

Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Perceptions on Return to Syria

(Survey report)







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April 2020

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The Day After (TDA) is a Syrian organization that works to support democratic transition in Syria, and its scope of work is focused on the following areas: Rule of law, transitional justice, security sector reform, electoral system design and Constituent Assembly election, constitutional design, economic reform and social policies.

We thank the Orient Policy Centerfor their valuable contribution to this report.



The Orient Policy Center (OPC) is an independent research center established in 2014, providing consultations and research services with the aim of developing humanitarian policies and programs, and supporting stabilization and reconstruction in crisis areas and fragile environments.

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Background:

"Safe, voluntary, and dignified" return according to the United Nations, is still not an option for Syrian refugees in Turkey. The case is similar for Syrian refugees in other host countries, and there does not seem to be any signs of resolving this issue in the foreseeable future.

The situation has become more dire for refugees, with Turkey expanding its military intervention in Idlib and other regions in northern Syria, and the effects of that involvement impacting Turkish domestic political dynamics. As a result, refugees find themselves gripped by the dilemma between staying in Turkey, where they suffer from a poor socio-economic and legal status, and an unsafe return to Syria, with no third option available for the overwhelming majority of them. Syrians in Turkey cannot remain refugees forever, posing a more urgent need to address this issue as soon as possible.

There have been proposals from various regional and international powers from time to time, on refugee return to Syria, with Russia seeking to enable, and ultimately force a return of Syrian refugees in Lebanon to Syria, in mid-2018⁽¹⁾. The proposal had been resisted, and resulted in no significant outcomes.

Furthermore, Turkey proposed that a planned "safe zone" in northern Syria could host 2 million to 3 million Syrian refugees who have settled in Turkey(2). Both proposals are using the refugee issue to serve political goals rather than humanitarian ones, and neither of the two proposals have received international acceptance so far.

This survey examines the most significant Syrian refugee trends in Turkey towards return, by answering a number of questions, the most important of which are: To what degree do they hope to return after nine years of their settlement in Turkey? What are the most important factors affecting the desire to return, related to their life in Turkey, or developments in the situation in Syria, or individual and personal factors? Also, what factors do refugees perceive, that would allow them to return, in political, security and economic terms?

Those points and others, are highlighted in this report throughout its two chapters. The first chapter provides a general overview on the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey, by relying on UN and Turkish government official data, and through the results of the field survey. The second chapter provides a correlational study between factors related to the situation in Turkey and Syria, and attempts to identify the most important factors affecting the refugees' desire to return. Finally, the report presents the perceptions of refugees' of the conditions that must be met in order for them to return to their country of origin.

It should be noted that the desire to return to Syria in the future does not mean the ability to return at the present time, as 99% of all respondents link their return to regime change, return to original place of residence and other conditions — while only 1% resolved to return under the current conditions.

⁽¹⁾ Muhammad al-Hammadi, "Russia pushing hard to return Syrian refugees", Zaman Al-Wasl newspaper, 2018, at: https://bit.ly/39deqV8, date 23-03-2020.

⁽²⁾ Seda Serdar, "The safe area in northern Syria, would refugees leave voluntarily?" German TV website, 2019, at the link: https://bit.ly/2QF7klR, dated 03-03-2020.

Methodology:

The survey included 54 questions that covered topics on the issue of the Syrian refugee presence in Turkey, prospects for return, and factors that control their return. The questions were divided into four sections: the first section covered general information about the respondents, and then probed into a number of issues related to their situation in Turkey. The survey further examined factors related to the conditions of the respondents leaving Syria, and the current level of their association with their country of origin. The survey additionally asked respondents how they perceived the current events happening in their country, and prospects for their presence in Turkey.

The data collection process was carried out between September 20 and the end of October of 2019. A team of 21 enumerators carried out the survey in 12 Turkish provinces, and were distributed to interview respondents in proportion to the number of Syrians residing in each of the provinces. The distribution of enumerators was carried out as follows:

Istanbul 3 enumerators

Gaziantep 3 enumerators (incl. Islahiyeh and Nizip)

Hatay 3 enumerators (incl. Antakya, Reyhanli and Iskenderun)

Sanliurfa 3 enumerators (incl. Urfa and Akcakale)

Adana 2 enumerators (incl. Adana and Osmaniye)

Kahramanmaras 1 enumerator

Kilis 1 enumerator

Ankara 1 enumerator

Mersin 1 enumerator

Bursa 1 enumerator

Izmir 1 enumerator

Izmit 1 enumerator

The team of the respondents targeted a stratified random sample that included 2,002 Syrian citizens (men and women) living in Turkey. A balanced proportion of gender, age, education and place of residence groups was pursued. Consequently, the sample achieved an accepChart balance in gender, where the percentage of women was 43%, with the rest being men.

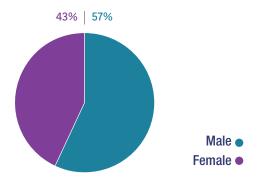


Chart No. (1) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to gender

The sample included five age groups, distributed among segments between 18 and those over 55 years old. The age group between 26 and 35 years old was the largest, and scored 39.46% of the sample. Overall, the sample is considered a youngage sample, with a variation of 84% between those 18 and 45 years of age.

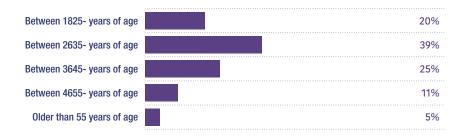


Chart No. (2) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to age

Twelve Turkish provinces were sampled, including Istanbul, Gaziantep and Sanliurfa, taking into account the size of Syrian presence in each of them. The aforementioned three provinces alongside Hatay, produced more than half of the sample results.

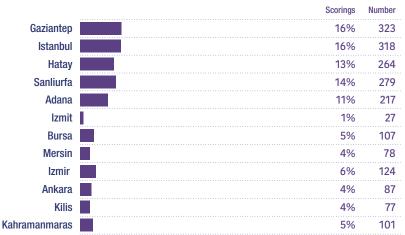


Chart No. (3) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to province

Efforts were made to include people from different education backgrounds, with a tendency to increase the representation of those with a higher education, as they are better equipped to express various opinions and positions on the issue of the return. However, four levels of education were represented in the survey, to help measure the impact of education on perceptions towards return.

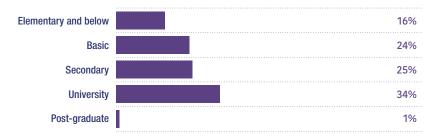


Chart No. (4) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to level of education

Additionally, the survey explores the legal status of respondents, holders of the Temporary Protection Card were the majority, at 81%. The total sample also included approximately 11% of Syrians with Turkish citizenship, in addition to about 6% of those who said that they possess tourist residence permits or work permits. Those who did not have any legal status in Turkey constituted the least among all groups at 2%.

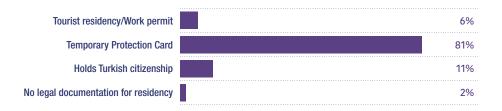


Chart No. (5) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their legal status

The total sample included male and female students of different ages and levels of education, yet the sample does not necessarily represent the entire Syrian refugee community in Turkey. Rather, the results of the survey may be used as guiding indicators that offer a preliminary picture of the perceptions of Syrians in Turkey on the issue of their return.



Chapter 1 - Syrian refugees in Turkey

First - Background on Syrian refugees in Turkey

Syrian refugees began arriving in Turkey following the uprising against Bashar al-Assad's regime in March 2011, and during the following years the numbers increased drastically with the escalation of violence inside the country, from about 10,000 refugees in January 2012 to more than a million in September 2014, then to 2.7 million in March 2016. The figures would stabilize at 3.6 million, who live under the "Temporary Protection Law" from 2018 to date, according to UN figures.

In addition to this number about 100,000 Syrians who live in Turkey hold tourist residency permits or work permits, as well as about 110,000⁽³⁾ were granted Turkish citizenship. Since there are no means to know the exact number of Syrians who live illegally in Turkey, this survey potentially represents an estimated population of more than 3.8 million. Although the inclusion of Syrians with Turkish citizenship and residence permits, and considering them part of the Syrian refugee community in Turkey is debaChart, the survey collected information from Syrians who entered Turkey after 2011 and for reasons related to the conflict. This integration of all groups, will give a clear picture on the legal status of Syrians in Turkey, in addition to the factors and variables that affect their desire to return.

Official Turkish statistics show that less than 3% of refugees in Turkey live in camps or shelters, while the vast majority of them live in Turkish cities and towns⁽⁴⁾. According to Turkish statistics, more than half of Syrian refugees are concentrated in four provinces, respectively: Istanbul 492,000, Gaziantep 452,000, Hatay 404,000, and Sanliurfa 424,000. The other half is spread out in 26 Turkish provinces, with the largest refugee population in Adana 250,000, and the smallest population in the province of Beyburt near the Black Sea, where 24 Syrians are registered.

Mass Syrian refugee waves flowed into Turkey at various times during the past years. The majority of refugees arrived either with their families, or were joined later by their families. The distribution of the age and gender composition of the Syrian refugee community in Turkey is a reflection of the composition of Syrian society as a young society. The proportion of those of working age in Turkey is estimated to be more than half at 56%, while the percentage of children under the age of 18 is estimated at 40%. The same applies to the gender composition of the refugee community, where males make up 54% of the community, and females 46%.⁽⁵⁾

⁽³⁾ Refugees Association, "The Syrian ISSUE IN TURKEY FEBRUARY 2020" https://multeciler.org.tr/turkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi/, 2 March 2020.

⁽⁴⁾ Previous source

⁽⁵⁾ Previous source

Syrians in Turkey are not considered refugees according to the 1951 Geneva Convention, but are subject to "temporary protection" according to Turkish law, and therefore, fall under "temporary protection" Those under temporary protection are not entitled to apply for asylum because under Turkish law, asylum-seekers are Europeans fleeing persecution in Europe⁽⁷⁾. The Temporary Protection Law allows Syrians to obtain legal services through the Bar Association (BARO), and access to medical services in exchange for paying 10% or 20% of a check-up fee, and some medication. It also provides socio-economic support for a specific period of time for families or single parents or their vulnerable children home care for people with disabilities, and a Vocational and Education Training program⁽⁸⁾. Furthermore, Syrians in Turkey are entitled to humanitarian assistance. They are granted a Turkish Red Crescent card, winter aid services or a PTT card. They also receive some assistance from civil society organizations and charities, and from the Turkish Red Crescent⁽⁹⁾. However, the law does not automatically grant Syrians the right of movement between provinces in Turkey, but rather they are required to obtain prior permission from authorities of the province they reside in to be granted mobility, and under strict conditions.

For education, the European Union allocated 400 million euros to support Syrian children in Turkey, in exchange for Turkey's commitment to curb Syrian refugees from reaching Greece from its territory, and to provide education to Syrian children⁽¹⁰⁾. The EU pledged to provide another 100 million euros to support construction of infrastructure for schools.⁽¹¹⁾ Consequently, the number of Syrian children who receive education reached about 850,000⁽¹²⁾, or 80% of those of school-age.

Economically, Syrians have managed well in the labor market in Turkey, and have overall, contributed to the Turkish economy. The number of enterprises established by Syrians reached more than 15,000⁽¹³⁾, and the Syrians contribution to the Turkish economy reached 3% in 2016, and rose to 7.4%⁽¹⁴⁾ in 2017 even though they constitute less than 4.5% of the total population of Turkey. Despite this, the poverty rate among Syrian refugees is estimated to be at 64%⁽¹⁵⁾, and tens of thousands of families are living in difficult conditions because of the high cost of living in Turkey.

- (6) For more information on the Temporary Protection Law, see the UNHCR website, https://redirect.is/ekojht, 14-03-2020.
- (7) Ulukütük, Mehmet (2017), "A social cohesion guide to Syrian refugees," Science education culture research center, Turkey, Gaziantep. P. 44.46.
- (8) UNHCR United Nations Commission, (2018), "Social, Economic and Civil Matters," https://help.unhcr.org, Turkey.
- (9) Eis, Mahfouz, (December 2018), "The cultural identity crisis of Syrian refugees in Turkey, and mechanisms for social inclusion policies", Journal of Social Sciences, No. 7, Arab Democratic Center Germany Berlin. P. 190. 183.
- (10) Enab Baladi, (9/17/2018), "The European Union allocates 400 million euros for Syrian students in Turkey", https://www.enabbaladi.net
- (11) Turk Press, (12/21/2018), "The European Union approves the provision of a new financial aid payment to Syrian refugees in Turkey," https://www.turkpress.com
- (12) UNICEF, "Syrian refugees", https://www.unicef.org/appeals/syrianrefugees.html, Last updated: 01 December 2019.
- (13) Refugees Association, "Number of Syrians in Turkey as OF FEBRUARY 2020", https://multeciler.org.tr/turkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi/ March 2, 2020.
- (14) Turk Press, (5/17/2018), "How Syrian refugees contributed to the growth of the Turkish economy" http://www.turkpress.com.
- (15) UNICEF, "The Syrian Crisis: Quick Facts," https://www.unicef.org/mena/ar, August 2019.

Second - Social and economic conditions of Syrians in Turkey

According to the survey data, about 75% of the respondents of the total sample have lived in Turkey for five years or more, while only 12% of the respondents said that they spent less than three years in the country. This means that the largest group of respondents arrived in Turkey between 2013 and 2014.

Duration of stay in Turkey (in years)

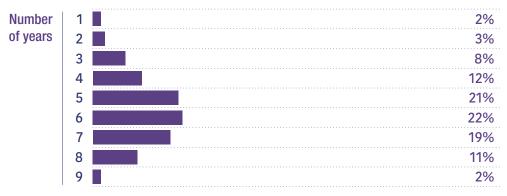


Chart No. (6) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to refugees' duration of stay in Turkey

It does not seem that the length of stay in Turkey has enhanced the infusion of refugees into Turkish society. If language were to be an indicator, the results of the survey showed that only 30% of respondents cited that they speak Turkish well, while 34% said they do not speak Turkish at all, or that they speak poorly.

This may be related to Turkey's lack of clear and comprehensive policies to integrate Syrians under "temporary protection" into Turkish society, which is reflected in the narrow spaces of intermingling between Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens. Despite the majority of refugees living in Turkish cities and towns, as mentioned earlier, however, there are certain neighborhoods where Syrians congregate more than others, where there are shops, restaurants, and even medical centers accommodating their needs.

What is your level of Turkish language?

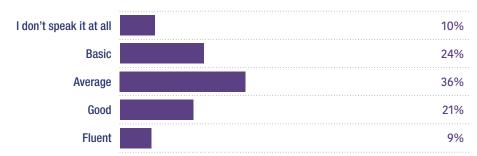
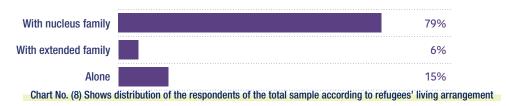


Chart No. (7) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to refugees' proficiency in the Turkish language

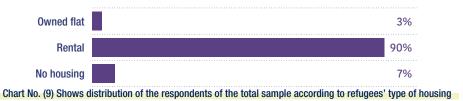
It can be said that the most significant characteristic of the Syrian presence in Turkey is that it is a family presence. More than 85% of the respondents said that they live with their families. This can also be attributed to the fact that a large number of Syrian refugees arrived in Turkey in waves that included families, and sometimes entire local communities.

With whom you currently live?



Ninety percent of the total respondents said they live in rentals, while approximately 7% said that they do not have their own housing, and they are often camp residents or are hosted by relatives or friends. Only 3% of Syrians own homes in Turkey.

The type of housing in which you reside



Thirty-three percent of the respondents said that they receive financial aid or social aid from Turkish establishments or the UN, while the vast majority depend on their own resources, and are part of the workforce in Turkey.

Sixty percent of the respondents said that they have a job, 44% of them are in the labor force, 10% are self-employed with small businesses, and 6% are medium or large-sized business owners. While 40% of the total respondents are unemployed, it cannot be considered as an indicator of the level of unemployment among Syrian refugees in Turkey, because among that group there's a 4% of respondents who are outside the working age, and also those who are still pursuing their education, who make up about 7%, and the rest who are not interested in seeking employment.

Your employment status

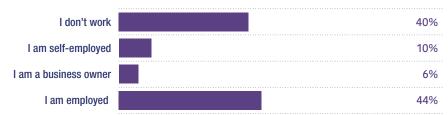


Chart No. (10) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to refugees' employment status

Overall, the ratios indicate a relatively high economic activity rate for Syrians in Turkey, but it should be noted that the number of workers within the survey sample who have work permits, and are registered in social security and pay income tax, did not exceed 19% of the total workers. This is due to two reasons, firstly, the complications for obtaining work permits for non-Turks presented by the authorities, and the second related to employers themselves, whether Syrians or Turks, they often evade their workers' registration formally because that requires them adhere to the minimum wage according to Turkish law, and the maximum number of working hours permitted, as well as other conditions that are not in the interest of employers.

Do you have a Turkish work permit to practice this profession?

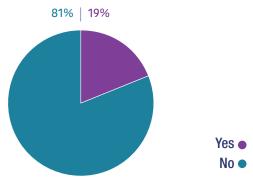


Chart No. (11) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to refugees' work-permit status

The foregoing contributes greatly to the harsh working conditions of Syrian workers, as the survey data showed that about 49% of workers of the total sample work more than 48 hours per week, exceeding the maximum limit of hours allowed in Turkish law. Furthermore, those extra hours of work are not reflected in an actual increase in the workers' income.

How many hours do you work weekly?

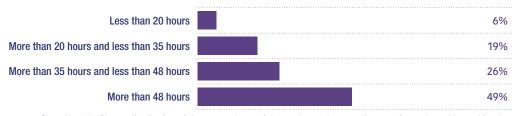


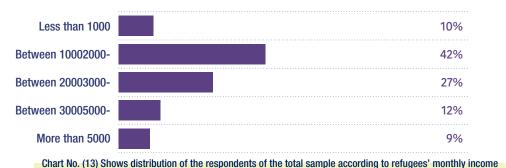
Chart No. (12) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to refugees' weekly working hours

Monthly income:

The survey data indicates that more than 52% of Syrian refugees earn an income that is below the minimum wage in the country, which is about 2,300TL.⁽¹⁶⁾ Figures decrease with the increase in wage, where only 26% of respondents said that their income ranges between 2000-3000TL, while those who earn more than 5000TL per month did not exceed the 9% threshold.

^{(16) -} New Turk News Agency, Announcing the value of the minimum wage for the year 2020, at the link; https://redirect.is/c2ispa, date 14-03-2020.

What is your average monthly income? (in Turkish lira)



Amid these factors, do Syrians wish to return to their country?

Desire to return

Seventy-four percent of the respondents expressed an explicit desire to return to Syria in the future, compared to 26% who seemed to have crossed out the option of return. However, the question here measures the desire in purely hypothetical terms. Returning is not an option or possibility for any of the Syrian refugees in the world. It is more so a further option for refugees in Turkey, most of whom come from the northern regions in Syria, regions that are still subject to extensive military operations. In fact, various factors contribute to shaping Syrians' attitudes towards return, and they will be discussed in the next chapter.

Do you want to return to Syria?

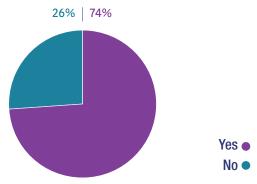


Chart No. (13) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to refugees' desire to return to Syria



Chapter Two

Significant factors affecting the refugee position towards return:

In the previous chapter, it was indicated that the proportion of those who wished to return to Syria amounted to approximately three quarters of the respondents of the total sample, with a quarter who said they do not wish to return. In this chapter, the report will focus on the most significant factors affecting the decision of refugees to return from three perspectives, the first related to life in Turkey, the second, related to the situation in Syria, and the third will focus on the personal factors for the respondents. In this chapter, each choice included separate percentages to draw conclusions according to the nature of each variable.

First - Factors related to life in Turkey

The survey attempted to investigate the correlation of a number of factors related to life in Turkey, with the desire of Syrians to return to their country. There were about 15 factors identified during the interviews, including social, economic and other factors. The report will present the most significant of these factors, and their degree of correlation or influence on the respondents' desire to return.

1- Reason for choosing Turkey as country of asylum:

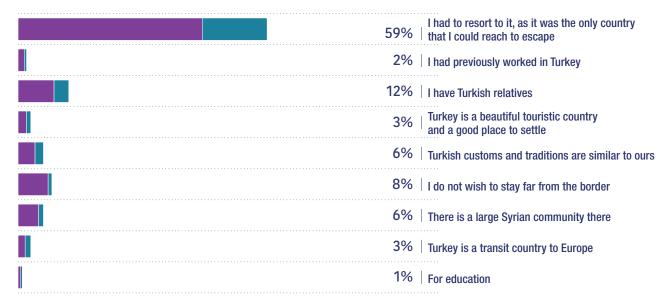
It is indispuChart that most, if not all Syrians who arrived in Turkey after 2011 were fleeing the conflict in their country, either because of military operations, or the deterioration of the standard of living or other reasons. The survey investigates the reasons these refugees chose Turkey as country of asylum, and then measures the correlation of those reasons with the degree to which respondents wanted to return.

Accordingly, the vast majority of respondents, 69%, said that they came to Turkey because it was the only option available to them. This figure did not significantly differ from the results of the total sample with regard to the refugees' desire to return to Syria, with 74% wishing to return and 26% who did not.

However, the remaining 31% from the sub-sample shows variations in their desire to return. One group said that they chose Turkey because they did not want to move away from the border, with those wishing to return scoring 90% among that group. Another group said they chose Turkey because it has a large Syrian community living there, with those wishing to return scoring 81% among that group.

Those least willing to return to Syria are those who chose Turkey as a transit country to Europe, where only 56% of them expressed the desire to return to Syria. Furthermore, others who chose Turkey because it was a "good place to settle". recorded a decreased desire to return at 65%.

The desire to return to Syria in the future, according to the reasons why refugees choose Turkey as the country of residence



No Yes

Chart No. (15) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to refugees' desire to return to Syria,

and its correlation to their choosing of Turkey as country of asylum

2- Legal status in Turkey

The legal status of Syrians in Turkey, as mentioned above, is divided between the majority of those who hold temporary protection cards, and in lower numbers, those who were granted Turkish citizenship or who have residence/work permits, and an unknown number who do not have any type of legal status in Turkey.

The survey data shows that the legal status factor has a great impact on the trend towards return. There was a clear difference between the responses of those who were granted Turkish citizenship, and those with temporary protection cards. The desire to return among those with Turkish citizenship amounted to approximately 62%, compared to about 77% who hold the temporary protection card.

Between those who hold Turkish citizenship, and holders of temporary protection cards, holders of tourist residency permits or work permits come in the middle, where 69% among this group said they wish to return back to Syria. This segment is likely to be from those with good income, as they are able to cover the costs of residence permits that include health insurance; bearing in mind that renewing the Syrian passport is very expensive for Syrians in Turkey.

The desire to return to Syria in the future, according to the legal status of Syrian refugees in Turkey

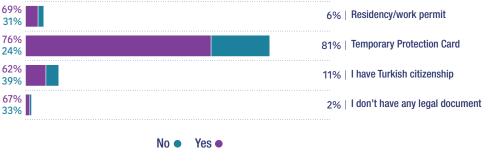


Chart No. (16) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to refugees' desire to return to Syria,
and its correlation to their type of residency (legal status)

3- Being with family or alone:

The survey included in its sample respondents living with their families in Turkey, others living with part of their families, while another percentage said that they live on their own. The responses of the three groups to the question of returning to Syria, indicated that those who live with their family or alone scored significantly higher than those who live with part of their family. While the figures of the first two groups remained close in number to the overall sample (74% willing to return versus 26% who are not), we find that the figures of those who live with part of their families dropped to 63%. This can be explained that those family members wish to move to a third country. Thousands of Syrian families in Turkey await family reunification with family members who live in Europe and other western countries.

The desire to return to Syria in the future, according to the family situation of refugees in Turkey

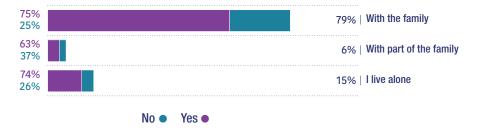


Chart No. (17) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria, and its correlation to who they live with

4- Turkish language proficiency:

The results of the survey indicate that there is a continuous inverse relationship between the factor of Turkish language proficiency and the level of desire to return to Syria. The more the individual's proficiency in the Turkish language, the less his/her desire to return. Eighty-seven percent of those who did not speak the Turkish language wished to return to Syria, compared to about 66% who were fluent in the language.

Naturally, people who speak the language well will have more opportunities for work, education and integration into Turkish society, which achieves a good level of stability for the individual.

The desire to return to Syria in the future, according to the level of refugees' proficiency in the Turkish language

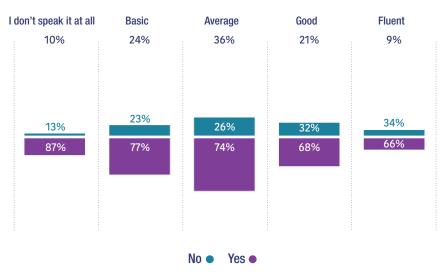


Chart No. (18) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria,

and its correlation to their Turkish language proficiency

5- Respondents' perceptions of the factors that govern their presence in Turkey:

Respondents were asked to specify their position on the phrase "The Turkish government is the only guarantor of the continued presence of Syrians in Turkey." It has been found that those who strongly oppose this phrase least favor return to Syria, with 66% of them expressing a desire to return to Syria, compared to 75% among those who strongly agreed with the phrase. In conclusion, respondents who do not link the continuity of their presence in Turkey to the existence of the current government more likely feel sChart and secure where the future is concerned, indicating a greater desire to stay in Turkey.

Do you wish to return to Syria in the future?

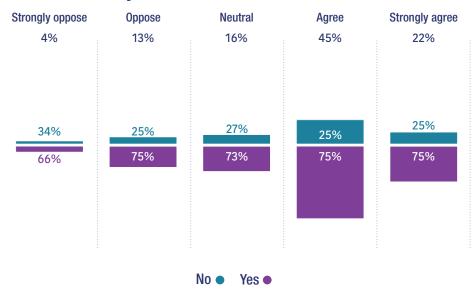


Chart No. (19) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria, and its correlation to their level of agreement with the phrase "The Turkish government is the only guarantor of the continued presence of Syrians in Turkey."

In a related context, respondents were asked what they think of the phrase "Syrian refugees in Turkey cause problems and unrest for the Turkish government". The results for this question indicated that those who strongly agree with the phrase have a greater desire to return to Syria than those who strongly disagree. Consequently, those who see that Syrians are causing problems for the Turkish government are more willing to return, but also due to their lack of stability in fear of the future.

Do you wish to return to Syria in the future?

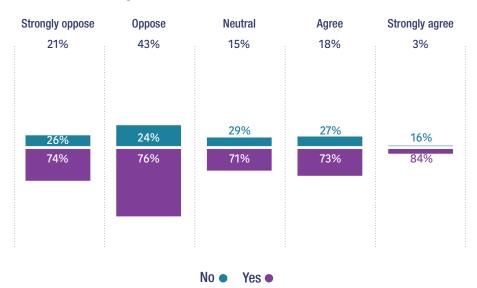


Chart No. (20) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria, and its correlation to the level of agreement with the phrase "Syrian refugees in Turkey cause problems and unrest for the Turkish government".



6- Duration of stay in Turkey and its effect on wanting to return

The report additionally attempts to link the factor of respondents' duration of stay in Turkey to their desire to return to Syria, but contrary to what was expected, the report found that there is no correlation between the duration of stay with the desire to return to Syria. There was a convergence in figures between those who have been in Turkey for only a year or less, with those who have lived in Turkey since nine years.

The desire to return to Syria in the future, according to the refugees' period of stay in Turkey

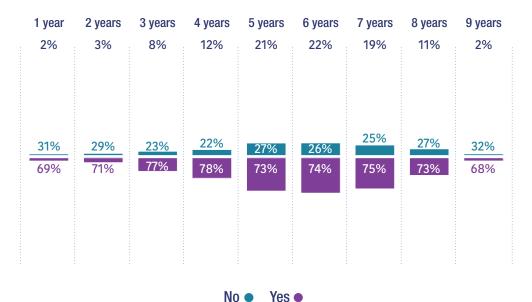


Chart No. (21) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria,

and its correlation to their duration of stay in Turkey.

7- Economic conditions and income:

A variation in figures can be observed when linking Syrians' income in Turkey, and their desire to return to Syria. Higher income means better life, more amenities, and thus a greater desire for stability and less desire for return. However, the survey data indicates that the lowest-income group earning less than 1,000 TL per month, is not necessarily the most willing to return, on the contrary, about 30% from this group said that they do not wish to return, scoring higher than those who earn an income ranging between 3,000-5,000TL, scoring 26%.

Furthermore, the effect of higher income can be observed, as 77% of those who earn between 1,000-2,000TL per month said they wish to return compared to 69% of those whose income exceeds 5,000TL per month.

The desire to return to Syria in the future, according to the level of refugees' income

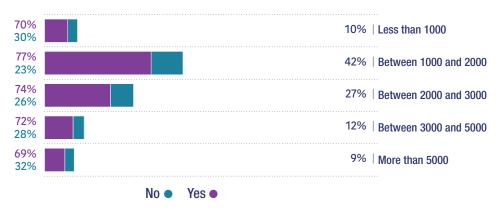


Chart No. (22) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria,

and its correlation to their average monthly income

The survey results indicate that the level of income and economic factors are not decisive factors in determining the trend towards return in the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The results are further reinforced by the variations in the figures of all questions of an economic nature in the survey. The attitude towards return for those who are working, and those who are unemployed showed no significant difference. Furthermore, those who work less than twenty hours, and those who work more than 48 hours per week also showed no significant difference in their attitude towards return.

8- Access to financial and social aid:

The link between access to financial/social aid and the desire to return shows similar results to the prior variable of average income, and reaffirms that economic factors are not a priority in determining the refugees' desire to return. The survey results indicate that those who receive financial or social assistance have a greater desire to return, more than those who do not receive any assistance, by a difference of about 9%. Furthermore, 80% of those who receive financial/social aid wish to return, compared to 71% of those who do not receive such aid.

The desire to return to Syria according to the provision of financial aid or assistance

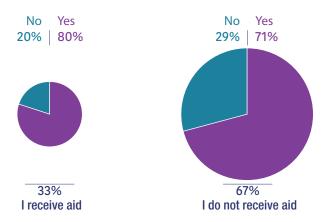


Chart No. (23) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria, and its correlation to their access to financial/social aid

Second - Personal factors for refugees:

Some personal factors largely influence the attitudes of respondents towards returning to Syria, the most significant are as follows:

1- Older refugees have a stronger inclination to return:

The older the age, the greater the desire to return to Syria, according to the sample data. The age group from 18 to 25 years scored 67% for those who wish to return to Syria, with figures increasing the older the age group, reaching 92% among the 55+ age group. The age variable appears to be one of the strongest factors with a systematic effect on refugees' attitude towards return.

The findings present logical figures; the younger age group for the most part studied in Turkish schools and universities and thus their integration into Turkish society is far easier than the rest of the groups. Additionally, the older one is, the more difficult it will be to find a job in Turkey.

Furthermore, the emotional attachment and longing for home are more severe in older age groups, while smaller age groups only have memories of ruin and destruction, and are less emotionally attached.

The desire to return to Syria in the future, based on the age of refugees

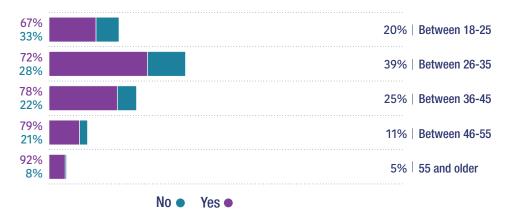


Chart No. (24) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria, and its correlation to their age



2- Married couples have a greater desire to return than unmarried people:

Seventy-eight percent of married couples are more willing to return to Syria, compared to 63% for singles, and 70% for separated people.

Single people have less responsibilities than married couples with families, and therefore feel less burdened to get by. In addition to this, singles are often younger, and, as was shown previously, younger age is directly correlated to a less desire to return.

Also, the reason for the high numbers of those who want to return within the category of married people, is they seek to preserve the identity of their Syrian children, which is diminishing, particularly among the group of children who are in primary education. (Further research must be conducted on this topic.)

The desire to return to Syria in the future, according to refugees' social situation



Chart No. (25) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria, and its correlation to their marital status

3- Slight differences between women and men with regard to return:

A slight difference was observed between men and women's wish to return to Syria. Men scored 76% compared to 72% of women.

The desire to return to Syria in the future, according to refugees' gender

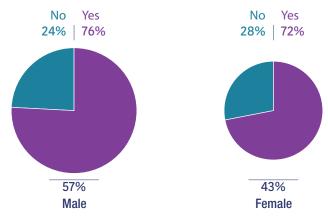


Chart No. (26) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria, and its correlation to their gender

4- Level of education and its correlation to the desire to return:

The level of education among the respondents did not seem to have a clear directional effect on their desire to return to Syria. Those with basic education, and those with postgraduate education expressed the same desire to return to Syria at a rate of 74%.

The desire to return to Syria in the future, according to refugees' level of education

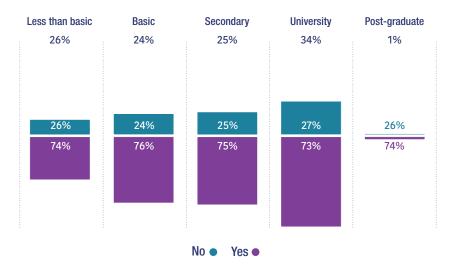


Chart No. (27) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria,

and its correlation to their level of education

Studying in Turkish universities appears to have a significant effect on the issue of wanting to return to Syria. Seventy-five percent of the respondents who do not study in Turkish universities said they wish to return to Syria, compared to 63% who study in Turkish universities.

Those who study in Turkish universities are usually fluent in the Turkish language, and therefore, are able to integrate more easily into Turkish society, in addition that the chances of being granted Turkish citizenship are greater. Also, the possibility of obtaining a decent job is more probable, than those who did not study in Turkish universities, therefore this group is more sChart and connected to their new society, thus their desire to return to Syria becomes less.

Third - Factors related to the situation in Syria

The decision to return to Syria for refugees relates not only to factors in the country of asylum, but mainly to the situation in Syria. From this standpoint, the survey included questions that attempted to investigate the connection between the refugee community and their country. Economic and social factors constitute two main pillars of the refugees' connection with their country of origin. The report presents the following factors:

1- Property and real estate:

It was found that those who own real estate or property in Syria have a greater desire to return than those who have no property or property left scoring a 78% among those who own property, in comparison with those who don't at 71%.

Do you wish to return to Syria in the future?

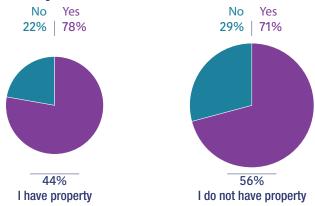


Chart No. (28) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria,

and its correlation to their ownership of property in Syria

The state of the refugees' property is also a factor in influencing the desire of the owners to return. Those whose property was seized or confiscated seemed less willing to return, amounting to about 73% for that particular group. However, the latter figure did not significantly differ from the figures of those who said their property was partially or completely destroyed, and among those who said it was still the same, and even those who said they knew nothing about the status of their property.

Do you wish to return to Syria in the future?

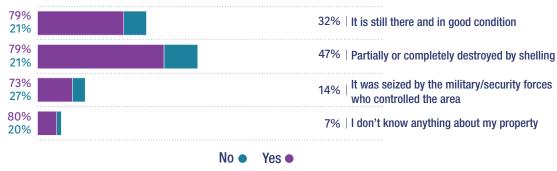


Chart No. (29) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria, and its correlation to the status of their property in Syria

2- Family ties or relatives in Syria:

Ninety-one percent of respondents whose relatives or family still reside in Syria, and who continue to communicate with them, and visit them repeatedly, expressed a desire to return, making this factor a significant one in determining respondents' wish to return to Syria.

However, it appears that those who communicate with their families or relatives through social media, their desire to return dropped to 72%. Those who never communicate with their relatives, scored 64% in their wish to return to Syria.

Do you wish to return to Syria in the future?

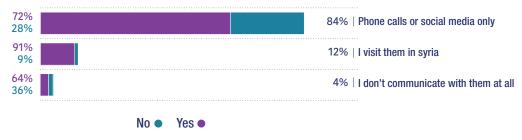


Chart No. (30) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria, and its correlation to their communication with family/relative in Syria

Fourth - Conditions for returning to Syria as perceived by the refugees

In the previous chapter, there were sufficient indications to suggest that the Syrian refugee situation in Turkey for most of the refugees is a near-coercive situation. The refugees face a number of serious obstacles that make their unsChart staying in Turkey their only option. But the hope to return remains by at least 74% of respondents of the total sample in this survey. Nevertheless, expressing the desire to return does not necessarily mean going back any time in the future. Among those who said they wanted to return, only less than 1% said that they had already made a decision to return in light of the current circumstances. The rest of the respondents said they were thinking about a conditional return, should political, economic, and other conditions improve.

The survey results also indicate that the conditions relating to the respondents' return to Syria, present conflicting results sometimes, which reflects the complexity of the situation which Syrian refugees in Turkey face in light of an impossible return. Especially with increasing pressure in Turkey, and very limited opportunities to be resettled in a third country. As a result, five variables in varying degrees were presented by the respondents:

1- The return must be to their place of origin:

Of the 74% who seemed willing to return to Syria at some point in the future, about 71% of them stated that their return must be to the place of origin from which they left, therefore, the idea of creating a safe zone in Syria to return refugees to is not an option. Only 29% of the respondents found it accepChart to return to a safe zone that is not their place of origin, while the majority preferred to stay in Turkey rather than return to areas other than their place of origin.

If you are not able to return to your original place of residence in Syria, will you accept living in any other Syrian region?

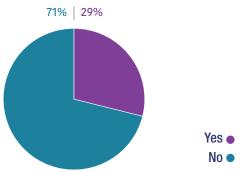


Chart No. (31) Shows distribution of the respondents of the total sample according to their desire to return to Syria,

and its correlation to their position on living in an area other than their place of origin in Syria

2- The return must be under a new political circumstance:

A political settlement that leads to a final cessation of hostilities in Syria is a prerequisite for the return of refugees, as the vast majority of respondents agreed, but what can be considered as a settlement for some refugees may not be so for others.

The majority of respondents who expressed a desire to return to Syria linked their return to a change in the country's system of government, expressed in the questionnaire with the phrase "overthrowing the regime", with respondents of the total sample requiring that about 70%. The overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees in Turkey have fled the country as a result of the regime's practices, and that included bombing, sieges, and forced displacement.

3- A safe return amid a cessation of hostilities

The ongoing military operations in Syria are still a major obstacle for the majority of refugees who wish to return. The operations are currently concentrated in the northwest regions of the country, but are not limited to there. During February of this year, clashes and even artillery shelling were carried out in several areas of Dara'a province in southern Syria, between local armed groups and the Syrian regime forces. (17) Paradoxically, Dara'a was one of the first regions that saw a reconciliation between the opposition forces and the regime, under Russia's guarantorship. This greatly indicates that most areas in Aleppo, Homs, Rural Damascus, and others that have succumbed to reconciling with the regime, are still unsChart, or can be described as fragile. The regions of the north-east of the country under control of the Kurdish Self-Administration oscillate between Turkish threats to further infiltrate the region, and the pressure exerted by the regime to restore its control.

Refugees in Turkey are well aware of these factors, therefore 60% of them believe in the "the permanent cessation of hostilities" as a condition for return, and hence the third most important condition for respondents of the total sample.

4- Return to a lawful place:

One of the major problems that still exist in Syria today is the spread of unlawful practices by various political and military forces on the ground. The Syrian Network for Human Rights continues to document hundreds of cases of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance every month⁽¹⁸⁾. Furthermore, property expropriation, especially in

⁽¹⁷⁾ Al-Jazeera website, at: https://redirect.is/jwc64d, date 11-03-2020.

⁽¹⁸⁾ The Syrian Network for Human Rights, monthly reports on detention and enforced disappearance, at the link: http://sn4hr.org/arabic/2020/01/02/11855/, dated 11-03-2020.

regime-held areas⁽¹⁹⁾, have undermined refugees' property rights. According to the results of this survey, 14% said that their properties were seized by the controlling forces on the ground.

Forty-six percent of the respondents said that the rule of law and establishing a level of security for people, and keeping their property is one of the basic conditions for their return. Also linked to this point is the presence of militias and armed groups, where 29% of respondents said that the dissolution of these armed organizations is a prerequisite for their return home.

5- Return to a thriving economy that provides employment opportunities and a place where health, education, and other basic services are available:

Syria lost an estimated 80% of its GDP value during the first four years of the conflict⁽²⁰⁾, setting off unemployment problems, inflation, etc., in addition to the destruction of infrastructure and the scarcity of basic services. All of these changes have brought poverty rates in the country to more than 82%⁽²¹⁾, rendering Syria the poorest country in the world.

Although the conditions related to the economy scored less than conditions related to security, an estimated 23% of respondents suggested the provision of basic services as one of the three conditions for return, further reinforcing the notion that economic and living factors are not a decisive factor when it comes to return.

⁽¹⁹⁾ For more on the issue of property expropriation, see The Day After's report entitled: The real estate problem and its implications, at the link: https://redirect.is/xgbczm.

⁽²⁰⁾ Adnan Abdul-Razzaq, the Syrian GDP lost 80% of its value, Al-Arabi Al-Jadeed, at the link: https://redirect.is/4d078m, date 11-03-2020.

⁽²¹⁾ The world in maps website, on the link: https://redirect.is/cru8ud - date 11-03-2020.

Your return to Syria is related to any of the following conditions?

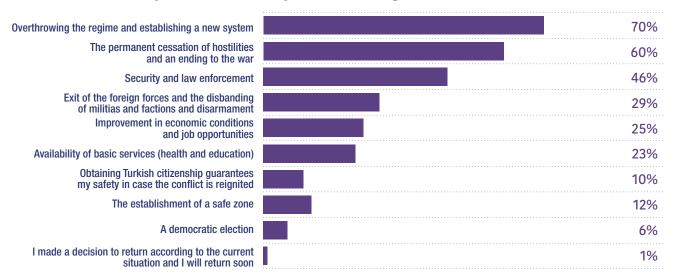


Chart No. (32) shows the respondents' expectations of the conditions that must be met for their return to Syria.

Summary and conclusion:

- Voluntary and safe returns are related to changing the political situation in Syria first and foremost. Survey results suggest that approximately three-fourths of the respondents of the total sample have cited this condition as a top priority for them to think about returning to Syria. Simultaneously, only a quarter of the respondents cite the improvement of the economic situation, reconstruction funds, or democratic elections as a top priority for them to think about returning to Syria. Consequently, as the survey results suggest, the revival of the economy is not considered a decisive factors for return.
- Fractional solutions to the refugee issue, whether proposed by Turkey or by the international community, may benefit
 in the short-term in relieving pressure in some regions, but may have negative effects in the long-term regarding refugees' permanent return. The results of the survey indicate that the vast majority of those who expressed their desire
 to return stated that their return must be to the areas of origin from which they left.
- The integration of the Syrians in Turkey needs well-funded programs for rehabilitation, better regulations for Syrians in
 the Turkish labor market, and to assist and facilitate legal procedures. This integration will be achieved only by providing job opportunities for the refugees to earn a living. Likewise, introducing a mechanism for exchanging experience
 between Turkey and countries that have a long history in hosting and integrating refugees within their societies, is
 crucial to put a long-term plan in place, for the integration of Syrians inside Turkey.
- Introducing programs to preserve refugees' property is of great importance because of its significant impact on encouraging refugees to return, especially because of the mass destruction caused by the Assad regime in the wake of the war. Furthermore, laws and decrees that violate property rights that were issued by the Assad regime, such as Law 10, must be addressed to prevent the regime from changing the demographic make up of several regions in the country through its tampering with the civil registry documents of refugees.
- More than 80% of the Syrian refugees work in the Turkish labor blackmarket, and as such they remain vulnerable to
 exploitation and job losses affecting their life and their future options. Therefore, it is important to overcome the legal
 obstacles that prevent Syrians from obtaining a legal work position, and to address the conditions that make them
 vulnerable and subject to exploitation.
- Most Syrians in Turkey are families, and there is no escape from recognizing the existence of a generation of Syrian
 children who only know Turkey as their home. These children are already engaged in Turkey's education system, and
 are absorbing its values, and year after year the idea of returning to Syria diminishes. Therefore, and regardless of
 what may develop in Syria, the issue of Syrians living in Turkey remains; which necessitates a review of the policies
 and interventions previously used in dealing with their crisis.

Survey questions

- 1. Gender
 - Female
 - Male
- 2. Age (number)
- 3. Marital status
 - Single
 - Married
 - Divorced
 - Widowed
- 4. Year of entry into Turkey (number)
- 5. Place of birth in Syria (name of province)
- 6. Place of former residency in Syria (name of province)
- 7. Place of current residency in Turkey (name of province)
- 8. Type of residency:
 - Tourist residency
 - Temporary Protection Card (kimlik)
 - Work permit
 - I hold Turkish citizenship
 - I don't have any residency documents

9. Do you live in a

- An owned flat
- A rented flat
- Youth shared dormitory
- Hosted by a Turkish family
- · Hosted by a friend
- Camp
- · Housing unit not classified as urban
- I have no place to live
- Other

10. Do you live with any of your family members (multiple answers permitted)

- Spouse
- · Spouse and children
- My children only
- One/both parents
- Siblings
- Siblings and parents
- Alone

11. What is the level of education you received in Syria?

- Illiterate
- Elementary
- Secondary
- Highschool
- Middle institute
- University degree (please proceed to q.12)
- Masters degree (please proceed to q.12)
- PhD (please proceed to q.12)

- 12. If you have studied in Syrian universities and graduated, please specify the major
- 13. Have you studied in Syrian universities or institutes and do not hold a degree?
 - Yes (proceed to q.14)
 - No (proceed to q.14)
- 14. Please specify the number of years you studied at university or an institute
- 15. Have you studied in a Turkish university?
 - Yes (proceed to q18)
 - No (proceed to q18)
- 16. Are you:
 - A student
 - A graduate
 - Dropout
- 17. What is your field of study?
- 18. On a scale from 1-10, where do you find your level in the Turkish language: 0 being no knowledge and 10 speak, read and write the language fluently

- 19. If you are fluent in another language (s), please specify (multiple answers permitted)
 - English
 - French
 - Spanish
 - Italian
 - German
 - Other

Work and income:

- 20. Have you worked in Syria before coming to Turkey?
 - Yes (proceed to q21)
 - No (proceed to q21)
- 21. What was your primary profession?
- 22. If you are currently working or have worked during the past six months, please specify your field of work
- 23. Do you work in this profession?
 - For pay
 - · As a volunteer
 - I am self-employed
 - I am a business owner
 - Other
- 24. Do you have a Turkish work permit to practice this profession?
 - Yes
 - No
- 25. How many hours do you work weekly?
 - · Less than 20 hours
 - More than 25 and less than 30 hours
 - More than 35 and less than 45 hours
 - 48 hours+
- 26. Do you think that your current profession is in line with your ambitions and aspirations?
 - Yes
 - No

27. What is your average monthly income (in Turkish lira)?

- Less than 1000
- Between 1000-2000
- Between 2000-3000
- Between 3000-5000
- More than 5000
- I prefer not to answer

28. Do you receive financial or social assistance from Turkish establishments or the UN:

- Yes
- No

29. Do you receive in-kind or social assistance from Syrian organizations?

- Yes
- No

30. Please specify the reason that prompted you to leave Syria? (multiple answers permitted)

- · My town/city was under siege
- · Escaping from conscription and security and prosecution
- Forced displacement
- To continue my education
- · Fleeing shelling and battles
- The direct threat to kill or kidnap me by non-governmental organizations
- · Continuous arrests at checkpoints
- · Unavailability of jobs and difficult economic conditions
- Reuniting with my family
- I did not leave Syria involuntarily and I visit it sometimes without fear
- Other reasons

- 31. Did you own any property or real estate before leaving Syria?
 - Yes (proceed to q34)
 - No (proceed to q34)
- 32. Do you have legal documents proving your ownership?
 - Yes
 - No
- 33. If you are following up on the status of your property, it is:
 - · Still in good condition
 - Completely destroyed in air strikes
 - Partially destroyed by air strikes
 - It was looted
 - It was seized by the military or security forces controlling the area / it was confiscated according to Law No. 10 because I could not verify its ownership
 - . I have relatives and acquaintances who live there and are taking care of it
 - I invest in it until I return
 - Other
- 34. If you still have family or relatives in Syria, you communicate with them by:
 - Phone calls/social media
 - . I visit them in Syria from time to time
 - . I visit them in Syria when the Turkish authorities allow me to cross the border
 - . I meet them in another country
 - I can't communicate with them at all
 - Other

35. Why have you chosen Turkey as a place for you to stay?

- It was the only country that I was able to escape to by land
- · I had previously worked in Turkey
- I have family ties in Turkey
- · Turkey is a beautiful touristic country and a good place to settle in
- Turkish customs and traditions are similar to our own
- I do not wish to remain far from the Syrian border
- There is a large Syrian community there
- Turkey is an Islamic country
- Turkey is a transit country until I am able to travel to a third country
- Other

36. During your stay in Turkey, were you (or a member of your family) subject to racist comments/ abuse on the basis of your Syrian nationality?

- Yes (proceed to q37)
- No (proceed to q38)

37. Please specify the form of the abuse

- Verbal
- Physical

38. Do you wish to be granted Turkish citizenship?

- Yes
- No
- I applied and waiting for it to come through
- I already hold Turkish citizenship

39. Have you tried to travel to a European country to settle in?

- Yes (proceed to q40)
- No (proceed to q42)

40. In what ways have you tried reaching Europe?

- Through a smuggler
- I applied for a visa from an embassy
- I am registered with UNHCR for resettlement
- Other

41. You want to travel to a European country because of:

- · So I can get a long-term residency in one of the countries there
- I am afraid of being forcibly deported to Syria
- · Looking for a better future
- Difficulty adapting to Turkish society
- Other

42. Do you wish to return to Syria in the future?

- Yes (proceed to q43)
- No (proceed to q48)

43. Your return to Syria is related to any of the following conditions? (multiple answers permitted)

- · Ending the war stopped and a permanent cessation of hostilities
- · Overthrowing the regime and establishing a new one
- Security and law enforcement
- The ousting of foreign forces, the dissolution of militias and armed groups, and disarmament
- The establishment of a safe zone
- Stopping arbitrary arrests
- · Reaching a comprehensive solution to the conflict
- Democratic elections
- Provision of basic services (health and education)
- Improvement of economic conditions and job opportunities
- Being granted the Turkish citizenship to guarantee my safety in the event of the conflict reigniting
- I made the decision to return according to the current situation, and I will return soon
- Other

44. You wish to return to Syria for?

- Contributing to reconstruction (proceed to question 45)
- Engaging in the political process (proceed to question 46)
- Investing (proceed to question 46)
- Job search (proceed to question 46)
- Permanent settlement with the family (proceed to question 46)
- Restore my property (proceed to question 46)
- Other (proceed to question 46)

45. In which sectors do you intend to work?

- Housing
- Health
- Education
- Agriculture
- The industrial sector
- Banking and insurance
- Development
- Other

46. What are the reasons that may lead you to return? [Please select one answer]

- Feeling of legal instability in Turkey
- Feeling of longing for Syria
- Inability to integrate into Turkish society in terms of language and work
- · Feeling hostility and discrimination from some Turkish citizens
- · I do not feel a cultural affiliation with this country
- Decline or absence of services
- Absence of assistance
- Increased debt due to the high cost of living
- Harassment by the Turkish authorities
- Other

- 47. If you are unable to return to your previous place of origin in Syria, will you accept residency in any other Syrian region?
 - Yes (proceed to question 50)
 - No (proceed to question 50)
- 48. Please specify the reason for not wanting to return / the reasons that prevent you from returning?
 - . I cannot return with the current regime still in power
 - I fear arrest, kidnapping, murder, prosecution and harrassment from security forces
 - Failure to provide basic services such as education, health and social security
 - The destruction of my city/town
 - I fear discrimination or backlash based on my religion and nationality
 - Return is unsafe and unclear
 - I do not have a residence in Syria to return to
 - I am settled in Turkey with family and work
 - I am married to a Turk
 - I do not see any prospects for a political solution in the future
 - Other
- 49. In the long run, and if the situation in Syria stabilizes according to your aspirations, would you think of?
 - · Changing your mind on your current decision, and return to Syria
 - Go to Syria to work for a period and return to settle in Turkey
 - Visit Syria from time to time
 - Syria doesn't mean anything to me
- 50. What does the phrase "safe, dignified voluntary return" mean to you? Please write one sentence.

- 51. In your opinion, there will be signs of a safe and dignified voluntary return to Syria when: (more than one choice is permitted)
 - Overthrow the regime and starting a political transition
 - Stopping hate speech and discrimination on Syrian media outlets
 - Establish national courts to hold all perpetrators of war crimes accountable
 - Freedom of movement and travelling outside Syria
 - Release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience
 - Other
- 52. From your own sense of affiliation and belonging, who/what would you defend first and fore-most?
 - Your family
 - Your town/city
 - Your tribe
 - Your religion/sect
 - Your nationalism
 - Your Syrian nationality
 - Human rights
 - · Freedom and dignity
 - I do not feel affiliated with anything
- 53. In your opinion, what is the most important factor that guarantees the end of the conflict in Syria and presents sustainable solutions?
 - For regional and western countries to stop interfering in Syria
 - Overthrowing the regime and beginning a political transition
 - · Acceptance of the current ruling government
 - · Dismantling the security services
 - · Holding all perpetrators of war crimes accountable
 - Other

54. Please determine your position on the following phrases:

M	Phrase	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	National courts are necessary to prevent people from committing vengeful acts					
2	The ideal rule in Syria should be in accordance with Islamic law					
3	Sectarianism in Syria existed before the conflict					
4	Most of the Syrian refugees around the world will return as soon as the situation in Syria stabilizes					
5	The countries involved in the Syrian conflict strive to find peace and stability for all Syrians					
6	Syrian women should have rights in society and the state					
7	Free and democratic elections can stop the conflict in Syria					

M	Phrase	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
8	Opposition political parties can compete for rule in Syria					
9	A future Syria for all its people					
10	The religious sect of the head of state must be specified					
11	Applying impunity laws impedes the achievement of a sustainable political solution					
12	The Kurdish people have the right to decide their own fate					
13	Syrian refugees in Turkey cause problems and turmoil for the Turkish government					
14	The current Turkish government is the only guarantor of Syrians' continued presence in Turkey					
15	The nature of the conflict in Syria is political rather than sectarian or regional					

M	Phrase	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
16	Having a Sunni Muslim president makes me feel safe					
17	International monitoring of the political pro- cess in Syria will end the conflict					
18	Sectarian power sharing resolves the conflict					
19	The presence of UN peacekeepers ensures the return of security to Syria					
20	Assad's survival in power ensures security and long-term stability in Syria					
21	All current political parties in Syria have no role in the political process					



