



# **Between Integration and Return: The Reality of New Syrian Refugees in Europe**

**A Survey of Refugees in Germany,  
France, the Netherlands, and Sweden**



اليوم التالي  
لدعم الانتقال الديمقراطي في سوريا



THE DAY AFTER  
Supporting Democratic Transition In Syria

## **Between Integration and Return: The Reality of New Syrian Refugees in Europe**

**A Survey of Refugees in Germany,  
France, the Netherlands, and Sweden**

January 2021

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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.



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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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## Introduction

On the sidelines of a conference organized by the Assad regime and Russia in November 2020 titled “The Return of Syrian Refugees,” a live TV broadcast camera mistakenly aired a side conversation between Syrian academics participating in the conference and a translator during a break between two sessions. One academic ironically commented, “What return are we talking about?! ... If those who are still in [Syria] had the opportunity to leave, no one would stay in the country. Are we mocking ourselves?!”<sup>(1)</sup>

The closing statement of the conference, however, was totally different from the opinion of the anonymous academic. Rather, regime officials once again focused on issues such as fighting terrorism, Western countries’ conspiracy against Syria, and other terms that have contributed to fueling the conflict in the country and pushing millions of Syrians out of it.<sup>(2)</sup>

This disparity between the regime’s official rhetoric and the perceptions of the conference participants—not to mention that of countless refugees and displaced persons—reflects the features of the regime’s approach to dealing with the issue: ignore the real causes and employ the results as a political card. This approach is likely to continue for as long as political strife persists in the country. It reflects the depth of the Syrian refugee crisis as well, forever linked to the conflicting interests of local and international players.

A decade of conflict in Syria has forced almost half the country’s population to leave their areas of residence. As of 2019, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) counted more than 6.1 million internally displaced persons and 6.7 million refugees outside the country.<sup>(3)</sup> The share of these refugees in EU countries was about 1.2 million,<sup>(4)</sup> who arrived in continuous waves that reached a peak in 2015 when tens of thousands of Syrian refugees and refugees of other nationalities entered the borders of European countries on foot. Most of the refugees crossed from Turkey to Greece by land and sea, and from there they made their way to other European countries.

Since then, the refugee issue has become a top priority for the leaders of EU countries, and one of the main points of disagreement between them. This is despite the relative slowdown in the arrival rates of new refugees during the years following the European-Turkish agreement in 2016, which turned Greece’s mainland and islands into the primary terminus for tens of thousands of refugees. However, the journeys of those adventurers in search of refuge never stopped. Many European countries still record large numbers of Syrians in the long lists of asylum seekers every year, including 80,000 in 2019.<sup>(5)</sup>

In the meantime, the question of the future is becoming more pressing every day for refugees themselves, as well as for the governments of European countries hosting them. European governments seem ever more inclined toward tightening refugee reception policies and opening legal pathways for some to return to their countries of origin or to the countries from which they came, as stated in the European Commission’s September 2020 proposal to reform the immigration policy known as the Dublin Regulation.<sup>(6)</sup> This was confirmed by Germany’s move to abolish the general ban on deporting Syrian refugees.<sup>(7)</sup>

But for the overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees, the option to return to Syria under the current conditions in the country is still unthinkable. It seems, theoretically, that integration into their host communities is the only option available

(1) Russia Today, “Opening of the International Conference for the Return of Syrian Refugees,” November 11, 2020, [https://youtu.be/k\\_NSXvZ1Q74](https://youtu.be/k_NSXvZ1Q74)

(2) According to regime sources, twenty-seven «ally and friendly» countries participated in the conference, with the exception of Lebanon and Iraq. None of the participating countries were hosting refugees; Egypt and Jordan did not participate, the European Union countries boycotted it, and Turkey, the largest host of Syrian refugees, was not invited.

(3) “Refugee Data Finder,” The UN Refugee Agency, accessed December 6, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=IA2o>

(4) “Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex – annual aggregated data (rounded),” Eurostat, accessed on December 6, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR\\_ASYAPPCTZA\\_\\_custom\\_316637/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=d54700d5-f6ba-45f4-bb22-3fac22a9dedf](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA__custom_316637/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=d54700d5-f6ba-45f4-bb22-3fac22a9dedf)

(5) “EASO Asylum Report 2020 Executive Summary,” Arabic version, European Asylum Support Office, p. 14, accessed on December 12, 2020, <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EASO-Asylum-Report-2020-Executive-Summary-AR.pdf>

(6) “Al Mufawadhyya Al-Orobiyya: Ma Heya Abraz Al Niqat Al Lati Yatadhamannouha Al Islah Al Jadeed Li Siyasat Al Hijrah” [European Commission: What are the highlights of the new migration policy reform?]” France 24 TV website, September 23, 2020, accessed on December 6, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2VLvXzy>

(7) “Al Mania Satasmah B’amaliyyat Al Tarheel Ila Syria I’tibaran min Al’ Aam Al Muqbil” [Germany will allow the deportation of Syrian refugees starting from next year], Deutsche Welle (DW.com), December 11, 2020, accessed on December 28, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3hqj47L>

to them—unless they decide to leave for a third country.

Thus, this study aims to shed light on the reality of these Syrian refugees in four EU countries. According to UNHCR figures,<sup>(8)</sup> these four countries have received, since 2011:

- Germany: 562,000 Syrian refugees
- Sweden: 114,000 Syrian refugees
- The Netherlands: 33,000 Syrian refugees
- France: 19,000 Syrian refugees

The study attempts to answer a number of questions related to this, including:

- What is the general extent of integration of Syrian refugees into these EU countries?
- What do the integration indicators look like in each of the target countries?
- What are the most prominent factors with strong positive or negative correlation to refugee integration in host communities?
- What are the perceptions of the refugees themselves about these communities?
- What degree of connection do refugees maintain with their homeland?

This approach targets a problematic area. The concept of integration in and of itself is still a controversial subject with no agreed global definition, varying according to different countries and intellectual backgrounds. It can be said that the semantic scope of “integration” extends from mere adaptation, to the legal and legislative system in a country, to the representation of its culture and lifestyle. Thus, integration is viewed as a psychological and social process related to other concepts such as identity, belonging, and others. And when it comes to Syrian refugees, the debate can expand to a greater extent, as it concerns people who fled their own country in large numbers to escape a grinding war into countries that found themselves forced to receive them.

In this context, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) proposes a definition of integration as a form of “integrating immigrants” in the broad sense of the word. It considers integration as an intermediate model between the concept of assimilation—which assumes a high degree of adaptation by immigrants and refugees of the values and culture of the host community, in exchange for a low level of host community acceptance—and the concept of cultural pluralism, which allows immigrants to maintain their cultural and social identity within a host community and is characterized by a high degree of acceptance.<sup>(9)</sup> In the midst of this lies the concept of integration, which assumes a moderate degree of adaptation by immigrants and the acceptance of the host community at the same time, a perception the EU countries built their policies on. IOM also proposes a definition of integration that includes the participation of migrants and refugees in certain sub-sectors of society, such as education, the labor market, the social welfare system, political representation, etc. This is a participatory process that includes the policies of public agencies or employers, as well as the role of the newcomers themselves. In short, integration can be seen as the antithesis of social exclusion.<sup>(10)</sup>

Our study is based on this flexible definition of integration. We do not attempt here to provide a theoretical addition to this vast field. Rather, we seek to focus on providing quantitative indicators about the extent of Syrians’ integration into host communities based on solid facts reflecting fundamental dimensions of integration—such as the degree of language learning, engagement in the labor market, social relations with the host community, etc. This is done from the perspective of Syrian researchers, who themselves have lived the experience of refuge. Within this margin, the study attempts to discern levels of integration among various segments of Syrian refugees and in the various countries covered by the study.

This study’s importance lies in the significance of integration itself, both for the European host countries—for whom the subject has become a national security issue, with the increasing number of terrorist attacks and acts of violence in recent years and the accompanying rise of right-wing anti-refugee movements, posing a distinct risk to social cohesion in those countries—and also for the Syrian refugees themselves, who are living under the pressure of all these crises without the ability to influence their own paths.

(8) “Refugee Data Finder.”

(9) “Taqrir Al Hijrah fi Al A’lam Li A’am 2020” [Global Migration Report for 2020], PDF file, International Organization for Migration, p. 189, accessed December 9, 2020, <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr-2020-ar.pdf>

(10) “Global Migration Report for 2020”, p. 341.





## Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive and analytical method as a general approach. Survey was chosen as the main tool for collecting data, reinforced via brainstorming sessions and open interviews.

In the first phase, two brainstorming sessions included a group of experts in refuge affairs, as well as Syrian refugees living in each of the four targeted countries. The results of these sessions were used to complete the conceptual framework for the study, and later to design the survey.

The survey questions come in four sections. The first section includes general questions such as age, gender, social background, etc. The second focuses on surveying features of the refuge experience, including questions about the specifics of respondents' departure from Syria and their current refuge country conditions in terms of the duration of residence and legal status, as well as their relationship with the labor market and local language. The third section of the survey highlights the social life of respondents, the extent and nature of their relationships—especially relationships with the host community—and we also tried to find out about their general level of satisfaction with their lives. The final section asks questions about the strength of respondents' continued connection with their homeland in terms of the availability of property, business, or relatives, their degree of communication with people in Syria, and under what conditions they would consider returning.

The research sample consisted of 1,600 respondents who have spent a year or more in a country of refuge. They were distributed equally in four European countries: Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and France, with 400 respondents from each country. The design of the sample and the collection of data take into account balanced representation of sex, age, and education. These variables were also taken into account in each of the four sub-samples.



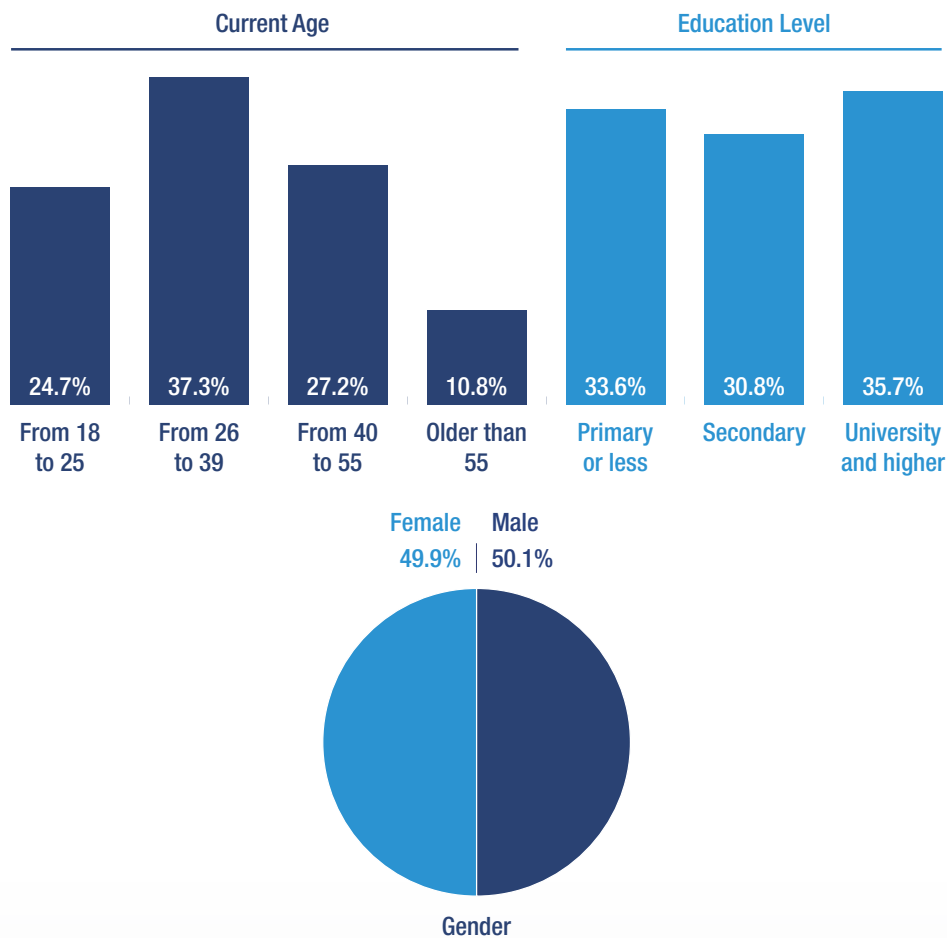


Figure 1 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of age, gender, and education.

**Note 1:** For more information about the composition of the sample and the distribution of sub-sample responses on the basis of gender and other variables, please use the interactive database (dashboard) on the Day After website.

**Note 2:** All the percentages in the figures have been rounded to the closest number after the decimal point. So, the sum of the figures may not necessarily be 100% exactly.

Although the three variables in the above figure formed the main factors upon which the sample was balanced, the design did not ignore second-level variables anticipated to affect the results given by the sample. Three other variables were observed when collecting data; they are represented in the sample without the claim that we have represented them equally. These are social background (religious, ethnic, and regional), marital or civil status, and the length of stay in the country of refuge. It is useful here to present the distribution of the sample according to these variables as additional features of the sample composition.



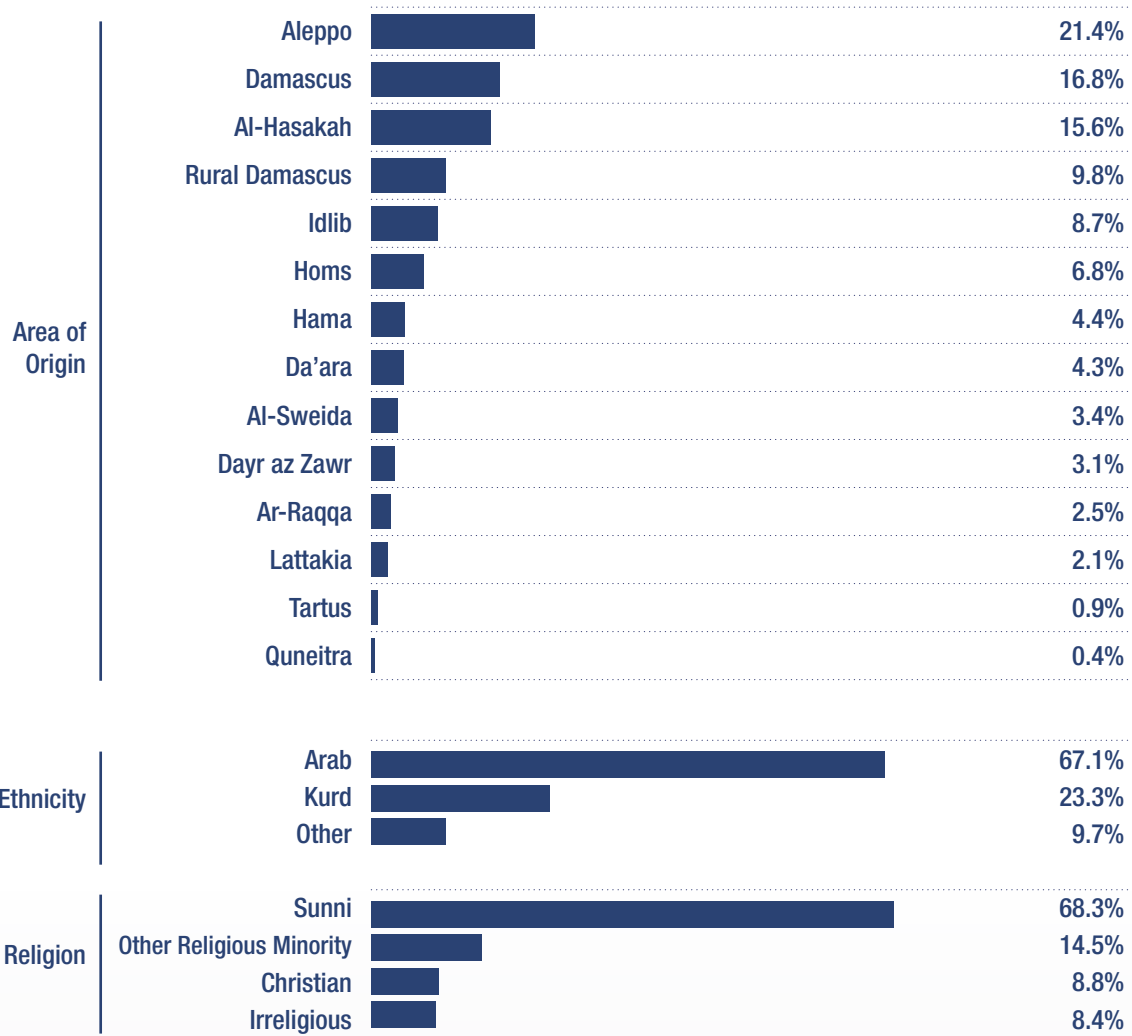


Figure 2 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of ethnicity, religion and area of origin.

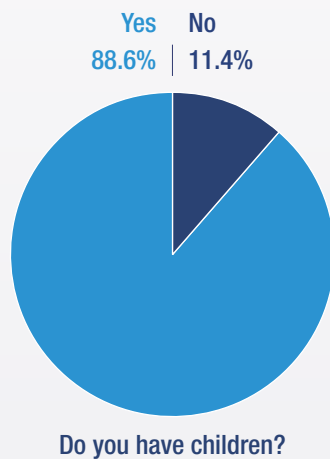
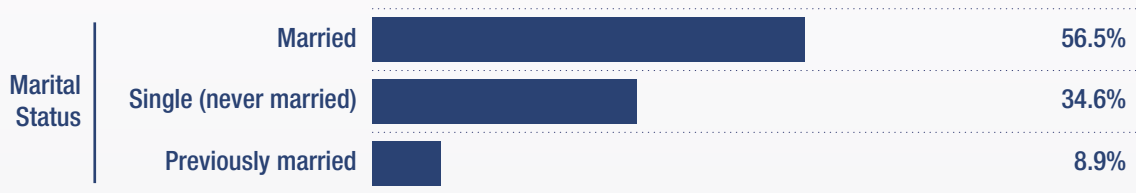


Figure 3 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of marital status and children.

## » Duration of residence since the moment of arrival

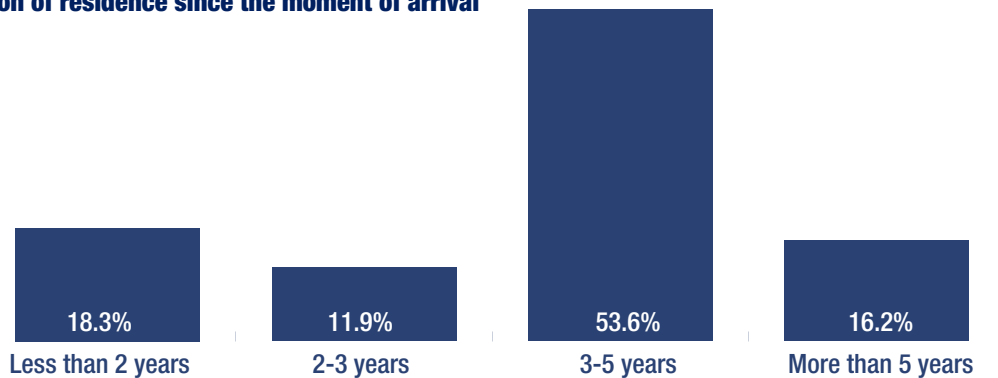


Figure 4 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the duration of residence in the country of refuge.

Regarding the method of sampling, and given that the research was carried out amidst the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated measures of social distancing, all interviews were conducted via phone or internet without going into the field. Respondents were reached according to the snowball sample method, relying on the connections of the data collectors and their ability to access refugee communities in the four countries, according to three basic conditions:

- The respondent must be a new refugee who arrived in one of the countries under study after 2011.
- The respondent must be over 18 years old.
- The respondent must have spent at least one year in the country of refuge.

Finally, the data collection process was carried out by a team of refugees themselves in the four countries, where 25 qualified persons of both sexes were selected. Training sessions conducted over a period of three days included an explanation of the objectives of the study and the dimensions of the survey, as well as training on conducting interviews via phone or the internet. Later, the trainees conducted pilot interviews; their performance formed the basis of the data collection team appointments.

The data collection process lasted about five weeks without interruption, from mid-October until late November in 2020. The data collection was accompanied by a daily process of supervision and the monitoring of interview quality and information obtained through technical means provided by the electronic survey, such as the time periods spent for each interview and the identification numbers of the devices registering collectors' access to the survey. The quality control process also ensured the sample balance according to the abovementioned principles. Quality control results appeared in semi-weekly reports, eight total throughout the collection period. Each report reflected the status of the data collected at a specific point in time, describing the degree of its consistency with the approved standards, and issuing suggestions to the collection team. At the end of the process, there were 1,845 surveys; 245 were excluded because they did not meet quality standards, leaving the analysis focus on 1,600 surveys.



## Chapter I: The Living Conditions and the Integration of New Syrian Refugees into the European Union Countries

This chapter examines a number of indicators related to the extent of new refugees' integration into the host community, using the assumption that the ability to join the labor market is a major factor in this process. Language mastery and current employment for refugees responding to the study are key to analyzing these elements.

While recognizing the controversy behind the definition of integration itself, we focus on basic criteria related to the effective participation of refugees in the host community on several economic and social levels, in addition to their self-perceptions about their integration and their relationship with the host community. These determinants together can, to a large extent, form a general picture about this relationship.

This chapter analyzes the total sample data of respondents in the four countries (Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden). It accommodates the various measures taken by each country in the process of integrating new refugees into the labor market—a process that extends from language education to professional education courses or the modification of academic certificates earned in countries of origin.

### A. Language Mastery and Current Employment

The four countries encourage learning the local language, at least to the intermediate level. Financial aid is allocated to new refugees for that specific purpose, providing a supportive framework for learning the host country's language.

Although preparations for language learning vary, affecting refugees based on a number of determinants (education level, personal barriers such as dyslexia, and external factors such as the level of language teachers' abilities), facilitation of the language learning process and its framework run by governmental or non-governmental institutions is common to the four countries. We can therefore consider the level of host country language proficiency as one of the most prominent indicators of a refugee's serious involvement in the integration process within the host community, as it also affects a number of other factors such as employment.

The data shows that 28.9% of the respondents—nearly a third of the sample—still have not learned the language of the host country to an acceptable degree. This percentage said that their language level is “weak” or “very weak,” which affects other factors such as their social relationships, and also their ability to learn the laws of the host country and to know their rights and duties under the law and prevailing social norms.

The percentage of respondents who said that their level of proficiency in the language of the host country is “average” reaches 33.6%, while 37.6% of the respondents said their proficiency level is “good” or “very good.” Thus, the general evidence from this question is that the majority of the refugees under study do speak the language of the host country, giving an indication of the success of the language education policies adopted by the four countries. These policies have made it easier for refugees to devote themselves to studying and learning a completely new language.

Since the study's total sample mainly depicts refugees who have been residing in the country of refuge for 3 years or more (69.8% of the total sample), this distribution allows generalized evaluations of the language education support programs in the four countries. This could be applied to an assessment of refugees' desire for integration and their understanding of the importance of effective communication within their new social environment.

It should be noted that this question relied on the self-evaluation of study respondents regarding their level of language proficiency, but this assessment is also related to realistic factors such as their involvement in the labor market, and the education level they have reached in language learning, which reduces the self-bias that may appear in such questions.

### » Language mastery of the country of refuge

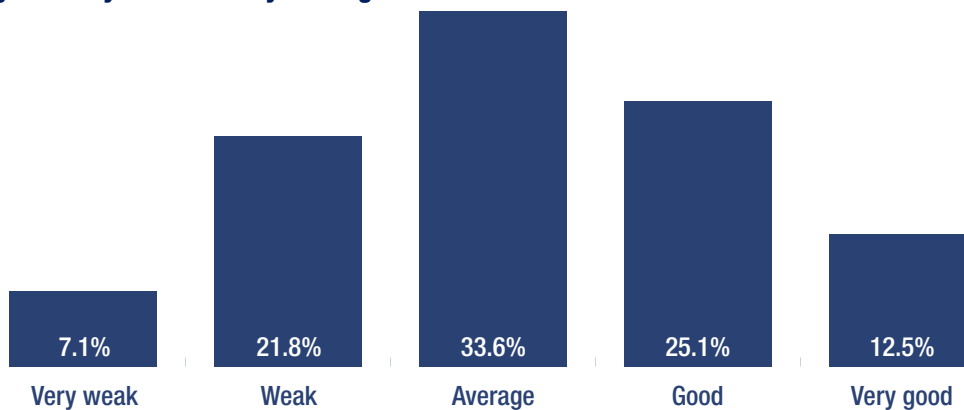


Figure 5 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of host-country language mastery.

All refugees receive financial aid directly or indirectly—such as free tuition at learning facilities and free subscription to public transportation—during the language learning process, according to the local laws of the countries under study. In many cases, they also receive financial aid during times when they don't work. But there are also some workers in those countries who receive financial aid to help with their salaries if they are, according to the laws of the country, below the minimum wage, or if their wages are not sufficient to cover the needs of the whole family. This financial aid plays a role in giving refugees more time than the host country government may deem “sufficient” for them to enter the labor market.

Some groups receive financial benefits regardless of work status or income level—such as children. German law, for example, provides salaries for children regardless of their parents' work or income level; these are received by refugees and citizens alike. According to this, a high percentage of respondent refugees receive financial aid from their host country—64.6%.

The general economic conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic also contribute to this higher percentage. 2020 witnessed increased unemployment rates and an economic downturn, which affected all residents of these countries. Since the survey was implemented during the global outbreak of the pandemic and several months after its emergence, this allowed the negative effects of the pandemic to appear on general economic indicators. These factors must be taken into account when looking at the percentage of financial aid recipients at the time the survey was conducted (October/November 2020).

### » Do you currently receive government financial support as a refugee?

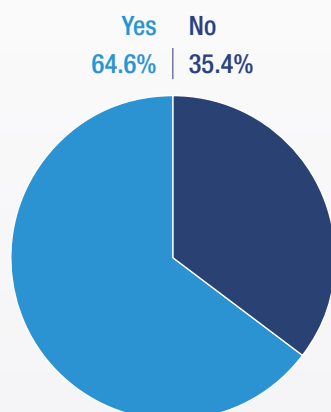


Figure 6 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of financial aid receipt.

When examining the employment indicator among the respondents to the study, we can see a convergence between this percentage and the previous percentage associated with receiving financial aid. In the sample, 32.2% said they were currently employed at the moment of responding to the survey, while 67.8% said they were not. Despite high unemployment figures in the host countries as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the difference between national rates and the rates among respondents is still very large (Germany: 3%, France: 8.3%, the Netherlands: 3%, Sweden: 6.7%).<sup>(11)</sup>

(11) “Indicators,” World Bank data for 2020, accessed December 11, 2020 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>.



The high percentage of unemployed refugees can be explained by several factors. The first takes into account previous conditions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The second is related to the involvement of some refugees in the education process, whether for language learning or university and vocational education. Third, refugees' ability to integrate into their new country's labor market may be affected by the host country not giving their educational qualifications the same evaluation as obtained in their country of origin or the countries in which they worked previously, creating a gap that affects the types of jobs available to refugees. However, there must also be a more in-depth consideration of the ability of host country labor markets to absorb refugees and adapt their needs to refugees' available skills, and of contributions made by the host society and state to adapt and improve the competencies and capabilities of refugees to facilitate their entry into the labor market. Therefore, we can say that although several factors play into the issue of refugee employment, the low levels of employment among refugees are an important indication of the failure of existing vocational rehabilitation programs to bridge the gap between refugees and indigenous people in terms of unemployment.

» **Do you currently work?**

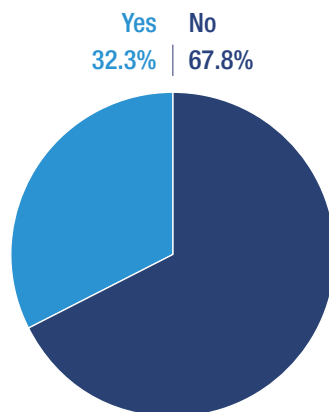


Figure 7 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of current employment.

In addition to employment and language, refugees' familiarity with the laws of the country in which they live is an important aspect of their ability to actually engage in formal relations with their host society, including contractual relationships such as work, investment, higher education, and so on.

Among the respondents, 69.5% said that, on a scale from 1 to 5, they rate their knowledge level of the laws regarding refugees in their host country at 3 or more. This means more than two-thirds of the sample under study tend to be familiar or very familiar with the laws in their host country.

Assuming a relative homogeneity of Syrians before their arrival in these countries, this indicator can also be used to measure the role of host country procedures in introducing refugees to the laws of the country, and their rights and duties according to those laws.

» **On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest, how familiar are you with the laws regarding refugees in the country where you live?**

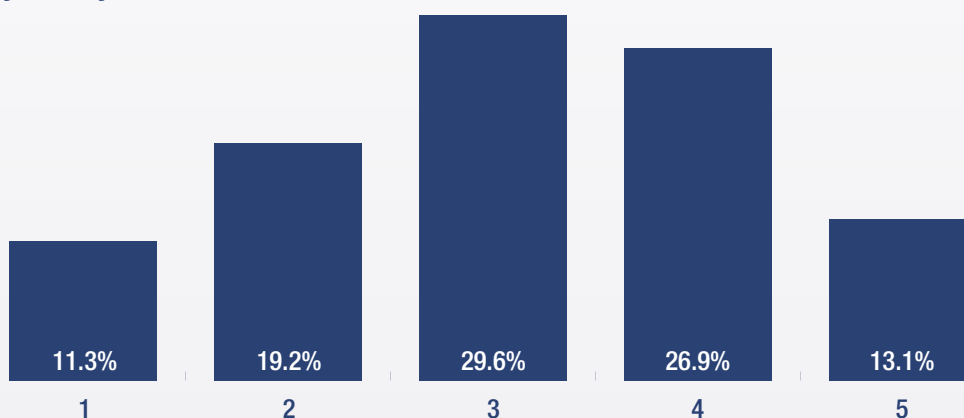


Figure 8 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of respondents' familiarity with host country laws.

## B. Relationships and Social Interaction

The aforementioned factors collectively meet the needs necessary for effective communication and involvement in the host community, but the structure of social relations surrounding the life of a refugee is also a factor affecting the process of integration. The existence of a social network with people of the host country or with other earlier refugees allows for a strengthening of new refugees' integration skills and an understanding of their path of development within that process.

When respondents were asked about the makeup of their current social network, 57.4% said that relations with family and kinship come first, and 32.6% stated that their basic social network is concentrated with other Syrian refugees. Only 7.3% of the studied sample said their social network consists mainly of citizens of their country of refuge.

This indicator may play two similar but opposite roles. The concentration of Syrian refugees' social relationships among their families and other Syrian refugees can be explained by communication barriers—the lack of high language skills which allow social communication outside the context of casual daily interactions—or psychological barriers which may have been created by the host community. Weak social relations between refugees and the people of the host country may be caused by the refugees or the hosts alike. Our survey does not allow for more engagement to directly answer these reasons for the lack of integration.

### » Who forms most of your social network?

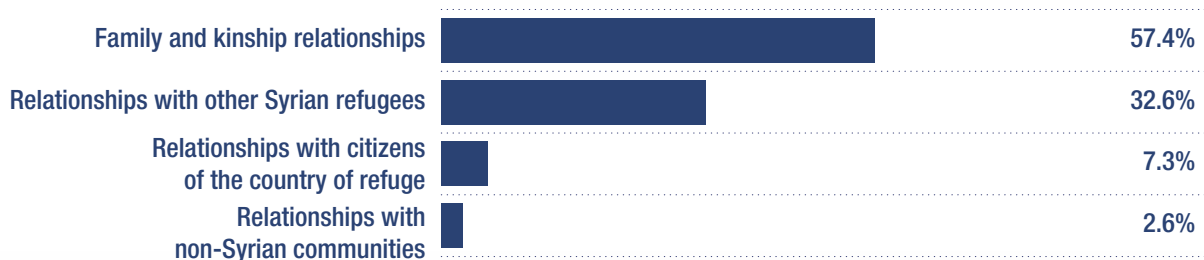


Figure 9 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of social network makeup.

On the other hand, when respondents were asked about having friends among the citizens of the host country, they showed an acceptance for this kind of social relationship. This demonstrates that preferences of social network makeup in the previous question relied on permanent relationships linked to the prevailing social norms in Syria—where family relations have major roles economically, politically, and socially.

Of the respondents, 49.4% said they have close friends among the citizenry of their country of refuge, which clarifies the nature of the previous answers. We also note that the percentage of those who have close friends from within their country of refuge exceeds the percentage of those listing their language level as “good” or “very good” (37.6% of the total sample). This can be explained by the fact that language is not the only condition for the existence of such a relationship, nor is it the only factor in the emergence of those relationships between refugees and the citizens of the host country.

### » Do you have close friends among the citizens of your country of refuge?

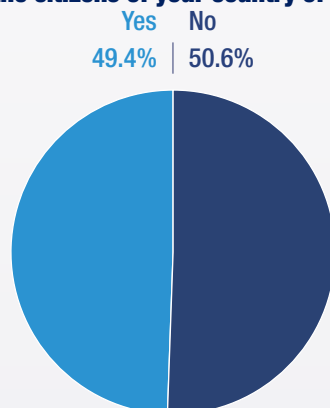


Figure 10 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of having friends from the country of refuge.



In addition to external factors, self-perception of the importance of integration also contributes to a refugee's involvement in the community of their country of refuge. The vast majority of respondents regarded integration into their host country as a priority for their lives; 80% said the issue of integration into the host community was a top priority or a priority, while only 20% said it is not currently a top priority for them.

The predominance in the sample shows the importance of integration for refugees. This attitude serves to increase their motivation to exert more effort in this process, which can be difficult.

It is also possible to interpret the answers of the 20%—not a small portion—who said integration is not currently a top priority in another way: they may see themselves as already well-integrated into the community of their country of refuge.

» **To what extent is integration into the host community a priority for you?**

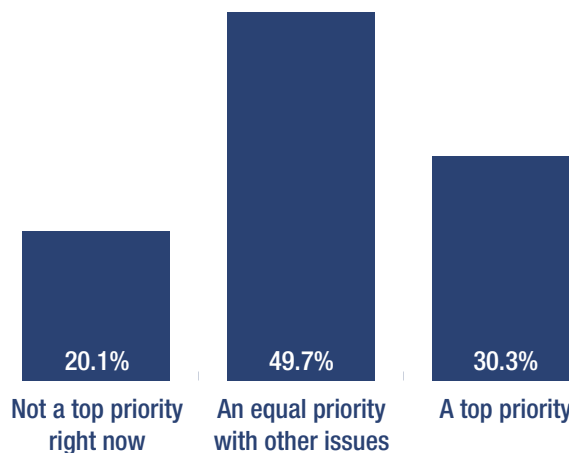


Figure 11 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of integration priority.

Refugees' self-perception of their integration into the societies of their countries of refuge is, in turn, an indicator of at least the desire to integrate. Although self-biases will influence people's assessment of their integration level into their host society, they at least express levels of desire to integrate.

In the survey, 74% of respondents rate their level of integration into their host community, on a scale from 1 to 5, as 3 or more.

The fact that a large portion of the respondents consider their integration "high" shows a clear desire on their part to integrate into the new societies. And the sample's focus on refugees who have been living in their country of refuge for three or more years can also explain the general tendency of the sample, as those years give ample opportunity to learn the host country's language and receive vocational training.

Of course, a general indication of integration will not match the results of this question, but that answer gives an indication of the self-perception and real desire of the respondents.

» **On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate your degree of integration into your host community?**

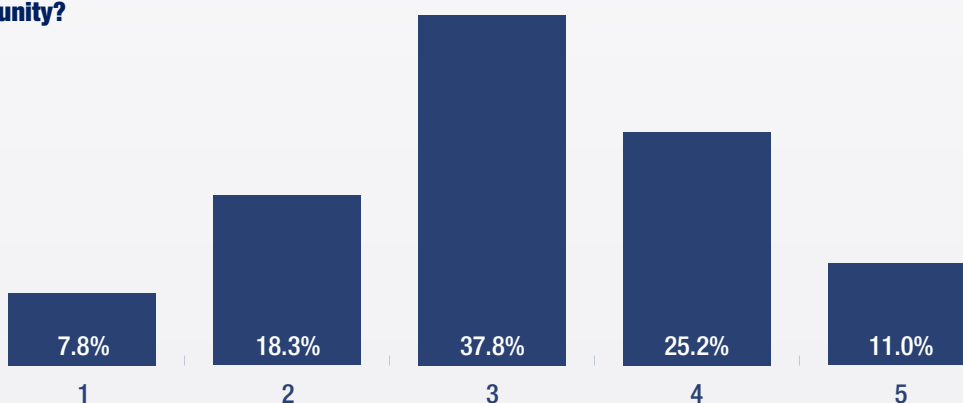


Figure 12 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of self-rated degree of integration.



In contrast to the necessary factors for refugee integration into their countries of refuge, there are a number of problematic issues within Syrian communities of origin which have at least a legal consensus in the countries of refuge (many issues may have gained a legal consensus in recent times, but a number of them still cause wide debate among the citizens of those countries, such as the issue of abortion).

The survey asked about respondents' opinions on a number of issues that are usually controversial in Syria but which have at least a legal consensus in the country of refuge. These can be an indication of obstacles to the social integration of refugees.

Regarding the issue of a wife obtaining a divorce without her husband's consent, the total sample tends to agree with that—59.6% of the respondents said that they “agree” or “strongly agree” to this right, while 23.1% of them disagree with it.

» **What is your position on the following issue: A wife's right to divorce without her husband's consent**

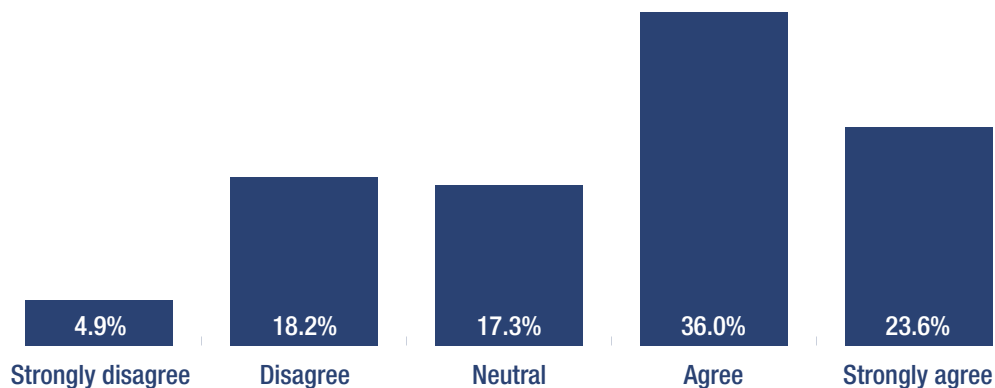


Figure 13 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of position on divorce.

This tendency continues in the total sample on the issue of contraception; more than half the sample agreed with it, while only 14.4% disagreed.

» **What is your position on the following issue: Contraception**

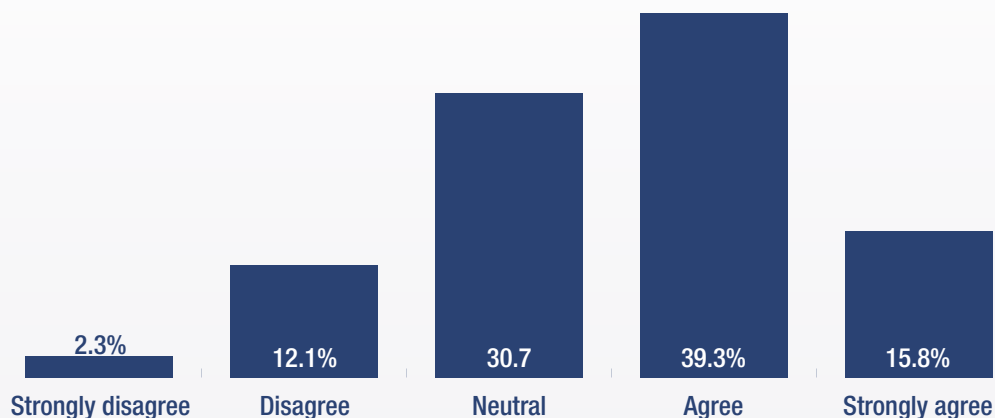


Figure 14 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of position on contraception.

This tendency toward acceptance diminishes when talking about issues such as the right to abortion, the consumption of alcoholic beverages, and sexual relations outside marriage—35.5%, 39.7% and 25% agreed with these issues, respectively. The approval rate drops to the minimum when talking about their acceptance of homosexuality; only 19.1% agreed with it, while 46.9% disagreed with it.



» **What is your position on the following issue: Abortion**

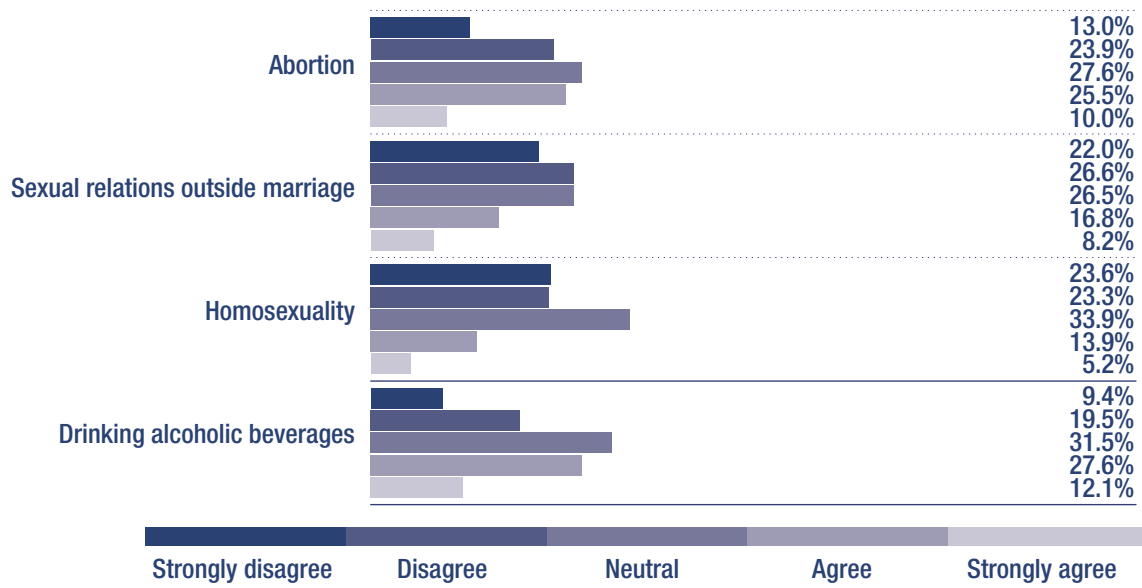


Figure 15 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of position on abortion, sexual relations outside marriage, homosexuality, and drinking alcoholic beverages.

## Chapter II: The Most Prominent Individual and Social Factors Affecting the Integration of New Refugees

The integration of new refugees into host country communities is affected by a number of personal and general factors, which can collectively form a general framework that guides this process. This chapter examines the intersections between those factors, which together form a general indicator of the degree of refugee integration. It also examines the way in which personal factors—age, gender, and social class—influence determinants of refugee integration such as language learning, employment, etc.

This section relies on correlational analysis within the total sample by linking integration indicators with two groups of variables. The first group includes individual variables: gender, age, education, and others. The second group are variables related to refugee status: the duration of stay in the country of refuge, living conditions, the people living with the respondent, legal status, cultural compatibility, and others.

### A. The relationship of integration into host communities with individual factors

Looking at a combination of factors related to individuals helps us understand the impact of these factors on the refugee integration process. This can also introduce an understanding of ways to improve integration mechanisms and the ways they affect these variables. This chapter includes an analysis of the links between the integration process indicators studied in Chapter I, such as the level of language proficiency and employment in the country of refuge, the makeup of the social network, and other research indicators used in their entirety on the form and degree of refugee integration. These indicators will be analyzed in relation to individual variables such as age, gender, education level, and other individual factors that can have a clear impact on the integration process.

#### 1. Age

This research shows a clear statistical correlation between the age of refugees and their integration into the social community of their host countries.

Language appears as the most closely correlated factor; since language proficiency is crucial to the integration process, the link between language proficiency level and age appears to be a fundamental factor affecting a number of other variables.

The percentage of those defining their level of host-country language proficiency as “good” or “very good” was largest among those in the 18-25 age group. According to the survey, 61.2% of respondents aged 18-25 said their language level is “good” or “very good,” while 43.6% of respondents aged 26-39 rated their language proficiency level as “good” or “very good.” Among those 40-55 years, this percentage dropped to 20%. A clear difference can be seen between the average within the younger age group and the overall average of respondents who said their level of language proficiency is “good” or “very good,” which was about 37%.

This apparent relation between age and language proficiency level is linked to several factors, including the faster learning process for younger people and the involvement of a large number of younger people, especially those 18-25 years, in the educational process that helps raise host-country language proficiency levels.

Also, younger refugees' involvement in more friendships with citizens of their country of refuge, as the following tables show, can be a helpful factor in understanding these differences. The friendship factor gives this age group an advantage in several areas within the process of integration into the new society.





» **Language mastery of the country of refuge**

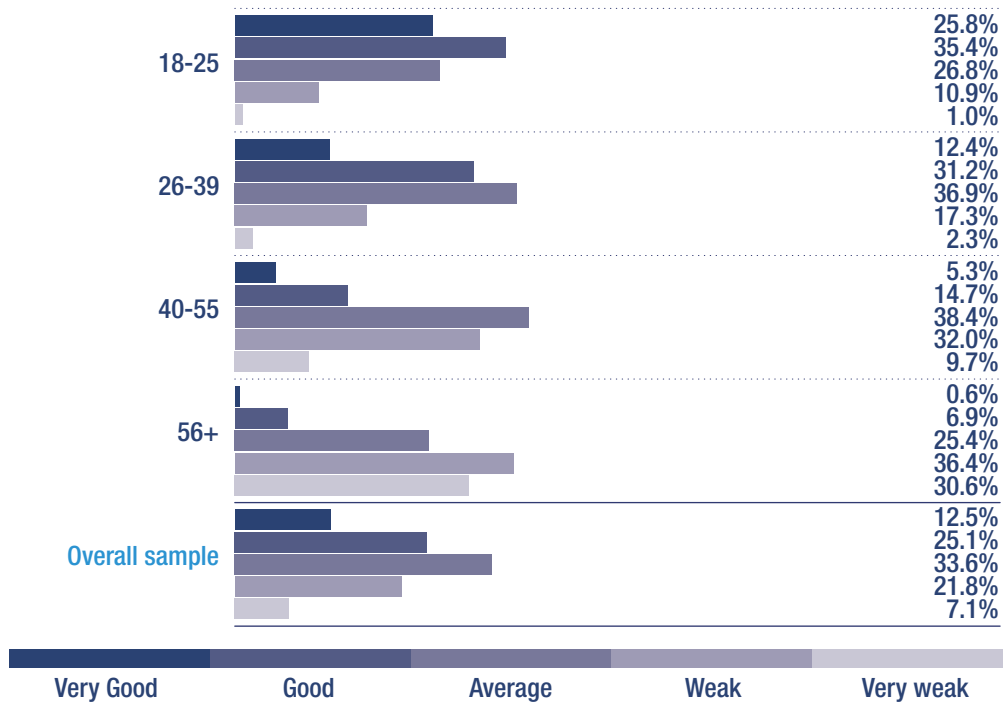


Figure 16 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of age and host-country language proficiency.

This research considers the ability to build friendships within the host community to be an indicator of refugee integration levels into new communities. But it is linked to a number of other influencing factors. The clear statistical relationship between those who established friendships with the people of the country of refuge and age shows the effect of the age factor on building close relationships between refugees and the host community.

In the survey, 64.8% of respondents in the 18-25 age group said they have close friends among the citizens of their country of refuge; this percentage decreased to 55.1% among the 26-39 age group and to 37.7% among those in the 40-55 age group.

We can also note close percentages between those who stated they have close host-community friends and those who said that their level of language proficiency is “good” or “very good” among the 18-25 age group, showing a clear link between the two factors. However, having friends from the host community is not only a result of language proficiency. It can be considered as an indicator of the integration nature and degree of new refugees. Age clearly contributes to this process, as respondents belonging to the two younger age groups of the study showed a significant increase in forming friendships with the citizens of the host country. This can be explained by the influence of cultural factors on younger generations, which can be considered global as a result of widespread online communication and its contribution to facilitating friendship-building with their peers from other countries.

» **Do you have close friends among the citizens of your country of refuge?**

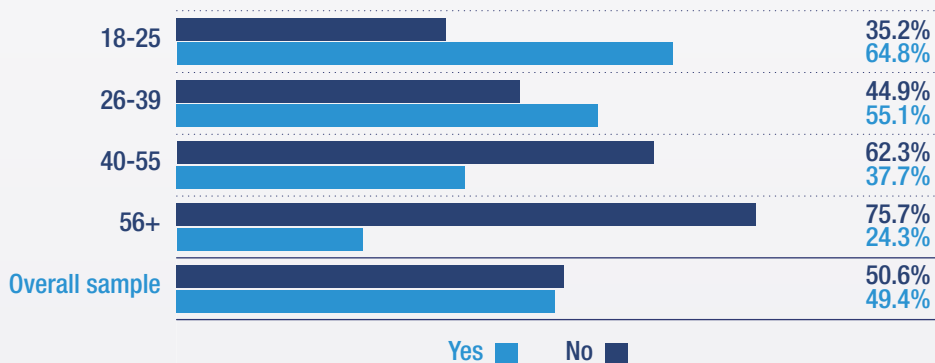


Figure 17 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of age and the existence of close friends among their host community.

But this inverse correlation between age, language proficiency levels, and close friends from the country of refuge shifts clearly when talking about current employment among refugee respondents. The middle age groups (26-39 years and 40-55 years) showed higher rates of having a job (40.2% and 33.6%, respectively).

Lower rates are present among the 18-25 group, with nearly 25% currently employed, followed by those among the older than 55 group at 17.9%.

This shift in correlation can be explained by the fact that those in the older age groups possess greater qualifications, making them more prepared to quickly enter the labor market within the country of refuge. Also, the devotion of a significant part of the youngest age group to university education necessarily leads to higher rates of unemployment among them, as is the case in most countries of the world. The percentage of those employed in the 56+ age group decreases due to some of them having reached retirement age.

#### » Are you currently employed?

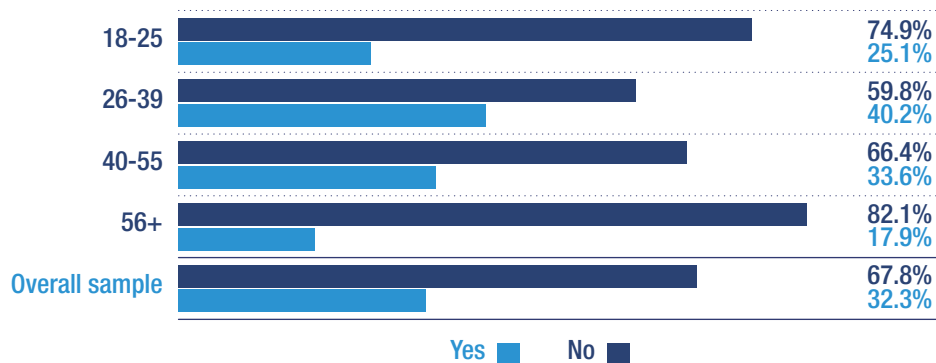


Figure 18 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of age and current employment.

## 2. Education Level

The statistical relationships in this study also show a clear correlation between refugees' education level and those questions considered indicative of refugee integration. This can be explained by the proficiencies gained with higher education, which help these refugees more easily engage in the process of learning a new language.

Those with a university education or higher showed a greater percentage of those who considered their level of host-country language proficiency "good" or "very good" at 53.1%, while 42.7% of those with a secondary education said their level of language proficiency of their country of refuge is "good" or "very good." This percentage decreased significantly among those with primary or less education, at only 16.5%.

The relationship between host-country language proficiency and other indicators of integration is a key factor in understanding the integration process. This correlation between levels of new language proficiency and the levels of education shows the effect of education on learning a new language, especially because one of the languages of the countries under study—French—is taught in Syria, although less than English. However, education cannot be overlooked as a major factor that helps raise the level of language proficiency among the most educated.

Also, entering with a higher education means easier involvement in new educational processes in order to gain language proficiency in the country of refuge. The presence of common languages, such as English, helps accelerate the education process and achieve its purpose.

### » Language mastery of the country of refuge

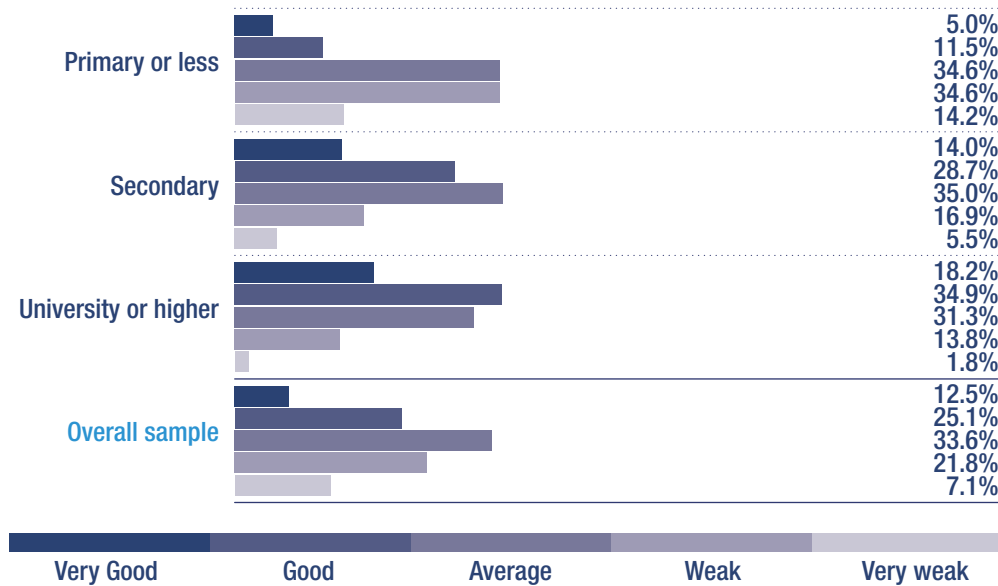


Figure 19 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of education and language proficiency.

Likewise, the results of the study show a distinct statistical correlation between the level of education and having a job. The percentage of employed among the most educated was the highest, and unemployment increased among those with less education. Although employment levels among those with a university education or higher are still not close to the overall percentage of the employed in the refuge countries, it is an indication that the most educated possess qualifications which enable them to enter the new labor market faster than the other groups.

Also, this may be considered an indication of labor market needs in the countries under study (Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden). Although the less educated may possess professional and vocational skills, this does not seem to have helped them much in entering the labor market of their countries of refuge, where manual occupations still require vocational and educational qualifications that are not easy to obtain by the least educated.

It appears that this is also linked to higher levels of language proficiency among the most educated, which could contribute to increasing their chances of finding a job.

### » Are you currently employed?

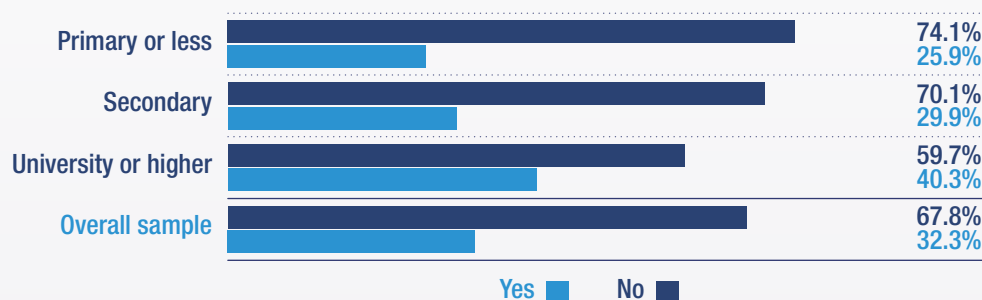


Figure 20 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of education and current employment.

As a result, the high levels of language proficiency and employment among the most educated contribute, as shown in the study, to strengthening their social relations with the citizens of their country of refuge. The percentage of those whose social relationships are mainly with the citizens of their host country was highest among the most educated. This percentage decreased with lower levels of education. But it was notable that the percentage of those whose social network is mainly with other Syrian refugees was also higher among the more educated. This shows the impact of education levels on creating social relationships with other Syrian refugees in the host country.

The explanation of the latter phenomenon will depend mainly on the structure of relationships that rely on the common spaces refugees have created for the purpose of communication and the exchange of experiences, including social media groups in the country of refuge. This seems to be an easy gateway for those with greater education levels to create social relationships with each other. Also, those with higher education levels usually belong to the middle and upper-middle classes, which allows the building of social relationships based on significant similarities in their original social environments.

As for the former phenomenon observed within this correlation—the high percentage of those whose social relationships are mainly with host-country citizens—high levels of both language proficiency and employment among the most educated can help explain this association.

#### » Who forms most of your social network?

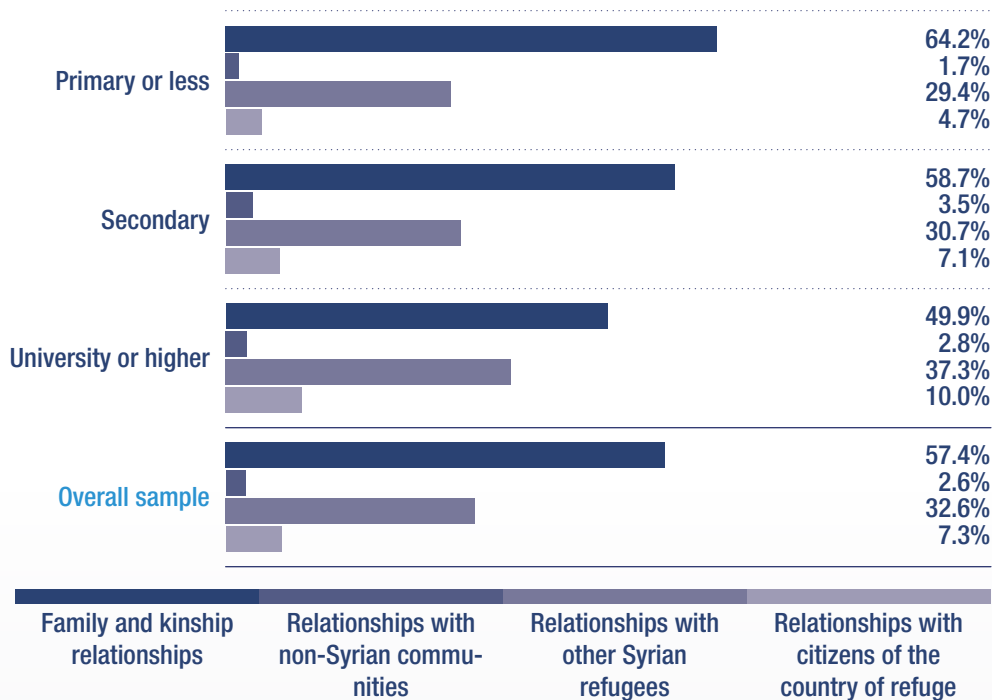


Figure 21 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of education and social network makeup.

### 3. Gender

The study reveals that a respondent's gender plays a clear role in the integration process. A number of statistical relationships have shown a correlation between the gender of the respondents and the indicators of integration. Several factors seem to continue to negatively affect the integration of women into host communities.

Women show a greater dependence on financial aid provided by their host country—70.3% of female respondents said they receive financial aid from their country of refuge, compared with 59.3% of male respondents. The gender-neutral group was the least dependent on financial aid; only 28.6% said they receive it (However, the percentage of the gender-neutral group may not allow generalizations due to the small sample of only 7 individuals).

These figures show that the process of integrating women into host-country labor markets has not succeeded in raising the percentage of employed female refugees. It appears social expectations that existed in the homeland—including roles such as house management and caring for children—play a major role in impeding the integration of women into the new society.

» Do you currently receive government financial support as a refugee?

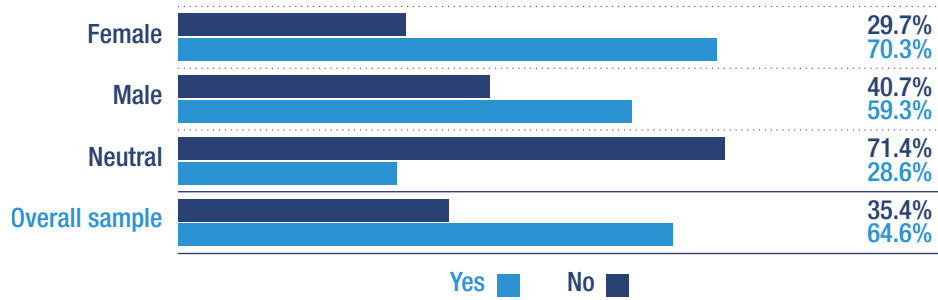


Figure 22 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of gender and the receipt of financial aid.

Likewise, it seems that the social structures affecting the presence of women in the public sphere and their social relations in their homeland have contributed to focusing their refuge-country relationships mainly on their family; 67.3% of female respondents said their social network consists mainly of their family, while only 47.7% of male respondents chose this answer.

The clearest difference can be seen between female respondents whose social network consists mainly of other Syrian refugees or citizens of their country of refuge (24.3% and 5.9%, respectively) and male respondents who chose the same answers (41% with other Syrian refugees and 8.5% with the citizens of their country of refuge). This allows us to observe the impact of traditional social structures on women even in countries of refuge. These impacts are too deep to be reflected in legal differences that favor the promotion of women’s rights in countries of refuge.

» Who forms most of your social network?

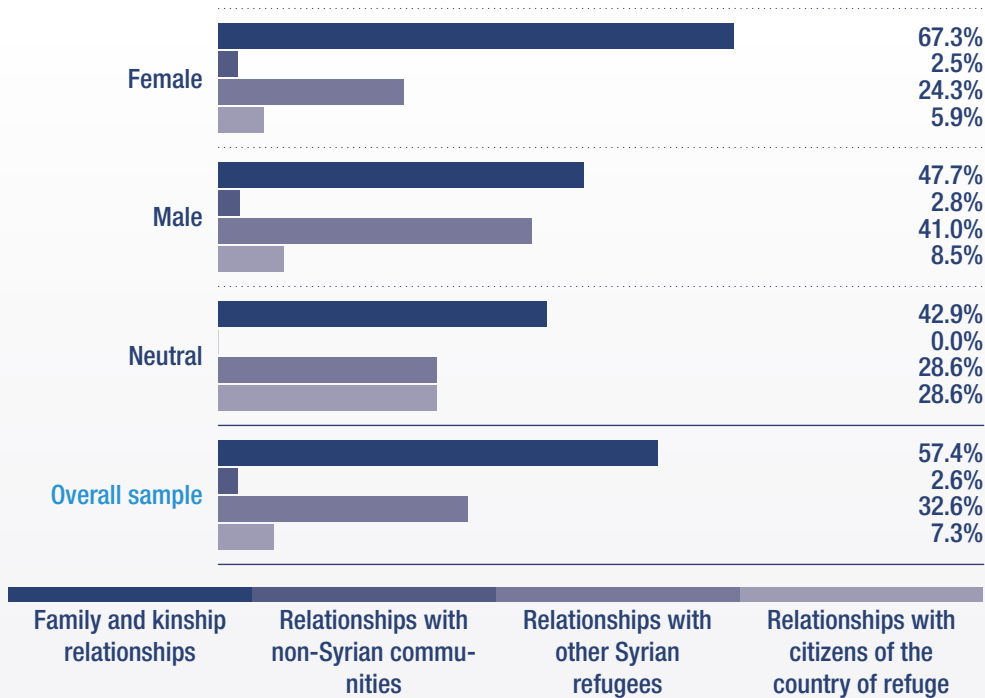


Figure 23 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of gender and social relationship network.

#### 4. Previous standard of living in Syria

The results of the study also show a correlation between previous economic living standards in Syria and the extent of refugee integration in the country of refuge. Those respondents in higher-income brackets in Syria showed greater preparedness to integration, although this was not always the rule. But the general tendency in the sample shows a direct correlation between the previous level of income in Syria and integration levels.



The highest earners showed a noticeable increase in the level of host-country language proficiency. In the survey, 36.7% of middle-income earners in Syria and 47.7% of high-income earners in Syria said their host-country language proficiency was “good” or “very good,” while 25.1% of people with low incomes in Syria rated their level of language proficiency as “good” or “very good.”

This may be mainly attributed to the existence of savings among those with high and middle income, which helped them at the beginning of their refugee journey to improve their living conditions in addition to the financial aid they receive from their host countries. This would contribute to an increased ability to effectively engage in the integration process, including learning the language of the new country.

Also, middle- and high-income levels are usually associated with higher levels of education, especially among young people. This may be a contributing factor to their higher percentage of learning their host country’s language more quickly and efficiently.

#### » Language mastery of the country of refuge

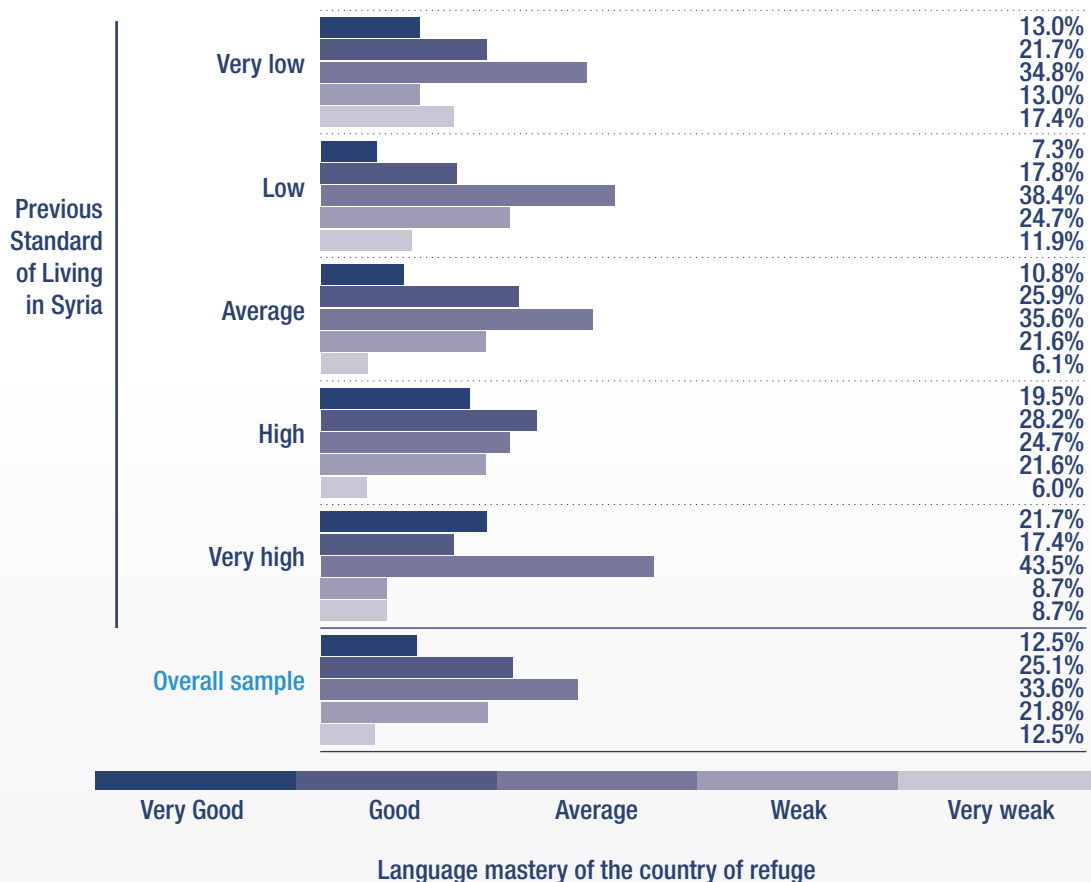


Figure 24 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of previous standard of living and host-country language proficiency.

During the study, it was noted that refugees’ self-assessed level of integration into the host community increased with the increase in the level of their pre-refugee journey income. Although a majority of all income levels rated their integration level at 3 or more out of 5, this percentage rose with the increase in income. In the survey, 60.8% of very low-income respondents rated their integration at 3 or more out of 5, while this choice was 64.8% among low-income respondents, 75.3% among middle-income respondents and 76.4% among high-income respondents.

Self-bias does, of course, affect the outcome of this question. But the steady rise in the percentage of those who consider themselves well-integrated in correlation with the increase of income should be explained by the level of living and material security achieved by the existence of savings and educational and practical qualifications of those who had higher income in Syria, which helped accelerate their integration into new communities.



» **Previous standard of living in Syria / On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest, how would you describe your degree of integration into your host community?**

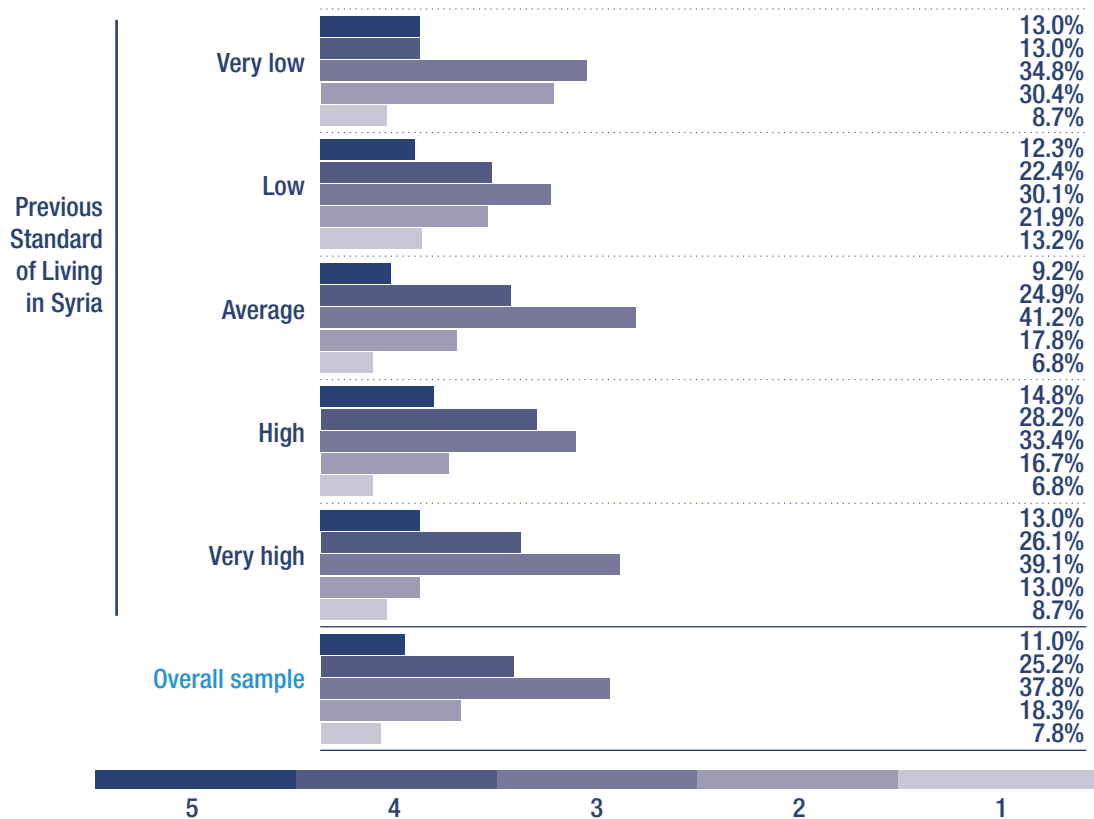


Figure 25 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of pre-refugee living standard and self-rated level of integration.

## 5. Religious background

A study conducted by German foundation Bertelsmann Stiftung in 2017 showed that a clear percentage of Europeans are reluctant to engage in social relations with residents of an Islamic background. For example, 14% of French and 19% of Germans surveyed said they do not want to have a Muslim neighbor.

On the other hand, the diversity of customs and traditions stemming from religious differences affects the speed of refugee integration into a new society. It seems that a mixture of Islamophobia and cultural differences stands as an obstacle to integration, although it is not always related only to clear religious differences (for example, a Muslim refugee in a Christian society). But it cannot be said that Christian refugees do not also face discrimination in countries of refuge.

One aspect of this phenomenon is the statistical correlation between having friends from the country of refuge and religious affiliation. In the survey, 42.2% of Sunnis stated that they have close friends from the country of refuge. This percentage increased to 70.9% among the irreligious, 63.1% among Christians and 62.9% among other religious minorities.

The difference—which exceeds 20 percentage points at the narrowest—explains the gap between members of the Sunni community and those belonging to other religious and ideological affiliations. It seems that the waves of hostility to Islam in Europe—led by far-right parties—contribute in great measure to widening this gap, but cultural differences also contribute to a deep social gap between Sunni Muslim refugees and their host communities.

» **Do you have close friends among the citizens of your country of refuge?**

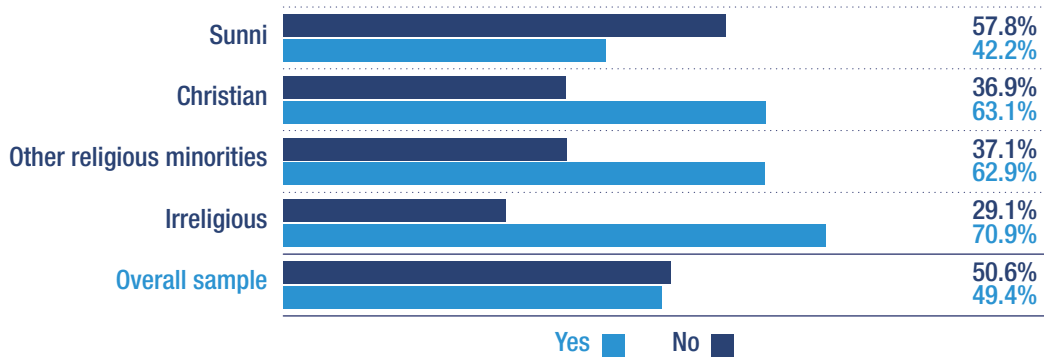


Figure 26 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of religion and having friends among the citizens of the country of refuge.

Likewise, members of the Sunni community show a lower self-assessment of integration levels into their new communities. According to the survey, 68.5% of Sunni respondents rated their integration 3 out of 5 or better. This percentage increases to about 83% among both Christians and other religious minorities, and to 94% among the irreligious.

» **On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest, how would you describe your degree of integration into your host community?**

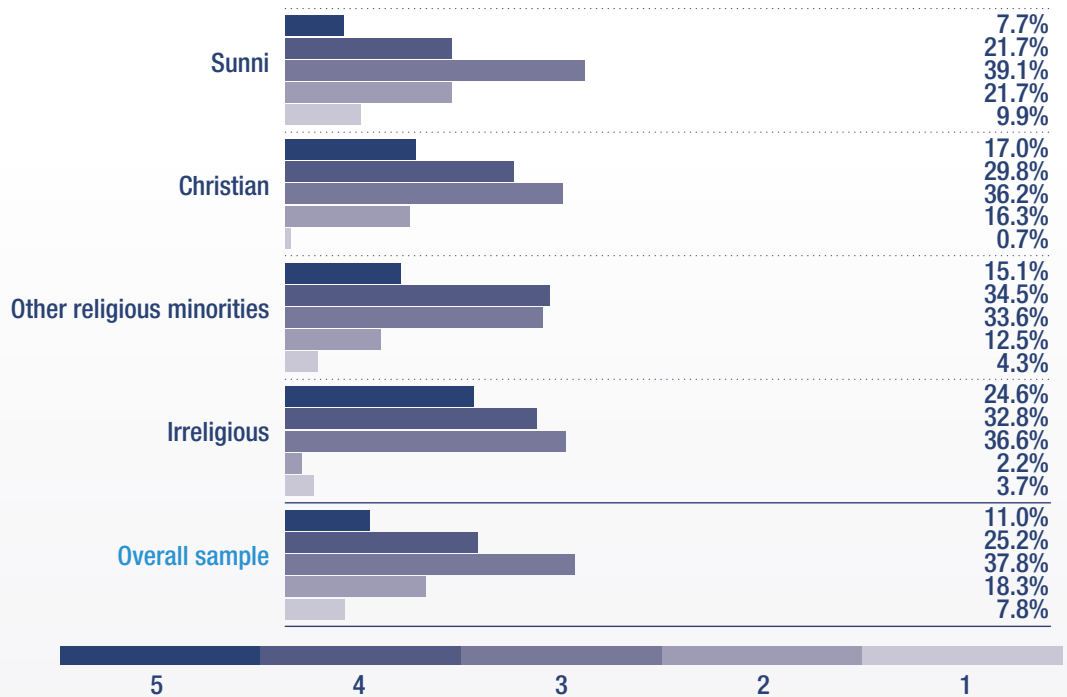


Figure 27 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of religion and self-rated level of integration.

## 6. Primary reason for departure from Syria

In addition to the previous correlations, indicators show a remarkable relation between the integration of refugees and the circumstances of their departure from Syria. The results showed that refugees who were forced to leave under more exceptional circumstances—such as fleeing direct military battles—faced greater integration difficulties in several aspects, including language. This can be explained by the effects of the traumatic conditions experienced by refugees who fled battles in their residential areas or fled the subsequent security prosecution that affected tens of thousands of civilians.





A study conducted by German researchers at the University of Leipzig<sup>(12)</sup> in 2019 indicated that half of their studied sample of refugees showed signs of psychological disorders, chiefly depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

It is also certain that the rate of traumatic disturbances is high among refugees who were exposed to longer-term and greater-degree traumatic events, such as the ongoing risk of arrest, detainment by the security forces, or long-term military operations in their residential areas.

It seems that these effects extended to refugees' lifestyle in their countries of refuge. Those refugees fleeing battles, for example, faced greater difficulties in learning the language of their host country.

The study presented here shows that 27.4% of refugees who fled battles rated their level of host-country language proficiency as "good" or "very good." This percentage increases among refugees who left Syria to avoid compulsory military service; 62.8% considered their proficiency of their host country's language "good" or "very good."

These differences are indicative of the highly traumatic situations fleeing refugees may have suffered from and the violent experiences—direct or indirect—which continue to affect their lives and their future beyond the active experience.

» **What is the most important reason that motivated you to leave Syria?**

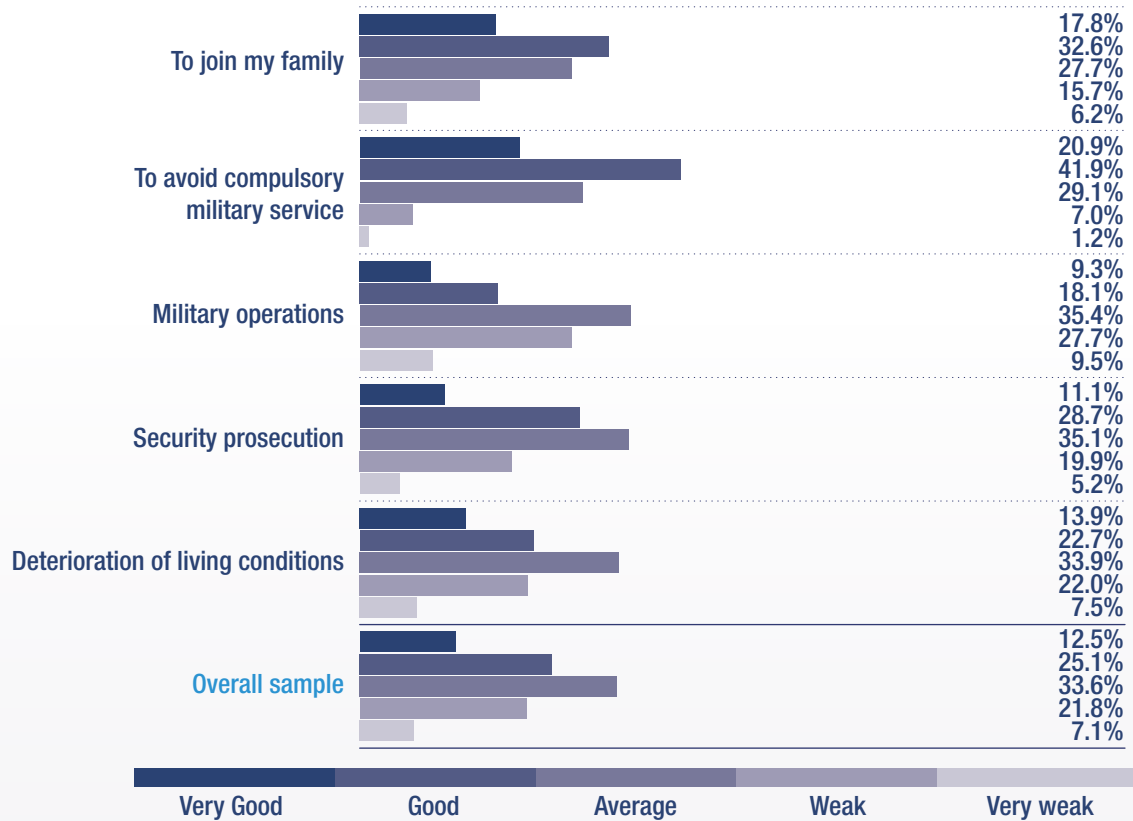


Figure 28 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of motivation for leaving Syria and host-country language proficiency.

(12) Y. Nesterko et al, "Prevalence of post-traumatic stress order, depression and somatization in recently arrived refugees in Germany: an epidemiological study," *Epidemiological and Psychiatric Sciences* 29 (2020): e40. DOI 10.1017/S2045796019000325. Link.

## B. The relationship of integration in host communities with variables of refugee status

Several other factors impact refugee integration into host societies, aside from factors related to a refugee's individual situation. The factors and conditions of refuge itself play a role in this process; many press reports<sup>(13)</sup> have explored this facet, taking individual examples as snapshots evaluating the usefulness of new refugee integration mechanisms in countries such as Germany.

The statistical correlations in this study indicate a very clear relationship between refugee status and refugee integration. The study of these correlations contributes to the directing of new refugee integration mechanisms and the provision of services to refugees in order to help accelerate the process of effective integration into their new societies.

### 1. Duration of residence from the moment of arrival

In general, respondents who have been refugees longer showed a greater level of integration into host societies and an increase in self-reliance in securing material needs. Only 39% of refugees who have spent five or more years in their country of refuge said they still receive refugee financial aid from their host government. This percentage rises to nearly 60% among refugees who have spent 3–5 years in their country of refuge and to 91.5% among those who have spent less than two years.

Thus, the Syrian refugees responding to the study showed greater self-reliance with the passage of time, as they became qualified to enter labor markets and gained proficiency in the language of their country of refuge.

This clearly indicates that time is a key factor in the integration of refugees and that their access to financial aid from governments or other facilitators for a period of time will not lead to their total dependence on it, but rather such aid will help them become productive individuals within their new societies.

In addition, several factors overlap within these percentages, which include all age groups. If retirees and university students are excluded, the percentage of those dependent on financial benefits at work age decreases.

#### » Do you currently receive government financial support as a refugee?

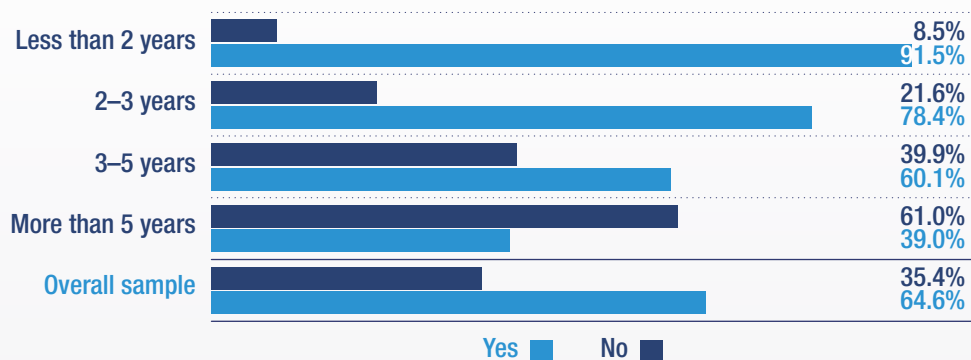


Figure 29 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the duration of residence and current receipt of financial aid.

Since integration is related to the period of residence in the host community, some respondents think that integration is not a top priority, or even a priority at all. They may take this position because they have resided for a longer time in the host country and have gone a long way toward integration. For this reason, they no longer see integration as a priority because they consider themselves already integrated.

Integration as a priority for refugees declines the longer they live in their country of refuge. According to the survey, 25.1% of refugees who have spent more than five years in their country of refuge consider integration a top priority, while the percentage among refugees who have spent less than two years in their country of refuge increased to 49.2%.

(13) Maram Salem, "Ta'theer Makan Al Iqama ala Al Indimaj: Laj'youn Yatahaddathoun 'an Tajaribihim" [The Impact of Residence on Integration: Refugees Talk About Their Experiences]," Deutsche Welle (DW.com), September 26, 2019, accessed December 9, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/ar/a-50613938>.

» **Duration of residence since the moment of arrival / To what extent is integration into the host community a priority for you?**

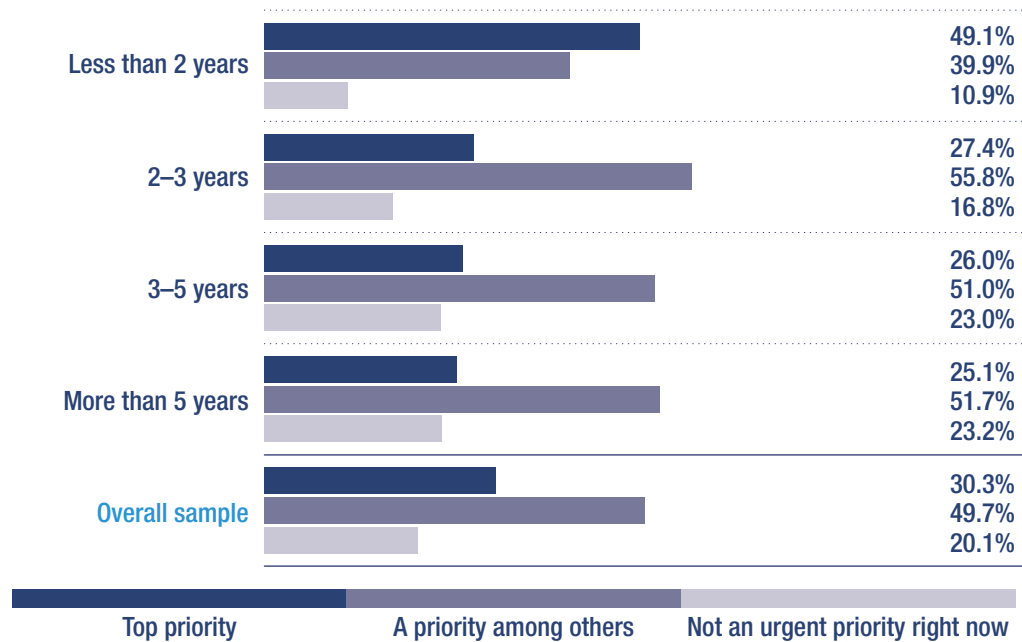


Figure 30 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the duration of refuge and priority placed on integration.

## 2. Ability to choose the country of refuge

The refuge journey, which is precarious in many aspects, often led new refugees to countries that they did not choose, either due to European asylum laws—obligating the first European country to which refugees arrive to receive them (exceptions were given to Greece and Bulgaria)—or because of the presence of family members or friends who had lived there for longer periods of time. This provided a social protection network of the older refugee community, which helped newcomers understand the conditions in the country of refuge.

This factor influenced a number of integration indicators. Refugees who chose their country of refuge showed higher levels of host-country language proficiency. In the survey, 42.9% of those who were able to choose their country of refuge rated their host-country language proficiency as “good” or “very good.” This percentage drops to 28.5% among those who could not choose their country of refuge.

» **Why did you choose this particular country? / Language mastery of the country of refuge**

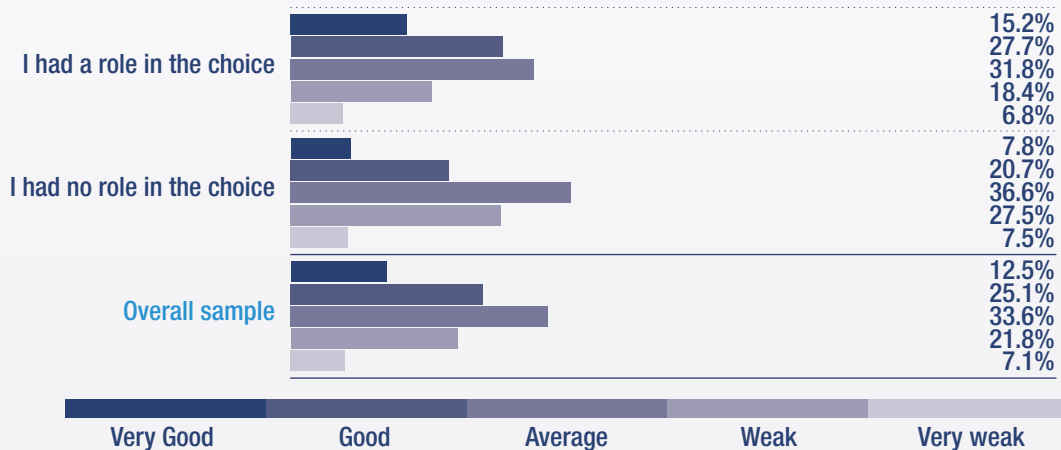


Figure 31 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of role in the choice of the country of refuge and host-country language proficiency.

The ability to choose the country of refuge also affected, to a lesser extent, refugees' level of involvement in their new country's labor market. According to the survey, 33.9% of those who were able to choose their country of refuge said they were currently employed, compared with 29.5% among those who could not choose their country of refuge.

This relationship may show that the ability to choose the country of refuge—offering the most suitable conditions for the refugee and the availability of relatives and friends—contributes to the acceleration of the host-country integration process. The ability to plan the journey allows sufficient time for both psychological preparation and perhaps the obtaining of basic qualifications regarding the language and laws of the new country. As a result, this factor contributes to refugee integration levels in several respects.

» **Why did you choose this particular country? / Are you currently employed?**

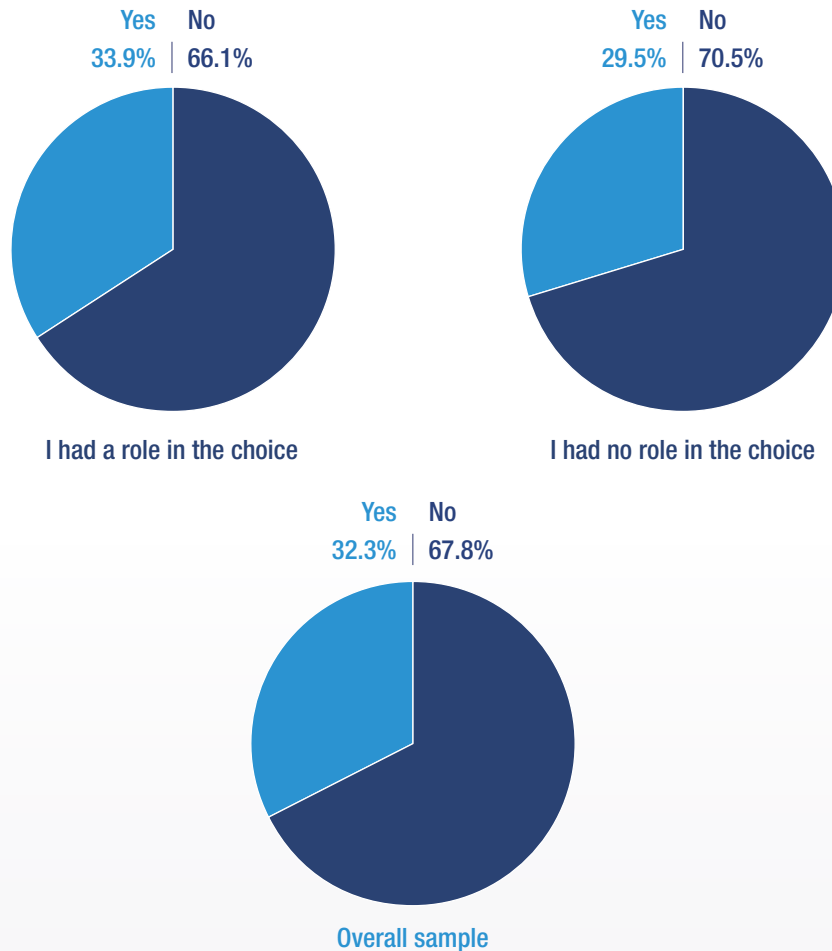


Figure 32 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of role in the choice of the country of refuge and current employment.

### 3. With whom do you live now?

The results of the study also show a correlation between the living conditions of a refugee at their home and their ability to integrate into their new society. Refugees who live with friends showed greater capabilities for integration, such as financial independence and forgoing refugee financial aid.

This is naturally related to the marital status of the refugee. Family burdens for married people contribute to a slowing down of the integration process. In the survey, 50% of refugees who live with friends reported receiving refugee financial aid. This percentage among those who live with marriage-based families increased to 69.3%; only 47.5% of refugees who live alone said they receive refugee financial aid. And 62.5% among those living in group housing reported receiving refugee financial aid.



The housing pattern is a partial reflection of refugees' marital status as well as their standard of living, which affects these percentages. The housing factor and the other burdens on working adults also affect refugees' ability to integrate into their new society.

» **With whom do you currently live? / Do you currently receive government financial support as a refugee?**

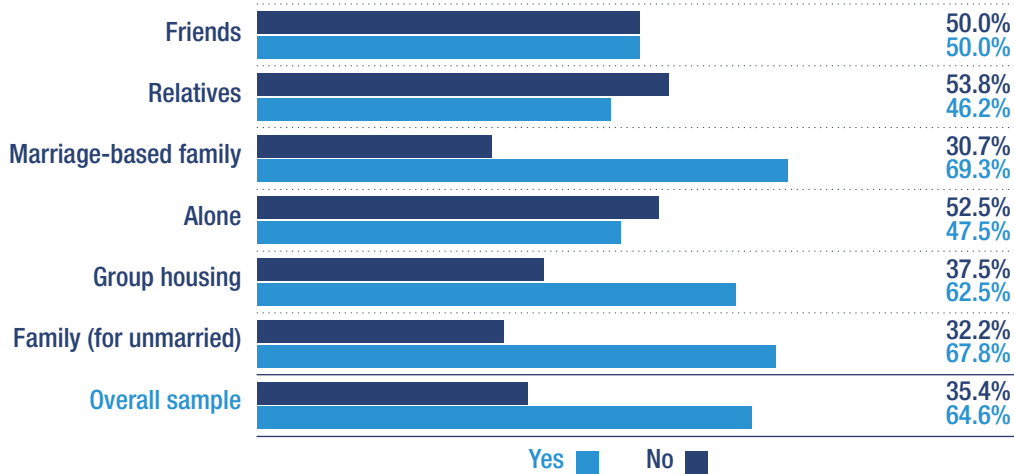


Figure 33 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of housing status and financial aid receipt.

In the same way, we find that a refugee's formation of friendships with the citizens of their country of refuge is affected in turn by the pattern of their housing. Respondent refugees who live with friends were the largest group able to form new friendships with the citizens of their host country; 67.5% said they have close friends who are citizens of their host country. This percentage decreases to 38.3% among those who live with their marriage-based family.

» **With whom do you currently live? / Do you have close friends among the citizens of your country of refuge?**

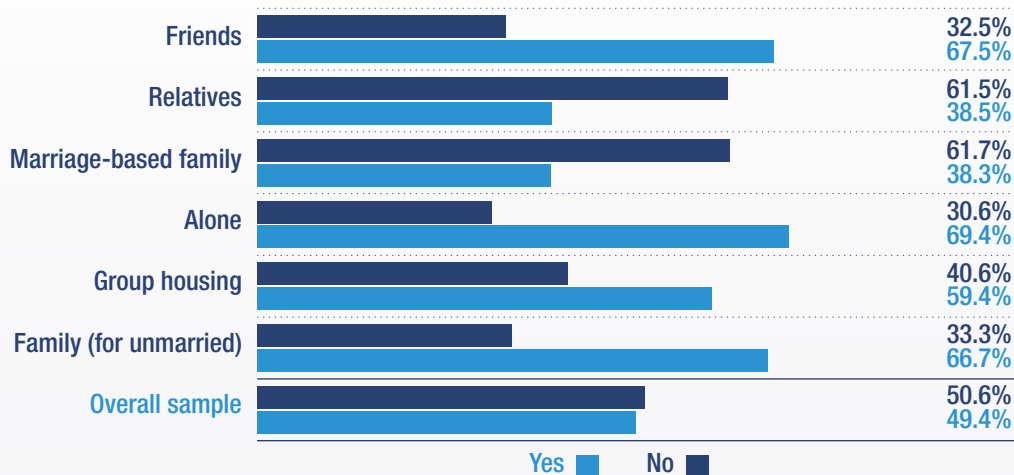


Figure 34 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of housing status and having friends from the country of refuge.

#### 4. Legal status

The legal status of refugees encourages integration, and vice versa. Long-term residency helps improve a sense of stability, although it is not a high-level factor, especially in European countries where Syrian refugees are not at risk of being deported—back to Syria or to another country—regardless of legal status. An exception to this is the recent decision by German state interior ministers to allow the deportation of dangerous refugees who represent a threat to national security. All European countries—including the countries under study—are obligated to not deport Syrian refugees, which



in practice encourages a sense of stability regardless of legal status.

However, some refugees—after years of refuge—have obtained citizenship in their country of refuge, contributing significantly to the process of integration. Citizenship gives the right to full movement and the right to work legally. As such, the percentage of employed among those respondents who have citizenship in their host country is 43.3%, compared with 26% among refugees still in the process of obtaining official residency.

It must also be taken into consideration that a good percentage of those who have citizenship in their host country consider themselves to have completed the integration process. This is reflected in the fact that having citizenship may in some cases complete, not help, the integration process. But with the current circumstances, it can help the integration process because of the conditions of isolation experienced by some of the refugees.

» **What is your current legal status? / Are you currently employed?**

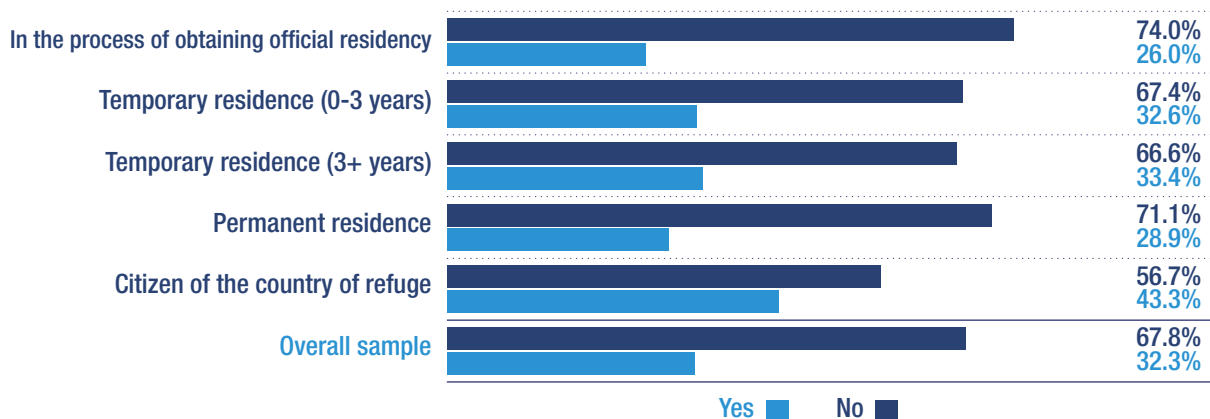


Figure 35 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of legal status and current employment.

## 5. The extent of the social network

The sample reveals higher levels of integration among those who reported a wide social network compared to other refugees in their area of residence, which can be viewed simultaneously as both a result and a cause.

Expansion of a social network within the host country helps strengthen a refugee's knowledge of their new country's culture and social life. In turn, this higher integration level facilitates social relations and creates opportunities to expand them.

In the survey, 65% of those claiming a wide social network rated their host-country language proficiency as "good" or "very good." Among those who claimed a limited social network, that percentage reached only 19.8%.

Thus, it can be seen that a wide social network is a major factor in developing and enhancing the language skills of refugees.



» How would you describe your social network, compared to your fellow refugees, in the country where you live today? / Language mastery of the country of refuge

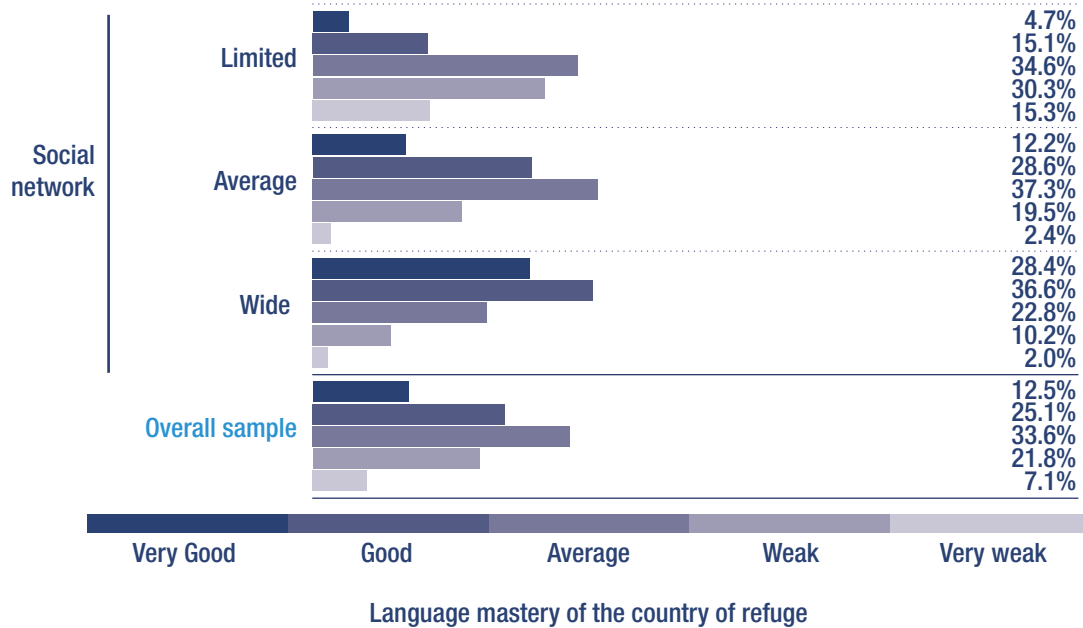


Figure 36 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of social network extent and language proficiency.

Likewise, refugees with a wide social network showed less dependence on refugee financial aid (42.6% for those with a wide social network, and 74.2% for those with a limited social network), and higher levels of employment (57.4% for those with a wide social network, and 18% for those with a limited social network). Social networking seems to be a primary contributor to the integration process and to a refugee's ability to get involved and become a productive individual within their new society. Social networks can serve as safety nets and opportunities to learn about legal conditions, social traditions, and life requirements.

» **How would you describe your social network, compared to your fellow refugees, in the country where you live today? / Do you currently receive government financial support as a refugee?**

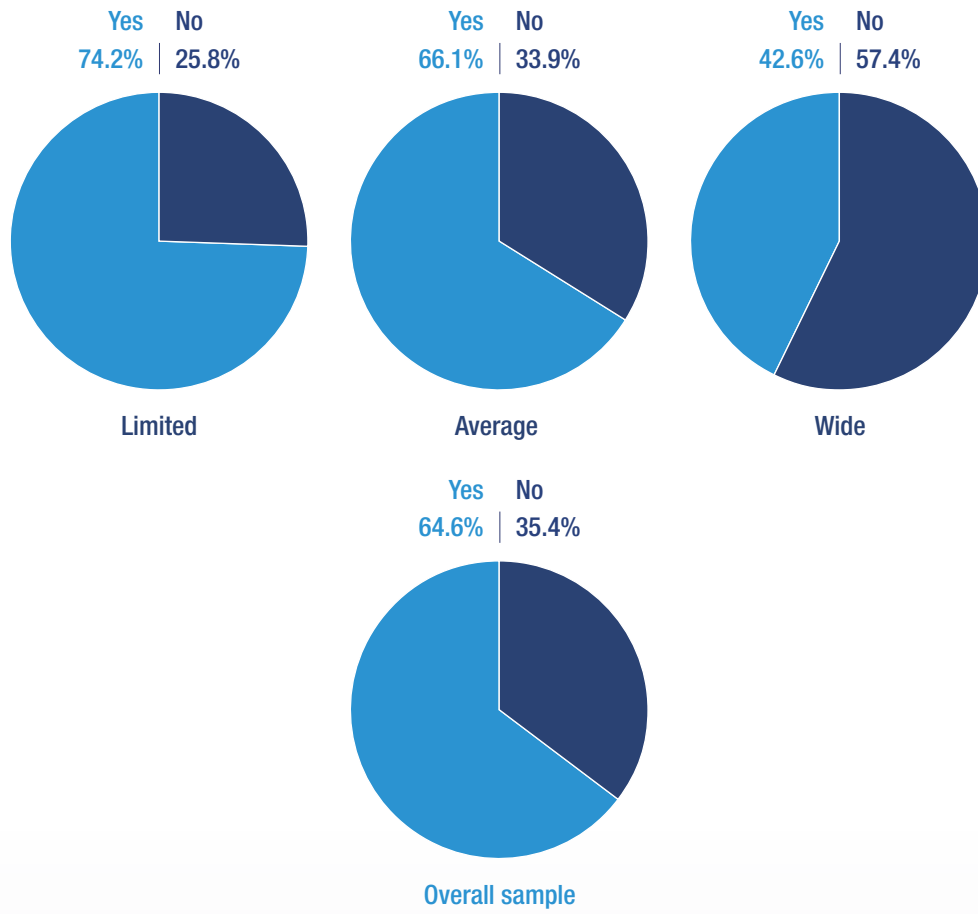


Figure 37 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of social network extent and financial aid receipt.





» **How would you describe your social network, compared to your fellow refugees, in the country where you live today? / Are you currently employed?**

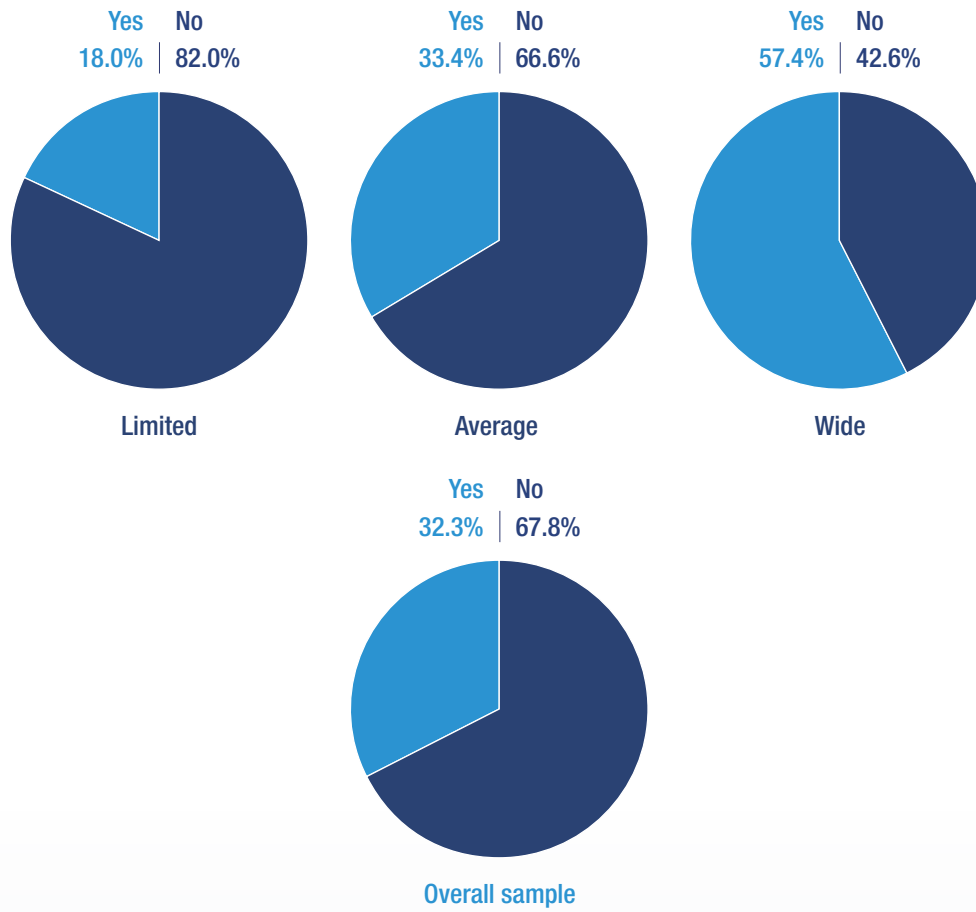


Figure 38 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of social network extent and current employment.

## Chapter III: Integration, Perceptions, and Satisfaction among Refugees in the Four Countries

This chapter presents comparisons between the four countries under study from several angles of analysis. First, we focus on comparing integration indicators, seeking evidence of which countries have higher refugee integration rates than others. Second, we discuss survey results regarding respondents' perceptions of their host communities and the extent of differences that may arise between those perceptions in different countries. Finally, we compare respondents' assessments of their standard of living in the four countries, guided by respondents' level of satisfaction, including an attempt to understand respondents' relationship with host country integration policies and their level of satisfaction with those policies.

### A. A comparative overview of the integration indicators between the four countries

In this section, we rely on three indicators of aspects generally agreed upon as essential to any integration process. First, the employment indicator, reflecting the extent of refugees' participation in the labor market. Second, refugees' host-country language proficiency. Finally, the social networking indicator, investigating levels of refugee involvement in social circles with citizens of their country of refuge and the extent of close friendships within them.

Obviously, the aforementioned indicators are not sufficient to create an accurate and definitive picture of the complex topic of integration, but they provide reliable features for building a general perception as a basis for more in-depth and specialized studies. However, differences between the four countries cannot be counted as an effectiveness indicator of each country's integration policies, due to the possibility that the Syrian refugees who came to those countries differed in some way. Some European countries followed a selective policy in receiving refugees—France, for example, which received large numbers of writers and journalists—while other countries, such as Germany, moved toward a policy of wide reception. This is reflected in the differences between the nature of refugee communities within the two countries.

However, before reviewing and discussing the aforementioned indicators, it is worthy to point out one important factor that is likely to have a significant impact on all the following results, related to the length of stay in the host country.

The time requirement for selecting respondents in the study was that a refugee should have spent at least one year in their country of refuge. The duration of residence in all countries varied from less than two years to more than five years. The largest percentage of respondents in all four countries has resided in their country of refuge for 3–5 years—53.6%—but there exists a wide margin of variation between each country's results.

While the percentage in Germany reached 71.4% for those who have resided there for 3–5 years, in France it was 44.5%. Likewise, 34.8% of respondents in France said they have resided there for less than two years; in Germany that percentage was 7%.

It should also be noted that 26.3% of the respondents in Sweden have resided there for more than five years—the highest percentage within that category—followed by the Netherlands with 16.3%, then Germany with 15.3%, and finally France with 7%.

In an attempt to neutralize confusion, the analysis here will be limited to only those refugees who have spent 3–5 years in their countries of refuge, which is the critical period during which refugees are supposed to have completed the language learning phase and are more ready to integrate into the community and the labor market.





### » Duration of residence since the moment of arrival

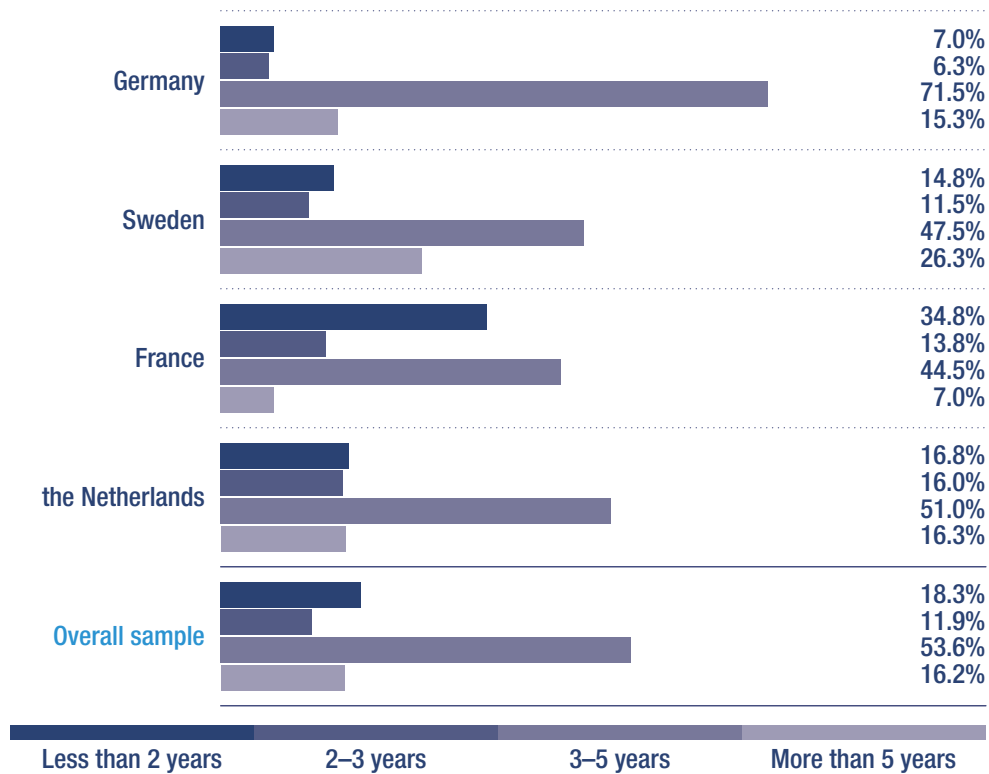


Figure 39 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the country of refuge and duration of residence in years.

## 1. Language learning

Learning the host country's language is the first step in any integration process. It is a precondition for practicing most daily affairs and the necessary basis for building social relationships with the host community and forming friendships within it. Looking at the sample results of those who have resided in their host country for 3–5 years in terms of respondents' host-country language proficiency, it can be said that the results are generally positive. The percentages of those who reported their language proficiency as "weak" or "very weak" did not exceed 25% in any of the sub-samples. However, there are differences between the host countries that warrant discussion.

The sample of refugees in Germany leads in terms of language proficiency; 47.9% of them said their German-language proficiency is either "good" or "very good," compared with only 19.2% describing their German as "weak" or "very weak." The Sweden sample followed; 43.7% of its respondents said that their Swedish is "good" or higher. But here, the percentage of those who said that their Swedish is "weak" or "very weak" increased to 25.3%.

The lowest level of language proficiency is in the sample of refugees in France, as the percentage of those who said that their French is "good" or "very good" was only 33.7%. The Netherlands shows a relatively average result, with 40.2% reporting their Dutch proficiency as "good" or "very good."

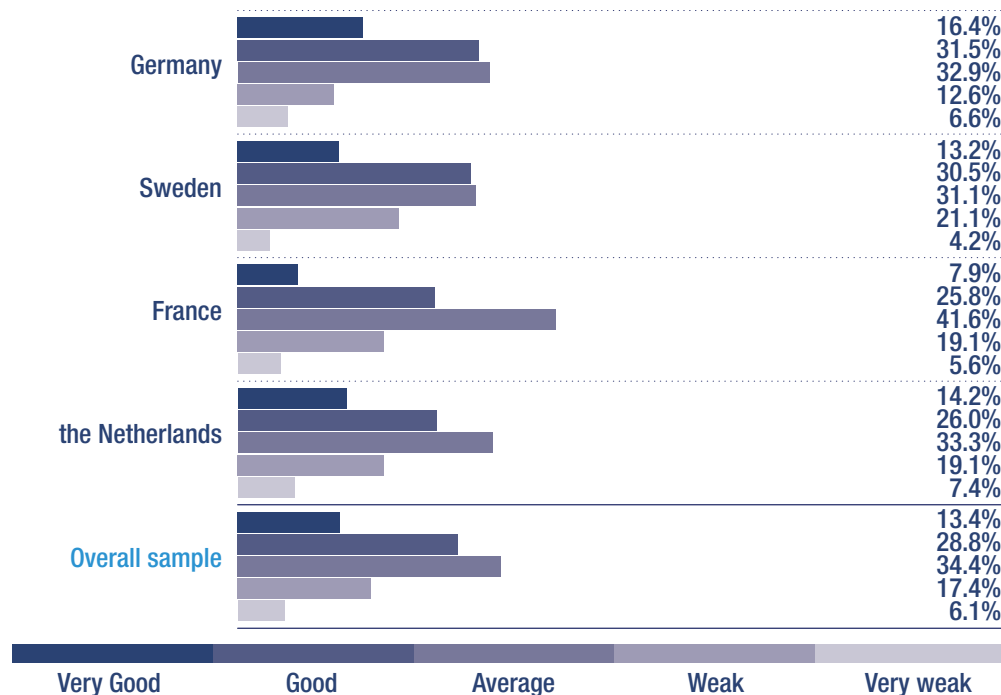
» **Language mastery of the country of refuge**

Figure 40 shows the distribution of the sub-sample of respondents who have spent 3–5 years in their country of refuge, according to the variables of the country of refuge and host-country language proficiency.

In general, the language proficiency indicator is affected by policies adopted in each country. Even though achieving a certain level of language proficiency is a condition set for refugees by each of the four host countries, the application of that requirement differs from one country to another.

In Sweden and Germany, state and local authorities are directly in charge of organizing the process of teaching the language to refugees. They determine, for each refugee, what school he should attend and how long he must spend learning the language, and they link all of this to the refugee financial aid provided.

In the Netherlands, the refugee integration mechanism puts a sum of money dedicated to learning the language at the disposal of the refugee, giving the refugee the opportunity to choose where and when he will study the language—provided that he finishes the required level within three years.<sup>(14)</sup>

In France, refugees have several options to learn the language, including free schools belonging to municipalities and other refugee integration associations or in universities that offer free language classes or paid classes with the availability of scholarships to cover their costs. But there is no direct supervision by the state institutions concerned with refugees, and no link between learning the language and continuing to receive aid. This may explain to some extent the low rates of French language proficiency among refugees.

## 2. Participation in the labor market

Participation in the labor market is an important part of the refugee integration process. It means that the refugee is transformed from being a recipient of aid to a taxpayer and active participant in the economic cycle of the country in which he lives.

The results of the survey show that the largest percentage of participation in the labor market is among respondents in the Netherlands sub-sample, where nearly half of the sample—49.5%—said they are currently employed. The lowest percentage was once again among respondents in the France sample at 35.4%. The Germany sample came in with 38.8%

(14) The researcher conducted telephone interviews with refugees in the four countries from December 9, 2020 to December 15, 2020.



of respondents who said they are currently employed, while the percentage in the Sweden sample was 36.3%.

» **Are you currently employed?**

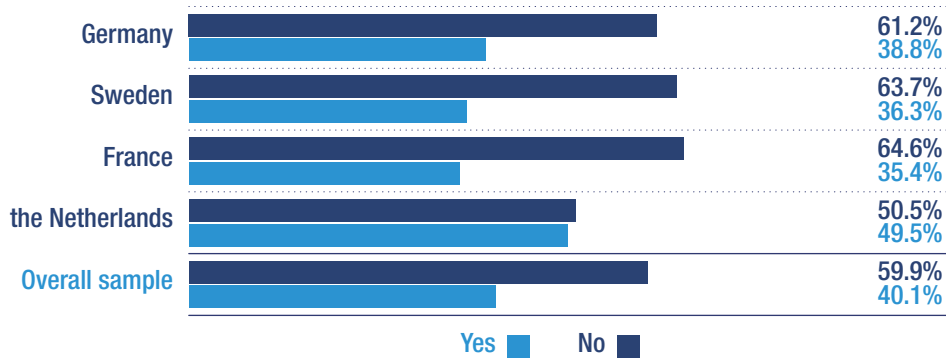


Figure 41 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents who have spent 3–5 years in their country of refuge, according to the variables of the country of refuge and current employment.

The extent of refugees' involvement in the labor market is related primarily to the qualifications and competencies of the refugees, as well as the size of the host country's economy and its ability to provide job opportunities. But the issue is also related to laws regulating refugee work and the efficiency of institutions concerned with their integration into the labor market.

As such, there is no easy way to explain the distinct rise in the percentage of employed refugees in the Netherlands—it is not the largest economy, nor are its refugees the most proficient in its language. While we exclude the possibility that this gap is merely a bias in the sample, we leave the question open to more in-depth and focused studies on this matter.

As for the limited variation in employment rates among the remaining three countries, it does not reflect a strong statistical significance, as the variation was only around three percentage points.

### 3. Social relations with the host community

The extent of refugee relations with the host society indicates the amount of social capital refugees have built in their new country. The nature of this social networking indicator differs from the previous language and employment indicators in that it requires not only the willingness and desire of the refugees to build relationships, but also the willingness and desire of the host community itself.

The results of the analysis of the sub-sample data do not show significant differences between refugees in the four countries. The percentage of those who said they do not have any relations with the host community ranges between a maximum of 12.3% in the Netherlands, and a minimum of 10.5% in Sweden. Also, the margins of variance remain very limited (less than five percentage points) between respondents of the four sub-sample countries, making it difficult to come up with any reliable results.



» **To what extent do the citizens of the host country constitute a part of your social relations?**

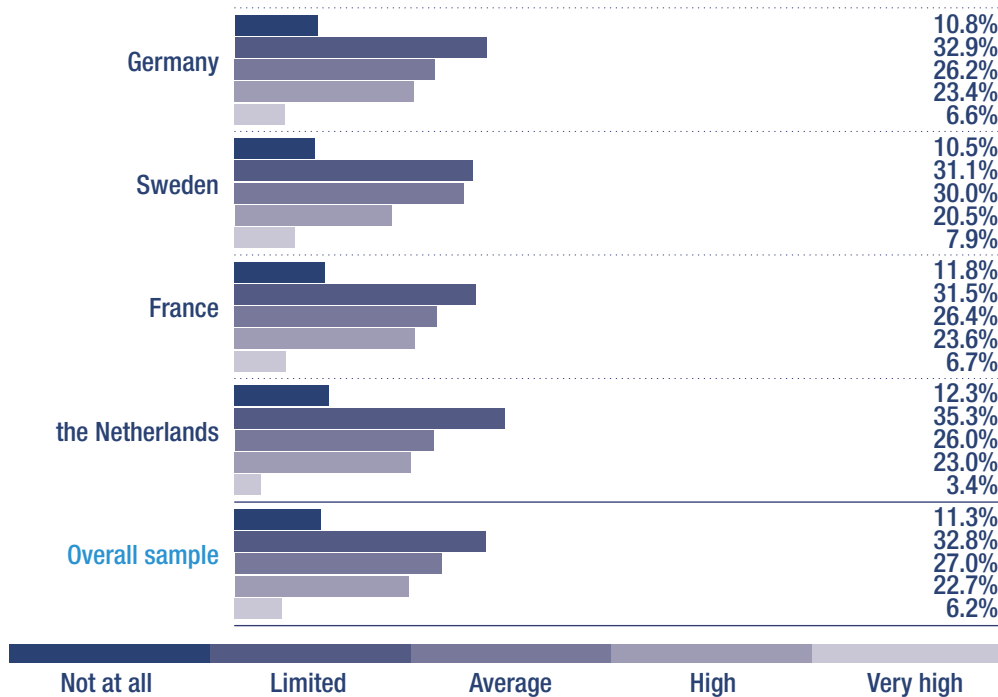


Figure 42 shows the distribution of the sample respondents who have spent 3–5 years in their country of refuge, according to the variables of the country of refuge and social network makeup.

Therefore, we approached the topic of social relations from a different angle by comparing the answers of the sample respondents to the question about close friends among the citizens of the country of refuge. Does the comparison here show any additional indications?

Among the France sample, the percentage of those who said they have close friendships with the citizens of their country of refuge rises to 63.5%, the highest in this context. Next are the Netherlands and Germany samples at 53.9% and 53.5%, respectively. The Sweden sample results were the lowest, with only 37.4% of the respondents having close friends from the citizens of this country of refuge. We note here that the question does not focus on the ethnicity or background of the host country's citizens.

» **Do you have close friends among the citizens of your country of refuge?**

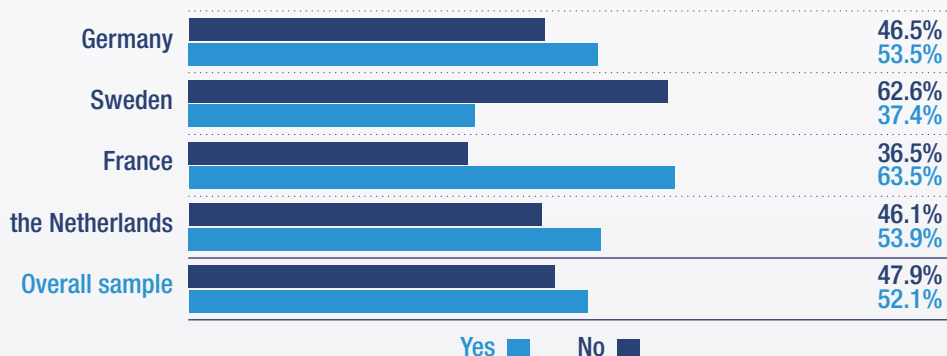


Figure 43 shows the distribution of the sample respondents who have spent 3–5 years in their country of refuge, according to the variables of the country of refuge and having close friends among the citizens of the country of refuge.

The refugee respondents in France were not the most proficient in the language nor the most involved in the labor market. Nevertheless, its respondents give higher results in terms of building social relations and friendships with French citizens. This can be explained by the presence of a large number of French associations that are active alongside state institutions in the field of refugee integration—more so than in Germany, for example. Most of the activists in these associations are



sympathetic to the refugee issue, and many of them speak Arabic, which facilitates the establishment of immediate social connections with refugees.

Finally, we can add in this context an indicator that reflects the extent of respondents' willingness and interest to integrate. Respondents were asked to rate the degree of priority integration into their host community holds for them. They had three options: a top priority, a priority among others, or not currently a priority.

» **To what extent is integration into the host community a priority for you?**

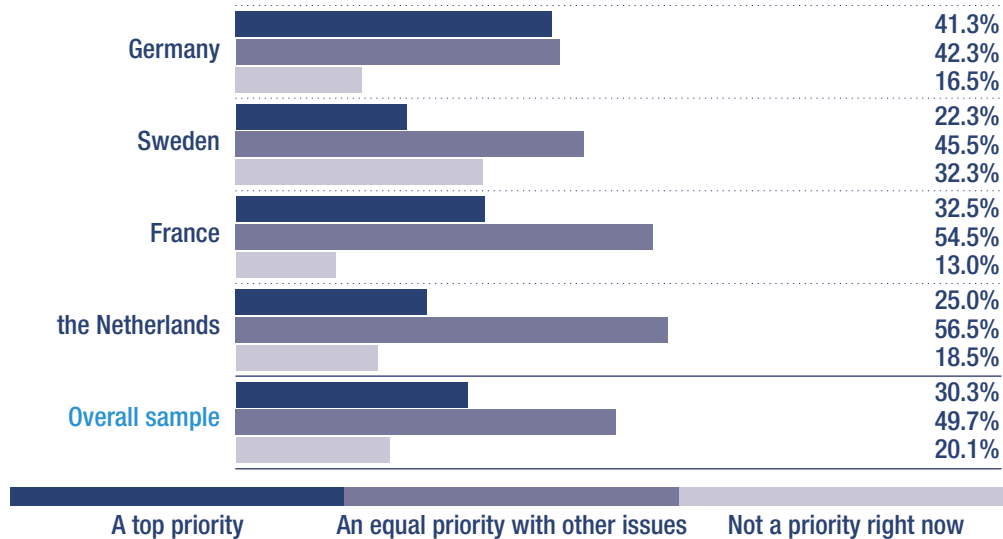


Figure 44 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of country of refuge and self-rated integration priority.

We notice here that 41.3% of respondents in the Germany sample rated integration as a top priority. The second-largest percentage was among the France respondents at 32.5%. The Netherlands came third with 25%, and Sweden fourth with 22.3%.

The low percentage in the case of Sweden seems slight here, but if we look at the percentage of those who said that integration is not a current priority for them, the difference appears more clearly. The percentage of Sweden respondents who said it is not a priority reached 32.3%, the highest percentage by far from the other three countries, whose percentages ranged from 13% in France to 18.5% in the Netherlands.

In sum, the differences between the four sub-samples—which are wide in some aspects and narrow in others—are a reflection of the policies these countries adopted and the differences between refugee groups in each of them. The indicators that have been presented so far are not sufficient to make bold conclusions or overall generalizations; this requires more in-depth study. However, it cannot be ignored that the indicators of integration among refugees in Germany appear to be the highest and most consistent in their various aspects, including language, employment, and social relations. The case appears to be very similar in the Netherlands.

Inconsistent results showed in France, whose sample increased on indicators of social relations and willingness to integrate but decreased on language proficiency and participation in the labor market. So, it can be listed third after the other two countries in terms of the overall extent of refugee integration. Perhaps the most worrisome indicators appear in the Sweden sample; despite a high indicator of language proficiency among its respondents, and to some extent employment, indicators of social relations as well as preparedness for integration appear to be lower among respondents than those in the other countries. The data here indicates some tension between the refugees and the host community, as will be further illustrated in the following paragraphs.

## B. Refugee perceptions about their host communities and the differences between the countries under study

The study survey included a set of statements often used to express attitudes of European society toward refugees in general. Respondents were asked to express their positions on the validity of these statements and to what extent they feel these statements apply to the societies in which they live and reflect the trends of their hosts. The respondents were given five options ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”

However, it is important to note that the results of this question are largely affected by the number of Syrian refugees in each of the countries studied and by the size and number of the host country’s population. In Germany, the percentage of new Syrian refugees out of the total population is more than 0.6%, but only 0.03% in France. The following table shows the rest of the percentages.

Country	Total population of the host country <sup>(15)</sup>	Number of new Syrian refugees <sup>(16)</sup>	Percentage of new Syrian Refugees of the total population
France	65,273,511	19,265	0.03%
Germany	83,783,942	56,2168	0.67%
the Netherlands	17,134,872	32,598	0.19%
Sweden	10,099,265	114,054	1.13%

### 1. Do respondents agree that “the host community views refugees as a drain on the local economy and contributing to an increase in unemployment”?

The higher the percentage of agreement with this statement, the more negative the refugee’s perceptions about their host community. When examining results here, the responses show that most respondents in the four countries disagree that their host communities hold this position. However, there are variations that deserve attention.

It is worth noting, for example, that 42.8% of the Sweden sample respondents agreed that Swedish society holds this view toward them. This is the highest percentage, far above the percentage expressed by respondents in the Netherlands at 19.5%. The Germany sample came third at 15.1%, and finally France with only 8.6%.

(15) “Population Data on 1 January,” European Union website (EC.Europa.eu), accessed December 29, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00001/default/table?lang=en>.

(16) “Refugee Data Finder,” UNHCR.org, accessed December 29, 2020 <https://bit.ly/3pwQp3R>.





» **The host community views refugees as a drain on the local economy and contributing to increased unemployment**

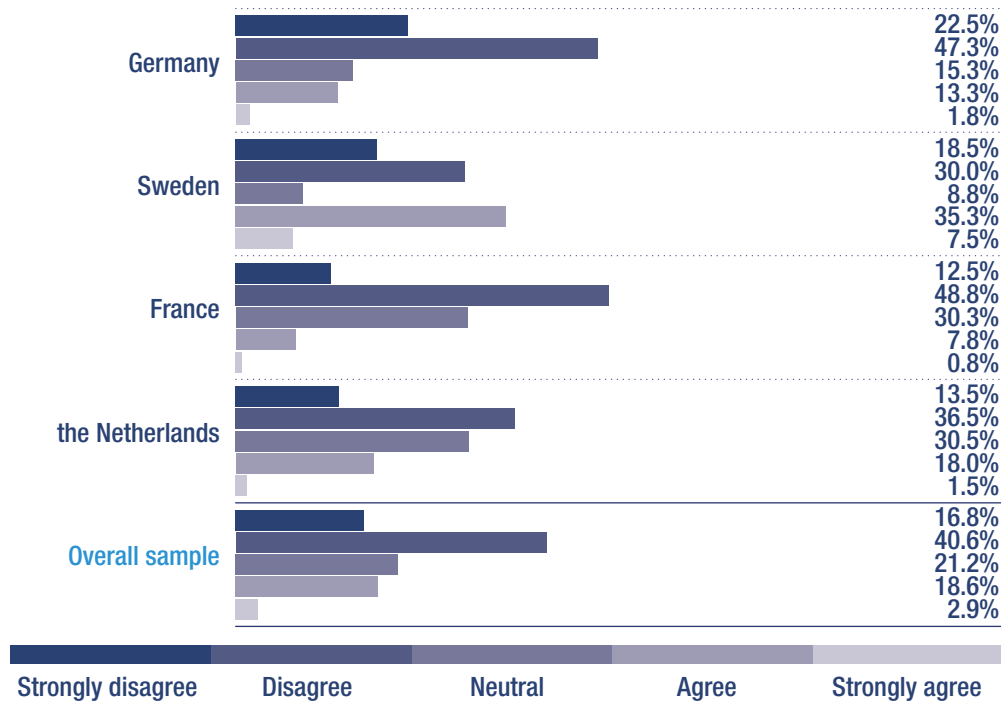


Figure 45 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the country of refuge and position on Question 212 Statement 1.

According to these figures, refugee perceptions about their host community appear much more negative in Sweden than in the other countries, while the France sample shows the highest positive percentage. However, respondents' attitudes toward this statement may not necessarily reflect decisive connotations about the relationship between the respondents and their host communities, as perceptions about the economic burden of refugees are related primarily to their numbers in each country in relation to the size of its population. France appears the least affected in this regard, in recent years at least. Perhaps the picture becomes clearer with subsequent statements.

## 2. Do respondents agree "The host community views refugees as a danger to Western lifestyle"?

This statement reflects something about the cultural dimension in respondents' perceptions about their host societies. Here also, the largest percentage of respondents in the four countries disagree that their host societies hold this view toward them. This view holds an overwhelming majority in the Germany sample with 65.3% disagreeing, and a slight majority in the France sample and that in the Netherlands with 53.0% and 50.5% disagreeing, respectively.

However, the results of the Sweden sample again appear more negative. Less than half of these respondents disagree with the statement at 48.6%, while 36.3% agree with it. In other words, more than a third of the Sweden sample believe that their host community views them as a threat to Western lifestyle, while the second-highest percentage—the Netherlands—was 20.6%.

» **The host community views refugees as a danger to Western lifestyle**

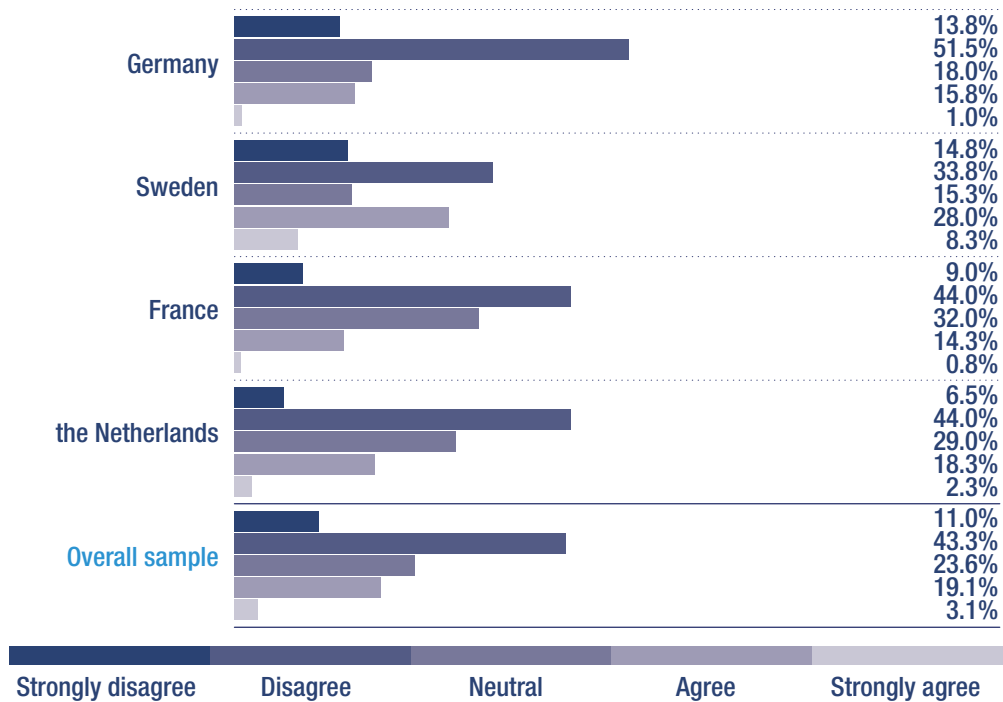


Figure 46 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the country of refuge and position on Question 212 Statement 2.

In short, we note high rates of negative perceptions about the host community among refugees in Sweden, which appeared with the first statement and is reiterated here. It has become clear that there is a bigger problem between refugees and the host community in Sweden than in France, Germany, or the Netherlands, whose samples showed more positive indicators.

### 3. Do respondents agree

“The host community welcomes refugees regardless of religious or ethnic affiliation”?

This statement does not seem to be a subject of clear variance among respondents from the four sample countries. The vast majority of respondents agree with the statement, but it is noteworthy that the responses of “agree” and “strongly agree” in the Sweden sample remained less than others, with a percentage of 76.6% (as opposed to 88.6% in the Germany sample, for instance). This was also the case in the percentage of disagreement and neutrality—the highest percentage of disagreement was in the Sweden sample at 10.6%. The second-largest disagreement percentage was in the sample in the Netherlands at only 4.8%, followed by the France sample at 4.6%—both of these percentages are less than half that of the Sweden sample.



» **The host community welcomes refugees regardless of religious or ethnic affiliation**

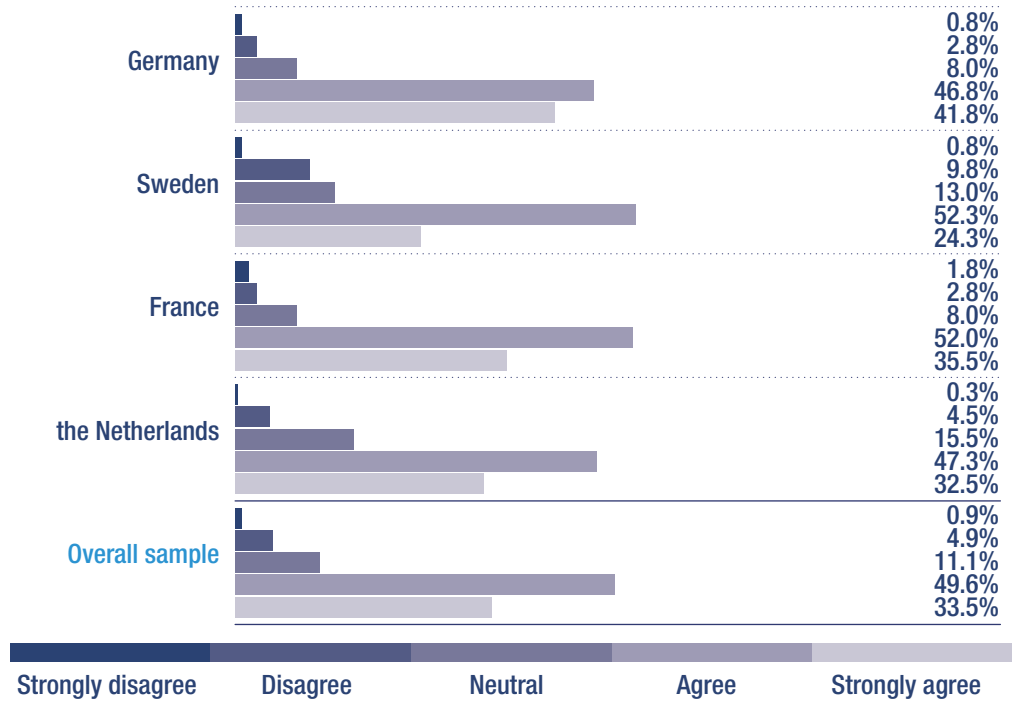


Figure 47 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the country of refuge and position on Question 212 Statement 4.

4. Do respondents agree

“European countries receiving refugees is part of a conspiracy against Arabs and Muslims”?

The majority of respondents who disagree with this statement are in the France sample, where the percentage reached 88.3%; only 3.5% agreed with the statement. The German sample came second, with 7% of those respondents agreeing with the statement. The agreement percentages were higher among respondents in the samples from Sweden and the Netherlands, at 12.6% and 11.1%, respectively.

» **European countries receiving refugees is part of a conspiracy against Arabs and Muslims**

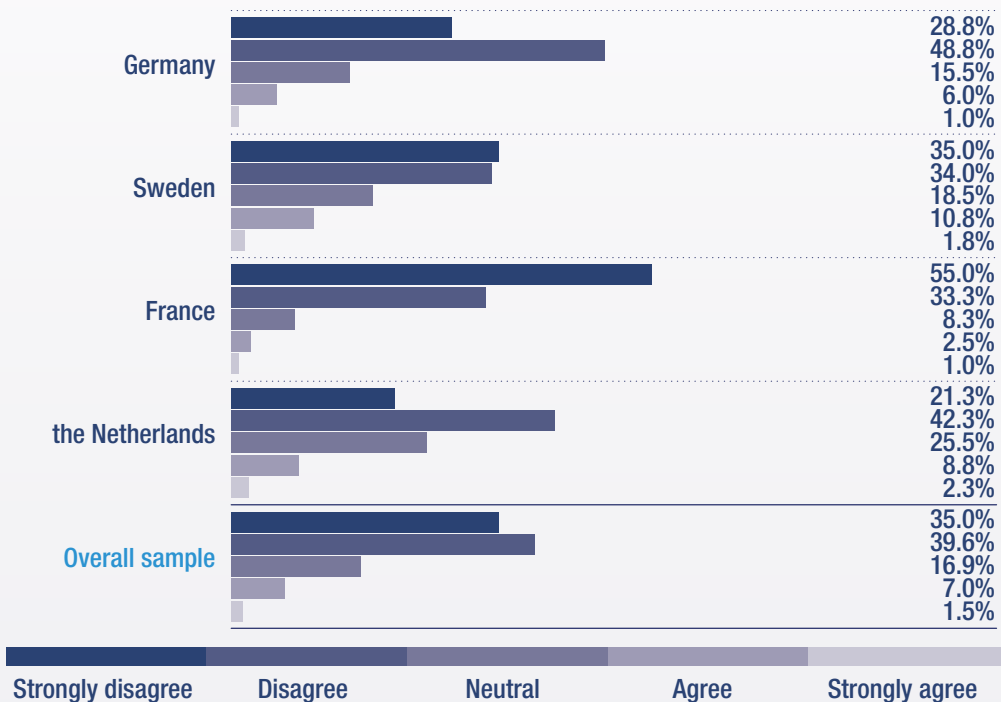


Figure 48 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the country of refuge and position on Question 212 Statement 3.

Undoubtedly, responses to this statement have been influenced by a serious wave of violence that European countries witnessed last year—especially in France.

In short, if we consider these responses as an expression of Syrian refugees' experiences in, and impressions formed via their relations with, their host societies, the results can be said to generally indicate that refugees' perceptions toward their host societies are predominantly positive in relation to the problematic ideas most circulated. Positive impressions are highest among refugees in France, then Germany, the Netherlands third, and finally Sweden, where the situation appears more complicated.

Two main factors can explain the variation in what this data suggests about host societies: the country's size and its historical relationship with migration. Germany and France are larger in terms of area and population, and both have long experience with receiving and settling mass migrations since WWII. Thus, they have accumulated great policy and societal experience. But the situation in the two smaller countries—Sweden and the Netherlands—is very different. These two countries have never before received mass immigration, in the strict sense of the word. The influx of large numbers of Syrian refugees constitutes a historical precedent for them, which is reflected in the reactions of society and institutions in those countries.

### **C. Satisfaction with the conditions and policies toward refugees in the countries of refuge**

Although the general features of refugee policies and conditions created by most EU countries are similar, the facts and applications differ from one country to another, according to the specific circumstances of each country and the political and ideological orientations of their successive governments. These differences widen further in the detailed aspects of managing refugees' lives and integration, such as institutional and procedural frameworks for language education, housing, employment, and other issues.

For example, the issue of residence permits is an important feature of the four countries' policies toward refugees. It is clear from the legal status information provided by respondents that there are two distinct trends in terms of granting residence permits.

Sweden changed its policies in 2015, but the majority of respondents in that sample—68.5%, the largest percentage among the host country samples—have obtained permanent residency. The Sweden sample also has the largest percentage of those who have obtained citizenship, at 15%. This is completely different from the case of refugees in Germany, where temporary residence is the majority at 88.8%; the percentage of permanent residency is only 7.5%, and citizenship only 1.8%.

In the Netherlands, policies are very similar to Germany. Nearly 70% of respondents in this sample hold temporary residence permits, the vast majority of which for a longer period of time than their counterparts in Germany. The percentage of permanent residence rises to 19% in the sample living in the Netherlands, and citizenship is at 11.5%.

Finally, there is France, where the percentages of those with permanent residency and temporary residence permits are similar, with 46% and 43.3%, respectively.



» **What is your current legal status?**

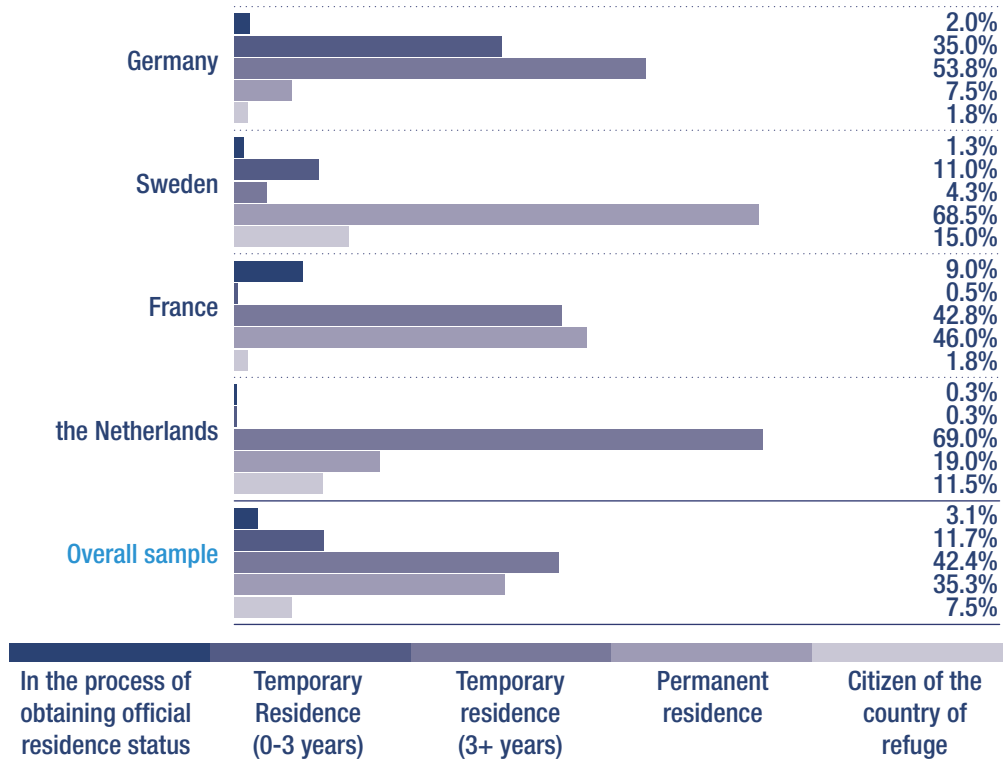


Figure 49 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the country of refuge and the respondent's legal status.

In the following paragraphs we compare levels of refugees' satisfaction in specific aspects of their lives in the four host countries, based on the respondents' own perceptions. But before that, we believe it useful to point out a basic element of refugees' relationship with the countries in which they now live, which is their own role in choosing that country. Not all refugees had the ability to choose their country of refuge, and it appears that the percentages differ greatly from one country to another.

The data shows that the majority of respondents from the France sample had no role in the choice or were given no other option. These constituted 66.8% of the respondents, the highest percentage among the four countries. The Sweden sample followed, in which 41.8% of respondents said they had no role in choosing the country.

In contrast, the data show that the vast majority of the sub-sample in the Netherlands had a role in the choice; those who did not made up only 16%. We can also put the German sample in this category—the percentage of those who said they had no role in the choice was just 23%.

» **Did you have a role in choosing your country of refuge?**

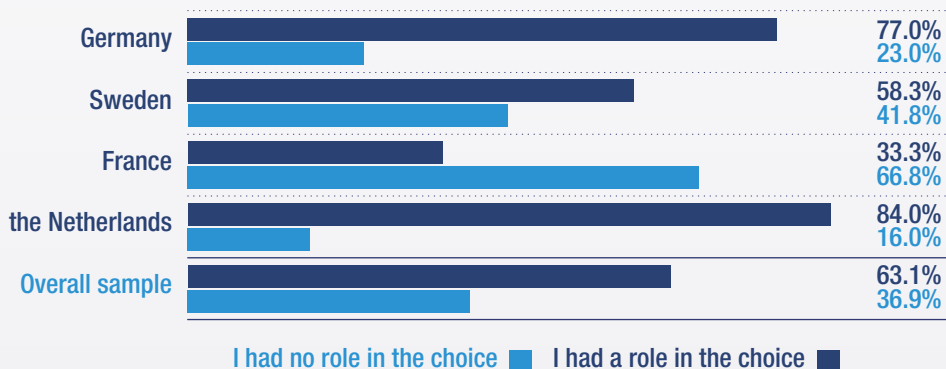


Figure 50 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the country of refuge and whether the refugee had a role in their choice of country of refuge.



The issue of host country choice can play a critical role in levels of refugees' satisfaction with their lives in their country of refuge and later in their integration. The choice factor often means a refugee has prior knowledge of their country of refuge and thus is psychologically prepared for any challenges or requirements. We will see the effects of this clearly in the following paragraphs.

The study attempted to investigate respondents' satisfaction with their lives in their refuge countries through four main elements:

- Ease of access to goods and services
- Relationships and social life
- The acceptance level of the host community
- A feeling of stability and confidence in the future

## 1. Satisfaction with access to goods and services

The refugee sample in Germany expressed the highest levels of satisfaction with ease of access to goods and services, with 84% of the respondents "very satisfied" and less than 1% dissatisfied to any degree. This was followed by the sample in the Netherlands, with 71.5% of its respondents expressing "very satisfied," compared to 2.5% at all dissatisfied.

The two cases in which dissatisfaction rates increased relatively were Sweden and France. The expression of any degree of dissatisfaction among the respondents in the Sweden sample reached 9.6%, while in the France sample it was 8.1%. In both cases, however, around 60% were "very satisfied."

### » Ease of access to goods and services

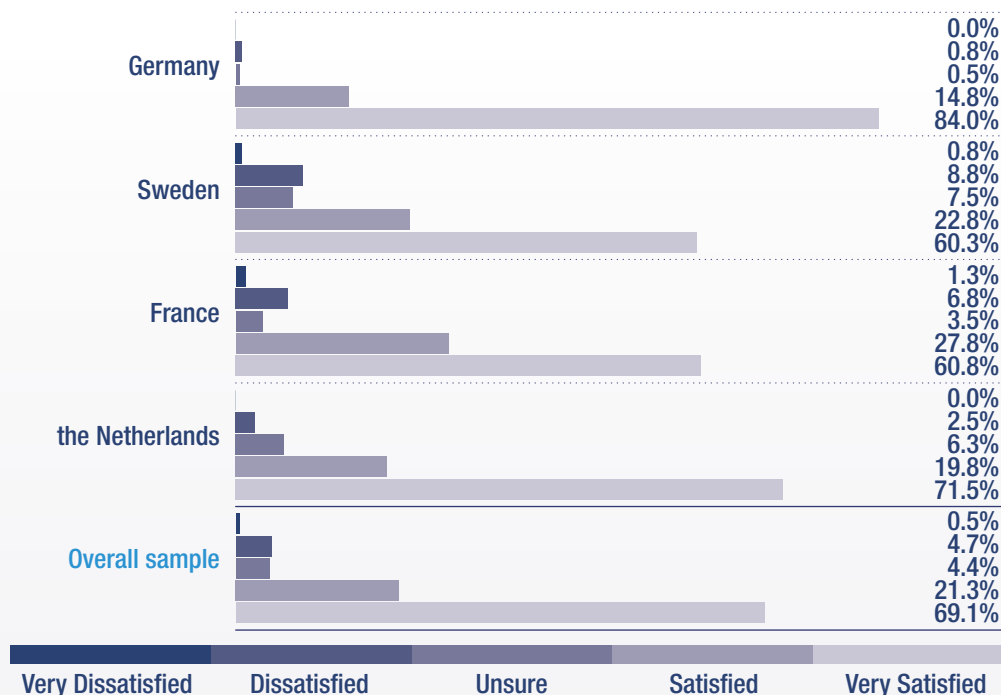


Figure 51 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the country of refuge and respondents' extent of satisfaction with access to goods and services.

Despite the variations in the responses between the four countries, it is clear that the vast majority of respondents are satisfied to some degree with the ease of access to services and goods that ultimately constitute the refugee's standard of living. The variation remains related to the level of financial and non-financial aid provided by each country to its refugees.



## 2. Satisfaction with relationships and social life in the country of refuge

Satisfaction with social life does not necessarily express the relationship of refugees with their host society solely; this indicator also includes intra-refugee relations. The overlap has a greater impact in countries with larger Syrian refugee communities, such as Germany. Taking this into account, we note that the percentages regarding satisfaction with social life are more concentrated in the “satisfied” option in all four countries. This option is higher in Germany and the Netherlands than in Sweden and France.

The percentages of “dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied” are almost equal in the Germany sample and that from the Netherlands at about 17.5%. It is highest among the Sweden sample respondents, who expressed their dissatisfaction at 32%, leaving the France sample the average at 24.3%.

### » Relationships and social life

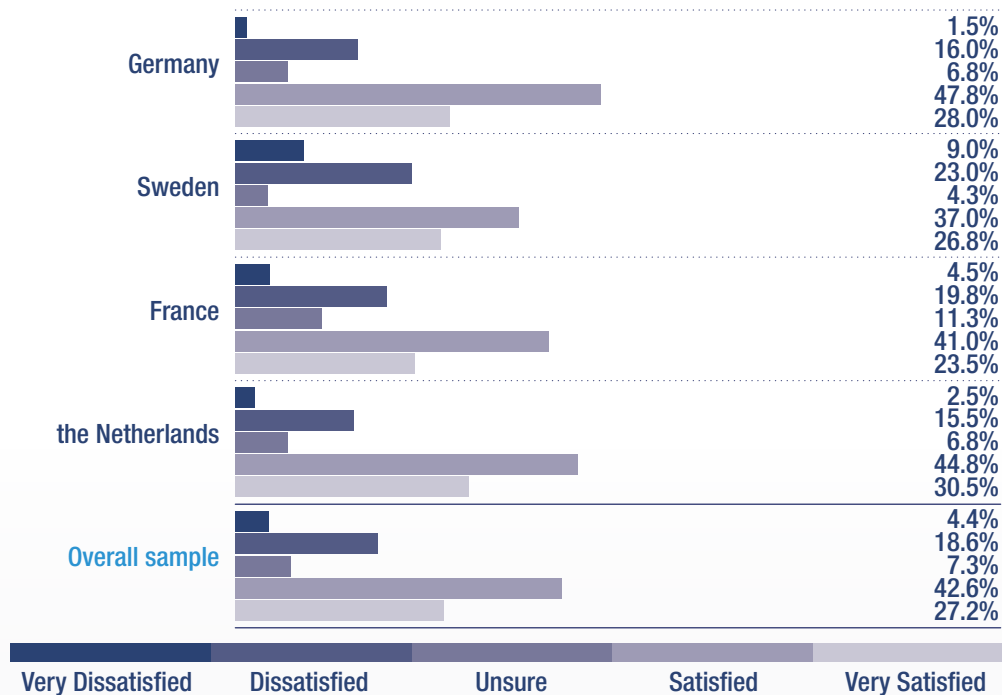


Figure 52 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the country of refuge and respondents' extent of satisfaction with relationships and social life in the country of refuge.

Germany and the Netherlands rate highest in satisfaction here, followed by France; Sweden again comes last in terms of the respondents' satisfaction with their social milieu. However, overall levels of satisfaction remain high, a result that contradicts the prevailing perception that social life for refugees in Europe is lukewarm and limited.

## 3. Satisfaction with the acceptance level of the host community

Here, too, the majority of respondents in each of the four countries appear happy with the level of acceptance in their host community, selecting either “satisfied” or “very satisfied.” In the sub-sample living in the Netherlands, 40.3% said “very satisfied.” The Germany sample was close, reaching 38.8%. It decreased a few percentage points in the France sample to 34.3%, and again the lowest was in the Sweden sample, with only 28.5% of the respondents saying they were “very satisfied.”

Also, the percentage of “dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied” responses in the Sweden sample was the highest of the four samples, with 17.6% of its total respondents—in other countries it was always less than 10%.

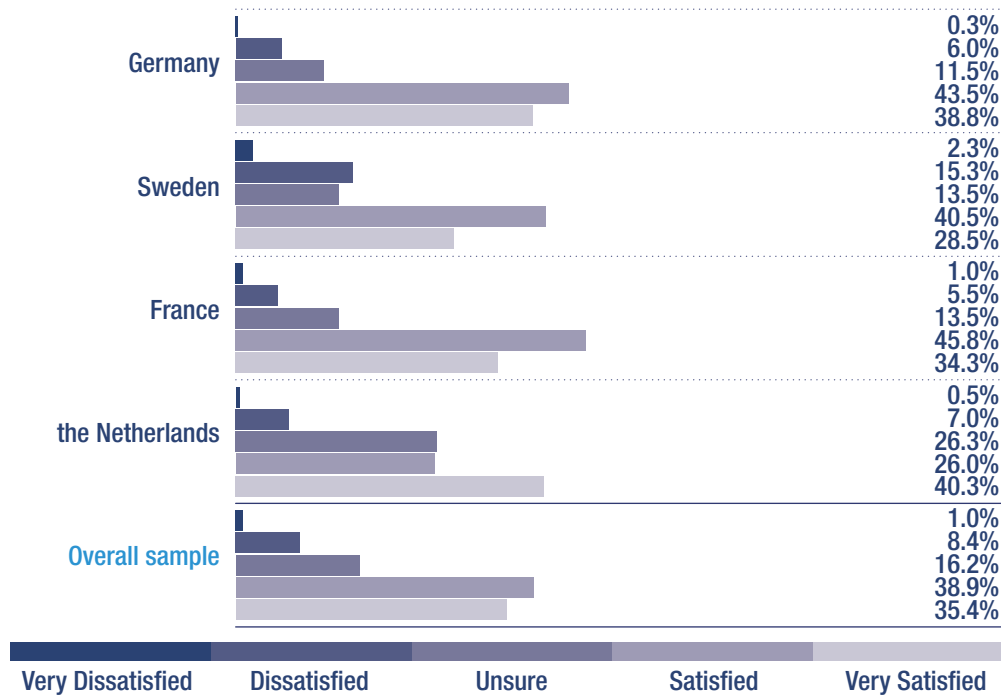
» **Host community acceptance of refugees**

Figure 53 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the country of refuge and respondents' extent of satisfaction with their host community's acceptance of refugees.

The results here are consistent with previous conclusions. The Netherlands and Germany rank high in terms of acceptance within the host communities, then France, and finally Sweden.

#### 4. Satisfaction with integration policies and programs adopted in the countries of refuge

The results of this question break, to some extent, the pattern noted in the previous results. The distribution patterns here differed to a greater degree, with the exception of Germany. The majority of respondents from the Germany sample are satisfied to some degree with the integration policies. The total of the two "satisfied" options is 70.8%, compared with just 10.5% who are "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied."

But the results differ in the other countries. For the sub-sample living in the Netherlands, 37% were satisfied and 29.8% dissatisfied. This was similar to the France sample, where 39.8% were satisfied and 36.8% dissatisfied.

Once again, the Sweden sample appears a more problematic case. Those respondents who were dissatisfied to some degree reached 48.1%—nearly half the sub-sample—compared with only 33% who were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the policies adopted by this country.



### » Approved integration policies and programs

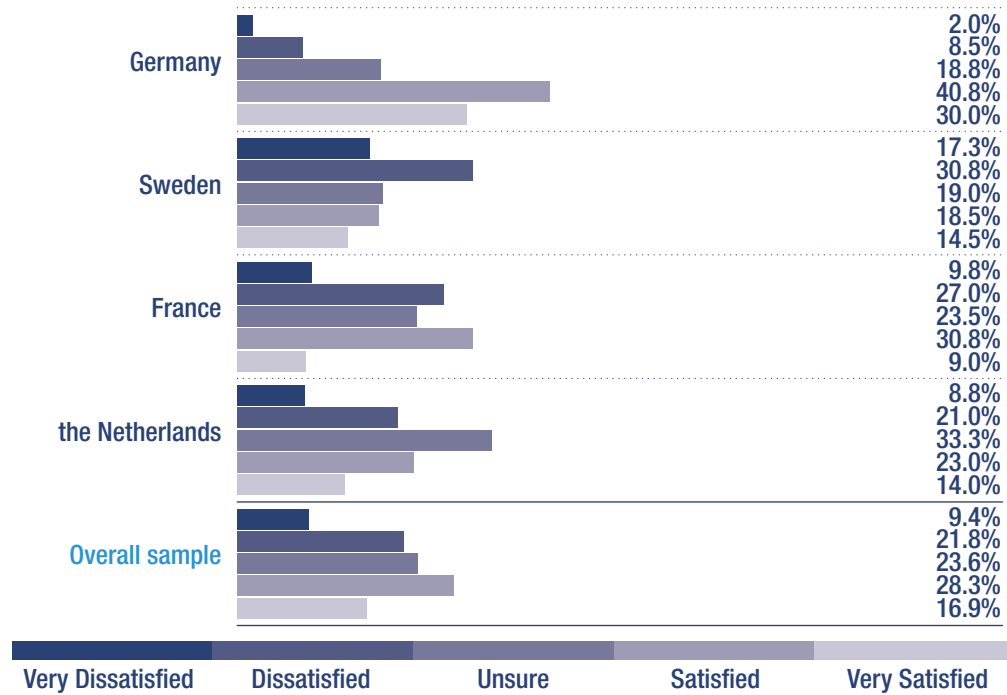


Figure 54 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variables of the country of refuge and respondents' extent of satisfaction with their host country's integration policies and programs.

Ultimately, when it comes to integration policies, Germany remains well ahead of the pack. The Netherlands and France settle in behind, while Sweden comes last yet again in terms of respondents' satisfaction with that nation's policies.

But what about refugees' concerns about possible future changes to these policies? With the growing number of refugees in recent years and the effects the influx has had on the host countries, many European nations seem more inclined to tighten their refugee policies. In this context, one-third of respondents in the Sweden sample expressed "serious concerns" about policies changing for the worse, the highest rate among the four sub-samples. In the Germany and France samples, this was around 20%. Those in the sample from the Netherlands appear to be the least concerned, as responses of "serious concerns" reached only 7.5%.

## » Do you have concerns that the country in which you now live will change refugee policies for the worse?

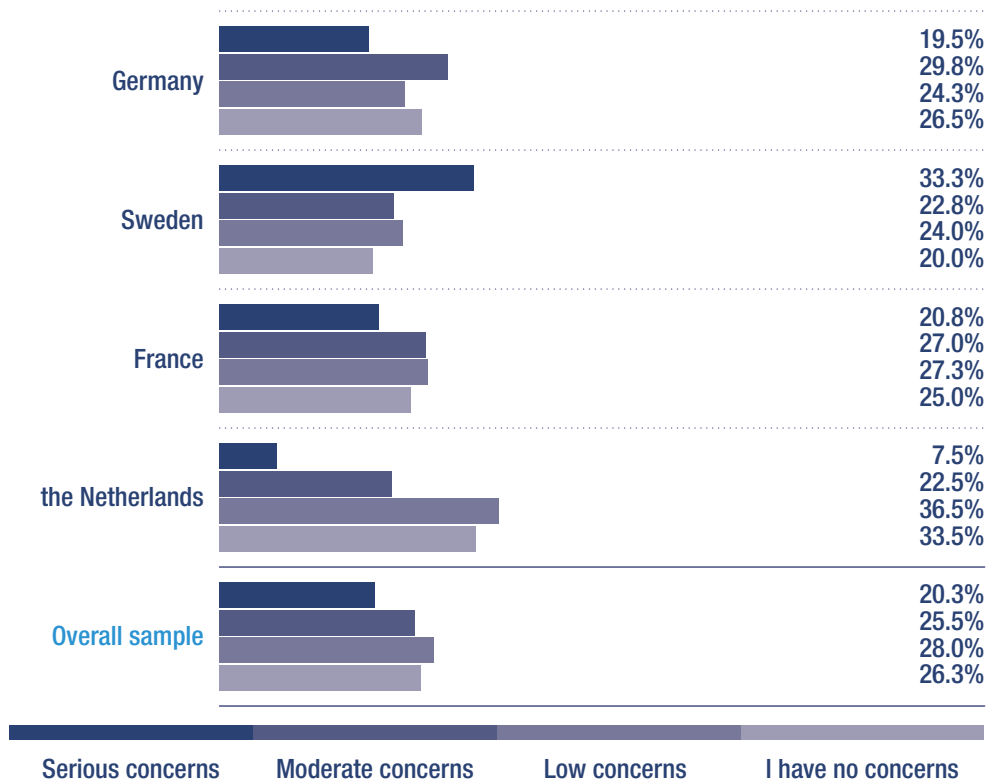


Figure 55 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to variables of the country of refuge and respondents' extent of concern about refugee policy changes.

Sweden, in particular, has witnessed a major shift in its handling of the refugee issue, from a policy of wide assimilation and granting permanent residency to most of those arriving in its territory before 2015, to more selectivity and scrutiny of refuge applications and the adoption of a short temporary residence system in subsequent years.<sup>(17)</sup> The Netherlands did not witness such a turn; and the country's refugee policies have remained largely stable, resulting in greater peace of mind among its refugees.

As for the larger countries with a history of receiving immigrants and refugees—France and Germany—their sub-samples recorded moderate and similar degrees of concern, despite the wide policy differences within the two countries, where Germany followed a policy of wide assimilation, and France followed a selective policy. Explaining these results may require more research and study.

(17) A telephone interview conducted by the researchers with a Syrian refugee teacher in Sweden, December 18, 2020.



## Chapter IV: The Relationship with the Homeland and the Thorny Question of Return

There is no doubt that Syrian refugees maintain a strong connection to their homeland—emotionally, socially, and perhaps even economically—and the hope of possibly returning one day in the future. However, the two sides of this relationship are highly complex, making it difficult for researchers to accept a linear impact. The complexity is attributed to the nature of the Syrian conflict itself, in terms of its violent extremes and its wide scope in both geographical and human terms.

Many refugees arrived in Europe carrying terrible memories of events they witnessed or were victims of in Syria. The psychological impact of these memories has resulted in a lack of desire by a large percentage of the respondents in this study to maintain their connection with the homeland. One of the young refugees we spoke to described the matter by saying, “Today I hate the country that witnessed all these atrocities.”<sup>(18)</sup>

The conflict has led to the uprooting of entire local communities from many areas in Syria, a practice that started in the town of Al-Qusayr in the countryside of Homs in 2013, then in the old neighborhoods of Homs in the following year. It later expanded to areas in Damascus and its countryside, and eventually to Aleppo and parts of Idlib. Thus, for many refugees, the entire concept of the homeland itself has vanished.

Further complexity lies in even asking the question of return to Syrian refugees today because many of the factors that led to their escape still exist. Many Syrian refugees in Europe—especially those who have undergone detention or prosecution experiences—share stories of nightmares on social media. The most terrifying element reported in those nightmares is that the dreamers see themselves back in Syria again; this has become known as the “nightmare of return.”<sup>(19)</sup>

Since the majority of new refugees left Syria for reasons directly or indirectly related to the conflict, the results of the survey show how the impact of direct causes is much greater than indirect ones. More than a third of the respondents (35.6%) stated that they left as a result of being affected by military operations, and 25.4% said that they were subjected to security prosecutions, which led to their exit. On the other hand, those who said they left mainly because of the deteriorating living conditions were 18.8%, while 15.1% left to join a family member abroad.

### » What is the main reason you left Syria?

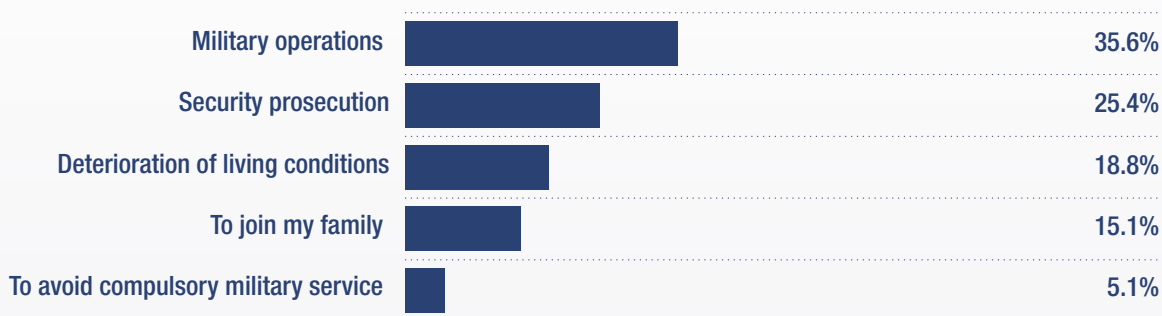


Figure 56 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of their main reason for leaving Syria.

Based on this background, this section of the study seeks to shed light on the issues of connection with the homeland and the hypothetical desire to return to it through the information and opinions made available by this survey. The chapter presents several indicators reflecting the degree of respondents' connection to their homeland. It also discusses the problematic question of return, exploring that possibility should the situation in Syria stabilize. The data includes the conditions of return for those who show a tendency to do so and the barriers for respondents unwilling to return.

(18) A telephone interview conducted by the researchers with a young Syrian musician, a refugee in Germany, December 9, 2020.

(19) Muammar Nakhle Facebook page, a Syrian refugee and specialist in treating victims of violence and torture, Facebook, accessed on December 16, 2020 <https://bit.ly/3gQYltx>

## 1. Connection with the homeland

This part is based on four indicators that reflect basic aspects of the surveyed refugees' relationship with their homeland:

- The social aspect, reflected by the presence of first-degree relatives still living in Syria.
- The economic aspect, reflected in the presence of respondents' property or business inside Syria.
- Interest in developments in the homeland, reflected in the degree of follow-up on Syrian news.
- The emotional aspect, reflected in the desire to visit the homeland.

Each of these indicators divides respondents into two categories: those with a strong or moderate connection to the homeland and those with a weak connection or no connection at all.

Unquestionably, the concept of connection to the homeland cannot be confined to these four indicators; the concept is multidimensional and complex, especially within the Syrian context. However, the aspects discussed in the survey are still valuable for providing information about the general essence of this connection.

The presence of first-degree relatives (parents, siblings, spouse, and/or children) still in Syria may be one of the most important reasons for new refugees' connection with the homeland, given the family's central position in the Syrian social system. The study data indicate that 38.1% of the respondents no longer have any first-degree relatives inside the country—although this percentage is not a majority, it remains a plurality. The most that can be deduced from this figure is that these people have lost a primary reason for their connection with the homeland without necessarily saying so, but the results of this indicator are further discussed in the following paragraphs.

### » Do you still have first-degree relatives in Syria?

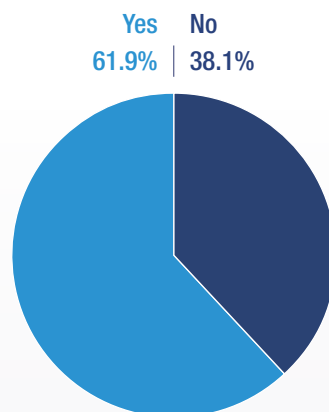


Figure 57 shows the distribution of the total sample respondents according to the variable of respondents having first-degree relatives in Syria.

The second question explores those who still own residential or business properties inside Syria, indicating an economic connection with the homeland. From the results, it appears that the majority of respondents no longer own any property or business inside Syria—63.2% answered “No.”

### » Do you still own properties or businesses in Syria?

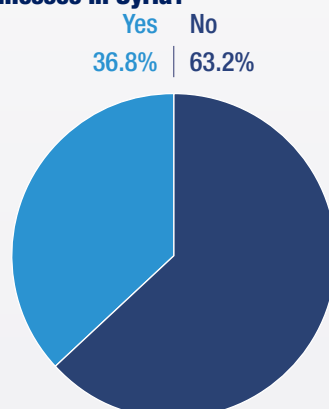


Figure 58 shows the distribution of the sample respondents according to the variable of whether respondents still own property or business in Syria.



But of the remaining 36.8% of the respondents who answered “Yes,” not all of them should automatically be seen as economically connected with the homeland at the present time. In fact, many left behind properties and businesses and have no access to them even through agents or relatives. The following figure illustrates this point, noting that some respondents have no information about the state of their properties, while others’ properties were destroyed, looted, or seized.

» **If you follow the conditions of at least one of your properties, you know they are:**

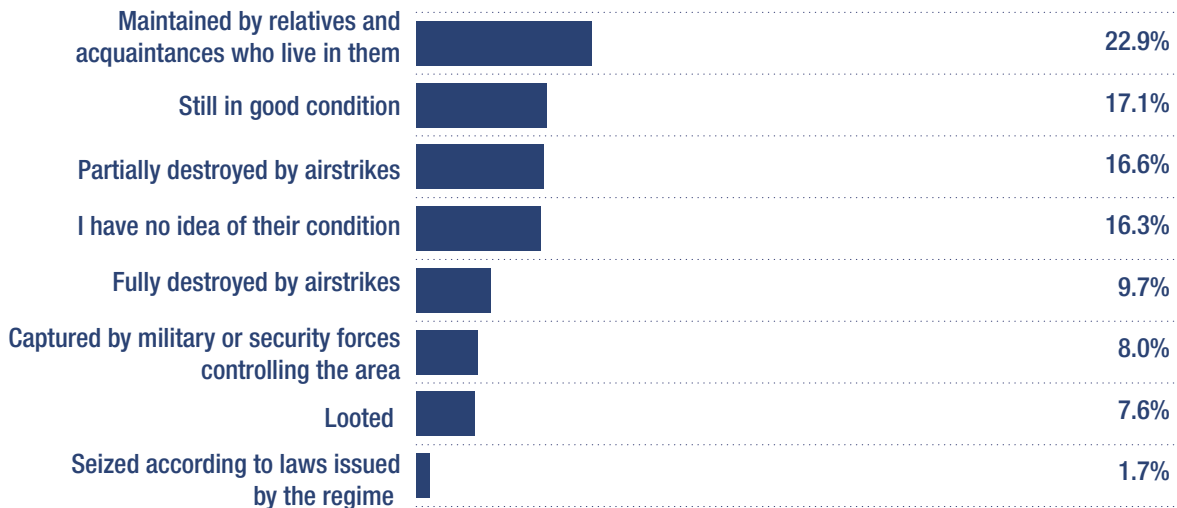


Figure 59 shows the distribution of the sample respondents who said they have properties in Syria according to the variable of the known condition of those properties.

Finally, we notice that those who said their property is still intact—or intact and they can still access it through agents or relatives—amounted to only 40.1% of the total of those who still have property. The number of these respondents reached 236 (which constitutes only 14.7% of the total study sample of 1600).

The third question about the relationship with the homeland is linked to the extent respondents follow the news of their areas in Syria. It is likely that those with the highest interest in their hometown news are the ones most connected to the homeland. Here, we find that respondents fall into three categories. The most connected, 26.8%, still follow the news of their areas on a daily basis. Nearly half, 48.2%, follow only from time to time or only important events. The third group, 25.1%, rarely or never follow the news; this is the group likely to be the least connected to the homeland.

» **To what degree do you follow the news about your area in Syria?**

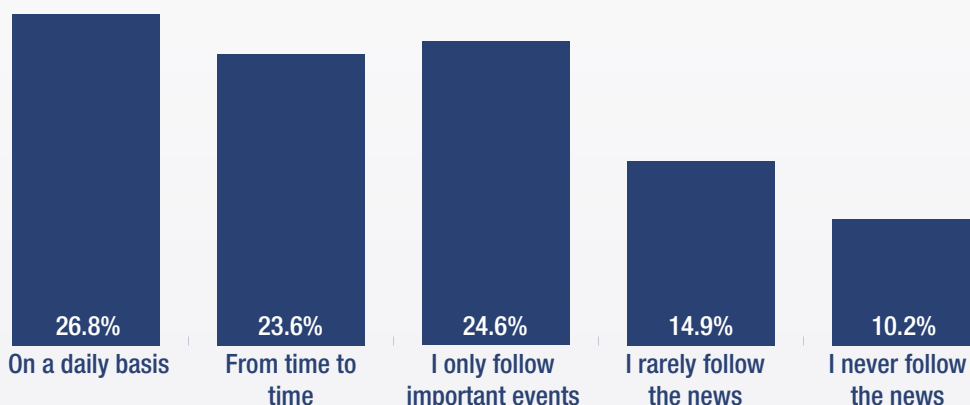


Figure 60 shows the distribution of the sample respondents according to the variable of following news related to the homeland.

The picture of homeland connection became clearer when respondents were asked about their desire to visit Syria. This question was stated as a hypothetical; we explained to the respondents that it concerned a desire only, not planning the matter or to what extent it is actually possible. Even when the question was stated this way, 31.9% of the respondents still said “No”—they have lost interest in visiting the homeland and are probably the least connected emotionally.



» **Do you currently feel a desire to visit Syria?**

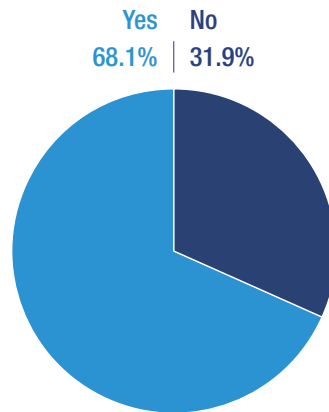


Figure 61 shows the distribution of the sample respondents according to the variable of a desire to visit Syria.

## 2. The Thorny Question of Return

The question about respondents' position on returning to Syria was placed in the survey conditional upon a general stabilization of the conditions in Syria. Despite this, the majority of the respondents in the sample said they would not seriously consider returning to and settling in Syria. The rest, only 33.9% of the respondents, expressed a willingness to return.

» **Would you seriously consider returning to live in Syria if conditions become stable?**

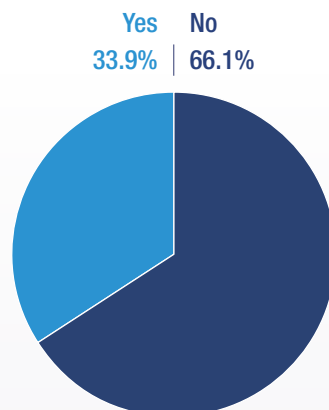


Figure 62 shows the distribution of the sample respondents according to the variable of their willingness to return to Syria should the conditions become stable.

Of course, the phrase “if conditions become stable” in the text of this question can have different meanings for different respondents. This is natural, given that the conflict in Syria has many facets, and is at the same time a local, regional, and international conflict. Therefore, we followed up this question with two additional questions—one addressed to those who were willing to return and the other to those who were not.

Regarding the approximately one-third of the total sample who expressed a willingness to return to Syria—542 respondents out of the 1600—we note that a basic condition for the majority of them (56.6%) is that a real political change takes place in the country, including changing parts of the authority. The second-largest percentage (34.5%), chose the cessation of military operations, regardless of the form of political settlement in the country. Other options—economic recovery, reconstruction, and guarantees for the safe return of refugees—were of little statistical importance compared to these two.



» **Hypothetically speaking, what would be your main prerequisite for making a decision to return**

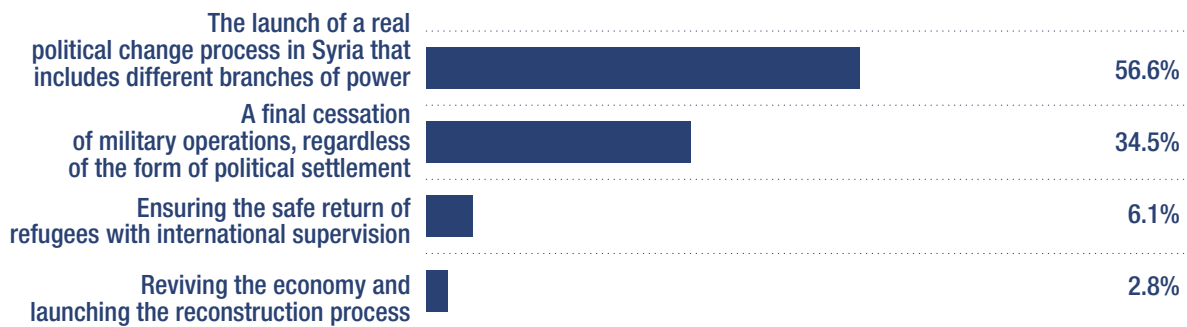


Figure 63 shows the distribution of the sample respondents who expressed willingness to return to Syria (n=542) according to the variable of respondents' main prerequisite for making that decision.

We can see a political position among the majority of respondents who are willing to return, embodied in the condition of a full or partial change within the power structure in the country before making the decision to return. This was not the case for the second-largest percentage, who seemed indifferent to the nature of the solution as long as it leads to a final cessation of violence in the country. The idea of international supervision over the return of refugees does not seem to have a major role in respondents' decision to return, nor does the prospect of revisions to economic conditions and reconstruction.

Visions of resolving the conflict in Syria can be classified into two types. The first is supported by the West and is based on a political transition process that leads to a new authority. The second is supported by the Russians and regime-allied countries, which consists of re-establishing the regime's control over the entire country and somehow "normalize" it by gaining international support.

It is likely that the first scenario would encourage a greater number of Syrian refugees to return. According to the data of the study sample, it is likely that about 91% of the total respondents who expressed willingness to return would do so if the first scenario takes place—it combines both conditions of a power change and the cessation of military operations. With the second scenario, which assumes the restoration of the regime's control over the entire country but still includes a final cessation of military operations, only 34.5% are willing to return.

The impact of the political position extends far beyond the limits of this sub-sample; it can be observed in the responses of the larger sub-sample who said they would not consider returning to and settling in Syria.

The respondents who expressed their unwillingness to return to Syria were given a set of common barriers to return. Each respondent was asked to separately assess the impact of each of these barriers in making the decision not to return, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 denotes the lowest impact and 5 the highest. In the following figure, we show the most prominent of these factors, with the total frequency of their selection as factors strongly affecting the respondents.

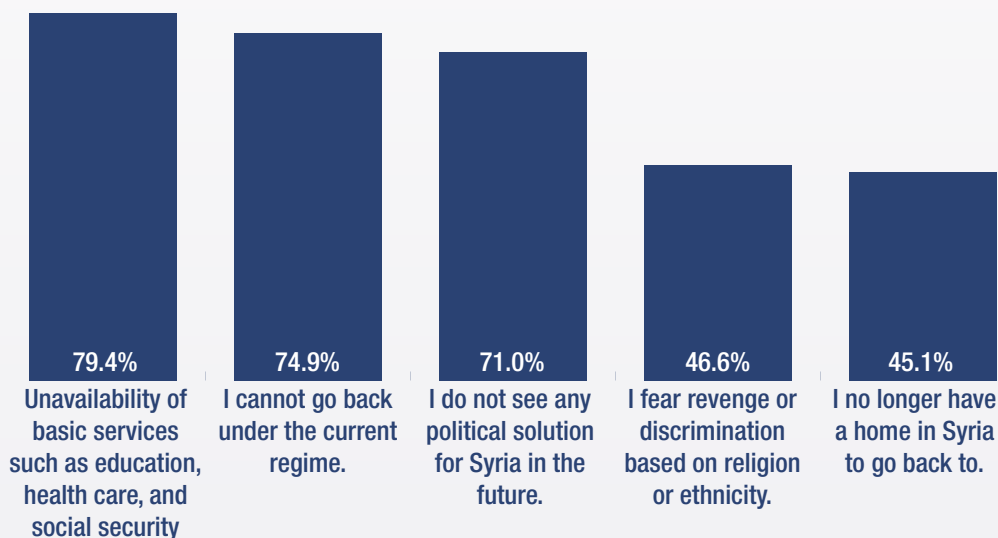


Figure 64 shows the preferences of the respondents who seem unwilling to return (n=1058) according to the variable of the factors most influencing their decision.

Respondents chose the absence of basic services such as education, health care, and social security as a major factor preventing them from thinking of returning to Syria—a 79.4% assessment. The second-assessed factor, at 74.9%, was political, an inability to consider returning under the current regime.

Despairing the possibility of reaching a political settlement in their country emerges third—71% see no political solution on the horizon, and this constitutes a highly significant factor in their decision not to return.

Two other factors rank highly among barriers to respondents' considering return to Syria, though considerably less than any of the first three. Fear of oppression on the basis of religion or ethnicity was chosen at 46.6% by respondents, followed by a loss of housing at 45.1%.

The bottom line of this section is that the issue of return for Syrian refugees is still a very complex issue due to a number of factors, close in their degree of impact. Lost security and stability, the economy and living conditions, and social factors related to families and local communities are all relevant; but above all is the political rigidity in the country, considered significant by both those who are considering return and those who are not.





## Conclusions and Recommendations

Younger, more educated, and more affluent respondent sub-groups tend to achieve higher levels of integration, especially in mastering their host country's language, which gives them an advantage over other refugees in the process of integration into new communities. As such, we recommend that integration programs should show a higher sensitivity toward the different needs of older and lower-income refugee groups and improve those factors that enable these groups to further integrate.

Women still face complex social and economic problems during the integration process, affecting their chances for independence. This can be attributed to the impact of traditional social structures on women even in countries of refuge. It seems that legal differences in the interest of promoting women's rights in countries of refuge are not sufficient by themselves to offset these structures. We therefore recommend that more help and assistance must be provided to women throughout the integration process, whether by achieving financial independence, or by providing services to help them overcome the obstacles of daily life and the danger of remaining at the mercy of their small community consisting of family and relatives only—which leads to a persistence of existing social problems in the original community despite better legal conditions in the country of refuge.

The religious background of refugees is a factor affecting their ability to integrate into new communities, whether due to host community rejection or simply because of cultural differences. This may lead to the creation of isolated social environments made up solely of Muslim refugees—especially Sunnis, who are exposed to the most significant discrimination in European societies according to some studies. Therefore, spaces for positive communication between Muslim refugees and the host community must be strengthened in order to break barriers and build bridges.

Refugees fleeing traumatic situations, such as military battles, face greater obstacles in integrating into new societies. This requires a strengthening of the frameworks for their integration.

Refugees who have resided for longer in the countries under study show less dependence on financial aid and a greater degree of integration and transformation into productive individuals within their new societies. This indicates that time is a very important factor in the integration process.

The extent of the social relations network is associated with an increase in refugees' ability to integrate into new societies. This means that refugees' housing particulars and their opportunities for creating greater social relations contribute practically to enhancing their integration into a new society.

In the comparative analysis between the four indicators of refugee integration in the four countries (language learning, employment, social relations with host societies, and the degree of integration priority), the results of the study showed that the Germany sample reflected the highest and most consistent rates of integration, with the sample in the Netherlands close behind. Third came the France sample; while it showed lower percentages in language and employment, its respondents showed a high degree of willingness and desire to integrate. The Sweden sample showed the lowest and least consistent results. Therefore, in light of these worrying indicators, we recommend that further consideration and study should be conducted regarding new Syrian refugees in Sweden, especially regarding aspects of social communication and the relationship between refugees and the host society.

As for new refugees' perceptions of the host community and the extent of its acceptance of them, the Sweden sample showed the lowest rates, followed by the Netherlands. Germany's sample again reflected the highest rates, with France second. The study tends to relate these results to the size of these countries in terms of population and their historical experience with immigrants and refugees. Germany and France have a history of receiving immigrants and refugees, which has resulted in an accumulation of societal experience and reflects a greater acceptance of refugees by the host community with less concern over their presence, unlike the Netherlands and Sweden, both smaller and less acclimated.

With regard to refugees' life-satisfaction in their refuge countries, including the level of satisfaction with integration policies adopted by their countries of refuge, the samples of Germany and the Netherlands showed greater degrees of life-satisfaction compared with the France sample and even further ahead of the Sweden sample. Therefore, we recommend that those concerned with the issue of integration in the host countries should more fully involve refugees themselves in the creation of policies related to them. This would increase both the efficacy of these policies and the refugees' acceptance and positive interaction with them.

The study showed that the majority of Syrian refugees likely still have a strong connection to their homeland, reflected in the desire of two-thirds of the sample respondents to visit Syria if they had the opportunity. Three-quarters of the respondents were interested, to average or high degrees, in following the news of their country and areas. On the other hand, about a third of the respondents seem to have little or no connection with the homeland.

Regarding the issue of returning to and settling in Syria, the majority of respondents expressed an unwillingness to do so—which is understandable in light of the continuing conflict in their country. Approximately one-third of our respondents said they would seriously consider returning one day, but most of them conditioned that return on a political change taking place in the country which leads to changing part or all of the existing authority. As for the larger percentage who said they would not consider returning to Syria, they referenced many factors barring them from considering return, including the absence of basic services and the existence of the current regime in power. Here it should be emphasized that the most significant factor in the decision of refugees to return to Syria is the political factor. Therefore, we recommend that those countries interested in returning Syrians to Syria should press for preparing a political transition path. Without this, European countries should not expect the return of large numbers of refugees even if the situation becomes relatively stable in Syria under the rule of the current regime.





# The Integration of Syrian Refugees into Europe

## Survey Questions

### Section 1: Demographics

1	Age	[number]
2	Gender	1 Female 2 Male 3 Other
3	Area of Origin	1 Al-Hasakah 2 Al-Sweida 3 Aleppo 4 Ar-Raqqa 5 Da'ara 6 Damascus 7 Dayr az Zawr 8 Hama 9 Homs 10 Idlib 11 Lattakia 12 Quneitra 13 Rural Damascus 14 Tartus
4	Education Level	1 No Formal Education 2 Elementary (Level 1, grades 1-4) 3 Primary (Level 2, grades 5-9) 4 Secondary (Level 3, grades 10-12) 5 University 6 Post-Graduate
5	Were you previously employed in Syria?	1 Yes 2 No <a href="#">(Skip to #7)</a>
6	What was the nature of your work in Syria?	1 Public or private employee 2 Worker or craftsman 3 Agricultural work <a href="#">(Skip to #8)</a> 4 Employer 5 Other (please specify)
7	Why didn't you work?	1 Child 2 Student 3 Full-time homemaker 4 Unemployed 5 Did not need a job 6 Other (please specify)

8	What was your previous standard of living in Syria?	1	Very high
		2	High
		3	Average
		4	Low
		5	Very low
9	Marital status	1	Married
		2	Single <a href="#">(Skip to #11)</a>
		3	Divorced (previously married)
		4	Widowed (previously married)
		5	Other (please specify)
10	Do you have children?	1	No
		2	Yes
11	With whom do you currently live?	1	Married family (spouse and/or children)
		2	Unmarried family (parents and/or siblings)
		3	My non-immediate relatives
		4	My friends
		5	Group accommodations
		6	Alone
12	Ethnicity	1	Arab
		2	Kurd
		3	Syriac/Assyrian
		4	Turkmen
		5	Circassian
		6	Armenian
		7	Other (please specify)
		8	Prefer not to answer
13	Religion	1	Sunni
		2	Shiite
		3	Alawite
		4	Christian
		5	Druze
		6	Ismaili
		7	Murshidi
		8	Yazidi
		9	Other (please specify)
		10	Prefer not to answer





## Section 2: Your Refugee Story

101	What is the most important reason that motivated you to leave Syria?	1	Deterioration of living conditions	
		2	Military operations	
		3	Security prosecution	
		4	To join my family	
		5	To avoid compulsory military service	
		6	Other (please specify)	
102	When did you leave Syria?	[Year]		
103	Did you live in other areas, inside or outside Syria, for longer than six months before you arrived in the country in which you are currently a refugee?	1	Yes	
		2	No <span style="float: right;">(Skip to #105)</span>	
104	In what places did you live in before your current location? How long did you stay in each?		Location	How long stayed?
		1	Turkey	[x]
		2	Jordan	[x]
		3	Lebanon	[x]
		4	Regime-controlled areas in Syria	[x]
		5	Opposition-controlled areas in Syria	[x]
		6	Autonomous Administration areas in Syria	[x]
		7	Other (please specify)	[x]
105	When did you arrive in your current refuge country?	[Year]		
106	Did you have a role in choosing your country of refuge?	1	No choice; Circumstances dictated	
		2	No choice; Resettlement	
		3	Choice: Staying with family members or friends	
		4	Choice: Ease of residency/reunion procedures	
		5	Choice: Better refugee support than other options	
		6	Other (please specify)	
107	What is your current legal status?	1	In the process of obtaining official residence status	
		2	Temporary residence (0–3 years)	
		3	Temporary residence (3+ years)	
		4	Permanent residence	
		5	Citizen of the country of refuge	
		6	Other (please specify)	



108	Language mastery of the country of refuge	1	Very weak	
		2	Weak	
		3	Average	
		4	Good	
		5	Very good	
109	Do you currently receive government financial support as a refugee?	1	No	
		2	Yes	<a href="#">(Skip to #111)</a>
110	When did you stop receiving government financial support for refugees?		[number of months ago]	
111	Are you currently employed?	1	No	<a href="#">(Skip to #113)</a>
		2	Yes	
112	What is the nature of that work?	1	Public or private employee	
		2	Worker or craftsman	
		3	Agricultural work	<a href="#">Skip to Section 3</a>
		4	Employer	
		5	Other (please specify)	
113	Why don't you have a job?	1	I am currently studying the language	
		2	Student	
		3	Full-time homemaker	
		4	Unemployed	
		5	Do not need a job	
		6	Other (please specify)	





### Section 3: Social Relationships and Level of Life Satisfaction

201	How would you describe your social network, compared to your fellow refugees, in the country where you live today?	1	Wide
		2	Average
		3	Limited
202	Who forms most of your social network?	1	Family and kinship relationships
		2	Relationships with other Syrian refugees
		3	Relationships with non-Syrian Communities
		4	Relationships with the citizens of the country of refuge
203	Do you have close friends among the citizens of your country of refuge?	1	No
		2	Yes
204	Describe your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of your life in your country of refuge:	Relationships and social life	
		1	Very satisfied
		2	Satisfied
		3	Dissatisfied
		4	Very dissatisfied
		5	Unsure
Easy access to goods and services	1	Very satisfied	
	2	Satisfied	
	3	Dissatisfied	
	4	Very dissatisfied	
	5	Unsure	
Host community acceptance of refugees	1	Very satisfied	
	2	Satisfied	
	3	Dissatisfied	
	4	Very dissatisfied	
	5	Unsure	
Approved integration policies and programs	1	Very satisfied	
	2	Satisfied	
	3	Dissatisfied	
	4	Very dissatisfied	
	5	Unsure	
A feeling of stability	1	Very satisfied	
	2	Satisfied	
	3	Dissatisfied	
	4	Very dissatisfied	
	5	Unsure	

205	To what extent is integration into the host community a priority for you?	1	A top priority
		2	An equal priority with other issues
		3	Not a top priority right now
206	On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate your degree of integration into your host community?	[x]	
207	On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest, how familiar are you with the laws regarding refugees in the country where you live?	[x]	
208	Culture and lifestyle differences	1	High impact
		2	Average impact
		3	Low impact
		4	No impact
	Pressure from laws and government institutions to deal with refugees	1	High impact
		2	Average impact
		3	Low impact
		4	No impact
	Refugees' lack of stability and confidence in the future	1	High impact
		2	Average impact
		3	Low impact
		4	No impact
Refugees themselves resisting integration	1	High impact	
	2	Average impact	
	3	Low impact	
	4	No impact	
Refugees feeling they are not welcome	1	High impact	
	2	Average impact	
	3	Low impact	
	4	No impact	
Not involving refugees in the making of integration policies	1	High impact	
	2	Average impact	
	3	Low impact	
	4	No impact	
Other crucial factors (Please specify, note importance)	1	High impact	
	2	Average impact	
	3	Low impact	
	4	No impact	





209	Do you have concerns that the country in which you live will change refugee policies for the worse?	1	Serious concerns
		2	Moderate concerns
		3	Low concerns
		4	I have no concerns
210	What is your position on the following issues? A wife's right to obtain a divorce without her husband's consent	1	Strongly agree
		2	Agree
		3	Neutral
		4	Disagree
		5	Strongly disagree
		Contraception	1
	2		Agree
	3		Neutral
	4		Disagree
	5		Strongly disagree
	Miscarriage	1	Strongly agree
		2	Agree
		3	Neutral
		4	Disagree
		5	Strongly disagree
	Sexual relations outside of marriage	1	Strongly agree
		2	Agree
		3	Neutral
		4	Disagree
		5	Strongly disagree
	Homosexuality	1	Strongly agree
2		Agree	
3		Neutral	
4		Disagree	
5		Strongly disagree	
Drinking alcoholic beverages	1	Strongly agree	
	2	Agree	
	3	Neutral	
	4	Disagree	
	5	Strongly disagree	

211	To what degree do you believe the following issues are a burden on host countries?	
	The magnitude of refugee numbers and their economic impact on the host country	1 High burden
		2 Average burden
		3 Low burden
		4 No burden
	The far right and its exploitation of refugee issues increasing tension in host societies	1 High burden
		2 Average burden
		3 Low burden
		4 No burden
	Communication difficulties between the host community and refugees	1 High burden
		2 Average burden
		3 Low burden
		4 No burden
	Political and media exploitation of the refugee problem	1 High burden
		2 Average burden
		3 Low burden
		4 No burden
	Economic burdens on host countries	1 High burden
		2 Average burden
		3 Low burden
		4 No burden
212	What do you think of the following statements?	
	“The host community views refugees as a drain on the local economy and they contribute to increased unemployment.”	1 Strongly agree
		2 Agree
		3 Neutral
		4 Disagree
		5 Strongly disagree
	“The local community views refugees as a danger to Western life.”	1 Strongly agree
		2 Agree
		3 Neutral
		4 Disagree
		5 Strongly disagree
	“European countries receiving refugees is part of a conspiracy against Arabs and Muslims.”	1 Strongly agree
		2 Agree
		3 Neutral
		4 Disagree
		5 Strongly disagree
	“The host community welcomes refugees regardless of religious or ethnic affiliation.”	1 Strongly agree
		2 Agree
		3 Neutral
		4 Disagree
		5 Strongly disagree





## Section 4: The Relationship with the Homeland

301	Do you still own properties or businesses in Syria?	1	No	<a href="#">(Skip to #303)</a>
		2	Yes	
302	If you follow the conditions of at least one of your properties, you know they are:	1	Still in good condition	
		2	Completely destroyed by bombings	
		3	Partially damaged by bombings	
		4	Plundered	
		5	Captured by military or security forces controlling the area	
		6	Confiscated according to laws issued by the regime	
		7	Maintained by relatives and acquaintances who live in them	
		8	I have no idea of their condition	
303	Do you have immediate family still in Syria?	1	No	
		2	Yes	
304	Are you still in communication with friends or relatives in Syria?	1	No	<a href="#">(Skip to #306)</a>
		2	Yes	
305	How frequent are those communications?	1	Almost daily	
		2	Weekly	
		3	Monthly	
		4	On occasions and when needed	
306	To what degree do you follow the news about your area in Syria?	1	On a daily basis	
		2	From time to time	
		3	I only follow important events	
		4	I rarely follow the news	
		5	I never follow the news	
307	Do you currently feel a desire to visit Syria? (discounting plans or possibility—simply the desire)	1	No	<a href="#">(Skip to #310)</a>
		2	Yes	
308	Would you seriously consider returning to live in Syria if conditions become stable?	1	No	<a href="#">(Skip to #310)</a>
		2	Yes	

309	In the event that you are unable to return to your original area of residence, would you be willing to return to live in another area in Syria?	1	No
		2	Yes
310	Hypothetically speaking, what would be your main prerequisite for making a decision to return?	1	The launch of a real political change process in Syria that includes different branches of power
		2	A final cessation of military operations, regardless of the form of political settlement
		3	Ensuring the safe return of refugees with international supervision
		4	Reviving the economy and launching our reconstruction process
		5	Other (please specify)
311	Please specify the reason(s) for your unwillingness to return, and rank them by importance on a scale of 1 to 5.	1	I cannot go back under the current regime
		2	I fear arrest, kidnapping, murder, legal and security prosecution
		3	Failure to provide basic services such as education, health, and insurance
		4	Widespread damage to my area
		5	I fear revenge or discrimination based on religion or ethnicity
		6	Return is not safe and unclear
		7	I no longer have a home in Syria to go back to
		8	I am professionally settled/with family in Europe
		9	I am married to a European
		10	I do not see any political solution for Syria in the future



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THE DAY AFTER  
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