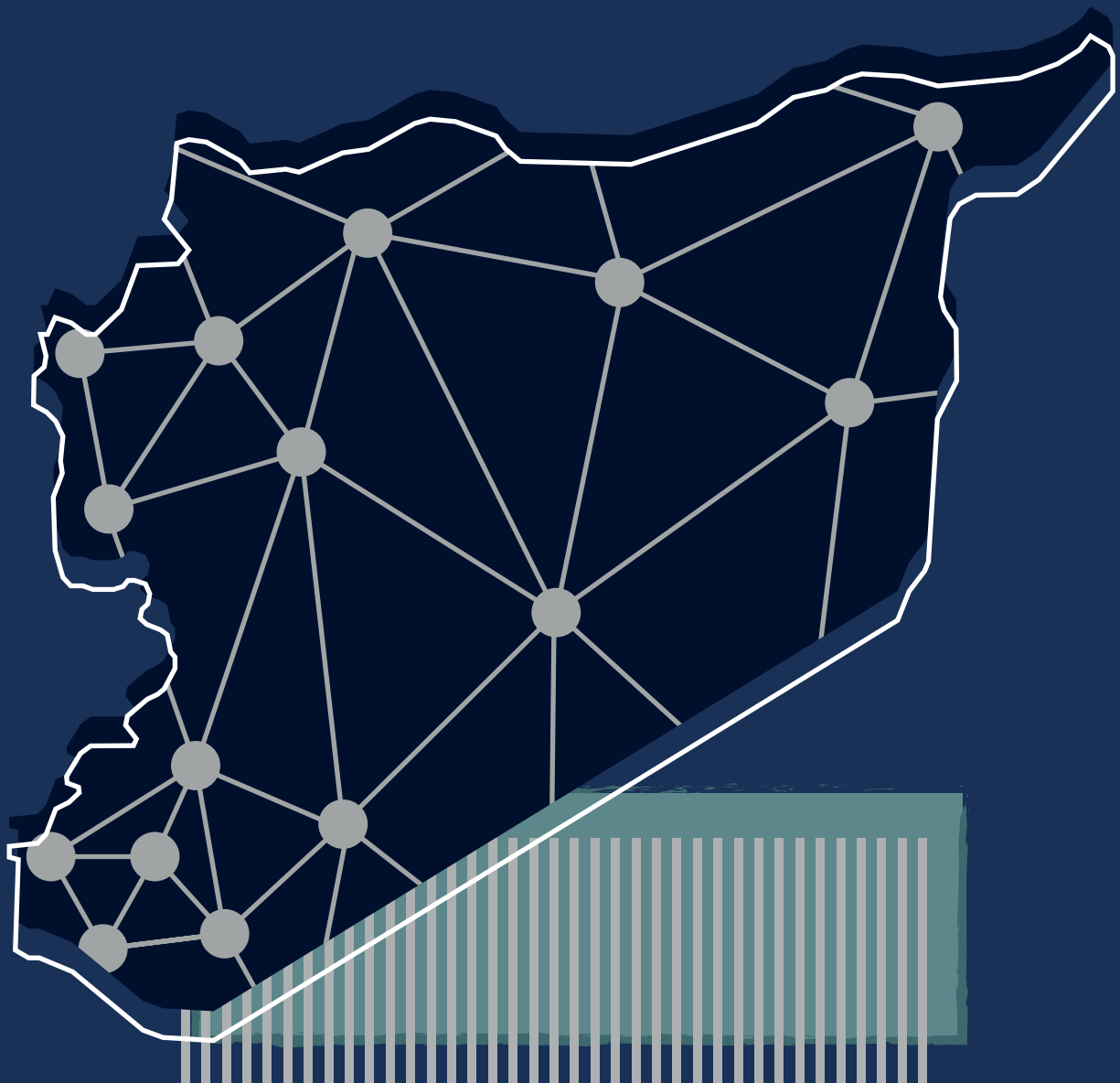




Syrians' Perceptions on the Concept and Implementation of Decentralization

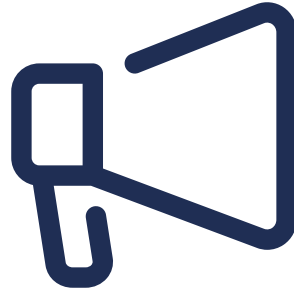


اليوم التالي
لدعم الانتقال الديمقراطي في سوريا



THE DAY AFTER
Supporting Democratic Transition In Syria

Syrians' Perceptions on the Concept and Implementation of Decentralization



2022

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

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Executive Summary

■ The targeted sample of this study consisted of 2500 Syrians (53.2% women and 46.8% men). Respondents are based in Syria, and outside of it, and hail from various religious, sectarian, national, and ethnic backgrounds. The respondents have varying educational levels and living standards.

■ One-third of the respondents (36.2%) think that decentralization will reduce the powers of the central government and give independent organizations more power over their political affairs and local economy and services. 19.5 % of the respondents view that decentralization will lead to greater social engagement and a higher representation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes. 17.3% of the respondents believe that decentralization will improve the quality of services provided by state institutions. 12.4% think that decentralization will lead to increased transparency and accountability in the work of central government institutions.

■ The majority of respondents considered decentralization a catalyst for positive change and a tool of political transformation that will lead to stability and peace and a democratic transformation in Syria. 77.6% of respondents agreed that implementing decentralization in the future in Syria will support the democratic transition. 77.5% think that decentralization will reduce the intensity of the conflict and help build peace within communities. However, the rates dropped to 59% when respondents were asked if decentralization would help achieve justice for victims of the conflict and ensure reparation and compensation.

■ 92% of the respondents agreed that the local community should elect the governor directly instead of being appointed by the executive power, as is the case today.

■ Nearly 78% of the surveyed sample believe that the elected local councils should enjoy legislative powers, including, for example, promulgating laws and legislation to be implemented at the local level on the condition that they do not contradict the broad guidelines of the country's constitution. The highest approval rate was amongst the Kurdish respondents, at 87.6%. Other national and ethnic minorities like Circassians, Turkmens, and Armenians followed, with an approval rate of 79.6%. Arabs came third with a 75.3% approval.

■ The high approval rates for allowing the localities a role in the legislative process are not restricted to the areas outside the control of the Syrian regime. 76% of the respondents who are residents in the areas under the control of the Syrian regime also agree that the local authorities should be given more legislative power and be allowed more independence from the central authorities.

69.2% of the surveyed sample view that each Syrian governorate should have its independent judicial system that functions within the administrative borders of the

governorate according to local legislation and laws, on the condition that these laws do not contradict the broad guidelines of the country's constitution. Those who agreed were 89.5% in North-East Syria, 82.7% in the Northern Aleppo countryside, 69.5% in North-West Syria, and 68.4% in the areas under the control of the Syrian regime.

- 76.8% of the surveyed sample agreed that the elected local councils should have the right to adopt another language, in addition to Arabic, the official language of the state, in the region they govern, based on ethnic and national diversity of the population in the administrative units affiliated to these councils.

- The approval rate for adopting another official language, in addition to Arabic, based on the predominant language/dialect in each region reached 93.3% in North-East Syria, 88% in North-West Syria, and 83% in Northern Aleppo countryside, and finally 69% in regime-held areas.

- The majority of the surveyed sample favored giving the elected councils of localities the leading role in surveying and determining the needs of the local communities. However, respondents believe that tasks like developing education, health and security, and tax policies should be left to the central government. governorate councils should be responsible for recruiting staff in most sectors.

- The sample assigned the governorates councils to determine the locations of education, health facilities, internal security forces headquarters and police stations. At the same time, the majority of respondents agreed that the responsibility to oversee and monitor the work of these different sectors is within the jurisdiction of the central government and its various ministries and directorates.

1- Introduction



This survey explores the views of Syrians — regardless of their background, affiliations, their place of origin or residence — on the concept of decentralization, and how it might impact politics, society and governance in the future. It analyzes statistical indicators of decentralization, and how it might affect post-conflict Syria, especially regarding the future relationship between the central authorities and the localities and the distribution of roles and powers among them in the various sectors. It also explores the possible role of decentralization in increasing social engagement and political representation and in achieving good governance and ensuring justice to the victims of the conflict, building domestic peace, and supporting stability. The study presents a survey of a large sample that represents the various national, ethnic, and sectarian backgrounds of Syrians, and the respondents are geographically distributed in all the various regions in Syria and the neighboring countries and countries of asylum in Europe.

The survey results show an acceptance of decentralization and its potential impact on the political and administrative dynamics of the country and the future of transitional justice, accountability, democratic transition, and peacebuilding efforts in the period of political transition in Syria. In addition, the surveyed sample highlighted the need to develop the legislative, judicial, electoral systems and the cultural and developmental frameworks in the post-conflict era. The current political and ideological polarization in Syria is rife with tension, and the country is divided into various spheres of influence with warring political and military powers in control, each implementing a different governance framework.

However, the sample showed an agreement on the need to reduce the powers of the central government and allow localities in the future extensive powers over the local economy, politics, and services.

Based on the survey findings, this study presents many recommendations and suggestions regarding the constitutional, legal and civic and theoretical frameworks; for example, it suggests stipulating in the constitution that decentralization is a foundation of the system of governance in the state. The constitution should determine the roles and powers of localities and their administrative units and their relationship and interaction with the central government. The study further suggests introducing new legal stipulations and incorporating them into the local administration law; for example, it suggests that the local governor should be elected directly by the local community, which would make him accountable to his community.

The study starts with introducing the research methodology. Second, it clarifies the general categories and subcategories of the surveyed sample. The third section of the study examines the concept of decentralization and its impact on the political dynamics and governance in post-conflict Syria. The fourth section reviews decentralization in the Syrian legal context, and focuses on the emerging governance systems in the different spheres of influence inside Syria. The fifth section of the study analyzes the findings of the survey and the statistical indicators of the sample regarding expectations of the impact of decentralization on dynamics in post-conflict Syria. It focuses on opinions about how decentralization would reshape the legislative, judicial, and electoral systems, and how it would impact the distribution of powers between central authorities and the localities across the various sectors, including health, education, security, taxation and economic development.

2- The Methodology and Sample Categorization

A quantitative research method was used for data collection, and the survey used closed-ended questions. The survey was created based on the outputs of brainstorming sessions with a group of experts from various Syrian civil society organizations working on issues related to decentralization, governance, and local administration. The survey questions were tailored to the Syrian context, and its statistical indicators were used to develop recommendations relevant to the political and governance dynamics of the political transition period in Syria.

Data collection was conducted between Aug 20, 2021 and Sep 20, 2021 by a group of fifty-four field researchers distributed among the majority of the Syrian governorates and neighboring countries and in countries Syrians sought asylum. The field researchers received extensive training on decentralization and its impact. In addition, they received further training on the best practices of data collection in the context of conflict to ensure the confidentiality of the respondents' personal information and to avoid subjecting them to any psychological pressure or political indoctrination.

The study relied on primary data, which included 2500 surveys with Syrian males and females, above the age of eighteen, who were distributed in and outside Syria, and hail from different religious, national, and ethnic backgrounds, and are of various educational levels and living standards. Table number 1 clarifies the subcategories of the sample and the gender, national, religious affiliations of the respondents and their places of residence, level of education, income level and living standards.

Limitations: This sample is not representative of the views of all Syrians and their various backgrounds, identities, political views, and ideological beliefs. However, the sample is relatively large and has taken into consideration, as much as possible, gender and religious factors, and the national diversity of Syrians, and included Syrians who live in Syria and in countries of asylum where respondents are from various education backgrounds and living standards. The sample generated indicators that are reliable and reflect the views of Syrians about the implementation of decentralization in the future.

Table (1): Subcategories of the sample

Gender		
	Numbers	Percentage
Male	1169	%46.8
Female	1331	%53.2
Age group		
	Numbers	Percentage
18-25	582	%23.3
26-39	1001	%40
40-59	796	%31.8
60+	121	%4.8
Geographic location		
	Numbers	Percentage
EU countries	394	%15.8
Neighboring countries	649	%26
Regime-held areas	792	%31.7
North-West Syria (Idlib and its surrounding areas)	144	%5.8
Northern Aleppo countryside	209	%8.4
North-East Syria	312	%12.5
Educational level		
	Numbers	Percentage
Illiterate	33	%1.3
Secondary	1047	%41.9
Undergraduate Higher Education	1035	%41.4
Advanced Degree	108	%4.3
Primary	277	%11.1

Income Level		
	Numbers	Percentage
Medium (I can provide for most basic needs)	933	%37.3
High (I can provide all my basic needs)	386	%15.4
Very High (I can provide all my basic needs and have savings)	126	%5
Low (I can provide some of my basic needs)	910	%36.4
Very Low (I can't provide any of my basic needs)	145	%5.8
Nationality / Ethnicity		
	Numbers	Percentage
Arab	1693	%67.7
Kurd	454	%18.2
Turkmen	128	%5.1
Syriac	83	%3.3
Armenian	46	%1.8
Circassian	32	%1.3
Assyrian	23	%0.9
Other	13	%0.5
I Prefer not to say	28	%1.1

Religion/ Sect / Denomination		
	Numbers	Percentage
Sunni	1633	%65.3
Christian	243	%9.7
Druze	153	%6.1
Alawite	145	%5.8
non-believer	61	%2.4
Ismaili	73	%2.9
Shia	30	%1.2
Other	58	%2.3
I Prefer not to say	104	%4.2

Table (1): Subcategories of the sample

3- Decentralization in Post-Conflict Eras

Since the end of the cold war, adopting decentralization in countries emerging from conflicts has become a crucial feature of implementing political and institutional reforms. Decentralization has been stipulated in many political settlements and post-conflict constitutions as a cornerstone to build peace and support stability and help the country move towards reconstruction and early recovery.^[1]

Most scholars who support the implementation of decentralization in post-conflict contexts argue that decentralization is a political tool and an institutional framework that can promote democracy and increase the political and social representation in the decision-making mechanisms both on the local and national levels.^[2] Several comparative studies show that decentralization increases the capacity of surveying and determining the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged groups more inclusively and accurately and that many essential services such as health, education, and hygiene can be provided at a lower cost by the localities compared to central government institutions.^[3]

[1] Braathen, E. and Hellevik, S. (2006), *The Role of Decentralization in Peacemaking and Conflict Management Processes*. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research.

[2] Robinson, M. (2007), *Does Decentralization Improve Equity and Efficiency in Public Service Delivery Provision?*. IDS Bulletin, Vol. 38, Brighton.

[3] Schou, A. and Haug, M. (2005), *'Decentralization in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations'*, Working Paper, no. 139, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Oslo

Furthermore, localized governance institutions can increase the negotiation capacity between the local communities and the state, which would enhance the social ownership of decision-making mechanisms and broaden the margin of accountability and monitoring by the citizens^[4] ^[5].

Although many countries emerging from conflict adopted decentralization, an increasing number of scholars and policymakers are now warning against the dangers of exercising decentralization without adapting it to the characteristics and specific political context of the local communities of these countries. Many countries that witnessed identity-based civil conflicts, such as Lebanon, Sierra Leone, and Angola, wound up with decentralized proportional representation systems based on tribal or national, or confessional quotas. Hence, these countries failed in creating representative democratic institutions, and the divisiveness and violence continued even after reaching a political settlement.^[6]

Examples of other countries, like Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia, show that despite the role decentralization plays in improving political engagement, this engagement remained nominal and ineffective.^[7] Also, decentralization might lead to transferring the power to local traditional and undemocratic leaders, who might use their new powers to further establish their affiliate profiteering networks to acquire significant personal, political and financial gains that do not serve the public interest^[8].

4- Decentralization in the Syrian Context:

Over the past five decades, the ruling authority in Syria adopted an extremely centralized political, administrative and economic system that deprived the local communities of their right to actively engage in any decision-making mechanism. It also denied them the right to question or hold the institutions of the central government accountable. There were elected local councils; however, those councils' remained nominative as they were overseen by the security services and the profiteering networks affiliated to the ruling power.

Although the Syrian constitution of 2012 recognized the term “decentralization”, it did not provide any basic determinants or regulations of this decentralization and the consequent redefinition of the relationship between the central authority and localities and a clear distribution of roles and powers at the national and local levels. Article 131 of this

[4] Kulipossa, F.P., (2004). Decentralization and Democracy in Developing Countries: An Overview. *Development in Practice*, 14(6), 768–779.

[5] Smoke, P. (2015), Managing Public Sector Decentralization in Developing Countries: Moving Beyond Conventional Recipes. *Public Admin. Dev.*, 35: 250– 262. doi: [10.1002/pad.1736](https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1736).

[6] Sisk, T.D.(2013), Power-Sharing in Civil War: Puzzles of Peacemaking and Peacebuilding, *Civil Wars*, 15 :sup1, 7-20, DOI: [10.1080/13698249.2013.850873](https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2013.850873)

[7] Braathen, E. and Hellevik, S. (2006), The Role of Decentralisation in Peacemaking and Conflict Management Processes.

[8] Joshi, A. and Schultze-Kraft, M. (2014), Introduction – Localising Governance: An Outlook on Research and Policy. *IDS Bulletin* 45(5): 1-8

constitution merely stipulates that the organization of administrative units in the country is based “on the application of the principle of decentralization of powers and responsibilities. The law defines the relationship of these units to the central authority, their competencies, their financial revenues, and the control over their work”. Consequently, this constitution referred everything related to the concept of decentralization to a separate legal text, which enables it to adapt and control the concept of decentralization to serve the interests of the ruling authority without any clear discipline or control.

The Law of Local Administration (Law No. 107 of 2011) stipulated the implementation of decentralization on a broader scale across the country. It connected the allocation of roles and powers over the various government sectors to “a national plan of decentralization,” which is to be drafted by a High Council For Local Administration (Art. 6 of the law). The allocation of these roles are determined by the elected local councils. However, the Syrian regime deliberately ignored establishing a High Council For Local Administration, and as a result, a national plan for decentralization was never drafted. This meant that decentralization was implemented, merely in appearance. None of its actual political and economic prerequisites were fulfilled, and the law’s mandate was reduced to limited powers in the services sector. It only gave the elected local councils simple powers over the construction, administrative, and public services sector. .

The Law of Local Administration (Law No. 107 of 2011) gave the governor power over most political, security, and economic roles and responsibilities. The governors are appointed by the president of the republic (Art.39), and as representatives of the executive authority, they have total control over the local affairs of their governorates. Law No. 107 stipulated that the appointed governor is the head of The Executive Office of the governorate’s elected council (Art.29). It also reinforced the governor’s broad mandate by granting him political and judicial immunity; Art 56 of the law states that the governor can not be prosecuted for any violation they commit during service except by a presidential decree that refers them to the Supreme Judicial Council, which is headed by the president himself.

As a result, the role of the elected local councils became restricted to managing public services (e.g. utilities), disaster management, the construction and management of clubs, stadiums, and community centers, the establishment and oversight over domestic bus carrier companies, the investment of billboard advertisements, setting the regulations and the procedures for granting construction licenses and administrative licenses, and other administrative and services roles that can not, in any case, lead to actual social participation and broaden the margin for political participation and decision-making processes (Art. 6063-).

The Syrian uprising erupted in March 2011, and demonstrators called for an end to the rule of the Assad family and the establishment of a democratic system in the country. The hegemony of the central government over the country started to weaken gradually.

The Syrian regime started lost over many governorates, cities, and provinces. Many local communities established local governance bodies that had their different institutional structures to run and manage the local affairs of their local communities.

In most areas outside the control of the Syrian regime, in the north-west of the country, for example, the local governance was established according to administrative framework and regulations derived from Law 107 of 2011. Some political and structural amendments were made to make these bodies compatible with these areas' political reality and security situation. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) established a decentralized governance system based on their regulatory framework and legislation in north-east Syria, This system is a total divergence from the laws of the central government of the Syrian regime.

In general, in most of the areas outside the control of the Syrian regime, local governance bodies emerged in the different towns, cities, and governorates. Some of these bodies were elected by the local communities. In contrast, others were appointed based on agreements between the de-facto powers on the ground and the traditional local leaders. These newly established bodies were assigned to oversee the administration and regulation of multiple services sectors like health, education, the judiciary, electricity, water and irrigation, among others. Furthermore, the continuous deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the total lack of sustainable income and finance resources, the political, security and military chaos in these areas and the large number of military powers — who were mostly at conflict with each other politically and ideologically — meant that the political and regulatory roles of these emerging bodies were limited. The result was that their roles were restricted to providing essential services on an irregular basis and intermittently in the areas they govern.

5- Analysis Of The Survey's Findings:

5.1. The Expectations About The Implementation Of Decentralization In The Future.

In this section, we asked the respondents about their expectations on the implementation of decentralization in post-conflict Syria. Chart No. 1 shows that nearly one-third of the surveyed sample, 36.2%, accept that the implementation of decentralization will lead to the devolution of the central government's power and give the localities extensive control over the local services, economy, and politics. In the second place, 19.5% of the respondents expected that decentralization would increase social participation and the representation of marginalized groups in the decision-making process. 17.3% of the sample expected that decentralization would improve the quality of state institutions' services. In comparison, 12.4% think that it would enhance the accountability and transparency of the central government institutions. The smallest percentage, 10.6%, did not expect decentralization to achieve any changes in the country's future.

What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future?

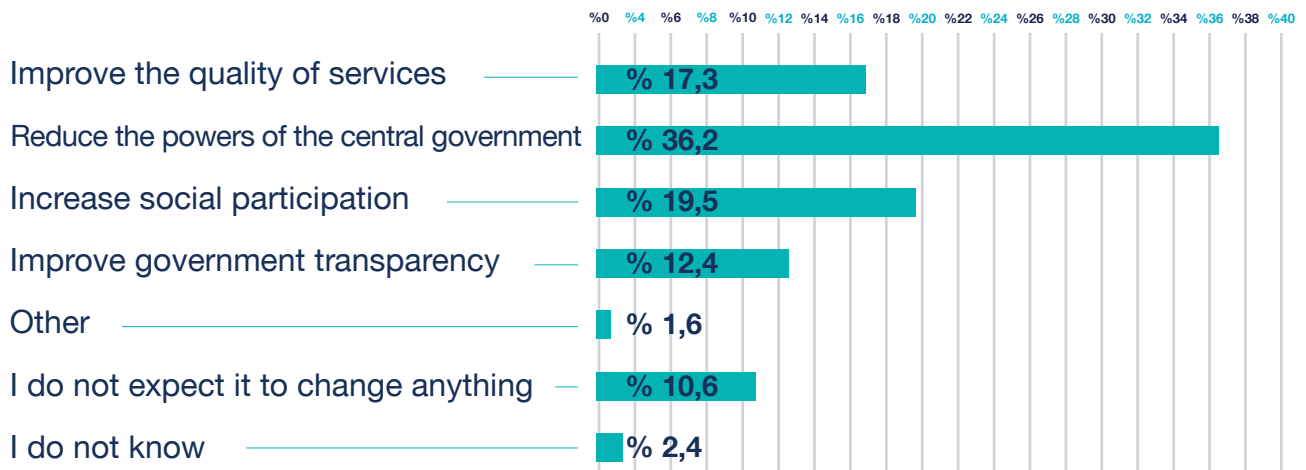


Chart (1) What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future?

Charts 2 and 3 show that the above mentioned rates remained consistent when cross-referenced with the education level and the living standards of the surveyed sample. It was noticeable that the highest rate of those who did not expect decentralization to achieve any change in the future was mostly amongst those who were illiterate and those with a very low income, with 27.3% and 20%, consecutively. This high rate amongst these two groups could result in them feeling that decentralization will not improve or change their deteriorating living conditions, especially for those with a low income.

What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future? (education level)

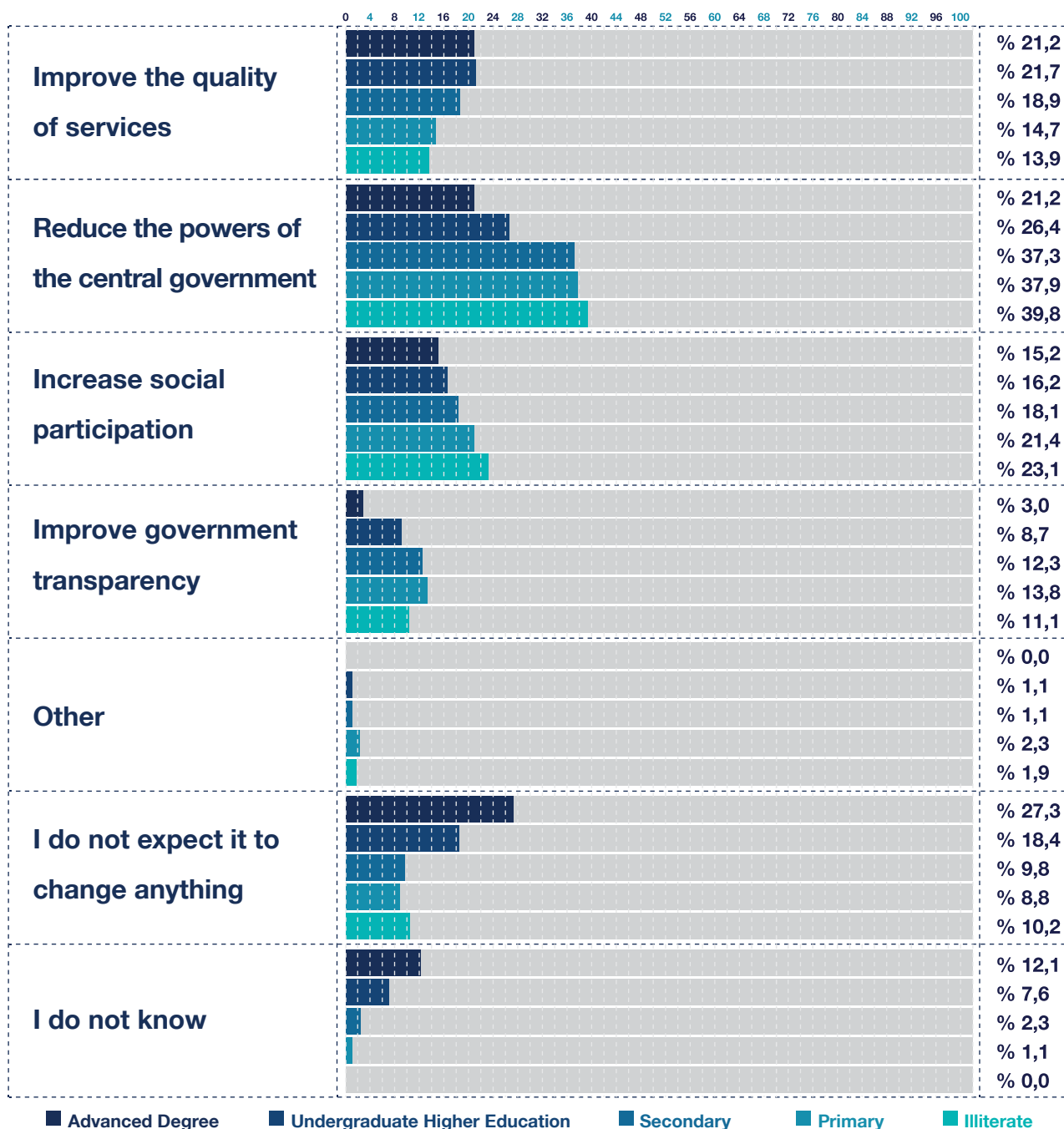


Chart (2) What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future? (education level)

What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future? (income level)

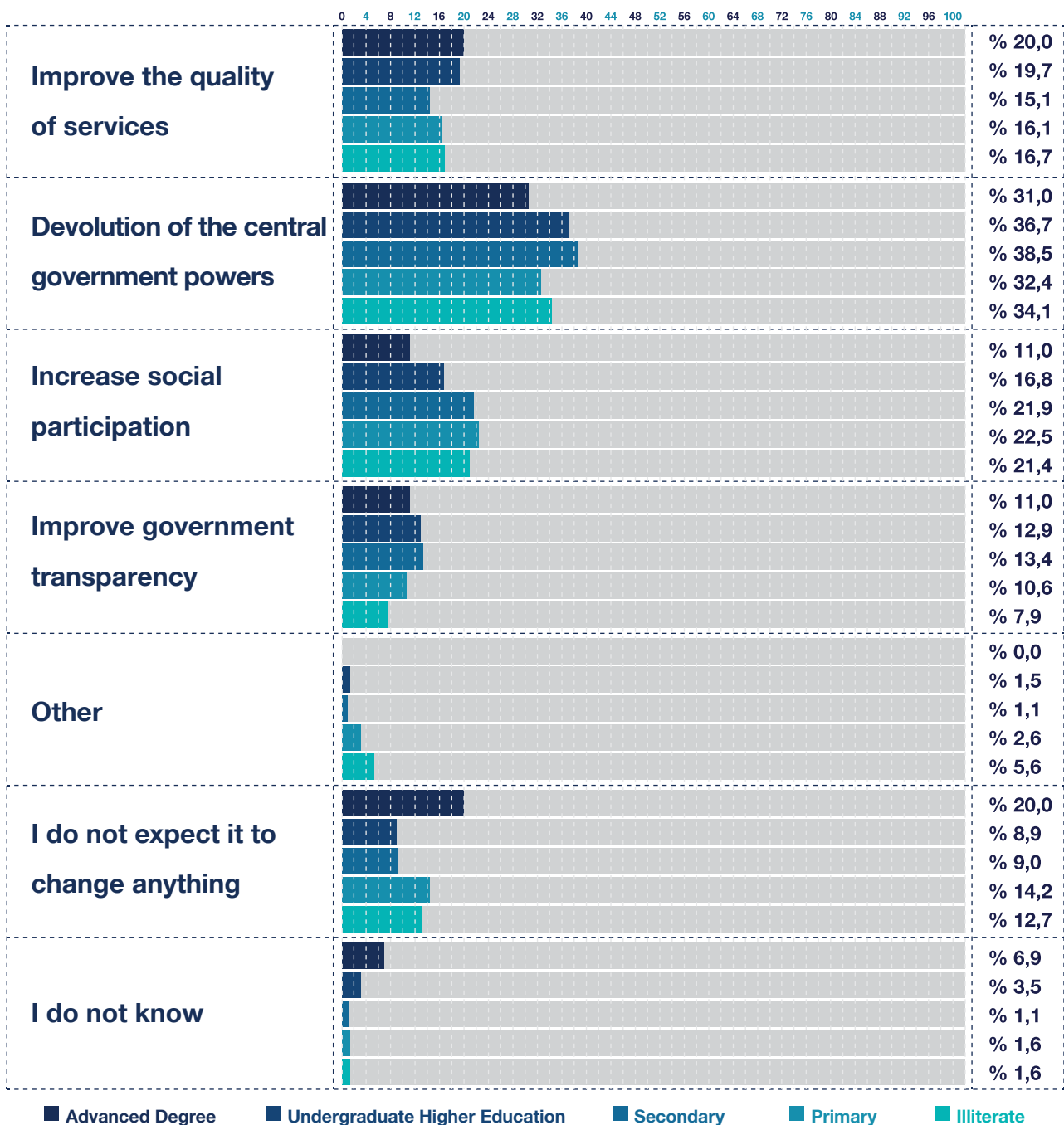


Chart (3) What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future? (income level)

When cross-referencing the results of the survey, national and ethnic affiliations of the sample, shown in chart 4, we found that the majority of the Arab, Kurds, and other national and ethnic minorities expected that decentralization would lead to the devolution of the central powers and broaden the political and economic roles of the localities and their control over services. The rate reached 35% among Arabs, 37.4% among Kurds, and 39.8% among other national minorities including the Circassians, Turkmens, Assyrians, and Armenians.

When asked about their expectations on whether decentralization would increase the inclusion and representation of marginalized groups, we noticed that the approval rates were higher among the Kurdish respondents and other national and ethnic minorities in comparison to Arab respondents. The approval rate was 30.6% among the Kurds, 25.8% among the other national minorities and only 16.5% among the Arabs. This disparity in approval rates can be justified by the general feeling of marginalization that ethnic and national minorities suffer from due to centuries of identity-based discrimination. This is why they promote the concept of decentralization as a tool that would increase their access to the decision-making process, both in their local provinces and at the national level.

What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future? (nationality)

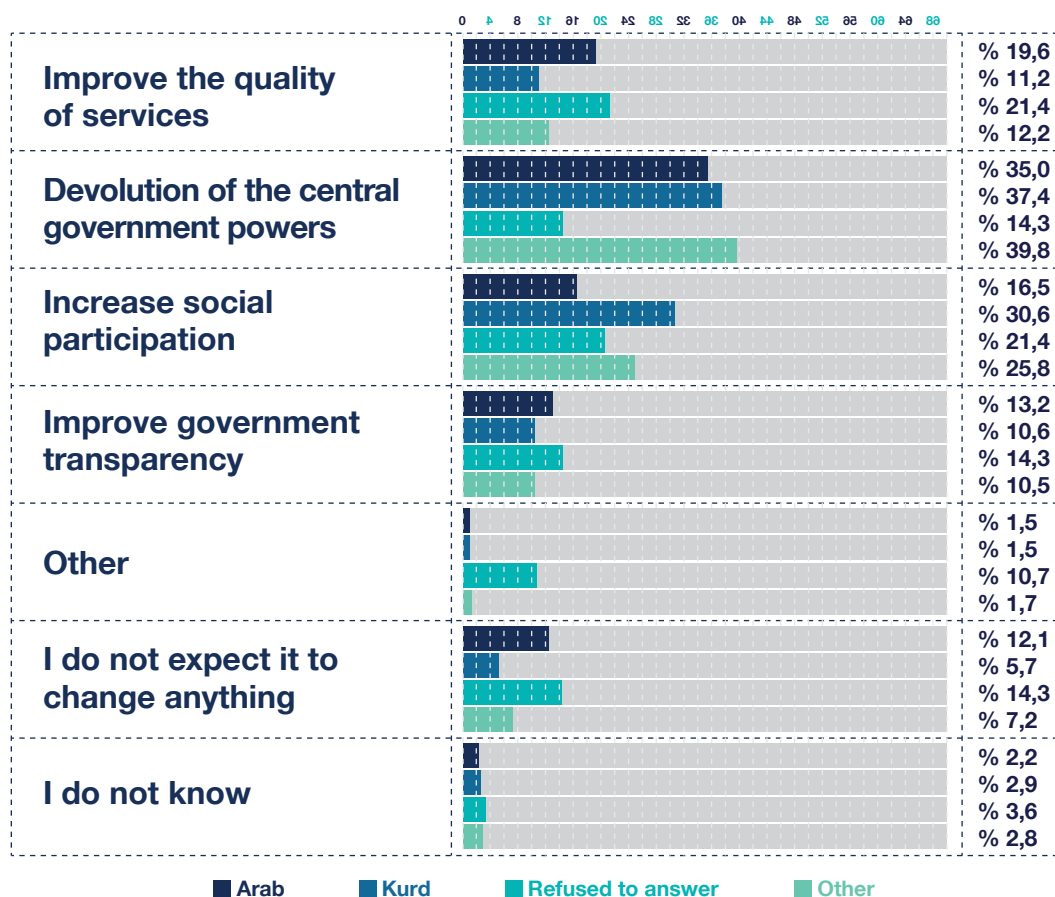


Chart (4) What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future? (nationality)

Similarly, when cross-referencing the findings of the survey with the geographic locations of the surveyed respondents, as shown in chart 5, we find that the most significant rate of the respondents, no matter their location in Syria, expected that decentralization would decrease the powers of the central authorities, and increase the power of the localities.

By examining the geographic distribution of the sample, we noticed that the humanitarian crisis and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in north-west Syria and the areas under the control of the Syrian regime prompted respondents in these areas to focus on the

connection between decentralization and the improvement of the quality of services provided to the local communities. That was their second choice, with a percentage of 30% of those residents in north-west Syria and 19.3% of those in regime-held areas.

In comparison, the second most crucial choice for the respondents in north-east Syria and the Northern Aleppo countryside, where the quality of the services is relatively better than the other areas, was that decentralization would increase the representation of marginalized groups in the decision-making process, especially that the highest rate of national and ethnic non-Arab minorities live mainly in these areas.

The approval rates of the respondents who are refugees outside Syria — in Europe or the neighboring countries — were consistent with their rates in the sample when counted based on the participants' geographic locations. The most considerable rate expected that decentralization would reduce the power of the central authorities (33.5% of those reside in Europe and 28% reside in the neighboring countries to Syria). The second choice was that decentralization would increase integration and social representation (26.4% of those residing in Europe and 22% residing in neighboring countries to Syria). However, the percentage of those who expected that decentralization would improve the quality of the provided services was 7% higher amongst those who reside in the neighboring countries compared to those who reside in Europe. This could be possibly explained by the fact that those who are in neighboring countries like Lebanon, Jordan, or Turkey have higher probabilities of returning to Syria in the future, and that is why they continue to take into consideration the quality of services provided in their original places of residence inside Syria. Simultaneously, Syrians who are refugees and who reside in Europe were more focused on the political aspects of decentralization. They had a higher rate of expecting that decentralization would increase transparency and accountability than the respondents residing in the neighboring countries, with the rate reaching 13% amongst the Syrians in Europe and 9.7% of the respondents from neighboring countries.

What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future? (geographic distribution)

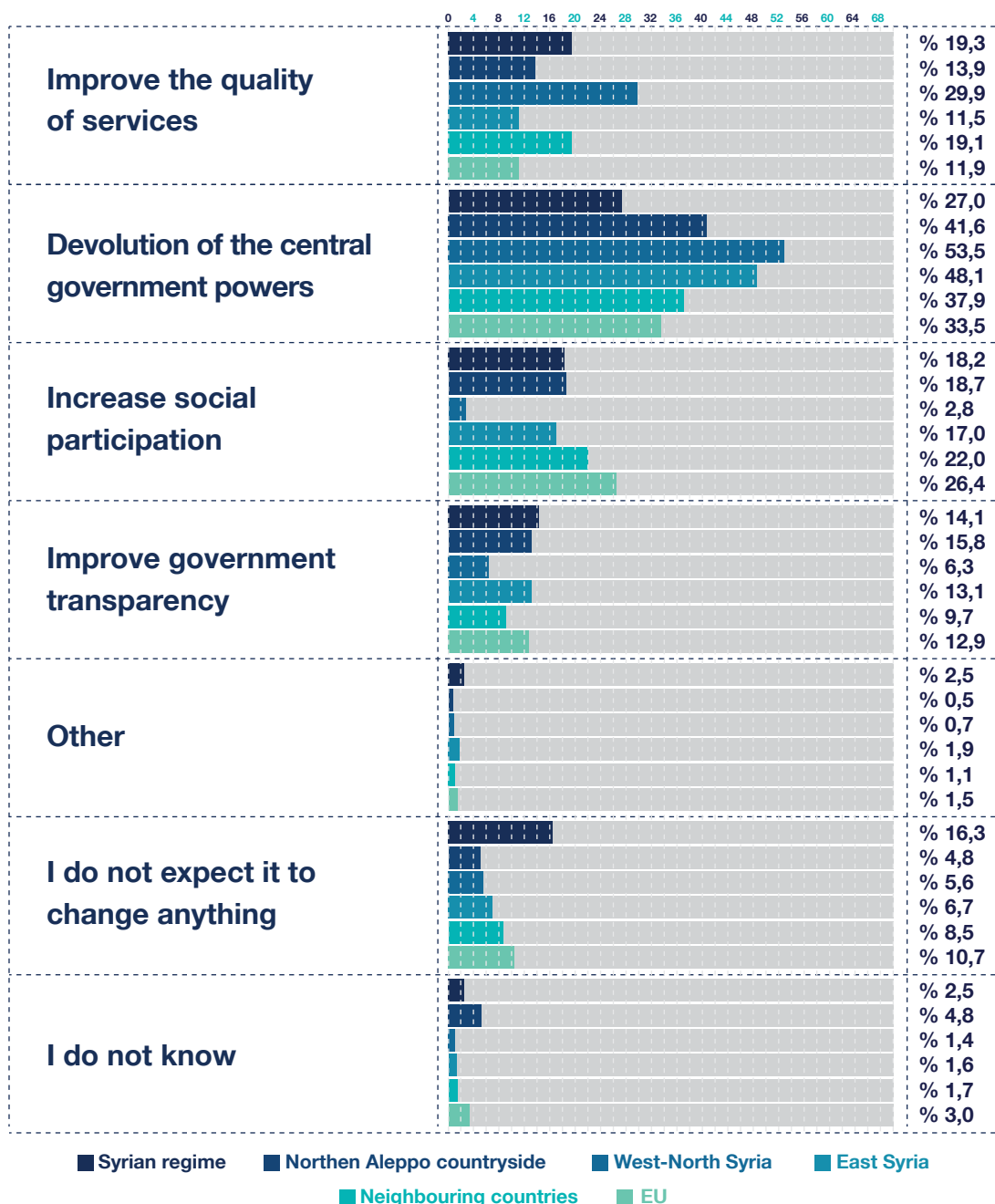


Chart (5) What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future? (geographic distribution)

5.2. The Impact of Decentralization in Post-Conflict Syria

In this section of the study, we attempted to survey the opinions of Syrians about some of the prevailing perceptions on how decentralization might impact the dynamics in post-conflict Syria, especially regarding its role in democratic transition and enhancing the local mechanisms of peacebuilding and transitional justice.

The majority of respondents considered decentralization an agent of positive change and a tool of political transformation that will lead to stability and peace and a democratic transition in Syria. This positive perception the surveyed sample showed towards decentralization could be explained by the public anger against the nature of the ruling system in Syria in the past five decades, which was highly centralized, and whose policies were exclusionary and systematically repressive, which led to the marginalization of the various segments of Syrian society. This is why the majority of the surveyed sample found that a move towards decentralization in the future would inhibit the hegemony of the ruling power, and prohibit the reestablishment of a totalitarian regime, and help stabilize the situation in the country in post-conflict Syria. We will examine the statistical findings of how decentralization would affect democratic transition, peacebuilding and transitional justice and reparation for the victims.

First: The Impact of Decentralization on Democratic Transition

The majority of the surveyed sample, 77.6%, agree (amongst whom 26% agree strongly) that decentralization will have a positive supporting role in facilitating democratic transition in Syria, as shown in chart 6. This general positive impression about the possible role of decentralization was prevalent amongst the respondents regardless of their national and ethnic identity, as shown in chart 7. When cross-referencing the results with the religious and sectarian backgrounds of the respondents, we found that the majority had a positive perception of the impact of the implementation of decentralization in the future, with the exception of the Alawite respondents, who rejected the notion of decentralization, with a rate of 33%.

Would decentralization have a positive role in achieving democratic transition in the future?

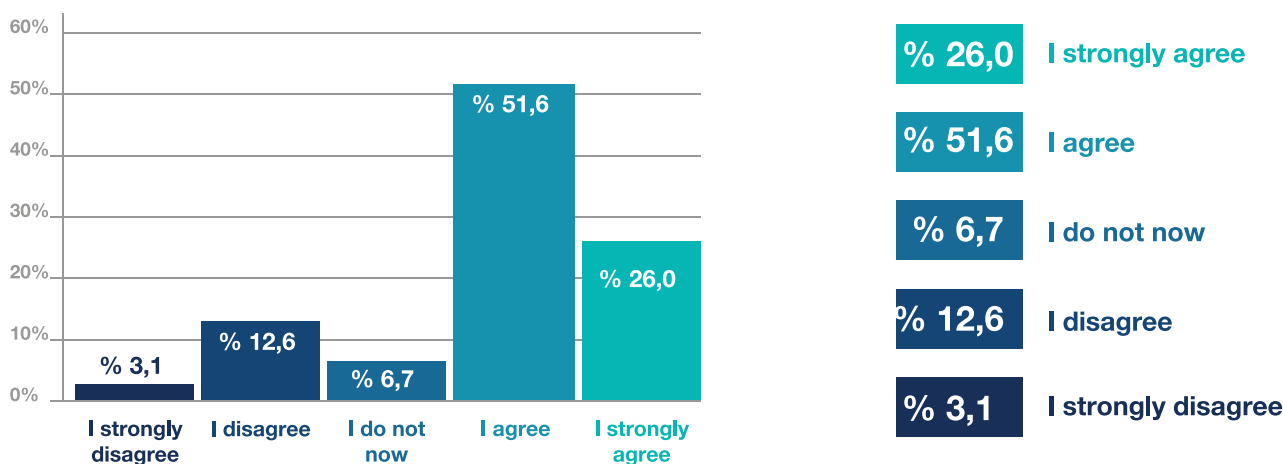


Chart (6) Would decentralization have a positive role in achieving democratic transition in the future?

Would decentralization have a positive role in achieving democratic transition in the future? (nationality)

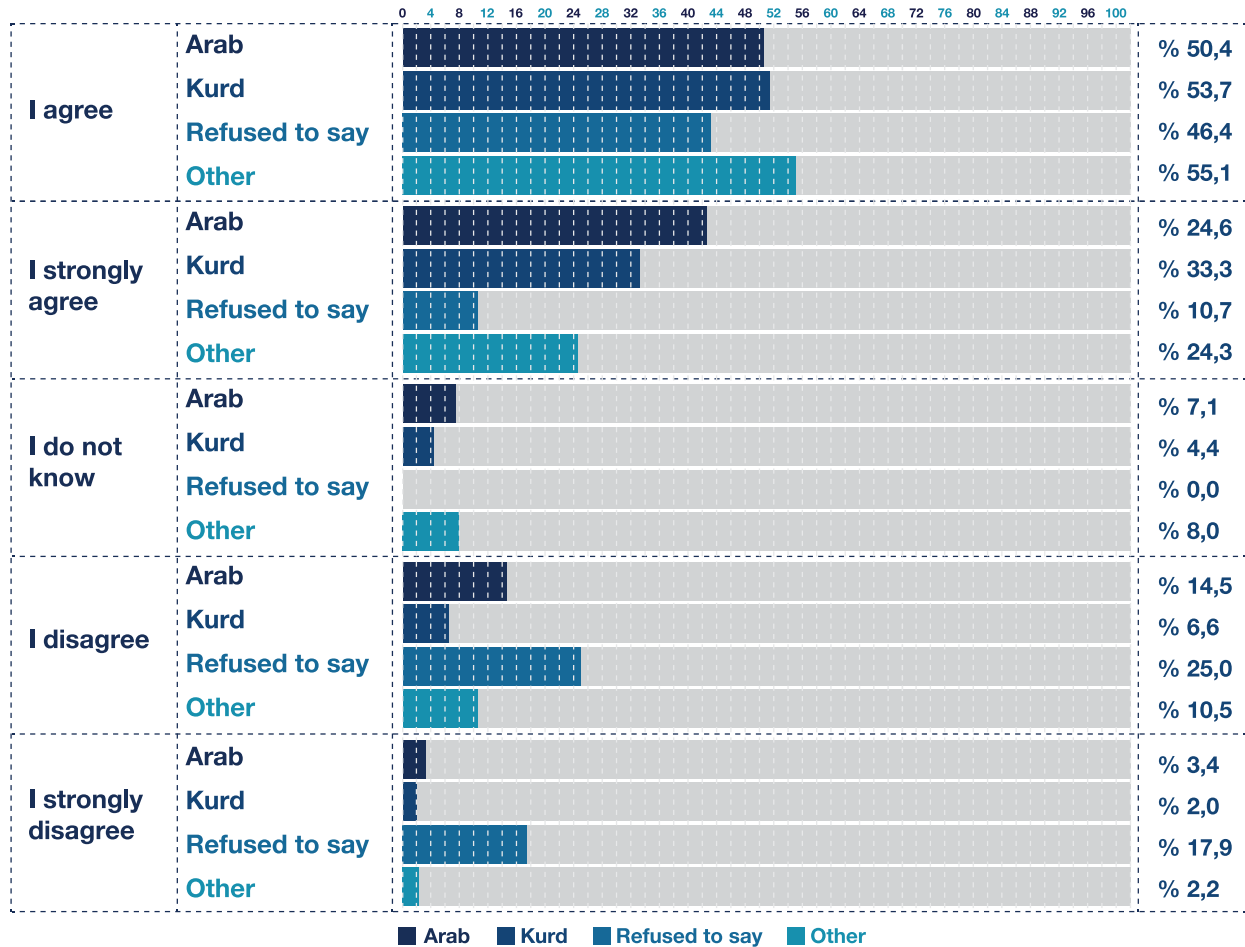


Chart (7) Would decentralization have a positive role in achieving democratic transition in the future? (nationality)

What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future? (religion/sect)

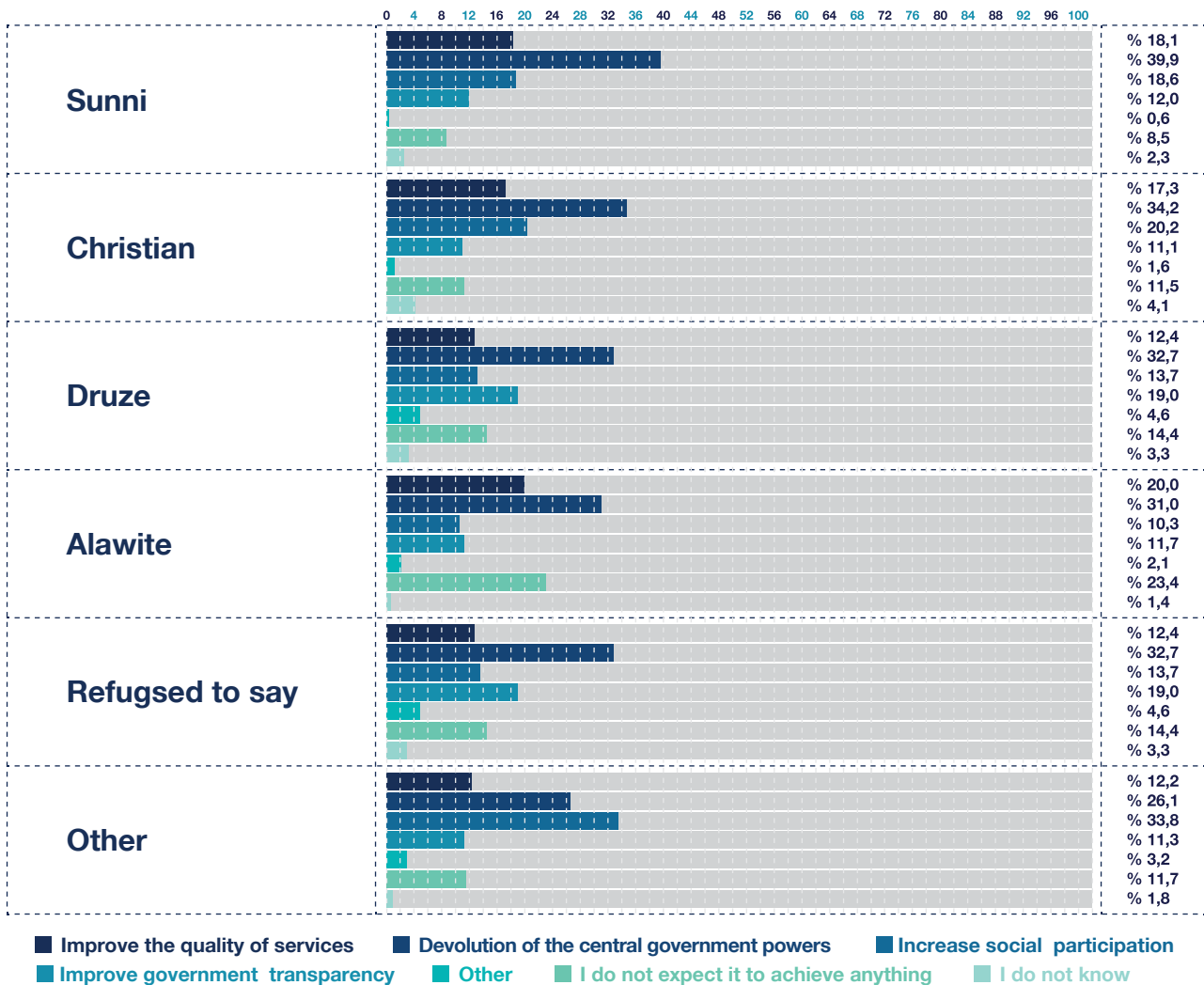


Chart (8) What do you expect decentralization to achieve in the future? (religion/sect)

Chart 9 shows that most respondents from the various geographic regions covered in this survey agree with the assumption that decentralization would support a democratic transition. It was noticeable that the disapproval rate was highest amongst the residents in regime-controlled areas, with a percentage of 25%. This high disapproval rate could result from the pessimism of those living under the regime towards the prospects of reaching a political solution that leads to a democratic transition, or because of their fear that decentralization could lead to fragmentation of the country and prolong the political instability.

Would decentralization have a positive role in achieving democratic transition in the future? (geographic location)

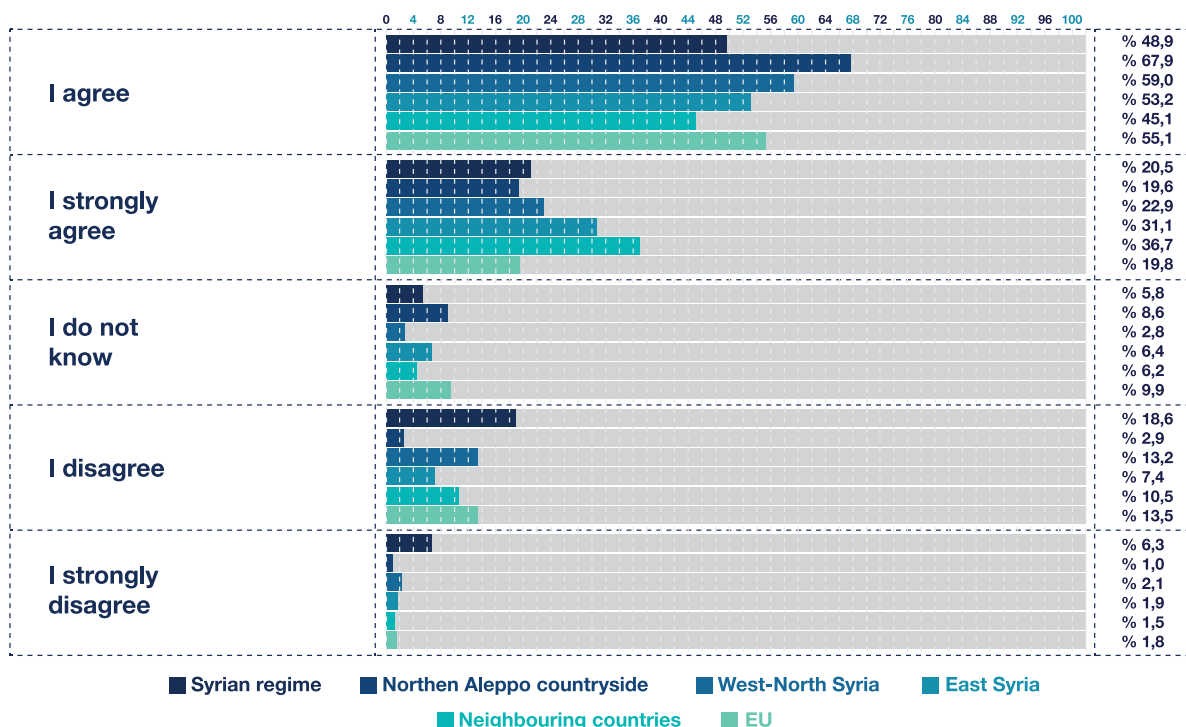


Chart (9) Would decentralization have a positive role in achieving democratic transition in the future? (geographic location)

Second: The Impact of Decentralization on Peacebuilding

Nearly 77.5% of the surveyed sample agreed that decentralization could play a supportive role in reducing the severity of the conflict and in peacebuilding measures, as shown in chart 10. This approval rate is equal to the approval rate regarding the role of decentralization in facilitating a democratic transition.

Decentralization plays a supportive role in reducing the severity of the conflict and in peacebuilding on local levels

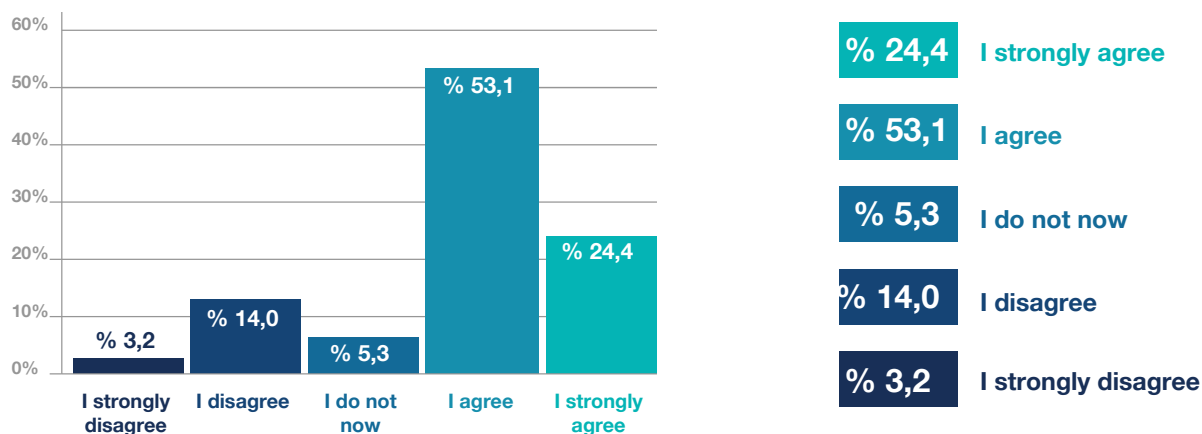


Chart (10) The supportive role of decentralization in reducing the severity of the conflict and in peacebuilding on local levels

When cross-referencing the answers to this question between the variables of the education level, living standards, geographic location, religious and national affiliation of the respondents, we found the answers consistent with a general outlook in the sample. There was a consensus in the opinions of the respondents, regardless of their backgrounds or sub-identities, and is a result of the prevalence of the belief that decentralization enhances local communities' access to decision-making, which will lead to reducing public anger and establishing a participatory approach in governance over local affairs and new ways for negotiation between state institutions and the communities, which would support peacebuilding at the granular level.

Third: The Impact of Decentralization on Transitional Justice.

Chart 11 shows a decrease in the approval rate for the assumption that implementing decentralization in the future in Syria would positively impact the process of transitional justice and reparation for victims. While 77.5% approved that decentralization would support democratic transition and local peacebuilding, the approval rate dropped to 59% when the respondents were asked about the role of decentralization in transitional justice. The disapproval rates were high among the Arabs, 32.3%, the Kurds, 23.4%, and the other national minorities, 26.5%. The disapproval rate among the respondents who refused to answer when asked about their ethnic background was the highest at 46.4%, as shown in chart 12.

Decentralization could have a positive impact on the process of transitional justice and reparation for victims

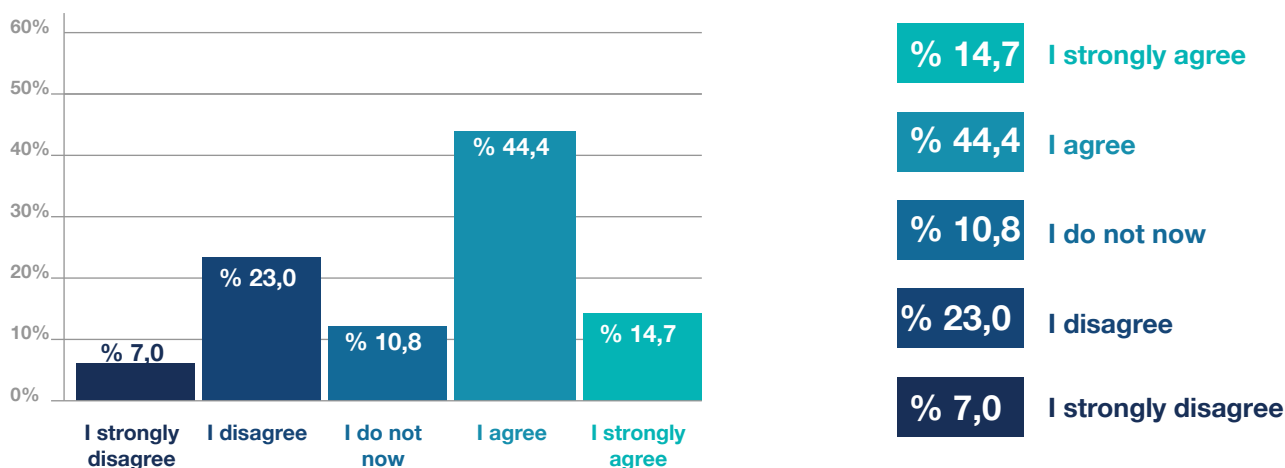


Chart (11) Decentralization could positively impact the process of transitional justice and reparation for victims

Decentralization could have a positive impact on the process of transitional justice and reparation for victims (Nationality)

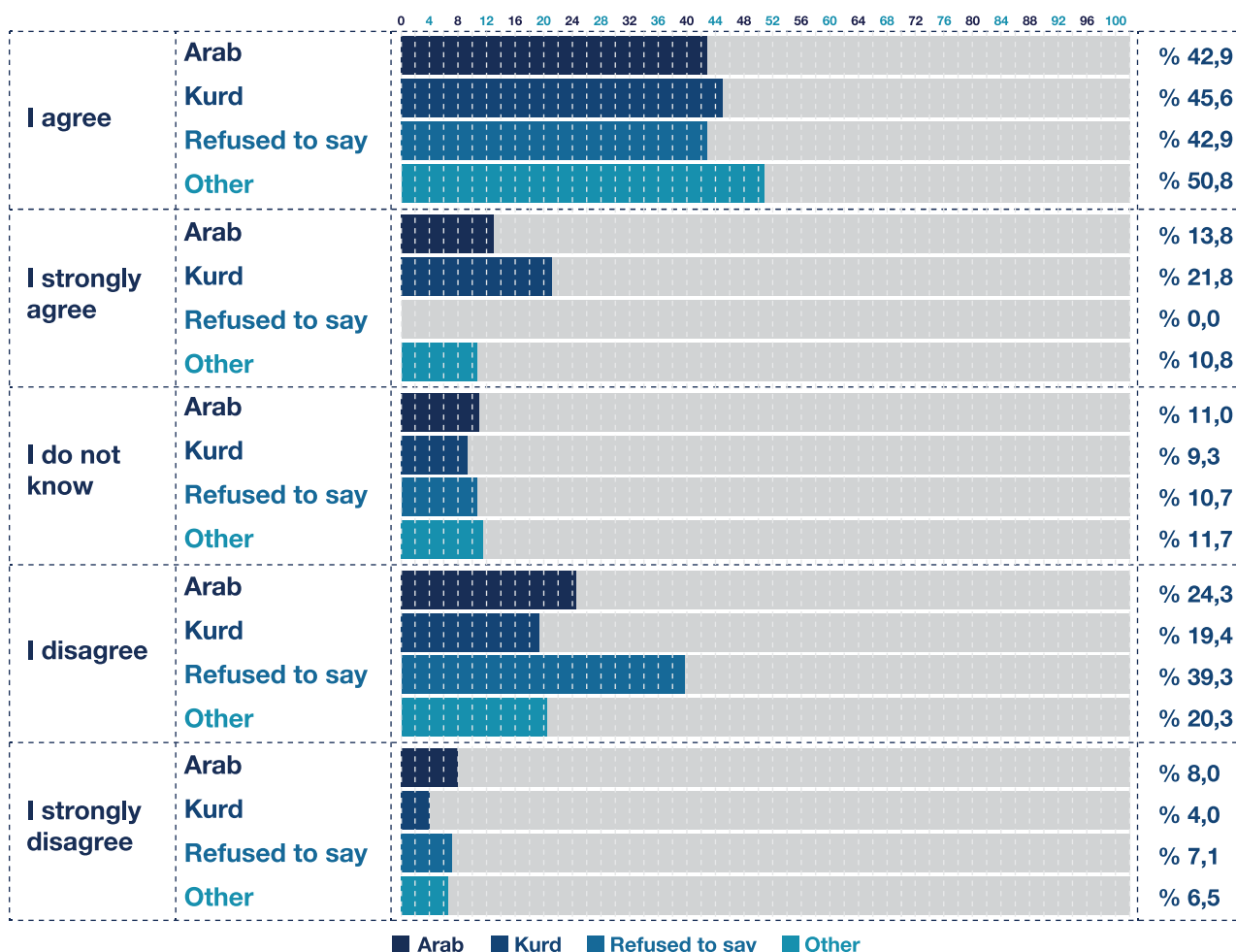


Chart (12) Decentralization could positively impact the process of transitional justice and reparation for victims

When cross-referencing these results with the geographic locations mapping of the respondents, shown in chart 13, we find that the disapproval rates were highest among the respondents residing in Europe with a percentage of 35.3%, followed by the respondents living in the neighboring countries at 32.7%. Those residing in north-west Syria’s disapproval rate reached 32.6%, and the lowest disapproval rate was in the northern Aleppo countryside at 14%. These lower approval rates and the correlation between decentralization and transitional justice and reparation for victims could be explained by two main reasons: First, the Syrians’ low confidence in the judicial system due to the politicization of the judiciary in service of the interests of the ruling class in the regime-controlled areas, and the de-facto authorities that oversee the judicial systems in the other various areas of influence in Syria.

The second reason is a general perception that achieving transitional justice and accountability for human rights violations and war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria, requires judicial and criminal mechanisms and policies for accountability, all of which are not directly reliant on decentralization or the nature of governance in the future in Syria.

Decentralization could have a positive impact on the process of transitional justice and reparation for victims (geographic locations)

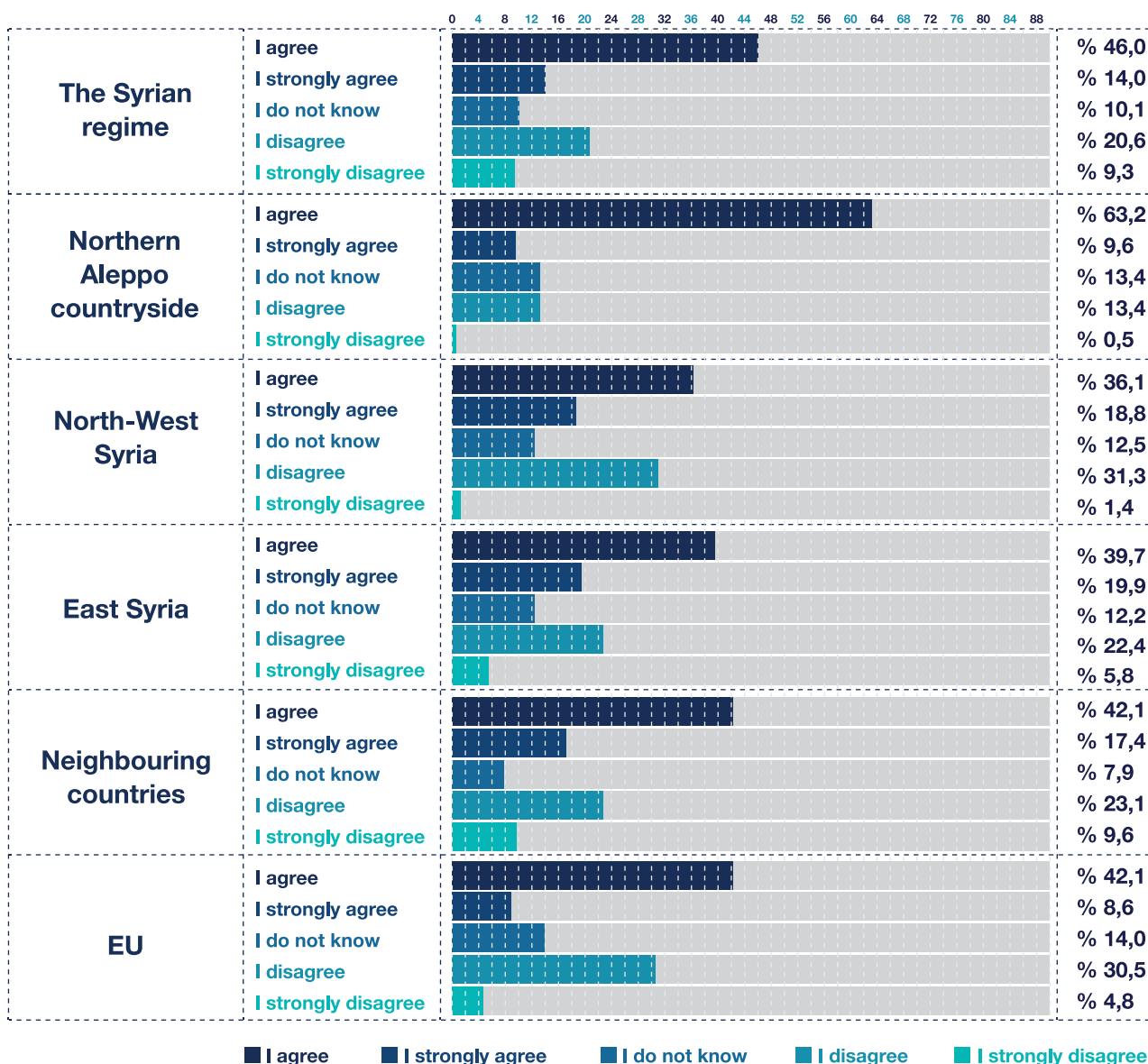


Chart (13) Decentralization could positively impact the process of transitional justice and reparation for victims (geographic locations)

5.3. General Impressions About Political Decentralization

In this part of the survey, we examined the opinions of the sample about the political factors of decentralization. Considering the complexity of these factors and their diversity, TDA chose to focus on four of them: local elections, legislative and judicial roles and powers, and cultural rights. The following section will examine the statistical results of these four factors in detail.

First: Local Elections

As stated earlier in the fourth section of this report, the local administration law No. 107 of 2011, currently in force, grants the governor, who is appointed by the president, absolute powers over services, security, and economic and political affairs within the administrative borders of the governorate. This vast jurisdiction of the appointed governor reduces the roles of elected executive offices in the governorates. It deems their authority on all administrative levels nominative and minimal, which makes the process of local elections worthless. In turn, respondents were asked if they think the governor should be elected directly by the local council, and not appointed by the executive power (the president).

No significant statistical variances were found when TDA cross-referenced the answers to this question with the sub-divisions of the sample, including the nationality, religion, and geographic locations of the respondents. Chart 14 shows nearly a consensus among the respondents that the governor should be elected with a rate of 92% (56.8% strongly agree). This indicates that most Syrians, regardless of their identity affiliations or geographic location, think that the governor, who is the highest authority in the governorate, should be elected directly by them, which would make them accountable to these local communities.

The governor should be elected directly by the local council and not appointed by the executive power (the president)

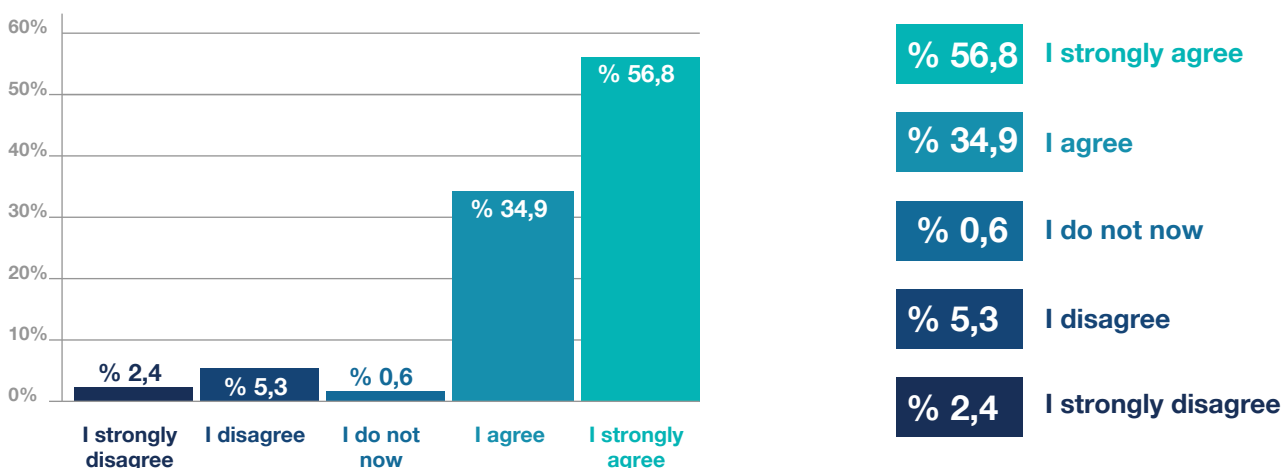


Chart (14) The governor should be elected directly by the local council

Second: Legislative Powers of the Governorates

Nearly 78% of the surveyed sample agreed that the elected governorate councils should have legislative powers, such as ratifying laws and legislation at the local level, on the condition that they do not contradict the general constitution of the country, as shown in chart 15. The approval rates were higher when TDA cross-referenced the results with the ethnicity and nationality of the respondents. Chart 16 indicates that the Kurdish respondents showed the highest approval for granting legislative powers to local councils, with a rate of 87.6%. The approval rate of the remaining national minorities, including Circassians, Turkmens, and Armenians, reached 79.6%, and Arabs 75.3%.

The elected governorate councils should have legislative powers to ratify laws and legislation on the local level, on the condition that they do not contradict the general constitution of the country

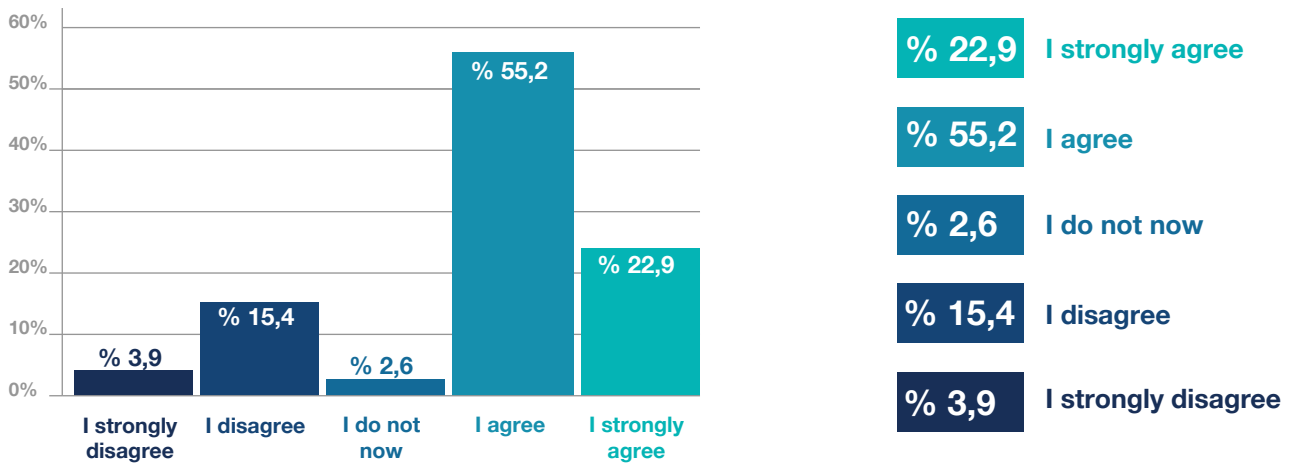


Chart (15) The elected governorate councils should have legislative powers

These higher approval rates for granting legislative powers to the elected councils were not restricted to the areas outside the control of the Syrian regime, which had established its governance structure that is independent of the authority of the central government in Damascus. 76% of residents in regime-controlled areas agreed that the local authorities in the governorates should be allowed more prominent legislative roles, as shown in chart 17.

The elected governorate councils should have legislative powers to ratify laws and legislation on the local level, on the condition that they do not contradict the general constitution of the country (nationality)

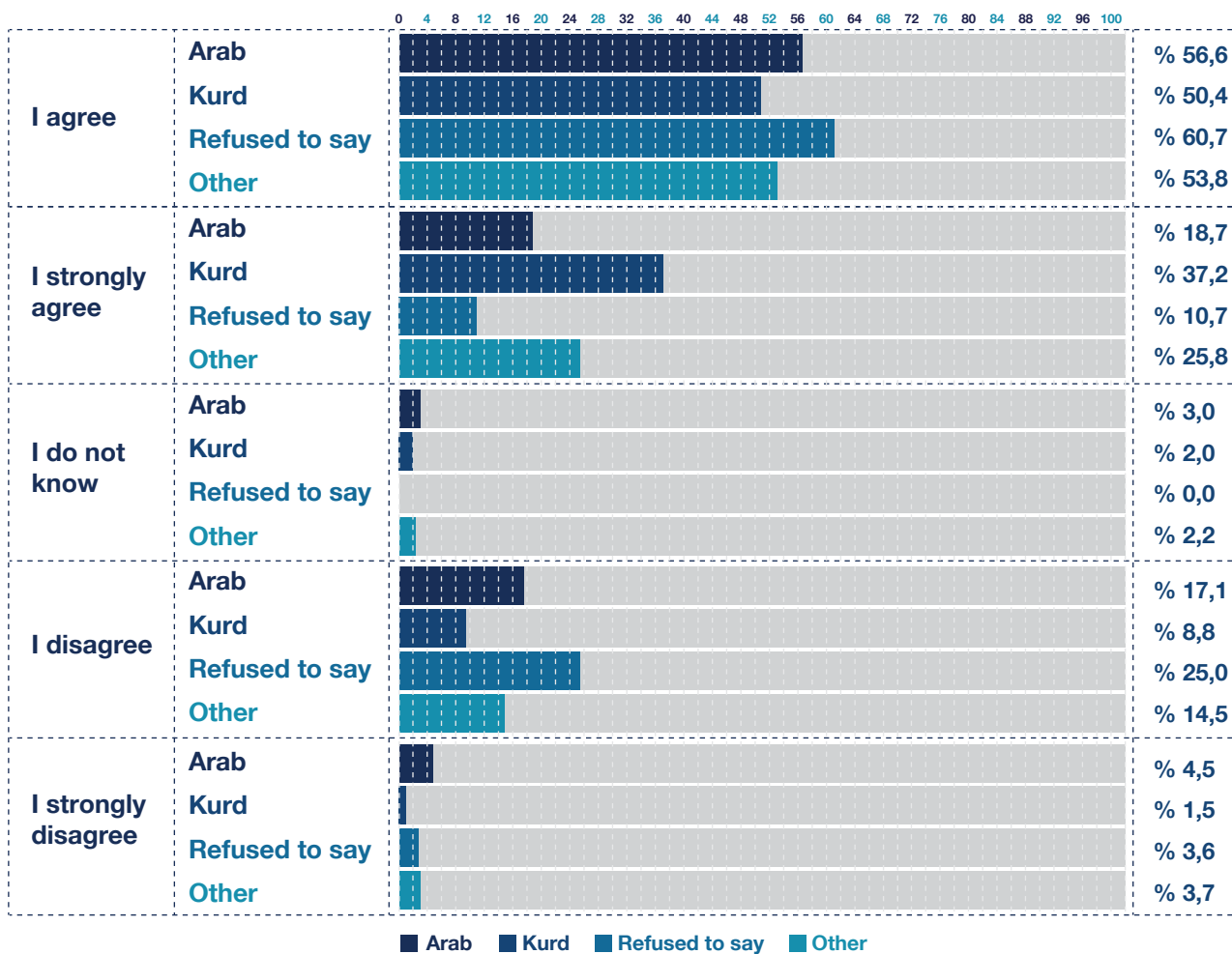


Chart (16) The elected governorate councils should have legislative powers (nationality)

The elected governorate councils should have legislative powers to ratify laws and legislation on the local level, on the condition that they do not contradict the general constitution of the country (geographic locations)

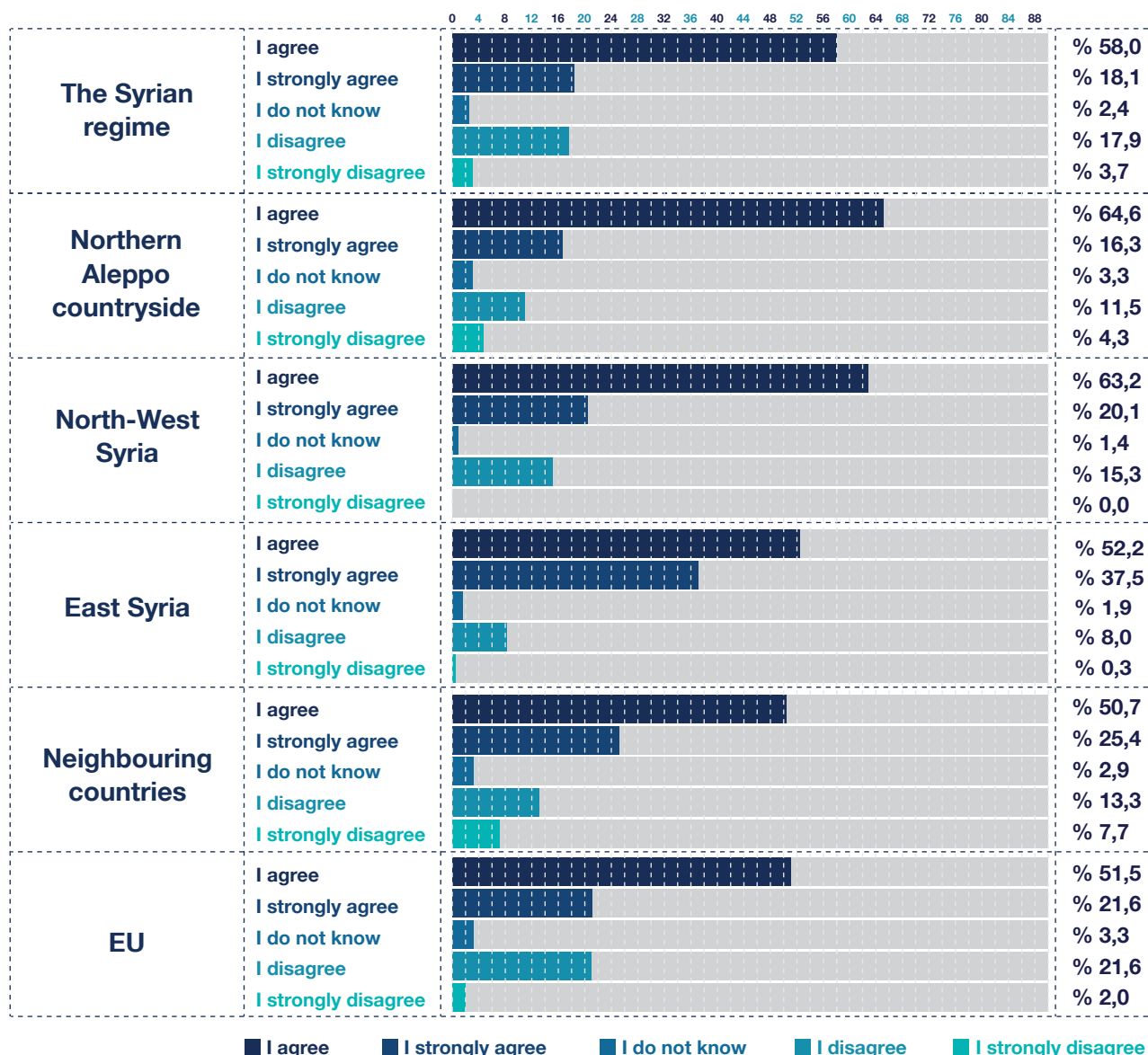


Chart (17) The elected governorate councils should have legislative powers (geographic locations)

Third: The Judicial Powers of the Governorates

69.2% of the respondents agreed that each Syrian governorate should have an independent judiciary and courts that function within the administrative borders of the governorate according to local laws and legislation that does not contradict the country's general constitution, as shown in chart 18. The approval rates were higher amongst the non-Arab ethnic and national respondents. The approval rate reached 84.6% amongst the Kurdish respondents and 73.2% among the Circassians, Turkmen, Armenians, and Syriacs. The approval rate among the Arab respondents was 64.4%, as shown in chart 19.

Each Syrian governorate should have an independent judiciary and courts that function within the administrative borders of the governorate according to local laws and legislation that does not contradict the country's general constitution

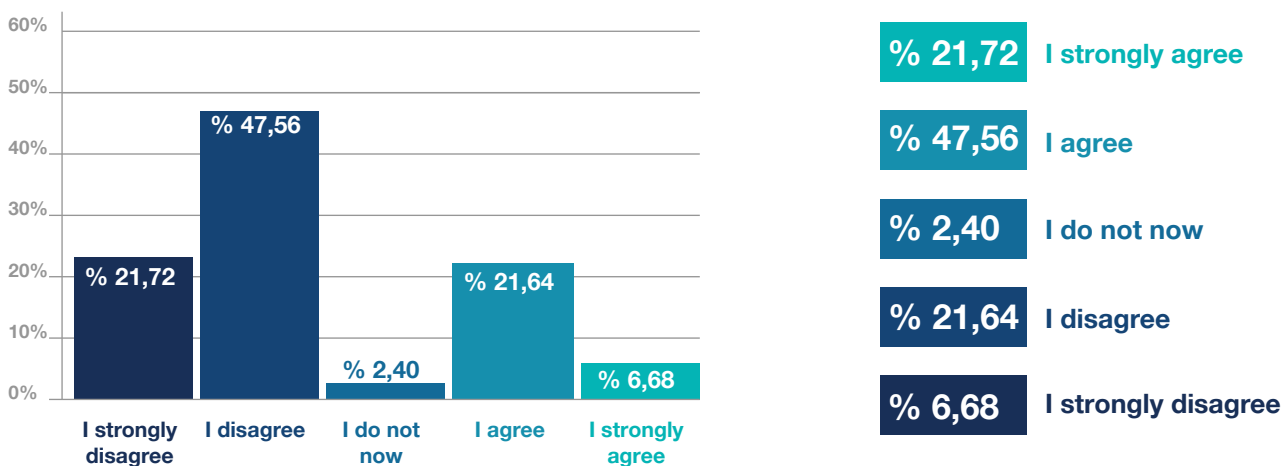


Chart (18) The judicial roles of the governorate councils

Chart 20 shows that the approval for allowing the governorate councils to establish independent courts was shared across the dividing lines in the geography of Syria and the various spheres of influence. The approval rate was 89.4% in north-east Syria, 82.8% in the northern Aleppo countryside, 69.5% in north-west Syria, and 68.4% in regime-controlled areas.

Despite the general approval of the surveyed sample for granting the governorates more significant powers to establish independent judiciaries, the approval rates for this question were lower than the responses about allowing the governorates more legislative and electoral powers. This drop is similar to the decrease in the approval rate when asked about the correlation between decentralization and transitional justice and reparation for the victims. To conclude, in this sample, respondents believe that the judiciary should have nationally unified jurisdiction, regardless of how implementing decentralization in the future might affect politics and governance at the local levels.

Each Syrian governorate should have an independent judiciary and courts that function within the administrative borders of the governorate according to local laws and legislation that does not contradict the country's general constitution

(Nationality)

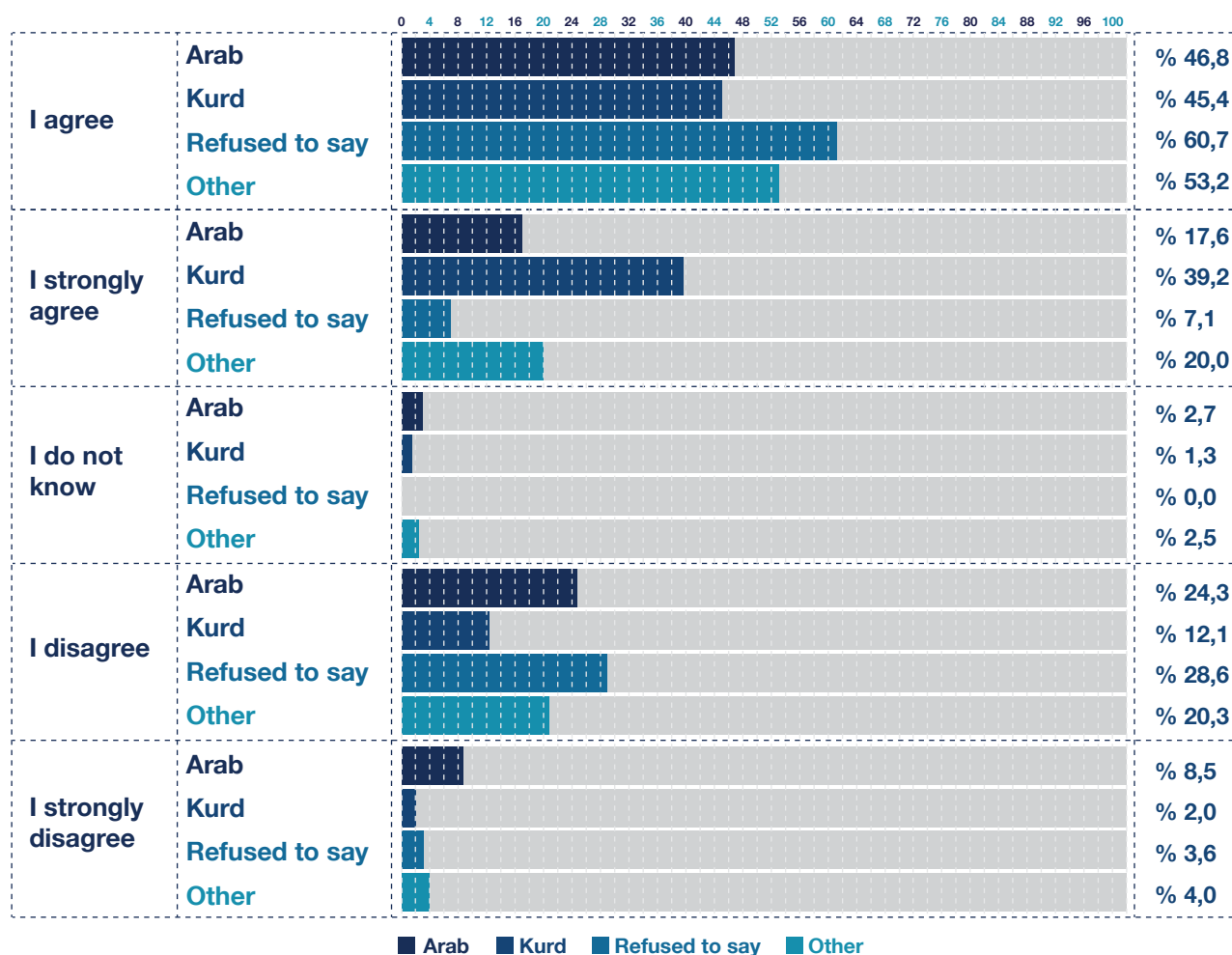


Chart (19) The judicial roles of the governorate councils (Nationality)

Each Syrian governorate should have an independent judiciary and courts that function within the administrative borders of the governorate according to local laws and legislation that does not contradict the country's general constitution

(Geographic locations)

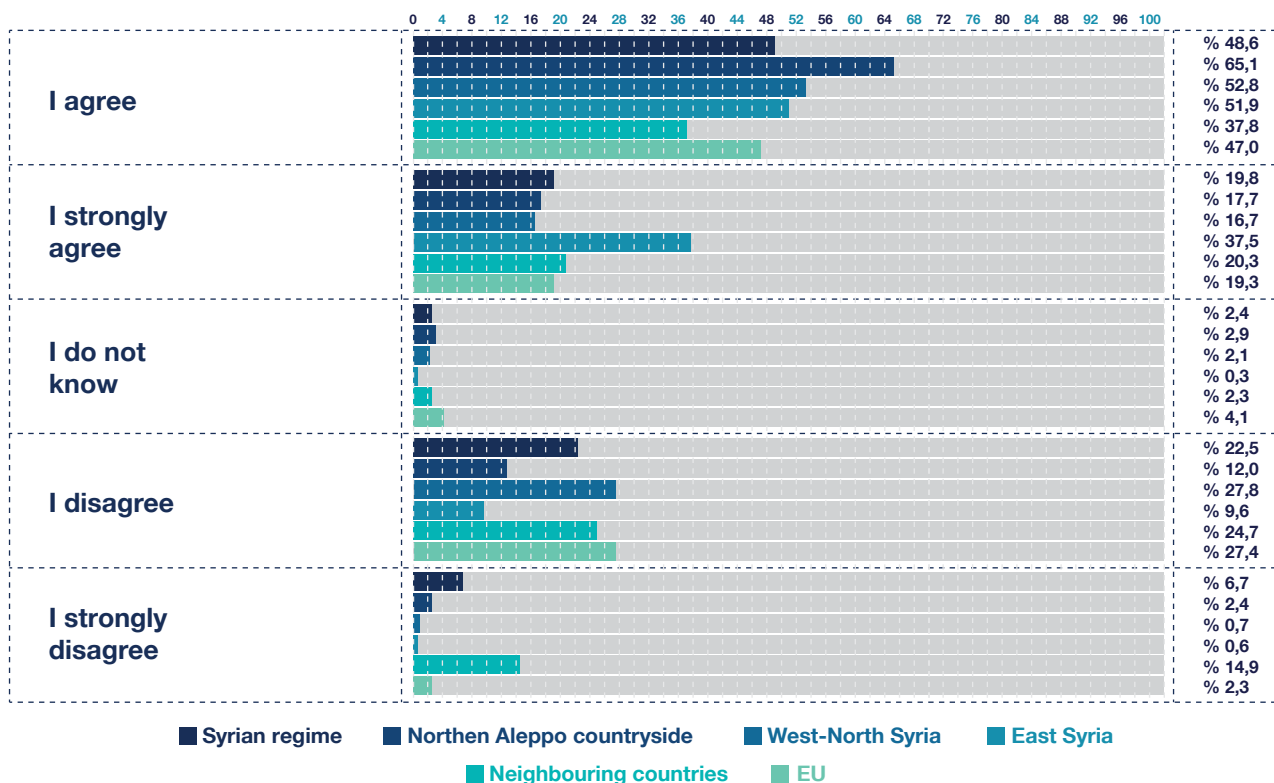


Chart (20) The judicial roles of the governorate councils (Geographic locations)

Fourth: Cultural Rights for the Governorates

76.8% of the surveyed sample agreed that the elected local councils have the right to adopt languages on the local level in addition to formal Arabic, the state's official language. This would be based on the language and the ethnicity or nationality of the population of the administrative units these councils preside over, as shown in chart 21. The majority of the Arab respondents approved, 70.5% (19.8% strongly agree). The approval rate for the Kurds was 91.8% (66.5% strongly agree), and 87.7% (53.7% strongly agree) amongst the other national and ethnic minorities.

The elected local councils (governorates, cities, or townships) have the right to adopt languages on the local level in addition to formal Arabic, the state's official language, based on the ethnicity or nationality of the population of their administrative units

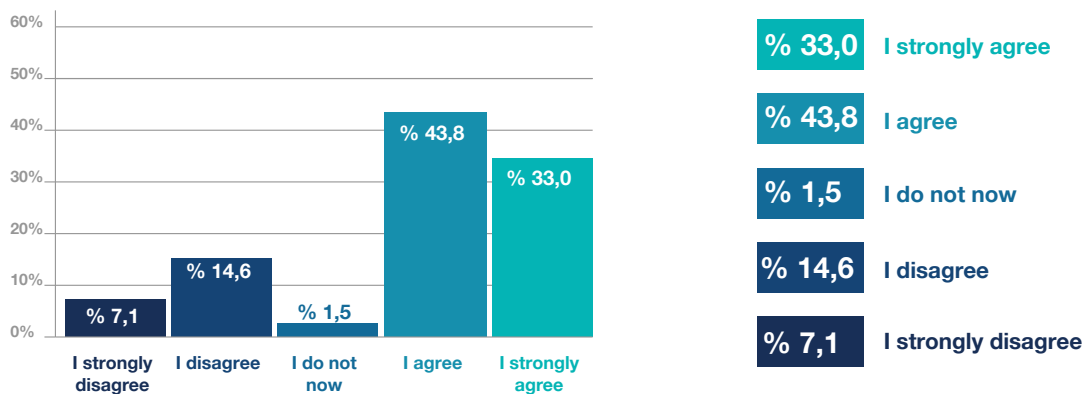


Chart (21) The elected local councils have the right to adopt languages at the local level in addition to formal Arabic, based on the ethnicity or nationality of the population of their administrative units

The elected local councils (governorates, cities, or townships) have the right to adopt languages on the local level in addition to formal Arabic, the state's official language, based on the ethnicity or nationality of the population of their administrative units

(Nationality)

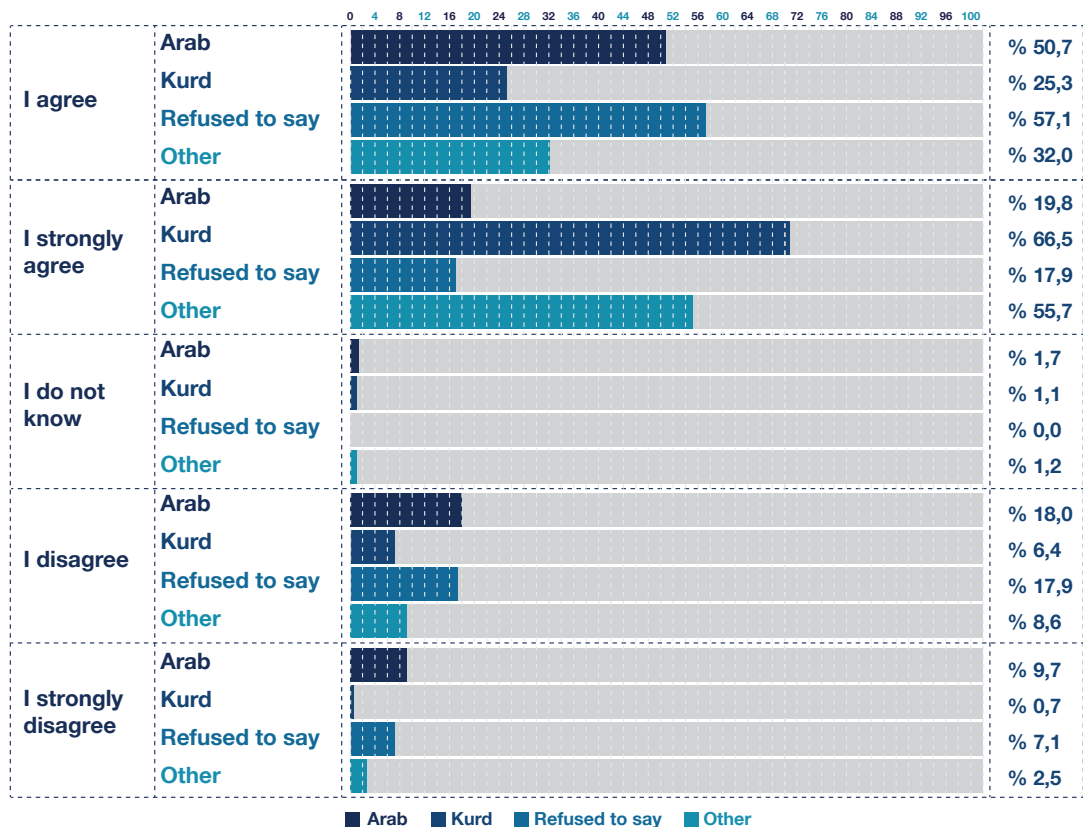


Chart (22) The elected local councils have the right to adopt languages at the local level in addition to formal Arabic, based on the ethnicity or nationality of the population of their administrative units. (Nationality and Ethnicity)

This high approval rate was not restricted to north-east Syria, where most non-Arab national minorities are concentrated (whose approval rate was 93.3%). Still, it was common amongst respondents from the various areas of influence. In north-west Syria, the approval rate was 88%, in northern Aleppo countryside, it reached 83%, and in the areas under the control of the Syrian regime, it was nearly 69%, as shown in table 23.

With reference to a previous survey conducted by TDA for a sample of 2651 Syrian respondents, both males, and females, who hail from various ethnic and national backgrounds, and are located both inside and outside Syria: 56.2% of the sample said that "Arabic is the state's official language while the right of other national and ethnic minorities must be protected to use their languages in their places of residence in Syria", which was 33 % higher than the choice "Arabic is the official and the only language recognized by the state."^[9]

This similarity in the statistical indicators of two different samples, which were surveyed at different times, resulted in concluding that there is generally an acceptance in Syria to adopt other languages, in addition to Arabic, at a localized level, mainly since this approval is not restricted to non-Arabic minorities but also includes a large number of Arabs, who reside in various areas, both in and outside Syria.

[9] The survey [The Opinions of Syrians about Citizenship and Identity](#) was conducted in March and April 2021.

The elected local councils (governorates, cities, or townships) have the right to adopt languages on the local level in addition to formal Arabic, the state's official language, based on the ethnicity or nationality of the population of their administrative units (Geographic locations)

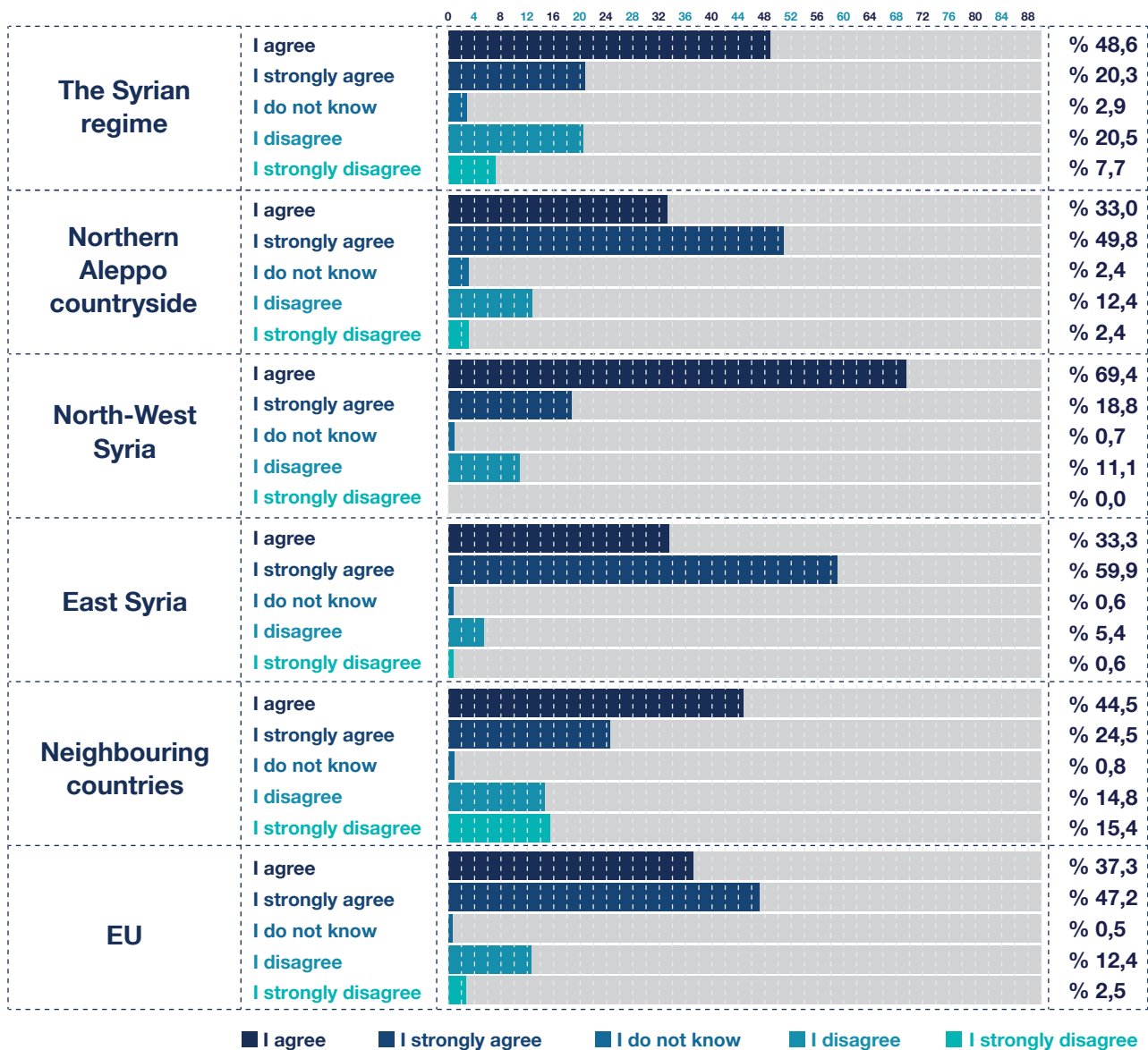


Chart (23) The elected local councils have the right to adopt languages at the local level in addition to formal Arabic, based on the ethnicity or nationality of the population of their administrative units. (Geographic locations)

5.4. The Division of Sectoral Powers and Roles Between The Center and the Localities.

TDA attempted in this part of this survey to examine the opinions of Syrians about the division of sectoral roles and the powers in the sectors of services, education, health, economy, and security on three administrative levels: the center (the central government and its affiliated ministries and directorates), the governorate (the elected local governorate councils), and the localities (the cities' councils and the towns and townships). We asked the respondents about their opinions on assigning sectoral roles and powers to each of the administrative levels.

We noticed from the findings that there is a tendency to grant the localities the leading role in surveying and determining the needs of the local communities. Meanwhile, setting and developing the educational, health, security, and tax policies should remain within the authority of the central government. The task of employing the cadres working in the various sectors should be assigned to the elected governorates councils. These elected councils should be given the task of determining the locations of education and health facilities and the headquarters for security forces and the police. The surveyed sample agreed that the responsibility to oversee and monitor the various sectors is within the central government's jurisdiction and its ministries and directorates.

Respondents from north-east Syria and the northern Aleppo countryside were more inclined to deviate from the central government's powers and grant more extensive sectoral powers to the localities. This could be explained that these two areas, especially north-east Syria, have already lived through a period of political decentralization that is more stable and better rooted compared to other areas of influence in Syria, which exacerbated the residents' belief that localities have the right and the capacity to run the various sectors without the need for a central government.

Appendix number 1 contains a table that explains respondents' perceptions about the optimum division of sectoral roles and powers among the various administrative levels.

5.4.1 Surveying and Determining Needs

Nearly the majority of the surveyed sample, 48.6%, chose that localities (cities' councils and towns and townships) should be directly responsible for surveying and determining local needs for the services, health, and education facilities. In the second place, respondents chose that the governorate councils should have that responsibility with a rate of 34%. In third place, respondents stated that the central government and its affiliated ministries and directorates should be responsible with a rate of 16.4%, as shown in chart 24.

There was a broad consensus among respondents who agreed that the task of surveying and determining local needs must be assigned to the localities. The general impression is that respondents believe that localities are more capable of directly and efficiently communicating with local communities to determine their needs and requirements in the various services and non-services sectors.

Surveying and determining local communities' needs in the health and education sectors

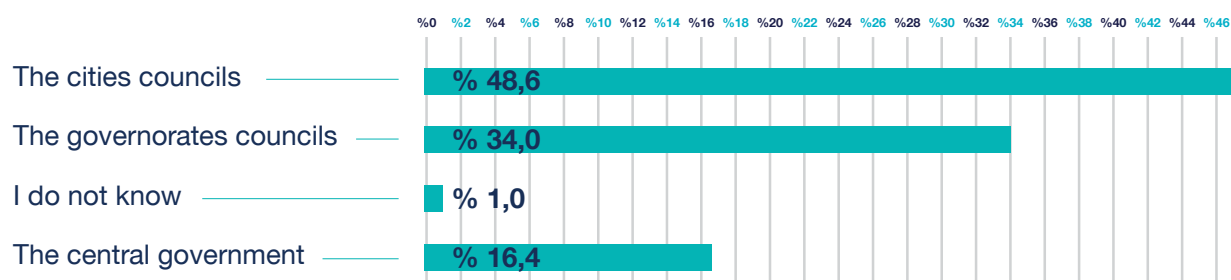


Chart (24) Surveying and determining local communities' needs in the health and education sectors

When TDA cross-referenced the former results with the geographic locations of the respondents and the areas of influence in Syria they reside in, shown in chart 25, it found that the respondents in north-east Syria showed the highest approval for giving the localities the role of surveying and determining needs, with a rate of 55.8%. This is because decentralization has been implemented in north-east Syria for a while and the governance in these areas is stable compared to the other regions in Syria. In second place came the respondents in regime-held areas, with a rate of 44.2%, and their approval rate was higher than the respondents in northern Aleppo countryside, with a rate of 44.2%. The respondents in north-west Syria, whose approval rate reached 39%, scored the lowest amongst all groups in Syria.

This disparity in approval rates could be explained by the general rejection of those under the control of the Syrian regime towards the regime's highly centralized policies and approaches to setting plans and determining needs. The disapproval of the groups residing in north-west Syria and northern Aleppo countryside could be explained by the local communities' dislike of the performance of the local towns and city councils in the past few years, which could also explain why they were more inclined to grant more significant powers to the governorate councils in surveying and determining local needs.

Surveying and determining local communities' needs in the health and education sectors

(Geographic locations)

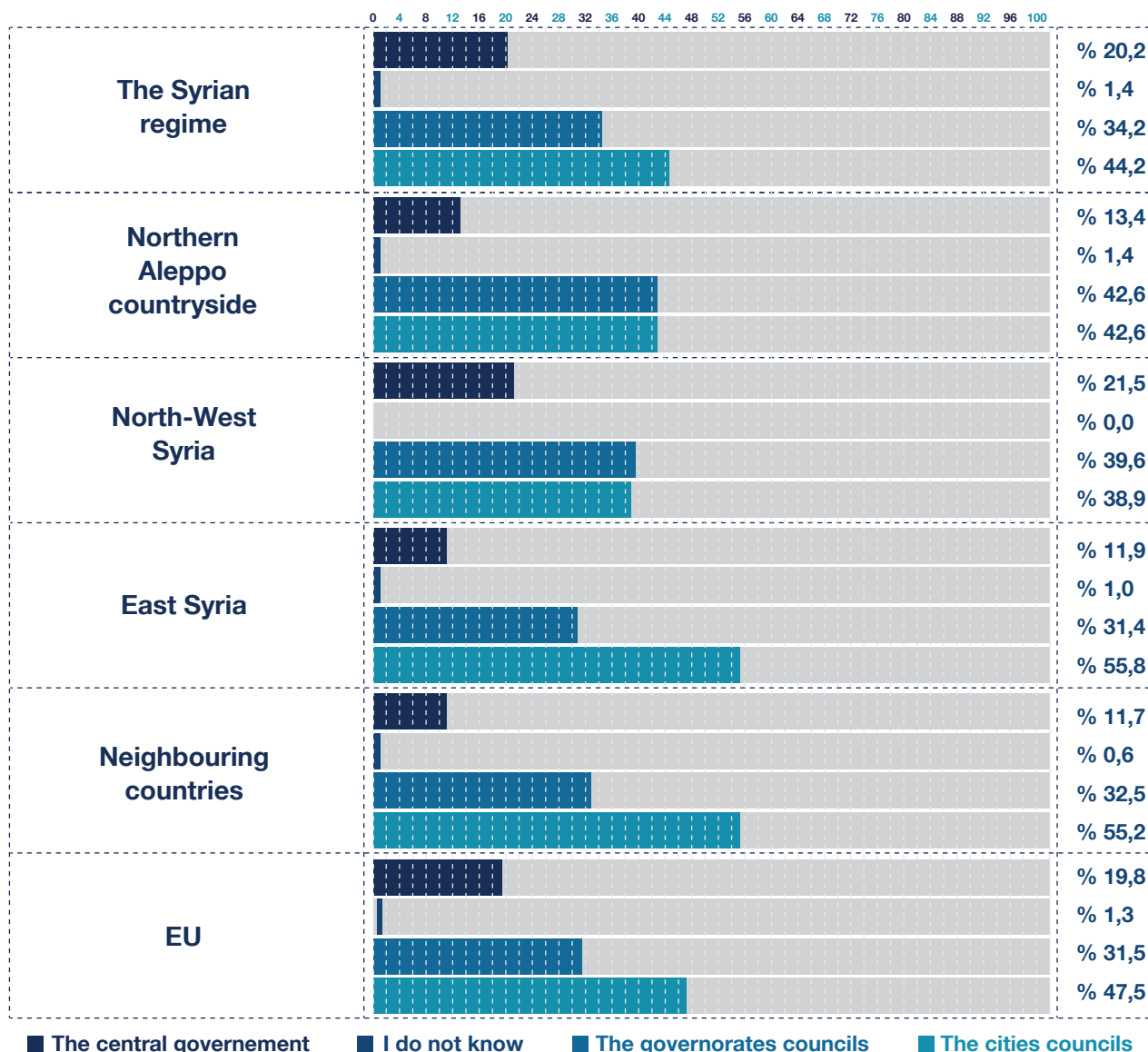


Chart (25) Surveying and determining local communities' needs in the health and education sectors (Geographic locations)

5.4.2 The Education Sector

5.4.2.1. Curriculum and Educational Policies Development

The majority of the surveyed sample, nearly 71.6%, said that the development of curricula and educational plans is the task of the central government. In second place, respondents chose the governorate councils with a rate of 23.8%. The localities (city councils and towns and townships) came in last place with a rate of 4%, as shown in chart 26.

Curriculum and Education Policies Development

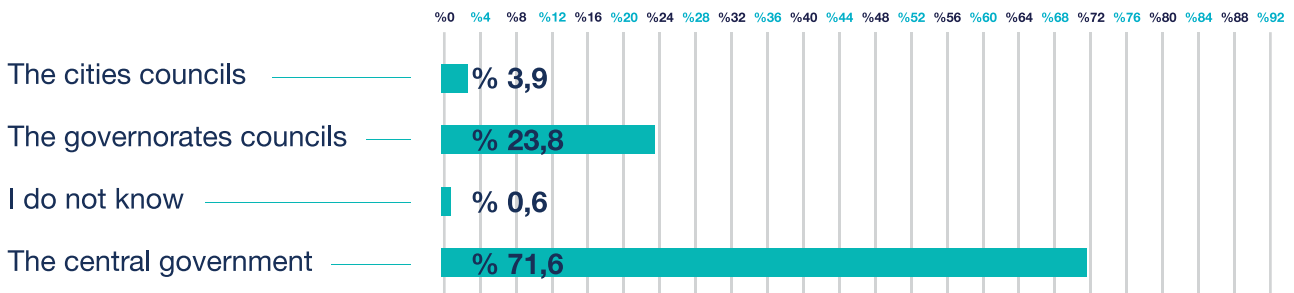


Chart (26) Curriculum and Education Policies Development

The various ethnic and national groups (chart 27) and the multiple spheres of influence inside Syria (chart 28) mostly agreed on adopting a centralized approach to developing curricula and educational policies.

Curriculum and Education Policies Development (Nationality and Ethnicity)

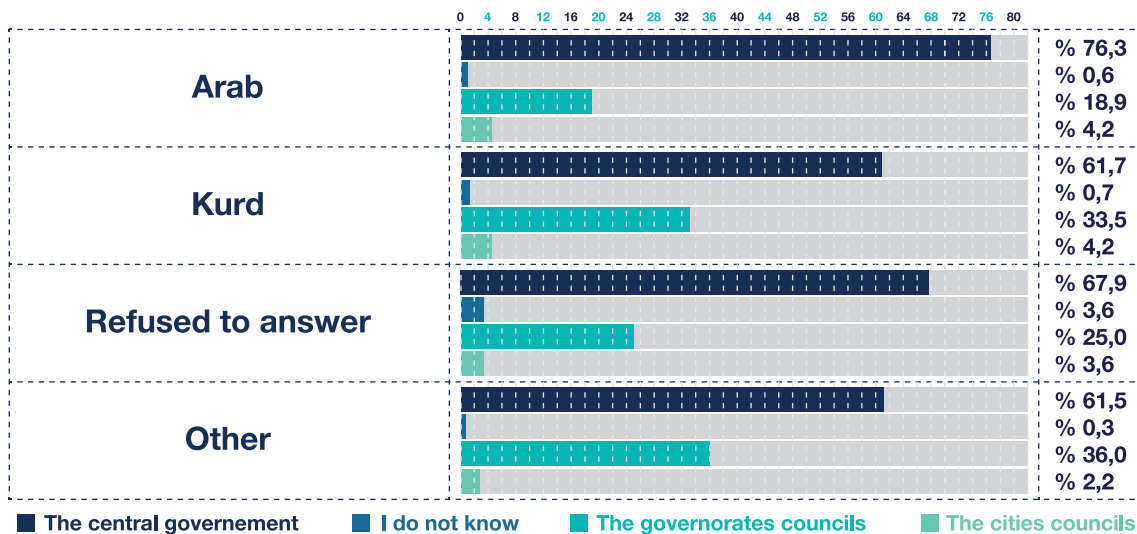


Chart (27) Curriculum and Education Policies Development (Nationality and Ethnicity)

Curriculum and Education Policies Development (Geographic locations)

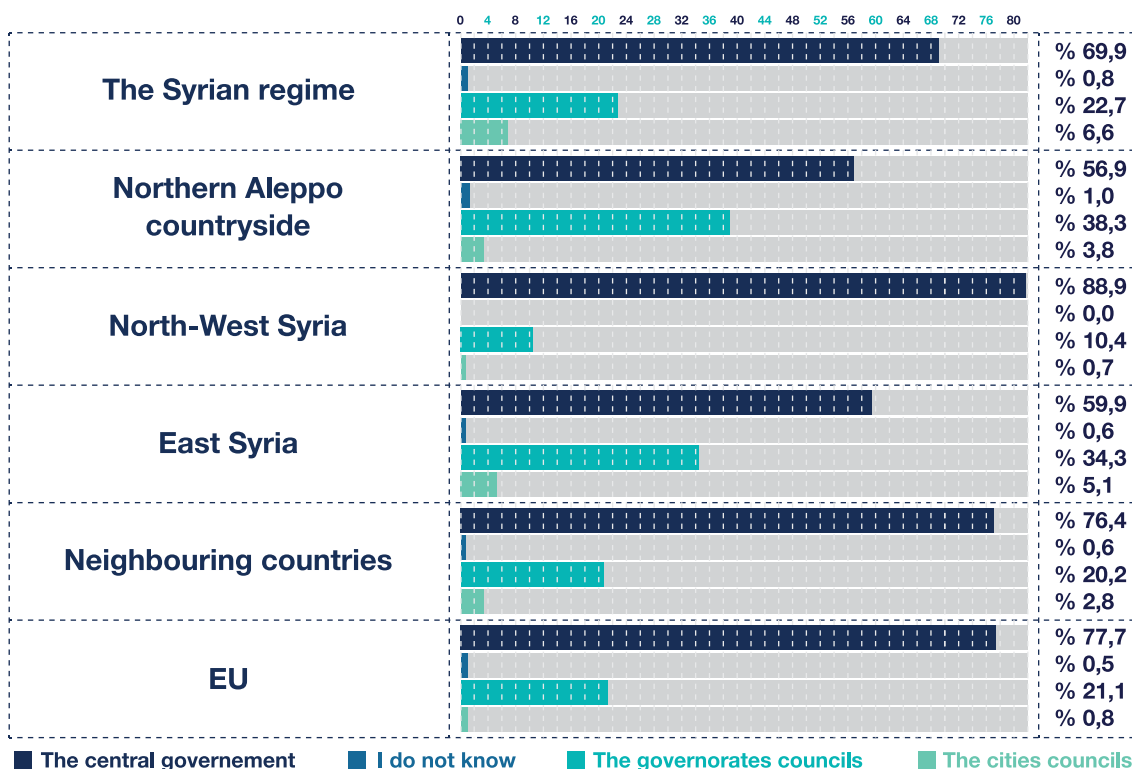


Chart (28) Curriculum and Education Policies Development (Geographic locations)

5.4.2.2 Recruiting Teaching Staff

Almost half of the sample, 51%, said that the task of recruiting teaching staff and school heads should be overseen by the governorate councils. While 27% of the entire sample stated this should be the task of the central government. The lowest rate in the sample, 21.6%, stated that this task should be the responsibility of the localities, as shown in chart 29.

Recruiting teaching staff, including teachers, teaching assistants, and school heads

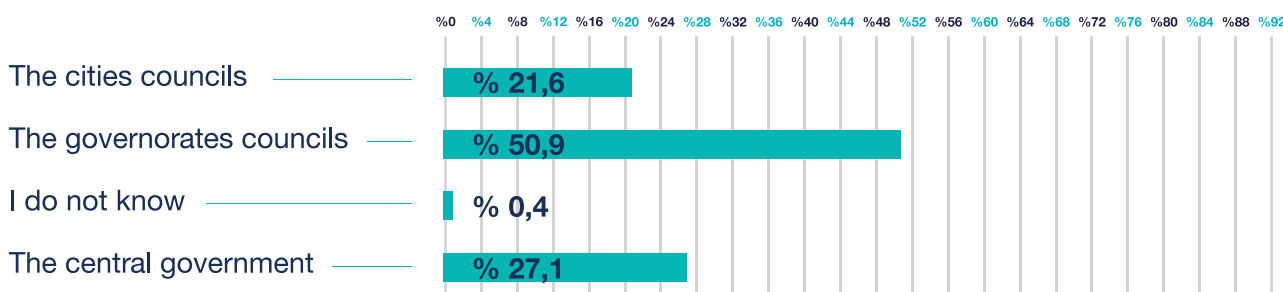


Chart (29) Recruiting teaching staff, including teachers, teaching assistants, and school heads

Chart 30 shows the first choice for the respondents in north-west Syria was that the

governorate councils should oversee the recruitment of teaching staff with a rate of 68.8%, while the rate in the northern Aleppo countryside reached 58%. In the areas under regime control, the rate was 51.4%. The approval rates dropped relatively in north-east Syria to 42%. Simultaneously, the respondents in this area agreed that the localities should be assigned the role of recruiting teaching staff, with an approval rate that reached 35.6%, the highest for this question amongst all the groups in Syria.

Recruiting teaching staff, including teachers, teaching assistants, and school heads (Geographic locations)

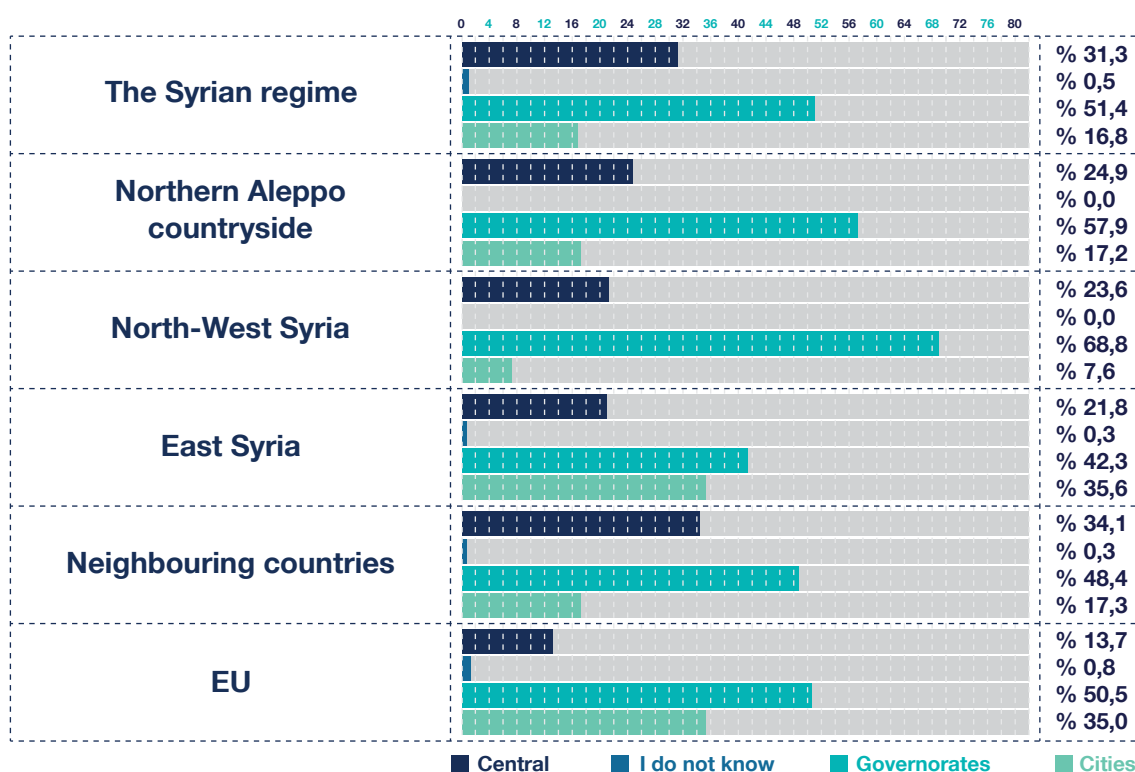


Chart (30) Recruiting teaching staff, including teachers, teaching assistants, and school heads

5.4.2.3 Determining the Locations of Educational Facilities.

A large segment of the sample, 45.8%, believe that the governorate councils should be responsible for determining the locations of education facilities and schools. 39.7% of the sample think this task is the responsibility of the localities, the city councils, and the towns and townships. 14% of the sample believe that it is the task of the central government and its affiliated institutions, as shown in chart 31.

Determining the locations of schools and education facilities

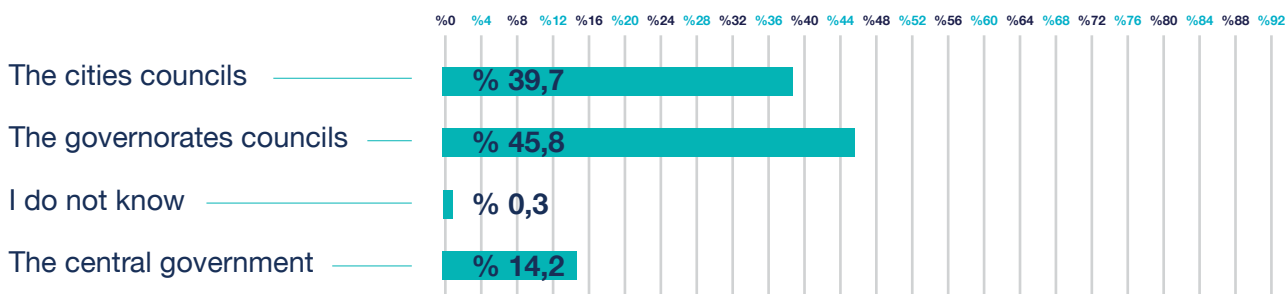


Chart (31) Determining the locations of schools and education facilities

TDA cross-referenced these results with the geographic locations of the respondents, as shown in chart 32, and found that the highest approval rates of governorates councils determining the locations of the education facilities was highest in north-west Syria at a rate of 70%. Regime-held areas came second with a rate of 50%, and in northern Aleppo countryside third, at a rate of 45%. The respondents in north-east Syria stated that determining the locations of education facilities should be the task of the localities, with an approval rate of 54.2% – 18% higher than the approval rate of the choice of assigning this task to the governorates councils.

Determining the locations of schools and education facilities. (Geographic locations)

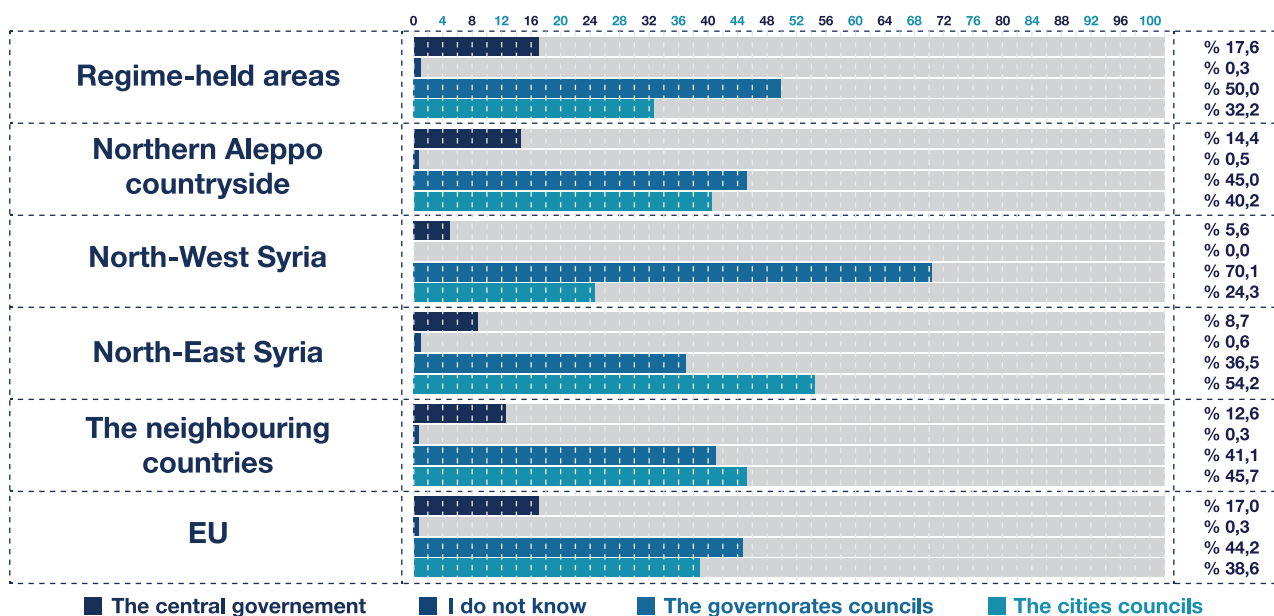


Chart (32) Determining the locations of schools and education facilities. (Geographic locations)

5.4.2.4 Supervising Education Policies

48.5% of the sample think that the task of supervising the execution of education policies and plans should be assigned to the central government and its affiliated ministries and directorates. 38.3% of the sample believe it should be the task of the governorates councils, and 12.5% believe it should be the task of local councils, as shown in chart 33. These answers were consistent with the distribution of the respondents according to the geographic locations in the various areas of influence in Syria, as shown in chart 34 — with the exception of the respondents from north-east Syria where the participants chose the governorates councils as their first option with an approval rate that is 16% higher, than their second choice which was the central government.

Supervising the execution of education policies and plans

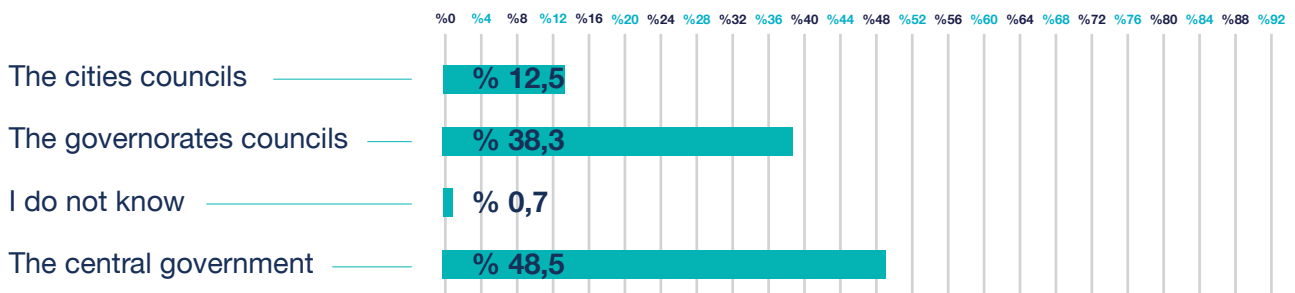


Chart (33) Supervising the execution of education policies and plans

Supervising the execution of education policies and plans. (Geographic locations)

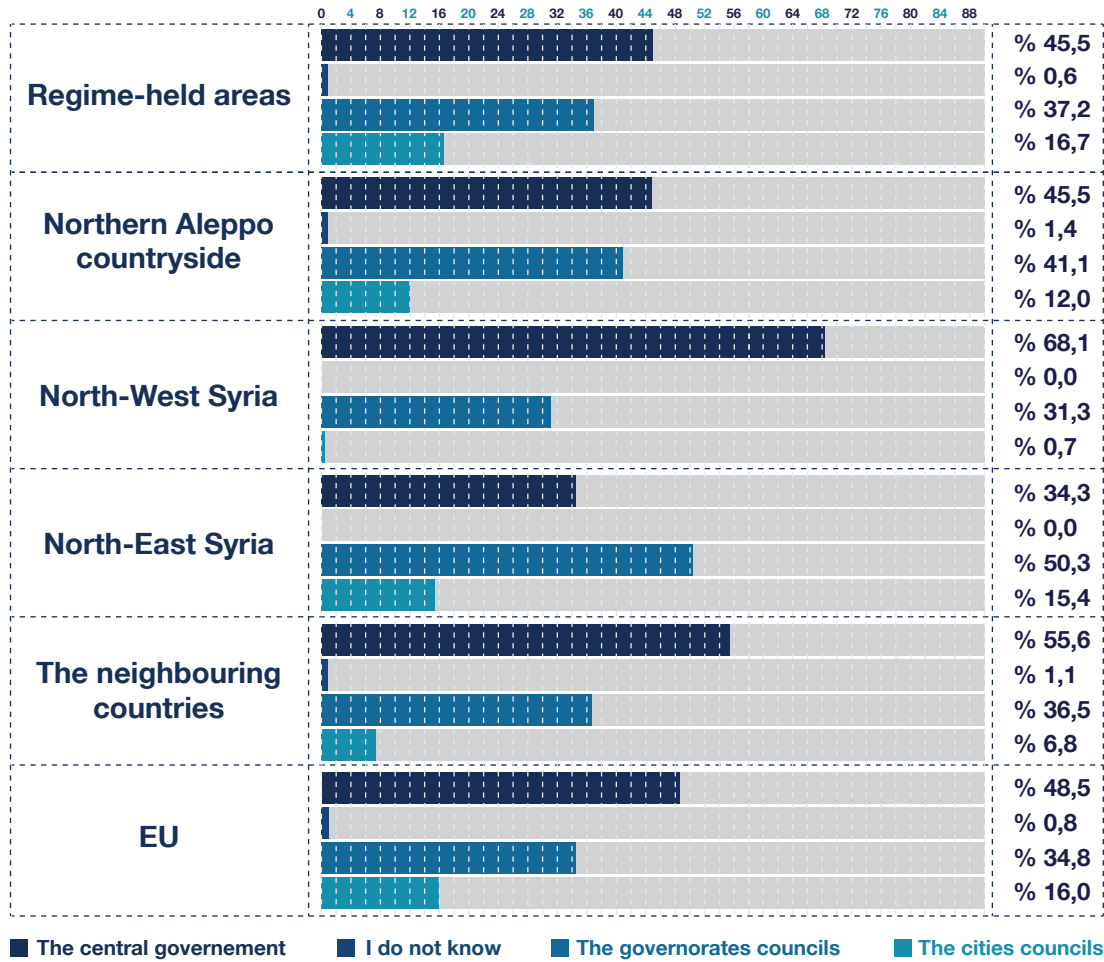


Chart (34) Supervising the execution of education policies and plans. (Geographic locations)

	Curriculum Development	Recruiting Teaching Staff	Determining The Locations of Education Facilities	Supervising Education Policies
North-East Syria	The central government	The governorates councils	The city councils and towns and townships	The governorates councils
North-West Syria	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Northern Aleppo countryside	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Regime-held areas	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Neighboring countries	The central government	The governorates councils	The city councils and towns and townships	The central government
EU	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government

Table (2): shows the division of roles and powers in the education sector and on the different administrative levels based on respondents' geographic locations

5.4.3 The Health Sector

5.4.3.1. Developing Public Health Policies.

The majority of the sample, 60.6%, believed that developing public health policies and campaigns such as vaccinations and primary care should be the responsibility of the central government. In second place, respondents chose the governorates councils with a rate of 29.2%, and in the third place were the city councils and towns and townships with an approval rate of 9.6%, as shown in figure 35.

Developing public health policies such as vaccinations and primary care

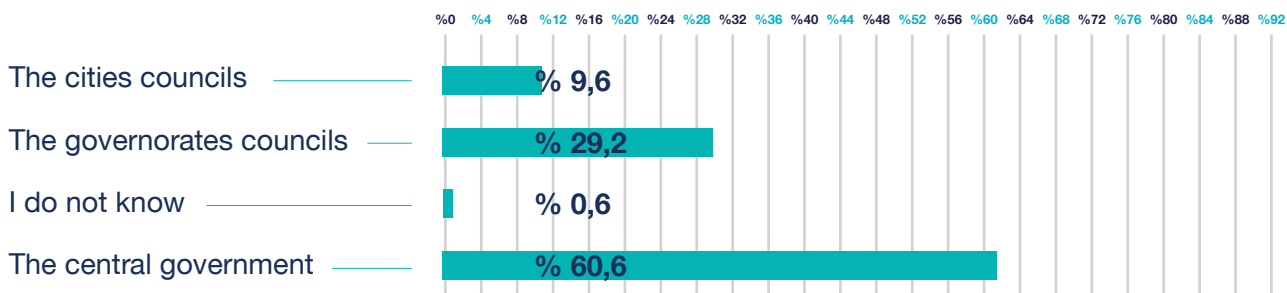


Chart (35) Developing public health policies such as vaccinations and primary care

These results are consistent with the geographic locations of the respondents, as shown in chart 36. However, TDA notes that the approval rate regarding the option of the central government dropped in northern Aleppo countryside to 34%, while the first choice of the respondents in this area was that the governorates councils should develop public health policies with an approval rate of 50%.

Developing public health policies such as vaccinations and primary care

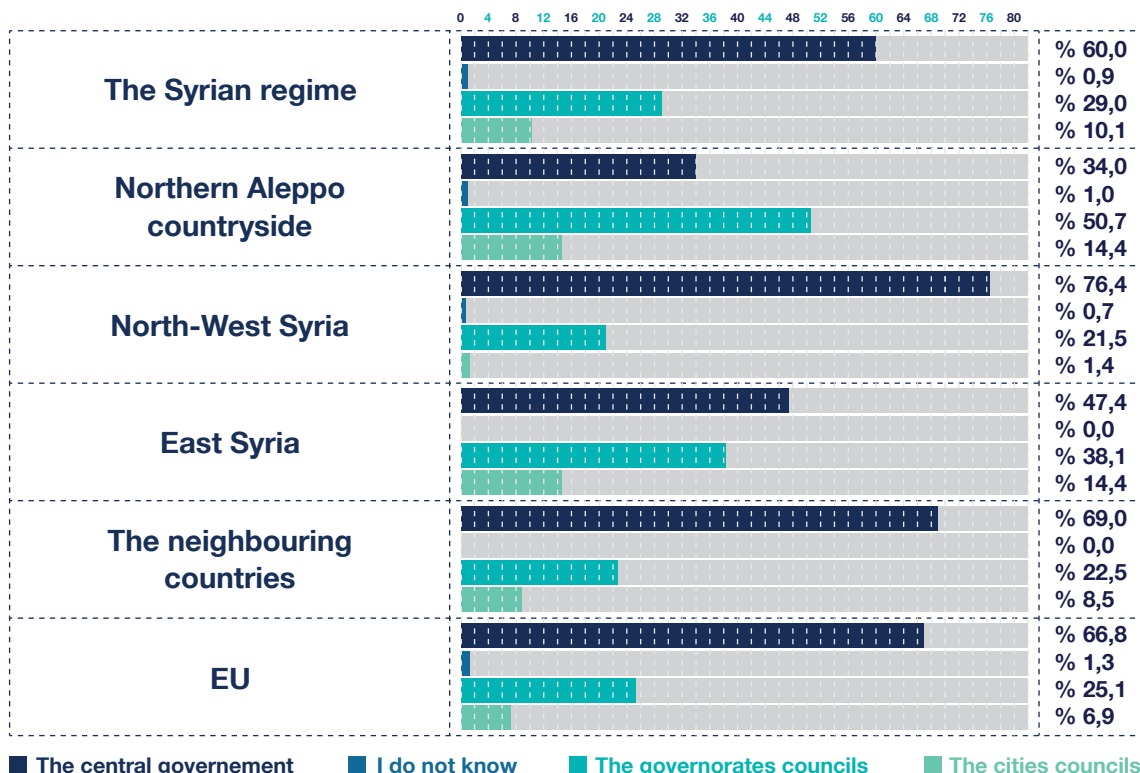


Chart (36) Developing public health policies such as vaccinations and primary care (Geographic locations)

5.4.3.2 Recruiting Medical Staff

Half of the surveyed sample, 50.8%, said that the governorate councils should be responsible for recruiting medical and nursing staff and hospitals' management. In second place, the respondents chose the central government with a rate of 28.8%, with localities determined as their third option, with a rate of 20%, as shown in chart 37. Chart 38 indicates that the results of the surveyed sample were consistent with the geographic locations of the respondents. However, the approval rate for the choice of governorate councils dropped in north-east Syria to 43.6%. In contrast, the approval rate for selecting city councils, towns, and townships rose to 38%, the highest among the areas included in this survey.

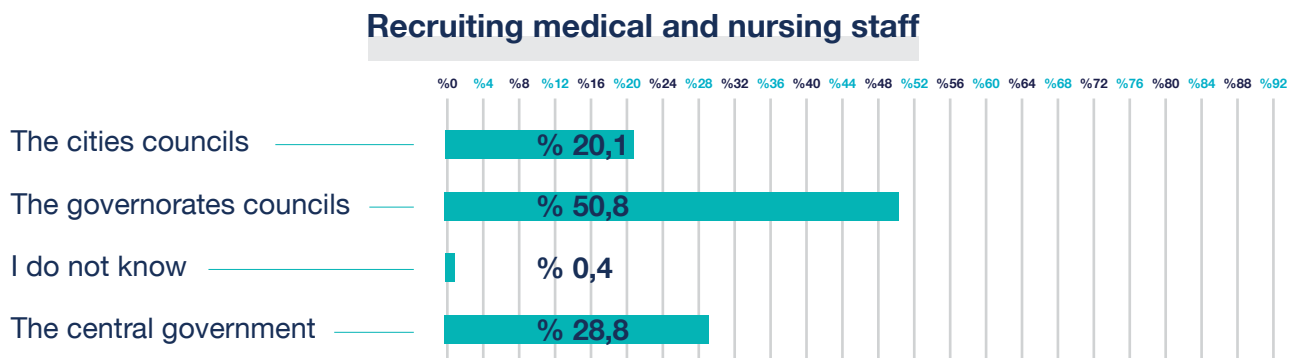


Chart (37) Recruiting medical and nursing staff

Recruiting medical and nursing staff

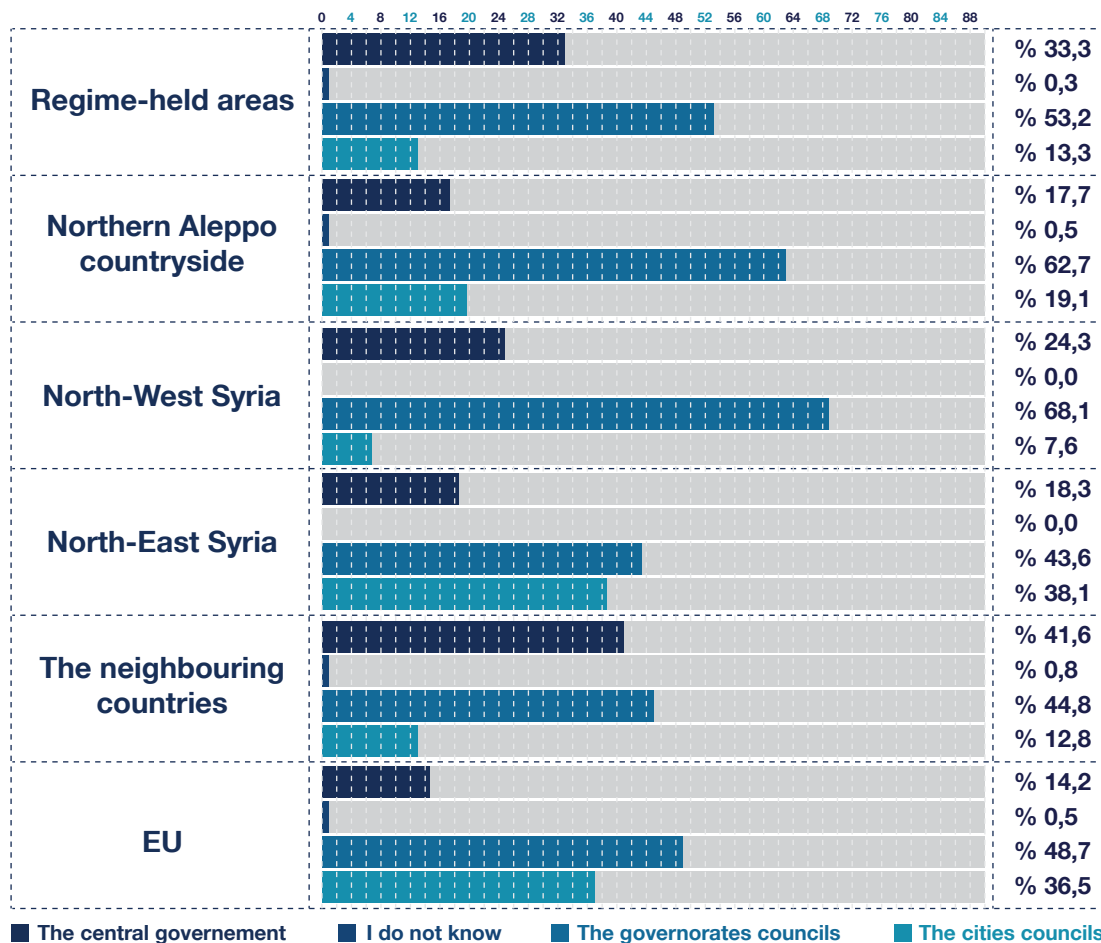


Chart (38) Recruiting medical and nursing staff

5.4.3.3 Determining the Locations of Health Facilities

47.8% of the respondents said that it should be the responsibility of governorate councils to determine the locations of hospitals, GP clinics, and medical care centers. 34.6 % of the respondents said that it should be the responsibility of city councils and towns and townships. The last option chosen by respondents was the central government’s choice with a rate of 17.4%, as shown in chart 39.

Determining the locations of hospitals and clinics

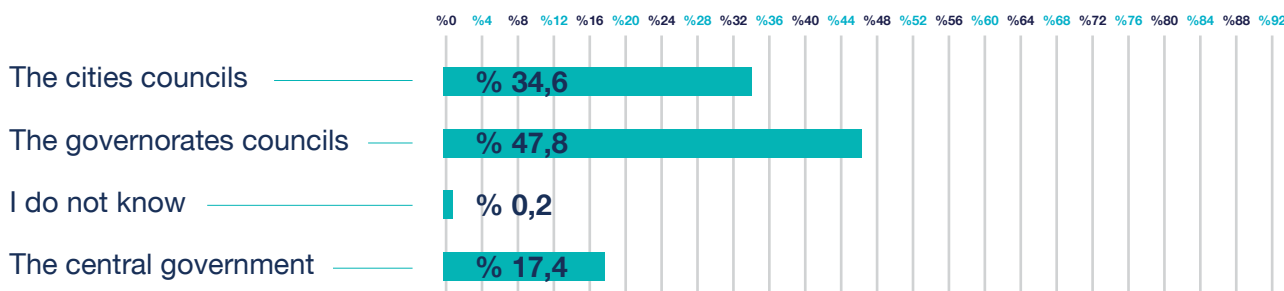


Chart (39) Determining the locations of hospitals and clinics

Similarly, chart 40 shows that the respondents from north-east Syria believed that localities, including the city councils, the towns, and townships, should determine the locations of health facilities with a rate of 54.4%, while choosing the second option of governorates councils with a rate of 36.5%.

Determining the locations of hospitals and clinics (Geographic locations)

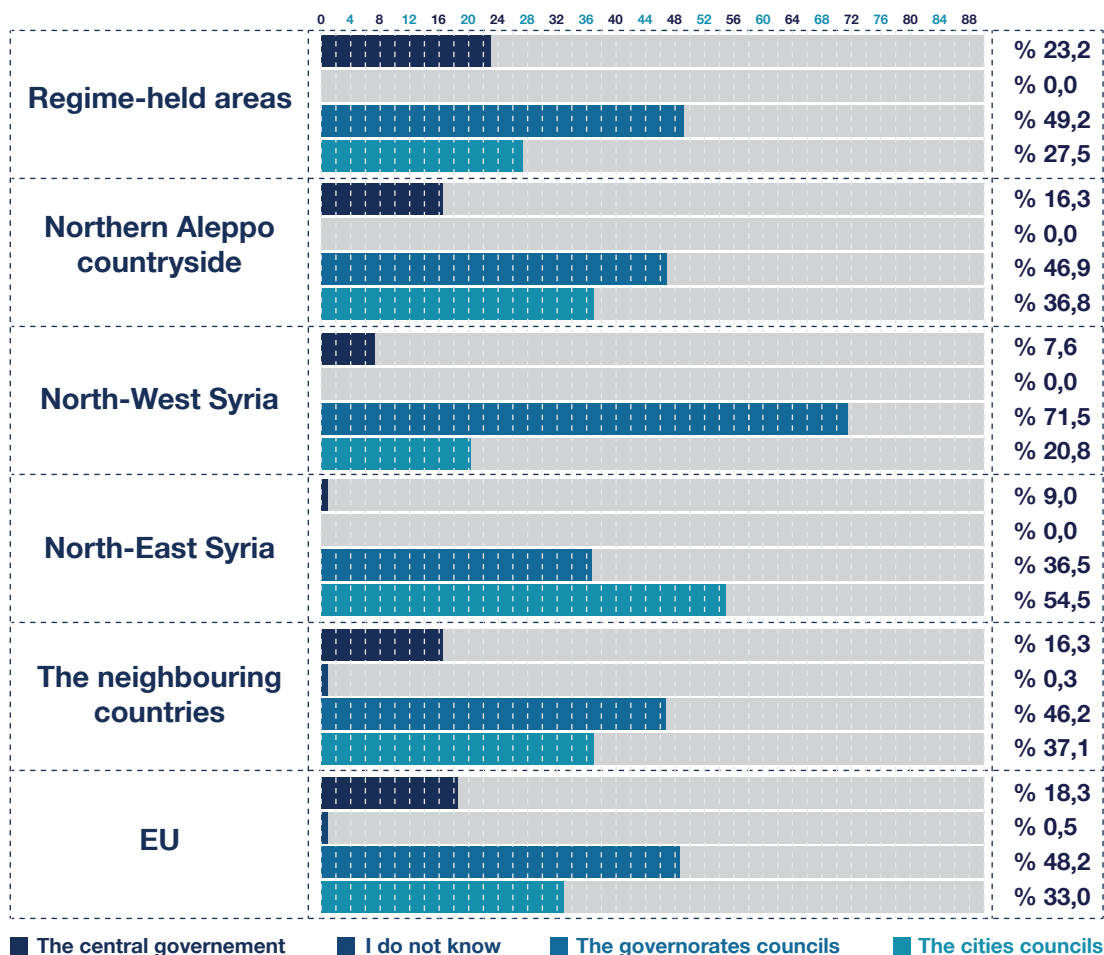


Chart (40) Determining the locations of hospitals and clinics (Geographic locations)

5.4.3.4 Overseeing the Implementation of Health Policies.

A large segment of the surveyed sample, 46%, considered that the oversight over the implementation of public health policies and the quality of services provided by hospitals and medical clinics is the task of the central government. 40% of the sample said it is the duty of the governorate councils. The lowest rate, 13.7% of respondents, stated that this task is the responsibility of city councils, towns, and townships, as shown in chart 41.

Oversight over the implementation of public health policies and the quality of services provided by hospitals and medical clinics

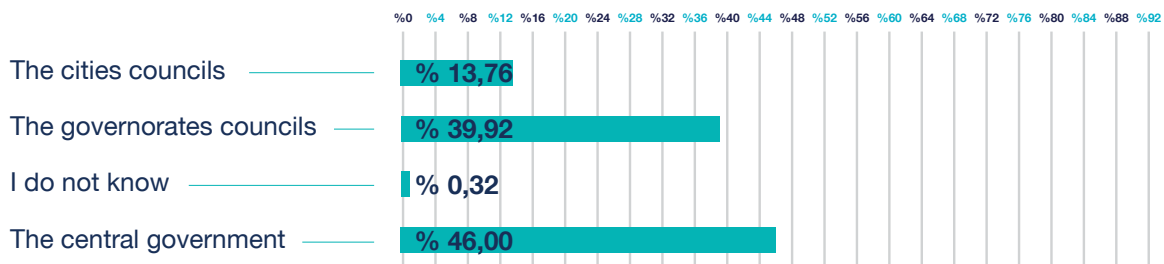


Chart (41) Oversight over the implementation of public health policies and the quality of services provided by hospitals and medical clinics

Cross-referencing the results with the geographic locations of the surveyed sample, as shown in chart 42, shows that the respondents from north-east Syria had different opinions to the rest of the sample. 53.2% of these respondents said that the oversight over the implementation of public health policies should be the responsibility of the governorate councils — a rate 27% higher than the approval rate for the second option; the central government.

Oversight over the implementation of public health policies and the quality of services provided by hospitals and medical clinics (Geographic locations)

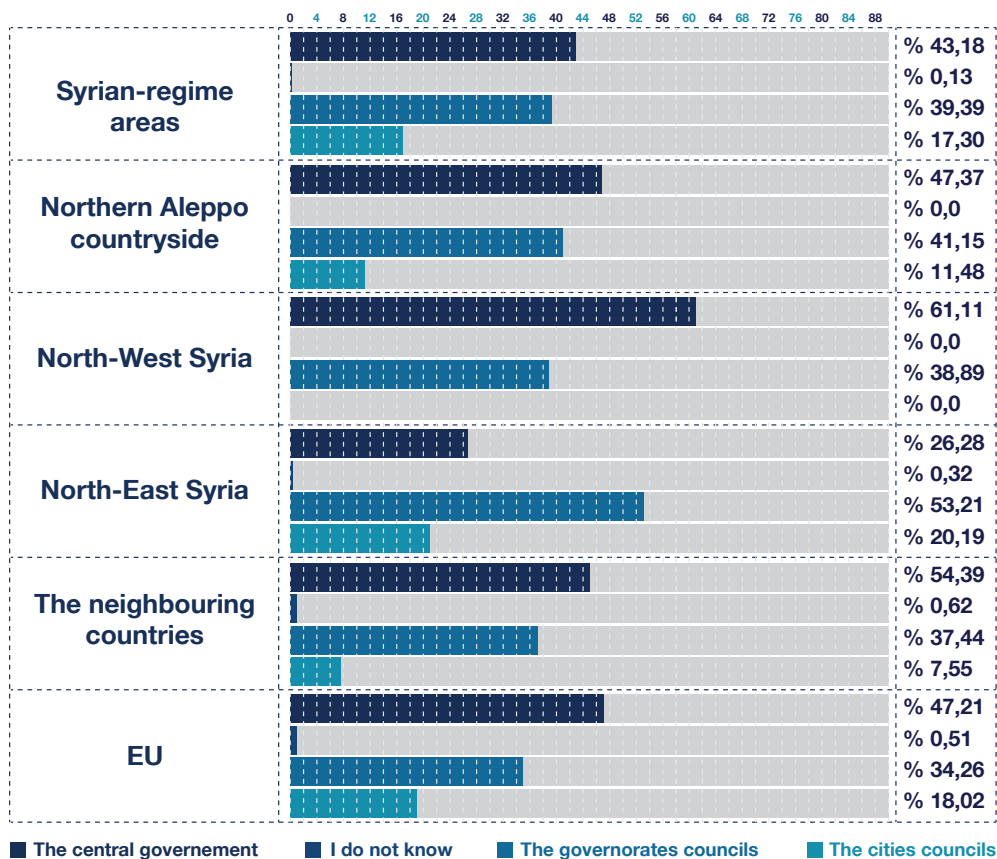


Chart (42) Oversight over the implementation of public health policies and the quality of services provided by hospitals and medical clinics (Geographic locations)

	Developing Public Health Policies	Recruiting Medical Staff	Determining The Locations of Health Facilities	Overseeing The Implementation Of Health Policies
North-East Syria	The central government	The governorates councils	The city councils and towns and townships	The governorates councils
North-West Syria	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Northern Aleppo countryside	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Regime-held areas	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Neighboring countries	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
EU	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government

Table (3): shows the division of roles and powers in the health sector based on respondents' geographic locations.

5.4.4 Economic Development and Taxation

5.4.4.1. Developing Tax Policies

The majority of the sample, 58.2%, chose that the central government and its institutions should be responsible for determining the general tax policies, including the income and consumption tax, among others. Chart 43 shows that the second choice was the governorate councils with 31.8%. The last choice was the localities, city councils, towns, and townships, with a rate of 8.2%. Chart 44 shows that the respondents from north-east Syria chose that governorate councils should be responsible for determining tax policies, with a rate of 43.6%. Their second choice was the central government, with a percentage of 35%.

Determining the general tax policies such as the income and consumption tax

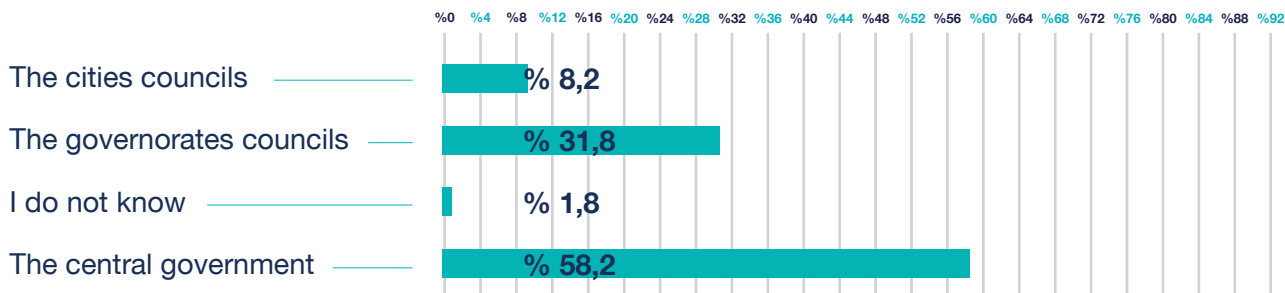


Chart (43) Determining the general tax policies such as the income and consumption tax

Determining the general tax policies such as the income and consumption tax (Geographic locations)

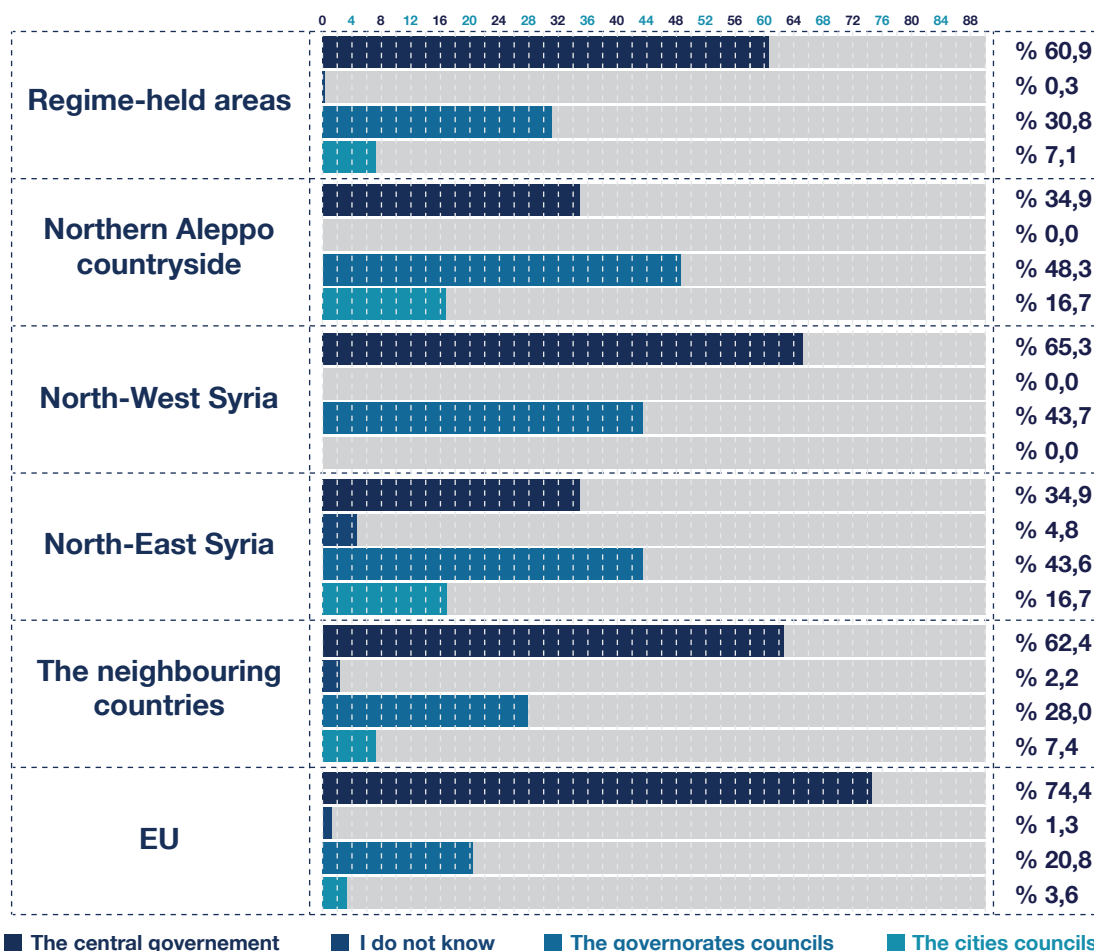


Chart (44) Determining the general tax policies such as the income and consumption tax (Geographic locations)

5.4.4.2 Tax Collection

Nearly 44% of the respondents chose that the city councils and towns and townships should be responsible for collecting tax. Their second choice was the governorate councils, with a percentage of 32%. Their last choice was the central government, with a rate of 22.6%, as shown in shape 45.

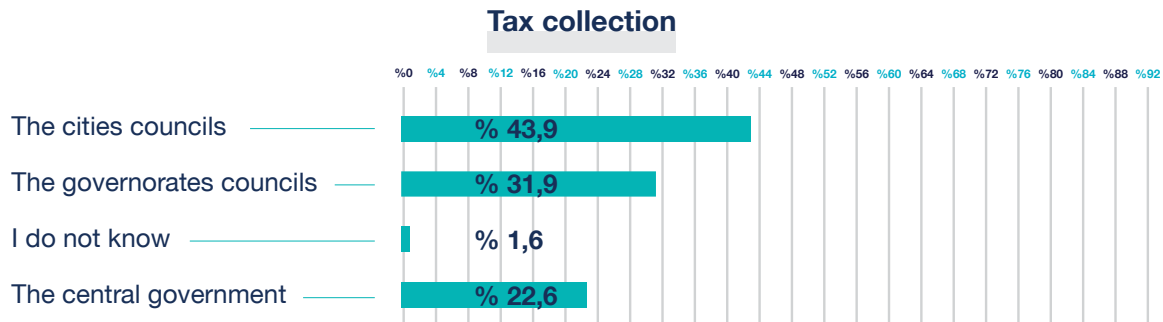


Chart (45) Tax collection

Chart 46 shows that the former approval rates are consistent when cross-referenced with the breakdown of the geographic locations of the respondents in the majority of the Syrian areas surveyed. The only exception were the areas under the regime's control. There, 39% of the respondents found that tax collection is the responsibility of the governorates councils. Their second choice was the city councils and towns and townships with an approval rate of 31.8%.

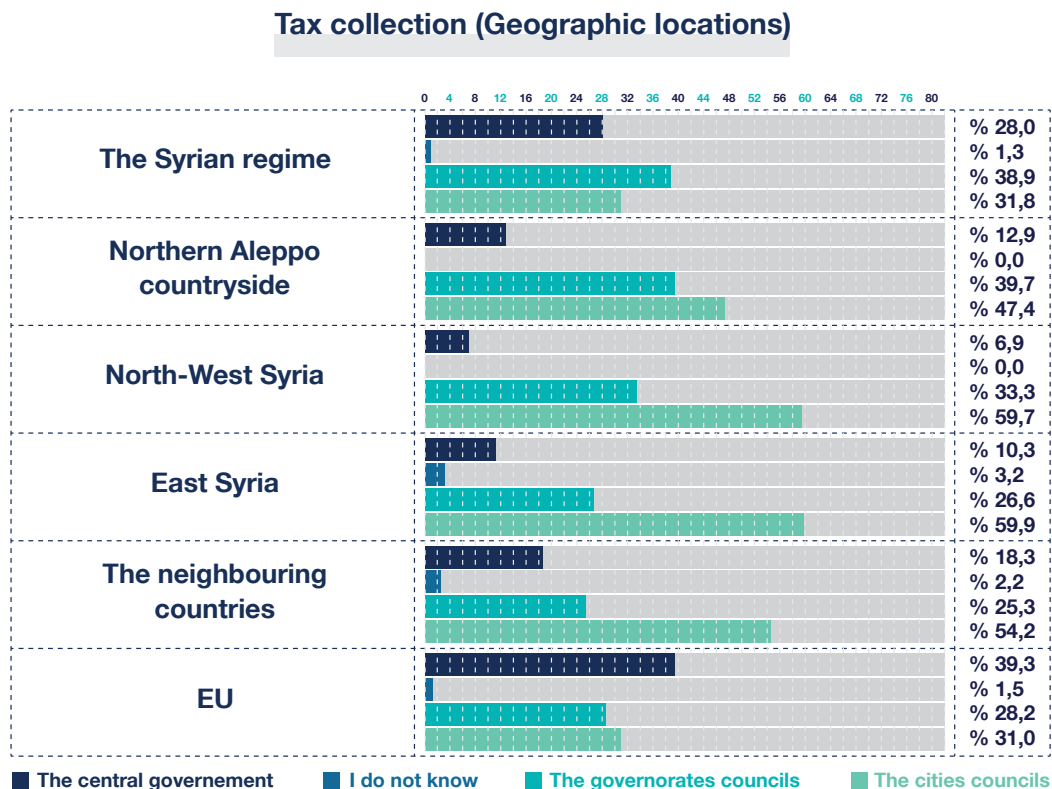


Chart (46) Tax collection (Geographic locations)

5.4.4.3 Investments And Public Sector Revenue-Generating Projects.

Chart 47 shows that the most significant part of the surveyed group, 45,2%, thinks that the central government and its affiliated ministries and directorates should be responsible for establishing investments and publicly owned revenue-generating projects. Their second option was the governorate councils with an approval rate of 40.5%, and the last choice was the city councils, towns, and townships with a rate of 12.7%.

Establishing investments and publicly owned revenue-generating projects

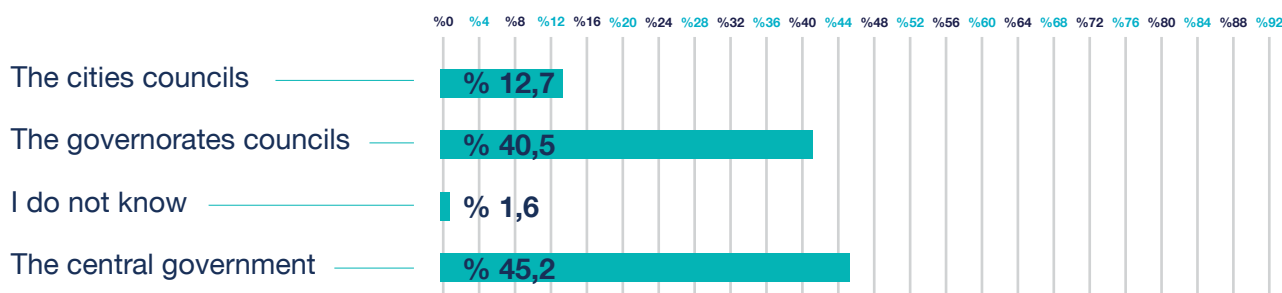


Chart (47) Establishing investments and publicly owned revenue-generating projects

The central government's choice was highest among respondents who were refugees and the respondents who reside outside Syria, as well as among respondents in Syria, as shown in chart 50%. However, the respondents inside other areas of influence in Syria preferred assigning this task to the governorate councils, with an approval rate of 53.5% in north-west Syria and 47.4% in north-east Syria and in northern Aleppo countryside.

Establishing investments and publicly owned revenue-generating projects (based on the geographic locations of the respondents)

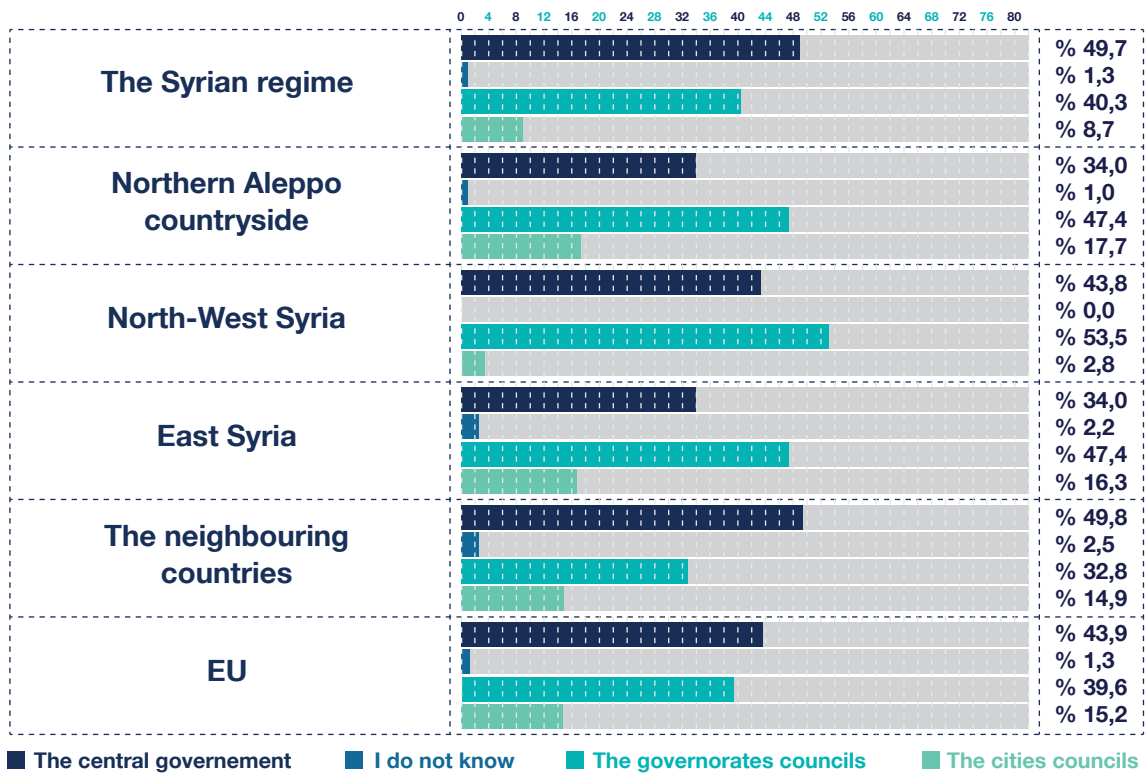


Chart (48) Establishing investments and publicly owned revenue-generating projects
(Geographic locations)

5.4.4.4 The Management of Natural Resources.

The majority of the sample, 77.5%, said that management of natural resources such as oil and gas and minerals should be the responsibility of the central government and its ministries and directorates. 18% of the sample said it should be the responsibility of the governorate councils, and 2.4% agreed that it should be the responsibility of the local councils such as the city councils and towns and townships. See chart 49.

The management of natural resources such as oil and gas and minerals

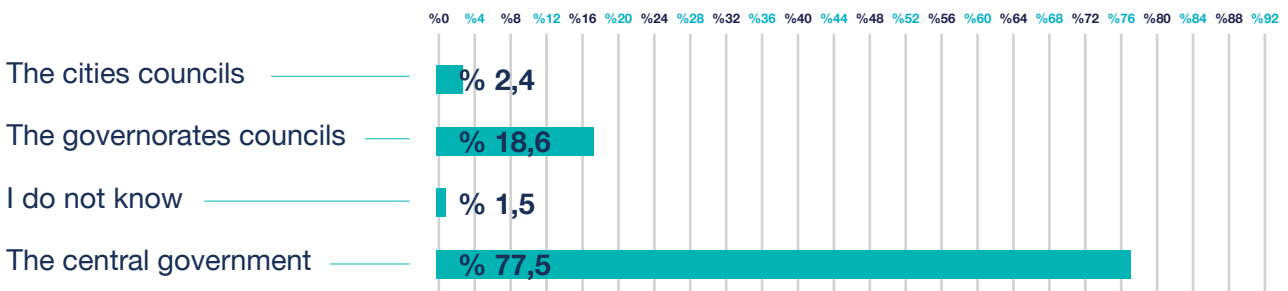


Chart (49) The management of natural resources such as oil and gas and minerals

Chart 50 shows that the sample was in agreement about leaving the management of natural resources to the central government. Respondents from north-east Syria also approved this choice with a rate of 56.7%, a rate that is 20% higher than their second preference, which is the governorate councils.

The management of natural resources such as oil and gas and minerals (Geographic locations)

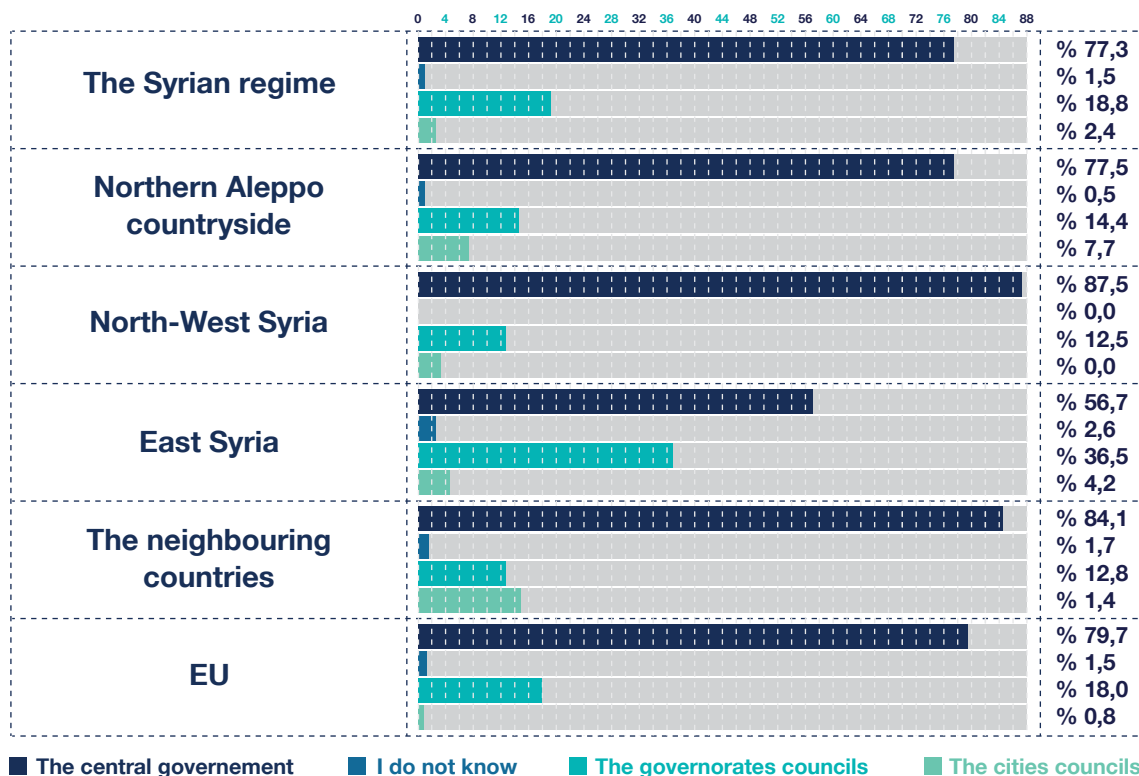


Chart (50) The management of natural resources such as oil and gas and minerals

5.4.4.5. Management of Border Crossings

The sample showed a near consensus, 86% approval rate, that the central government should be responsible for managing sea, land, and air border crossings. This consensus was common across all the areas covered in this survey, both in and outside Syria, and there were no meaningful statistical variances among the different geographic locations. The approval rate for the option of the governorates councils did not exceed 11.3%, while less than 2% of the sample chose the option of the city councils and towns and townships, as shown in chart 51.

The management of sea, land, and air border crossings

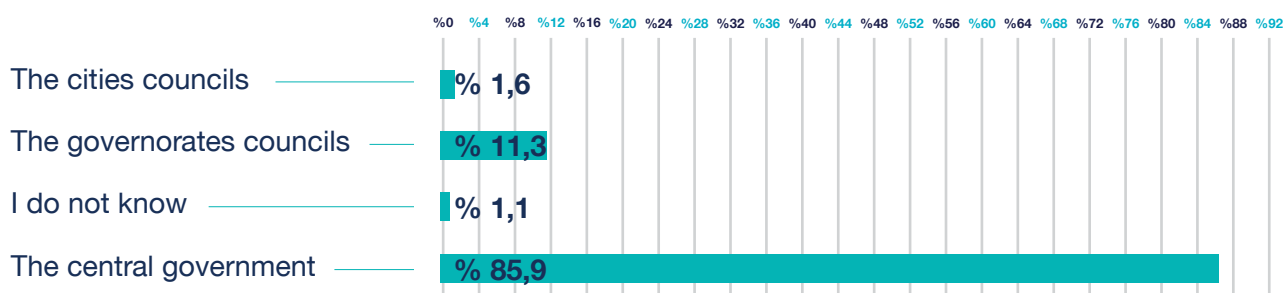


Chart (51) The management of sea, land, and air border crossings

	Developing Tax Policies	Tax Collection	Investments and Revenue-Generating Projects	The Management Of Natural Resources	The Management of Border Crossing
North-East Syria	The governorates councils	The city councils, towns, and townships	The governorates councils	The central government	The central government
North-West Syria	The central government	The city councils, towns, and townships	The governorates councils	The central government	The central government
Northern Aleppo countryside	The governorates councils	The city councils, towns, and townships	The governorates councils	The central government	The central government
Regime-held areas	The central government	The governorates councils	The central government	The central government	The central government
Neighboring countries	The central government	The city councils, towns, and townships	The central government	The central government	The central government
EU	The central government	The city councils, towns, and townships	The central government	The central government	The central government

Table (4): shows the division of roles and powers in the economic and taxation sector based on respondents' geographic locations

5.4.5 The Security Sector

5.4.5.1 Developing Security Policies.

More than half of the sample, 52%, think that the powers of developing security policies include the location and distribution of police centers and the deployment of security forces to the central government and its affiliated ministries. Granting it to governorate councils was the second choice with a 40.6% approval rate. The third choice was the option of city councils and towns and townships with a percentage of 6.3%, as shown in chart 52.

Developing security policies such as the location and distribution of police centers, and the security forces deployment

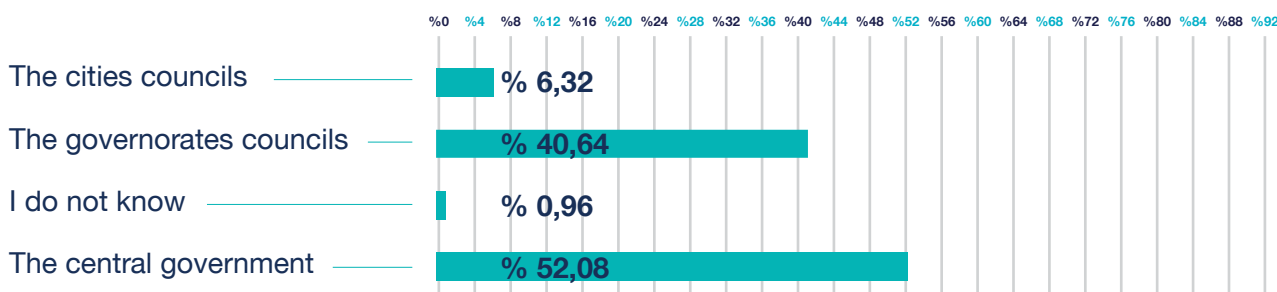


Chart (52) Developing security policies such as the location and distribution of police centers, and the security forces deployment

Chart 53 shows that the respondents from north-east Syria and northern Aleppo countryside had different opinions. 63% of the sample of north-east Syria and 50% of the sample of northern Aleppo countryside agreed that governorate councils should be responsible for developing security policies. Their second option was the central government with a rate of 34.4% in northern Aleppo countryside and 26.3% in north-east Syria.

Developing security policies such as the location and distribution of police centers and the security forces deployment (geographic locations)

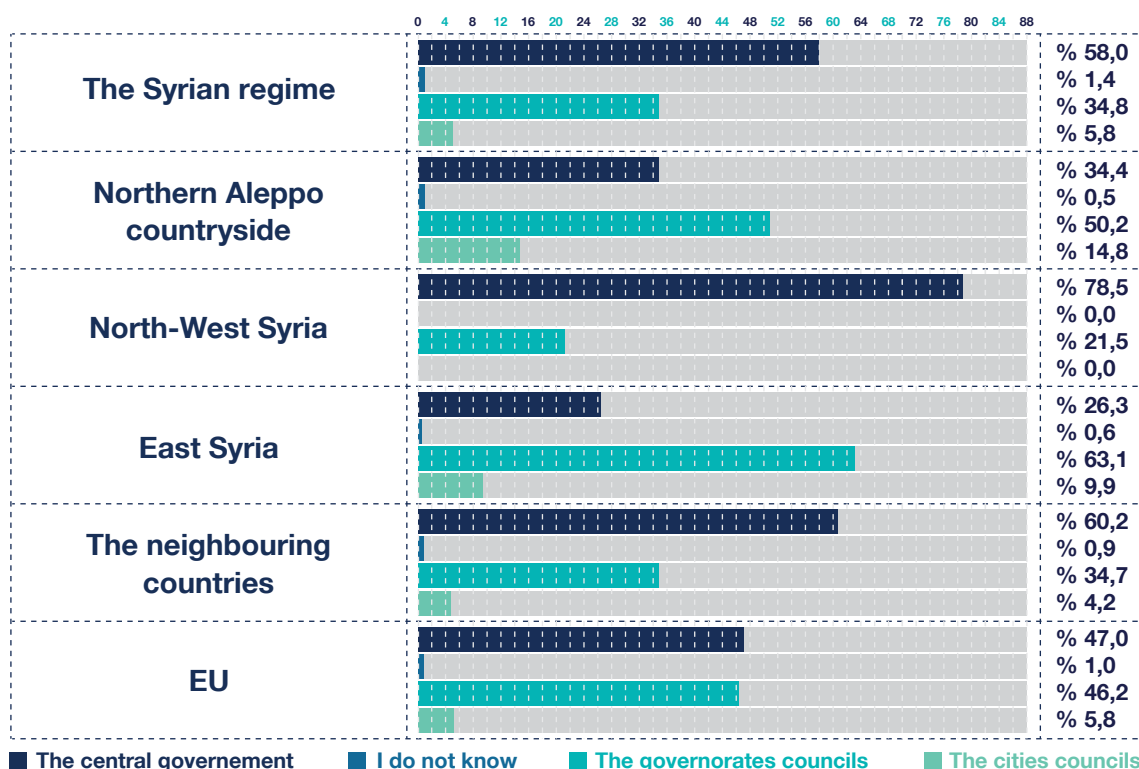


Chart (53) Developing security policies such as the location and distribution of police centers and the security forces deployment (geographic locations)

5.4.5.2 Appointing Leadership of Security and Police

The sample similarly approved both the option of the central government and the possibility of the governorate councils being responsible for recruiting and appointing the leadership of the security forces and the police. 47.2% of the sample said that this is the task of the central government, while 43.2% of the sample said that it is the responsibility of the governorate councils. The choice of the localities came last with a rate of 8.7%. See chart 54.

Appointing the leadership of the security forces and the police

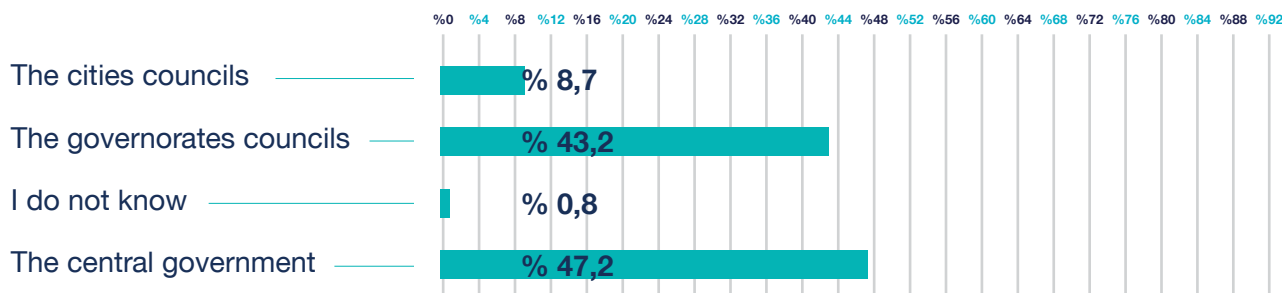


Chart (54) Appointing the leadership of the security forces, and the police

Chart 55 shows that 60 % of the respondents who are in neighboring countries and 57.6% of those in the areas under regime control, believe that appointing the leadership of the security and the police is the responsibility of the central government. The remaining respondents preferred designating this task to the governorate councils at a rate of 58.4% in northern Aleppo countryside, 55.6% in north-west Syria, and 44.2% in north-east Syria. The respondents in north-east Syria had the highest approval rate for the option of the city councils and towns and townships appointing the leadership of the security and the police with a rate of 29.2%.

Appointing the leadership of the security forces and the police (Geographic locations)

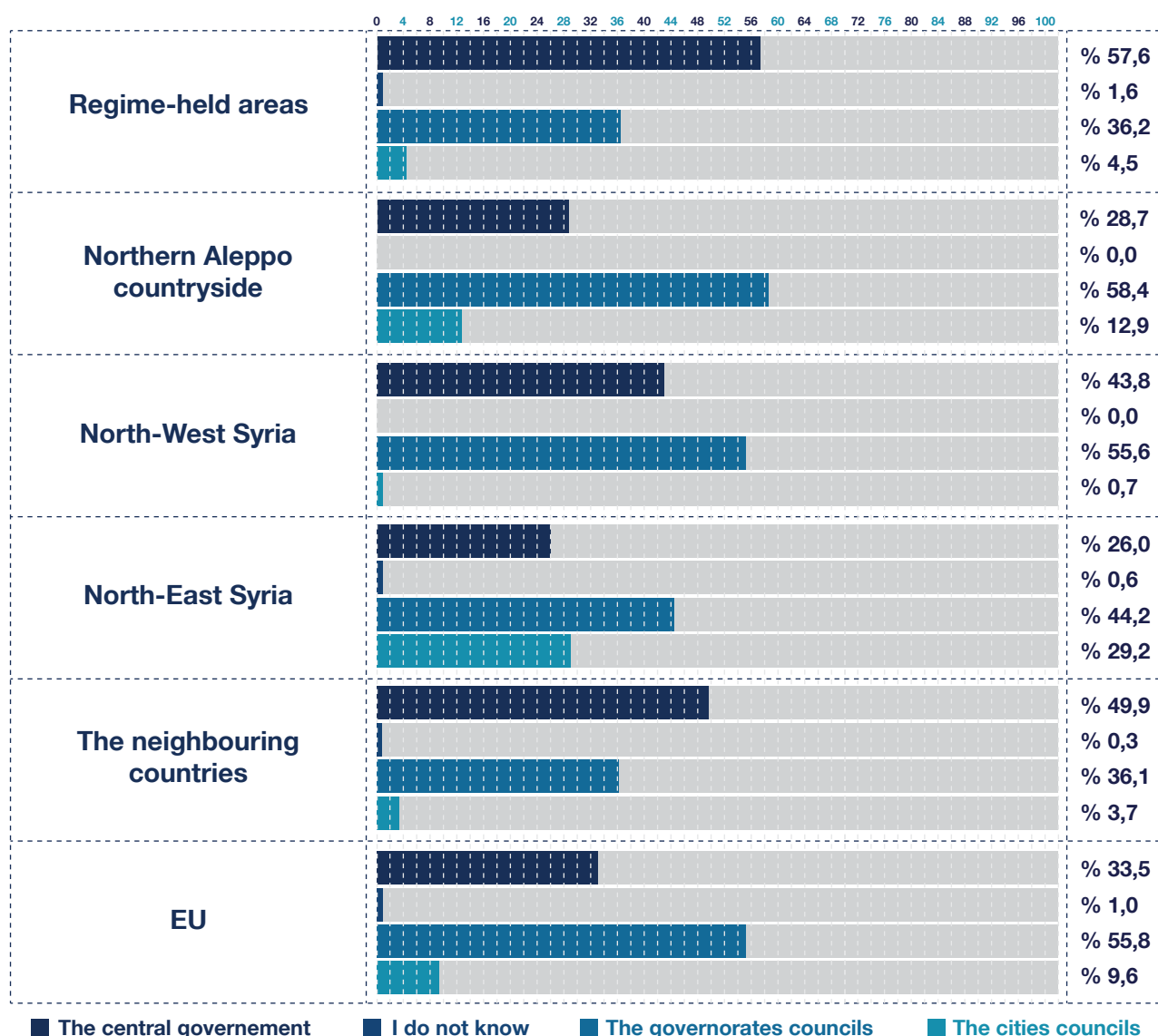


Chart (55) Appointing the leadership of the security forces and the police (Geographic locations)

5.4.5.3 Oversight and Monitoring the Work of Security Branches and Police Departments.

Similar to the former results, the sample showed an approval towards assigning the task of monitoring the work of police departments and security branches to the central government. Chart 56 shows that nearly 50% of the surveyed sample chose the option that the central government is responsible for this task, while 38.3% thought it should be assigned to the governorates councils and 10.6% thought it is the task of the city councils and towns and townships.

When TDA cross-referenced these results with the geographic locations of the surveyed sample, as shown in chart 57, we found that the only exception was the answers of the respondents in north-east Syria. 54.2% of the respondents in north-east Syria chose to assign this task to the governorates councils, while 30% chose to give it to the central government.

Monitoring the work of security branches and police departments

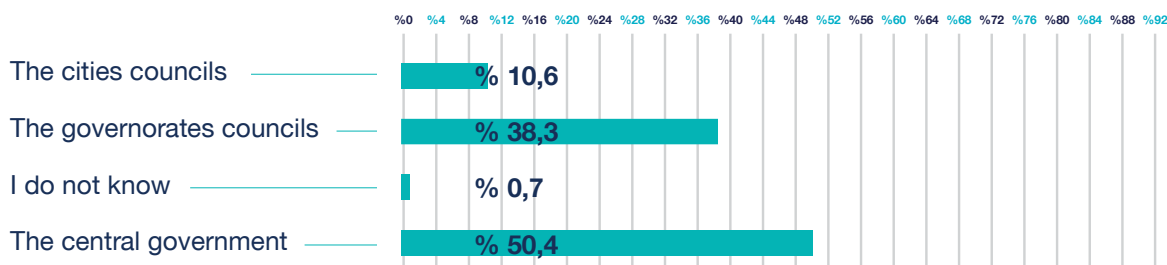


Chart (56) Monitoring the work of security branches and police departments

Monitoring the work of security branches and police departments (Geographic locations)

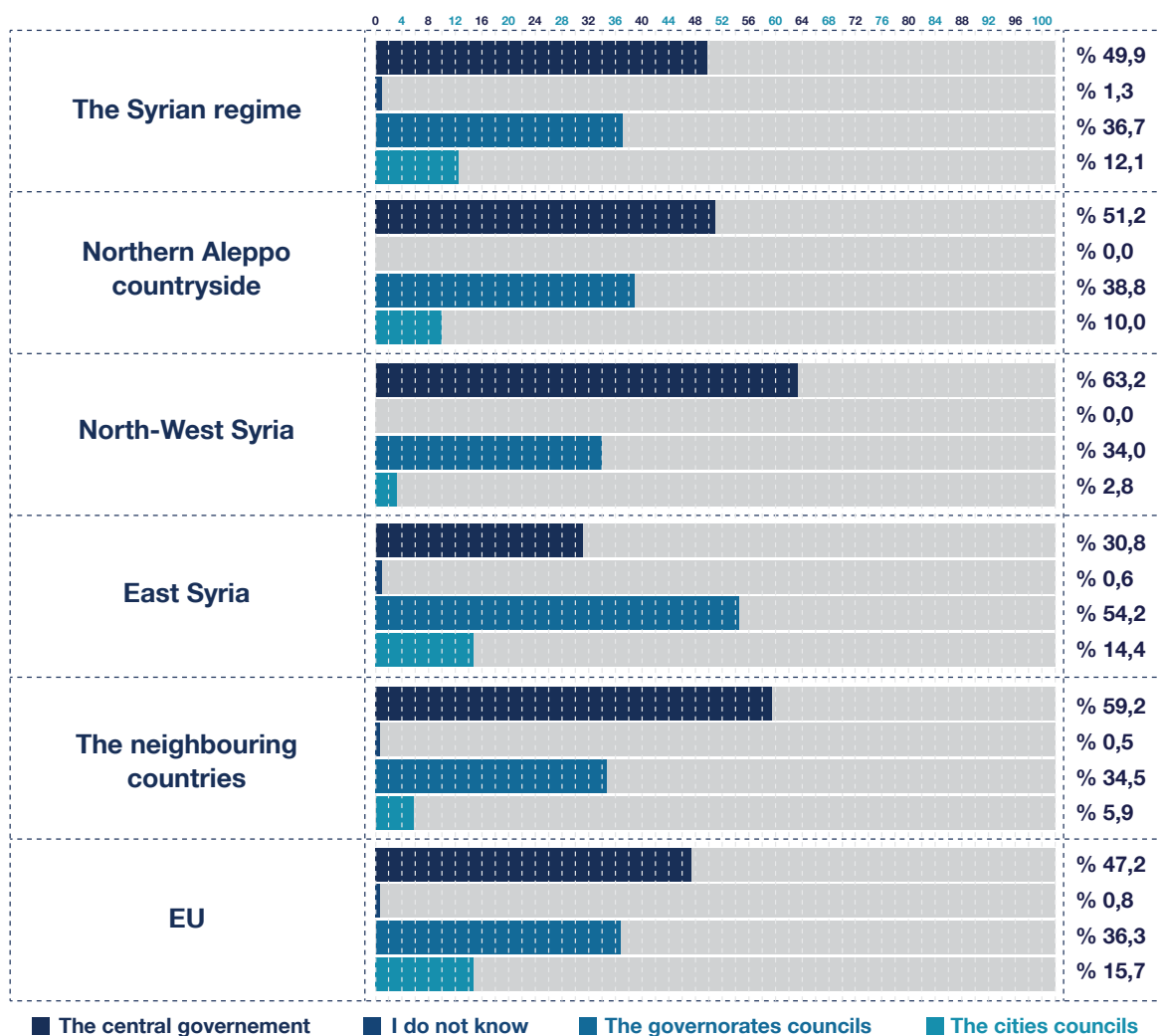


Chart (57) Monitoring the work of security branches and police departments (Geographic locations)

	Developing Security Policies	Appointing Leadership of Security and Police	Oversight and Monitoring over the Security policies
North-East Syria	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The governorates councils
North-West Syria	The central government	The governorates councils	The central government
Northern Aleppo countryside	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Regime-held areas	The central government	The central government	The central government
Neighboring countries	The central government	The central government	The central government
EU	The central government	The governorates councils	The central government

Table (5): shows the division of roles and powers in the security sector based on the geographic locations of the respondents, both in and outside Syria

Conclusion and Recommendations

The former results show that Syrians, both males, and females, regardless of their identity affiliation or geographic locations, have a high approval for the adoption of decentralization and its political and social aspects and its impact on governance in the post-conflict era in Syria. There is also a consensus that decentralization can not be restricted to a reduced interpretation, limiting its function to administration or services, because that would prevent its main objective of facilitating a democratic transition and a broader political representation and social participation, and in the stabilization and peacebuilding efforts in Syria in the future.

Based on the survey results and statistical indicators, TDA presents suggestions and recommendations regarding decentralization in the constitutional, legal, civic, and theoretical frameworks.

First: In The Constitutional Framework

1- Incorporating the concept of decentralization in the constitution and stipulating that it is a cornerstone of the governing system in Syria to oblige the state in the future to adopt and implement decentralization in ways that ensure participatory democracy and active political representation of the local communities in the decision-making process.

2- Setting clear constitutional regulations for decentralization in Syria, which would prevent any legislator in the future from tailoring the concept to serve the interests of the political ruling power. These regulations include:

- The Syrian state consists of decentralized units, such as governorates, cities, and towns. These units are entitled to an independent legal status that guarantees their administrative, organizational and financial independence and are overseen by elected councils.

- These elected councils are responsible for managing all local affairs according to the principle of freedom of administration. They are obliged to abide by the unity of the state. The elected councils are chosen through a public secret ballot in an equal and direct voting process.

- The budget of the decentralized units in the state is developed from the financial revenue of those decentralized units' properties, and from the tax revenues and the natural resources compiled within their administrative borders, in addition to the contribution made by the main treasury of the central government to ensure equal and sustainable development of all regions.

- Ensure that all decentralized units have their jurisdiction to guarantee their independence and powers that respect the nature and cultural characteristics of their local communities.

3- Reducing the powers of the president of the republic and the executive power, and ensuring the complete separation of powers and that each of the branches of the government does not impede or interfere with the work of the others, which would help prevent the executive power from overcontrolling the local decentralized units.

Second: In The Legal Framework

Working to issue a new local administration law that would enforce the aforementioned constitutional principles and roles. The law needs to stipulate the following:

- Remove any political or judicial impunity for the governor's office and guarantee that they are fully accountable to the local community they serve.
- Set a quota system for women's representation in all the elected councils in the decentralized units.
- Ensure the decentralized units' right to establish their judiciaries and promulgate their laws and legislations to be enacted within their administrative borders on the condition that they do not contradict the general constitution of the country.
- Allow the decentralized units the right to adopt a second language, in addition to the official language of the state, based on the spoken languages in their communities.
- Abolishing the the division of sectoral roles and powers in the decentralized units based on executive orders by the central government. Instead, stipulate how these roles and capabilities are divided in the legal text as accurately and precisely as possible. Ensure that the decentralized units have the primary role in surveying and determining the local needs and adapting the general state's educational, health and tax policies to be best suited to their local communities' needs. (Refer to annex No.1 regarding the division of sectoral roles between the central government and the localities.)

Third: In The Civic And Educational Framework

The statistical results of this survey reveal an acceptance amongst Syrians from the different political and military spheres of influence inside Syria regarding the implementation of decentralization and its various aspects. This lays the foundation for Syrian CSOs and research centers to initiate broad intersocietal debates and discussions at the local level, and in each of the areas of influence to understand better the perceptions and the consensus and differences on the implementation of decentralization in the future. This understanding could be a cornerstone for a national dialogue that brings together opposing ideologies and political actors, and paves the way for a political settlement regarding the country's government in the future and decentralization and the relationship between the central authority and the localities in post-conflict Syria.

Annex (1) The Division of Sectoral Powers And Roles Between The Center And The Localities

The Education Sector				
	Curriculum Development	Recruiting Teaching Staff	Determining The Locations of Education Facilities	Supervising Education Policies
North-East Syria	The central government	The governorates councils	The city councils and towns and townships	The governorates councils
North-West Syria	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Northern Aleppo countryside	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Regime-held areas	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Neighboring countries	The central government	The governorates councils	The city councils and towns and townships	The central government
EU	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government

The Health Sector				
	Developing Public Health Policies	Recruiting Medical Staff	Determining The Locations of Health Facilities	Overseeing The Implementation Of Health Policies
North-East Syria	The central government	The governorates councils	The city councils and towns and townships	The governorates councils
North-West Syria	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Northern Aleppo countryside	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Regime-held areas	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Neighboring countries	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
EU	The central government	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government

Taxation and Economic development sector					
	Developing Tax Policies	Tax Collection	Investments and Revenue-Generating Projects	The Management Of Natural Resources	The Management of Border Crossing
North-East Syria	The governorates councils	The city councils, towns, and townships	The governorates councils	The central government	The central government
North-West Syria	The central government	The city councils, towns, and townships	The governorates councils	The central government	The central government
Northern Aleppo countryside	The governorates councils	The city councils, towns, and townships	The governorates councils	The central government	The central government
Regime-held areas	The central government	The governorates councils	The central government	The central government	The central government
Neighboring countries	The central government	The city councils, towns, and townships	The central government	The central government	The central government
EU	The central government	The city councils, towns, and townships	The central government	The central government	The central government

Security Sector			
	Developing Security Policies	Appointing Leadership of Security and Police	Oversight and Monitoring over the Security policies
North-East Syria	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The governorates councils
North-West Syria	The central government	The governorates councils	The central government
Northern Aleppo countryside	The governorates councils	The governorates councils	The central government
Regime-held areas	The central government	The central government	The central government
Neighboring countries	The central government	The central government	The central government
EU	The central government	The governorates councils	The central government

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