



UPINION - REFUGEE COUNCIL OF TÜRKİYE - 11.11.11

Escalation of obstacles and hardships: Insights from Syrian refugees in Türkiye

October 2024



Executive summary & recommendations

This joint report by Upinion¹, 11.11.11² and the Refugee Council of Türkiye (TMK)³ presents the results of three conversations held between July 18th and September 2th, 2024, using Upinion's online community in Türkiye. These conversations aimed to investigate the current situation and long-term prospects of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, in the context of ongoing EU discussions on allocating new resources to support Syrian refugees in Türkiye.

The three conversations explore the main needs and challenges faced by Syrian refugees, their satisfaction with and experiences of the assistance received, access to information about available assistance and humanitarian organisations, accountability to affected populations by aid organisations working with Syrian refugees in Türkiye, access to legal documentation, safety and security, fears of deportation, and future plans.

Due to the sample size and distribution of participants in the conversations, it is important to emphasise that this research constitutes a qualitative inquiry that nonetheless provides valuable insights into emerging trends, and should be interpreted accordingly. This report does not claim to establish statistical representativeness for the observed figures.

Main findings of the three conversations are summarised below, followed by a set of policy recommendations to donor states; the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR); the UN Country Team, the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and Sector leads; and the Government of Türkiye.

Conversation 1: Access to aid and main challenges and needs

The first conversation was held between July 18th and August 12th, 2024. The sample consisted of **603** Syrian individuals who started the conversation, and **489** Syrian respondents who completed it. Of those who provided their demographic information, **61%** (n=603) identified as male and **39%** identified as female, resulting in a male-to-female ratio of 1 : 0.64.

- **Lack of access to aid:** a large majority (**81%**, n=603) of respondents mentioned they did not receive any assistance in the past year. **13%** mentioned they had, while **5%** preferred not to answer the question.

¹ Upinion is a two-way communication and digital engagement platform with local communities in hard-to-reach areas of the world. See <https://upinion.com/>

² 11.11.11 is the coalition for international solidarity, bringing together NGOs, unions, movements and various solidarity groups in Flanders, Belgium. See <https://11.be/>

³ The Refugee Council of Turkey (TMK) brings together more than 20 civil society organisations (CSOs) working across Turkey to advocate jointly for better policies and programs for refugees and the communities that host them. Its members include national CSOs working with or for refugees, as well as organisations set up and run by refugees themselves (refugee-led organisations). See [Refugee Council of Turkey \(turkiyemultecikonsevi.org\)](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.tr/)

- **Main needs:** Half of Syrian respondents identified cash assistance as their top priority. This was followed by shelter (**34%**, n=590), projects or initiatives aimed at improving livelihoods (**29%**), and psychosocial support (**27%**).
- **Main challenges:** When asked about the main challenges experienced in the previous six months, a majority of **70%** (n=572) reported that the recent escalation of violence against Syrians has made them more worried than before, identifying it as the main challenge they have faced over the past 6 months. Additionally, more than half of the respondents (**53%**) mentioned that an increase in rent prices has made it difficult for them to stay in their current residences. **22%** of respondents reported issues in obtaining or renewing their legal documentation, while **19%** stated that they have faced discrimination in the distribution of aid.
- **Social tensions:** To additionally monitor social tensions between Syrian refugees and Turkish host communities in the previous six months, Syrian respondents were asked to fill in the following statement: *“As of July 2024, the social tensions between Syrians and Turkish people are _____”*. With a list of single answer options, they could select an option rating from ‘Very low’ to ‘Very high’. The large majority reported the tensions between the two communities were high or very high (**70%**, n=568). **12%** of individuals mentioned the tensions were low or very low.
- **Access to information:** Respondents were also asked about whether they feel they have sufficient information about available support to Syrian individuals in Türkiye. **12%** (n=498) of respondents reported feeling adequately informed about available support. The largest groups, however, indicated either that they lacked sufficient information (**39%**) or were unsure (**38%**) whether they had received enough information.

Conversation 2: Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

The second conversation was held between **July 30th** and **August 22th**, 2024. The research sample consisted of **453** Syrian individuals who started the conversation, of which **74%** (n=453) had not received assistance in the past half year, while **23%** had received assistance. Amongst those who received assistance, **92** individuals completed questions on their experiences with their aid providers. **232** of Syrian respondents who did not receive assistance completed the questions on access to information and trust in humanitarian organisations.

Of those who provided their demographic information, **56%** (n=425) identified as male and **44%** identified as female, resulting in a male-to-female ratio of 1 : 0.64.

Respondents who received aid in past six months

- **Behaviour of aid workers:** All respondents who indicated to have received aid in the past six months were asked to share their feelings about the behaviour of aid workers in their area. More than half of the respondents reported feeling good or very good (**52%**, n=94) about the behaviour of the aid workers they interacted with. This was followed by one-fifth who remained neutral. **10%** mentioned that the behaviour was bad or very bad.
- **Participation and inclusion:** When asked whether they had participated in any decisions, implementation, or monitoring of aid and services in any way, **2%** of respondents mentioned that they had participated in such activities related to the support they received in the past six months. The large majority of **94%** (n=93) reported they had not, while **4%** preferred not to answer the question.
- **Feedback and complaint mechanisms:** When asked whether they knew how to share suggestions and/or concerns with aid providers, a large majority of **76%** (n=92) reported they did not know how to share feedback. **13%** knew how to do so, while **11%** preferred not to answer the question.
- **Perceptions of EU and other donors:** Respondents who indicated to have received support in the previous six months were subsequently asked whether they agreed with the following statement: *"I feel that the European Union and other international donors care about hearing the opinions of Syrian refugees in order to develop and implement their programs and policies."* The largest group (**37%**, n=91) disagreed with this statement. This group was closely followed by **31%** of individuals who somewhat agreed. **18%** of respondents highly agreed with the statement, while only **7%** remained neutral.

Respondents who did not receive aid in past six months

- **Trust in humanitarian actors:** The largest share of Syrian respondents (**34%**, n=264) indicated they do not trust humanitarian actors very much. **12%** of Syrian individuals reported completely trusting humanitarian actors, with some groups also mentioning they mostly (**13%**) or somewhat (**19%**) trust these actors. **17%** of respondents did not trust humanitarian actors at all.
- **Feeling informed on available aid in Türkiye:** The majority of Syrian respondents (**52%**, n=259) reported not feeling very much or not at all informed about aid and services available to them. **14%** indicated they felt somewhat informed, as well as **30%** who indicated they felt mostly or completely informed.

When specifically asked about their sense of being informed regarding the procedures and locations for registering for aid and services offered by United Nations agencies (including UNHCR, WFP, and UNICEF), **68%** (n=232) of respondents did not feel informed about available UN aid and services. This was followed by a group of **23%** of respondents that felt informed, and which was reported more by men (**28%**, n=131) compared to women (**16%**, n=84). **9%** preferred to not answer the question.

- **Awareness decision-making processes aid eligibility:** A large majority of respondents (**70%**, n=251) reported they do not know how aid providers decide on who they provide aid to. One-fifth (**19%**) understood aid providers' decision-making, followed by **11%** who preferred not to answer the question.

Conversation 3: Legal protection, forced deportation, and future plans

The third and final conversation was held with **420** Syrian individuals from **August 22nd** to **September 2nd** 2024, and focused on legal protection and related challenges of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, forced deportation, as well as their future migration plans.

The sample consisted of **420** Syrian individuals who started the conversation, and **382** who completed all questions. Of those who provided their demographic information, **64%** (n=390) identified as male and **36%** identified as female, resulting in a male-to-female ratio of 1 : 0.56.

- **Fear of cancellation of "Kimlik":** When respondents who have a Temporary Protection Identification Card ("Kimlik") were asked whether their legal status expires within the next six months, the majority said they did not know (**56%**, n=343). This was followed by **37%** who said "No," and **6%** who said "Yes."

Those who indicated that their Kimlik does not expire or were unsure about its expiration in the next six months were asked a follow-up question about whether they feared it might be cancelled within that time frame. Almost half of the respondents reported that they extremely feared this (**47%**, n=324), followed by one-fifth who had little fear. **13%** mentioned they did not have fears, while a considerable **19%** reported being uncertain about whether they had fears.

- **Challenges related to (lack of) legal documentation:** All respondents were asked whether they experience any challenges related to their legal status, choosing from a long list of predefined answer options. The two main challenges mentioned were limited freedom of movement (**57%**, n=379) and the threat of forced deportation to Syria (**51%**). Another significant challenge reported by some respondents was the inability to receive aid or support (**33%**).

- **Feelings of safety:** **33%** (n=398) of respondents reported that they currently do not feel safe at all in Türkiye. **28%** mentioned feeling somewhat safe, and **28%** mentioned feeling safe.

Following this question, respondents were also asked whether they agree with the following statement: *"In the past three months, the security and safety situation for Syrian refugees in Türkiye has strongly deteriorated."* Almost half of the respondents (**48%**, n=397) mentioned they agree. This was followed by a **quarter** who remained neutral. **6%** of individuals disagreed with the statement.

- **Awareness of forced deportations:** When respondents were asked whether they know any individuals who have been forcibly deported in the previous three months, **50%** (n=397) mentioned they knew of others. Four individuals indicated they had been forcibly deported themselves in the past. When those who reported knowing others who have been deported were asked to specify how many people they know who had been deported in the previous six months, the largest group indicated they know more than 10 individuals (**33%**, n=197). Additionally, **19%** knew 5 to 10 people, **28%** knew 2 to 5 individuals, and **12%** mentioned knowing one person.
- **Fear of being deported in the next three months:** **39%** (n=390) of respondents reported they extremely fear being deported within the next three months. This was followed by **26%** who answered "somewhat", and **13%** of respondents who indicated to have "little" fear. Another **14%** did not have such a fear at all. When asked about the reasons behind this fear, individuals identified two main issues: awareness of deportations happening around them (**54%**, n=303) and the increase in violence and hate by Turkish citizens (**53%**).
- **Intentions for the future:** When asked if they had any concrete plans to leave Türkiye in the next six months, **2%** (n=385) of respondents reported planning to voluntarily return to Syria. **41%** indicated they want to leave for a third country, specifically through UN resettlement. Additionally, **16%** planned to stay in Türkiye, while **13%** intended to go to a third country through other means, which could include irregular migration. Importantly, **21%** did not know how to or preferred not to answer the question.

Those who indicated plans to leave Türkiye within the next six months were additionally prompted to indicate the main reasons behind this intention. Threats of deportation (**57%**, n=242), the anti-refugee sentiment by Turkish host communities (**56%**), as well as safety and security concerns (**51%**) were mentioned as the three main reasons.

- **To return or not to return?** As a final question, all respondents in the third conversation were asked about their current attitude towards returning to Syria, in a multiple-answer format. The largest group of Syrian individuals reported they do not plan to return to Syria

under any circumstances (**48%**, n=382) or they would return only if the war in Syria ends and if a government they want is being formed (**43%**). Almost no respondents reported that they would want to return under the current circumstances (**2%**, n=370) or if the war ends but the current regime remains in place (**2%**). Additionally, 3% mentioned they would return if economic conditions in Türkiye remain difficult, **11%** stated they would return if the economic conditions in Syria improve, and another **10%** said they would return if a “safe zone” is created in Syria.

Recommendations to donor states

Tackling forced deportations

- In line with recent assessments by the UN Commission of Inquiry, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and local and international human rights organisations, **reiterate the position that Syria remains unsafe for return**, in whole or in part.
- Put out diplomatic demarches towards the Government of Türkiye, in which it is made clear that donor countries **expect full compliance with the principle of non-refoulement**, are following closely alleged cases of forced deportations, and will hold perpetrators to account for violations of the non-refoulement principle. In order to make such demarches credible and effective, EU member states must also ensure strict compliance with the principle of non-refoulement themselves.
- Make the issue of **forced deportations a priority and recurring issue during future meetings of the EU-Türkiye High Level Dialogue** on Migration and Security.
- **Support efforts by relevant actors (UNHCR, Ombudsman, TIHEK) to structurally monitor return movements**, including through an enhanced monitoring presence at main Turkish border crossings with Syria (Tell Abyad, Bab al-Hawa, Bab al Salaam) and in Turkish detention and removal centres.
- Accelerate efforts to **put in place an objective assessment, including a human rights impact assessment, of the EU-Turkey Statement** and of cooperation on refugees, asylum seekers and migration (as already requested by the European Parliament in May 2021).
- Put in place an **independent investigation into allegations that EU-funded “removal centres”** across Türkiye have been used to force Syrian refugees to sign forms stating that they are doing so willingly, before being deported to Syria.
- **Increase resettlement numbers and other safe and formal routes to Europe for Syrian refugees**; increase the effectiveness of relocation programs by developing a fair and equitable sharing mechanism among EU member states; and engage in public awareness campaigns that increase understanding and empathy among European public opinion about the importance of refugee resettlement.

Funding

- Commit to and accelerate the **provision of sufficient, predictable, flexible and multi-annual humanitarian, cooperation and peacebuilding funding** to refugees and host communities in Türkiye. **Particular attention** should be given to cash assistance, shelter, livelihood assistance and psychosocial support, as well as projects aimed at providing legal assistance to Syrian refugees in Türkiye, initiatives around Turkish language training, and public campaigns towards Turkish citizens that counters prejudices about Syrian refugees, xenophobia and discrimination.
- Actively explore modalities to provide **sustained and flexible financial support for Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs)**, including women and youth, and to RLO consortia.
- Provide **support to locally-led initiatives aimed at putting in practice the 2019 OECD DAC recommendation regarding the “triple nexus”** between humanitarian support, development cooperation and peacebuilding.

Enhancing Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

- **Establish a “Friends of AAP” donor group** that, during regular meetings:
 - Coordinates AAP approaches and project requirements for future grantees (in order to ensure as much as possible a coherent and unified donor approach);
 - Exchanges information on experiences and best practices from previous or existing grantees;
 - Proactively identifies funding gaps specifically related to collective AAP, including the creation of a common, response-wide and community-led Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM);
 - Coordinates high-level donor messages to humanitarian actors operating in Türkiye;
 - Regularly exchanges with refugees and representatives from Refugee-Led Organisations.
- **Prioritise funding for organisations that have a proven track record** in participatory project design and implementation; and that can demonstrate long-term and trusting relationships with refugee communities and using community feedback to inform decision-making.
- **Include AAP-specific indicators and benchmarks in project requirements.** Among other things, require grantees:
 - To demonstrate how they intend to meaningfully involve refugees in the design, implementation and monitoring of the proposed action;
 - To explain how the grantee’s feedback and complaints mechanism will collect, monitor, address and incorporate beneficiary feedback throughout the action;
 - Explain how the feedback and complain mechanism will specifically improve the quality of programming;
 - To describe their plans to share monitoring results with beneficiaries and to describe how they intend to close the feedback loop.
 - To explain whether the grantee’s feedback and complaint mechanism will feed into a response-wide, collective mechanism.

- o To report on how they will respond to feedback and complaints and how this feedback will be translated into tangible outcomes for affected populations;
 - o To report on the extent the person providing the feedback was satisfied with the response received from the grantee.
- **Allow grantees the necessary space and flexibility to adjust programming on the basis of feedback received**, even if this would require significant changes from the initial grant proposal.

Recommendations to UNHCR

- In coordination with other relevant actors (Ombudsman, TIHEK), **scale up capacity to structurally monitor return movements**, including through an enhanced monitoring presence at main Turkish border crossings with Syria (Tell Abyad, Bab al-Hawa, Bab al Salaam) and in Turkish detention and removal centres.
- **Increase the number of people with lived experience of forced displacement among staff**, including in leadership positions.
- **Prioritise AAP in internal staffing procedures:**
 - o Appoint dedicated AAP officers/focal points at both HQ and sub/field office level.
 - o Provide specific AAP training courses to all staff.
 - o Ensure that terms of reference and job descriptions for all staff working on projects explicitly include implementing two-way communication activities between participants and staff and bringing refugees' comments to programme planners in the organisation.
 - o Require staff (including in their job description) to spend a minimal amount of their working hours outside the office (including house / ITS visits), to consult and discuss directly with refugees themselves.
 - o Include AAP-specific targets and indicators in annual work plans for staff members.
 - o Include AAP-specific targets and indicators in evaluation procedures of staff, as well as in performance plans of the organisations' senior management.

Recommendations to the UNCT and Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)

- Building on the best practices and lessons learnt from the already existing "Refugee Engagement Forum" in Uganda, **establish a "Meaningful Refugee Participation Forum"** that is comprised of elected refugee leaders and that is given the space and resources to directly influence strategy, policy-making and programme design at the most senior levels of the Türkiye response.

- Explore digital tools including two-way **online conversations and real-time engagements**, to structurally include refugees and host communities in decision- and policy-making.
- Building on the best practices and lessons learnt from the Central African Republic (CAR), and in close coordination with OCHA's Centre for Humanitarian Data, develop a standard operating procedure (SOP) for a **new common, response-wide and community-led Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM)**.
- **Systematically include RLOs and other local organisations as co-leaders/co-coordinators/co-chairs of sector working groups**; and provide support to strengthen RLOs' and local organisations' leadership in refugee coordination structures.

Recommendations to the Government of Türkiye

- **Reinstate the waiver** that allows Syrian refugees to travel to another province without seeking prior permission by the authorities, as well as the waiver that allows Syrian refugees who temporarily returned to Syria to move back to Türkiye.
- **Streamline and centralise information updates that are relevant for refugees**, by systematically publishing them on the website of the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM).
- Provide Syrian refugees in Türkiye with a **step-by-step guide on how to complete legal applications**, clear instructions on where to submit a legal application, a point of contact or authority to address any questions throughout the application process and a list of eligibility requirements for the desired legal status.
- Re-activate and **strengthen the role of the Human Rights Institute of Türkiye**.
- Ensure that the legal framework for return procedures provides for **due process rights for refugees**, such as access to legal representation and the right to appeal.
- **Facilitate and strengthen refugees' access to humanitarian assistance**, including food, clean water, shelter and medical care. **Enhance coordination with humanitarian organisations and NGOs** to ensure the delivery of these services.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	12
2. Methodology	12
2.1. Data considerations	13
3. Setting the Scene	14
3.1. How many Syrian refugees are living in Türkiye?	14
3.2. Türkiye's response since 2011	14
3.3. Lack of durable solutions for Syrian refugees	16
3.4. State of EU-Türkiye relations	21
4. Data findings Conversation 1: Access to aid and main challenges and needs	25
4.1. General access to aid	26
4.1.1. Access to aid	26
4.1.2. Actors who provided aid	26
4.1.3. Satisfaction with aid	27
4.2. Main needs and challenges	28
4.2.1. Priority support and services	28
4.2.2. Main challenges in the past six months	30
4.3. Social tensions in the past six months	32
4.4. Feeling informed on available services	32
5. Data findings Conversation 2 (Accountability to Affected Populations)	34
5.1. Aid workers' behaviour	35
5.2. Participation and inclusion	36
5.3. Knowledge on feedback mechanisms	36
5.4. European Union and donors' perceived attitude about Syrian refugees	37
5.5. Trust and awareness	38
5.5.1. Trust in humanitarian organisations	38
5.5.2. Feeling informed on available aid in Türkiye	39
5.5.3. Feeling informed on registration for UN aid and services	40
5.5.4. Awareness of decision-making processes regarding aid eligibility	41
6. Data findings Conversation 3: Legal protection, forced deportation, and future plans	43
6.1. Legal protection and related challenges	44
6.1.1. Current legal status	44
6.1.2. Expiration of legal status	44
6.1.3. Fears for being unable to renew Kimlik	45
6.1.4. Challenges with legal documentation	46
6.2. Feelings of safety	47
6.3. Forced deportations	49

6.3.1. Awareness of forced deportations	49
6.3.2. Awareness of “voluntary return” forms	50
6.3.3. Fear of deportation in the next three months	51
6.4. Future plans	53
6.4.1. Migration plans within the next six months	53
6.4.2. Attitudes towards returning to Syria	55
Annex A: Upinion’s Digital Engagement Platform	56

1. Introduction

This joint report by Upinion⁴, 11.11.11⁵ and the Refugee Council of Türkiye (TMK)⁶ presents the results of three conversations held with Upinion’s online community in Türkiye between July 18th and September 2th, 2024.

The study aimed to investigate the current situation and long-term prospects of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, in the context of ongoing EU discussions on allocating new resources to support Syrian refugees in Türkiye. The three conversations specifically explore the main needs and challenges faced by Syrian refugees, their satisfaction with and experiences of the assistance received, access to information about available assistance and humanitarian organisations, accountability to affected populations by aid organisations working with Syrian refugees in Türkiye, access to legal documentation, safety and security, deportation, and future plans.

2. Methodology

The study’s methodology consisted of three conversations held through Upinion’s Digital Engagement Platform (DEP). Upinion has developed this online platform that allows it to securely connect and stay in touch with marginalised or hard-to-reach communities, including people in crisis and displacement-affected countries. The in-house developed platform enables Upinion to engage real-time with people in the same way they connect with their friends and families, using messaging apps like Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, which are also widely used by Syrian refugees in Türkiye.

Important to mention is that the DEP enables Upinion to send tailored, neutral information to respondents about relevant services or initiatives in their area, thereby turning the conversation into an information exchange. This sets the study’s methodology apart from traditional surveys, as participants become active agents engaged in and influenced by knowledge exchange, rather than being simply providers of data.

For more information on the recruitment of participants and Upinion’s private DEP, see Annex A.

⁴ Upinion is a two-way communication and digital engagement platform with local communities in hard-to-reach areas of the world. See <https://upinion.com/>

⁵ 11.11.11 is the coalition for international solidarity, bringing together NGOs, unions, movements and various solidarity groups in Flanders, Belgium. See <https://11.be/>

⁶ The Refugee Council of Turkey (TMK) brings together more than 20 civil society organisations (CSOs) working across Turkey to advocate jointly for better policies and programs for refugees and the communities that host them. Its members include national CSOs working with or for refugees, as well as organisations set up and run by refugees themselves (refugee-led organisations). See [Refugee Council of Turkey \(turkiyemultecikonsevi.org\)](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.tr/)

2.1. Data considerations

Important to note is that the research does not amount to quantitative evidence, as the sample distribution is not representative of the entire population. Therefore, this study is a qualitative inquiry that offers valuable insights into emerging trends without claiming statistical representativeness for the figures presented. In this context, data breakdowns are performed to highlight interesting tendencies rather than statistically significant differences. Only percentile differences exceeding 10 percentage points are mentioned. Accordingly, due to the small sample sizes involved in data disaggregation, groups of respondents with an 'n' value below 20 were consistently excluded from the report analysis.

Upinion acknowledges that general awareness within a group can increase because of its informational contributions. This effect does not contradict its overall mission, raising awareness being part of its core objectives. Committed to monitoring its impact however, when providing information about a specific policy, mechanism, or phenomenon, Upinion asks the respondents a follow-up question on whether they were familiar with this information before, and whether it had been useful, the latter being evaluated through a star ranking system. It is important to note that for research purposes, the effect of Upinion's information-sharing on the awareness of the general public remains incidental, and so it can be presumed that answers to awareness questions throughout the conversation are unlikely to be motivated by Upinion's input.

3. Setting the Scene

3.1. How many Syrian refugees are living in Türkiye?

Thirteen years into a revolution that evolved into a war, Syria remains one of the world's largest refugee crises. By the end of 2023, about 6.4 million Syrian officially-registered refugees were living outside Syria's borders. Additionally, another 7.2 million people are internally displaced within Syria. More than half of the Syrian population is still fleeing war and persecution.⁷

According to UNHCR data, as of 12 September 2024 there are 3,1 million registered Syrian refugees in Türkiye, in addition to more than 300.000 other refugees and migrants from other nationalities.⁸

3.2. Türkiye's response since 2011

Türkiye's refugee response is based on the 2013 Law on Foreigners and International Protection and the 2014 Temporary Protection Regulation.⁹ The country is the second largest humanitarian donor in the world, after the United States of America (USA). In 2022 Türkiye's humanitarian assistance (largely consisting of spending on hosting Syrian refugees within Türkiye) reached \$7.2 billion. Türkiye gave the most humanitarian assistance as a percentage of gross national income (0.65 percent), followed by Luxembourg (0.22%) and Sweden (0.17%) percent.¹⁰

In the first years after 2011, the Turkish Government implemented an open-door policy for refugees, who were granted temporary protection and free access to healthcare, education and other social services. However, as previously outlined in a research report by Upinion and 11.11.11 (March 2022), in recent years the political and economic situation in Türkiye has undergone drastic changes, which has resulted in an increasingly negative public opinion against refugees.¹¹ Since 2018, the Turkish economy has been characterised by high levels of inflation, a rapid depreciation of the Turkish lira and an economic crisis that severely affected both the Turkish and refugee communities. Whereas Turkish people initially had a very welcoming attitude towards Syrian refugees, since 2019 public opinion surveys have documented a notable deterioration in the level of social cohesion between Syrian refugees and Turkish communities. This change in attitude is influenced, among other things, by the increased competition for limited informal employment opportunities, rising costs of living, and the increasingly hostile political discourse that emerged in the run-up to, and after, the March 2019 local elections.

⁷ See <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2023>

⁸ See https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria_durable_solutions

⁹ See <https://11.be/sites/default/files/2022-03/202203-11paper-Upinion-Syrian-Refugees-in-Turkey.pdf>, p 16-17.

¹⁰ See https://devinit-prod-static.ams3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/GHA2023_Digital_v9.pdf

¹¹ See <https://11.be/sites/default/files/2022-03/202203-11paper-Upinion-Syrian-Refugees-in-Turkey.pdf>

Another indication of Türkiye's stricter refugee policy is the 20 percent quota that was introduced in 2022. As a result of this new policy, the Directorate of Migration Management closes new foreigner registrations in neighbourhoods where the number of foreigners exceeds 20 percent of the number of Turkish citizens, in order to reduce congestion. The 20 percent limit is not stipulated in any law but was introduced through an announcement by the Ministry of Interior's Directorate of Migration Management. The migration administration also monitors whether the number of foreigners exceeds the 20 percent limit compared to the number of Turkish citizens. If the limit is exceeded, the relevant neighbourhood is closed for the residence of more foreigners. According to the Directorate of Migration Management, the number of closed neighbourhoods has been increased to 1169 (as of 1 July 2022).¹²

The devastating earthquakes that hit Southern Türkiye and Northern Syria in February 2023 impacted over 15.6 million people in 11 provinces, including 1.75 million Syrian refugees living in Türkiye.¹³ Interviews that 11.11.11 conducted in Southern Türkiye in March 2023 highlighted cases of unequal aid distribution, verbal and physical harassment during distributions (resulting in a tendency among many Syrians to not queue and thus forego distributions), cases in which Syrian refugees were pressured to leave their shelters or houses to make place for Turkish citizens, and a further increase in anti-Syrian rhetoric and hate speech on Turkish social media. Cases of aid discrimination, physical abuse, verbal harassment, hate speech and evictions from emergency camps have also been reported by Amnesty International¹⁴ and the Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC).¹⁵

Moreover, Syrian refugees in Türkiye continue to face issues around their freedom of movement. On 13 February 2023, the Turkish government announced that people who are under international or temporary protection and who are living in one of the five worst-hit provinces (Kahramanmaraş, Hatay, Gaziantep, Adıyaman and Malatya) would be given a 60-day exemption on a pre-existing requirement to obtain prior travel permit to travel outside the province where they are residing. As such, Syrian refugees living in these provinces would be allowed, for a period of 60 days, to travel to another province without seeking prior permission by the authorities. Although a positive development in the short term, critics warned that this 60-day respite is largely insufficient and not realistic, given that no longer-term solutions will be in place after the expiration of this exemption. As of late 2023, this exemption is no longer in force, as a result of which foreigners, including Syrian refugees, can no longer travel to other provinces without a travel permit.

3.3. Lack of durable solutions for Syrian refugees

In recent years, Syrian refugees' access to any of the three "durable solutions" for forced displacement crises (local integration in host countries; safe, voluntary and dignified return to Syria; resettlement and other legal pathways) has further decreased.

¹² See <https://www.goc.gov.tr/mahalle-kapatma-duyurusu-hk2>

¹³ See <https://reporting.unhcr.org/syria-and-t%C3%BCrkiye-earthquake-emergency-supplementary-appeal>

¹⁴ See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2023/02/turkiye-syria-earthquakes-a-human-rights-approach-to-crisis-response/>

¹⁵ See <https://syriaaccountability.org/as-rescue-efforts-wind-down-syrian-survivors-face-discrimination-amidst-desolation-in-turkey/>

In the aftermath of the 6 February earthquakes, which coincided with the electoral campaign for the May 2023 general elections, the public sentiment against Syrian refugees further deteriorated. Syrian refugees in Türkiye have faced strong xenophobic and anti-refugee propaganda by some of the political parties, driven largely by escalating electoral rhetoric and scapegoating, competition for post-earthquake support and services, and the ongoing economic and financial crisis in Türkiye.¹⁶ After winning the second round of the Presidential Elections on 28 May 2023, and in a context of an acceleration in the normalisation process between the Syrian government and Arab states,¹⁷ Turkish President Erdogan promised that Türkiye “will ensure the return of another 1 million people within a year” to the northern areas of Syria that are under Turkish control.¹⁸

Immediately after the 2023 elections, Turkish authorities increased checks on Syrian refugees in many Turkish provinces, in particular Istanbul. According to Syrian human rights organisations, in June-July 2023 alone hundreds of Syrian refugees have been sent to removal centres where many cases of deportation were recorded. This campaign targeted Syrians who had failed to obtain official legal documents, Syrians who failed to renew their residency or update their personal data (for temporary protection document (“kimlik”) holders) as well as Syrians who were residing in provinces other than those for which their kimlik was issued.¹⁹

The level of forced deportations, which often happen under the guise of so-called “voluntary returns” (in which refugees are coerced into signing “voluntary return forms” in EU-funded detention centers²⁰) has continued and further intensified into the second half of 2023 and first half of 2024. According to a March 2024 Human Rights Watch report, between January and December 2023 Turkish authorities deported at least 57.500 Syrians and others over its border crossings.²¹ During a press conference in Istanbul on 14 July 2024 Turkish Foreign Affairs minister Fidan denied any allegations of forced deportations, stating that “we will not force anyone to leave here unless they do so voluntarily. The provocative allegations on this issue are completely unfounded”.²² The Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), the main Turkish body in charge of refugee policies, has also claimed on its website that any voluntary return “is carried out under the supervision of international organisations and non-governmental organisations”, and that any “Voluntary Return Request Form” issued should be signed by either a UNHCR representative, a Red Crescent official, a representative of an NGO “deemed appropriate by the government” or an official of the Human Rights and Equality Board of the Governorate where the return is taking place.²³ In stark contrast to these claims, and in addition to multiple reports by international human rights organisations in recent years, the Syrian rights group

¹⁶ See <https://d3jwam0i5codb7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Syria-Report-October-2023.pdf>, p 16-17.

¹⁷ See also <https://d3jwam0i5codb7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Syria-Report-October-2023.pdf>

¹⁸ See <https://www.tcgb.gov.tr/en/news/542/147332/-every-single-one-of-our-85-million-citizens-has-won-today->

¹⁹ See

<https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/violations-are-still-being-committed-all-parts-syria-including-northern-syria-refoulement-refugees-poses-serious-threat>

²⁰ In an October 2024 report, Lighthouse Reports has documented how the EU has funnelled hundreds of millions of euros into a shadowy deportation system operating just outside its borders in Turkey. Syrian and Afghan refugees have been detained, abused and even killed as a result. See <https://www.lighthousereports.com/investigation/turkeys-eu-funded-deportation-machine/>

²¹ See <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/syrians-face-dire-conditions-turkish-occupied-safe-zone-enartr>

²² Cited in

https://stj-sy.org/en/turkiye-misleading-statements-by-foreign-minister-regarding-forced-return-of-syrian-refugees/?mc_cid=9bde645510&mc_eid=b6df3bac9b

²³ See <https://en.goc.gov.tr/voluntary-safe-and-dignified-return>

“Syrians for Truth and Justice” (STJ) however stated that in the first seven months of July 2024 alone approximately 57.000 people were deported back to Syria.

Moreover, the anti-Syrian riots that erupted on 30 June 2024 in the city of Kayseri and which then spread to several other cities (including Antakya, Antalya, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Kilis and Konya), have further installed a climate of fear among Syrian communities throughout Türkiye. Rioters attacked Syrian shops and property and demanded that Syrian refugees be “kicked out” of Türkiye. After tensions spread into Türkiye-controlled areas across Northern Syria, at least seven people were killed in clashes with Turkish troops and Türkiye temporarily shut its main border crossings into northwest Syria. The Turkish government condemned the violence, with President Erdogan accusing opposition parties of inciting racism. The accelerating climate of fear among Syrian refugees was further strengthened by the leaking online of personal data of approximately three million Syrians, including their names, ID numbers, and addresses. The data was shared widely on Telegram groups and was paired with violent language that called for attacks on Syrian refugees living in Türkiye.²⁴

Other durable solutions than protection and local integration in Türkiye also remain largely out of reach. Despite increasing claims that parts of Syria have become “safe” for return, independent reports continue to confirm that nowhere in Syria is safe for return and that simply declaring or wishing an area to be safe for return does not actually make it safe. Recent reports by the United Nations, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Commission of Inquiry for the Syrian Arab Republic (UN COI), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA) do not provide a factual basis for the claim that Syria, or parts of the country, have become safe for return.

On the contrary: in recent months Syria has experienced the worst escalation in violence since 2020, while it has been widely documented how refugee returnees have been specifically targeted:

- In the **2024 Humanitarian Needs Overview** (HNO), published by the United Nations in March 2024, it is explicitly stated that “*the situation in Syria continues to be volatile and not conducive to safe and dignified return.*”²⁵ The HNO also assesses the risk of increased hostilities and regional spillover on Syria as “*likely*”, which would have a “*critical*” (the highest scale) impact.
- In February 2024, the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** issued a report in which it stated that “*there are reasonable grounds to believe that the overall conditions in Syria do not permit safe, dignified and sustainable returns of*

²⁴ See

<https://syriaaccountability.org/civil-society-organisations-call-on-the-eu-to-stop-funding-and-endorsing-rights-violations-against-syrian-refugees-in-turkiye/>. See also <https://etansyria.org/syria-military-brief-north-west-syria-june-2024/> and <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/152851/-we-will-not-allow-the-public-order-to-be-violated->

²⁵ See

<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2024-humanitarian-needs-overview-february-2024#:~:text=In%202024%2C%2016.7%20million%20people.of%20the%20crisis%20in%202011.&text=Syria%20remains%20a%20protection%20crisis>

Syrian refugees to their home country.” The report documented how refugee returnees have been systematically targeted after their return, and found that most refugee returnees have fled Syria again after their return.²⁶

- In a report issued in March 2024, the **United Nations Commission of Inquiry for the Syrian Arab Republic (UN COI)** documented how since October 2023 Syria has been experiencing a wave of violence not seen since 2020. In line with previous UN COI reports, the report confirmed that *“over 13 million Syrians (are) unable to return to their homes.”*²⁷ In a report previously issued in 2023, the UN COI stated that *“it remains abundantly clear that Syria is still not a safe place to return to.”*²⁸
- In its most recent **“International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic”** (March 2021), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated that it *“continues to characterise the flight of civilians from Syria as a refugee movement, with the vast majority of Syrian asylum-seekers continuing to be in need of international refugee protection, fulfilling the requirements of the refugee definition contained in Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention.”* UNHCR further added that *“a particular feature of the conflict in Syria is that different parties to the conflict frequently impute a political opinion to larger groups of people, including families, tribes, religious or ethnic groups, or whole towns, villages or neighbourhoods, by association. As such, members of a larger entity, without individually being singled out, may become the target of repercussions by different actors for reasons of real or perceived support to another party to the conflict. The perception of sharing a political opinion or affiliation in relation to the conflict is often based on little more than an individual’s physical presence in a particular area (or the fact that he/she originates from a particular area), or his/her ethnic or religious background. In those situations, the risk of being harmed is serious and real, and in no way diminished by the fact that the person concerned may not be targeted on an individual basis.”*
- In its updated “Country Guidance” on Syria (April 2024), the **European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA)** (again) identified a wide array of specific profiles who have a well-founded fear of persecution and can continue to claim refugee status. These include, among others, persons perceived to be opposing the Syrian government (including persons who have ever expressed criticism towards the regime or persons who took part in protests); civilians originating from areas associated with opposition to the government; persons who evaded or deserted military service; members of and persons perceived to be collaborating with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in areas where the Syrian National Army (SNA) operates; and Kurds from areas under the control of the Syrian National Army

²⁶ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/syrian-returnees-subjected-gross-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-un>

²⁷ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/03/un-commission-inquiry-syria-too-desperately-needs-ceasefire>. See also <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/statement-paulo-s-pinheiro-chair-independent-international-commission-inquiry-syrian-arab-republic>

²⁸ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/03/statement-paulo-pinheiro-chair-independent-international-commission-inquiry>

(SNA).²⁹ When assessing the likelihood of “indiscriminate violence”³⁰, the EUAA Country Guidance found that high or substantive levels of indiscriminate violence continue to persist in the governorates of Aleppo, Dar’a, Deir Ez-Zor, Hasaka, Idlib, Hama, Homs, Latakia, Quneitra, Raqqa, Rural Damascus and Sweida. Although the EUAA Guidance did not identify a general risk of indiscriminate violence in the governorates of Damascus and Tartous, it did explicitly warn that people returning there could still face a well-founded fear of persecution (see above), and that the situation in areas such as Damascus is such that sending people there who were not at risk of persecution would be reasonable “only in exceptional cases.”³¹

- In a report published in February 2024, **Human Rights Watch (HRW)** also documented how areas in Northern Syria under control of Türkiye and pro-Turkish militias remain unsafe for return. HRW documented abductions, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention, sexual violence, and torture by the various factions of a loose coalition of armed groups, the Türkiye-backed Syrian National Army (SNA), as well as the Military Police, a force established by the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) and Turkish authorities in 2018. Human Rights Watch also documented violations of housing, land, and property rights, including widespread looting and pillaging as well as property seizures and extortion, and the failure of attempted accountability measures to curb abuses or to provide restitution to victims.³²
- Similarly, in a resolution adopted in February 2024, the **European Parliament** “recalled that Syria cannot be regarded, in whole or in part, as a safe country for the return of Syrian nationals living as refugees and asylum seekers in Europe and around the world”. In the same resolution, the European Parliament also specifically “reiterate(d) to host countries, such as Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, that Syria is not a safe country, neither in whole nor in part, and that Syrian nationals can therefore not return safely.”³³
- This assessment has been echoed by the **European Commission**, which on 1 August 2024 reiterated that conditions for safe return are “still not put in place neither guaranteed by the Syrian regime” and that “Syrians who return to Syria continue to face severe protection risks and human rights abuses.”³⁴

At a time when conditions for safe return are not in place, and the protection situation of Syrian refugees in Türkiye is also rapidly deteriorating, access to the third durable solution (resettlement and other legal pathways) has also been at a historic low. In the period 2016- 2024 (as of 31

²⁹ See <https://euaa.europa.eu/country-guidance-syria-2024>, p 19, p 34, p 36, p 47, p 50, p 55, p 75.

³⁰ In order to assess cases in which the Syrian applicant would not qualify for refugee status, but may be eligible for subsidiary protection.

³¹ See <https://euaa.europa.eu/country-guidance-syria-2024>, p 186.

³² See <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/29/everything-power-weapon/abuses-and-impunity-turkish-occupied-northern-syria>

³³ See https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2024-0109_EN.html

³⁴ See

https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bb6e4f2b-415b-486d-8a8a-f9149a1895eb_en?filename=C_2024_5660_4_EN_annexe_acte_autonome_nlw_part1_v1.pdf

August), EU-27 member states have resettled 42,916 Syrian refugees from Türkiye, an average of approximately 5.000 Syrians per year.³⁵ In the first eight months of 2024 only 2.427 Syrian refugees were resettled in the EU³⁶, while UNHCR had previously projected that at least 384,070 refugees were in need of resettlement in 2024 (the vast majority of which are refugees from Syria, followed by Afghans and Iraqis).³⁷

Faced with a total lack of access to durable solutions, Syrians have increasingly resorted to dangerous “irregular migration” routes towards Europe. Overall, in 2023 the European Asylum Agency (EUAA) recorded 1.14 million asylum applications to Europe, the highest number since 2015-2016. Syrians (181.000 applications) were by far the most important nationality, followed by 114.000 Afghan applications.³⁸ In a similar vein, the EU’s border agency Frontex in 2023 recorded 380.000 “irregular border crossings”, the highest number since 2016 and an increase of 17 % compared to 2022. Syrians accounted for over 100.000 “irregular crossings”, the highest number among all nationalities. Among the different routes, approximately 60.000 people followed the “Eastern Mediterranean route”, a 55% increase compared with 2022.³⁹

Whereas Frontex has reported a significant decline in the overall number of “irregular border crossings” in the first seven months of 2024, the Eastern Mediterranean route continues to see an increase (29.673 crossings, +57% compared to the same period in 2023) in attempted crossings, and Syrians remain the number one nationality on all different routes.⁴⁰

3.4. State of EU-Türkiye relations

Against this background, in the past year discussions on the future of EU-Türkiye relations, including cooperation on refugees and migration, have continued.

While the 2016 EU-Türkiye Statement continues to provide the overall framework for EU-Türkiye cooperation on Syrian refugees and migration, since June 2023 the future of overall EU-Türkiye cooperation has been discussed at several moments.

³⁵ Calculation through UNHCR’s “Resettlement Data Finder” (last consulted on 6 September 2024), see https://rsq.unhcr.org/?_gl=1*34z3fc*_rup_ga*MTc0MjA0NTA5Ni4xNzE5MjE3NDk4*_rup_ga_FVDQIj4lMY*MTcyNTYyMjE0Ni4yMC4xLjE3MjU2MjMwNDUuNjAuMC4w*_gcl_au*Nzk5NjlyNiMyLjE3MTg1NTMyMTk.*_ga*MTc0MjA0NTA5Ni4xNzE5MjE3NDk4*_ga_X2YZPJ1XWR*MTcyNTYyMjczMi44MS4xLjE3MjU2MjI4OTkuNjAuMC4w#_ga=2.117335438.940693458.1672035693-2124218442.1671361396

³⁶ Calculation through UNHCR’s “Resettlement Data Finder” (last consulted on 6 September 2024), see https://rsq.unhcr.org/?_gl=1*34z3fc*_rup_ga*MTc0MjA0NTA5Ni4xNzE5MjE3NDk4*_rup_ga_FVDQIj4lMY*MTcyNTYyMjE0Ni4yMC4xLjE3MjU2MjMwNDUuNjAuMC4w*_gcl_au*Nzk5NjlyNiMyLjE3MTg1NTMyMTk.*_ga*MTc0MjA0NTA5Ni4xNzE5MjE3NDk4*_ga_X2YZPJ1XWR*MTcyNTYyMjczMi44MS4xLjE3MjU2MjI4OTkuNjAuMC4w#_ga=2.117335438.940693458.1672035693-2124218442.1671361396

³⁷ See https://reliefweb.int/report/world/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2024-enar?gad_source=1&qclid=Cj0KCQjw0Oq2BhCCARlsAA5hubVSBbtUEetK73-LPFGkGvJBNk4Q9EhJPUz_TfNcmwqJAKwHVP47AaAo5pEALw_wcB

³⁸ See <https://euaa.europa.eu/news-events/eu-received-over-1-million-asylum-applications-2023>

³⁹ See <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/frontex-significant-rise-irregular-border-crossings-2023-highest-2016>

⁴⁰ See <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/eu-external-borders-irregular-border-crossings-fall-nearly-40-this-year-ZXxDJD>

Following a request by the European Council in June 2023, the European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs in November 2023 published a “Joint Communication on the State of Play of EU-Türkiye political, economic and trade relations”. On the issue of refugees and migration, the Joint Communication proposed *“a more effective and mutually beneficial implementation of key areas of the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, notably on migration management is necessary, along the following actions”*⁴¹:

- “Step up efforts by Türkiye to stem irregular migration flows to the EU, by preventing departures and dismantling the criminal smuggling networks that facilitate them, and strengthening border protection, building on the positive trend since October of increased interception of migrant smugglers and reduction of irregular departures.
- Step up EU and Member States engagement with Türkiye in a Team Europe approach. Political and technical dialogue is ongoing, following the recent EU-Türkiye High-level Dialogue on migration and security of 23 November 2023, including enhancing cooperation of EU and Türkiye’s migration and law enforcement Agencies.
- Resume readmissions from the Greek islands and address the migration situation in Cyprus, and prevent irregular departures on routes to the EU, building on the recent increase in interceptions of migrant smugglers and reduction of irregular departures since October 2023.
- Continue ongoing work with the Turkish authorities and airline companies to improve the effectiveness of passenger screening and border controls at Istanbul airport.
- Conversely, step up resettlements from Türkiye to the Union by EU Member States, building on the progress made so far. This should especially cover the most vulnerable groups of Syrian refugees in Türkiye. Consider activating the Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme.
- Continue support to refugees and host communities in Türkiye as proposed by the Commission in the mid-term review of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework. This would build on the successful and effective aid of the last years, fit for the current realities on the ground.
- Support the safe, dignified and voluntary returns to the countries of origin, in close cooperation with IOM and UNHCR.”⁴²

⁴¹ See

<https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/Joint%20Communication%20to%20the%20European%20Council%20-%20State%20of%20play%20of%20EU-Turkiye%20political%2C%20economic%20and%20trade%20relations.pdf>, p 16.

⁴² See

<https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/Joint%20Communication%20to%20the%20European%20Council%20-%20State%20of%20play%20of%20EU-Turkiye%20political%2C%20economic%20and%20trade%20relations.pdf>, p 16.

BOX: The 2016 EU-Türkiye Statement

This Statement, adopted on 18 March 2016, outlined the following main actions points⁴³:

- The intention that “*all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey*”. The Statement claims that this will be a “*temporary and extraordinary measure*”, which will happen “*in respect of the principle of non-refoulement*”.
- For every Syrian being returned to Turkey from Greek islands, another Syrian would be resettled from Turkey to the EU, taking into account the UN Vulnerability Criteria, while also giving priority to “*migrants who have not previously entered or tried to enter the EU irregularly*.” The text referred to 18.000 resettlement places that were previously committed by member states, and set a limit of an additional 54.000 resettlement places. In case that the number of returns to Turkey would exceed the number of resettlement places offered (18.000 + 54.000), the one-on-one mechanism would be discontinued.
- A Turkish commitment to “*take any necessary means*” to prevent new sea or land routes for illegal migration from Turkey to the EU.
- The activation of a “*Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme*”, “*once irregular crossings between Turkey and the EU are ending or at least have been substantially and sustainably reduced*.”
- The acceleration of a visa liberalisation roadmap, with a view to lifting the visa requirements for Turkish citizens by the end of June 2016.
- The acceleration of the disbursement of a first tranche of 3 billion Euro under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, and a promise for a second tranche of an additional 3 billion Euro.
- A commitment to “*re-energise*” the Turkish accession process to the EU, including the opening of Chapter 33 and the acceleration of preparatory work for the opening of other chapters.
- A joint EU-Turkey commitment to improve humanitarian conditions inside Syria, in particular in certain areas near the Turkish border.

Since its inception, questions continued to be raised about the legality of the EU-Türkiye deal, which has received harsh criticism from human rights organisations:

- Human rights organisations have rightfully argued that **Turkey cannot be considered a “safe third country”**, given its human rights record and its non-signature of the 1967 Additional Protocol to the UN Refugee Convention.⁴⁴ Amnesty International, for example, has called returns under the EU-Turkey deal “*reckless*”, “*illegal*” and “*unconscionable*”, and has repeatedly called on the EU to halt the return of asylum-seekers to Türkiye on the false pretence that it is a “safe country” for refugees.⁴⁵ In a July 2024 report, the rights watchdog has also criticised conditions in EU-funded detention camps in Greece, referring to the site on the island of Samos as a “*dystopian nightmare*”. According to Amnesty, residents in

⁴³ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>

⁴⁴ See https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/strategic-mid-term-evaluation-facility-refugees-turkey-2016-201920_en, p 21.

⁴⁵ See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2016/06/eus-reckless-refugee-returns-to-turkey-illegal/>

Samos are “systematically subjected to “restrictions of freedom” orders which confine them to the centre for up to 25 days from their entry. These restrictions exceed legitimate “restrictions of freedom of movement” and amount to unlawful detention. They are overwhelmingly applied to new arrivals without consideration of individual circumstances, in breach of international law and standards, which state that detention solely for immigration purposes is only allowed in the most exceptional of circumstances.”⁴⁶

- Crucially, the deal also **breaches the international law principle of non-refoulement**, if somebody is returned to Turkey without having had access to a complete asylum application procedure, and/or if such person is subsequently at risk of forced return, from Turkey to his/her country of origin, where they risk serious human rights violations.⁴⁷ Such concerns have also been acknowledged in a May 2021 resolution by the European Parliament, which calls for an “objective assessment, including a human rights impact assessment, of the EU-Turkey Statement and of cooperation on refugees, asylum seekers and migration”.⁴⁸

Following adoption of the new EU Multiannual Financial Framework on 1 February 2024⁴⁹, on 17 April 2024 the European Council further adopted conclusions in which it tasked Coreper⁵⁰ to “advance work on the recommendations of the Joint Communication in line with previous European Council conclusions and in a phased, proportionate and reversible manner, subject to additional guidance from the European Council”. In the same Council Conclusions, EU leaders also invited the High Representative and the European Commission to “review and enhance the effectiveness of EU assistance to Syrian refugees and displaced persons in Syria and in the region” and called “on all donors to maintain or increase their level of assistance to them.”⁵¹

BOX: THE FACILITY FOR REFUGEES IN TÜRKIYE

Since adoption of the EU-Türkiye statement, the EUR 6 billion budget of the Facility for Refugees has been fully committed and contracted. Disbursements are set to continue until the end of Facility project implementation, which is scheduled for 2025. In 2020, the EU also mobilised an additional EUR 535 million in bridge funding, and in 2021 the European Council authorised the allocation of a further EUR 3 billion to refugee support in Türkiye for 2021-2023. Following the devastating earthquakes in February 2023, the EU has also mobilised search and rescue teams, and deployed field hospitals to provide relief. The Commission and the Swedish Presidency of the Council organised an international donors conference on 20 March 2023, “Together for the people in Türkiye and Syria”, at which EUR 6

⁴⁶ See

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/greece-unlawful-detention-on-samos-must-not-become-the-blueprint-for-the-eu-migration-pact/>

⁴⁷ See https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/strategic-mid-term-evaluation-facility-refugees-turkey-2016-201920_en, p 22.

⁴⁸ See https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0243_EN.html

⁴⁹ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/02/01/european-council-final-conclusions-1-february-2024/>

⁵⁰ For more background, see <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/>

⁵¹ See

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/04/18/european-council-conclusions-on-ukraine-and-turkiye/?utm_source=brev&utm_campaign=AUTOMATED%20-%20Alert%20-%20Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_id=320

billion were pledged for earthquake-affected people in Türkiye, including EUR 3.6 billion in a Team Europe approach including EUR 1 billion from the EU budget.

A Special Report by the European Court of Auditors (April 2024) concluded that the Facility for Refugees *“provided relevant support to refugees and host communities and the Commission had implemented our 2018 recommendations. The projects examined the needs of the refugees and the host communities in the various priority sectors, but for various reasons their implementation was significantly delayed and project costs were not systematically assessed.”* Furthermore, the Court of Auditors found that *“although the planned outputs were delivered, there was insufficient measuring of the Facility’s impact and sustainability has so far only been ensured for infrastructure projects, but not for some projects in the education, health and socio-economic support sectors.”* The Special Report made four main recommendations to the European Commission: 1) improve the assessment and monitoring of costs; 2) gather data on education from the Turkish authorities regarding refugees and the host communities; 3) improve the measurement of the impact of projects; and 4) strengthen the sustainability of projects.⁵²

Finally, it should also be noted that in July 2024 European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced her intention to appoint a European Commissioner for the Mediterranean. In her “mission letter” to Commissioner-designate (Dubravka Šuica), von der Leyen stated that the new Commissioner for the Mediterranean is expected to *“lead on the new Pact for the Mediterranean. This should work on building comprehensive partnerships focused on investment, economic stability, jobs, energy, transport, security, migration and other areas of mutual interest. You should deploy an integrated approach so that economic, humanitarian, development, peace and security policies all contribute (...) You will ensure these comprehensive partnerships operationalise the external aspects of our migration policy, notably covering border controls and the fight against smugglers, in respect of human rights.”*⁵³

⁵² See <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications?ref=SR-2024-06>

⁵³ See https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/24039223-f92e-40a0-a440-a27d9715051a_en?filename=Mission%20letter%20%C5%AQuica.pdf

4. Data findings Conversation 1: Access to aid and main challenges and needs

The first conversation was held with **603** Syrian individuals from **July 18th** to **August 12th**, 2024, and focused on the main needs and challenges faced by Syrian refugees in Türkiye, as well as their satisfaction with the support they have received. In addition to these topics, Upinion also provided updates on previous conversations and advocacy work concerning Syrian individuals in Türkiye.

The sample consisted of **603** Syrian individuals who started the conversation, and **489** Syrian respondents who completed it. Of those who provided their demographic information, **61%** (n=603) identified as male and **39%** identified as female, resulting in a male-to-female ratio of 1 : 0.64. The majority of the respondents (**61%**, n=603) were aged between 26 and 45, with smaller groups in the 18-25 (**9%**), 46-55 (**16%**), and 56-65 (**11%**) age ranges. 20 respondents were older than 65.

Regarding respondents' areas of residency, individuals in this sample were living in the Southeastern Anatolia Region (**31%**, n=570), the Marmara Region (**29%**), the Mediterranean Region (**26%**), and the Central Anatolia Region (**8%**).



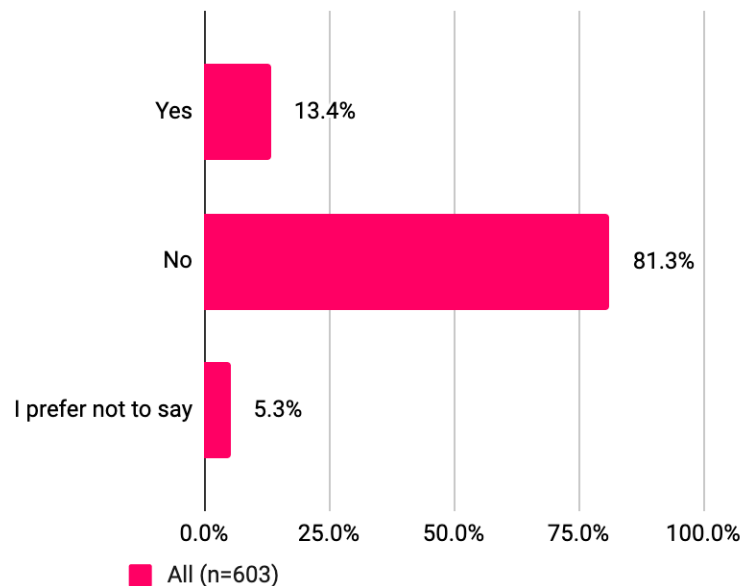
4.1. General access to aid

4.1.1. Access to aid

All Syrian respondents were first asked to indicate whether they had received any assistance in the form of money or service from any institution in the past year.

The large majority (**81%**, n=603) mentioned they had not received any assistance in the past year. **13%** mentioned they had, while **5%** preferred not to answer the question.

Figure 1. "Have you received any assistance in the form of money or service from any institution in the past year?" - all respondents



Regional breakdown highlights that a relatively larger group of individuals living in the Mediterranean Region (**21%**, n=148) reported not having received assistance, compared to those living in other regions (around **10%**).⁵⁴

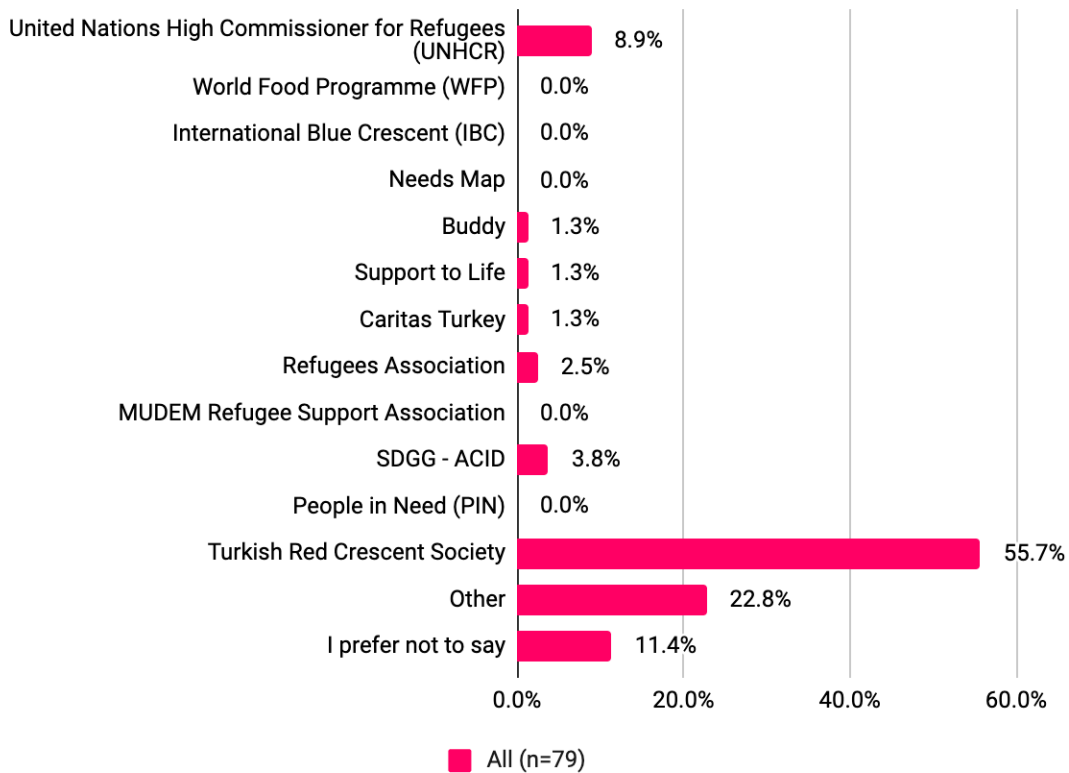
4.1.2. Actors who provided aid

All respondents who identified they received assistance in the past year were subsequently prompted to identify which actor(s) mainly provided them with aid the past 6 months. This was asked using a multiple-answer format.

⁵⁴To reiterate, all data disaggregation in this report represents interesting tendencies rather than statistically significant differences. Therefore, the data should be interpreted with caution.

The majority of respondents (**56%**, n=79) mentioned that they received assistance from the Turkish Red Crescent Society. A considerable group also indicated receiving assistance from an unlisted actor (**23%**). **9%** reported receiving support from UNHCR in the past six months, while other actors were mentioned marginally. The number of respondents to this question was too low to perform additional disaggregation.

Figure 2. "Could you specify from which actor you received social/humanitarian assistance in the past 6 months?" - multiple answers - all respondents



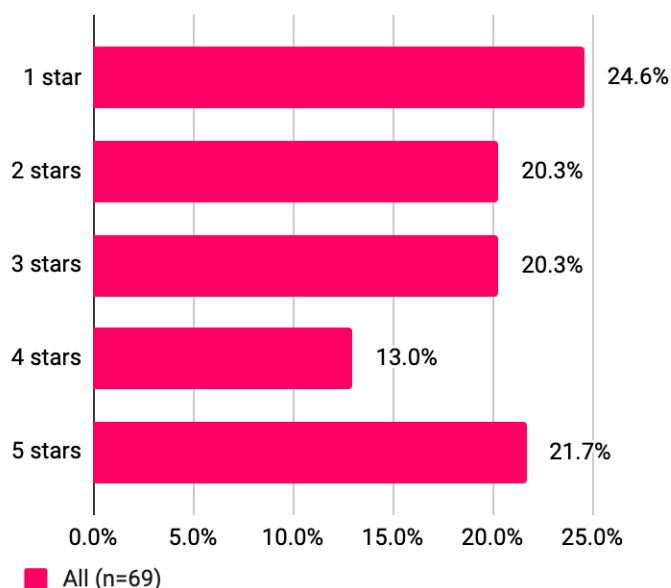
4.1.3. Satisfaction with aid

The same respondents were followed-up with the question to rate their satisfaction with their received aid over the past six months. This was posed using a star-rating question, explaining the following logic:

- 1 star = very unsatisfied
- 2 stars = partly unsatisfied
- 3 stars = neutral feelings
- 4 stars = satisfied
- 5 stars = very satisfied

The ratings were varied. However, a slightly larger group reported feeling unsatisfied (**45%**, n=69) compared to those who were satisfied (**35%**). One-fifth remained neutral about the support they received.

Figure 3. "Could you rate your satisfaction with the aid you received by these actors?" - all respondents



After rating their satisfaction with the aid received over the past six months, individuals were asked to briefly share their experiences, highlighting both the positive and negative aspects of the assistance provided.

The answers revealed considerable dissatisfaction with the assistance, which is seen as insufficient to meet basic needs and limited in value due to inflation and currency fluctuations. Additionally, there were concerns about the uneven distribution of aid and delays in its delivery, though a few responses offered positive feedback, acknowledging the benefit of specific types of support, such as psychotherapy and hygienic assistance.

4.2. Main needs and challenges

4.2.1. Priority support and services

Respondents were subsequently asked which services are a top priority for them to receive in their current situation. A list was provided with multiple answer options.

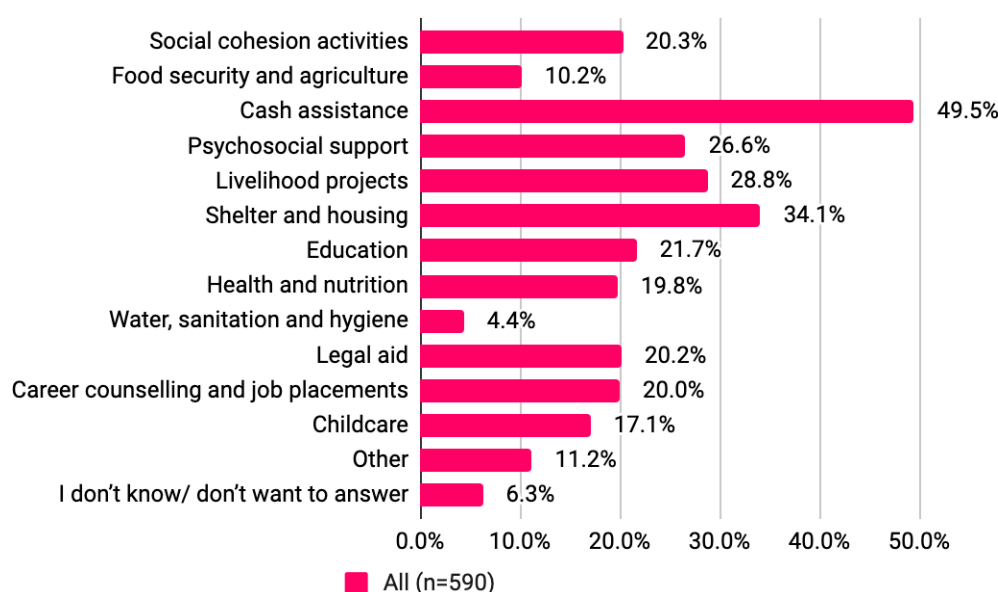
Half of the respondents identified cash assistance as their top priority. This was followed by shelter (**34%**, n=590), projects or initiatives aimed at improving livelihoods (**29%**), and psychosocial support (**27%**). Disaggregation by age highlights that relatively more younger

individuals, aged 18 to 35, reported to be in need of psychosocial support, compared to their older counterparts.

Although other options were mentioned by approximately one-fifth of respondents, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) (**4%**), as well as food security and agriculture (**10%**) were not frequently cited as priorities.

While cash assistance is identified as a top priority, it is important to note that programs like the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) seem insufficient to meet the basic need of most Syrian refugees in Türkiye.^{55,56} In addition to this, legal and socio-economic barriers severely limit their access to formal employment, often forcing them to rely on minimal income through informal work, external aid, or no income source at all.^{57,58} With rising housing costs and inflation, this has exacerbated multidimensional poverty among many Syrians.⁵⁹ Therefore, it is crucial to consider more comprehensive interventions, including social protection and integration mechanisms for Syrian refugees in Türkiye.

Figure 4. “Which services in the below list are your top priority?” - multiple answers - all respondents⁶⁰



It is also interesting to note that the priority of shelter and housing was especially mentioned by those living in the Mediterranean Region (**40%**, n=146), followed by the Marmara Region (**35%**,

⁵⁵<https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/multi-sectoral-needs-assessment-syrian-refugees-turkey>

⁵⁶ In an Upinion conversation in August and September 2023, only 7% (n=448) of Syrian individuals reported being able to fully meet their basic needs. 66% were able to meet their needs only to a certain extent, and 26% were unable to meet their basic needs at all.

⁵⁷<https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkiye/content-temporary-protection/employment-and-education/access-labour-market/>

⁵⁸ In an Upinion conversation in March 2024, 6% (n=431) of Syrian individuals reported having formal employment. The two main sources of income indicated were informal work (35%) and no source of income at all (27%).

⁵⁹<https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/multi-sectoral-needs-assessment-syrian-refugees-turkey>

⁶⁰ It is important to note that the option of 'Social cohesion activities' was explained as activities aimed at improving the relationship between Syrian and Turkish host communities.

n=164) and the Southeastern Anatolia Region (**31%**, n=175). In contrast, a smaller proportion of individuals in the Central Anatolia Region (**23%**, n=44) prioritised shelter and housing. In this region, there appeared to be a relatively higher need for education (**30%**) and 'other' services (**21%**).

An open-ended question asking what the 'other' priority services entailed revealed that most individuals reported a need for protection against discrimination and anti-refugee practices, assistance with obtaining and overcoming challenges related to legal documentation, and access to resettlement.

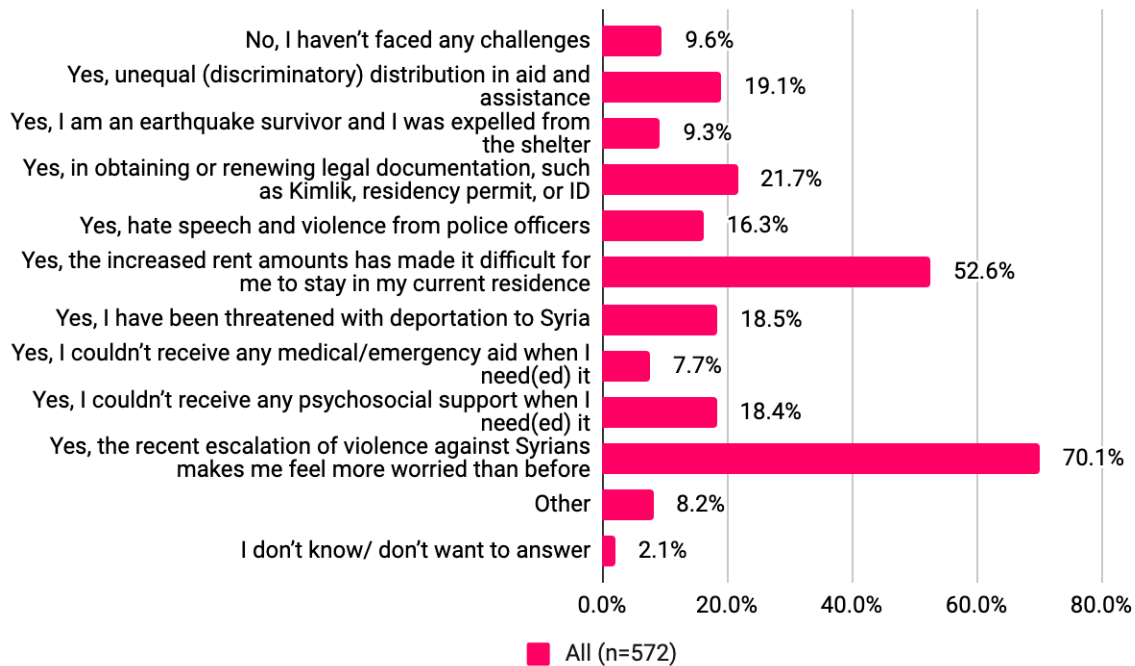
4.2.2. Main challenges in the past six months

To monitor the main challenges experienced by Syrian refugees in Türkiye the previous six months, they were asked to identify the main challenges out of a list of multiple answer options. This question was also asked before in March 2023, one month after the earthquakes in February. It is important to note that, this time, two additional answer options were added to reflect the increase in violence against Syrians in Türkiye and the sharp escalation of housing prices.

Out of all the options listed, a majority of **70%** (n=572) reported that the recent escalation of violence against Syrians had made them more worried than before, identifying it as the main challenge faced over the past 6 months. Additionally, more than half of the respondents (**53%**) mentioned that an increase in rent prices made it difficult for them to stay in their current residences. Moreover, **22%** of respondents reported issues in obtaining or renewing their legal documentation, while **19%** stated that they have faced discrimination in the distribution of aid.

Relatively small groups of respondents reported challenges such as receiving medical or emergency aid when needed (**8%**) and being expelled from their shelter as earthquake survivors (**9%**). 10% mentioned that they did not face any challenges at all.

Figure 5. "Have you faced any challenges in the past 6 months in Türkiye?" - multiple answers - all respondents



Although the responses are difficult to compare with March 2023 due to the addition of the two new answer options, it is noteworthy that in the 2024 conversation, the number of respondents reporting hate speech by police officers (**16%**), being threatened with deportation to Syria (**19%**), and facing challenges in obtaining and renewing legal documentation (**22%**) was considerably higher than in March 2023 (**6%**, **7%**, and **12%**, respectively).

The breakdown of the data by age highlights that a relatively large group of young individuals aged 18 to 25 faced issues in obtaining or renewing their legal documentation, such as their Kimlik. In addition, a considerable number of the youngest age groups of respondents, aged 18 to 35, reported being threatened with deportation (**36%**, n=199). This was minimally reported by individuals older than 35, at around **7%**.

Disaggregation by region additionally shows that individuals living in Central Anatolia and the Marmara Region reported experiencing an escalation of violence against Syrians more frequently compared to groups in Southeastern Anatolia and the Mediterranean Region. Additionally, a relatively large group of individuals in Southeastern Anatolia reported facing increasing difficulties due to rising rent.

"Since the events in Kayseri until now, my family has not gone out of the house because of the racism that exists."

"We can no longer speak Arabic among citizens. We get strange looks everywhere."

"We have faced a lot of harassment in the neighbourhood in which we live due to racial discrimination that has worsened in recent times."

4.3. Social tensions in the past six months

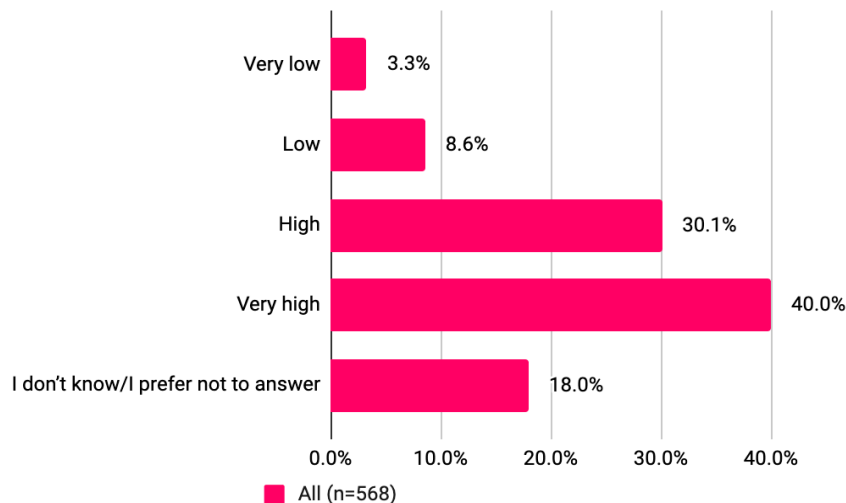
To additionally monitor social tensions between Syrian refugees and Turkish host communities the past six months, respondents were asked to fill in the following statement:

"As of July 2024, the social tensions between Syrians and Turkish people are _____"

With a list of single answer options, they could select an option rating from 'very low' to 'very high'.

The majority reported that tensions between the two communities were high or very high (**70%**, n=568). **12%** of individuals mentioned tensions were low or very low.

Figure 6. "In the light of experiences in the past 6 months, please select the answer option that completes the following sentence the best:" - all respondents



Age disaggregation shows that particularly groups of individuals aged 18 to 25 (**63%**, n=43) and those aged 26 to 35 (**54%**, n=156) reported very high levels of tension, compared to around **34%** (n=264) among those aged 36 to 55 and only **14%** (n=56) of those aged 56 to 65. Relatively higher groups of the latter two age groups reported they did not know how, or preferred not to answer the question.

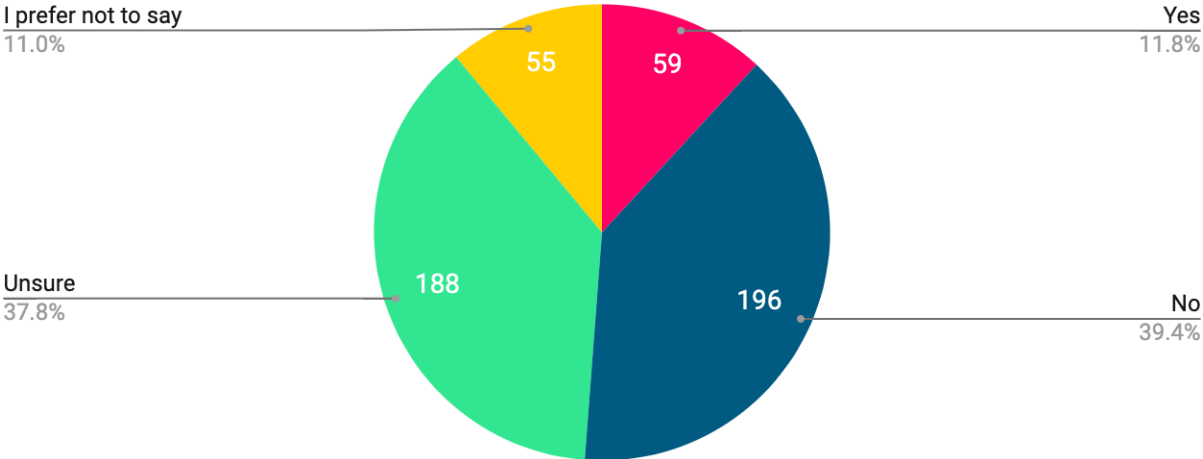
4.4. Feeling informed on available services

As a final topic, respondents were asked about whether they feel they have sufficient information about available support to Syrian individuals in Türkiye.

12% (n=498) of respondents reported feeling adequately informed about available support. The

largest groups of respondents, however, indicated that they either lacked sufficient information (39%) or were unsure (38%) whether they had received enough information.

Figure 7. "Do you feel like you have sufficient information about the available aid to Syrians in Türkiye?" - all respondents



A breakdown of the data by region highlights that individuals residing in the Southeastern Anatolia Region (46%, n=147) are particularly likely to report not having sufficient information about available aid, compared to those in other regions (around 36%).

5. Data findings Conversation 2 (Accountability to Affected Populations)

The second conversation was held with **453** Syrian individuals from **July 30th** to **August 22nd**, 2024. Those who indicated they had received aid in the past six months were asked questions about their satisfaction with the aid, the behaviour of aid workers, their involvement in aid-related decision-making processes, as well as their knowledge of and experience with the feedback mechanisms of aid organisations. Those who did not receive aid in the past six months provided their insights on access to aid-related information and their trust in humanitarian organisations. The sample consisted of **453** Syrian individuals who started the conversation, of which **74%** (n=453) had not received assistance in the past half year, while **23%** had received assistance. Amongst those who received assistance, **92** individuals completed questions on their experiences with their aid providers. **232** of Syrian respondents who did not receive assistance completed the questions on access to information and trust in humanitarian organisations.⁶¹



Of those who provided their demographic information, **56%** (n=425) identified as male and **44%** identified as female, resulting in a male-to-female ratio of 1 : 0.64. The majority of the respondents (**65%**, n=422) were aged between 26 and 45, with smaller groups in the 18-25 (**8%**), 46-55 (**18%**), and 56-65 (**9%**) age groups. 6 respondents were older than 65.

⁶¹The drop-out among those who did not receive assistance in the past half year who started and completed the conversation can be attributed to the two-week delay in receiving the follow-up questions on access to information and trust in humanitarian actors.

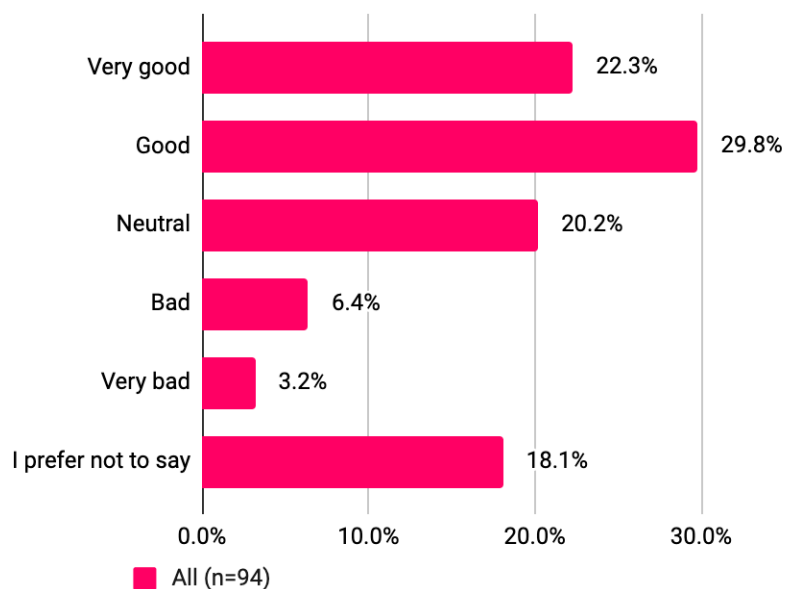
Regarding respondents' areas of residency, most individuals in this sample were living in the Mediterranean Region (**29%**, n=419), the Southeastern Anatolia Region (**28%**) or the Marmara Region (**27%**). Another **9%** indicated to be in the Central Anatolia Region, while the others were spread out over other regions in Türkiye.

5.1. Aid workers' behaviour

Firstly, all respondents who had received aid in the past six months were asked to share their feelings about the behaviour of aid workers in their area.

More than half of the respondents reported feeling good or very good (**52%**, n=94) about the behaviour of the aid workers they interacted with. This was followed by **one-fifth** who remained neutral. Only **10%** mentioned that the behaviour was bad or very bad.

Figure 8. "When you received some kind of assistance in the past six months, how did you feel about the behaviour of the aid workers in your area? - all respondents (n=94)



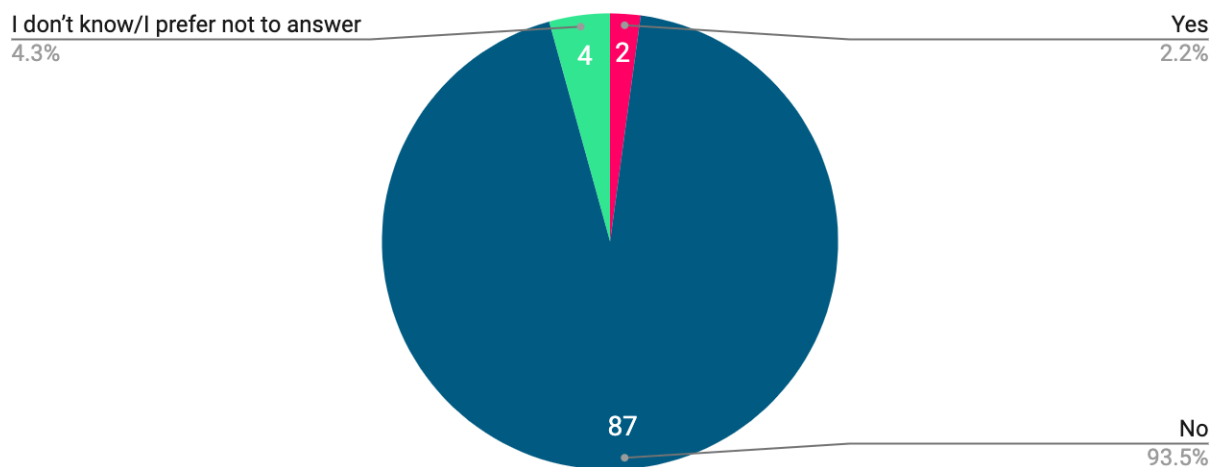
Disaggregation by region shows that individuals in the Mediterranean Region and the Southeastern Anatolia Region were more positive about the behaviour of aid workers in their area compared to those living in the Marmara Region. Those residing in the Marmara Region tended to have a more neutral stance compared to the other regions. However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously due to the low number of respondents per region answering this question.

5.2. Participation and inclusion

To better understand their participation and inclusion in aid programs, all respondents who received support in the past six months were asked whether they had participated in any decisions, implementation, or monitoring of aid and services in any way.

2% mentioned that they had participated in such activities related to the support they received in the past six months. The large majority of **94%** (n=93) reported they had not, while **4%** preferred not to answer the question.

Figure 9. "In the past six months, have you participated in any decisions, implementation, or monitoring of aid and services, in any way? - all respondents (n=93)

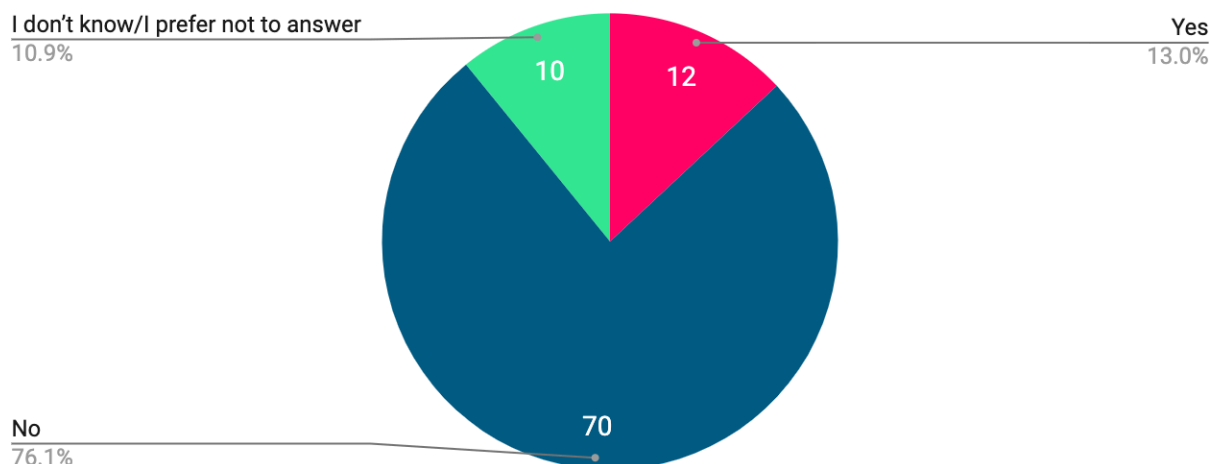


5.3. Knowledge on feedback mechanisms

After questions regarding participation and inclusion, respondents were asked about aid organisations' feedback mechanisms. First, those who had received support in the past six months were asked whether they knew how to share suggestions and/or concerns with aid providers.

The majority of **76%** (n=92) reported they did not know how to share feedback. **13%** knew how to do so, while **11%** preferred not to answer the question.

Figure 10. "Do you know how to share suggestions and/or concerns with your aid providers?" - all respondents (n=92)



Disaggregation by region highlights that relatively more respondents in the Marmara Region reported not knowing how to share feedback with their aid providers, compared to those in the Mediterranean Region and the Southeastern Anatolia Region. However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously due to the low number of respondents per region answering this question.

5.4. European Union and donors' perceived attitude about Syrian refugees

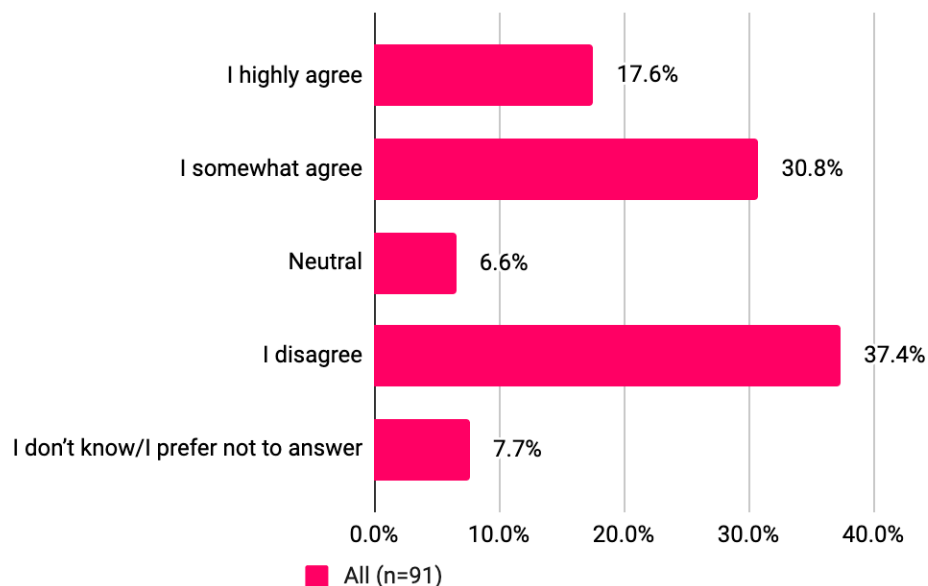
Those who indicated to have received support in the past 12 months were subsequently asked whether they agree with the following statement:

"I feel that the European Union and other international donors care about hearing the opinions of Syrian refugees in order to develop and implement their programs and policies."

The largest group (**37%**, n=91) disagreed with this statement, with more men indicating this than women. This group was closely followed by **31%** of individuals who somewhat agreed, **18%** of respondents who highly agreed and **7%** of respondents who remained neutral.

It is additionally important to note that a considerably higher percentage of women (**14%**) reported that they preferred not to answer the question, compared to men (**4%**).

Figure 11. "Please select the answer that reflects your feelings about the following statement as accurately as possible?" - all respondents (n=92)



5.5. Trust and awareness

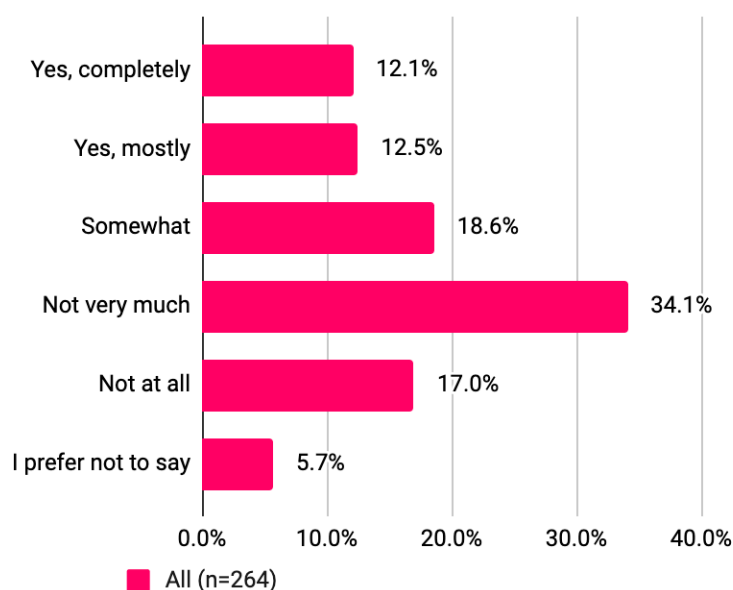
The majority of respondents in the online community reported that they did not receive support in the previous six months. This group was asked about their general trust in humanitarian actors and whether they felt informed about available support and services. It is important to note that these questions were sent later than the initial question about receiving aid, which may explain some respondents' dropout.

5.5.1. Trust in humanitarian organisations

To assess the overall trust levels in humanitarian organisations operating in Türkiye, all respondents who did not receive support in the past six months were asked about their general trust in humanitarian actors. A clarification and examples were given, amongst others noting that humanitarian actors include various organisations, agencies, and networks providing support to those in need.

The largest share of Syrian individuals (**34%**, n=264) indicated they do not trust humanitarian actors very much. **12%** of Syrian individuals reported completely trusting humanitarian actors, with some individuals also mentioning that they mostly (**13%**) or somewhat (**19%**) trust these actors. **17%** reported to not trust humanitarian actors at all.

Figure 12. "Do you generally trust humanitarian actors?" - all respondents (n=264)



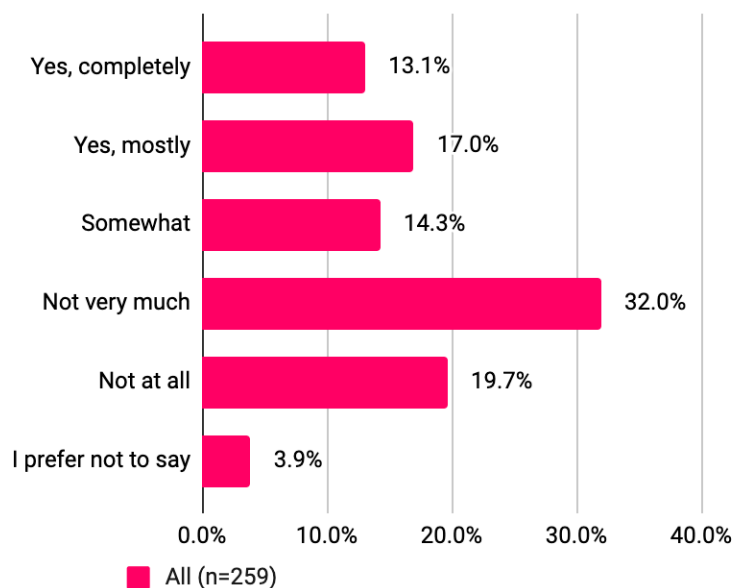
Important to note is that relatively more individuals in the Central Anatolia Region and Marmara Region reported a lack of trust - whether not very much or not at all - in humanitarian actors, compared to the Mediterranean and Southeastern Anatolia regions. However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously due to the low number of respondents in Central Anatolia answering this question.

5.5.2. Feeling informed on available aid in Türkiye

Regarding the communication and transparency practices of humanitarian actors in Türkiye, all respondents who indicated that they did not receive support in the previous six months were asked if they generally and adequately feel informed about the aid and services accessible to them. Clarification was provided that "informed" implies having a clear understanding of the type of assistance and support programmes, and information about your eligibility to receive that assistance, how you can access it, and for how long.

The largest group of Syrian respondents (**52%**, n=259) reported having a clear lack of information, including **32%** feeling 'not very much' informed and 20% 'not at all' informed about the aid and services available to them. In contrast, 30% had a positive view, with **17%** feeling 'mostly' informed and **13%** 'completely' informed. Additionally, **14%** indicated they felt somewhat informed.

Figure 13. "Do you feel informed about the aid and services available to you?" - all respondents (n=259)

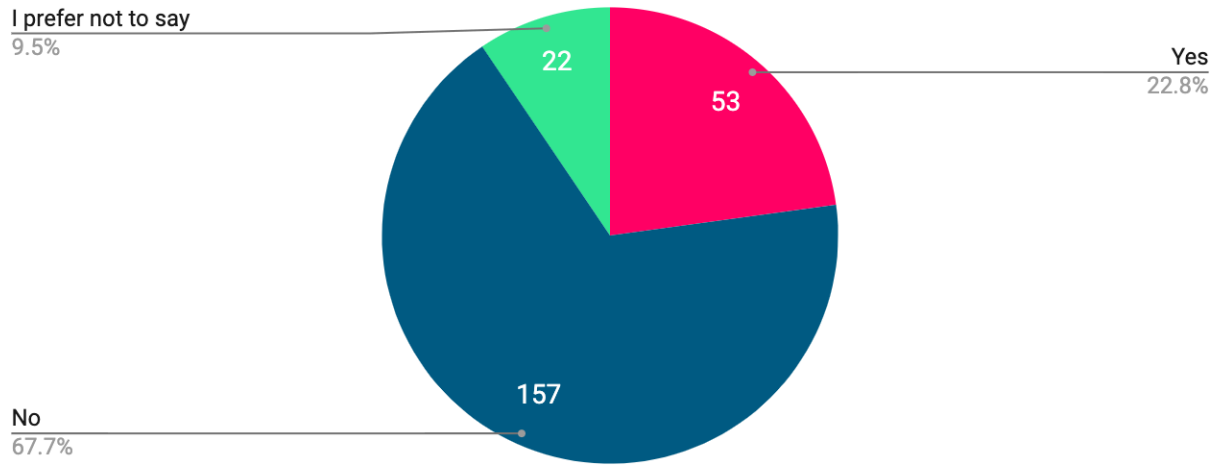


5.5.3. Feeling informed on registration for UN aid and services

Additionally, all respondents who did not receive support were also questioned about their sense of being informed regarding the procedures and locations for registering for aid and services offered by United Nations (UN) agencies, including UNHCR, WFP, and UNICEF.

68% (n=232) of respondents did not feel informed about available UN aid and services. This was followed by a group of **23%** that felt informed, and which was reported more by men (**28%**, n=131) compared to women (**16%**, n=84). **9%** preferred to not answer the question.

Figure 14. "Do you feel informed about how and where to register for aid and services provided by the UN (United Nations) agencies?" - all respondents

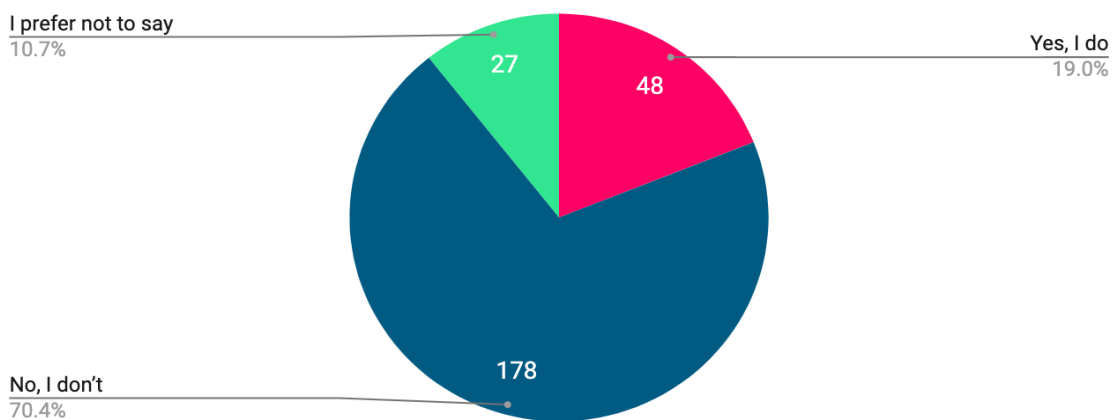


5.5.4. Awareness of decision-making processes regarding aid eligibility

Lastly, all respondents who did not receive support in the past six months were asked whether they know how aid providers decide who receives aid and services.

The majority of respondents (**70%**, n=251) reported they do not know how aid providers decide on who they provide aid to. Almost one-fifth (**19%**) understood aid providers' decision-making, followed by **11%** who preferred not to answer the question.

Figure 15. "Do you know how aid providers decide who receives aid and services, and who does not?" - all respondents (n=251)



Notably, individuals living in the Central Anatolia Region and Southeastern Anatolia Region were more likely to report not knowing how aid actors determine their eligibility criteria, compared to those in the Marmara Region and the Mediterranean Region.

6. Data findings Conversation 3: Legal protection, forced deportation, and future plans

The third and final conversation was held with **420** Syrian individuals from **August 22nd** to **September 2nd** 2024, and focused on legal protection and related challenges of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, forced deportation, as well as their future migration plans.

The sample consisted of **420** Syrian individuals who started the conversation, and **382** who completed all questions. Of those who provided their demographic information, **64%** (n=390) identified as male and **36%** identified as female, resulting in a male-to-female ratio of 1 : 0.56. The majority of the respondents (**66%**, n=389) were aged between 26 and 45, with smaller groups in the 18-25 (**6%**), 46-55 (**14%**), and 56-65 (**11%**) age groups. Only 11 respondents were older than 65.

Regarding respondents' areas of residency, most individuals in this sample were living in the Mediterranean Region (**26%**, n=387), the Southeastern Anatolia Region (**32%**) or the Marmara Region (**30%**). Another **7%** indicated to live in the Central Anatolia Region, while the remaining respondents were spread out over other regions in Türkiye.



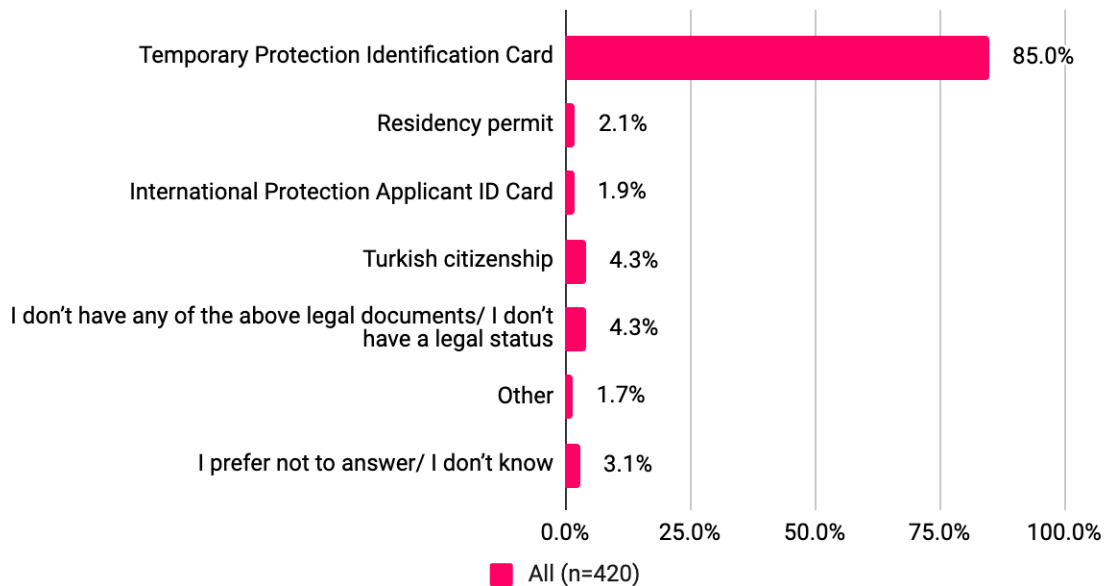
6.1. Legal protection and related challenges

6.1.1. Current legal status

As a monitoring question, all individuals were asked which legal documents they currently hold. The large majority (**85%**, n=420) of respondents indicated to have a Temporary Protection Card (Kimlik), with relatively more men (**89%**, n=250) reporting this compared to women (**79%**, n=140). Marginal groups of individuals said they had obtained other legal documentation. **4%** of respondents indicated to not have any legal documents.

This figure is similar to the responses Upinion received when asking Syrian individuals in Türkiye about their legal status in March and April 2023.

Figure 16. "What types of legal documents do you have?" - all respondents (n=420)



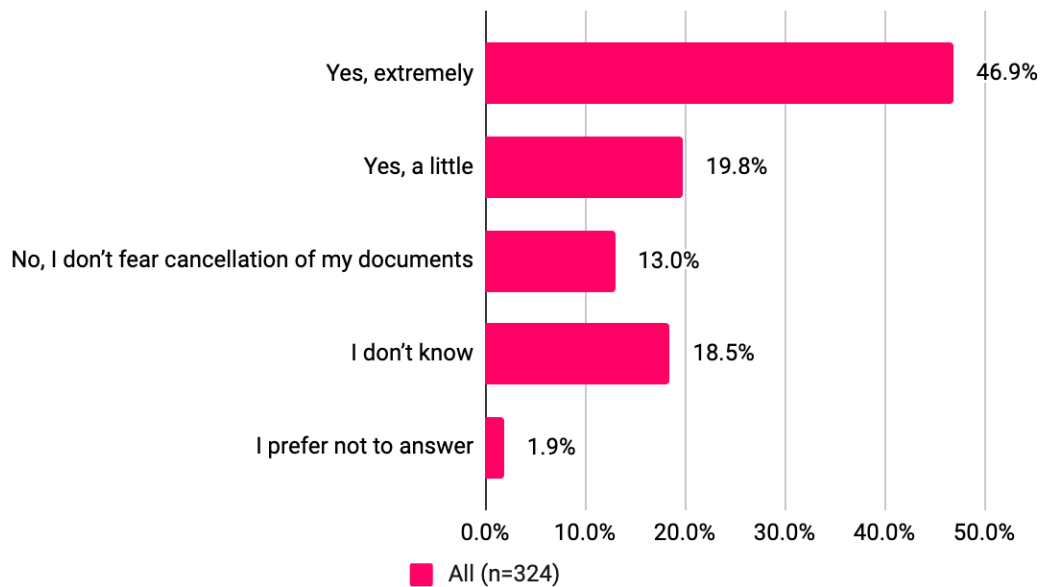
6.1.2. Expiration of legal status

When respondents who indicated to have a Temporary Protection Identification Card were asked whether their legal status expires within the next six months, the majority said they did not know (**56%**, n=343). This was followed by **37%** of respondents who said "no," and only **6%** who said "yes."

Those who indicated that their Kimlik does not expire or were unsure about its expiration in the next six months, were asked a follow-up question about whether they feared their Kimlik might be cancelled within that time frame. Almost half of the respondents reported that they extremely fear

this (**47%**, n=324), followed by one-fifth who had little fear. **13%** mentioned they did not have such fear, while a considerable **19%** reported being uncertain about whether they were afraid. This figure is also similar to the responses we received from Syrian individuals in Türkiye regarding their fear of having their legal status cancelled in March and April 2023.

Figure 17. “Do you fear that your Temporary Protection Card (Kimlik, Gecici Koruma Kimlik Karti) will get cancelled within the next six months?” - all respondents (n=324)



Disaggregation of the data by age shows that as age increases, relatively less individuals reported extreme fears. Those aged 26 to 35 reported the highest level of extreme fears, followed by those aged 36 to 45, 46 to 55, and 56 to 65.⁶² However, the relatively older groups indicated more to have little concerns.

6.1.3. Fears for being unable to renew Kimlik

The **19** respondents who reported their Temporary Protection Card will be expiring within the next six months were asked whether they fear the renewal of their legal documentation.

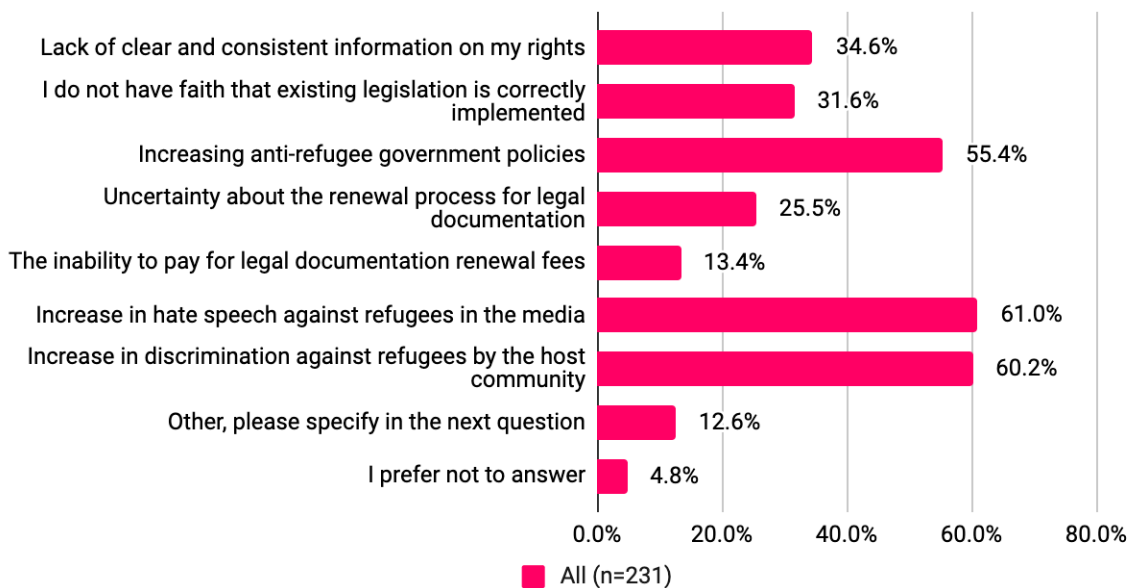
The majority of **15** respondents reported that they feared this extremely. Following this, **2** individuals indicated they had little concerns, **1** respondent mentioned not having any fears, and **1** respondent mentioned being unsure about having fears.

Respondents who feared the cancellation or non-renewal of their Temporary Protection Card were asked to identify the key reasons for their concerns about losing their legal documentation. The majority of respondents cited three main reasons: the surge in hate speech against refugees in

⁶²Those aged 18 to 25 and 65 and older were excluded from this breakdown due to the low number of respondents (n < 20).

the media (**61%**, n=231), rising discrimination against refugees by host communities (**60%**), and increasing anti-refugee policies (**55%**). Additionally, limited and inconsistent information, a lack of confidence in the proper application of legislation, and uncertainty about the renewal process for legal documentation were also noted by substantial groups. The inability to pay for legal documentation renewal fees was mentioned the least.

Figure 18. "Could you indicate why you have fear of losing your legal documentation?" - multiple answer - all respondents (n=231)



It is important to note that those living in the Marmara Region reported hate speech against refugees in the media more frequently than those in the Southeastern Anatolia Region and the Mediterranean Region. The same trend applies to uncertainty about the renewal process for legal documentation, which was mentioned more often by individuals in the Marmara Region compared to the other two regions.

6.1.4. Challenges with legal documentation

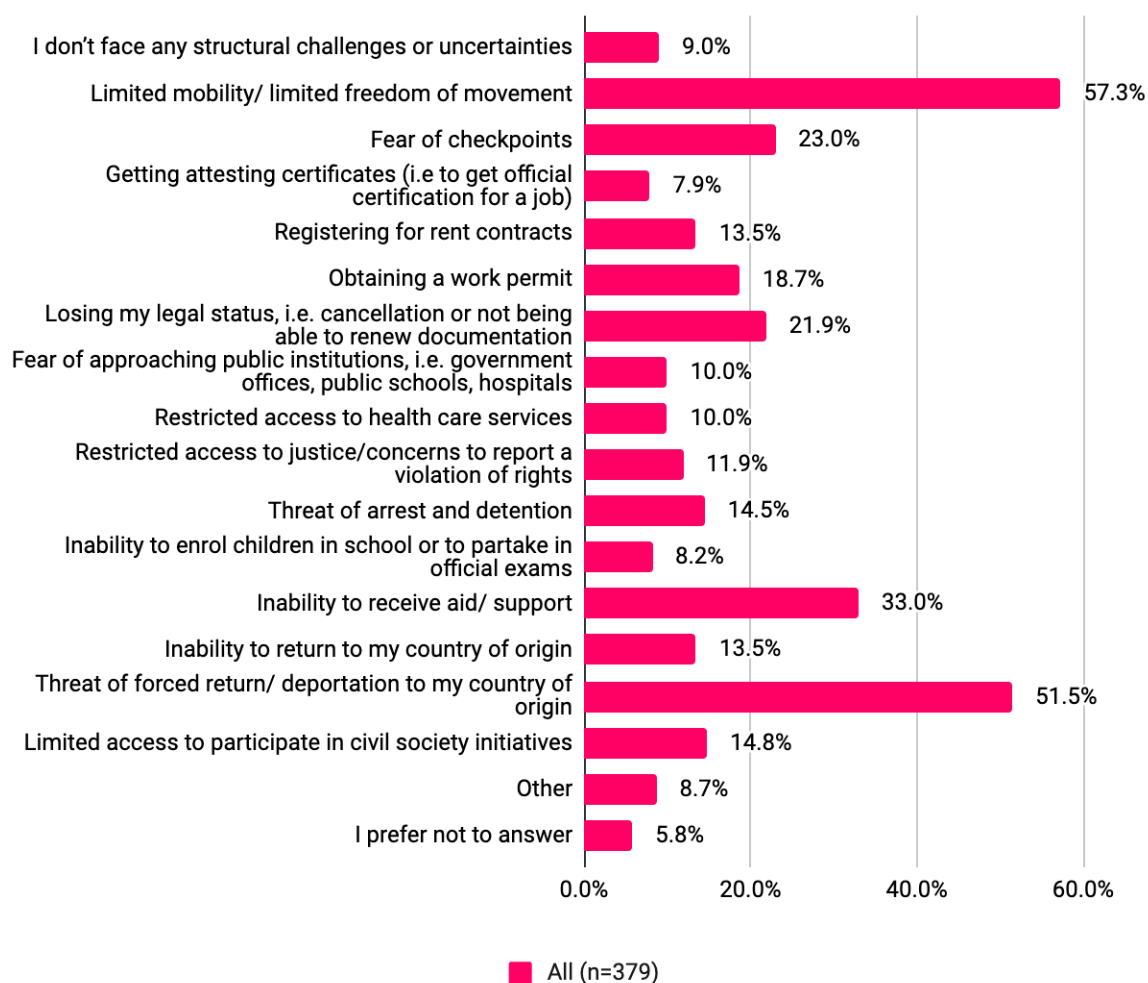
All respondents were also asked whether they experience any challenges related to their legal status, choosing from a long list of predefined answer options.

The two main challenges mentioned were limited freedom of movement (**57%**, n=379) and the threat of forced return/deportation to Syria (**51%**). Another significant challenge reported by some was the inability to receive aid or support (**33%**). These were mentioned much more than other challenges.

Comparing this data with responses from Syrian individuals in March and April 2024, the main

difference is the increase in reported challenges related to limited mobility. At the beginning of last year, a smaller group of **44%** (n=377) cited this as a major issue.

Figure 19. "If applicable to your situation, what structural challenges or uncertainties do you face with the legal status that you currently hold?" - all respondents (n=379)



It is important to note that while male respondents reported many challenges more frequently than female respondents, the difference was especially notable regarding the threat of arrest and detention (**20%** males vs. **5%** females), losing legal status (**26%** vs. **14%**), threats of being forced to return (**57%** vs. **46%**), and limitations in freedom of movement (**62%** vs. **51%**).

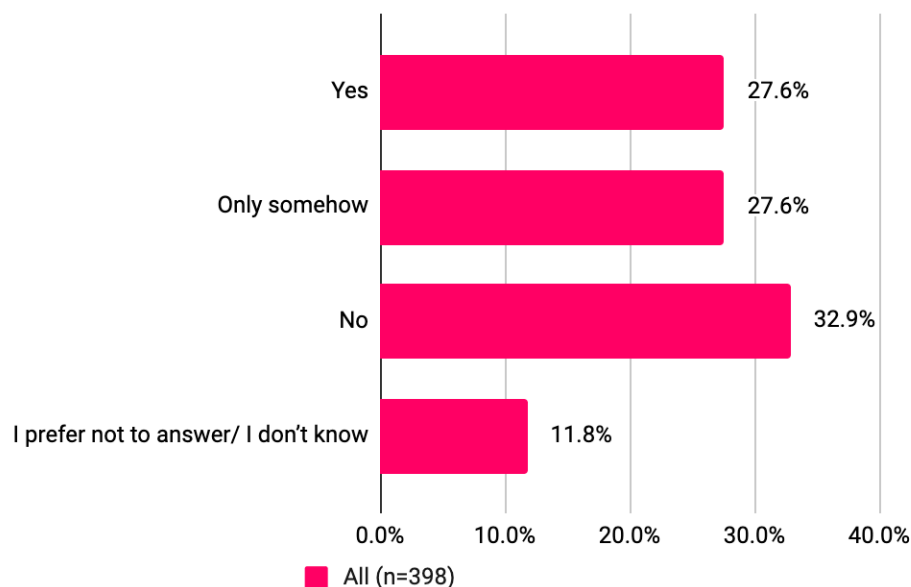
6.2. Feelings of safety

As a monitoring question, all individuals were asked whether they generally feel safe and secure in Türkiye at this moment in time.

The largest group of respondents (**33%**, n=398) reported that they currently do not feel safe in Türkiye. Similar groups reported they feel only somehow safe (**28%**) or safe (**28%**).

This figure matches the responses Upinion received from Syrian individuals in Türkiye regarding their feelings of safety, both in April 2023 and in June- July 2023.

Figure 20. "Do you generally feel safe and secure in Türkiye?" - all respondents (n=398)



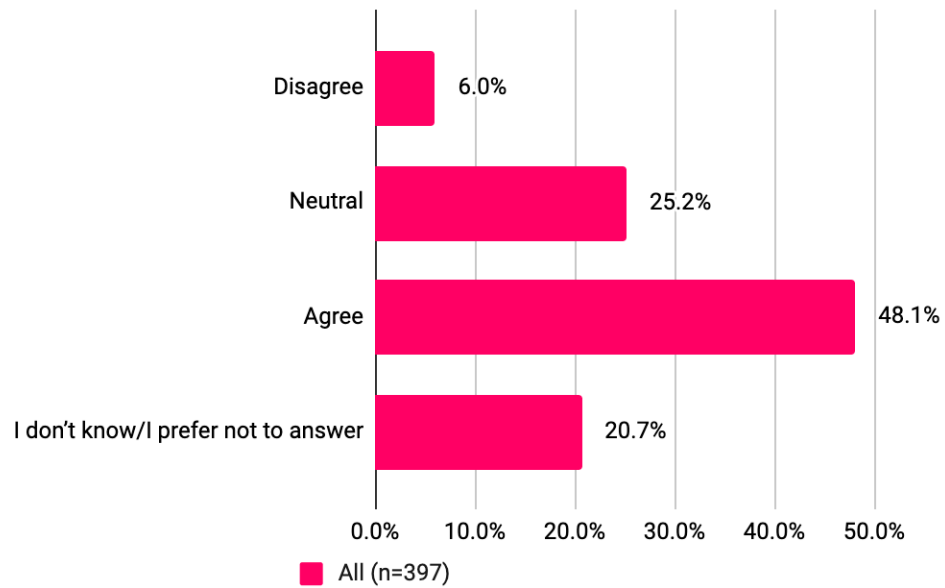
Notably, relatively more male respondents reported they do not feel safe at all (**37%**, n=238), compared to female respondents (**25%**, n=132).

Following this, every respondent was asked whether they agree with the following statement:

"In the past three months, the security and safety situation for Syrian refugees in Türkiye has strongly deteriorated."

Only **6%** of individuals disagreed with the statement. Almost half of the respondents (**48%**, n=397) of all respondents mentioned they agree. This was followed by a **quarter** who remained neutral.

Figure 21. "To what extent do you agree with the statement?" - all respondents (n=397)



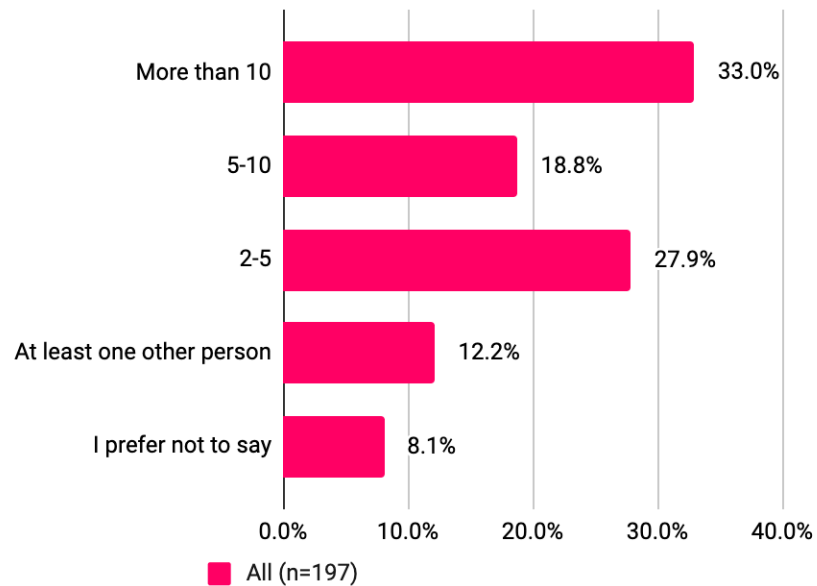
6.3. Forced deportations

6.3.1. Awareness of forced deportations

When respondents were asked whether they know any individuals who have been forcibly deported in the previous three months, **50%** (n=397) mentioned they know of others. **4** individuals indicated they were forcibly deported themselves.

When those who reported knowing others who have been deported were asked to specify how many people they know who had been deported in the last six months, the largest group indicated they know more than 10 individuals (**33%**, n=197). Additionally, **19%** knew 5 to 10 people, **28%** knew 2 to 5 individuals, and **12%** mentioned knowing one person.

Figure 22. "How many other people do you know that have been deported the past six months?" - all respondents (n=197)

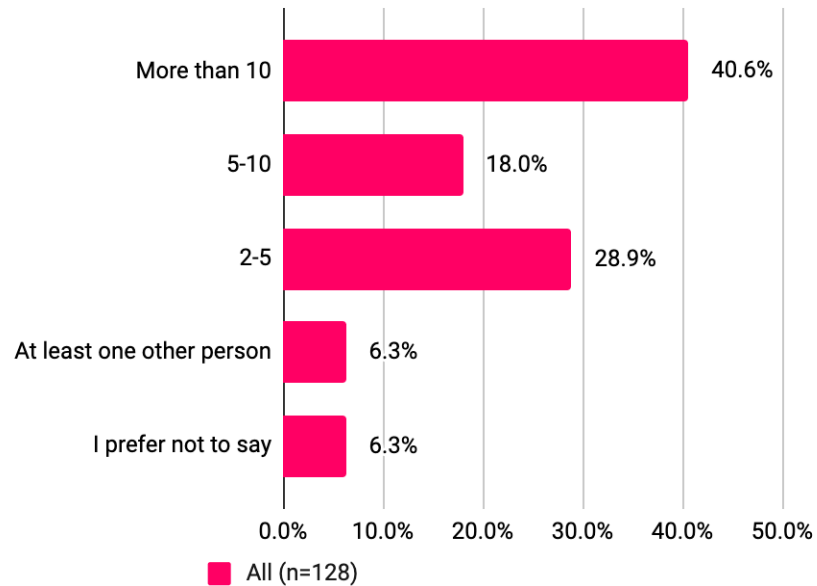


6.3.2. Awareness of "voluntary return" forms

Additionally, individuals were asked whether they know any individuals who were forced to sign a "voluntary return" form while being in detention. **33%** (n=392) mentioned they know of others. **8** individuals indicated they were forced to sign such a form themselves.

When those who reported knowing others who have been forced to sign a "voluntary return" form, the largest group indicated they know more than 10 individuals (**41%**, n=128). Additionally, **18%** knew 5 to 10 people, **29%** knew 2 to 5 individuals, and **6%** mentioned knowing one person.

Figure 23. “How many Syrian individuals in Türkiye do you know that were forced to sign a “voluntary return” form while being in detention?” - all respondents (n=128)



6.3.3. Fear of deportation in the next three months

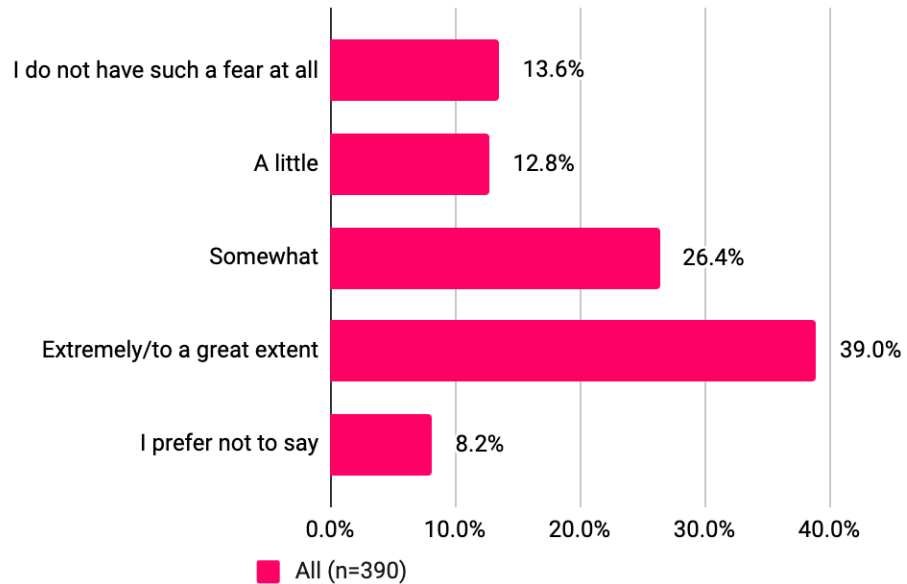
Lastly, to monitor Syrian refugees' fears of deportation, respondents were asked to indicate the extent of such concern.

The largest group of Syrian individuals (**39%**, n=380) reported they extremely fear being deported and/or forcibly returned within the next three months. This was followed by **26%** who somewhat feared this. **13%** mentioned they have little such concerns, while another **14%** did not have such a fear at all.

Notably, relatively younger individuals in the age groups 18–25 and 26–35 reported having extreme fears more often, compared to older age groups. This, however, needs to be carefully interpreted given the low number of individuals in the younger age group.

These numbers are roughly similar to the responses Upinion received from Syrian individuals in Türkiye regarding their fears of deportation at the time of the May 2023 elections in Türkiye.

Figure 24. "To what extent do you fear being deported and/or forced to return to Syria within the next three months?" - all respondents (n=390)



When asked about the reasons behind this fear, individuals identified two main issues: awareness of deportations happening around them (**54%**, n=303) and the increase in violence and hate by Turkish citizens (**53%**). While other predefined reasons were also frequently mentioned, EU financial support to Turkish removal centres was less commonly cited as a contributing factor to fears of deportation.

Figure 25. "What are some of the key reasons that make you fear being deported and/or forced to return to Syria?" - all respondents (n=303)



It is important to note that, although most of the listed reasons were reported more frequently by men than by women, the growing difficulty in renewing legal documentation was mentioned equally by both genders.

Lastly, regional disaggregation shows that a relatively large group of individuals in the Marmara Region reported being aware of deportations around them, followed by respondents living in the Mediterranean and in the Southeastern Anatolia regions.

6.4. Future plans

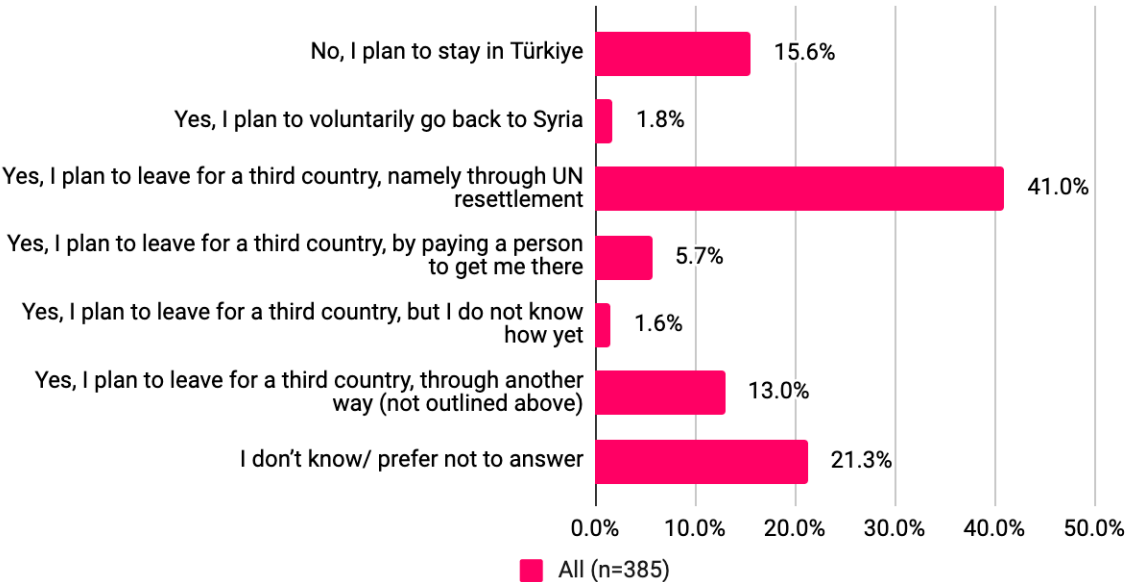
6.4.1. Migration plans within the next six months

To gauge Syrian individuals' intentions to migrate within the next six months, all respondents were asked if they had any concrete plans to leave Türkiye in this time period.

2% (n=385) reported planning to voluntarily return to Syria. **41%** indicated they want to leave for a third country, specifically through UN resettlement. Additionally, **16%** planned to stay in Türkiye, while **13%** intended to go to a third country through other means, which could include irregular migration. Importantly, **21%** said they did not know how to leave or preferred not to answer the question.

This figure is also similar to the responses Upinion received from Syrian individuals in Türkiye regarding their future migration plans in March and April 2023.

Figure 26. "Do you have concrete plans to leave Türkiye in the next six months?" - all respondents (n=385)

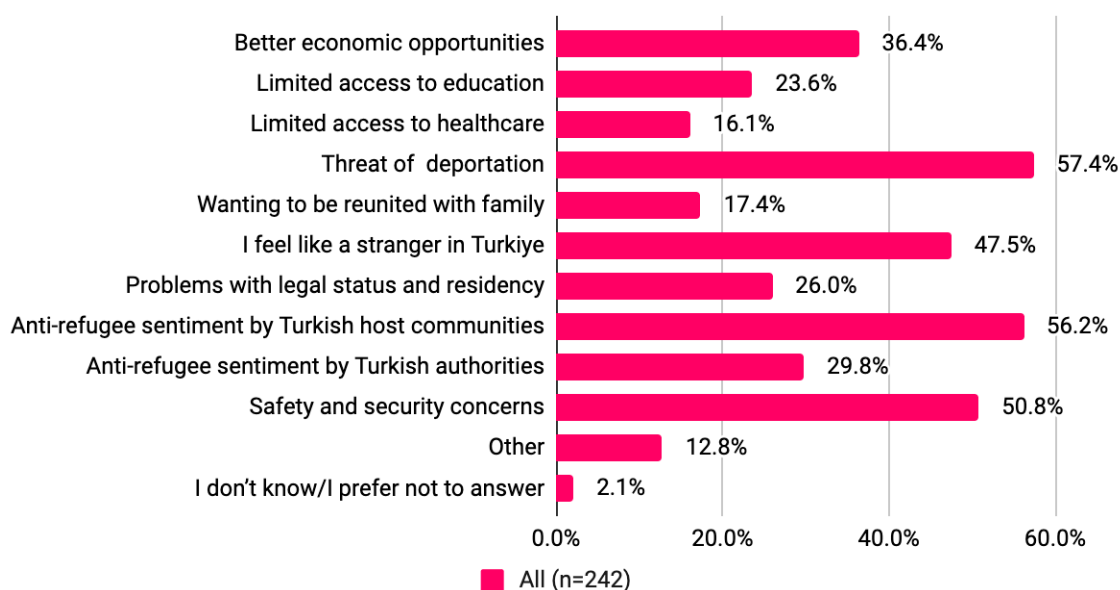


It is important to note that those who indicated plans to leave Türkiye through resettlement were primarily living in the Mediterranean Region (**44%**, n=95) and the Southeastern Anatolia Region (**46%**, n=124), compared to the Marmara Region (**32%**, n=107). The responses from those living in the Marmara Region were more varied.

Those who indicated plans to leave Türkiye within the next six months were additionally prompted to indicate the main reasons behind this intention.

Threats of deportation (**57%**, n=242), the anti-refugee sentiment by Turkish host communities (**56%**), as well as safety and security concerns (**51%**) were mentioned as the three main reasons. Limited access to healthcare and wanting to reunite with family were mentioned least often.

Figure 27. "Can you highlight what are the main reasons that you want to leave Türkiye" - all respondents (n=242)



While these were also the main reasons mentioned by female respondents, the gender breakdown shows that male respondents more frequently reported anti-refugee sentiment from Turkish communities (**63%**, n=150), the threat of deportation (**62%**), and anti-refugee sentiment from Turkish authorities (**33%**), compared to women (**45%**, **51%**, and **23%**, respectively).

The above-mentioned reasons were also more frequently reported by younger individuals aged 26-35, along with issues related to legal status and residency, and feeling like a stranger in Türkiye. Other age groups were more likely to mention better economic opportunities or the desire to be reunited with family.

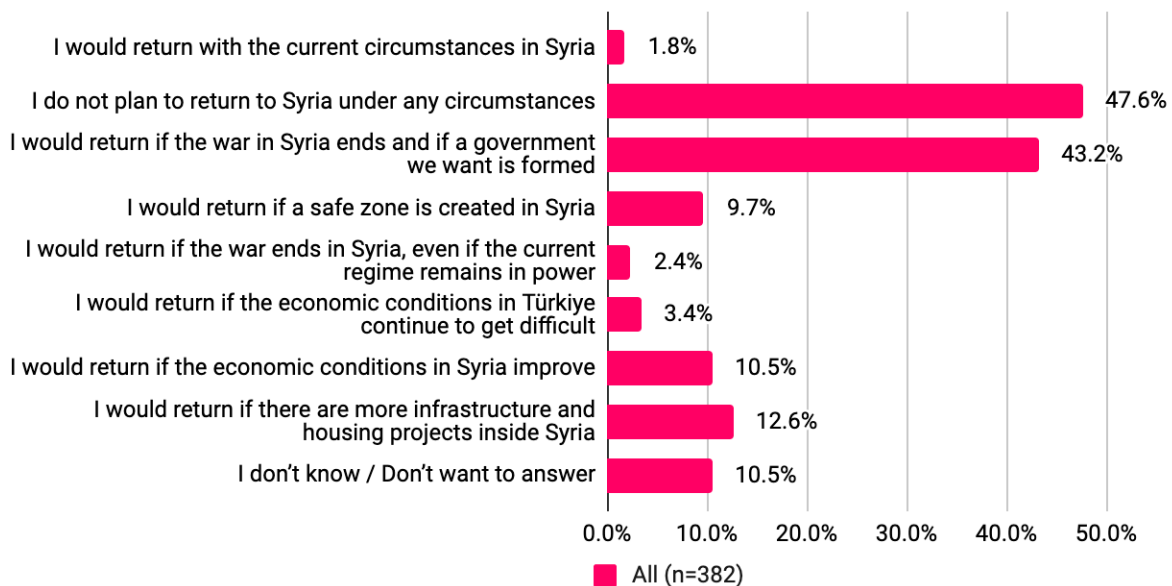
6.4.2. Attitudes towards returning to Syria

As the final question of the third conversation, all individuals were questioned about their current attitude towards returning to Syria, in a multiple-answer format.

Outstandingly, the largest group of Syrian individuals reported they do not plan to return to Syria under any circumstances (**48%**, n=382), while the second largest group indicated they would return if the war in Syria ends and if a government they want is being formed (**43%**).

Nearly no respondent reported that they would want to return under the current circumstances (**2%**, n=370) or if the war ends but the current regime remains in place (**2%**). Additionally, only **3%** mentioned they would return if economic conditions in Türkiye remain difficult, **11%** stated they would return if the economic conditions in Syria improve, and another **10%** said they would return if a safe zone is created in Syria.

Figure 28. "Which one of the following statements best explains your attitude on returning to Syria?" - all respondents (n=382)



Annex A: Upinion's Digital Engagement Platform

Expanding on the methodology section in the beginning of this report, this annex provides a detailed outline of the recruitment methodology and characteristics of Upinion's Digital Engagement Platform (DEP) used in this study.

Respondents' recruitment

In order to reach an audience as wide and as varied as possible (while taking into consideration methodological challenges), Upinion deployed a recruitment method based on Facebook, local outreach through Upinion Ambassadors and the help of partner organisations in Türkiye, starting in 2022.

- *Facebook:* Participants in this study have primarily been recruited through Facebook. Upinion posted targeted⁶³ advertisements on Facebook, illustrating the aim of the conversation so that any individual from the target countries with an internet connection and Facebook account would be able to participate. Respondents entered the conversation by clicking on the ad, and were directed to the correct conversation through a link. They then were asked for their consent to participate in the conversation: they had to answer that they wished to be taken to a safe and private Upinion environment where their privacy is secured and answers are not visible to anyone but Upinion.
- *Upinion Ambassadors:* To strengthen the outreach as well as to reach those who are difficult to reach online, Upinion works with local ambassadors with contextual knowledge who reach out to their networks, explain the purpose of the conversation to their community members and encourage them to participate through a unique link. The links are created by Upinion specifically to be shared through WhatsApp and are accompanied by an introductory text explaining the purpose of the conversation, as well as the privacy and data security protocols that Upinion adheres to.
- *Local partner organisations:* Local partner organisations have been assisting in the recruitment of respondents by sharing the links to the conversations, similar to described above, with their networks.

Upinion's private mode

Once recruited and consenting to participate in the conversation, the respondent is guided to Upinion's Digital Engagement Platform (DEP). This is a private environment, where all the respondents' answers are anonymised and deleted from their phone immediately after closing the

⁶³ The Facebook ads were targeted to respondents above the age of 18.

interface. Respondents are informed at the beginning of the private conversation that their data is anonymous and protected, as well as that they can indicate to have their data deleted at any point in time.

Important to note is that Upinion's DEP methodology has the ISO/IEC 27001 Certification, which is the international best practice standard for Information Security Management Systems (ISMSs), and follows GDPR regulations.

Contact

11.11.11

Willem Staes
Policy & Partnership Advisor Middle East
Willem.Staes@11.be

Upinion

Noor Lekkerkerker
CEO
noor@upinion.com

