



Syrian Association for
CITIZENS' DIGNITY

FADING VISION OF SAFE SYRIA

Survey of 3,000 Syrians on
Return & Socio-Economic
Collapse



ABOUT SACD

The Syrian Association for Citizen's Dignity (SACD) is a civil-rights grass-root popular movement established by citizens from different regions of Syria to serve the people of Syria. As a popular social movement, the Association has no political affiliation. It works to promote, protect and secure the rights of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) wherever they are.

The Association strives to present the vision, concerns and demands of the refugees and IDPs, and make sure that their voice is heard through advocacy, mobilization of necessary support, and influencing key inter-national and regional policy and decision-makers.

The Association embodies the diversity of the citizens of Syria, regard-less of their social, religious or gender background. The Association is fighting to ensure the right of a safe, voluntary and dignified return of all Syrian refugees and IDPs, and the effective implementation of a safe environment according to the definition of the Syrian displaced people themselves.

We are against any forced or premature return of refugees and IDPs. The Association believes that a popular social movement for a dignified return, based on the recognition of the rights of refugees and IDPs as Syrian citizens, is central to any future solution in Syria.

The SACD is not a civil society organization, nor a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), nor a political party: it is a social movement.



CONTENT

- 01 Executive summary**
- 04 Key findings**
- 06 Methodology**
- 10 Present circumstances**
 - 10 Security issues
 - 12 Detainees
 - 14 Civil rights
 - 15 Socio-economic conditions
 - 17 Public services reform
- 19 Perspectives on return**
 - 19 Main conditions for return
 - 20 Emigration & displacement
 - 20 Return intentions & experiences
- 21 Political & constitutional reform**
- 23 Conclusion**
- 24 Recommendations**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than half of Syria's pre-war population are still living in situations of displacement inside or outside the country, with approximately 5.5 million refugees displaced outside Syria's borders—mostly in Lebanon, Türkiye, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan—and another 7.2 million Syrians internally displaced inside the country.

As new international crises emerge and global attention and core humanitarian funding shifts elsewhere, some policymakers and observers are tempted to understand Syria as a post-conflict context simply because we do not hear about it as much anymore. The conflict is in a quasi-frozen state with the Syrian regime expending immense efforts in recent years, including through Syria's 2022 universal periodic review (UPR) at the UN,¹ to portray itself as victor following 13 years of conflict, and Syria therefore as a “post-conflict” context in which the serious work of rebuilding, transitional justice and reconciliation can now begin.²

Even if regime-held areas may superficially appear to be in their own post-conflict phase, the regime's behaviour has not changed, even in the face of continued pressure and regional overtures towards partial normalization. The regime deftly utilized the devastating February 2023 Syrian-Turkish earthquake in pursuit of normalization with the international community and regional states, but that normalization has failed, in part, due to the regime's inability—and unwillingness—to provide a safe environment for Syrians and neighboring countries alike. It is because of this complete lack of positive behavioral change by the regime that no significant returns have taken place in Syria in recent years.

For one, the root causes of the uprising and conflict have not been addressed. Crucially, Syrians are still awaiting a political solution that can produce real reforms in Syria and achieve a political transition that would put an end to the Syrian regime and its security apparatus security policies, responsible for a majority of the wartime displacement and the arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance of hundreds of thousands of people since 2011—at least 100,000 of whom are still missing or unaccounted for within the regime's notorious detention archipelago. A past SACD survey focused on security and living conditions of displaced Syrian found that security reasons were far and away the most prominent driver of displacements from 2012 onwards (responsible for 96 percent of displacements between 2012-2018); in addition, more than 80 percent of refugees and IDPs wanted to see the complete dismantling and reform of the regime's security services before

¹ Syrian Legal Development Programme (SLDP) & We Exist, *Fallacies not Facts: A critical legal study of the national report submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic in the third cycle of the universal periodic review in 2022*, <https://weexist-sy.org/wp-content/uploads/Fallacies-not-Facts_EN.pdf> accessed 10 April 2024.

² Veronica Bellintani, 'The Assad Regime's Post-Conflict Narrative in the International Arena', *Tahrir Institute for Near East Policy (TIMEP)*, 10 May 2022, <<https://timep.org/2022/05/10/the-assad-regimes-post-conflict-narrative-in-the-international-arena/>> accessed 27 March 2024.

they would consider going home.³ By not addressing both historic and ongoing violations, removing and holding to account the perpetrators responsible, security will remain a top priority for all refugees and IDPs. In addition, a detailed, dynamic and well-informed understanding of the risks that displaced Syrians face and fear must form a cornerstone of policymaking on Syria and the Syrian conflict to reflect these very real concerns.

An overall decrease in military hostilities has not translated into a safe, calm, neutral environment in Syria, despite some attempts by European governments to portray the Syrian context as such.⁴ Although regime-held areas have witnessed a reduction of all-out military hostilities since 2018, civilians are under constant bombardment by the regime and Russian forces in the north-west of the country, while myriad protection risks abound in the regime-held areas: arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance; forced military conscription; conflict-related violence; extortion, blackmail and harassment by regime and Iran-backed militias; negative coping mechanisms to deal with extreme poverty; assassinations; IED explosions; and the risks left behind by landmines and unexploded ordnance. Returning refugees and IDPs have been explicitly targeted by regime intelligence agencies either at the border or sometime after re-entering the country, experiencing brutal and horrific torture inside detention facilities.⁵ Meanwhile, the combined effect of the regime's longstanding mismanagement of the economy and corruption, immense wartime destruction, and western sanctions have all sent the economy in regime areas into tailspin: 90 percent of Syrians in these areas now live below the poverty line and 72 percent are reliant on humanitarian assistance to get by despite that assistance being a target of regime's corruption—as detailed in SACD's report, *Weaponization of Aid*⁶—with many now considering ways to leave the country and find a life elsewhere. This is emigration and displacement like earlier in the conflict, but this time for different reasons. In this context, socio-economic and humanitarian trends increasingly become tied up with protection concerns.

In north-east Syria, controlled by the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) and US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) since the territorial collapse of ISIS in 2019, communities may enjoy marginally better rights protection when it comes to issues such as detention, albeit in an unstable and unpredictable security environment that is always at risk of change. ISIS sleeper cells continue to present a potent threat across areas east of the Euphrates River, targeting the SDF and US-led Coalition forces as well as civilians, tribal leaders, local merchants and others.⁷ Intermittent conflict between the SDF and Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and Turkey maintain the real possibility of future conflict in the region; since late 2023, a wave of Turkish airstrikes targeting Kurdish groups have also led to disruptions to civilians' water and electricity supply in the area.⁸ Recent armed clashes between the SDF and dissident tribal groups in eastern Deir Ezzor province have also undermined an image of the north-east as more stable and better governed than regime-held Syria, where policies and practices based on ethnic discrimination against Arabs have contributed to further unrest, and constituted further reasons for leaving the area.

Conditions are little better in opposition-held north-west Syria, the site of regular regime and Russian bombardments and front-line clashes as well as endemic poverty, displacement and a range of other pressing humanitarian concerns.

The future of Syria's conflict and solutions to the problem of forced displacement of Syrians is about more than socio-economics. In an attempt to encourage returns of refugees in Europe, regime-friendly right-wing and far-right governments in the EU have worked to push a narrative claiming that the only thing that matters to most (if not all) Syrians is the improvement of socio-economic conditions inside the country. Once that is

3 Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity (SACD), *We Are Syria: Survey of 1,100 Displaced Syrians on the Reasons for Displacement and Minimum Conditions for Return*, July 2020, <https://syacd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SACD_WE_ARE_SYRIA_EN.pdf> accessed 10 April 2024.

4 Human Rights Watch (HRW), 'Denmark: Flawed Country of Origin Reports Lead to Flawed Refugee Policies', 19 April 2021, <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/19/denmark-flawed-country-origin-reports-lead-flawed-refugee-policies>> accessed 10 April 2024.

5 Amnesty International, 'Syria: Former refugees tortured, raped, disappeared after returning home', 7 September 2021, <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/09/syria-former-refugees-tortured-raped-disappeared-after-returning-home/>> accessed 10 April 2024.

6 UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'Syria Refugee Crisis Explained', 13 March 2024, <<https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>> accessed 27 March 2024.

7 European Asylum Support Office (EASO), *Syria: Security situation – Country of origin information report*, July 2021, pp.40-41, <<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/easo-country-origin-information-report-syria-security-situation-july>> accessed 10 April 2024.

8 Hiba Zayadin, 'Türkiye's Strikes Wreak Havoc on Northeast Syria', HRW, 9 February 2024, <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/02/09/turkiyes-strikes-wreak-havoc-northeast-syria>> accessed 10 April 2024.

fixed, they argue, everyone can go back. While it is important to remember that displacement has become so protracted that refugees and IDPs have come to concentrate more on their socio-economic and living conditions in their place of displacement (where some may have been living for most of the last 13 years of unrest and conflict), this kind of talking-point is easily rebuffed by statistics and surveys of displaced Syrians' return intentions.

For example, UNHCR's latest (May 2023) survey among refugees from Syria in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon found that 40 percent of refugees hope to return to Syria one day, but that those intending to return in the short-term had declined in comparison to previous years' polling—just 1.1 percent of refugees expressed an intention to return within the coming 12 months.⁹ Even then, the situation is precarious. UNHCR's respondents on the one hand cited systemic barriers to return such as a lack of safety and security, a lack of livelihood/work opportunities, as well as inadequate basic services and lack of adequate housing in Syria as key factors influencing their decision-making around return, whereas, at the same time, 90 percent also said they were struggling to make ends meet in neighbouring countries. These are the complex interrelated push and pull factors that refugees (and IDPs) must weigh up when considering return to a country in which none of the root causes of the conflict have been addressed, no effective or consensual political solution has presented itself, and the conflict continues to roll on, unpredictably and intermittently, into its 13th horrific year.

With interest in the Syrian conflict waning following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2023 and Israel's horrific attack on the Gaza Strip still unfolding (at the time of writing), it has never been more important to provide substantiated, well-informed material to guide policymaking around Syria and the Syrian conflict.

As such, the SACD conducted a far-reaching survey amongst refugee/IDP, resident and returnee populations in regime-controlled areas of the country and AANES/SDF-controlled areas of north-east Syria to obtain a detailed understanding of how Syrians inside Syria feel about the issues affecting their lives—the economy and socio-economic deprivation, service provision and governance, security policies, detention and human rights, return, and the prospects for a political solution in Syria that can bring an end to the conflict, address root causes and provide a safe and dignified environment for the return of refugees and IDPs in the future.

The resulting SACD survey was therefore specifically designed to represent the views and experiences of as wide as possible a sample of Syrians. Compared with the SACD's last survey, which reached some 1,100 Syrians inside and outside the country, the survey you are reading is based on interviews with more than 3,000 Syrians—including refugees, IDPs as well as those who were never forced to flee their homes after 2011.

The respondents' answers highlight how damaging the current status quo has become. Syrians are poorer than ever and also more pessimistic about the future. Most of those surveyed who live in the regime-held areas have come to see the Syrian regime as a critical barrier to any form of positive change in the country, and that changes to the socio-economic, humanitarian and political situation in Syria cannot happen with the current political formation in place. Many have little faith in the UN-led political process but appear divided on what alternative future solutions might look like. With Syria displaying many of the signs of a failed state, more needs to be done to listen to the opinions of Syrians living face-to-face with the realities of the conflict.

And while Syria's crippling economic downturn is a key concern to the surveyed Syrians—with many in regime areas considering ways to leave the country as and when they get the opportunity to do so—security is still the priority when it comes to ways to end the conflict and create the appropriate environment for returns.

In that sense, the demands and views of Syrians inside and outside the country has changed little since the very beginning of the uprising and conflict.

9 UNHCR, Eighth Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions & Intentions on Return to Syria: Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan – May 2023, 20 June 2023, <<https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/eighth-regional-survey-syrian-refugees-perceptions-and-intentions-return-syria-rpis-egypt-iraq-lebanon-jordan-may-2023-enar>> accessed 26 March 2024.



KEY FINDINGS

Security behaviour of the regime still a fundamental threat for most Syrians. Nearly 70 percent of survey respondents said they would support a political solution that changed the security behaviour of the regime; on average, more than half (56 percent) said that changing the regime and holding perpetrators of abuses to account should be regarded as a prerequisite before Syria can reach a stable peace and begin about the long work of rebuilding the country. Just under half of Syrians in regime areas also said that security reasons (including the fear of conscription, detention and general security conditions) acted as a push factor for those considering a life outside Syria. Security instability and predatory practices by ruling authorities are still a crucial part of life in Syria.

Continued regime abuses block returns. Recent UNHCR surveying amongst refugee populations found that just 1.1 percent were even considering a return to the country in the next year, pointing to the fact that for many, return is impossible without a serious reckoning of the root causes of the conflict. During the course of SACD's survey, more than half of respondents said that the most importation condition for refugees and IDPs to return was "changing the existing system of government." This meant that in regime areas, regime change was far and away the most commonly cited condition for return, with respondents twice as likely to cite this as opposed to issues related to services and living conditions, security environment or security behaviour.

A staggering percentage of Syrians do not feel a sense of safety and security for themselves and their families. As many as 75 percent of Syrians in regime areas and just over half in north-east Syria said categorically that they do not feel safe in their places of residence, with many suggesting holistic, top-down reforms to change that status quo—including preventing security agencies from interfering in civilian affairs, strengthening state institutions such as the judiciary and holding to account all actors (whether individuals, institutions or militias) found to be responsible for past violations and abuses.

Detention remains a defining fact of life for Syrians in regime areas. Previous documentation by Syrian victims' associations suggests that as many as 1.2 million Syrians have been impacted by detention (either as detainees or relatives of detainees) since 2011. In regime areas, many detainees' families are left in the dark, waiting for any form of court ruling to be issued against their loved-ones and vulnerable to extortion and blackmail by predatory security officers. And despite regime fanfare about amnesty decrees, just 17 percent of respondents said that previously detained relatives were released through a recent decree—from November 2023—with more than three-quarters of surveyed respondents doubting the seriousness and meaningfulness of the amnesty as a result.

Ruling authorities across Syria are failing to provide for their citizens. The service situation across Syria is poor, although significantly more so in regime areas. Respondents across the country emphasized properly priced electricity, subsidized bread and subsidized health services as the three most pressing service needs in their communities. An overwhelming majority of respondents in regime areas (92 percent) said that the cost of basic services was disproportional to the current income of citizens, compared with about half (56 percent) in north-east Syria.

Socio-economic deprivation is having an increasingly prominent impact on Syrians' futures. More than half of residents of regime areas and north-east Syria say they are dissatisfied with economic conditions in their respective places of residence; three-quarters of the Syrians in regime areas who said they were thinking of emigrating if and when they get the opportunity to do so said that economic factors were behind their thinking.

In the absence of effective, human-centred governance, Syrians turn to family & social networks instead. While almost three-quarters of survey respondents (73 percent across regime and AANES/SDF areas) stated that they received income from the current work, these incomes are clearly insufficient. Many indicated that they used coping strategies including remittances and loans from social networks outside the country and incomes shared within an individual's family inside or outside the country.

Most returnees moving back to regime areas are IDPs, not refugees. Three-quarters of returnees who returned to regime areas did so from another part of Syria rather than from outside the country as refugees, pointing to a growing gulf between the experiences and return intentions of those dakhel (inside) and kharij (outside) the country. Although a portion of returnees interviewed for this survey stated that they had returned from Lebanon in recent years, no returnee cited a positive pull factor inside Syria (such as an improvement in local security dynamics) as opposed to a negative push factor in their former host community (such as socio-economic deprivation or an inability to integrate) as the reason they decided to go back to Syria.

Almost all of those who returned would not advise others to follow in their footsteps. Some 85 percent of returnees in regime areas and 91 percent in north-east Syria said they would not recommend that other displaced Syrians do the same. Returns therefore seem to be motivated by highly individual circumstances in the absence of improvements to the security situation or any steps to address the fears of persecution or violence that many returnees appear to feel.

Possibly more displacements to come, not less. Around half of the country's pre-war population have been displaced, however there are indications that socio-economic crisis coupled with ongoing conflict conditions and protection issues are encouraging continued displacements—particularly from regime areas. SACD's findings suggest that Syria is now seeing growing emigration and displacement intentions among populations within regime areas who were never displaced during the conflict but are now being forced into considering a life outside Syria because of the country's economic collapse. While refugees and IDPs who were displaced after 2011 were more likely to have fled individual or community-level persecution, wartime violence and destruction, populations in regime areas who were never displaced may have managed to survive the conflict without themselves becoming wanted, detained or killed only to encounter new grounds of displacement afterwards.

Disappearing vision of the future of Syria. With Syria's conflict in a quasi-frozen state and the country divided into at least four competing territorial zones of control, it is perhaps unsurprising that Syrians themselves are divided over future prospects and solutions. Less than a quarter of respondents expressed any optimism whatsoever towards the UN-led political process, with many distrustful of the actors involved or the entire process itself. Even so, one thing that clearly came out of surveys was an interest in comprehensive solutions—whether all-out regime change or personnel changes within the upper echelons of the regime; justice and accountability measures to address the many years of conflict, or policies to maintain the territorial integrity of a “whole of Syria” as one state rather than a series of differing zones of control.



METHODOLOGY

SACD's survey process for this research study involved conducting 3,007 structured interviews using a standard questionnaire to collect the opinions of residents as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees. It focused on five main topics:

- Socio-economics;
- Service provision and reform;
- Perspectives on return;
- Detainees and other rights issues;
- And the future prospects of Syria.

Surveys were adapted for the two contexts in which they were conducted: for example, questionnaires used in regime areas included several questions on amnesty decrees in relation to the detained or forcibly disappeared relatives of survey respondents, questions that were not used in surveys conducted in north-east Syria. As such, surveys in regime areas included 61 questions whereas surveys in north-east Syria included 52 questions.

All interviews were conducted in person by a total research team of 55 researchers working on the ground: including a 45-person team of researchers in regime areas (comprising 30 men and 15 women) and a 10-person team of researchers in AANES/SDF areas (comprising six men and four women).

All names have been changed to ensure respondents' safety. Researchers who conducted the interviews had prior experience in conducting similar experience, in addition to the technical qualifications required to carry out this kind of study. Researchers had also been trained extensively to apply procedures that ensure the protection and privacy of interviewees, and informed consent was obtained from respondents before they were interviewed in accordance with the policies of SACD's Data Collection and Analysis Unit.

Sample

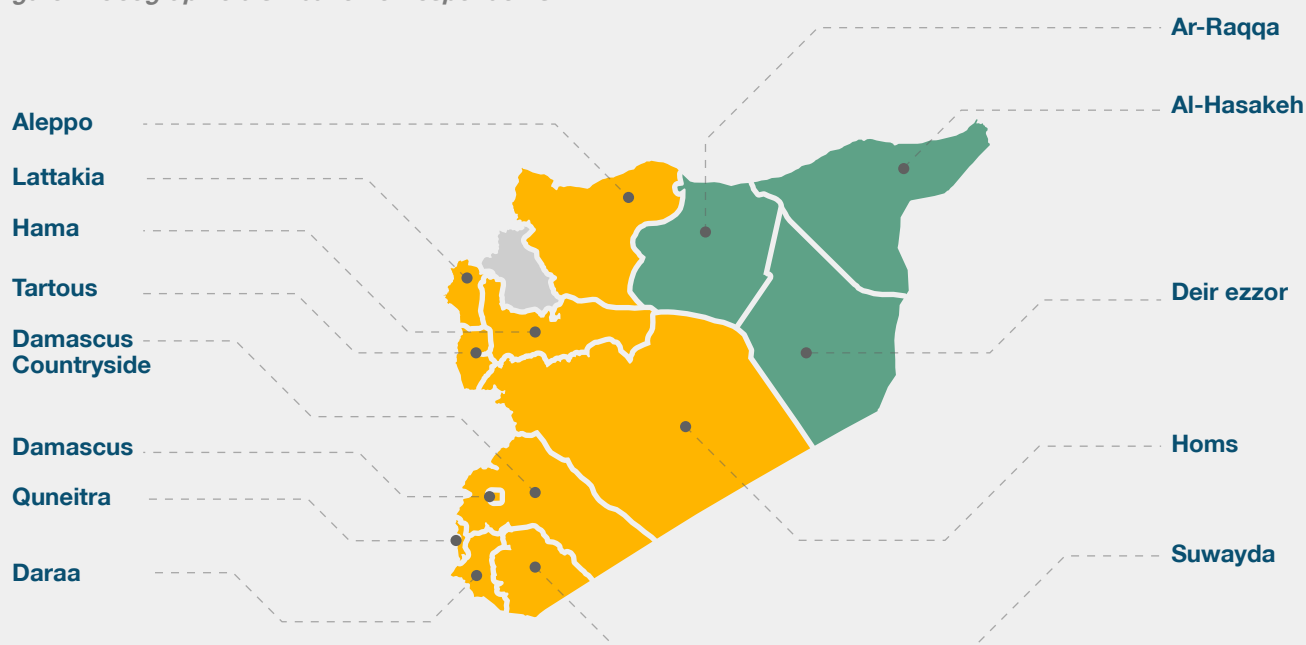
The sample targeted for this study was significantly larger than previous SACD surveys: while the We are Syria report (2020) relied on 1,100 survey responses, this survey on regime and AANES/SDF areas relied on just over 3,000 alone. To maximise the representativeness of the findings, the study also sought to ensure the equitable representation of different segments of Syrian society to ensure a fair representation of the following parameters

- Gender;
- Age;
- Displacement profile (to include both IDPs and returnees);
- Socio-economic activity and background.

The study sample included IDPs living in regime and AANES/SDF areas as well as returnees who returned to either of these areas following periods of displacement either as IDPs or refugees living outside the country.

The inclusivity of the sample was achieved by including respondents from all Syrian governorates in the two targeted zones of control. In regime areas, interviewees were conducted in 10 governorates (Aleppo, Damascus, Damascus countryside, Daraa, Hama, Homs, Latakia, Quneitra, Suwayda and Tartous); in AANES/SDF areas, interviews were conducted in four governorates (Aleppo, Deir Ezzor, Hasakeh and Raqqqa). Official statistics on governorate populations were considered when determining the size and distribution of demographic samples for interviewees.

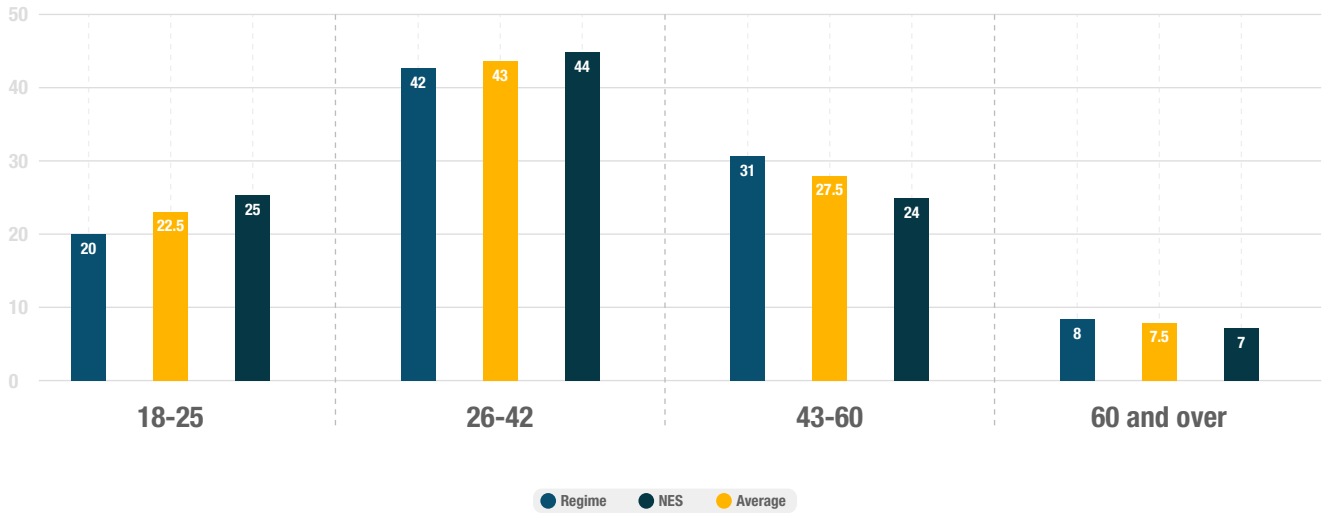
Figure 1. Geographic distribution of respondents.



On average, the sample included 59 percent males and 41 percent females, with a slightly higher percentage of female respondents reached in regime areas.

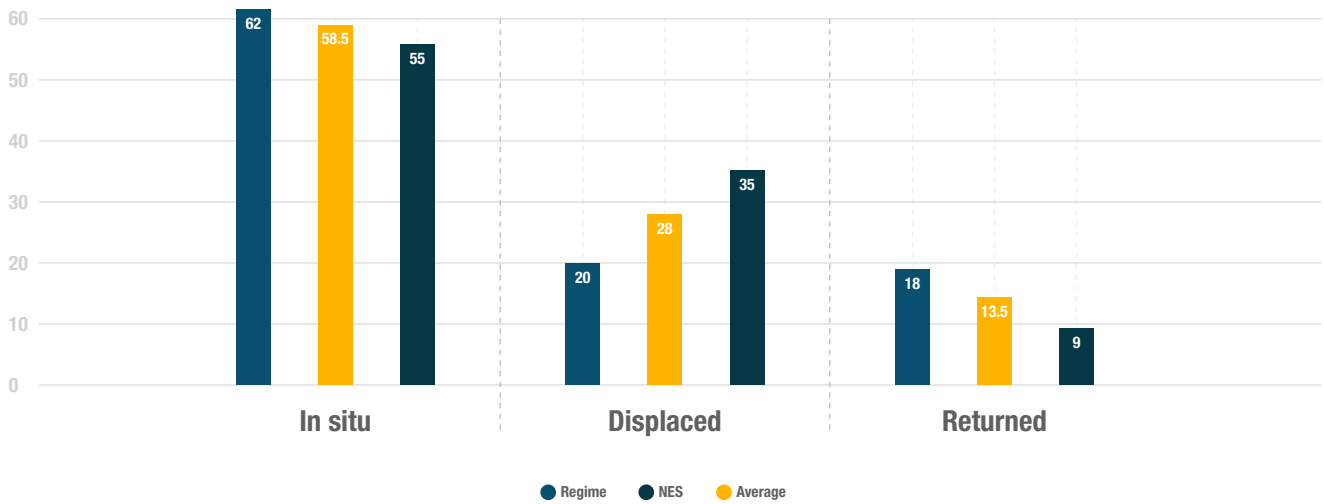
The sample was divided into four age categories.

Figure 2. Age groups of survey respondents.



Just under half of the sample across regime and AANES/SDF areas featured Syrians with a displacement background, with 28 percent currently displaced (as IDPs) and a further 13.5 percent recently returned to their origin communities sometime between 2011 and the present day. The remaining 58.5 percent, described as in situ, were never displaced from their origin community at any point since 2011 and were currently living in their origin community at the time of their interview.

Figure 3. Respondents' displacement situation at the time of their interview.



The sample also included a broad educational and socio-economic cross-section of Syrian society.

Figure 4. Educational background of respondents.

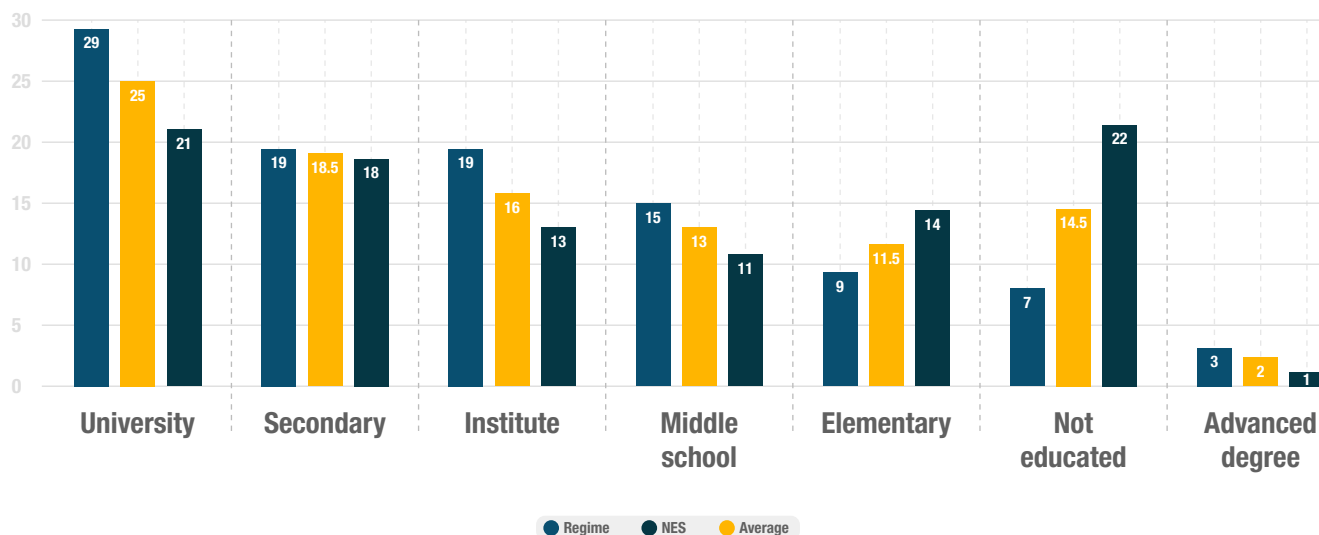
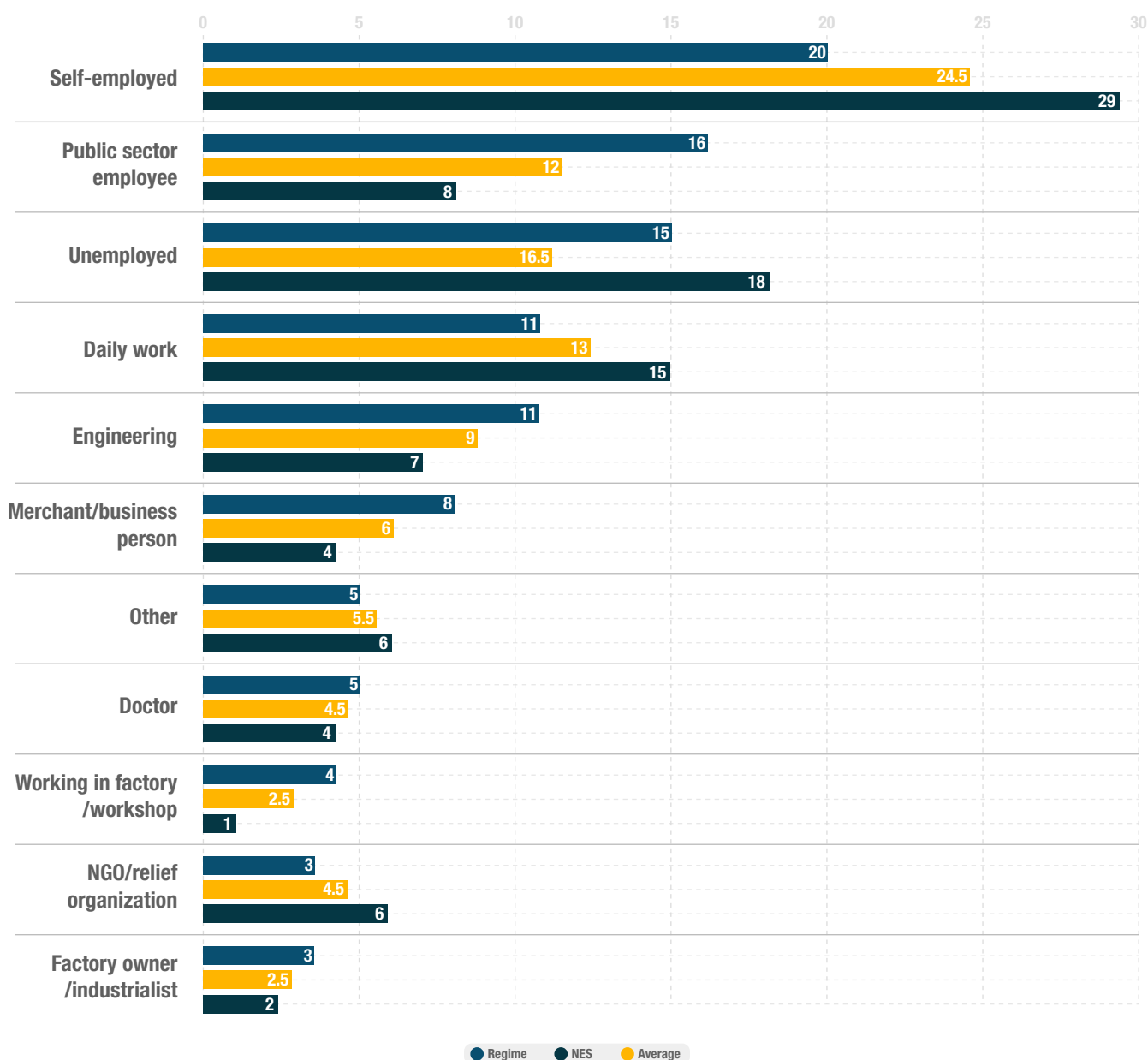


Figure 5. Socio-economic & professional background of respondents.



PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES

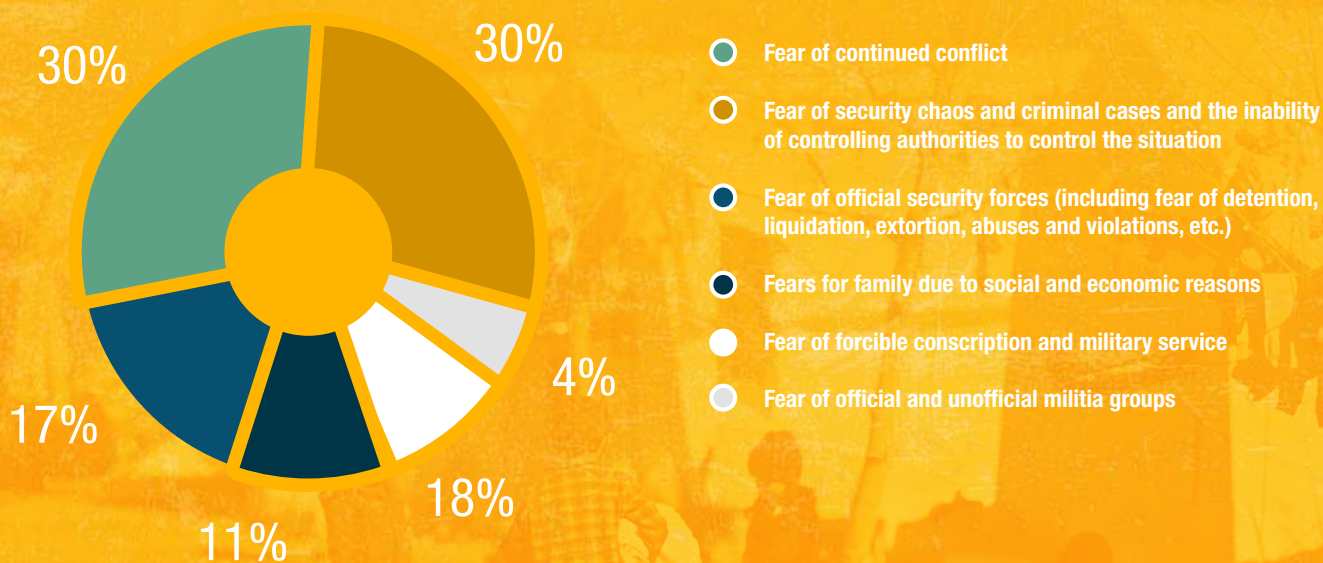
Security issues

A large majority of Syrians in regime areas see the Syrian regime (and its security apparatus) as the primary barrier to return. As such, most would support a political solution that reined-in the historic and ongoing excesses of the regime's security apparatus, while the continued security behaviour is creating a longstanding and persistent barrier to return among refugees and IDPs who fear arrest or worse upon returning home.

Even then, various security factors in regime and NES areas contribute to Syrians feeling unsafe in their places of residence or apprehensive about going home.

Three-quarters of respondents in regime areas and just under half in AANES/SDF areas said they do not feel safe for themselves or their families. Reasons given in AANES/SDF areas included: fear of continued conflict (30 percent); fear of security chaos, criminal cases and the inability of authorities to control the situation (30 percent); and fear of official security forces (17 percent).

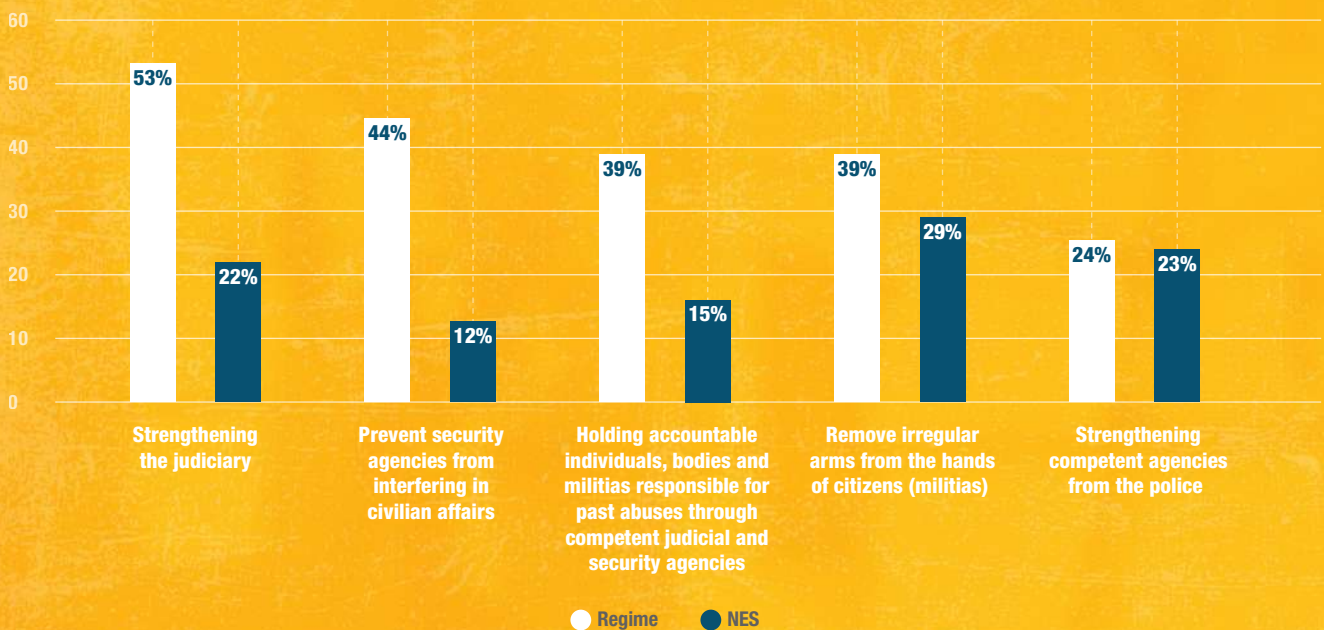
Figure 6. What is your main reason for not feeling safe?
(North East Syria)



There were differing views on whether ruling authorities are working to increase citizens' sense of security, a point that touches on broader questions of governance and legitimacy amongst governed populations. In AANES/SDF areas, 77 percent of respondents felt that the AANES and SDF are working to make citizens feel more safe and secure, while in regime areas, 63 percent of respondents felt that regime authorities were no.

Instead, respondents were asked to envision reforms that could increase feelings of safety and security.

Figure 7. What are the measures that must be implemented within the areas you live in to enhance your feeling of safety?



DETAINEES

Estimates by Syrian victim/survivor associates suggest that as many as 1.2 million Syrians have been impacted by detention since 2011, whether as detainees or relatives of detainees.

Whereas in north-east Syria, 88 percent of respondents they had not had family or friends subject to arbitrary arrest in recent years, this may point to the historic nature of detentions among the north-east's resident and IDP populations—although the SDF and affiliated security forces do arbitrarily detain and forcibly disappear civilians,¹⁰ they do so on a scale far less than the regime's security apparatus.¹¹ Most communities in the north-east have also lived outside of regime control since 2014 onwards; Raqqa was the first area to fall out of regime hands in 2014 followed by other northeastern governorates shortly afterwards.

Responses from regime areas meanwhile point to the chief modus operandi through which the regime has sought to detain, punish and, in many cases, kill perceived dissidents. Across all responses from regime areas with detained relatives, 41 percent were tried before the Counter-Terrorism Court, 18 percent by military courts and 16 percent by civilian courts. The fact that more than half of respondents reported relatives tried in extraordinary courts points to the heavily securitised and violent means through which the regime litigates and punishes perceived opposition activity—even in spite of the regime's feted reforms to supposedly improve the system¹². Court proceedings in the CTC and military courts system rely on an almost total lack of due process and summary judgements (including asset seizures, lengthy prison sentences and executions).

Among respondents with detained relatives, there were broadly similar responses between regime and AANES/SDF areas in terms of whether they had had a court ruling issued against him or her, with 59 percent in regime areas and 55 percent in AANES/SDF areas reporting that a court ruling had been issued.

These respondents also reported similar detention trajectories for detained relatives in terms of their knowledge about the relative's whereabouts, their visitation rights and their experiences of extortion by security forces.

Figure 8. Is his/her whereabouts known?

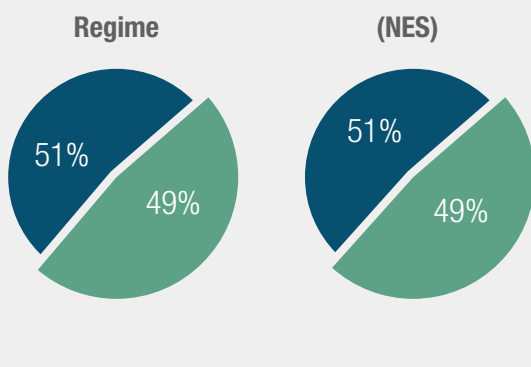
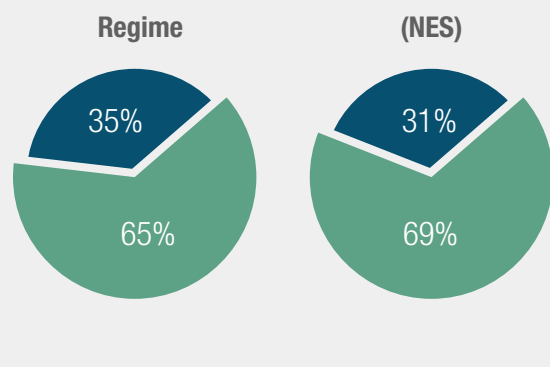


Figure 9. Can you visit him/her?



10 UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), 'Disappearance and detention to suppress dissent a hallmark of a decade of conflict in Syria – UN report', 1 March 2021, <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/02/disappearance-and-detention-suppress-dissent-hallmark-decade-conflict-syria>> accessed 10 April 2024.

11 According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) monitoring group, regime forces have been responsible for 86.88 percent of all documented arbitrary arrests (compared with 3.22 percent by the SDF) perpetrated since the beginning of the uprising/conflict. For more information, see: SNHR, 'On the 13th Anniversary of the Start of the Popular Uprising, 231,278 Syrian Civilians Have Been Documented Killed, Including 15,334 due to Torture, 156,757 Have Been Arrested and/or Forcibly Disappeared, While 14 Million Remain Forcibly Displaced', 18 March 2024, pp.10-12, <<https://snhr.org/blog/2024/03/18/on-the-13th-anniversary-of-the-start-of-the-popular-uprising-231278-syrian-civilians-have-been-documented-killed-including-15334-due-to-torture-156757-have-been-arrested-and-or-forcibly-disappeared/>> accessed 10 April 2024.

12 In September 2023, Bashar al-Assad passed a legislative decree (Decree 32/2023) that nullified military field courts (MFCs) a key tool for suppressing Syrian society by the regime from the 1980s onwards but especially after 2011. For more information, see: Muhammad El Fakir & Muhsen Al Mustafa, 'Military Field Court: Nullification and a No Change Approach', Omran Strategic Studies, 10 October 2023, <<https://omranstudies.org/index.php/publications/articles/military-field-court-nullification-and-a-no-change-approach-202310061150.html>> accessed 10 April 2024.

Figure 10. Have you been blackmailed to find out information about his/her whereabouts?

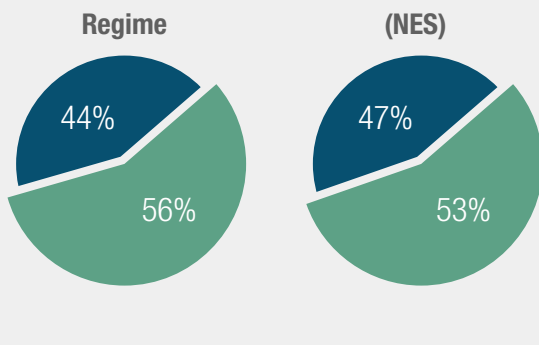
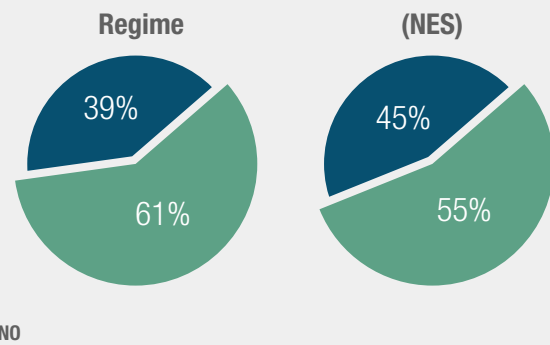


Figure 11. Have you been subjected to fraud or blackmail for the possibility of his/her release?



On average across the two areas, respondents described broadly similar levels of detention access: 51 percent know the whereabouts of their loved-ones in detention; 67 percent are able to visit them; and 42% have been subjected to some form of blackmail or extortion (either to find information about their relative’s whereabouts or in an attempt to secure their release from detention).

Although not applicable in north-east Syria, respondents in regime areas were asked several questions about amnesty decrees—and in particular, the November 16, 2023 amnesty issued in line with Decree 36/2023. This amnesty promised the lifting of sentences for some qualifying convicts—including those

found guilty of misdemeanours, those with incurable diseases and those over the age of 70—while those qualifying for the amnesty with death sentences would instead serve life sentences in prison.¹³ Human rights groups criticised the amnesty for excluding political prisoners arrested or disappeared within the context of the post-2011 uprising and conflict.¹⁴

Just 17 percent of these respondents said that previously detained relatives were released through the November 2023 amnesty. When asked for the reason, in their opinion, why their detained relative(s) were not released, 62 percent of respondents said their loved-ones were detained without trial in the first place while 18% said their loved-ones fit the criteria of the amnesty but still were not released regardless. As a result, the significant majority of these respondents cast doubts on the “seriousness” and meaningfulness of the amnesty—77 percent said it was “not serious”; 16 percent said it was “satisfactory and serious”; a further 7 percent gave other reasons.

¹³ Reuters, ‘Assad issues conditional amnesty for condemned Syrians’, 16 November 2023, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/assad-issues-conditional-amnesty-condemned-syrians-2023-11-16/>> accessed 8 April 2024.

¹⁴ Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), Amnesty Decree No. 36 of 2023 Excludes Political Prisoners, 21 November 2023, <<https://snhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/R231114E.pdf>> accessed 8 April 2024.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Despite a growing narrative that the story of Syria’s conflict and return prospects is almost exclusively tied up with the socio-economic situation inside the country, protection concerns are a stalwart part of any would-be returnees’ decision-making process. It is therefore important to consider the kinds of rights abuses that current residents and recent returnees describe, and how they can contribute to one’s feeling of insecurity and a lack of safety upon returning.

Besides the “detainees file,” most Syrians in regime areas feel they do not enjoy basic civil and socio-economic rights.

For example, respondents in regime areas reported marginally higher rates of corruption when it came to asserting their rights, with 64 percent reporting that they felt it necessary to pay a bribe or obtain an intermediary to obtain their rights as a citizen. In north-east Syria, 59 percent reported the same sentiment.

Figure 12. Do you think you need to pay a bribe or obtain an intermediary to obtain your rights as a citizen (not to bypass them)?

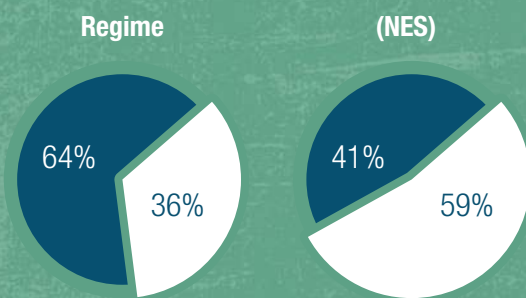


Figure 13. Do you believe that (in cases of corruption) you can resort to the judiciary to obtain a fair result?

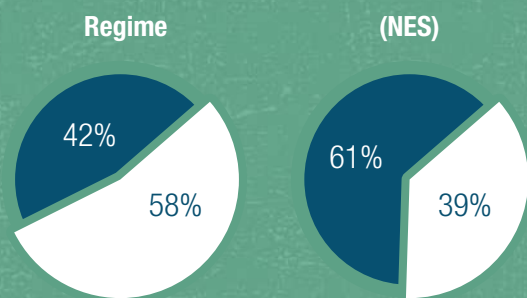


Figure 14. Do you think you can express your opinion freely?

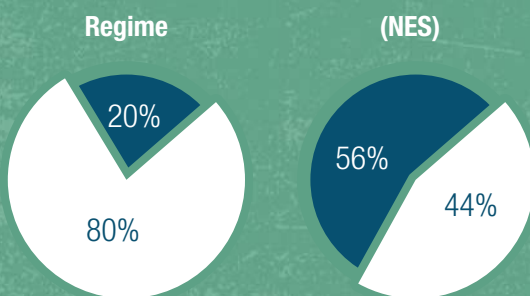
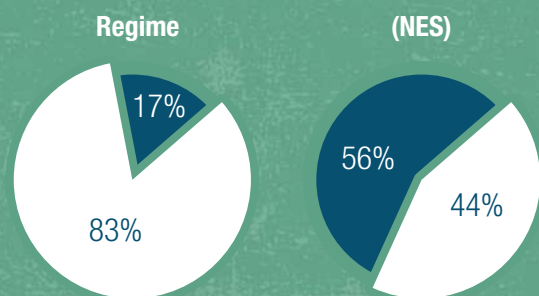


Figure 15. Do you think you can protest peacefully?



● YES ● NO

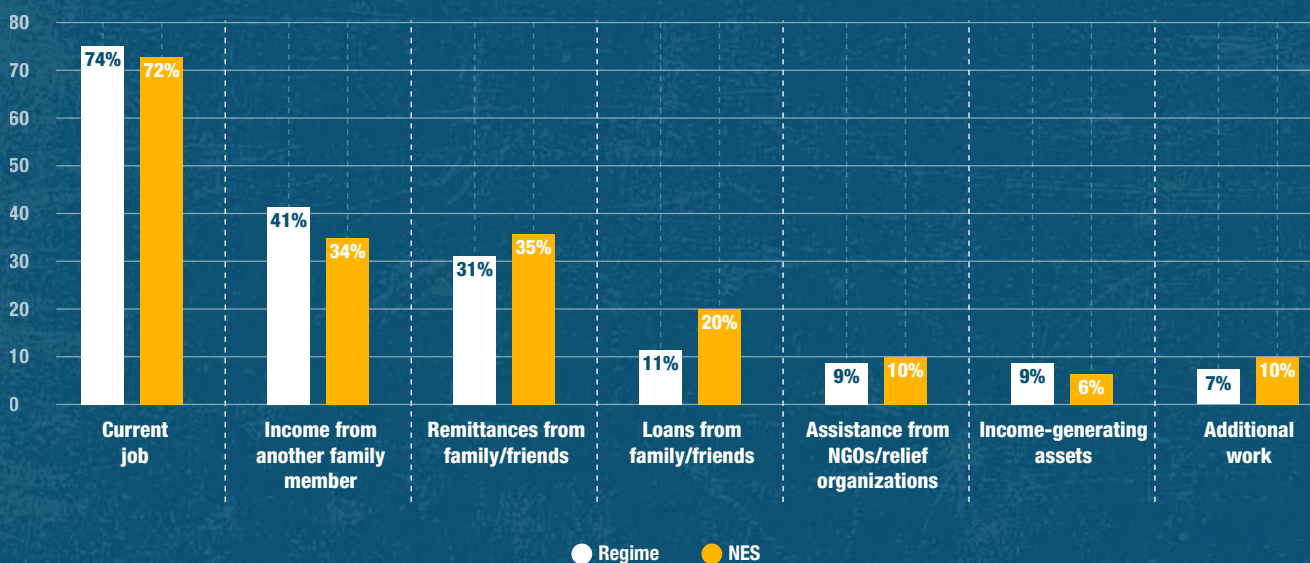
Denial of civil rights was reported to be particularly prevalent in regime areas, where more than three-quarters of respondents stated that they could not express their opinion freely or protest peacefully. Response from AANES/SDF areas were more mixed, with 56 percent of respondents stating in both cases that they felt they could assert these rights freely and safely.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The socio-economic crisis in Syria has been fuelled by a range of factors: longstanding regime corruption and mishandling of the economy, the collapse of the Syrian pound, wartime destruction to civilian and economic infrastructure, and the imposition of far-reaching western sanctions against regime and regime-affiliated entities. More than half of respondents said they were dissatisfied with the current economic situation in Syria, but this appears to say more about how accustomed to suffering Syrians are after a decade of war rather than the granular socio-economic indicators experienced in the country—which are grim by any measure.

While almost three-quarters of survey respondents (73 percent across regime and AANES/SDF areas) stated that they received income from the current work, these incomes are clearly insufficient. Many indicated that they used coping strategies including remittances and loans from social networks outside the country and incomes shared within an individual’s family inside or outside the country.

Figure 16. What sources of income do you have?



The average monthly income of both individuals and families surveyed fell well below national averages. Only 11 percent in regime areas and 22 percent in north-east Syria stated that they individually earned more than 1.5 million Syrian pounds (SYP) per month, the equivalent of approximately \$115. By contrast, 68 percent of respondents in regime areas said the total income of their family was under 1.5 million Syrian pounds and the situation was little better in AANES/SDF areas, where 57 percent of respondents said their total family income for a month was less than 1.5 million SYP.

Recent assessments of average incomes and poverty rates across Syria demonstrate just how critical these figures are. In August 2023, the poverty line for families across the country stood at 1.97 million SYP (\$151.50) per month, with poverty rates recorded as particularly severe in Damascus and the Damascus countryside, Daraa and Raqqa.¹⁵ With inflation on the rise and a currency in slow collapse,

15 Syrian Center for Policy Research (SCPR), 'Monthly Bulletin for Consumer Price Index and Inflation in Syria, Issue (8) – August 2023', 14 February 2024, p.12, <<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/monthly-bulletin-consumer-price-index-and-inflation-syria-issue-8-august-2023-enar>> accessed 8 April 2024.

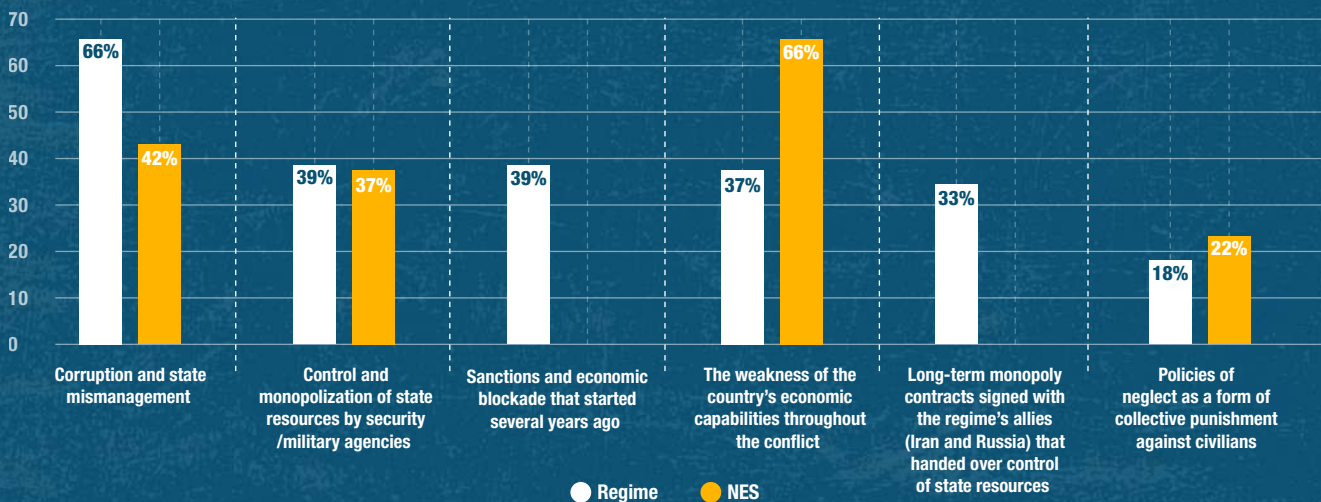
regime areas are also witnessing a crisis of purchasing power and the value of real wages—despite 68 percent of respondents earning less than 1.5 million SYP per family, 89 percent of respondents in regime areas said that their average essential costs for a family per month were more than 1.5 million SYP. Just five percent of respondents stated that the average essential costs per month for their family were equal to or below 1.5 million SYP. To put that into context, one recent assessment suggested that the average cost of living for a family of five in the first quarter of 2024 was in the region of 12.5 million SYP (approximately \$961).¹⁶

Despite the very different conflict-era experiences in the two surveyed regions of the country, respondents in both areas saw about a 50-50 division regarding whether the economic reality was general and experienced by all economic groups or disproportionately affecting certain segments of society.

That said, however, respondents in regime areas were far more likely to blame the regime as the culpable actor. Logical in the sense that residents of regime areas live under the direct rule of regime authorities (even though north-east Syria lived for decades with extractive and sometimes discriminatory policies related to natural resources such as oil and gas), this also reveals how Syrians do not see their current socio-economic reality as an apolitical phenomenon. Instead, socio-economic conditions are political and tie-in to broader questions about security, governance and political reform.

As such, a minority of respondents agreed with statements describing the current socio-economic reality as the result of passive economic deterioration—such as sanctions imposed from outside the country, or the weakness of the country’s economic capabilities throughout the conflict—whereas many more placed the blame on authorities themselves, whether because of corruption and state mismanagement (66 percent in regime areas, 42 percent in AANES/SDF areas), monopolisation by ruling authorities and security agencies (39 percent in regime areas, 37 percent in AANES/SDF areas) or deliberate policies of neglect as a form of collective punishment against civilians (18 percent in regime areas, 22 percent in AANES/SDF areas).

Figure 17. In your opinion, what is the reason for the economic conditions the country is facing?



As such, the solutions envisaged by respondents were explicitly political—although more so in regime areas, where respondents were more likely to call for systemic change rather than piecemeal reform. In regime areas, for example, 59 percent of respondents believed that changing the current regime would improve citizens’ socio-economic conditions—compared with just 21 percent in AANES/SDF areas.

Less maximalist proposals from respondents included proper use of state resources (40 percent in regime areas, 68 percent in AANES/SDF areas), combatting corruption and the “tyranny of powerful individuals” (46 percent in regime areas, 56 percent in AANES/SDF areas), and encouraging foreign investments (38 percent in regime areas, 48 percent in AANES/SDF areas).

16 From Qassioun Cost of Living Index, Q1 2024.



PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM

Many surveyed Syrians are deeply dissatisfied with the level of service provision and administration in their local communities—not least because levels of service provision in both surveyed areas fall below community requirements but also what individuals and families can feasibly pay. Services might include electricity, water, gas, bread, health services and municipal services such as refuse collection and street-cleaning.

Although nearly three-quarters of respondents in AANES/SDF areas felt that the bureaucratic and legal infrastructure for service provision in north-east Syria actually intended to meet the needs of citizens, almost half in regime areas disagreed—a sign of the poor state of the regime’s “social contract” with communities under its control, who appear to increasingly feel that the regime is unable to provide adequately for them.

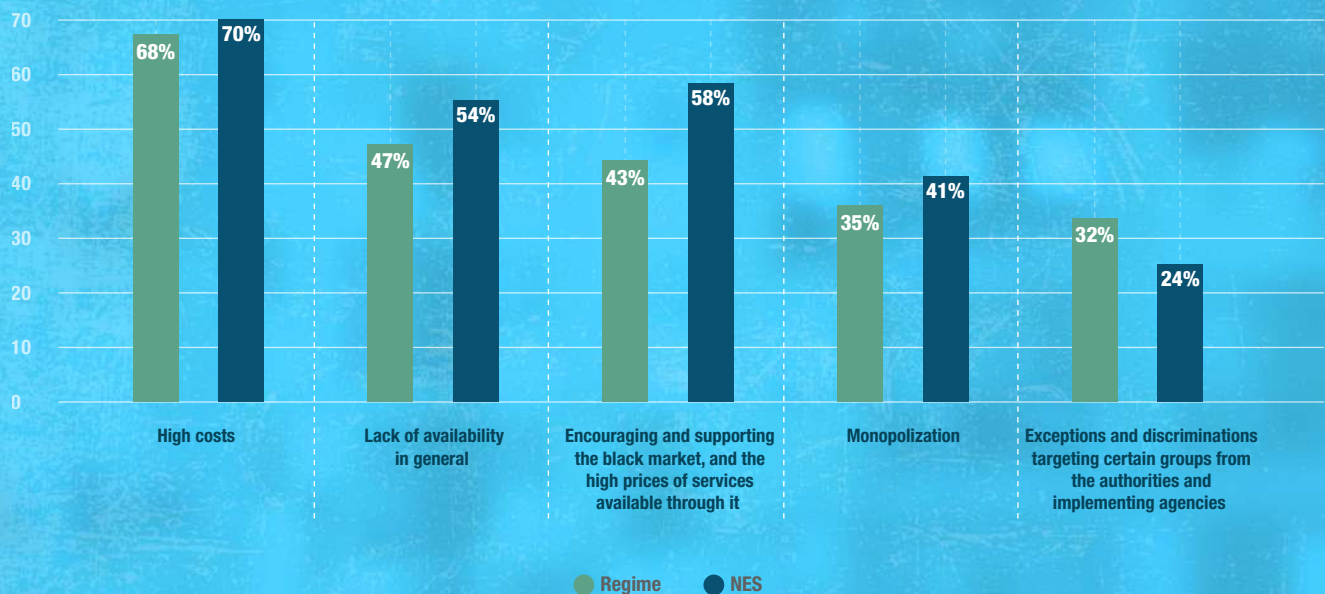
A minority in regime areas described a level of availability of services that might reasonably be described as “adequate” (above 50 percent). While just 10 percent said that services in their local community were fully available, a further 7 percent estimated availability of between 51 and 75 percent. Instead, most respondents described inadequate and extremely inadequate levels of service provision, with 45 percent estimating 50-11% availability and a staggering 39 percent, over a third, referring to 0-10% availability.

Although not as extreme as responses from regime areas, a majority of respondents (59 percent) in north-east Syria still said that basic services were not adequately available in their place of residence. Of that number, 18 percent estimated 0-10% availability, 52 percent estimated 11-50% availability, and 30 percent estimated availability of 50% or above. No respondents in the north-east described enjoying 100-percent availability of services in their local area.

Respondents tended to blame the status quo on economic difficulties—high costs, a lack of availability in general, and authorities’ subsequent reliance on the black market—however, many also pointed to more nefarious political reasons.

Syrians in both surveyed areas also pointed to a concerning trend of services being politicised to favour loyalist communities and punish wartime opponents or perceived dissidents, with nearly a third of respondents noting this trend.

Figure 18. What are the most prominent reasons for the lack of adequate provision of basic services?



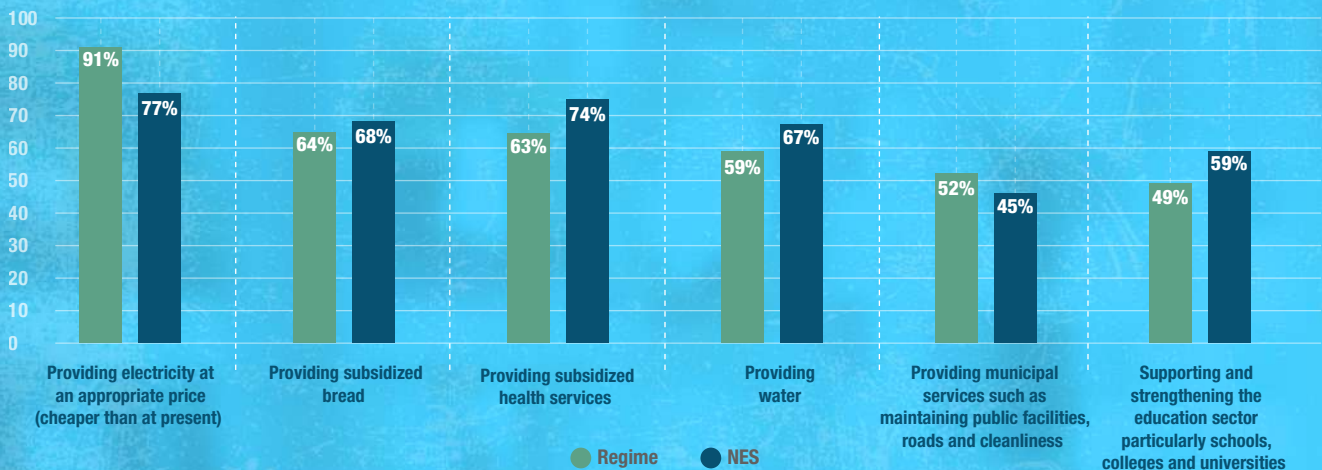
Coupled with the dire socio-economic conditions (documented above), even these inadequate levels of services are disproportional to what they cost cash-strapped Syrians in both regime and AANES/SDF areas. In regime areas, for example, 92 percent of respondents said the current cost of basic services was not proportional to citizens' current income. In AANES/SDF areas, on the other hand, citizens were more satisfied, with 56 percent describing the cost of services as proportional.

This raises further questions around legitimacy and accountability. Almost all respondents (95 percent) in regime areas and 80 percent in AANES/SDF areas said that taxes were not commensurate with services and the level of care provided by authorities in their local community.

In addition, few respondents felt optimistic about recent policies. In regime areas, 83 percent said they had not noticed positive changes in relation to the services file—arguably unsurprising given the regime's austerity policies in recent months that included critical subsidy cuts on fuel and bread, undercutting a small increase in the base-level public sector salary in the process—while 44 percent in north-east Syria said they had observed positive changes.

Despite the differing experiences in the two surveyed regions, respondents in both were broadly in agreement on what needs to change to improve service and living conditions in their respective communities. Providing electricity at an appropriate price (i.e. cheaper than at present) was the biggest priority in both areas (91% in regime areas, 77% in AANES/SDF areas) followed by providing subsidized bread (64% in regime areas, 68% in AANES/SDF areas) and providing subsidized health services (63% in regime areas, 74% in AANES/SDF areas).

Figure 19. What are the most prominent public services that can contribute to improving the living and service situation and you hope to increase and enhance them?



At the same time, no service category received less than 45 percent in respondents' answers, suggesting that all services are on some level inadequate and important.

PERSPECTIVES ON RETURN

Main conditions for return

Past surveys have found that IDPs are the most interested in returning—SACD's last study on return intentions conducted in 2021 found that 92 percent of IDPs were interested in returning to their homes provided the right conditions were met, whereas 62 percent of refugees by comparison felt the same way.¹⁷ Consistently, displaced Syrians have cited security threats and the presence of the Syrian regime and its security apparatus as the greatest obstacle for return.

In this survey, however, perspectives of those who currently live in regime-held areas on return are inherently more political. A majority of those surveyed for this study, in both areas, do not regard returns as a prerequisite for Syria's recovery—53% in regime areas said no and a staggering 80% in NES said no. In regime areas, 52 percent of respondents said that the most importation condition for refugees and IDPs to return was "changing the existing system of government." This meant that in regime areas, regime change was far and away the most commonly cited condition for return, with respondents twice as likely to cite this as opposed to issues related to services and living conditions, security environment or security behaviour.

In AANES/SDF areas, on the other hand, this was much less of a priority, where just 13 percent said that a change in government was the primary condition for returns. Instead, respondents felt that improvements in service provision and living conditions (32 percent), the establishment of a security environment guaranteeing the safety and dignity of returnees (32 percent) and changes in the security behaviour of ruling authorities (15 percent) were more important.

Concerns around justice and accountability received little focus (6 percent in regime areas, 8 percent in AANES/SDF areas), suggesting that Syrians in these areas regard significant, top-down political changes and improvements in their immediate lived reality as more pressing.

Emigration & displacement

Since the early months of Syria's uprising 2011 and the conflict that followed, Syria has been regarded as a historic displacement crisis. Around half of the country's pre-war population have been displaced, however there are indications that socio-economic crisis coupled with ongoing conflict conditions and protection issues are encouraging continued displacements—particularly from regime areas.

Just under 60 percent of respondents in regime areas said they were thinking of leaving if they had the opportunity, compared with just 39 percent in AANES/SDF areas.

In both cases, socio-economic factors were the most commonly cited reasons: 75 percent in regime areas and 74 percent in AANES/SDF areas pointed to the economy while 44 percent in regime areas and 57 percent in AANES/SDF areas pointed to living conditions.

The above findings suggest that Syria is now seeing growing emigration and displacement intentions among populations within regime areas who were never displaced during the conflict but are now being forced into considering a life outside Syria because of the country's economic collapse. This is not a contradiction in terms: IDPs and returnees who were displaced after 2011 were more likely to have fled individual or community-level persecution, wartime violence and destruction. Populations in regime areas who were never displaced may have managed to survive the conflict without themselves becoming wanted, detained or killed, however the present-day situation has simply created new grounds for displacement.

Continuing trends from earlier in the conflict, most respondents (61 percent) who expressed a desire to leave Syria stated that they were looking to reach Europe; 15 percent opted instead for Turkey and 10 percent for Egypt.

Return intentions & experiences

On average, 13.5 percent of SACD's survey sample were returnees: meaning they were displaced at some point after March 2011 (either as refugees or IDPs) but later returned. Most returnees heading back to origin communities in regime areas came from Lebanon.

Of the 13.5-percent segment of returnees within the total sample for this latest survey, 86 percent of returnees to regime or AANES/SDF areas felt that the reality waiting for them there matched their perceptions of the situation when they decided to return, meaning either that informal channels were sufficient for returnees or that returnees returned to Syria as a result of push factors in host communities (such as socio-economic deprivation, problems with integration, protection concerns or outright coerced/forced returns) and/or with very low expectations about the conditions waiting for them in origin communities.

The survey suggested that, on an individual level at least, returnees felt they were able to make relatively informed individual decisions about going back even if they would not recommend that others join them in the foreseeable future. Indeed, the vast majority of returnees stated that they would not recommend others also return, with 85 percent in regime areas and 91 percent in AANES/SDF areas stating this during the course of the survey.

This may be because almost all returnee respondents indicated that their decision to return was based on an individual circumstances. Just over 61 percent cited personal reasons compared with 31 percent citing economic reasons, 29 percent citing social reasons and 22 percent citing an inability to integrate into the local society to which they were displaced.

POLITICAL & CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

With Syria divided into at least four main zones of territorial control ruled by different governance bodies and/or armed groups—whether regime, AANES/SDF, HTS or Turkish-backed groups—it is unsurprising that Syrians appear divided on the prospects of a future Syria and what that future might look like.

For example, a slim majority across regime and AANES/SDF areas expressed a belief that the current status quo will likely lead to the division of Syria into separate areas of influence in the future (55% in regime areas, 50% in AANES/SDF areas).

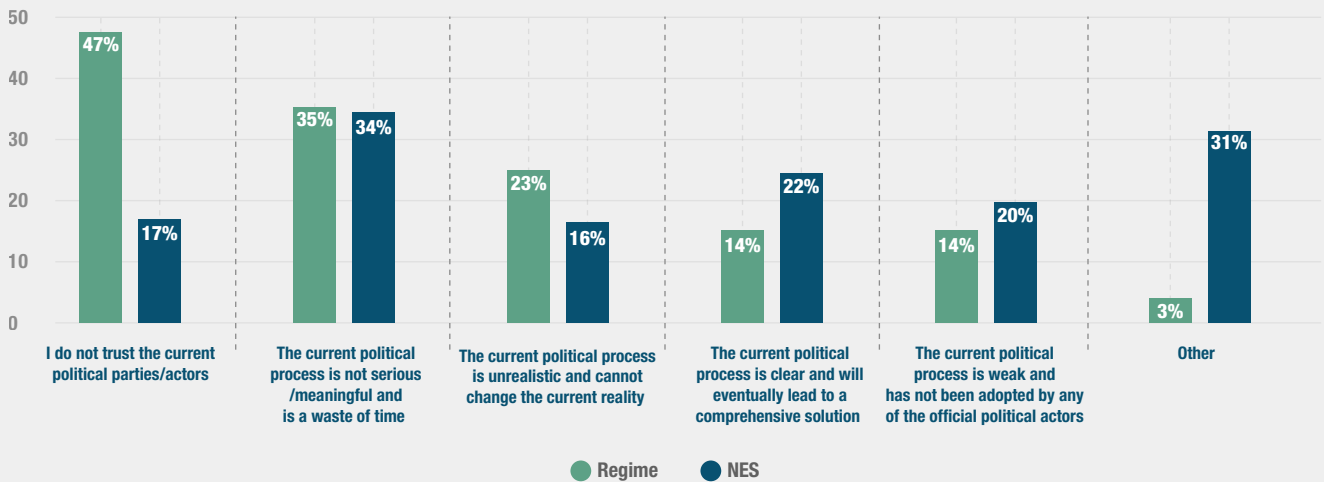
However, for most this is merely a reflection of current on-the-ground realities rather than a desirable solution to the conflict: just 17 percent in regime areas said they were “convinced of this...as a future solution,” compared with 47 percent in AANES/SDF areas. The fact that nearly half of respondents in north-east Syria do see this as a solution is significant, even if its exact providence is not immediately clear from the survey results—and could touch on the north-east’s different ethnic/sectarian demographics (which includes a significant Kurdish minority in Aleppo, Hasakeh and Raqqa provinces) or reflect local communities’ preference for AANES control over a portion of the country as opposed to regime control over the whole of Syria.

A more popular solution for Syrians in both surveyed locations was regime change so that the country can “reach a stable peace and start rebuilding”: 57 percent of respondents in regime areas, and 55 percent in AANES/SDF areas, said that changing the regime and holding perpetrators of wartime violations to account would be a positive step forwards for Syria.

At the same time, other solutions envisaged by respondents included: holding to account and eliminating corrupt leaders from all sides (55 percent in regime areas, 44 percent in AANES/SDF areas) or policies of tolerance, reconciliation and continuation of the current status quo (17 percent in regime areas, 14 percent in AANES/SDF areas).

But how can Syrians go about securing these aims? As a result of delaying tactics by the regime and Russia’s attempts to create parallel political processes through the Astana track, many Syrians do not have faith in the UN-led political process as it stands—although respondents in north-east Syria were twice as likely to have a positive outlook on the process compared with those in regime areas. There, almost a quarter of respondents said the current political process is “clear and will eventually lead to a comprehensive solution,” compared with just 14 percent in regime areas.

Figure 20. Do you think that the current political path is serious and will contribute to ending the conflict and finding a solution to the Syrian issue?



With the conflict frozen and the political process still in the reeds, many Syrians struggle to feel optimism about the future of the country.

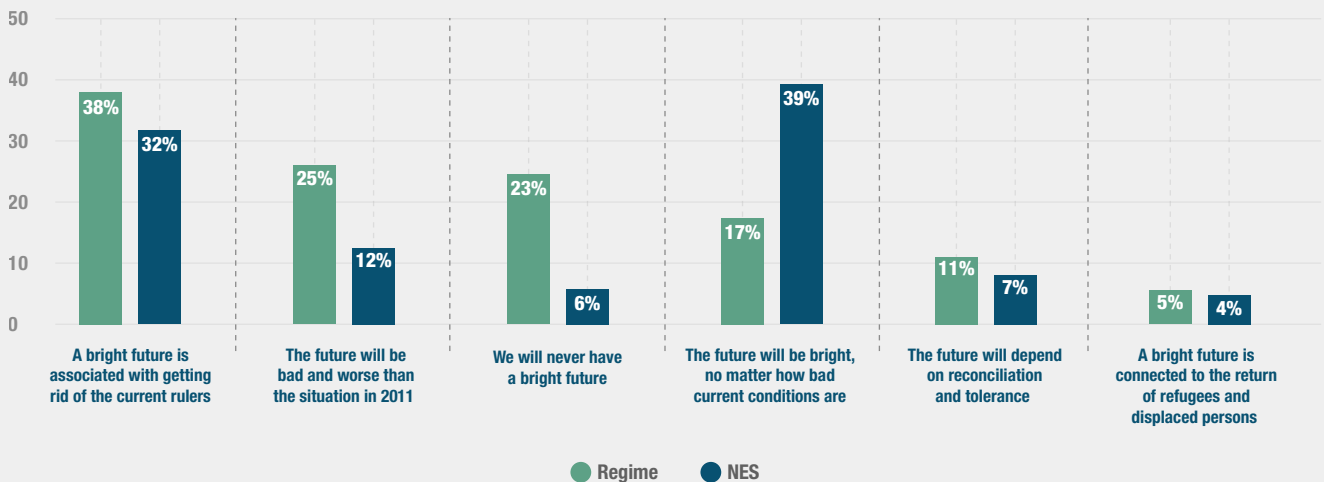
Once again, the largest portion of respondents in regime areas stated that a better, brighter future for the country hinged on systemic changes to the status quo—namely, regime change—with 38 percent agreeing with the statement that a “bright future [for Syria] is linked with getting rid of the current rulers.”

A marginally smaller portion in the north-east, 32 percent, said the same.

Perhaps most worrying, however, is the significant portion of respondents who expressed resoundingly negative responses. One fifth of all respondents stated that Syria’s future “will be worse than the situation in 2011,” while 14.5 percent expressed a belief that “we will never have a bright future.”

Reflective of other negative indicators across the survey, pessimism was highest in regime areas. By comparison, the largest portion of respondents in AANES/SDF areas (39 percent) stated that Syria’s future will be positive “no matter how bad current conditions are.”

Figure 21. How do you envision the future of Syria?



CONCLUSION

The years of SACD's consultations and surveys among Syrians inside and outside the country presented a roadmap for international policymakers, host countries, UN agencies and NGOs to address both the current needs and priorities of displaced Syrians but also to develop a solid basis for a sustainable, lasting political solution to the conflict in Syria, captured in the "Roadmap to a Safe Environment in Syria".¹⁸

If anything, the findings of this latest survey have only reinforced the need for such a roadmap. Very little has changed militarily or politically on the ground; the root causes of the popular uprising in 2011 and the ensuing conflict are unaddressed. And while international attention has shifted from Syria for the time being, the views and experiences expressed by Syrians in regime areas and AANES/SDF-controlled areas in the north-east of the country speak to the human and moral cost of not working to positively effect change and alter the current status quo, as well as the increasing likelihood of new waves of displacement and migration.

Syrians in all areas of the country are poorer than ever before, but it would be a mistake to believe that by addressing poverty and economic indicators, the millions of refugees and IDPs displaced from their homes would suddenly consider going back.

One thing that is abundantly clear from the survey findings is that, without systemic changes to the regime and its security apparatus as well as socio-economic conditions inside the country, refugees and IDPs will not return to the country in any significant way, on the contrary – more Syrians will leave. Once a bedrock of UN Resolution 2254, security sector reform is one of the most important future solutions in Syria for refugees and IDPs—as well as those Syrians who have never fled their homes but live with the insecurity, corruption and monopolisation that typifies life in regime-held Syria.

Despite its grandstanding about transitional justice, prisoner amnesties and the rest, the lack of any demonstrable and meaningful behaviour change by the regime, coupled with refugees' and IDPs' unwillingness to return home for the foreseeable future, means that the situation may reach a point of critical mass in the future whereby more Syrians are leaving the country—whether fleeing violence and persecution, instability, or poverty—than those returning. Stories from Libya of new generations of Syrian refugees, too young to remember the worst days of the conflict, boarding "death boats" in the Mediterranean points to the myriad risks that Syrians are willing to expose themselves and their families in search of a better life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

United States and European Union:

- The continued lack of a safe environment is the main driver of displacement of Syrian refugees and IDPs and the greatest obstacle to their safe, voluntary and dignified return. Consequently, a sustained diplomatic effort, coupled with economic and political pressure, should prioritise producing a realistic roadmap that can create a truly “safe environment” for all Syrians.
- Help establish formal mechanisms within the Geneva political process to directly and effectively involve displaced Syrians and make the rights of displaced Syrians an integral part of discussions around the future of Syria. Such mechanisms should ensure the direct participation of displaced Syrians in defining the conditions for safe, voluntary and dignified returns as well as the definition of a safe environment.
- Actively participate in and support UN-led negotiations under UN Resolution 2254, focusing on creating a safe environment for all Syrians, with robust international oversight and guarantees. Support initiatives for security sector reform within Syria as part of broader peace negotiations, ensuring that reforms lead to tangible improvements in safety and governance.
- Ensure effective and meaningful participation of displaced Syrians in the work of the Office of the Special Envoy and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), particularly in relation to the minimum conditions for returns as well as returns policies or mechanisms.
- Increase funding to neighbouring host countries to ensure appropriate living standards and services are available to refugees during their displacement but ensure conditionalities are included in relationships that prevent the politicization and dehumanization of refugees in these host countries. Refugees’ access to proper living conditions in neighbouring countries are only becoming more difficult the longer the conflict and crisis lasts.
- Maintain targeted sanctions as fundamental tools in keeping pressure on the Syrian regime and its main allies to start making significant changes in security conditions, to engage in a meaningful political negotiation that would lead to a sustainable and comprehensive solution, to prevent further escalations and displacement of Syrians, and to ensure the direct delivery of aid to all areas of the country. Foster greater international cooperation to address the Syrian crisis holistically. This includes aligning policies on sanctions, resettlement, and cross-border aid.
- Actively work to counter misleading narratives that portray Syria as a safe post-conflict zone ready for refugee returns and reconstruction/early recovery schemes. Reject ad hoc and partial approaches towards a safe environment in Syria that would legitimize the current status quo.
- Critically assess and adjust policies that encourage the premature return of Syrian refugees, ensuring they align with the reality on the ground and international protection standards. Provide legal assistance to Syrian refugees in Europe, including support for asylum applications and resistance against forced returns.

Office of the Special Envoy

- Negotiate and deliver a mechanism that secures the rights and minimum conditions for returns expressed by refugees and IDPs themselves as a fundamental part of any political solution and its individual elements, such as the new and credible Constitution or elections.

Türkiye & Lebanon

- Use strategic position to advocate for a viable political solution in Syria and collaborate with other nations on long-term strategies that would elevate the establishment of safe environment for all Syrians as the main pre-requisite for a safe, dignified and voluntary return of displaced Syrians.
- Ensure services, aid and legal rights are afforded to refugees and work to provide continuity of care to these communities to prevent premature and unsafe returns.
- Regularly assess the effectiveness of integration programs for Syrian refugees to ensure they effectively meet the needs of targeted populations.
- Prevent the politicization of refugees and work to combat hateful and dehumanising rhetoric and behaviour against them, which causes negative psychological impacts and may lead to premature and unsafe returns.
- Manage border security in a way that respects human rights and provides safe passages for refugees in urgent need.

Civil society & international NGOs

- Enhance efforts to keep the Syrian crisis in global discourse, highlighting the ongoing humanitarian needs and the lack of safe conditions for returnees. Continue to document and report on human rights violations in Syria, focusing on arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances and the plight of IDPs.
- Advocate and work toward securing a comprehensive political settlement for Syria, including mechanisms to meet the returns conditions of refugees and IDPs, so they can return home safely, voluntarily and with dignity.
- Provide aid to and advocacy for refugees and IDPs inside Syria and in neighbouring countries and work together to pressure host countries, donors and political actors to increase assistance and protections for Syrians in displacement and to advocate for an increase in resettlement places.



Syrian Association for
CITIZENS' DIGNITY

FADING VISION OF SAFE SYRIA

**Survey of 3,000 Syrians on
Return & Socio-Economic
Collapse**