

# LONG ROAD TO RETURN III

ENSURING DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Syria has been the **largest forced displacement crisis in the world since 2014**. At the end of 2021, more than 13.5 million Syrians lived in displacement, including 6.748 million refugees and 6.8 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Syrian refugees are the largest refugee population in the world, accounting for 27 percent of the global refugee population in 2021.

Syria's neighbouring countries have been disproportionately affected by the Syrian forced displacement crisis. The vast majority of Syrian refugees (84 percent) live in host countries in the region, who continue to bear a vastly unequal responsibility for hosting Syrian refugees. Turkey hosts more than half of all Syrian refugees (3.721 million Syrians; 55 percent of the overall Syrian refugee population), in addition to approximately 330.000 refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries (mainly Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran). As such, **Turkey is the country with the largest refugee population in the world**. 1 in 23 persons in Turkey is a refugee, the fifth largest ratio of refugees relative to the national population across the globe.

Since 2011, the political and economic situation in Turkey has undergone drastic changes, which has resulted in an **increasingly hostile public opinion against refugees**. Since 2018, the Turkish economy has been characterized by high levels of inflation, a rapid depreciation of the Turkish lira, a sharp rise in poverty, a widening current account deficit, and a depletion of external reserves. 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 was 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 the March 2019 local elections. In March 2019, the ruling AKP party of Turkish President Erdogan suffered a historic loss to the opposition, and lost political control over major cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya, Mersin and Adana.

Consequently, **since the summer of 2019 there has been a significant increase in the number of raids, arrests and forced returns of Syrian refugees in Istanbul and beyond**. The prospect of a new large-scale movement of refugees into Turkey, following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, has further reinforced the unreceptive mood among many Turkish citizens. In response to calls by European leaders to expand the scope of the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement towards Afghans, Erdogan stated that there is an "unease" among Turkish public opinion with the presence of large number of refugees, and that "Turkey has no duty, responsibility or obligation to be Europe's refugee warehouse".

Erdogan is under **increasing domestic pressure to take a tougher stance on the refugee issue**, with general elections scheduled in 2023 and with Turkey's main opposition party (the Republican People's Party, CHP) increasingly campaigning on an anti-refugee platform. In August 2021, both the CHP and the Iyi party (another opposition party) - in response to a campaign by a group of university students who call themselves "angry young Turks"- started to hang large banners stating "The Border is our Honour" on their buildings across the country.

The changing public attitude has also led to a significant increase in xenophobic rhetoric in the public discourse, including on social media and in political campaigns, and in violent attacks against Syrian refugees and their property. Syrian refugees in Turkey are also at





**increased risk of forced return.** According to reports by rights groups, in the past years thousands of refugees in Turkey have been forced to sign “voluntary return” forms, before being returned to Syria. Such practices also took place in removal centres that have received financial support from the EU's Facility for Refugees in Turkey, which highlights the serious risk of **EU complicity in human rights abuses** against Syrian refugees. NGO reports have documented how Syrian refugees, including Syrians who possess an official ID (“kimlik”), have been mistreated by Turkish security forces or denied access to medical care in such removal centres, before being forced to sign a “voluntary return” form. NGOs additionally collected testimonies showing that Syrians were tricked into signing voluntary return documents. After their forced return to Syria, many Syrian refugees have often been detained and mistreated by the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) or Al Qaida-affiliated Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS).

Against this background, 11.11.11 and Upinion conducted an **online survey among 944 Syrian refugees** in Turkey, in the period between 20 December 2021 and 30 January 2022. Main findings are as follows:

- **50.6 percent** of respondents reported an **increasing pressure from Turkish authorities to leave Turkey**. The main pressure that Syrians experience relates to restrictions on movement (32.6 percent). 6 percent of respondents also reported arrests, raids or arbitrary detentions as a main pressure factor, while 5.3 percent reported physical violence.
- **30.3 percent** of respondents answered that they **fear their deportation**, even though they did not (yet) experience deportation and/or push back. 22.6 percent of Syrians also know others who have experienced deportation and/or push backs on the border. 14 percent of respondents stated that either they have been forced to sign “voluntary return forms” themselves, or that they know people who had been forced to do so.
- **35.2 percent** of respondents reported an **increase in tension** between Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey over the past 3-6 months.
- **74 percent** of respondents said that they are **not able to cover basic household necessities and needs**.
- **54.8 percent** of respondents reported **not being allowed to leave their area of residency** due to movement restrictions.
- **35.9 percent** of female respondents reported to not have access to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) care services.
- When asked “*Do you plan to stay in the same place in the coming 6 months?*”, **almost 40 percent of Syrian respondents answered that they want to seek refuge in a European third country through the UN resettlement program**. 25.5 percent of respondents stated that they want to stay in Turkey, while 16 percent do not know yet what to do in the coming six months. **Another 8.6 percent of respondents indicated that they want to try to move to a European third country, without relying on the UN resettlement program.**



- Only 3.7 percent of respondents said that they are planning to return to Syria in the next six months. **Just 34.8 percent of those respondents had objective and reliable information on conditions of return in their area of origin in Syria.**
- Highlighting the unsustainable and premature nature of current return movement, **80.1 percent of respondents answered that they know of cases of “re-return”**, in which Syrians returned from Turkey (either in a voluntary manner, or as a result of forced return) back to Syria, but then decided to flee Syria again and cross the border with Turkey through irregular means.

Urgent action is required to address the deteriorating situation for Syrian refugees in Turkey. 11.11.11 and Upinion recommend that the EU and EU member states<sup>1</sup>:

- Take an active leadership role - within national, European and international fora - in the **development and implementation of a comprehensive and more ambitious strategy and response to the Syrian refugee crisis**, which is based on the UNHCR framework of "**durable solutions**" for international refugee crises.
- Put in place an **independent investigation** into allegations that EU-funded “removal centres” across Turkey have been used to force Syrian refugees to sign “voluntary return” forms, before being returned to Syria.
- Demand immediate, full and unhindered access of the UNHCR and other independent observers to Turkish detention and removal centres, in order to verify the voluntary nature of return movements. Make any EU **funding** for Turkish “removal centres” **conditional on full and unhindered access** of UNHCR monitoring staff and other independent observers.
- 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 requested by the European Parliament in May 2021).
- Publicly **call on the Turkish government to put an immediate end to any forced return**, either directly or indirectly, of Syrian refugees to Syria.
- **Increase resettlement numbers and other safe and formal routes to Europe** for refugees from Syria.
- Commit to and accelerate the provision of **sufficient, predictable, flexible and multi-annual humanitarian, development and peacebuilding funding**, taking into account the 2019 OECD DAC recommendation regarding the “triple nexus”, to refugees from Syria and host communities, through dedicated funding mechanisms, and with a particular focus on the needs of female refugees. Particular attention should be given to projects aimed at providing legal assistance to Syrian refugees in Turkey, initiatives around Turkish language training, and public campaigns towards Turkish citizens that counters prejudices about Syrian refugees, xenophobia and discrimination.

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- Develop and implement a **gender equality strategy for future support to the refugee response in Turkey**, including an active commitment to gender mainstreaming training and gender awareness-raising for EU staff and partners.
- Accelerate and concretise aid **localisation efforts and commitments**, by committing more resources to humanitarian, development, human rights, and peacebuilding projects and programmes from local civil society organisations and Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs).
- Actively **support the creation of a robust international monitoring mechanism** – on the basis of the UNHCR Protection Thresholds, and with sufficient resources – that closely monitors conditions inside Syria and the experiences of returnees.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today Turkey hosts more than 3.721 million Syrian refugees, in addition to approximately 330.000 refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries (mainly Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran). As such, **Turkey is the country with the largest refugee population in the world**. 1 in 23 persons in Turkey is a refugee, the fifth largest ratio of refugees relative to the national population across the globe. Turkey by itself hosts more than 3 times the number of Syrian refugees as all EU member states combined.

On 18 March 2016 the members of the European Council and Turkey agreed on the EU-Turkey Statement (also known as the “**EU-Turkey Deal**”), which determined that from 20 March 2016 onwards all irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands would be returned to Turkey. For every Syrian being returned to Turkey from Greek islands, another Syrian would be resettled from Turkey to the EU. The statement also announced the acceleration of the disbursement of a first tranche of 3 billion Euro in support of Syrian refugees and promised a second tranche of an additional 3 billion Euro. Although Turkish authorities on multiple occasions threatened to ‘scrap the Turkey Deal’, this agreement remains the framework for cooperation between the EU and Turkey on migration.

In December 2019 11.11.11 published the report “*Long Road to Return II: Durable Solutions for Syrian refugees in Turkey*”, based on a survey among 300 Syrian refugees in Turkey. This report assessed the socioeconomic situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey, their access to human rights and the effectiveness of EU support. The report focussed on the three internationally recognised durable solutions promoted by the United Nations: safe, voluntary and dignified return to Syria; local integration in Turkey; and resettlement to EU Member States. Progress on all three solutions is crucial not only for the Syrian refugees, but also for Turkey and the European Union.

The current report, jointly published by 11.11.11 and Upinion, provides a follow-up to the 2019 report, with an updated assessment of the socioeconomic and human rights situation of Syrian refugees living in Turkey. The report is based on a online survey among 944 Syrian respondents and interviews with key stakeholders. The report offers concrete recommendations for the EU and the Member States, donor governments, UNHCR and the Turkish government.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY

This report is based on an online survey among Syrian refugees in Turkey, conducted by Upinion. These data findings were complemented by extensive desk research and additional qualitative interviews with 13 stakeholders, including representatives of Turkish refugee rights organisations, staff of Syrian CSOs working in Turkey, individual Turkish and European analysts and human rights experts, and an EU official. Finally, in February 2022 a questionnaire and request for an interview was shared with UNHCR Turkey, but no answer was received.

Online data collection took place between 20 December 2021 and 30 January 2022, and eligible respondents were recruited both via targeted advertisements on Facebook and by reconnecting with existing Syrian respondents on Upinion's platform. The conversation was published in Arabic, in order to be able to engage with Syrian refugees in Turkey.

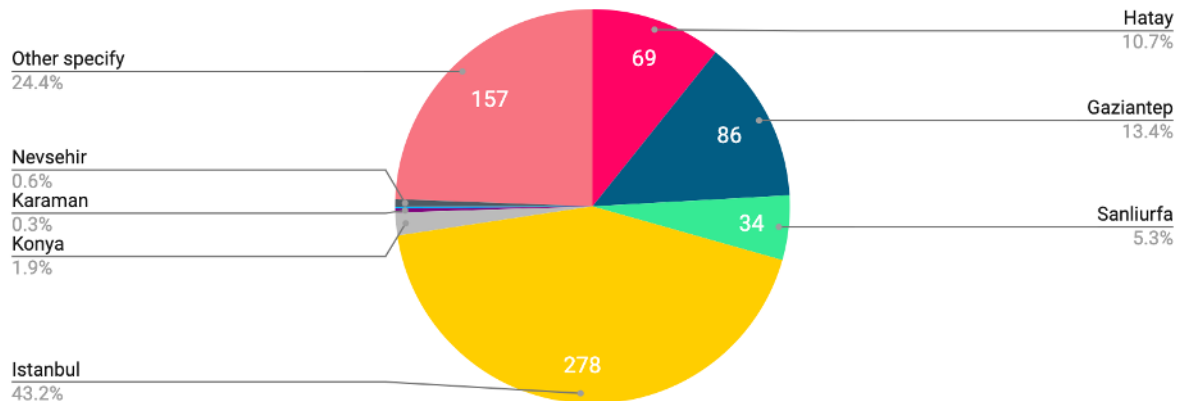
Upinion's online platform allows to securely connect and stay in touch with people living in crisis- and displacement-affected communities. Its in-house developed platform allows to engage real-time with these communities in the same way they connect with their friends and families, using messaging apps like Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. The way Upinion holds conversations with people also permits to send tailored information to respondents about relevant services or initiatives in their area, or to share statistics of the research with them, thereby turning the conversation into an information exchange. Upinion has the ISO/IEC 27001 Certification, which is the international best practice standard for Information Security Management Systems (ISMSs), and follows GDPR regulations.



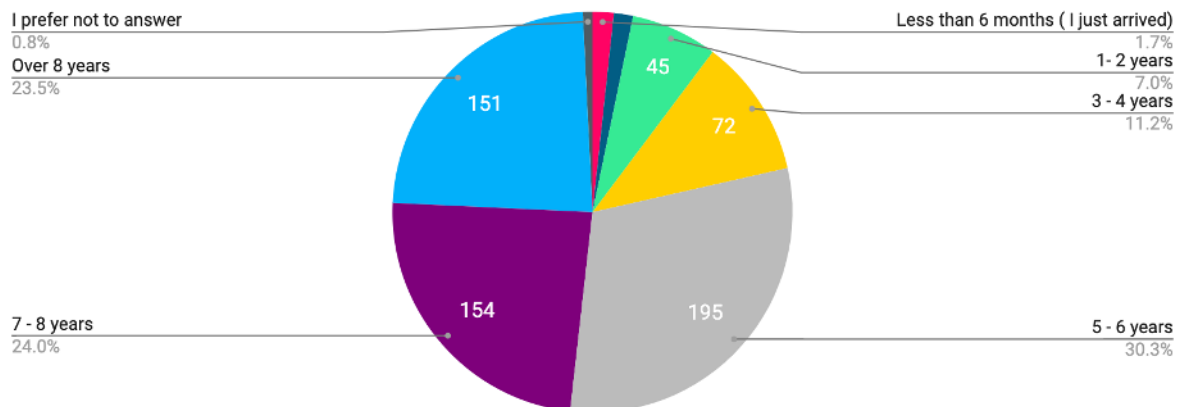
### 2.2. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONDENTS

In total, **944** Syrian respondents (including Syrian Palestinian individuals) were reached. The majority of respondents (43.2 percent) currently live in Istanbul, the second largest group (13.4 percent) in Gaziantep, followed by Hatay (10.7 percent) and Sanliurfa (5.3 percent). 77.8 percent of the Syrian respondents have resided in Turkey over 5 years, of which 30.3 percent between 5-6 years; 24 percent between 7-8 years and 23.5 percent over 8 years. As is visible in the graph below, a minority of respondents have arrived in Turkey more recently. Disaggregation by gender reveals that there are no significant differences between women and women in terms of their city of residence and the duration of their stay in Turkey.

**Figure 1: Where do you currently live?**



**Figure 2: How long have you been living in Turkey?**

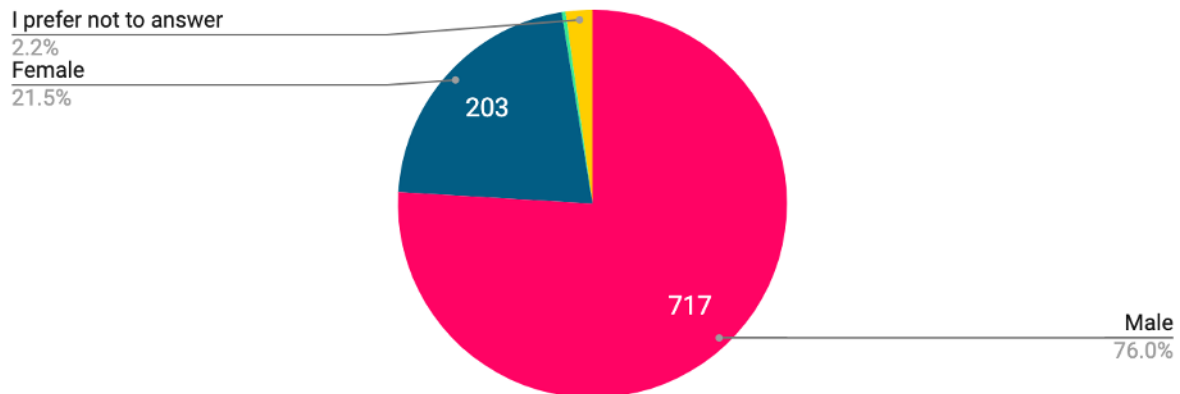


21.5 percent (n=203) of the respondents are female, compared to 76.0 percent male (n=717), indicating a gender ratio of almost 1:4. Additional efforts have been made to include a higher ratio of women in the survey, with targeted advertising towards female Syrian Facebook users. This resulted in slightly higher participation of women. In Turkey in general, 58 percent of Facebook users are male and 42 percent women.<sup>2</sup> There are many reasons for why women are less connected to Facebook or social media in general, ranging from concerns around privacy, security, trust, higher illiteracy rates, and religious and cultural values. Upinion always strives for an equal gender balance among its respondents, yet at the same time follows a do-no-harm approach.

Data findings in this report have been disaggregated by gender, but the unequal distribution of male versus female respondents should be kept in mind while interpreting these.



**Figure 3: Gender ratio**



## 2.3. METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

- The data findings solely rely on self-reporting. To remedy this, desk research and cross-checking of information has been conducted.
- As Upinion is a digital platform, it does not have the advantages that face-to-face interviews have with regard to probing or explaining questions. Hence, sensitive topics such as gender-based violence or security-related themes have not been addressed extensively.
- Only respondents with internet access and a Facebook account are included in the online panel, which excludes part of the target cohort. However, an assessment of internet and social media connectivity pointed out relatively high connectivity rates among Syrian refugees in Turkey.

## 3. SETTING THE SCENE

### 3.1. THE LARGEST REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE WORLD

Syria has been the **largest forced displacement crisis in the world since 2014**. At the end of 2021, more than 13.5 million Syrians lived in displacement, including 6.748 million refugees and 6.8 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Syrian refugees are the largest refugee population in the world, accounting for 27 percent of the global refugee population in 2021. Similarly, Syria is the country with the second highest level of internal displacement.<sup>3</sup>

Syria's neighbouring countries have been disproportionately affected by the Syrian forced displacement crisis. The vast majority of Syrian refugees (84 percent) live in host countries in the region, who continue to bear a vastly unequal responsibility for hosting Syrian refugees. Turkey hosts more than half of all Syrian refugees (3.721 million), in addition to approximately 330.000 refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries (mainly Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran).<sup>4</sup> As such, **Turkey is the country with the largest refugee population in the world**. 1 in 23 persons in Turkey is a refugee, the fifth largest ratio of refugees relative to the national population across the globe.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the Syrian refugees in Turkey live outside camps. According to UNHCR statistics, 98.6 percent of Syrian refugees live across Turkey in 81 provinces, while only 1.4 percent of refugees live in seven temporary centres managed by the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM).<sup>6</sup> Within Turkey, the provincial breakdown of Syrian refugees is as follows (15 main provinces):<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 4: Provincial breakdown of Syrian refugees living across Turkey**

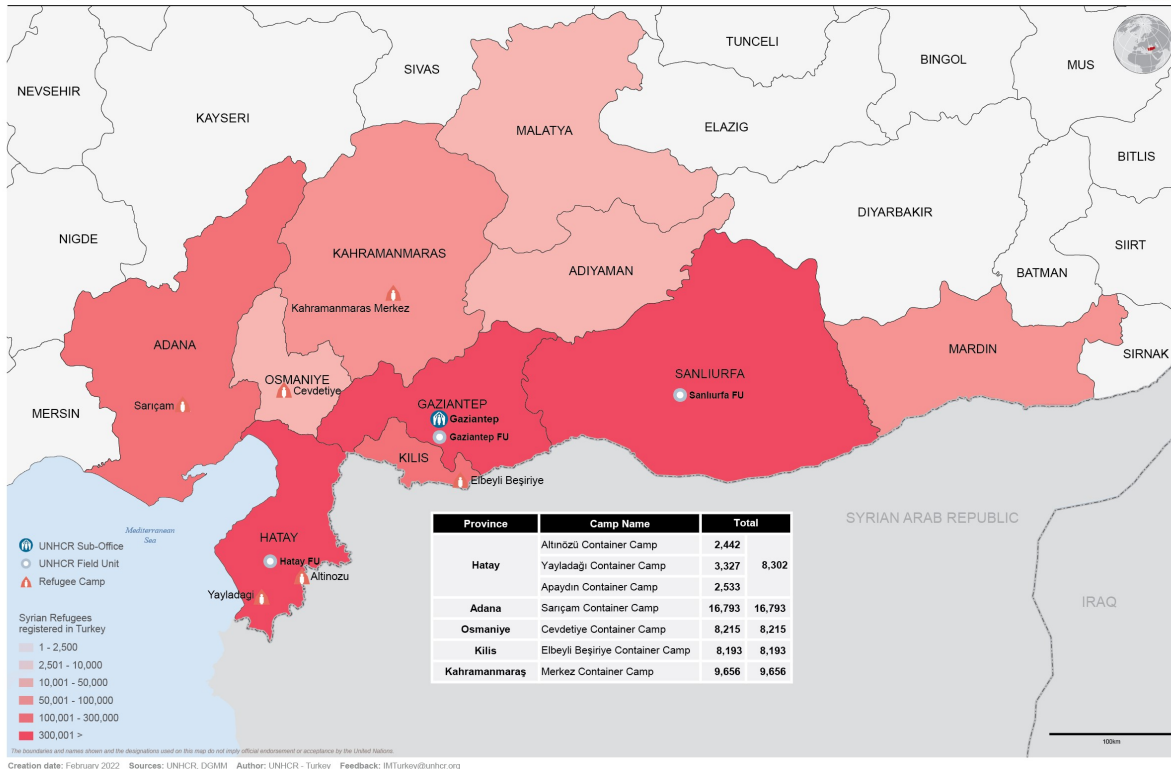
Province	Registered Syrian refugees	Total population in Province	Share of total
<b>Istanbul</b>	<b>523,067</b>	15,011,868	3.48%
<b>Gaziantep</b>	<b>449,356</b>	2,085,795	<b>21.54%</b>
<b>Hatay</b>	<b>435,881</b>	1,654,907	<b>26.34%</b>
Sanliurfa	<b>423,419</b>	2,108,013	<b>20.09%</b>
Adana	253,981	2,244,748	11.31%
Mersin	226,188	1,839,975	12.29%
Bursa	179,104	3,057,247	5.86%
Izmir	148,018	4,365,022	3.39%
Konya	118,720	2,224,384	5.34%
<b>Kilis</b>	105,442	141,454	<b>74.54%</b>
Ankara	100,646	5,506,786	1.83%
Kahramanmara	93,521	1,164,273	8.03%
Mardin	89,172	851,922	10.47%
Kayseri	79,643	1,402,941	5.68%
Kocaeli	55,351	1,983,505	2.79%

**Figure 5: Map with provincial breakdown of Syrian refugees in Turkey<sup>8</sup>**

#### UNHCR Turkey:

Syrian Refugee Camps and Provincial Breakdown of Syrian Refugees Registered in South East Turkey

as of 10 February 2022



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The Syrian forced displacement crisis is also having a particular impact on women and girls. Forcibly displaced Syrian women and girls have been subjected to many rights violations before their displacement, and continue to live in challenging and abusive situations. They are often suffering from trauma and they lack documentation, which constrains movement and access to basic services.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, many female refugees' lack of documents limit their ability to generate an income, forcing them to adopt dangerous coping mechanisms, including early marriages of under-aged girls. Most forcibly displaced women have also lost the social networks which they had previously, and lack the knowledge, support and tools to advocate for their rights at local and international level.<sup>10</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the vulnerable position of displaced Syrian women. <sup>11</sup> Finally, many displaced Syrian women are facing an enhanced risk of domestic and gender-based violence.

### 3.2. EVOLUTION OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE IN TURKEY

After the start of the Syrian revolution in March 2011, large refugee movements into Turkey did not take place until 2013-2014. Many Syrians who did come to Turkey in this initial period were able to fund their own stay and did not seek formal refugee status, while those

Syrians that did seek such status were accommodated in two camps in Kilis and Reyhanli. In the first years after the start of the Syrian conflict, these Syrian refugees were welcomed as guests and mainly resided in large refugee camps in southern Turkey, close to the border with Syria.<sup>12</sup> After the further intensification of the Syrian war (including the rise of Islamic State) from 2013 onwards, larger number of Syrian refugees fled to Turkey. After fleeing to Turkey, many Syrian refugees attempted onward migration to Europe. Between March 2015 and March 2016 over 988.000 people (both Syrians and non-Syrians) crossed the Aegean Sea in an attempt to reach Greece.<sup>13</sup>

In response, on 15 October 2015 EU member states and Turkey reached an agreement on a “Joint Action Plan”, which formed the basis for the eventual “EU-Turkey Statement” (also known as the “EU-Turkey Deal”) that was agreed between the members of the European Council and Turkey on 18 March 2016.

### THE EU-TURKEY DEAL (2016)

The EU-Turkey Statement, adopted on 18 March 2016, outlined the following main action points<sup>14</sup>:

- 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 will 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.

**Proponents of the EU-Turkey deal have argued that it has delivered on two of its main objectives: the reduction of irregular migration from Turkey to Greece and a decrease in the number of fatalities at sea.** Whereas in October 2015 an average of 6.360 persons arrived on the Greek islands each day, between March 2016 and March 2020 this number was reduced with 94 percent, to an average of 105 people per day who made the sea crossing. In terms of casualties, proponents have argued that in the year before the EU-Turkey deal at least 1.145 persons lost their lives while trying to cross the Aegean Sea, but that in the two years following the deal this number was reduced to 130.

Several migration experts and academics have however **questioned the supposed causal relation between the deal on the one hand, and the reduction of irregular migration and casualties on the other.** This is also noted in the Strategic Mid-Term Evaluation of the Turkey Facility: *"It is possible that arrivals in Europe have already peaked and begun to decline in the winter of 2015/2016, due to there being a finite number of refugees and migrants in Turkey with the resources (to pay smugglers) and the inclination (education level, language skills, family size) to attempt to reach Europe."*<sup>15</sup>

**Other elements of the EU-Turkey deal have also known limited success or implementation.** Despite a drop in arrivals in Greece with more than 80 percent<sup>16</sup>, the "Voluntary Humanitarian Admission Scheme" has never been activated. Resettlement from Turkey to EU member states has also been limited, with only 32.589 persons that were resettled in the period 2016-2021, far below the 54.000 places mentioned in the Statement.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, **questions continue to be raised about the legality of the deal, which has received harsh criticism from human rights organisations:**

- Critics 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.<sup>18</sup> 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 Turkey on the false pretence that it is a "safe country" for refugees.<sup>19</sup> The rights watchdog has also criticized the *"harrowing"* human cost of the deal for asylum-seekers who found themselves stuck on the Greek islands: *"Not allowed to leave, thousands of asylum-seekers live in a tortuous limbo. Women, men and children languish in inhumane conditions, sleeping in flimsy tents, braving the snow and are sometimes the victims of violent hate crimes."*<sup>20</sup>
- 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.<sup>21</sup> 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"*.<sup>22</sup>



Shortly after the **failed coup d'état** of 15 July 2016, the Turkish government declared a state of emergency and temporarily derogated from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Civil and political rights were suspended, and tens of thousands of people have been arrested and detained. Although the state of emergency was lifted in 2018, the **operating space for international organisations and NGOs remains very limited.**

This “shrinking space” has been characterized by the withdrawal of the operating permits for several national and international organisations, restrictions on certain activities (such as household visits, outreach programmes and community centres), lack of work permits for local staff, an increasing number of bureaucratic requirements, and a drastic anti-terrorism law that was adopted in late 2020.<sup>23</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, the new law enables *“the Interior Ministry to target nongovernmental groups’ legitimate and lawful activities and the right to association of their members (...) Organizations disliked by the government for their work on human rights and rule of law issues in Turkey will especially be at risk.”* 475 nongovernmental groups in Turkey also signed a declaration calling on the government to withdraw provisions of the law relating to associations, foundations, and charitable fund-raising, stating that these provisions violate Turkey’s obligations under international human rights law and the Turkish constitution.<sup>24</sup> A similar observation has been made in the 2021 report on Turkey by the European Commission, which notes that *“civil society faced continuous pressure and their space to operate freely has continued to diminish limiting their freedom of expression and freedom of association. The new law on preventing financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction raises concerns with regard to possible restrictions on the activities of human rights defenders and civil society.”*<sup>25</sup>

In its 2021 report on Turkey, the European Commission has also criticized the **deterioration of the human rights situation in Turkey**, noting that *“broad-scale restrictions”*, as well as criminal cases and convictions, continue to be imposed on human rights defenders, social media users, journalists, writers, lawyers, academics, students, and opposition politicians.<sup>26</sup> The European Commission has also observed **serious deficiencies in the functioning of Turkey’s democratic institutions; a lack of a sound and effective separation of powers between the executive, legislative and the judiciary**; and a *“systemic lack of independence of the judiciary and undue pressure on judges and prosecutors.”*<sup>27</sup> In a similar vein, the European Parliament has also sharply criticized the *“authoritarian interpretation of the presidential system”* in Turkey, while also pointing to the lack of independence of the judiciary and the *“continued hyper-centralisation of power in the presidency”*. Members of the European Parliament have also called on Turkish authorities to release all imprisoned human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, academics and others who have been detained by the government on unsubstantiated charges.<sup>28</sup> On 1 July 2021, in a major reversal for women’s rights, Turkey formally withdrew from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention.

In addition, **since 2018 an economic crisis has hit Turkey**, characterized by high levels of inflation and a severe depreciation of the Turkish lira. In the summer of 2018 the lira experienced its largest depreciation against the dollar since 2001.<sup>29</sup> According to World Bank data, the Turkish economy lost 730.000 jobs in the period between July 2018 and July 2019 alone.<sup>30</sup> The economic crisis in Turkey has been further worsened due to the **COVID-19** pandemic. During the second quarter of 2020 the Turkish economy experienced its biggest fall on record, contracting with 11 percent of GDP.

Although the economy had stabilised again by the end of 2020, Turkey’s economic challenges remain enormous, with **high levels of inflation, a rapid depreciation of the Turkish lira, a sharp rise in poverty, a widening current account deficit, and a**

**depletion of external reserves.**<sup>31</sup> In early 2022, the Turkish Statistical Institute said that annual inflation has risen to 36.08 percent, the highest inflation rate since 2002. Both Turkish and international researchers have stated that these record numbers are actually an underestimation (or even a falsification), and have put the actual annual inflation rate at 65, or even 82.81, percent.<sup>32</sup> Syrian refugees in Turkey have been particularly affected by this economic crisis, and the related loss in informal jobs, given that many of them rely on informal labour to survive.

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 was influenced, among other things, by the increased competition for limited informal employment opportunities due to the economic crisis, and the increasingly hostile political discourse on refugee returns that emerged in the run-up to the **March 2019 local elections in Turkey**.<sup>33</sup> In March 2019, the ruling AKP party of Turkish President Erdogan suffered a historic loss to the opposition, and lost political control over major cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya, Mersin and Adana. One of the main reasons for the decrease in popular support for the AKP was that many Turkish voters are increasingly opposed to Erdogan's Syria policy, while the gradual closure of refugee camps along the Turkish-Syrian border has also meant that refugees have moved in large numbers to urban areas across the country.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, since the summer of 2019 there has been a **significant increase in the number of raids, arrests and forced returns** of Syrian refugees in Istanbul and beyond.<sup>35</sup>

In this context of a rapid decrease in popular support for the continued hosting of large numbers of refugees, and at a moment when a new military escalation in Idlib (northwest Syria) displaced almost one million Syrians toward the Syrian-Turkish border, President Erdogan in **February 2020** announced that **Turkey would open its borders with Greece**. *"We can't handle a new wave of migration",* Erdogan stated, adding that *"we will not close the gates to refugees. The European Union has to keep its promises. We are not obliged to look after and feed so many refugees."*<sup>36</sup> As a result, thousands of migrants and refugees (mainly non-Syrians) travelled to the border between Greece and Turkey, often with the direct support of Turkish security forces, leading to sharp criticism of the weaponization of the refugee issue by Turkey.<sup>37</sup> In response, Greek security forces and unidentified armed men detained, assaulted, sexually assaulted, robbed, and stripped asylum seekers and migrants, before forcing them back to Turkey.<sup>38</sup> The EU did not condemn these illegal practices. Instead, during a visit by senior EU officials to the border zone, European Commission President von der Leyen referred to Greece as Europe's *"shield"*, and stated that she wanted to *"send a very clear statement of European solidarity and support to Greece."*<sup>39</sup> According to Amnesty International, practices of arbitrary detention, torture and violent pushbacks by Greece have continued ever since, and have become a *"de facto policy."*<sup>40</sup>

The prospect of a new large-scale movement of refugees into Turkey, following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, has further reinforced the unreceptive mood among many Turkish citizens. In response to calls by European politici to expand the scope of the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement towards Afghans, Erdogan stated that there is an *"unease"* among Turkish public opinion with the presence of large number of refugees, and that *"Turkey has no duty, responsibility or obligation to be Europe's refugee warehouse"*.<sup>41</sup> Erdogan is under increasing domestic pressure to take a tougher stance on the refugee issue, with general elections scheduled in 2023 and with Turkey's main opposition party (the Republican People's Party, CHP) increasingly campaigning on an anti-refugee platform. If elected to power in 2023, the CHP has promised to normalise relations with the Assad government in Damascus, and to step up efforts to return Syrian refugees to Syria.<sup>42</sup> In August 2021,

both the CHP and the İYİ party (another opposition party) - in response to a campaign by a group of university students who call themselves "angry young Turks" (Öfkeli Genç Türkler)- started to hang large banners stating "The Border is our Honour" on their buildings across the country. In a similar vein a Turkish academic, Ümit Özdağ, recently founded a far-right political party (Zafer) that campaigns on the message that all refugees should leave Turkey.<sup>43</sup> This increasingly anti-refugee stance among Turkish political parties is also trickling down to Turkish social media, where an increasing amount of anti-refugee hashtags, such as "*stop the silent invasion*", have emerged.<sup>44</sup>

In September 2021, during a visit of UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi to Turkey, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu also said that "*we are working to repatriate refugees, especially in Syria, especially with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.*"<sup>45</sup> This was followed by an announcement, on 2 March 2022, that Turkey and Jordan intend to organise an international conference on returns. The prospect of a large-scale return and the feasibility of accommodating millions of Syrians in a so called 'safe zone' in Syria is nevertheless questioned by experts. In the context of long term displacement (up to 10 years for some Syrians) further integration of the majority of the Syrians in Turkey with assistance from Turkish and international organizations is a more likely scenario.<sup>46</sup> Despite the political discourse, the Turkish government is aware that a large number of Syrians will remain permanently in Turkey. A 2018 study by Turkey's ombudsman projected that the Syrian population in Turkey would likely surpass 4 million to 5 million within 10 years and asserted that "*it is necessary to produce policies based on [the expectation of] permanence*".<sup>47</sup> According to Turkish Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu, more than 193.000 Syrians have obtained Turkish citizenship between 2011 and early 2022.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.3. EVOLUTION OF THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE IN TURKEY

Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, but maintains a geographical reservation that does not grant refugee status to non-Europeans. While initially operating an "open door policy" that treated Syrian refugees as "guests", from 2013 onwards Turkey has taken several steps to overhaul its legislation on asylum and migration. In 2013 **Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP)** was adopted, which entered into force in 2014. Among other things, the LFIP introduced the notions of "international protection" and "temporary protection" (providing people in both categories with access to most government services), and also created a "**Directorate General of Migration Management**" (DGMM) within the Ministry of Interior. In October 2021, DGMM was re-named into the "Presidency for Migration Management" (PMM).<sup>49</sup> Since 2014, DGMM/PMM has created a centralised registry of Syrian refugees (2015), has put in place a network of provincial migration management offices, has taken up the responsibility for refugee status determination (2018), and has taken over the management of refugee camps.<sup>50</sup> Towards the end of 2018 UNHCR phased out its registration of international protection applicants and other protection related activities. Since then, UNHCR's role is largely limited to technical and operational support.<sup>51</sup>

The LFIP contains a number of specific provisions that are of direct relevance for Syrian refugees living in Turkey:

- **Article 91(1)** introduced the notion of "*temporary protection*", which "*may be provided to foreigners who, having been forced to leave their country and cannot return to the country they left, have arrived at or crossed the borders of Turkey in masses seeking emergency*

*and temporary protection.” In Article 91 (2), it is further stated that “the actions to be carried out for the reception of such foreigners into Turkey; their stay in Turkey and rights and obligations; their exit from Turkey; measures to be taken to prevent mass influxes; cooperation and coordination among national and international institutions and organisations; determination of the duties and mandate of the central and provincial institutions and organisations shall be stipulated in a Directive to be issued by the Council of Ministers.”<sup>62</sup>*

Accordingly, on 22 October 2014 a “**Temporary Protection Regulation**” (TPR) entered into force<sup>53</sup>. Under this TPR, Syrian refugees who arrived in Turkey after 28 April 2011 can access a group-based “Temporary Protection” (TP) scheme, which – in theory – protects them against violations of the non-refoulement principle. Under the TP scheme, Syrians are also afforded access to basic services, including education and health, on the basis of a temporary protection identification card (“kimlik”), and are eligible for resettlement.<sup>54</sup> Under the regulation, Syrians are however required to reside in the province of their registration, temporary accommodation centre or in a certain province determined by the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM); and to obtain a travel permission document from the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) if they wish to travel outside of their province of registration.<sup>55</sup>

- **Article 57(2)** stipulates that detention can be ordered for those “*who constitute a threat to public order and security or public health*”, while article 57(3) states that pre-removal detention can last up to one year.<sup>56</sup>
- **Article 57(5-6)** states that detainees must be informed about the reason and duration of their detention, and also have the right to legal counsel and the right to challenge their detention. A December 2020 decision by the Turkish Constitutional Court has also stipulated that administrative appeals against deportation decisions have a suspensive effect, in order to ensure the right to an effective remedy.<sup>57</sup> However, according to the Global Detention Project, in practice detainees and lawyers rarely receive copies of detention orders and/or removal decisions, and encounter many difficulties to gather all the information and write an appeal within the seven-day time limit set by the law.<sup>58</sup>
- **Article 59** stipulates that detainees should be able to have access to lawyers, relatives, UNHCR, consular officials and NGOs.<sup>59</sup> In practice, however, the Global Detention Project has noted how “*monitoring immigration detention operations in Turkey is severely hampered by the fact that both national and international observers lack access to sites of detention.*”<sup>60</sup>
- **Article 4(1)** explicitly recognises the principle of non-refoulement, stating that “*no one within the scope of this Law shall be returned to a place where he or she may be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment or, where his/her life or freedom would be threatened on account of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.*”<sup>61</sup> **Article 54**, however, contains provisions that allow Turkish authorities to return persons on vague and arbitrary grounds, including persons who “*pose a public order or public security or public health threat*”.<sup>62</sup>
- **Article 53(1)** specifies that such “removal decision” can be issued “*either upon instructions of the Directorate General or ex officio by the governorates*”, and that a “*foreigner, legal representative or lawyer may appeal against the removal decision to the administrative court within fifteen days as of the date of notification.*”<sup>63</sup>

- **Article 9(1)** allows the Directorate General of Migration Management to “impose an entry ban against foreigners whose entry into Turkey is objectionable for public order, public security or public health reasons.”<sup>64</sup>

In addition to the LFIP and the TPR, in April 2014 **Regulation No. 28980 on the Establishment and Operations of Reception and Accommodation Centres and Removal Centres** was also adopted. This regulation stipulated that DGMM (now: PMM) is responsible for the administration of all removal centres, and outlined a list of nine principles that are to be respected in all removal centres: 1) Protection of the right to life; 2) Maintenance of a human-centred approach; 3) Observing the best interest of the unaccompanied child; 4) Priority to applicants with special needs; 5) Confidentiality of personal information; 6) Informing persons concerned about the operations that are to be performed; 7) Social and psychological strengthening; 8) Respect for the freedom of belief and worship; and 9) Providing services to residents without discrimination based on language, race, colour, sex, political thought, philosophical belief, religion, sect, or any other similar reasons.<sup>65</sup> Regulation No. 28980 however does not grant NGOs or UNHCR access to removal centres.<sup>66</sup>

Finally, **DGMM Circular 2019/1** on Cessation of Status of Syrians due to Voluntary Return (7 January 2019) stated that persons who “re-returned” to Turkey after 1 January 2019 (people who signed a “voluntary return” document, returned to their country of origin, but then went back to Turkey) should be allowed to re-access services in Turkey. Implementation of this circular is however reported to be uneven.<sup>67</sup>

According to the UNHCR, the EU asylum acquis is clearly visible in Turkish legislation. Turkish human rights lawyers and experts see the development of the legal framework as an important step forward. However, they point to serious problems in terms of implementation and to the lack of possibilities to enforce rights. In practice, it often turns out to be impossible for Syrians to obtain access to protection in Turkey.<sup>68</sup>

### 3.4. THE FACILITY FOR REFUGEES IN TURKEY

#### 3.4.1. ESTABLISHMENT AND SCOPE OF THE FACILITY

The Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) was established in November 2015. It is not a fund in itself, rather a coordination mechanism for the mobilisation of resources from both the EU budget and from EU member states. **Between 2015 and 2021 two tranches of 3 billion Euro** have been allocated: a first tranche of 3 billion Euro (1 billion from the EU budget, 2 billion from EU member states) with an implementation deadline of 2021, a second tranche of 3 billion (1 billion from EU member states, 2 billion from the EU budget) with an implementation deadline of 2025.<sup>69</sup> As of February 2022 1.767 billion of the second tranche has been disbursed in projects. For the first tranche, 2.879 billion Euro has been disbursed.

Contrary to popular belief, the majority of FRIT funds (74.42 percent) does not go to the Turkish government. This is also highlighted by the FRIT’s strategic mid-term review (July 2021): “Although often characterized in the media as a large sum of money given by the EU to Turkey, the Facility was established to fund projects for the benefit of refugees in Turkey.”<sup>70</sup>

In the period between 2016 and 2019, various UN agencies (such as UNHCR, WFP, WHO, IOM, UNICEF) were the main beneficiary (**31.82 percent**) of FRIT funds, compared to **25.58**



**percent** of funds flowing to Turkish government actors. The budget contracted to Turkish government ministries (Health, Education, DGMM) has however increased significantly in the second tranche, from 660 million in the first tranche (22 percent) to 955 million Euro (32,16 percent) in the second tranche.

**15.59 percent** of the funds went to agencies of EU member states; **9.96 percent** to the World Bank; **9.11 percent** to the International Red Cross Movement; and **2.87 percent** to International NGOs. In stark contrast to aid localisation commitments under the “Grand Bargain”<sup>71</sup>, a **mere 0.17 percent of FRIT funding has been allocated to local NGOs**.

**Figure 6: FRIT funding per implementing partner, 2016-2019<sup>72</sup>**

Implementing partner	Number of projects	Amount committed (in Euro)	% of total FRIT budget (2016-2019)
UN agencies	31	1.909.028.403	31,82 %
Turkish government	7	1.535.000.000	25,58 %
EU MS agencies	12	935.279.492	15,59 %
World Bank	8	597.676.071	9,96 %
International Red Cross movement	4	546.729.645	9,11 %
International NGOs	44	171.993.901	2,87 %
Local NGOs	1	9.937.867	0,17 %
Admin, technical assistance, M&E, audit, communication		104.152.372	1.74 %
Other <sup>73</sup>	5	190.202.249	3.17 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>6.000.000.000</b>	

Projects funded by the FRIT are **both humanitarian and structural** in nature. Main sectors that were funded under the first tranche are socio-economic support, education, health and protection, while a limited number of “migration management” projects have also been funded<sup>74</sup>:

- **Socio-economic support**, including the “Emergency Social Safety Net” (ESSN), a nationwide social assistance programme that provides cash assistance to over 1.5 million vulnerable Syrian refugees in Turkey. The ESSN is the largest humanitarian programme in the history of the EU.<sup>75</sup> In addition to the ESSN, the FRIT also funds projects in the field of vocational education and labour market integration.
- **Education**, including the “Conditional Cash Transfer for Education” (CCTE) programme, which provides cash assistance to refugee families (through their “Kızılaycard”) on the condition of regular (at least 80 percent) school attendance by their children.<sup>76</sup> In addition, the FRIT also addresses barriers to education access through the “Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System” (PICTES) programme, and funds school infrastructure projects.

- **Health:** increasing and improving access to primary and secondary healthcare services through the “Improving the health status of the Syrian population under temporary protection and related services provided by Turkish authorities” (SIHHAT) programme. In addition, the FRIT also supports health infrastructure projects, training programmes for Turkish and Syrian healthcare workers, and INGO projects aimed at mental health and psychosocial support, post-operative care and rehabilitation.
- **Protection:** UNFPA-implemented healthcare projects, such as Women and Girls’ Safe Spaces (WGSS) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) work; UNHCR projects to support the Turkish legal framework for the protection of refugees, in particular by promoting registration; Referral to and provision of specialised services for the most vulnerable people, the provision of information, awareness raising on refugee rights and obligations, protection monitoring, activities delivered through community centres, social service centres and legal aid.
- **Migration management:** a grant of 20 million Euro to strengthen the operational capacity of the Turkish Coast Guard with the supply of technical equipment (including Search and Rescue vessels) and related training, as well as 60 million Euro for the construction and improvement of several “removal centres”.

### 3.4.2. SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF THE FACILITY

According to a **strategic mid-term evaluation report**, published in July 2021, projects funded under the first Facility tranche have “*made a truly bold and significant contribution to the welfare of Syrians and others fleeing conflict in the region.*” The evaluation further states that the Facility has “*prevented economic deterioration and negative coping strategies*”, and that “*refugees report being very satisfied with the services provided, particularly under the ESSN, but also in education and health.*”<sup>77</sup> At the same time, however, the evaluation points to **several challenges and limitations**. 400.000 Syrian children are still out of school, while the Facility has not had sufficient impact on the mental health of refugees. The Facility is lacking a specific gender strategy and has been “*weak*” in its gender analysis and planning, while its approach to Turkish communities has been “*uneven*”. The evaluation further describes a “*strategic deficit*”, wherein the Facility has been “*unable to leverage its large scale to funding to influence policy.*”<sup>78</sup> According to Turkish refugee rights organisations, the Facility has also contributed very little to social cohesion between refugees and host communities, and has sometimes even contributed to social tensions, because of the perception among some Turkish citizens that refugees are receiving “special treatment” through increased access to social assistance.<sup>79</sup>

Importantly, the evaluation points to the **negative spill over of both the economic and COVID-19 crises**. The rapid devaluation of the Turkish lira, combined with the socio-economic impact of COVID, has jeopardized earlier gains in household income and has drastically reduced the purchasing power of the ESSN payments.<sup>80</sup> Refugee families currently receive 155 Turkish Lira (about €10) monthly per person<sup>81</sup> compared to 120 Turkish Lira (around €19) per family member per month in 2019<sup>82</sup>. In order to make up the difference, refugees have to seek more employment opportunities, which is however being complicated

by legal restrictions imposed by the Turkish government. The **key dilemma** between being eligible for continued assistance on the one hand, and seeking employment on the other, is summarised by the evaluation report as follows:



*Perhaps the most significant exclusions from both Facility and Turkish assistance, however, are for refugees who do not stay in their province of registration. Refugees are required to stay in their province of registration to qualify for services, but many have moved to find work. The ESSN was not designed to cover all basic needs, rather to provide a top-up, and some 70% of household income is derived from working. Despite facilitating measures, such as a reduced work permit fee and online applications, the structural problems of the labour market and the difficulties in creating new jobs mean that access to formal employment remains a challenge. **Border provinces where most refugees are registered do not have the jobs, so refugees are faced with either moving for work, or staying for services.**"<sup>83</sup>*

The Strategic mid-term evaluation of the FRIT also makes a number of **key observations and recommendations**. Among other things, the evaluation suggests to take additional measures to mitigate the impact of increasing social tensions, to develop a gender strategy for future EU support to Turkey, to strengthen the mainstreaming of protection across the Facility response, and to invest more resources in Turkish language training projects:

- **Mitigate the impact of increasing social tensions:** the evaluators call upon the European Commission to closely monitor trends in public opinion and government policy regarding refugees in Turkey, analyse which strategies are more effective at reducing social tensions, and to use this analysis to fine-tune strategic direction and operations. In addition, the evaluation report also suggests to develop proactive campaigns aimed at increasing awareness about refugee challenges and rights in Turkey among both government officials and the general public.<sup>84</sup>
- **Development of a gender strategy for future EU support to Turkey:** the evaluators recommended to create a reference group (consisting of interested member states, Commission officials, UN agencies and civil society organization representatives) to inform current and future support for gender equality in the refugee response in Turkey; that the European Commission develops a practical guidance manual to put in place an approved gender strategy; and that the Commission actively supports gender mainstreaming training and gender awareness-raising for its own staff and partners.<sup>85</sup>
- **Turkish language training:** in line with reports by the World Food Programme and local CSOs<sup>86</sup>, the evaluators emphasized that *"refugee access to health, education, employment, protection and social cohesion is significantly greater when refugees can speak Turkish. Turkish language training would have an important multiplier effect on all access to all rights and services."*<sup>87</sup>

In November 2018, the **European Court of Auditors (ECA)** also issued a Special Report on the FRIT. The ECA concluded that all the audited humanitarian projects helped refugees to meet their needs, mainly through the cash-based assistance, but also that the Facility could achieve more value for money and efforts had to be made towards better coordination and monitoring.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.4.3. ADDITIONAL 3 BILLION PACKAGE (2021-2024)

In June 2021, the European Council - after a first such request was made in March 2021<sup>89</sup> - called on the European Commission “to put forward without delay formal proposals for the continuation of financing for Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and other parts of the region, in line with the statement of the Members of the European Council of March 2021 and within the context of the EU’s overall migration policy.”<sup>90</sup> In response, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced **an additional 3 billion Euro package to support refugees in Turkey until 2024**, as part of a broader package for continued EU support to Syrian refugees in the region.<sup>91</sup> As part of this additional 3 billion Euro package, the European Commission has made two major allocations in December 2021:

- On **2 December 2021**, the European Commission announced that it had allocated 325 million Euro to extend the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme until early 2023.<sup>92</sup>
- On **21 December 2021**, the European Commission announced two new financing decisions, for an overall amount of 560 million Euro. Under the first decision, 530 million Euro is allocated for measures to support quality inclusive education for refugees (including a fourth phase of CCTE and a third phase of PIKTES). Under the second decision, 30 million Euro is allocated for “measures to support migration and border management”, including the “management of reception and hosting centres” and the “continuation of EU direct support to the Presidency for Migration Management (PMM), as foreseen in the EU-Turkey 2016 statement.” As stated by European Commissioner Varhelyi, this money will be used to “provide financing to the authorities to address migratory challenges and increase border protection, not least in view of the evolving situation at the Eastern border of Turkey”.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.5. EU INVOLVEMENT IN FORCED RETURNS

According to Turkey’s Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), as of January 2022 Turkey operates 25 “removal centres” (with a total capacity for 15.908 people), in addition to one “reception and accommodation centre” in Yozgat (capacity for 100 people).<sup>94</sup> Refugees and asylum-seekers can also be detained in ad hoc detention sites near the borders, holding rooms in airports, and police stations:<sup>95</sup>

- **Removal centres** in Adana, Agri, Ankara, Antalya, Aydin, Bursa, Çanakkale, Cankiri, Edirne, Erzurum 1, Erzurum 2, Gaziantep (Oguzeli), Hatay, Istanbul (Binkılıç), Istanbul (Silivri), Istanbul (Tuzla-Konteyner), Izmir, Kayseri, Kırklareli (Pehlivan köy), Kocaeli, Malatya, Mugla, Van (Kurubas) , Igdir (temporary), and Malatya (temporary). The Global Detention Project has further observed additional removal centres in Van (Tusba), Osmaniye (Düzici) and Kırıkkale that are no longer listed on the PMM website, but for which it is unclear if they are still operational or not. Furthermore, several new facilities in Adana, Balıkesir, Kütahya, Nigde, and Sanliurfa are planned to open with EU support.<sup>96</sup>
- Detention facilities in the following **airports**: Sabiha Gokcen, Ankara Esenboga, Izmir Adnan Menderes, and New Istanbul Airport.<sup>97</sup>

- **Ad hoc detention sites**, including military and gendarmerie outposts, near the Turkish-Syrian border.<sup>98</sup>
- **Police stations**, in particular in cities close to the Aegean and Mediterranean coastlines, where people who have been arrested during attempted sea crossings are being detained, prior to their transfer to a removal centre or forced return from Turkey.<sup>99</sup>

According to reports by rights groups, in the past years **thousands of refugees in Turkey have been forced to sign “voluntary return” forms, before being returned to Syria.**<sup>100</sup> The NGO Syrians for Truth and Justice claims that Turkish authorities deported up to 155,000 Syrian refugees to Syria between 2019 and 2021.<sup>101</sup> NGO reports have documented how Syrian refugees, including Syrians who possess a “kimlik”, have been mistreated by Turkish security forces or denied access to medical care in such removal centres, before being forced to sign a “voluntary return” form. NGOs additionally collected testimonies showing that Syrians were tricked into signing voluntary return documents. For example, to get Syrian refugees to sign voluntary return documents, they were led to believe that they had to sign a document to register, to confirm the proper reception of a sheet in a detention centre, or even to confirm that they wanted to stay in Turkey. In some cases, Syrian refugees were forced to sign a document that they were not allowed to read, or forced to choose between “voluntary” return or indefinite detention in Turkey.<sup>102</sup> After their forced return, many Syrians have also been detained and mistreated by the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) or Al Qaida-affiliated Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS).<sup>103</sup>

In February 2022 media reported that Turkish authorities arrested and deported up to 150 Syrian refugees from Istanbul to rebel-held northern Syria. Videos shared on social media show young Syrians in Turkish detention centres stating that they have legal residence papers, work permits, families in Turkey, or are enrolled in local universities.<sup>104</sup> The Global Detention Project has further noted how observers have reported **poor conditions in Turkish detention centres, in addition to persistent overcrowding, lack of medical care, and failure to provide detainees access to legal assistance.**<sup>105</sup> *“Turkish state officers use unlawful techniques to force the signature on “voluntary” return forms in order to manipulate, deny and block appeals that question the voluntariness of returns and the violation of the non-refoulement principle”,* a 2021 report by Euromed Rights has also stated in this regard.<sup>106</sup>

Similarly, reports from the Asylum Information Database (AIDA, a database managed by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles), has stated that persons who refuse to sign “voluntary return” forms are threatened with one-year administrative detention, or have been subject to physical violence and other forms of ill-treatment. According to AIDA, there is **no UNHCR supervision over voluntary returns that take place from removal centres.**<sup>107</sup> UNHCR claims that it has observed the voluntary return processing of some 120,000 individuals who have decided to spontaneously return to Syria since 2016.<sup>108</sup> However, several reports point to the lack of access of the UNHCR and NGOs to Turkish detention and removal centres, which calls into question the UNHCR’s capacity to verify that all return movements were indeed voluntary.<sup>109</sup>

Investigations by the Global Detention Project (GDP) and investigative journalist Melvyn Ingleby have highlighted how **such practices took place in removal centres that have received financial support from the EU’s Facility for Refugees in Turkey.**<sup>110</sup> According to the most recent Facility’s annual progress report, two “migration management” projects have been funded under the first tranche (2016-2017), for an overall amount of 80 million Euro. A first project (20 million Euro) was aimed at *“enhancing the capacity of the Turkish Coast Guard to carry out search and rescue operations”*, while a second project (60 million



Euro) provided direct support to the Turkish Directorate General for Migration Management (now: Presidency for Migration Management, PMM) for its management of removal centres. Both projects have been completed by the end of 2019.<sup>111</sup>

The EU support of migration management in Turkey **poses serious risks to complicity in human rights abuses**. Ngo's and media have reported on violent behaviour by the Turkish coast guard.<sup>112</sup> The Global Detention Project, in a report issued in October 2021, has been scathing about the **continued involvement of the EU in the detention (and subsequent return) of refugees and asylum-seekers**. According to the GDP:



*The controversial 2016 EU-Turkey refugee deal expanded Turkey's detention estate with the help of EU funding and has subsequently led to an increase in detentions and summary deportations of refugees and asylum seekers (...) EU support has bolstered the number and capacity of detention facilities, or removal centres. Indeed, in 2018, the country's detention capacity in removal centres doubled. Six facilities originally intended for reception of international protection applicants, made possible through EU funding, were later "re-purposed to serve as removal centres" after the EU-Turkey Action Plan on Migration and EU-Turkey deal (...) Seven facilities are also planned to open with EU support (the Directorate General for Migration Management's (DGMM) website refers to them as "EU project centres.".)<sup>113</sup>*

In response to the announcement, in June 2021, that the EU would earmark a portion of its future funding to refugees in Turkey for projects that would strengthen migration management and border controls, the Global Detention Project has further commented that this "could result in more illegal pushbacks and forced returns at the border."<sup>114</sup>

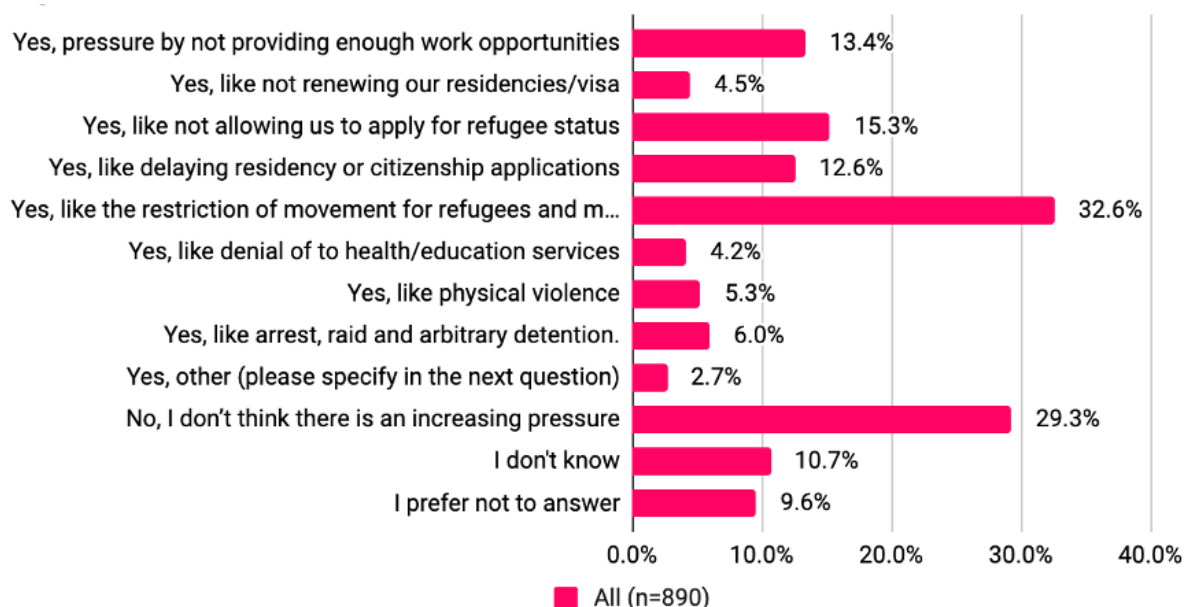
## 4. SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY: DATA FINDINGS

### 4.1. PRESSURE TO RETURN AND FORCED DEPORTATIONS

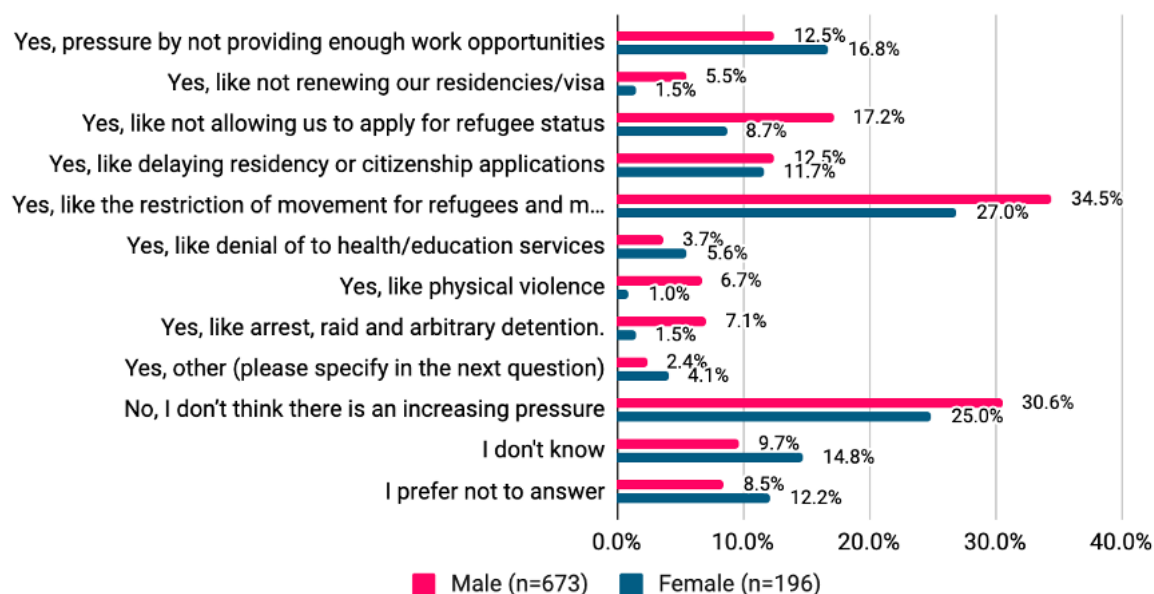
When asked, "Do you think there is increasing pressure by the Turkish authorities on Syrians to leave Turkey, in the past 3 to 6 months?", **50.6 percent of Syrian respondents reported an increasing pressure from Turkish authorities to leave Turkey (48.0 percent of women and 51.2 percent of men)**. The main pressure that Syrians experience relates to restrictions on movement (32.6 percent). 6 percent of respondents also reported arrests, raids or arbitrary detentions, while 5.3 percent reported physical violence.<sup>115</sup> These restrictions or hazards can be experienced both as direct and indirect pressure to push people to return to Syria.

When it comes to providing job opportunities and education, more female respondents (16.8 percent) than male respondents (12.5 percent) think the pressure has increased. On the other hand, only 2.5 percent of Syrian women reported pressure related to physical violence and arrest, compared to 11.8 percent of men.

**Figure 7: “Do you think there has been increasing pressure by the Turkish authorities on Syrians to leave Turkey, in the past 3 to 6 months?”**

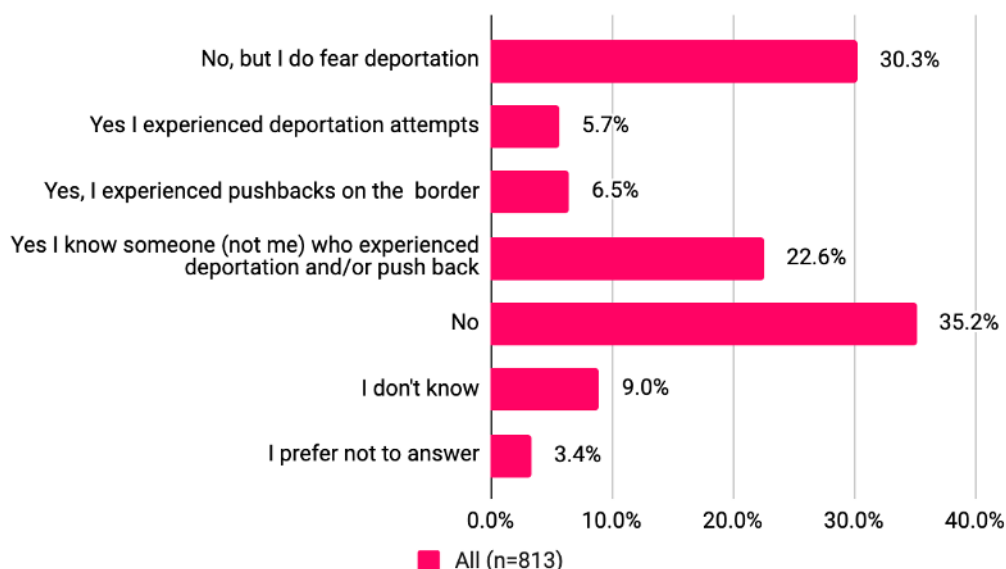


**Figure 8: “Do you think there has been increasing pressure by the Turkish authorities on Syrians to leave Turkey, in the past 3 to 6 months?” Breakdown by gender**



When asked, “*Did you or someone you know (relative or a friend) experience deportation and/or push back on the border?*”, **30.3 percent of Syrian respondents answered that they fear their deportation**, even though they did not (yet) experience deportation and/or push back. **22.6 percent of Syrians also know others who have experienced deportation and/or push backs** on the border, while **5.7 and 6.5 percent of respondents, respectively, stated that they have experienced deportation attempts or pushbacks themselves** in the past.

**Figure 9: “Did you or someone you know (relative or a friend) experience deportation and/or push back on the border?”**



When respondents were asked, “*Do you have information on the deportation process? How did it happen, and where? Do you know of cases where people were forced to sign “voluntary” return forms?*” (as an open answer question), **14 percent of respondents stated that either they have been forced to sign “voluntary return forms” themselves, or that they know people who had been forced to do so.** All these respondents were male, none of the female respondents reported having been forced to sign voluntary return forms.



***They forced me to sign the voluntary return paper, in the detention centre in Izmir, a region called Harmande. They used to beat us away from the cameras, so that they wouldn't be held accountable. We were detained for a reason we don't know.” - Syrian, male -***

***I was forced to sign a voluntary return form at the Department of Immigration Administration two years ago. I was deported because I called the police and gave them information about a person belonging to a terrorist group. The police arrested me and deported me within two days without bringing charges or even being brought to court.” - Syrian, male -***

***In June 2021, I was deported by the Turkish authorities, and they forcibly deported me. By God, I did not want to return, but under torture, they let me sign a voluntary return paper and denied me entry to Turkey for five years.” - Syrian, male -***

***My son was arrested by the Turkish authorities and detained for 55 days and an arbitrary deportation decision was issued against him”***  
- Syrian, female -

Finally, when asked: “Do you see a different treatment of female refugees versus males when it comes to deportation?”, **22.0 percent of respondents stated that women are treated better than men. Interestingly, more men (24.5 percent) than women (15.0 percent) think that, while 30.5 percent do not think there is a different treatment (31.6 percent male, 25 percent female).** 40.8 percent of respondents answered, “I don’t know” (more women (50.6 percent) than men (37.9 percent)) and only 2.5 percent of respondents stated that women are treated more badly than men.

**Figure 10: “Do you see a different treatment of female refugees versus males when it comes to deportation?”**

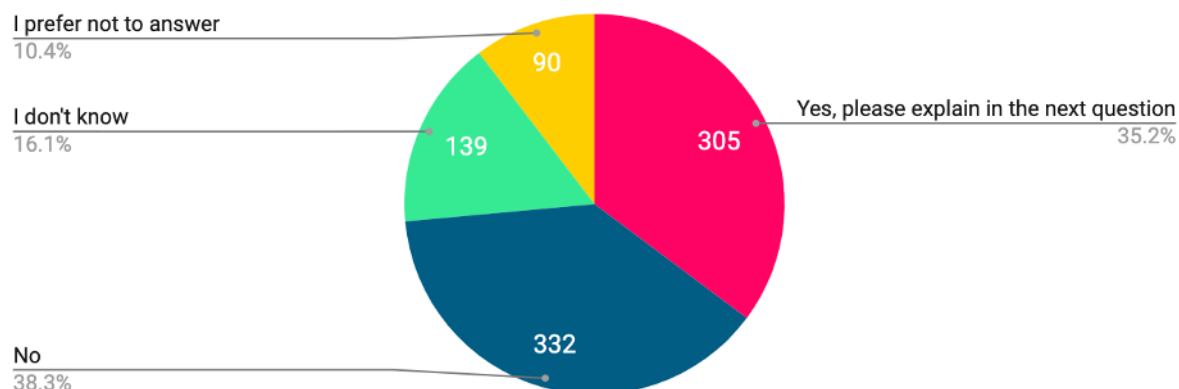
	All (800)	Male (604)	Female (180)
Yes women are treated more badly than men	2.5%	2.8%	1.7%
Yes women are treated better than men	22.0%	24.5%	15.0%
No	30.5%	31.6%	25.6%
I don't know	40.8%	37.9%	50.6%
I prefer not to answer	4.3%	3.1%	7.2%

## 4.2. SOCIAL TENSIONS

### 4.2.1. MAIN DATA FINDINGS

Social tensions between Syrian individuals and host communities have sharply increased in Turkey in recent years. When asked “Have you experienced an increase in tension between refugee/ migrant communities and host communities in Turkey over the past 3-6 months?”, **35.2 percent of Syrian respondents felt that there are more social tensions with Turkish host communities, while 38.3 percent reported that this is not the case.** A quarter of the answers came as either “I don’t know (16 percent)” or “I prefer not to answer (10.4 percent)”, which might indicate the sensitivity of the question. There is no difference between female and male answers regarding the tension between Syrians and host communities.

**Figure 11: “Have you experienced an increase in tension between refugee/ migrant communities and host communities in Turkey over the past 3-6 months?”**



When we asked to please explain what kind of tension, some precise quotes indicated the increasing tension or the emerging tension that was not there before:



***The overall mood among the population has changed. There are the obstructions to students' registration, the attacks on Syrians and accusations.*** - Syrian, male -

***The treatment of Turkish neighbours has changed for the worst. I am worried about the presence of our children in the streets***” - Syrian, female -

***Yes, the tension in Turkish streets during the past three months was very present on all sides. As well as the increasing racist tone from Turks***” - Syrian, male -

#### 4.2.2. FINDINGS BY OTHER SURVEYS

The above findings are **in line with other public opinion surveys and research reports, which have clearly shown an increasingly hostile public and political climate towards Syrian refugees** (as well as other foreigners) in Turkey.<sup>116</sup> For example, a recent research report by local civil society organizations working with Syrian refugees in Turkey has documented how xenophobia and racism have become a daily reality for many Syrians in Turkey. *“The source of hostile and racist discourses does not originate from lived experiences or daily encounters, but from discourses and representations of politicians and media as well as content with unknown origin but repeated and circulated in social media. Therefore, alternative discourse should be developed and content should be produced against racist, xenophobic and discriminatory ones”,* the study states.<sup>117</sup>



Public opinion surveys confirm the increasingly negative perception that Turkish citizens have about Syrian refugees. In the 2021 “Turkey Trends” survey, which is based on interviews with 1.000 persons in 26 Turkish provinces, the **“refugee issue” was ranked the second most important concern among the Turkish public**. The most important issue remained “economic problems” (22.7 percent), followed by the refugee issue (17.9 percent, from 6 percent in 2020 and 3.7 percent in 2019) and the “coronavirus pandemic” (7.3 percent). Other findings regarding refugees include<sup>118</sup>:

- The number of people who expressed general discontent with refugees increased from 55.2 percent in 2020 to **68.9 percent** in 2021.
- **79.4** and **77.5** percent of respondents, respectively, agreed with statements that Syrian refugees are *“increasing unemployment due to cheap illegal labour”* and *“Syrian refugees become a problem due to their inclination towards crime”*; **77 percent** of respondents think that Syrian refugees are *“consuming scarce resources”*; and **74 percent** is *“bothered”* with the *“privileges accorded to Syrian refugees.”*
- **76.6 percent** thinks that *“all Syrian refugees should be repatriated.”*
- **65.3 percent** would not approve if his/her child would marry a refugee or asylum-seeker.
- The rate of people who expressed dissatisfaction with the government's Syria policies rose to **38.1 percent**, from 23.6 percent in 2020.

Other surveys have shown a similar picture. The “Dimensions of Polarization in Turkey 2020” survey, published by the Istanbul Bilgi University in late 2020, found that **86 percent** of respondents wanted Syrian refugees living in Turkey to go back to Syria.<sup>119</sup> The “Syrian Barometer 2019”, published in July 2020, included several alarming findings as well:

- When asked what is the most appropriate expression to describe Syrians, the most frequent answer by Turkish respondents (**42 percent**) was that *“they are dangerous people who will cause us a lot of troubles in the future”*. This while in the Syrian Barometer 2017, the top answer (57.8 percent) to the same question was that Syrians are *“victims who escaped persecution/war.”*<sup>120</sup>
- In the 2019 Barometer, more than half of respondents indicated their reluctance to the idea that their children would enrol to the same school as Syrian children (**52 percent**), the idea that they would have to work with Syrians in the same workplace (**56.3 percent**), the idea that some Syrian families would settle down in their neighbourhood (**59.4 percent**), or the idea that they would have to live together with a Syrian in the same building (**60.4 percent**).
- **81.5 percent** of respondents would not allow his/her children to marry a Syrian, while **61.1 percent** disagree with the idea that they could become friends with a Syrian refugee.<sup>121</sup>
- **74.1 percent** of respondents in the 2019 Syrian Barometer expressed concerns that Syrians will harm the Turkish economy; **65 percent** that Syrian refugees will strip Turkish people from their jobs; **70.3 percent** that the quality/delivery of public services would decrease because of Syrians; and **68.8 percent** that Syrians will harm Turkish society.<sup>122</sup>



A similar pattern can be found in a social cohesion survey published by the World Food Programme's Turkey office in July 2020. Additional findings of this survey included the following<sup>123</sup>:

- **45 percent** of Turkish respondents believed that the presence of Syrians has affected the cost of living in their neighbourhood.
- **47 percent** of Turkish respondents thought that the presence of Syrians has resulted in higher crime rates in their neighbourhood. The discrepancy between reality and perception is however obvious when consulting official government figures, which state that Syrian refugees were only involved in 1.46 percent of crimes committed in Turkey between January and September 2018 (down from 1.53 percent in 2017). Syrians make up around 4.5 percent of the population in Turkey.

#### **4.2.3. INCREASE IN VIOLENT ATTACKS**

This changing public attitude has led to a significant increase in xenophobic rhetoric in the public discourse, including on social media and in political campaigns, and in attacks against Syrian refugees and their property<sup>124</sup>. Major violent incidents that took place in recent months include:

- **11 August 2021:** violent clashes took place in Altindag, a large neighbourhood in the capital Ankara. After an 18-year old Turkish citizen was killed in a fight between Syrians and Turkish people, hundreds of protesters took to the streets and violently attacked Syrian shops, restaurants, homes and cars.<sup>125</sup>
- **30 September 2021:** Syrian houses in Izmir were attacked and/or set on fire, after the killing of a young Turkish man by a Syrian refugee. The approximately 120 Syrian families in the area fled their houses, and have not returned since.<sup>126</sup>
- In the second half **of October 2021**, several Syrians were arrested and detained in Izmir and Istanbul for posting online videos in which they eat bananas. Such videos were a response to another video in which a Turkish citizen is complaining that he cannot afford to buy bananas, while Syrians "*are buying kilos of bananas*" and are "*living comfortably*".<sup>127</sup>
- **16 November 2021:** a Turkish man set fire to a building where three Syrian refugees were sleeping, resulting in the death of all three Syrians.<sup>128</sup>
- **9 January 2022:** a violent mob stormed several Syrian businesses in Istanbul's Esenyurt neighbourhood.<sup>129</sup>
- **10 January 2022:** a group of Turkish men broke into the house of a young Syrian refugee in Istanbul, and stabbed him to death.<sup>130</sup>

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### 4.3. DISCRIMINATION

When asked “Do you feel you have a specific vulnerability when it comes to your gender/identity or other? If yes please provide an example/example?” **40 percent of respondents confirmed that this is indeed the case.**

The answer that was reported the most was that **simply being a Syrian already puts the respondents in a vulnerable position.** Whether they have mastered the Turkish language or have work opportunities, Syrians in Turkey feel that they are treated unfairly due to their Syrian identity. Below are some quotes to illustrate this point:

“ **Just because I am of Syrian nationality, I am subjected to racism’**  
- Syrian, male -

**The Syrian identity has become badly treated, and many real estate owners refuse to rent to Syrians’** - Syrian, male -

In addition to this, **three respondents with a disability** described that their condition, plus being a refugee, makes it hard for them to cope in Turkey:

“ **Yes, there is a weak point because of my illness. I lost my right eye because of the war we have in Syria and because of the pressure of work in Turkey, I suffer from an inguinal hernia, so life has become very difficult for me’** - Syrian, male -

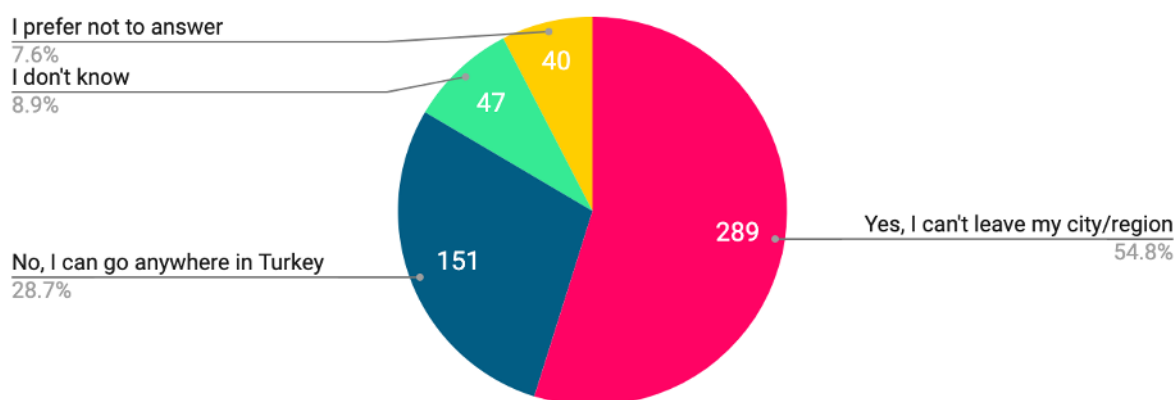
### 4.4. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

As explained in section 3.3, the mobility of Syrian refugees in Turkey is significantly restricted. Under the Temporary Protection system, Syrians living in Turkey are required to reside in the province of their registration, temporary accommodation centre or in a certain province determined by the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM); and to obtain a travel permission document from the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) if they wish to travel outside of their province of registration.<sup>131</sup>

**Recent policy changes, announced by the Turkish government in February 2022, threaten to further limit Syrians’ freedom of movement in Turkey.** In response to the rapid increase in social tensions, the Turkish government has introduced a new 25 percent quota for foreigners in districts. In places where the number of foreigners is currently higher, refugees will be relocated to other locations. In accordance with this new policy, 16 provinces (including Istanbul, Ankara and Hatay) have announced that they will no longer be issuing residencies for newly arrived foreigners. The new policy has already been piloted in places like Altindag (Ankara) where, according to Turkish government officials, over 4.500 Syrians have been relocated to other areas following the violent clashes that took place in August 2021. Since then, 309 abandoned buildings have also been demolished in Altindag, while 177 businesses were closed.<sup>132</sup>

When asked: “Do you face any movement restrictions in Turkey (i.e. to travel to other regions if you want to)?”, **half of the Syrian respondents (54.8 percent) reported not being allowed to leave their area of residency** due to movement restrictions, while 28.7 percent of respondents stated that they do not experience such restrictions.

**Figure 12: “Do you face any movement restrictions in Turkey (i.e. to travel to other regions if you want to)?”**



When asked: “Were you able to register yourself in Turkey (i.e. Do you have a Kimlik / Turkish ID number)?”, **the overwhelming majority of Syrian respondents (92.2 percent) both men and women, reported they were able to register themselves in Turkey.**

Below are some quotes to illustrate the freedom of movement challenges that Syrian refugees in Turkey face:



**Syrians cannot travel to another province without specific conditions, and the requirements are to have relatives from the first degree in the other governorate. This causes me a constraint in my field of work”.**

- Syrian, male -

**We need a travel permit, and the permission is almost impossible to obtain, especially in key places such as Istanbul”** - Syrian, male -

**I am in the ninth month of pregnancy and I cannot enter the hospital because I do not have Kimlik or the money”** - Syrian, female -

**There is no travel permission to visit my sisters who live outside my province. The answer always comes with a refusal, and I cannot move to live in the same state in which my family resides.”** - Syrian, female -

**We, as persons with Kimlik, are not entitled to move between provinces without a travel permit. When a request for a travel permit is submitted, the response comes with a refusal”** - Syrian, male -

**To the cities that need a travel permit, you can only travel there by smuggling”** - Syrian, male -

## 4.5. EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

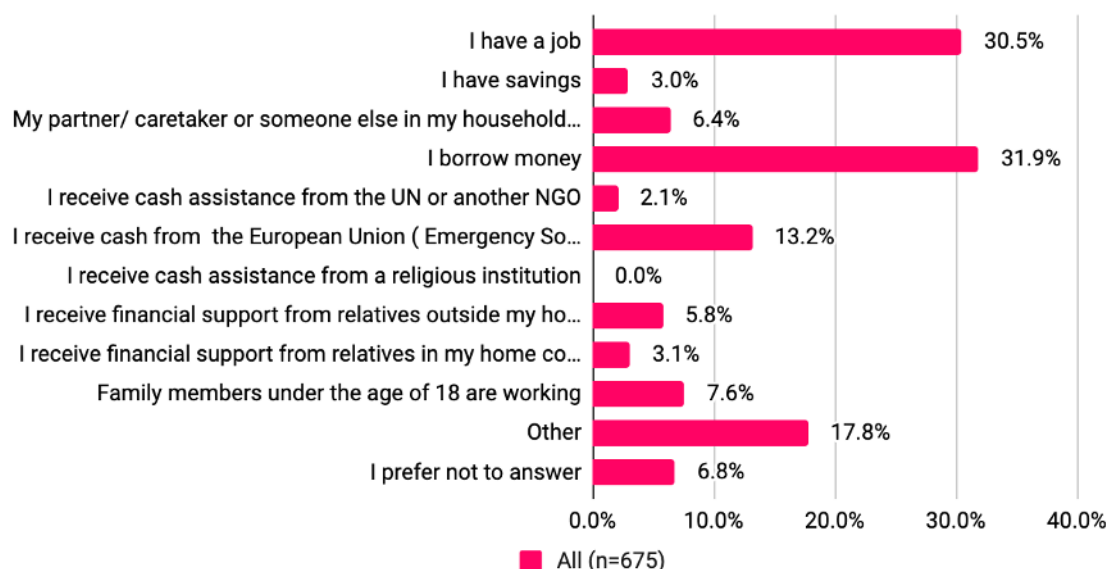
When asked “*Were you able to cover basic needs?*” **74 percent of Syrian respondents (77.8 of women and 73.0 percent of men) said that they are not able to cover basic household necessities and needs.**

To follow up we asked: “*What is currently your main source of income?*”. The answers indicate that the **main source of income for Syrian respondents is borrowing money (31.9 percent), followed by having a job (30.5 percent).** 13.2 percent of respondents also answered that they receive cash assistance from the European Union, through the **Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN)** programme.

Yet, when breaking down the numbers by gender, 38.1 percent of men have jobs compared to only **6.6 percent of Syrian women.** Nevertheless, one-fifth of the women (21.2 percent) stated that their partners have jobs.<sup>133</sup> These findings are in line with findings on pressure that are outlined above: relatively more female respondents have experienced decreased job and educational opportunities.

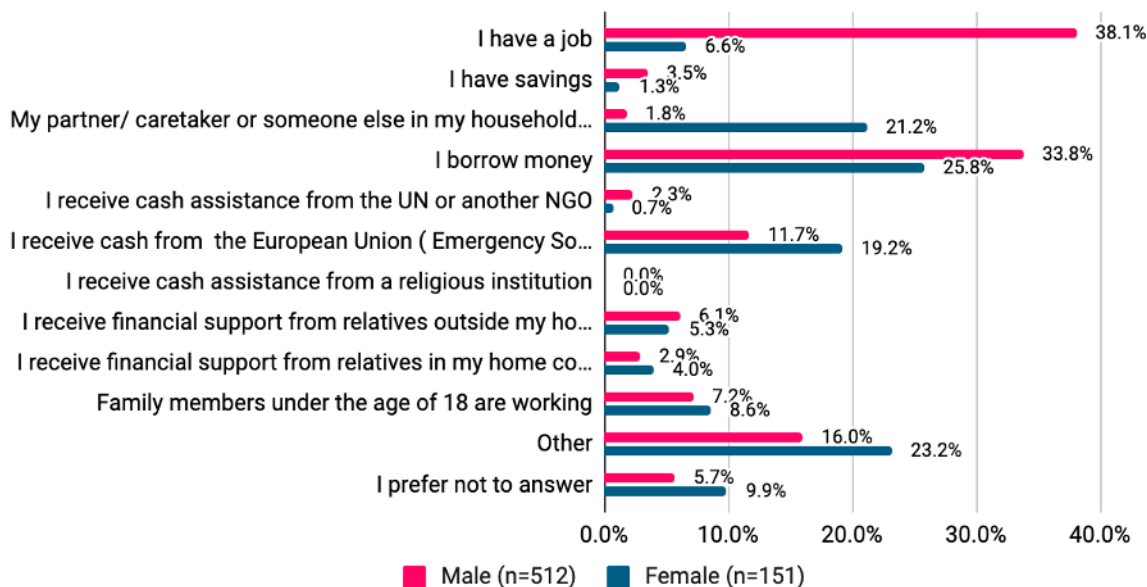
When it comes to receiving assistance from the European Union, more women declared that they receive assistance: 19.9 percent compared to 11.7 percent of men.

**Figure 13: “What is currently your main source of income? (You may give up to three answers)”**



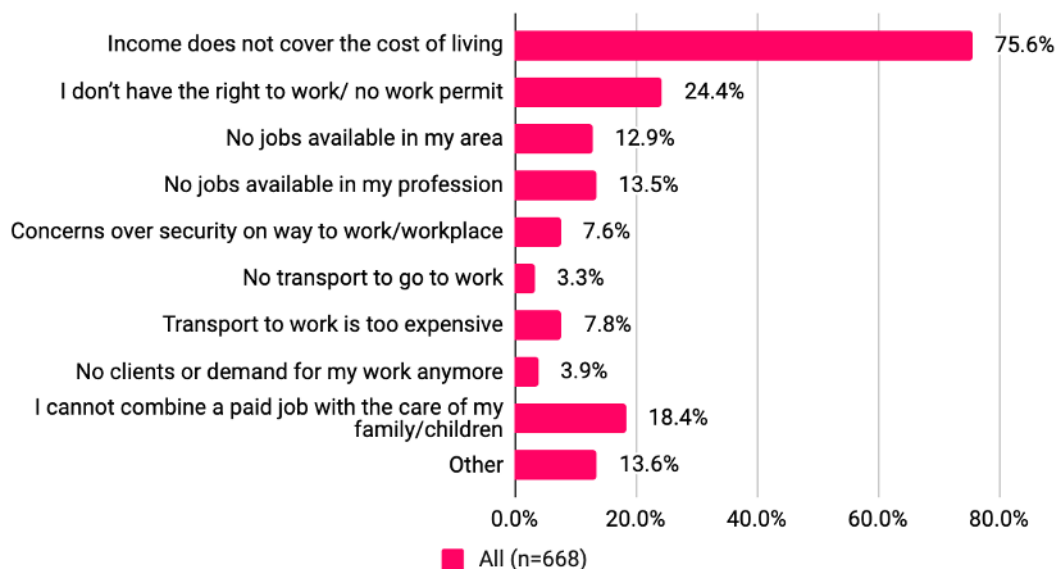


**Figure 14: “What is currently your main source of income? (You may give up to three answers)” Breakdown by gender**



Regarding the question “What are the major challenges you currently face with regard to your livelihood?”, the **biggest livelihood challenge** was by far **“income does not cover the cost of living”** (75.6 percent). The second and third most important challenges reported were **“no work permit”** (24.4 percent) and **“not being able to combine a paid job with the care of family/children”** (18.4 percent). The latter was reported considerably more by women (31.8 percent).

**Figure 15: “What are the major challenges you currently face with regard to your livelihood?”**

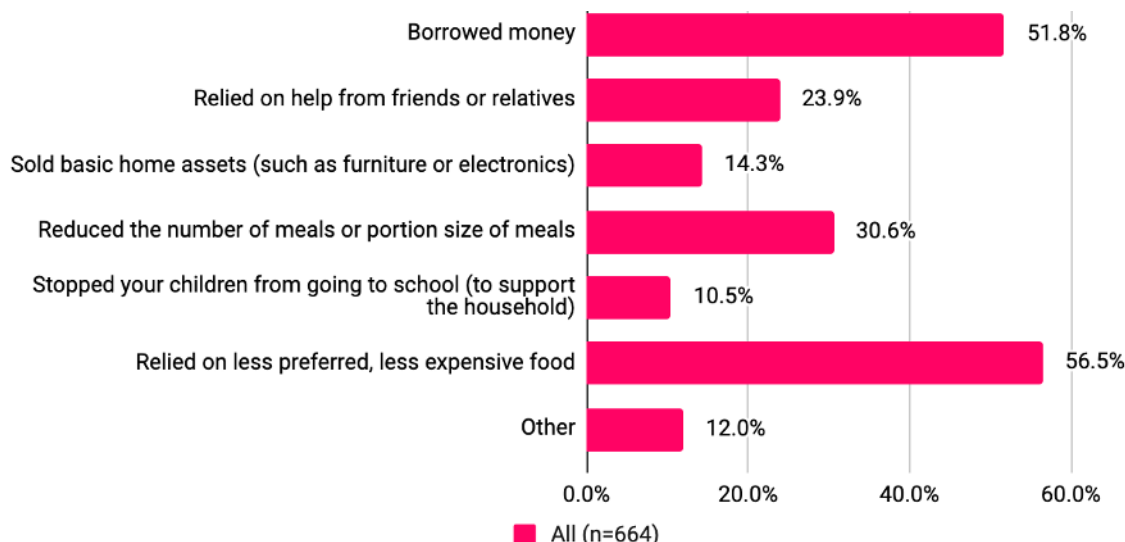


## ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

Even though close to 3.7 million Syrians are currently under temporary protection in Turkey, only 63,789 Syrians had been issued work permits by 2019 (the most recent year for which publicly accessible data are available). 93 percent of work permits for Syrians were granted to men and only 7 percent to women. The Syrian Barometer report estimates that 1.4 million Syrians were employed in 2019, nearly 95 percent of them in the informal sector.<sup>134</sup>

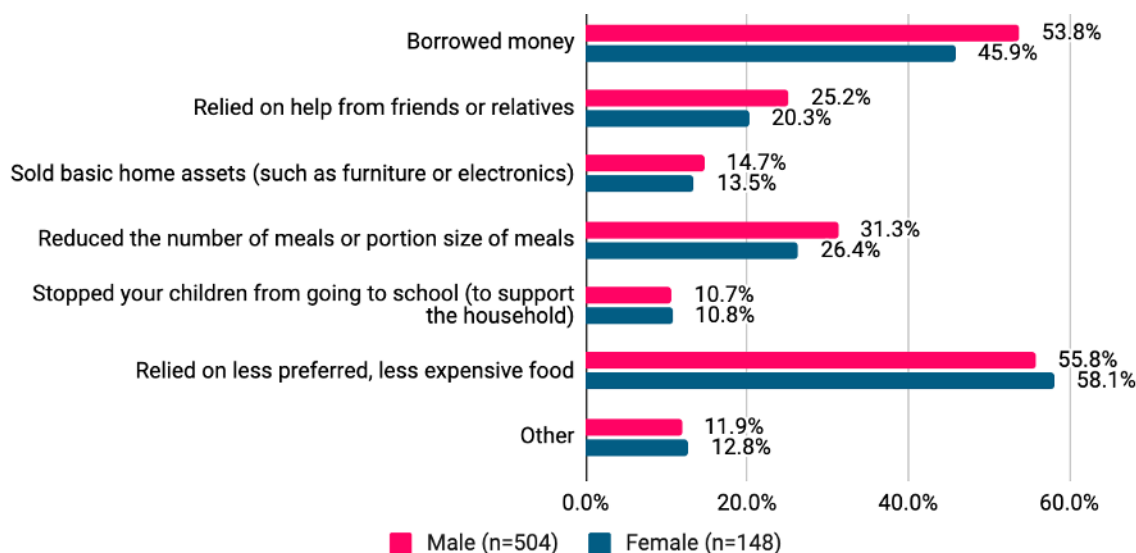
When asked about **which coping strategies they have employed to deal with a lack of food or money to buy food**, Syrian respondents have relied on less preferred, less expensive food (56.7 percent), have borrowed money (51.8 percent) or have reduced the number of meals or portion size of meals (30.6 percent). When examining the gender breakdown, we found that Syrian men and women had to employ the same strategies to deal with the shortage of basic needs.

**Figure 16: “Have you had to employ one of the below strategies to cope with a lack of food or money to buy food in the past month?”**



**Figure 17: “Have you had to employ one of the below strategies to cope with a lack of food or money to buy food in the past month?” Breakdown by gender**

### 4.5.1 FINDINGS BY OTHER SURVEYS



The above findings correspond with other surveys that indicate a deteriorating socioeconomic situation for Syrian refugees in Turkey.

A survey (December 2021) by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Turkish Red Crescent Society (the implementing partners of the ESSN) among 5,148 households indicates a deterioration among ESSN recipient and non-recipient households, despite a median increase of income compared to 2020. The increase in income, mainly due to the end of lockdowns, did not compensate for the increase in expenditure. About 93 percent of ESSN recipient and 80 percent of the non-recipient households do not earn enough to cover their monthly expenditure. 80 percent of ESSN applicant households adopted debt as a coping strategy.<sup>135</sup>

Other studies have also shown the particular challenges that Syrian and Turkish women face in terms of access to the labour market and livelihoods. They often have to work in low-paid and uninsured jobs, while they are often the sole responsible for providing childcare and are facing patriarchal social norms. This is in a general context where public services providing child care are very limited, and where the Temporary Protection Regime for Syrian refugees has created and maintained informal employment conditions that make Syrians vulnerable for exploitation.<sup>136</sup> Economic factors, as well as the COVID-19 crisis, further negatively affect women's (future) access to jobs, education and livelihoods. As stated in a recent research report by local CSOs working with Syrian refugees in Turkey:



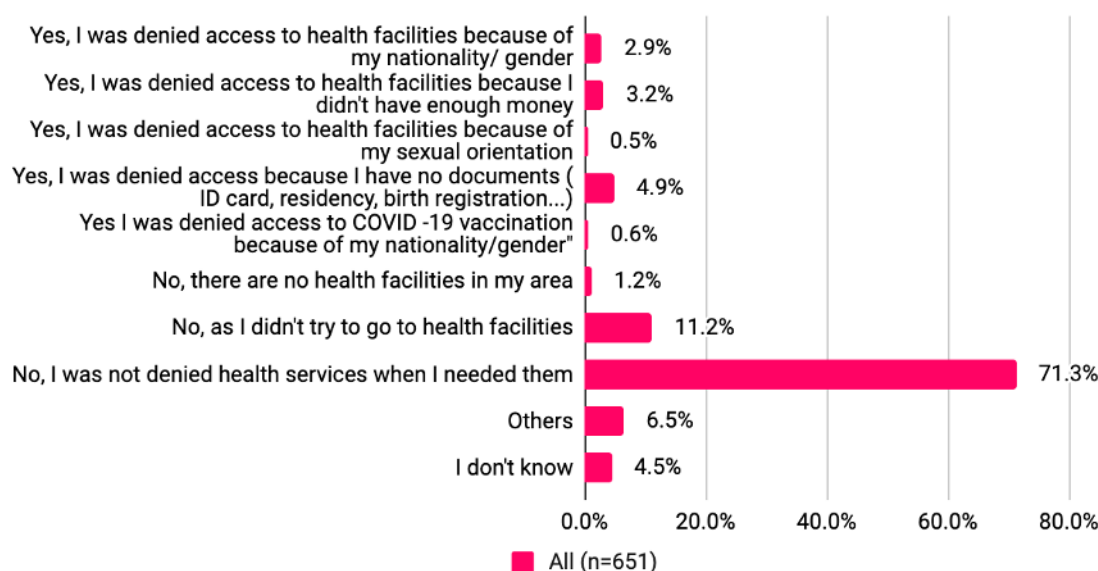
*Increasing unemployment in Turkey, especially the increase in youth unemployment, causes education not to be considered as a factor that will provide vertical social mobility for young people. Therefore, families seem to have given up insisting on having their children educated for a better future, since education is an expensive business, but ultimately does not provide financial income and does not bring to work in professional jobs. Especially Turkish families think that a good marriage for girls and getting a job at an early age for boys is the best opportunity for their children's future. In addition (...), the number of children and youth dropping out of education due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is another common problem for both Turkish and Syrians.<sup>137</sup>*

## 4.6. HEALTHCARE AND COVID-19

During the conversation, all respondents were presented with the question: “Have you been denied health services (including COVID vaccination) over the last 6 months?”. **The large majority of the Syrian respondents (71.3) stated that they have not been denied access to health care services.**

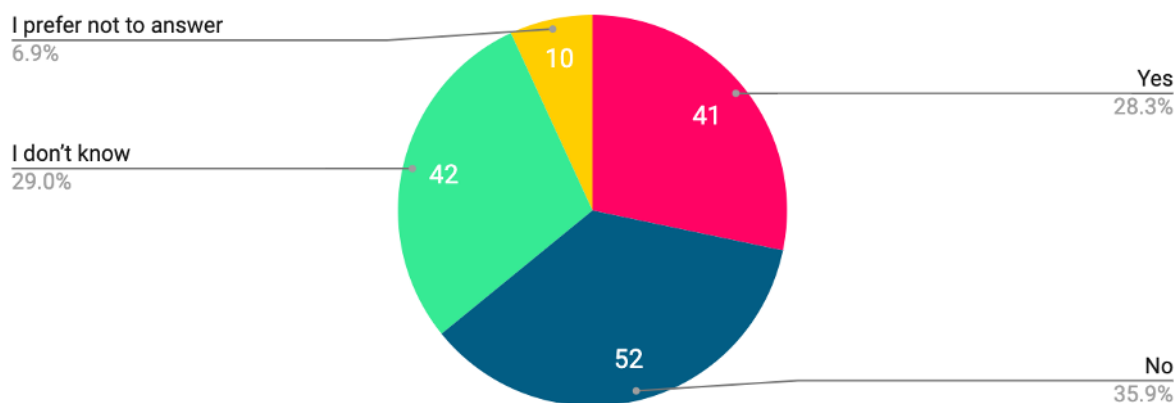
4.9 percent indicated that they were denied access because of a lack of personal documents, while **only 0.6 percent of Syrians answered that they were denied access to COVID-19 vaccination** because of their nationality or gender. None of them were female.

**Figure 18: “Have you been denied health services (including Covid vaccination) over the last 6 months?”**



Female respondents were asked an additional question regarding access to safe, affordable, and accessible sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care services. **35.9 percent** of Syrian female respondents **reported that they do not have access to SRH care services, while 28.3 percent feel they have sufficient access to these services.** A significant percentage of respondents (29 percent) are unaware of whether they have sufficient access, which might indicate that the lack of access is likely larger than the above reported.

**Figure 19: “Do you have access to safe, affordable, and accessible sexual and reproductive health care services?” (asked to female respondents only)**



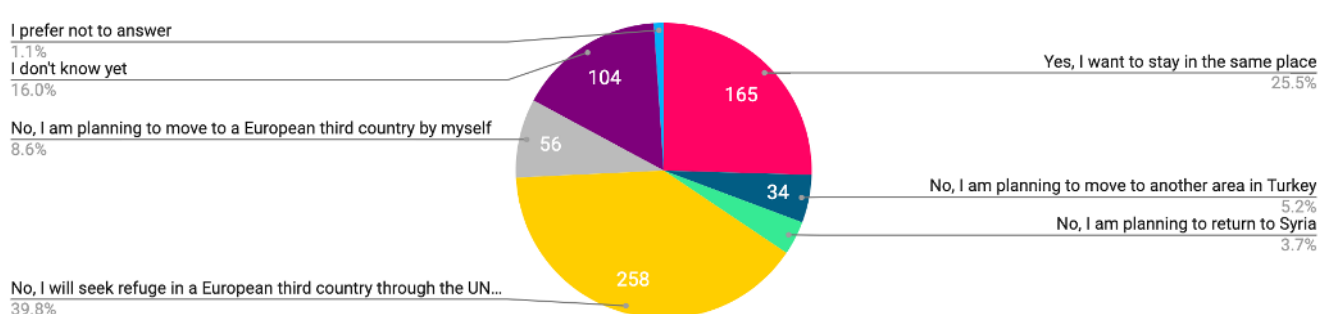
## 4.7. PROSPECTS ON RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

When asked “*Do you plan to stay in the same place in the coming 6 months?*”, **almost 40 percent of Syrian respondents answered that they want to seek refuge in a European third country through the UN resettlement program.** 25.5 percent of respondents stated that they want to stay in Turkey, while 16 percent do not know yet what to do in the coming six months. Another 8.6 percent of respondents indicated that they want to try to move to a European third country, without relying on the UN resettlement program (however, only 2.2 percent of female respondents said they would like to move to Europe by themselves). Finally, **only 3.7 percent of respondents said that they are planning to return to Syria** in the next six months.<sup>138</sup>

In terms of resettlement opportunities, it should be noted that the **possibility of resettlement to a third country has become less and less available for Syrian refugees in Turkey** (as is the case with Syrian refugees in the broader region). Resettlement to third countries reached a record low in 2020, with only 9,377 Syrian refugees being resettled, less than 0.2 percent of the total number of Syrian refugees. As of early 2021, UNHCR estimated that 579,031 Syrian refugees were in need of resettlement.<sup>139</sup> Around 402,000 refugees are estimated to be in need of resettlement in Turkey.<sup>140</sup> However, in the period between 1 January and 31 December 2021, only 17,519 Syrian refugees (including 5,608 Syrian refugees residing in Turkey) were resettled to third countries.<sup>141</sup>

The limited number of resettlement is also resulting in increased pressures on neighbouring host countries. In November 2021, for example, the United Nations’ Syria Regional Needs Overview 2022 has warned that “*given that the resettlement needs far outnumber the resettlement spaces (...) vulnerable refugees remain in host countries for longer, and result in increased pressure on assistance programmes and vital services.*”<sup>142</sup>

**Figure 20: “Do you plan to stay in the same place in the coming 6 months?”**





For those who reported they wanted to stay, a follow-up question was posed: **“Can you please explain why you want to stay in Turkey?”**

Respondents provided the following reasons (in order of significance): 1) they have a better and safer life in Turkey than in Syria (26 percent); 2) there is no other option for them to go anywhere else (21 percent); 3) they are integrated (work, school etc.) (18 percent), and 4) they love Turkey for its hospitality, respect and humanity (16 percent). Some quotes below further illustrate the provided reasons:



***From my point of view, Turkey is the only country that has hosted Syrians fairly well, and living in this country is better than the rest of the countries that have received Syrians. I learned the Turkish language and worked and provided for my family.”*** - Syrian, male -

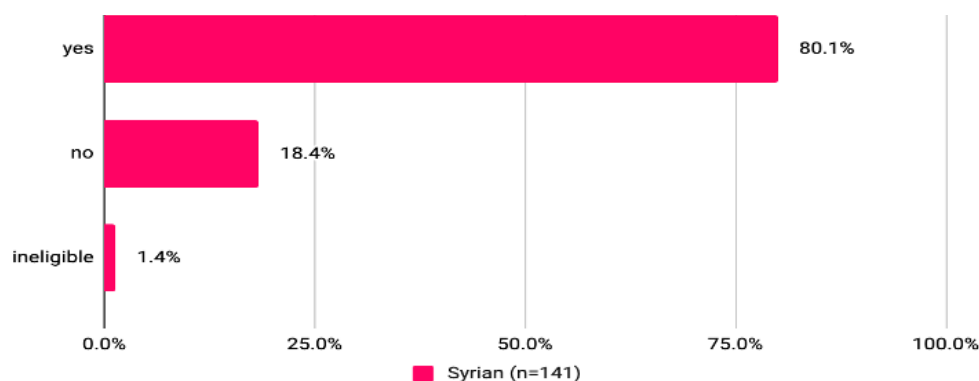
***Because there is more safety here than my country and it’s a Muslim country, I do not want to go to other European countries and I am grateful to Turkey despite facing some hardships, but I feel that it is my second home and I do not deny, in every country there are ugly and beautiful things, but I want to stay here for the sake of my children because in our principles and traditions there are big similarities.”*** - Syrian, male -

***There is no other place to go.”*** - Syrian, female -

We furthermore asked those who had indicated they wanted to return to Syria, whether they have sufficient access to objective and reliable information on conditions of return in their area of origin in Syria. **Only 34.8 percent of those respondents had objective and reliable information on conditions of return in their area of origin in Syria**, whereas 60.9 percent of Syrian respondents did not have this kind of information.

**When asked: “Do you know someone who returned to Syria?”, 40.3 percent of respondents knew someone who did**, while 47.7 percent said that they do not know of people who have returned. Highlighting the unsustainable and premature nature of these returns, **80.1 percent of respondents answered that they know of cases of “re-return”**, in which Syrians returned from Turkey back to Syria, but then decided to flee Syria again. Frequently cited reasons for this decision were the poor circumstances upon return, while lack of information on the conditions for return were also mentioned.

**Figure 21: “Do you know people who returned from Turkey back to Syria, but then decided to flee Syria again?”**



## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND EU MEMBER STATES

- Take an active leadership role - within national, European and international fora - in the **development and implementation of a comprehensive and more ambitious strategy and response to the Syrian refugee crisis**, which is based on the UNHCR framework of "**durable solutions**" for international refugee crises.
- Put in place an **independent investigation** into allegations that EU-funded "removal centres" across Turkey have been used to force Syrian refugees to sign "voluntary return" forms, before being returned to Syria.
- Demand immediate, full and unhindered access of the UNHCR and other independent observers to Turkish detention and removal centres, in order to verify the voluntary nature of return movements. Make any EU **funding** for Turkish "removal centres" **conditional on full and unhindered access** of UNHCR monitoring staff and other independent observers.
- 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 requested by the European Parliament in May 2021). EU support to migration management in Turkey should be closely monitored from a do-no-harm perspective.
- Publicly **call on the Turkish government to put an immediate end to any forced return**, either directly or indirectly, of Syrian refugees.
- **Maintain the position that Syria is not a safe destination of return**, and that any (future) returns must be safe, voluntary, informed and dignified. In line with this position, the EU and its member states should not return people to Syria, and must immediately end policies and practices that remove refugee status or temporary protection status from Syria's displaced; halt the shift of national policies towards depriving certain categories of refugees from Syria of their protected status, or reverse this where they have already done so.
- Actively **support the creation of a robust international monitoring mechanism** – on the basis of the UNHCR Protection Thresholds, and with sufficient resources – that closely monitors conditions inside Syria and the experiences of returnees, in relation to the requirements for safe, voluntary and dignified return to Syria.<sup>143</sup>
- Continue to use the **Protection Thresholds and Parameters for Refugee Return to Syria**, as issued by the UN in February 2018, as the basis and cornerstone for European and UN discussions on policies regarding refugees from Syria.
- **Increase resettlement numbers and other safe and formal routes to Europe** for refugees from Syria; commit to improved responsibility-sharing between member states; and uphold the right to apply for asylum.



- **Request UNHCR to structurally include and empower a diverse set of local civil society** to contribute to discussions and decision making about refugee policies, including in the UN-led Durable Solutions Working Groups.
- Develop a **regular dialogue track between Syrian CSOs and European policy makers**, that is regularly convened in between the annual Brussels Conference on the Future of Syria and the Region, and which takes stock of the implementation of commitments outlined in the Conference's outcome documents.
- Immediately **put an end to deportations and violations of the principle of non-refoulement, including push backs** on all Mediterranean sea routes, and on land routes to Europe. Increase search and rescue capacity in the Eastern Mediterranean and provide predictable ports of safety to allow swift disembarkation of people rescued at sea.
- As part of ongoing negotiations on a new EU Pact on Asylum and Migration, **support the creation of an independent mechanism that monitors effective access to EU asylum procedures, respect for fundamental rights and respect for the principle of non-refoulement at the EU's borders**; and ensure that any such process is truly independent from national authorities, and well-resourced. In case of violations, the European Commission must be able to take effective measures to ensure accountability for rights violations.

#### **TO DONORS (INCLUDING THE EU AND EU MEMBER STATES)**

- Commit to and accelerate the provision of **sufficient, predictable, flexible and multi-annual humanitarian, development and peacebuilding funding, taking into account the 2019 OECD DAC recommendation regarding the “triple nexus”**, to refugees from Syria and host communities, through dedicated funding mechanisms.
- Develop and implement a **gender equality strategy for future support to the refugee response in Turkey**, including an active commitment to gender mainstreaming training and gender awareness-raising for own staff and partners.
- Accelerate and concretise aid **localisation efforts and commitments**, by committing more resources to humanitarian, development, human rights, and peacebuilding projects and programmes from local civil society organisations and Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs).
- Systematically **include local CSO actors in the design, planning, coordination, implementation and evaluation** of international cooperation interventions.
- **Abstain from shifting significant resources to voluntary return assistance programming**, and ensure that any such assistance does not come at the expense of support to refugees in host countries or incentivizes premature return.
- Make more resources available for **Syrian-led and Syrian-owned research efforts that document protection concerns in areas of return and in host countries**.
- Make more resources available for **projects aimed at providing legal assistance to Syrian refugees** in Turkey.





- Given that refugee access to health, education, employment, protection and social cohesion is significantly greater when refugees can speak Turkish, **make more resources available for initiatives around Turkish language training**, which would have an important multiplier effect on refugees' access to rights and services."
- Make **more resources available for public campaigns towards Turkish citizens that counters prejudices** about Syrian refugees, xenophobia and discrimination.

## TO UNHCR

- Publicly **call on the Turkish government to put an immediate end to any forced return**, either directly or indirectly, of Syrian refugees to Syria.
- **Provide regular updates on** how often UNHCR has had **free and unhindered access to "removal centres"** across Turkey; on which specific obstacles UNHCR is facing when trying to access such centres; on the number of return cases in which UNHCR was able to **verify and confirm the voluntary nature of the return movement**; and on which specific obstacles UNHCR is facing when assessing the voluntary nature of return movements of Syrian refugees from Turkey.
- Maintain the position that people displaced from Syria should be granted **refugee status**.
- Continue to use the **Protection Thresholds and Parameters for Refugee Return to Syria**, as issued by the UN in February 2018, as the basis and cornerstone for UNHCR policies regarding refugees from Syria. Ensure that the 2018 version of the Protection Thresholds is systematically included in the ongoing review of the "Regional Operational Framework for Refugee Return to Syria."
- Take an active role in the **creation of a robust international monitoring mechanism** – on the basis of the UNHCR Protection Thresholds, and with sufficient resources – that closely monitors conditions inside Syria and the experiences of returnees, in relation to the requirements for safe, voluntary, dignified and informed return to Syria.
- In order to **promote the voluntary and informed character of any individual return decision**, increase efforts to ensure that refugees from Syria who consider returning have sufficient access to objective, reliable and up-to-date information about current conditions in their area of return in Syria, including protection risks and information gaps about such risks. Such information could be offered during voluntary return assessment interviews or on a dedicated website that contains detailed information regarding the conditions for return.
- **Continue not to promote or facilitate voluntary repatriation of Syrian refugees** as long as conditions for safe, voluntary and dignified return are not in place; and do not incentivise premature return:
  - Ensure that humanitarian programming in both Syria and host countries does not preemptively focus on returns preparedness when conditions for safe, voluntary, informed and dignified returns are not met. At all times, UNHCR should communicate clearly and unambiguously to refugee populations (including during pre-return interviews) and host governments that any increased UN role in providing (limited) return



assistance does not change the UN's position that present conditions in Syria are not conducive for voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity.

- At all times, ensure that any return assistance programming does not come at the expense of humanitarian and development programming in neighbouring countries, where a large majority of refugees will likely stay in the medium- to long term.
- Ensure that a **diverse set of Syrian CSOs is structurally included in, and have greater power in, discussions and decision making about refugee policies**, including in the Durable Solutions Working Groups.
- Provide clarity on how **UNHCR resettlement processes** are carried out to both refugees and CSOs, and encourage third states to increase resettlement numbers, and other safe and formal routes for refugees from Syria.

#### TO TURKISH AUTHORITIES

- Put an **immediate end to any forced return**, either directly or indirectly, of Syrian refugees to Syria.
- Allow refugees who have returned to Syria, either on their own decision or because of direct or indirect pressure, to **safely and legally re-enter Turkey**. Expand the January 2019 Circular to ensure that Syrians who left Turkey after signing a “voluntary return” form can renew their registration documents and re-access essential services in Turkey.
- Develop and publish **regulations on “voluntary return” procedures**, that are in line with international law and standards regarding *refoulement*, and guarantee free and informed consent of the potential returnee.
- Ensure **full and unhindered access** of UNHCR, as well as other independent observers, **to “removal centres”**.
- Publish detailed **statistics on “voluntary returns,”** including a breakdown by age, gender, date of exit, and name of border crossing.
- Take additional steps to **facilitate access to work permits** for Syrian refugees, in particular female refugees, living in Turkey.

**11.11.11**  
VECHT MEE TEGEN ONRECHT



## ENDNOTES

- 1 See also full list of recommendations, including separate recommendations to UNHCR and the Turkish government, on *pg 40*
- 2 See <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-turkey/2021/12/>.
- 3 See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89699>
- 4 See <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/3RP%20Regional%20Needs%20Overview%202022.pdf>, p 4-5. 54 percent of Syrian refugees in Turkey are male, and 46 percent female.
- 5 See <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/3RP%20Regional%20Needs%20Overview%202022.pdf> and <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89699>. In Aruba the ratio is 1:6; in Lebanon 1:8; in Curacao 1:10; in Jordan 1:14; and in Turkey 1:23.
- 6 See <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/unhcr-turkey-operational-update-october-2021-entr>
- 7 Taken from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/statistics/>
- 8 UNHCR Turkey (last updated on 10 February 2022). See <https://reliefweb.int/map/turkey/unhcr-turkey-syrian-refugee-camps-and-provincial-breakdown-syrian-refugees-registered-37>.
- 9 See <https://women-now.org/report/Position-paper-on-Perspectives-of-Forced-Displaced-Syrian-Women-on-their-Conditions,Rights,and-Demands.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1AR103sSKqALpOLSGBL4lNM3dIDQyTqDpZqRK8KFCcC8d4kdiYr1x1IY>
- 10 See <https://women-now.org/report/Position-paper-on-Perspectives-of-Forced-Displaced-Syrian-Women-on-their-Conditions,Rights,and-Demands.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1AR103sSKqALpOLSGBL4lNM3dIDQyTqDpZqRK8KFCcC8d4kdiYr1x1IY>
- 11 See <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/3RP%20Regional%20Needs%20Overview%202022.pdf>, p 8.
- 12 See [https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/social-cohesion-turkey-refugees-and-host-community-online-survey-findings-rounds-1-5?gclid=Cj0KCCQIart6PBhCoARIsAMF5waipplGySlwOucAiW1OK65O3Fm0NQSpTmrSeTUFBVzy-W9d4lc9TI5rUaAoXgEALw\\_wcB](https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/social-cohesion-turkey-refugees-and-host-community-online-survey-findings-rounds-1-5?gclid=Cj0KCCQIart6PBhCoARIsAMF5waipplGySlwOucAiW1OK65O3Fm0NQSpTmrSeTUFBVzy-W9d4lc9TI5rUaAoXgEALw_wcB), p 3-4.
- 13 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 19-20.
- 14 See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>
- 15 See [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/strategic-mid-term-evaluation-facility-refugees-turkey-2016-201920\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/strategic-mid-term-evaluation-facility-refugees-turkey-2016-201920_en), p 21.
- 16 The number of migrants arriving on the Greek Aegean Islands in 2021 has reached its lowest level since 2012. 4,109 people crossed from Turkey to the Greek Islands in 2021. This compares to 9,714 in 2020 and just under 60,000 in 2019. See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>
- 17 See <https://rsq.unhcr.org/en/#F8zq>
- 18 See [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/strategic-mid-term-evaluation-facility-refugees-turkey-2016-201920\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/strategic-mid-term-evaluation-facility-refugees-turkey-2016-201920_en), p 21.
- 19 See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/06/eus-reckless-refugee-returns-to-turkey-illegal/>
- 20 See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/the-eu-turkey-deal-europes-year-of-shame/>
- 21 See [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/strategic-mid-term-evaluation-facility-refugees-turkey-2016-201920\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/strategic-mid-term-evaluation-facility-refugees-turkey-2016-201920_en), p 22.
- 22 See [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0243\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0243_EN.html)
- 23 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 30-31. Interviews with local CSOs working in southern Turkey, February 2022.
- 24 See <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/24/turkey-draft-law-threatens-civil-society>
- 25 See [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_21\\_5282](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_5282)
- 26 See [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_21\\_5282](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_5282)
- 27 See [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_21\\_5282](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_5282)
- 28 See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210517IPR04118/eu-turkey-relations-are-at-a-historic-low-point-say-meps>
- 29 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>
- 30 See <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/32634>
- 31 See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkey/publication/economic-monitor>
- 32 See [https://www.wsj.com/articles/turkeys-inflation-rate-nears-20-year-high-as-lira-crisis-continues-11641211659?mod=lead\\_feature\\_below\\_a\\_pos1&s=08](https://www.wsj.com/articles/turkeys-inflation-rate-nears-20-year-high-as-lira-crisis-continues-11641211659?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1&s=08); and <https://www.duvarenglish.com/world-renowned-economist-steve-hanke-says-turkish-govt-falsifying-inflation-data-news-60013>
- 33 See [https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/social-cohesion-turkey-refugees-and-host-community-online-survey-findings-rounds-1-5?gclid=Cj0KCCQIart6PBhCoARIsAMF5waipplGySlwOucAiW1OK65O3Fm0NQSpTmrSeTUFBVzy-W9d4lc9TI5rUaAoXgEALw\\_wcB](https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/social-cohesion-turkey-refugees-and-host-community-online-survey-findings-rounds-1-5?gclid=Cj0KCCQIart6PBhCoARIsAMF5waipplGySlwOucAiW1OK65O3Fm0NQSpTmrSeTUFBVzy-W9d4lc9TI5rUaAoXgEALw_wcB), p 3.
- 34 See <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/syrian-refugees-in-turkey-changing-attitudes-and-fortunes>
- 35 See <https://11.be/sites/default/files/2020-12/11report-LongRoadtoReturnII-ENG.pdf>, p 5-6.
- 36 See <https://apnews.com/article/ap-top-news-syria-turkey-recep-tayyip-erdogan-greece-42a117912dd-5a6a7ba407298a89563f3>
- 37 For example, a May 2021 European Parliament resolution "*emphasises that the instrumentalisation of migrants and refugees cannot be accepted as a tool for political leverage and blackmail; strongly condemns, in this regard, Turkey's use of migratory pressure for political purposes in March 2020, when the Turkish authorities actively encouraged migrants and refugees and asylum seekers with misleading information to take the land route to Europe through Greece.*" See [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0243\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0243_EN.html)

- 38 See <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/17/greece-violence-against-asylum-seekers-border> and <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur25/4307/2021/en/>
- 39 See <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51721356>
- 40 See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur25/4307/2021/en/>, p 5.
- 41 See <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/34475/erdogan-turkey-will-not-become-europes-refugee-warehouse>
- 42 See <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/3/uncertainty-for-syrians-in-turkey-as-opposition-warms-up-to-assad>; and <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-58327414>
- 43 See <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/making-eu-turkey-cooperation-on-migration-sustainable>, p 2-3.
- 44 See <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-58327414>
- 45 See <https://apnews.com/article/europe-middle-east-syria-turkey-migration-740ba73f6db9c2787a74de5bae66457a>
- 46 See <https://11.be/sites/default/files/2020-12/11report-LongRoadtoReturnII-ENG.pdf>
- 47 See <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/turkeys-refugee-dilemma/>
- 48 See <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-refugees-foreigners-settling-provinces-stopped>
- 49 See <https://en.goc.gov.tr/about-us>
- 50 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 35-36; and <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 11. See also <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update/>
- 51 See [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/report-download\\_aida\\_tr\\_2018update.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/report-download_aida_tr_2018update.pdf)
- 52 See <https://en.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/en.goc/Ingilizce-kanun/Law-on-Foreigners-and-International-Protection.pdf>, p 35.
- 53 See <https://www.refworld.org/docid/56572fd74.html>
- 54 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 17-18; [https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/EN\\_Chapter-7-Turkey\\_Report\\_Migration.pdf](https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/EN_Chapter-7-Turkey_Report_Migration.pdf), p 12-13.
- 55 See <https://help.unhcr.org/turkey/information-for-syrians/rights-and-obligations/>
- 56 See <https://en.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/en.goc/Ingilizce-kanun/Law-on-Foreigners-and-International-Protection.pdf>, p 20-21.
- 57 See <https://en.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/en.goc/Ingilizce-kanun/Law-on-Foreigners-and-International-Protection.pdf>, p 21 and <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update/>
- 58 <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 27; <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/removal-and-refoulement/>
- 59 See <https://en.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/en.goc/Ingilizce-kanun/Law-on-Foreigners-and-International-Protection.pdf>, p 22.
- 60 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 31. For more in-depth background, see <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/detention-asylum-seekers/detention-conditions/access-detention-facilities/>.
- 61 See <https://en.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/en.goc/Ingilizce-kanun/Law-on-Foreigners-and-International-Protection.pdf>, p 3.
- 62 See <https://en.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/en.goc/Ingilizce-kanun/Law-on-Foreigners-and-International-Protection.pdf>, p 19; [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-03/EN\\_Chapter-7-Turkey\\_Report\\_Migration.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-03/EN_Chapter-7-Turkey_Report_Migration.pdf), p 21-22; and <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/removal-and-refoulement/>. Article 55(1)(a) does however provide for an "exemption from removal decision", including for those who are within the scope of article 54, if "there are serious indications to believe that they shall be subjected to the death penalty, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in the country to which they shall be returned to." Article 55(2) further specifies that "assessment within the scope of the first paragraph shall be made on a case by case basis."
- 63 See <https://en.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/en.goc/Ingilizce-kanun/Law-on-Foreigners-and-International-Protection.pdf>, p 18-19.
- 64 See <https://en.goc.gov.tr/kurumlar/en.goc/Ingilizce-kanun/Law-on-Foreigners-and-International-Protection.pdf>, p 4.
- 65 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 31.
- 66 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 31, 33.
- 67 See <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update/>
- 68 See <https://11.be/sites/default/files/2020-12/11report-LongRoadtoReturnII-ENG.pdf>
- 69 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 22. The Facility is governed by a Steering Committee, chaired by the Commission but with representation from all EU member states. Its main duty is to provide strategic oversight and guidance of the programming and implementation of Facility assistance. EU member states are also following the implementation of Facility projects through their diplomatic missions in Ankara, which are briefed on a monthly basis by the EU Delegation to Turkey.
- 70 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 22.
- 71 The "Grand Bargain" is an agreement among major humanitarian donors and aid organisations during the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 that aims to improve the way humanitarian aid is delivered by making it more effective and more efficient.
- 72 See [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2022-01/Facility%20table\\_December%202021.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2022-01/Facility%20table_December%202021.pdf)
- 73 Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), Council of Europe Development Bank, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

- 74 See overview table on <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 27.
- 75 See [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/emergency-social-safety-net-essn-offering-lifeline-vulnerable-refugees-turkey\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/emergency-social-safety-net-essn-offering-lifeline-vulnerable-refugees-turkey_en)
- 76 See <https://www.unicef.org/turkey/en/conditional-cash-transfer-education-ccte-programme>
- 77 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 12.
- 78 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 12-13, p 129-130.
- 79 Interviews with Turkish refugee rights groups, February 2022.
- 80 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 12, p 127.
- 81 See <https://www.ifrc.org/press-release/eu325-million-boost-eus-largest-ever-humanitarian-programme-reaching-15-million>
- 82 See [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/QANDA\\_19\\_6212](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/QANDA_19_6212)
- 83 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 12.
- 84 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 133.
- 85 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 134.
- 86 See [https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/social-cohesion-turkey-refugees-and-host-community-online-survey-findings-rounds-1-5?gclid=Cj0KCQiArt6PBhCoARIsAMF5waipplGySlwOucAiW1OK65Q3Fm0NQSpTmrSeTUFBVzy-W9d4lc9TI5rUaAoXgEALw\\_wcB](https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/social-cohesion-turkey-refugees-and-host-community-online-survey-findings-rounds-1-5?gclid=Cj0KCQiArt6PBhCoARIsAMF5waipplGySlwOucAiW1OK65Q3Fm0NQSpTmrSeTUFBVzy-W9d4lc9TI5rUaAoXgEALw_wcB), p 3; and <https://www.stgm.org.tr/sites/default/files/2022-01/DRC%20-%20EN.pdf>, p 20, p 27.
- 87 See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Vol%20I%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>, p 130.
- 88 See: [https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR18\\_27/SR\\_TRF\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR18_27/SR_TRF_EN.pdf)
- 89 See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48976/250321-vtc-euco-statement-en.pdf>, p 6.
- 90 See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/50763/2425-06-21-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>, p 4.
- 91 Opening remarks by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with President Michel and Prime Minister Costa following the meeting of the European Council of 25 June 2021: *"We plan to allocate an additional EUR 3 billion to support refugees in Turkey until 2024. This money will come entirely from the EU budget and it will focus more on the socio-economic support to refugees. Less on the plain, pure emergency assistance because these refugees live now since years in the region and they need a perspective for the coming years. And in addition, we will support Turkey to manage migration at its Eastern border. At the same time, the Commission will also provide EUR 2.2 billion until 2024 to support Syrian refugees in Jordan and in Lebanon. And we have invited Member States to contribute with further funding. Leaders have supported this strategic package. Now we will, as a Commission, work on a legal proposal and put that on the table."* See [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT\\_21\\_3201](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_21_3201)
- 92 See [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_21\\_6470](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_6470).
- 93 See [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/eu-continues-supporting-education-refugees-and-addressing-migration-turkey-additional-eu560-million-2021-12-21\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/eu-continues-supporting-education-refugees-and-addressing-migration-turkey-additional-eu560-million-2021-12-21_en)
- 94 See <https://en.goc.gov.tr/removal-centres>
- 95 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 43-55. See also <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/detention-asylum-seekers/detention-conditions/place-detention/>
- 96 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 44.
- 97 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 45.
- 98 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 45-46.
- 99 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 45.
- 100 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 6.
- 101 See <https://stj-sy.org/en/turkey-continues-to-forcibly-return-refugees-ignoring-international-warnings-that-syria-is-still-un-safe/>
- 102 See <https://stj-sy.org/en/turkey-continues-to-forcibly-return-refugees-ignoring-international-warnings-that-syria-is-still-un-safe/>; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/turkey-syrians-illegally-deported-into-war-ahead-of-anticipated-safe-zone/>; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/24/turkey-syrians-being-deported-danger>; and <https://stj-sy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Turkey-Renewed-Concern-Among-Syrian-Refugees-over-a-New-Wave-of-Illegal-Deportations.pdf>.
- 103 See <https://stj-sy.org/en/turkey-continues-to-forcibly-return-refugees-ignoring-international-warnings-that-syria-is-still-un-safe/>
- 104 See <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-syria-refugees-deported-scores> and <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1289688/ankara-mene-une-nouvelle-vague-dexpulsions-de-refugies-syriens.html>
- 105 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 6.
- 106 See [https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/EN\\_Chapter-7-Turkey\\_Report\\_Migration.pdf](https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/EN_Chapter-7-Turkey_Report_Migration.pdf), p 5.

- 107 See <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/removal-and-refoulement/>. See also <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/detention-asylum-seekers/detention-conditions/conditions-detention-facilities/>: "Incidents of violence, handcuffing and pressure to apply for "voluntary return" from guards have also been reported in Hatay. Similar complaints were reported from applicants or foreigners released from Gaziantep. These especially referred to ill-treatment against persons with a YTS code, including barriers to their access to water and hygiene. According to lawyers, poor detention conditions in Removal Centres are likely to be used as a tool to pressure migrants into opting for voluntary return."
- 108 See <https://reporting.unhcr.org/turkey>
- 109 See <https://11.be/sites/default/files/2020-12/11report-LongRoadtoReturnII-ENG.pdf>
- 110 See <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/08/europe-turkey-syria-refugee-crackdown/597013/>; and <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 34-42.
- 111 See [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/fifth-annual-report-facility-refugees-turkey\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/fifth-annual-report-facility-refugees-turkey_en), p 14 and [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2022-01/Facility%20table\\_December%202021.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2022-01/Facility%20table_December%202021.pdf), p 8, p 10.
- 112 See: <https://sea-watch.org/en/breaking-turkish-coast-guards-attack-refugees/> and <https://watchthemed.net/index.php/reports/view/1498>
- 113 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 6, p 39.
- 114 See <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 42.
- 115 In this regard it should also be noted that Turkish authorities have adopted a "stop-and-search" programme, in which any Syrian without a Turkish ID number ("kimlik") can be detained. See <https://voicesforsyrians.org/is-syria-safe-for-return-returnees-perspectives/>, p 20.
- 116 See in this regard also <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/making-eu-turkey-cooperation-on-migration-sustainable>
- 117 See [https://www.stgm.org.tr/sites/default/files/2022-01/womens-labor-in-the-grip-of-market-policy-and-gender-e\\_0\\_1.pdf](https://www.stgm.org.tr/sites/default/files/2022-01/womens-labor-in-the-grip-of-market-policy-and-gender-e_0_1.pdf), p 58.
- 118 For all data findings, see <https://www.khas.edu.tr/en/haberler/turkey-trends-survey-2021-results-announced>
- 119 See <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1782446/middle-east>
- 120 See <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/09/SB2019-ENG-04092020.pdf>, p 54-55.
- 121 See <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/09/SB2019-ENG-04092020.pdf>, p 72.
- 122 See <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/09/SB2019-ENG-04092020.pdf>, p 82.
- 123 See [https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/social-cohesion-turkey-refugees-and-host-community-online-survey-findings-rounds-1-5?gclid=Cj0KCQiArt6PBhCoARIsAMF5waipplGySlwOucAiW1OK65O3Fm0NQSpTmrSeTUFBVzy-W9d4lc9TI5rUaAoXgEALw\\_wcB](https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/social-cohesion-turkey-refugees-and-host-community-online-survey-findings-rounds-1-5?gclid=Cj0KCQiArt6PBhCoARIsAMF5waipplGySlwOucAiW1OK65O3Fm0NQSpTmrSeTUFBVzy-W9d4lc9TI5rUaAoXgEALw_wcB)
- 124 See also <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/immigration-detention-in-turkey-trapped-at-the-crossroad-between-asia-and-europe>, p 9-10; [https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/EN\\_Chapter-7-Turkey\\_Report\\_Migration.pdf](https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/EN_Chapter-7-Turkey_Report_Migration.pdf), p 17; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/3/uncertainty-for-syrians-in-turkey-as-opposition-warms-up-to-assad> ; and <https://syriadirect.org/abuses-against-syrians-in-turkey-fueled-by-hate-speech-amplified-by-propaganda/>
- 125 See <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-58185612> and <https://multeci.org.tr/en/2021/08/24/our-call-to-the-public/>
- 126 See <https://www.duvarenglish.com/syrian-refugees-forced-to-move-away-after-their-homes-attacked-in-turkeys-aegean-izmir-news-59065>
- 127 See <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/30/syrians-face-deportation-from-turkey-over-banana-videos>
- 128 See <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/12/turkey-news-log-jan-12>
- 129 See <https://www.duvarenglish.com/syrian-businesses-attacked-by-fascist-mob-in-istanbuls-esenyurt-video-60096>
- 130 See <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/12/turkey-news-log-jan-12>
- 131 See also <https://voicesforsyrians.org/is-syria-safe-for-return-returnees-perspectives/>, p 20.
- 132 See <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-refugees-foreigners-settling-provinces-stopped>
- 133 It should be noted here that the relative percentage of female respondents is anyway low compared to that of male respondents.
- 134 See <https://wrmcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Turkey-Syrian-Refugees-WRMC-final.pdf>
- 135 See [https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/socioeconomic\\_impacts\\_for\\_refugees\\_in\\_turkey\\_one\\_year\\_on\\_from\\_covid-19\\_0.pdf](https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/socioeconomic_impacts_for_refugees_in_turkey_one_year_on_from_covid-19_0.pdf)
- 136 See [https://www.stgm.org.tr/sites/default/files/2022-01/womens-labor-in-the-grip-of-market-policy-and-gender-e\\_0\\_1.pdf](https://www.stgm.org.tr/sites/default/files/2022-01/womens-labor-in-the-grip-of-market-policy-and-gender-e_0_1.pdf), p 6, p 53. See also the Syria Regional Needs Overview 2022, which states that: "Research shows that child-care responsibilities (38%), not getting permission to work from either their husband or family(20%), care of disable and elderly in the household (11%), and housework (9%) are the major reasons for not seeking for employment. For women and girls, language seems to be a significant barrier, whereby 70% of the female Syrian population in Turkey says they have little to no knowledge of the Turkish language." <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/3RP%20Regional%20Needs%20Overview%202022.pdf>, p 27.
- 137 See [https://www.stgm.org.tr/sites/default/files/2022-01/womens-labor-in-the-grip-of-market-policy-and-gender-e\\_0\\_1.pdf](https://www.stgm.org.tr/sites/default/files/2022-01/womens-labor-in-the-grip-of-market-policy-and-gender-e_0_1.pdf), p 54.
- 138 Other research has also shown a strong change in the **voluntary repatriation intentions** of Syrian refugees in Turkey. For example, the number of Syrian respondents in the "Syria Barometer" who stated that they do not plan to return under any circumstances, has increased from 16 percent (in 2017) to 52 percent (in 2019).



- 139 <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/the-darkest-decade-what-displaced-syrians-face-if-the-world-continues-to-fail-them/>, p. 11
- 140 See: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/turkey>
- 141 See <https://rsq.unhcr.org/en/#Qq5o>.
- 142 See <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/3RP%20Regional%20Needs%20Overview%202022.pdf>, p 9.
- 143 See also <https://11.be/verhalen/rpw-paper-set-international-monitoring-mechanism-safe-return-displaced-syrians>





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