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Migration from Areas Controlled by the Syrian Regime After 2019

Motivations - Destinations - Impacts



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Social Research

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Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies

Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies is an independent nonprofit research institution, focusing on the production of political, societal and intellectual studies and research related particularly to the Syrian issue, and the possible outcomes of ongoing conflict in Syria. also works on Arab issues and related conflicts, as well as Arab regional and international relations.

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Executive Summary

Syria has witnessed continuous migrations throughout history, to and from it. However, following the outbreak of the revolution in 2011 migration waves from Syria have surged, and millions of Syrians were forced to leave their country or flee to other areas inside Syria. As regime violence increased — suppressing demonstrators to the point of bombing cities with planes and barrel bombs — so did the migration waves. Nonetheless, with the near cessation of military operations after 2019, a new form of migration has emerged: migration from areas controlled by the Syrian regime that do not witness military operations.

This study seeks to shed light on this phenomenon by finding out its causes, motives, routes, destinations, who is migrating, effects of this migration on society and finally about the migrants themselves.

The data was collected using questionnaires and interviews as well as relevant literature and studies. There were 400 questionnaires about the perceptions of the Syrians residing in the areas of the study and 100 questionnaires about the persons they migrated with in the last two years. There were 20 interviews with residents and 10 with migrants. The questionnaires and the interviews were conducted between December 2021 and July 2022, after which the data was analyzed and authenticated.

The study arrived at a number of conclusions: the majority of residents in regime-controlled areas wanted to emigrate (71%); there was a convergence in the male and female ratios; the desire to emigrate weakens with age; young people are the most willing to emigrate, and the elderly are the least willing; single people had the highest desire to emigrate; the higher the level of education, the greater the desire to emigrate; of those who want to emigrate 86% had completed postgraduate studies; the percentage of uneducated people was also high (74%); the displaced were more willing than residents by 85% to 66%, respectively; the percentages of those who wished to emigrate from Aleppo and Daraa were 76% and 66%, respectively.

The driving factors behind migration have changed in the recent years. The two biggest motivators are the economic incentive including the inability to secure life's basic needs such as water and electricity, and loss of hope. Other factors include feelings of precariousness represented in compulsory service for males mainly and fear of insecurity for females. The topmost factor was the desire to secure a decent life since the prospect for a solution to the crisis in Syria is nonexistent. This factor is important because inhabitants have been patient for almost



11 years now hoping that things will improve. Since this has not happened, they started to think about emigrating.

In the last period, most of the immigrant population consisted of educated individuals, professionals, craftsmen, university-aged persons, businessmen, investors and industrialists. Most did not have the luxury of choosing their destination and route, which are linked to availability and the capabilities of the immigrant. In the last period, United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Iraq were the most popular destinations, in addition to northern Syrian and SDF-controlled areas. Each region is affiliated with a certain profession or status. Industrialists, traders and some who want to pursue education head to Egypt, recent graduates to Iraq, those who have money or a specialty to the UAE, and those of limited material means, of all categories, to the north of Syria. However, most wanted to continue unto Europe.

Migration from these areas is an economic migration since it aims to secure better job opportunities and a better life. Moreover, the migrants cannot be called refugees, because there is no direct danger to the lives of most of them. Interviewees and questionnaire participants chose different phrases to express their condition: expulsion; economic migration; search for existence; search for a life; migration of despair (from the conditions in the country); migration to secure a decent life; migration of supporters; migration of the hungry; migration in search of sustenance; forced migration; forced displacement; migration of deserters from the army; migration of the uneducated; and migration of the foolish (because they have remained in Syria).

This migration has had a dangerous impact on Syrian society considering that it is draining it from the younger population and contributing to societal aging. It is the educated, the skilled and those who own capital that are leaving. Meanwhile, it is having a positive impact on the migrants themselves. They are able for example, to start a new life, pursue an education and invest in a business, especially that the situation in the areas they are leaving no longer allows for any of this.

The migration of educated youth is of particular concern. Shortages in many professions are beginning, especially in the medical field, and the exodus of male citizens is causing a demographic imbalance where the proportion of the female population has increased significantly foreshadowing the emergence of social problems. However, the effects of the migration on the migrants themselves as well as on their families back home are positive, in general, as remittances have become the main source of income for many.

Keywords: migration / economic migration / loss of hope / demographic imbalance / youth migration



Introduction:

Syria has always been one of the biggest exporters of its own citizens even from before 2011. Throughout its history waves of migrants left Syria for economic, political, social and other reasons. When Syrians were emigrating to the Americas in the late nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, a large number of Armenians were flowing to Syria. This was followed by the migration of Palestinians to Syria after 1948, then the Iraqis after 2003 and the Lebanese after the 2006 war.⁽¹⁾

There have been waves of economic migration, some of which were for the purpose of work, to Lebanon, the Gulf countries, Libya and others. One study shows that during that period 2% of the total population of Syria were migrants⁽²⁾ the largest number of which resided in Lebanon and the Arab Gulf countries.⁽³⁾

The main motivations behind these were political and security related, especially during the eighties of the last century. However, following the historical drought of the 2006-2010 years, the economic motive superseded the political. The drought, which affected the agricultural and livestock sectors, especially in the eastern and northeastern governorates, prompted families to emigrate to other parts of Syria or abroad. This was accompanied by governmental measures, such as raising the price of fuel to almost four times its price, which impacted Syrian society and played a role, that cannot be overlooked, in the 2011 uprising across several regions of the country.⁽⁴⁾

With the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in 2011, many Syrians poured into neighboring countries and other regions as refugees. This was the result of the excessive violence that the regime used against the revolution. The first wave was in 2012 and the second in 2015-2016 and they are still ongoing. However, the number of emigrants vary in each period. The bulk of those who emigrated in 2012 and later in 2015-2016 were wanted opponents of the regime or were living in areas that were damaged by military operations. This wave also included some supporters of the regime and others who were neutral to it, who were seeking a new life in a new country. Some of the wealthy settled their businesses

(1) De Bel-Air, F. (2016). Migration profile: Syria.

(2) Fargues, P., & Fandrich, C. (2012). Migration after the Arab spring.

(3) Seeberg, P. (2013). Migration into and from Syria and nontraditional security issues in the MENA region: Transnational integration, security, and national interests. In *Migration, security, and citizenship in the Middle East* (pp. 167-193). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

(4) Ash, K., & Obradovich, N. (2020). Climatic stress, internal migration, and Syrian civil war onset. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 64(1), 3-31.



and left, while those who had nothing saw migration as an opportunity for a new life.⁽⁵⁾ Some were fleeing from what they had done and many of the Shabiha and regime supporters who participated in the fighting with the regime sneaked into those convoys. During that period the Syrians refugees were the largest population of asylum seekers within the European Union countries.⁽⁶⁾

After 2017, the migration waves abated in part, as neighboring countries began tightening their borders to prevent their crossing. However, migration continued, albeit not with the previous momentum as there were those who were willing to take the risks.

With the near-halt in military operations after 2019, a new type of migration has emerged, namely the migration of those living in regime-controlled areas. These include regime supporters as well as those who are politically indifferent and do not have a security problem with the regime. Unlike previous waves, this is an invisible migration. People have been taking different routes including crossing opposition areas to reach Turkey or travelling through Lebanon. Some were able to obtain visas to other countries and fly out through airports of neighboring countries or through Syrian airports, and other routes.

Nevertheless, people's desire to emigrate from Syria has recently increased due to several factors: the severe economic crisis in regime-controlled areas exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; the acceleration of Western economic sanctions on the regime; internal conflicts between the economic hegemons in the regime's inner circle, and the dominance of Russia and Iran over many of the state's resources. All of these have led to the deterioration of the economic and living conditions of the population.⁽⁷⁾

Syria is suffering the largest humanitarian catastrophe it has experienced in its history, now that the crisis has lasted for more than 11 years. In late 2021, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths announced that 90% of Syrians at home are living below the poverty line. He also declared that 13.4 million Syrians need aid,⁽⁸⁾ 6.7 million are internally displaced, and 6.6 million Syrian refugees have spread around the world⁽⁹⁾ 70% of whom suffer from

(5) Qassem Marwani, A sharp split between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime over the idea of emigration, *Raseef 22*, 15 October 2016, accessed 25 March 2022 <https://bit.ly/367q8oS>

(6) Staněk, M. (2017). The humanitarian crisis and civil war in Syria: Its impact and influence on the migration crisis in Europe. *Kontakt*, 19(4), e270-e275.

(7) Living in Damascus after a decade of war, Labor, Income, and Consumption, Center for Policy and Operations Research, June 22, 2021, p. 32, seen February 15, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3vaPkTL>

(8) Griffiths to the Security Council: 90% of Syrians live below the poverty line, Al-Jazeera website, October 28, 2021, viewed April 20, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3nDomkj>

(9) <https://www.unhcr.org/ar/58fc758e10.html>



severe food insecurity.⁽¹⁰⁾ Moreover, three quarters of Syrian households cannot meet their basic needs, an increase of 10% from the previous year,⁽¹¹⁾ and a Syrian family of 5 needs approximately 750,000 Syrian pounds to live, knowing that salaries and wages do not exceed a tenth of this amount.⁽¹²⁾

Considering that the conflict has shown no signs of decline and there is no solution on the horizon, the number of those wishing to emigrate is a continuing to increase.⁽¹³⁾ The deterioration of the economic and living conditions has forced many to have more than one job or to increase their working hours, so much so that the average working hours of full-time workers has reached 52.5 per week higher than the average in the region and the world.⁽¹⁴⁾

According to the regime’s statistical office — known for its considerable underreporting — the average income of the Syrian citizen was equivalent to \$200 in 2010, \$70 in 2017, and \$30 in 2021. By 2018 the purchasing power of Syrian families had decreased by an average of 82%.⁽¹⁵⁾

Following a decade of war and migration, Syria’s demographic structure has undergone some changes. The most prominent of these is the decline in the number of adult males, which in turn has led to an increase in the proportion of females in the labor market.⁽¹⁶⁾

Participation in the labor market	Male	Female
2010	72%	13%
2021	76%	26%

The unemployment rate has also risen significantly for both males and females:⁽¹⁷⁾

(10) Sham Mustafa: 11 years since the start of the revolution, learn about the map of Syrian migration and displacement, Al-Jazeera website, March 14, 2022, accessed on July 23, 2022 <https://bit.ly/39PRykU>

(11) UNHCR, 11 years after increasing hardship pushes many Syrians to the brink of the abyss, March 15, 2022, accessed June 23, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3NcUOo4>

(12) Nasser Al-Jassim: Remittances for Syrians, Lifeline, Hermon Center for Contemporary Studies, 7 April 2021, accessed on 20 April 2022 <https://bit.ly/3P6v8ux>

(13) Yazgan, P., Utku, D. E., & Sirkeci, I. (2015). Syrian crisis and migration. *Migration Letters*, 12(3), 181-192.

(14) ¹⁴Living in Damascus after a decade of war, Labor, Income, and Consumption, Center for Policy and Operations Research, June 22, 2021, p. 32, accessed February 15, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3vaPkTL>

(15) Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Groups, on site <http://www.cbssyr.sy>

(16) World Bank, Syrian Economic Observatory, A Lost Generation of Syrians, Spring 2022, accessed June 22, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3HQAIFL>

(17) Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Groups, on site <http://www.cbssyr.sy>



Unemployment rate	Male	Female
2010	22%	6%
2021	37%	4%

Another difficulty facing citizens in regime-controlled areas is the shortage of basic goods, such as bread, gasoline, electricity and other necessities. In addition, insecurity has increased despite the almost complete cessation of military operations due to the spread of regime-protected thugs, militias and gangs. As a result, a new wave of migration has gained great momentum, especially regime-controlled areas.⁽¹⁸⁾ As mentioned earlier, what is new about is that it is not linked to any military operations and that those who are emigrating are mainly artisans, industrialists, traders, educated people, and those who can afford a passport, a visa, flights, or smugglers' fees. The majority of those leaving have no security problems with the regime.

Despite the regime's efforts during the last period to change its strategy regarding this, movement out of Syria has not abated. For example, the regime's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement in July 2018 calling on Syrian citizens to return, and it even held a conference in November 2020 with the support of its allies to deal with this issue. However, the conference did not achieve any of the results that the regime had hoped for.

The migration of many of the youth in the regime areas began because of the campaigns launched to draft them for military and reserve services. Conscription is one of the main reasons behind migration and behind the fear to return. These fears have increased with the decline of economic conditions and the worsening of the quality of life to the extent that some families are selling property to get their children out of Syria.⁽¹⁹⁾

As a result of the increasing demand for passports, the Ministry of Interior opened a new immigration and passports branch in Damascus in June 2022 to keep up with passport applications.⁽²⁰⁾ For example, 888,000 passports were issued during 2021. The number of passports issued between January and April of 2022 was 140,900.⁽²¹⁾ In the governorate of Hasakah alone about 28,000 pass-

(18) The Syrian regime addresses the migration file: Travel silently, Nakri Gemayel, Jisr website, September 23, 2021, seen on March 22 March 2022 <https://bit.ly/3LXBilx>

(19) Amir Abd al-Qader, How migration contributed to emptying the Syrian regime-controlled areas of youth, Arabi 21 and 4 October 2015, seen on March 23, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3LXnP6X>

(20) Inauguration of the building of the Department of Immigration and Passports in Damascus, Syrian newspaper Al-Watan, June 14, 2022, accessed June 23, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3bvEn9q>

(21) Issuance of 140,000 passports from the beginning of the year, Al-Watan Newspaper, April 7, 2022, accessed July 20, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3xSpzJr>



ports were issued in 2021.⁽²²⁾ These numbers include passports for Syrians living abroad whose families or relatives were obtaining passports for them.

In late July 2022, the regime's Ministry of Interior began receiving passport applications electronically. A few days afterwards the number of these applications reached more than 50,000.⁽²³⁾



In front of an immigration and passports branch in a regime area

Former Minister Lamia Al-Assi stressed that the intensity of demand for youth migration is confirmed by the congestion in front of the immigration and passports buildings where crowds are waiting to obtain their passport. She believes that this is a great loss for Syria and a drain of manpower and prime capacities saying that “migration has economic reasons, due to the decline in local production, the absence of policies and development projects and the terrible decline in income, which made the majority of people fall into the clutches of extreme poverty and severe destitution, in addition to the lack of job opportunities.”⁽²⁴⁾

(22) Dahham al-Sultan: 28,000 citizens who obtained new passports last year in Al-Hasakah, Al-Watan Newspaper, January 11, 2022, viewed on July 20, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3u62eTn>

(23) News on the page of Al-Arabiya Syria, dated July 31, 2022, was seen on August 1, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3cZmyQJ>

(24) A big loss and those who are now migrating to the economic elites, Al-Watan Newspaper, September 20, 2021, accessed June 20, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3u5WoBr>



The current migration from regime areas is similar to the migrations that took place after the collapse of the Soviet Union from Eastern European countries to Germany, where the reasons were related to work or employment or the absence thereof. Other reasons include improving employment or income; seeking a higher standard of living; family-related reasons, such as family reunification or marriage; study; fear of war or persecution; retirement; expiration of work contract; homesickness; and expulsion, etc.⁽²⁵⁾ However, in the case of the current Syrian wave there is an added motivation for certain age groups, particularly for males, is to flee military service.

It seems that Syrian migration after 2019 is characterized by an economic feature, meaning that people are leaving for a new country because living conditions or job opportunities are unsatisfactory back home. Therefore, an emigrant is not a political refugee who was forced to leave for political or security reasons. Emigrants make a conscious decision to leave in search of a better life. They plan their trip and take their belongings with them. They also know that they could return home if they wanted to. Whereas refugees are those who are forced to leave their country because they fear persecution. Their fears are related to human rights issues or safety and not to economic advantages. Refugees leave everything behind without warning.⁽²⁶⁾

The decision to stay, emigrate or return is based on one's understanding of or beliefs about the current and future economic situation in the country of origin as well as the destination country. It is assumed that a negative forecast of the overall economic future and unemployment rates is more impactful than a positive one and that the fear of loss is likely to lead to an increase in migration.⁽²⁷⁾

(25) Europaeische Kommission, Bruessel (Belgium)(Germany); (2000). Push and pull factors of international migration A comparative report.

(26) See 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, UNHCR, On the link: <https://bit.ly/3xnIxsJ>

(27) Czaika, M. (2015). Migration and economic prospects. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(1), 58-82.



The events following the Arab Spring have brought about several changes in the Arab societies of the region, including Syria, and have resulted in a vast wave of migration that has not ended yet. This migration will not decline unless systemic changes — and no one can predict what it will look like in Syria — that can respond to the demands of the peoples and provide economic and political stability are put in place.⁽²⁸⁾

(28) Fargues, P., & Fandrich, C. (2012). Migration after the Arab spring.



Research Methodology

Significance of Study

The study analyzes migration from the areas controlled by the Syrian regime after 2019 i.e., from the areas that the regime claims it has restored safety and stability to and where no military operations are taking place. The aim of the study is to determine the truth of what is being repeated in the media and on communication platforms about the widespread desire to emigrate — people waiting for any opportunity to leave because of unemployment and harsh living conditions — from regime areas despite the cessation of military operations. The study also aims to prove that the regime's calls for the return of refugees are unrealistic, since a large part of the population there wishes to emigrate.

A sample of current residents and migrants who left after 2019 were surveyed and interviews were conducted with several of them. Therefore, the data that the study examines is derived from these groups and their understanding of the situation in those areas.

The Research Problem

The main question of the research: What is the reality of migration from areas controlled by the Syrian regime after 2019?

Secondary questions:

- What is the percentage of those wishing to emigrate?
- What are the push factors behind emigration?
- What are the pull factors behind emigration?
- Who has emigrated in the last two years? How did they emigrate? How much does it cost?
- What can the migration that has been taking place in the last two years from those areas be called?
- What is the impact of this migration on society and the person who emigrates?

**Hypotheses:**

- There is a great desire among residents of regime areas to emigrate despite the cessation of military operations there.
- The reasons for migration have changed. It used to be mainly for security reasons and is now economic and social.
- The regime's demands for the refugees to return are unrealistic, as a large part of the population in those area wants to emigrate.
- Emigrants belong to all segments of society, especially young males, and this poses a long-term demographic risk.
- The migration has significant implications for society as it constitutes a brain drain and the migration of skilled work and capital.

Objectives:

- Study the migration that took place from regime-controlled areas after 2019.
- Identify the push and pull factors behind this migration.
- Study and analyze the effects of that migration on society and the individual.

Limits:

- The areas under study are the areas that are currently under the control of the regime. They constitute about 63% of Syrian land and include the provinces in southern and central Syria, the Syrian coast and parts of Aleppo, Idlib, Raqqa, Deir Ezzor and Hasakah.
- The focus of the study is the migration take took place after 2019. The term "emigrant" refers to those who migrated after 2019 from the areas covered by the study. The term "resident" refers to those who were residing in regime areas at the time of the questionnaires and interviews.



Methodology:

The variables of the research gap were accurately identified after reviewing several studies and reports that deal with a similar topic. This helped with selecting the methodology necessary for the design and implementation of the research, which combines both the quantitative and qualitative methods in collecting data from a random sample representative of the targeted community.

There were two versions of the questionnaire: one for residents of the areas currently controlled by the regime and one for those who emigrated from those areas after 2019. The type of questions varied due to security issues in those areas. The questionnaire included questions about the participant's understanding of the situation from various aspects, the motives that urged them to emigrate or to think about migration and who is emigrating in their opinion and how. The questionnaires were collected during the period between 21 December 2021 and 15 May 2022. There were 400 questionnaires taken by residents and 100 questionnaires by those who emigrated after 2019.

After obtaining the required number of questionnaires, a preliminary analysis was carried out to form the interview questions, which were also in two types, resident and emigrant. The interviews clarified many issues and included live testimonies from the participants about their experience of migration or the experience of others they knew. There were 30 interviews in total, 20 with residents and 10 with emigrants. The interviews were conducted by available means (WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom, etc.). Later each interview was indexed and coded.

The study used the descriptive analytical approach. The results of the questionnaires and interviews were analyzed and compared to similar studies and articles by triangulating the data to increase validity.

Sample:

In some places the response was scant, such as in Homs and the coastal area. However, since some of the participants who reside in major cities such as Damascus, Aleppo and Hama were originally from those areas, it can be said that the sample covered those areas to some extent and that it was representative. Moreover, the sample satisfied the conditions set in the objective of the study — security obstacles in areas controlled by the regime. There was a good gender balance in both the questionnaire and the interview samples.



Table 1 Characteristics of the questionnaire sample

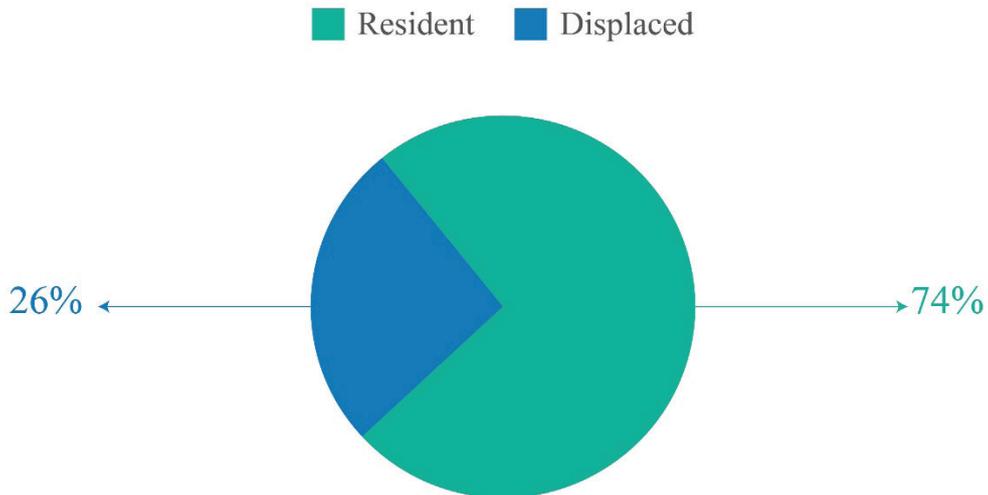
Questionnaires	Gender		Marital status				Educational level					
	Male	Female	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Post-Graduate	University	High school	Prep	Elementary	Unschoolled
Emigrant	%72	%28	47%	48%	2%	3%	11%	43%	32%	9%	3%	2%
Resident	%56	%44	46%	41%	8%	6%	11%	50%	25%	8%	2%	5%

Table 2 Characteristics of the interview sample

Interviews	Gender		Marital status				Educational level					
	Male	Female	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Post Graduate	University	High school	Prep	Elementary	Unschoolled
Emigrant	%70	%30	%30	%60	10%	0%	20%	40%	%20	%0	%0	%20
Resident	%65	%35	45%	55%	0%	5%	20%	55%	20%	0%	5%	0%

The study aimed to represent both the residents and the displaced persons, because it was important to determine the differences and similarities between the two groups regarding their perceptions on emigration. The percentage of native residents was 74% and the percentage of the displaced in those areas was 26%.

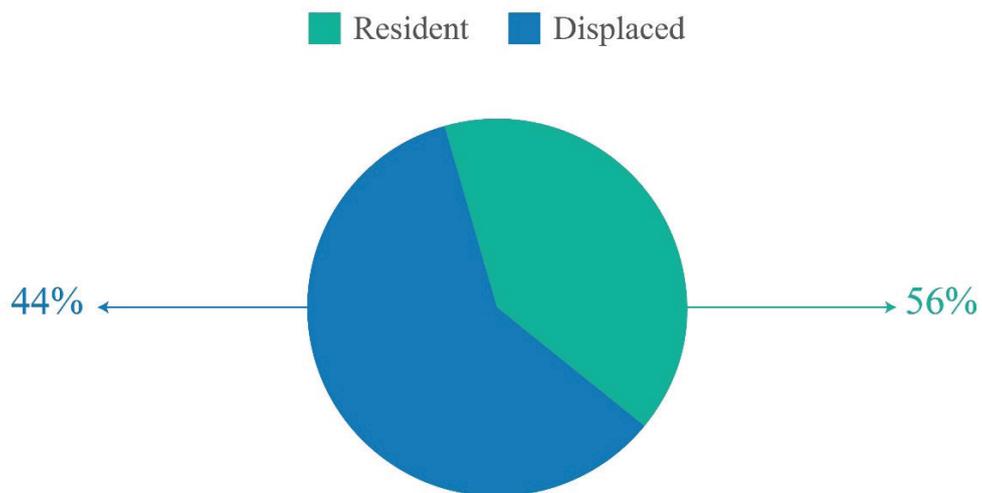
Figure 1: Characteristics of the resident questionnaire sample



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As for the migrants, they were asked whether they were residents of their areas of origin or if they were displaced before their emigration? The percentage of residents was 56% and the percentage of the displaced was 44%.

Figure 2: Characteristics of the emigrant questionnaire sample



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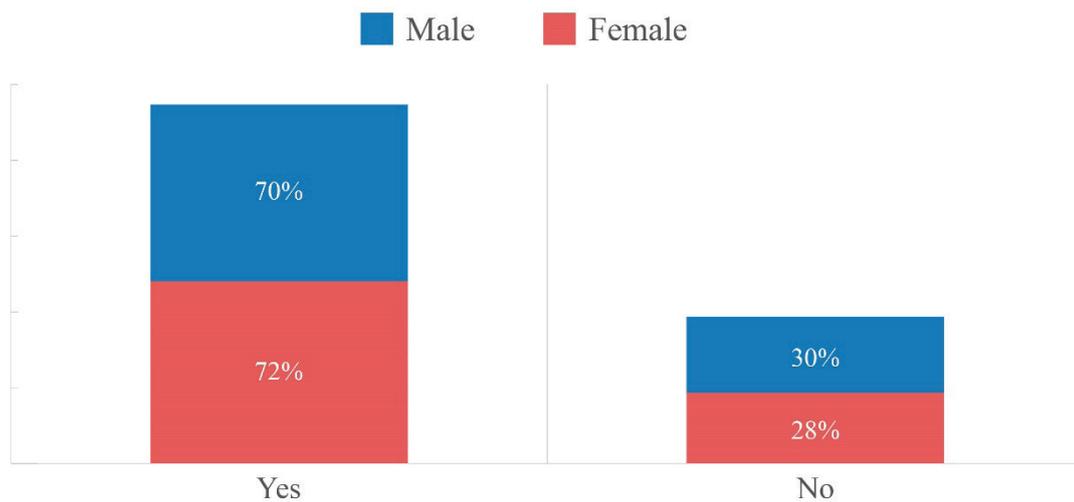


Discussion of the results

1. Who wants to emigrate?

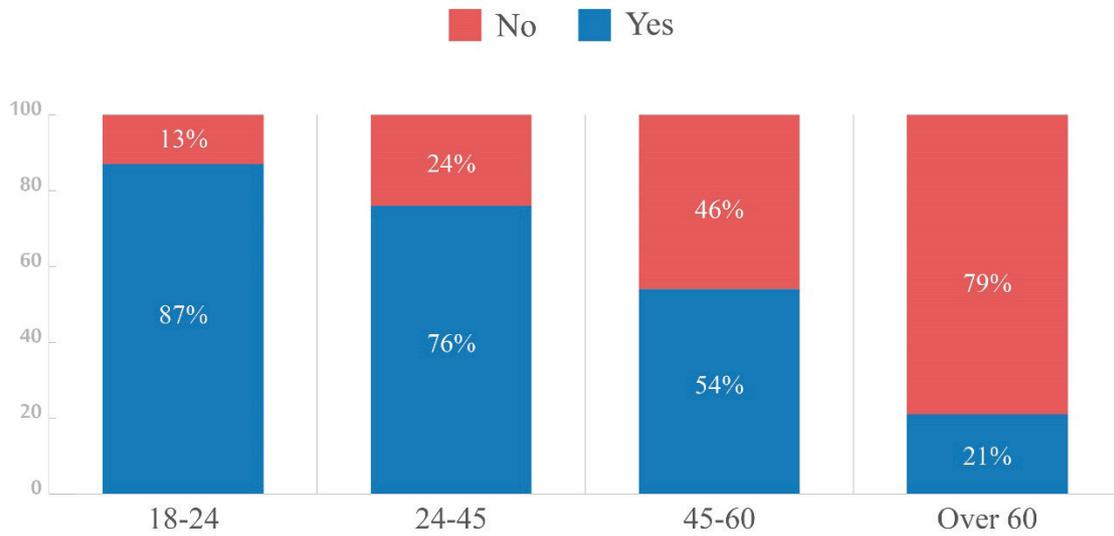
Most of the residents (71%) said that they were thinking about emigrating, while 29% said they were not currently considering emigration. The percentages of males and females were similar. This high percentage is attributed to the living conditions in the regime areas such as poor economic circumstance, insecurity, and loss of hope.

Figure 3: Percentages of residents who consider/do not consider emigrating by gender



According to the results of the questionnaire, the desire to emigrate decreases with age. People between the ages of 18 and 24 being the most willing to emigrate (87%).

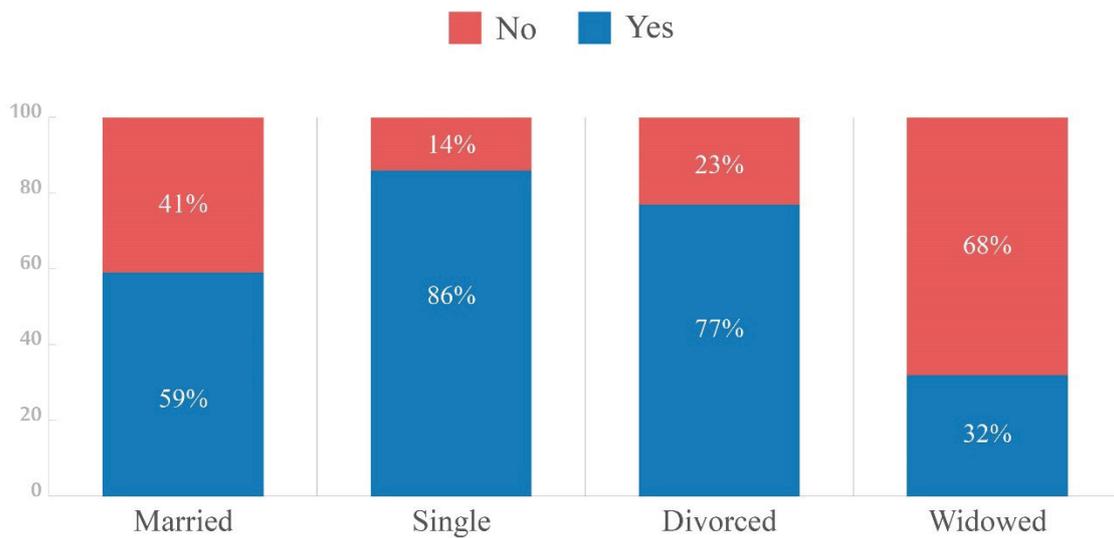
Figure 4: Residents who consider/do not consider emigrating by age



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As to marital status, 86% of the singles wanted to emigrate followed by the divorced category at 77%, the married and the widowed.

Figure 5: Residents who consider/do not consider emigrating by marital status

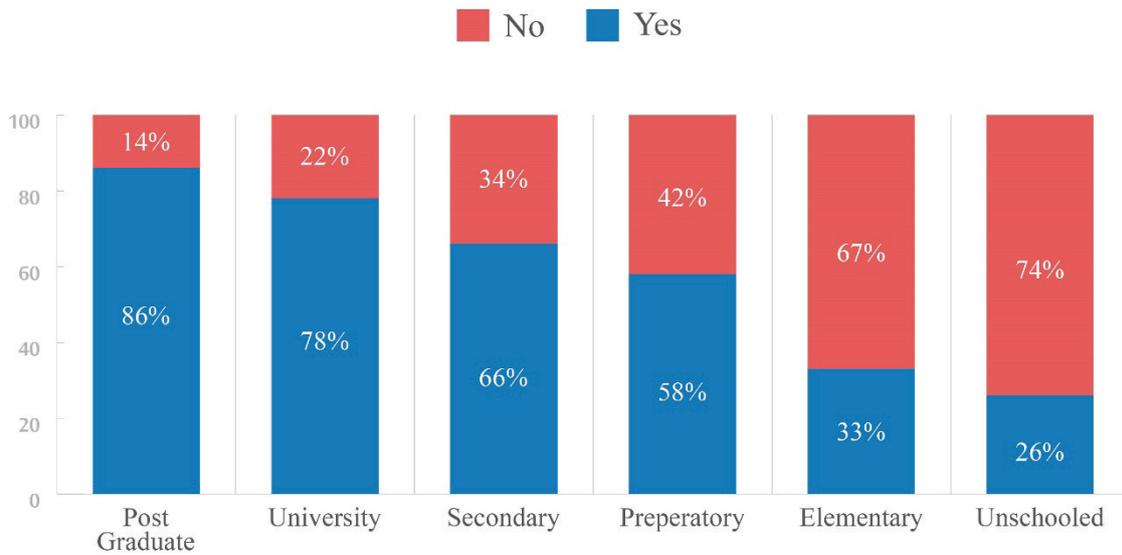


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As to educational level, the higher the level of education was the greater the desire to emigrate. The percentage of graduate students who want to immigrate was 86% and the highest percentage of those who did not want to emigrate were among the unschooled at 74%.

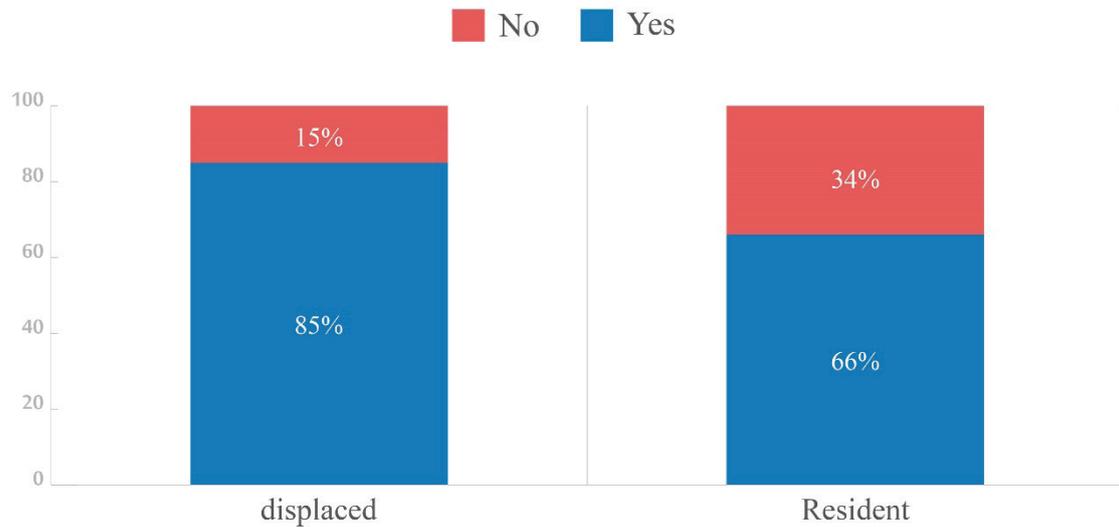
Figure 6: Residents who consider/not consider emigrating by educational level



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The results of the questionnaire show that there was a difference between the displaced and the residents in their desire to emigrate. The percentage of the displaced who are thinking of emigrating reached 85%, while the percentage of residents reached 66%. This is natural if we consider the difficult conditions that the displaced live under and the additional costs of living that they must bear, especially rent. Moreover, emigration becomes an easier option if one is already not living in their original hometown.

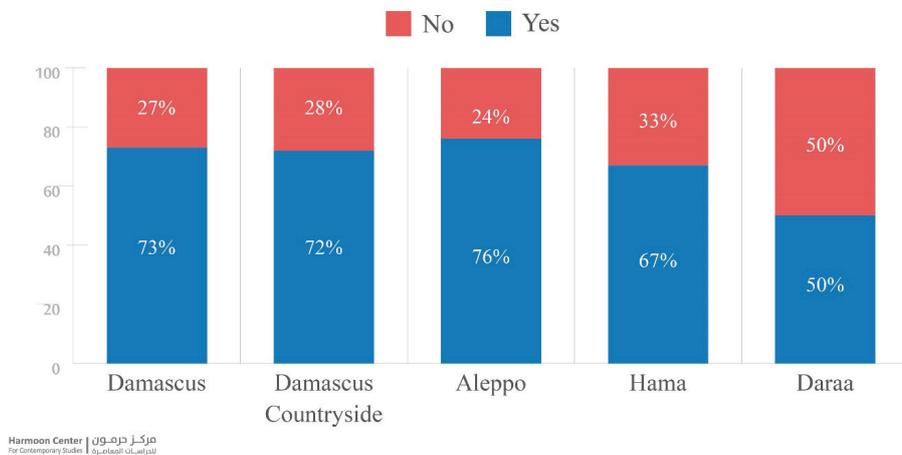
Figure 7: Residents and displaced persons who consider/do not consider emigrating



In terms of regions, the sample from Aleppo had the highest percentage of people who were thinking about emigrating. The lowest percentage was from Daraa despite the complaints about the poor economic, living and security situation. This can be explained by the fact that many of them had previously been displaced to Jordan before returning to Daraa because of the difficulties they had faces there. Therefore, they are not thinking about emigrating again.



Figure 8: Residents who consider/do not consider emigrating by place of residence



As for the results of the interviews, there were those who were thinking of traveling for work opportunities, especially under the current economic conditions.

“I want to travel for work. I mean the financial reason comes first. In the past (at the beginning of the uprising) people were emigrating to avoid death, but today we are thinking about how will we live, how will I support my children and help my parents with this poverty?” (Interview 5)

Even military personnel are thinking about emigrating:

“I wish to emigrate, but I can’t because I’m a non-commissioned officer, but I’m trying to help my little brother travel.” (Interview 11)

These results intersect with another study that shows that 68% of the population of the regime-controlled areas and 48% of the residents of the areas that were originally under the control of the regime are considering emigrating.⁽²⁹⁾

Another study found that 63% of Damascus residents who were included in the questionnaire wanted to leave the country, while a majority did not know when they would leave and 30% said they planned to leave within the next six months. All said they would prefer to go to a different country than to another part of Syria.⁽³⁰⁾

(29) Normalization of Terror: Security and Living Conditions in Assad-Controlled Syrian Areas, Syrian Association for Citizen Dignity, August 9, 2021, accessed March 23, 2022 <https://bit.ly/367Ecia>

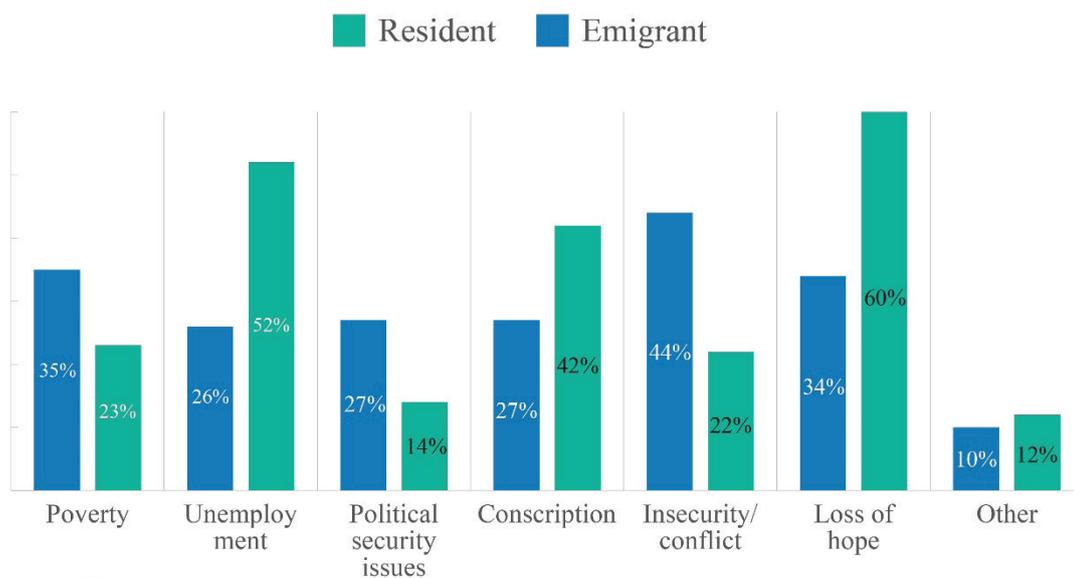
(30) Is Syria safe to return, the perspective of returnees, Voices for the Displaced Syrians Forum and the Center for Policy and Operations Research, November 2021, accessed February 15, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3Jlkk9y>

It seems that the pressures experienced by people in these areas make most of them, particularly the youth, think about emigrating as they compare their own situation to those who had managed to emigrate and are now living European countries.

2. Push Factors:

In answer to the question “What factors push you or had pushed you to emigrate?” the respondent was left to choose more than one factor, because the motives cannot be limited to one factor. Insecurity was the most motivating factor for the emigrants, while loss of hope was the driving force for 60% of residents.

Figure 9: Factors Driving Migration

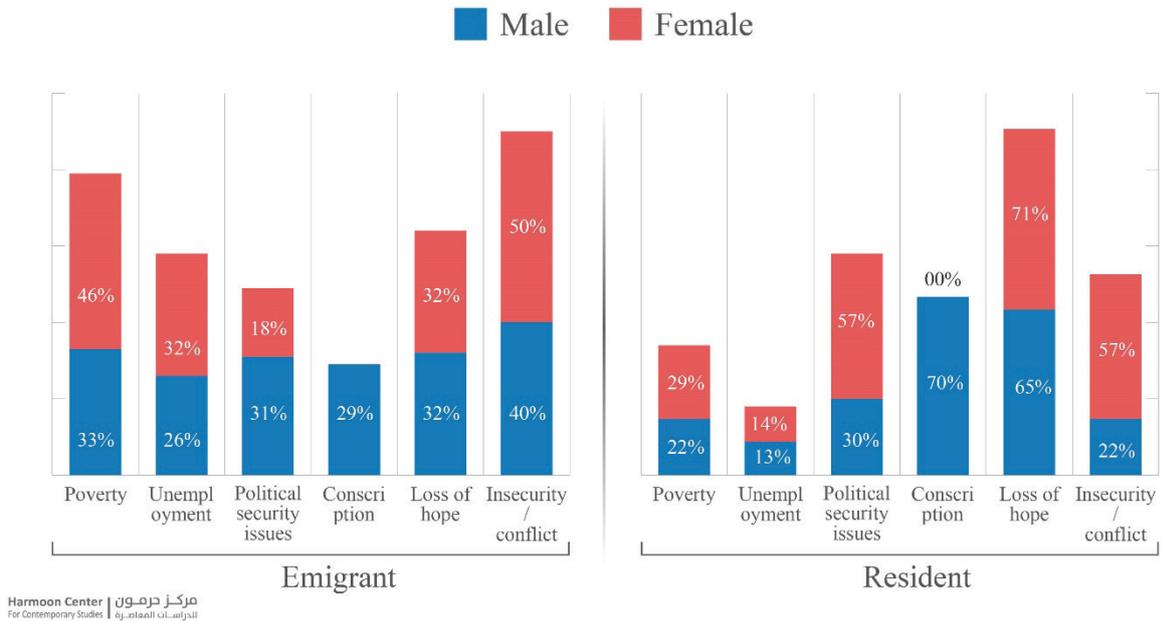


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For male emigrants, insecurity was the most important factor, as was the case for female emigrants, followed by poverty. For residents, conscription was the most important factor for males, followed by loss of hope, while for females, it was a loss of hope.



Figure 10: Factors Driving Migration by Gender



To understand the factors driving migration, it was necessary to know how people perceived the economic, social, service and security conditions in their areas.

The push factors driving emigration can be divided as follows:

2- 1 The economic factor:

According to the results of the survey, more than half of the emigrants saw the economic conditions as bad, and very bad, while 7% of them said that they were good. As for the residents, more than 70% saw the conditions as bad and very bad and 7% said they were good. Some believed that the economic condition was excellent (9% of residents).

As for gender difference among the emigrants, females were more optimistic, with 4% saying the economic condition was excellent, while half of the males said it was very bad. As for residents, most males (78%) believed that economic conditions were bad or very bad, while that percentage decreased to 68%, for females. The percentage of females who felt that conditions were good and excellent was greater than the percentage of males: 9% for females compared to 5% for males.

The percentage of residents who were single persons and saw economic conditions as worse was higher than that of married couples. Meanwhile, 10% of

Damascus residents thought that the economic situation was good, while everyone from Daraa thought that the economic conditions were bad or very bad. In terms of age, 25% of those who were over 60 saw the conditions as good, and 77% of those between 24 and 45 felt that the conditions were bad or very bad.

Figure 11: Perception of Economic Conditions by Status (Resident or Emigrant)

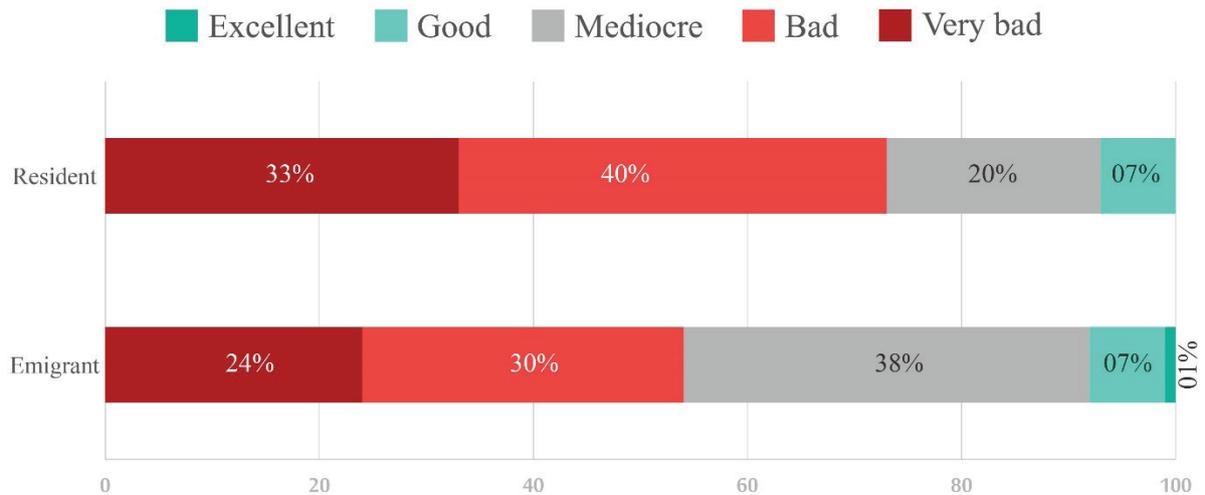


Figure 12: Perception of Economic Conditions by Gender

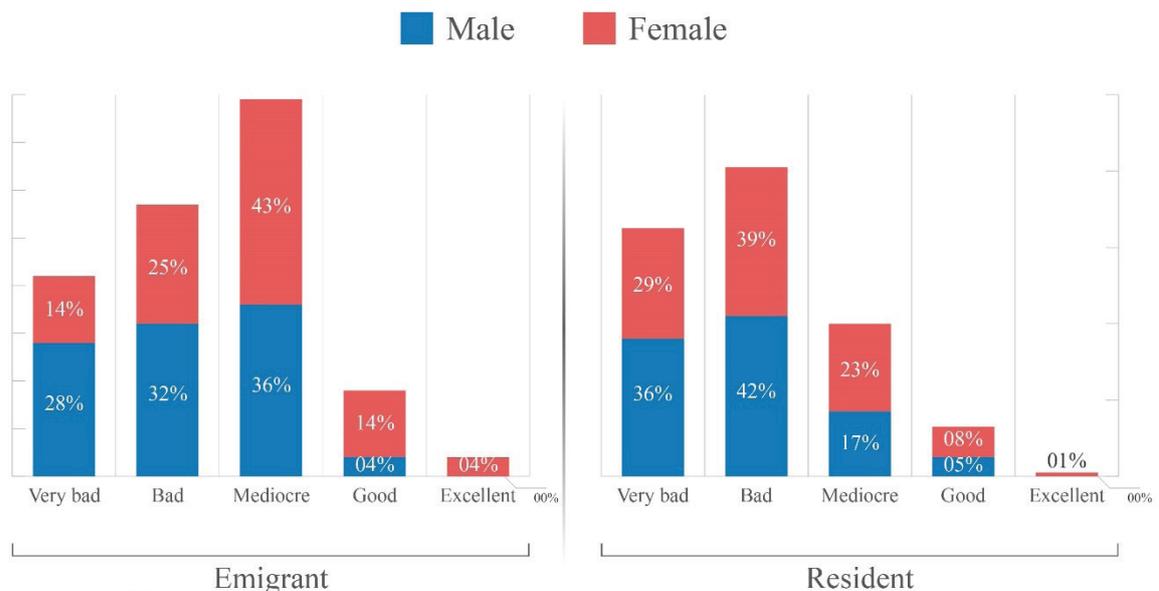




Figure 13: Perception of Economic Conditions by Marital Status

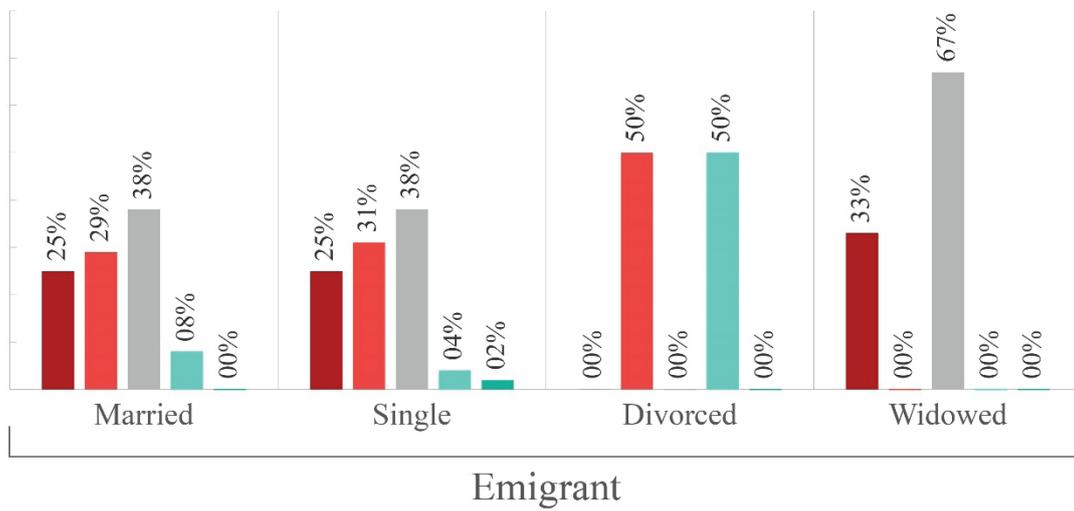
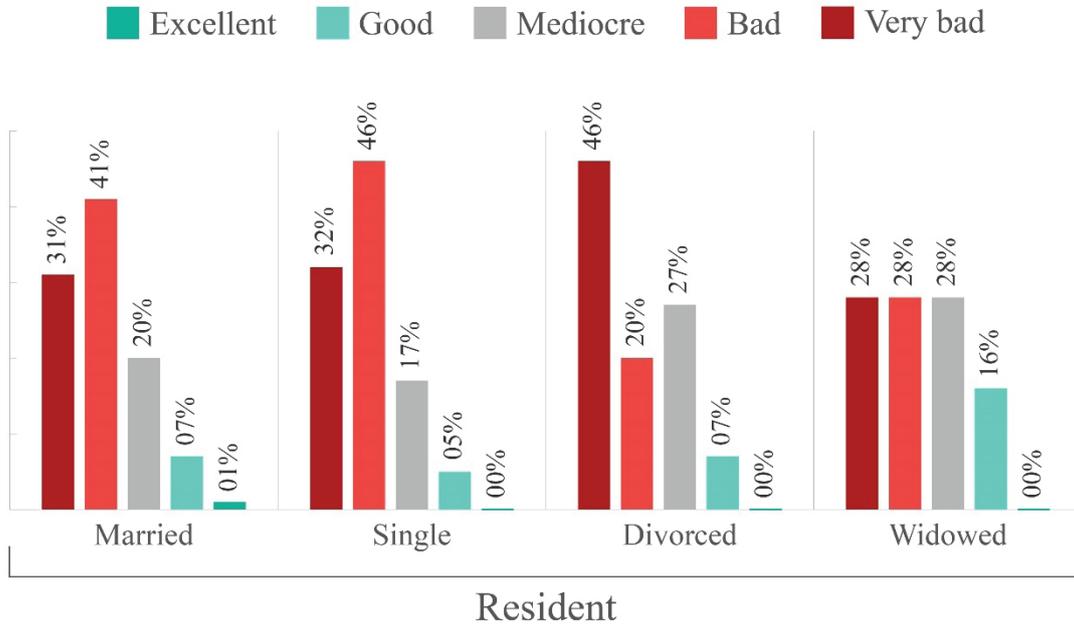


Figure 14: Perception of Economic Conditions by Place of Residence

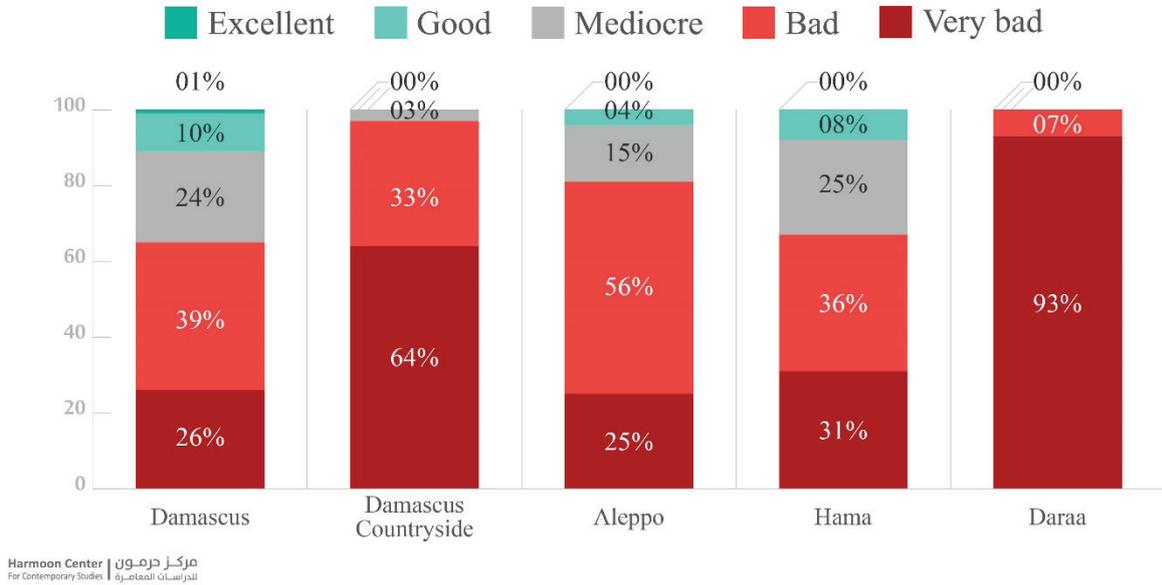
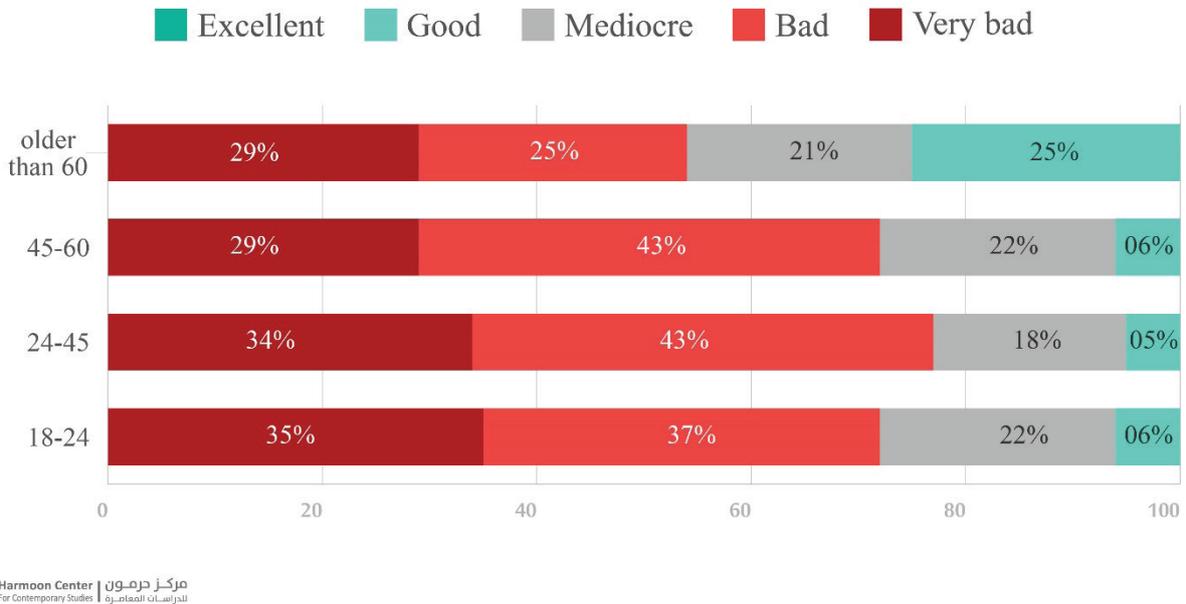


Figure 15: Perception of Economic Conditions by Age Group





As for the results of the interviews, there was a near-universal consensus that economic conditions were bad, and that the economic motivation is one of the most important factors that drive people to emigrate. Most interviewees confirmed that they are thinking about emigrating, and when asked about the economy they talked about their inability to secure the most basic need: Bread.

“Some people I know can no longer buy bread, or access it, because connecting bread to the smart card has reduced access to it.”
(Interview 1)

This economic crisis is linked to several factors, some of which are related to the devaluation of the currency, inflation and weak purchasing power. There are many people who work but their incomes are no longer enough.

“We work to no effect and there is no financial return.” (Interview 3)

The problem has become more complicated for many people. It begins with finding work, but then this work is not enough. Most have no other choice and are forced to work long hours for low wages.

“I am one of the lucky ones, one of the few who has found work in an organization. When my friends finish their studies or leave their jobs and start looking for a well-paid job, and it may take months with no result. It can be said that the jobs in Damascus are akin to slavery, very bad salaries and long working hours.” (Interview 8)

One of the interviewees stated that he had emigrated in the last two years, and that before his emigration he had to ask for money from his father, because his salary from his work was not enough:

“Imagine that I was dependent on my father financially. I am an IT engineer and work for a private entity, meaning a better salary, and in some situations, I was taking money from my father rather than helping him.” (Interview 21)

Another person stated:

“I mean the financial reason comes first. In the past (at the beginning of the uprising) people were emigrating to avoid death, but today we are thinking about how will we live, how will I support my children and help my parents with this poverty?” (Interview 5)

A study conducted in three neighborhoods in Damascus found that about 70%



of the respondents said that their families depended on two or three sources of income for their livelihood. About 19% said that their families depend on a single source of income, and most depend on the work of one or more of members of family to secure their living. There is a large percentage of the population that depends on support coming from abroad through remittances and humanitarian aid, and through relief organizations inside the country. This means that the local economy is unable to meet the needs of the population.⁽³¹⁾

The economic conditions differ between one region and another and one city and another, even within the neighborhoods of the same city. They also differ between residents and the displaced who are worse off due to additional costs such as paying rent and other expenses.

“There is a large social strata, service and economic rift between two areas of the same city, between Jaramana and Muhajereen, for example.” (Interview 8)

The economic problem is no longer limited to cities only and has moved to rural areas and the agricultural sector. This has led to a decline in agricultural production and is reflected in the lives of rural residents, the prices of food in the countryside and cities. It has affected people’s lives and their desire to emigrate.

“Our region is an agricultural area where everyone depends on agriculture. With the absence of electricity, services and resources on the one hand, and drought, snow and frost on the other, the peasants have lost their harvests. So, imagine how the people of the region can manage with the waves of high cost of living that we are seeing today.” (Interview 5)

The crisis has even reached government irrigation projects, which the regime has been unable to rehabilitate. This has also affected people’s lives.

“The difficulties began with our inability to secure agricultural supplies and sell our goods following the deterioration of the Euphrates project’s irrigation canals and other parts of the project. As a result, the percentage of cultivated land fell to less than a third, and many people were forced to leave agriculture. We had livestock that we stopped raising, because their selling price became too low and the costs of raising them too high.” (Interview 18)

These economic conditions have been reflected in people’s responses. They

(31) Living in Damascus after a decade of war, Labor, Income, and Consumption, Center for Policy and Operations Research, June 22, 2021, pp. 18-19, accessed February 15, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3vaPkTL>



are looking for ways to emigrate or adapt to the conditions until an opportunity for emigration arises or conditions improve. The conditions have become so bad that some are looking for food in garbage containers, particularly in the outskirts of major cities.

“I’m carrying out mandatory service in Damascus. For the past 8 years I’ve on leave from time to time. This is the first year I see people eating out of garbage containers. There’s not a single dumpster in south Damascus where people are not searching for food in it. They used to say no one dies of hunger, but this is not true. There are people dying today, and they will continue to die. Hunger is killing people.” (Interview 11)

People have resorted to eating less bread or drying bread, because they are unable to buy it easily.

“People are drying bread again, because the day might come when they will not be able to buy it. I remember a clip from a series in which Khaled Taja is shot holding a loaf of bread and saying, ‘Loaf of bread, I never imagined that you would humiliate me.’ We are humiliated for a loaf of bread. We stand in bread queues. We work all month to collect the price of bread. People don’t even want electricity anymore. We are used to darkness, but we want a loaf of bread.” (Interview 12)

Most participants believed that the economic and living conditions are in constant decline with no improvement in quantity or quality.

“About a year and a half ago, I emigrated from the country and the situation was bad back then, but it was a hundred times better than it is now as my parents are telling me, and as I saw with my own eyes. Six months ago, I went to Syria to see my family and I couldn’t eat, not because I was too proud, but because of the food. The basic food items they were buying from the stores was aid food. The rice was strange! I don’t know if it was Indian or Chinese, and the oil was like engine oil.” (Interview 23)

The employed are also suffering from the poor economic conditions. Even though they are in a slightly better position than those who do not have a job, economic pressures are high and they cannot provide for all their needs.

“I was a teacher. My entire salary plus the additional private lessons I was giving did not amount to even 300,000 Syrian pounds. I



was getting less than \$100 a month for working more than 12 hours a day. This is a miserable situation. Of course, I'm a teacher, so imagine the situation for a person who doesn't have a job and a salary!" (Interview 25)

These economic conditions have also affected merchants, who were forced to emigrate.

"I'm a trader, and I was making excellent profits, but I was blackmailed. I left the country after I lost most of my business." (Interview 26)

Another economic factor that pushes many businesspeople and industrialists to emigrate is Regulation 3/2020 that prevents traders from dealing in foreign currency. The penalty is up to seven years in prison for those who violate the decree. Importing raw materials and goods from abroad has become difficult, especially with the closure of money exchange offices and restrictions placed on the black market — which was providing them in the past with the dollars they needed. The Central Bank has not secured alternatives, while traders and industrialists are being blackmailed by the regime's big shots.⁽³²⁾

Recently, the government has clearly been absent as warlords, security forces and militia leaders have come to control various aspects of economic and social life and the service industries.⁽³³⁾

Some attributed the decline in economic conditions to the decrease of government subsidies on basic items.

"Government subsidies on basic items are decreasing and declining very quickly, and families are unable to access bread easily. If a family needs one bundle of bread a day (unsubsidized bread) at a price of 1300 liras, that is about 40,000 liras a month, just for bread." (Interview 9)

There are areas where government support does not reach, particularly rural areas and some city neighborhoods especially those that were previously under the control of the opposition, or under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces and overlap with the regime areas, such as the Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood of Aleppo.

(32) Fouad Abdelaziz, Migration of Syrian Industry to Egypt: Those close to the regime leave after their coffers have been drained, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, September 21, 2021, seen on March 23, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3Cs53At>

(33) Wajih Haddad: The New War Rich Replace Veterans of Syria, Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies, May 30, 2022, Viewed on 1 June 2022 <https://bit.ly/3OPbeVc>



“We, the Kurds, in the Sheikh Maqsoud area suffer from restriction; the support doesn’t reach us.” (Interview 17)

One of the interviewees felt that the poor economic conditions were caused by the Caesar Act. He explained that the regime tried hard to improve the living situation, but that things deteriorated because of some corrupt individuals and the effects of the sanctions. This seems to be just one person’s opinion, because most of those interviewed believed that corruption is taking place with the regime’s knowledge and will, who might even be directing the situation.

“ Security units are interfering directly to protect the economic interests of some entities. For example, Abu Ali Khader is now in charge of smuggling in Syria, and everything passes through him. If anyone smuggles goods away from the eyes of Abu Ali, the fourth division will arrest him particularly its brigade 215, and if cellphones other than those belonging to the company EmmaTel come into the country, the same thing will happen. The person will be arrested, a fine will be paid and the smuggled goods will be confiscated.” (Interview 15)

Poverty rates have risen in the last period as families have lost their ability to adapt to the decline in everything. The inflation rate in Syria was 114% in 2020 and rose to 90% in 2021. The price of the food basket increased by 236% in 2020 and by 97% in 2021. This has been accompanied by a decline in government subsidies for food and fuel and a tightening of rations. Syria’s real GDP is expected to contract by 2.6% in 2022 following a fall of 2.1% in 2021.⁽³⁴⁾

In the absence of a political solution to the conflict in Syria and with the continuation of the war in Ukraine and the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, a further turmoil in the economic situation is expected. This decline is already worsening as prices have risen significantly in the last period.⁽³⁵⁾ The factors that had prompted those who emigrated after 2019 to leave the country still exist and are pushing current residents to consider emigrating as well. This economic motivation has become an important one because access to basic needs is now restricted. Despite the attempts of the people to adapt to the new situation by working more than one job, getting aid, and receiving remittances from relatives abroad, their ability to cope is limited due to the magnitude of the economic pressure.

(34) Syrian Economy Observatory, Spring 2022, A Lost Generation of Syrians, seen on June 30, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3vyf5hO>

(35) See: Harmoon Observatory, Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies, October 2021-March 2022, accessed on 1 April 2022 <https://bit.ly/3Ebv83>



2- 2 Standard of living and services factor:

Of the emigrant group 56% believed that services were bad or very bad. This percentage was as high as 77% for residents. As for living conditions, about 76% of residents responded with bad or very bad, compared to 49% of the emigrants. Only 15% of emigrants and 6% of residents believed that they were good.

Regarding gender differences, 76% of male emigrants said that living conditions were bad or very bad, compared to 75% of the females in the same group. As for residents, the results were similar between males and females. The majority saw them as bad or very bad.

As for marital status, single emigrants had a more negative view at 53%, compared to 46% for married couples. Regarding residents, 57% of divorced people said that living conditions were very bad, compared to 48% of single and married people. A small percentage of participants said living conditions were good.

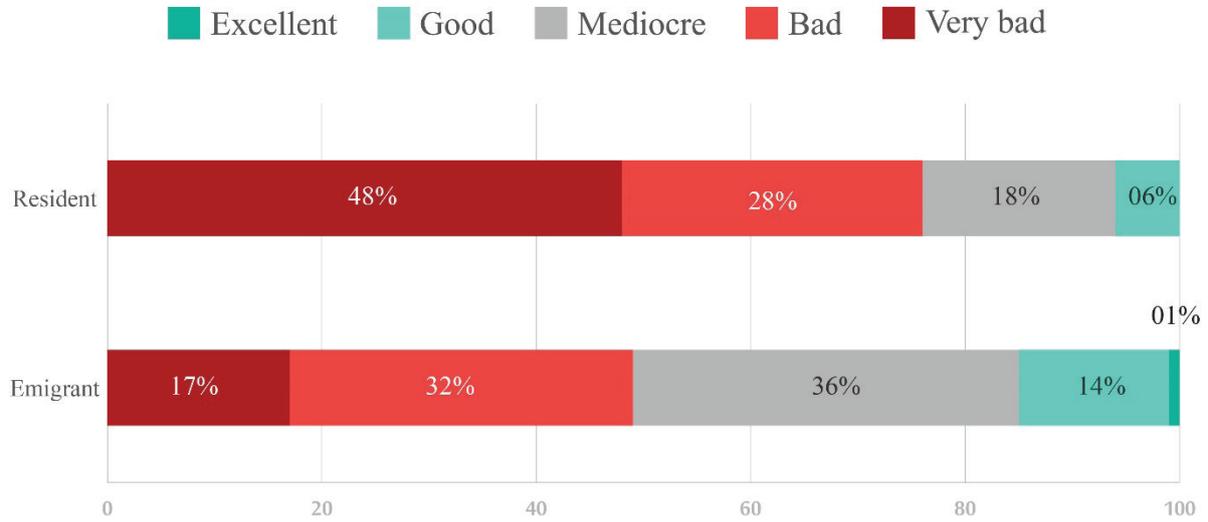
The percentage of female emigrants who felt that services were bad or very bad was lower than that of males by 39% vs. 62%, while the percentage of female residents who said they were bad or very bad was 66% compared to 72% of males. For emigrants, the percentage of those who believed that services were bad or very bad was about 80% for singles and about 74% for married couples.

According to region, the vast majority of people from rural Damascus and Daraa said that living conditions were bad or very bad with percentages exceeding 90%. In Hama the percentage was 66%. In terms of age, those over 60 were the least likely to see things as bad at 59%, while percentages in the rest of the age groups were higher.

No one from Daraa said that services were good or excellent, while 15% of those from Damascus said they were good or excellent. About 21% of over sixties said services were good compared to 7% of those between the ages of 24 and 45.

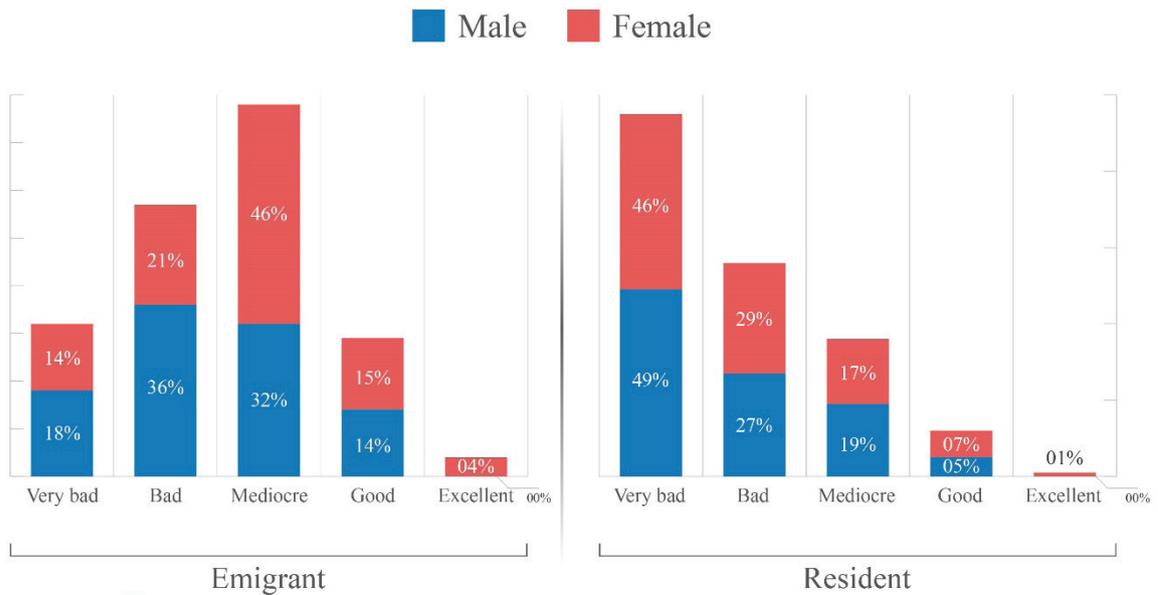


Figure 16: Living Conditions by Status (Resident/Migrant)



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Figure 17: Living Conditions by Gender



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Figure 18: Living Conditions by Marital Status

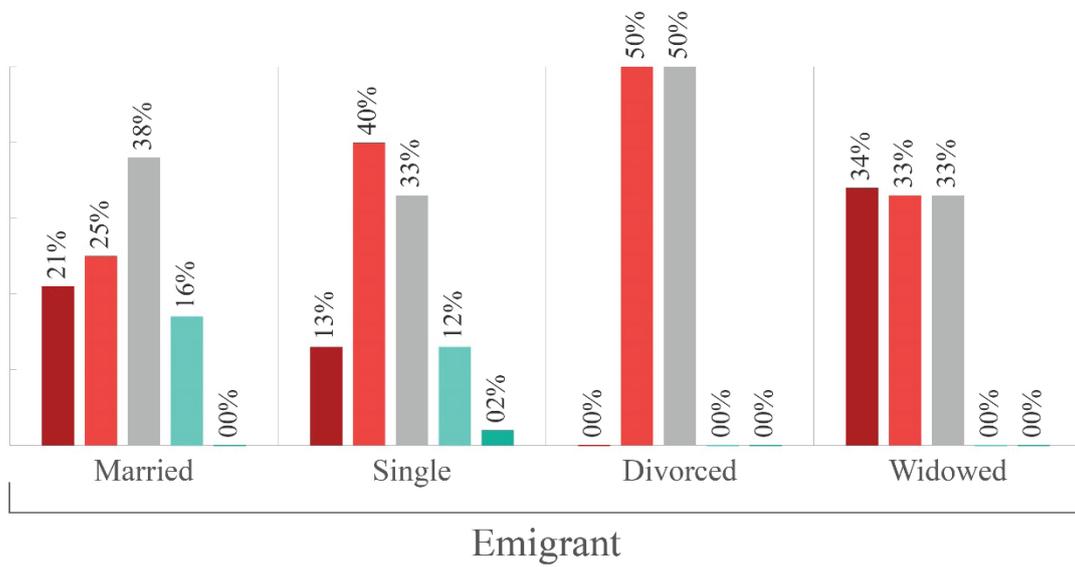
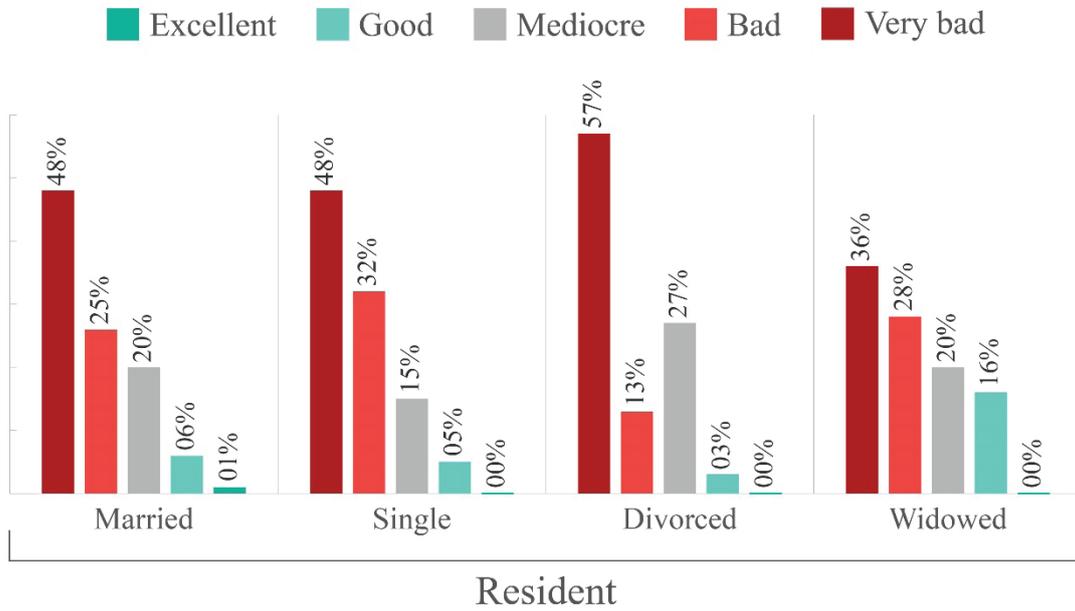
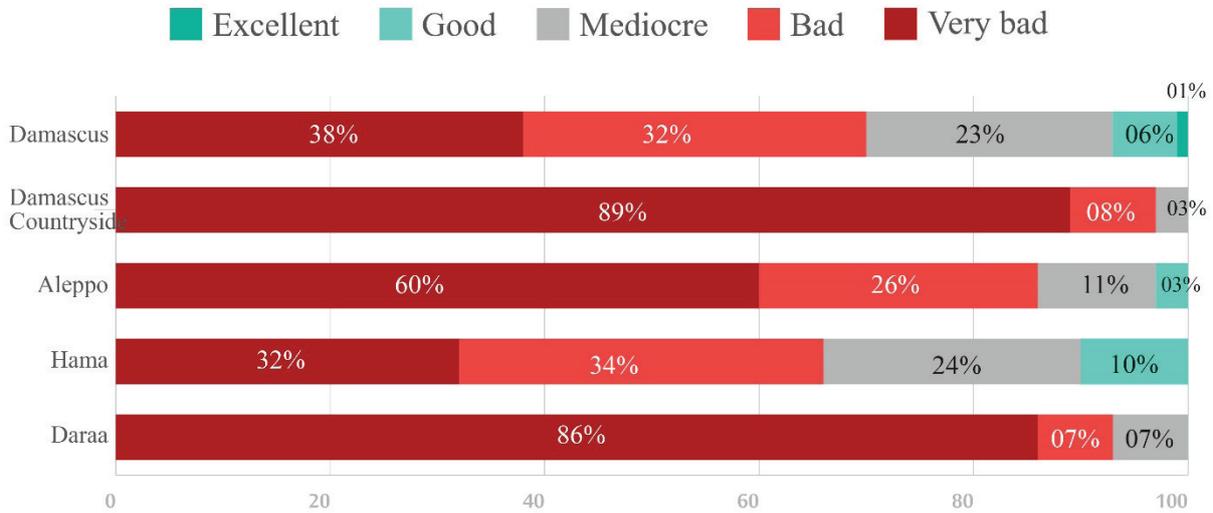


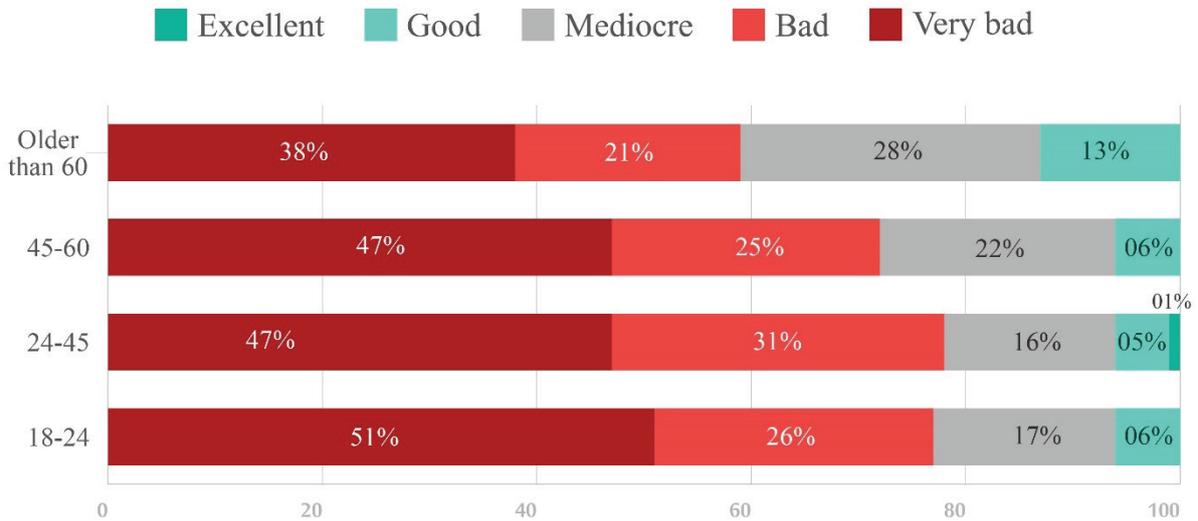


Figure 19: Living Conditions by Place of Residence of Residents



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Figure 20: Living Conditions by Age Group



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Figure 21: Quality of Services by Status (Resident or Emigrant)

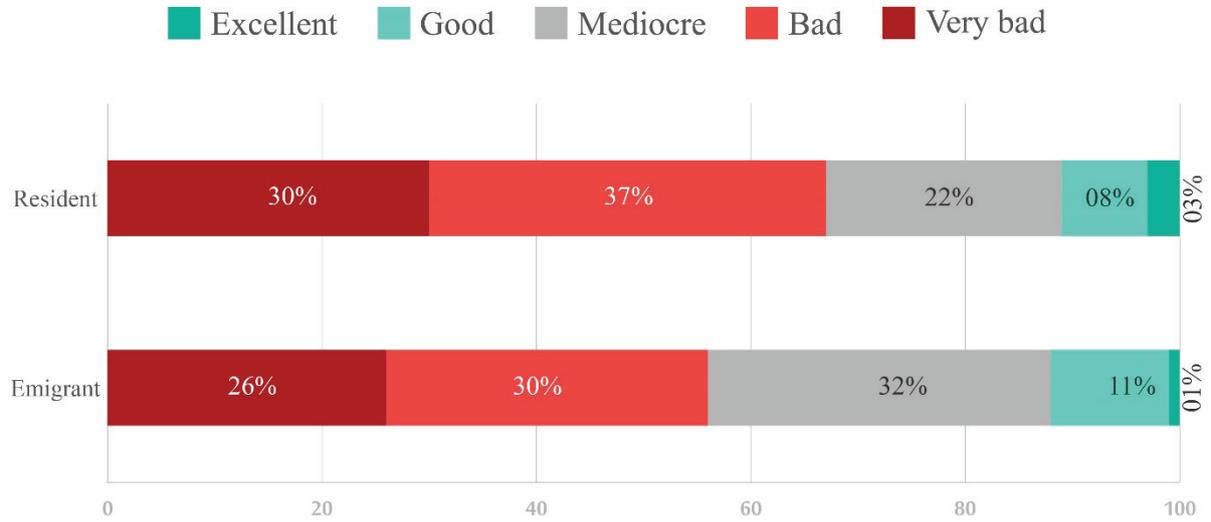


Figure 21: Quality of Services by Status (Resident or Emigrant)

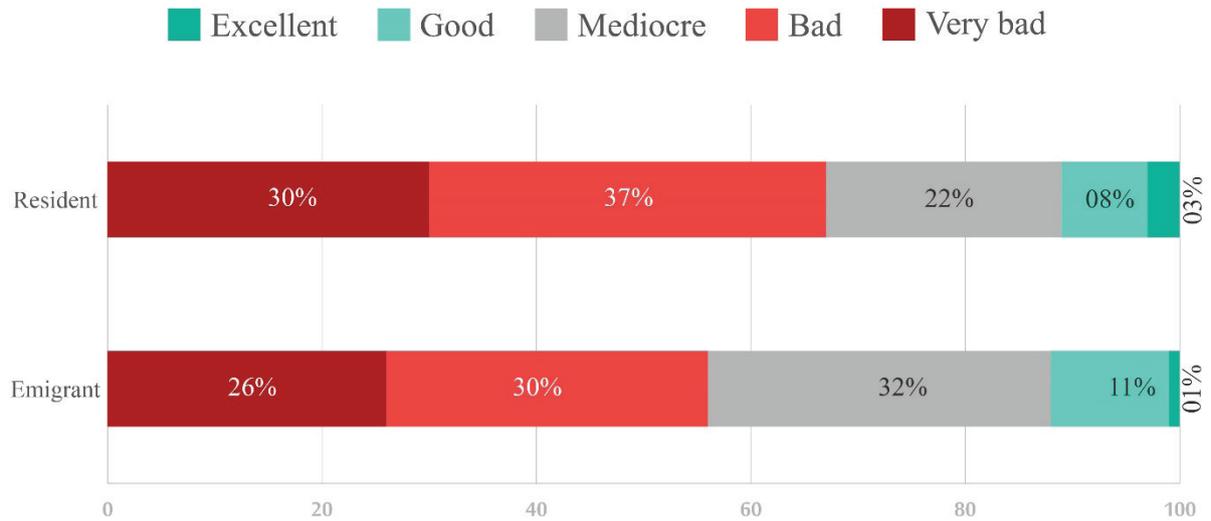
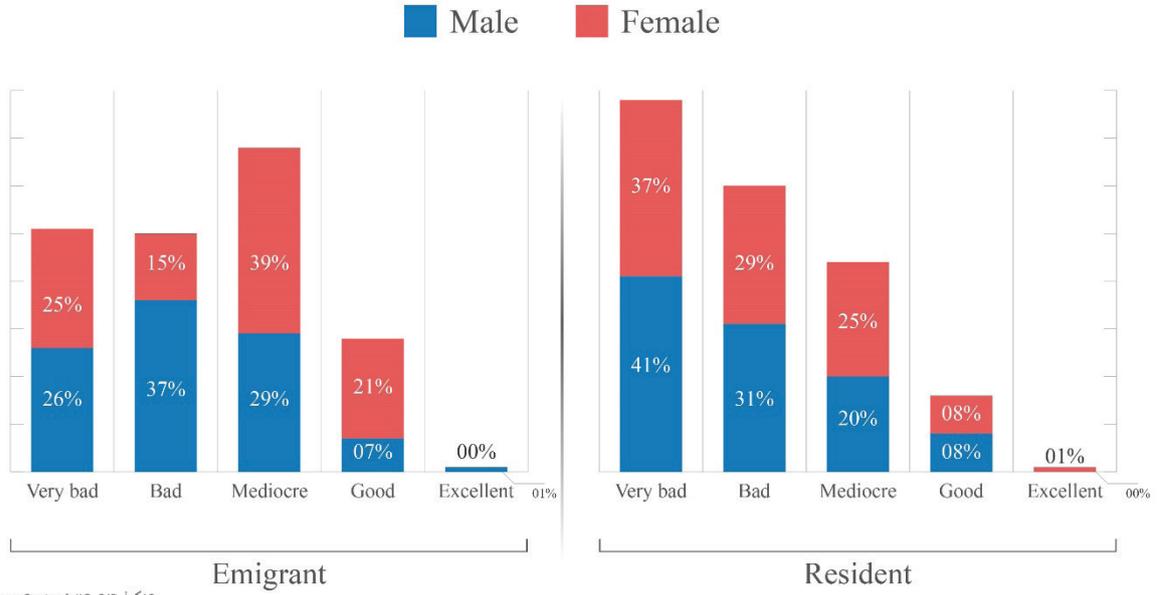




Figure 22: Quality of Services by Gender



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Figure 23: Quality of Services by Marital Status

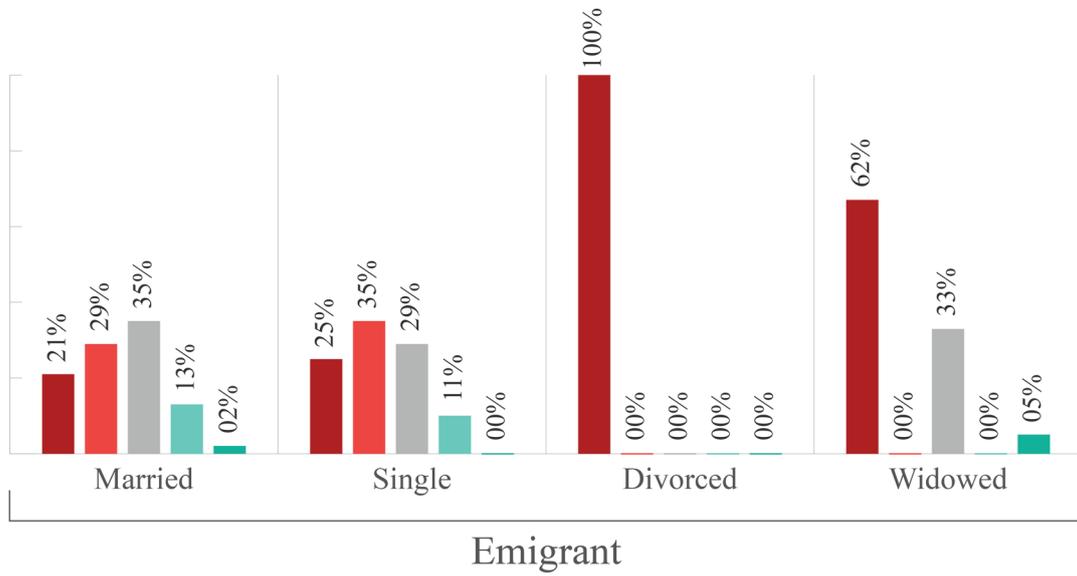
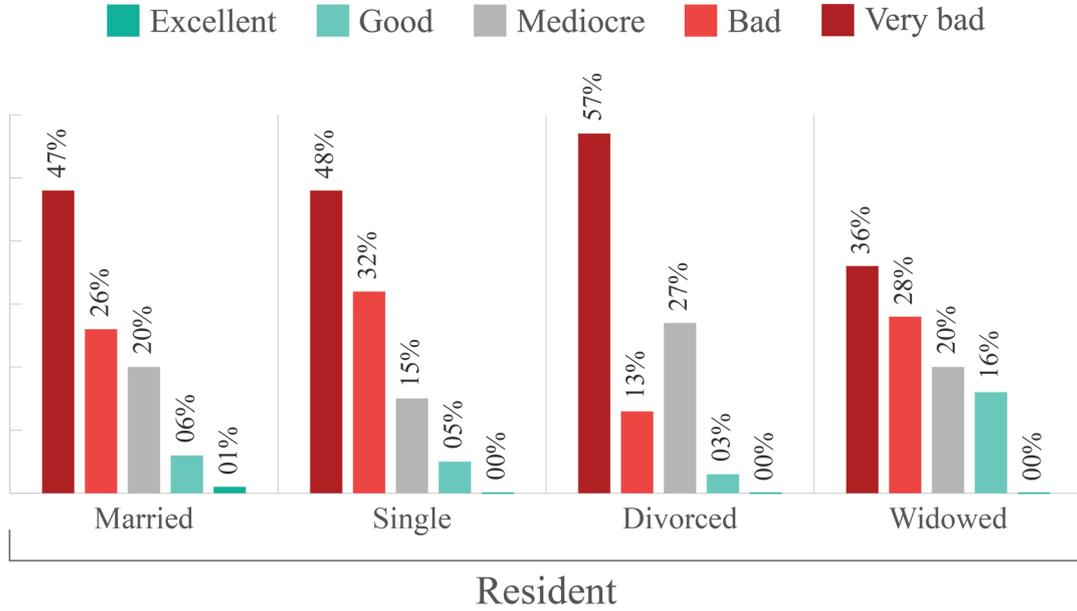
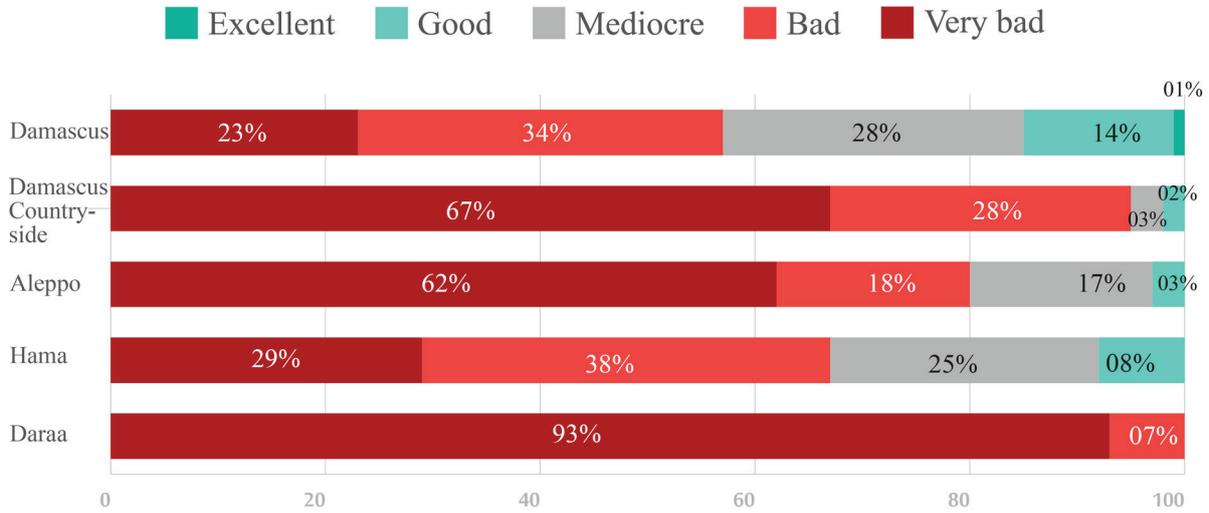


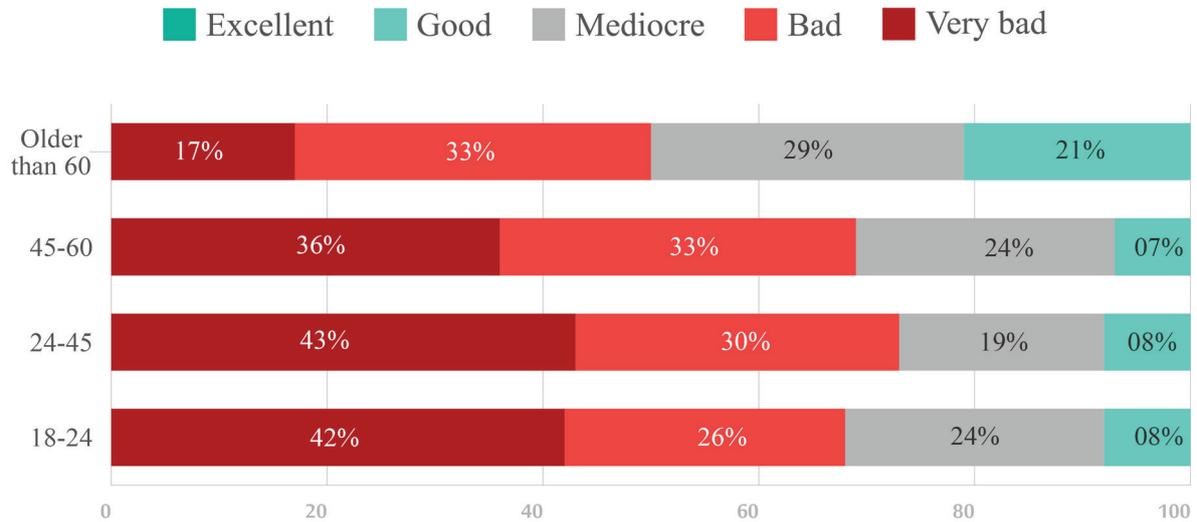


Figure 24: Level of services according to the place of residence



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Figure 25: Quality of Services by Age Group



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Most participants across all regions believed that services were bad or very bad.

“There are no services that are compatible with life.” (Interview 1)

At the beginning, services differed according to region: In areas where there were no military operations, they declined gradually until they reached the level they are at now, unlike areas where military operations had affected a lot of infrastructure.

“Being from an area that has been beaten down and bombed, so far we don’t have electricity from the government. There are people who have bought generators and are selling subscriptions. Also, the roads are bad since the traces of the shells are still there. Large numbers of buildings are falling down, and if I want to talk about water, water is connected to electricity, so we don’t have water unless the generator pumps it.” (Interview 10)

As for electricity, its situation varies according to regions. There are areas where electricity is provided at certain hours of the day, and areas where it is no longer provided.

“The electric supply is bad. It comes on for one hour every 5 hours an, and sometimes there is no power at all.” (Interview 5)

“We don’t have diesel. We don’t have heating. We don’t have electricity. Even the water is cut off a lot. We don’t have any services.” (Interview 6)

In many neighborhoods in cities and the countryside, citizens are relying on generators for power (self-reliance). And the same applies to water, as people are forced to buy water or rely on wells — in rural areas. The situation in rural areas is better because of the wells, solar energy or diesel-run pumps.

“We can say that the water is good, because the people have their own wells.” (Interview 5)

There is also the problem of heating and securing diesel for it. Many have resorted to firewood, coal or even materials such as plastic bags and others to heat up in the winter.

“There are days when the power doesn’t come for more than an hour. Even gas has runs out. With the lack of diesel and heating



materials people are warming themselves with dung and walnut shells.” (Interview 7)

The role of the state has declined in many of the sectors it oversaw before 2011, such as electricity, water and others.

“One can say that the state has left the services to those who can afford it. If you have money, you can buy boards and provide electricity for yourself. If you have money, you can provide heating and drinking water. In short: if you have money, you can live. Here those who access bread are kings.” (Interview 14)

To help ease the shortages in basic items, the government began to organize distribution via a smart card and divided the population into segments. However, this did not solve the problem or mitigate it.

“Imagine following the decision to cancel subsidies through the smart card and having divided the Syrian society economically into segments people in my town of Masyaf attacked a Takamul Company center and tore it down while the employees were still in the building. This shows lack of appreciation and indifference to those who have been patient in the country.” (Interview 8)

During 2021, the prices of some items increased by 600% and family allocations were insufficient, so people were forced to buy them at double the prices. The price of a gas cylinder increased by almost 300%, ordinary bread by 100%, better quality “tourist bread” by almost 600%, sugar and rice by 100%, transportation fees by almost 100%, and medicines by almost 60%.⁽³⁶⁾

As for transportation, there are shortages and difficulties in using it. Transportation fees have risen as well and roads that have been damaged by military operations are bad in many areas. The regime is not repairing the roads.

“Transportation is often not available.” (Interview 7)

(36) Jana Al-Issa, Diana Rahima, Amal Rantissi, Russian-Syrian plans fail 2021 Flesh Syrians instead of returning them, Enab Baladi website, January 9, 2022, seen March 29, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3E5wa5S>



Circulating

Travelers from Damascus to Salkhad in Suwayda countryside are forced to travel on the roof of the bus due to the transportation crisis

The distance is about 150 km

Nidaa Post

Similarly, all government services, such as medicine and clinics, vary according to regions. The situation in areas that have not been subjected to military operations is slightly better than in other areas. Service in areas where military operations had taken place were much worse compared to areas that have only suffered from shortages or interruptions.

“What services!! There are no services, there’s nothing. Everything is bad.” (Interview 4)

In other areas, especially those that have not been subjected to military operations, the situation is somewhat better.

“In terms of medicine, we have a clinic and a government hospital that provides good services.” (Interview 5)

However, in some areas there has been some gradual improvement in services, due to individual initiatives or efforts on the part of notables and organizations.



“The only service in Jaramana that we can say has improved is the waste service and the credit does not go to the government. A Druze sheikh who lives in the region was able to communicate with the UN to hire sanitation workers. After a while the UN stopped the service. So, the sheikh communicated with church associations who were able to employ permanent workers. They rent garbage trucks from Damascus governorate to remove waste.” (Interview 15)

Internet services are available in some areas, but also vary by region, except in the city of Damascus where there are better Internet services, which vary between bad and mediocre in the rest of the country.

“The internet does not yet exist, although it has been a month since they built landlines. The Internet gateways are still not available.” (Interview 10)

In general, it can be said that services are bad in all their aspects and are putting pressure on people’s lives.

“Because of the conditions of war, before I emigrated, we were no longer looking for services as much as we were looking for basic things such as bread and so on.” (Interview 28)

All this has generated hopelessness among many residents in the regime areas of and the desire to emigrate.

“Because the country was taken over by Russia and its allies, the Syrian citizen has no source of income or the ingredients for a decent life.” (Questionnaire 204)

Another study says that 69% of the population living in regime areas did not have access to electricity or heating in a regular and adequate fashion until last year. Only 4% said they had these services, while 54% said that they did not have regular and adequate access to clean drinking water. Moreover, 29% said that they do not have regular access to health services, while 13% said they do not have regular access to education.⁽³⁷⁾

People in these areas have been trying to cope with this lack, including shortages of cooking gas and fuel. However, it has become a challenge due to increased

(37) Is Syria safe to return, the perspective of returnees, Voices for the Displaced Syrians Forum and the Policy and Operations Corps Center, November 2021, accessed on 15 February 2022 <https://bit.ly/3JlkK9y>



pressure from the high costs of food.⁽³⁸⁾ All of this is creating in people the need to emigrate to anywhere where basic services are available.

2-3 The security factor:

Most participants, emigrants and residents alike, said that security conditions were between mediocre and the good. The percentage of those who saw them as bad or very bad was between 41% for emigrants and 27% for residents. Even though most respondents do not see the conditions as bad, they initially said that it was an influential factor in their decision to emigrate.

Similarly, 36% of female emigrant saw the level of security matters as mediocre, 25% said they were good, the rest believed they were between bad and very bad. However, 18% of male participants believed that security conditions were good, and only 11% saw them as very bad.

As for residents, 41% of males thought security conditions were good or excellent, while 9% said they were very bad. About 44% of females said they were good or excellent, and only 7% said they were bad.

Among the emigrants 54% of the married believed the conditions were bad or very bad, 8% said they were good, while only 6% of single people saw them as good. As to residents 41% said conditions were good, 10% of divorced people think they are excellent, and 20% of married people said they were bad.

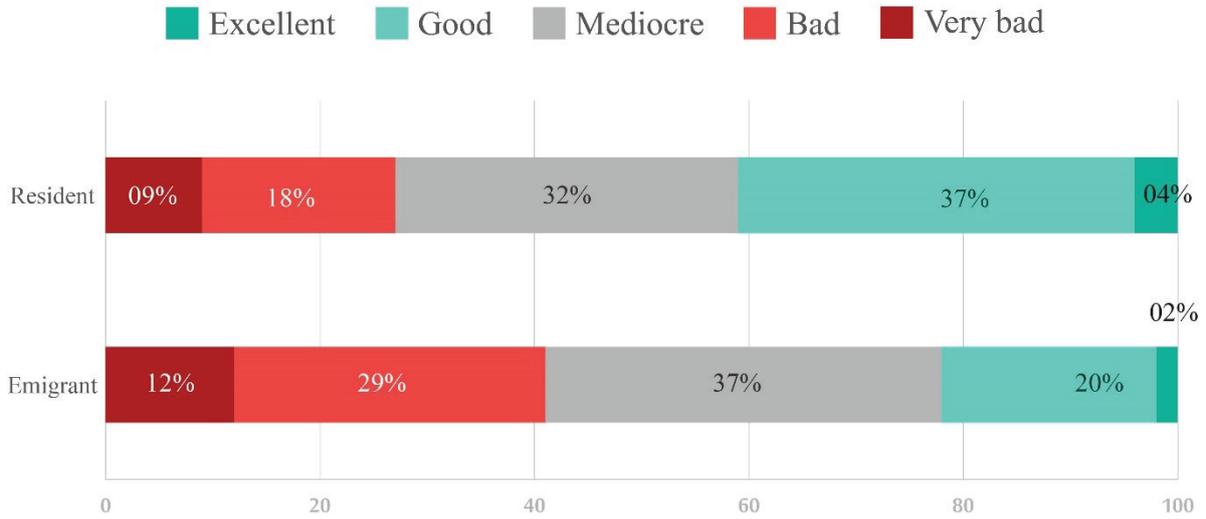
Regionally speaking, 64% of the respondents from Hama and 42% from Damascus said the conditions were good or excellent, while 100% of the respondents from Daraa believed they were bad or very bad.

Similarly, those over 60 who saw things as good or excellent at 63%, while 40% of those between the ages of 24 and 45 had the same view.

(38) Sarah Dadouch, Syrians fleeing desperation at home flock to the United Arab Emirates, April 13, 2022, accessed on 14/04/2022 <https://wapo.st/38VYqfO>

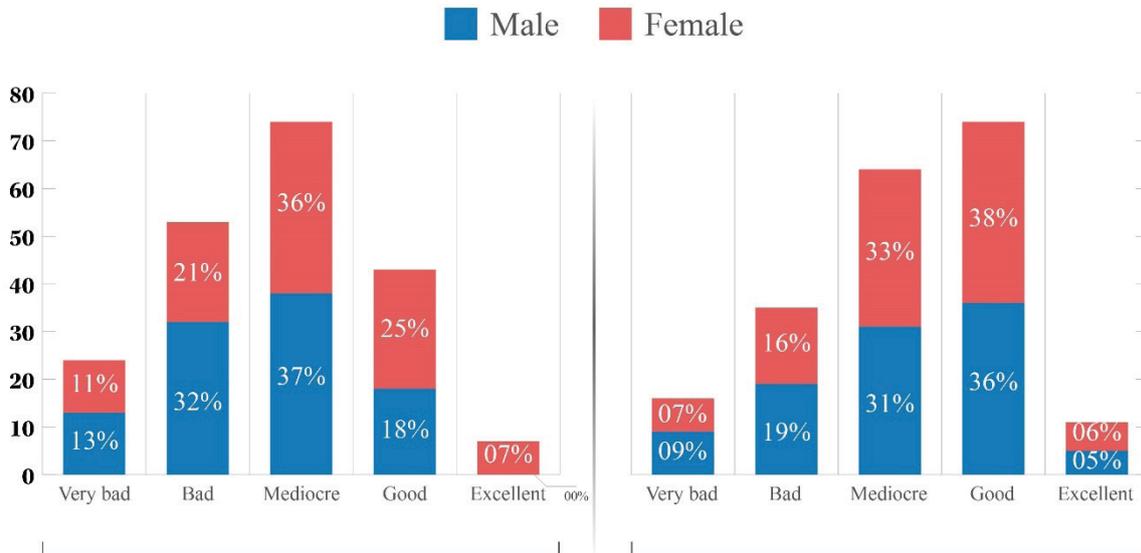


Figure 26: Security Conditions by Status (Residents and Emigrants)



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Figure 27: Security Conditions by Gender



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Figure 28: Security Conditions by Marital Status

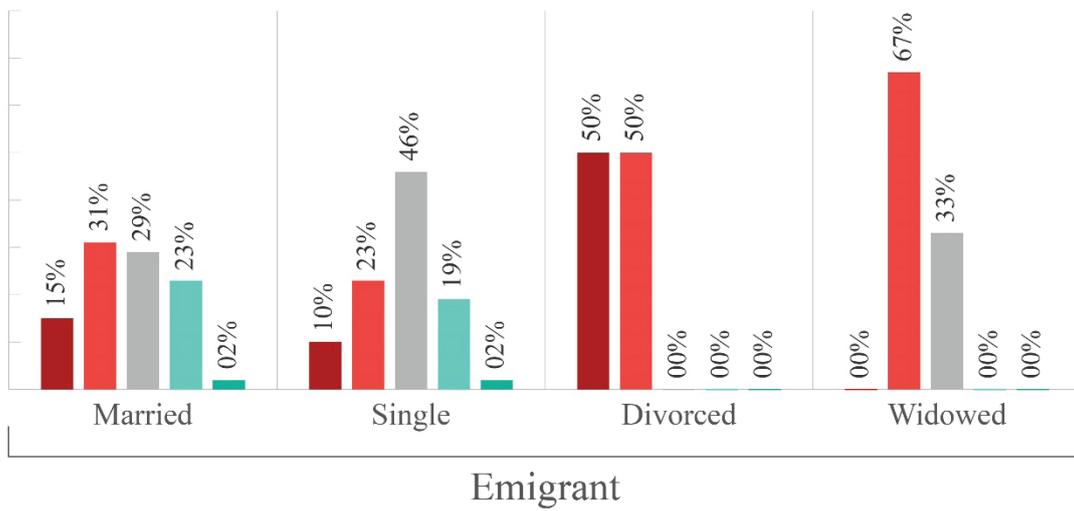
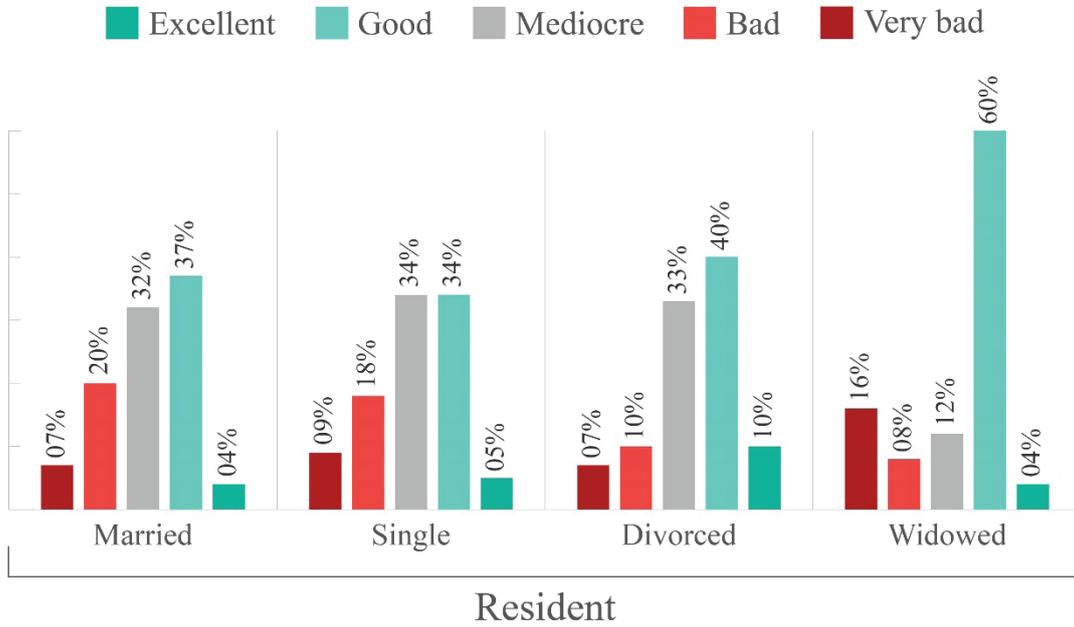
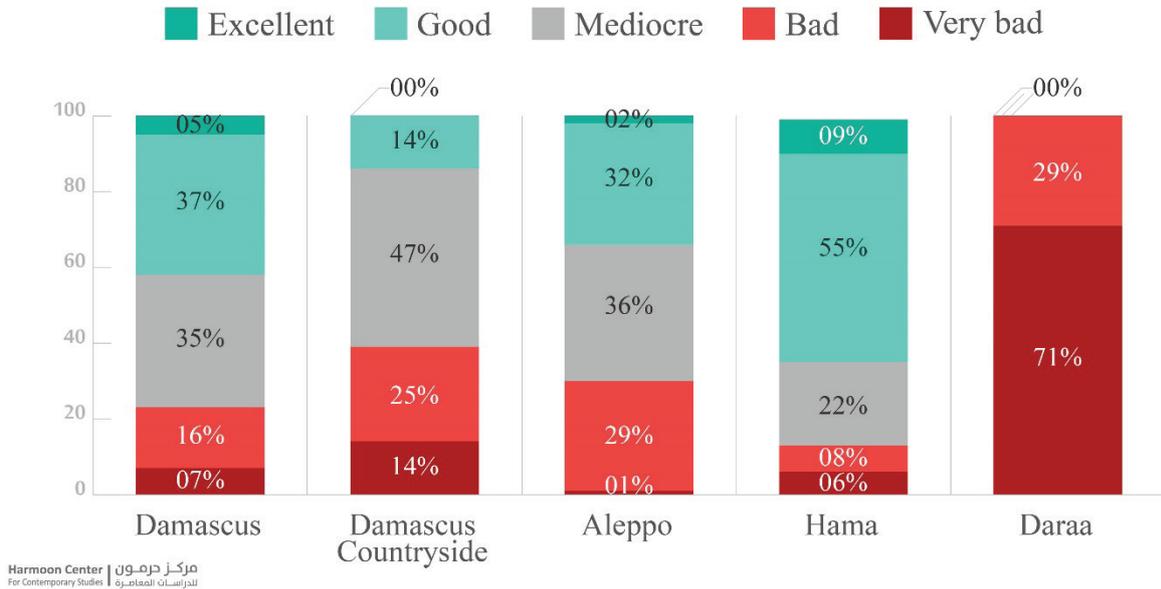




Figure 29: Security Conditions by Place of Residence of Residents



As for the results of the interviews, some of those interviewed felt that the security situation had improved somewhat in some regime-controlled areas, especially in the city of Damascus and some nearby neighborhoods.

“Between Damascus and its countryside, security exists. I always move between home and work, and I have not faced problems.” (Interview 3)

But there is still fear at night even in some areas of Damascus, especially for females.

“I try not to be late, because the night is scary in Damascus.” (Interview 4)

“Damascus is not safe, especially for girls.” (Interview 8)

This seems to be caused by the continuing incidents of murder, theft and kidnapping at night, especially with the blackouts and the spreading of armed men and drugs.

“We can say that our area has become safe by day, but you cannot walk at night. Darkness, armed youth and drugs are very widespread.” (Interview 6)



“The security situation is fine, but there are constant fears of theft, kidnappings or scams.” (Interview 2)

There is a general feeling of insecurity, and when people say it’s better, they are comparing the situation to several years ago. Also, there are variations from region to region. In Daraa for example:

“Every day there is news of a murder or a kidnapping. It is scary out there. My children and I do not go out after the sunset call to prayers, because the streets are dark, and you do not know what calamity awaits you outside.” (Interview 12)

Kidnappings are prevalent in neighborhoods where extremists live, on the roads, especially those that are far from cities:

“On the edges of Hama’s countryside near Salmiyya there are Bedouins. Anyone who wants money kidnaps someone, asks for a ransom and sticks it to the Bedouins” (Interview 14)

For example, in Deir Ezzor there are many security entities, more than before, including factions loyal to Russia or Iran. Insecurity, restrictions and fears have increased, and people don’t feel safe.

“In the beginning, the villages were not like the cities. We saw security units only from time to time, but after 2017 there have been more than ten security agencies authorized to imprison you. As a result of this militarization, chaos and bribery have spread, and people are paying security agencies to protect themselves.” (Interview 18)

Even though armed conflict/war/major military operations have seized, things have gotten worse in some areas. This is especially true when it comes to kidnapping for ransom, which is carried out by gangs or militias affiliated with the regime.

“Now, the security situation is a little complicated. Although it has become more secure, that is, there is no more war, insecurity and kidnappings are rampant. This is as horrible as war. People are saying that those who worked as civil defense or irregular auxiliary forces are behind the kidnappings. They are used to theft, trashing and vandalism, and when theft became unfeasible, they started kidnapping people and asking for ransom, because they accustomed to making easy money.” (Interview 24)



Meanwhile in Hama, the only situation that the participants believed has improved was the security situation compared to previous years. However, this is not the case in Suwayda where the regime is fomenting chaos because it doesn't like the attitude of the residents of that governorate towards it.

“As for Suwayda, when the regime saw how united the people were there, it sicked ISIS on them. They wreaked havoc killing and displacing people. But when the regime's game was exposed, it began to restrict us more and more with security. (Interview 16)

These results were consistent with another study, which reported that the majority of returnees to regime areas (57%) feel insecure there or that they feel safe walking around in their neighborhoods only during the day.⁽³⁹⁾

People seem to be afraid, especially that the arrest campaigns have started to target loyalists and supporters of the regime, who used to feel safe in the past years when the regime was mainly targeting its opponents. This is evidenced by the fact that any complaints about the services or the economic crisis led to arrest or harassment. Previous migrations — of regime's opponents — were driven by fear of arrest by the security services, but now the arrests are being launched against the regime's supporters, especially those who complain about the poor conditions.

“The percentage of arrests has declined a lot, and the security services have become a tool for intimidating the regime's supporters and those who are impartial. It can be said that most arrests in regime areas are of the supporters, especially those who are active on social media.” (Interview 15)

“To understand the security situation, it's simple, look at Abbas Al-Nouri: two days ago, he said his mind, and today he apologized. I can say, ‘I don't feel safe.’” (Interview 8)

This sense of insecurity coupled with bad economic conditions has become an important catalyst for emigrating.⁽⁴⁰⁾ In the early years of the Syrian conflict migration was connected to one's political stance, whereas now it is propelled by slight criticism of the government, not to mention kidnappings, robberies and other similar acts. Another factor, which is related to security and is one of the most important reasons why youth

(39) Is Syria safe to return, the perspective of returnees, Voices for the Displaced Syrians Forum and the Policy and Operations Corps Center, November 2021, accessed on 15 February 2022 <https://bit.ly/3JlkK9y>

(40) Tammam Abu al-Khair, the illusion of the return of safety to regime areas and the new wave of migration, nWen Post, September 2, 2021, viewed March 23, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3LSyIa0>



are emigrating, is compulsory military service. Seeing young people being arrested and forced to join the army is pushing people of military service age to leave the country.⁽⁴¹⁾

“Honestly, I traveled because I was wanted for mandatory military service. I mean that’s the main reason, because I don’t want to waste my life in the army.” (Interview 23)

The increase in the number of security authorities increasing did not make people feel more secure. On the contrary, citizen became fearful of these entities, especially that their units who are accustomed to robbery and blackmailing, are badly paid.

“Security authorities have found a second source of income by charging money of those wanted by the regime (for example, civil society activists). For example, the Palestine branch is given the task of keeping an eye on the youth in civil societies, and the Political Security is to watch the regime’s opponents on the ground. Brokers have surfaced. When you hear that a broker wants to see you, you pay the broker to tell you what they want from you. This is how the security machine is using its power to steal.” (Interview 15)

Although feelings of safety differed between residents and displaced persons, there was a general sense of loss of security among all participants. As the results of another study confirms, in regime areas more than 50% expressed this loss, of those who returned to Syria from a foreign country 67% did not feel safe versus 62% of those who returned from other areas in Syria.⁽⁴²⁾

In conclusion, the security factor is an important motive behind emigration: insecurity for females; fear of military service for males; and the fear of being kidnapped or robbed under any pretext.

2- 4 The hopelessness factor:

This is an important factor that has a significant impact on migration. There seems to be no hope of a forthcoming political solution that could lead to improved economic and living conditions despite the almost complete cessation

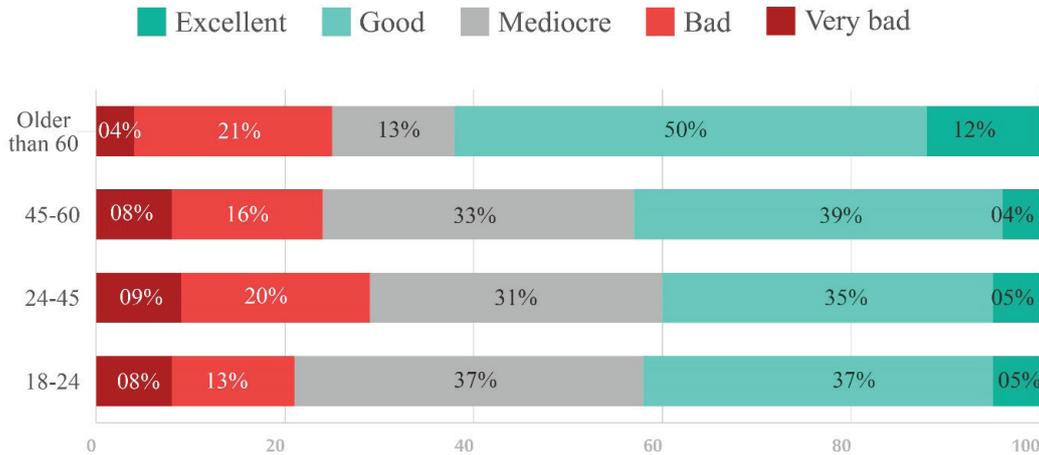
(41) Sham Mustafa, The migration of Syrians from Damascus and its countryside to Turkey, Why and the money of the routes they take, Al-Jazeera website, February 28, 2022, viewed March 15, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3O570c7>

(42) Normalization of Terror: Security and Living Conditions in Assad-Controlled Syrian Areas, Syrian Association for Citizen Dignity, August 9, 2021, accessed March 23, 2022 <https://bit.ly/367Ecia>



of military operations. Most emigrants and residents felt that things were not going to get better in Syria by 74% and 80%, respectively.

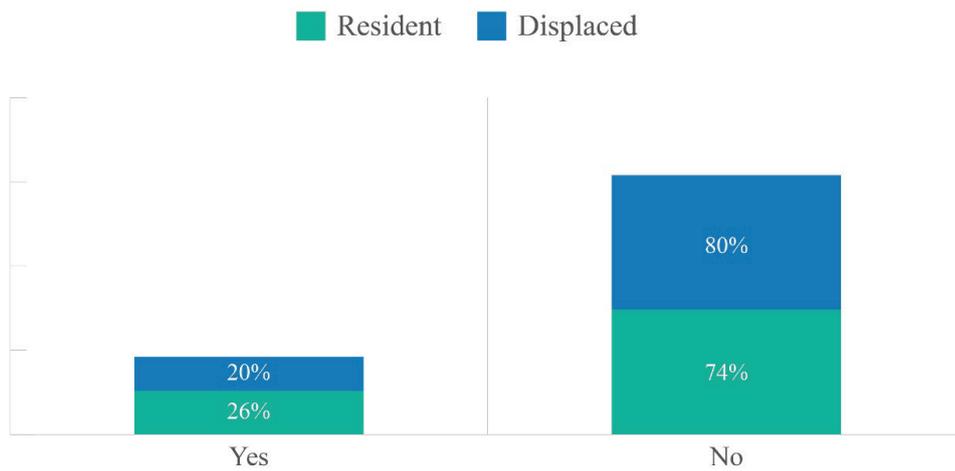
Figure 30: Security Conditions by Age Group



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Male and female participants gave similar answers to this question. Most male and female respondents believed that things are not going to get better in Syria.

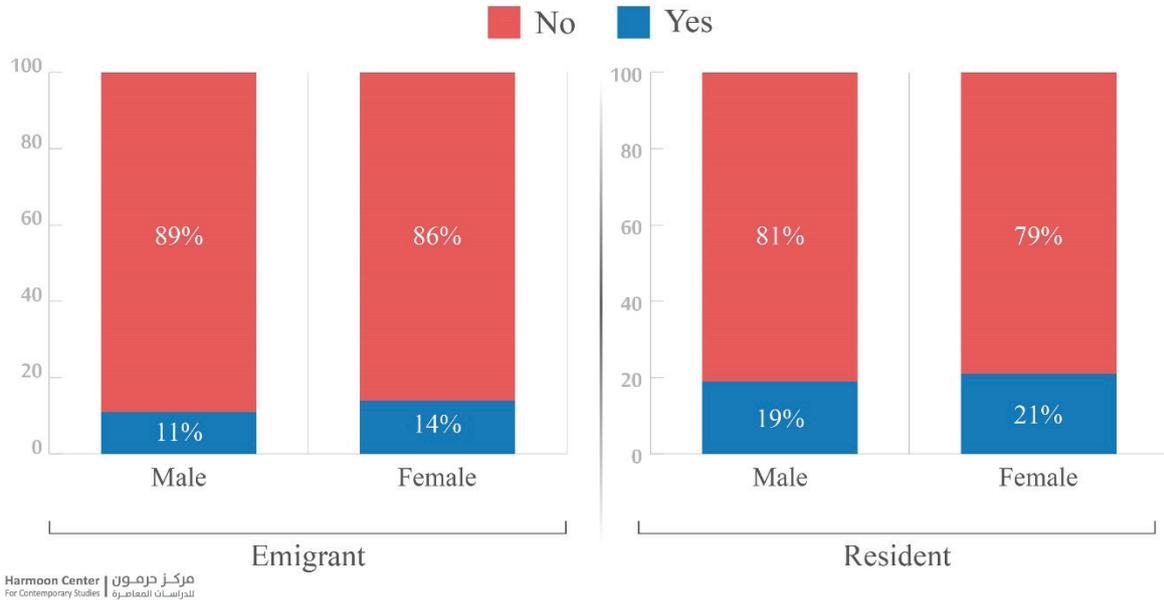
Figure 31: Do you think that things are going to get better in Syria?



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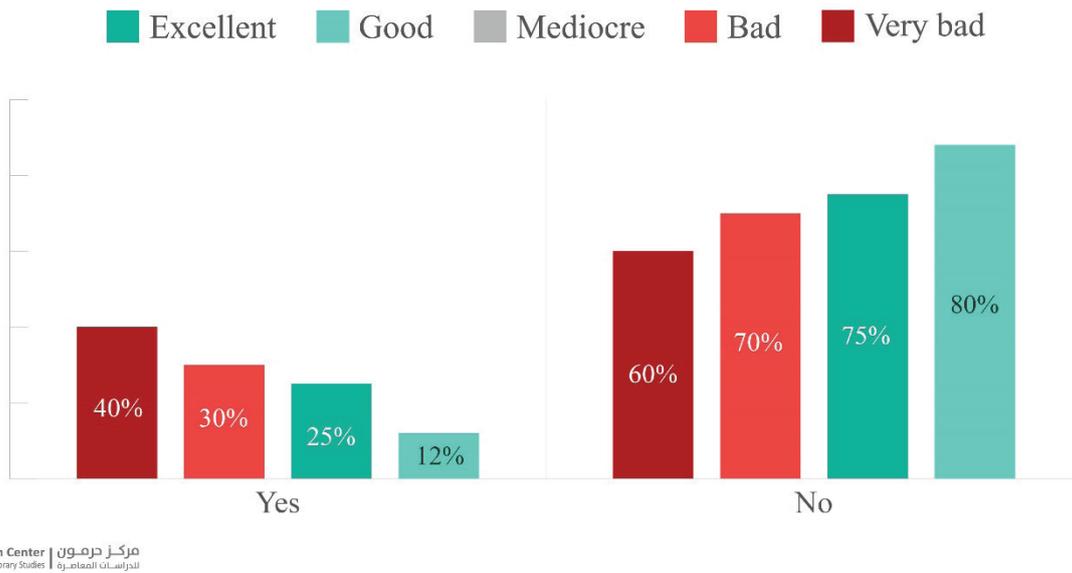
As for the results according to marital status, the percentage of single people who believed that things are not getting better was the highest at 88%.

Figure 32: Do you think that things are going to get better in Syria?
According to gender (residents)



Young people aged 18-24 were the most likely to think that things were not going any better (89%) versus 58% for those over the age of 60.

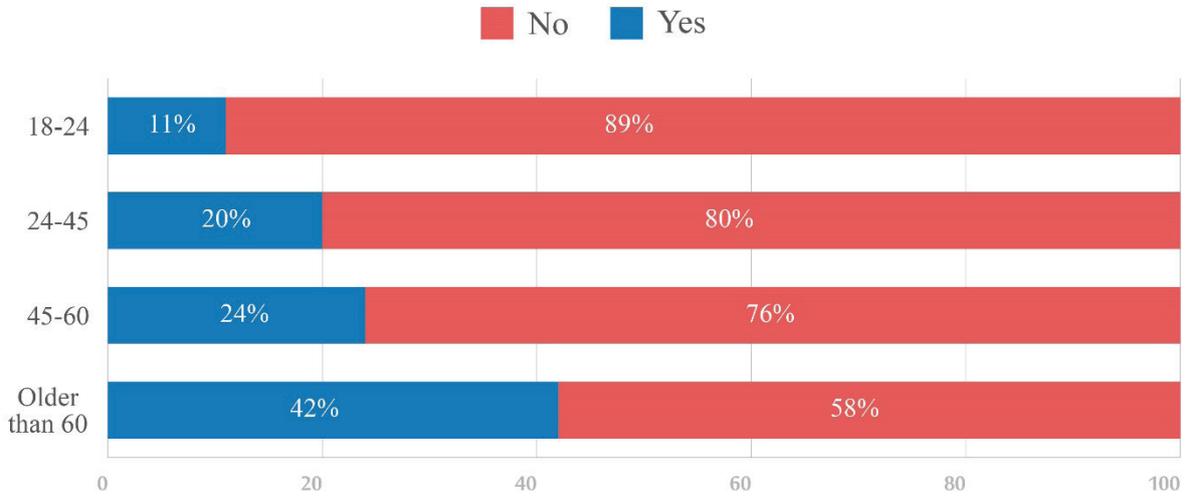
Figure 33: Do you think that things are going to get better in Syria?
According to marital status (residents)



All respondents from Daraa believed that things were not getting better (100%) versus 66% in Hama.



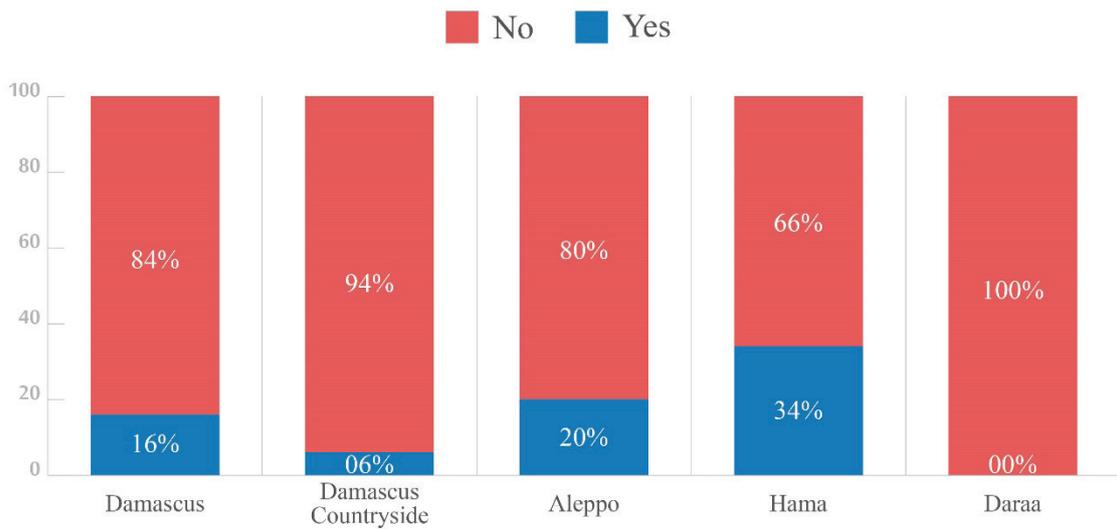
Figure 34: Do you think that things are going to get better in Syria?
According to age group



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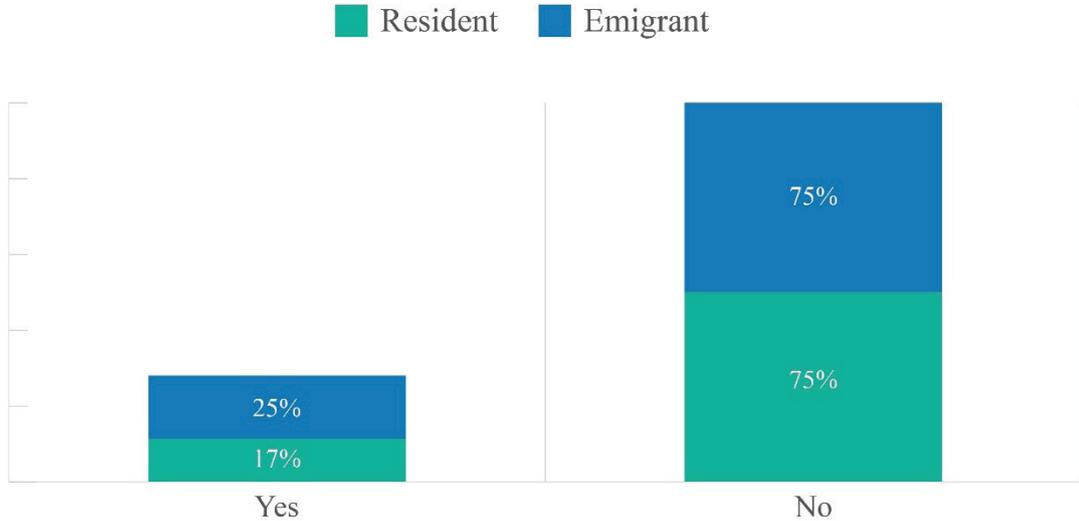
Most participants, male and female, residents and emigrants, felt that there was no hope left for living in Syria.

Figure 35: Do you think that things are going to get better in Syria?
According to place of residence



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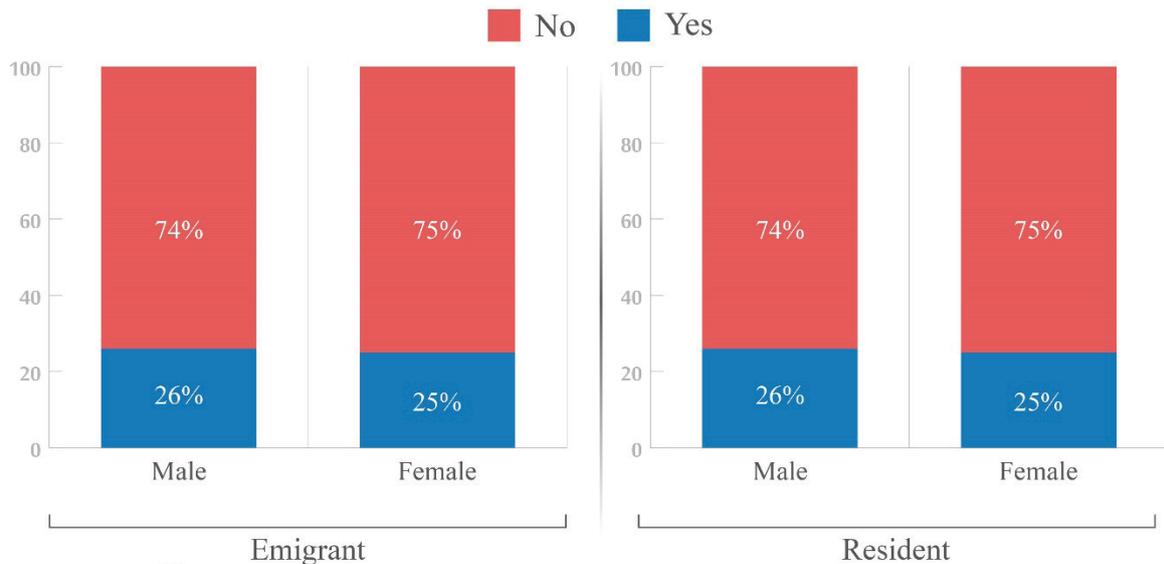
Figure 36: Do you think there is still hope for living in Syria?



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Consistent with the findings of the other study, singles were the most pessimistic group about the situation in Syria, with 84% of them seeing no hope for living in Syria.

Figure 37: Do you think there is still hope for living in Syria?
According to gender



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The results were age proportional. Hope increased with age.



Figure 38: Do you think there is still hope for living in Syria?
According to marital status of residents

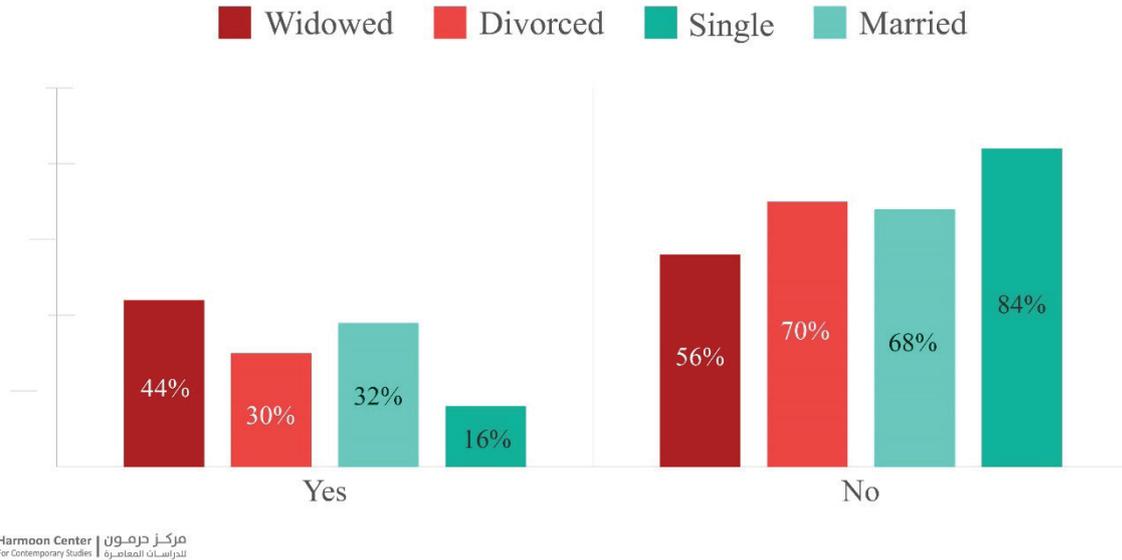
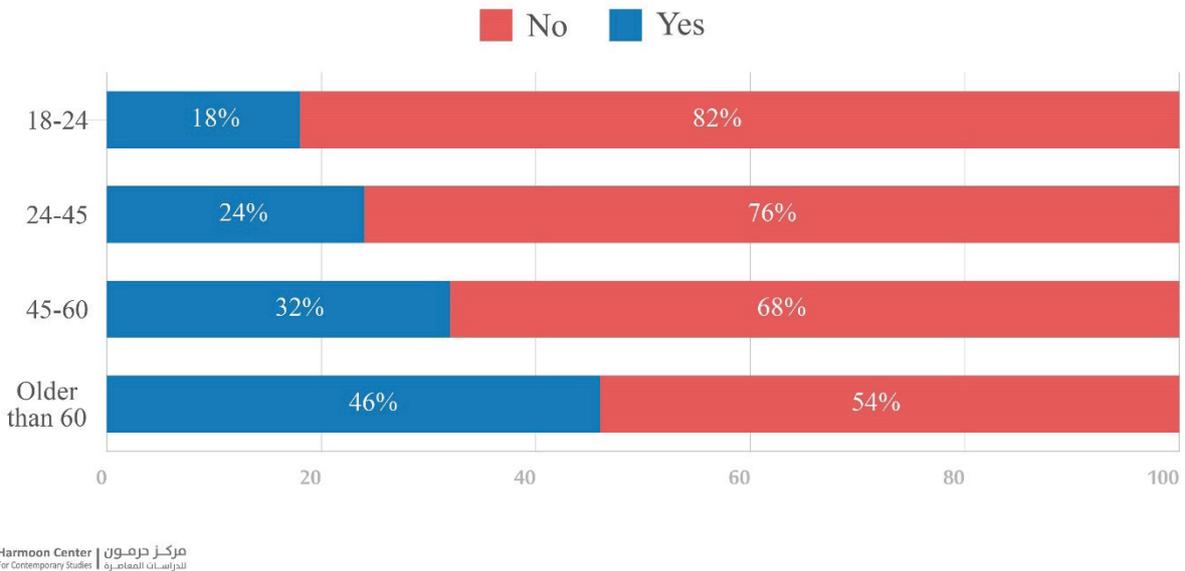
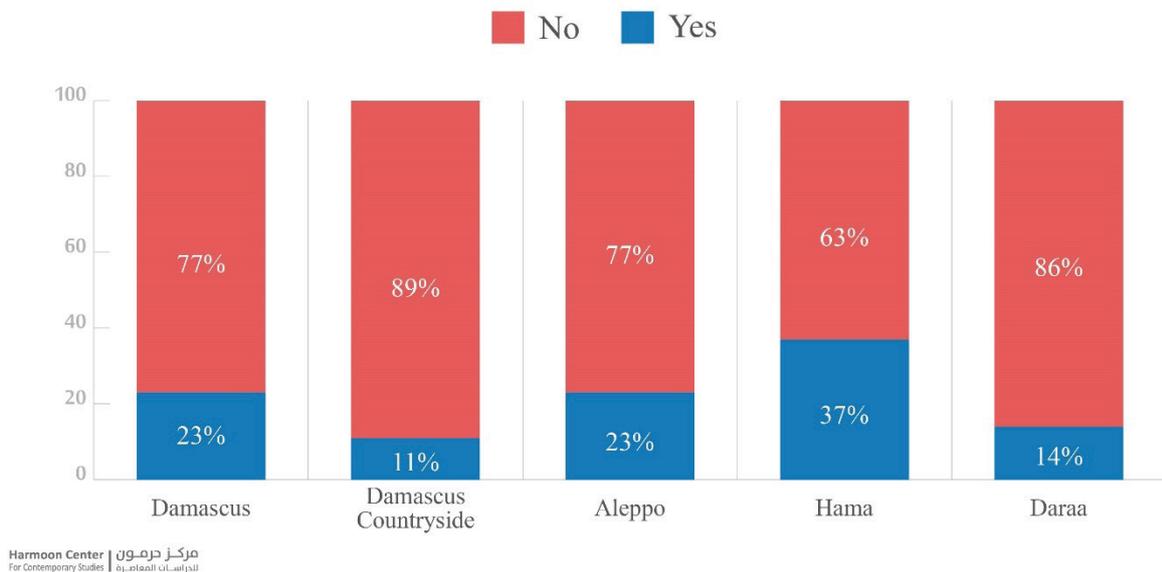


Figure 39: Do you think there is still hope for living in Syria?
According to age group



As for the place of residence, the people of Hama were the most hopeful to live in Syria, while respondents from the Damascus countryside were the least hopeful.

Figure 40: Do you think there is still hope for living in Syria?
According to place of residence



Most interviewees believed that things are not going to get better in Syria, and that there is no hope for Syria's future.

“There is no hope for anything because there is no life in Syria.”
(Questionnaire 53 Resident)

This has been especially true following the destruction that Syria underwent particularly in its infrastructure.

“There is no hope because it is no longer a country. It has turned into a cemetery.” (Questionnaire 6 Immigrant)

“We don't know what hope means anymore. We live in the hope of dying tomorrow.” (Questionnaire 209 Resident)

Some believed that the reason behind this hopelessness is the large wave of migration of young people whom the country could rely on to rebuild itself.

“How can we talk about hope, hope in young people, when the youth are out of the country, when only those who have not succeeded abroad and have lived on benefits return?” (Interview 21)

Some felt that the reason was the survival of the current regime, the rampant corruption, and the presence of those who benefited from the continuation of



the war, especially the merchants of wars:

“As long as the current regime and government exist, there is no hope for Syria.” (Interview 2)

“There is no political solution in the foreseeable future, in addition to the deteriorating economic situation and the lack of services that preserve the dignity of human beings.” (Questionnaire 153 Resident)

Some felt that Syrians have even lost the ability to create hope.

“Hope is not just a word to be said. It is something that is made, and we have lost the ability to make it.” (Questionnaire 284 Resident)

It is this hopelessness that drives many people to think about emigrating, because some of those who have stayed in Syria in the hope that things will improve there have now lost faith.

“If there had been hope after the 11-year war, we wouldn’t have thought about emigrating today.” (Interview 6)

Others saw that there was still hope, and that hope was the only reason they had stayed in Syria until now.

“Certainly, there is hope. Basically, that’s why I have stayed here so far and haven’t emigrated like everyone else.” (Interview 8)

There are those who hope that the country will return to what it was before 2010, because they believe that things were good in Syria then. Therefore, they are not thinking about travel.

“I feel like the country was beautiful back then. It could come back, and I have ruled out the idea completely. I feel that staying in the country is my duty.” (Interview 8)

These same respondents have hope that the economy can be revived through remittances from abroad to rebuild their homes, which could lead to an economic recovery in the country.

“People who are outside the country send money here to fix their homes and lives. The market is starting to shift, and I work when the market is working.” (Interview 14)



For some, hope is not derived from the idea that the crisis is coming to an end soon or that they see a solution on the horizon. They believe that any crisis has its own end.

“The fate of any country is to get out of the dark tunnel and enter a state of prosperity and re-construction.” (Questionnaire 5 Resident)

Even though, this hope is being linked to young people, a large proportion of them have left the country and the rest are hoping to emigrate.

“I still have hope in Syria and in the youth in it.” (Interview 15)

Hopelessness has led supporters of the regime and even those fighting for it to think about emigrating. This is especially true because there is no hope in sight, and the duration of compulsory service for some has been extended for years to come. Some of the regime’s soldiers have begun to flee and emigrate.⁽⁴³⁾

Still more, a media personality belonging to a pro-regime channel, who used to be one of the staunchest defenders of the regime, has justified his emigration through, “the paralysis that is felt in the professional sector, the deteriorating situation that prevails in the country, the state of despair, the complete paralysis and the sickening disgust.”⁽⁴⁴⁾

(43) Qassem Marwani, A sharp split between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime over the idea of immigration, Pier 22, 15 October 2016, accessed 25 March 2022 at <https://bit.ly/367q8oS>

(44) The Syrian regime addresses the migration file: Travel silently, Nakri Gemayel, Jisr website, September 23, 2021, seen on March 22 pedestrianQ 2022 in: <https://bit.ly/3LXBilx>



Syrian Artist Firas Ibrahim

The immigration and passport building these days is like a beehive. There is a frantic and unprecedented attempt for a large segment of Syrian youth to travel and emigrate outside the country. It is sad that the country is being drained of its youth and its abilities in this unprecedented way due to difficult living conditions and the loss of hope.

16 September 2021

The loss of hope has been linked to the decline in the economic situation and the living crisis, with no effective effort to resolve them.

“There is no hope because the economy is still declining dramatically and rapidly. People are hungry and everyone is in denial. No one is recognizing reality or the real numbers. No one is recognizing the deteriorating health, services and economic situation.” (Questionnaire 19 Immigrant)

They don't see any improvement in the situation and believe it is only getting worse.

“Because the economic, living and services situation at all levels and sectors is bad, and there is no improvement.” (Questionnaire 18 Immigrant)

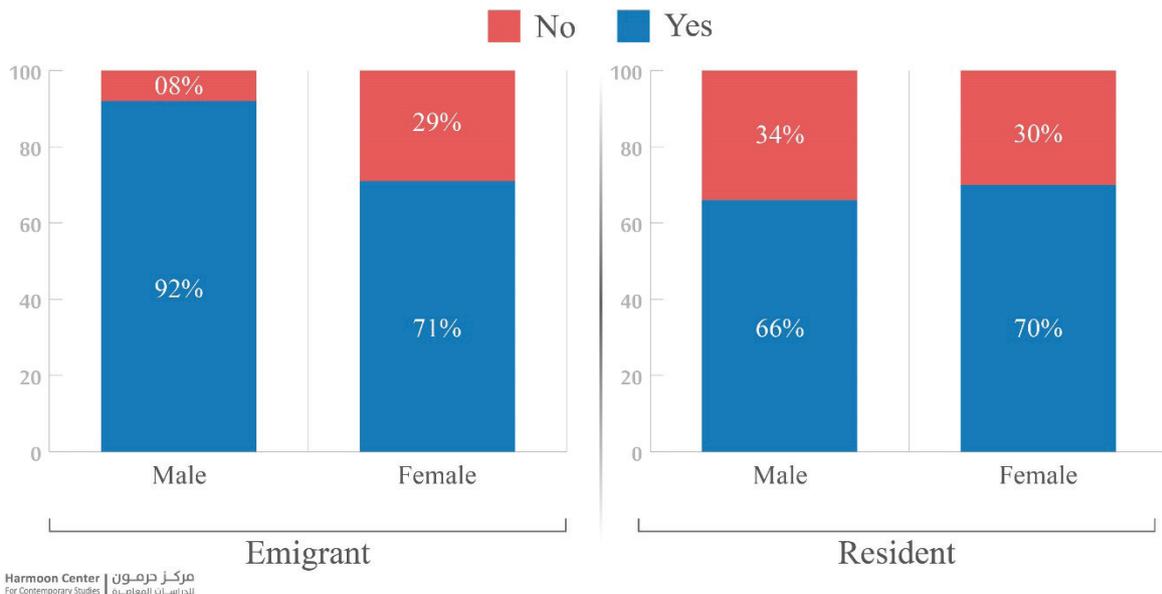
Economic pressures have generated hopelessness in people pushing them to think more seriously about emigrating from these areas, especially that life has not improved following the decrease in military operations.

2- 5 The displacement factor:

Internal displacement is another factor that has caused many to emigrate. When citizens lose all of what they own including their homes and are displaced to an area where they own nothing they are forced to rent a place. Even those who returned to their hometowns following reconciliation efforts found most of their homes uninhabitable. This was also true for shops and industrial buildings and even land, which required the removal remnants of war from it.

The percentage of questionnaire participants who were displaced from their areas of origin before emigrating was about 56%. Of those 86% said that displacement was one of the main reasons for their emigration. Of the males in that group 92% said that displacement was the main reason for leaving Syria versus 71% of the female participants.

Figure 41: Was internal displacement the cause of your emigration?
According to gender



As for the residents, 26% of them were currently displaced, 74% were residents in the area of their origin. Of the males in that group 66% said that displacement was the main reason for leaving Syria versus 70% of the female participants.

The displacement factor is a significant motive so much so that the decision to emigrate is an easier for the displaced than it is for the residents, especially since some of them have lost everything they owned. The Syrian crisis has led to the emergence of an unprecedented number of internally displaced people, and



the timeframe of their migration cannot be predicted, especially that they are the most affected by the economic conditions.⁽⁴⁵⁾

These are the most important factors that drive emigration. There are certainly secondary factors as well, some individual and others general. The results of our study intersect with another study that found out that 79.07% of the questionnaire respondents prefer to leave the country because of the deteriorating living conditions, 9.30% because of military service, and 9.30% to find a job.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The impact of each of these factors changes over time. For example, previously security conditions were main cause of migration at 90%, followed by marital status at 33% and economic factors at 28%. Social factors, family separation and societal divisions were some of the other reasons that led people to leave.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Today, hopelessness is the main push reason behind emigration and is connected to other factors such as the decline of the economy, the service and living conditions. If there had been a glimmer of hope on the horizon, many would not have thought of emigrating and would have tried to adapt to these challenges in the hope of an imminent relief.

3. The Pull Factors:

About 77% of residents felt that securing a better future in another country is one of the most important factors that pull them to emigrate followed by securing a decent life at 70%, and transfer of economic activity at only 14%.

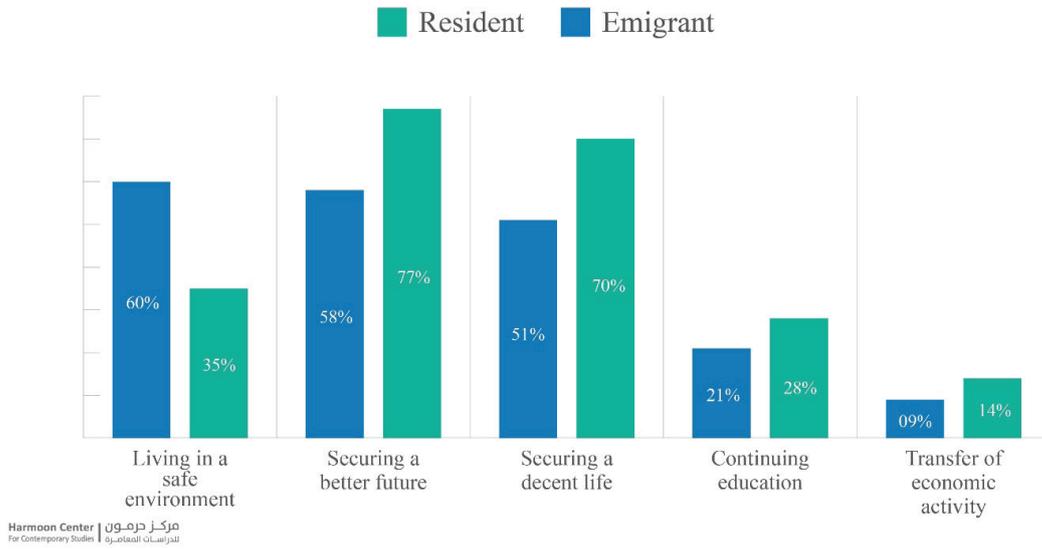
As for the emigrants, 60% said that their goal was to live in a safe environment, 58% wanted to secure a better future, 51% a decent life, and 17% to transfer economic activity. These findings are consistent with other studies that say that people are suffering from a state of hopelessness in those areas and that there is a desire to build a new life abroad.

(45) Huynh, B. Q., & Basu, S. (2020). Forecasting internally displaced population migration patterns in Syria and Yemen. *Disaster medicine and public health preparedness*, 14(3), 302-307.

(46) Is Syria safe to return, the perspective of returnees, Forum Voices for the Displaced Syrians and the Policy and Operations Center for Operations, November 2021, p. 55, accessed February 15, 2022 at: <https://bit.ly/3JlkK9y>

(47) - We are Syria, Syrian Association for Citizen Dignity, July 20/ Uleo 2020, p. 11, viewed March 22, 2022 at: <https://bit.ly/3uy5jfx>

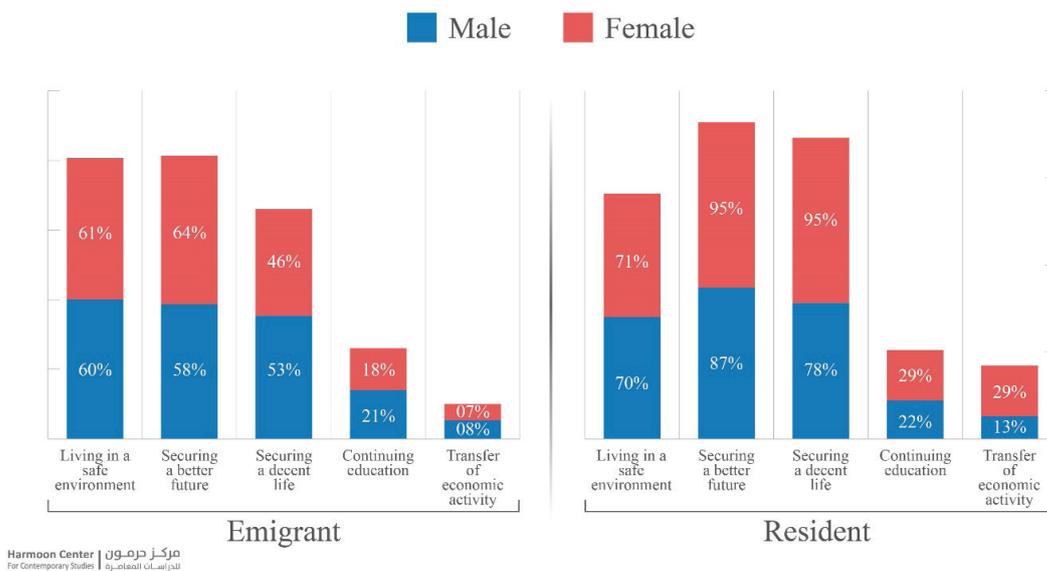
Figure 42: Emigration pull factors



Regarding female emigrants, 64% said they wanted to secure a better future, while only 7% said that their aim was to transfer economic activity versus 60% and 8% of male emigrants, respectively.

The same applied to residents. Most male and female respondents wanted to secure a better future, a decent life, and a safe environment, and to a lesser extent to pursue education and transfer economic activity.

Figure 43: Emigration pull factors according to gender





The same results were true for the interviewees, where most said that they wanted to secure a better future and a decent life, especially since it has become almost impossible to achieve these in Syria.

“Safety and stability alone. I felt that having a child in Syria had become a crime.” (Questionnaire of 19 immigrants)

“I certainly want to travel because my life anywhere else that I could get to would be better. I will be able to secure my future. I cannot work in this country.” (Interview 9)

Citizens are thinking about how to secure their basic needs because of the economic and social difficulties in Syria.

“Instead of thinking about their future, about educating their children and raising them, the concerns of an advanced way of living and how to develop themselves, Syrian citizens are thinking about securing the basic needs of life, being able to survive.” (Questionnaire 76 Assessed)

Most participants desire to live in a psychologically and socially safe and secure environment.

“I want to look for a homeland that respects me and reveres me primarily as a human being.” (25 Migrants Questionnaire)

There are also those who wish to emigrate to pursue education, especially university education.⁽⁴⁸⁾

“Today, in our region, many people travel through Aga Khan scholarships under the pretext of pursuing education for future qualification to work at the institution, but it is certainly a way to escape the country.” (Interview 1)

Another incentive for emigration has been reunification with family some of whose members abroad are immigrants and have applied for family members in Syria to join them. Marriage in another route especially for women. As for the transfer of economic activity, it is an incentive for merchants and industrialists who are faced with restrictions.

Many feel that they have come to a dead end in Syria.

“No serious attempts could convince Syrians that what is next is

(48) Avery, H., & Said, S. (2017). Higher education for refugees: the case of Syria. *Policy & Practice*, (24), 104-125.

more beautiful... Nothing on the ground indicates that the future is bright.” (Questionnaire 132)

Here the push and pull factors are connected. For example, hopelessness as a driving factor is associated with the desire to secure a better future, a pull factor. The economic factor is linked to the need to secure a decent life. There is a positive correlation between the push and pull factors.

4. Classification of Emigrants:

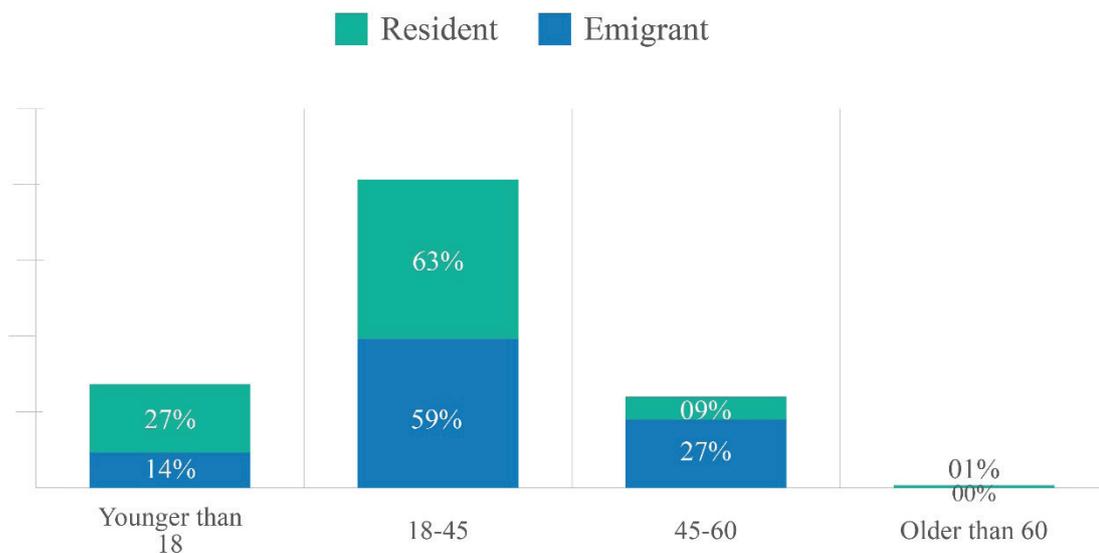
The study classifies emigrants or those who wish to migrate according to age, gender, religion and other categories. The following answer given by an interviewee is noteworthy:

“You have to ask who is not traveling.” (Interview 12)

4- 1 Age group

In the last period, those who emigrated were between the ages of 8 and 45 according to 59% of emigrant respondents versus 63% of resident respondents. Those over the age of 60 are the least likely to emigrate.

Figure 44: Emigrates and residents according to age group





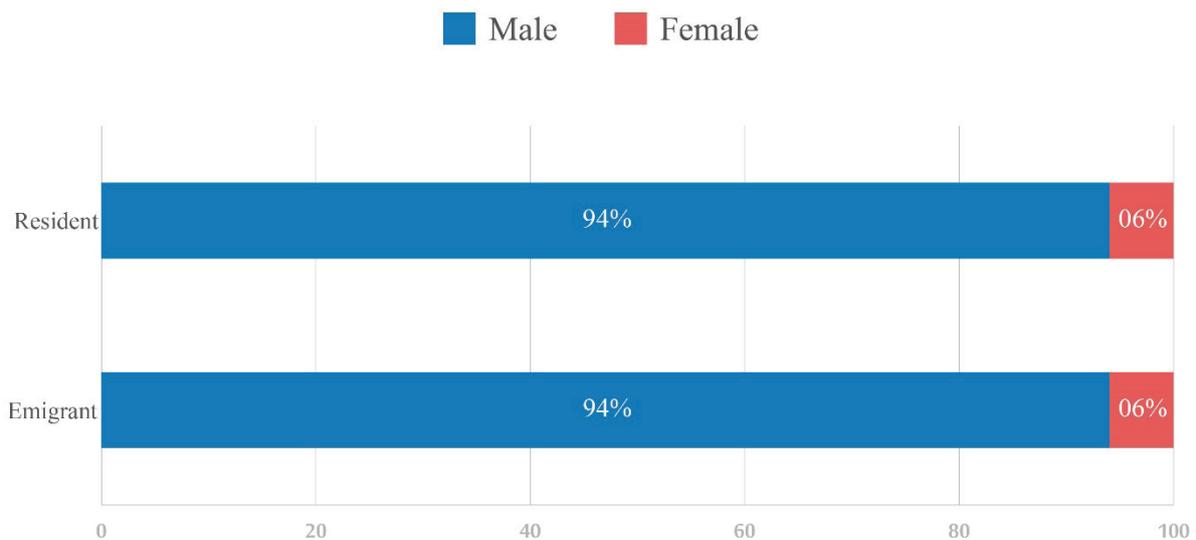
Young people are the majority of those who emigrate,⁽⁴⁹⁾ especially university graduates and those who are wanted for military service, as well as young craftsmen. The migration of young males is greater than females due to compulsory military service. In some cases, entire families are forced to emigrate because they fear for their children, especially those who are close to the age of conscription.

“Young people whether they are educated or have a craft, everyone is leaving.” (Interview 2)

4-2 Gender:

Of the residents, 96% said that men are the ones who are emigrating versus 94% of emigrant respondents.

Figure 45: Emigrates and residents according to gender



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A new phenomenon of unprecedented magnitude that has recently appeared in Syrian society is the migration of women who are leaving Syria for reasons other than marriage, reunification with family abroad or education.

“Young men travel much more than girls, because of compulsory military service.” (Interview 10)

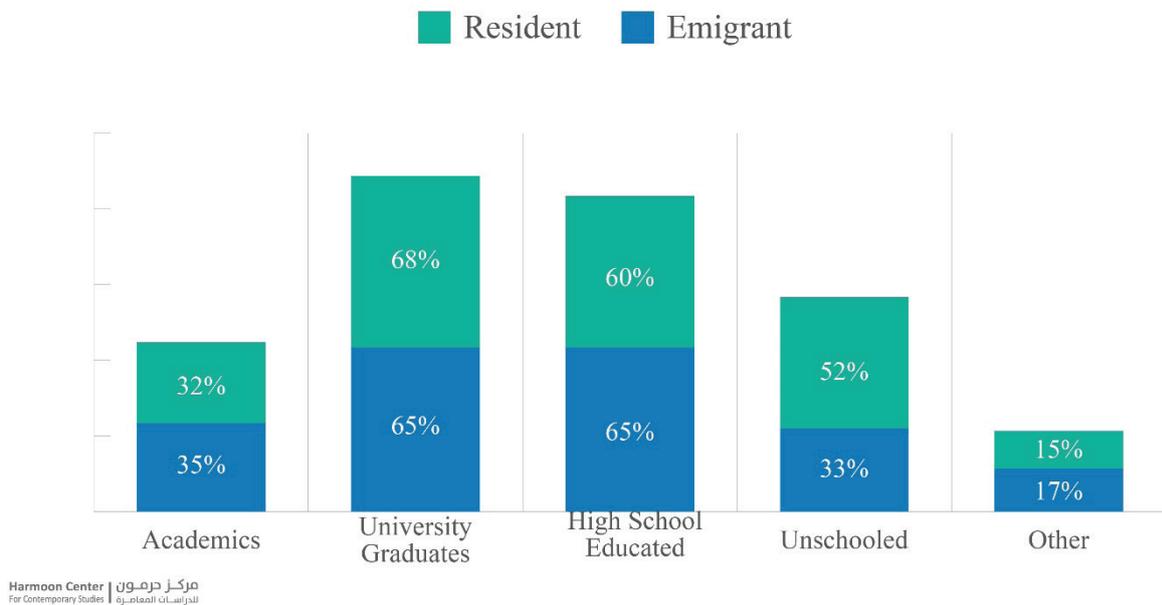
(49) Sham Mustafa, due to economic collapse and rampant unemployment, thousands of Syrians knock on the doors of migration, Al-Jazeera website, January 6, 2022, accessed March 28, 2022 at <https://bit.ly/3JsJ1VC>

For example, in the town of Nawa, in Daraa, more than 2,000 young men emigrated during May 2022 due to military service recruitment campaigns and security conditions.⁽⁵⁰⁾

4-3 Educational level

Migration is taking place at all educational levels. However, the percentages of academics, high school and university graduates are much higher than the rest of the categories. The answers to the questionnaire were as follows noting that respondents could choose more than one answer:

Figure 46: Emigrates and residents according to educational level



The above results were consistent with the interviews.

“Everyone wants to emigrate, especially university students who are emigrating before receiving their diplomas.” (Interview 8)

Some believe that this has affected the military, as most of the educated and those with financial means are leaving.

“Only the uneducated or those whose financial condition does not allow travel join the army.” (Interview 22)

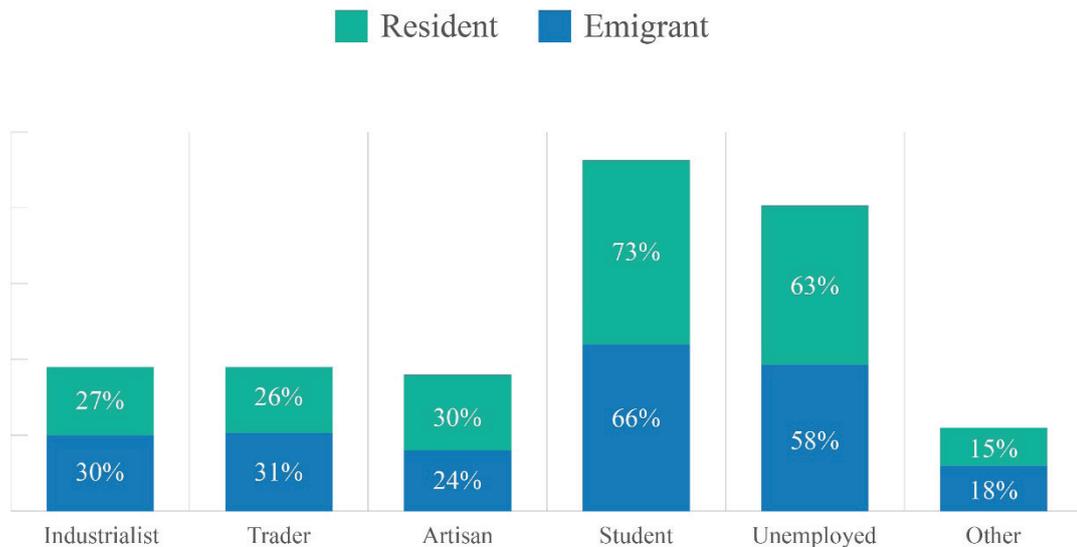
(50) Al-Hadith al-Suri, July 19, 2021, seen on July 20, 2021 <https://bit.ly/3yogyt7>



4- 4 Profession:

The largest group of emigrants by profession were the students at 73% for residents and 66% for emigrants, followed by the unemployed and then the rest of the categories such as traders and industrialists.

Figure 47: Emigrates and residents according to profession



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The most displaced Syrians are doctors, dentists and academics and those in similar professions. Therefore, a shortage of these professionals has been observed in regime areas in addition to other professionals such as traders who leave because of economic pressures.

Younis Qabalan, director of the Syrian Commission for Medical Specialties, has said that the number of doctors who have emigrated was 40% during the past years and that the migration rate for new doctors has reached 80%.⁽⁵¹⁾ A large number of doctors have migrated, due to poor economic conditions, to unstable and war-torn countries such as Yemen and Somalia and their salaries there are ranging from \$1200 to \$3000. Back home in the regime areas their salaries did not exceed 280,000 Syrian pounds, equivalent to \$70. The number of Syrian doctors in Somalia has reached 500, most of whom are specialized in dentistry, pediatrics or surgery. According to a statement made by the former Syndicate of Doctors in February 2021, only 20 thousand doctors out of 70 thousand have remained in the regime areas. About 70% of health workers have left, and there

(51) Fadi Bey Al-Sharif: Obliging doctors to have a year of national service outside their provinces... , Al-Watan Newspaper, January 30, 2022, accessed June 20, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3buxViX>



is now only one doctor for every 10,000 Syrian citizens. The situation is so bad that the regime's Ministry of Health has announced that it needs 1,500 doctors to cover the shortage caused by the migration of doctors.⁽⁵²⁾

The migration wave has included industrialists as well as artisans, as the demand for documents or certificates for the purpose of travel increased by a large percentage during 2021. This was confirmed by the Chairman of the General Union of Craftsmen, Naji al-Hadwa, who believes that high production costs are behind the migration wave.⁽⁵³⁾

“The craftspeople are all thinking about traveling, and I think the vast majority of competent craftspeople have left en masse.” (Interview 8)

About half of the licensed beauty salons have closed due to the migration of their workers to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the UAE. Nearly 70% of students graduating from the Faculty of Dentistry are emigrating, according to several regime officials.⁽⁵⁴⁾

In May 2022, Jordan issued a decision that allows the entry of Syrian businesspeople and investors holding premium or first-class commercial registrations for one year and for several entries. The purpose of this decision is to attract Syrian capital and traders who are considering leaving Syria.⁽⁵⁵⁾

One industrialist from Aleppo said: “For 30 years, I have been working in the Kalasa area, which has never experienced such conditions. Because of many obstacles that have hindered our work my factory had to be shut down 3 months ago, and today I'm offering it for sale. I might emigrate at any time to any country that appreciates industrialists.” Another said: “What is happening is a form of expulsion that encourages industrialists to emigrate and leave their factories behind.”⁽⁵⁶⁾

The economist Ammar Youssef has confirmed that the emigrants are the economic elites and the craftspeople who are being driven away by financial re-

(52) Continuous bleeding, why Syrian doctors migrate to countries witnessing wars and instability, Al-Jazeera website, July 17, 2022, seen on July 19, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3brBxCv>

(53) A big loss and those who are now migrating to the economic elites, Al-Watan Newspaper, September 20, 2021, viewed on July 20, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3u5WoBr>

(54) Jana Al-Issa, Diana Rahima, Amal Rantissi, Russian-Syrian plans fail 2021 Flesh Syrians instead of returning them, Enab Baladi website, January 9, 2022, seen March 29, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3E5wa5S>

(55) New visa for commercial registration holders.. Jordan offers new facilities to Syrian investors and businessmen, Top News, May 14, 2022, accessed on July 21, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3nmaiM5>

(56) Suhaib Amraya: Industrialists of the Aleppo class distress from under the rubble, Tishreen newspaper, September 22, 2021, accessed on July 20, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3xTIB33>



striction such as taxes. He continues to say that the government is backing foreign investors from countries such as Egypt and facilitating their work to a great extent. Youssef stressed that the migration of artisans is a result of poor living conditions, where owners of establishments cannot give salaries of more than 300,000 Syrian pounds, which is equivalent to \$100. Meanwhile, rents are about \$150-200 per month. Whereas workers abroad can afford rent and other living expenses at the same time.⁽⁵⁷⁾

A new and noteworthy phenomenon has come about where a group of industrialists from regime areas have emigrated, it seems, to Egypt and Iraqi Kurdistan despite the regime's efforts to reduce their numbers. A member of the Chamber of Industry in the regime's areas revealed that about 18,000 industrialists from Aleppo, and 28,000 from Damascus emigrated to Egypt and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq following the rise in the cost of production and energy. Moreover, some of the policies of the regime discourage the continuation of their work, and the huge taxes imposed on them are forcing them to close their facilities and emigrate.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Many industrialists and traders have lost hope and cannot continue to wait for the situation to improve, so they have begun thinking about leaving, especially that good investment opportunities are available elsewhere in countries such as Egypt and Iraq.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Some have emigrated because they could not find the minimum requirements of a climate adequate for investment. They also suffer from shortages in production supplies, high taxes, and a narrowing of the Syrian market due to the widespread poverty that has affected a large part of the population.⁽⁶⁰⁾

4- 5 Place of residence:

Residents believe that people in cities are more likely to emigrate than people from the countryside, while the emigrants see it the other way around. This can be explained by the fact that in the last period economic pressures have been greater in the cities while people in the countryside have a greater ability to respond to the living crises. This is especially true because they can access electricity and water in alternative ways such as solar energy and wells. The same is true for bread and food. Whereas before living in the rural areas was difficult

(57) A big loss and those who are now migrating to the economic elites, Al-Watan Newspaper, September 20, 2021, viewed on July 20, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3u5WoBr>

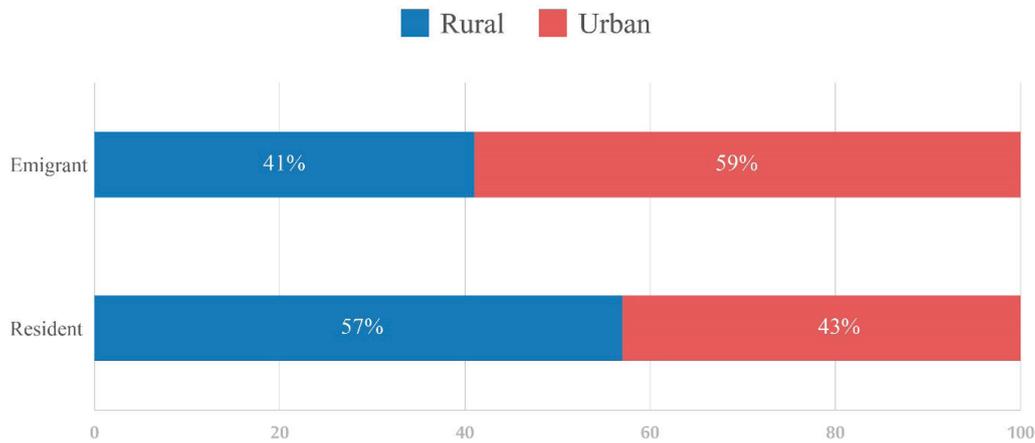
(58) Angry reactions to the phenomenon of the migration of industrialists from areas controlled by the Syrian regime, Social Press Center - Syrian Press Center, September 27, 2021, seen on March 12, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3v9j4Ap>

(59) Migration from the regime's areas is multiple routes and destinations to reach abroad, Al-Suriya website, October 14, 2021, seen on March 1, 2022 <https://bit.ly/2Zzi24u>

(60) Harmoon Observatory, Hermon Center for Contemporary Studies, October 30, 2021, accessed March 20, 2022 <https://bit.ly/37QA0DG>

because of excessive military operations that took place there.

Figure 48: Emigrates and residents according to place of residence

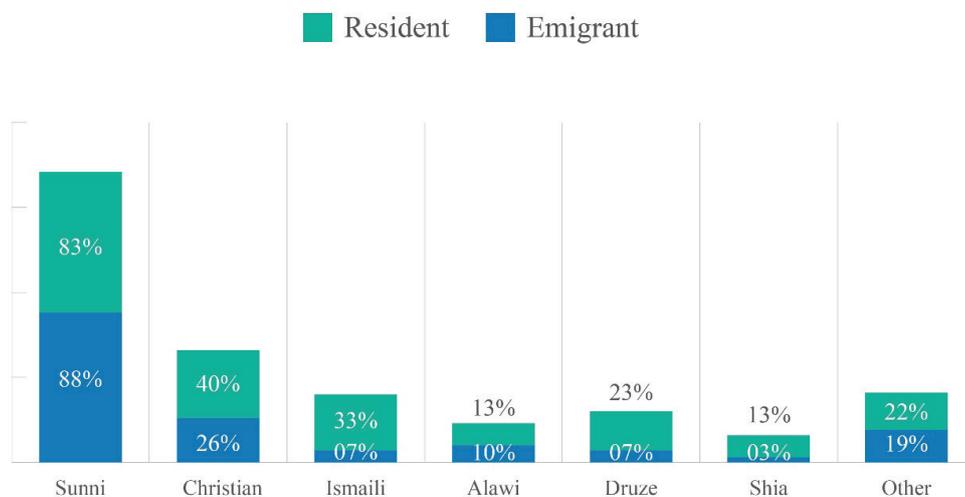


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4- 6 Religion and sect:

Syrians of all sects and religions are emigrating. However, Muslims and Christians are the most likely to do so. Of the residents, 83% said they believe that Sunnis are the most likely to emigrate and 40% thought that Christians were the most likely to leave. The percentages of the same were 88% and 26% for the emigrant respondents. The percentages of the rest of the sects were lower.

Figure 49: Emigrates and residents according to religion or sect



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Most interviewees asserted that migration was initially dominated by a certain sect because of the war, but now it is across all sects.

“It can be said that the migration of minorities and certain religious sects was during the obvious periods of war, today there is no particular sect that is leaving.” (Interview 8)

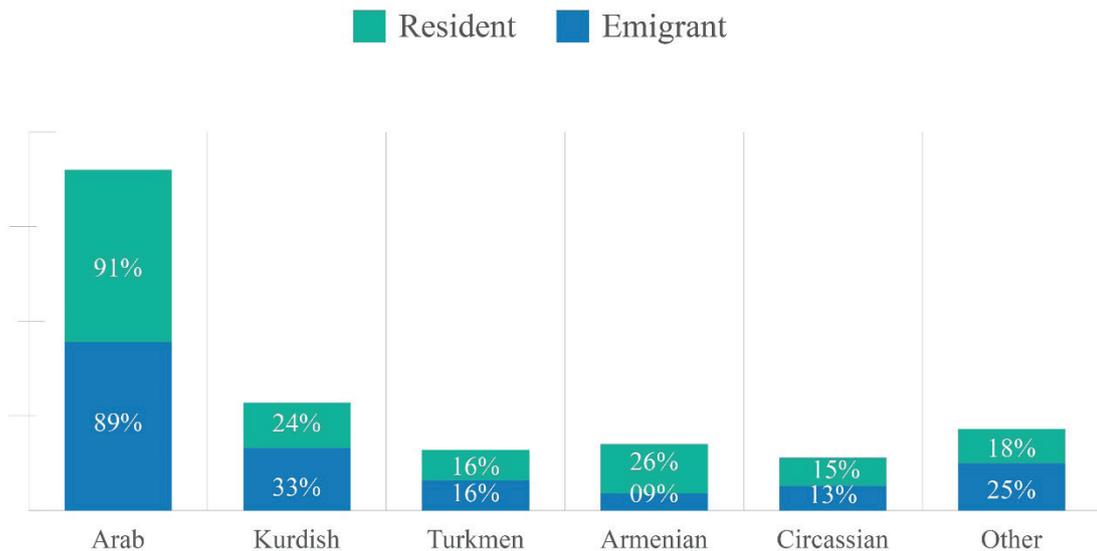
Another interviewee believed that whoever could emigrate is emigrating regardless of religion or sect:

“In my opinion, there is no tendency within a particular sect to emigrate more than others, because the situation is experienced by rich and poor, Muslim, Christian, Sunni, Druze and Alawite, everyone is feeling the poverty.” (Interview 9)

4- 7 Ethnicity:

Of the emigrants 89% answered that Arabs are the most likely to emigrate while 33% believed that was true for the Kurds. Meanwhile, 91% of the residents in the sample said that Arabs constitute the majority of emigrants followed by Armenians at 26% and Kurds at 24%.

Figure 50: Emigrates and residents according to ethnicity



Arabs make up the majority of the Syrian people, therefore their emigration rate is high. The same can be said about the ethnicities whose migration has left



a significant impact on the demographic composition of Syria, especially Armenians, Assyrians, and Turkmens.

4- 8 Case Study:

The study collected data from several regions and governorates to come up with approximate numbers. However, the names of data collectors could not be published due to fear of prosecution.

Salamieh:

Salamieh has not witnessed major military operations except for some ISIS attacks on some of its villages. Its inhabitants are predominantly middle-class employees. It has witnessed a large migration of young people between the years 2014 and 2017, which then spread to the migration of entire families. Six out of ten of the youth from this region has emigrated or is thinking and planning to do so. Their drivers varied between the desire to continue their education and work abroad or escape military service and secure a better future. One man from Salamieh reported:

“Of the 30 families living in the neighborhood, 10 have completely left, and within families of 7 at least 2 have emigrated.”

This caused a major shortage of medical staff there, which became clear when people began to go to doctors in other governorates. This was accompanied by an obvious decrease in the number of youths as the number of elderly people became larger and the dependence of on remittances more prevalent. At first there was a shortage in the labor force of too, but with the decline of the economic conditions in Lebanon many workers returned.⁽⁶¹⁾

Other cases:

In the last two years, about 250 young people emigrated from a village in the eastern countryside of Aleppo, which had a population of about 5,000 people before 2011. Most of these emigrants left because they were unwilling to do compulsory military service, or they left for economic reasons. The village is in an agricultural area and working the land no longer provides a good return. This led to a significant shortage of labor in that area, and the landowners are finding Difficulty in securing workers to work in the farms there.⁽⁶²⁾

This applied to a neighborhood of Aleppo as well. Although it was not pos-

(61) Interview with a resident of the city during the month of May 2022.

(62) An interview with a resident of that village in May 2022, who asked not to be named.



sible to determine the exact percentages or number of emigrants from that neighborhood, one participant reported that most of his friends have migrated:

“We were an ingroup of about 9 young men, and now there are only two of us left: me and a friend in reserve service. The rest are abroad.” (Interview 26).

The countryside of Hama, especially the Christian villages, is also witnessing with the increasing economic pressures and the security chaos an unprecedented migration of dozens of young people every week. The towns of Maharda, Saqilabiya, Kafr Behm are particularly affected, as well as the villages of Wadi al-Nasra in the countryside of Homs. This increasing level of migration among the rural Christian people in particular is threatening to empty some villages of their inhabitants.⁽⁶³⁾

5. Routes taken by migrants:

Immigration and passport buildings are crowded with queues of Syrians wishing to obtain a passport because of their desire to emigrate. Many are forced to sell their property to secure the costs of travel. Some are resorting to trafficking networks, especially to opposition areas in northern Syria towards Turkey or to Lebanon. Trafficking to Jordan has decreased because Jordanian authorities have tightened the borders and are not allowing migrants to pass into Jordan. Therefore, migrants are forced to pay large sums of money to brokers and smugglers.⁽⁶⁴⁾

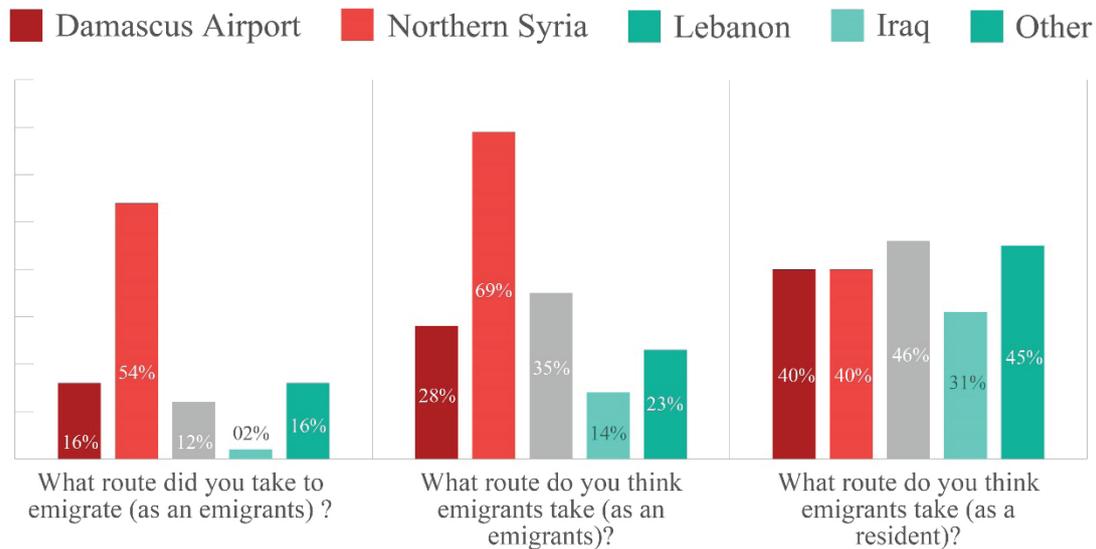
Fifty-four percent of the emigrants who participated in the survey said they migrated through northern Syria, 16% through Damascus airport, 12% through Lebanon, and the rest via other routes.

Similarly, 69% of emigrants said that most migrants travel through northern Syria, 35% said through Lebanon, and 28% via Damascus airport. Of the residents, 46% said that migrants leave through Lebanon, 40% through Damascus airport or northern Syria, 45% said that they migrate through other routes not mentioned.

(63) The increasing emigration of Christians in the areas of the Syrian regime, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, July 15, 2022, accessed July 20, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3OUkzu2>

(64) Muhammad Kasah, Syria regains the migration of 2013, multiple causes and suffering are the same, Al-Modon website, August 12, 2021, accessed March 24/ March 2022 in: <https://bit.ly/3jsHyiP>

Figure 51: Routes taken by emigrants



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The latest migration wave has mainly been through Damascus airport to countries that grant visas, security clearances, etc., such as the UAE, Egypt, Iraq, and Libya.

“I’ve been wondering lately: Has trafficking stopped!? Because everyone around us is traveling from Damascus airport.” (Interview 5)

The routes are also going through Lebanon or Jordan to reach the last destination, especially for holders of visas and those who are reuniting with family or intending to continue their education. They are also travelling through northern Syria and the Kurdistan region of Iraq to reside in those areas, or as a first step before proceeding to Turkey and Europe.

There is a route that has recently become active through cruises from Tartus to Cyprus. The cost of the trip is \$800-1300, and there are about 3 trips a week. There are rumors that militias affiliated with the regime oversee this route.⁽⁶⁵⁾

The opposition areas are one of the favorite destinations for those wishing to leave the regime areas, and over the past two years thousands have flowed through the front lines ⁽⁶⁶⁾ between the opposition and the regime. There are at

(65) Migration from the regime’s areas is multiple routes and destinations to reach abroad, Al-Suriyah website, October 14, 2021, seen on March 1, 2022 <https://bit.ly/2Zzi24u>

(66) Khaled al-Khatib, Migration of Syrians through the Lines, An Unannounced Partnership Between the Fourth and Opposition Factions, Syria TV website, 27 September 2021, viewed on 1 March 2022 <https://bit.ly/3jBulnD>



least four trafficking corridors between the two, three of them in the countryside of Aleppo and one in the countryside of Idlib, and another that connects people to the areas of the Peace Spring in the countryside of Raqqa and Hasakah.

The first corridor is in Nubl north of Aleppo, which is the most important corridor in terms of the number of daily crossings. It costs about \$1200 per person, and the migrant must coordinate with dedicated offices to secure the transit operations, which are concentrated in Aleppo and belong to the Fourth Division. The migrant must pay two-thirds of the agreed amount upfront (\$800) and is then accompanied by someone from the office. The rest of the payment (\$400) is paid on the other side to the corresponding trafficker after crossing. Payment methods vary as there are some undisclosed offices in opposition areas. Units from the Fourth Division accompany the migrants to an agreed at the other side after midnight and are transferred into those areas afterwards.

The second corridor is the Sukariyyeh corridor in the countryside of al-Bab. The same process takes place there in terms of payments and procedures.

The third corridor is between Jarablus and Manbij. Access to it is more expensive due to long distance that needs to be traversed through the SDF areas.

The fourth corridor is located on the lines of contact between Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham in Ma'arat al-Na'asan and regime forces in Mizanaz in the overlapping area between the western countryside of Aleppo and Idlib in the northeast.

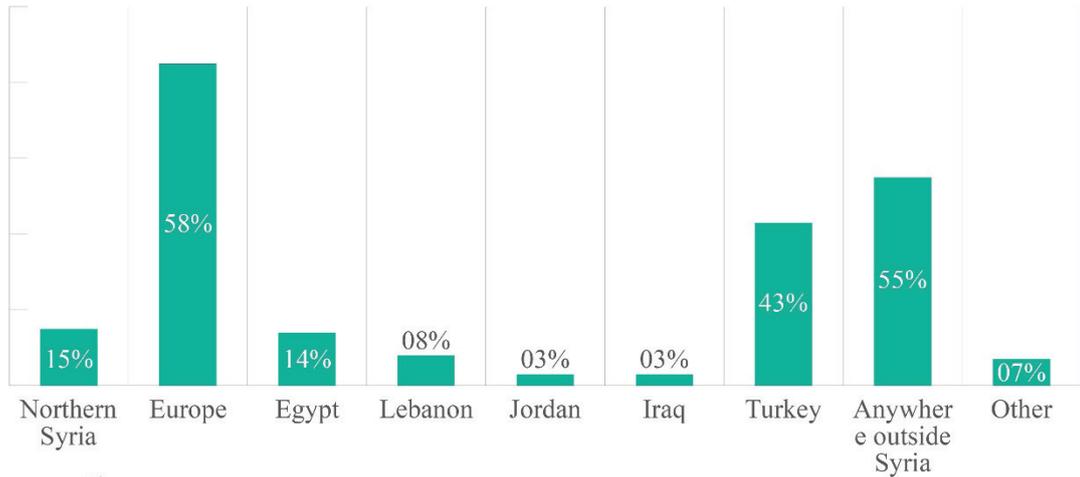
6. Destinations and costs for migrants:

The preferred destination of migrants is tied to availability with is little opportunity to choose between them.

“Honestly, there is no favorite place or destination. People migrate to whatever place is accessible. Any place is better than here.”
(Interview 6)

As for the results of the questionnaire, 58% of the respondents said that Europe is the preferred destination for migrants, 55% said anywhere outside Syria, while 43% said Turkey and 15% Syria.

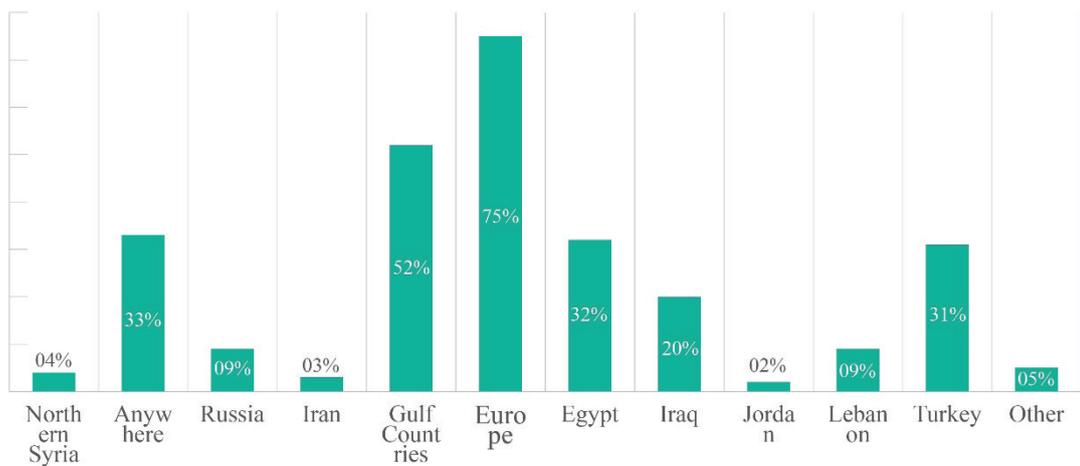
Figure 52: Destinations to which migrants wish to travel to according to emigrants



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As for the residents, 75% said Europe was the favorite destination for emigrants, 52% said the Gulf countries, 32% Egypt, 31% Turkey, 33% anywhere outside Syria, 9% Russia and 3% Iran. Because of its close relationship with the regime Iran was not a preferred travel destination for residents of regime areas.

Figure 53: Destinations to which residents wish to travel to



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Destinations in detail:

6-1 Opposition-controlled areas and areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces:

As mentioned, these destinations are reached mainly through trafficking and the cost is much lower. Migrants are smuggled to the opposition areas directly, or through the areas controlled by the SDF. Some remained in those areas, especially those who have families and relatives there.⁽⁶⁷⁾ Others continue unto Turkey and then Europe.

This route is the least expensive, and its cost ranges between \$400 and \$1,500 per person. The journey lasts about 5 days, and migrants faces the risk of being arrested at checkpoints, or at the least being robbed of everything they own.⁽⁶⁸⁾

“I arrived in an SDF area in northern Syria with the help of smugglers and then to rebel areas at a cost of \$800. I was with my wife and two sons.” (Interview 28)

There are many young people who migrate to those areas to escape compulsory military service, or entire families due to living conditions. In the last period, the cost of getting smuggled into Turkey increased after many began to leave regime areas to come to opposition areas with the aim of entering Turkey. The cost ranges between \$1500 and \$5000.

Most of those who cross through the opposition areas are young people from all regions and sects. In the last two years, large numbers of young people have arrived in Idlib coming from Damascus and the cities of the Syrian coast on almost daily basis. Some are arriving through a military corridor to the north of Syria protected by militias. Some trips are taking place in the daytime. For example, in a period of several weeks 10 Palestinian families arrived from Damascus and its suburbs to northern Syria with the aim of settling down there or traveling further.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Some of those wishing to emigrate go to Deir Ezzor, then enter the SDF areas and settle in them or continue to the opposition areas, Turkey or Iraq. These migrants are from other governorates or from Deir Ezzor itself.⁽⁷⁰⁾

(67) Khaled al-Khatib, Migration of Syrians through the Lines, An Unannounced Partnership Between the Fourth and Opposition Factions, Syria TV website, 27 September 2021, viewed on 1 March 2022 at <https://bit.ly/3jBulnD>

(68) The truth about the emigration of Syrians from the regime's areas, Economy, Finances and Syrian Businesses, August 31, 2022, was seen on March 23, 2022 <https://bit.ly/363y9Lk>

(69) Palestinian families leaving regime-held areas for northern Syria, the New Arab, July 15, 2022, seen on July 22, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3QaAupg>

(70) Migration from regime areas has multiple routes and destinations to reach abroad, Al-Suriya website, October 14, 2021,



6 -2 United Arab Emirates:

Arab countries are another emigration option for residents of the regime's areas, especially that some of these countries have recently made it easy to get visas or security approvals in exchange for an amount of money either as wages or to some brokers.

In the last two years, migration to the UAE has been flowing steadily. Syrians of all ages have been issued 90-day tourist visas since September 2021. This was possible because UAE was allowing all nationalities to receive airlines-sponsored entries on the occasion of the opening of Expo 2020 Dubai. Whereas before it was granting visas to Syrians only if they were women or over the age of forty. As a result, a large number of Syrian youths emigrate there for work or to evade compulsory military service. A large percentage of those who left Syria in 2019, especially the educated youths, emigrated to UAE⁽⁷¹⁾ This route is usually accessed via Damascus airport after obtaining a visa through Lebanon. According to some who have taken this route, the costs ranged between \$400 and \$3,000.

“From Damascus airport, very simply. I came through a travel office in my area who prepared a stay for me. Ticket, visa and accommodation cost me \$1500.” (Interview 24)

Many were shocked on arrival because they could not secure a well-paid job there. Therefore, some were forced to return, or look for another place to emigrate to after their tourist visas ended. UAE law prohibits working with a tourist visa or a visitor visa. However, one can apply to extend visitor and tourist visas and entry permits of all kinds for 30 days only twice at a cost of 600 dirhams (about \$160) per extension. So, the frequency of Syrians traveling to it has declined in recent months.

The price of a one-month visa to the UAE starts from 550 dirhams (about \$150), and 1100 dirhams (about \$300) for a 3-months visa. The cost of a residency permit can be up to 5,000 dirhams (about \$1,350).⁽⁷²⁾ The recreational visa is more expensive and more guaranteed. It allows a one-year stay at a cost of \$3,000.

“My nieces traveled, and also our neighbors' children. They emigrated to work and live in a country that respects their humanity

seen March 1 2022 <https://bit.ly/2Zzi24u>

(71) Sarah Dadouch, Syrians fleeing desperation at home flock to the United Arab Emirates, April 13, 2022, accessed on 14/04/2022, at: <https://wapo.st/38VYqfQ>

(72) - Syrians in the UAE on a tourist visa are threatened with returning for these reasons, Syria TV, 9 January/ January 2022, accessed June 23, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3Njul8g>



and to help their parents. From Damascus airport to the UAE, the visa cost about \$400, the flight about \$450, and the accommodation about \$1500.” (Interview 13).

The total number of Syrians in the UAE, according to the various types of visas issued in 2018, did not exceed 430,000 of which 320,000 have valid residency permits. The estimated value of Syrian investments in the UAE since 2011 is \$40 billion.

The UAE is a haven for academics, craftspeople and investors due to banking and tax provisions, advanced infrastructure, job opportunities, and logistical ability to communicate and conduct business with Syria. Syrians who have emigrated to the UAE fall into the following categories: academics, engineers, media professionals, health workers including doctors and nurses, and workers in the tourism sector especially restaurants. In the last four years, about 300 Syrian restaurants were counted in the UAE.⁽⁷³⁾

6-3 Egypt:

Egypt is a preferred destination for those wishing to continue their education and for craftspeople, industrialists and traders, as well as for middle-income people because living there is cheaper than in the rest of the available countries/options. One has to obtain a security approval from Egyptian authorities, which costs between \$ 1500-2000 for each approval with the price being higher for men. The cost of the flight is about \$400 and flight reservations are hard to find. Flights are always booked for the next two months.

“Egypt, because the visa is cheaper, according to what my son told me. The Egyptians like us and there aren’t many Syrians in Egypt, which means that they can find work.” (Interview 12)

Some travel to Egypt through Sudan and enter Egypt through smuggling networks. In that case the cost rises to about \$7,000.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Some continue from Egypt to Libya and travel from there to Europe.⁽⁷⁵⁾

Syrians in Egypt make up 10% of Syrian refugees globally, according to a statement by the head of the International Migration Mission in Cairo on June 24,

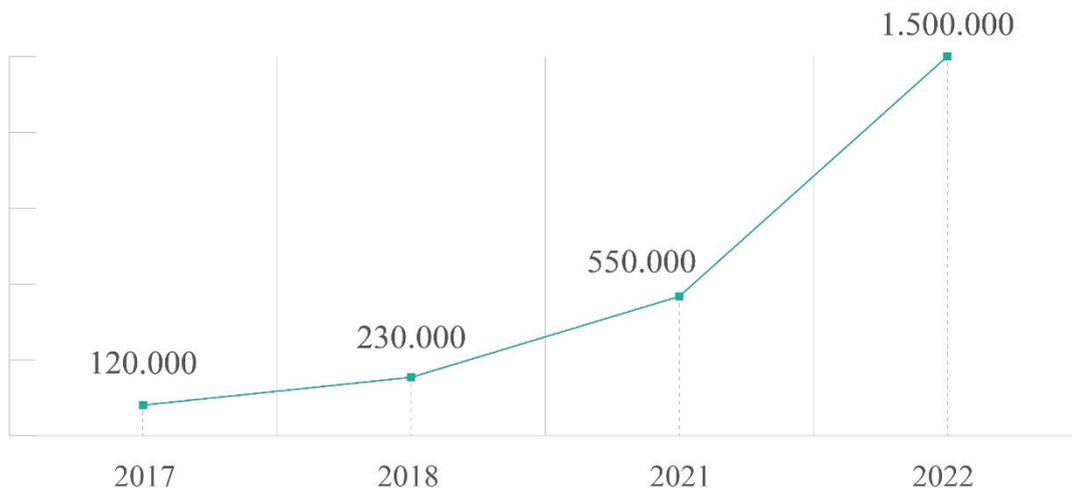
(73) - Arab Reform Initiative, Gulf States and Syrian Capital Destination, United Arab Emirates, for example, December 5, 2018, accessed on July 20, 2022 at <https://bit.ly/3xRD0Jx>

(74) Muhammad Kasah, Syria regaining the migration of 2013, multiple causes and suffering the same, Al-Modon website, August 12, 2021, accessed March 24, 2022 at: <https://bit.ly/3jsHyiP>

(75) Tammam Abu al-Khair, The Illusion of the Return of Safety to the Regime’s Areas and the New Wave of Migration, n Post, September 2, 2021, seen on March 23, 2022 at: <https://bit.ly/3LSy1a0>

2022. He announced that the number of Syrians in Egypt has reached 1.5 million. Some considered this number to be an exaggeration.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Figure 54: Number of Syrians in Egypt



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The dollar amount of Syrian investments in Egypt has been estimated at \$800 million to \$1 billion and the number of investors at about 30,000.⁽⁷⁷⁾

Recently, Egypt has succeeded in attracting many industrialists to its markets by facilitating processes. This follows the success of the Syrian refugee experience in Egypt in the sectors of textiles, clothing, real estate, tourism, restaurants and other sectors.⁽⁷⁸⁾

6- 4 Iraqi Kurdistan:

It is the preferred destination for new university graduates, especially doctors and dentists, because of the ease of travel. Graduates who do not want to join the compulsory military service have to leave the country as soon as possible and do not have time to wait for visas. The cost of travel to this destination is

(76) International Organization for Migration. The number of Syrians in Egypt reached one and a half million people, the site of the city, June 25, 2022, seen on June 28 in: <https://bit.ly/3NQALfF>

(77) 10 years of war, Syrians in Egypt work, investment and a decent life, Al-Ruwaya newspaper, March 15, 2021, accessed June 21, 2022 in: <https://bit.ly/3I2amtM>

(78) Fouad Abdelaziz, Migration of Syrian Industry to Egypt: Those close to the regime leave after their coffers have been drained, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, September 21, 2021, seen on March 23, 2022 at <https://bit.ly/3Cs53At>



between \$1000 and \$3000.

In 2018, the number of Syrians living in Iraqi Kurdistan declined to 1,400,000 from one 1,800,00 in 2012.⁽⁷⁹⁾ In 2020, the number was only 242,163 48% of which were women. In January 2022, about 1,500 people entered Iraqi Kurdistan within two weeks. Syrians enter this area via the Simalka border crossing or Erbil and Sulaymaniyah airports by means of a visa. Then they could apply for a residency permit, which allows them to stay a year and can be renewed annually with a fee of about \$300. This permit only applies to the areas with these the borders. If the Syrian migrants want to travel to the rest of the Iraqi provinces, they need to contact the Iraqi government there.

Syrians are mainly concentrated in Erbil followed by Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah. They work mainly in luxury cafes and restaurants, tourism and medical centers. The salaries range from \$350 to \$3,000.⁽⁸⁰⁾

6- 5 Other Arab States:

One of these routes is through Libya via Damascus airport and is particularly used by non-university artisans or by those en route to Europe. There are direct flights from Damascus airport to Bengoazi airport with Cham Wings Airlines.⁽⁸¹⁾ There is a route to Sudan as well. The Syrian community there is estimated at about 100,000 individuals. This was a popular destination because until the end of 2020 when Syrians did not need a visa to enter Sudan⁽⁸²⁾.

Syrians are emigrating to Algeria, Tunisia and other Gulf countries as well. Some doctors and dentists have emigrated to Somalia, where they receive good salaries that are up to twenty times the salaries they would get in Syria, according to the head of the Syndicate of Doctors.⁽⁸³⁾

(79) Erbil: One million and 400,000 Syrians in the region, Anadolu Agency, December 10, 2018, accessed June 12, 2018 in <https://bit.ly/39LCK00>

(80) Important information about the stay of Syrians in Iraqi Kurdistan, Al-Hal website, March 14, 2022, accessed June 23, 2022 at <https://bit.ly/3NkQkvN>

(81) Muhammad Kasah, Syria regains the migration of 2013, multiple causes and suffering are the same, Al-Modon website, August 12, 2021, accessed March 24/ March 2022 in: <https://bit.ly/3jsHyiP>

(82) Observer: Syrian refugees mourn the loss of their last refuge in Sudan, Al-Jazeera website, March 15, 2021, viewed June 26, 2022 at: <https://bit.ly/3O3qtbZ>

(83) Syria Continued migration of doctors from Syrian regime areas to Somalia Details?, Location S.M, 11 August 2021, viewed on 28 March 2022 at: <https://bit.ly/363toRY>



6- 6 European countries:

European countries are the preferred destination for most of those who want to emigrate. The costs to travel there are greater than travel to Arab countries and opposition areas. Some residents of the regime areas can travel to European countries after obtaining a visa through European embassies in Lebanon. Most of these emigrants are the educated or those who want to continue their education. Some are going there to reunite with their families and relatives by getting visas from Lebanon, Jordan or Iraqi Kurdistan.

“The cost was \$15,000 for a bank account, translation of documents and language courses.” (Interview 22)

There are those who take the trafficking route through opposition areas first then to Turkey to reach Europe. The minimum cost for this route is \$6,000, while traveling with a visa costs a minimum of \$10,000.

6- 7 Turkey:

There are two ways to reach Turkey: the first is through trafficking from regime areas to opposition areas then Turkey, or through Iraqi Kurdistan then Iran then Turkey. The other route is by obtaining a visa from the Turkish embassy in Lebanon, which costs \$1,000 to \$3,000 paid to brokers who help in obtaining it. This route has recently been popular and has prompted the Turkish Minister of Interior to say that granting humanitarian residency permits to those coming from regime areas will be stopped. He stressed that temporary protection is granted only to those coming from conflict zones, but those who come from regime-controlled areas are coming because of economic hardships.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Many families from Damascus and its countryside have been seeking to emigrate to Turkey recently due to the deteriorating living conditions there.⁽⁸⁵⁾

Turkey is also the preferred destination for those who have family there, those seeking work or as a first destination pending preparation for to travel to Europe.

6- 8 Other destinations:

There is a tendency for migrants to travel to any place as a temporary measure before moving to their next or final destination. Prior to the Russia-Ukraine, Syrians were migrating to Belarus. Advertisements selling visas to Belarus as an

(84) Ibrahim Hale, Sudden Decision, Turkey Will Prevent Temporary Protection from Certain Areas of Syria, Orient Site, February 18/ February 2022, viewed on 17 March 2022 <https://bit.ly/3LSx08A>

(85) Sham Mustafa, The migration of Syrians from Damascus and its countryside to Turkey, Why and the money of the routes they take, Al-Jazeera website, February 28, 2022, viewed March 15, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3O570c7>



initial destination to reach the rest of the Europe were appearing in Damascus to. The route crosses over the Polish-Belarusian border and costs about \$ 1300-4000.⁽⁸⁶⁾

Some have been able to travel to Brazil and other South American countries.⁽⁸⁷⁾

In conclusion, destination is dependent upon availability and traveling from Damascus airport to visa granting countries is more expensive than migrating through northern Syria. Those who migrate through smuggling routes do not have enough money to get a visa or have failed to obtain it.

7. Entities behind migration:

It is not possible to identify the entities behind this phenomenon, because migration reflects the poor conditions experienced by people in these areas. However, there are groups who are facilitating migration. Some believe that the regime is pressuring people to emigrate.

“The Syrian regime is making things worse for us so that we leave, because they want the country emptied of its people.” (Interview 2)

“Yes, the regime wanted to empty the area of Sheikh Maqsoud for Iranians to settle, as evidenced by this when we – the Kurds – came out of the city of Afrin. The regime opened its doors to us to defend it then closed the border behind us and did not allow our youth to return to Sheikh Maqsoud in Aleppo. So our youth were forced to live in the areas of Raqqa and Manbij.” (Interview 17)

Some residents said that the regime desires to control the remaining wealth of Syrians, because it is unable to secure the needs of the people. There are those who believe that the regime is planning to make a demographic change in the areas under its control, or that there are entities that want to bring about a demographic change through the displacement of Sunnis and Christians in particular.

“Yes, the regime is interested in bringing Iranians to settle and give them citizenship.” (Interview 30)

(86) Migration from the regime's areas is multiple routes and destinations to reach abroad, Al-Suriyah website, October 14, 2021, seen on March 1, 2022 <https://bit.ly/2Zzi24u>

(87) Muhammad Kasah, Syria regains the migration of 2013, multiple causes and suffering are the same, Al-Modon website, August 12, 2021, accessed March 24/ March 2022 in: <https://bit.ly/3jsHyiP>



This in addition to the suffocating security policy, which has increased the flow of migrants out of those areas.

“The Syrian regime is trying to change the features of the areas under its demographic sovereignty and obliterate any vestiges of its original inhabitants.” (Questionnaire 25 Immigrant)

Some have suggested that the regime’s strategy is to facilitate the process of issuing passports and the migration processes by land and air.

“The regime, because emigration provides it with foreign currency through the issuance of documents and exit and entry fees.” (Questionnaire 1 Immigrant)

Meanwhile, the regime is turning a blind eye to the trafficking and some of its affiliates are supervising these movements. Perhaps the regime wants to send a message to the West, that without the lifting of sanctions, the flow of migrants to the West will continue. Statements by some regime officials have appeared from time to time hinting at this. ⁽⁸⁸⁾

Most of those interviewed believed that travel is being encouraged by unnamed entities. Visas and reservations are being secured by entities that some called fundraising mafias.

“For example, the Fourth Division was working on smuggling people to Idlib and Lebanon. When trafficking to the north stopped, I think it started to find an alternative way through facilitating travel. We can’t deny that the financial return from travel is huge, nor forget that in 2016 the Shabiha and the committees were making money from the robbery. Perhaps they have now replaced that with revenues coming from human trafficking, smuggling and extradition.” (Interview 15)

Others saw that external actors are encouraging the emigration of Syrians led by Russia and Iran.

“It stands behind the migration that aims at making Syria an aging country, by weakening it economically and controlling it.” (Questionnaire 18 Immigrant)

Others see immigration as a reflection of the economic conditions and the

(88) Khaled al-Khatib, Migration of Syrians through the Lines, An Unannounced Partnership Between the Fourth and Opposition Factions, Syria TV website, 27 September 2021, viewed on 1 March 2022 <https://bit.ly/3jBulnD>



decline in the standard of living, which are putting pressure on people and that there is no one behind it. They believe that this is true especially because obtaining passports is very difficult.

“Certainly, the regime benefits from emigration and wishes that half of the people would emigrate. The responsibility of securing electricity, water and gas would be reduced. But those who have remained so far would not have wanted to emigrate, and would not have emigrated, if services or salaries had been better, if poverty had not been of this magnitude.” (Interview 21).

On the other hand, visas issued by some countries, such as Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, who are facilitating the entry of Syrians into their country, especially craftspeople, owners of capital and traders, has put pressure on the regime’s economy. The Syrian government is suffering from an unprecedented suffocating economic crisis in all its regions, that is pushing it to hinder migration by any means, including delaying the issuance of passports.⁽⁸⁹⁾

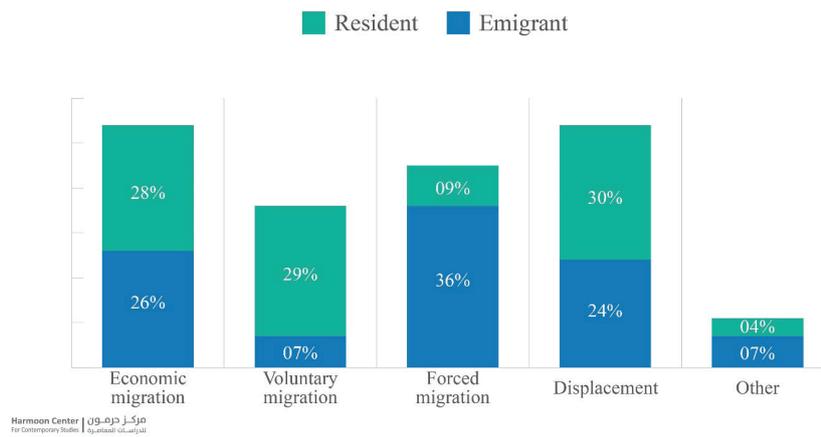
As mentioned above, it is not possible to identify an entity that is encouraging people to emigrate. However, it is in the regime’s interest to do so. The same goes for influential people who are facilitating migration through brokerage offices and smuggling corridors in exchange for financial returns.

(89) Sham Mustafa, due to economic collapse and rampant unemployment, thousands of Syrians knock on the doors of migration, Al-Jazeera website, December 6, 2022, accessed March 28, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3Jsj1VC>

8. Emigration Types:

Of the emigrants surveyed, 36% said that migration from regime areas in the recent period could be called forced migration, while 26% saw it as economic migration. Of residents, 30% believed that it was displacement, 29% voluntary migration, and 28% economic migration.

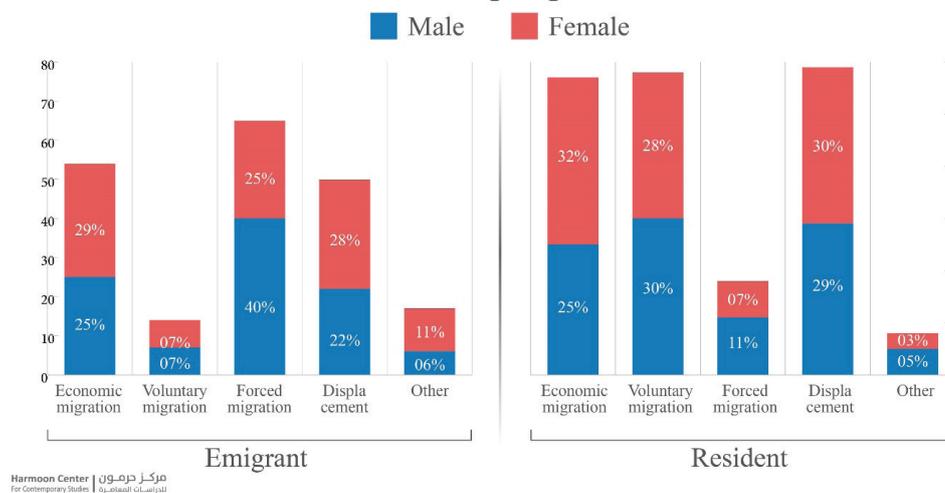
Figure 55: What can the migration of the last two years be called?



Of the male emigrants 52% believed it is an economic migration, while 29% of females said it was an economic migration and a displacement. Of the female residents, 32% said it was an economic migration, 30% a displacement, 28% a voluntary migration, 7% a forced migration. Of the male residents, 30% said it was a voluntary migration, 29% a displacement, 25% an economic migration, and 11% a forced migration.

Figure 56: What can the migration of the last two years be called?

According to gender





As for those who participated in the interviews, they gave several names to this migration: expulsion; economic migration; search for existence; search for a life; migration of despair (from the conditions in the country); migration to secure a decent life; migration of supporters; migration of the hungry; migration in search of sustenance; forced migration; forced displacement; migration of deserters from the army; migration of the uneducated; and migration of the foolish (because they have remained in Syria).

Some consider it a forced migration, because they believe it is the result of the circumstances that forced people to do leave.

“Ninety percent economic migration, and we can say it’s forced migration, because many travel in spite of themselves.” Interview 22)

And there are those who consider it survival.

“It’s not migration, it’s called individual survival.” (Interview 8)

Some call it the migration of the foolish because they stayed in Syria and didn’t leave from the beginning in the hope that conditions would improve.

“The expulsion migration/the migration of the foolish, because they did not leave at the beginning.” (Interview 26)

And there are those who called it:

“The migration of deserters from the army, who have been the majority in the recent period, is of course due to the length of the compulsory service, which often reaches nine years.” (Interview 18)

Many residents felt that what prevented them from traveling so far was the inability to secure emigration as well as the family expenses, if the person wishing to emigrate was married or was the family’s bread winner. One of the interviewees answered with this when asked why he wanted to emigrate:

“My children. Don’t be surprised that I want to travel for them, but it’s hard for all of us to travel. It’s hard for me to leave my work and leave my family without money. Of course, this is apart from the fact that travel costs, which means that I would have to borrow money. I can’t guarantee that I will find a job abroad. I am a pharmacist, and I am now 45 years old. Who’s going to give a job to someone my age abroad? “. (Interview 6)

In conclusion, most of the labels given by the participants are related to the economy and despair from life's pressures.

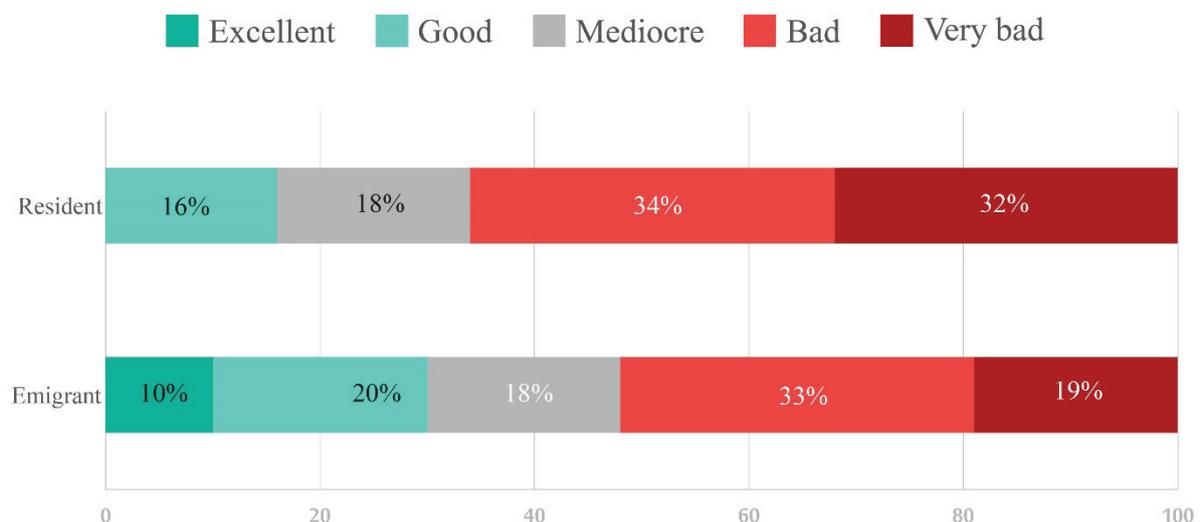
9. Effects of Migration:

This migration affects society as well as the emigrants themselves in various ways including economically, socially and psychologically.

A- Society

About 66% of emigrants said that the impact of migration is bad or very bad in Syrian society versus 52% of the residents. Of the emigrants 16% believed that the impact of migration as good, while about 30% of the residents said it as good or excellent.

Figure 57: How do you see the effects of migration in Syrian society?





Migration has many negative effects on society including:

- The loss of an entire generation of young people and the transformation of Syria into an aging country because of those who died in the war and those who emigrated. This began to become clear on the streets of the regime areas, as well as in the great shortage of some professions, especially those carried out by young people, particularly young men.
- The migration of qualified and educated people, which allows for corruption and the appearance of the unqualified in vital positions that determine the fate of the country. What is especially relevant is the migration of university graduates, where most young males emigrate immediately after finishing their university studies.(90)
- Heavy dependence on remittances because of the lack of job opportunities. Even when available, they are not enough for families to live on. It is creating dependence on support from abroad and leads to the spread of unemployment and other problems.

“I can hardly see anyone in the country who is not poor or destitute, and if they had money, they would have traveled as well. Also, corrupt people, drug addicts and thieves.” (Interview 10)

- The migration of capital, expert craftspeople, and skilled workers who have cost the state and their families millions of dollars to enter the labor market. The drain includes more males than females by 75%, which leads to a serious social and demographic imbalance crisis.
- The decline in the level of some services such as education and health care due to the migration of specialists. The Syndicate of Rural Damascus Doctors warned of the danger of the disappearance of some medical specialties in Syria, such as forensic medicine, vascular surgery, kidney specialists and anesthesiologists because of the migration of doctors even to unsafe countries such as Yemen and Somalia. The syndicate also said that there could be a need to attract doctors in these specialties from abroad. He said that in the province there is only one vascular surgeon, while it needs at a minimum between 10 and 12 doctors in this specialty. This applies to thoracic surgeons as well.(91)

(90) Qassem Marwani, A sharp split between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime over the idea of immigration, Pier 22, 15 October 2016, accessed 25 March 2022 <https://bit.ly/367q8oS>

(91) Medical specialties threatened with extinction, regime government: Doctors heading to unsafe countries, Al-Suriyah website, May 17, 2022, seen on May 18, 2022 at: <https://bit.ly/3urtU5g>

- Social problems, especially the high rate of spinsterhood due to the migration of a large percentage of young males and the death of some in war. Also, family separation. The rate of spinsterhood in Syria reached about 70%, and the rate of marriage to a second woman reached 40% in 2020 according to some estimates.⁽⁹²⁾

“The rate of spinsterhood has risen in the country, young men travel to work, then marry there, and the girls who stay here remain without work, marriage or life.” (Interview 7)

- Increasing pressure on women to work for an extended period, because the numbers of males is lower than females. The percentage of women in 2019 was 65-70% whereas in 2011 it was 49% compared to 51% men. It is expected that the proportion of women will become greater in 2022.⁽⁹³⁾



Photo from a graduation ceremony at one of the colleges of Damascus University

- Changes in the demographic composition of Syria especially after the large migration of minorities⁽⁹⁴⁾

(92) Syria is a country of women, fanack, 17 December 2020, accessed on 25 June 2022 <https://bit.ly/3SmlpCY>

(93) The absence of men in Syria, The Tale of What Was Told, May 27, 2019, was seen on July 23, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3oRrSZ4>

(94) Qassem Marwani, A sharp split between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime over the idea of immigration, Pier 22, 15 October 2016, accessed March 25, 2022 <https://bit.ly/367q8oS>



- Economic impacts. In Aleppo for example, the prices of residential apartments have decreased due to the increase in supply as many people have left the country. Advertisements for the sale of apartments mention “for the purpose of travel.” Even though the prices of imported building materials increased by 25% as a result of the Ukrainian war, the prices of homes fell by 25% due to the increase in supply.⁽⁹⁵⁾

Negative effects on the migrant:

- The possibility of being exposed to the dangers of smuggling routes, fraud or theft.
- Feelings of alienation accompanying psychological and social problems.⁽⁹⁶⁾
- Family separation and the division of many families into residents and emigrants.

Positive effects:

In the community:

Providing financial support to the families of migrants through remittances and providing support to their families in Syria. This is a double-edged sword. While providing for some of the needs of residents, it could sometimes cause unemployment and dependence.

“Those who travel send money to their families, even \$10 to eat bread, \$100 can feed 20 people here. Unfortunately, this very dark and sad situation is a positive thing.” (Interview 6)

Mahdi Dakhlallah, a member of the central leadership of the ruling Baath Party, talked about the importance of remittances sent by Syrian expatriates in countries of asylum pointing out that the people in regime-controlled areas depend on them to the most part. He said, “If it were not for the money sent by Syrians abroad, we would have been wasted.”⁽⁹⁷⁾

Syria’s neighbors (Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq) account

(95) Khaled Zinklo: Despite the high prices of building materials and cladding due to the Ukraine war, offers for sale on the grounds of travel, Al-Watan Newspaper, March 15, 2022, viewed on July 22, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3QIksnL>

(96) Malm, A., Tinghög, P., Narusyte, J., & Saboonchi, F. (2020). The refugee post-migration stress scale (RPMS)–development and validation among refugees from Syria recently resettled in Sweden. *Conflict and health*, 14(1), 1-12.

(97) An official in the Syrian regime, had it not been for the money of Syrians abroad, we would have been humiliated, Syria TV, April 25, 2022, viewed on June 1, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3zQ52pZ>

for 76% of remittances sources and the rest of the countries constitute 24%. The World Bank has estimated annual remittances at about \$1.62 billion. Some reports have indicated that the daily amounts transferred to Syria are equal to about \$5.4 million. This was confirmed by the Chairman of the Securities and Financial Markets Commission, Abed Fadila who has said that the value of remittances sent to regime areas daily range between five million to seven million dollars.⁽⁹⁸⁾

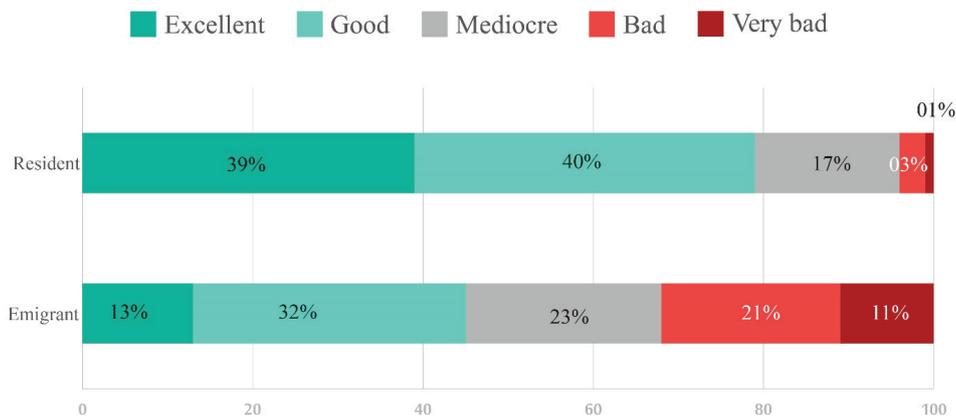
Many families rely on these remittances to secure basic living needs such as food,⁽⁹⁹⁾ and a third of residents in regime areas depend on remittances from abroad.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

Also, the fact that many young emigrants continue to study or acquire skills abroad may reflect positively on the future of society through their contribution to the future of Syria.

In the emigrant:

Of the emigrants 45% said that emigration has a good or excellent impact on the individual versus 64% of residents. About 10% of emigrants believed it has a bad or very bad impact versus 5% of residents.

Figure 58: How do you see the effects of migration on the migrant?



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(98) The regime’s government, seven million dollars in expatriate remittances per day A, Enab Baladi, July 5, 2022, viewed July 6, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3ajc4KT>

(99) Nasser Al-Jassim: Remittances for Syrians, Lifeline, Hermon Center for Contemporary Studies, 7 April 2021, accessed on 20 April 2022 <https://bit.ly/3P6v8ux>

(100) The regime’s government, seven million dollars in expatriate remittances per day A, Enab Baladi, July 5, 2022, viewed July 6, 2022 <https://bit.ly/3ajc4KT>



A large number of immigrants have been able to innovate and succeed in many fields. Some have been able to pursue their studies and start economic activity in the countries to which they migrated, especially Egypt, Turkey and some other European and Arab countries.

Migration has also contributed to saving the lives of young people by not enrolling in compulsory service or joining militias where young people are being forced to join as a result of economic hardship.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

There is also impact on the host countries, especially the countries where a large number of Syrians reside. It has increased the burden on them, especially for countries with large numbers and few resources such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. On the other hand, the migrants are a benefit to some countries, especially since most of those migrants are educated, owners of capital and crafts, especially Egypt, the UAE, Iraq and European countries.

Additionally, this migration is affecting the political solution process in Syria by proving the insincerity of the regime's calls for the return of refugees since it is unable to provide for the basic needs of residents in its areas of control — seen in the low number of returnees. Migration to opposition-held areas also increases pressure on those areas, especially as it is already suffering from population density, in light of the lack of resources and dependence on foreign aid.

(101) Qassem Marwani, A sharp split between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime over the idea of migration, Raseef22, October 15/October 2016, accessed March 25, 2022 <https://bit.ly/367q8oS>



Conclusions:

Migration from regime-controlled areas became a phenomenon after 2019, and its signs were clear everywhere, from queues in front of immigration and passport centers, to the vacuum left by emigrants in many of the places where they worked. Most importantly it is apparent in the desire to emigrate among many who have not yet had the opportunity to do so for material reasons, the inability to venture through smuggling, or difficulty in obtaining a visa.

The push and pull factors for emigration from regime areas changed after 2019 with the near cessation of military operations. Before 2019 the push factors included the security factor, fear of arrest, loss of property and displacement, while the most important pull factor was the survival. After 2019, the push factor became the significant decline in economic conditions, which is reflected in the daily lives of the citizen, from lack of services such as electricity, water, gas, diesel and others to queues for most basic needs, including bread, gas and oil derivatives. This was exacerbated by the loss of hope for any political solution that would come soon.

The emigrant population from these areas has also changed. Before 2019, the general pattern was the migration of the opponents of the regime. In the last two years, it has shifted to the migration of supporters, or at least those who do not have a security problem with the regime and are not threatened with arrest, except that some of them are wanted for compulsory service.

After 2019, hopelessness became a very important push factor. People living in regime areas felt that they had been patient for almost 11 years in the hope that things will improve. +But this has not happened. When some began to voice their frustration and demand better living conditions, they were confronted with the same repression that the opposition had faced before them. Many have realized that there is no hope in staying and are thinking about emigrating.

As for the pull factors, the desire to secure a good future and a decent life were the most important ones as evidenced by the magnitude of frustration and hopelessness.

The options have been limited for those who have emigrated or those are thinking of emigrating. Destinations and routes are linked to availability and the capabilities of the the migrant. Some destinations and routes are cheaper than others, especially being trafficked across borders. But that comes with great risks, while those who are financially better off have better options.



Recently, Egypt, the UAE and Iraq have been the most popular migratory destinations, in addition to northern Syria and the areas controlled by SDF. The status of emigrants to each region differed. Industrialists, traders and some of those who wanted to continue their education left for Egypt. New graduates headed to Iraq, and those who had money, or a distinctive craft went to the UAE. Those with limited financial means potential, from all categories, travel to northern Syria, although most of them intend to end up in Europe.

Migration from regime areas can be called an economic migration because its aim is to secure better jobs and a better life. These migrants cannot be called refugees, because there is no direct danger to the lives of most of them.

This migration leaves dangerous effects on society, as it drains it of its youths and turns it into an aging society. This is especially true since those who migrate are the educated, the skilled and the owners of capital. On the other hand, it can affect the emigrants themselves positively: starting a new life and pursuing education, investment and other useful activities, when the situation back in regime areas no longer allows it.

The Syrian regime is using this issue to its advantage in more than one way. Firstly, there is the financial benefit through issuing large numbers of passports, which have become more expensive, and through the activities of the brokers, most of whom are affiliated with influential people in the regime's circles. Secondly, the regime is trying to blackmail the West with the suggestion that delays in starting reconstruction and support for the economic system is making this migration continuous. This has put pressure on those countries, despite the regime's media calls to refugees to return to its areas, a call which is intended to mislead the West into thinking that the war in Syria is over and that the regime has come out victorious.



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