



# **The problem of unregistered civil incidents in North-Western Syria: Causes and Effects**

**Access to Justice IV  
Project  
2021**







## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	ii
List of Tables .....	iii
ABOUT THE PROJECT .....	v
Syrian Association for Studies and Consultations (SÇDD) .....	v
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Survey study’s background, field, and methodology .....	4
2. FINDINGS.....	6
2.1. Demographic Information .....	6
2.2. Household Patterns .....	21
2.3. General Patterns Concerning Children in the Households .....	25
2.4. Official Documents .....	37
2.5. Awareness of Rights and Registration .....	43
2.6. Patterns of Jobs and Work.....	58
3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	79
ABOUT THE AUTHORS.....	82

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1:</b> Place of residence.....	6
<b>Figure 2:</b> Place lived before the war.....	7
<b>Figure 3:</b> Sex distribution of respondents by place of residence .....	7
<b>Figure 4:</b> Age Distribution.....	8
<b>Figure 5:</b> Educational Attainment .....	10
<b>Figure 6:</b> Educational Attainment of Women .....	11
<b>Figure 7:</b> Educational Attainment of Men.....	12
<b>Figure 8:</b> Age of the First Marriage.....	14
<b>Figure 9:</b> Year They Left Their Previous Residence .....	19
<b>Figure 10:</b> Frequency of relocation after 2011.....	19
<b>Figure 11:</b> Household Size .....	21
<b>Figure 12:</b> Tenure Status .....	22
<b>Figure 13:</b> Respondent’s Role in the Household/Family .....	25
<b>Figure 14:</b> Number of Children under 18 years old of Age in the Household .....	26
<b>Figure 15:</b> Do you know what institutions register children and marriages? .....	32
<b>Figure 16:</b> Have you ever taken legal advice? .....	39
<b>Figure 17:</b> Have you ever given information about your rights? .....	43
<b>Figure 18:</b> Have you ever attended a meeting informing of your rights?.....	44
<b>Figure 19:</b> Would you like to register your unregistered marriage and children? .....	48
<b>Figure 20:</b> At what institution would you like to register your unregistered marriage and children? .....	49
<b>Figure 21:</b> Would you like to get help while registering your marriages and children? .....	51
<b>Figure 22:</b> Do you know any institution giving help in legal matters? .....	54
<b>Figure 23:</b> Are you working?.....	58
<b>Figure 24:</b> Job/Work Distribution .....	61
<b>Figure 25:</b> Profession of Your Spouse.....	63
<b>Figure 26:</b> Do you get any financial support apart from your income? .....	64
<b>Figure 27:</b> Is there someone else working in the household/family?.....	68
<b>Figure 28:</b> Monthly Expense of the Household/Family (Turkish lira) .....	69
<b>Figure 29:</b> Monthly Income of the Household/Family (Turkish liras) .....	70
<b>Figure 30:</b> Who do you apply to in case of legal problems? .....	74
<b>Figure 31:</b> Would you like to live in another country?.....	75
<b>Figure 32:</b> Why would you like to leave the country? (Multiple Choices) .....	76
<b>Figure 33:</b> In what country would you like to live? .....	77

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1:</b> Age distribution .....	8
<b>Table 2:</b> Educational Attainment.....	9
<b>Table 3:</b> Educational Attainment of Women.....	11
<b>Table 4:</b> Educational Attainment of Men .....	12
<b>Table 5:</b> Marital Status .....	13
<b>Table 6:</b> Marital Status of Women .....	15
<b>Table 7:</b> Number of Wives (Polygyny) .....	17
<b>Table 8:</b> Registered Institution .....	18
<b>Table 9:</b> Type of Housing .....	24
<b>Table 10:</b> Number of Children in the Households.....	27
<b>Table 11:</b> Number of Children in the Respondent’s Family .....	27
<b>Table 12:</b> Distribution of Schooling of the Children in the Households/Families .....	29
<b>Table 13:</b> Reasons Children Remaining Excluded from Education.....	31
<b>Table 14:</b> Effects of Being an Unregistered Child .....	32
<b>Table 15:</b> Do you know what institutions register birth and children? .....	33
<b>Table 16:</b> Do you know where the institutions registering birth and children are? .....	33
<b>Table 17:</b> Girls should go to school. ....	35
<b>Table 18:</b> Boys should go to school .....	35
<b>Table 19:</b> Girls should go to school. (By Sex of the Respondents) .....	36
<b>Table 20:</b> Boys should go to school. (By Sex of the Respondents).....	36
<b>Table 21:</b> Owning Official/Legal Documents .....	37
<b>Table 22:</b> Type of Owned Official/Legal Documents by Sex.....	37
<b>Table 23:</b> Institution Asked for Counsel/Advice .....	39
<b>Table 24:</b> Topics Gotten Counsel on.....	40
<b>Table 25:</b> Topics Gotten Counsel on (by Sex) .....	40
<b>Table 26:</b> Difficulties While Getting Official Documents (by Sex) .....	42
<b>Table 27:</b> Have you ever given information about your rights? .....	44
<b>Table 28:</b> Have you ever attended a meeting informing of your rights?.....	45
<b>Table 29:</b> Aid Obtained for Unregistered Children.....	46
<b>Table 30:</b> Aid Obtained for Unregistered Children (by Sex) .....	46
<b>Table 31:</b> At what institution would you like to register your unregistered marriage and children? (by Sex).....	50
<b>Table 32:</b> Would you like to get help while registering your marriages and children? (by Sex) .....	52
<b>Table 33:</b> Would you like to get help while registering your marriages and children? (by City).....	52
<b>Table 34:</b> Do you know of any institution giving help in legal matters? (by City).....	54
<b>Table 35:</b> Do you know of any institution giving help in legal matters? (by Sex) .....	55
<b>Table 36:</b> Would you like to get help with the processes concerning the registration of marriage and children? (by Place Lived in) .....	55
<b>Table 37:</b> Do you know any institution giving help in legal matters? (by Place Lived in) .....	55
<b>Table 38:</b> Would you like to get help with the processes concerning the registration of marriage and children? (by Residential Status) .....	56
<b>Table 39:</b> Do you know any institution giving help in legal matters? (by Residential Status) .....	56
<b>Table 40:</b> Are you working? / Do you have a job? (by Sex).....	59

<b>Table 41:</b> Are you working? / Do you have a job? (by Place Lived in) .....	60
<b>Table 42:</b> Are you working? / Do you have a job? (by Residential Status) .....	60
<b>Table 43:</b> Distribution of Job Types (by Sex) .....	62
<b>Table 44:</b> Profession of Your Spouse (Crosstabulation) .....	63
<b>Table 45:</b> Do you get any financial support apart from your income? (by Sex) .....	65
<b>Table 46:</b> Financial Supporters .....	66
<b>Table 47:</b> Do you get any financial support apart from your income? (by Residential Status) .....	67
<b>Table 48:</b> Financial Supporters (by Residential Status) .....	67
<b>Table 49:</b> Coping with the Imbalance of Income and Expense .....	71
<b>Table 50:</b> Coping with the Imbalance of Income and Expense (by Sex) .....	72
<b>Table 51:</b> Main Problems Here .....	73



## ABOUT THE PROJECT

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### Syrian Association for Studies and Consultations (SÇDD)

SÇDD is an independent non-governmental organization that seeks to raise awareness and provide advice and promote the rule of law to achieve a free and democratic society with justice and equality. It was founded by Syrian experts, academics, and activists in early 2013 and registered legally in Turkey. Their vision is to have a free and fair democratic society in which all segments of Syrian society enjoy equal rights and duties.

The message is to spread the concepts of justice, democracy, and human rights, promote the principle of the dominion of law, mobilize the energies of society on understanding their rights and duties, and apply the values of social justice and tolerance.

The objectives are:

1. Raising legal awareness to promote the dominion of law and respect for human rights in society.
2. Awareness of human rights, transitional justice mechanisms, peace-building, non-violence, and participation in peaceful conflict resolution.
3. Promote community cohesion to create a state of harmony and stability among the various components of society to alleviate tensions arising from different interests.

SÇDD have done many projects in Syria, such as the following:

- **Four projects were implemented to reach justice:**

Legal awareness lectures were given on several different topics, providing legal assistance and consultations, and contributing to conflict resolution in local communities in Idlib governorate and the countryside of Aleppo, including the displaced, women, and youth, to reduce vulnerabilities, alleviate their problems and provide protection for them. In addition, and to facilitate access to the legal advice service to the most significant possible number of beneficiaries, numbers were provided for communication through the WhatsApp application and an electronic link dedicated to requesting legal advice on the official website of the association and all legal questions which were answered within the framework of respecting confidentiality and privacy.

- **Two projects were implemented to build the capacities:**

For members of local councils and members of civil society associations in the governorate of Aleppo and its countryside, by implementing training workshops on issues regarding developing negotiation skills, conflict management, governance, building civil society organizations - strategic planning for organizations - organizational development and project life cycle - project management - writing funding proposals - monitoring and evaluation.

- **Two projects in Research and Advocacy:**

1. A project to promote societal reconciliation between IDPs and native people. The aim is to advocate for the issues of the displaced and to address the problem of lack of awareness towards issues of compatibility and harmony between the heterogeneous societal components, especially the local population and new arrivals from other regions of the country (the displaced) and find a solution to the problem of the absence of a culture of accepting the other, and the discourse of intolerance, racism, and hatred in society, which contributes to promoting harmony between the different societal groups and is, therefore, a guarantor of achieving civil peace and laying the foundations of security and stability within the targeted areas in the countryside of Aleppo Governorate.
2. A media campaign has been implemented for the benefit of civil society to contribute to achieving social cohesion in Syria by enhancing cooperation and coordination between the Syrian media, civil society organizations, and international bodies by helping the Syrian people to communicate their voice in the public discourse, which affects their lives, in addition to highlighting the daily effects of the conflict on the lives of people and thus harnessing the media fully to support the rights of Syrians in various societies and groups within the framework of the campaign. Opinion polls were carried out to produce results to fight hate speech, promote civil peace, and strengthen the social fabric. The crime of enforced disappearance, its legal implications, and suggestions and recommendations to address this crime was introduced by publishing educational posters and brochures in this context.

- **Two projects in transitional justice:**

The project was implemented to educate members of civil society associations through the implementation of several training workshops on transitional justice programs, civil peace, human rights, criminal documentation for the non-Syrian.



# **ACCESS TO JUSTICE IV**

**Research Report**

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Murat Kaya

Gaziantep, 2021

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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Nobody, including the experts involved with the region for years, could foresee how the popular uprising in Tunisia having begun toward the end of 2010 would result in. There are many reasons for the inability to anticipate the effects of the uprisings in the Middle East. In late 2010, the weakness of the relationship between the judgments and analyses and the real social life, built with classical orientalist perspectives, became clear once more. The spark, causing the Middle East to be on fire later, was the self-immolation of a young street vendor in Tunisia, which appeared to be a personal matter. This first small event turned into effective mass movements in Tunisia and then in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. However, the thing that should be noted here is how this immense spark impacted society. At the same time, this catalyst was the indicator that the societies in question could start mass movements. The reason ultimately having caused broad-based social protests was the pressure that resulted from the social problems in the Middle East such as poverty, social justice, lack of democracy, class differences, authoritarian regimes, oppression, instability, the gap in the share of public resources, rapid demographic changes, and unplanned urbanization. These social protests turned into the processes in which the mass and different social classes put forward their demands in a wide region from North Africa to Iraq, from the Arabian Gulf to Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. While the authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, and Yemen were falling, the hard times began for the regimes in all the Middle East having been built upon powerful populist and mostly Pan-Arabist slogans, but in fact, having served the interests of one dynasty or power cartel<sup>1</sup> and disconnected from its public. However, expecting that the power cartels, dating back to almost a hundred years ago, would easily give in to the demands of mass would not be realistic. Indeed, starting from the beginning of 2011, the public uprisings in Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, and other countries became open to serious violence. Despite all the resistance of the authoritarian regimes and cartels, they fell in some countries due to each country's own historical and social conditions. While the protests were violently suppressed in some nations, some others returned to *status quo ante* as a "solution." Libya, Yemen, Egypt, and Tunisia threw off the authoritarian leaders and power cartels but dramatically experienced that the successors, showing an institutional behavior, tried to build similar authoritarian regimes and political structures. In other words, due to the various domestic and foreign reasons, the demands, such as democracy, stability, social justice, freedom, and economic development, of these societies in the Middle East were not met once again. The successors could not accomplish keeping war, violence, instability, and chaos out of this region.

On the contrary, with globalization, religious and denominational violence took over the Middle East societies. The process has not been over yet. However, it is very convenient to propound that although the Middle East, in comparison with the previous century, has expanded (regarding human and physical geography) from Mali to Afghanistan, from Nigeria to Malesia, it has become a phenomenon that is increasingly being narrowed in terms of its meaning and only being identified with institutionalized violence and identities completing this violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Bozarslan, H. (2012) Ortadoğu'nun Siyasal Sosyolojisi – Arap İsyanlarından Önce ve Sonra, (M. I. Durmaz, Trans.) İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları

The spark that began in Tunisia in 2010 has caused a global fire in Syria since 2011. The disaster is still ongoing, and it is impossible to predict when and how it will end. However, while violence, war, and instability have been getting institutionalized in Syria, too, the lives of millions of people have completely changed. Whereas Syria and the Syrians have experienced war and violence firsthand, the societies and states in which the Syrians have become migrants or refugees have also encountered various difficulties. The future of the conditions experienced by the Syrians is still uncertain. In the meantime, both the Syrians, dispersed over each continent of the world and the societies and states encountering migrants and refugees, have been facing changing situations. The process at issue is dynamic and has varied according to state, society, and period. Many political, demographic, economic, and cultural issues regarding the Syrians have become the agenda in all the countries from Turkey to Germany, from Lebanon to Canada. It is true that all around the world, a significant part of Syrians has experienced being immigrants and refugees under challenging circumstances. However, it is also undeniable that another significant part of the Syrians has been displaced inside the country.

Moreover, in many ways, the displaced have struggled to survive in worse physical, political, economic, and legal conditions than the Syrians who could leave the country and become an immigrant or a refugee. Although there are thousands of studies and researches about the Syrians that have become refugees, developed new relationships with the state they are in, and taken part in the cohesion processes, it is witnessed that the researches concerning the internally displaced persons (IDPs) are limited only to the reports focusing on immediate aid. Indeed, people enduring the harsh circumstances of war and violence in Syria every day need immediate aid. However, in the final analysis, it is also significant to understand under which conditions the IDPs in Syria have been living for ten years, which is a period not to be underestimated, what kind of political, social, educational, economic, legal, or cultural relations they have been in, and how they have participated in these relations. Remembering the phenomenon of social life which can maintain, reconstruct, and reproduce itself, it is crucial to comprehend how the locals and IDPs in different regions of Syria live because there are millions of people enduring violence, war, and tough political conditions and living under different political structures since 2011. There has been a fragmented country interfered with by numerous actors like the national government, various opponents, and states such as Turkey and Russia, which has become stagnant since 2018. Different powers have controlled different parts of the country. The first of them is the national government in Damascus that has still sustained and consolidated its power at some point despite the 10-year long war. The Kurds and their allies, mostly in North and East Syria, have controlled a significant area. As for the Idlib governorate, there are armed groups quite different from each other. Besides, there exist regions Turkey and Russia entirely have involved in. After 2018, it is witnessed that the “pockets” such as Afrin and Ras al-Ayn have also been entered into this fragmentation by the implied collaboration of Turkey, Russia, and the USA. Therefore, the matter in question is the lives of millions of people under multi-divided and various political, economic, and social conditions. For this reason, looking at the daily lives of internally displaced persons or the people staying in the same place in Syria is as equally important as understanding the situations encountered by the Syrian immigrants and refugees in other countries.

Considering the limited reports of the United Nations (UN) and various NGOs based upon the data gathered at the beginning of 2021, most of which was collected until 2020, a diverse

population shows up. Since none of them is based upon exact and official data, the numbers and inferences in circulation are away from reliability. As indicated before, giving a certain number of people being obliged to emigrate, displaced within the district or country, or staying in the same place due to the war is impossible for both the whole of Syria and Idlib Governorate. Another reason for this is undoubtful that Idlib Governorate has constantly been occupied by different forces, armies, and armed groups. Therefore, even in the middle of 2021, both the current and future situation of Idlib is still ambiguous.

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) recent reports, only in Syria, 13,4 million people were affected by the war and violence from 2011 until May 2021. 13,4 million Syrians needed a serious amount of protection and humanitarian aids. More than half of the pre-war population, which were 22 million, have been directly affected by the war results. Half of 13,4 million people (6,6 million) are refugees, and 6,7 million people are internally displaced<sup>2</sup>.

Until the middle of 2021, the IDPs have been forced to go to various districts and cities in Syria. Even though political, ideological, military, economic, and cultural reasons have formed the settlement patterns of the IDPs, it can also be stated that the primary motivations in this kind of extraordinary situation are obligation and survival.

In each city and district of Syria, it is possible to meet internally displaced persons today. However, few of the displaced population have been able to catch the attention despite their hard lives. Although Idlib Governorate has become topical worldwide from time to time because it has witnessed various forces and extremely intricate balances, the humanitarian crisis in question is always going unnoticed. Regardless of all the political, ideological, and military power struggles, it must be remembered *people* live there. This survey aims to reveal some main issues about people's daily lives in a small area of the Idlib Governorate. Therefore, this project, turning to three small-scaled cities in Idlib, intends to collect data about the people staying in Syria, is presented under different titles such as demography, economy, legal issues, education, job, work, and patterns of households. The data gathered through the survey aims to concretely show the current issue and come to conclusions together with making recommendations. This project, in other words, intends to comprehend especially the present situation in the three small-scaled cities<sup>3</sup> of Idlib firsthand by depending on the survey and related group interviews.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html> Access: 15.05.2021

<sup>3</sup> <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/syria.html> Source for the maps Access: 15.05.2021

### 1.1. Survey study's background, field, and methodology

To get how the daily public life in Idlib Governorate has been affected by the process of war and violence, meetings with SÇDD were held in November 2020. After the protocols signed between the TARGET unit of Gaziantep University and SÇDD, it was worked on the survey study's field, scope, purpose, and questionnaires in January 2021. Eventually, it was decided that the research would depend on two main data. The first ground was to interview 120 people with a questionnaire in Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin. 120 people were interviewed through KoBo Toolbox software by asking more than 200 multiple-choice questions to fulfill it. In interviews, explained in detail in the report, the variables of men-women, IDP-local, camp-downtown were particularly considered. The second ground was to test the data collected through the questionnaire by conducting in-depth interviews. Seven focus group discussions (FGD) in total were carried out in these three small-scaled cities. The third FGD in Maaret Tamsrin included only the employees of the NGO that was active and had a great deal of observation in the region. The list of those who attended the FGDs in the three small-scaled cities is as: In Maaret Tamsrin, three FGDs in total; one of which with women, one of which with men, and the last one – regardless of their assigned sexes—with the employees of the NGO active in the whole region. In Kaftin, two FGDs, one with women and the other with men. Lastly, two FGDs in Kelly, once again one with women and one with men, were conducted. Excluding the FGD with the NGO employees from both sexes, meetings with men and women were held separately, considering the socio-cultural structure of the region and sensitivity to security. The meetings lasted for a while, changing from one and half hours to four hours.

The profile of meetings and those attending the FGDs was as below:

Sixty-seven people (33 women, 34 men) attended the FGDs. The youngest female participant was 22 years old, whereas the eldest was 45. The average age was 32. 12 of 33 women were internally displaced persons. While 30 of them were married, the remaining three women were single. As for the female participants' education status, 16 of them held a bachelor's degree while 4 of them got an associate's degree or post-secondary vocational education. Additionally, 7 of them graduated from a high school, and the remaining 2 women graduated from elementary school. 9 of the female participants stated they had never worked before. Adding this number and 8 women defining themselves as "housewives", it can be said that 16 of women were housewives. The remaining 16 women's occupations were: 2 employees, 1 civil servant, 4 NGO employees, 1 tailor, 4 teachers, 1 volunteer, 1 nurse, and 2 managers.

Thirty-four men in total attended the FGDs. The average age of male participants was 35, and the youngest man was 20 while the eldest was 52. Thirty-two men were married, and 2 of them were single. The education status of men was as 2 secondary school graduates, 14 high school graduates, 3 associate's degree or post-secondary vocational school's degree holders, and 15 bachelor's degree holders. As for the occupational distribution of men: 9 employees, 1 civil servant, 1 journalist, 4 NGO employees, 2 students, 8 teachers, 6 freelancers or farmers, 2 merchants, and 1 unemployed.

Before all the FGDs and questionnaire interviews, all the participants were informed about the purpose and scope of the survey study, and their oral consent was obtained. All the notes were taken by hand. Neither voice nor visual media were recorded during the interviews. No detail that might have disclosed the participants' identities was asked during the interviews



conducted with the questionnaires within the bounds of ethics. Within the scope of protection of personal data and COVID-19 precautions, the health and hygiene of interviewers, reporters, and participants were taken care of at a maximum level. During the FGDs, one facilitator and two reporters served.

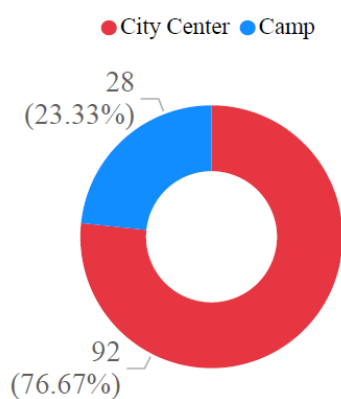
In Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin in Idlib, the interviews with KoBo Toolbox were completed between February 1 and March 15, earlier than the date planned. By roughly scanning the interviews done with randomly chosen 120 people, the topics discussed during the FGDs were set. In the months between January and March, the reporters and interviewers, who would perform data-collection in the field and the FGDs, were trained. The FGDs beginning at the end of March was also ended in advance. The in-depth data analysis started in April 2021. All the question forms and topics of the FGDs were first designed in Turkish and later translated into Arabic before the participants were interviewed.

On the following pages, there will be analyses depending on the interviews with 120 people, and it will be attempted to comprehend the information collected through the FGDs.

## 2. FINDINGS

### 2.1. Demographic Information

Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin, in which the survey study conducted, are small-scaled cities of Idlib, one of the fourteen governorates in Syria. These three settlements in Idlib in northwestern Syria, bordering Hatay Province in Turkey, have changed in terms of their demography—like all the cities in Syria—since 2011. According to the official records before 2011, these small-scaled cities were considered small-scaled for Syria, with a population of 2.346 for Kaftin, 7.157 for Kelly, and 17.519 for Maaret Tamsrin. However, the demography of these three small-scaled cities and the governorate of Idlib have radically changed after 2011 due to the civil war, migration, and displacement. The demographic data provided by the UN and the other organizations active in the region are only estimated because of the lack of an exact and accurate census. In 2020, the population of Idlib Governorate, excluding the IDPs, was around 1.445.000<sup>4</sup>. By the data compiled from the organizations working in the region, because of the demographical changes just mentioned, the population is now 7.000 with 5.250 IDPs for Kaftin, 12.500 with 5000 IDPs for Kelly, and 44.000 with 25.000 IDPs for Maaret Tamsrin. These numbers are the combination of the number of the locals and the newcomers in the downtowns. Besides, in the 31 IDP camps of various sizes built around these small-scaled cities of Idlib, 25.000 people settle. Therefore, it is estimated that about 89.000-90.000<sup>5</sup> people live in Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin.

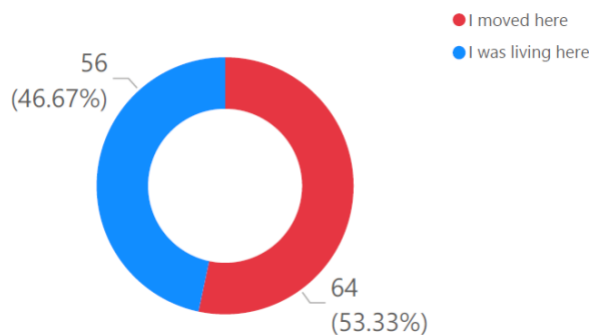


*Figure 1: Place of residence*

One hundred twenty respondents in total were interviewed with a questionnaire. Twenty-eight of them live in the IDP camps while the remaining 92 persons settle in the downtowns. Additionally, considering the place where they lived before 2011, 53% of the respondents, each representing one household, stated that they immigrated into these small-scaled cities.

<sup>4</sup> <https://knoema.com/atlas/Syrian-Arab-Republic/Idlib> Access: 16.05.2021

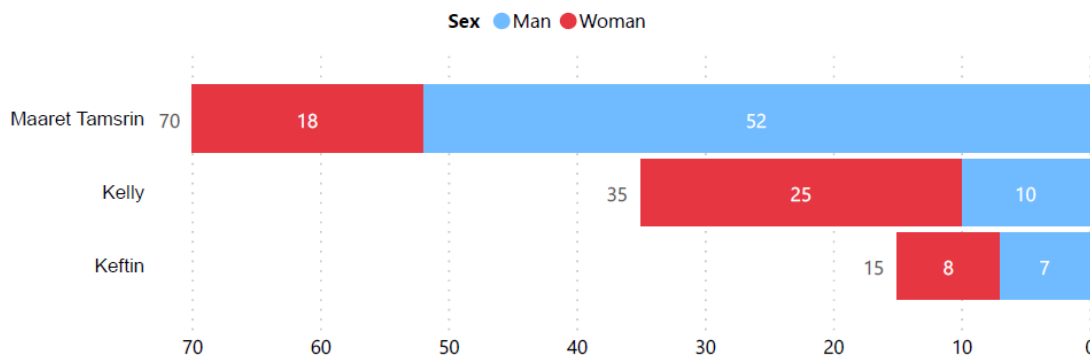
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unocha.org/syria>; <https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html> Access: 16.05.2021



**Figure 2:** Place lived before the war

FGD Meeting Notes...

"It's a strange and somewhat sad feeling because we left our homes and lived in tents. The living and housing conditions have gotten harsher." (Fatma, 26, Married, University, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)



**Figure 3:** Sex distribution of respondents by place of residence

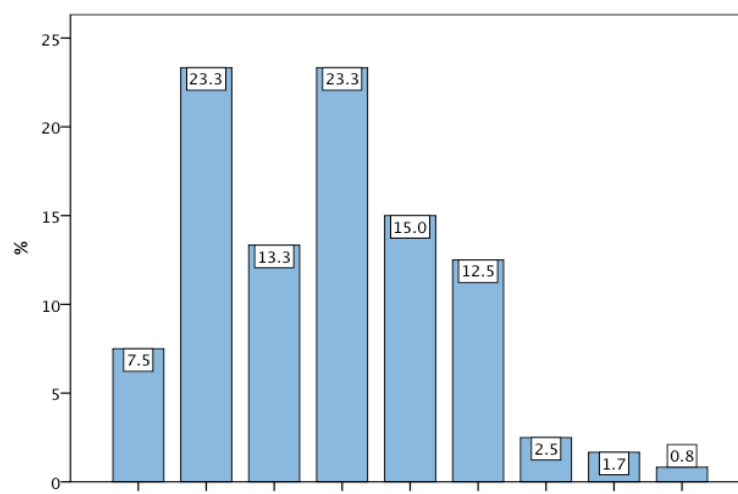
Considering Table 3, 69 of the respondents were men, whereas 51 of them were women. Regarding the distribution between camp and downtown, the IDPs in the camps near the given cities were prioritized.

### FGD Meeting Notes...

“People are all tired and there is no psychological comfort, so the family is broken up and we are limited, we can't go anywhere. My children live in the regime zone and I haven't seen them for over five years. I hope that roads will be opened so that I can visit my children. Do you understand how painful this feeling is? And so far, the future has been unknown, as well.  
(Anam, 33, Married, Secondary School, Unemployed, Kaftin)

**Table 1:** Age distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
19-24	9	7,5	7,5
25-29	28	23,3	30,8
30-34	16	13,3	44,2
35-39	28	23,3	67,5
40-44	18	15,0	82,5
45-49	15	12,5	95,0
50-54	3	2,5	97,5
55-59	2	1,7	99,2
60-64	1	,8	100,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100,0</b>	



**Figure 4:** Age Distribution

Looking at the distribution of age in all three cities, the demography is middle-aged. The average age of men, each representing one household, is 37, while the average age is 33 for women. Moreover, the life expectancy at birth was 72<sup>6</sup> for all the three given cities in Idlib Governorate, according to the 2004 data. However, there is no doubt that this average has decreased due to war and violence.

FGD Meeting Notes..

“We live in our houses and were not forced to leave them, but we do not have much. We live under great psychological pressure because we have nothing, not even a job opportunity to support our old father. There is no safety and security.” (Haniye, 29, Married, Secondary School, Unemployed, Kaftin)

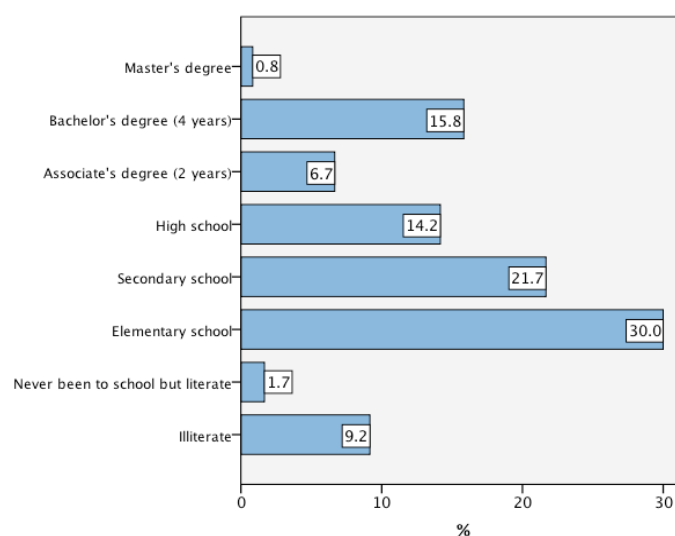
**Table 2: Educational Attainment**

	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	11	9,2
Never been to school, but literate	2	1,7
Elementary school graduate	36	30,0
Secondary school graduate	26	21,7
High school graduate	17	14,2
Associate’s degree (2 years)	8	6,7
Bachelor’s degree (4 years)	19	15,8
Master’s degree	1	,8
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100,0</b>

<sup>6</sup> <https://knoema.com/atlas/Syrian-Arab-Republic/Idlib> Access: 16.05.2021

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“Sometimes forgery is used to obtain academic certificates, diplomas or documents that remain in the records of the regime. Sometimes documents are obtained through nepotism and bribery.” (Firas, 44, Married, University, Freelancer, Kelly)



*Figure 5: Educational Attainment*

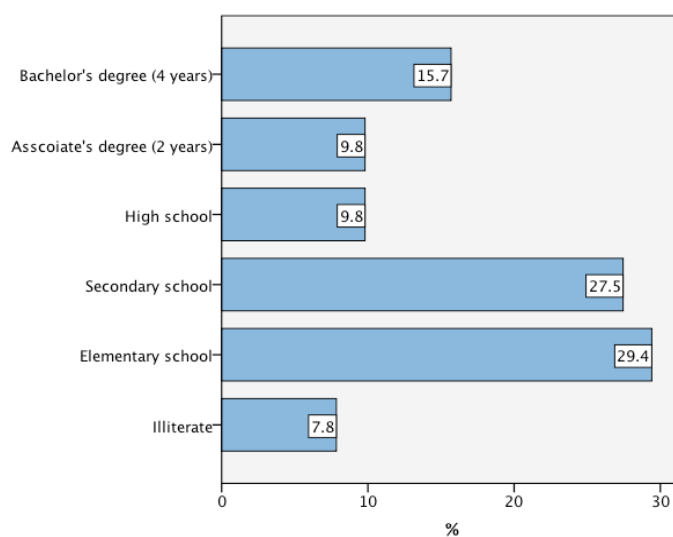
The education level of 120 respondents poses interesting results. Although the collected data are away from representing all, they indicate that the percentage at higher education level is against women. Also, considering the average age of all the respondents, each representing one household, the rate of personal encounters with the negative effects of the civil war, keeping on for 10 years, on education is relatively low. However, it should be noted that the younger generations have been affected more by the 10-year long war, migration, being a refuge, and displacement. Thus, it is predictable that younger individuals in the households of the respondents have encountered more frequently unfavorable impacts.

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“There is security and stability. The presence of family and relatives around us causes a sense of safety and comfort. Aid is also adequate.” (Hatice, 24, Single, High School, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)

**Table 3:** Educational Attainment of Women

	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	4	7,8
Elementary school graduate	15	29,4
Secondary school graduate	14	27,5
High school graduate	5	9,8
Associate's degree (2 years)	5	9,8
Bachelor's degree (4 years)	8	15,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100,0</b>



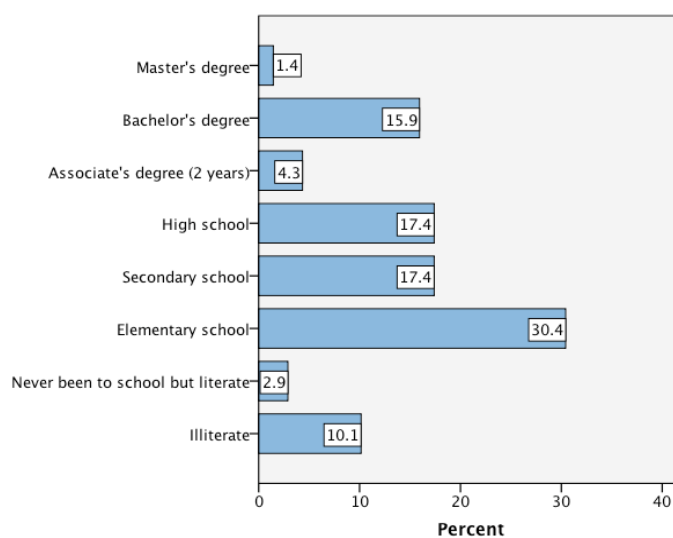
**Figure 6:** Educational Attainment of Women

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“Generally disturbing feeling due to lack of security, lack of job opportunities, lack of income and high cost of living.” (Hatice, 24, Single, High School, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)

**Table 4:** Educational Attainment of Men

	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	7	10,1
Never been to school, but literate	2	2,9
Elementary school graduate	21	30,4
Secondary school graduate	12	17,4
High school graduate	12	17,4
Associate’s degree (2 years)	3	4,3
Bachelor’s degree (4 years)	11	15,9
Master’s degree	1	1,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100,0</b>



**Figure 7:** Educational Attainment of Men



The latest statistical data about Idlib reveal that the illiterate above 15 years was 16,4% for the year 2009. This percentage was 8,8% for men and 24,3% for women<sup>7</sup>, and it was quite high. For this reason, compared to 2009, when the last exact and accurate statistics obtained, the education levels of the respondents are more positive now despite the war.

*Table 5: Marital Status*

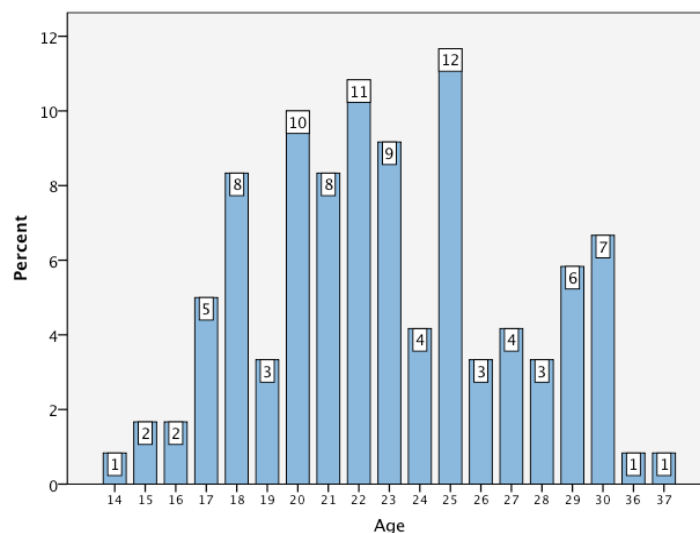
	Percentage
Divorced	5,8
Widowed	4,2
Married	90,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0</b>

90% of the respondents are married. In such a narrow-scoped sample, including 120 persons from traditional and rural communities like in Idlib, the percentage of the divorced is high. This should be evaluated together with the heavy conditions of the war. According to the 2010 statistics, the rate of divorce in Syria was one-thousandth<sup>8</sup>. This phenomenon in Idlib, which is against women holding disadvantaged conditions, clearly indicates how much war has affected family structures and divorce.

While 81% of respondents have married once so far, 9,2% have gotten married more than once. Of the respondents who stated their current marriage was the first one, 76,5% are women, and 84,1% are men. The main reason why the rate is higher for men is that the war has affected women more than men (as the later data reveal), and women have had to marry their relatives. On the other hand, the first marriage percentage for women is lower than men's is the death of husbands during the war, husbands' leaving the country, or being unable to hear from them.

<sup>7</sup> <https://knoema.com/atlas/Syrian-Arab-Republic/Idlib/Adult-illiteracy-rate-15-yr-Female> Access: 16.05.2021

<sup>8</sup> <https://kockam.ku.edu.tr/syrian-refugees-in-turkey-what-existing-data-implies-for-gender-and-displacement-aysen-ustubici-h-berra-ince/> Access: 16.05.2021



*Figure 8: Age of the First Marriage*

The average age at which the respondents married for the first time is 23. For men, this age is 24,5, whereas 20,8 is for women. The youngest age during the first marriage is 14 for women while the eldest age is 37. For men, the youngest age is 18, and the eldest is 30.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

"I am not from this village, but I married someone from here. My husband is an old man. I am here for my husband and relatives. Thank God there is peace here, though we hope theft and kidnapping will be reduced. We haven't been given any aid. We live here and have not migrated. No one who emigrates from here can return. If they leave, their houses will be confiscated." (Anam, 33, Married, Secondary School, Unemployed, Kaftin)

Almost all of the marriage types are both religious and civil. Despite the increase in religious marriages in Idlib due to the incidents in the last ten years, official records are necessary for the legal issues after marriage. The necessity of civil marriage, especially for the processes of education and passport, has raised problems that cannot be solved with religious marriage going up in recent years as a makeshift remedy. Considering women are more disadvantaged under religious marriage, there have emerged problems in marriage, divorce, inheritance, and parental rights. 55% of women hold religious and civil marriage contracts, while 21,6% have only religious marriage contracts.

In that sense, 21% of women stated that their marriages were not registered at any official institution, parallel with the rate of women with religious marriage. However, inevitably, one-fifth of women's marriage limited to religious laws will cause serious social and legal problems. Concerning who decides the marriage types, while the family became the decisionmaker for 47% of women, 21,6% of women decided it together with their husbands. These statistics do more than revealing the impacts of patriarchal social norms on women. They indicate that women under the processes of war, migration, and being refugees have become more vulnerable in terms of rights and legal status.

Besides the registration of marriage, registration at various institutions is needed to meet the needs in daily life, especially under war conditions. About 80% of the 120 respondents stated that they somehow registered at least one institution after 2011 when the institutions and registration systems of the central government started to lose their effect. On the other hand, 20% has no registration at any organization, which is a quite high.

Registered women and men were asked about the reason for registration. 2% of women stated they applied for an identity card accepted by any organization. Men have no application for an identity card. Neither women nor men applied for passports to non-state institutions because the central government issues official passports. These results also reveal that passport application procedures are considerably complicated in Idlib.

On the contrary, the registration rate to benefit from aid, which is vital during war and displacement, is the highest among both women and men. 71% of women and 74% of men stated that they registered to get aid. These rates are pretty natural and realistic in the war and displacement processes. For education, 6% of women and 7% of men registered. As for health services, the rates of registration are 8% for women and 12% for men. Remarkable data take place in the rates of registration for jobs and work. It is 22% for women while it is 3% for men. However, this result is fairly consistent, and it should be evaluated together with the numbers of marriage types and divorced or widowed women. Additionally, it can be inferred that under the war and refuge conditions, the 20% of women in question have been affected more adversely by patriarchal socio-cultural structure. Evaluating the table showing the marital status of women (Table 10 just below) and their demands for job and work, there is a strong positive correlation between the divorced and widowed women and their job and work demands.

*Table 6: Marital Status of Women*

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Divorced	7	13,7
Widowed	5	9,8
Married	39	76,5
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100,0</b>

10% of the female respondents stated that their marriages were not registered at any civil institutions. Marriages only being abided by religious laws mean that both women and their born

children will face difficulties in terms of legal personality in the present or future. They stated that they obtained some legal documents such as marriage certificates, health certificates, and stamps for aid after they registered. The reasons they did not register their marriages were stated as ever-changing authorities, instability, difficulties, and dangers of the registration at central government, complicated procedures, and density of offices. Almost every participant uttered the same issues during the FGDs. Therefore, it is quite clear that disorder, chaos, and uncertainty are prevalent, at least in the three cities in question. There must be simpler procedures and new and different methods to reach more people, especially women.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“Many people do not have the necessary documents. And they are difficult to obtain because the institutions that issue these documents are far away. The number of employees in the centers is inadequate. Sometimes you have to stay and wait for hours or even days to get the document. Not to mention very high fees, without these documents you will be deprived of health and education services and benefits. And if your documents are missing, you won't be able to get any services or a job.” (Fatma, 26, Married, University, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)

The question “Do you have an official document approving your marriage?” was answered positively by 23 out of 51 women. Therefore, 45% of women hold an official document provided by the government and recognized internationally. The remaining 28 women have no registration or one registration whose international recognition is not available. Moreover, husbands of 8% of the female respondents do not live together with them. The causes for this situation were stated as leaving the country, migration, or other reasons.

19% of the respondents have consanguineous marriage. The age group between the ages of 25 and 29 is the highest for women with consanguineous marriage. Considering this age group together with the 10-year long war and the average age of women during their first marriages, it can be propounded that the increase in the tendency toward consanguineous marriage results from the limitation of social relations and regression of educational and economic conditions during the war. Of women married to their kin, 56,5% are married to their cousins, while 43,4% are married to distant relatives. However, the rate of consanguineous marriage in the whole of Syria is similar. Including marriages with cousins or distant relatives, the rate is more than 20% for all of Syria. It should also be kept in mind that the surveys in Turkey have conducted on the Syrians put forward similar numbers.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Gültekin, M.N., Giritlioğlu, İ., Karadaş, Y., Soyudoğan, M., Leyla Kuzu, Ş., Gülhan, S.T., Doğanoglu, M., Utanır, A., Aslan, Ç., İncetahtacı, N., (2018) Gaziantep'teki Suriyeliler: Uyum, Beklentiler ve Zorluklar (Özet Rapor), Gaziantep: Gaziantep Üniversitesi Yayınları; Gültekin, M.N., Yücebaş, M., Soyudoğan, M., Atasü Topçuoğlu, R., Doğanoglu, M., Leyla Kuzu, Ş., Gülhan, S. T., Aslan, A., İncetahtacı, N., Utanır, A., Aslan, Ç., Kaya, M., Karayakupoglu, H.C., Açikgöz, Ü., Özhazar, İ., (2021) Gaziantep Monitörü 2020 – Suriyeliler, Ankara: SABEV Yayınları; <https://www.unocha.org/syria> Access: 16.05.21; Bittles A.H. and Black M.L. (2015). Global Patterns & Tables of

The results reveal that the spouses of all the married respondents are citizens of Syria. On the contrary, the daily speculations, all the marriages at least in the three cities are between the Syrian citizens themselves.

FGD Meeting Notes...

“There is a problem in terms of marriage at a young age. There are girls who are forced to marry at the age of 14 and 15. It is very clear that these marriages will result in divorce in the future.” (Nadine, 22, Married, High School, NGO employee, Maaret Tamsrin)

**Table 7: Number of Wives (Polygyny)**

Number of Wives	Frequency	Percentage
1	57	82,6
2	11	15,9
3	1	1,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100,0</b>

As for men’s plural marriage, although monogamy seems to have a high rate (82,6%), the main point to be emphasized is the rate of marriages with 2 or 3 women, which is around 17%. Unfortunately, it is impossible to conclude here since there is no exact and accurate data for polygamy before or after 2011. However, it is known that the legitimating reasons for marrying women as the second wife are created as a coping mechanism by the patriarchy during war and violence periods.

As stated above, marriage registration is one of the most prevalent problems in the three cities where the survey was conducted. Almost 22% of men and 17,6% of women said their marriages were not under any official registration. At this point, an important issue must be highlighted. Under the difficult conditions of war and in the world of social relations, women, by using all the opportunities at their hands at the maximum level, somehow bargain with the socio-cultural, political, and ideological patriarchal system<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, it can be stated that the data

Consanguinity. <http://consang.net> Erişim: 21.09.2020; Al-Gazali, L. ve Hamamy, H. (2014). Consanguinity and dysmorphology in Arabs. *Human Heredity*, 77(1–4), 93–107.

<sup>10</sup> Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender and Society*, 2(3), 274-290.

in this report similarly reveal a latent “bargaining” situation. Under marriage, women have as high numbers as under education, job, and work. These numbers could be evaluated as latent bargaining with the unequal, unfair, and oppressing patriarchal system surrounding women. On the other hand, it must be remembered that women do not have powerful and effective means in this bargaining since the hierarchal hegemony dominates them made up by state/local governments/armed forces, religion, relatives, families, fathers, husbands, and brothers.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

"Prices are too high. Preparing a dowry is difficult while getting married. Finding suitable house is difficult. Registering a marriage is difficult because the dowry is also taxed; thus, people stay away from registering marriages. I think tradition has nothing to do with it."

(Selva, 35, Married, High School, Unemployed, Kaftin)

**Table 8:** Registered Institution

	Frequency	Percentage
IDPs Council	1	1
Local Government	54	57,5
NGO	32	34,0
Unknown Organization	7	7,5
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Among the respondents registered at one institution, local governments and NGOs are dominant in all three cities. The demography of Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin is significant in indicating the vital importance of NGOs in these regions. Local governments followed by NGOs reveal the existence of aid activities. Depending upon the three cities, where the central government is weak, the power is divided between various groups. As a result, particularly women and children have become more vulnerable to these conditions, and the activities of NGOs based on gender rights gain a lot of significance.

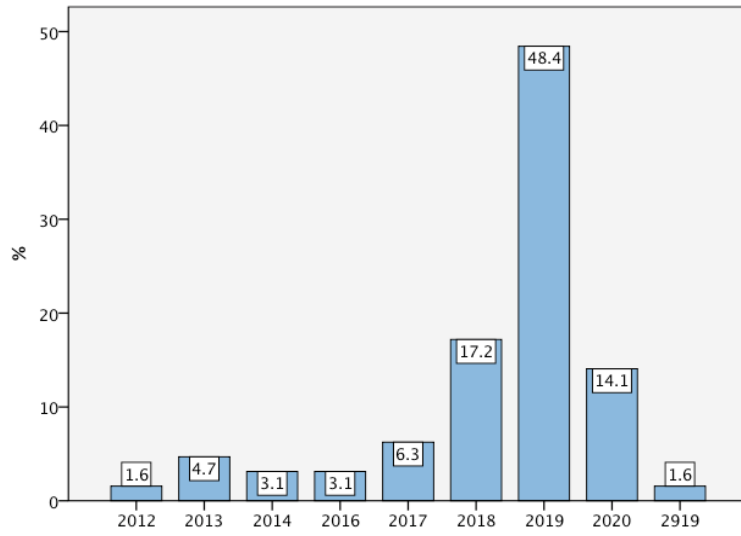


Figure 9: Year They Left Their Previous Residence

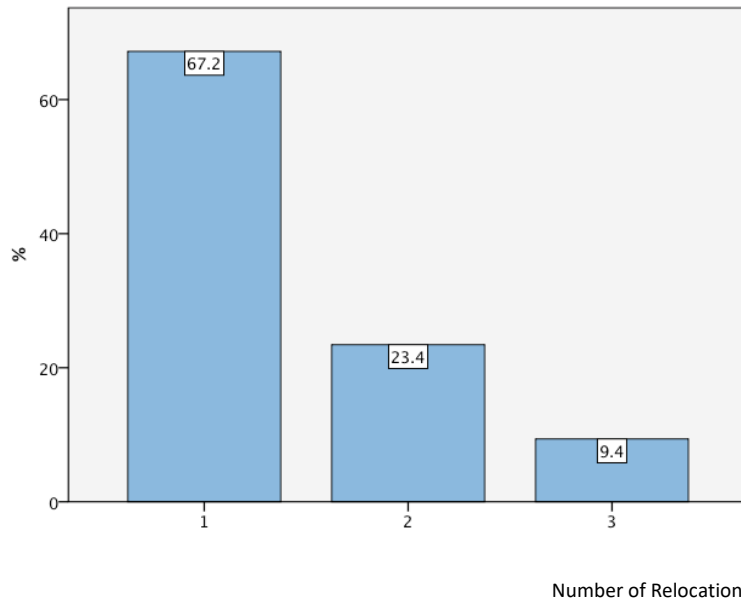


Figure 10: Frequency of relocation after 2011

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“We left our homes because of the bombing and destruction. For this reason, we left our house without knowing where we were going; we did not choose where we were going. However, the circumstances forced us to live in this camp. Although aid provided are not perfect, they are good. There are security and safety in the camp because most of the camp residents are people from our village and the presence of relatives around us gives me a feeling of safety and security.” (Fatma, 26, Married, University, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)

Most of the respondents in all the three given cities stated the year of 2019 as the year they left their residences or were displaced. Whereas displacement, being forced to emigrate, and being a refugee was more common throughout Syria between 2011 and 2016, the trend was more stable in these three cities. The most significant reason why the displacement increased at such high rates in 2019 could be the re-rise of armed conflicts involving the Syrian regime, Turkey, Russia, and other armed groups. Moreover, as some other surveys put forward, the years between 2014 and 2016<sup>11</sup> were when the mobility resulting from the influx of refugees was mostly observed. Similarly, the agencies' archives under the United Nations also indicate that almost two million people displaced their places in Idlib and near 2019. By the middle of 2021, because of various reasons, Idlib and the places near it are still the regions where the most dramatic incidents regarding migrants and refugees have been witnessed<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, the year of 2019 was stated mostly by near half (48,4%) of the 64 respondents who said they moved to the city they were in now. Another data confirming these findings is more than one-third (67%) of the IDPs stating they changed their place of residence more than once from 2011 to the first months of 2021. Thus, it can be claimed that there is *not* a similar trend between the migration experiences of the IDPs in Idlib and the Syrian refugees' pattern of leaving the country. The reason for this is that there are few places within Syrian borders to go for most of the Syrians that have stayed in the country because the alternatives free from war and violence still hardly ever exist.

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“I don't know, but we live in our village and we feel safe because our family and relatives are here and we have neighbors we have known since our childhood.” (Haniye, 29, Married, Secondary School, Unemployed, Kaftin)

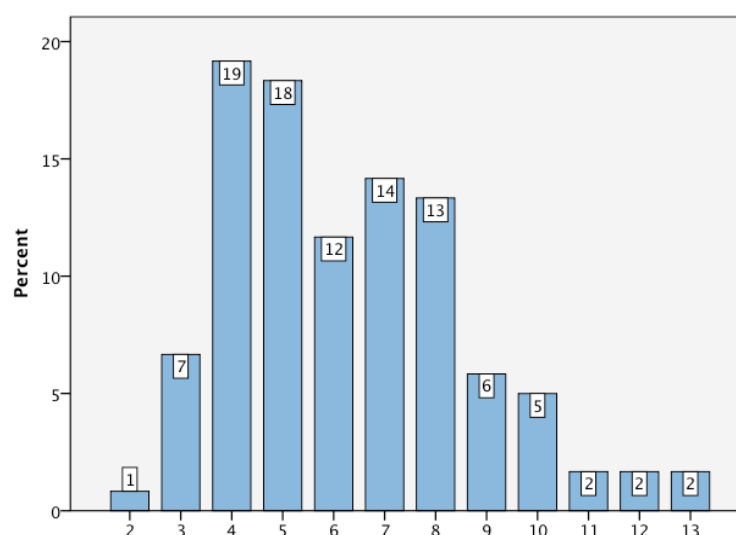
<sup>11</sup> Gültekin, M.N., Giritlioğlu, İ., Karadaş, Y., Soyudoğan, M., Leyla Kuzu, Ş., Gülhan, S.T., Doğanoglu, M., Utanır, A., Aslan, Ç., İncetahtacı, N., (2018) Gaziantep'teki Suriyeliler: Uyum, Beklentiler ve Zorluklar (Özet Rapor), Gaziantep: Gaziantep Üniversitesi Yayınları; Gültekin, M.N., Yücebaş, M., Soyudoğan, M., Atasü Topçuoğlu, R., Doğanoglu, M., Leyla Kuzu, Ş., Gülhan, S. T., Aslan, A., İncetahtacı, N., Utanır, A., Aslan, Ç., Kaya, M., Karayakupoglu, H.C., Açıkgöz, Ü., Özhazar, İ., (2021) Gaziantep Monitörü 2020 – Suriyeliler, Ankara: SABEV Yayınları.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.unocha.org/syria> Access: 16.05.2021



For the 64 IDPs, each representing one household, the pre-eminent reason they chose to live in these cities in Idlib is “security” with 84,4% as expected. Besides security, the second reason (56%) is cooperation and solidarity brought with kinship. Work conditions and employment come third with 19%, while hope for benefiting more easily from the aid in the region is the least stated option. Considering the answers of the IDPs in Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin, it has become clear that opportunities to get aid do not cause the increase in the refugee influxes in a certain region or city.

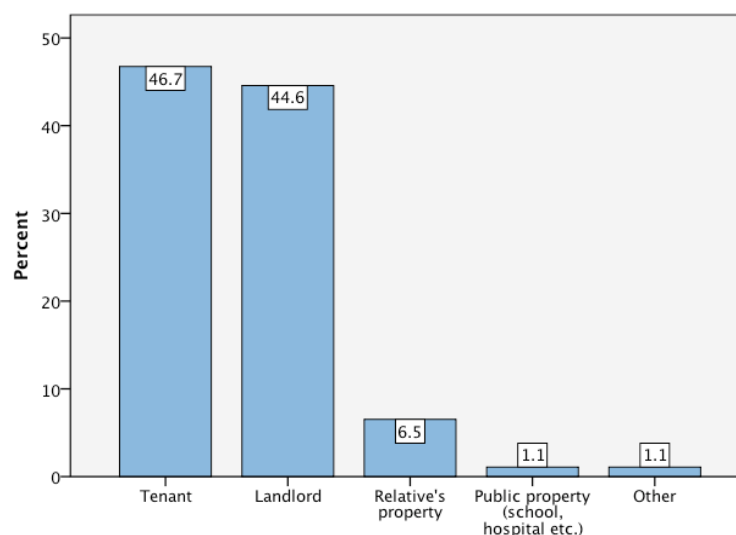
## 2.2. Household Patterns



*Figure 11: Household Size*

Looking at the household size, the family units are made up of at least 2, at the highest 13 persons. The average size is 6,3 persons. According to the 2009 data, the household size was 5,5 persons on average in Idlib before the war.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://knoema.com/atlas/Syrian-Arab-Republic/Idlib> Access: 16.05.2021



**Figure 12: Tenure Status**

43 out of the 92 IDPs that live in the downtowns, not in the camps, are tenants. This number equals 47%. The percentage of living in the property of a relative corresponds to about 6,5%. This confirms the positive relationship between kinship and trust. The lowest rent is 25 Turkish liras, whereas the highest is 750 Turkish liras. The average rent is 240 Turkish liras. There is no standard for rent payments, and almost all the house rents are paid monthly. Although there are different powers in the region, tenants pay their landlords most of the time. Only one person stated that they paid the armed forces in the region. The remaining 4 people pay the local administration.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

"(In tears) We have been evicted from our home and are living in a room in a school building. And we use this room also for guests, for sitting and sleeping, and as kitchen and bathroom. We do not educate our children because the school is far from us, the staff is not good and there is no safety on the road. My daughter is in danger and goes to school by running due to the lack of safety. I live in the same room with my 14-year-old son, husband, and 8 children, which makes living very difficult. If there were more than one room, the kids would play in one room while I would be sitting in another room to rest. (...) The situation of my mother and father is very difficult, they have only Allah. My father has 5 married daughters and no young son. That's why my husband and I, and our 5 kids live in the same room together with my dad and mom." (Ayşe, 39, Married, Secondary School, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)

Eighty-three of the respondents that do not live in the camps provided some information about the physical conditions of their houses. The number of rooms ranges from 1 to 5. The average room number of houses, except kitchen, bathroom, and restroom, in all three cities, is 2,46. Although the rooms' number is between 1 and 5, house types and household members should be considered to understand the room distribution. Regardless of settling in the camps and in or near the downtowns, the rates of the number of rooms in the houses in which the respondents live are listed as follows: 13,3% of the respondents have 1 room in their houses. Whereas 40% live in two-roomed houses, 34,1% reside in three-roomed ones. 11,6% of them have four-roomed houses, and only 0,8% have five-roomed. The number of household members is at least 2 and at highest 13. The average is 6,3 persons per household. As a result, 10 to 13 people live in 10% of the households (12 households in total). There are 8 to 9 household members in 19,1% of the households. In 41,1% of the houses, 5 to 7 people live. The percentage of the households 2 to 4 people reside in is 26,6%. The number of people divided by the number of rooms in the houses equals 2,7 persons per room, which is quite high. However, crowded and impoverished families indeed live in smaller or fewer-roomed houses under the conditions of migration and refuge. Looking at the 120 households interviewed in the survey, dramatic results come out. For instance, 7 people live in five-roomed houses, which corresponds to 1,4 persons per room. In four-roomed houses, the number of rooms per person is 1,9. As for three-roomed houses, there are 2 people per room. The average has turned out more remarkable for the one or two-roomed houses that can be defined as poorer. In two-roomed houses, each room holds 3,2 persons. For one-roomed houses mostly lived by the IDPs, the average is 4,7. Even only these numbers are enough to reveal the physical conditions in the three cities.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

"Lack of good services (electricity, water, hygiene, roads). Life is very difficult and there are many reasons for this such as high prices, lack of job opportunities, monopoly, and exploitation. Also, the security is very bad due to the war." (Abdullah, 23, Married, University, NGO employee)

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

"Everything is difficult. Housing is hard. Our life is difficult. There are no health services, education, and job opportunities in the camps. Everything is very expensive. And we don't feel safe." (Mary, 39, Married, Secondary School, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)

*Table 9: Type of Housing*

Type	Percentage
Flat	28,3
Tent/camp	21,7
Public building	,8
Detached house	47,5
Other	1,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0</b>

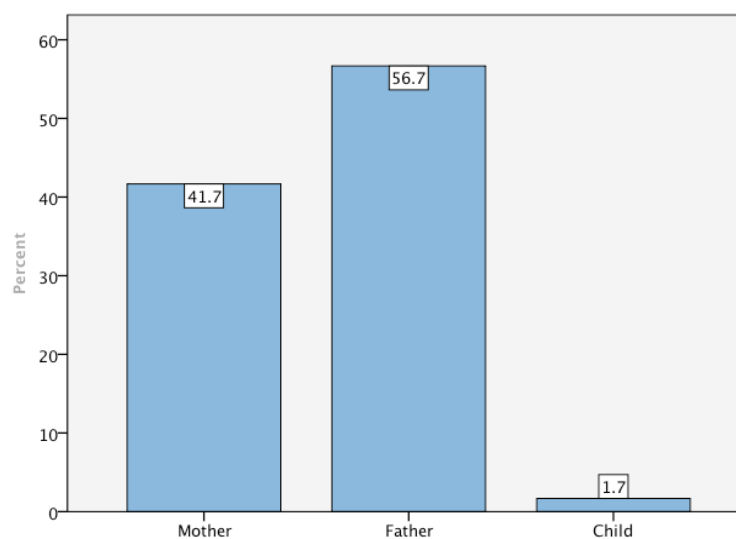
As expected, in each city, the types of houses are flats (28%) or detached houses with gardens (47,5%), except those living in tents in the IDP camps. The size of detached houses is in accordance with the geographical and socio-cultural structure of the region. On the other hand, considering most non-IDPs have their own houses, the pattern in the house types has become more understandable—another reason why there are more detached houses in the agricultural and rural structure in the region.

In terms of the physical conditions and sub-structure of the houses, 80% of the households have their kitchen, bathroom, and restroom. The percentage of the houses with individual kitchens, bathrooms, and restrooms outside the house building or in the garden is 8%. This situation is mostly observed in the countryside. The percentage of the houses with private kitchens, bathrooms, and restrooms inside the building of the house is also 72,5%, which is high. However, for 19% of the interviewed households, the kitchen, bathroom, and restroom are shared. Evaluating this last rate and the IDP camps, the physical conditions of houses have become more meaningful.

One of the most serious problems in the camps or downtowns is power cuts. Except for 2%, all the respondents in the three cities mentioned electricity problems regardless of the place they live—the camp or downtown. There have been severe problems with electric power distribution. The participants of the focus group discussions frequently stated the same issue, as well. The continual problems with electric power have been directly affected the daily lives of those living in the camps or cities. The solutions like using generators have not solved the problem permanently.

Additionally, 27,5% of the households do not have the systems of healthy drinking water and do have problems with it. As for heating, stoves rather than central heating is more common in the region because of the climate and geography. Nevertheless, preferring stoves in the IDP camps after 2011 mostly results from obligations. Consequently, stoves are used in the camps or houses by 97% of the respondents. Moreover, the rate of use of solar energy to heat water is pretty common in the region because of the obligation or availability of climatic conditions. 80% of houses use solar energy. Apart from these sub-structures, 50% of the households have internet connection in their houses, which is essential for today's communication and network society. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the internet connection mentioned here is satellite broadband such as 3G and 4G rather than broadband connections based on wire systems like DSL.

### 2.3. General Patterns Concerning Children in the Households

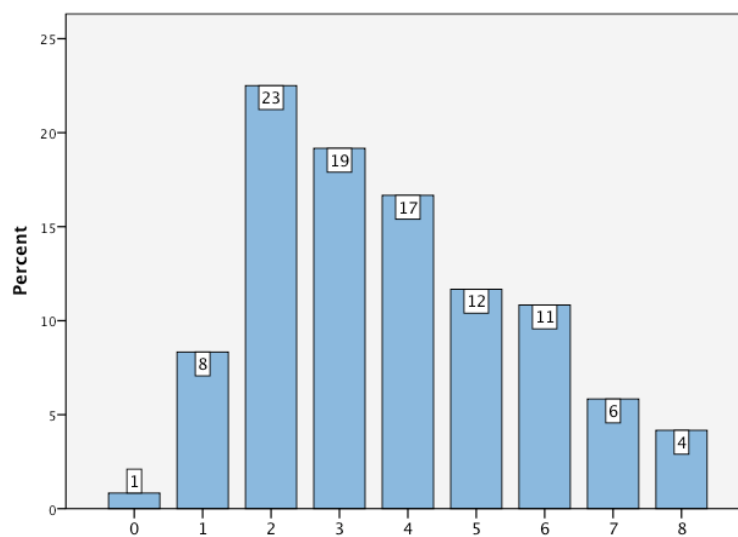


**Figure 13:** Respondent's Role in the Household/Family

In terms of the status of the respondents in the household, each of whom represents one household, 41% of them identify themselves as the “mother” while 57% of them are the “father.” The remaining 2% are the “child” of the household. In other words, the data obtained in this survey come from either mother or father of the household is at 98%. For this reason, their statements about the registration processes of their own family reflect the truth more. On the other hand, it should be recognized the strategic behaviors in the value system of patriarchy men always and women most of the time show. The patriarchal system advises and forces men to repress or hide the negative situations and deficiencies in the family as much as possible. As for women, to avoid the tension resulting from conflicts and be accepted, they might internalize men’s thoughts and behaviors as much as men do. Therefore, these unwritten rules must be considered while discussing marriage, children, and their registration.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“We wanted a better future, but the future is not clear anymore.” (Fatma, 26, Married, University, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)



**Figure 14:** Number of Children under 18 years old of Age in the Household

In the 120 households interviewed, there are 450 children under the age of 18 in total. This number means the average corresponds to 3,75 children per household<sup>14</sup>. The number of children under the age of 18 in the households ranges from 1 year old to 8 years old; however, it concentrates between 2 and 4. Half of the households have at least 1, at most 3 children. Moreover, these numbers are important since they reveal the population is very young in the three cities. While the policies about refugees and IDPs are being made, this condition must be especially cautiously handled.

<sup>14</sup> It should be particularly noted here that no respondent must be forced to categorize for the sake of differentiation of family from household because of the socio-cultural structure of the field of this survey and the features of sociological terminology. We know that the patrilineality characteristic and family structure in the Middle East tend to define some relationships as “family” rather than “household,” which is the definition of sociology. For example, married sisters or nieces in the house are defined as the members of the family, not the members of the household. Although this situation has a meaning in the daily social relations, it has nothing to do with sociology. The reason why the respondents were particularly asked about the number of *their own* children is to be able to differentiate family from household, which is significant for sociology.

*Table 10: Number of Children in the Households*

Child Number	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
-	1	,8	,8
1	10	8,3	9,2
2	27	22,5	31,7
3	23	19,2	50,8
4	20	16,7	67,5
5	14	11,7	79,2
6	13	10,8	90,0
7	7	5,8	95,8
8	5	4,2	<b>100,0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100,0</b>	
Average per household: 3,75			

Considering the footnote about the differentiation between household and family, the number of children of the respondents' own families is 406. This means that 44 children in the households belong to more than one family or relative. In other words, 10% of the total of children in the households are from more than one family. The average number of children in the respondents' own families is 3,41. The majority of the families have 2 or 3 children. The families with 3 children correspond to 60% of the respondents.

*Table 11: Number of Children in the Respondent's Family*

Child Number	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
-	1	,8	,8
1	16	13,3	14,2
2	32	26,7	40,8
3	23	19,2	60,0
4	14	11,7	71,7
5	13	10,8	82,5
6	14	11,7	94,2
7	4	3,3	97,5
8	3	2,5	<b>100,0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100,0</b>	
Average per family: 3,41			

During the survey, particularly asking the number of children in the family, apart from asking the number of children in the household, gives important information about the household pattern. Furthermore, the difference between the average number of children in the

household and the average number of children in the family provides a significant clue to the composition of the household. Therefore, this is the way we chose.

To obtain more accurate data about the number of children and their sexes, the respondents were specially asked how many sons they had. As a result, the number of boys in the family is 53,9% while it is 46,1% for girls.

The respondents were also asked about the registration or birth certificates of the children in the households and families. According to the collected data, the rate of children under 18 who are registered or have an official document is 46,6%. In other words, more than half of the children have no registration. Although this rate is high, it is understandable considering the 10-year war keeping on since 2011 and the conditions it has led to. The war and its effects are certainly the main reason for this rate; however, it must also be remembered that the region is agricultural or rural. Thus, it is also possible to state that this rate is also affected by rural social structures in the region that cause to be distant toward formal procedures. As the average number of children per household is 3,8, it is concluded that 2 children per household have no registration. This result is tragic and may cause concern for the future. The information on the family given by the respondents as a member of the household is also dramatic. Based upon the family, 53,9% of the children are registered, and the remaining 46% (187 persons) of the children are not registered.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“Psychological stress, poverty in general, overpopulation and children’s contact with each other cause problems. It would be better if children could go to school and get educated at school. But the school is far away. The round trip takes two hours. Students who go to school are not taught other than painting and sports. For example, the school-going children have never been given homework until today. We were living in a school building with other families. They made us leave there to put the school into operation. But this time there is no teacher because of low wages. Teachers who work with low wages do not provide good education. So even if you find a school, there isn't enough staff. Students continue to school, but in vain.” (Ayşe, 39, Married, Secondary School, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)



*Table 12: Distribution of Schooling of the Children in the Households/Families*

	Average per Household	Average per Family	Girls	Boys	(of) Total
Child number	3,75	3,41	46%	54%	100%
Registered Children	46,6%	53,9%			100%
School-Age Children	52%				---
Rate of Schooling in Total Children in School	63,4%		87,7%	64%	---
Children Unable to Go to School			53%	47%	100%
Children Exactly out of School					36,6%
Children Who Have to Work					26%
Illiterate School-Age Children					15%
					10,9%

**Note:** All the rates and values are calculated according to the number of children stated by the respondents.

The schooling rates of the children in the households are also tragic, as can be expected from the results relating to registration. 52% of the children, corresponding to 235 persons, are school-age. Despite the variety from country to country, the ages from 6 to 12, or 5 to 11, are defined as the school age. Therefore, near half of the children in the survey field are school-age. Additionally, it can be roughly estimated that 48% of the children under 18 in the households are between the ages of 0-6 and 13-18. However, the schooling rates are the actual thing that is tragic. 63,4% of school-age children can go to school. In other words, more than one-third (36,6%) of the children who must be getting an elementary education are deprived of it. This rate includes those who have never been to school, have continued for some time, and then dropped out, and have been unable to attend school because of many reasons such as violence, disorder, poverty, and lack of official documents, security, and services.

Based on the data, the distribution of sexes of the children who go to school or get an elementary education can be suggested as head-to-head under the present circumstances caused by the war. Of 406 children, 219 are boys, and 187 are girls. The number of school-age children is 202. Thus, 109 children out of 202 are boys, while 93 of them are girls. The total number of children in school is 149. Whereas 70 of them are boys, the remaining 79 are girls. As a result, the rate of children in school is 64% for boys and 87,7% for girls. The total rate of the children in school is 47% for boys and 53% for girls. Despite all the difficulties, the rate of girls in school is higher in all the three cities, which is promising; on the other hand, the presence of children who cannot go to school—corresponding to more than one-third of the school-age children—is a quite serious problem of a generation. Undoubtedly, there is a need for more in-depth surveys to learn in detail about the general pattern of education and its operation in these three small-scaled cities. Notwithstanding, in all the six focus group discussions, except the NGO employees, the respondents' first few issues were always education. Regardless of their age, sex, education status, profession, or being an IDP or a local, all the respondents emphasized poor education.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“We don't have good teaching staff in our schools. The freshman and sophomore years are slightly better, but schools are far from our home and there is no security.” (Selva, 35, Married, High School, Unemployed, Kaftin)

On the other hand, considering the interviews in the three cities, the problems concerning education are not limited only to the insufficiency of schools and teachers. These data also indicate that at least 53 of 202 school-age children, i.e. 26% of them, are completely out of school. It must be reminded that the percentage of children out of school, which is estimated as above 37%, also includes these 53 children (26%). The families stated that 8 school-age children not to go to school did different jobs and took a tremendous responsibility like maintaining the family. However, in 2009, which is the last year providing accurate data in Syria, the schooling rate for the elementary education in Idlib covering these three cities was 94%.<sup>15</sup>

More tragic data indicate that 22 children are school-age but illiterate and unable to attend school. This value equals 10,9% of all school-age children, which is considerably high. Interestingly, this rate is quite similar to the illiteracy rate of 120 respondents (9,2%), each of whom represents one household. This percentage firmly shows how real and close the “lost generation” is, as indicated by most researches and mostly mentioned in populist discourses.

The problems with education and children’s schooling are created by the insufficiency of schools and teachers and the elements such as the 10-year long war, displacement, instability, poverty, insufficiency of official institutions, and lack of security. All these states have encountered all these three cities and have caused difficulties with registering marriages and children, i.e., recognition as a legal subject. One of the biggest problems in each city is, as stated during the FGDs, registration of marriages and children. Unsteady governments, the prevalence of armed groups, and unestablished and vague bureaucracy certainly negatively affect the registration of children and families.

There are 22 families out of 120 households with at least one child out of school, although s/he must be in school. This corresponds to 18% of the households. The reasons brought forward by the 22 families, i.e., 18% of the households, are familiar.

<sup>15</sup> <https://knoema.com/atlas/Syrian-Arab-Republic/Idlib> Access: 17.05.2021

**Table 13:** Reasons Children Remaining Excluded from Education

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Unsuccessful/Dropped out	2	9
Working	3	13
Education is unnecessary (Girls)	2	9
Engaged (Girls)	2	9
Distance/Security	6	27
Inadequacy of School	5	23
Lack of Public School	1	5
Disabled	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>

It is known that during the crises, especially such as war and scarcity, the social values of patriarchy handicap women and girls by making up banal excuses under the name of protection. As revealed in Table 16, reasons like security and engagement can turn into reasons for keeping girls out of school. Another reason causing children excluding from school or education is the forced marriages of children under 18.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“There is neither safety nor security, life has become difficult and obtaining anything has become difficult. People don’t have jobs anymore, but the prices are high. People are tired and we have lost loved ones to death or migration.” (Haniye, 29, Married, Secondary School, Unemployed, Kaftin)

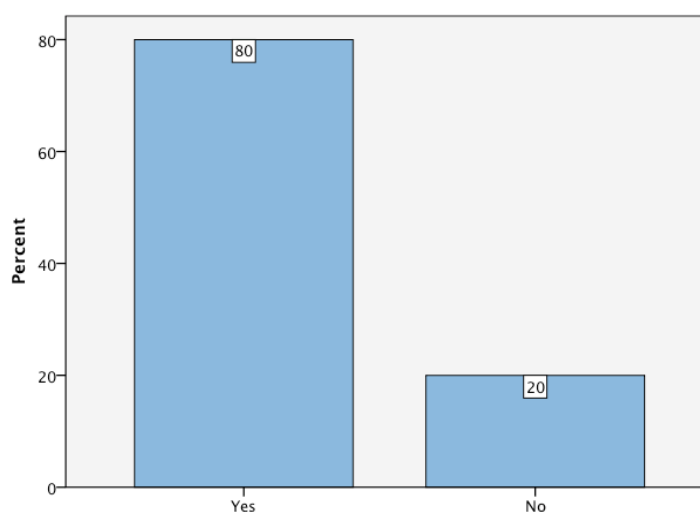
There are also 12 children who either dropped out or were somehow completely excluded from school/education. These children compelled to work are errand boys or workers, 1 of who works for his father and 11 of whom work for somebody else. 2 children’s weekly wages are 400 TL while 10 of them “earn” below 200 TL per week.

**Table 14:** Effects of Being an Unregistered Child

	Frequency	Percentage
---	2	1,7
I am aware of the negative effects, but there is no suitable condition.	3	2,5
The child is too young. / Registration is not necessary.	16	13,3
Remaining excluded from education	39	32,5
Not interested / Not care	3	2,5
Being disinherited	6	5,0
Not being a legal subject	19	15,8
Being unable to get health services	5	4,2
Being unable to get aids	7	5,8
Registered at the local government / No problem	20	16,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100,00</b>

One-third of the respondents stated that the unregistered children were mostly affected by exclusion from education. Therefore, it is understood that official recognition is at issue. Under the difficulties experienced by all the three cities, such as instability, being in the middle of the conflict of various groups, displacement, poverty, deprivation, and uncertainty, getting education officially recognized and seeing the future of the young generations have become more vital. Although being unable to inherit and reach health and aid services is highly significant under the households' experience, they are far behind official recognition and education.

On the other hand, in Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin, some problems and disruptions relate to marriage and children's registration. The findings of awareness of the institutions issuing child and marriage registrations are quite interesting.

**Figure 15:** Do you know what institutions register children and marriages?

80% of the respondents stated that they were aware of the local institutions issuing registration of children and marriages. Although this rate seems high, one-fifth of them are not aware of the institutions, which is a much more meaningful percentage. One of the more dramatic results, which may explain the tragedy in education and schooling, is only 61% of women know what institutions register birth and children. On the contrary, a vast majority of men are aware of these institutions.

FGD Meeting Notes...

“There are a lot of problems here... Lack of international and regional recognition, difficulties in obtaining official documents, identity and registration issues, excessive bureaucratic obstacles, lack of institutions to provide day-to-day services, high prices, difficulties in transportation, lack of security...” (Muhammed, 33, Married, University, Teacher, IDP, Kaftin)

**Table 15:** Do you know what institutions register birth and children?

Sex	Know the institution		Total
	Yes	No	
Men	94,2%	5,8%	100,0%
Women	60,8%	39,2%	100,0%
<b>% of Total</b>	<b>80,0%</b>	<b>20,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

**Table 16:** Do you know where the institutions registering birth and children are?

Sex	Know the place of the institution		Total
	Yes	No	
Men	91,3%	8,7%	100,0%
Women	54,9%	45,1%	100,0%
<b>% of Total</b>	<b>75,8%</b>	<b>24,2%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

When the respondents were asked whether they knew the place of the institutions, the data obtained are much more remarkable in terms of the difference between men and women. Slightly more than 91% of men know the place of these institutions and be aware of the registration institutions. There is a difference equaling 2% between men being aware of these institutions and men being aware of the place of these institutions. However, the same difference

corresponds to more than 5% for women. The reasons for this situation are certainly various. Under traditional patriarchal social life, men are more associated with the outside (street, state, market, money).

In contrast, women are mostly associated with the inside (house, family, child-care). Since the relations of men with the street, official authorities and institutions, and the market are multidimensional and more frequent in these three cities, the rates of women relating to these titles are understandable. As stated more frequently and freely during the FGDs, there is a lack of knowledge about the bureaucratic processes. Since this kind of knowledge is fundamental for both women and children, it can be inferred that security, chaos, and inadequacy of institutions negatively impact women.

Despite these problems, schools in these cities accept school-age children without official documents because there are 62 persons in total who contacted school administration to register their children at school. These 62 respondents, at the same time, have problems with their children's official identity and birth certificate. However, only 8 out of 62 parents had trouble while registering their unregistered children at school, whereas the remaining 54 parents in the same situation had no problem. Undoubtedly, these schools had no problem accepting children without official documents, which are hard or in some cases impossible to get; also approve illegality that may give trouble in terms of the future of the legitimacy of children, families, and society living there. The war lasting for a decade destroyed many institutions and structures, but it has also collapsed the system of documents and records. However, schools adopting a policy to include undocumented children and their families in education symbolize overcoming only the very first problem of this process. It is quite likely that these children will have to deal with further and more complicated problems at their future ages.

It must be stated here not to create a contradiction that although the parents can easily register their undocumented children at school, the reasons why a large number of children remain excluded from school lie in security issues and geographical, cultural, political, institutional, and economic conditions of these three cities. To check the accuracy of these explanations, the respondents were asked:

*Table 17: Girls should go to school.*

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	41	55%
Agree	19	26%
Neither agree nor disagree	8	11%
Disagree	5	6,8%
Strongly disagree	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Table 18: Boys should go to school*

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	0	0%
Agree	62	84%
Neither agree nor disagree	9	12%
Disagree	2	2,7%
Strongly disagree	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100%</b>

The respondents' attitude toward schooling of boys and girls was surveyed on a scale with five options. According to 74 persons from all three cities, they—regardless of their sexes—have a strongly positive attitude to the schooling of both boys and girls. However, before giving the final judgments, it is also kept in mind, as emphasized very frequently during the FGDs, the war in the region has lasted for ten years, and security, housing, health infrastructure, and access to services are also important crucial problems in these cities.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“Due to the lack of support for education, teachers are looking for jobs other than teaching. There is only one school in town and no teacher in it! As the schools are far away, there is no obligation to attend classes. Most of the girls cannot complete their education since there is no primary or secondary school in the town. Enrolling in schools outside the city is expensive and commuting is dangerous for girls. We are afraid. No security for my school-age sister. He dropped out because we couldn't afford the expenses.” (Selva, 35, Married, High School, Unemployed, Kaftin)

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“The situation has advantages and disadvantages compared to other regions. We have advantages such as better security compared to Euphrates Region. We have been facing an unknown future, I don't know what to do. Unlike the locals who live in their homelands, I can't buy farmland or houses because our future is unknown. Likewise, unemployment is high. The circumstances here particularly affect us, and we do not know our fate. The issue of proof of identity is very important, but I do not have identity documents! I do not have rights like an ordinary citizen in the world. I'm having trouble registering at the local government. Moreover, that government has no recognition. Like in Maslow's pyramid, we need basic needs and the theme of life and death.” (Muhammed, 33, Married, University, Teacher, IDP, Kaftin)

**Table 19:** Girls should go to school. (By Sex of the Respondents)

	Women		Men	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	23	68%	18	45%
Agree	4	12%	15	38%
Neither agree nor disagree	3	9%	5	13%
Disagree	4	11,8%	1	2,5%
Strongly disagree	0	0%	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 20:** Boys should go to school. (By Sex of the Respondents)

	Women		Men	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	0	0%	0	0%
Agree	28	82%	34	85%
Neither agree nor disagree	4	12%	5	13%
Disagree	2	6%	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

The implicit reason women support girls' schooling less than men do can be understood by considering the main problem, which is still the war and instability. The multilayered situation of disadvantaged girls is reproduced especially by women supporting girls' schooling less than boys' schooling. It must be remembered that the patriarchal system builds powerful structures through masculine and ideological discourses and arguments such as war, violence, nationalism, security, honor, family, and kinship and gives the responsibility for the protection of these structures mostly to women. Here, the fact that girls' schooling is supported more by men must be



evaluated together with the values of patriarchy and concrete social conditions. Therefore, the high number of men remaining neutral in girls' schooling must be analyzed under the same value system.

## 2.4. Official Documents

Most titles, such as the present limbo (uncertainty) in all the three cities in Idlib, military and political situations, and demographic patterns eventually depend on the issue of official documents. Not only does the kind of documents held by people in these cities affect themselves, but also it forms almost all daily relations from the education of their children to jobs, traveling, establish a business, and getting aid.

*Table 21: Owning Official/Legal Documents*

Documents	Holder	Not Holder
	Percentage	Percentage
ID Card	90%	10%
Passport	11%	89%
Marriage certificate	63%	38%
Driving license	15%	85%
Other	19%	81%

*Table 22: Type of Owned Official/Legal Documents by Sex*

Documents	Holder	
	Men	Women
	Percentage	Percentage
ID Card	90%	90%
Passport	10%	12%
Marriage certificate	67%	57%
Driving license	25%	2%
Other	25%	12%

The most emphasized issue in the FGDs was the difficulties in getting official/legal documents. On the other hand, Table 24 reveals that 90% of 120 respondents, each representing one household, have identity cards regardless of their sexes. Nevertheless, the presence of 10% not holding ID cards—even 10 years after the beginning of the war—must be dwelled on since the registration numbers among the school-age children get lower. Therefore, it can be generally assumed that if 10% have no identity and the number of children per household is near 4, there could be many more persons without identity cards in this society. Therefore, the relatively lower number of passport ownership is an understandable and expected result. However, the percentage of marriage certificate ownership is rather low, considering this rate is made up of

the rates of those who married both in the last few years before 2011 and after 2011. As stated in the pages above and during the FGDs, the lack of marriage certificates severely affects the legal relations of families and the daily lives of people, especially women and children.

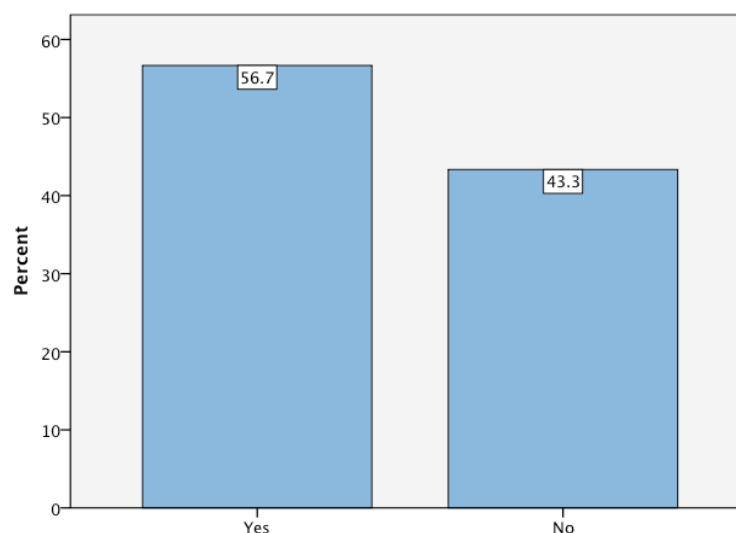
#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“The local government here is unable to issue a recognized and accepted document to the residents. Since 2013, the regime has revoked the right to give identity cards to residents. This dual plight will cause people to deprive of their right to education and will seriously paralyze the future education, graduation and marriage processes.” (Yasser, 48, Married, College, Merchant, Kelly)

The analysis considering sex differences means that men have net 10 points higher than women in marriage certificate ownership. Although this situation initially seems to be explained by the value system of patriarchy, such a high and unequal rate can be accepted as the indicator of women who are married to men older than themselves or in most cases, as a second or third wife. This estimation is that the ownership of a marriage certificate interests both men and women simultaneously; however, here, the number of men owning this document is higher than the women’s number. Considering both the patriarchal socio-cultural structure of the survey field and the economic situation of the respondents and region, the low rate of driving license ownership among women is quite understandable since men, accepted in the social value system of patriarchy as the mediator of the social relations with outside, drive more. However, patriarchal cultural codes require women, rather than men, to be active in situations that symbolize poverty, such as demanding and getting aid, because the patriarchal system foregrounds men in each case regarding power.

On the other hand, the same system does not hesitate to bring in women in every situation described by the patriarchy as weak and embarrassing conditions such as poverty, demanding support, waiting in a queue for aid, and exchange relations. Therefore, the current patriarchal values dominate over the region. In addition to institutions, armed forces, war, and chaos, these three cities reproduce and strengthen the present patriarchy, all are built upon men remaining at the forefront of power relations.

The reason for such high rates of “other” documents in both tables above is that dozens of different and unrelated documents are grouped under this title. The documents defined as “other” documents do not include military service certificates, diplomas, job certificates, or merit certificates; however, these other documents are not much effective to solve the difficulties of daily lives in these cities.



**Figure 16:** Have you ever taken legal advice?

Considering the problems of people, who live in uncertainty caused by the war in the cities like Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin, with registration and official documents, it is not hard to estimate that they have many troubles in terms of legal issues. The respondents, thus, were asked whether they took legal advice to overcome these problems. Unfortunately, more than half of them (57%) stated that they did not take it.

FGD Meeting Notes...

“The biggest challenge is the prices and then the bureaucracy. Dozens of documents are requested from everywhere. There is no way to get a personal identity for those who have no identity from the regime before the revolution. This leads people to forgery to have an identity card.” (Kadriye, 42, Married, Housewife, IDP, Kelly)

**Table 23:** Institution Asked for Counsel/Advice

	Frequency	Percentage
Lawyer	55	81%
Local organizations	1	1%
International NGOs	2	3%
Other	10	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>

For 68 respondents who got counsel or advice before, lawyers took place on the top, which is understandable. “Other” means friends, acquaintances, and relatives. However, the gender gap in getting counsel or advice is fairly obvious. This gap indicates who needs official documents and legal processes most because 65% of women stated they took legal support while this rate is 51% for men. Considering that women suffer from unregistered marriages, births, deaths, and divorces most, these results are not surprising.

**Table 24:** Topics Gotten Counsel on

Topics	Frequency	Percentage
Judicial case	6	9%
Case about money	5	7%
Marriage/Divorce/Guardianship	19	28%
Rental contract	6	9%
Inheritance	7	10%
Identity registration	13	19%
Social rights/Aids	2	3%
Titles/Property	10	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>

Regardless of sexes, the main topics on which 68 respondents got counsel are marriage, divorce, guardianship, and identity registration. However, the sociological truth lies in the distribution of topics by sex.

**Table 25:** Topics Gotten Counsel on (by Sex)

Topics	Percentage	
	Men	Women
Judicial case	9%	9%
Case about money	11%	3%
Marriage/Divorce/Guardianship	23%	33%
Rental contract	6%	12%
Inheritance	9%	12%
Identity registration	28%	9%
Social rights/Aids	3%	3%
Titles/Property	11%	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The presence of women who sought advice on marriage, divorce, and guardianship indicates that they have problems with these issues. However, the daily life issues in the market mostly interest men. At the same time, more inclusive topics such as marriage, registration, inheritance, titles, and property are the ones on which women generally get counsel.

FGD Meeting Notes...

“Debt and inheritance cases are resolved by the family elders and members of conciliation and arbitration. If the family elders and arbitration members cannot resolve the issue, the case should be taken to court.” (Hatice, 24, Single, University, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)

As for the years when getting counsel started, seeking counsel was relatively lower (under 5%) between 2011 and 2016 and reached the maximum level (15%) in the years between 2019 and 2020. Furthermore, it was stated that there was an influx of IDPs to Idlib and the three cities in 2019. Therefore, from 2018 to 2021, the simultaneous increase in seeking legal advice and displacements is not coincidental.

FGD Meeting Notes...

“Documents issued by the local governments are not recognized even in other liberated areas. University diplomas awarded by Idlib University are not recognized in Azaz, and vice versa.” (Heba, 24, Married, University, NGO employee, Maaret Tamsrin)

96% of the respondents stated that they had problems with obtaining official documents. For the percentages of facing problems, there is no gender gap.

The respondents were also asked whether they faced difficulty while getting official/legal documents which are mostly demanded and necessary for daily life.

*Table 26: Difficulties While Getting Official Documents (by Sex)*

Documents	Men		Women	
	Rate of Not Holders (%)	Documents the Hardest to Get (%)	Rate of Not Holders (%)	Documents the Hardest to Get (%)
ID Card	10%	20%	10%	24%
Passport	90%	32%	88%	27%
Marriage Certificate / Marriage Registration	33%	32%	43%	35%
Birth Certificate	53%	75%	53%	90%
Other (Diploma etc.)	75%	7%	88%	4%

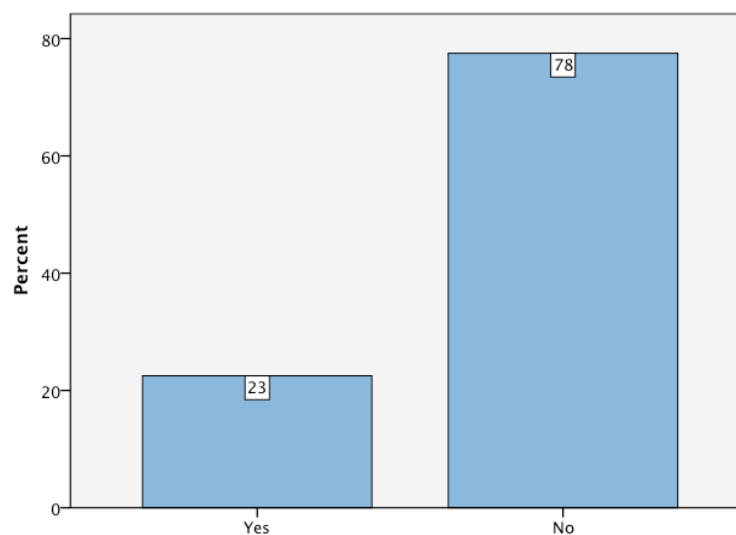
As expected, because of the three cities' current conditions, the hardest to get documents are the most vital ones for the respondents. Documents such as driving licenses and military certificates do not have much importance under the circumstances in Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin. Indeed, women's ownership of driving licenses was also fairly low. It is also clear that in the might need a driving license somehow manage the situation. Another in the multi-part structure striking point in Table 29 is that passports, for both men and women, are important documents needed to be gotten al. However, they are hard to get because it must be realized that there is a positive correlation between the demands for passports and those who want to immigrate into a foreign country due to the dissatisfaction with the current conditions in the place they live. It must also be remembered that since passport takes place at the top of the documents requested most but are the hardest to get, bribery and illegal ways are applied. Life and relationships in these cities under the regime's oppression, the local government, armed forces, and the countries in the region force people to try these ways. A passport is so hard to get because the current central government only issues it. Besides, transactions, dangers of traveling, fear of being arrested, imprisoned, or sent to the military by the authorities of each region make passports hard to get.

On the other hand, the document, which is the hardest for both men and women to get, is the birth certificate. To get an ID card, children's birth must first be registered, which is also problematic. As stated before, lack of marriage and birth registration causes many problems relating to divorce, inheritance, and guardianship. The legal counsel on these topics is also demanded most, which shows consistency in the survey field's data.

### FGD Meeting Notes...

“One of the major challenges is that each document has to be got from a different location and a different office. Transportation is a big problem as the procedures are very long and the offices are in different places. Since the IDPs from other parts of Syria do not have a birth certificate here and residence and headman documents are requested, major problems arise. Getting documents issued by the government offices requires a fee here. 50 Turkish liras are too high for many people to obtain a marriage license. This is one of the biggest causes of indifference. The employees in the offices are not competent and do not work efficiently.”  
(Ahmed, 46, Married, University, Teacher, Kelly)

## 2.5. Awareness of Rights and Registration



**Figure 17:** Have you ever given information about your rights?

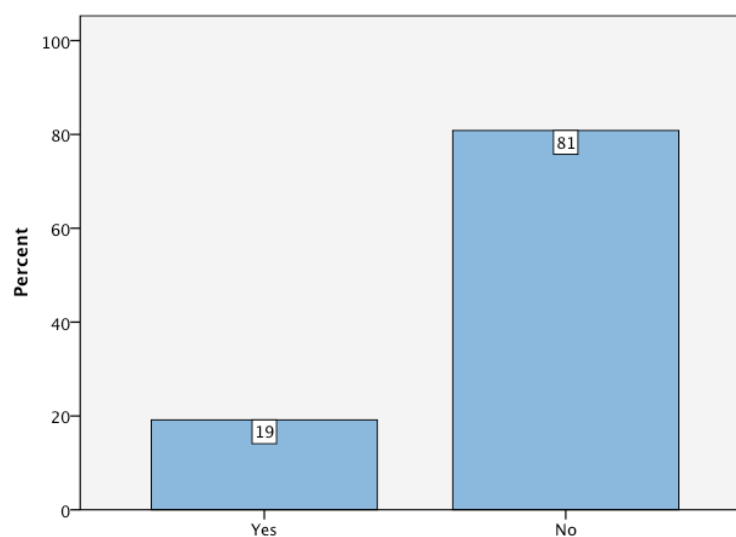
It is learned that only one-fifth of the respondents were given information about their rights. Wars, violence, displacements, migration, and refuge leave aside women's rights, children, the disabled, and the old because of the emergency. Although awareness of the rights is not

enough for the vulnerable segment in society, this awareness could trigger the demands for education, health, life, and human dignity. The embodiment of these rights is carried through by the policies of national and international organizations and NGOs working on rights.

**Table 27:** Have you ever given information about your rights?

Sex	Yes (%)
Men	17,3%
Women	29,4%

The rates of informing about the rights seem to be for women in the three cities. Still, less than one-third of women were informed about their rights. The reason why more women are aware of their rights may result from the fact that more women deal with getting aid. Similarly, it may be caused by the high rates of women seeking legal advice since the legal counsel itself is directly related to rights.



**Figure 18:** Have you ever attended a meeting informing of your rights?



*Table 28: Have you ever attended a meeting informing of your rights?*

Sex	Yes (%)
Men	14%
Women	25%

As just mentioned, there are concrete reasons why one-fourth of women attended meetings that inform of their rights. Women get beyond the limits of the social values system of the patriarchy, which aims to keep women inside the home because of reasons such as getting aid, registration of marriage and birth, divorce, inheritance, and guardianship. Considering the negative conditions in these three cities, this must be considered a promising future situation. Moreover, it is also possible to understand women are more sensitive to social problems than men considering women's statements during the FGDs. Women stated both the problems more clearly without caring about political correctness and offered concrete solutions. These results show once more that women may be the counselors who give the most reliable advice in these three cities.

Generally, it is clear that although the patriarchal system forces women to remain out of daily social life, they take action through communication and information networks by being aware of and attending the meetings. It points out that women are the most reliable and effective address for active organizations in the region or would like to be active in the future.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“We have no brothers in the family and no one to help my father with the family expenses. So, even if there are odd jobs, we as girls will work and help our family.” (Rama, 28, Married, High School, Unemployed, Kaftin)

As stated before, the certificates of marriage and birth are the hardest and most complicated official documents to obtain for the residents of the three cities. However, daily life continues regardless of registration. During on-going daily life, primary health services and humanitarian aids are the most vital issues, especially for IDPs, refugees, and immigrants. Therefore, the 120 respondents were asked whether they could get health benefits and humanitarian aids for their unregistered children.

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“Organizations demand different criteria for giving aid. This leads people to lie and falsify the truth in order to comply with the standards of each organization and to get the aid. These organizations operating in other countries and liberated areas somehow impose to legitimize corruption.” (Merdi, 35, Married, University, Teacher, IDP, Kelly)

*Table 29: Aid Obtained for Unregistered Children*

Services	Percentage (%)
Humanitarian aids	2,5
Health benefits	12,5
Both	79,2
None	5,8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“Especially in the camps, the income level of families has significantly dropped. This has led to an increase in the poverty rate among the population. If there were no displacement, each family would live on their own land, but now they only have tent areas on the lands that do not belong to them. (...) There are problems at the social level such as the prevalence of early marriage, divorce, and the unregistered children. (...) Also, the psychological crisis of anxiety we experience due to the war and instability in the region is very deep.” (Sanaa, 37, Married, University, Teacher, IDP, Kelly)

*Table 30: Aid Obtained for Unregistered Children (by Sex)*

Sex	Services (%)			
	Humanitarian	Health	Both	None
Men	2,9%	2,9%	88,4%	5,8%
Women	1,9%	25,4%	66,6%	5,9%

80% of children in total can obtain both humanitarian and health aids. This rate is vital for the children and their families who live in the war zone and under almost institutionalized instability for 10 years. Despite the current negative conditions, 6% of the children who can obtain none of the services are still dramatic. However, the responses declared by men and

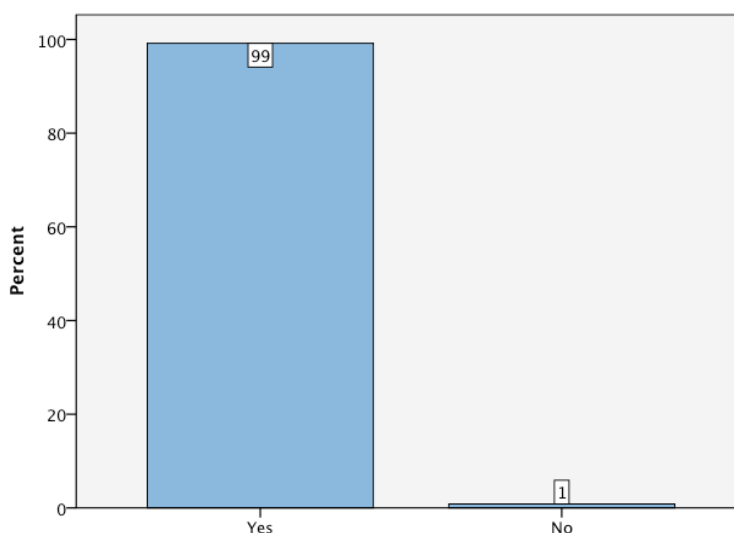
women differentiate. For example, 25% of women stated that the children could get health services, while the same thing was declared by 3% of men. The main difference between the statements of men and women is hidden behind the rates of access to both services. Children's access to both services is 66% for women whereas it is 88,4% for men. This difference in percentage corresponding to 20% indicates that women fall behind in getting these humanitarian and health services for their unregistered children since access, especially to these services, requires a network and fight and women are disadvantaged within the patriarchal socio-cultural and political structure.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

"The situation is a bit bad because of the difficult life we live here. The large number of camps, widespread poverty, lack of job opportunities, high prices, fluctuations in exchange rates and market prices, the instability of the region, continual bombings, displacements and armed conflicts are the biggest problems here. The situation of women is also very bad. There are many divorces. The situation of widowed women is terrible due to their spouses' being under arrest, unsolved deaths, or emigration to look for a job outside the country and losing their husbands." (Rukiye, 30, Married, University, Nurse, IDP, Kelly)

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

"Costliness, lack of job opportunities. There should be projects that provide job opportunities for women. There is no primary or secondary school here. We have certificates, but I haven't been to school for 3 years because of the lack of education." (Haniye, 29, Married, Secondary School, Unemployed, Kaftin)



*Figure 19: Would you like to register your unregistered marriage and children?*

It is pretty obvious that almost all the respondents with unregistered marriage and children, except 1 person who stated that s/he did not accept the present system, prefer being registered to remaining unregistered.

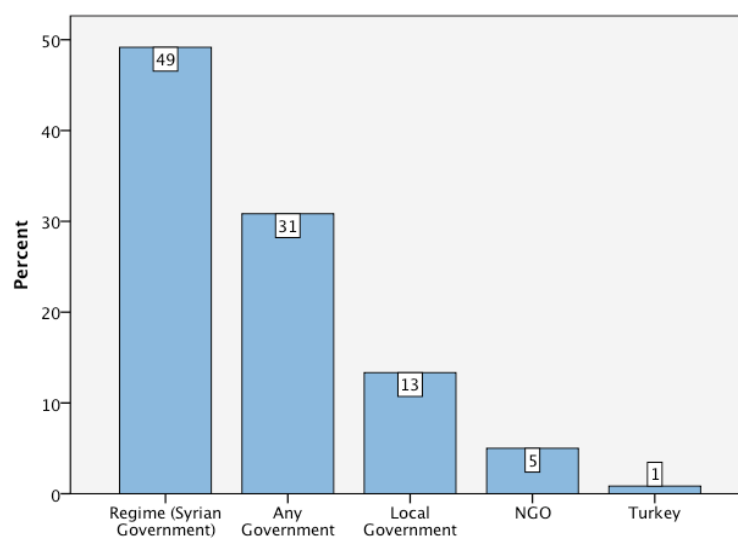
However, there are differences in terms of at what institution to be registered. If these three cities continued the normal flow of life, the question relating to the preference of institutions to get registered would be meaningless. However, the experience of war, instability and multi-part structure dominating the region of these cities cause differentiations in terms of institution preferences.

Moreover, it must be clarified that both women and men go to great lengths to obtain humanitarian and health services for unregistered children and use all the networks and methods. In addition, almost all individuals have developed their coping strategies, such as finding an acquaintance, directly applying to NGOs and institutions, searching for free service providers regardless of the distance between the provider and the place where they live.

Here, it must be emphasized that the data collected with questionnaires relating to such a region as Idlib, where war and violence have become institutionalized since 2011, are highly limited, as it happens in this survey. Moreover, in the survey fields exposed to many demographic transformations, registration of marriages and children and conditions of women with non-civil marriages contains numerous details that can be comprehended only with in-depth interviews conducted in long-duration. Therefore, these given topics require more in-depth interviews and surveys and spend much more time in the field.

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“Aid is not enough and distributed fairly... The priority is water, bread and education.”  
(Hatice, 24, Single, University, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)



**Figure 20:** At what institution would you like to register your unregistered marriage and children?

As time passes, the type of institution issuing registration is gaining more importance. The solutions offered temporarily did not work between 2011 and the first months of 2021 when the survey was conducted due to the region's instability. The institutionalized instability makes the issue of internationally recognized marriages and registration more serious. Transactions between regions and armed forces cause the region's residents to feel besieged while they attempt to obtain official documents. Eventually, the result becomes the continual reproduction of disadvantaged conditions. As a result, not only the non-citizens migrating into Syria later but also the Syrian citizens themselves have problems in the processes of marriage and children registration. The reason why women seek registration of marriage, divorce, guardianship, and inheritance more than men is not limited to security and instability that covers all people. Another reason for this situation is that either their husbands are non-citizens of Syria or have a religious marriage that is not officially recognized. However, the war in Syria and Idlib shows a 10-year period that is extremely inconsistent, unstable, and fluid.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

"We are not comfortable psychologically because we live in the shadow of an unfinished war and the future of us and our children is still unclear. Job opportunities are very few. Unemployment rates are very high. The prices of food are very high and constantly increasing. Daily living puts a lot of pressure on families. According to the regime region, everything is available here, but everything is very expensive and there is not enough income." (Suad, 36, Married, Associate's Degree, Instructor, Kelly)

**Table 31: At what institution would you like to register your unregistered marriage and children? (by Sex)**

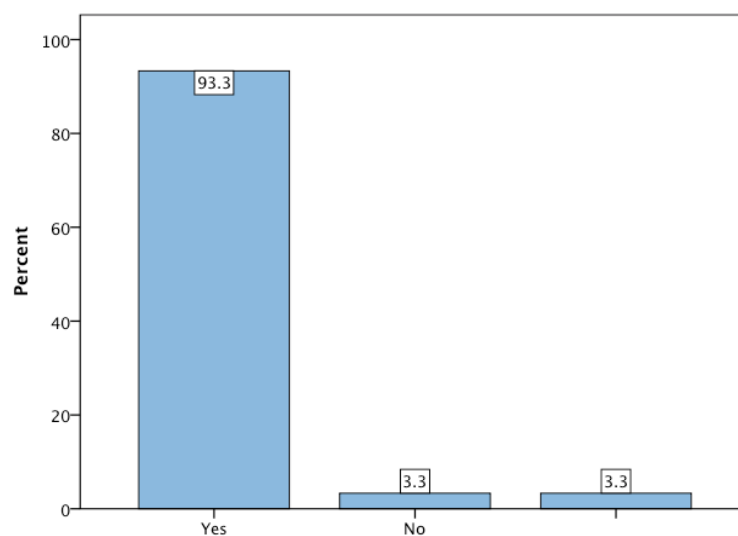
Sex	Regime (Syrian Government)	Any Government	Local Government	NGO	Turkey	Nowhere	Total
Men	24 34,8%	25 36,2%	12 17,4%	6 8,7%	1 1,4%	1 1,4%	69 100%
Women	35 68,6%	12 23,5%	4 7,8%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	0 0,0%	51 100%
<b>Total %</b>	<b>49,2%</b>	<b>30,8%</b>	<b>13,3%</b>	<b>5,0%</b>	<b>0,8%</b>	<b>0,8%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Most men (%35) and women (%69) get registered at the central government, i.e., the regime, regardless of political and ideological dimension and international recognition and institutional stability. These results could be evaluated as the presence of people's demands in the three cities experiencing all the institutional destructions for stability and predictable institutional structures and operations. The demands for registration at the Syrian government are also higher than those for registration at any other institutions such as international NGOs or

local governments. Since local governments are not internationally recognized, the demands for them are lower.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“Because of the recognition of the identities issued by the regime and the non-recognition of the documents obtained here, people want to apply to the regime to issue identity cards. On the other hand, this causes difficulties such as a lot of time, money, document supply, and security.” (Yusuf, 28, Married, High School, Worker, IDP, Kaftin)



**Figure 21:** Would you like to get help while registering your marriages and children?

Almost all of the respondents stated that they needed help and guidance in registering marriage and children. Therefore, the NGOs or local government units that plan to work in this area should be aware of the need for this kind of help and guidance. Still, these results and rates must also be evaluated together with the variables such as unemployment, income, household pattern, and economy.

More women demanding help for the registration of marriages and children is an expected result because women severely experience the negative effects of such procedures. However, another obvious result is that there are serious problems in the survey field, as the limited 120 interviews and FGDs revealed.

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“The forces controlling the region are interfering with many things, including the way women dress and their education, work, and activities. There is no freedom of expression like in the areas controlled by the regime. That's true, it may seem like there is freedom here; however, you have to be careful with everything you do and say because they are monitoring you. As we live in a situation of war that has not yet ended, there is a situation of displacement—a large number of camps, a large number of widows and orphans, and especially the very poor living conditions of the camp residents. Every winter the tents sink into water and mud. There is no adequate service. No one aims to provide a better life for the hundreds of thousands of people living in tents. Generally, prices are too high. When the Turkish lira depreciates against the currency, prices also increase.” (Emine, 37, University, Teacher, Kelly)

**Table 32:** Would you like to get help while registering your marriages and children? (by Sex)

Sex		Undecided	Yes	No	Total
Men	Count	4	62	3	<b>69</b>
	% within Sex	5,8%	89,9%	4,3%	<b>100%</b>
Women	Count	0	50	1	<b>51</b>
	% within Sex	0%	98%	2%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>3,3%</b>	<b>93,3%</b>	<b>3,3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 33:** Would you like to get help while registering your marriages and children? (by City)

City		Undecided	Yes	No	Total
Kaftin	Count	0	15	0	<b>15</b>
	% within City	0%	100%	0%	<b>100%</b>
Kelly	Count	0	34	1	<b>35</b>
	% within City	0%	97,1%	2,9%	<b>100%</b>
Maaret Tamsrin	Count	4	63	3	<b>70</b>
	% within City	5,7%	90%	4,3%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>3,3%</b>	<b>93,3%</b>	<b>3,3%</b>	<b>100%</b>



Similarly, considering the small size of the sample, especially in Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin, there are insistent demands for help and guidance concerning registration processes and other legal issues. All the respondents in Kaftin and all the respondents, except one person, in Kelly indicate a distinct lack of this kind of service.

FGD Meeting Notes...

"(...) Before the war there was a kind of psychological stability, there was security, everything was available. We made a revolution to get rid of his regime, but after the revolution we failed in governing. And now we are insecure because different forces and groups have taken control of the revolution. This leads to chaos and instability." (Mustafa, 50, Married, High School, Unemployed, Maaret Tamsrin)

FGD Meeting Notes...

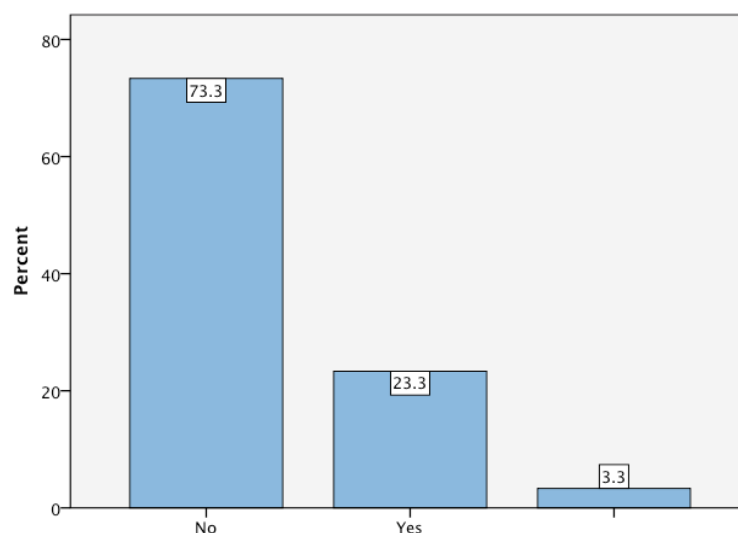
"We are walking into the unknown without knowing what is to come." (Muhammed, 40, Married, High School, Worker, IDP, Kaftin)

FGD Meeting Notes...

"There is surveillance that causes people to live in anxiety and fear, including those supporting the local government controlling the area here. As an ordinary person, I always feel like I'm being watched, even at the level of posts on the social media pages (Facebook). (Baasam, 45, Married, University, Freelancer, Kelly)

FGD Meeting Notes...

"The Syrian Salvation Government's hostility towards the work of humanitarian organizations and the withdrawal of these organizations from the projects supporting education due to the Salvation Government's excessive control over all fields and sectors, particularly education... The Salvation Government is now like the father the neighbors hate. These neighbors do not provide food for his children in need because they hate this corrupt father, so the death of this father is better for these children." (Hasan, 45, Married, University, Freelancer, Kelly)



**Figure 22:** Do you know any institution giving help in legal matters?

**Table 34:** Do you know of any institution giving help in legal matters? (by City)

City		Undecided	Yes	No	Total
Kaftin	Count	0	12	3	<b>15</b>
	% within City	0%	80%	20%	<b>100%</b>
Kelly	Count	0	13	22	<b>35</b>
	% within City	0%	37%	63%	<b>100%</b>
Maaret Tamsrin	Count	4	3	63	<b>70</b>
	% within City	6%	4%	90%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results of the registration of marriages and children and other important bureaucratic processes reveal that the demand for help is not groundless since these demands are requested by more than 70% of the respondents who are aware of the institutions issuing registration of marriages and children. Nevertheless, being aware of the institutions is not enough to reach these institutions and provide the documents demanded by them. The reason why the demands for help and guidance during the registration processes are higher in Kaftin and Kelly, which are relatively smaller cities than in Maaret Tamsrin, may be related to the presence of this kind of office in fewer numbers. However, Maarit Tamsrin gets ahead in other data.

**Table 35:** Do you know of any institution giving help in legal matters? (by Sex)

Sex		Undecided	Yes	No	Total
Men	Count	4	9	56	<b>69</b>
	% within Sex	100%	32%	64%	<b>58%</b>
Women	Count	0	19	32	<b>51</b>
	% within Sex	0%	37%	63%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 36:** Would you like to get help with the processes concerning the registration of marriage and children? (by Place Lived in)

Place Lived in		Undecided	Yes	No	Total
Downtown	Count	4	86	2	<b>92</b>
	% within Place	100%	77%	50%	<b>77%</b>
Camp	Count	0	26	2	<b>28</b>
	% within Place	0%	93%	7%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 37:** Do you know any institution giving help in legal matters? (by Place Lived in)

Place Lived in		Undecided	Yes	No	Total
Downtown	Count	2	27	63	<b>92</b>
	% within Place	2%	29%	69%	<b>100%</b>
Camp	Count	2	1	25	<b>28</b>
	% within Place	7%	4%	89%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 38:** Would you like to get help with the processes concerning the registration of marriage and children? (by Residential Status)

Residential Status		Undecided	Yes	No	Total
Locals	Count	1	53	2	56
	% within Residential Status	2%	95%	4%	100%
IDPs	Count	3	59	2	64
	% within Residential Status	5%	92%	3%	100%
	<b>Count</b>	4	112	4	120
	<b>% of Total</b>	3%	93%	3%	100%

**Table 39:** Do you know any institution giving help in legal matters? (by Residential Status)

Residential Status	Residential Status	Residential Status	Residential Status	Residential Status	Residential Status
Locals	Locals	Locals	Locals	Locals	Locals
	% within Residential Status	2%	95%	4%	100%
IDPs	IDPs	IDPs	IDPs	IDPs	IDPs
	% within Residential Status	5%	92%	3%	100%
	<b>% of Total</b>	3%	93%	3%	100%

The respondents were asked about legal counsels and aware of the institutions, and the results were categorized by various titles. As expected, the rates of demands of women and IDPs are quite high. However, the remarkable detail is the lack of legal counseling services, although the respondents are aware of the registration institutions and their places. These three cities know the registration institutions and their places while there is a lack of information about the institutions providing legal counsel is quite concrete considering the conditions there. The most

important reason is the ongoing uncertainty, instability, and lack of organization internationally recognized and valid. Therefore, it seems that the gap resulting from the respondents' statements can be explained only through the absence of official authority. Therefore, the presence of little information about legal counsel must be interpreted together with the absence of other institutions.

FGD Meeting Notes...

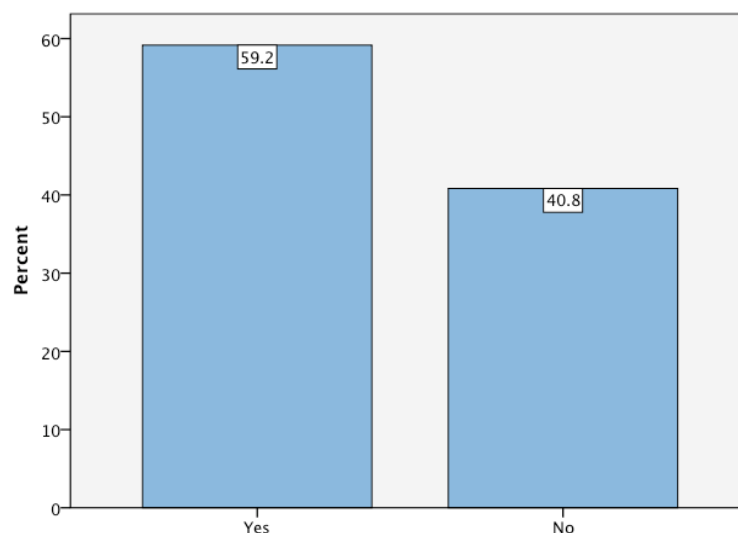
“It is not possible to obtain official documents issued by the regime and we had a lot of trouble for it. I am trying to benefit from the necessary services with temporary documents.”  
(Yusuf Ahmet, 28, Married, High School, Worker, IDP, Kaftin)

FGD Meeting Notes...

“Uncertainty and not knowing how long we will live in tents... No job opportunity, no education. When we become ill, we have to go to Maaret Tamsrin or Idlib. And they are very far from here.” (Fatma, 26, Married, University, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)

## 2.6. Patterns of Jobs and Work

According to the results of questionnaires conducted in each of these three cities and camps around them, near two-third of the respondents (59%) either are freelancers or have a job paying them. This point is critical because unemployment is one of the most significant issues both in questionnaires and FGDs. Therefore, two out of every three persons, regardless of being farmers, shopkeepers, merchants, or civil servants, have a job providing subsistence wage.



*Figure 23: Are you working?*

The results familiar from sociological researches come front here once more. 78% of men have a job, while this rate is 33% for women. However, not to cause a methodological error, it must be emphasized that the job 120 respondents mean is mostly income. Therefore, it must not be understood a profile of industrial worker or civil servant.

### FGD Meeting Notes...

“Preparing a dowry is difficult. Getting married has become burdensome because job opportunities for men and women are very few. This causes the number of single girls to increase.” (Recaa, 24, Single, University, Unemployed, Kaftin)

**Table 40:** Are you working? / Do you have a job? (by Sex)

Sex		Yes	No	Total
Men	Count	54	15	<b>69</b>
	% within Sex	78%	22%	<b>100%</b>
Women	Count	17	34	<b>51</b>
	% within Sex	33%	67%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## FGD Meeting Notes...

"I am a displaced person. And unfortunately, displaced people are massively exploited in renting homes and other things. For example, when the owner of the house is offered a higher price than the displaced tenant is paying, he can immediately give the house to the other, not the IDP one. It also obliges displaced people to experience multiple displacements and the pain of being a migrant." (Ahmed, 35, Married, University, Freelancer, IDP, Kelly)

## FGD Meeting Notes...

"Job opportunities are few and all depend on the mediation. We work without any guarantee in the jobs found. Job opportunities in general are limited and difficult, especially for men. There are more job opportunities for women. I have a diploma and couldn't find a job. That's why I have to perform another job other than my profession." (Muhammed, 39, Married, University, Teacher, IDP, Kaftin)

*Table 41: Are you working? / Do you have a job? (by Place Lived in)*

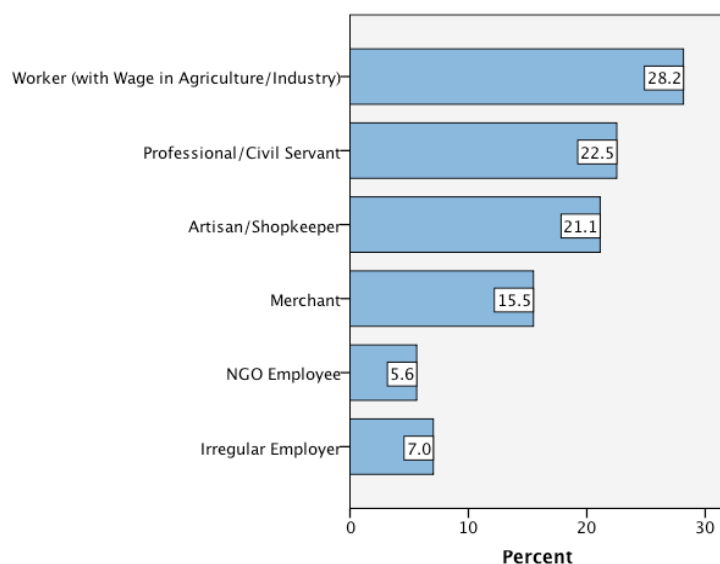
Place Lived in		Yes	No	Total
Downtown	Count	60	32	<b>92</b>
	% within Place	65%	35%	<b>100%</b>
Camp	Count	11	17	<b>28</b>
	% within Place	39%	61%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Table 42: Are you working? / Do you have a job? (by Residential Status)*

Residential Status		Yes	No	Total
Locals	Count	39	17	<b>56</b>
	% within Residential Status	70%	30%	<b>100%</b>
IDPs	Count	32	32	<b>64</b>
	% within Residential Status	50%	50%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>100%</b>

As estimated, the rates of working and having a job are higher for the downtown residents than those living in the camps and for the locals compared to the IDPs. In other words, displacements and living in the camps simultaneously mean being disadvantaged in jobs and work, supported by the data above.





*Figure 24: Job/Work Distribution*

In terms of job/work distribution, the rates of workers in agriculture are the highest. Considering that Idlib, including these three cities, is one of the most important agricultural areas in Syria, the higher rates of workers in agriculture are understandable. Being an NGO employee emerges as an employment area in this region after the Syrian War. The presence of NGOs active in the region in large quantities points out that they generate economic activities. The prevalence of shopkeepers, artisans, and merchants, from small grocery shops and markets to wholesalers, is also understandable because Idlib is a region in which most goods are imported.

FGD Meeting Notes...

“There is no job opportunity. Unemployment dominates the region. Almost all university graduates are unemployed. Women cannot find a job too, but women are not required to work most of the time. As for men, they have to work, or our families will starve.” (Mahmoud, 27, Married, University, NGO employee, Maaret Tamsrin)

*Table 43: Distribution of Job Types (by Sex)*

Job Types		Sex		Total
		Men	Women	
Irregular Employment	Count	5	0	<b>5</b>
	% within Sex	9%	0%	<b>7%</b>
Worker (with Wage in Agriculture / Industry)	Count	13	7	<b>20</b>
	% within Sex	24%	41%	<b>28%</b>
NGO Employee	Count	2	2	<b>4</b>
	% within Sex	4%	12%	<b>6%</b>
Professional/Civil Servant	Count	10	6	<b>16</b>
	% within Sex	19%	35%	<b>23%</b>
Merchant	Count	10	1	<b>11</b>
	% within Sex	19%	6%	<b>16%</b>
Artisan/Shopkeeper	Count	14	1	<b>15</b>
	% within Sex	26%	6%	<b>21%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>71</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The distribution of job types by sex in the three cities reveals the boundaries built for women and men by the current social structure. According to these gender roles, women become civil servants (mostly teachers and trainers) while men concentrate on trade, artisanship, and retail. The high number of women in agriculture can be explained through the value system of patriarchy and economic rationalism. The agriculture sector becomes a financial-social area where women can find employment because of its features based on low wages and labor-intensive work. Women also stated in the FGDs that they worked in agriculture with daily wages. However, because of the quality of agricultural production, these cities, women, or all others working in this sector can be employed as temporary or seasonal workers, not permanent.

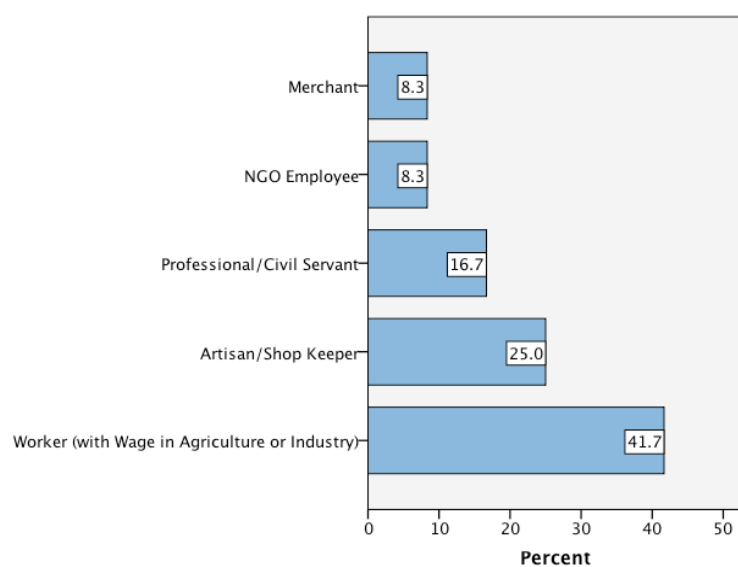


Figure 25: Profession of Your Spouse

Table 44: Profession of Your Spouse (Crosstabulation)

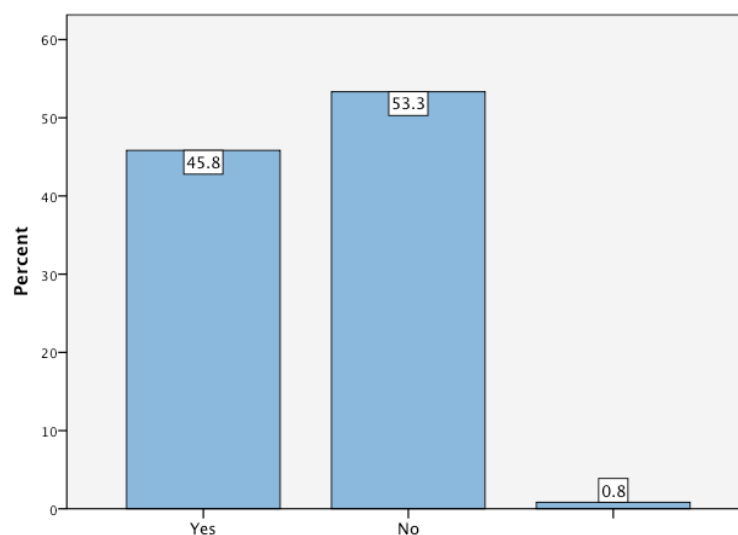
Job Types		Sex		Total
		Men	Women	
Irregular Employment	Count	0	1	1
	% within Sex	0%	3%	3%
Worker (with Wage in Agriculture / Industry)	Count	2	12	14
	% within Sex	29%	41%	39%
NGO Employee	Count	3	0	3
	% within Sex	43%	0%	8%
Professional/Civil Servant	Count	2	4	6
	% within Sex	29%	14%	17%
Merchant	Count	0	3	3
	% within Sex	0%	10%	8%
Artisan/Shopkeeper	Count	0	9	9
	% within Sex	0%	31%	25%
	<b>Count</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>36</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

One hundred twenty respondents were asked what their spouses do. The occupational distribution of the spouses of 36 respondents—7 out of which are men and the remaining 29 are women—is consistent with the previous table. Men’s spouses concentrate on agriculture and professional jobs such as civil servants once again, while women’s spouses are in trade, shopkeeping, and agriculture. The data relating to jobs and work were collected from 107 persons in 71 households/families, including these 36 respondents giving information about their spouses’ professions.

Rather than the occupational distribution, it is significant that how much of the expenses can be afforded by the income of the household/family because it is seen that the income is not enough for the households mostly made up of a lot of members and they need additional aid. This also indicates that more than half of the households try to find different resources to maintain their lives. %53 of the respondents clearly stated that because of the insufficiency of income, they searched for resources according to the extent of their networks and savings.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“In general, there is pain due to instability, there is nothing comfortable. Everything has high prices and there is psychological pressure. (...) In addition to displacement, I left my home and live in a different area away from my relatives, acquaintances and friends. We live in a very crowded place. We live in a very small geographic area for such a large population.” (Hanadi, 28 Married, High School, Housewife, IDP, Maaret Tamsrin)



**Figure 26:** Do you get any financial support apart from your income?

**Table 45:** Do you get any financial support apart from your income? (by Sex)

Sex		NA	Yes	No	Total
Men	Count	1	25	43	<b>69</b>
	% within Sex	1%	36%	62%	<b>100%</b>
Women	Count	0	30	21	<b>51</b>
	% within Sex	0%	59%	41%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The rates of getting financial aid are dominant for women, as expected. However, under the circumstances of violence like in these three cities, it is observed that how financial distribution is already against women causes poverty to be imposed on them. It is known that each individual, including men, in these cities endeavor to deal with difficulties; however, there are obvious indicators revealing feminization of poverty. Considering this context, 30 out of 51 women (59%) stated that they could not live because of the imbalance of income and expenses and thus got various aids.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“(...) I want to be hopeful for tomorrow, but there are some challenges to overcome. Political uncertainty, for example. There is nothing we can say about our political future. Moreover, the economic conditions are very difficult.” (Firas, 44, Married, University, Civil Servant, Kelly)

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“Actually, aid is enough. But the problem arises in distribution of them and the standards that organizations set to deliver benefits. Because sometimes NGOs and local authorities set standards that are impossible to meet.” (Abdullah, 23, Single, University, NGO employee)

*Table 46: Financial Supporters*

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Relatives (in Syria)	7	13%
Relatives (Abroad)	12	22%
NGO	36	65%
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100%</b>

The financial supporters can be categorized under three titles. Interestingly, the Syrian diaspora, formed after 2011, support their relatives remaining in the three cities at issue and within the borders of Syria. A vast majority of the Syrians, having fled particularly to the European and North American countries after 2011, keep on the relations with their relatives. The presence of these traditional relations becomes one of the most significant resources. The 120 interviews and FGDs Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin indicate that these relatives abroad provide the major solidarity network for 53% of the families, which have to get aids every month, to maintain their existence under the difficulties in the region. Of course, NGOs also hold a distinct place in terms of providing support. More than two-thirds of the families/households stated that they could tolerate the imbalance of income and expenses thanks to aids given by NGOs. Therefore, it can certainly be inferred that the activities of NGOs are quite vital for the region.

As mentioned many times before, each segment living under chronic conditions of war has a serious vulnerability. However, women, children, the IDPs, and other disadvantaged groups get affected more severely by these conditions. Among those getting aids for a living, the rates of the IDPs and persons living in the camps are evidently higher.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“Too many people live in the camps and it is a disaster. Previously, people lived in their homes, then they were displaced and their homes destroyed. On a personal level, I can say that everything—such as daily and social life and economic situation—has changed. Our families broke up. Some of us lost money and jobs. There is no security and there are increased cases of crime and theft.” (Abdul Qadir, 21, Married, High School, NGO employee, Maaret Tamsrin)

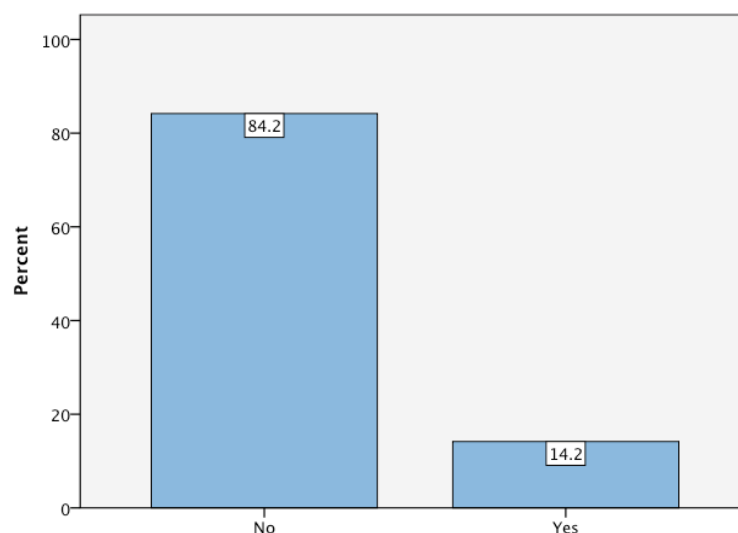
**Table 47:** Do you get any financial support apart from your income? (by Residential Status)

Residential Status		Yes	No	Total
Local	Count	15	41	<b>56</b>
	% within Residential Status	27%	73%	<b>100%</b>
IDP	Count	40	24	<b>64</b>
	% within Residential Status	63%	38%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 48:** Financial Supporters (by Residential Status)

Residential Status		Relatives (in Syria)	Relatives (Abroad)	NGOs	Total
Local	Count	3	5	7	<b>15</b>
	% within Residential Status	20%	33%	47%	<b>100%</b>
IDP	Count	4	7	29	<b>40</b>
	% within Residential Status	10%	18%	73%	<b>100%</b>
Total	<b>Count</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>55</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Another noticeable situation is that the IDPs are those id from NGOs most, as also found out by other surveys. Three fourth of the IDPs living in these three cities needs aids provided by NGOs. Therefore, aids given by NGOs are also vital for IDPs.



**Figure 27:** Is there someone else working in the household/family?

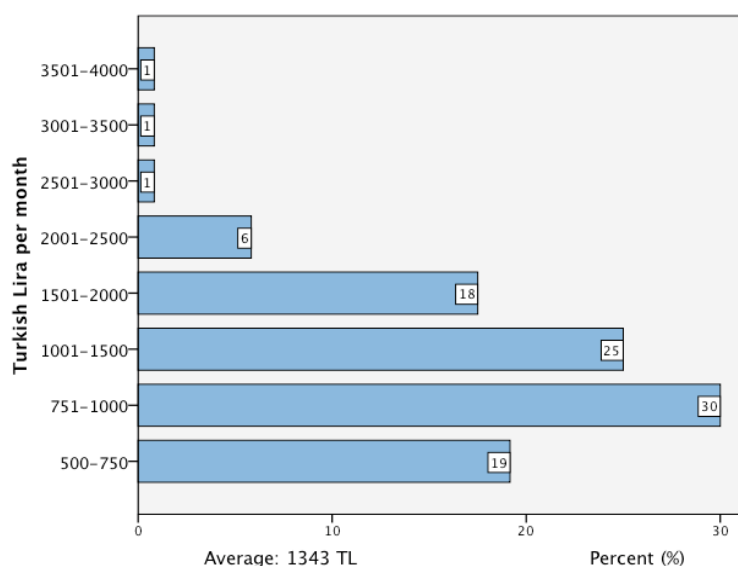
In 14% of the households (17 families), more than one person works to bring in money. In 4 out of 17 households, there are 3 persons in work while in the remaining 14 households, this number is 2 persons. One hundred twenty respondents stated that 128 persons worked to bring in money to 120 households (household distribution is not proportional). This generally means that 1 person per household is at work. It must be clarified here that the main reason why there is only one person per household at work while the size of the household is crowded is the current situation in these cities as well as job and employment opportunities. Moreover, the rural character of Idlib Governorate causes the issues of job, work, and unemployment to be open to discussion. According to the year 2009, which is the latest year when exact and accurate statistics could be collected, the unemployment rate in Idlib was around 11%.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“There are no factories in Idlib now. There were many in the past. A factory used to employ up to 1000 workers, which helped 1000 families. But now there is no such opportunity as there is no infrastructure.” (Gibran, 36, Married, University, Teacher, IDP, Maaret Tamsrin)



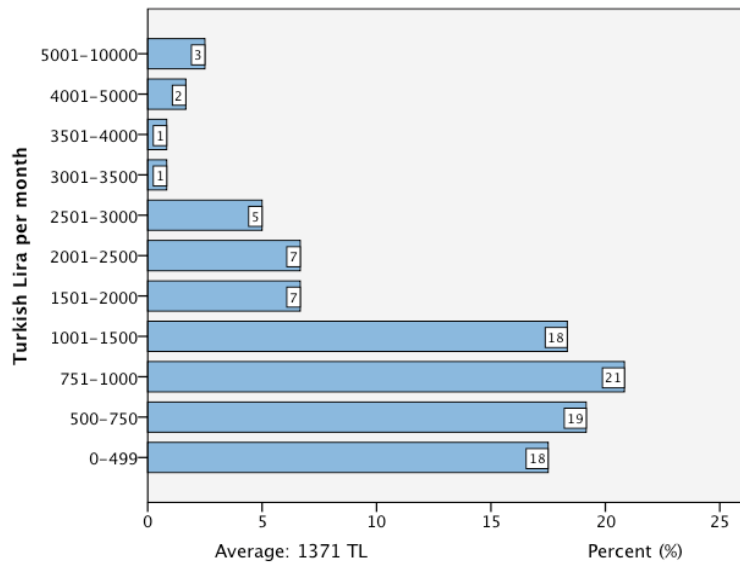
Job and work patterns of the households vary in the different regions of Syria, while the average number of persons in work is 1,5<sup>16</sup> for the Syrian households in Gaziantep, densely populated by the Syrians coming from Aleppo near Idlib. These results obtained from a narrow-scoped field in Idlib point out that even though they are IDPs in their own country, the number of persons who work is almost 1 for the Syrian households. In contrast, conditions in other countries, especially in densely populated industrial metropolitans like Gaziantep, force the household to have more labor force.



**Figure 28:** Monthly Expense of the Household/Family (Turkish lira)

For understanding the economic composition of household/family, respondents are first asked about their expenses during the fieldwork because it is a social psychological reality that people tend to exaggerate their expenses, whereas they prefer lowering their income because of various reasons. To minimize this “threat,” the respondents of this survey were first asked about the expenses of the household/family. Following this question, the income was asked, and then the curve of income and expenses was created and categorized by sex and household. It is not claimed that the values obtained are accurate because reaching the most “accurate” information requires spending more time in the field and more long-term and in-depth interviews. Since there was not such an opportunity in this survey, the available data must be depended on.

<sup>16</sup> Gültekin, M.N., Giritlioğlu, İ., Karadaş, Y., Soyudoğan, M., Leyla Kuzu, Ş., Gülhan, S.T., Doğanoglu, M., Utanır, A., Aslan, Ç., İncetahtacı, N., (2018) Gaziantep’teki Suriyeliler: Uyum, Beklentiler ve Zorluklar (Özet Rapor), Gaziantep: Gaziantep Üniversitesi Yayınları; Gültekin, M.N., Yücebaş, M., Soyudoğan, M., Atasü Topçuoğlu, R., Doğanoglu, M., Leyla Kuzu, Ş., Gülhan, S. T., Aslan, A., İncetahtacı, N., Utanır, A., Aslan, Ç., Kaya, M., Karayakupoglu, H.C., Açıkgöz, Ü., Özhasar, İ., (2021) Gaziantep Monitörü 2020 – Suriyeliler, Ankara: SABEV Yayınları.



*Figure 29: Monthly Income of the Household/Family (Turkish liras)*

The average expense of the 120 households is 1.343 TL, which means it is less than half of the minimum wage in Turkey (2.825 TL). Similarly, the income of the households is 1.371 TL, and once again, it remains highly under the minimum wage in Turkey. However, the female respondents stated that their average monthly expense was 1.299 TL and the income was 1.583 TL. As for men, they stated 1.376 TL for average expense and 1.214 TL for income. Therefore, considering most wages and exchanges in the given region are TL-based, it can be said that Ildib is under the influence of Turkey in terms of economy. However, despite this influence, both average income and expense remain less than half of the minimum wage in Turkey.

On the other hand, the household's major indicator of poverty is not the minimum and maximum income, but families at the rate of 76% that have income less than 1.500 TL. In other words, 3 out of 4 persons have an income of less than 1.500 TL. The crowded household size, unemployment, inadequacy of education, and other social services must be added to these numbers, as well. Furthermore, the positive difference between income and expense must not be misunderstood. These rates of income do not mean that all the expenses can be afforded. Regardless of the relation of income and expense, the needs of the households are not limited to this relation, and they need to apply some strategies to overcome poverty.

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“(...) Young people here work hard and they are very tired. They are working at more than one place to save their present and their future. (...)We are at the Turkish border. At night, we see lights in Turkey, but here we live in darkness.” (Abdul Qadir, Married, 21, High School, NGO employee, Maaret Tamsrin)

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“There is great fear among people about the devastation caused by years of bombing, forced displacement and massive population density in a small geographical area in northern Syria. There are many negative situations such as the widespread theft cases due to poverty which are banalized by people, disappearance of people, kidnapping and ransom demand, and unidentified corpses.” (Fatma, 38, Married, High School, Worker, Kelly)

Because of low income but the high cost of living in these cities, the households develop various coping methods categorized under the table below. Some methods are selling the savings and getting into debt. However, the rate and effect of aids take more than half.

*Table 49: Coping with the Imbalance of Income and Expense*

Way of Coping	Frequency	Percent (%)
Selling the savings	4	7%
Getting into debt	9	15%
Getting support from relatives/acquaintances	16	26%
Getting aids	32	52%
Total	61	100%

Evaluating the coping methods on a gender basis, three-fourths of the households maintain their lives thanks to aids. Therefore, it is obvious that civil initiatives give aids provided by NGOs and services are essential for these three cities. Also, one of the points at which feminization of poverty can be seen is here.

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“Almost no job opportunities because of the oppression and the large population living in this small geographic area. People are looking for a job to live. Many people had to leave the country. Those who can't find a way there too are going to the battles in Libya, Azerbaijan or Yemen for money. Here, ordinary unemployed people join military and armed groups for a monthly salary of 400 Turkish liras. When there is a job opportunity in the institutions, those who work there employ their relatives in that job. On the other hand, applying for a job requires a lot of documentation and often everyone's documents are missing.” (Firas, 44, Married, University, Freelancer, Kelly)

**Table 50:** Coping with the Imbalance of Income and Expense (by Sex)

Sex		Coping Method				Total
		Selling the savings	Getting into debt	Getting support from relatives/acquaintances	Getting aids	
Men	Count	2	8	13	15	<b>38</b>
	% within Sex	5%	21%	34%	39%	<b>100%</b>
Women	Count	2	1	3	17	<b>23</b>
	% within Sex	9%	4%	13%	74%	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Count</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>61</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>100%</b>

For the methodological course of the interviews, the respondents were asked toward the end of the questionnaires the problems in these cities and the region. Problems with housing, education/schooling, electric power, food shortage, security, unemployment, costliness, insufficiency, and inefficiency of official institutions, health, and aids are mostly stated. However, for the respondents, the main problems are costliness, lack of security, unemployment, housing, electric power, and inefficiency of official institutions. In addition, it is evident that social life, which collapses during war and violence and cannot be rebuilt immediately, is also experienced in these cities.

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“Fate is unknown. The region here is small and densely populated, but our fate is still unknown. We live now, but in fear of our unclear future.” (Abdel Khaleq, 43, Married, High School, Freelancer, IDP, Maaret Tamsrin)

**Table 51:** Main Problems Here

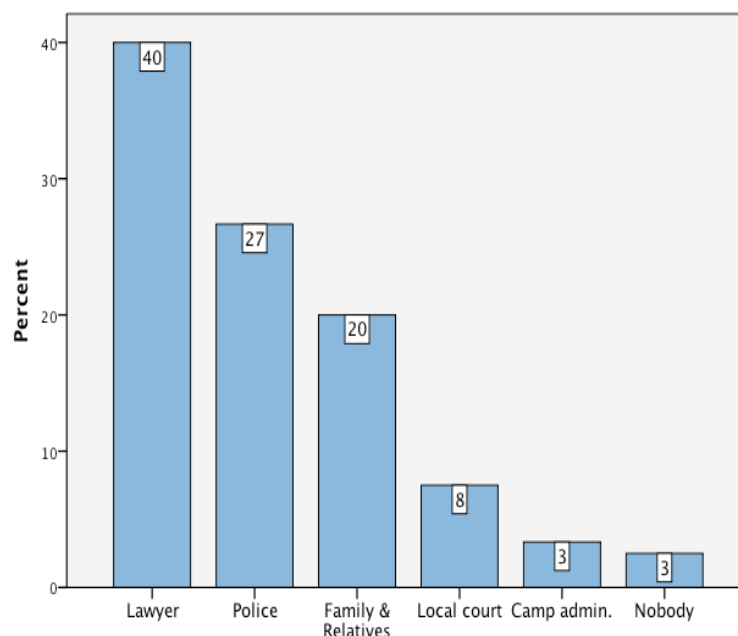
Rank	Overall		Men		Women	
	Problem	%	Problem	%	Problem	%
1	Costliness	18	Costliness	17	Costliness	17
2	Security	16	Security	13	Unemployment	15
3	Unemployment	13	Electric power	12	Food shortage	11
4	Housing	10	Unemployment	11	Security	11
5	Electric power	8	Official institutions	11	Health	11
6	Official institutions	8				

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“Living here is definitely an uncomfortable feeling. Most people are psychologically disturbed for various reasons. There are very serious security problems. The rulers of the region tax almost everything. When basic necessities such as gas, diesel and gasoline are taxed, the price of everything increases. I think the situation is getting worse due to the economic weakness of people, overpopulation and lack of job opportunities.” (Mustafa, 50, Married, High School, Unemployed, Maaret Tamsrin)

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“We were caught between two fires in the liberated areas. Either you will work with one of the organizations operating in Syria or if you can find it, you will work as a freelancer, by not performing your own profession here! This leads to an immoral enrichment and relationships among those working with organizations. For this reason, on the one hand, there are those who suddenly become rich in these jobs; on the other hand, there are those who cannot be included in these networks and become very poor. Now there are the very rich, who are too few, and the very poor, who are too many. But before, the vast majority lived in the middle.” (Ahmed, 46, Married, University, Teacher, Kelly)



*Figure 30: Who do you apply to in case of legal problems?*

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

“There is great psychological pressure on us. Because frankly, the situation is difficult. No income. No job. Education and school problems are huge. Everything is very expensive. There houses are not enough. The fear of being a displaced person or being displaced at any moment is a huge pressure. Health services are insufficient and poor. A normal worker earns 20 TL per day.” (Faysal, 41, Married, Secondary School, Freelancer, Maaret Tamsrin)

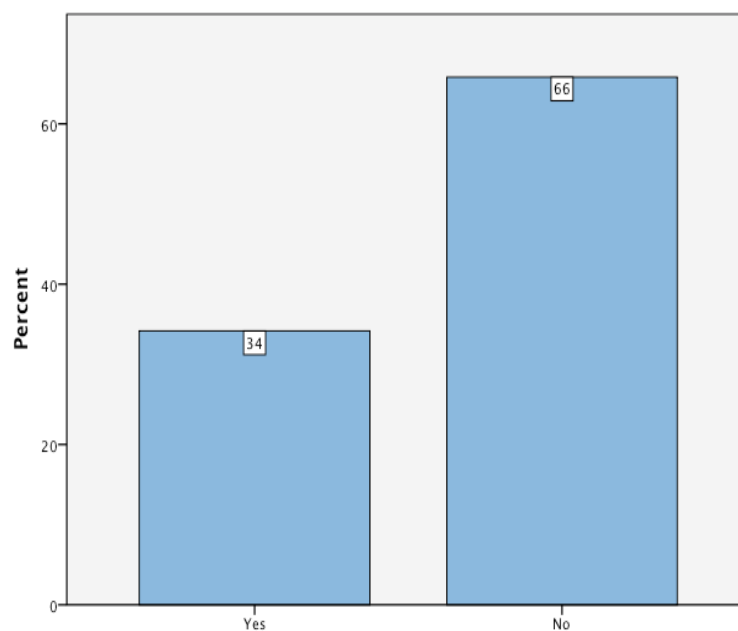
Obviously, in these cities dominated by war and instability, the residents face legal issues in daily life. The respondents were asked who they apply to in case of a legal problem. Lawyers, police, and family and relatives have mostly applied subjects. The complexity of legal processes and limbo and instability in the cities bring lawyers and the police to the forefront.

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“Life causes despair in all respects, the feeling of joy in our hearts has died. Even the smile has become fake. It’s not sincere anymore. (...) As for social relations, people’s true colors have become visible. They were all wearing masks and all their masks are off now.” (Ayşe, 39, Married, Secondary School, Unemployed, IDP, Kaftin)

## FGD Meeting Notes...

“We suffer so much because we are displaced here. House rents are too high. Lacking income and high cost of living are challenging. We pay for even water here. Children’s daily needs or school expenses are also very expensive. (...) What we feel here as IDPs is different from the locals here because they live in their own home on their own land. Our psychological situation as displaced is awful. Sometimes we witness locals discriminating against the IDPs in the community.” (Abdel Khaleq, 43, Married, High School, Freelancer, IDP, Maaret Tamsrin)



**Figure 31:** Would you like to live in another country?

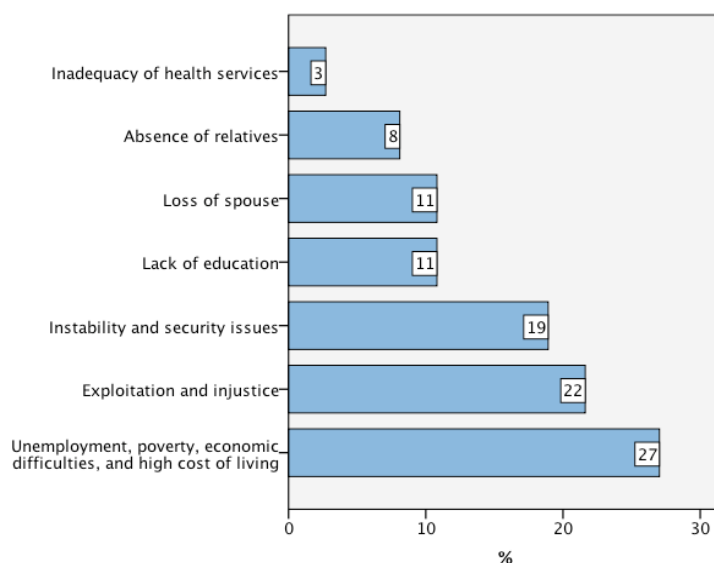
In Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin experiencing war, violence, insecurity, migration, refuge, displacement, and chaos during the last 10 years, the presence of wish to emigrate is fairly understandable. However, considering the region itself experiences migration and refuge, it is necessary to look at people's tendencies to emigration.

Two third of the Syrian respondents stated that they wished to live in another country. The respondents who do not want to emigrate, corresponding to 34%, were asked about their reasons. The most stated reasons are "challenges of living abroad" and economical insufficiency. The rate of those pointing out cultural differences is at the lowest. However, the most evident reason they are against leaving the country is the absence of economic opportunities and networks. Three respondents out of 120 are against it because of "patriotism."

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

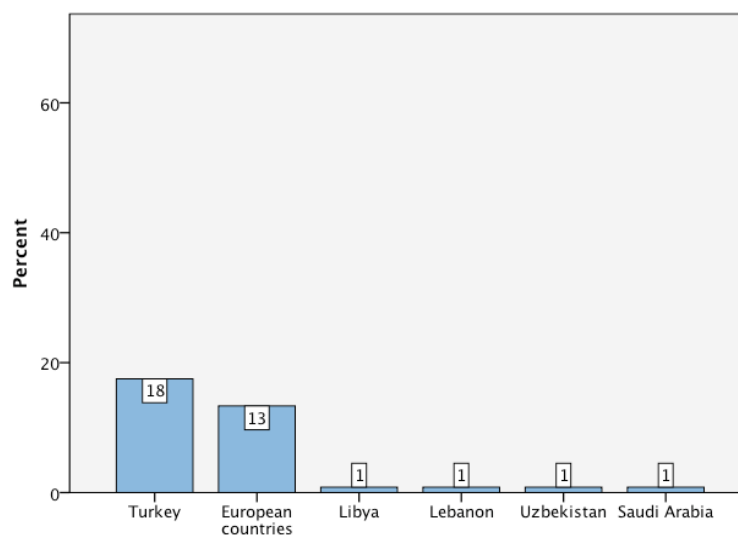
"I never intend to travel outside the country." (Muhammed, 32, Married, High School, Worker, IDP, Kaftin)

On the other hand, the reasons for those who would like to leave the country depend on distinct and concrete motives stated during the interviews and FGDs. Unemployment, costliness, relations based on exploitation, injustice, security, loss of a spouse are the reasons that keep their desires for leaving alive. As for the least mentioned reason, it is health services. However, problems related to education and school are also common.



**Figure 32:** Why would you like to leave the country? (Multiple Choices)





**Figure 33:** In what country would you like to live?

The first preferred country for those wishing to live in another country is Turkey. West and North European countries, such as Germany and Sweden, are also listed. Interestingly, any country in the east of Germany was never mentioned. However, Germany is the most favorite one among the European countries. The main reason for this is the presence of previously established migrant networks<sup>17</sup> in Germany. It must be remembered that Germany is at the second rank after Turkey in terms of being chosen by the Syrians to live since 2011. One respondent's statement is quite notable, which is "a country with humane attitudes toward my children and me." Therefore, wishes to live in democratic Western countries are pretty frequent depends on concrete occasions.

#### FGD Meeting Notes...

"The education problems are serious. And I think there will be no future for our children here. Because in two years my daughter will be in the sixth grade and will graduate. But the diploma she will receive is recognized neither here nor there (in the regime zone). (Rama, 28, Married, High School, Unemployed, Kaftin)

<sup>17</sup> Massey, D. S. (1990). Social Structure, Household Strategies, and the Cumulative Causation of Migration. *Population Index*, 56(1), 3-26; Massey, D. S., & Taylor, J. E. (Eds.). (2004). *International Migration - Prospect and Policies in a Global Market*. Oxford University Press.

One reason for willingness to live in another country is the “absence of relatives” (8%). There are people without relatives in such a traditional region as Idlib. Considering the distribution of preferred countries, Uzbekistan, Libya, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia in the list reminds abundance of “aliens” in the region and mobility in the years after 2011. Therefore, those already without registration of marriage and children would like to go (back) to these countries, which is quite fair. On the other hand, these findings related to wishes to leave the country must be evaluated with in-depth interviews and long-term field observations.

FGD Meeting Notes...

“There is no particular place I want to immigrate to, but I want to go to any place where I can fulfill my dreams.” (Fatma, 28, Married, High School, Unemployed, Kaftin)

FGD Meeting Notes...

“There are procedures, routines and difficulties in recording missing persons. Wives of missing persons have difficulty claiming their rights as there are no documents. If these documents do not exist, we are deprived of the rights to education and service.” (Doaa, 25, Married, University, Housewife, Maaret Tamsrin)

### 3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Although its scope is narrow, this survey conducted in three cities in Idlib Governorate, associated with the processes of war and violence, instability, and unclear future since 2011, presents significant findings and patterns to have an opinion about the areas in Syria where the war has not ended yet. It, with the data collected from Kaftin, Kelly, and Maaret Tamsrin with 120 questionnaires and seven focus group discussions (FGDs), provide remarkable results and facilitate further study areas. More than half of the respondents are internally displaced persons (IDPs). Therefore, the results give ideas about the locals of the region as well as the displaced. Additionally, the data depend on a balanced sex distribution, so it enables to classify. Furthermore, the data obtained with the questionnaires are also supported with the notes of 7 FGDs having conducted in each city.

The average age of the respondents, each of whom represents one household, is under 40. Therefore, the profile of the respondents that can speak for or are responsible for the household is very young. The average age of women is 33 while it is 37 for men. As for the socio-cultural background of the respondents, the percentage of those illiterate is approximately 9%. Whereas elementary and secondary school graduations are the most frequent, the situation is for women after elementary school.

The results related to mobility in the three cities indicate that the tendency differs from those throughout the Syrian War, and it summits in the years between 2018 and 2020. These results are also parallel with the conflict and chaos processes in the Idlib region. Two third of the IDPs changed their location only once, while 23% of them moved twice. The percentage of those having had to change their location three times is 9%. Therefore, it is evident that the mobility in the region is quite much.

Almost half of the respondents are tenants, which also results from being IDPs. Whereas detached houses with gardens are predominant due to the geographical characteristic of the region, the scale of housing types ranges from flats to tents and public buildings. As for the physical features of the houses, there are 2,5 rooms per household. Since the household size is 6,3, it can be asserted that the rooms are crowded.

Most of the respondents are married. However, it is noteworthy that the rate of divorced is 5,8%, and the percentage of the widowed is 4,2%. These two rates correspond to 10%, which is a high value. The details of these rates can be understood only with in-depth interviews. Also, 9,2% of the respondents have gotten married more than once. The youngest age during the first marriage is 21 for women and 25 for men. Another noticeable finding is the high rates of consanguineous marriages. The last ten year and war have caused an increase in consanguineous marriages in the region compared to the data before 2011.

One of the biggest social problems in these three cities is related to the registration of civils. Registration here includes registration of marriages and children, as well. Less than 60% of the people in the three regions are registered at the local government, which needs to be considered. This rate is rather low and enlarges the daily life problems connected with education, divorce, property, and inheritance. Therefore, this field requires a multi-purpose, women and children-focused, rights-based survey. It is essential for the NGOs, which are planning to be or are already active in the region to focus on these issues.

As much as registration of marriages, registration of children also deserves to be seriously discussed because children, together with women, are the victims of this war. Therefore, NGOs' projects about education, children, and women are crucial for this vulnerable segment to maintain their lives.

It is indubitable that one of the reasons why the number of unregistered marriages and children is quite high is related to the fact that people living in the region and these cities have been exposed to war and displacements for ten years. It is known that inability to get registered and obtain confidential documents during the war years severely affect the young population and their education and travels. On the other hand, because of the present instability in the region and the regime, obtaining official documents is hard and problematic even for Syrian citizens. However, this narrow-scoped fieldwork and FGDs reveal another reality here that is hard to see at a glance. This reality is that a vast majority of Syria, including Idlib, has been flooded by unregistered male foreigners, especially since 2013 due to various reasons, but mostly because of the military, political, economic, and ideological motivations. Therefore, considering the geographic position of the three cities and the last 10-year long unstable military situations, one of them (most significant) reasons for the current high number of unregistered marriages and children can be explained through the presence of non-citizens of Syria in the region.

Moreover, the respondents stated the countries such as Uzbekistan, Libya, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia where they wished to live could be claimed as the presence of non-citizens of Syria and mostly members of some armed groups. The illegal, unregistered, and illegitimate relations of war always affect the vulnerable population within society most. Here, the most vulnerable segment is made up of women and children.

During the interviews and FGDs in the three cities, it is understood that people encountering serious legal problems in their daily lives are not exactly aware of how to solve their problems. Therefore, the region's residents have to deal with a lack of information, the inadequacy of institutions, legal problems, and bureaucratic processes. Due to the insufficiency and inefficiency of institutions in the region, there is a need for studies and projects that will increase the fight against corruption in the area, as stated during the FGDs. The thing that will help those planning to work on these subjects in the region is the cooperation and the demands of the people there. The issue of awareness of rights certainly requires local organizations and NGOs with perspectives based on giving information and problem-solving.

The survey indicates that the households in the region have low income, and they are susceptible to unemployment, high cost of living, and exploitation. The IDPs that are majority and made up of impoverished segments, including the vulnerable, are more affected by these difficult conditions. It is observed that the households and families sell their savings and get in debt or support from their relatives and acquaintances, and obtain aids from NGOs to overcome the imbalance of income-expense and maintain their daily lives. Especially the high rate of getting aids from NGOs indicates the vitality of these aids.

The rooted and different problems in daily life and institutionalized instability cause the region's residents to would like to go to another country. Considering the preferred countries, it is evident that the demands are for the features not available in their current condition, such as social justice, security, good education, sufficiency and efficiency of public services, and lack of exploitation.

Once more, political chaos and fragmented governance mostly affect ordinary people and their daily lives. Therefore, it is observed that the central government, having recognition, bureaucratic institutionalism, and being registered, is accepted as the provider of legal guarantees that are not available in the respondents' lives, especially women, in the region.

Consequently, some solutions to these three cities of the region are related to international balances and relations. However, it is more dramatic and real that the solutions to the problems of these ordinary people and relieving their burden depend on serious, realistic, and long-term actions.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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### Murat Kaya

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