

FOURTH REGIONAL SURVEY ON SYRIAN REFUGEES' PERCEPTIONS AND INTENTIONS ON RETURN TO SYRIA (RPIS)

EGYPT, IRAQ, LEBANON, AND JORDAN

July 2018

Conducted by The UNHCR Country Operations In Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon
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Units

At The Director's Office in Amman (DOiA) of the MENA Bureau.

For further information:
http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria_durable_solutions

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hope to return one day

76%

hope to return to
Syria one day

5%

are undecided

41%

of refugees not considering a return within the coming 12 months found it imperative to go back to Syria for a “go-and-see” visit

25%

increase in refugees hoping to return one day since 2017.



Intention to return in the next 12 months



85%

do not intend to return in the next 12 months.



11%

are yet to decide about whether to return in the next 12 months.

Syrian refugees' intentions to return in the next year may change with notable improvements in:

I. Safety & Security

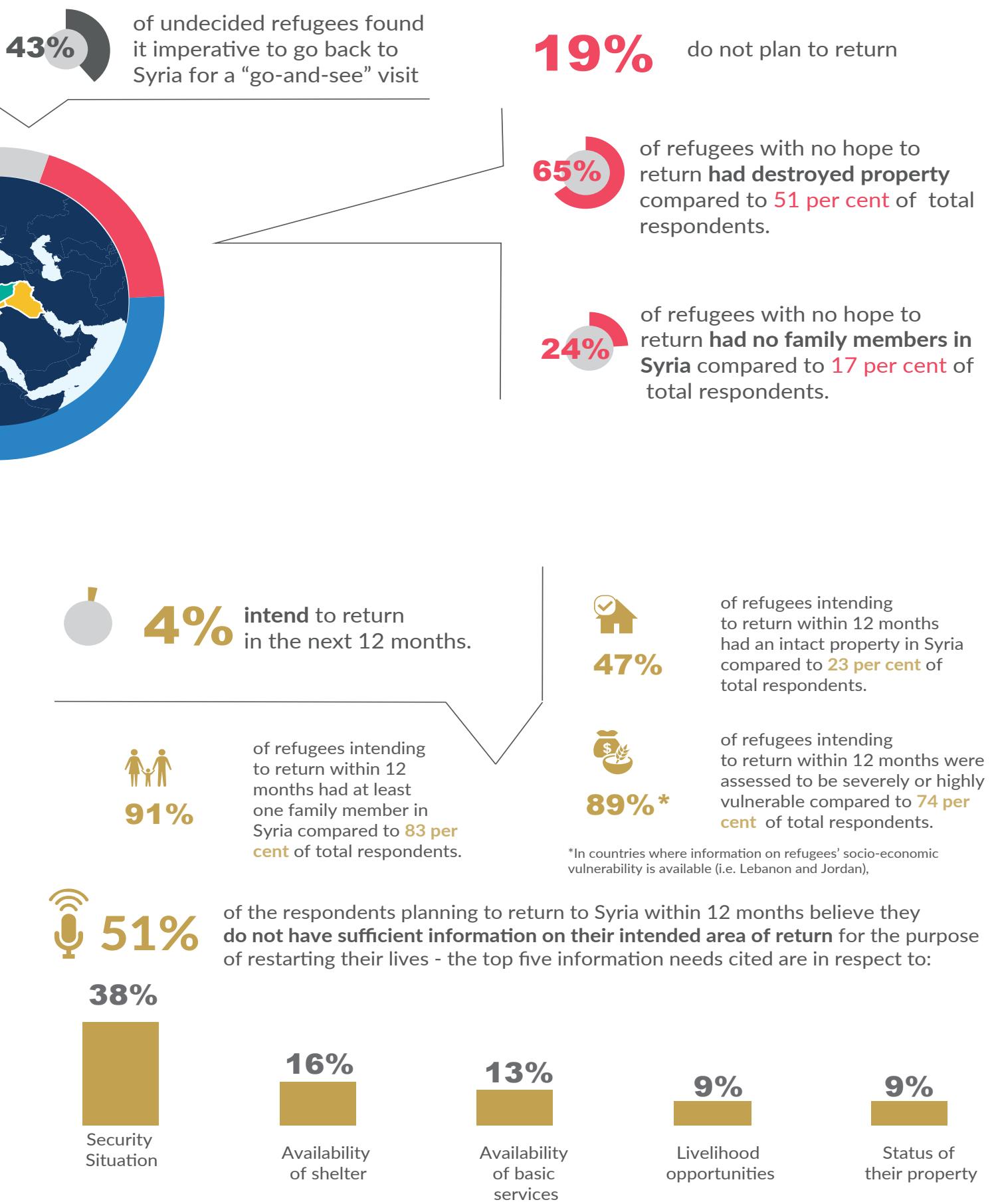
The lack of predictable and sustainable physical safety in Syria is the primary factor influencing refugees' plans for the future. Refugees highlighted the situation of indiscriminate violence or risks of targeted reprisal as key obstacles to return.

II. Access to adequate housing

75 per cent of refugees not intending to return in the next 12 months responded that they don't have inhabitable housing in Syria.

III. Work opportunities

Access to, or lack of, livelihood was regarded as a determining factor influencing decisions on return.



INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of 2017, UNHCR operations in host countries neighbouring Syria have been conducting **Return Perception and Intention Surveys (RPIS)**¹ as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with Syrian refugees on their intentions for return in the future. Due to operational context, Turkey did not take part in the 2017-2018 RPIS exercises and the intentions to return were collected through dedicated focus groups discussions with refugees.

These initiatives aim to examine Syrian refugees' plans for the future, hear their perspectives about returning to Syria as a possible solution to their plight, and better understand the attainability of comprehensive solutions to displacement from Syria. The information provided through the RPIS is assessed as part of the information related to durable solutions collected by country operations through routine discussions and counselling with refugees at registration centres, reports from border and protection monitoring directly or through partners, and other information collected during the implementation of protection and assistance activities. UNHCR's first-hand knowledge of refugees' concerns and intentions, as well as their profiles and protection needs, allows for the triangulation of information, examination of regional variations or similarities, and assessment of the profiles and needs of the individuals surveyed. All of these components are vital to inform any analytical projection of comprehensive solutions to displacement from Syria with a focus on future plans for returns to Syria.

The information available to UNHCR as a result of these surveys, FGDs and protection activities carried out in the field, will continue to inform UNHCR and partners in the development and implementation of a durable solutions strategy that is evidence-based, participatory and places refugees' needs and aspirations at the centre. It is also crucial to inform advocacy and programming both in Syria and in host countries.

This report presents the **main findings of the fourth Return Perception and Intention Survey from a regional perspective**.

Findings were complemented by historical data collected during previous rounds of the RPIS enabling, to the extent possible, a comparative analysis of trends over time.

¹ See Annex III for Common Floor Questionnaire

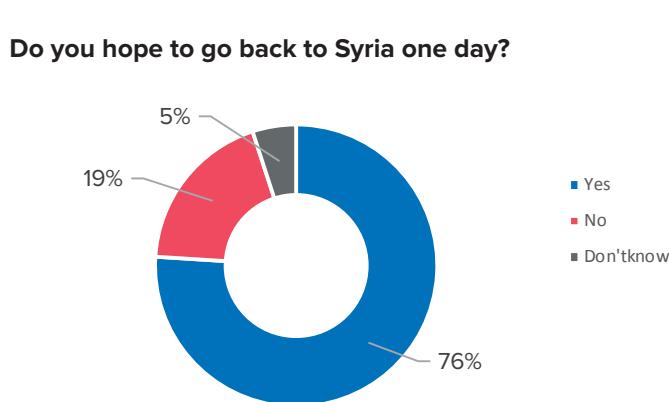
I. Refugees' hopes and intentions for the future

The hope to return to Syria one day has significantly increased

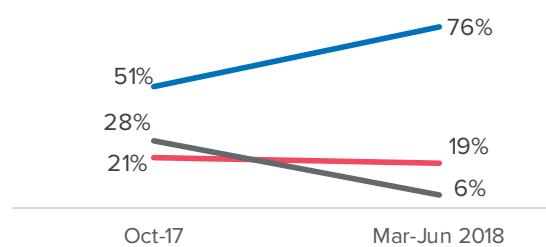
Since 2017, UNHCR has endeavoured to understand not only refugees' plans and intentions within the next 12 months, but also their hopes and aspirations to return home one day. The decision to return home, especially to a war-torn country, has practical and emotional implications on individuals and their families, and an insight into their perspective for the future sheds light on the feasibility of return as a favourable solution.

The RPIS conducted in 2018 found that **76 per cent of Syrian refugees hoped to return to Syria one day**. This percentage has increased by about a quarter from 51 per cent in 2017 to 76 per cent in 2018.

Nevertheless, 19 per cent of refugees noted that they do not plan to ever return to their country.



The trend of the “hope to return” answer from Oct. 2017 to Jun. 2018



This further confirms that voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity remains the preferred durable solutions for Syrian refugees. It's important to highlight the fact that 49 per cent of refugees who were undecided and 41 per cent of refugees not considering a return to Syria within the coming 12 months found it imperative to go back to Syria for a “go-and-see” visit before taking a decision on their intention to return.

19 per cent refugees have no hope to return to Syria

- **Country of asylum:** Jordan and Iraq were the countries with the larger proportion of respondents indicating having no hope to return, with 26 per cent and 29 per cent respectively. In Egypt and Lebanon, only 10 per cent and eight per cent of respondents respectively expressed this view.
- **Family in Syria (including extended family members):** 24 per cent of refugees with no hope to return had no family members in Syria compared to 17 per cent of the total respondents.
- **Property status in Syria:** 65 per cent of refugees with no hope to return have a destroyed property in Syria compared to 51 per cent of the total respondents.
- Trends and correlations were looked at for this group between socio-economic vulnerability, areas of origin, reason for flight and the lack of hope to return to Syria one day, but no significant correlation was found at the regional level. Country-level findings nevertheless suggest that areas of origin and reasons for flight can play a role in shaping refugees' intentions and the absence of hope to return.

For most, the intention to return will not materialize in the next year

Although 76 per cent of respondents aspire to go home one day, 85 per cent stated they do not have intentions to return to Syria in the next 12 months, 11 per cent were undecided, and 4 per cent intended to return.

When compared to the October 2017 RPIS survey, the percentage of those who stated they intend to return within the next 12 months decreased from 7 per cent to 4 per cent and the proportion of those who were undecided also **decreased** from 18 per cent to 11 per cent, while those who had no intention to return **increased** from 76 per cent to 85 per cent.

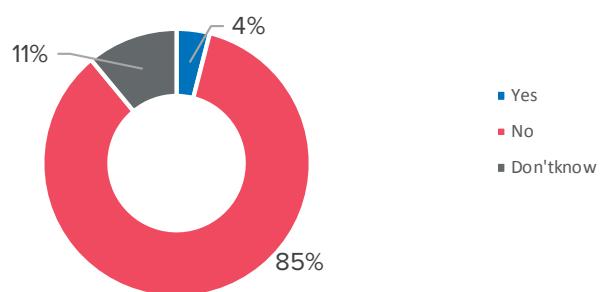
It is likely that the change in intentions, especially the decrease of those who had initially said they intend to return, reflects the ongoing situation of violence in Syria. This notably refers to: the events that took place in eastern Ghouta, Rural Damascus Governorate, between February-April 2018; organized returns from Lebanon in May 2018; and, the recent government offensives and expansion of the territory controlled by the Government of Syria in Dara'a.²

“Parents cannot ask about their detained sons. If we do, we will be detained too”.

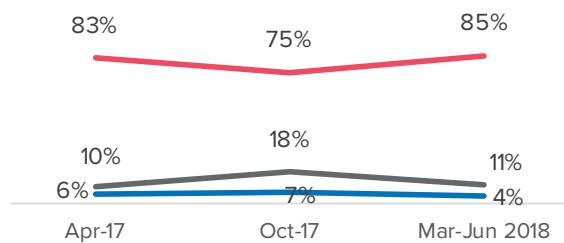
-Male respondent, Jordan

It is worth mentioning that since the first round of RPIS in January 2017, and despite the (positive or negative) developments in Syria over the past two years, the majority of refugees have consistently stated they did not intend to return to Syria in the next year before observing a significant improvement in safety and security, access to services and livelihood opportunities, and availability of shelter/housing.

Do you plan to go back to Syria in the next 12 months?



The trend of “intention to return in the following 12 months” answer (from April 2017 to June 2018)



Four per cent of refugees intend to return in the next 12 months

- Socio-economic vulnerability:**³ In countries where information on refugees' socio-economic vulnerability is available (i.e. Lebanon and Jordan), 85 per cent of respondents intending to return in the next 12 months were assessed as being severely or highly vulnerable compared to 74 per cent for the total respondents in the same countries. This suggests that vulnerable individuals are more likely to be affected by push factors in the country of asylum.
- Country of asylum:** Six per cent of respondents in Iraq and six per cent in Jordan indicated an intention to return in the near future while they were proportionally less numerous in Egypt and Lebanon, with four per cent and three per cent respectively.

² It may also reflect the specific views of respondents from Lebanon included in this fourth round and who did not participate in the previous round.

³ The level of socio-economic vulnerability was determined based on available vulnerability scores from the Vulnerability Assessment Framework and Desk Formula exercises conducted in Jordan and Lebanon. This analysis therefore only looked at respondents residing in Lebanon and Jordan.

- **Family in Syria (including extended family members):** 91 per cent of refugees intending to return to Syria had at least one family member in Syria compared to 83 per cent for the total respondents.
- **Property status in Syria:** 38 per cent of refugees intending to return to Syria had an intact or habitable property in Syria compared to 23 per cent of the total respondents.
- **Skills:** it is more likely that a refugee with skills that may yield immediate work opportunities in Syria will intend to return. This is illustrated by the fact that almost 38 per cent of refugees considering return option in the near future had experiences in construction, agriculture or small business sectors prior to fleeing Syria in comparison to 27 per cent of the total respondents.
- **Specific needs:** 48 per cent of the refugees intending to return had a family member with specific needs in their household compared to 55 per cent of the total respondents. This slight difference in percentage may indicate that specific needs alone may not influence the intention to return as much as each family's coping mechanism and their access to services, in addition the severity of the specific need for each individual.
- Also for this group, no correlations were found between reason for flight or areas of origin at the regional level. As mentioned above, country-level findings may suggest that areas of origin and reasons for flight can play a role in shaping refugees' intentions to return.

II. The reasons behind the return intention

To understand the rationale behind return plans for the next 12 months, refugees were asked to select the **three main reasons** amongst a wide range of options, either as push factors (i.e. conditions inside country of asylum) or pull factors (i.e. developments inside Syria), for their intention to return or lack of intention. The reasons presented below for each answer category are the main three reasons perceived by refugees as main factors influencing their return considerations. These reasons represent the regional dimension, noting that some may differ at the country level.

Why are refugees intending to return?

- The main three reasons for intention to return selected by this group were an **improvement in the security situation, family reunification, and having livelihood opportunities in Syria**.
- This is the first time that **family reunification is selected amongst the top three pull factors for return**.
- This is however **consistent with findings from border monitoring activities** in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq where most self-organized returns are explained by the need to reunify with family members in Syria.
- 60 per cent of this group still noted concerns or fears in relation to their upcoming return, mainly the **security situation, limitations to freedom of movement, lack of a political solution to or of progress in, the political process, and shortage of livelihood opportunities**.

“...yes, I think going back to Syria is better for me because it is my home country...improvement of the security situation influenced my decision”.
-Female respondent, Egypt

Why are refugees **not** intending to return?

- The main three reasons selected by respondents who do not intend to return were the lack of **safety and security in Syria, lack of livelihood opportunities, and adequate housing**.
- These concerns are consistent with the findings from the October 2017 survey.
- Similarly, it was the **improvement in the security situation, availability of livelihood opportunities and access to basic services** that will make this group reconsider their intentions for return in the future. Again, these considerations are relatively similar to those of the October 2017 survey with the exception of the third reason which was then “a political solution to the conflict” and not “access to basic services”.

Why are refugees **undecided** about their intentions?

- Improvement in three main areas would help this group decide on their intention to return to Syria are the following **improvement in the security situation, progress in finding a political solution to the conflict, and confidence that returnees will have access to basic services**.
- These findings are generally consistent with the October 2017 survey results where political solution was the third priority and “access to livelihood opportunities” was mentioned instead of “access to services”.

III. Concerns and obstacles for return

This section provides a more detailed insight into the three main reasons given by refugees who have no intentions to return to Syria in the coming 12 months.

Safety and security as the primary considerations for return

Lack of predictable and sustainable physical safety in Syria is the primary factor influencing refugees’ plans for the future. This has been a consistent trend throughout all the RPIS surveys conducted so far. Among refugees not intending to return to Syria within 12 months, almost half of the reasons provided to explain their intentions were related to the prevalence of indiscriminate violence or the risk of targeted reprisals (45 per cent). Of this group, 32 per cent of the responses highlighted the lack of predictable and sustainable safety and security in Syria, eight per cent were linked to concerns over military service, conscription or recruitment for them or their children, and five per cent were associated with the fear of arrest, detention and/or retaliation upon return, and/or to the lack of an amnesty for military desertion and military evasion.

“...despite the lack of work in the [Kurdistan Region of Iraq] it is impossible to go back to Syria because my sons fled from the military service”.
-Male respondent, Iraq

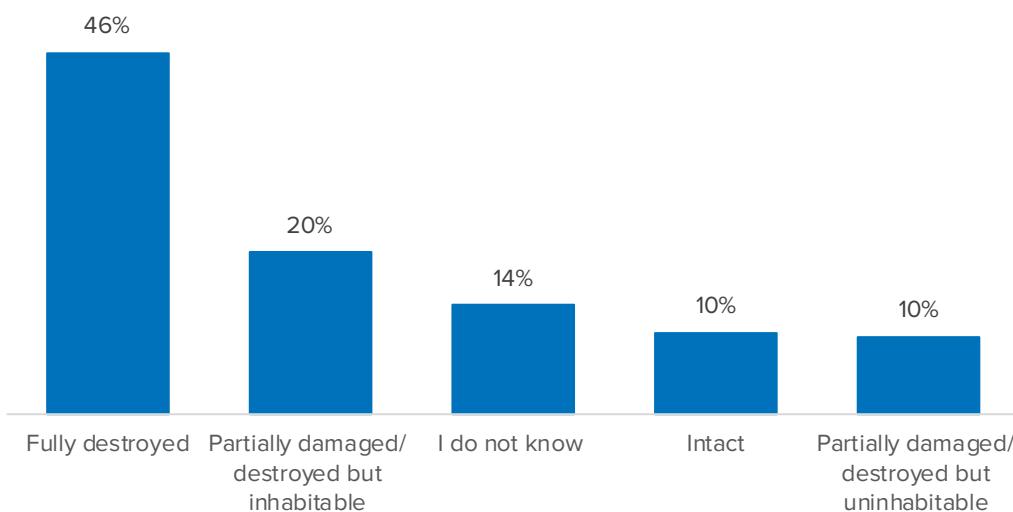
Similarly, 43 per cent of respondents who are undecided about returning to Syria noted that an improved security situation would help them to make a decision to return. This was also consistent with the main reason of those who stated they intended to return to Syria.

Lack of adequate housing and concerns over property

Throughout several rounds of RPIS in the region since 2017, refugees emphasize that the lack of housing or shelter upon return is a major obstacle preventing return; 74 per cent of refugees interviewed in the first half of 2018 had a property in Syria before their flight.

Among them, 46 per cent said their property was now fully destroyed and 10 per cent said the property was partially destroyed and uninhabitable. Some 30 per cent said their property was inhabitable, either because it remained intact (10 per cent) or was only partially damaged (10 per cent). Another 14 per cent said they did not know about the status of their property.

Conditions of property inside Syria



Scarcity of livelihood opportunities

The conflict has had severe impact on livelihoods in Syria, and has caused increased levels of poverty and unemployment. Access to, or lack of, livelihoods opportunities upon return in Syria was regarded in particular as a determining factor influencing decisions on return as it is essential to provide the resources required for a successful reintegration.

Refugees will therefore continue to consider availability of livelihoods opportunities in Syria based on their respective professional expertise. At the time of their registration, 75 per cent of the total survey respondents reported having expertise and skills in the following sectors: mining, construction and manufacturing (24 per cent); services i.e. cleaning, domestic workers, concierge (22 per cent); agriculture (12 per cent); business, industry and supply (10 per cent); and, small businesses (seven per cent). Another eight per cent reported having no occupation prior to the crisis. The remaining 17 per cent included a very broad range of professional activities. In the future, the progressive reconstruction of the Syrian economy will therefore create livelihood opportunities in different sectors, making the possibility of successful reintegration more likely.

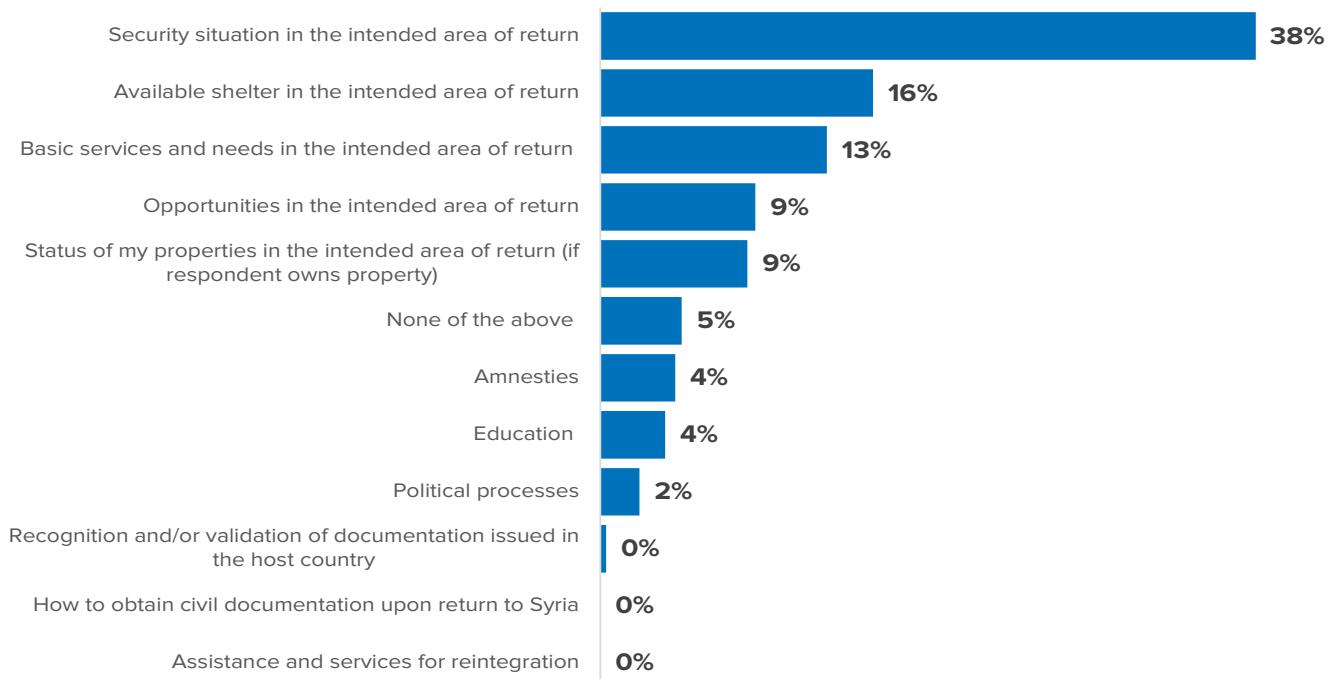
IV. Going home

This last section analyses the modalities of return and considerations for those intending to return to Syria within 12 months.

Making an informed decision to return

To make an informed decision about their future, refugees need to access accurate, complete and objective information, including on physical, material and legal safety issues in Syria. **Some 51 per cent of the respondents** planning to return to Syria within 12 months thought they **did not have sufficient information** on their intended area of return for the purpose of restarting their lives, eight per cent were not sure that they were sufficiently informed, while 40 per cent stated that they had enough information. This represents an increase of 11 per cent of respondents with insufficient information compared to the October 2017 RPIS (40 per cent in October 2017 to 51 per cent in 2018).

Information needs of refugees intending to return within 1 year



When asked what additional information refugees require on their intended area of return, the main need was information on the security situation in their area, followed by information on shelter, and then basic services. It is to be noted that although humanitarian actors highlighted housing, land, and property (HLP) and civil documentation as priority information needs to support the reintegration of returnees, this was not highlighted as a key issue by the respondents. This is not necessarily because refugees do not find this topic important but it could be in part due to lack of awareness of such issues or information on the procedures. This lack of awareness may hamper reintegration but will not necessarily prevent return to Syria.

“...no one from my family is in my home town to provide me details about the situation in Hamaya”.
-Male respondent, Lebanon

Most refugees considering return in the near future relied primarily on information from their family and relatives about the situation in their intended area of return (41 per cent). This however, may be problematic if these individuals have been displaced from their places of origin as well.

Secondary sources of information included media such as TV, newspapers, online media (17 per cent), community members (13 per cent), friends (12 per cent), and information found on social media (12 per cent).

To evaluate the prospect of restarting their lives and augment their knowledge of the situation in Syria, 49 per cent of refugees who were undecided and 41 per cent of refugees not considering a return to Syria within the coming 12 months found it important to go back to Syria for a “go-and-see” visit before taking a decision on their intention to return.

Returning home with family and possessions

If conditions allowed, the preferred destination of return for 90 per cent of refugees considering going back within 12 months, is their place of origin. Others were undecided (three per cent) or were considering another area (7 per cent) due to safety, because it was their last place of residence prior to their flight, or because it is the area of their spouse's family. Similarly, 83 per cent of those who were undecided said they would return to their place of origin when/if they decide to return.

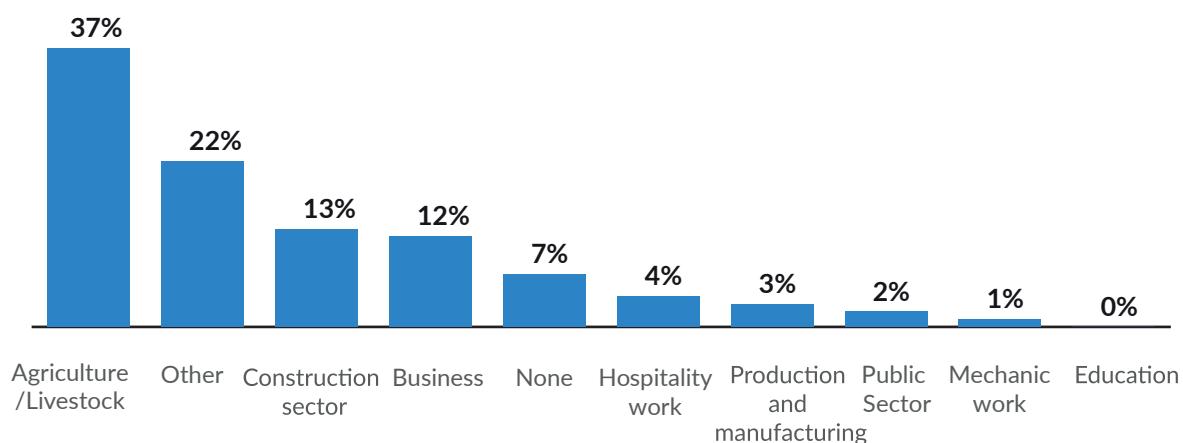
Family considerations and especially the preservation of the family unit continue to take an important part in the decision to, and modalities for, return to Syria. According to border monitoring findings in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, the decision to reunify with family members in Syria is one of the main reasons to go back.

- Similarly, and in line with the results from previous surveys, 83 per cent of refugees with the intention to return in the coming 12 months said they wished to return with all their family members, 11 per cent alone, and six per cent with some family members while others remain in the country of asylum.
- Some 68 per cent of those who plan to travel alone will do so because their family is already in Syria. Some 23 per cent plan to travel alone to check on the situation first before bringing the rest of their family (most often the male head of household).
- Border monitoring and Focus Group Discussion findings show that family strategies to prepare an eventual durable return can vary depending on their specific circumstances with for instance the breadwinner returning ahead of the family to take a livelihood opportunity in Syria or, if working in the country of asylum, remaining behind to earn resources required to support his/her family's reintegration back home.
- About 40 per cent of the respondents stated they will take their assets/items back with them (mainly furniture and electronics). About 70 per cent of the respondents left items/assets in Syria that they may be able to use upon their return such as a house, land, or a vehicle.

Expected livelihood opportunities upon return

Refugees intending to return within 12 months were hoping to find livelihood opportunities in various economic sectors among which the top three were agriculture (37 per cent), small businesses (12 per cent) and construction (13 per cent).

Intended sector of work upon return



Plans for those who are not intending to go home now

Of the group who stated they **do not** have intentions to return to Syria or are undecided, 67 per cent and 47 per cent respectively plan to stay in their host country whereas 25 per cent and 19 per cent respectively plan to travel to a third country.

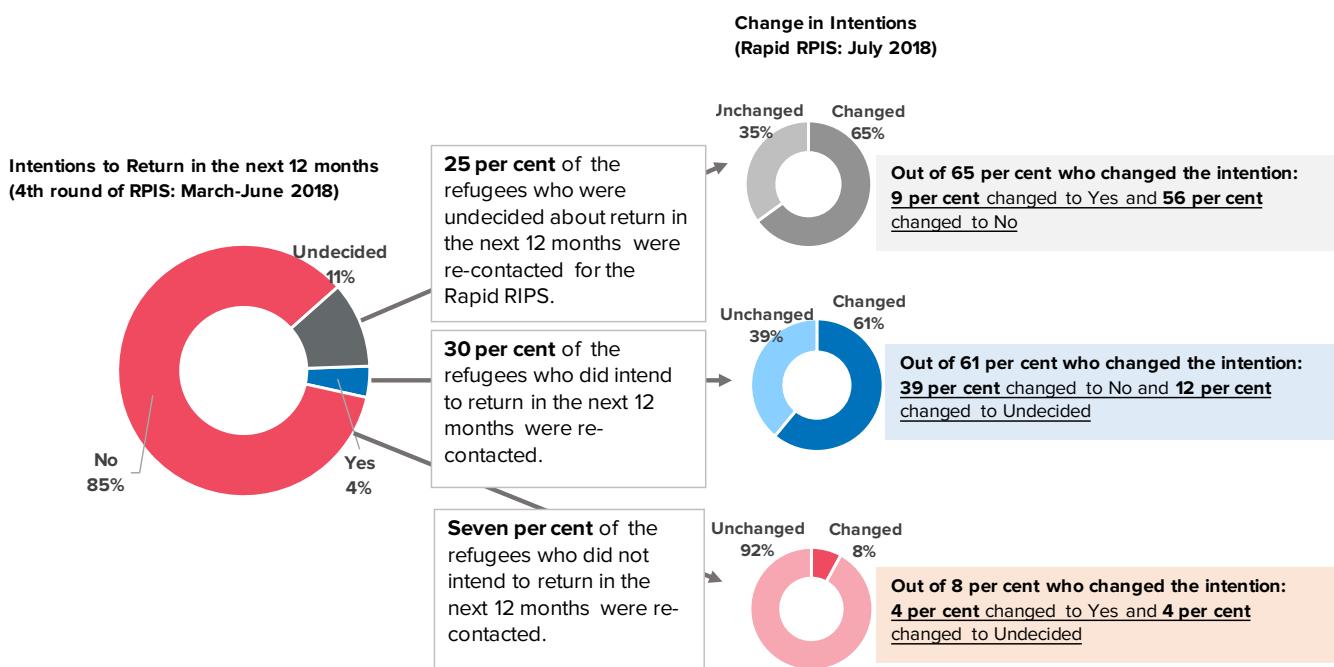
When those considering moving to a third country were asked why they selected a particular country, the main reason was due to having family ties, friends or other contacts in that country. Canada was reported as the number one country of choice for onward movers (33 per cent) followed by the USA (21 per cent), Germany (11 per cent), with smaller numbers mentioning the UK (two per cent), Sweden (two per cent) and Australia (one per cent). In addition, 30 per cent of the concerned respondents were ready to go to ‘any country’.

V. Validation of results post developments in July

In light of the rapidly evolving conflict dynamics in Southern Syria including the recent effective expansion of Government of Syria controlled territory and the return-related announcements by the Syrian Government and the Russian Federation, a rapid RPIS was undertaken in July in Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt to review findings from the fourth round of RPIS and examine any impact of developments on overall intentions to return.

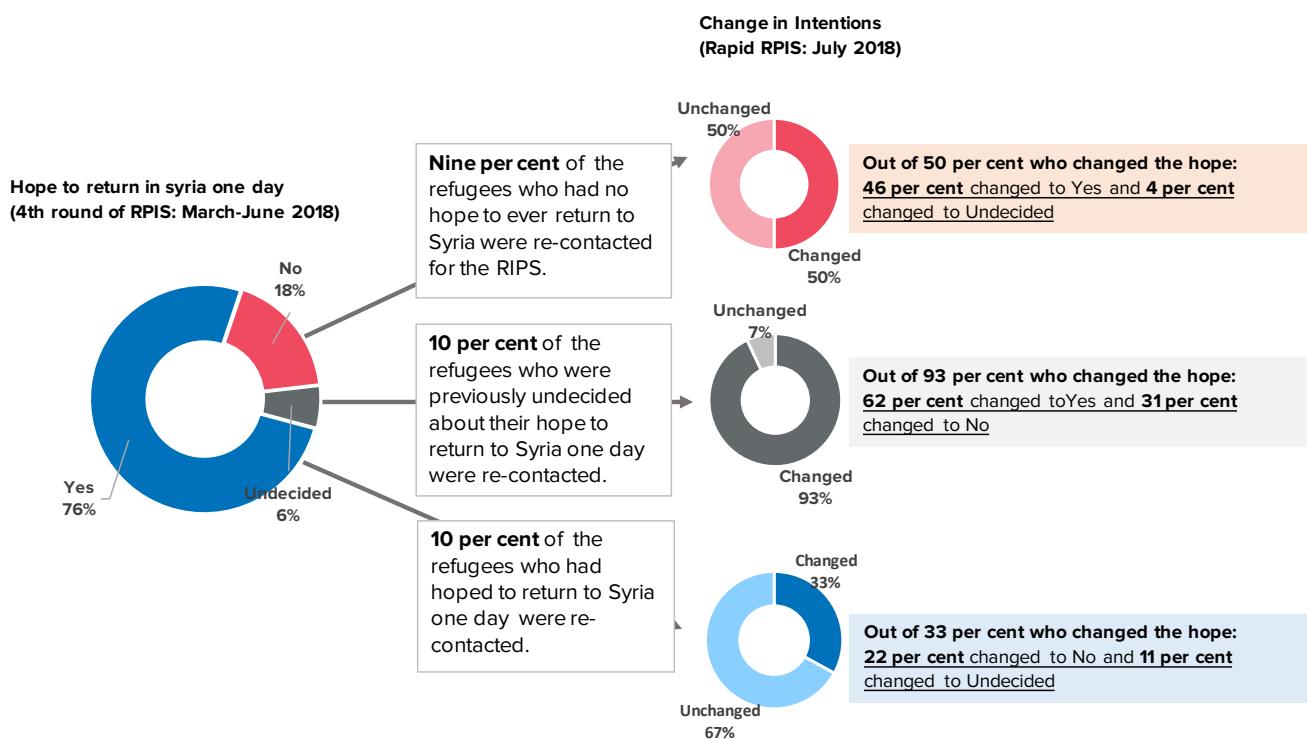
Out of 439 cases that underwent the Rapid RPIS, 26 per cent **changed their intention** (March - June). Some 25 per cent of respondents who initially had said they were undecided about their return were contacted. 65 per cent of those contacted changed their decision to ‘no intention to return’. Some 30 per cent of those who had initially said they intended to return were contacted. 61 per cent changed their decision to ‘no intention to return’. Finally, seven per cent of those who had initially said they were not intending to return were contacted and eight per cent of respondents had changed their mind to either ‘yes’ and ‘undecided’.

The following diagram illustrates the percentage of each answer group that changed their intention to return, followed by a listing of the reasons for this change (overleaf):



- **Previously undecided:** Those who had stated previously they were undecided and changed to a 'yes' answer in the Rapid RPIS said their main reason was due to obtaining new information from friends on the improvement in the security situation in Syria. Those who were initially undecided and then changed to a 'not intending to return' answer stated that their main reasons for reconsideration was the worsening of the security situation and that the situation would take years to improve. A second main reason stated was the lack of access to livelihoods in their country of asylum; Other reasons included the belief that armed groups were mainly concentrated in one area (Idlib), their initial reason for fleeing was due to military service which remains of concern; and, the fact that their homes were destroyed.
- **Previously intending to return:** Those who were previously intending to return and changed their mind to 'no longer intending to return', included reasons such as the lack of security, being integrated in their host country (having a new life and job), and concern about repercussions for having fled from the military. Other reasons were due to high cost of living in Syria, poor living conditions, and the inability to rebuild their destroyed homes. Within this group, those who became undecided about their intention stated they changed their mind due to the security situation, lack of sources of income, and the deteriorating situation inside Syria.
- **Previously not intending to return:** Amongst this group, those who now indicated they are intending to return in the Rapid RPIS stated that their decision changed due to receiving positive information about the improvement of the situation from their trusted sources (family and friends) and due to better education opportunities for their children in Syria. Negative push factors in host countries such as high debt, lack of coping mechanisms, and no work opportunities, have also led this group to change their intention. Those who are now undecided about their return have stated that their concerns over the security situation has now made them reconsider.

Similarly, those who stated that they had no intentions or were undecided about their return to Syria in the next 12 months were asked if they hoped to return to Syria one day. In sum, nine per cent of respondents who had initially said they did not have hope to return were reached and almost half changed their mind, and now hope to return. Seven per cent of those who had initially said that they were undecided about their hopes for return were reached and 93 per cent changed their decision, mainly to 'hope to return'. Finally, 10 per cent of those who initially said they hoped to return one day were reached and a third changed their decision, mainly to 'no hope'. **In sum, an increase in the hopes for return was noted which is in line with the general trend mentioned above.** The following diagram illustrates the percentage changes of each answer group.



VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

Notwithstanding a range of developments in Syria in 2018, 85 per cent of Syrians do not intend to return home in the next year primarily due to safety and security concerns in the country. This remained consistent throughout the surveys conducted by UNHCR over the past one and half years. Similarly, renewed Government of Aleppo in early 2017, did not result in a significant change in intentions at that time. Nonetheless, the conclusion of military operations in some areas in Syria has likely affected some refugees in their perception of the security and safety situation in their areas of origin.

It is important to note that almost three-quarters of Syrians have hopes and aspirations to go back home one day- a confirmation of their continued connection to their country, extended families and home.

Hopes to return one day

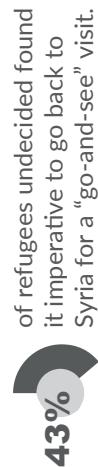
76% hope to return to Syria one day

19%

do not plan to return

5%

are undecided



of refugees undecided found it imperative to go back to Syria for a “go-and-see” visit.

43%

of refugees not considering a return within the coming 12 month found it imperative to go back to Syria for a go and see visit.

65%

of refugees with no hope to return had destroyed property compared to **51 per cent** of total respondents.

24%

of refugees with no hope to return had **no family members** in Syria compared to **17 per cent** of total respondents.

85%

do not intend to return in the next 12 months.

11%

are yet to decide whether to return in the next 12 months.

4%

intend to return in the next 12 months.

Intention to return in the next 12 months



19%

do not plan to return

I. Safety & Security

The lack of predictable and sustainable physical safety in Syria is the primary factor influencing refugees' plans for the future. Refugees highlighted the situation of indiscriminate violence or risks of targeted reprisal as key obstacles to return.

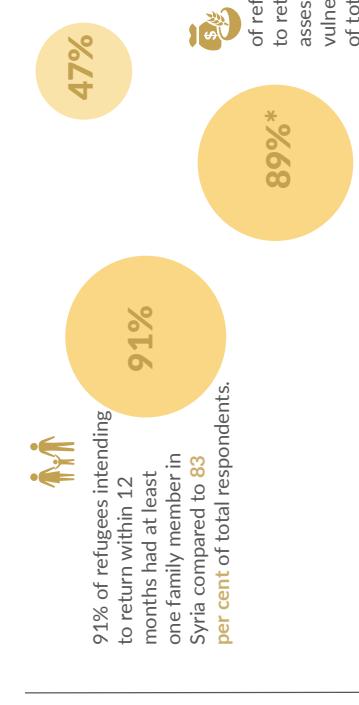
II. Access to adequate housing

75 per cent of refugees not intending to return in the next 12 months responded that they do not have inhabitable housing in Syria.

III. Work opportunities

Access to, or lack of, livelihood was regarded as a determining factor influencing decisions on return.

51 per cent of the respondents planning to return to Syria within 12 months believe they do not have sufficient information on their intended area of return for the purpose of restarting their lives - the top five information needs cited are:



*In countries where information on refugees' socio-economic vulnerability is available (i.e. Lebanon and Jordan).

Annex II: Methodology

During the fourth round of the RPIS, a total of **4,283 Syrian refugees residing in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan** were interviewed between **March and June 2018**. Due to operational context, Turkey did not take part in the 2017-2018 RPIS exercises and the intentions to return were collected through dedicated focus groups discussions with refugees.

Common Floor Questionnaire (CFQ)

A noteworthy change in the 2018 RPIS is agreement on and use of a ‘common floor questionnaire’ by all participating country operations. This questionnaire comprised seven main questions for every respondent followed by an average of 12 follow-up questions for each answer category (those who answered: Yes, No, I do not know/I am undecided) which ensured a harmonized approach across the region and the possibility for comparison, to the extent possible, given the specificities of each operational context. Country operations also had the option to add country-specific questions to the CFQ. The additional country-specific questions will be analysed and released separately, as deemed appropriate, by each operation in the country chapters.

Sampling strategy

The sampling approach adopted for this survey aimed to generate a random and representative sample of the overall population of Syrian refugees registered in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. To ensure a representative sample (with a 95 per cent confidence level), a stratified random sample of cases was generated for each country to account for governorate of origin, family size and records of specific needs in the case.

Surveys conducted per country for the 2018 RPIS and RAPID RPIS (cases)

Country	Number of surveys conducted
Egypt	922
Lebanon	1,453
Jordan	1,798
Iraq	596
Overall	4,769 Syrian refugees interviewed

Interviews

The surveys were conducted by phone in Egypt, Jordan and Iraq and through face-to-face interviews in Lebanon.

Who answered the survey?	Persons with Specific Needs
The majority (87 per cent) of the respondents were the Principal Applicants (PA) of the case, most of whom are male. The remaining 13 per cent were the adult spouse, mostly female.	71 per cent of the respondents are families with at least one individual with a specific need.
28 per cent of the respondents are female-headed households. ⁴	The main specific needs are: 32 per cent, serious medical conditions; 19 per cent, child at risk; 18 per cent, specific legal and physical protection needs; and 10 per cent, disability.

⁴ Some of these cases may have a spouse registered with them who is not of concern, i.e. national of the host country, or the spouse is living with the Principal Applicant in the country of asylum but is not registered.

Data analysis

In addition to the information collected through the survey, UNHCR registration system (proGres) and Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS) data was used during the analysis of the findings to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the profiles of those surveyed, including family composition, place of origin, specific needs, occupation, socio-economic vulnerability, and age and gender breakdown. This information is displayed in an aggregated manner in this report to maintain confidentiality. In addition to the data collected through the 2018 survey, the data analyse the findings from the three surveys completed in 2017 (a total of 7,067 Syrian cases).

Overview of 2017 RPIS Surveys

Date of implementation	Number of surveys conducted
February 2017	963 surveys Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon
April 2017	2,859 surveys Egypt, Iraq and Jordan
October 2017	3,245 surveys Egypt, Iraq and Jordan
Overall - 2017	7,067 Syrian cases reached in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon

To date, 11,836 Syrian families (over 47,000 Syrian refugees) have been surveyed through the regional RPIS survey on their intentions and perceptions on return to Syria, noting that country operations continue to conduct additional surveys and FGDs.

Follow up Rapid RPIS

After the completion of the fourth RPIS during the period from March to June 2018, a rapid RPIS was conducted in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan during the third week of July 2018 to validate the findings from the fourth round of RPIS in light of the rapidly evolving events in the south of Syria. In this regard, 439 cases (seven per cent of the respondents from the fourth RPIS), who had previously agreed to be contacted regularly by UNHCR about their intentions, were surveyed to assess whether or not their initial intentions had changed as a result of the recent developments in Syria. A light questionnaire was used to allow for timely collection and compilation of findings.

Out of the 439 cases that underwent the Rapid RPIS, 26 per cent **changed their intention** from the RPIS survey conducted in March-June mainly to “no intention to return”. Some 65 per cent of those who had initially said they were undecided about their return to Syria changed to ‘no intention to return’ and 61 per cent of those who had initially said they intended to return changed to ‘no intention to return’. On the other hand, only eight per cent of those who had initially said they were not intending to return changed their mind, equal proportions between a “yes” answer (intending to return in the next 12 months) and undecided about return intentions. More details and diagrams are outlined in Section V (page 14).

Limitations

While intention surveys are a useful tool to collect important data and conclude on some findings, they have limitations, including the fact that the reflection of refugees' intentions are valid at a given point in time only and may subsequently change. Phone surveys are not intended to gather sensitive protection and personal information. Accessing groups of refugees with specific needs or other specific personal characteristics may not always be possible over the phone either.

It is to be noted that the intended target of individual surveys to be contacted per country to ensure a full representativeness of the sample was not systematically reached. A total of 6,651 cases were contacted for the purpose of the survey and 62 per cent of them were successfully reached, accepted to take part in the survey, and were interviewed. The remaining cases either declined participation, were unreachable, or their contact details were incorrect. As such, while the confidence level remained at the planned 95 per cent, the planned five per cent margin of error increased to an average of (+/-) 7.5 per cent.

Although data collected through previous survey gives an interesting perspective of trends over time, the survey methodology and questionnaire used varied slightly during the different surveys. This challenge was mitigated by focusing the current analysis to allow for greater comparability, including indicators which could be compared over time and between operations to generate trends. In the future, this will be addressed through the continued use of the Common Floor Questionnaire.

Finally, because of its specific operational context, UNHCR Turkey did not take part in the RPIS surveys in 2017 and 2018 but undertook a dedicated participatory assessment with Syrian refugees in Turkey in July 2017 with an aim to understand intentions for the future, gain information on refugees decision making with regards to return, and understand interactions with spontaneous returnees from Syria. In collaboration with the MENA Director's Office in Amman (DOIA), this participatory assessment exercise was conducted for 321 participants covering six provinces (Ankara, Adana, Hatay, Sanliurfa, Osmaniye and Gaziantep). Although limited in size, UNHCR Turkey has noted that the exercise produced results which are generally consistent with the main findings of the RPIS surveys conducted in the region, showing a fairly uniform picture when it comes to intentions and perceptions regarding returns.

Annex III: Common Floor Questionnaire

i. Call-related information (to be entered for all calls)

1. File number: Insert the UNHCR file number from the calling list (Note: Use the standard format, i.e. 199-11c12345, and double check it to avoid errors. Allow the respondent to check their document to provide the file number if need be).

2. Status of call

- Unreachable (try calling twice)
- Not the correct person
- Declined participation
- Dropped out in the middle of the interview (after trying to call back twice)
- Available – proceed with the survey

ii.General information

1. Identity of respondent (select one)

- Principal applicant (male/ female)
- Adult spouse (male/ female)

2. Place of origin of respondent (select one)

- Select from the drop down menu

3. Do you have family members (including extended family members) in Syria? (Select one)

- Yes
- No
- I do not know
- I prefer not to answer

4. What is the status of your dwelling (i.e. the home they used to live in only. This does not include land or commercial property etc. If the respondent has more than one dwelling, ask about their main dwelling, i.e. the one they used to live in before they fled/the one they plan to return to)? (Select one)

- I do not have a dwelling (proceed to question 6)
- Occupied with my consent
- Occupied without my consent
- Rented
- Sold
- I do not know
- Other – specify (maximum characters)

5. What is the condition of your dwelling? (Select one)

- Fully Damaged/destroyed
- Partially damaged/destroyed but inhabitable
- Partially damaged/destroyed but uninhabitable
- Intact
- I do not know

6. Do you currently possess at least one official civil document issued by the Government of Syria, showing your Syrian origin? (Make sure the respondent understands that this question only relates to documents issued by the Government of Syria) (Select one)

- Yes – (proceed to question 6.1)
- No (proceed to question 7)
- I do not know (proceed to question 7)

6.1 Which documents do you have? (Select all that apply)

- Syrian passport
- Syrian national ID
- Other Individual civil extract (خراج قيد)
- Family booklet
- Other Family civil extract (بيان عائلي)
- Military booklet
- Birth certificate
- Marriage certificate
- Divorce certificate
- Driving license
- Other document - specify
- I am a stateless (proceed to question 7.2)
- I do not know

6.2 If stateless, what type of document do you have? (Indicate “no document” if the respondent states they do not have any documents)

Free text

7. Do your family members (spouse, children etc.) have at least one official civil document issued by the Government of Syria? (Select one)

- Yes
- No
- Only some of my family members
- I do not know

8. Do you feel you have sufficient information to decide on your intention to return to Syria in the next 12 months?

- Yes- proceed to 8.2
- No – proceed to 8.1
- I am not sure – proceed to 8.1

8.1 What additional information do you require? (Select top three)

- Information on the security situation in the intended area of return
- Information about available shelter in the intended area of return
- Information on the rule of law in the intended area of return
- Information about the status of my properties in the intended area of return
- Information about basic services and humanitarian in the intended area of return (food, water, electricity, health, public transportation, etc.)
- Information about support for reintegration
- Information about job opportunities in the intended area of return
- Information about education
- Information on amnesties
- Information on military service, including exemptions
- Information about the recognition and/or validation of documentation issued in host country (i.e. marriage certificate, birth certificate, education certificates)
- Information on how to obtain civil documentation upon return to Syria
- Information on the political process
- None of the above
- I do not know

8.2 Who are your sources of information (select all that apply)

- Family/relatives
- Community
- Friends
- Social media
- UN agencies
- NGO and INGO
- State media (TV, newspapers, online etc.)
- Non state media (TV, newspapers, online, etc.)
- Other

9. Do you plan to return to Syria in the next 12 months? (Select one)

- Yes – Response section iii
- No – Response section iv
- I do not know/ I am undecided – Response section v

iii. Intention to return

3.1. Whom are you planning to return to Syria with? (Select one)

- With all my family (all those registered on the same file)- proceed to 3.2
- With all my family and extended family- proceed to 3.2
- With some of my family/extended family members while others will remain in the host country- proceed to 3.2
- Alone – Proceed to 3.1.1

3.1.1 Why do you plan to return alone? (Select one)

- I want to check on the situation first before bringing my family
- My family is already in Syria
- My family wants to remain in host country
- I have no family in Syria or in my current host country
- Other (specify)

3.2. Why do you intend to return to Syria? (Select the answer(s) that best matches the answer(s) provided by the respondent but do not read them to the respondent. maximum of 3 answers can be selected)

- The security situation has improved
- There is progress in the political solution to the conflict so far/in the place I return to
- Improved rule of law
- I want to reunite with my family in Syria
- My family has decided to return
- I have work/livelihood opportunities in Syria
- There is access to adequate basic services in my place of return (health, water, power, etc.)
- There are services to cater to my specific needs
- To provide education for my children
- To access my property/housing and/or check on my property back home
- To obtain or access civil and other documentation
- I have finally obtained the identity documents needed to return legally/my Syrian nationality will be acknowledged by the Government of Syria (for stateless Syrians)
- To obtain humanitarian assistance in Syria
- I have sufficient resources to return and reintegrate
- I have now sufficient information to return home
- I understood I will not face any problems as a military deserter/draft evader
- I understood there won't be a retaliation against me/my family upon return
- I understood that I and/or my children won't be recruited
- I understood that there won't be any mandatory military service/conscription
- I don't or no longer have resettlement prospects through UNHCR/Travelling to a third country is no longer an option for me
- I understood I can return to my host country in case I change my mind after returning to Syria

- I/my family are facing problems in the host country (legal, residency expired, harassment, exploitation, abuse against children or women)
- I feel pressure from my host country to return
- I have used up all my savings/cannot afford to live in the host country anymore
- I no longer want to be a refugee
- I prefer not to answer
- None of the above
- Other-specify

3.3. Do you have concerns or fears about returning to Syria?

- Yes – proceed to 3.3.1
- No- proceed to 3.4
- I do not know- proceed to 3.4

3.3.1 What are your three main concerns/ fears about returning to Syria? (Select the answer(s) that best matches the answer(s) provided by the respondent but do not read them to the respondent. maximum of 3 answers can be selected)

- The security situation, experiencing conflict & violence, limitations to freedom of movement
- The lack of political solution to the conflict/lack of progress in the political process
- Lack of rule of law
- Lack of work/livelihood opportunities
- Lack of adequate basic services (health, water, power, etc.)
- Lack of education for my children
- Lack of freedom of movement
- I cannot access shelter/housing, including my own house and property
- I cannot obtain or access civil documentation/civil registries upon return and/or fear not to be able to obtain such documentation for oneself or a family member
- Not having sufficient resources to return and/or reintegrate
- That my Syrian nationality is not recognized by the Government of Syria (for stateless Syrians)
- Individuals with my profile will face harm
- Lack of an amnesty for military deserters/draft evaders
- Lack of an amnesty, law/decreed for leaving the country illegally/ I don't have the necessary documents to return legally
- Retaliation against me/my family upon return
- I or my adult children will have to complete military service and/or be conscripted
- I and/or my adult children will be recruited by non-state actors
- Availability of services to cater to my specific needs (disability, unaccompanied elderly, serious medical condition, etc.)
- I cannot return to my host country in case I change my mind after returning to Syria
- I prefer not to answer
- Other - specify

3.4. Where will you return to in Syria? (Select one)

- Place of origin- proceed to 3.7
- Other place – proceed with 3.4.1 and 3.4.2
- I do not know- proceed to 3.7
- I am undecided- proceed to 3.7

3.4.1 If you are not returning to your place of origin, what area will you return to? (Drop-down menu with governorate, district, sub-district)

3.4.2 Why are you choosing to return to another place than your place of origin? (select one)

- It is my spouse/family's place of origin
- It is the last place of residence prior to fleeing to Jordan
- It is safer
- It has livelihood options
- It has education options for my children

- It has housing options
- Other – specify

3.7 What was your main job prior to fleeing Syria? (Select one)

- Agriculture/Livestock
- Business (kiosks, shops, trade, hair salon etc.)
- Mechanic work (car, motorcycle repairs, etc.)
- Hospitality work (restaurant, hotel, tourism agency, etc.)
- Construction sector
- Production and manufacturing
- Education (teacher, professor)
- Public sector (any kind of government-related job)
- Military or security (police, office, intelligence, etc.)
- Medical sector (doctor, nurse, pharmacist)
- Legal (judge, lawyer, notary public, etc.)
- NGO/UN work
- Other – specify
- None

3.8. What job will you do if you return to Syria? (select one)

- Agriculture/Livestock
- Business (kiosks, shops, trade, hair salon etc.)
- Mechanic work (car, motorcycle repairs, etc.)
- Hospitality work (restaurant, hotel, tourism agency, etc.)
- Construction sector
- Production and manufacturing
- Education (teacher, professor)
- Public sector (any kind of government-related job)
- Military or security (police, office, intelligence, etc.)
- Medical sector (doctor, nurse, pharmacist)
- Legal (judge, lawyer, notary public, etc.)
- NGO/UN work
- Other – specify
- None

3.9. If you decide to return, which of your assets/items that you currently possess would you wish to take back with you? (select all that apply)

- Furniture
- Electronics
- Vehicle
- My pets (i.e. cat, dog) and/or poultry/livestock
- Other items and assets - specify
- I do not know
- Nothing

3.10. What did you leave behind in Syria that you may be able to use upon your return, if it is still there? (select all that apply)

- Nothing
- Land
- House
- Livestock
- Business
- Vehicle
- Other items - specify
- I do not know

iv. Not planning to return

Enumerator note to respondent: Although you are not planning to return in the near future, is it okay to capture some additional information from you which would assist us to better understand your perceptions and intentions.

4.1 What are the three main reasons why you are not planning to return to Syria in the next 12 months? (Select the answer(s) that best matches the answer(s) provided by the respondent but do not read them to the respondent. Maximum of 3 answers can be selected).

- Lack of safety and security/ongoing conflict/fear of resumption of conflict
- Lack of a political solution to the conflict/lack of progress in the political process
- Lack of rule of law
- Lack of livelihood/work opportunities
- Inadequate basic services (health, water, power, infrastructure etc.)
- Lack of education for my children
- Lack of adequate housing and/or concerns over my property/housing (i.e. destroyed, damaged, inaccessible, uninhabitable, occupied, etc.)
- I don't have the documents required to return, and/or have concerns over obtaining or accessing civil documentation in Syria, and/or cannot proof Syrian nationality.
- Fear of arrest, detention and/or retaliation upon return and/or no amnesty in place
- To avoid military service, conscription or recruitment (for me or my children)
- Limitations to freedom of movement
- Lack of resources to return and/or reintegrate there
- I don't have enough information about the situation to make a decision
- I have been advised against such return by those who have returned already
- Because I expect harm due to my profile (i.e. LGBTI, woman alone, certain political profile, SGBV survivor, etc.)
- Due to lack of services to cater to my specific needs (such as disability, special medical need, elderly requiring care etc.)
- I am in the resettlement pipeline/I am interested in resettlement (through UNHCR)
- I plan to depart to a third country/interested in going to a third country on my own
- I am well settled in my host country (i.e. I have work, my children are in school, my family are here, etc.)
- I am concerned that I will not be able to re-enter the host country if I return
- I left Syria unofficially
- Some of my family (including extended family) do not wish to return
- I no longer have family in Syria
- I prefer not to answer
- None of the above
- Other - Specify

4.2 Under what circumstances would you consider returning to Syria? (Select the answer(s) that best matches the answer(s) provided by the respondent but do not read them to the respondent. maximum of 3 answers can be selected)

- Improved security situation
- Progress is made in finding a political solution to the conflict
- Improved rule of law
- I am confident that there are work/livelihood opportunities
- I am confident that I will have access to adequate basic services (health, water, power, etc.)
- I am confident that my children will have access to education
- I am confident that there is access to my own property/housing or alternative housing
- I have the civil documentation required, and/or have access to obtain civil documentation back in Syria, and/or my Syrian nationality is recognized by the Government
- There is safer freedom of movement
- I have sufficient resources to return and/or reintegrate
- I have sufficient information to make a decision
- I am sure there is an amnesty for military deserters/draft evaders
- I am sure there is an amnesty, law/decreed for leaving the country illegally
- I am sure there won't be a retaliation against me/my family upon return
- When it's no longer mandatory to complete military service/ no longer fear risk of conscription or recruitment

- I am sure there is availability of services to cater to my specific needs (i.e. disability, elderly, medical condition, etc.)
- I am sure that individuals with my profile will not face harm (i.e. LGBTI, woman alone, SGBV survivor, certain political profile, etc.)
- Resettlement or otherwise going to a third country is no longer an option for me
- When I can return to my host country in case I change my mind after returning to Syria
- If I/my family continue to face problems in the host country (legal, residency expired, harassment, exploitation, abuse against children or women)
- When all my family is ready to return
- I prefer not to answer
- None of the above
- Other - specify

4.3. Would it be important for you or for someone from your community to first visit Syria (i.e. go and see visit) before deciding on return? (Select one)

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

4.4. What are your plans since you do not wish to return to Syria in the next 12 months? (Select one)

- I stay in the host country where I am- proceed to 4.5
- I move to a third country (onward movement) – proceed to 4.4.1 and 4.4.2
- I will eventually return to Syria- proceed to 4.5
- I do not know/ I am undecided- proceed to 4.5
- None of the above- proceed to 4.5

4.4.1 If “third country/onward movement” is selected: To which country are you planning to go to? (Select one)

- I have not decided yet
- Any country
- If country is decided, enumerator to enter name of country in free text with maximum characters.

4.4.2 What is the main reason you chose this country? (Select one)

- I/my spouse have contacts in that country, i.e. family members and/or friends
- I am engaged/married to a national of that country
- I/my children can continue education
- I/my spouse have a job opportunity in that country
- I/my spouse used to live/study/work there
- I/my family are in the family reunification process/private sponsorship process
- None of the above

4.5. Do you hope to go back to Syria one day? (Select one)

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

v. Undecided about return

5.1. What are the main three issues that would help facilitate your decision on whether to consider returning in the next 12 months or not? (Select the answer(s) that best matches the answer(s) provided by the respondent but do not read them to the respondent. maximum of 3 answers can be selected)

- Improved security situation
- Progress in finding a political solution to the conflict is made
- Improved rule of law
- I am confident that there are work/livelihood opportunities
- I am confident that I will have access to adequate basic services (health, water, power, etc.)
- I am confident that my children will have access to education
- I am confident that there is access to my own property/housing or alternative housing

- I have the civil documentation required, and/or have access to obtain civil documentation back in Syria, and/or my Syrian nationality is recognized by the Government
- There is safer freedom of movement for me and my family and/or a better protection environment
- I have sufficient resources to return and/or reintegrate
- I have sufficient information to make a decision
- I am sure there is an amnesty for military deserters/draft evaders
- I am sure there is an amnesty, law/decrees for leaving the country illegally
- I am sure there won't be a retaliation against me/my family upon return
- When it's no longer mandatory to complete military service/ no longer fear risk of conscription and recruitment
- I am sure there is availability of services to cater to my specific needs
- I am sure that individuals with my profile will not face harm (i.e. LGBTI, woman alone, SGBV survivor, certain political profile, etc.)
- Resettlement or otherwise going to a third country is no longer an option for me
- If I/my family continue to face problems in the host country (legal, residency expired, harassment, exploitation, abuse against children or women)
- When I can return to my host country in case I change my mind after returning to Syria
- When all my family is ready to return
- I prefer not to answer
- None of the above
- Other - specify

5.2 Would it be important for you or a member of your community to first visit Syria (i.e. go and see visit) before deciding on return? (Select one)

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

5.3 If you decide to return in the future, where would you return to in Syria? (Select one)

- Place of origin- proceed to 5.4
- Other place – proceed to 5.3.1 and 5.3.2
- I do not know / I am undecided- proceed to 5.4

5.3.1 If you are not returning to your place of origin, what area will you return to? (Drop-down menu with governorate, district, sub-district. Enumerator must select one for each level)

5.3.2 Why are you choosing to return to another place than your place of origin? (select one)

- It is my spouse/family's place of origin
- It is the last place of residence prior to fleeing to the host country
- It is safer
- It has livelihood options
- It has education options for my children
- It has housing options
- Other - specify

5.4. What are your plans since you are undecided about return to Syria in the next 12 months? (Select one)

- I will stay in the host country where I am- proceed to 5.5
- I will move to a third country (onward movement) – proceed to 5.4.1 and 5.4.2
- I will eventually return to Syria- proceed to 5.5
- I do not know/ I am undecided- proceed to 5.5
- None of the above- proceed to 5.5

5.4.1 If “onward movement to a third country” is selected, to which country are you planning to go to? (Select one)

- I have not decided yet
- Any country
- If country is decided, enumerator to enter name of country in free text with maximum characters.

5.4.2 What is the main reason you chose this country? (Select one)

- I/my spouse have contacts in that country, i.e. family members and/or friends
- I am engaged/married to a national of that country
- I/my children can continue education
- I/my spouse have a job opportunity in that country
- I/my spouse used to live/study/work there
- I/my family are in the family reunification process/private sponsorship process
- None of the above

5.5. Do you hope to go back to Syria one day? (Select one)

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

vi. For all respondents, this question is to be asked at the end of the interview followed by a repeated thank you for the individual's time and cooperation:

6.1 Do you accept to be part of a smaller group that UNHCR will call more regularly to understand your plans and intentions over time and in the case you decide to return, UNHCR can continue to follow up with you inside Syria? You can opt out at any point if you change your mind in the future, and as mentioned before this will not have any effect on your file.

- Yes
- No

FOURTH REGIONAL SURVEY ON SYRIAN REFUGEES' PERCEPTIONS AND INTENTIONS ON RETURN TO SYRIA (RPIS)

EGYPT, IRAQ, LEBANON, AND JORDAN

July 2018

Conducted by The UNHCR Country Operations In Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon
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Units

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