



SYRIAN REFUGEE ARRIVALS IN GREECE

PRELIMINARY
QUESTIONNAIRE
FINDINGS

APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2015

METHODOLOGY

This preliminary analysis was conducted on a large number of interviews results (1,245), conducted by UNHCR border protection teams in various locations in Greece. Interviews were conducted with Syrian refugees who arrived to the country between April and September 2015. The sampling methodology used was not randomized, and therefore is not representative of the entire caseload of Syrian refugees coming through Greece. These preliminary findings, however, do represent the largest sample of Syrian refugees interviewed upon arrival in Europe. Moreover, this is the first in a series of surveys UNHCR is conducting which will provide a more comprehensive and randomized set of findings.

The UNHCR Greece team developed a simple questionnaire to capture as much basic information on the profiles of the sea arrivals from Syria, their reason to leave Syria and take the journey across the Mediterranean to Greece and to capture their vulnerabilities, conditions and expectations before, upon and after their entry into Greece.

During the period April 2015 to 16 September 2015, UNHCR Greece border teams gathered 1,245 responses to the questionnaire at various border locations, including on the islands, in accordance with specific guidelines. The participants were assured the principle of confidentiality would be respected and that their responses would be gathered, compiled and assessed without revealing their names or any details of their identity. The questionnaires were completed by participants who were willing to participate in this study and who gave their consent to having the results published accordingly.

The participants were given the option not to abstain from answering any question they did not wish to respond to for any personal reason. Therefore, “no reply” was included as an option in the questionnaire itself and was presented in the final tables of findings. There were interpreters who supported Arabic speaking participants in completing the questionnaires. The interpreters were provided through UNHCR Greece’s implementing partner METAction and signed a confidentiality code.¹

The values presented in the findings section, both absolute and percentages (as applicable), refer to the responses provided, while the total number of Syrians that arrived in Greece for the same period (April-September) was nearly 263,000.

¹ Document which has to be signed by Implementing Partner’s translators/interpreters to ensure personal data confidentiality as per UNHCR standards.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE FINDINGS

- The findings analyzed in this report are not representative of the whole Syrian refugee population that arrived in Greece; the methodology used was not a random sampling. Percentages used in this analysis only refer to the set of interviewees UNHCR staff interviewed, and cannot automatically be generalized to all Syrian arrivals to Greece.
- The period during which these interviews were conducted and the conditions during which both the refugees and UNHCR border teams found themselves were highly dynamic, unpredictable and ever-changing.
- This analysis, however, is applicable to the large sample of interviewed Syrians and provides strong indications to the humanitarian community on the 'profile' of Syrians arriving in Greece between April and September 2015.
- The number of questionnaires administered in each location is not representative of the number of arrivals per location. Evros has fewer arrivals than other locations, for example, but is represented in the survey by a larger number of interviews. However, Lesbos and Samos are currently the islands with the most arrivals and they are also represented with a high number of interviews.

LOCATIONS OF CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

Location	Number of Interviews	Percent of total
Lesbos	344	27.63 %
Samos	249	20.00 %
Evros	203	16.31 %
Kos	119	9.56 %
Chios	76	6.10 %
Other	62	4.98 %
Symi	59	4.74 %
Leros	50	4.02 %
Rhodes	42	3.37 %
Kalymnos	26	2.09 %
Limnos	15	1.20 %
TOTAL	1,245	100.00 %



MAIN FINDINGS

- **EDUCATION:** Those Syrians interviewed reported a very high level of education (**86%** secondary or university education level). Students were the largest group among interviewed refugees.
- **MISSING FAMILY MEMBERS:** One in five interviewees stated that they had been separated from one or more family members in Syria and that they do not know their current location.
- **SPECIFIC NEEDS:²** Most interviewees (**65%**) stated they did not have specific needs. Additionally, as declared by the individuals, **6%** were unaccompanied or separated children, **5%** were victims of torture, **3%** have a chronic disease and **3%** are single parents.
- **INTENTIONS:** Most interviewed refugees intended to apply for asylum **elsewhere in the EU**.

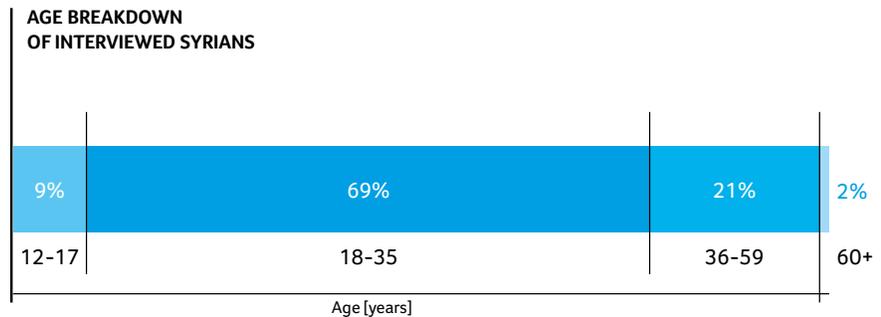
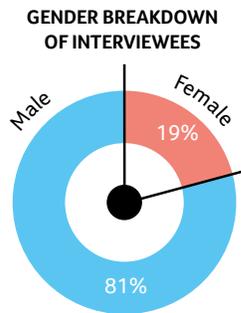
² Persons with specific needs (such as single-parent or women headed households, pregnant women, elderly or disabled refugees) and unaccompanied minors often do not want to be identified as such.

- **COUNTRY OF INTENDED DESTINATION:** Most interviewees indicated that they wished to seek asylum in Germany and, for a smaller number, Sweden. The reasons for this choice which interviewees cited most were employment opportunities, assistance and rights for refugees, existing family and social networks, and educational opportunities.
- **YEAR OF DEPARTURE FROM SYRIA:** **63%** of the interviewees left Syria in **2015**.
- **TIME SPENT IN COUNTRY OF FIRST ASYLUM OR TRANSIT AND LEGAL DOCUMENTATION:** Most of the interviewees spent little time in a country of first asylum or transit, and were without legal documentation to enter or be in the country of transit or first asylum.
 - **37%** of interviewees stated they did not reside in a third country before coming to Europe. In addition, **18%** spent between 1 and 3 months in a third country and the majority of them (**91%**) said they did not have any kind of legal documentation to enter or reside in that country. **10%** stated they spent between 3 to 6 months in a third country, **91%** of them without legal documentation. **10%** of those interviewed stated they spent 6 -12 months (**74%** without legal documentation), **10%** stated that they spent 1-2 years and **10%** stated that they spent more than 2 years in country of first asylum.
 - Only **13%** of interviewed Syrians had some documentation to enter or live in a country of transit or first asylum. The majority (**56%**) of those who spent more than one year and **76%** of those who spent more than one month in a third country **did not** have legal documentation to stay there.
 - **5%** of the interviewees stated they had refugee status or temporary protection in a third country.
- **TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION:** **91%** of the Syrians who spent more than 1 month in a third country had lived in private accommodation, only a handful had stayed in camps (**3%**).
- **ASSISTANCE:** **18%** of respondents stated that they had received some assistance in a third country.
- **MAIN REASONS FOR LEAVING COUNTRY OF FIRST ASYLUM:** Interviewees' main reasons for leaving were lack of non-exploitative employment opportunities adequate to their skills, financial needs, security and protection concerns, search for better opportunities for their children and the hope of educational opportunities.
- **85%** of those interviewed reached Greece at their first attempted crossing.

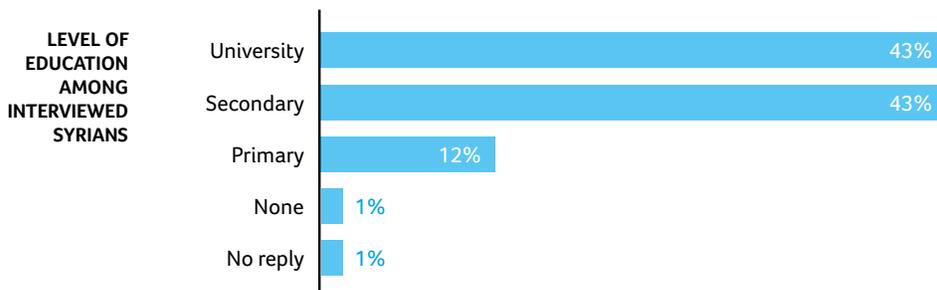
PROFILE OF INTERVIEWED SYRIANS

AGE AND GENDER BREAKDOWN OF INTERVIEWED SYRIANS

The graphs below illustrate the age and gender breakdown of the interviewed individuals, and are not indicative of the total Syrian population who arrived to Greece between April and September 2015.³ An up-to-date breakdown of Syrians arriving in Greece in 2015 according to registration carried out by Greek authorities is available on the Web portal (data.unhcr.org/mediterranean).



EDUCATION



86% of interviewed Syrians have secondary or university level education.

³ As a number of interviews were conducted with those refugees or refugee families requesting assistance or information from UNHCR staff, it is possible the large percentage of men reflected heads of households (both traveling with and ahead of their families), as well as men traveling on their own. The statistic mentioned later in this survey citing that 58% of the interviewees intended on bringing their family members to join them to their country of asylum alludes to this probability.

LAST PROFESSIONS OF INTERVIEWED SYRIANS

The weighted list in visual design below indicates the frequency of each reply to the question on last employment of interviewed individuals. The more frequent the reply, the larger the font size.



The most frequently mentioned occupation among interviewed Syrians was 'student' (consisting the **16%** of the total among **1,139** replies). In addition, **9%** were merchants or working in trade; **8%** were employed in the private sector; **7%** were in technical professions (carpenters, electricians etc.), **5%** were engineers and architects; **5%** were teachers; **4%** were pharmacists, doctors, veterinarians, viologists, or chemists; **4%** were laborers and **4%** were housewives. Additional professions cited by respondents included lawyers, judges, cooks, drivers, professors, academics, hairdressers, beauticians and IT specialists.

FAMILY STATUS OF INTERVIEWED SYRIANS:

Close to **50%** of the interviewed Syrians stated they are single, while **45%** stated they are married. A much smaller percentage stated they are widowed or divorced or other. **56%** stated they had no children, while **44%** stated they had children, either with them or in another country.

INTERVIEWED SYRIANS PLANNING TO BRING FAMILY MEMBERS TO COUNTRY OF ASYLUM:

More than **58%** of interviewed Syrians stated they intend to bring their family members to their country of asylum, while **34%** stated they did not intend to do so. **7%** were undecided.

ETHNIC ORIGIN AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF INTERVIEWED SYRIANS:

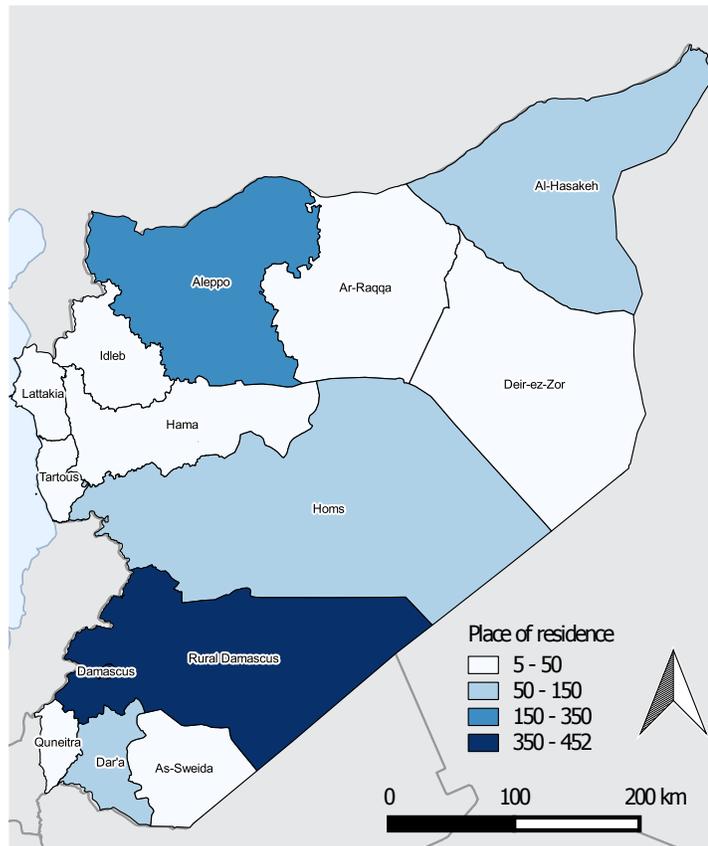
Most interviewees indicated their ethnic origin as Arab (86%) or Kurdish (12%). Less than 2% stated their ethnic origin as Circassian, Turkoman, Aramaic, Armenian or other.

STATED RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF INTERVIEWED SYRIANS:

Most interviewees identified themselves as Sunni Muslims (85%), while a small number stated they were Christian, belonging to different denominations (6%). Only 5% stated a different religious affiliation (Yazidi, Druze and Alawite), while 4% did not reply.

PLACE OF RESIDENCE IN SYRIA:

Place of residence	Frequency	Percent
Damascus and Rural Damascus	452	37.22 %
Aleppo	310	25.24 %
Homs	79	6.43 %
Daraa	74	6.03 %
Al Hasakah	62	5.05 %
Idlib	50	4.07 %
Latakia	44	3.58 %
Deir ez Zor	42	3.42 %
Hama	37	3.01 %
Ar Raqqa	31	2.52 %
Quneitra	20	1.63 %
Tartus	13	1.06 %
As Suwayda	5	0.41 %
No Reply	4	0.33 %
TOTAL	1,228	100.00 %



STATUS IN SYRIA:

Among those interviewed, 8% identified themselves as Palestinian Refugees in Syria, mostly under UNRWA mandate.

INTERVIEWED SYRIANS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS:

Most interviewees stated they did not have any specific needs (65%), and only 19% identified a particular need: 7% were unaccompanied/separated children, 6% identified as victims of torture, 3% as single parent family, another 3% stated they had a chronic disease, while 16% abstained from replying.

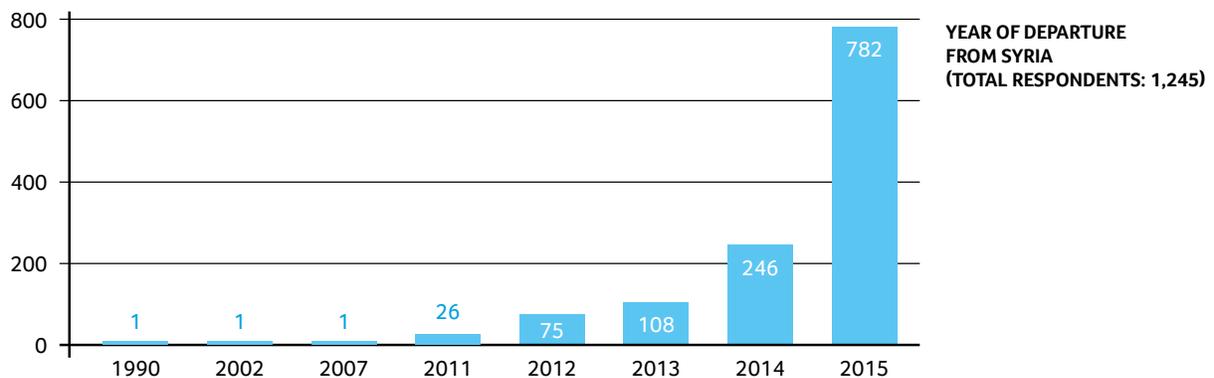
INTERVIEWED SYRIANS SEPARATED FROM FAMILY MEMBERS IN SYRIA AS A RESULT OF THE WAR:

19% of interviewees stated that they had been separated from one or more family members in Syria and that they do not know their current location.

ATTEMPTS MADE TO REACH GREECE:

85% of interviewed Syrians stated that they had reached Greece on their first attempt, **8%** on their second attempt, **3%** on their third and only **2%** after 4 or more attempts.

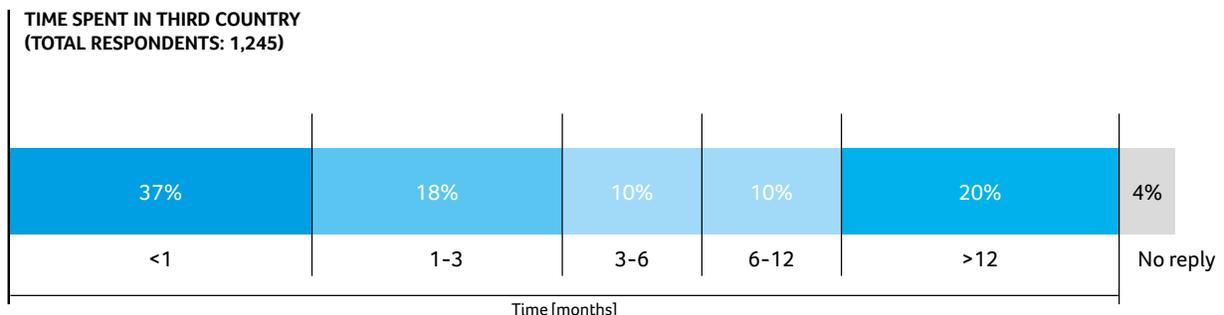
YEAR OF DEPARTURE FROM SYRIA:



Most interviewed Syrians left Syria **during 2015**.

TIME SPENT BY INTERVIEWED SYRIANS IN COUNTRY OF ASYLUM OR TRANSIT COUNTRY

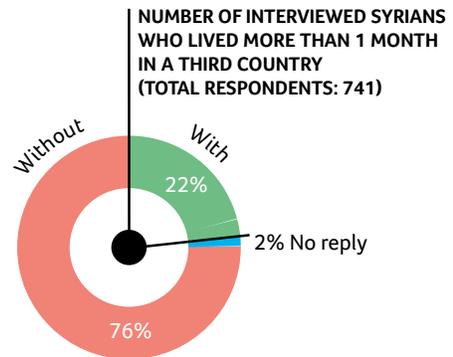
Most interviewees transited through a third country, but **came directly from Syria: 37%** of interviewees stated they did not reside in a third country before coming to Europe. In addition, **18%** stated that they spent only between 1 and 3 months in a third country and the majority of these persons (**91%**) did not have any kind of legal documentation to enter or reside in that country. **10%** stated they spent between 3 and 6 months, **91%** of them without legal documentation. **10%** of the interviewees stated they spent 6 -12 months (**74%** without legal documentation), **10%** spent 1 to 2 years, another **10%** spent more than 2 years in country of asylum. Of those staying for longer than 1 year, **56%** said that they did not have legal documentation to live in that country.



INTERVIEWED SYRIANS WHO SPENT MORE THAN 1 MONTH IN A THIRD COUNTRY: DOCUMENTATION

582 interviewed Syrians stated they spent more than 1 month in Turkey, 71 in Lebanon (6% of the total respondents), 27 in Egypt (2% of total), 20 in Iraq (2% of total), 19 in Jordan (2% of total). 17 indicated other countries (2% of total), while 5 (%) did not specify the country.

76% of them stated they had **no legal documentation** to be in that country.



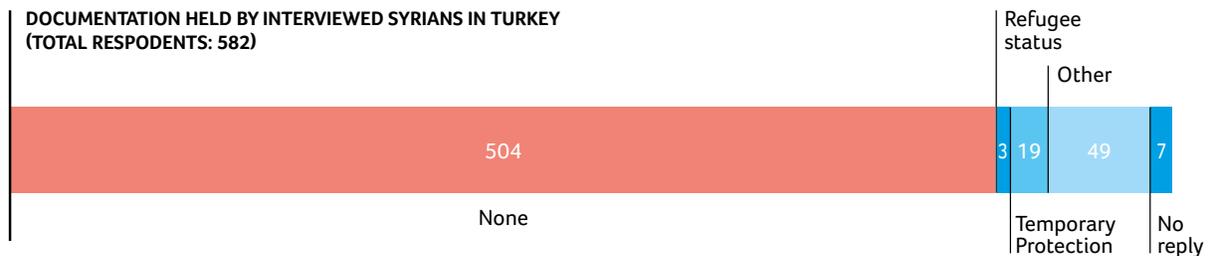
REFUGEE STATUS OR TEMPORARY PROTECTION

TYPE OF DOCUMENTATION HELD IN ALL COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM OR TRANSIT (TOTAL RESPONDENTS: 741)



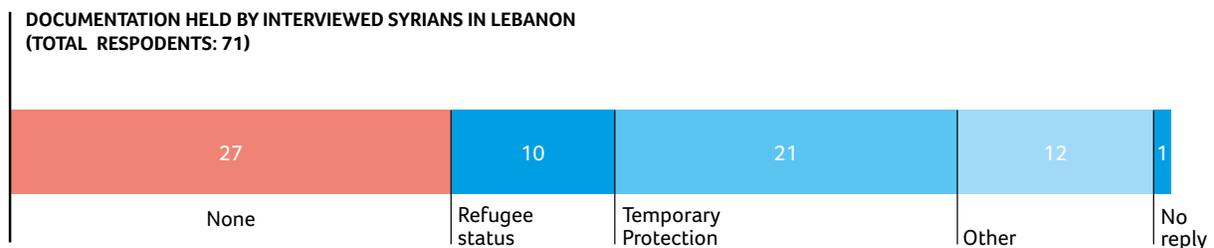
12% of the interviewed Syrians who spent more than 1 month in a third country had refugee status or temporary protection in this country

DOCUMENTATION HELD BY INTERVIEWED SYRIANS IN TURKEY (TOTAL RESPONDENTS: 582)



87% of the interviewed Syrians who came through Turkey **did not have any documentation in Turkey.**

DOCUMENTATION HELD BY INTERVIEWED SYRIANS IN LEBANON (TOTAL RESPONDENTS: 71)



60% of the 71 interviewed Syrians who came through Lebanon had some kind of documentation in Lebanon.

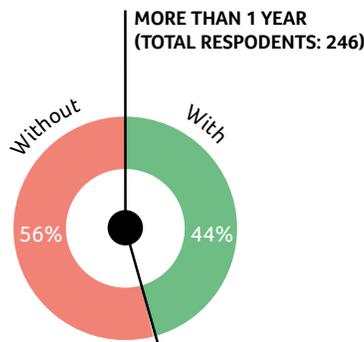
INTERVIEWED SYRIANS WITH LEGAL DOCUMENTATION IN ANOTHER COUNTRY BEFORE ENTERING GREECE:

NUMBER OF INTERVIEWED SYRIANS WITH DOCUMENTATION TO ENTER OR LIVE IN THE THIRD COUNTRY WHERE THEY SPENT MORE THAN 1 MONTH (TOTAL RESPONDENTS: 165)

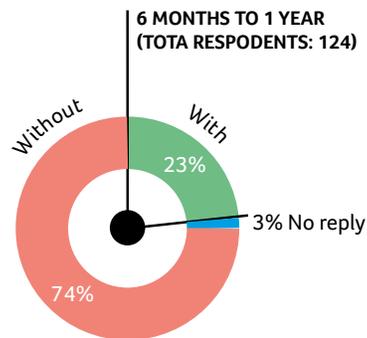


Only **165** out of 741 interviewed Syrians who spent more than 1 month in a third country before coming to Greece, had some kind of documentation to enter or temporarily reside in this third country. Documentation included entry visas, temporary residence, temporary protection, UNHCR registration, healthcare cards, or Foreigner Identification Numbers.

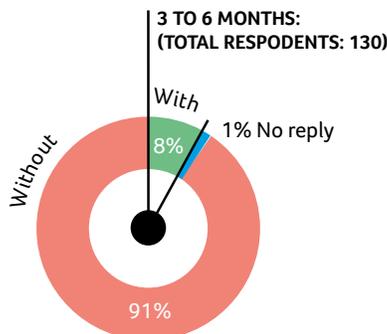
LEGAL DOCUMENTATION TO ENTER OR BE IN THE THIRD COUNTRY WHERE THEY LIVED



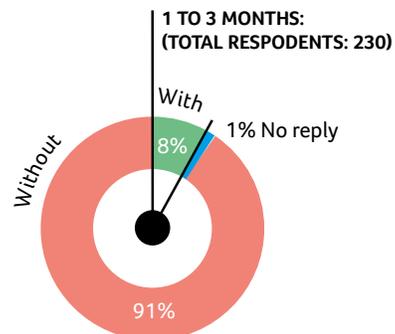
56% of those stating they lived in a third country for longer than 1 year also stated that they had **no legal documentation** to be there.



74% of those stating they lived in a third country between 6 months and 1 year also stated that they had **no legal documentation** to be there.



91% of those stating they lived in a third country between 3 and 6 month, also stated that they had **no legal documentation** to be there.



91% of those stating they lived in a third country between 1 and 3 months also stated that they had **no legal documentation** to be there.

SYRIANS WHO SPENT MORE THAN 1 MONTH IN THE COUNTRY OF FIRST ASYLUM OR TRANSIT COUNTRY – DISTRIBUTION AMONG COUNTRIES



ACCOMMODATION IN COUNTRY OF TRANSIT OR FIRST ASYLUM



The large majority of the respondents who had lived in a country of transit or first asylum (**91%**) had lived in **private accommodation**; while only **3% had lived in camps**.

ASSISTANCE:

Out of 734 who replied to the question, **130** interviewees stated they received some kind of assistance in a third country. Of those 130, **20** indicated they received shelter assistance, **51** received food aid, **9** received NFIs (non-food items), **10** received a subsistence allowance, **56** accessed free medical care, **13** received financial assistance and **36** received other kinds of assistance. (Interviewees were able to select multiple types of assistance they had received where applicable).

REASON TO LEAVE COUNTRY OF FIRST ASYLUM (RESPONDENTS COULD CHOOSE MORE THAN ONE OPTION):

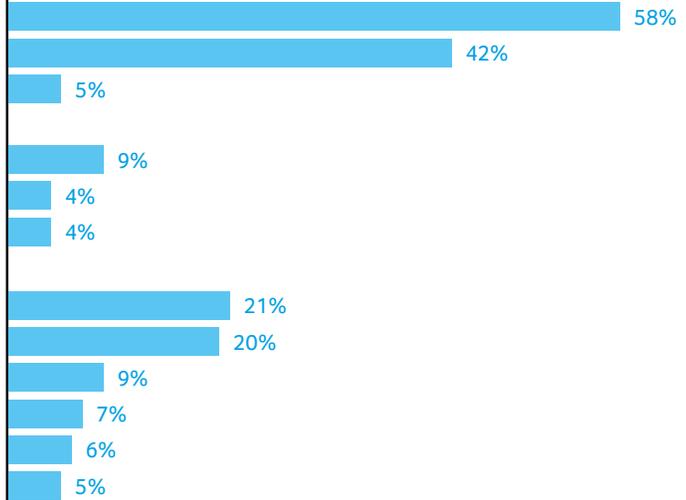
Out of 736 Syrians who answered the question on their main reasons for leaving the country of transit, most identified the lack of employment opportunities which were non-exploitative or adequate to their skill levels, the need for financial assistance, and the cost of living. Lack of documentation and security concerns were also among the reasons identified by a large number of interviewees. Family reunification, lack of adequate shelter, protection concerns and discrimination, education and fear of deportations were among the other reasons identified.

Only a minority (27 out of 1245, or 2%) identified termination of assistance as one of the reasons for leaving country of transit. (Interviewees could indicate more than one reason where relevant.)

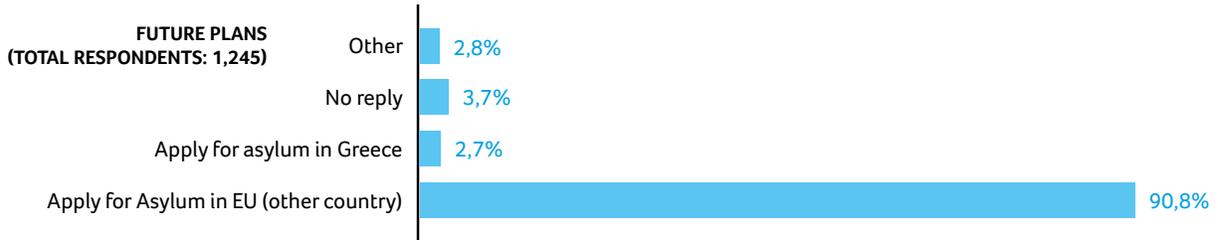
SYRIAN REFUGEE ARRIVALS IN GREECE
PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

Reason for leaving country of transit/ first asylum	Respondent who said yes
Employment and cost of living	
Lack of employment opportunities	425
lack of financial assistance	309
Cost of living	34
Assistance	
Shelter	63
Medical	32
Assistance Discontinuation	27
Protection	
Lack of documentation	153
Security	145
Family reunification	66
Protection concerns	53
Education	44
Fear of Deportation	37

REASONS FOR LEAVING COUNTRY OF FIRST ASYLUM/TRANSIT
(TOTAL RESPONDENTS: 736)



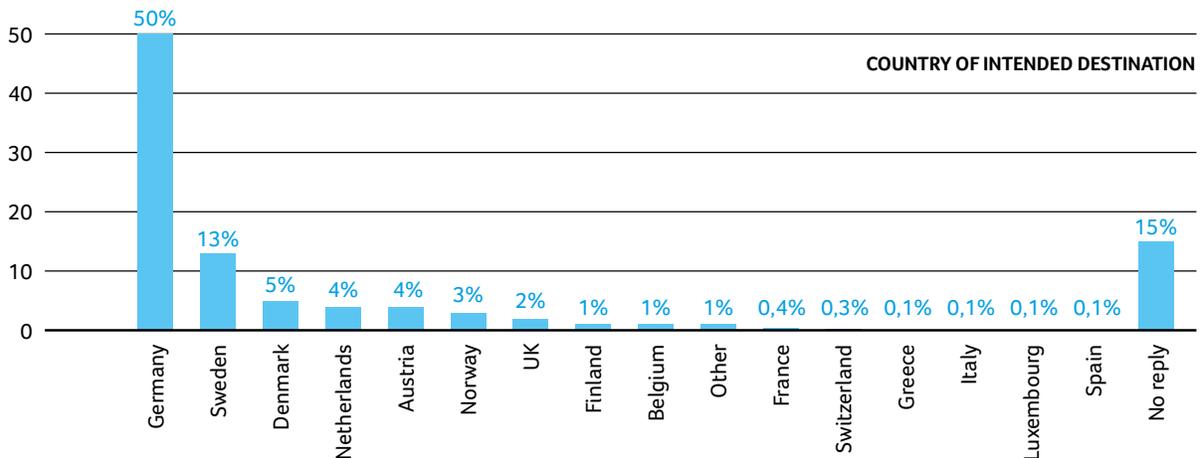
INTENTIONS OF INTERVIEWED SYRIANS:



Most interviewed refugees (91%) intend to apply for asylum **elsewhere in the EU**.

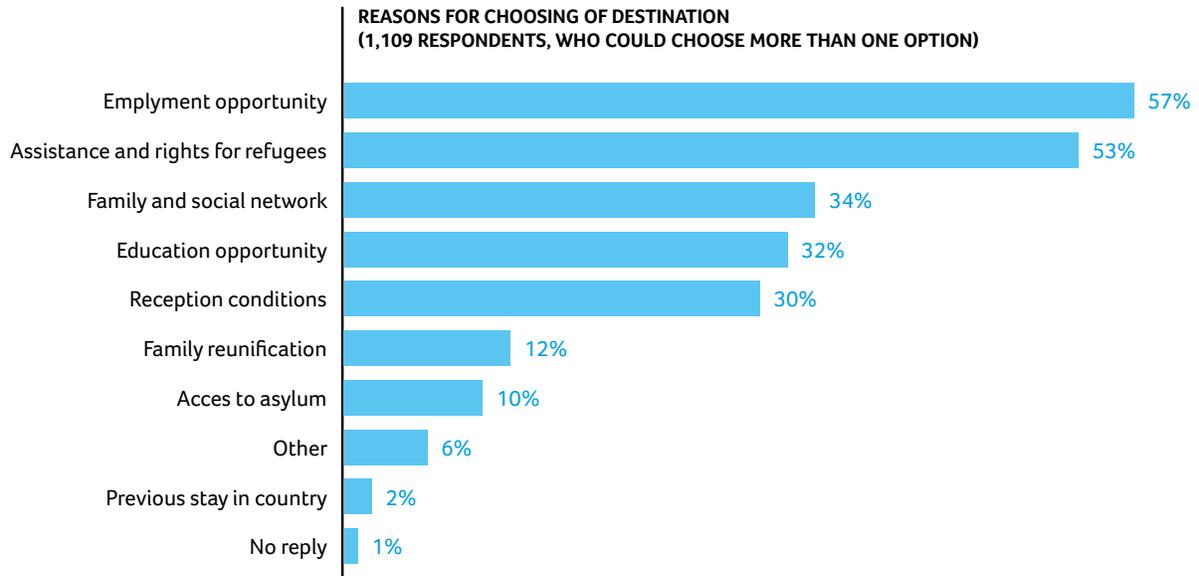
INTENDED COUNTRY OF DESTINATION IN THE EU +⁴:

The majority of those interviewed intended to request asylum in **Germany (50%)** and **Sweden (13%)**.



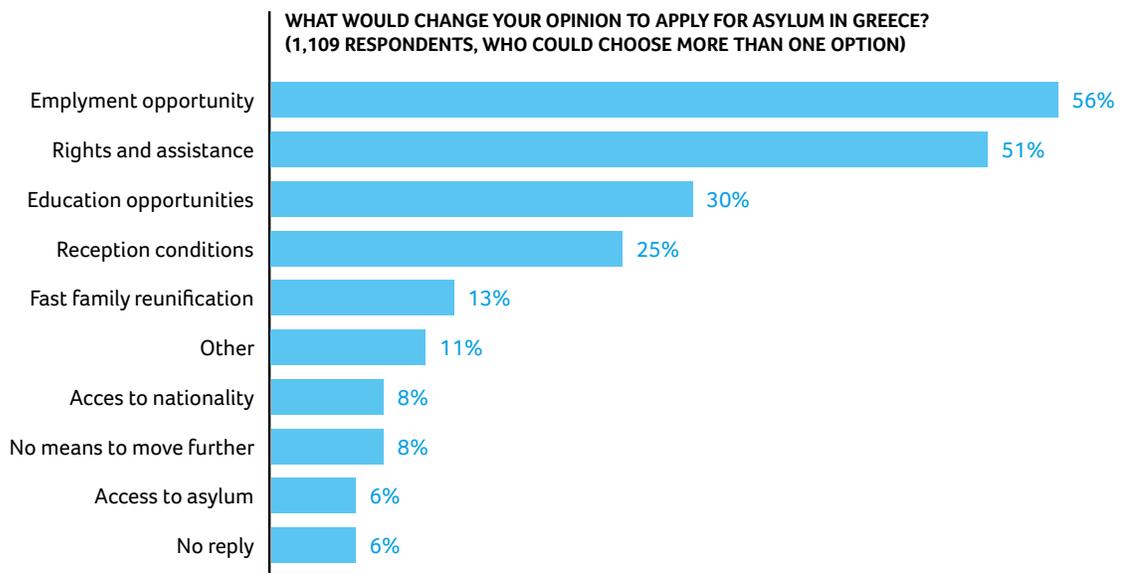
⁴ EU+ refers to all 28 EU Member States and associated States (i.e. Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland).

REASON FOR CHOOSING ANOTHER COUNTRY TO APPLY FOR ASYLUM:



Employment opportunities and ability to enjoy assistance for refugees were the options cited by most respondents. Family and social network, education opportunities and conditions of reception in a specific country also impacted the choice of country of intended destination. (Respondents could choose more than one reason.)

WHAT WOULD CHANGE YOUR OPINION TO APPLY FOR ASYLUM IN GREECE?



Employment opportunities, rights and assistance for refugees and education opportunities were indicated as areas that would impact the decision on applying for asylum in Greece. Respondents could choose more than one reason where relevant.

RECEPTION CONDITIONS IN GREECE

Among the respondents **72%** had not regularly received hygiene items, **67%** stated that facilities were not cleaned on a regular basis, **59%** had not been examined by a doctor, while **56%** of women and children stated that they did not sleep in a separate space from men. Additionally, **56%** stated that they had not received a blanket or sleeping bag, **54%** had not had access to showers, **52%** had not had access to a phone and **47%** had not slept in a bed. The full list is provided below:

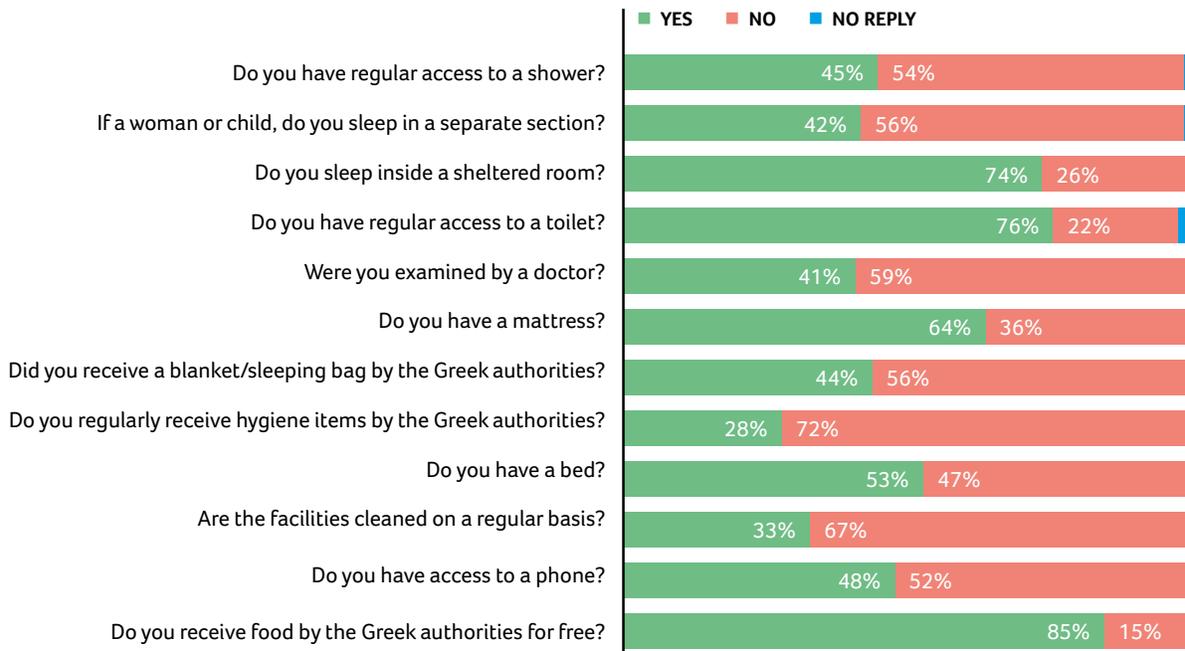


Figure 1. Refugees and migrants waiting to register with Greek authorities at the Moria Reception/Registration Centre
© UNHCR/Achilleas Zavallis



Figure 2. Refugees sleep on the side of the road on Lesbos
© UNHCR/Achilleas Zavallis