



**REFUGEES**  
ASSOCIATION

# VOLUNTARY RETURNS TO SYRIA SECOND MONITORING REPORT

**HARD TO STAY, UNCERTAIN TO RETURN:  
A MIGRATION DILEMMA**

**2026**

We would like to express our gratitude to everyone who contributed to the preparation of this report, especially our beneficiaries who openly shared their life experiences with us, and to all our stakeholders.

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## INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Syria, which has been ongoing since 2011, has caused a large portion of the Syrian population to be forcibly displaced and forced to migrate to different countries. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2024 Global Trends Report, the number of registered Syrian refugees and asylum seekers who have left the country due to the Syrian crisis is approximately 6.1 million; in addition, 7.4 million people have been internally displaced. A significant portion of Syrian refugees live in neighboring countries, and Türkiye has been the country with the highest concentration of this population for many years.[1]

Türkiye, with approximately 3.5 million Syrian refugees, is the country hosting the largest number of refugees in the world; as of January 15, 2026, the number of Syrians in Türkiye has been announced as 2.3 million.[2] These figures, which have been discussed in different contexts for a long time, have gained a new dimension as of December 8, 2024. On this date, significant political and military developments occurred in Syria, contrary to the process that had been going on for about 14 years; the Assad government fell, and a new governance process began. These developments have affected all individuals and institutions witnessing the process in a multifaceted way, especially the Syrians who were forcibly displaced inside and outside the country.

This new period, which has created an expectation of Syria's stabilization, has also brought the discussions on "voluntary return" back to the agenda due to the large Syrian population living outside the country. Since December 8, 2024, numerous statements and information have been provided by national and international institutions regarding the voluntary return of Syrians and the current conditions in Syria. Regional real-time updates published by UNHCR also provide up-to-date data on this movement. Accordingly, as of January 12, 2026, it is reported that 1,346,485 Syrians have returned to Syria, and approximately 600,000 of these individuals have returned from Türkiye.[3]

The report series titled **“Monitoring Report on Voluntary Returns to Syria”** is designed to monitor and understand the rate of return, motivations, and decision-making processes of Syrians living in Türkiye following the regime change in Syria and subsequent developments at the local level. The series aims to identify the needs and potential problems related to the voluntary return process; It aims to guide the policies and services of relevant actors, primarily public institutions and civil society organizations, with field-based data.

Prepared within this scope, the **“Voluntary Returns to Syria Second Monitoring Report”** is presented to the public as the second report in the series.[4] A survey was conducted throughout 2025 by the Refugees Association to identify individuals and families who voluntarily returned to Syria from among Syrian migrants living in Sultanbeyli and surrounding districts of Istanbul. Quantitative data was collected on 2,753 individuals from 562 families who were found to have returned; in addition, return experiences were qualitatively analyzed through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with 12 individuals.

This report addresses the phenomenon of voluntary return not only through numerical trends but also through the experiences, needs, and perceptions of returning individuals. The findings show that the concept of “voluntariness” does not always correspond to a singular and free will; economic difficulties in Türkiye, administrative and legal uncertainties, experiences of discrimination, and household decision-making dynamics can effectively make return decisions compulsory. At the same time, the security situation in Syria, infrastructure deficiencies, problems accessing basic services, and living conditions stand out as key factors determining life after return.

The aim of this study is to contribute to shaping policies and practices regarding the voluntary return processes of Syrians with a human rights-based approach, taking into account the current conditions in Syria, the profile of the returning population, and post-return experiences.

[1] <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/syria/>

[2] <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638>

[3] UNHCR Syria situation: Regional flash update #59

[4] Mülteciler Derneği, Suriye'ye Gönüllü Geri Dönüşler İzleme Raporu

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, prepared by the Refugees Association and published in 2026, is the second in a monitoring series addressing return movements from Türkiye following the regime change in Syria. The main objective of the report is to analyze the motivations, speed, and decision-making processes of Syrians living in Türkiye who returned following the political and military developments (regime change) in Syria on December 8, 2024. The study is based on quantitative data obtained from 562 families and a total of 2,753 individuals identified as having returned through surveys conducted throughout 2025, centered in Istanbul (Sultanbeyli and its surroundings). In addition to quantitative data, qualitative analyses based on in-depth interviews with 12 individuals are also included in the report. The report reveals that the concept of "voluntary return" does not always reflect complete free will; economic difficulties and uncertainties can make return effectively unavoidable. 95% of those returning have no plan for the next year or their plans are uncertain, indicating that stability in Syria is not yet fully predictable.

### Key Findings:

- **Regarding Returnees:** The main factor determining return decisions is the worsening living conditions in Türkiye rather than the improvement of conditions in Syria. Children constitute 56.3% of the returning population. The gender distribution is balanced at 50% female and 50% male. 79.2% of returning families have insufficient income. Among the returnees, 225 individuals with chronic health problems and 184 individuals with psychological disorders were identified.
- **Decision-Making Process and Satisfaction:** The level of participation in the return decision varied among the participants, and overall satisfaction with the return decision was calculated as 3 out of 5.
- **Post-Return Adaptation Level:** The "Difficulty of Adapting to the New Syria Index" was calculated as 63.5%. This value indicates that the adaptation process generally involves a moderate to high level of difficulty.
- **Needs in Syria:** Needs in Syria: It has been observed that daily life after return is sustained not through public services, but through individual coping strategies and purchasing power. This irregularity in access to services leads to participants experiencing constant uncertainty in basic areas such as health, education, and livelihood; causing the return experience to be shaped by dissatisfaction, insecurity, and a perception of unsustainability. Therefore, despite regional differences, the general picture shows that returns are far from establishing a permanent and secure life due to structural infrastructure deficiencies and lack of services. The greatest needs in the areas of return are infrastructure (electricity, water) and employment. In Aleppo, the construction sector stands out in terms of labor needs, while in Damascus, the food sector is prominent.

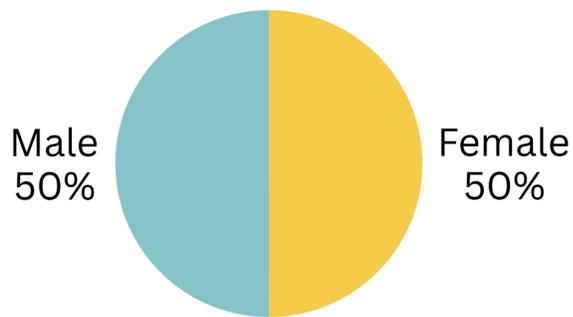
### Recommendations:

- The recommendations are grouped under the following headings: "Strengthening Access to Pre-Return Information", "Strengthening Household Participation in Decision-Making Processes", "Developing Child-Focused Integration and Language Support Programs", "Improving Access to Basic Services", "Planning Livelihood and Investment-Focused Interventions", and "Strengthening Institutional and Civil Support Mechanisms in Syria and Türkiye".
- The fact that the participants were in a position to receive services from our institution while in Turkey invalidates the assumption that social support provided to Syrians in Türkiye reduces the motivation to return; on the contrary, it confirms the multi-dimensional character of the process, which depends on individual and structural dynamics. In this context, civil mechanisms should be positioned not as elements hindering return, but as complementary actors that ensure the process is carried out on the axis of human rights. Therefore, it is emphasized that increasing the accessibility of NGOs before and after return, establishing effective referral systems for individuals who cannot access public resources, and implementing holistic policies that prioritize psychosocial adaptation and livelihoods are essential.

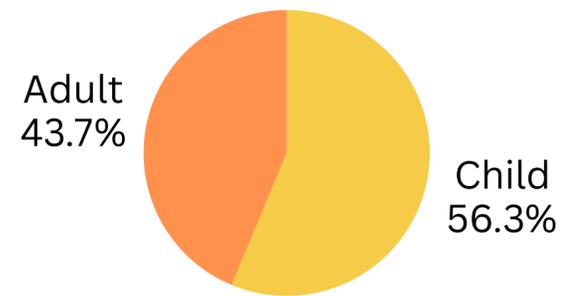
## 01 Overview

<b>Number of Returning Families</b>	562 Families
<b>Number of Returning Individuals</b>	2.753 People

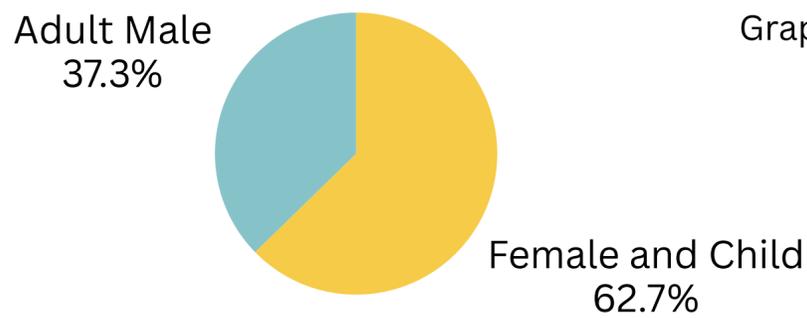
The graphs below show general demographic information about individuals and families who have voluntarily returned to Syria from Türkiye.



Graph 1

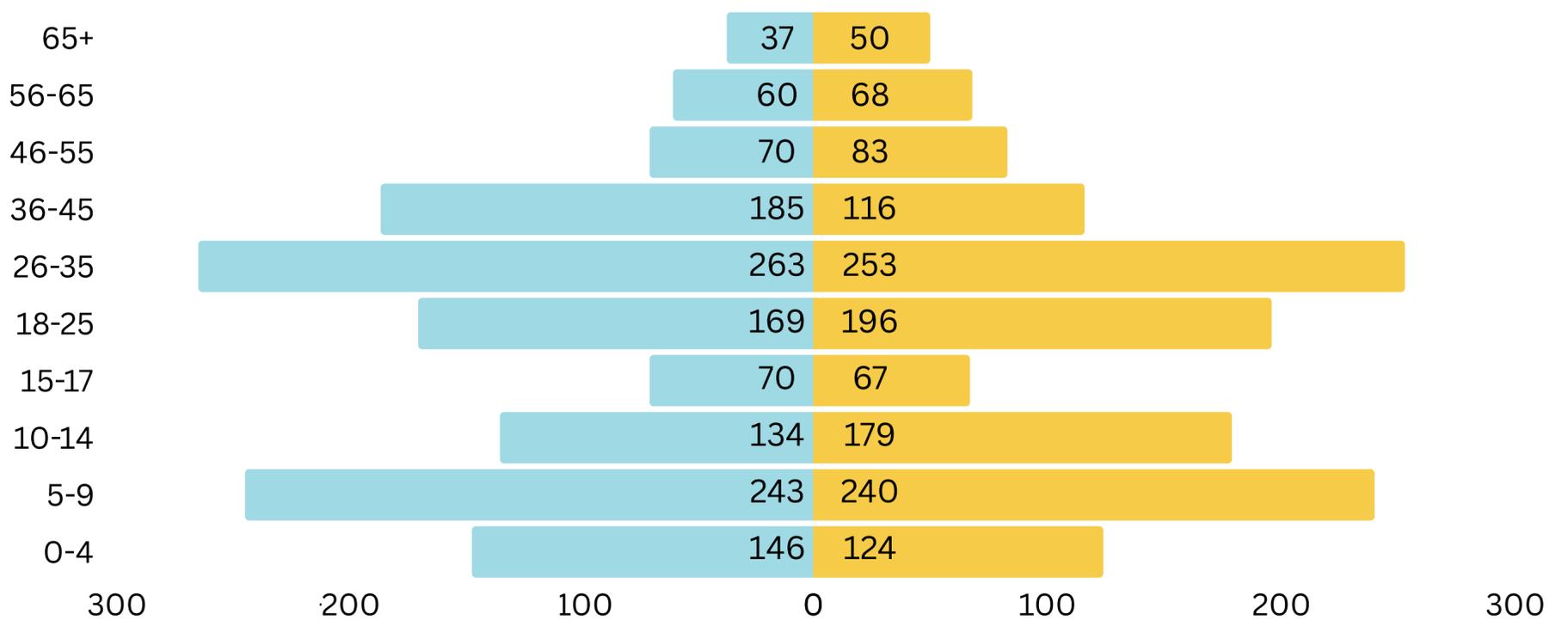


Graph 2



Graph 3

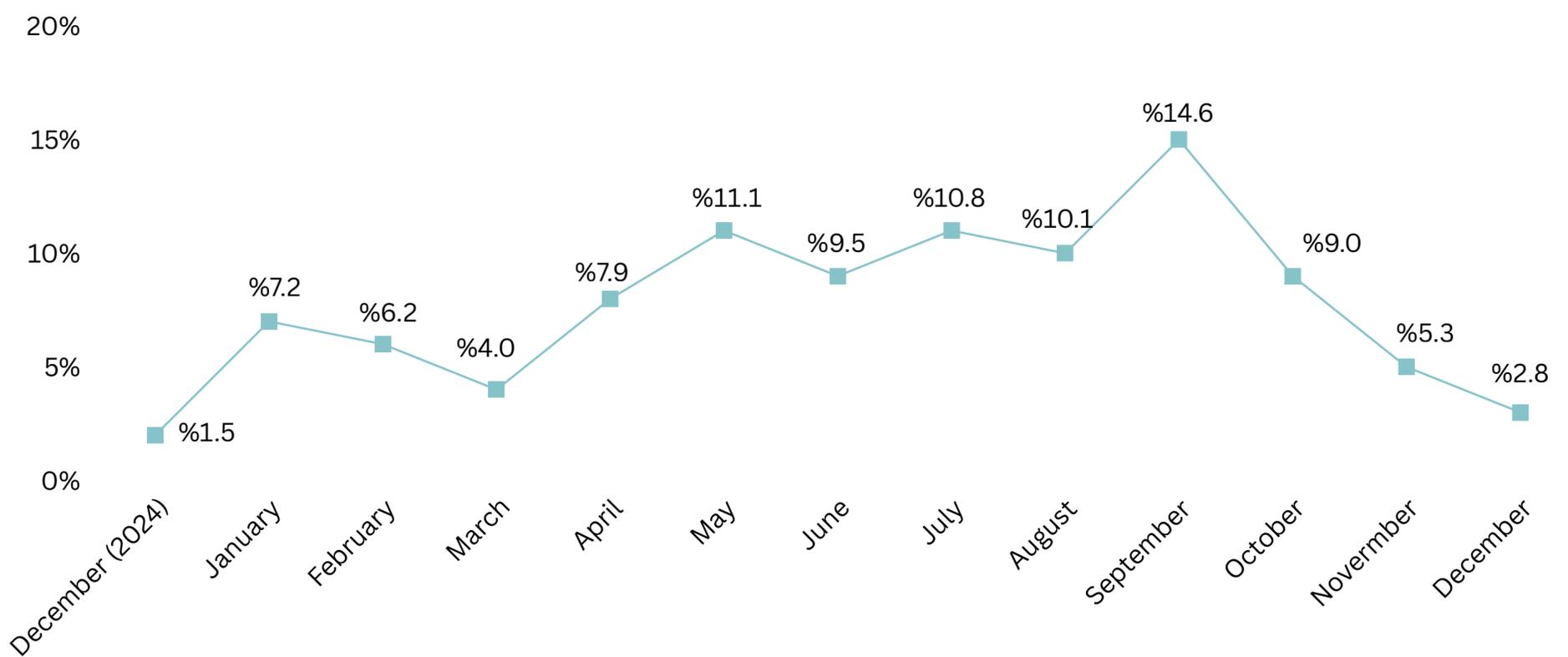
● Male ● Female



Graph 4

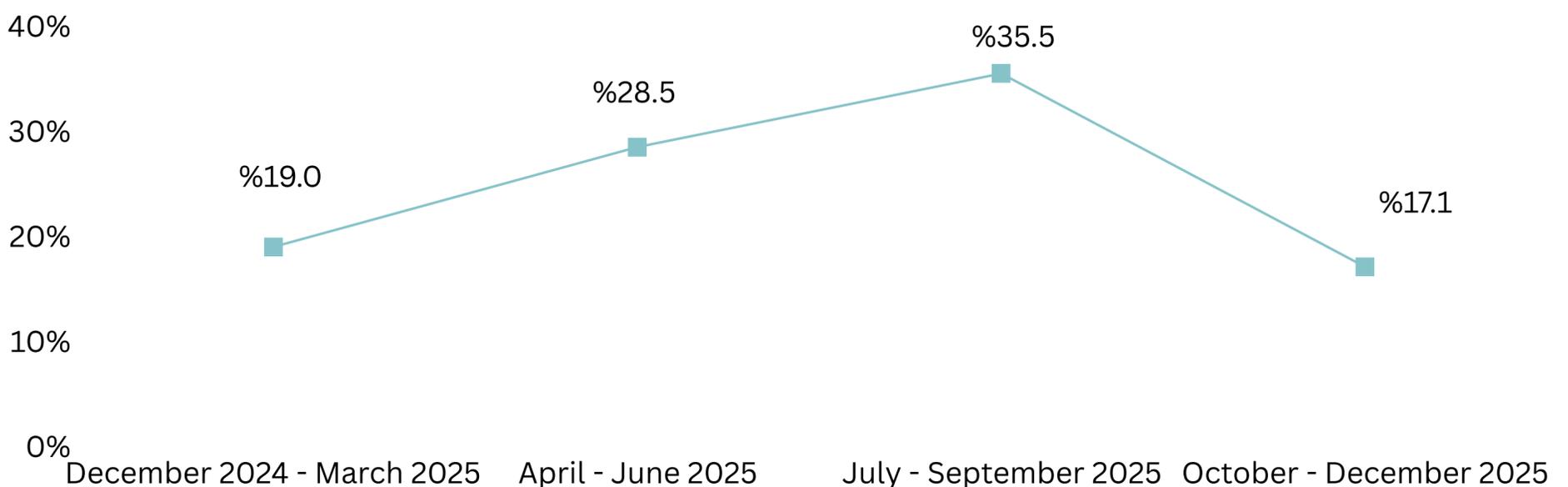
## 02 Return Date

Looking at the monthly distribution, voluntary returns to Syria increased significantly during the spring and summer months of 2025. In particular, return rates rose in May (11.1%), July (10.8%), and September (14.6%). This increase is considered to be related to a partial improvement in security perception following the political developments in Syria on December 8th, and to favorable seasonal conditions facilitating return. A decrease in return rates was observed during the autumn and winter months.



Graph 5

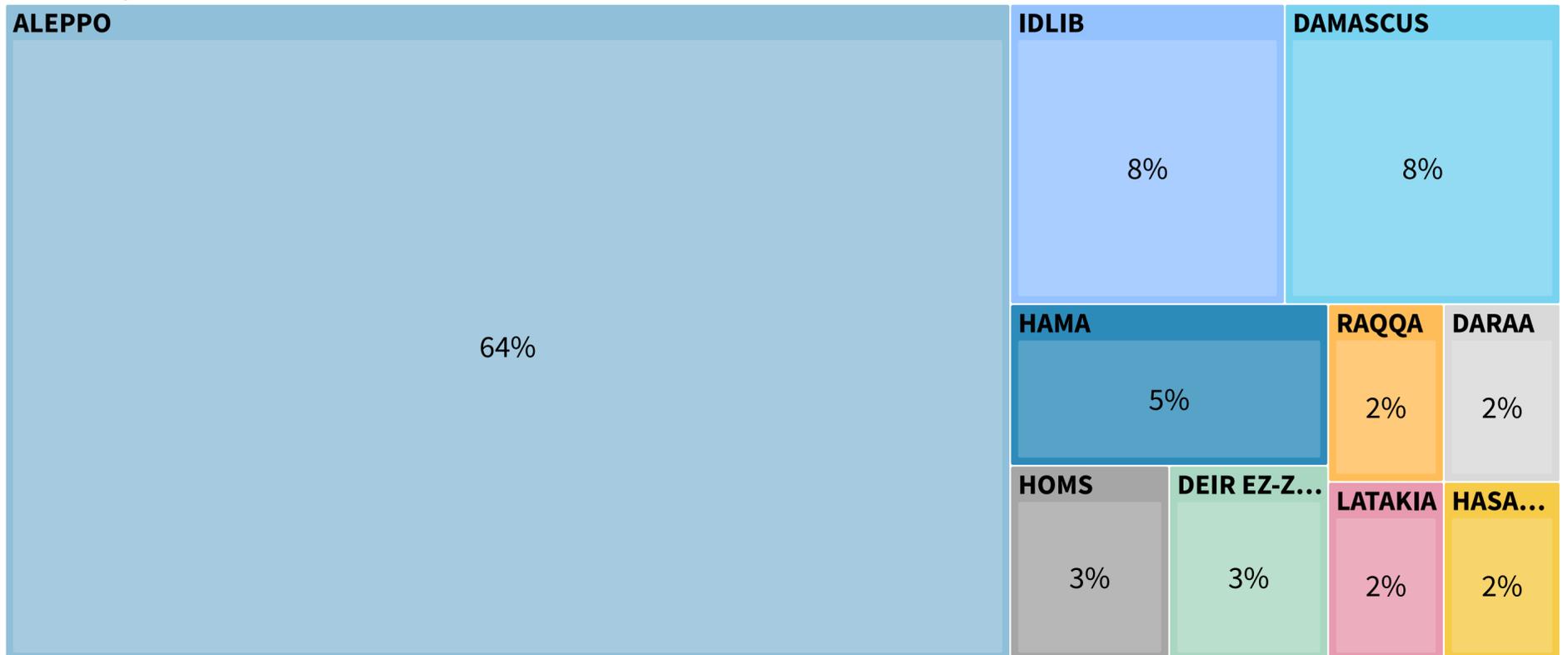
An assessment based on three-month periods reveals that the highest rate of return occurred between July and September 2025 (35.5%). This was followed by April–June 2025 (28.5%). Lower return rates were observed during December 2024–March 2025 (19.0%) and October–December 2025 (17.1%). These findings indicate that voluntary returns are directly related to seasonal conditions and political/social developments on the ground.



Graph 6

## 03 Return Region

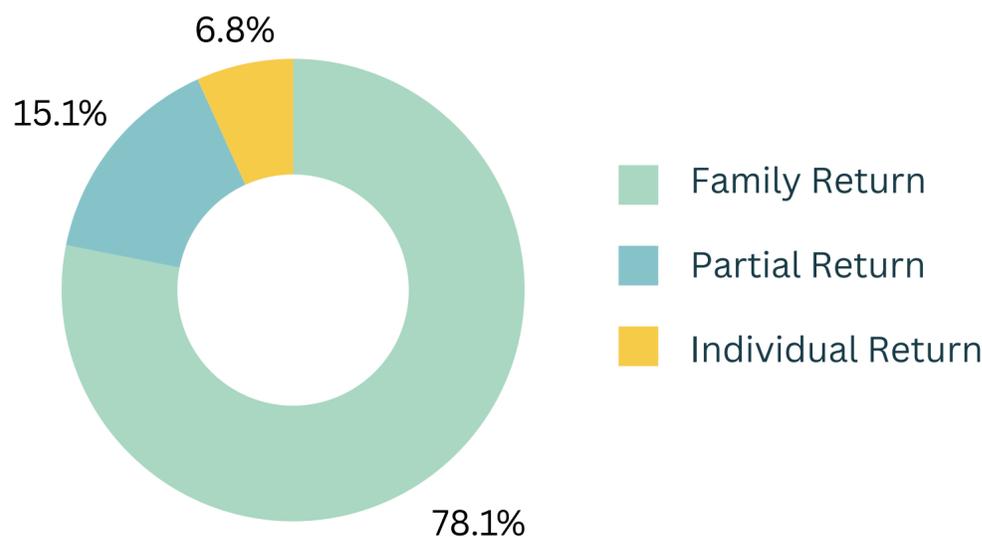
In line with the regions of origin of the population migrating to Türkiye, voluntary returns are most concentrated in Aleppo (64%). Following Aleppo, the rates in other regions where returns are concentrated remain below 10%, with Idlib, Damascus, and Hama being the most prominent among these regions. Considering that 66.17% of the Syrian population registered in the SUKOM database of the Refugees Association originates from Aleppo, it is clear that individuals have a significant tendency to return to their regions of origin during voluntary returns.



Graph 7

## 04 Return Manner

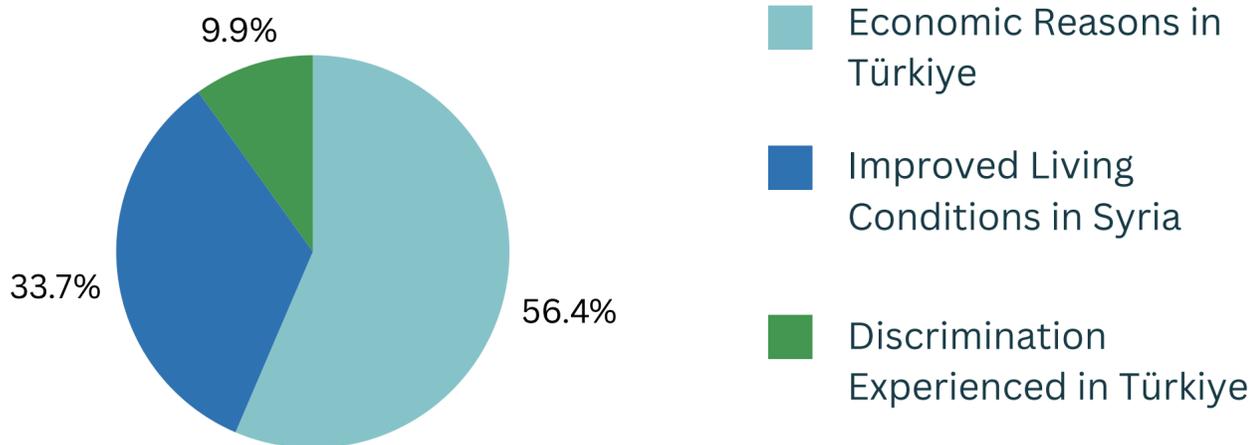
The preferred manner of return varies. Of those identified as returning, 78.1% preferred to return with all family members (family return), while 15.1% preferred to return with only a part of their family (partial return). A relatively smaller percentage, 6.8%, were found to have returned alone (individual return).



Graph 8

## 05 Reason for Return

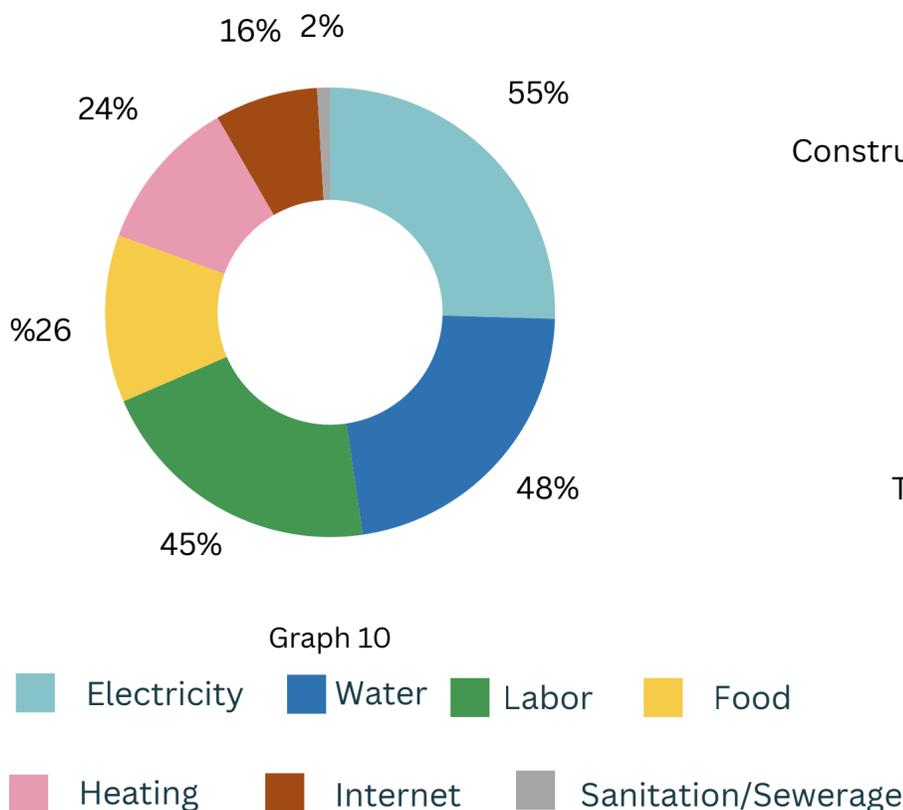
It has been determined that the worsening conditions in Türkiye played a greater role in the decision to return than the improvement of conditions in Syria.



Graph 9

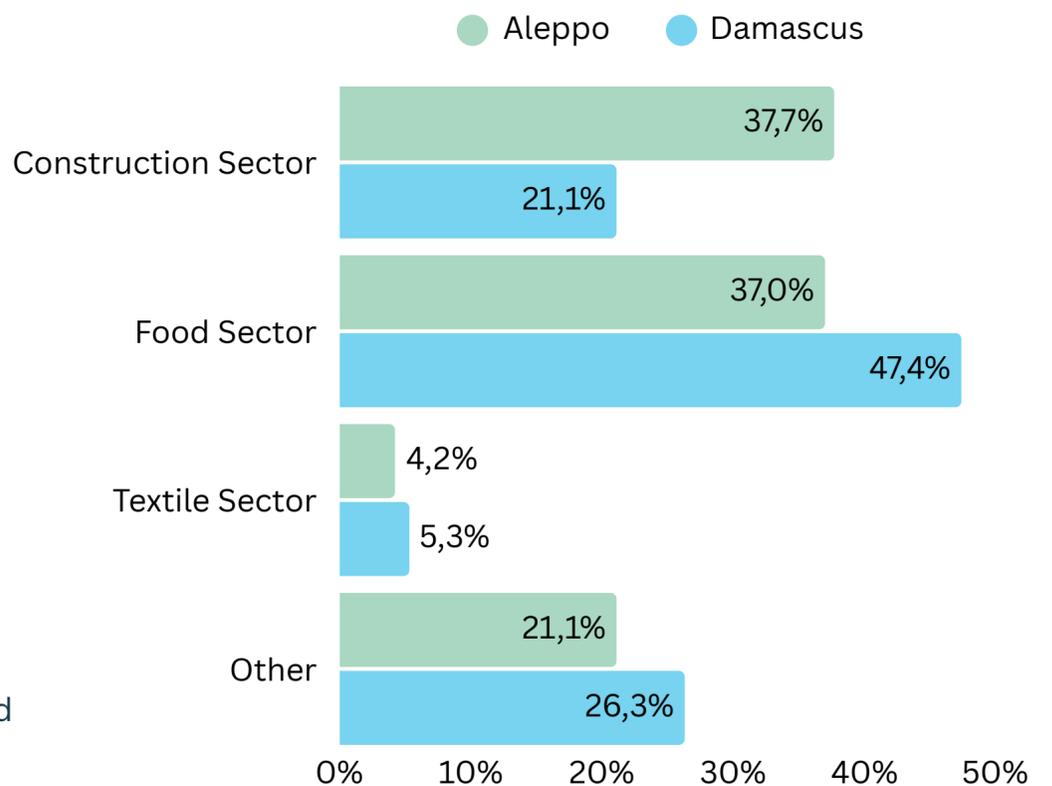
## 06 Regarding the Needs in Syria

Participants reported experiencing difficulties accessing basic services in Syria. The areas where access problems were reported are as follows.



Graph 10

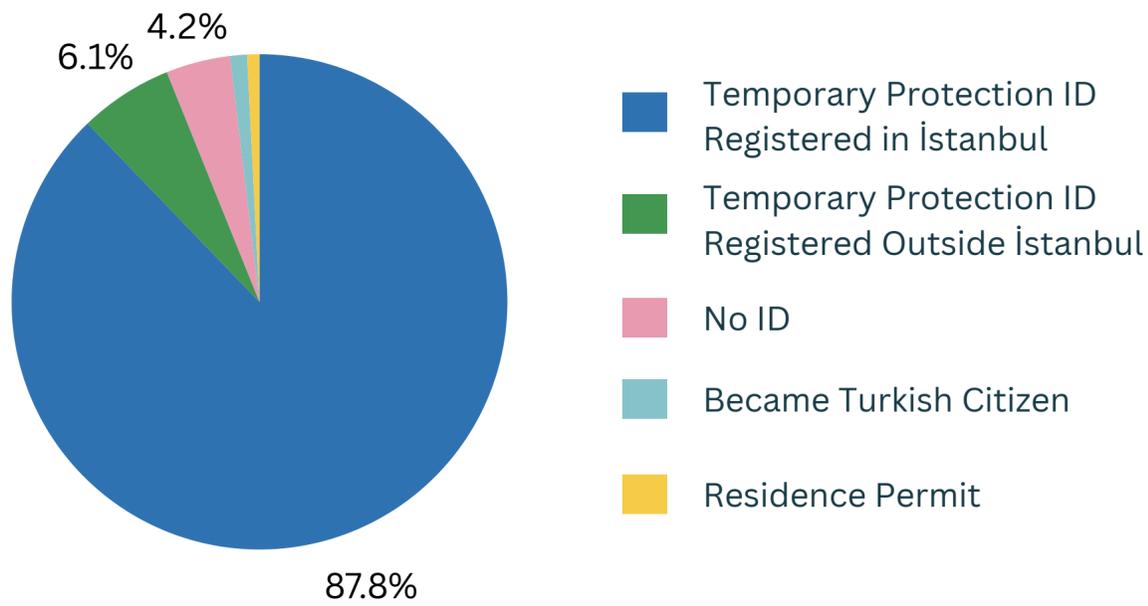
When participants were asked about the areas of employment and labor demand in Syria, construction, food, and textiles stood out. A graph showing employment needs, differentiated between Aleppo and Damascus, is shown below. In Damascus, the food sector is prominent, while in Aleppo, the construction sector is more prominent.



Graph 11

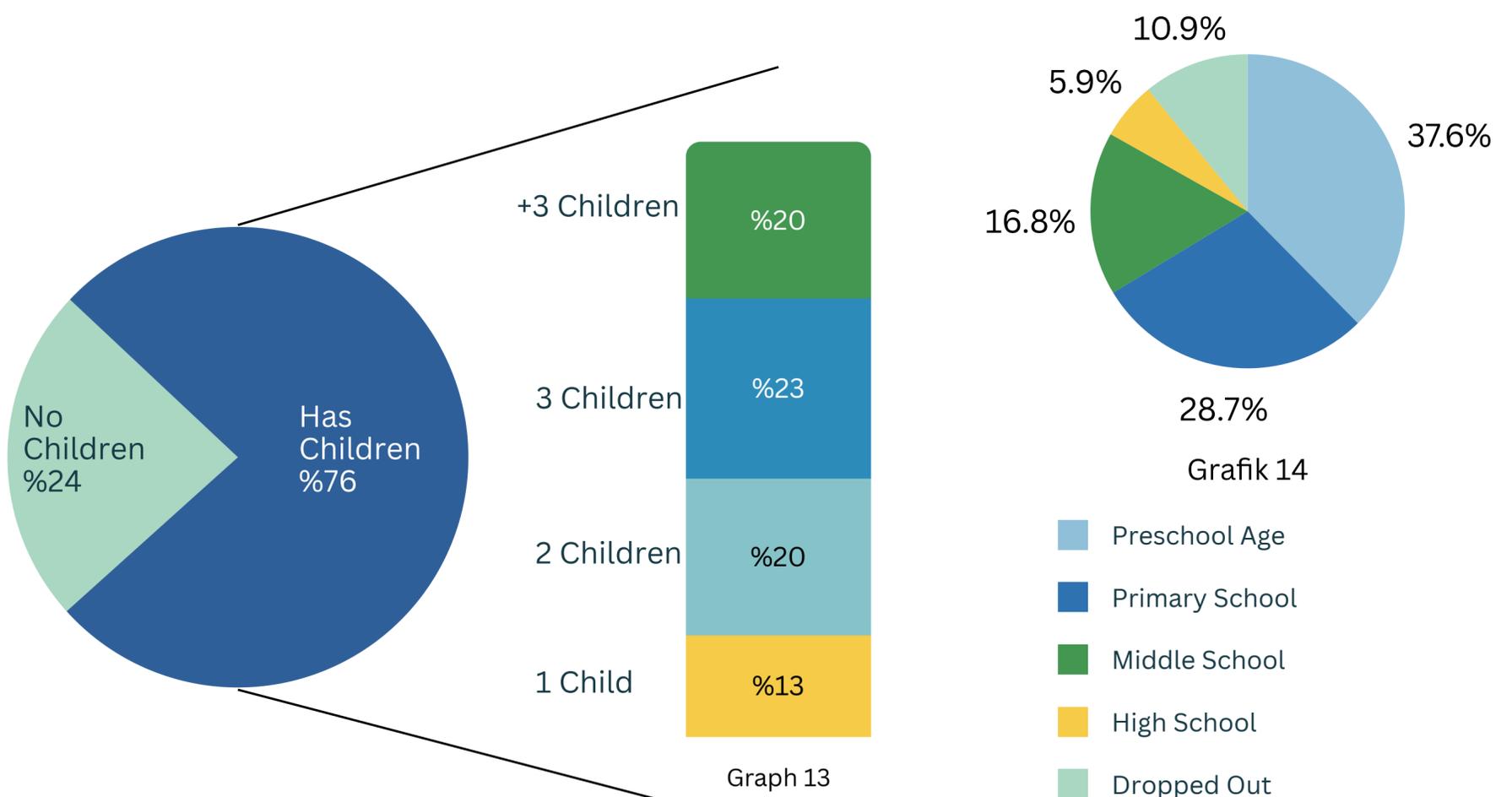
## 07 Analysis of Returnees

It has been determined that 10.3% of those returning to Syria are living without identification or outside their registered province. Information regarding their identification/registration status in Türkiye is provided below.



Graph 12

The study examined the presence and number of children in families returning to Syria, as well as the educational status of children in these households in Türkiye. It was found that the majority of families had children, and more than half of the children were of preschool or primary school age.



# VOLUNTARY RETURNS TO SYRIA

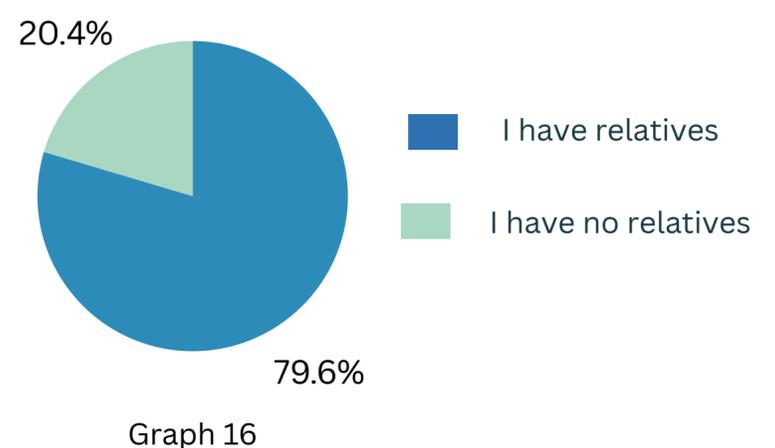
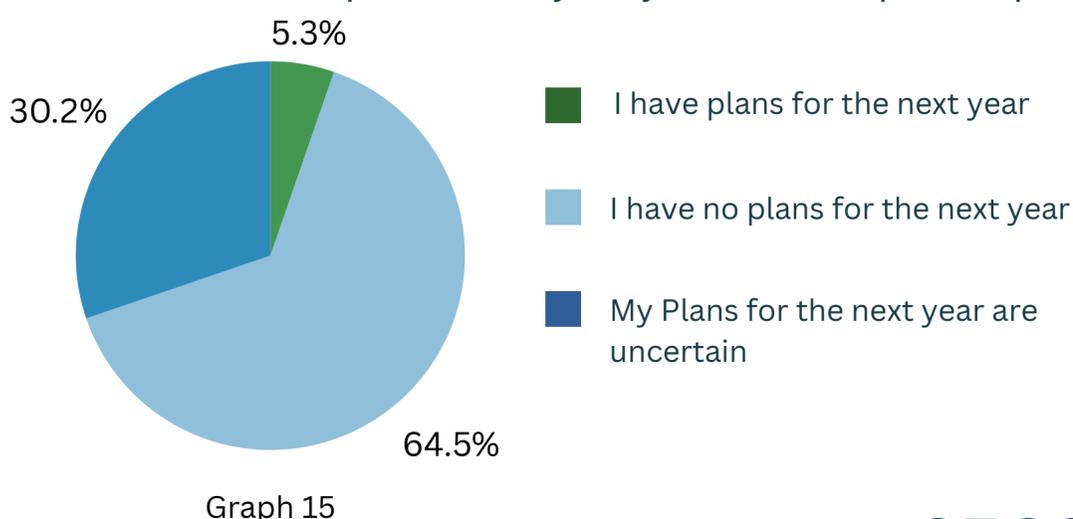


**79.2%** of families who voluntarily return have low incomes. Some data on vulnerable individuals among those who return are presented below.

Vulnerabilities	Adult	Child	Total
Chronic Health Condition	188	37	225 People
Individuals with Mental or Psychological/Psychiatric Disorder	131	53	184 People
Individual with Disability	70	23	93 People
Single Parent	78	-	78 People
Child Labor	-	70	70 People
Earthquake Survivor	32	11	43 People
Children Who Lost Parent(s)	-	55	55 People
GBV Survivor	24	-	24 People
Children in Conflict with the Law	-	7	7 People

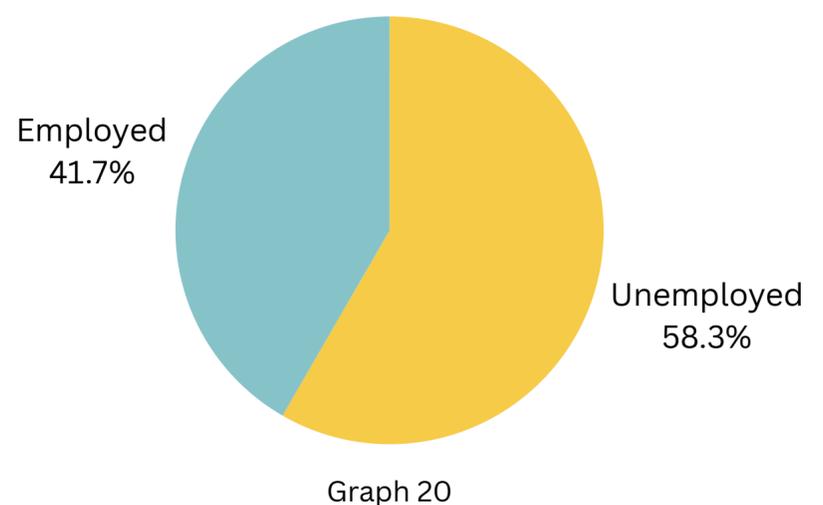
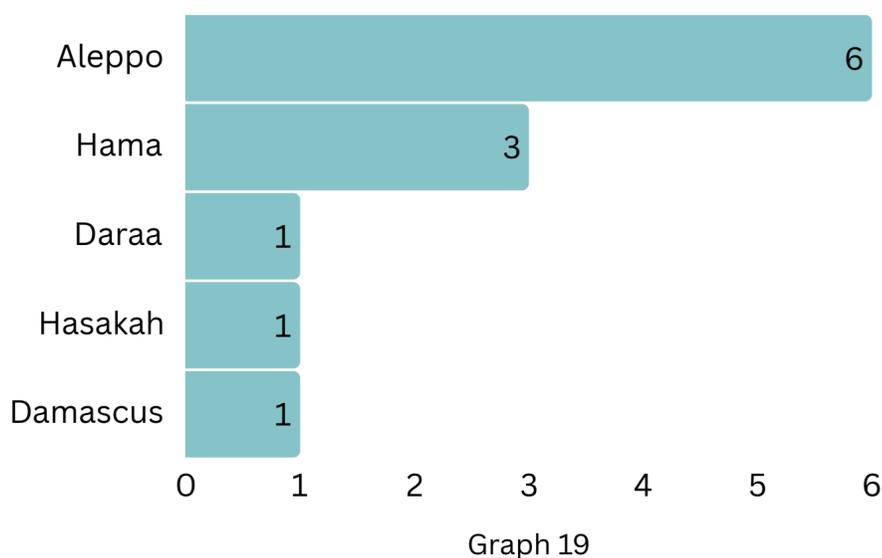
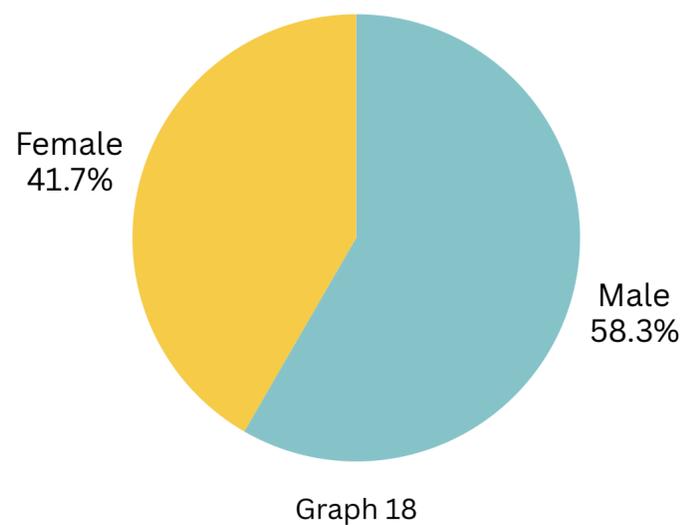
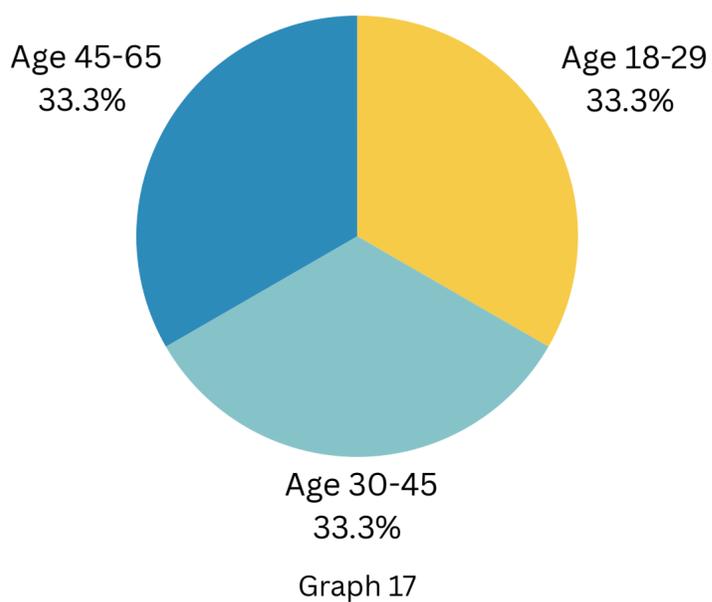
When the social support mechanisms available to families who voluntarily returned, as well as their future plans regarding vulnerabilities and resource deficiencies, were examined, it was found that the vast majority of families (80%) had relatives in the regions where they were located.

95% of those interviewed stated that they had no plans or that their plans were uncertain for the next year. This demonstrates the unpredictability in Syria and its impact on people's life plans.



## 08 The Voice of Returnees: Perceived Needs and Challenges After Return

In the screening study, semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with **12** of the 2,753 individuals identified as having returned to Syria. Information regarding the age, gender, region of residence, and employment status of those who participated in the semi-structured interviews is provided below.



The distribution by age group was proportional, and children and the elderly could not be directly included in the process. Information was obtained indirectly through the interviewees.

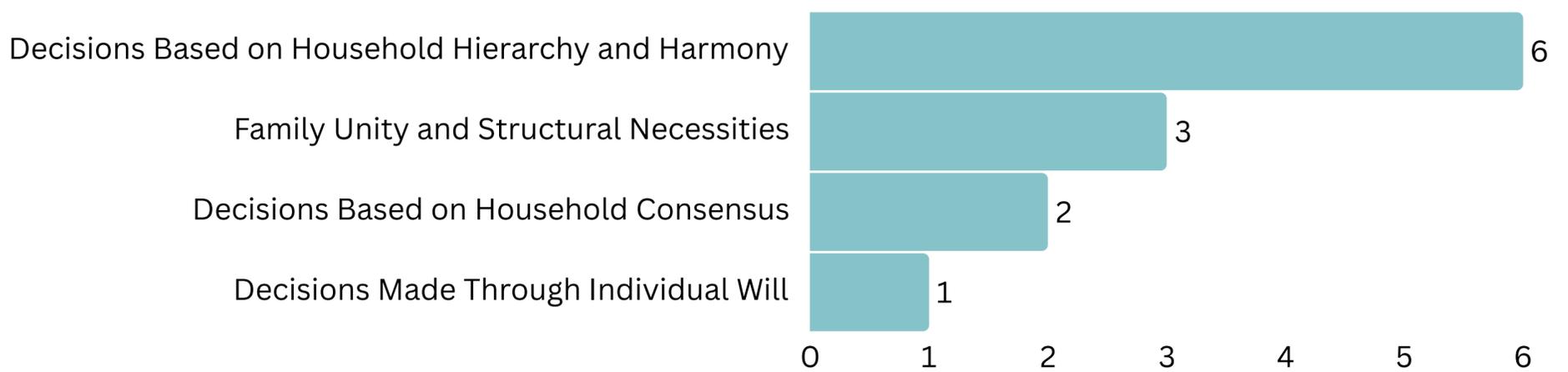
Although interviews with women in the household were requested to ensure gender distribution, difficulties were encountered in reaching women due to the fact that there was sometimes only one phone in the household and the phone was in the possession of a man outside the household.

For an inclusive analysis, an attempt was made to interview participants from all regions, but more interviews were conducted with individuals from the Aleppo region, in direct proportion to the concentration of the Syrian population in Türkiye and the returning population in their regions of origin.

It was determined that all the workers were men; they generally worked in the service sector, including construction workers, electricians, plumbers, cleaners, and auto mechanics. Individuals working in the fields of electricity, plumbing, and auto repair stated that they did the same work in Türkiye and were able to continue this work in Syria. This situation demonstrates the importance of acquiring sustainable professional skills.

## Decision-Making Process and Satisfaction with the Decision Made

The way participants made their voluntary return decisions varied according to living conditions in Türkiye, opportunities in Syria, and family communication dynamics. Only 25% of participants stated that they returned either through a consensus within the household or alone by their own decision. 75% stated that they returned due to certain necessities, complying with decision-makers within the household with limited free will, or under duress.



Graph 21

**Household Hierarchy and Harmony-Based** Decisions encompass situations where other household members voluntarily or involuntarily comply with the head of the household's decision to return home. Interviews indicate that the decision-making process is more hierarchical when the head of the household is male, while women are often forced to comply due to caregiving responsibilities.

*“It was my husband’s decision. I didn’t want to go back. I had to leave while I was pregnant, our journey was difficult and long.”* - Female, 25 years old, Hasakah

*“I made the decision, my wife didn’t want it, but I convinced her.”* - Male, 33 years old, Hama

*“I was the one who wanted it the most. My wife goes wherever I go. In Syria, men are more prominent in customs, and I feel more comfortable in Syria.”* - Male, 53 years old, Aleppo

While men in households, generally husbands/fathers, tend to be more willing and decisive in voluntary return, there have also been instances where the woman/mother in the household showed willingness to return and other household members complied.

*“My wife wanted to return, so we all returned as a family, all our relatives.”* - Male, 35 years old, Hama

**Decision-making based on household consensus** includes situations where the decision-making process within the household is determined through dialogue, or where individuals in the household demonstrate a proactive will to voluntarily return, and the household voluntarily adapts to those who do so.

*“We made the decision together with my husband. First, we came here with my children and settled in, and now we are waiting for my husband to come. We need to build our own house, and for that, we need money and savings.”* -Female, 30 years old, Deraa

*“My children wanted to return. Because all our relatives are in Syria. We have no relatives in Türkiye.”* -Female, 52 years old, Aleppo

**The responsibility to maintain family unity** has been a decisive factor in the decision to return, particularly for individuals in caregiving roles within the family. Participants stated that they returned in order to be together with the individuals for whom they are responsible for care or who are responsible for their care.

*“I had to come because my husband was deported; I wish I had waited a little longer. I returned immediately.” - Female, 33 years old, Damascus*

*“My parents wanted to return. I had to come back to take care of them. My parents haven’t seen my brother for 10 years; he is disabled, and my parents cannot take care of him. I am the only child who can take care of them.” - Male, 46 years old, Aleppo*

The interviews show that administrative and legal challenges in Türkiye can effectively make voluntary return decisions mandatory. The account of a family living outside the province where their identity is registered in Türkiye is given below.

*“I lived in Türkiye for 5 years. My return to Syria was more like a forced voluntary return. Our IDs were in Mersin, and my son was working in Istanbul. We returned because we were afraid of being caught and sent back, but we regret it.” - Female, 52 years old, Aleppo*

It was identified that the reconstruction process in Syria was perceived by some Syrians as an “opportunity,” and that voluntary return was preferred in order to take part in this process. The narrative below presents the decision-making process and motivations of a young man who returned **as a result of individual free will**. This narrative demonstrates that, for some participants, voluntary return is framed as an “early and active preparation for an inevitable future.”

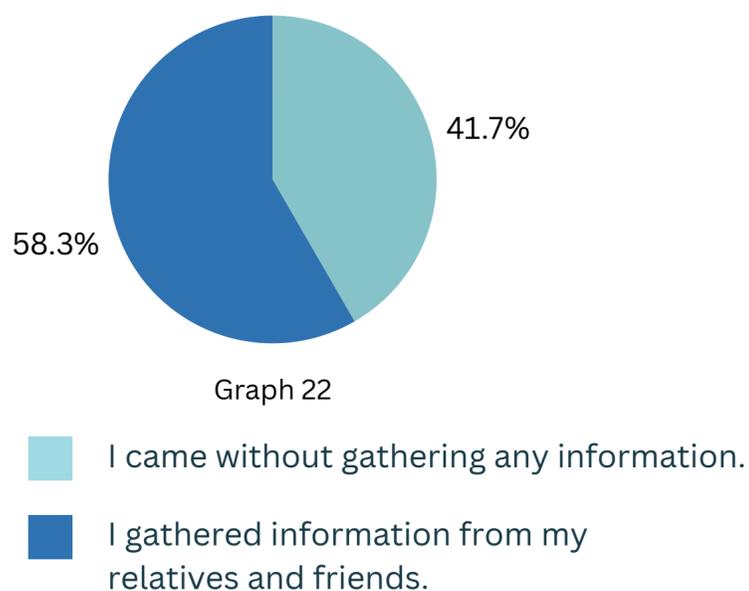
*“I returned to get my life in order. It’s important to seize opportunities from the start; I’m young, and I have a fiancée in Türkiye. I need to improve myself in every way, and since I’ll eventually return to my homeland, I wanted to take advantage of the opportunity from the beginning. My family didn’t want me to return, but seizing the opportunities here now seemed more logical to me.” - Male, 22 years old, Aleppo*

The sources from which participants obtained information about Syria during their decision-making process for voluntary return were examined. The findings indicate that a significant portion of these decisions were made **without relying on a systematic and multi-source information gathering process**. It was found that official, independent, or institutional information sources were not preferred; the information gathering process was primarily conducted through relatives and friends, but this information was often limited, selective, and did not adequately reflect the security risks.

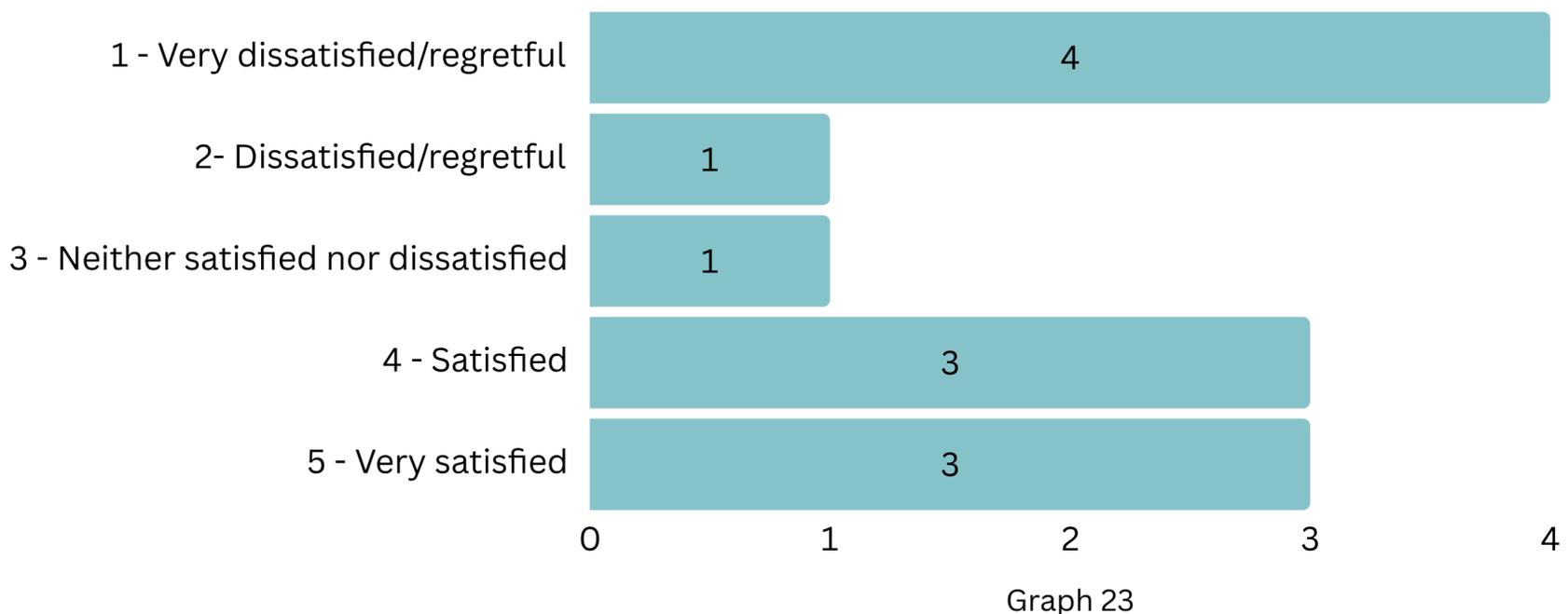
*“My relatives only told me that Israel was bombing; they didn’t give me any other bad information.” - Female, 30 years old, Deraa*

*“I didn’t know there was a war, I returned early. Then they started bombing.” - Female, 25 years old, Hasakah*

*“When I returned, I was thinking of buying a house and living there, but I didn’t find the prices I expected.” - Male, 33 years old, Hama*



The quality of information acquired before returning and the level of participation in the decision-making process appear to be factors that directly influence the levels of satisfaction and regret expressed after returning. The satisfaction levels of participants regarding their voluntary return to Syria were examined, and the findings are summarized in the graph below;



When examining the participants' satisfaction level regarding the decision to return, the average satisfaction score is found to be 3.0. However, when the distribution is examined, it is seen that 50% of the participants stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the return, while 41.7% stated that they were dissatisfied or regretted it. This situation reveals that the return experiences are not homogeneous, but polarized at two extremes. The participants' narratives show that satisfaction is not solely based on the voluntary nature of the return decision; rather, it depends on the concrete living conditions encountered after the return, the quality of the information acquired before the return, and the alignment between expectations. While some participants exhibited a more hopeful approach to the future by accepting the limited resources and access to them as natural, others emphasized the disappointment they experienced.

The narratives of the participants who stated that they encountered an atmosphere that met their expectations are given below::

*“It’s only recently been liberated, things are gradually improving. I can do my job here. Everything is there, it’s slowly happening, I should focus on the business.”* - Male, 22 years old, Aleppo, Car mechanic

*“As I expected from a country that has been at war for 14 years, I haven’t encountered any disappointment.”* - Male, 27 years old, Hama

*“Everything was as I expected. I knew there would be destruction.”* - Female, 65 years old, Aleppo

Participants who continued to receive economic support from outside Syria and were able to meet their basic needs were observed to have higher satisfaction levels.

*“We use solar energy for electricity. We repaired our house and now we live there. My children in Türkiye send money. Overall I am satisfied, she sends greetings to the association.”* - Female, 65 years old, Aleppo

*“It was as I expected, I thought life and work would be better here, and it is.”* - Male, 53 years old, Aleppo, Plumber

In the narratives where participants expressed their dissatisfaction with their return decisions, the themes that stand out are the **security situation, economic conditions and access to employment, access to basic services (electricity, water, health), housing opportunities, the safety and education of children, and the level of realism of expectations formed before returning.** These factors are presented below under the heading "Challenges Experienced in Syria After Voluntary Return".

## Challenges Experienced in Syria After Voluntary Return

One of the most prominent themes in narratives related to the hardships experienced in Syria and dissatisfaction with the decision to return has been "**security.**" Participants associated their security concerns not only with the ongoing conflict and war environment, but also with the failure to establish internal security after the war, child abduction cases, theft, social violence, and the fact that fights and disagreements have become a normal part of daily life. This situation appears to reduce the quality of life at both individual and household levels and directly affect satisfaction with the decision to return.

It is understood that security concerns are particularly decisive in households with children; participants even relegated their evaluations regarding basic areas such as education and health to secondary importance due to security concerns. In this context, one participant described their experience regarding the return process as follows:

*"I didn't know there was a war, I returned early, then they started bombing. There's no security at all, **they're kidnapping children**, bombing houses, there's always the sound of fighting. My child (3 years old) is very affected by the war. My other child is 7 months old, I came to Syria 9 months ago, I gave birth here. My biggest concerns are about security, education and health can't even be prioritized. It's not just the children, I'm very scared too. I'm seeing changes in my child due to fear. I want to return to Türkiye. Yesterday, they stole my sister's bag in the middle of the road. There's fighting on both sides, **fighting and child kidnapping...** Houses are being raided. There's almost no electricity. There are curfews. We have to buy water. My husband's money isn't enough, \$100... Even if my child wants to buy something, I can't buy it, when the gas cylinder runs out we have to wait 2-3 months to get in line." - Female, 25 years old, Haseki*

Another participant compared their life experience in Türkiye with the security conditions they encountered in Syria, emphasizing that the insecurity in daily life had negative effects, especially on the education and social development of children:

*"I lived very comfortably in Türkiye for 11 years; not once did anyone bother me, and the Refugee Association always helped me. We want to return to Türkiye. I already knew things were bad. We live in the city, but the people in the village look at each other; the city used to be more peaceful. **There are fights** in the city... There are security problems in schools; I don't send my 13-14 year old daughters to school because they won't develop morally and educationally. **We don't even prefer to go out on the balcony as a family;** there's always vulgar language and profanity on the streets, and we don't want our children to be exposed to it. There's no order on the streets, no place to walk... People have set up their stalls on the sidewalks. They start fights when you try to get out of your car; there aren't even traffic rules. If we tell someone who's doing something wrong in traffic, it leads to a big fight; they pulled sticks and knives on me. It's like there are no human rights. There are many shortcomings in terms of security. I was also robbed." - Male, 46 years old, Aleppo*

It appears that the perception of security is not limited to large-scale conflicts but also permeates everyday life practices. The prevalence of theft and social tensions was frequently mentioned by the participants:

*"Everyone warns me about theft." - Female, 33 years old, Damascus*

*"There are many disagreements among the people. Not much has changed since the liberation, there are many problems in foreign affairs, so the government cannot focus on domestic affairs." - Male, 46 years old, Aleppo*

“**Unemployment and economic hardship**” stands out as one of the fundamental themes common to almost all narratives expressing dissatisfaction with the decision to return. Participants stated that they were unable to make ends meet in Syria due to low income levels, limited and irregular job opportunities, and difficulty accessing basic necessities due to high costs. The disproportionate relationship between salaries and the cost of living was particularly highlighted as a factor directly affecting household well-being. One participant described both their own healthcare needs and the economic vulnerability within their household as follows:

*“Everything here is expensive and requires payment. Healthcare is also expensive. I have nerve inflammation, a hernia, and problems with my hormone glands; I'm receiving treatment and paying half the price, but it's still expensive for me. Salaries are very low, everything is very expensive. Nothing has changed in Syria (since liberation, that is). My son doesn't have a profession, he wants to work as a laborer, but there isn't always a need for laborers (he's 20 years old). There's no electricity, we try to meet our needs only with solar panels. Actually, we have everything, but we don't have the money to buy it. Those who had money opened businesses and continued their lives; this is not the case for those who don't have money.”* - Female, 52 years old, Aleppo

Job insecurity and irregular working conditions also emerge as another factor deepening livelihood insecurity. Participants emphasized that due to the lack of stable employment, they are unable to meet their basic needs:

*“My salary isn't enough; I work one day and stay home for two. There's very little work. Water comes only twice a week. Rents are very high (600,000 Syrian pounds, about 3000 TL), and electricity is available in 5 to 12 watt options, but they charge 200 TL per ampere. Even just using the lights costs 200 TL a week. Life is hard for the children; they get bored easily, and I can't buy them anything. When I was in Türkiye, my salary was enough; my daughter went to kindergarten there and had internet. My eldest daughter is about to start primary school, but in Syria, she couldn't go to kindergarten/had to drop out.”* - Male, 28 years old, Aleppo

Some participants stated that their savings, which they had accumulated before returning home, were quickly depleted due to unexpected living costs, and that this increased their feelings of regret:

*“There's no work. I was planning to buy a house and live there when I returned, but the prices weren't what I expected, so I'm renting. Besides, all the money I saved for furniture and preparing the house went here. My children lacked nothing when they were in Turkey, but here I can't give them the support they need. **If I had the choice, I would return to Türkiye.** I haven't been working for two months. They asked for \$100 per child for my children born in Türkiye, so I couldn't register them.”* - Male, 33 years old, Hama

In contrast, a limited number of participants stated that their professional skills were valued in Syria and that this increased their satisfaction. However, these narratives are exceptional within the overall picture:

*“In Türkiye, salaries weren't sufficient, but in Syria I can claim my rights and speak out against injustice. In Türkiye, I had to remain silent. What's lacking in Syria is jobs, but I'm working, my profession thrives here.”* - Male, 53 years old, Aleppo, Plumber

It appears that economic hardship is not limited to unemployment; it is further exacerbated by price increases, lack of regulation, and the fact that basic services are now subject to fees:

*“My son (17) is not working, and neither am I. You work very hard, but the wages are very low, not enough money for us, why should I drag myself into this? Prices are excessively high, there is no control.”* - Male, 46 years old, Aleppo

*“They choose the prices according to themselves, the state should control it, prices are very expensive.”* - Male, 33 years old, Hama

# VOLUNTARY RETURNS TO SYRIA

*“Those who have money can live a normal life. The irregularities on the roads, the prices, these are very important questions.” - Male, 46 years old, Aleppo*

*“In Türkiye, we could buy the things our children wanted, we can't do that here.” - Female, 52 years old, Aleppo*

**“Difficulty accessing basic services and maintaining daily life”** stands out as another of the most frequently expressed themes of dissatisfaction among participants regarding their decision to return. Access to infrastructure services such as internet, electricity, and water, as well as access to food, was examined in depth through various questions and will be presented under the heading “Access to Resources” with the support of quantitative data; in addition, serious deficiencies in access to health and education services were highlighted in the participants' narratives.

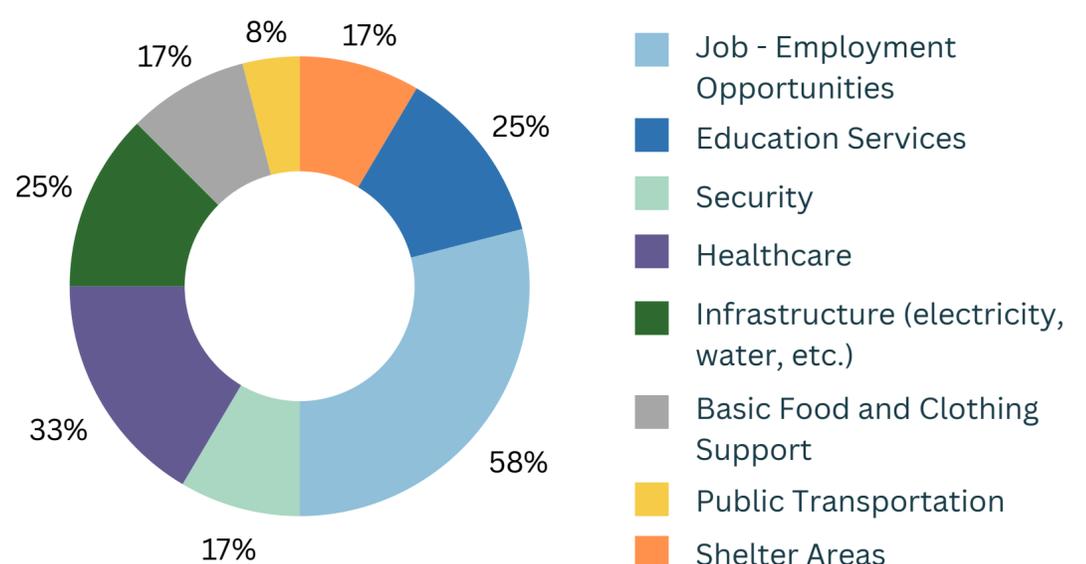
Participants stated that they had expected their living conditions to gradually improve before returning; however, the situation they encountered after returning did not meet these expectations. The fact that infrastructure in rural areas was largely destroyed, the physical inadequacy of education and health institutions, and the lack of continuity in basic services are among the main factors that make daily life difficult. One participant described this situation as follows:

*“I was expecting better living conditions. Most of the houses are in ruins. There are 5 schools in my village, but they are all very deficient, ruined, and have hygiene problems; some don't even have doors. There is no hospital; the nearest one is 20 km away. The health centers are also in ruins. Daily work brings in \$10, but we live in tents because the houses are in ruins.” - Male, 35 years old, Hama*

Deficiencies in education and healthcare appear to deepen dissatisfaction, particularly among households with children. Inadequate physical conditions in schools, teacher shortages, and hygiene problems limit children's access to education; while the inaccessibility and high costs of healthcare services make it difficult to meet even basic health needs. One female participant expressed this situation with the following words:

*“The schools are bad, the toilets aren't clean, there's a lack of hygiene, there's a shortage of teachers, we have to send our children to extra courses (the children are in 8th, 5th, and 2nd grades). Health centers only exist for monthly vaccinations, there are no doctors. When our children get sick, we have to take them to a distant hospital. Childbirth in hospitals costs almost as much as a month's rent (600,000 Syrian pounds, for example). Even a regular check-up costs between 15,000 and 30,000, and in private clinics it's 50,000.” - Female, 30 years old, Daraa*

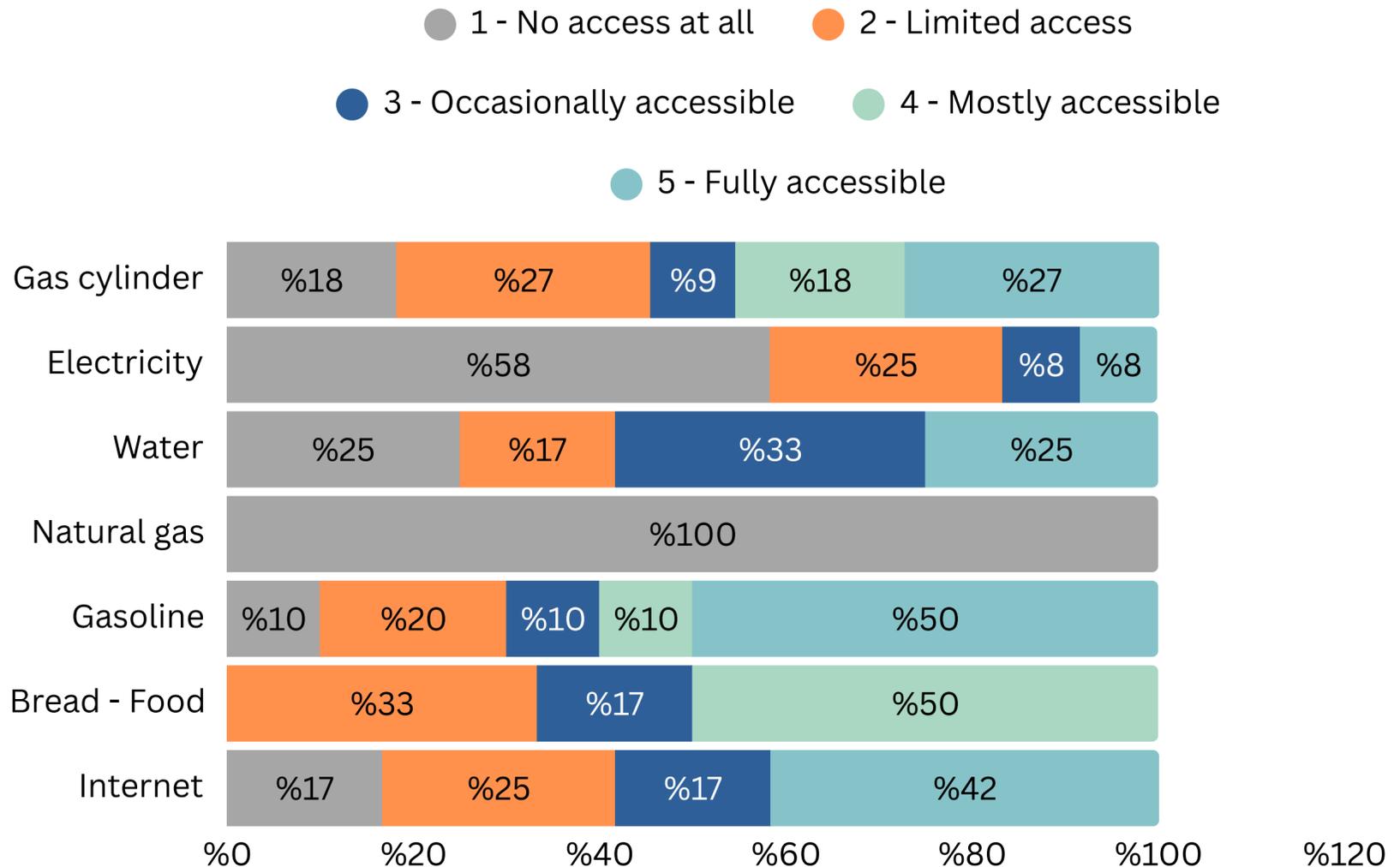
The key areas of difficulty highlighted in the participants' narratives are visualized in the graph below. This graph shows a direct correlation with the results of a survey conducted with 2,753 people (Section 6 - Needs in Syria), however it is also observed that additional areas of need, such as public transportation, were addressed due to the in-depth interviews conducted in this study.



Graph 24

## Access to Resources

Participants were asked to rate their access to basic resources such as gas cylinders, electricity, water, natural gas, gasoline, bread/food, and internet after returning, and to rate them on a scale of 1 (no access at all) to 5 (fully accessible). The findings reveal that access to basic services after returning is irregular, fragile, and varies significantly depending on the type of service.



Graph 25

According to the scoring results, all participants (12 people) have no access to natural gas service. Access to electricity is also extremely limited; the vast majority of participants stated that they either have no access to electricity or only very irregular access. Access to water service is completely intermittent; regular and continuous access is almost nonexistent. In contrast, access to bread/food, gasoline, and the internet appears relatively more possible, but access to these services is also not continuous and is highly dependent on economic conditions.

These findings show that access to basic services after returning to work is sharply differentiated by service type. While access to infrastructure services such as electricity, water, and natural gas is largely absent or extremely limited; access to bread/food, gasoline, and the internet is accessible however fragile.

Qualitative narratives support these quantitative findings. One participant described how access to basic needs creates additional burdens in daily life as follows:

*“We buy water, there’s no electricity; we manage with solar panels. There are no buses, no roads, everything is in ruins. To buy bread, we have to go to another area 5 kilometers away. For internet, I load a package onto a Turkish number and use that.” - Male, 35 years old, Hama*

*“Water only comes for three hours on Fridays.” - Male, 46 years old, Aleppo*

# VOLUNTARY RETURNS TO SYRIA

Another participant reported that access to electricity and water was completely irregular, making it impossible to even plan for basic necessities:

*“The electricity comes on every 4-7 hours, and even then only for half an hour or an hour; sometimes it’s cut off completely. Water comes once every 20 days, and we wait in line. We fill the water tanks on the roof. Bread is limited per family; if you want more, you pay extra. Prices increase according to the dollar, and even if the dollar falls, prices don’t decrease.” - Female, 30 years old, Dera*

Lack of access to basic services appears to make life even more difficult, especially in households with children and individuals with special needs. One participant caring for a disabled child expressed this situation as follows:

*“There’s no electricity, only two hours a day. Public transport isn’t accessible for people with disabilities; I carry my son to the hospital. Medicine is expensive, physiotherapy isn’t available at the state hospital, so I go to a private clinic. Because there’s no electricity, we don’t have a refrigerator, so we can’t store food; we have to buy things like meat and cheese daily.” - Female, 33 years old, Damascus*

It is understood that structural deficiencies in services such as electricity, water, and natural gas, combined with fragility in access to food, internet, and fuel, seriously hinder the sustainability of daily life and deepen dissatisfaction with the decision to return.

A comparative analysis by region reveals that access to basic services after return varies regionally, but these differences **do not create a regular, safe, and sustainable living environment in any region.**

Region	Internet	Gas cylinder	Gasoline	Electricity	Water	Bread - Food
Daraa	3.0	3.0	5.0	1.0	1.0	5.0
Aleppo	4.3	3.8	4.2	2.2	3.2	4.2
Hama	3.0	3.0	3.7	2.3	3.0	3.0
Hasakah	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0
Damascus	2.0	5.0	2.0	1.0	3.0	2.0

Graph 26

Graph 25 presents the categorical distribution of access to basic services across the entire sample, while Graph 26 shows the regional averages of these access levels calculated on a scale of 1–5. The findings indicate that access to public infrastructure-based services, particularly electricity and water, is widespread, irregular, or extremely limited; in contrast, access to market-available resources such as bread/food, gasoline, and internet is relatively more possible, but fragile and cost-driven. This suggests that post-return daily life is sustained not through public services, but through **individual coping strategies and purchasing power**. This irregularity in access to services leads to participants experiencing persistent uncertainty in fundamental areas such as health, education, and livelihood; shaping the return experience with feelings of dissatisfaction, insecurity, and unsustainability. Therefore, despite regional differences, the overall picture shows that returns are far from establishing a permanent and secure life due to structural infrastructure deficiencies and service deprivation.

The responses to the question regarding general needs reveal that participants, regardless of region, age, or gender, share a common experience: a multifaceted and profound deprivation prevails throughout Syria. Rather than listing individual areas of need, participants emphasized a comprehensive deficiency encompassing everything from infrastructure and services to livelihoods and the order of daily life. This indicates that the needs are not temporary or sectoral, but structural and systemic. The statements of two participants from different demographic groups strikingly reflect this shared perception:

**“Actually, everything is needed, but it will be resolved in time.”** - Male, 27 years old, Hama

**“Everything is needed, but there is no infrastructure. The system needs to be established.”**  
- Female, 65 years old, Aleppo

## Job - Employment Opportunities

Findings regarding the most needed sector show that participants defined the employment problem not as a shortage in a specific sector, but rather as a **lack of investment**. 59% of participants emphasized the need for direct investment; construction, textiles, manufacturing, healthcare, education, food, and blue-collar sectors were cited as areas that could develop with investment. The narratives reveal that while professions and labor force exist, this potential is not being utilized due to a lack of capital, production infrastructure, and regulated market conditions; low wages and insecurity are seen as deterrents to employment. This situation reveals that post-return livelihood difficulties stem not only from the inability to find work, but also from the failure to establish sustainable and equitable economic structures.

*“All professions exist, but there’s no money; investment is needed.”* - Male, 27 years old, Hama

*“Markets and shopping malls like those in Türkiye should be built, there should be supermarkets like BIM and A101, with fixed prices.”* - Male, 33 years old, Hama

*“My friend works in a textile workshop in Türkiye; there isn’t such a workshop system here, but there should be. There should be local production; it’s always imports. People don’t know how to invest.”*- Male, 22 years old, Aleppo

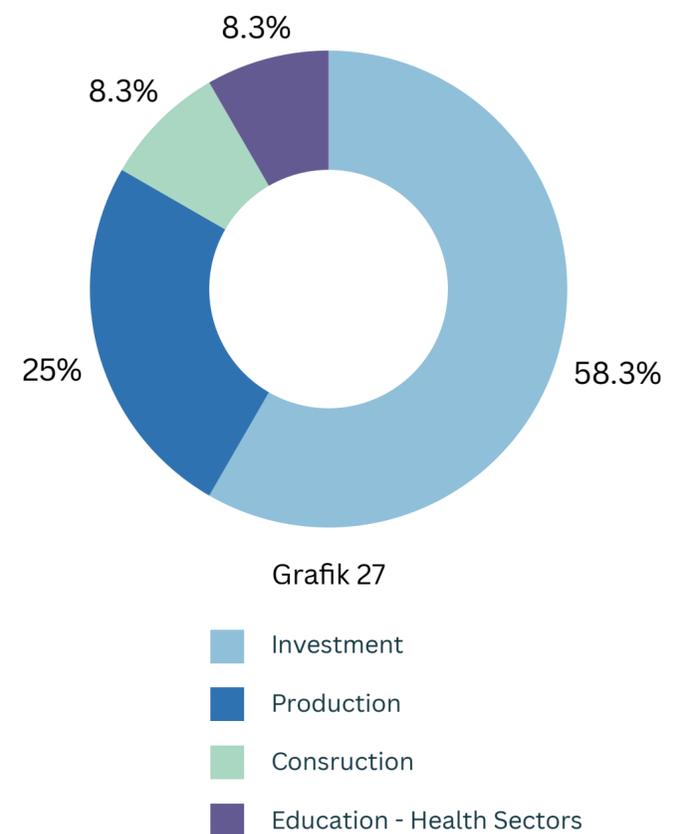
*“Most of the educated people are working. But no new workers are being hired; only those who already have a profession can work.”* - Female, 52 years old, Aleppo

*“Well-paying jobs are needed. Investment and the opening of workplaces are necessary.”* - Male, 53 years old, Aleppo

*“There are no jobs, investment is needed.”* - Male, 28 years old, Aleppo

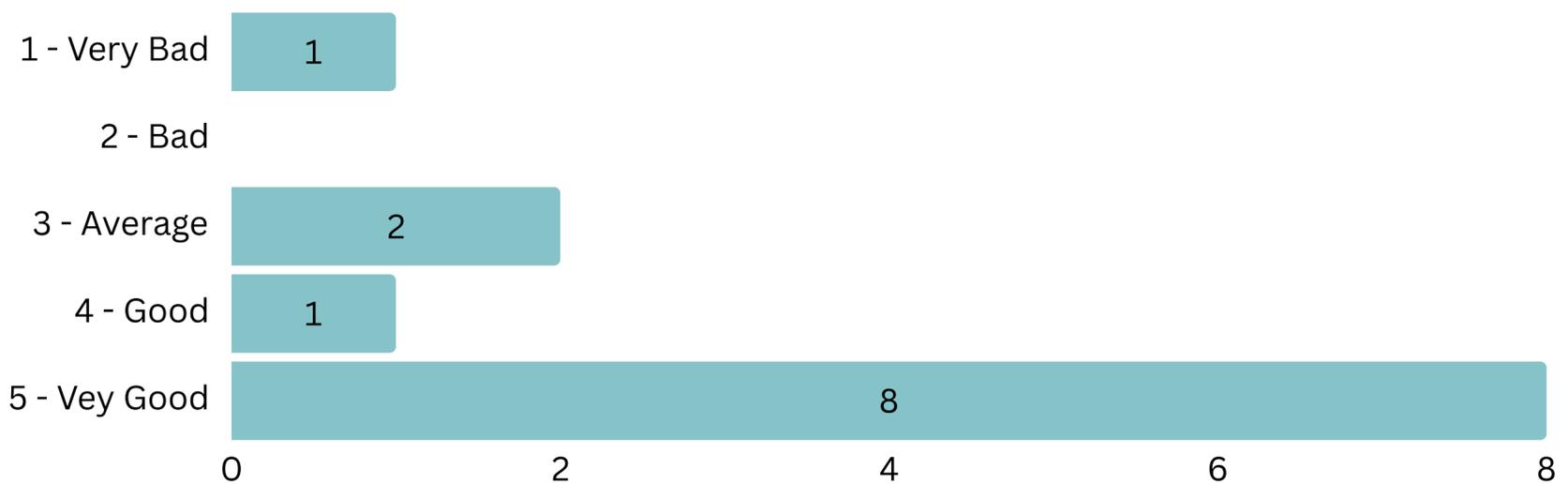
*“There are jobs, but they don't pay enough. Because of this, people prefer not to work, and there is no order.”* - Male, 46 years old, Aleppo

*“There are doctors, but they are expensive. State support for healthcare is needed.”* - Female, 33 years old, Damascus



## 09 Post-Return Perspective on Türkiye and the Syrian Reintegration Process

An examination of the assessments of participants who voluntarily returned to Syria from Türkiye reveals a **significantly positive overall perception** of Türkiye. The vast majority of participants rated life in Türkiye as "good" or "very good".



Graph 28

Participants, particularly when comparing their post-return experiences, placed Türkiye in a more positive light, especially in terms of security, access to services, and living conditions. Negative assessments were mainly associated with recent economic difficulties, the difficulty of finding employment, and rent increases. Nevertheless, the narratives reveal that Türkiye is seen as a safe and livable place; some participants explicitly expressed a desire to return to Türkiye. At the same time, it appears that participants' expectations from Türkiye continue.

*"We are very grateful to Türkiye, but we have had difficulties with employment towards the end."*  
-Male, 27 years old, Hama

*"In Türkiye, they would pick us up from our house, the municipality. I was also receiving financial assistance (from an association) in Türkiye for my disabled son."* - Female, 33 years old, Damascus

*"We returned to Syria because of rent. Now, I would like to return to Türkiye by any means necessary; our identities are clean."* - Female, 25 years old, Hasakah

*"I was forced to return about a year ago. I tried to come back to Türkiye twice, but I faced violence and couldn't return."* - Male, 28 years old, Aleppo

*"Large city buses have arrived in Hama, just like in Türkiye (these buses came from Türkiye). Housing complexes will be built in Hama by Turkey."* - Male, 33 years old, Hama

A participant, while sharing their thoughts on the needs in Syria and the subsequent integration process, highlighted the need to regulate social dynamics rather than just address basic needs, and emphasized that social polarization makes integration more difficult. Their statement is noteworthy:

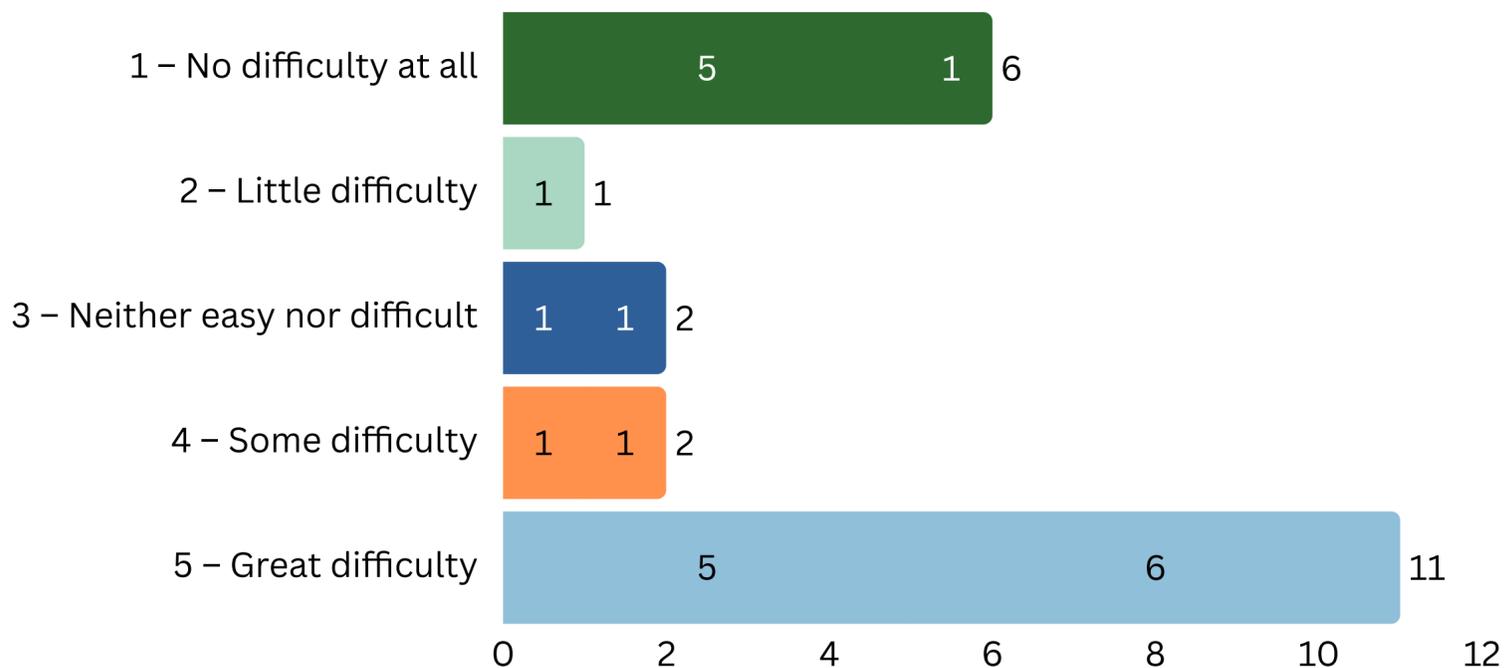
***"We don't need to 'build the earth,' we need to 'build minds.' There is polarization after the Assad regime."***

- Male, 22 years old, Aleppo

# VOLUNTARY RETURNS TO SYRIA

In order to assess the reintegration process into Syria following voluntary return, participants were asked questions regarding both their own readjustment experiences and the readjustment of the family members and children with whom they live.

In the graph below, the first column shows the perceived difficulty of readjustment for themselves, and the second column shows the perceived difficulty of readjustment for their families or children. **While 41.7% of participants stated that they did not experience any difficulties in readjustment for themselves after voluntary return, 70% of participants stated that other family members, and especially children, experienced difficulties in the readjustment process.** This finding shows that the perceived readjustment at the individual level is relatively higher; however, when it comes to the household and children, the readjustment process is experienced as much more fragile and problematic.



Graph 29

The narratives clearly show that children, especially those in Türkiye who have experienced a more stable, safe, and accessible life, struggle to adapt to the daily living conditions in Syria. These adaptation difficulties are reported to encompass not only limited access to resources but also access to unfamiliar relatives, social circles, and the dynamics of social life in Syria. Participants also emphasized the impact of belonging on the reintegration process.

*“There are no parks. In Türkiye, everything was accessible; we lived in prosperity. These things don't exist in Syria. There are no parks, shopping malls, or places where children can spend time. My wife is starting to get used to it now, but it was difficult at first. She's in her twenties, a relatively young age when she left Syria; I left at a much older age, so I got used to it and longed for Syria.” - Male, 27 years old, Hama*

*“In Türkiye, there was peace and quiet, even at home. The children aren't social, but they came to the village as a social place, and they're struggling here. The village is crowded; **they had a more solitary life in Türkiye.** They're also struggling because education suddenly switched from Turkish to Arabic.” - Female, 30 years old, Deraa*

*“They struggled in the beginning. It took us two months to adapt; the children got used to their grandfather.” - Male, 33 years old, Hama*

*“The children are always at home. Even when I send my son to buy bread, I worry about him, wondering if there was a fight. I never let my daughters go outside; it's not a suitable life for them. When they were in Türkiye, they could go out freely, no one said anything, they walked around comfortably.” - Male, 46 years old, Aleppo*

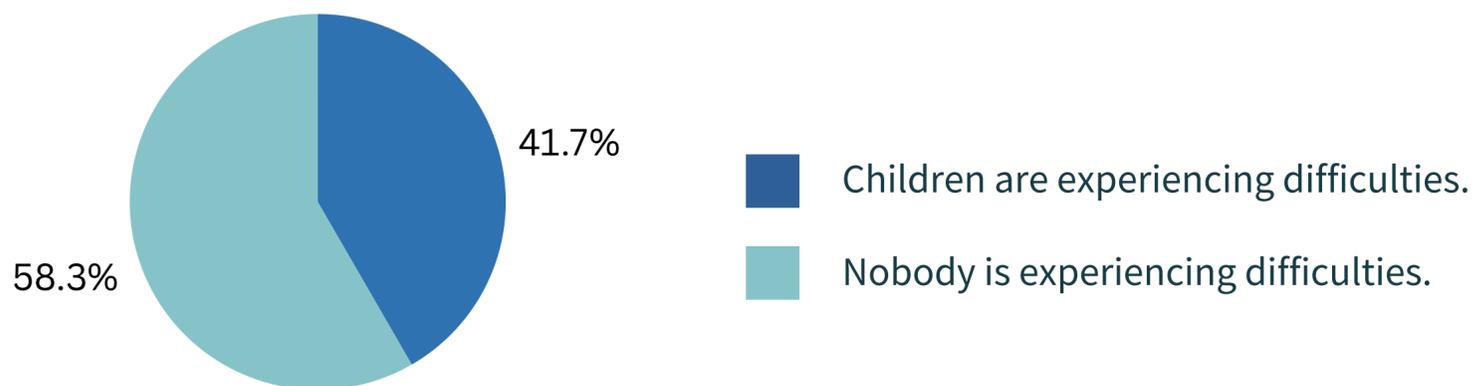
To determine the overall difficulty level of the readjustment process in Syria after voluntary return, the "**Difficulty of Adapting to the New Syria Index,**" created by considering the participants' self-assessments and those of their family members/children living with them, was calculated as 63.5%. This value indicates that the readjustment process generally involves a moderate to high level of difficulty.



Graph 30

In conclusion, it points to the fact that a large part of post-return life has not yet reached a stable and sustainable level of adaptation; and that the difficulty of adaptation is deepened through household and child-focused risks rather than individual resilience.

"Difficulty communicating in Arabic" has been addressed as a separate topic due to its frequent emphasis in narratives and secondary sources in the field. The findings reveal that children, in particular, experience significant difficulties in the linguistic adaptation process. While 41% of participants stated that their children had difficulty communicating in Arabic, 59% indicated that they did not experience such difficulties in their households.



Graph 31

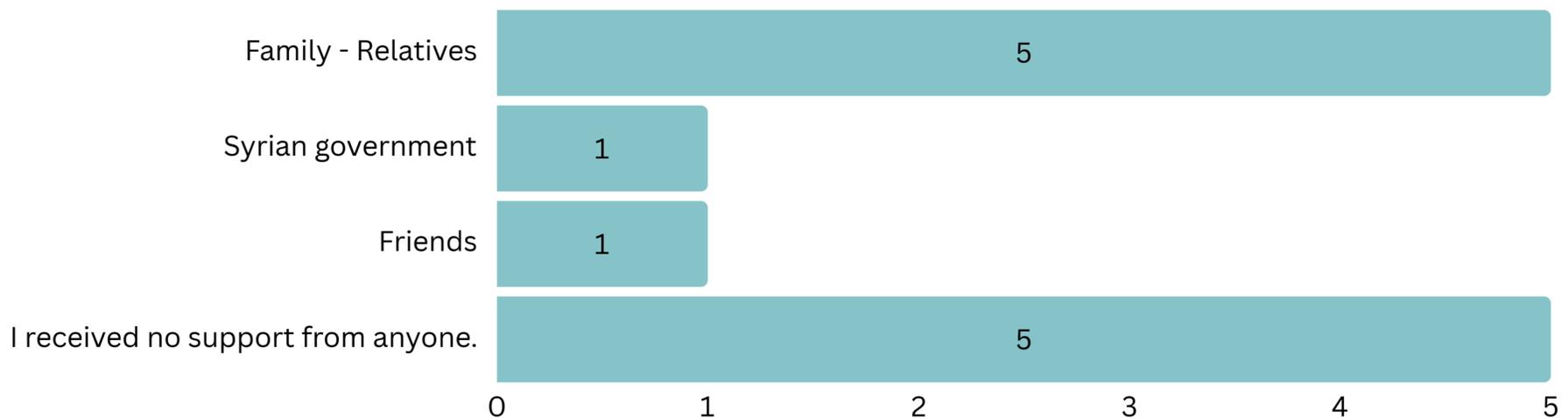
The narratives indicate that the children, having received extensive Turkish education and conducted their daily lives in Turkish in Türkiye, found it difficult to use Arabic actively and fluently upon their return. One participant described their children's situation as follows:

*“My non-disabled son struggles to communicate in Arabic, and my disabled son can’t speak at all. My disabled son faces significant difficulties in managing his life in areas such as healthcare, physiotherapy and transportation” - Female, 33 years old, Damascus*

Another narrative concretely demonstrates the impact of language transfer on children:

*“My 6 year old child’s Turkish is better. At first he would speak one word in Turkish and one word in Arabic.” - Male, 35 years old, Hama*

Finally, the social support mechanisms available to participants during their reintegration process after returning to Syria were examined. The findings indicate that support networks are extremely limited and largely informal.



Graph 32

The support reported by the participants was primarily provided through relatives and friends in Syria or abroad (especially in Türkiye). This support varied in form, including in-kind assistance such as home repairs, or regular or irregular monthly cash transfers. A total of three participants—two from Türkiye and one from another country—stated receiving support from their close circle abroad.

In contrast, it is noteworthy that none of the participants mentioned receiving support from civil society organizations. Participants stated that while it was possible to receive support from the Syrian government, this required official procedures, document acquisition, and various financial obligations; they often lacked the information, documents, and financial resources to complete these processes.

This situation reveals that individuals and households remain largely dependent on their own social circles during the post-return integration process, and that institutional and systematic support mechanisms are perceived as either inaccessible or dysfunctional.

*“My Syrian friend in Türkiye is married to a Turkish person, he sends us aid every month.”*  
-Male, 28 years old, Aleppo

*“They told me to enroll my children in the population registry to receive support, but I can’t get support because I am not able to pay the money.”* -Male, 33 years old, Hama

*“My deceased husband’s family gave us a house and told us to repair it and live in it.”* -Female, 52 years old, Aleppo

## 10 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study reveals that the structural, economic, and social challenges faced by individuals who voluntarily returned to Syria from Türkiye are comprehensive and multifaceted. The findings show that while there are differences across regions, age groups, and genders in Syria, problems such as profound deprivation, lack of investment and employment, low income levels, and limited access to public services are common. The vast majority of participants have positive perceptions of Türkiye, and their return decisions are largely related to economic necessities and housing costs. It was found that individuals perceive higher levels of difficulties for children and other family members compared to themselves during the integration process; children, in particular, experience significant integration problems in the areas of education, social life, and Arabic communication. The Integration Difficulty Index clearly indicates that a significant portion of post-return life has not yet reached a stable and sustainable level of integration; protective, **supportive, and structural interventions are needed, especially for children and families.** It was also assessed that social support mechanisms are largely limited to family and kinship networks, and the absence of any narrative regarding support from civil society organizations points to a significant gap.

### 1. Strengthening Access to Information Before Return

Multilingual information mechanisms should be established to ensure individuals have access to up-to-date, unbiased, and region-specific information before making a return decision. Realistic information on the security situation, access to basic services, cost of living, and education and health infrastructure should be systematically provided.

### 2. Taking Household Vulnerabilities into Account in Decision-Making Processes

Return policies should be designed to take into account household hierarchies and care responsibilities; meaningful participation of women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities in decision-making processes should be supported in particular.

### 3. Child-Focused Integration and Language Support Programs

For children who have lived in Türkiye for a long time, Arabic language support, remedial education, and psychosocial adaptation programs should be developed. Transition models that facilitate reintegration into the education system should be implemented. Adaptation policies should be designed to focus on the needs of households and children rather than individual adaptation. Opportunities should be created for access to safe social spaces.

### 4. Improving Access to Basic Services

Short- and medium-term support mechanisms should be established to reduce regional inequalities in basic services such as electricity, water, health, education, and transportation. Basic infrastructure should be prioritized, especially in rural and semi-urban areas. Access to social support mechanisms should be supported with information and guidance activities that reduce bureaucratic obstacles.

### 5. Livelihood and Investment-Focused Interventions

As participants clearly stated, not only jobs but also sustainable and decent income-generating employment opportunities should be created. Supportive programs should be developed for small-scale investments, local production, blue-collar sectors, and service sectors.

### 6. Strengthening Institutional and Civil Support Mechanisms in Syria and Türkiye

The fact that participants received services from our association while in Turkey invalidates the assumption that social support provided to Syrians in Türkiye reduces motivation for return; on the contrary, it confirms the multi-dimensional character of the process, which depends on individual and structural dynamics. In this context, civil mechanisms should be positioned not as elements hindering return, but as complementary actors ensuring that the process is carried out on the axis of human rights. Therefore, it is essential to increase the accessibility of NGOs in the pre- and post-return periods, to create effective referral systems for individuals who cannot access public resources, and to implement holistic policies that prioritize psychosocial adaptation and livelihoods. Civil society organizations should be made more visible and accessible in the post-return process. Intermediation and referral mechanisms should be established for individuals who cannot access state support due to information, documents, and financial conditions.

# VOLUNTARY RETURNS TO SYRIA SECOND MONITORING REPORT

**HARD TO STAY,  
UNCERTAIN TO RETURN:  
A MIGRATION DILEMMA**



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