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Advancing Alternative Migration Governance



Migration and Development: Measuring migration aspirations and the impact of refugee assistance in Turkey

Deliverable 6.1

Ayşen Üstübici, Eda Kirişcioğlu and Ezgi Elçi

June 2021



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List of Abbreviations

CCTE Conditional Cash Transfers for Education
COVID-19 Corona Virus Disease 2019
DGMM Directorate General of Migration Management
EU European Union
ESSN Emergency Social Safety Net
FRIT Facility for Refugees in Turkey
IP International Protection
LFIP Law on Foreigners and International Protection
NGO Non-governmental Organization
PDMM Provincial Directorate of Migration Management
RTP Regulation on Temporary Protection
TP Temporary Protection
TL Turkish Lira

1. Introduction

This report is written in the context of the ADMIGOV WP6, which focuses on the relationship between development interventions and migration aspirations and decisions at different stages of the migration cycle, including secondary movements from countries of first reception. Understanding this question is especially important to achieve the aims envisaged at New York Declaration of 2016 towards more predictable and comprehensive responses to “crisis” situations created by large scale displacements. Similarly, the Global Compact on Refugees, a non-binding international document adopted in December 2018, laid out the principles of international solidarity to address the needs of the displaced population by easing the pressures on host countries and enhancing refugee self-reliance.

Turkey, as a main refugee recipient country hosting over 3.6 million Syrian refugees as well as nearly 400,000 more refugees from other nationalities, provides a suitable case to measure reasons for aspirations to move on, to stay put, and return, in relation to Turkey’s particular socio-economic and political context. Initiated by the EU-Turkey statement of March 2016, the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) is a major cash transfer program funded by the EU to improve the living conditions of refugees in Turkey. The ESSN is one of the largest programs of its kind and entails a modest, but regular, cash transfer to vulnerable refugee families in Turkey. ESSN cash assistance is also complemented with conditional cash transfers for education (CCTE) funded by UNICEF. There are also other less comprehensive initiatives providing assistance in cash and aid in-kind to enhance the integration of refugee communities in Turkey.

One of the standing policy questions is whether the assistance provided to refugees improves their living situations and also whether such programs engender aspirations to stay put in the current place, rather than moving on. To partly answer this very complex question, we unpacked migration decision-making not only in relation to migration aspirations in ideal circumstances, but also in relation to considerations and plans in the near future. Then, we evaluate the reasons for aspirations to move on, stay put, and return. We focus and compare two major groups: Syrians, who are pre-dominantly under Temporary Protection in Turkey, and Afghans, who are under international protection. These two communities have different histories of displacement and they are subject to differentiated legal statuses in Turkey (Üstübici, 2019).

We employed a mixed method approach to measure current migration aspirations and the factors shaping those aspirations. The findings are based on the analysis of a survey with 966 Afghan and Syrian nationals living in Turkey and 45 in-depth interviews, collected throughout 2020 under the conditions of COVID-19 pandemic.

The report is structured in six sections. After this brief introduction, Section 2 summarizes the country context with a specific focus on the two major communities of refugees mentioned above, as well as the particular development interventions in place in Turkey which aim to improve the livelihoods of displaced communities. Section 3 details our methodology and discussed how we adapted our research methodology to pandemic conditions. Section 4 and 5 discuss our main

findings in light of the analysis of the survey and qualitative data. Section 4 details descriptive results regarding the socio-economic profile of respondents, their attitudes towards migration and reasons for aspiring to move on, stay put, or return, and their views on the different types of assistance they receive. Section 5 analyses the causal relationship between different dispositions towards migration plans in the near future and development assistance while controlling socio-economic variables as well as migration specific ones such as duration of stay or transnational networks, through a multinomial regression analysis. Section 6 concludes with reiterating the major findings of the study with policy suggestions to be taken into consideration by national and international authorities as well as by the EU.

1.1. The context of Turkey

Since the 1920s, the Turkish Republic has been a land of immigration, particularly for communities of Turkish descent and Muslims, whose immigration into Turkey was conceptualized as part of the nation-building process. These communities were received and viewed as natural citizens rather than immigrants. Being a typical emigration country in the post-WW2 period for several decades, Turkey has received immigrants from its wider region after the 1980s, becoming an immigration destination for those seeking short stay, asylum, and economic opportunities ([İçduygu and Kirişçi, 2009](#)).

Turkey becoming a land of immigration can be contextualized within a number of external, geopolitical and domestic factors. Turkey is geographically proximate to conflict-ridden countries on one side (mainly Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan) and the gates of Europe on the other (through Greece and Bulgaria). The country has lax visa policies and a relatively developed and open economy. Therefore, it has become a destination for immigrants in search of economic opportunities from post-Soviet countries as well as conflict-torn, refugee generating countries. Within this context, Turkey transformed from a land of emigration to one of immigration. Turkey is especially seen as a transit zone, a stepping stone for those on the way to Europe. However, for many it is also a land of asylum and immigration for those seeking protection as well as economic opportunities. Note that these categories of transit migrants, labour migrants, and refugees are not mutually exclusive. In our lived experience as researchers, it is very likely that a person can fit in two or more categories at the same time.

From a formal international law perspective, Turkey's commitment to international protection dates back to 1951. Turkey was one of the first signatories of the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees. However, the country did not establish its own refugee reception and protection system for several decades.

A number of changes marked Turkey's immigration policy as an outcome of the EU migration externalization measures and domestic concerns. As a general trend, more external and internal controls were introduced to stop transit migration through Turkey and the asylum system went through a reform. The country introduced a comprehensive migration and asylum law in 2013, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP). The LFIP brought together formerly scattered pieces of legislation on the entry, stay and deportation of foreigners. Turkey's asylum policy was codified as law for the first time as opposed to secondary legislation.

The LFIP as a policy response was initiated in early 2000s, both by the EU-Turkish accession process and existing realities of mixed migration movements across the Mediterranean. Therefore, immigration and asylum policy were still undergoing transformation when Turkey become a major refugee recipient country in 2015 (İçduygu, 2015). Note that the LFIP was a result of the ongoing process in the context EU accession talks rather than a response to the arrival of refugees from Syria. Although the prospect for Turkey's EU membership has faded, migration is now one of the few areas of cooperation between Turkey and the EU.

As an outcome of the EU governments' panic over increasing number of migrants and refugees arriving in Europe during the summer of 2015, the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan enacted in November 2015 and the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016 constituted a crystallization in the ongoing migration diplomacy between Turkey and the European Union. As a continuation of the externalisation of EU migration and border policies, the 2016 statement between the EU and Turkey—commonly known as the 'Turkey-EU Deal'—had direct implications shaping development initiatives that are researched in this study.

As of 2021, Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world with over 3.6 million Syrian nationals under Temporary Protection, close to 330,000 registered conditional refugees and asylum applicants of other nationalities under International Protection and nearly one million foreigners with resident permits. Although the report uses the term *refugees* in a generic way to refer to Afghans and Syrians, we need to acknowledge that among both communities, there are individuals who have not registered with the authorities and therefore do not have legal status, as well as those with residence permits who are considered "legal migrants".

1.2. Overview of Syrian and Afghan displacement in Turkey

The current legal framework on asylum is based on the provision of **temporary protection (TP)** for **Syrians** and **international protection (IP)** for **non-Syrians**. Syrians were provided temporary protection by the government and unlike other nationalities, they do not have to go through the individual refugee status determination process.

The LFIP retains geographical limitations on the implementation of the Convention, meaning that refugee status is granted only to persons originating from Europe, the latter defined as a member state of the Council of Europe. Individuals seeking protection in Turkey have been dealt with under different legal categories. The term 'international protection' refers to non-Syrians who applied for asylum in Turkey, live in their designated satellite cities and wait for their refugee status determination to be processed. Then, if accepted, they are granted *conditional refugee status*. The latter is not a fully-fledged refugee status leading to permanent residency, rather a status providing the right to stay in the country while waiting to be resettled in a third country. Note that the annual number of resettlements from Turkey is much lower than the number awaiting resettlement.

Major nationalities under international protection in Turkey are Iraqis, Afghans, Iranians and Somalis, among others, with the Afghans constituting a sizeable community. Reflecting this major differentiation in the asylum system, this study focused on two major communities: Syrians and Afghans. The migration trajectories of these two communities differ significantly from one another in terms of their size, conditions of displacement and legal status, despite similarities regarding their incorporation experiences in Turkey. Note that among these two communities, there are also unknown number of undocumented migrants in Turkey, whose asylum application may have been rejected, especially for Afghans, or those who had never registered with the authorities.

Syrians in Turkey

A majority of Syrians in Turkey are registered under TP. In the aftermath of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, Turkey declared that it would pursue an “open-door policy” welcoming the arrival of Syrians fleeing the regime. Although the open-door policy stopped in 2016, the number of Syrians registered in Turkey has increased due to birth rates and also because Syrians continue to enter Turkey via smuggling and other means. Yet there are other Syrians who were already in the country and registered only after 2016. As a result, the 3.6 million Syrians registered under TP have become the largest immigrant community. The majority of Syrians are residing in urban areas, often in packed neighbourhoods alongside the urban poor. Consequently, the issue of immigration has become high on the public agenda.

As far as the Syrians under temporary protection are concerned, debates over refugee policy have emerged around three main areas: their integration in Turkey, their return prospects, and their option to resettle in third countries. Various research has focused on policy responses at national and local levels ([İçduygu, 2015](#), [Üstübici, 2019](#), [Memişoğlu and Yavcan, 2020](#), [Üstübici, 2020](#)), on the prevalence of anti-refugee attitudes in Turkey in political discourses and among the public ([Yanasmayan et al., 2019](#), [Sivis, 2020](#), [Saraçoğlu and Bélanger, 2019](#), [Erdoğan, 2020](#), [Çarkoğlu and Elçi, 2021](#)) and Syrians’ perceptions on integration in Turkey and their future aspirations ([Baban et al., 2017](#), [Müller Funk, 2019](#), [Rottmann and Kaya, 2020](#)). Research and field observations reveal that the initial welcoming attitude towards refugees has gradually faded while xenophobic tendencies and discrimination are on the rise.

Based on Article 91 of the LFIP on large-scale displacement, in October 2014 the Regulation on Temporary Protection (RTP) specified terms of registration and stay in Turkey without determining the length of protection. Accordingly, once applicants from Syria are registered with the provincial authorities and received their card and identity number, they can benefit from public services, especially healthcare and education in the provinces where they are registered. Their mobility from one province to another is subject to official permission granted by the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) branch in the city they reside.

As part of measures regarding integration, Turkey introduced the Regulation on Work Permit of Refugees under Temporary Protection in January 2016. However, the number of work permits granted to Syrians have remained relatively modest. Back in 2017, some 20,966 Syrians in Turkey

had work permits,¹ increasing to 63,789 as of 2019.² However, this is only a small fraction of the nearly 2 million Syrians of the working age in Turkey. The regulation's introduction of a maximum quota of 10% employment of Syrians for each workplace and bureaucratic barriers for employers to apply for a work permit has obstructed the implementation of the regulation. Moreover, the regulation prioritized those with financial and cultural capital, causing most Syrians and other groups seeking international protection to remain locked in a highly informal and abusive labour market.

For Syrian refugees in Turkey, their access to durable solutions (local integration, return and resettlement) is limited. As a measure regarding local integration, a number of Syrians under temporary protection have been called for interviews with the government for exceptional acquisition of citizenship. Around 110,000 Syrian refugees have been naturalized as of February 2020, half of them being adults ([Günaydin, 2020](#)). In the absence of publicly available data, field observations indicate that a considerable number of Syrians invited for naturalization are business people, university students or young professionals, and some are in the humanitarian sector. The overwhelming majority of Syrians are under TP and the latter does not pave the way for permanent residency.

Recently, officials from both the government and political opposition have put much more emphasis on 'return' policies as a durable solution. Although Turkish authorities stated that around 414,000 Syrians voluntarily returned to Syria as of October 2020, research highlights that return aspirations are, at best, conditional on the situation in Syria ([Müller-Funk and Fransén, 2020](#), [Sevencan, 2020](#)). The resettlements from Turkey in general and that of Syrians in particular is low. Turkish authorities have revealed two figures regarding resettlement of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Accordingly, between April 2014 to April 2021, 16,931 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey and a majority of them left for Canada, the US, the UK, and Norway.³ In addition, as of April 2021, 28,581 Syrians have been re-settled in European countries, primarily Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden, in the context of the 1-to-1 scheme explained below.

Afghans in Turkey

Afghans constitute a sizeable community with a relatively long history of immigration to Turkey. Afghan nationals have been coming to Turkey since the early 1980s and have become citizens. Others arrived in recent decades, fleeing the fragile conditions of Afghanistan in search of economic opportunities and security. While a majority of the recently arrived Afghans in Turkey seek international protection, there are others who have remained undocumented and a minority who may yet acquire a residence permit to stay in Turkey.

Our main target in this study are Afghan nationals seeking international protection in Turkey. As asylum seekers from non-European countries in Turkey, they are expected to register with the authorities upon entering the country. After registration, applicants are assigned to a satellite city, a policy that has been in place since the early 2000s, where they are expected to reside and prove

¹ See statistics by the Ministry of Labour, *Work permit of foreigners 2017* <https://www.csgeb.gov.tr/media/3372/yabanciizin2017.pdf> [access date: 06.05.2021]

² See statistics by the Ministry of Labour, *Work permit of foreigners 2019* <https://www.csgeb.gov.tr/media/63117/yabanciizin2019.pdf> [access date: 06.05.2021]

³ See the statistics by DGMM available at: <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638>

their presence by providing signatures to provincial authorities on a regular basis. Note that while Syrians are able to register in their provinces of choice, non-Syrians applying for international protection have to register in certain designated provinces. Provinces designated as satellite cities in Turkey are geographically located away from the Western coast and land borders with Greece and Bulgaria. Although in principle they have access to basic rights and are eligible to apply for work permits 6 months after their registration, in practice their access to protection is jeopardized.⁴ Recently adopted in December 2019, Law No.7196 “Amending Several Acts” to the LFIP limited the right to free healthcare for those under international protection to **one year after registration**.

According to the UNHCR, over 116,000 Afghans constitute the second largest nationality under IP in Turkey, following Iraqis.⁵ The DGMM reports that in only 2020,⁶ over 22,000 Afghans registered with the authorities under international protection. Also, there are unknown number of Afghan nationals living in Turkey without legal status, as they search for a way onwards to Europe after a period of staying and working in Turkey, or others who do not register with the authorities as they want to live and work in big cities, especially in Istanbul, rather than being stuck in designated “satellite cities.”

With increasing border controls between Turkey and the EU since 2016 and worsening conditions on the Greek islands, those who have been aspiring to move onwards from Turkey have had to stay in Turkey longer than they intended. According to DGMM statistics, as of 2018, Afghan nationals have become the largest group among other apprehended irregular migrant groups at the borders, outnumbering Syrian nationals.⁷ The Afghan community in Turkey has been studied by a number of researchers focusing on the dynamics of onward migration and the dynamics of their journey ([Kaytaz, 2016](#), [Kuschminder, 2018](#)) as well as their incorporation experience in urban centres and satellite cities in Turkey ([Ikizoglu Erensu and Kaşlı, 2016](#), [Karadağ, 2021](#)).

In a nutshell, there is no legal right of permanent stay for either Syrians under Temporary Protection nor for Afghans under International Protection. However, Syrians under temporary protection have easier access to registration, services, and aid compared to non-Syrians under international protection (Üstübici, 2019). Situated at the bottom of this stratum, the undocumented group is notably marginalised with no access to any formal provision of protection. The limited access to asylum and very low resettlement rates for those under international protection after long years of waiting might prompt Afghans to seek alternative ways to move onwards from Turkey. At the same time, Afghans under IP and Syrians under TP are subject to similar conditions of vulnerability, particularly in terms of access to livelihoods that may potentially engender aspirations of further mobility. The temporary status of Syrian refugees and Afghan refugees’ deprivation of legal status render them vulnerable. In turn, this vulnerability potentially generates a higher willingness to leave Turkey.

⁴ See Karadağ and Üstübici, 2021 Country Report for ADMIGOV WP4

⁵ See the statistics by UNHCR available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/unhcr-turkiye-istatistikleri>

⁶ See the official website of the DGMM: <https://en.goc.gov.tr/international-protection17>

⁷ See the official website of the DGMM: <https://en.goc.gov.tr/irregular-migration>

This background information coupled with the development intervention discussed below makes Turkey an interesting case to discuss the dynamics of decision-making for Syrians and Afghans currently residing in Turkey, in terms of migrating to another country, settling in, or returning.

1.3. Overview of Development Projects

In this research, we measured the impact of different types of cash aid schemes for refugees in Turkey, mainly funded by the EU, as well as other assistance in-kind provided by various local actors. The year 2015 was marked by the so-called “refugee crisis,” as nearly one million refugees from Syria as well as asylum seekers from other countries mobilised to enter Europe through Turkey. Developments during this period led to the intensification of migration diplomacy between Turkey and the EU. The talks culminated in the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan enacted in November 2015 and the EU-Turkey Statement on additional action points in March 2016. As a continuation of the externalisation of EU migration and border policies, the 2016 statement between the EU and Turkey—commonly known as the ‘Turkey-EU Deal’—largely shaped the EU funding mechanisms towards the target groups we are focusing in this study.

The 2016 statement has three important components, including the return of refugees arriving to Greek islands from Turkey, the one-to-one resettlement scheme, and the funding channelled to support Turkey in improving the living conditions of refugees. The funds under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) had been contracted until the end of 2020, funding a number of ongoing projects for the protection and integration of displaced communities, especially Syrians in Turkey.⁸ One of the aims of this study is to measure the impact of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) for family members of non-camp refugees in Turkey. The ESSN is the biggest disbursement of financial support under the FRIT, implemented by the World Food Programme, Turkish Red Crescent, and Turkish government. Its budget amounts to 1.7 billion Euros.⁹ The program introduced a cash transfer system targeting the most vulnerable refugees in Turkey, currently reaching over 1.5 million refugees. 90% of ESSN beneficiaries are from Syria but other beneficiaries from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran are also included. Beneficiary families previously received 120 Turkish Liras (TL), although this has increased to 155TL (around 15 Euro) per family member per month. In this program, the vulnerability criteria generally include families with several young children and with adult family members unable to work due to disability, old age, or care responsibilities.

In addition to ESSN, there is conditional cash transfer to families whose children are enrolled and regularly attending schools in Turkey. This scheme is funded by UNICEF’s conditional cash transfers for education (CCTE) and beneficiaries use their ESSN card to receive cash aid. All refugees meeting the eligibility criteria, who are residing in off-camp settings, and regardless of their nationality, can benefit from this assistance. The CCTE scheme aims to help refugee communities to keep their children in school. The amount of cash aid varies from 50TL (around 5 Euro) per month to 200TL (around 20 Euro), depending on the schooling level and gender of the pupil. As of February 2021,

⁸ The allocation of funding under FRIT can be found at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/facility_table.pdf [access date: 28.05.2021]

⁹ See Factsheet on ESSN support for refugees in Turkey published by EC (31.10.2019) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_19_6212 [access date: 31.05.2021]

682,882 students benefited from the UNICEF CCTE.¹⁰ Note that around 77% of families receiving CCTE are also ESSN beneficiaries.

We specifically measured the effects of the ESSN and CCTE aid schemes, as they are the two main programs with nation-wide coverage. In addition, we also asked whether respondents received any other types of cash or in-kind aid from different donors, including municipalities, charities or NGOs. Regarding integration measures, we also asked whether they attended any free Turkish language courses or vocational training.

Despite basic cash transfers to the most vulnerable, the livelihoods of urban refugees are mainly left to market forces. Note that there is no public housing available to refugees and access to the formal labour market is very restricted. Due to the high unemployment rates and low wages facing refugees in Turkey, and in the context of Turkey's recent economic recession coupled with the COVID-19 measures, the ESSN support is not effective in meeting the scale of need. Given these structural challenges, we hypothesize that:

Aid schemes, particularly the ESSN, would not have a significant impact on shaping aspirations.

2. Methodology

2.1. (Online) Survey Methodology

The WP6 Development Interventions of the ADMIGOV project includes both quantitative and qualitative components. Both survey and semi-structured interviews were planned to be conducted face-to-face with Afghan and Syrian refugees living in different cities of Turkey. The team started piloting the survey and conducted interviews in Adana in early March 2020.¹¹ However, the first official case of COVID-19 pandemic was announced during our fieldwork on 11 March 2020. The first measures taken by the Turkish government on 16 March 2020 included the transition to online education. On 1 April 2020, the Minister of Health announced that COVID-19 had spread across Turkey. Accordingly, our research team postponed data collection due to COVID-19 to an unknown date.

Meanwhile, we started to discuss alternative data collection methods considering the health and safety of respondents, survey team and research team. Since face-to-face data collection was no longer a safe method, we decided to continue with online data collection techniques. Between January and August 2020, we conducted three pilot surveys with Syrian respondents and one with Afghan respondents to test whether online data collection was a practical alternative and we received promising results in terms of recruitment, response rate and completion rate.

We conducted the online survey between 18 November and 31 December 2020. We recruited participants through Facebook and Instagram advertisements. We used the Qualtrics survey tool for data collection which ensures data privacy and anonymity. The questionnaire and survey ads

¹⁰ Check the number of beneficiaries available at: <https://www.unicef.org/turkey/media/11731/file> [access date: 28.05.2021]

¹¹ Adana is an industrialized southern province of Turkey but also has a significant agricultural production. The province is hosting over a quarter of a million Syrians under TP and it is also designated as a satellite city for those under international protection.

were presented in the native language of respondents – Arabic for Syrians and Dari for Afghans. We limited the survey advertisements' scope to Turkey. Our online ads also specifically invited Syrian or Afghan participants to the survey.

The survey began with an informed consent form. Participants were not able to see questions in the event they did not give their consent. Qualtrics keeps survey completion records of participants and we dropped respondents who only partially completed the survey. Next, we dropped respondents who were not born in Syria for the Syrian sample. For the Afghan sample, we asked the respondents' citizenship and were dropped if they were Farsi/Dari speakers but not originally from Afghanistan, as Turkey hosts a sizeable Iranian population. Arabic speakers who are from Iraq or Gulf countries were also dropped. However, we kept those originally from Afghanistan but lived in Iran as refugees before coming to Turkey. Then, for both samples, we dropped the respondents who failed the attention check, which was in the form of a directed query ([Abbey and Meloy, 2017](#)). Finally, using cross-tabulation, we dropped respondents who had inconsistent answers, such as male respondents who reported their occupation as being housewives. In the end, we had 551 Syrian respondents and 415 Afghan respondents.

On average, the survey took 36 minutes to complete (SD = 46). The completion time for the Syrian sample was 31 minutes (SD = 42) and the Afghan sample was 44 minutes (SD = 49). The survey has eleven main sections, which are basic information questions regarding the household head, risk attitudes, migration aspirations, household network, migrant module on migration history, development interventions, wellbeing, household characteristics, access and assets, current employment status, and demographic information. Most modules comprise comparable questions across other countries. However, we also added some country specific questions, particularly about development interventions and the access-asset section to understand the vulnerability of migrant populations. We also asked detailed risk attitudes questions to grasp the complex relationship between risk-taking and migration aspirations.

We analysed the survey using Stata 16 software. We tabulated and calculated percentages and the means of variables in the first stage. In the final section, we conducted a series of multinomial logistic regressions to estimate the determinants of migration aspirations.

However, our sampling method had limitations as we recruited respondents through Facebook and Instagram advertisements, hence the results rely on a convenience sample. Therefore, the sample could be biased in favour of more educated, literate, and wealthier people to the exclusion of illiterate, elderly, and poorer people in refugee communities. Also, since the survey was conducted online, participation required having a smartphone or computer, as well as a Facebook and Instagram account. Thus, our sample only includes Syrian and Afghan refugees who have access to these devices and online platforms.

Nonetheless, recent literature suggests that online platforms are viable alternative tools for conducting surveys with difficult-to-reach populations such as immigrants and refugees. Previous survey studies with migrant populations yielded promising results on recruiting participants from difficult-to-reach populations using social media advertisements ([Pöttschke and Braun, 2017](#), [Ersanilli and van der Gaag, 2020](#)). Besides, we do not know the universe of Syrian and Afghan refugees in Turkey. Thus, we cannot estimate whether a face-to-face survey in a specific neighbourhood or online surveys are more accurate and representative of Syrian and Afghan

refugees. Another advantage of online surveys and survey experiments is that they allow researchers to collect data safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, when compared with face-to-face and phone surveys, data collection with social media advertisements appears to be a cost-effective, time-saving, user friendly, and safer alternative.

We were still able to compare our Syrian sample with the limited official data provided by the DGMM, which contains provincial, gender, and age distribution statistics on Syrian refugees in Turkey.¹² Regarding the gender distribution of Syrians, our final dataset has almost the same percentage of males and females compared to the official numbers (Figure 1). Regarding age distribution, we have a younger sample compared to the official numbers for Syrians, which can be explained by the higher use of internet and social media among younger cohorts. However, similar to the official figures, we have fewer respondents as cohorts get older (Figure 2). Finally, we controlled for the distribution across provinces. In line with official figures, Istanbul, Gaziantep, and Hatay appear as the top three provinces hosting Syrians among respondents of our survey. Also, out of the top 15 provinces, only Kocaeli ranked higher than its official rank, but only by a minor difference (Table 1).

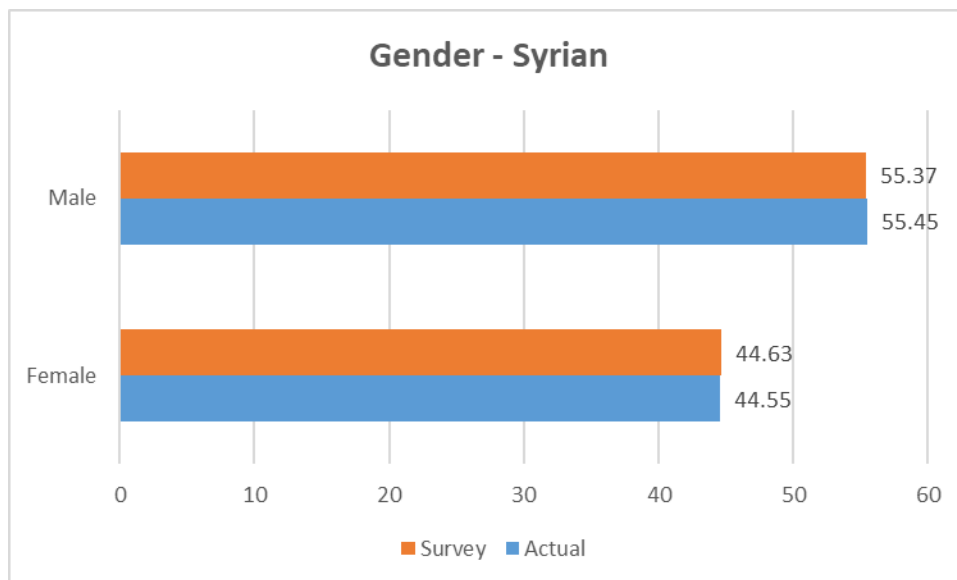


Figure 1 Comparison of gender distribution in survey with the DGMM data

¹² Check the official statistics by DGMM available at: <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27> [access date 28.05.2021].

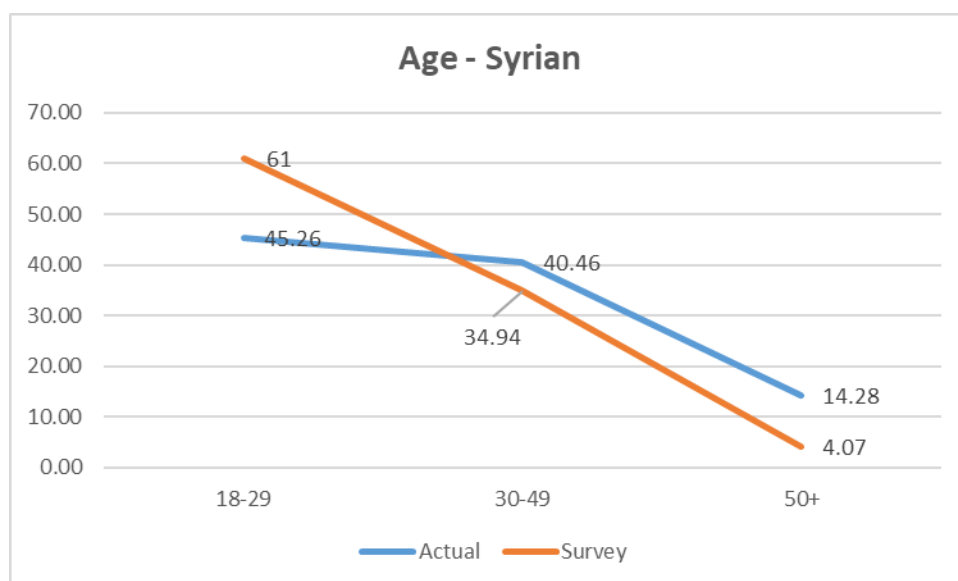


Figure 2 Comparison of age distribution in survey with the DGMM data

Table 1: Comparison of province distribution in survey with the DGMM data

Province	Actual Rank	Survey Rank
Istanbul	1	1
Gaziantep	2	2
Hatay	3	3
Şanlıurfa	4	9
Adana	5	5
Mersin	6	6
Bursa	7	4
Izmir	8	7
Konya	9	11
Kilis	10	14
Ankara	11	10
Kahramanmaraş	12	8
Mardin	13	13
Kayseri	14	12
Kocaeli	15	17
Osmaniye	16	15

Overall, most of the respondents in our sample came from Istanbul, which is in line with our expectations as Istanbul hosts the largest refugee population in Turkey. When we split the sample, the top 10 provinces also reflected the actual distribution of refugee groups across provinces. Gaziantep, Hatay, and Adana, the provinces closest to the Syrian border, appear as the top provinces for the Syrian sample. For the Afghan sample, the top provinces are Denizli, Ankara, and

Kayseri, where a significant Afghan population resides in their assigned satellite cities by the authorities.

Table 2: Top 10 provinces of participants in the survey

Ranking	All	Percent	Syrian	Percent	Afghan	Percent
1	İstanbul	31.08	İstanbul	33.83	İstanbul	27.49
2	Gaziantep	5.6	Gaziantep	9.35	Denizli	6.08
3	Hatay	4.65	Hatay	8.22	Ankara	4.87
4	Bursa	4.33	Bursa	7.48	Kayseri	4.38
5	Adana	3.7	Adana	5.23	Eskişehir	4.14
6	Ankara	3.49	Mersin	5.23	Konya	4.14
7	Mersin	3.28	İzmir	4.11	Afyon	2.92
8	Konya	3.07	Kahramanmaraş	2.8	Trabzon	2.68
9	Kayseri	2.85	Şanlıurfa	2.8	Tokat	2.43
10	Denizli	2.75	Ankara	2.43	Nevşehir	2.19

2.2. Qualitative Interview Methodology

As in the case of quantitative data collection, the research team had to alter the recruitment strategy and interview medium due to COVID-19 pandemic measures in Turkey. When the first case was announced in Turkey on 11 March 2020, we had already started our fieldwork in the southern Turkish city of Adana. When the government first announced precautions for COVID-19, we had already interviewed 12 refugees living in Adana. We had recruited our interlocutors through a pilot survey initiated a week before pandemic measures started in Turkey. The enumerators in the pilot survey asked respondents whether they would be willing to be spoken with for an in-depth interview with the researchers. The research team then visited households who had volunteered to agree to talk about their living conditions in Turkey.

When we had to suspend our fieldwork for an indefinite period due to the conditions of COVID-19, we decided to conduct in-depth interviews online. As explained in section 2.1 Survey Methodology, we conducted online pilot tests with respondents. As a closing message in these pilot tests, we stated that the research team would like to conduct online in-depth interviews with the survey participants who volunteer and to contact the research team via e-mail or social media direct messaging tools. After receiving e-mails from volunteers, we have sent a follow-up e-mail informing the participants of the research's aims and informed consent procedures. Aside from e-mails, some participants also reached us via direct messages through the official Instagram and Facebook accounts of MiReKoc. In total, we received 264 e-mails and direct messages. After the initial contact, respondents were informed about the procedures of the interviews in written and oral form and their oral consent was secured. Out of these 264 e-mails and messages, we were able to do 33 online interviews. With the help of interpreters in our research team, we set online meetings with volunteering participants. To compensate for the internet data usage of the online interviews, we provided interlocutors with internet bundles.

In total, we interviewed 45 Syrian and Afghan refugees living in different cities of Turkey (see Table A1 in the appendix), 12 of those were on-site and face-to-face, while 33 were online interviews.¹³ With the exception of two interviews conducted on the phone, all interviews were conducted as a video call using different platforms, in line with the interlocutors' preferences. We audio-recorded the meetings via a separate voice recorder after receiving consent from the interlocutors. We only recorded the voice of the interlocutors in order to avoid any privacy-related issues. We initially aimed to conduct in-depth interviews by selecting from the face-to-face survey data, however, we were not able to purposively select from the online survey data due to privacy concerns. To overcome this, we were also willing to apply snowball methodology for our in-depth interviews as well. However, out of 33 online interviews only four refugees were reached by snowballing. The rest were from among the survey participants. These online interviews took place in two phases, in August after the pilot survey and between November and February after the main survey.

The interview questionnaire was semi-structured, targeting and gauging the relation between development interventions and migration aspirations. We initially asked our interlocutors about their lives and living conditions in Turkey. Then, we asked about their migration journey (i.e., how they left their country of origin and how they shaped their decision along the route). Third, we asked about the aid our interlocutors receive in Turkey and how these aids affect their life in general. Finally, we asked interlocutors' current plans/aspirations to better understand migration aspirations.

The interviews were transcribed and translated into English and Turkish and uploaded to the Atlas.Ti software program for thematic analysis. We finalized our code list using a pre-defined coding list and adapting it to our data through a grounded approach. We also created network groups for migration aspirations and development interventions and created a report including quotations using the query tool on Atlas.Ti. To analyse the interviews from different demographic backgrounds, we also generated scope conditions based on gender, ethnicity, and marital status. In this way we were able to analyse the effects of development interventions on migration aspirations for migrants from different demographic backgrounds.

Similar to quantitative data collection, we also faced online-methodological shortcomings and limitations in our research such as limited observation, difficulty of reaching a population without access to the internet and social media, and challenges in building trust through online interviews. In addition, due to most refugees' availability only after evening, as many usually work 10-12 hours a day and come home very late and usually work during weekends, it was often difficult to arrange the timing of the interviews. Furthermore, we were able to interview fewer respondents from Istanbul than expected.

As in the online surveys, we were only able to reach interlocutors who have access to social media, many primarily from younger generations. Additionally, few women reached out to us to be interviewed. After we realized that we lacked female perspective in our research, we decided to send another round of e-mails in which we highlighted that we were going to prioritize female

¹³ Among the total 33 online interviews, we have used 2 interviews with Syrian female interlocutors conducted as part of ADMIGOV WP4 on protection, to ensure more balanced representation of Syrian women.

interlocutors for interviews. In response, male survey participants sent us e-mails that their female relatives were willing to be interviewed. In the end, we ensured that at least one-third of our interlocutors are women (see Table A2 in the appendix). The main challenge in the recruitment of interlocutors was the time and effort needed to set the interview times over e-mail, messages, and phone exchanges. Adhering to consent procedures over e-mail or phone, rather than face-to-face, proved to be time-consuming. Some of the potential respondents dropped out during this long informed consent process, as explained above.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Profile of Respondents

We started with analysing the characteristics of survey respondents in relation to their demographic, socio-economic, and legal statuses in Turkey. Figures 3-6 below illustrates the results. In both the Syrian and Afghan samples, 52 percent of participants are household heads. The participants' average age is also close to one another, although the Syrian sample is around three years older than the Afghan sample. 70 percent of the Afghan sample is male while 55 percent of Syrian respondents are male. 56 percent of Syrians are married and 39 percent of them are single. Among Afghans, however, most respondents are single. This is not surprising as single men are prominent among the Afghan community in Turkey, as several studies and field observations have indicated ([Karadağ, 2021](#), [Bozok and Bozok, 2019](#))

Regarding levels of education, the Syrian sample is more educated than the Afghan sample. However, in both groups respondents are predominantly high school graduates (Figure 7). In terms of employment, both groups have similar characteristics; half of them are employed (Figure 8). While 4 percent of Syrians are home owners, this number rises to 9 percent for Afghans.¹⁴ Meanwhile, most refugees in our sample live in rented places: 81 percent of Syrians and 58 percent of Afghans rent their dwellings. Around 10 percent of both refugee groups live in rented dwellings shared with other households. While 9 percent of Afghans live in places which are parts of their workplaces, only one percent of Syrians live in such buildings. This finding again reflects the prominence of single men among Afghan respondents. Finally, around 12 percent of Afghans live in places provided by their acquaintances whereas it is 3 percent for Syrians (Figure 9). Regarding income sources, both groups predominantly rely on wages or salaries (Figure 10).

¹⁴ Relatively high home ownership among Afghan participants indicates that the average socio-economic situation of the sample might be better off than the actual population.

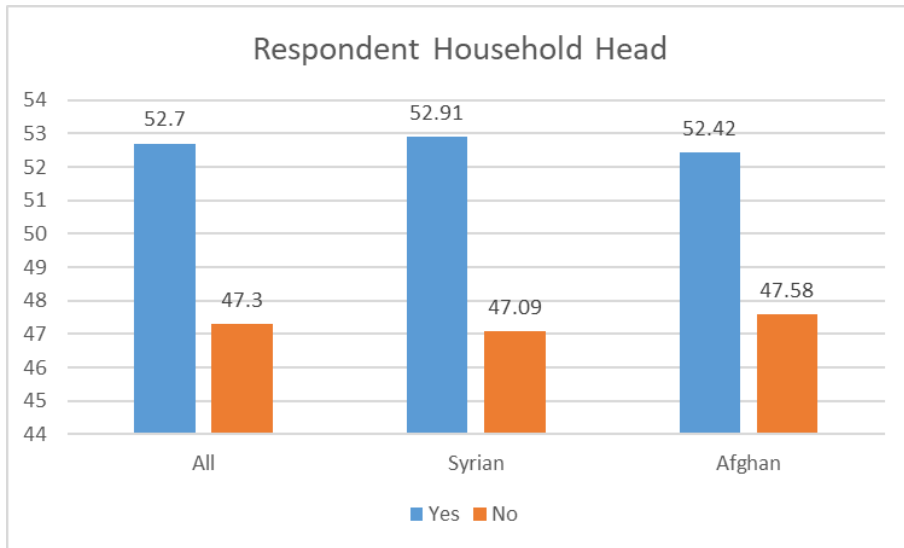


Figure 3: Percentage of respondents as the head of household

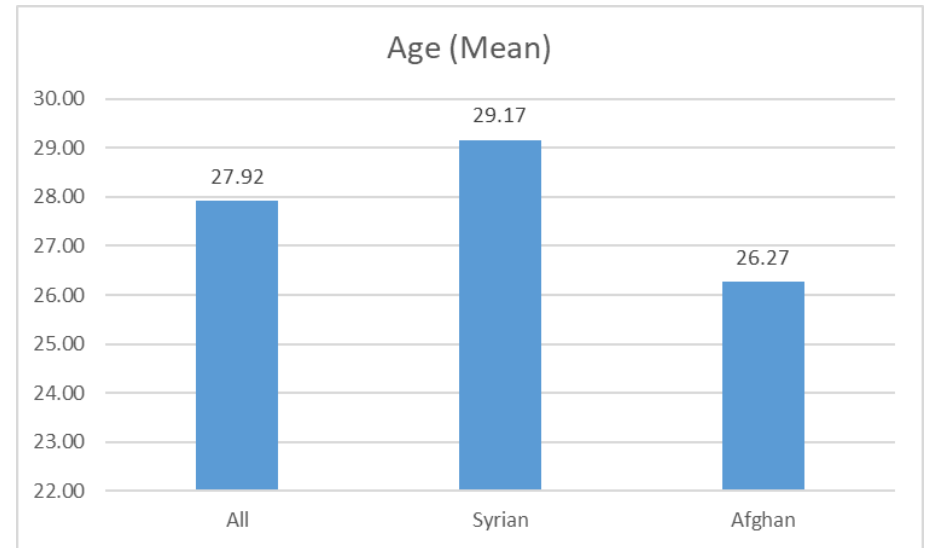


Figure 4: Mean age of respondents: Mean age of respondents

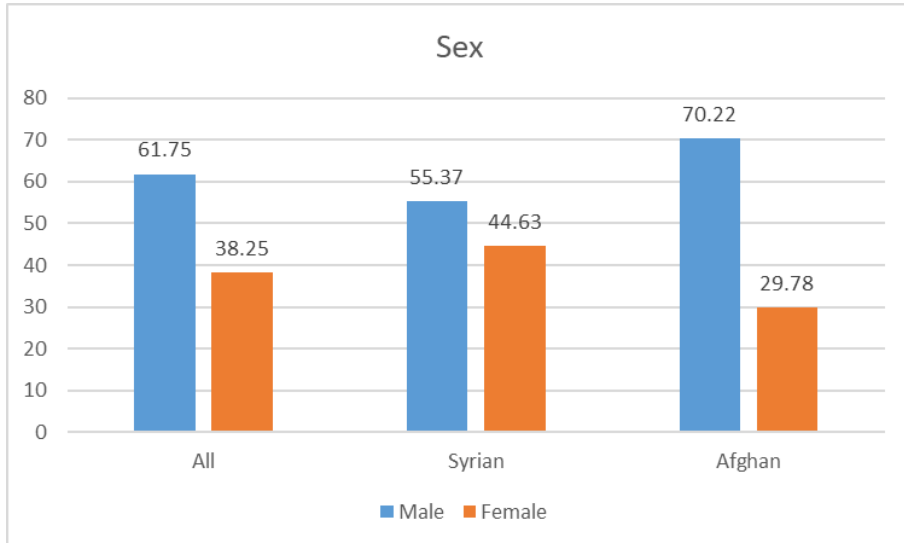


Figure 5: Percentage of males and females in the survey

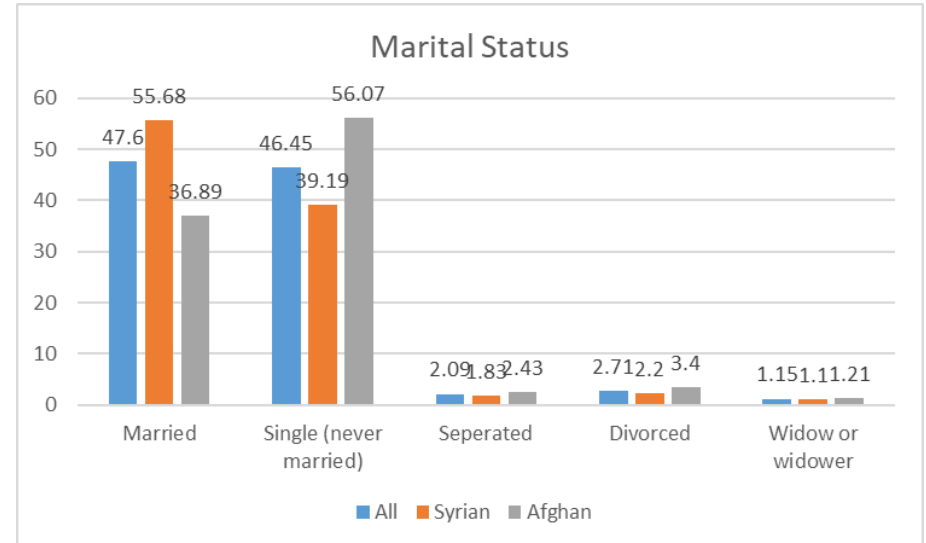


Figure 6: Martial status of the respondents (in percentage)

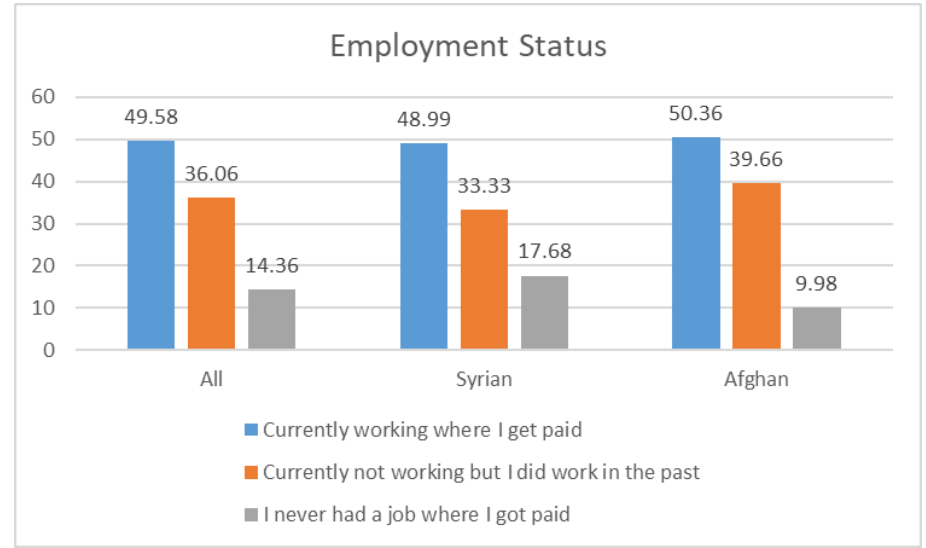
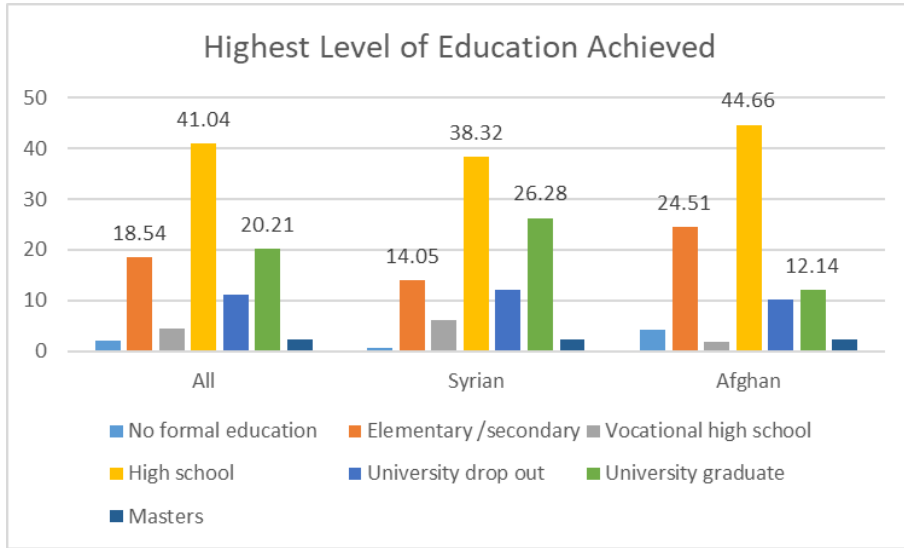


Figure 7: Level of education (in percentage)

Figure 8: Employment status (in percentage)

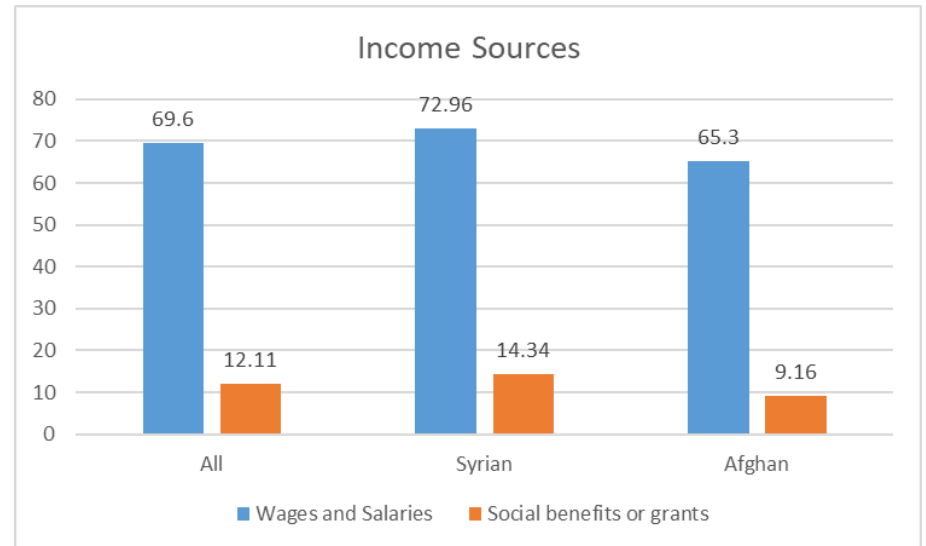
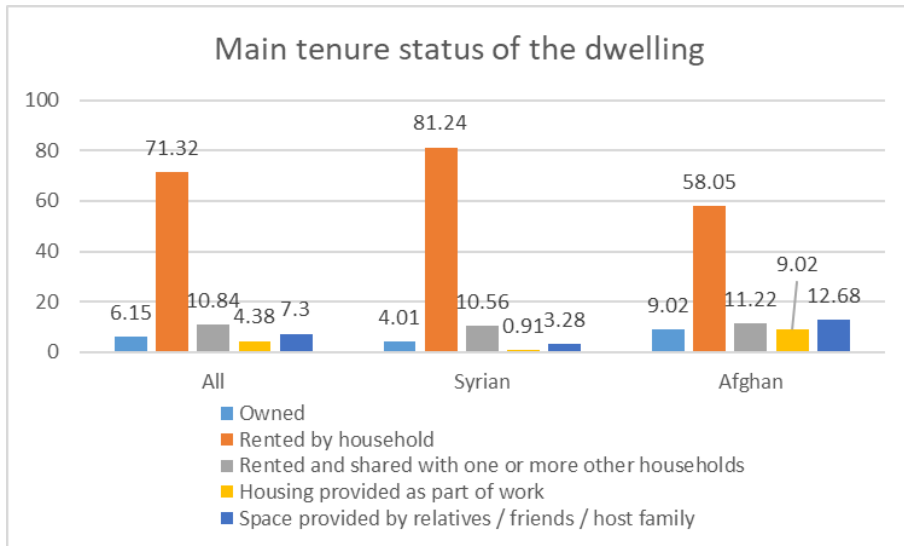


Figure 9: Tenure status of the dwellings (in percentage)

Figure 10: Income sources of the respondents (in percentage)

In order to measure the socio-economic status and current financial situation of respondents, we asked whether they have the following items in their current place: a refrigerator, dishwasher, oven, washing machine, plasma or LCD television, other types of tv, air conditioner, automobile, motorbike, computer or laptop, mobile phone, satellite dish, internet connection at home, and internet connection for mobile phones (4G). Next, we generated a mean score for each participant with ranges between 0 and 1. Figure 11 illustrates the results. Overall, respondents possess around 39 percent of these assets. However, Syrian refugees scored higher than Afghans, with around an 11 point difference. This difference indicates that Afghan refugees in Turkey are poorer than Syrians on average. 80 percent of households have a refrigerator, 16 percent have a dishwasher, and 73 percent have a washing machine. Regarding communication assets, 20 percent of households have a computer/laptop at home, 76 percent have an internet connection at home, and 94 percent have mobile phones.

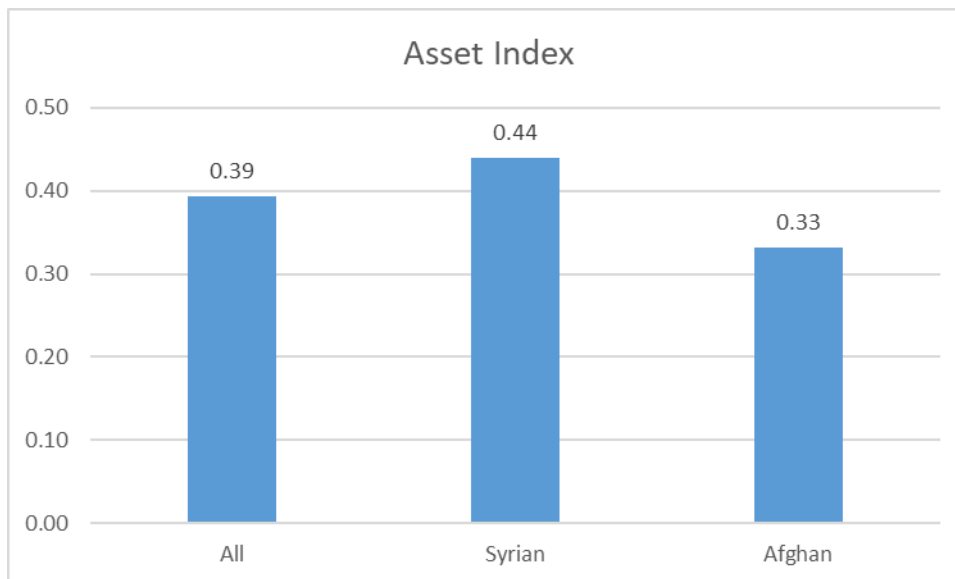


Figure 11: Asset index

We asked the household size of respondents including themselves (Figure 12). The average household size for all respondents is 5.16 people, but Afghan households are slightly more crowded than Syrians.¹⁵ Next, we asked how many men and women in the household have worked in the last 12 months and calculated mean scores. The results illustrate the gender difference for both refugee groups. The mean for working men is around 1.20, whereas it is 0.4 for working women. In other words, the mean for working men is three times the mean for working women in an average household (Figure 13). We also calculated the percentage of working women in our sample during the last 12 months. While 25 percent of Syrian households have at least one working women, this number is around 33 percent for Afghan households. In other words, women among Afghan families are more likely to work and generate income than women in Syrian families (Figure 14). Cross-tabulation of the gender and employment statuses also confirms the gender

¹⁵ This result may stem from single male Afghans who share their apartment with other single males included their flatmates as a member of household.

difference in employment. Among employed respondents, only 25 percent of them are female. However, among those who have never had a paid job, females comprise 72 percent of the sample (Figure 15).

Migration Aspirations and the Impact of Refugee Assistance in Turkey

ADMIGOV

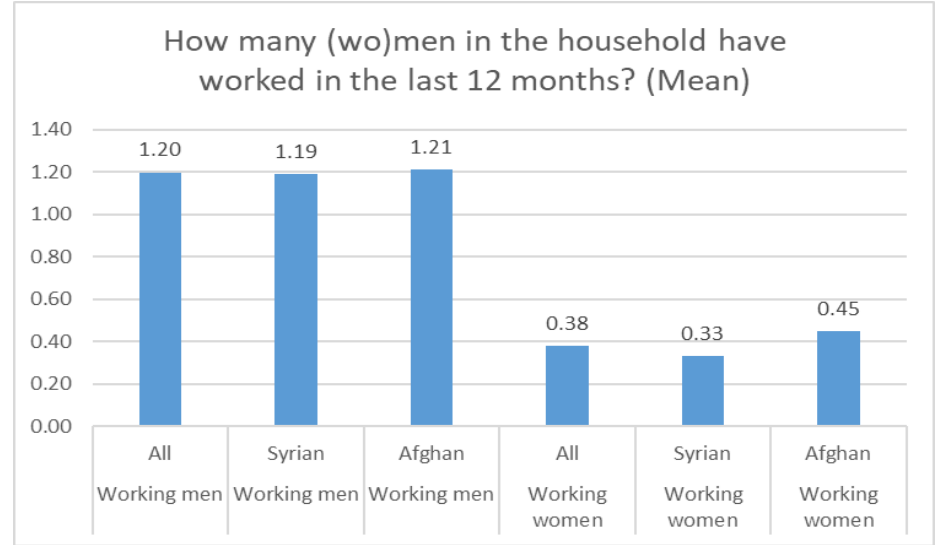
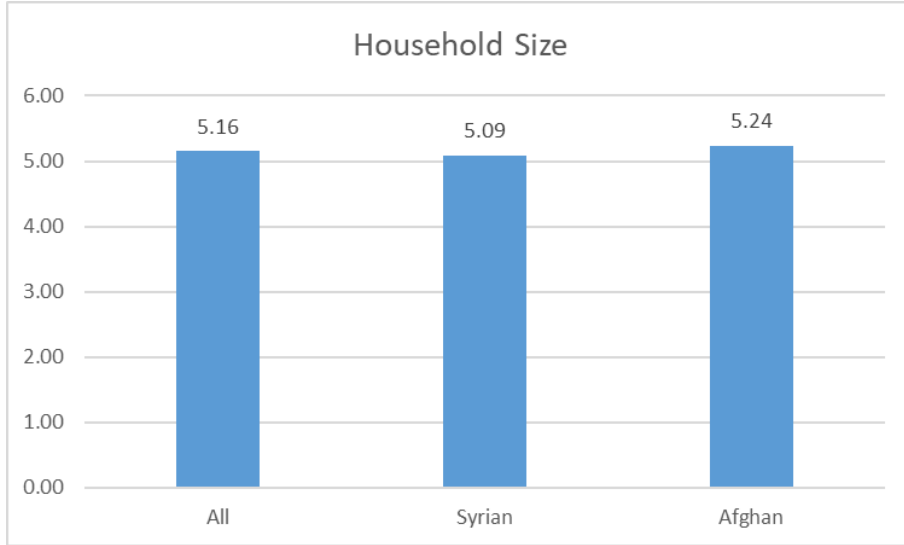


Figure 12: Mean household size

Figure 13: Mean working population in the household across genders

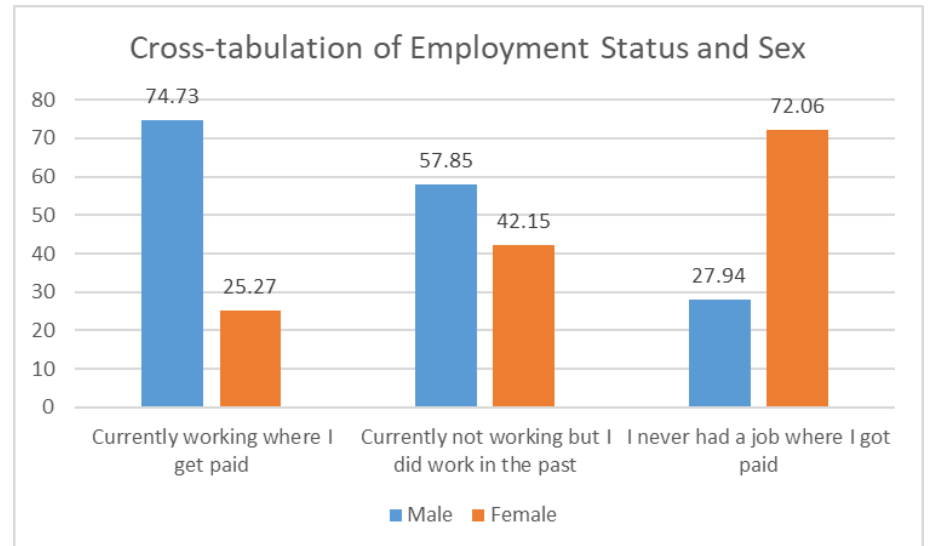
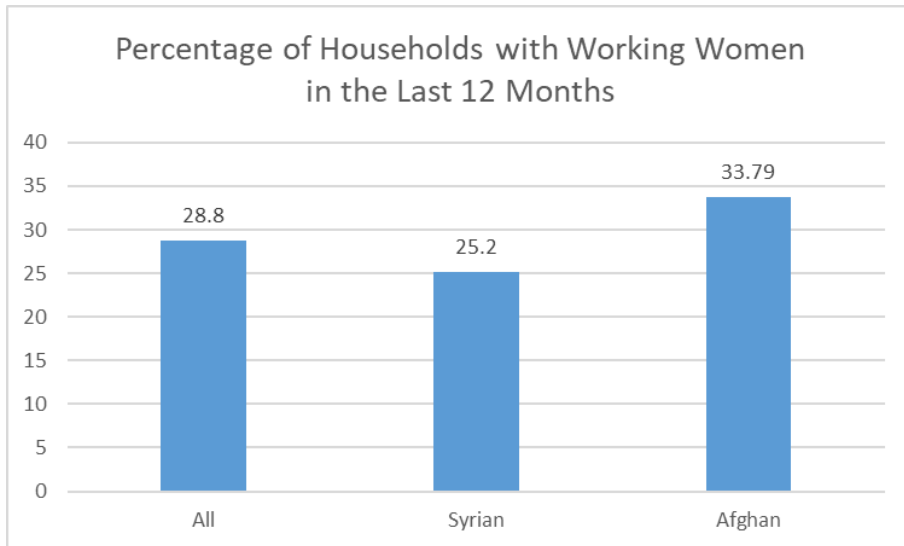


Figure 14: Percentage of households with working women

Figure 15: Cross-tabulation of employment and sex (in percentage)

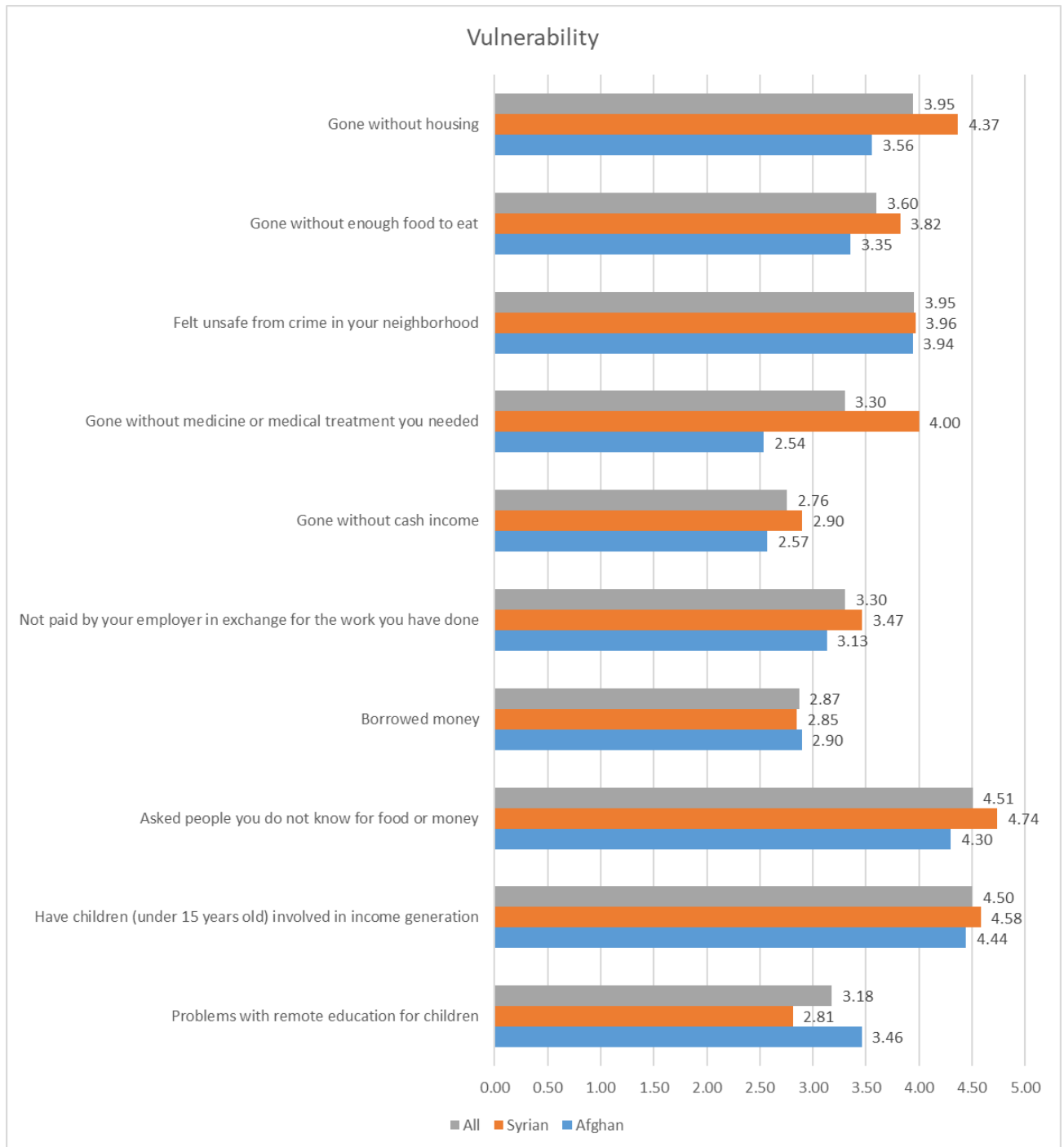


Figure 16: Vulnerability of respondents

We also measured the vulnerability of respondents. To this end, we asked, “in the past 12 months, how often were you or your family faced with any of the following challenges: Gone without housing, Gone without enough food to eat, Felt unsafe from crime in your neighbourhood, Gone without medicine or medical treatment you needed, Gone without cash income, Not paid by your

employer in exchange for the work you have done, Borrowed money, Asked people you do not know for food or money, Have children (under 15 years old) involved in income generation, or Had problems with remote education for children?" We measured answers with a 5-level Likert scale of Always (1), Frequently (2), Occasionally (3), Rarely (4), and Never (5).

Figure 16 illustrates the results. Overall, respondents rarely had gone without housing or felt unsafe due to crime in their neighbourhood. The average of going without enough food to eat is between occasionally and rarely. While there are problems with access to healthcare, Syrians have better access than Afghans regarding medicine or medical treatment when needed. This difference indicates the impact of recent legislation leaving Afghans under international protection and out of the scope of free public healthcare until one year after registration. Both refugee groups occasionally experienced not getting their salary after working for some employer. The average of going without cash income and borrowing money for both refugee groups are between frequently and occasionally. Finally, while fewer households have children involved in income generation and very rarely asked for money from people they do not know, they occasionally have problems with remote education for children. The latter is especially true for Afghan families.

Finally, we asked questions related to migration history and transnational connections. Overall, respondents have been in Turkey for around five years (Figure 17). However, there is a significant difference between Afghan and Syrian participants: the average duration of stay of Syrian respondents is six years, almost twice as long as Afghan participants. This also shows that our sampling methodology recruited mostly recent arrivals in the Afghan population and indirectly indicates that the Afghan community is more mobile. We also asked the year respondents left their homes (Figure 18). Overall, there is a minor difference between the time leaving home and arriving in Turkey for Syrians. However, there is a significant difference between leaving home and arriving in Turkey for Afghans, which indicates that their journey to Turkey took more time when compared to Syrian respondents. We also asked their attempts to leave Turkey. Around 6 percent of the Syrian respondents attempted to leave Turkey without legal documents (Figure 19). The Afghan sample has more than twice the illegal migration rates of Syrians: around 13 percent of Afghans tried to leave Turkey without documents. When we analysed the number of attempts leaving Turkey (from those who tried to leave Turkey), most respondents tried it once. While Afghans tried four and five times to leave Turkey, Syrian attempts are at most three times (Figure 20).

Migration Aspirations and the Impact of Refugee Assistance in Turkey

ADMIGOV

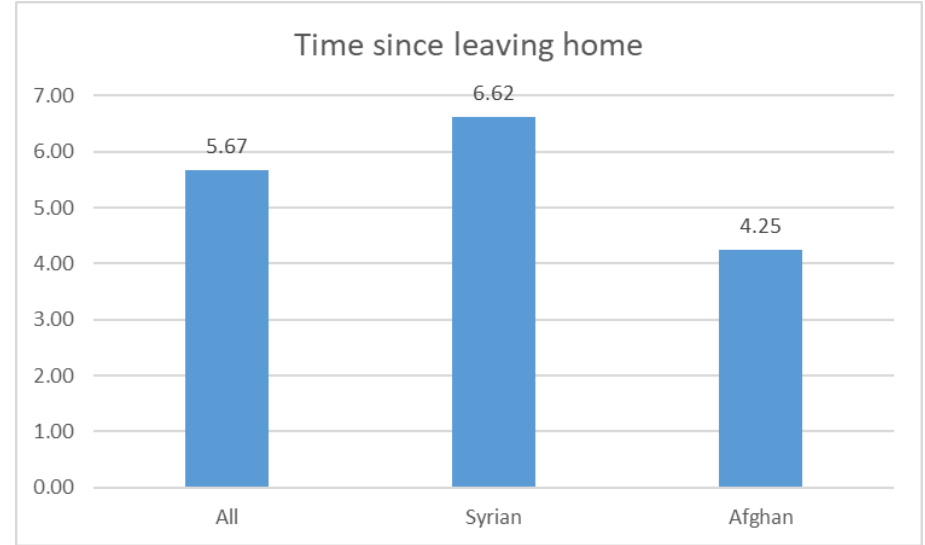
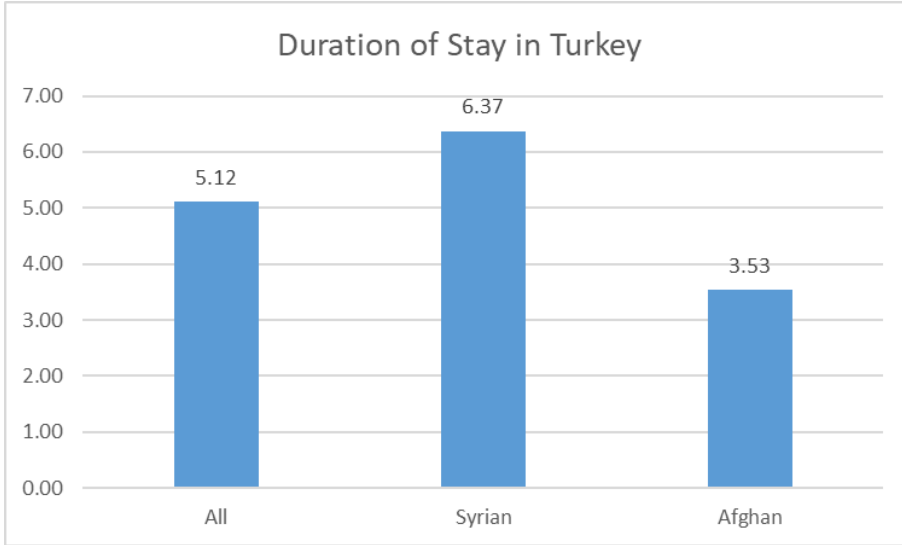


Figure 17: Duration of stay (mean)

Figure 18: Time since left home (mean)

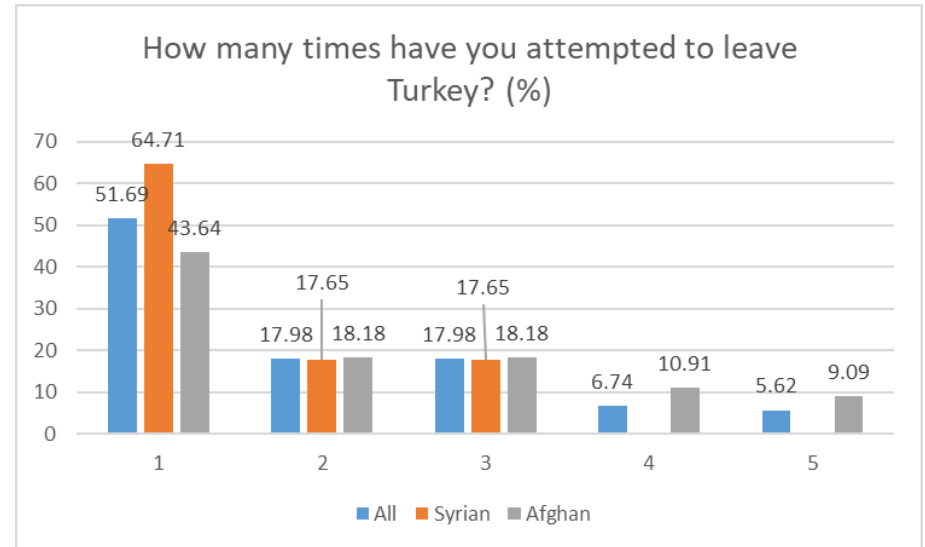
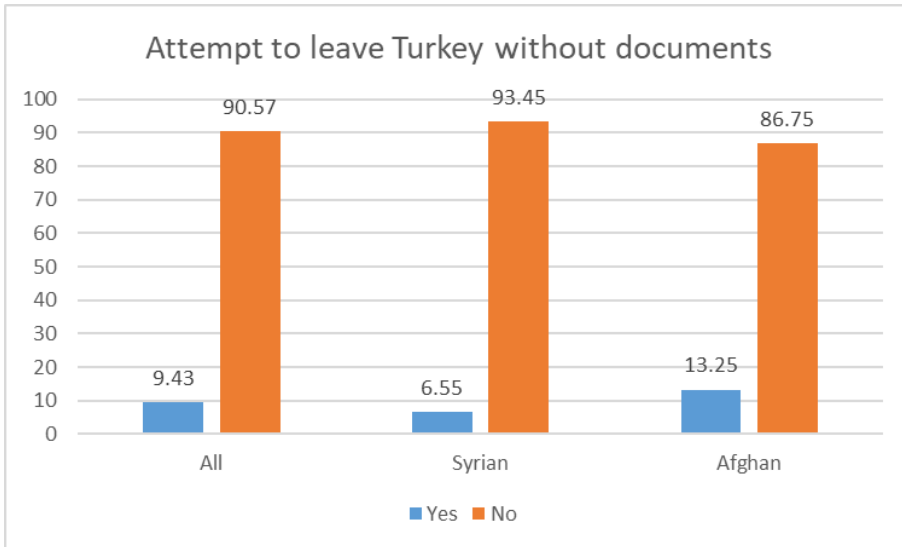


Figure 19: Attempt to leave without documents (in percentage)

Figure 20: Number of times attempted to leave Turkey (in percentage)

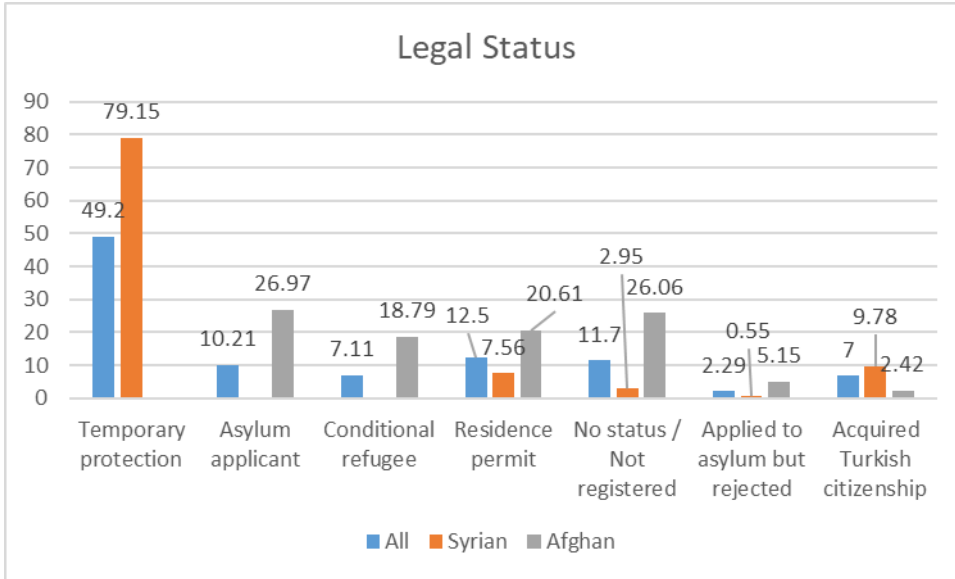


Figure 21: Legal status (in percentage)

Regarding legal status, as Figure 20 shows, most Syrians are under temporary protection in line with our expectations and official statistics, with only around 10 percent of them obtaining Turkish citizenship. Since the actual percentage of Syrian who have acquired Turkish citizenship is around three percent (including minors), this again proves that our sampling strategy is biased towards wealthier respondents. For the Afghan sample, most of the respondents are either asylum applicants (27 percent) or have no status (26 percent). Only around 2 percent of Afghan respondents have obtained Turkish citizenship.

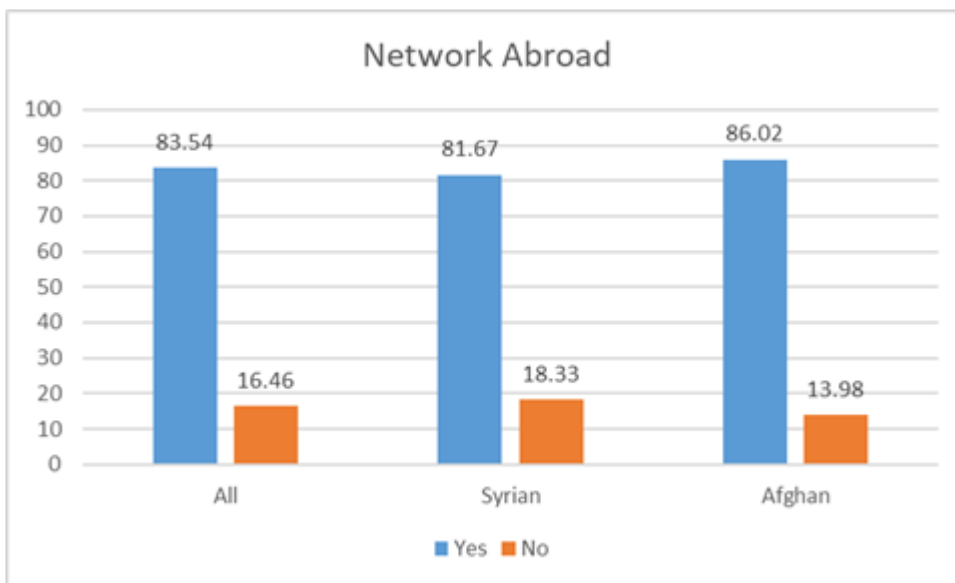


Figure 22: Having network abroad (in percentage)

Regarding transnational connections, we asked whether there are any household members, relatives, and/or friends who live outside Turkey in places other than their country of origin. The results show that Afghan refugees have more networks abroad than Syrians on average (Figure 21). Next, we asked about the location of the network. From those who have a network abroad, half of them indicated that they know someone in Germany. Both Syrian and Afghan refugees also have networks in Sweden, Canada, and the US. While 25 percent of Syrian participants know someone in Saudi Arabia, very few Afghans have a network there. Finally, Afghan participants' networks are more scattered than Syrians, as 44 percent of Afghan respondents indicated that they have a network in other countries than the ones we listed (Figure 22).

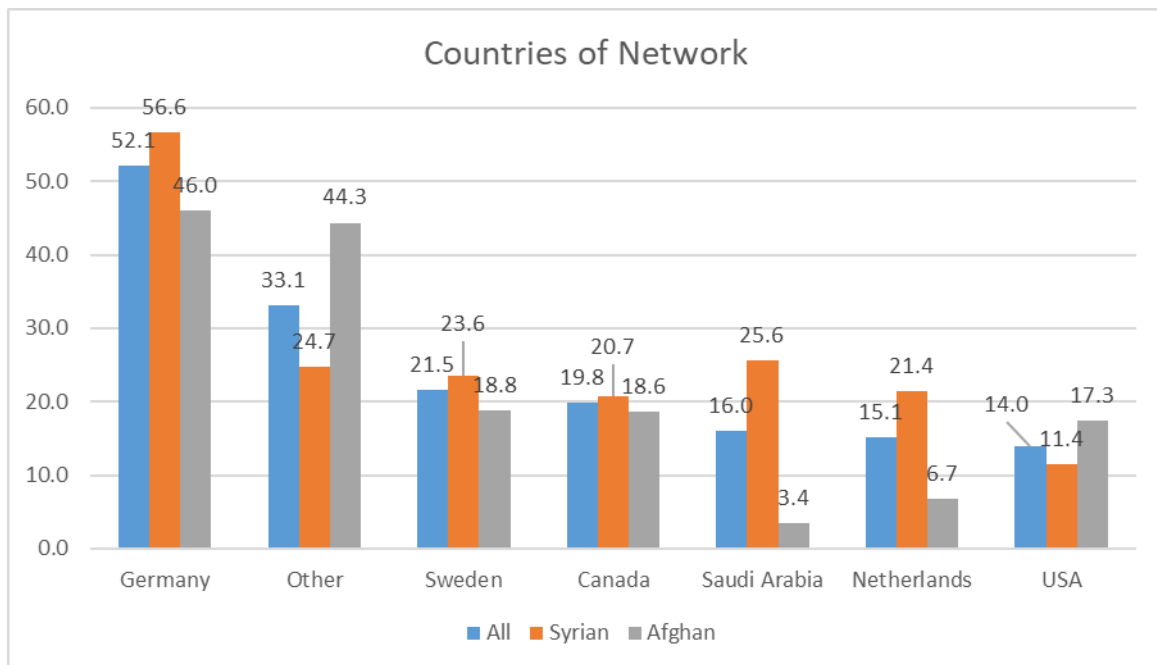


Figure 23: Countries of network (in percentage)

The sample for qualitative interviews was self-selected. In other words, we interviewed those who reached the research team via email and direct messages, as explained above. While it was difficult to reach female participants for online interviews, we almost reached a balanced number of female and male participants. Especially among Afghans, the ratio between man and woman interlocutors is more balanced. To achieve this balance, we prioritized emails from woman respondents. We asked questions about the female members of the family when we interviewed male household heads. Hence, the content of the interviews provided an insight on gendered differences within each community.

While 56% of our Syrian interlocutors are university graduates, only 17% of our Afghan interlocutors are university graduates. Among Afghans we interviewed, 55% of interlocutors either have no education or only an elementary education. Many of our Afghan interlocutors indicated that they had to leave school due to poverty or violence and oppression by the Taliban regime. Especially our female interlocutors who never received education expressed that they could not attend schools due to the Taliban regime's prohibition over girls attending schools in Afghanistan.

While our survey analysis indicated that Afghan households are larger, our on-site fieldwork observation experiences showed that single man households are widespread among the Afghan community. However, in our online interviews, we were mainly able to interview Afghan families rather than single Afghan males. One of the reasons for this result might be the hesitation of mostly unregistered single Afghan males to participate in online interviews due to security concerns.

Most of our interlocutors are registered with the authorities. However, out of 45 interlocutors, four Afghan and two Syrian interlocutors were undocumented. These unregistered interlocutors were a part of families and one single Afghan male who could not be registered with the authorities due to the lack of financial resources to travel to the satellite city where registration is possible. Nearly all Syrian interlocutors have temporary protection in Turkey. However, we also interviewed two Syrian female interlocutors who were not residing in the province they were initially registered, hence facing difficulties in access to services (see Karadağ and Üstübici, 2021 to read more about the issues concerning registration).

The vast majority of our interlocutors indicate that they are employed in the informal labour market with unregistration or social security. Only 3 of our interlocutors stated that they have work permit. These three Syrian male interlocutors expressed that they were able to find jobs in line with their qualifications. Out of 45 interlocutors, seven stated that they were unemployed and six stated that they were not working nor seeking work at the time of the interview. Six of those 13 interlocutors who do not work also expressed that they do not receive any aid in Turkey, which causes them to rely on loans to earn their living or survive.

Finally, out of 45 interlocutors, 19 of them stated that they receive ESN aid regularly. Out of 26 interlocutors who do not receive ESN aid, 20 stated that they do not receive ESN aid because they are not eligible, as ESN scheme generally targets families with more than two children. Besides ESN aid, some families whose children are enrolled in school indicated that they receive CCTE aid. Only a small number of our interlocutors indicated that they occasionally received aid from the municipalities, NGOs, and state institutions since their arrival.

3.2. Migration Aspirations

This section discusses the migration aspirations of survey respondents and interlocutors with whom we conducted in-depth interviews. We measured migration aspirations with three questions that capture aspirations from different perspectives. We first asked their migration aspirations in an ideal situation, “Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to move to another country, or would you prefer to continue living in Turkey, or return to the country of origin?” Secondly, we asked about considerations with the question, “Over the past year, have you considered moving from Turkey?” And finally, we asked about migration plans in the near future with the question, “At the moment, are you planning to move to another country, or stay in Turkey, or return?”

Figures 23-25 below illustrate the results. Under ideal circumstances, most respondents want to move on to another country (58 percent). The ideal circumstances providing the opportunity to move onwards is left to interpretation by respondents. This may include being resettled to a third country, having the means to travel with or without papers, presence of countries welcoming

refugees, or being offered a good job opportunity in third country. However, when we split the sample, we see that among the Syrian community those aspiring to move onwards and those aspiring to stay in Turkey are nearly equal. Afghans, on the other hand, predominantly want to leave Turkey for a third country. The difference between the migration aspirations of Syrian and Afghan refugees is related to the differences in such aspects as the reception context in Turkey, refugees' access to services, their living conditions, and the background of their migration journeys (see next section, *4.2.2 Onwards Migration Aspirations*). Finally, returning to the country of origin does not appear as a viable option for the majority of respondents in both communities.

Regarding these considerations over the past year (see Figure 24), we detect major differences compared to ideal aspirations. Only 44 percent of the respondents have considered moving from Turkey, whereas their ideal aspiration to move onwards was 57 percent. When we compare the refugee groups in terms of nationality, the difference is striking. While Syrian participants predominantly did not consider moving from Turkey, around 54 percent of Afghans considered moving from Turkey over the past year despite challenges due to COVID-19 restrictions (see the effects of COVID-19 in detail in section 5.2.1).

Finally, current migration plans also differ from ideal aspirations. Syrian respondents are predominantly planning to stay in Turkey. Their actual plans for return are also significantly lower than aspirations to return in an ideal situation. In other words, while Afghan respondents' ideal and current migration plans overlap, Syrian refugees' ideal and current plans change mostly in favour of moving abroad and to return to Syria to a lesser extent (Figure 25).

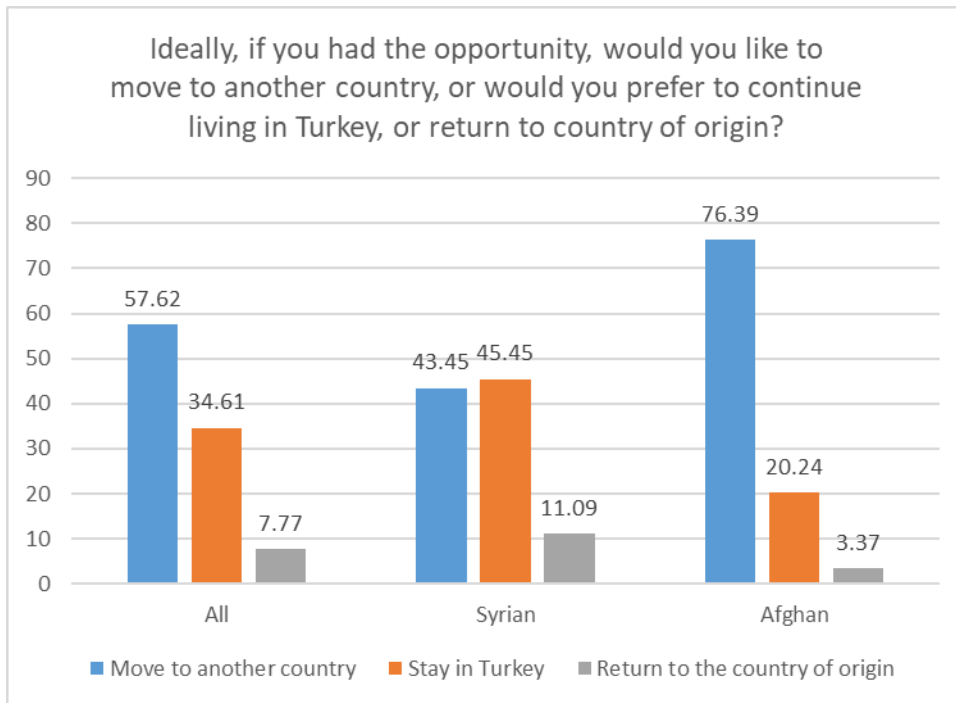


Figure 24: Ideal aspirations

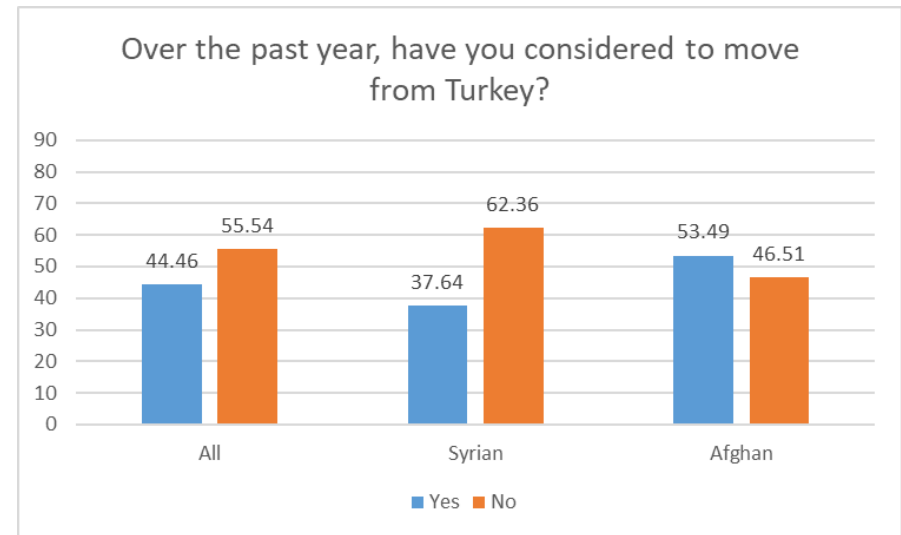


Figure 25: Last year considered moving

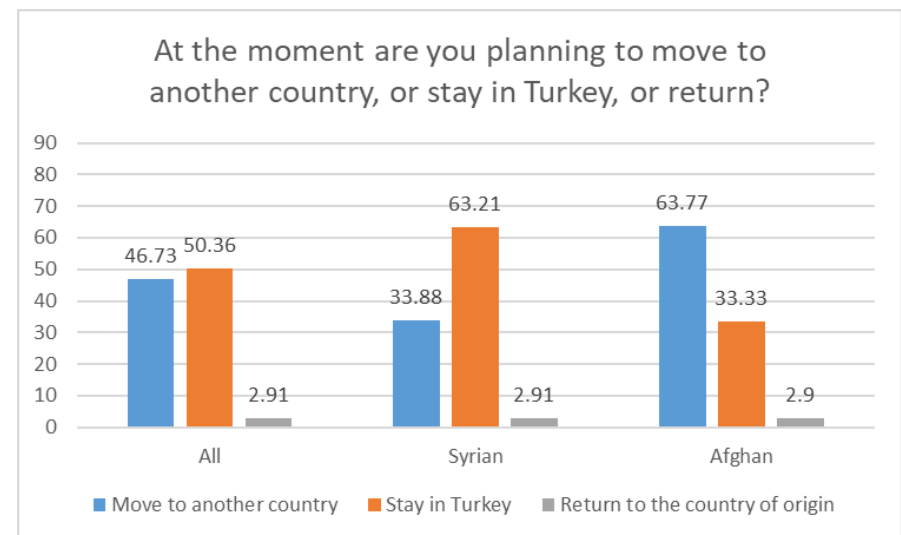


Figure 26: Planned aspiration

Following the question on migration plans in the near future, we separately measured the reasons for aspirations for onwards migration, to stay, and to return. To this end, we used three separate open-ended questions in which we asked the main reasons to move on, stay, and return. Next, we recoded answers using a predetermined coding scheme. The following section discusses reasons for migration.

3.2.1. Onwards Migration Aspirations

Overall, most of the respondents in both refugee groups expressed their dissatisfaction about the lack of employment opportunities, living conditions that prevent them from pursuing their dreams, and uncertainty about their future in Turkey. Yet another concern of both refugee groups is the fear of discrimination and persecution, which are signs of contention with the local population and state institutions. Lacking educational opportunities is also a common determinant of onwards migration for both refugee groups. For Afghans, their uncertain legal situation in Turkey also appears as a significant factor for aspirations to move on. On the other hand, Syrians also complain about poor access to healthcare (see Table 3).

Table 3: Reasons of onwards migration

Reason (All Respondents)	Percent	Reason (Syrian)	Percent	Reason (Afghan)	Percent
Better living conditions/unable to pursue dreams / stability	40.72	Lack of employment opportunities	36.61	Better living conditions/unable to pursue dreams / stability	39.77
Lack of employment opportunities	23.98	Better living conditions/unable to pursue dreams / stability	25.68	Lack of employment opportunities	15.06
Fear of ethnic/political/religious discrimination and persecutions	8.14	Fear of ethnic/political/religious discrimination and persecutions	9.84	Lack of educational opportunities for children	15.06
Uncertain legal situation in the country	7.24	Lack of educational opportunities for children	8.2	Uncertain legal situation in the country	10.04
Lack of educational opportunities for children	5.43	Poor access to health care	8.2	Fear of ethnic/political/religious discrimination and persecutions	6.95

Note: N = 442 for all participants, N = 183 for Syrians, and N = 259 for Afghan respondents.

Better life in the destination

Our interlocutors suggested that their onward migration aspiration is motivated by having a better life in the destination country, living in dire conditions in Turkey, the lack of employment opportunities, and discrimination they face in both the work and social spheres of their lives. However, as [de Haas \(2021\)](#) argues, aspirations are complex, multi-faceted, and context-dependent. In this regard, our interlocutors expressed that their onward migration aspirations are

dependent on the living standards of their current country of residence and migration and border policies in the destination country. Therefore, when living conditions and opportunities change, migration aspirations may shift as well. Despite the volatility of onward migration aspirations, we present the primary motivations for onward migration based on in-depth interviews with the Syrian and Afghan populations living in Turkey.

Better living conditions in destination countries stand out as a pull factor, stated as reasons for aspiring to move on. We unpacked this notion of “better living conditions” in our qualitative interviews. Accordingly, better living conditions refer to pursuing one’s dreams rather than immediate financial gain at the destination. For instance, Ahmad is 30 years old Syrian refugee who came to Turkey in 2014 from Aleppo.¹⁶ He is a father of two, working odd jobs, and aspires to be resettled to a third country because he **“feels that he is wasting his time in Turkey and losing his future.”** For Ahmad and many of our interlocutors aspiring to move onwards, pursuing his dreams refers to a sense of achievement that he could not experience in Turkey. Due to Ahmad's disappointment with his living experience in Turkey, he does not believe that he can achieve his life goals anymore:

I want to migrate because I cannot find a good job, I could not continue my studies here, and my 15-year-old brother is not going to school anymore as he has to work to help our father earn enough money. So, I feel like I could not achieve anything here. We try to work hard, but the reality is still disappointing actually. So, we want to migrate to a better country (Ahmad, Syria, Male, 30, Izmir, 24.07.2020).

While better living conditions can be understood as a significant reason for onwards migration, it is also a term for many refugees to express what they lack in their current country of residence and what they expect at the destination. In other words, Ahmad’s future projections rely on his living conditions, work environment, and life aspirations in general. All these negative life experiences have made him dislike his life in Turkey and Turkish society at large. As with many of our interlocutors, better living conditions are perceived as an umbrella term in which they would like to fulfil their life aspirations.

Lack of employment opportunities in Turkey

Lack of employment opportunities in the current country of residence is another push factor for secondary migration. Many of our interlocutors argue that not only being able to find a job but also not being able to find a job in line with their qualifications and a job with a work permit and job security prompt them to aspire to move onwards. Most of our Syrian and Afghan young and middle-aged interlocutors work in odd jobs without social security and legal work permits. As a result, they have to work extra hours (on average 12 hours a day) and they are forced to accept wages that are usually below the legally mandated minimum wage. Some of our interlocutors indicated that when they challenge their employers for more equal rights, employers make efforts to intimidate refugees by emphasizing their “illicitness” and lack of job security in the labour market. The employers also imply that if the refugees have complaints, they can just quit the job. As a result, refugees have very little bargaining power over wages and work conditions.

¹⁶ We use pseudonyms referring to our interlocutors.

For some of our interlocutors, being forced to work in odd jobs which are beneath their qualifications is the most prominent reason for them to aspire to move onwards. For instance, Ahmad also experienced downward social mobility as he was left with no choice but to work in odd jobs in Turkey. Back in Syria, he studied English Literature at his university. When the war started in Syria, he migrated to Turkey with the hope that he could find a decent job, owing to his degree in Syria. However, Ahmad had to work in different sectors as a construction worker, textile worker, carpenter assistant, and tailoring worker. When we asked him whether he is satisfied with his job, he answered:

Of course not. Because I am doing something that I do not understand and do not like honestly. In Syria I was a white-collar worker, but here I am doing construction work, factory work, etc. Anyways, **I feel satisfied with myself as I do not need anyone's charity!** (*Ahmad, Syria, Male, 30, Izmir, 24.07.2020*)

Although Ahmet has to work in jobs which are not related to his qualifications, he is proud of himself as he can earn his living without depending on any aid. Here, this statement also implies the negative stigma attached to aid provided to refugees in Turkey. On the other hand, his current living and working condition does not lead to fulfilling his dreams, both for himself and for his family, in Turkey. Thus, he aspires to move onwards from Turkey.

Experience of violence in daily life

Discrimination faced by refugees in their current country of residence prompts them to aspire to move onwards. Not only discrimination by locals and state institutions, but also the fear of inter-ethnic violence and xenophobia, might be sufficient for onward migration aspirations. Although the percentages of Syrian and Afghan respondents who prioritize the fear of being subject to violence to explain their aspirations to move onwards are very close to each other, persecutions were the third most significant reason for Syrian respondents for onward migration aspirations and among top five reasons for Afghan respondents. While both the experiences of discrimination and the fear of persecutions are predominantly expressed by both nationalities, our Syrian interlocutors were additionally complaining about the cyberbullying targeting Syrian refugees on social media, whereas Afghan interlocutors were mainly expressing their discrimination experiences in the work place. In other words, while Syrians are subject to xenophobic attitudes by the public, Afghan refugees are more widely accepted or tolerated by the society. However, such toleration does not protect them from being subject to unjust treatment in the informal labour market.

I aspire to move onwards to **provide a better and safer future for my children**. Here in Turkey, every other day, we are **facing racism**. We, as Syrians, experience conflicts and abuse from Turkish people. I can't even file a case if I get robbed. We are also facing **cyberbullying by Turks** who are telling us [Syrians] to go to Syria and to fight against the enemies instead of Turkish soldiers in Syria (*Adnan, Syria, Male, 31, Adana, 07.03.2020*).

Most of our Afghan interlocutors state that they are underpaid and working 12 hours a day on average. They also express that they receive lower wages than their Turkish or Syrian co-workers. When they voice their complaints about the unequal wages between the nationality groups at work, their employers tell them to quit their job if they are discontented. While discrimination at

work is prominent among Afghan refugees, they face discrimination at state institutions as well. Many Afghan interlocutors indicated that they are humiliated in state institutions where they apply for ESN aid or when receiving medical treatment (for more information on the development interventions see Section 4).

Uncertain legal status in Turkey curtailing access to rights

Uncertain legal status in Turkey as the major reason for onward migration is mainly expressed by Afghan respondents in the survey. However, our Syrian interlocutors expressed the same issue as their motivation to move onwards from Turkey. The major similarity between the two nationalities is in terms of their concern over the fear of deportation. Based on our observations in the field, being subject to detention is part of the daily reality of undocumented migrants in Turkey. Especially our Afghan interlocutors expressed their stress over living under an uncertain legal status. Despite holding international protection status, most our Afghan interlocutors state that their status does not provide them with access to services or aid.

The current legal framework in Turkey requires persons under international protection to pay premiums for their public health insurance one year after registration. Only their children below 18 years of age are covered by the public health care system. This recent change, enacted in December 2019, jeopardize access to healthcare for a considerable number of individuals under international protection. The lack of language skills also makes it difficult for Afghans to navigate an already complex public healthcare system. For instance, Alireza is one of our Afghan interlocutors living in Kayseri since 2018 with his wife and three children. During our interview, Alireza stated that he feels like a foreigner in Turkey because he cannot even access health services. He states that their health insurance was cut almost year ago and they cannot pay premiums, which are expensive:

We try not to get sick since our health insurances have been cancelled. **We try hard not to get sick.** We go to hospital rarely because the costs are very high. In the absence of health insurance, we can't go to the hospital even if we are not well. We however take the children to hospital whenever they don't feel well because they have health insurance. I myself am suffering from lordosis (a disease when the spine curves too far inward) and it sometimes cause a lot of back pain and headaches, or it can even cause a stroke as I have learned, **but I haven't dared to go to the hospital for treatment because of the costs.** If we go to the hospital, they do admit us, but we must pay. We only receive treatment if we pay for it (*Alireza, Afghanistan, Male, 39, Kayseri, 10.01.2021*).

For Syrians, access to primary public health is covered and they can receive healthcare provided in Arabic at Migrant Health Centers. However, among our Syrian interlocutors, language barriers and issues pertaining to access continue in the secondary healthcare sector and beyond but were less of a problem compared with our Afghan interlocutors.

Lack of educational opportunities for children

The lack of educational opportunities in Turkey is prioritized by refugee families as the most significant reason for onward migration. Although the registered refugees have *de jure* access to education services in Turkey, issues such as language barriers, difficulties adapting, and discrimination at schools triggers onward migration aspirations. Additionally, difficulties in access

to higher education and the financial cost of higher education compel some refugees to work in odd jobs and support their families instead of enrolling in higher education. Thus, many of our interlocutors indicated that they aspire to move onwards to provide their children with better opportunities instead of ending up in odd jobs due to the obstacles in the educational system.

Preferred Destinations

We also asked participants' preferred destination if they want to move on. Both groups' top preferences are Canada and Germany, respectively. Syrian respondents also aspire to go to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Around 5 percent of Syrians who want to move on also don't have a specific country yet. For Afghans, the United States, Australia, and France are other alternatives they want to live in (see Table 4).

Table 4: Preferred destinations

All	Percent	Syrian	Percent	Afghan	Percent
Canada	42.06	Canada	36.9	Canada	45.77
Germany	16.55	Germany	17.65	Germany	15.77
United States	6.71	Netherlands	6.95	United States	10.77
United Kingdom	4.03	United Kingdom	5.35	Australia	5.38
Australia	3.8	Don't know	4.81	France	4.62

Our interlocutors indicated that their expectations about the destination country is related to the feedback provided by their social networks abroad, as well as the information they received via social media (videos, blogs etc.). Most refugees, whether aspiring to move on or stay, indicated that refugees prefer these destinations because of a better access to education, access to the legal job market, lower levels of discrimination, enhanced legal status, the support provided for refugees who suffer from psychological trauma, and aid provided to those refugees who are unable to work. For instance, one of our Afghan interlocutor's daughter, Mojdeh, states that she aspires to move to Canada because of the better treatment of refugees there:

One of my friends went to Canada from Afghanistan two years ago. I talk to her about Canada. She told me to move to Canada if I can arrange my trip. She was going to help me in this matter. My friend had psychological problems when she was in Afghanistan. She was continuously staring into space while sitting on the couch. She was not hearing what we told her for 2 or more minutes. Yet, she told me that she got better after moving to Canada. She told me that she is living in peace in Canada. **Also, the state supports her a lot in terms of receiving education** (Mojdeh, Husna's daughter, Husna, Afghanistan, Female, 32, Adana, 07.03.2020)

For young Afghans as Mojdeh, access to education is one of the most significant factors in preferring a certain destination country. Additionally, as Mojdeh states, many refugees suffer from psychological stress due to the migration journey and psychological support provided for refugees at the destination country plays an important role in shaping refugees' migration aspirations.

3.2.2. Aspiration to Stay

Contrary to aspirations to move on, the reason for aspirations to stay are more diverse within the community and across the two communities. For Syrian respondents, the lower levels of crime, violence, and insecurity are the most important reason to stay in Turkey. While the absence of armed conflict in the area and the surrounding areas, as well as avoiding discrimination and persecutions in Syria, are the fourth most important reasons for Syrians, these are the most important reasons to stay for Afghan respondents. Afghan respondents also indicated that, despite their despair of continuing to stay in Turkey, with the answer, “I feel I have no other choice.” On the contrary, some respondents from both communities also indicated that they love Turkey and got used to living there. Thus, rather than starting from scratch in another country, they prefer to stay in Turkey. Religious and cultural affinity with the Turkish locals is another factor for staying in Turkey for both refugee groups (See Table 5).

Table 5: Reasons for staying in Turkey

Reason (All Respondents)	Percent	Reason (Syrian)	Percent	Reason (Afghan)	Percent
Lower levels of crime, violence, and insecurity (beside Armed conflicts)	19.05	Lower levels of crime, violence, and insecurity (beside Armed conflicts)	26.75	Absence of Armed conflict in the area and the surrounding areas/ Avoiding ethnic/political/religious discrimination and persecutions	24.81
I love this country / I got used to living here / Starting from zero	15.15	Education opportunities	13.37	I love this country / I got used to living here / Starting from zero	19.55
Absence of Armed conflict in the area and the surrounding areas/ Avoiding ethnic/political/religious discrimination and persecutions	14.29	I love this country / I got used to living here / Starting from zero	13.37	I feel I have no other choice	12.78
Education opportunities	12.77	Absence of Armed conflict in the area and the surrounding areas/ Avoiding ethnic/political/religious discrimination and persecutions	10.03	Religious or cultural affinity	12.78
Religious or cultural affinity	10.82	Religious or cultural affinity	10.03	Education opportunities	11.28

Note: N = 462 for all participants, N = 329 for Syrians, and N = 133 for Afghan respondents.

Lower level of crime, violence and insecurity

Lower levels of crime, violence, and insecurity in the current country of residence could be sufficient in explaining why some of our interlocutors plan to stay in Turkey for the near future. However, this finding does not imply that the interlocutors are satisfied with their living conditions in general. Both Afghan and Syrian interlocutors argue that the level of safety in Turkey is the major reason for them to aspire to stay, despite the dire living conditions in the country. One of our Afghan interlocutors, Rabi, has been living with his family of four in Turkey since 2015. Prior to coming to Turkey, Rabi was among the minority of Afghans who had a professional career in Iran. However, he was threatened by the authorities because he publicly expressed his views regarding the Iranian education policy of excluding Afghan pupils. Faced with persecution, Rabi came to Turkey with the hope that he could provide his children with a better future, one in which they will not be discriminated against and will feel safe. While Rabi expresses that they do not face discrimination in Turkey as they did in Iran, they have to overcome such obstacles as economic hardship due to a lack of steady employment, access to health services, and a lack of employment opportunities. Despite these dire conditions, Rabi would like to stay in Turkey in the future:

After I came to Turkey, I have found myself in many different problems and everything became much more different. Yet, at least, my children can go to school here and refugees can work in different sectors. The state gives them work permits as well as insurance. Unfortunately, Iran did not give refugees work permits. Also, you can choose the religion you want in Turkey. A majority of the population are Muslims in Turkey and I would like to raise my children here. Of course, my children can choose whichever religion they want, we can only give them advice. **Here in Turkey, there is peace, security, and my children can go to school.** The only problem for me is that I cannot do my own profession in Turkey (*Rabi, Afghanistan, Male, 31, Kayseri, 25.07.2020*).

The feeling of security and peace, as Rabi states, triggers aspirations to stay put. However, later in the interview, Rabi also states that if the reception context for refugees in Turkey changes for the worse, they would aspire to move onwards, as they will have no other choice.

Familiarity with the current place

Open ended responses such as “I love this country,” “I got used to living here,” and “I do not want to start from zero” were commonly given answers by survey respondents and we categorized them under the subtitle of familiarity with the current place. Some of our interlocutors stated that they got used to living in Turkey and onward migration would mean starting from scratch in a place they are not familiar with. Being a refugee again in another country discourages some of our interlocutors for onward migration. Getting used to living in the current country of residence refers to relatively easier access to services (i.e., children attending school) and to the (informal) labour market. However, as we have discussed above, getting used to living in the current country of residence does not imply that those refugees do not face any problems with access to services. They face challenges in earning their living or accessing certain services. Yet, they argue that they are accustomed to these challenges and moving onward would mean starting from zero all over again as a refugee. Therefore, they would like to stay in Turkey. This is especially the case for refugees who have settled in Turkey and managed to secure a more or less stable legal status

and/or employment, but also for those who may not be able to afford onward migration and the financial, social, and psychological costs of re-settling in a new place.

Abdulaziz is one of our Syrian interlocutors who has established a business in Turkey. He aspires to stay in Turkey, although he has applied for third country resettlement to the United States where his brother-in-law's family lives. Abdulaziz was called for an interview, but over time, his aspirations about being resettled in the US changed:

Because of **the business I established here, the independence and freedom I feel here**, and the reason that I do not want to **start my life from zero again**, neither in the USA nor anywhere else, I would like to stay in Turkey. **I do not want to be a refugee again** anymore. I am fine here in Turkey and I still can manage what is left of my business (*Abdulaziz, Syria, Male, 33, Istanbul, 23.07.2020*).

Abdulaziz added that the third country resettlement process have been suspended after the Trump administration, yet, he was called again to be resettled a year ago. Abdulaziz declined to be interviewed because he decided he did not want to be a refugee again with his family of three. He argues that the most striking reason for him to aspiring to stay in Turkey is that he achieved what he desires in terms of his job. Additionally, Abdulaziz states that he applied for Turkish citizenship. He believes that with the help of his Turkish citizenship, he can travel abroad to establish business networks and visit his family. Thus, citizenship could be sufficient for Abdulaziz to aspire to stay in Turkey in the long run.

Abdulaziz is an example of a rather well-off refugee who would like to stay in Turkey and continue running his business as a Turkish citizen. However, this notion of being familiar with the context and not willing to move on to a new place is also common among poorer Syrian refugees living in Turkey. For instance, a young couple with two children, living together with their extended family in a poor neighbourhood in Adana, indicated that it took time for them to get used to life in Adana and now, they do not consider changing their place of residence as an option. Although their material conditions were far from ideal, the husband moving from one daily job to another, they were not considering moving to another city in Turkey or another country, stating that they love Adana despite all the hardship and it would be costly for them to get used to another place.

Besides getting used to living in the current country of residence, some of our interlocutors underscored the social aspects of integration, indicating that they would like to stay in Turkey because they love the people and the country. This also refers to establishing networks with local people and integrating into the labour market or education system. For instance, Mahnaz, is one of our Afghan interlocutors who came to Turkey with her husband in 2019 when she was seven months pregnant with her twins. Mahnaz and her husband had to cross the border by walking in the snow over the mountains for 12 hours. When they came to Turkey, they applied for international protection and started to work as poultry keeper in Bolu where they had relatives from Afghanistan. Three weeks after they acquired legal IDs, Mahnaz gave birth to her twin children:

We want to stay here. **We love Turkey. The people here are good.** The country is good. When I gave birth, I was in hospital for 23 days and we were given very good treatment and we were respected. I am very grateful and very happy for that. We were initially

thinking about coming and staying in Turkey, and now we are even more determined to stay and live here (*Mahnaz, Afghanistan, Female, 31, Bolu, 15.01.2021*)

Owing to the treatment that Mahnaz received in the hospital and her social life, she aspires to stay despite the difficulties of living in Turkey. As she stated, Turkey was the destination country for them from the beginning. Thus, Mahnaz indicates that the difficulties do not encourage them to aspire to move onwards.

Religious and cultural affinity

Cultural and religious affinity with Turkey prompts many of our interlocutors who do not aspire to move onwards to settle in Turkey. In fact, not only the cultural or religious affinity with Turkey, but also cultural and religious discrepancy between European countries, encourages some of our interlocutors to stay in Turkey. While many of our interlocutors indicated that although they think the living conditions are better in European countries or in Canada than Turkey, they still aspire to live in Turkey:

No, we did not think about moving onwards because **we want our children to be raised in an Islamic country** and not in Europe. (...) The living standards in Europe are much better and easier than Turkey but the kids' future is more important to us (*Mahdi, Syria, Male, 26, Adana, 04.03.2020*).

Here, we observed the impact of negative feedback flowing from the communities that are already in Europe. For instance, during on-site fieldwork in Adana, several families raised this issue that the state would intervene in how they raise their children if they go to Europe, a reason why they would prefer to stay in Turkey. Mahdi, for instance, came to Turkey from Syria in 2015 with his wife and his child and works in odd jobs. They have financial difficulties, yet, they do not aspire to move onwards.

Mahdi and some of our interlocutors indicated that if they move to Europe, their children can be taken away by the state due to their way of raising children:

My relative's daughter was taken away from her family because her father shouted at her, and they have not seen the daughter for 3 months now. They can only communicate with her through phone calls (*Mahdi, Syria, Male, 26, Adana, 04.03.2020*).

Similar to Mahdi, another female Syrian interlocutor, Fatima, expresses that European countries can take their children away and intervene in her way of parenting. Fatima's husband could not find a decent job in Turkey and their livelihood is dependent on ESSN aid. Despite the difficulties they face in living in Turkey, Fatima rejects moving onwards. She heard from her relatives in Europe that refugee families' children can be taken by the state and she is afraid that her children can be taken away from her.

Access to Education

While some refugees aspire to move onwards for better educational opportunities in the destination country, educational opportunities can prompt some to aspire to stay in the current country of residence. Especially those refugee families who can communicate in Turkish express that they can help their children in their homework and their children are well integrated into the

education system in Turkey. As their children learn Turkish and spend time at schools, refugee families do not want their children to go through the difficulty to adapt to another education system in a different country than Turkey. Additionally, a few of our Syrian interlocutors state that their children or themselves enrolled in universities and they do not want to leave Turkey. Yet, the number of those interlocutors who aspire to stay in Turkey owing to the education opportunities are very few.

Jabbar is one of our Syrian interlocutors who came to Turkey with his family of five in 2014. He was working as IT support in Syria and he found a job in an international organization in Gaziantep as an IT support specialist after he migrated to Turkey. His wife was working as an engineer back in Syria, yet, she could not work after coming to Turkey. Jabbar indicates that their children learned Turkish at school and their school performance is great, owing to his wife's efforts in helping their children do their homework. Jabbar and his wife went to Turkish language courses and both of them are fluent in Turkish. Additionally, Jabbar states that he aspires to stay in Turkey although his brother is inviting them to move to the US. When we ask Jabbar whether he could have aspired to move onwards in 2015 when the borders were open to refugees:

At that time, I think, yes, I would have chosen to go to Europe, if I had a safe, good way. But now, **after my children learned Turkish and are happy at school, I would say no to going to Europe** (*Jabbar, Syria, Male, 51, Gaziantep, 22.07.2020*).

Despite Jabbar's decent job in line with his own qualifications, his major motivation to stay in Turkey is their children's integration into the education system of Turkey. However, as we have discussed above, Jabbar is an exception, rather than a rule, among our interlocutors due to his employment status and language skills. Most refugee families experience difficulties in helping their children in their homework or communicating with the teachers of their children.

3.2.3. Aspiration to return

Finally, despite having very few observations, motivations to aspire to return may also be categorized. Firstly, family reunification appears as a significant factor in planning to return to the homeland. Many Syrians also indicated their longing for the home country. Lacking employment opportunities is another essential factor in returning for both refugee groups. For Afghans, the lack of educational opportunities as well as political problems with government officials are significant determinants to return. Note that because of low number of observations and unique reasons stated by the respondents, the initial code list fell short of capturing the return aspirations under pre-given categories (see Table 6).

Table 6: Reasons for return aspirations

Reason (All Respondents)	Percent	Reason (Syrian)	Percent	Reason (Afghan)	Percent
Family formation/reunification	25.93	Family formation/reunification	31.25	Other reasons	45.45
Other reasons	18.52	Fear of ethnic/political/religious discrimination and persecutions	25	Lack of employment opportunities	18.18
Fear of ethnic/political/religious discrimination and persecutions	14.81	I miss my homeland	18.75	Family formation/reunification	18.18
Lack of employment opportunities	11.11	Livelihood challenges ¹⁷	12.5	Lack of educational opportunities	9.09
I miss my homeland	11.11	Lack of employment opportunities	6.25	Political problems/Problem with government security officials	9.09

Note: N = 27 for all participants, N = 16 for Syrians, and N = 11 for Afghan respondents.

During our fieldwork, we did not interview any Afghan and Syrian interlocutors with an explicit aspiration to return. Many of our interlocutors talked about return as an alternative option when their country of origin was safe again to live in. Both Syrian and Afghan interlocutors expressed that returning to their country of origin is not feasible due to conflict and inaccessibility to services such as electricity and gas. Additionally, for many of our Afghan interlocutors, returning implies taking a step back in their migration journey. In a way, returning is considered a failure which they would like to avoid. Our Afghan interlocutor, Rabi, argues that voluntary return aspirations can only be related to personal matters such as family formation or reunification:

Even if you would like to return voluntarily, **where do you think you will return?** Nobody wants to move to a place which is worse than where one currently resides. Who would like to move to **a place where there is no electricity and water?** Everyone wants to move onwards (from Afghanistan). If one does not have relatives or friends in Afghanistan, they would not aspire to return voluntarily. Maybe some Afghans apply for voluntary return programs but they probably have serious valid reasons. For instance, **someone would return for their mother or father whereas some others would return for their spouse or children.** Because, there (in Afghanistan), they won't be living in better conditions (Rabi, Afghanistan, Male, 31, Kayseri, 25.07.2020).

On the other hand, for some refugees, return is only an option if the conflict situation ends in their country of origin. Our Syrian interlocutors, especially the ones living near the Turkey-Syria border, indicated that they aspire to return to Syria if the war ends in the near future. Similarly, the

¹⁷Note that it was coded as "lack of proper management of the site/ site is crowded" in the initial common list covering camp and non-camp contexts this study was carried out. Here, we changed this item to refer to challenges of living arrangements in general.

aspiration to return to a post-war Syria provides a basis to prefer to stay in Turkey over moving on to Europe. For instance, we asked one of our Syrian female interlocutors, Amira, whether she would aspire to move onwards if the conditions change in Turkey:

I would never leave Turkey to go to Europe. I would live in a tent in Syria before thinking about going to Europe. **I would only go there (to Europe) if there is no Syria anymore** (Amira, Syria, Female, 32, Adana, 06.03.2020)

Amira adds that her family only lives in Adana, a border city of Turkey, because they are closer to Syria and they can immediately return when the conflict situation ends in Syria. For Amira and her family of five, moving onwards to Europe means moving away from Syria, both mentally and physically. Thus, for our Syrian interlocutors like Amira, return is the major aspiration when the conflict ends in the country of origin. In a way, staying in Turkey implies having the possibility of “reaching the homeland” again.

4. Development Interventions

This section discusses the development interventions in Turkey provided to Syrian and Afghan refugees. Although not seemingly the most important reason for staying in Turkey for both refugee groups, development interventions are essential tools for governments and NGOs aiming to improve the livelihoods and enhance the resilience of refugee communities. In the survey, we asked about five types of development interventions that refugees in Turkey can benefit from. ESSN aid, also known as the Red Crescent Card, is provided by the Turkish Red Crescent with a budget funded by the EU. The second one is the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) provided by UNICEF, given to families that have children enrolled in school. Besides these specific aids, many NGOs and municipalities provide several types of aids in cash. Also, during the COVID-19 period, additional aids are being provided to refugees in Turkey by many organizations, including municipalities and NGOs.

Overall, 54 percent of Syrians and 44 percent of Afghans receive at least one of these development interventions (Figure 26). The most common aid is ESSN, which is distributed to 32 percent of our Syrian participants and 26 percent of Afghan respondents (Figure 27). Figure 28 also illustrates the frequency of ESSN Aid those respondents receive. Overall, the majority of both Syrians and Afghans receiving ESSN received it almost every month in the last 12 months. However, nearly 10 percent of Syrians and 4 percent of Afghans did not receive ESSN aid in the last 12 months, meaning they received ESSN in the past but not currently. Finally, we compared the positive impacts of ESSN aid on the respondents’ lives. Overall, there was no significant difference between Syrian sample respondents who said yes and no regarding quality-of-life improvements. However, most Afghan respondents who get ESSN aid indicated that their quality of life had not improved (Figure 29).

Syrian refugees receive UNICEF cash education aid more often than Afghan refugees, as is also the case with ESSN aid. Rather than cash aid, receiving aid in-kind is more common for both Syrians and Afghans. Especially upon their arrival, refugees explained that they relied on house appliances and furniture provided by other refugees, neighbours, charities, etc. Finally, around 11 percent of Syrians and Afghans received aid during the COVID-19 period.

Migration Aspirations and the Impact of Refugee Assistance in Turkey

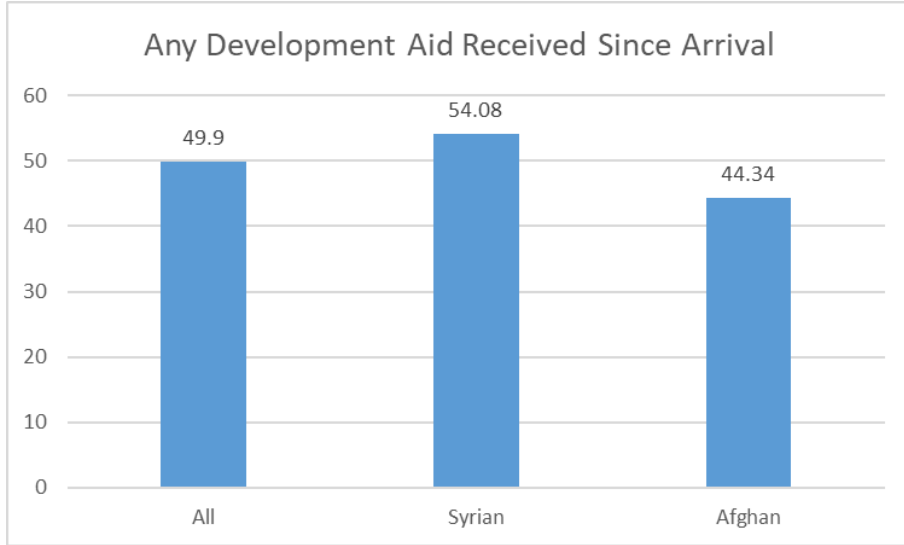


Figure 27: Development aid received

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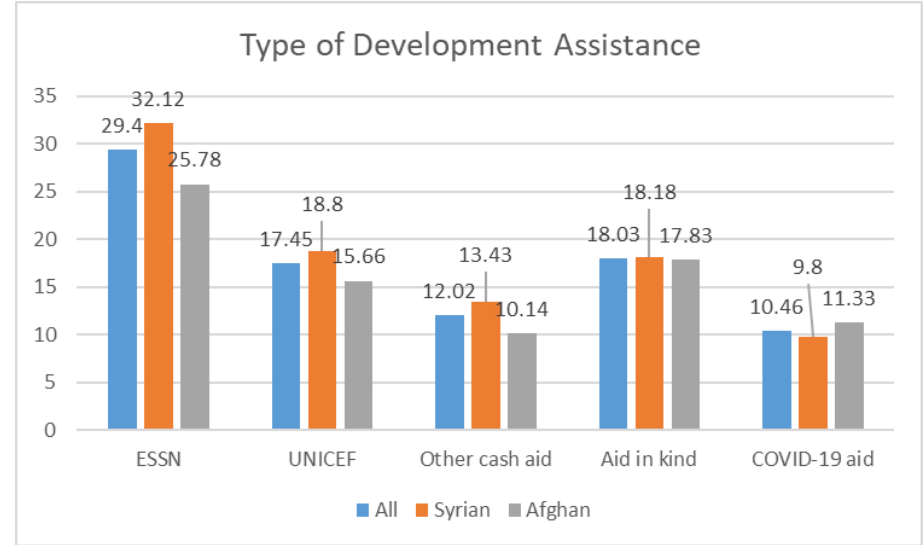


Figure 28: Type of development assistance

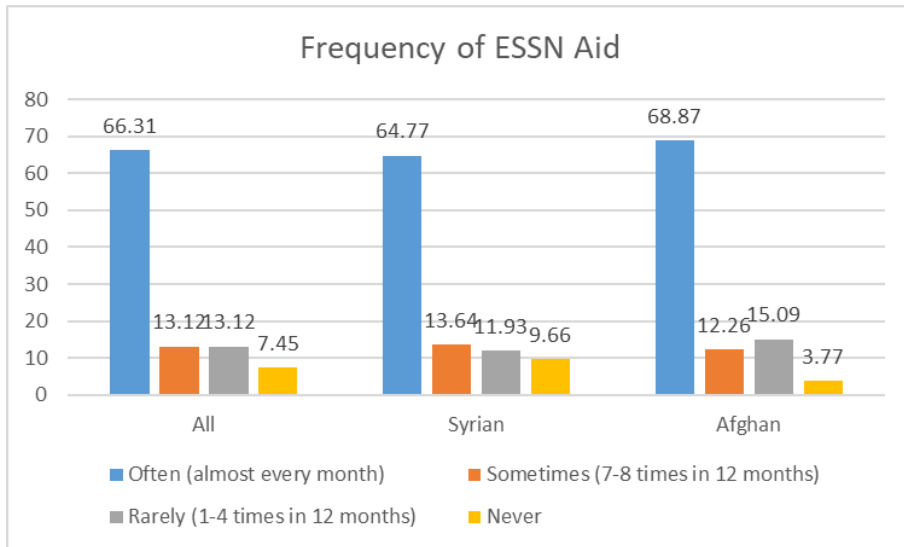


Figure 29: Frequency of ESSN aid

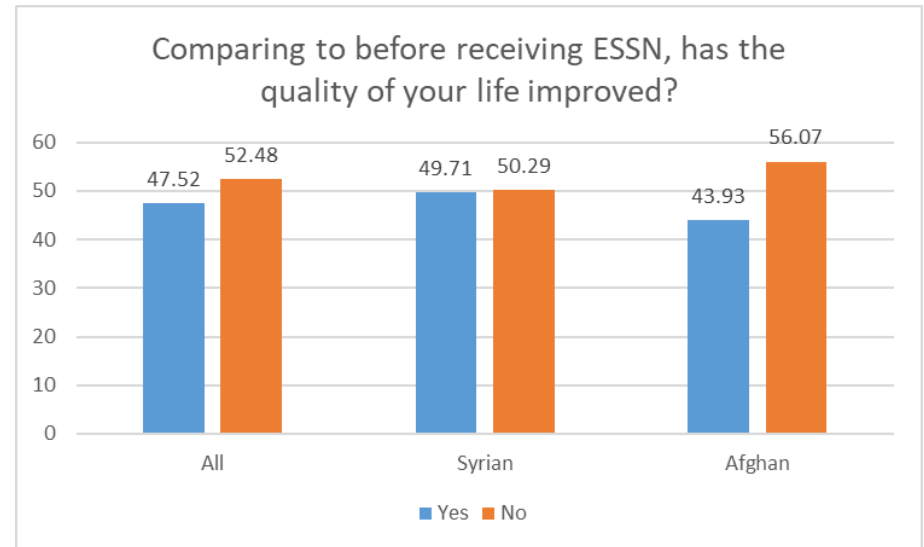


Figure 30: Improvements in quality of life by ESSN aid?

5. Bivariate and Multivariate Analyses

5.1 Bivariate Analysis

This section discusses some bivariate and multivariate analyses regarding assistance received by refugees and determinants of their migration aspirations. To this end, we first calculated the means of household size, asset index, number of children at the schooling age, and relative deprivation over assistance received. In the following graphs, *yes* columns indicate the means of assistance receivers and *no* shows the means of respondents who do not receive any assistance.

According to Figure 30, the household size of respondents who receive assistance is larger than those who do not get assistance. However, this difference is larger for Syrians than for Afghans. This result is also the same as Figure 31, which illustrates the relationship between the number of school-age children and receiving assistance. As the number of children of school-age increases, families are more likely to get assistance than the households with fewer children. This result is in line with the design of assistance policies intended to reach out to overcrowded families with several little children and/or dependent members.

Figure 32 illustrates that although there are differences between respondents' wealth in terms of the assets they possess and assistance received, the difference between assistance receivers and others is very small. Finally, we tested whether there is a relationship between respondents' relative deprivation and reception of any assistance since arrival. We measured relative deprivation with two questions. Firstly, we asked respondents to locate their household on an income scale between 1 (lowest income group) and 10 (highest income group). Next, using the same scale, we asked the same question about their economic situation in their country of origin. Finally, we subtracted their situation in Turkey from their country of origin and generated a scale between -9 and 9. Figure 33 shows that respondents who experience more relative deprivation are more likely to get assistance than those who experience less deprivation. Overall, the results show that more crowded and vulnerable respondents are more likely to get assistance than households with relatively better conditions.

Migration Aspirations and the Impact of Refugee Assistance in Turkey

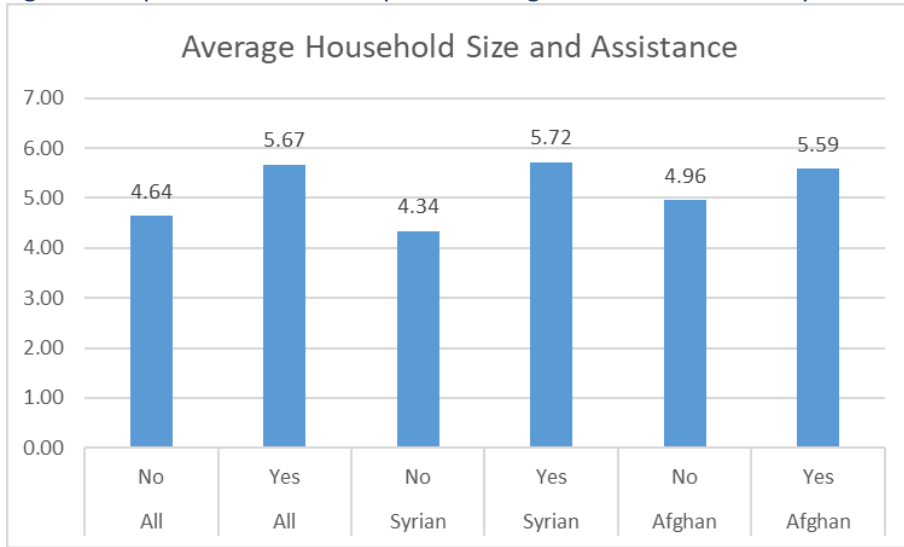


Figure 31: Average household size according to assistance receiving

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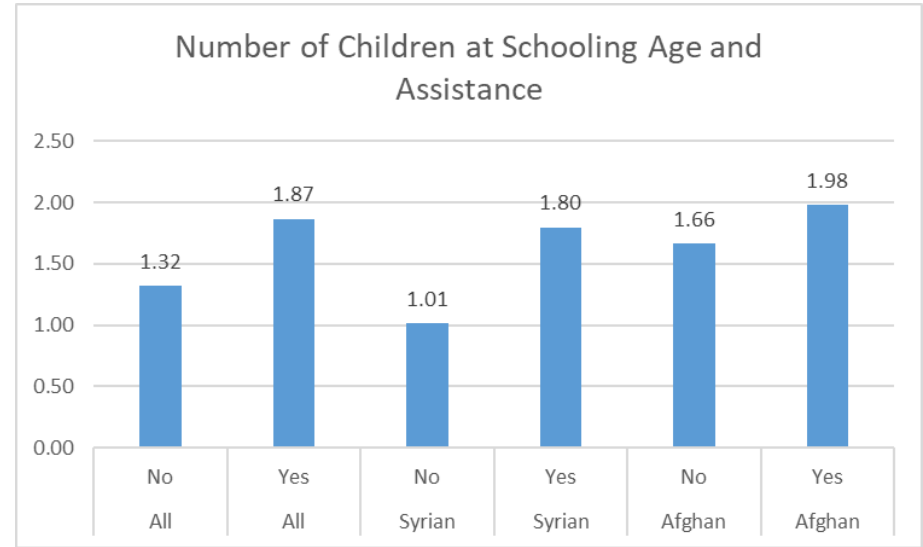


Figure 32: Average number of children at schooling age according to assistance receiving

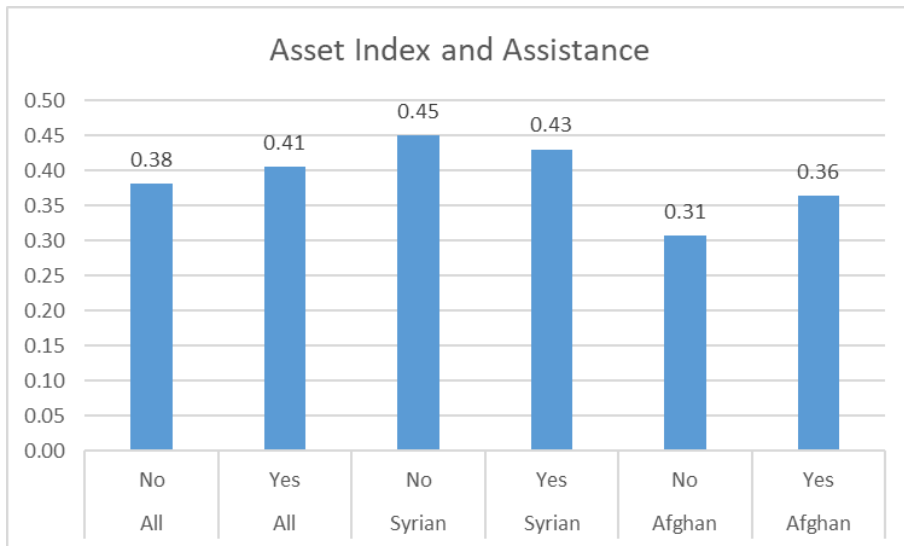


Figure 33: Average asset index according to assistance receiving

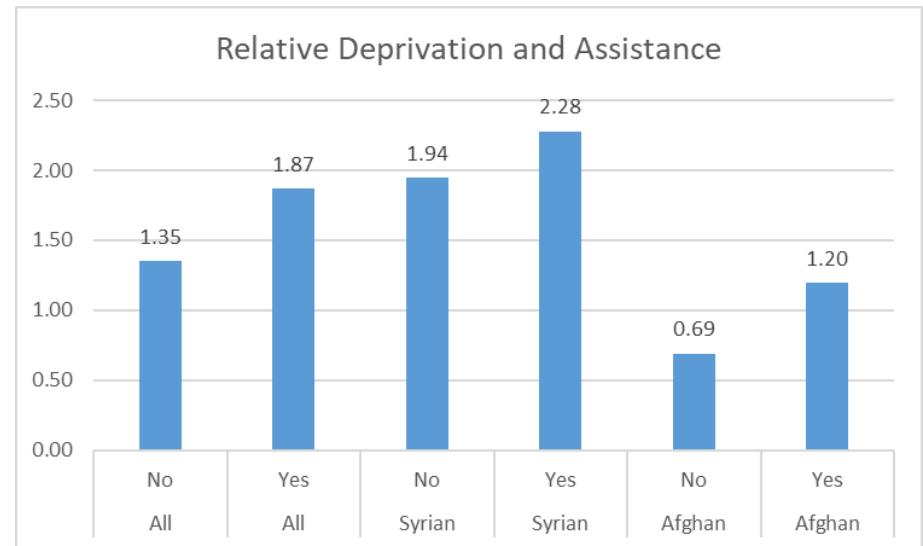


Figure 34: Average relative deprivation according to assistance receiving

5.2 Multivariate Analysis

Finally, we tested the determinants of migration aspirations using multinomial logistic regressions. Our primary goal was to test the impact of receiving assistance on migration aspirations. As control variables, we used such demographic variables as age, sex (male), higher education, asset index, employment status, marital status (married), household size, and residing in Istanbul. We also controlled for the impact of receiving assistance with other migration-related variables such as duration of stay, risk taking, and having a network abroad (See Table 7 for descriptive statistics).¹⁸

Our dependent variable is migration aspirations. In our multinomial logistic regression, we used current migration plans to measure aspirations, rather than ideal aspirations, as the dependent variable. Given the discrepancy between aspirations in an ideal situation and current plans, the latter can be more realistic and better reflect the current context regarding the situation at the borders or the effects of covid, among other individual factors. Also, in the previous section, the open-ended question on reasons to move on, stay put, or return was based current plans. Note that the findings of the regression analysis are complemented with input from the qualitative interviews, where we had the chance to elaborate whether the person is talking about an ideal aspiration, consideration, or a current plan.

Overall, our results indicate that there is a significant relationship between receiving assistance and aspirations to stay in Turkey, yet the results run contrary to expectations. Meanwhile, the results reveal different factors explaining aspirations to move on, stay put, or return, as well as differences between the two communities.

¹⁸ Measurement of independent variables is explained in detail in previous sections. In addition, risk-taking is measured with the question, “How do you see yourself in general? Are you generally a person who is fully prepared to take risks, or do you try to avoid taking risks in your life?” Answers range on a 5-level Likert scale as “not willing to take risks,” “somewhat not willing to take risks,” “moderately willing to take risks,” “somewhat willing to take risks,” and “extremely willing to take risks.”

Table 7: Descriptive statistics of independent variables

Variable	All			Syrian			Afghan		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Age	950	27.92	8.96	541	29.17	9.27	409	26.27	8.25
Male	962	0.62	0.49	549	0.55	0.50	413	0.70	0.46
Higher education	960	0.34	0.47	548	0.41	0.49	412	0.25	0.43
Asset index	966	0.39	0.18	551	0.44	0.17	415	0.33	0.16
Employment status									
Employed	954	0.50	0.50	543	0.49	0.50	411	0.50	0.50
Unemployed	954	0.36	0.48	543	0.33	0.47	411	0.40	0.49
Never employed	954	0.14	0.35	543	0.18	0.38	411	0.10	0.30
Married	958	0.48	0.50	546	0.56	0.50	412	0.37	0.48
Household size	948	5.16	2.73	541	5.09	2.45	407	5.24	3.06
Istanbul	966	0.30	0.46	551	0.33	0.47	415	0.27	0.45
Assistance	966	0.50	0.50	551	0.54	0.50	415	0.44	0.50
Duration of stay	921	5.12	2.35	513	6.37	1.91	408	3.53	1.84
Network abroad	966	0.84	0.37	551	0.82	0.39	415	0.86	0.35
Risk taking	963	2.79	1.23	550	2.64	1.17	413	3.00	1.29
Syrian	966	0.57	0.50						

Regression results

We reported relative risk ratios for better interpretation, where numbers greater than one indicate a positive relationship and numbers less than one show a negative association. Regarding current plans, Table 8 illustrates that, firstly, respondents receiving assistance are more likely to move on to another country in the pooled sample model. This finding is counter to the expectation that policy interventions intending to enhance refugee livelihoods would help their integration in the first country of asylum and motivate them to stay put. As assistance is provided to vulnerable families, one can expect that their impact on integration is minimal. This point is further underscored in descriptive statistics and in our qualitative analysis. When we separate samples, Syrian refugees who receive assistance are more likely to move on to another country, yet the result is not significant for the Afghan sample.

Table 8: Regression Results¹⁹

DV: Planned Aspiration	Model 1 All		Model 2 Syrian		Model 3 Afghan	
	Move on	Return	Move on	Return	Move on	Return
Assistance	1.417* (0.228)	0.737 (0.356)	1.578* (0.344)	1.541 (0.919)	0.852 (0.229)	0.00000085 (0.0000996)
Asset Index	0.0944*** (0.0464)	0.0173** (0.0256)	0.0460*** (0.0313)	0.0356+ (0.0652)	0.187* (0.153)	0.110 (0.302)
Duration	1.044 (0.0431)	1.061 (0.122)	1.089 (0.0623)	0.810 (0.122)	1.066 (0.0730)	1.489* (0.282)
Network	1.671* (0.348)	1.064 (0.547)	1.645+ (0.457)	0.746 (0.490)	1.615 (0.538)	1.861 (1.786)
Risk taking	1.056 (0.0663)	1.254 (0.218)	0.976 (0.0890)	1.526 (0.392)	1.147 (0.107)	1.050 (0.259)
Istanbul	1.137 (0.193)	2.266+ (1.009)	1.909** (0.422)	2.215 (1.288)	0.446** (0.131)	0.737 (0.561)
Age	0.985 (0.00948)	1.016 (0.0284)	0.978 (0.0133)	1.072+ (0.0391)	0.976+ (0.0144)	0.950 (0.0731)
Male	1.578** (0.261)	3.819* (2.300)	2.287*** (0.533)	2.367 (1.608)	1.165 (0.307)	4001513.8 (5280930000)
Higher educ.	1.166 (0.196)	1.090 (0.525)	1.369 (0.311)	0.553 (0.364)	1.134 (0.307)	1.503 (1.213)
Married	0.957 (0.163)	0.386+ (0.212)	1.265 (0.309)	0.197* (0.154)	0.705 (0.178)	0.830 (0.695)
Household size	0.980 (0.0270)	1.065 (0.0715)	1.038 (0.0448)	0.916 (0.102)	0.982 (0.0383)	1.189+ (0.118)
Ref: Employed						
Unemployed	1.071 (0.179)	1.392 (0.635)	1.008 (0.235)	0.947 (0.598)	1.171 (0.296)	2.307 (1.712)
Never Employed	1.393 (0.326)	0.986 (0.830)	1.599 (0.510)	0.720 (0.678)	1.952 (0.803)	0.000000442 (0.000914)
Syrian	0.355*** (0.0682)	1.369 (0.745)				
N	877		491		386	
pseudo R ²	0.097		0.088		0.090	

Note: Relative risk ratios are reported; Standard errors in parentheses + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Development Interventions

As mentioned above, contrary to expectations, development interventions in the form of assistance delivered to different refugee groups have a positive impact on moving on aspirations. Although such interventions are delivered to improve the living standards of refugees in the host country, our results indicate that they fall short of increase living standards in Turkey. Therefore,

¹⁹ We conducted a similar analysis using only ESSN aid as an independent variable instead of receiving any assistance. Similar to Table 8, the results illustrated those Syrian respondents who get ESSN aid are more likely to move on to another country than stay in Turkey. However, the effect of ESSN assistance is not statistically significant when we pool all respondents into a single model. This result also contrasts with our expectations, as indicated in this section in detail.

one can argue that refugees who live with low living standards still suffer from vulnerability, and thus, they still want to move on to another country where they believe they can improve their living standards.

In our qualitative interviews, the most prominent narrative is that the effect of the aids on the life quality of our interlocutors is very little. Both onward migration and stay aspirations are prominent among our interlocutors who receive either ESSN or any other aid. In this regard, we can argue that there is no direct relationship between migration aspirations and receiving ESSN or any other types of aid, according to our qualitative interviews. To understand why some of our aid-receiving interlocutors aspire to move onwards and others aspire to stay in Turkey, we will present our evidence by relying on the narratives of our interlocutors.

Some of our interlocutors who receive aid on a regular basis (either ESSN, UNICEF or any other aid), aspire to move onwards to a third country. As discussed in section 4, those interlocutors express that the impact of the aid they receive on their quality of life is minimal. Also, they suggest that their aspirations for the future are more important than the amount of the financial aid they receive in Turkey. These future aspirations are independent of the financial aid in Turkey. In other words, our interlocutors indicated that they cannot fulfil their dreams in Turkey, even if the amount of the aid were to increase. Muhammad is one of the Afghan refugees that we interviewed. Muhammad is living with his family of four in Ankara and they receive ESSN aid for four members of the family. Due to an accident he had in Afghanistan, he is unable to walk and uses a wheelchair. Thus, he cannot work and is eligible for receiving ESSN aid. None of Muhammad's family members can work and they rely on money sent by his brother who lives in the USA. Muhammad would like to move onwards from Turkey because he aspires to receive an education, reunite with his brother, and fulfil his dreams:

It is not like a human being needs just enough to eat and have no other desires. That is not enough. Let me think how to explain it... My mother is sick and is laying in bed all day. My father also has health problems. He has been diagnosed with lumbar disk disease. Since he is a father, he has gambled on his own life in order to help and take care of me, my mother, and my younger brother. He has taken the responsibility of everything at home. **So, having enough money to eat is not the only problem.** I would like to my brother, so that he can also help and take some of the responsibility off the shoulders of my father. In addition, I think that the conditions here for my studies are not in place. I am handicapped and I was expecting that I can receive some extra help so that I could succeed in starting my university education here. I didn't receive that help. I have dreams which I want to come true. **I have plans to get an education so that I can help people like myself who are in wheelchairs, so that their life quality is improved.** Because I am tied to the wheelchair, I know them better than anyone else (*Muhammad, Afghanistan, Male, 24, Ankara, 11.12.2020*)

As Muhammad states, his aspiration to move onwards is not related to the cash assistance he receives in Turkey. On the other hand, some of our interlocutors who receive aid stated that they would like to stay in Turkey. However, they add that their aspiration to stay is not related to the aid they receive in Turkey. As discussed in Section 4, some of our interlocutors receiving aid in Turkey suggest that they aspire to stay in Turkey not because they are satisfied with their financial

condition supported by aid, but because other reasons such as the feeling of being accustomed to Turkey, their children attending school, and the anxiety over starting from scratch in a third country are more important for them to aspire to stay.

For instance, Khalim, a 51 year old Syrian male living in Adana since 2014, indicates that he is not satisfied with his living conditions despite receiving ESSN aid for himself plus five members of his family. When they first came to Turkey, Khalim was working in odd jobs but he could not work for the last couple of years due to his health issues. As a result, his 16-year-old son had to drop out of school and started to work in a tailor shop to generate income for the family. They live in an old apartment's basement floor which is very humid and lacks many necessary home appliances. ESSN aid helps Khalim's family to pay rent for their accommodations plus the bills and they can cover their monthly expenditures by the ESSN aid. For the other expenditures such as food, they are dependent on Khalim's son's daily wages. We ask Khalim about their most important challenge they face in Turkey:

Well, my main problem, in fact **everyone's problem, is financial issues**. I mean, we are getting **help from the Red Crescent and we are paying our rent and bills with it**. Whatever my son gains, we spend it to meet our daily expenses. Yet, we are unable to make extra expenditures like going [around the city], to the parks or other places or restaurants (*Khalim, Syria, Male, 51, Adana, 06.03.2020*).

Despite these financial difficulties they face, Khalim aspires to stay in Turkey. Yet, his aspiration to stay put is not related to the ESSN aid that his family receives, although receiving aid helps them to get by. Khalim states that they would like to stay in Turkey to be able to return to Syria when the war ends. Khalim and his family are not planning to return at the moment. However, Khalim says that "one day everything will be better in Syria." When this day comes, they will easily return to their homeland due to their proximity.

We further asked our interlocutors hypothetical scenarios about their migration aspirations, specifically in terms of receiving assistance in Turkey. First, we asked our interlocutors who currently receive no aid but have aspirations to move onwards whether they would aspire to stay in Turkey in case they started receiving aid. Second, we asked other interlocutors with aspirations to stay in Turkey whether they would still aspire to stay in the event that aid programs were stopped in Turkey. Our interlocutors indicated that they cannot make any connections between their migration aspirations and receiving aid. However, a few of our relatively poorer interlocutors expressed that the aid they receive is highly significant for their living standards and their migration aspirations would change in regards to the amount of cash aid they receive, in other words, they would be more willing to stay if they received higher amounts of cash aid and other forms of assistance.

Our interlocutors who do not receive any aid on a regular basis stated that their aspirations would not change even if they were to receive aid in Turkey. First, many say that they are used to living in Turkey regardless of receiving any aid and they believe that the aid would not affect their living conditions. Second, some of our interlocutors suggested that they experience social and psychological problems in Turkey and financial aid would not be a solution for these issues. Thus, they indicated that they would still move even if they received aid in Turkey.

Other Findings

Our qualitative interviews revealed some findings about the development interventions that we did not measure in the survey. First, some of our interlocutors stated that they abstain from the legal job market because they can lose their ESSN Card when they work legally. For instance, Mahdi is one of those Syrian refugees who explained that he did not want to ask for a work permit from his employer so he that he may continue to receive ESSN aid. Mahdi stated that they receive a ESSN Card for 8 members of the household and is afraid of losing their ESSN Card if he worked with a work permit. Nonetheless, he indicated that the ESSN Card is not improving the quality of their lives. Rather, the ESSN Card is used by Mahdi's family to pay the rent and the bills. Thus, Mahdi states that if the ESSN Card stops, they would not meet their basic needs.

On the other hand, some of our Afghan interlocutors indicated that they do not receive as much aid as Syrian refugees receive in Turkey. For instance, Perveen is one of those Afghan interlocutors who thinks that aid in Turkey is unevenly distributed among refugees. As a single mother of three living in slum housing in a poor neighbourhood of Adana, Perveen cannot work and their livelihood is dependent on their ESSN Card. Besides the ESSN aid, Perveen applied to NGOs and governmental institutions for other aids. Yet, these institutions said they were able to help Syrian refugees, but not Afghans like Perveen:

They help Syrians more. Many places serve only Syrians. Yet, the Syrians living conditions are better than Afghans. **When we apply to some institutions to receive aid, these institutions indicate that aid is only given to Syrians.** For instance, there was flood in our home and I took pictures of the flood to show these institutions. Yet, they only helped Turkish people. They did not give us coal aid as well. I collect cardboard from the market for heating (*Perveen, Afghanistan, Female, 39, Adana, 07.03.2020*).

Perveen is representative of some other Afghan interlocutors in our fieldwork. Since the aid funds are mostly focused on Syrian refugees living in Turkey, most NGOs and institutions provide services only for Syrian refugees. As a result, Afghan refugees living in Turkey feel discriminated against by the institutions allocating aid.

The Impact of Assets

The survey results indicate that in all models, respondents who have more assets are less likely to leave Turkey and go to a third country. However, the pooled and Syrian sample models are also less likely to return as the asset index increases. In other words, as the asset index increases, respondents are more likely to stay in Turkey as well. This result can be read in two ways. One is that refugees who are willing to stay in Turkey invest in improving their living conditions. It may also indicate that once refugees manage to establish a new life in a new country, they avoid risking their recent gains by once again moving to another country. In other words, they do not want to start from scratch. Similar to survey findings, being financially better off prompts our interlocutors to stay in Turkey. However, many of our interlocutors indicate their connections living abroad are better off than themselves. Our interlocutors express that their acquaintances and relatives in Europe can achieve higher life standards than refugees living in Turkey, despite refugees in Turkey having to work longer hours than their counterparts in Europe.

While the survey findings show that economically better off respondents are more likely to aspire to stay in Turkey, our qualitative interviews indicate that the improvement in the economic situation of refugees *per se* can reshape migration aspirations. In a way, wealth can also motivate onward migration aspirations because refugees can pay for the costs of the migration journey (i.e., cost of smuggling). Many of our interlocutors express that they could not move onwards even if the route to Europe is less dangerous, as they do not have the financial assets to pay for smuggling or the migration journey. For instance, Alia, a Syrian refugee woman of Kurdish origin living with her newborn baby and husband in Adana, expressed that she could not move onwards because they do not have money for smuggling and the route is too dangerous. Alia's husband and father-in-law have to work in odd jobs despite their illness and in dire conditions. Alia argues that her migration aspiration is dependent on her family's living standards:

The life in there (Europe) is very easy: the government pays a salary for the unemployed, they help all Syrians, they like Syrians, and they do not speak ill of Syrians. We know these things from our relatives and neighbours who live in European countries. They call us there, they say that living conditions are wonderful in Europe. Yet, we cannot move there. We cannot go there illegally because smugglers demand a lot of money. The route is dangerous as well as expensive. (...) If we had enough money, we would not aspire to leave Turkey. Turkish people are nice and they are Muslims. Actually, some people are good and some people are bad. However, bad people exist everywhere. Turkey is just like Syria. **Europe cannot be like Syria. Even so, life is easier in Europe. You can enrol to schools and receive salary. These are what I know from what I heard. People there say so** (Alia, Syrian, Female, 20, Adana, 07.12.2020).

Alia suggests that she aspires to move onwards but cannot make plans to move onwards to Europe due to the lack of financial resources. Yet, in line with the survey findings, she also indicates that she would not aspire to move onwards if they could have financial security in Turkey.

Duration of Stay

As the duration of stay in Turkey increases for the Afghan respondents, they are also more likely to return home. This result can be explained by refugees' date of arrival to Turkey, different policy contexts covering Afghan and Syrian refugees in Turkey, and structural differences in the living conditions of both groups. In our qualitative interviews, most of our Syrian interlocutors indicated that they came to Turkey before 2015. On the other hand, many of our Afghan interlocutors indicated that their arrival to Turkey was after 2015. In this regard, our Syrian interlocutors explained their aspiration to stay in Turkey in relation to their adaptation to living in Turkey. However, our Afghan interlocutors expressed their onward migration aspirations in relation to their poor access to services, their liminal legal status, and poverty in Turkey.

Social Networks Abroad

Respondents who have a network abroad are more likely to move on to a third country than stay put. Having a network abroad can enable establishing a new life in another country. However, the qualitative interviews show that there is no direct relationship between social networks abroad and onward migration aspirations. Rather, migration aspirations are mostly related to the type of feedback they receive from their social networks in third countries. In general, when refugees

receive positive feedback about the living conditions in third countries, they would aspire to move onwards to have a better life. However, our interlocutors also state that their onward migration decision is dependent on how they reach the destination. If the route to their destination is dangerous and “illegal,” most of our interlocutors state that they would not aspire to move onwards.

Ehsan is one of our interlocutors who has social networks in Europe. He is a 23 year old Syrian refugee living in Hatay since 2015 with his family of seven. Ehsan aspires to move onwards by himself because his uncle said that the route is too dangerous for a family:

We heard that the route to Europe is very long and harsh. My uncle experienced this route and said the route was very difficult when he traveled to Europe. He recommended us to stay in Turkey as he got stuck in Greece for a long time. It took him almost two years to reach the Czech Republic where he lives now. So, we were hesitant about the journey from the beginning. In time, we realized that conditions have changed and it is almost impossible to go there now (*Ehsan, Syria, Male, 23, Hatay, 12.12.2020*).

Despite the negative feedback about the route to Europe, Ehsan indicates that he would aspire to move onwards by himself without risking his family’s lives on the route. Ehsan’s uncle said that “compared to Turkey, living in Czechia is easier and there are more education and job opportunities here.” Thus, Ehsan expresses that he would make the onward migration decision by himself but he could not pay the high costs of smuggling. Besides, he states that if the “illegal” route is too risky, he would prefer to move to Europe through legal ways. So, in a way, while social networks and aspirations are correlated, there are other such factors as the type of feedback that social networks give, the risks of the route, and the costs of smuggling.

Istanbul

Regression results indicate that while Syrians in Istanbul are more likely to move on to another country, Afghans in Istanbul are less likely to move on and stay in Turkey. Istanbul hosts high numbers of Afghans who are undocumented and most of them became undocumented by leaving the satellite city they were registered in after losing hope to be recognized as a conditional refugee and resettled to a third country. Most Afghans continue to reside in satellite cities, not because they are happy with the living conditions in those provinces but mainly because resettlement is only way they can realize their aspirations to move on.

Farman and his wife Nargez were one of the Afghan families that we interviewed in Adana, where they are registered with the authorities under international protection. Farman and Nargez’ family of six have lived in poverty in Adana since 2018. Their livelihood is dependent on ESSN aid for six members of the family as well as CCTE for two of their children. Farman works as a cleaner in a factory despite his spinal disc herniation, which he reports is impeding his work. When we ask them about their most significant need in Turkey, Nargez says that they just want to be resettled to a third country:

We want to be interviewed for third country resettlement. We want to foresee our future. We want to be resettled to another country. Our son has difficulties here, he constantly asks questions about our future. He questions how our life would go on in Turkey. Me and

my husband's life would not be too difficult here but our children's future is the most important matter for us (Nargez & Farman, Afghanistan, 31, Adana, 07.03.2020).

Nargez cannot even imagine a life in Turkey where their needs can be met. Rather, she thinks that the only way for her family to build a prosperous future is to move onwards from Turkey. In Nargez's view, many Afghans lead a life "on hold" in Turkey, where they just wait to be resettled to a third country to continue their life and build their future. As a dweller of a satellite province, Nargez and Farman are examples of Afghans who want to leave Turkey compared to the ones that live in Istanbul. For many Afghan families, the reason they continue residing in satellite cities rather than joining their relatives in Istanbul is the hope of resettlement. Therefore, it is not so surprising that Afghans in Istanbul are more likely to stay than the Afghans living in other cities.

Demographic Variables

Male respondents in the pooled and the Syrian samples are more likely to leave Turkey than stay put. Males in the pooled model are also more likely to return to the home country. This result indirectly indicates that men are less satisfied with their lives in Turkey and aspire to leave. Married respondents in the pooled and Syrian samples are less likely to return than staying in Turkey. For the Afghan sample, marital status has no significant effect on their migration aspirations.

5.3 Other Results Relevant for Turkey

5.3.1 COVID-19's effects

In this section, we discuss the effects of COVID-19 on refugees' lives. Firstly, while most Syrian respondents did not postpone or change their migration plans due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 51 percent of Afghans changed or postponed their migration plans (see Figure 34). In short, a severe exogenous shock like COVID-19 may alter plans regarding migration due to direct impacts on the livelihoods of migrants and changing border policies.

Secondly, we asked how concerned the respondents are that COVID-19 poses a serious risk for the world, Turkey, and their families. We measured concerns with a four-level Likert scale of not concerned at all (1), not concerned (2), concerned (3), and extremely concerned (4). Overall, the respondents are more concerned about risks of COVID-19 for their families than for the general situation in Turkey and in the world. In other words, they are more concerned about immediate health and financial risks rather than the effects in the long term for their country of residence or the world in general. On average, Syrians are less concerned than Afghans in all dimensions. Overall, however, their level of being concerned is around (3) on the answer scale, meaning that the level of concern is pretty high (Figure 35).

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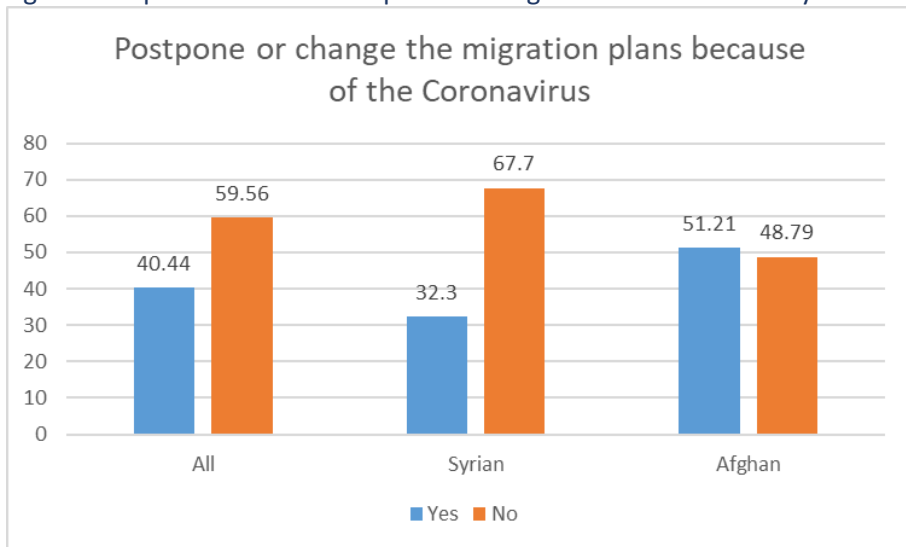


Figure 35: Postpone or change migration plans due to COVID-19

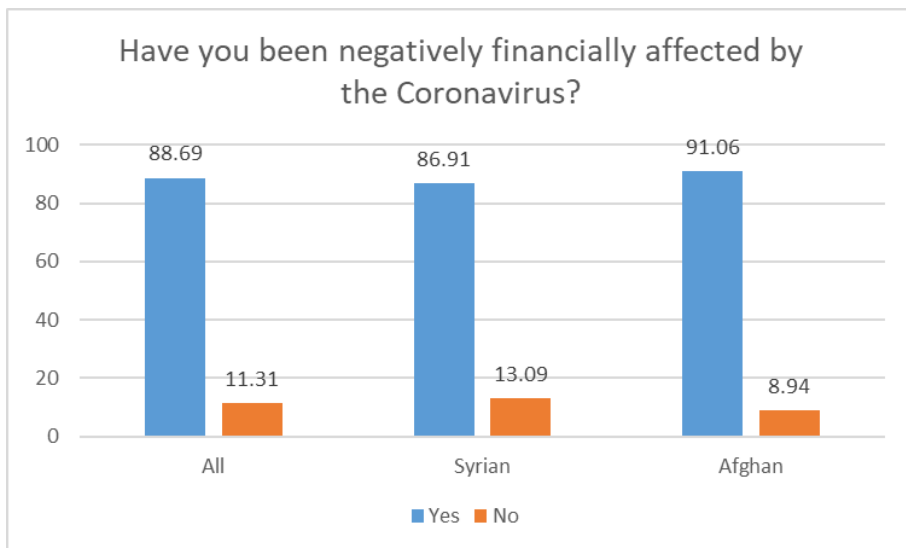


Figure 37: Percentage of respondents financially affected by COVID-19

ADMIGOV

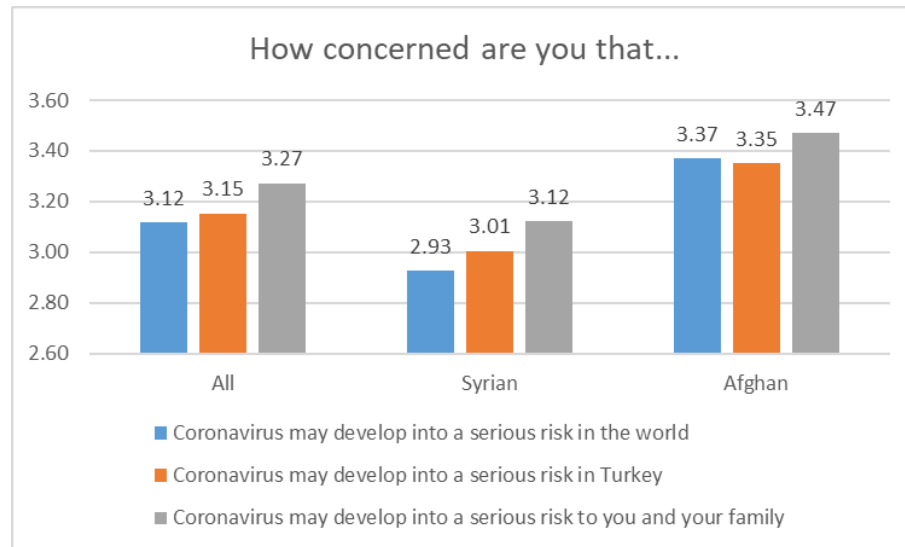


Figure 36: Concerns about world, Turkey, and themselves due to COVID-19

Finally, we asked whether COVID-19 had financially affected the respondents. Overall, COVID-19 measures negatively financially affected both refugee groups. However, COVID-19 financially hit Afghans more than Syrian respondents (Figure 36). As qualitative interviews also show, several refugees either lost their income from daily work or lost their jobs altogether because of the hardships related to COVID-19 lockdowns. Some of our interlocutors indicated that they did not lose any income or job but had to overwork (almost 15 hours a day) to compensate and did not get extra wages. Many of our interlocutors expressed that they had to spend their savings, borrow money from their acquaintances, or sell such belongings as furniture to support their livelihoods during the COVID-19 lockdown.²⁰

Safaa is one of our Syrian interlocutors who lost his job **during the COVID-19 lockdowns**. Safaa has lived in **Izmir with his family of three since 2017**. Since they have only one child, Safaa's family is not eligible to receive ESSN aid. The family's livelihood depends on the odd jobs that Safaa has had to change frequently. Although Safaa was an engineer back in Syria, he had to work in infrequent daily jobs in construction, cleaning, and portering among others. When the COVID-19 lockdown was initiated, Safaa lost his job and he had to borrow money from his brother and friends. Safaa narrates those days as hard days:

Actually, we had very hard days. The month of Ramadan arrived and I could not pay the rent or the bills. My brother helped me. Also, a friend of mine lent me some money. I worked for a few days so I could pay my debts. These were hard days but Alhamdulillah those days are gone (**Safaa, Syria, Male, 32, Izmir, 11.08.2020**).

Financial difficulties prompted Safaa to consider returning to Syria. Safaa states that he could move onwards to Europe if he had money to pay for smuggling. Yet, when he thought about the difficulties of living in Turkey under COVID-19 restrictions, he considered returning to Syria as an "option" despite the risk of death:

I was so upset. I thought that I must go back to Syria. It is already my destiny to die in a specific day, so, what would happen? Yet, my family stopped me. If I had money, I would go to Europe. I am forced to stay here and live in this way. I have no chance (**Safaa, Syria, Male, 32, Izmir, 11.08.2020**).

Besides the financial effects of the COVID-19 lockdowns, access to education became harder with the transition to online education. As we discussed in Section 3.1 in the context of vulnerabilities, most refugee children were not able to access online education due to the lack of necessary resources for online education such as mobile-phones, computers, tablets, and TV. For instance, many of our Afghan interlocutors indicated that they had difficulties in accessing online education tools, due either to a bad internet connection or a lack of communication tools. Due to the shortcomings of online education, our interlocutors expressed concern about their children falling behind in class.

²⁰ Note that the research team also compared the financial impact of coronavirus on Turkish v. Syrian population in Turkey, in a pilot survey of ADMIGOV Project, and found that Syrians were significantly more negatively affected than Turkish citizens (see Elçi, Kirişcioğlu and Üstübcü, 2021).

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has revealed secondary migration aspirations among Syrian and Afghan refugees living in Turkey. We contend that refugees take into account various factors regarding their current situation and aspirations for the future in general when expressing their attitudes, aspirations, and decisions regarding secondary migration. In this sense, aspirations to stay put in the current place are equally important to the aspirations to move on or return.

For both communities, the decision-making to move onwards or stay happens in a particular policy context marked by the border closures after 2016, by selective integration measures initiated by the government, and the subordinated incorporation within the information market and in an increasingly hostile societal context. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to additional challenges to securing livelihoods and led to further immobility. Despite the daily hardship, note that return aspirations among both communities is pretty low. This is mainly because the conditions awaiting them upon return are not better and possibly worse than their current conditions. Overall, refugees from Afghanistan living in Turkey are more inclined to aspire to move on to a third country than Syrian refugees. A majority of Syrians still imagine a future in Turkey, as they become more familiar with the local context, and as they retain the prospect of returning to Syria, although the latter does not seem as a feasible plan for the near future. As members of both communities are subject to exploitation in the labour market, Syrians have additionally become the targets of xenophobic attacks on social media and in daily life.

This study, as part of a larger comparative research in places of origin and transit in the context of the ADMIGOV project WP6 on development interventions, has had a particular focus on the impacts of cash and in-kind assistance for refugees living in Turkey. ESSN cash aid is the most prominent and widely received type among the different forms of assistance. Nearly one-third of Syrians and a quarter of Afghan respondents in our survey sample indicated that they receive ESSN. Our findings indicated that the modest cash transfers help vulnerable families to pay their rent and bills and to get access to basic nutrition only when coupled with someone from the family working in the informal sector. Only half of the ESSN beneficiaries indicated that the cash aid improved their living conditions, with the positive response rate being lower among Afghan refugees than Syrians.

Neither the analysis of the in-depth interviews nor the regression results enable us to forge a causal relationship between the reception of assistance and lower migration aspirations to move on. Unlike as expected in some models, only the ESSN Card is positively and significantly correlated with onward migration aspirations. This can also be explained by the fact that the most vulnerable families receive assistance and they are likely to aspire to build a life in another country given the hardship they live through in Turkey. Additionally, those who are not receiving aid may be motivated to stay put for other reasons than the (non-)availability of assistance.

Other variables such as wealth or the existence of transnational networks better explain migration aspirations to move on rather than the assistance available for refugees. As wealth increases, refugees aspire to stay in Turkey. This is a finding that is common both in the quantitative model and in the qualitative interviews. Social networks generally boost aspirations to move on. However, qualitative data also indicated that the feedback from close and extended networks may play a positive or negative role, depending on the content of the feedback.

Another major finding that requires further investigation is the impact of COVID-19 on aspirations. A majority of our respondents did not consider moving out of Turkey in the past year, although ideally, they would aspire to live elsewhere. This was to be expected in a context characterized by immobility due to COVID-19 measures. What is striking is that although there is not much difference among Syrians between their considerations of migration in the past year and current plans, a majority of Afghan respondents indicated that their current plans are to move on, although only half of them considered moving out of Turkey in the past year.

Policy Implications or Recommendations

- 1) Based on our findings on the differences between the two major refugee communities in Turkey, one immediate recommendation for policy makers is to take into consideration differences between refugees' communities in Turkey (in our study, Syrians v. Afghans) as well as differences within communities when designing policies. Syrians constitute, by far, the largest refugee community in Turkey and at times non-Syrian refugees have indicated that their needs are sidelined because the whole policy architecture considers Syrians under temporary protection as the norm.
- 2) Another policy implication is the discrepancy between the ambition of integrating refugees into the formal labour market and the unwillingness of employers and refugees themselves to go through the bureaucratic hurdles to get a work permit. The ESSN criteria makes integration into the formal labour market a little bit harder, as it is only eligible for vulnerable families and largely excludes families if one of the family members is working formally with social security. In other words, it encourages families to work informally in order to continue receiving cash aid for eligible members of family. This is understandable, as combining cash aid and wages is the only way for most of these families to make ends meet. One policy suggestion would be to continue ESSN cash aid even when one family member manages to acquire a work permit and join the formal labour force, then reassessing the situation of the family after a certain period. Hence, ESSN cash transfers and participation in the formal labour market should not be interchangeable. Policies makers should keep in mind that most individuals feel stigmatized for being ESSN beneficiaries while at the same time, they need the cash aid for basic needs.
- 3) Keeping in mind increasing societal backlash, especially towards Syrian refugees, international funds designing cash assistance or other types of in-kind assistance should take into account vulnerabilities among the local population. The exclusion of asylum seekers under international protection from free public health insurance is unacceptable, especially for people with chronic conditions and for vulnerable families unable to pay their premiums for health care. Instead, entrance to the formal labour market, which would bring public health insurance for the rest of the family, can be encouraged.
- 4) Programs that target refugees in Turkey should not prioritize one group over another. Also, the underlining reasons of why only refugees are the target of some programs should be clearly communicated to the public to avoid intolerance and the stigmatization of certain groups. For donors and academics, we repeat our call that future aspirations in forced migration contexts should be researched holistically, keeping in mind that migration plans are only one aspect of aspirations for life (see [Kirisicioglu and Ustubici \(2020\)](#)). At times,

the former can only be considered as a means to achieve the latter, rather than as an end unto itself.

- 5) Another policy implication of our research concerns return policies. Given the very low aspirations for return, international funders, the EU, as well as national authorities should not encourage refugees into voluntary return programs without fully informing the potential returnees of the risks.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Demographic characteristics of the interviewees

Table A1: Demographic Information of Interlocutors (In-depth Interview Respondents)

	Syria	Afghanistan	Total
Number of interviews	22	23	45
Average Age	34	32	33
Gender (Male)	14	14	28
Marital Status (Married)	19	13	32
Average Household Size	4.8	4.2	4.5
Employment status (Unemployed)	6	7	13

Table A2: Detailed information of in-depth interview participants

Inter view code	Pseudonyms	Nationality	Legal status in Turkey	City of registration/City of residence	Date	Gender	Interview Methodology
1	Saimah	Syria	Temporary protection	Adana/Adana	04.03.2020	Female	Face to face
2	Mahdi	Syria	Temporary protection	Adana/Adana	04.03.2020	Male	Face to face
3	Zahra	Afghanistan	International protection	Adana/Adana	05.03.2020	Male	Face to face
4	Amira	Syria	Temporary protection	Adana/Adana	06.03.2020	Female	Face to face
5	Noreen	Syria	Temporary protection	Adana/Adana	06.03.2020	Female	Face to face
6	Khalim	Syria	Temporary protection	Adana/Adana	06.03.2020	Male	Face to face

7	Perveen	Afghanistan	International protection	Adana/Adana	06.03.2020	Female	Face to face
8	Mirza	Afghanistan	International protection	Adana/Adana	06.03.2020	Male	Face to face
9	Azim	Syria	Temporary protection	Adana/Adana	07.03.2020	Male	Face to face
10	Adnan	Syria	Temporary protection	Adana/Adana	07.03.2020	Male	Face to face
11	Farman	Afghanistan	International protection	Adana/Adana	07.03.2020	Male	Face to face
12	Husna	Afghanistan	International protection	Adana/Adana	07.03.2020	Female	Face to face
13	Hamid	Syria	Temporary protection	Istanbul/Izmir	21.07.2020	Male	Online
14	Jabbar	Syria	Temporary protection	Mersin/Gaziantep	22.07.2020	Male	Online
15	Abdulaziz	Syria	Residence Permit	Istanbul/Istanbul	23.07.2020	Male	Online
16	Khalid	Syria	Temporary protection & Work permit	Bursa/Bursa	24.07.2020	Male	Online
17	Ahmad	Syria	Temporary protection	Izmir/Izmir	24.07.2020	Male	Online
18	Rabi	Afghanistan	International protection	Kayseri/Kayseri	25.07.2020	Male	Online
19	Zafir	Syria	Citizenship of Turkey	Hatay/Hatay	10.08.2020	Male	Online
20	Safaa	Syria	Temporary protection	Izmir/Izmir	11.08.2020	Male	Online
21	Rashad	Syria	Temporary protection	Şanlıurfa/Mersin	22.10.2020	Male	Online
22	Alia	Syria	Temporary protection	Gaziantep/Adana	07.12.2020	Female	Online
23	Mustafa	Syria	Temporary protection	Mersin/Mersin	08.12.2020	Male	Online

24	Azad	Afghanistan	International protection	Sinop/Sinop	09.12.2020	Male	Online
25	Muhammad	Afghanistan	International protection	Ankara/Ankara	11.12.2020	Male	Online
26	Ehsan	Syria	Temporary protection	Hatay/Hatay	12.12.2020	Male	Online
27	Najiba	Afghanistan	International protection	Kırıkkale/Kırıkkale	16.12.2020	Female	Online
28	Sabira	Afghanistan	International protection	Isparta/Isparta	16.12.2020	Female	Online
29	Maher	Afghanistan	Undocumented	None/Balıkesir	17.12.2020	Male	Online
30	Najib	Afghanistan	Undocumented	None/Nigde	17.12.2020	Male	Online
31	Fardin	Afghanistan	Undocumented	None/Istanbul	18.12.2020	Male	Online
32	Zuleikha	Afghanistan	International protection	Denizli/Denizli	08.01.2021	Female	Online
33	Nehal	Afghanistan	Undocumented	None/Niğde	09.01.2021	Female	Online
34	Alireza	Afghanistan	International protection	Kayseri/Kayseri	10.01.2021	Male	Online
35	Mahnaz	Afghanistan	International protection	Bolu/Bolu	15.01.2021	Female	Online
36	Ziya	Afghanistan	International protection	Erzurum/Erzurum	16.01.2021	Male	Online
37	Rashid	Afghanistan	International protection	Sivas/Sivas	16.01.2021	Male	Online
38	Salim	Afghanistan	International protection	Nevşehir/Kayseri	24.01.2021	Male	Online
39	Maysa	Syria	Temporary protection	Adana/Adana	28.01.2021	Female	Online
40	Noor	Afghanistan	International Protection	Tokat/Tokat	04.02.2021	Female	Online
41	Nazila	Syria	Temporary protection	Hatay/Hatay	06.02.2021	Female	Online

42	Badria	Afghanistan	International protection	Istanbul/Istanbul	07.02.2021	Female	Online
43	Faheema	Afghanistan	International protection	Adana/Adana	04.05.2021	Female	Online
44	Fatima	Syria	Incomplete procedure - Undocumented	Niğde/Istanbul	28.12.2020	Female	Online
45	Kareema	Syria	Undocumented	None/Istanbul	06.01.2021	Female	Online