SECURITY PROVISION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN POST-WAR SYRIA:
A SECURITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT AMONG THE SYRIAN DIASPORA IN GERMANY

Introduction to the Survey and Sample Group Composition

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This security needs assessment aims to contribute to open access information on good governance and security sector reform in Syria. It was specifically designed to understand citizens' needs and identify entry points for citizen-oriented security sector reform efforts. It analyses how the Syrian security system would need to change in order for Syrians to feel safe and secure in post-war Syria.

The survey's online questionnaire consists of 63 questions in Modern Standard Arabic. Between March and August 2018, 619 Syrians living in Germany completed the questionnaire. They came from all 14 Syrian governorates. On average, participants were 29 years old (born in 1989).

This paper is the introduction to a series of working papers presenting the results of the survey. For access to all nine working papers covering topics such as insecurity and injustice, transparency, the justice sector, and prospects for the post-war Syrian security sector, scan the following QR code or access the link below:

https://www.lanosec.de/ssr-survey-syria/

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A Security Needs Assessment among the Syrian Diaspora in Germany: Background and Approach

This security needs assessment aims to contribute to open access information on good governance and security sector reform in Syria. It was specifically designed to understand citizens' needs and identify entry points for citizen-oriented security sector reform efforts. It analyses how the Syrian security system would need to change in order for Syrians to feel safe and secure in post-war Syria.

The survey targets both academics and decision-makers conducting research or working on issues relevant to good governance, peacebuilding, and security sector reform in Syria. It serves as a basis for framing and developing project interventions addressing the security needs of citizens.

Why security matters

Feeling secure is essential for all of us. It is a core human need, along with food and shelter. Without security, accompanied by stability and governance based on the rule of law, we cannot achieve sustainable development.[1] High levels of violence, insecurity, and injustice have a destructive impact on a country's ability to provide government services, to realise inclusive societies, and to promote economic growth. In 2016, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[2] SDG 16 deals with peace, justice, and strong institutions. Working together with governments and communities, it aims to significantly reduce all forms of violence and find lasting solutions to conflict, insecurity, and injustice. It seeks to establish institutions that respond to the needs of citizens, for example by preventing violence and combating crime.[3]

Security sectors play an important role in achieving SDG 16.[4] The main purpose of a functional security sector and its institutions is to provide security to citizens and maintain public order.[5] Its principal task is to ensure that all citizens, including women, men, boys, and girls, can live in safety and security. However, as security sectors affect the most sensitive part of national security, they function differently to other government sectors, such as health or education. Often, secrecy plays a role and only specific information is publicly disclosed. Security institutions (such as the army, police, and intelligence agencies) do not always respond to the actual needs of citizens. At the same time, most citizens have very limited contact with the security institutions in their country. If anything, citizens mainly interact with the police or have relatives and friends working in the sector. All of this can lead to widespread distance and scepticism between security institutions and citizens.

An abusive Syrian security sector before and during the war

In Syria, an abusive security sector contributed heavily to the outbreak of the Syrian civil war and the consequent humanitarian crisis. When, in 2010/2011, the Arab spring started in Egypt and Tunisia, a group of Syrian schoolboys were detained for writing anti-regime graffiti on a school wall in the city of Daraa. For weeks, the boys were subjected to severe torture and a thirteen-year-old died as a result. Their families protested the detention and mistreatment of their children, accusing the regime of decades of violent repression of the Syrian people. The Syrian government responded to the protests by introducing an even

more violent crackdown on those demonstrating. Dozens died and funerals often turned into protests, which were dispersed by security institutions. Within a few months, demonstrations had erupted in Latakia, Homs, Damascus, Baniyas, Aleppo, and Raqqa. By July 2011, army defectors had established the Free Syrian Army. Over time, the violent crackdown of protests escalated into a full-fledged civil war, involving a multitude of national and international actors.[6]

For decades before the war, security institutions were accused of repression and violence against citizens. Just before the uprising in Syria, Human Rights Watch stated in its World Report 2011 that the authorities continued to broadly violate citizens' civil and political rights.[7, p. 584] The state of emergency, imposed from 1963 to 2011, was then still in effect. Syria's multiple security institutions continued to detain people, especially political and human rights activists, without arrest warrants. Detainees were held for lengthy periods without being able to contact their friends and families.[7, p. 584] Instead of protecting citizens, security institutions have been explicitly used to oppress, terrorise, and kill.

After nine years of armed conflict, the humanitarian situation in Syria continues to be catastrophic. According to recent data from the United Nations, more than 13 million people depend on humanitarian aid, including over 6.6 million internally displaced persons.[8] The parties to the conflict in Syria, including the security institutions of the Syrian regime, continue to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law, such as carrying out targeted attacks on civilian institutions.[9] With an escalation of grave and systematic violations of human and citizen rights during the war, many Syrians have given up on the idea of a Syrian security sector that protects them.

Regardless of future political developments on the ground, or how and when the war in Syria ends, the country will need to be fundamentally rebuilt. Given the likelihood that the Syrian regime, backed by Russia and Iran, will win this war militarily, the prospects are slim for establishing a Syrian state that protects all its citizens, respects human rights, acts in a non-discriminatory way, and is open to profound political reform. Reconstruction efforts will most probably focus on infrastructure, the economy, and social systems, rather than on in-depth and comprehensive governance reforms that specifically target the security sector. However, ensuring that all Syrians feel safe and secure in their country should be at the heart of such efforts. The security needs of all people assessed in this survey, including women, girls, men, and boys, will certainly not change. Understanding and addressing these needs remains an incredibly important concern for long-term peacebuilding in Syria, despite the unfavourable contemporary political status quo. Security sector reform that responds to the needs of all and that works according to the principles of transparency, accountability, the rule of law, and civilian oversight remains crucial. International actors, such as the European Union, that currently link any reform subsidies to political conditionality, should bear this in mind when looking for orientation in designing sustainable policy programmes and solutions for post-war Syria.

Giving citizens a voice for their security needs

Traditional concepts of security centre mainly on state stability and national security. However, these paradigms have changed, increasingly focusing on the safety and well-being of the population. Nonetheless, security sector reform processes are very often designed without taking into account the needs of those who most benefit from them: citizens.[10, p. 3 & 15] This survey assesses these needs and analyses the opinions of Syrians regarding an ideal security sector in Syria. The survey explores Syrians' experiences with security institutions before and during the war, and what would need to change in order for Syrians to feel secure in the future and even build trust in the Syrian security sector. It examines dispositions and perceptions of Syrians regarding key concepts such as the rule of law, state legitimacy, oversight, and democracy.

This survey targeted Syrians living in Germany, who make up the largest Syrian diaspora group outside of the Middle East.[11; 13] For the first time, members of the Syrian diaspora in Germany have been quantifiably and comprehensively surveyed on their experiences, expectations, and recommendations regarding a future Syrian security and justice sector. The level of detail and precision concerning these topics is unprecedented compared with similar study efforts.

Only a few publications about Syria focus specifically on security governance-related topics while building on the perceptions and attitudes of Syrians as recipients of government services. Some studies dealt only with particular aspects of security, such as justice needs[12], and internationally-brokered peace talks[13] focusing exclusively on specific parts of society, such as women[14]. Other studies have implemented surveys with a very small number of general questions[15] that do not allow for the development of a comprehensive vision of future security and justice provision in Syria[16; 17]. Still others only surveyed Syrians based on their perception of safety in host countries, such as Lebanon[18], or conducted focus group discussions on relevant issues that do not allow for results to be generalised and quantified[19].

The results speak for themselves, regardless of the limited political window of opportunity to engage in actual development programmes inside Syria. They serve as a solid basis for further analysis and research concerning the Syrian security sector. The survey itself offers the potential to be replicated in other countries, or to be supplemented with different sample group compositions for more detailed insights into particular issues, for example by targeting gender- or age-differentiated focus groups.

Content of the survey

The survey was conducted through an online questionnaire in Modern Standard Arabic. Participants did not need German or English language skills to complete it. The online questionnaire was accessible via a link. The survey addressed Syrians living in Germany between the ages of 15 and 45; however, a small number of participants were up to 50 years old. Participation in the survey was anonymous, meaning no requests were made for names, email addresses, or any other information that could identify participants.

The questionnaire included a total of 63 questions divided into five chapters (see Table 1). It comprised various forms of question types, including multiple choice, scales, and ratings. In addition, 20 questions in the survey were open-ended, which allowed participants to add new elements or express their thoughts and feelings freely and in more detail.

Table 1: Questionnaire structure

Introduction	Survey objective, project team, and target group	
Chapter 1	Basic understanding of the five key concepts of security sector governance	1 question
Chapter 2	Experience with and level of insecurity and injustice in Syria before and during the war	13 questions
Chapter 3	Assessment of Syrian state security providers	12 questions
Chapter 4	Perspectives on the post-war Syrian security sector	26 questions
Chapter 5	Demographic information of participants	11 questions

The survey results are presented in a series of topical working papers. This gives readers quick and direct access to their areas of interest. The working papers cover the following topics:

Working Paper 1: **Safe Spaces and Protection in Syria before and during the War**
Working Paper 2: **Insecurity and Injustice in Syria before and during the War**
Working Paper 3: **Assessing Security Providers in Syria before the War**
Working Paper 4: **Experiences with the Syrian Justice Sector before and during the War**
Working Paper 5: **Transparency of the Syrian Security Sector**
Working Paper 6: **General Notions of Ideal Security Provision**
Working Paper 7: **Envisioning a Future Security Sector for Syria**
Working Paper 8: **The Importance of the Justice System for Security Sector Reform in Syria**
Working Paper 9: **The Syrian Police**

Access to the target group

There were three main challenges when accessing the target group for the survey. First, most Syrians considered it a taboo to speak about security, especially the Syrian security sector. They were afraid of persecution and other negative consequences if they expressed their opinions and shared information, mainly because of the potential risk to relatives and friends still living inside Syria. Some were fearful that the data collectors might work for Syrian security institutions or German institutions responsible for refugees, such as the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) or the Immigration Authorities of German federal states (Ausländerbehörden). Second, the online questionnaire was rather extensive, and took an average of thirty minutes to complete. Many Syrians living in Germany described feeling a sort of 'survey fatigue', having already participated in numerous studies in the past. Third, access to female participants was particularly challenging. Women and girls would often say that security was a "man's topic" which did not concern them. This affected the number of women and girls who took part in the study, and required tailored approaches to increase their participation. For further information on the challenges of reaching more women and girls, please refer to the section below entitled A male majority and an average age of 29.

At the same time, numerous participants welcomed the initiative to conduct this survey and expressed their gratitude and appreciation in the open-ended sections of the questionnaire. These comments, which were often lengthy and detailed, running to several pages, underline the importance of having a platform for sharing opinions and experiences on topics that are very often sensitive and taboo, such as the security sector of Bashar al-Assad's Syria.

The authors used a network-based approach to disseminate the survey, starting with their personal networks. The first participants to take part in the survey then allowed access to their individual networks and distributed the survey in their communities. In parallel, the project team identified prominent Syrians living in Germany, such as journalists, YouTube influencers, and student activists who have large Syrian audiences in Germany and do not publicly favour any particular sect or political orientation. In total, those supporting and sharing the survey reached more than 100,000 followers on social media (e.g., Facebook and YouTube) in 2018. Using the questionnaire's introduction as a basis, they presented the survey on these platforms in their own words and provided the link to the questionnaire.

Survey Participants: Sample Group Composition

Between March and August 2018, a total of 2,318 Syrians living in Germany accessed the link to the questionnaire, of whom 619 completed it. This represents a completion rate of 27%, which corresponds to the average for online surveys.[20] Of those who participated, 544 were men and 75 were women. The following section shows who participated in this survey.

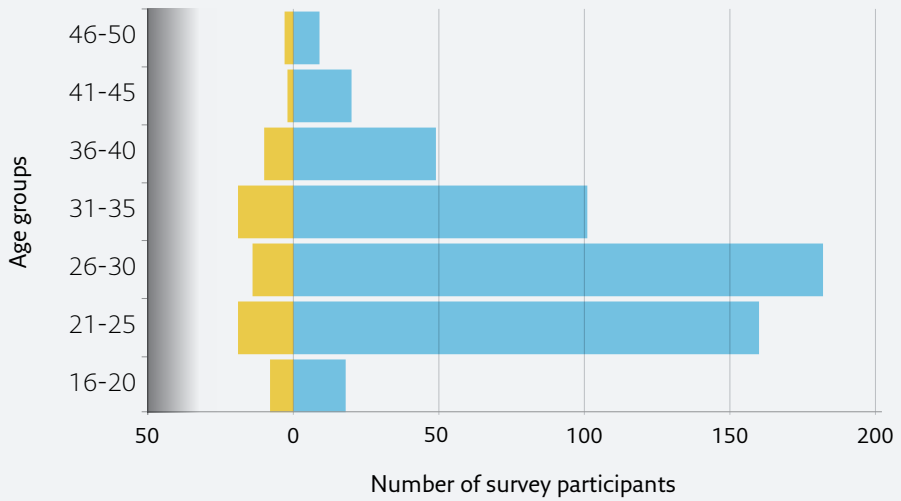
A male majority and an average age of 29

544 men (88%) and 75 women (12%) completed the online questionnaire (see Figure 1). Despite tremendous efforts during the data collection phase to encourage more Syrian women and girls to participate in the survey, the vast majority of participants were men and boys.

There are three main reasons for the low participation rates of Syrian women and girls in the survey. First, more men and boys came to Germany than women and girls. According to data collected by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) on asylum applications, between 2011 and 2016 only 32% of all Syrian asylum applicants in Germany were women.[21, p. 23; 22, p. 22; 23, p. 22; 24, p. 22; 25, p. 22; 26, p. 22] Second, fewer women showed interest in security as a topic, often stating that security was rather "for men" or "made by men" and that, as women, they would not be able to contribute to the discussion to the same extent as men. They were deeply convinced that their opinions about security would be less valuable than those of men. Third, it was more difficult to reach Syrian women in person, especially without knowing a contact person who they could trust. On social media, many women engage with women-only platforms and groups, which often explicitly do not deal with political and religious issues and were therefore unwilling to distribute the questionnaire.

All data was aggregated and analysed according to specific factors, including gender. Although fewer women than men participated in the survey, the analysis followed a gender-based approach. The results are therefore presented separately for men and women wherever their opinions significantly differed. Based on the challenges of reaching women participants, it is strongly recommended to conduct further studies and research specifically on the security needs of Syrian women and girls. These should include specific strategies on how to encourage girls and women to express and share their opinions on security-related topics.

Figure 1
Sex and age distribution of participants [Q53 & Q54]



Survey participants were between 17 and 50 years old. Five men did not indicate their age. On average, participants were 29 years old in 2018 (born in 1989). Table 2 presents an overview of the age of survey participants.

Table 2: **Age of survey participants (as of 2018) [Q54]**

	Men	Women
Average age of participants	29	28
Most represented age group	Born 1986-1990 (148; 27%)	Born 1980-1985 (19; 25%)
Age of youngest participant	18	17
Age of oldest participant	50	48

More single men, more married and divorced women

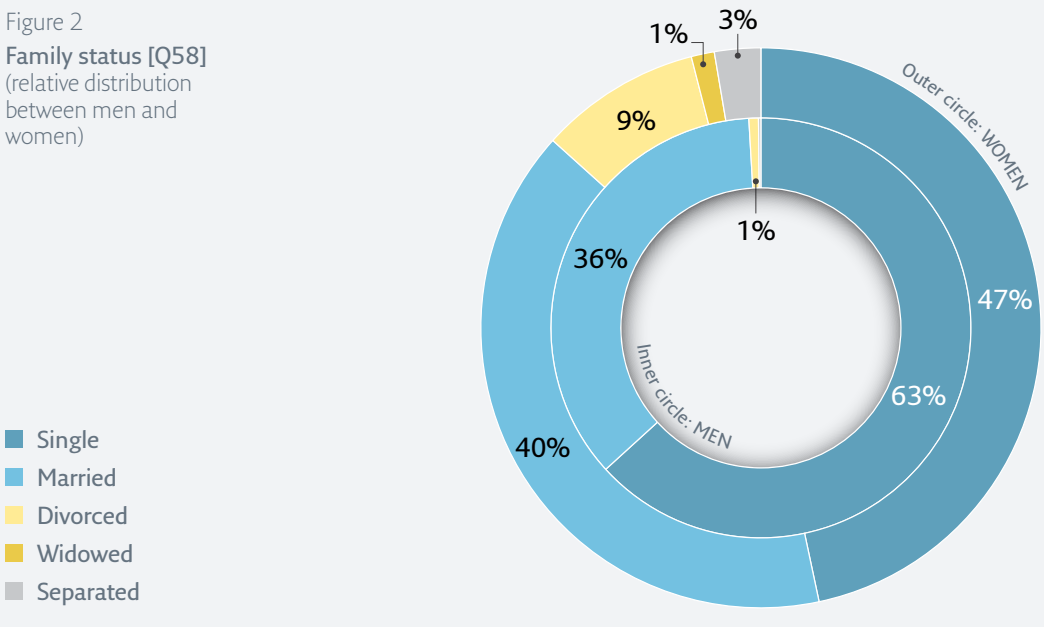
61% of all survey participants were single, while 36% were married. In comparison to women, on average, more men were single (see Figure 2). In contrast, on average, more women were married or divorced than men.

Religion: an open question

Religion was a non-obligatory question in the questionnaire. Furthermore, it was the only question which was asked in a purely open-ended format. This meant that participants were free to decide whether to answer this question and, if so, how they wanted to describe their religion or beliefs. There were no pre-defined categories, such as Christian or Muslim, Orthodox or Sunni.

Overall, 20% of participants decided not to answer the question, either by not filling it in, or by giving general answers such as "I am a human being", "I am Syrian", or "I don't know". The vast majority indicated being Muslim (63%) without specifying a certain group or sect, while 2% stated that they were Christian. This

Figure 2
Family status [Q58]
(relative distribution between men and women)



reflects the low rate of Syrian Christians coming to Germany; for example, 3.9% in 2015 [25, p. 25] and 2.6% in 2016 [26, p. 25]. 6% indicated belonging to a specific sect or group such as Sunni, Druze, or Ismaili. 9% stated that they were atheist or not religious.

Urban vs. rural: area of residence in Syria

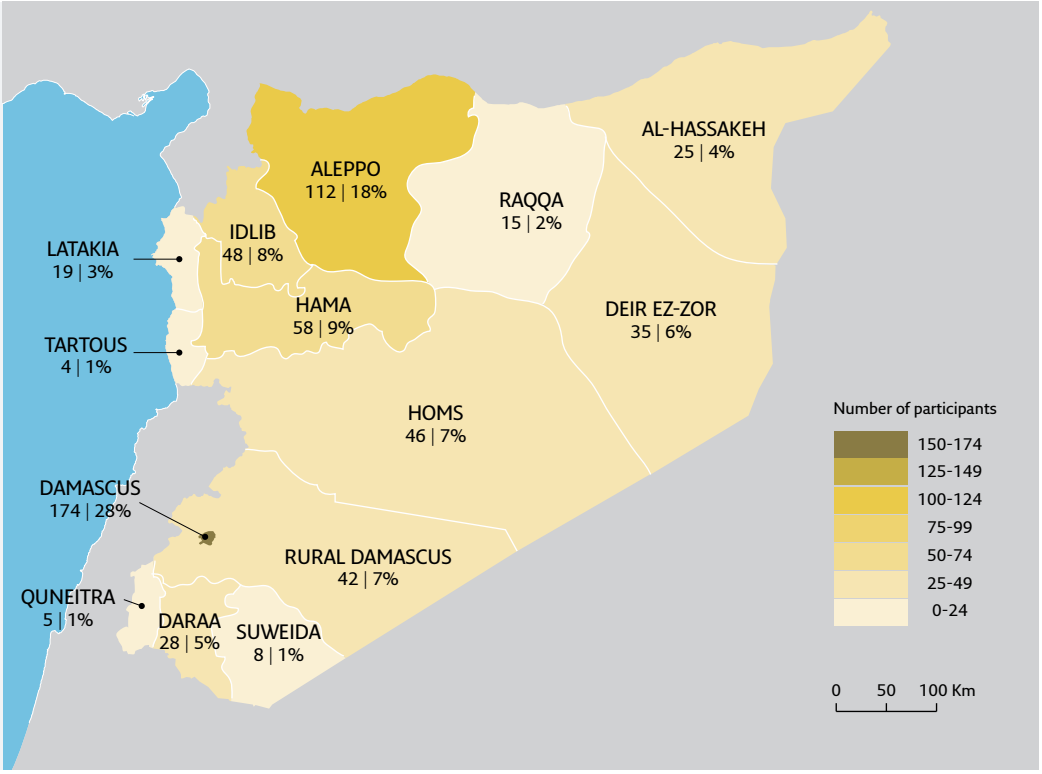
Survey respondents came from all 14 Syrian governorates (see Figure 3). According to the last official census of 2004[27], the three governorates with the highest populations were Aleppo (22%), Rural Damascus (13%), and Damascus (8%). However, it is very likely that this data has changed over the past 15 years due to population growth, urbanisation, and the war, which has resulted in internal displacement and flight.

In this survey, most participants were registered in the Governorate of Damascus (28%; see Table 3), followed by the Governorate of Aleppo (18%). In the 2004 census, the governorates of Quneitra, Suweida, and Tartous were the least populated.[27] This corresponds to the rates of survey participants from these governorates: 1% came from each of the governorates of Quneitra, Suweida, and Tartous.

Table 3: **Comparison of the last area of residence in Syria of survey participants with the census of 2004**

Governorate	This survey	Census of 2004
Governorate of Aleppo	18%	22%
Governorate of Damascus	28%	8%
Governorate of Rural Damascus	7%	13%
Other governorates	47%	57%

Figure 3
My last area of residence in Syria was in the governorate of: [Q56]



As their last place of residence, 83% of all survey participants stated that they lived in urban areas in Syria. Only 16% lived in villages and 1% in refugee camps. On average, 91% of women participants said they had lived in cities and only 8% in villages.

Advanced level of education

Nearly half of all survey participants (43%) had completed an academic degree (bachelor's, master's, or PhD) in Syria before leaving the country (see Figure 4). Of those, the largest group were undergraduates, representing 34% of all survey participants. The second-largest group were high school graduates (Baccalaureate), representing 33%.
Overall, 12% were enrolled in Syrian schools (primary, secondary, and preparatory), but did not attain a Baccalaureate certificate before leaving the country. Most participants in this category were 27 years old in 2018. In comparison to men who selected the category of Secondary school without certificate, the share of women represented is much higher (10% vs. 19%) (see Figure 5).
In the open-ended section of this question, 4% of participants indicated that they had attended university in Syria but did not graduate before leaving the country. For the purpose of data analysis, these participants were added to the category of Baccalaureate holders.

In 2016, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit), and the German Institute for Economic Research (Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung) published the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey of 2016[28], which is a representative study providing data on all Syrians who arrived in Germany between January 2013 and January 2016. The IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey used the 2011 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED11) to classify the different levels of education.[29] This survey applies the same system for classifying data related to the level of education of participants in order to compare it with the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey. Table 4 shows that the share of Baccalaureate holders in the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey corresponds to the share of Baccalaureate holders in this survey; the same applies to PhD graduates.[28, p. 30] However, the rate of bachelor's and master's graduates in this survey is three times higher than in the IAB-BAMF-SOEP

Figure 4
The highest level of education I attained in Syria is: [Q59] (absolute distribution between men and women)

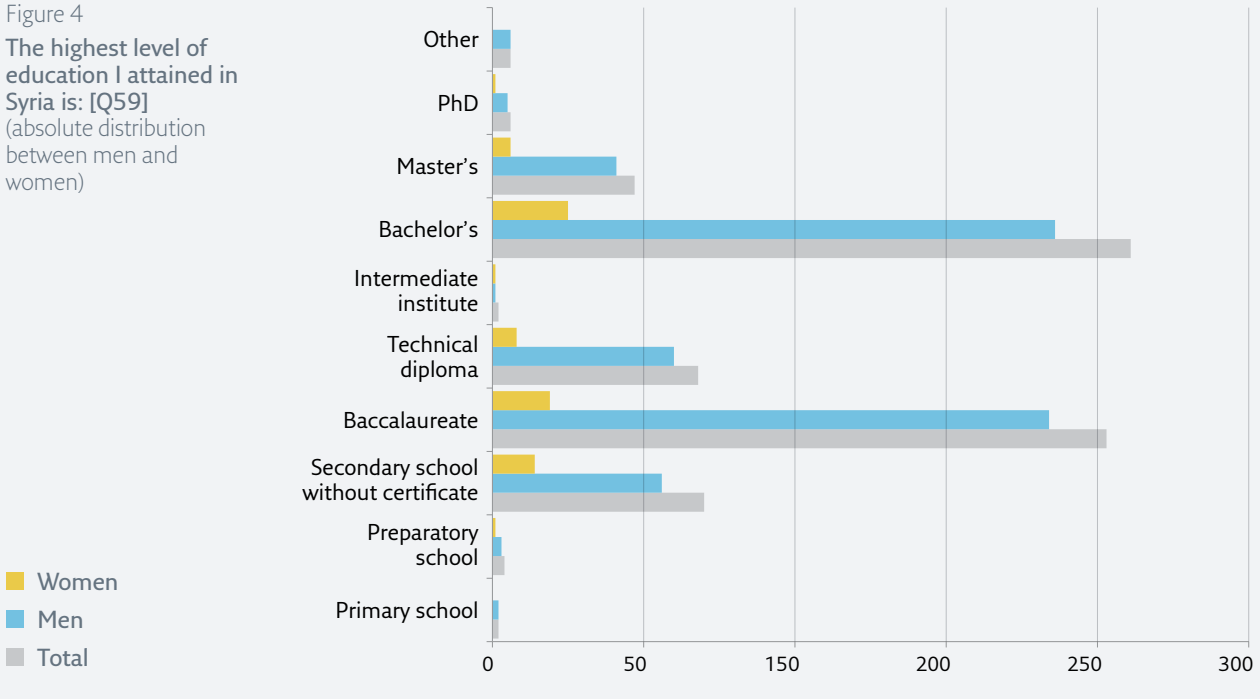
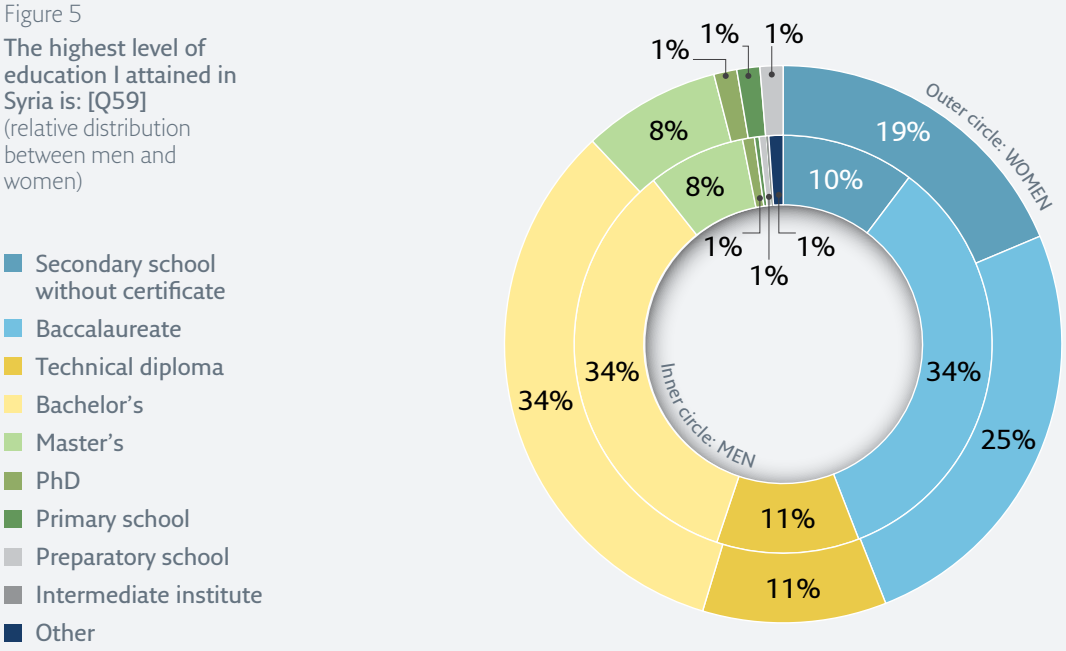


Figure 5
The highest level of education I attained in Syria is: [Q59]
(relative distribution between men and women)



Refugee Survey. Furthermore, the rate of those enrolled in early childhood, primary, and lower secondary education represents nearly one quarter compared to the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey. In conclusion, the sample group of this survey possesses a relatively advanced level of education when compared to all Syrian refugees who arrived in Germany between 2013 and 2016.

Table 4: Comparison of the education level of participants in this survey and the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey of 2016 according to ISCED11

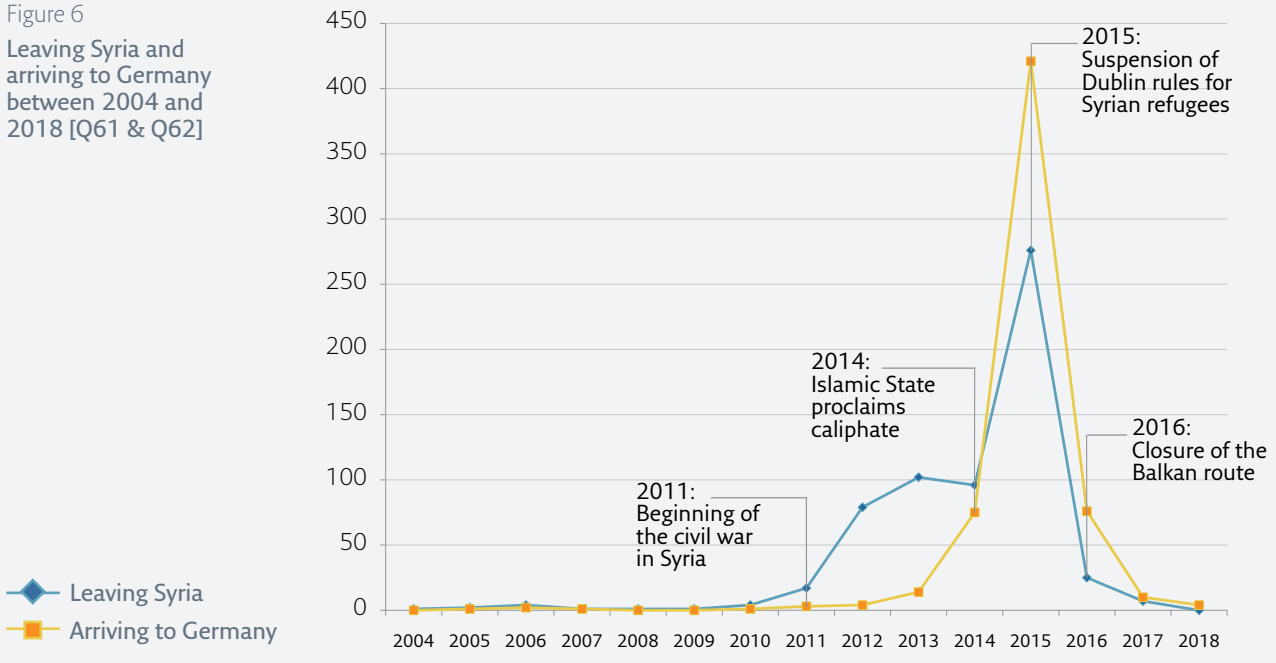
ISCED11 level (International Standard Classification of Education of 2011)		**This survey**	**IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey of 2016**
0-2	Early childhood, primary & lower secondary education	12%	45%
3	Upper secondary education (Baccalaureate)	33%	29%
6-7	Bachelor's & master's	42%	14%
8	PhD	1%	1%

Leaving Syria: when and why

The number of survey participants leaving Syria started to increase in 2011, which was the year in which the crisis in Syria erupted (see Figure 6). In 2012, 2013, and 2014, 45% of survey participants left Syria. However, in the same years, only 15% of those who took part in the survey reached Germany.

The situation changed significantly in 2015, as this was the year in which most survey participants left Syria (45%) and even more (69%) arrived in Germany. The civil war had been on-going for over four years, causing extreme suffering for civilians. In addition, based on the influx of refugees in Greece and the deteriorating humanitarian situation on the Balkan route, Germany suspended the Dublin rules for Syrian refugees in the

Figure 6
Leaving Syria and arriving to Germany between 2004 and 2018 [Q61 & Q62]

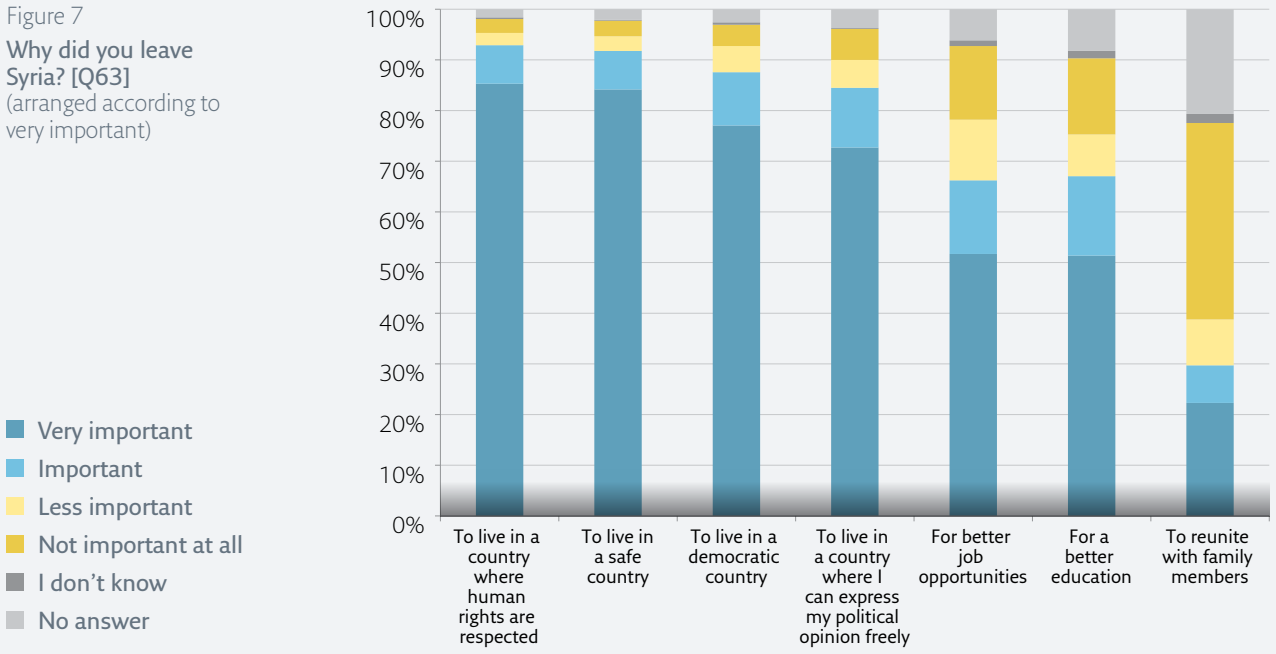


summer of 2015, meaning asylum seekers were no longer required to claim refuge in the first state of the European Union in which they arrived.[30]

In 2016, the numbers of survey participants leaving Syria and arriving to Germany fell: only 4% left Syria and not more than 12% arrived in Germany.

Why did Syrians leave their country (see Figure 7)? 85% of participants indicated *To live in a country where human rights are respected* as being very important; while 84% wanted *To live in a safe country*. These results reflect perceived and experienced insecurity and injustice in Syria (see Working Paper 2: Insecurity and Injustice in Syria before and during the War).

Figure 7
Why did you leave Syria? [Q63]
(arranged according to very important)



Nearly the same number of participants stated that it was important for them *To live in a democratic country* and *To live in a country where I can express my political opinion freely*. The least important reason for survey participants was *To reunite with family members*, with 39% of participants indicating that this reason was not important at all. In addition, out of all pre-defined variables, *To reunite with family members* was the one that the highest number of survey participants did not want to answer. Participants maybe preferred not to answer this question due to security reasons, fearing for their own asylum status or the status of family members waiting for their files to be approved.

When taking the sex, age, and education level of participants into consideration for this question, overall, *To live in a country where human rights are respected* and *To live in a safe country* were the most important reasons for all categories (see Table 5).

Table 5: **Why did you leave Syria? [Q63]**
Value: Very important

	Sex		**Age**		**Level of education**		
	Men	Women	Born 1990 and before	Born 1991 and after	No Baccalau-reate	Baccalau-reate	Bachelor's
To live in a country where human rights are respected	85%	84%	87%	83%	90%	88%	81%
To live in a safe country	84%	88%	86%	82%	91%	86%	79%
To live in a democratic country	76%	73%	79%	75%	81%	82%	71%
To live in a country where I can express my political opinion freely	74%	64%	75%	70%	79%	75%	70%
For better job opportunities	50%	65%	50%	53%	54%	58%	40%
For a better education	50%	63%	41%	63%	57%	66%	41%
To reunite with family members	21%	31%	29%	15%	26%	22%	18%

The biggest differences can be found for the two variables *For a better education* and *For better job opportunities*. These differences manifested themselves in three ways. First, on average, more women than men indicated the importance of leaving Syria *For a better education* and *For better job opportunities*. For women, leaving Syria *For better job opportunities* was slightly more important than *To live in a country where I can express my political opinion freely*. One reason for this might be that women hoped for increased socio-economic independence when leaving Syria. Second, younger participants indicated a higher importance of leaving Syria *For a better education*. Third, those with a lower level of education placed more importance on leaving Syria *For a better education* and *For better job opportunities*, especially survey participants who were Baccalaureate holders, though non-Baccalaureate holders also placed importance on this reason. The results seem to show that the majority of Baccalaureate holders were aspiring to complete their education outside Syria. Reasons for this might include the overall quality of education in Syria, the war limiting opportunities for education, or the unsafe atmosphere at Syrian universities (see Working Paper 1: Safe Spaces and Protection in Syria before and during the War for further information).

Furthermore, survey participants could add new elements or express their thoughts and feelings in the open-ended section of the question. 22 participants out of 619 (4%) made use of this option; of these, 41% indicated they had left Syria to avoid serving in the army (including mandatory military service). Another 23% stated that they wanted to live in a country where they could choose whether or not to have a religion and

practice it. 14% stated that they wanted to live in dignity. To see selected statements of survey participants, please refer to Box 1 below.

Box 1
Selected statements of survey participants on reasons for leaving Syria [Q63]

Lack of freedoms

"To live in a country where I can choose to have a religion or not and to be able to exercise it."

Violence and repression

"The main reason for me to flee Syria was the security persecution and to avoid getting arrested by intelligence services due to my being involved in political activities against the regime."

"I left Syria out of fear of arbitrary political arrest by the security forces. And also because they wanted my brother. He was a doctor and treated wounds arising from gunshots and all other kinds of weapons that the regime used against the people during demonstrations to stay in power."

"I fled from the oppression and violence of the regime and its sectarian militias as well as of extremists."

"Freedom is a big word, and has an even bigger meaning. In Syria, we cannot speak about state politics or changing or opposing the ruling regime, not even in a small word. I was in prison [for political reasons] for one year and was completely deprived of my civil rights. They [then] wanted me to serve in the army."

Military service

"I left Syria because there was no chance to stay alive in my country. [Had I stayed,] I would have had to carry arms, either for the regime or for the opposition, and I did not trust either of them."

"I came to Germany because I did not want to be a killer or killed."

"[I fled] so that I did not have to participate in the war against the sons of my homeland."

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