STILL LONGING TO GO HOME IN SAFETY AND DIGNITY

SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

Perceptions Surveys, Focus Group Discussions and Return Movements

UNHCR Lebanon, May 2019
Cover photo: A young Syrian refugee shares some humor with UNHCR colleagues as his parents board a bus back to Syria. © UNHCR/ Maggie Hawari
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since publication of the "Longing to go Home" report in January 2018, UNHCR has continued to seek and analyze Syrian refugees’ intentions and perceptions with regard to returning home. This has been done through surveys, focus group discussions and daily interactions. In addition, group return movements organized by the Directorate General of General Security have taken place regularly since May 2018, which constitute a new element. The analysis of actual returns allows for a comparison between intentions and actual return decisions. With almost 3 years of structured assessment completed, several key trends and messages from refugees themselves are emerging. Understanding these perspectives will allow all stakeholders to better support solutions.

Key Trends

» First and foremost, the hope to return home remains consistently strong – well above 80%.
» Second, the intention to return within 12 months continues to rise.
» Third, the number of refugees actually returning, while still modest, continues to increase.
» Fourth, helpful measures supporting both dignity in exile and a free, informed and simplified return process enhance the hope, intention and ability to return.
Key Messages from Refugees

- **Refugee decision-making is now a highly personalized family and individual decision** based on weighing a variety of factors, the relative importance of which is intimately linked to individual situations and refugees’ sense of the situation at home.

- **Key factors in deciding whether to return in the near future** are very practical and include issues of safety/security, shelter/property, access to livelihoods and availability of basic services.

- **Refugees highlighted the importance of clear and current information** on return processes, and the situation at home, as well as the value of go and see visits and the importance of family unity.

What We Can Do

- **Proactively identify and work on** the factors that can help refugees return.

- **Maintain and enhance robust international support for neighboring host countries and ensuring that refugees’ basic needs and dignity are respected** in exile in order to support both those who intend to return or are already returning in the near-term, as well as the vast majority who desire to return ultimately.

- **Increase opportunities** for resettlement and alternative options in third countries for those who cannot return.
1. INTRODUCTION

There won’t be a single Syrian in Lebanon when Syria becomes peaceful, believe me. We all wish to return to Syria.”

Refugee Focus Group Discussion Participant, Bekaa, February 2019

Understanding refugees’ aspirations, hopes and concerns is at the heart of UNHCR’s mandate. It helps the Organization to prepare for and support the realization of solutions for refugees. Since early 2017, UNHCR has undertaken a series of intentions surveys (Surveys) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with refugees in Lebanon and other host countries in the region as part of ongoing dialogue with refugees to better understand their situation and the factors influencing their decisions on options for the future.

The views gathered here are complemented by information from UNHCR’s regular protection, assistance and community outreach activities and interviews involving literally thousands of refugees a month.

The report builds on findings initially set forth in the A Longing to Go Home report of 2018¹, and includes both new Survey results from July 2018 and February 2019 involving over 2,000 individuals, as well as trends and profiles from actual returns, to see how intentions and actions have evolved over two years. These Surveys show that, inter alia:

- 86% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon interviewed in 2018/19 hope to return to Syria ultimately;
- there is a slight increase from 3% in 2018 to 5% in 2019 of refugees intending to return within 12 months; and
- perceptions related to security, military conscription and access to shelter, basic services and livelihoods rank among the main factors currently limiting return.

Thus, the overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees in Lebanon wish to return home ultimately. Indeed, between 2017 and early 2019, increasing numbers from both Lebanon and regionally intended to return and have done so. This shows that neither intentions nor perceptions are static but develop as the situation evolves. Ongoing efforts to understand and address constraints and practical issues faced by refugees – such as the need for sustainable safety and security and opportunities in Syria to support rebuilding their lives – will enhance the ability of refugees to make free and informed choices and realize their aspirations.

As noted by the Lebanese Prime Minister at the Brussels III Conference on 14 March 2019, “We have no other option but to join hands and work together to address the obstacles and challenges facing the return of the displaced”. This requires multi-faceted efforts by all stakeholders over time, in both refugee hosting countries and within Syria. As the hope to return continues to materialize, sustained and redoubled commitment to supporting both refugees and host communities in Lebanon remains critical. Further, efforts to increase third country resettlement for the most vulnerable, and seeking other pathways to third countries such as family reunion, are also critical.

As envisioned by the Global Compact on Refugees², undertaking efforts to actualize durable solutions in the immediate, medium and longer terms, while supporting host communities and preserving well-being and dignity during the time in exile, are the key goals of all stakeholders. In both Lebanon and the region, UNHCR continues to systematically undertake activities aimed at preparing for the future facilitation of large-scale voluntary repatriation of refugees, safely and with dignity; and this requires building trust.

² The Global Compact on Refugees (A/73/12 (Part II)) was affirmed by the General Assembly on 17 December 2018, A/RES/73/151, and is available at https://bit.ly/2NRH1tL
2. 2018 AND 2019 CONSULTATIONS RESULTS

In July 2018, and in January and February 2019, UNHCR consulted 2,178 refugees through Intention and Perceptions Surveys. The results are presented below and are compared with the findings of 2017. These findings are complemented by qualitative information from focus group discussions, Pre-Return Interviews and analysis of profiles of refugees who returned in 2018 and through April 2019.

2.1 REFUGEES’ HOPES AND INTENTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

2.1.1 The Hope to Return Home Remains Strong

The 2018 and 2019 Surveys found that the vast majority of Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon (86% combined or 88% and 83%, respectively) do hope to return to Syria.

Refugees are increasingly making up their minds about their future. The number of refugees unsure about their future intentions dropped from 4% in 2018 to 2% in 2019, while the percentage of those with no hope of returning also changed over time, from 11% in 2017, to 8% in 2018 and 16% in 2019. These changes show the emotional nature of such decisions and need to be seen in light of developments back home such as the end of the conscription-related Amnesty in April 2019 and the current fighting in Idlib.

These findings, despite variations over time, resonate strongly with the 2017 findings where 89% of refugees desired to return to Syria.

As seen in the chart below, the trend in Lebanon is also notably above the regional average, which itself increased from 51% in 2017 to 75% in 2018.

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3 In 2017, the question asked only about hope or no hope.

4 In October 2018, the Syrian government announced a 6 month Amnesty ending 9 April 2019, which waived imprisonment penalties for military draft evaders and deserters. This should be distinguished from the 6 month “grace period” applied in some areas for returning males to (re)commence actual service.
2.1.2 Intentions to Return Now and Actual Returns are Increasing

The percentage of refugees intending to return in the near future increased from 2% in 2017 to 3% in 2018, and to a further 5% in 2019. While modest overall, the number of respondents actually intending to return more than doubled between 2017 and 2019. At the same time, the number of respondents who were uncertain about their intentions decreased, while the number who were not considering return in the near future dropped in July 2018 and increased again in February 2019.

Refugee Return Intentions In The Near Term

The increasing trend in the intention to return is mirrored by actual return figures from Lebanon recorded by UNHCR, which have increased each year since 2016. UNHCR recorded 5,006 and 11,052 individual returns in 2016 and 2017, respectively. In 2018, UNHCR recorded 16,729 returns (of whom 14,496 persons were known to UNHCR) including 5,596 individual returns and 11,133 self-organized and GSO-facilitated returns. This trend is likewise consistent with overall regional trends.

Overall, as seen in previous years, the question for most is not “whether” but “when” to return. To help refugees gain confidence and realize this overall desire to return, the findings suggest that national and international actors should continue to help equip refugees with the information, tools and experience needed to rebuild their lives and future in Syria. This can be achieved by, for example, continuing to support education and vocational training, as well as access to health services and civil documentation. While a number of positive steps have been taken by the authorities inside Syria that facilitate returns, in Syria itself, work must continue towards making further progress in addressing key factors that refugees perceive as significant to their return and reintegration.

5 In the 1st quarter of 2019, UNHCR recorded 4,492 returns (of whom 4,008 were known to UNHCR) including 2,492 individual returns and 2,000 self-organized/government-facilitated group returns. Those not known to UNHCR include Syrians who never contacted UNHCR. The General Security Office (GSO) began facilitating transport to Syria in mid-2018 in cooperation with the government of Syria, and reports that over 175,000 Syrians have returned in 2018 through official border crossing points with the intention of returning permanently.
2.2 THE REASONS BEHIND INTENTIONS AND CHOICES – SECURITY AND SAFETY FIRST

As seen in the Surveys and discussions with refugees, a mix of factors influence intentions and actual decisions regarding return to Syria. The majority of these relate to the situation in Syria, especially related to security and military conscription, access to services/livelihoods, conditions of and access to property/housing and considerations of family unity. The sections below compare the reasons given by those intending to return, those not intending to return, those undecided about return and, finally, those actually returning.

2.2.1 Comparing Intentions and Actions

Significantly, a sense of improvement in the security situation was cited by those intending to return within 12 months as the overall top reason in both 2018 and 2019. In addition, refugees intending to return also cited the wish to reunite with family, improved work/livelihood opportunities, education for children and the situation in Lebanon. The consistency of these answers is an important indication of refugee motivations and interests – physical safety and human security are essential in supporting the decision to return.

While the above reasons figured prominently and positively in the intention to return in the near term, it is also noteworthy that the situation in the host country was increasingly cited among the top 5 factors influencing the decision to return.

For those not considering to return in the near future, the main reasons likewise relate to perceptions about safety and security. Interestingly, however, concern related to physical security consistently reduced from 40% in 2017 to 33% in 2018, and further down to 23% in 2019. This is seemingly due to the reduction in the number of frontlines inside Syria. This does not, however, address concerns over military conscription which primarily impacts men between the ages of 18-38, and which may also increase the possibilities of families splitting. Indeed, for 2019, the remaining top 4 concerns included military conscription and/or detention (18%), as well as issues related to livelihoods, housing/property and lack of access to basic services in Syria (17%, 13% and 11%, respectively).

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6 In 2017, the question looked at a 6 month time frame.

7 This varied slightly in 2018, where concerns related to livelihoods came in second at 15%, followed by shelter, access to basic services and concerns over conscription/detention (13%, 12% and 10%, respectively).
Similarly, for those uncertain about returning, perceptions related to safety/security, conditions and availability of property/housing, issues related to military conscription and access to basic services and livelihoods were cited as the top five factors. While concerns about the overall security situation and conflict have reduced consistently from 2017 to 2019, considerations related to military conscription notably increased in 2019, perhaps in view of the 9 April expiry of the current conscription-related Amnesty.

The fact that the same top 5 issues are cited by both those not intending to return within 12 months and those uncertain about returning suggests that addressing these issues will build significant confidence towards return.

When looking at the motivations of those who actually returned in 2019, these main factors are also prominent. A summary of reasons provided during Pre-Return Interviews conducted by UNHCR is set forth below, noting that each respondent may have provided more than one reason.

Based on the foregoing, and despite some changes in relative percentages and order of importance, intentions and perceptions related to return have remained consistent and echo the actual reasons for return. Issues related to safety/security (including military conscription/Amnesty), conditions in

As refugees weigh the prospects of return, security, property rights, legal documentation and military service requirements in Syria are all key considerations. And so are of course, jobs, shelter and access to basic services. If you speak to any refugee in any of the neighbouring countries, this is what they will tell you."

UNHCR’s High Commissioner, 14 March 2019 Brussels III Conference
Lebanon and access to and availability in Syria of property/housing, basic services and work/livelihoods are the primary factors refugees consider when deciding whether to return in the near term. 8

Clarity on these issues will undoubtedly build greater confidence in decisions to return going forward, and likewise support the sustainability of actual returns.

2.2.2 Return as Seen from the Individual’s Perspective – Age, Gender and Diverse Profiles

Focus group discussions9 conducted in 2018 and 2019 underscore refugees’ views of current opportunities and constraints – in particular the interplay between issues of physical and material security. Sensitivities vary depending on refugees’ age, gender and background.

Instructive in framing the broad range of perceptions is a dialogue between a group of adult and youth participants. A couple from Al Raqqa said, “If we are safe, we are ready to go and live in tents”. At the same time, respondents from the same group said that this does not apply to refugees from urban areas. “With all due respect

It is very important ... that any return be not only safe and dignified but also voluntary.”

UNHCR’s High Commissioner, 9 March 2019 Beirut Press Conference
to everyone, this applies to farmers but not to us. First of all, we are not used to living in tents and second we cannot rely on agriculture like farmers to meet our needs.”

Thus, although all respondents considered the need for physical and material security as the most essential factors to support returns, many also had other considerations. Individualized issues, including both objective and subjective perspectives, as well as specific profiles across a range of socio-economic considerations, influence both refugees’ intentions and their decision-making. When planning for returns, these are all important elements to take into account.

Ethnic and religious minorities, for example, cited specific concerns related in particular to equality of treatment and sectarian violence, as well as discrimination in the context of mixed marriages. Older persons highlighted concerns related to access to medication and social assistance following return. Persons with disabilities likewise highlighted access to services and specific assistance. Children highlighted concerns related to the availability of schooling and entry requirements (both identity and prior learning documents), also noting the linkages to the language of instruction in areas of return. Women and girls repeatedly expressed serious concerns related to physical security, clearly showing the trauma that the level of gender-based violence throughout the crisis has constituted for women who cited reports of abuse, arrest and rape. Additional findings are presented below.

A HIGHLY PERSONAL DECISION

WOMEN AND FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS indicated, in the majority, that they were not yet ready to consider a return to Syria, which tallies with the 2018/19 Survey results. Those who were more actively considering return at this time indicated that they would be more likely to return than their husbands or sons due to concerns over military conscription and uncertainties as to the terms of service. Several women residing in the Bekaa indicated a limited role in decision-making related to return, one woman pointing out, “In Syria, we didn’t reach the point where women could take the decision alone. This is part of our culture”. Interestingly, however, the majority of women interviewed who are residing in North Lebanon indicated that women do contribute to decision-making inside the family structure as a whole. A majority of women emphasized that return decisions should take into account considerations of individual security, access to a home and hopes for a stable income. Other women within refugee households also spoke about the importance of establishing women empowerment programmes in Syria (including economic empowerment), and the role of national and international actors working towards achieving gender equality. It is critical, some highlighted, for women to take an active role in decision making for their households. During displacement, gender roles often evolve and this will have an impact on returns, as well as on assistance planning inside Syria.

MEMBERS OF RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES expressed unique concerns about returning to Syria. Refugees from religious minorities stated that they fear harassment, and are now even more reluctant to interact with individuals from outside their own ethnic groups. Religious minorities also emphasized how much they value religious freedom and freedom of expression. Several individuals from both ethnic and religious minorities highlighted the importance of full social (re)integration in parts of Syria. Whether subjective perspectives or otherwise, such comments show how some minority refugees feel that the eight-year-long crisis in Syria has eroded much of the previously existing social fabric of the country, and heightened ethnic tensions.
YOUTH participants were generally very specific and detailed in sharing their concerns and hopes. The availability of educational opportunities was a significant factor in their decision to return. Youth emphasized the need for the continuity of education upon return; including through the Syrian authorities’ recognition of their school certificates from Lebanon and allowing access to education for those without school certificates. Young people want opportunities in Syria that allow them to be a part of the reconstruction of the country, and to be able to lend their voices to the future of Syria. This includes wishing for the support of the government in establishing programmes that respect youth competencies, experience and skills, and helping young people to build their own futures. Youth suggested work on unifying laws and consistent application of laws in Syria, noting that in some areas laws and regulations apply and in others they do not – highlighting concerns about possible arbitrary or discriminatory application. Youth stated that while they do not expect the situation to be “perfect” upon return, they are hoping for positive signs of change in Syria that would encourage them to return. Youth also voiced concerns surrounding military conscription, and its potential impacts upon their access to education and their longer term futures. Young people expressed feeling overwhelmed by the ongoing challenges of displacement, and the continual stream of concerning news from Syria over the years. This protracted cycle of displacement, they said, meant that many had not properly lived their childhoods and adolescences.

UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED MINORS noted specific concerns surrounding return, mainly related to the lack of care arrangements existing for them in Syria. Girl refugees from amongst this group noted that “children should be sure that whoever they go with will take good care of them, and won’t leave them alone, so that they can stay safe.” In humanitarian settings, it is generally understood that between one and five per cent of refugee children are unaccompanied or separated. In host countries, these children face heightened protection risks, including risks of exploitation and abuse. These children also possess unique psychosocial vulnerabilities requiring special attention. “In case an unaccompanied minor returned to Syria and was arrested”, one child inquired during a focus group discussion, “who will follow up on him? Who will ask about him?”

STATELESS PEOPLE noted, in addition to echoing the key concerns of other groups, very specifically that they have no information whatsoever on how to access educational opportunities upon return to Syria, thereby showing the need for specifically targeted information to this group.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES raised broad concerns about access to and physical accessibility of housing and other services and overall treatment. A young man with an amputated leg said, “Excuse me if I am being rude but before asking this question, remember that our disability and specific needs are not taken into consideration in Lebanon … so how can we expect this to be considered in the context of return?” Such perceptions underscore the importance of looking systematically at the needs of persons with disability in Syria, especially in the longer term, but also in the context of specific support during returns.
OLDER PEOPLE also expressed the need for accessibility of health services in Syria. As one participant noted, "we need our medicines to survive." Highlighting the role of trauma and lack of family support, and the continued need for resettlement opportunities for the most vulnerable who will not be able to return, an older woman residing in Tripoli whose two sons were arrested at the beginning of the crisis and are still missing stated that "even if my residency is not renewed and all my assistance is cut off, I will never go back to Syria."

WHAT DOES SAFETY MEAN?

The criteria defining the notion of “safe return” are the following:

- **Physical safety**: this includes the right to life, the right to liberty and security, and protection from torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, and measures to be undertaken, primarily by State authorities, to protect refugees and returnees from violence or threats to their physical safety, both en route and in areas of return in the country of origin.

- **Legal safety**: means that returnees have non-discriminatory access to essential services, national protection mechanisms and administrative procedures for obtaining documentation and restoring property, and enjoy recognition of civil status and the rights associated with nationality.

- **Material safety**: means that returnees can enjoy their social, economic, and cultural rights (e.g. food, water, sanitation, and shelter; property restitution; access to livelihoods; health care; education) on an equal footing with any other nationals, and are provided with material and community-based support, particularly in the initial stages of the return to facilitate their reintegration.

VERY PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Common to all groups, however, were a series of shared and very practical concerns and a desire for information concerning the following:

- **Conditions relating to security in Syria and military conscription**, including whether military operations and clashes between armed groups are ongoing or have ceased in various areas of return. Child refugees also noted concerns surrounding rumors of recruitment of children by parties to the crisis. Participants generally called for “international guarantees” and, citing the presence of and inhumane treatment (killings, beatings, bullying) by mercenaries, stated "we need them out of Syria." Highlighting the interplay between livelihoods strategies and conscription, most participants (not just conscription age men) were keenly interested in official and practical information on whether the conscription-related Amnesty was being actively implemented\(^\text{10}\), as well as the duration of military service and exemptions or deferments.

- **Access to education in Syria**, particularly for men above 18 years who are eligible for military service. Refugees noted that men falling into this group are reluctant to return to pursue educational opportunities given uncertainties around the availability of the pre-crisis deferments and reduced enlistment period (18 months) for University students and graduates. Child refugees, including unaccompanied and separated children, also noted the need for more information on access to education in Syria and expressed concerns about the physical availability of schools and teachers, as well as the recognition of educational certificates earned in Lebanon.

\(^\text{10}\) Note that the Amnesty came to an end in April 2019.
• Availability of and access to shelter, basic services and livelihoods in Syria, including detailed information about the condition and status of property, whether they are occupied by others, and assistance available to help rehabilitate. Information on the types of available assistance upon return were also highlighted including both humanitarian assistance for individuals but also broader support for rehabilitating schools, hospitals and other humanitarian infrastructure.

• Information on regularization of residency in, and exit procedures from, Lebanon, including entry/exit fees, maintaining residency based on UNHCR certificates, how cases of illegal entry/exit will be handled by authorities of both countries upon return, and whether and on what terms people will be able to re-enter Lebanon in light of the re-entry ban placed on those who left with expired residency. One woman reflected on the complex historical and personal relationship between Lebanese and Syrians, further complicated by the crisis and current legal entry/exit processes, noting that "the issue of the re-entry ban is a big concern for us...you wouldn't find a Syrian family who doesn't have a kinship with a Lebanese family. We need to visit them."

These voices highlight the highly personalized and individualized nature of deciding whether and when to return. They show the human element and real emotions behind the complex range of considerations which underpin and support return decisions. At the same time, these reflections illuminate the many issues that need to be addressed to support informed decision-making and sustainable return.

2.3 FACTORS THAT HELP BUILD CONFIDENCE

Several specific supporting and limiting factors influencing return decision-making and actions are clearly reflected in intentions and perceptions, as well as the individualized concerns, highlighted above. They include security/protection, family unity, property, information and access to education, livelihoods and basic services in Syria. The following paragraphs examine in more detail what would be needed to increase refugees’ confidence in return.

A sense of security clearly remains the primary influencing factor with regard to intentions. This can be seen most readily through the top 5 areas of actual return, areas in which active conflict has substantially ceased. This factor encompasses a broad range of general and highly personalized issues, not at all limited to ongoing military confrontations. For example, the risks associated with unexploded ordinance require both awareness raising and continued mitigation effort. Also, while concerns related to military conscription appeared to increase in 2019, for example, so did the number of conscription age men who returned by April 2019. This suggests both the importance of the conscription-related Amnesty, and possible benefits of extending it beyond 9 April 2019.

Returning with family members, presence of relatives in areas of return and property conditions all play a significant supporting role in deciding when to return and in actually returning. For refugees hoping to return, the vast majority – an average of 93% of respondents in 2018 and 2019 – indicated that they wished to return with all their family members at once. This is consistent with the 2017 findings, in which 94% of refugees indicated the same wish. At the same time, 50% suggested that they would consider sending one family member to assess the situation before the rest of the household returns. Approximately 88% of those expressing the intention to return within 12 months indicated they had at least one relative already in Syria. Women, in particular, noted during focus group discussions that the presence of family members in Syria would be a contributing factor to return. 90% of those intending to return within 12 months also indicated that they intend to return to their place of origin.
When looking at those refugees who have actually returned in February and April 2019, over 92% of respondents indicated they already had a relative in the area of return. 53.5% of these returnees comprised whole (35%) or partial families. Almost 80% are returning to their place of origin. This contrasts somewhat significantly with the data from 2018, where some 76% of families returned as full families. It suggests that refugees are making complex decisions in terms of actual return, the family composition of those returns and areas of return. Refugees are balancing their desires to maintain family unity with the individualized practicalities they assess in terms of both their situation in Lebanon and prospects for successful reintegration in Syria. In the April 2019 return movement, it was noted that 6% of returnees were from a family from which previous returns were recorded. This may suggest a progressive move towards family reunification after a family member has gone ahead to assess and prepare for the family’s return.

Access to and conditions of housing, land and property (HLP) were cited as significant factors influencing the return decision-making. There is an expressed lack of certainty in the context of urban development activities and the application of Law 10, which is emblematic of overall concerns. Amendments to Law 10 were made by Law 42 in November 2018, allowing property owners one year to return and establish their tenure. This addresses some issues but underscores the need for continued attention to HLP issues including, in particular, the ownership and inheritance rights of women and the challenges associated with documenting property rights given issues such as loss or destruction of documentation and records, as well as secondary occupation of property.

As elaborated in numerous studies, the housing, land and property system in Syria is characterized by overlapping statutory and traditional land tenures, a complex land administration system, and a regulatory framework with over 130 sometimes inconsistent HLP-related laws. Over 30 HLP-related laws enacted during the crisis add further complexity to this legislative fabric.
The physical condition of property is also a primary concern and underpins the sustainability of return. Of those intending to return within 12 months, 42% believed their property was either intact or partially destroyed but habitable, while 52% believed their property was either completely destroyed or uninhabitable. As such, while important in decision-making, it was not, for some, prohibitive in the decision to return.

Of those not intending to return within 12 months, 62% stated that their property was either fully destroyed or uninhabitable. Few (7%) of those intending to return had no knowledge of the state of their property. And while post-return reports are limited owing to access constraints in Syria, interviews with persons who returned with the intention to remain in Syria often cited the actual condition of their property as an important challenge faced during reintegration. This also highlights the importance of helping refugees obtain accurate information about their property back home, and helping them (re)establish their property rights before and/or after return.

As seen in Section 1 above, access to education, livelihoods and basic services plays a crucial role in the decision-making process and routinely ranks among the top 5 considerations related both to the decision to return, or not return, within the next 12 months. The importance of these issues was highlighted during focus group discussions, in particular among school-aged children and youth, wondering how they will survive upon return. Equally important to their futures is the availability in Lebanon of educational and access to other services, which the World Bank noted in its study on the Mobility of Displaced Syrians generally makes it more, not less, likely that an individual will return to Syria – empowering individuals to build and rebuild their futures. The availability of education, skills development and work opportunities, as well as access to basic medical care in host countries, likewise provide a base of security that can support the decision to return. Indeed, as seen below, access to assistance and support in Lebanon has not deterred people from making the decision to return and, arguably, has empowered that decision. Some refugees returning from Arsal in November 2018 also cited the presence of family members who can help employ them, and a desire to seek livelihood opportunities “early”, as motivating factors. This is underscored by the increasing perception that more

livelihood opportunities are becoming available as conditions stabilize and strongly suggests that the situation in Syria, not in Lebanon, are the main driving forces behind return and that, indeed, assistance in Lebanon can and does support these decisions, contrary to widespread perceptions.

Uncertainty about both the return process and situation within Syria remains a critical concern of refugees, and highlights the importance of access to a variety of forms of information in support of the decision-making and return process. In 2018, 67% of

Survey respondents who intended to return within 12 months felt they had sufficient information, while only 33% of those who did not intend to return within 12 months felt they had adequate information.

In 2019, only 50% of interviewed refugees intending to return felt they had sufficient information related to key issues (e.g., security situation, basic services, jobs, conscription issues, possibilities for legal re-entry to Lebanon). Only 38% of those not intending to return in the next 12 months and only 46% of those who were unsure felt they had sufficient information.

This is particularly striking with regard to women, in particular women who indicated an intent to return within the next 12 months, with only 6% indicating they have sufficient information.

As highlighted during the focus group discussions, this strongly suggests that issues related to decision-making authority within the family, and by women generally, need to be further assessed and addressed. As detailed below, and in Annex 1, while women generally express less hope and intention to return, they made up an average of 54% of returnees from 1 January 2018 through 31 March 2019. It also suggests that women may have less access than men to different forms of information, which may also have an impact on their decision-making role and personal decision-making authority. Indeed, a recent UN Women study also highlighted that Syrian refugee women generally had less access to fewer sources of information than men.\(^\text{13}\) This indicates an important need for more targeted types of information and information access.

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THE NEED FOR A FREE AND INFORMED DECISION

According to international standards, the decision to return to one’s country is a personal decision and it should be a voluntary decision. This does not mean that refugees can go back and forth open-endedly to their country of origin and change their mind multiple times. This is a fundamental decision of critical importance in people’s lives.

Voluntary repatriation based on a free and informed decision therefore means that refugees should be able to decide for themselves whether and when to return to their home country, without being coerced or pressured by anyone, including their own family or community, and based on reliable information about the return process and conditions in the area of intended return.

Decisions to return should indeed be based on the situation in the country of return and not on the conditions in the country of exile (e.g. community pressure or discontinuation of assistance). That said, individual refugees may decide to return home on their own before large scale organized refugee returns. This may depend on their individual circumstances. UNHCR respects such decisions, if made freely and on the basis of accurate information.

Sources of information also play an important role in the decision-making process. The Surveys for both 2018 and 2019 indicated that family members in Syria are the primary source of information (34%), both for those intending to return within 12 months and those not intending to return within 12 months. State Media, Social Media and friends and other sources came in 2nd and 3rd. Significantly, an average of 53% of respondents indicated the importance of having at least one family member go and visit Syria prior to returning.

The Pre-Return Interviews and Intentions and Perceptions Surveys clearly show that, even with limited information, people are returning. Access to more information would support this process. The following chapter analyses the trends and profiles of actual movements in 2018 and 2019, and elaborates on the impact of these supporting and limiting factors in the decision-making process.
3. ACTUAL RETURNS SINCE 2018 – TRENDS & PROFILES

Currently, returns are occurring in two main ways – either through group movements facilitated by the GSO or as individuals returning through their own means. UNHCR is present at the staging points for GSO facilitated movements. While not the organizers of such returns, UNHCR seeks to be available for refugees throughout the process. In the case of reported individual returns, UNHCR likewise conducts Pre-Return Interviews or obtains data from family members who have not returned. Drawing firm conclusions about trends remains difficult at this early stage and given the highly individualized nature of decision-making. Nevertheless, the following trends emerge.

First and foremost, the rate of return remained largely stable in 2018 and the 1st quarter of 2019, averaging about 4000 returns per quarter. Interestingly, women appeared to return in larger numbers in individual (versus GSO-facilitated) departures, accounting for 62% in 2018 and 60% in the 1st quarter of 2019. Men generally appeared to be departing in larger numbers through group returns, be they self-organized or facilitated by the GSO, accounting for 51% in 2018 and 56% in the 1st quarter of 2019. For 2018, of all returns, women accounted for 55.5%, while men accounted for 44.5% on average. In the 1st quarter of 2019, this changed slightly, equaling 52% women and 48% men. The sex distribution of the total refugee population in Lebanon stands at 52% women and 48% men, of whom close to 55% are children under 18 (28% female and 27% male). During 2018, children comprised 45% of those departing (23% female and 22% male), but only 35% in the 1st quarter of 2019 (17.5% female, 17.5% male).

Thus, fewer children are departing as compared to the total average, and slightly more women. Seen in the context of families splitting overall, it is perhaps not surprising that during these initial returns more children are staying behind, including in order to continue their education and given uncertainties about access to schools in Syria, although increasing numbers of school aged children returned in 2018 in advance of the school year.

Of returning refugees, around 5% of complete families and 11% of split families were receiving multi-purpose cash assistance, and around 30% of complete families and 41% of split families were receiving food assistance. However, around 57% of refugees returning via GSO-facilitated movements were ranked as severely socio-economically vulnerable. To place these figures in perspective, among the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon, only 19% receive Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (175 USD per household, per month), and less than

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14 In 2018, there were 22 such movements from 83 locations. In 2019, there have been 3 movements from 18 locations.
15 These numbers refer only to returns known to UNHCR. As indicated earlier, the GSO has recorded a higher number.
16 This is interesting given that, as discussed in Section 2 above, women overall expressed less hope and intent to return than men, indicating issues related to decision-making authority within families that should be addressed both generally and through targeted information activities.
50% receive monthly food assistance (27 USD per month, per person). Regarding legal residency, according to the 2018 Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon ("VASyR 2018"), only 23% of refugees over the age of 15 have valid legal residency in Lebanon. Approximately 12% of refugees returning in 2018 and the 1st quarter of 2019 had valid legal residency. Thus, while socio-economic difficulties in Lebanon are cited as the top reason for return, and lack of legal residency is often cited as a serious constraint, neither access to assistance nor legal residency alone determine the decision whether to return or remain.

Few concrete conclusions on broader trends can be drawn from the overall data, again reflecting the highly individualized, and varied calculations being made over time by refugees. By way of further example, among returnees with specific needs in 2018 and the 1st quarter of 2019, the highest percentages (irrespective of type of return) concerned returns that aimed to address a serious medical condition, reflecting perhaps the relative cost of health care and the limitations on assistance in Lebanon for persons suffering from very serious or terminal illnesses. Length of time in exile also appears to be an important characteristic of those returning. In 2018, over 75% of returnees were persons who had arrived in Lebanon in the early years of the crisis, between 2012 and 2014.

Overall return trends reflect, at least in part, the interplay between individual profiles and the supporting and limiting contextual factors discussed above. As frontlines recede and the situation is perceived to stabilize with available social services increasing within Syria, actual returns appear to grow. When return processes of departure and on arrival are favorably modified, returns appear to increase. Individualized economic and medical situations also clearly play a role. When key considerations such as those related to conscription and property are addressed, returns appear to increase. In the last GSO-facilitated return before expiry of the conscription-related Amnesty, for example, as many as 60% of returnees were conscription age males, suggesting a sense of confidence in the assurances provided by the GSO process and related benefit of the Amnesty.

### VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

It is recognized that voluntary repatriation is not necessarily conditioned on the accomplishment of political solutions in the country of origin, in order not to impede the exercise of the right of refugees to return to their own country.

*Global Compact on Refugees, para. 87*

A summary of some key events compared to return trends is set forth below.

- **January/April/May 2018** – armed confrontations subside in key areas around Beit Jinn, Eastern Ghouta and Homs/Hama
- **April 2018** – GSO begins to facilitate group returns with the government of Syria
- **August 2018** – easing of exit formalities/restriction from Lebanon
- **September 2018** – beginning of the school year in Syria; Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants announces that the country is “ready for the voluntary return of refugees”
- **October 2018** – a six-month Amnesty announced for draft evaders/deserters through 9 April 2019
- **November 2018** – adoption of Law 42 amending Law 10, giving Syrians living abroad one year to return and claim their properties in Syria ahead of urban development projects

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17 According to the 2018 VASyR: 69% of refugee households remain below the poverty line; 51% of households fall below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket of $2.90 per person per day; 9 out of 10 households are living in debt; and one third (34%) of Syrian refugee households are moderately to severely food insecure. See VASyR 2018, available at [https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/67380](https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/67380)
In short, returns are increasing overall and there is some correlation between this trend, the profiles of returnees and key supporting and limiting factors, both contextual and individualized. Returns are, however, still relatively modest. This underscores that more needs to be done on a variety of fronts including dissemination of information on the availability of services and any enabling decisions made by Syria and Lebanon related to returnees in order to support both those who intend to return or are already returning in the near-term, as well as the vast majority who desire to return ultimately. As noted in the recent World Bank study:

All refugees are not alike: each person in exile faces a different configuration of constraints and capabilities. The role played by the four major group factors [Security, Livelihoods, HLP and Infrastructure/Services] also vary across individuals within a given refugee situation. This is true because each person who is in exile faces a different combination of these factors based on his/her economic and social background. 18
4. THE WAY FORWARD

Refugee returns are likely to increase in response to evolving factors, in particular in Syria. Proactively identifying and addressing the elements that can help refugees to return should remain a key focus of all stakeholders as this will serve the vast majority of refugees in the region and particularly in Lebanon.

While preparing for future large-scale returns, sustaining robust international support for neighboring host countries in the unprecedented efforts to respond to the basic needs and dignity of refugees and host communities is vital, both as an act of humanity and because it demonstrably enhances the likelihood of sustainable return.

Meanwhile, maximizing and increasing opportunities for resettlement and alternative options in third countries remains critically important in terms of solutions and as a visible expression of the solidarity and responsibility sharing envisioned by the Global Compact on Refugees which was affirmed by the General Assembly on 17 December 2018.

4.1 WORKING TOWARD SAFE, DIGNIFIED AND SUSTAINABLE RETURNS AND REINTEGRATION

As noted by the World Bank, the situation in Syria itself plays a major role in refugees deciding whether and when to return – “… better security and service access in Syria consistently increase returns”\(^\text{19}\). This will enhance refugees’ confidence in returning and the sustainability of those returns – which is in the interests of both refugees and host countries.

This is a process that requires high levels of cooperation, coordination and understanding between all involved governmental and aid actors, now and in the longer term. Putting refugees, their hopes and concerns, at the center of this process is essential to its success.

\(^{19}\) Mobility of Displaced Syrians, p. 7.
In Syria, there have been several practical developments towards the sustainability, safety and dignity of return, including:

From officials:

1. Law 2/2018 issued in February 2018 easing the process for Syrians abroad to authenticate documents in the absence of a Syrian Diplomatic Mission;
2. Legislative decree 18 which provided an Amnesty for draft evaders and deserters through 8 April 2019 (now expired);
3. Circulars issued in 2018 by the Directorate of Immigration and Passports instructing the facilitation of returns and non-arrest for evading mandatory or reserve military service;
4. Two Administrative Orders issued by the General Command of the Army and the Armed Forces ending retention and call up of civil Reservists aged 42 years and above;
5. Through Law 42, amendments to Law 10 related to the disposition of property allowing, inter alia, for a one year period for returnees to make and establish property claims;
6. An instruction in March 2019 waiving fines and penalties related to illegal exit from Syria, mirroring similar actions in Lebanon with regard to illegal entry and/or overstay;
7. An April 2019 Ministry of Interior instruction allowing flexible registration procedures for Syrians born and/or residing outside Syria, through submission of birth attestation issued by any competent authority in the country of birth/residence to Syrian diplomatic missions abroad.

From aid actors:

1. Increasing (access permitting) needs-based humanitarian assistance for returned refugees and IDPs, provided both by UNHCR directly and through other member agencies of the Return and Reintegration Working Group within the Office of the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria;20
2. Providing returnees with information and support on critical issues such as civil status documentation, birth registration and the location of and access to services within Syria through, for example, a network of Community Centers.

As seen in this Report, these are essential issues to refugees. Thus, in Syria, within neighboring host countries and regionally, UNHCR will continue to work with all stakeholders to identify and, where possible, support addressing the needs expressed by refugees with regard to safe, dignified and sustainable return.

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4.2 ENSURING CRITICAL THIRD COUNTRY OPTIONS – RESETTLEMENT AND COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS

Resettlement remains a critical safe and legal admissions pathway from host countries neighboring Syria to third countries. Since the beginning of the crisis, through the end of December 2018, UNHCR has presented more than 220,000 Syrian refugees for resettlement (RST) and other humanitarian admission programmes (HAP) from the region, including over 74,000 from Lebanon, with more than 120,000 having departed, including over 52,000 from Lebanon.

UNHCR continues to strongly advocate for a significant increase of third country resettlement places for Syrian refugees both as a way to give Syrians who have no foreseeable prospects for return a longer-term solution, and as a tangible way of giving support to neighboring host countries. The Agency prioritizes the most vulnerable and at risk, including persons with serious protection concerns in host countries such as: women and girls at risk; persons at risk of gender-based violence; vulnerable children and adolescents; survivors of trauma; victims of trafficking and exploitation; and persons whose medical needs cannot be adequately addressed in Lebanon.

Despite these efforts, the impact of dramatically declining resettlement spaces worldwide can be seen in the recent numbers. From Lebanon, UNHCR submitted 23,494 Syrian refugees for third country resettlement in 2016, with 18,279 departures, in 2016. In 2017, UNHCR submitted 13,253 Syrians, with 12,167 departures. In 2018, 7,808 Syrian refugees were submitted for resettlement and other humanitarian admission, with 9,372 Syrian refugees departing in 2018. Despite best efforts and the submission of large numbers, the effects of the global reduction in resettlement spaces can be seen in the figures below, and limits considerably the potential for solutions for some of the most vulnerable refugees.

UNHCR intends to maximize the number of available places in 2019 and beyond, while enhancing its global advocacy for increased numbers of spaces from both traditional and emerging resettlement countries.

In addition, UNHCR continues to support and explore alternative and complementary pathways that may be available in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees. Given the hundreds of thousands of Syrians resettled and the hundreds of thousands more who have otherwise found protection and a durable solution in third countries, there are increasing opportunities for family reunification of those family members who stayed behind in host countries in the region. Further, States may express solidarity with refugee hosting countries bordering

"We need more refugee resettlement places... they are a lifeline for the most vulnerable and a key mechanism in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees for responsibility sharing."

UNHCR’s High Commissioner, 14 March 2019 Brussels III Conference

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21 Including cases pending from previous years.
Syria and consider alternative forms of temporary labor migration, study and work visas and other “win/win” options. Such actions also mitigate against the traumatic impact of human trafficking and the risks of exploitation and abuse associated with illegal migration.

4.3 SUPPORTING CONTINUED SOLIDARITY IN LEBANON WHILE PREPARING FOR RETURNS

The vast majority of refugees in Lebanon desire nothing more than to return home. As shown in previous chapters, their views also bring into sharp focus the existence of very real and tangible considerations regarding return which, if addressed, will have a significant impact on return trends and numbers. As this process continues, it is essential that the international community continues to strongly support host countries in maintaining assistance for both refugees and the communities in which they reside – often communities bound together not just by a sense of solidarity, but also ties of kinship and shared history. Far from being a hindrance to return, this support demonstrably improves the capacity of refugees to consider and ultimately undertake return while lessening the strains on, and even contributing to the well-being of, local communities. As made clear by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees at the Brussels III Conference on 14 March 2019, however, their generosity “must not be taken for granted”. The Lebanese President indicated at the 21 March 2019 Arab Summit, that Lebanon’s priority “is the return of Syrian refugees to their country [which would] alleviate the heavy burden it is shouldering...” Highlighting regional dimensions, the Lebanese Speaker of Parliament urged Arab leaders to help “… facilitate and contribute toward eliminating obstacles to the return of Syrian brothers,” at the 4 March 2019, Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference.

UNHCR’S ROLE POST RETURN

UNHCR’s mandated responsibilities continue several years after refugees have returned to ensure that they fully recover national protection, including access to civil documentation, recovery of housing, land and property, access to schools and national services, and no differentiated treatment on the basis of having been displaced.

Within the framework of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, and consistent with the dual track approach of supporting refugees as well as national institutions and vulnerable host communities, funding for the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan and its UN and national and international partners has totaled more than 7 Billion USD since 2012. In 2018, donors provided some 1.40 Billion USD for Lebanon, and in 2017 some 1.24 Billion USD. Aid actors continue to support humanitarian needs and public services to save lives and ease pressure on the State due to the presence of an additional population. For its part, UNHCR provides specific support to government line ministries, municipalities and local communities with regard to activities such as education, health care, civil and other legal documentation as well as community infrastructure. UNHCR also regularly engages with government ministries to discuss issues related to the realization of solutions for refugees beyond Lebanon. A technical inter-ministerial committee meets on a bi-monthly basis to foster joint analysis and practical work on return issues. The diplomatic community is also closely involved in the subject. Among aid actors, a Durable Solutions Group and a Technical Working Group meet to look at different contextual and technical elements of voluntary return planning and needs.
For refugees opting to return, and to help ensure the success of returns now and in the future, UNHCR engages in targeted activities including:

**PRE-RETURN INFORMATION AND INTERVENTIONS** – For refugees considering return or returning, pre-return information is provided on issues such as the importance of having updated documents, as well as having vaccinations and a supply of needed medications in advance of departure. With the support of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, “fast-track” provision of educational certifications is possible. UNHCR also provides information on important issues such as processes for in-country birth registration and obtaining national identity documents upon return, as well as the locations of UNHCR Offices and Community Centers in areas of return. Specific arrangements may be made for persons who require particular support during movement such as medicalized transport.

**DOCUMENTATION** – So that refugees can move on with their lives in Syria, and return as a family with all the vital events of their lives in exile properly documented (e.g. births, marriages, divorces, deaths, medical events, and educational and vocational achievements), UNHCR and other organizations help refugees obtain these civil documents in Lebanon. Recognition of these documents in Syria supports their access to justice, inheritance, services, school, voting rights, etc.

**RESIDENCY RENEWAL** - While the lack of, or expired, legal residency leads to multiple protection challenges for refugees in exile, it also constitutes a serious concern to return due to re-entry bans applied or heavy fines that some refugees need to settle upon departing the country. Efforts to facilitate residency renewal following the commitments made by Lebanon and its international partners at the London and Brussels conferences on supporting Syria and the region, in 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively, need to be sustained and will contribute to removing such difficulties. Waivers introduced in 2018 by the GSO for exit fines, for example, helped enable refugees wishing to return to do so more easily. Similar waivers by Syria announced in March 2019 likewise help.
Further simplifications in exit/entry requirements and processes would likely also increase the ability of those who wish to return to do so as simply as possible.

**REFERRALS** – Profiling vulnerabilities and updating data on refugees with specific needs is another activity that enables UNHCR and partners to refer medical and other issues for continued follow-up by aid actors, after return, in Syria. Polio vaccinations are provided by the Ministry of Public Health free of charge during GSO-facilitated returns, and UNHCR and other actors also support vaccinations free of charge.

**HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY** – Raising refugees’ awareness about rules and procedures for recovering property in Syria, and the importance of safekeeping their original housing, land and property documents and having a copy of these assists people in re-gaining access to their homes once back in Syria.

**A COHERENT TEAM APPROACH** – UNHCR teams in Lebanon and Syria are in constant liaison to analyze the situation in order to adequately inform refugees, prepare for increased support to larger scale returns and help those who want to return now while following-up on the situations of those who have returned.

**WORLD BANK, MOBILITY OF DISPLACED SYRIANS, 2019**
Maximizing refugee returns at any cost is a poorly defined policy target. Maximizing the well-being of refugees, their hosts and Syrians in Syria should be considered.

**BUILDING TRUST, LISTENING AND LEARNING** – UNHCR has assisted well over 40 million refugees in returning to their homes since its creation in 1950. In the Agency’s experience, return requires important advance work, and UNHCR typically invests efforts in this phase as critical to the success of repatriation. Poorly planned returns are often not sustainable and frequently result in secondary displacement in the country of origin, or renewed refugee flow. It can also lead to a loss of trust in the entire return process and thus delay the return of the majority of refugees who are still in host countries. In the Syrian refugee context, it is clear that a number of returns are already taking place and more refugees are considering their options. By listening to and learning from them, and working with government and non-governmental stakeholders, UNHCR endeavors to build a common analysis and approach towards return, while contributing to a constructive atmosphere in which refugees’ choices are respected, current needs are addressed and options are maximized in an informed and dignified fashion.
ANNEX 1: GENDER DISTRIBUTION – HOPES, PLANS TO RETURN, ACTUAL RETURNS

Overall Sex/Age Distribution as of April 2019

- Returns by Sex
  - Actual Returns 2019 – 52% Female, 48% Male
  - Actual Returns 2018 – 55.5% Female, 44.5% Male
  - Combined average 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2019 – 54% Female, 46% Male

Hopes and Plans by Sex

2018 Survey – Overall distribution of all respondents = 46% female and 54% male.

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<td>63%</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Male</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
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2019 Survey – Overall distribution of all respondents = 42% female and 58% male.

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<tbody>
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<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
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ANNEX 2: METHODOLOGY

Understanding the perceptions and situations of refugees of different ages, gender and backgrounds is fundamental to UNHCR’s overall protection and solutions work, informing programmes and activities in ways that address the real and varied needs of refugees with effective and sustainable interventions.

Through voluntary participation in Intentions and Perceptions Surveys (IPSs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), complemented by daily engagement with thousands of refugees through regular counselling, reception interviews, protection and assistance activities and monitoring, we ensure the views of refugees of diverse profiles help frame discussions and responses.

The sampling approach adopted for the IPSs aimed to generate a random, representative sample of the overall population of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. To ensure a representative sample (95% confidence level), a stratified random sample of cases was generated to account for governorate of origin, family size and existence of specific needs in the case.

The FGDs referenced herein complemented FGDs done in March and November 2017, as well as semi structured interviews held in July 2017 and surveys on HLP issues in April and May 2017, detailed in A Longing to Go Home In Safety and Dignity – Intentions and Perceptions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon About their Future, UNHCR, 2018. FGD Locations and Profiles are set forth in the table below.

UNHCR has been conducting Pre-Return Interviews (PRIs) with refugees returning, including those who have opted to return through movements organized by the Lebanese General Security Office. These movements, trends and profile analysis and related activities and the results of the most recent round of PRIs conducted on 27 February and 3-6 April 2019 are also presented and completed by additional data from individual and self-organized/GSO-facilitated returns which occurred in 2018.

2018 and 2019 IPS, FGDs and PRIs

- Intention/Perception Surveys
  July 2018 & February 2019
- Focus Group Discussions
  January-February 2019
- Pre-Return Interviews January-April 2019

- Women/Men (25 years of age +)
- Minority Groups, Mixed Marriages, Stateless Persons
- Female headed households
- Female/Male adolescents/youth (between 14 and 24 years of age)
- Unaccompanied/Separated Minors
- Older persons (60 years of age +)
- Persons with disabilities
- Returnees

In addition to Lebanon-specific IPSs, UNHCR has been conducting similar surveys in Egypt, Jordan and Iraq, each utilizing a “common floor questionnaire”, adapted to country specific conditions. The most recent results are also aggregated in the 5th Regional Perceptions and Intention Survey, 2019, and include the Lebanon-specific data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Locations</th>
<th>Participant Profiles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mt Lebanon/Beirut</td>
<td>Armenian, Kurdish and Yezidi Syrian Minority groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christian Syrian Minority groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth, including university students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minors, including unaccompanied minors, separated children and children with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bekaa/Zahle</td>
<td>Female heads of household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stateless people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed marriage couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women (18-59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North/Tripoli</td>
<td>Women including female heads of household</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older persons</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons with disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South/Tyre</td>
<td>Minors, including unaccompanied and separated children and children with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Older persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons with disability</td>
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