

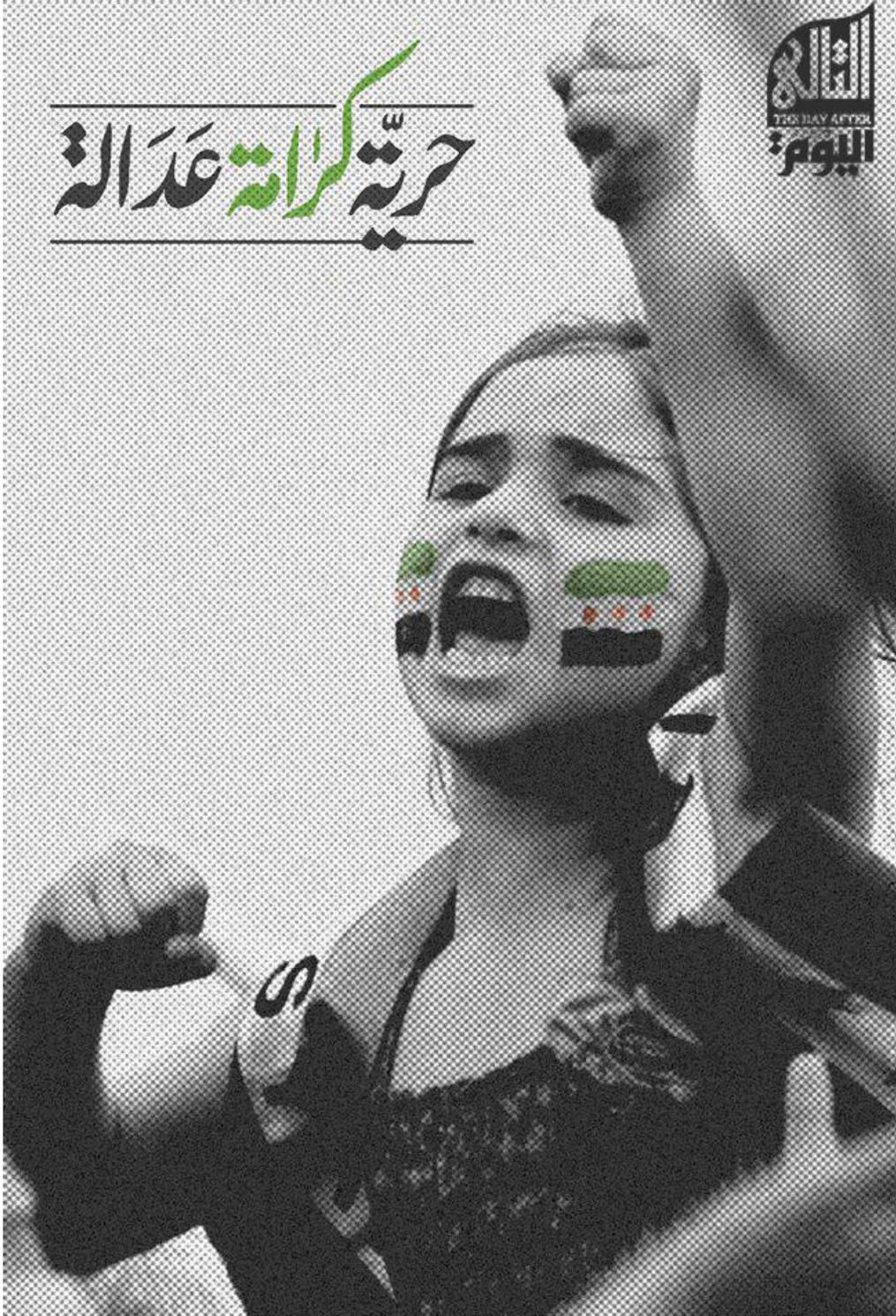


The Opinions of Syrians about Citizenship and Identity (Survey)



حرية كرامة عدالة

اليوم
THE DAY AFTER



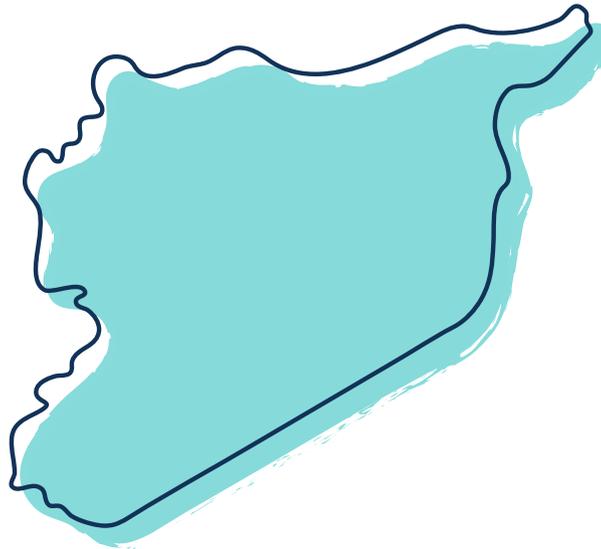
اليوم التالي
لدعم الانتقال الديمقراطي في سوريا



THE DAY AFTER

Supporting Democratic Transition In Syria

The Opinions of Syrians about Citizenship and Identity



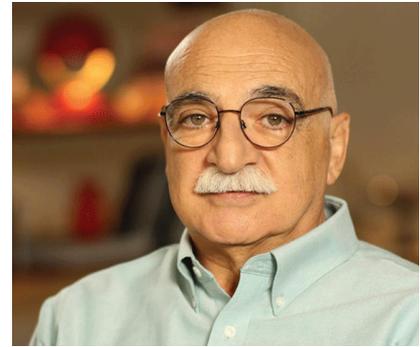
SEPTEMBER 2021

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The Day After (TDA) is a Syrian organization that works to support democratic transition in Syria, and its scope of work is focused on the following areas: Rule of law, transitional justice, security sector reform, electoral system design and Constituent Assembly election, constitutional design, economic reform and social policies.

Dedication:

The Day After would like to use the opportunity of publishing this study to express its gratitude and pay respects to the memories of professor Hassan Abbas, May Skaf, Fadwa Souleimane, Mohammad Shlash, and the martyr Mashaal Tammo. They all worked relentlessly to achieve democratic transition in Syria and ensure that all Syrians enjoy equal citizenship, with no discrimination in civil rights and duties. We also dedicate this study to the thousands of Syrian women and men who worked to lay the foundation of equal citizenship and dreamt of freedom and dignity, though we can't list all their names here.



Acknowledgement

The Day After would like to thank all the experts who took part in the brainstorming sessions and worked on developing the survey questions to be more relevant to the Syrian context. We also thank all the respondents to the survey who shared their opinions about citizenship with us.



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Executive summary:

This study depended on the statistical results of a closed survey of a sample of 2651 participants, both male and female, distributed inside Syria and outside of it, and from various religious, sectarian, national and ethnic backgrounds. They have different levels of education and varying living standards. The data was collected between March 25, 2021, and April 25, 2021, by a group of fifty-two field researchers.

This study tried to examine the opinions of Syrians regarding identity and its connection to the concept of equal citizenship and its political, social, economic, and cultural elements. Also, the study explores the relationship between the various identity affiliations and civil rights and electoral preferences and sources of legislation in the state.

Nearly a quarter of the surveyed sample, 24% exactly, said that affiliation to their family is the most important aspect of their social identity. Religious and sectarian affiliation came second, scoring 20.4 %. It was followed by national affiliation 16% and regional affiliation 12%. The surveyed individuals stated that tribal affiliation is the least representative of their social identity, with a percentage of 4.6%.

This affiliation to the family was highest among women. The percentage of the women who said their affiliation to their family was a determinant factor of their identity was 26%, while it was 21% for men.

The majority of the respondents who are descendants of national and ethnic minorities, non-Arabic, said their national affiliation is the most important factor of their social identity. The percentages were: the Kurds 30.8%, The Turkmen 26%, the Assyrians 25% and the Circassians 23.6%. While the Arabs who stated that their nationality was a determinant factor of their identity was 10%.

The percentage of responders of the Sunni sect who said their religious affiliation was the most important factor in their identity was higher compared to other religions surveyed. The percentage reached 21.3% compared to 17% for the Druze, 15% for the Alawites, and 6.8% for the Christians.

Nearly 84% of Syrians, male and female, said they were subjected to discrimination based on their identity, especially discrimination based on their religious or sectarian affiliation, with a percentage of 20.7%. In the second place was the discrimination based on your views or political orientation 18%. Discrimination based on your place of birth or place of residence was 14%. Last came discrimination based on ethnic affiliation 13.3%.

Nearly 24% of the women respondents said they were subjected to discrimination based on their gender, especially in private circles like their family, tribe, or local community. Men said they were subjected to political discrimination more than other forms of discrimination (24% for men while only 12.5% for women), and religious and sectarian discrimination (men 23.7% and women 17.7%).

The Syrian Kurds suffered the highest levels of discrimination based on their ethnic identity compared to the other surveyed groups, especially regarding employment in the state institutions and the right to education, including enrolling in state schools, technical institutes, and universities. The survey results also revealed that ethnic and sectarian minorities suffered higher discrimination based on their religious affiliation compared to the respondents from the Sunni sect. The percentages were: the Druze 30%, the Alawites 26%, the Christians 25.5%, and the Sunnis 18%.

38% of the surveyed sample said that “combating poverty, corruption and achieving economic development and food security” was their most significant priority for the future. The second priority with the percentage of 24% was “the right to liberty and security and protection of property rights.” The third was “freedom of belief, protecting the right to worship and safeguarding social customs,” with a percentage of 16.8%. The fourth priority was “meaningful public political participation that constitutes accountability and peaceful transfer of power.” The fifth priority was “freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly.”

The survey results show there is a consensus on the need to achieve equality in political and economic rights regardless of national, ethnic, religious, or sectarian affiliation.

The approval rate dropped when the participants were asked about the need for equality in political rights between women and men. 20% of men refused equality of political rights in public life with women. An increased number of males and females rejected the idea of women running for the presidency during the transitional period, and the disapproval rates were 38% for men and 18% for women.

The survey revealed that men were more accepting of the need for gender-based economic equality, including the right to work and economic development, fair pay, and the protection of property rights. Men had less approval for equal political rights like women's right to political participation, candidacy, and voting.

Nearly 97% of the surveyed sample agreed on the need for equality in the right of safe, dignified, and voluntary return of Syrians to their original places of residence, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation. The abovementioned consensus dropped by 15% when we asked about equality of the right of return regardless of the individuals' political views.

The results show that there is nearly a total agreement that women should enjoy the right to give their nationality to their children, with the approval rate reaching 92%. There was also a consensus that the Syrian nationality should be reinstated to those who have been deprived of it for political or ethnic reasons. The approval rates among the Kurds reached 95%, and 87% amongst the Arabs, and 86% amongst the remaining ethnic minorities like the Turkmens, the Armenians, the Circassians, the Assyrians, and the Syriacs.

The surveyed sample tended to agree that “Arabic should be the official language of the state, while protecting the right of other national and ethnic minorities to use their languages in their places of residence inside Syria,” the approval rate reached 56.2% of the surveyed sample. This percentage is 33% higher than the approval rate for the option “Arabic should be the official and only language of the state.” The least favourite option was “Both Arabic and Kurdish are the official languages of the state,” which got the approval of 11.6%.

The majority of the Arab respondents, 61%, said that Arabic should be the only official language of the state while protecting the right of the other national and ethnic groups to speak their languages. However, the majority of the Kurdish participants, 56.8%, said “both Arabic and Kurdish should be the official languages of the state.”

Nearly 56% of the surveyed group said that the religion of the presidential candidate in the transitional period will not be a determinant factor of their electoral preferences. Upon cross-referencing these results with the religious and sectarian affiliation of the sample, we found that 51% of the Sunni participants said that the religion of the presidential candidate in the transitional period is an essential factor for them, in comparison to 25.5 % of the Christians, 22.4% of the Alawites, and less than 10% of the Druze.

Nearly 46% of the Surveyed group agreed on “the need to adopt the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and the other international treaties as one of the sources of legislation in the state, in addition to other sources.” 36% stated that “the Islamic Sharia should be one of the sources of legislation, in addition to other sources.” The smallest percentage, 14.6%, said that “the Islamic Sharia should be the only source of legislation in the state.”

This tendency to adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the relevant international treaties as one of the sources of legislation in the state was highest amongst the respondents from religious minorities. 89% among the Christians, 78% among the Druze, 72% among the Alawites, and 83% among the other religious minorities like the Ismailis, the Yazidis, and the Shia. Nearly the majority of the respondents of the Sunni sect, 47.6%, said they want the Islamic Sharia to be one of the sources of legislation, followed by a percentage of 29.4% of those who stated that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the relevant international treaties should be one of the sources of legislation. The smallest percentage, 20.5 % of the Sunni respondents, chose Sharia as the state’s only source of legislation.

1. Introduction



Over the last five decades, the ruling Baath party in Syria systematically eradicated any inclusive and encompassing national identity. It worked on replacing it with a sense of identity derived from the Baath ideology, a narrow-minded, limiting, and totalitarian ideology that seeks to institute total domination of the ruling authority over the state institutions and the social interaction of the Syrian society. This “ideological” identity of the Baath Party has redefined the nature of the Syrian state and changed its identity to become a ban-Arab state that aspires to establish a unified larger Arab nation. This change took place in conjunction with establishing a total state hegemony over public life, both politically, economically, and socially and eliminating any space for civic or political action that is independent of the control of the state institutions.

In addition, the Syrian regime exploited the identity politics and the historical grievances of ethnic and religious minorities to further the interests of the ruling elite and their local proxies. As a result, the understanding of the concept of citizenship shifted away from being a guarantor of the social contract and political exchange in society into a narrow understanding of the term that linked citizenship to complete loyalty to the ruling Baath party, “the leader of the state and society” and to the ruling Assad family. Especially that the Syrian regime, like all other totalitarian regimes, consider active citizenship a direct threat to its hegemony and an obstacle to its effort to “baathification” of public life and the state. This made the profiteering networks affiliated to the regime the main arbiter of the nature of the relationship between the citizens and the state on the one hand, and amongst the citizens themselves on the other hand.

- With the beginning of the uprising in March 2011, peaceful activists succeeded in creating new spaces for organized civil and political campaigning. This newly established civil activism allowed an increasing number of Syrians to convene and develop political and social agendas to end the hegemony of Baath rule and achieve a democratic transition and lay the foundations for active citizenship that guarantees inclusive political participation and enhances the protection of all fundamental rights. However, the Syrian regime brutally repressed the protest movement and adopted a divide and rule policy that manipulated the sensitivities and fears of various groups, which led to the retreat of civil activism that was being replaced by a growing number of armed groups. This shift towards arming happened amongst various groups, across the political divide, and regardless of ideologies, identities, and political views. This marked an increase in violence that led to widespread displacement and chaos in governance and deterioration in security. The influence of warlords was increasing, and religious extremism was becoming widespread. This made the extreme and violent polarization among the various religious, sectarian, and national and ethnic groups a defining feature of the dynamics of the conflict in Syria. This polarization was only further exacerbated by the interference of regional and international powers that had conflicted interests in Syria, and these opposed powers imposed their control both on the Syrian regime and many of the opposition entities.
- After the establishment of the Syrian Constitutional Committee in September 2019 to be one of the UN-facilitated negotiations tracks between the Syrian regime and the opposition and the civil society representatives, the debate about the relationship between national identity, sub-identities and how are they defined in connection to citizenship and to what degree it enforces equal rights and duties among all citizens regardless of their origins became important again. However, these debates remained limited to the representatives of civil society and political stakeholders, while the broader segments of Syrians who are not involved in political activism remained largely outside this debate. That is why we used this survey to examine the opinions of a large sample of Syrians, males and females, both inside and outside the country, who descended from various sub-identities and held different political views with the aim of providing indicators of the public opinions about the concept of active and equal citizenship, how it interacts with pre-national sub-identities, and to what degree these sub-identities influence equality in political, economic, cultural, and civil rights regardless of the nationality, ethnicity, religion, sect, region, or gender.
- This report starts with explaining the research methodology and the general and regional distribution of the surveyed sample. The third section of the report details the survey's results, especially how the Syrians express their own social identity and what are their priorities in the mid to long term. The survey then presents the results of the indicators examining the opinions about equal political rights and how identity politics could affect electoral preferences during the transitional period. In addition, the survey presents the opinions of the sample about equality in the right to work and economic development, the right of safe, voluntary, and dignified return, and equality in cultural, linguistic, and civil rights, including the right of women to give Syrian nationality to their children or the right to reinstate Syrian nationality to those who have been deprived of it for ethnic and political reasons. Also, the survey attempts to measure to what extent the surveyed group identities and biases influence their opinions about what the basic sources of legislation in the state should be. The report ends with a group of recommendations regarding the political and constitutional negotiation process, civil activism, and analytical and theoretical research.

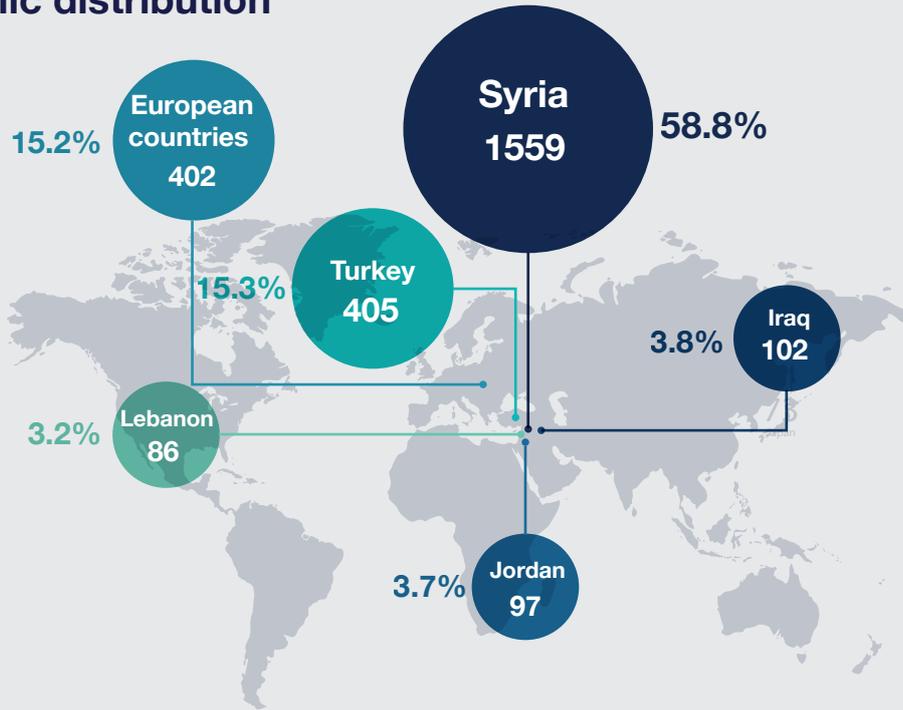
2. Methodology

- This study relied on a closed survey that was developed based on the outputs of many brainstorming sessions with a group of legal experts who are researching issues of citizenship and identities. They are working to contextualize their research to the specifics of the Syrian crisis, with the aim of reaching relevant conclusions and recommendations on how best to address the dynamics of the Syrian conflict.

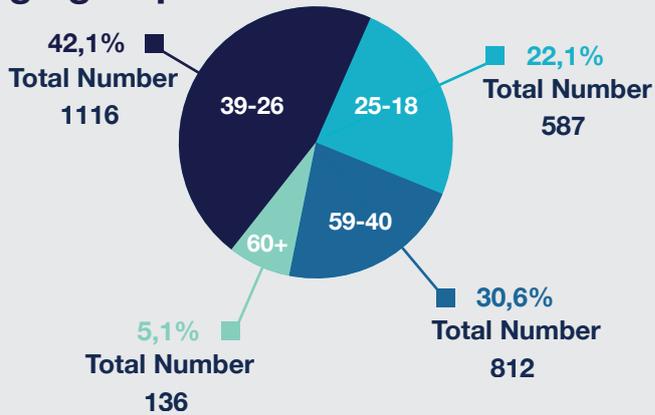
The data was collected, and the interviews were conducted with the targeted group in the period between March 25, 2021, and April 25, 2021, by a group of fifty-two field researchers, covering the majority of the Syrian governorates and the main countries where Syrians sought asylum including Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and many European countries. The field researchers received extensive training on the concepts of citizenship and identity politics. In addition, they were introduced to the best practices of data collection in situations of armed conflict, with the aim of protecting the secrecy of the identities of the respondents and not indoctrinating them politically or pressurizing them.

- The number of the participants reached 2651 Syrians, both males and females, all of them are over eighteen years old, living inside and outside the country, from various religious, ethnic, national, and sectarian backgrounds, and with varying levels of education and living standards. Table number 1 shows the breakdown of the sample based on gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sect, place of residence, education level, living standards, and income.
- This sample cannot be considered comprehensive nor fully representative of the opinions of all Syrians and all their identities, political views, and ideologies. However, the large number of respondents and the fact that the survey attempted to be as widely representative of gender, religion, sect, and ethnicity and nationality, places of residence both inside and outside Syria, and the varying educational levels and living standards could provide statistical indicators. These indicators could help build a deeper understanding of the current reality of identity conflicts in Syria and develop a group of policies and approaches regarding the political and constitutional processes and determine the strategic priorities for civil society organisations and Syrian and international NGOs working to promote active citizenship and further civil liberties and fundamental rights.

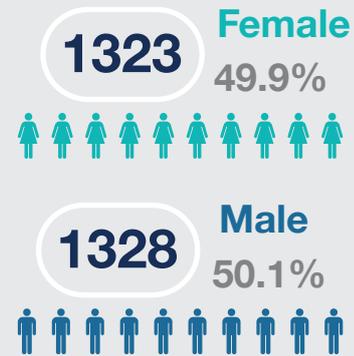
Geographic distribution



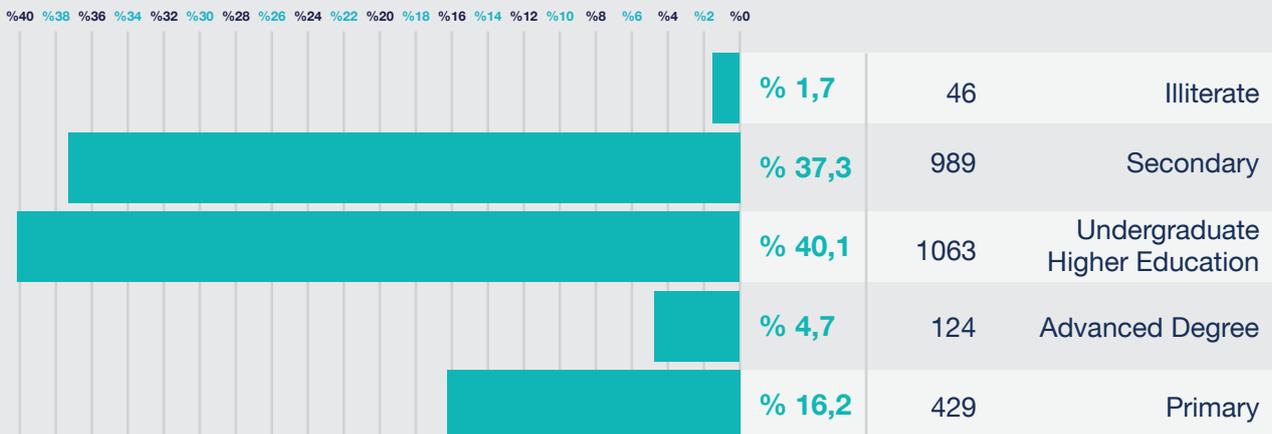
Age groups

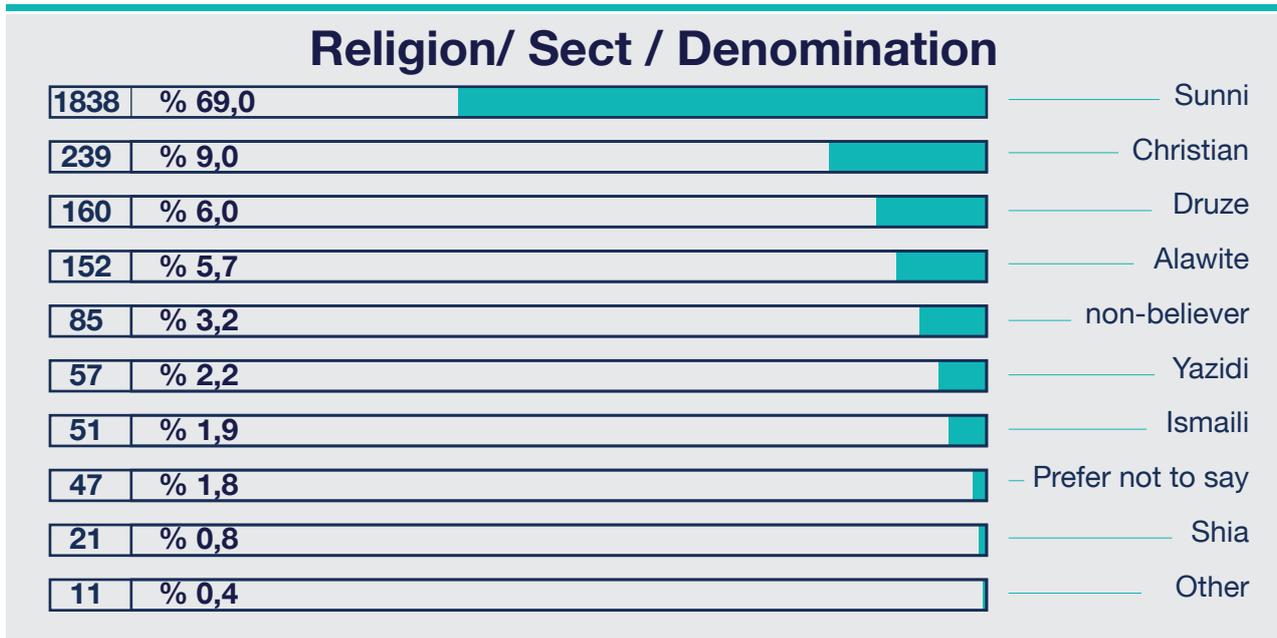
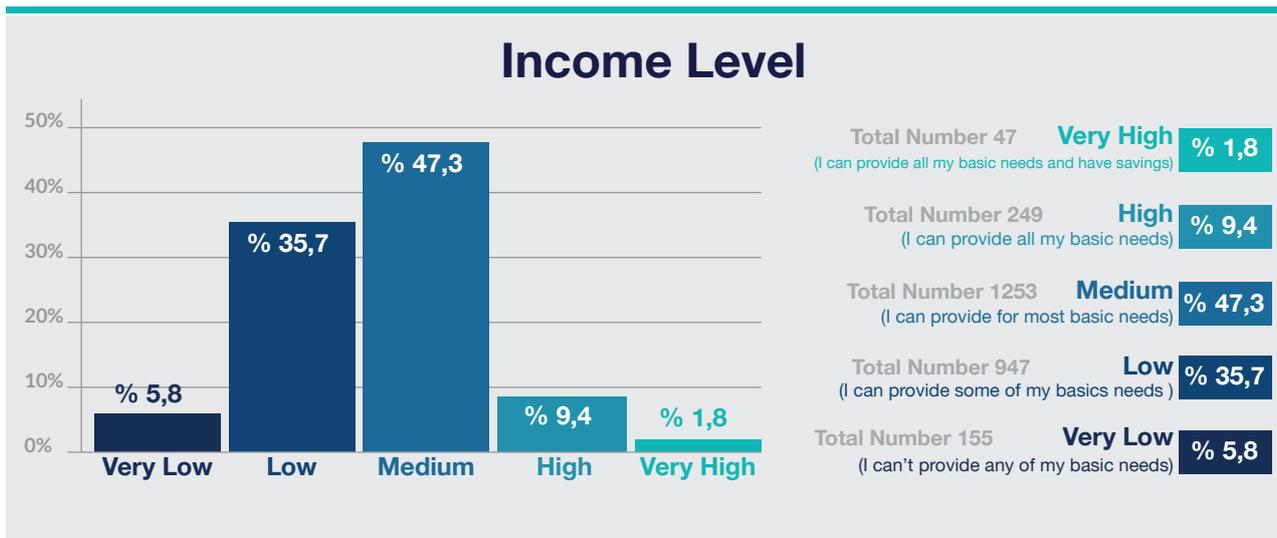


Gender



Educational Level





3. The Analysis of the Survey Results

1. Identities of the Sample

We tried in the first part of the survey to examine the pre-national sub-identities of the surveyed sample. We gave the respondents the right to choose the top three identities they think express their social identities, be it their family, religion, ethnicity or nationality, region, or political views or gender. The questions aim to measure the sub-identities, which will give indicators about the degree of polarization and identity conflict, and how it affects the implementation of equal citizenship. In addition, it could help shed light to a great degree on the various kinds of repression and identity-based discrimination in Syria, especially in the period after the Syrian uprising of the year 2011.

Which of the following identity affiliations express your social identity most?

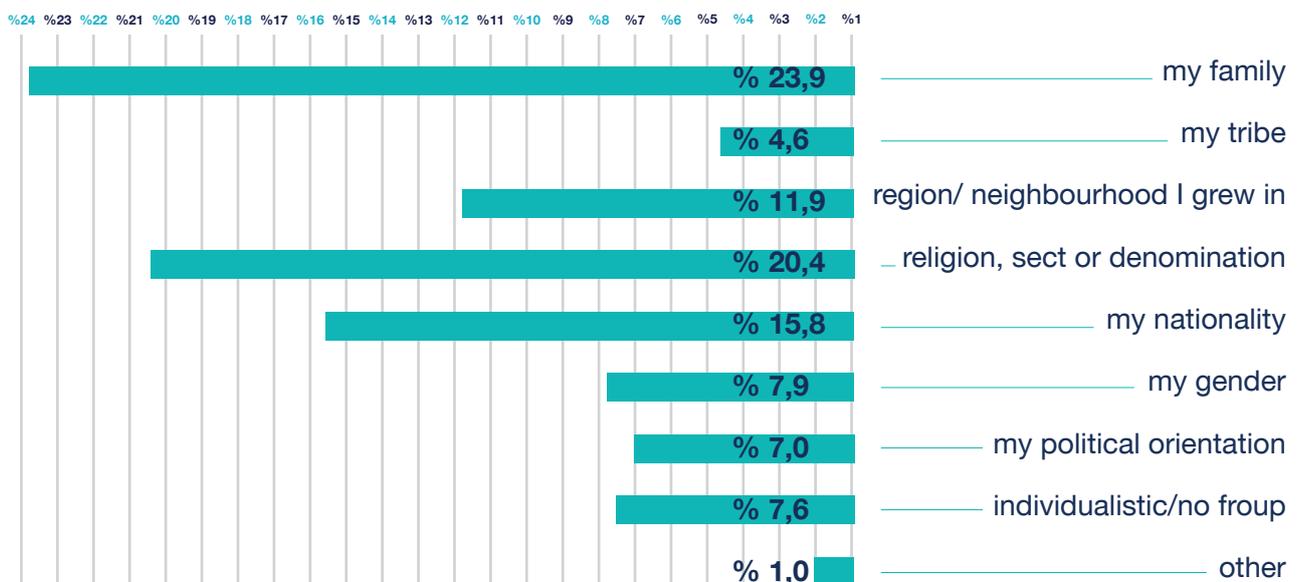


Chart 1: Identity affiliations of the surveyed group.

When we look at chart 1, we see that nearly a quarter of the surveyed group, nearly 24%, said that their sense of belonging to their family is the most defining factor of their personal social identity. The second most important defining factor of their social identity was their religious and sectarian affiliation, with a percentage of 20.4%. In third place was national and ethnic affiliation 15.8%, and in the fourth was the place of origin with the percentage of 11.9%. Tribal affiliation was the least important factor of the social identity for the surveyed group, with only 4.6%.¹

¹ The lower percentage of respondents listing tribal affiliation as a determinant factor of social identity could be explained by the limitedness of the geographical representation of the surveyed group. There was a limited number of respondents from tribal Syrian regions like Raqqa, Deir ez-Zur and Palmyra for example.

The percentage of women was highest amongst those who said that belonging to the family was the determinant factor of their social identity, 25.8% of women, compared to 21.9% of men. The perception of identity and its relationship to gender was largely different between men and women. 12.6% of women said that their gender was the most defining factor of their identity, compared to 3% amongst men. On the other hand, the percentage of men who said their political views made an integral part of their social identity was 5% higher than women. Percentages were almost equal amongst men and women who said their religious affiliation was most important (men 20.6%, and women 20.2%). National and ethnic affiliation was 3.5% higher amongst men, as shown in chart 2.

Which of the following identity affiliations express your social identity most ?

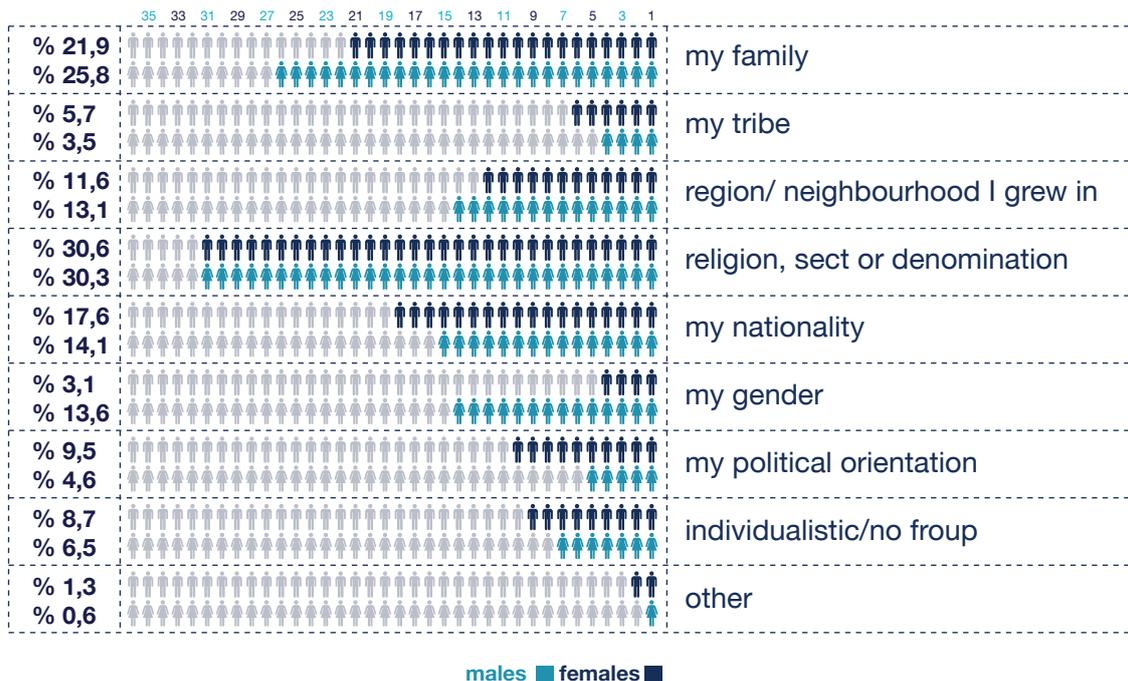


Chart 2: Identity affiliation of the surveyed group (based on the gender of respondents)

The difference of the determinants of identity between men and women could be attributed to a group of social and political factors, mainly the patriarchal nature of the Syrian society, which resulted in decades of discrimination and social oppression and political exclusion of women. Women were not allowed to take part in public life, while men were highly always politically active, which over time allowed men to be more expressive of their political views and consider them part of their social identity.

While examining the differences in the opinions expressed of those who live inside Syria and those who live outside of it, we find that the percentage of those who said their national and ethnic, religious, tribal, and place of origin affiliation are determining factors of their social identity are slightly higher than those who reside outside the country. For example, the percentage of those who live inside Syria who said that their religious or sectarian affiliation is an integral part of their identity reached 21% compared to 18% amongst those who live outside the country. The margin of difference was smaller when the comparison was about national and ethnic, tribal affiliation or place of origin, and the differences varied between 1% to 1.5%. The biggest margin was noticed when the comparison was concerning individualistic identity that is not derived from being descended from any group. While 5.5% of those who lived inside Syria said their identity was individualistic, the percentage was more than double amongst the respondents who lived outside Syria as shown in chart 3.

These figures lead us to believe that the widespread Syrian displacement that saw a huge number of Syrians forced outside their country, where they worked to integrate into new societies, only marginally reduced their sense of identity conflict. However, it has strengthened their sense of individualism. This change could be the result of the fact these Syrian refugees and migrants suffered social isolation after having lost their social support networks and also because they moved to societies that value individual rights constituted by equal citizenship over identity-based rights.

Which one of these identity affiliations express your social identity (geographical location)

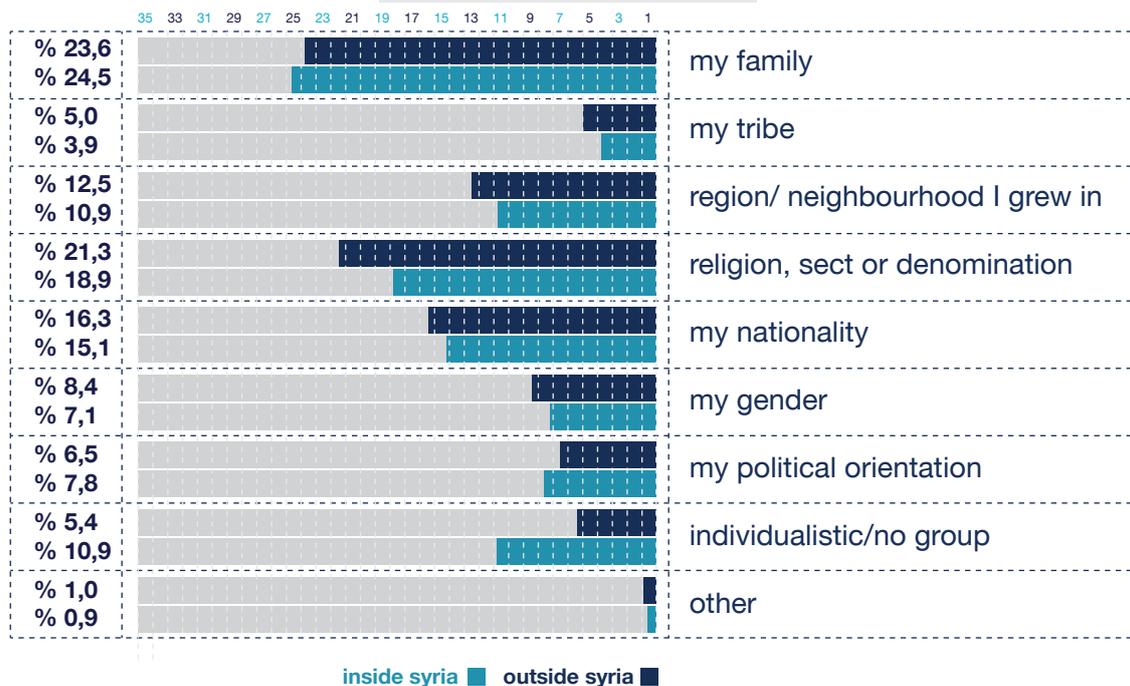


Chart 3: identity affiliation of the surveyed sample inside and outside Syria

When asked about ethnic and national affiliation, nearly 46.7% of the surveyed sample preferred not to specify and said that their identity is individualistic and not based on belonging to an ethnicity, religion, or tribe. On the other hand, the majority of respondents who belong to national and ethnic minorities said that their ethnicity was the most important factor in their social identity compared to other surveyed groups. The percentage was high in particular among the Kurds (30.6%), Turkmens (26%), Assyrians (25%), and Circassians (23.6%). The number of the Arabs who found that their national affiliation was a determining factor of their identity was less than 10%.

This increase in adopting national and ethnic affiliation amongst national and ethnic minorities could be attributed to the Arabist ideology that was enforced by the Baath party in Syria over five decades. This ideology led to the repression of the identities of the Syrian non-Arab ethnic and national minorities and to institutionalized oppression against them, especially the Kurds. This made respondents from non-Arab ethnic minorities insist that their ethnicity is a major determining factor of their own social identity.

Which one of these indentity affiliation express your social identity (nationality)

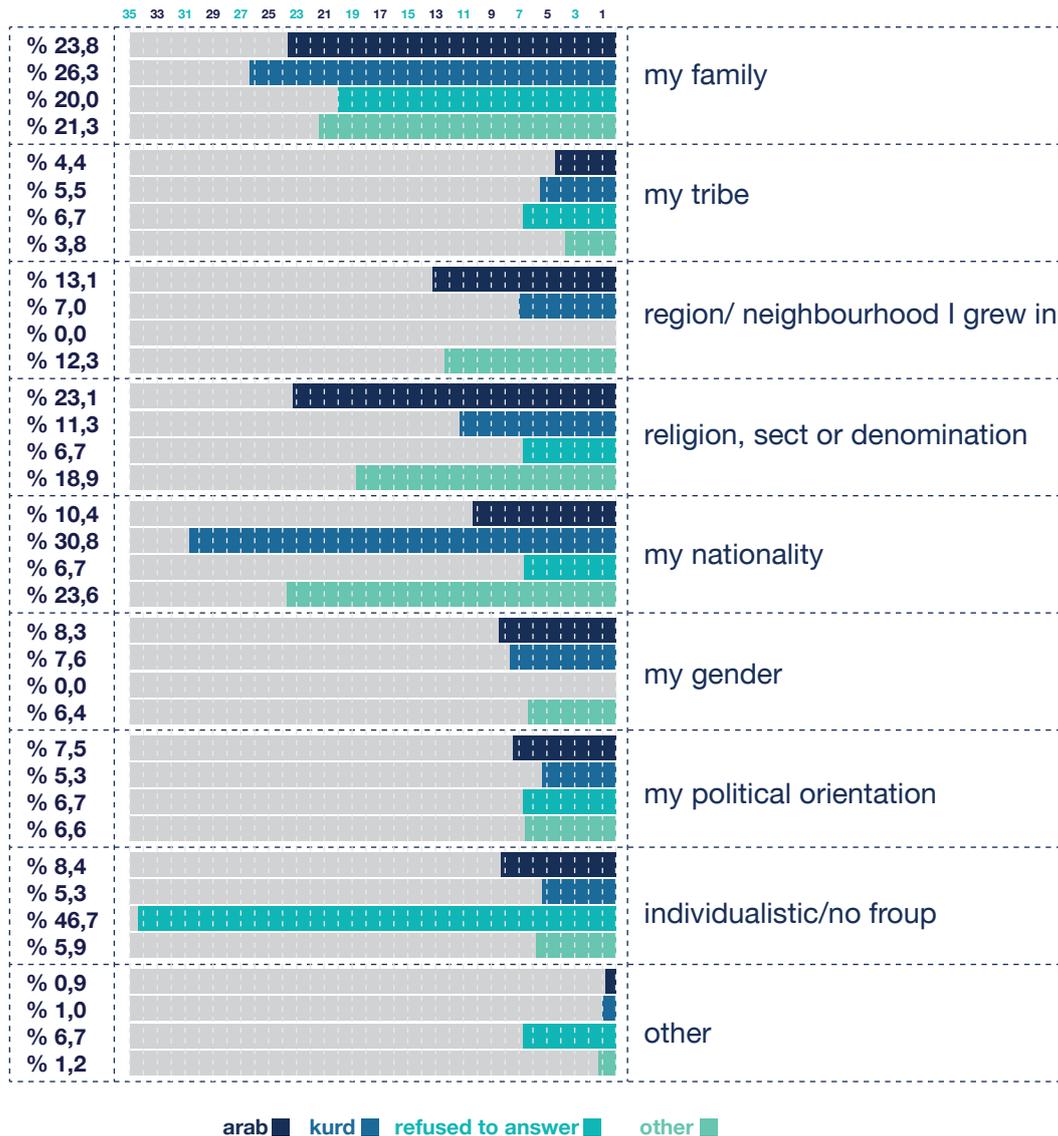


Chart 4: Identity affiliation of the surveyed group (based on the ethnicity and nationality of respondents)

When looking at the answers regarding religious or sectarian affiliation, shown in chart 5, we find a notable increase in declaring religion as a determining factor of social identity amongst the respondents of the Sunni sect in comparison to other religions and sects. The percentage among the Sunni was 21.3%, while among the Druze 17%, the Alawites 15%, and the Christians 6.8%. This increase could be explained by the increasing power of Islamist movements and their influence over the political dynamics of the Syrian conflict and the sense of historic religious grievance the Sunnis feel they suffered. The majority of Sunnis feel they are the group who suffered displacement and forced migration most, and there is a general impression that in comparison to religious and ethnic minorities, the biggest number of the victims of the violence in Syria are from the Sunni majority. The Syrian regime has manipulated and managed these sectarian sensitivities to strengthen its authority and its hegemony over society.

One of the other major differences that were noted is that a large number of the respondents from the Christian faith (25.5 %) chose the affiliation to the area or neighbourhood in which they grew up as a determining factor of their identity. The numbers were lower amongst the Alawite (15.5%), the Sunnis (12.9%) and the Druze (8.9%). This could be explained by the fact that Christians demographically lived in neighbourhoods in the cities' centres that were almost isolated from their surroundings like al-Qassaa neighbourhood in Damascus and

al-Azizzieh in Aleppo or al-Hameediye In Homs. These neighbourhoods are usually isolated socially and economically from their neighbouring districts, which will deepen their affiliation to the place of their residence. Most other sects, like the Sunnis, usually live in diverse and mixed neighbourhoods both in the cities and the countryside, which would usually be less secluded from their surroundings.

Which one of these identity affiliations express your social identity (religion/sect)

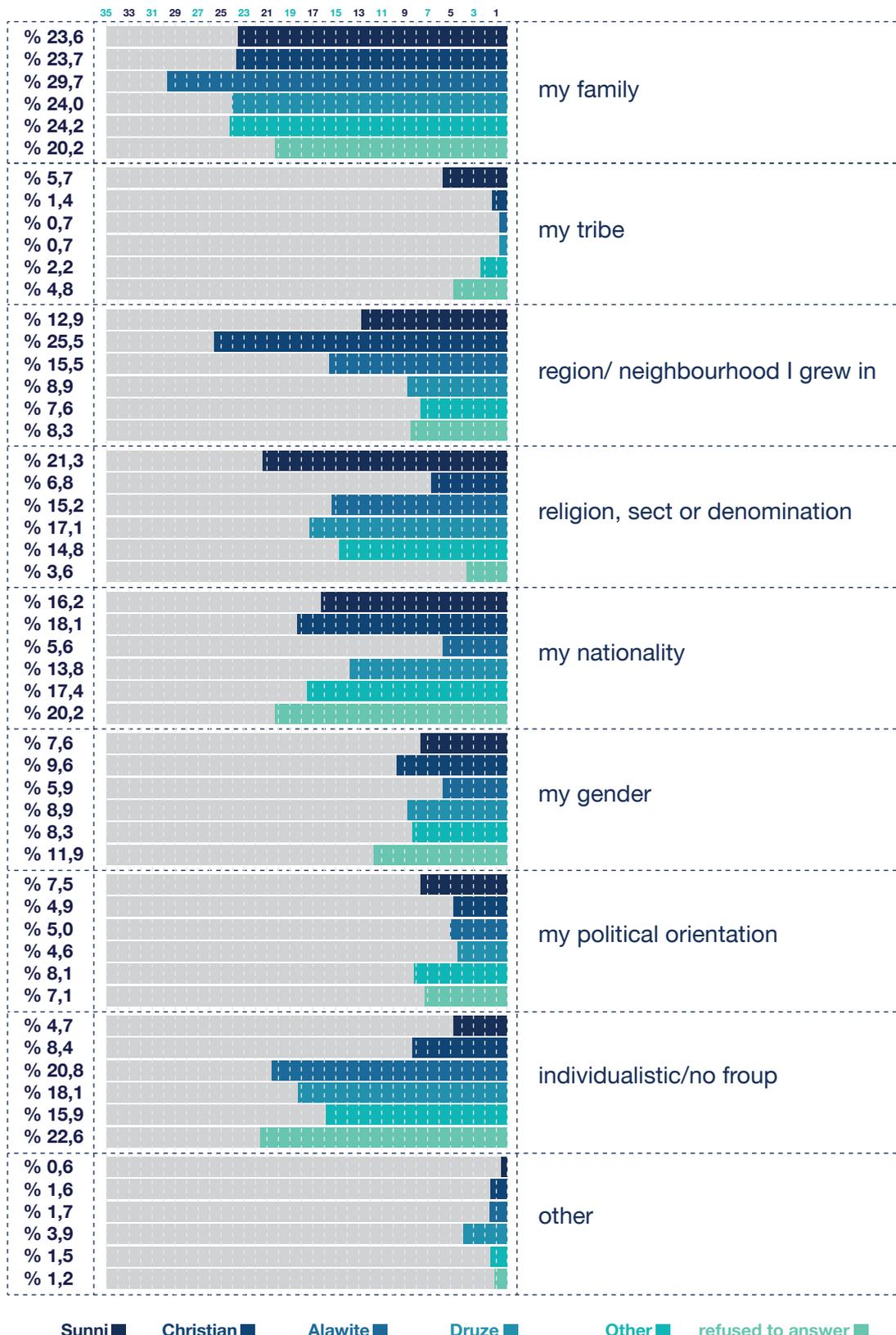


Chart 5: Identity affiliation of the surveyed group (based on the religion, sect or denomination of respondents)

2. Identity-based discrimination in Syria.

Nearly 84% of surveyed Syrians said they were subjected to identity-based discrimination inside Syria.² The biggest percentage complained of religious or sectarian discrimination 20.7%. The second was discrimination based on political views and orientation 18%. Discrimination based on place of birth or place of residence reached 14%, followed by discrimination based on national affiliation 13.3%. A total of 14.7% of the respondents said they didn't face any identity-based discrimination, as shown in chart 6.

Here we should point to the limitations of quantitative measurement of identity-based discrimination, especially that identifying the patterns of this discrimination and measuring its impact on individuals is subject to personal interpretation, which would require a more in-depth analysis of the opinions of Syrians about identity-based discrimination, its definition, and psychological and social indicators.

Have you faced any identity-based discrimination inside Syria?

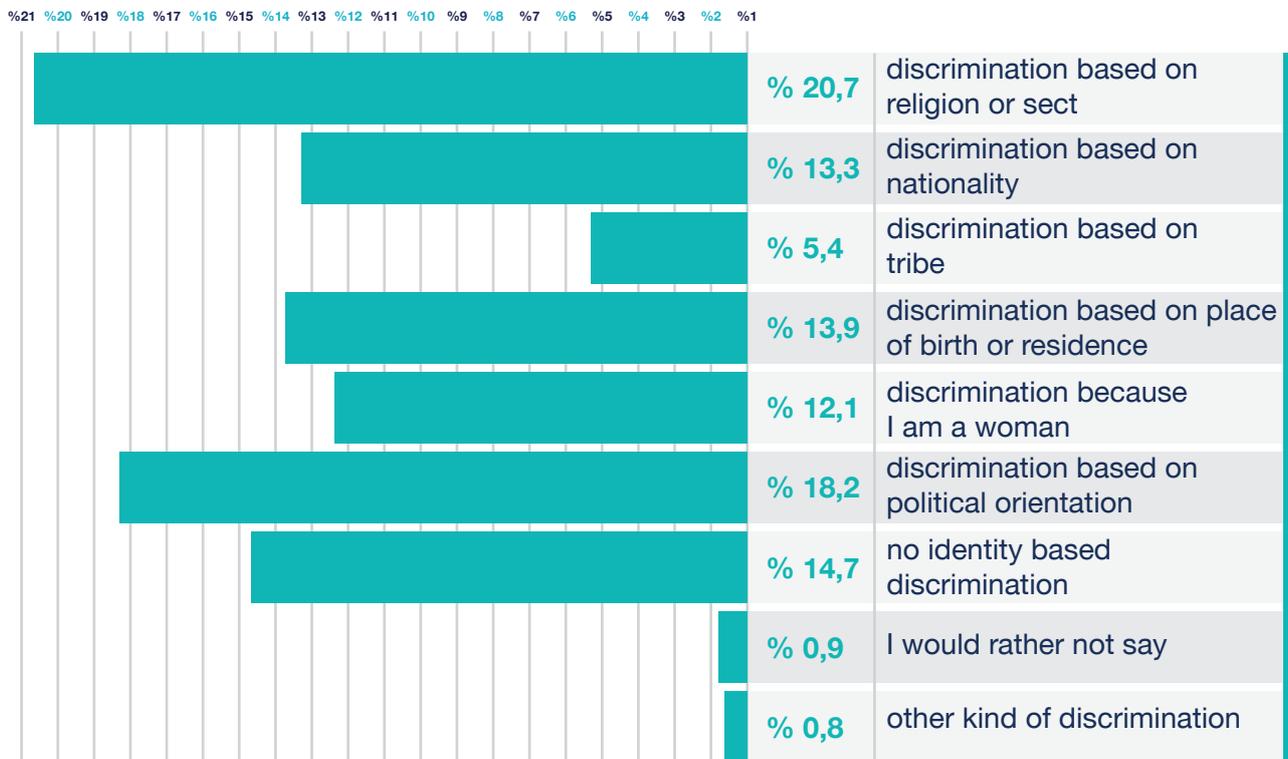


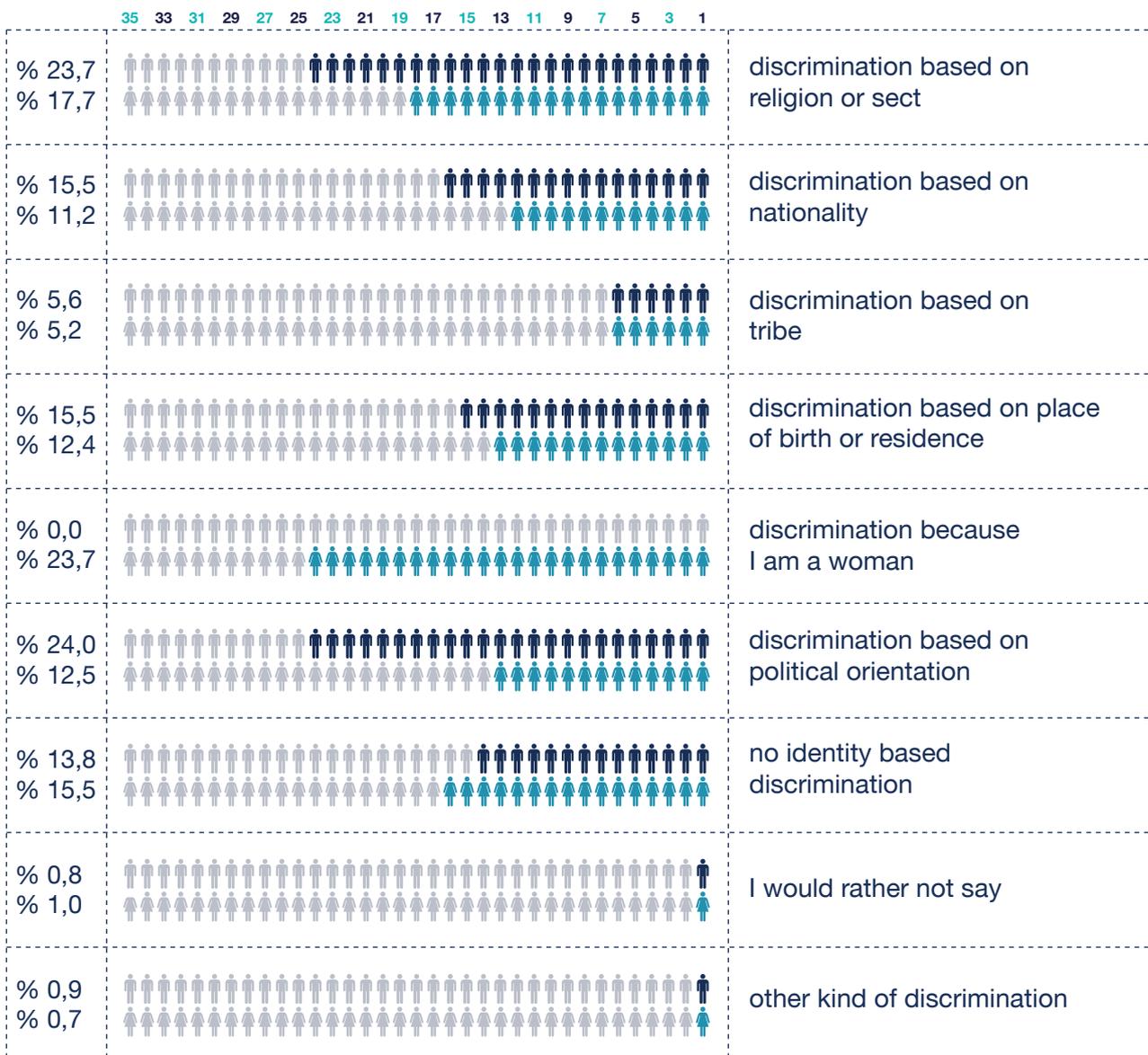
Chart 6: types of discrimination

When we examine the gender breakdown of the sample detailed in table 7, we find that a big number of female respondents said they were subject to gender-based discrimination, 23.7% of the total number of surveyed women. On the other hand, men said they were subjected more to political discrimination (24% of men compared to 12.5% of women). The figures for religious and sectarian discrimination (23.7% for men and 17.7% for women), and for national discrimination (15.5% for men and 11% for women).

2 We tried to specifically ask in the questions related to the identity-based discrimination about what types to discrimination the respondents experienced while they lived inside the country, whether they are now resident inside out outside Syria. It is highly important to study the discrimination faced by Syrian refugees, but it is not covered in this study.

This difference between men and women responses could be justified by the discrimination against women in the Syrian society that gives men more access to public life, while women roles are more confined to their family life, and their participation in political and social roles remain restricted. Men largely control public life in Syria, and considering that political, ethnic, national, and religious identity conflict and polarization is a defining factor of public life in the country, men's identity became more centred on their religious and national affiliation. This explanation is reinforced by the figures shown in chart 8 that details the places in which Syrians said they faced discrimination. Statistical figures show that men who said they face identity-based discrimination in state institutions were 15% higher than the surveyed women. Women, on the other hand, faced more discrimination in their private lives, in their families, tribe or local community. The percentage of women who said they faced discrimination in their families were 6% higher than men (8% women and 2% men).

Have you faced identity-based discrimination inside Syria?(gender)



males ■ females ■

chart 7: Identity-based discrimination based on gender.

What are the places you faced most discrimination at (gender)

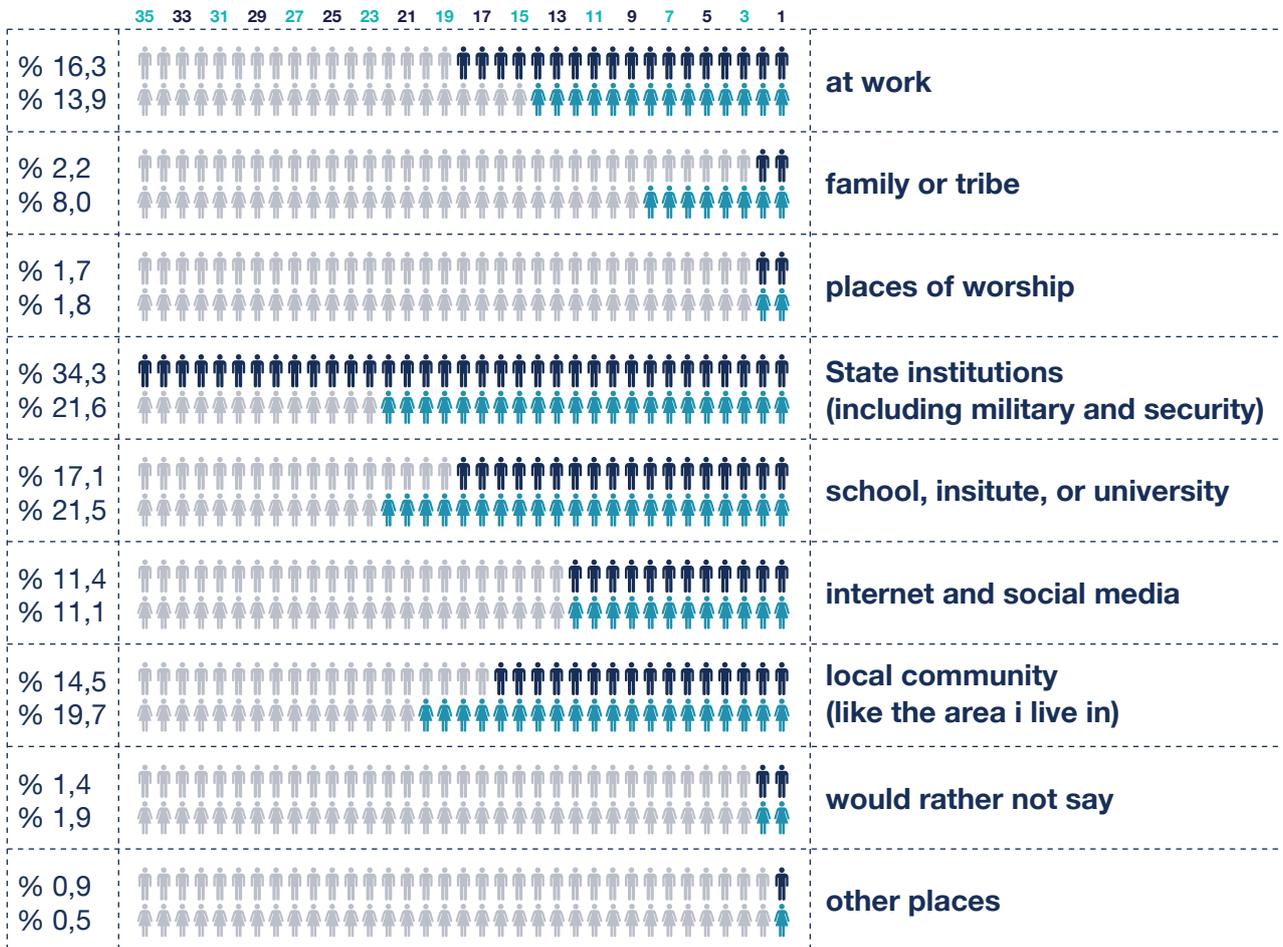


chart 8: places in which respondents faced discrimination based on gender

When cross-referencing the results of the surveyed sample with the ethnic and national affiliation of the respondents as shown in chart 9, we find that the Syrian Kurds were most subjected to identity-based discrimination in comparison to the other surveyed groups. Nearly 91% of the Kurds said they were subjected to identity-based discrimination, compared to 82% of the Arabs and the other ethnic and national minorities. National discrimination was the biggest discrimination faced by the Kurds, reaching 45%, followed by political discrimination (13%), then gender-based discrimination and discrimination based on the place of birth or the place of residence, both types of percentages were nearly 9%. The Kurdish respondents said that the place they faced discrimination most at was state institutions (30.5%), educational institutions like schools, technical institutes, and universities (24%) and their local community (15%).

These high figures could be explained by the institutionalized discrimination against the Kurds by the ruling Baath party, which deprived a large segment of the Syrian Kurds of their civil rights, including personal documentation and the right to Syrian nationality, which restricted their access to state institutions including educational institutions. This also led to an increase in the Arabic- Kurdish identity conflict in Syria and to the emergence of ethnic and national discrimination in the areas where the Kurds resided, especially in the areas outside north-east Syria that are controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Have you faced identity based discrimination inside Syria? (nationality)

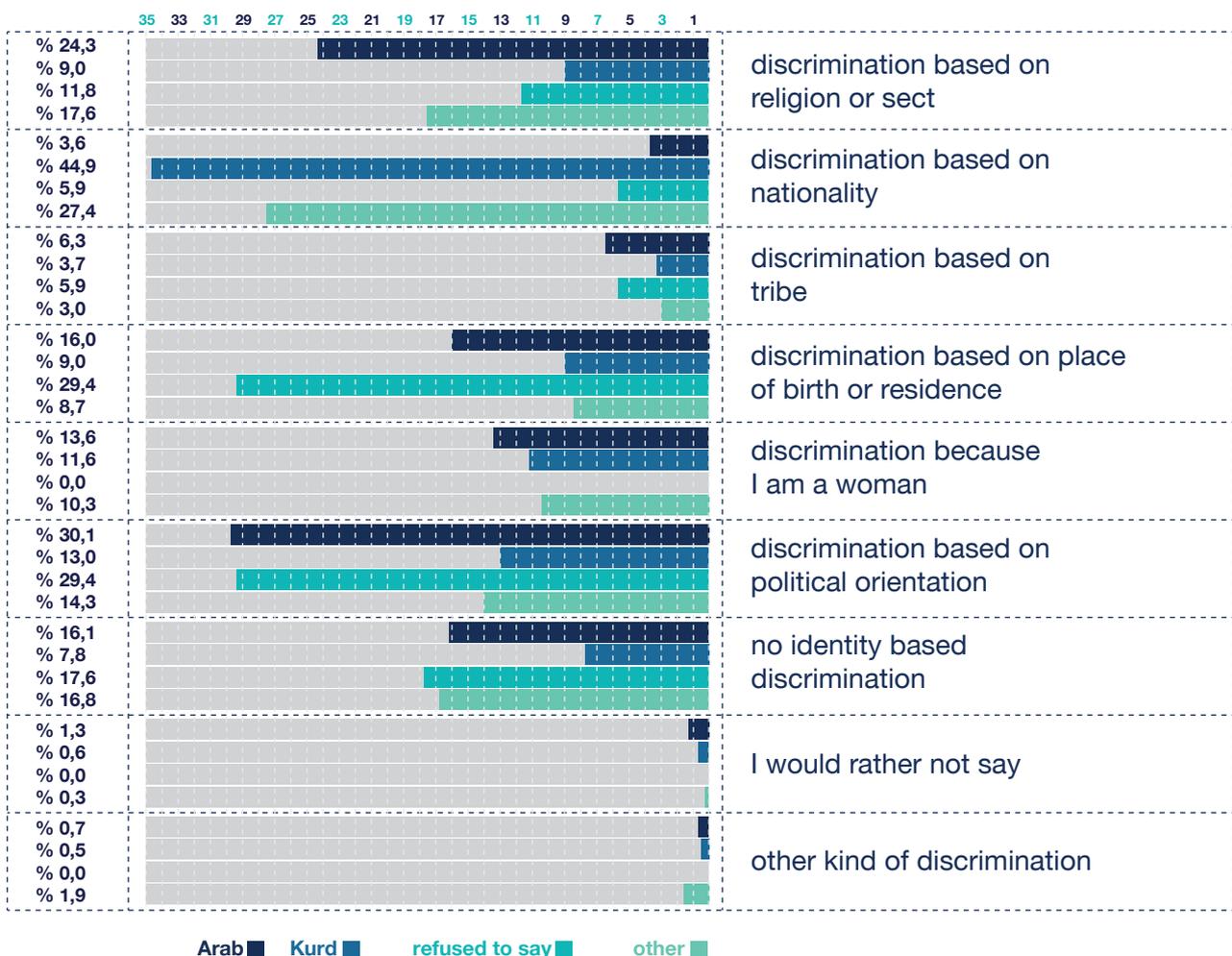


Chart 9: Types of discrimination (based on the ethnicity or nationality of respondents).

What are the places you most discrimination at (nationality)

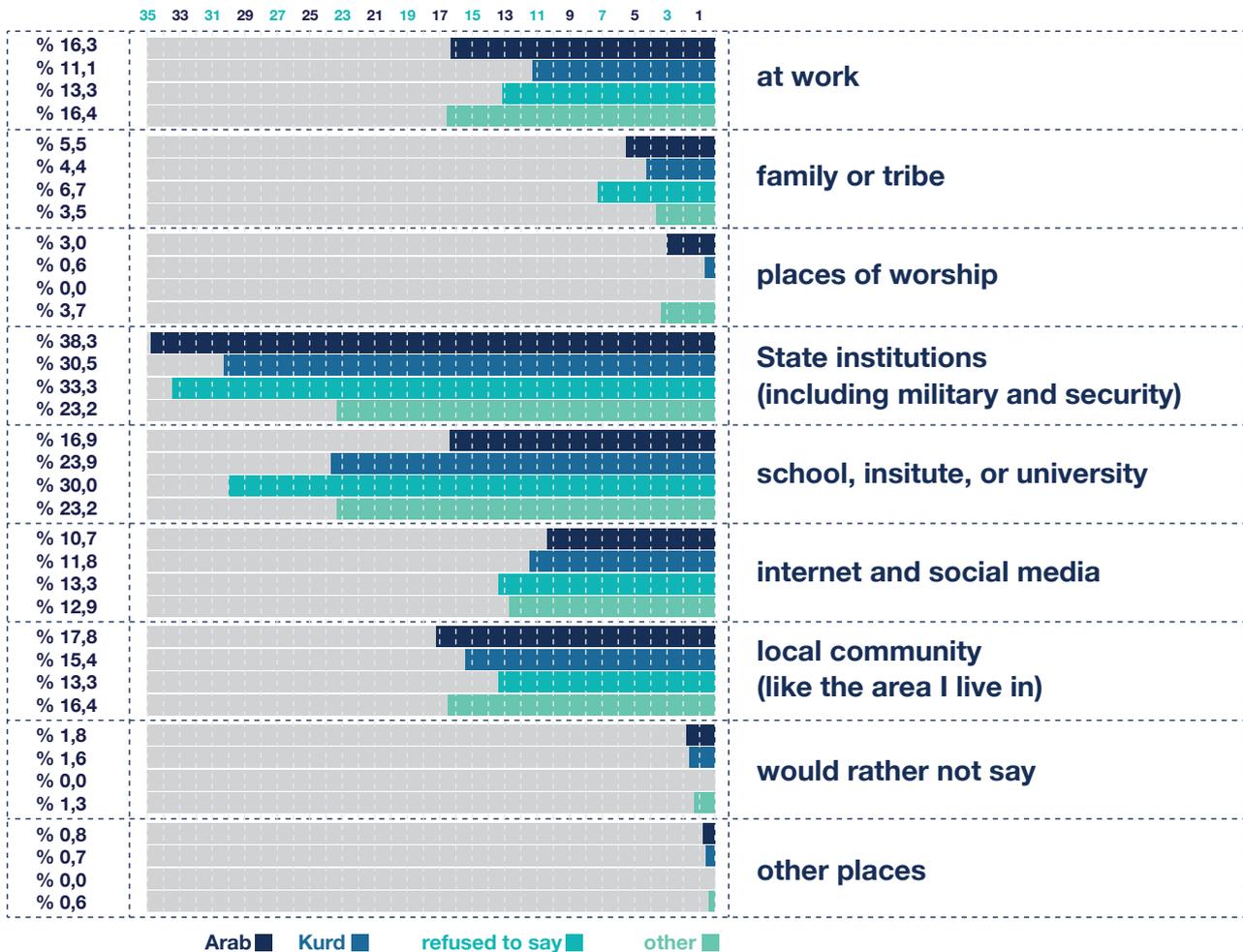


Chart 10: Places in which respondents faced discrimination (based on the ethnicity or nationality of respondents).

When examining the survey results based on the religious and sectarian affiliation of the surveyed sample, we find that the percentage of the respondents from ethnic and sectarian minorities that said they were subjected to religious discrimination was much higher than the Sunnis. The percentages were: the Druze 30%, the Alawites 26%, the Christians 25.5%, compared to the Sunnis 18%. Discrimination based on political orientation was the second-highest discrimination suffered by the minorities, especially the Druze 23%, the Alawites 21%, compared to the Sunnis 18% and the Christians 10.3%, as shown in table 11.

Have you faced-identity based discrimination inside Syria? (religion or sect)

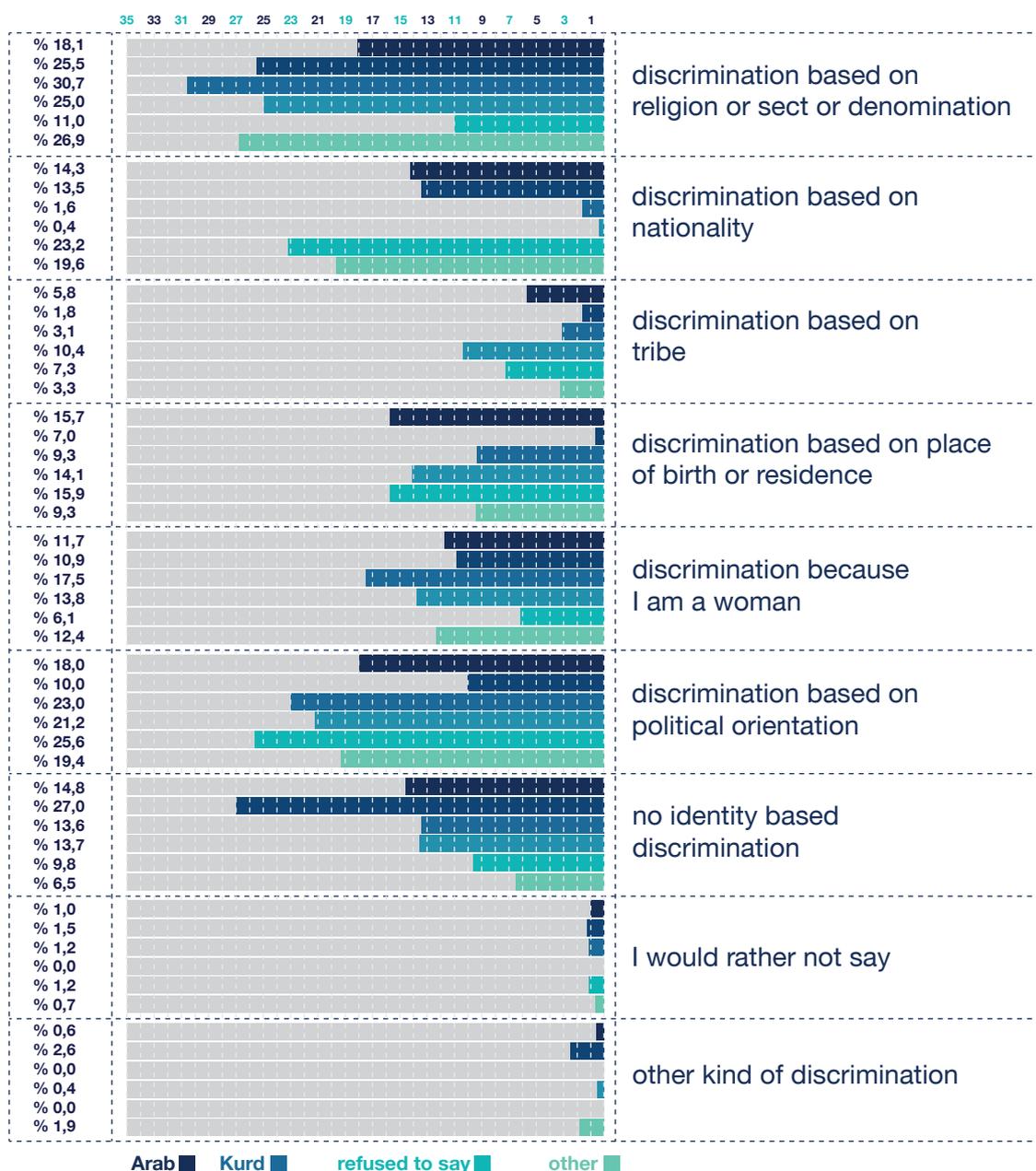


Chart 11: Types of discrimination (based on the religion or sect of respondents).

This increase in numbers representing sectarian and political based discrimination amongst the respondents from Alawite and Druze sects lead us to conclude that political views of descendants of these sects regarding the Syrian war are often stereotyped, regardless of their true position or whether they are pro-regime or pro-opposition. This inherited the minorities a sense of grievance because they felt they suffered prejudice and stereotyping of their political views based on their sectarian affiliation. This analysis is supported by the results of the survey shown in chart 12, which shows that the majority of Syrians have the impression that descendants of minorities are given preferential treatment in state institutions in comparison to other sects, especially the Alawites. However, the Alawite and Druze respondents to this survey said that state institutions were the place in which they faced sectarian discrimination most, 23.3 % of the Alawite respondents and 21% of the Druze.

Schools, technical institutes, and universities came second on the list of places where both sects faced discrimination. This shows that the state institutions have failed to introduce an inclusive social atmosphere with no discrimination or exclusion, despite the fact that these institutions are usually the places where the population needs to mix most outside their traditional social circles. At last, it is important to point out that the percentage of the Christian respondents who said they didn't face identity-based discrimination inside Syria was the highest, 27%, which is 12% higher than the Sunnis, the Alawites, and the Druze. This could be explained by the fact that the biggest percentage of the Christians who were surveyed live outside Syria now.

What are the places you faced most discrimination at (religion or sect)

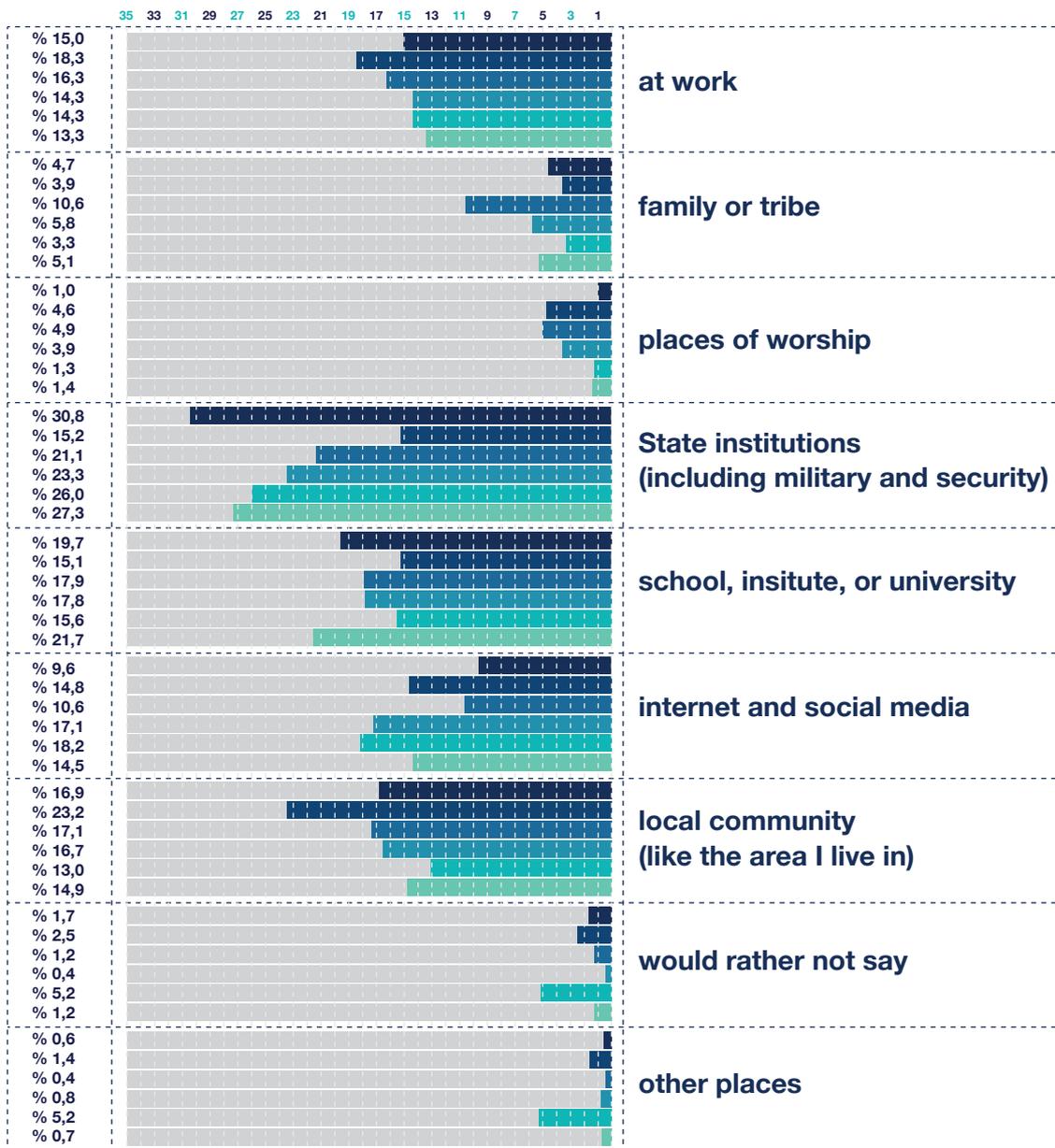


Chart 12: Places in which respondents faced discrimination (based on the religion or sect of respondents).

3. General priorities of the studied sample .

We aim in this section to conclude a group of statistical indicators about the priorities of the surveyed sample about specific political, economic, developmental, and legal issues, both in the short and medium-term. We offered the surveyed group six options to be ordered based on their priorities and personal preferences, and this is how these priorities were ranked:

Nearly 38% of the surveyed sample chose “combating poverty, corruption and achieving economic development and food security” as their most significant priority for the future. The second priority with the percentage of 24.3 % was “the right to liberty and security and protection of property rights.” Third was “freedom of belief, protecting the right to worship and safeguarding social and religious customs” with a percentage of 16.8%. The fourth priority was “meaningful public political participation that constitutes accountability and peaceful transfer of power.” The fifth priority was “freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly” with a percentage of 23.8%. At last, nearly 27% of the sample chose “safe, voluntary and dignified return of the refugees” as the last priority, as shown in chart 13.

How do you rank the following priorities? (religion or sect)

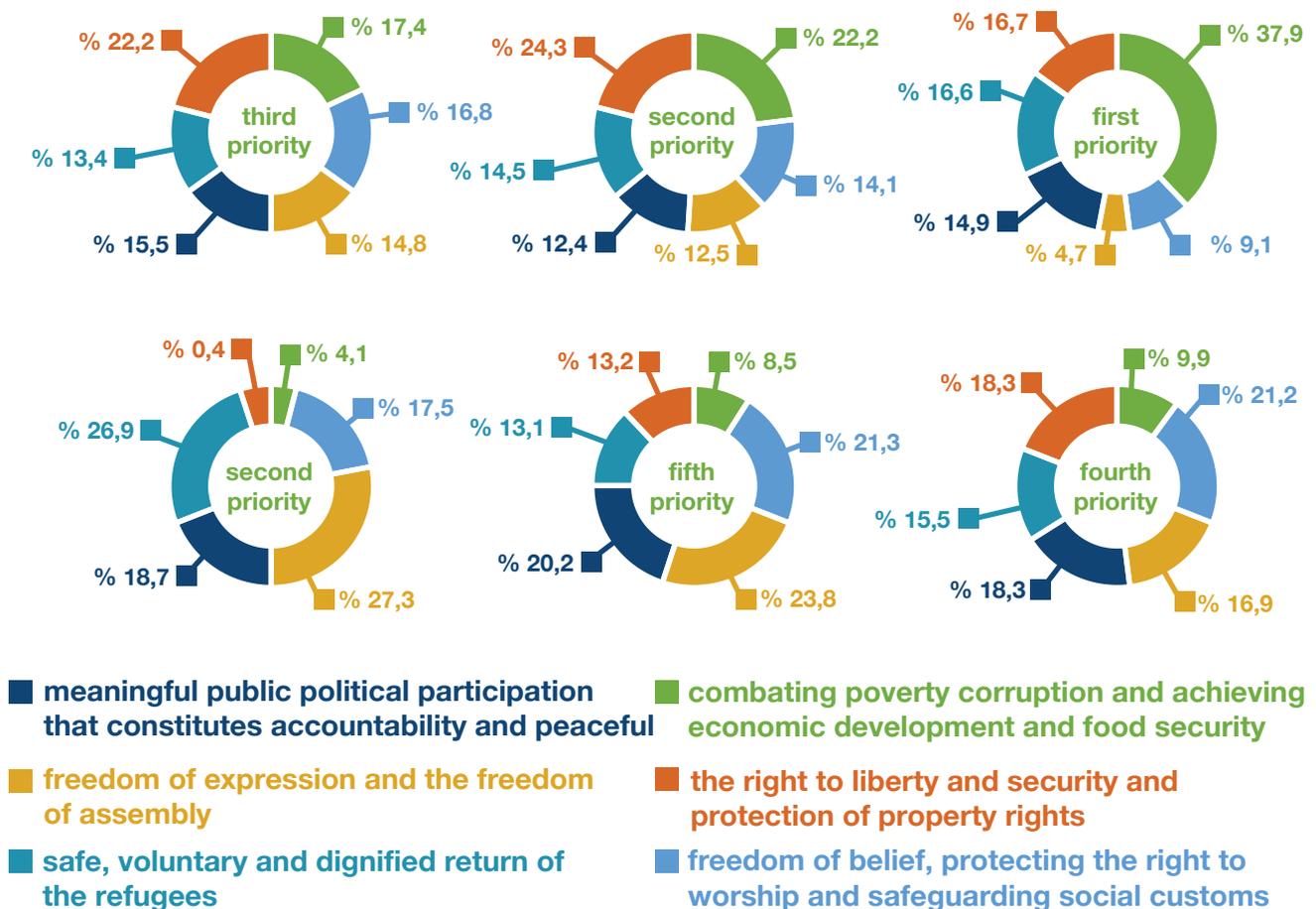


Chart 13: Ranking of the priorities of the surveyed group.

The abovementioned numbers give a clear indicator of the effects of the unprecedented economic collapse on the priorities of Syrians in the future. Especially that this collapse is exacerbated by many social and economic factors, most notably the deepening of the economic monopoly of profiteering networks and the warlords, and the widespread corruption and nepotism, accompanied by the inflation of the Syrian pound and a rise in poverty and unemployment and severe shortages of basic supplies like petrol, wheat, and sugar.³

This deteriorating economic situation and living standards made the majority of the respondents choose combating poverty and corruption and the need to create a balanced economic development as their first priority for the future. They considered that a more pressing priority compared to political, social, and cultural liberties and rights. What supports this conclusion is that the majority of the surveyed sample, especially those who are living outside Syria, said that safe, voluntary and dignified return of the refugees was their last priority, mainly because they feel that the return of the refugees is dependent on the development and the improvement of the economic situation and living conditions in their original neighbourhoods and places of residence.

When cross-referencing these results with the gender division of the sample, we found that there are similarities between men's and women's priorities in the next stage. Both men and women choose combating poverty and corruption and achieving balanced economic development as their first priority, with a percentage reaching 38% for both men and women. We found an increase in the percentage of women who chose the right to liberty and security and protection of property rights as their second priority, which reached 18%, compared to 15% of men.

This difference can be explained by two main factors. The first factor is the lack of personal security women feel they suffer in the light of the unprecedented rise of gender-based violence against women in the last decade, in addition to the collapse of social safety nets and the total absence of any legal institutions or rights groups, whether official or not, that can provide the needed protection for women. Also, personal firearms are widespread amongst men without any legal or social restrictions.⁴ The second factor is related to the protection of private property rights, multiple Syria-related studies and reports stated that the cases of illegal seizures of the properties of Syrians are rife, both by the Syrian regime and by armed groups from the different political and ideological forces on the ground.⁵ Women, however, remain more likely to have their private properties stolen by their husbands or family members, either because of the traditions and discriminatory social norms against women, or due to women's inability to access legal, judiciary and independent services that are capable of assisting in protecting their private property rights.⁶

³ Charles Lister, 2021 Would Be a Conclusive Year for Syria, Asharq Al-Awsat, January 12th, 2021.

⁴ WILPF and Dawlaty (2020). Sexual violence by force of arms against women in Syria: A tool of political repression, social dismantling and impoverishment of women and communities. Available at: <https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Sexual-violence-by-force-of-arms-against-women-in-Syria-t.pdf>

⁵ NRC (2016). Housing Land and Property (HLP) in the Syrian Arab Republic. Available at: <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/housing-land-and-property-hlp-in-the-syrian-arab-republic.pdf>

⁶ NRC and UNHCR (2017). Displacement, housing land and property and access to civil documentation in the south of the Syrian Arab Republic. Available at: https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1405606/1930_1503398808_final-nrc-displacement-hlp-and-civil-doc-s-syria-23-07-2017-en.pdf

Chart 14 shows a decrease in the numbers of high-income and very high-income earners who prioritized combating poverty and achieving economic development. At the same time, there was a remarkable increase amongst them for prioritizing political participation and peaceful transfer of power, the percentage reached 21% amongst high-income earners and 34% amongst very high-income earners. These indicators were similar when we cross-referenced these results with the levels of education. We found that combating poverty and achieving balanced economic development was the first priority for the majority of the surveyed groups, especially for primary education respondents (40.3%) and for illiterate (43.5%). On the other hand, other priorities like political participation and peaceful transfer of power got remarkably higher percentages amongst respondents with undergraduate higher education (16.2%) and with advanced degrees (27.4%), compared to respondents with primary education (8.4%) or illiterate (2.2%).

How do you rank the following priorities? (income level)



- meaningful public political participation that constitutes accountability and peaceful
- safe, voluntary and dignified return of the refugees
- the right to liberty and security and protection of property rights
- combating poverty corruption and achieving
- freedom of belief, protecting the right to worship and safeguarding social customs
- freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly

Chart 14: Ranking of the priorities of the surveyed group (based on income level).

When cross-referencing the results against the ethnic and national affiliations of the surveyed group, and despite listing a priority related to protecting the freedom of belief, the right to worship and safeguarding social customs, we found that the majority of the ethnic and national groups surveyed chose combating poverty and corruption and balanced economic development as their first priority. The percentages were 39% for the Arabs, 33% for the Kurds, and 39% for the remaining ethnic and national minorities. Similarly, this priority was the first for all religious and sectarian groups surveyed, with the percentage of 55% for the Alawites, 45% for the Christians, 39% for the Druze and 36% for the Sunnis, as shown in table 15. These percentages reassert our conclusion that the crisis in living conditions and the economic collapse in Syria is the primary concern for most Syrians regardless of their identity affiliation, and that is why they focused on economic conditions as their most important priority for the short and medium-term.

How do you rank the following priorities? (religion / sect)

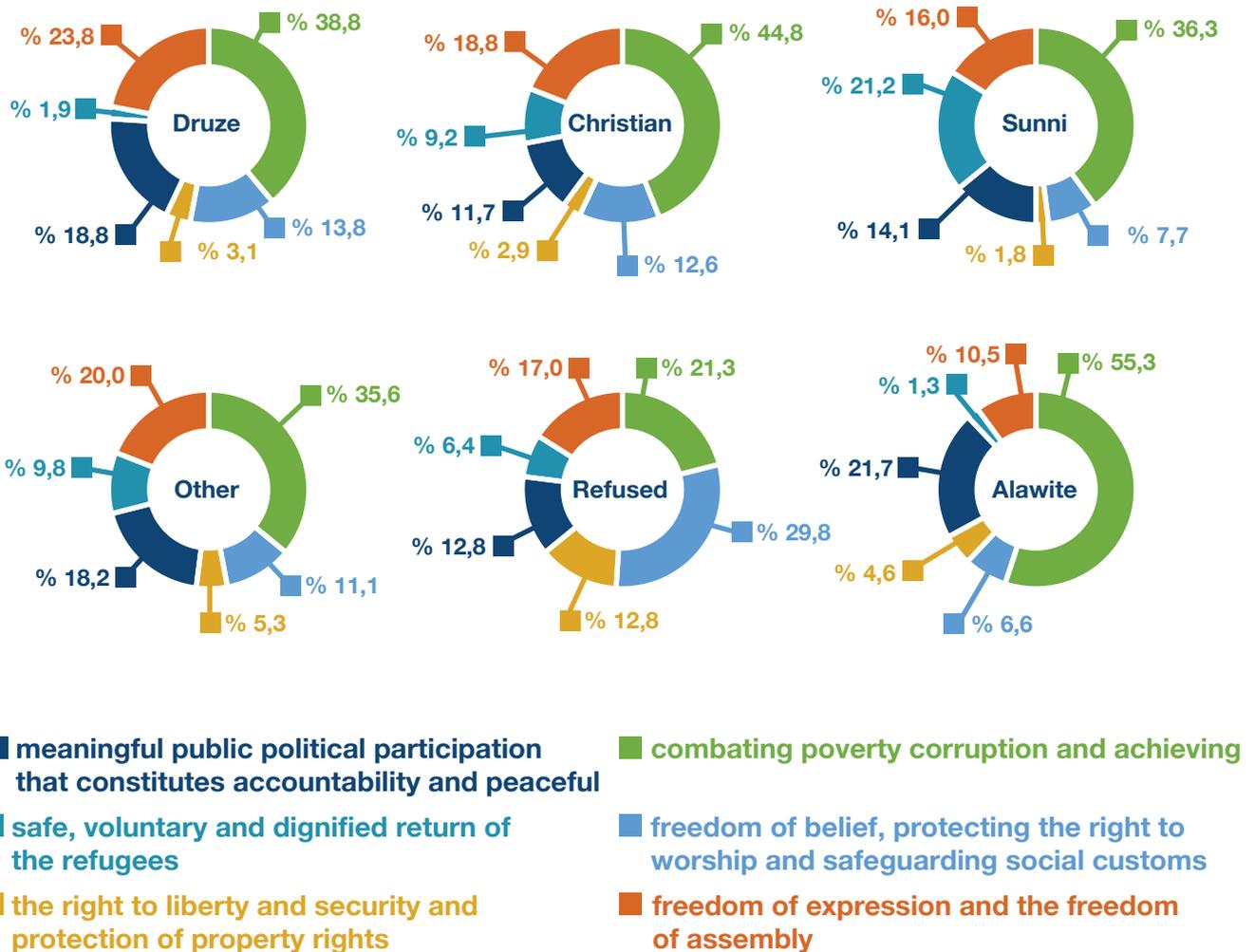


Chart 15: Ranking of the priorities of the surveyed group (based on the religion or sect of respondents)

4. Equality in Political Rights.

In this section, we study the agreements and differences of opinions of the surveyed sample, especially regarding the right to participate in public life, and the right to vote, the right to candidacy and to form parties. The sample includes Syrian, both males and females, who come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and different regions and areas in Syria.

Charts 16 and 17 show that there is an agreement among the respondents regarding the right to equal political rights for all nationalities and ethnicities (with a percentage of 96.4%), and equal political rights for all religions and sects (with a percentage of 95%). When we cross-referenced the answers to these two questions with the national, ethnic, religious, and sectarian affiliations and the living standards and education levels of the surveyed sample, we found that the agreement on the necessity of equal political rights for all ethnicities and religions was asserted by the respondents regardless of what is their individual identity, their ethnicity or nationality, or their income levels.

Do you agree that all Syrians should have equal political rights regardless of their national affiliation?

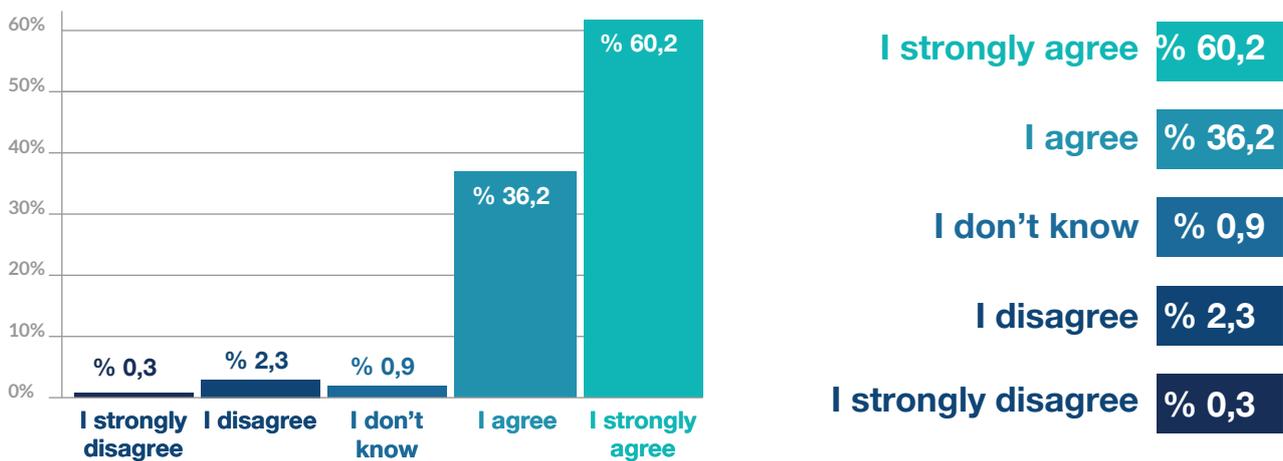


Chart 16: Equality of political rights, regardless of the national affiliations.

Do you agree that all Syrians should have equal political rights regardless of their religious and sectarian affiliation?

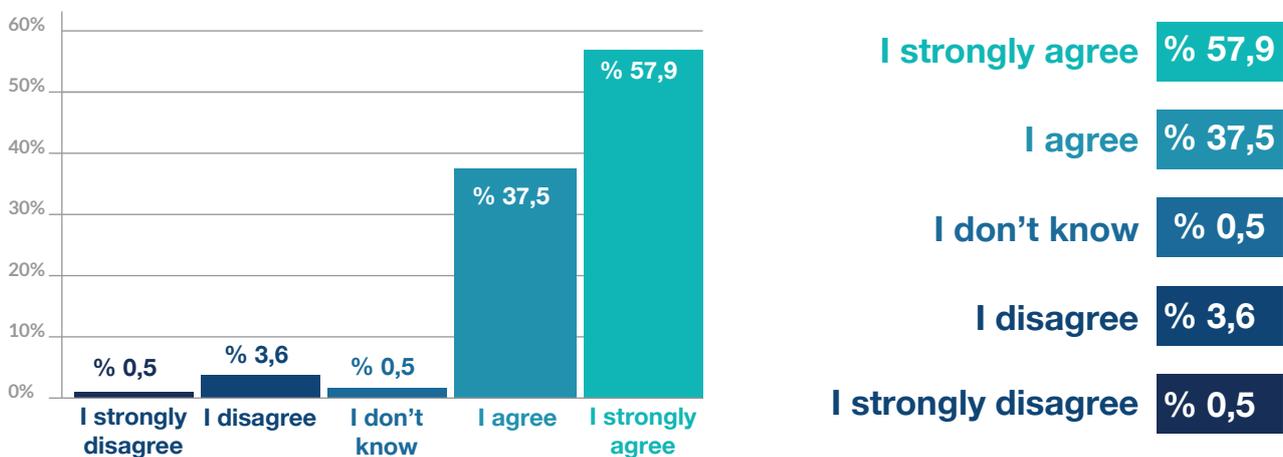


Chart 17: Equality of political rights, regardless of the religious or sectarian affiliations.

The agreement margin was narrower when we asked about equality in political rights between men and women. chart 18 shows that the majority of respondents agreed to the need for equal political rights for both genders, with a percentage exceeding 85%. However, the disapproval percentage was 14% of the surveyed sample, a higher percentage than those who disapproved of equal political rights for all nationalities and ethnicities 2.6%, and those who disapproved of equal political rights for all religions 4%. These figures made us analyze the disapproval rates and cross-reference them with the gender, identity, and place of residence of the surveyed sample.

Women and men should have equal political rights?

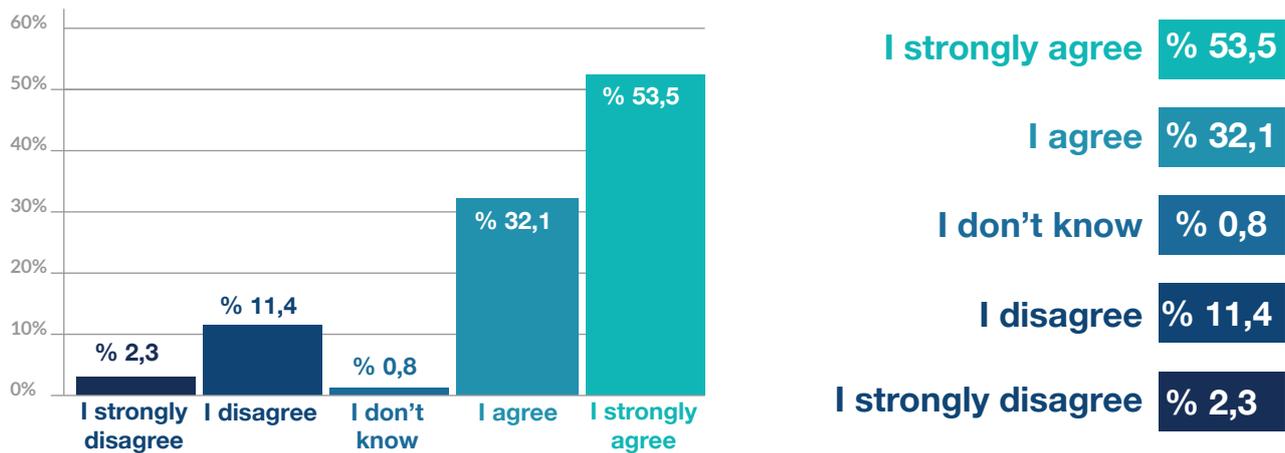


Chart 18: Gender-based equality of political rights.

Chart 19 shows that the highest percentage of disapproval for equal political rights for men and women was amongst men, with a percentage of 20% of all surveyed men. In addition, those who lived inside Syria showed higher disapproval 15.5%, in comparison to those living outside the country 11%. The disapproval was even higher amongst men with lower educational levels (men with primary education 23.5%, and illiterate men 14%) and men with lower-income levels (17% amongst lower-income and 16.8% amongst very low-income).

Women and men should have equal political rights? (gender)

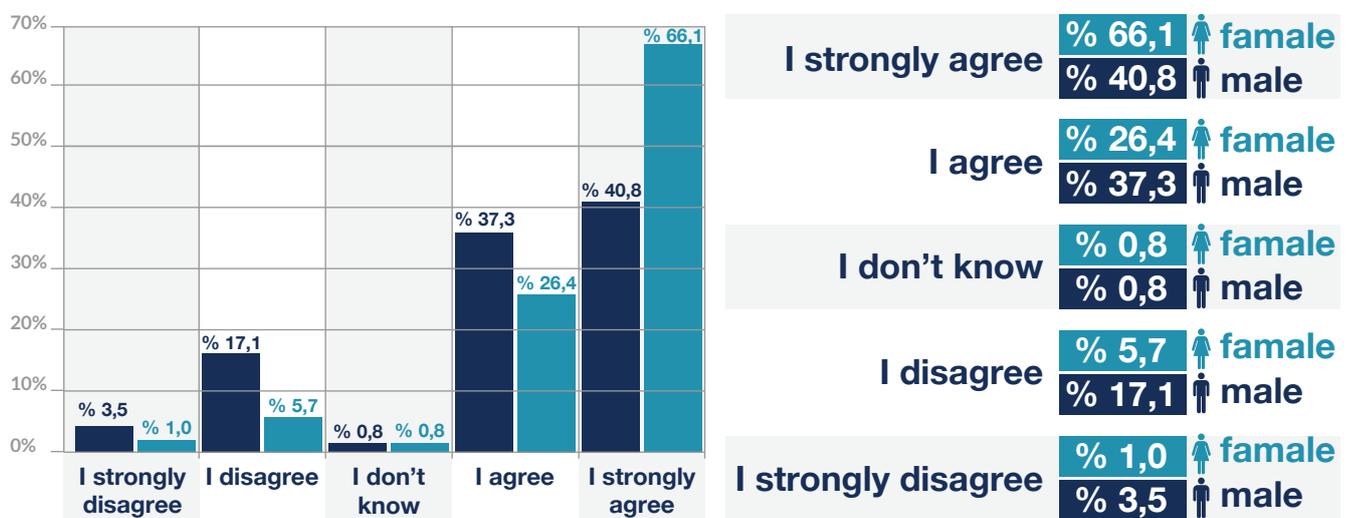


Chart 19: Gender-based equality of political rights. (based on the gender of respondents).

Figures shown in charts 20 and 21 reveal that the percentage of disapproval was lowest amongst the Kurds 5%, followed by the remaining ethnic and national minorities, less than 9%. Arab respondents were the highest nationality that expressed disapproval for equality amongst men and women 16.8%. When examining the answer based on religious affiliation, we found that disapproval rates amongst the religious and sectarian minorities to be similar (7% amongst the Christians, 6% amongst the Alawites, and 4% amongst the Druze). The disapproval rate was considerably higher between respondents from the Sunni sect 17.6%.

The abovementioned figures and statistics show that there is a near consensus between the respondents about the need for equal political rights regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, or sect. The approval rate was considerably lower amongst men regarding gender-based equal political rights, especially amongst men living inside Syria, and men with lower education levels and income levels, and men who are more religious. These men are more socially conservative and adhere to social customs and traditions that are largely discriminatory against women. The origin of this conservatism doesn't necessarily stem from their religion or nationality, and it makes these men refuse any true political participation for women in public life. However, this social conservatism is not the dominant mood amongst Syrians regarding gender-based equal political rights.

Women and men should have equal political rights? (nationality)



I don't agree strongly ■ I don't agree ■ I don't know ■ I agree strongly ■ I agree ■

Chart 20: Gender-based equality of political rights. (based on the nationality or ethnicity of respondents).

Women and men should have equal political rights? (religion/sect)

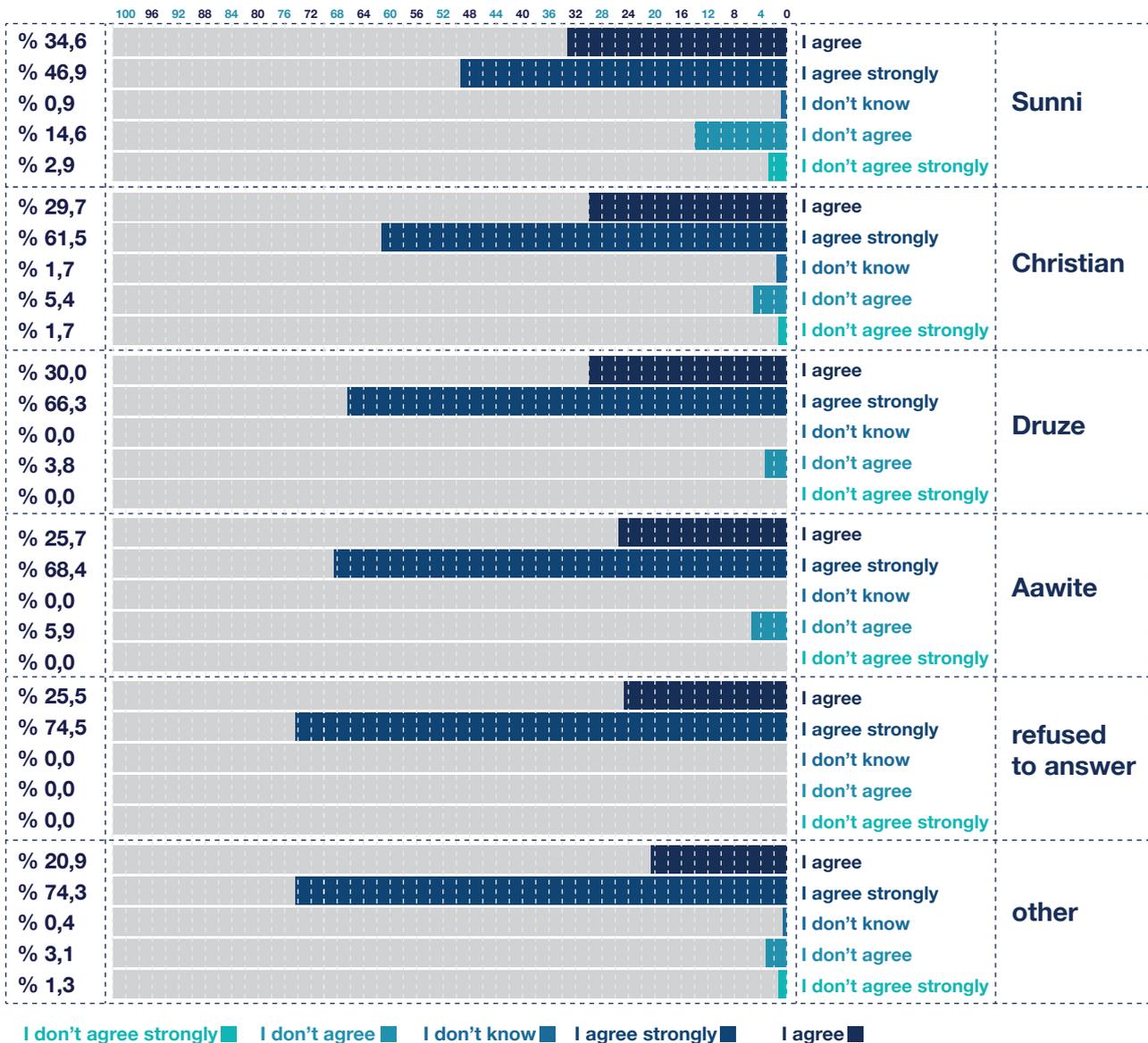


Chart 21: Gender-based equality of political rights. (based on the religion or sect of respondents).

5. Identity affiliations and electoral preferences.

In most local conflicts, the transitional election that takes place after reaching a political settlement is vital in securing a democratic transition in the future and in instituting democratic traditions in state institutions and the way they interact with the local society. In addition, the first election is an important indicator of the future and margin of civil liberties and to what extent political participation would be active and inclusive in the future. In the Syrian context, the critical ideological and identity conflict, and the widespread gender-based discrimination in political and civil life would have the biggest effects on electoral preferences of a large number of Syrians regardless of their national, religious and sectarian affiliation.

In this section, we tried to measure the degree to which the respondents' individual identities would affect their electoral preferences in the transitional election. We focused mainly on two issues: first is the issue of supporting a woman running for the presidency in the transitional period, and second how would the religion of the future candidate affect the electoral preferences of the surveyed group.

1 Women's right to run for presidency during the transitional period

Chart 22 shows a noticeable decrease, nearly 16% of the rate of approval for a woman running for the presidency in the transitional period when compared to chart 16 that reflects the approval rate for gender-based political equality. 69.4% of the respondents approved of a woman running for the presidency, compared to 85% who agreed that women and men should have equal political rights. The rate of disapproval of women running for the presidency was higher both amongst men and women. While 6.7% of the female respondents said they disapproved of granting women equal political rights, the disapproval rate amongst women participants rose to 18.4% when they were asked if they supported a woman running for the presidency in the transitional period. Similarly, the number of men who don't support a woman running for the presidency after reaching a political settlement reached 39%, as shown in chart 23.

In case there was a fair and independent election in the future under the supervision of the UN and all Syrians are guaranteed the right to vote, would you support a woman running for presidency?

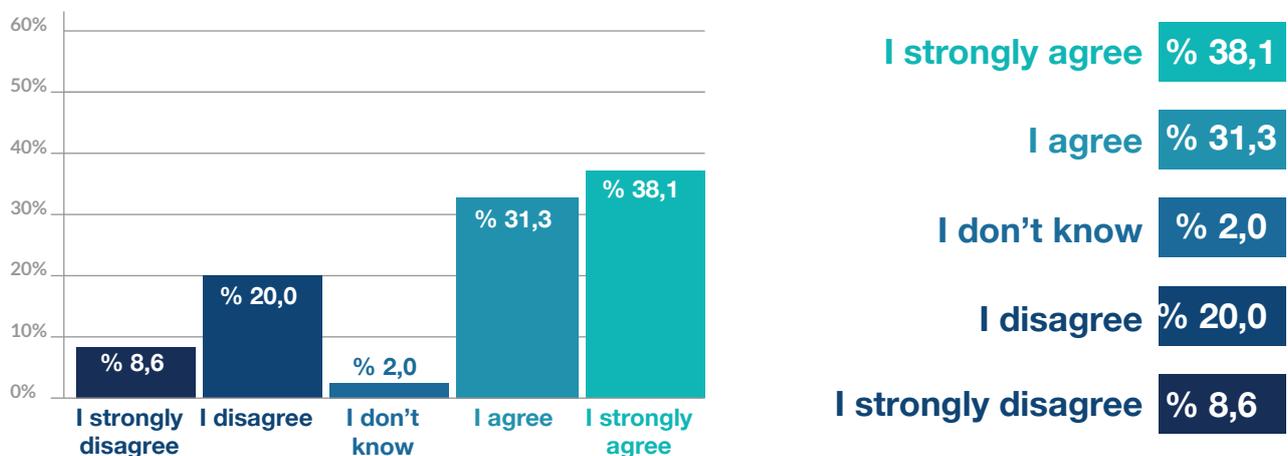


Chart 22: Percentage of support for a woman running for the presidency in the transitional period.

In case there was a fair and independent election in the future under the supervision of the UN and all Syrians are guaranteed the right to vote, would you support a woman running for presidency?(gender)

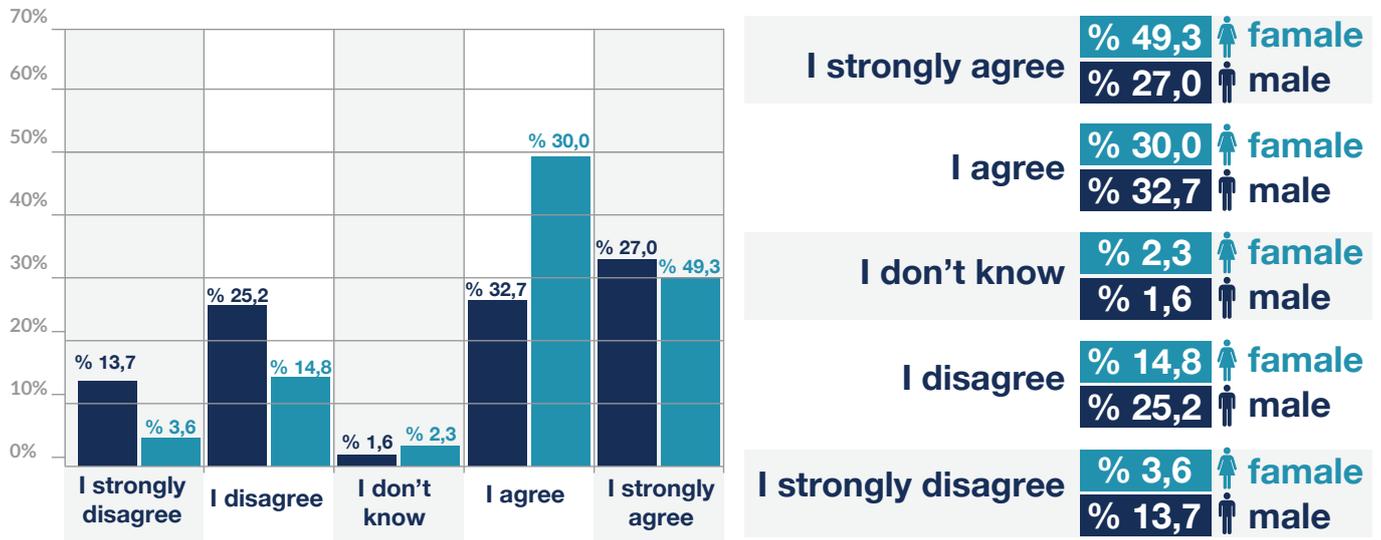


Chart 23: Percentage of support for a woman running for the presidency in the transitional period (based on the gender of respondents).

It is worth noting that disapproval of women running for the presidency was not restricted to those with lower education levels, as was the case with the question about gender-based political equality. The results of the survey show that the disapproval was also amongst respondents with secondary and higher education. The disapproval rates were 29% for secondary education level, 21.3 % for undergraduate higher education, and 25.9% for respondents with advanced degrees. When the question was related to .gender-based equality of political rights, the percentages were 13% and 11% and 6.5%

When cross-referencing the approval rates for the question about women running for the presidency in the transitional period with the religious, sectarian, and national affiliations of the surveyed sample, we noticed an increase varying between 12 % to 14% if compared to the disapproval rate of gender-based political rights equality. For example, 5% of the Kurds disapproved of political equality between men and women in public life, which was the lowest disapproval rate amongst minorities. However, the disapproval rate increased to 17% when the Kurds were asked about a woman running for the presidency of Syria in .the transitional period. Look at charts 24 and 25

In case there was a fair and independent election in the future under the supervision of the UN and all Syrians are guaranteed the right to vote, would you support a woman running for presidency?(nationality)

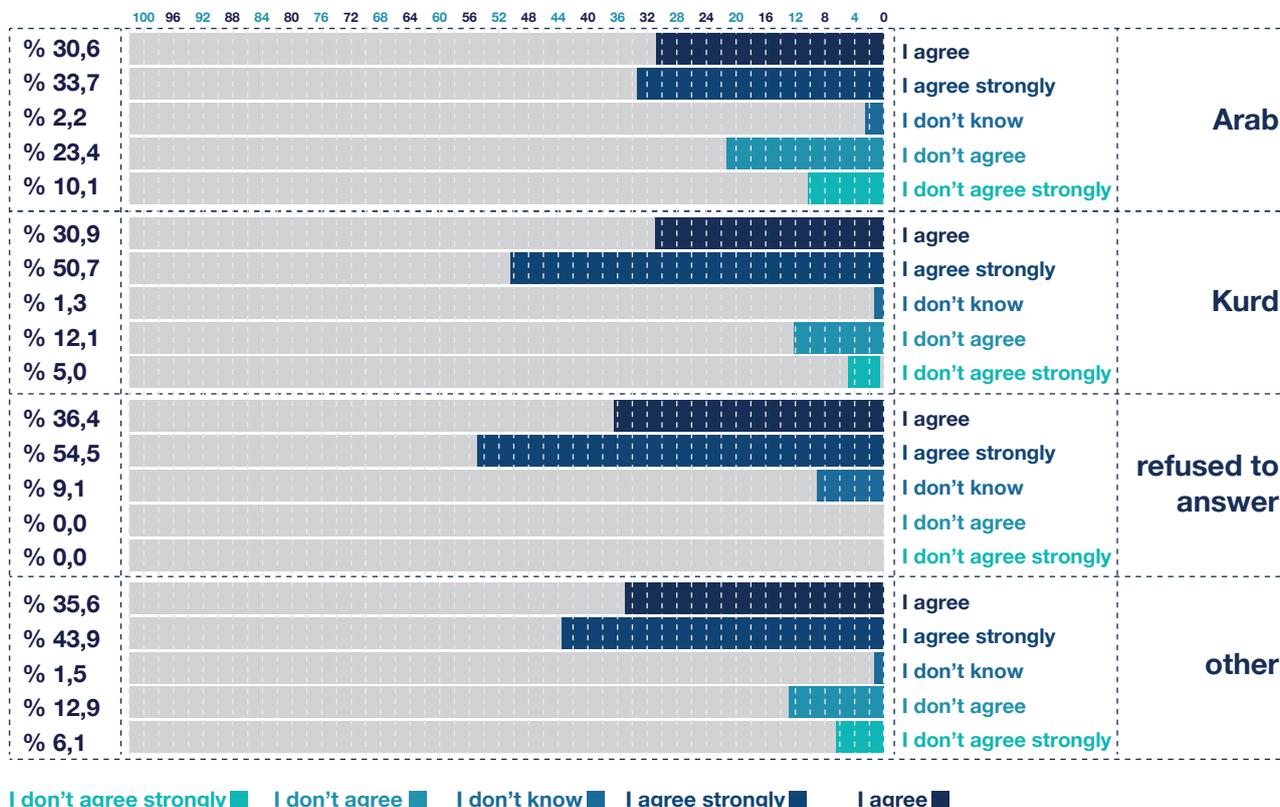


Chart 24: Percentage of support for a woman running for the presidency in the transitional period (based on the ethnicity or nationality of respondents).

These numbers and rates lead us to conclude that despite the near consensus of the surveyed group on the need to achieve equality of political rights between men and women, Syrians from different nationalities and religions remain sceptical of the ability of a woman to lead the country during the transitional period. Two main factors could explain this scepticism: the first is the hegemony of men over political life in Syria since the establishment of the Syrian state and until this moment, this made women excluded from any meaningful political leading role. As a result, women are largely absent from the collective political memory for many Syrians. The second factor is the overwhelming general perception that the transitional period is going to be extremely complicated and would require a strong, prominent, and capable leader who can negotiate internal, regional and international agreements. Many Syrians think this leader should be a man, considering the patriarchal nature of the Syrian society, which links characteristics like strength, determination, and political statecraft to men. This society still considers women as a “fairer sex” that doesn’t have the political experience needed.

In case there was a fair and independent election in the future under the supervision of the UN and all Syrians are guaranteed the right to vote, would you support a woman running for presidency?(religion/sect)

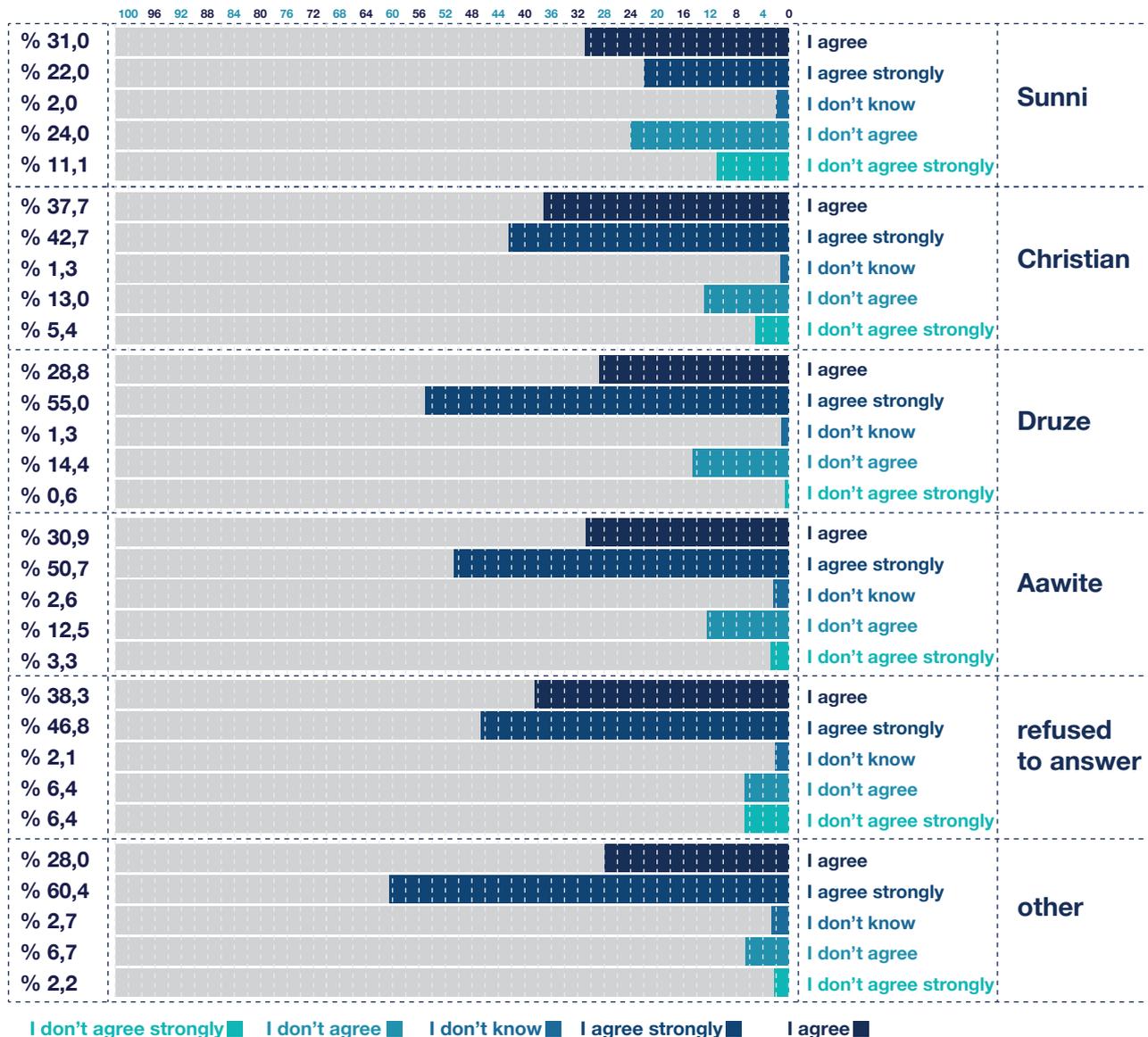


Chart 25: Percentage of support for a woman running for the presidency in the transitional period (based on the religion or sect of respondents).

2 The religion of the president in the transitional period

The results of the survey listed in chart 26 show that the religion of the presidential candidate in the transitional period is not a determining factor in the electoral preferences of the majority of the surveyed sample with a percentage of 56.3%. However, 40% of the sample said that the religious identity of the candidates would be essential in deciding their electoral preferences. These figures are similar between those who live inside Syria 57.6% and

respondents who live outside it 55% and are similar among people with different educational levels. However, there are minor statistical variances amongst respondents with different standards of living. However, there are minor statistical variances amongst respondents with different standards of living.

In case there was a fair and independent election in the future under the supervision of the UN and all Syrians are guaranteed the right to vote. would you religion of the presidential candidate have a role in determining your electoral preferences?

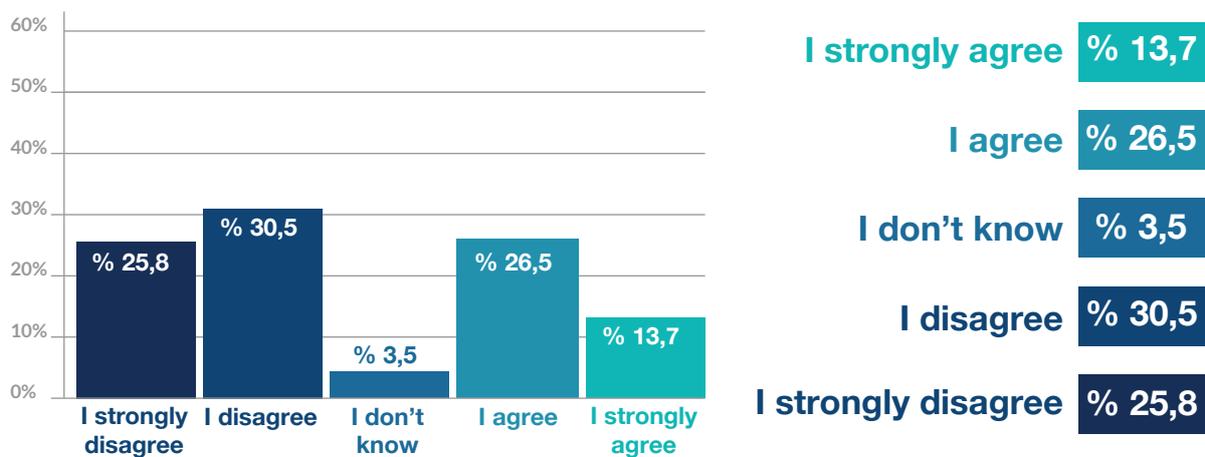


Chart 26: Would the religion of the presidential candidate in the transitional period have a role in determining the electoral preferences of the surveyed group?

When we examine the answers and cross-reference them with the religious and sectarian affiliation of the sample, look at chart 27, we find few differences between the Sunni majority and the remaining sectarian and religious minorities. 51% of the Sunni respondents said that the religion of the presidential candidate in the transitional period is a major factor for them, compared to 25.5% of the Christian, 22.4% of the Alawites and less than 10% of the Druze.

This high percentage among the Sunnis can be explained by the exploitation of the Assad regime, both under the father and the son, of the identity conflict in Syria over the last five decades. This was best manifested through reserving higher positions in the state, especially in the security and military establishments, to profiteering networks linked to the ruling family and to the relatives of this family, which descends from the Alawite minority in a society the majority of which are Sunni Muslims. In addition, there is a deepening sense of religious grievance increasingly dividing the Syrians throughout the last ten years of conflict that left entire Sunni majority cities and towns destroyed and their residents displaced.

In case there was a fair and independent election in the future under the supervision of the UN and all Syrians are guaranteed the right to vote, the religion of the presidential candidate have a role in determining your electoral preferences? (religion/sect)

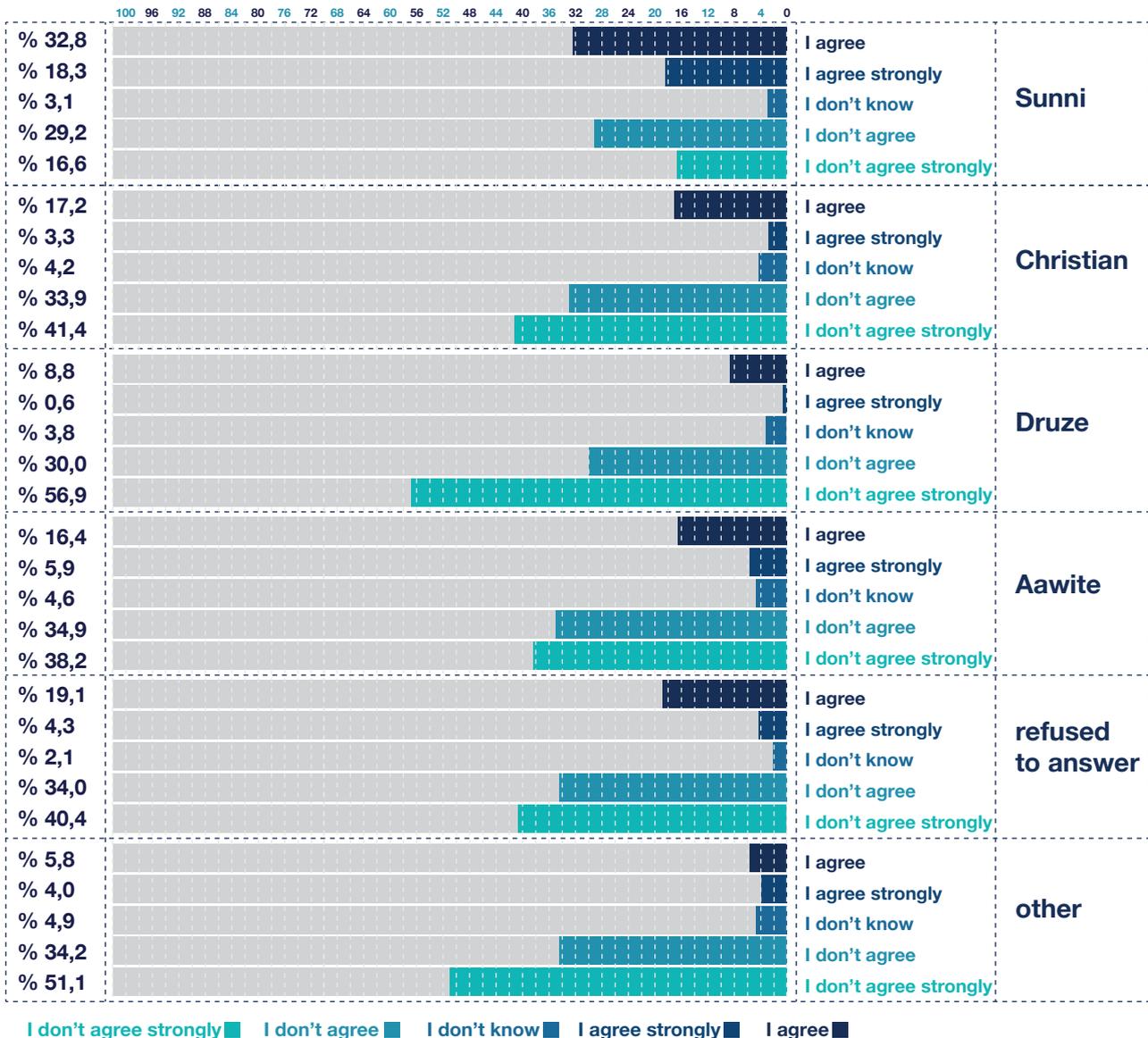


Chart 27: Would the religion of the presidential candidate in the transitional period have a role in determining the electoral preferences of the surveyed group? (based on the religion or sect of respondents).

When considering the nationalities and ethnicities of the sample, a large percentage of Arabs who were surveyed said they didn't consider the religion of the presidential candidate to be a determinant factor of their electoral preferences, reaching 50%, and the majority of the Kurds 73%, and the other nationalities nearly 65% as shown in chart 28. However, the fact remains that a big number of the Arabs surveyed, 50%, expressed a keen interest in the presidential candidate's religion. This could be the result of the growing control

of political parties and military brigades that are formed based on Kurdish identity and are Kurdish majority. These Kurdish advances forced Arab-majority military brigades to retreat and lose political and military control. This created a political grievance for a big number of Arabs, especially the Sunnis, which is why the presidential candidate's religion is more vital for them compared to the other surveyed religious and ethnic and national minorities.

In case there was a fair and independent election in the future under the supervision of the UN and all Syrians are guaranteed the right to vote. the religion of the presidential candidate have a role in determining your electoral preferences? (religion/sect)

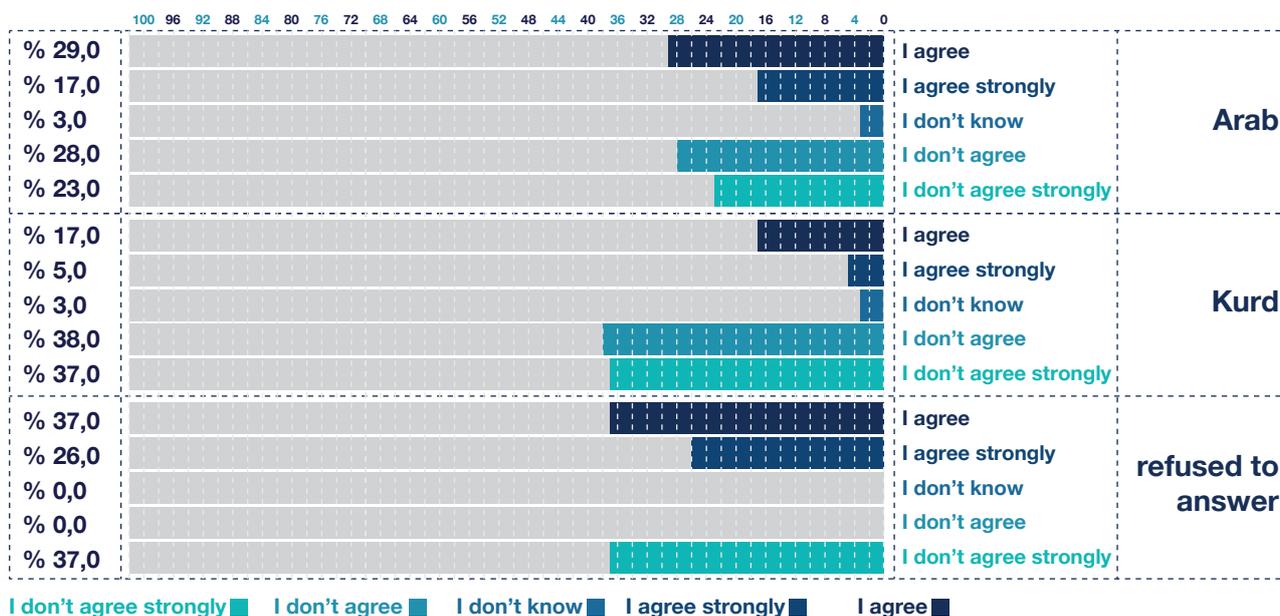


Chart 28: Would the religion of the presidential candidate in the transitional period have a role in determining the electoral preferences of the surveyed group? (based on the nationality of respondents).

6. Equality in economic rights.

charts 29 and 30 show a near consensus of the surveyed group about the need for equality in economic rights for all Syrians like the right to work and the right to equal economic development, fair pay and protecting private properties, regardless of national, ethnic, religious, or sectarian affiliations. The agreement rate regarding equal economic rights to all nationalities and ethnicities exceeded 98% of the surveyed sample. The approval rate was 97.6% regarding equal economic rights to all religions and sects. We found no noticeable differences in numbers when we cross-referenced these questions with the other variables; gender division, level of education and religion and ethnicity and nationality. There was a near consensus for all these variables.

Should all Syrians have equal economic rights regardless of their national affiliation?

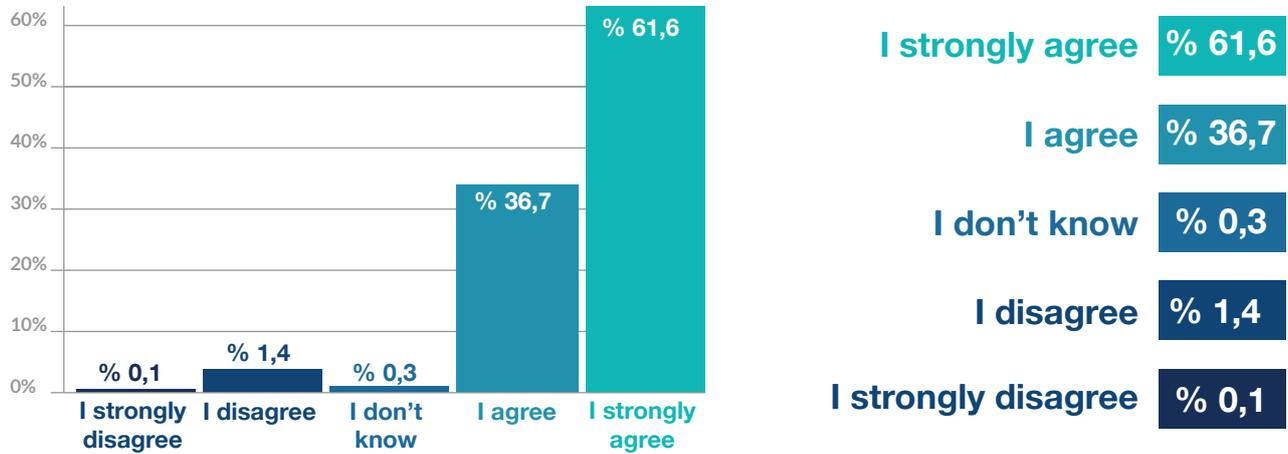


Chart 29: Equality of economic rights regardless of national affiliations.

Should all Syrians have equal economic rights regardless of their religious or sectarian affiliation?

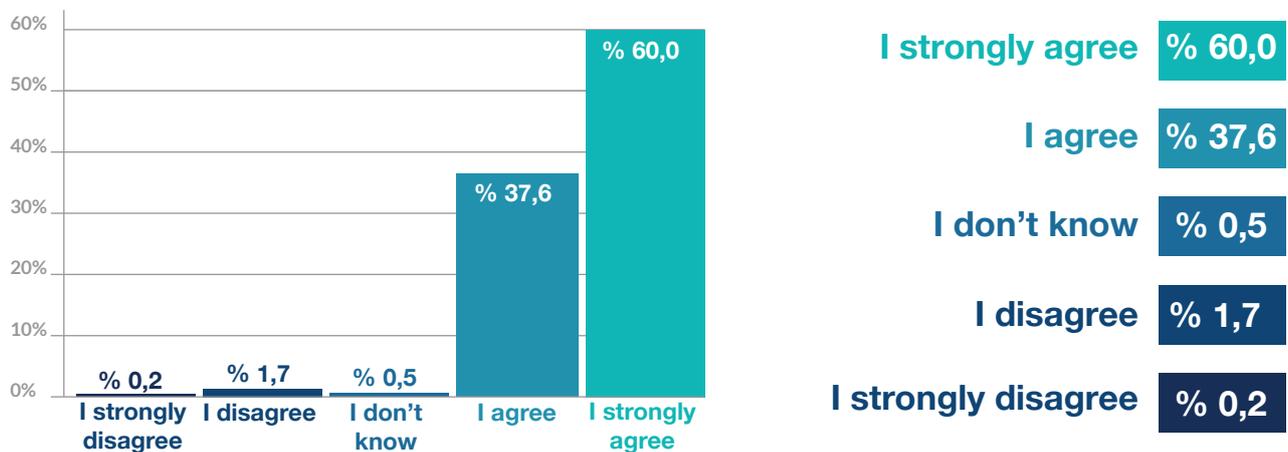


Chart 30: Equality of economic rights regardless of religious or sectarian affiliations.

When the question was related to equal economic rights for men and women, chart 31 shows an increase by 8% in the disapproval rate for gender-based economic equality. A total of 13.7% of men expressed disapproval of equality in economic rights, compared to 2.6% of women.

Should women and men have equal economic rights (gender)

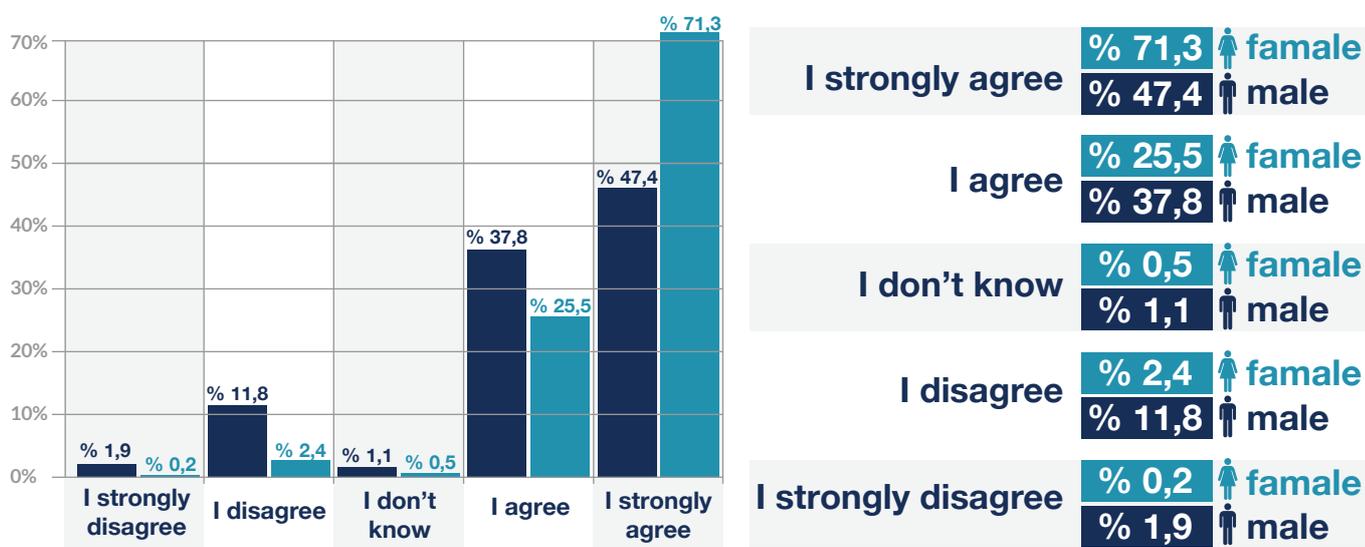


Chart 31: Gender-based equality of economic rights (based on the gender of respondents).

When we compared the disapproval rates about equal economic rights and the disapproval rates about political rights, shown earlier in chart 19, we find that the percentage of men who disapprove of gender-based equality of political rights was 7% higher than their disapproval rate about equal economic rights. In other words, men have less rejection of equality with women in economic rights compared to political rights.

These figures could be explained by the circumstances of the current conflict. A number of studies that were conducted in countries that witnessed violent conflicts showed that women entered the job market during the conflict in bigger numbers compared to the pre-conflict era. In some cases, women outnumbered men in the job market during conflict⁷. This is because the number of men who leave their usual occupations to participate in the war effort is much higher than women who do the same. This, in turn, creates vacancies in the job market that are usually filled by women who become the sole breadwinner for themselves and their families⁸. This change in the economic dynamics and the living conditions usually last after the conflict ends. Women usually have better economic and political representation in the post-conflict era compared to the times before, even in the conservative patriarchal societies⁹.

In the Syrian context, there are few in-depth analyses about the changes in women's economic roles during the current war. However, few reports issued by Syrian feminist civil society organizations examined the significant changes in women traditional gender roles

⁷ Menon, N. and van der Meulen Rodgers, Y. (2015). War and Women's Work: Evidence from the Conflict in Nepal. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 59(1), pp. 51–73. doi: 10.1177/0022002713498699.

⁸ Acemoglu, D., Autor D. And Lyle, D. (2004). Women, War, and Wages: The Effect of Female Labor Supply on the Wage Structure at Midcentury. *Journal of Political Economy* 112 (3): 497–551.

⁹ Christiana, S. (2006). The role of women in economic transformation: market women in Sierra Leone. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 6:3, 411-423, DOI: 10.1080/14678800600933571

because of the circumstances of displacement, seeking asylum and the ongoing battles. Women now play bigger economic roles and have entered professions and occupations that are traditionally restricted to men.¹⁰

Reviewing all the statistical indicators of the sample and taking into consideration that a higher percentage of men approved of gender-based equality of economic rights while their approval rate for gender-based equality for political rights was less, we concluded that men were in favour of gender equality when it works in their favour. Men's acceptance of women's right to work led to an increase in the family's income and improved their living conditions. However, men are less accepting of gender-based equality for political rights. A lot of men fear that higher participation for women in political life would create political competitiveness and challenge the personal interests of men.

7. Equality in Civil Rights.

In this section, we tried to assess how the identity affiliation of the surveyed respondents influenced their opinions about several civil rights. Considering that there are various political, social, and legal definitions and indicators for civil rights, we choose to ask about three rights. This would help us infer statistical indicators about the Syrian political and identity conflict and how this conflict could affect the right of equal citizenship and other civil rights.

These rights are:

1. Equality in the right of safe, voluntary, and dignified return for all those displaced, both internally and outside the country, regardless of their ethnic, national, or sectarian affiliation or political views.
2. The rights of Syrian women to give their nationality to their children, just like men do.
3. The right to reinstate Syrian nationality to those who have been deprived of it for ethnic and national reasons like the Kurds, or for political reasons like the opponents of the Syrian regime.

¹⁰ Zaha Ali, 2019, Gender Justice and Feminist Knowledge Production in Syria. Women Now for Development.

1 The right to save, voluntary and dignified return

The results of the survey, shown in chart 32 and 33, reveal that there is a near consensus amongst the respondents about the need for equal right of safe, voluntary, and dignified return for all Syrians, males, and females, regardless of their religious, sectarian, and ethnic and national affiliation. The percentage for equal right of return for all nationalities and ethnicities reached 98.5%. The number representing equal rights of return for all religions and sects to their original places of residence was 97.2%. We found no noticeable statistical indicator variances when cross-referencing the results with the religion, ethnicity and nationality, gender, the living conditions, or the educational level of the surveyed sample.

All Syrians have the right of safe and dignified return to their original places of residence, regardless of their national affiliation.

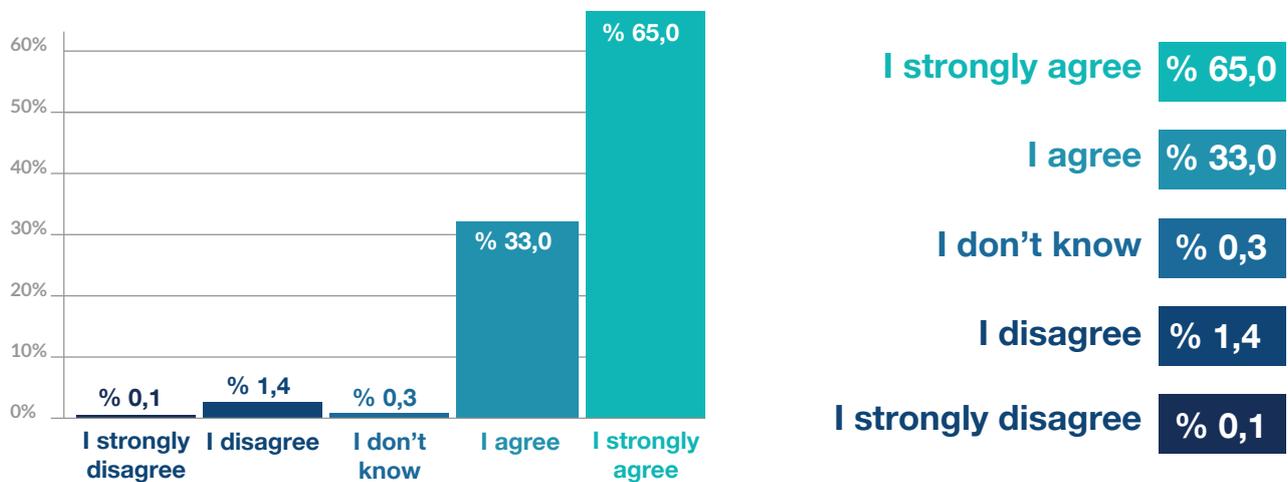


Chart 32: Syrians have the right of safe and dignified return to their original places of residence, regardless of their national or ethnic affiliation.

All Syrians have the right of safe and dignified return to their original places of residence, regardless of their religious or sectarian affiliation.

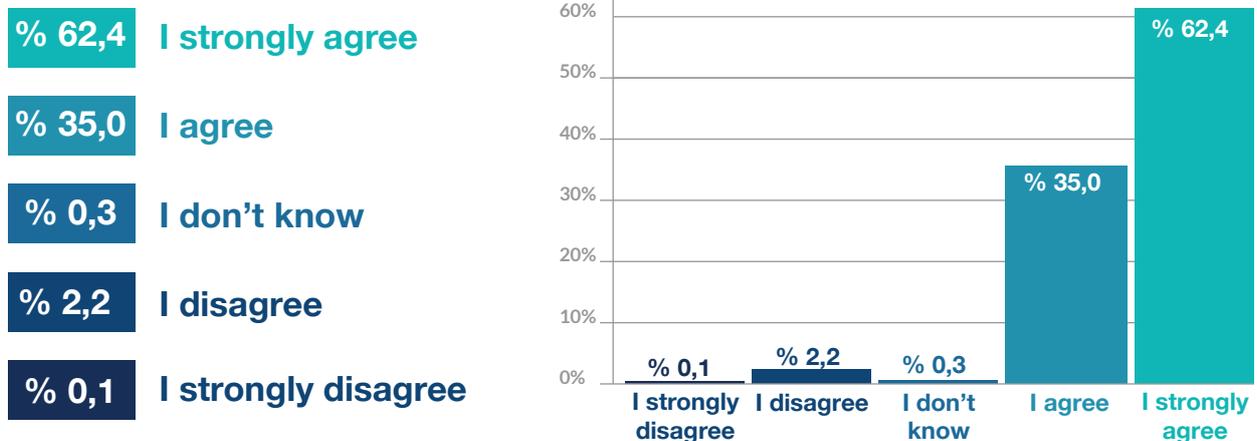


Chart 33: Syrians have the right of safe and dignified return to their original places of residence, regardless of their religious or sectarian affiliation.

The consensus regarding the equal rights of return to all nationalities, ethnicities, religions, and sects in Syria dropped by 15% when we asked about the equal right of return regardless of political views, as shown in chart 34. These differences became clearer when we cross-referenced the results with the ethnicity and religion of the surveyed sample, as shown in chart 35. The majority of the respondents who expressed disapproval of granting equal rights of return to all Syrians regardless of their political views were the Arabs, with a percentage reaching 15%, compared to 6.8% of the Kurds. When relying on the religious and sectarian division of the sample, as shown in chart 36, we found that the Sunnis were the sect that expressed the biggest disapproval with a percentage of 17.6%, compared to 7% amongst the Christians, 6% amongst the Alawites, 3.8% amongst the Druze and 4.4% amongst the remaining surveyed sectarian minorities.

All Syrians have the right of safe, voluntary and dignified return to their original places of residence, regardless of their political orientation.

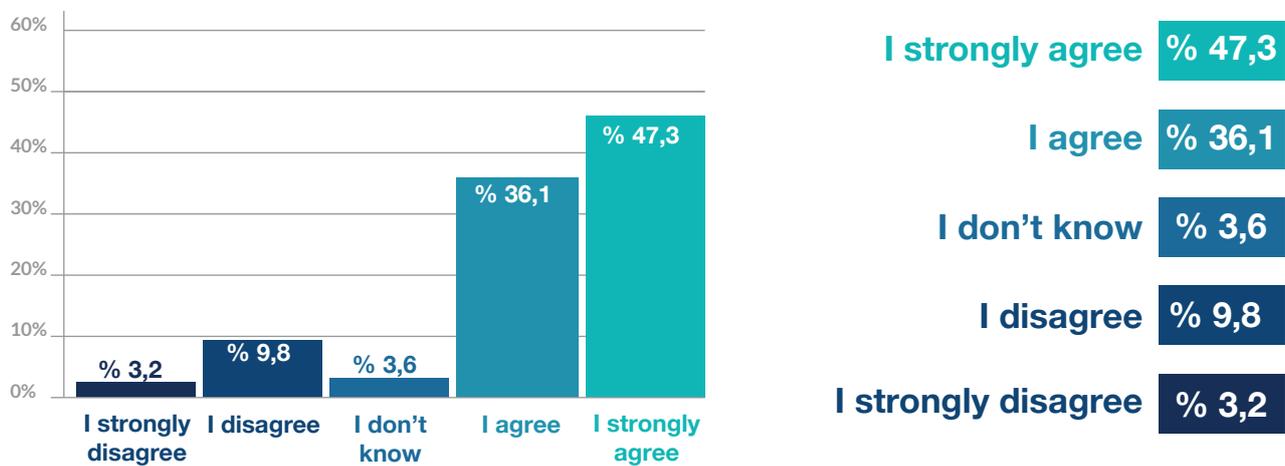


Chart 34: Syrians have the right of safe, voluntary and dignified return to their original places of residence, regardless of their political orientation.

This increase in the percentage of disapproval amongst the Arab and Sunni respondents of the right of safe, voluntary, and dignified return of all Syrians to their original places of residence regardless of their political views could be explained by the deepening political grievances felt by these two groups, especially during the last ten years of war. Both groups feel they paid the heaviest price for their political views, more than all other Syrian sub-identities. That is because both these groups are predominantly anti-regime, more than other religious, ethnic, and sectarian minorities. This led to the destruction of a huge number of Sunni- majority villages and towns and the displacement of its residents, and to an increased number of casualties and arrests among the Sunnis and the Arabs compared to the other religious and ethnic and national minorities.

All Syrians have the right of safe and dignified return to their original places of residence, regardless of their political orientation.(nationality)

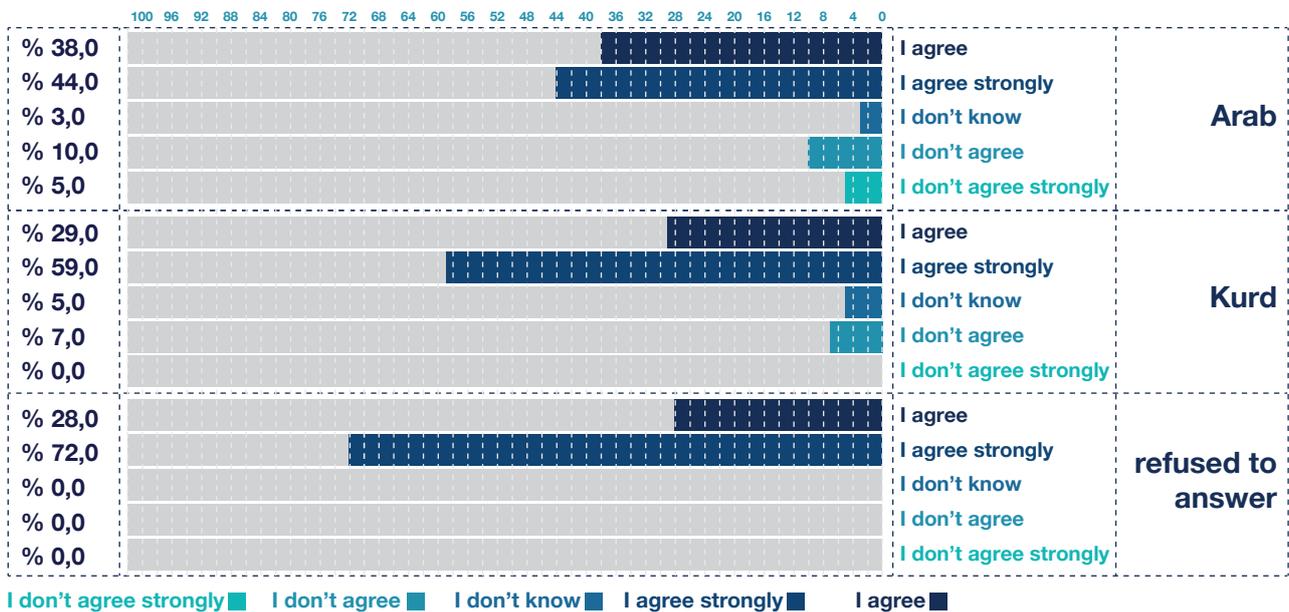


Chart 35: Syrians have the right of safe and dignified return to their original places of residence, regardless of their political orientation (based on the nationality or ethnicity of respondents).

All Syrians have the right of safe and dignified return to their original places of residence, regardless of their political orientation.(religion or sect)

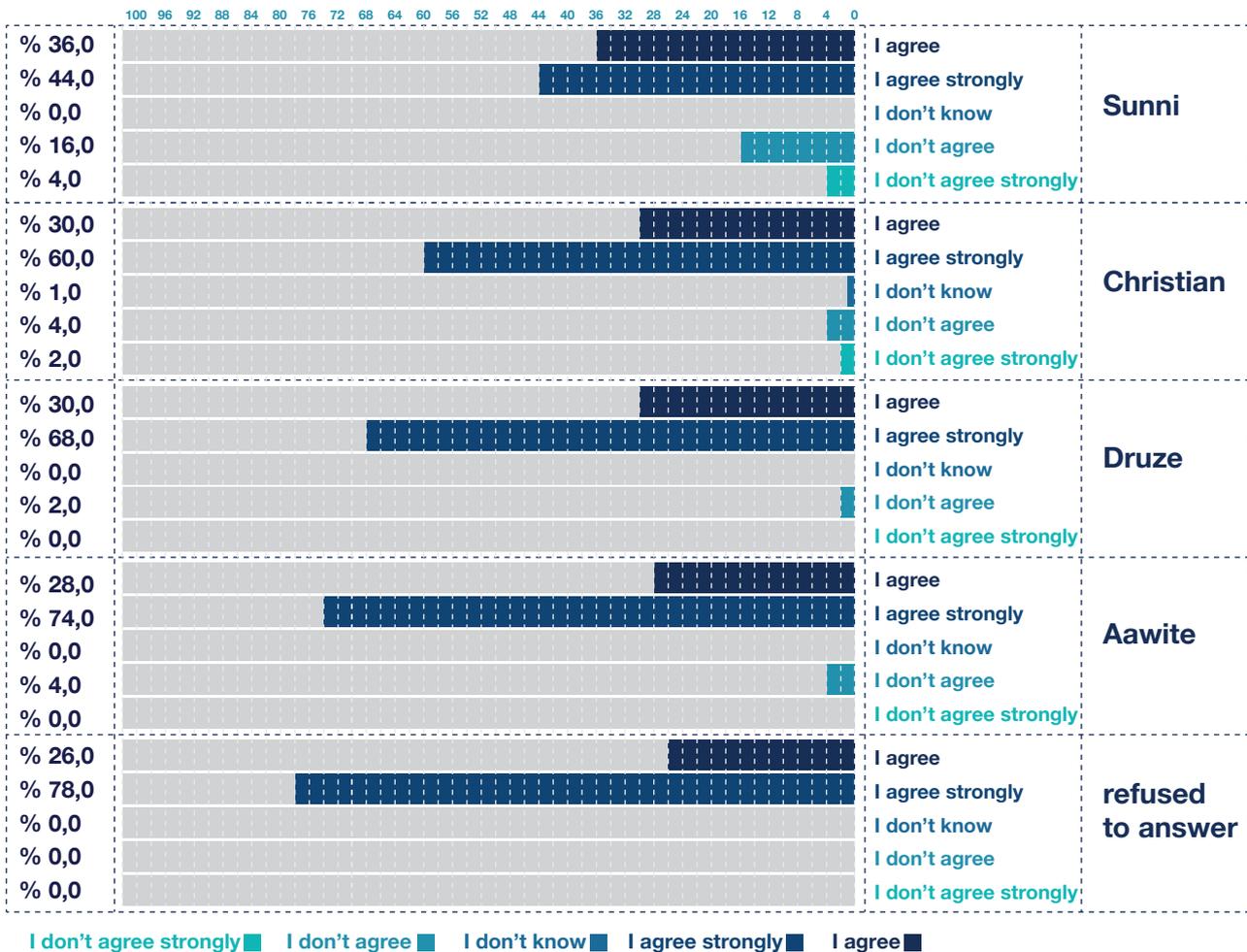


Chart 36: Syrians have the right of safe and dignified return to their original places of residence, regardless of their political orientation(based on the religion or sect of respondents).

2 The right to Syrian nationality

First: The right of Syrian women to give their nationality to their children

The constitutional and legal environment has always been discriminatory against women, in the various political, economic, cultural, and civic fields. There is a total lack of any legislation, laws or constitutional articles that oblige the state and its institutions to enforce gender equality. Women are deprived of equal participation in public political life, and their economic rights are restricted. The penal code has gender bias towards men, and the personal status law is very discriminatory against women.

Arguably, the most important civil liberty the Syrian law deprives women of is the right to give their nationality to their sons and daughters and to their grandchildren, a right insured to all men. Article three of the legislative decree number 276 of the year 1969, known as the Syrian Nationality Law, guaranteed the father’s absolute right to give his Syrian nationality to his children, whether males or females and whether born inside or outside Syria. At the same time, article B of the same law limited the Syrian mothers right to transmit her nationality to her children and made it dependent on three conditions: 1. The mother held the Syrian nationality from birth. 2. her child was born inside Syria. 3. The mother can’t legally prove the paternity of the child. These discriminatory conditions and restrictions deprived a large number of women of the right to give their nationality to their sons and daughters, which made many civil and political activists demand a change of these laws that are unfair to women.

Chart 37 shows that there is a near consensus about the right of Syrian women to give their nationality to their children among the surveyed sample, with a percentage reaching 91.5%. When we cross-referenced the answers with the gender of the respondents, we found that the percentage of men who disapproved of this right reached 10%, compared to 3% of the women. This small percentage of disapproval could be explained by the multiple local initiatives and public awareness campaigns carried out by many local civil society organizations, which have increased the social acceptance of women’s right to grant their nationality to their children, just like men have that right.

Do you believe in the Syrian woman right to give their nationality to their children?

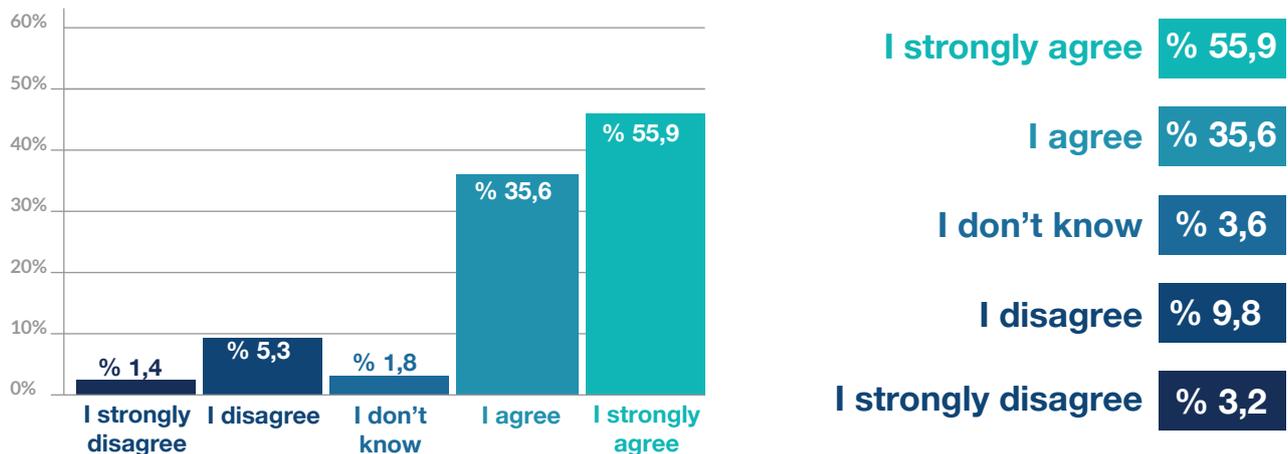


Chart 37: Syrian women have the right to give their nationality to their children.

When we cross-referenced these results with the varying education level of the sample, we noticed that respondents with higher education levels were more inclined to approve of women’s right to give their children their nationality. For example, the disapproval rate was 11% for respondents with primary education. 5.7% for secondary education, and advanced degrees disapproval rate was 0.8%.

Second: Reinstating the right to nationality to those who have been deprived of it.

When we asked the surveyed sample about their opinions regarding the necessity to reinstate the Syrian nationality to those who have been deprived of it, either for political reasons, as is the case of many of the political opponents of the Syrian regime, or for ethnic and national reasons, as is the case with a big number of Syrian Kurds. There was a near consensus amongst the respondents to approve this right with a percentage of 88.7%, as shown in chart 38. The approval rate was 95% amongst the Kurds, 87.2% amongst the Arabs, 86.4% amongst the remaining national and ethnic minorities like the Turkmens, the Armenians, the Circassians, the Syriacs, and the Assyrians. The percentages of approval are very similar between men (88%) and women (89%). We found no noticeable differences in the percentages based on the educational level and living standards of the surveyed respondents.

What do you think about reinstating the Syrian nationality to those who have deprived of it for political or national reasons?

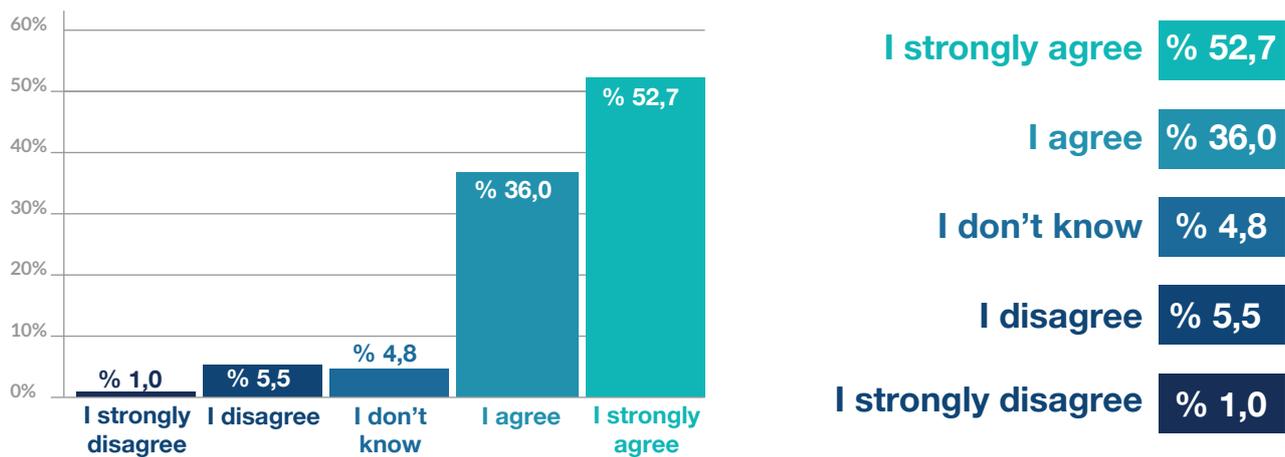


Chart 38: Reinstating the Syrian nationality to those who have been deprived of it for political or national and ethnic reasons

Statistical differences were clearer when we cross-referenced the results of the survey with the places of residence of the respondents, both inside and outside Syria, and with the religious and sectarian affiliation of the respondents. Chart 39 shows that the highest disapproval rate was amongst the residents inside Syria, with a percentage of 9.7%. The percentage of disapproval for those living outside Syria didn't exceed 2%. This difference could be explained by the increased intensity of ethnic and national identity conflict, especially inside the country, as a result of the rise in tension between the Kurds and the Arabs, as we have stated earlier in the section analyzing political equality.

What do you think about reinstating the Syrian nationality to those who have deprived of it for political or national reasons?

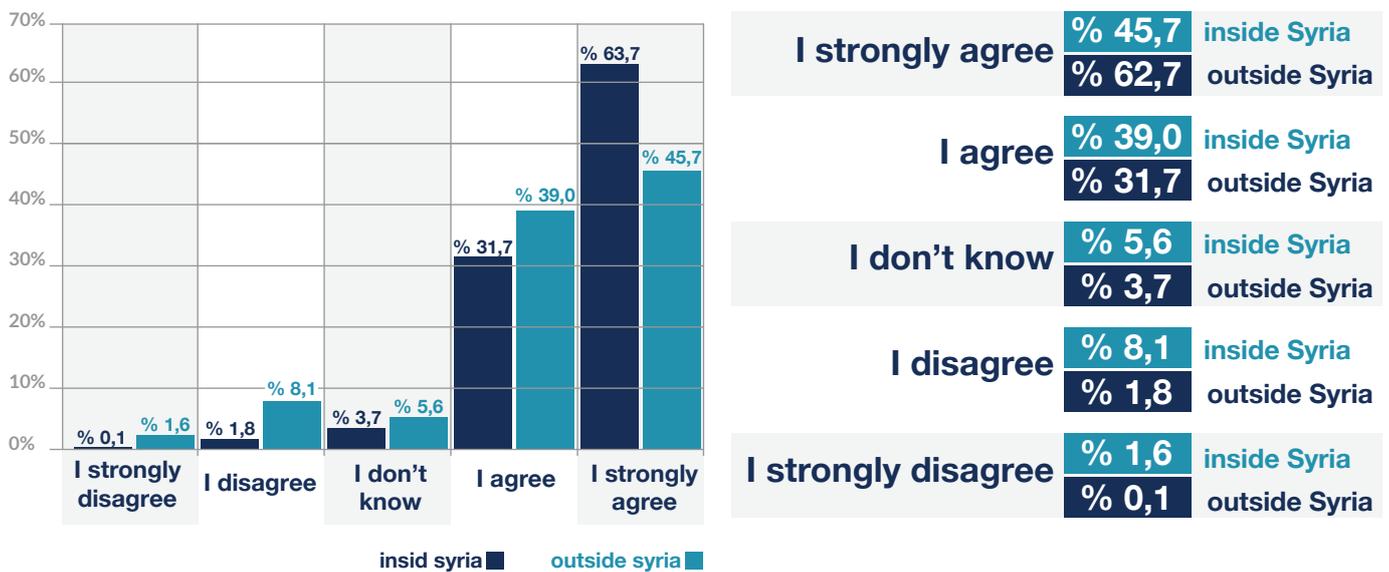


Chart 39: Reinstating the Syrian nationality to those who have been deprived of it for political or national and ethnic reasons (based on the geographical location of respondents).

Religiously, the percentage of the religious and sectarian minorities who disapproved of reinstating the Syrian nationality to those who were deprived of it for political or ethnic and national reasons was higher than the percentage of the respondents from the Sunni majority who expressed disapproval, as shown in chart 40. The disapproval rate was highest among the Alawites with a percentage of 23.7%, followed by the Druze respondents with a percentage of 13%. The disapproval amongst the Christians reached 8.3%, while the disapproval was lowest among the Sunni sect, with a percentage of 4.3%. This increase in the disapproval rate amongst religious and sectarian minorities could be because of the general perception these respondents have that those who have been deprived of their nationality for political reasons are members of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which made them inclined to refuse the notion of reinstating their nationality. This analysis remains weak considering that the main question in this survey didn't specify and asked about both; those who were deprived of their nationality for political reasons and for ethnic reasons. To further validate this analysis we need more in-depth research.

What do you think about reinstating the Syrian nationality to those who have deprived of it for political or national reasons?(religion or sect)

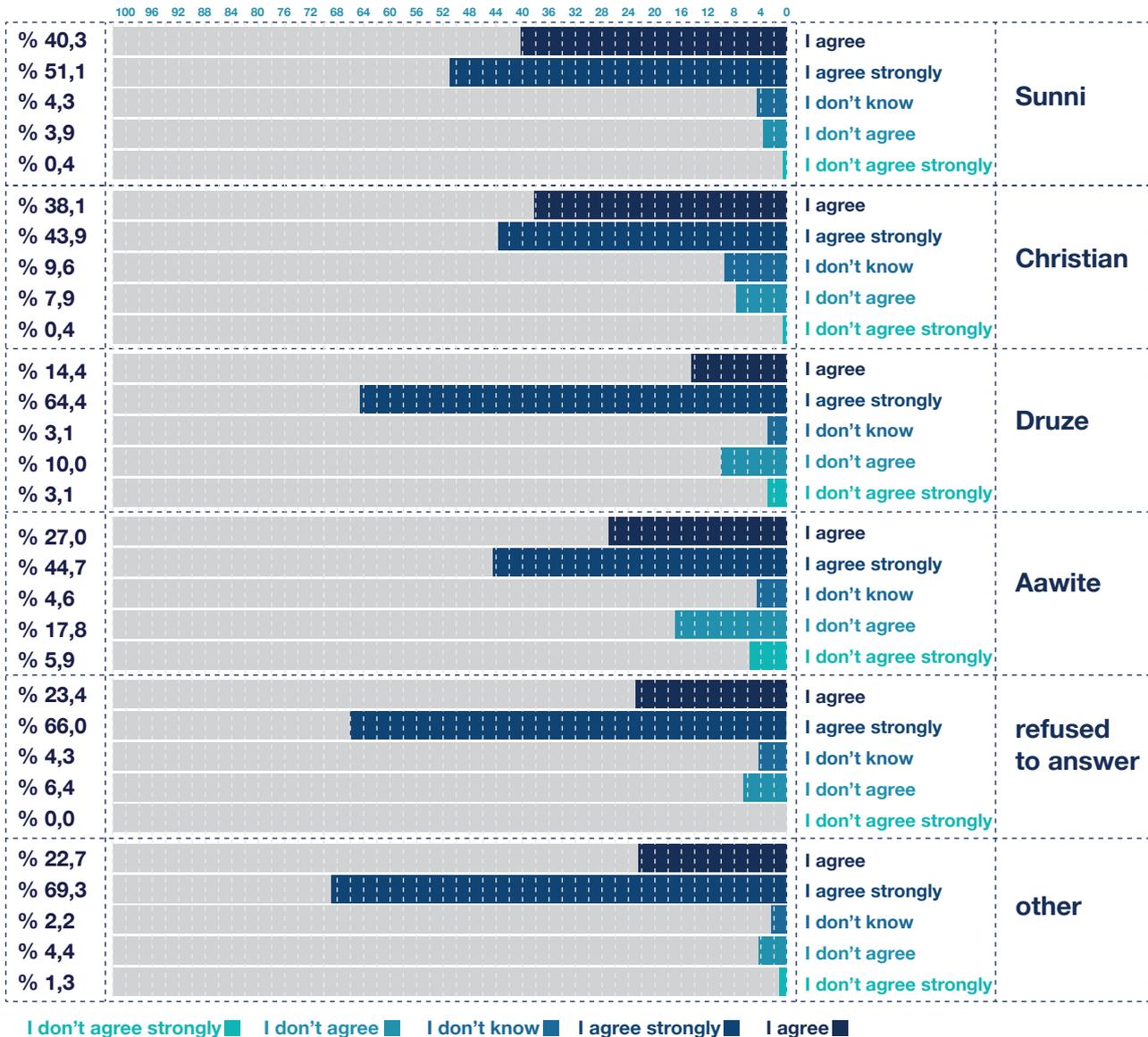


Chart 40: Reinstating the Syrian nationality to those who have been deprived of it for political or national reasons (based on the religion or sect of respondents).

8. Equality in Cultural and Linguistic Rights.

We attempted to study the influence of the identities of the surveyed respondents and their general opinions about cultural rights. We asked about language as one of the most important indicators of these rights. We asked four questions in the survey and asked the respondents to choose the answer they agree with most.¹¹

¹¹ The researchers explained the fundamental differences between the four options to the respondents, to make sure they are well informed, and the results are accurate and reflect their true opinions.

Chart 41 shows that the majority of the surveyed sample chose “Arabic is the official language of the state, while protecting the right of other national and ethnic minorities to use their languages in their places of residence inside Syria” with an approval rate of 56.2 % of the surveyed sample. This percentage is 33% higher than the approval rate for the option “Arabic is the official and the only language recognized by the state,” this choice had the approval of 23% of the surveyed sample. The next option was “Both Arabic and Kurdish are the official languages of the state,” which got the approval of 11.6%. The least favourite option was “All spoken languages in Syria should be recognized as official languages,” which got 8.3%.

Which of the following sentences you agree with?

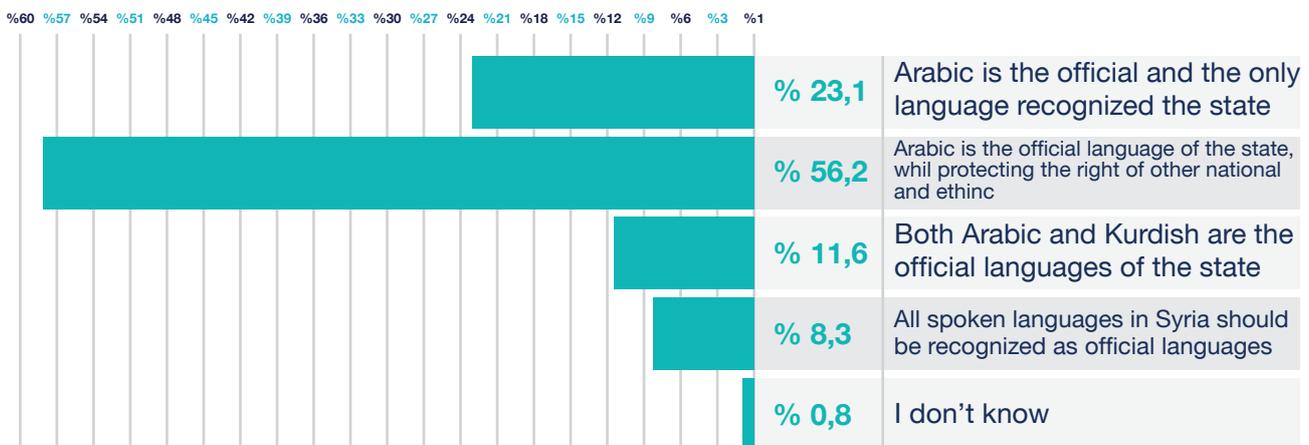


Chart 41: Opinions about linguistic rights of the surveyed group.

These percentages contradict the general impression that there is a demand for Arabic to be the only and official language in Syria. This is confirmed by examining the breakdown of the sample based on the nationality and ethnicity of the respondents, as shown in chart 42. The highest percentage of Arab respondents, 61%, chose Arabic as the official language of the state, while protecting the rights of other national and ethnic minorities to use their languages. However, the biggest majority of Kurds chose Arabic and Kurdish as the official languages of the state with a percentage of 56.8%.

It is worth noting that this general acceptance of the right of non-Arab ethnic minorities to use their languages, even if not recognized as official languages, was remarkably high amongst the Sunni respondents, with an approval percentage of 54.6%, as shown in chart 43. This approval rate was 27.7% higher than the approval rate for the option Arabic is the official and only language of the state. This tendency to accept the linguistic rights of the ethnic and national sub-identities was also noticeable amongst respondents from other sects. The percentage of approval amongst the Druze was 74%, amongst the Christians was 69.5%, amongst the Alawites was 58%, and nearly 46% amongst the remaining religious and sectarian minorities like the Ismailis, the Yazidis and the Shia.

Which of the following sentences you agree with?(nationality)

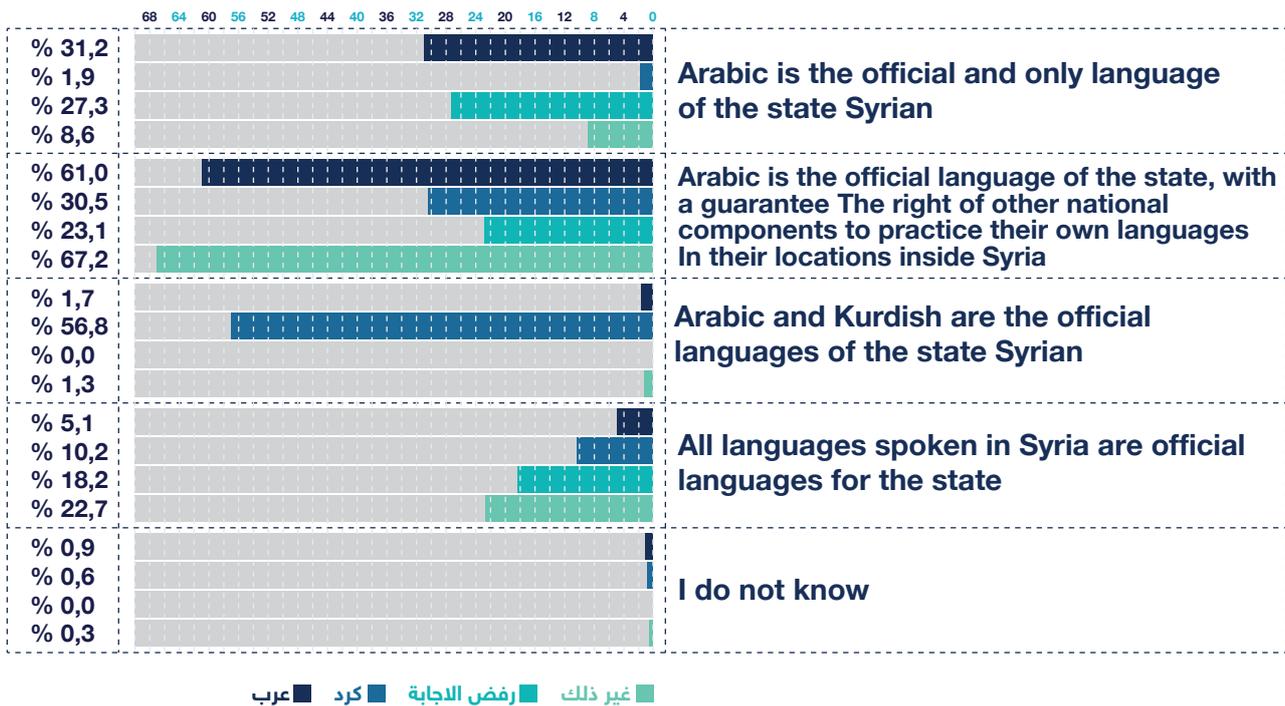
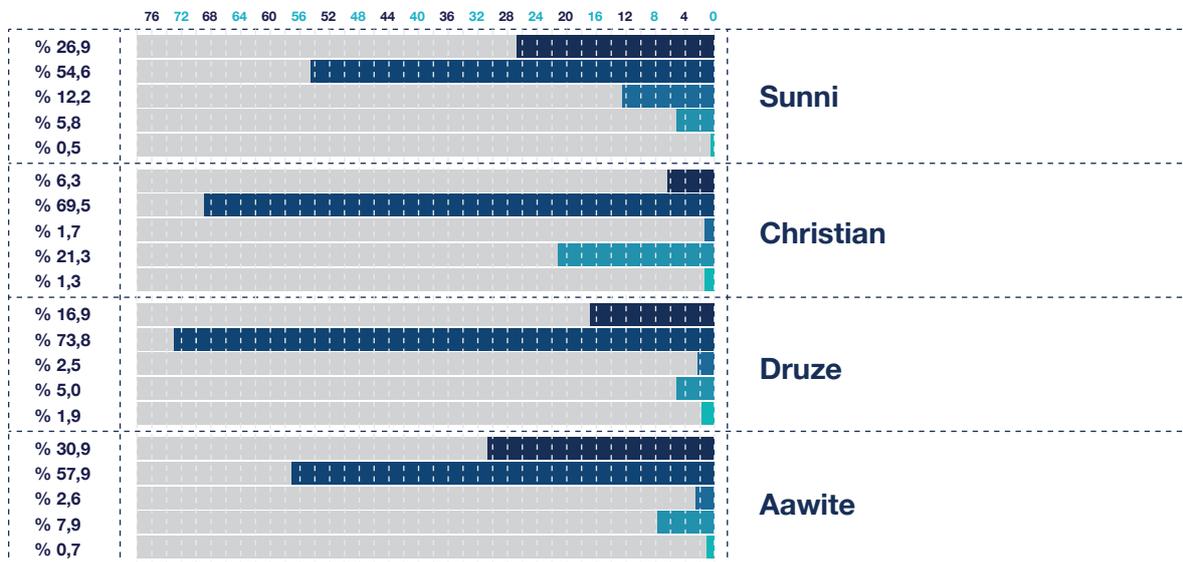


Chart 42: Opinions about linguistic rights (based on the nationality or ethnicity of respondents).

Which of the following sentences you agree with?(religion or sect)



- Arabic is the official and the only language recognized the state
- Arabic is the official language of the state,whil protecting the right of other national and ethinc
- Both Arabic and Kurdish are the official languages of the state
- All spoken languages in Syria should be recognized as official languages
- I don't know

Chart 43: Opinions about linguistic rights (based on the religion or sect of respondents).

9. Identity affiliations and sources of legislation in the state.

We tried in this section to study the influence of gender, national and ethnic, and religious identity affiliation on the sources of legislation in the state, especially that the future of the relationship between religion and the state is one of the most complicated and problematic topics in any future political and constitutional negotiations related to the future of Syria. This relationship is also relevant to the prospects of active and equal citizenship.

Chart 44 shows that the majority of the surveyed sample wanted to adopt the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and the other international treaties and accords as one of the sources of legislation in the state, in addition to other sources, with a percentage of 45.5%. 36% of the respondents stated that the Islamic Sharia should be one of the sources of legislation, in addition to other sources. The smallest percentage, 14.6%, said that the Islamic Sharia should be the only source of legislation in the state.¹²

The fact that the majority of respondents chose to adopt the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and other relevant international treaties and accords as one of the sources of legislation in the state, despite being given two options that make Islamic Sharia a source of legislation, could be considered a building block we can rely on in any constitutional negotiations in the future. This high percentage could be explained by the fact many political factions, armed brigades, and religious authorities, belonging to the warring and various forces on the ground, now adopt exclusionary religious doctrines that verge on extremism on many occasions. This made a large number of Syrians afraid of considering Islamic Sharia as the main regulator of the relationship between the state and society in the future.

This conclusion is supported by the statistical indicators based on the religious and sectarian breakdown of the sample. When we study chart 45, we notice that there is a near consensus amongst all the religious and sectarian minorities in Syria about the need to adopt the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and the relevant international treaties and accords as one of the sources of legislation in the state. The percentages were 89% amongst the Christians, 78% amongst the Druze, 71.7% amongst the Alawites and 82.7% amongst the remaining religious minorities like the Ismailis, the Yazidis and the Shia.

On the other hand, the majority of the respondents from the Sunni sect, 47.6%, chose Islamic Sharia as one of the sources of legislation, in addition to other sources, 29.4% of the Sunni respondents chose the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and the international treaties as one of the sources of legislation. The smallest percentage, 20.5% of the Sunnis, chose Islamic Sharia as the only source of legislation in the state.

This difference in opinions between the various religious and sectarian groups could be explained by the fact that the surveyed sectarian and religious minorities fear that relying on Islamic Sharia will exclude them from public life or create a state of religious discrimination in the society that would affect fundamental rights and duties and their relationship to the state institutions.

¹² The field researchers explained the differences between the three options to the respondents, in an attempt to get accurate answers that reflect their true opinions. They especially explained the difference between the option of Islamic Sharia being one of the sources of legislation or the only source of legislation in the state.

Which of the following sentences you find most appropriate: The syrian state should

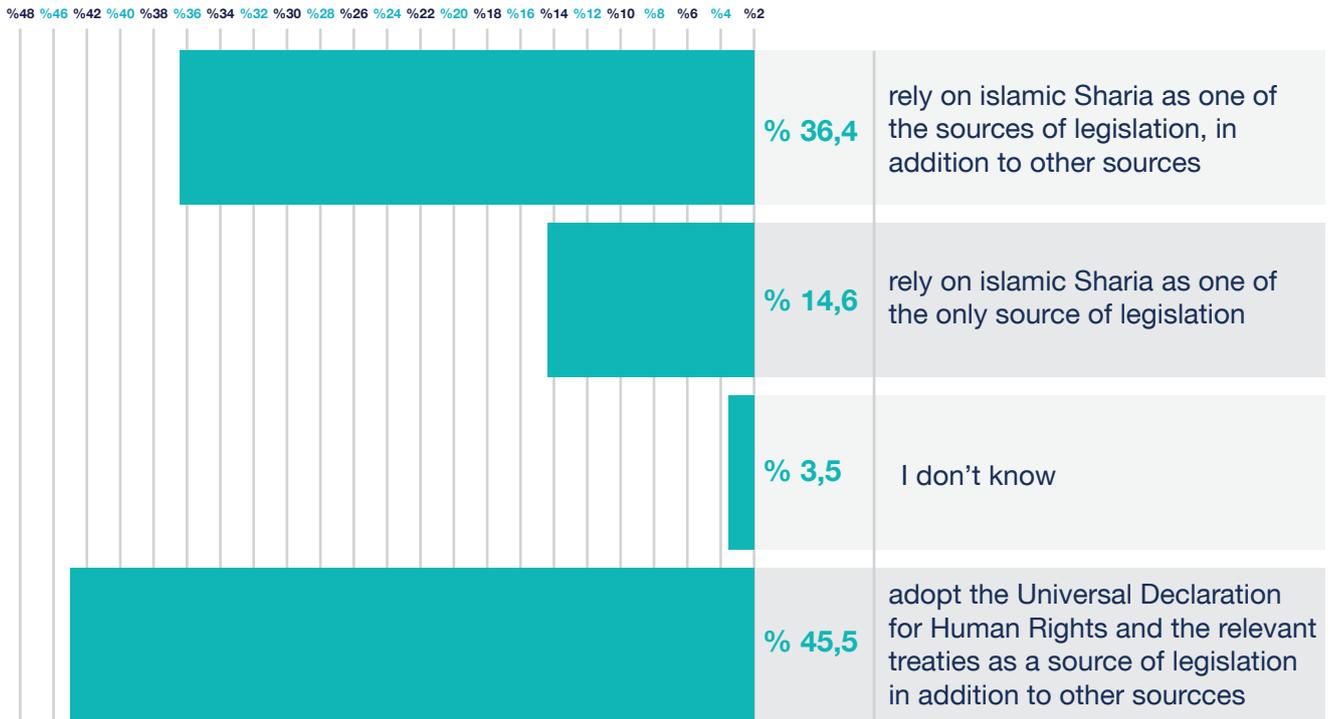
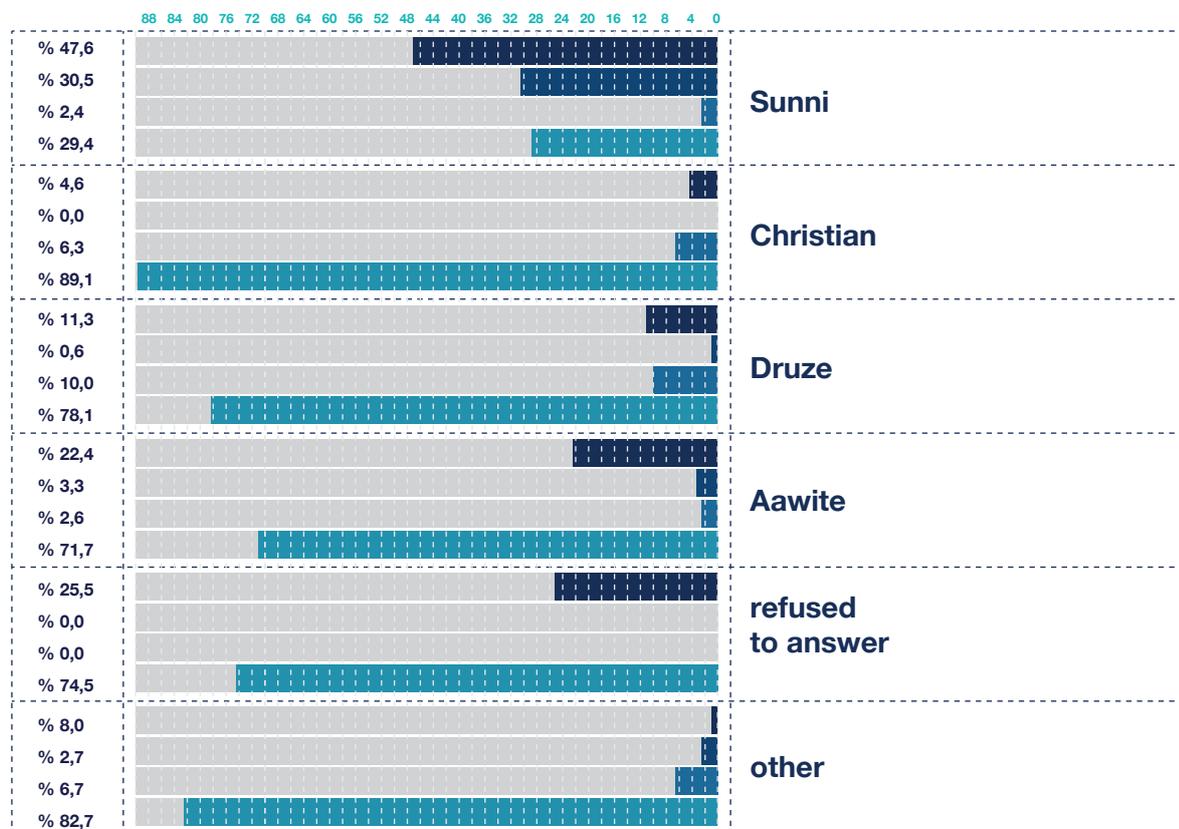


Chart 44: Opinions about sources of legislation in the state.

Another fact that supports our conclusion is that the majority of those who are resident outside Syria now want the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the relevant international treaties as a source of legislation, with an approval rate of 54.4%, compared to a 39% approval rate for those who live inside Syria. There was a noticeable decrease in approval for using Islamic Sharia as the only source of legislation amongst those who live outside Syria with a percentage of 7.4%, compared to a 19.6% approval rate for those who live inside Syria.

These differences in opinions about the sources of legislation between those who are living inside Syria and those who are abroad could be the result of the experiences of displacement and seeking asylum. A large number of Syrians were introduced to democratic systems with well-established democratic traditions in their host countries, where the protection of human rights and all the relevant rights and duties are enshrined in the culture and regulates the relationship between the members of society on the one hand, and between the members of society and the state on the other.

Which of the following sentences you find most appropriate: The syrian state should: (religion/sect)

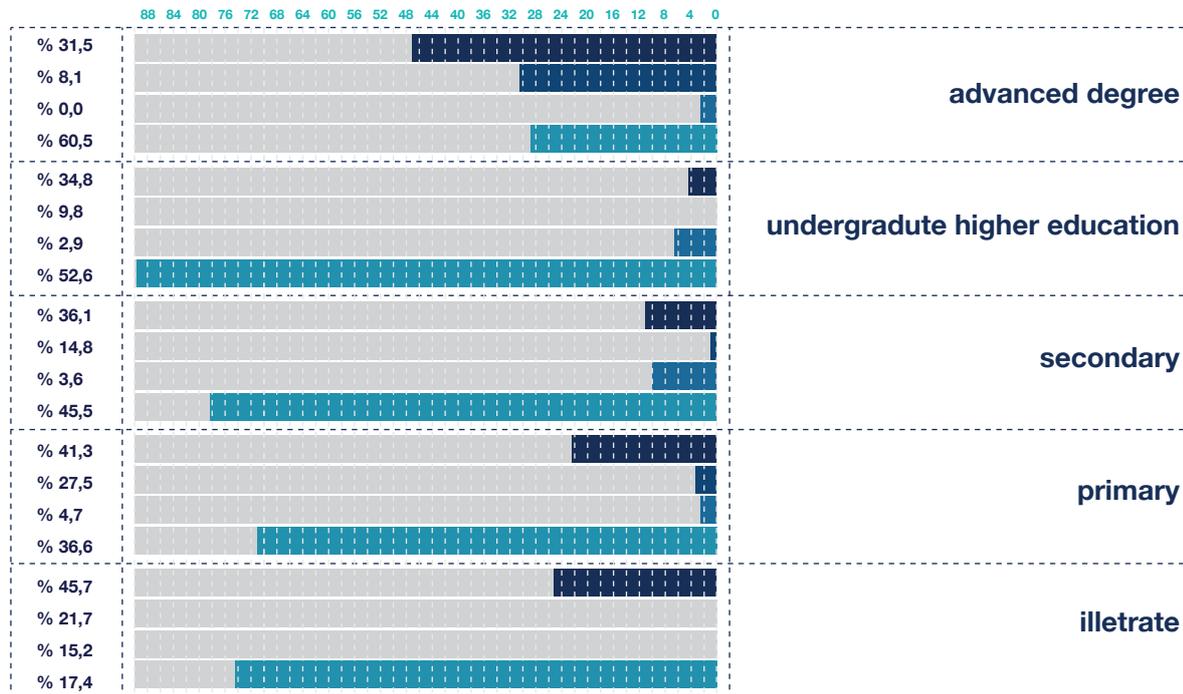


- rely on Islamic Sharia as one of the sources of legislation, in addition to othef sources
- rely on Islamic Sharia as the only as the only source of legislation
- I don't know
- adopt the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and the relevant treaties as a source of legislation

Chart 45: Opinions about the sources of legislation in the state
(based on the religion or sect of respondents)

The other statistical indicator that supports our conclusion is the apparent correlation between the educational level of the respondents and their position about sources of legislation in the state. Chart 46 shows that the higher the level of education the respondent have, the less likely he or she is to choose Islamic Sharia as a source of legislation or as the only source of legislation, and the more likely they are to choose the Universal Declaration for Human rights and the relevant international treaty as s source of legislation. It is worth noting that the opinions of men and women are similar, a large number of men (46%) and of women (45%) chose the Universal Declaration for Human rights. 37% of men and 36% of women chose Islamic Sharia as a source of legislation. The smallest percentage of both genders chose Islamic Sharia as the only source of legislation, (14.3% for men and 14.8% for women).

Which of the following sentences you find most appropriate: The syrian state should: (education level)



- rely on Islamic Sharia as one of the sources of legislation, in addition to othef sources
- rely on Islamic Sharia as the only as the only source of legislation
- I don't know
- adopt the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and the relevant treaties as a source of legislation

Chart 46: Opinions about the sources of legislation in the state (based on the education level of the respondents).

2. Conclusion and recommendations

After reviewing the statistical indicators of the entire surveyed group and indicators of each of its subdivisions, we tried in this section to develop several practical recommendations relating to three main domains. The first addresses a group of constitutional principles and general legal frameworks related to national identity and the duties and rights of equal citizenship. These recommendations can be adopted by the Syrian constitutional committee while working on drafting the new Syrian constitution. The second relates to the overall political negotiation process. In particular, the participative roles the political opposition bodies can play to increase the inclusivity of the political negotiation process to ensure a relatively wider representation of the various groups of the Syrian society. The last addresses the limitation of the analytical research and the information gaps in this report and in the quantitative survey the report is based on, through presenting a number of recommendations to the civil society organizations, the research centres, and legal organizations working on issues of citizenship and identity in Syria.

First: relating to the constitutional process

- Redefining the Syrian national identity in the new Syrian constitution through:
 - Acknowledging the national, ethnic, religious, sectarian, and tribal diversity of the Syrian society, and stipulating that the protection of this diversity is one of the fundamental values of the Syrian state.
 - The ruling system in Syria should be based on participatory democracy, political pluralism, and peaceful exchange of power. The official national symbols of the state, like the name of the state, its flag, and its anthem, should not be linked to any political or national ideology that is exclusionary to any of the sub-identities or groups of the Syrian society.
- The recognition of the right of equal citizenship and equality of all political, economic, social, and cultural rights to all Syrians, regardless of their gender, identity affiliation, ideologies, and political views.
- The recognition of the right of safe, voluntary, and dignified return to all internally and externally displaced Syrians to their original places of residence or to any other location within the political boundaries of Syria that they may freely and knowledgeably choose. The right of return should not have a statute of limitation.
- The recognition of the linguistic and cultural rights of all ethnic and national sub-identities in Syria, and protecting their rights to use their languages, practice their religious, social, and cultural customs in their places of residence inside Syria.
- The sources of legislation in the state should include the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and the relevant international treaties and accords, in addition to using the Islamic Sharia as a source of legislation.
- Obliging the state to commit to a balanced, equal, and inclusive economic development, and to guarantee combating poverty and corruption and to commit to achieving food security and equality in economic opportunities and the right to work for all Syrians regardless of their gender, identity affiliation and political views. Especially that combating poverty and corruption and achieving economic development was one of the most important priorities for the surveyed group.
- Equality of civil rights for all Syrians of both genders and guaranteeing Syrian women the absolute right to give their nationality to their children, whether they are born inside or outside Syria.
- Obliging the state to remove all obstacles and constitutional, legal, executive, and procedural limitations that restrict Syrian women ability to occupy official roles in the elected state institutions, or its bureaucratic or service institutions, both in the governorates and centrally. Women should be third of the working force in all state institutions, with the aim of raising their representation or quota to half of the working force.
- Using gender-sensitive language in the phrasing of all constitutional and legal articles and texts, including the executive regulations and executive orders of all Syrian laws and legislations.

Second: relating to the political process

- Working to make the political opposition bodies that are taking part in the UN-sponsored negotiation process more inclusive, through the following steps:
 - Increasing the direct and active access of Syrian women; politicians, academics, legal experts, and civil rights activists to the political and constitutional process. Don't restrict their access to technical or consultant roles but work on increasing their representation and membership in all political and constitutional negotiation bodies.
 - Increasing the representation of national minorities; Kurds, Turkmen, Circassians, Syriacs and Assyrians, and other national and ethnic minorities in the constitutional and political negotiation bodies, while also respecting the religious and sectarian diversity.
 - Expanding the negotiation process and Syrian inter-dialogue between the political negotiation bodies and the largest possible segment of the Syrian public, including both genders, from across the geography of Syria, paying special attention to include people from the different spheres of influence inside the country, and Syrians who are refugees in other countries.
- Establishing specialized economic committees of Syrian and non-Syrians experts that would be affiliated to the Syrian opposition political and constitutional negotiating bodies. These expert committees would conduct consultations with the largest segment of Syrians from both genders, both inside and outside Syria, and work on drafting a comprehensive economic blueprint for the transitional period in Syria that would achieve a balanced, just, and inclusive economic development.
- The Syrian political negotiation committees and bodies should work on developing a transitional electoral system, for the local governorates level and for the constitutional and presidential elections. This system should be inclusive and guarantee the right of candidacy and voting for all Syrians, males, and females, regardless of their political views, their identity affiliation, their places of residence and whether they are outside or inside Syria. With the condition that elections are under the direct supervision and administration of the UN, in accordance with security council resolution 2254.

Third: relating to civil society and research

- Holding more dialogue meetings to raise awareness about equal citizenship, and its political, social, economic, cultural, and civic requisites, both locally inside Syria and with the refugees in their host countries.
- Establishing social networks to brainstorm with civil activists from different religious and national affiliations to reach general agreements about the political and social regulators of equal and active citizenship, and about social reconciliation and reducing the intensity of political, ideological, and national polarization.

-
- Supporting the projects, initiatives and civil organizations that are led by women, especially the ones working on legal, political, and economic empowerment of women.
 - Cooperating with Syrian academics and researchers, to produce in-depth research, based on participatory knowledge production, about:
 - The concept of citizenship and identity politics. The transformation in Syrian women's social, economic, and political roles during the current conflict.
 - An in-depth qualitative analysis about the social reasons behind some of the controversial issues discussed in this report. For example, the relationship between citizenship and sources of legislation in the state, and equality of rights and duties between men and women, and identity-based discrimination in public life and state institutions and how this discrimination influenced the dynamics of the current conflict.
 - All these research and reports should be available in Arabic, which will make them more accessible for all Syrians.

SEPTEMBER 2021
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