



SYRIAN YOUTH CURRENT ECONOMIC REALITIES AND RETURN CHALLENGES

THE RESEARCH WAS PREPARED BY





ABOUT THE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

EMISSA

A civil society organization focused on civic engagement and peacebuilding, Emissa empowers youth and women through training programs and community initiatives that promote social cohesion and sustainable local development.

IDIL (Innovative Development for Improving Lives)

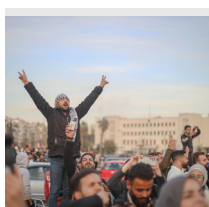
A development and humanitarian organization legally registered in Syria, IDIL is committed to saving lives and improving well-being. It works toward building a healthy, educated, and inclusive society through interventions rooted in dignity, equity, and inclusion.

Epissa

A Syrian organization dedicated to empowering individuals and communities by supporting grassroots initiatives and enhancing the capacities of local actors, particularly in fragile contexts, with a strong focus on livelihood and resilience.

Rouya

A community-based organization that works on youth engagement, education, and social development. Rouya provides safe spaces for dialogue and collective action, enabling youth to play a leading role in driving positive change within their communities.



Amid the protracted Syrian crisis, the economic and social challenges facing youth—both within Syria and in neighboring host countries—have become increasingly complex. In response, four organizations—Emissa, IDIL (Innovative Development for Improving Lives), Epissa, and Rouya—have joined efforts to conduct this collaborative research project. The study aims to deepen understanding of the current economic conditions in Syria and to explore the key obstacles hindering the return of young Syrians to their homeland.

Each organization brings a strong background in humanitarian and development work, with a shared commitment to empowering local communities, promoting youth inclusion, and advancing sustainable development rooted in dignity and equity. This joint research represents a collective investment in producing locally grounded knowledge that can inform more responsive policies and lead to concrete interventions that support safe, voluntary, and sustainable return pathways for youth.



Introduction

Syrian youth have been among the most affected and marginalized groups throughout the protracted crisis that began in 2011. Hundreds of thousands of young men and women have found themselves facing complex challenges that impact their daily lives, economic futures, and connection to their homeland. Once considered the driving force behind development and reconstruction, this segment of society is now caught between poverty, unemployment, displacement, and limited opportunities—pushing many to make life-altering decisions such as migration, engagement in the informal economy, or withdrawal from public life altogether.

The ongoing conflict has exacerbated Syria's structural economic crises, including rampant inflation, currency collapse, and a sharp decline in production. These factors have directly affected job opportunities for youth, especially in light of weak government programs and shrinking investments. While some inside the country have tried to adapt through small businesses or remote work, the overall picture remains bleak, with few signs of substantial improvement.

Moreover, basic services that directly impact youth—such as education, healthcare, housing, and financial services—have significantly deteriorated. The collapse of infrastructure has also made it difficult to access the internet and public transportation, reducing opportunities for skills development and entry into the digital labor market. In some areas, geographic or ethnic background serves as an additional barrier, further exacerbating social inequalities.

Under these circumstances, Syrian families are increasingly unable to support their youth. Estimates suggest that more than 70% of households rely on remittances from abroad to meet basic needs. The weakened educational system and lack of vocational training programs have also eroded the productive skills of young people, widening the gap between labor market demand and supply.

Syrian youth in host countries face equally complex challenges. They often live in precarious legal conditions, struggle to obtain work permits, and face limited access to higher education—coupled with feelings of alienation and marginalization. Many experience social isolation, lack representation in decision-making processes that shape their future, and are excluded from institutional frameworks that support civic and economic participation. In some cases, host country policies further reduce access to employment and education, increasing the vulnerability of their futures.



Despite all this, the idea of returning to Syria remains present for many. However, it is highly conditional, tied closely to economic conditions, security, social justice, and guarantees of protection from violations. Preliminary findings indicate that approximately 64% of respondents in this study link their decision to return with the availability of safe and stable job opportunities, while more than half express concern over the lack of infrastructure needed for reintegration. Some also cite Syria's unstable legal and tax environment as a deterrent to investment or entrepreneurship.

In this context, the study aims to provide an accurate and realistic picture of the current economic conditions facing Syrian youth both inside the country and in host settings. It explores the factors that influence their decisions to return or remain displaced. With a large sample of 7,433 young men and women from diverse regions and communities, the study offers strong analytical credibility and depth in comparing different experiences and contexts.

Through this research, we aim to shed light on the economic and service-related gaps impacting youth, understand the challenges to improving their living conditions, and explore ways to support their dignified and sustainable return. The study also formulates actionable recommendations for local and international stakeholders. Ultimately, we hope this work serves as an evidence-based reference to guide youth-focused policy development—recognizing young people as a cornerstone of recovery and reconstruction. We aspire for this study to become a platform for dialogue between Syrian youth and decision-makers, leading to inclusive and just development policies that end marginalization and strengthen youth engagement in rebuilding their homeland.



Syrian Youth: Current Economic Realities and Return Challenges

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative tools to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the economic and social realities facing Syrian youth. The research tools were designed based on a thorough review of existing literature and comparable studies on youth in conflict and displacement contexts, while carefully accounting for the specific Syrian context.

Sample:

The study included a large sample of 7,433 young men and women aged between 18 and 35 years, selected through purposive sampling from

various geographic regions inside Syria (east, west, north, south, and central areas) as well as neighboring countries hosting Syrian refugees, including Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. The sample ensured balance in terms of gender, urban–rural distribution, and diverse educational and professional backgrounds.

Data Collection Tools:

Online and Field Surveys:

A structured questionnaire with multiple-choice questions was used to collect quantitative data on economic status, income sources, employment opportunities, acquired skills, intention to return, and perceived

economic and social obstacles.

In-Depth Interviews:

Qualitative interviews were conducted with a selected group of youth to explore underlying motivations and contexts that cannot be fully captured through quantitative data alone.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

Several focus groups were held with participants from diverse backgrounds to discuss their perceptions of current challenges and opportunities for improving their conditions.

Data Analysis Methods:

Quantitative data were analyzed using advanced statistical software such as SPSS to generate frequency distributions, correlation patterns, and regional or group-based comparisons. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to identify key trends, recurring concepts, and underlying narratives.

Ethical Considerations:

The study adhered to strict ethical standards, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and efforts were made to avoid any potential harm. The data collection team was trained on ethical principles and sensitivity when engaging with participants.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the current economic realities faced by Syrian youth, both inside Syria and in host countries, with a focus on the challenges influencing their future decisions, particularly the decision to return to Syria. The main objectives of the research can be summarized as follows:

Analyze the current economic situation of Syrian youth, including income sources, unemployment rates, job opportunities, and the standard of living in different regions.

Identify the economic and social disparities between youth in Syria and those in host countries, analyzing the causes of these differences and their impact on individuals' lives.

Explore the factors influencing youth decisions to return to Syria or remain in host countries, including economic, social, security, and legal considerations.

Assess the skills acquired and the educational level of youth, and determine how these align with the current labor market in Syria and abroad.

Understand the coping mechanisms employed by Syrian youth to address economic challenges, such as entrepreneurship, remote work, or reliance on family support.

Provide practical recommendations based on reliable data that can contribute to improving the

economic conditions of youth and enhancing opportunities for dignified and sustainable return for those who wish to return.

Enrich the public discourse and policy-making by amplifying the voices of Syrian youth as key actors in the future of the country and as crucial supporters of the recovery and reconstruction process.

Study the gender differences among youth, analyzing how these disparities impact employment opportunities, skill acquisition, and decisions to return or stay in host countries.

Analyze the geographic distribution of youth within Syria, identifying differences between rural and urban areas, and understanding how these differences affect youth in terms of the economy, education, and employment opportunities.



GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

The study covered diverse geographical regions within Syria, neighboring host countries, and certain European asylum countries that represent new destinations for Syrian youth. The sample was distributed to ensure representation of all these areas and their respective social and economic contexts.

The geographical areas were categorized as follows:

Inside Syria

Northern Region (Northern Syria):

Idlib: Focus on the war-affected economy, unemployment, and limited opportunities.

Aleppo: One of the largest cities heavily impacted by the war, with a nearly

destroyed local economy.

Afrin: Undergoing significant changes in the local labor market.

Eastern Region:

Deir ez-Zor: Youth face severe economic decline due to ongoing conflict.

Raqqa: Difficult economic conditions and an urgent need for infrastructure development and job creation.

Al-Hasakah: A conflict zone where deteriorated infrastructure severely affects youth.

Southern Region (Southern Syria):

Daraa: Facing economic pressure post-conflict, and youth struggle with major employment challenges.

Quneitra: Faces instability in both security and the economy.

Western Region:

Damascus: Despite being the political and economic capital, youth face

limited opportunities due to the ongoing economic crisis.

Homs: Heavily affected city where youth confront major economic challenges.

Central Region:

Hama: Suffering from a deteriorating economy with negative impacts on job opportunities.

Latakia: Despite being a coastal city, the war and economic blockade have directly affected the youth economically.

Neighboring Countries

Lebanon:

Hosts one of the largest

Syrian refugee populations. Syrian youth face restricted economic opportunities due to fragile legal status and limited access to education and employment.

Jordan:

Hosts many Syrian refugees. Youth in Jordan face challenges related to limited economic opportunities and legal and living constraints that hinder access to sustainable employment.

Turkey:

Hosts a large number of Syrian refugees. Syrian youth face difficulties entering the labor market due to legal restrictions.

European Asylum Countries

Germany:

One of the most attractive destinations for Syrian refugees in Europe. Offers better opportunities in education and employment, yet youth face challenges in social and economic integration, as well as language and cultural barriers.

Sweden:

Hosts a significant number of Syrian refugees. Provides a good working environment but presents challenges in social and economic integration for some Syrian youth.

Netherlands:

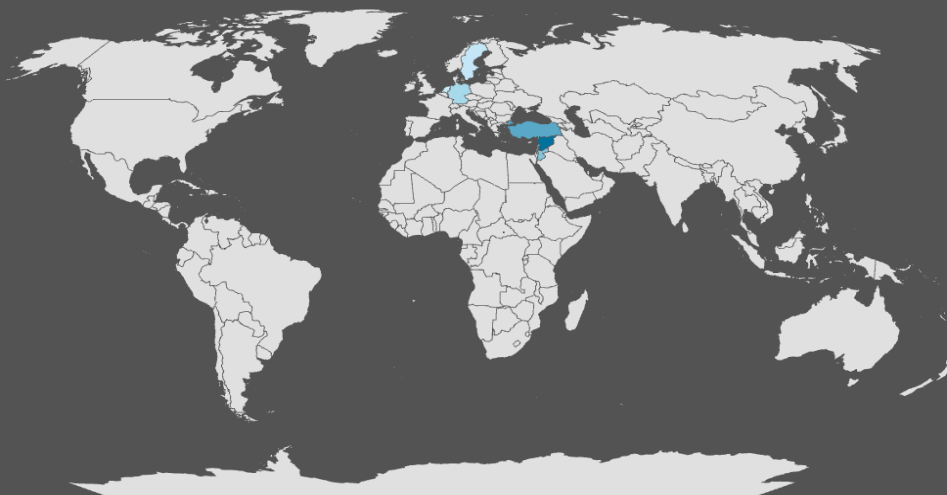
Welcoming to Syrian refugees, offering broad opportunities in education and employment. However, youth face challenges in adapting to the country's social and economic systems.

Geographical Areas

Numbers

2411

277



GENDER DISTRIBUTION:

The sample was divided according to gender distribution in order to study the economic and social differences between males and females across various geographical contexts. The questionnaires and research tools were designed to be inclusive and to allow for a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by youth of both genders. The study included the following proportions:

Inside Syria:

Males:

Males constitute the majority of Syrian youth in most regions, making up approximately 60% of the sample. This percentage reflects various challenges, such as limited access to job opportunities due to the ongoing conflict and a severe economic crisis that has impacted most productive sectors.

Females:

Females make up about 40% of the sample, reflecting the presence of women across different areas despite social and cultural challenges that may affect their participation in the labor market or education. Many women face limited economic opportunities and restrictions in accessing decent employment, especially in rural areas where cultural norms may restrict female employment.

Neighboring Countries:

Males in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey:

Males constitute a larger portion of the sample in these countries, as the need to work is greater among young men due to the economic pressures they face in host countries. The ongoing economic crises limit their access to formal job markets, pushing many into informal sectors or temporary jobs.

Females in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey:

Syrian females in neighboring countries make up approximately 35% of the sample. They face additional challenges in accessing decent employment due to social restrictions imposed by certain communities or legal limitations related to work permits and employment rights.

Neighboring Countries:

Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey:

Males:

Males in European asylum countries make up around 55% of the sample. In these countries, they face different challenges, including adapting to new legal and economic systems. However, they may find better opportunities for education and employment compared to other regions, potentially improving their ability to integrate into the local labor market.

Females:

Females in European asylum countries constitute approximately 45% of the sample. Despite the opportunities available in countries such as Germany and Sweden, they face specific challenges in adapting to new work environments and may sometimes encounter social or economic discrimination. Nonetheless, many local and international organizations are working to promote women's rights in these countries, providing opportunities for them to improve their economic conditions.



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ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

THE ECONOMIC REALITY AND CHALLENGES

1. GENERAL CONTEXT OF SYRIAN YOUTH SITUATION:

The introduction reveals that

Syrian youth are experiencing a dual vulnerability—structural and economic. The protracted Syrian crisis, ongoing for over a decade, has severely impacted the country's infrastructure and weakened the ability of youth to engage positively with their environment, both inside Syria and in host countries.

Inside Syria: Youth face severe challenges, including economic collapse, deteriorating basic services, and the absence of effective policies supporting education and vocational training.

Outside Syria: The situation is not significantly better. Youth suffer from legal precariousness, institutional marginalization, and limited access to decent employment opportunities.

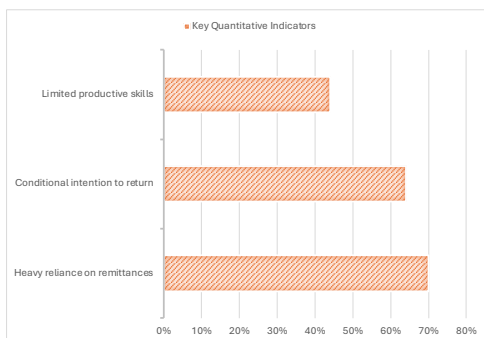
2. Key Quantitative Indicators:

critical indicators emerge:

Heavy reliance on remittances: Over 70% of households depend on remittances from abroad, highlighting the erosion of productive job opportunities within the country.

Conditional intention to return: 64% of respondents tie their decision to return to the existence of stable job opportunities, while more than half express concern about weak infrastructure as a barrier.

Limited productive skills: A result of the collapse of the education system and the absence of training programs, this gap widens the mismatch between labor market needs and the actual capabilities of youth.



3. Extracted Qualitative Trends:

The qualitative data collected through interviews and focus group discussions revealed several key insights:

Rising feelings of exclusion and marginalization: Particularly among refugee youth who lack institutional representation or support. Many feel alienated from decision-making processes and community development efforts in host countries.

Loss of trust in Syria's legal and economic environment: This is a major deterrent to return, especially for youth with entrepreneurial or digital skills that could otherwise be leveraged remotely or in more stable settings.

Suppressed desire to return: While many young people express a deep emotional connection to their homeland, their return is hindered by ongoing security, political, and economic instability. As a result, many are exploring alternative pathways, such as resettlement in Europe or enduring the hardships of host countries rather than risk returning.

4. Economic and Social Gaps:

Regional disparities: Geographic background—such as being from rural or ethnically distinct areas—remains a critical factor in accessing services and employment opportunities, both inside Syria and in neighboring countries.

General Economic Situation:

The research findings highlight a **systematic and ongoing collapse of the Syrian economy** that has persisted for over a decade, directly impacting the lives and futures of Syrian youth. A striking **81% of participants** indicated that the current Syrian economy offers no form of economic security whether in terms of employment opportunities, income stability, or price control.

This decline is attributed to several interconnected factors, most notably:

- International **economic sanctions**,
- Decline in **domestic production**,
- **Weak infrastructure**,
- Reliance on a **rentier economy and external remittances**.

Inflation and Cost of Living:

Inflation emerged as one of the most urgent daily challenges:

- **74%** of youth reported being unable to meet their basic needs—even when working full-time.
- The prices of **food, rent, and essential goods** have surged by over **800%** in the past three years.

- Meanwhile, **average wages** remain extremely low:

- Approximately **\$20/month** in government-held areas.
- Around **\$40–\$60/month** in opposition or autonomous areas.

Dependence on Remittances:

Over **67%** of respondents stated that their families rely primarily on financial support from relatives abroad. This heavy dependence has turned remittances into the backbone of local economies, particularly in the absence of domestic job creation.

Market Stagnation and Youth Employment:

Local markets suffer from severe stagnation due to the drop in purchasing power, resulting in:

- Shrinking commercial activity,
- A rise in youth unemployment,
- Increased layoffs and underemployment.

Shift to Informal Economy:

In response, many young people are turning to the informal economy to secure temporary or partial income through:

- Seasonal labor,
- E-commerce,
- Smuggling,
- Day-to-day service work.

Roughly **42%** of participants admitted that their current income sources are unstable and sometimes **illegal**, posing a significant threat to **economic sustainability** and undermining prospects for long-term financial planning or career development.

Lack of Transparency and Policy Planning:

The Syrian economic system suffers from a lack of transparency and effective central planning:

- **59%** of youth believe that current economic policies do not reflect the priorities or needs of the population.
- Instead, they see these policies as serving **overlapping interests of military and economic elites**, which further **widens the gap** between the state and its youth.



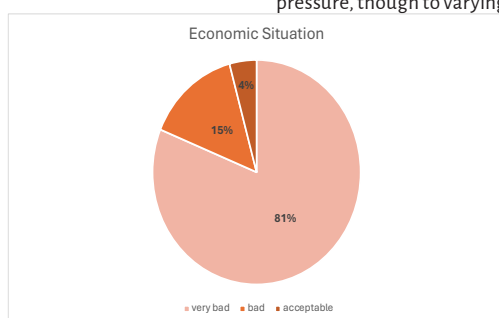
FINDINGS

Overall Assessment of the

Economic Situation:

- **81.2%** of participants described the economic situation in Syria as “very bad.”

- **14.6%** rated it as “bad,” while only **4.2%** considered it “acceptable” or “relatively good” (mostly among those residing outside Syria).



Average Monthly Individual

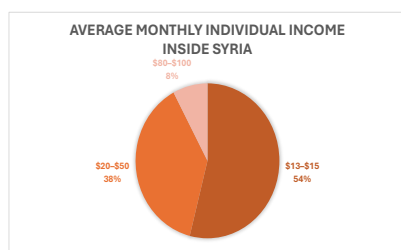
Income:

Inside Syria:

- **46.9%** earn less than 200,000 SYP per month (approximately \$13–\$15).

- **33.2%** earn between 200,000 and 500,000 SYP.

- Only **6.8%** reported an income above 1,000,000 SYP monthly.

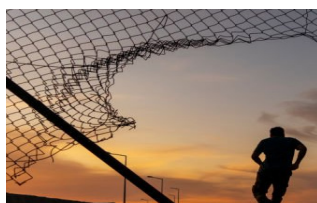


Dependence on Financial

Remittances:

- **67.8%** of participants reported that their families rely on remittances from relatives abroad as a primary source of income.

- This percentage is higher in governorates like Deir ez-Zor and Daraa, but lower in Idlib and eastern Aleppo countryside, where some job opportunities are available through humanitarian organizations or projects.



Youth's Ability to Meet Daily Needs:

- **76.5%** of participants inside Syria reported being unable to cover basic needs such as food, rent, and transportation.

- In comparison, **58.3%** of participants in neighboring countries and **48.7%** of those in Europe reported ongoing financial pressure, though to varying degrees.

In Host Countries:

- **42.4%** work in unstable or seasonal jobs.

- **29.1%** rely on NGO aid or remittances.

- **28.5%** of participants rely on selling their resources (such as furniture or personal belongings) in Syria, or they depend on humanitarian aid to meet their needs.

Opportunities for Investment or Small Businesses:

- Only **8.4%** of participants reported owning or being involved in a small economic project.

- **71.6%** expressed interest in starting a small business, but cited challenges such as lack of funding, poor infrastructure, and security concerns as reasons for not pursuing this path.

Level of Trust in Local Economic Policies:

- **62.1%** of participants believe that economic policies in Syria do not address the needs of youth.

78.5% do not trust that there will be any economic improvement over the next three years if current conditions

Education and Vocational Training

Education and vocational training are critical determinants of the economic and social future of youth, particularly in conflict and prolonged crisis contexts, such as in Syria. Over the past years, the Syrian education system has suffered severe blows, including the destruction of schools, displacement of teaching staff, and a decline in government resources allocated to the educational sector. Millions of young people are no longer able to continue their formal education or gain vocational training that aligns with market demands.

At the same time, there has been an increased reliance on informal initiatives or those funded by

international organizations to bridge the educational gap.

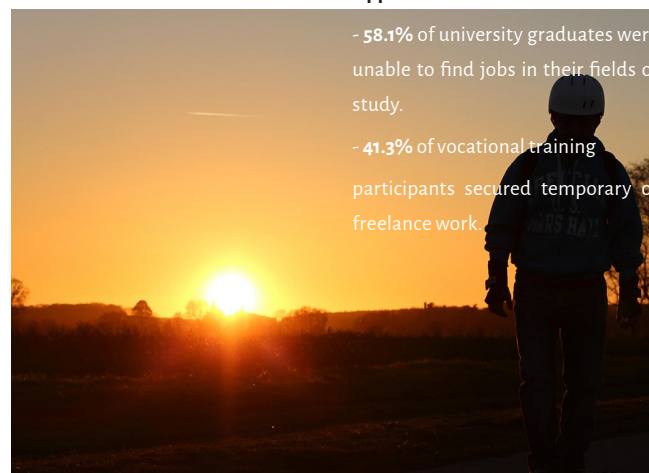
However, these alternatives often lack official accreditation or institutional recognition. In host countries, Syrian youth face challenges related to registration in educational institutions, the difficulty of credential recognition, or language and legal barriers. Many young people have been forced to leave school early and enter the

labor market, which has affected their acquisition of specialized skills.

The deterioration of education standards and the lack of effective vocational training programs

contribute to weakening youth's ability to compete in the labor

market. This increases their reliance on informal and unstable work and hinders any efforts for sustainable economic development.



Findings

Educational Attainment:

- **12.4%** were unable to complete basic education.

- **34.9%** stopped at the secondary school level.

- **37.6%** hold university degrees.

- **8.1%** pursued postgraduate or specialized vocational education.

Dropout from Education:

- **42.7%** of youth within Syria had to leave education due to displacement or economic hardships.

- **21.5%** of youth in neighboring countries were deprived of education due to the lack of legal residency or the need to work.

Access to Vocational Training

Programs:

- Only **28.2%** of participants

attended vocational training courses in the past three years.

The most common fields of training were: technology, handicrafts, and services.

Quality of Education and Training:

- **62.9%** expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the educational or training programs they attended.

- Only **14.7%** confirmed that the training helped them actually enter the job market.

Main Barriers:

- Cost (**49.3%**).

- Lack of training centers (**35.5%**).

- Difficulty in attending due to family commitments (**22.6%**).

Impact of Education on Job

Opportunities:

- **58.1%** of university graduates were unable to find jobs in their fields of study.

- **41.3%** of vocational training participants secured temporary or freelance work.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND SOURCES OF INCOME

Employment opportunities and sources of income are critical factors in

determining the standard of living for young people in any country. They are among the key dimensions that directly affect their social and psychological

stability. In the context of the ongoing

Syrian crisis, which has lasted for more than a decade, job opportunities have been severely affected due to

widespread infrastructure

destruction, declining investments, and a distorted labor market. Amid rising unemployment, many Syrian youth have been forced to work in the informal economy or in low-income and unstable jobs.

For young people inside Syria, the private sector has significantly deteriorated, and the government is no longer able to

absorb the large number of graduates and job seekers. In host countries, labor regulations often impose numerous

restrictions, including difficulties in

obtaining official work permits and limitations on employment opportunities in certain sectors. In some cases, Syrian youth abroad face additional challenges, such as the non-recognition of their

academic qualifications or

employment gaps.

This study aims to uncover the

factors affecting young people's ability to access employment

opportunities, identify their sources of income, and explore the

challenges they face in their pursuit of economic independence.

Findings

1. Unemployment:

- **66.3%** of participants confirmed that they are currently unemployed, reflecting the high unemployment rates among Syrian youth both inside and outside the country.

- **19.7%** of youth in Syria reported finding temporary or seasonal job opportunities.

- Only **14%** managed to secure stable or permanent employment.

2. Informal Economy:

- **54.5%** of participants work in the informal economy, including

self-employment, handicrafts, or other unregistered small-scale jobs.

- **32.1%** are engaged in low-income activities such as daily wage labor or family farming.

3. Available Jobs:

- The most available job

opportunities were in handicrafts (**22.7%**), trade (**18.9%**), and services (**16.4%**).

- **9.1%** of youth indicated that the available jobs do not match their qualifications or education.

4. Income Levels:

- **41.3%** of participants inside Syria earn less than \$100 per month, while 35.7% reported an income ranging between \$100–\$300 per month.

- **18.5%** of youth in neighboring countries earn less than \$200 per month, while **10.1%** earn more than \$500.

5. Impact of Economic Crises on Income:

- **71.8%** of participants in Syria

stated that economic crises have led to a significant decrease in their monthly income.

- In host countries, **48.3%** reported that reduced employment

opportunities have caused income instability.

6. Opportunities in Host Countries:

- **42.2%** of Syrian youth in host countries confirmed that job opportunities are limited due to local laws or work permit restrictions.

- **29.5%** mentioned a mismatch between their academic qualifications and the requirements of the local job market.

- **22.3%** noted that the available jobs in host countries are often low-paying or temporary.

7. Challenges Facing Youth in

Securing Income:

- **63.5%** of youth in Syria believed that the lack of government investment and a weak private sector are the main barriers to employment.

45.2% of youth in host countries highlighted that the difficulty in obtaining work permits or legal restrictions is their biggest challenge

SOCIAL PATTERNS AND FAMILY LIFE

Social patterns and family life are highly influential factors shaping the situation of Syrian youth, both within the country and in host nations. In the Syrian context, these patterns have been profoundly

disrupted by the war. Family and social roles have shifted due to the destruction of social and economic structures,

leading to the disintegration of some families and fragmentation of social r

elationships. Ongoing crises have also placed enormous pressure on youth to provide for their families, pushing many into the role of breadwinner instead of student or independent worker.

In host countries, young Syrians face additional challenges adapting to new societies. Many report feelings of social isolation and marginalization due to the loss of cultural identity or difficulties integrating into unfamiliar

environments. These shifts in social norms have had a direct impact on

family and personal relationships, as many youth struggle to maintain family bonds under harsh circumstances.

This section highlights how economic and social challenges have affected

family and personal life for Syrian youth, and how they are navigating these

challenges across different geographic contexts.

Findings

1. Family Roles:

- **58.3%** of Syrian youth inside the country have become the primary breadwinners for their families, especially due to deteriorating economic conditions that have left many parents unable to provide.

- In host countries, **45.6%** of youth reported having to take on leadership roles within the family, with 38.9%

working in informal jobs to support their households.

- **12.7%** of youth in Syria and 7.4% in host countries said their families still rely on support from relatives or remittances to meet basic needs.

2. Family Relationships:

- **33.4%** of Syrian youth inside the country felt that their family relationships improved due to increased cooperation in facing economic hardships.

- Conversely, **41.8%** said economic pressures have worsened family r
elationships, leading to more frequent conflicts.

- **25.7%** of youth in host countries

reported feelings of social

marginalization and isolation due to

difficulties adapting to new cultures.

3. Marriage and Romantic Relationships:

- **22.6%** of youth in Syria stated they were forced into early marriage due to

economic conditions, which has limited their opportunities for education and stable employment.

- **31.2%** of youth in host countries

reported facing social or familial pressure for early marriage due to traditional

values and the perceived need to

establish a new family in an unstable

environment.

- **15.4%** of Syrian youth in host countries said they have struggled to form social

relationships due to isolation and

discrimination, affecting their ability to integrate into host communities.

4. Social Challenges in Host Countries:

- **55.3%** of Syrian youth in host countries reported difficulties adapting to new societies, due to lack of social support or legal challenges.

- **39.8%** indicated they face challenges due to the absence of strong social support networks in host countries.

- **23.2%** cited language barriers as a major issue negatively affecting their ability to integrate.

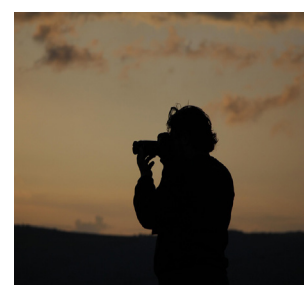
5. Social Representation and

Decision-Making:

- **61.4%** of youth in Syria stated they do not participate adequately in decisions affecting their personal future or social change processes, due to weak community institutions.

- In host countries, **47.1%** of youth reported feeling marginalized and excluded from political or social decision-making, struggling to adapt to the systems in place.

- **19.9%** said they face barriers to political or social representation that would ensure their rights are upheld.



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Mental health has long been overlooked in studies concerning youth in Syria.

However, the protracted conflict and daily struggles endured by Syrian youth have underscored the urgent need to focus on this issue. The challenging economic conditions, persistent social hardships, and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria have all contributed to a surge in anxiety and depression among young people. These mental health challenges directly impact their ability to cope with their circumstances and act as barriers to realizing their future ambitions.

In host countries, Syrian youth also face psychological challenges associated with social isolation, discrimination, and unstable legal status. Additionally, the trauma of forced displacement has left many with deep psychological scars stemming from loss and dislocation.

Under such conditions, it is crucial to shed light on youth mental health and explore how to support them in facing these challenges.

This section presents the psychological challenges experienced by Syrian youth both inside Syria and in host countries, supported by findings from the study sample.

Findings

1. General Psychological Distress:

- 72.5% of Syrian youth inside the country reported suffering from high levels of anxiety and depression due to the difficult economic and political conditions.

- 61.8% of youth in host countries expressed ongoing anxiety and stress linked to displacement, loss of stability, and the sense of alienation in unfamiliar environments.

- 45.3% of youth both in Syria and abroad said they felt hopeless about their future, citing a lack of economic and social prospects.

2. Economic-Related Psychological Stress:

- 68.7% of Syrian youth in-country confirmed that economic pressures were the primary factor behind their mental health deterioration, as they struggle to find informal jobs or cope with living costs.

- 57.5% of youth in host countries said their mental health was heavily affected by unstable employment and inability to meet basic needs.

- 52.3% of all participants said that their inability to contribute to rebuilding their country or achieving personal goals deepens their sense of frustration and despair.

3. Coping with Psychological Trauma:

- 35.1% of youth in Syria reported they received no psychological support or counseling during the conflict, leaving them with unresolved trauma.

- 48.6% of youth in host countries said they experience trauma due to displacement, with insufficient access to mental health support.

- Only 21.2% of participants said they had received psychological counseling or support from organizations, highlighting a critical gap in services.

4. Influential Factors on Mental Health:

- 63.4% of youth in Syria indicated that their family environment, including financial hardship and lack of emotional support, significantly affects their mental health.

- 57.8% of youth in host countries identified social isolation, marginalization, legal uncertainty, and instability as major contributors to their psychological distress.

- 33.7% of youth both in Syria and abroad said that limited access to educational and employment opportunities has led to increased feelings of alienation and depression.

5. Accessing Mental Health Services:

- 54.5% of youth in Syria said they had not received any treatment or psychological support for mental health issues.

Moreover, 61.3% noted that they face difficulties accessing specialized mental health services due to security concerns.

- In host countries, 42.1% shared similar sentiments, emphasizing that mental health services are either unavailable or too expensive.

- 28.7% of youth in host countries attempted to seek psychological care but struggled to access adequate support, leading to increased feelings of frustration.

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS ON YOUTH

Cultural and social influences are among the key factors that determine the

ability of Syrian youth to adapt to current conditions, whether inside the country or in host countries. In addition to the economic and legal challenges they face, cultural and social factors form a significant part of their experience in

society. Social values, traditions, national identity, and social interactions can influence young people's outlook on life, thereby affecting their future decisions, such as whether to return to Syria or remain in host countries.

Analyzing these cultural and social impacts requires examining the concept of national identity among Syrian youth, the extent to which it has been affected by the war, and whether there are differences in cultural perceptions between youth inside Syria and their peers in host countries. Additionally, social influences related to family, religion, and education shape young people's perceptions of the future.

Findings

1. Cultural Impacts Inside Syria:

- 53.2% of youth inside Syria indicated that the war significantly affected their sense of national identity, and internal displacement has increased feelings of alienation and loss of cultural identity.

- 62.3% confirmed that traditional social values, such as family and local

community, remain central in their lives, and they feel responsible for their families and community.

- 45.5% expressed concern that social changes due to the war might erode

communal values, which would negatively impact youth stability and future relationships.

2. Cultural Impacts in Host Countries:

- 61.7% of Syrian youth in host countries stated that life in exile helped them

develop a new identity combining their original culture with the host community's culture.

- 48.9% mentioned that they sometimes feel isolated due to cultural and

traditional differences between their upbringing and the society they currently live in.

- 39.4% expressed experiencing internal conflict between preserving their

cultural heritage and adapting to the new culture, reflecting a challenge in balancing belonging to their original culture and integrating into new societies.

3. Social Impacts on Return Decisions:

- 58.7% of youth inside Syria and 63.1% in host countries indicated that the deteriorating social conditions in Syria are major factors influencing their decision on whether to return.

- 72.4% of youth facing social issues in host countries (e.g., isolation and social discrimination) reported feeling

increased pressure to remain in exile due to a lack of belonging to the new society.

- 54.8% of youth in host countries said they might reconsider returning to Syria if social interactions improved and genuine community reconciliation was achieved.

4. Family-Related Social Challenges:

- 66.3% of youth inside Syria stated that the family still plays a very significant role in decisions about the future, especially regarding marriage, work, and education, highlighting the strong ongoing influence of family.

- 59.8% of youth in host countries confirmed that their social and family situation affects their psychological and social stability, and thus their future decisions about returning to Syria.

- 41.7% of youth in host countries said that their family relationships have been negatively affected by the social and economic pressures in exile, which has impacted their ability to make decisive choices about returning.

5. Education-Related Challenges:

- 53.9% of youth inside Syria affirmed that families' inability to provide proper education is one of the most significant factors negatively impacting their future aspirations, especially in conflict areas.

- 44.3% of Syrian youth in host countries said they struggle to adapt to the educational systems due to linguistic and curricular differences, which intensifies their sense of isolation.

- 56.1% of youth in host countries noted they do not have equal opportunities compared to their peers in host countries to access higher education, which greatly affects their career plans and economic future.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In the context of the deteriorating economic situation in Syria and in host countries, Syrian youth face significant challenges in finding decent and stable employment opportunities. The labor sector is directly impacted by ongoing crises, with economic weaknesses and

deteriorating infrastructure leading to fewer traditional job opportunities.

Inside Syria, local production has significantly decreased, and many youth face major challenges due to a lack of resources and facilities that support entrepreneurship. In contrast, Syrian youth in host countries face additional challenges such as legal barriers that restrict their access to work permits or employment in the formal sector.

In this context, entrepreneurship is considered a potential option for youth in both contexts, whether inside Syria or in host countries. However, starting small businesses or expanding individual projects requires institutional support and targeted training that enables youth to acquire the necessary skills. In many host countries, Syrian youth find themselves facing numerous challenges when attempting to start their own businesses due to legal and administrative restrictions, in addition to limited financial resources.

However, some opportunities emerge that could improve youth's economic situation, such as working in digital sectors, which offer opportunities for youth to integrate into the digital labor market and generate sustainable income online. This, however, requires improving access to the internet and enhancing digital skills, which might be lacking or weak in some segments.

Findings

1. Employment Opportunities Inside

Syria:

- 72.4% of youth in Syria reported that they cannot find stable or decent jobs due to the country's economic and political conditions.
- 56.3% confirmed that they work in informal jobs or in the informal sector due to the lack of opportunities in the formal sector, which exposes them to risks regarding their social and professional rights.
- 49.8% of Syrian youth inside the country believe that entrepreneurship could be a solution to overcome unemployment chal-

lenges, expressing interest in starting small businesses. However, 62.1%

pointed to the lack of funding and professional guidance as major obstacles.

- 36.2% of youth in Syria said they are looking for job opportunities abroad due to the lack of local investments and the worsening economic situation.

2. Employment Opportunities in Host Countries:

- 63.5% of Syrian youth in host countries reported that they face difficulty obtaining formal employment due to local laws that restrict their rights as refugees.
- 47.9% said they work in informal sectors or temporary jobs, with the informal sector serving as a refuge for many youth who do not have official work permits.
- 55.3% of participants in host countries stated that entrepreneurship is a potential option for securing sustainable income, with 61.8% believing that government or civil society organizations can help provide training and financial support to start small businesses.
- 42.6% of youth in host countries expressed a desire to receive training in digital and technical skills that would allow them to work remotely or participate in the digital economy.

3. Entrepreneurship Challenges:

- 69.2% of youth inside Syria and in host countries cited a lack of funding as the primary obstacle to starting their own businesses.
- 58.7% of participants inside Syria and in host countries pointed to the absence of proper, targeted professional training in entrepreneurship as one of the biggest challenges they face.
- 45.3% of youth in host countries said that local laws and regulations pose a barrier to developing their own businesses, making it difficult to expand their commercial activities due to restrictions on obtaining work permits or licenses.

4. Opportunities in the Digital Economy:

- 53.8% of Syrian youth in Syria and in host countries expressed interest in acquiring digital skills such as programming, graphic design, and online marketing to participate in the digital economy and work remotely.

FUTURE EXPECTATIONS AND RETURN TO SYRIA

The decision to return to Syria is a highly complex one for Syrian youth, both within the country and in exile, and it is heavily influenced by a variety of economic, security, social, and legal factors. Despite the challenges, many young people still hope to return to their homeland, with the condition that there is a safe and supportive environment, as well as economic opportunities available to them. This return is largely dependent on improved conditions and the availability of sustainable infrastructure and employment opportunities.

Findings:

1. Future Intentions to Return:

- 64.3% of youth within Syria expressed a desire to return to their pre-crisis lives, should security and economic conditions improve, particularly if job opportunities and economic recovery are assured.
- 59.2% of Syrian youth in exile also expressed their intention to return, conditional on achieving peace, stability, and the availability of suitable employment.

2. Influencing Factors in the Decision to Return:

- **Security Conditions:** 72.4% of youth stated that security improvements are the primary factor influencing their return. They believe that improving the security situation will facilitate the return process.
- **Economic Conditions:** 68.9% cited the need for a better economic environment, particularly in terms of job creation and support for small businesses, as a major factor in their decision.
- **Infrastructure:** 51.6% mentioned that having access to basic services such as healthcare and education would be essential for their decision to return, as they consider these foundational to a decent standard of living.

3. Challenges Facing Youth in Returning to Syria:

- **Economic Fears:** 66.3% of youth expressed concerns about the potential economic difficulties they would face upon returning, particularly the lack of available job opportunities and the inability of the country to provide sustainable economic support.
- **Security Concerns:** 58.7% expressed anxiety about the ongoing security challenges in the regions they intend to

return to, particularly due to the lack of guarantees regarding personal safety or the stability of the situation.

- Lack of Infrastructure:

- 50.4% of respondents felt that the lack of basic infrastructure, especially in education, healthcare, and transportation, would be a significant barrier to their return, as they don't foresee these services being restored in the near future.

- **Absence of Supportive Policies:** 42.1% of youth felt that the absence of government incentives for return, such as reconstruction programs or investment incentives, further hindered their decision to come back.

Outlook for the Future:

- **Security Improvements:** 48.5% of youth abroad believed that security conditions would improve in the near future, which would facilitate a stable return to Syria.

- **Economic Optimism:** 53.3% of youth inside Syria were optimistic about the future, especially if there were international investments focused on infrastructure and rebuilding the economy.

- Reconstruction as an Opportunity:

- 61.2% of youth abroad saw reconstruction as a significant opportunity, should sufficient funding and sustainable development programs be implemented.

Opportunities for Supporting Return:

- **Support Programs:** 70.4% of youth, both within Syria and abroad, stated that government and international support programs aimed at youth, including education and vocational training, would facilitate their return and integration into society.

- **Job Creation and Investment:** 63.2% emphasized the importance of creating stable job opportunities and fostering both local.

- **Human Rights and Social Justice:** 55.6% of youth said that guarantees related to human rights, social justice, and equal opportunities would be key motivators for their decision to return.

- **Improved Basic Services:** 67.9% of youth emphasized the need for improvements in basic services such as education and healthcare, as these factors would significantly increase their willingness to return and rebuild their lives in Syria.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the findings of this study,

several recommendations can be derived to improve the economic and social situation of Syrian youth, both inside Syria and in refugee host countries, and to facilitate a dignified and sustainable return. These recommendations cover several key areas:

1. Improving Security and Stability:

- Efforts must be made to ensure sustainable security across all Syrian regions, with a focus on strengthening the rule of law and protecting human rights.
- Clear monitoring and enforcement mechanisms should be established to ensure that youth are not subject to violations or threats during their return or while residing in the country.

2. Rebuilding the Economy:

- Large-scale investments should be directed towards reconstruction efforts, particularly in infrastructure projects that can improve both work and living conditions in Syria.
- A stable economic environment that attracts both local and international investors should be created by improving financial and tax systems and easing legal procedures related to investment and entrepreneurship.
- Programs should be developed to support youth entrepreneurship, such as micro-loans and non-repayable grants, as well as establishing business incubators for creative youth in various fields.

3. Education and Vocational Training:

- Educational systems in Syria should be developed to ensure high-quality education that meets the needs of both local and international markets.
- Expanding vocational training programs, particularly in digital skills, is essential to prepare youth for the digital and global job markets.
- Partnerships between educational and the private sector should be established to develop training programs directly targeting youth, helping them acquire the necessary skills for employment.

4. Improving Basic Services:

- Focus should be placed on the development of essential services such as health and education, ensuring equal access across all regions of Syria.
- Reconstruction of infrastructure in conflict-affected areas should be prioritized, with significant budgets allocated to rehabilitating public facilities and improving transport and energy networks.
- Psychological and social rehabilitation programs for war-affected youth, both inside Syria and in refugee host countries, should be supported through collaboration with humanitarian organizations.

5. Support for Youth in Refugee Host Countries:

- Training and educational programs should be provided for Syrian youth in refugee countries to improve their chances in local job markets, in addition to facilitating their access to work permits.
- Host countries should be encouraged to implement policies that integrate Syrian youth into their local communities, including social support and mental health programs.
- Cooperation between governments and humanitarian organizations should be enhanced to create opportunities for Syrian youth in host countries to participate in community development and political programs.

6. Social Justice and Equality:

- Mechanisms should be established for the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities across all segments of Syrian society, including empowering women and youth to play an active role in reconstruction and development.
- Human rights must be guaranteed for all individuals in Syria, including rights to education, health, and employment, with a legal environment that promotes justice and equality.

CONCLUSION:

Syrian youth represent the backbone of Syrian society, as they were initially a driving force behind development and construction. However, today they face significant challenges related to their economic, social, and educational future, both in Syria and in refugee host

countries. Over time, it has become clear that the major challenge facing Syrian youth is the result of years of war and conflict, which have deeply affected all aspects of life. Despite this, Syrian youth still carry hope and a desire to return to their homeland and contribute to the rebuilding of Syria.

In this context, this research serves as an attempt to understand the economic and social situation of Syrian youth, focusing on the challenges they face both inside Syria and in refugee host countries. The study also examines the factors influencing the decision to return, such as economic opportunities, education, security, and social justice. Through data collection from a large sample of Syrian youth, the research highlighted many issues that pose significant obstacles for these young people, which require clear and integrated strategies to improve their conditions.

Despite the major challenges highlighted by the findings, the study also pointed to the possibility of improving the situation if a series of policies and development programs targeting youth are implemented.

Key policies include creating a safe and stable environment within Syria, enhancing educational and vocational training opportunities, and supporting small economic projects that can strengthen youth's ability to enter the labor market and achieve financial independence. Additionally, improving basic services such as healthcare and education, and rebuilding infrastructure destroyed by the war, is crucial to ensure a nurturing environment for youth and increase their chances of living a dignified life.

The findings reveal that more than half of Syrian youth are eager to return to Syria, provided that there are safe and stable employment opportunities, along with personal security guarantees. However, without these opportunities, many remain in refugee host countries, where they suffer from social and economic marginalization. Based on these insights,

it is essential for governments and humanitarian organizations to act swiftly to create policies that support youth both inside and outside Syria. This includes facilitating their access to job opportunities, providing flexible educational environments, and enhancing their capacity to participate in rebuilding their homeland.

The research also reflects the economic and social challenges faced by Syrian youth in refugee countries, where they suffer from limited legal, educational, and economic opportunities. Therefore, developing appropriate support programs in these countries is a critical step toward empowering Syrian youth comprehensively, not only in education and employment but also in community and political engagement.

In conclusion, while the challenges facing Syrian youth are immense, opportunities still exist if practical solutions are adopted by all concerned parties, including the Syrian government, international and local humanitarian organizations, and the international community as a whole. Empowering Syrian youth through education and training, supporting small businesses, and achieving social justice will enhance their ability to contribute to the rebuilding of their country and restoring its stability. Thus, Syrian youth will be better equipped to overcome economic and social challenges, and play a vital role in rebuilding Syria as a more stable and just nation.

This research serves as a call to decision-makers and key stakeholders to implement more effective support strategies and build policies that place youth at the heart of development and reconstruction efforts. Through this, we hope to build a Syrian society where everyone can thrive, and youth can fully realize their potential.



MESSAGE FROM THE RESEARCH TEAM:

The research team behind the study “Syrian Youth: Current Economic Reality and Challenges of Return” is pleased to present this report, which reflects the situation of Syrian youth amidst the ongoing crisis in the country. Our goal with this research was to highlight the economic and social challenges faced by Syrian youth, both within Syria and in refugee host countries, and to provide recommendations based on the research findings that may contribute to improving the conditions of this important segment of society.

We believe that youth are a fundamental pillar in the process of rebuilding Syria, and therefore, it was essential to conduct an in-depth study that helps decision-makers, humanitarian organizations, and stakeholders develop policies that support this group and provide them with the appropriate opportunities for progress and growth.

In conducting this research, we used a precise scientific methodology, which included gathering data from a wide sample of Syrian youth, both inside and in neighboring countries. We were keen to provide an accurate picture that reflects the living conditions and challenges faced by the youth.

We hope that this research will serve as the beginning of an in-depth dialogue between all relevant parties and contribute to efforts aimed at improving the situation of Syrian youth and creating real opportunities for them in the future.

The Research Team

MESSAGE FROM THE RESEARCHER

I would like to express my deep gratitude to everyone who supported this research—whether by contributing to data collection or by offering guidance and advice throughout the various phases of the study. This research journey was filled with challenges, but it reaffirmed for me the vital role that Syrian youth play in driving the change needed within Syrian society.

Through this study, I aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the reality facing Syrian youth both inside the country and in host countries. I sought to highlight the pressing economic and social challenges they face, and to explore how these factors influence their decision to return to Syria. Additionally, I hoped to shed light on the role that government policies and civil society organizations can play in improving these conditions.

I hope this study has provided clear and valuable insights into the complex issues surrounding Syrian youth, and that it will contribute to the development of practical, sustainable policies that support this essential group. I also hope that all relevant stakeholders will find in this research a useful tool to work together toward empowering youth, creating opportunities, and enabling them to achieve their aspirations and contribute meaningfully to the rebuilding of Syria.

I call upon all concerned parties to adopt and implement the recommendations presented in this study, as a step toward improving the lives of Syrian youth and helping them navigate the significant economic and social challenges they continue to face.

The Researcher
Farhan Alasker

