



The influence of Turkish Language Level on the **Integration of Syrians Refugees**

APRIL 2021

ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Appreciation:

We thank Ms. Batoul Al-Qasim for her contribution to this study as a general coordinator, and in the report writing.

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Executive Summary

The war that erupted in Syria more than ten years ago has forced millions of Syrians to leave Syria and seek refuge outside the country, and Turkey hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees, as their numbers there are estimated at 3,672,646¹ according to statistics issued by the Turkish Immigration Department, and thus, Syrians have become an integral part of the Turkish society through their involvement in real life such as schools, workplaces and local communities.

There is no doubt that the existence of Syrians in Turkey has an effect on several aspects, and the social aspect is considered the most affected one, as many problems have arisen between the Turkish people and the Syrian people due to the difference in language, culture and lifestyle, as many Turks believe that the Syrians are an increasing burden on their society, as according to a survey conducted by the (Immigration and Integration Research Center), about 70% of Turks in 2014 believed that they do not have cultural similarity with the Syrians, and this percentage increased to about 82% in 2020, and 75% of Turks consider that they cannot live with the Syrians in peace².

The Social and Field Policies Study Center in Turkey also states, according to a poll conducted with Turks in three states; (Gaziantep, Urfa, and Kilis), that 71% of Turks do not accept to work or live with Syrians, and 50% do not feel comfortable when Syrians live in the same building in which they live. According to Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, some Turkish academists say that there are many issues that affected the perspective of some Turks about the Syrians, the most important of which is the long period of their residence in Turkey, as well as what some opposition parties have worked on, using the Syrians issue as a pressure card on the ruling party (Justice and Development Party).

We denote here that the degree of Turks' unacceptance of the Syrians increases towards Syrians who do not master the Turkish language, as the Syrian refugees' mastery of the Turkish language is a pivotal factor in increasing their integration into society, facilitating their communication and breaking the barriers of rejection that the Turks have, adding to that the role of the Turkish language in improving their living conditions and increasing their chances of finding jobs, which increases their integration and their sense of stability. In view of the foregoing and in view of the importance of working to achieve the integration of Syrian refugees into Turkish society, and to reduce the tension among Turks towards the Syrians, and to determine the role of the Turkish language in achieving that integration, we have conducted this study, which aims to reveal the level of mastering the Turkish language among Syrian refugees in Turkey, identifying the reasons that hinder their ability to learn the Turkish language, knowing the degree of integration of Syrians into Turkish society, and the impact of their mastery of the language on their integration and Turks acceptance of them. The study also aims to evaluate the Turkish language training courses and to know the situation of Syrian refugees in Germany regarding learning German language in order to benefit from the German experience in developing the language abilities and skills of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

The study was conducted during the second half of 2020, and covered the states of Istanbul, Gaziantep, Hatay and Urfa, which are the states in which the largest number of Syrians reside. During the study, key informant interviews were conducted with key

¹ <https://bit.ly/2VqLhVA>

² Poll by " Migration and Integration Center", according to (alaraby.co.uk) website; Syrians in Turkey...
Difficulty in crossing from asylum to citizenship.

informants interested in refugees' integration in Turkey and Germany, and questionnaires were conducted with 340 Syrians residing within the states covered by the study, and the study adopted stratified random sampling method to ensure including Syrians according to several variables such as gender, age and educational level.

The study showed that the level of mastering the Turkish language among Syrian refugees is generally low, as the percentage of those who said that their level of mastering the Turkish language is advanced or close to the Turks themselves did not exceed a quarter of the study participants, and a quarter of the participants also said that they possess language skills that only enable them to manage their daily life matters, as for the largest percentage, which is more than half, they said that they can communicate at the minimum level or cannot communicate in the Turkish language at all, and the factors that limit the ability of Syrian refugees to learn the Turkish language vary, and the most prominent of which is the lack of acceptance of the Turkish society for the Syrians, which made them alienate from learning the language, in addition to the lack of sense of stability among most of them and their desire to travel to one of the European countries or return to Syria, and in general, the largest percentage of the study participants said that there is a medium level of acceptance of the Syrians by the Turks, in addition to a medium level of sense of stability, knowing that the degree of acceptance of the Syrians by the Turks and the level of sense of stability is higher among those who are fluent in the Turkish language.

The study showed that the efforts of teaching Syrian refugees the Turkish language and the Turkish language courses offered by government authorities or civil society organizations suffer from many weaknesses, and one of the most prominent weaknesses is the lack of continuity in the levels taught within the courses, and the low experience of the majority of teachers in the methods of teaching language to foreigners, in addition to the fact that the courses are generally offered in the morning, which prevents many Syrians from being able to attend them due to their preoccupation with work or study, in addition to the lack of effective channels for announcing the training programs and courses that are being offered, which causes lack of knowledge among a large percentage of Syrians about the existence of such programs and courses.

Based on the above, the study recommends making more efforts to increase the integration of Syrian refugees into Turkish society, and work to increase the degree of acceptance of Syrian refugees by Turks through correcting misconceptions about the aid that Syrians receive and clarifying that this aid is funded by the European Union, and that Syrians pay taxes and are subject to admission exams when they apply to universities. We also recommend encouraging and enabling Syrians to attend the Turkish language courses that are being offered, and this can be done by providing financial aid, albeit nominal, to those who attend language learning courses, providing free transportation means for those wishing to attend courses to centers that offer these courses, creating effective channels for announcing courses, and launching evening programs and courses to enable workers, employees, students and others who have commitments during the morning period to attend language courses. The study also recommends working on developing Turkish language programs and courses, through qualifying trainers and developing their skills in methods of teaching language to foreigners and designing language courses in a way that enables trainees to attend consecutive levels.

Key Findings

First – Turkish language level among Syrians:

1. The degree of Syrians' mastery of the Turkish language is low, as only less than a quarter of the study participants said that they possess language skills at a level close to the Turks or that their level in the Turkish language is advanced, while the answers of the rest of the participants ranged between saying that they possess language skills that enable them to manage their daily life matters, or that they can only communicate at the minimum levels, or they cannot communicate in Turkish at all.
2. The degree of mastering the Turkish language is lower among females compared to males, as the percentage of females who cannot communicate in Turkish at all or can communicate at the minimum levels is 65%, while that percentage among males was 42%.
3. The level of mastering the Turkish language among Syrians is higher among those whose educational level is higher.
4. The level of mastering the Turkish language is very low among Syrians residing in the states of Istanbul and Hatay, where the percentage of those who said that they cannot communicate in Turkish at all or that they could do so at the minimum level in both states reached 67% and 68% respectively, while that percentage in Gaziantep and Urfa was 40% and 30%, respectively.
5. The level of mastering the Turkish language among Syrians varies according to their ages, as 44% of Syrians between 18 and 25 years old said that they have advanced language skills or language skills close to the Turks themselves, while this percentage significantly drops among older respondents.
6. There are many factors affecting the Syrians' lack of interest in learning the Turkish language, such as the Turkish society's lack of acceptance of the Syrians, which caused them to alienate from learning the language, their lack of sense of stability and a great desire to travel.
7. The work of Syrians has an important role in the degree of their mastery of the Turkish language, as the level of the mastering the Turkish language is higher among those who work in Turkish factories due to the fact that they are forced to interact with Turks and use the language on a daily basis, while the degree of mastering the Turkish language is lower among those who work with Syrian companies or entities or with international organizations, which requires proficiency in English, not Turkish.

Second – The effect of Turkish language level on their acceptance by Turks:

1. More than half of the study participants said that Turks generally treat them well or very well.
2. The percentage of those who said that the Turks treat them well or very well rises to about three quarters among those who master the Turkish language to an advanced level.
3. The largest percentage of study participants said that most Turks tend to treat Syrians well in terms of shopping.
4. About half of the study participants described the treatment of Turks with them in healthcare and government institutions as good or very good, and this percentage rises to about three quarters among the participants who have language skills that

are close to the Turks, and gradually decreases with the decrease of level of the Turkish language of the respondent.

5. The largest percentage of the study participants believe that there is a medium degree of acceptance of the Syrians by the Turks, knowing that this degree of acceptance increases whenever the level of mastering the Turkish language is higher.
6. More than two-thirds of the study participants described their relationship with their Turkish neighbors as good or very good, knowing that this percentage increases whenever the level of mastering the Turkish language is higher.
7. In general, the key findings of the study showed a medium level of sense of stability among the study participants, and the sense of stability increases whenever the level of mastering the Turkish language is higher.

Third – Efforts to teach Turkish language to Syrian refugees:

The Turkish language teaching programs and courses for Syrian refugees suffer from many weaknesses, the most prominent of which are the following:

1. There is no continuity in the language teaching levels that are offered to the trainees, for example, whoever finishes the A1 level may not be able to attend the next level until after a long period of time.
2. In many training programs and courses, there is no separation between the trainees in terms of the level of each of them and the degree of their knowledge of the basics of the language, as no placement test is conducted at the beginning of the course or educational program.
3. The majority of teachers and trainers who teach Turkish language to Syrian refugees do not have sufficient experience in methods of teaching the language to foreigners.
4. Language teaching courses are offered in the morning, which prevents the majority of Syrians from attending these courses due to their commitment to other work and tasks during the morning, such as work or study.
5. There are no effective channels for announcing the training programs and courses that are being offered, which prevents a large percentage of Syrians from knowing that such programs and courses exist in the first place.

Fourth – Comparison with the German experience in refugees' language learning:

1. Full time occupancy for learning language: Syrian refugees in Germany are fully devoted to learning the German language, as the German government provides them with housing and pays monthly salaries that are sufficient to fully cover their monthly expenses, while in Turkey, the majority of Syrians do not have enough time to learn the language, as they do not receive any kind of aid from the Turkish government, and they are forced to work for many hours to cover their monthly expenses.
2. Sense of stability: There is a great sense of stability among Syrian refugees residing in Germany compared to Syrian refugees in Turkey, as a high percentage of Syrians in Turkey want to return to Syria or seek refuge in the European Union countries.
3. Incentives to learn the language: Syrians in Turkey do not have actual incentives to learn the Turkish language, as working in the factories or workshops does not require language mastery, and even if the Syrian worker has mastered the Turkish

language, this will not make a significant difference in the monthly salary he receives, while getting a job or a job opportunity in companies or civil society organizations often requires proficiency in English, not Turkish. In Germany, mastering the German language increases the chances of getting well-paid job opportunities, and helps the refugee to obtain permanent residence.

4. Communication with native speakers: Syrian refugees are not able to communicate effectively with Turks due to the fact that the Syrians are not accepted by the Turks. In Germany, Syrian refugees can communicate easier with Germans and with foreigners who were born in Germany and have acquired German as their mother tongue.
5. Mandatory language learning: Syrian refugees in Turkey are not obligated to learn the Turkish language, but in Germany, the refugee's learning of the German language is mandatory, and the German government enrolls Syrian refugees in language courses and provides them with all their requirements to devote themselves to attend these courses, and if they fail to attend these courses, a certain amount of the aid provided by the German government to the refugee is deducted.
6. Time of language teaching courses: Turkish language courses are offered in the morning periods, and therefore workers, employees or students cannot attend these courses. In Germany, there are two periods for courses, one in the morning and the other is in the evening.
7. Designing language teaching programs and courses: The majority of Turkish language courses are not designed in a way that enables Syrian refugees to master the language, as the majority of these courses are limited to teaching the A1 level only, and the teachers lack the necessary experience in the methods of teaching the language to foreigners, while the language teaching courses in Germany are designed in a way that allows the refugee to master the language, as refugees attend several levels successively, and the teachers are mainly foreigners or specialists in teaching foreigners and therefore have experience and knowledge of how to convey information to the trainees.

Recommendations

- **General Recommendations:**
 1. Re-conducting the study in a more detailed manner to include a larger number of Syrians and Turks and focus on searching for more details about the reasons for the low level of mastering the Turkish language among Syrians and how it can be used to increase the degree of Syrians' integration, and to seek implementing solutions that help integration.
 2. Raising the level of Syrians' awareness of the importance of learning the Turkish language and its role in facilitating the integration process as well as finding a job.
- **Recommendations to the Syrians in Turkey:**
 1. Determine the goal that you seek to achieve by learning this language, even if learning the language for you is just a hobby or just to learn the language, as this will help in learning the language better.
 2. Learning the Turkish language and supporting the learning through practicing what you learn with Turkish society, and not considering mistakes made during

the conversation, negative situations you are exposed to, or your sense of instability as obstacles to learning the language.

3. Continuous use of free smartphones applications that support learning the Turkish language and help to learn and apply the language.
 4. Do not stop listening to the Turkish language on a daily basis, which helps to learn the structures and style of the Turkish language.
 5. Study and learn the vocabulary of the Turkish language, in addition to pronouncing it out loud, which helps to improve the learner's pronunciation.
 6. Search for institutes that offer Turkish language education in a method that suits you and fits your schedule of commitments.
 7. Mingling with Turks and talking with them is the most important thing in learning the language.
 8. Follow Turkish social networking pages to keep reading, also, watch Turkish news and TV shows without subtitles.
- **Recommendations to the Turkish government and other stakeholders interested in the integration of refugees:**
 1. Encouraging Syrian refugees to learn the Turkish language by providing financial aid, albeit in nominal amounts, to those who attend language courses.
 2. Launching evening Turkish language programs and courses to enable workers, employees, students and others who have daytime commitments to attend language courses.
 3. Providing free transportation means to transport those wishing to attend language courses to language courses' centers.
 4. Create effective channels to announce Turkish language courses targeting Syrian refugees.
 5. Linking learning the Turkish language to the facilitations provided by the Turkish government to Syrian refugees in terms of the renewal of residency, as well as citizenship.
 6. Organizations shall grant their Syrian employees specific times in order to attend educational courses within working hours.
 7. Working to qualify Turkish language teachers on ways and methods of teaching language to foreign students.
 8. Working to raise the awareness of the Syrian refugees about the importance of learning the Turkish language, and its role in increasing Turks' acceptance of them and facilitating their lives in Turkey.
 9. Working to raise the awareness of the refugees about the disadvantages of the Syrian secluded gathering and what this phenomenon entails in making language learning more difficult and thus reducing the integration process.
 10. Bringing specialists in the field of community integration and languages from other countries that are successful in the field of refugee affairs.
 11. Working to correct the misconceptions of the Turks about the aid provided to the Syrians and to make them aware that it is funded by the European Union, and that the Syrians pay their water, electricity and gas bills, and are subject to admission exams in the Turkish universities.
 12. Studying the experiences of other countries in the field of integrating refugees.

Methodology

Objectives

The study aims to identify the level of mastering the Turkish language among Syrian refugees residing in Turkey, identify the reasons that prevent the Syrians from being able to learn and master the Turkish language, and to know the degree of integration of Syrian refugees into Turkish society and their sense of stability and the size of the effect of language proficiency on the integration of refugees and Turkish acceptance of them. The study also aims to evaluate the language teaching programs and courses offered by the Turkish government and civil society organizations, and also aims to know the situation of learning German language among Syrian refugees residing in Germany and to compare it with the situation in Turkey in order to benefit from the German experience in developing the language capabilities and skills of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Scope

Time range: The study was conducted during the second half of 2020.

Geographical scope: The study covered the states of Istanbul, Gaziantep, Urfa and Hatay, which are the states in which the largest number of Syrian refugees reside.

Data sources

Primary sources: which include individual questionnaires conducted with Syrian refugees residing in Turkey and key informant interviews in each of Turkey and Germany.

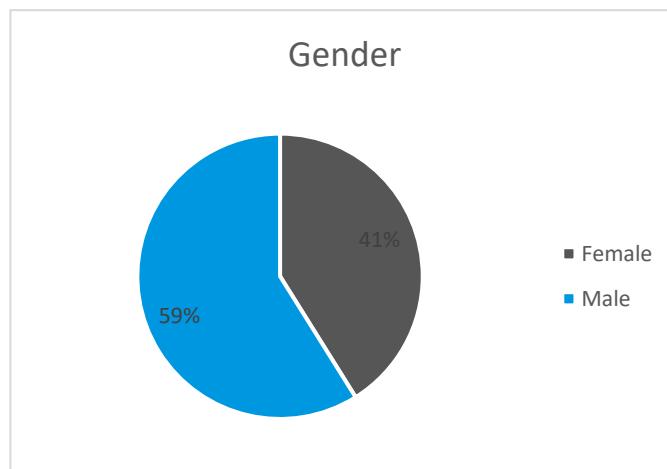
Secondary sources: These include research, studies, reports and statistics related to the subject of the study.

Sampling:

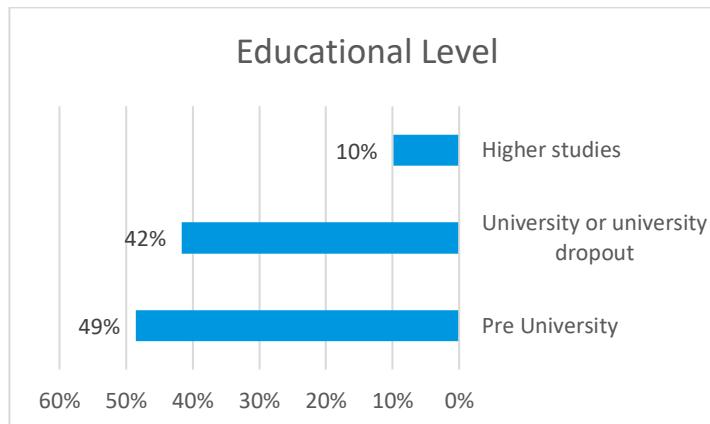
The study sample included interviewing four key informants in Turkey who work in civil society organizations interested in helping Syrian refugees or offering Turkish language courses, and four other interviews were also conducted with key informants residing in Germany who are specialized in refugee affairs. Key informant interviews were conducted using interview guide with open questions.

The sample also included interviews with 340 Syrians residing in Turkey, males and females of all age groups. The individuals interviews were conducted in the states of Istanbul, Hatay, Urfa and Gaziantep, which are the states with the largest number of Syrians. In each state, 85 interviews were conducted, and the interviews were conducted using a questionnaire that includes closed-ended questions, and field researchers used the Kobo Collect program to conduct the interviews, while the data analysis was conducted using the SPSS and MS EXCEL programs. The study adopted stratified random sampling method to ensure including Syrians according to several variables such as gender, educational level and age. The following charts shows the characteristics of the participants according to each of those variables:

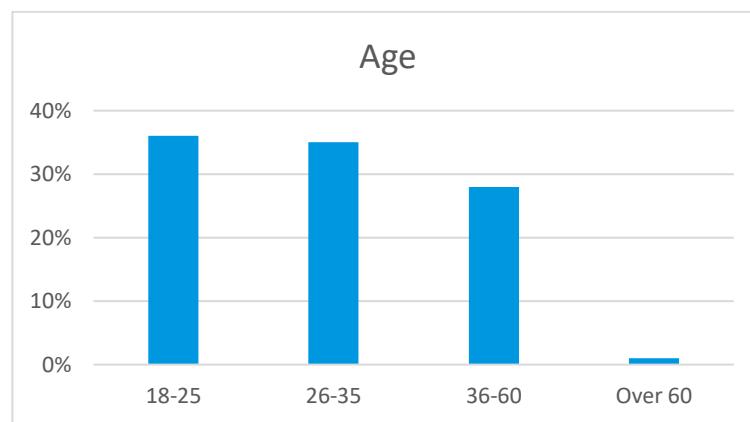
Distribution of the sample members according to gender:



Distribution of the sample members according to the educational level:

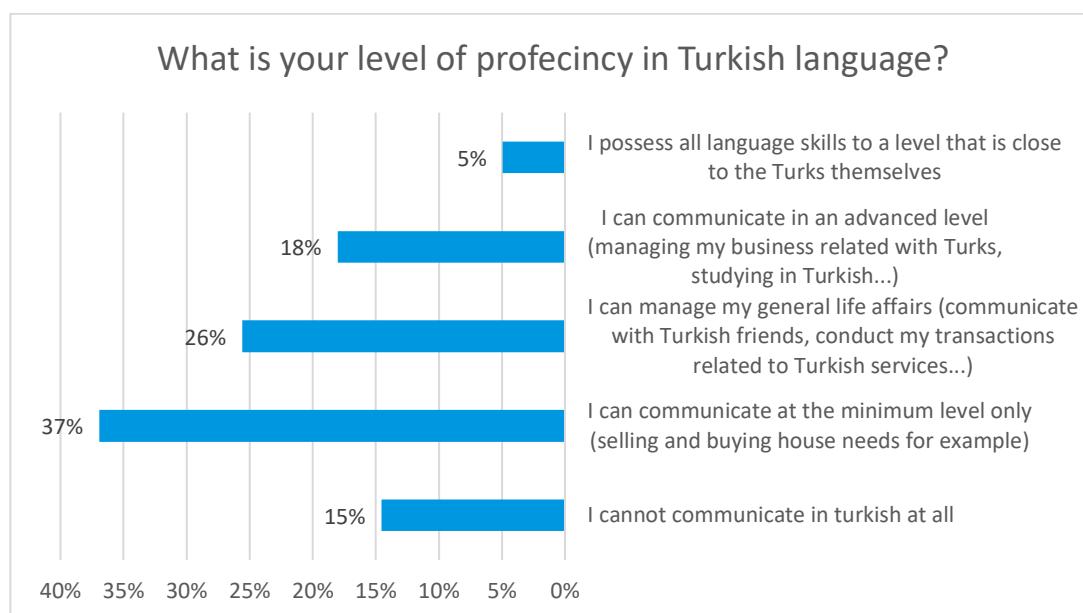


Distribution of the sample members according to age:



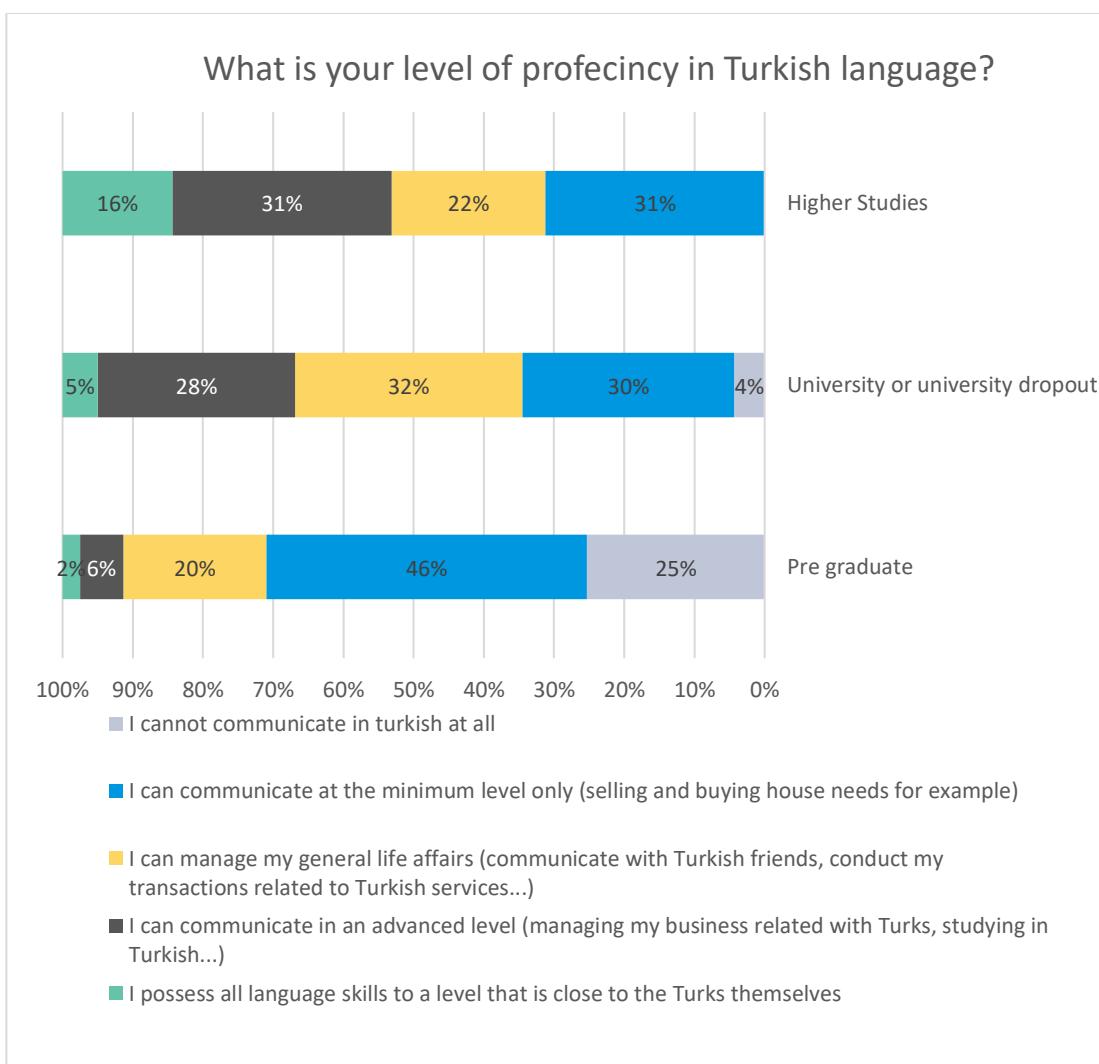
Syrians' Turkish language level

The key findings of the study showed that the percentage of Syrians who master the Turkish language is low, as only less than a quarter of the study participants said that they possess language skills at a level close to the Turks or that their level in the Turkish language is advanced, while the answers of the rest of the participants ranged between those who said that they have language skills that enable them to manage their daily matters and those who said that they can only communicate at the minimum level or cannot communicate in Turkish at all.



The level of mastering the Turkish language is lower among females compared to males, as the percentage of females who cannot communicate in Turkish at all or can communicate at the minimum level reached 65%, while that percentage among males was 42%, and the percentage of females who said that they have advanced skills in the Turkish language or that they master Turkish at a level close to the Turks themselves reached 15% and 1%, respectively, while this percentage increased among males to 20% and 8%, respectively.

Also, the study showed a relation between the level of mastering the Turkish language among the respondents and their educational level, as the degree of Turkish language proficiency increases whenever the educational level of the respondent is higher.



On the other hand, with regard to the current place of residence, the key findings of the study showed that the level of the Turkish language among the Syrians is very low in both the states of Istanbul and Hatay, as 67% of the respondents in Istanbul said that they cannot communicate in the Turkish at all or that they can do so at the minimum level, and that percentage increased in Hatay to reach 68%, while in Gaziantep and Urfa it was 40% and 30%, respectively.

In terms of age, it is noticeable that the level of mastering the Turkish language increases among younger age groups, and this may primarily be due to the tireless efforts exerted by the Turkish state in an attempt to integrate Syrian students with Turks through teaching the Turkish language.



Reasons of the weakness of the Syrians' Turkish language

Learning the Turkish language is an urgent necessity for Syrians, especially with the long period of their residence in Turkey, the lack of clarity regarding their return and the continuous increase in their numbers. As we mentioned earlier, the key findings of the study showed that the percentage of Syrians who master the Turkish language is low. There is no doubt that there are many factors affecting learning the Turkish language, such as economic, social and psychological factors.

One of the most important reasons for the weakness of the Syrians in Turkish language, according to previous studies, is the Syrians' lack of sense of stability. Some have said that it was not taken into account that the asylum period might be so long, and Al-Arabi 21³ mentions a set of factors that affect language learning, including:

- The unacceptance of the Syrians by the Turkish society has in many cases contributed to the alienation of some of them from the language.
- The gathering of Syrians in one region within the Turkish provinces, and it is not limited to this only, but their dealings is only with other Syrians in various sectors and fields.
- The Syrians, when dealing with Turks, especially when managing their life requirements, resort to using sign language or to memorizing basic words, and the spread of a large number of shops opened by Syrians helps eliminating the urgent need to learn the Turkish language.
- From their point of view, the Turks believe that one of the reasons of the weakness of the language among some Syrians is that they do not mingle with Turks,

³ Poll by "Migration and Integration Center", according to (alaraby.co.uk) website; Syrians in Turkey... Difficulty in crossing from asylum to citizenship.

- especially those who work with Syrian entities or international organizations, as the majority of international organizations require mastery of the English language, not Turkish, unlike the category of the poor Syrians, who work in Turkish factories, as Aswan Nahar⁴ said: "These were forced to learn the language, due to their need to work with the Turks, but other than that, Syrian certificate holders did not have the desire to learn it, because of their work with Syrian entities or with international organizations that are not concerned with dealing in Turkish.
- Some Syrians find it difficult to learn the language because of the large number of working hours. Undoubtedly, the difficulty of pronouncing the words of the Turkish language is one of the reasons that hinder learning the language, as well as the difference of the sentence structure.

One of the most important recommendations proposed by the Syrians is the need for the Turkish authorities to refrain from providing translators in government sectors, especially in public hospitals, which in turn will contribute to the Syrians' desire to learn the Turkish language.

The effect of Turkish language level on the integration

The degree of integration and coexistence between Syrians and Turks

There is no doubt that working to achieve integration and coexistence between Syrians and Turks should be of paramount importance by Turkish governmental bodies, civil society organizations, and all bodies and institutions concerned with the issue of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The importance of working to achieve integration is because of many reasons, and the most prominent of which is the increase in the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey, which is about four millions, in addition to the high degree of unacceptance of the Syrians and their existence in Turkey by the Turks, as a research study issued by the Endowment of Human Development in cooperation with the Turkish Bilgi University⁵ showed a high level of tension between Syrians and Turks, with a tension rate of 51% in 2020, while it was 48% in 2019, and this study mentioned many reasons that led to the high rate of tension among Turks towards the Syrians, and one of the most prominent of these reasons is the spread of many misconceptions within the Turkish society about Syrian refugees, as about three-quarters of the participants of the aforementioned study said that they believe that Syrians receive salaries from the Turkish state, and about half believe that Syrians do not pay their water, electricity and gas bills, and that they have a preference in obtaining medical services compared to Turks, and 60% of them believe that Syrians can enter Turkish universities without taking admission exams, and that the Turkish state provides scholarships to all Syrians who enter universities.

In order to know the degree of integration of Syrian refugees into Turkish society and the impact of the Turkish language on achieving that integration, we asked the participants in this study about how the Turks treat them in general, their relationship with their Turkish

⁴ Social Activist

⁵ The results of the study conducted by the Endowment for Human Development and the Turkish University of Bilgi, taken from the translation of the study by the Syrian Dialogue Center.

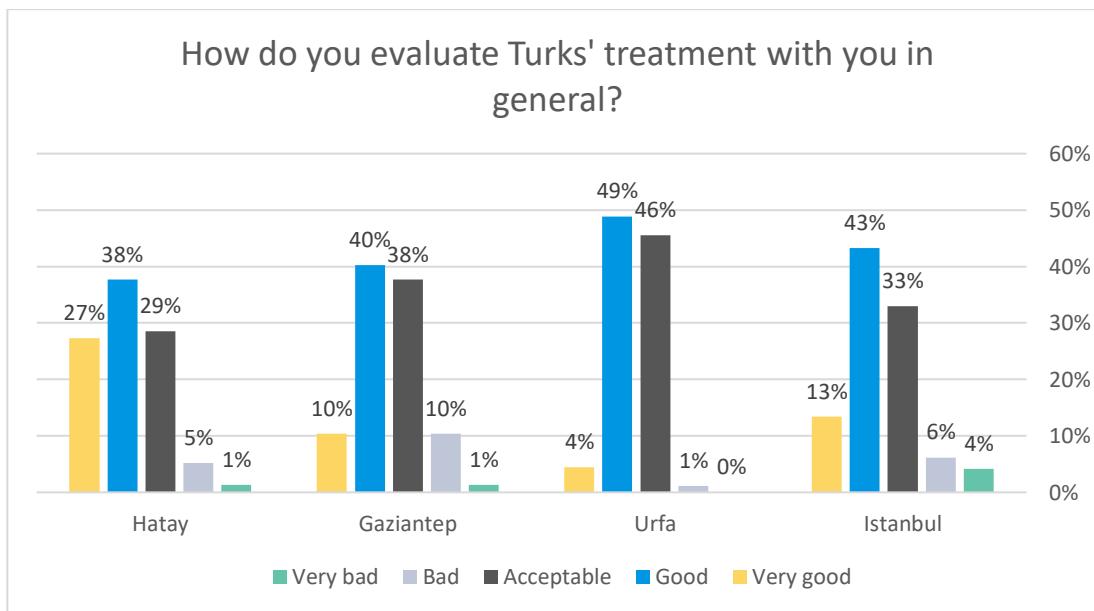
Link to the study summary published on the Syrian Dialogue Center website:

http://sydialogue.org/files/TurkSyrianVReport.pdf?fbclid=IwAR26XVKjsLR8xuyBjNiVhisc11_R0OOGJcwEWBT5I9-kc42_yEWX19XPRSc

neighbors, and how Turkish employees deal with them during the shopping transactions and within government authorities and departments, which are the main aspects of life that concern Syrians residing in Turkey, and the results were as follows:

The Turks' treatment with the Syrians

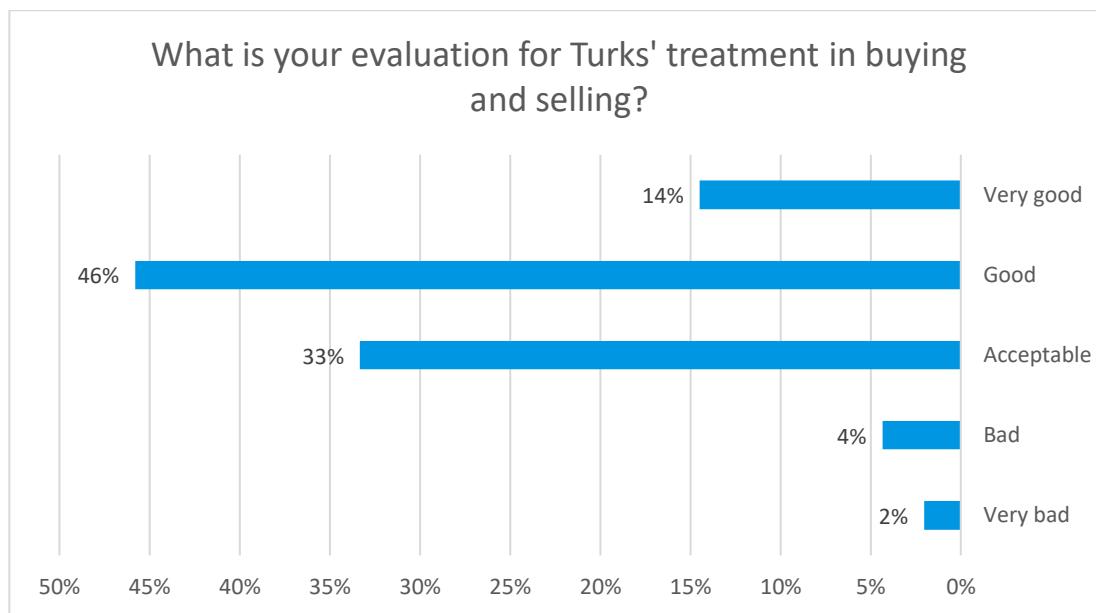
More than half of the study participants said that Turks generally treat them well or very well, and this percentage is higher among males to about two-thirds, while it was less than half among females due to the fact that males deal more than females with Turks, as males mingle with Turks at work and public and commercial places, while the interaction of females with Turks is often limited to shopping centers that need certain words to communicate. The percentage of those who evaluate the treatment of Turks with them as good or very good increases to about three quarters of those who have an advanced level in the Turkish language. In terms of age, we notice that the answers of participants from different age groups is similar, with a high percentage of those who believe that the Turks treat them well or very well reaching more than 80% of the participants over the age of 60 years, this is due, according to experts, to the existing Turkish laws that prioritize the elderly in terms of public services, such as government departments, hospitals and public facilities, in addition to the Turkish culture which stipulates respecting the elderly and giving them special importance, whether it is in personal transactions or in public services as well. By comparing the states, we find that the percentages of evaluating the Turks' treatment with the Syrians are close, with the high percentage of those who consider the Turks' treatment with them as good or very good in Hatay, and experts attribute this to the fact that there are many Turks who speak Arabic in Hatay, and this reduces the tension and facilitates the communication between Syrians and Turks and increases the acceptance of Syrians in society.



Shopping

The largest percentage of the study participants said that most of the Turks tend to treat the Syrians well with regard to shopping, and there are no significant differences in these percentages according to the variables of the study, and in most cases, the reason for good

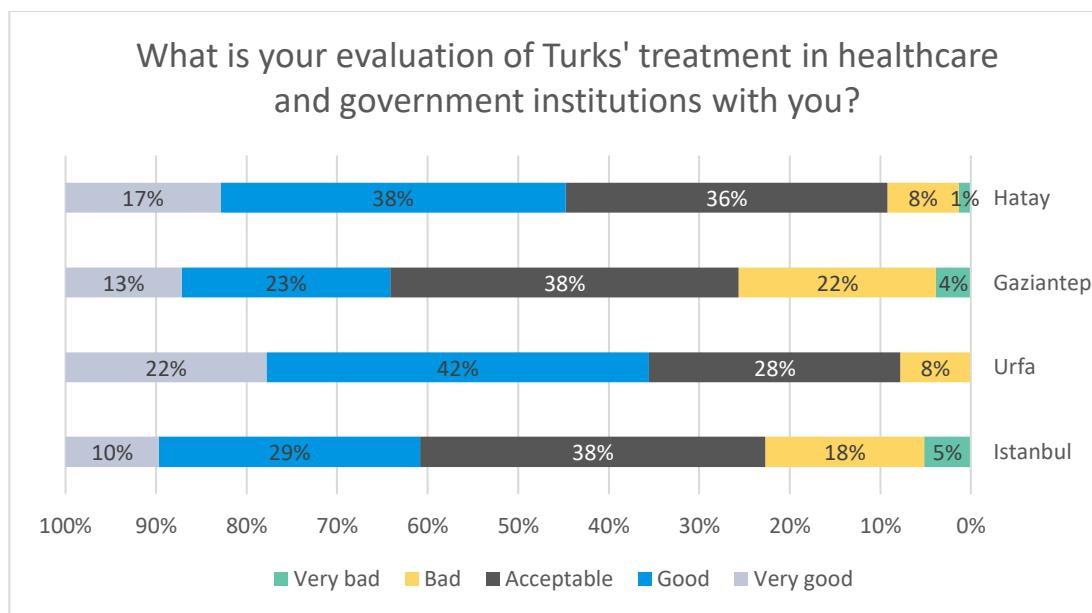
treatment is the commitment of the Turks to the principles of shopping without distinguishing between the Turkish customers the Syrian ones, and because their focus is on the shopping process.



Healthcare and government institutions

About half of the study participants said that the treatment of Turks working in healthcare and government institutions with them is good or very good, and this percentage has increased to about three quarters of the participants who have language skills that are close to the Turks themselves, and this percentage gradually decreases with the decrease of the level of Turkish language proficiency.

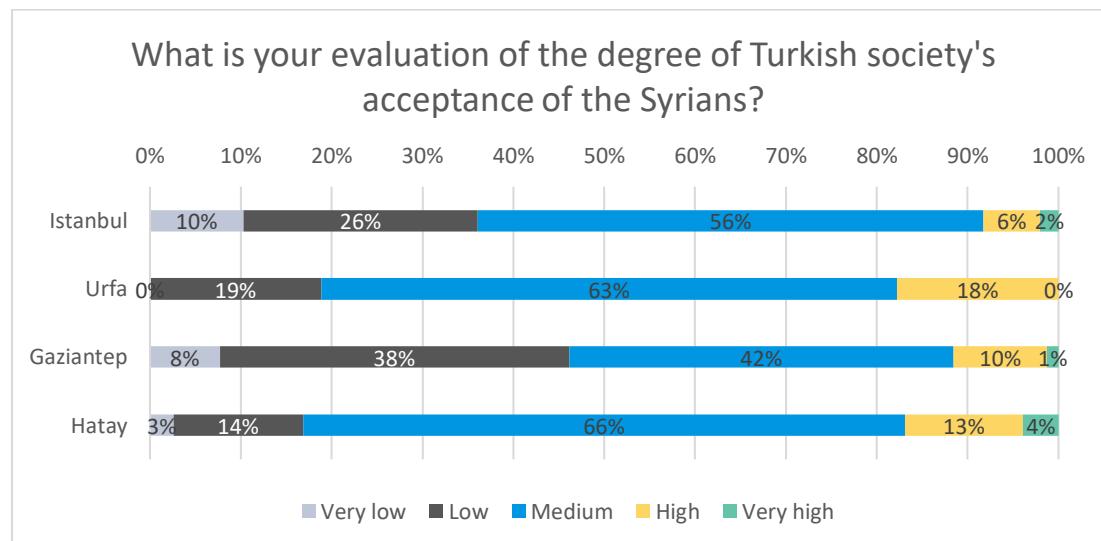
It should also be noted that the treatment of Turks who work in the government sector, such as workers in government institutions or hospitals, is good or more than good at a rate of up to 80%, especially with people over the age of 60 years, as we previously mentioned that the government services system focuses on the priority of the elderly, which increases satisfaction of this category with the treatment of Turks in hospitals and government institutions, and this percentage drops to 40% with those under this age. It is noticeable that the Turkish workers' treatment with the Syrians in Urfa is the best compared to the rest of the states, followed by Hatay, Istanbul and finally Gaziantep, respectively.



Acceptance of the Syrians by Turkish society

With the beginning of the influx of Syrian refugees to Turkey, the attitude of the Turkish society was positive, and there was a high degree of acceptance of the Syrians and their presence in Turkey by the Turks, but with the increase in the number of Syrians and the long period of their residence in Turkey, this attitude has changed, and the degree of Turkish acceptance of the Syrians began to decrease, and in general, about 57% of the study participants believe that there is a medium degree of acceptance of the Syrians by the Turks, while the percentage of those who said that there is a high or very high degree of acceptance reached 12% and 2%, respectively, while the percentage of those who said that the degree of Turks' acceptance of the Syrians is low was 30%.

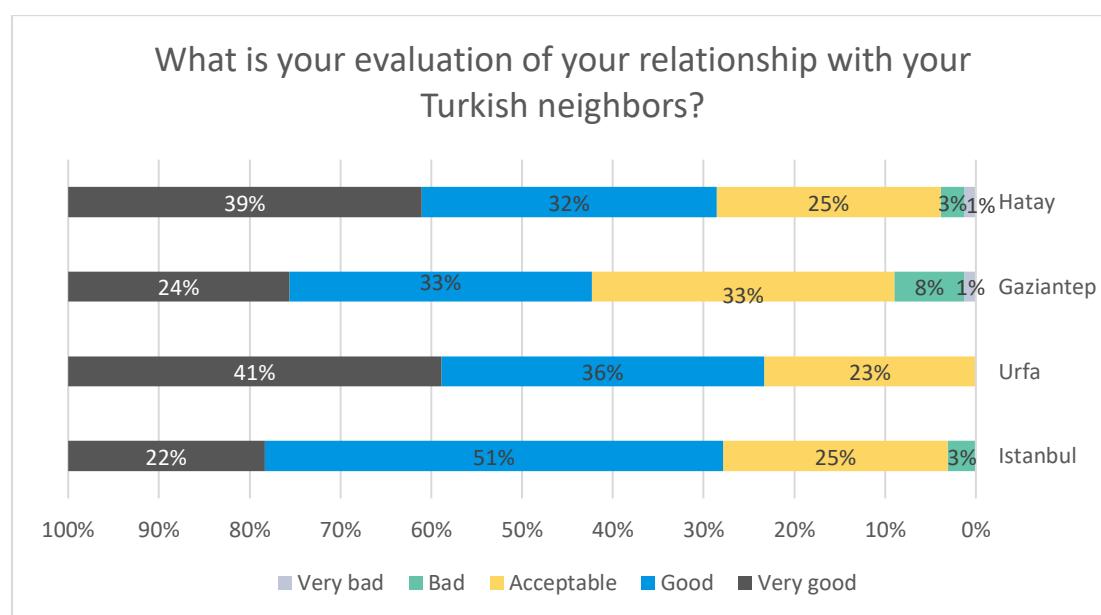
Here, we denote that mastering the Turkish language plays an important role in the Turks' acceptance of the Syrians, as the percentage of Turks' acceptance of the Syrians increases whenever the level of mastering the Turkish language is higher. In terms of the states covered by the study, the degree of Turks' acceptance of Syrians was lower in both Istanbul and Gaziantep.



Finally, there are other factors that cause the Turks to not accept the Syrians according to the key findings of the Turkish studies, which showed that the Turkish society has become more alienated from the Syrians, and that there is a huge gap that has opened between the Syrian and Turkish societies, along with a state of misunderstanding from both parties towards each other due to some individual actions by some Syrians, which the media has exaggerated and the Turkish opposition worked on promoting and exploited them in the most horrific way, and thus the Syrian refugees became a mainstay in political disputes, and this has negatively affected the Turkish citizens' prospect of Syrians in general.

The relationship of the Syrians with their Turkish neighbors

The percentage of study participants who said that their relationship with their Turkish neighbors is good or very good was 38% and 31%, respectively, and 27% of them described the relationship with their Turkish neighbors as acceptable, and the Syrians' mastery of the Turkish language contributes to improving the relationship with their Turkish neighbors, as the percentage of Syrians who said that their relationship with their Turkish neighbors is very good reached 65% of the Syrians who master the Turkish language at a level close to the Turks themselves, and 29% of them described their relationship with their Turkish neighbors as very good, and it is noticed that the relationship of Syrians who are at the age of 60 years and above is very good and at a high percentage compared with those under this age, this is due, as we mentioned earlier, to the culture of the Turkish society which stipulates treating the elderly well. As for the place of residence, the key findings of the study showed that the relationship of the Syrians with their Turkish neighbors is very good in general, with some difference between the states, as we find that the percentage is higher in Urfâ and Hatay and it decreases in Gaziantep and Istanbul, respectively.



Having perused previous studies, it was found that there are other factors that affect the relationship of Syrians with their Turkish neighbors, such as the Syrians' ignorance of Turkish customs and traditions, which are considered one of the main elements that contribute to achieving social integration. (Aisha Hanim), a Turkish woman from the

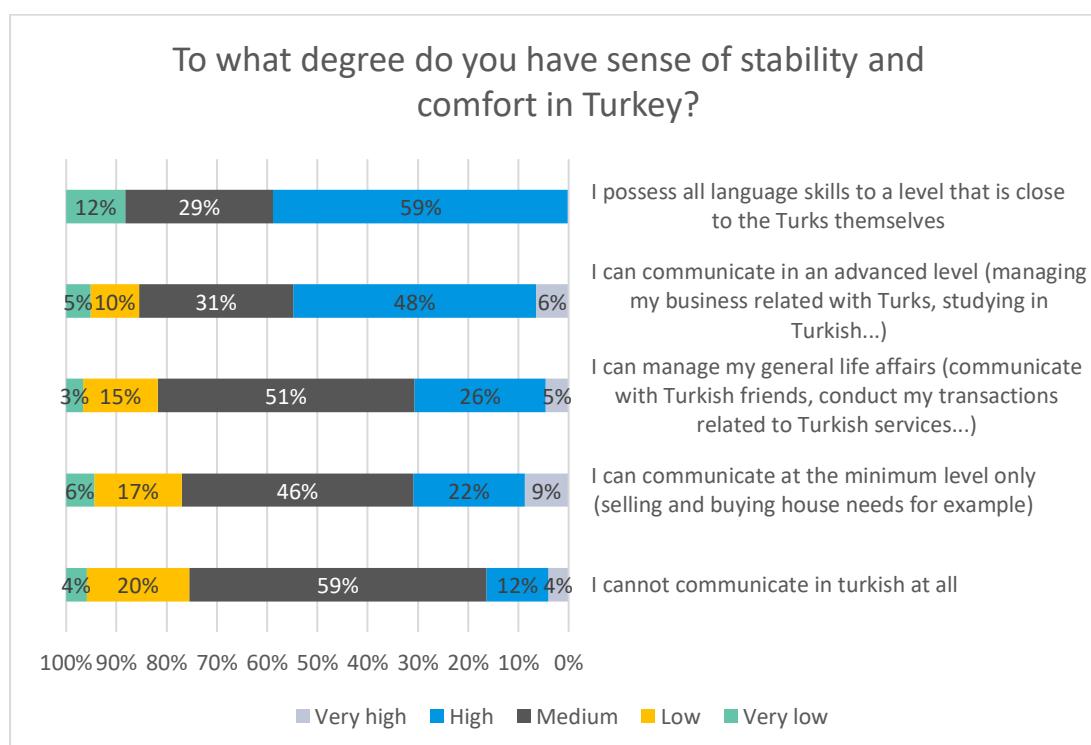
Draman district, in the Fatih district of Istanbul, says that she called the police after she had knocked the door of her Syrian neighbors and talked to them about the loud noises coming from their apartment: "they kept annoying us, they don't have the right to sing loudly at night, it annoys us, and my husband is sick, so I called the police." This is what she said in response to a question by (Al-Araby Al-Jadeed).

Finally, there is no doubt that mastering the Turkish language contributes to the process of social integration and increases the understanding of the life culture of the Turkish society in which we live.

Sense of stability in Turkey

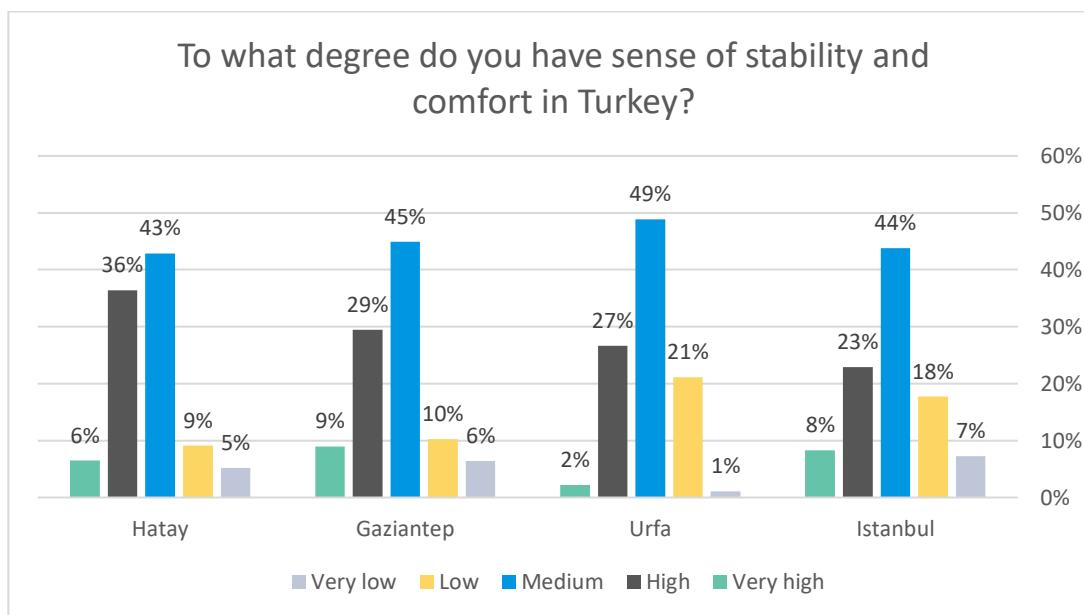
In general, the key findings of the study showed a medium degree of sense of stability among Syrian refugees residing in Turkey, as one third of the respondents said that they feel stable to a high or very high degree, while nearly half of them said that they have a medium degree of sense of stability, and the percentage of those who said that they feel stable at a low or very low level has reached 15% and 5%, respectively.

The degree of sense of stability of Syrian refugees is affected by many factors, such as the poor economic situation of the largest percentage of Syrians residing in Turkey, the high living costs, lack of job opportunities and the exploitation of Syrian workers by employers, in addition to the social factors represented by the Turks' refusal to the presence of Syrians in Turkey, and the large number of mobilization campaigns launched by some political parties and forces against the Syrian presence in Turkey. Mastering the Turkish language also plays an important role in the degree of sense of stability, as the key findings of this study showed a direct relationship between mastering the Turkish language and the sense of stability, as the degree of sense of stability increases whenever the level of mastering the Turkish language is higher.



The study showed that there was no significant difference between males and females in terms of their sense of stability in Turkey, and the key findings confirmed the existence of a correlation between the high educational level and the sense of stability, as the higher the educational level is, the higher the percentage of sense of stability in Turkey. While in terms of age, the Syrians who are between 18 and 25 years old and those aged 60 years or above have the highest sense of stability, mostly because the first age group is university students and working youth who want to establish a new life, as for those aged 60 and above, perhaps the reason for their sense of stability is due to the acceptance of their presence by the Turks, as we mentioned earlier.

On the other hand, the percentage of Syrians' sense of stability was similar in all of the states covered by the study, noting that there is a greater tendency for stability among Syrians residing in Hatay, as Syrians in Hatay tend to feel more stable compared to other states, and there is no doubt that there are many factors for that, such as the fact that the Syrians in Hatay obtain Turkish citizenship in a larger percentage than the rest of the states, which contributes to making the Syrians the same rights as the Turks, such as the right to own property, traveling between states, working and other rights, in addition to the existence of a high percentage of the people of Hatay who speak Arabic, which facilitates the Syrians' communicate with the Turks, and it eases the tension between them.



Efforts to teach Turkish language to Syrians

Turkish government agencies and Syrian and Turkish civil society organizations are exerting many efforts to teach Syrian refugees the Turkish language, as many training programs and courses that target Syrian refugees have been designed. The Turkish language education programs for Syrians have varied since their arrival to Turkey until today, as there are some programs that can be attended directly "physical attendance" and others via are attended online, and there are many types of these programs, some of them are paid and others are free, and there are also educational programs that provide a financial grant to the student.

Experts say that there are some weaknesses in Turkish language education programs of all kinds, and this prevents them from achieving the intended benefit, and the most prominent of these weaknesses is the lack of a continuity of educational levels, as those who complete the A1 level may not be able to attend the next level except after a relatively long period of time. There is no doubt that the interval in learning the language prevents the trainees from being able to master it, and causes them to lose some of the skills they acquired during the previous level.

Also, among of the weaknesses of Turkish language education programs is the lack of separation between the trainees in many programs in terms of the degree of knowledge of each of them about the basics of the language or the degree of their mastering of the Turkish language, and not conducting placement tests at the beginning of the program, so, for example, in the same training course you will find some trainees who master the Turkish language to a good and know the basics of the language, and you will also find among them some trainees who do not have any knowledge of the Turkish language.

Also, the experts pointed out that among the challenges facing Turkish language education programs is the lack of specialized trainers who are qualified to teach foreigners, as the trainers in general are Turks who have never taught Turkish language for foreigners, therefore, they don't know the methods of teaching foreigners nor how to communicate ideas to them optimally.

Despite what was previously mentioned about the existence of online training programs, the number of these programs is low, and the benefit from them is not equal to the benefit achieved by the trainees who physically attend training programs, and here we denote that there are some difficulties that hinder Syrians from attending Turkish language courses directly (physically), including that these courses are only offered in the morning, bearing in mind that the largest percentage of Syrians cannot attend the morning courses because of their commitments and their preoccupation with work or study.

In addition to the above weaknesses and challenges that hinder Syrians from attending Turkish language courses and programs, there is a lack of effective channels for announcing the programs that are being implemented, which prevents a large percentage of Syrians from knowing that such programs exist in the first place, or causes them to not know the places and dates of the courses, In addition, the centers providing courses are distant and mostly located in the centers of the Turkish states, which causes difficulty of reaching these centers for Syrians because they are distant and due to lack of transportation means or high transportation costs.

Comparison with the German experience

In 2015, German Chancellor Anglia Merkel announced her country's intention to welcome Syrian refugees, and as a result of these statements, the number of Syrians who went to live in the European Union has significantly increased, and Germany had the largest number of refugees in the European Union, and the number of Syrian refugees in Germany according to the latest statistics issued by the Federal Statistical Office in Germany is 800 thousand⁶.

⁶ <https://turkey-breaking.com/archives/63838>

Germany, like the other European countries, gives great importance for teaching refugees residing on its territory its language, and this is noticed from the official website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, which includes: "If you want to live in Germany, you must learn the German language." In fact, European countries have previous experience in dealing with asylum seekers and migrants and teaching them the language, as European countries received Lebanese refugees during the civil war in Lebanon, Iraqi refugees and other refugees from Afghanistan and Pakistan, in addition to the presence of a large number of migrants from various countries of the world.

In order to benefit from the experiences of European countries in dealing with refugees and teaching them the language, we have studied the efforts exerted by the German government by interviewing a number of key informants who are familiar with the situation of programs and courses of teaching German language for Syrian refugees, and comparing those programs and what is provided to Syrian refugees in Germany to the situation in Turkey, and in fact, there are many factors that help Syrian refugees in Germany to master the German language to a higher level than the level of mastery of Turkish language by Syrian refugees in Turkey, and the following are the most prominent of these factors:

First – Occupancy with learning the language

In fact, the majority of Syrian refugees residing in Turkey do not receive any kind of financial aid, while some families and refugees receive financial aid provided by the European Union through the Turkish Red Crescent, knowing that the amount of such aid does not exceed 150 Turkish lira per person only, which is an amount that may not actually be enough to cover the needs of that person for two or three days max, and therefore, Syrians in Turkey are forced to work to manage their living costs and secure the necessary money to cover their families' monthly expenses, knowing that the working conditions of the majority of Syrians are considered very difficult, as they have to work for about 12 hours a day, not to mention the time they need to go and return from their work, which may reach several hours in the states and major cities such as Istanbul, and therefore, the Syrian refugees in Turkey do not have enough time to learn the language.

On the other hand, and by looking at the situation in Germany, we find that the Syrian refugees are completely devoted to learning the German language as the German government provides them with housing for free and gives them an average monthly salary of about 400 Euros per person, which is a sufficient amount for providing requirement for a decent living for refugees. During the first years of their presence in Germany, refugees are not required to work, as the government provides all their requirements and make them devoted to learn the language.

Second - Sense of stability

In general, experts believe that the sense of stability decreases among Syrian refugees residing in Turkey compared to Syrian refugees in Germany, and reports issued on the number of Syrians returning voluntarily to their country from Turkey and Germany confirm what the experts have said, as according to the statements of Turkish Minister of Interior Suleiman Soylu, the number of Syrians who returned voluntary from Turkey to Syria is 462,026⁷.

⁷تركيا: عدد السوريين العائدين طوعاً إلى سوريا بلغ 462 ألفاً و 26 شخصاً - جريدة شامنا (shamna-sy.net)

In Germany, although there are no official statistics on the number of voluntary returnees, they do not exceed few thousands, as according to the German newspaper Der Spiegel, the number of Syrian refugees who decided to leave Germany and return to Syria reached 466 people in 2018, while the number of refugees who left Germany was 199 in 2017, which shows low number of voluntary returnees from Germany.

Many factors play a decisive role in the refugees' sense of stability. In Turkey, experts say that the poor economic situation of Syrian refugees is one of the main reasons for their low sense of stability, as most of them work as workers in Turkish factories, and they do not have any incentives for them to stay in Turkey, as they did not establish a business of their own, and they basically do not have sufficient funding to start such businesses, and they are not able to save any financial amounts of the income they get from their work to establish their own business, and their work in factories is not permanent, and they work without work permits and therefore they will not have any rights and will not receive any compensation in situations of crises, as the case was, for example, during the period of the spread of the COVID-19, whereas a large number of Syrians have lost their jobs and were no longer able to cover their families' living costs, which prompted a number of them to return to Syria, on the contrary, in Germany, the Syrian refugee workers in general receive good salaries that are sufficient for them to provide a decent life for themselves and their families, and in the event that one of them loses his job for any reason (like what happened during the COVID-19 crisis), the state provides them with unemployment aid, and those who reach retirement age receive a state pension that is sufficient to cover their living costs.

On the other hand, social fluctuations and political tensions play an important role in decreasing the sense of stability among Syrians in Turkey, as the issue of Syrian refugees and incitement against them, spreading false rumors about them, such as receiving aid from the Turkish state, exempting them from taxes and paying water and electricity bills, entering universities without admission exams, and threatening with the deportation of the Syrians has now become a tool used by the Turkish opposition parties in their electoral battle to incite Turkish public opinion against the ruling Justice and Development Party in Turkey and to undermine its popular base, and these rumors has caused Turks to alienate from Syrians, which caused Syrians to have low sense of stability in Turkey.

While in Germany, political parties in general do not base their electoral campaigns on the file of Syrian refugees, with the exception of some extremist parties (such as the Alternative for Germany Party), which incite against Syrian and other refugees in general, but the popularity of these parties is low and has no influence on German politics.

In this context, we refer to what Kifah Ali Deeb, Director of the Arabic department at (Handbook Germany), a website that introduces Germany, said: "It is difficult for most Syrians living in Germany to give up excellent educational opportunities for their children in schools and universities, along with job opportunities and life in Germany to return to a country that suffers from demolition, and those who will return will start their lives from the scratch, in addition to the security problems in Syria⁸".

⁸ What is the future of the Syrian refugees in Germany?
عربى - ما مستقبل اللاجئين السوريين في ألمانيا؟
[BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/arabic/travel/article/2018/03/18/syrian-refugees-germany-future)

Third - Language learning incentives

In general, experts in Turkey point out that there are no incentives for Syrian refugees to learn the Turkish language, as working in factories or workshops does not require language proficiency, and even if the Syrian worker has mastered the Turkish language, this does not result in a significant difference in the monthly salary he receives, while regarding getting a job or a job opportunity in companies or civil society organizations, it often requires proficiency in English, not Turkish. On the other hand, the vast majority of Syrian refugees in Turkey reside under the temporary protection term, and they will continue to be in Turkey under that term (except for those who obtain Turkish citizenship), as no matter how long they stay, they cannot obtain permanent residency, unlike the situation in European countries, and from the above, we find that there are several incentives for Syrian refugees in Germany to learn German that Syrian refugees in Turkey do not have, whereas Syrian refugees in Germany, although they can get a job without mastering the German language, the income they receive in this case remains low compared to refugees who are proficient in the German language, as mastering the language opens the way for refugees to get job opportunities with high monthly income. also, the refugees' residence for a certain period of time qualifies them to obtain permanent residence, which requires among the most important of its requirements the mastery of the German language.

Fourth - Communication with native speakers

Experts in Turkey believe that there is a state of dissonance and congestion that has emerged during the past years among the Turks towards the Syrian refugees, and the degree of unacceptance of the presence of Syrian refugees in Turkey or of establishing social relations with them by the Turks has increased, which in turn led to the emergence of a negative reaction among the Syrians that made them avoid dealing with the Turks and made them prefer living in Syrian gatherings, and accordingly, there is no effective communication between the Syrian refugees and the Turks, which negatively affects the Syrians' mastery of the Turkish language, as there is no doubt that developing language skills, especially conversation and pronunciation, requires communication with native speakers.

In Germany, experts believe that there is greater communication between Syrians and Germans, and despite the fact that there are some difficulties in communicating with Germans since German society is a secluded society by nature, there are large numbers of foreigners who were born in Germany and acquired German as a mother tongue, and Syrians can communicate with them easily and without any obstacles, which helps the Syrians to develop their language and pronunciation skills.

Fifth – Language education courses

By studying and comparing the situation of language courses in Germany and Turkey, we notice that there are many points that distinguish German language courses from Turkish ones; first, Syrian refugees' attendance for language courses in Germany is mandatory and free of charge up to B1 level, as we mentioned formerly, the German government provides all the Syrians' living requirements in order to devote them to attend language courses, and it also grants refugees transportation allowances to enable them to go to language education centers if these centers are more than 3 kilometers from their place of

residence, and if they fail to attend, 30% of the aid allocated to them is deducted for a period of 3 months, while in Turkey, there is no obligation for Syrian refugees to attend Turkish language courses, and the Turkish government does not provide them with any assistance to help them devote themselves to learn the language.

On the other hand, the Turkish language courses are not designed in a way that allows Syrian refugees to learn the language effectively, as we mentioned formerly, there is no continuity in the Turkish language courses offered in Turkey, as most of these courses are limited to A1 level, and these courses include people with varying language abilities, in addition, the trainers lack the experience in the methods of teaching foreigners and communicating information to them, which we do not find in the German language courses, whereas before the beginning of the course, a placement test is conducted to determine the person's level of language proficiency, and he is then joined to the course that suits his language abilities, and the trainers are mainly from foreigners or specialists in teaching foreigners, and they have sufficient experience and knowledge of the methods of teaching foreigners and dealing with them and how to communicate information to them. Also, the language courses are designed in a way that allows the refugee to start the higher level immediately after completing the lower level, and the curriculum is divided into several levels and each level has a specific number of hours as follows:

| | |
|----|-----------|
| A1 | 200 Hours |
| A2 | 200 Hours |
| B1 | 400 Hours |
| B2 | 600 Hours |
| C1 | 700 Hours |

After completing the first three levels, there is a mandatory exam, and upon passing of the exam, the person enters a course called the "Regulations Course", which includes the laws and history of the state, and the rights and duties of the state towards the citizen and vice versa. If the student fails the exam, he is entitled to repeat it twice, and in case he does not pass it after the second time, he is then transferred to attend intensive courses with German people in order to learn the language faster.

Also, with regard to the timing of language courses, we notice that in Turkey the courses are generally morning courses, and therefore workers, employees and students cannot attend them, while in Germany, there are two periods for attending courses, one in the morning from 08:45 am until 01:00 pm, and the second in the evening from 01:00 pm until 04:00 pm, therefore, people who want to attend these courses can choose the most convenient time for them, and there are two types of language study that refugees can choose between, and these two types are the slow type, in which the attendance is two days a week and the session duration is 3 and a half hours a day, and the second type is the fast, in which attendance is five days a week and the session lasts from 4 to 5 hours a day.

Finally, we point out that the German government grants Syrian mothers maternity leave starting from birth until the child is 3 years old. During this period, mothers are exempted from attending language courses. The German government is working to enable Syrian mothers after the end of the maternity period to attend language courses, as it helps parents to keep their children in kindergarten for free, and if the parents are unable to

find a kindergarten to keep their children in, there are language courses called mother and child courses, where the centers providing the courses contain places for taking care of children until the mother finishes attending the course, while in Turkey, Syrian mothers face difficulty in attending language courses because they have to stay at home to take care of their children, because there are no free kindergartens in Turkey nor mother and child courses as in Germany.

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