



UPINION

# Actionable insights from Syrian refugees in Türkiye: prioritizing community voices

---

June 2025

# Introduction

---

This report aims to highlight key findings and provide actionable recommendations derived from four conversations held with Upinion's Syrian refugees community in Türkiye between April and June 2025. It identifies critical barriers and facilitators to return to Syria, assesses the impact of "go-and-see" visits and sanction lifts on return intentions, evaluates the community's perception of humanitarian aid, funding, and participation in decision-making processes, and provides actionable recommendations based on community voices to inform humanitarian responses and policy.

## Methodology

---

The study's methodology consisted of four conversations held through Upinion's Digital Engagement Platform (DEP), as part of a broader series of monitoring conversations conducted with Syrian individuals in Türkiye over the past four years. Upinion has developed this online platform that allows it to securely connect and stay in touch with marginalised or hard-to-reach communities, including people in crisis and displacement-affected countries. The in-house developed platform enables Upinion to engage real-time with people in the same way they connect with their friends and families, using messaging apps like Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, which are also widely used by Syrian refugees in Türkiye.

Important to mention is that the DEP enables Upinion to send tailored, neutral information to respondents about relevant services or initiatives in their area, thereby turning the conversation into an information exchange. This sets the study's methodology apart from traditional surveys, as participants become active agents engaged in and influenced by knowledge exchange, rather than being simply providers of data.

The 4 conversations covered in this report are the following:

1. Views on returns and future plans (27 March - 2 May 2025, *n=229 started; n=201 completed*)
2. Impact of the funding cuts (22 May - 04 June 2025, *n=225 started; n=189 completed*)
3. Impact of lifting the sanctions on Syrian refugees (2 - 10 June 2025, *n=184 started; n=174 completed*)
4. Upinion community impact evaluation (16 - 24 June 2025, *n=247 started; n=191 completed*)

5. Follow up on the Go-and-See visits (19 June 2025 - ongoing, n=154 started; n=153 completed)

### Representativeness

Upinion does not aim to establish statistical representativeness through its findings, as the conversations conducted for research purposes constitute quantitative enquiries and do not simulate a reflection of the actual population. When comparing our distribution to actual country distributions, we invite readers to see for themselves how our samples can be reflective of a larger tendency.

## Key conversation findings (April to June)

### 1. Prioritize go-and-see visits and address return barriers

#### *Go-and-see visits & returns (Views on returns and future plans (April 2025) and Follow up on the Go-and-See visits (June 2025))*

- In April 2025, **90%** (n=229) of Upinion's community reported still being in Türkiye, while **6%** had returned to Syria permanently, and **4%** were in Syria but only for a temporary visit.
- **95%** (n=201) of respondents that were still in Türkiye indicated that they had not travelled to Syria since the fall of the Assad regime, with **37%** of those planning future visits.
- In June, we observed that **14%** (n=128) had undertaken a "go-and-see" visit to Syria.
- Most returned to check on property and assess the situation, leading **50%** to feel less likely to return due to safety concerns, lack of life-building possibilities, and the need for reconstruction. This reinforces earlier discussions (May-June) where respondents stressed the need for reconstruction and support for safe, dignified, and voluntary returns.
- As "go-and-see" visits will end on the 1st of July 2025, it is crucial to note that **41%** (n=128) of respondents in June considered the visits essential for assessing the situation in Syria, and **17%** found them useful.

**Recommendation:** Continue to support and facilitate safe and organized "go-and-see" visits.

### ***Barriers to return & return support (Views on returns and future plans (April 2025))***

- Main barriers to return to Syria include limited capacity to rebuild homes (**52%**, n=201) and lack of jobs (**49%**), coupled with poor services, weak infrastructure, and fear of being unable to re-enter Türkiye.
- **60%** (n=210) stated return support would influence their decision, **24%** disagreed, and **7%** considered returning without support. Caution with interpreting these results is advised, as support alone doesn't guarantee safe, voluntary, or informed returns.
- Out of the Syrian refugees that answered they would consider returning if provided with support, **74%** (n=140) would need a financial stipend for post-arrival costs (food, partial reconstruction), and **41%** would need financial support for the journey. Many also indicated needing support for housing, reconstruction, legal issues, basic needs, and economic opportunities.

**Recommendation:** Prioritize comprehensive return support addressing housing, reconstruction, legal issues, basic needs, economic opportunities, and financial assistance for the journey and post-arrival costs. Notably, facilitate bureaucratic processes (authentication of school documents/certificates) and provide financial assistance (reducing border crossing costs, travel to Syria, settling).

## **2. Offer adaptable support for varied future plans**

### ***Future plans (Views on returns and future plans (April 2025) and Impact of lifting the sanctions on Syrian refugees (Early June))***

- Future plans among Syrians in Türkiye are diverse: In April 2025, **20%** planned to stay, **20%** planned to return to Syria, **21%** aimed for UN-led resettlement, and **23%** remained uncertain.
- When asked again in June 2025, **25%** planned to settle in Syria within 6 months, **14%** planned on staying in Türkiye, **39%** wanted to leave to a third country, and **20%** did not know yet.

**Recommendation:** Provide flexible support that caters to the varied future plans of Syrian refugees, including integration in Türkiye, information about UN-led resettlement, and informed return.

### 3. Leverage sanction lifts while acknowledging continued hesitation

#### *Impact of lifting sanctions (Impact of lifting the sanctions on Syrian refugees (Early June))*

- Despite a positive feeling (**88%**) and belief that lifting sanctions will improve living conditions in Syria (**81%**), **44%** of respondents still did not want to return.
- Notably, **22%** said lifting sanctions made them more likely to consider returning and **16%** said it made them more likely to consider a visit. **13%** were still not sure.

**Recommendation:** Capitalize on the positive sentiment surrounding sanction lifts by facilitating further "go-and-see" visits, while acknowledging and addressing the persistent hesitation to return.

### 4. Ensure accountability and community participation in aid decisions

#### *Funding cuts (Impact of the funding cuts (May-June))*

- Many emphasized that the structural problems in the humanitarian sector transcends mere funding cuts, highlighting pre-existing aid insufficiency and a "survival crisis." Concerns were also raised about the lack of sustainability and transparency in the humanitarian system.
- **60%** did not feel heard by humanitarian funding decision-makers, and **90%** had not participated in aid decisions, implementation, or monitoring within the past 12 months. **50%** expressed a desire to speak with decision-makers directly, and would be willing to do so immediately.

**Recommendation:** Establish direct communication channels (meetings, feedback tools, voting, digital platforms) between the affected community and donors and decision-makers. Implement monitoring mechanisms for aid distribution and provide clear opportunities for community input on needs. Ensure meaningful participation in future decision- and policy-making regarding Syria and refugees in neighboring countries.

## 5. Prioritize essential aid such as shelter, housing, and protection services

### *Most needed aid (Impact of the funding cuts (May-June) and Upinion community impact evaluation (mid-June))*

- In early June 2025, housing and shelter (**76%**, n=225) were the most needed types of aid, followed by basic needs, health/medical assistance, and education.
- During Upinion's impact evaluation with Syrian refugees in Türkiye in mid-June 2025, **44%** (n=160) indicated no access to protection services (legal aid, psychosocial support, safe spaces) but needed it, while **23%** had partial access.

**Recommendation:** Urgently provide housing and shelter, basic needs, health/medical assistance, and education. Expand access to protection services such as legal aid, psychosocial support, and safe spaces.

## Contact

Noor Lekkerkerker  
CEO  
[noor@upinion.com](mailto:noor@upinion.com)

Augustine Hacques  
Researcher  
[augustine@upinion.com](mailto:augustine@upinion.com)