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Protection Cluster

North-West Syria (Türkiye)

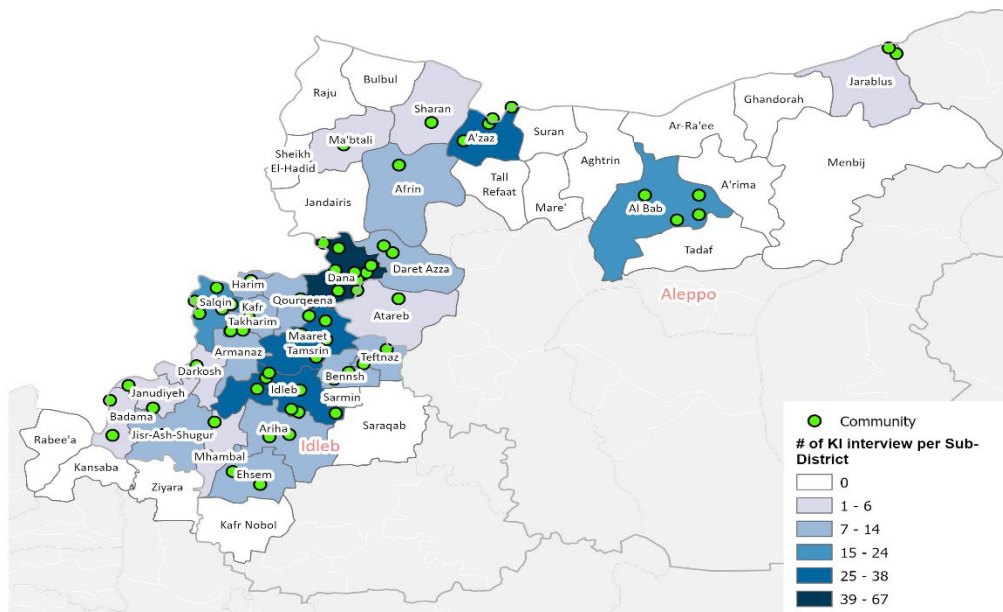
**Impacts of Security Escalation and Humanitarian
Constraints on Protection and Recovery**

North-West Syria July 2023

Protection Monitoring Analysis Working Group

Introduction and Objectives:

The Protection Monitoring and Analysis Working Group (PMAWG) and its partners conducted a comprehensive survey, gathering insights from 351 key informant interviews across 64 communities. The primary objective of the survey was to assess the current protection environment, focusing on the impacts of security escalation and humanitarian challenges on protection and recovery in Northwest Syria (NWS).



The data collected from this survey will serve as a crucial foundation for understanding the challenges faced by affected populations in Northwest Syria and will inform evidence-based strategies for addressing their protection needs. The PMAWG and its partners are committed to utilizing these findings to develop targeted interventions and enhance humanitarian efforts in the region.

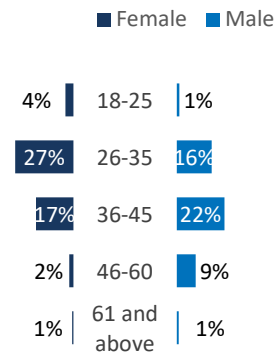
Key findings:

- 1. Fear & Insecurity:** Northwest Syria faces fear and uncertainty due to ongoing insecurity. Explosive ordinance, limited services, and risks for families drive fear among 82% of respondents.
- 2. Protection Risks:** Amid increased violence and insecurity, the most prominent protection risks include exploitation (67%), family separation (40%), and reduced access to services (39%).
- 3. Affected Populations:** Displacement impacts vulnerable populations. Persons with disabilities (75%), destitute older persons (60%), and children with disabilities (65%) need targeted support.
- 4. Pressing Issues:** During displacement, aid distribution (79%), mental health support (75%), and risk mitigation (47%) are top priorities. Timely and comprehensive assistance is crucial.
- 5. Potential Protests:** If the UN resolution is not renewed, demonstrations are likely (89%). Preparedness for potential risks like displacement and clashes is essential.

Methodology:

Gender representation among the key informants was nearly balanced, with 178 female and 173 male participants. The survey encompassed a wide age range, with significant contributions from the 26-35 age group, which included 152 participants (27% female, 16% male), and the 36-45 age group, which included 139 (17% female, 22% male). Various types of key informants participated, providing valuable perspectives on the region's protection landscape. The survey encompassed religious leaders, camp management personnel, health workers, local authorities, community leaders (including youth, elder, and women's group leaders), school administrators, and NGO staff engaged in protection work.

KI Age and Gender Breakdown



Humanitarian Situation in Northwest Syria

The humanitarian situation in Northwest Syria remains critical and complex, with ongoing security challenges and a heatwave exacerbating the vulnerabilities of displaced populations. The region is facing a multitude of protection concerns, displacement risks, and socio-economic hardships, requiring urgent and comprehensive responses from humanitarian actors and donors. As efforts to respond to the urgent needs continue, the temporary re-opening of al-Rai and Bab al-Salameh crossings, which have been crucial for UN shipments into Northwest Syria, is set to expire on May 13. With approximately 2.9 million internally displaced individuals out of a total population of 4.1 million¹ in need of humanitarian assistance, the situation demands sustained efforts to provide essential aid and address the pressing needs of vulnerable communities.

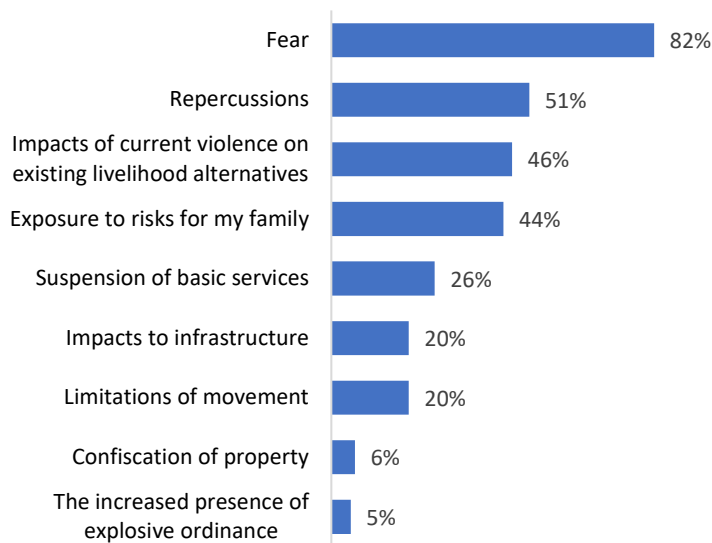
In conclusion, the current security situation in Northwest Syria has resulted in a climate of fear and instability, compelling many individuals and communities to contemplate moving to safer places. Fear, as the primary factor influencing this decision, highlights the urgency of addressing the root causes of insecurity and violence. The potential destination sites, including staying within Northwest Syria or seeking refuge in neighboring Turkey, reflect the complexity of displacement dynamics in the region. While protection mechanisms are in place, there is a need for strengthened coordination and resources to effectively address the identified vulnerabilities and protection risks faced by affected populations in Northwest Syria. This deeper analysis underscores the importance of a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to protect and support those impacted by the current heatwave and ongoing security challenges in the region.

I. Protection:

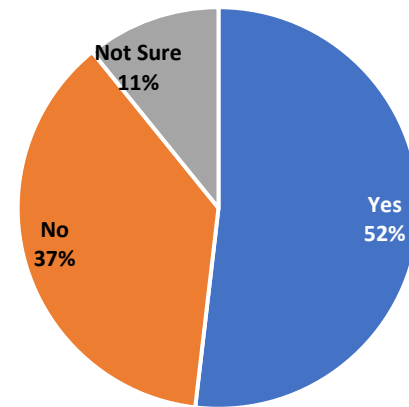
Factors Prompting Consideration of Moving: The current security situation in Northwest Syria has created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among the population. With the ongoing violence and armed conflicts, many individuals and communities are seriously contemplating moving to safer areas according to 52% of the KIs.

¹ <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/syria/>

Factors influencing this decision



Factors Prompting Consideration of Moving

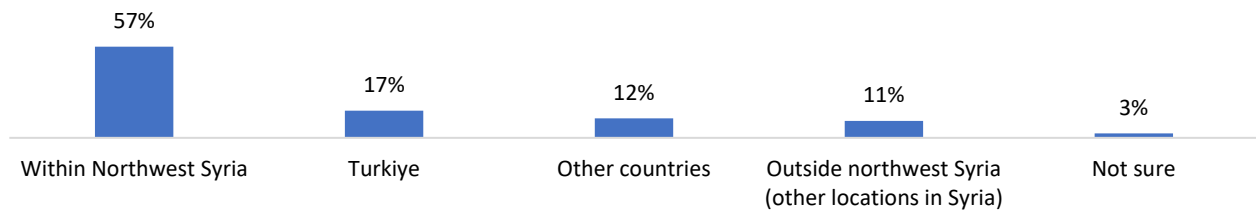


The survey² reveals that fear is the most dominant factor influencing the population's consideration of moving to a different place in Northwest Syria, with 82% of respondents expressing it as a primary concern. The pervasive and unpredictable violence, exposure to risks, and potential repercussions contribute to the climate of fear among the population. Additionally, 51% of respondents mentioned "Repercussions" as a significant factor, encompassing negative consequences such as loss of property, disruption of livelihoods, psychological distress, limited access to essential services, and food insecurity due to ongoing violence and insecurity. Impacts of current violence on existing livelihood alternatives (46%) and exposure to risks for families (44%) and were also cited as critical factors. The constant exposure to violence and its impact on communities creates uncertainty and compels families and individuals to seek safer environments.

Potential Destination Sites: While more than half of respondents (57%) are considering staying within Northwest Syria, a substantial portion (17%) is exploring the possibility of seeking refuge in Turkey, which shares a border with NWS. The remaining respondents indicated preferences for locations within Syria, but outside of the Northwest region (11%) or considering migration to other countries outside Syria (12%). Collectively, these findings reveal that 40% of respondents are contemplating relocation from Northwest Syria. This suggests that nearly a third (29%) of the respondents are considering migration beyond Syria's borders. Should the current situation continue to worsen, this could potentially result in a significant wave of refugees. The choice of destination reflects the urgency of creating safer and more stable living conditions amid the security challenges in Northwest Syria.

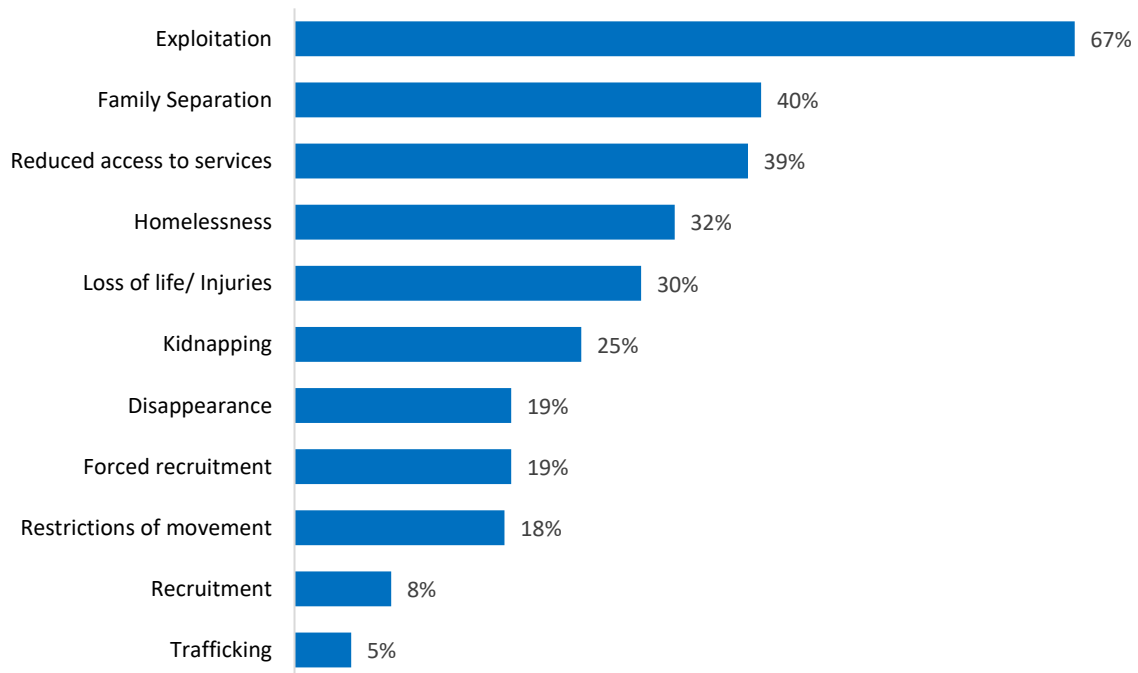
² Please note that these percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple factors.

Potential destination sites within the Northwest or across international borders



Current Protection Risks³: The survey highlights the major protection risks faced by communities in Northwest Syria amidst increased violence and insecurity. The top three risks are exploitation (67%), family separation (40%), and reduced access to services (39%). Exploitation is a significant concern due to socio-economic hardships, making individuals vulnerable to forced labor, trafficking, and financial exploitation. Family separation has increased, leaving children without families, or forcing parents to separate from their children. Reduced access to services, including healthcare and education, further challenges the population's safety and well-being. Other risks include homelessness (32%), loss of life/injuries (30%), and kidnapping (25%).

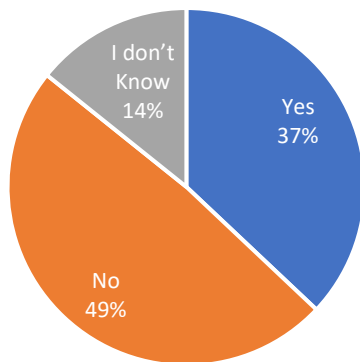
Protection Risk



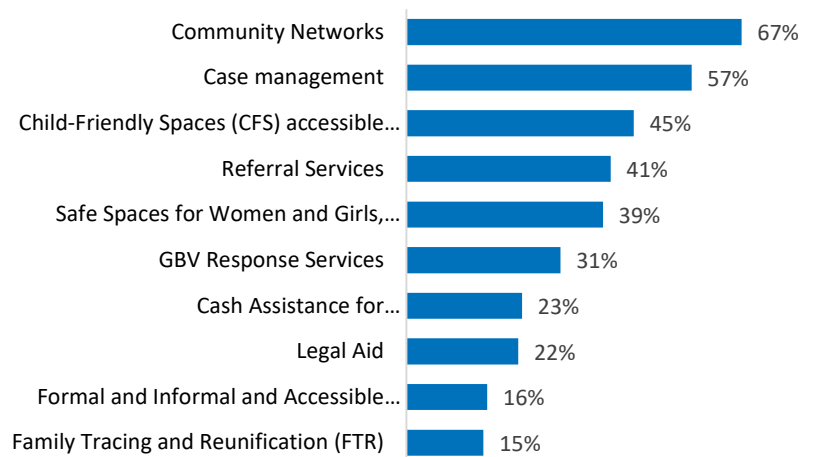
³ Please note that these percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple factors.

Existing Protection Mechanisms⁴: While Northwest Syria faces significant protection challenges, there are commendable efforts to address the needs of those displaced. Community networks play a critical role in supporting displaced individuals, with 67% of respondents reporting their existence. These networks likely offer assistance, information-sharing, and social support to those affected by displacement. Case management services (57%) and referral services (41%) also demonstrate an attempt to provide necessary support and resources during displacement. However, the availability of such mechanisms may not be uniform across all areas within Northwest Syria, warranting further coordination and capacity-building efforts to ensure comprehensive protection coverage.

Protection mechanisms currently in place within your community



If yes, please specify the protection mechanisms



II. Child Protection (CP)⁵:

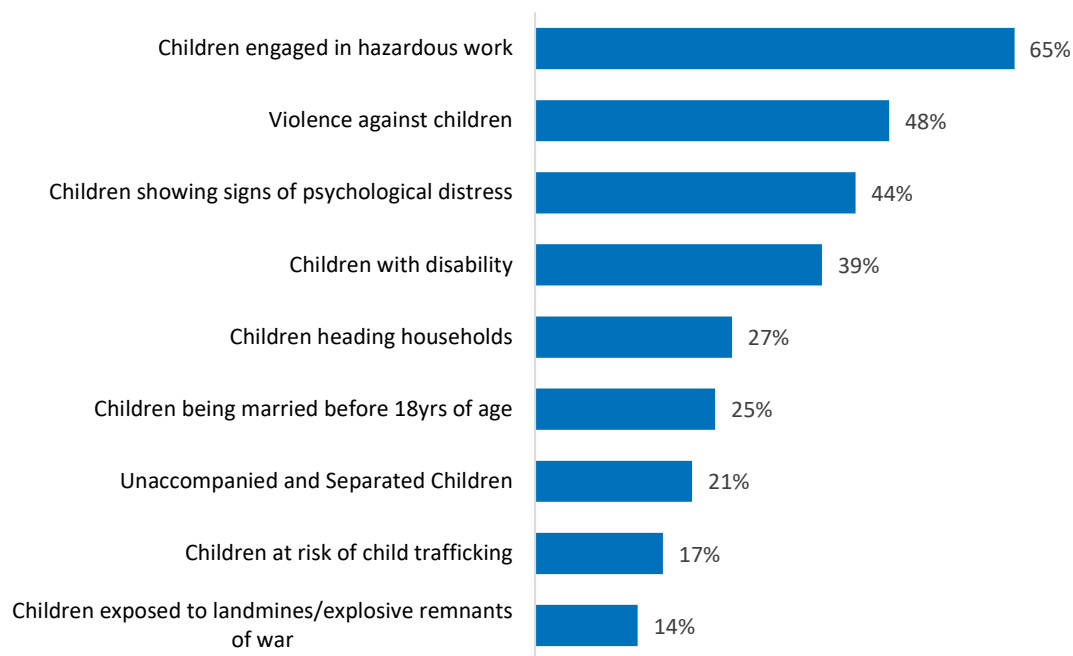
Most Significant Protection Concerns for Children During Displacement:

- Children engaged in hazardous work (65%):** NWS has been grappling with the impact of armed conflict, destruction of infrastructure, and economic hardships. Displaced families often struggle to meet their basic needs, which can force children into work to supplement family income. The absence of proper safety measures and child labor regulations exposes them to hazardous conditions, exacerbating the risk of exploitation and injury.
- Violence against children (48%):** The protracted conflict in NWS has exposed children to various forms of violence, including airstrikes, bombings, and attacks on civilian areas. Children are at risk of witnessing and experiencing traumatic events that can have severe psychological and physical consequences. Additionally, the presence of armed groups and a breakdown of law and order may lead to incidents of abduction, assault, and sexual violence against children.
- Children showing signs of psychological distress (44%):** Displacement itself is a traumatic experience for children. The ongoing violence, loss of homes, and separation from family and friends can lead to psychological distress. In NWS, access to mental health and psychosocial support services is limited due to the challenging humanitarian situation, making it harder for children to cope with the trauma they have experienced.

⁴ Please note that these percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple factors.

⁵ Please note that these percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple factors.

If your family had to undergo displacement, what would be the three most significant protection concerns for your children?



III. Gender-Based Violence (GBV)⁶:

Concerns Regarding Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during Displacement:

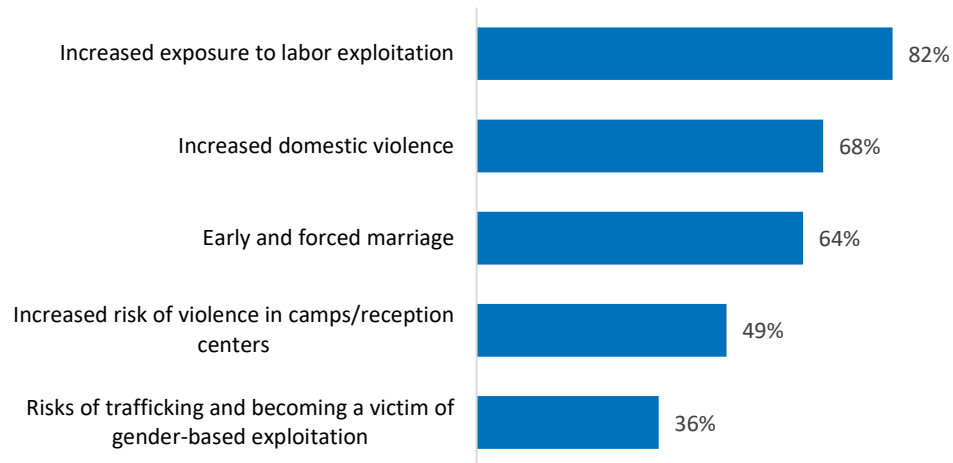
a) Increased exposure to labor exploitation: The survey indicates that 82% of respondents are concerned about the heightened risk of labor exploitation faced by women and girls, including those with disabilities. Displacement often disrupts livelihoods and economic stability, leaving women and girls vulnerable to exploitative labor practices, including hazardous or low-paying work.

b) Increased domestic violence: The potential increase in domestic violence in camps or reception centers is a serious concern raised by 68% of respondents. The cramped and stressful living conditions in displacement settings, coupled with the breakdown of social support structures, can escalate tensions, and contribute to higher incidences of domestic violence.

c) Early and forced marriage: The risk of early and forced marriage is a pressing concern during displacement, with 64% of respondents expressing worry. In crisis situations, families may resort to marrying off their daughters at a young age due to perceived safety concerns or economic hardships. This places young girls at risk of enduring early motherhood, limited education, and increased vulnerability to abuse.

⁶ Please note that these percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple factors.

Increased violence and possible displacement of women and children, including children and women with disabilities, what are your concerns regarding gender-based violence



IV. Legal Protection:

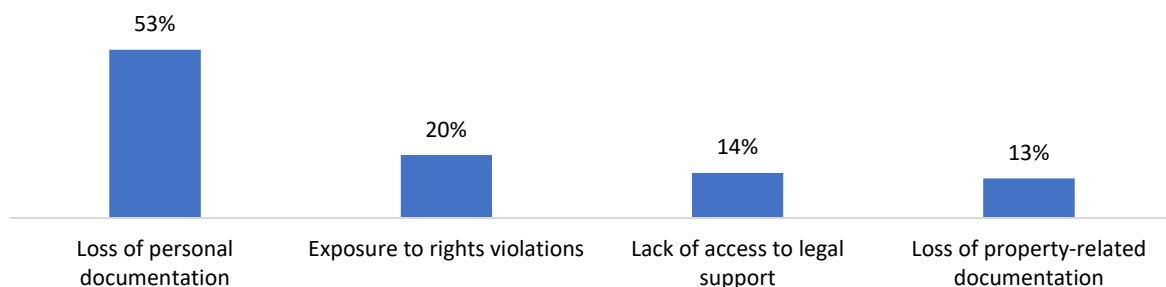
Most Significant Impacts of Displacement:

a) Loss of personal documentation: More than half of the respondents (53%) reported that the loss of personal documentation had the most significant impact on them during displacement. This loss can have severe consequences, as individuals may struggle to access essential services, prove their identity, or claim their rights without proper documentation.

b) Exposure to rights violations: 20% of respondents highlighted the exposure to rights violations as a significant impact of displacement. The upheaval caused by displacement often exposes individuals to various human rights abuses, including discrimination, harassment, and exploitation, making legal protection crucial in such circumstances.

c) Lack of access to legal support: 14% of respondents identified the lack of access to legal support as a considerable challenge during displacement. Legal aid is vital in protecting the rights of displaced individuals and ensuring access to justice, especially in complex and uncertain situations.

In your past experiences of displacement, which of these have been the most significant impacts?



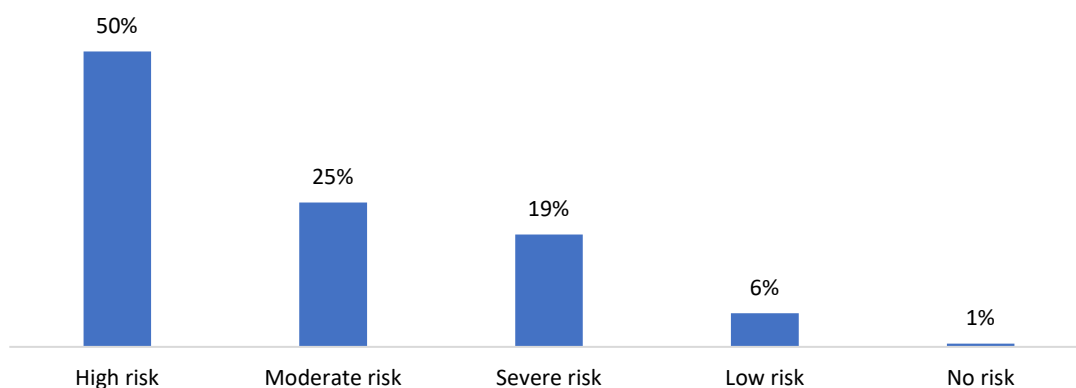
Anticipated Risk of Forced Evictions:

a) High risk: 50% of respondents anticipated a high risk of forced evictions due to the inability to pay rent caused by the high demand for housing. Displacement often leads to increased demand for housing, driving up prices and making it challenging for displaced individuals to secure affordable housing options.

b) Moderate and severe risk: 25% and 19% of respondents, respectively, anticipated moderate and severe risks of forced evictions. These concerns reflect the vulnerability of displaced individuals to homelessness and further displacement due to financial constraints.

c) Low and no risk: A small percentage of respondents (6% and 1%) anticipated low or no risk of forced evictions, suggesting that some individuals may have found alternative housing solutions or have support networks to mitigate these risks.

In case of displacement, how do you anticipate the risk of forced evictions due to the inability to pay rent because of the high demand for housing?



V. Post-Earthquake Recovery:

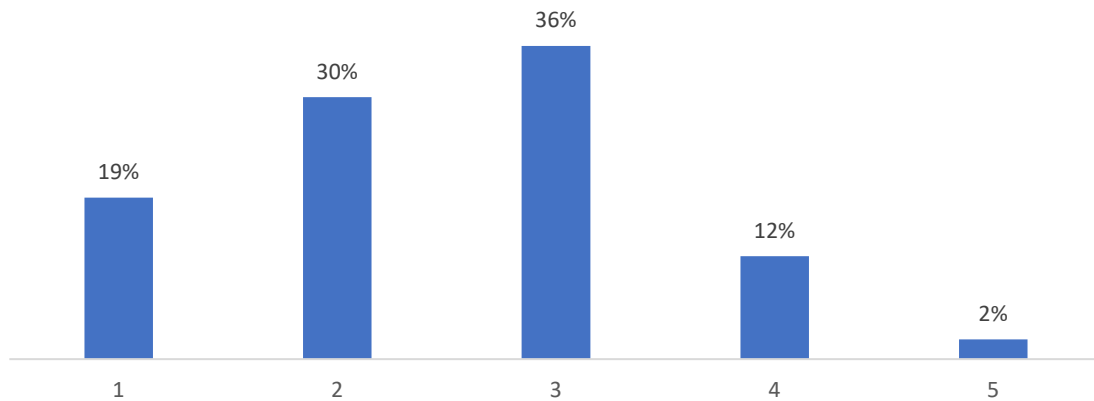
Community Recovery from Earthquake Impact:

a) Scale 3: The largest proportion of respondents (36%) rated their community's recovery from the earthquake's impact as "3," indicating a moderate level of recovery. This suggests that significant efforts have been made, but there is still progress needed for a full recovery.

b) Scale 2 and 4: Approximately 30% and 12% of respondents rated their community's recovery as "2" and "4," respectively, indicating a mix of communities with varying degrees of progress in recovering from the earthquake's impact.

c) Scale 1 and 5: A smaller percentage of respondents (19% and 2%) rated their community's recovery as "1" (not recovered at all) and "5" (fully recovered), respectively. This indicates that some communities have not seen significant improvements, while others have successfully overcome the earthquake's impact.

On a scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 being not recovered at all and 5 being fully recovered), how much has your community recovered from the earthquake's impact?



VI. The Most Affected Population⁷:

The survey results reveal that certain population groups are more significantly affected by displacement than others. The highest percentage, at 75%, emphasizes the vulnerability of Persons with Disabilities during displacement. They require specialized support to address their unique needs and challenges, ensuring their safety and inclusion in humanitarian responses. Following closely at 65%, the survey indicates that a substantial proportion of the displaced at risk are Children with Disabilities, underscoring the importance of providing inclusive services and protection to safeguard their rights and well-being.

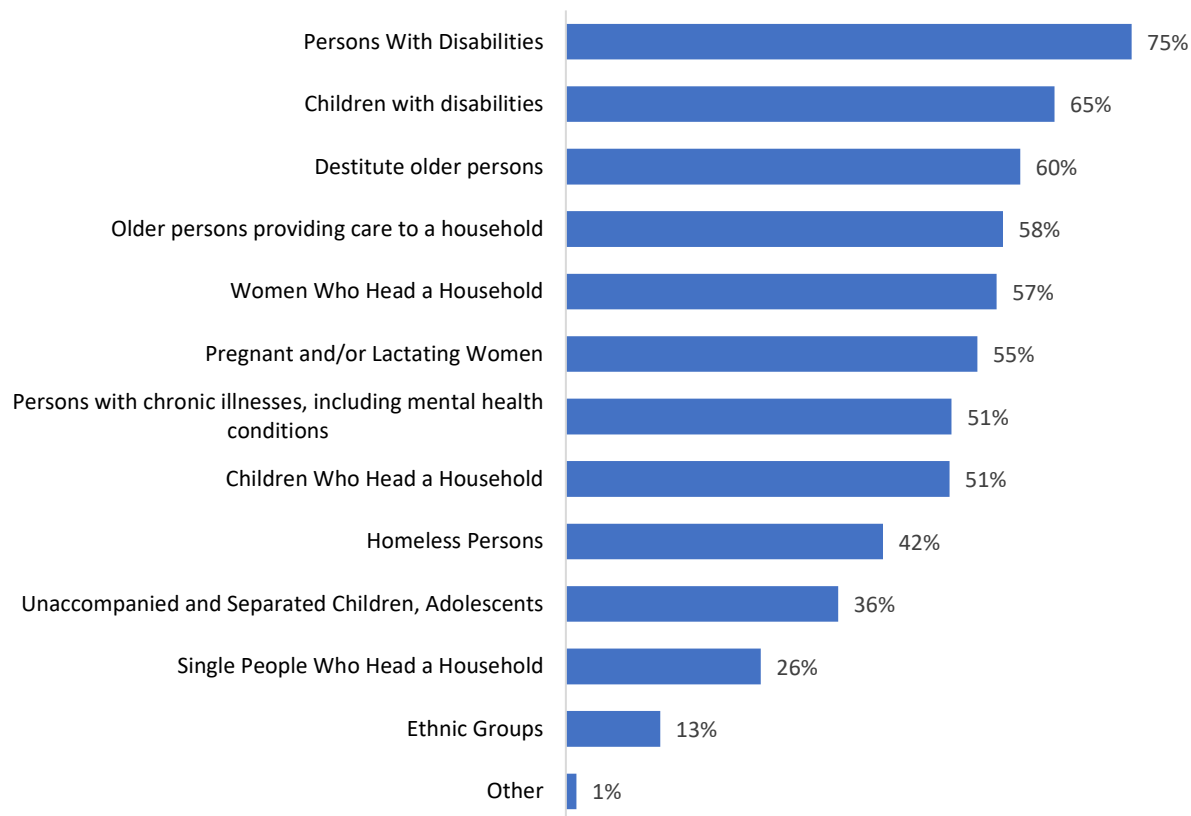
At 60% and 58%, respectively, the survey highlights the vulnerability of Destitute Older Persons and Older Persons Providing Care to a Household during displacement. These older individuals require specific assistance in accessing essential services and maintaining their health and dignity. Pregnant and/or Lactating Women, comprising 55% of the affected population, also demand targeted support to address their distinct needs during displacement.

Furthermore, the survey shows that Women Who Head a Household represent 57% of the affected population, requiring focused attention and assistance to navigate the challenges of leading households during displacement. Unaccompanied and Separated Children, Adolescents account for 36%, signifying the need for urgent protection and reunification efforts for these vulnerable young individuals.

Lastly, Single People Who Head a Household (26%) and Ethnic Groups (13%) also face specific challenges during displacement that necessitate tailored support and attention.

⁷ Please note that these percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple factors.

Most Affected Population



Essential Services and Support in Displacement

According to 79% of the respondents, having fair access to aid distribution is crucial. This highlights the importance of ensuring displaced individuals have dignified access to necessities such as food, water, and shelter. By providing aid, we can create a foundation for those affected to address other areas of vulnerability.

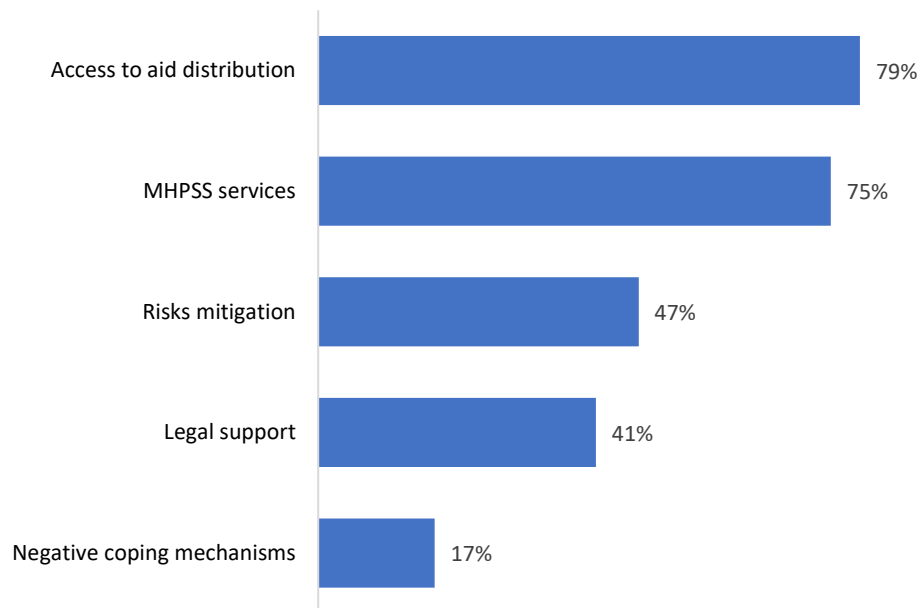
It has become clear that providing only material assistance is not enough. In fact, 75% of people have identified that having access to 'Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services' (MHPSS) is just as important. This emphasizes the importance of psychosocial care in addressing issues such as trauma, grief, depression, and other mental health impacts that can affect a person's ability to cope with displacement. MHPSS is an essential aspect of protection, in addition to physical aid.

Almost half of the survey respondents (47%) highlighted the importance of implementing "Risk Mitigation" strategies to improve security measures against violence and exploitation. This serves as a reminder that simply providing survival aid will not suffice without taking steps to monitor and minimize the risks.

It is clear that restoring the legal standing and identity of displaced populations, along with their documentation, is crucial. This is indicated by the fact that 41% of respondents have expressed a need for 'Legal Assistance'.

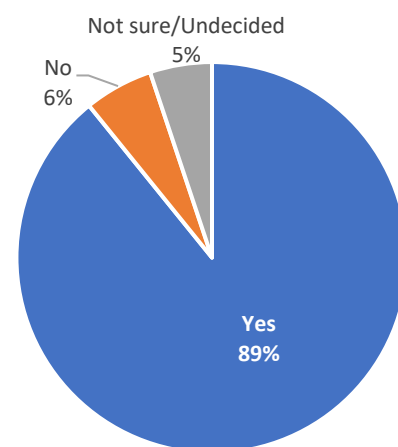
Approximately 17% of respondents expressed worries about harmful "Negative Coping Mechanisms," such as child labor and child marriage, among others. This emphasizes the necessity for specific programs aimed at preventing displacement from leading to negative actions caused by desperation.

If displacement occurs, what would be the most pressing issues that should be addressed?



VII. UN Security Council resolution:

Based on the survey results, it appears that a significant portion of the population in this community, with 313 respondents (approximately 89%), foresees participating in demonstrations or protests to voice their concerns if the UN Security Council resolution is not renewed, and the Government of Syria's letter is accepted. This indicates a strong level of discontent and a willingness to express grievances through peaceful means. On the other hand, a smaller proportion of the population, with 20 respondents (approximately 6%), does not anticipate participating in demonstrations or protests, potentially indicating a preference for other forms of expression or reluctance to engage in public protests. Additionally, 18 respondents (approximately 5%) remain unsure or undecided, reflecting a level of uncertainty among some members of the community regarding their potential participation.



Based on the survey responses, if communities were to participate in demonstrations or protests to voice their concerns, the following reactions are anticipated:

1. **Demonstrations:** The overwhelming majority of respondents, (93%), expect that demonstrations will be one of the community's reactions. This indicates a strong likelihood of peaceful expressions of grievances through organized protests.
2. **Displacement:** A significant portion of respondents, (42%), foresees displacement as one of the potential reactions. This suggests there is a concern that the situation could escalate to a point where people may need to leave their homes due to security or safety concerns. These findings corroborate the predictions in the " Potential Destination Sites" section, as continued deterioration of conditions could prompt large-scale displacement and an influx of refugees to other countries.
3. **Clashes:** A considerable number of respondents, (29%), anticipate clashes as one of the community's reactions. This implies that there is a perceived risk of confrontations between different groups within the community or with authorities.
4. **Looting:** A substantial proportion of respondents, (20%), predicts looting as one of the potential reactions. This indicates a fear that civil unrest could lead to property damage and theft.
5. **Intercommunal clashes:** A notable number of respondents, (19%), expect intercommunal clashes to be one of the community's reactions. This suggests concerns about tensions between different ethnic or social groups escalating into violent conflicts.

If yes, which reactions do you think communities might have?

