THE STATUS OF
GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN SYRIA

Mapping the Terrain

Prepared by:

Mahmoud Ramadan

Farah Hwijeh

Omar Abdulaziz Hallaj

Sidra Salahieh

Mohamad Diab

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Abbreviations

CDEAW	*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination against Women*
GBV	*Gender-based violence*
GDP	*Gross Domestic Product*
GoS	*Government of Syria*
GUSW	*General Union of Syrian Women*
HLP	*Housing, land and property rights*
HTS	*Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham*
IDP	*Internally displaced person*
ISIS	*Islamic State of Sham and Iraq*
INGO	*International non-governmental organization*
NGO	*Non-governmental organization*
PVAW	*Physical violence against women*
SCFAP	*Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population*
UNFPA	*United Nations Population Fund*
UNICEF	*United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund*

1- Executive Summary

This report covers the results of a quantitative and qualitative survey conducted from January till March 2021 mapping the situation of gender equality and women's rights throughout Syria. The approach was to understand gender perceptions and the lives of women through their own eyes and according to their own words and priorities. All the while the research team tried to develop a baseline for further research to benchmark deep transformations and explore ways to support women to endure and survive the impacts of the conflict on their lives. To map a complex eco-system surrounding women and shaping the dynamics affecting their lives, eight pillars were identified by the research team mainly:

- Security and Protection (two sub pillars: GBV, food security)

- Economy/labor markets

- Equity and equality (two sub pillars: education, HLP)

- Political rights

- Legal rights

- Education

- Health

- Social norms and culture

231 respondents from all over Syria and across its many geographies of control and inclusive of all socio-economic groups and populations were asked perception questions; they ranked questions related to the different pillars and the results were streamlined and analyzed to identify correlations and possible ways to segment the results. 51 respondents were asked more in-depth questions through a semi structured qualitative survey. Their personal experiences and understanding of their local conditions covering all Syrian geographies and population groups were documented, coded and analyzed using a qualitative data management software. This enabled in-depth understanding of certain phenomena and how women across Syria perceive their environment and what do they take into their calculus when they make decision. Results of the quantitative and qualitative surveys were compared to provide a better understanding of gender dynamics in society.

Key findings pointed out to similarities of the normative perceptions of different communities regarding social and cultural factors affecting women despite great variations between the locations and within each location. Hot spots underperforming on women rights and gender equality included Deir al-Zor, Raqqa and to a lesser extent Rural Damascus as many of the dynamics affecting those rights were reinforcing each other and creating a restrictive eco-system. The situation tended to be better in the main cities across all geographies of control, and in the governorates of Idlib and Damascus (in the first one because societal norms seemed to be universally accepted and are perceived to be fair, and the latter because there was a reasonable variety of opportunities where women would have access to different resources not available elsewhere). However, a key finding from the qualitative survey was that women tend to internalize and justify inequalities and injustices. Security was perceived to be good in places like Idlib, but it was at the expense of women adhering to strict codes imposed by local authorities; housing, land and property (HLP) rights were perceived to be satisfactory and provided women with a basis of equity (not equality) but in reality, many women were not even aware that they had such rights or how to protect them[1].

What seemed to matter more to women was issues that impacted the quality of their lives directly such as health, education and the economy. Incidentally, these

[1] We asked women different questions to see if they were treated fairly on HLP and other issues related to equality. In many cases women valued receiving their shares of inheritance stipulated by the religious law, unequal as it may be to that of their male counterparts than being disinherited from inheritance altogether because of societal norms, though the local codes were fairer. Our approach was to allow the women themselves to prioritize their perceptions, but to be also fully aware of how their perceptions were coerced or influenced by their social, economic and political settings.

areas are showing great shifts in practice and women are progressively assuming more public roles despite facing great societal resistance. However, political rights were perceived negatively across the board and in all geographies as corruption and intimidation imposed great risks to women wanting to assume political office. Though some progress has been achieved on some fronts in transforming women's lives in practice, women still adhere to societal norms as ideal normative standards even when their daily experiences are in contradictions with these norms. Ten years of war may have transformed women's living experiences, but societal attitudes persist.

Six typologies of women were identified from the quantitative data and fine-tuned through the qualitative analysis. These present different possible ways to understand conditions surrounding women and provide an insight on how support programs can be segmented and channeled to improve women's lives and help them cope with the impacts of conflict and related social transformations. These segments are:

- Segment 1: Middle-aged large-city female dwellers who enjoy stable conditions in terms of security, economy, education, health, political rights and social norms, and average equity conditions and legal rights,

- Segment 2: Adult Women who enjoy satisfactory security, equity, health as well as political and legal rights, but with average economy, education and subjugation to social norms,

- Segment 3: Young, mostly single women who enjoy, average security, economy, education, health, political rights and subjugation to social norms, relatively good HLP equity conditions but otherwise lack legal rights,

- Segment 4: Women who have average conditions in terms of economy, equity, legal rights, education and social norms, relatively strong political rights yet suffer from lack of security and below-average access to health,

- Segment 5: Medium and low-income women who have below average conditions in terms of security, economy, equity, legal rights, education and health, and especially lag behind in terms of political rights and being disfavored by social norms,

- Segment 6: Urban women who struggle in every aspect, facing violence, bad food security, economy, equity, political and legal rights, education, health and social norms.

These segments are not segregated geographically, and each single geography may contain several patterns simultaneously. However, it was observed that locations that tend to underperform on most gender rights, tended to also have less variations. Societal, economic and political pressures tended to apply almost universally in places like Deir al-Zor, Raqqa and Rural Damascus. Geographies that tended to have better average conditions tended to have a broader spread and variety of responses. Indicating a close correlation between diversity and affording opportunities for women to enhance their access to services and rights. However, in places like Aleppo where the largest diversity of responses was observed, deep pockets of concern seemed to be entrenched. The subdivision of the governorate into different areas of control with different societal dynamics was clearly noted there. However, even within the same geographies of control, diversity of conditions was observed across the board.

The findings of the different pillars, both quantitative and qualitative analysis, are provided, along with different maps and diagrams to help visualize conditions. The detailed review provides a very rich material for program managers, researchers and most importantly for the women of Syria, as this research will be made available in Arabic to the participating women and their communities to provide a way for them to benchmark their conditions in what is hoped to be a continuous research program in the future.

2- Introduction

This preliminary report covers the results of the quantitative and qualitative surveys conducted in late January, February and early March 2021. The report highlights great diversity of gender conditions in the different parts of Syria yet, points to many common societal biases and norms. The ten years of conflict seem to have changed little of the normative ideals and social standards of society, though on the level of praxis many deviations were mapped. In total the research team conducted 51 semi-structured interviews and 231 quantitative perception questionnaires[2]. The presentation of the results follows many threads of investigation grouped into eight pillars. The presentation of results for each pillar is done in a systemic manner first by examining the results of the quantitative survey then exploring the nuanced answers to the qualitative survey. Correlations and strong patterns were identified to allow for aggregating findings and drawing policy recommendations.

The study was conducted under difficult conditions[3], requiring careful attention to the personal safety of participants and with an eye of drawing evidence-based analysis and mapping that could be used to support policy decisions in future iterations of the research. The study does not promote any a priori position regarding the conflict in Syria or gender politics there. The research team wants to make the data and analysis available first to Syrian women themselves, as the study will be shared with participating women and their communities to enhance their understanding of their conditions and to enable them to benchmark their life experiences in comparison to the those of other women in and from Syria.

The outcomes of the study will also hopefully enable researchers, policy makers, and all stakeholders working on empowering and supporting women in Syria to tap on information drawn from all of Syria without prejudice.

[2] For this pilot study limitation of access was a particular concern. We compensated for it by a careful calibration of how the samples were selected and identified. Please refer to the section on methodology later for the discussion on the reliability of the sample.

[3] Communicating with respondents inside Syria was hampered by difficulties in securing internet contacts, electricity, and other logistics. Also, given the security conditions in all geographies of the conflict, extra precautions were undertaken not to undermine the safety of any respondent.

3- Methodology

To map the eco-system where women live, work and have to survive the daily challenges of the Syrian conflict, a complex research strategy was adopted. This pilot research effort will be the backbone of a longer-term research framework. But as a baseline it had to cover a complex set of issues, map the whole Syrian geography and engage in the complex social, economic and political realities of the country. To establish a first benchmark the research used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research tools. Covering eight pillars of the eco-system surrounding women's lives. These were identified for the purpose of the initial pilot to cover the following issues:

- Security and Protection (two sub pillars: GBV, food security)
- Economy/labor markets
- Equity and equality (two sub pillars: education, HLP)
- Political rights
- Legal rights
- Education
- Health
- Social norms and culture

Both qualitative and a quantitative research approaches were designed to answer questions to these pillars. The qualitative approach helped to understand the dynamics, the nomenclature used by the women themselves, and the relative importance of each pillar on women's lives, etc. While the quantitative approach was meant to set an order of magnitude and allow for systemic comparative analysis and development of schematic assessments to measure trends, early warning, relative areas of weakness and strength.

To frame these pillars or focal areas, key issues within each pillar were identified for this initial pilot. At a later stage additional questions could be added if they were deemed of interest. This would be particularly relevant to understand the issues quantitatively. However, experience from similar research projects point out that for the quantitative research, additional indicators may not necessarily enhance the overall calibration of any given pillar. But they may improve our understanding of a particular phenomenon. To that extent the 47 quantitative questions and 41 semi-structured qualitative questions were deemed as a reasonable start for piloting the research.

The quantitative questionnaire was distributed to 231 respondents covering all the geographies of the conflict in proportions matching demographic realities on the ground and ensuring that major population trends in each geography are included proportionally. This is not a fully random survey as the resources and time available to prepare a proper representative sample were beyond the means of this pilot. Yet all efforts were exerted to ensure respondents from each geography were triangulated by including several persons from each sub population group in the geography. Questionnaires were perception based for the most part and were graded on a scale from 1 to 5 or -2 to +2 based on the case, with the lower numbers being the worst and the highest representing better situations for women's status, protection, access to services and guaranteeing of rights. Outliers were removed and data was organized to draw comparative conclusions and identify hot spots and critical correlations in the data.

For the qualitative survey a total of 51 semi structured interviews were conducted with women covering all the geographies and the population groups among them, including IDP's. responses were documented and analyzed using a qualitative data analysis program. Each interview was coded to capture all possible relevant information provided by the respondents and to enable cross

referencing and correlation. Respondents were asked to cover the bulk of the same themes covered by the quantitative survey but were also asked to provide case studies and personal experiences. This was essential to understand the social phenomena beyond their normative definitions.

Comparing quantitative and qualitative survey results provided important nuances to understand the quantitative data and to draw important lessons learnt for future research. In this report the initial findings of each pillar and its sub-components will be presented in a systemic manner to cover a first-round mapping of the terrain and understand the where and how things are seen from the views of the women interviewed. The correlations between the pillars were highlighted whenever the data showed clear patterns and deeper examination ensued when logical contradictions were discovered between the two sets of data. This often led to more nuanced understanding of phenomena. The final results point to a complex eco-system where the pillars are often intertwined and where one social, economic or political phenomenon is examined as part of a transformative environment. This enabled the research team to distinguish clear patterns or segments of Syrian society and will have important policy consequences in terms of directing resources and efforts in the future.

For a detailed review of the methodology adopted please refer to the annex 1.

4- Key Policy Recommendations

While it is too early to draw conclusive recommendations on the basis of a pilot survey with a relatively small sample of respondents, some early potential markers can be pointed out:

- It is not possible to tackle women's rights and living conditions separately; they comprise a complex and integral eco-system. Policies aimed to support women should not focus on single thematic areas but should adopt instead an area-based approach to tackle multiple issues of concern facing women in a specific geography, whilst considering other intersectional factors. This would help them capitalize on local social energies and their communities' capital rather than become dependent on external resources and aid.

- Normative social and cultural patterns are deeply entrenched and tackling them directly may not be the best method to transform women's lives. The main entry points may be issues that touch women directly such as the economy, health and education. Women are making important societal shifts in those domains and it is important to help them make these shifts and to gain experience and awareness to transform their lives in other domains.

- Women across Syria face similar problems but in different combinations. Understanding the segmentation of conditions may help develop more targeted programing responsive to each segment's needs and priorities, while also allowing for the transfer of knowledge and experience from one area to the next.

• Women succumb to complex societal norms; patriarchal social, legal and political pressures impose severe restrictions on women. However, many of the patriarchal norms are enforced by women; women also adopt moral justifications and adapt their lives to survive in the complex eco-systems surrounding them. Targeting programs to empower women should not focus on creating a wedge between men and women nor to problematize their relationships as much as on providing women with the tools to protect themselves and navigate the complex dynamics surrounding them. The focus should be on transforming social norms by focusing on how the patriarchal order is rooted and who are the key actors enforcing it and what are the key factors reinforcing it.

• While the study pointed to deeply rooted norms and dynamics influencing women and their communities, it was noted that some emerging dynamics may have the potential to greatly transform the eco-system. The issue of food security is gradually emerging as an uncharted social phenomenon with yet poorly understood consequences on women and their families. As women are becoming more directly engaged in earning income and accessing the public domain, positive and negative perceptions are created with potential rebounding effects on the status of women. Keeping a long-term monitoring of how such emergent issues are progressing is important to identify potential early warnings. But, perhaps equally as important is to understand how coping mechanisms can provide new entry points for supporting women to make progress towards transforming gender roles and providing women with opportunities to use the crisis to emerge into the public sphere more prominently.
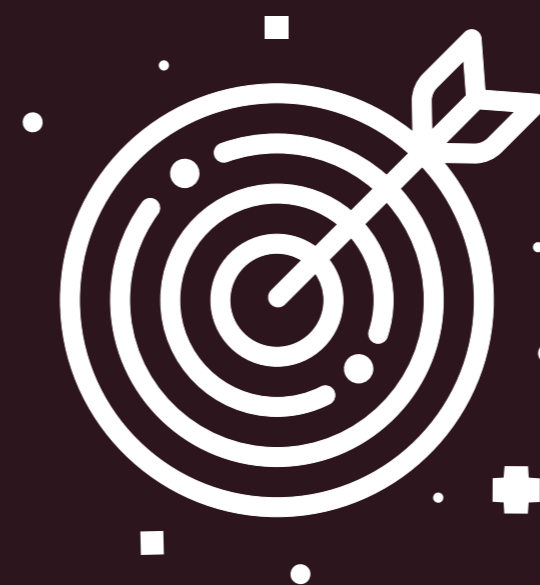
5- Challenges and Issues to Consider for the Future

The research team faced several challenges during the work, primarily among them:

• No men were interviewed for the sake of this pilot study. The limited resources available for the research would have limited the sample of men included for counter factual understanding. It was opted at this initial phase to restrict the research on women's voices alone. In the future it will be useful to incorporate men from within the same eco-system to get a more rounded understanding of the dynamic.

• The validity of limited quantitative and qualitative data points prevents overall generalization of results. The pilot should be used mainly to validate the methodology, highlight key observations that require further investigation and support the design of a more systemic system of research. The small sample size allowed certain social dynamics to pass without being sufficiently documented (the issue of physical sexual violence for instance).

• The communities and respondents to the surveys should be seen as active partners to the project. They are not the subject of research but its future end users. It is important to ensure that adequate communication tools are developed to return knowledge and results to them at key intervals of the process. However, as this phase is only a pilot, it is important to recognize the subjective biases involved and that corrective measures will only apply in future editions and subsequent iterations. The limitations of the research will be clearly reported in the final report.

• Contact to people inside Syria proved very difficult for logistical reasons such as access to internet and electricity. This renders the sample even less reliable as it targeted mainly people who had such access. To offset some of the limitations, the research team had to provide such logistics for people who could not undertake them on their own. This was systematically provided to all respondents to avoid biases in the process. In the future however, this approach will not be reliable for a larger and more random sample.

In the future special areas of interest need greater focus and may merit specific attention in upcoming research. These include:

• HLP indicators need further details to anchor them to other social and economic issues, the standard choice of inheritance as the main driver of HLP rights limited the issue considerably.

• While women political participation was weak across the board, it is important to track how some women are making progress and understand their electoral strategies. In some parts of the country a quota system was mandated. Women are winning elections in the Northeast, but we fail to understand the social challenges they face. Important lessons learnt for any future considerations of the quota in Syria could be drawn from examining what is happening on the ground.

• In some pillars and in some geographies, there were clear divergences between the quantitative and qualitative data. It is important to chart these areas to understand how to design the survey in a more nuanced manner in the future to make a better understanding of what is happening. Examples include the data on women security and legal rights in Idlib.

• Hot spots like Deir al-Zor, Raqqa and to a lesser extent Rural Damascus merit close examination as the eco-system is very unfavorable to women there. While these areas exhibited a critical situation in terms of quantity they did not differ in kind from other parts of Syria. What is happening there could serve as an early warning for other places.

6- Research Results

The survey results are presented below in a manner to simplify a very complex eco-system and visualize its dynamics in a systemic manner. First the report will highlight high level findings and a general overview of the results. This will be followed by a section describing how conditions can be clustered to enable an understanding of different typologies of conditions. The quantitative data enabled the research team to identify six possible segments of the population. These segments were calibrated through information gathered in the qualitative survey. This section could be of use for policy discussions later to define potential entry-points and support to women in each segment.

The last part will focus on each of the eight pillars by analyzing its data alone and mapping the correlation of the data from that pillar with data from the other pillars to understand possible complementarity and potential causalities. The data is insufficient to draw firm conclusions regarding direct causality. Yet it is possible to map how certain phenomena are interrelated and how the eco-system is shaped. Each pillar will be covered by an overall summary outlining the main findings of the qualitative and quantitative surveys. The results are summarized in easy-to-read maps and diagrams.

6.1 - General Overview

A great variation exists among the different geographies of Syria and to a lesser extent within each geography. The prevalence of certain phenomena is not consistent across the terrain. Quantitative data made these discrepancies very evident. However, the perceived advantages or disadvantages of some locations or social attributes were either nuanced or contradicted in the qualitative data. This led the research team to take note for the future to examine certain issues in more depth or to question certain assumptions inherent in feminist research. Standard questions about security and gender-based violence for instance needed qualifications, as many areas were deemed safe because women were excluded from the public sphere not because women were safer in the public space. Similarly, perceptions of equality in terms of HLP rights were thought to be higher in some areas only to find out that women in those areas were ignorant of many of their rights and those who felt equal were the few who had access to the rights.

Nonetheless juxtaposing quantitative and qualitative data proved of tremendous help to push for further investigations and to understand why certain phenomena are happening and where. Some locations such as Raqqa, Deir al-Zor and to a lesser degree Rural Damascus had consistent problems in terms of closing the gender gap on all or almost all issues. In those areas the data is indicative of interrelated factors shaping the eco-system and affecting the lives of women on all fronts. Those areas incidentally had the least variations among respondents, pointing to severe structural conditions affecting most women across the board. Those areas require further investigation to understand what is at work and why are they such high-risk areas for women's rights in general. In other instances, areas may have shown fluctuating results. Hama and Tartus for instance can demonstrate some high performance in some fields and very

low perceptions in other pillars. In Aleppo, on the other hand, the data pointing to average conditions across the board, but upon closer look, the governorate showed a great variation among respondents. The governorate of Aleppo had the largest standard deviations for all pillars. The divided control over the governorate could be one reason for such a deviation, but variations also exist under the same conditions of political control. All these factors indicate the presence of segmented social conditions affecting women in the same proximity with other social segments.

Furthermore, areas that featured relatively well such as Idlib, proved to be worthy of deeper examination. The qualitative survey results there showed that perceived good performance is only the result of people adhering to traditional social norms and enforcing strict religious codes. Satisfaction with the status quo-seems to be a question of coping, rather than of adoption and implementation of universal norms. Women in those areas are less likely to be harassed because they do not leave the home and are more likely to make good salaries when they work but most women are not working, but the few who do have better jobs.

One important finding of the study points to the pervasiveness of cultural norms and local culture as a dynamic driver within the eco-system surrounding women and shaping their lives. The worst conditions were found in communities where there was little difference among respondents and where women had the least options and opportunities in their eco-system to improve their status. On the other hand, the best performing areas tend to have more diversity of conditions (larger standard deviations in the data). We do not have sufficient data to explain the phenomena, but the most likely indication at this stage is that proximity to women who have better opportunities and rights in the same geography may be a factor to helping women in accessing services and mitigation deficiencies of

status and rights. This is a strong pointer to work on improving the whole local eco-system for women and not to focus on sectoral approaches.

Ten years of conflict have not yet changed or challenged deep rooted societal norms. People may go against the norm in their day-to-day practice, but they still revert to long entrenched ideals. The issue of women's rights is often used politically by the different political protagonists to justify their social control and to differentiate the social paradigms they purport to adhere to when exercising social control. Political and armed stakeholders have issued many new codes and ordinances, each in their geography, to regulate, control or improve women's lives. The research found that their self-image and policies are not reflective of how the society and women fair in practice. Social norms are still perceived as societal ideals despite or perhaps as a means of coping and self-preservation in a chaotic and fast changing environment.
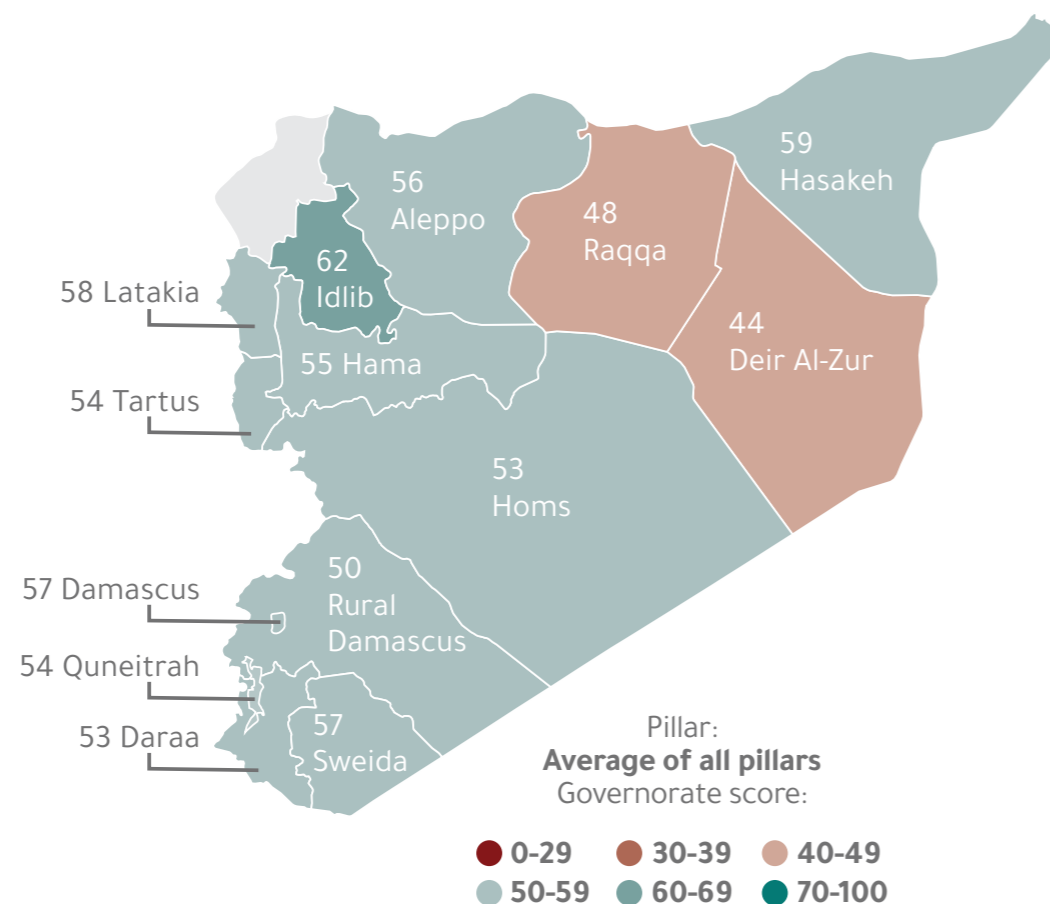
Differences between geographic areas, population groups, economic status seem to be differences in quantity rather than in kind. Across the board women's engagement in politics ranked very poorly compared to other pillars (see the section on political rights for more details). This was true of rich communities, as well as poor; urban as well as rural; in all areas of control and in all governorates. Though differences among geographies were substantive, women across the board in all geographies deemed political rights to be less relevant than other rights. Naturally, some may have better political rights than others, but they all shared the view that political rights their weakest rights. We did not have a counterfactual on male members of those communities; the equity and equality barometers chosen were selected from other relevant rights (HLP and education). Thus, it is very difficult to discern if this is a universal condition for all Syrians because of the conflict. This an area that will require further investigation. In contrast, education, health, and economic rights seem to be relatively stronger domains where women fair better than in other pillars in most geographies. However, perception of good performance may baffle external observers. These perceptions are very subjective and sometimes they can be part of coping mechanisms or ways where women are internalizing societal controls and justifying them. They may not be even aware of alternatives.

It will be important in the future to expand the study to include counterfactuals among men to see how women fair with regards to their male counterparts. However, the selection of two initial indicators on HLP and education to examine gender gaps between men and women point to the fact that most women across the board in the different geographies and areas of control as well as social classes and level of urbanization perceive that their have a fair level of equity with men. This question will be tackled in greater detail under the pillar equity and equality and will certainly merit deeper investigation in the future.
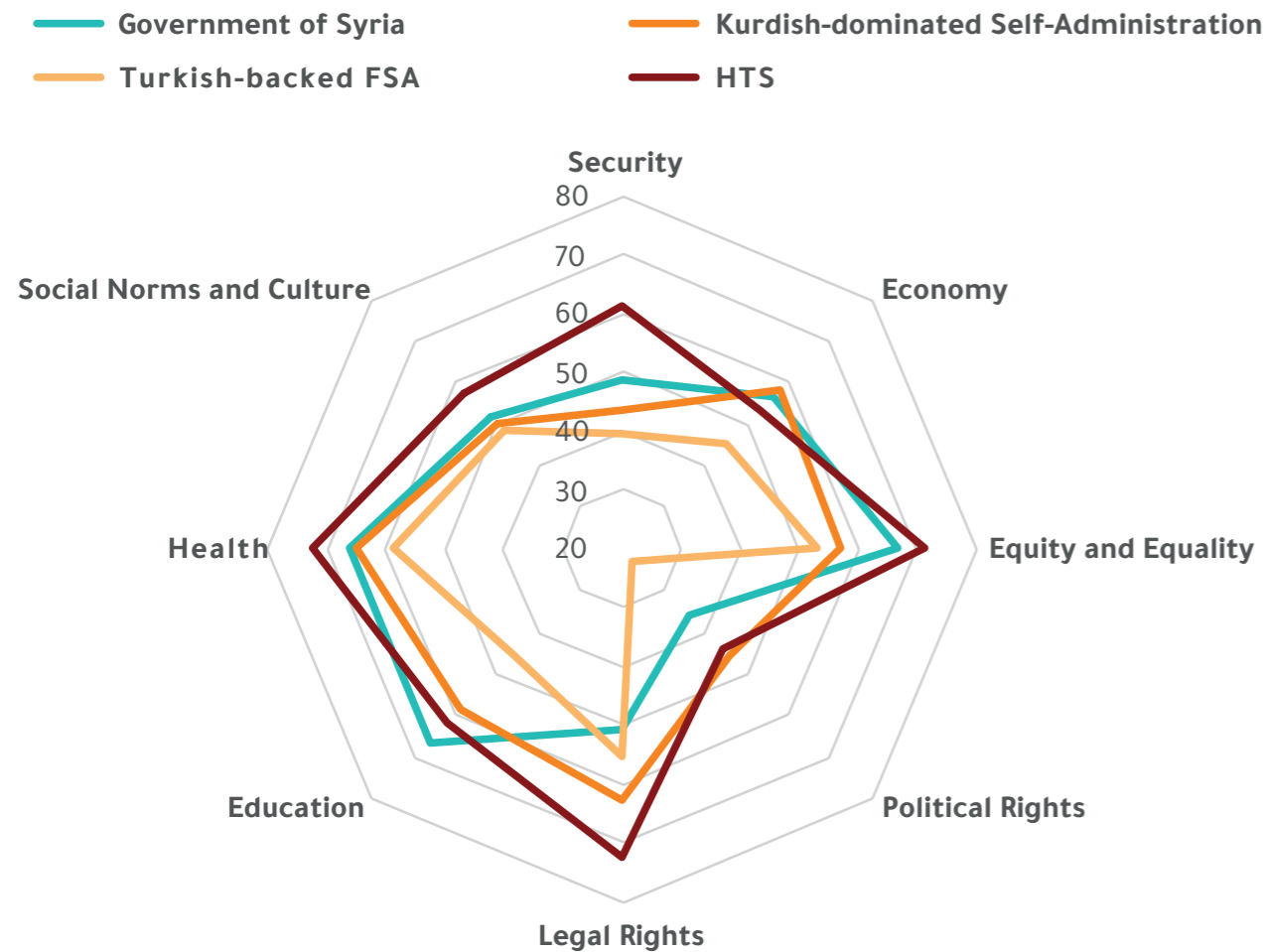
Figure 1: Map of overall scores (average of all eight pillars) by governorate

Legend:
- Government of Syria
- Turkish-backed FSA
- Kurdish-dominated Self-Administration
- HTS

Figure 2: Pillar scores by governorate (zero is the worst and 100 is the best score)

Legend:
- Idlib
- Quneitrah
- Homs
- Tartus
- Hasakeh
- Lattakia
- Daraa
- Rural Damascus
- Raqqah
- Aleppo
- Damascus
- Sweida
- Hama
- Dei Al-Zur

Figure 3: Pillar scores by area of control (zero is the worst and 100 is the best score)

The two areas where relative divergence exists are the pillars of security and legal rights. Strong inconsistencies exist among the different groups and geographies. Naturally those two pillars are related to the type of political control and governance model that exists in the area. However, while the quantitative data pointed to divergent realties in each pillar, the qualitative data was nuanced, and pointed to general skepticism within the different governance models for providing security (security from GBV or food security) and administering justice. Women respondents were clear that improvement in those pillars did not outweigh social pressures and societal norms. The lesson learnt here is that any improvement to the legal or governance framework is limited by the social and cultural norms in which this framework is imposed. The formal governance models cannot supersede social acceptance and awareness.

Most pillars were interconnected; different elements of the eco-system seemed to work in tandem with other elements. The social and cultural norms pillar showed the highest relevance and correlation with other pillars in both the quantitative and qualitative data. Physical security from GBV similarly showed considerable correlation with other pillars. This provides strong evidence for the integral way eco-systems function. Improvements happen on all pillars, or they regress across the board. This points to deep and entrenched patterns of social behavior and dynamics. New phenomena such as food security was not a major issue in Syria before the conflict. In contrast to historic and deep dynamics, this issue shows very little correlation in both the quantitative and qualitative data with other pillars. Despite ten years of war, this new dynamic has yet to create a permanent impact on the deeply rooted social practice and gender dynamics. It will be interesting if hunger will eventually force major divergence from social norms in a structural and non-reversible manner. The evidence for now is still

limited to localized practice (such as perceptions of increased prostitution in some areas). But yet, there is very little evidence that this has caused a major re-ordering of societal norms.

Figure 4: Pillar scores for urban and rural areas (zero is the worst and 100 is the best score)

Perceptions of satisfaction with the degree of attaining rights by women are relative. While external observers may point to differences in how women appreciate their HLP rights and how equal women in a particular community are to men, these differences are less important for the women experiencing discrimination. They tend to weave different coping mechanisms to deal with their realities, justifying them and absolving themselves from having to reflect on contradictions between their lived experiences and the ideal social norms they adhere to. The two areas that seem of particular relevance (where the data points to breakthroughs in terms of women's perceptions of

their realities and where progress in their quality of lives is measured and used as a benchmark for improvement) are education and health and to some extent the economy. These areas are tangible areas where women are slowly aware of injustices and inequalities practiced against them, challenging the patriarchal order, and making small progress to advance gender equality. International resources geared to help women improve their lives and enhance gender parity should perhaps examine why these pillars were more relevant to women and to use them as entry points for further progress.
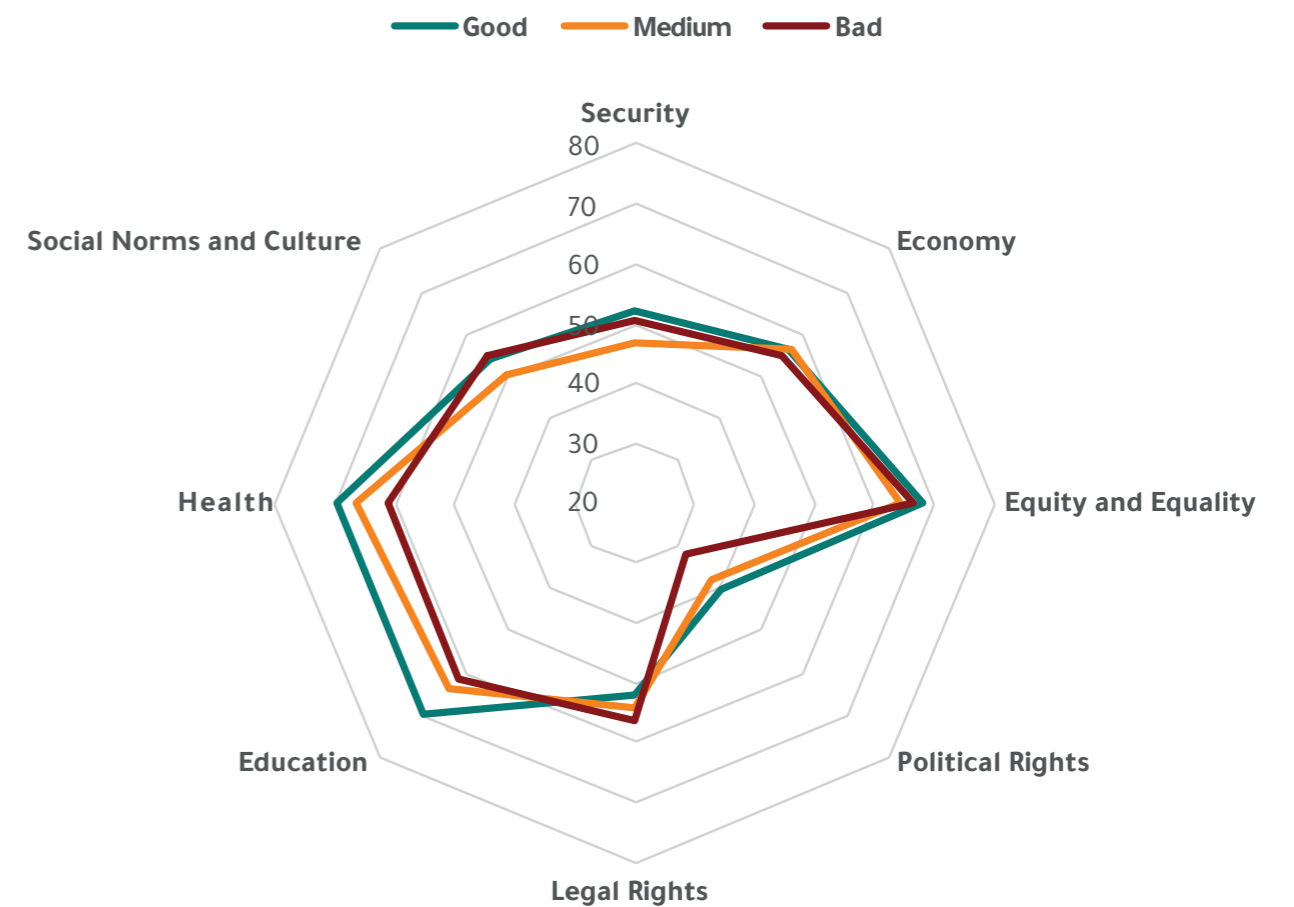

Figure 5: Pillar scores by economic condition (zero is the worst and 100 is the best score)

6.2 Cross-Pillar Segmentation

To better understand the eco-systems surrounding women, patterns were assessed by segmenting respondents into different typologies or segments. This is relevant to understand what different types of women need and where entry points to supporting them may exist. Different women have different needs. This has important policy ramification later on in terms of rationalizing resources and maximizing progress based on relevance of inputs to achieve specific outputs. Using a statistical clustering approach calibrated by findings from the qualitative analysis[4], the interviewees were clustered into six segments. Naturally these segments are not mutually exclusive, and each geography may contain several of them.

[4] Refer to the Annex 1 on methodology for an explanation on how the segmentation was developed.

Segment 1: Middle-aged large-city female dwellers who enjoy stable conditions in terms of security, economy, education, health, political rights and social norms, and average equity conditions and legal rights

Respondents in this segment had the highest overall score among the six segments, at 67. Communities where these respondents live had the highest score in the gender-based violence sub-pillar, i.e. violence is least prevalent there. They also fared well-above-average at the social and cultural norms pillar, at 69; (the next best segment scored 56 at this pillar). This segment also enjoys relatively good health and education. Women in these communities suffer less gender discrimination than any other segment in terms of education, however, their HLP equity is only slightly above-average as it was surpassed by some other segments. Political rights were highest in this segment and legal rights were above average as well. In terms of economy and labor, this was the best-performing segment, but this is not to say much as economic conditions across the board were rather grim.

This segment represents 18% of the total sample. Notably, respondents whose communities fall in this segment tended to be 50 years old or above. The

overwhelming majority among them were employed in various sectors but had a higher likelihood to be public sector employees. They have higher chances to be located in large cities in the governorates of Aleppo, Latakia, Hasakeh, Sweida, Damascus and Tartus. They mainly live in areas controlled by either the central government or Kurdish self-administration.

Segment 2: Adult Women who enjoy satisfactory security, equity, health as well as political and legal rights, but with average economy, education and subjugation to social norms

At an overall score of 66, this segment was the only relatively high-scorer along with Segment 1. Communities in this segment had an above-average score as for gender-based violence. They had the best food security conditions, but at a score of only 57. They fared well at the equity pillar, both in terms of education and HLP. Women in this segment appreciated the highest level of legal rights, at 83, compared to an average of 55 for the whole sample. Their political rights were above average too. These communities fared well in terms of health, but their scores were close to average in terms of education, economy and labor. This group's social and cultural norms were in the average range and the qualitative survey pointed out that many of the perceptions of security and equity for this group is associated with strong adherence to traditional social roles and norms. They benefit from acceptance of these norms, but this is not reflective of their absolute enjoyment of rights.

This is one of the relatively smaller segments, representing 13% of the total sample. This segment is highly represented by women in the governorate of Idlib, and to a lesser extent Aleppo, Damascus and Homs. They mostly lived in areas controlled by HTS or the central government. Women in this segment had a higher tendency to be in their 30s and 40s. Both segments 1 and 2 seem to have slightly better incomes than the rest of the sample, indicating perhaps a prevailing middle-class status, though respondents can also be well to do as well as poor.

Segment 3: Young, mostly single women who enjoy, average security, economy, education, health, political rights and subjugation to social norms, relatively good HLP equity conditions but otherwise lack legal rights

This segment is one of three average-scoring segments, along with the fourth and fifth segments. This segment, however, has the highest overall equity standards, especially at the HLP equity sub-pillar. Communities in this segment feature relatively low risks of gender-based violence conditions. Women in this segment had average conditions with regards to food security, economy and labor, political rights, education, health as well as social and cultural norms. On the other hand, the legal rights women in this segment experienced were among the lowest, at a score of only 43, compared to 55 for the whole sample.

In terms of size, this segment represents around 17% of the whole sample. Women in this segment had a higher tendency to be single and in their 20s and 30s. They are mainly based in both urban and rural central government-controlled areas and to a lesser extent in HTS-controlled areas reflecting different social and economic backgrounds but mainly coming from employment backgrounds in the private sector, what was once the main stay of the Syrian middle class that has dwindled in size and relevance during the conflict. They have a higher likelihood to live in the governorates of Tartus, Hama, Rural Damascus, Damascus, Idlib and Homs. It seems that they mostly belong to a middle class that has slipped in fortunes and income during the conflict, as they tend to overlap with the better performing women in segments 1 and 2.

Segment 4: Women who have average conditions in terms of economy, equity, legal rights, education and social norms, relatively strong political rights yet suffer from lack of security and below-average access to health

Women in this segment suffer from especially poor security, both in terms of gender-based violence and food security. This is accompanied by a below-average score at both the social and cultural norms and health pillars. Communities in this segment seem to have average conditions in terms of education and equity. They scored slightly above average at the economy and labor and legal rights pillars. Despite a relatively low political rights score at 51, this segment is among the high performers at this pillar, political rights being an area of poor performance across the board in the country.

This is the smallest segment, representing 11% of the overall sample. It is relatively highly represented among respondents in the governorates of Raqqa, Deir al-Zor and Hasakeh. Respondents tended to live in Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas, and to a lesser extent, Government areas. This segment tends to be of medium to low economic conditions for the most part. Respondents were mainly employed in the public sector or by non-profit organizations. Unlike the previous category, these women cover the whole age spectrum, their concentration in specific areas in the Kurdish dominated Self Administration point to newly acquired political rights that have not yet been matched by deeper social transformations or have not trickled down from political elite structures.

Segment 5: Medium and low-income women who have below average conditions in terms of security, economy, equity, legal rights, education and health, and especially lag behind in terms of political rights and being disfavored by social norms

This segment had an overall score that is slightly below the average of other segments. Its scores for gender-based violence, food security, economy and labor, equity, legal rights, education and health were all close to average. However, communities in this segment had the lowest political rights standards, with a score of only 21, reflecting very low political participation among women. They also scored relatively low at the social and cultural norms pillar.

Although they have a relatively higher presence in Rural Damascus and Sweida, respondents in

this segment can be found in all governorates. This is the largest segment, amounting to 25% of the whole sample. Respondents in this segment worked in all sectors, but NGO workers had a higher presence in this group. Communities where these respondents live tend to have medium or bad economic conditions. This segment represents typical working class Syrian women who have had modest improvements in their rights prior to the conflict and are seeing major regression to their status after ten years of conflict.

Segment 6: Urban women who struggle in every aspect, facing violence, bad food security, economy, equity, political and legal rights, education, health and social norms

This is the lowest-performing segment, with an overall score of 41, compared to 56 for the whole sample. For all measured pillars and sub-pillars, respondents in this segment indicated poor conditions. Women in this segment face severe food security threats, poor gender-based violence conditions (second only to Segment 4), highly unfair access to HLP rights, access limitations and unfair treatment in the job market. They live in environments where social and cultural norms discriminate against women more than in other segments. The areas where they live also tend to have below-average health and education conditions for women. Women in this segment are largely denied political and legal rights.

This segment represents 16% of the whole sample. Respondents live in areas controlled by the central government, Kurdish self-administration and Turkish-backed FSA. They mainly live in the governorates of Daraa, Homs, Raqqa, Deir al-Zor, Aleppo and Damascus. They tend to live in (or on the fringes of) large cities in these governorates and they tend to be in their 30s. This is a sample of the most disfavored part of the society even before the conflict. Ten years of violence, displacement and economic hardships has added to their disenfranchisement.

Pillar	1	2	3	4	5	6	Sample Average
Security	58	59	55	37	47	36	**49**
Gender-based Violence	67	62	62	32	50	37	**53**
Food Security	49	57	49	41	44	36	**46**
Economy & Labor	65	61	54	63	60	42	**58**
Equity and Equality	70	73	74	60	61	48	**64**
Education Equity	94	95	94	81	82	65	**85**
HLP Equity	55	58	61	45	47	37	**50**
Political Rights	59	54	35	51	21	25	**38**
Legal Rights	66	83	43	60	54	34	**55**
Education	75	66	68	61	60	48	**63**
Health	77	75	68	57	67	51	**66**
Social & Cultural Norms	69	56	53	47	45	41	**52**
Overall Score	**67**	**66**	**56**	**54**	**52**	**41**	**56**

Figure 6: Segment scores across pillars and sub-pillars

There is not one factor that determines if women will fall into one segment or another. All areas of control and most governorates will tend to have a variety of conditions and segments living in proximity to each other. The least performing geographies tend to be more homogenous, and the presence of the better performing segments may be limited there. But that is not an indication of universal segregation on a territorial level. Each community will have different segments living side by side. The more the diversity of conditions the more women in the worst performing segments seemed to have access to indirect resources. The better performing geographies tended to have larger standard deviations for most pillars. The data however, is no robust enough at this stage to provide causal links to specific factors.

6.3 Security

> "*Where is the problem? This has always been the case. A man is venting out his anger on his sister or his wife. These are very hard time, better he vents his anger in the house than outside*"

Security for women and girls is a complex issue involving many factors. For the sake of this initial pilot, the research team focused on two aspects, mainly gender-based violence and food security. It was deemed that these two factors were likely to exhibit the most evident impact of the conflict on the security of women. In the future other factors must be included to complete the picture. However, the quantitative and qualitative surveys already point to the complexity of issues. Many aspects of human security are intertwined and cannot be studied apart.

The data points to very strong correlation between physical security and gender-based violence and almost all aspects of women lives. Gender-based violence seems to correlate with many structural conditions that inhibit women's advancement in general. Moreover, GBV has been interiorized to shift the blame on the survivors. Harassment and physical security were deemed by many respondents to be the consequence of women working outside the home or breaking social norms; the direct or indirect violence exercised on women to stay home was not highly understood as "abnormal". To that extent, some of the regions where quantitative indicators pointed to perceptions of safety were found in the qualitative survey to be the most restrictive in terms of women access to the public sphere. GBV is part of a deep pattern of social conditioning of women to conform to social controls.

On the other hand, food security shows little correlations with the other pillars, except perhaps with the social norms and culture pillar, in terms of social habits related to food consumption. In the qualitative survey, most respondents referred to food security only in the context of discussing the severity

the economic situation. This is perhaps indicative that food security is a new concern that has not yet developed greater structural societal impacts, at least for the bulk of Syrians. It would be interesting to see in subsequent research if the persistence of the issue will develop broader social consequences. For the time being food security is still reflected in basic coping mechanisms, and there is little evidence to suggest that it has been incorporated into long-term social transformations affecting women's lives beyond basic nutrition.

Gender Based Violence

Gender-based violence exhibited different trends of pervasiveness across Syrian women's private and public lives. The level of harassment and physical violence against women and girls outside the home was common but not as prevalent as abuse inside the home. Verbal violence and harassment were more common than physical violence. There appeared to be some great variations among respondents in terms of their perception of the commonality of harassment in their local areas. On the other hand, child marriage recorded a medium level of commonality in almost all areas. However, despite, GBV being documented across Syrian geographies, different forms of violence have different patterns.

The prevalence of GBV was correlated with a mixture of social and economic factors as well as the urban-rural dynamics of the communities in which it occurs. The increase in all forms of violence as well as child marriage were almost unanimously linked by respondents to the stressful and unstable economic and security situation. Yet, different forms of violence were also more likely to be reported among communities which had normalized them as they passed them down the generations; the data show strong correlation between GBV and social norms. Harassment outside the home was found to be less prevalent in lower-income rural communities and more widespread in large cities where communities are in flux. On the other hand, the prevalence of child marriage was found to be less common in areas with good economic conditions and more common

among displaced communities which usually experienced heavier financial burdens and unstable security conditions; child marriage was clearly linked to the economic conditions of the household. It was interconnected with girls' education prospects; a girl was less likely to get married when the family valued her education. Thus, as expected GBV should not be looked at as an independent phenomenon; it is closely linked to other socio-economic conditions that must be addressed to reduce levels of GBV.

GBV exhibited different patterns across the Syrian geographies. The Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas scored the worst for physical and verbal violence, harassment and child marriage. However, results, varied in this area. While some parts of the geography are showing signs of improvement, other parts such as Raqqa and Deir al-Zor, areas whose societal norms were more conservative (and were occupied by the Islamic State), still exhibit very problematic levels of violence. Government areas are also heterogenous with regards to physical violence. Rural Damascus and Tartus recorded the best conditions, while the worst conditions were documented in Daraa. The level of child marriage was low in communities living under the Government of Syria control, especially in communities that still have relatively tolerable economic conditions (the rate drops only slightly in poorer areas). In HTS-controlled areas, a reduced incidence of all forms of GBV was recorded. However, various informants indicated that this was mainly because women were not encouraged to venture outside their homes under the restrictive rules imposed by HTS. Additionally, HTS implemented very strict Islamic codes against abusers. Similarly, in the Turkish backed Rebel Groups areas, GBV was less prevalent outside the home mainly due to the nature of the rule of religious codes implemented by the armed factions in control of the area which served as deterrence to potential perpetrators. However, it was common inside the home. While all Syrian communities experienced consistent levels of GBV, different patterns of normalization of violence are occurring in the different areas of control.

Food Security

Indicators of women's overall food security are showing and alarming downturn across Syria and women were especially impacted by their restricted ability to afford food items. The availability of food products in local markets was recorded as somewhat sufficient, yet their quality and diversity were limited. However, the affordability of food products is severely compromised; most families indicated that they could no longer afford meeting basic nutritional needs. Low food affordability was observed in all geographies and was directly linked to strenuous economic conditions, high inflation, and the loss of work opportunities among most households. Women headed households, and elderly people were particularly more vulnerable to food prices. Ultimately, families are coping by resorting to underpaid informal work and relying on remittances from abroad to survive.

Women's food security was interconnected with their community's urban-rural dynamics, their displacement status, and the household's breadwinner's work sector. Families living in rural areas had some accessibility to food mainly as a result proximity to rural production, growing their own food and in some cases their ability to tap on smuggling routes. Women IDPs and refugees were completely dependent on food baskets and aid; malnutrition was reported to be particularly common among IDPs. Meanwhile, employees of the public sector faired at the bottom of food affordability followed by employees of small private enterprises, workshops and factories. Those employed by INGOs had the best outlook given some flux of external donor funds. Resilience and ability to access food sources were noted to be diminishing across the board.

Food security showed little correlation with the other pillars. Its indicators correlate with each other but not with indicators in from other pillars like education, health, political rights, etc. This indicates a new phenomenon that has not yet impacted the eco-system in ways that would impact women lives

over the long run. Most respondents look at the issue within the confines of basic coping mechanisms, but few relate the issue to structural conditions shaping women lives in general.

There were some notable differences between the different regions. Women living in Government-held areas faced challenges in accessing crowded local sale points; the use of the Government issued Smart Card system have only marginal benefits in enhancing food security. In HTS controlled Idlib, women were more likely to afford food items. On the other hand, in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas, specifically in areas previously occupied by ISIS, food value chains have yet to fully recover. Commercial networks remain unstable, and markets experience regular shortages as basic infrastructure was severely devastated during the military operations to oust the Islamic State. The main breadwinner's work sector, which directly impacts the household's food affordability, is also linked to geography; public sector jobs are more common among those living in Government areas, while those living in the northeast and northwest seem to have increased access to private as well as NGO jobs. Families in those areas seem to have more access to international humanitarian resources.

The household's eating culture revealed that while the disparity in quantity of food consumed between men and women was not particularly significant, women still tended to ensure the family's overall nourishment at the expense of their own food intake. When the family lacked sufficient food, the children were usually prioritized and then they were followed by the men. Reports of malnourishment appeared to be slightly more common among women than men. Some respondents reported that women were also more inclined to skip meals so that other members in the family could eat. Meanwhile, it has become common to see the initial signs of malnutrition among the population across all geographies. Losing weight and pale faces were noted everywhere. However, these observations should be further examined as the issue has vital

humanitarian implications and cannot be assessed based on a small number of interviews. Overall, while women's food security appears to be mainly shaped by economic conditions, there continues to be a myriad of factors that render women's access food particularly vulnerable.

6.3.1 Baseline Review Prior to 2011

Gender Based Violence

The issue of violence against women is an age-old problem that occupied increasing public discussion space before the conflict. The General Union of Syrian Women (GUSW) and the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population (SCFAP) both had "Countering Domestic violence" as one of their central mandates; they published important research that serves as baseline on the issue. In 2006, the GUSW published a study that proclaimed that one in every four women were subjected to physical violence by a member of the family.[5] The SCFAP published in 2010 a more comprehensive qualitative and quantitative study. It concluded that one out of every three women were directly subjected to physical violence.[6] The study co-produced by the UNFPA used a random sample of over 5000 respondents and focused on domestic gender-based violence. It surveyed various forms of physical, verbal, as well as moral, and symbolic violence - which was considered to be the most dangerous form of violence because it is practiced under "socially acceptable frameworks". The study concluded that the prevailing forms of violence were slapping, beating, and punching, followed by biting, pulling hair and ear, and then hitting with a belt and stick. The comparison between the two studies reveals a serious increase in violence against women within a short period of time, pointing out that efforts made by some civil organizations had not paid off. This is time when Syria was witnessing its largest ever youth bulge and had to encounter the effect of the global economic crisis of 2008. The increase of domestic violence during this period should be looked at closely in the future as it could be possibly considered a key driver of conflict.

[5] The General Union of Syrian Women, 2006. *Domestic Violence Against Women*. Damascus: The General Union of Syrian Women.

[6] The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population (SCFAP), 2010. *Domestic Violence against Women in Syria*. Damascus: The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population.

Other indicators are worthy of note. In 2010 the Ministry of Interior issued statistics that showed an increase in the number of "Honor killing" with 249 registered cases that year.[7] Syria was the third worst Arab country in terms of honor killings. Its penal code gave male relatives very extenuated sentences if they killed a female relative suspected of adultery. Over 80% of honor killings were taking place in rural areas. The report estimated that another 200 cases were suspected but the perpetrators went into hiding and there was no conclusive sentence regarding their status. On the positive side, the percentage of girls married under the age of 18 decreased from 18% in 1993 to 3.8% in 2010, this decrease was due to the increase in enrollment in education, especially secondary education for girls.[8]

It is noted that the concept of violence against women in general and domestic violence, in particular, is absent from the provisions of the constitution and is poorly addressed by the legal corpus of Syria. The Syrian state adopted the CEDAW convention but placed certain reservations on key articles emptying the convention of key elements including effective measures to combat violence against women. The perception that the universal protection of women's key human rights is in contradiction with some of the mandates of Muslim law has promoted Syria and many other countries in the region to place strong reservations against the convention. Some civil society groups such as the Syrian Women League, drafted a model "Family Law" which proposed legislative measures to tackle discrimination against women including articles related to the CEDAW reservations. The draft was presented to the parliament for discussion in 2007 with no further action taken due to the lack of political will.[9]

Food security

Agriculture is a major contributor to the Syrian economy, however, state policies aimed at subsidizing agriculture were constrained in the late 1980's. The state could no longer afford most of the subsidies during the economic crisis of the 1980's.

Food production dwindled to dangerous levels at times impacted by poor productivity, dependency on seasonal rains, mismanagement of water resources, and redundant labor. Rural areas became increasingly more disenfranchised compared to urban centers. And despite concerted efforts to ensure better supply chains and heavy subsidies for the growing of basic crops, the fortunes of the population residing in the countryside regressed, especially in times of drought, the last major one hit for several consecutive years after 2007 coinciding with the global economic crisis. Many people left their fields and migrated to the outskirts of major cities. The increased demand of the Syrian population for basic food stipends was further exacerbated by rapid population growth.[10] The government compensated by intensifying subsidies for production and purchased basic crops at above market prices to try to slow down the outmigration of labor from the sector. Food poverty was slowly reduced from (2.2%) in 1997 to (1.1%) in 2010. However, food self-sufficiency in Syria was happening at the expense of eliminating labor redundancy in the sector.

Poverty was persistent in many rural areas especially in the Northern and Northeastern regions (Idlib, Aleppo, Al Raqqa, Deir al-Zor, and Hassakeh governorates) where pockets of poverty were most evident. Using the lower poverty line (less than $1/day), poverty incidence is highest in the Northeastern rural region (17.9%), in the Northeastern region as a whole the figure stood at (11.2%). The incidence of poverty is less in the Southern urban region (Damascus, Rural Damascus, Daraa, Sweida, and Quaintera governorates) at 5.8%.[11] Starting with the 10th five-year investment plan, State had to face a dual dilemma of liberalizing the economy to grow the GDP but ensure a social safety net for the urban and rural poor. However, the plans failed on the second objective. Poverty increased, as was the exacerbation of disparities between regions, indicating that the programs that were planned to reduce poverty in the most deprived regions failed in achieving their objectives.[12]

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[7] https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/content/print/206809.html
Last visited April 23rd, 2020.

[8] http://cbssyr.sy/
Last visited April 23rd, 2020.

[9] https://syrianechoes.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Domestic-Violence-Against-Women-DVAW-during-COVID-19-Quarantine-Syria-EN.pdf
Last visited April 23rd, 2020.

[10] The Syrian Center for Policy Research, 2019. Food Security and Conflict in Syria. Beirut: The Syrian Center for Policy Research.

[11] FAO and the National Agricultural Policy Center, 2010. National Programme for Food Security in the Syrian Arab Republic. Damascus: FAO.

[12] UNICEF, 2014. Multidimensional Poverty in Syria: A Comparative Research. Damascus: UNICEF Syria Country Office.

Rural women were particularly affected by structural adjustments. Men workers were leaving to the cities in mass, and women were left to take care of land and family. After 1995, and the Syrian government's participation in the Beijing Conference on Women, the Government intended to pursue more serious policies and mechanisms towards the advancement of women in general and rural women in particular. It created new public institutions and increased its collaboration with civil society groups; many initiatives were adopted to support rural women. However, these mechanisms remained deficient and insufficient; and the required change did not occur in a scalable and sustainable manner; women in Syria, especially rural women suffered the burden of economic liberalization.[13]

[13] **The Syrian Center for Policy Research, 2019.**

6.3.2 Quantitative Survey Findings

Two sub-pillars have been examined under the security pillar: gender-based violence and food security. Their combined impact is highlighted in Figure 7. However, given that the issues proved quite independent a detailed account of each is given below.

Figure 7: Map of security pillar scores by governorate

Pillar: **Security**
Governorate score:

● 0-29 ● 30-39 ● 40-49
● 50-59 ● 60-69 ● 70-100
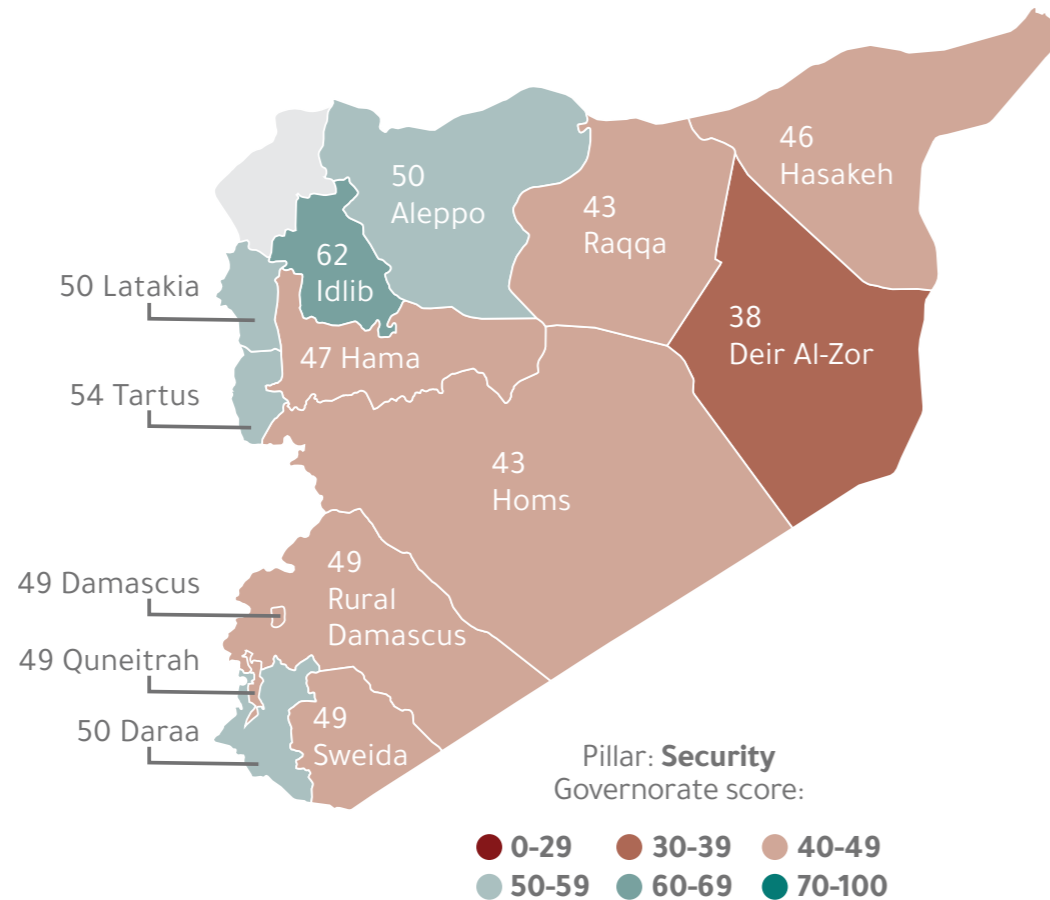
Gender Based Violence

For the gender-based violence sub-pillar five indicators were measured. Gender based violence was analyzed on the basis of violence outside the home, violence inside the home, verbal abuse inside and outside the household, as well as marriage of underaged children, which was classified as a form of violence given that it is considered as such under law. Though many of the respondents to the qualitative survey, as shall be seen below, preferred to treat it more as a socio-economic phenomenon. The research team felt that its continued presence in the GBV category is still highly justified.

Figure 8: Map of gender-based violence sub-pillar scores by governorate

Sub-Pillar:
Gender-based violence
Governorate score:

● 0-29 ● 30-39 ● 40-49
● 50-59 ● 60-69 ● 70-100
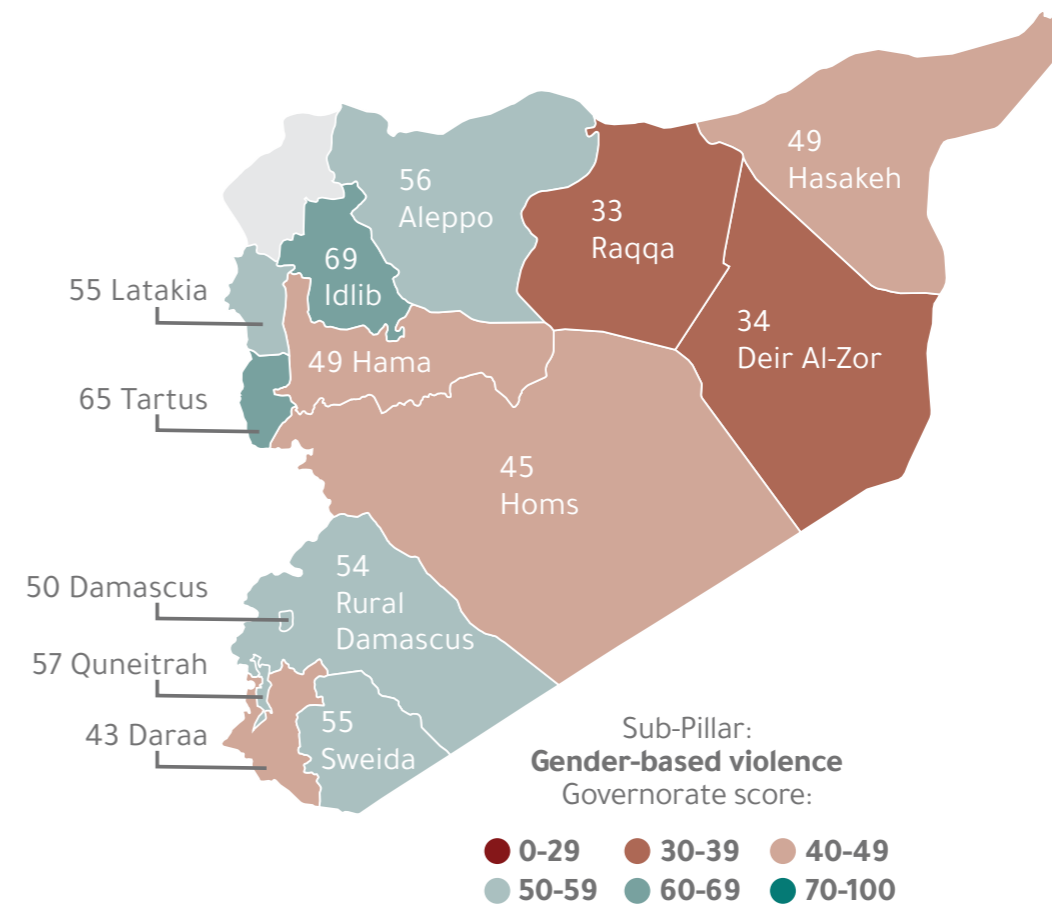
Regarding the level of physical violence against women and girls outside home, respondents' answers indicated an average rating of 3.6 on a gradual scale from 1 to 5[14], which is between low and medium. Rural Damascus and Tartus recorded the best conditions in this regard, while the worst was in Daraa. On the other hand, physical violence against women inside home seems to be slightly more common, represented by an average level of 3.3. This phenomenon seems to be most common in the governorates of Raqqa and Deir al-Zor.

Verbal abuse (yelling, name calling, etc.) against women and girls inside home is relatively more common, reflected by an average rate of 2.5. The governorates of Raqqa, Deir Al-Zor and Hama have higher rates than other governorates. Harassment outside the home, whether verbal or physical, is less common, at a rate of 3.1. Harassment seems to be most common in Damascus, the capital at the level of 2.4, and least common in Idlib at 4.4, where the qualitative survey respondents indicate very strict application of Islamic codes against abusers of this kind of abuse in the area controlled by HTS. One issue is noticed in most places; there are great variations among respondents in terms of their perception of the commonality of harassment in their local areas. This indicates that the perception is rather personal and not widely shared as a social phenomenon. It is noteworthy as well, that harassment is also less prevalent in lower-income areas and in rural communities.

Child marriage (girls under 18 years old) is of a medium level of commonality, at an average rating of 3.1[15]. It seems to be most common in Deir al-Zor and Raqqa and least common in Tartus. It is also slightly more common in displaced communities, at the rate of 2.8. In areas with good economic conditions, child marriage seems to be slightly less common, at the level of 3.4.

[14] From 5 to 1: very low - low - medium - high - very high.

[15] From 5 to 1: never happens - rarely happens - sometimes happens - often happens - always happens.

Figure 9: Levels of physical violence, verbal abuse and harassment against women
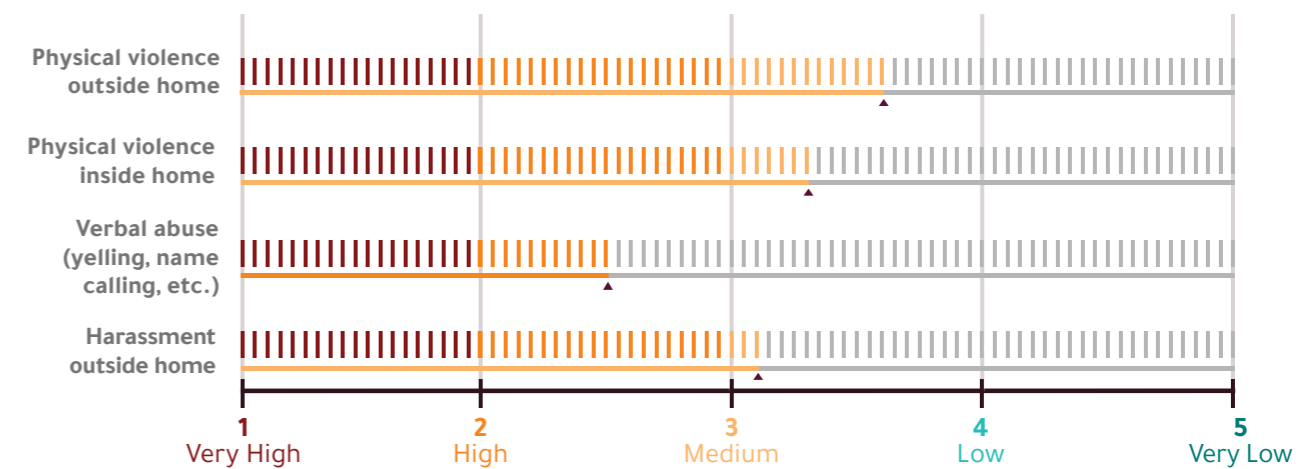
Gender based violence indicators show markedly high correlations. This indicates a high probability that when one type of violence is taking place other types of violence are also happening. This an important issue to monitor in the future to understand how violence sets eco-systems that reinforce and justify violence within communities.

Food Security

The food security indicators included availability of foodstuffs in the market, their affordability, and the priority of food consumption in the household. The indicators for food security were not of consistent levels with one another and a great variety existed between regions, pointing to patterns that should be further examined as the issue has vital humanitarian implications. But also, this lack of correlation with other factors points to a new phenomenon that has not yet had strong impacts on social behavior and not yet setting structural patterns impacting women's lives in general.

Figure 10: Map of food security sub-pillar scores by governorate

44 Latakia

42 Tartus

47 Damascus

42 Quneitrah

58 Daraa

Sub-Pillar: **Food Security**
Governorate score:

● 0-29   ● 30-39   ● 40-49
● 50-59   ● 60-69   ● 70-100
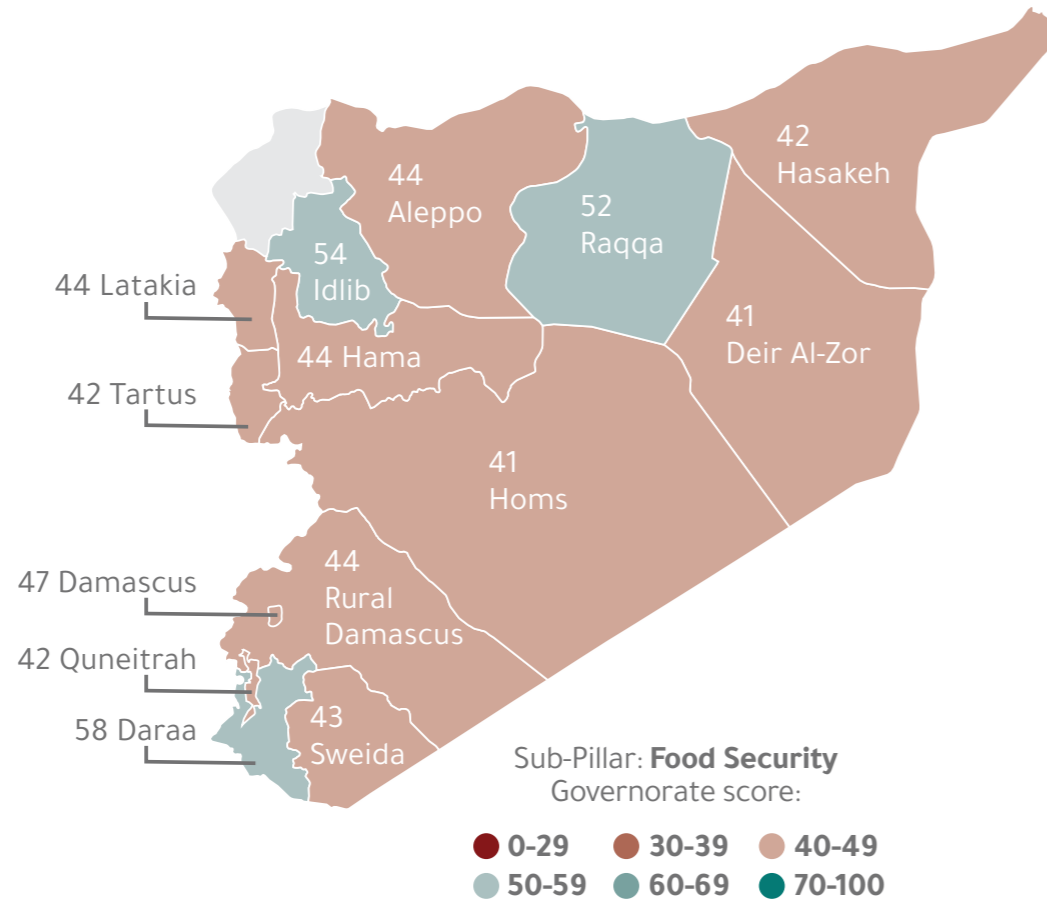
In terms of the availability of food products in local markets, the average rating was 3.8, indicating that available quantities are somewhat sufficient[16]. In some governorates, markets seem almost always to have enough available food; this is the case especially in Rural Damascus and Daraa. In Quneitrah, available quantities of food seem to be less sufficient than other governorates. According to respondents, the quality and diversity of available food products was medium overall, at 3.0[17]. The highest rates were recorded in Rural Damascus and Raqqa, while the lowest were in Deir al-Zor, Latakia and Daraa. Respondents whose marital status is "divorced" had a perception of lower food quality in their areas, at 2.6, indicating a very close link in the perception of the availability of food and its affordability.

[16] From 5 to 1: totally sufficient - somewhat sufficient - neither sufficient nor insufficient - somewhat insufficient - totally insufficient.

[17] From 5 to 1: very high - high - medium - low - very low.

Despite the relative sufficiency of food in markets, families' ability to afford food is limited. The financial ability to buy food was rated at 2.6[18], which means that more often than not, families cannot afford buying the foodstuffs they need. Some parameters seem to increase the likelihood of food affordability, such as living in a rural area, being a resident in a high-income urban neighborhood, or living in the governorate of Idlib, where proximity to rural production is a strong factor. In all, it seems that perception of affordability is linked to local produce, meaning that imported and processed foods are no longer affordable for most communities.

[18] From 5 to 1: always - mostly - sometimes (half the times) - rarely - never.
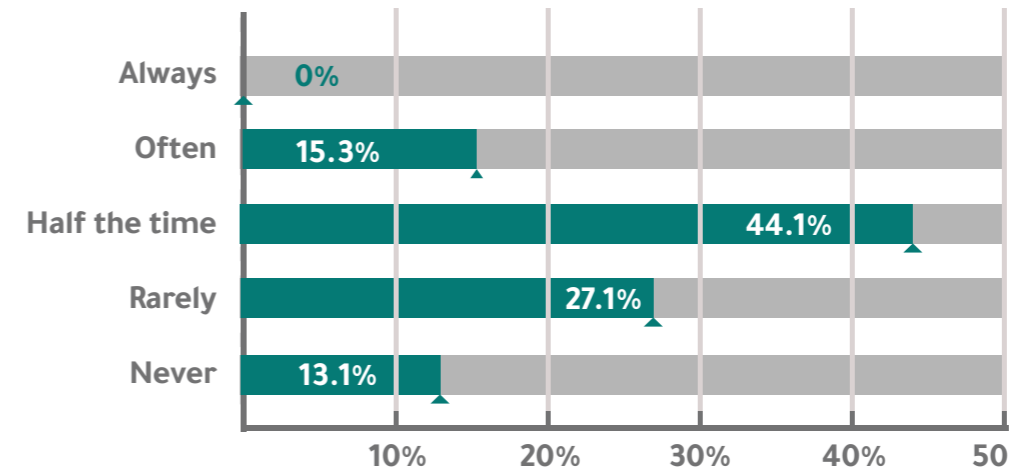
Figure 11: Families' ability to afford buying food, broken down by answer

Respondents agreed that when the family lacked sufficient food, children's nutrition is prioritized. The overall rate was 4.4[19], and exceeded 4.0 in the majority of governorates. However, when the family lacked sufficient food, respondents' answers suggest that men are slightly more likely to have a higher share of the available food. Overall, the rate was -0.4 (on a scale from +2 to -2)[20]. In Rural Damascus and Hasakeh, women seem to be at a worse condition in such circumstances, while in Daraa women seem to get a higher share than men when food is scarce. This is further supported by respondents' belief that malnourishment is slightly more common among women than men, at a rate of -0.5[21]. The relatively higher malnourishment among women is most acute in the governorates

[19] From 5 to 1: strongly agree - agree - neither agree nor disagree - disagree - strongly disagree.

[20] From +2 to -2: women eat significantly more - women eat slightly more - men and women eat equally - men eat slightly more - men eat significantly more.

[21] From +2 to -2: significantly more common among men - slightly more common among men - equally common among men and women - slightly more common among women - significantly more common among women.

Figure 12: Commonness of malnourishment among women in comparison to men

-0.4

| -2 Significantly more common among women | -1 Slightly more common among women | 0 Equally common | +1 Slightly more common among men | +2 Significantly more common among men |
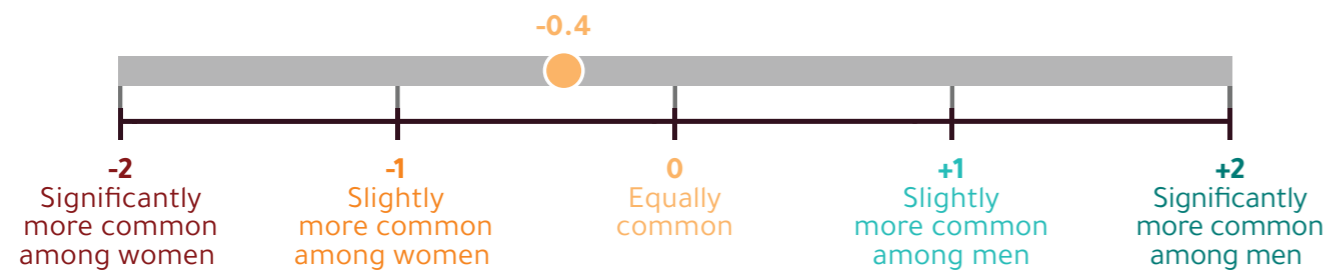
of Tartus, Raqqa, Idlib, Rural Damascus and Quneitrah. This poses a contradiction as some of those governorates indicated that food prices were relatively affordable as is the case of Idlib. One possible explanation could be the quality of foods and their diversity to ensure balanced diets.

Families only sometimes have a chance to sit together for a meal, at a frequency rate of 3.2[22]. Chances of gathering are slightly higher for families living in rural communities, at a rate of 3.5, than those residing in cities.

[22] From 5 to 1: always - mostly - sometimes - rarely - never.

6.3.3 Qualitative Survey Findings

Gender Based Violence

Similar to the quantitative survey, the qualitative survey focused on the same problems from a more nuanced and reflexive point of view. Questions were asked more specifically about sexual violence that were not covered by the quantitative survey.

Physical Violence

The occurrence of physical violence against women (PVAW) continues to affect women across Syrian society in all geographies. It is taking place inside and outside the household and usually by members of women's own families and close male relatives. However, the numbers of officially reported cases of PVAW may be underreported across Syria due to the social stigma and shame associated with acknowledging and reporting the violence infringed by one's own family and relatives. Some women who fall victims to such abuse are also unaware of their legal rights; this plays a part in further perpetuating the phenomenon. The social and cultural normalization of this form of violence has also contributed to the

cycle of violence as many women who are abused do not consider it an offence. Incidents of PVAW were not restricted to the household as many have been witnessed and described to have taken place in the public sphere; public transportation and crowded public areas were the main places where they occurred. This dichotomy is most prevalent in places like Idlib, where the quantitative survey pointed to a relatively reduced incidence of public violence and the qualitative survey explained that violence against women was low in the public sphere because women were not encouraged to venture outside their homes under the restrictive rules imposed by the HTS.

Meanwhile, the occurrence of physical violence varied within Kurdish dominated Self-Administration territories according to local demographics and prevalent social norms. Those living in Deir al-Zor and Raqqa, areas predominantly populated by Arab tribes whose societal norms are shaped by the conservative Arab tribal code, described physical violence inside the household as prevalent in their areas. These were also areas that were previously occupied by the Islamic State. According to some participants, these areas witnessed a spike in domestic physical violence inside the households but were considerably curbed outside the home under the strict rules of the Islamic State. Participants also referred to the difficulty for women to report or complain about their abuse and preferred to remain discrete about such personal affairs deemed to be taboo in their tribal culture. Women continued to report low incidents of public physical violence after the departure of the Islamic State; but they also explained that the publicization of violence was deemed inappropriate and unacceptable in their areas. In contrast, the majority of women living in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration held Hasakeh governorate (an area where the Self-Administration weight and armed presence has stronger and wider influence, and the population comes from a diverse background of ethnic minorities and urbanites) reported low levels of

physical violence which they attributed to social disapproval and protection laws set by the Self Administration. The fear of repercussion from arraignment and prosecution in the local courts appears to have impacted men's behavior towards women in the household and outside the house, according to participants' responses.

In Turkish backed Rebel Groups controlled areas, women did not have a uniform outlook on the occurrence of physical violence. Some described the phenomenon as a 'social heritage'. Others referred to economic conditions, life pressures on men and the age difference between couples as contributors to physical violence inside the household.

Women in government-held areas also did not have a uniform outlook on the occurrence of physical violence. Their responses varied from societal justification of violence as a normal social behavior to justification of violence under the guise of increased economic pressures and the need for men to vent out their anger.

Some of the main root causes of PVAW were attributed to the worsening socio-economic situation across the country; the psychological stress associated with the crisis and the economy; the lockdown measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic; the militarization of communities and prevailing religious extremist beliefs and traditions; the patriarchal social system and mentality; the demographic change across communities shaped by displacement.

Many women suggested that the causes for the increase in physical violence cases was due to the stressful economic and security situation that is adding stress to men in the household. The language used by the interviewees may hint towards justifications of these acts of violence by referring to men's economic hardships and psychological stress instead of holding them accountable for their actions. In some conservative communities the issue is looked at as a common right for the men, which women should not question; this is not specific to

one area but was found among respondents from most areas.

Verbal Violence and Harassment

Two other forms of gender-based violence, verbal violence and verbal sexual harassment, were usually reported in tandem and without much differentiation by the respondents. Verbal violence was commonly reported inside and outside the household. This form of violence appears to be normalized and as common phenomenon widely spread, especially within the household. Some of the root causes behind verbal violence becoming increasingly prevalent were attributed to the patriarchal social system, the psychological stress caused by the conflict, and the worsening socio-economic situation.

On the other hand, some women stated that harassment was caused by sexual and emotional repression brought about by men's delayed marital status due to their poor socio-economic situation. Interviewees reported verbal harassment more frequently than physical violence. Cases of harassment seem to be connected to local social norms; if a woman does not abide by a socially acceptable behavior or dress code, she is more likely to get harassed. Again, here the quantitative survey pointed to a reduced incidence of such occurrences in Idlib, but the semi-structured interviews qualified the finding by pointing that verbal harassment was highly punishable under the HTS rule, but that women were not venturing outside the home as often as they did before.

In the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas, the majority of women reported the prevalence of verbal violence and harassment and some mentioned it was more widespread than physical violence. While the Self Administration has issued strict codes against different types of GBV, the awareness and impact of such codes on verbal harassment are considerably less observed than the case of physical violence. Respondents pointed to changing behaviors regarding violence but not harassment.

In Turkish backed Rebel Groups areas, answers varied. Some women reported that verbal violence and harassment were common while others reported that they were low in their communities due to the religious nature of the society and implemented of strict codes inspired by the local authorities affiliated with the armed groups which served as deterrence to potential perpetrators.

In areas that witnessed intense fighting and/or where men were subject to political and security checks, women started to venture outside their homes, to fulfil social roles that the men could no longer fulfil. They reported being subjected to verbal harassment. However, with more areas becoming calmer and men returning to public life and the workforce, women were no longer obliged anymore to earn for the family and now they spend more time inside the house instead. Thus, cases of harassment decreased likely due to women's reduced interaction with the public rather than reduced prevalence of the practice per se.

The majority of women who mentioned that verbal violence and harassment were common and socially acceptable phenomenon lived in large cities which may indicate that these forms of violence could be more common in highly populated areas with heterogeneous populations rather than rural areas. This could be the result of the conservative nature of rural communities and the close connections and familiarity between families there which may play a role in shunning such behavior.

Sexual Violence

Threats of sexual violence such as rape and physical sexual harassment were highlighted as challenges to women who considered participating in their community's political scene. There is much shame associated with reporting and admitting to experiencing sexual violence within the community which hinders women from reaching out for support in such incidents. Women who experienced sexual abuse by their own husbands have been told to 'be patient' as little to no support is available for them

from their own communities or governmental institutes. Moreover, the lack of work prospects, and the declining economy have been associated with reasons behind women, especially internally displaced women, resorting to prostitution as a means to an economic end. Some cases were reported where women were being forced by their husbands and male relatives to enter such professions and risk battery in case they refused.

There were no reports of sexual violence in the Kurdish dominated Self-Adminsitration, HTS, and Turkish backed Rebel Groups controlled areas. However, this does not negate the existence of sexual violence in these areas. A more thorough study with a larger sample size is required for such an assessment.

Child Marriage and Labor

There were fluctuating responses regarding cases of child marriage among Syrian communities. Some women reported that the rates of child marriage were low in their communities and explained that as the level of women's education improved, their ability to secure financial independence increased and they were less likely to get married at an early age. The majority of the participants who answered that the level of child marriage was low in their communities were residents of Government-held areas who came from a well to do or an average socio-economic status. Some participants attributed the decline in child marriage to the increased social awareness against the phenomenon. In those cases, there was a clear disdain of the phenomenon.

Nevertheless, while some participants stated that the war and the worsening economic situation led to a shift in women and men's priorities away from marriage and towards education and work, others have stated the opposite; such that families were more likely to resort to marrying off their daughters due to financial burdens. The main root causes behind child marriage were related to the social norms, local traditions, and the family's

financial situation. Another factor that was likely related to the family's socio-economic status was their residency status as some women stated that child marriage was higher among IDP communities. In these cases, the issue was not entirely approved but more accepted out of necessity. However, in almost half of the answers there was a nuanced definition of childhood. Girls between the ages of 16-18 were not considered minor. And respondents indicated that it is normal for girls to be engaged and even married at that age. In some cases, the respondents indicated that the girls themselves showed preference to be married at this age.

The family's beliefs regarding the merits of educating their girls play an important role in deciding to force their daughters into early marriage. Some families who deemed education as useless for girls were more likely to push for early marriage. Moreover, there was reference to the population's sex ratio brought about by the war which has caused worry among certain families that their daughters would become spinsters given the decreasing number of men across the country. Some participants indicated that in certain communities if a girl is not studious and her family could not afford her an education, she is more likely to be married off at an early stage. Other factors that contributed to such cases were the lacking accreditation of a school degree earned in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration held territories. The absence or death of the father which leaving a financially vulnerable family behind also played a factor in the decision to force girls into marriage.

Some interviewees indicated that cases of child marriage were less likely to take place in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas due to the strict implementation of the laws against child marriage compared to Government of Syria-held areas. However, this did not necessarily prove to be the case among all the interviewees living in Self Administration areas as a number of them mentioned that the phenomenon remained prevalent despite

of the new codes. One displaced woman living in Qamishli city explained that the marriage would take place during a religious ceremony and only once the girl turned 18 years old then her marriage would be officially registered. Another displaced woman living in Ras al-Ain town stated that after ISIS attacked her area, many families rushed to marry off their daughters for the sake of providing protection.

In the Turkish backed Rebel Groups areas, child marriage was associated with the family's low economic status and in one case to the community's conservative social traditions which found little value in her education's prospects. It was more likely for families to decide to drop out their daughters from school in case she had a marriage proposal.

The unstable security situation of certain areas and the loss or absence of male providers in the family were also noted as driving factors behind child marriages. In HTS held areas, a woman in Idlib city mentioned that her friend acted against her own wishes and forced her daughter to drop out of school and married her off as she could no longer financially support her nor protect her as the security situation kept worsening.

Cases of child labor were mainly related to the family's low socio-economic status as well as the country's deteriorating economy such that girls at the age of 15 years were often taken out of school and sent to work to support their families. Boys were more likely to drop out of school to work at an early age for the same reasons. Some participants indicated that areas where schools were unavailable, cases of child labor were more likely to occur. Child labor and school dropout rates was also linked with the rising trend of begging in certain areas and with the seasonal farming jobs in rural areas. Child labor was more likely described and witnessed among boys than among girls.

Child labor was noted particularly by women who lived in Raqqa and Deir al-Zor; economic reasons were given for such a phenomenon. In Hasakeh by contrast, the main reason was lack of security and

fear to send girls to school under such condition. Lack of accreditation of schools was often given as a justification for the futility of sending children to schools and preferring to send them to work as apprentices in the trades instead. IN the north and north west the lack of schools or quality education was a main driver to pull children out of school and into the workforce. Curricula in that area are better recognized but parents have little faith in the quality of the education. Economic conditions were the main reasons for forcing children out of schools and into work in Government and HTS areas. In all cases boys were more likely to be sent to work and girls were more likely to be forced into early marriage. The main exception seems to be in Sweida where parents have been noted to send their daughters to work and earn extra income for their families.

Food Security

The qualitative survey overlaps with that of the quantitative one on many of the questions asked. However, there was more room for respondents to qualify answers and to provide issues on quality of food and not just on its availability. Prioritizing food consumption in the household was explored as part of the food culture of the families. In all there was more room for the respondents to reflect on their social customs and provide nuanced answers to questions of nutrition and survival.

Availability of Food

Respondents were almost unanimous in pointing out the economic hardship and inflation as a first response to question of food availability. This clearly shows a strong perception of food affordability with that of food availability in the markets. In the future the issue should be more nuanced in the survey. Economic scarcity was attributed to the economic sanction in some areas and to the loss of work opportunities or the income of the main bread winners (men killed or displaced).

However, when pressed to speak about what is available on the market, respondents were clear to point out missing imported products (and by

association products produced locally but based on imported materials). This affected nutritional elements and products needed for children such as baby milk and formula. Many associated other items with baby foods (such as diapers and medicines). In many respondents minds the issue of raising a child is not separable into food items and other items.

Many respondents from big cities and lower economic statues pointed to the distribution mechanisms as a main cause for the scarcity of food items. They point that wholesalers regularly resort to monopolizing certain food items and hiding them from the market to create temporarily scarcities to drive prices up. In Government-controlled areas, the use of the "Smart Card" was supposed to regulate access to food subsidized by the State. However, access to sale points was difficult because of the crowds and the insults people must go through to get their allowances. Women access to such sale points was particularly problematic, this mechanism put a limitation for the quantities of food that families can access, which added to the scarcity of food such as bread and other essential materials.

The availability of food stuffs varies considerably. While government institutions do not have the capacity to cover the needs especially in areas with high numbers of IDPs, certain markets seem to have an abundance of food stuffs. Clearly pointing out to high inequalities among the population between the haves and have nots. Some rural borderline areas showed less difficulty finding products on the market due to the smuggling activities mainly in GoS and Northwest areas. It seems that many areas compensate for food shortages by smuggling foods from one area of control to another, and food items smuggled from neighboring countries are not uncommon.

In some rural areas the respondent said that they are relaying on in-house agricultural activities to get their basic foodstuffs. Indeed, both locally grown and/or bartered food items seem to matter for many family's survival strategies. On the other hand, in post ISIS areas regular value chains and

trade in food stuff are still not fully recovered and markets experience regular shortages due to the instability of the commercial networks and the still devastated physical conditions of the markets and their basic infrastructure.

Quality of Food

Markets in all areas of control have responded to changing economic conditions and reduced purchasing power by shifting to poor quality foodstuffs. Some respondents clarified that there are so many food items in the market with altered or falsified expiry dates mainly in rural areas. Most good quality food items are missing from the markets. This is not restricted to imported goods, but it is even noted with locally produced items where only second or third grades are made available. Besides lack of good quality of foods, most of the respondents said that families are not able to get a diversity of food choices to achieve a balanced diet. Items like, meat, chicken and fruits are out of their capacity to obtain, and their diets are very limited as a result.

Affordability of Food

As has been noted, there is a critical correlation between the availability and the affordability of foods. The majority of the respondents mentioned that the ability of families to obtain food had drastically decreased during the last few years, and this last year was the worst due to the inflation, economic crisis. In many GoS areas, the sanctions were also blamed as a main cause of the rising costs of basic food items. Respondents indicated that for the most part the family's average basic income (salary of the main bread winner) is barely enough to cover food costs for less than a week. Coping strategies included pushing additional family members to seek underpaid informal work and relying on remittances from family members abroad. Most families have had to recalibrate their expenses and cut all non-essentials to ensure the minimum of food security.

Yet the issue is almost impossible to balance for families that have lost the income of the main breadwinner. Women headed households, and elderly people are less able to afford food. In many of the IDP and refugee communities, survival is dependent on food baskets and aid delivered by aid organizations and NGO's. Yet, such aid is less documented in communities that have not been displaced. This is an issue that needs to be taken up in the future, in the debate on the role of aid to balance the impact of the sanctions. The issue is not just the availability of aid but of who is eligible and how sufficient is food aid to compensate for the deteriorating economic conditions for the majority of households.

It was clarified by half of the respondents that the food affordability by families differed greatly based on the types of jobs held by the main bread winners, where the employees of the public sectors seemed to fair at the bottom mainly in GoS and Northeast areas, followed by employees of the small factories, while the best category was thought to be those working with INGOs mostly in the Northwest and Northeast areas since they are paid in foreign currency or at favorable exchange rates.

However, a common feature among all was the horizon of expectations. The common comment used in most interviews "We don't know what to eat tomorrow". There is a general perception that things are not likely to improve and that even those who have some security today will gradually slide into precarity in the near future.

Malnutrition

In many areas, respondents said that the situation did not yet get to the level of severe malnutrition, except in some cases for people who arrived in the Northwest from the besieged areas in Ghouta. However, other respondents described the situation by saying that there is no clear sign of critical malnutrition to the point requiring urgent medical interventions, but they pointed that it became common to see the initial signs of it, such as losing weight and pale

faces across the geographies. The observations were very common when describing children, young babies and their mothers. This corroborates with UN reports indicating that stunting because of malnutrition is becoming a common phenomenon among children[23]. Respondents explained that during pregnancy and breastfeeding women need more food, but they cannot afford it, which deprive them of the needed nutrition and vitamins for themselves and to breastfeed their babies.

In some situations, children would need formula, which is either not available or the family cannot afford it. Mothers are likely to give away their share of food for their children when there is not enough food, and this was observed from the majority of the interviews. Inter-aid among families and relatives is often helpful to avoid the worst mainly in rural and lower economic statues. But this was mainly observed in rural areas where families are compensating for expensive foodstuffs by growing their own and sharing among relatives, this is a form of social solidarity not often observed in urban areas.

Other threats of malnutrition were identified among elderly people who are at risk of malnutrition in case they did not get the support needed when their younger household members have left or migrated. Losing the father as breadwinner of the family was another cause for alarm. Additionally, malnutrition was noted as a common phenomenon in IDP centers and communities with high IDPs population, despite these being on the radar of aid agencies.

Eating culture

Eating habits are witnessing some changes according to many respondents. Families are exerting efforts to find time to sit together for the main meals. In many cases in the rural areas in the south and the northwest this was not the practice before; men used to eat first followed by women and children (especially during family feasts and celebrations). Eating habits changed in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas for

several reasons, mainly due to the new laws that promoted the role of women, and women financial independence, as well as due to the inner fear by men and society that women might resort to the Women's Court in case of discrimination against them. Some respondents from a main city in GoS areas - Latakia- said that there are no specific habits but she prefers that she eats with the children after the husband, and it's her choice. But families try to share their meals to ensure that children are taken care of. Yet, this is not often possible as many family members have been displaced and others work long hours and multiple jobs to earn income. Prioritizing the children's meals mean that sometimes the children will be fed first, and occasionally women expressed that mothers are likely to skip a meal to ensure the children can eat. Fruit is kept exclusively for the children when it is available. Few respondents indicated that the women may save the best part of the meal (meat) to men who are working long hours and hard jobs. In such cases women's work at home was not seen as comparable to men's work outside, and the women would thus justify the men getting the meat. But in the overall, respondents did not point to major disparities in quantity of food between men and women.

The elderly was identified as a special category needing care. Women in most respondents' commentaries were portrayed as the stereotypical care takers managing scarcity and ensuring that the critical balance of keeping the family nourished even at their own expense.

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[23] UN/SYRIA | United Nations UN Audiovisual Library (unmultimedia.org) Last visited May 1st, 2021.

6.4 Economy

> *"The war has destroyed all my professional ambitions and dreams"*

The conflict has also disrupted economic activities and value chains, forcing most Syrians into poverty, with women carrying a heavy burden to support their families. The conflict in Syria has forced many young men into fighting or migration to escape being recruited to fight, this in principle should have changed the traditional patterns of income generation where pre-conflict data points to a heavy dependency on the men's income. While this has allowed some women both the opportunity and the incentive to reverse their long-entrenched domestic roles and encouraged them to seek public economic activities, yet the trend is not universal. Interestingly, despite the economic crisis and the scarcity of men to fill essential jobs, the general findings of the study point to hard-to-alter social realities; social control and stereotypes seem to be consistent with pre-crisis attitudes when it comes to women's work. Thus, it is hard to assert based on the results of the surveys to assert with any degree of accuracy of the degree of transformation. Many respondents pointed that their communities are still holding onto old social norms and refusing to accept changing realities. In the future this issue will need further research, as it is hard to discern the real conditions on the basis of perception questionnaires.

Despite the decrease in the number of men in the workforce due to migration and military drafting, women's participation in the workforce does not seem to have significantly increased. This is likely attributed to general economic reasons limiting the availability of jobs. However, the respondents also pointed to poor skills and lack of experience as other related factors. Moreover, many women also pointed to social factors, such as family and household obligations, the unacceptability of working in a mixed-sex environment as additional factors, especially in more conservative areas. An exception is noted in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas, especially in the Hasakeh governorate, where social factors seem to be less

of a barrier than elsewhere, though some disparities in the area exist naturally. It was noted also that women tend to refrain from working outside the home when security conditions are poor; this concern was observed across the Syrian territory regardless of who is in control.

Social and cultural factors not only affected women's access to jobs, but also promotions and treatment at the workplace. Informal networking by male employees with managers and employers and men's willingness to work longer hours contribute to their higher chances of getting promoted. There seems to be inherent biases by employers against women in the workplace, where women are perceived as less capable leaders and less able to handle work stress. These biases are reflected in both the qualitative and quantitative data. Women suffer from many biases in terms of incentives and promotions.

Similarly, a combination of economic and socio-cultural factors contributes to pay disparity against women in most governorates. Women tend to work less hours than men do. Many women expressed preference for such work as they are still expected to carry on the bulk of house chores. Consequently, they accept lower salaries, especially when they are not their family's main breadwinner. Skill and education gaps were sometimes a factor impacting pay differentials. Women in Idlib governorate, controlled by HTS, indicated that they usually get similar or higher salaries than men. This could be due to the absence of women from lower paying jobs and a small window for higher paying jobs in specific sectors such as internationally funded NGO work, where they tend to be better compensated. Elsewhere in the country women were consistently underpaid compared to men.

The economic sector in which women were employed played a role in determining disparities in pay and treatment. Many women traditionally preferred public-sector jobs for stability, benefits and shorter working hours due to home care responsibilities. Women employed in the public sector are granted, by law, equal salaries to men in similar positions. However, promotions tend to favor male public-sector employees. On the other hand, NGOs tend to hire more women than men. Women seem more likely to work in jobs related to administration, education, health, and humanitarian aid, in addition to domestic labor jobs, tailoring and sales. The financial burdens of the crisis, however, has slowly pushed women to seek wider range of jobs and job conditions, and many are starting to embrace new work opportunities.

6.4.1 Baseline Review Prior to 2011

While the Syrian legislation does not discriminate against women in terms of access to the job market, the equality of pay and the ability to benefit from social security benefits, the actual realities on the ground were considerably different. There was a clear gap between the rates of women and men in the labor market.[24] Some studies pointed out to the structural obstacles facing women's access to work: lack of skills and experience, societal perceptions of women's gender roles and the expectations that they prioritize caring in the household to fulfil "family obligations", and social resistance to women accessing jobs considered to be the reserve of men.[25] Throughout the years from 2000-2010 women entering the job market became more educated, while men accessed the job market at earlier ages with less education at hand. The proportion of women with no secondary education having a job decreased from 67% to 40%.[26]

This points to a regression of women being primarily employed in the agricultural sector to alternative employment opportunities in other sectors. Women employment in the agricultural sector in 2001 was 65%, but these jobs were becoming scarce by the end of the decade shrinking by more than 57%. New employment opportunities in urban professions increased by 8% for the same period, not enough to cover the loss of jobs in the agricultural sector. Women were among the hardest hit by the government liberal policies that shifted the main focus of the economy from agriculture to services and industry. While women were losing jobs in the middle of the decade men made small gains. The situation moved to slightly self-adjust by the end of the decade, but the gap between men and women in the labor market remained huge. Slightly over 4,100,000 men were in the labor force by 2008 in contrast to slightly over 600,000 women.[27]

By 2007, 56% of jobs for women were in the public sector and informal work was less than 17%. In contrast, men in the public sector constituted less than 25% and over 36% of them worked in the informal sector. Jobs in the public sector were more prevalent in the coastal areas and in the greater Damascus metropolitan area. Jobs in the informal sector were particularly prominent in the North and Northeast. Women's experience with the labor market differed considerably from one part of the country to the next; the implementation of State policies was certainly not uniform across the country.[28]

6.4.2 Quantitative Survey Findings

Respondents' answers on the proportion of women in their area who have an income-generating work inside or outside home averaged 3.5[29], which falls in the middle between "some women" and "most women". At the governorate level, the highest rates were recorded in Latakia and Hasakeh at 3.8, and the lowest in Raqqa at 3.0 and Idlib and Homs at 3.1. On the other hand, men seem to be paid slightly more than women when they perform similar jobs, reflected by an average score of -0.4 (on a scale from +2 to -2)[30]. Pay disparity against women is most acute in the governorates of Deir al-Zor and Hama. In Daraa, women and men seem to be paid almost equally, while in Idlib, women are paid slightly more than men when they perform the same job. This is in line with other surveys conducted recently[31]. However, this question should not be analyzed in the void of other indicators. The fact that women in certain areas make more money does not mean that more women are working. It may just indicate that women's work is only valued in certain fields, whereas in other fields they may be barred from work altogether.

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[24] http://cbssyr.sy/ Last visited May 1st, 2021.

[25] Ekman, Mikael, ed., 2017. ILAC Rule of Law Assessment Report: Syria 2017. Solna, Sweden: ILAC.

[26] Aita, Samir, 2009. Labour Markets Policies and Institutions with a Focus on Inclusion, Equal Opportunity and the Informal Economy: National Background Paper: the Case of Syria. ILO.
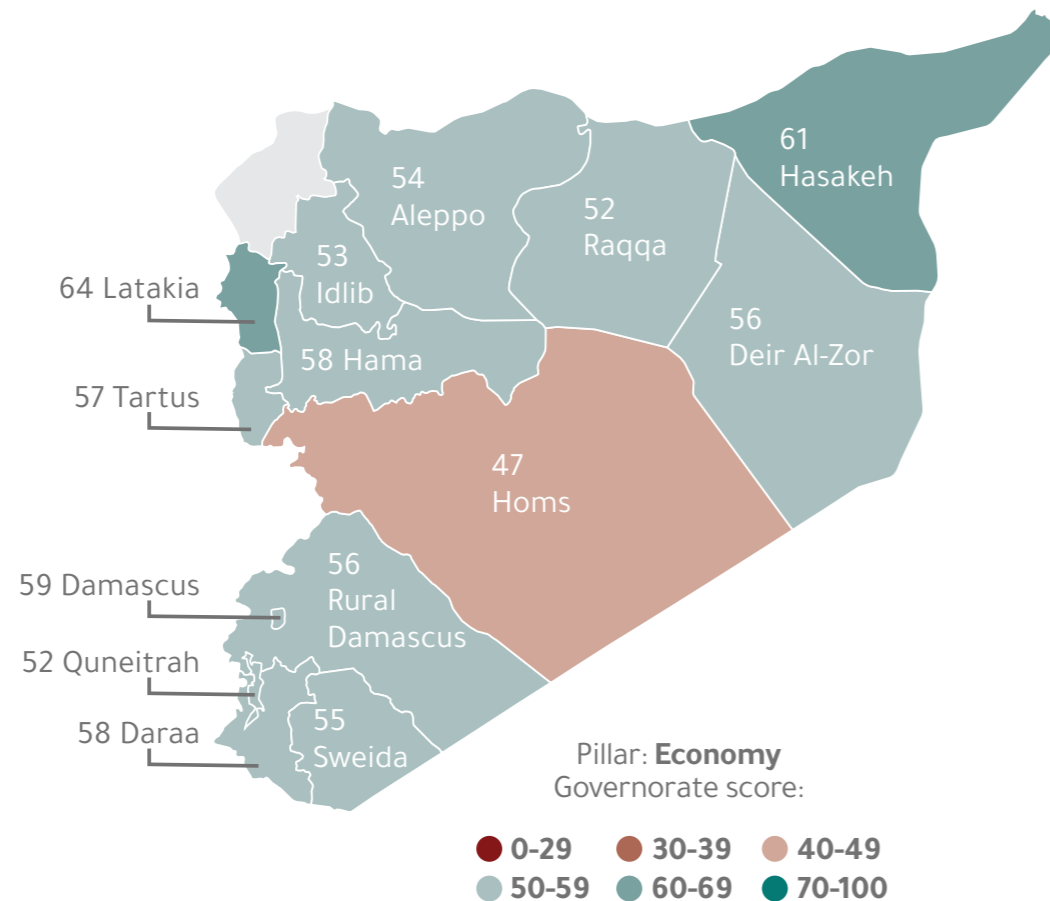
[27] Ibid

[28] Ibid

[29] From 5 to 1: all women - most women - some women - few women - no women

[30] From +2 to -2: women are paid significantly more - women are paid slightly more - women and men are paid equally - men are paid slightly more - men are paid significantly more
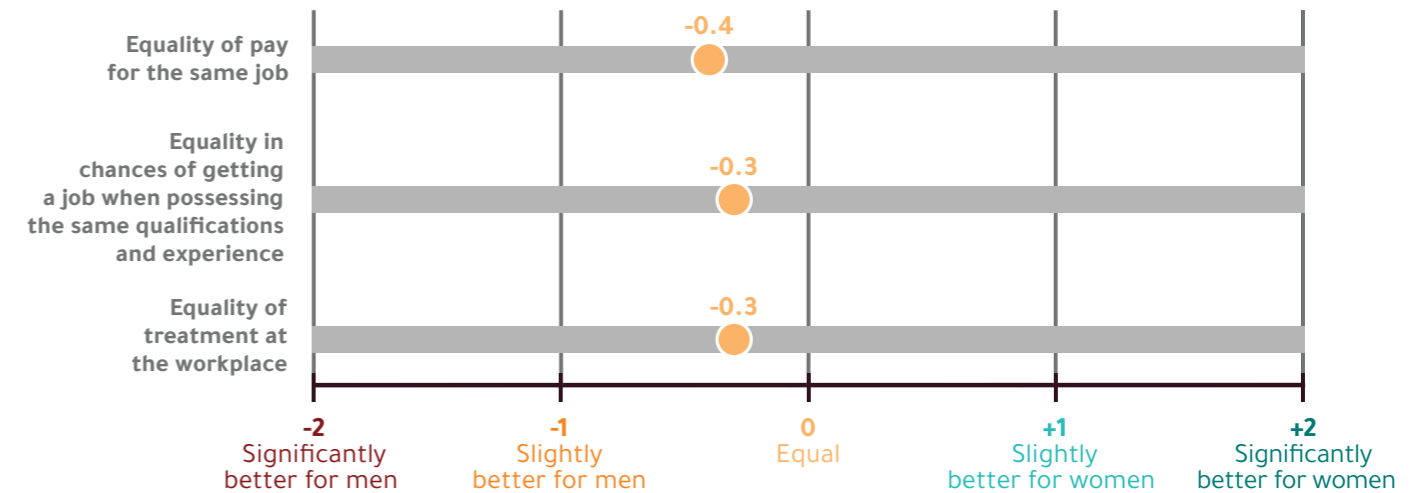
[31] DA-Issue-EN-2020-03.pdf (developmentassets.org) Last visited May 1st, 2021.

Figure 13: Map of economy pillar scores by governorate

Pillar: **Economy**
Governorate score:

● 0-29   ● 30-39   ● 40-49
● 50-59   ● 60-69   ● 70-100

-2
Significantly better for men

-1
Slightly better for men

0
Equal

+1
Slightly better for women

+2
Significantly better for women

In terms of equal treatment at the workplace, women are treated slightly worse than men in terms of incentives and promotions, at an average rate of -0.3[33]. Idlib seems to be an exception among governorates; at a rate of +0.5, it is implied that women get better treated there than their male counterparts. Women in Homs and Tartus suffer from the highest levels of discrimination, according to respondents. But this may be related to the fact that women in some areas are restricted to certain jobs and are rewarded for not venturing into other job markets. This issue is further qualified below.

Figure 14: Degree of equality between women and men in the job market in terms of access to jobs, pay and treatment at the workplace

When men and women get paid equally for the same job, there is a higher likelihood for them to be treated equally in the workplace. This is reflected by a correlation coefficient of 0.55 between the two indicators. The quantitative survey did not show any other strong correlations for the economy and labor indicators with the indicators of the other pillars. This may be related to the fact that conditions in this pillar are affecting different parts of the country in different ways and women's access to the labor market has not been streamlined yet.

[33] From +2 to -2: women are treated significantly better - women are treated slightly better - women and men are treated equally - men are treated slightly better - men are treated significantly better.

Women also seem to have slightly poorer chances than men of getting a job when they have the same qualifications and experience, at an average rate of -0.3[32]. However, there is a large variation in the way respondents answered this question with a relatively high standard deviation of 1.13. In the governorate of Raqqa, women seem to get better chances than men, at a rate of +1.0. Women in Idlib, Latakia and Quneitrah have similar chances of getting a job in comparison to men. The worst rates were recorded in Homs and Tartus. Again, this indicator should be considered in light of what jobs are women are applying for. As the qualitative survey points out (see below), women are not encouraged to apply to all jobs. As such the fact that they have equal or better chances to land a job, may be related to the fact that they are applying to stereotypical "Women's jobs".

[32] From +2 to -2: women have significantly more chances - women have slightly more chances - women and men have the same chances - men have slightly more chances - men have significantly more chances

6.4.3 Qualitative Survey Findings

Many of the same questions asked in the quantitative survey were also asked in the qualitative survey. When given a chance to reflect on issues and give examples the results were richer. Conducting a correlation analysis using the qualitative analysis software point to high internal intersections among themes within the pillar itself, leading to think that economic issues are very interconnected in the respondents' thinking. But most importantly, the economic pillar had high intersections with the social and cultural pillar. Social patriarchal values are inseparable in the respondents' discourse from the factors shaping women's access to jobs, the type of jobs they would choose to undertake, the chances of getting equal pay and fair treatment in the workplace and the chances to advance their careers. Strong correlation was also find between security issues and the prevalence of gender based violence and the ability of women to access the labor market.

Accessibility to Work Opportunities

Most participants indicated that women faced several challenges in accessing work opportunities as compared to men. The most commonly reported challenges were related to society's conservative stereotypical position against working women, the disapproval of families and husbands of women working outside the home, and the currently lacking number of job opportunities across the country. Many responses also indicated that women did not want to work for fear of undermining their family obligations inside the household. In some cases, women specifically stated that their family obligations impacted their accessibility to jobs especially due to restrictions on working hours and the commuting distance from home.

None of the women who lived in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas referred to societal obstacles or family objections as challenges against women's ability to attain work outside the house. Instead, they referred to the lack of skills and expertise, the poor security situation, and old age.

Meanwhile, family reservations against allowing women to work were common challenges mentioned by participants living in areas held by the Turkish-backed Syrian Army. While more indicators would be required to further investigate the link between an area's governing authority and women's accessibility to the job market, such preliminary results may perhaps point towards examining the impact of the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration's women empowerment policies on shaping society's own perception towards women's participation in the workforce.

There was no particular difference with these challenges between government held areas and HTS areas. However, there was emphasis among participants in HTS areas on the unstable security situation as a deterrent for men and women to access jobs.

Some participants indicated that women's accessibility to the job market was impacted by employers' bias against hiring women based on the belief that men could handle more pressure and responsibilities. Other perceived obstacles were women's lack of skills and expertise as well as nepotism within the workplace - which disregarded an individual's competencies and focused on their connections.

As for men, the mandatory military draft was the main challenge to their accessibility to work opportunities. Other security challenges associated with accessing different locations across Syria have also been deemed as obstacles to men's job options. It was thought however, that women should have better access to job opportunities given that men are often displaced or are leaving the country to avoid the draft. There was little evidence in the survey to suggest that this has impacted prevalent biases against women's access to the job market.

Equality within the Workplace

The majority of responses indicated that there was bias against women within the workspace due to multiple factors. Many participants indicated that men were more likely to get a promotion and a raise and were able to dedicate longer hours in the workplace than women who were simultaneously responsible for family obligations. As such, men were more likely to ask and receive a promotion especially for senior and leadership roles. Participants also indicated that the manager's mentality and work ethic played a predominant role in setting the level of equality within the workspace. On the other hand, some participants explained that progress within the workplace was mostly related to an individual's close connections and networks rather than their sex or gender.

The social dynamics between the employer and employees influenced the employee's progress at work. Informality between managers and male employees allowed for greater job advancement opportunities, something that hindered women's advancement. One example of this was mentioned by an architect living in Muhradah in Hama Governorate who stated that her manager was very strict with her female coworkers' attendance schedule and less stringent with her male colleagues with whom they shared a closer working relationship. Some participants referred to men's higher employability chances that were influenced by the social perception that men were considered better leaders and could handle more stress compared to women. Some participants also reported that men were more likely to reach senior decision-making positions, especially in business and politics.

The work sector may have been another determining factor for equality within the workspace. For example, the public sector was likely to favor and promote males to advance in the workplace, while the humanitarian sector employed more women and allowed them opportunities to grow. Women were listed as more likely to access and saturate the education sector as well.

Also, some women living in Kurdish Self-Administration held territories indicated that females had a higher chance of getting a job due to the low number of male applicants caused by the military draft. They also indicated that tolerance was practiced towards women who were sometimes forced to compromise their working hours due to family obligations.

There were no particular differences between the challenges highlighted by women living in HTS and government held areas concerning differential treatment of men and women in the workplace. On the other hand, women living in Turkish governed areas emphasized that men were more likely to get promoted to leadership roles than women such as seen in school and hospitals.

More studies would be required to assess the link between equality in the workplace and the governing authority of each region across Syria.

Equal Payment and Salaries

The majority of participants indicated that women were generally paid lower salaries than men. However, there were specific factors that contributed to this inequality. Many participants indicated that salary payments within the public sector were equal due to the labor law and that inequality in salaries were more likely to happen in the private sector. However, even the public sector some women indicated that men had better access to special compensations and benefits related to the type of missions they were assigned to undertake. A Woman engineer pointed to her engagement on designing and planning projects but was not sent to the field to supervise the implantation of projects where she would have received duty station compensation.

Most responses explained that one of the main reasons behind women being paid less was the employer's social perception regarding men being better and smarter employees who could take on more pressure; their financial responsibilities towards their families made them more willing to

take on extra responsibilities and work longer hours. Meanwhile, women were thought to be paid less because they worked fewer hours and committed to a lower workload due to having to consecrate more time to their family obligations. Women were also less likely to negotiate higher salary payments and often accepted a lower pay.

Some participants deviated from the general views. They indicated that salary payments were often equal; while a minority opinion highlighted that the reason behind any discrepancies in salary payment were not related to the gender of the employee but rather to their competencies and skills.

In Government and Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas, participants had varied responses. Some women considered the salaries to be equal while others found that men were paid slightly more than women. Women living in Turkish governed areas indicated that salary payments were rather equal between men and women, and that women had an advantage when it came to leave days as they were given time off for maternal leave. In HTS areas, women explained that salary payments were equal between men and women or even slightly more at times.

Work Fields

Most responses indicated that women worked mainly in government jobs. Respondents pointed to a prevalence of employment in the administrative sector, the education sector, the health sector, and the humanitarian aid sector. Housekeeping and domestic labor jobs were also very common among women as well as tailoring and sales. Most participants indicated that women's decision in joining certain work fields were impacted by what society deemed as socially acceptable positions for women to occupy. Many also indicated that women resorted to teaching positions because they were easy to attain and required a low level of competency; they were generally considered less stressful and more comfortable. A few others indicated that women turned to the education and health sectors

because of their natural tendencies to act as caretakers. All in all, there was very little observable change in the job opportunities for women, despite what many observers have often been saying about the crisis in Syria opening opportunities for women to enter into the workforce in areas often reserved for men.

However, it is vital to also keep in mind that the job market was impacted and shaped by a decade of war such that women were likely also forced to occupy certain positions due to their limited financial situation and the mere saturation of certain jobs across the market especially given that some sectors did not have the opportunity to expand and flourish during this period, including the private sector.

There were no specific variations among the areas of control when it came to the work fields adopted by women, however, there were a few noticeable trends. It may be worthwhile to note that participants living in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration held areas were the only ones to mention that women worked in security and the military. This is not quite surprising given the push by the administration to integrate women across its security and military apparatus, a direct example of which are the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) and the Asayish, among others. In HTS areas, participants stated that women were specifically employed in women health centers and clinics due to communities' religious reservations.

Other challenges

Some of the main social challenges that face women in the workplace are related to the pressure exerted on women from the family or her husband which can challenge her choice to work outside the house and her choice of work field. Such reservations are mainly related to the duration of her work, the distance of her work from home, and the work environment as some conservative communities prefer women to stay home rather than work in a mixed-sex environment. Women continue to expect the husband to care for them. One woman expressed

it directly: Why should I continue to study and seek work when in the end I will be getting a husband who will take care of me.

This pillar had high internal intersections among indicators within the pillar itself, leading to think that economic issues are very interconnected in the respondents' thinking. It was also related to the socio-cultural, education, and security pillars. When it came to accessibility to the workplace, equality within the workplace, and equality in payment in the workplace, there were high intersections between them and socio-cultural indicators, specifically the image of women in society and the patriarchal social structure. There were high intersections between the topic of equality of access to work and the expertise and skill levels of women which is a reflection that women's accessibility to the job market were challenged by the lack of expertise and skill levels which may either be due to their late entry into the job market or to lack of training opportunities.

As for the economic situation of the household, as previously stated, it highly intersected with physical violence cases, school enrollments and dropout cases, child marriage and food affordability and to a lower extent with food accessibility. It also intersects with socio-cultural factors such as the patriarchal social system and image of women in society. It appears that these socio-cultural challenges are one of the factors impacting women's ability to access better economic conditions including their choices of work sector and education field. There were clear intersections between the economic situation of the household on one hand and gender-based violence, food security, education, and socio-cultural norms on the other hand.

6.5 Equity and Equality

> "*My Brother has a family to take care of, he has a lot of responsibilities, I do not face the same pressure*"

Equality and equity were envisioned as a cross cutting issue and were analyzed directly in all the pillars. However, for the sake of deriving quantitative indicators, two indicators were selected specifically: equality in the access to education and equality in asserting housing, land and property rights (HLP). The quantitative survey was able to develop systemic orders of magnitude for the phenomena. However, the qualitative survey required far more nuances when discussing equality in education. Thus, this section was merged when discussing education in general. The HLP qualitative survey results are very nuanced and are presented here as they point to strong deviation from the results of the quantitative survey. Again, the study points out to the need to fine tune the research in the future to explain why standard quantitative indicators fail to capture the depth of certain phenomena.

The results of the survey point to the role played by laws and the way they are implanted, particularly those denying many women their right to own property. Inheritance laws (both religious and civil codes) are known to give women a disadvantaged share of legacies. In many types of inheritance situations, a woman inherits only half the share of her male counterpart (this does not apply to all religious groups or to all types of property). However, the prejudice of the law is only part of the picture. Societal traditions work to further disenfranchise women. Women from across all geographies described how local customs and norms were impeding women from inheriting even the shares stipulated by law. Results showed that daughters had to give away their properties to their brothers to protect the family assets and support the brother who is often considered to be the breadwinner of the family. Women are often brought up in a social environment that believes property and inheritance is best run by the men in the family to keep the family assets intact. The majority of women do not resort to the formal legal system to seek their HLP rights; seeking recourse through a formal legal system usually comes with stigma from the society and the family. Many respondents expressed concerns not to upset their brothers (and surprisingly their mothers at times). In many cases, they do not even feel that it is their right to inherit in the first place. In some cases,

women were verbally and physically abused when resorting to the legal system. In other cases, women were pressured by their families to sell their property at a symbolic price to their male family members; this was common practice in Daraa and Deir al-Zor. In a fewer number of cases, women were pressured by their families to sell their property, but at a fair market price. This practice is most common in Hama. Social norms may be more of a factor in denying women from their HLP rights than the letter of biased laws.

When it comes to inheritance of HLP rights, both qualitative and quantitative data showed that a significant number of women are not likely to inherit from their parents or spouses, even rights ascribed by law. This was observed across the country and in different forms across communities and confessions. Social bias does not yet to be affected by new codes and regulations it exists in areas that have less discriminatory laws as well as in areas with more biased codes. In the Kurdish Dominated Self-Administration areas legal codes have been changed by the local authorities, yet in some areas (Hasakeh and Raqqah) there was still strong evidence of women being denied their inheritance rights in practice. Different respondents from different communities in Hasakeh indicated that this was still the dominant practice, though the word was spreading that women could recourse to courts to assert rights. In Government controlled areas, there were large pockets, such as the southern governorates of Daraa, Quneitrah and Sweida, where HLP rights are particularly threatened because of social practice.

Managing properties was another issue to study. A large portion of cases where women inherit property, their male relatives managed the property on their behalf; this was common in Deir al-Zor and Aleppo. There were fewer cases where women inherited the property and managed it themselves; this was common in Idlib according to some respondents. In some other locations it was noted that some minority communities seem to have also fared slightly better than the national average. The areas where HLP rights seemed to be most vulnerable were Daraa, Lattakia, Raqqa, Hasakeh, and Sweida. Social pressure in those areas was so strong against allowing women control over property.

The unavailability of documentation centers in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas affected the access of women to obtain proper documentation. The situation was better in GoS controlled areas. Interestingly women in some rural areas indicated good access to documentation. These results need further scrutiny however, as women in rural areas tend to be subjected to social constraints denying them their HLP rights to begin with. Very often a positive indicator can be a sign that that particular indicator is available only to privileged women in an otherwise restrictive environment.

The limited access to inheritance rights is essential to understanding the economic disenfranchisement of women in general. The results of the analysis showed strong linkages between women's ability to access their HLP inheritance rights and the prospects of accessing further rights. Women's abilities to obtain the needed resources to be independent property owners is a pre-requisite for obtaining loans and mortgages, securing equity and selling their assets in time of distress. HLP rights constitute the steppingstone to other economic activities and to securing women's independence.

In contrast, the quantitative indicators for equity in education showed little variation across the country. Women respondents claimed that access to education differed very little between boys and girls. While we know that these results are not very accurate from the qualitative survey and from other sources and interviews, it remains an area for further reflection and research to see why respondents did not point to such differences. This may require adding a few more questions in future surveys to triangulate information and get more accurate assessments. The pillar on education is more revealing in that regards and a more nuanced account of women's education is provided there.

6.5.1 Baseline Review Prior to 2011

The baseline on education equity is described in detail under the education pillar below. This section will focus on the baseline of the other theme undertaken as a barometer for equity and equality, mainly the equity in protecting the housing, land and property rights for women and men.

The Syrian constitution and legal codes give men and women the same rights over their properties, However, article 3 of the Syrian constitution designating Islamic jurisprudence as the primary source of legislation has been interpreted by subsequent legislation in manners that undermined women's ability to inherit property on an equal basis as men. The law

often denied women proper agency to manage and enjoy the returns form their property as women's access to economic and public life was often restricted by a myriad of legal conjunctures (see below under the pillar legal rights). Islamic jurisprudence as interpreted in Syria and many other countries distinguishes between various types of properties and proscribes different rules for their inheritance and tenure. The most readily available property in urban areas is the freehold formal property. For this type of property, the law proscribes that a man inherits twice as the share of his female counterpart. However, for other types of tenure such as usufruct rights, the law has different stipulations. In Rural areas, the most prominent tenure type is the Amiri land, where the tenure right holder can pass usufruct rights through inheritance. Women inherit the same share as men as per the letter of the law in this case. Indeed, there are over twenty types of tenure that have different treatment under the law.[34] Inheritance laws differ considerably when it comes to different religious minorities in Syria.

Averaging the different tenure types, women ought to inherit between 35-45% of properties. Yet, in reality, women owned less than 5% of properties according to the planners who drafted the 10th five-year plan, which had as one of its objectives to redress injustices and inequalities.[35] Women faced many social and legal obstacles to assert their property rights (imperfect as they may be proscribed by law). Women were often dissuaded by their families and society from demanding their fair share of inheritance. Moreover, women were often dissuaded from conducting their own management of their properties when they retained the title. Husbands and brothers often acted as custodians on their behalf. Women often did not engage in registering new properties to their name, consequently, their claims to inheritance were even further disenfranchised in case of divorce. Women were also not allowed to act as the custodians of their minor children when a father passed away.

This transferred the management of legacies to the hands of distant male kin, who did not have the women's best interest at heart.[36]

6.5.2 Quantitative Survey Findings

Two sub-pillars were assessed under the equality and equity pillar: education and housing, land and property (HLP). In terms of accessibility to education it was noted that the level of ease or difficulty for girls and boys to access schools was almost identical at the national level. It is somewhat easy for both girls and boys to access schools, at an average rate of 4.1[37]. However, broken down by governorate, there are noticeable disparities; for instance, in Quneitrah, the average is 3.3 for girls and 4.0 for boys. In Raqqa, while both girls and boys face difficulties in accessing schools, girls have relatively better chances, at a rate of 2.7, compared to 2.2 for boys, where boys seem to have poor access to schools. The governorates of Daraa and Tartus seem to have the highest accessibility to schools for both girls and boys.

[34] United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), 2018. Women and Land in the Muslim World: Pathways to Increase Access to Land for the Realization of Development, Peace and Human Rights. Nairobi: UN Habitat.

[35] http://picc.gov.sy/site/arabic/index.php?node=55148&cat=14869& Last visited April 24th, 2021.

[36] Ilac, 2017.

[37] From 5 to 1: very easy - somewhat easy - neither easy nor difficult - somewhat difficult - very difficult.
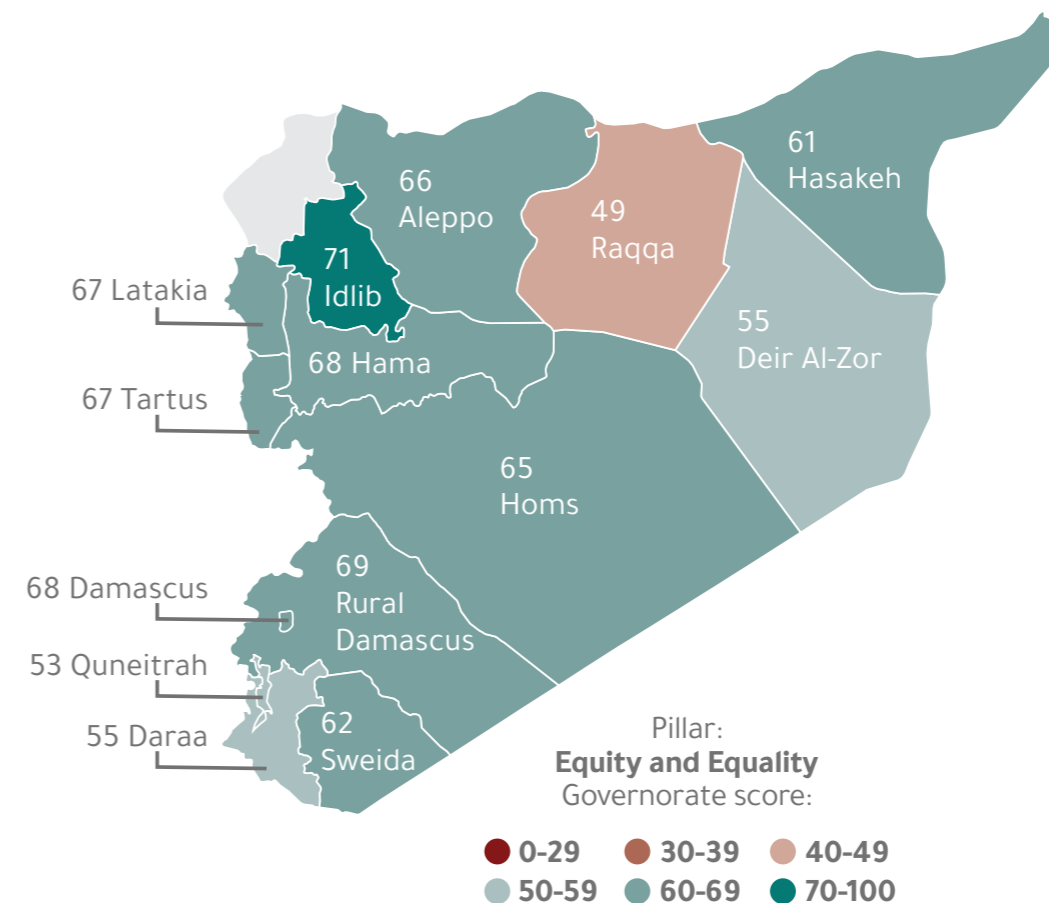
Figure 15: Map of equity and equality pillar scores by governorate

67 Latakia
67 Tartus
68 Damascus
53 Quneitrah
55 Daraa

66 Aleppo
71 Idlib
68 Hama
49 Raqqa
61 Hasakeh
55 Deir Al-Zor
65 Homs
69 Rural Damascus
62 Sweida

Pillar:
Equity and Equality
Governorate score:

● 0-29   ● 30-39   ● 40-49
● 50-59   ● 60-69   ● 70-100

The majority of families tend to send their daughters and sons to school, according to respondents' answers. The average rate is 4.2 for girls and 4.3[35] for boys. The biggest gender gap is recorded in Daraa, where the rate is 3.5 for girls and 4.0 for boys. Due to economic hardship and other reasons, the girls in southern Syrian governorates were expected to work to support the family financially. When they were not engaged in work, it was common for girls to get married at an early age. Many families did not really value education for the girls in those areas. The lowest rates of sending both boys and girls to school were recorded in Raqqa, with 3.1 for girls and 3.3 for boys, while the highest were in Tartus, with 4.9 for girls and 4.8 for boys. Neither displacement nor neighborhood economic condition seem to significantly affect the overall likelihood of families sending their children to school when schools seemed to be available according to the surveyed sample.

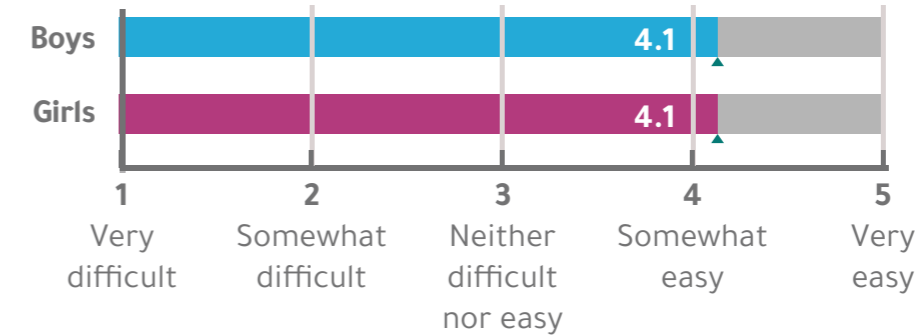**Figure 16: Map of education equity sub-pillar scores by governorate**
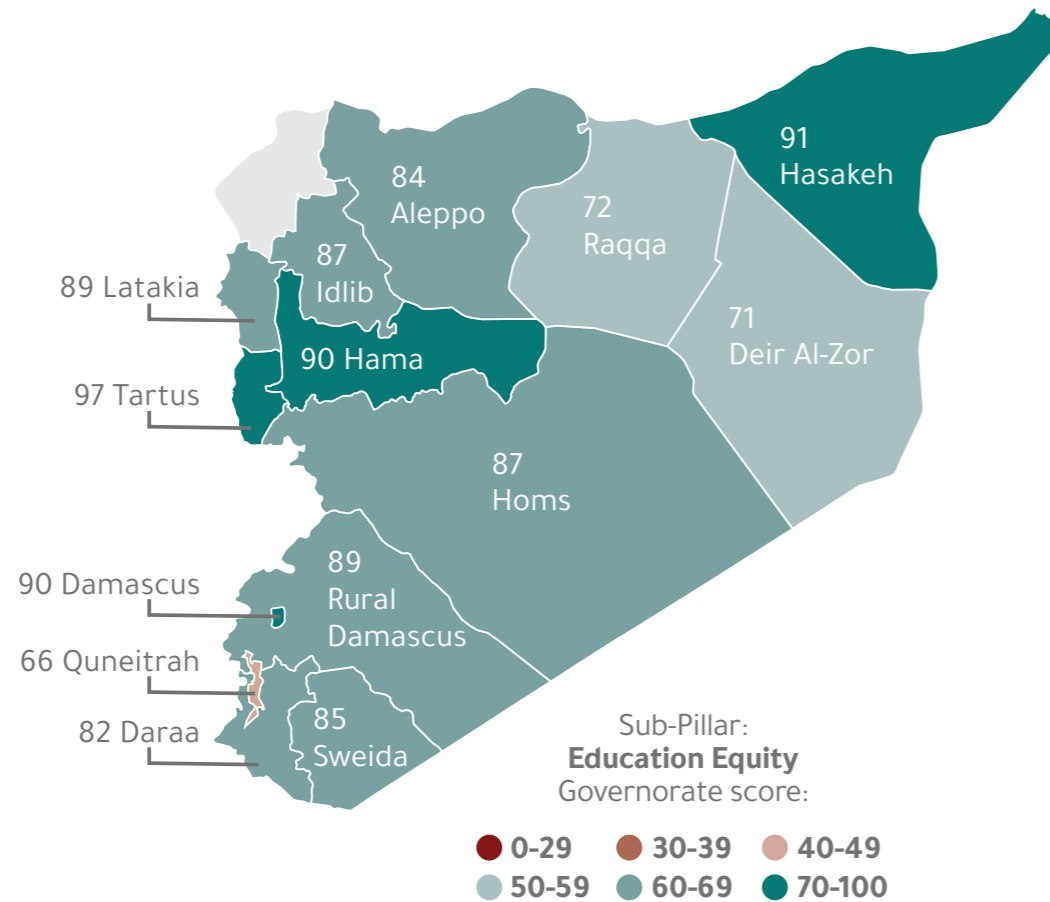
Figure 17: Ease or difficulty in access to schools for girls in comparison to boys

In contrast to education, indicators of equity in access to housing, land and property rights are alarming across the country. Respondents answered a composite question about the commonness of each of five likely scenarios regarding women's receiving inherited property as stipulated by the law. In 25% of the times, women do not receive their inheritance because their family outright takes the property away from them, even when inheritance rights guaranteed by law. This scenario is especially common in the Kurdish Self-administration areas (Hasakeh and Raqqa) as well as the southern governorates of Daraa, Quneitrah and Sweida. In 17% of the cases, women are pressured by their families to sell their property at a symbolic price. This is more likely to take place in Daraa and Deir al-Zor than elsewhere. In another 15% of the cases, women are pressured by their families to sell their property, but at a fair market price. This practice is most common in Hama, where it takes place 22% of the time.

Figure 18: Map of housing, land and property (HLP) equity sub-pillar scores by governorate

55 Aleppo
41 Hasakeh
34 Raqqa
61 Idlib
53 Latakia
45 Deir Al-Zor
53 Hama
48 Tartus
50 Homs
56 Rural Damascus
53 Damascus
45 Quneitrah
36 Daraa
48 Sweida

Sub-Pillar:
Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Equity
Governorate score:

- 0-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-100
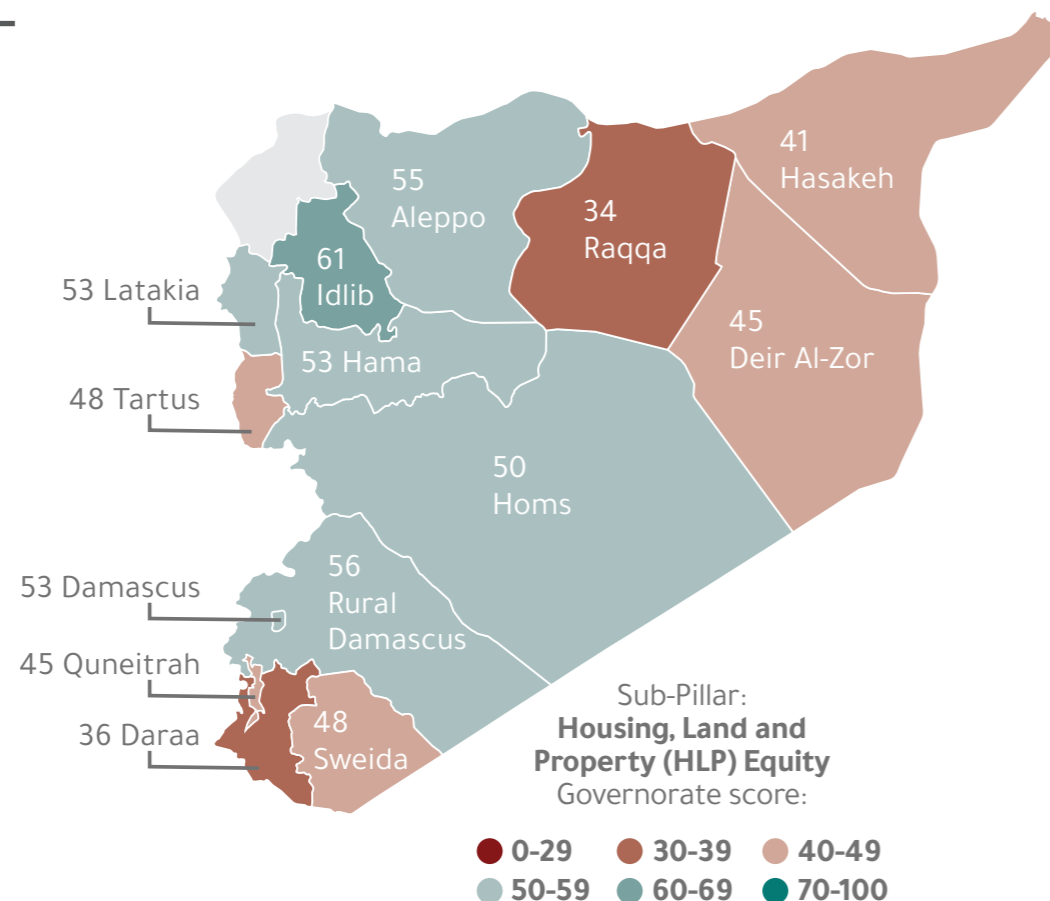
On the other hand, in 22% of the cases, women inherit the property, but male relatives manage this property. This is most common in the governorates of Deir al-Zor and Aleppo. In only 21% of the cases, women inherit the property and manage it themselves. This is the most common practice in Idlib according to respondents. However, this finding was betrayed in the qualitative survey, where women who inherit indicated that they may actually manage their properties, but many seemed unaware that women do inherit at all.
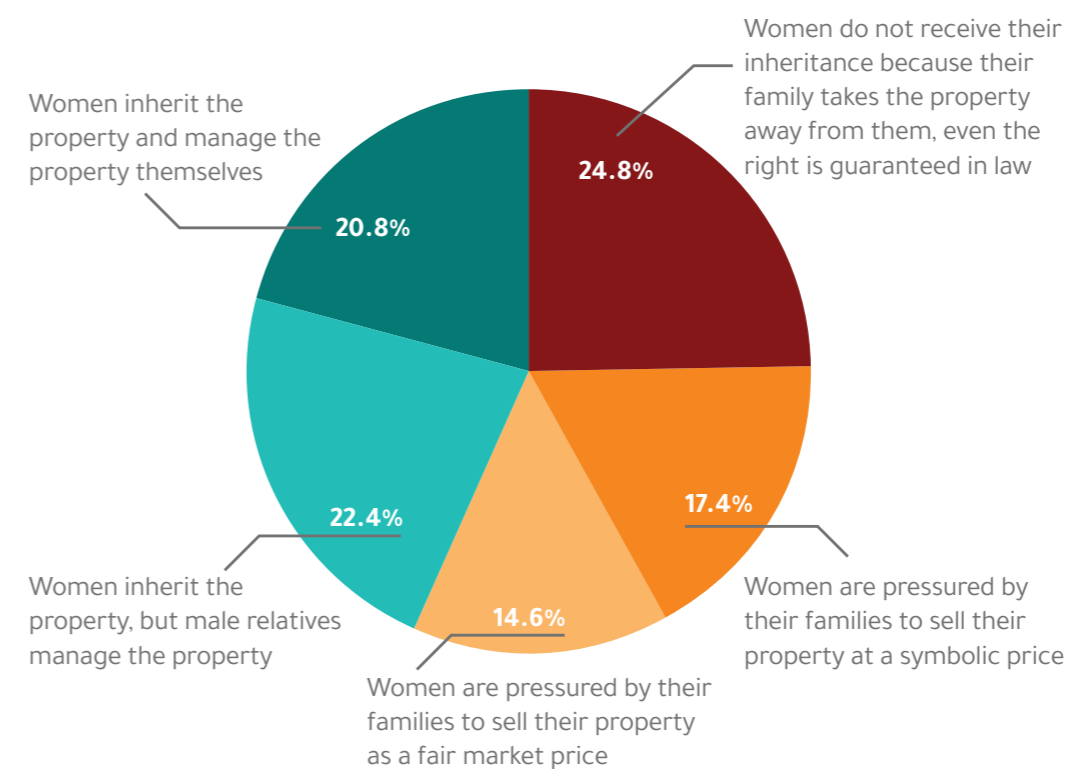
The findings of the different scenarios were used to create a composite indicator of women's property inheritance rights, on a gradual scale from 1 to 5. The overall average for Syria was 3.0. Idlib and Rural Damascus seem to have better conditions that other governorates, at the rates of 3.5 and 3.3 respectively. The governorates with the lowest rates were Daraa, Latakia, Raqqa, Hasakeh and Sweida.

Regarding the acquisition of HLP documentation, some women seem to have documents in their name for real property they own, reflected by a rate of 3.0[39]. The

[39] From 5 to 1: all women - most women - some women - few women - no women.

highest rates were recorded in Idlib at 3.7 and Rural Damascus at 3.5, while the lowest were in Hasakeh and Raqqa at 2.4, perhaps due to the unavailability of government departments concerned with registering properties.

Women in rural areas seemed to have slightly better documentation, at a rate of 3.3, compared to 2.9 in urban areas. These indicators go contrary to other perceptions found in the qualitative survey. Where the prevalence of documentation may not necessarily mean that women are at liberty to have transactions related to their properties. Also, it could be that the few women in rural areas who do own property have better chances to retain their documentation, but other women who have been disenfranchised from their property altogether may not have prioritized documentation. Moreover, the fact that women own property to their name is no indication if these titles are their fair share of inheritance and other legacies.

Women inherit the property and manage the property themselves — 20.8%

Women do not receive their inheritance because their family takes the property away from them, even the right is guaranteed in law — 24.8%

Women are pressured by their families to sell their property at a symbolic price — 17.4%

Women are pressured by their families to sell their property as a fair market price — 14.6%

Women inherit the property, but male relatives manage the property — 22.4%

Figure 19: Ways in which women are likely to receive inherited property stipulated to them by the law

Biases against women are more directly observable when men are absent from a household. only in a few cases are lease arrangements made in the name of a female member of the family, at a rate of 3.3[40]. This practice seems fairly common in Sweida, at 3.8, and least common in Raqqa, at 2.1. It is also

[40] From 5 to 1: always - often - sometimes - rarely - never.

common in rural areas, at 3.7, as well as in areas with relatively poor economic conditions, at 3.7. However, the fact that the lease is made by women is in itself no indication that an actual contract is written. In many cases the arrangements are made verbally, and women are still vulnerable.

In cases that require a formal legal system, such as unresolved inheritance disputes, women do not often resort to a formal legal system, reflected by a rate of 2.9[41]. The least tendency to resort to formal legal channels for such issues is recorded in Raqqa, Deir al-Zor and Hasakeh.

The HLP quantitative indicators showed very little correlations internally within the pillar or externally with other pillars. In essence each indicator seems to follow a specific logic related to the local conditions and no evident pattern seem to govern how HLP equity is distributed. This, merits further research in the future to understand how local communities interpret the issue of property and deal with it. An anthropological research may be best suited for such study.

6.5.3 Qualitative Survey Findings

Equality in education is discussed in a more direct way under the section of education (see below). This section will concentrate mostly on equality in the assertion of HLP rights.

Inheritance

Women in the qualitative survey were asked to reflect on the same scenarios that were considered in the quantitative survey. However, they were asked to elaborate and provide examples and personal observations. Very often responses in this section correlated with other codes related to the social and cultural norms, pointing to direct correlation (unlike the findings of the quantitative survey. Below are some of the scenarios that respondents were asked to describe:

[41] From 5 to 1: always - often - sometimes - rarely - never.

In the case of the death of one of the parents (Mostly fathers): The majority of the respondents revealed that the Social customs demand women/girls not to inherit from their parents; they don't feel that it's their right to inherit, and the reasons behind are numerous. Responses from across the country pointed to similar examples:

- Daughters want to protect their family unity by protecting the unity of the families' assets. In some cases, this was perceived as a voluntary feeling by the women and in others there was substantive pressure from society. In some cases, the husbands refused to allow their wives to inherit from their families and in some incidences when they approved, they did not want that income to cover household expenses and preferred for the women to retain such income for their personal expenses. On the other hand, many respondents told stories of women/girls who were forced to sell their shares of inheritance to their brothers either at a fair or symbolic price. Interestingly the rate of the symbolic price was sometimes a bit higher.

- The brother is the breadwinner in the family and has more responsibilities. Many respondents declared that "men have a bigger burden in life". This pressure was interestingly exerted by mothers on their daughters and not just by the male kin.

- The family does want to fragment their properties and will not accept to share control over them with strange men (the husbands of the daughters).

- The majority of women/girls did not seem to be aware that they should inherit at all. Some of them were shocked by the question, while others said: "of course, women don't inherit", "it's the brother's right", "it is my choice not to inherit and to give it to my brother", etc. such manifestations of the patrimonial perceptions about inheritance challenge the findings of the quantitative results of the survey, especially in areas where the quantitative survey pointed to high levels of equality such as in Idlib. A plausible explanation could be that only well to do women in that area seem to have a say in the

ownership and management of their properties. A more detailed study is needed to understand the linkage between women awareness of their rights and their likelihood of asserting those rights.

· Daughters do not have the time or the needed skills to manage the proprieties. Respondents told stories of women who allowed their brothers to manage their properties in return for a share in the returns from these properties. These were not very frequent an often the income generated did not seem congruent with the type of property discussed. In some cases, women relegated to their husbands and not their brothers to manage their properties.

· In some rural communities, women can inherit the house and the male members can inherit the land or other productive properties.

· Some women inherit a share of the usufruct of land even when the property was in their brother's name; this was the case in Latakia.

The case of the husband's death: The majority of the respondents said that there were eviction cases against women after the passing of their husbands; especially if they did not have children, or if they only had girls (having a baby boy seem to give some protection for women to stay in the house, whereas if she had no children or had just girls the probability that she would be evacuated is higher. Women chances to inherit or to stay in the house is even more endangered if she was the second wife. Respondents pointed out that in many cases were women were thrown to the street or to IDP shelters, even when they were not in fact displaced. However, in other cases women went voluntarily back to their parents' homes, as it was "shameful for a woman to live alone", as one respondent said.

In the case of divorce: Women had to leave the house even if they invested in the house for years. If the women were young their parents are likely to force them to move back with them to protect their honor. In some cases, women were evicted when their husbands were missing or were in hiding and wanted for their political views. In GoS areas, in addition to having women forced to leaving their marital homes, they were often forced to relinquish their "smart card" denying them access to subsidized goods in government-controlled areas. Women seeking divorce were often forced to give up their properties if they wanted their husbands to approve the divorce. Only a fraction of cases reported that there was no eviction of women in cases of death or divorce of husbands.

Access to litigation and Mediation channels (Formal-Informal)

When it comes to the inheritance, the majority of women across the country do not resort to the formal legal system, aiming to protect their family name and not to upset their brothers and sometimes mothers, wherein in so many cases they don't feel that it's their right in the first place. The majority of women resort to their mothers first, then to the older male members of the family for mediation attempts, if this did not work, they would resort to other informal mediation channels like (churches, religious leaders, minorities councils, local mediation committee, and/or trustworthy public figures. Consensual arbitration is rare but was reported in some cases where women sought an external arbitrator (an elder in the family or the community) to settle the problem.

The majority of the respondents said that it is only in very rare cases that women resort to either the police or court. Seeking litigation in the formal legal system usually comes with stigma from society and the family. In some cases, women reported that they were verbally and physically abused when resorting to the legal system.

6.6 Political Rights

"I do not want to become everyone's laughingstock"

Women' exercise of their political rights is the pillar where women are most obviously disadvantaged. There is a general mistrust of the political system in all parts of Syria, however, women seem to have considerably more disadvantages than men in this regard. While some areas have been more accessible to women running for public office and engaging in the political process, the general tendency among most respondents is that politics is dirty and is not a place for women to engage. Women's chances to be elected to political office are very low in most parts of the country; the survey pointed as well to a gender gap when it came to women's participation in voting in local and parliamentary elections. There is hardly any statistics on the participation of women in the vote in Syria. The survey results indicated that women are considerably less likely to vote than men due to various social and security factors. Additionally, women's ability to contact their political representatives is limited; men were significantly more likely to contact their local political representatives to raise community concerns than women. In the few incidences when women did reach out to political representatives it was usually for personal issues rather than community concerns, as in the case when a son was detained, imprisoned, or disappeared. Essentially, there were notable gender inequalities when it came to accessing and exercising political rights across Syria.

Women's election to public office and the gender gap in voter participation appear to be correlated with socio-economic, cultural, and security factors. In terms of reaching political positions, women seemed to have a better chance of getting elected in large cities and in communities with medium to low income. The main two challenges facing women's accessibility to political positions were the social stigma held against female politicians and the lack of relevant expertise necessary for the job. As for the gender gap in voter participation during parliamentary elections, it was relatively wide in rural areas and relatively small in areas with good economic conditions

where women tend to have a higher participation rate. The unstable security climate of certain communities discouraged any involvement in politics for both men and women, but for women there was an increased likelihood of women candidates becoming targets of sexual harassment. Political rights were low across the board everywhere in Syria, yet the limited manner in which they are exercised differs considerably from one context to another.

In the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas the applicable codes mandate that all major public offices be co-chaired by men and women and all seats in then various governance councils must have at least 40% women. This has led to a notable increase of participation of women in local politics. However, there is no reference in the data concerning the type of electoral politics that enable women to win and maintain public office in those areas. Despite showing high levels of participation of women (both as voters and as candidates), these areas have yet to show a major change of public perception on the participation of women in politics. The survey pointed that discrimination against women politicians was still common in many communities, and biases exist the viability and meaningfulness of their participation. This would be an interesting follow up research to understand how the quota system really works and what impact it may have on changing skeptical opinion about women political participation over the long run. Also, women in these areas were specifically vulnerable to security threats orchestrated by the Islamic State and its sleeping cells that seem to specifically target women politicians. On the other hand, women respondents in these areas indicated that local political representatives were highly responsive to their complaints.

Women had lower chances to be elected in GoS and Turkish-backed rebel groups' areas. In Government controlled areas, female politicians were traditionally less likely to get elected and there were no identifiable trends during parliamentary election as to the policy space allowed for women to engage in politics; different governorates showed conflicting patterns.

In the future it might be relevant to study how the few women who were elected built up their electoral strategies to draw lessons learned from the successful campaigns. In HTS areas, the results indicated that men and women have almost equal chances of reaching public office, this is in contradiction of known facts from the area and may reflect that the limited number of elections that normally take place in those areas are elections for unions and civil society boards and not so much for formal governance posts. Women in these elections seem to show improved chances of winning small elections in recent years as some interviews have suggested.

6.6.1 Baseline Review Prior to 2011

The participation of women in political life cannot be separated from the general political life in Syria though it has its own complications. Women` rise to prominence to hold public office was gradual and often associated with top-down political decisions rather than a bottom-up pressure to assert their political roles. Women obtained the right to vote in 1949 after the first military coup in the post-independence era ousted the democratically elected government and parliament. That right to vote was conditional; universal suffrage would not be recognized in the Syrian constitution till 1953 after another military coup. Women entered Parliament for the first time by appointment from the top leadership in the unity government that brought Syria and Egypt into union in 1958. Ascension to the National Council in 1965 and to the People's assembly in 1969 and 1971 were also by appointment.

Subsequently the number of women steadily increased in Parliament to roughly 12%; however, the bulk of women were voted in on the Baath party and its ruling coalition's ticket. Independent women had a much lower chance than their male counterpart to win independent seat, though both men and women independents comprised a small fraction of the seats.[42] Women in the local elections faired less prominently and won a maximum of 9% of the seats in 2007.[43] Women candidates to public offices comprised 8% of the total number of candidates but

they were clearly unevenly distributed throughout the country.[44] Women were also considerably underrepresented in the numbers of registered voters, though statistics for the breakdown of voters in Syria is sporadic and only made available for a limited number of elections.[45] Women's presence in appointed public offices in Syria was on the rise. The trend was improving from two to four women were ministers from during the last decade before 2011; there was also a woman vice president, and the number of judges and public officials was on the rise steadily till 2011.[46] This also covered many domains on the national and local level, in the government as well as the Government controlled labor unions. Women were also on the rise in the ranks and top leadership of the ruling Baath party. However, when interviewed many women said that their winning of elections was still a far cry from participating in designing policy and directing party platforms.[47]

The Syrian constitution of 1973 granted women overt equal citizenship rights according to article 25 and stipulated in article 45 that the government should guarantee women the opportunities that enable them to "fully and effectively participate in political, social, cultural and economic life". However, the constitution also recognized in its article 3 that the Islamic jurisprudence would remain the primary source of legislation. The Syrian government often indicated in the context of its reports on the implementation of the CEDAW convention the sensitivity of adhering to social interpretations of the Islamic jurisprudence and used this as an excuse to delay the removal of its reservations on various articles of the convention. Many of these reservations affected women political empowerment directly or indirectly.[48]

6.6.2 Quantitative Survey Findings

According to respondents, women tend to have less chances of getting elected to public office than men, reflected by a score of -1.3 (on a scale from +2 to -2)[49]. In some governorates, such as Daraa, Tartus, Rural Damascus and Homs, women's chances are significantly lower than men's. The closest women's

[42] The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population (SCFAP), 2007. Nahwa al-tamkin al-siyasi lil mar'ah al-souriyyah. Damascus: SCFAP and UNIFEM.

[43] https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=ar/CEDAW/C/SYR/2 Last visited April 24th, 2021.

[44] SCFAP, 2007.

[45] IBID.

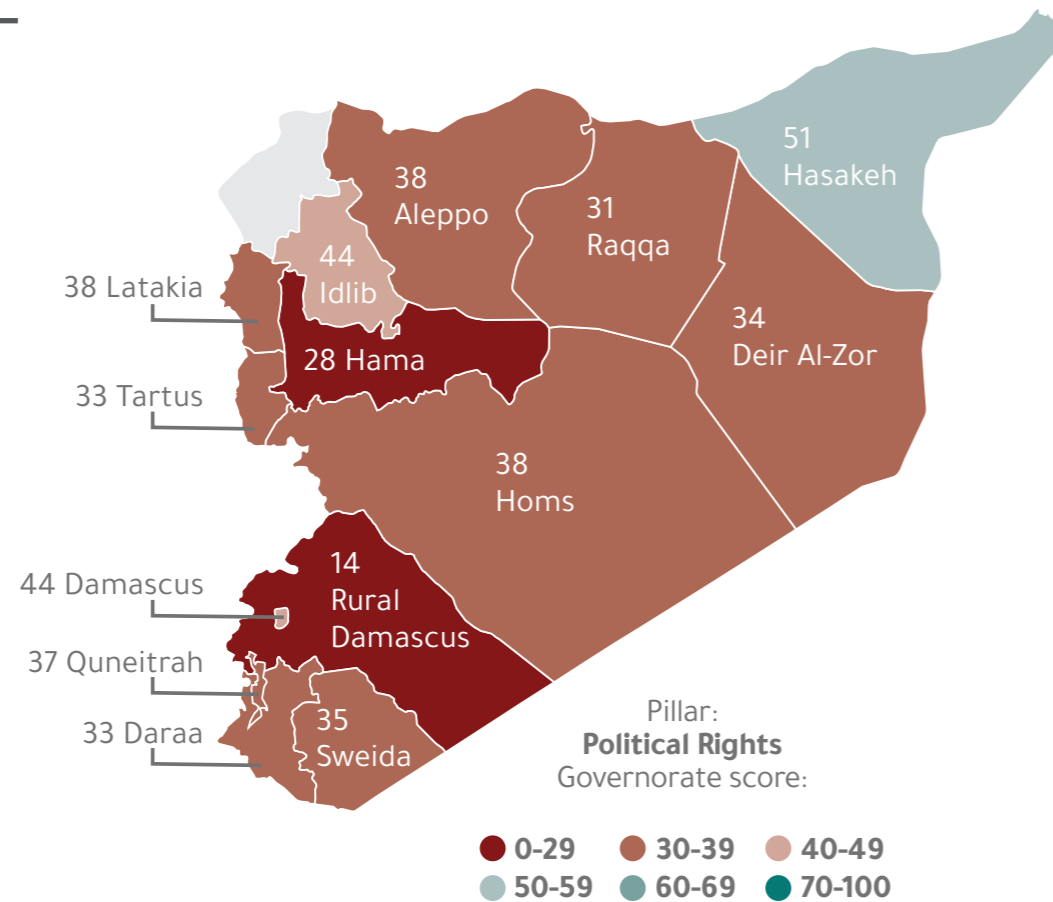[46] https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=ar/CEDAW/C/SYR/2 Last visited April 24th, 2021.

[47] SCFAP, 2007.

[48] IBID.

[49] From -2 to +2: women have significantly more chances - women have slightly more chances - women; and men have the same chances - men have slightly more chances - men have significantly more chances.

chances get to equality with men's are in Hasakeh, at -0.4. Generally, women's chances seem to be lower in Central Government areas and in areas controlled by the Turkish-backed Syrian Free Army (Euphrates Shield). In large cities, especially in communities with medium to low income, women seem to have better chances of getting elected to public office. However, the survey did not explain which types of office they are likely to be elected to. In the qualitative survey this is nuanced and indicate possibilities of winning office in less important fields rather than major decision-making offices.

Figure 20: Map of political rights pillar scores by governorate

38 Latakia

33 Tartus

44 Damascus

37 Quneitrah

33 Daraa

51 Hasakeh

38 Aleppo

31 Raqqa

44 Idlib

28 Hama

34 Deir Al-Zor

38 Homs

14 Rural Damascus

35 Sweida

Pillar:
Political Rights
Governorate score:

- 0-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-100

While a majority of men vote in parliamentary elections, at the rate of 3.9[50], only some women seem to vote, at 3.1. The gender gap is smallest in Damascus, at 3.7 for men and 3.4 for women, and widest in Rural Damascus, at 3.6 for men and 2.1 for women (the lowest participation rate in all governorates). The gap is also relatively large in rural areas, at 4.0 for men and 3.0 for women. In areas with relatively good economic conditions, the rate is 3.9 for men and 3.5

for women, i.e. women in economically stable areas have a higher participation rate and the gender gap is relatively small.
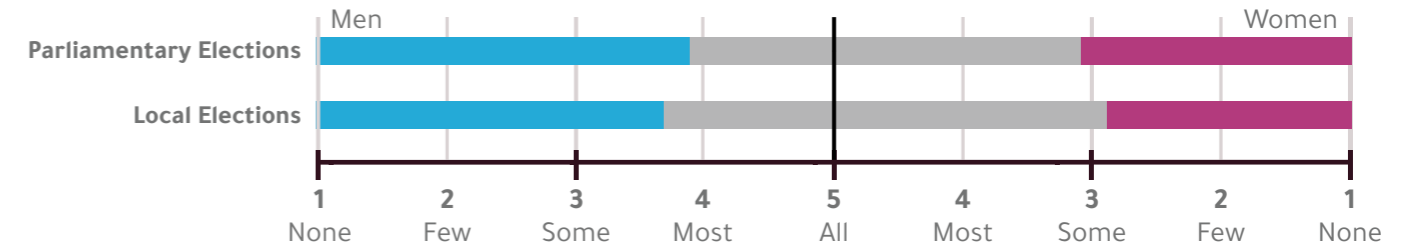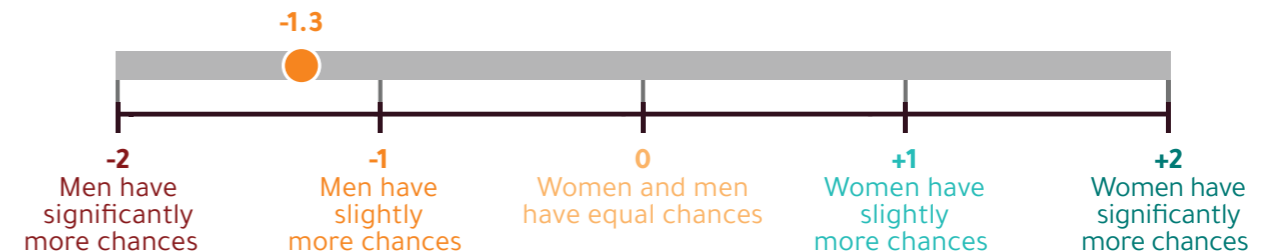

Figure 21: Proportion of women and men who vote in elections

In the most recent local elections, voting was slightly lower for both men and women in comparison to parliamentary elections, at 3.7 for men and 2.9 for women. The largest gender gaps were recorded in Daraa, at 4.0 for men and 2.5 for women, and in Rural Damascus, at 3.5 for men and 2.0 for women. The highest participation rates at the governorate-level were in Hasakeh, at 4.3 for men and 3.5 for women. The most common correlations indicate that in elections that seem to be credible to local communities, men and women votes are relatively high. Also, the results point to a high correlation between turnout to parliamentary elections and those to local elections. Where women tend to vote heavily in one there are likely to vote heavily in the other. This points to a strong correlation between women participation in voting and the credibility of political elections.

Figure 22: Women's and men's chances of getting elected to public office

-1.3

-2
Men have significantly more chances

-1
Men have slightly more chances

0
Women and men have equal chances

+1
Women have slightly more chances

+2
Women have significantly more chances

Men are also significantly more likely to contact their local political representatives to raise community concerns than women, at a rate of 3.3[51] for men and 2.2 for women. The largest gender gaps are observed in Rural Damascus, Raqqa, Hama and Deir al-Zor, while the smallest gap is in Daraa. The lowest likelihood of women to contact their local representatives was recorded in Rural Damascus, Quneitrah and Tartus.

6.6.3 Qualitative Survey Findings

The qualitative survey asked respondents to elaborate on the details of women political participation. The findings reflect nuanced perceptions. Women may face serious societal pressures inhibiting their participation in politics, yet, what defines their engagement in public affairs is related the credibility of the political processes, and many women would consider taking their chances with politics if the process was more transparent, secure and accessible despite social stigma and inhibition. Responses to questions in this pillar intersected very often with social and cultural norm codes as well as to perceptions of security.

Accessibility to Political Positions and Political Participation

According to most participants, the main two challenges facing women's accessibility to political positions were the social stigma held against them working in politics and the stigma against political work itself within the Syrian context. Specifically, many participants indicated that women politicians were not always perceived with respect, were usually looked down at by their communities which did not encourage their political ambitions. Comments about women being inexperienced and unfit for political life were often put forward by women interviewees. Nevertheless, while participants indicated that participation in politics is indignant for women, many pointed out that as education and social awareness levels improved, female politicians were increasingly being perceived with respect.

For some participants the lack of female political role models fails to inspire women to join political careers and to change society's views on female politicians. A few participants indicated that women did not participate in political work due to its ineffective and fraudulent nature. Family disapproval, family obligations, and obstacles within the electoral system were also mentioned by a few participants as challenges to women's accessibility to political positions. In some cases, participants referred to the

social perception which deemed women as lacking the proper knowledge and expertise regarding their political context to be able to occupy such positions.

A few participants indicated that the toxic and unsafe security climate discouraged any involvement in politics for men as well as for women, but the impact on women's political participation was even more endangered because of the increased likelihood of them becoming targets of harassment, bullying and outright assassination. This was especially highlighted by participants living in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas where women politicians fell victims to attacks orchestrated by the Islamic State. A few other respondents highlighted the challenges of the electoral system and the burdensome financial demands associated with running for office.

There were no apparent variations between responses of participants living in Government held and Turkish backed Rebel Groups areas. However, there were some trends among the rest. Participants living in Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas indicated that men and women had equal accessibility to political positions due to the local code mandating the appointment of male and female co-chairs in all top administrative and political positions, yet discrimination and social stigma against women politicians were still noted within those communities. This may indicate that while the Self-Administration codes may appear ostensibly progressive, they may not necessarily reflect the attitudes of all the communities living across their territories. In HTS areas, participants indicated that women politicians were viewed with respect and their challenges were related to their expertise and competencies. In reality however, women occupy very few political seats and their roles are confined to family affairs and education.

Women's Relationship with Local Political Representatives

The likelihood that women reach out to local political representatives to raise their community's concerns and needs were rather low. Instead, women would usually consult local political representatives for personal issues rather than community-related issues such as in the case that their son being detained, imprisoned, or disappeared. Participants residing in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas indicated that local political representatives were highly responsive to complaints and had an open-door policy. Women felt safer there to bring grievances.

Participants added that the likelihood of reaching out to political representatives may be low due to the absence of trust in the political environment; there was a prevailing mistrust among both male and female citizens alike of their local authorities. In general, engagement with political actors remained rather low even in areas where women run for office more frequently.

6.7 Legal Rights

"We are a society that prefers to burry its problems and not have a public case for the world to see"

The question of women's access to their legal rights is complex and related to the fairness of the prevailing legal systems in their areas, accessibility to legal institutions, the implementation of legal decisions. Due to limitations of resources the survey did not tackle in detail the role of the police explicitly and focused more specifically on the impact of issuing laws, the role of formal and informal court systems, and the execution of judiciary decisions. However, other factors seem to feature in women's calculus to seek adjudication. These involve social stigma, mistrust in corrupt legal institutions, and the perceived costs involved in hiring lawyers. In many cases women perceived access to the formal legal system to be fair but seemed to be less aware of their legal rights. Lack of awareness seem to be the largest hindrance for women seeking justice. The survey anticipated these social determinants on the access to justice and asked specific questions to understand how laws, legal institutions and executive procedures are perceived and manipulated by social and community actors.

Women's access to the formal legal system is challenged on all fronts. They are discriminated against within the text of the laws itself, as well as in terms of access to legal institutions. The national Syrian formal laws explicitly afford greater rights to men than women, particularly in matters related to marriage, divorce, custody of children, guardianship, and inheritance. These disparities also exist in many of the codes implemented in areas outside Government control. However, respondents determined the fairness of the legal system less in terms of the letter of the law and more according to their ability access judicial institutions. The survey pointed to women being further disenfranchised in terms of their access the legal system, to assert rights. Respondents pointed to financial factors related to affording lawyers and power of attorney fees particularly given the economic hardships; they also pointed to security challenges hindering physical access to legal institutions. Moreover, women fear social stigma

if they decided to seek legal support anyway. The limited access and fear of social pressure often drive women to seek justice through informal traditional and or non-traditional mechanisms. Women from upper- and middle-income groups seemed more inclined to seek such access; urban women were also more akin to seek ways for legal redress than rural women.

The legal pillar showed high correlation with several other pillars. Women's accessibility to their legal rights intersected with economic conditions in general. The affordability of legal services is highly dependent on the woman's economic conditions; the economic factor is interlinked in the data with women's understanding of the of judicial system and having the know-how to maneuver through its complex institutions. Also, economic status was strongly correlated to women's awareness of their legal rights. On the other hand, patriarchal social and cultural norms regarding women's role in society seem to also have strong linkages to women seeking adjudication in the formal legal system or resorting to informal justice mechanisms such as local arbitration and mediation by elders. Many respondents pointed to social pressures and stigma preventing women from expressing their grievances in public. They pointed to having to seek mediation through traditional social mechanisms to retain some of their rights. There was also strong correlation in the data between the legal rights pillar and the security pillar. Specifically, these interconnections point to increased incidences of GBV against women/girls including physical violence, harassment, and child marriage with poor scores in the legal pillar. Similarly, there was strong evidence that poor access to legal rights coincided with weak HLP rights.

Women in Government controlled areas had special views when it comes to the fairness of the legal institutions. Respondents linked fairness of the legal system to access to resources and connections and generally avoided criticism of the legal system itself. Men were perceived to have better chances to benefit from seeking justice through formal mechanisms. In Daraa women were more satisfied with the fairness of the institutions, contrary to women from Rural Damascus, Hama and Tatrus where women indicated clear dissatisfaction. Issues such as the protection of women's custody rights over their children were particularly thought to be influenced by extrajudicial factors in these areas. These disparities point

to a heterogeneous application of the law and the practice of judicial proceedings.

On the other hand, women in the HTS-held areas, described the legal institutions to be fair towards women. The swift justice of the Sharia Courts and the ability of women to access a judgment relatively fast mattered more than the application of the Sharia law. Respondents from Idleb considered the legal system in their area to be fairer than in Government controlled areas where courts are inaccessible and procedures are complex, time consuming and often subject to indirect interferences. For women in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas, the fairness of the institutions differed based on the type of legal intervention needed. In general, the legal system was thought to be fair in adjudications related to family law and violence related disputes. These latter types of disputes seem to be particularly high in Raqqa.

6.7.1 Baseline Review Prior to 2011

The Syrian constitution of 1973 provided equal citizenship to men and women in its article 25. It further mandated the State in article 45 to guarantee women all opportunities to enabling them to participate in the political, social, cultural, and economic life fully and effectively. However, women continued to face challenges when they came into contact with the Syrian justice system. The preservation of Islamic jurisprudence as the main source of legislation according to article 3 created many dichotomies in the Syrian legal codes, especially when it came to personal status laws where the legislation adopted in 1949 retained many interpretations of classical religious codes in favor of male custodianship in the family and this greatly impacted the lives of women when it came to matters related of marriage, divorce, custody and guardianship, as well as inheritance. The provisions in the personal status law had ramifications for a myriad of other legal jurisdictions including the civil code, the penal code and codes establishing the rules and procedures of litigation.[52]

[52] For a comprehensive review of all the codes discriminating against women in the Syrian legal corpus, review: Murad, Ghada, 2003, Al-mar'a al-souriyyah wa al-qanoun. Damsacus. Also see: Al-Rahbi, Maya, 2014. Al-nasawiyyah: mafahim wa qadaya. Damascus: Dar al Rahbah.

Syria's ratifications of international instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2003 did little to secure women's rights. Syria ratified the treaty with reservations to articles that it claimed were incompatible with Sharia law. While Syria's periodic reports to the follow up process to the Beijing conference often pointed out to the government's intention to gradually overcome those reservations, the reports were very explicit in terms of recognizing the difficulty in mitigating the contradictions inherent in the Syrian constitution itself.[53]

However, it was not only the letter of the law that disadvantaged women, but often the conservative interpretations by the courts dominated by male judges that made things worse.[54] The number of women judges remained limited and efforts to graduate more women judges did not make much progress as the number of women graduates remained slightly less than half the number of men judges (a figure that would regress further after 2010).[55]

Access to the judiciary system was often problematic for women. Except for a few pilot projects providing women with legal aid in very specific cases, there was not a formal legal aid system in Syria, and lawyers generally did not accept pro bono work. Even when lawyers accepted reduced fees, the fees for ratifying a power of attorney to a lawyer to represent a client remained beyond most women's ability to pay. This was a barrier to access justice for both men and women, but disproportionately impacted women, as they often lacked independent financial means.[56] Social stigma and fears of family pressure and the husband's objections also contributed to a woman not pursuing formal legal remedies.[57] Corruption in the justice system meant that women had to afford significant bribe money to have their cases addressed by the courts in a timely manner.

Women often resorted to traditional and/or improvised informal justice mechanisms to seek some retribution or resolution to their legal disputes. This generally involved designating a community

elder or leader (often a man) mediating on her behalf. While this had been an important route of redress for many women in different parts of the country, this further subjugated women to social norms and often contributed to hindering their achievement of basic rights.[58]
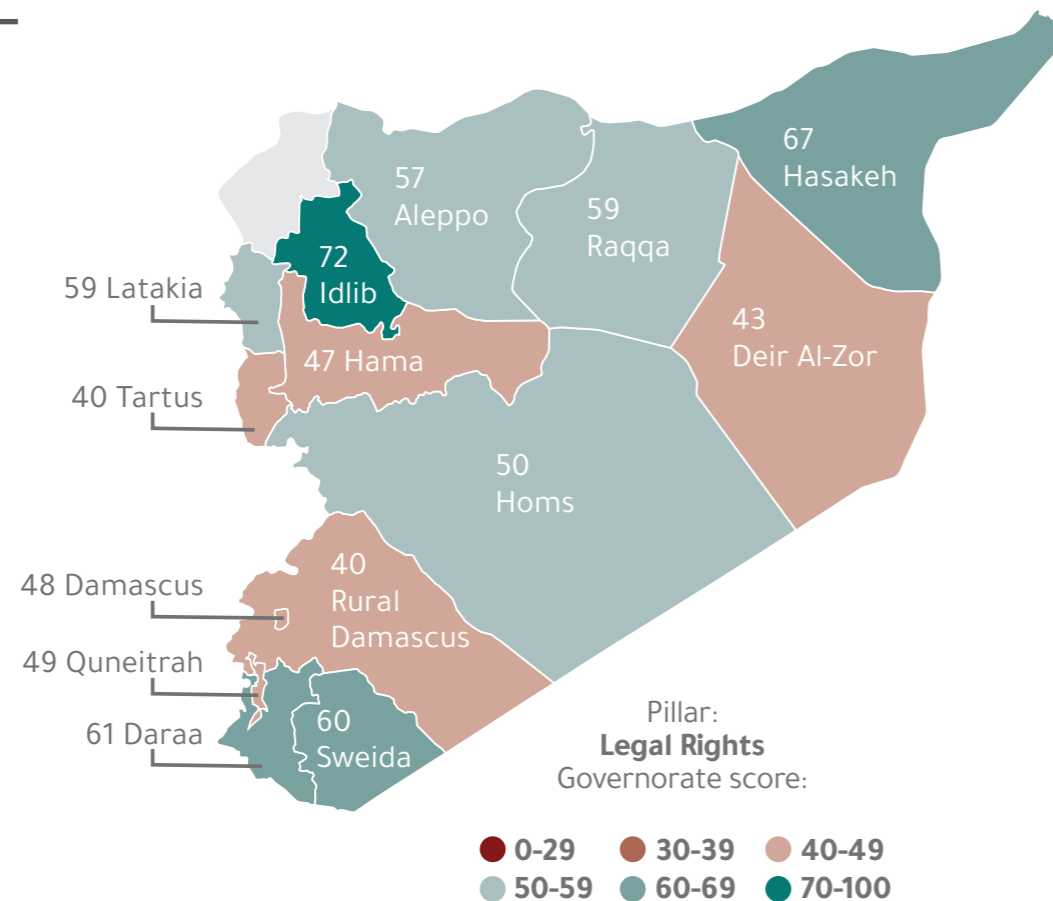
6.7.2 Quantitative Survey Findings

Respondents differed in their appreciation of the fairness of the legal system in their area. The average is 3.2, which is somewhat between neither fair nor unfair, though local variations were considerable[59]. In comparison, respondents believed that men tend to be treated somewhat more fairly by the courts, at 3.6. Men and women are treated most fairly and equally in the governorates of Idlib since the Sharia Courts administered swift justice and their decisions were respected and implemented by the local authorities. In the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas the fairness of the legal system faired less with Raqqa having the highest rate at 3.9. Government controlled areas varied considerably but generally the system was less appreciated for its fairness than other areas. In Daraa an area that was regained to the central government but having its own local arrangements still the fairness of the legal system was rated at 4.0. In other GoS controlled areas women are perceived to be treated less fairly by courts, the lowest rates were in Rural Damascus at 2.7 and Tartus at 2.8.

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Al-Rahbi, 2014.

[55] https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=ar/CEDAW/C/SYR/2
Last visited April 24th, 2021.

[56] Ilac, 2017.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] From 5 to 1: very fair - fair - neither fair nor unfair - unfair - very unfair.

Figure 23: Map of legal rights pillar scores by governorate

67 Hasakeh

57 Aleppo

59 Raqqa

72 Idlib

59 Latakia

43 Deir Al-Zor

47 Hama

40 Tartus

50 Homs

48 Damascus

40 Rural Damascus

49 Quneitrah

61 Daraa

60 Sweida

Pillar:
Legal Rights
Governorate score:

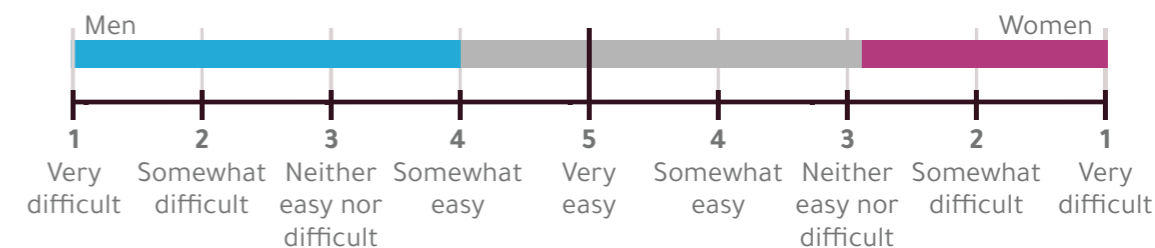● 0-29   ● 30-39   ● 40-49
● 50-59   ● 60-69   ● 70-100

Women seem to face significantly more difficulties than men do in accessing the legal system (a court of law, the presence of defense counsel, law enforcement). This is reflected by an average score of 2.9 for women[60], compared to 4.0 for men. The gender gap in access to the legal system is widest in Quneitrah, Tartus, Raqqa and Damascus. Women seem to have somewhat easier access to the legal system in Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas and areas controlled by HTS.

In terms of the degree to which the law protects women's rights, respondents believed some of these rights are better protected than others. For example, access to education is protected somewhat fairly by the applicable law, at 3.8[61]. At the governorate level, it is perceived to be least protected in Raqqa at 3.0. This is somewhat surprising given that the perception of the gender gap between boys and girls is not very prevalent there (see the education pillar). This would require subsequent iterations of the research to focus more carefully on general scarcity of services and not just on the gender gap in the text of the law.

[60] From 5 to 1: very easy - somewhat easy - neither easy nor difficult - somewhat difficult - very difficult.
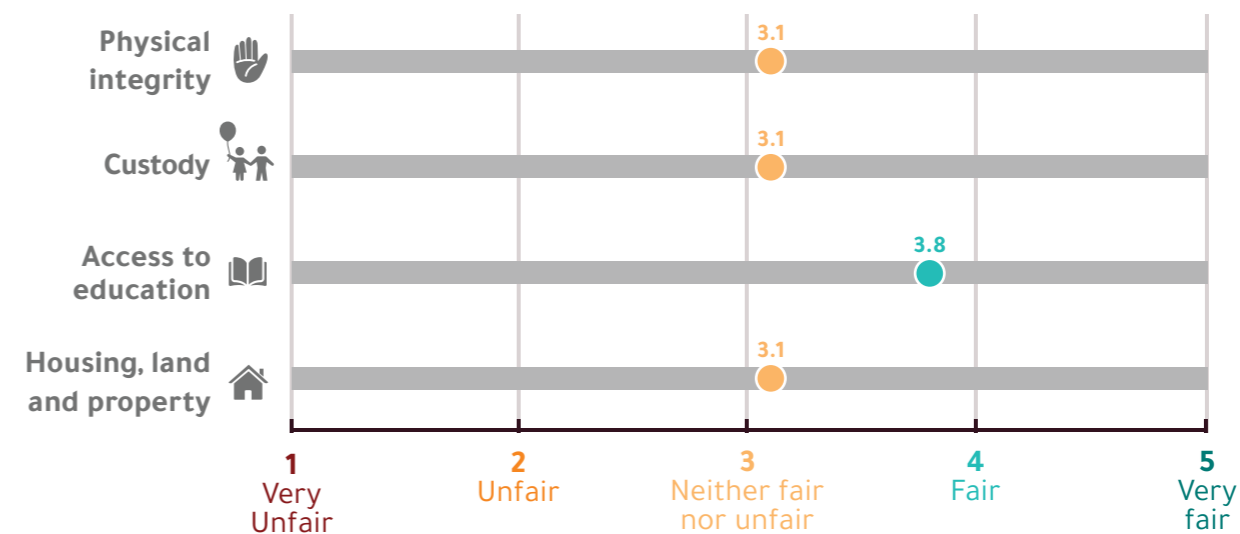
[61] From 5 to 1: very fair - fair - neither fair nor unfair - unfair - very unfair.

Men   Women

1   2   3   4   5   4   3   2   1
Very   Somewhat Neither   Somewhat Very   Somewhat Neither   Somewhat Very
difficult difficult easy nor   easy   easy   easy   easy nor   difficult difficult
                     difficult   difficult

Figure 24: Ease of access to the legal system for women and men

On the other hand, physical safety of women seems to be less protected by laws, at a low rating of 3.1. The least degree of protection for this right was recorded in Rural Damascus at 2.2. Women's custody rights also seem to be poorly protected, at 3.1. Hama and Rural Damascus have the lowest rates at 2.4. Custody rights over minor children, in case of divorce or death of husband, are also poorly protected from the perspective of divorced women, at 2.7. Housing, land and property rights' degree of protection by law was also low at 3.1. These rights seem to be most protected in Idlib at 4.1, and least protected in Tartus, Deir al-Zor, Hama and Rural Damascus. However, once again we have a discrepancy in the perception of protection and the awareness of such rights, as is qualified by the qualitative survey.

Figure 25: Fairness in the legal protection of women's rights

Physical integrity   3.1

Custody   3.1

Access to education   3.8

Housing, land and property   3.1

1   2   3   4   5
Very   Unfair   Neither fair Fair   Very
Unfair   nor unfair   fair

In general, there was a high correlation between the security and the legal rights pillars. Women feel more secure from different forms of violence and abuse when they have more faith in the legal system. Also, there were correlation in the data between perceptions of fairness in the system for men with that of women. In essence, when the system is generally fair it tends to be fairer for women; the gender gap is less prevalent in more transparent and less corrupt systems. However, there were some minor exceptions to this rule.

6.7.3 Qualitative Survey Findings

The qualitative survey provided very nuanced answers regarding legal protection. The issue of protection is not correlated with the prevalence of laws or the robustness of the legal system as much as in the awareness of women of their rights. Women from upper and medium economic class, and from large and mid-sized cities seemed to have the best chances to access the legal system in their areas and the have their grievances addressed by the courts.

Accessibility to the Formal Justice System

Several factors affect the accessibility of women to the formal justice system including the perception that access to the legal system is costly and beyond the means of women. Other factors include social pressure and stigma associated with women being dragged to courts. Physical access also seems to be a problem as court houses and police stations are not available everywhere. The road accessibility is not often secured to main cities and towns where recourse to the formal legal institutions is possible. Moreover, perception of cumbersome bureaucracy, crowded courthouses, corruption and harassment in the public space seem to pose challenges to seeking justice in the formal legal system.

However, the most important hindrance facing women seeking their legal rights seem to be that they are not even aware that they have rights. Several respondents mentioned that women don't have the know how when it comes to dealing with courts, or do not know how to find or hire a lawyer.

Affordability of Legal Services

When faced with possible litigation against men, women seem to have a clear disadvantage. Hiring a lawyer and giving them a formal power of attorney cost money and disruption to working schedule for working women. Men were reported to have more access to advanced cash to pay lawyers, they can even borrow money or sell property. Women seem to be at a considerable economic disadvantage when seeking adjudicating within the formal legal system. That is why in areas where quasi-governmental bodies applied "swift justice" measures and abolished due legal procedures, like in Idlib, women seem to have a better access to the law from an economic point of view. Yet, such measures also tend to apply laws that are less favorable for women.

Connections (Wasta) and Bribes

Several respondents said that the fairness of treatment in the legal insinuation is linked to who you know and how much you have. Women have less access to fair treatment since they have fewer resources (money and connections). Even women who have "wasta" seemed reluctant to use it as that might impose future obligations on her or her family. In some cases, it was implied that providing such wasta would be repaid with dishonorable requests implying sexual favors.

Social Pressure to Resort to Informal Justice Mechanisms

The majority of women said that society and family are encouraging women to seek traditional mediation to solve their issues, to protect the family, their honor, and their social relations. Formal justice procedures are lengthy and costly, as has been pointed out. Most women mentioned that resorting to the formal legal system usually will come with stigma, social isolation, as well as physical and verbal violence. Informal traditional mediation and arbitration is thought to be less damaging to the women and their families. However, these mechanisms are often carried on behalf of women by their male relatives, as women are not encouraged to talk to male lawyers. Thus, women may be more successful in were seeking justice from strangers than from close family members. In this latter case, accessing any form of redress becomes off limit for them. When the dispute is with a close male relative, even informal arbitration and mediation channels are not readily accessible to women. In many cases women are pressured to resort to "traditional" methods of arbitration, however, there is little indication in the data how society defines such tradition. Some women indicated that there are new and improvised arbitration mechanisms. This is an area that requires further detailed research.

Fair Treatment by Public Institutions

While some women thought that the justice system is fair, many respondents indicated that the fairness of treatment in the institutions responsible for implanting the law are highly unreliable and dependent on who you know and how much money you can pay to ensure that judgments are implemented. In some other cases women respondents thought that police are just as biased as judges against women and are more likely to act in favor of the man even when the law is in favor of the woman. The institutions related to the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration were described to be fairer to women by some respondents.

Fairness of the General Laws and Regulations

Many respondents indicated that women have little protection under the law in areas that were important to them such as protection from domestic violence and protection against arbitrary layoffs in the private sector and in informal employment. There is a general perception in many areas that the law is not on the side of women. This perception is slowly changing in the Kurdish dominated self-administration areas, as women are seeing the implementation of the law and not just the text of the law moving in their favor.

Availability of Judicial Institutions

Several women referred to the hardship in accessing legal institutions, especially for those living in rural areas; the situation seems somewhat better for those living in the cities at closer proximity to legal institutions. In many cases these institutions are operating at sub optimal level or are absent all together. In Kurdish dominated self-administration areas, it was easier to access legal institutions since they seem to be more evenly distributed. However, in those areas there is a duality of legal institutions and many cases are only handled in central government courts that are now restricted to main cities.

6.8 Education

> "*In the past the people in this area preferred to have their daughters get married at 18 lest they risk not marrying at all. In the last three years, new chances for girls finishing their education have come about, the parents are changing their minds*"

The education pillar was an area where most societal stereotypes and perceptions of women were particularly apparent compared to other pillars. This seems to be because parents often expressed strong opinions about social norms related to girls' education and expected futures for their daughters. The role of women as caregivers is consolidated at an early age and societal pressure is exercised to lead girls into fields of study that reinforce these stereotypes. The crisis seems to have changed little in terms of these stereotypes, if anything, there is a tendency to force children to drop out of school at an early age. All parts of the country seem to exhibit such tendencies, except in the north east where social norms are gradually changing but given that these areas were disadvantaged in the first place, the gap they still have to cover is tremendous.

Despite ten years of conflict, most families still adhere to strong pre-conflict practice by sending their children to school. There is no significant difference between girls and boys in this regard. However, in some areas, such as the governorates of Raqqa, Deir al-Zor and Daraa, school dropouts seem to be high, especially for girls. Lack of security is a major factor influencing school dropouts. In other cases, poor economic conditions lead some families to stop sending their children to school beyond initial primary school years; this usually subjects boys to child labor and girls to child marriage. Lack of access to schools is another barrier especially for girls, This was particularly acute in the Northeast and Northwest, and in many rural areas across the country. Lack of accreditation adds another challenge, especially for families in Kurdish-dominated Self-Administration areas.

The purpose and choices of women's education are strongly tied with perceptions of women's role in society. Stereotypical expectations of women to get married early and care for home and children impose a pressure on girls in terms of their education and choices. As a result, female high school graduates tend to be more limited in their higher education major choices than male counterparts. Girls are often encouraged to choose majors that require fewer years of education. Meanwhile, they are encouraged to pursue jobs that are stable, predictable, less demanding, have fewer working hours, and longer paid breaks to allow them to tend to their families, something that was expressed most often as the primary role of women's labor. They are also encouraged to choose professions that may involve independent and flexible work. Specialties related to humanities, translation, teaching, pharmacology, nursing, architecture and design are therefore quite popular among women. The general perception related by many respondents is that women have intrinsic nature inclined to such professions.

In terms of employment in the education sector, women occupy a significant proportion of positions, especially in comparison to other sectors. The majority of primary school teachers are female, and a large proportion of secondary teachers as well. In contrast, the proportion of female school head administrators is significantly lower. Teaching jobs fit societal perception of women as caregivers, while also providing stability and convenience for women who are still expected to be the primary care takers of their households. However, women's inclination to teaching jobs contributes to narrowing their potential and reinforcing stereotypical images of women.

6.8.1 Baseline Review Prior to 2011

Syria managed to make major strides in moving closer towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals concerning inclusiveness of education. Illiteracy was almost whipped out and the average number of years of education was on the rise for both girls and boys, albeit the rate for women was slowing down by the second half of the decade before 2011. By 2011, the rates of girls in the basic education phase increased to 98% in the first cycle (fourth grade) and 94% in the second cycle (eighth grade).[62] However, statistics related to the quantitative access to education betray

[62] http://cbssyr.sy/
Last visited April 24th, 2021.

many worrisome qualitative indicators related to the efficiency of the system, its connection to practical knowledge needed in the labor market, quality control, curricula, critical thinking, IT and technology, etc.[63]

Girls' enrollment in the general education system was high, facilitated by a large increase in the number of schools built throughout Syria, making the number of girls' high schools on par and even superior to boys' schools in many parts of the country.[64] However, considerable disparities existed between urban and rural areas especially in the North and Eastern governorates. More prevalent than disparities in access to primary and secondary schools were the disparities related to vocational training and technical education. Many governorates did not have sufficient schools for girls and when they did it was for topics of little relevance to the labor markets (home economics, religious studies, etc.).

Women teachers were the norm rather than the exception in the primary schools (64% in 2006). Women by far exceed the number of men graduating from the higher colleges for preparing teachers. However, the percentage of women teachers in high school the number lingered for some years around 47%.[65] In higher education the ratio of women to men teachers in the university level was less than 20% but was on the rise.[66]

6.8.2 Quantitative Survey Findings

Few indicators were selected to explore the issue of education from a quantitative point of view. In hindsight these indicators were not always the most informative ones. The proportion of secondary school teachers that are women did not seem to vary significantly from one area to another and the rating averaged 3.6 nationally[67]. By contrast, the proportion of female school head administrators was quite lower, rated at 3.0. The highest proportions were in Rural Damascus at 3.5 and Quneitrah at 3.4, while the lowest were in Tartus and Deir al-Zor at 2.3.
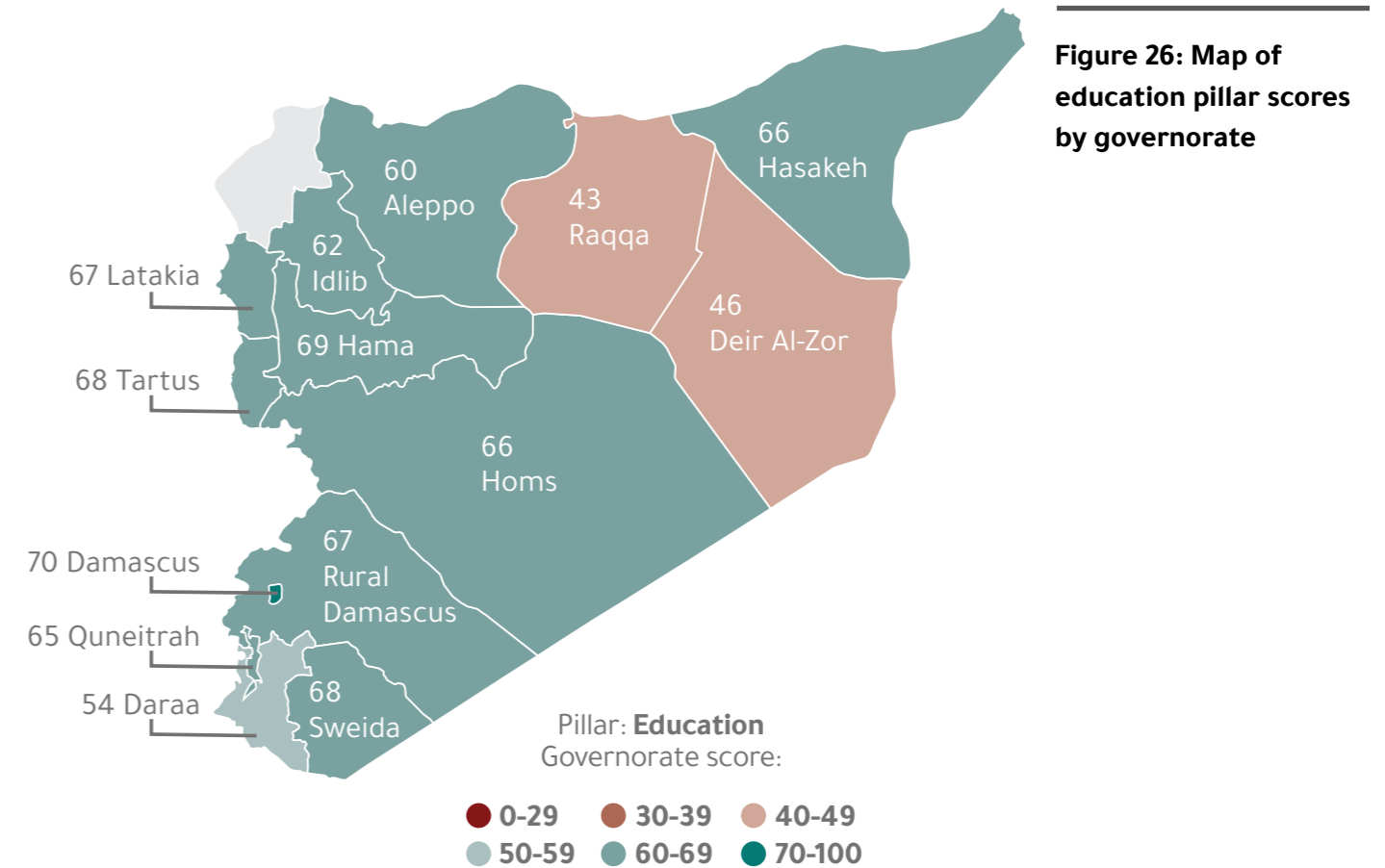
Figure 26: Map of education pillar scores by governorate

Pillar: **Education**
Governorate score:
● 0-29 ● 30-39 ● 40-49
● 50-59 ● 60-69 ● 70-100

As for literacy, a significant proportion of women can read and write according to respondents' estimates, at an average rating of 3.7. Women's literacy seems to be the lowest in Raqqa and Deir al-Zor, at 2.6 and 2.8 respectively, while the highest level was recorded in Tartus at 4.3. Economic factors seem to play a role here; in high-income areas the literacy rating is 4.3, compared to only 3.4 in low-income areas.
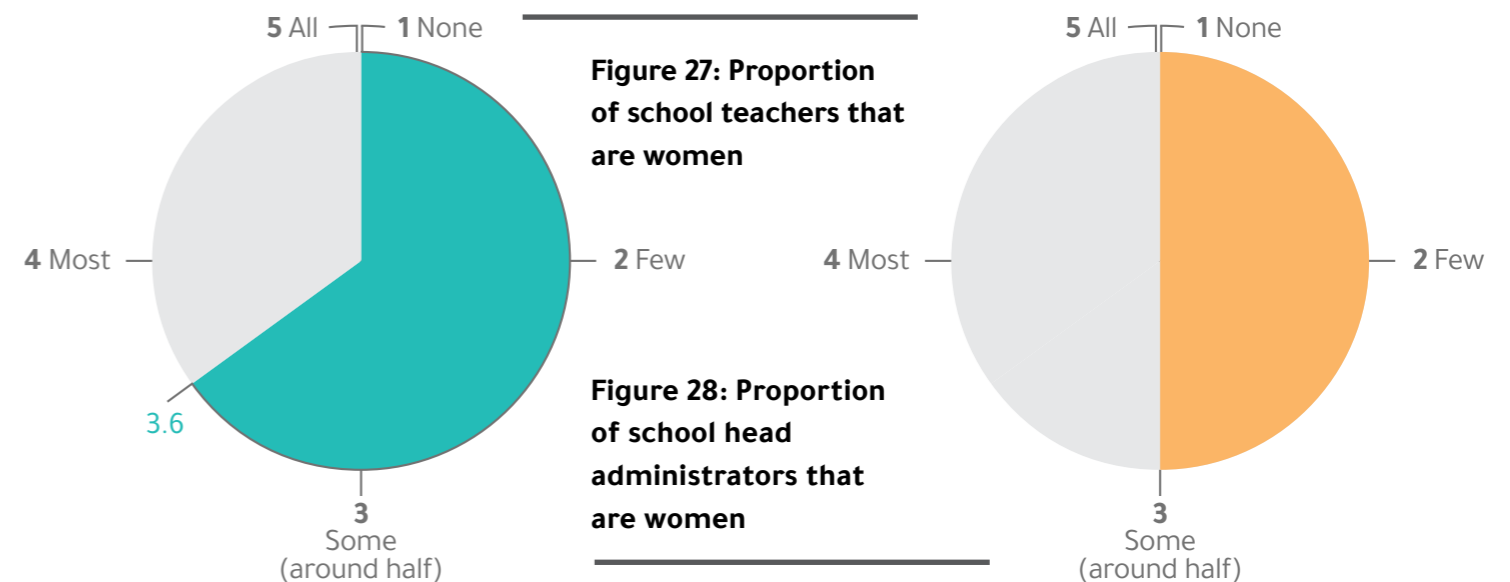

Figure 27: Proportion of school teachers that are women

Figure 28: Proportion of school head administrators that are women

The proportion of girls aged 15-18 who are not enrolled in school did not significantly differ from that of boys, at an average rating of 3.6 for girls,[68] and 3.5 for boys. In many governorates, such as Rural Damascus, Sweida, Tartus, and Hama, it seems more likely for boys to drop out from school. On the other hand, in Raqqa, there is a higher likelihood of girls to not be enrolled in high school, at a rate of 2.0 for girls and 2.4 for boys, even though in primary schools they seem to fair rather well. This is also the case in areas controlled by the Turkish-backed Syrian Free Army, where the rate is 2.7 for girls and 3.2 for boys.

6.8.3 Qualitative Survey Findings

In contrast to quantitative survey results, the qualitative survey was nuanced and very informative. It revealed the gender gap in many areas and the biases at the deep societal level facing girls and women's access to education.

Availability of Schools/Universities

Many respondents reported that the number of schools is not enough and in many cases the schools are not available at all. Many school buildings are used as shelters and many others are either destroyed or semi-destroyed. This is the case for all grades of education. The lack of access to schools was reported to be a main reason for dropping out of schools, especially for girls. This was particularly observed in the Northeast and Northwest areas. In GoS areas there was a consistent complaint that the number of functioning schools was reduced and meant the remaining schools were overcrowded and this influenced the rates of dropouts. Rural areas are at disadvantage, as the number of schools was less than optimal to begin with before the conflict and now many areas have no operable schools at all especially at the secondary level.

For girls, this means travelling to nearby towns to pursue their education and this is often too risky, expensive or unacceptable socially. Many girls in rural areas such as around the towns of Palmyra

and Nubul, have had to leave school due to the lack of availability of preparatory and secondary schools in the area. If they want to study, they must go to neighboring towns, and this requires not only travel and additional costs but also passing through areas hostile to their communities. This was presented as a reason to pull many girls from school and forcing them into marriage.

Responses indicated that in some areas, like the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration, parents had to choose where to enroll their children. They had to make tough choices either to enroll children in the public system operated by the GoS or the schools administered by the local authorities administered by the Self-Administration. Each had its pros and cons, and parents must make difficult decisions:

- Schools related to the local authorities are available in rural and urban areas, but the diplomas are not accredited.

- Schools related to the government are available only in the main cities (Qamishly and Hasakeh) and their diplomas are accredited.

Public universities are concentrated in main cities. Access to them is difficult for most families. Travel to nearby cities is expensive and risky given security conditions and residence in the university dorms in the big cities is not trusted by parents as a safe place for their daughters. This has been a main reason for forcing girls to dropout from university and forcing them to early marriage.

For families in the Northeast the choices to be more limited than anywhere else in the country. Majors available at al-Furat University cover limited academic subjects and seats available to students were very limited. Male students wanting to study medicine and engineering were often afforded the chance to travel to other cities to seek higher education. On the rother hand, respondents from Hasakeh city mentioned that families had to dissuade their daughters from studying in a

[68] From 5 to 1: all - most - some - few - none.

university and only allowed them to register in the nearby technical colleges. Security was a primary concern behind such decisions. Al-Furat was a destination for students from nearby Palmyra before 2011. Now families in Palmyra cannot cross the dividing line to send their daughter to al-Furat. They could not afford other options and opted instead to pull their daughters from university and forced them into marriage.

Affordability of Education

Most of the interviews talked about the difficult economic situation and its impact on seeking education. The high expenses of education (enrollments, materials, stationery, transportation, and other related matters) were a common factor in dropping out of school. The cost of education also factored in the decision-making process when it comes to choosing the type of education to enroll one's children. For females it was a particularly determining factor when choosing what fields to study in university. By contrast for some well-off families, the preference is to send their daughters to nearby private universities to study available programs, rather than allowing them to study their major of choice at public universities further away from their residences.

Some respondents indicated that families in extreme economic distress had to choose among their children to decide who would continue education and who would not. This did not always work in favor of the boys, as some families preferred to force boys to seek jobs in the labor market and preferred to allow their daughters to continue their studies. Other families chose to force their daughters to marry to alleviate the economic pressure.

School Enrollment and Dropouts

Although education in its primary and secondary phases were compulsory in Syria, enforcement differed from one area to another. While many respondents said that it is still a priority for the majority of parents to send their children (both boys

and girls) to school when they can afford it, other factors contribute to the decision of continued enrollment or dropping out. Respondents indicated the following factors as affecting the decision:

- Affordability of education especially for secondary education and university. In some cases, economic constraints prevent parents from considering even primary education as an option. This was the case with IDP's as well as many low-income communities.

- Availability and accessibility of the schools/ universities in the vicinity of the residence. Commuting to schools is particularly problematic for girls, but it is sometimes a consideration to remove boys from school.

- Accreditation of diplomas at all levels was another contributing factor for lower rates of enrollment in certain areas, especially in the Northeast.

- Seeking job opportunities away from the formal labor market with better financial return.

- Displacement and/or constant changing of address.

- Perceived lack of self-motivation (boy/girls).

- Enrollment in university differed considerably for men/women:

  o Men travel and migrate seeking better future or they may opt to stay and enroll at university as a mean to postpone the military service.

  o Women were perceived as taking advantage of men travelling to take opportunities not available to them otherwise. Yet, some were forced to seek employment to support the families after the travel of male children. However, the marrying of underage girls seemed to be the main reason why girls do not continue their education in universities. Pressure from families to preserve social norms still factors in forcing women to marry

and stay home rather than go to universities where they may interact with men. This featured in many respondents' commentaries.

Education Prospect (Value of Education)

Many respondents indicated that education (especially higher education) has little value nowadays. They did not perceive the income generation prospect of education as worth the investment in time and money. Families that undervalued education often used that as a justification to pull children out of school to send them to work for boys and force them to marry early in the case of girls. In one case a respondent from a "reconciliation area" said that culturally women in her area are not encouraged to continue study after high school as this may cause them to interact with men and adopt "foreign ideas" that would sway them away from good marriages; the value of education did not outweigh the risk of having girls lose marriage prospects.

Many respondents indicated that families' preference was to teach the boys a trade that can support them finically. Vocational training was not highly valued as compared to learning as an apprentice on the job. Girls had no such prospects.

Curriculum-Related Issues

Some respondents pointed out that the discrimination based on gender is clearer at the primary school curriculums; it can be seen clearly in the text itself and in the images used in the textbooks. Stereotypical roles of women and men in the house/family were abundant in in the formal curricula. Many of the respondents said that the curriculum in GoS areas is better than before though some considered the new curriculum to be "disastrous". In one case a respondent thought the curriculum to be a step backward in terms of women's rights as introduced images of veiled women. However, regardless of the perception of the curriculum itself, parents complained that teachers have not been given clear instructions on

what to teach in schools, and many opt to continue indoctrinating children using traditional methods.

Curricula of the Kurdish dominated self-administration were described to be the most gender neutral. In the Northwest curricula designed by UNICEF were also described to be gender neutral. However, the issue often is not the actual curriculum but the interpretation of teachers of the curriculum. Social biases are often reinforced informally by the teachers, despite the curriculum.

Accreditation

Interviewees from the Northwest and Northeast mentioned the issue of accreditation of diplomas for secondary schools and universities as a main factor that hinders the prospect of education, and also contributed to the decision of forcing their children to leave schools to work or get married in the case of girls.

Field of Study / Secondary Schools

The majority of parents are still trying to send their kids to primary and secondary school. However, there are different preferences for what subjects they should study in school. Girls are encouraged to seek literary studies and the liberal arts at the high school level, whereas boys are encouraged to seek scientific studies. Some women pointed that it is more common for girls to study home economics. It is less common for girls to study in trade or industry vocational schools. There were some exceptions. In Damascus region, respondent from Deir Atiya" and in other rural areas like Salmeih, and from Mazzeh 86 said that men and women have equal rights to choose whatever field of study and are encouraged to consider all options. Similar responses came from well to do families in Aleppo.

Field of Study /University

Based on the interviewees' responses, the social preferences for university enrollment were clear. Social norms affected women's ability to choose the field of study, either directly or indirectly by making it sound like it was the women's choice. Female students are conditioned to go in that direction in two way:

1- Related to the type of work after graduation:

- Choosing a field of study like education, the liberal arts, history and geography would land graduates an "easy teaching job", with fewer working hours ad summer breaks that do not overlap with family obligations and taking care of children and the house.

- Seeking a field of study that can lead to a public sector job. Such a job is described to be, permanent, comfortable, less competitive thus less stressful, fixed monthly payments, and acceptable to the society.

- Studying in fields that will lead to jobs not requiring interaction with men, such as in education and women health.

2- Related to the field of study itself:

- Fields of studies that require fewer number of academic years and those fields that do not require specialized higher education such as translation, nursing, and certain technical colleges, so as women would not have to be late in getting married and families would not have to invest heavily in the cost of education.

- Fields like health studies, pharmacology were highlighted to be more common for women since they are more "suitable". In some areas studying nursing was highlighted to be one of the most favorite fields of study for women since it suits women personality as a caregiver, and it requires fewer academic years. The image of women as caregivers is also reinforced in dentistry as a socially accepted medical field for women to study.

- When it comes to the engineering sciences, it was also clear in the interviews that certain fields were more common than others such as architecture engineering; graphic and interior design were also preferable. Other fields such as electronic engineering, electrical, and mechanical engineering were not preferred by society and pressure is often mounted on women to avoid them.

- Field of studies within accessible universities/institutes. Some families were not in favor of sending their daughters to study in other governorates or in fields that require extended travel or residency away from their homes.

Women Work in Educational Institutions

Women's work in education was very common as was clarified by the majority of the interviewees, especially as teachers al the primary level, where the majority of teachers were women. The image of women as "caregivers" fits well with the socially acceptable norm of primary education teachers. Moreover, it has fewer working hours and paid summer vacations. However, less prevalent were women heading the administration offices and teachers in high schools. Girls' schools are often headed by women while boys' schools are headed by men. In the Kurdish dominated Self Administration areas schools had dual presidency, a man and a woman administered all major schools, so the number were reported to be equal there.

6.9 Health

> "*In general women are encouraged to study nursing, the image befits them: angels of mercy.*"

The health sector is another area where societal biases against women are most prevalent. While society seems to accept women as medical professionals and considers it befitting their image as caregivers, women's access to health care is not secured. Also, decision making regarding women's reproductive health is often tilted in favor of the husband or the extended family before it is in the hands of the woman. There are considerable disparities among different areas regarding availability of health services and their quality. It seems the conflict has imposed a major toll on the sector and many areas have not yet fully recovered.

On a national scale, health services were generally available for women, but women still faced major challenges in accessing them. Pediatric and general health services as well as child vaccinations were usually available in most areas. However, reproductive health services do not seem to always be available to women in Raqqa and Deir al-Zor and in many rural areas, though giving birth seemed to be done in a safe way most of the times. There was little gender disparity in terms of equality of access to health services. Yet, for the most part communities still faced a number of obstacles in accessing health services due to lacking infrastructure, high expenses, and the burden of traveling distances coupled with COVID restrictions.

Women's accessibility to health services were impacted by socio-economic conditions, rural-urban dynamics, and societal biases. In areas with poor economic conditions, reproductive services seem to be less available. Women living in small or medium cities were slightly less safe to give birth compared to those living in large cities or rural areas. While the Syrian society seems to accept women as medical professionals and considers

it befitting their image as caregivers, there was a general perception highlighting gender roles among health staff such that it was more likely that women were positioned to become nurses while men were more likely to be the doctors.

There are considerable disparities among different areas regarding women's access to health facilities, the availability of health services and their quality. The Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas, especially Deir-al-Zor and Raqqa, scored lowest for availability of reproductive health services, while Deir al-Zor scored lowest for childbirth safety and availability of pediatric services. Also, in Deir al-Zor, women had the worse accessibility to health services than men. In areas controlled by the Turkish-backed Syrian Free Army, availability of child vaccination seems to be significantly lower than other areas and there was a low number of available health centers in Afrin. In HTS areas, heath services were not sufficient, and the types of services covered in health centers were limited. In Government areas, pediatric services were usually available, general health services were available for most communities. Child vaccinations were almost available across the board. Overall, while health services were generally deemed available, vital differences existed even within each region which determined women's accessibility to these services.

6.9.1 Baseline Review Prior to 2011

Syria before the crisis witnessed a noticeable development of its health system in the years leading to 2011, and this was observed in the remarkable improvement in the life expectancy and survival rates for mothers delivering their babies, the reduction of infant mortality rates and early death.[69] The improvement of nutritional conditions and the increase in attention to all components of the national reproductive health, including reproductive health programs and working with the mothers contributed to a general improvement in the health conditions of the population, but particularly affected the health of women and girls. However, these developments were not even across the country and the distribution of the health

[69] www.arabdevelopmentportal.com/sites/default/files/publication/syria_national_sdgs_arabic_report-a4-final-2.pdf **Last visited April 24th, 2021.**

infrastructure remained greatly heterogenous among the governorates and in between urban and rural areas.[70]

The Syrian government provided free health care across the board for most medical situations requiring treatment and subsidized even the most expensive of medical procedures.[71] However, health care quality was heterogeneous and the rates of admittance of patients into hospitals and dispensaries varied considerably among the different regions.[72] While there is no detailed breakdown of health statistics in Syria, the human development index, a composite index comprised of many indicators including health, showed large gaps in different parts of the country, particularly in the rural areas of the North, Northeast, some parts of the coastal area and the South.[73]

Women dominated the ranks of nurses and midwives in Syria and the nursing and midwifery schools graduated female professionals almost exclusively. In other technical colleges (pathology, dental technicians, radiology technicians, etc.) women made up half the graduates. In pharmacy women were again superior to the number of men graduates.[74] However, there was still an obvious shortage of women doctors, as the graduates from medical schools in 2010 were still twice more men than women.[75]
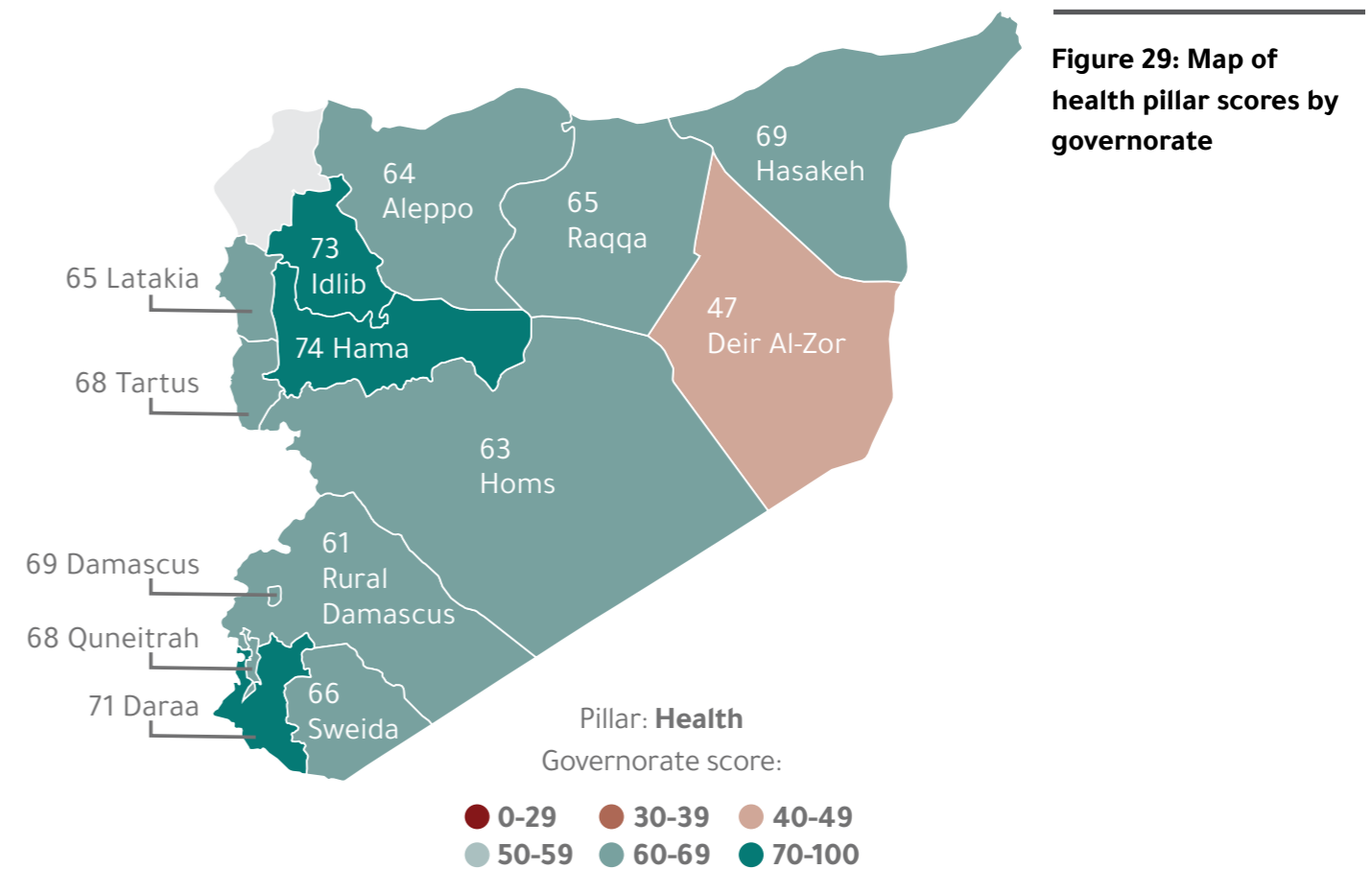
6.9.2 Quantitative Survey Findings

The quantitative survey focused on several health indicators such as the perception towards the availability of reproductive health, vaccination, pediatric health services, and general health care. It also focused on perceptions of equality of access among men and women. There was considerable correlation in the data among the different types of health services pointing to health system wither functioning in full or collapsing altogether. Accordingly, it would be hard to excel in one type of service without the whole health system being robust and responsive.

[70] http://cbssyr.sy/
Last visited April 24th, 2021.

[71] https://www.arabdevelopmentportal.com/sites/default/files/publication/syria_national_sdgs_arabic_report-a4-final-2.pdf
Last visited April 24th, 2021.

[72] http://cbssyr.sy/
Last visited April 24th, 2021.

[73] The Regional Planning Commission, 2010. Al-Itar al-watani lil takhtit al-'Iqlimi fri souriya. Damascus: Regional Planning Commission.

[74] http://cbssyr.sy/
Last visited April 24th, 2021.

[75] Ibid.

Figure 29: Map of health pillar scores by governorate

Pillar: **Health**
Governorate score:

- 0–29
- 30–39
- 40–49
- 50–59
- 60–69
- 70–100

Reproductive health services do not seem to always be available, at a national average of 3.6[76]. Availability is lowest in Deir al-Zor at 3.0, Raqqa at 3.1, and Rural Damascus at 3.1. In areas with bad economic conditions, reproductive services seem to be less available, at a rate of 3.2. It is somewhat safe for women to give birth, at a rate of 3.7[77]. However, there seems to be higher risks for women associated with birth in Deir al-Zor, where the rate is 2.9. The rate is lower for small and medium cities, at 3.6.

[73] From 5 to 1: always available - often available - usually available (half the time) - rarely available - never available.

[74] From 5 to 1: very sage - safe - neither safe nor unsafe - unsafe - very unsafe.

+0.1

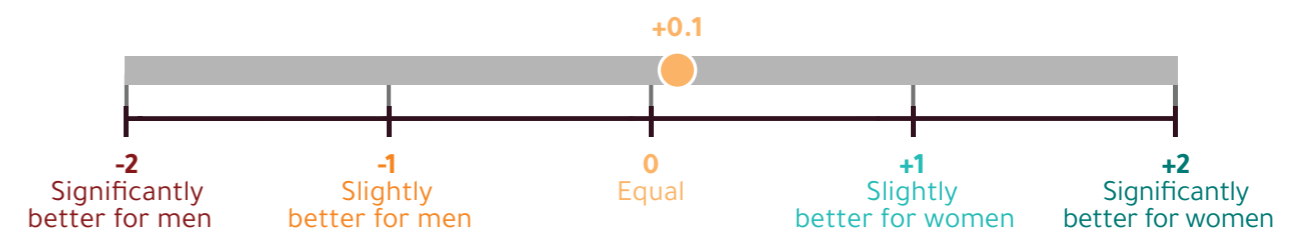| -2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 |
| Significantly better for men | Slightly better for men | Equal | Slightly better for women | Significantly better for women |

Figure 30: Ability to access healthcare services for women and men

Child vaccination is more widely available, at a rate of 4.7. In areas controlled by the Turkish-backed Syrian Free Army (Euphrates Shield), availability of child vaccination seems to be significantly lower, at 3.6. Pediatric services are available nationally at a rate of 4.3 and are least available in Deir al-Zor at 3.0. General health services are available at a rate of 4.0. They are most widely available in Damascus at 4.7 and least available in Deir al-Zor at 3.3.

Figure 31: Local availability levels of health services
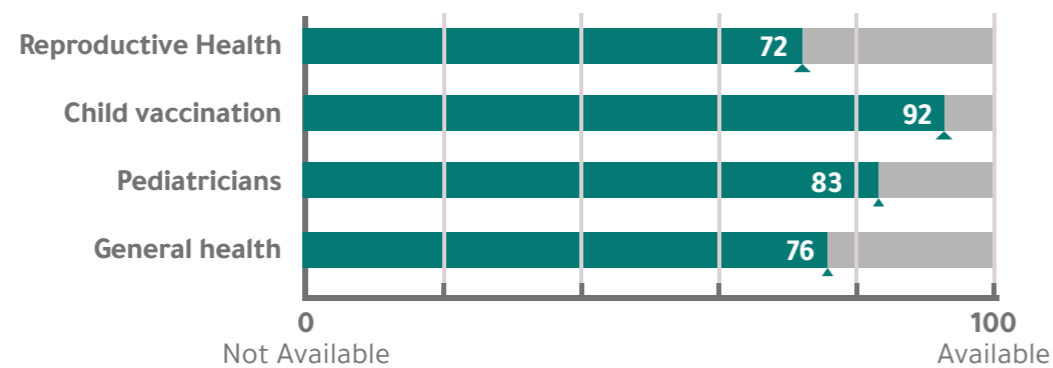
Women and men are equal in terms of their access to health services, at a rate of +0.1[78] (on a scale from +2 to -2). Women have better accessibility to health services than men in several governorates, such as Raqqa at +0.6, and Hama at +0.4. In Deir al-Zor, women have worse accessibility than men, at a rate of -0.6.

6.9.3 Qualitative Survey Findings

The qualitative survey focused on reproductive health in depth. It also looked at the roles of women in the health professions.

Availability of Reproductive Health

Most interviewees said that the reproductive health services are widely available in most of the surveyed areas, mostly by local and international NGOs, when not provided by the State. However, the quality of the services is not equally good or sufficient in all areas, women in Idlib said that the types of services covered in these centers are very limited, whereas it was not available in Afrin due to the security and military situation.

[78] From +2 to -2: women have significantly better access - women have slightly better access - women and men have the same access - men have slightly better access - men have significantly better access.

Some of the interviewees clarified that the services of certain health centers need to be advertised better so people/ women can know more about them and be encouraged to visit them and seek help. Interviewees said that these centers usually provide limited types of consultations and do not provide any financial support for the medication if needed, nor for medical interventions, so several families had to refer to private clinics when needed which is often very expensive.

Follow up for complications related to pregnancy, or even regular follow-ups for the pregnancy are mostly done in private clinics. Accessibility of reproductive health unlike other forms of health services seem to be unaffordable even when they are available, since many of the centers supported by charities do not provide these kinds of services.

Accessibility of Reproductive Health

Reproductive health centers are available in most areas, where women can get consultations about their situations. Yet the decision to seek advice or service is not entirely belonging to women. Husband and family often interfere in such decisions. Women seeking advice on birth control do so without husband control in many cases or are forced to do so by husbands against their will according to other interviewees. Women often are hindered in seeking health services because of one of the following reasons:

- Lack of health infrastructure due to the conflict.

- High expenses of private clinics.

- Availability of health centers is limited due to Covid restrictions, low number of centers, which means that people sometimes must travel far to access the service.

- Families are more likely to favor men accessing services than women as the decision is in the hand of the economic decision-making person in the household and that is more often than not the men.

Social Norms Related to Pregnancy

Many interviewees pointed out that the decision-making in the family, when it comes to pregnancy, is in the hand of the husband or his mother. While others indicated that it was a joint decision, women were rarely the sole decision makers on when to get pregnant. The decision is often also influenced by the extended family.

It was reported by several interviewees that once the women get pregnant, she will stop working and will focus on taking care of house and future children. This biased many employers against hiring women. In most workplaces women do not have access to maternity leaves. Many respondents also pointed out that pregnant women are becoming increasingly malnourished given the economic hardships facing households.

Female Health Workers (physicians, nurses)

Women as Nurses: Based on the answers of most respondents, women are most likely to be nurses, for several reasons:

- It suits the women's image as caregiver, and suits her personality, issues that receive considerable social acceptance in most regions.

- It is easier to study since nursing colleges are often available with private dorms for women. Nursing also requires fewer academic years to complete.

- A nursing career is seen by society as an easy job, with reasonably good income, and good job prospects.

While there is a general perception that nursing is a female job, many respondents said the numbers are equal between men and women. Given that Syria mostly graduates women nurses in its colleges, it sems that many unqualified male nurses are hired with less-than-optimal education.

Women as doctors: Few respondents said the numbers of men and women doctors are equal. Yet, this is statistically not the case. For most respondents, men are most likely to be doctors, for several reasons:

- Fewer women are seeking to study medicine, since it requires long academic years (6-10), which might affect women marriage prospects, in addition to being a very costly study and requiring travel to other governorates and sometimes abroad to enroll in universities.

- It is a tough profession with sporadic working hours, and it suits men better according to some respondents.

- Women have family obligations and cannot be doctors on call all the time.

- If women were to be doctors then there were certain fields that would be more acceptable by society for their work: dentistry, dermatology, gynecology, and pathology)

- The society trusts male doctors more than female doctors.

6.10 Social Norms and Culture

"He does not consider any house chore as his responsibility. He is willing to buy things for the house. He asks me: what do we need for the house? He does not ask me what I want"

This pillar explores social attitudes towards men and women in society. In general, it reflects on the division of labor in terms of household chores, gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes. In framing women as the main caretakers and forcing them to be responsible for most family obligations women are also denied important educational and work opportunities. Societal stereotypes contribute to denying women access to the legal system and to health care. This section sums up most of the biases found against women in previous sections and highlights the gap in gender roles imposed by society on women in Syria, noting all the while that norms differ from one area to another and that despite the persistence of many norms during the conflict, some minor changes are starting to appear.

Social and cultural norms based on societal stereotypes of women's gender roles almost universally impacted women's rights in all other pillars. Societal norms seem to have the most traceable impact on women's security, professional life, legal rights, and political participation. The occurrence of harassment was connected to societal responses to women who deviated from socially acceptable behavior and dress codes. Women's choice of work and education and their employability within the market were also shaped by social perceptions and restrictions. Framing women mainly as caretakers responsible for family obligations denied women important educational and work prospects. On the other hand, framing men as providers was usually described as a justification for men's professional and academic achievements. In the economic and political fields, men were perceived to be more intelligent, capable of leadership positions, and of handling higher stress than women. Women's perceptions in society were among the main reasons behind women seeking informal mediation mechanisms rather than resorting to the formal legal system. Social pressure to protect the family's unity was also partly behind women giving up on their properties in favor of male kin.

Due to the ongoing conflict, there are increasing numbers of households becoming headed by women across Syria. Increasingly, women must contribute to the family's income; they have to fulfil these new roles while retaining their responsibility over most household chores. The proportion of women who are the head of household was perceived to be increasing and this phenomenon is becoming a common occurrence across all segments of Syrian society (though statistically it is still around 9%)[79]. When it came to household contributions, men's contributions were more open to grocery shopping and less likely to involve caring for children and the elderly, cleaning, cooking, and teaching children. Nevertheless, men seemed to be more open to care for the elderly (especially in rural areas) in their household than for children. Results showed that women usually participated in making important decisions in the household with men. However, decisions related to pregnancy were sometimes decided by the husband with the intervention of the extended family and decisions regarding women's accessibility to reproductive health were also influenced by their husbands and in-laws. Thus, although women have increasingly taken charge of households, their responsibilities remain heavy while their input to the family's decision making remains challenged.

While these findings were cross cutting between all geographies, there were some noticeable trends in some regions. HTS controlled areas scored highest in men's openness to care for children and the elderly; and it was common for

[79] Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAP), 2021. Spring 2021 Report Series Demographic Overview: Syrian Arab Republic. Damascus: HNAP.

women to participate in decision making in the family. In Turkish-backed rebel group held areas, it was especially rare for men to partake in cleaning and cooking in the house, though it was common for women to participate in the family's decision-making. Results varied in the Kurdish dominated Self-Administration areas; women usually participated in the household's important decisions in Hasakeh, while women were rarely involved in Deir al-Zor and Raqqa, where the man was also the usual decision maker on pregnancy matters. Results also widely varied within Government-held areas, however, it was more common that women were involved in the household's important decisions. Despite the persistence of many norms during the conflict, some transformations are impacting women's social roles are evident across the different areas of control.

Also, in Deir al-Zor, women had the worse accessibility to health services than men. In areas controlled by the Turkish-backed Syrian Free Army, availability of child vaccination seems to be significantly lower than other areas and there was a low number of available health centers in Afrin. In HTS areas, heath services were not sufficient, and the types of services covered in health centers were limited. In Government areas, pediatric services were usually available, general health services were available for most communities. Child vaccinations were almost available across the board. Overall, while health services were generally deemed available, vital differences existed even within each region which determined women's accessibility to these services

6.10.1 Baseline Review Prior to 2011

Societal norms and cultural consideration were always an important factor in limiting women's full potential as citizens. The laws were gradually changing to increase the opportunities and space allowed for women to enjoy their rights, major progress was made over the years to enhance the education, health, and work opportunities. Women were gradually being eased into prominent positions in the Syrian government. However, social

norms prevailed and created major obstacles to rapid transformations towards women gaining their rights on the ground and enjoying them in practice. Women were consistently perceived by major segments of society to be subordinate to men, a position that continued to be sustained by a myriad of religious practices and legal codes.[80] Customs and traditions were stronger and more pervasive than the letter of the law. Women were often perceived as lacking credibility and competence in issues related to public affairs. Moreover, in the household many private issues were not under the control of women. Decisions over health, education household expenditures and social behavior were either in the hand of the husband or sometimes his extended family. These patriarchal patterns of social dominance over the lives of women often had serious repercussions as they directly and indirectly promoted domestic violence; they stereotyped men to have in their nature to be rough and violent while indoctrinating women and girls to be weak and accepting of domestic violence[81]. The failure of the Syrian society to provide a strong ethical values and institutional structures that control personal violence could be at the deep root of the conflict and data needs to be further examined to understand the psychology of domestic repression and its impact on societal violence in Syria. The situation was only to get worse during the conflict.[82]

6.10.2 Quantitative Survey Findings

Female respondents rated their perception about men's openness to contributing to several tasks at home, on a scale from 5 to 1[83]. Men are often open to shopping for groceries but are less likely to contribute to caring for children and the elderly, cleaning, cooking and/or teaching children at home.

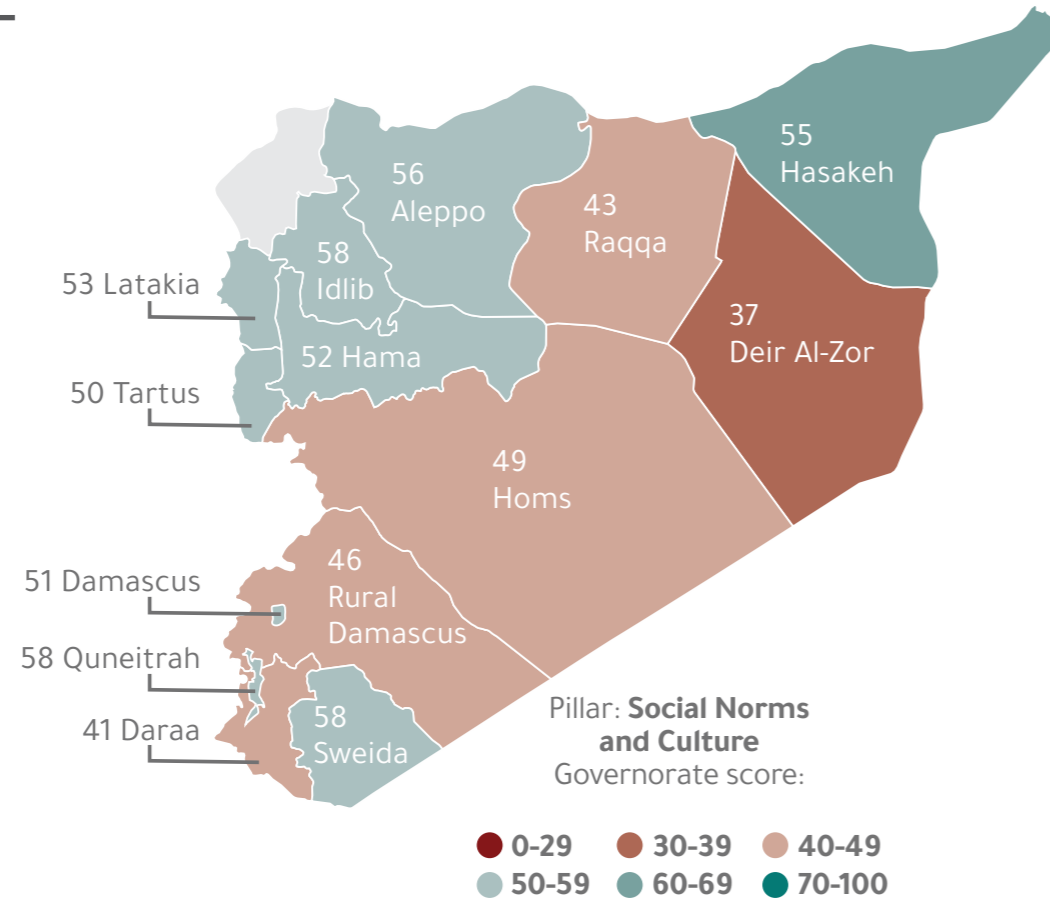[80] **The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population (SCFAP), 2007.**

[81] **The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population (SCFAP), 2007.**

[82] https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/The-human-rights-of-women-in-Syria-single-pages.pdf

**Last visited May 3rd, 2021.**

[83] **From 5 to 1: always open - often open - sometimes open - rarely open - not open at all.**

Figure 32: Map of social norms and culture pillar scores by governorate

53 Latakia

50 Tartus

51 Damascus

58 Quneitrah

41 Daraa

56 Aleppo

58 Idlib

52 Hama

43 Raqqa

55 Hasakeh

37 Deir Al-Zor

49 Homs

46 Rural Damascus

58 Sweida

Pillar: **Social Norms and Culture**
Governorate score:

● 0-29   ● 30-39   ● 40-49
● 50-59   ● 60-69   ● 70-100

Generally, men seemed to be more open to care for the elderly in their household than for children, at a rating of 3.0 for the former and 2.7 for the latter. Men in Idlib were most open to care for children, while men in Deir al-Zor and Rural Damascus were least open in this regard. As for caring for the elderly, men in Quneitrah and Idlib were the most open, while those in Daraa and Deir al-Zor were least open. Men in rural areas had a higher likelihood to care for the elderly than their urban counterparts. Men also tended to not favor teaching children at home, at a rating of 2.8. The least interest was recorded in Daraa at 2.3.
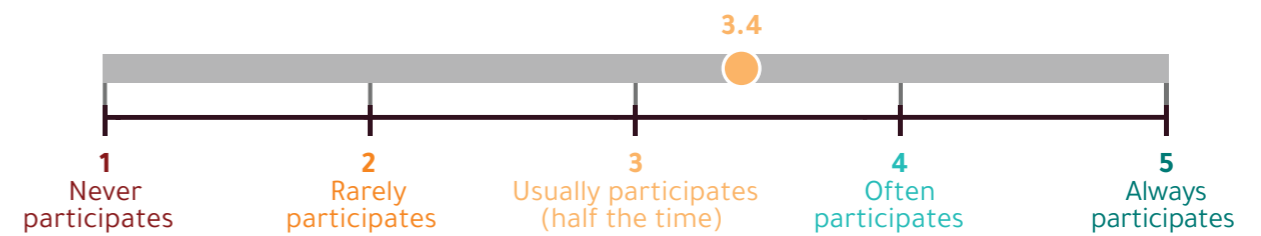
Among the different household tasks in question, respondents indicated that men were least open to contribute to cleaning and cooking, at a rate of 2.2 for each. Men in Deir al-Zor, Raqqa and Daraa were least interested in cleaning, while those in Deir al-Zor, Rural Damascus and Quneitrah were most against cooking. Men were often open to shopping for groceries, at a rate of 3.9. However, this is not the case everywhere, as men in Deir al-Zor, Hasakeh and Daraa were less willing to do so.

Figure 33: Openness of men to contribute to household tasks

[84] From 5 to 1: all - most - some - few - none
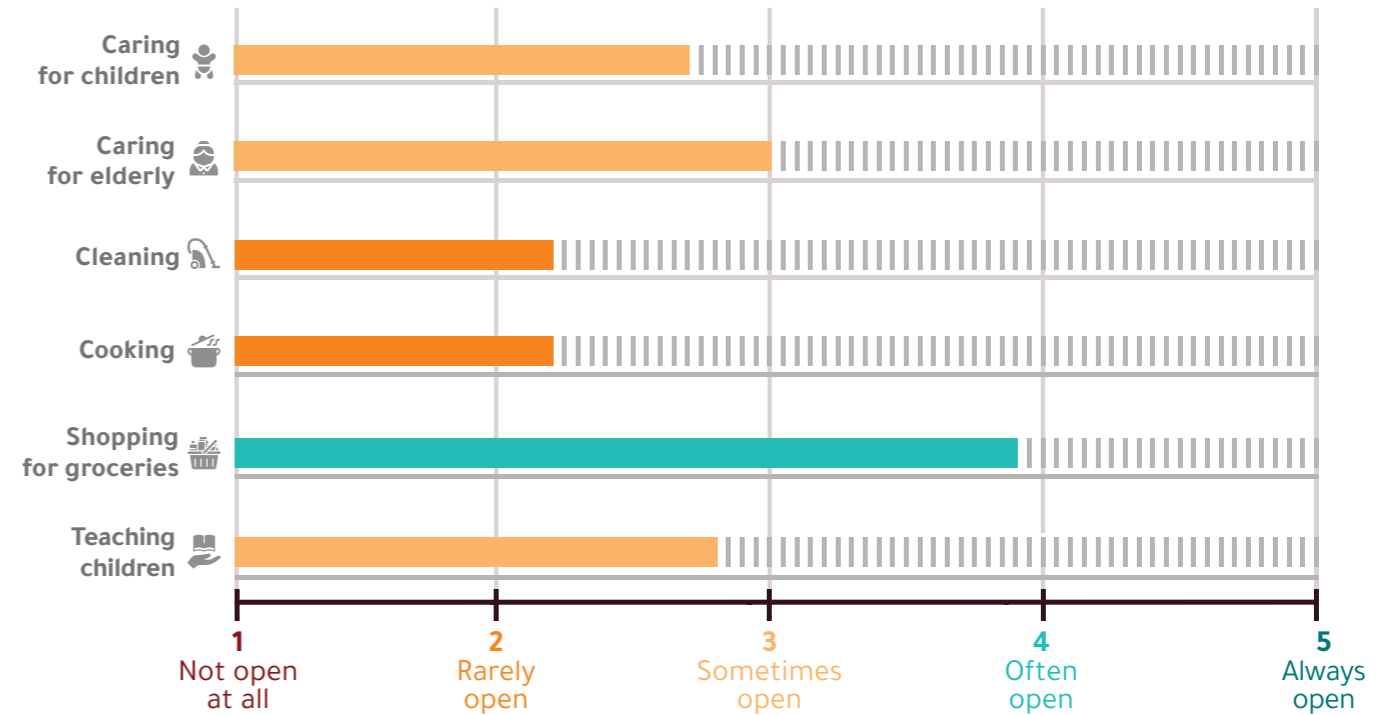
The proportion of women who are the head of a household seems relatively high, rated at 3.7[84]. This is not indicative of the actual numbers of such female headed households as to the perception that such households are becoming a common occurrence in society. There is a relatively high consistency of answers to this question, indicated by a relatively low standard deviation of 0.67, which means that a large proportion of respondents answered with either "most households" or "some households". The proportion is highest in Raqqa at 4.4 and lowest in Daraa at 3.0.

Figure 34: Women's participation in making important decisions in the family

Women usually participate in making important decisions in the household, at a rate of 3.4[85]. The highest participation in family decision-making was recorded in Quneitrah at 4.0 and to a lesser degree in Sweida, while the lowest was in Deir al-Zor at 2.5 and Raqqa at 2.6.

[85] From 5 to 1: always - often - usually - rarely - never

6.10.3 Qualitative Survey Findings

Social norms and cultural factors were usually cross cutting issues that impacted women across all the previous seven pillars. The research team still focused on reviewing these norms as a separate issue as it is important to group them in one place for comparative reasons.

Codes documented under the social norms and cultural pillar were an essential node in the ecosystem that affected women's ability to access their rights; these codes intersected with all the other pillars in the study. The image of women in society was strongly connected to the patriarchal social structure across the other pillars, and intersected with violence against women/girls, including child marriage and harassment. The image of women and the patriarchal system jointly affected women's ability to access work opportunities, or even choosing the field of work. The socio-cultural norms, in general, showed that women were stereotyped as caregivers, and they were expected to protect the family's unity by not asking for their inheritance, and considered giving up property as a good gesture towards their brothers.

When it comes to the health sector, intersections showed that women were more encouraged to be nurses rather than doctors. In political life, intersections showed that women were perceived as less capable of holding political positions than men due to the perception that they lack the proper expertise and skills. Family obligations for women intersected with their ability to access work opportunities. Women did not have the sole or independent decision-making power. The correlations showed that when it comes to decision-making in the family women had less engagement on all levels even when it comes to decisions like seeking reproductive health services, pregnancy and delivery, taking a child out of the school, as well as decisions concerning choosing the field of study or even marrying off their daughters.

Image of Women in Society

Many challenges were attributed to the perceived image and role of women within Syrian society which impacted her security, professional life, legal rights and political participation.

In terms of security, participants highlighted that harassment cases were connected to societal responses to women who deviate from social norms. Deviation from socially acceptable images in terms of behavior or dress are likely to get women harassed. The burden of harassment is shifted from the perpetrators to the women in many of the respondents' comments.

Women's choice of work and education and their employability were also associated with the social perception that some jobs were more suitable for them as "caregivers". While men were perceived to be more intelligent, capable of leadership positions, and handling stress. Social restrictions imposed by society, such as the family and the husband, also impacted women's choice of work and education. However, while many participants have indicated that a stereotypical image of women in society impacted their choice of work and study, it is important to note that women's family obligations and dedication to the household have also been highlighted as "voluntary" choices.

In political life, women were perceived as less capable of holding political positions than men due to the perception that they lack the proper expertise, leadership skills, and stamina to work as politicians which reinforced a social stigma against female politicians and discouraged them from participation. Many participants also indicated that women's image in society which pressured them to protect their honor and reputation within their communities were a main reason behind women seeking traditional and informal mediation mechanisms rather than resorting to the formal legal system when settling disputes. This was also partly the case behind women giving up their properties due to the social pressure to protect the family unity and reputation.

These findings were not restricted to certain areas of control but rather were cross cutting between all geographies. Despite the quantitative survey pointing to some hot spots such as in Deir al-Zor, Raqqa and Rural Damascus as special geographies meriting more detailed study to track early warning, the qualitative survey pointed to prevailing stereotypes and hard to change perceptions of the "proper norms" even when societal practice was pointing to new realities.

Family Obligations and Participation in the Household

According to most responses, it was clear that a woman's family obligations impacted her academic choices, accessibility to jobs, equality within the workspace, salary payments, and political participation. The impact of family obligations on women's economic prospects were felt in their job preferences and their access to the labor market. Family obligations also, imposed restrictions on a woman's working hours and workload which usually played in favor of men who were more likely to get employed, promoted, and paid a higher wage. Family obligations were also an important factor that impacted women's field of study and choice of work due to the required commuting distance, workload and study duration.

While family obligations appeared to act as an obstacle for women, the lack of such obligation by the men was usually described as a push factor for men's professional and academic achievements. Participants indicated that men's participation in the household were limited to certain tasks such as buying groceries. However, a few also stated that men contributed to home repairs, cooking, and taking care of the children. Very few participants indicated that household responsibilities were shared equally between men and women, a phenomenon which appears to be relatively recent and usually linked to the impact of women joining the workforce.

There were no particular variations between the participation of men and women in the household across the different areas of control. Again, this is in stark contrast with the quantitative survey, that point to persistent patterns in some locations like Deir al-Zor and Raqqa. Actual practice is gradually diverging from societal attitudes and it would be useful to study this divergence in more details in the future.

Patriarchal Social Structure

Respondents reflected on the patriarchal social structure in a complex and diverse manner. While only a few were aware of such a social construct, many were able to express features of how society dominates women's lives even when the men are not directly involved. Both men women and men seem to contribute to consolidating patriarchal attitudes. This has affected women and girls on many levels:

- GBV is viewed to be socially sanctioned or justified if not accepted. Some of the root causes behind verbal and physical violence becoming increasingly prevalent were attributed to prevailing social norms. "Why make a fuss about being slapped a couple of times on the face, a woman should be wiser than to make an issue of this" said one woman echoing what many others said or implied. Women often give advice to other women to endure such injustice and to understand the men's need to vent their frustration and anger.

- Child marriage: the main root causes behind child marriage were related to the social norms and traditions of the family and the community. Mother-in-laws were often involved in the decision and the extended family was even involved.

- Access to the formal legal system was discouraged by the family; women often dissuaded each other from such recourse. They advised other women to rely on mediation and talking to family elders to resolve problems: this was affected women in many ways such as denying them inheritance

rights, cutting them off financial resources needed to seek litigation, denying women access to know-how about their rights and the working of the courts, as well as depriving women from social support networks essential to bypassing corruption and gatekeepers.

Decision-making in the Family

Families have to make very important decision to cope with an ever-changing environment and conflict dynamics shaping their lives. Two examples can be explored to understand how social norms and culture frame and control women's contribution to important decisions to be made by the family:

- Education: Decisions regarding education are subject to complex societal interferences.

  o Several respondents said that the decision of taking a child out of the school is, in the majority of times, in the hand of the father alone, while only a few said it is a joint decision with the mothers. Yet the decision straight forward. Alternatives to schooling involve child labor for boys and early marriage for girls; the decisions for those alternatives were influenced by the extended family and the in-laws. Social norms are hardly independent and are used selectively to reinforce complex negotiations in the household.

  o Families and society affect the girls/women decision when choosing the field of study (high school or university). However, as has been noted earlier, girls were being indoctrinated from early age to accept believe they prefer and want fields of study acceptable to society.

- Pregnancy: The decision making in the family when it comes to pregnancy is rarely in the hands of the women. More often than not, the husband has the higher say, but in many cases the extended family may intervene, particularly the more-in-law is involved. Decision to access reproductive health centers is also rarely that of the woman alone. As has been seen.

Responses about the decision making in the family concerning pregnancies and accessibility to reproductive health varied across the areas of control. HTS areas demonstrated the highest attitudes related to men's openness to care for children and the elderly; it was common in those areas for women to participate in decision making in the family. In Turkish-backed Rebel Groups areas, it was common for women to participate in decision making in the family yet in some cases the husband's family intervened in family planning and pregnancy decisions. It was especially rare for men to partake in cleaning and cooking in the house. In KSA areas, results were varied such that women usually participated in the household's important decisions in Hasakeh, while they were rarely involved in Deir al-Zor and Raqqa where the man was the usual decision maker on matters of pregnancy. This is likely a product of the demographics and social norms related to the prevalence of the conservative Arab tribal common law ('orf) across these areas. Results varied widely within Government-held areas however, it was more common that women were involved in the household's important decisions. In government areas, men were least likely to participate in cooking and cleaning in the household.

The interconnection of decision-making powers with other social norms corroborates the quantitative survey findings and indicate that social norms are often interrelated. They comprise an eco-system of normative and practical factors surrounding women and their households.

Annex

Annex 1: Detailed Methodology

The Qualitative Survey

The qualitative approach: used semi-structured interviews from a sample of 51 women covering the widest possible spectrum of geographies, social and economic backgrounds, and conditions of displacements. The sample is by no means sufficient to provide a quantitatively representative sample but was carefully selected to ensure that most views present in the society were reflected in it. The purpose of the survey was to understand what women thought, how they felt, what language they used and what considerations went into their calculus to take decisions. Interviewees were asked to reflect on issues and provide justifications and rational for what they see happening. Their personal backgrounds were not the subject of the interviews as much as their personal and communal experiences. To that extent this research would not be able to answer definitively questions related to the conditions of a specific sect or ethnicity or micro-geography in Syria. But as the interviewed women came from all backgrounds the research could provide a 360-degree mapping of the dynamics governing the interactions of different communities. This comprehensive look allows for the exploration of most blind spots without essentializing communities or locking them into stereotypes.

The approach to empirical research is meant to allow the interviewees to speak beyond the biases associated with their personal background and provide a reflexive reading of their surrounding in their own words and their own narratives. The findings of the quantitative and qualitative surveys revealed many counter-intuitive results as was explained in the body of the report. Enabling the women to explain in their own voices what was happening allowed the research team to dig deeper into social norms and dynamics to understand how different interpretations of issues have emerged during the conflict. The standard assumptions of the research team had to be examined and re-evaluated at every step of the process as a result.

Each aspect of the eco-system and pillars highlighted above was given a code or a sub-code, to ensure topics were captured even if they appeared when answering other questions. Interviews were analyzed using a qualitative research analysis software (MAXQDA). Codes were aggregated across all the interviews, and trends were documented in a way to be able to attribute them to their original interviewees, thus linking issues to a broad set of attributes related to the persons who enunciated them. As the codes of the qualitative research questions and codes were closely related to those of the quantitative research, the research team was able to make interesting correlations and facilitated detailed probing of the interviews for further insights to explain quantitative phenomena.

The Quantitative Survey

The quantitative survey covered 231 respondents from diverse geographical, social and/or political backgrounds. The sample size is still relatively small to be considered representative. The survey was meant to test the methodology and provide an initial indication on the order of magnitude to expect future research to face. To avoid single sourcing of interviewees the research team resorted to different networks of civic actors to nominate people from their communities. Each community was covered by multiple nominations from at least 3 or 4 sources, making the process as close to random sampling as is possible. Given the conflict situation of Syria and the limitations of resources this was deemed adequate for the purpose of this pilot. An initial number of 150 interviewees was envisioned, but it

turned out that the initial number was not sufficient to cover all social and geographical categories equitably while allowing multiple sourcing into each category. Thus, the number was increased beyond the original plan.

The fact that all Syrian geographies and social, ethnic and sectarian conditions were covered does not render the sample representative of each category separately. Quantitative analysis was done on the basis of geography, area of control, economic and educational background of respondents. Other ethnic and sectarian backgrounds were not analyzed as there were few representatives of each in the sample and the quantitative analysis would have been meaningless. The inclusion in the sample of diverse backgrounds renders the overall results more trustworthy but makes detailed analysis less accurate at this stage. In subsequent iterations it is hoped that the numbers of respondents could be increased to enable more detailed analysis. Eventually, the process will be opened to develop a crowd sourcing methodology that can feed the framework with data and ensure big data validation of findings in a future evolution of the project.

In this first pilot the respondents were asked questions about their communities at large (Please refer to the annex 2 for both quantitative and qualitative questions). In subsequent random sampling in future phases of the project they will be asked to respond to questions related to their own lives and households. This will help reduce the biases of the small sample. Most of the questions were perception-based questions. However, perception questions could still be quantified. Initial responses were classified on a sliding scale from 1 to 5 or -2 to +2 in some cases (worst case to best). But then to make all entries uniform, all responses were be converted to a scale from 0 to 1 scale (0-100%) to allow for visioning of results on the maps. Outliers were removed to allow for a smooth curve to track each question alone and enable a comparative analysis across geographies and local contexts. Answers to questions under one pillar were given

relative weights based on heuristics at first. In subsequent iterations end-users will weigh in in how different questions are likely to be prioritized.

Respondent women's answers were first averaged by governorate, control group, city size and economic condition of the area where they live. To navigate ways of grouping respondents, and hence their corresponding communities, by the similarity of their conditions across pillars, individual respondents' pillar and sub-pillar scores were used to generate segments. Respondents were segmented using the k-means clustering method to generate segments of respondents that have similar score ranges across pillars. This process of segmentation implies that each cluster's member is closer to her segment's center average than to that of any other segment.[86] The result of this process is six segments, with unique arrays of pillar scores and varying geographic distributions.

[86] Using the k-means clustering method, first random cluster centers were assigned. Each point was assigned to the cluster with the nearest cluster center using Euclidean distance in the pillar scores deployed here. Cluster centers were then re-assigned through multiple iterations to minimize the sum of distances from each observation to its closest cluster center. A cluster center therefore represents average characteristics of observations in its group.

Annex 2: Quantitative and Qualitative Survey Questions

Pillar: Security
Indicator; GBV (including child/early marriage)

1. What is the current level of physical violence against women and girls <u>outside the home</u> in your area?

- Very high (1)
- High (2)
- Medium (3)
- Low (4)
- Very low (5)
- Do not know

Qualitative questions

1. Could you give an example(s) of such incidents in your area?

2. Could you explain why GBV is happening in your area?

2. What is the current level of physical violence against women and girls inside the home in your area?

- Very high (1)
- High (2)
- Medium (3)
- Low (4)
- Very low (5)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

3. Could you give examples of such incidents?

4. Could you explain why violence against women and girls is happening in your area?

3. What is the current level of verbal abuse (yelling, name calling, etc.) against women and girls inside the home in your area?

- Very high (1)
- High (2)
- Medium (3)
- Low (4)
- Very low (5)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

4. What is the current level of harassment of girls outside the home in your area?

- Very high (1)
- High (2)
- Medium (3)
- Low (4)
- Very low (5)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

5. Could you give examples of such incidents?

6. Could you explain why girls experience harassment outside the home in your area?

5. In your area, how common are child marriages (girls under the age of 18)?

- <u>never</u> happen (5)
- <u>rarely</u> happen (4)
- <u>usually</u> happen (3) - half of the time
- <u>often</u> happen (2)
- <u>always</u> happen (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

6. Could you give examples of such incidents?

7. Could you explain why child marriages happen in your area?

Indicator Food security

6. In your area, is there enough food to meet the needs of the people?

- Sufficient enough (5)
- A bit Sufficient (4)
- Not sufficient and not insufficient (3)
- Somewhat insufficient (2)
- Insufficient (1)
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

9. Could you give reasons why families do not get enough to eat?

7. In your area, is quantity of food available enough?

- never (1)
- rarely (2)
- usually (3) - half of the time
- often (4)
- always (5)
- Do not know?
- I do not want to answer

8. In your area, how is the quality of available food?

- very high (5)
- high (4)
- medium (3)
- low (2)
- is very low (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

9. In your area, do women sit at the table and eat at the same time as men in the family?

- always (5)
- often (4)
- sometimes (3)
- rarely (2)
- never
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

10. Could you give examples of such incidents and possible reasons?

11. Could you explain any socio-cultural norms around eating?

10. In your area, when there is not enough food, who eats more in the family, men, or women?

- Men eat significantly more (discrimination against women) (-2)
- Men eat slightly more (-1)
- Men and women eat equally /the same (desirable response) (0)
- Women eat slightly more (2)
- Women eat significantly more (discrimination against men) (2)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

12. Could you give examples of such incidents and possible reasons?

13. Do women need to skip meals to ensure that husbands and children are eating well?

11. In your area, how common is malnourishment among women and men?

- is significantly more common among men (2)
- slightly more common among men (1)
- is equally common among men and women (0) [most ideal situation]
- is slightly more common among women (-1)
- is significantly more common among women (-2)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

14. Could you give examples of such incidents and possible reasons?

Pillar: Economy/labour market

12. Do women in your area currently work outside the home?

- <u>All</u> women- 5
- <u>Most</u> women- 4
- <u>Some</u> women- 3
- <u>A few</u> women - 2
- <u>No</u> women - 1
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

15. Could you describe the types of work that women do outside the home?

16. Could you give reasons why women do not work outside the home?

13. In your area, are women and men paid the same for the same job?

- Women are paid <u>significantly more</u> than men (2 discrimination against men)
- Women are paid <u>slightly more</u> than men (1)
- Women and men are paid <u>the same</u> (0 - ideal answer)
- Men are paid <u>slightly more</u> than women (-1)
- Men are paid <u>significantly more</u> than women-2 discrimination against women)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

17. Why are men paid more than women?

18. What barriers do women face in receiving equal pay to men?

14. Do men and women in your area have equal chances of getting a job if they have the same qualifications and experience?

- Women have <u>significantly more</u> chances (5 - discrimination against men)
- Women have <u>slightly more</u> chances (4)
- Women and men have the same chance (3 - ideal answer)
- Men have <u>slightly more</u> chances (2)
- Men have <u>significantly more</u> chances (1 - discrimination against women)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

<u>Qualitative questions</u>

19. What challenges do women face in accessing jobs?

20. What challenges do men face in accessing jobs?

15. Are women and men treated equally in the workplace?

- Women are treated significantly better (2 discrimination against men)
- Women are treated slightly better (1)
- Women and men are treated the equally (0 - ideal answer)
- Men are treated slightly better (-1)
- Men are treated significantly (-2 discrimination against women)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

<u>Qualitative questions</u>

21. Could you give examples of how women or men are treated differently in the workplace?

Pillar Equality and equity
Indicator Education equality

16. How easy or difficult is it for girls to access schools?

- Very easy (5)
- Somewhat easy (4)
- Neither easy nor difficult (3)
- Somewhat difficult (2)
- Very difficult (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

17. How easy or difficult is it for boys to access schools?

- Very easy (5)
- Somewhat easy (4)
- Neither easy nor difficult (3)
- Somewhat difficult (2)
- Very difficult (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

18. Do families currently send their daughters to school?

- All families (5)
- Most families (4)
- Some families (around half) (3)
- Few families (2)
- No (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

19. Do families currently send their sons to school?

- All families (5)
- Most families (4)
- Some families (3)
- Few families (2)
- No families (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

22. How do families make choices about which children continue their education and which do not (keep gender neutral - not always prejudice by gender, but for financial reasons, security reasons, sometimes which child more promising

23. Portrayal of boys and girls in curriculum - do you think the curriculum, as its being taught in your area, does it differentiate how girls and boys are being represented? (Describe any differences that you know of)

24. Do you know of a story of a girl who wanted to continue her education but was forced to leave school, could you tell us this story? (why, how the decision was made)

Indicator; Housing, Land, Property

20. When there is an inheritance in your area, how likely are women to receive the property as stipulated by the law?

- Women do not receive their inheritance because their family takes the property away from them, even the right is guaranteed in law (1)
- Women are pressured by their families to sell their property at a symbolic price (2)
- Women are pressured by their families to sell their property as a fair market price (3)
- Women inherit the property, but male relatives manage the property (4)
- Women inherit the property and manage the property themselves (5)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

21. What is proportion of women owners that have documents in their name for property (real estate, land) they own in their own name?

- All women owners (5)
- Most women owners (4)
- Some women owners (3)
- Few women owners (2)
- No women owners (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

22. When men in the household are absent, how often are lease arrangements in the name of a female member of the family?

- Always (5)
- Often (4)
- Sometimes (3)
- Rarely (2)
- Never (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

23. For cases that require a formal legal system, such as unresolved inheritance disputes, how often do women resort to formal legal system?

- Always (5)
- Mostly (4)
- Sometimes (3)
- Rarely (2)
- Never (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

25. Are you aware of any women who had to give up their property? Why are women being pushed to give up their property rights?

26. Have you heard of any cases where a woman was evicted from her home when the male owner of the property died or when a woman and husband divorced? Can you tell such a story?

27. Have you heard of women who own property and lease to others etc? Could you describe these cases?

28. Type of system used /available legal systems (tick the box

Column A-Type of system used /available legal systems

- direct family
- Extended family/Tribe
- Community leaders
- Police
- Court
- Other

Column B (5-1)

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Pillar Political rights

24. Do men and women in your area have the same chances of getting elected to public office (i.e. to get elected)?

- Women have significantly more chances (2 discrimination against men)
- Women have slightly more (1)
- Women and men have the same chance (0 - ideal answer)
- Men have slightly more chances (-1)
- Men have significantly more chances (-2 discrimination against women)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

25. What is the proportion of women who vote in your area in <u>parliamentary</u> elections?

- All women vote (5)
- Most women vote (4)
- Some women vote (3)
- A few women vote (2)
- No women vote (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

26. What is the proportion of men who vote in your area in <u>parliamentary</u> elections?

- All men vote (5)
- Most men vote (4)
- Some men vote (3)
- A few men vote (2)
- No men vote (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

27. What do you think was the proportion of women who voted in your area in the <u>local</u> elections?

- All women vote (5)
- Most women vote (4)
- Some women vote (3)
- A few women vote (2)
- No women vote (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

28. What is the proportion of men who vote in your area in <u>local</u> elections?

- All men vote (5)
- Most men vote (4)
- Some men vote (3)
- A few men vote (2)
- No men vote (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

29. How likely are <u>women</u> to contact their local political representatives to raise community concerns?

- Very high (5)
- High (4)
- Medium (3)
- Low (2)
- Very low (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

30. How likely are <u>men</u> to contact their local political representatives to raise community concerns?

- Very high (5)
- High (4)
- Medium (3)
- Low (2)
- Very low (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

<u>Qualitative questions</u>

29. Are women respected as politicians in this area - or do women carry stigma, face discrimination? Explain.

30. What factors prevent women from practicing their political rights?

Pillar Legal rights

31. When women are in a legal dispute, how fairly are they treated by the courts?

- Very fairly (5)
- Fairly (4)
- Neither fairly nor unfairly (3)
- Unfairly (2)
- Very unfairly (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

32. When men are in a legal dispute, how fairly are they treated by the courts?

- Very fairly (5)
- Fairly (4)
- Neither fairly nor unfairly (3)
- Unfairly (2)
- Very unfairly (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

33. How easy or difficult is it for <u>women</u> to access the legal system (a court of law, defense counsel, law enforcement etc.)

- Very easy (5)
- Somewhat easy (4)
- Neither easy nor difficult (3)
- Somewhat difficult (2)
- Very difficult (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

34. How easy or difficult is it for <u>men</u> to access the legal system (a court of law, defense counsel, law enforcement etc.)?

- Very easy (5)
- Somewhat easy (4)
- Neither easy nor difficult (3)
- Somewhat difficult (2)
- Very difficult (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

35. How likely is the law to protect women's rights?

<u>Column, the rights</u>
- Physical integrity
- Custody
- Access to education
- HLP

<u>Line Answers</u>
- Very fairly (5)
- Fairly (4)
- Neither fairly nor unfairly (3)
- Unfairly (2)
- Very unfairly (1)
- Do not know
- *I do not want to answer*

<u>Qualitative questions</u>

31. Can you tell us a story of woman you know who had to resort to the legal system; does society accept that women use the legal system or are there any stigmas involved?

32. Are women in your area encouraged to use other channels such as customary mechanisms or mediation/ negotiation between families instead of resorting to the legal system?

Pillar Education

36. What is the proportion of secondary school teachers that are women in your area?

- No teachers are women (1)
- Few (2)
- Some [around half] (3)
- Most (4)
- All teachers are women (5)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

37. What is the proportion of school head administrators that are women in your area?

- No head administrators are women (1)
- Few (2)
- Some [around half] (3)
- Most (4)
- All teachers are women (5)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

38. What is the proportion of women who can read and write in your area?

- All (5)
- Most (4)
- Some (3)
- A few (2)
- None (1)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

39. What is the proportion of girls aged 15-18 who are not enrolled in school?

- All (1)
- Most (2)
- Some (3)
- A few (4)
- None (5)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

40. What is the proportion of boys aged 15-18 who are currently not enrolled in school?

- All (1)
- Most (2)
- Some (3)
- A few (4)
- None (5)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

33. Are girls more likely to go into specific types of education than boys? Explain.

34. Do families pull their girls out of school at a certain age? Why would families take girls out of school?

35. Do families pull their boys out of school at a certain age? Why would families take boys out of school?

Pillar Health

41. Are reproductive health services available in your area?

- Never available (1)
- Rarely available (2)
- Usually available (3) - half of the time
- Often available (4)
- Always available (5)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

42. What is the proportion of school head administrators that are women in your area?

- No head administrators are women (1)
- Few (2)
- Some [around half] (3)
- Most (4)
- All teachers are women (5)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

43. Who has better access to health care services in your area, men or women?

- Women have <u>significantly better</u> (5 - discrimination against men)
- Women have <u>slightly better</u> (4)
- Women and men have the <u>same access</u> (3 - ideal answer)
- Men have <u>slightly better</u> (2)
- Men have <u>significantly better</u> (1 - discrimination against women)
- Do not know
- I do not want to answer

44. In your area, what types of services available (tick the box)

<u>Column A -Types of services available</u>
- Reproductive Health
- Pediatrician /Vaccines
- General Health

<u>Column B- the answers</u>
- Yes (1)
- No (0)
- I do not know

<u>Qualitative questions</u>

36. Who makes decision to seek reproductive health services in a family?

37. Who makes decisions around pregnancy in a family, the man or woman?

38. Are nurses usually men or women? Please explain why.

39. Are doctors usually men or women? Please explain why.

Pillar Social norms and culture

45. How open are men to contributing to the following tasks at home?

<u>Column A: List of tasks</u>
- Caring for children
- Caring for elderly
- Cleaning
- Cooking
- Shopping for groceries
- Homeschooling

<u>Column B: Scale 5 -1</u>
- Always open (5)
- Often open (4)
- Sometimes open (3)
- Rarely open (2)
- Not open at all (1)
- I do not know
- I do not want to answer

46. What is the proportion of women in your area that are the head of the household?

- All (5)
- Most (4)
- Some (3)
- A few (2)
- None (1)
- I Do not know
- I do not want to answer

47. In your area, for important decisions in the household, how often do women participate in decision-making?

- never participate (1)
- rarely participate (2)
- usually participate (3) - half of the time
- often participate (4)
- always participate (5)
- I Do not know
- I do not want to answer

Qualitative questions

40. What is considered acceptable male chores

41. Describe stories about a girl that did not want to adhere to social norms and how did her family react to her?