sreo

Syria Justice and Accountability Centre

Societal Attitudes toward Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Syria

December 2015

Acknowledgements

SREO would like to acknowledge all of the groups, organizations and individuals who made this report possible. SREO would like to thank the Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC) for commissioning this report, and for providing the research team with background information and timely feedback about the research tools used in the field. Finally, SREO would like to thank all of the Syrian refugees in the cities of Antakya, Gaziantep, and Şanlıurfa who took the time to be interviewed, and for providing honest and useful insight into their perceptions of, and experiences with, sexual and gender-based violence.

About SREO

SREO is an independent, non-partisan research center based in Gaziantep, Turkey. SREO's team of researchers includes Syrians, Turks, Europeans, and Americans who have all spent significant time in Syria and the Middle East. Its researchers speak local languages and are dedicated to providing objective analysis of what is transpiring inside of Syria as well as in the host communities of neighboring countries.

SREO provides monitoring and evaluation services along with needs assessments and feasibility studies. Together, the SREO team has more than two decades of experience working in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

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About SJAC

SJAC has been a leading transitional justice actor since the beginning of the Syrian conflict. It is the only documentation organization working inside Syria to comprehensively collect documentation with the purpose of driving holistic transitional justice efforts. SJAC collects and preserves evidence of violations of international humanitarian, criminal, and human rights laws by all parties in the Syrian conflict.

SJAC's end purpose is that the documentation it collects, preserves, and processes will be used not only for prosecutions and accountability mechanisms but also for reparations, truth-seeking, memorialization, and institutional reform efforts. By contributing to broader transitional justice processes, SJAC will help all Syrians find ways to reconcile with atrocities committed during the conflict, and the resulting individual and social trauma they have experienced, which will be essential for rebuilding the country.

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List of Abbreviations

IDP	Internally-Displaced Person
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham
PYD	Kurdish Democratic Union Party
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SJAC	Syria Justice and Accountability Center
SREO	Syria Research and Evaluation Organization

Definitions Provided to All Respondents Prior to Interviews

Sexual violence: Sexual violence are acts of a sexual nature against a person, by force, or by threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression, or abuse of power, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment or a person's incapacity to give genuine consent. Sexual violence includes but is not limited to rape.

Gender-based violence: Gender-based violence (GBV) are acts committed against persons, whether male or female, because of their sex and/or socially constructed gender roles. GBV is not always manifested as a form of sexual violence and may include minor/forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honor killings, physical assault, or the denial of resources, opportu-.nities, or services on the basis of gender

Table of Contents

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Executive Summary

The Syria Justice and Accountability Centre (SJAC) aims to ensure that human rights violations during the conflict are comprehensively documented in order to advance transitional justice and peacebuilding in Syria. Despite the vast amount of documentation that SJAC has been able to collect since the uprising began in 2011, very little information has been gathered on violations related to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).

This report sought to assess the prevalence of SGBV in Syria before and after 2011, as well as to gauge Syrians' attitudes towards the survivors and perpetrators of abuse.

For this assessment, the evaluation team conducted 60 semi-structured interviews with Syrians currently residing in the Turkish cities of Gaziantep, Antakya, and Şanlıurfa. Twenty interviews were conducted in each city: ten with men and ten with women.

Respondents overwhelmingly reported that SGBV was present in Syria before the start of the revolution and that it has increased in scale and severity since. Before 2011, respondents reported that SGBV occurred in Syrian government prisons and detention centers, but also in the community, primarily in the form of domestic violence, early marriage, and sexual harassment. Since the revolution, most respondents thought of SGBV as a weapon of war, used chiefly by the Syrian government, but also by opposition or other fighting groups, including the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). The entanglement of SGBV with war and politics was the primary analytical challenge faced during this assessment.

Attitudes towards survivors of SGBV represent a tragic irony: nearly all respondents expressed genuine sympathy and a willingness to help survivors of SGBV, but respondents just as commonly expressed that the community would ostracize SGBV survivors. The result is that while nearly all respondents, 58 out of 60, indicated that their community should help survivors of SGBV, only three respondents indicated that their community actually would be supportive of survivors. Instead, they believed the community was likely to shame, harass, and isolate survivors, especially females, sometimes to the point of suicide or honor killing. According to respondents, the community was less likely to actively abuse male survivors. Instead, male survivors were reported to "not talk about it," and suffer psychologically as a result. Women, by small margins, were more likely than men to both express and attract sympathy.

A large majority of respondents reported that justice for perpetrators should be dispensed in a formal manner through the courts. However, a significant minority expressed anger and a desire for revenge or vigilantism. Many said that perpetrators should be treated rather than punished.

Respondents also reported a significant lack of available psychological services for SGBV survivors in Syria. The most common problem identified by respondents was the absence of medical specialists. Respondents also agreed that SGBV was a reason why many Syrians fled the country, although they differed on the primacy of this explanation.

Finally, nearly 90 percent of respondents expressed that SGBV would negatively affect the future of Syria. By far, the three most common conditions respondents put forth to reduce or mitigate the negative impacts of SGBV on the wider Syrian society, were identified as: psychological treatment by specialists; awareness campaigns to address community attitudes toward survivors; and justice and accountability, in that order.

According to reports by the U.N. Commission of Inquiry on Syria, both women and men have encountered conflict-related SGBV since spring 2011. (1) The most common locations for SGBV include detention centers, checkpoints, and houses during government raids.(2) When men report suffering from SGBV, it is often in the context of torture.(3) There is sparse publically available information about whether men encounter SGBV in other contexts. Women report sexual assault during torture as well, and also face SGBV by way of forced marriages, domestic violence, denial of access to reproductive care, and honor killings (4)

In addition to the direct effect of SGBV, an indirect effect has impacted Syrians' sense of safety (or perceived safety). Rumors and stories of rape are ubiquitous, and often used to intimidate entire communities. Some women and families have left Syria, fearing sexual abuse. Meanwhile, resources for SGBV survivors are scarce in the camps, and difficult to find in Syria, though medical, psychosocial, and protection services are necessary for survivors, particularly if they are to come forward for the purposes of documentation. (5) As a result, SJAC is concerned about the availability of services, the capacity of human rights documenters to ethically engage with survivors, and the lack of knowledge regarding these types of crimes. One reason for the lack of documentation on this topic is the pervasive social

stigma surrounding SGBV, which is a taboo subject matter in Syrian society.(6) Although this is true in most parts of the world, the issue is complicated by the fact that traditionally honor and female sexuality have been closely linked.(7) Thus, women in particular fear coming forward because of the possibility that they will be shunned or harmed by family members and their communities for the perceived sense of dishonor that sexual assault denotes. (8) Media stories, for instance, have documented cases of women being abandoned by their husbands or family because of abuse they experienced as a result of the conflict.(9)

Research Objectives

The objective of this report was to gauge perceptions toward SGBV among Syrian refugees in southern Turkey. Researchers analyzed differences in prevalence and perception before and after the start of the Syrian revolution in March 2011. The research placed a particular emphasis on differences in perception between genders, both among respondents and towards .potential survivors of SGBV

Further, this research sought to ascertain the impact that wartime SGBV may have on the wider Syrian society and identify any areas for further research. Additionally, the report aims to inform SJAC's strategy for increasing its documentation of SGBV and help guide how transitional justice mechanisms might engage with the Syrian community to increase post-conflict accountability for SGBV-related crimes.

Data Collection

This study consists of 60 in-person semi-structured interviews completed between August 12 and September 9, 2015. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes. All interviews were transcribed in Arabic and coded in English to provide specific details and enable a systematic analysis of the findings. Before the start of each interview, the field researchers began by introducing SJAC and SREO. The field researchers also explained the objectives of the research and the definition of SGBV before moving on to the interview questions.

The research questionnaire, including the definition of SGBV, was developed by SJAC and translated by SREO. However, SJAC offered its technical support in defining the SGBV related terms in Arabic to ensure accurate translation.

Locations and Sample

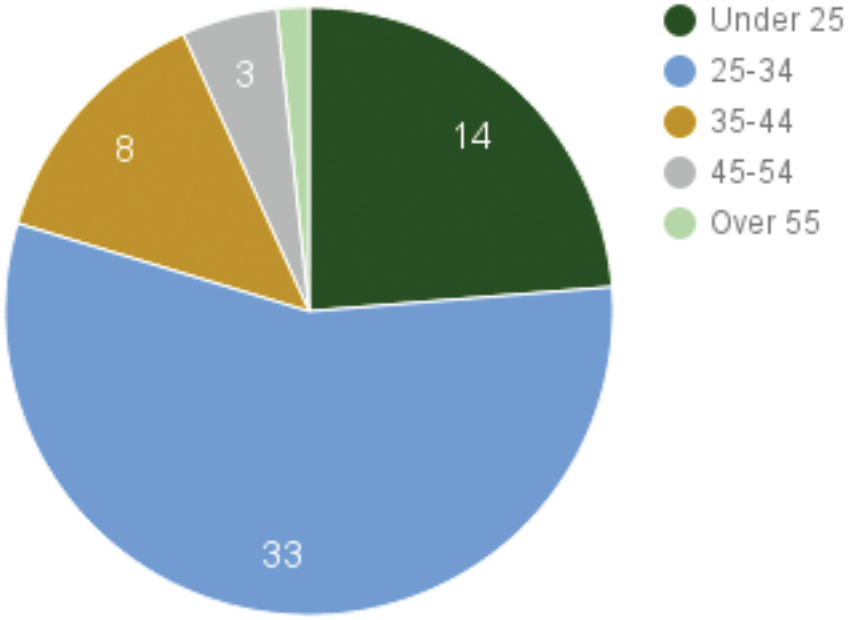
The geographic locations covered in this study include the southern Turkish cities of Antakya, Gaziantep, and Şanlıurfa. According to June 2015 estimations, an overwhelming majority (85 percent) of the 1.75 million Syrian Refugees in Turkey live in cities, outside of camps. (10) It was therefore considered appropriate to focus the geographic coverage of this study on the three most refugee-denseurban areas in southern Turkey: Antakya (Hatay), Gaziantep, and Şanlıurfa.(11)

In each city, one female field researcher was responsible for interviewing ten male and ten female adults, bringing the total sample to 30 male and 30 female respondents.

After careful consideration, SREO's research team decided to conduct the fieldwork with female field researchers only. This decision is based on the understanding that female field researchers are able to approach male and female respondents both, without cultural restrictions related to propriety, whereas a male field researcher could find it challenging to discuss sensitive questions related to SGBV with female respondents. As expected, the female field researchers faced no difficulties approaching male or female members of the Syrian communities in the neighborhoods of Antakya, Gaziantep, and Şanlıurfa.

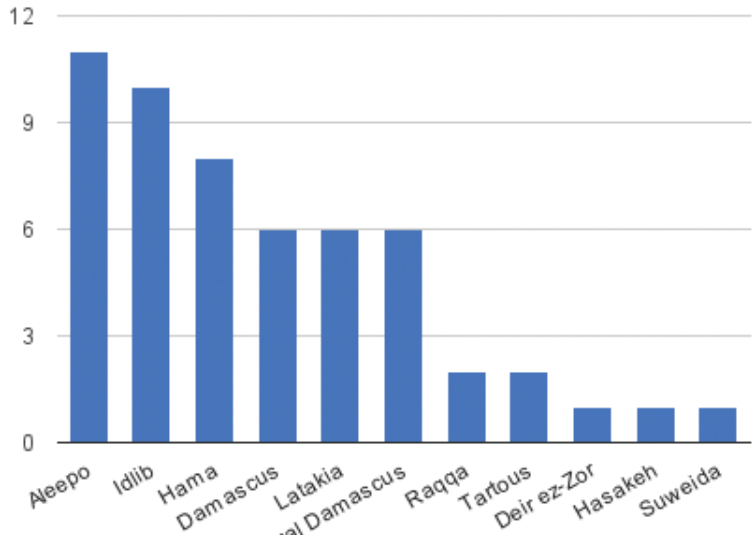
The average age of respondents was 30.1 years old and more than three-quarters of respondents were under 35. The relative youthfulness of the sample may have led to data indicating more progressive views than those held by the population as a whole.

Figure 1: Respondents by Age



Respondents hailed from a diverse array of native governorates, as would be expected for a survey of Syrians living in southern Turkey. Because the sampling criteria involved respondents' current city of residence and not their native governorate, it is difficult to draw confident conclusions about SGBV in underrepresented governorates. For purposes of this assessment, SREO has considered any governorate with two or fewer respondents as insufficiently representative for governorate-level analysis. SREO also decided to treat Afrin as a distinct entity from Aleppo given its unique demographics and political institutions.

Figure 2: Respondents by Native Governorate



Respondent Selection

Given the sensitivity of the research topic, some respondents were selected from within the networks of the field researchers—either contacts of the field researchers or known associates of their friends. The risk that this could lead to a skewed sample, for example, with an overrepresentation of respondents with similar values and education levels as the field researchers, was outweighed by the imperative to find respondents willing to offer forthright testimony. Care was taken to develop a representative sample based on age, gender, religiosity, and profession. The majority of interviews took place in cafes or the homes of respondents, where there could be a reasonable expectation of privacy. Approximately one-third of the sample was unknown previously to the researchers.

Challenges

Several challenges related to this assessment are worth noting. Firstly, SGBV remains a taboo subject in Syrian society. Because of the sensitive nature of the focus of this research, there is a risk that some respondents may not have been fully forthright in their testimonies. Furthermore, SGBV is not a concept native to Syria. Despite researchers efforts to explain the framework of SGBV to respondents, it is possible that misunderstandings persisted. For example, some respondents mentioned non-forced prostitution and parents' refusal to send female children to school as examples of SGBV.

Additionally, SGBV is a complex and multi-faceted issue, but the research design needed to ensure that interviews were not burdensomely long. Thus, following the interviewers' description of the various acts that constitute sexual violence and gender-based violence, interview questions focused on SGBV in general—allowing respondents the flexibility to raise whatever form(s) of SGBV they were most familiar with. While, in some cases, respondents mentioned a particular act (e.g., rape), others responded more generally, making it difficult to discern if responses would have been different for different iterations of SGBV. For example, for respondents who expressed that perpetrators of SGBV should be executed, it was unlikely that this response applied equally to all forms of SGBV. Similarly, in discussing community attitudes toward survivors of SGBV, respondents tended to speak predominately about the consequences likely to be suffered by rape survivors, and it was unclear if these same types of treatment and consequences could be extrapolated to survivors of sexual harassment, early marriage, or other SGBV violations. Some respondents also expressed that SGBV was not a topic of urgency at a time when physical violence and a lack of
food, water, and medicine are so widespread.

Other challenges arose because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter. Researchers had the impression that respondents sometimes gave answers that they thought the researchers wanted to hear. Overwhelmingly, respondents expressed sympathy, and a willingness to support survivors of SGBV. This happened to such a degree that researchers were occasionally skeptical of the answers they
were receiving. Many respondents also called for "awareness campaigns" and "transitional ",justice

concepts that almost assuredly have become familiar only recently given proximity to largely Western humanitarian and NGO actors in Turkey and their principles. The previous points are exemplified by a respondent who expressed the desire to organize an awareness campaign, after the completion of the interview, on behalf of SGBV survivors. Additionally, despite the intention of obtaining a random sample, the selected respondents tended to be those more comfortable discussing the topic of the SGBV. The clearest example of this is the sample itself, which skewed young.

A handful of analytical challenges arose as well. Respondents' views differed substantially based on their community of origin. While the sample was divided between locations in Turkey—Antakya, Gaziantep, and Şanlıurfa—more variation existed based on governorate of origin in Syria. Therefore, the sample was not representative of Syrian society as whole. Specifically, governorates closer to Turkey, chiefly Aleppo and Idlib, were overrepresented, while areas in southern and eastern Syria—Hasakeh, Deir-ez-Zor, Sweida, and Dar'a—were underrepresented. This bias based on governorate of origin was political in addition to geographical, as governorates in which the Syrian government exerts significant control, specifically Homs and Tartous, were also underrepresented. With that, the sample did include a significant number of respondents from Lattakia, Damascus, Rural Damascus, and Hama—governorates which are generally less well represented in southern Turkey for geographical and political reasons.

Finally, while interviewing Syrian refugees in Turkey proved more logistically feasible than interviewing respondents inside Syria, it may have impacted the accuracy of the data. Many respondents had been in Turkey for several years, and therefore their testimony about SGBV in Syria in the intervening years may have been based on hearsay. It is possible that community attitudes towards survivors, services available to survivors, etc. have changed since the respondents left the country.

Prevalence of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Syria Pre / Post 2011

SGBV before the Revolution

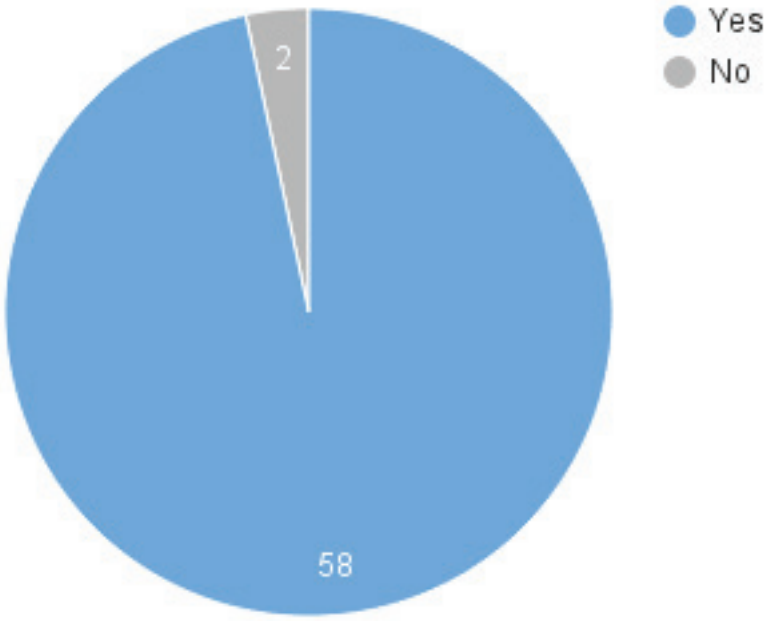
The vast majority of respondents (58 out of 60) indicated that incidences of SGBV occurred in Syria prior to the outbreak of the conflict in March 2011.

The only two respondents to say that SGBV did not exist in pre-2011 Syria were from Idlib. A common sentiment was that, prior to the conflict, incidences of SGBV "were mostly hidden" and became more widespread and exposed during the crisis. (Gaziantep/Unknown Male). Some respondents reported that "all kinds of SGBV existed before the crisis, (Gaziantep/Lattakia Female)" while others noted that "it was rare"(Antakya/Idlib Male) or occurred far away in the countryside because of the "ideology and wrong traditions of these areas," (Antakya/Idlib Male) which were described as "backwards and unorganized" (Antakya/Idlib Female) by some respondents from urban areas. Some female respondents mentioned that respect for women was lacking in their communities, saying "we have a masculine society"(Antakya/Idlib Female) and "always the man is right and the woman is wrong."(Gaziantep/Hama Female). Some men agreed, saying "women were deprived of basic rights,"(Sanliurfa/Aleppo Male) with one respondent attributing incidences of SGBV before the conflict to "religion, traditions, conventions, and regime law being against women."(Sanliurfa/Lattakia Male) Another respondent indicated that, "domestic violence is accepted and not punished by the community."(Antakya/Idlib Male).

Even in discussions of pre-2011 incidences of SGBV, respondents often associated these crimes with the Syrian government or pro-government militias, known as Shabiha. According to one respondent, SGBV "existed in regime prisons but not in the community."(Sanliurfa/Aleppo Male). Another respondent presented a perhaps more accurate picture:

> ***"Most [incidences] were domestic violence, but also [there were incidences of SGBV] in regime prisons, which were hidden, and honor killings in rural areas.(Sanliurfa/Damascus Female)."***

Figure 3: SGBV before 2011?

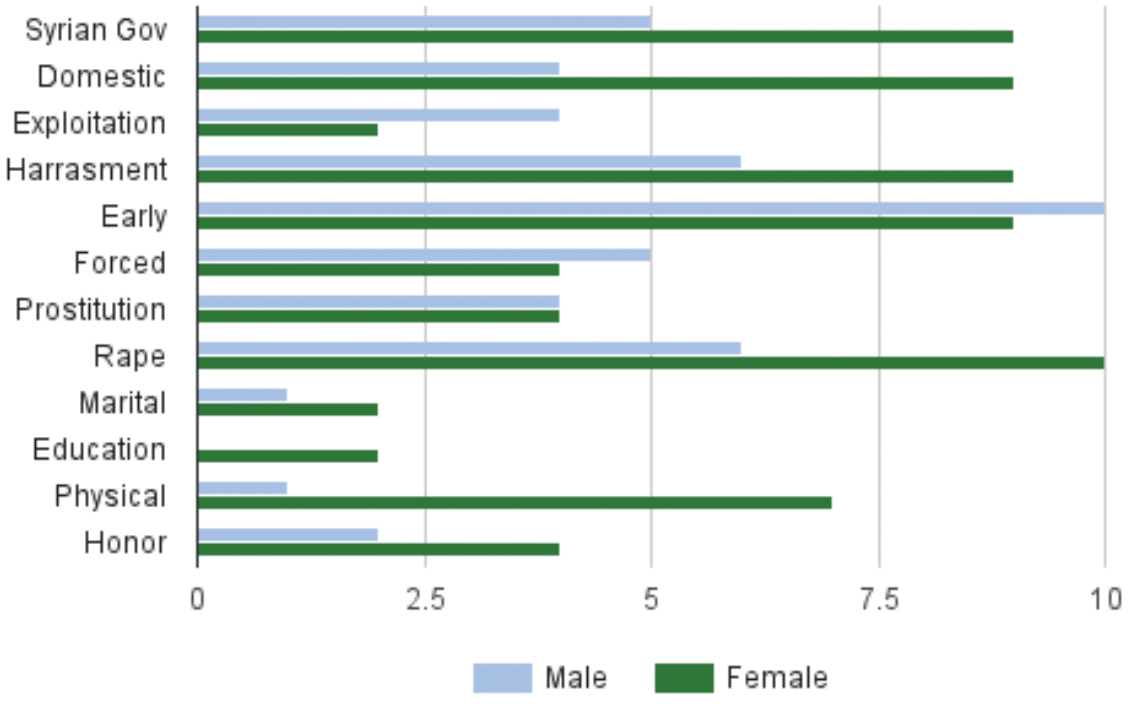


Most respondents did not feel that Syria was special regarding SGBV before 2011. Most responses to the question of whether or not SGBV occurred in Syria before the conflict began with "of course." As one respondent summarized, "of course [SGBV] existed in Syria, but [it] also exists everywhere."(Sanliurfa/Aleppo Male).

Types of SGBV Incidences before the Revolution

Respondents mentioned a wide variety of types of incidences of SGBV. Female respondents were more comprehensive than male respondents in detailing the landscape of pre-2011 SGBV in Syria. Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to mention cases of SGBV committed by the Syrian government, verbal harassment, rape, marital rape, and honor killings, and were much more likely to highlight cases of domestic violence and physical abuse. Two female respondents said that families depriving their daughters of an education qualified as SGBV. Men were slightly more likely than women to mention early marriage, forced marriage, and exploitation (i.e., cases in which men used a superior professional standing to extract sexual favors from female subordinates).

Figure 4: Types of SGBV Incidences before 2011



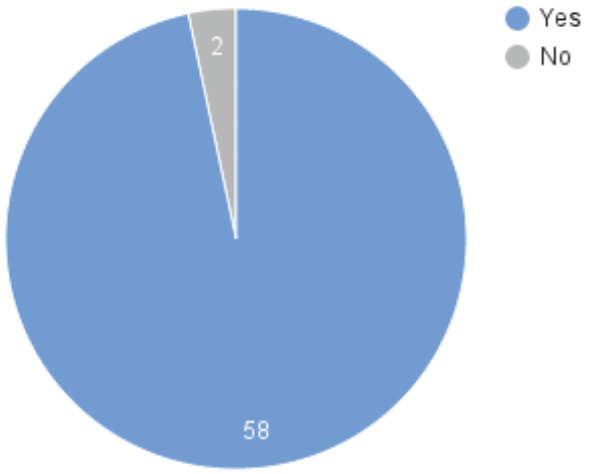
Overall, early marriage, rape, verbal harassment, government violations, and domestic violence were the five most common associations with pre-2011 SGBV incidence. It is important to note that these associations were passive, mentioned without the prompting of the interviewer. Therefore, just because a respondent did not mention, for example, domestic violence, does not mean that the respon
dent would deny that domestic violence existed in pre-2011 Syria.

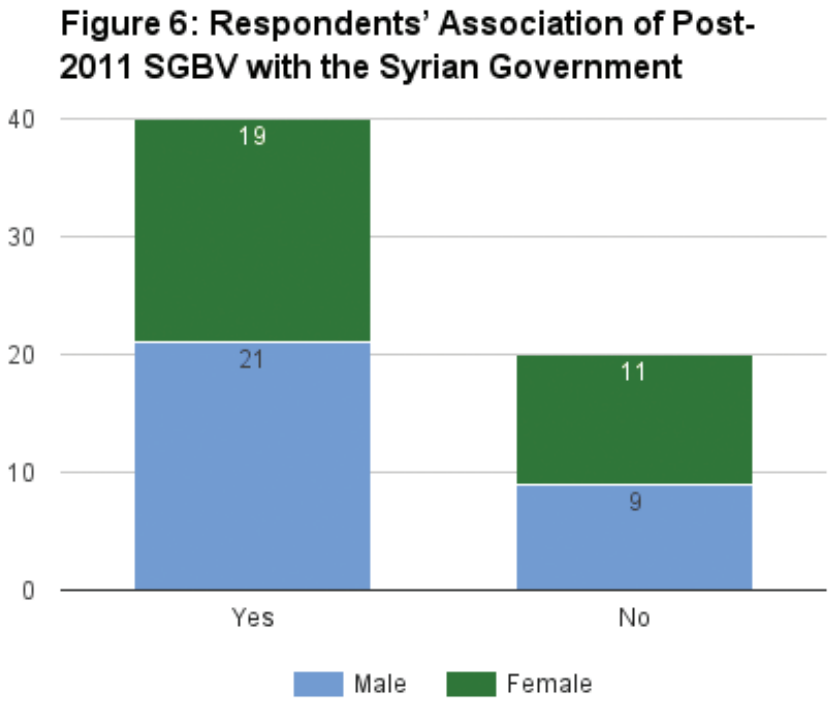
SGBV after the Revolution

Nearly every respondent (58 out of 60) said that incidents of SGBV increased after the start of the crisis. One of the respondents who said that SGBV did not increase was originally from Afrin and said that local authorities, likely the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), prevented incidences of SGBV, and that women in Kurdish areas "are respected the same as men."(Sanliurfa/Afrin Female).

Not just the scale, but the nature of, and contributing factors to, SGBV changed with the onset of the crisis. For example, while only 14 respondents specifically associated acts of SGBV committed in pre-2011 Syria with the Syrian government, two-thirds of respondents (40 out of 60) associated acts of SGBV committed in post-2011 Syria with the Syrian government—male and female respondents in almost equal proportion. According to one respondent, "all women now who are arrested are accused of having been raped in prison."(1)

Figure 5: Increase of SGBV after 2011?





This association was strongest in Rural Damascus, Damascus, and Hama in descending order, and weakest in Afrin, Idlib, and Lattakia. Respondents originally from areas of Aleppo other than Afrin associated post-2011 SGBV with the government at a rate proportional to the sample as a whole. The overall level of anger towards the Syrian government makes it difficult to disentangle respondents' views of SGBV committed by the government from SGBV in general.

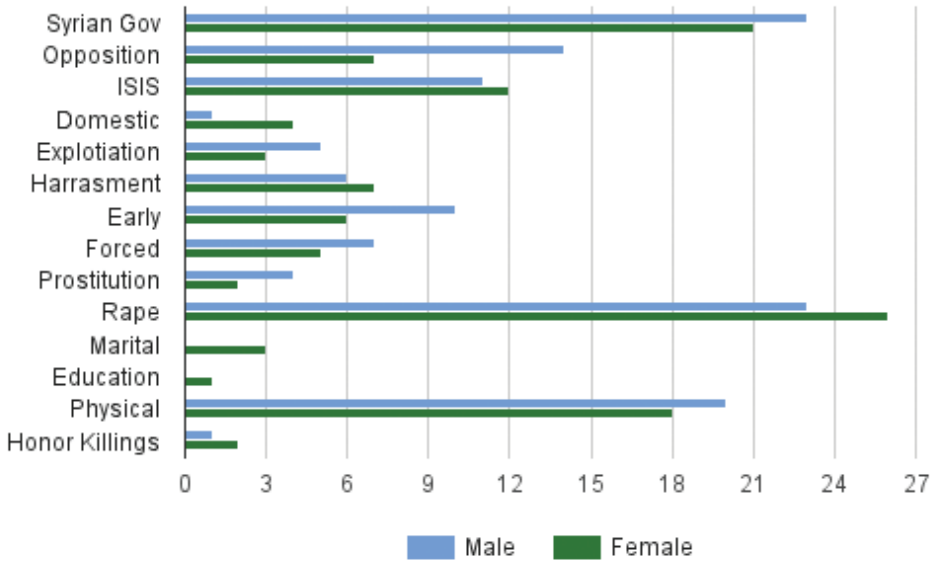
Types of SGBV Incidences after the Revolution

By far the three most common associations with SGBV in the context of post-2011 Syria were rape, acts of SGBV committed by the government, and physical assaults. These categories are not mutually exclusive: most of the respondents who mentioned acts committed by the Syrian government said that the acts consisted of rape and physical assaults. It is also noteworthy that ,physical assaults were mentioned in the pre-2011 period in various contexts, but in post-2011

were usually mentioned in the context of torture, specifically torture in government prisons and detention centers.

Regarding post-2011 incidences of SGBV, male respondents were more likely than female respondents to mention early marriage, forced marriage, and prostitution, and much more likely to mention abuses by opposition groups. Often respondents viewed prostitution as SGBV, whether it was forced or not. Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to mention rape, marital rape, domestic violence, and honor killings.

Figure 7: Types of SGBV Incidences after 2011



Because fewer respondents mentioned, for example, domestic violence in the context of post-2011 Syria than in pre-2011 Syria does not mean that these incidences stopped or decreased. The incidents mentioned were simply associations, expressed by the respondents without prompting from field researchers (apart from the definition of SGBV). Respondents' post-2011 associations with SGBV were overwhelmingly connected with politics, war, and violence. Of less overt salience were violations committed outside of the context of war.

As for ISIS, 23 respondents directly mentioned the extremist group in association with acts of SGBV committed in post-2011 Syria. However, this does not mean that the remaining 37 respondents denied that the group commits such acts—it only means that the remaining participants did not mention ISIS directly. Additionally, participants' accusations of violations committed by "armed groups" were only categorized as "opposition," although it is possible that this wide category also included ISIS. Often, SGBV violations committed by opposition groups were characterized as revenge, or a counter-reaction, for government abuses (Antakya/Lattakia Female).

There was widespread agreement that acts of SGBV were less hidden, and that there was "more openness after it is discussed more,"(Sanliurfa/Hama Female) although "some of the incidents are still hidden or not talked about."(Antakya/Idlib Male) One respondent said that "cases in regime prisons are more known and documented."(Sanliurfa/Deir ez/Zor Male). A few respondents said that acts of SGBV were so common that it "became something normal" (Sanliurfa/Rural Damascus Female) or "typical." (Antakya/Idlib Female). One respondent noted, "it is rare for a woman in the regime prisons not to be raped," (Antakya/Lattakia Female) while another acknowledged that "rape cases against both men and women in regime prisons" were very common (Gaziantep/Damascus Female). As one respondent explained:

> ***"Shabiha and regime members would rape girls in front of their fathers… It became something normal and it happens every day so I don't have a strong reaction anymore (Gaziantep/Hama Male)."***

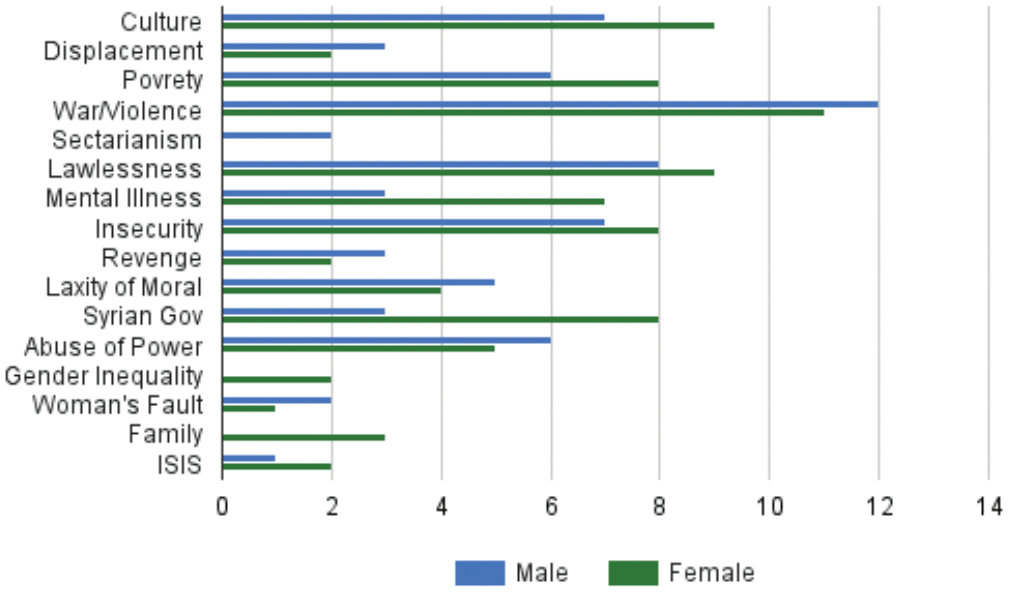
According to respondents, SGBV in post-2011 Syria has worsened in other contexts as well. While early marriage existed before the revolution, “before it was 15 year-olds but now it is 11 and 12 year-olds.” (Sanliurfa/Damascus Female). In addition, “early marriage used to be more prevalent in the countryside but now it is also happening more in the cities.” (Gaziantep/Hama Female). Deteriorating livelihoods, as a result of the conflict, were cited as contributing factors to early marriage, forced marriage, and non-forced prostitution. Another respondent said that fighters for the government would kidnap women at checkpoints and force them into prostitution (Sanliurfa/Rural Damascus Female). Several respondents mentioned ISIS, usually in connection with the group’s taking sex slaves (Sanliurfa/Damascus Female). Multiple respondents at least partially attributed the rise in SGBV after the revolution to alien practices, like female genital mutilation, early marriage, and polygamy, imported by foreign fighters(Antakya/Aleppo Male). IDPs were reported to be particularly exposed to all varieties of SGBV(Antakya/Damascus Female). While outside of the scope of this research, a handful of participants expressed that Syrians were exposed to SGBV in neighboring countries, where they are vulnerable and do not receive adequate protection (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Male).

One respondent characterized the entanglement of politics, war, and SGBV in post-2011 Syria by stating that, “SGBV is used as a weapon because of the importance of honor and chastity in the community." (Sanliurfa/Damascus Female). Another noted that SGBV “is a weapon that all sides use.” (Gaziantep/Afrin Female).

Factors Contributing to SGBV

Respondents attributed SGBV in Syria to a myriad of factors, the most common of which was war and violence. According to one respondent, SGBV “is normal in times of war.”(Antakya/Idlib Female). The second- most-common factor was lawlessness, as “there is no one to protect the people.” (Gaziantep/Rural Damascus Female). The third-most-common factor was “culture.” Here, subsumed under the category of “culture” were responses highlighting the so-called “Eastern” (Gaziantep/Damascus Female). culture prevalent in Syria, “ignorance,” (Gaziantep/Lattakia Female) sex as “taboo,” (Gaziantep/Hama Male) “poor sexual education,” (Antakya/Unknown Male). “backwardness,” (Antakya/Rural Damascus Female) “social pressure,” (Sanliurfa/Damascus Female) and “customs, norms and traditions.” (Sanliurfa/Lattakia Female). Insecurity was the fourth most-oft-cited factor contributing to SGBV

Figure 8: Factors Contributing to SGBV



Poverty and mental illness were also commonly mentioned as contributing factors. Poverty was most often mentioned in the context of prostitution and early marriage. Many respondents reported that early marriage increased after the revolution, as poorer families sought to "get rid of the responsibility of [caring for] their daughters," (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Female) especially if their future sons-in-law would pay a dowry. Also, many respondents attributed the spread of SGBV to acts committed by perpetrators suffering from mental illness. For these respondents, given the nearly unanimous opinion that acts of SGBV increased since the revolution, the conflict either created the psychological trauma that led to illness in future perpetrators, fostered an environment in which future perpetrators with preexisting mental illnesses could commit acts of SGBV with fewer obstacles, or a combination of the two.

Less frequently mentioned, but nonetheless important, factors included displacement, revenge, ISIS, and the disintegration of family structures and/or acts committed within the family. Another somewhat common explanation was "laxity of morals," although the use of this expression was vague and difficult to understand. Three respondents, including one woman, said acts of SGBV are sometimes the fault of the survivor, for seducing or bringing on their attacker (Antakya/Idlib Male , Sanliurfa/Aleppo Female) or for not being sufficiently aware (Antakya/Aleppo Male).

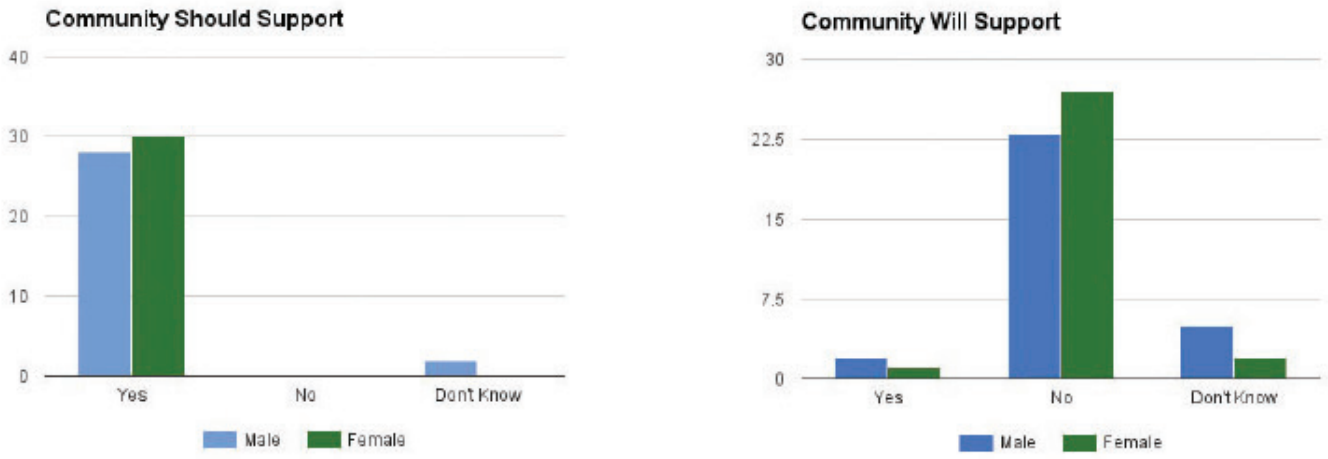
Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to highlight factors like culture, poverty, gender inequality, and the disintegration of, or problems within, the family unit. Female respondents were much more likely to mention mental illness and to specifically mention the Syrian government as a contributing factor to SGBV. Male respondents were more likely to mention sectarianism, revenge, and laxity of morals. On the aggregate, male respondents mentioned fewer factors than their female counterparts did.

Attitudes Towards Survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Community Behavior toward Survivors

The most interesting finding about attitudes toward survivors of SGBV was that respondents nearly unanimously agreed that they themselves and their community should support survivors, yet they expressed, with equal certainty, that the community would not only fail to support survivors, but would actively shame, attack, and isolate them, sometimes to the point of death by suicide or honor killing.

Figure 9: Community Attitudes toward Survivors of SGBV



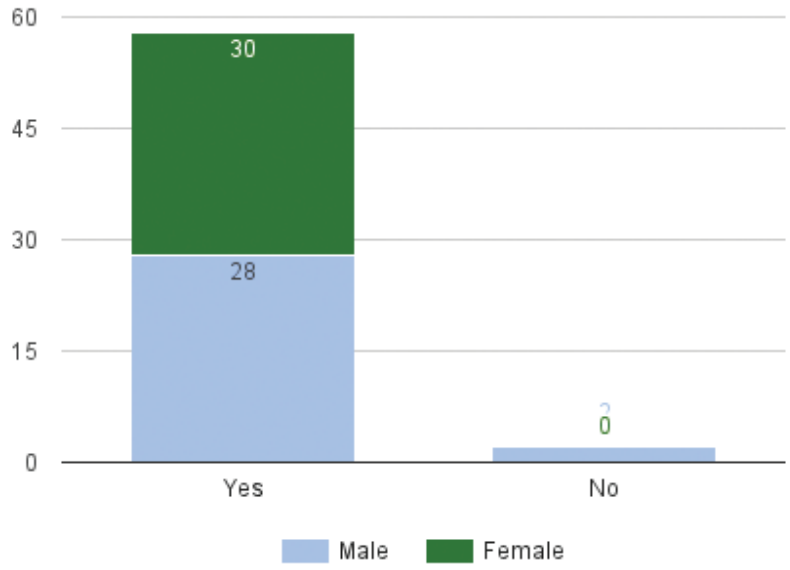
There are several potential explanations for such respondent unanimity. First, some respondents may have been telling field researchers what it is they thought the researchers wanted to hear. Second, the highly political nature of SGBV in Syria, in tandem with the wide variety of acts that constitute SGBV, may have complicated analysis of respondents' attitudes towards survivors. For example, one respondent posited that it depended "on the circumstances,"(Antakya/Idlib Male) and not all potential circumstances were covered in the interviews with each respondent. Specifically, when asked if they would support survivors, respondents trended towards thinking of those who had been raped and tortured by the Syrian government rather than, say, survivors of domestic violence, early marriage, or sexual harassment—iterations of SGBV that may or may not have elicited proportionately high levels of sympathy. In other words, political detainees surviving rape committed by the Syrian government—which is overwhelmingly what respondents associated SGBV with—may have elicited more sympathy than survivors of rape in other circumstances. For example, one respondent who expressed sympathy toward survivors of government abuses, said in a different context: "In the case of [women having sex outside of marriage] I blame the woman for what happened to her."(Gaziantep/Hama Female).

Finally, the relative youthfulness of the sample may have skewed the data towards more favorable views of survivors. It is possible that the data, characterized by expressing support for survivors, and doubting the community's support for survivors, represents a generational divide, as younger and more progressive respondents resent the conservatism and patriarchy of an older generation.

Sympathy for Survivors

Respondents, both male and female, overwhelmingly expressed sympathy for survivors regardless of gender. As one respondent put it, "There is no difference between men, women, and children." (Gaziantep/Hasakeh Male). Another respondent referred to SGBV as "a violation of humanity." (Gaziantep/Unknown Male).

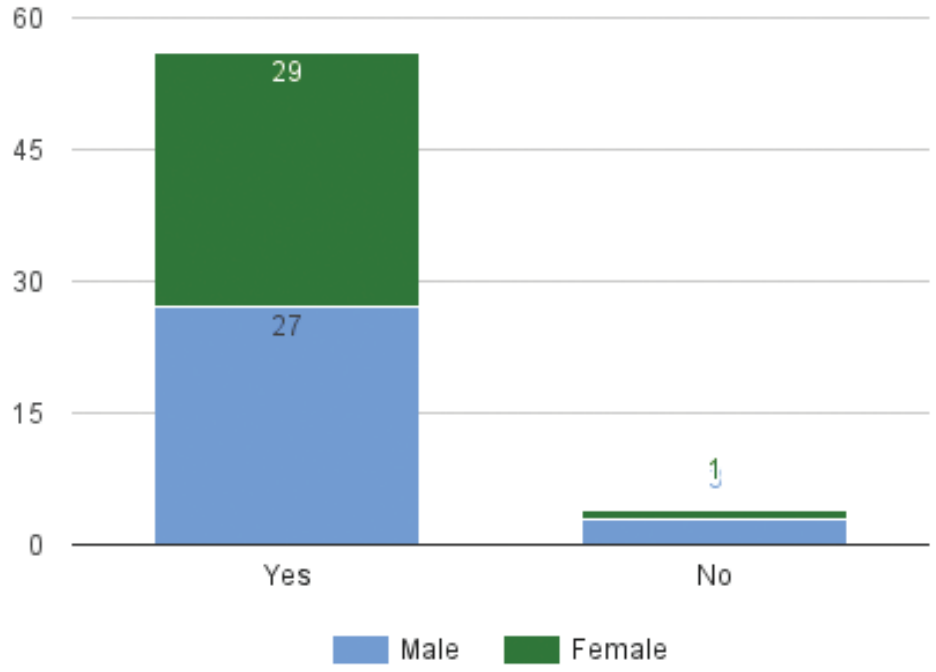
Figure 10: Sympathy for Female Survivors



Female respondents were slightly more sympathetic than male respondents to both female and male survivors. While just two respondents, both males, failed to express sympathy for female survivors, four respondents, three males and one female, did not express sympathy for male survivors. One male respondent said he would not have sympathy for a male survivor of SGBV unless he was attacked by the government, otherwise the survivor should not have allowed himself to be attacked "because he is a man." (Antakya/Idlib Male).

Respondents also expressed that incidences of SGBV were not the fault of the survivor: "Even if the woman is very sexy, it's not a reason for a man to rape her." (Gaziantep/Hama Female). Another reported that he wanted female survivors to "understand that what happened was out of her control and that they haven't lost their chastity or honor." (Gaziantep/Tartous Male). Another respondent said, "it is not their fault, and they should know the regime is using SGBV as a weapon." (Sanliurfa/Deir ez-Zor Male).

Figure 11: Sympathy for Male Survivors



Perception of Challenges Faced by Survivors Based on Gender

While respondents largely expressed sympathy for both male and female survivors, they differed over which gender would face greater difficulty in the aftermath of an attack. For some respondents, male survivors would have a harder time because of the community's expectations for men. As one respondent put it:

> ***"It's harder [for men] because they do not talk about it so no one helps them. The community doesn't talk about this and hides it.(Gaziantep/Tartous Male)***
>
> **.**

Some respondents also thought male survivors would suffer more because females were more accustomed to mistreatment in the community and therefore better equipped to cope (Antakya/Lattakia Female). As one respondent said, "Women are raised on how to avoid SGBV but men are not, so male victims would have a harder time." (Gaziantep/Damascus Male). Even some female respondents reported that coping would be harder for men "because we are part of an eastern community and this will affect his manliness." (Gaziantep/Rural Damascus Female).

For others, female survivors would face more difficulty because they would be more likely to face abuse from the community after an attack. According to one respondent, "People will say bad things about her and treat her as a criminal, whereas for male survivors, no one talks about it." (Gaziantep/Hama Female). Other respondents sympathized with female survivors because they were more vulnerable to attack (Gaziantep/Idlib Female).

Support for Survivors

Respondents overwhelmingly thought that survivors in the community should be supported in various ways. Types of support were not mutually exclusive, so respondents could indicate a preference for providing moral, medical, and financial support. Nearly every respondent thought that survivors should receive moral (59 of 60) and medical/psychological support (53 of 60), and 18 respondents indicated that survivors should receive financial support. These opinions were mentioned passively and without prompting by interviewers, so the inverse of these statements likely does not hold true (i.e., that 42 respondents oppose financial support for survivors), only that 42 respondents did not mention financial support.

Respondents communicated moral support in a variety of ways, such as saying that community members should accept and protect survivors, raise the morale and confidence of survivors, (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Male) make it clear to survivors that "it was not their fault," (Sanliurfa/Hama Male) provide a safe "place [for survivors] to share their experiences," (Gaziantep/Hama Male) and so forth. In a representative remark, one respondent said that those around survivors "should try to build confidence of victims and get the community to integrate and accept them." (Sanliurfa/Damascus Female).

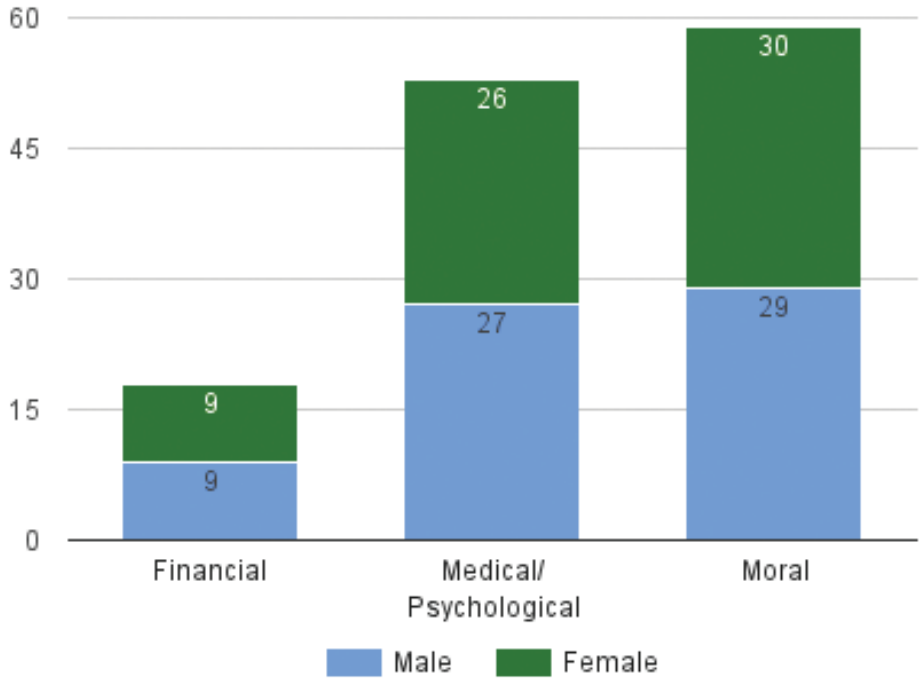
Respondents also placed a high value on psychological support for survivors. Respondents readily recognized the psychological impact of SGBV and were highly receptive to the idea of psychological treatment for survivors, whether male or female. However, the consensus among respondents was that there was an almost total absence of personnel qualified and capable to provide such services to survivors. As one respondent said:

> ***"We need specialists to treat survivors individually based on their needs. (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Male).***

Psychological support was emphasized as a greater need for men, since male survivors were less likely to talk about their experience as a way to cope, and because SGBV against men was perceived as even more taboo than SGBV in general (Antakya/Lattakia Female).

For the few respondents who favored offering financial support for survivors, it was unclear what mechanism should be created or used to implement such support. For roughly half of the respondents who mentioned financial support, this sentiment was expressed in terms of helping survivors to find a job, both to sup
port their livelihoods and "restore confidence." (Antakya/Idlib Female).

Figure 12: Types of Support for SGBV Survivors



In addition, 22 out of 60 respondents emphasized the need for awareness campaigns regarding SGBV in their communities, but it was often vague exactly what the goal of these campaigns should be. Some respondents expressed that survivors should be the target of such campaigns, as they "should be made aware of their rights." (Sanliurfa/Damascus Female). For other respondents, the community should be the target of awareness campaigns, the goal of which would be to convince community members that survivors should be accepted, supported, and reintegrated and to make the community understand "it's not the fault of the victim." (Sanliurfa/Afrin Male).

Respondents differed over whether or not survivors should talk about their attacks, with some respondents expressing that this would allow survivors to open up about their experience and heal while other respondents indicated that this could invite attack, abuse, and unwanted attention from community members. In two representative remarks, one respondent said "the first step is for [survivors] to talk about" (Gaziantep/Afrin Female) what happened to them, while another said that, in the aftermath of an attack, she "hopes the news does not spread so [the survivor] is safe from the abuse of the community." (Antakya/Lattakia Female).

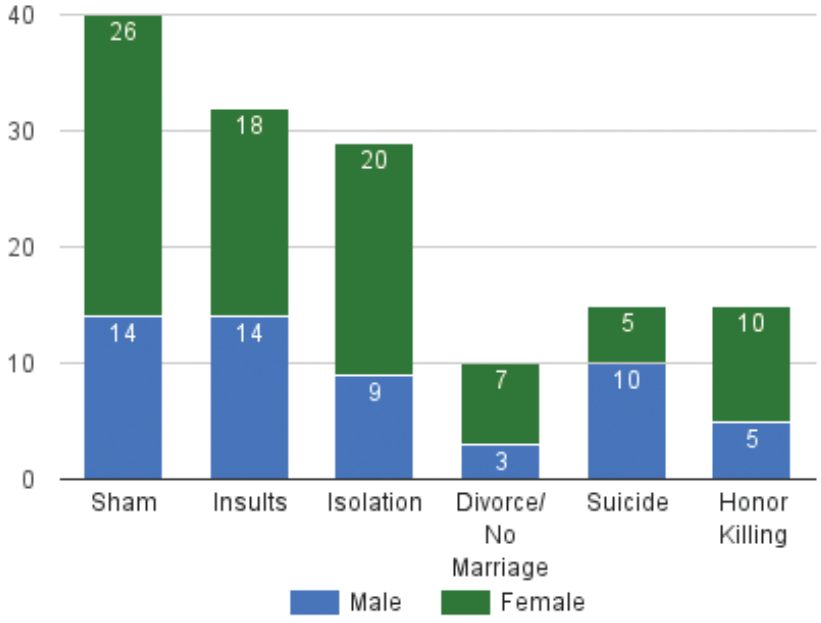
Respondents overwhelmingly reported that the communities would not be accepting of survivors. For some respondents, the first way to support a survivor would be to protect them, not from another SGBV attack, but from the abuse of the community. One respondent said of survivors, "we need to get them out of the community and to a safe place."(Sanliurfa/Aleppo Male).

Community Abuse of Survivors

Respondents reported that community members' abuse of survivors could take many forms. However, they largely agreed that community attitudes toward survivors "depended on the community." (Gaziantep/Unknown Male).
Several respondents expressed that some communities were "educated" and others were "backwards."

Female respondents had a more pessimistic view of how the community would treat SGBV survivors. With the exception of suicide, female respondents indicated that survivors would suffer consequences at the hands of the community with greater frequency than male respondents did. In a representative comment, one female respondent stated that, "the community will make survivors feel inferior." (Gaziantep/Afrin Female). Another said that, "the community is eastern and backwards on this issue." (Antakya/Lattakia Female). Two-thirds of all respondents, and 26 of the 30 female respondents, indicated that the community would shame SGBV survivors. Most commonly, this was expressed with statements like "the community would look down at them." (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Female). Another respondent, in a rare comment about community attitudes about domestic violence, said that women who speak out against domestic violence are shamed for "exposing family secrets." (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Female). Thirty-two respondents, and 18 of the 30 female respondents, said the community would insult, verbally attack, or gossip about survivors. As one respondent said of survivors, "people will say bad things about her." (Gaziantep/Hama Female).

Figure 13: Perceived Treatment of Survivors by the Community



In addition, female respondents were twice more likely than male respondents to report that female survivors could be exposed to honor killings. According to one respondent, female survivors "are sometimes abandoned or killed by their families." (Gaziantep/Hama Female) . For this reason, another respondent said that some female survivors "will not return to her parents out of fear" after an attack. (Sanliurfa/Rural Damascus Female). Women working as prostitutes, whether forced or not, were also said to be vulnerable to honor killings. (Sanliurfa/ Damascus Female). Another problem that respondents reported related to marriage was that husbands might divorce married survivors or unmarried survivors might have difficulty marrying. However, at least two male respondents expressed that they would "be proud to marry" (Sanliurfa/Afrin Male) a survivor of SGBV (Sanliurfa/Damascus Male). According to another respondent, some female survivors "married a relative to hide the scandal." (Sanliurfa/ Lattakia Female).

Male respondents expressed with double the frequency as female respondents that survivors were suicide risks. According to one male respondent, "if parents disown their daughters and treat her like she has no chastity she might commit suicide." (Gaziantep/Tartous Male). Male victims were also perceived to be potential suicide risks. One female respondent said that male survivors "would rather kill themselves than live as survivors." (Antakya/Aleppo Female).

In addition to direct mistreatment by the community, respondents indicated that survivors would also suffer indirectly. According to one respondent, "women represent honor in our community and she will feel that she is inferior and that she is nothing." (Antakya/Rural Damascus Female). Of male survivors, another respondent said that, "men may feel that their honor/dignity is compromised and would isolate themselves." (Gaziantep/Hama Male). A significant number of respondents reported that male survivors were unlikely to talk about their suffering, and were instead prone to harboring their burden alone, potentially lashing out violently or seeking revenge.

Problems for Female and Male Survivors at the Hands of the Community

Respondents held the view that the community would mistreat female survivors almost unanimously, and across all governorates. In a representative comment, one respondent said that "the community will make accusations against her and say she has lost her chastity." (Gaziantep/Rural Damascus Female). According to another respondent, "survivors would be a shame to their parents." (Damascus Female). There have been honor killings of girls released from detention, who are presumed to be have been raped, even though many may not have been.

While respondents almost unanimously agreed that the community would mistreat female survivors, the data was more ambiguous about the fate of male survivors. Twenty-six respondents indicated that male survivors would face mistreatment from the community and 28 said they would not. Female respondents were slightly more likely than male respondents to express that the community would mistreat male survivors. According to one respondent, who expressed a common opinion, "the community will attack female survivors but treat male survivors as heroes." (Gaziantep/Tartous Male). As another respondent put it, "because there is a discrimination between men and women in our community, men will be treated well and cooperated with." (Antakya/Idlib Female). However, for another respondent who also represented a common position, the community would "mock male survivors, look down on them, shame them, [and] say they ''lost their manliness." (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Female). A few respondents said that male survivors would face additional stigma because of negative community attitudes toward homosexuality (Sanliurfa/Rural Damascus Female). But for another respondent, "men can be strong and overcome it. Women are the source of honor in the community and not men." (Sanliurfa/Hama Male).

Figure 14: Problems for Female Survivors at the Hands of the Community

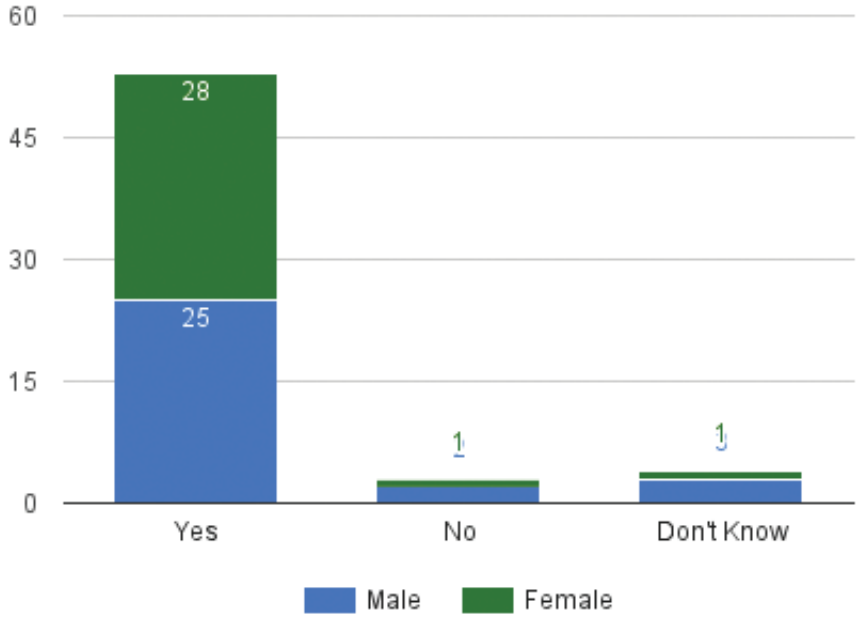
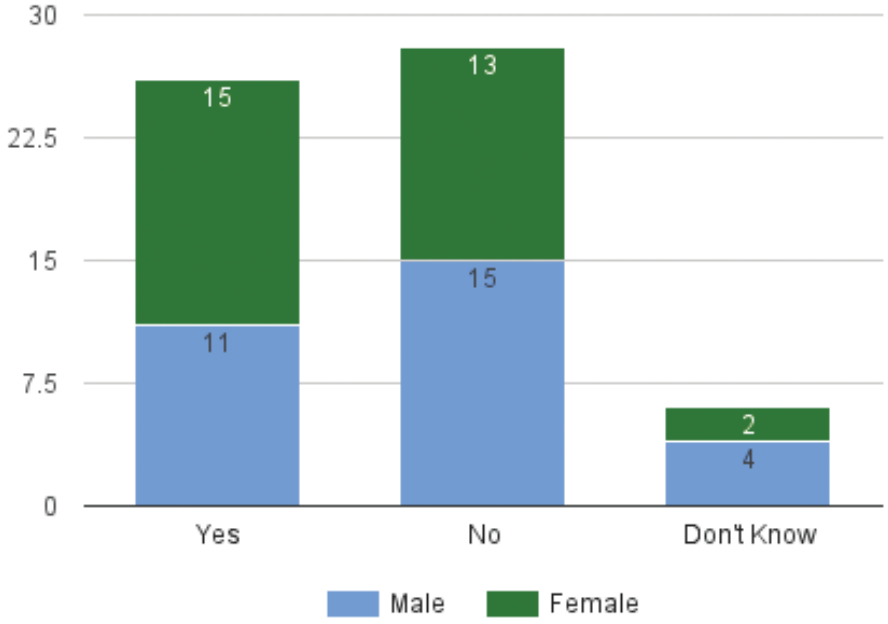


Figure 15: Problems for Male Survivors at the Hands of the Community



Among native governorates, respondents reported with greater proportion that communities would mistreat male survivors in the largely southern, western, and government-held areas of Damascus (five out of six respondents), Lattakia (four out of six respondents) and Rural Damascus (four out of six respondents) than in the northern and largely opposition-held areas of Afrin (zero out of four respondents), Idlib (two out of nine respondents) and Aleppo (three out of eight respondents). Even where respondents reported that the community would not directly abuse male survivors, they would likely face substantial challenges. Many of the respondents reported that male survivors were likely to keep information about the attack to themselves and suffer psychologically. As one respondent put it:

> ***"The men will not have social negative effects because it is hidden and not discussed in the community when males are survivors. Male survivors will suffer from psychological effects. (Gaziantep/Tartous Male).***

Additionally, several respondents expressed that if male survivors were not treated psychologically, they could become perpetrators of SGBV themselves or become violent in other ways. As one respondent put it, male survivors "may resort to violence and criminality because of what happened to them, join an armed group or commit suicide." (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Male).

A few respondents expressed that the community was improving in its treatment of survivors. According to one participant:

> ***"Since the revolution, the community has improved and treated survivors better, knowing it's not their fault. There is more awareness now in the community (Sanliurfa/Deir ez-Zor Male).***

However, it is unclear if better treatment and higher levels of awareness apply to acts committed by the Syrian government in general or to SGBV specifically, since the two have become intertwined. One respondent, when asked about how the community treats SGBV survivors, said "no one treats those emerging from regime prisons badly" without commenting on SGBV in other contexts. (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Female).

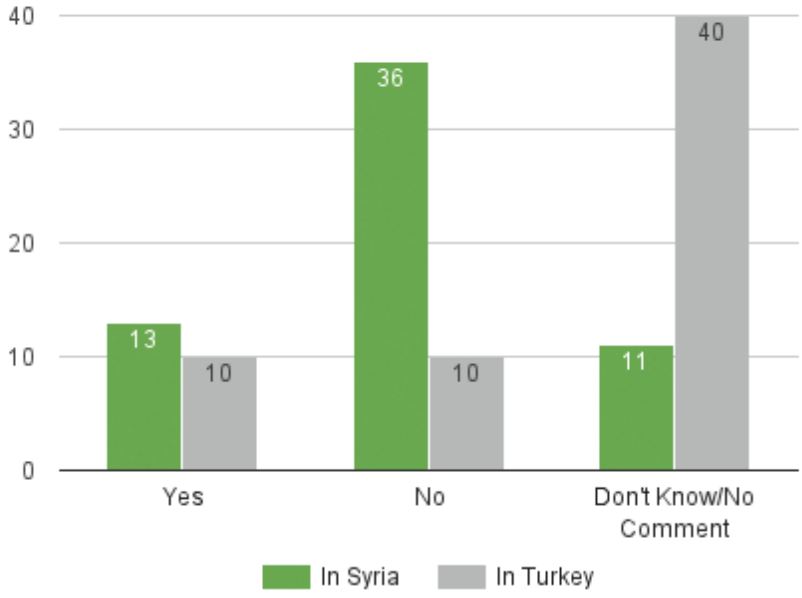
Primacy of Rape in the Mindset of Respondents

It should be noted that respondents tended to strongly associate SGBV with rape, and to speak of the experience of SGBV survivors in the community in such a way that SREO concluded that respondents were primarily thinking about rape survivors. It is difficult to parse out which consequences SGBV survivors would be more likely to suffer from in the case of other types of SGBV violations. For example, there was no specific testimony about how the community would treat a survivor of early or forced marriage, yet it seems implausible that they would suffer from honor killing at the hands of the same family members who condoned their marriage. Again, consequences for SGBV survivors were not mutually exclusive, and respondents mentioned these consequences without the prompting of the interviewer. Therefore, respondents who did not indicate a particular consequence did so by omission, not by denying that SGBV survivors would suffer from a particular form of negative treatment.

Availability of Psychosocial Support

Generally, respondents were not aware of centers providing services for SGBV survivors. Because the questionnaire only asked about respondents' knowledge of centers in their area, it was sometimes unclear if respondents were speaking about their native area in Syria or their new area in Turkey. Given the context of the assessment, and for the sake of simplicity, when respondents spoke of a center without clarifying which country the center was located in, the evaluation team assumed the respondent was speaking about Syria given the context provided by other questions. Additionally, many respondents spoke about centers in other areas of Syria that they had heard about in passing from friends or relatives, but had not personally seen themselves. Finally, since many of the respondents for this assessment have not lived in Syria for an extended period of time, it is possible that centers that had previously been active have since become defunct. According to one participant, "it is impossible to have these centers in Syria currently." (Gaziantep/Suweida Male). For all of these reasons, data on this issue is ambiguous.

Figure 16: Knowledge of Centers Providing Services for SGBV Survivors



That being said, 13 of 60 respondents had heard of services in Syria while 36 of 60 had not. Ten of 60 respondents mentioned services in Turkey, 10 said none existed, and 40 either did not know of services in Turkey or did not comment on the presence of services in Turkey. Some respondents expressed that SGBV has not been a priority for organizations during the crisis. As one respondent put it, "frankly, no one cares about this issue, unfortunately." (Antakya/Idlib Female). In all native governorates, a strong majority of respondents had not heard of services for survivors.

Only a handful of respondents mentioned the specific location of centers or the names of organizations providing services for survivors. One respondent mentioned two Syrian organizations, Child Not a Wife and Syria's Flourishing Future, which work with survivors in Gaziantep. (Antakya/Idlib Female). One respondent said that the Turkish government provides services for survivors in Antakya. (Gaziantep/Tartous Male). Another respondent mentioned a center administered by the Orthodox Church in Tartous that treats survivors of domestic violence, but it does not provide services for former detainees exposed to SGBV. (Antakya/Aleppo Male). Another respondent mentioned two organizations working on the issue in Syria, Women Now and Foundations, but said both had stopped operations inside Syria because of security issues (Gaziantep/Tartous Male).

Many of the respondents who had heard of centers operating in Syria reported that the services provided were not adequate in quantity or quality to meet survivors' needs. A common sentiment was that those working at such centers "are not specialists." (Gaziantep/Rural Damascus Female). According to another respondent, there are centers in Syria, but they "are nothing…just people who are not specialists talking with [survivors] and not providing any tangible services."(Gaziantep/Damascus Male).

Another respondent who had heard of services in Syria said that "they work on awareness only, nothing serious." (Antakya/Unknown Male). Several other centers or organizations working on the issue of SGBV in Syria did not provide services to treat survivors, but instead organized awareness campaigns about the issue, especially in IDP camps (Gaziantep/Hama Female). Finally, even if centers did exist, and did provide high-quality and professionalized services, respondents said many survivors would still not go. As one respondent said:

> ***In Syria, women don't go to these centers because they are afraid of scandals. (Sanliurfa/Damascus Female).***

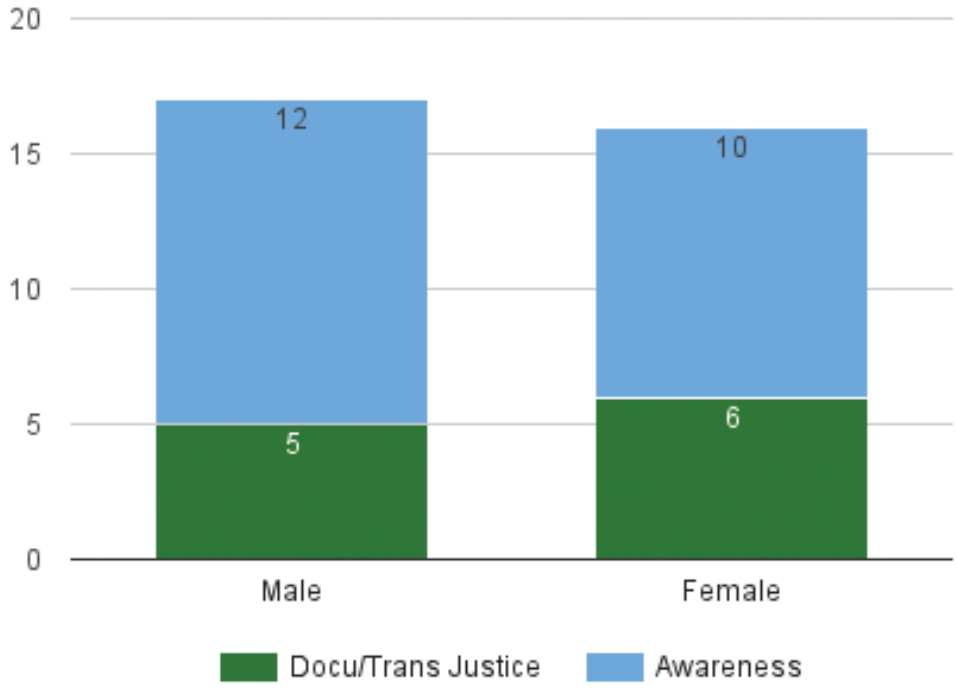
The most common need expressed by respondents was not for support centers per se, but for specialists trained in providing psychological treatment for survivors. Without any prompting from interviewers, 21 respondents mentioned survivors' need to be treated by specialists, and many respondents criticized support centers for not employing specialists. Both male and female respondents gave this response. It was widely agreed that such specialists were exceedingly rare in Syria.

Justice and Accountability

Documentation and Justice

While some respondents, without prompting from interviewers, expressed positive opinions about documenting incidences of SGBV, a greater proportion supported other initiatives, such as organizing awareness campaigns (22 respondents) and having specialists provide psychological support to survivors (21 respondents).

Figure 17: Number of Respondents Supporting Initiatives Related to SGBV



Despite being seen as less of a priority, no respondent expressed a negative opinion toward documentation or transitional justice initiatives. As one respondent said, crimes should "be documented so perpetrators can be brought to court in the future." (Antakya/Aleppo Male). According to another respondent:

> ***We should bring them to court if we can, if not, we should document the case so they can be tried in an international court later.(Gaziantep/Damascus Female).***

Indeed, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that perpetrators should be brought to justice, and that justice should be administered by the courts. According to one respondent, "of course we should have a trial, to prevent the destruction of the community and avoid seeking revenge." (Sanliurfa/Deir ez-Zor Male). Such widespread support may be due to respondents' primary association of SGBV with detention centers and prisons administered by the Syrian government.

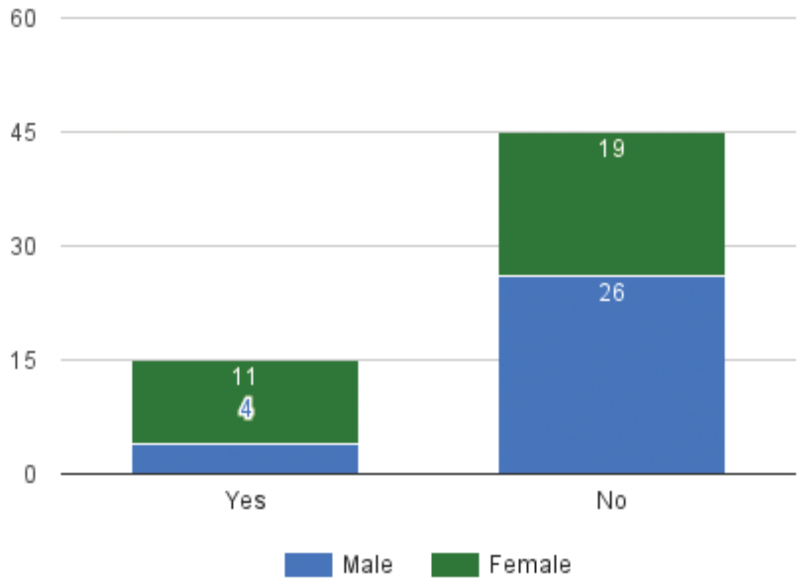
At the same time, several respondents noted that it would be difficult to hold perpetrators accountable at the current time, given the lawlessness and insecurity in Syria and the lack of a functional court system in much of the country. One respondent said that it is only possible to "resort to law in places where there is law." (Sanliurfa/Damascus Female). Another respondent favored trials for cases of SGBV, but said they should be administered immediately, and in the streets, by local authorities "because the people cannot wait for official courts to function again." (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Male). Another expressed pessimism that accountability was possible given the current situation, declaring that, "if the perpetrator was armed, we wouldn't be able to do anything." (Antakya/Lattakia Male).

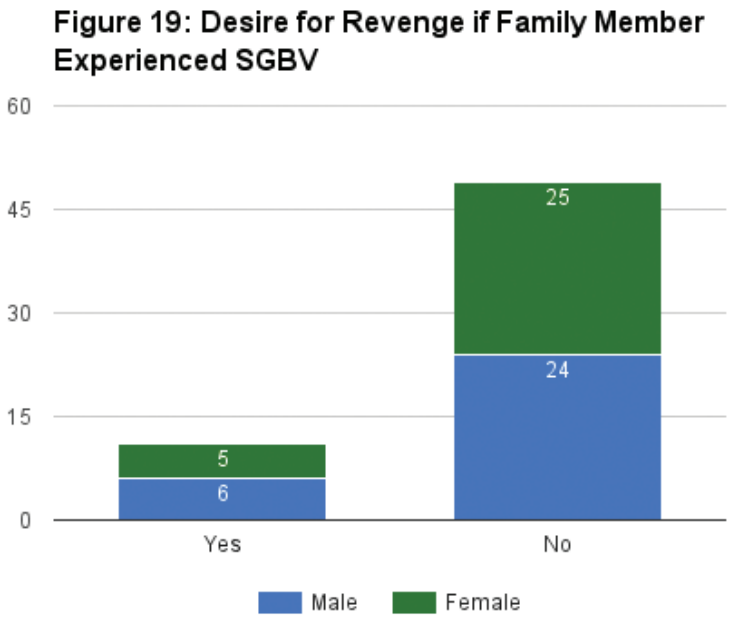
Again, nearly all of the respondents' opinions regarding the administration of justice and accountability for SGBV seemed to focus primarily on perpetrators of rape, especially those who were parties to the conflict. Therefore, it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding respondents' attitudes of documentation and justice for other incidences of SGBV.

Anger, Revenge, and Vigilantism

Without prompting, 15 respondents specifically expressed anger about incidences of SGBV. According to one respondent, "I won't kill them, but I hope they die." (Sanliurfa/Rural Damascus Female). A smaller number (11 respondents) expressed a desire for revenge or vigilantism. As one respondent said, "I would solve it myself, using my strength." (Antakya/Aleppo Male). Another said that, if his family was attacked, he would act to defend his honor, even if he died in the process. (Antakya/Idlib Male). This view was not limited to male respondents. One female respondent said that if a member of her family was attacked, she would "go insane and seek revenge." (Gaziantep/Hama Female).

Figure 18: Anger Regarding Incidences of SGBV





Punishment and Treatment for Perpetrators

Suggested punishment for perpetrators of SGBV ranged from short prison sentences, to life in prison, to execution. One respondent said that members of the government or the Free Syrian Army who committed acts of SGBV "should be hanged." (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Female). Another respondent said that "they [the authorities] must apply to them the maximum extent of torture." (Antakya/Idlib Female). Other respondents expressed that perpetrators should be punished "according to international law." (Sanliurfa/Aleppo Male).

One-third of respondents (20 out of 60) stated that at least some perpetrators should be treated rather than punished for their crimes. Respondents commonly held the opinion that perpetrators of SGBV often suffer from mental or psychological illness. According to one respondent, there are two types of perpetrators, criminals and the mentally ill, and that:

> ***"Criminals should go to jail and [the] mentally ill should be treated.(Sanliurfa/ Rural Damascus Female).***

Another respondent took the position that perpetrators of SGBV "should be treated because they are victims of the regime, which obligated them to perform these acts, which have become a habit." (Sanliurfa/Hama Female). Others posited that perpetrators could be survivors themselves, and acting out of revenge. Of those who favored treatment, some indicated that punishment and treatment were not mutually exclusive—but that perpetrators should receive treatment while serving prison sentences.

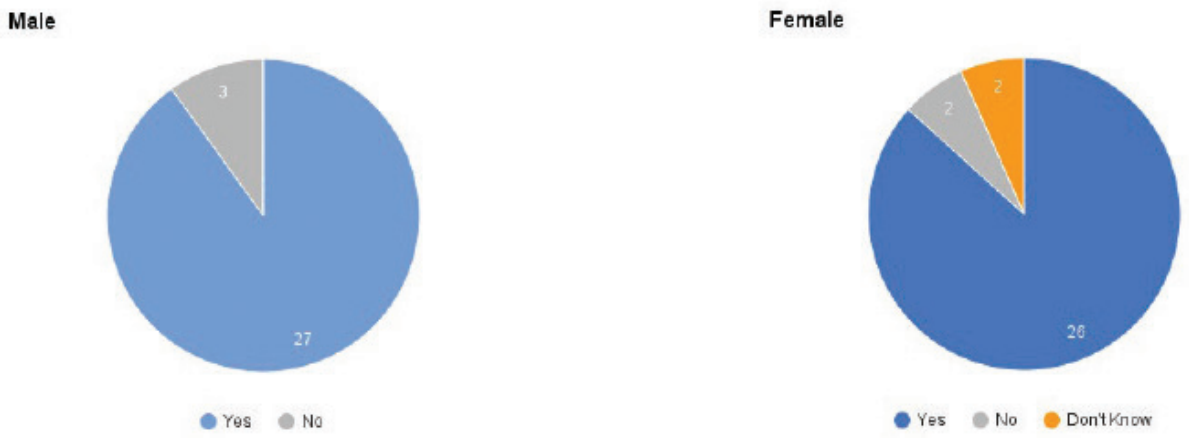
The Impact of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence on the Wider Syrian Society

The overwhelming majority (53 of 60 respondents) agreed that SGBV would affect the future of Syria. This finding held for both male and female respondents, and across all native governorates. According to one respondent:

> ***It will be more than a generation before we get rid of the negative effects of this.(Gaziantep/Hama Female).***

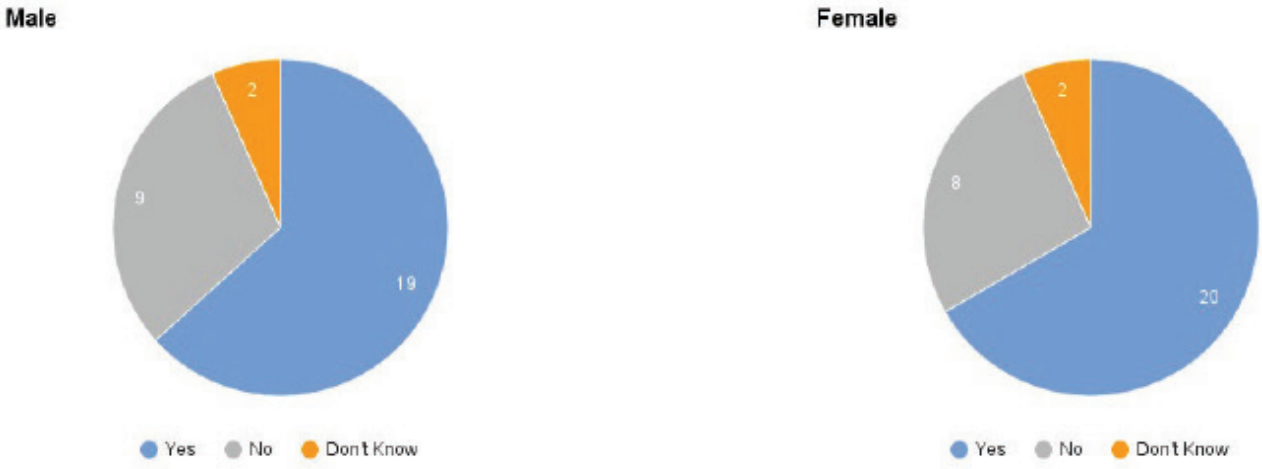
Respondents commonly expressed that, because of community mistreatment, the absence of justice and accountability, and the lack of psychological services, survivors would have significant problems healing from their attacks, reintegrating into their communities, and maintaining traditional and healthy familial relationships. In this way, SGBV would seriously divide and fracture the two most important social units in Syrian life. The only positive aspect is that, because of the widespread nature of SGBV, some communities may be more aware or tolerant in their attitudes than before the crisis (Antakya/Aleppo Male).

Figure 20: Will SGBV Affect the Future of Syria?



The impact of SGBV on Syrian society is all the more serious because it was a significant reason, according to 39 of the 60 respondents, as to why more than four million people have left Syria. Female respondents were slightly more likely to report that SGBV was a reason why people have left Syria. Among native governorates, respondents from Idlib (10 out of 10 respondents), Damascus (four out of five respondents) and Hama (five out of seven respondents) were particularly likely to cite SGBV as a reason for leaving Syria. This was less true for respondents from Lattakia (two out of six respondents) and Rural Damascus (three out of six respondents).

Figure 21: Was SGBV a Reason Why People Left Syria?



For some respondents, fear of SGBV was the main reason for leaving Syria, particularly for fathers afraid of violations against their daughters. One respondent said that SGBV was "a very strong reason" why her father decided to take her and her family to Turkey (Gaziantep/ Afrin Female). However, for the vast majority of participants, SGBV was either one reason among many for leaving, or it was just one manifestation or consequences of the larger issues that motivated them to leave, like general violence, detention by the government, or insecurity. Emblematic of this attitude was one respondent, who said that, "all Syrians, men and women, are afraid of having their house broken into and detentions and sexual violence." (Antakya/Lattakia Female). As another respondent said, "the main reason is violence in general," not SGBV (Gaziantep/Lattakia Female). According to others, SGBV was only a reason for leaving Syria for survivors or survivors' families (Gaziantep/Tartous Male).

This assessment found that incidences of SGBV occurred in Syria before the current crisis, but have increased markedly in severity and scale since March 2011. Respondents sometimes associated pre-crisis SGBV with the Syrian government's treatment of political prisoners, but also frequently mentioned domestic violence, early marriage, and sexual harassment. However, post-crisis, respondents overwhelmingly associated SGBV with parties to the conflict, especially the Syrian government.

Given the intertwining of SGBV with politics, it was difficult to differentiate between the impact of SGBV on Syrian society from the impact of the war itself. When "SGBV [becomes] a political weapon against those with opposing views," (Gaziantep/Hama Male) it is hard to know if community members oppose SGBV in and of itself, or if they oppose the political and military forces that employ it. Furthermore, it was a challenge to isolate and analyze respondents' views about incidences of SGBV that were not directly connected to war and politics.

Out of 60 interviews—30 with men and 30 with women—all respondents believed their community should support survivors. In addition, respondents overwhelmingly reported sympathy for survivors, regardless of gender. But attitudes towards survivors of SGBV represent a tragic irony: while nearly all respondents expressed sympathy for, and a desire to support, survivors of SGBV, all but three thought that their community would abuse survivors, especially women. The experience for female survivors in the community, according to respondents, is characterized by shame, abuse, isolation, and abandonment, as they are perceived to have lost their honor and chastity. Male survivors faced a more ambiguous fate: sometimes welcomed as heroes, sometimes left alone, and sometimes shamed for a perceived loss of manliness.

This assessment found the availability of psychological services for survivors to be very low, particularly in Syria. When respondents had heard of centers that provided support for survivors, they noted that the quality of treatment suffered significantly from a lack of medical and psychological specialists.

The majority of respondents indicated that local authorities and the courts should administer justice and accountability formally. However, a small number of respondents said they would seek revenge if a loved one was attacked. Respondents varied dramatically about their preferred fate for perpetrators, with roughly equal numbers supporting execution, prison, and treatment.

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that SGBV will affect the future of Syrian society, as these crimes have damaged the honor and dignity of individuals, families, and communities. Many respondents indicated that the fear of SGBV factored into their decision to leave Syria.

Conclusion

While documentation about the actual pervasiveness of SGBV in Syria is inconclusive, this report suggests that many Syrians perceive SGBV to be widespread and believe that it is being used as a weapon of war. Additionally, as this and other reports indicate, it is not uncommon for survivors of SGBV to suffer doubly: first from the attack, and later from the abuse of those around them. Lacking adequate support services, survivors may seek revenge or become perpetrators themselves, creating a multiplier effect. Without efforts to provide specialized psychological services for survivors and functioning courts or other institutions to effectively administer justice and accountability, anger and trauma regarding SGBV will continue to .wreak havoc on Syrian society

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings from this report suggest that further research into SGBV among Syrian refugees would be beneficial. Specifically, SJAC should undertake the effort to document occurrences of SGBV during the conflict and consider a mapping exercise to have a full understanding of the local and international actors working or involved with these issues. Also, a more comprehensive study could delineate variations in Syrians' attitudes towards SGBV across regional, political, ethnic, and religious lines. Some respondents reported that their community would make SGBV survivors feel welcome while others reported that members of their community might isolate, harass, or exploit survivors. Further research is needed to determine which communities are likely to be friendlier than others toward SGBV survivors. An approach that would facilitate this could involve conducting research inside Syria or, perhaps more practically, structuring a sample based on respondents' native governorates rather than their location in Turkey.

Moreover, respondents disproportionately spoke of SGBV only in the context of abuse suffered at the hands of detainees in Syrian government prisons and detention centers. More investigation is required to uncover attitudes toward other instances and perpetrators of SGBV, particularly among armed opposition groups and within communities and households. Respondents also, despite interviewers' best efforts, tended to disproportionately associate SGBV with rape. More comprehensive and specific data collection tools are needed to more conclusively understand Syrians' attitudes toward survivors and perpetrators of other forms of SGBV, such as domestic violence, early marriage, forced marriage, forced prostitution, and sexual harassment.

Respondents indicated that SGBV was less likely to affect the future of Syria post-conflict so long as there were improved efforts to provide psychological services by specialists for survivors, awareness campaigns to improve community attitudes toward survivors, and justice and accountability initiatives to document incidences of SGBV. In the future, SJAC could undertake more comprehensive analyses of these three issues to ascertain how, specifically, SJAC could address them. Further research is needed to determine how to advance accountability in both the short and medium term and how to provide survivors with assistance, irrespective of the results of the conflict.

EndNotes

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