



A MULTIDIMENSIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF SYRIAN REFUGEES' INTEGRATION IN JORDAN, TURKEY, AND SWEDEN (2021-2022)

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About SIPGI

The research program Refugee Migration and Cities: Social Institutions, Political Governance and Integration in Jordan, Turkey, and Sweden (SIPGI) aims to contribute new knowledge about political and social possibilities as well as limitations for urban integration in large cities. SIPGI gathers researchers from Sweden, Turkey, Jordan, and USA. The program is funded by Vetenskapsrådet (Swedish Research Council) Grant #2018-03700. Read more about SIPGI at <https://www.gu.se/en/sipgi-researchenvironment>.

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Executive Summary

Much of the existing policy studies and academic articles on integration of migrants and refugees focus on either the perspective of policymakers and host societies or refugees themselves living within a single institutional environment. This report adopts a simultaneous top-down and bottom-up approach for analyzing Syrian refugees' understandings of the multidimensional aspects of integration across three countries: Jordan, Turkey, and Sweden. We studied legal, linguistic, economic, institutional, social, and psychological aspects of integration. Key take-aways of our study include:

- Across the three cases, citizenship is a particularly important factor contributing toward feelings of equality and integration in the host society.
- Open access to and equal opportunities in the labor market, as well as easy validation of formal qualifications, facilitate refugees' economic and psychological integration.
- Learning the local language to a proficient level and building social ties with the host population are recognized as vital for different aspects of integration.
- Our interviewees in Sweden—and to a lesser extent in Turkey and Jordan—express worries of losing one's original culture and identity, which negatively affects their ability to socially and psychologically integrate.
- In terms of institutional trust, our interviewees expressed fear of interacting with official institutions in Turkey and Jordan while more trust exists in Sweden, where refugees expect Swedish institutions to be helpful and honest.
- Our interviewees view Sweden as successful in formal aspects of integration, measured by high levels of institutional trust, appreciation of the clear legal path toward citizenship, and recognition of the importance of formal integration programs. Yet, social and psychological integration of Syrians in Sweden remains weak, and economic integration requires further efforts to match refugees with jobs that make use of their formal qualifications.
- On the contrary, Jordan seems to be more successful in terms of social and linguistic integration due to shared culture and language with Syria. Yet, restrictions on accessing the labor market, the lack of a clear path for citizenship, and low institutional trust all have been expressed as major hindrances to other dimensions of integration.
- In Turkey, mixed feelings are expressed depending on whether the person has obtained citizenship or not, a privilege which is granted on a seemingly arbitrary basis. In general, refugees in Turkey struggle across most of the dimensions of integration due to absence of clear economic, linguistic, cultural, and legal policies facilitating refugees' integration in the country.

Executive Summary in Arabic

ملخص تنفيذي

إن معظم الدراسات السياسية والأبحاث الأكاديمية الحالية التي تختص بمسألة اندماج المهاجرين واللاجئين غالباً تتناول الموضوع إما من منظور صنّاع السياسات والمجتمعات المضيفة في الدول التي تستضيف اللاجئين، أو من منظور اللاجئين فقط والذين يعيشون غالباً في ظل بيئة مؤسسية واحدة (دولة واحدة).

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دمج المنظورين، المنظور الرسمي للدول المستضيفة ومنظور اللاجئين أنفسهم، من أجل تقديم فهم وتحليل أفضل للأبعاد المتعددة لاندماج اللاجئين السوريين في ثلاثة دول، وهم: الأردن وتركيا والسويد. عمدت الدراسة إلى تحليل الأبعاد القانونية واللغوية والاقتصادية والمؤسسية والاجتماعية والنفسية المتعلقة باندماج اللاجئين السوريين في المناطق الثلاثة.

يمكن تلخيص النتائج الأساسية لهذه الدراسة في النقاط التالية:

- في الدول الثلاثة، يُعتبر الحصول على جنسية البلد المضيف (المواطنة) عاملاً مهماً وأساسياً لتعزيز الشعور بالمساواة والاندماج في المجتمع المضيف.
- إمكانية الوصول إلى سوق العمل دون تقييدات وتكافؤ الفرص فيه، فضلاً عن تيسير معادلة المؤهلات الرسمية، من شأنها تسهيل الاندماج الاقتصادي والنفسي للاجئين.
- إن إتقان اللغة المحلية للدولة المضيفة وإقامة الروابط الاجتماعية مع السكان المضيفين، يُعتبر أساسياً لتحقيق كافة أبعاد الاندماج في البلد المضيف.
- أعرب الأشخاص الذين تم مقابلتهم في السويد - وبدرجة أقل في تركيا والأردن - عن مخاوفهم من فقدان ثقافتهم وهويتهم الأصلية. وعبروا أن هذا الخوف يؤثر سلباً على قدرتهم على الاندماج الاجتماعي والنفسي في المجتمع الذي يعيشون فيه.
- فيما يتعلق بالثقة بالمؤسسات الحكومية، أعرب الأشخاص الذين تم مقابلتهم عن خوفهم من التعامل مع المؤسسات الرسمية في تركيا والأردن. الأمر الذي يختلف في السويد، حيث يتوقع اللاجئون أن تكون المؤسسات السويدية مفيدة وصادقة.
- معظم الأشخاص الذين تم مقابلتهم في الدول الثلاثة يوافقون على أهمية الاندماج في مجتمعاتهم المضيفة ولكنهم يقاومون الانصهار فيها، بحيث تعني الأخيرة إحلال الثقافة الجديدة محل ثقافتهم الأصلية بشكل كامل.
- في السويد، ووفقاً للأشخاص الذين تم مقابلتهم، فإن الدولة قد نجحت في الجوانب الرسمية للاندماج. وقد تم قياس ذلك من خلال تعبيرهم عن ثقتهم العالية بالمؤسسات الرسمية، وتقديرهم لوضوح المسار القانوني نحو الحصول على الجنسية، وتقديرهم لأهمية دور برامج الاندماج الحكومية. من الناحية الأخرى، لا يزال الاندماج الاجتماعي والنفسي في السويد ضعيفاً إلى حد كبير. وما زال تحقيق الاندماج الاقتصادي بحاجة لمزيد من الجهود الرسمية من أجل مطابقة اللاجئين مع وظائف تتناسب مع مؤهلاتهم الدراسية ومهاراتهم العملية.
- في الأردن، ووفقاً للأشخاص الذين تم مقابلتهم، فقد حقق الاندماج الاجتماعي واللغوي للاجئين السوريين نجاحاً كبيراً بسبب الثقافة واللغة المشتركة بين البلدين. في المقابل من ذلك، اعتبر اللاجئون الذين تم مقابلتهم أن القيود المفروضة على الوصول إلى سوق العمل، وافتقار المسار القانوني الواضح نحو الحصول على الجنسية، وانخفاض الثقة بالمؤسسات الحكومية، عوائقاً رئيسية لتحقيق الأبعاد الأخرى من الاندماج.
- في تركيا، عبر الأشخاص الذين تم مقابلتهم عن مشاعر مختلطة نحو البلد. فقد اختلف المنظور بين الأشخاص الذين حصلوا على الجنسية والذين لم يحصلوا عليها، وهو ما يُعتبر امتيازاً تمنحه الدولة بدون معايير واضحة. بشكل عام، يكافح اللاجئون في تركيا في معظم أبعاد الاندماج المختلفة بسبب عدم وجود سياسات اقتصادية ولغوية وثقافية وقانونية واضحة من شأنها تسهيل اندماجهم في البلاد.

1. Introduction

Over thirteen million Syrians have been displaced due to the still ongoing civil war, close to seven million of whom have sought refuge outside the country. Many Syrian refugees¹ have fled to neighboring countries, often deemed ‘transit countries’ by policymakers and scholars. As the terminology implies, these countries were considered temporary places of residence for forced migrants from Syria on their way to countries of destination. Yet, over five million Syrians remain in limbo status as their stay in these supposed transit countries became permanent. With most of the Syrian refugees unlikely to return to Syria, and very few being eligible for resettlement elsewhere, this report is particularly timely.

This study contributes to the study of migrant integration in three ways: 1) combining voices of migrants/refugees with comparative analyses of differing institutional approaches to migrant integration; 2) adopting a multidimensional approach to understanding integration processes; and 3) making a cross-country comparison of so-called transit versus destination cases. Most of the policy studies and academic articles on integration of migrants and refugees focus on the

perspectives of policymakers and host societies. We suggest that to fully understand refugee integration, within either transit or destination contexts, refugees’ own voices and experiences must also be taken into consideration (e.g., Bucken-Knapp et al., 2018; Schierenbeck et al., forthcoming). Existing work also tends to consider integration through a unidimensional lens.

Our report combines top-down and bottom-up approaches for analyzing Syrian refugees’ understandings of the multidimensional aspects of integration across three very different institutional and cultural contexts: Jordan, Turkey, and Sweden. We studied legal, linguistic, economic, institutional, social, and psychological aspects of integration.

Next, we provide a short discussion of our methods. This is followed by an overview of the three countries and cities under study in relation to Syrian refugees and institutional analyses of the support (or lack thereof) these environments provide with regards to refugee integration. Section four presents our results in terms of the six areas of integration outlined above. Finally, the conclusion discusses our findings and offers policy recommendations for improving the integration of refugees.

¹ In this report, the term ‘refugee’ is used to define an individual that has fled his or her home country for fear of persecution or targeted violence, but who may not have gained formal refugee (or asylum-seeker) status with the UNHCR or the country in which asylum is sought. In Sweden, most Syrians have not attained refugee status as it is defined in the Geneva Convention, but instead have gained the form of international protection based on

the European Union’s Qualification Directive, subsidiary protection, which is part also of the Swedish Aliens Act (Chapter 4.2). In Turkey, Syrians obtain a temporary protection status, while in Jordan, they have no protection status at all but are considered as Persons of Concern for the UNHCR. Unless stated otherwise, we use the terms ‘asylum seeker’, ‘migrant’, ‘immigrant’ and ‘newcomer’ as synonymous to each other and to ‘refugee’.

2. Methodology & Research Design

Multiple methods were employed to conduct this research. First, we employ a most different case design for selecting our country cases: Jordan, Turkey, and Sweden. There are large numbers of Syrian refugees in each country, but they differ greatly in terms of cultural proximity to Syrians as well as institutional approach and capacity for incorporating immigrants. To understand the institutional context of migration and migrant/refugee integration in these three countries, we employ a top-down analysis of relevant policy and legal documents, such as citizenship laws and work permit regulations. These sources are complemented by reports from international institutions and civil society organizations to gain a fuller understanding of de facto practices on the ground.

To capture the feelings and thoughts of refugees themselves, we also rely on interviews with Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey, and Sweden. The interview questions were divided into seven categories of questions, covering six overarching aspects of integration: acquisition of citizenship, institutional trust levels, and economic, psychological, social, and linguistic integration. We analyze the interviewees' understanding of the concept of integration by asking about their lives in the host country, how their lives in the host country differ from their home country, what makes

a person Swedish, Jordanian, or Turkish, and about their proficiency in the host country's language. We also included a battery of questions on personal experiences of discrimination and thoughts about residential segregation, which helps in understanding the background of the interviewees' reflections and feelings towards integration. Finally, we ask about demographic characteristics, including age, gender, origin, level of education, household income, duration of stay in the host country, as well as whether they have citizenship or not in the host country.

To analyze our interview data, we combined deductive and inductive approaches, coding the interviewees' answers into six different dimensions of integration: legal integration (citizenship), institutional trust, economic integration, social integration, psychological integration, and linguistic integration. These dimensions were identified in the interview data (inductive), but we also benefited from some pre-templated interview guides (deductive), such as the models provided by Ager and Strang (2004) and by the Immigration Policy Lab Integration Index (IPL) to help navigate the interviews.

We conducted 19 semi-structured interviews with Syrian refugees aged between 23 and 65 years old in Jordan, Turkey, and Sweden. Due consideration was given to achieving a gender balance among the respondents, and we were able to include ten men and nine women in our sample. The

interviews were conducted by native Arabic speakers (Levantine Arabic) between November 2021 and January 2023. Due to Covid-19 related restrictions, almost all interviews were conducted via Zoom. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and the interviewees have been anonymized. Interviewees were read a GDPR compliant consent and verbal consent was required before proceeding with the interviews. They were allowed to skip any questions and to end the interview at any time. The interviewer was instructed to avoid questions and discussions that may be considered politically sensitive in the host country.²



3. Jordan, Turkey, and Sweden as Refugee Hosting Countries

We study Jordan, Turkey, and Sweden as case countries. This case selection allows us to compare between so-called transit countries (Jordan and Turkey) versus a destination country (Sweden). In general, transit countries tend to be closer to the conflict causing a refugee crisis and therefore, are often more culturally similar to the refugees' home country (i.e., share similar languages, religions, historical experiences with colonialism, or other impactful regional events). Destination countries are often farther away both in terms of physical distance and cultural proximity to refugees' home countries. These differences are expected to have a meaningful impact on differing types of integration.

According to the UNHCR (2023), only about 5% of formally registered Syrian refugees in 2023 live in camps. Most refugees reside in cities, meriting a focus on urban integration. We chose three secondary cities to focus our data collection on. Given that migration is primarily an urban phenomenon, we avoided capital cities as they tend to already be centers of high heterogeneity including newcomer versus long-time resident populations who are already very accustomed to shifting demographics which might dampen our

² For details, see the interview guide in Appendix II.

ability to capture Syrians’ cultural integration. Irbid, Jordan and Adana, Turkey are both located just across the borders of Syria. On the contrary, there are numerous countries and bodies of water that separate Gothenburg, Sweden from Syria. Irbid is home to the second largest population of Syrians in Jordan while Adana is host to the fifth largest population of Syrians in Turkey. Gothenburg has the largest number of Syrians among Swedish cities (SCB, 2022).

Hosting over three of the almost seven million Syrian refugees today, Turkey has the world’s largest Syrian refugee population. Ranking third in sheer numbers, Jordan currently hosts the second largest per capita population of Syrians, behind Lebanon. As of 2022, there were 676,164 Syrian refugees, or Persons of Concern³ (PoC), registered with the UNHCR in Jordan. In Sweden, a total of 129,292 asylum applications were submitted by Syrian nationals between 2011 and 2021.⁴ Seventy seven percent of applicants (100,090) were granted subsidiary protection status while only 9% (12,040) were declared as refugees according to the

Geneva convention.⁵ Although these numbers might seem low, Sweden accepted the highest Syrian refugees per capita of any country in Europe (Rabo et al., 2021).

Table 1. Syrian Refugees in Numbers

Turkey	3,443,219 <small>(PMM, 2023)⁶</small>
Adana	244,003 <small>(PMM, 2023)</small>
Jordan	676,164 <small>(UNHCR, 2023)⁷</small>
Irbid	136,158 <small>(UNHCR, 2023)</small>
Sweden	156,423 <small>(Migrationsverket, 2022)⁸</small>
Gothenburg	8,839 <small>(SCB, 2022)⁹</small>

Political and Economic Situation

Several political and social differences exist between the three case countries we study in this report. We start with a short overview of politics, economy and culture, followed by a more detailed description of migration and integration legislations and policies in Sweden, Turkey, and Jordan.

Sweden is an advanced democracy ranked as completely free (100/100) by Freedom House (2022a) with a GDP per capita of 60,230 USD in 2022 (World Bank, 2023a). Jordan and Turkey, on the other hand, are both autocracies (Freedom House 2022b-c)

³ As most Syrians in Jordan are not registered as refugees in Jordan, the UNHCR regularly refers to Syrians in Jordan as Persons of Concern instead of refugees.
⁴ The Stateless category in the SMA’s statistics (Migrationsverket, 2022a) does not differentiate by habitual residence, making it impossible to identify which of the stateless applicants have arrived from Syria (e.g., stateless Palestinians or Kurds).
⁵ Between 2011 and 2020, 44,290 Syrians were also granted residence permits in Sweden to reunite with family members that are refugees or under subsidiary protection. In total, these three categories—refugees, subsidiary protection holders, and their family members arriving between 2011 and 2021—constitute 156,423 Syrian nationals. In 2021, there were close to 196,077 individuals born in Syria residing in Sweden (SCB, 2022). This

figure includes also those Syrians who resided in Sweden before 2011, as well as those who may have arrived after but on other grounds than international protection and family reunification; but excludes children born to Syrians in Sweden.
⁶ Figures refer to Syrians under Temporary Protection and are as of March 23, 2023.
⁷ The UNHCR’s figures are as of July 31, 2022. The Jordanian government estimates the number of Syrian refugees in the country to be over 1 million (Stave et al., 2021).
⁸ This figure includes Syrians that have been granted asylum and/or family reunification between 2011 and 2021.
⁹ This figure includes all inhabitants in Gothenburg that were born in Syria.

and have considerably weaker economies than Sweden with GDPs per capita (2021) of 4,405 USD and 9,586 USD, respectively (World Bank, 2023a). Jordan struggles with high unemployment rates at 23% overall rising to close to 50% among youths. The unemployment rates for Turkey and Sweden are at 13% and 9%, respectively (World Bank, 2023b).

Cultural Proximity to Syria

Syria is generally considered a collectivist society where loyalty to the family and community members is important (Merkin and Ramadan, 2016). In contrast, Sweden is one of the world's most individualistic and secular countries according to the World Values Survey (2020). Turkey and Jordan, on the other hand, rank among the world's most traditional and collectivist societies (World Values Survey, 2020). Similar to neighboring Turkey and Jordan, Syria is majority Sunni Muslim. Syrians thus have more in common with their Jordanian and Turkish neighbors when it comes to shared cultural values and religion, and language in the case of Jordan. Jordanians and Syrians also share an Arab identity, although some Syrians come from Turkmen background and speak Turkish, albeit with some dialectal differences, bringing them closer to Turkish identity.

Migration and Integration Policies

There are considerable differences between Jordan, Turkey, and Sweden when it comes to migration governance and the ability for refugees to acquire international protection, as well as the ability to integrate there in terms of formal policies. To start with, Sweden is a destination country for migrants while Turkey and Jordan are generally seen as transit countries that migrants cross on their way elsewhere. Already before the Syrian crisis Jordan “played a regional role in transit migration” for the many Iraqi refugees that settled there between 1991 and 2002 (Chatelard, 2010). Turkey, due to its geographical location between the Asian and European continents, is often the first country of arrival for people fleeing conflict in the Middle East, not least Syria, and elsewhere (IOM Türkiye, 2023).

However, it is not uncommon that what are known as transit countries turn into destination countries over time, hosting refugees and migrants more or less permanently, despite that they might lack in the pull factors commonly associated with destination countries, such as predictable migration governance and legislation. Improvements in the institutional structure of refugee reception, such as the introduction of new laws and government agencies, as in the case of Turkey, likely affects the willingness of migrants to stay in a transit country and their ability to integrate.

Sweden

Of the three case countries, Sweden has the most rigid legislation for asylum, migration, and integration. Sweden was one of the first countries to ratify the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the Refugee Convention), as well as its 1967 Protocol that removed the Convention's temporal and geographical limitations.¹⁰

The primary law guiding the asylum process and determining a protection status is the Swedish Aliens Act (*Utlänningslagen 2005:716*). The requirements for refugee status in the Aliens Act is almost identical to that in the Refugee Convention, although adding gender and sexual orientation as grounds for persecution.¹¹ As a European Union (EU) Member State, Sweden is also bound to the EU's Qualification Directive which, among other things, includes the requirements of a subsidiary protection status implemented in those cases where the requirements for a refugee status are not obtained, but where a need for international protection nonetheless exists. These include individual risks, such as torture and/or death penalty for reasons not related to the grounds of persecution listed in the Refugee Convention (in that case, a refugee status

would be given instead), as well as general/collective risks due to, for example, armed conflict.¹²

The Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) is the responsible authority for processing asylum claims, from application and registration to decision. If the SMA decides to grant an applicant either refugee or subsidiary protection status, a temporary residence permit follows. In 2016, a temporary law (2016:752) that became permanent in 2021 changed the residence permits from permanent to temporary for all international protection grantee holders.

With some exceptions, permanent residence for refugees can only be acquired if the applicant can show self-sufficiency through employment or running a business. The fact that permanent residency is tied to self-sufficiency illustrates the importance of work in the Swedish integration policy, where early establishment in the labor market is particularly emphasized. At the national level, the Swedish Public Employment Service, a government agency under the Ministry of Employment, is an important integration actor, being responsible for various 'establishment initiatives' relating to

¹⁰Prior to the Refugee Convention's 1967 Protocol, a refugee could only be recognized as such due to events occurring in Europe and before January 1, 1951.

¹¹ The Swedish Aliens Act defines in its Chapter 4, section 1, a refugee as "an alien who is outside the country of the alien's nationality, because he or she feels a well-founded fear of persecution on the grounds of race, nationality, religious or political belief, or on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation or other membership of a particular social group and is unable, or because of his or her fear is unwilling, to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country".

¹² The Swedish Aliens Act defines in its Chapter 4, section 2, a person in need of subsidiary protection as "an alien, in cases other than those referred to in section 1, is outside the country of which the alien is a citizen, due to 1. there is well-founded reason to assume that the alien, upon return to his or her home country, be at risk of being punished with death or subjected to corporal punishment, torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or as a civilian be at serious and personal risk of injury due to indiscriminate violence resulting from an external or internal armed conflict, and 2. the alien cannot, or due to those risk referred to in point 1 does not want to, make use of the protection of the home country."

the labor market. At the local level, the municipality is responsible for many social services of relevance for integration, such as arranging Swedish language adult education (Swedish for Immigrants; SFI).

Asylum seekers in Sweden are entitled by law to free of charge emergency health- and dental care, as well as maternal and reproductive health care. The administrative regions in Sweden decide if additional healthcare is needed and will be provided to asylum seekers. Those who obtained residence permits, and thus are no longer asylum seekers, are entitled to the same healthcare as Swedish citizens (Migrationsinfo.se, 2018).

Gothenburg

This report studies Syrian refugees' integration in Gothenburg, the second largest city in Sweden. Of its 587,549 inhabitants, 8,839 (1.5 %) were born in Syria, and 166,059 (28.2 %) in a country outside of Sweden (SCB, 2022). The municipality, *Göteborgs Stad*, is responsible for the accommodation of those who have received their residence permit from the SMA, as well as for other types of service provision for newcomers, such as schooling for children and adult language education. There is no particular local legislation for the integration of refugees, but several local initiatives exist at the municipal level. For example, there is an Integration Center (*Integrationscentrum*) where the municipality offers several activities, such as civic

orientation courses and women's groups, for newly arrived immigrants (Göteborgs Stad, 2023a). There is also an Establishment Unit (*Etableringsenhet*) that "provides support for new arrivals to help them settle and become more independent", focusing on those newly arrived migrants who have received their residence permit in the last two years (Göteborgs Stad, 2023b).

A report by the Centre on Global Migration surveying newly arrived refugees' experiences of reception and integration activities in Gothenburg found that the needs and experiences during the reception differ across educational and professional experience, as well as age and gender. For example, some newly arrived refugees with higher educational backgrounds wished for more effective and individualized programs than those offered to be able to start working in their profession as soon as possible; those with lower educational backgrounds often needed more information overall and needed it to be communicated in their native language (Franke Björkman and Spehar, 2018).



Residential segregation poses a serious problem in Sweden, not least for integration prospects, and Gothenburg has been referred to as one of Europe's most segregated cities (Kadarik et al., 2021). Measures to address residential segregation have recently been taken at the national level. During the asylum process, the SMA is responsible for housing, after which the municipalities take over. Asylum seekers can either live in reception centers and apartments provided by the SMA or in accommodation that is arranged on their own (*eget boende*; EBO). Arranging one's own accommodation often means staying with or close to relatives and friends already in Sweden, which risks contributing to residential segregation that is especially prevalent in the country's three largest cities Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö (Tunström and Wang, 2019). In January 2020, changes to the legislation were introduced restricting asylum seekers from residing in socio-economically weak areas. If an asylum seeker chooses to reside in a low income area during the asylum process, he or she might lose the right to welfare assistance from the state. The SMA even has a search function where one can type in an address to see if moving there would result in the loss of one's daily welfare allowance (see Migrationsverket, 2023c).



Turkey

While Turkey has signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, they have not signed its 1967 Protocol that, among other things, expanded the Convention's geographical limitations to not only cover refugees from Europe. Accordingly, Turkey only recognizes Europeans as Convention refugees. In 2013, Law No. 64587 on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), a national legal framework regulating international protection in Turkey, was established.¹³ In the same year, the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) was founded. The DGMM is responsible for migration and asylum, including assessing the eligibility of persons for temporary protection. In 2018, the DGMM took over all registration and assessment of international protection applications from UNHCR and its implementing partner, the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM) (ECRE, 2022).

The LFIP lists four categories of protection¹⁴, of which temporary protection (Article 91) is of primary relevance for Syrians arriving in Turkey. This is technically not an international protection status, but instead defined as a discretionary measure to be deployed in situations of mass influx of refugees where individual processing is considered

impossible. Syrian nationals, as well as those who are stateless and/or refugees that have resided in Syria for longer periods, such as stateless Palestinians, and who arrived in Turkey after April 28, 2011, are granted temporary protection statuses (TPS) and have the right to stay in Turkey with the TPS until a more “permanent solution is found” (UNHCR Türkiye, n.d.). A Temporary Protection Regime is declared, and eventually terminated, by a decision of the Presidency of Turkey (ECRE, 2022). Although holders of a temporary protection status are, *de jure*, covered by the non-refoulement principle, reports have found that Syrians on several occasions have been coerced by Turkish authorities to sign forms that they wish to ‘voluntary’ return to Syria (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

While the LFIP does not specify any obligation for state provision of housing to international protection applicants and status holders, a reform to the Temporary Protection Regulation in 2018 (Regulation 2018/1208) made the DGMM responsible for accommodation and other services to temporary protection holders. However, there are just seven DGMM-run shelter centers, in five provinces, together hosting around 66,000 Syrian refugees—18,600 of which are in the Sarıçam center of Adana.

¹³ The LFIP was not the first regulation for asylum protection in Turkey—as noted by Kelsey Norman (2020, p. 96), the Asylum Regulation enacted in 1994 clarified who is eligible for temporary protection in Turkey, “effectively restating the parameters set forth in the 1951 Refugee Convention”. However, this law was not functioning very well. For example, in 2000, Human Rights Watch reported that “the system as it currently stands is extremely

hazardous for non-European refugees and various stages of the process put them at risk of *refoulement*.”

¹⁴ (1) *Refugees* from European countries (Article 61); (2) *conditional refugees* from outside Europe, who will be allowed to reside in Turkey temporarily until they are resettled to a third country (Article 62); (3) *subsidiary protection* (Article 62); and (4) *temporary protection* (Article 91).

There are over three million Syrians in Turkey under temporary protection *not* living in the shelter centers (PMM, 2023).

Migrants and refugees without health insurance or other financial means to pay for healthcare services are covered by the Turkish General Health Insurance Scheme (Kaya, 2020). Syrians with a Temporary Protection Status (TPS) have been permitted to work in Turkey since the Regulation on Work Permit for Foreigners under Temporary Protection was passed in January 2016. Also since 2016, Syrians with TPS are allowed to attend Turkish schools, including universities. Initially, Temporary Education Centers (TEC), that followed the Syrian school curriculum in Arabic, were set up for Syrian refugees. The TECs are now closed, as Syrians are allowed to enroll in Turkish schools.

Adana

In Adana, Turkey's sixth largest city, over 250,000 Syrian refugees are registered, constituting over 10% of its total population. It is among the Turkish cities that have received the largest share of Syrians, along with Kilis, where 38.5% of the total population are Syrian refugees, Gaziantep (18%), Hatay (18%), Şanlıurfa (15%) and Mersin (11%). By comparison, Istanbul with its 16 million inhabitants hosts around 550,000 Syrian refugees (3 % of the total population) (PMM, 2023).

The Adana Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM), a regional extension of the DGMM, is responsible for registering and collecting information about Syrians in the province. The Adana City Council has also established a Migrant and Refugee Council (*Göç ve Mülteci Meclisi*), aiming to improve local and regional migration governance (Adana Kent Konseyi, 2020). There are several local and national NGOs operating in Adana, including initiatives such as the Adana Migrant Coordination and Harmonization Centre run by the International Organization for Migration in collaboration with the Adana Metropolitan Municipality, that provides counseling and support for refugees (International Organization for Migration, 2023).

Adana is located close to the Syrian-Turkish border, making it a natural destination for Syrian refugees for not just practical but also cultural reasons. According to a census from 2000, around 300,000 Arab Alawis reside in the Çukurova district in the Adana province, approximately 55,000 of whom still speak Arabic (Procházka-Eisl and Procházka, 2018). As noted by Betts, Ali and Memişoğlu (2017, 25), “the presence of a large local Arab population [in Adana] also plays a role in the settlement of Syrian refugees”. In 2017, over 10% of Adana's Syrian refugees resided in the city's Yeşilbağlar neighborhood, where its Turkish-

and Arabic-speaking neighborhood leader (*muhtar*) explained that family members and relatives from Deir ez-Zor in Syria and Şanlıurfa in Turkey had reunited there (ibid, 25).



Jordan

Jordan has not signed the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, nor its 1967 Protocol, and is thus not legally bound by these to register and process claims for asylum. Instead, Jordan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the UNHCR in 1998, partially amended in 2014, in which the Jordanian government committed to treating asylum seekers and refugees according to international standards (Clutterbuck et al., 2021). The MoU also forms the basis of the UNHCR's activities in Jordan, as there are still no other international or national legal instruments on refugees in the country.



Text saying "We are all Jordan" under hands grasping a map of Jordan.

In contrast to Turkey, which was previously in a similar position, Jordan has not established a national asylum authority to replace the UNHCR following the Syrian crisis. The lack of a national legal framework on refugees in Jordan has resulted in several changeable directives, policies and rules, making the asylum process unpredictable.¹⁵ While Syrian refugees are able to reside in Jordan legally upon registration, they are not granted any particular protection status. A small proportion of Syrians have also—more or less—voluntarily returned home from Jordan, although some of these have faced torture or even death upon return (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

The UNHCR in Jordan issues a 'Proof of Registration' document to Syrian refugees residing in camps, jointly administered by the Jordanian government and UNHCR, and an asylum seeker certificate for those living outside camps, stating that they are 'Persons

¹⁵ Moreover, different rules apply to refugees from different countries and contexts; for example, non-Syrian refugees are required to apply for Jordanian visas before arrival and are often

denied such (Clutterbuck et al., 2021). For more on the situation of non-Syrian refugees in Jordan, see Johnston et al. (2019).

of Concern' to the UNHCR. Holders of the asylum seeker certificate can access services and assistance, such as cash, food and subsidized healthcare by the UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies.

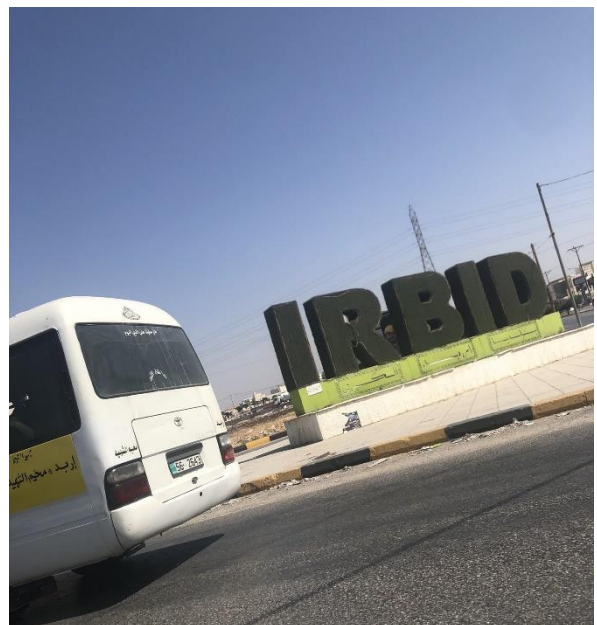
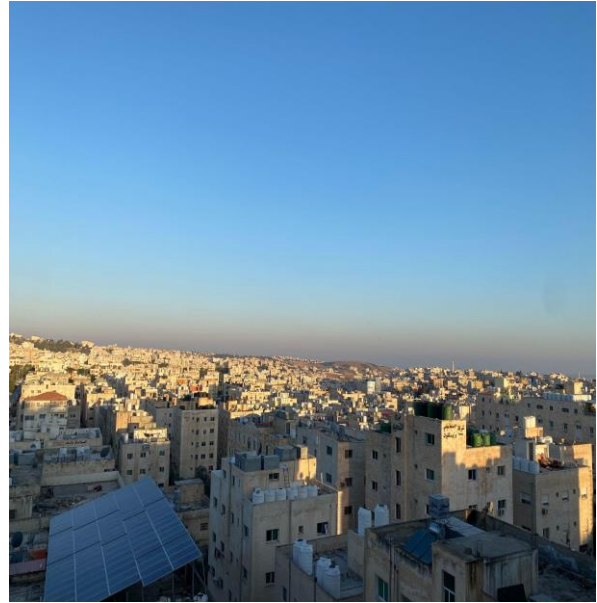
Without legal status- and documentation, refugees in Jordan have restricted access to services, risk being exploited in the labor market, and face restricted movement within the country (Norwegian Refugee Council and International Human Rights Clinic 2016). The Ministry of Interior Service Card (so-called 'new Mol card') is another important legal documentation for Syrian refugees. It gives the official entitlement to live outside refugee camps and refugees without an Mol card are at risk of arrest and deportation. With the Mol card, Syrians can apply for work permits in certain economic sectors and driver's licenses in Jordan. The card holder can move freely inside Jordan; but access to public services is only available in the district where the card was issued.



Irbid

Irbid is Jordan's third largest city, after Amman and Zarqa, and is the provincial capital of the Irbid governorate. The city is located just 20 kilometers from the Syrian border. The Syrian province Dara'a is right next to the border crossings in both the Irbid and Mafraq governorates, and a significant proportion of Syrian refugees in both these governorates are from there (Betts, Ali and Memişoğlu 2017). Shared tribes, kinship networks, and families that stretch across the national borders of Jordan and Syria have fostered social and political ties over time. For example, a study conducted by the Mercy Corps (2013) in Ramtha, Irbid governorate, noted that "both Jordanian and Syrian residents consider the national border to be arbitrary and irrelevant to their tribal ties, and consider themselves to be the 'same people'" (p. 5).

A resource-poor city, Irbid was experiencing challenges in the provision of housing, jobs, health services, education, water and security to its residents already before the large influx of Syrian refugees. However, as noted by for example Betts, Ali, and Memişoğlu (2017), the social ties already in place have enabled relationships to foster between the Syrian refugee community and the Jordanian host community in Irbid despite these economic challenges.



4. Multidimensional Integration from the Syrian Perspective

We now turn to the various dimensions of integration of our study: legal integration (citizenship), language/linguistic integration, economic integration, institutional trust, social integration, and psychological integration. Across these six dimensions of integration, we allow a wide space for the Syrian refugees to express themselves (bottom-up approach) while also providing an overview of the institutional framework (top-down approach) on the respective integration dimensions, particularly for legal integration and economic integration which are more dependent on laws and policies than our other categories.

Integration dimensions often build upon each other in an almost reciprocal relationship. For example, speaking the host country's language (linguistic integration) is often a precondition for creating a social network there (social integration). In turn, having a social network in the host country greatly facilitates learning the language. In a similar way, acquiring legal residency and/or citizenship (legal integration) is often a requirement for getting a job (economic integration)—but in many cases, having a job is a precondition for permanent legal residency, in Sweden for instance. Such mutually dependent situations can be difficult, and frustrating, for the individual seeking to integrate into the host country,

and in extension also challenging for integration at a societal level.

4.1. Legal Integration (Citizenship)

We start with legal integration, focusing primarily on citizenship. Previous research has found that acquisition of citizenship has a positive relationship with political integration, in part because it gives a sense of belonging (psychological integration), in turn encouraging political activity and participation (Hainmueller et al., 2015). Naturalization may also foster economic integration as well as social integration (Hainmueller et al., 2019; Hainmueller et al., 2017).

This chapter starts with a short overview of the citizenship laws and regulations in each of our three case countries. We then continue with exploring our interviewees' perceptions about citizenship and/or other types of legal residency and integration in their respective host countries.

Citizenship Regulations

Sweden

In Sweden, the main path to citizenship for international protection holders, including Syrians, is through naturalization. The Swedish Citizenship Act lists the requirements for naturalization, including five years of residence (four years for Convention refugees and stateless persons) as well as holding a permanent Swedish residence permit. Since 2016, residence permits for those granted asylum changed from

permanent to temporary; three years for Convention refugees and thirteen months for those under subsidiary protection. Both groups can apply for renewed residence permits for two years at a time. Permanent residence permits are only granted for applicants who can show self-sufficiency through employment or self-employment (with some exceptions, such as for children and those of retirement age). Given that permanent residency is required for citizenship, this law change has meant that citizenship through naturalization has become a lengthier and more difficult process.¹⁶

Due to the large number of Syrians who arrived in Sweden around 2014 and 2015, being eligible for citizenship after four or five years (depending on the type of protection status), the number of applications for Swedish citizenship reached historically high levels in 2019, with citizenship cases dominating the caseload at the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket, 2020). The number of citizenship applications has decreased somewhat during 2020 and 2021, but waiting times have continued to be over what is regulated in the Swedish constitution

(Cetrez et al., 2020). Between 2018 and 2022, 117,073 Syrian nationals were granted Swedish citizenship (Migrationsverket, 2023a).

Turkey

Three procedures for naturalization are set out in Law No. 5901 on Turkish Citizenship of 2009: (1) general acquisition (application); (2) exceptional cases; and (3) marriage to a Turkish citizen. For general acquisition, an uninterrupted legal residence is required, for which a Temporary Protection Status (TPS) does *not* count. As Syrians with TPS are unable to fulfill this residency requirement, their two remaining options for naturalization are through marriage to a Turkish citizen or through the so-called exceptional circumstances procedure, where citizenship is granted on the basis of certain profiles and skills that could contribute to Turkey.¹⁷

In the exceptional circumstances procedure, citizenship is granted by an offer from the relevant authorities rather than by application. One example of how such rather unpredictable selection processes might look was given to the authors in a conversation with a Syrian man who has lived in Turkey for the past eight years. In

¹⁶ The new rules on temporary residence permits only apply to asylum seekers arriving *after* November 24, 2015. Before this date, the former Aliens Act was applied under which all international protection status were granted permanent residence permit. For those individuals, the requirement in point 3 of the Citizenship Law's section 11 (permanent residency) was automatically fulfilled upon their arrival to Sweden. Among the respondents interviewed in Sweden for this report, everyone had arrived in Sweden before November 24, 2015, and thus got permanent residency (and later citizenship).

¹⁷ Article 12 (1)(a) of Law no. 5901 on Turkish Citizenship states that individuals eligible for citizenship under this procedure include: "Those persons who bring into Turkey industrial facilities or have rendered or believed to render an outstanding service in the social or economic arena or in the fields of science, technology, sports, culture or arts and regarding whom a reasoned offer is made by the relevant ministries".

2015, he went to the local office of the Turkish migration agency (*Göç İdaresi*) for another matter and, upon showing his ID card, was informed by the government officer that he had been nominated for Turkish citizenship under the exceptional circumstances track, and became a Turkish citizen eleven months later.¹⁸ A similar example is that of a Syrian business woman in Istanbul, who had been nominated for citizenship by a Turkish association without being aware of it herself, and was later granted Turkish citizenship (in Hammargren, 2020).

The Turkish citizenship process is also marked by political influences—there are claims, although difficult to verify, that Syrian refugees supporting the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) have been granted citizenship on that very ground (Hammargren, 2020). Another ‘shortcut’ to citizenship is that of having Turkish ancestry, such as a Turkmen background. For example, one interviewee in Turkey told us that “the Turks” (Turkmens) from Syria were favored and that “they got citizenship faster” (Interviewee #2).

Jordan

The Jordanian citizenship law, Law No. 6 of 1954 on Nationality, formally states in its Article 4 that “any Arab¹⁹ who has resided

continuously in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for not less than 15 years may acquire Jordanian nationality [...] if he renounces his nationality of origin and the law of his country permits him to do so”. *De jure*, it is thus technically possible for (Arab) Syrians to become Jordanian citizens under the citizenship law, albeit with many years of residence and renunciation of their Syrian citizenship. Some special requirements for women exist. According to Article 8 of the citizenship law, a foreign woman with citizenship in another Arab country, such as Syria, may acquire Jordanian citizenship after three years of marriage to a Jordanian national, and five years if she is not an Arab. The same rule does not apply for a foreign man marrying a Jordanian woman.

De facto, however, acquiring citizenship in Jordan for foreigners is practically impossible, perhaps especially for Syrians, not least because the system for citizenship acquisition through naturalization in Jordan is marked by uncertainty and unpredictability. To the best of our knowledge, no Syrian refugee has become a naturalized citizen of Jordan since the large influx of Syrians to Jordan began around 2011/2012.

¹⁸ Zoom interview, July 2022.

¹⁹ Article 2 in the *Law no. 6 of 1954 on Nationality (last amended 1987)* states that: “[...] ‘Arab’ means, for the purposes of this Law,

any person whose father was of Arab origin and who is a national of a State Member of the League of Arab States.”

Predictability and Security

A common theme between interviewees in Jordan and Turkey is the lack of predictability in the path towards citizenship. Among the Syrian refugees in Jordan interviewed for this report, most having resided in Jordan for around ten years and none of them had obtained a Jordanian citizenship. As put by one interviewee there: “Here is unlike Europe, where a person can know that after a couple of years, they will be citizens. Here, we don’t have that.” (Interviewee #1).

Similar sentiments were expressed by interviewees in Turkey, where the Temporary Protection Regime is perceived by many Syrians as insecure and unreliable (Pamuk, 2019). Naturalization is the most secure protection against *refoulement*. One interviewee, who has held Turkish citizenship since 2018, explains:

“Providing Syrians with a Temporary Protection Status was good in the short term, but harmful in the long term. We are protected for a limited time. In any minute they might take that protection [status away from you], since Syrians are neither refugees registered by the [United Nations] to pay for, nor citizens that can work and pay taxes. The Syrian is just a guest, with no chance to go back to Syria, but at any time they can take away the temporary protection status and make

him go back. But for those of us who got citizenship, it is a different story.” (Interviewee #3).

Sense of Belonging

Citizenship is often tied to a sense of belonging to the country in which one resides. In contrast, lacking citizenship or a predictable route to ever attaining it can lead to alienation. In Jordan, many Syrians not ‘only’ lack any reasonable prospect of ever becoming naturalized citizens; they live in the country without any legal status whatsoever. One interviewee explained to us that his lack of legal status makes him feel like an outsider:

“I don’t feel Jordanian, because I don’t have citizenship. ... As long as I don’t have legal papers and can’t act like a citizen, I will feel like a stranger, like I’m in exile. ... If I get legal rights, I will stay [in Jordan] for sure” (Interviewee #1).

Sentiments of alienation due to a lack of citizenship were also expressed by interviewees in Turkey. One informant underscored that “citizenship is extremely important to consider [a] person Turkish” (Interviewee #19). Another interviewee told us that:

“Until this moment, I have never thought of settling here, because there is nothing here that I can call mine ... I don’t have even 5 percent of the rights of citizens. I don’t think I will ever feel

connected to this country, but other people might. Like those who brought their wealth from Syria, and thus have a great financial situation and live comfortably here. They can obtain Turkish citizenship, [meaning] this is their country now” (Interviewee #2).

One interviewee linked the temporary status of Syrian refugees in Turkey as hindering their ability to settle and live a stable life there:

“People around us [who didn’t come here at a young age like me] are not settled and they are not thinking about staying here. I think the reason is the ... legal status of Syrian refugees in this country; [the Turkish government] can say ‘goodbye’ to them at any time. So there is no status that enables them to become settled and stable here” (Interviewee #18).

However, the same interviewee also told us about difficulties to integrate despite having citizenship, “which is the most that one can get to become Turkish” according to her, often feeling like a “second-degree citizen” and that she is not Turkish (Interviewee #18). Another interviewee in Turkey who has held Turkish citizenship since 2018, is also still struggling to being seen as Turkish by the host community:

“I have had Turkish citizenship for four years, [I speak Turkish], I have a Turkish passport, and I have my Turkish ID-card in my pocket all the time. But still, my clients save my number as “[Mohammed]²⁰ the Syrian” (Interviewee #3).

In Sweden, one interviewee told us that acquiring citizenship was like “a certificate I was granted, that I fulfill all the criteria and have the rights to live here, and that I fit in here” (Interviewee #6). Another interviewee felt quite the opposite, though: “Even if they sign all the land in my name, I will never feel Swedish. Citizenship doesn’t make anyone Swedish” (Interviewee #13).

Thus, our jury is mixed as to whether citizenship can overcome alienation. We can conclude only that citizenship may be a necessary, but not sufficient requirement for attaining a sense of belonging in a host community. More work is needed to attain psychological integration among Syrians in their host communities.

Rights and Benefits

Citizenship comes with a set of rights and benefits, such as the right to vote in national elections. In Jordan, the inability to vote made one of our informants care less about the host country since he feels he is unable to change anything (Interviewee #1). Many

²⁰ Not the interviewee’s real name.

other rights are restricted for non-citizens in Jordan. For example, only those Syrians who hold a so-called A or B investor card²¹ are allowed to buy property in Jordan. Also owning cars is limited by strict rules in Jordan, for all foreigners, something one of our interviewees cited as an obstacle for his ability to integrate (Interviewee #5). Moreover, for Syrian refugees, the Jordanian labor market is only open for certain sectors such as service work, agriculture, and construction (Hawkins, Assad, and Sullivan, 2019).

The rights to which non-citizens are entitled, such as basic education and health care, are sometimes challenging to attain. One interviewee told us that: “Simple rights here are difficult to get; medical, educational and others. I have a medical problem and no insurance company or other organization has helped me to get surgery. In Syria, I am at least a citizen and would have solved the issue somehow” (Interviewee #10).

Agency

Beyond providing a set of formal rights and a sense of belonging, acquiring citizenship also provides agency. An interviewee in Turkey told us about a situation where he needed to actively proclaim and demand his rights, stressing the fact that he is now a Turkish citizen:

“One time I applied for [a job] at the job center. The [case officer] sent me to a translator, even though she saw that I have [Turkish] citizenship and I also told her that I speak Turkish. The translator filled out the application all wrong; he didn’t write that I have a college degree and a driving license, even though these things help in finding a job. So here, I started defending myself. I said that ‘I am a Turkish citizen, and here you don’t have something like level one or level two Turkish citizen. We are all Turkish and I have [the same] rights as you’” (Interviewee #3).

Acquisition of citizenship contributes to Syrians’ security, formal rights, sense of belonging and agency in their new homelands. However, it does not instantly solve all issues of integration. Challenges for integration, such as discrimination, remain across the realms brought up in this report, including in encounters with formal institutions, which we turn to next.

4.2. Institutional Trust

Institutional trust is generally defined by political scientists as the extent to which a person believes a given institution will carry out its role(s) in a satisfactory manner

²¹ Category A cards are granted to non-citizens of all nationalities if they have invested at least JD 150,000 (approx. \$212,000, as of April 2022) in Jordan and providing at least 40 jobs for Jordanians. Category B cards are granted to those investing at

least JD 50,000 (\$71,000) and providing at least 10 jobs for Jordanians (Jordan Times, 2019). Syrians holding a category A or B investor card can apply for a residency card in Jordan (Syrian Legal Platform, 2021).

(Mishler and Rose, 2001). Institutions that are fair, have established rules of operation that are easily understandable, and are effective are likely to be highly trusted. Refugees generally come from environments where trust in the state and its institutions is very low, and state institutions in refugee-sending countries are often the very reason that refugees cannot return home. Fears of persecution, imprisonment, torture, and involuntary conscription are all factors that have been cited by refugees who have returned to Syria (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Transparency International's corruption index for 2022 ranks Sweden as fifth in the world with a score of 83, Jordan as 61th with a score of 47, and Turkey as 101st with a score of 36, where higher scores mean less corruption (Transparency International, 2023). Our interviews indicate that state institutions and the bureaucrats working at them are often engaging in partial and unfair practices when dealing with Syrians living in Jordan and Turkey, and that this is much less of a concern for those living in Sweden. Institutional trust is perhaps lowest in Turkey where stories of discrimination are widespread, particularly when it comes to interactions with state bureaucrats. Jordan is a context in which tribal norms encourage in-group members to favor one another and offer "wasta" — personal connections to help one gain access to basic social services and rights (Transparency International,

2019; Al-Ramahi, 2008). Many Syrians described Sweden as a law-abiding country where they turn to state institutions first to solve their problems or report serious crimes (Interviewees #6, #7, #9); expect Swedes to be honest in their dealings with Syrians; and do not see host population members seeking special privileges or favoritism (Interviewee #8). In this section, we focus on interactions between Syrians and state institutions, starting with interactions with the police.

The Police

As enforcers of the law at the local level, the police provide the frontline of security and dispute resolution for Syrians. For the most part, Syrians interviewees in Sweden feel that they can call the police for help with serious issues concerning their security or even if they see someone else doing something illegal like fighting (Interviewee #9), theft (#8), or disputes (#6). This contrasts starkly with responses in Jordan and Turkey where Syrians feared reporting problems to the police would get themselves into trouble, even if they were not the party at fault (Interviewees #2, #11, #4, and #5). An interviewee living in Turkey explained the situation: "[If I] call the police and then I would get in trouble because we don't have rights here as I said before. We might interfere to solve a problem and end up carrying the blame, so we Syrians don't interfere" (Interviewee #2). Another from Jordan affirmed: "I would never talk with the

police. Because this person who I would report might get me in so much unwanted trouble. So I choose not to be involved” (Interviewee #4). Fears of being sent back to Syria or “the fifth village”—a fenced-off compound located with the Azraq refugee camp that is likened to a prison (Staton, 2016)—also deterred Syrians from calling the police. In this situation, we can better understand how inability to gain permanent residency or citizenship inhibits Syrians from engaging with the state, even to help the police through things like reporting crimes.

Our interviewees in Jordan provided mixed reviews of the Jordanian institutional environment when it came to direct experiences, but perceptions of fairness of Jordanian bureaucrats seemed to be very low. The pernicious effects of *wasta* (personal connections) and tribal solidarities were commonly cited as drivers of Syrian distrust of the police (Interviewees #1, #4, #5, and #10). One participant described a couple of situations in which Syrians were killed in car accidents but to gain justice they were pressured to follow tribal law and accept material compensation, which was difficult to obtain unless another Jordanian tribal *sheikh* (leader) was willing to take on their case (Interviewee #4). Another explained the situation: “The tribal rules the city here. If a person from a big tribe hurts a foreigner like us, they can do whatever they want. Here the law protects us [Syrians] but to a certain extent only. In

Syria we had a civil law, even in Daraa.” (Interviewee #10). Here we can see that the fate of Syrians living in Irbid very much depends on their relations to the local tribes and tribal leaders. In another case, a Syrian girl in high school was sexually harassed by a Jordanian boy. Her family reported the boy and he was imprisoned for his actions. The boy’s cousins then attacked the Syrian girl’s brother with weapons, resulting in major injuries. The family and the police could not do anything about this incident since the cousins were protected by a large and powerful tribe. As a result, the girl’s family fled Jordan to Uganda (Interviewee #4). This story demonstrates how if a Jordanian comes from a large and powerful tribe, even the law cannot reach him. The same person concluded later on that “Jordanians can get their rights [from each other] but Syrians might not get their rights if they do not have someone [Jordanian] behind their back to support them” (Interviewee #4).

In other instances, positive interactions were recounted in which a Jordanian would stand up for a Syrian and guarantee their rights against another Jordanian who might be expected to be favored. Two interviewees recounted positive experiences with the police (Interviewees #1 and #5). One described a situation in which a Jordanian with alleged connections to the Royal Palace attacked a Syrian family with his tribe, which provoked violence on the part of the

Syrians; the situation was about to go to court when the Syrian decided to call a police officer he knew to explain the situation, who then spoke to his police chief (Interviewee #1). The chief forced the two sides to make peace by threatening to call the Jordanian offender's supervisor if he did not comply. *Wasta* clearly plays an important role in these dealings. Another Syrian recounted a positive experience:

"...in the police station, there was a problem between me and a Jordanian person, then we went to the police station. Obviously, my Jordanian opponent wanted to use all his advantages to win the dispute, so he took the officer to the side and told him that 'we are both Jordanian and you should side with me against the Syrian'. Then the officer brought this man to the main room and in front of everyone he scolded him for it and then told him that nationality has nothing to do with this, what is important is who has the right and who hasn't. This shows that the rights are equal and there is no duality."
(Interviewee #1)

As the host of numerous waves of forced migrants, Jordan offers a comparative perspective over time. In August of 2020, an incident in which a government official underscored discriminatory sentiments towards a Palestinian-origin Jordanian

citizen went viral.²² The target was an 80-year-old man who had lived in the country for 70 years. His son was imprisoned over a political matter and the man was warned by the governor of his region not to communicate with or join any of the social activists seeking the release of his son. The governor then told the man a rhymed catchphrase in Arabic translating roughly to "You foreigner, know your place!" (*ya gharib, khalik adib*). The Jordanian Minister of State for Legal Affairs issued an official apology to the man and his son over the incident (Al Hayat News, 2020). Such popular stories of prolonged discrimination against former refugees—even those who have gained citizenship in the country—remind Syrians about the difficulties to integrate. One contact relayed the following story built upon how this particular phrase affected his thinking about integration and institutional trust in Jordan:

"...if it happened that a Syrian was reported to the police [then I would feel disconnected to Jordan] because the treatment is different between Syrians and Jordanians. Syrians are double punished. In this situation, I feel sorry for myself, like, I have been here for 10 years and still am treated differently. Why do they insist on double punishing the Syrians, they are even adopting the saying: 'You foreigner, know your place!' Even if

²² To read more about this incident, see Rai al Yom (2020).

you [as a Syrian] live here for 100 years, you would never be [treated as] a local” (Interviewee #5).

The Double-Edged Sword of the Law

Syrian interviewees in Sweden think that the more strict, rule-bound system there has both positive and negative sides. Most participants reported that the host population follows rules more stringently and more often compared to participants in Jordan or Turkey, where processes can be unduly influenced by those with personal connections in the government. “We are in a ‘law country’, and the law rules” said one respondent in Sweden (Interviewee #6). Another reported that in comparison to having a problem with another Syrian neighbor in Sweden, “the difference is that if the Swedish person was in the wrong, they admit it quickly and the problem is solved faster” (Interviewee #8). Strict rule-following can have its downsides though. Many Syrians reported that the system was not flexible enough to accommodate their special case and so they were denied benefits; in other cases, Syrians could not understand and therefore did not follow the specific procedures laid out by the public bureaucracy and were denied benefits as a result. In Sweden, interviewee #8 described how he became homeless for two years because of issues with the social services, that help arranging accommodation when necessary—for citizens and non-citizens

alike—and difficulties with understanding the highly formalized appeals process:

“I feel lost when I have legal problems, they say that I can appeal the decision, but I didn't know how to write the appeal and I didn't know who to talk to help me... No, I didn't have legal help and I know that it is expensive anyway and I can't afford it” (Interviewee 8).

Such findings are supported also by Schierenbeck, Spehar and Naseff (forthcoming). In their study of Syrian refugees' encounters with local government institutions and service providers in Adana, Gothenburg, and Irbid, they found that the high level of formalization, including formal complaint channels, of Swedish institutions in fact gave less agency to their clients (in this case, Syrian refugees). This in comparison to the Jordanian and Turkish cases, where the interviewed Syrians expressed that there were other places to turn to when dissatisfied, such as local NGOs and personal connections (*wasta*). In Sweden, interviewees reported that they did hand in formal complaints, but that these were often believed to not make any difference.

For those coming from countries where the state's capacity is weaker, it may be difficult to learn to trust in the state to manage things. One interviewee we talked to in Sweden reported how “the law here is different, it

says 'if there is a thief in your house to steal things, let him, and after he is done, call the police' (Interviewee #8). But waiting for the police to resolve an issue is difficult when trust in the police may be damaged by previous life experiences.

Misinformation feeds fear as well. As another interviewee in Sweden noted: "I heard people complain that here they can't discipline their kids because social [services] will take their kids away" (Interviewee #9). There are conspiracy theories propagated among Syrians in Sweden and those abroad that the Swedish authorities are stealing refugee children from their parents and giving them to Swedish families. In its defense, the Swedish Department of Social Affairs insists that no children are taken away from parents except in cases where child abuse is suspected.

Despite these failings, social services in Sweden are generally seen as reliable and most of our interviewees in Sweden turned to state institutions immediately for help, while in Turkey and Jordan they rely on intermediaries. Access to social services in Turkey is particularly problematic if a Syrian does not speak Turkish, although one interviewee pointed out that "there are Syrian lawyers that have Turkish citizenship ... that I ask when I need legal help" (Interviewee #2). Even when calling the doctor, the primary concern is finding a translator according to one interviewee.

In Jordan, the primary concern is payment, even when thinking about whether to call for an ambulance (Interviewees #1, #5). Syrians there are largely reliant on civil society organizations and NGOs for aid with healthcare matters. In 2018, the Jordanian government canceled subsidized healthcare for Syrians. About 80 percent of Syrian refugees in Jordan are living below the poverty line; 60 percent are living in extreme poverty (Karasapan, 2022).

4.3. Economic Integration

Economic inclusion of refugees, by employment or entrepreneurship, not only enables rebuilding the lives of those having fled war or persecution, but also allows refugee populations to contribute to the local economy of their host communities. Previous research has also found that economic inclusion, or integration, of female refugees may increase gender equality in the refugee population (Albrecht et al., 2021).

In this section, we explore the legal framework as regards work in Jordan, Turkey and Sweden, as well as how our interviewees there perceive their opportunities to economically integrate in their respective host countries.

Jordan

According to the UNHCR (2023), nearly half of the Syrian population in Jordan are between the age of 18 and 59 years, meaning that well over 300,000 Syrians in

Jordan are of working age. Still, before 2016, only 3,000 work permits were issued every year to Syrians in Jordan. In February 2016, the Jordan Compact was introduced; a commitment by the international community, primarily the European Union, to financially support Jordan, with the condition to formalize employment for at least 200,000 Syrian refugees (Barbelet et al., 2018).

Since the introduction of the Jordan Compact, more than 230,000 work permits have been issued (UNHCR, 2022). Such positive developments notwithstanding, the Jordanian labor market is still very limited for Syrians, with only certain sectors open for Syrian refugees to work in, including manufacturing, construction, and agriculture, regulated by a quota system. Sectors that are closed for Syrian refugees to work in include sales, education, hairdressing, and most white-collar jobs (Stave et al., 2021).

The restrictive work permit regime in Jordan makes it so that many Syrians are permanently underemployed and feel hopeless in terms of their economic prospects in the future. One interviewee told us that:

“I definitely don’t want to stay here, because there is no work permit for my education level. I studied business and management, and here, engineers, doctors, and similar professions are not permitted to work. Therefore, I would like to go

somewhere where I can work with my education” (Interviewee #4).

These feelings were shared by another interviewee (#10), telling us that: “I don’t have the right to work here. Outside [Jordan], at least I can work [in] my field”.

Understandably, most interviewees in Jordan (#4, #10, #11, and #15) viewed being restricted from the labor market as negative and unfortunate, one of them (#15) saying that: “I believe that us Syrians add experience to [the Jordanian labor market] and that we can benefit from each other”. However, one of them also expressed a certain understanding of the restrictions, explaining that:

“I agree that Syrians should be restricted from accessing certain jobs ... It is important that the *ibn al-balad* [roughly ‘son of the country’, .i.e., a Jordanian] finds a job first—we don’t want them to hate Syrians” (Interviewee #17).

Another interviewee expressed a similar opinion, but also stressing the fact that Syrians have difficulties surviving without being allowed to work:

“I know that job opportunities are scarce here in Jordan. However, ... [Syrians] get a very small monthly allowance—70 Jordanian dinars, about 100 dollars—which isn’t enough for anything. If we would get

enough aid to survive on, then I agree that access to the labor market should be restricted for Syrians ... Jordanians themselves cannot find a job, so I understand that they want to be prioritized in their own country. But we also need to survive!" (Interviewee #14).

With a valid work permit, foreign workers are covered by the Jordanian labor law stipulating rights such as minimum wage, maximum working hours, and social protection coverage. They are also formally recognized as workers in courts and can report grievances (Stave et al., 2021). Non-Jordanian workers without a work permit are thus at much higher risk of being exploited at the labor market, situations that may be at the expense of the sentiments towards the host community by refugees. For example, one interviewee told us that:

"Many Syrians who worked in restaurants and other kinds of jobs, and who got scammed, like never got paid for their job, have started hating all [Jordanians]. They don't differentiate between the good ones and the bad ones." (Interviewee #4).

In addition to restrictive work permit regimes, Jordan is troubled with high unemployment rates. Some of our interviewees in Irbid did indeed worry

about the country's high unemployment rates, citing that as another reason for not wanting to stay in Jordan: "[even if I was given a work permit], I would not stay, because of the high unemployment rates", said one interviewee (#4). Another interviewee (#11), a student, felt that she is "studying for no point since there are not enough jobs anyway".

Turkey

In 2016, the Turkish government adopted the Regulation on Work Permits of Refugees Under Temporary Protection, covering Syrians residing in Turkey with a Temporary Protection Status (TPS). By the end of 2019, over 130,000 work permits, including renewals, had been issued to Syrians in Turkey (UNDP/UNHCR, 2022). However, with a total population of close to 3,6 million Syrian refugees, half of which are of employment age (18-59) (UNHCR, 2023), it is estimated that around one million Syrians in Turkey are still working in the informal sector, where they lack legal protection, and many more are unemployed (Danish Refugee Council, 2021).

Foreigners, including Syrians with TPS, with a work permit are covered by Turkish labor law, including a minimum wage, limitations on working hours, and inclusion in the social security system.²³ However, limitations in the work permit system have limited Syrian

²³ The minimum wage in 2022 was 4,250 lira per month (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2021). The maximum number of working hours is set in the Turkish labor law (Law no.

4857) to 45 hours per week with daily working hours that should not exceed 11 hours.

refugees' access to the formal labor market, including extensive bureaucracy in applying for work permits, making many employers preferring instead to hire Turkish citizens. Other formal limitations also exist; for example, the ratio of Syrians to Turkish citizens in any workplace cannot exceed 10 percent (Danish Refugee Council, 2021).

A study on Syrian refugees' perception of the labor market in Turkey found that key barriers to the formal job market included, among other things, not having a sufficient level of Turkish language, lacking Turkish connections, and feeling discriminated against by Turkish employers (Danish Refugee Council, 2021). Among our interviewees in Turkey, the most pronounced issues were feelings of being discriminated against in the sense that Syrians have less job security and earn less compared to their Turkish counterparts. This is especially the case for workers without a permit, who often have very low wages. For example, 75 percent of Syrian refugees in Turkey earn less than minimum wage, and that Syrians without a work permit work on average five hours more than their Turkish counterparts (Danish Refugee Council, 2021). One Syrian interviewee in Turkey told us that:

“Work here is difficult and the hours are very long. I work as a night shift guard in a construction site. I work 15 hours a day [and get] paid 2000 TL [Turkish lira]. [...] That's my salary all

month [and] I'm paying 7500 TL for my apartment” (Interviewee #2).

He continued with explaining that his Turkish colleagues earn twice as much as he does and that they work in better working conditions:

“We are three people who work in the same position and the [one working the] morning shift is a Turkish person. His salary is 4000 lira and we [Syrians] get 2000 lira [per month]. And the morning shift is shorter than the evening and night shifts [that we work]” (Interviewee #2).

Working without a permit also means less job security overall. For example, the same interviewee also told us about his wife who had been let go from her job with very short notice:

“My wife is an Arabic language teacher. When we first came, they opened temporary schools in the camps, and she was working there. And suddenly they just terminated her job with a message on WhatsApp, after eight years of work” (Interviewee #2).

Livelihood in Turkey is difficult for many Syrian refugees. Over 1.8 million are under the poverty line, of which 280,000 live in extreme poverty (UNDP/UNHCR, 2022). As a result, there have been reports of Syrians declining formal employment to also be eligible for receiving financial aid through

the Red Crescent's Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) (Danish Refugee Council, 2021). The financial contribution from the Red Crescent is small, however, as indicated by one of our interviewees:

"Life here is very difficult. For financial aid, we have only the Red Crescent card [which is now] 155 TL per month. This doesn't cover [anything] these days; it's very expensive here" (Interviewee #2).

General sentiments of discrimination, not necessarily from Turkish employers, were expressed by some interviewees (#2 and #3). One of them, who has his own business in construction, said that:

"I feel like a guest here, sometimes a wanted one and sometimes an unwanted one. In the working field, when I enter with some competition, and I win against a Turkish person [they] look at me as if I am a guest taking [their] job opportunities. They make me feel as if I took something that doesn't belong to me [...]" (Interviewee #3).

The difficulties to integrate in the labor market make some Syrian refugees unwilling to stay in Turkey. One interviewee told us that: "I still have a hope to move to Europe. There I would at least get the chances that I deserve. I feel so undervalued here" (Interviewee #18).

Sweden

In contrast to Jordan and Turkey, there is no specific work permit program for refugees in Sweden. Instead, the residence permit provided along with the protection status is a combined residence and work permit. Asylum seekers that have been able to or have tried to prove their identity can start working already during the asylum procedure, being exempted from having a work permit provided (Migrationsverket, 2023b). There are no limitations as to what sectors immigrants can work in, although some government positions may require Swedish citizenship for security reasons.

The main route to permanent residency, and later citizenship, for protection status holders is self-sufficiency. As such, in Sweden, the route to permanent residency, and later citizenship, is very much tied to economic integration. It has, however, proven to be difficult for many Syrians to become self-sufficient in Sweden. One study found that only about a third of Syrians in Sweden between the ages of 25 and 64 were able to support themselves without any financial assistance (Stiftelsen the Global Village, 2021). Also, many Syrians in Sweden are working in occupations far below their formal skill level and expertise. For example, one report surveying 530 Syrians working in Sweden, found that the largest share of respondents (31.1%) worked as 'unskilled workers' such as maids, waiters or

cleaners (Cetrez et al., 2021, 40). Some of the reasons for the underemployment of Syrians are lack of Swedish language proficiency, complicated procedures for validating diplomas, and generally high youth unemployment (ECRE, 2021).

Experiences of the Swedish labor market differ among our interviewees in Sweden. One of them (#6), who arrived in Sweden at 18 years old and is now 24, works as a sales manager and has a stable economy from the earnings he has saved from working the past years. In contrast, another interviewee (#8), who also arrived in Sweden at age 18 but who is now 26, is still struggling to find a job there. When asked whether he ever feels like an outsider in Sweden, he replied:

“Here in Sweden, finding a job is impossible. To find a job was difficult and still is; it has nothing to do with [the Covid-19 pandemic]. If a person doesn’t have the proper certification, the person has no career. Now, I decided to apply for a job in a warehouse. After I sent my CV, [the manager] called me and asked all these questions and I answered everything, but she never came back to me. This has happened three times now” (Interviewee #8).

Following these reflections, the interviewer asked whether it was the difficulties of getting a job that made him feel like an outsider. To this, the interviewee responded:

“No, not really. Because I also felt this while working, I used to work before. I am a newcomer and not fluent in the language. This made the employer watch me closely. In my nature I work hard, I’m very active and do extra things. I don’t understand how they can see me work like that and then say they can’t hire me because of budget problems. I see others work less and have better contracts. I work extra to prove that I’m worthy of an open-ended contract. But the employer prefers to just hire someone else with a ‘new-start job’ financial support from the job center”²⁴ (Interviewee #8).

A similar feeling of needing to work extra hard because of being non-Swedish is felt by another interviewee, telling us that:

“In my previous work, I realized that my boss used to contact me late, even on a Friday. This made me wonder if my other, Swedish, colleagues experienced this. [I felt] that I needed to impress him [to be worthy of the job]” (#9 Sweden).

²⁴ A ‘new-start job’ (*nystartsjobb*) is a government-subsidized employment. The subsidy is paid by the Swedish Public

Employment Service to an employer when hiring, among other groups, newly arrived immigrants.

4.4. Linguistic Integration

Speaking the host country's official language is key to integration as it not only gives easier access to formal institutions, such as health care providers or the police, but also enables forming relations with members of the host community. Ager and Strang (2004) identify "language and cultural knowledge" as facilitators for "social bonds (connections within a community), social bridges (with members of other communities) and social links (with institutions, including local and central government services)" (in Başak Kızıllan, 2020, 11-12).

In the section that follows, we delve further into the role of language in various dimensions of integration. For our interlocutors in Jordan, shared language facilitates social integration in particular. In Turkey and Sweden, the lack of a shared language creates distance between host and refugee populations, thus hindering integration.

Jordan

As in Syria, Levantine Arabic is the most widely spoken language in Jordan. The local dialects are particularly similar in the border region, for example among inhabitants from Daraa (Syria), where the majority of Syrians in Irbid come from, and Irbid (Jordan). This means that language as a hindrance for integration for Syrian refugees is mostly overcome upon arrival. Yet, differences in dialect remain, especially for Syrians who

do not come from Daraa, like those from Damascus or Homs.

Many of our interviewees in Jordan described shifting their dialect as a way to 'blend in' or 'pass' among the locals (Interviewees #5, #10, and #4). The underlying assumption was that adopting the local dialect would facilitate social relations, and by extension, integration. For example, one contact reported that: "my accent is particularly similar to the [Jordanian city of] Ar-Ramtha; even when I travel to other cities in Jordan, they ask me if I am from Ar-Ramtha. [The Jordanians] will never guess that I am Syrian, so they become more comfortable" (Interviewee #5). Similarly, another interviewee (#4) originating from Daraa, said that he is often asked if he is from Irbid when he visits the Jordanian capital, Amman. In contrast, another interlocutor (#1) who speaks a Damascus dialect noted: "My accent is the only thing that can indicate that I am Syrian". He explained that: "In the beginning, I was trying to fit in. But then ... I realized that my accent doesn't make any difference in my interactions" (Interviewee #1).

Turkey

In 2016, the Turkish Ministry of National Education and the DGMM signed a cooperation protocol with the DG-LL (Directorate General of Lifelong Learning) to organize Turkish language courses for Syrians under temporary protection in

Turkey. In March 2019, the UNDP and DG-LL began language training for Syrians under Temporary Protection through Public Education Centres (PECs) in 10 provinces of Turkey (including Adana) in which over 52,000 adult Syrians were estimated to participate (UNDP, 2019). In addition to such initiatives, there are also language courses held by Turkish universities, such as the TÖMER program, as well as various scholarships for studying Turkish, funded by international actors such as the UNHCR and the EU (Nimer, 2019).

However, only around 28,500 Syrians participated in formal Turkish language courses in 2017, having decreased from 70,000 participants in 2015 (Erdoğan et al., 2021). A report surveying Syrian refugees' experiences with Turkish language education found that one of the main reasons for the low participation in language courses among Syrian refugees is their economic status—many are working long and irregular hours, which is hard to combine with language courses. Language courses offered by private centers are also often relatively expensive, despite some organizations offering small stipends. For women specifically, lack of childcare and refusals from male family members constitute major obstacles to attending language courses (Nimer, 2019).

Language remains a key barrier for Syrians' access to services in Turkey due to difficulties

in understanding procedures and the functioning of various institutions; even a basic level of Turkish eases access to services (Başak Kızıllan, 2020). One interviewee (#2) related that it is difficult for him to visit the hospital because he does not know any medical terms in Turkish. Another Syrian (#12) said that it is very unlikely she would call the police if she would see or hear about something illegal since she doesn't speak the language. Lack of linguistic proficiency also hinders Syrian refugees' access to higher education and employment (UNDP/UNHCR, 2022).

While several channels for adult language education formally exist in Turkey, one of our interviewees found that opportunities for Syrians to learn Turkish were still difficult to access:

“Normally, every host country focuses on providing language education. Like in Europe, the first thing the refugees do is [learn] the language. But here, in Turkey, they didn't prepare us for anything, especially the language” (Interviewee #2).

He further explained that it can be difficult for refugees to focus on learning the host country's language as their minds might be preoccupied with other issues:

“Those who came here at a young age [and] those who are studying in the university, they have learned the language. But [people like me], who

left their jobs, money, positions, who came from a collapsed situation... We're still confused and also a bit scared, thinking that we might [need to] go back. I know I should learn [Turkish], but it's difficult for me. Livelihood is difficult, so I'm always worried about providing for my children" (Interviewee #2).

Syrian refugee children now attend Turkish schools following the national curriculum, taught in Turkish. This has replaced the Temporary Education Centres (TEC) that were set up for Syrian refugees, following the Syrian curriculum in Arabic. The interviewee cited above (#2) told us more about this:

"For the past [years], [the host community] has integrated Syrian children into Turkish speaking schools, and the Arabic language class is no more. Many Syrian teachers demanded that there would be Arabic classes for Syrian students, but nothing happened" (Interviewee #2).

He discussed his worries that his children will forget Arabic completely. This is particularly worrisome to him given his concerns that he and his family might be forced to return to Syria. "In a couple of years", he said, "they will have lost their Syrian identity completely. [...] We might [have to] go back to Syria any minute [and] I don't want them to forget their roots" (Interviewee #2).

Another interviewee (#18) who had herself worked in the Turkish educational system with Syrian refugees told us that many parents had been outraged by the decision to close down the TECs and that some Syrians had "opened local centers to teach Arabic, so that children do not forget the Arabic language" (Interviewee #18).

Lacking Turkish linguistic skills forms an obstacle for refugees in Turkey to communicate with the host community. In an online survey of 363 Syrians participating in language courses, 29% stated "to communicate with people" as the primary reason for learning Turkish (Nimer, 2019, 19). The importance of language for connecting with others (social integration) and feeling a sense of belonging to Turkey (psychological integration) was frequently mentioned among our interviewees. As put by one interviewee:

"The language is what keeps me from fully integrating. [We have] many in-common traditions, but the language is the main barrier ... I will never be [Turkish], because of the language" (Interviewee #12).

In a similar vein, other interviewees said that "the religious and social traditions are close to ours, [but] the difference in language is very noticeable" (Interviewee #3) and that "the [difference in] language is creating this wide distance between us" (Interviewee #2).

One interviewee also told us that speaking Arabic in public further contributes to him feeling like an outsider in Turkey, telling us that: “Here, I feel very much like a stranger. In the bus, for example, ... the minute I speak one word in Arabic, everyone stares at me” (Interviewee #2). Another stated that she never dared to speak Arabic in public even with her family members assuming doing this shows disrespect for Turks and might invoke discrimination against them (Interviewee #19).

There is also a perceived social norm or expectation among host population members that Syrians should learn the local language. One interviewee told us that she felt encouraged, and expected, by Turkish people to speak Turkish to them, saying that:

“They like when I use the [Turkish] language, and they encourage me. When they see that we [Syrian refugees] don’t speak the language, they get upset” (Interviewee #12).

Sweden

Swedish integration policies have for long been focused on language training (Milani et al., 2021), not least as a part of the more general emphasis on establishment on the labor market. This strategy has not always been successful. For example, in a 2018 study of Syrian refugees in (mainly) the Gothenburg area, several interviewees—

especially those with higher education levels—expressed that poor quality of language training was a major hindrance towards their labor market integration (Bucken-Knapp et al., 2018)

The most common language training program for newcomers to attend is Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), which is available to anyone who has received a residence permit. Participating in SFI is mandatory to receive subsistence allowance as one is otherwise not considered qualified to join the labor market. The program is designed and funded by the Swedish National Agency for Education but organized by adult education divisions in the municipality.

Proficiency in the Swedish language is currently not a prerequisite for Swedish citizenship, nor is civic orientation.²⁵ Since October 2021, civic orientation courses are mandatory for asylum seekers in Sweden. The previous Social Democratic Party-led government announced in June 2022 that Swedish language and civic orientation classes would become necessary to acquire permanent residency (and in effect citizenship). However, in September 2022, a conservative coalition government was elected, which is likely to introduce even stricter requirements in this area. The agreement (*Tidöavtalet*) for cooperating included an inquiry into stricter requirements

²⁵ Civic orientation was, however, an integral part of Swedish for Immigrants until 2007 when it became a purely language training program (Milani et al., 2021).

for citizenship, but no changes have yet been made to the Swedish Citizenship Act in this regard.

Among our interviewees in Sweden, the Swedish language is mentioned as a key for interactions with Swedish people. Speaking Swedish is perceived to be very important to connect with the host community. As put by one interviewee:

“[For Swedish people], the Swedish language is like religion in our societies; very important and embedded in everything” (Interviewee #7).

Accordingly, not being able to speak Swedish well is mentioned in relation to feeling left out in social settings and for belonging in general:

“Sometimes when people around me speak [Swedish], it is hard for me to participate. I think the first step for me to feel Swedish is to improve my language skills” (Interviewee #9).

Similarly, another interviewee explained that learning Swedish opened up new opportunities and formed new relationships:

“As for people my age, I didn’t have a chance to interact with them until I spoke Swedish; ... they didn’t give me a chance. Language is the key to making friends. [Most] probably, my language level limits my interactions

and relationships, and limits me from integrating and knowing more about the country and the culture” (Interviewee #6).

A third interviewee reiterated that being able to speak Swedish fluently is what makes someone fully integrated, or “Swedish”, as this can be seen as a sign that he or she has spent much time socializing with the host community:

“If a person lives here for 30 years, and doesn’t speak Swedish, [that person] is not Swedish to me. But if you’ve been in Sweden for 30 years and speak Swedish fluently; this means that you have socialized with Swedish people until you became fluent. That person is really Swedish” (Interviewee #8).

Lacking Swedish language skills can constitute a problem also for communicating with the host community in more formal settings. One respondent told us about some issues he had with the social services in Sweden. While he was able to communicate with the officer in English, he got the feeling that the authority was still unwilling to give him the information he needed:

“There was no language problem in the social services; I spoke English perfectly but they [still] didn’t give me any information ... I know that there are Swedish people that don’t like to

interact with people that don't speak Swedish, even if they speak English" (Interviewee #8).

We turn now to social integration, where language is a key component in order to communicate and create relations with members of the host community.

4.5. Social Integration

Social integration is the "connecting bridge between refugees and the receiving society" (Simsek, 2018, 541). For social integration to be successful, it is important that both sides—the newcomers and the locals—make an effort to interact and accept each other. As suggested by Laurensyeva and Venturini (2017), the newcomers should understand the values and culture of the receiving society, develop their feelings of belonging to the new society and form new relations with the locals as deemed necessary. On the other hand, locals' acceptance of newcomers as active members of their society is a main prerequisite for social integration to be feasible. One of our interviewees in Sweden reinforced this argument: "Immigrants don't feel welcomed socially! In theory they are, by law they are, but you can't change people's hearts and minds" (Interviewee #9).

Cultural Differences

Our interviewees pointed out various barriers affecting social integration of Syrians in Turkey, Jordan, and Sweden. In

Turkey and Sweden, the language and culture appear to form a main obstacle to social integration, whereas having tribal ties and networks were considered vital for successful integration in Jordan. In all three countries of study, the Syrians interviewed described their host society as introvert and individualistic, put in contrast to the Syrian culture described by the interviewees as more extroverted and hospitable. This difference in culture makes it more difficult for Syrians to build friendships and form networks with the locals, which is vital for their integration (Décieux and Mörchen, 2021). Feelings of isolation and loneliness are particularly high among our interviewees in Sweden, one of them says:

"Despite being an introvert and not having much contact with neighbors et cetera in Syria, I will definitely move away from Sweden. This isolation is not suited for me. Yes, I am an introvert, but this is isolation, alienation ... I don't have any friends or family here; it's too much" (Interviewee #13).

Friendships and Social Networks

Friendships are "indispensable to individuals' opportunities and to their integration into communities" (Granovetter, 1973, 1378). Building networks with local societies is important for the newcomers to establish their lives in the new environment, understand the system, and access services as well as the economic market. In addition, social networks are vital for building a sense

of belonging and becoming a member of the receiving society (see the UNHCR's Integration Handbook [UNHCR, n.d.]).

Our interviews indicated that Syrians find making friends with other Syrians, or others with foreign-born background, easier than with the host population as the former share similar experiences and are in a similar situation to themselves. This is particularly the case for interviewees in Sweden and Turkey, and to a lesser extent in Jordan.

Sweden

In Sweden, only one interviewee reported to be able to make native Swedish friends, although his closest friend is Polish. The interviewee explained why he felt a closer connection to persons of foreign-born background as follows: "I think they went through similar experiences like I did. For example, my Polish friend says that she thinks that Swedish people are very shy and not easy going, and I realized that too [after a while]. So, I was 'clicking' more with her; this is just one example of how we find things in common" (Interviewee #6). Another interviewee explained the advantages of seeking help from friends of foreign origin, or Middle Eastern more specifically, over Swedish friends: "the Swedish person would only go by the rules, but the Middle Eastern would try to find a solution outside the box" (Interviewee #8).

However, this preference to build relations with non-Swedes, or Swedes with foreign

background, does not prevent the Syrian interviewees from realizing that networking with native Swedes is still important. As stated by one interviewee: "here in Sweden; if you don't have connections, you can't survive!" (Interviewee #8). Another explained that "the one who could [really] understand me is someone who experienced being a refugee and being new to Sweden, but a Swedish native might be more able to help me as they have better connections" (Interviewee #6).

In Sweden, the main barrier to social integration seems to be the cultural gap between natives and Syrians. Learning the language is likely helpful in reducing this gap, although it can probably not remove it completely. Even Syrians who learned Swedish and worked for years among Swedes have trouble building strong relations with native Swedes. One interviewee in this situation explained that "people in Sweden are as cold as their weather" and that the absence of social life limits his chances for developing better connections with the host population (Interviewee #8).

Turkey

Also in Turkey, Syrians tend to build friendships with other Syrians, whom they met either in Turkey or in Syria before leaving. There is an overlap of culture between Turkey and Syria: shared religion, Ottoman heritage, and Islamic history. Thus,

in contrast to Sweden, *cultural* differences between Turks and Syrians do not seem to be a major barrier to social integration in Turkey (Interviewees #12, #3, and #2). However, some interviewees still mentioned culture as a reason hindering them from making strong friendships with Turks. As one interviewee put it: “I lived and studied in Turkey, learnt the language fluently, however I didn’t manage to create any real or strong friendships with Turkish people...they have their special jokes and special sayings that we would never understand no matter how fluent you learn the language. It is something related to their culture which you will never know” (Interviewee #18).

All in all, most of our interviewees mentioned language to be the main obstacle to making Turkish friends. “One should know the language very well, like 100%. If a person doesn’t speak Turkish very well, it is difficult to integrate with Turks”, said one interviewee (#2). Other interviewees (#12 and #3) noted that Syrians with Circassian or Turkmen background are able to communicate with Circassian Turks and Turks in their native tongues and are thus in a better position to communicate with the host population.

Jordan

In Jordan, the shared language should, in theory, mean there are greater chances for meaningful interactions with locals than

Syrians in Turkey or Sweden. Yet, our interviewees there experienced mixed feelings with regard to networking with Jordanians. On the one hand, they described how Jordanians tended to be welcoming, open to helping them, and providing them with favors. One interviewee found that “being Jordanian or Syrian is not a barrier for social relations. As regards marriages, making friends, and working, being Syrian can even give you an advantage as they [Jordanians] feel sympathy for you” (Interviewee #1). Another interviewee (#5) explained how a Jordanian person that he met through a common friend was willing to register a car for the interviewee in his own name, despite the fact that this will affect his financial aid for bread (100 dinars/per month). Yet another (#4) told us about how his Jordanian friend lent him money without even asking when he would return it. On the other hand, most of the interviewees in Jordan still have many more Syrian friends than Jordanian, attributing this imbalance to differences between Syrian and Jordanian traditions and cultural practices, despite that Jordanians share many cultural aspects with Syrians such as religion, language and tribal ties.

Syrians with tribal connections in Jordan were exceptionally privileged in terms of social networking. Tribes are very important in Jordan, providing a lot of power and protection (Al-Rousan, 2019), and most of

our interviewees in Jordan confirmed that tribal belonging is extremely helpful for newcomers. One interviewee explained that his family's tribal ties to Jordan made it so that upon their arrival they were very well received, to the extent that "we didn't feel that we have even left Syria in any way! We feel [like we] are home" (Interviewee #5). He further added that "when someone from Syria is from a certain tribe and lives with the tribe's Jordanian branch, they get the support." Another stated that: "I know Syrians who found connection with tribes because their mothers were Jordanian, so their uncles supported them to start businesses" (Interviewee #10). A third interviewee said that having an opportunity to be 'adopted' by a tribe would increase their sense of belonging and provide more support (Interviewee #4).

Despite similarities in language and culture, as well as shared tribal connections in many instances, some interviewees had experienced discrimination from Jordanian neighbors or colleagues. One interviewee (#5) explained that he felt accused by his Jordanian neighbors for anything wrong that happens in the building he lives in. Another interviewee (#4) felt their neighbors were being rude and exclusionary because of his lack of a tribal identity. A third interviewee described how she and her mom were yelled at by a taxi driver for asking to stop by a shop, she told us: "The driver got outraged and started to yell at us saying

"You, Syrians, have a lot of money and a lot of stuff with you!" You either pay me extra 2 dinars or I report you to police!". We became terrified. So, we paid and got out of the taxi" (Interviewee #15).

Resentment against Syrians

Interviewees from all three case countries have felt resentment from locals in their host community, especially when they are doing well. This is most pronounced among interviewees residing in Turkey. One of them explained that "if Turks see Syrians enjoying free time or buying something new, they consider it as if the Syrian is taking something from them personally" (Interviewee #2). The "banana crisis" in 2021 in Turkey demonstrates how such situations can escalate. The incident started with a Turkish man being interviewed in Turkish television saying that he is seeing "Syrians in the bazaar buying kilograms of bananas" while he himself cannot afford them (Babilie, 2021). This incident led to a lot of debate among Syrians in Turkey which soon turned into a TikTok trend with Syrians eating bananas and challenging other Syrians to do so, use of banana filters, and sharing of memes about bananas—including putting bananas on the Turkish flag—all of which caused outrage among Turks who viewed the trend as insulting toward Turkish people. The situation became so tense that Turkish authorities opened an investigation, which resulted in the arrest and preparation for deportation of eleven Syrians due to

“provocation and inciting hatred” (Babilie, 2021).

A report published by the Arabic press platform Noon Post found that Syrian refugees in Canada and several European countries experienced resentment, or envy, from former refugees. Some in the latter group, interviewed in the Noon Post’s report, did indeed find that newcomers received aid “on a plate of gold” while they themselves had to work hard for the benefits when they arrived (Najjar, 2020). Such dynamics exist also in Jordan, especially from Jordanians with Palestinian origin. One interviewee told us that “[East Bank] Jordanians treat us better than Jordanians with Palestinians origins, because the latter think we took over the aid from UN organizations, so that they have less now” (Interviewee #10). Another interviewee (#11) found that Palestinian Jordanians see Syrians as any other foreigner who does not deserve any special treatment. On the contrary, though, some other interviewees stated that: “Palestinian [Jordanians] are closer to Syrians, because they have a cause, and we have a cause. They have more sympathy [towards us Syrians]” (Interviewee #5). Another said: “I feel more comfortable dealing with them [Palestinian Jordanians] since they don’t view people as second-class or lower than them” (Interviewee #14).

Residential Segregation

Our interviews indicated mixed feelings over neighborhood preferences in all three countries. On the one hand, Syrians prefer to live closer to other Syrians where they can recreate a feeling of home from where they were forced to leave. In Sweden and Turkey, Syrians prefer Syrians or those from similar backgrounds due to shared language as well as culture which facilitate warmer relations with neighbors (Interviewees #2, #7, #12, and #10). One interviewee, in Sweden, explained that:

“The concept of neighborhood is different in our [Syrian] culture. In our culture we take care of each other, for example, we share food with each other. This is how friendships can form. But the Swedish person, in the best case, would only say ‘hi’” (Interviewee #13).

Also in Jordan, where the culture is similar, Syrians prefer Syrian neighbors. Interviewees cited increased exchanges of favors such as sharing food, caring for each other’s children, or having their children to play together (Interviewee #4). Syrians feel that Jordanian culture does not support these types of exchanges as strongly. When asked whether he prefers to move a neighborhood with a majority of Syrians, an interviewee in Irbid told us: “Yes, I might move to such a neighborhood because it has people that are similar to me, have similar traditions and customs and I will also avoid

possible racism [from Jordanians]” (Interviewee #14).

In general, Syrians reported that they are more cautious when host-country members are living around them as they assume their neighbors will be watching them more closely for mistakes and may be racist against Syrians. This theme of caution ran across all three countries (Interviewees #5, #11, #13, and #2).

On the other hand, Syrians sometimes prefer to have native neighbors to learn their language and culture and open new opportunities for them. One interviewee (#6) stated that he thinks that “Syrians are happy when Swedish people move close to them. For them, this is a new door to opportunities [where] they might learn new words or make new networks.” One interviewee in Sweden reported preference for a Swedish family to move in as neighbors, finding them to be more respectful, in the sense that “Swedes are like robots and programmed not to harm” (Interviewee #8). Another interviewee laid out conflicting perspectives, explaining that “there are contradictions in our [Syrian] peoples’ thinking. Sometimes, we don’t like Syrians to live close to us because they think that they bring trouble. Other times, we don’t like our Swedish neighbors because they are very observant about things such that Syrians can’t play the radio at a high volume or smoke anywhere they want”

(Interviewee #13). An interviewee in Jordan said that “I would rather have a Jordanian neighbor, because it is as if they don’t exist. Their children are always indoors” (Interviewee #5).

A common theme between the countries is thus that for those preferring to be left alone and have little interaction with their neighbors, it is best to live close to host community members (and vice versa). Also, there is a trade-off where some Syrians prefer to live in ethnic enclaves even though they are aware of the importance of integrating more with the local society, especially in Sweden and Turkey. In general, however, our interviewees across the three countries do not mind who is moving to or living in their neighborhood, as long as they are good people (Interviewees #6, #3, #7, #11, #15, #16 and #10).

4.6. Psychological Integration

Refugees differ from other forms of migrants in terms of the forced nature of their situation and the peril they often faced in reaching their destination. Being coerced to leave their home countries is an important aspect affecting the psychological process of integration for refugees (Echterhoff et al., 2020), thus meriting separate study.

Psychological integration measures refugees’ sense of belonging, their emotions, motivations, expectations, goals and perspectives they see within the hosting

society, and the extent to which they define themselves as belonging to the receiving community (Echterhoff et al., 2020; Becker, 2022).

The Role of Memories

Memories are important to develop a sense of belonging to a country. Therefore, the age of the person upon arrival and amount of time spent living in the host country seem to greatly affect feelings of belonging to the country. Several of our interviewees, particularly in Turkey and Sweden, highlighted these factors. For instance, one interviewee in Turkey (#3) explained that “memories make the connection” in the sense that he himself, at 31 years old, does not feel very connected to Turkey as he still has many memories from his life in Syria. Another interviewee who arrived to Turkey at a very young age mentioned that “I consider Turkey my home. I arrived here when I was ten years old. I grew up here. I established my life here. I studied here. There is everything I need here. I built friendships here. I met people here who became important in my life, and so on” (Interviewee #19). An interviewee in Sweden reinforced this finding, telling us that “I feel like Sweden is my country. Yes, I was born in Syria, ... but I feel I was raised in Sweden” (Interviewee #11). By contrast, another interviewee (#7) who came to Sweden at a later stage in life described her memories from Syria as the main factor

preventing her from feeling truly connected to Sweden.

Acceptance by the Host Community

Feeling like an ‘outsider’, a ‘guest’ and a ‘second-degree citizen’, all of which are terms mentioned by interviewees across the three case countries, are barriers for psychological integration. Some interviewees had these sentiments even after living in the country for a long time, having attained citizenship and achieving fluency in the local language. In Jordan, one interviewee (#5) told us that he felt like an outsider because “there is always something that is forbidden for us [Syrians]” and mentioned an example of Jordan restricting Syrians’ access to certain cities such as Aqaba because it is a tourist city and close to the borders. Lacking tribal ties is another important factor hindering feelings of belonging in Jordan. One interviewee (#4) stated that “to be Jordanian, a person should have Jordanian parents and belong to a tribe and have lived here for a long time. Ten years is not enough—maybe fifty”.

The feelings of Syrian refugees in Turkey are quite similar. *Yabancı*, the Turkish word for ‘foreigner’ was mentioned by several interviewees in Turkey as the way they feel they are treated and viewed by Turkish people. One interviewee (#12) stated that “from the first minute, they [Turkish people] call us *yabancı*.” We came from a different country, and we speak a different

language. I feel I am less than the local Turkish person. We are citizens of a second degree". Another interviewee (#3) described that despite living in Turkey for ten years, four of which he has held citizenship, running a business, speaking Turkish very well, having children with only Turkish citizenship, his clients still save his number as "Mohammed, the Syrian", adding that that "everyone [in Turkish society] considers me as Syrian and I consider myself as Syrian". He explained further that he "feels like a guest here [in Turkey], sometimes wanted and other times unwanted" (Interviewee #3).

In Sweden, a young man who lived with a native Swedish family upon arrival developed a more positive mental connection to the country. He explained that "I was lucky to live with a Swedish family and I learned about the culture from it. If I didn't have that opportunity, it would have taken me more time to adapt" (Interviewee #6). The interviewee arrived to Sweden at the age of 18 and has been interacting with Swedish society through study and work. Even though he experienced situations that he described as racist, he accepted these acts as part of any society: "I accepted it [racism], because I know that in every society there is rejection. Even the Swedish [natives], they discriminate against each other depending on what city they come from" (Interviewee #6). Feelings of alienation were, however, particularly emphasized

among interviewees in Sweden. One told us that "I feel like an outsider [and] unaccepted by society ... If I had money, I would go somewhere else" (Interviewee #8). This feeling was also shared by other Syrians we met in Sweden. Another interviewee (#13) added: "I love Sweden because it gave me a new life and an opportunity. So, I respect that. But I don't feel connected to it. I feel like a stranger, like a tourist".

Acculturation

Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) defined acculturation as "the process of cultural change that occurs when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into prolonged, continuous, first-hand contact with each other" (149). Acculturation can in turn be divided into psychological outcomes and socio-cultural outcomes. The first concerns immigrants' *internal* adaption, and includes their satisfaction with life and mental health in the new cultural setting; while the second concerns their *external* adaption and relates mainly to social integration (Şafak-Ayvazoğlu et al., 2021).

Acculturation is often a stressful process affecting the psychological well-being of refugees. The level of this effect varies depending on the difference of the new culture, the speed of change, and the pressures imposed on the refugees for adaptation (Phillimore, 2011). Some of our interviewees indicated that being familiar with the host culture and having common

traditions can help to remove the barrier of non-belonging. Others described the difference between cultures made them feel like they had been almost reborn. One interviewee explained this as if “like the life I had before [in Syria] died, it ended. And then I had another life here [in Sweden].” He went further to describe how his life in Syria and the one in Sweden cannot even be compared: “In Syria, I was Syrian. I was in my country; I spoke the language and with my family and friends. There is no comparison between Swedish and Syrian cultures” (Interviewee #13).

Fear of losing their original culture, or of their children doing so, complicates psychological integration according to many of our interviewees. Even minimal differences can become important to holding onto one’s original identity and heritage. One interviewee in Jordan told us that “some Syrian families don’t allow their kids to develop the Jordanian accent” (Interviewee #10). However, other interviewees in Jordan told us that “there is no fear of losing the culture here in Jordan; the cultures are the same” (Interviewee #1). Another underscored: “For me as a person from Daraa and currently residing in Irbid, the culture is similar in marriages, in invitations to celebrations, in funerals. It is almost the same culture” (Interviewee #4).

In Sweden, where the cultural gap is significantly higher, the desire to maintain one’s original identity often prevents

refugees from developing a sense of belonging toward the host country. For example, the term ‘Swedified’ (*försvenskad*) is sometimes used to, in a derogatory manner, describing foreign-born Swedes who are considered to have adapted ‘too much’ to Swedish culture at the expense of their original culture. One Syrian woman we spoke to in Sweden told us that:

“[Syrians in Sweden] think that if they don’t preserve their identity, they will lose themselves and everything they ever had ... I managed to integrate to a certain extent. But in order to integrate fully, it means to strip off my real identity and disapprove of everything I experienced before... Sometimes, to belong to Swedish society means to disconnect with my background” (Interviewee #7).

Yet, this interviewee also told us that Sweden’s culture of gender equality had helped her to integrate and feel more connected, even if only to a certain extent.

Another interviewee reported:

“I saw people taking a long time to adapt and finding it hard to learn about the new culture because for a 40-year-old person who has spent his life in Syria, it is difficult to adapt in one or two years, especially that it [integration] needs a very flexible person, and those who arrived here lack flexibility because the first couple

of years are more about standing up on their feet again. The adaptability to learn a new culture is not there” (Interviewee #6).

A third interviewee, also in Sweden, reported that he doesn’t like what he understands of Swedish culture, and that this inhibits him from wanting to become ‘Swedish’, and to integrate into society (Interviewee #8). Another one told us that “I think it would be hard to feel fully Swedish. Because I believe there are different parts of my [original] character or culture I will still preserve, and these will remain no matter how long I stay here” (Interviewee #9).

Having a different religion was also stated as a reason for rejection of full integration:

“They [Syrian refugees] reject the Swedish identity by refusing to integrate because the Swedish culture is not Islamic, and they reject the male-female relations which is a sensitive topic for them. They reject the whole culture and the Swedish people themselves” (Interviewee #13).

5. Conclusion

This report contributes toward filling important gaps in the studies of migration and integration. Many of the policy studies and academic articles on integration of migrants and refugees focus on the perspective of policymakers and host societies, while the needs and opinions of the people who will integrate are often overlooked. The absence of migrant and refugee voices contributed to the failure of integration processes, as has been recently acknowledged by several studies that have begun to concentrate on the bottom-up perspective of integration (Damen et al., 2022; Pace and Simsek, 2020; Shaw et al., 2021).

The outcomes of our study on (Syrian) refugee integration in two ‘transit countries’ and one ‘destination country’ contributes to as well confirms some of the results of previous studies conducted in other parts of the world, including the U.S., Canada, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Lebanon, among others. Findings from such studies show that refugees’ understanding of integration center around not being differentiated from host society members (Pace and Simsek, 2020) and that they give due consideration to safety, equal opportunities, and social ties when attempting to integrate (Shaw et al., 2021; Damen et al., 2021).

Our study contributes to recent literature recognizing the multidimensional nature of integration from the lens of Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey and Sweden. Syrian refugees understand integration in terms of being acknowledged by the local society as equal members of the host community, with equal opportunities, and not being treated as outsiders or guests.

Our interviewees expressed gratitude and respect towards their respective host country, for providing safety and the opportunity to begin a new life. At the same time, in all three countries, they also expressed that they do not feel that they belong to their host country. One reason for this in Sweden, and to a lesser extent also in Turkey and Jordan, is the fear of losing one's original culture and identity, hindering their social and psychological integration. Refugees, who have left their homes and their cultures not by choice and are now faced with starting a new life in a new country, are most likely to accept integration but resist assimilation, the latter meaning a total absorb of the new culture at the expense of one's origins (Hieronymi, 2005; Echterhoff et al., 2020).

Citizenship has been considered by our interviewees as an important factor contributing towards feelings of equality and integration in the host society. Having equal chances for entering the labor market were also perceived to facilitate economic, social, and psychological aspects of

integration. In contrast, being restricted from certain jobs, not being treated equal to local counterparts, and not getting formal qualifications easily approved, all negatively affected refugees' ability and desire to integrate. In terms of institutional trust, our interviewees had experienced issues with interacting with officials across the three case countries, although there is considerably more trust among refugees in Sweden for institutions there to be helpful and honest.

Across all dimensions of integration, our interviewees stressed the importance of learning the language to a proficient level for being able to integrate. Building social ties with natives was considered vital to reach stability as well as opening new opportunities. However, our interviewees expressed difficulties in making new friends and connections, especially in Sweden due to what was found to be an individualistic culture, as well as language barriers. In Turkey, the difference in language was considered the major obstacle to building social relations.

Our study also highlights the difference between transit and destination countries on varying dimensions of integration for refugees. Given their higher institutional capacities, destination countries are, on average, better at formally integrating refugees, in the realms of legal and economic integration, and institutional trust. Yet they struggle with informal integration,

i.e., psychological, social and linguistic integration. This leads to a need for differential foci for policies dealing with refugees depending on the type of context the refugee is living in.

6. Policy Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, we recommend policy actions for each country (see Table 2 below). Overall, though, in all three countries, policymakers and government agencies should concentrate more efforts on ensuring social integration between migrants and the host society. This could be done by for example supporting initiatives and programs with social activities inviting Swedes, Turks, and Jordanians with Syrians to learn new things or engage in hobbies. Studies have shown, for example, that inter-mixed football teams can encourage not only the players but their families to socially and economically integrate with outgroups (Mousa, 2020). Interlocutors in the field reported activities like taking knitting, composting, or where appropriate Quranic courses, together with the outgroup and that this had led to the creation of meaningful connections. It would be best if these activities are not directed at “integration with the other” in their advertising but are rather more organic spaces of integration where the main focus is on whatever the task at hand is (football, skill-building, etc.). Organization of cross-cultural music festivals, art shows, fikas, or

even family trips to national parks or sights of interest by NGOs and cultural centers should be encouraged as well by public funding of such activities.

Table 2. Policy Recommendations

Sweden
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policymakers and government agencies should work to combat fears of assimilation expressed by Syrian refugees by acknowledging their cultural heritage and provide more support for the diversity of its community. Adoption of a truly multicultural education could facilitate this. • Much effort is paid towards linguistic integration in Sweden, with one purpose being facilitating the entry to the labor market, with a well-established language training program in place (Swedish for Immigrants; SFI). Equal efforts should also be paid at other aspects of economic integration, most importantly to facilitate the process of validating previous educational and professional qualifications of refugees and migrants.
Turkey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policymakers and government agencies should support and facilitate language learning. Formal language training programs should be reintroduced, and refugees should be encouraged to participate in them. • Clear criteria for providing citizenship are needed to allow refugees to have a predictable path to (formal) inclusion to the host society.

- Policymakers and government agencies should concentrate more efforts on ensuring social integration between migrants and the host society. This could be done by, for example, supporting initiatives and programs with social activities by non-governmental organizations and the like.
- Policymakers and government agencies should acknowledge and combat the lack of institutional trust by refugees in Turkey. Increasing refugees' trust in the police and other actors should be part of the general work towards anti-corruption in Turkey. Hiring Syrians with citizenship in the police force and/or dedicating a portion of the force to focus on addressing Syrian issues specifically could be one solution.
- Policymakers and government agencies, as well as labor unions, should monitor the labor market to ensure fairness and equality for refugees and migrants working in Turkey.
- There should be an immediate halting of involuntary returns to Syria or border camps from Turkish areas.

Jordan

- Legislators in Jordan should consider introducing a national asylum legislation and/or to better define how to come under international protection in Jordan.
- They should also consider the establishment of a national asylum authority that can process asylum applications.

- Policymakers in Jordan should also review the citizenship law and formulate a process in which refugees and migrants can become citizens.
- The restrictive rules on different aspects of refugees' lives, such as banning them from entering certain cities and restricting the labor market to limited jobs should be relaxed to allow Syrians to pursue positions in line with their skills and feel that they have a future as an active part of their host country's economy.
- There should be an immediate halt of involuntary returns to Syria or border camps from Jordanian territories.



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Appendix I. Interviewee Information (Anonymized)

Table I. List of Participants in the Semi-Structured Interviews

ID	Country	Date	Gender	Age	Occupation	Citizen	Time in country
#1	Jordan	18-10-2021	Male	33	Artisan	No	7-10 years
#2	Turkey	4-11-2021	Male	41	Night guard	No	10 years
#3	Turkey	4-11-2021	Male	31	Business owner in construction	Yes	4 years
#4	Jordan	8-11-2021	Male	30	Student in Business Administration	No	10 years
#5	Jordan	9-11-2021	Male	40	Military; Volunteer in NGO	No	9 years
#6	Sweden	30-11-2021	Male	24	Sales manager	Yes	6 years
#7	Sweden	4-12-2021	Female	27	Volunteer in NGO	Yes	7 years
#8	Sweden	5-12-2021	Male	26	Shop assistant	Yes	8 years
#9	Sweden	12-12-2021	Female	23	None	Yes	6 years
#10	Jordan	13-12-2021	Female	26	None (no work permit)	No	8 years
#11	Jordan	13-12-2021	Female	22	Teacher	No	9 years
#12	Turkey	21-2-2022	Female	65	Retired	Yes	5 years
#13	Sweden	3-3-2022	Male	35	None	No	6 years
#14	Jordan	9-10-2022	Male	25	None	No	9 years
#15	Jordan	9-10-2022	Female	24	None	No	11 years
#16	Jordan	9-10-2022	Male	23	None	No	10 years
#17	Jordan	9-10-2022	Female	19	None	No	8 years
#18	Turkey	5-12-2022	Female	29	Research Associate	Yes	10 years
#19	Turkey	12-1-2023	Female	22	Student	No	10 years

Appendix II. Interview Guide

Informed Consent Form (ICF)

Title of the project: Refugee Migration and Cities, Social Institutions, Political Governance, and Integration in Jordan, Turkey, and Sweden (SIPGI)

Institution: Gothenburg University

Researcher: Kristen Kao

The following people are involved in this research project and may be contacted at any time:

Dr. Kristen Kao, GLD, University of Gothenburg, email: kristenkao@gmail.com

Purpose of the study

You are invited to participate in an interview for a research project executed by Gothenburg University, Sweden. The purpose of this study is to document how forced migration is addressed in urban areas, considering how it not only changes the social composition of neighborhoods but also influences norms and behaviors within them. This program investigates and analyzes the nexus between political and social institutions in shaping processes of integration and fills a critical gap in migration studies.

Your participation is voluntary

Your participation in this interview and this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time.

You have the right to withdraw

You have the right to withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty.

Potential Risk / Discomfort

Although we do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research. However, you may withdraw at any time and you may choose not to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable in answering.

Potential Benefit

There are no direct financial benefits to you for participating in this research. No incentives are offered. The results of this study could benefit the improvement of policymaking concerning migrant integration in your area.

Participation Requirements

You will be asked to participate in an interview about your experience of living and integrating in Sweden on a day-to-day basis. We are also interested to know what your experiences are with Swedish institutions and people.

Confidentiality

The personal data collected in this study is confidential. Your name and contact details will not be associated with any audio recording nor any transcript. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible.

The audio recordings will be stored and secured on a protected network drive at the University of Gothenburg. Only the SIPGI lead research team will have access to recordings, including the respondent.

Any audio recordings will be destroyed 2 years after data are collected unless you permit the recordings to be archived for future research within a given research area (e.g., language development, spatial perception, conversational attributes).

Do you agree to be recorded: (Any recording will not be saved with your name or contact information, and it will be anonymous when stored)

(Orally indicate which option you prefer from the below:)

- Only audio
- Video and audio
- No video nor audio recording is allowed.

Questions About the Research

- If you have any questions about the research in general, or about your role in the study; please feel free to contact Dr. Kristen Kao, GLD, University of Gothenburg, email: kristenkao@gmail.com
- This research conforms to the standards of research ethics guidelines.
- If you would like to obtain a copy of this research from Kristen Kao, please tell me your email here:

Oral Consent

I understand the conditions of my participation. (Researcher: Circle the appropriate response and only continue with the interview if agreement is obtained)

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

Q#	Question Category	Questions
1	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hello and welcome to this interview today, • In this interview, I will ask questions about your stories and impressions of your stay in [Sweden/ Jordan/Turkey]. We will have a conversation about things you noticed, you saw, things that happened with you, or things you did while you are in [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey]. Some questions will be only yes and no or some ranking, others might be open-ended for you to tell us stories and observations. To start here, I would like to ask you about the time you have for this interview. • About how much time do you have to give me to talk today? • How old are you? (Simple answer) • How long have you been in [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey]? (Simple answer) • Do you have [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] citizenship? (Simple answer)
2	Integration reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared to your life in Syria, how is your life in [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey] different? • From your experience living in [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey], what makes a person [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish]? (Have to be born in [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey]? Or Parents born in

		<p>[Sweden/Jordan/Turkey]?; certain appearances or physical features; certain language skills; adoption of certain habits or practices; citizenship, gaining the rights of a [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish], etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When you are meeting new people in [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey, how do you differentiate between [Sweds/Jordanians/Turks] and Syrians? Can you tell a difference? ● Please evaluate how well you speak the [Swedish/Turkish Language/Jordanian accent]? (Poorly, intermediate, excellent) (simple) Do you ever use it?
3	Psychological integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How connected do you feel to [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey]? Do you feel it is your home? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extremely close, very close, Why? Can you describe this feeling? What was the thing or the moment that made you feel that connected? Did you ever felt like an outsider here? Never, rarely, somethings, often, always. If so, how? If not, why not? ○ moderately close, why? What are the things that stand in your way to feeling extremely connected? Are there elements that you would never give up in your personality or culture, to feel that connected? What makes you feel like an outsider? ○ weak connection, no connection at all. (Simple) Why or why not? What do you think you need to feel more connected? Do you think you should change a lot to feel connected? How often do you feel connected to Sweden? Can you tell us! (Detailed) <p>Putting your previous answer into consideration,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did you ever feel like an outsider? ● How often do you feel like an outsider here? Never, rarely, somethings, often, always. If so, how? If not, why not? ● Do you think you will ever feel that you are [“Swedish”/“Jordanian”/“Turkish”]?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If so, when was the moment when you felt so? ○ If not, tell us what would make you feel so? <p>Culture is many things, and it can mean, clothing, food, marriage traditions, invitation details, and many others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you think that you can understand the [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] mentality/culture? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can you give examples? ○ Do you like the [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] mentality/culture? ○ Why? ○ Why not? ● Do you think that the [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] community understands your culture? Give examples please of how they do or do not. ● Thinking about your future, where do you want to spend your life? Would you like to stay where you are? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Definitely [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey] for the rest of my life, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Why? ● Unsure, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What would help you be sure? why? ● Definitely wants to move to another country. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Which country would you like to move to? ▪ why? (Simple)
4	Social integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What area of [Gothenburg/ Irbid/ Adana] do you live in? About what proportion of people living in your neighborhood are [Swedish/Jordanian/Turks]? Can you give me a guess, what do you see when you go out? (Simple) <p>Now looking at your circle of friends around you, the ones you meet or talk to regularly.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you have [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] friends? If you think about all of the people you call friends, what proportion are [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] and what proportion are not? (So half-half would be 50% are [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] for example). (Simple) ● What about Syrian friends? Did you know them before you came to [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey]? If not, how did you meet them? ● Did you change your living location much? How many times? <p>I would like you to think of the neighborhood you live in now,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Firstly, how long did you live there? ● I'd like you to imagine that a [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] family is coming to live in your neighborhood. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does this happen often in your neighborhood? ○ Or is it more often the opposite – [Swedees/Jordanians/Turks] are leaving your neighborhood? ● Would you rather a Syrian family come to live in your neighborhood instead of another [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] family? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why or why not? ● Do [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] and [non-Swedish/ non-Jordanians/ non-Turkish] families behave differently in the neighborhood or towards their neighbors? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How so? Tell me about that! ● What about other Syrians in your neighborhood - would they welcome a [Swedish/Jordanian/Turk] in their neighborhood? ● Do you have good relationships with your neighbors? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How much do you interact with them? ○ Do you ever visit them in their homes or in your home? ● Can you tell me some stories about your interactions with [Swedees/Jordanians/Turks]?
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Did any [Swedes/Jordanians/Turks], who were not working for the government, help you with anything since you have come here? (positive and negative) ● Have you ever helped or offered help to a [Swedish/Jordanian/Turk]? Tell me about that ● Do you see Syrians who reject the culture of [Sweden/ Jordan/Turkey] in hopes of preserving or maintaining their authentic or original Syrian identity? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If so, what do they do? ● Are you a part of associations or other types of social groups? For instance, sports clubs, churches/mosques, environmental groups, cultural groups, language groups, etc. What is the ratio of [Swedishs/Jordanians/Turks] and Syrians in these groups? (Simple) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If not, do you spend time in other public spaces like cafes and interact with others there? Are most of the patrons Syrian or [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] or an even mix? Could you tell me about those interactions?
5	Economic integration	<p>(If the person works)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are you working? ● If yes, ● If not now, did you work in [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey] before? ● You said you work as a <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What proportion of your work colleagues are [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish]? ● Are you friends with your work colleagues? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you socialize with them outside of work? ● Do you feel you understand how to get a work permit? ● Do you feel that you understand the economic and financial system in your host country? (Economic system can include; the tax system, the salary

		<p>system, the social security system, employment system, how to save/invest your money)</p> <p>(If the person does not work outside the home)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you feel you understand how to get a work permit? ● Do you feel that you understand the economic and financial system in your host country? (Economic system can include; the tax system, the salary system, the social security system, employment system, how to save/invest your money)
6	Navigational Integration	<p>Now, God forbid and you needed medical help in [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey],</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How should you seek medical help for a condition like chronic shoulder pain? (making an appointment with a general practitioner doctor, then seeking a specialist through that doctor. But mark other answers like go to ER, asking a friend about it, etc.) ● In case of a medical emergency for yourself or for someone else, who do you call? ● In this country, how difficult or easy would it be for you to get help with legal problems? Who would you turn to for help with this? ● If you see or hear about something illegal, how likely would you be to call the police? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not at all likely, Why? ○ unlikely, Why? ○ somewhat likely, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In what cases? why? ● very likely. Why? <p>Now what about you and your family members, if you get in trouble or have a dispute with someone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What about a dispute with a neighbor if the neighbor was Syrian, have you been in a dispute with someone before?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who would you turn to for help if you could not resolve the issue? (Imagine like they damaged your property or there was trouble between your kids) How do you know this person? Is this person Syrian or [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish]? Why this person? ● What about a dispute with a neighbor if the neighbor was [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish]? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who would you turn to for help if you could not resolve the issue? (Imagine like they damaged your property or there was trouble between your kids) ○ How do you know this person? ○ Is this person Syrian or [Swedish/Jordanian/Turk]? Why this person? <p>Now to move to the living technicalities, I will ask you some simple questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you know how to pay your taxes and how tax returns work? How does one go about this in this country? (Simple) ● Are you currently involved in any state or non-state programs to help refugees? Have you been in the past? Which ones? (Simple answer)
7	Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is the highest level of education you have attained? ● Please indicate whether your household currently can or cannot afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of... 4000 Kr, 8000 Kr, 800000, 4000000 Kr. today?⁵⁷ (Simple)
8	Specific discrimination/	<p>Just some final questions here about your experiences:</p> <p>Are there any experiences that made you feel like you are not the same as a [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] person? Or that you or another Syrian were</p>

⁵⁷ The amounts changes for Turkey to become “4000 TL, 8000 TL, 800000 TL, 4000000 TL” and for Jordan becomes “400 Dinar, 800 Dina, 80000 Dinar, 400000 Dinar”.

		<p>not being treated the same way by a [Swedish/Jordanian/Turkish] as he/she would treat another [Swedish/Jordanian/Turk]? Have you witnessed or heard about [Sweds/Jordanians/Turks] discriminating against Syrians? Please tell me about it.</p> <p>Are there any particularly positive moments where you felt included or felt very at home here in [Sweden/Jordan/Turkey]? Please tell me about them.</p> <p>I understand that most of the people in Adana come from the north of Syria and they might have old relatives in Adana or Turkey. Do you have these ties? How does that help you in your life in Adana?</p> <p>If not, do you think that those with ties to Turkey have more privileges than you?²⁶</p> <p>It is known that there are people living in Sweden who have citizenships that are not originally from Sweden and had arrived a long time ago, like the Serbs, Polish, Bosnians, Croatians and from the Yugoslavian countries, have you had any interactions with them? Were they more or less helpful to you?²⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about Palestinians and Iraqs and Iranians? Did you interact with them and were they more or less helpful? • In comparison, who do you think is more probable to support a Syrian refugee, a Swedish person originally from Sweden or a Swedish person not from Swedish origins?²⁸ <p>I have heard that there are sometimes differences among Jordanians that may affect how they treat Syrian refugees when they meet them. First, I understand that tribes play a big role in the social and political life in Jordan. Are you a</p>
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²⁶ A question only for interviewees in Turkey.

²⁷ A question only for interviewees in Sweden.

²⁸ Questions only for interviewees in Sweden.

		<p>member of a Jordanian tribe (a tribe with at least some Jordanian branches)? If so, how has that either helped or hindered your feeling of belonging in the community you live in? If not, do you perceive differences for Syrians who share these tribal ties to Jordanians and those like you, who do not?²⁹</p> <p>Secondly, we hear a lot about the Palestinians who moved/refugees to Jordan before. And that there were different waves of Palestinians arriving in Jordan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you encounter any Jordanian from Palestinian origin? • Do people from Palestinians origin tend to treat Syrian refugees differently than Jordanians? Or is it all the same? • Can you tell us more about that!
		<p>Thank you so much for your time. If you'd like to track the results of this project, you can follow us here:</p> <p>Could you give me the contact information for any other Syrians in this city who might be willing to talk with me?</p>

Red lines

Jordan: Do not ask opinions about the monarchy. Don't ask anything about the coup plot earlier this year. Don't ask about Islamists.

Turkey: Do not ask opinions about Erdogan or AKP party.

²⁹ These questions are only specified for interviewees in Jordan.

