

**REFUGEE RIGHTS  
EUROPE**

In partnership with



# **AN ISLAND AT BREAKING POINT**

**FILLING INFORMATION GAPS RELATING TO REFUGEES  
AND DISPLACED PEOPLE IN CHIOS, GREECE**

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# INTRODUCTION

Located just five miles across sea from Turkey, the Greek island of Chios receives large numbers of refugees and displaced people hoping to seek asylum in the European Union.

Since the EU-Turkey deal was signed in March 2016, thousands have found themselves trapped in limbo on this small island. Men, women and children who aspire to continue onto mainland Greece are housed in two overcrowded camps.

One of the camps is Souda, a makeshift settlement which stands within an old fortress in Chios town. It is currently managed by Chios municipality, and has very little security apart from the presence of several NGOs. The other camp, Vial, was originally the official 'hotspot camp' or detention centre on Chios. It is located in the mountains, around 20km from Chios Town.<sup>1</sup>

Following widespread reports of the deteriorating situation for refugees in Chios, RRE sent a field delegation to the island from 11-18 May 2017. The team carried out 300 interviews with displaced people to investigate the human rights issues and humanitarian standards experienced there.

**THE CONTINUED ARRIVAL OF REFUGEES FROM CONFLICT-RIDDEN COUNTRIES HAS LED TO CHRONIC OVERCROWDING WHILE CHARITIES, NGOS AND UNBODIES ARE STRUGGLING TO PROVIDE SOME OF THE MOST BASIC SERVICES REQUIRED.**



At the time of the study, UNHCR estimated that there were 3,782 refugees on the island. This figure is significantly higher than the UNHCR guideline maximum capacity of 1,300, and that of 1,100 proposed by the European Commission. Meanwhile, local charities believed the number of people on the island at the time of the study was slightly lower, with estimates ranging from 2,000 to 3,000 people. The steady flow of new arrivals and departures makes it difficult to establish the exact number of residents at any given moment.

The research found that the island is at breaking point.

This report outlines in detail the various areas for concern identified through our research. We have chosen to structure the results around the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as it provides a common standard for all peoples and nations, and lists fundamental human rights which must be universally protected.

<sup>1</sup> The Guardian (2017) [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/28/refugees-greece-europe-dirty-secret-chios-detention-centres-bursting-point?CMP=share\\_btn\\_fb](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/28/refugees-greece-europe-dirty-secret-chios-detention-centres-bursting-point?CMP=share_btn_fb)

# METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

The purpose of our first-hand data collection is to provide policymakers, advocacy groups and the general public with an insight into the conditions faced by refugees and displaced people within European borders.

In contrast to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) who are responsible for demographic data collection in many of the state-run camps across Europe, our data and research are independently collected with the aim of informing public debate and contributing to a long-term resolution to the current crisis. We achieve this by focusing specifically on human rights infringements and unmet humanitarian standards.

The data presented in this report was collected on the Greek island of Chios from 11 to 18 May 2017. Over this period, three experienced RRE researchers, alongside two researchers from partner organisation Refugee Info Bus, conducted 300 surveys in Arabic, Dari, English, Kurdish, and Pashto. The format was semi-structured, and aimed to capture the lived experiences of individuals - primarily those over the age of 18.

**BASED ON THE ESTIMATED POPULATION IN CHIOS AT THE TIME OF THE STUDY, OUR RESEARCH SAMPLE REPRESENTS BETWEEN 8 - 13% OF THE REFUGEE POPULATION ON THE ISLAND.**

In total, 88.3% of respondents were male, and 11.7% were female. This constitutes an under-representation of women and girls in the research sample.

Each member of the research team had field experience of working with refugees and displaced people, or similar groups. The researchers were recruited from RRE's pool and from the Refugee Info Bus team, and included native speakers of all key languages.

The study was guided by ethical checklists that are underpinned by data protection policies, child safeguarding policies and a robust risk register to ensure the security and dignity of all participants.

**THE RESEARCHERS HAD PREVIOUSLY ATTENDED A COMPULSORY INDUCTION SESSION TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF STRICT ADHERENCE TO ALL RRE POLICIES, AND TO DISCUSS REFERRAL POLICIES, CHILD PROTECTION AND ISSUES PERTAINING TO FULL AND INFORMED CONSENT.**

Wherever possible, RRE adopts a methodology of random selection - using stratification and continuously monitoring the breakdown of demographic groups within the sample throughout its research studies, to ensure that the final data is representative of a given situation. We initially planned to employ our methodology of random selection in Chios on this occasion, but external conditions and barriers made it necessary for us to be flexible in our approach.

We surveyed as many individuals as possible in and around the two camps on the island (Souda and Vial camps), comparing our sample every evening against UNHCR's estimated number of individuals on the island at the time of the research. Rather than random selection, we ended up mainly utilising so-called snowball sampling. As a result, selection bias could not always be avoided, and we were at times unable to steer the sample and stratification as much as we would ideally have liked. Overall, however, we believe the country and age groups have been represented with relatively good accuracy, albeit with an under-representation of women and girls. The research team's observations and complementary informal interviews with charities and NGO staff serve to corroborate the research findings.

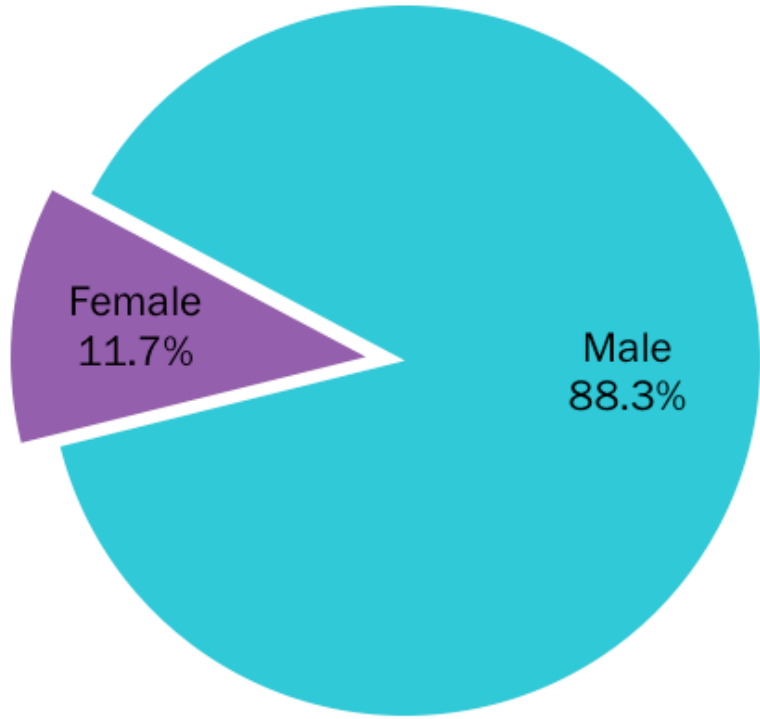
# ARTICLE 1

**ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE  
AND EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS.  
THEY ARE ENDOWED WITH REASON  
AND CONSCIENCE AND SHOULD ACT  
TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER IN A SPIRIT  
OF BROTHERHOOD.**

The central tenet of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is that “*all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*”. However, this is not the lived reality for thousands of refugees and displaced individuals in Chios.

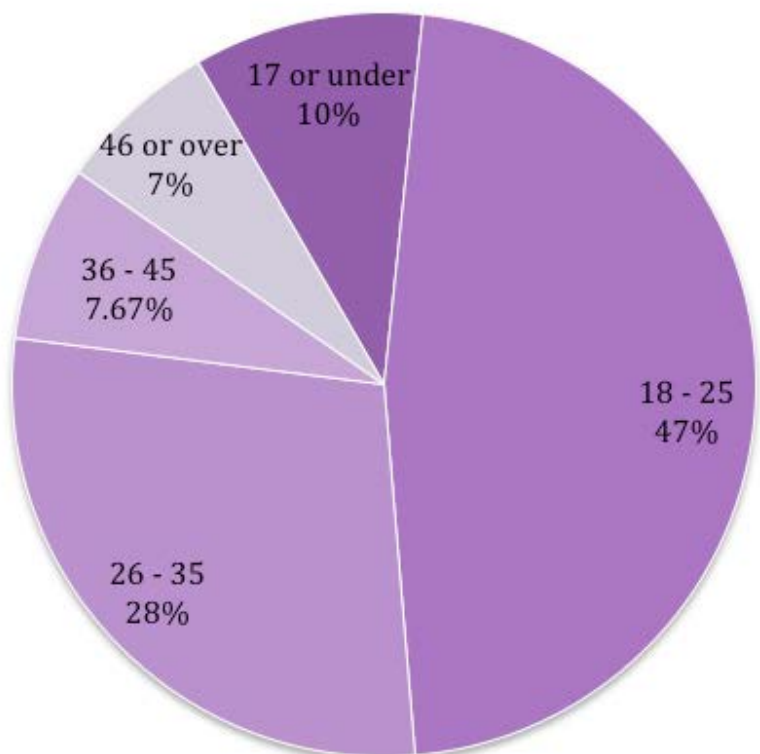
Among our respondents, 88.3% were male and 11.7% were female.

**ARE YOU MALE OR FEMALE?**  
ALL RESPONDENTS



The average age was 27.2 years old, while 10% of respondents were children aged 17 or under. This included a number of girls.

**HOW OLD ARE YOU?**  
ALL RESPONDENTS

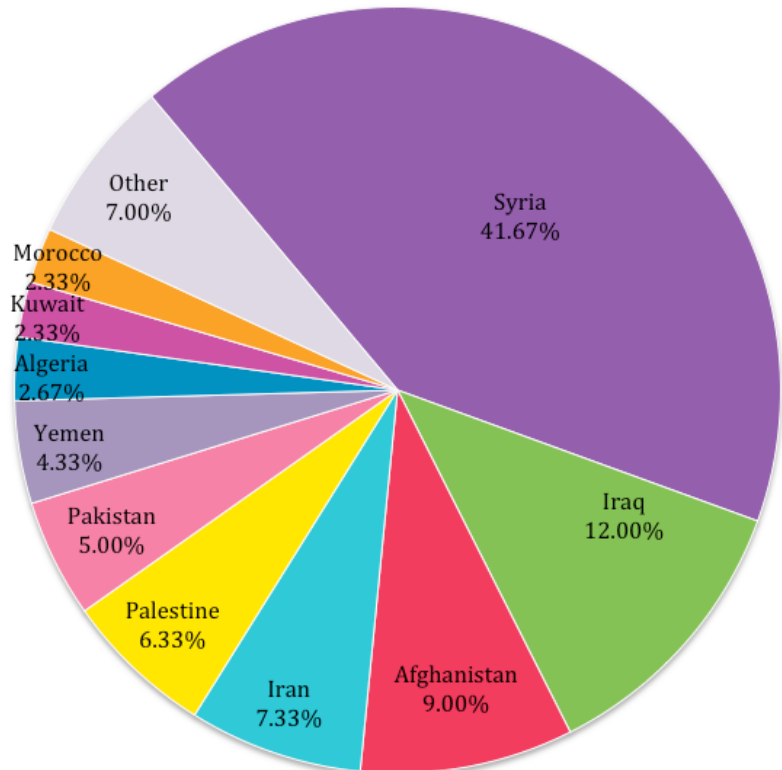


**THE LARGEST NATIONAL GROUPS IN CHIOS AT THE TIME OF THE STUDY WERE THOUGHT TO BE FROM SYRIA, IRAQ, AND AFGHANISTAN.**

These were followed by an increasing number from Pakistan, Yemen, and various African countries. It is worth noting that the demographics on the island fluctuate heavily over time.

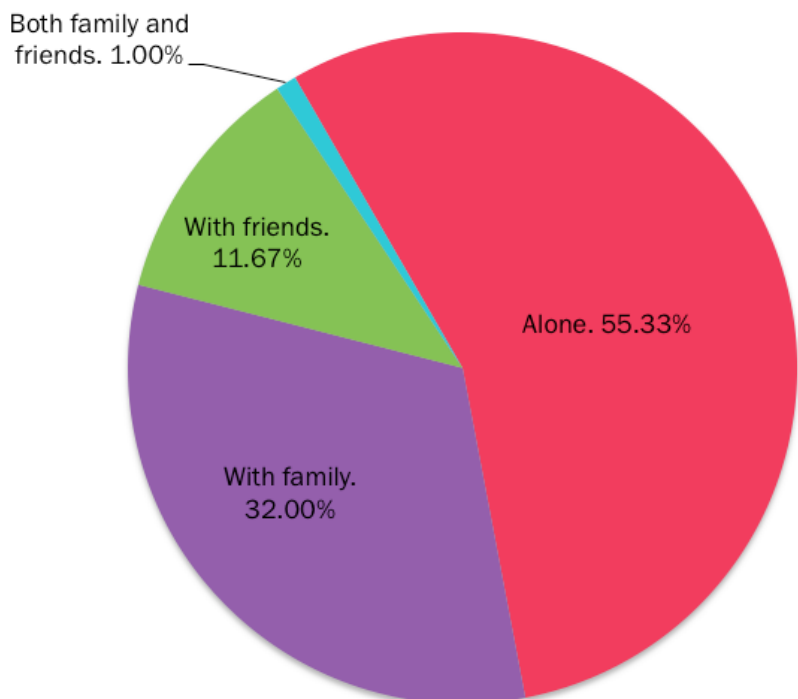
The 'other' category included respondents from Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?  
ALL RESPONDENTS**



More than half of the respondents were in Chios alone, unaccompanied by friends or family members.

**WITH WHOM ARE YOU WITH IN CHIOS?  
ALL RESPONDENTS**







## **ARTICLE 3**

**EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LIFE,  
LIBERTY AND SECURITY OF PERSON.**

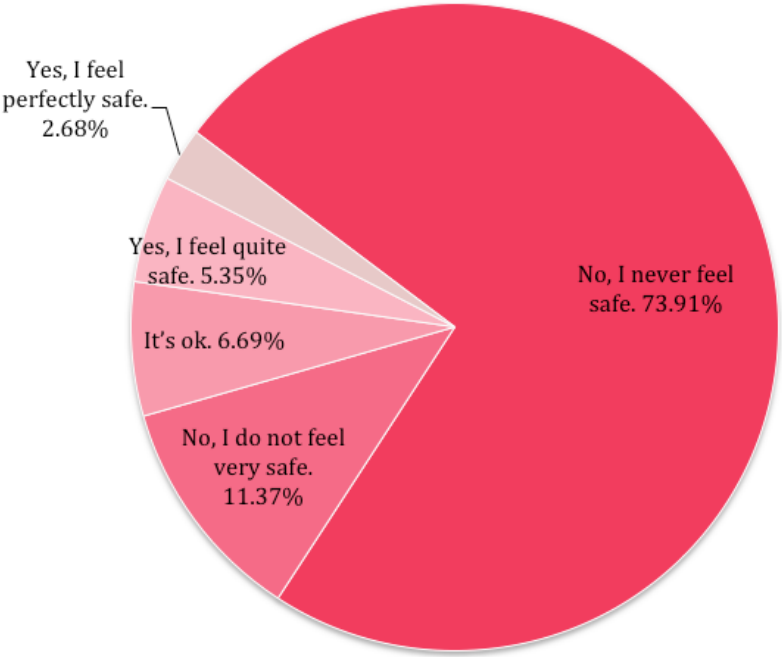
## SAFETY AND SECURITY

Feelings of insecurity are widespread among refugees in Chios. About 85.3% of respondents surveyed by RRE said that they “do not feel safe”, while only 2.7% said they do “feel perfectly safe”.

This is largely due to inadequate security measures provided by camp administration. As a result of this security gap, refugees are exposed to the threat of three different types of violence - from police, citizens, or between groups of refugees.

Among women, 82.4% said they “never feel safe” or “don’t feel very safe”. 42.9% of women had experienced some form of violence inside camps, and generally didn’t feel safe when using showers and similar. One man explained that he always accompanies his wife around the camp as he is worried about her safety. He also waits for her outside the showers because someone once took a picture of a woman while she was washing inside.

### DO YOU FEEL SAFE IN CHIOS? ALL RESPONDENTS

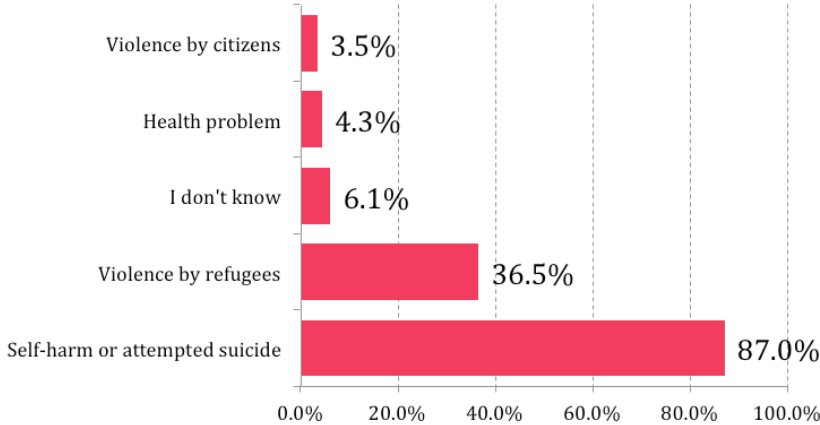


## FATALITIES

**A WHOLE 39% OF RESPONDENTS HAD WITNESSED SOMEONE DIE IN CHIOS.**

While it should be acknowledged that many of these respondents were referring to the same incidents (meaning that the figure is not indicative of the occurrence of death and suicide in the island), it is nonetheless alarming that 87% of these respondents cited suicide as the reason for the death. In addition to being tragic for the victim, this could also be a highly traumatic experience for the witness.

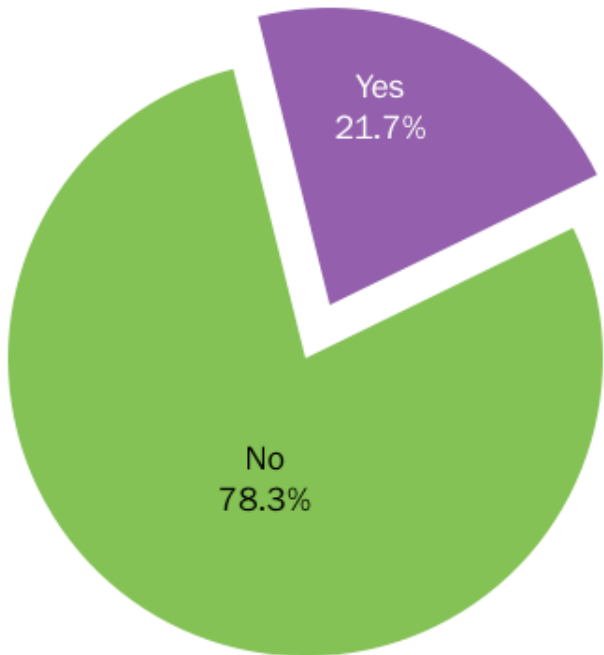
### WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR THE DEATH? ALL RESPONDENTS



## CITIZEN VIOLENCE

21.7% of respondents had experienced violence by Greek citizens in Chios. 76.2% said they had been subjected to verbal abuse, and 60.3% physical violence.

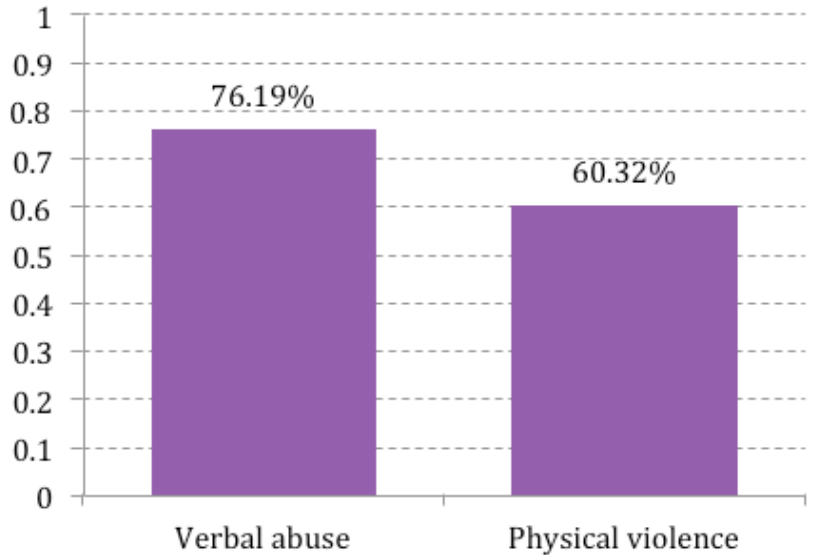
### HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY CITIZENS? ALL RESPONDENTS



Although not representative of all citizens on Chios, the island is known for its small yet vocal far-right anti-immigrant group that organises occasional demonstrations to express their dissatisfaction with the current refugee situation on the island. A few weeks prior to our research, one such demonstration had escalated into a physical attack on Souda refugee camp, with demonstrators throwing stones and Molotov cocktails into the camp without effective interference from the police. Many refugees described this incident as extremely distressing and frightening – especially women and children who were forced to flee the camp, and thus were reminded of previous traumatic experiences in their war-torn countries of origin.

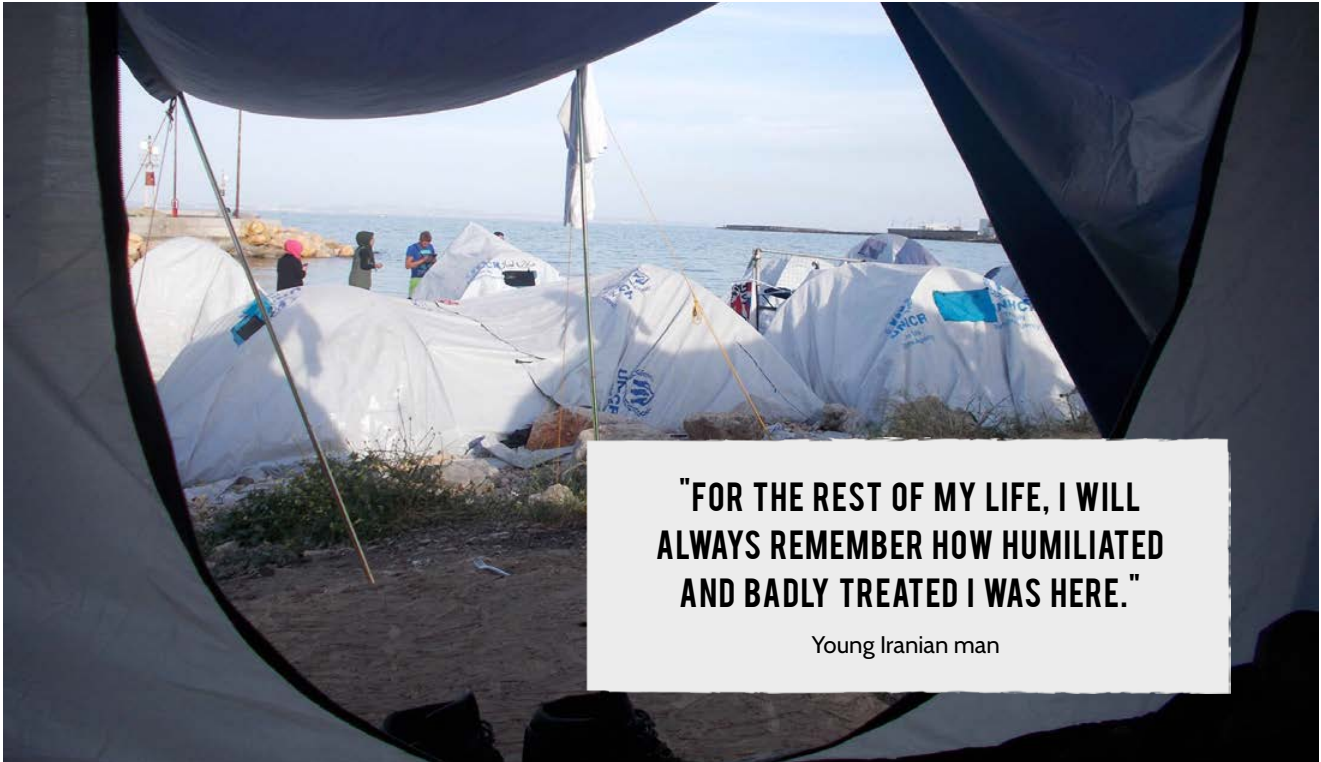
In a separate incident a few weeks before the research study, a refugee protest was intercepted by a large group of up to 100 citizens.

**WHAT KIND OF CITIZEN VIOLENCE HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED?  
ALL RESPONDENTS**



**THE HOSTILE CROWD REPORTEDLY FILMED THEMSELVES BEATING THE REFUGEES FOR ABOUT 30 MINUTES. WHEN THE POLICE ARRIVED THE CITIZENS CLAIMED THAT THEY HAD BEEN ATTACKED FIRST, LEADING TO THE DETENTION OF A NUMBER OF REFUGEES.**

Several respondents also reported being regularly insulted or physically attacked by Greek citizens in the port area or in parks in Chios Town.

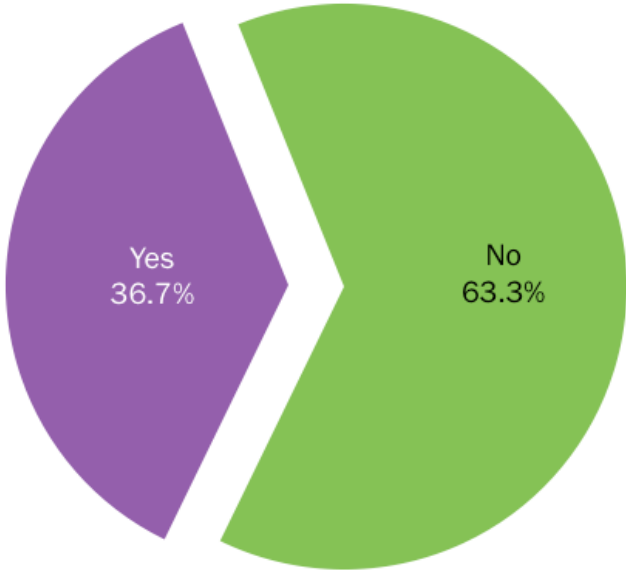


## VIOLENCE BY OTHER REFUGEES

36.7% of respondents said they had experienced violence by other refugees in Chios (42.9% of women). 77.1% described suffering from verbal abuse, and 68.8% physical violence. ally attacked by Greek citizens in the port area or in parks in Chios Town.

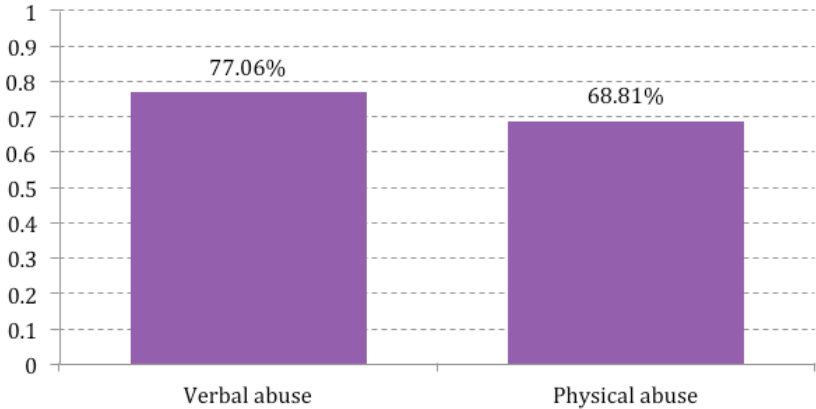
**THIS VIOLENCE WAS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS A RESULT OF MENTAL EXHAUSTION AND TENSIONS IN THE OVERCROWDED CAMPS, COMBINED WITH AN ABSENCE OF ADEQUATE SECURITY MEASURES.**

### HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY OTHER REFUGEES? ALL RESPONDENTS



Many reported it was largely due to high levels of frustration and the feeling they had been forgotten, leaving them living in a miserable place with very little hope. Indeed, 23% have been living in the Chios camps for more than six months, leading to a sense of desperation and impatience. Many have experienced war and high levels of violence, a large number have been tortured prior to arriving in Chios, some have recently lost a family member, while others have chronic diseases or have seen their homes and savings destroyed.

### WHAT KIND OF VIOLENCE HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED BY OTHER REFUGEES? ALL RESPONDENTS



**"EVERY NIGHT I SEE NIGHTMARES BECAUSE OF THE SEA; MY TENT IS SO CLOSE TO THE WATER AND I CANNOT SWIM. SO I'M AFRAID THE SEA WILL JUST COME AND TAKE US."**

Young Pakistani man



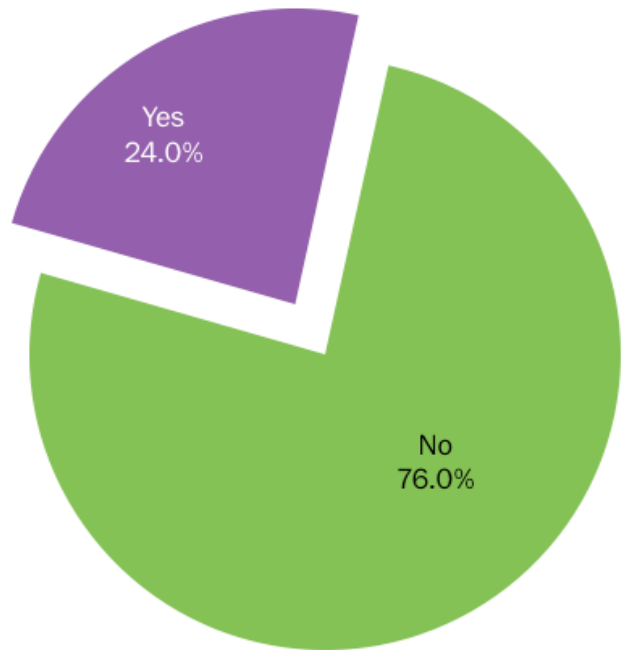
## **ARTICLE 5**

**NO ONE SHALL BE SUBJECTED  
TO TORTURE OR TO CRUEL,  
INHUMAN OR DEGRADING  
TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT.**



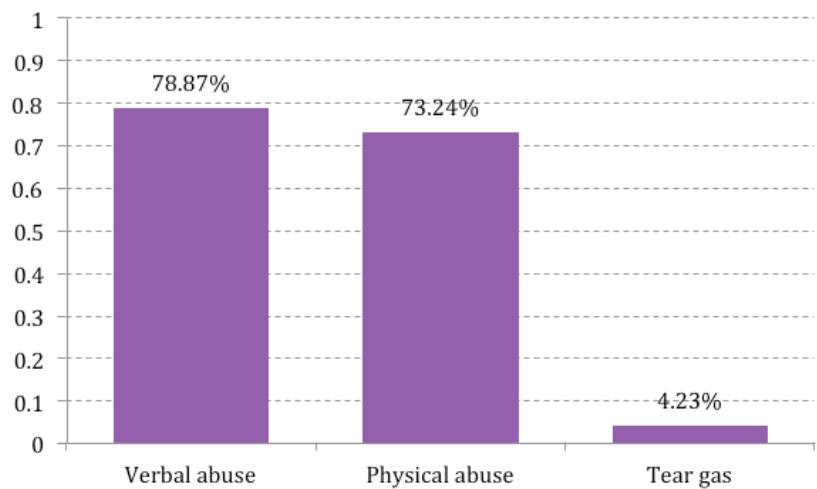
About a quarter of respondents (24%) had experienced police violence in Chios. 78.9% of these said they had been subjected to verbal abuse and 73.2% physical violence (other than tear gas). 4.2% had been exposed to tear gas.

**HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY POLICE?  
ALL RESPONDENTS**



In general the respondents described police treatment in Chios as “very bad”, even if they personally hadn’t experienced problems with the police. Many reported that the police treated refugees “like animals”, using disproportionate violence and disrespectful language.

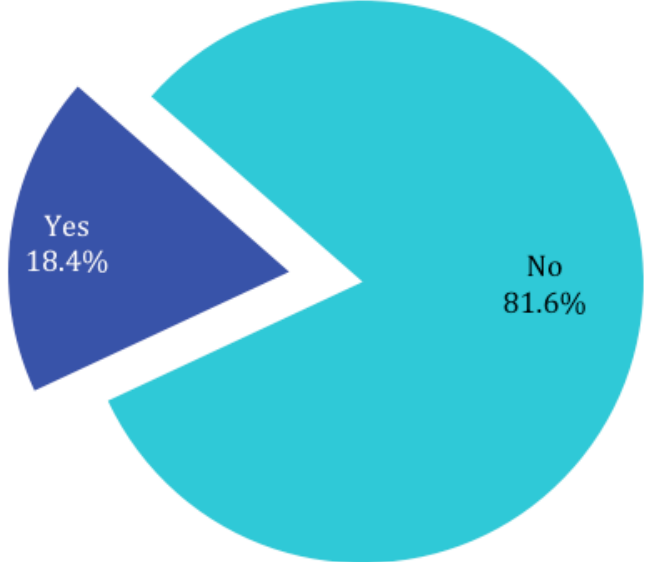
**WHAT KIND OF VIOLENCE HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED BY POLICE?  
ALL RESPONDENTS**



Meanwhile, 18.4% had been arrested or detained since arriving in Chios. Random detention by police also appears to be commonplace, with many relating stories about refugees who were detained and beaten by police for no apparent reason. *"I do not dare to leave the camp because police detain people all of a sudden - especially nearby the port,"* one refugee told us.

One Syrian respondent recalled that he was detained for ten days, and then suddenly released after the authorities realised that he was not the person they were looking for. This man recounted being beaten and kicked in the face during detention, whilst also being prevented from going to the toilet and smoking.

**HAVE YOU BEEN ARRESTED IN CHIOS?  
ALL RESPONDENTS**

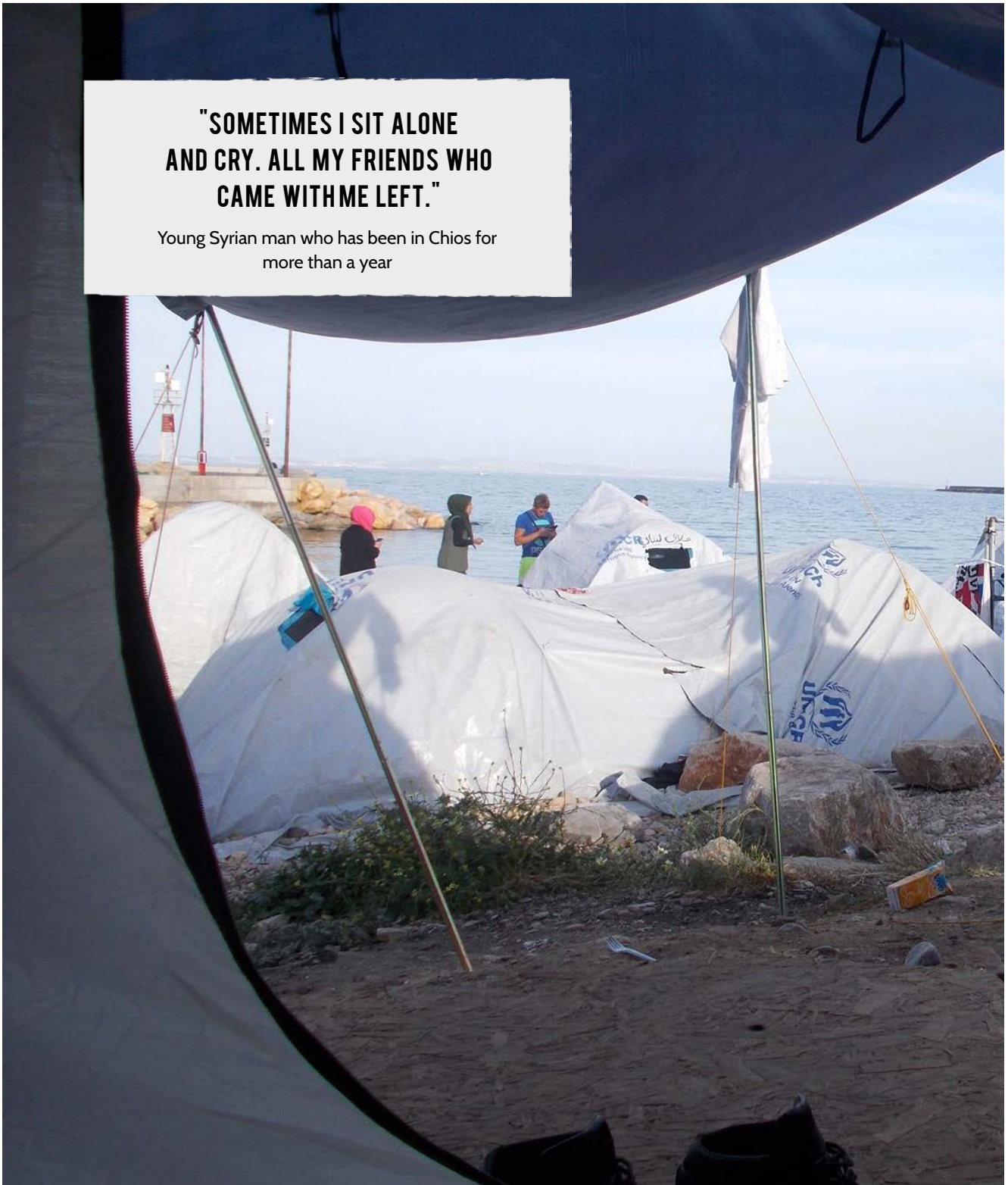


Another respondent explained that he had been arrested and forced to remove his clothes in order to be searched naked. He then waited for approximately four hours, before being released without any further explanation. Yet another Syrian man had spent six months in several detention centres in Chios and Athens, where he recounted being beaten several times.

Some respondents also spoke of incidents with police that were not violent, but humiliating. For instance, while swimming in the sea an Iranian man was stopped by police officers who accused him of stealing the swimsuit he was wearing. They asked him to take it off and give it to them. Fortunately, he was able to show the police the receipt and they left him alone.

**"SOMETIMES I SIT ALONE  
AND CRY. ALL MY FRIENDS WHO  
CAME WITH ME LEFT."**

Young Syrian man who has been in Chios for  
more than a year



## **ARTICLE 25 (1)**

**EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO A STANDARD OF LIVING ADEQUATE FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF HIMSELF AND OF HIS FAMILY, INCLUDING FOOD, CLOTHING, HOUSING AND MEDICAL CARE AND NECESSARY SOCIAL SERVICES, AND THE RIGHT TO SECURITY IN THE EVENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT, SICKNESS, DISABILITY, WIDOWHOOD, OLD AGE OR OTHER LACK OF LIVELIHOOD IN CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND HIS CONTROL.**

Nearly two thirds (60.7%) had been unable to access any form of support services in Chios. For those who had access, this often involved little more than receiving basic nutrition or an item of clothing, rather than more substantive support.

**"WHEN I ARRIVED IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR, I SLEPT IN STREETS FOR TWO WEEKS UNTIL I FOUND A PLACE TO SLEEP INSIDE THE CAMP."**

Syrian man

## LIVING CONDITIONS

According to local charities on the ground, there were around 200 refugees accommodated in hotels and flats as per their vulnerability criteria (some unaccompanied minors, people with medical issues including mental health issues, people under informal family protection due to domestic violence or other issues, families with several children, single-parent families, etc.). However, the living conditions for the vast majority in Chios are inadequate.

Large numbers of people, including many families, are residing in small and fragile tents. Camps are so overcrowded that large numbers are forced to sleep in the streets or on the beach. This is a particular issue for new arrivals. *"When I arrived in November last year, I slept in streets for two weeks until I found a place to sleep inside the camp,"* explained one respondent. Meanwhile, the shortage of shelters pushes people to take drastic measures. A group of ten women from Kuwait recounted, *"We went to the city centre, and when we came back, another family occupied our tent."*



## WATER AND SANITATION

**"I CREATED A HIGH SLEEPING PLACE INSIDE THE TENT FOR MY CHILD IN ORDER TO KEEP HER AWAY FROM RATS."**

Syrian man

In general, the living environment is unsanitary and dirty. The Souda camp attracts rats and insects, due to its proximity to a drainage pipe extracting dirty water from the nearby city. *"I created a high sleeping place inside the tent for my child in order to keep her away from rats,"* a respondent noted.

Meanwhile, hot water is a rare currency for refugees in Chios. In Souda camp, hot water is only available for a few hours per day. In Vial camp it is lacking entirely. *"I come from Vial to Souda just to have a shower,"* one respondent explained. The situation is particularly dire in Vial, as there is no water available in the toilets.

## ACCESS TO FOOD

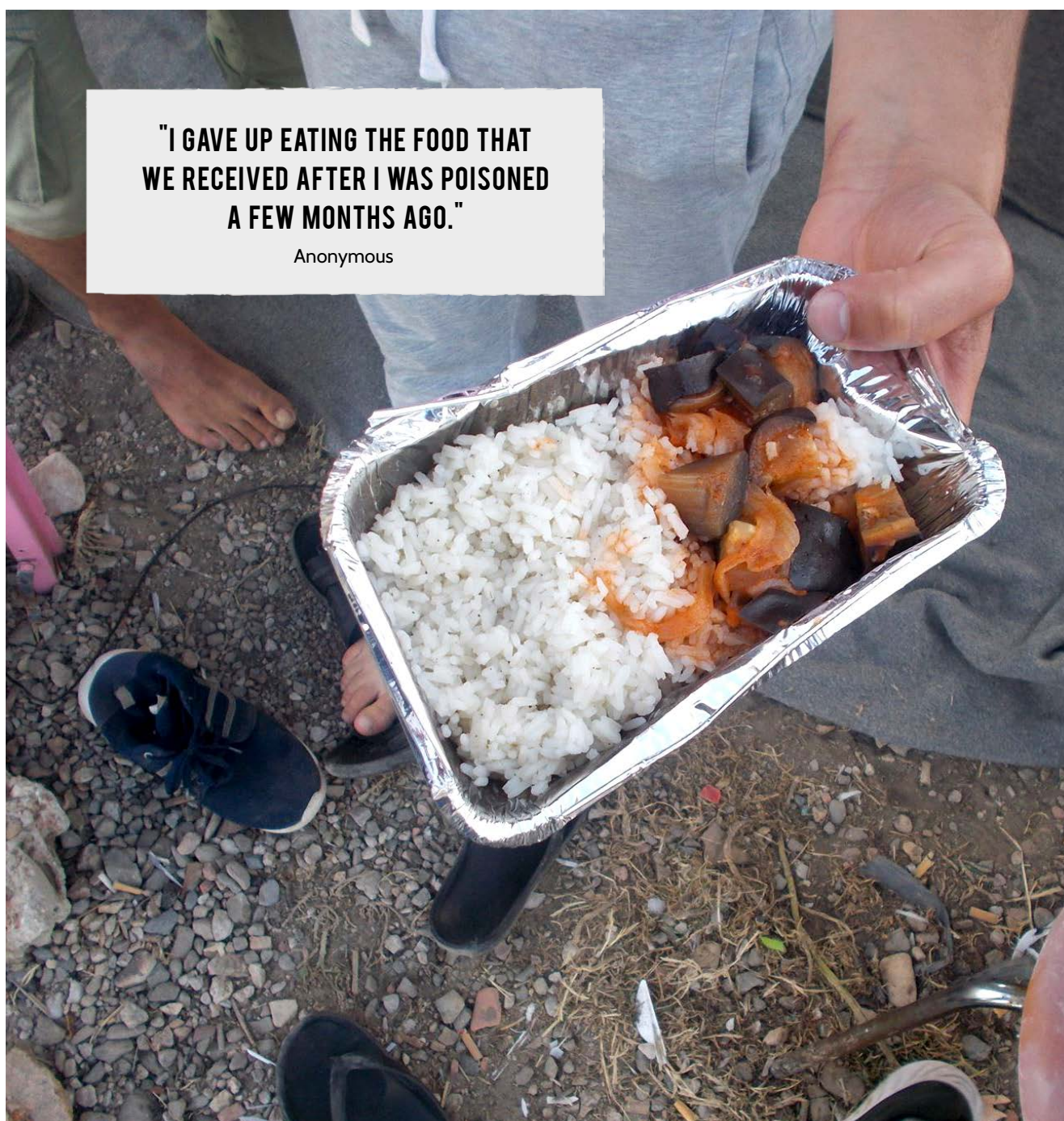
In both Souda and Vial camps, refugees are provided ready-made meals three times a day. Only those who are living in flats receive money instead and can cook for themselves. While the frequency of food distributions hence appears fully acceptable, access to adequate food seems to be a major problem in Chios. Spoiled food is commonplace, with many respondents reporting having suffered from food poisoning. *"I gave up eating*

*the food that we received after I was poisoned a few months ago,"* one person told us. Another group explained, *"It's happened twice in our camp that people were poisoned by food"*.

One respondent mentioned having resided in the streets for approximately one month, during which time he was forced to eat food that he found or was given by passers-by.

**"I GAVE UP EATING THE FOOD THAT WE RECEIVED AFTER I WAS POISONED A FEW MONTHS AGO."**

Anonymous

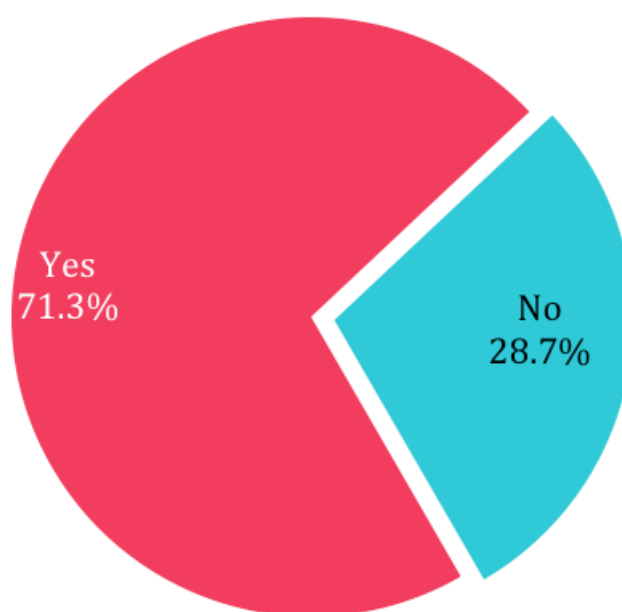


## HEALTH PROBLEMS AND LACK OF MEDICAL SERVICES

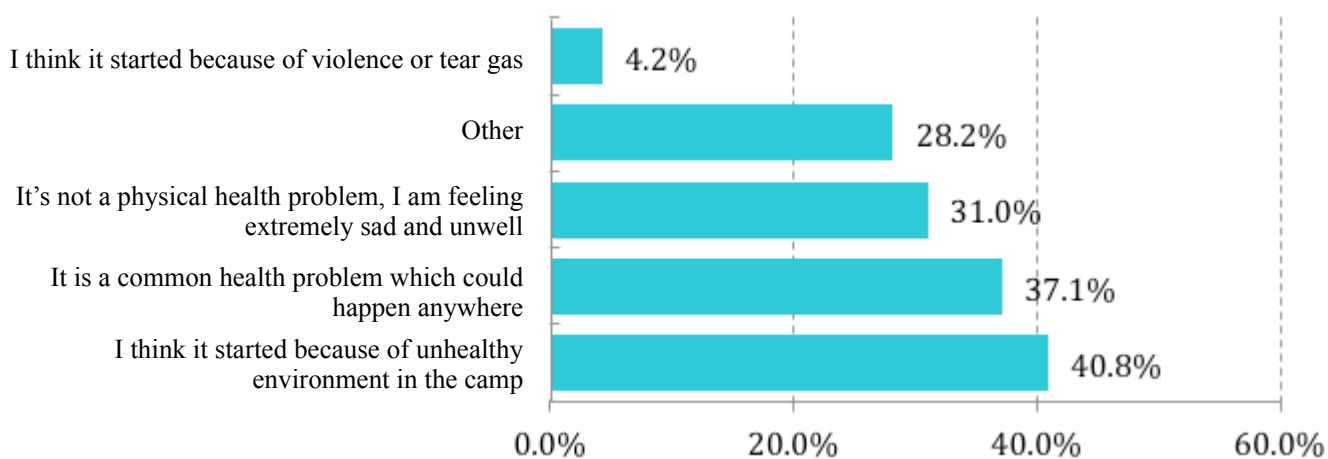
71.3% said they had experienced health problems since arriving in Chios. While all emergency care can be obtained from the local hospital free of charge, less than a third (28.5%) of those people with a health condition had been able to access medical care. The figure was even higher for women, with a whole 94.3% reporting they experienced health issues in Chios. Less than a third (30.3%) of these women had been able to access medical care.

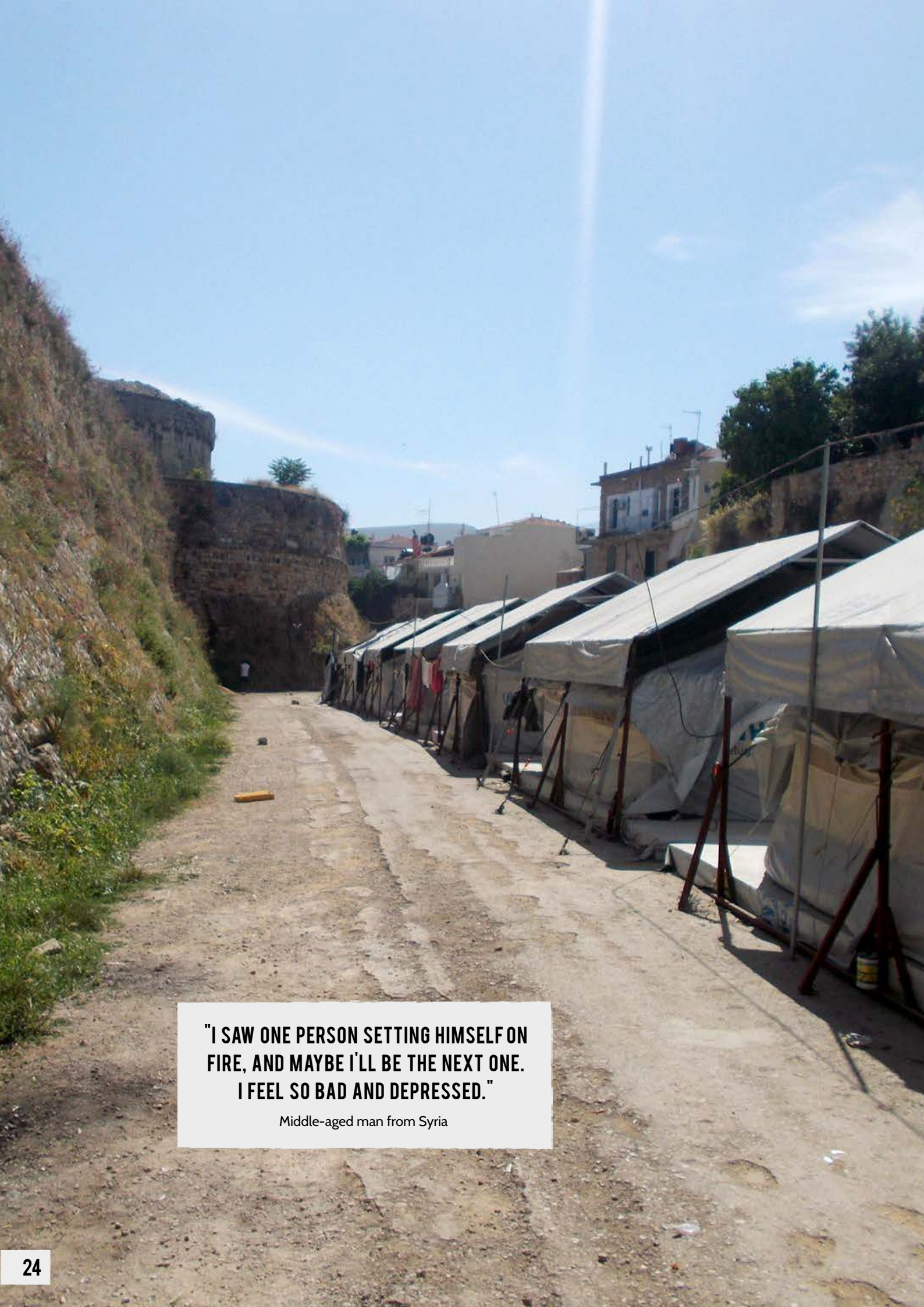
While 37.1% said they had suffered from a common health problem that could happen anywhere, 40.8% said it had started due to the unhealthy environment in the camp. Alarming, 31% described their health problem as a mental health issue rather than a physical ailment. Indeed, it became evident through the study that incidents of mental ill-health were widespread, with many respondents considering self-harm and substance abuse.

### HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY HEALTH ISSUES WHILE IN CHIOS? ALL RESPONDENTS



### WHAT KIND OF HEALTH ISSUE WAS IT? ALL RESPONDENTS





**"I SAW ONE PERSON SETTING HIMSELF ON  
FIRE, AND MAYBE I'LL BE THE NEXT ONE.  
I FEEL SO BAD AND DEPRESSED."**

Middle-aged man from Syria



Despite the immense efforts made by charities on the ground, there is an evident shortage of services relating to medical care. One respondent explained his frustration with the lack of medical care by suggesting sarcastically, *“if you were dying, the doctor would give you a painkiller tablet, but just one tablet.”*

Another respondent, who had sought medical help for a broken bone in his face, was met by an outright hostile approach on arrival at the medical centre. The doctor asked *“Did you come here to make your dreams come true?”* and refused to provide medical care.

**“I CAN'T SLEEP IN THE CAMP, I HAVE BEEN SLEEPING IN THE PARK FOR FOUR MONTHS.”**

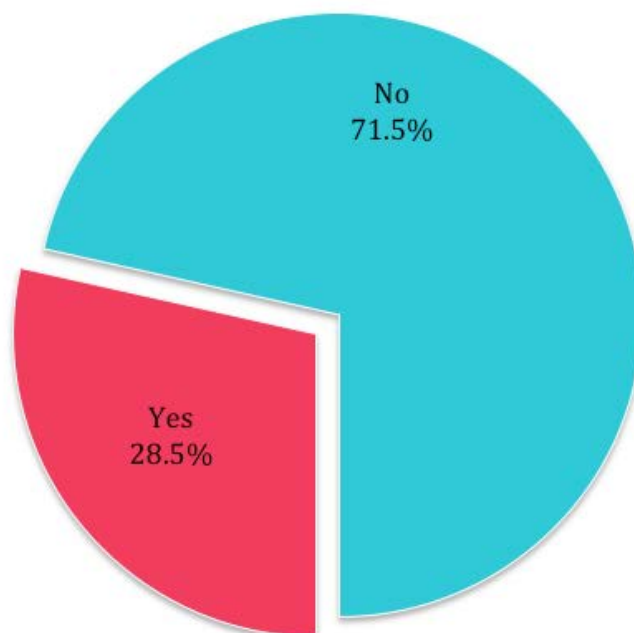
Anonymous

A Syrian man reported that he was experiencing chronic pain due to being tortured in Syria. However, rather than providing treatment, the doctor he saw simply concluded that he was fine, which led to the man losing his temper. Rather than seeking a solution to the chronic pain, the doctor called the police.

One Syrian man explained he had ruptured a ligament in his leg, but the doctor only gave him a painkiller tablet and refused to analyse the problem further. As a result, he is now unable to walk. Separately, a few Nigerian individuals reported they had certificates from a doctor in Chios confirming various ailments, but were refused transfer to Athens by UN staff. They felt this was a result of racial discrimination.

A key concern relating to medical care was the long delay to receive help. One woman with cervical cancer had waited for more than two weeks before she was able to go to Athens for medical care. Meanwhile, many reported long waiting times to get a diagnosis in the first place. This was a particular problem in relation to mental health. For instance, one Iraqi man had an acute psychological issue but was forced to wait for six months to get a diagnosis. He reported that he felt like he was suffocating in the camp and had therefore chosen to leave. *“I can't sleep in the camp, I have been sleeping in the park for four months”,* he said.

## HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS MEDICAL CARE IN CHIOS? ALL RESPONDENTS



Indeed, the lack of support for mental ill-health is highly alarming. *“The psychiatrist gave me only five minutes, he said he cannot give him more time as there are others waiting,”* said one respondent with a serious psychological issue. In the absence of solid psychological support or psychiatrists in Chios, self-harm is commonplace. *“I tried several times to hurt myself by a blade but my friend prevented me”,* one said. Another claimed, *“I did not sleep and eat anything since yesterday, just had a cigarette”.*

**“I TRIED SEVERAL TIMES TO HURT MYSELF BY A BLADE BUT MY FRIEND PREVENTED ME.”**

Syrian Kurdish man

**“THE PSYCHIATRIST GAVE ME ONLY FIVE MINUTES, HE SAID HE CANNOT GIVE HIM MORE TIME AS THERE ARE OTHERS WAITING.”**

Moroccan man

There were also reports of people resorting to substance abuse in a bid to forget about their miserable situation. A respondent told our researchers that his 18-year old son suffers from insomnia after being held captive by Daesh for two months. He is now unable to the toilet alone at night. However, no one appears willing to help them, and they are still stuck in a camp.

## **ARTICLE 25 (2)**

**MOTHERHOOD AND CHILDHOOD ARE ENTITLED TO SPECIAL CARE AND ASSISTANCE. ALL CHILDREN, WHETHER BORN IN OR OUT OF WEDLOCK, SHALL ENJOY THE SAME SOCIAL PROTECTION.**

## MOTHERHOOD

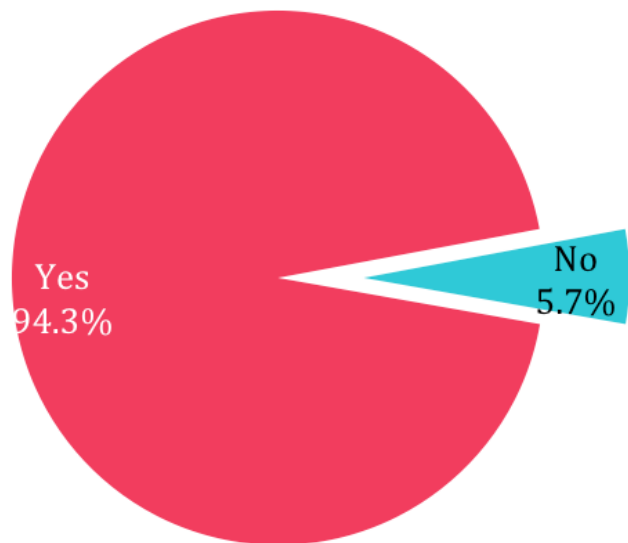
The conditions in Chios are particularly unsuitable for women going through different stages of motherhood, and for children. While services for pregnant women are technically provided in the local hospital free of charge, we found that pregnant women were deeply concerned about their situation.

For instance, one woman interviewed by our researchers was in the eighth month of her pregnancy. She had been waiting for more than two months to be moved to a flat near Athens where she can access the hospital, but is still living in the camp. Another pregnant woman, from Iraq, is housed in a small flat full of insects with her three children. At the time of the interview, she had not eaten for more than 24 hours.

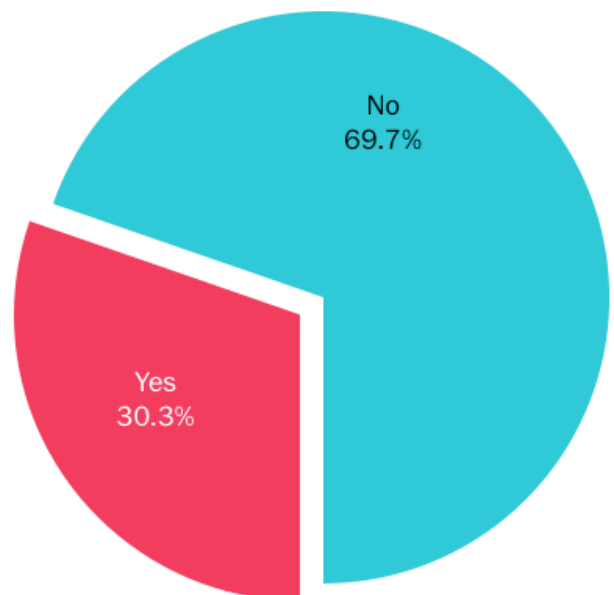
**ONE WOMAN, WHO HAS A SICK CHILD, SAID SHE LIVED WITH TWENTY OTHER PEOPLE IN A SPACE WITH VERY LOW HYGIENE STANDARDS.**

Overall, 94.3% of women - including pregnant women - said they had experienced health problems in Chios. Of those, less than a third had been able to access medical care.

### HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY HEALTH PROBLEMS IN CHIOS? WOMEN ONLY



### HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS MEDICAL CARE IN CHIOS? WOMEN ONLY



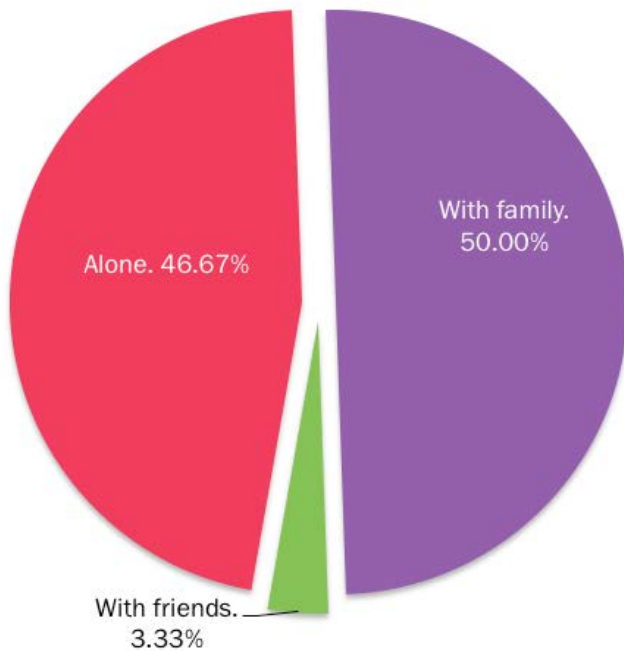
## CHILDHOOD

The conditions in Chios are particularly shocking considering that it is home to hundreds of displaced children.

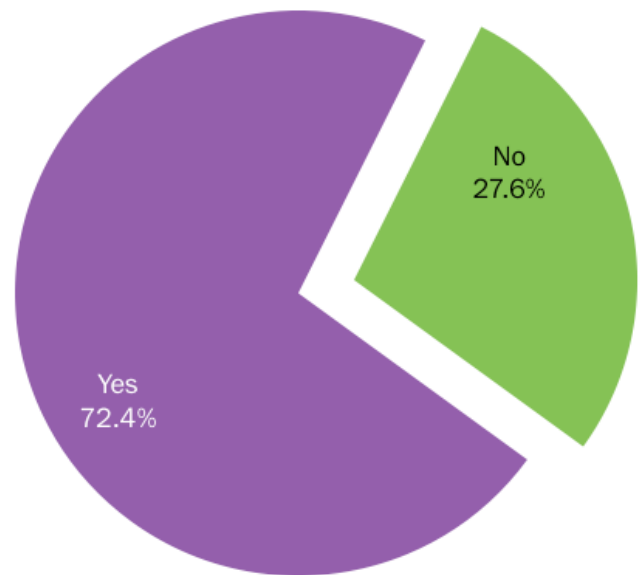
**50% OF MINORS INTERVIEWED WERE UNACCOMPANIED, WITH 72.4% OF ALL MINORS REPORTING THEY HAVE FAMILY SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE.**

The average time children had spent in Chios' highly inadequate conditions so far was 2.1 months.

### WITH WHOM ARE YOU WITH IN CHIOS? MINORS ONLY



### DO YOU HAVE FAMILY IN EUROPE? MINORS ONLY

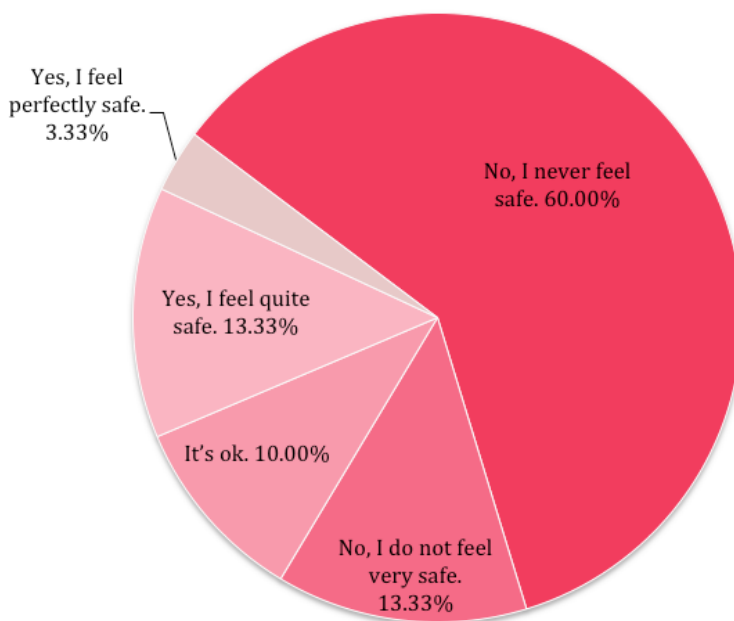


73.3% of minors said they “never feel safe” or “don’t feel very safe” in Chios. Meanwhile, one father explained that his children are ~ being harassed and touched by others in the camp. He reported that other refugees sometimes slap the children if they misbehave - a sight witnessed by members of the RRE research team.

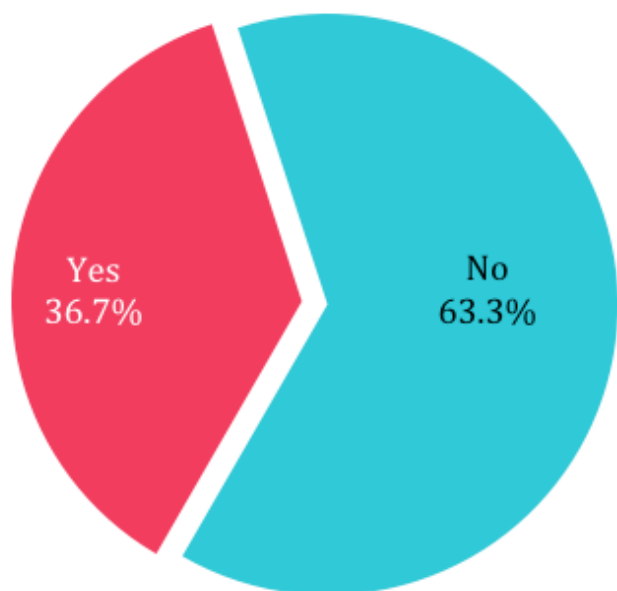
13.3% of children had experienced police violence on the island. 13.8% had been detained in Chios. 13.3% had experienced citizen violence and 23.3% violence from other refugees. Moreover, 28.6% had witnessed someone die in Chios - an experience that could be particularly traumatising for children.

36.7% of children had experienced health problems in Chios, but only 18.2% of those had been able to access medical care.

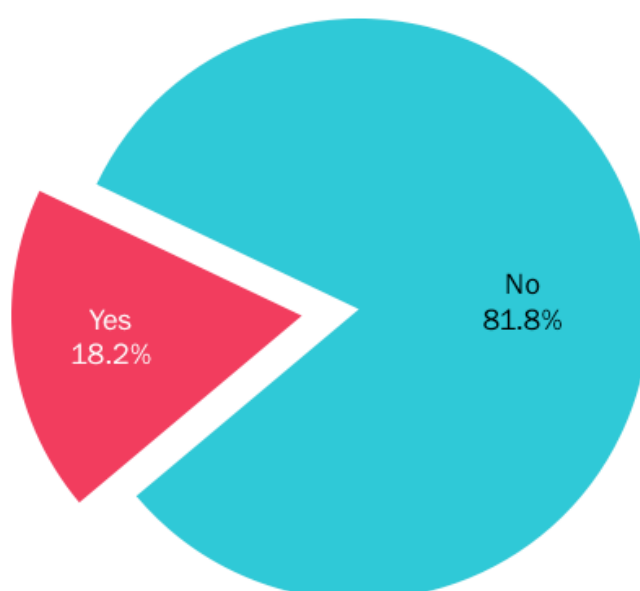
**DO YOU FEEL SAFE IN CHIOS?  
MINORS ONLY**



**HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY HEALTH PROBLEMS IN CHIOS?  
MINORS ONLY**



**HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS MEDICAL CARE IN CHIOS?  
MINORS ONLY**

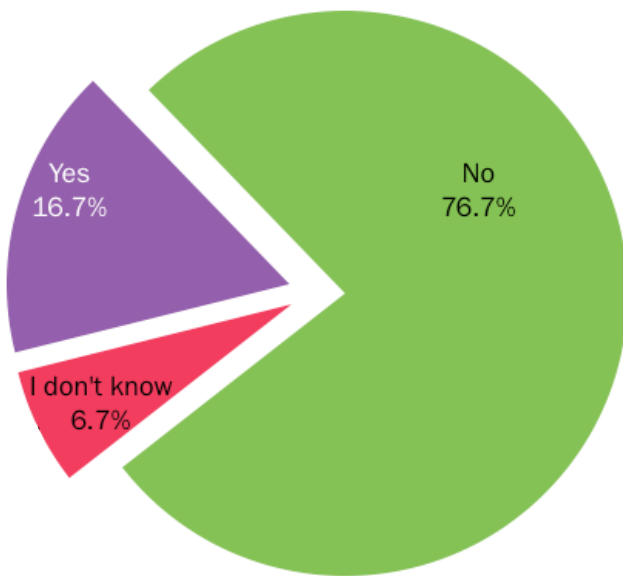


A family explained that one of their children suffers from heart disease. As a result, they were promised transferral to Athens. However, they had been waiting for six weeks and still had no idea if and when they would be able to travel. Another father, a single Iranian man, was in Chios with his two children aged three and five - the eldest of whom was suffering from serious

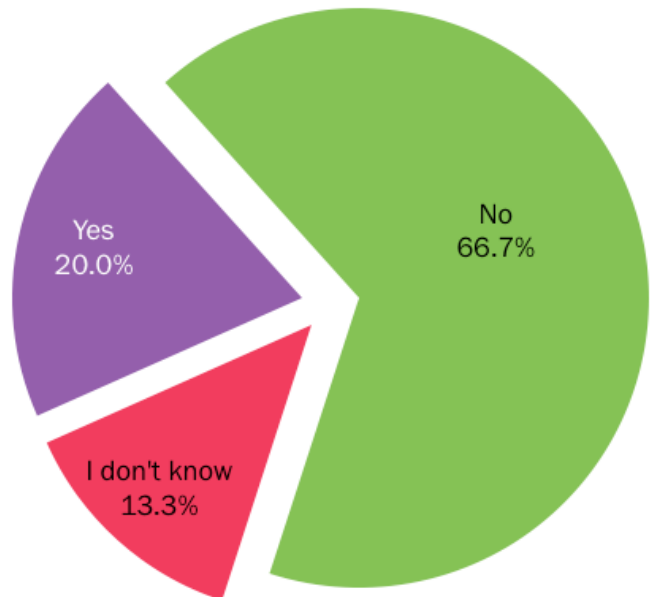
medical issues. He had requested to be moved to a flat but was told that his family does not meet the eligibility criteria.

Only 16.7% of children had access to information about their rights and opportunities, while just 20% had access to information about European immigration rules and asylum law.

**DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES? MINORS ONLY**



**DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT EUROPEAN ASYLUM LAW AND IMMIGRATION RULES? MINORS ONLY**



**65.5% SAID THEY FEEL "VERY BAD" OR "BAD" ABOUT BEING IN EUROPE BASED ON THEIR EXPERIENCES HERE SO FAR.**

However, 96.6% said they "cannot go back to their country of origin", and 3.4% said they "don't know" if they can.

When asked if they had applied for asylum in Greece, a whole 65.5% said they hadn't yet done so. Alarming, 10.3% didn't know if they had done or not.



**"WE ARE HERE SINCE MARCH 2016,  
BUT NO-ONE CAN HELP US SINCE  
THERE ARE NO PASHTO TRANSLATORS  
AVAILABLE FOR US."**

Anonymous

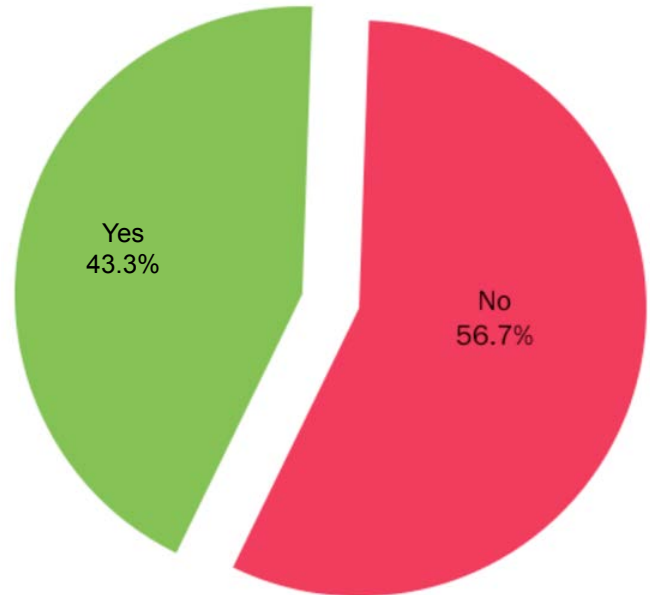
## **ARTICLE 26 (1)**

**EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION. EDUCATION SHALL BE FREE, AT LEAST IN THE ELEMENTARY AND FUNDAMENTAL STAGES. ELEMENTARY EDUCATION SHALL BE COMPULSORY. TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION SHALL BE MADE GENERALLY AVAILABLE AND HIGHER EDUCATION SHALL BE EQUALLY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL ON THE BASIS OF MERIT.**



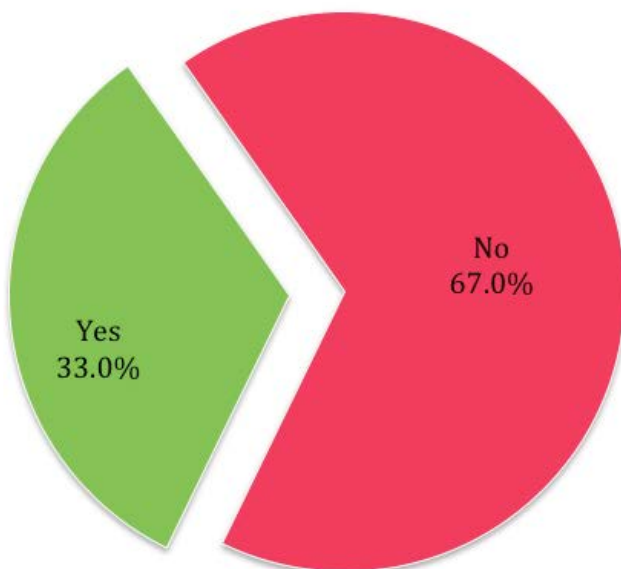
So far the Greek government has not taken any measures to incorporate refugee children into the official education system in Chios. Children are still able to access informal education provided by international NGOs in different centres in Chios Town or in a 'child friendly space' in Vial camp. Nevertheless, 56.7% of the child respondents in RRE's study said they do not have access to any form of education in Chios.

**DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO ANY FORM OF EDUCATION IN CHIOS?  
MINORS ONLY**

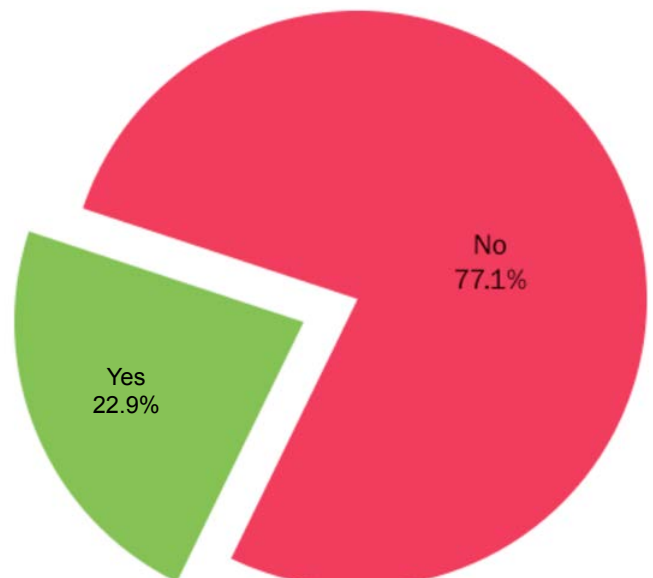


There are also English and Greek language courses available for adults at the language centre operated by an international NGO. However, 67% of refugees above 18 years old said they didn't have access to any form of education in Chios. This figure was even higher among women at 77.1%.

**DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO ANY FORM OF EDUCATION IN CHIOS?  
ALL RESPONDENTS**



**DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO ANY FORM OF EDUCATION IN CHIOS?  
WOMEN ONLY**



## **ARTICLE 28**

**EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO A  
SOCIAL AND INTERNATIONAL  
ORDER IN WHICH THE RIGHTS  
AND FREEDOMS SET FORTH IN  
THIS DECLARATION CAN BE  
FULLY REALIZED.**

In Chios the asylum process is managed by the Greek Asylum Service, with technical support from EASO (European Asylum Support Office) which is responsible for a fast-track “admissibility interview” procedure to determine whether the new arrivals are eligible for asylum in Greece. Successful applicants receive an Asylum Seeker’s Card permitting their transfer to Athens. Those who are unsuccessful can go through the appeals procedure with the Appeals Committee. However, if they do not succeed, they must wait for deportation.

While conducting the study, RRE researchers noted that the situation in Chios is highly ambiguous. People are waiting without having any idea of what is going to happen to them, or whether and how their asylum case is being progressed. One respondent explained, “I have been here since April 2016 and I am ready to wait for two or three years, but all I need to know is when I will be transferred from here. I have no idea, I am just waiting hopelessly.” This sense of hopelessness resulting from a widespread lack of transparency and information is commonplace among refugees in Chios.

When residents try to ask the camp administration office or local authorities about their case, they tend to be simply told to wait. No one appears able, or willing, to share any concrete information about the status of asylum cases, or the likelihood of being transferred to the mainland. Many Syrian

respondents reported that they were not provided with detailed reasons for why they were rejected - instead being handed papers stating that Turkey will protect them. This which makes appealing the case extremely difficult, as the grounds for rejection remain unclear.

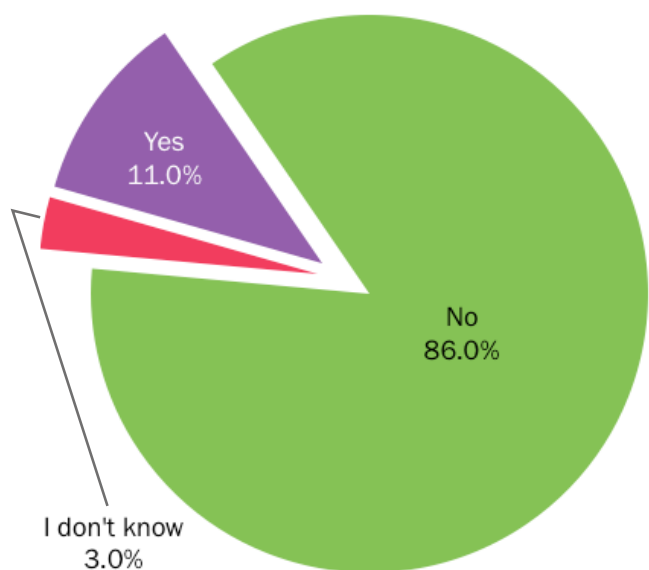
One respondent from Syria, who was injured during the war and now suffers from a chronic back issue which has left him unable to walk, told RRE’s researchers that there was a power cut immediately after he finished his asylum

interview. The interviewers told him that everything was fine, but he is having huge doubts as he is the only one from his cohort still waiting to be called for a second interview. He has tried to follow up with the administrators but is constantly sent away and told to wait.

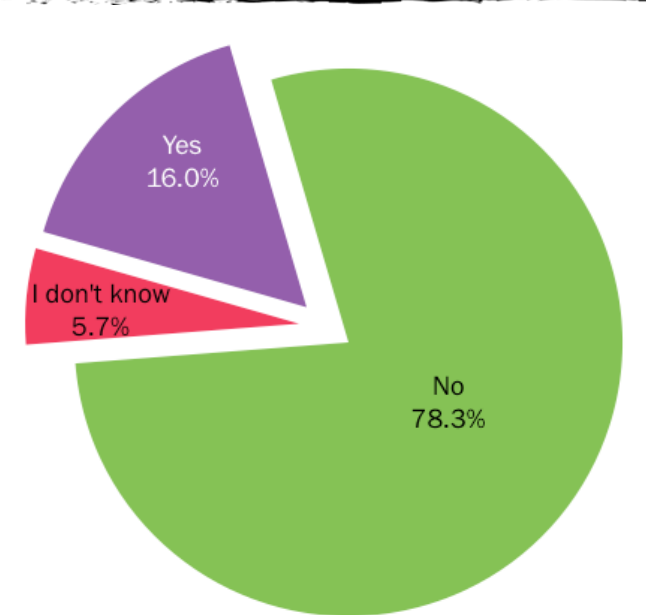
**“I HAVE BEEN HERE SINCE APRIL 2016 AND I AM READY TO WAIT FOR TWO OR THREE YEARS, BUT ALL I NEED TO KNOW IS WHEN I WILL BE TRANSFERRED FROM HERE. I HAVE NO IDEA, I AM JUST WAITING HOPELESSLY.”**

Young Syrian man

**DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES?  
ALL RESPONDENTS**



**DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT EUROPEAN ASYLUM LAW AND IMMIGRATION RULES?  
ALL RESPONDENTS**



Another respondent, who had spent five years in Syrian regime prisons and demonstrated PTSD and torture symptoms, explained that he is trying to join his wife and daughter in Germany. He claimed that he has all the required documents to prove his situation, but the office is too crowded and he has thus far been unable to process his case.

Furthermore, there are very few help organisations that have capacity to provide guidance relating to the asylum process and provision of advice and information. Grassroots initiatives are doing invaluable work alongside other charities on the island,

but their resources and capacity are simply not sufficient for the current level of needs among refugees there.

Indeed, 86% of respondents said that they have no access to information about their legal rights or opportunities to change their situation. Similarly, 78.3% reported that they have no access to information about European asylum law and immigration rules. Consequently, people live in complete uncertainty about their future, which appears to foster a strong sense of desperation and unnecessary frustration.

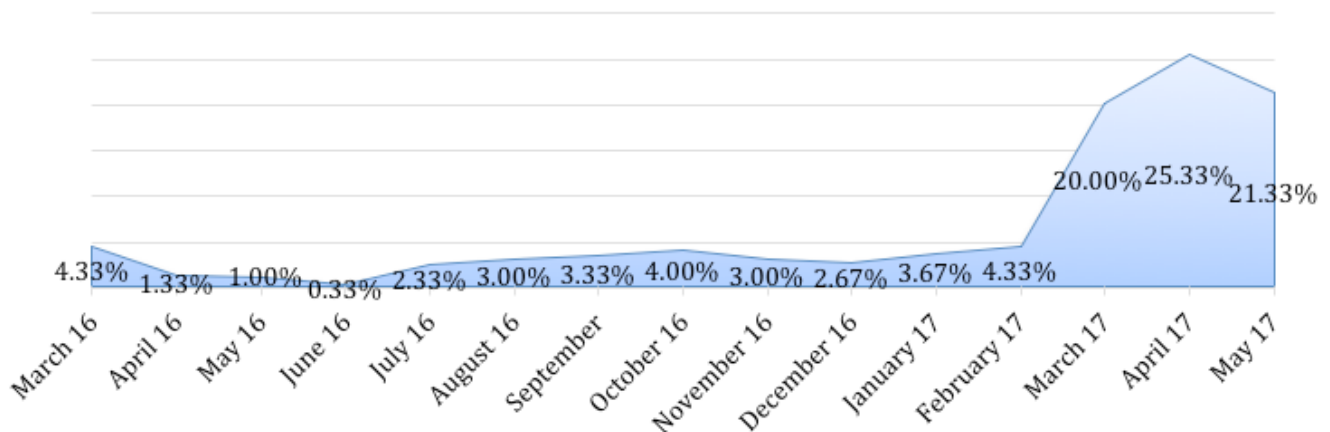


The average time respondents had spent in Chios was 3.2 months. However, some 6.67% had been there for a year or longer. Only 33% of respondents were in Chios with one or more family members.

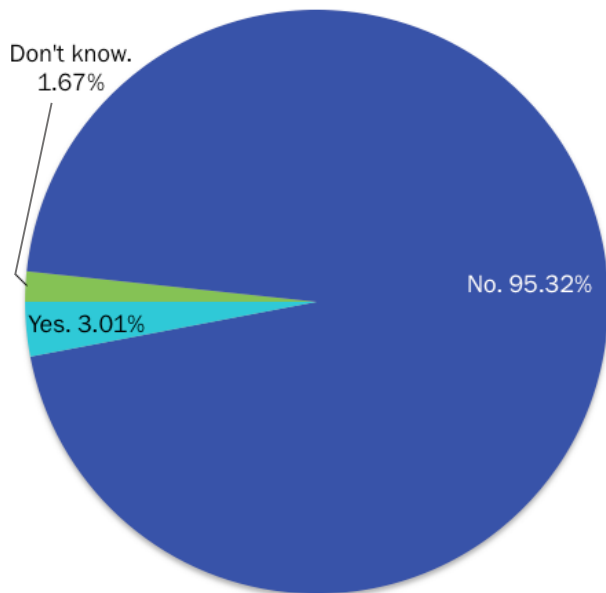
**"I GOT REJECTED AND THEY SAY THEY WILL DEPORT ME TO TURKEY. BUT I'M KURDISH, HOW CAN I GO TO TURKEY?"**

Syrian Kurdish man

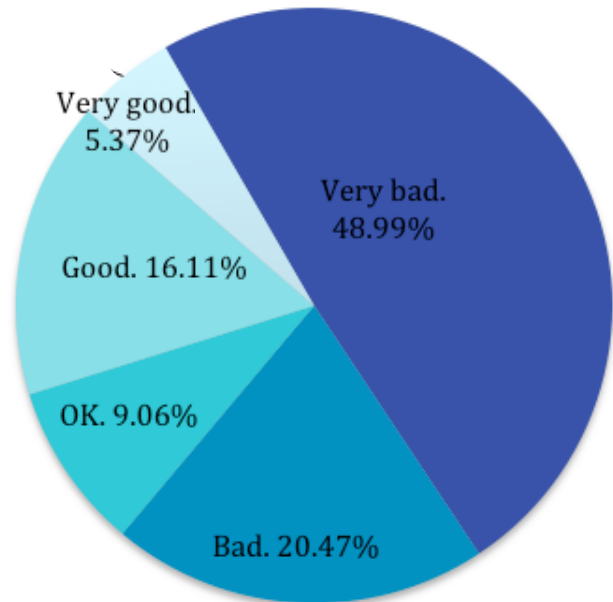
**HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN CHIOS?  
ALL RESPONDENTS**



**CAN YOU GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN?**  
ALL RESPONDENTS



**HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BEING IN EUROPE?**  
ALL RESPONDENTS

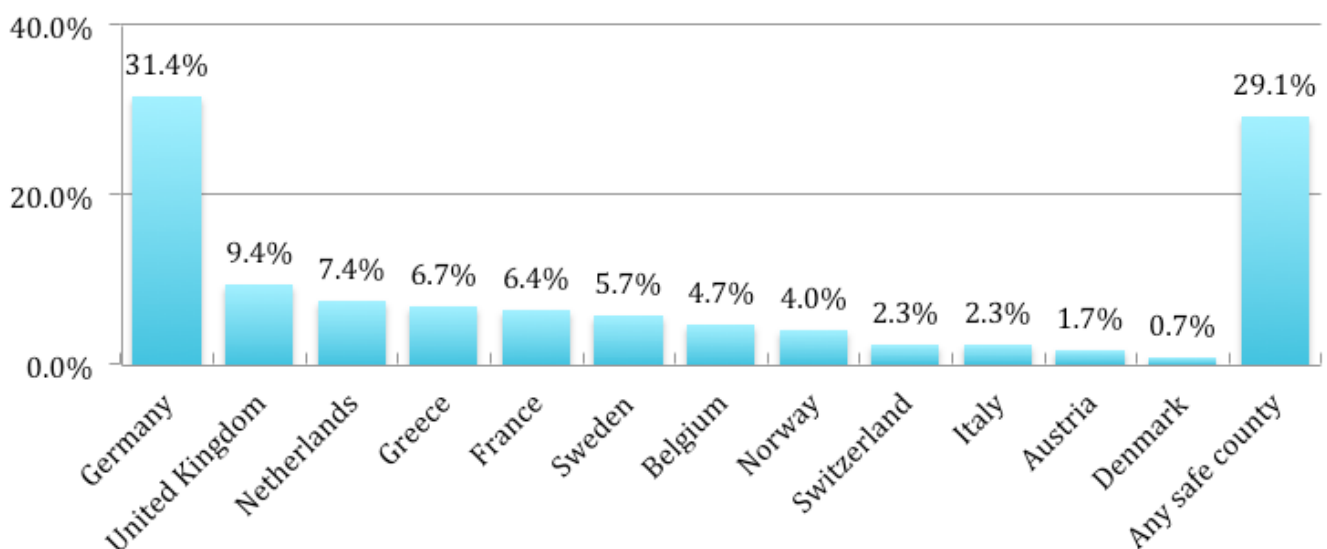


69.5% of respondents said they “feel very bad” or “feel bad” about being in Europe, but the vast majority said they cannot go back to their countries of origin, due to fears of war, conflict and persecution.

**“I DON’T CARE TO WHICH COUNTRY I WILL GO, I JUST WANT TO LIVE IN PEACE AND DIGNITY.”**

Syrian man

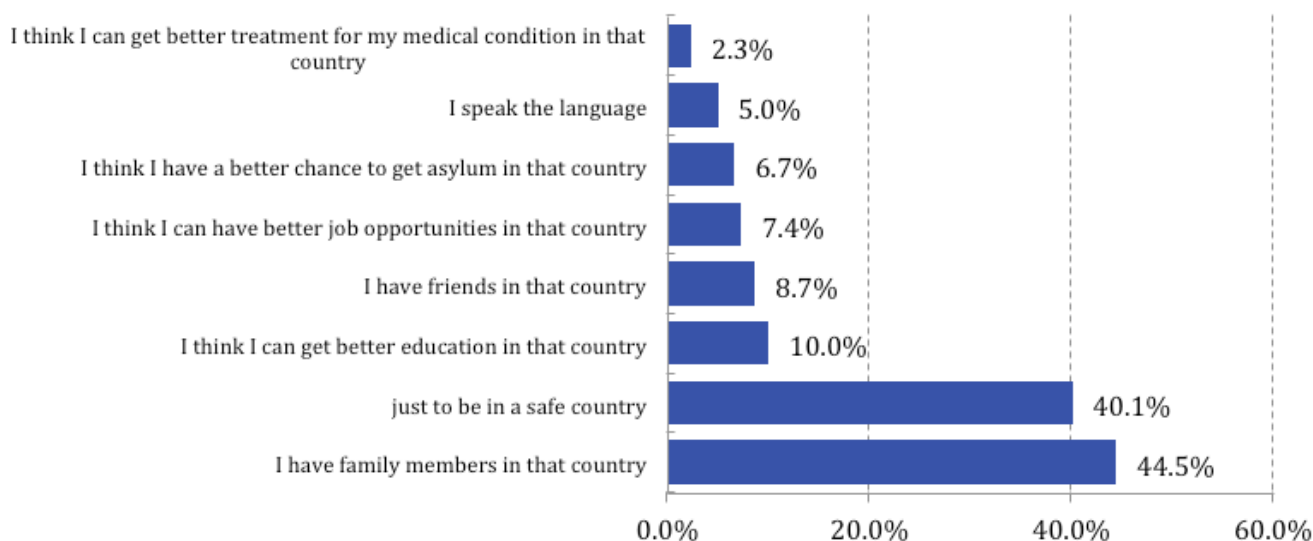
**WHICH COUNTRY IN EUROPE ARE YOU TRYING TO GO TO?**  
ALL RESPONDENTS



**WHEN ASKED THEIR PREFERRED COUNTRY IN EUROPE, NEARLY A THIRD SAID THEY WOULD GO ANYWHERE THAT'S SAFE.**

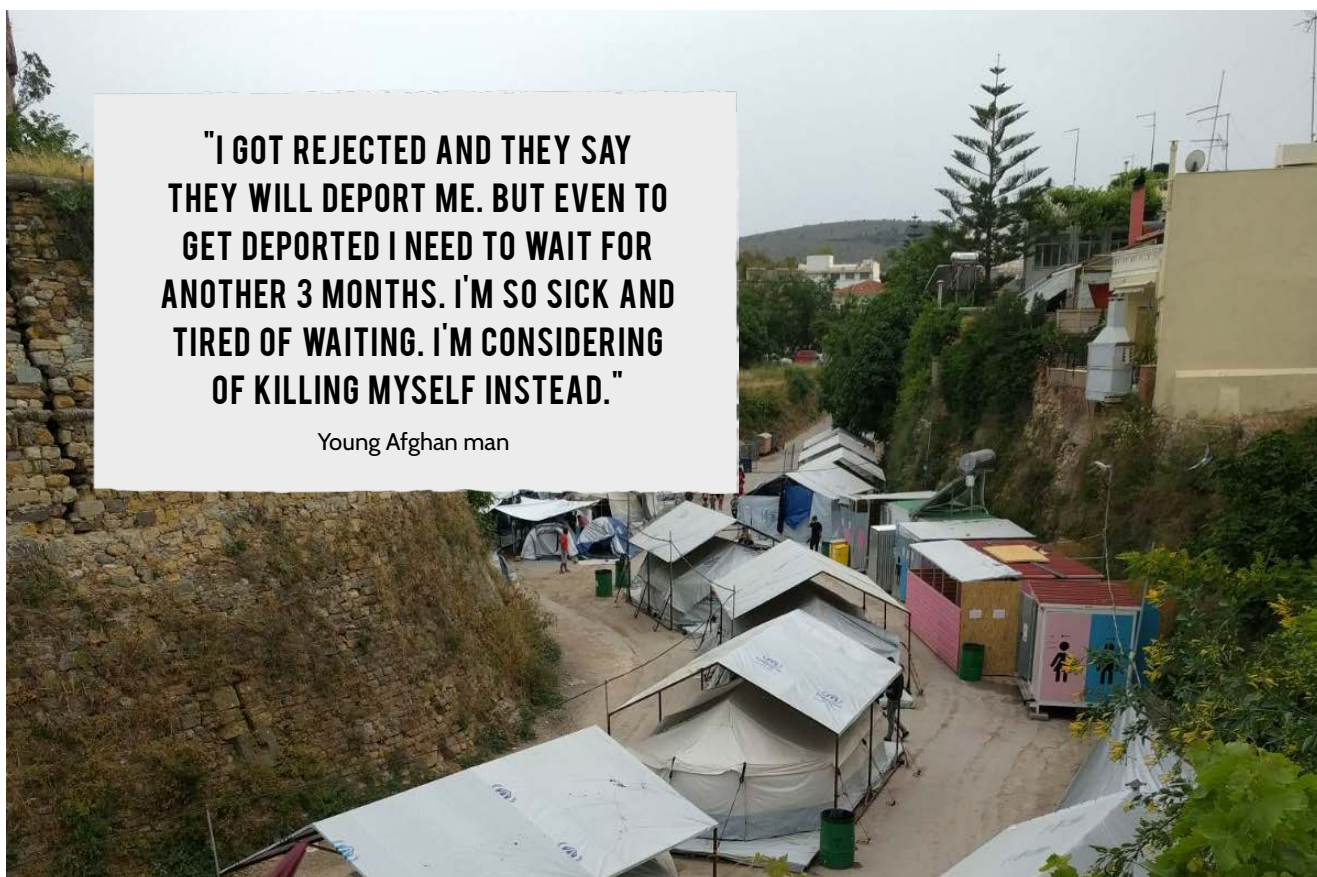
Another 31.4% said they would like to go to Germany. The top reason for wishing to go to a certain European country was to be reunited with family, as demonstrated by nearly half of all respondents (44.5%).

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO TO THAT COUNTRY?  
ALL RESPONDENTS**



**"I GOT REJECTED AND THEY SAY THEY WILL DEPORT ME. BUT EVEN TO GET DEPORTED I NEED TO WAIT FOR ANOTHER 3 MONTHS. I'M SO SICK AND TIRED OF WAITING. I'M CONSIDERING OF KILLING MYSELF INSTEAD."**

Young Afghan man



# CONCLUSION

The research findings outlined in this report suggest that the island of Chios, Greece is at breaking point. With the continued arrival of refugees from conflict-ridden countries, the island is overcrowded and struggles to provide the most basic services required.

As outlined in this report, which is based on responses from approximately 10% of refugees on the island in May 2017, nearly two thirds (60.7%) had been unable to access any form of support services in Chios. For those who had access, this often involved little more than receiving basic nutrition or an item of clothing, rather than more substantive support. Out of the staggering 71.3% who had experienced health problems since arriving in Chios, less than a third (28.5%) had been able to access medical care.

Living conditions are largely inadequate in most places, with 40.8% of respondents stating that their health issues had started due to the unhealthy environment in the camp. Similarly, the safety and security measures provided for refugees seem wholly inadequate, with 85.3% of respondents saying they “never feel safe” or “don’t feel safe” in Chios.

About a third (31%) said they were experiencing mental health problems. 39% of respondents had witnessed someone die in Chios, while 87% of those said the death had occurred due to self-harm or suicide. The lack of support and health services for these individuals is highly alarming, particularly considering that the majority of refugees on the island are escaping war and turmoil in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Overall, the research indicates that refugees in Chios are experiencing various forms of distress, including traumatic past experiences, a depressing present situation characterized by an absence of information, and an uncertain future including fear of deportation. These combined factors lead to depression and mental ill-health among thousands of people seeking protection in Europe.

In light of RRE’s findings, the health, safety and human rights of the displaced people arriving in Chios must be the highest priority, and increased resources and services need to be urgently allocated.

Accelerated transfers of asylum seekers from the islands to mainland Greece and a strengthened system for processing asylum applications will be of utmost importance. However, in the immediate term, stakeholders must ensure the standards on the islands are humane. Hence, the research clearly demonstrates that any decision to withdraw or reduce funding would be detrimental and inhumane, given that Chios is already under immense pressure. Such a move would also disregard the principles of human rights which the European Union is otherwise keen to safeguard around the world, and risks having a detrimental impact on displaced people seeking sanctuary at Europe’s shore.





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