



**REFUGEE RIGHTS
EUROPE**

In partnership with

**Immigrant
Council
of Ireland**

and *Denise Charlton
& Associates*

LIFE IN LIMBO

**FILLING DATA GAPS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND
DISPLACED PEOPLE IN GREECE**

DATES OF RESEARCH

7 - 12 NOVEMBER 2016

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for delivering training in Greece, and for invaluable and ongoing support and overall belief in the Refugee Rights Europe

THOSE WHO SUPPORTED THE DESIGN OF RESEARCH TOOLS:

Nicholas Cotterill, Fionnuala Finnerty, Musashi Fujimura, Ozlem Hangul, Fenella Henderson-Howat, Storm Lawrence, Jihad Nammour, and Seth Wolpin. Many thanks to Joe Hopkins and Amy Bellamy for assisting with the online data processing tools.

RRE VOLUNTEERS,

notably deputy director Natalie Stanton, working behind the scenes throughout the year to make field research trips and report production possible.

FENELLA HENDERSON-HOWAT AND MUSASHI FUJIMURA

for seamlessly managing logistics in Greece, and Claire Veale and Johan Ekstedt for invaluable insights on the ground.

STYLIANOS KOSTAS

for help liaising with the Greek authorities.

PEGGY WHITFIELD OF REFUCOMMS

for forging invaluable connections on the ground, making large parts of the research possible.

DROP IN THE OCEAN

in Skaramagas camp: Michaela Rafferty and colleagues.

HELP REFUGEES:

Annie Gavrilesu for making connections and ongoing support, Nico Stevens and Paddie Marlow-Barnes for invaluable guidance regarding Greek camps and partners on the ground.

ASA SWEE AND DARIUS ALEMZADEH AT LIGHTHOUSE RELIEF

for kindly hosting our research delegation in Ritsona camp, Greece.

SULAF ASAAD

for the fantastic paintings seen in the report.

PROF. DIBYSESH ANAND & DR THOMAS MOORE

of the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Westminster for hosting the report launch event.

DENISE CHARLTON & ASSOCIATES AND THE IMMIGRANT COUNCIL OF IRELAND

for expert advice throughout all stages of the research study, and for mobilising the funding required. The Quinn Foundation, Metropolitan Properties for their sponsorship. Louise Smyth & Dylan Macaulay, Rachel Widdis, and all those that donated to the GoFund appeal.

AND ABOVE ALL, THE COURAGEOUS PEOPLE IN DISPLACEMENT WHO TOOK PART IN THIS STUDY.

You remain in our minds and hearts, with sincere hopes for a future in dignity.

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Photo: Claire Veale

GREECE HAS FOUND ITSELF AT THE EPICENTRE OF A MAJOR HUMANITARIAN CRISIS. IN 2015, SOME 856,700 REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PEOPLE ARRIVED AT THE COUNTRY'S BORDERS, SEEKING A SAFE AND SECURE FUTURE IN EUROPE.¹

This number dropped significantly in 2016 - partly as a result of the EU-Turkey deal which came into effect in March, and border closures along the so-called “*Western Balkan route*” to the north of Greece. However, many continued to make the treacherous journey to Greece. By 13th November 2016, the country had welcomed more than 170,000 refugees and displaced people, equating to an average of 61 arrivals each day throughout the course of the year².

AS A FIRST PORT OF ENTRY INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION, GREECE FINDS ITSELF HANDLING A LARGE NUMBER OF ASYLUM CLAIMS WITH LITTLE SUPPORT FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION AND OTHER MEMBER STATES.

But the country has been struggling with the sheer volume of applications, causing long delays to the process, which often takes more than a year to reach completion.³ As of 21 November 2016, UNHCR recorded 34,700 refugees and displaced people living within its sites in mainland Greece, and a further 16,500 on the

Greek islands, which is more than double the official capacity.⁴ Since then, Greece has undertaken initiatives to relocate

individuals from the islands to the mainland. However, the European Union subsequently prohibited this practice - arguing that it would lead to the collapse of the ‘EU-Turkey deal’, which explicitly states that individuals must be held on the Greek island camps, registered, and sent back to Turkey.

While Greece has become one of the main transit points for refugees reaching Europe, it may also among the least economically equipped to deal with this challenge. The Greek government is burdened with harsh austerity measures implemented by the EU and the IMF. The country’s economy has shrunk by almost 30% since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008 - and while observers are hopeful that a recovery is now in sight, Greece remains crippled by debt. This has had a real impact on livelihoods. Unemployment levels have become a serious problem - youth unemployment



Photo: Claire Veale

1. UNHCR, ‘Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015’ <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/576408cd7.pdf>

2. UNHCR, ‘Greece Data Snapshot: 13 Nov 2016’ <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/download.php?id=2164>

3. RRE acknowledges that this is not particular to the Greek context only; long delays are inherent in the current asylum system in most European countries.

4. UNHCR, ‘Europe Refugee Emergency’ (21/11/2016) <https://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/download.php?id=2173>

reached 49% in the last quarter of 2015⁵ - and poverty levels have soared.

Meanwhile, new refugee arrivals to the country continue to suffer and conditions in the country's many refugee camps remain deeply concerning.

IN 2016 A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL BODIES, INCLUDING MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, SPOKE OUT ABOUT THE "APPALLING CONDITIONS" AND "IMMENSE AND AVOIDABLE SUFFERING" FACED BY THOSE LIVING IN CAMPS ON THE GREEK ISLANDS.

In this context, Refugee Rights Europe, in partnership with Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) and Denise Charlton & Associates, set out to conduct in-depth, first-hand research across

refugee camps in mainland Greece. From 7 to 12 November 2016, a team of experienced researchers and interpreters visited nine different settlements, as well as a number of squats and community centres, in Greece. They investigated potential human rights violations occurring among the people living there, and their future plans and aspirations. We hope that our research will help to shed light on the

situation faced by refugees and form the basis of a strong call to action - encouraging a firm and sustainable solution to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Europe.

It must be acknowledged that this research focuses on a very specific context. At any given time, there are approximately 50 settlements in Greece, excluding a number of refugee-squats, which have emerged predominately in the Athens area. These settlements vary greatly in size, in the quality and extent of services provided, shelter type, and camp management arrangements.

Living conditions also vary dramatically between these sites. For instance, at the time of our research, Skaramagas Dock - a refugee settlement near Athens - was home to more than 3,000 refugees, while nearby Rafina housed less than 200. Moreover, while a few camps receive designated EU funding for a full range of services, others rely on smaller volunteer-led groups to fulfil basic needs such as healthcare or child protection. It is also important to stress that refugees tend to experience very different conditions on the islands and in some areas of northern Greece - both of which fall outside the scope of our current research.

By the same token, the study provides a snapshot of a very specific period of time - a number of months after the EU-Turkey deal, the closure of the border with FYR Macedonia, and the eviction of the notorious Idomeni camp in northern Greece. The situation for refugees in the country remains continually in flux, subject to change both in response to global political events but also local, organisational changes. Nevertheless, the adversities outlined in this report paint an alarming picture of the context faced by displaced individuals in Europe, and call for firm and immediate policy action.



⁵. Eurostat (2016) [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Table_1_Youth_unemployment_2015Q4_\(%25\).png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Table_1_Youth_unemployment_2015Q4_(%25).png)



**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 data collection in many of the state-run camps in Greece, our data and research is independently collected with the sole aim of informing public debate and contributing to a long-term resolution to the current humanitarian crisis. In light of these objectives, our research focuses on three key areas: human rights infringements, unmet humanitarian standards, and future plans and aspirations.

In September 2016, a small RRE delegation, working with partners from Help Refugees and RefuComms, undertook a scoping mission in order to negotiate access to the state-run camps but, most importantly, to discuss the study with camp residents and obtain their consent. As a result, camps in Ritsona, Oinofyta, Malakasa, Skaramangas, Elliniko, and Lavrio Town were identified in southern Greece, alongside a number of squats and community centres in central Athens, and Katsikas camp in north-western Greece.

The survey was coordinated by the RRE Coordination Team, spearheaded by Marta Welander, with additional support from a field research coordinator from St Joseph University in Beirut who has led similar studies in Syrian refugee camps across Lebanon.

DURING THE STUDY, UNDERTAKEN IN GREECE FROM 7 TO 12 NOVEMBER 2016, RRE'S 25 ACADEMIC RESEARCHERS CONDUCTED 278 SURVEYS IN EITHER ENGLISH, ARABIC, DARI OR KURDISH.

The format was semi-structured, and focused predominately on individuals over the age of 18. In total, 59.4% of respondents were men and 40.6% women.

Each member of the academic research team had field experience of working with refugees and displaced people, or similar groups. The researchers were recruited from a pool of over 800 applicants and included native speakers in Arabic, Farsi, Dari and Kurdish.

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.

All researchers attended a compulsory induction day in Greece to stress the importance of strict adherence to all RRE policies.

In most cases, RRE's research teams adopt a methodology of random selection - using stratification and continuously monitoring the breakdown of demographic groups within the sample, to ensure that the final data is representative of a given situation. We initially planned to employ this methodology in Greece, but external conditions and barriers (including but not limited to the refusal of authorities to grant us access to the camps) made it necessary for us to be flexible in our approach.

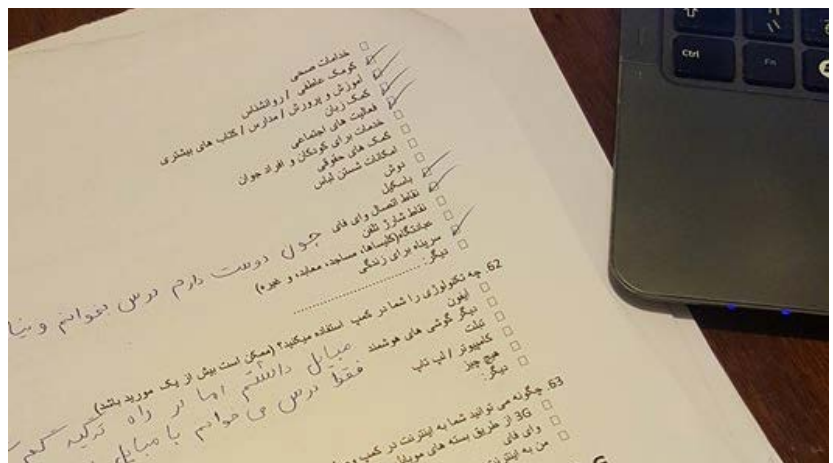
Despite extensive efforts to gain official ministerial authorisation to conduct the research, RRE was denied access to a number of the camps identified. However, camp residents themselves expressed a strong desire to take part in the survey and have their voices heard. As a result, we set up surveying stations outside a number of sites, including Elliniko, Oinofyta and Skaramangas. We also chose to add a number of squats and community centres in Athens to the study, in order to diversify the sample further and gain access to additional respondents. This limited our ability to follow the methodology of random selection sampling


and monitoring, leading us instead onto a path of so-called snowball sampling and bus stop methodology.

As a result of these factors, 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 to. Nonetheless, despite these many challenges and constraints, our research team was able to obtain a large amount of data relating to the conditions in which refugees and displaced people are forced to live within European borders.

THIS REPORT SEEKS TO HIGHLIGHT SOME OF THESE ISSUES AND RAISE AWARENESS OF THE STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN CAMPS IN GREECE.

We have chosen to structure the research findings around the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, demonstrating how the EU is falling short of expectations in its treatment of those who arrive at its shores to seek protection through the asylum system.





**"WHEREAS RECOGNITION OF THE
INHERENT DIGNITY AND OF THE
EQUAL AND INALIENABLE RIGHTS
OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN
FAMILY IS THE FOUNDATION OF
FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE IN
THE WORLD... NOW, THEREFORE
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
PROCLAIMS THIS UNIVERSAL
DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
AS A COMMON STANDARD OF
ACHIEVEMENT."**

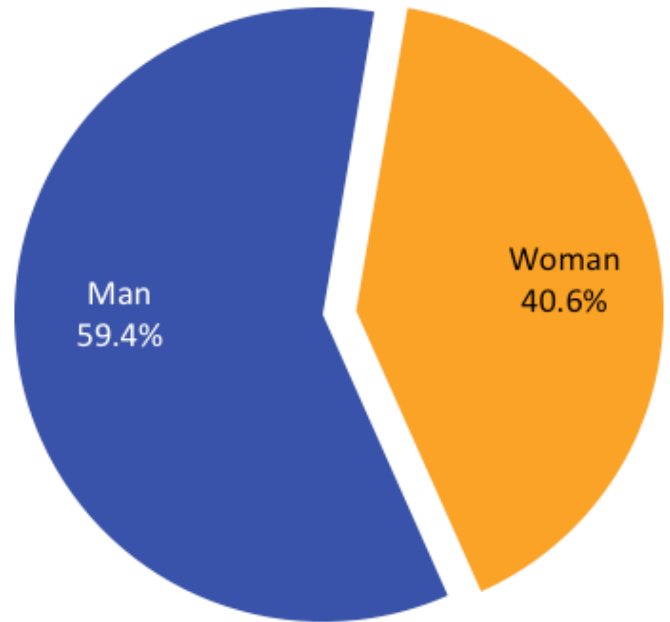
- UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, PREAMBLE



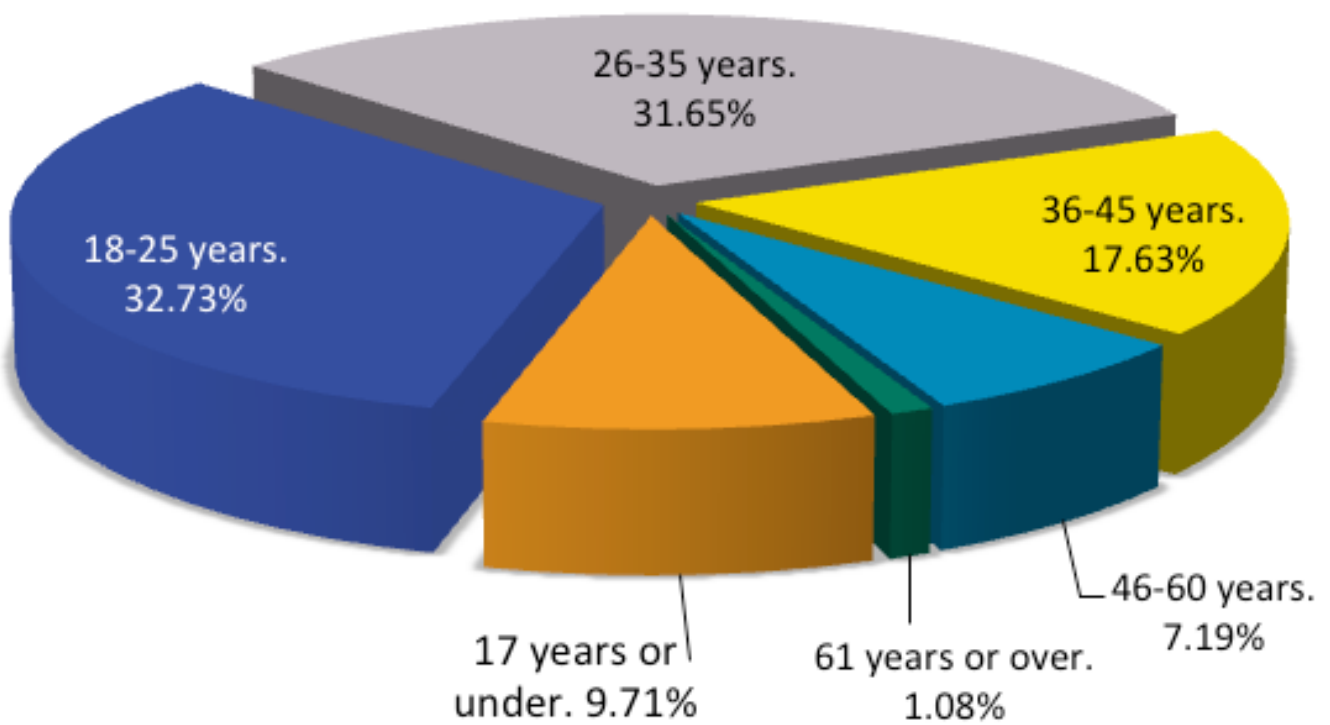
**ARTICLE 1:
ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE
BORN FREE AND EQUAL IN
DIGNITY AND RIGHTS**

The following graphs outline the demographic composition of the research sample:

MEN / WOMEN



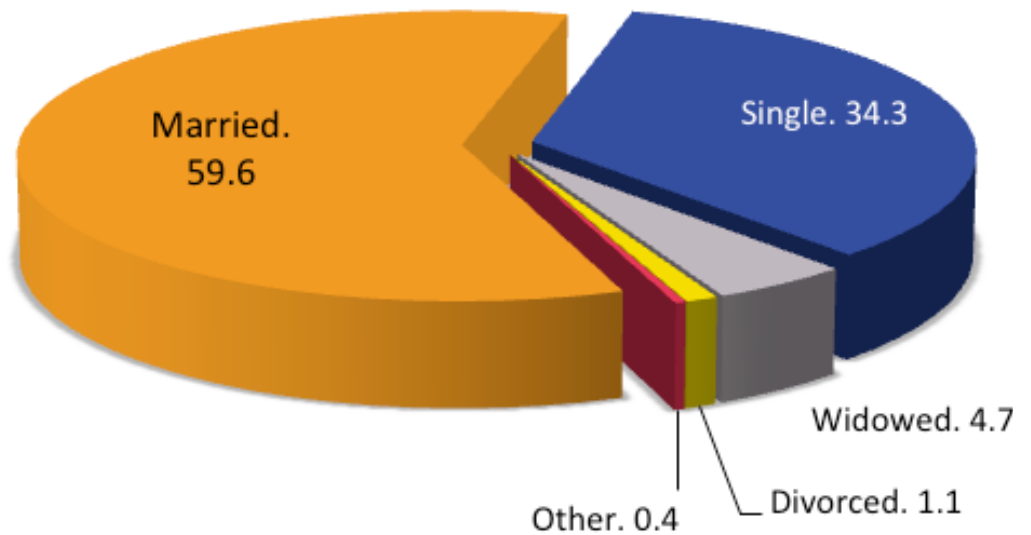
AGES



¹⁸ Research Component 1: Interviews with 38 refugee women.

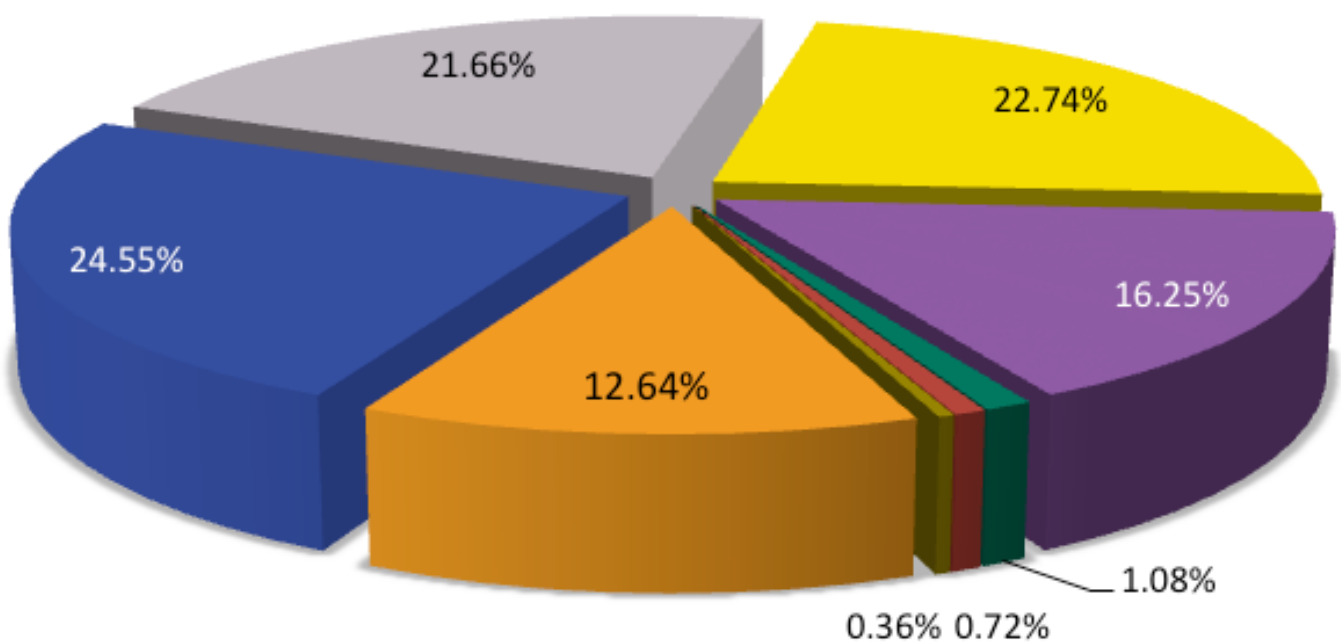
¹⁹ Research Component 1: Interviews with 38 refugee women.

MARITAL STATUS

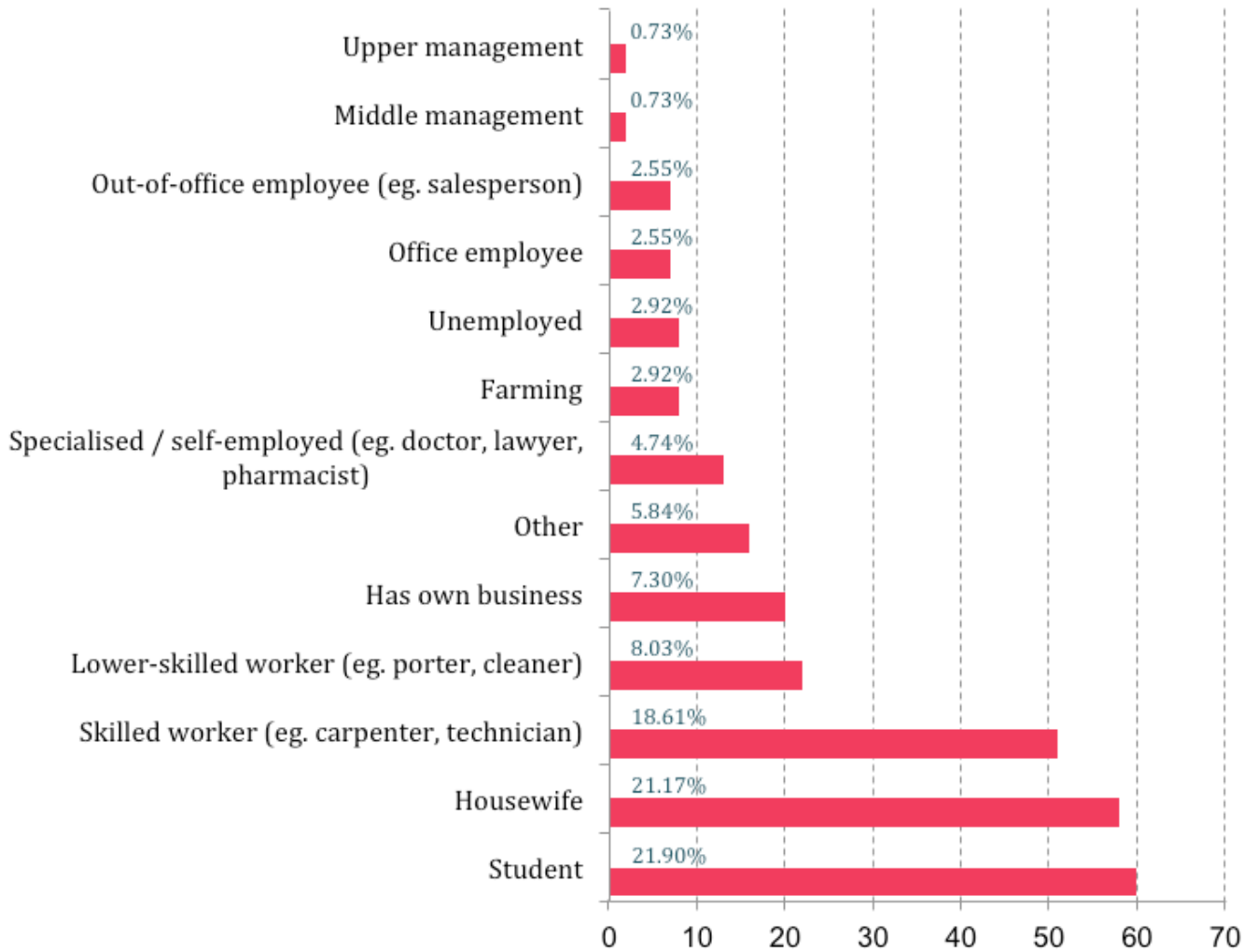


EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

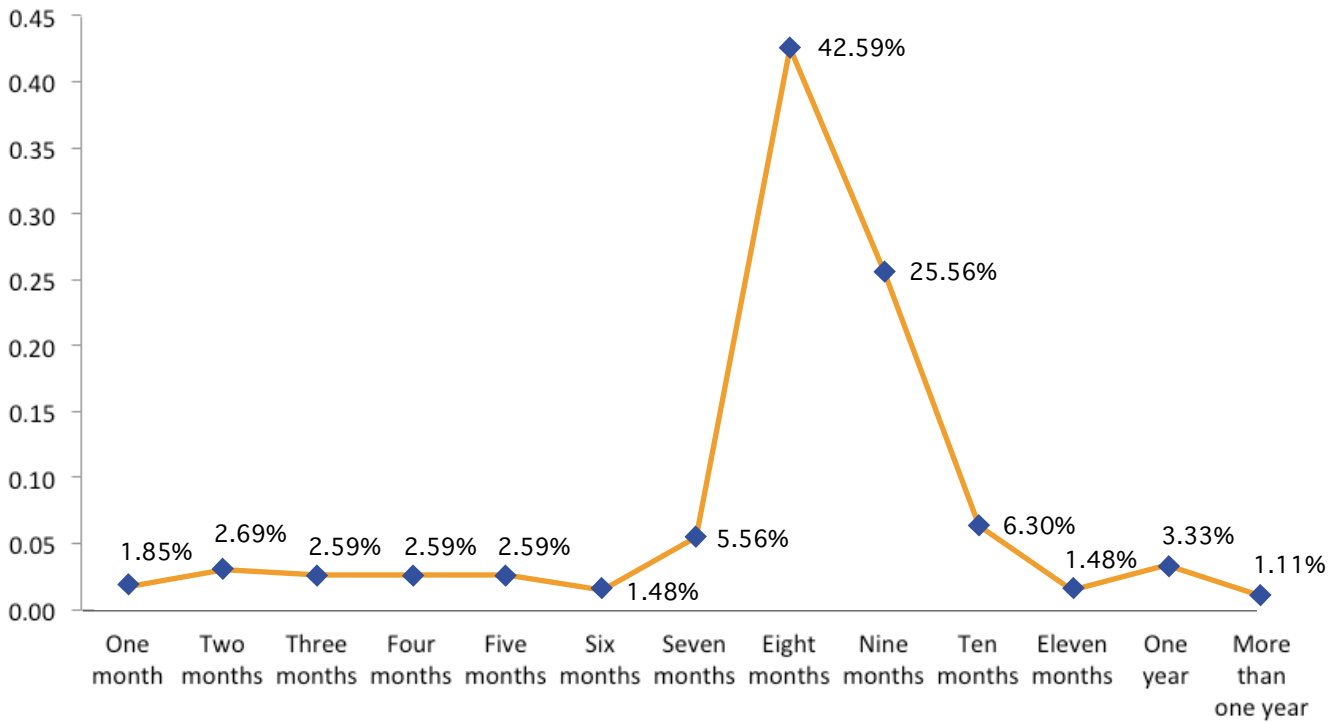
- Never been to school
- Primary school
- Preparatory school (until 9th grade)
- Secondary school or high school
- University
- Master's degree
- PhD or more
- Other



PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND



TIME SPENT IN GREECE



TIME SPENT IN CURRENT CAMP

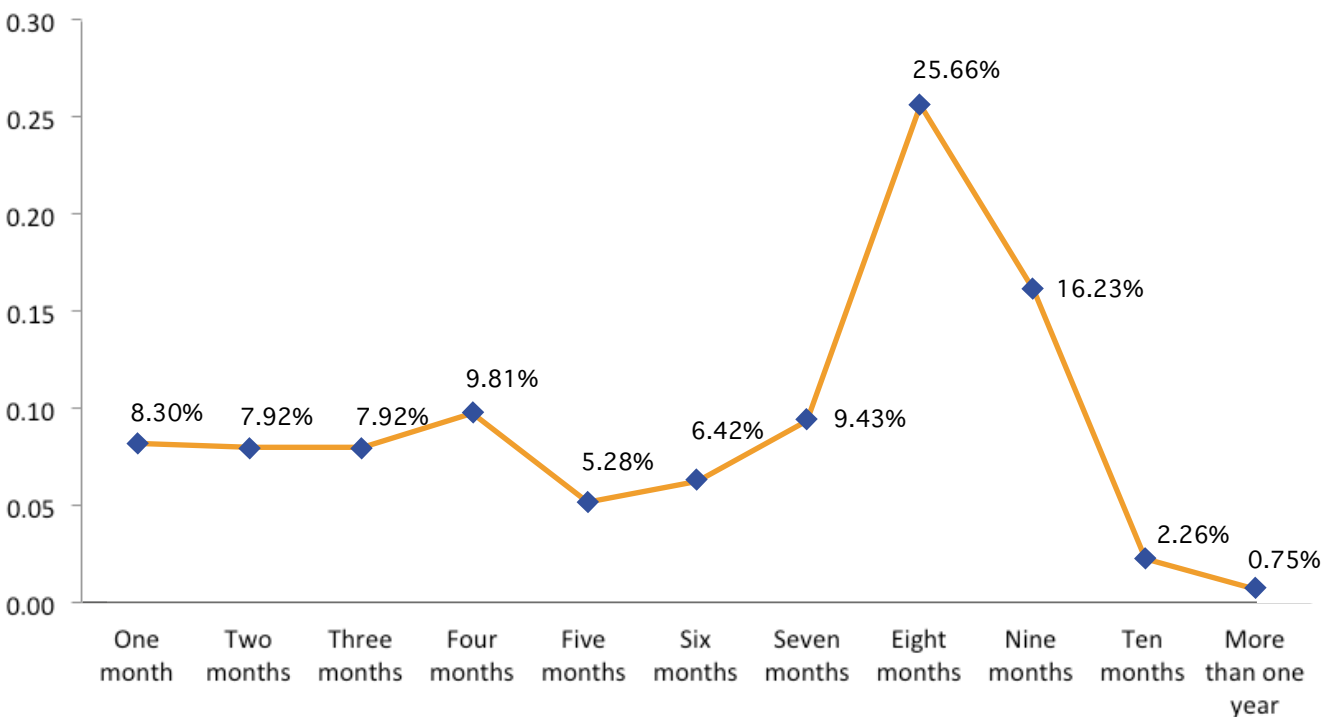




Photo: Claire Veale

**ARTICLE 3:
EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT
TO LIFE, LIBERTY AND
SECURITY OF PERSON**

DEATHS

Many respondents said they had witnessed others being hurt or killed during their journey to Europe. One woman said:

MANY PEOPLE DIED ON THE WAY, BUT WE DID NOT. MANY OF OUR FRIENDS WERE DETAINED AND BEATEN UP.

Another respondent recalled a particularly harrowing account: *“There was a woman on our boat from Turkey to Greece with four kids, including a new-born baby. About three quarters of the way through our boat began to sink and we started to swim. The woman tried to grab the kids to stay afloat but couldn’t manage in time since she also had the baby in her arms. They drowned. When the workers from Greece finally arrived to pull us out, she put the baby in the air until a worker took him. Then she drowned herself. I can still remember her face.”*

Rather than finding safety and security in Greece, many residing in camps continue to face risks to their lives on a daily basis. 31.6% of respondents knew of at least one death having taken place inside their camp.

THE CAUSES FOR THE DEATHS RANGED FROM VIOLENCE BETWEEN RESIDENTS TO CHRONIC DISEASE AND LACK OF ADEQUATE MEDICAL TREATMENT.

A number of respondents also cited suicides and attempted suicides among camp residents.

DO YOU KNOW OF ANY DEATHS IN THE CAMP?

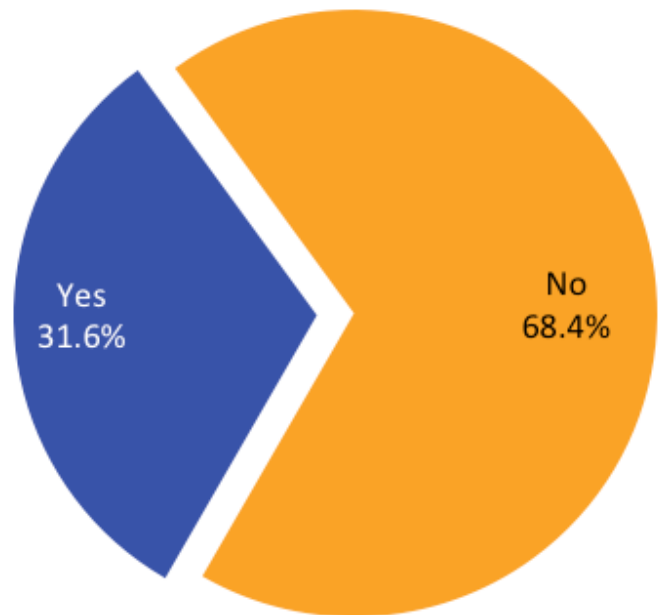


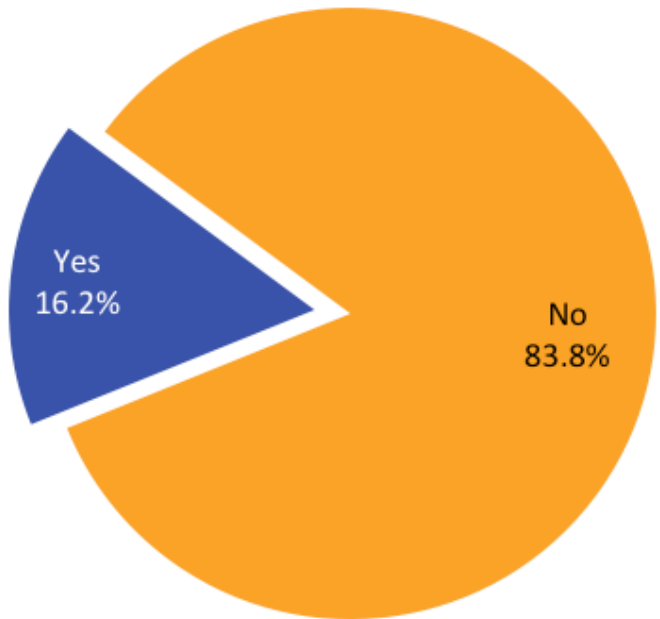
Photo: Aoife Collins Boulton



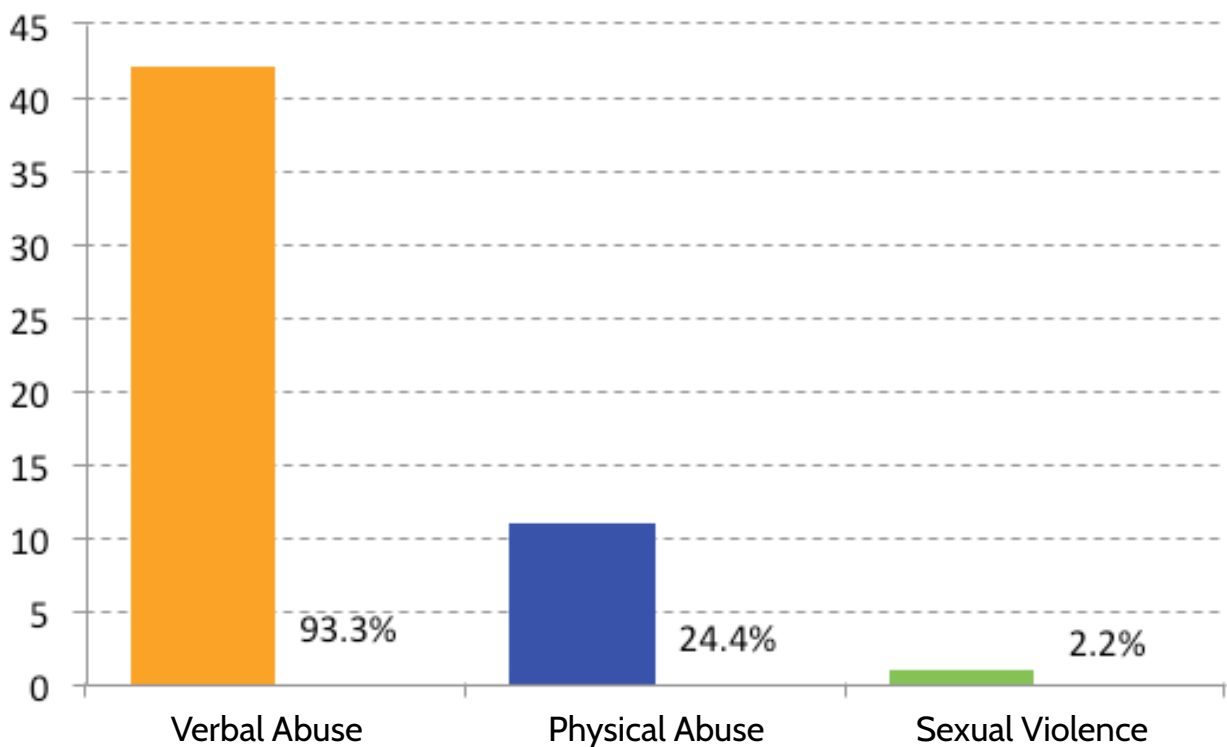
SAFETY AND SECURITY

In total, 16.2% of respondents had experienced violence by Greek citizens. However, the vast majority - whether residing in small camps in remote areas, or asylum centres in towns - were very happy about the interaction they had experienced with locals, and many were made to feel welcome by the Greek people.

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY CITIZENS?

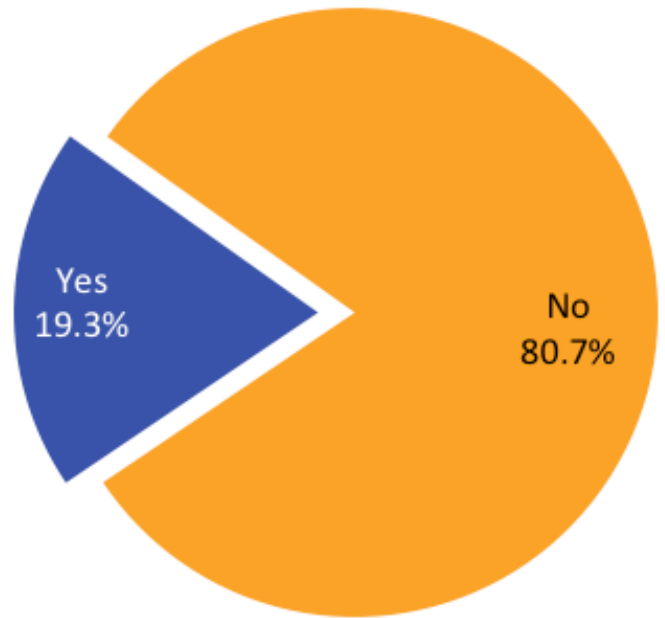


WHAT TYPE OF CITIZEN VIOLENCE?

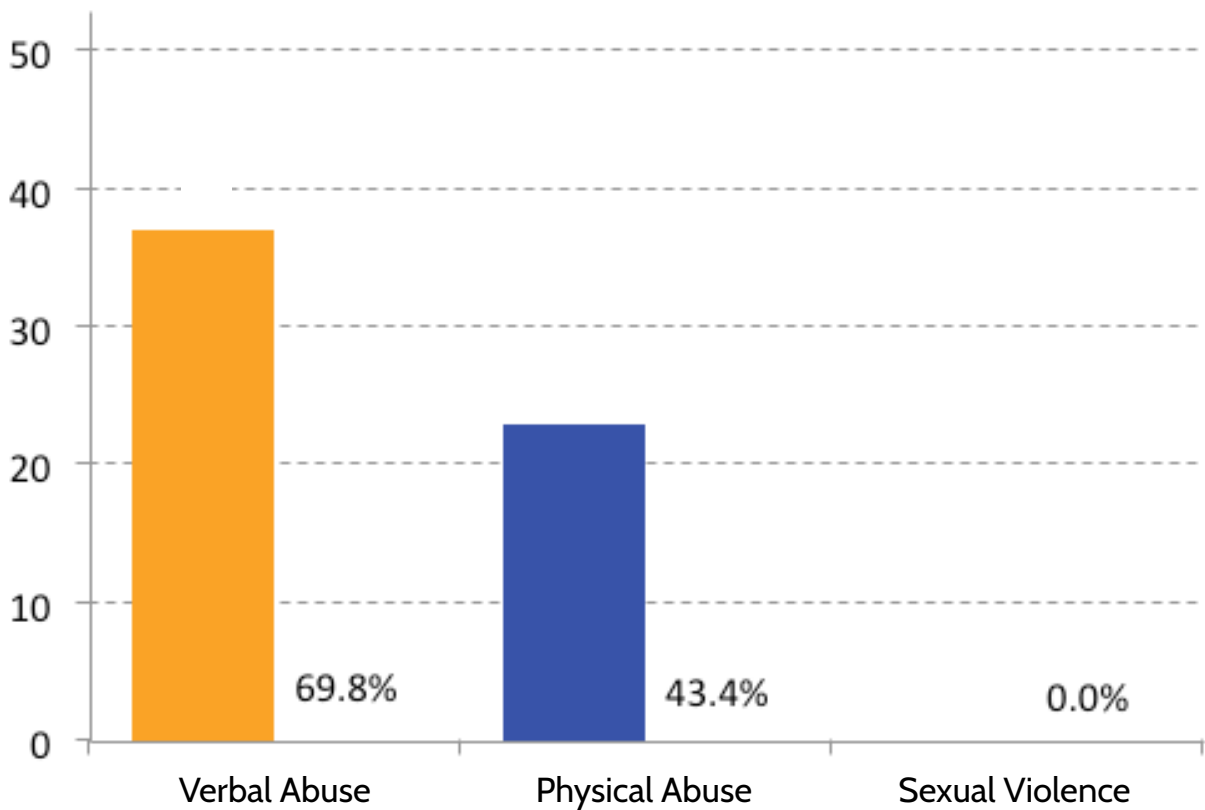


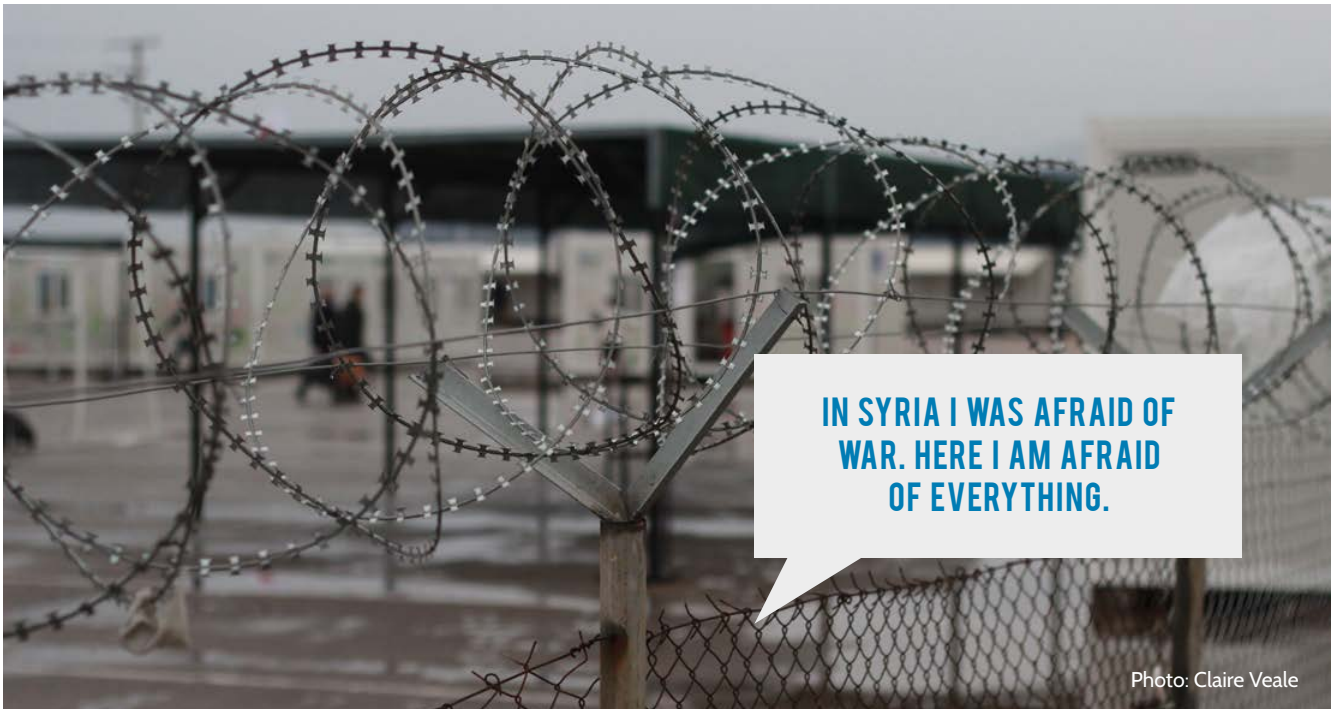
A slightly higher proportion of respondents, 19.3%, had experienced violence by someone inside the camp.

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY SOMEONE IN THE CAMP?



WHAT TYPE OF VIOLENCE BY SOMEONE INSIDE THE CAMP?



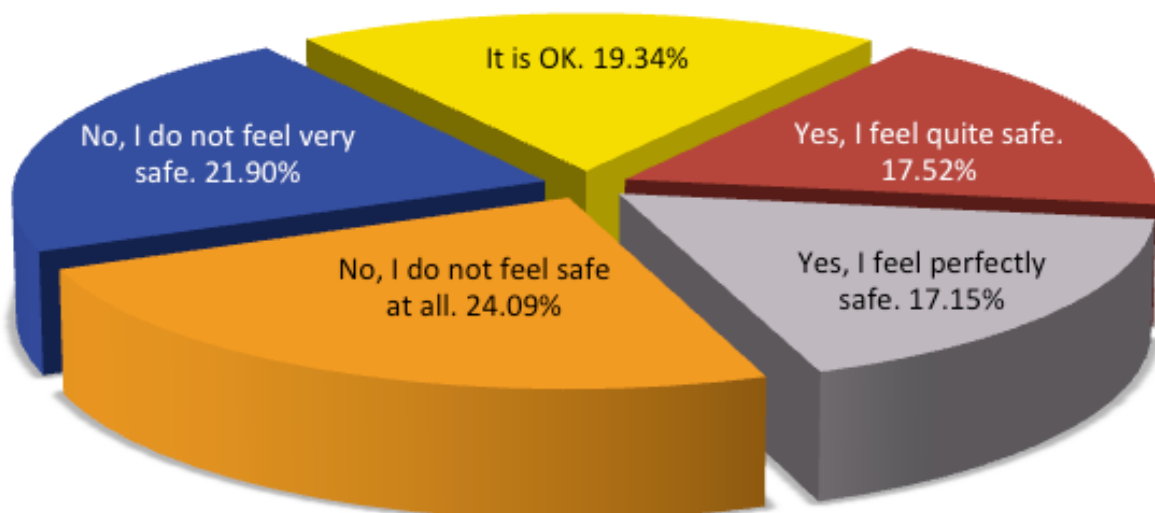


Almost half of all respondents (45.3%) said they 'don't feel safe at all' or 'don't feel very safe' inside their respective camps. For many this was due to a lack of security personnel (or their unwillingness to intervene). Others reported potential violence inside the camp, men drinking alcohol, the presence of wild animals such as wild boards and snakes, and the fact

that they lived in tents and/or did not have a secure lock on their door.

At one site, fighter jets regularly flew over the camp. Respondents explained how upsetting they found this experience, prompting memories of the war zones they had escaped in their countries of origin.

DO YOU FEEL SAFE IN THE CAMP?





**WE LEFT AFGHANISTAN
TO NOT GET KILLED BY
BOMBS. BUT WILL WE
JUST DIE HERE INSTEAD?**

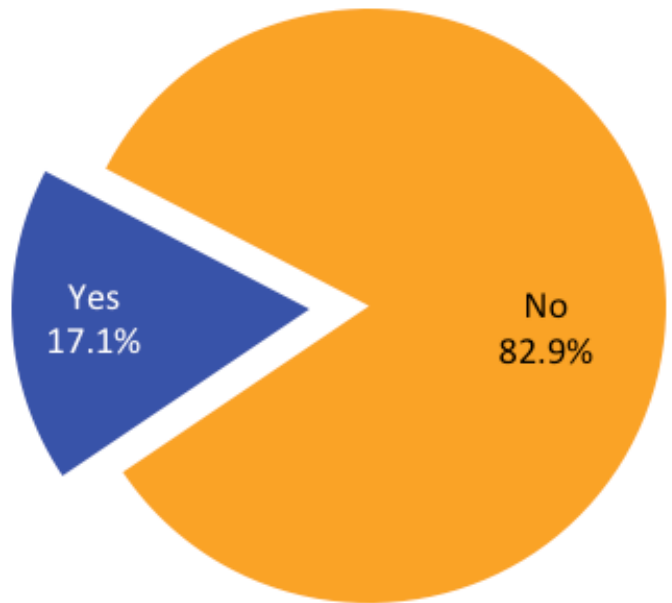
**ARTICLE 5:
NO ONE SHALL BE
SUBJECTED TO TORTURE
OR TO CRUEL, INHUMAN
OR DEGRADING TREATMENT
OR PUNISHMENT**

ARTICLE 5: NO ONE SHALL BE SUBJECTED TO TORTURE OR TO CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

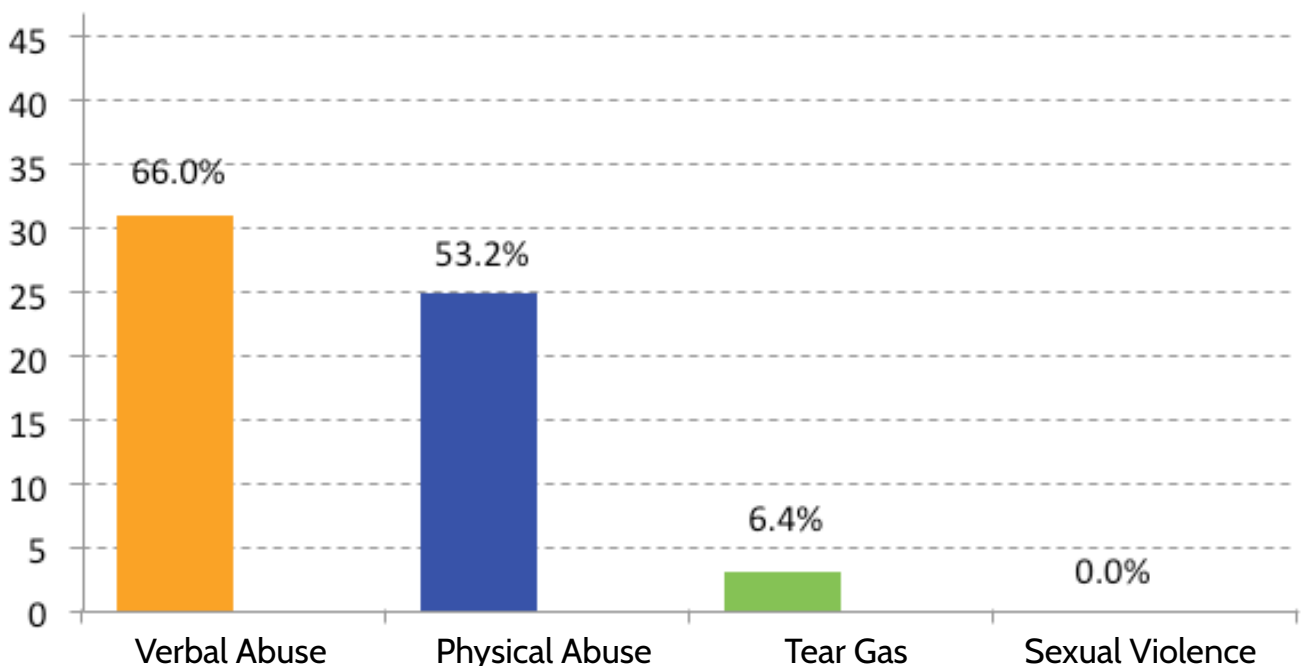
In 2016, several clashes were reported between refugees and police forces (or military or security officials) - particularly at the Greek- Macedonian border and on the islands. However, our study found relations between refugees and police in mainland Greece to be relatively calm.

Some 17.1% of all respondents (11.5% of women) reported experiencing violence by police (or security or military officials) during their time in Greece - the most common type of violence being verbal abuse. While the presence of police (or military or security personnel) is limited in camps on the mainland, this does not appear to be the case on the islands where a number of respondents reported encounters with security forces.

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY POLICE (OR SECURITY OR MILITARY OFFICIALS) IN GREECE?



WHAT TYPE OF POLICE VIOLENCE?



Some 20.5% of respondents said they had seen other refugees being hurt by police (or security or military officials), either in their camp or nearby. This confirmed our general estimation that around one fifth of refugees in Greece's mainland camps had experienced police violence during their time in Greece.

Despite this figure, respondents generally described their treatment by police in Greek camps as either 'very good' (18.43%), 'good' (32.16%) or 'OK' (38.82%). Several respondents noted that:

ANYONE CAN ENTER THE CAMP AND DO WHATEVER THEY WANT IN THE VICINITY OF THEIR CARAVANS AND TENTS

with some suggesting that increased policing would contribute to their sense of security within the camps.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE GENERAL TREATMENT OF REFUGEES BY POLICE (OR SECURITY OR MILITARY OFFICIALS)?

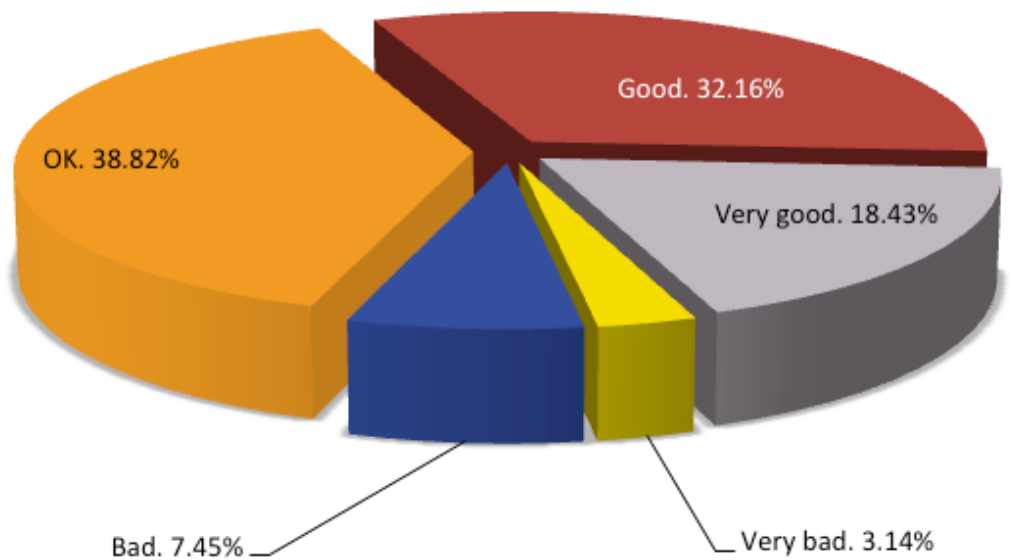



Photo: Claire Veale

A photograph of a makeshift camp. In the foreground, a large, textured tree trunk stands on the right. The ground is dirt and gravel, with long shadows cast across it. To the left, there are several tents made of grey and blue tarps. In the background, a white fence runs across the scene, with trees and a clear sky beyond it.

**WHEN THE BORDER
POLICE CAUGHT US
AND SENT US BACK,
THEY TREATED US IN A
RESPECTABLE WAY.**

**ARTICLE 7:
ALL ARE EQUAL BEFORE
THE LAW AND ARE ENTITLED
WITHOUT ANY DISCRIMINATION
TO EQUAL PROTECTION OF
THE LAW. ALL ARE ENTITLED
TO EQUAL PROTECTION
AGAINST ANY DISCRIMINATION
IN VIOLATION OF THIS
DECLARATION AND AGAINST
ANY INCITEMENT TO
SUCH DISCRIMINATION**

ARTICLE 7: ALL ARE EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW AND ARE ENTITLED WITHOUT ANY DISCRIMINATION TO EQUAL PROTECTION OF THE LAW...

At the time of our study, Syrians were the only one of these national groups to qualify for relocation within the EU. This programme, which is supposed to ease the burden of large refugee populations in Greece and Italy, has never accepted Afghans - despite their significant presence in the camps.

In addition, many Afghans reported a further grievance to researchers: perceived unequal treatment of refugees and displaced people inside camps, depending on their country of origin.

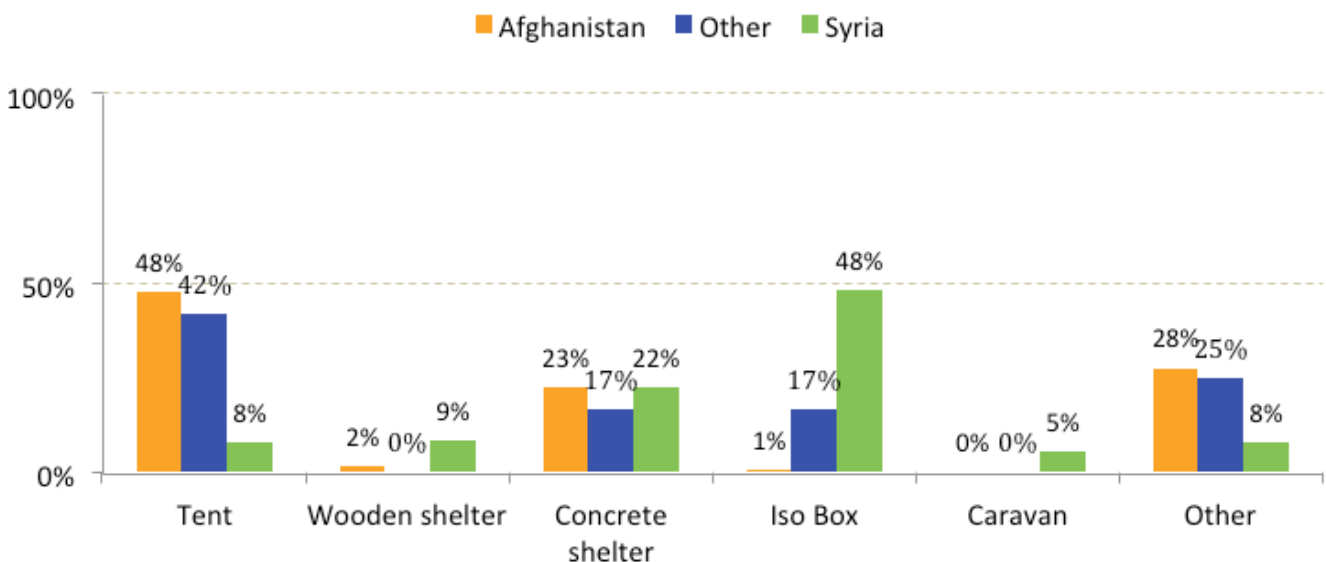
A LARGE NUMBER OF AFGHANS, FROM ALL CAMPS STUDIED, REPORTED THAT THEY HAD BEEN DISADVANTAGED COMPARED TO REFUGEES FROM SYRIA.

While RRE acknowledges the anecdotal, subjective nature of these reports of discrimination, we believe our findings do shine a light on potential additional adversities faced by Afghans during their time in Greece.

Almost half of all Afghans surveyed, some 48%, were residing in tents compared to just 8% of Syrian respondents. Conversely, 48% of Syrians lived in IsoBoxes compared to just 1% of Afghans. Possibly as a result of these differences, 58% of Afghan respondents said their shelter leaked water when it rained, compared to 42% of Syrians.

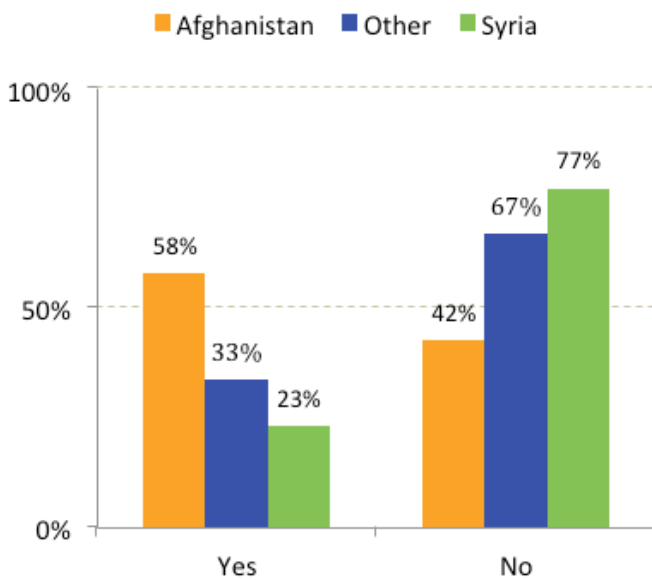


SHELTER TYPE (AFGHAN / SYRIAN)



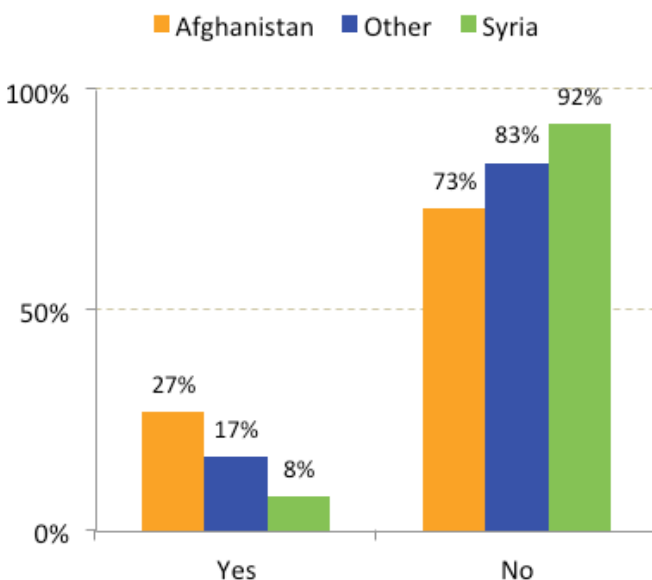
ARTICLE 7: ALL ARE EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW AND ARE ENTITLED WITHOUT ANY DISCRIMINATION TO EQUAL PROTECTION OF THE LAW...

DOES YOUR SHELTER LEAK WHEN IT RAINS? AFGHAN / SYRIAN

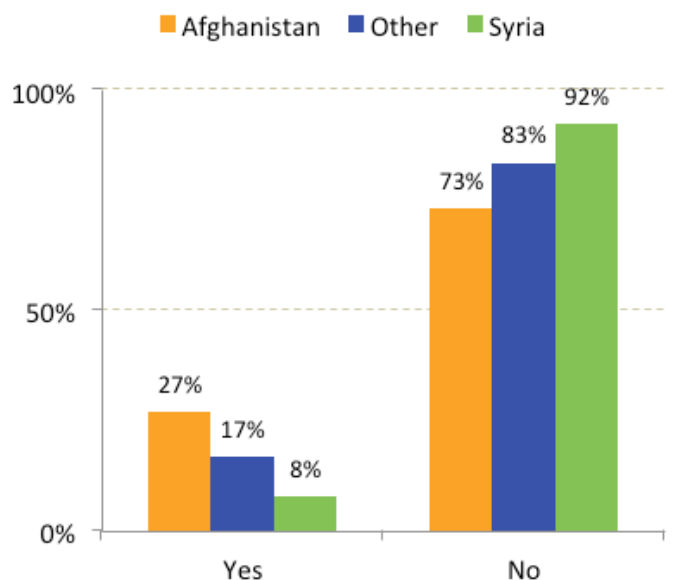


Afghans also reported experiencing higher levels of police and citizen violence than most other groups. Some 27% of Afghans said they had suffered violence from police or security staff as opposed to 8% of Syrians. The difference becomes even starker between those who reported violence by citizens - 30% of Afghans compared to 5% of Syrians.

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY POLICE OR SECURITY STAFF? AFGHAN / SYRIAN



HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE BY CITIZENS? AFGHAN / SYRIAN

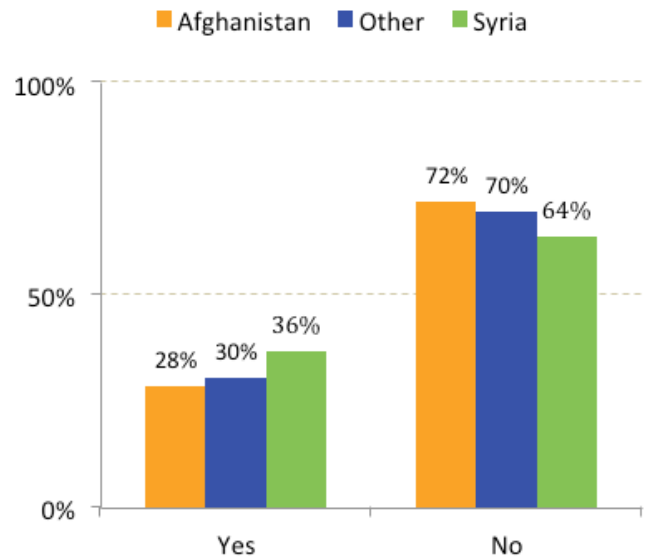


NOTHING HAS UPSET ME MORE DURING MY JOURNEY AND UP TO THIS POINT THAN SEEING AFGHANS BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN FAVOUR OF SYRIANS

said one Afghan respondent. She reported that an old Afghan woman in poor health was still living in the camp, despite a large number of Syrians being moved into a nearby hotel. If she was Syrian, the respondent claimed, the woman would have been prioritised for transfer.

While these findings are not necessarily a true representation of the treatment of Afghans and Syrians across all camps in Greece, it is nonetheless important to document the differences reported by these two national groups. This type of lived discrimination, whether intentional or not, has a significant impact on the mental and physical health of refugees and displaced people from Afghanistan.

**ACCESS TO ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION INFORMATION
AFGHAN / SYRIAN**

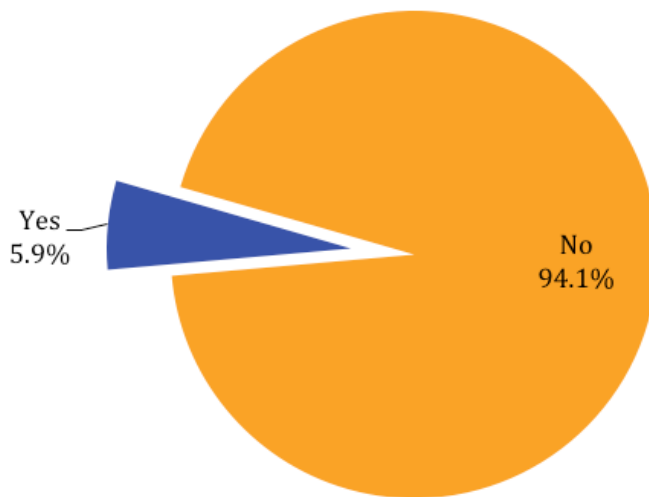


**ARTICLE 9:
NO ONE SHALL BE SUBJECTED
TO ARBITRARY ARREST,
DETENTION OR EXILE**

One woman, who was held for twelve days, explained how “there were 2,000 people to one toilet and all the male security guards would keep the doors open in order to watch us and laugh.” Another respondent reported that she was held in jail for 15 days with her entire family. One bathroom was shared by about 300 families, and she was denied access to a shower. They were provided with basic food, but it was almost always infested with bugs. One woman reported:

I WAS DETAINED FOR 20 DAYS AND I WAS EMOTIONALLY ABUSED. WE WERE NOT TREATED AS HUMANS. WE WERE CRYING ALL THE TIME. OUR YOUNG CHILDREN WERE CRYING. WE WERE SHOUTED AT AND ABUSED BY THE PRISON GUARDS AND THE POLICE.

HAVE YOU BEEN DETAINED IN GREECE?



Equally alarming are reports of refugees being detained by smugglers or other armed groups at various stages of their journeys. “I was detained once by robbers pretending to be police,” said one woman. “They brought us to a forest area and robbed us

of all our money and valuables. Later we were kept in detention in Turkey.”

Meanwhile, only a small percentage, 5.9%, had been detained during their time in Greece.



Photo: Claire Veale

**ARTICLE 12:
NO ONE SHALL BE SUBJECTED
TO ARBITRARY INTERFERENCE
WITH HIS PRIVACY, FAMILY,
HOME OR CORRESPONDENCE**

FAMILY LIFE

The vast majority of respondents, 93.5%, were in Greece with one or more family members, such as their spouse, children, siblings or other relatives.

WHO ARE YOU WITH IN GREECE?

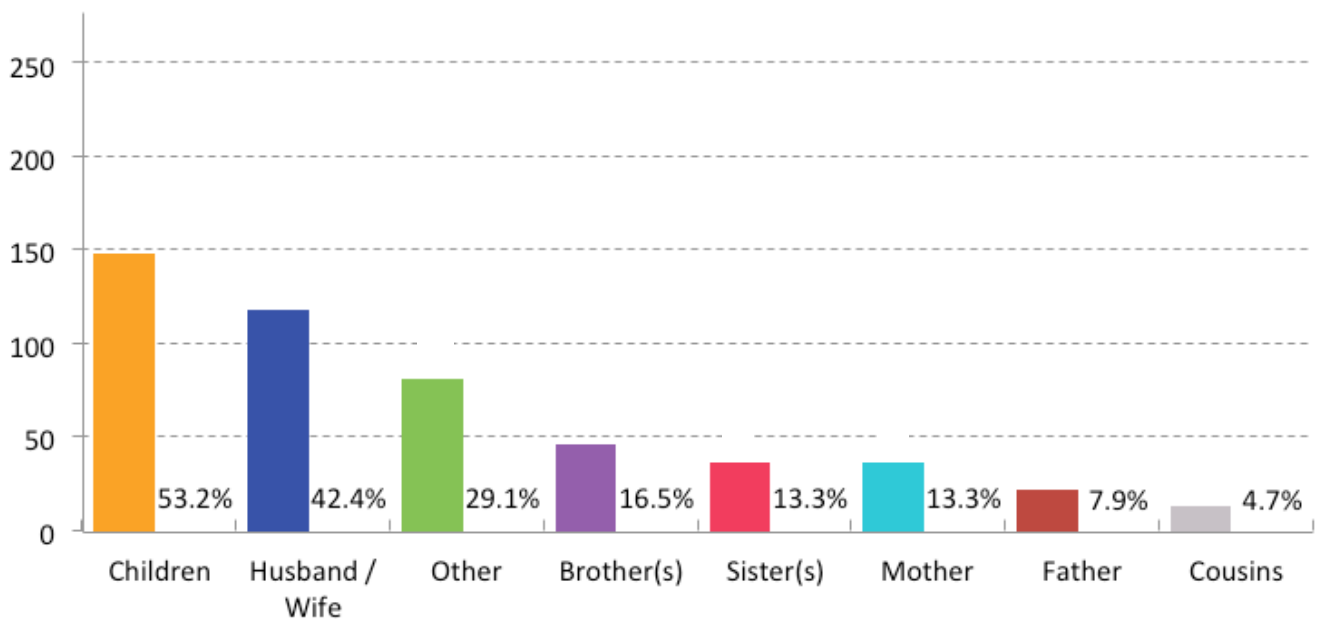


Photo: Claire Veale

ARTICLE 12: NO ONE SHALL BE SUBJECTED TO ARBITRARY INTERFERENCE WITH HIS PRIVACY, FAMILY, HOME OR CORRESPONDENCE

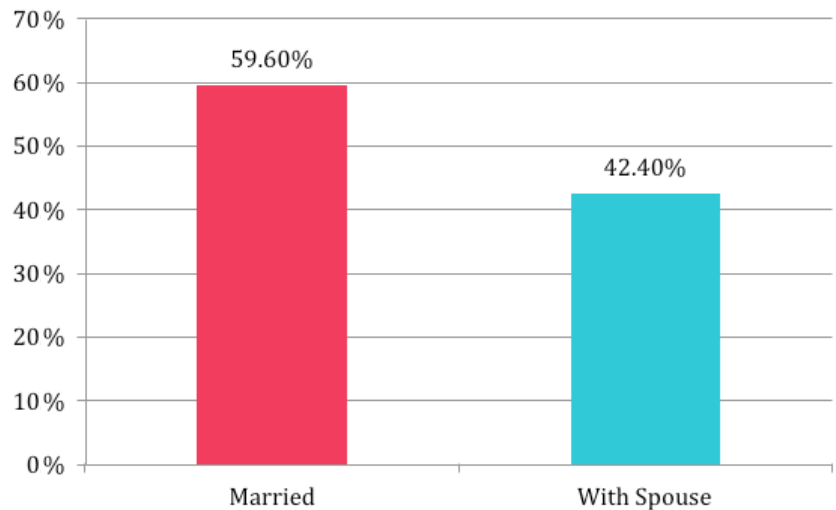
Upon arrival in Greece, a number of respondents reported that they experienced arbitrary separation of families. One woman recalled:

WHEN THEY ARRESTED US, THEY SEPARATED MEN FROM WOMEN AND CHILDREN. THEY WERE VERY ROUGH WITH THE MEN, I WAS TRYING TO PROTECT MY HUSBAND AS MUCH AS I COULD. THE KIDS WERE CRYING. IT WAS VERY TRAUMATIC.

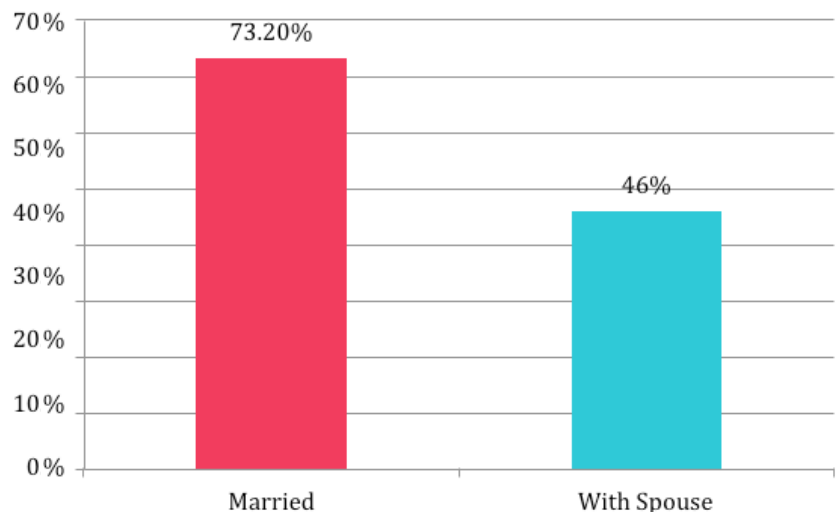
Many reported currently being on their own in their camp, with their relatives dispersed around other camps, or in Athens. Meanwhile, a number of women reported that their husbands had moved onto another European country and that they were hoping to be reunited there. Notably, while 59.6% of respondents were married, only 42.4% were in Greece with their spouse. For women, the discrepancy was even higher, with 73.2% being married, but only 46% being in Greece with their husband. Nearly 10% of women surveyed were widowed. One explained:

I NEED TO JOIN MY FAMILY, OTHERWISE I DON'T KNOW. I HAVE LOST MY HUSBAND IN SYRIA, HE WAS KILLED. I AM SAD AND LONELY AND SCARED HERE.

MARRIED / WITH SPOUSE IN GREECE ALL RESPONDENTS



MARRIED / WITH SPOUSE IN GREECE WOMEN ONLY



PRIVACY

Those 24.3% of respondents who lived in a so-called 'IsoBox' (container) at the time of the research reported that they had a certain level of privacy and family life. However, respondents in the same camp who were residing in tents, reported that they had very little space for family life and no privacy.

THE ROOM IS FILLED WITH TENTS. MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE IN THERE ALL TOGETHER. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SLEEP AT NIGHT BECAUSE YOU CAN HEAR EVERYONE TALK IN THEIR TENTS.

Similar problems were reported at a number of camps.

At another site, situated in an abandoned factory, people lived either in tents or makeshift rooms within an empty hall. Here, women found the lack of privacy to be a particular problem. Those living in makeshift rooms had to make do with curtains for privacy, rather than a solid door. Meanwhile, those living in tents also discussed their fears of someone entering their shelter at night.



Photo: Claire Veale

**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, D
ISABILITY, WIDOWHOOD, OLD
AGE OR OTHER LACK OF
LIVELIHOOD IN CIRCUMSTANCES
BEYOND HIS CONTROL**

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...

STANDARD OF LIVING

Only 3.6% of all respondents reported that they were 'completely satisfied' with living conditions in their camp, while 30.7% said they were 'completely unsatisfied'. The majority of respondents lived in a tent (28.3%), an 'IsoBox' container (24.3%) or a concrete shelter (22.5%).

Living conditions varied dramatically both between different camps, and within individual sites.

In one camp, located in a remote area, many of the 600 residents had been moved into 'IsoBox' containers approximately one week before the survey was conducted.

Meanwhile, another camp nearby hosted approximately 300 residents in either tents or makeshift rooms within an abandoned factory hall. A third site in the area provided accommodation for some 900 people in UNHCR tents.

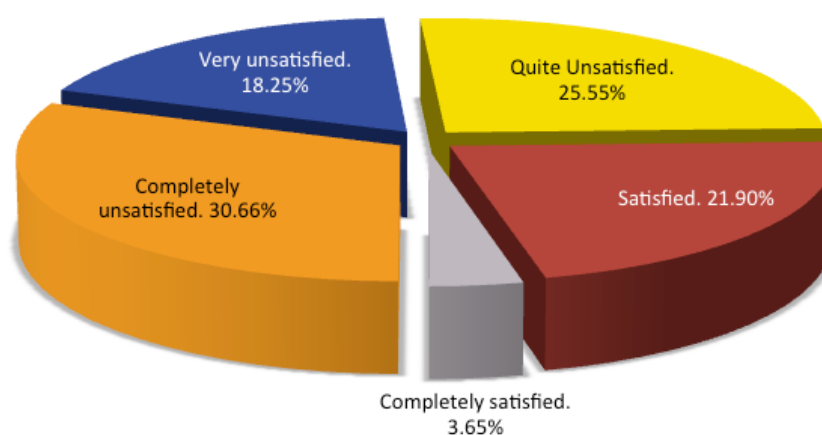
One of the largest camps near Athens hosted more than 3,000 people - the majority living in 'IsoBoxes', with the exception of 40 to 50 Iraqi Kurds who lived in tents under a barn-style roof. Another camp, of similar size, saw people living in tents within an abandoned sports stadium.

A RECEPTION CENTRE IN SOUTHERN GREECE, HOSTING JUST UNDER 100 RESIDENTS, PROVIDED EACH FAMILY WITH ONE ROOM ACCOMMODATING FROM FOUR TO SEVEN PEOPLE.

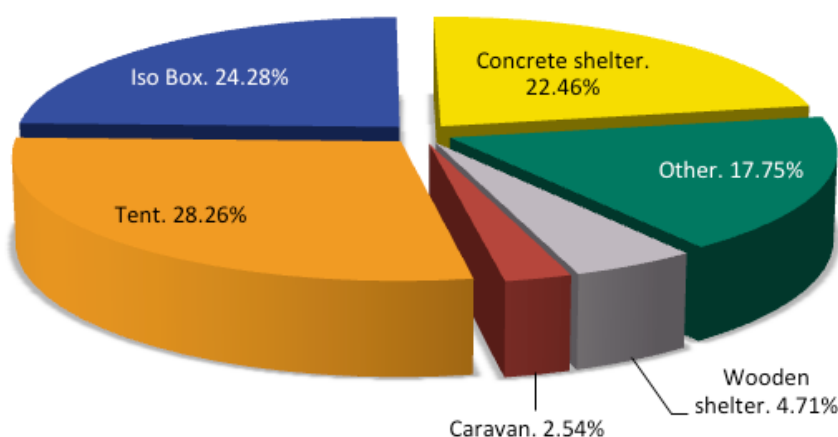
Another centre in the same region featured dorm-style rooms, while an associated camp nearby hosted families in small, basic caravan-style shelters.

Finally, a camp studied in north-western Greece, towards the border with FYR Macedonia, was characterised by particularly alarming living standards, hosting the majority of residents in tents.

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE LIVING CONDITIONS?



WHAT TYPE OF SHELTER DO YOU LIVE IN?



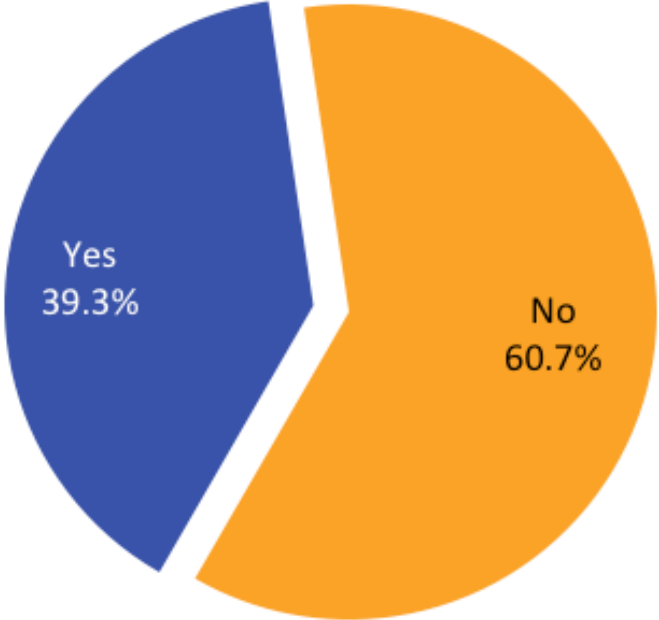
ARTICLE 25 (1): EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO A STANDARD OF LIVING ADEQUATE FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL – BEING OF HIMSELF AND OF HIS FAMILY...

More than a third, 39.3%, of respondents said their shelter leaked water when it rained. The majority of those suffering from this problem were housed in inadequate shelters, for example the 40 to 50 Kurds living in tents under a barn-style roof who reported getting wet during a torrential downpour the previous night.

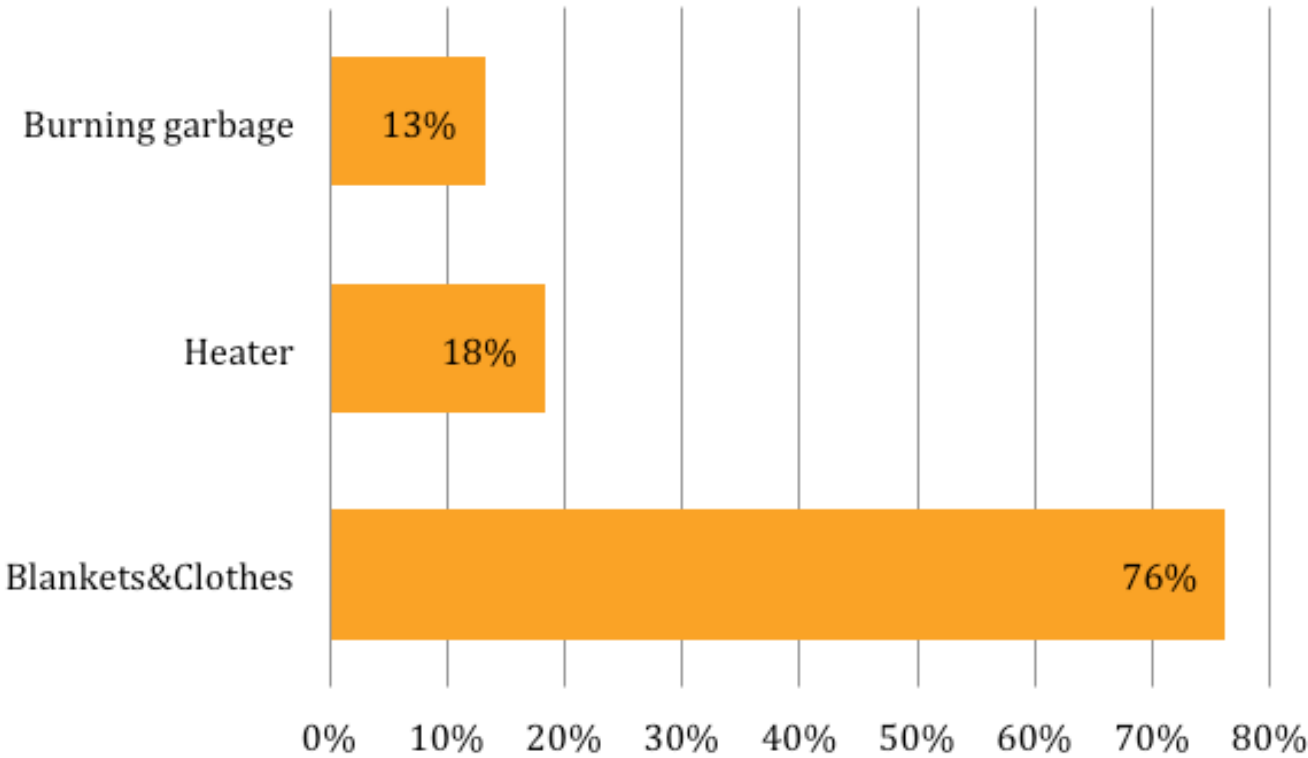
Across all camps studied, only 18% of respondents had access to a heater.

THE MAJORITY THEREFORE KEPT WARM USING CLOTHING AND BLANKETS, WHICH WAS A GREAT CONCERN TO MANY AS TEMPERATURES WERE PLUMMETING IN THE RUN-UP TO WINTER.

DOES YOUR SHELTER LET IN WATER WHEN IT RAINS?



HOW DO YOU KEEP WARM?



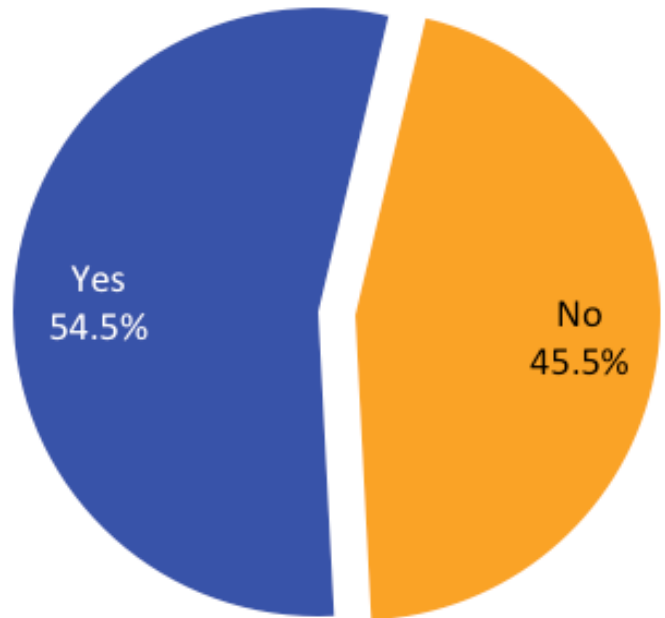
ARTICLE 25 (1): EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO A STANDARD OF LIVING ADEQUATE FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL – BEING OF HIMSELF AND OF HIS FAMILY...

THIS IS HOW ANIMALS LIVE. NOT HUMANS.

said one respondent, commenting on the living conditions in a large camp near Athens. Another, who lived in a smaller, remote camp added, *“Anyone coming from a war, any war, to seek refuge, deserves humane conditions.”* Some 54.5% of respondents had their own bed to sleep on, although this had not always been the case. *“I have a back ache due to sleeping in the tents,”* said one respondent. *“We have been sleeping on the ground for 8 months, before they gave us beds.”*

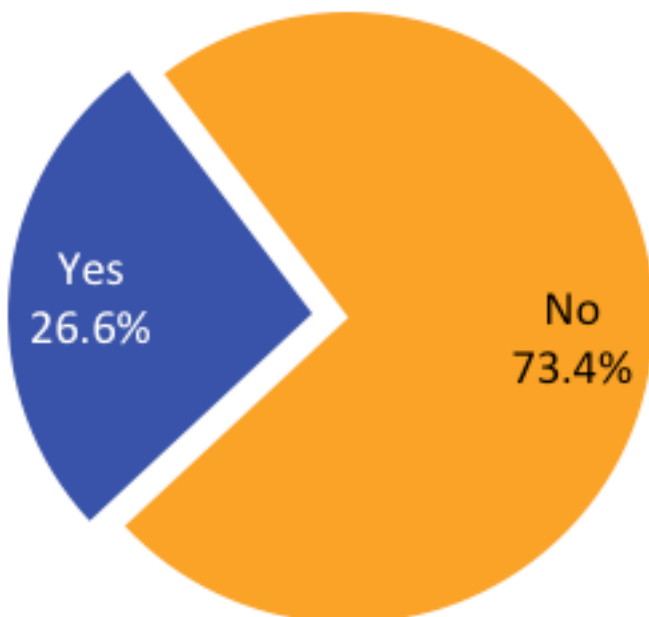
Meanwhile, only 26.6% said they had a secure lock on their shelter or room, which also gave rise to serious security concerns.

DO YOU HAVE YOUR OWN BED TO SLEEP IN?



DO YOU HAVE A SECURE LOCK ON YOUR SHELTER / ROOM?

While living conditions in the camps are alarming, there are also a large number of refugees and displaced people who have found themselves homeless on the streets in Athens. One respondent said:

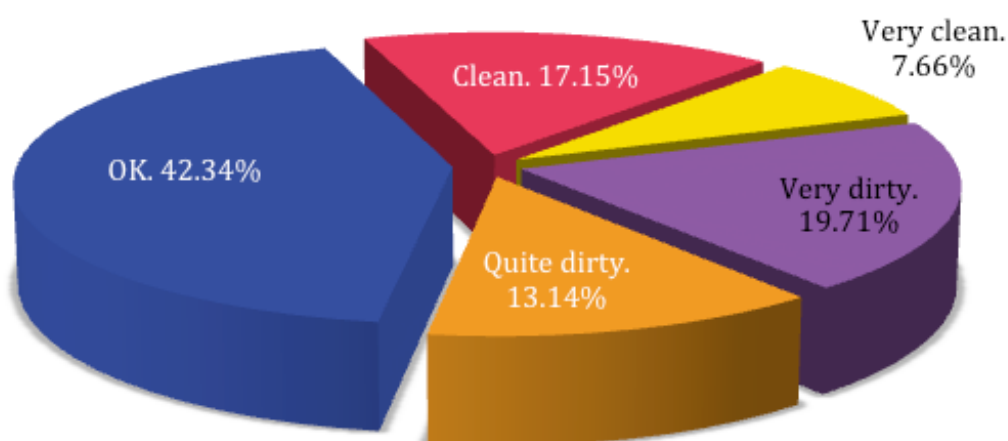


I USED TO LIVE IN A SCHOOL SQUAT WITH MY BROTHER BUT WAS KICKED OUT AROUND A MONTH AGO FOR A SILLY REASON. NOW I STAY IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE DURING THE DAY WHERE I GET A MEAL TO EAT. I SLEEP IN THE PARK WITH MY BROTHER. I DRINK FROM THE TAPS IN THE PARK. SOMETIMES PEOPLE WHO WORK IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE ASK ME TO STAY THE NIGHT IN THEIR HOUSE BUT I DON'T WANT TO OVERSTAY MY WELCOME.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

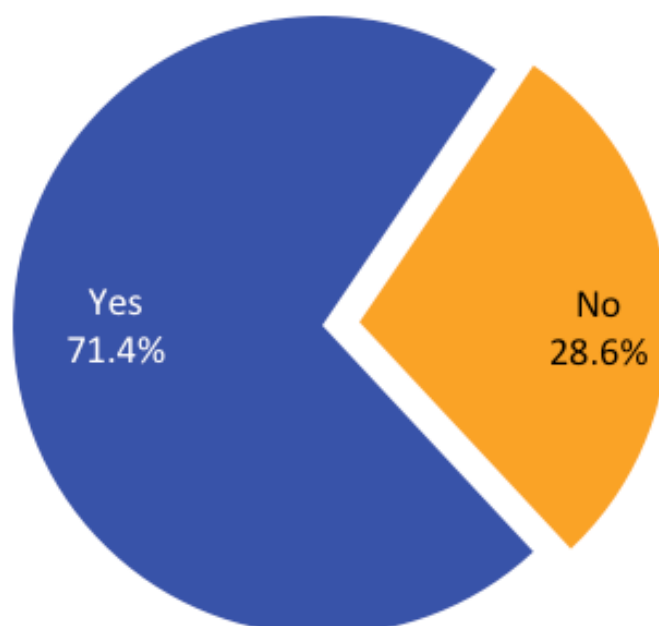
Many camps featured problems with hygiene and sanitation. While the majority described toilet facilities in their camps as 'OK', some 19.7% described them as 'very dirty'.

WHAT ARE THE TOILETS LIKE?



Moreover, 28.6% said they did not have enough water to shower and wash. 58.5% did not have access to hot water, and 60.7% said reported they were unable to wash any time they wanted. In one of the larger camps, women respondents explained that there were too few showers for all the residents.

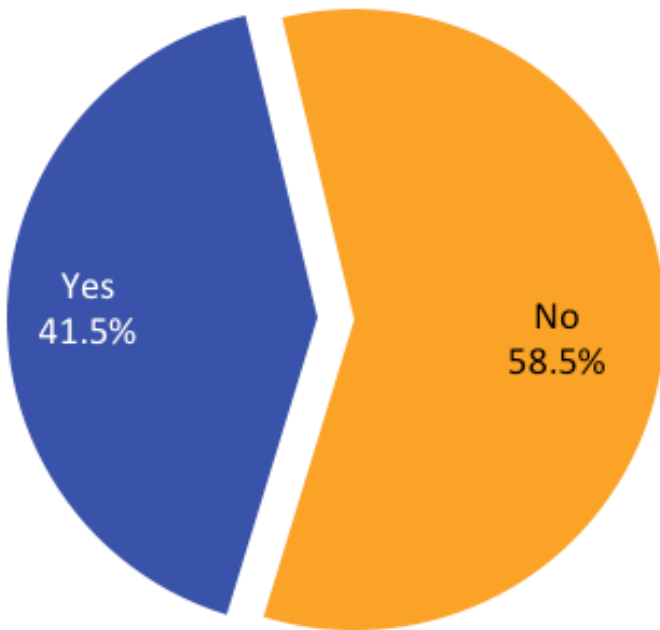
DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH WATER TO SHOWER AND WASH?



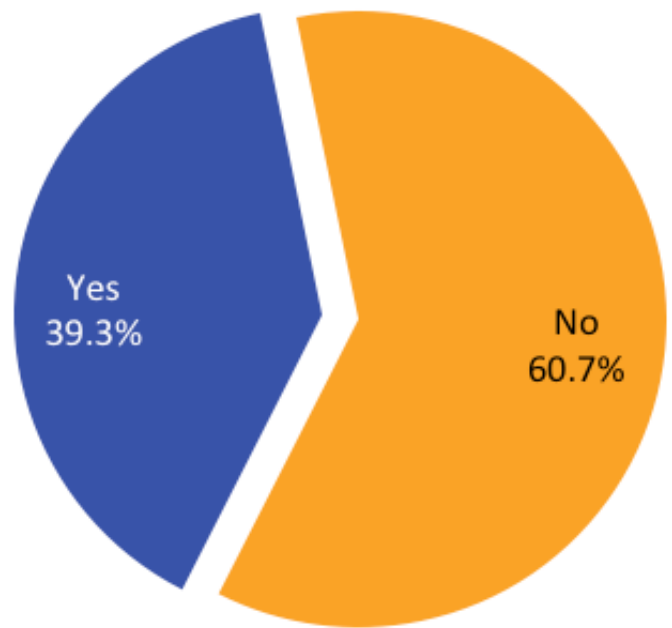
HOT WATER WAS ONLY AVAILABLE TO THE FIRST FEW PEOPLE TO WASH EACHDAY, AND MANY HAD CONCERNS ABOUT HEADACHES DUE TO BATHING IN COLD WATER.

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...

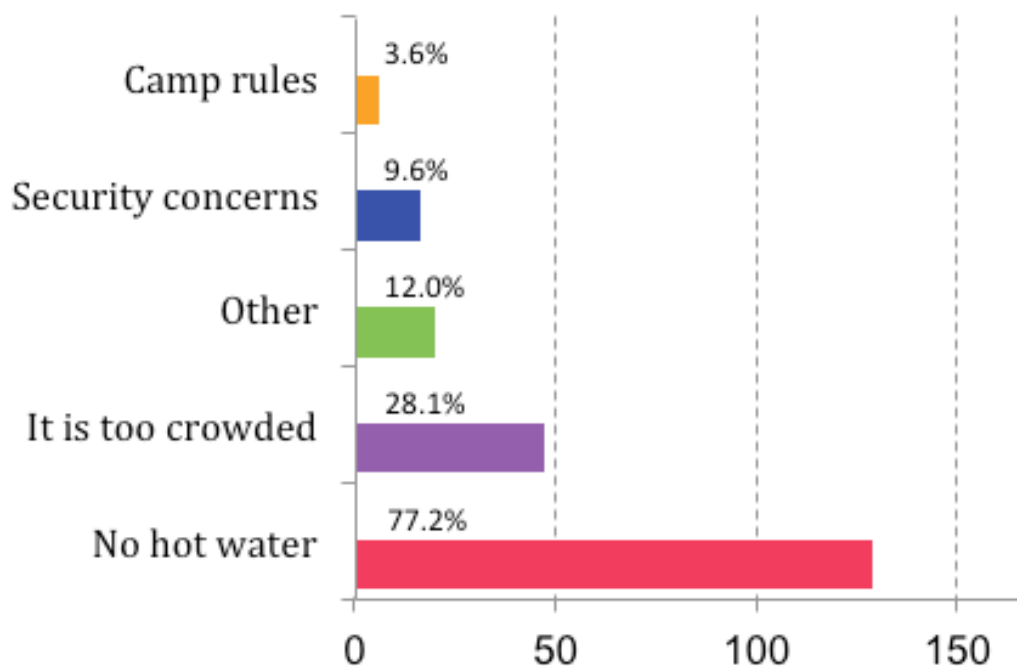
ARE YOU ABLE TO HAVE A SHOWER WITH HOT WATER?



CAN YOU SHOWER / WASH YOURSELF ANYTIME YOU WANT?



WHY CAN'T YOU SHOWER ANYTIME?



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...

A number of women reported feeling unsafe using the toilets and showers due to security concerns - particularly at night. One woman stated:

I DON'T GO TO THE TOILETS AT NIGHT. IT'S TOO FAR, AND I'M TOO SCARED TO GO ALONE. I HAVE TO WAIT TILL MORNING - I COULDN'T SLEEP, THE NIGHTS FELT LIKE THEY WERE SO LONG.

Further research findings relating to the safety concerns of women and girls can be found in Refugee Rights Europe's gender-specific report 'Hidden Struggles' (January 2016).

Respondents living in sites across Greece complained of various hygiene problems, from having to wash dishes in their bathroom sink, to infestations of rats and mice.



Photo: Claire Veale

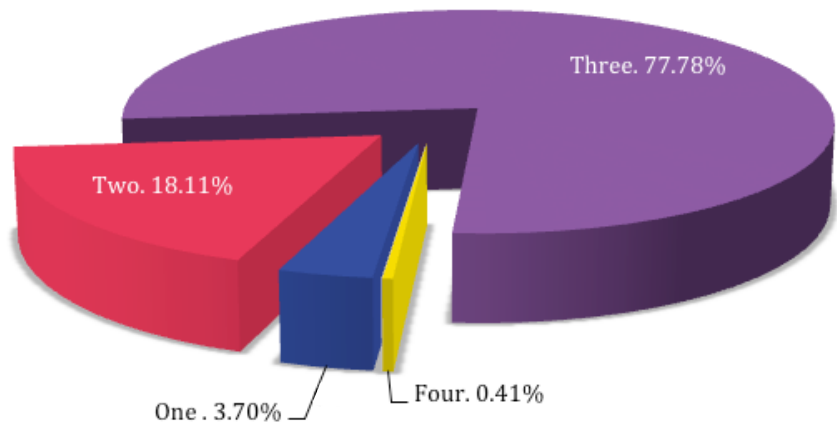
FOOD AND WATER

The majority of respondents, 77.8%, were able to access a full meal three times a day. However, many described the food as extremely poor, sometimes “inedible”.

IN ONE OF THE LARGER CAMPS, RESIDENTS REPORTED THAT RATS AND MICE MANAGED TO ACCESS FOOD, EVEN WHEN IT HAD BEEN STORED CAREFULLY IN BOXES AND BAGS.

A number of camp residents expressed that they would rather cook their own food, but they did not have the resources to purchase necessary ingredients. One woman told researchers that meals provided by the camp gave her daughters a stomach ache, to which camp management responded, “*don’t eat it if you don’t like it.*”

HOW MANY TIMES PER DAY CAN YOU HAVE A FULL MEAL?



A day centre in Athens is working to provide food to the many refugees and displaced people living on the city’s streets. A Syrian chef, who is also a refugee living in volunteer

accommodation, cooks breakfast and lunch each day for an average of 150 people.



Photo: Claire Veale

I DEVELOPED ALL SORTS OF HEALTH PROBLEMS FROM LIVING HERE. THEY SAY I'M IRON DEFICIENT AND HAVE A BLOOD PROBLEM BUT THIS WAS NEVER THE CASE WHEN I LIVED IN SYRIA. I BLAME EVERYTHING ON THE LACK OF NUTRITION IN THIS CAMP. IT IS NO WONDER WE ARE ALL SICK.

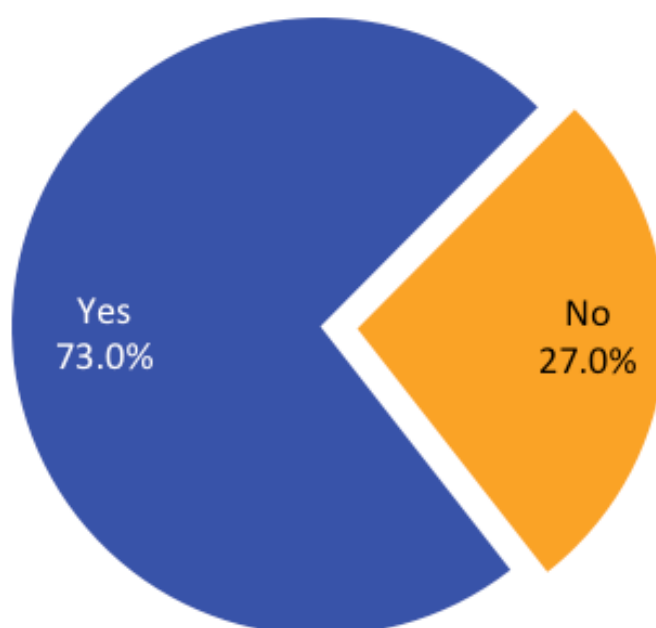


HEALTH ISSUES

Health issues and limited access to healthcare emerged as major challenges for refugees living in mainland Greece, with many reporting experiencing constant health problems.

In total, 73% of respondents had experienced health problems during their time in the camp - the majority due to the spread of contagious diseases, unhygienic conditions inside the camps, or a lack of effective treatment for chronic diseases or existing health issues. Meanwhile, a striking 20.1% of those who had experienced health problems reported that this was due to poor mental health or emotional wellbeing.

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY HEALTH PROBLEMS IN THE CAMP?



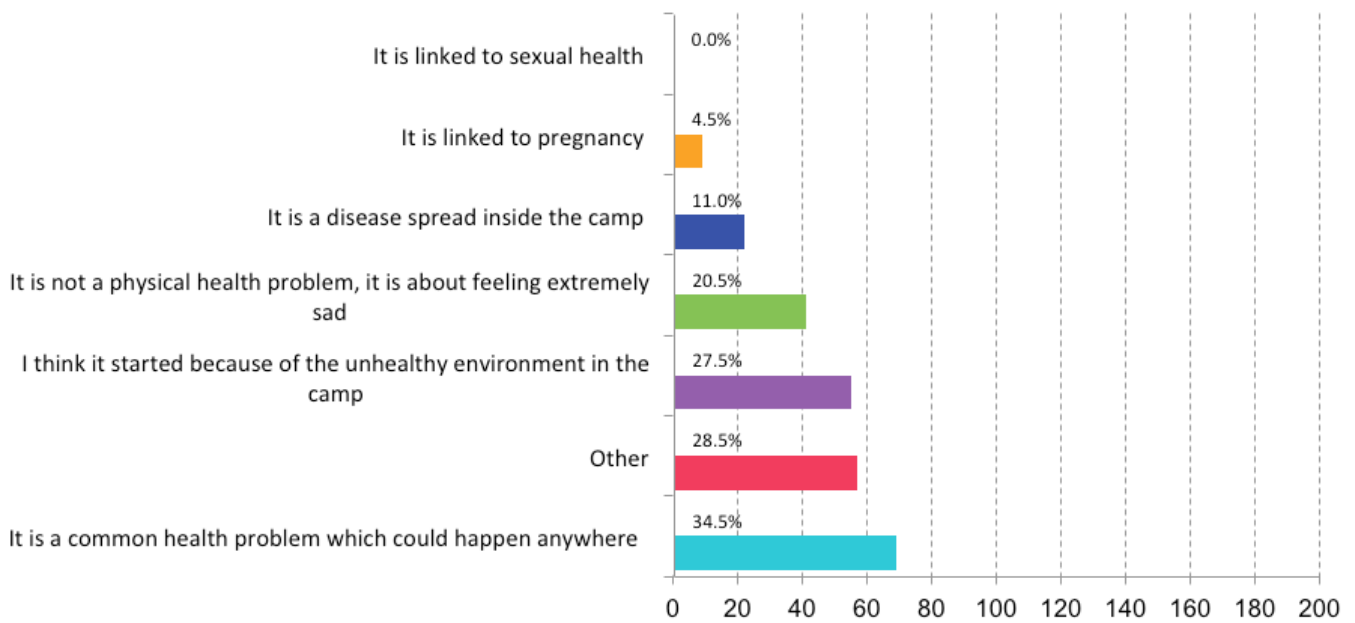
ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

MANY OF MY HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE A RESULT OF EXTREME STRESS – EVEN THE DOCTOR AT THE CAMP SAID SO

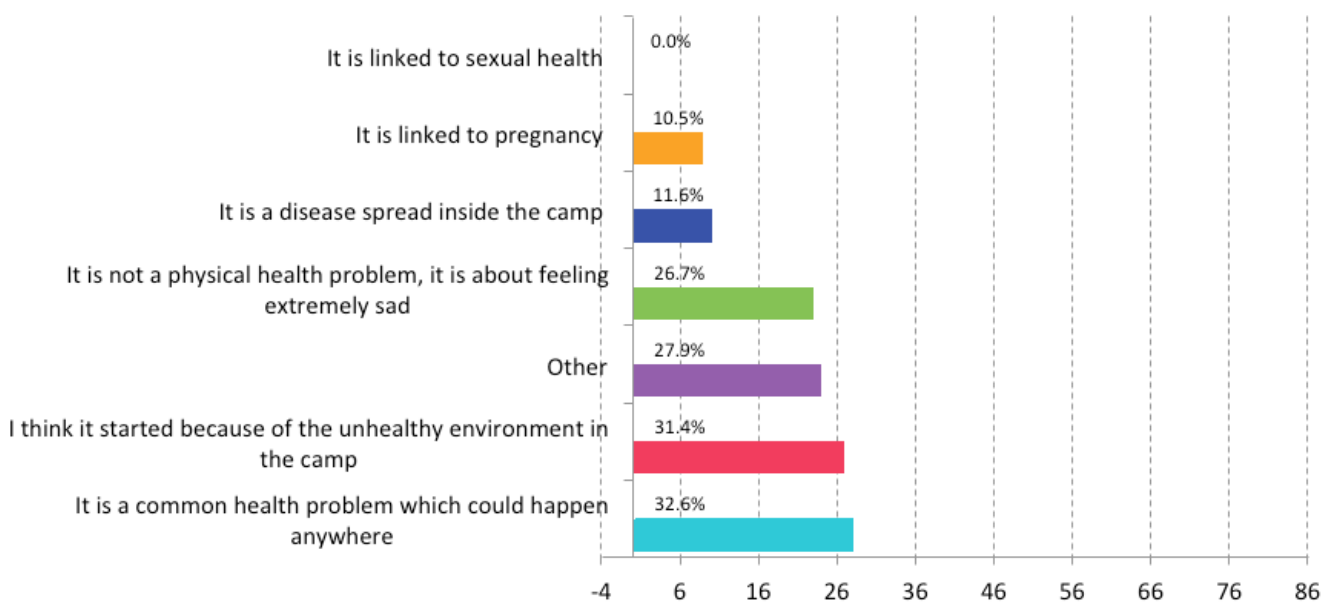
In total, 79.4% of those who had experienced health problems sought medical help - in most cases offered by international NGOs inside the camps or by the Greek hospitals through referral from the camp doctor. Of those with experience of healthcare, 51.9% rated it as 'OK', while 26.26% described it as either 'bad' or 'very bad'.

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...

**WHAT KIND OF HEALTH PROBLEMS?
ALL RESPONDENTS**



**WHAT KIND OF HEALTH PROBLEMS?
WOMEN ONLY**



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...

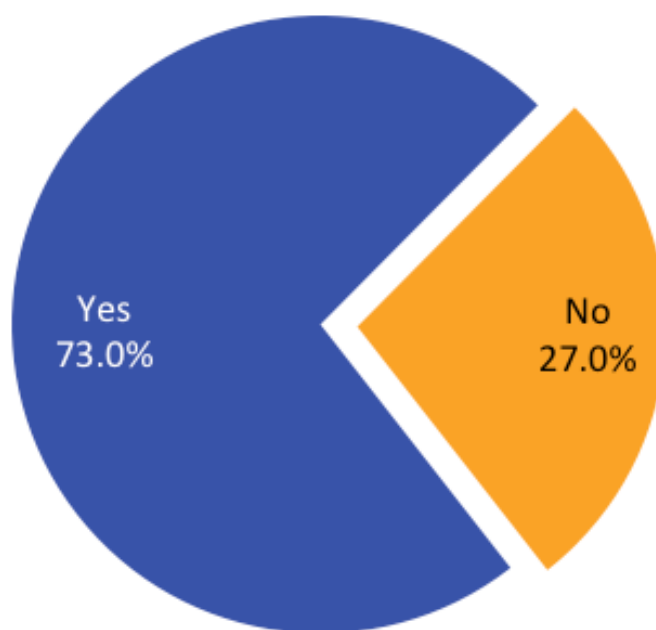
A lack of medical supplies and treatment was among the biggest concerns to camp residents. Respondents explained that paracetamol was prescribed to treat most medical concerns. The number of doctors and their reception hours were also perceived as inadequate, as one camp resident described it:

WE NEED DOCTORS ON CAMP ALSO AT NIGHT. ALL THE NGO'S LEAVE AT SUNSET. IF THERE IS AN EMERGENCY AT NIGHT, WE HAVE TO WAIT TILL 9AM FOR THEM TO COME BACK.

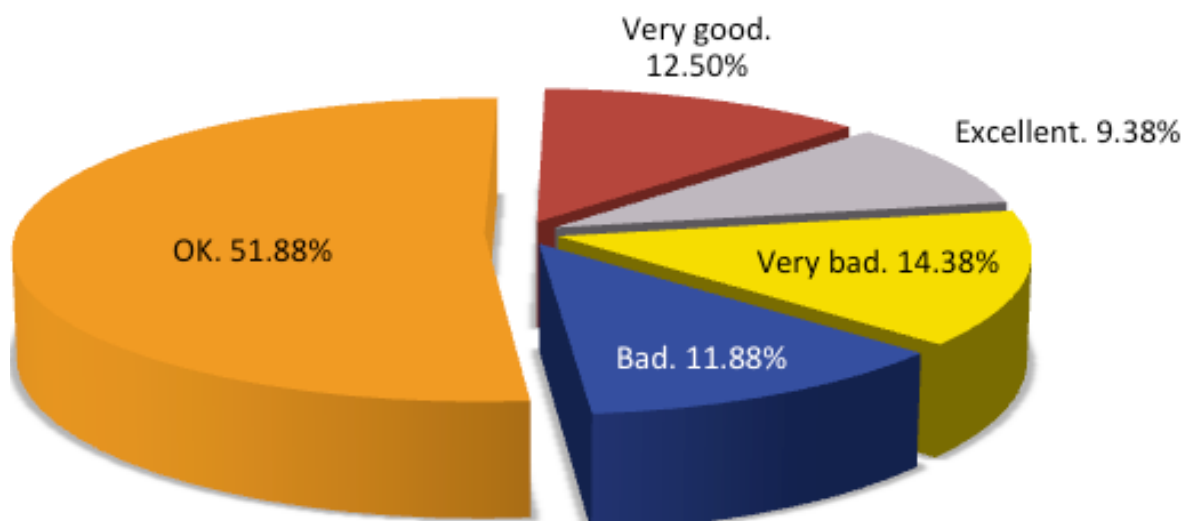
Another issue creating barriers to healthcare was a lack of translation services, which in many cases caused delays to treatment and created unnecessary frustration. *"I am always the last to get help in the hospital or to be seen by a doctor, even though I get there before others because I never have a translator,"* said one respondent.

Due to the limited services offered in camps, any more serious health issues need to be treated in Greek hospitals. However, access to these facilities is complicated - partly because patients must be referred by a camp doctor, but also because they tend to be far away and require high costs for both transportation and treatment.

DID YOU SEEK MEDICAL HELP? ALL RESPONDENTS



HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE MEDICAL CARE THAT YOU RECEIVED? ALL RESPONDENTS



SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE

**DO YOU KNOW WHERE WOMEN CAN ACCESS MEDICAL SERVICES FOR PREGNANCY?
ALL RESPONDENTS**

**DO YOU KNOW WHERE WOMEN CAN ACCESS MEDICAL SERVICES FOR PREGNANCY?
WOMEN ONLY**

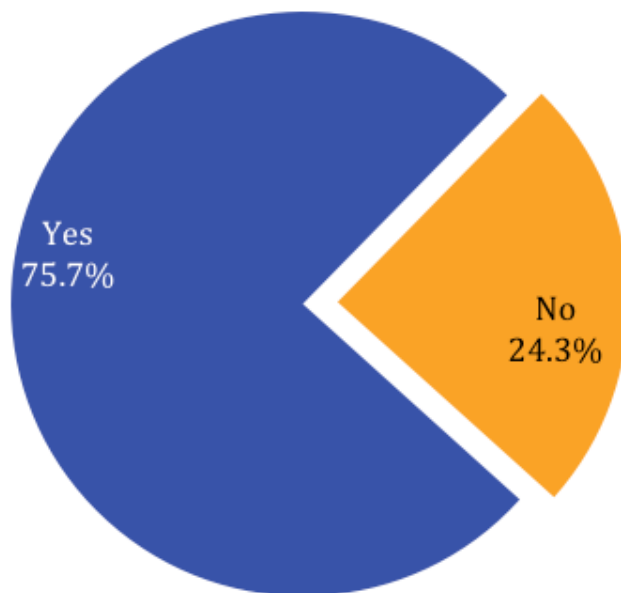
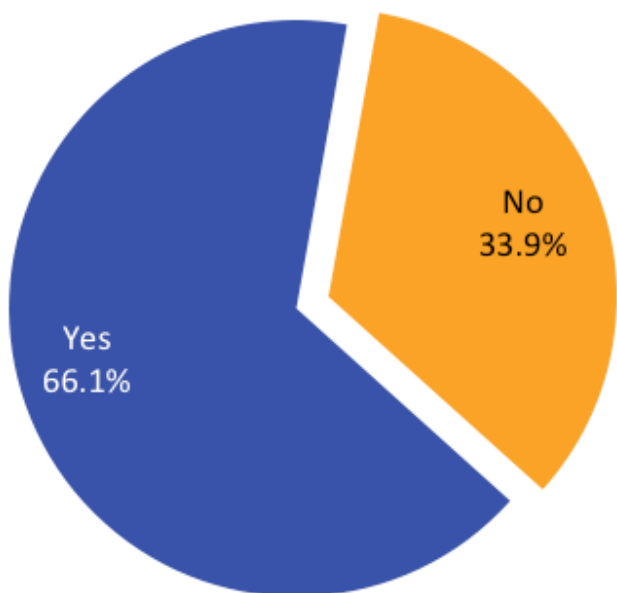


Photo: Claire Veale

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...



Photo: Claire Veale

Many respondents reported that medical care for pregnant women was insufficient. A number reported experiencing delays before transferring pregnant women to the nearest hospital. One respondent explained:

MY WIFE WAS PREGNANT AND SHE HAD COMPLICATIONS IN HER PREGNANCY. SHE COULD HAVE HAD A MISCARRIAGE; THEY WERE SO SLOW. IT TOOK SEVEN HOURS TO GET TO A HOSPITAL.

In each of the camps studied, with one exception, at least one service provider reported that they could give local access to 24-hour-a-day emergency maternal care. In all camps but two, service providers said they could give access to 24-hour-a-day emergency neonatal care. However, one service provider reported, *“The services that are available for pregnant women are purely symbolic. In practice, they are entirely insufficient.”*

A lack of translation services in hospitals made the experience of childbirth traumatic for some women - particularly for first-time mothers, many of whom were not properly informed about the medical procedures being conducted.

THE MAJORITY OF CAMP DOCTORS WERE MEN, WHICH MADE MANY WOMEN HESITANT TO DISCLOSE OR SEEK TREATMENT FOR THEIR SEXUAL OR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROBLEMS.

This is particularly concerning given that 4.5% of all respondents who had experienced health problems in the camp said that these were linked to pregnancy. For example, several women told us that they were too embarrassed to consult male doctors about treatment for urinary tract infections

and similar, despite this being a common and relatively easily-curable health problem among pregnant and sexually active women.

Access to contraception proved to be equally troublesome, since only 12% of women interviewed privately knew where they could access contraceptives. One woman explained, *“I avoid sexual relations because I want to make sure that I don't get pregnant. I don't know where to get contraception. The last thing I need is a baby in this situation!”*

In many camps, it appeared that condoms were only offered to men, effectively excluding women from family reproduction decisions. Some women reported that they had

asked service providers for contraceptive pills or the coil, but they requests had been declined.

Additional research findings relating to motherhood, as well as sexual and reproductive health more broadly, are presented in Refugee Rights Europe's gender-specific report 'Hidden Struggles' also based on our studies in Greek camps.

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...

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

A number of respondents explained how there are very few measures in place to ensure that people with disabilities are given the care and services they require.

For instance, one mother reported that her son with autism received no adequate care. *“My ten year old son has autism,”* she explained. *“I need to leave here since my son needs special care. I tried to leave to Italy from Greece. We took a boat but the waves were over three metres high. It was a miracle that we were saved and returned to Greece. We need help.”*

Another mother of four, herself aged just 28, reported that her six-year old son cannot speak. A healthcare organisation in the camp referred her to a doctor in Athens who scheduled an appointment for five months’ time. One respondent asked:

IS IT NOT MY SON'S RIGHT TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK? TO GET THE HELP THAT ALL OTHER KIDS GET SO THAT HE CAN BE A PROPER MAN AND LIVE A NORMAL LIFE? WHAT MAKES HIM LESS WORTHY THAN EVERY OTHER CHILD?



Photo: Claire Veale

THE ELDERLY

By the same token, the research findings suggest that very few measures are in place to provide specific care and services for elderly people. One older woman explained how she stacked chairs, pieces of wood and blankets against the entrance to her tent, as she did not feel safe alone at night.

Another reported keeping her mobile phone and personal documents under her pillow at night for security reasons, but she was unable to sleep properly because she felt so unsafe.

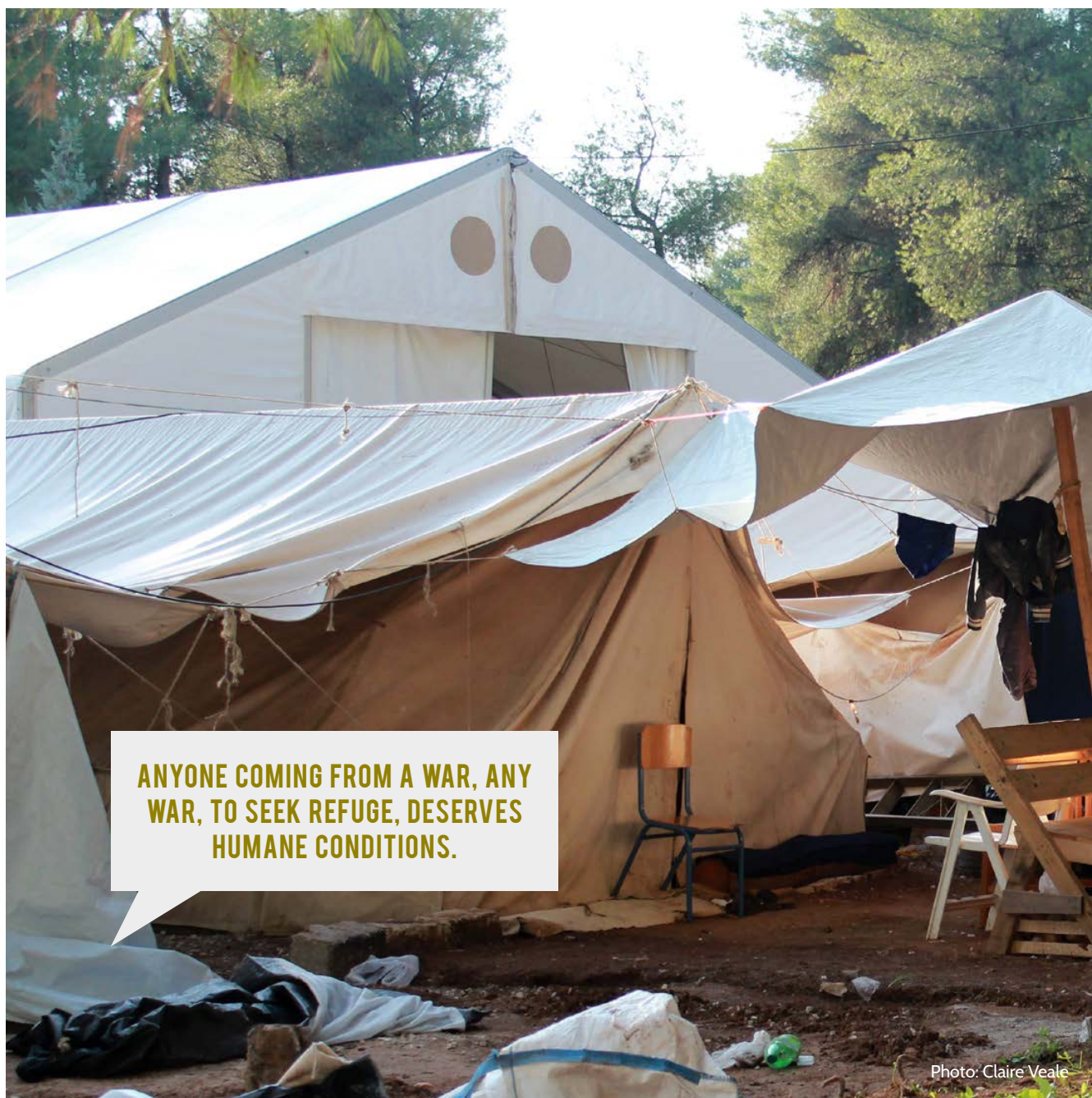


Photo: Claire Veale

**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**

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

74.3% of women who took part in the research study were also mothers, which adds to the complexities and struggles of camp life. Many of them expressed deep concerns about going through motherhood in the camp setting. One woman said:

LIFE IN CAMP IS DIFFERENT FOR WOMEN IN COMPARISON TO MEN. ESPECIALLY TO MOTHERS BECAUSE THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN.

Another told our researchers, *“Every day I cry, because I am so worried about the future of my child. I want her to be safe, that’s all I want. And right now there is no certainty of that.”*

NGOs and volunteers have set up ‘mother and child spaces’ and ‘female friendly spaces’ in many camps, along with the opportunity to attend activities/classes of their own. However, some ‘female friendly spaces’ have a policy of only allowing access to mothers with babies younger than two years of age, which excludes many from using the facilities.

As mentioned in the previous section about healthcare, 33.9% of survey respondents (both men and women) said they did not know where a woman could seek medical care if pregnant. Almost a quarter, 24.3% of women, did not know where they could seek this type of care. Meanwhile, 4.5% of respondents who had experienced health problems reported that these were linked to pregnancy. (See Access To Healthcare section on P44).

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS RELATING TO MOTHERHOOD, AS WELL AS SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH MORE BROADLY, ARE PRESENTED IN REFUGEE RIGHTS DATA PROJECT’S GENDER - SPECIFIC REPORT ‘HIDDEN STRUGGLES’ ALSO BASED ON OUR STUDIES IN GREEK CAMPS.

I HAVE TO SEND MY KIDS TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY IN THEIR PYJAMAS. AS A MOTHER, THIS IS REAL PAIN.



Photo: Claire Veale

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.

CHILDHOOD

The low overall living conditions for refugees in Greece - and extended periods spent in waiting - are particularly unsuitable for children. "All my children got sick," said one woman, describing how one suffers from apnoea and asthma, another from calcium deficiency and kidney problems, and a third from skin problems and dermatitis - partly due to the poor living conditions in the camp. One mother explained that her children had not washed in 20 days, and even then it was in cold water.

The overall lack of safety and security in the camps (see above) raises specific concerns for children. There are a significant number of unaccompanied minors in many camps, who are at heightened risk. A service provider reported that unaccompanied boys were often unwilling to move from tents to caravans or their 'IsoBox' containers because they did not want to live with other men due to fear of sexual violence.

As previously mentioned, military jets flying above camps is particularly upsetting for children, who may associate these with traumatic experiences in their country of origin.

Meanwhile, in a squat in Athens, a Syrian man reported that he was living in squalid conditions with his 6-year-old son, following the death of his wife in Syria.

HE EXPRESSED CONCERNS FOR HIS SON AS HE WAS FORCED TO SHARE A ROOM WITH YOUNG ADULT MEN WHO DRINK, SMOKE AND USE DRUGS IN THE ROOM, TEACHING BAD HABITS AND WORDS TO HIS SON.

As mentioned in our report 'Hidden Struggles', many women interviewed during our research expressed deep concern about the health of their children, and felt that the authorities were not doing enough to redress the situation.

Some experienced issues accessing emergency healthcare for their children. Another woman explained, "I demanded an ambulance because my baby couldn't breathe. This wasn't taken seriously enough. Eventually [the service provider] called the ambulance, and then I was kept with the baby for four days in hospital in Athens".

Women also reported issues with securing basic needs, such as infant formula, for their children. One described how she was referred to a major healthcare service provider, but was forced to wait for two hours before being told to come back tomorrow, without

any explanation for the delay. "I used to be a dignified woman in Aleppo," she said. "I'm from a big family and we had money. I don't know how to beg. But my baby is hungry. What am I supposed to do?"



Photo: Claire Veale

**WE ALWAYS THOUGHT OUR KIDS
WOULD BE DOCTORS OR SOMETHING
RESPECTABLE WHEN WE WERE IN SYRIA.
NOW THEY HAVE NO EDUCATION AND NO
CHANCE FOR A FUTURE.**



**ARTICLE 26(1):
EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT
TO EDUCATION**

ADULTS' EDUCATION

The majority of respondents, 69.6%, said they did not have access to any form of education. Moreover, 30.4% said they 'don't speak any English at all' and 73.9% 'don't speak any Greek at all'.

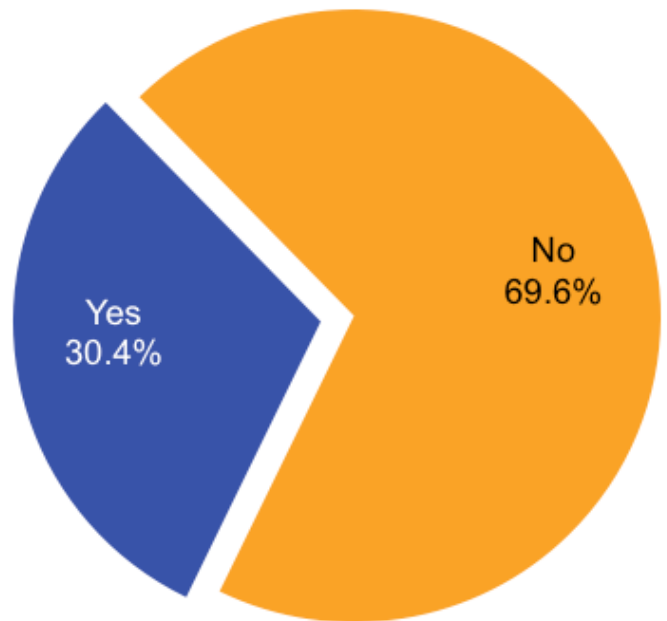
WHILE DISCUSSING THIS TOPIC, RESPONDENTS IN AN ASYLUM RECEPTION CENTRE IN SOUTHERN GREECE REPORTED THAT THEY HAD BEEN WAITING FOR SEVERAL MONTHS TO ACCESS GREEK LANGUAGE CLASSES BUT WITHOUT ANY SIGN OF ADVANCEMENT.

Others reported that they had the opportunity to attend English language teaching offered by volunteers. Meanwhile, researchers identified several adults who engaged in informal peer-learning or were teaching themselves English.

In a different camp, an 18-year-old woman reported that she had dropped out of school due to language difficulties. She had been provided with an interpreter at school for the first two weeks, but found learning in this way so difficult that eventually left the classes.

Women in another camp reported that they were offered some Greek language learning by volunteers, but illiterate women did not attend since they didn't understand how they could learn without even knowing the letters of their own language.

DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO ANY FORM OF EDUCATION?



THAT MAN OVER THERE WAS AN ARCHITECT AND THE ONE NEXT TO HIM A LAWYER. NOW LOOK AT THEM.

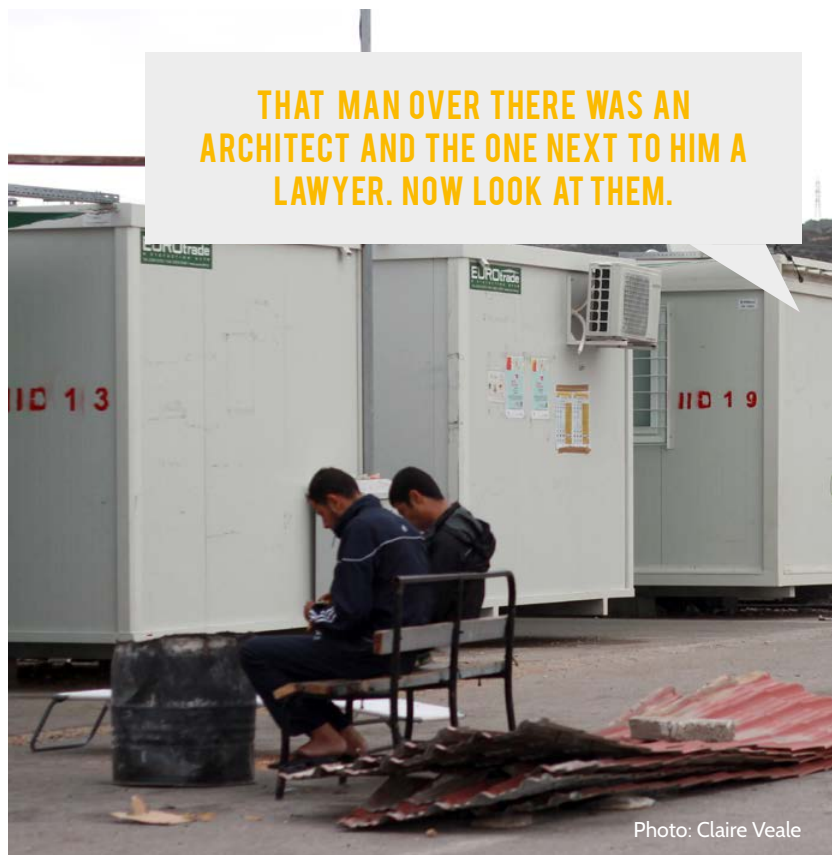
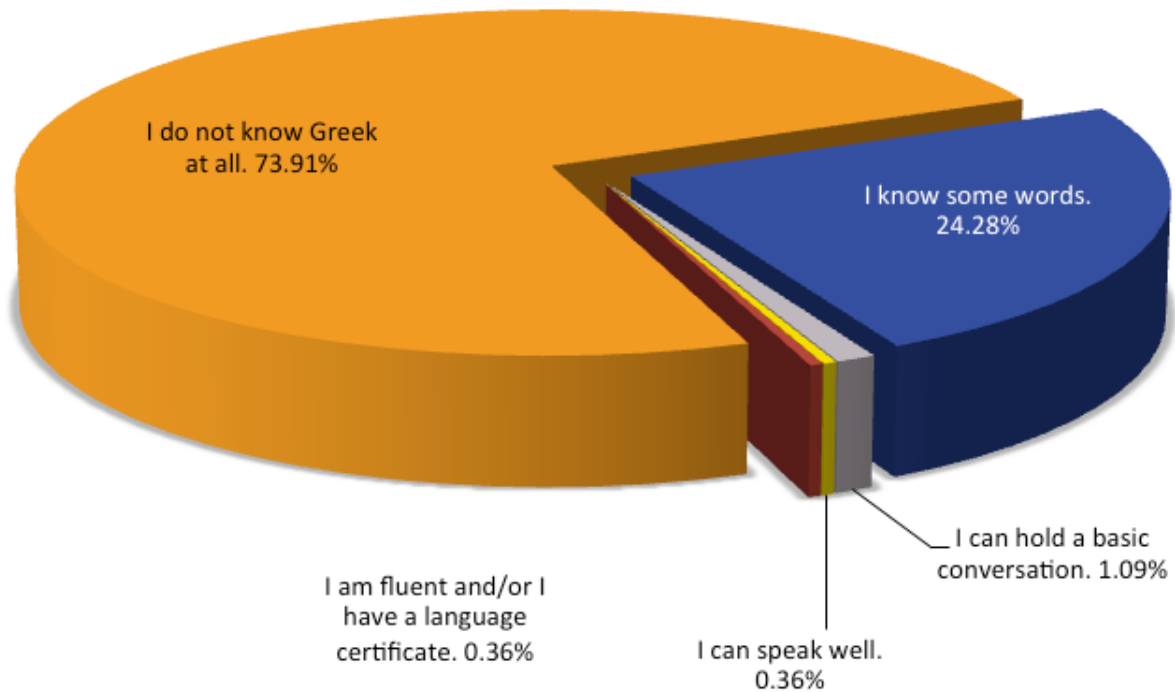
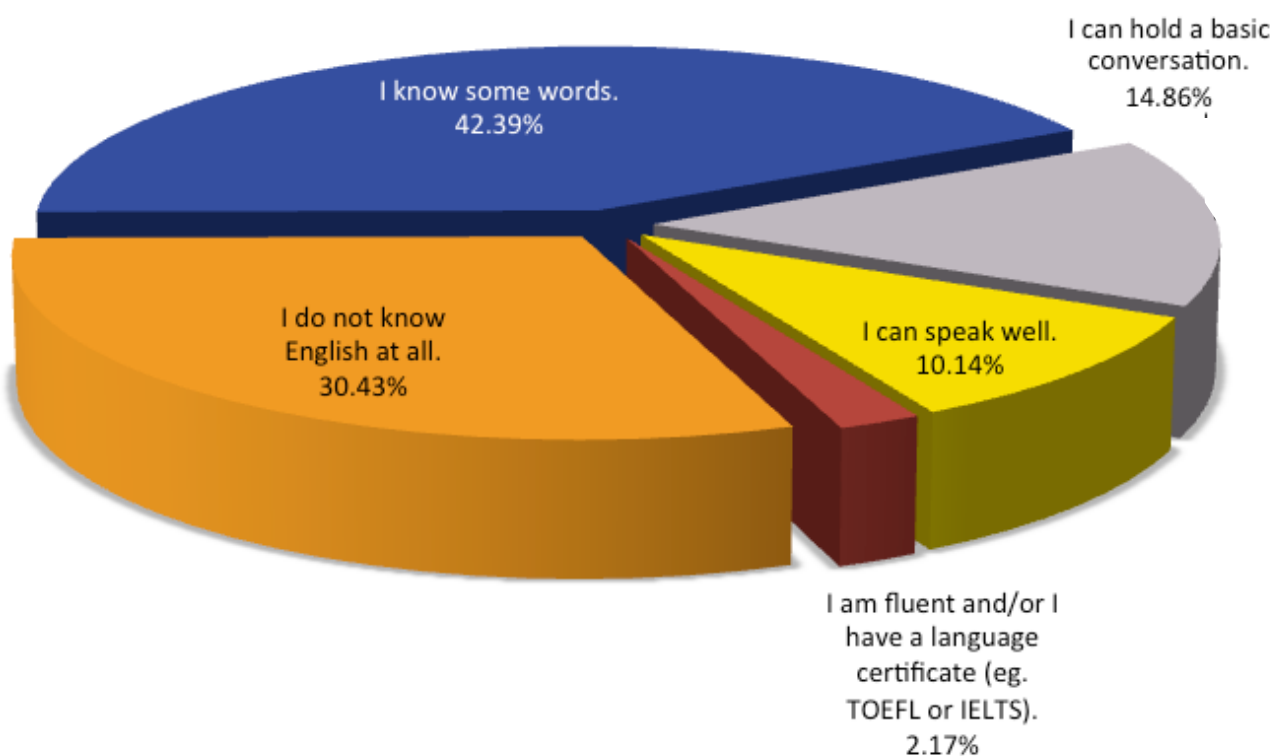


Photo: Claire Veale

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR LEVEL OF GREEK?



HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR LEVEL OF ENGLISH?



CHILDRENS' EDUCATION

The amount and quality of education provided for children varied widely between different camps. One respondent told us that there were few programmes for children around the site. Her daughter is now nine-years-old and has “never stepped foot in a classroom”.

In 2016, the Greek government announced its aim to make schooling available for all refugee children in the country, with the first children attending local Greek schools in October. However, many respondents said they did not want their children to participate due to the “unwelcoming environment”. One respondent said that

“the parents did not want refugee children” and “children were fighting”, so her children no longer participate in the programme.

Meanwhile, a number of mothers said they chose not to send their children to school because of the embarrassment of not being able to clothe them properly. One respondent explained, *“I don't know how much more humiliation I can take. I have to send my kids to school every day in their pyjamas. As a mother, this is real pain”.*

Others reported long waiting periods, or transport issues interfering with schooling. One service provider said,

“All the children are registered for the local school. A bus was requested as it is a 30 minute walk along the highway. But no bus was sent, so the 60 children from the camp were unable to go to school.”

PARENTS REPORTED THAT THEY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN WHO JUST STAY IN THE CAMP THE WHOLE DAY WITH NOTHING TO DO AND SO IT MIGHT AFFECT NEGATIVELY THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURES.

Poor hygiene levels within on-site facilities also put mothers off sending their children to classes. Another said she doesn't want to send her children to camp activities again because each time they return with lice.

Meanwhile, service providers claimed that some children did not want to go to school or learn Greek because they are aiming to continue onto a different European country. By this token, researchers found that children in some camps were teaching themselves German.

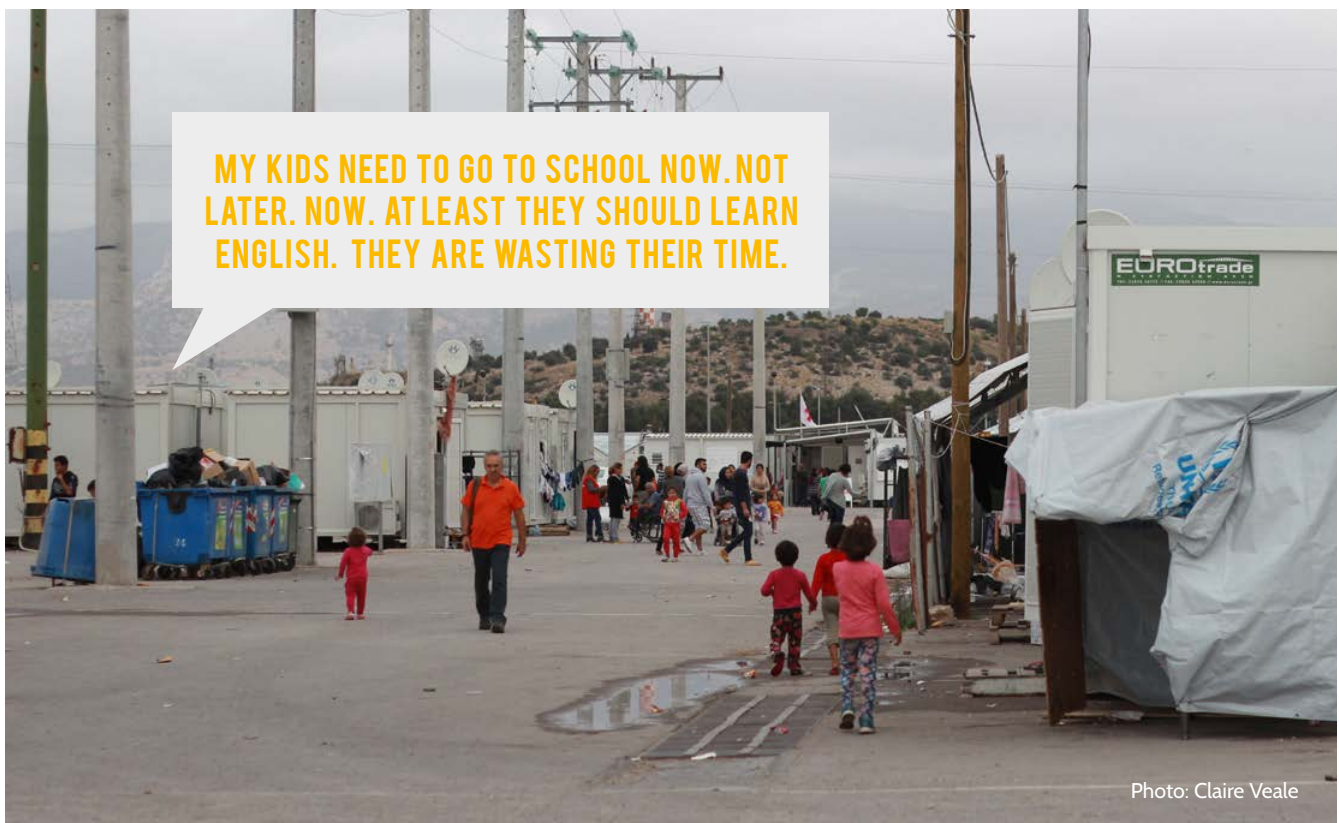


Photo: Claire Veale

**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**

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

Indeed, most respondents expressed a concern about being stuck 'in limbo' Greece, facing uncertainty and slow bureaucratic procedures. The vast majority, 73.4% of respondents, said they felt 'very unhappy' or 'quite unhappy' about being in Greece.

80% of respondents had been in Greece for a period of eight months to more than one year, and 54% of them had been living in their current camp for seven months to more than one year.

WAS GREECE THE COUNTRY YOU WANTED TO TRAVEL TO WHEN YOU LEFT YOUR COUNTRY?

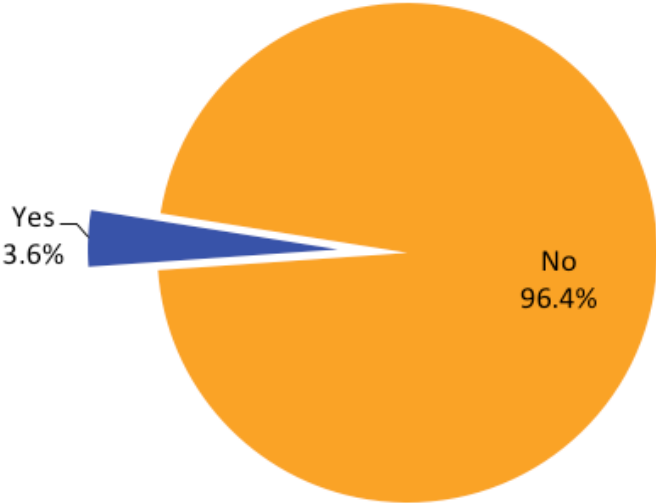
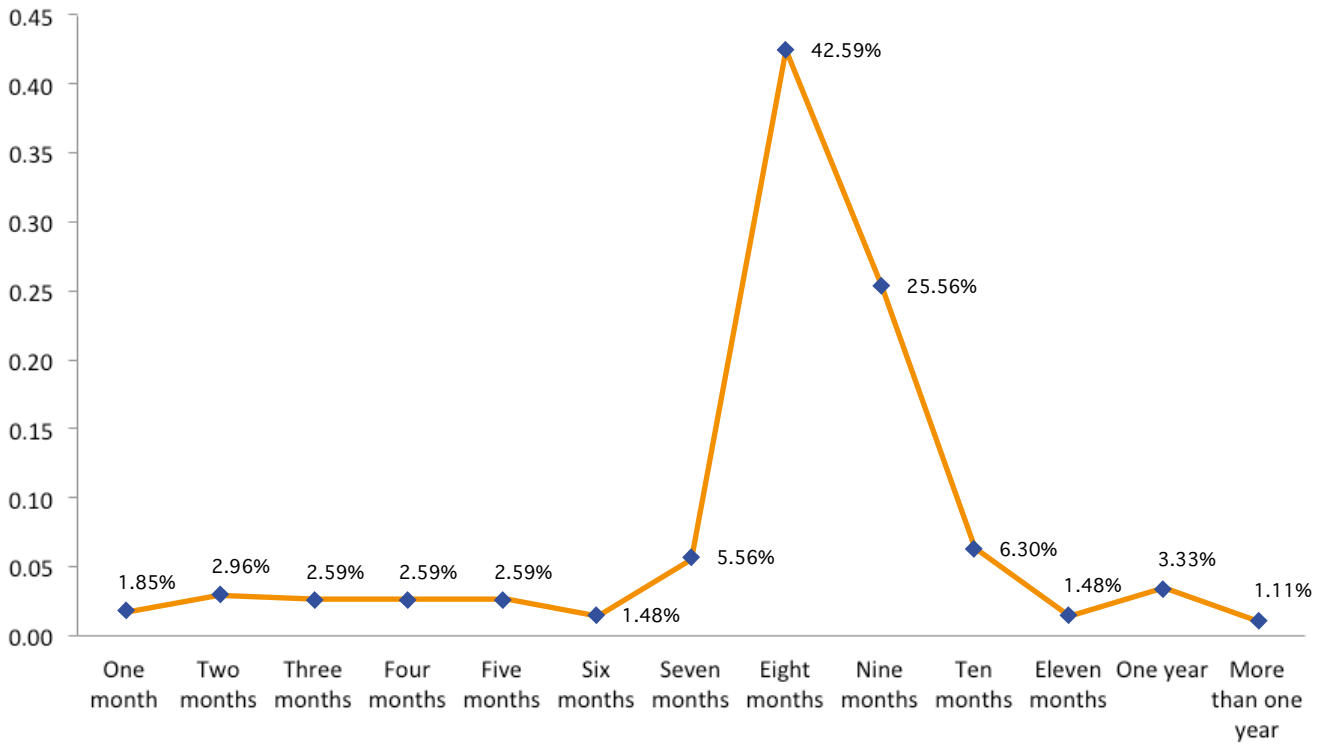


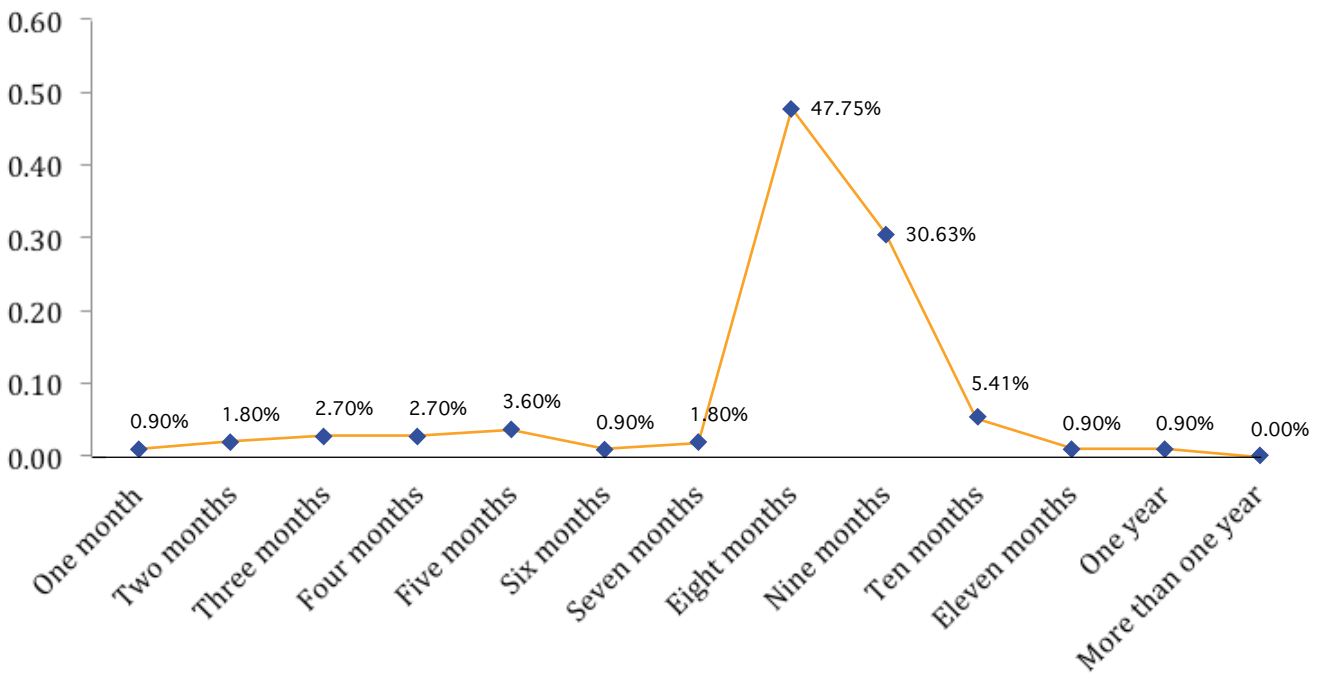
Photo: Claire Veale

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

**TIME SPENT IN GREECE
ALL RESPONDENTS**



**TIME SPENT IN GREECE
WOMEN ONLY**

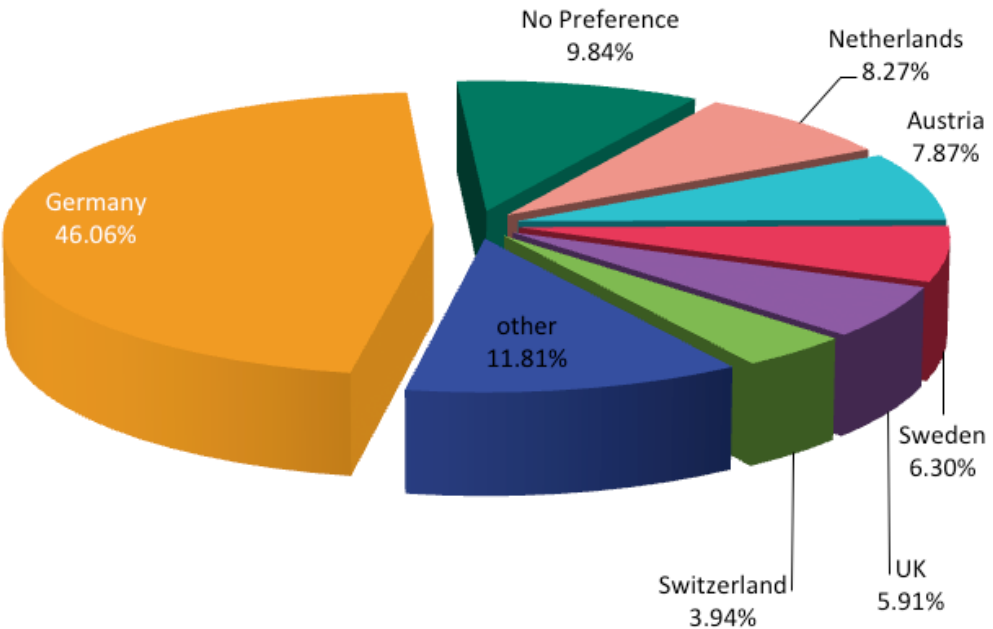


ARTICLE 28: EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO A SOCIAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER IN WHICH THE RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS SET FORTH IN THIS DECLARATION CAN BE FULLY REALIZED

One respondent said:

THEY PUT SO MUCH MONEY ON IMPROVING THE LIVING CONDITIONS HERE IN GREECE INSTEAD OF PROCESSING OUR CASES AND HELPING US TO GO TO OUR DESTINATIONS.

**WHICH COUNTRY DO YOU WANT TO GO TO?
ALL RESPONDENTS**



Of the 278 respondents, only 3.6% said that Greece was their target country when they left their country of origin. Many found themselves “stuck” in the country due to the closure of its northern border with FYR Macedonia in March 2016, and have since been waiting to continue to another country.

Of the respondents who wished to move on from Greece, the majority - a total of

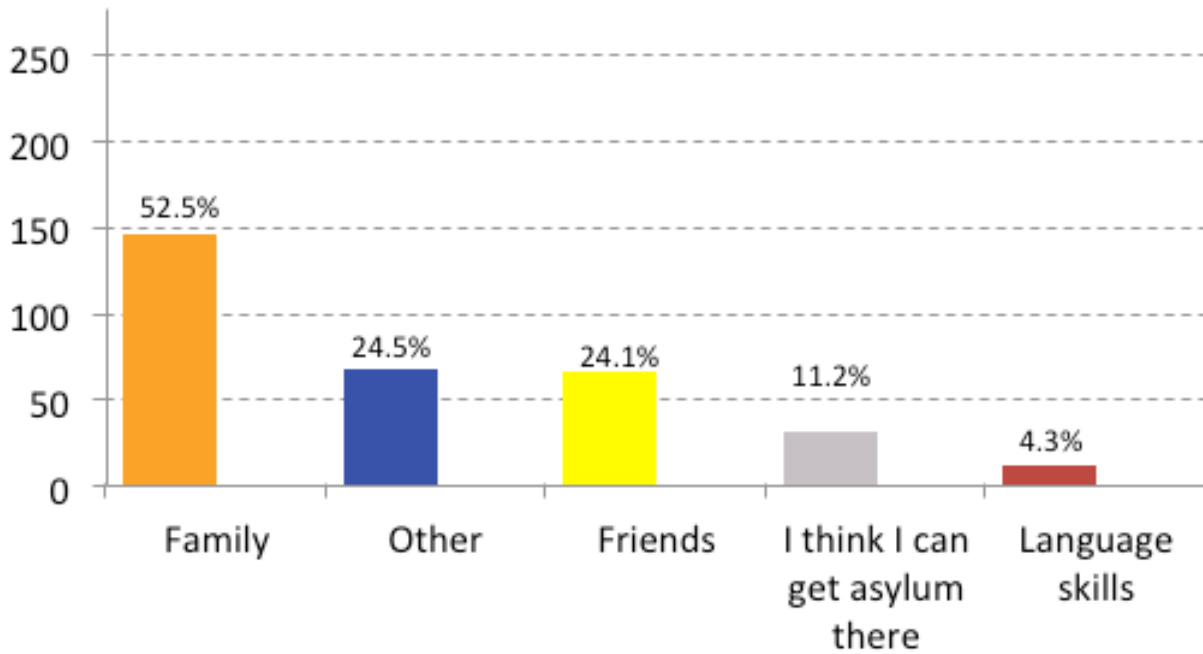
42.1% - wanted to go to Germany. 7.6% were aiming to reach the Netherlands, 7.2% Austria, 5.8% Sweden and 5.4% the United Kingdom.



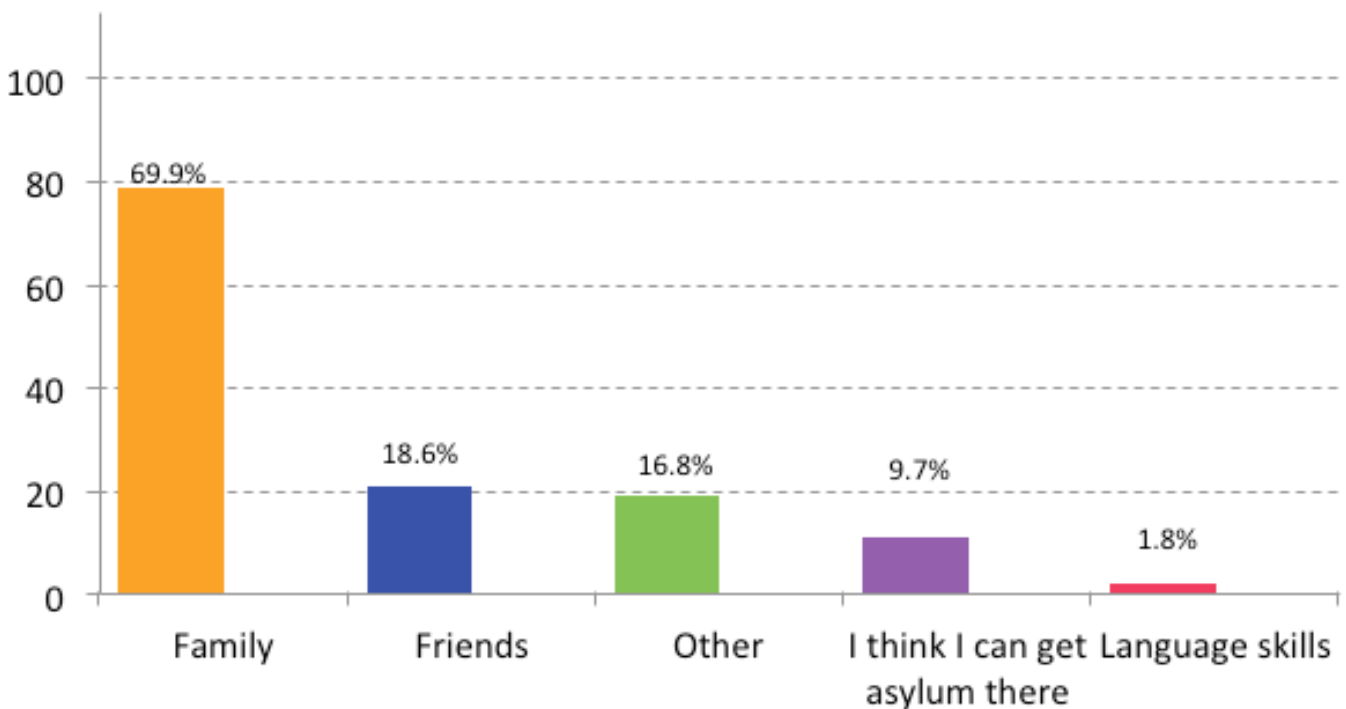
Photo: Salma Kasmani

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

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO THERE?
ALL RESPONDENTS**



**WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO THERE?
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

52.5% of respondents (69.9% of women) wanted to carry on to a different country in order to be reunited with family members, and 24.1% (18.6% of women) to join friends.

Many expressed concerns about not knowing what might happen to them following the official relocation process from Greece. One man explained:

I LIVE WITH MY MOTHER AND MY PREGNANT WIFE. WE ARE AFRAID TO APPLY FOR RELOCATION TO GERMANY SINCE WE MIGHT BE SEPARATED FROM MY MOTHER.

Similar concerns resulted in others attempting to take matters into own hands. For instance, a Syrian man explained, *“Two months ago, a group of eight of us tried to escape to Serbia. We were on foot for about 20 hours and eventually broke down from hunger. We were so desperate we finally found a dog and ate it. We then got caught and returned a few hours later.”*

Residents were particularly concerned about the uncertainty and lack of transparency surrounding their claims for relocation. During the long waits for their claims to be processed many found it difficult to remain optimistic about the future. One service provider explained, *“The people [in this camp] thought when they came that they’d stay for 10 days but it’s been nine months - they want to know when they will leave.”*

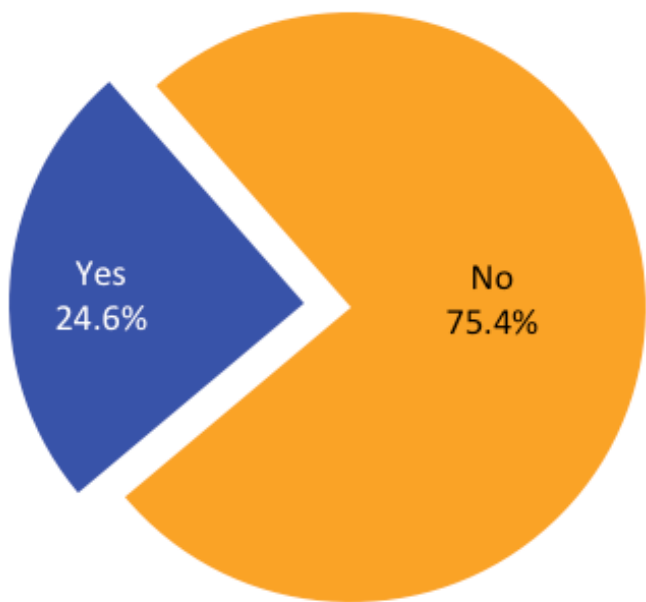
Once again, many refugees stalled in Greece are reported to have paid smugglers

to help them continue their journeys across Europe. This exposes refugees - women and girls in particular - to even greater risks of violence and abuse, with many falling into the hands of traffickers or disappearing while trying to reach family in another European country.

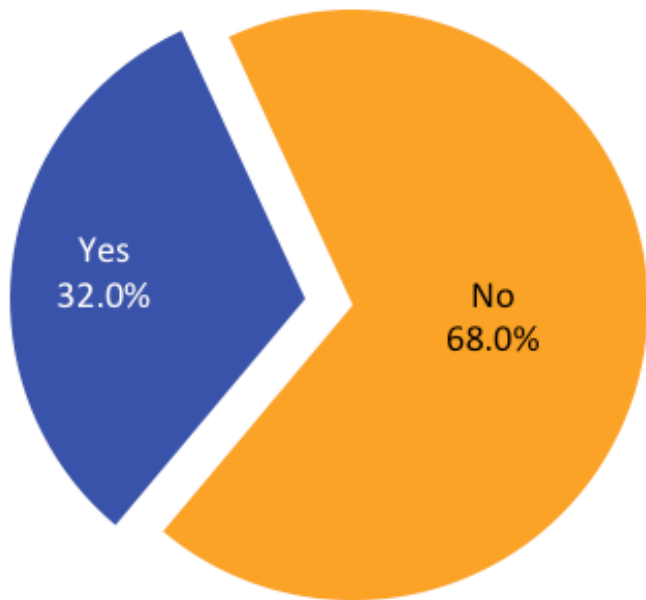
Respondents also found that they had little access to information about their rights or European asylum law. Many said they would not know what to say in their asylum interview, while others reported that they did not know whose advice they could trust.

75.4% of respondents (72.6% of women) did not have access to information about their rights and opportunities. Of those who said they did have access to such advice, more than half obtained this information from informal sources, such as other refugees, family members, volunteers in the camp, or similarly unofficial information channels. Approximately 50% of respondents obtained such information from official organisations in the camp, and 7.5% from the Greek government.

DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES?



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



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

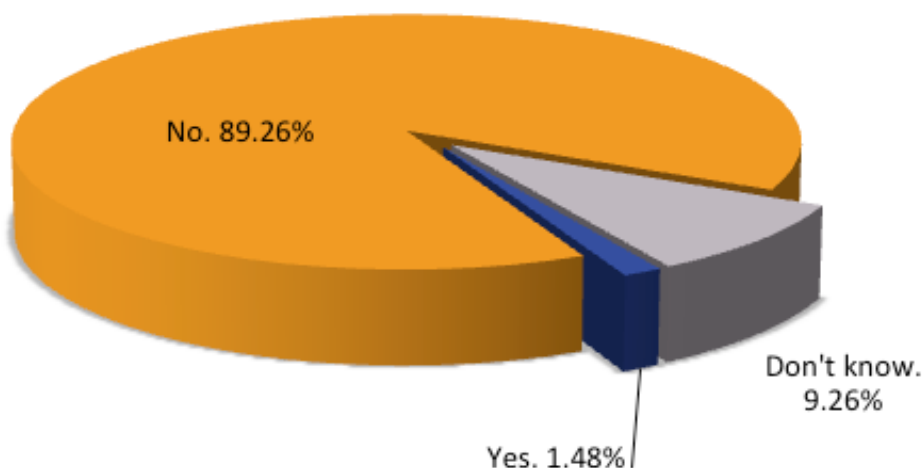
Meanwhile, 68% of respondents (70.8% of women) said they lacked access to information about European asylum law and immigration rules. Once again, around half of those who did have access said that received this information from informal sources, such as other refugees, family members, or volunteers in the camp. Approximately 50% acquired the information from organisations in the camp, and around 10% from the Greek government.

RESPONDENTS LIVING IN REMOTE AREAS FOUND THAT TRAVELLING TO ASYLUM INTERVIEWS OR OTHER APPOINTMENTS REQUIRED COMPLEX LOGISTICS AND SUPPORT FROM CAMP MANAGEMENT.

However, some reported that this support was lacking, which led to camp residents being late for – and therefore missing their chance to attend – asylum or relocation interviews. “One

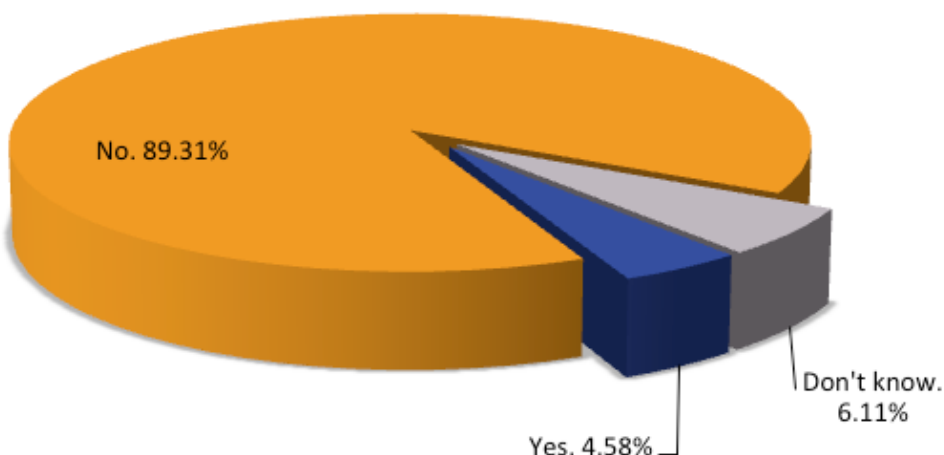
friend missed her interview because the bus was delayed,” explained one respondent. “Now she is punished and they do not give her new date for interview. She is stuck.”

CAN YOU GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN?



A FAMILY TOLD RESEARCHERS THAT THEY DID NOT TRUST THE OFFICIAL BUS SERVICE, SO WERE PLANNING ON SPENDING THEIR MONTHLY ALLOWANCE ON A NIGHT IN A HOSTEL IN ATHENS TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF MISSING THEIR INTERVIEW APPOINTMENT.

IF OFFERED MONEY, WOULD YOU GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN?



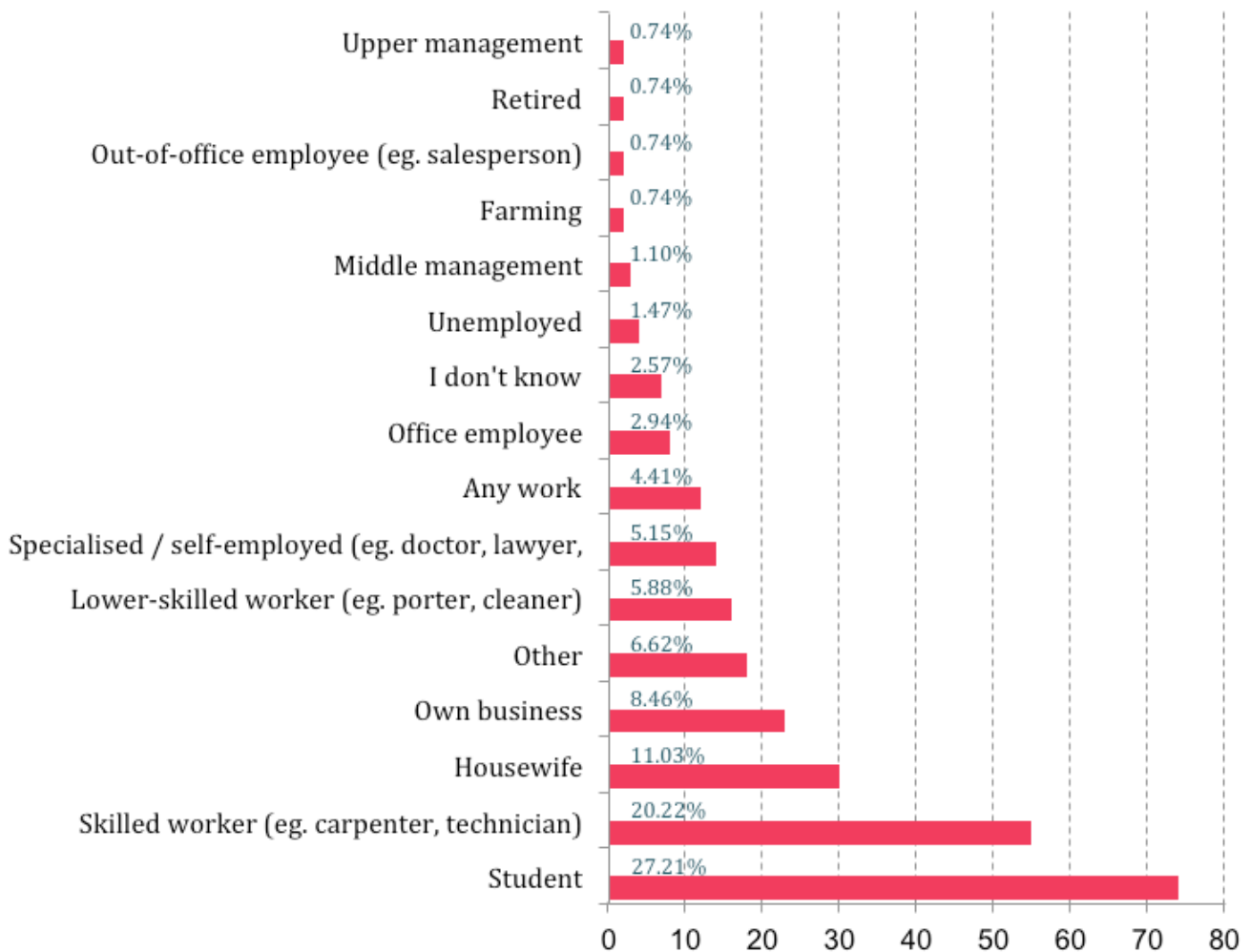
Meanwhile, a couple living in a different camp without access to a free bus service reported that each family member – including their five children – had been invited to interview in Athens, an hour's drive from the camp, on seven different dates. This made it very difficult for the family to afford transportation.

89.3% of respondents said they could not go back to their country of origin, 9.3% didn't know, and only 1.5% said they would be able to return.

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

Despite their desperate circumstances and disillusionment regarding prospects for the future, most respondents had high aspirations and ambitious goals for their future in Europe.

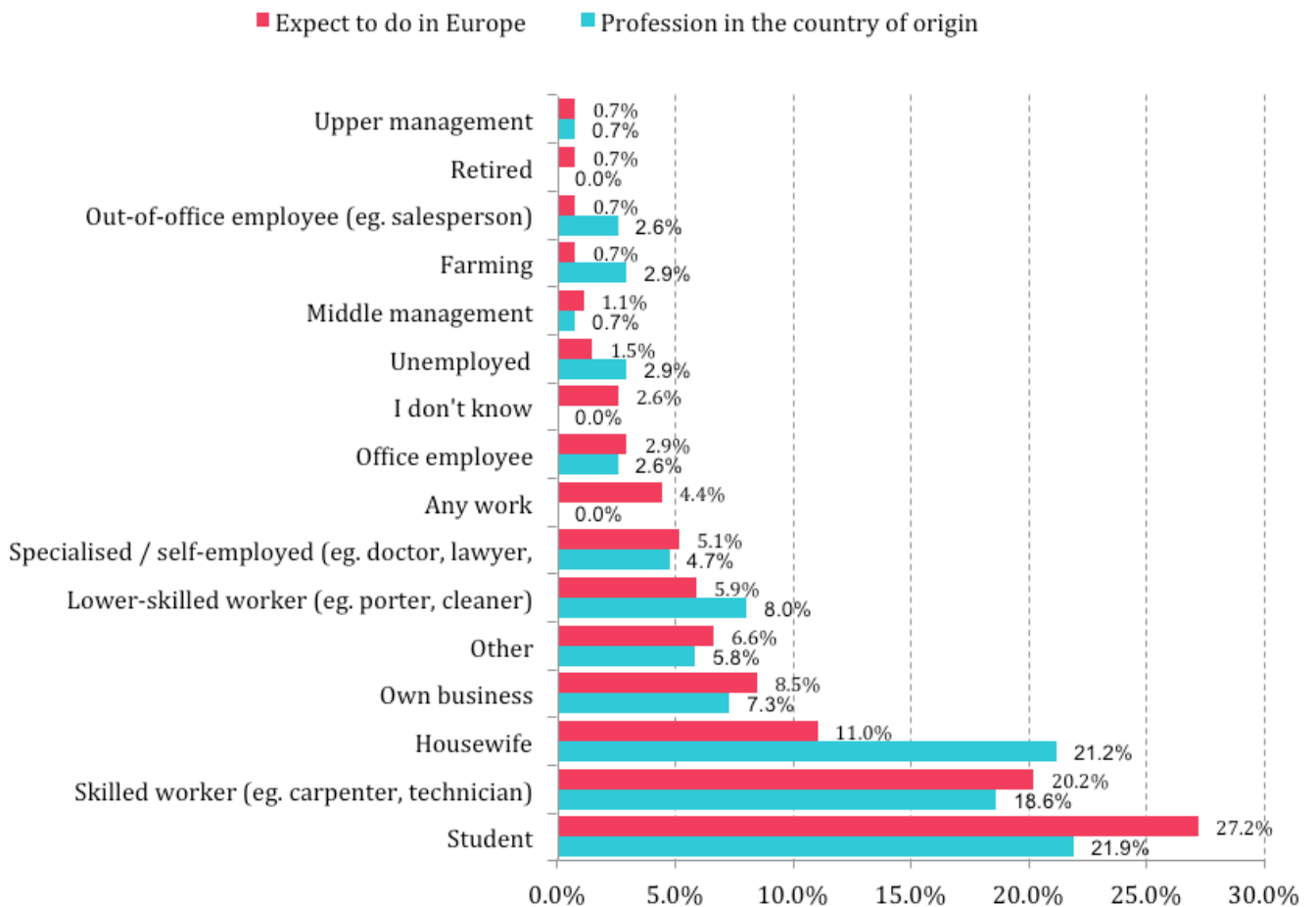
WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD BE YOUR PROFESSION IN EUROPE?



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



PROFESSION BEFORE / POTENTIAL PROFESSION IN EUROPE



IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO STAY ALL THIS TIME WITHOUT WORK. WE WANT TO WORK, TO PROVIDE FOR OUR FAMILIES, TO USE OUR SKILLS. WHAT USE ARE WE WITHOUT WORK? IT WOULD GIVE US A SENSE OF PURPOSE THAT WE ARE BADLY IN NEED OF.



INEFFECTIVE EU POLICIES HAVE FORCED A SITUATION IN GREECE IN WHICH TENS OF THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES ARE TRAPPED IN DIFFICULT CONDITIONS, IN A COUNTRY THAT LACKS THE ASYLUM AND HUMANITARIAN INFRASTRUCTURE NECESSARY TO MANAGE SUCH A CASELOAD.



Photo: Claire Veale

Ineffective EU policies have forced a situation in Greece in which tens of thousands of refugees are trapped in difficult conditions in a country that lacked the asylum and humanitarian infrastructure necessary to manage such a caseload.

THE RESEARCH SHOWED THAT THE LIMITED AMENITIES IN THIS EU BORDER COUNTRY CANNOT OFFER AN ADEQUATE RESPONSE TO THE ENORMOUS CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH ACCOMMODATION OF DISPLACED POPULATIONS.

In order to reduce the harmful impact on refugees' physical and psychological wellbeing, a number of urgent improvements are needed at micro-level. This could take the form of changes put into place within individual camps, including improved living standards, hygiene and sanitation, and access to education.

However, the research findings specifically suggest there is also an urgent need to urgently address the following matters at local and national levels:

- Improve refugees' access to information and advice regarding the asylum and relocation processes;
- Allocate increased resources to strengthening logistics related to asylum interviews and similar meetings, ensuring that refugees are easily able to attend these critical appointments and proceed with the process;
- Make available an adequate number of male and female interpreters - including with relevant expertise - in each camp;
- Ensure that all service provision is gender-sensitive, in line with RRE's recommendations presented in the report 'Hidden Struggles' (January 2017).

Importantly, if we are to see meaningful change, the above needs to be urgently accompanied by effective, longer-term EU-level policy action aimed at:

- Increasing the speed at which asylum claims are expedited in Greece. In doing so, the lengths of time during which men, women and children are trapped in unhealthy and harmful environments can be reduced.
- Ensuring that the asylum process and relocation mechanisms in EU countries are underpinned by clearly demarcated pathways, with adequate information and advice mechanisms in place.
- Making available sufficient statutory funding to ensure that adequate legal advice, medical and support services, and protection frameworks are in place across all camps.

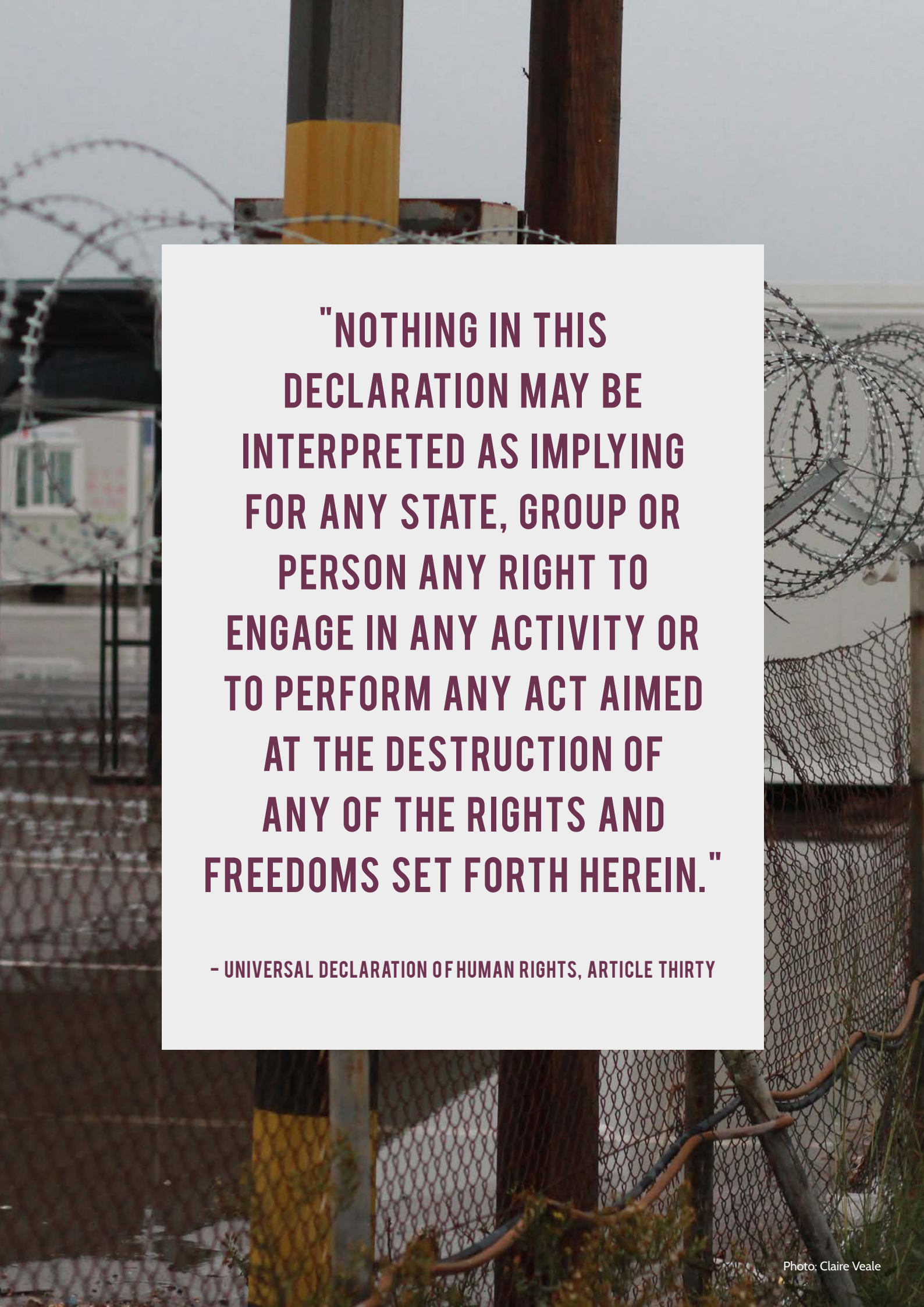
It's clear that improvement is required at both the local and national service delivery level.

HOWEVER, SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVING THE SITUATION REQUIRES MAJOR EU-LEVEL POLICY CHANGE - CHARACTERISED BY SOLIDARITY WITH AID AGENCIES, THE GREEK AUTHORITIES, AND REFUGEES ALIKE.

Such high-level engagement will help to successfully unlock the situation in which tens of thousands are trapped in limbo, facing sub-par humanitarian standards and daily human rights violations.



Photo: Claire Veale



**"NOTHING IN THIS
DECLARATION MAY BE
INTERPRETED AS IMPLYING
FOR ANY STATE, GROUP OR
PERSON ANY RIGHT TO
ENGAGE IN ANY ACTIVITY OR
TO PERFORM ANY ACT AIMED
AT THE DESTRUCTION OF
ANY OF THE RIGHTS AND
FREEDOMS SET FORTH HEREIN."**

- UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, ARTICLE THIRTY



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