Is Convergence between Syrian Migrants and Turkey Population a Myth or a Possibility?

Faruk Keskin, Hacettepe University
Pelin Cagatay, Hacettepe University

The Syrian civil war has caused more than 5.6 million Syrians to be dispersed across neighboring countries. Turkey hosts the largest amount of the Syrian refugees (65%) (https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria). This is the largest wave of immigration that have been experienced in history from a single country to Turkey. Different than usual irregular migration process, the registered Syrians in Turkey are not granted a refugee status. Instead, they are provided with temporary protection by the government. Independent of the status they have, the war-related immigration has played a major role in reinforcing conflicts and inequalities, and in yielding political, economic, moral, and security dilemmas between citizens and migrants.

When Turkey has started hosting the Syrians who have fled from the war, it has been thought that Syrians would only be the "visitors" for a while. Contrary to expectations, many Syrian migrants have decided not to return their home country and to stay in Turkey. This "crisis" has become a heavy burden for Turkey to handle with the existence of friction between its own large population and Syrian migrants while meeting its obligations to both. There have been incidences about the Syrian migrants who were the victims of discrimination, who were subjected to inhuman living and working conditions, and who had restricted or had no access to health services. Although some of these arguments can be treated as speculative stories, but can we find any data-driven information on Syrian's living or working conditions? The only data we had until now was the number of registered Syrian migrants in Turkey and their basic demographic properties. It is far more likely that because of missing complete data, socio-demographic information about Syrian migrants are lacking. This group of permanent visitors will definitely play a significant role in shaping the demographic structure of Turkey. For this reason, it is of high importance to understand their demographic characteristics through a representative data set.

The aim of this study is to clarify the living and working conditions of Syrian migrants in Turkey to see whether the new mechanisms developed by the government help to ensure the social justice and equal access to services. For the analyses, we utilized the data sets of 2018 Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (2018 TDHS) National Sample and Syrian Migrant Sample. 2018 TDHS Syrian Migrant Sample was designed based on the population size of Syrian migrants in each quarter, which is the smallest administrative unit, in Turkey. Since the sampling frame is different and information about the Syrian migrant population is limited, the Syrian representative sample size was set as 2,000 households to be interviewed in hundred clusters. The sample size was determined to ensure an acceptable level of precision for core indicators that could be compared to those obtained in the national sample.

The data collection approach was the same as the national sample. The same questionnaires were used: Household and Individual Questionnaires. The only difference was the language of the questionnaires. For the Syrian migrant sample, the questionnaires were translated into Arabic and interviews were conducted by native speakers of Arabic. In total, out of selected 1,960 households, 1,826 were interviewed in Syrian migrant sample. In these households, 2,391 women were identified as eligible (between 15 and 49). Of which, 2,216 were interviewed.

The preliminary descriptive analyses revealed that the differences between the respondents in national sample and Syrian migrants were pronounced for living and working indicators. On the other hand, some health indicators indicated a high levels of service provision to women in both Syrian and national sample. For instance, the percentage of women receiving antenatal care from a skilled health personnel is 93 among Syrian migrant women and 96 for those in the national

sample. A similar pattern also exists for the institutional deliveries. This might indicate that Syrian women has almost an equal access to maternal health care services compared to their counterparts in the national sample. However, when it comes to the scope of these services, there is dramatic discrepancy among these two groups. Almost all of the women in the national sample who received ANC for their most recent birth had key ANC services performed, including having their blood pressure measured (98%), blood and urine sample taken (97% and 92% respectively) and an ultrasound performed (98%). On the other hands, basic components of antenatal care services were provided to Syrian women less than it should have been, except for the ultrasound.

Labor force participation of Syrian migrants is also important to understand their financial dependency in the hosting country. The survey data includes information on economic condition of Syrian households to the extent permitted by the survey questionnaire. One of these indicators is the percentage of household member who are working at a paid job. Thirty to 33 percent of the interviewed population in the national and Syrian sample are said to be capable of earning their own money. The discrepancy emerges when taking the distribution of those group by age. Child labor is prevalent among Syrian migrants with a paid job. Fourteen percent of Syrian migrants are are under 18 in working population whereas it is only 2 percent among the national sample. Unfortunately we do not know their status at work and the nature of the work, but it is obvious that Syrian children are allowed to work while they are at schooling age. This is an important problem indicating the poor living conditions of Syrian children in Turkey. Although some findings point out an equal provision of services to some extent, others indicate a need for new mechanisms and support system that help the resettlement of Syrian migrants.

PRELIMINARY DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

Table 1. Selected characteristics for Syrian migrant and Turkey sample

	Syrian migrant sample (%)	Turkey sample (%)
Household level		
Ownership of the house	0.5	59.0
Rented	93.8	25.2
Ownership of another house	4.9	19.4
Household population level		
Private health security	0.6	8.9
Working in a paid job	30.0	33.8
Individual level		
Receiving ANC from a skilled provider	92.9	96.4
Number of ANC 4+	63.7	89.7
ANC components		
Blood pressure measured	69.8	97.6
Urine sample taken	67.1	92.0
Blood sample taken	71.3	96.7
Ultrasound	95.0	98.4
Tetanus injection	30.0	80.9
Institutional deliveries	93.4	98.9
Postnatal check in 2 days after delivery (mothers)	86.3	78.7
Postnatal check in 2 days after delivery (newborn)	69.2	68.0
Unmet need for FP (among currently married women)	20.8	11.6
No exposure to FP messages via media sources	94.3	81.1

Table 2. Household working population
with a paid job by age

Age	Syrian migrant sample (%)	Turkey sample (%)
12-14	4.8	0.3
15-17	9.4	1.3
< 18	14.2	1.6

Table 3. Household working population
with a paid job by age and sex

Age	Syrian migrant sample (%)		Turkey sample (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
15-64	95.6	88.7	97.3	98.8
65+	0.2	0.0	2.3	0.8
Total	52.5	5.8	52	16.2