

Northeast Syria Movement Monitoring Initiative: Population Overview

Northeast Syria, December 2018

Ar-Raqqa and Eastern Aleppo Governorates

KEY FINDINGS

Since the outbreak of conflict in 2011, the population of the predominantly rural region of northeast Syria has changed following displacements across the country. This factsheet provides an overview of spontaneous returnees (SR), residents and IDP populations, as well as shelter settings and priority needs of displaced populations in 637 assessed communities in accessible areas of Ar-Raqqa and eastern Aleppo governorates.

- As of December 2018, an estimated 1,139,000 people were reported to be living in the assessed locations in Ar-Raqqa and eastern Aleppo governorates.¹ Specifically, **946,000 spontaneous returnees (SRs)** were reported by Key Informants (KIs) to be living in 617 assessed communities and an estimated **197,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs)** were reported by KIs in 635 assessed communities.
- In addition to the 946,000 SRs, 2% of the total population had reportedly not been displaced during the conflict, which brings the total number of residents who are not IDPs to 972,000. SRs had reportedly been displaced for an average of 12 months before returning to their original communities, with 520,000 SRs reportedly returning to their former homes.^{2,3} More than two thirds (70%) of SRs had returned to their community of origin before 2018, with 30% having returned after 1 January 2018, following an overall decrease in conflict in the assessed governorates.⁴
- KIs reported that **56,000 IDPs (64%)** had been living in their current location for more than 1 year and **23,000 (27%)** had been living in their current location for between 6 months and 1 year.⁵
- The reported proportion of IDPs is highest in assessed communities along the Euphrates river and the road between Ar-Raqqa city and Tell Abiad, as well as in western **Menbij sub-district** (see the maps on page 3).

Methodology

Findings presented in this situation overview are based on data collected remotely by REACH as part of an assessment focused on IDP and SR populations living in accessible opposition-held communities in Ar-Raqqa and Aleppo governorates in Northeast Syria. Data was collected between 13 and 31 January 2019 in 637 accessible communities in the governorates. Data was collected at the community level, with enumerators interviewing two key informants (KIs) per assessed location. KIs were selected based on their knowledge of SR and IDP populations in their respective locations. The selection of communities to be assessed was based on the availability of REACH enumerator and KI networks. Collected primary data was triangulated through available REACH and external secondary sources. Information should be considered as reflective of the situation at the time of data collection, given the dynamic situation in the region. In addition, findings are not statistically representative and should only be considered as indicative of the situation in the wider area. For more information, please refer to the assessment's [terms of reference](#) and [full data set](#).

946,000 Estimated number of SRs in 617 assessed communities.¹

197,000 Estimated number of IDPs in 635 assessed communities.¹

Estimated population distribution in assessed communities (where total populations were reported), as of 31 December 2018:



Spontaneous returnees
Internally displaced persons
Non-displaced residents

83%
15%
2%

Assessed Coverage Area:



¹ Estimated individual figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000. The total population number is based on the 617 assessed communities where KIs were able to report on both IDP and resident numbers.

² Information on the average duration of displacement was reported for approximately 808,000 SRs in 431 assessed locations.

³ Information regarding returns to former homes was reported for approximately 534,000 SRs in 229 assessed locations.

⁴ Information on the date of return for SRs was reported for approximately 821,000 SRs, by KIs in 452 assessed locations.

⁵ Information regarding the lengths of IDP displacement were reported for approximately 88,000 IDPs, by KIs in 101 assessed locations.

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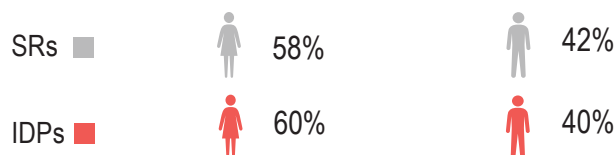
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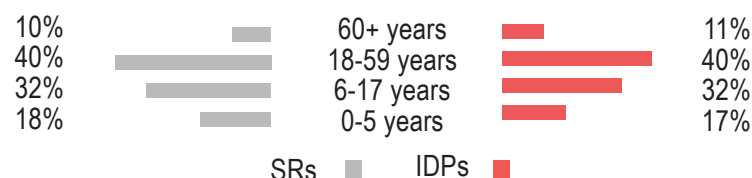
DEMOGRAPHICS

Amongst the 946,000 SRs reported in 617 assessed communities and the 197,000 IDPs reported by KIs in 635 assessed communities, KIs reported that the **number of women and girls was typically higher than that of men and boys**.

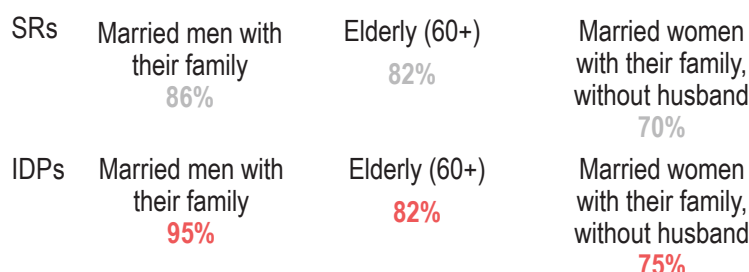
Estimated gender distribution of SR and IDP populations in assessed communities, as of 31 December 2018:



Estimated age distribution of SR and IDP populations in assessed communities, as of 31 December 2018:⁶



Household profiles reported to be the top-three most common (by percentage of communities where SRs and IDPs were reported):⁷



PRIORITY NEEDS OF IDPs⁸

In **28%** of communities with IDPs, **winterisation** items were reported as a top priority need, with KIs specifying heating fuel (25%), winter clothes (22%) and winter shoes/boots (13%) as the top three priority items. KIs in **19%** of the communities also reported that **food** was a top priority need. Key needs included sugar (18%), bread (11%) and cooking oil (11%).

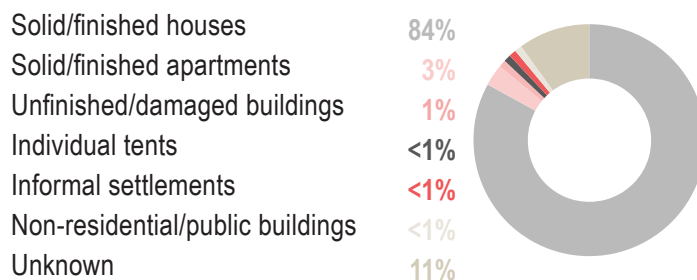
Top 3 reported priority needs of IDPs, by number of assessed communities where IDPs were reported:

	1st	2nd	3rd	Total
Winterisation or equivalent	64	88	21	173
Food	89	18	9	116
Non-food items (NFI)	15	36	56	107
Healthcare	19	42	10	71
WASH	4	8	15	27
Shelter	9	3	4	16
Education	1	5	6	12
Safety and security	9	1	0	10
Cash/voucher assistance	10	25	36	3

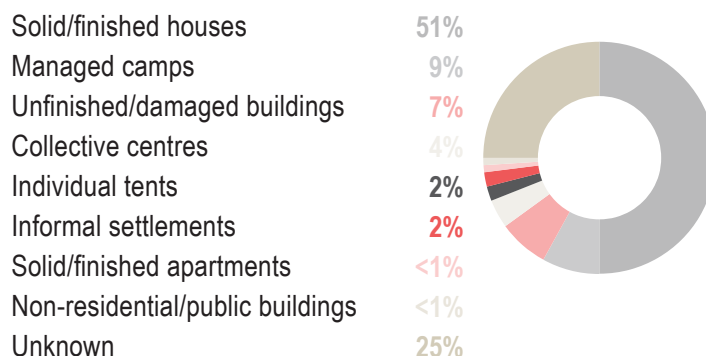
SHELTER

Although the majority of SR and IDP populations reportedly live in solid/finished housing (84% and 51% respectively), KIs indicated that SRs and IDPs reported three common shelter adequacy issues: **a lack of lighting, shelter damage and a lack of insulation from the cold**. KIs reported that only residents in 4 assessed communities (1%) with SRs and 19 assessed communities (8%) with IDPs experienced no shelter adequacy issues.

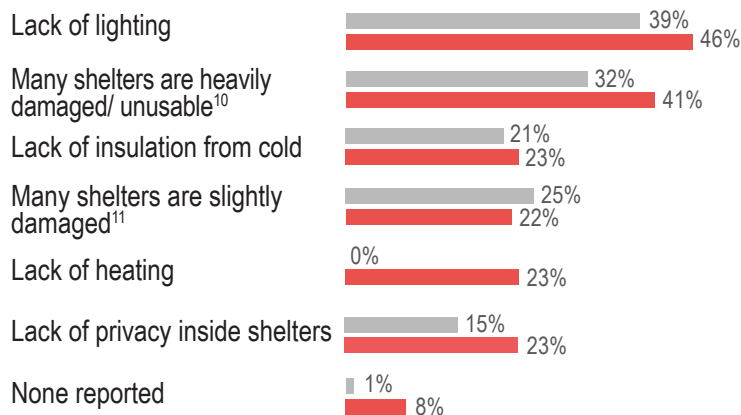
Most commonly reported shelter types of SRs in assessed communities, where reported:⁹



Most commonly reported shelter types of IDPs in assessed communities, where reported:⁹



Most commonly reported shelter adequacy issues of SR and IDP populations (by percentage of communities where each was reported):



SRs ■ IDPs ■

⁶ KIs reported the age distributions for IDPs in 192 assessed locations and for SRs in 431 assessed locations.

⁷ KIs could select multiple answers for the most common types of households in a location.

⁸ Only priority needs of IDPs were collected for this assessment. Priority needs of SRs were not assessed.

⁹ KIs were asked to report the most common shelter types of SRs and IDPs and give the percentage of the population group living in each type.

¹⁰ 'Heavily damaged shelters' are defined as buildings which are structurally unstable and not habitable.

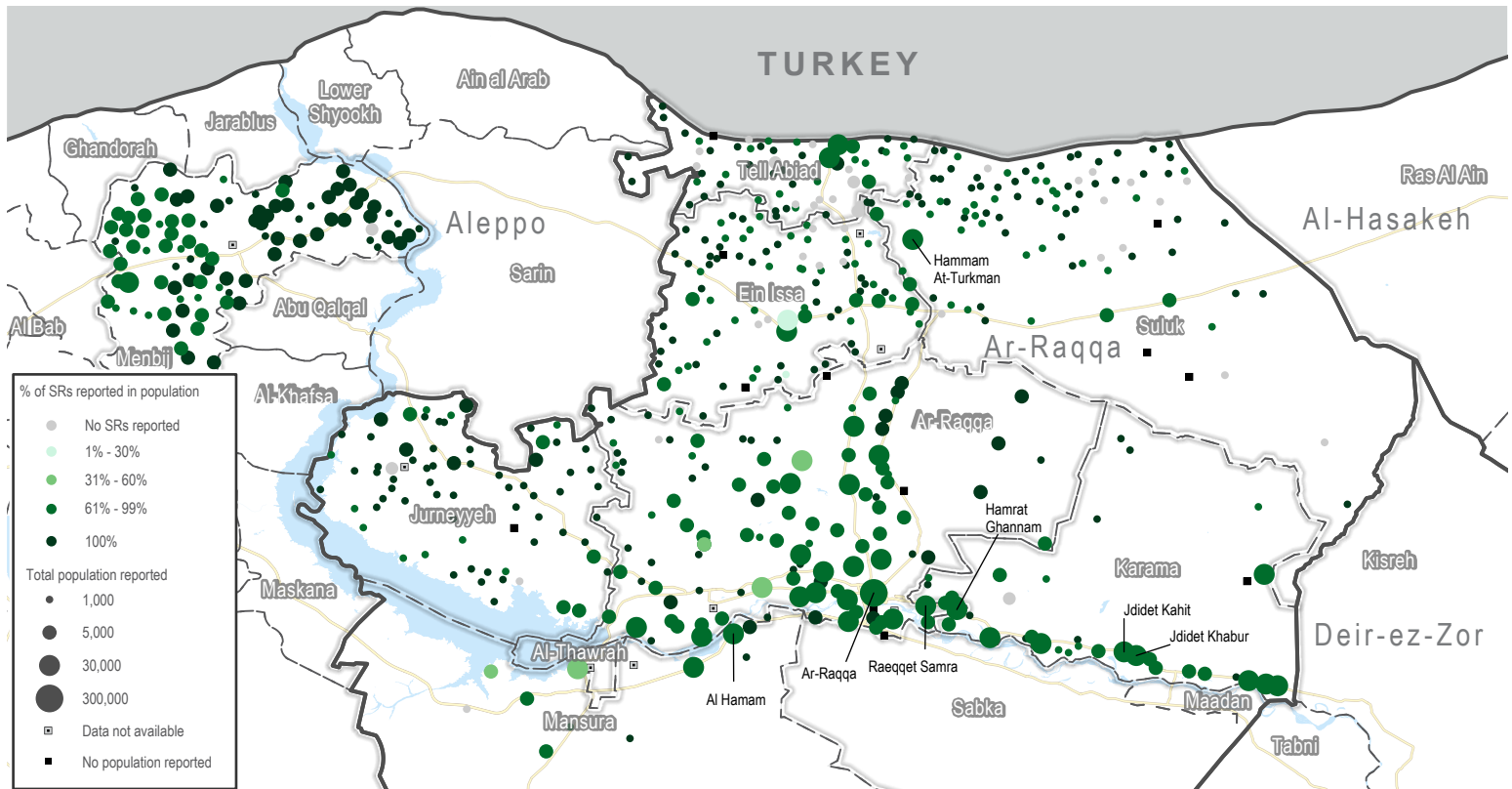
¹¹ 'Slightly damaged shelters' are defined as buildings which are structurally stable but may have some cosmetic damage.

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Estimated SR populations in assessed communities, as of 31 December 2018:¹²



Estimated IDP populations in assessed communities, as of 31 December 2018:¹²

