



IDP women: needs assessment for post-conflict life, including expectations for safe return home

Surviving the vicissitudes of life in the past and bequeathed to deal with new challenges to build better future for descendants



"Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Development"
Public Union [August 2021]

IDP women: needs assessment for post-conflict life, including expectations for safe return home

The IDP community of Azerbaijan currently faces the dilemma of how to build – or continue – their lives in the areas from which they, or their elderly, were expelled around three decades ago. To diagnose the corresponding needs of the community, a survey, involving a set of questions and covering several hundred internally displaced women, has been conducted by a local civil society institution, under the supervision of the project manager and coordinator. The findings of the survey revealed a diverse set of needs – from personal safety to urban-to-rural migration challenges, involving social and economic implications

(for a younger generation who grew up in a different setting), as well as psychological help/counseling and restoration of the culture of coexistence and neighborhood with Armenians. The views of respondents paved the way for a number of recommendations to the Government of Azerbaijan and other stakeholders to coordinate their actions to respond adequately to rebuilding the almost demolished civic and hard infrastructure, with a strong focus on engaging the returning communities, particularly women, in decision-making and keeping an eye on maintaining peace in the region.

IDP WOMEN: NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR POST-CONFLICT LIFE, INCLUDING EXPECTATIONS FOR SAFE RETURN HOME



Author:

Khalisa Shahverdiyeva, Public Policy Analyst, Chairperson of "Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Development" Public Union

This material is completely or partly financed by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Kvinna till Kvinna. The Swedish MFA and Kvinna till Kvinna do not necessarily agree with the opinions expressed. The authors alone are responsible for the content.

This report was developed under the project "Needs Assessment of IDP Women in post-conflict and resettlement in liberated areas" that was led by two members of WP-SAC (Women Peace and Security Advisory Council, a local pro-peace initiative of women activists in Azerbaijan), precisely Khalisa Shakhverdiyeva in her capacity as the project manager, and Leyla Jahangirova, who was the project coordinator.

The reference to the report shall be as follows:

Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Development Public Union, "IDP women: needs assessment for post-conflict life, including expectations for safe return home". Baku (Azerbaijan), 2021.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	5
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	8
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	12
NEEDS ASSESSMENT: MAJOR FINDINGS	20
Safe return home	20
Safety / Security	23
Social needs and housing conditions	26
Employment	29
Coexistence with ethnic Armenians in Karabakh	31
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	34

TABLES

Table 1: If there is a feeling of anxiety or fear, which of the following is it attributed to?	24
Table 2: In your opinion, which of the following challenges could you face upon settling down in the liberated areas?	26
Table 3: What do you expect from coexistence with Armenians in Karabakh?	32

FIGURES

Figure 1: Survey area	12
Figure 2: Age distribution of respondents	14
Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by education status	14
Figure 4: Distribution of respondents by marital status	15
Figure 5: Number of children under the age of 18 or any dependents in the family	16
Figure 6: Are there any restrictions on your employment due to your official disability status or health condition?	17
Figure 7: Are you currently employed (income-generating employment)?	18
Figure 8: Does your income (salary, profit earned from business activities)/benefits ('bread money' (allowance for essential necessities), pension, and social assistance) cover your essential needs?	18
Figure 9: Distribution of IDPs (respondents) by the current dwelling occupancy status	19
Figure 10: When the relocation process begins in the liberated areas, would you settle in those areas (as the principal place of residence) yourself or with your family?	21
Figure 11: Has your opinion about settlement plans in the liberated areas been studied or asked by any government agency, member of Parliament, international or local organization over the past year?	23

Figure 12: What would be your general expectations for life once you are relocated to the liberated areas?	23
Figure 13: Do you feel any anxiety or what are your biggest fears as far as the relocation to the liberated areas goes?	24
Figure 14: Being a woman, what kind of support do you need for the relocation to the liberated areas?	30
Figure 15: As you know, our President (Ilham Aliyev) has guaranteed the right of abode/security for civilian Azerbaijani citizens of ethnic Armenian background residing in Karabakh. What about your views on a new period of coexistence with Armenians in Karabakh?	31
Figure 16: Do you think you are prepared for the coexistence with Armenians in Karabakh?	32

INTRODUCTION

The first Karabakh War was a conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Karabakh region of southwestern Azerbaijan starting from 1988 and ending in May 1994, which arose on the basis of the territorial claims of Armenia and ethnic Armenians of Karabakh against Azerbaijan¹. During these years, the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding rayons (administrative districts) of the Republic of Azerbaijan have been occupied by the Armenian armed forces. As a result of the occupation, about one million people were forced to leave their homes and settled in various regions of Azerbaijan as refugees and internally displaced persons. Azerbaijan, with a population of ten million, has one of the highest number of IDPs in proportion to its population in the world.²

Women took the brunt and the subsequent aftermath of the first Karabakh War – many had to care for their families nestled in cobbed or thatched shacks, even iron railcars, often without any air ventilation round the year, pull through and continue living on the essential food items – and scant money – that were dispensed by the government and humanitarian aid agencies till the end of the 20th century. To the credit of the Government of Azerbaijan, the country's IDP population were treated equally with other citizens in terms of legal rights and their exercise. IDPs were even granted some privileges in form of socio-economic support; the tuition fee for students with an IDP status is still fully covered by the state budget.

Finally, the oil windfall gains that started to flow into Azerbaijan since the beginning of the 21st century helped the Government of Azerbaijan build 102 new settlements containing about 55,000 provisional houses and flats to accommodate IDPs³. Yet that was not enough to make arrangements for IDP communities to enjoy their right to return home. Unemployment was another acute problem – like many Azerbaijanis, the absolute majority of IDP families had – an still has – to eke out their income with odd jobs.

Besides, IDP women and girls had to live with social stereotypes. Despite gradual, but slow changes for the better, including improved lifestyle and other circumstances, many

1. To highlight the geography and real scope of the conflict, the author of the report uses the toponym 'Karabakh' – instead of Nagorno-Karabakh – regarding the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The approach is based on the wording of UN Resolutions 822 (1993) ([Resolution 822 \(1993\) / \(un.org\)](#)), 853 (1993) ([Resolution 853 \(1993\) / \(un.org\)](#)), and 884 (1993) ([Resolution 884 \(1993\) / \(un.org\)](#)) that clearly refer to the occupation of Kelbadjar (Kalbajar), Agdam (Aghdam) and other recently occupied areas, Zangelan (Zangilan), and Goradiz (Horadiz) town of Fizuli, respectively. None of them constitutes Nagorno-Karabakh.

2. [5943e8a34.pdf \(unhcr.org\)](#)

3. [102 qəsəbə, 55 min mənzil :: Mehriban Əliyeva \[mehribanaliyeva.preslib.az\]](#)

IDP women still do not have the disengagement from traditional and conventional influences, including community precepts, that are characteristic of the Azerbaijani society's attitude towards the female sex. Access to education is a universal right in Azerbaijan, but the exercise of the right to education, particularly in rural areas and among IDPs, is a multifaceted dilemma that puts a dent in the corresponding hopes of many IDP girls. Such challenges remain an onerous burden with a rather blue outlook. Consequently, only a handful of IDP women became successful in life, female role models for the others to follow.

After intensive military operations between Azerbaijan and Armenia during September – November of 2020, also called as the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan succeeded to regain control over Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Zangilan, Gubadly, Khojavand, Aghdam, Kalbajar, Lachin, Shusha cities and several other residential areas which have been under occupation for last 30 years and to restore its territorial integrity⁴.

One of major subjects regulated in the Tripartite Statement signed by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan I.H.Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia N. V. Pashinyan and President of the Russian Federation V. V. Putin on the date of November 10, 2020 is the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the liberated territories. In accordance with Article 7 of the Statement, internally displaced persons and refugees shall return to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and adjacent districts under the control of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees⁵. This process is planned to take place on a stage-by-stage basis, within the framework of the strategic planning and upon completion of reconstruction works.

However, a series of TV footage depicting the utter destruction – obliterated villages and towns – in the liberated areas offered a sinister beginning for return home and amplified the fury on Armenians. In addition, mines planted by Armenians will be a serious threat to the security of returning communities. Given a very high number of mines – planted even in cultural reality. For this reason, the study of the expectations and needs of these people, especially women and girls, the assessment of their psychological condition is important for decision-making and adopting policy (strategy) in this area.

4. <https://mod.gov.az/az/news/sgaldan-azad-olunan-seher-qesebe-ve-kendlerimiz-28583.html>

5. Official web-site of the president of the republic of Azerbaijan <https://en.president.az/articles/45923>

In order to ensure that resettlement process in Karabakh (and other areas)⁶ is conducted in a smooth, sustainable and efficient way, there is a need for thorough study of number, age categories, housing conditions, access to necessary resources (work, land, technology, credit, information, etc.) and the need for social services in order to meet special needs of IDP women and girls. For this purpose, "Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Development" Public Union in cooperation with "Young IDP Women for Peace" held an assessment of the needs of IDP women in the framework of resettlement in the liberated areas. During this assessment study, the survey was conducted with 590 IDP women living in six cities and districts and individual interviews were conducted with 30 women, and the collected data has been researched and analyzed.

This report presents the results of the assessment, as well as recommendations in order to take into consideration the special needs of IDP women and girls.

Implementation of the project and activities envisaged within the project were carried out in compliance with the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and related quarantine conditions. The project execution team shared relevant information and instructions regarding procedures applicable for survey and interview participation, as well as requirements to combat COVID-19 and ensured that the respondents strictly adhered to those rules.

6. [Unfinished Business in the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict - Carnegie Europe - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1 Scope of the study and selection of respondents

The views and opinions of survey-covered IDP women and girls have been studied to make the assessment of their needs for safe return home as well as rehabilitation and peace-building initiatives in the liberated areas. To get a picture of the outlook for future within the IDP community's eyeshot, the respondents had been given an opportunity to speak out for themselves, on important issues such as their future lives, children's education, social needs, employment and economic opportunities.

Consequently, the needs assessment has been performed by means of the following two methods:

- **survey questionnaire**
- **individual interviews**

To ensure data representativeness, the survey area included the capital city Baku and its environs, with the highest concentration of IDPs in the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the countryside, precisely IDP s communities in Saatly, Bilasuvar, Fuzuli, and Beylagan rayons (administrative districts).

The survey covered 590 IDP women and girls temporarily settled in the Absheron Peninsula (Baku and its suburban area, Khirdalan city), as well as Saatly, Bilasuvar, Fuzuli, and Beylagan rayons. Furthermore, due to quarantine restrictions imposed as a measure to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, individual interviews were conducted online with about 30 IDP women and girls residing in Baku and Saatli rayon.

The women/girls aged 18-50 years took part in the survey. To conduct a thorough analysis of the data collected, the respondents were divided into the following three age groups ranges: 18-29, 30-40, and 41-50 years. The classification made it possible to analyze the answers to survey and interview questions against the age factor, marital status, and other demographic indicators.

Selection of geographical areas depended on a number of factors, such as IDP concentration, accessibility of communities, and availability of support from local representatives. The survey also turned out to be an opportunity for field examination of the current living conditions of IDP women and girls in the capital city versus the regions; the same approach was also applied to study the extend of convergence in the respective

expectations and thoughts of the urban and rural respondents.

To obtain better representative results and cover a wider area, a decision was made on the relative number of IDP families to be surveyed in the targeted geographical areas. Subsequently, if the selected families did not have a female resident corresponding to one of the age criteria of the survey, or if a suitable candidate declined to participate for any reason, or if it was not possible to contact the family, the survey team addressed the next house in the same area.

Furthermore, to ensure the diversity of opinions, the survey and individual interviews were conducted among both the IDP women and girls living in government-provided housing facilities and those temporarily settled in dormitories and similar buildings. That approach opened the way for the survey team to explore different thoughts, needs, and concerns of women, living in different, even diametrically opposed conditions, about their past, present, and future lives.

1.2 Structure of survey questionnaire

The questionnaire, composed of 22 closed- and open-ended questions, has been designed as a tool to cover the following thematic areas:

- **socio-demographic profile of respondents: age, marital status, education and health status;**
- **return home;**
- **safety and security;**
- **social needs and housing conditions;**
- **coexistence with ethnic Armenians in Karabakh.**

1.3 Interview questions

About 30 women were interviewed online to identify their basic needs. During the interviews, all participants were asked the same six questions about the current living conditions, present and past experiences, the challenges they had to live with upon becoming IDPs, and their views on important necessities such as desired housing/living conditions, employment and working environment in the liberated areas. The interviews also offered

clues to gain an understanding of women's concerns and fears linked to relocation.

Each interview lasted 30 to 40 minutes.

1.4 Summarizing and analysis of collected data

All information collected through the survey and interviews was initially incorporated into a special survey database created on SurveyMonkey, a multifunctional cloud-based software with a wide-range of services, including online survey development. Survey Monkey is an effective tool to summarize and analyze the findings and display the ultimate outcomes as tables and diagrams. The corresponding figures constitute an essential part of the present report.

1.5 Rules of professional conduct

All ethical guidelines applicable to this type of research were observed during the survey and interviews. Each participant (and respondent) received detailed information from the survey team on the purpose and objectives of the project, as well as the the rules to conduct the survey and interviews, and safety precautions against the COVID-19 pandemic. All respondents were explained that the survey was conducted on an anonymous, voluntary participation, and free-of-charge basis and that every respondent had the right to call off their participation at any time.

The confidentiality of the survey and interviews is strictly protected. All interviews were anonymous. Respondents were informed that their responses would be only referenced in general, without the disclosure of their names. This factor ensured high reliability of the data collected.

1.6 Staff conducting the survey

The survey team was composed of eight interviewers and two coordinators. Given that the survey covered only women and girls, all interviewers were women. Prior to the survey, the team members underwent a training session, covering, inter alia, the project goals and objectives, expectations, as well as the rules to conduct survey and interviews, and safety precautions against the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, survey questions were discussed in detail to clarify ambiguities and other unclear points.

Individual interviews were conducted by the project coordinator and project expert, following in-depth discussions of interview questions. Consequently, written notes were taken for future processing and analysis of the corresponding outcomes.

2. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

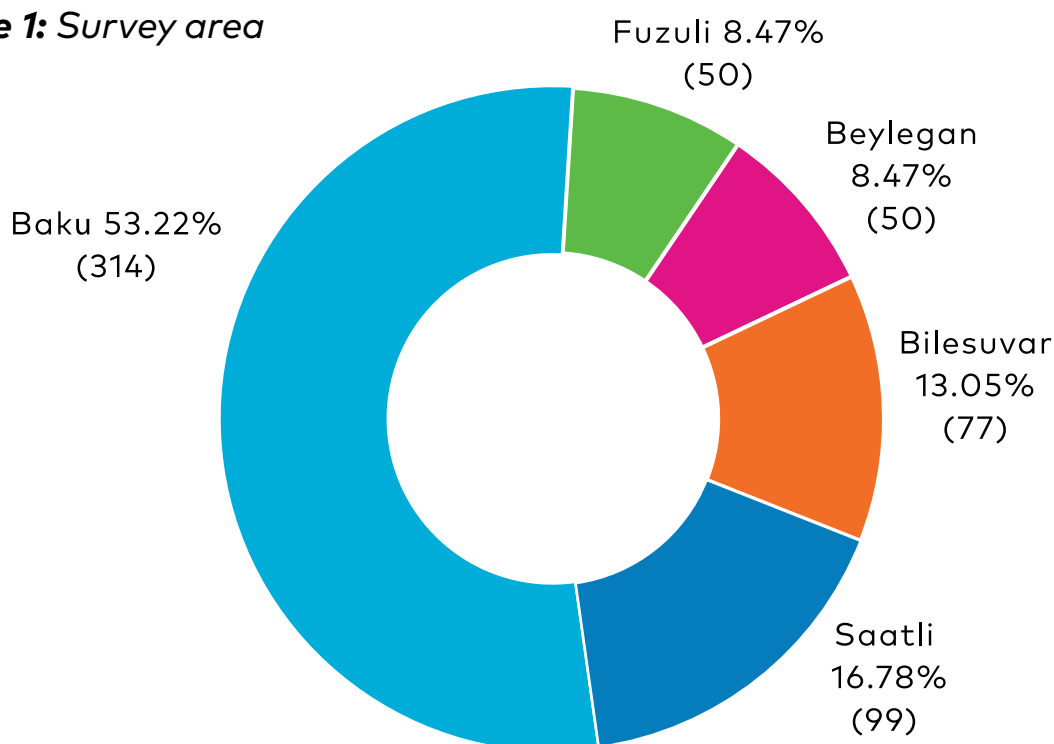
2.1 Survey area and distribution of respondents by the current place of residence

To make arrangements for data comprehensiveness, the survey questionnaire inquired about a respondent's socio-demographic, financial and education status as well as other personal information. Consequently, the survey turned out to be a stepping stone to the demographic and social analysis of respondents, along with the attitudes of IDP women towards return home and concomitant circumstances.

Altogether, the survey covered 590 IDP women and girls; of the total, 314 were residents of Baku and its suburban area, Khirdalan city, while the remaining 276 temporarily settled down in the countryside (Figure 1). It also enabled the team to identify a variety of needs and expectations of IDP women and girls living in different conditions, urban and rural areas; as it transpired, the respondents' outlook for future was based on their past and present life experiences.

The main purpose of age segregation was to study possible differences between thoughts of women, belonging to distinct age groups, about return home and their basic needs associated with relocation.

Figure 1: Survey area



2.2 Age of respondents

Respondents were divided into three age groups: 18-29 (111 women), 30-40 (238 women), and 41-50 years (241 women).

The overwhelming majority of women – more than 80 percent – was born in different parts of Karabakh, but later on subjected to internal displacement. Only one in five respondents was not native of Karabakh and consequently, got to know their hometowns from other people, including elder members of their families.

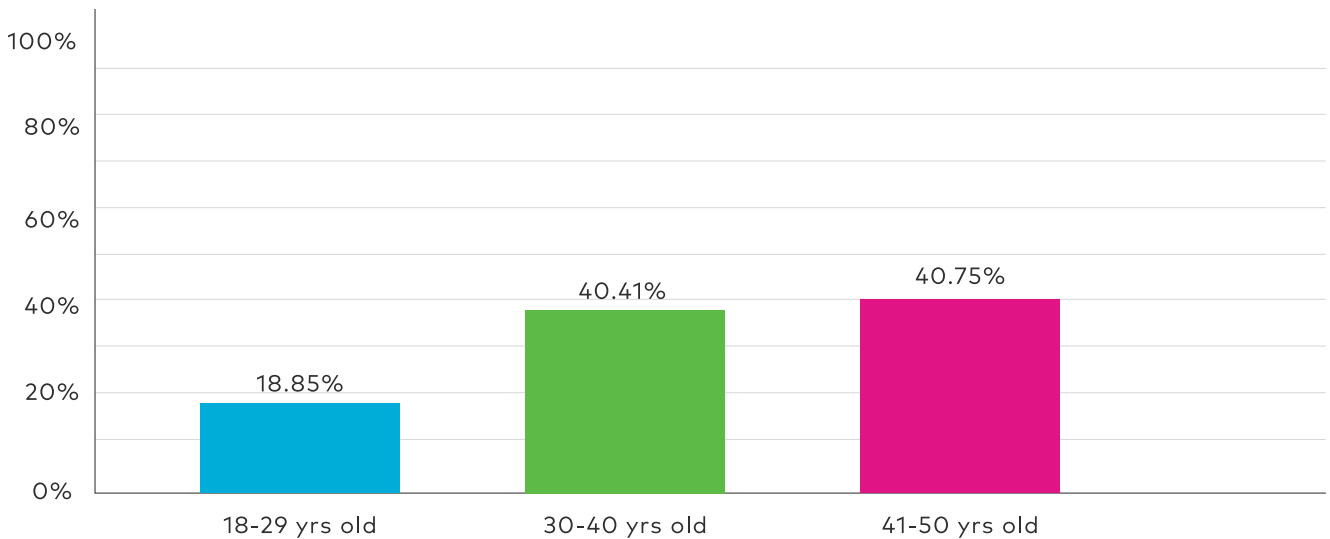
The main purpose of age segregation was to study possible differences between thoughts of women, belonging to distinct age groups, about return home and their basic needs associated with relocation. The subsequent outcome signaled certain needs that were specific to a particular age group. For instance, respondents in the age group of 30-40 years articulated the need for the establishment and operation of educational

The younger generation of respondents, in the age group of 18-29 years, constituted the majority of the women unwilling to return to the liberated areas.

The younger generation of respondents, in the age group of 18-29 years, constitutes the majority of the women unwilling to return to the liberated areas. Born as internally displaced people, they have grown up, studied, lived and got employed in different places, thereby having a weaker affinity with an ancestral homeland.

On the contrary, the idea of resumption of co-existence with Armenians meet with approval among members of the older generation (41-50 years) since they had experienced similar companionship with Armenians in the past.

Figure 2: Age distribution of respondents

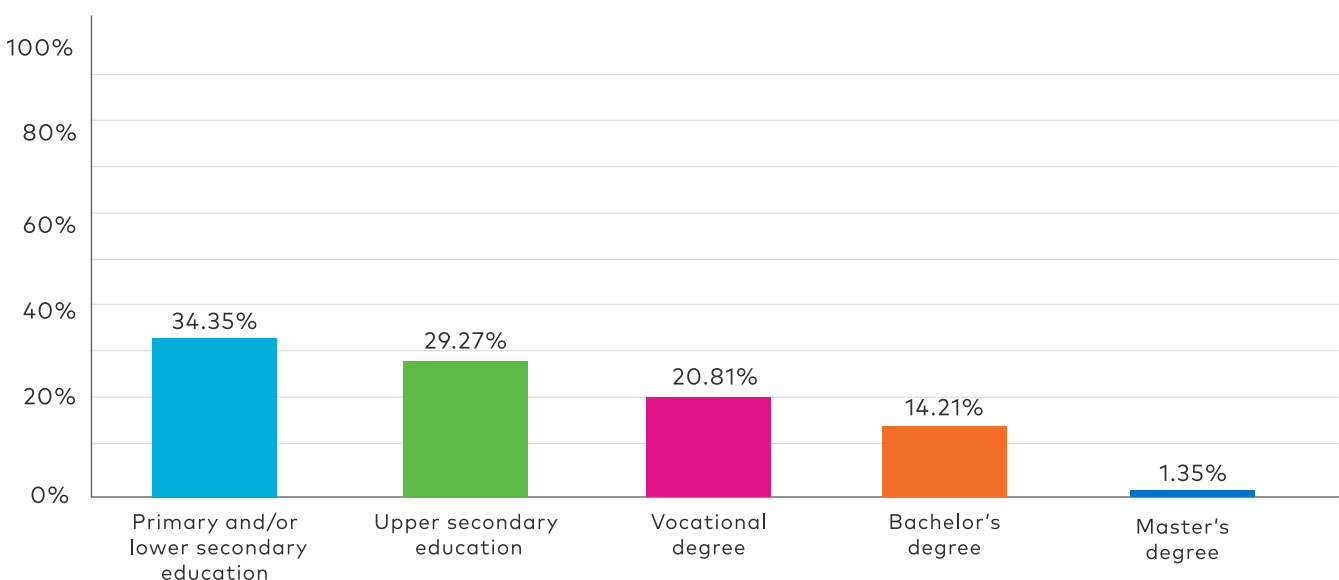


2.3 Education

Slightly over a third of respondents (203 women or 34.35%) had completed a primary and/or secondary education school, while 173 (29.27%) and 123 (20.81) respondents received upper secondary and vocational education, respectively. Only one in seven respondents (15.56%) enrolled in a higher educational institution, with 84 (14.21%) either studying or having received a baccalaureate diploma, and the remaining eight women (1.35%) having earned a master's degree.

Given the cross-cutting nature of the education status, the answers provided by respondents were also considered in view of future needs to arise with the growing percentage of women in higher education.

Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by education status



2.4 Marital status and family composition

The majority of respondents – 72.42% (428 women) – said they were married, while 11.34% (67 women) and 8.29% (49 women) being unmarried and widows, respectively. Besides, 10 respondents (1.69%) had a civil partner (extramarital cohabitation), 30 respondents (5.08%) had dissolved their marriage for various reasons, and seven women (1.18%) admitted that they were living separately even though they were officially married (Figure 4).

Relocation to the liberated areas is fraught with specific needs and concerns for families with children, from infant to the juvenile age. According to the survey data, 117 respondents had (and/or fostered) at least one child, while 281 were in charge of two to four children; finally, 15 women mothered five or more children (Figure 5).

Furthermore, respondents were asked about the current size and composition of their households. It turned out that respondents share the same household with other family members. Only one in ten women (slightly over 10%) was living alone. Meanwhile, 70% of women lived in families composed of three to five members, while 90% of respondents live in larger households of six to seven people. Finally, 22 women lived in families having

Figure 4: Distribution of respondents by marital status

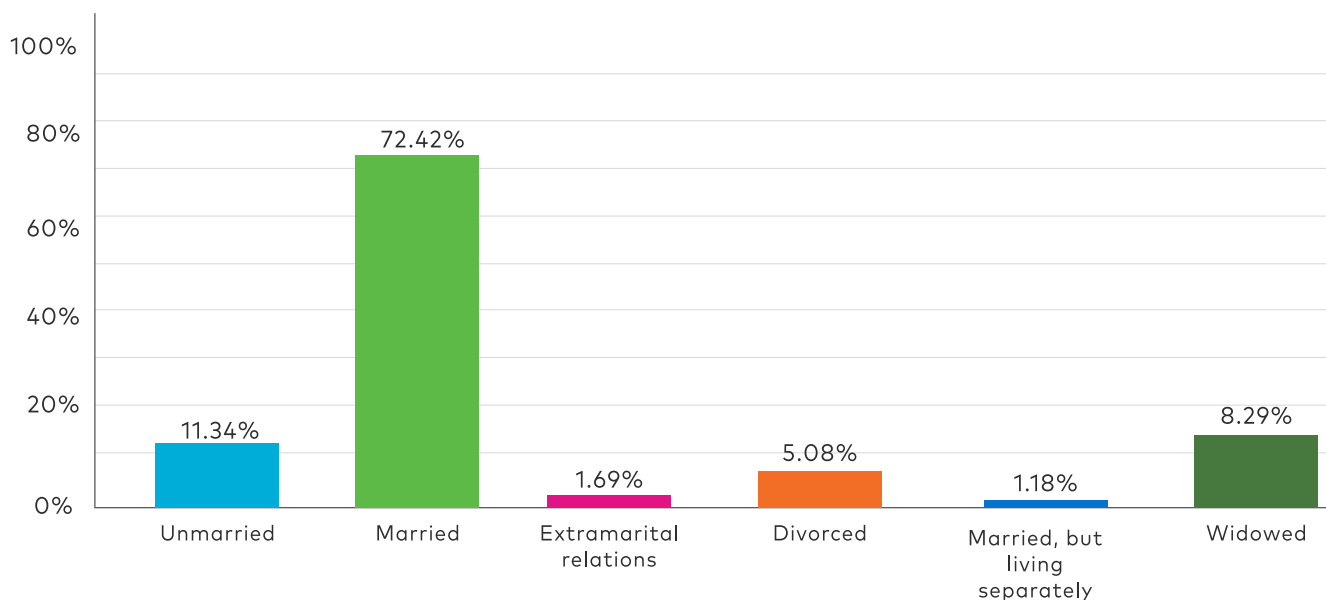
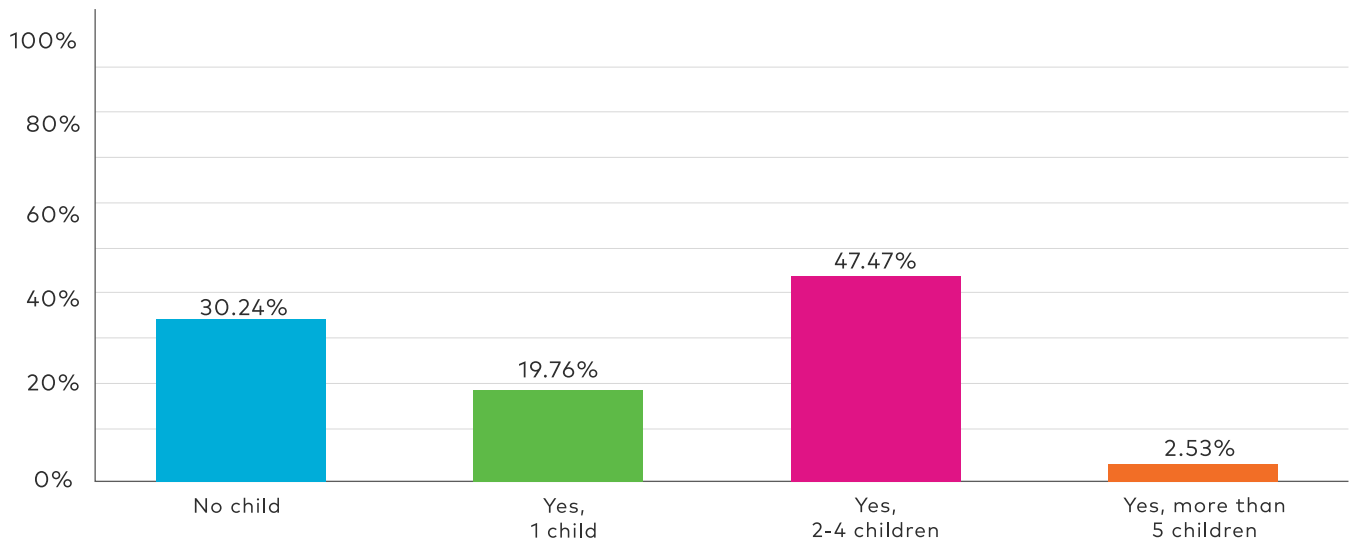


Figure 5: Number of children under the age of 18 or any dependents in the family

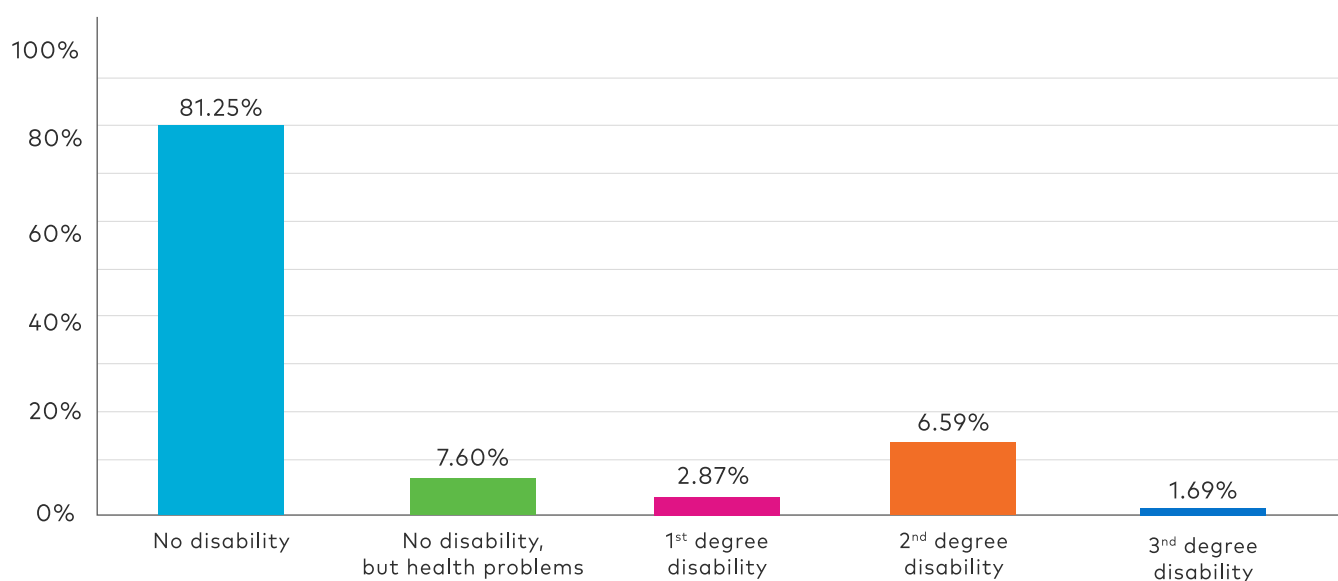


2.5 Health and ability to work

Health and employment-restricting factors were other important topics to gain an insight into the socio-demographic profile of respondents. According to the analysis of survey findings, the overwhelming majority of respondents (81.25%) considered themselves healthy and stated that they did not have any serious health issue or a disability degree that would limit their employment capacity. Meanwhile, 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd degree disability was reportedly assigned to 17, 39 and 10 women, respectively. Meanwhile, 45 respondents who did not have any disability status admitted that health problems limited their capacity to work.

Despite the majority of respondents said they were able to work, some 70% of them remained unemployed at the time of the survey.

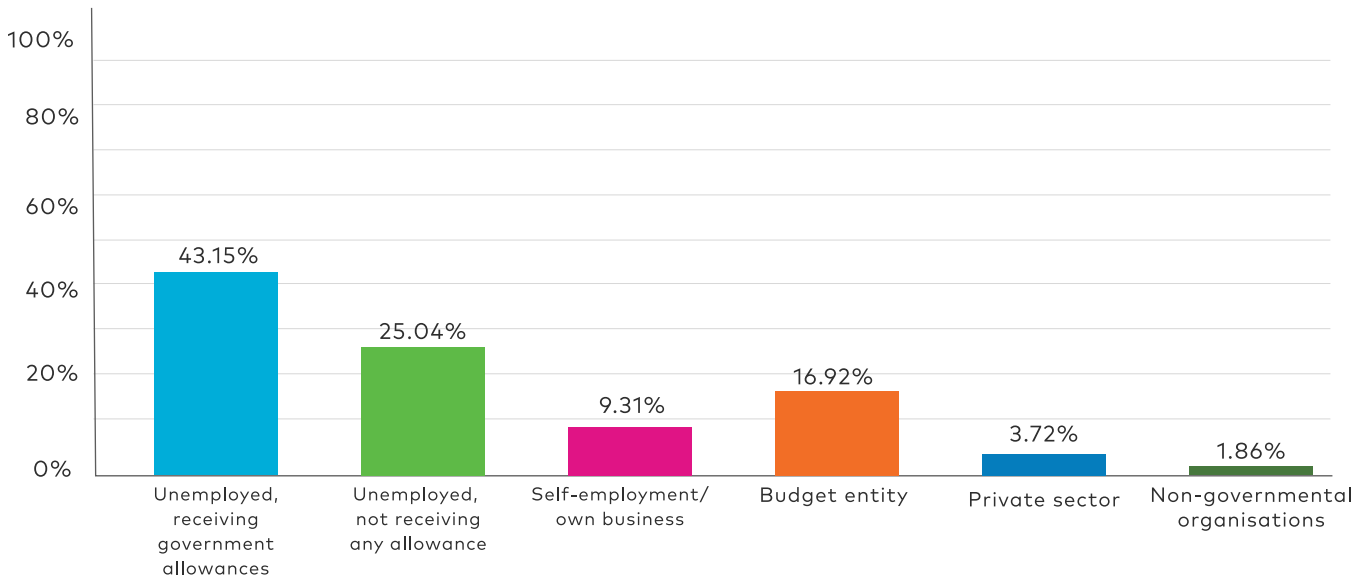
Figure 6: Are there any restrictions on your employment due to your official disability status or health condition?



Despite the majority of respondents said they were able to work, some 70% of them remained unemployed at the time of the survey. It emerged that more than two-fifths of respondents (43.15%) lived on allowances, while 25.04% said that they did not receive such support. Also, 55 women earned their living through self-employment, and 100 respondents said they worked in government institutions versus 22 hired by the private sector and just 11 employed by non-governmental organizations (Figure 7).

To get a clear picture of changing lifestyles of IDP women over the years, the survey team asked about the dynamics – and evolution – of their employment status over the past decade. This question was central to the assessment of employment accomplishments by respondents since they became IDPs, settled down in new places of residence and adapted themselves to new conditions. Unfortunately, there were only a few success stories since 293 out of 590 respondents have not had formal work over the period in question. The rest were involved in different fields (health or education sectors, sales, service provision, and agriculture field).

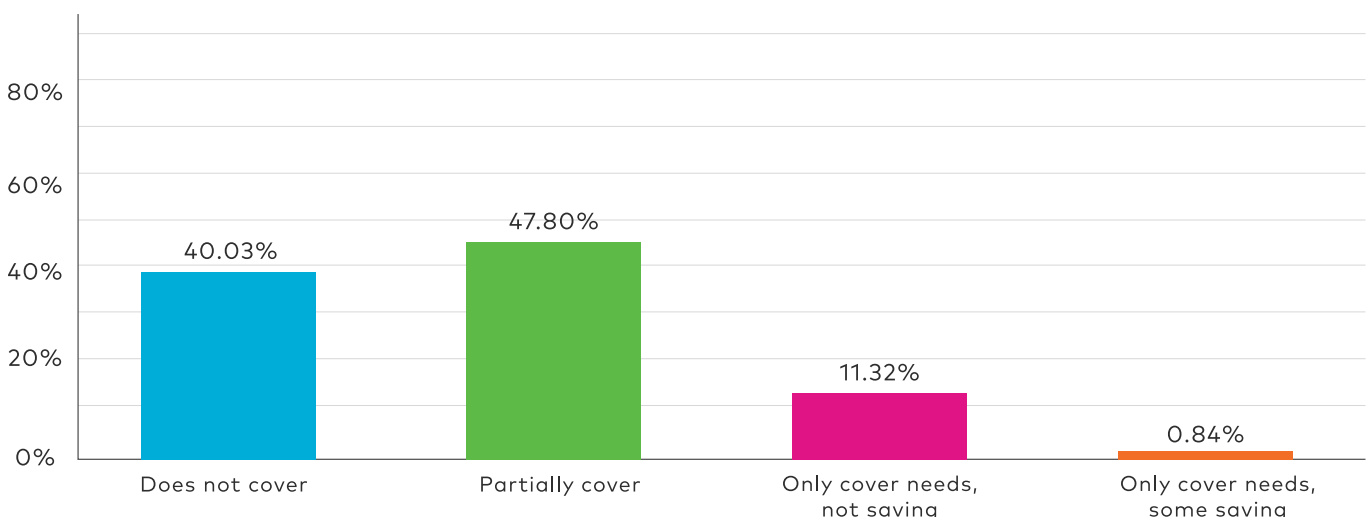
Figure 7: Are you currently employed (income-generating employment)?



The high unemployment rates among respondents can be also qualified as missed economic – and other – opportunities for them in general, and their communities in particular. Consequently, many IDP women have to live on allowances and other forms of financial support. Two-fifths of respondents objected to the size of monthly income, saying it was too small to cover their basic needs, while a significantly lower proportion of women stated that their daily essentials were met only partially. Only 72 respondents (12.16%) admitted that their income was sufficient enough to pay the bills, while a handful of them added that they even managed to save some money (Figure 8).

Unemployment remains the top priority issue to address in order to lift IDP communities out of poverty.

Figure 8: Does your income (salary, profit earned from business activities)/benefits ('bread money' (allowance for essential necessities), pension, and social assistance) cover your essential needs?



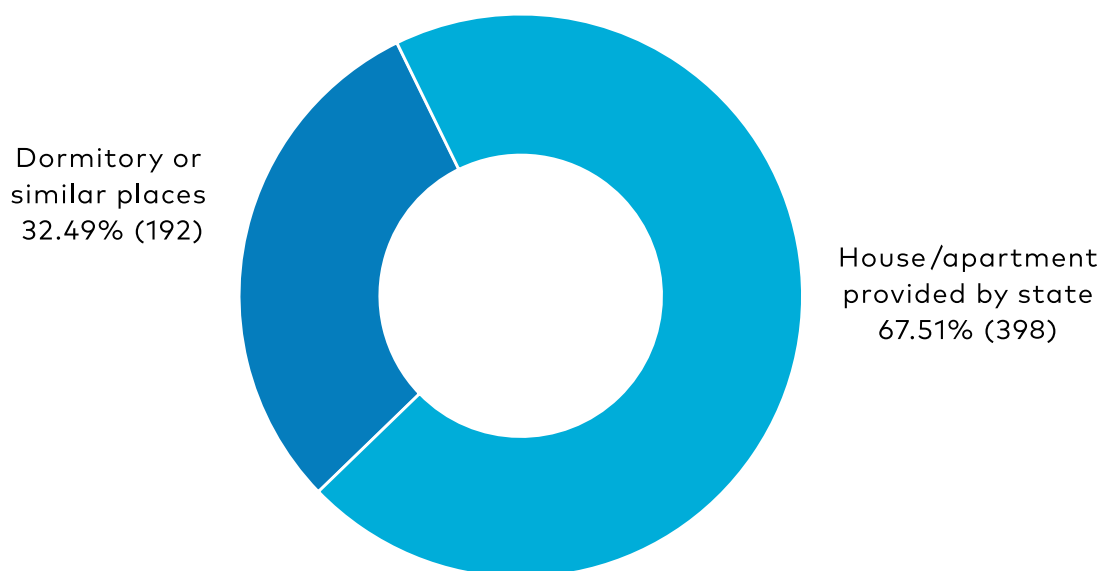
2.6 Housing conditions

To eliminate the room for representative bias and therefore capture a diverse range of needs and expectations among IDP community members, the survey team collected the views and opinions of respondents living in different conditions. To a certain extent, the corresponding outcomes were poles apart.

Given that Azerbaijan's IDP and refugee population surpassed one million, it is practically impossible to make the same housing arrangements for everybody.

The factor of housing disparity was observed in the framework of the survey: a third of respondents – 192 women and girls in total – occupied crowded premises, the former dormitory and similar community accommodations in Baku and its suburban area, Khirdalan city. The remaining respondents stayed, with the right to live but not own, in the houses and apartments that were built and furnished by the government (Figure 9). Consequently, respondents preferred to live in houses and apartments, which often fell short of the promised accommodation quality, rather than huddling up in dormitories that were no more than a roof, shelter for them.

Figure 9: Distribution of IDPs (respondents) by the current dwelling occupancy status



3. NEEDS ASSESSMENT: MAJOR FINDINGS

3.1 Safe return home

The question about the respondents' determination to return home, settling down in the liberated areas (as the main place of residence) was made the cornerstone of the survey. The absolute majority of IDP women and girls, i.e. 88.68% of them, stated that they were willing to go back home, the liberated areas. This viewpoint was shared by respondents in each of the survey-assigned age groups. Despite the existing concerns, including the necessity to shun dangers in many directions, most respondents expressed their readiness to return irrespective of their current living conditions. Individual interviews offered a better setting for the discussions of relocation prospects in detail. All inter-

The majority of women wishes to return to the liberated areas, with two primary reasons being life in homeland and better livelihood opportunities for their families that remain constricted by the existing unsupportable dormitory conditions.

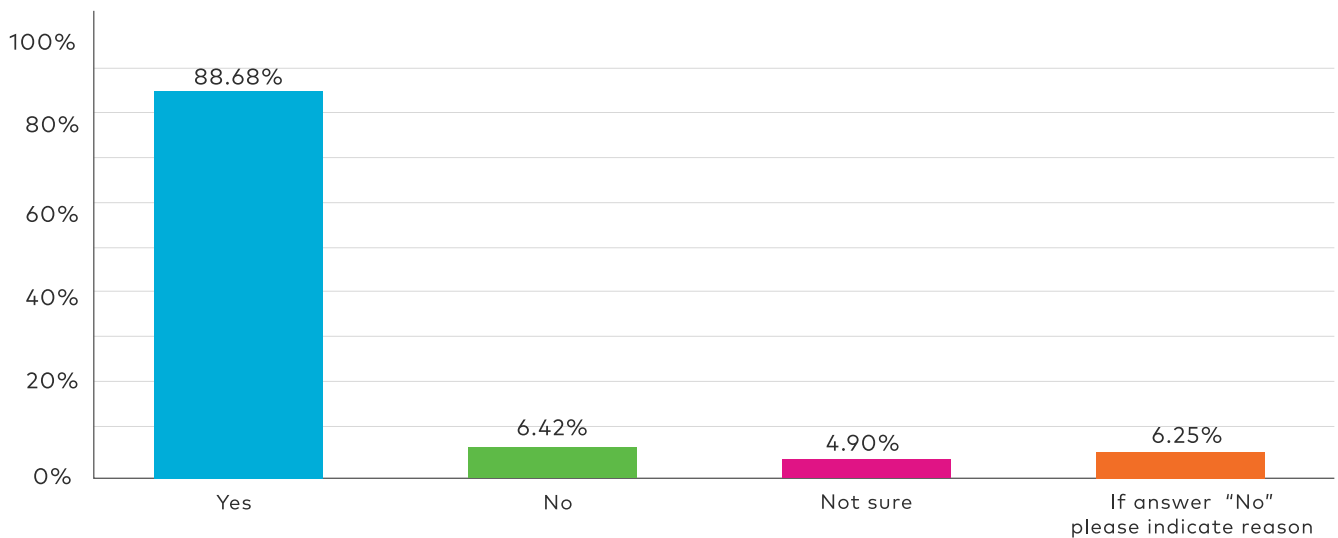
viewees confirmed their determination to return their determination to return, with one of them adding the following: "I want to return. However, if my children want something different, they can stay in Baku."

38 respondents (6.42%) remained downbeat about moving from the current place of residence to the liberated areas and preferred not to relocate.

Meanwhile, 38 respondents (6.42%) remained downbeat about moving from the current place of residence to the liberated areas and preferred not to relocate. That opinion, according to the analysis of the findings, was prevalent among young women and girls in the age group of 18-29 years – they constitute the younger generation of IDPs that was born after occupation and grew up outside Karabakh, with some of either receiving tertiary education or having a job to secure financial footing. They socialized – and were welcomed – in their constitu-

ency, thereby refraining from relocating to the (liberated) areas that were not in their plans for future. Besides, several members of this cohort said they were afraid of becoming an IDP again, while others were against living a rural lifestyle since they grew up in the urban environment. Finally, one in twenty respondents (4.9%) admitted they were not yet sure about relocation.

Figure 10: When the relocation process begins in the liberated areas, would you settle in those areas (as the principal place of residence) yourself or with your family?



Only the respondents who wanted to return or were still unsure about relocation could proceed to the next stage. Consequently, 38 women and girls without any intention to return were requested to specify the corresponding reasons, whereupon their participation in the survey was suspended.

The IDP women willing to relocate to the liberated areas were sought for the disclosure of the reasons for return. The absolute majority – 409 respondents or 73.96% – said they wanted to settle down in the same settlement which they had to flee from, often in panic and confusion, following the encroachment of Armenian forces. They admitted that they belonged to that land and missed it since eviction. Another reason was the knowledge of the area, particularly its geography and climate, thereby contributing to the plans of IDPs for land cultivation for farming to achieve livelihood security.

On the other side, 49 respondents underlined that they had a taste for relocation in an area that was not their home before occupation. They substantiated this choice with a number of objective (infrastructure development, fertile soil, favorable climate) and subjective (marriage and other family connections) factors. Even Khankandi, Khojaly and Aghdara⁷ – the settlements that remain under the control of Armenian secessionists – were among preferred relocation options.

7. Khankandi and Aghdara are known as Stepanakert and Martaket, respectfully, in Armenian, while Khojaly, the Azerbaijani-populated settlement that was captured by Armenians in February 1992, following the mass murder of hundreds of its inhabitants qualified as the Khojaly massacre, was renamed Ivanyan [after the Armenian general Kristapor Ivanyan] in 2001.

Some interviewees expressed a preference for urban over rural life, while the others said they would choose the opposite upon relocation. There were also women, mainly in the age group of 41-50 years, who noted that would likely relocate without their children for the latter were either studying or already got employed in their current place of residence.

Another noteworthy issue to address is anticipated emotional effects, including deep psychological impact, on the people upon their return to where they were forced out several decades ago. More than half of respondents (56.6%) uttered words of contentment to describe their feelings of going home, to the liberated areas. Conversations conducted with women during interviews further bolstered confidence in such feelings.

Subsequently, three-fifths of women (56.6%) who answered positively to the question about going back home were positive thinkers, upbeat about future and willing to revitalize the land of their fathers; only one in three interviewees (28.93%) hesitated between 'yes' and 'no' options, and the remaining 15% was at a loss for valid arguments that would have their respective concerns dissipated.

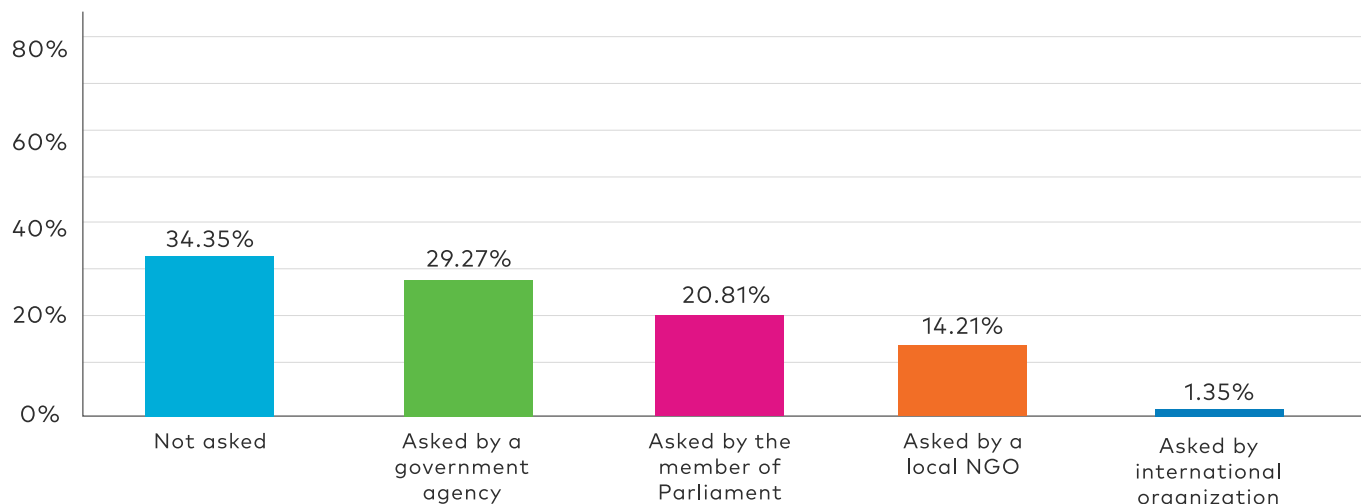
The observations the team members had made during survey and interviews were conducive to the conclusion that women were not afraid of relocation and were comfortable expressing their associated needs and concerns freely. It should be noted that the IDP community have long been disregarded for their views and opinions about returning home. Only a few organizations showed an interest in getting to know the IDP women's thoughts about relocation plans if the occupied territories will be liberated.

Consequently, the survey was first such experience for every seven out of ten respondents over the past year, with only one in four (25.66%) recalling similar polls that were conducted by government agencies. Less than two percent of respondents stated that they had been asked similar questions by a local and/or international organization, and only one respondent had been approached by a member of Parliament on the same topic.

Furthermore, respondents noted that the questions they had been asked in the previous surveys were too general and open-ended, without any room for detailed discussions of conditions, concerns or needs for safe return home. Such approach is not strategically appropriate since it fails to consider specific needs of women.

Finally, 35 respondents said that they had once attended a public hearing with an aim to discuss the return to the liberated areas, while 16 women participated in such meetings several times.

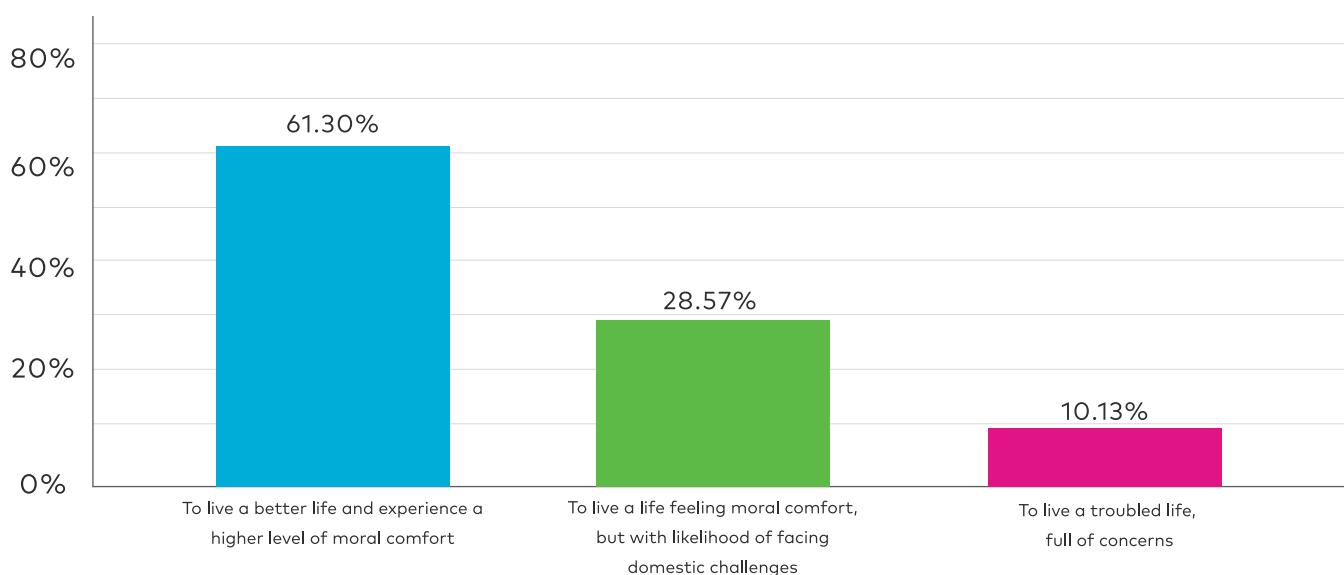
Figure 11: *Has your opinion about settlement plans in the liberated areas been studied or asked by any government agency, member of Parliament, international or local organization over the past year?*



3.2 SAFETY/SECURITY

Before the analysis of safety/security needs and expectations, an attention should be paid to summary answers to one of the survey questions of no small importance:

Figure 12: *What would be your general expectations for life once you are relocated to the liberated areas?*



Clearly, the majority of IDP women emphasized that they wanted an upgrade from the current living conditions to something of a higher standard. Three-fifths of respondents (61.3%), willing to return to their parental homeland, set their hearts on living 'a better life and experiencing a higher level of moral comfort.'

Another question was whether respondents had any livelihood concerns and/or fears upon relocation to the liberated areas. The hardship the IDP women have gone through, with some still suffering, following their eviction by Armenians, is a valid reason to argue that arrangements for a better life, to be accompanied by a higher level of moral comfort, will not be an easily laid path. Hence, nine out of ten respondents (89.13%) have shared concerns and fears, on grounds of safety/security, livelihood, etc., upon return home.

Figure 13: Do you feel any anxiety or what are your biggest fears as far as the relocation to the liberated areas goes?

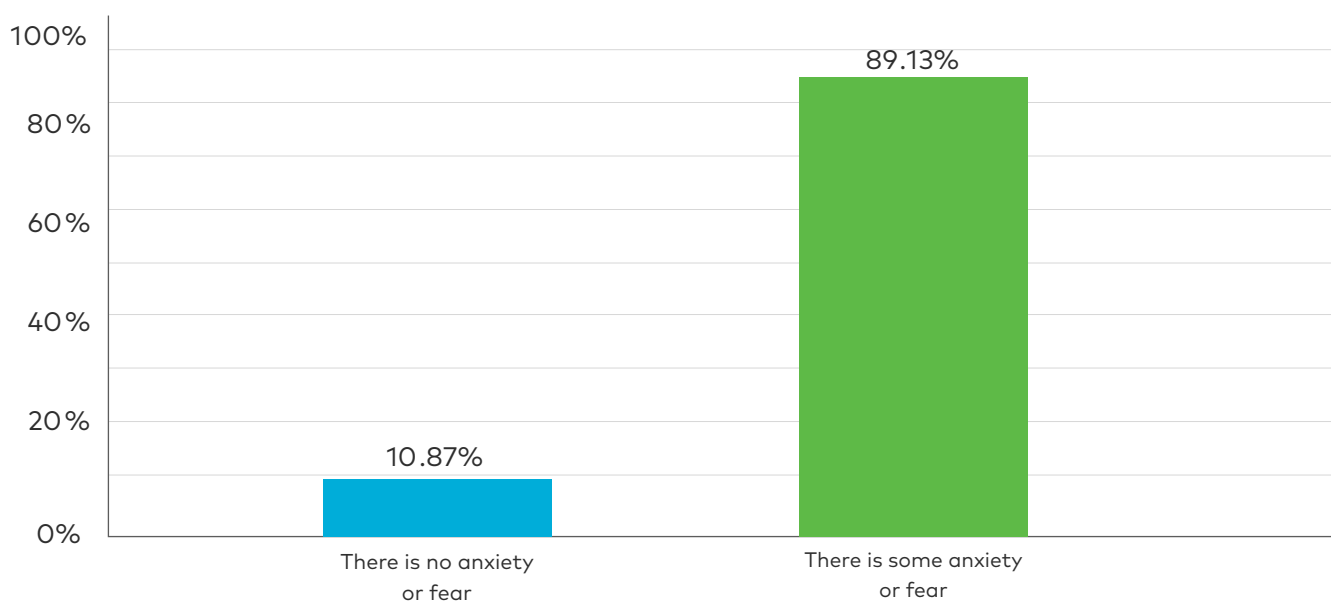


Table 1: If there is a feeling of anxiety or fear, which of the following is it attributed to?

I am worried about income and financial problems	48.73%	250
I am afraid of the restarting of the armed conflict and unexploded weapons	92.20%	473
I am worried about not being able to adapt to the new conditions	28.27%	145
As a woman, I am afraid of being physically or sexually abused	15.79%	81
As a woman, I am afraid tha the health and reproductive health services I need are not at the required level	11.31%	58
I am afraid of difficulties in handling both my work and my role in the family	5.85%	30
I am afraid that my family members will not be able to adapt to the new conditions and will be left behind in education	19.30%	99
I am worried about losing my current connections and social support group	9.75%	50

One of the multiple-choice questions, 'In your opinion, which of the following difficulties you might face upon relocation to the liberated areas?' cemented safety/security as a key issue to address; the overwhelming majority of respondents (87.55%) highlighted safety/security as the crucial factor in the context of returning home, versus just 4.15% who did not see and/or feel any significant difficulty in that respect. The danger of unexploded ordnance (mines, weapons, etc.) and threat of a new armed conflict remain a challenge to overcome. Consequently, safety/security remains a key concern raised by respondents in both survey and interviews.

The survey findings also illustrate safety/security as an undeniable factor in getting everything arranged for the IDP community to return home safely. The interviewees talked openly about the anxiety and fears which they had with regard to the lives of their family members, particularly children. On the one hand, they were afraid of the unexploded ordnance (mines, etc.) planted at many sites, while on the other side, they had vague apprehension and muddled thoughts about living side by side with Armenians who almost wiped out the Azerbaijani presence in the region, including civic infrastructure.

Interviews offered a great opportunity to discuss relevant viewpoints in detail. One lady admitted that she would never want to come across Armenians in the street. It is clear that the involvement and responsible behavior of law-enforcement agencies and the judiciary could be a turning point in ensuring a conjunction of social and legal factors to open the way to coexistence.

The following table shows what types of challenges the respondents expect as an appendage to safety/security concerns.



Of course I want to return, however, mines and other dangerously explosive weapons remain my biggest concern, particularly when I think of my children. I want to live in a safe environment, therefore I am scared of these issues...

Table 2: In your opinion, which of the following challenges could you face upon settling down in the liberated areas?

There can be no significant difficulty	4.15%	23
There may be difficulties with transportation, and communications	7.04%	39
Difficulties in organizing housing and utilities	39.53%	219
Difficulties with health and reproductive health services	14.80%	82
Concerns about discrimination and violence against women	7.58%	42
Unexploded mines, danger of weapons	87.55%	485
Threat of a new armed conflict	65.52%	363
Difficulties in organizing jobs	52.53%	291
Legal services, difficulty with documentation	4.33%	24
Credit and financial support, difficulty in obtaining land	10.11%	56
Difficulty with the quality of children's educations (kindergarden, school, etc.)	17.33%	96
Other (briefly explain your opinion)	0.54%	3

3.3 Social needs and housing conditions

One of key amenities of life in the context of relocation to the liberated areas are social safety net, housing schemes, education development arrangements, civic infrastructure, and safe utility supply chain operations. Both respondents and interviewees made question of the availability of these facilities at the time of – and soon after – return home.

As is seen from Table 2, about 40% of respondents consider housing and utilities as major challenges in the framework of relocation. Furthermore, they added that the establishment and provision of the conditions that are essential to support life is a matter of paramount importance for the central government to address.

One in three respondents (32%) was living in the dormitory at the time of survey. In addition, all interviewees expressed disappointment at intolerable living conditions in dilapidated, yet cramped dormitories. Some of the views collected during interviews are presented below:

- *"The housing conditions are terrible, the corridor and kitchen of the dormitory are in an emergency state, close to collapse."*

- *"The overall conditions in the dormitory are unbearable. This was not the case before, but the entire compound gradually feel into disrepair and is currently in a very bad state. We can't even walk relaxed, for we need to watch out for every step we are making."*

- *"The biggest problem is that the building is too old. It is no longer suitable for renovation."*

- "Our housing conditions are bad. We are crammed into one room only. It is time for my son to get married, but he cannot afford that due to the unsolved housing problems. Several families use the same kitchen and bathroom."

- "The living space is very small and unrepaired. Water and gas are supplied but often cut off."

- "I was born in this dormitory, and we have lived here, in these difficult conditions, ever since."

Most respondents stayed, with the right to live but not own, in the houses and apartments that were built and furnished by the government. Nevertheless, they disclosed some shortcomings of the corresponding accommodations:

- "Indeed, the houses were renovated, but that was a low-quality job causing the deterioration of the refurbishments within a short period of time."

- "The homestead land is extremely small."

- "None of the houses that were built in rural areas had a bathroom. This made the house-keeping activities of women difficult to carry out. In addition, women had to bathe their kids in a keeve in the middle of their houses unless families built a bathroom themselves (although poor families can't afford it at all)."

- "Our house is short on space. We are a family of four and we were given a two-room house without a built-in bathroom or toilet facility."

- "The biggest problem is the small size of homestead land and lack of land allocated for farming (crop husbandry)."

On the other side, some respondents were uncertain whether they will be provided with better living conditions upon relocation, since, at the time of the survey and interviews, they were expanding and/or renovating their current place of residence (government-built houses and apartments) at their own expense.

According to the analysis of survey findings, asked about the challenges that were expected in their lives upon relocation to the liberated areas, the majority of respondents residing in dormitories emphasized housing conditions a probable consequence of the lack of reasonable accommodation they have had to live through, and a fear of ending



Since it is a dormitory, the living conditions are dismal. The building is not renovated, we share it with rats. The sanitary is very bad because it is shared. We have been living in such conditions since 1993.

up in the same situation upon return home. Some respondents fussed over every issue related to housing arrangements as part of the relocation process, for they expect that the corresponding conditions will be provided with due consideration of their needs, i.e. the challenges they have been facing since their recognition as an IDP will not make their future lives worse. As a matter of fact, the respondents do not have illusive requirements since they hope for a set-up that will ensure a decent standard of living.

In summary, respondents' needs and expectations for housing conditions are about the acceptable proportion between the number of family members and rooms to accommodate all of them in the house/apartment which they will, and the sufficient level of quality of the residential houses/apartments, with a kitchen, bathroom and toilet facilities, to be built for returning communities. In one of the interviews, a 21-year-old lady admitted that she kept on dreaming of living in her own room, but there was no separate room for her in their house/apartment.

Women need housing conditions with the sufficient number of rooms to accommodate all family members, as well as houses/apartments to be built and commissioned in line with living expectations, including connection to the utility systems, and in conformity with the standards that ensure high quality.

In summary, respondents' needs and expectations for housing conditions are about the acceptable proportion between the number of family members and rooms to accommodate all of them in the house/apartment which they will, and the sufficient level of quality of the residential houses/apartments, with a kitchen, bathroom and toilet facilities, to be built for returning communities. In one of the interviews, a 21-year-old lady admitted that she kept on dreaming of living in her own room, but there was no separate room for her in their house/apartment.

Upon relocation, some people could end up in an unfamiliar environment, for some arrangements are likely to be made for returning communities to adapt themselves to a new type of setting to establish and develop neighborhood relations with people whom they did not know before. Settlement beautification plans, involving innovative landscape architecture and garden designs, could improve the quality of life in the liberated areas. Public catering facilities, shopping arcades, cultural halls (theater, cinema, etc.) supplemented the respective list of needs.

Specific needs were characteristic of the respondents intending to live in rural areas and engage in farming. They stressed the importance of allocation of substantial parcels of land to avoid a 'subsistence farming' trap, as well as the construction and

maintenance of irrigation systems, cold storage warehouses, and unimpeded access to markets.

They added that the failure to materialize any of these components could jeopardize the revival of agriculture in the liberated areas.

Accessibility of medical/health and educational services is an important and reasonable necessity for the maintenance of life and personal development. Availability of educational institutions (kindergartens, secondary schools, vocational schools, higher educational institutions, and training centers) was particularly noted by mothers with school-age children. One thought-provoking opinion, voiced by 82 respondents, was the lasting negative effect of the lack of access to health care services on women's health. However, domestic functions, including family duties, and financial constraints outweigh the prioritization of health in the minds of many women.



Let them build our house with all amenities in the village, we will then go and live there. That house should be large enough to accommodate members of our family, with kids having their own room at the least, and should have an in-built bathroom and kitchen, and be connected to the utility systems (electricity, gas, water, and sewer), including phone service and internet.

On top of everything, the area should be cleared of unexploded ordnance (mines, weapons, etc.)."

3.4 Employment

Job creation was another issue of concern for the respondents who already lacked employment opportunities in their current place of residence, thereby facing financial constraints. Interviews were a better platform for IDP women to explain the corresponding challenges in a clear, detailed manner.

Referring to the demographics section of the report, the data on work capacity and employment status (Figures 6 and 7) signify that over 80% of respondents is able-bodied and capable of doing the work, while almost 70% considered de facto jobless. Thus, unemployment is one of the root causes of poverty, leading to missed opportunities, including inadequate education. Consequently, 49% of respondents said that their monthly financial means, including income, were a matter of concern, while 52% of respondents laid stress on the availability of adequate job opportunities as a key issue to be addressed in parallel with the relocation to the liberated areas (Table 2).

Many interviewees expressed the willingness to work and earn money upon relocation. Some even had plans to open a dance studio, café or beauty salon.

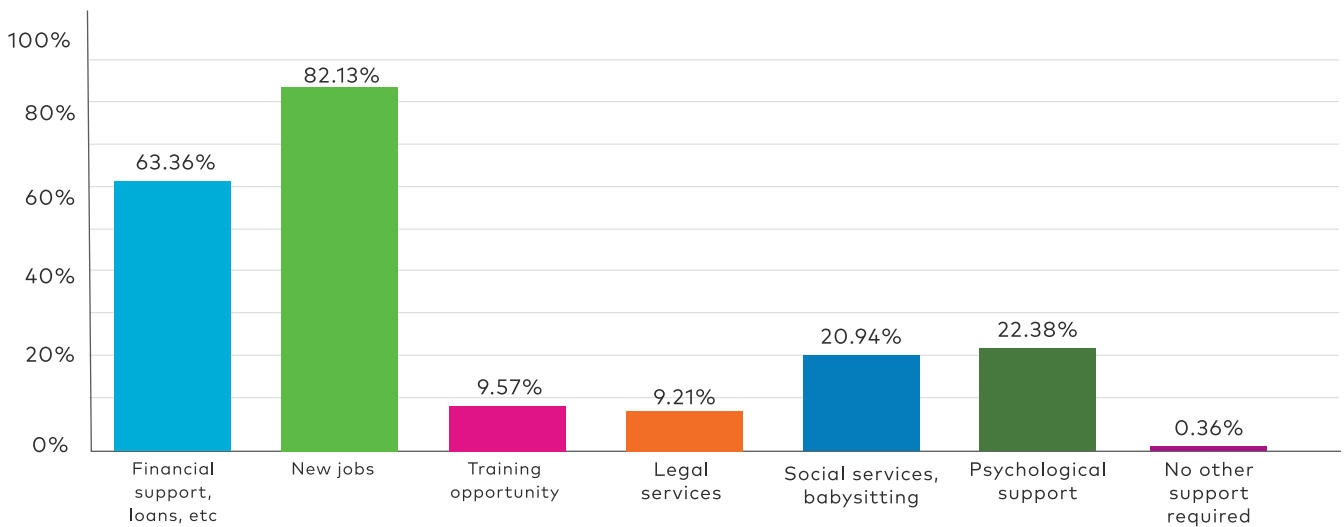
To materialize business and/or education plans, any woman needs financial and institutional support, including the improvement of professional and managerial skills.

On the same note, almost two-thirds of respondents (63.65%) highlighted financial security as a core condition for well-being. Moreover, 56 of them, as is indicated in Table 12, cited access to finance, including soft loans and subsidies and other types of similar support, as a handicap to overcome.

Some of those women are divorced, widowed or single (but live alone or have to sustain their lifestyle themselves) – hence their dire need to secure financial support upon relocation to the liberated areas.

Women need serious financial support, broader opportunities for education, and improvement of professional and managerial skills

Figure 14: Being a woman, what kind of support do you need for the relocation to the liberated areas?



3.5 Coexistence with ethnic Armenians in Karabakh

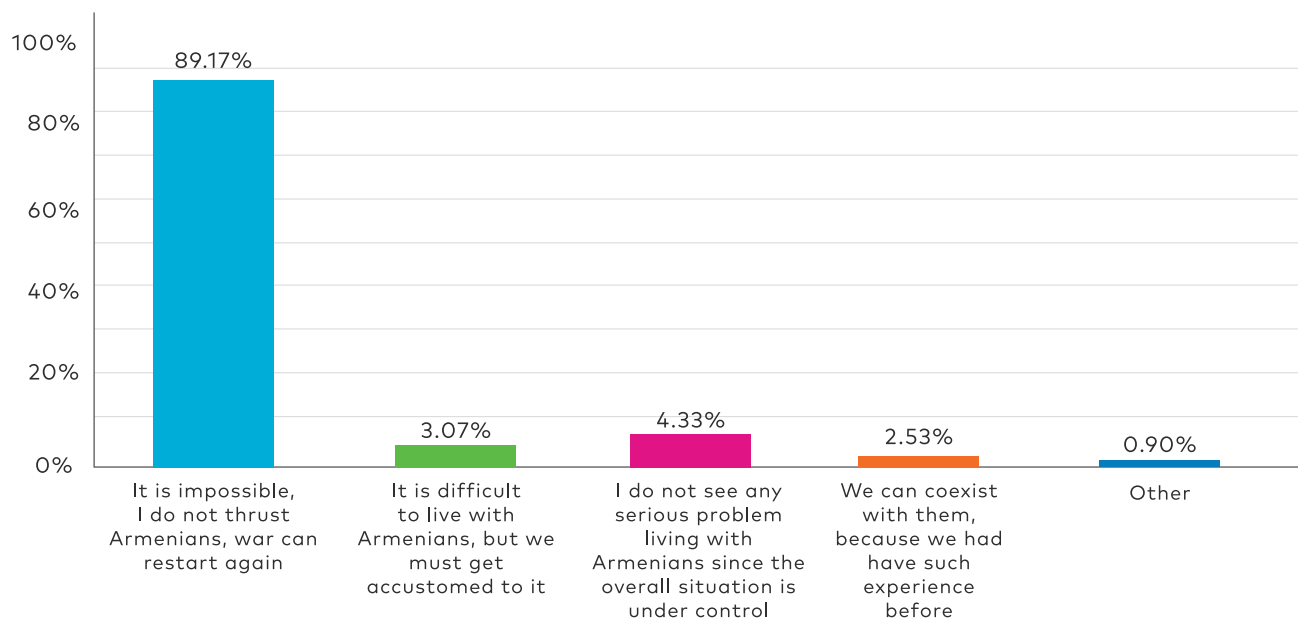
The 44-day 2020 Karabakh War ended with Azerbaijan's sweeping victory and liberation of the major portion of the occupied land, but did not outline any prospect for a peace agreement to prepare ground for interethnic coexistence in Karabakh.

Meanwhile, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan stated that the country's citizens of Armenian origin may return to their places of residence in Karabakh within the measures to be taken by the Government of Azerbaijan and did not ruled out a 'cultural autonomy' for ethnic Armenians.⁸



The views of survey respondents, however, sent a firm 'no trust' signal to stakeholders, including the international community. Nine of ten IDP women noted that coexistence with ethnic Armenians in Karabakh was impossible, and only one in ten considered the possibility of such scenario.

Figure 15: As you know, our President (Ilham Aliyev) has guaranteed the right of abode/security for civilian Azerbaijani citizens of ethnic Armenian background residing in Karabakh. What about your views on a new period of coexistence with Armenians in Karabakh?⁹



8. Azeri president says Armenians can have 'cultural autonomy' in Nagorno-Karabakh | Reuters

9. https://apa.az/az/xarici_siyaset/Prezident-Dagliq-Qarabagda-yasayan-ermnilrin-thluksizliyi-huquqlari-tam-tmin-olunacaq-611668

The survey included a number of questions related to coexistence with Armenians in Karabakh, such as: 'Is it possible to live with Armenians? Do you feel ready to live with them?' etc. It emerged that more than 80% of respondents did not think they were prepared for coexistence with Armenians in any way. The horrors of the First Karabakh War (1988-1994) were still fresh in the memories of the women who shared the vicissitudes of life as an eyewitness of brutal behavior of ruthless treatment – even heinous crimes committed – by the enemy. Some of them even added that they would not feel safe having come across Armenians in the street. It was evident that many respondents had to live with deep emotional and psychological trauma that left them struggling with upsetting memories and anxiety.

Figure 16: Do you think you are prepared for the coexistence with Armenians in Karabakh?

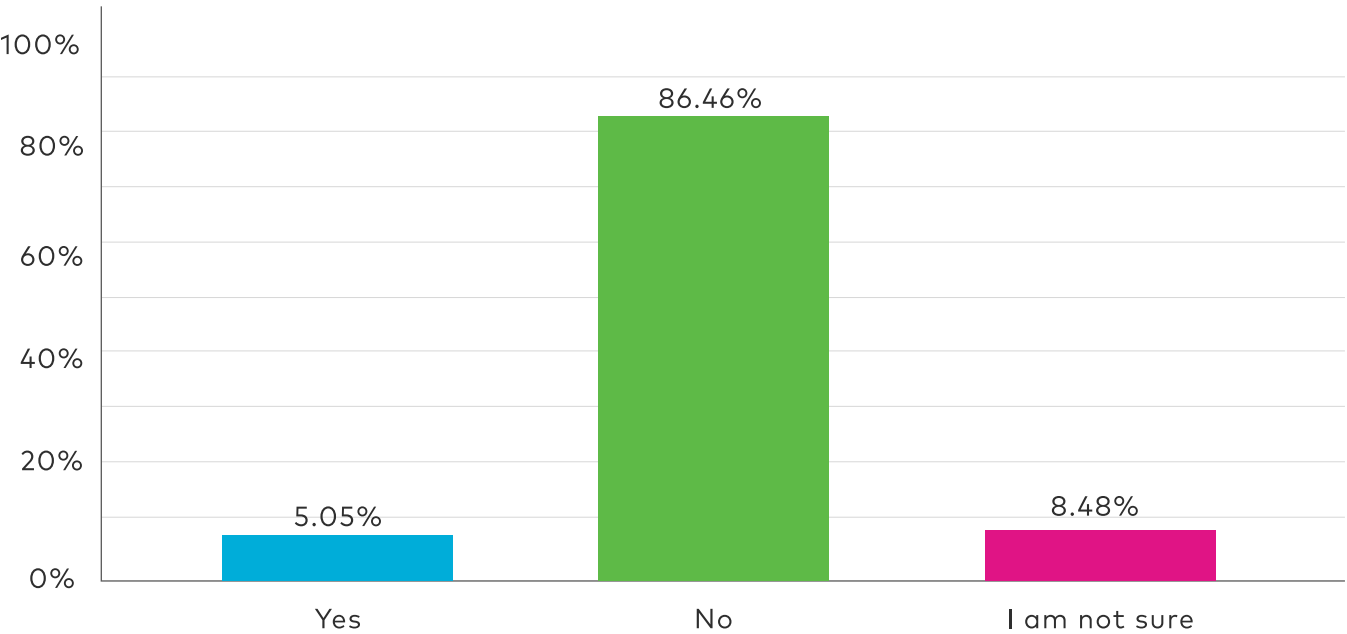


Table 3: What do you expect from coexistence with Armenians in Karabakh?

It is possible to live together in peace, as in the Soviet Union	3.25%	18
For peace and coexistence with Armenians, it is necessary to build mutual trust and confidence on both sides (confidence building for reconciliation and co-habitation)	4.70%	26
I do not see any intention of the Armenians to live in peace and cooperation with us	11.03%	61
It is impossible for both side to live together after so many casualties	79.93%	442
Other (explain your opinion briefly)	1.08%	6

Yet there is a flame of hope, for one in twenty women signaled their – even held themselves in – readiness to coexist with Armenians.

Some respondents, both protagonists and antagonists of the idea of coexistence, left the following handwritten notes in the questionnaire to explain their respective choices:

- **"If they [Armenians] want to stay in Karabakh, they have to live with our presence."**
- **"I am worried about the future of my children since Armenians have always been treacherous."**
- **"How can anyone live with Armenians who committed the Khojaly tragedy?"**
- **"It is impossible! They have captured my father-in-law as a prisoner of war."**

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey covered 590 internally displaced women, while 30 more women were interviewed to get a tentative picture of their needs and expectations, including their fears and concerns for peace-building and returning home.

The findings did not make any about-turn on the safety/security issue, with the overwhelming majority (87.55%) of respondents highlighting the necessity of being safe from danger as a decisive factor behind their decision to relocate. Consequently, the full-scale clearance of landmines and deadly weapons to make the liberated land available for safe agriculture and development activities, to be supported by the guarantee for non-resumption of armed hostilities have been underscored as key factors for IDPs' return home. Meanwhile, almost two-thirds (63.65%) of respondents emphasized employment and improved financial standing as a preceding necessity, while one in two (52%) considered job creation as the biggest challenge to relocation. Finally, two-fifths (40%) of the surveyed/interviewed IDP women and girls raised matters of better housing conditions and utility supply infrastructure.

Protection of human rights, legitimate interests and needs of IDP women will make the relocation process in the liberated areas more effective and systematic. Therefore, competent government authorities, in cooperation with civil society institutions, should carry out regular measures to identify and diagnose the corresponding needs of the returning IDP communities. Such approach would ensure that the opinion of the majority of returning IDPs is reflected in decision-making and subsequent activities.

To contribute to the upcoming multi-stakeholder and cross-cutting action, involving, inter alia, gender sensitive planning, strategy building, and identification of specific needs of women during the relocation process, the following recommendations have been formulated for competent stakeholders, including the Government of Azerbaijan, as a consequence for the processing and analysis of the survey findings:

General recommendations

- Policies/programs shall be crafted and implemented, with active involvement of international organizations, development agencies, civil society institutions and women's organizations, to secure an effective response to specific needs of returning women and the corresponding gender sensitivity requirements, as well as to ensure that adaptation to new living conditions takes its smooth, productive and swift course for women and girls;
- Regular surveys, individual interviews, and community meetings with IDP women and girls shall be conducted by relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations to identify and keep an eye on the dynamics of gender-specific needs;
- Arrangements need to be made to ensure women's participation in all stages of planning and decision-making;
- Civil society institutions, as well as women's groups and gender experts shall be engaged in the formulation of development plans and strategies for the relocation of IDP women and girls in liberated areas;
- An incessant communication channel shall be set up to keep returning IDP communities informed, on a regular basis, about the extent to which their relocation-related needs, concerns and views are covered;
- To launch a communication strategy for regular news update on restoration work in liberated areas, and to offer an opportunity to women and girls to express their respective views and thoughts about the process in question;
- To carry out an awareness-raising campaign with the ultimate goal of providing unimpeded access for the returning population to support services to do away with the psychological impact of adaptation. Whenever required, psychological and legal counseling should be offered prior to the relocation;
- To enhance the effectiveness of territorial integration approach, the Government of Azerbaijan shall take necessary measures to develop and strengthen local communities, including facilitation of the progress of projects to be implemented by international organizations, development agencies, and non-governmental organizations;

- International organizations, development agencies, civil society institutions, and women's organizations shall be engaged in building and advancing up dialogue for peaceful coexistence between Azerbaijani and Armenian communities, thereby contributing to the consistent policy of peace in the region.

Safeguarding security and ensuring safety during relocation and upon return home:

- ANAMA¹⁰, and other organizations with relevant on-site experience abroad, shall be involved in the efficient demining of liberated areas;
- Extensive awareness-raising and training activities need to be carried out with participation of the civilian population to protect returning communities from mine hazards;
- To address security-related concerns, the general public shall be kept informed about the security measures undertaken and the correspondent development work progress, on a regular basis, by various means (TV, radio, traditional and social media, community meetings, etc.);
- Safeguards against violence and failures to respect human rights, and actions to raise awareness of available services, including legal remedies, should be put in place to protect returning women and girls;
- Gender-responsive and gender-sensitive services should be among the topics of regular training courses for the staff of law-enforcement agencies and the judiciary to operate in liberated areas;
- Free-of-charge crisis and counselling services, including hotlines, shall be made available for returning communities and accessible in all areas, especially remote habitations.

10. ANAMA or the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action was established with UNDP's support in 1999 to demine unsafe areas in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Over the past 20 years, the Agency has been involved in rendering more than 800,000 mines and other explosives harmless, thereby ensuring a safe return home for over 160,000 displaced people ([ANAMA and UNDP join forces to support mine action in Azerbaijan - Azerbaijan | ReliefWeb](#)). Following the second Karabakh War (27 September -10 November 2020), the Agency has cleared 3,326 ha of land, including around 22,000 mines and other explosives ([ANAMA: 2020-ci ilin noyabr ayından Qarabağda 12,5 minə yaxın mina və 9,5 minə yaxın partlamamış hərbi sursat zərərsizləşdirilib – «Interfax» — Ən son Azərbaycan, Gürcüstan və Ermənistan xəbərləri \(interfax.az\)](#)).

Social needs and housing conditions in liberated areas

- Residential construction and infrastructure development activities shall be tailored to the needs of returning community members, particularly women and girls;
- Civilian oversight shall go hand in hand with the government-exercised control of development activities;
- Given the respondents disapproval of the quality of the houses/apartments that were built to accommodate them in the past, the overall quality – including compliance testing – of construction and (possible) renovation works in the liberated areas shall be subjected to independent scrutiny by civil society institutions to ensure full transparency of the process in question;
- Returning families shall be provided with sufficient area of living accommodation, including a separate kitchen and bathroom, as well as internal access to utilities, to make arrangements for their smooth adaptation to new living conditions.
- Legal documents certifying the ownership of property and the accompanying legal services shall be made available for returning family members, with equal prospects for both sexes, to secure them against relevant property-related problems in future;
- Recreational, sports and cultural facilities should be built and operate in liberated areas to give residents, particularly women and girls, an opportunity to live a healthy life and spend leisure time with their nearest and dearest;
- Access to quality medical services must be provided for returning communities. Enabling conditions should be ensured for privately owned health facilities to benefit from level playing field, thereby giving relocated people the right to choose an appropriate healthcare provider;
- The education infrastructure responsive to the today's requirements shall be developed and be accessible for returning communities. These activities shall be handled in parallel with the relocation process so that IDP children and juveniles can continue their education without any unplanned break during the respective school year;
- Establishment and operationalization of a social protection system in liberated areas should be an integral part of the relocation process.

Employment

- Gender-sensitive access to finance and other resources (land, technology, equipment, training opportunities, etc.) shall be provided for women with an intention to engage in entrepreneurial activities upon relocation to the liberated areas, with a special focus to be made on the women aspiring to set up micro- or small businesses;
- Inclusive educational and vocational training programmes shall be put in place to keep the level of professionalism of returning community members in conformity with modern business requirements;
- Appropriate action shall be taken to further improve women's skills and knowledge necessary for their adaptation to and employment in the 'smart village' environment;
- Sufficient land shall be allocated, on condition of equitable distribution among women and men, for agriculture purposes to allow the returning families to build and develop competitive farms, including agroforestry businesses;
- Unimpeded access to extension (agricultural advisory) services irrigation systems, colling chain, and markets shall be made available for female farmers willing to set up cooperatives;
- On a general note, gender equality must be a prevailing attitude towards ensuring access to available resources.

Neighborhood culture involving ethnic Armenians in Karabakh

Harmonious and peaceful coexistence with Armenians seems to be a long way to go, since the findings of the survey show signs of unpreparedness of the respondents – affected communities of Azerbaijani IDPs – to embrace peace at this point in time.

To achieve and maintain peace on condition of compliance with the internationally accepted territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, well-directed efforts shall be made by relevant national stakeholders, including through the partnership with agencies with international outreach capacity, to gradually change the mindset and attitudes of the affected communities from hostility and resentment towards what is left in common. Subsequently, such approach could help relieve the affected communities – afflicted with the pains of the past – of psychological trauma and prevent the younger generation from ending up exposed to the risk of anxiety disorders, thereby finding a solid ground for recovery

and confidence-building between the two nations. International partners can contribute to making a positive about-turn on the issues in questions; their contribution could be central to assuaging the feelings of mutual antagonism.

The following recommendations have been made as a potential response to fostering the sentiments of peace to prepare Azerbaijani IDPs and Armenians in Karabakh, in their respective capacity as citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and at a later stage, the general public in both Armenia and Azerbaijan for friendly coexistence:

- To conduct public surveys in both countries to shape a comprehensive strategy that will capture the corresponding views and opinions regarding peace and coexistence. It is therefore important that both sides apply a holistic approach that is responsive to the needs of women/girls and vulnerable populations;
- To review the role of international organizations, development agencies and civil society institutions, including women organizations, against their achievements in the field of promotion of mutual confidence and good neighborhood relations between two hostile nations and their ultimate involvement in win-win cooperation;
- Special attention shall be paid to engaging women and youth in the projects offering flexible solutions to their respective needs;
- The status of civil society and media should be advanced, with the support of international organizations that prove to be free from bias in carrying out their activities, to advocate the ideas of peace and coexistence between the two nations, thereby gradually changing the persisting differences and attitudes through the 'national dialogue and forgiveness/repentance days' within the framework of joint cooperation;
- Women leaders, as role models, can play a crucial role in mobilizing female community members to foster the culture of peaceful and friendly coexistence. Therefore, involvement of women organizations in such dialogue could be a starting point to move ahead;
- Peace initiatives of community and volunteer groups shall rest upon institutional and financial support to be provided by competent stakeholders, including international partners;
- Live videos designed for social media audience and featuring women and children calling for peace could be a response to peace promotion needs. Meanwhile, the social media could be utilized as a joint discussion platform to reinstitute contacts

between conflict-affected communities to help them listen and – possibly – understand each other, thereby finding a common ground for peace, cooperation and co-existence;

- Face-to-face communication among community members of different ages, involving dialogue meetings, and/or summer schools and camps to be set up for the youth in a neutral area with the support of international organizations and NGOs could contribute to creating an enabling peace-building environment leading to friendly co-existence;
- Religious institutions and leaders, and public figures should be involved in the peace process as influencers acting in the areas in which government's involvement could be resisted by communities. On the one side, they can be the voices of unattended communities, while on the other side, they can promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Given the sensitivity of the issue, such activities should be sober-minded, based on facts and knowledge, to achieve mutual understanding and reinstate tolerance between the communities concerned;
- Important messages for peace-building shall also be conveyed through cultural events (art festivals, cinema, theater, book presentations, painting, and photo exhibitions) to be organized with participation of celebrities and/or notables;
- Given the long-lasting nature of efforts to achieve peace in essence, with the majority of community members, particularly living victims, expressing readiness for peaceful coexistence, psychological assistance should be rendered for an extended period to overcome the effects of stolen lives and grow accustomed to living in peace with neighboring communities.

