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PEACE & RECOVERY | POLICY BRIEF

SEPTEMBER 2020

## Returning Home? Conditions in Syria, Not Lebanon, Drive the Return Intentions of Syrian Refugees



As of September 2020, the Syrian government had retaken control of the majority of Syria, leading to speculation about the end of the country's civil war and sparking debates both within the region and beyond about whether Syrian refugees will return. While some regional governments have begun to take active steps to encourage such return, many in the international community believe that conditions in Syria remain unsuitable for return. Still, some have started to consider steps to aid refugees with going back.

Absent in these discussions though is the voice of Syrian refugees. Do refugees want to go back to Syria? And if so, when and how? What are the conditions that predict the return of refugees? With support from IPA's Peace & Recovery Program, researchers from the Immigration Policy Lab (IPL) conducted a representative survey of 3,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon from August-October 2019 to learn about their return intentions.

### Key Findings

- Refugees were ambivalent about return—a majority wanted to go back to Syria at some point in the future but thought it was too soon to go back within the next few years.
- A substantial share of the population of Syrian refugees, approximately one third, did not expect to ever be able to return to Syria.
- Most refugees wanted to go back to their place of origin, and local conditions in people's hometowns—namely safety, economic conditions, availability of public services, and personal networks—were the most important predictors of return intentions.
- Conditions in Lebanon, such as socio-economic wellbeing and access to services, did not play an important role in predicting return intentions, suggesting that attempts to put pressure on refugees to go home are unlikely to achieve that goal.

#### RESEARCHERS

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#### COUNTRY

Lebanon

#### TIMELINE

August-October 2019

#### STUDY TYPE

Descriptive study

# Returning Home? Conditions in Syria, Not Lebanon, Drive the Return Intentions

## of Syrian Refugees

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September 25, 2020