

# Syria Audience Research 2016



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## MAIN FINDINGS

- **In Syria, television is the dominant media type** with high usage and availability rates in all areas studied. Television is followed by online media, print media, and finally radio.
- **Media aligned with the Syrian government are leading in government-controlled areas, and opposition-aligned media are leading in opposition areas.** There are indications that media not clearly aligned with a particular camp have a following across the board.
- **Pro-government and opposition audiences are deeply divided in their media following** and in their perceptions about their communities. Being open to both media camps does not always translate into a stronger critical view of the media.
- **Syrian audiences are confident that they are well-informed about the general geopolitical situation,** but sometimes express less confidence that they are receiving adequate information regarding immediate local affairs.

## About the report

*There is a need to be sure that efforts for entering the media landscape in Syria are focused in the right direction—for media organizations to better target their activities and identify possible commercial opportunities, for development actors to better direct and measure their efforts, and for humanitarian practitioners to better reach and empower the population. Research is the first step in this process. This report takes that step. Its aim is to develop a reliable picture of what is going on ‘on the ground’, so future media development in Syria can be based on the realities of media consumption in the country, and on the level of confidence/trust the Syrian people have in their media channels. As a fact-finding exercise, this report specifically refrains from drawing conclusions of a prescriptive nature: its purpose is to provide the tools for informed engagement with the Syrian media landscape.*

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# INTRODUCTION

Over the past five years, Syria has faced a devastating civil war, one of the most gruesome in modern history, which has resulted so far in the death of over one quarter million people<sup>1</sup> and the displacement of an estimated nine million Syrians—almost half the population.<sup>2,3</sup> The popular uprising that began in March 2011, and which was met with government suppression and an escalation of violence by various parties, has led to a gradual descent into civil strife, creating an environment in which media operation has become increasingly difficult.

According to a recent study, 343 media organizations have been active in Syria since 2011, many of which have since closed. The realities of the battlefield, the withdrawal of international donor support, and the overall deterioration of the operational environment are all factors in these closures.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these difficulties, many efforts have been made to contribute to the development of free and critical media, which provide a counter to the hegemony of propaganda channels. The members of the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) have been at the forefront of this support. Together with emerging Syrian media organizations, GFMD members have contributed significantly to the professionalization of media workers and the development of organizational capacity. However, efforts have been hampered by the limited availability of research on Syrian audiences, media channels, and the impact of Syrian media organizations. In the absence of better data, interventions have been designed on the basis of small-scale studies, imperfect samples and assumptions based on experiences elsewhere in the world. Additionally, during the first years of development, many activities were simply reactionary. The nature of the conflict made it impossible to plan strategically and make reliable predictions that may have informed long-term action.

In short, the lack of reliable research has made it impossible to identify failures in a timely fashion, or to design strategies to deal with weaknesses.

Proper media research is also an essential basis for the development of any media organization that wants to obtain funds from advertising sales. Attracting commercial sources of income has proven very difficult even for the more successful media outlets, due to their inability to prove either impact or market share in Syria. A lack of research is therefore obstructing organizations' abilities to become financially sustainable actors.

Obtaining reliable research data on Syrian audiences has a much wider potential impact than its ability to serve the needs of media and media development organizations. It can also be an important strategic tool for humanitarian practitioners and organizations that need to deliver crucial information to the Syrian population, which is in great need of empowerment and support. By knowing the available communication channels, the communities that can be reached (or not), and the information needs of those communities, practitioners and organizations can ensure that resources are used for the right channels/media.

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1 Al Jazeera, 2015. "Almost quarter of a million people' dead in Syria war." Al Jazeera, [online] 7 Aug. Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/quarter-million-people-dead-syria-war-150807093941704.html>

2 Salama, V., 2012. Covering Syria. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 17(4), 516-526.

3 Migration Policy Center, 2014. *Syrian refugees: A snapshot of the crisis – in the Middle East and Europe*. [online] Available at: <http://syrianrefugees.eu/>

4 Mawared, 2016. *Landscape mapping research*. [online] Available at: <http://arcg.is/1Nx2n3Q>

## Previous research

Despite the general lack of reliable and accurate data on Syrian audiences, some researchers have attempted to better understand the situation. Although all studies that have been conducted have their limitations, some are interesting to examine.

One of the earliest examples of a Syrian audience study was conducted by InterMedia in 2005 for USC-funded broadcasters. This study focused on Syria's big cities (including their suburban areas), where researchers had unobstructed access to participants. The study showed that internet usage in pre-revolutionary Syria was limited, and television – in particular government-owned and pan-Arab channels (like al-Jazeera) – was the dominant source of information.

The next substantial body of data can be found in the Audience Research report published by MICT<sup>5</sup> in 2014. The first study conducted under “war conditions”, this report surveyed a sample of Syrians in both government-controlled and contested areas. A significant part of the sample was surveyed through face-to-face interviews within Syria, but refugees inside and outside of camps in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon were also interviewed. In a finding similar to InterMedia's 2005 study, television was identified as the dominant source of information. Social media also appeared as an important channel, reflecting a surge in internet use in the intervening years. The study also indicated that variable conditions for media access were exerting an influence on usage. Contested areas of the country had significantly less access to terrestrial television, newspapers, mobile phones and internet sources than government-controlled areas.

The majority of research studies more or less follow the results of the MICT report, often hampered by a less reliable methodology or very limited scope. None of these other studies give any regional or demographic detail, and most were conducted from a distance, through online means or via telephone. These studies include a survey of Syrian public opinion in Damascus and Aleppo published by the International Republican Institute (2012), an unpublished study by Information International (on the request of FPU and Internews, 2013), a small study on the availability of humanitarian information to Syrian refugees in Iraq (conducted by IMS in 2014), and a Rapid Assessment of Syrian Media Preferences by Caerus (2014) for the organization Spirit of America.

Small-scale research has also been conducted on an ad hoc basis and within the context of specific projects (as part of Monitoring & Evaluation activities). Most of these studies do not have an elaborate methodology and usually rely on random sampling “on the street” or through telephone calls. While data obtained this way may sometimes indicate a trend, they are rarely a comprehensive reflection of reality. Similarly, online research (and web statistics<sup>6</sup>) are biased towards specific sub-groups in society and may only be useful within very specific contexts.

## This study

Extreme difficulty of data collection, and prohibitive costs, are the main reasons for the absence of reliable, detailed and up-to-date research on Syrian media audiences. Access is the most obvious obstacle. While online media organizations may be able to get some data through digital measurements, the composition of a reliable dataset requires face-to-face interviews, ideally conducted inside the many (often contested and difficult-to-access) territories into which the country is broken.

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5 Melki, Jad (Pl.), Fiedler, Anke, Reimpell, Philippine, and Maul, Gunnar (Eds). 2014. *Syria Audience Research*. [pdf] Media in Cooperation and Transition (MICT): Berlin, Germany. Available at: [http://www.mict-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/syrienstudie\\_20140813.pdf](http://www.mict-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/syrienstudie_20140813.pdf)

6 Additionally, it was found that web-statistics are often used wrongly: confusing unique visits with visits and in some cases even hits. The use of VPNs, and inability to monitor locations inside Syria, further contribute to unclear results.

Through various consultation meetings organized by the GFMD, its member organizations identified a common need for a comprehensive audience study inside Syria. In response to this, Free Press Unlimited (FPU) and Media in Cooperation and Transition (MICT) took the lead in developing a draft methodology for such a research. This methodology was presented during a GFMD coordination meeting in Copenhagen on 23 April 2015. The methodology was finalized in June of 2015, and the necessary resources were pooled during the following months with contributions from the EU, SIDA, UNESCO, MICT, IMS and FPU. The guiding objectives agreed for the study were as follows:

1. Examine the most important media sources used by Syrians and compare them across regional, geopolitical and demographic divides.
2. Assess the level of digital and media literacy among Syrians living under wartime conditions.
3. Define the information needs of Syrians, identifying information they believe to be missing from the news sources they consume, and homing in on the major shortcomings of available media programs and content.

Dr. Jad Melki of the Institute of Media Research and Training (IMRT) at the Lebanese American University (LAU) was selected as an implementing partner and primary investigator, for his reputation and extensive experience with conducting research under challenging circumstances. Dr. Melki is one of the few leading researchers who still has access to networks inside Syria, and had accrued valuable experience previously by leading the more limited (in scope) audience research conducted by MICT in 2014.<sup>7</sup>

# SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

**Syrian people have access to various news sources, the most-used of which are television channels and news websites.** Newspapers, mobile news, and radio are predictably more accessible in government-controlled areas, while Syrian TV is, curiously, slightly more accessible in contested areas. Access to Arab/International TV stations, social media, and news websites dominates all regions, and is similar in scope across the different regions.

**Choice of favorite media is directly related to the authority to which a region belongs.** Government-controlled regions tend to favor pro-government news sources, while regions under opposition control are more likely to favor pro-opposition sources. However, pro-government media sources still have a significant following in contested areas, whereas pro-opposition media barely register in government-controlled regions.

**The Syrian media landscape is revealed to have a few news sources for which a clear allegiance could not be determined.** These news sources provide the public with urgent and basic information about daily activities, and engage less in political news. These outlets, such as Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen, are surprisingly prominent across all areas.

**Facebook dominates the social media sphere everywhere,** while Twitter and WhatsApp compete for a distant second position. Of these two channels, Twitter is more popular in government-controlled regions, while WhatsApp wins in contested and opposition-controlled regions.

**Syrian TV stations are dominated by pro-government news sources,** which feature strongly in all areas except Idlib, the only area fully controlled by the opposition. Idlib shows consistency in its resistance of pro-government media and support of pro-opposition media. Aleppo, a region that houses a mixture of contested and government-controlled areas, is the only location that displays a mix of pro-government and opposition TV channels.

**The government's hegemony of local TV stations is weakened by the broader picture presented on Arab/International TV.** Here anti-government channels have been able to infiltrate pro-government regions, take top spots in Aleppo, and dominate in Idlib (where some foreign channels also have a considerable following).

**Pro-government sources dominate radio programming in all regions** with the exception of Idlib (which remains loyal to its opposition leanings).

**Newspapers are dominated by pro-government sources.** This is an expected finding: at the time of study, opposition newspapers had only recently been founded and had not had sufficient time to spread. These papers continue to face publication restrictions in certain regions. Here, also, Aleppo and Idlib offer two exceptions. Aleppo sees opposition newspapers competing with government newspapers on an almost equal footing, while in Idlib, opposition newspapers fully dominate.

**Both government-controlled and contested areas consume news websites with some diversity,** perhaps due to easier access and fewer restrictions as compared to traditional media sources. The spread of consumption also shifts when we look at new media. In certain areas, such as Damascus, Hama, and Homs, pro-government websites occupy top spots on a list of most-followed sources. But they share that list with opposition websites in other areas, or disappear completely in still more: for example Idlib and Aleppo. Syrians' use of internet sources on their mobile phones is relatively weak, without major trends appearing, except for the prevalence of Facebook and the site Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen, regardless of the area individuals live in.

**Syrian's critical assessment of news sources vary.** The predominant lean is toward positive views of the media, signaling weak levels of media literacy. Those living in government-controlled areas, however, tend to have a slightly more negative outlook about the news sources they use compared to people in contested areas. Roughly half of the participants express doubts about the credibility of the Syrian channels they follow.

**People living in areas under government control show higher levels of digital skills than those in contested areas.** The latter, however, display more online activity than the former. What all Syrians share regardless of where they live is a general lack of trustworthiness of information on the internet. Despite these perceptions, audiences in government-controlled areas believe the media fulfill their information needs more than do Syrians in contested areas. This trust most likely comes from the positive views they hold about traditional media, and not the internet.

**The younger generation and low-income groups tend toward opposition media**—as opposed to older people and those in higher income brackets who generally prefer pro-government media. Major differences also appear when considering age groups and online presence: younger people tend to be more connected than the older generation.

**Syrians with a higher level of education tend to be more critical of the media.** They also tend to possess more digital tools, and are able to use them to enforce their online presence, which also increases with income. The only exception to this positive relation between higher education, income, and more digital activity is Facebook, which flourishes across the different demographics.

**A huge difference is evident between the information needs perceived by high- and low-income groups.** While respondents with higher income reported being more satisfied with socio-economic information needs, those with lower income are more satisfied with political information needs.

**Audiences who tend to only follow pro-government media believe that people in their community predominantly follow pro-government media, while those who only follow opposition media believe the opposite.** Those who follow both media orientations tend to fall in between. This shows that the former two groups are deeply divided in their media following and in their perceptions about their communities, while the latter group may have a better perception of reality. However, being open to both media camps does not in all instances translate into a stronger critical view of the media.



# METHODOLOGY

The research study took place between September 2015 and February 2016, and included the Syrian public in different provinces of the country.

## **Instrument**

The survey used a structured questionnaire that comprised 75 questions (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was divided across the objectives stated above and was mainly made up of closed-ended scales. The open-ended questions asked respondents to list specific names of media, apps, and to identify information needs.

Questions 1 to 8 collected metadata and were filled by the field researcher upon the informed consent of the interviewee. These questions included the questionnaire ID, the name of the interviewer, the date and place of the interview and the sampling criterion chosen.

Questions 9 to 43 examined the media that participants followed the most. The section asked participants to list their preferred media. No predetermined list was supplied, so as not to influence their answers. Questions were divided across various media categories: Syrian TV<sup>8</sup>, Arab/International TV, radio, newspapers, websites, social media, and mobile news sources. The section was further divided into two parts. Questions 9 to 36 asked participants about their own media consumption, while questions 37 to 43 posed indirect “social grouping” queries that asked participants about the media most followed in their community/neighborhood. This technique was used to test for the possible existence of a political bias validity threat (respondents may fear that their answer will reveal their political affiliation and therefore may choose the channels affiliated with the political groups that control their region). The data (as showed later) showed consistency between the two groups of questions, which suggests only limited bias and strong validity. Closed-ended questions in this section, which mainly tackled the frequency of use of each media category, used a four-point ordinal measurement scale.

Questions 44 to 54 asked participants to assess the media they consumed. The questions dealt with issues of objectivity, reliability, diversity, veracity, accuracy, political bias, and so forth. Using four-point interval measurement scales, these questions asked participants about the media they followed the most and the media they followed the least. The section also asked participants whether the media content they followed contained certain politically charged and propaganda content, such as sectarian incitement, hate speech, inflammatory content, calls for fighting, etc.

Questions 55 to 59 examined the digital literacy levels of the participants by looking at the digital tasks they were able to perform, the digital tools they used, the digital activities in which they engaged, and their assessment of the Internet in matters related to the Syrian crisis. Some questions in this section were measured at the nominal level, while others used four-point interval scales.

Questions 60 to 65 examined the information needs of participants, from the assessment of information offered by news sources to information they deemed necessary but missing, and their assessment of media independence. Most questions in this section used four-point interval scales, but some questions about missing information needs were open-ended.

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<sup>8</sup> In the questionnaire, the terms “local TV” and “Satellite TV” were used and understood by researchers and participants as Syrian TV channels and Arab/International TV channels respectively. In this report, we use the latter two terms for clarity.

Finally, questions 66 to 72 collected demographic information about the participants (gender, income, education, region of origin, and refugee status), while questions 73 to 75 asked about Syrnet radio.

The questionnaire was first devised in English and translated into Arabic. It was then reverse-translated to test for translation reliability. Both the Arabic and the second English versions were pre-tested/piloted on a small sample of 12 participants, after which minor modifications were made to the questionnaire. In the data-gathering phase, only the Arabic questionnaire was used. The survey required 10 to 30 minutes to be completed, with an average of 15 minutes. All questionnaires were administered face-to-face on paper by trained field researchers. A mobile app was first used to fill some questionnaires, but after significant data loss due to incompatibilities with the Arabic language, the use of the app was discontinued. In order to achieve a high level of reliability in data gathering, self-administered questionnaires were avoided (due to the high level of illiteracy among the population).

Following the piloting phase, systematic training of field researchers was conducted in Gaziantep, Turkey, and in Beirut, Lebanon. The training focused on the questionnaire content, sampling techniques to be followed, secure data transfer, ethical and professional conduct, and safety precautions. The trainees tested the questionnaires on each other and received feedback about their work. They were later distributed among the accessible geographic areas, and allocated questionnaires. Communication with most field researchers was continuous via email and Skype throughout the fieldwork phase, with few exceptions. At the end of each fieldwork period, the field researchers scanned and emailed their completed questionnaires to the central research team. A systematic and rigorous review of all questionnaires was then conducted by the central research team. Only questionnaires that were deemed complete, valid and reliable were sent to another team that conducted data entry, as well as another set of checks in case the first team missed any issues. As noted in the limitations section below, a significant number of questionnaires were excluded from the data.

### **Sample**

The main aim of the survey was not to achieve representativeness on a national level, which is impossible during war circumstances and when there are no reliable sampling frames, but to gain a comprehensive and detailed insight into locations included in the study. Such insight was intended to fuel a comparison of media consumption patterns and preferences, information needs, and media/digital literacy levels between these sub-samples. The study also aimed to compare Syrian audiences across different political dominations and circumstances.

Therefore, an overall completed sample size of 1,500 was deemed sufficient. This calculation was based on the following figures: a population of 22.5 million, a 95% confidence interval (CI), and a  $\pm 2.5\%$  sampling error. However, the war situation required a significant amount of oversampling, because we were not certain that researchers would be able to enter badly-affected, dangerous, or hard-to-reach areas. To make provision for the potential failure of some sampling missions, an additional 1,000 questionnaires were distributed. We were able to collect around 2,200 questionnaires. As the limitations section describes, 1,708 were determined to be useful.

The study targeted 14 locations (see Table 1) and used a cluster random sampling technique in the areas that were relatively calm and stable. For the locations in which cluster random sampling was not possible due to access limitations and security threats, the study employed a snowball sampling technique with multiple entry points. For the cluster random sampling approach, each team of field researchers was allocated areas/neighborhoods (clusters), and was instructed to randomly select "households" within each cluster, using a systematic random sampling approach. For example, in one neighborhood, a researcher would randomly approach the first house/apartment, then in the same neighborhood he/she would select the nth house/apartment as his/her second entry point, and so on. Researchers were instructed to never enter neighborhoods where active conflict was happening, and to always ensure proper permissions and documents were received before entering a neighborhood. This often meant significant delays to sampling, while the research teams were held up attempting to secure permissions.

Regardless of the sampling technique employed, one person was interviewed per household, following a selection protocol that ensured diversity: first, the oldest male under 65, then the youngest female above 18, then the youngest male above 18, then the oldest female under 65, and so forth. The researcher would ask to interview the first type of individual in one household, and then the next in the next household, and so on. Due to ethics board restrictions and regulations, the sample was restricted to interviewees aged between 18 and 65.

### Geographical spread

Ultimately, reliable questionnaires were gathered from the various locations outlined in Table 1. Because of security constraints, and for the personal safety of field surveyors, some areas were relegated to non-priority status—after being deemed too dangerous due to ongoing battles and the presence of extremely hostile factions such as ISIS. Therefore, only seven interviews were conducted in Al Hasaka, five each in Al Quneitra and Deir ez Zor, and three in Al Raqqa. Twelve questionnaires were returned without location information, hence the ‘Other (or not reported)’ line in the table. We were obliged to eliminate a significant amount of invalid surveys in Daraa (explained in the limitations section below) and thus this area was accounted for with just five surveys.

Where were interviews conducted?	% (n)
Damascus	22% (379)
Hama	17% (282)
Aleppo	15% (262)
Homs	13% (220)
Idlib	9% (154)
Tartus	8% (132)
As-Suwayda	6% (100)
Reef Damascus	5% (86)
Latakia	3% (56)
Al Hasaka	0.4% (7)
Al Quneitra	0.3% (5)
Daraa	0.3% (5)
Deir ez Zor	0.3% (5)
Al Raqqa	0.2% (3)
Other (or not reported)	0.6% (12)

**Table 1:** Interview locations

### Age distribution

Out of 1,708 respondents, 55% were male and 45% were female. The age distribution is displayed in Table 2. A significant percentage of the participants were young (18-29). This variable excludes 52 participants, whose age was not reported.

Age	% (n)
18-29 years old	43% (735)
30-45 years old	35% (597)
45-65 years old	19% (324)

**Table 2:** Age distribution of respondents

## Education

As for education level, the majority of interviewees (around 80%) attained an intermediate to advanced level of education, having at least completed high school (Table 3).

Education level	% (n)
Completed elementary school or less	7% (119)
Completed middle school	14% (229)
Completed high school	39% (666)
Completed a university bachelor degree	30% (510)
Completed a graduate degree	10% (164)

**Table 3:** Highest level of Education Achieved

## Income distribution

Despite this high level of education, the income distribution was concentrated in the lower brackets. The monthly income of more than half of the participants did not exceed 25,000 Syrian Pounds, or approximately 100 Euros (Table 4). This is expected in countries engulfed by war and conflict.

Income in Syrian Pounds (SYP)	% (n)
Less than 10,000 SYP	25% (405)
10,000 - 25,000 SYP	30% (491)
25,001 - 50,000 SYP	28% (450)
50,001 - 100,00 SYP	10% (171)
More than 100,000 SYP	7% (119)

**Table 4:** Approximate Monthly Income

## Historic geographic distribution

Respondents were asked from which province they originally came, or lived in, before the crisis. The results show a distribution across 12 major Syrian provinces, with a high concentration in Damascus and its suburbs (Reef Damascus), Hama, Aleppo, Homs, Tartus, As-Suwayda, and Latakia (Table 5).

In which province did you live before the crisis started?	% (n)
Damascus or Reef Damascus (suburbs)	26% (437)
Hama	22% (374)
Aleppo	18% (302)
Homs	14% (227)
Tartus	5% (77)
As-Suwayda	6% (98)
Latakia	3% (46)
Daraa	2% (26)
Deir ez-Zor	2% (27)
Idlib	2% (27)
Al Raqqa	0.7% (12)
Al Hasakah	0.4% (7)
Other	0.7% (11)

**Table 5:** Place of living before the start of the Syrian crisis

More than half the participants (53%, n = 897) reported not having changed their location despite the crisis, while 18% (n = 308) had had to move temporarily but were back in their original area of residence. Although 28% (n = 474) had had to move permanently, only 23% (n = 329) of participants considered themselves to be refugees, which indicates that a significant number continue to refuse the “refugee” status despite being displaced from their homes.

## Analysis Criteria

The survey generated 189 variables, 34 of which were recoded.

A descriptive analysis of all variables was conducted using frequency tables. Bivariate analysis was implemented using cross-tabulations and correlation tests to measure statistical significance. The following independent variables were used for the bivariate analyses: regions, geopolitical divides, media orientation, age, education, income, gender, and refugee status. Finally, multivariate analysis was conducted using regression and factorial analysis tests—however, these results did not produce any added insight beyond the descriptive and bivariate analyses and were kept out of the report. In order to perform the bivariate and multivariate analyses, the independent variables (all except for gender and age) were recoded as follows:

### Geopolitical divides

The “geopolitical divides” variable reorganized the regions according to the political and military controls they fell under, and was given two values: “contested” and “government-controlled”. We first examined the political and military control imposed on each of the interview locations during the period of the field research. Regions existing under the total control of opposition factions, and regions that were contested by both ruling and opposing factions were labeled “contested”, while regions that largely remained under the central government’s authority were labeled “government-controlled.” Overall, 522 surveys fell under contested regions and 1,169 fell under government-controlled regions. For various reasons, contested regions are represented by a smaller number of survey participants. However, a valid comparison relative to pro-government regions can be made regardless of the unequal distribution of interviewees. The geopolitical divides variable excluded 17 cases because their region was not identified.

### Media orientation

The “media orientation” variable used the political orientation of the media followed as a proxy to infer the political preferences of respondents. The logic behind the construction of this variable was as follows: If the respondent follows opposition media only, he/she is mainly opposition oriented. In this case, the variable’s value is labeled “Opposition.” If the respondent follows pro-government media only, he/she is mainly pro-government oriented. In this case, the variable’s value is labeled “Pro-government.” If the respondent follows both pro-government and opposition media, he/she may stand in the middle and may be open to both arguments (in political terms). In this case, the variable’s value is labeled “Mixed.”

We realize that people follow media of mixed political orientation for various reasons, including to monitor the media output of the political sides they oppose. However, from a media literacy perspective people who follow varied media are assumed to be more media literate. This variable was constructed by going over all the media listed by each respondent, and classifying them into two categories: pro-government and opposition. Some media institutions are easily identified and known. Others required more investigation, conducted for instance by visiting their websites and performing basic content analysis in order to determine the political affiliation. Content analysis of articles or writing praising the Syrian president, or using the term “terrorists” to refer to opposition groups, would in this model have indicated a pro-government media. The use of terms such as “revolution” or “rebels”, on the other hand, announced that the media in question was affiliated with the opposition.

If the affiliation could not be directly inferred from the content, the alternative step was to look at the ownership/funding of the media in question. An owner/funder known to have ties or affiliations with a particular political party involved, directly or indirectly, in the Syrian crisis, would determine such media to be labeled with a corresponding orientation. Consider the example of the Lebanese TV channel OTV. It is known that OTV is affiliated to the Lebanese party The Free Patriotic Movement, which is a political ally of Hezbollah, another Lebanese political party directly involved in the Syrian crisis by supporting the Syrian government. In this case, through the nature of the political alliances of its owning entity, the channel is considered a pro-government media.

Media for which we found no affiliation, or where we could not properly confirm the presence of an affiliation, was labeled as “undetermined.”

For every respondent, all the different types of media he/she followed were aggregated into one “media” variable. The respondent was then labeled as belonging to one of the three categories listed above: according to whether he/she was found to follow only pro-government media, mixed media, or only opposition media. Overall, 1,004 surveys were designated as completed by pro-government media followers, 542 as completed by mixed media followers, and 50 as completed by opposition media followers. The media variable excluded 112 participants, either because of the absence of answers for the section, or because the media followed by the respondents was labeled “Undetermined” (i.e. not showing a clear bias to either of the two sides of the conflict, and therefore not suitable for inclusion in any of the three categories mentioned here).

### **Education**

The “education” variable was split into three categories to simplify the analysis. “Up to middle school” included participants in the groups: “Less than elementary school,” “Completed elementary school,” and “Completed middle school”. The second group, “Completed high school”, was formed from a sub-group of the same name. The group “Completed a university degree” was formed from two sub-groups: “Completed a university bachelordegree” and “Completed a graduate degree.” The distribution of people within these categories was as follows: 348 fell in the up to middle school category, 666 completed high school, and 674 completed a university degree. The education variable excluded 20 participants who did not specify their education level.

### **Income**

Given the current war situation in Syria and its effect on currency and economic conditions, respondents’ income was divided along the following lines:

- Very low income: Up to 25,000 Syrian Pounds (combines the two categories: “Less than 10,000 Syrian Pounds per month” & “10,000-25,000 Syrian Pounds per month”);
- Low income: 25,001-50,000 Syrian Pounds per month;
- Middle range income: 50,001-100,000 Syrian Pounds per month;
- Mid to high income: Higher than 100,000 Syrian Pounds per month (combines the categories: “100,001-200,000 Syrian Pounds per month”, “200,001-400,000 Syrian Pounds per month”, “400,001-800,000 Syrian Pounds per month” and “More than 800,000 Syrian Pounds per month”).

Knowing that accurate evaluation of different socio-economic categories is made difficult by the lack of precise data in war circumstances, our division of these different income groups takes into account the deterioration of the Syrian Pound (SYP) relative to the dollar (1 USD went from 189 SYP in May 2015 to 220 SYP in May 2016<sup>9</sup>, thus pushing more people into poverty). Also, the high inflation that the country is witnessing adds to the difficulty its people have just securing their basic needs. The World Bank has estimated inflation to have hit 90% in 2013, 29% in 2014, and 30% in 2015<sup>10</sup>. A rough estimation of living costs in Syria places the minimal cost of living per month (including housing, food, and transportation) around 140 USD (approx. 30,000 SYP)<sup>11</sup>. So, an income below 25,000 Syrian Pounds cannot secure such needs, while an income between 25,001 and 50,000 Syrian Pounds per month, although possibly enough to cover minimal costs, barely breaches the level of sustenance and is thus classified as low income. The distribution of people within these categories is as follows: 896 fell in the very low income group, 450 in the low income group, 171 in the middle range income group, and 119 in the mid to high income group. The variable excluded 72 participants because they did not report their income.

9 <http://www.xe.com/currencycharts/?from=USD&to=SYP&view=1Y>

10 The World Bank, 2015. Syria Overview. [online] Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/syria/overview> [Accessed September 2015].

11 Numbeo, Cost of living in Syria. [online] Available at: [http://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country\\_result.jsp?country=Syria](http://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country_result.jsp?country=Syria)

### **Refugee/displaced status**

The “refugee/displaced status” originally assumed three values: still living in the same place, temporarily moved but now back to the original place of living, and now living in a different place. However, to clearly render the divide between a displaced/non-displaced person, we recoded the three categories into two. The first two values were grouped under the “non-displaced” label, since the person currently lives in his/her original hometown. Only when the person remained living in a different place did we attribute the label “displaced” to the variable. Overall, 1,205 participants were deemed non-displaced and 474 were considered displaced. This variable excluded 29 participants who did not answer the relevant question.

### **Limitations**

The research faced three major limitations, the first of which was the security situation in some of the more dangerous areas (as discussed earlier). The second issue was a technical breakdown in a data gathering application. The initial plan was to use a mobile application to gather data via mobile phones, which would digitally transmit to a secure server that could be accessed by the central research team. The advantage of this application lay in the ability to gather data without the need for wireless connectivity at the interview site. This would also have saved tremendous time in data entry and eliminated the need to carry paper questionnaires. Although the piloting phase did not indicate any problems, the application began creating issues early in the fieldwork phase. At first, surveyors were unable to access their accounts. Then the application stopped reading the Arabic textual data, which led to a substantial and irrecoverable loss of many questionnaires. At this point, we decided to switch entirely to paper versions, to prevent any further possible loss of data.

A third major problem related to inappropriate filing of questionnaires by some field researchers. As stated earlier, the original sample targeted was 1,500. However, because the situation required oversampling, we collected around 2,200 questionnaires. 1,708 were deemed reliable and valid after approximately 500 questionnaires were discovered to have been filled out by surveyors and not respondents. The eliminated questionnaires were from Idlib (around 200), Daraa (200), and Damascus and Reef Damascus (100).

### **Conclusion**

Despite limitations faced during the information-collecting phase, the overall valid number of surveys returned still exceeded the minimum required to make the report effective. The variables applied to the data reveal targeted insights, which can be used by organizations and individuals entering the Syrian media landscape for a number of purposes.

# RESULTS

We have chosen to present the data gathered during this study in five subsections: overall findings (part 1), geopolitical divides (part 2), geographic regions (part 3), demographic variables (part 4), media orientations (part 5). Each subsection examines the responses to the questionnaire in the light of defined variables. Each subsection follows the same pattern, exploring the data from four perspectives:

- **The media sources audiences follow:** including Syrian TV channels, Arab/International TV channels, radio stations, newspapers, news websites, social media, and mobile news sources. We look at the media participants follow themselves, and the media participants believe people in their communities follow the most.
- **Audience assessment of their media sources:** from the most-followed to the least-followed: including issues of objectivity, reliability, diversity, veracity, accuracy, political bias, etc.
- **Audiences' digital literacy levels:** assessed by the extent of their connection with and ability to use digital technologies, their awareness of online risks, and their familiarity with digital tools that can help them verify information.
- **The perceived information needs of audiences:** including what they believe is needed to find jobs, find missing family members, access health information, obtain humanitarian assistance and aid, etc.



# PART 1:

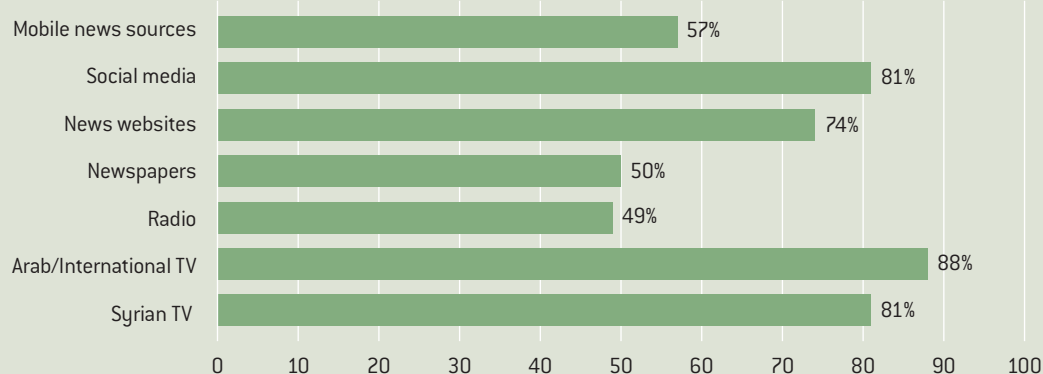
## OVERALL FINDINGS

This section gives an overview of the findings of this study as they relate to all Syrian audiences. The overview begins with an analysis of the main news sources these audiences follow, their perceptions of these news media, their digital literacy levels, and their perceptions/understanding of the ways in which their information needs are provided for.

### SECTION SUMMARY

- **Arab/International TV and Syrian TV stations and news websites are the dominant source of news,** with mobile news sources used to a lesser extent. Only half the Syrian audience, however, has access to newspapers and radio channels.
- **The Syrian media scene remains largely dominated by pro-government news sources.** However, there are visible breakthroughs for opposition news sources in specific areas. The Arab/International TV available to a Syrian audience shows a clear geopolitical divide, with most pro-government sources based in Lebanon and opposition sources headquartered in the Arabian Gulf. Russia Today and the BBC feature among the top news sources. When it comes to social media, Facebook is the uncontested top news source.
- **The overall study results shows a deep divide among the Syrians regarding media literacy.** About half of the media users have a positive view of the news sources they follow most, and give high scores to their truthfulness, reliability and objectivity (while the opposite is true for the media they follow least). This half can be considered an uncritical, and partisan audience that selects to trust the few news sources it follows and agrees with, and rejects the ones it disagrees with. The other half of the participants show critical views and suspicion towards the media channels they mainly follow and Syrian media in general. Members of this groups tend to distrust the information they get from Syrian media.
- **The findings also demonstrate very weak digital literacy levels among Syrians.** Although the Syrian audiences are reasonably well-connected digitally, this connection does not translate into an active engagement in the digital world. Most Syrians are only capable of executing very basic digital activities, such as taking photos and videos with their mobile phones, and use social and digital media mainly for personal consumption. Production, communal and civic engagement purposes are rarely seen as end-uses of digital media. And as noted above, Syrians tend to be skeptical about the internet as a source of information, preferring to trust traditional media over the web.
- **Most Syrians feel they receive enough information about the political and military situation in the country, but are not satisfied with the information they receive related to urgent personal and familial needs,** such as job opportunities, access to healthcare, safe passage, and shelter.

## ACCESS TO NEWS SOURCES AS REPORTED BIJ RESPONDENTS



### Media Sources and Perception

We asked respondents to list the most important news sources they followed, in addition to specifying the news sources they think are most followed by their community. The latter listing was used as a reliability and validity check (see methodology section) and showed a strong positive correlation value between the two.

**Syrian TV channels.** Around 81% of respondents say they have access to local Syrian channels. While the list includes both pro-government and opposition channels, Sama TV (a pro-government channel) came in as the TV source most followed. One-quarter of participants follow Sama TV, with one-third perceiving it as the most followed by their community (Table 6 and Table 7 respectively). Other pro-government channels (such as Al Ikhbariya al Souriya, Al Fadaiya al Souriya, and Al Dunia) feature high in the list. Only a few non government-controlled channels make it on there (such as Halab al Yawm, the Free Syrian Army channel, which is controlled by the Free Syrian Army, and Orient TV).

Syrian TV channels	% (n)
Sama	24% (313)
Al Ikhbariya al Souriya	17% (215)
Halab al Yawm	13% (172)
Al Fadaiya al Souriya	10% (132)
Al Dunia	8% (110)
Orient	5% (60)
Free Syrian Army (FSA)	4% (47)
Syria Drama	4% (46)
Talaqi	3% (33)
Al Khabar	2% (29)
Others	11% (138)

**Table 6:** Top 10 Syrian TV channels followed

Syrian TV channels	% (n)
Sama	32% (495)
Al Ikhbariya al Souriya	18% (280)
Halab al Yawm	13% (200)
Al Fadaiya al Souriya	8% (125)
Al Dunia	8% (117)
Free Syrian Army (FSA)	4% (55)
Orient	3% (54)
Al Khabar	3% (41)
Talaqi	3% (40)
Syria Drama	2% (26)
Others	8% (120)

**Table 7:** Top 10 Syrian TV channels respondents think are most followed by their community

**Arab/International TV channels.** Access to Arab/International TV is slightly higher than access to Syrian TV. 88% of the participants say they have access to Arab/International channels. Here, too, the comparison between TV channels participants themselves follow and TV channels they perceive to be most followed by their community showed them to be almost identical. The mix of political leanings evident in these channels, though, is slightly different. Unlike Syrian TV, where pro-government channels dominate, the top-ranked Arab/International TV stations tend to be mixed between pro- and anti-Syrian government channels.

Opposition channels include the Qatar-controlled al-Jazeera, the Saudi-owned Al Arabiya and al Arabiya al Hadath, and the Dubai-based Orient. Pro-government channels include Sham FM<sup>12</sup>, Hezbollah's al-Manar, the left-leaning al Jadeed TV, and the Beirut-based al-Mayadeen, in addition to Russia Today. The BBC also features among the top-ranked channels, but is at the bottom of the list (Table 8 and Table 9). Most top-ranked Arab/International TV stations in Syria broadcast from inside the Middle East. Only two international channels are prominently ranked: Russia Today and the BBC.

Arab/International TV channels	% (n)
Al Jazeera	18% (257)
Sham FM	14% (211)
Al Mayadeen	11% (163)
Al Manar	8% (112)
Al Jadeed	7% (102)
Al Arabiya	6% (93)
Russia Today	6% (88)
Al Arabiya al Hadath	4% (54)
BBC	3% (47)
Orient	2% (38)
Others	20% (291)

**Table 8:** Top 10 Arab/International TV channels followed

Arab/International TV channels	% (n)
Al Jazeera	25% (397)
Sham FM	16% (243)
Al Mayadeen	14% (214)
Al Arabiya	9% (138)
Al Manar	6% (94)
Al Jadeed	5% (85)
Russia Today	5% (73)
BBC	2% (38)
Al Arabiya al Hadath	2% (34)
Top News	2% (33)
Others	13% (209)

**Table 9:** Top 10 Arab/International TV channels respondents think are most followed by their community

**Radio.** Public access to radio as a news source is limited. Only 49% of participants have access to radio news. Almost half of those who have access to radio list the pro-government Sham FM as their top source, and the perception of its popularity is even higher (Table 10 and Table 11). Indeed, pro-government channels dominate—with a couple of exceptions. Radio Fresh ranks in the upper ranges of both lists (achieving position number two on the list of radio stations respondents think are most followed in their community). Hawa Smart, another opposition radio channel, ranks low on both lists. Hara, interestingly, does not appear in the top 10 followed radio stations, but is perceived to be the 7th most followed radio channel.

Radio channels	% (n)
Sham FM	43% (311)
Al Madina	7% (52)
Dimashq	7% (52)
Radio Fresh	7% (50)
Sawt al Shabab	6% (45)
Al Quds	4% (30)
Ninar	4% (26)
Souria al Ghad	3% (22)
Hawa Smart	3% (20)
Hala	2% (14)
Others	15% (107)

**Table 10:** Top 10 radio channels followed

Radio channels	% (n)
Sham FM	55% (602)
Radio Fresh	7% (76)
Al Quds	6% (62)
Al Madina	5% (57)
Sawt al Shabab	4% (45)
Dimashq	4% (40)
Hara	3% (30)
Souria al Ghad	2% (27)
Ninar	2% (22)
Hawa Smart	2% (21)
Others	11% (121)

**Table 11:** Top 10 radio stations respondents think are most followed in their community

<sup>12</sup> Sham FM is an interesting case for radio, as it appears prominently in several categories: including Syrian TV, Arab/International TV, radio, and websites. Sham FM began in 2007 as an FM radio station, but in 2010 started broadcasting its radio program via satellite, along with images. Audiences can also listen to its programs online through its website. Its content is predominantly entertainment. It broadcasts mainly traditional Arabic music and plays, and its news is largely services oriented.

**Newspapers.** Syrian access to newspapers is also limited, this time to 50% of respondents. The print news scene is clearly dominated by official government-controlled newspapers, such as Tishreen, al Watan, al Baath, and al Thawra (Table 12 and Table 13). Opposition newspapers (Maan, Honta, Oxygen, Gherbal and Hibr) only start to appear in 5th position on the list of most-read newspapers (Table 12) and in 6th place among the newspapers most perceived to be read (Table 13), and they tend to lag well behind the government-controlled newspapers in percentage terms.

Newspapers	% (n)
Tishreen	19% (136)
Al Watan	18% (128)
Al Baath	11% (81)
Al Thawra	10% (69)
Maan (Together)	7% (49)
Al Fida'	6% (45)
Honta	3% (22)
Oxygen	3% (19)
Gherbal	2% (16)
Al Mawkef al Riadi	2% (14)
Others	19% (138)

**Table 12:** Top 10 newspapers

Newspapers	% (n)
Al Watan	22% (238)
Tishreen	21% (223)
Al Thawra	14% (155)
Al Baath	12% (132)
Al Fida'	6% (62)
Maan (Together)	5% (52)
Hibr	4% (47)
Honta	2% (25)
Gherbal	2% (23)
Assafir	2% (20)
Others	9% (100)

**Table 13:** Top 10 newspapers respondents think are most read in their community

**News websites.** Internet websites are highly accessible to a large sector of the Syrian public, with 74% claiming the ability to reach them. Trend-wise, websites diverge from the patterns seen in non-digital news media. Instead of one or two dominant news websites, we see an even mix of pro-government and opposition sources (Table 14 and Table 15). One of the most interesting findings here relates to the second position occupied by Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen. Compared to Sana (number one on the list, a government-controlled national news agency), Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen is a site for which a clear allegiance could not be determined, documenting events of the conflict without explicitly taking sides and dealing mainly with quotidian matters that relate to the urgent and immediate needs of Syrians. Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen overtakes other websites, such as Syria News or Sham FM, known to be pro-government, or Halab al Yawm and Al Jazeera Net, which fall in the opposition camp. Overall, opposition websites still have a limited weight. Three are present among the most-followed sites (Al Jazeera Net, Halab al Yam, and Orient, Table 14), and two feature in the list of sites perceived to be most followed (Halab al Yawm and Al Jazeera Net, table 15).

News websites	% (n)
Sana	8% (98)
Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	6% (75)
Syria News	5% (55)
Sham FM	4% (49)
Al Jazeera Net	4% (44)
Russia Today	4% (43)
Halab al Yawm	4% (42)
Orient	4% (42)
Al Mayadeen	3% (39)
BBC	2% (38)
Others	56% (661)

**Table 14:** Top 10 news websites followed

News websites	% (n)
Sana	11% (111)
Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	10% (105)
Halab al Yawm	6% (58)
Al Jazeera Net	5% (53)
Aajel	4% (45)
Russia Today	4% (38)
Syria News	3% (34)
Dam Press	3% (31)
Sham FM	3% (31)
Syria Now	3% (26)
Others	48% (488)

**Table 15:** Top 10 news websites respondents think are most followed by their community

**Social media.** Social media have become a major source of news for the Syrian public, with 81% of respondents claiming the ability to access them. Facebook overshadows all other social media tools. Its actual use is even greater than its perceived use by the community. Other social media platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube lag well behind Facebook both in actual and perceived use (Table 16 and Table 17). One interesting social media source is Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen, a news source that mainly reports about mortar attacks in the Damascus area but also includes other news about Syria and publishes across multiple platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, as well as its own website. Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen has a visible presence in the ‘News websites’ section of these findings (Tables 14 and 15), and appears in second place on the table of social media platforms perceived by Syrians to be most-used in their communities (Table 17).

Social media	% (n)
Facebook	75% (1001)
WhatsApp	7% (93)
Twitter	7% (90)
YouTube	4% (53)
Instagram	2% (25)
Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	2% (22)
Skype	1% (15)
Others	2% (41)

**Table 16:** Top 10 social media sites followed

Social media	% (n)
Facebook	70% (955)
Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	8% (104)
Twitter	7% (93)
WhatsApp	7% (91)
YouTube	3% (44)
Instagram	1% (15)
Skype	1% (9)
Others	3% (48)

**Table 17:** Top 10 social media sites respondents think are most followed by their community

**Mobile news sources.** The use of mobile telephony as a news source is not widespread. Only 57% of respondents claim to access news from a mobile phone. This figure is, however, higher than the figures claimed by Syrian audiences for access to radio channels and newspapers. This finding should be taken within the context of the extremely high cost of mobile internet subscription in Syria, the country’s unreliable internet connections and limited coverage, and the deteriorating state of the mobile infrastructure. Overall, Facebook still tops the list of mobile news sources, both actual and perceived, followed by Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen (see social media section) and the state news agency Sana (Table 18 and Table 19). It is important to point out here that mobile news sources are a mix of news websites, apps, and social media sites—sources that overlap with other categories in this study.

Mobile news source	% (n)
Facebook	27% (223)
Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	10% (82)
Sana	6% (46)
Top News	5% (43)
Aajel	3% (25)
Al Mayadeen	3% (23)
WhatsApp	3% (21)
Al Hadath News	2% (16)
Al Iqtisadi	2% (16)
Sham FM	2% (16)
Others	39% (320)

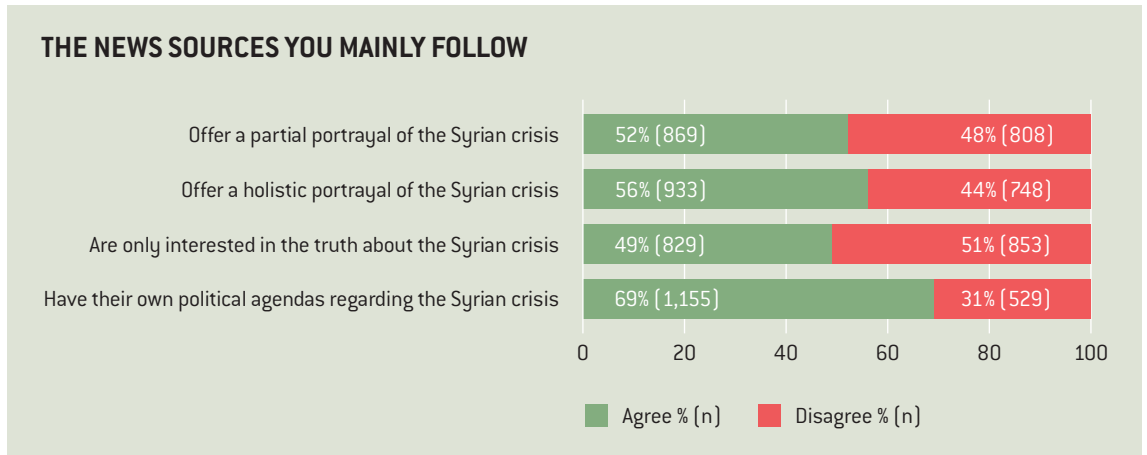
**Table 18:** Top 10 mobile news sources followed

Mobile news sources	% (n)
Facebook	22% (194)
Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	12% (109)
Sana	10% (93)
Top News	9% (78)
Aajel	5% (41)
NBN	4% (35)
Dam Press	3% (25)
Al Hadath News	2% (17)
Al Iqtisadi	2% (17)
WhatsApp	3% (27)
Others	29% (265)

**Table 19:** Top 10 mobile news sources respondents think are most followed by their community

### Assessment of Media Followed

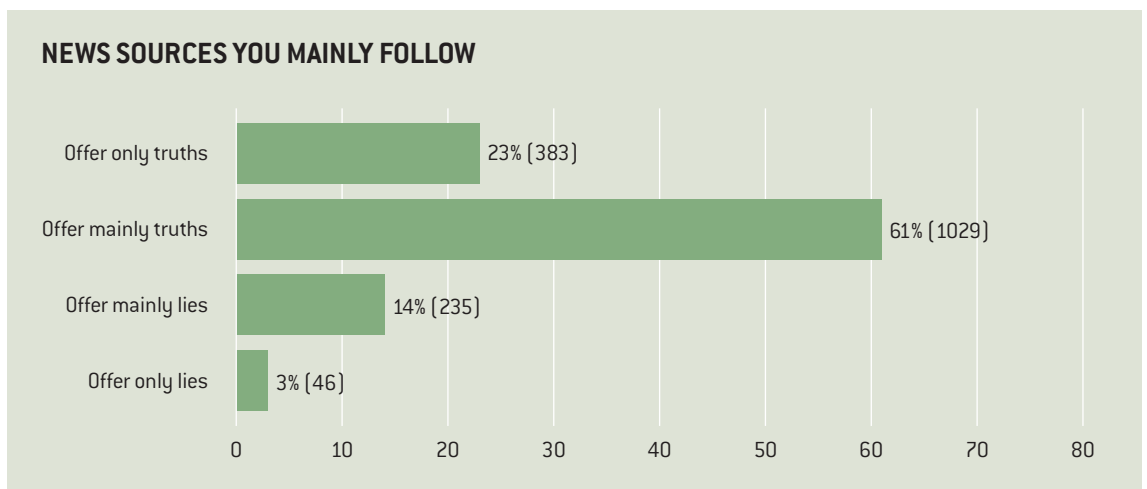
The majority of respondents (75%, n = 1,254) agree with the statement “There are big differences in the portrayal of the Syrian crisis by the different news sources.” 69% agree that the media they mainly follow have their own political agenda regarding the crisis. By contrast, however, almost half the participants agreed that the news sources they mainly follow “are only interested in the truth about the Syrian crisis.” The Syrian public is equally divided over the issue of whether news sources they mainly follow offer a holistic or partial image of the crisis (Table/Chart 20). Overall, it can be assumed from these findings that about half of the Syrian media users are seriously suspicious about the political independence of the media channels they mainly follow while the other half considers these media channels as unbiased.



**Table/Chart 20:** Evaluation of the Syrian-crisis-related content offered by different media outlets

### Truthfulness of information

Consistently, when it comes to news sources they mainly follow about Syria, 61% of respondents are convinced their chosen outlets offer mainly truths, 23% believe they offer only truths, 14% believe they offer mainly lies, and 3% believe they offer only lies (Table/Chart 21). A tendency to trust all media sources is linked to weak media literacy, confirming the conclusion drawn from information listed in Table/Chart 20. The data examined here (Table/Chart 21), which focus on the perceived truth of the news sources available to the Syrian public, may suggest that a vast majority of participants almost blindly trust the news sources they follow, or at least that selective exposure is at play.



**Table/Chart 21:** Assessment of the truthfulness of information offered by news sources

### Objectivity of information

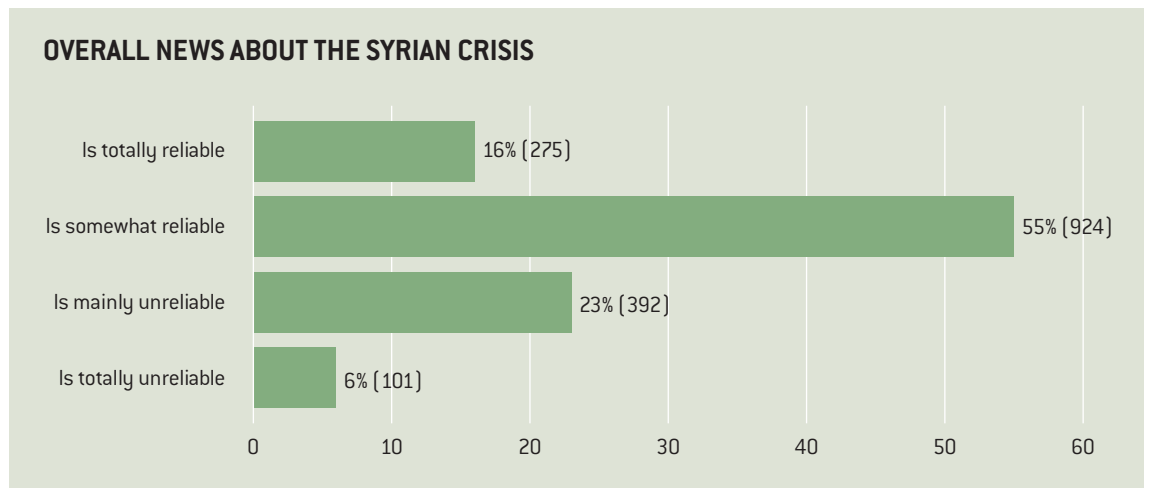
Furthermore, respondents rate objectivity highly for the sources they use the most, and poorly for sources they follow least. Only 23% of interviewees believe that news sources they follow the least offer objective information (determined as “often” or “always” in the table), while 76% believe that the news sources they follow the most offer objective information (Table 22). Again, the selective exposure argument is confirmed, drawing a picture of an audience deeply divided in its perception of the Syrian reality and the corresponding media coverage of this perceived reality.

How often do news sources offer objective information	Never % (n)	Rarely % (n)	Often % (n)	Always % (n)
News sources I follow the most	4% (75)	20% (344)	59% (984)	17% (278)
News sources I follow the least	24% (408)	53% (880)	19% (325)	4% (59)

**Table 22:** Assessment of the objectivity of news sources most used and least used news

### Overall reliability of crisis reporting

Paradoxically, news about the Syrian crisis coming from various media sources is deemed overall to be reliable, with 71% of respondents believing the information is “somewhat” or “totally” reliable (Table/ Chart 23). This perception, however, mainly relates to the news content that the audiences follow rather than the ones they avoid or don’t know about—and therefore the paradox is explained away.



**Table/Chart 23:** Overall reliability of Syrian-crisis related news

### Number of news sources consulted

Syrian audiences list themselves as consulting multiple news sources. A majority of respondents say they follow two or more news sources, and a significant percentage (39%) claim to follow more than three sources (Table 24). These numbers reflect an ability to take news from multiple channels. However, in a world of ubiquitous, multi-platform news sources (including traditional, online and mobile), one could expect an even higher percentage of respondents to follow more than three sources during dire conditions of war and conflict.

The figures for Syrians comparing news sources indicate practices of scrutiny among the Syrian audiences (Table 25). Sixty-three percent of respondents claim to always or often compare different news sources. Again, although these numbers are quite high, it remains troublesome that in war circumstances less than one-fifth of the Syrian audience says it always compares news sources.

How many news sources do you follow for information about the Syria crisis?	% (n)
None	4% (67)
One news source	14% (231)
Two to three news sources	43% (731)
More than three sources	39% (662)

**Table 24:** Number of news sources followed

How often do you compare the coverage of the different sources?	% (n)
Never	10% (160)
Rarely	27% (453)
Often	45% (749)
Always	18% (303)

**Table 25:** Frequency of comparison of media outlets

### Perception of content

Participants tend to view the news sources they follow the most in a positive light, claiming these sources never or rarely display inflammatory content (79%), sectarian incitement (81%) or calls for war (81%). The news sources most followed are viewed as often or always encouraging unity (71%) and peace (51%) (Table 26).

The news sources I follow the most contain	Never % (n)	Rarely % (n)	Often % (n)	Always % (n)
Calls for defecting	66% (1113)	20% (330)	9% (159)	5% (82)
Calls for fighting	60% (1010)	23% (387)	11% (190)	5% (88)
Hate speech	58% (982)	25% (424)	13% (213)	4% (62)
Sectarian incitement	57% (969)	24% (400)	13% (227)	6% (93)
Inflammatory content	54% (920)	25% (428)	14% (239)	6% (106)
Calls for war	53% (889)	28% (463)	13% (217)	7% (112)
Patriotic speech	14% (235)	22% (365)	37% (627)	27% (459)
Calls for peace	13% (221)	17% (282)	11% (190)	40% (669)
Calls for unity	12% (198)	17% (287)	37% (619)	34% (576)

**Table 26:** Evaluation by participants of the content of their most followed news sources

On the other hand, a majority of respondents regard the news sources they follow the least in a negative light, seeing them as often or always conveying inflammatory content (58%), hate speech (53%), calls for war (52%) and fighting (53%). Least-followed news sources are never or rarely viewed as offering calls for unity (71%), calls for peace (69%), or patriotic speech (68%). (Table 27). Again, this consistently draws a picture of a deeply divided and politicized audience.

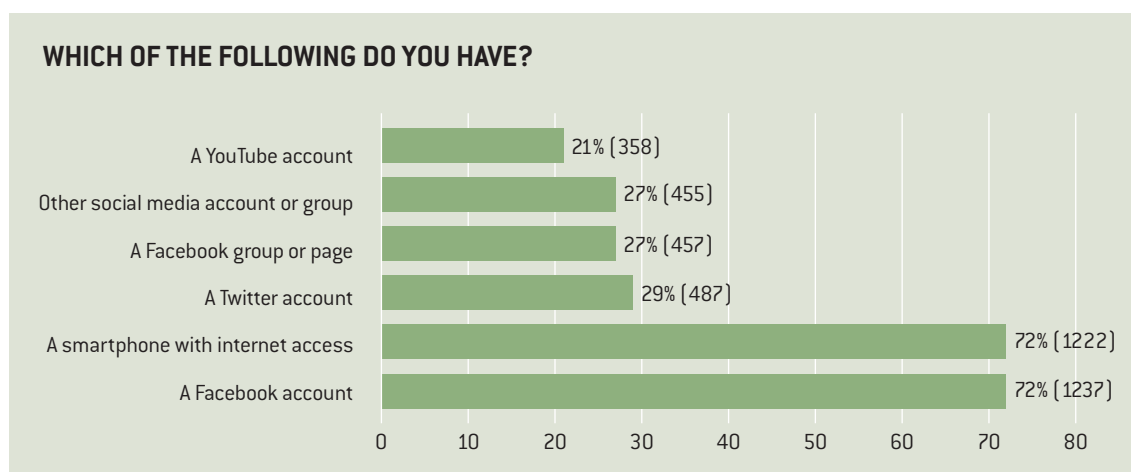
The news sources I follow the least contain	Never % (n)	Rarely % (n)	Often % (n)	Always % (n)
Calls for unity	38% (638)	33% (559)	19% (310)	10% (162)
Calls for peace	35% (592)	34% (566)	30% (495)	13% (212)
Patriotic speech	32% (541)	36% (601)	20% (333)	12% (192)
Calls for defecting	31% (519)	19% (316)	26% (433)	24% (401)
Calls for fighting	26% (431)	21% (356)	30% (495)	23% (379)
Calls for war	23% (389)	24% (403)	31% (521)	21% (352)
Hate speech	22% (374)	24% (403)	30% (505)	23% (387)
Inflammatory content	21% (346)	21% (359)	34% (565)	24% (402)
Sectarian incitement	20% (343)	20% (342)	35% (587)	24% (407)

**Table 27:** Evaluation by participants of the content of their least followed news sources



## Digital Literacy

We can safely conclude that most Syrians are connected digitally. 72% of respondents have a smartphone with an internet connection and 72% have a Facebook account. However, the use of Facebook remains more personal, and where information is transacted it is primarily consumed and not produced. Proactive civic engagement is less than common: only 27% of participants claim to possess a Facebook group or page. Facebook, as has been noted elsewhere in this report, is the dominant social media platform. Use of other social media is claimed by a minority: Twitter (29%), YouTube (21%) (Table/Chart 28).



**Table/Chart 28:** Digital access

Consistently, when asked about whether they execute certain digital tasks, Syrians reveal a very basic level of digital literacy. The only two tasks the majority feel comfortable executing are taking photos (76%) and recording videos (53%) with a camera or mobile phone. Only a minority are comfortable executing slightly more complex digital tasks, such as posting texts (40%), images (39%), and videos (30%) on social media. Less than one third say they are able to edit photos (29%) on a computer or mobile phone, and only 15% claim the ability to edit videos on a computer or mobile phone (Table 29).

Which of the following tasks do you feel capable of doing?	% (n)
Taking a photo with a camera or a mobile phone	76% (1293)
Recording a video on a camera or mobile phone	53% (906)
Posting a text to a blog or social media platform	40% (680)
Posting images to a blog or social media platform	39% (658)
Posting video to a blog or social media platform	30% (519)
Editing a photo on a computer or mobile phone	29% (497)
Writing a news opinion article on a computer	21% (367)
Editing a video on a computer or mobile phone	15% (252)
Editing and updating a website	8% (141)

**Table 29:** Digital literacy

## Digital participation

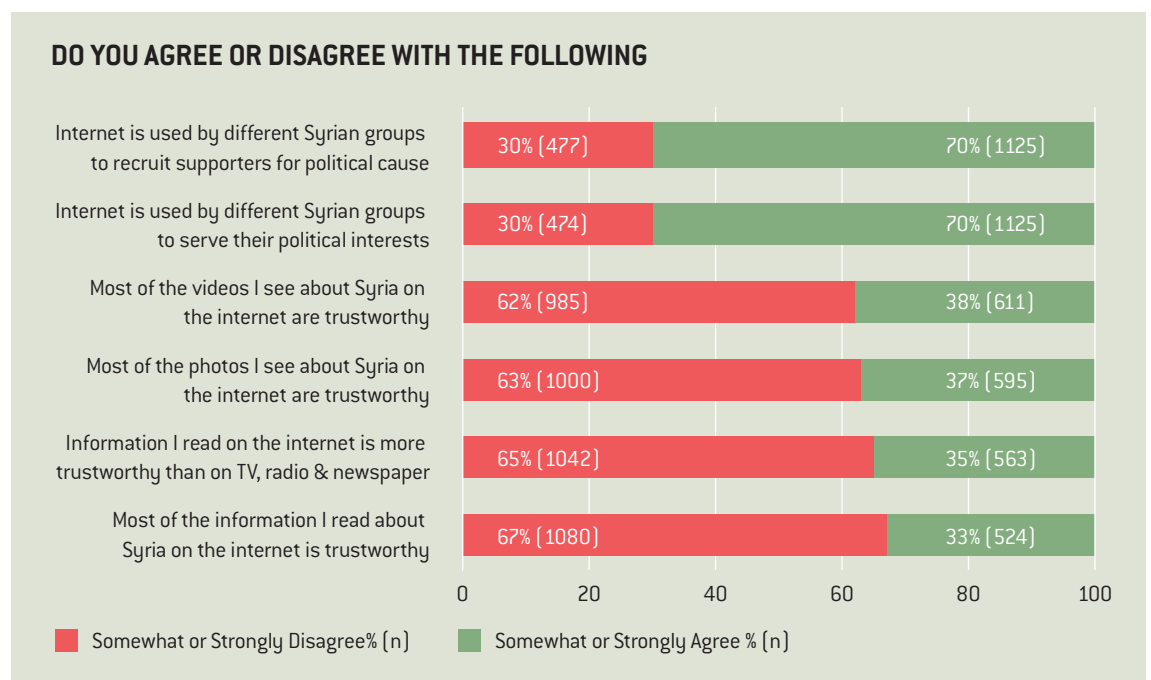
Syrians are slow to participate in media activities and dialogues related to the crisis. Most respondents never or rarely participate in online discussion forums (87%), post an article or comment on a blog (79%), or comment on news articles online (77%). The audience does, however, feel relatively more comfortable acting or reacting on social media: a higher share of respondents declares often or always posting articles (45%), photos (45%), or videos (34%) (Table 30).

How often do you engage in the following activities as a response to news related to the Syrian crisis	Never % (n)	Rarely % (n)	Often % (n)	Always % (n)
Participate in online discussion forums	66% (1076)	21% (339)	9% (145)	5% (81)
Post an article or comment on a blog	54% (873)	25% (407)	15% (249)	6% (95)
Comment on news articles online	49% (812)	28% (462)	17% (272)	6% (97)
Post videos on social media	41% (665)	25% (404)	18% (302)	16% (265)
Post photos on social media	34% (561)	20% (336)	26% (432)	19% (311)
Post an article or comment on social media	33% (544)	21% (345)	29% (483)	16% (268)

**Table 30:** Frequency of participation in Syrian-crisis-related network activities

### Trust in internet-sourced information

The Syrian audience has low trust in the internet as a source of information. A minority agree that internet content, whether textual information (33%), photos (37%), or videos (38%), is trustworthy. Generally, the internet is seen less trustworthy than the other forms of traditional media (only 35% see it as more trustworthy). 70% of respondents agree that the internet represents a tool for the different parties in the conflict to promote their interests, both through serving political aims and recruiting supporters for each group's ideas and cause (Table/Chart 31). This seems to go against the general perception, enjoyed in countries outside Syria, that the internet and digital media offer an alternative and freer mode of communication. If Syrians mainly trust traditional media (see 'Truthfulness of information' in the preceding section of this report), and mainly distrust new media, the prospects of new media playing a role in this conflict may be slim. This digital distrust may also indicate higher levels of critical and media literacy when it comes to the internet, but the question here is whether Syrian audiences tend to distrust online media because they are a relatively new or unfamiliar technology, or because the content they see online doesn't fit their frames and perceptions in the same way as traditional media content. This is a matter that must be addressed through additional qualitative research.



**Table/Chart 31:** Evaluation by respondents of internet trustworthiness

### Websites/apps used to verify information

Facebook is the highest-rated application for verifying information, topping the list at 33%. Google (14%) and Sana (12%) come in second and third (Table 32). It is clear from the low response rate on this question that few Syrians use any online tools to verify information: another cause for concern about the digital and media literacy of the audience. In addition, no advanced verification tools for images and videos are mentioned by respondents, showing a lack of awareness that these widely available tools exist.<sup>13</sup>

Internet applications/websites used to verify information	% (n)
Facebook	33% (202)
Google	14% (84)
Sana	12% (72)
WhatsApp	5% (30)
Aajel	4% (25)
YouTube	3% (21)
Al Hadath News	2% (15)
Twitter	2% (15)
Al Iqtisadi	2% (13)
Sada	2% (13)
Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	2% (13)
Others	17% (106)

**Table 32:** Applications/websites used to verify information

### Information Needs

Table 33 displays the respondents' perception of how their information needs are met by their news sources. The figures show that informational needs most met<sup>14</sup> are perceived as: military developments inside Syria, political developments inside Syria, international diplomatic developments regarding Syria, peace and reconciliation, and the security situation. In other words, matters that are often overrepresented in war and conflict coverage, and which give a global and official scope about the conflict with little in the way of human interest angles. Least covered,<sup>15</sup> according to the respondents, were immediate concerns such as, finding job opportunities, finding missing family members and reuniting families, accessing shelter and safe areas, obtaining humanitarian assistance and aid, access to healthcare, and information related to evacuation and migration (Table 33). Not surprisingly, the information least offered relates to basic or urgent human needs, which most news media tend to ignore in favor of formulaic and sensational coverage of a war situation.<sup>16</sup>

13 Silverman, C., ed 2015. *Verification Handbook: A definitive guide to verifying digital content for emergency coverage*. [e-book] European Journalism Center. Available at: <http://verificationhandbook.com/>

14 Percentages obtained by adding "enough information is offered" and "a lot of information is offered."

15 Percentages obtained by adding "no information is offered" and "a little bit of information is offered."

16 Moeller, S., 1999. *Four Habits of International News Reporting*. [pdf]

Available at: [http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF\\_GII/four\\_habits\\_of\\_news\\_reporting.pdf](http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_GII/four_habits_of_news_reporting.pdf)

<b>How much information is offered?</b>	<b>None % (n)</b>	<b>A little bit % (n)</b>	<b>Enough % (n)</b>	<b>A lot % (n)</b>
Finding job opportunities	54% (895)	27% (455)	21% (347)	6% (97)
Finding missing family members and reuniting families	49% (822)	33% (546)	13% (217)	6% (94)
Accessing shelter and safe areas	32% (540)	38% (627)	21% (356)	9% (148)
Obtaining humanitarian assistance and aid	31% (522)	43% (725)	20% (345)	6% (94)
Access to health care	31% (511)	41% (682)	21% (347)	8% (128)
Evacuation and migration	31% (518)	35% (574)	24% (391)	10% (173)
Safe and secure/open roads and areas	24% (407)	33% (558)	31% (525)	12% (195)
New laws and legislations	22% (370)	32% (527)	30% (502)	16% (267)
Promoting mutual understanding between Syrian communities	19% (316)	35% (581)	32% (529)	15% (249)
The security situation	15% (254)	36% (600)	37% (615)	13% (214)
Peace and reconciliation	18% (309)	30% (507)	29% (482)	23% (386)
International diplomatic developments regarding Syria	9% (153)	23% (392)	40% (671)	28% (462)
Political developments inside Syria	8% (132)	21% (348)	41% (691)	30% (508)
Military developments inside Syria	8% (130)	21% (346)	44% (747)	27% (457)

**Table 33:** Evaluation of the Syrian-crisis-related information needs offered by media

### Non-conflict-related information needs

Respondents revealed five top non-conflict-related information needs sufficiently covered by their chosen news sources: weathercasts, sports, economics, cultural information, and entertainment news. These figures highlight a persistent interest in basic quotidian information even during war (Table 34).

<b>Type of information</b>	<b>% (n)</b>
Weathercasts	13% (49)
Sports	12% (46)
Economic	9% (34)
Cultural	6% (21)
Entertainment	5% (20)
Others	54% (202)

**Table 34:** Other information offered by followed media sources

### Information needs not met

Respondents stated a wish to obtain a variety of information not perceived as offered by their chosen media. The top five perceived unmet information needs revolved around job opportunities, services, the economy, culture, and arts (Table 35). More open-ended and qualitative research methodologies are required to properly understand these information needs, and potentially respond to them with the introduction of new media or the targeted training of existing media organizations.

<b>Type of information</b>	<b>% (n)</b>
Job opportunities	10% (45)
Services	5% (22)
Economic news	4% (20)
Cultural	3% (15)
Arts	3% (12)
Others	75% (335)

**Table 35:** Other information needs not offered by followed media sources

## PART 2:

# COMPARING ACROSS GEOPOLITICAL DIVIDES

This section analyzes the different variables by geopolitical divisions. As noted in the methodology section, the different regions are categorized according to the authority (political and military) under which they fell during the data collection phase.

The regions in which the interviews were conducted fall under two broad categories:<sup>17</sup>

- Regions almost completely under government control: As-Suwayda, Baniyas, Damascus (and Reef Damascus), Hama, Latakia and Tartus
- Regions partly or fully dominated by the different opposition factions<sup>18</sup>: Al Hasaka, Al Quneitra, Al Raqqa, Aleppo (and Reef Aleppo), Daraa, Deir ez Zor, Homs and Idlib

### SECTION SUMMARY

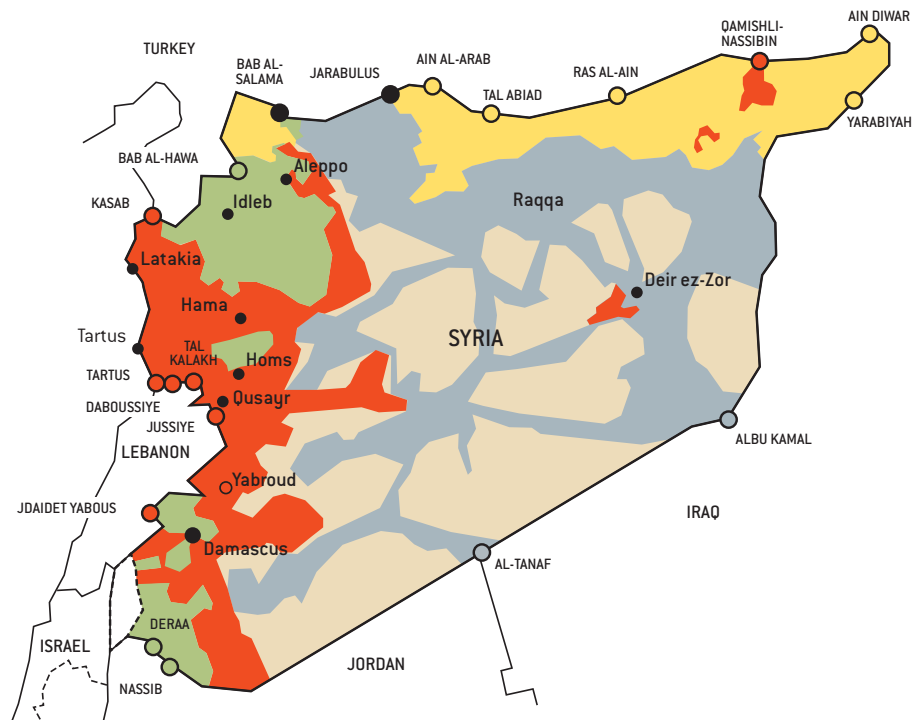
- **Major differences register for access to and consumption of Syrian TV, newspapers, mobile news, and radio.** No differences feature for Arab/International TV, social media, and news websites. Newspapers, mobile news and radio are predictably more accessible in government-controlled areas. Curiously, Syrian TV is reported as being slightly more accessible in contested areas.
- **Pro-government news sources dominate in government-controlled regions and feature strongly in contested areas, while pro-opposition media tend to dominate in contested areas but barely register in pro-government areas.** A few news sources – for which a clear allegiance could not be determined – tend to offer urgent and basic everyday information and feature well in both zones.
- **Facebook dominates both regions,** while WhatsApp features prominently in contested areas only, and Twitter registers a significant following in both regions.
- **Media literacy levels are equally weak among Syrians in both government-controlled and contested areas.** Syrians living in government-controlled areas do tend to have a slightly more negative outlook on the news sources they use than people in contested areas, although the overall trend for both regions remains predominantly positive.
- **Syrians in both regions display very weak digital literacy levels.** Syrians in contested areas are generally more active online than their counterparts in government-controlled areas. No major differences between regions register when it comes to possessing various social media elements or accessing social media platforms, and both regions claim similar positions regarding the trustworthiness of information on the internet.
- **More Syrians claim to have their informational needs satisfied when living in government-controlled areas.** The top five information needs are consistent in both regions. Information about services tends to be most needed in contested regions, while information about employment opportunities features as the top unfulfilled requirement in government-controlled areas.

<sup>17</sup> Map as per April 2016, retrieved on the website: <http://syria.liveuamap.com/>

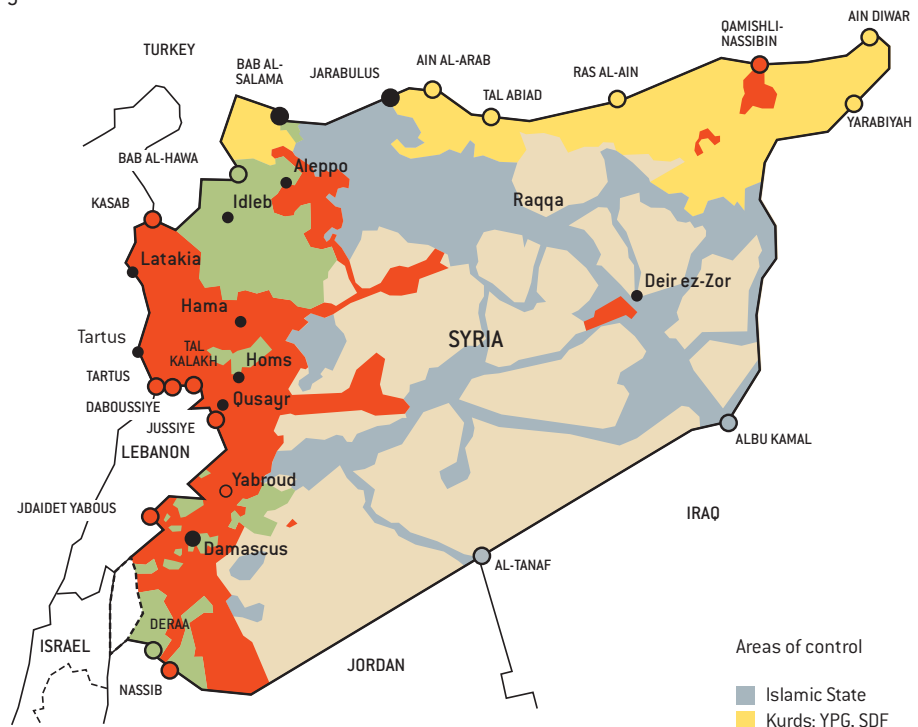
<sup>18</sup> “Opposition factions” denotes all the factions distinct from the government, regardless of the specific opposition group they belong to. ISIS, the Kurdish forces, and the moderate opposition forces are all grouped under this category.

## Areas of control during the research period

September 2015



February 2016

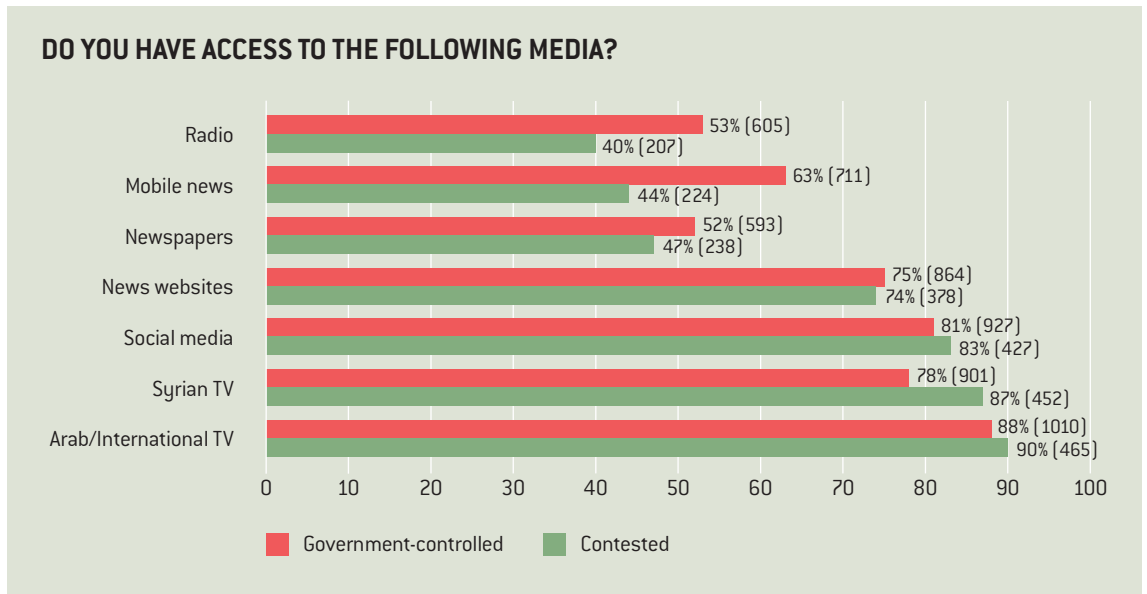


100 km

Data source: [syria.liveuamap.com](http://syria.liveuamap.com)

### Access to Media and Media Most Followed

Compare access to media between contested and government-controlled regions, and two immediate trends emerge. First, barely any difference registers between the two region types when it comes to accessing or following Arab/International TV, social media, and news websites. Second, major differences appear when looking at access to or use of Syrian TV, newspapers, mobile news, and radio. A greater degree of access to newspapers, mobile news and radio is registered by audiences living in government-controlled areas, which is somewhat predictable given the need for government infrastructure and stability for such media to thrive. Curiously, though, Syrian TV enjoys higher access in contested areas [Table/Chart 36].<sup>19</sup>



**Table/Chart 36:** Access to the different types of media, by geopolitical divisions  $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Contested”)

<sup>19</sup> In this section, all tables display a 95% confidence interval, unless otherwise specified.

### Media most followed: Syrian TV

Here, strong differences register between pro-government and anti-government sources across the two regions. Prominent opposition channels like Halab al Yawm, Free Syrian Army and Orient barely register in government-controlled regions: but these rank as the top three in contested areas. Government-controlled media, such as Sama, Al Ikhbariya al Souriya, Al Fadaiya al Souriya and Al Dunia make up the top four in regions falling under government control, but also register a significant following in contested areas (Table 37). This may suggest that audiences in government-controlled regions are almost fully supportive of and trust in government-controlled media. Or it could hint at an underlying fear of divulging the following of opposition media when living in a government-controlled area. Whatever the truth behind the figures, the same bias does not hold in opposition regions. While a slight majority in contested areas follow opposition media, a significant minority also follow government-controlled media.

Most followed 10 Syrian TV channels	Contested		Most followed 10 Syrian TV channels	Government-controlled	
	n	(%)		n	(%)
Halab al Yawm	172	33%	Sama	269	23%
Orient	54	10%	Al Ikhbariya al Souriya	181	16%
Free Syrian Army (FSA)	47	9%	Al Fadaiya al Souriya	110	9%
Sama	47	9%	Al Dunia	104	9%
Al Ikhbariya al Souriya	31	6%	Syria Drama	48	4%
Deir ez Zor	21	4%	Talaqi	32	3%
Al Fadaiya al Souriya	20	4%	Sham FM	25	2%
Shaza al Horriya	19	4%	Al Khabar	22	2%
Al An	8	2%	Souria	18	1%
Al Dunia, Souria	6	1%	Al Oula, Orient	6	1%

**Table 37:** Top 10 Syrian TV channels, by geopolitical divisions.  $p \leq 0.05$



## Arab/International TV

Both opposition and pro-opposition stations (Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and Al Arabiya al Hadath) rank as the top three Arab/International TV stations consumed in contested areas. However, channels considered as pro-government—like Al Manar and Al Mayadeen—also have significant following in these areas. Sham FM, Al Mayadeen, Al Manara and Al Jadeed are among the top five in government-controlled areas. In other words, the trend for government-only consumption in government-controlled areas, and mixed consumption in opposition areas, continues. The exception here is Al Jazeera, which ranks third in government-controlled areas (and to some extent Al Arabiya and Orient TV, which have a small following), but the pattern, overall, is the same. Pro-government channels, such as Al-Mayadeen, Sham FM, Al Manar and Al-Jadeed feature highly in contested areas.

It is important to note here that most of these Arab satellite channels have invested heavily in covering the Syrian conflict and have correspondents on the ground. They are also numbered among the top Arab Satellite news channels across the Middle East. International satellite channels are represented by Russia Today (a prominent sixth position in government-controlled areas, but also ranks 10th in contested areas), Sky News Arabia (eighth in contested areas, no ranking in government-controlled areas), and the BBC (an almost equal but small following in both areas) [Tables 38].

Most followed 10 Arab/ International TV channels	Contested		Most followed 10 Arab/ International TV channels	Government- controlled	
	n	(%)		n	(%)
Al Jazeera	156	30%	Sham FM	176	15%
Al Arabiya	64	12%	Al Mayadeen	132	11%
Al Arabiya al Hadath	54	11%	Al Jazeera	101	9%
Al Mayadeen	31	6%	Al Manar	87	7%
Sham FM	31	6%	Al Jadeed	84	7%
Al Manar	21	4%	Russia Today	79	7%
Al Jadeed	18	3%	Orient	33	3%
Sky News Arabia	17	3%	BBC	31	3%
BBC	16	3%	Al Arabiya	29	2%
Russia Today	8	2%	Top News	23	2%

**Table 38:** Top 10 Arab/International TV channels, by geopolitical divisions.  $p \leq 0.05$

## Radio channels

Consistently, radio channels follow the same trend, with pro-government Sham FM registering the highest rank in both regions but also featuring prominently in government-controlled regions. Sham competes strongly with opposition channels Radio Fresh, Hawa Smart, and Rosana, in contested areas. Pro-government channels dominate completely in government-controlled regions (Table 39).

Most followed 10 radio channels	Contested		Most followed 10 radio channels	Government- controlled	
	n	(%)		n	(%)
Sham FM	58	11%	Sham FM	252	22%
Radio Fresh	50	10%	Dimashq	47	4%
Hawa Smart	20	4%	Al Madina	42	4%
Sawt al Shabab	17	3%	Sawt al Shabab	28	2%
Rosana	14	3%	Al Quds	27	2%
Al Madina	9	2%	Ninar	24	2%
*	*	*	Souria al Ghad	20	2%
*	*	*	Hala	14	1%
*	*	*	*	*	*

**Table 39:** Top 10 radio stations, by geopolitical divisions. \* No values to display.  $p \leq 0.05$

## Newspapers

Government-controlled newspapers, such as Tishreen, Al Baath and Al Thawra, register prominently in government-controlled regions. Tishreen makes it into the rankings for contested areas, but only in eighth spot. Al Watan, which purports to be independent, but which in content tends to be pro-government, ranks second in both regions. Opposition newspaper Maan ranks first in contested areas, while the other opposition newspapers Honta, Oxygen, Gherbal and others feature prominently in contested areas but do not appear at all in government-controlled areas (Table 40). The overall trend for newspapers is somewhat similar to preceding trends for media consumption in contested and government-controlled areas: pro-government sources make it into the contested areas, but pro-opposition sources do not find it so easy to infiltrate the government-controlled areas.

Most followed 10 newspapers	Contested		Most followed 10 newspapers	Government- controlled	
	n	(%)		n	(%)
Maan	49	9%	Tishreen	125	11%
Al Watan	25	5%	Al Watan	102	9%
Honta	22	4%	Al Baath	71	6%
Oxygen	19	4%	Al Thawra	63	5%
Gherbal	16	3%	Al Fida'	45	4%
Enab Baladi	13	3%	Al Mawkef al Riadi	14	1%
Hibr	13	3%	Assafir	12	1%
Tishreen	11	2%	*	*	*
Zeitoun	9	2%	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*

**Table 40:** Top 10 newspapers, by geopolitical divisions. \* No values to display.  $p \leq 0.05$

## Websites

The trend remains consistent with websites. Both opposition and pro-opposition websites feature strongly in contested areas (for example Al Jazeera Net, Halab al Yawm, Anadolu Agency and Orient), while pro-government websites Sana, Syria News, Russia Today, Sham FM and Al Mayadeen show a strong following in government-controlled areas. Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen – a site for which a clear allegiance could not be determined – that both documents events of the conflict and deals with day-to-day matters relating to the urgent and immediate needs of Syrians, shows a significant following in both regions. The BBC (viewed by many Syrians as being among the most fair and balanced international news sources) features on the lists for both regions (Table 41).

Most followed 10 websites	Contested		Most followed 10 websites	Government- controlled	
	n	(%)		n	(%)
Al Jazeera Net	50	10%	Sana	92	8%
Halab al Yawm	41	8%	Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	62	5%
Anadolu Agency	30	6%	Syria News	52	4%
Orient	24	5%	Russia Today	41	4%
Syrian Observatory for Human Rights	17	3%	Sham FM	39	3%
Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	11	2%	Al Mayadeen	37	3%
BBC	11	2%	Syria Now	31	3%
Aaks al Seir	10	2%	BBC	27	2%
Sham FM	9	2%	Dam Press	20	2%
Al Khabar	8	2%	Aajel, Orient	18	2%

**Table 41:** Top 10 websites, by geopolitical divisions.  $p \leq 0.05$

### Social media news sources

Social media news sources don't present the same trend, mainly because social media platform incorporates both pro-government and opposition content and groups. It is, however, interesting to note that while Facebook dominates across the regions, WhatsApp features much more prominently in contested areas and Twitter and YouTube register a significant following in both regions (Table 42).

Most followed 10 social media sites	Contested		Most followed 10 social media sites	Government- controlled	
	n	(%)		n	(%)
Facebook	266	51%	Facebook	719	62%
WhatsApp	72	14%	Twitter	61	5%
Twitter	27	5%	YouTube	36	3%
YouTube	16	3%	Instagram	21	2%
Skype	14	3%	WhatsApp	19	2%
*	*	*	*	*	*

**Table 42:** Top 10 social media sites, by geopolitical divisions. \* No values to display.  $p \leq 0.05$

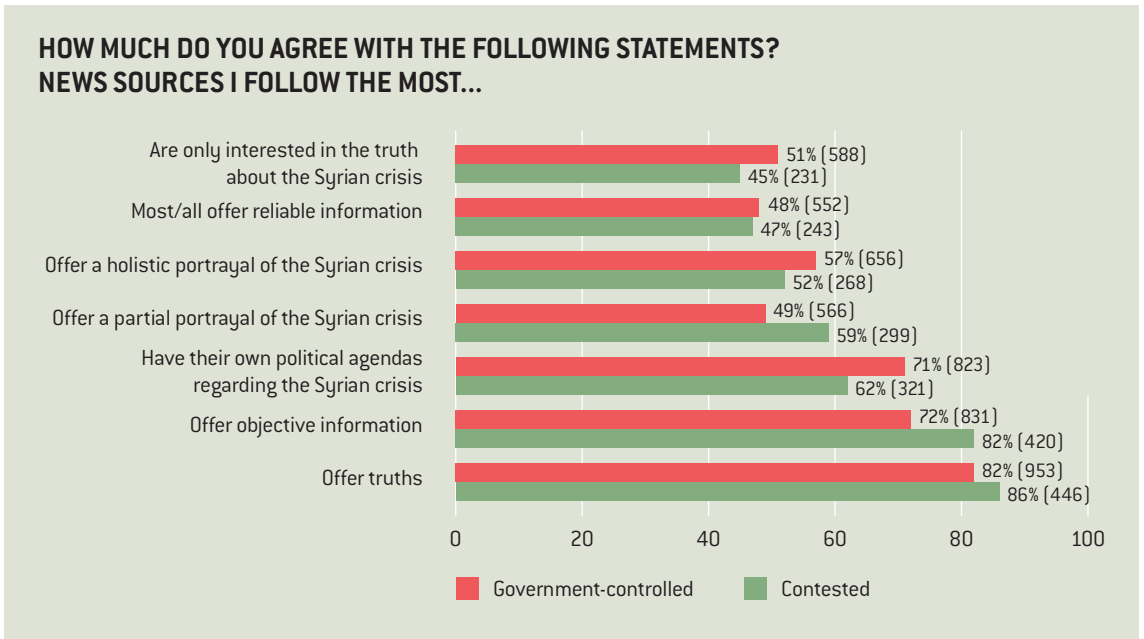
### Assessment of Media Followed<sup>20</sup>

In keeping with the main trends identified in this study, people from both area types report a similar attitude towards the media channels they consume the most. For example, people in government-controlled areas, despite showing a slightly greater conviction that all news sources have their own political agenda (71% in government-controlled vs. 63% in contested regions), also display a slightly higher agreement rate on the statement that these media are only interested in the truth about the Syrian crisis (51% in government-controlled vs. 45% in contested regions) (Table/Chart 43).

Similar percentages of the audience in both area types agree that the media they follow most offer truths (86% vs. 82% respectively). While there is no significant difference between the number of news sources followed by the two groups, slightly more people from government-controlled areas claim to compare different coverage sources than do those from contested areas (66% vs. 58% - combining the "often" and "always" options). This greater frequency of comparison may be the reason fewer people living in government-controlled areas believe in the objectivity of news—even when it is by the media they follow the most. That said, percentages of stated belief in objectivity remain high for both zones: 72% and 82% respectively.

Questions dealing with media least followed returned no significant results.

<sup>20</sup> In this section, the "Media assessment" tables combine the "somewhat agree" and "strongly agree" options.



**Table/ Chart 43:** Assessment of media followed, by geopolitical divisions [1] <sup>21, 22</sup>  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Contested”)

### Reliability of crisis-related news

While the majority of people from both regions agree there are major differences in the portrayal of the Syrian crisis by the different news sources, almost the same percentage of people agree that overall news about the Syrian crisis is reliable (Table 44). From this we can assume the same partisanship that has been inferred in the overall results of this study. Respondents tend, or claim to tend, towards a belief in the news as it is reported by the news sources they choose to consume. In other words, Syrian audiences generally assume their ‘side’ is right, and the coverage presented by the ‘other side’ is unreliable.

How much do you agree with the following statements?	Contested		Government-controlled	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
There are big differences in the portrayal of the Syrian crisis by the different news sources	403	78%	842	73%
Overall, news about the Syrian crisis are reliable <sup>1</sup>	372	72%	816	70%

**Table 44:** Assessment of media followed, by geopolitical divisions [2]  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Contested”)

<sup>21</sup> “Offer truths” is the sum of “Offer mainly truths” and “Offer only truths”.

<sup>22</sup> “Offer objective information” is the sum of “Often offer objective information” and “Always offer objective information”.

### Assessment of media content<sup>23</sup>

People in government-controlled areas tend to have a slightly more negative outlook about the news sources they use the most than people in contested areas. However, the overall trends for both types of region remain predominantly positive: differences are very small and don't necessarily demonstrate a strong pattern. Audiences in contested areas are slightly less likely to view the media they follow the most as conveying negative information (such as inflammatory content, sectarian incitement, hate speech, and calls for defection), and are more likely to state that these media broadcast calls for unity. Conversely, more people in government-controlled areas believe that the media they follow the most offer patriotic speech. There is no significant difference between the regions when audiences consider content that features calls for peace, calls for war, and calls for fighting (Table 45).

How often do the media you follow the most broadcast:	Contested		Government-controlled	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Calls for unity	402	79%	780	68%
Calls for peace	360	70%	814	70%
Patriotic speech	292	57%	782	68%
Inflammatory content	64	12%	277	24%
Sectarian incitement	62	12%	254	22%
Hate speech	64	12%	209	18%
Calls for defecting	52	10%	184	16%

**Table 45:** Assessment of media followed most's content, by geopolitical divisions  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by "Contested")

### Media least followed

People living in government-controlled areas show a slight trend towards a negative outlook on media they follow the least. Fewer people in contested areas proclaim that the media they follow the least convey inflammatory content, sectarian incitement, hate speech, calls for war, and calls for fighting, while fewer people in government-controlled areas believe the media they follow least conveys positive content, such as patriotic speech, calls for unity, and calls for peace (Table 46).

How often do the media you follow the least broadcast:	Contested		Government-controlled	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Calls for defecting	170	67%	656	43%
Sectarian incitement	235	46%	752	66%
Hate speech	213	42%	674	59%
Inflammatory content	210	41%	749	66%
Calls for peace	207	41%	299	26%
Patriotic speech	199	39%	320	28%
Calls for war	192	38%	672	59%
Calls for unity	190	37%	275	24%
Calls for fighting	171	34%	694	61%

**Table 46:** Assessment of media followed the least, by geopolitical divisions  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by "Contested")

<sup>23</sup> The "media content" tables combine the "often" and "always" options.

## Digital Literacy

There is a slightly better level of digital literacy in government-controlled areas, although overall Syrians in both regions display very weak levels of aptitude. It is only when editing photos and posting images that people living in contested areas report more familiarity/comfort than their counterparts in areas under government control (Table 47). No significant differences, however, exist between the two region types when editing videos, or when editing and updating websites (not included in table).

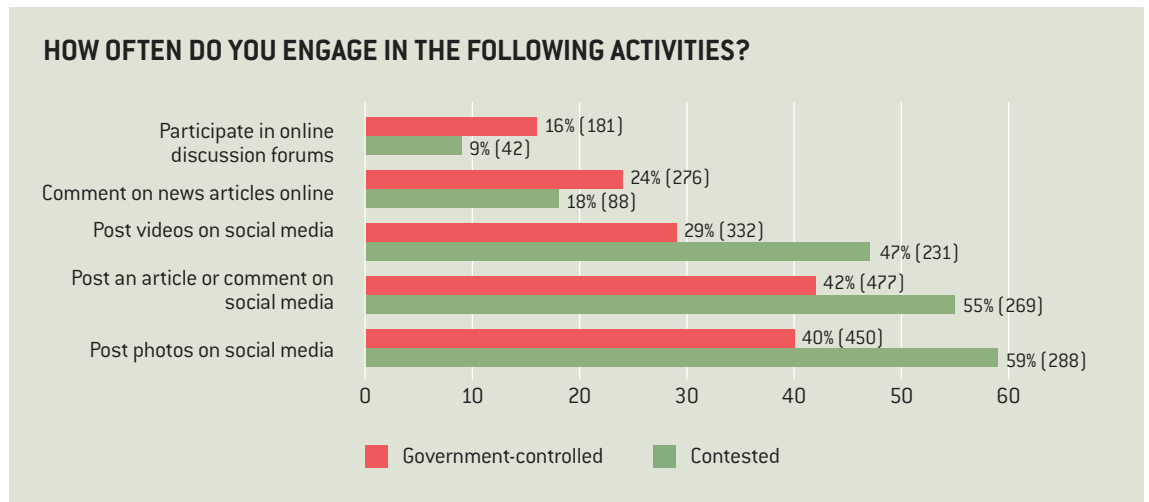
Which of the following tasks do you feel comfortable doing?	Contested		Government-controlled	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Taking a photo with a camera or a mobile phone	365	70%	916	78%
Recording a video on a camera or a mobile phone*	255	49%	642	55%
Posting images to a blog or social media platform	213	41%	443	38%
Editing a photo on a computer or mobile phone	184	35%	307	26%
Posting text to a blog or social media platform	171	33%	503	43%
Posting video to a blog or social media platform	159	31%	360	31%
Writing a news opinion article on a computer	58	11%	306	26%

**Table 47:** Digital skills, by geopolitical divisions

\*significant at the 10% level.  $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Contested”)

## Online presence

Syrians in contested areas are generally more active online than their counterparts in government-controlled areas. While more residents of government-controlled areas engage in online discussion forums and comment on news articles online (despite the percentages being low in general), they are otherwise surpassed by those in contested areas—especially when it comes to social media. Posting articles, comments, photos or videos on social media is an activity undertaken by significantly more respondents in contested areas (Table/Chart 48). Posting articles or comments on blogs, on the other hand, shows no significant difference between the two regions (not included in table).



**Table/Chart 48:** Engagement in digital activities, by geopolitical divisions  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Contested”)

## Social media engagement

No major differences between regions register when it comes to possessing various social media. Indeed, for Facebook groups or pages, and Twitter or YouTube accounts, differences between the two regions are not statistically significant (not included in table). Facebook personal accounts are more widespread in government-controlled areas, but the percentage of their possession remains high even in contested areas. The most notable difference is in the possession of smartphones with internet access, where a gap of 13% prevails between the two regions: the government-controlled areas having the advantage (Table 49).<sup>24</sup>

Which of the following devices or accounts do you possess?	Contested		Government-controlled	
	n	[%]	n	[%]
A Facebook account	355	68%	871	75%
A smart phone with internet access	327	63%	885	76%
Other social media account or group	176	34%	272	23%

**Table 49:** Possession of digital tools, by geopolitical divisions  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Contested”)

## Confidence in internet-sourced information

Both regions have almost the same position regarding the trustworthiness of information on the internet, with few exceptions. Interestingly, more people in government-controlled zones trust internet content over traditional media content, although most traditional media are government controlled. This is despite the higher awareness among people in contested areas that the internet is used by different Syrian groups to serve their political interest and to recruit supporters for their political cause. However, a much higher percentage of people in contested areas trust photos and videos posted online. (Table 50).<sup>25</sup>

How much do you agree with the following statements?	Contested		Government-controlled	
	n	[%]	n	[%]
Internet is used by different Syrian groups to recruit supporters for their political cause	356	75%	758	68%
Internet is used by different Syrian groups to serve their political interests	352	75%	763	68%
Most of the videos about Syria on the internet are trustworthy	248	53%	356	32%
Most of the photos about Syria on the internet are trustworthy	243	52%	350	31%
Most of the information about Syria on the internet is trustworthy	147	31%	371	33%
Information on internet is more trustworthy than information on traditional media	136	29%	419	37%

**Table 50:** Internet trustworthiness, by geopolitical divisions  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Contested”)

## Information Needs<sup>26</sup>

More Syrians living in government-controlled areas report having their information needs fulfilled than do those in contested areas. This trend is prominently displayed in answers provided for detailed information needs. Exceptions are informational requirements related to military and political developments, international diplomacy, and peace and reconciliation. When it comes to promoting mutual peace and understanding, however, the difference between zones is not significant (Table 51).

<sup>24</sup> The “Engagement in digital activities” tables combine the “often” and “always” options.

<sup>25</sup> The “Internet trustworthiness” tables combine the “somewhat agree” and the “strongly agree” options.

<sup>26</sup> The “Satisfaction of information needs” tables combine the “enough information” and “a lot of information” options.

Which of the following information needs do the media you mainly follow provide?	Contested		Government-controlled	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Political developments inside Syria	399	78%	789	69%
Military developments inside Syria	383	75%	809	70%
International diplomatic developments regarding Syria	364	71%	757	66%
Peace and reconciliation	280	54%	580	50%
The security situation*	229	44%	591	51%
New laws and legislations	183	36%	576	51%
Evacuation and migration	156	31%	403	35%
Safe and secure/open roads and areas	157	30%	554	48%
Access to healthcare information	126	25%	342	30%
Accessing shelter and safe areas	115	22%	380	33%
Obtaining humanitarian assistance and aid	102	20%	331	29%
Finding job opportunities	81	16%	231	20%
Finding missing family members and reuniting families	65	13%	244	21%

**Table 51:** Satisfaction of information needs, by geopolitical divisions

\*significant at the 10% level.  $p \leq 0.05$  [Ranked from highest to lowest by “Contested”]

### Information needs not met

The top five perceived unmet information needs identified call two significant findings to attention. In the contested regions, a perceived need for more information about services ranks number one. Information about employment and economic news feature as the top two needs in government-controlled areas [Table 52].

What information that you need is not offered by the media?	Contested		Government-controlled	
	n	(%)	n	(%)
Services	33	6%	1	0.1%
Employment	8	2%	44	4%
Economic news	3	1%	26	2%
Cultural	1	0.2%	18	2%
Arts	0	0%	13	1%

**Table 52:** Information needs, by geopolitical divisions

$p \leq 0.05$  [Ranked from highest to lowest by “Contested”]



# PART 3:

## COMPARING ACROSS GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS

In this section, we compare the study's findings across the Syrian regions, zooming into each of the main governorates, namely As-Suwayda, Aleppo (city and reef), Damascus (city and reef), Hama, Homs, Idlib, Latakia/Tartus, and trying to pinpoint the major trends.

### SECTION SUMMARY

- **Government-controlled and pro-government media dominate in all regions but two:** Aleppo and Idlib. In Aleppo, a mix of pro-government and opposition media compete for audience share. Idlib stands out as the stronghold dominated by opposition and pro-opposition media. Idlib is also notable for being the region in which digital skills are the least developed, but nonetheless shows the highest rates of engagement in digital activity.
- **Overall, all regions show uncritical assessment of media followed,** and sometimes show contradictory answers regarding media evaluation.

#### Access to Media and Media Most Followed

Access to various media is largely consistent across the regions, with some interesting exceptions. Idlib provides a distinct, unique picture in which penetration rates almost reach saturation for all media except radio and mobile. In Idlib, mobile accessibility registers at just 26%.

Syrian TV stations are highly accessible across all geographical regions, with the exception of As-Suwayda and Homs, both of which show moderate access rates (67% and 69%, respectively). Aleppo and Idlib feature the highest penetration rates (90% and 97%, respectively). Similar findings are reported for Arab and International TV. Here, As-Suwayda and Homs register the lowest (albeit still strong) penetration rates (80% and 85%, respectively), while Idlib features the highest penetration rate, almost at saturation level (98%).

Radio access shows a somewhat different pattern. Respondents in Idlib and Hama report the highest (albeit moderate) access (73% and 77%, respectively), followed by those living in Latakia/Tartus and Damascus (54% and 49%, respectively). Homs and As-Suwayda show extremely low penetration levels (35% and 32%, respectively).

Penetration rates for newspapers are low across the board, with the exception of Idlib, which enjoys an unusually high penetration level (94%). The only other moderately-penetrated region is Hama (78%), followed by Damascus (46%).

Websites are moderately to highly accessible across all regions, with Idlib again showing the highest penetration rate (94%). Aleppo, Homs, and Latakia/Tartus lag behind at a moderate level (66%, 65%, 65%, respectively). Social media follow the same trend, with Idlib again leading at almost saturation level (99%). The trend is inverted for mobile telephony: Idlib registering the lowest penetration rate not only across all regions but also among all media (26%). Aleppo and Latakia/Tartus also show low penetration levels (46% and 49%, respectively), while Hama registers the highest level (82%) (Table 53).

**Do you have access to:**

	As-Suwayda		Aleppo		Damascus		Hama		Homs		Idlib		Latakia/ Tartus	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Syrian TV	67	67%	232	90%	372	81%	226	82%	147	69%	149	97%	146	80%
Arab/Int'l TV	80	80%	228	88%	406	89%	252	91%	183	85%	151	98%	158	87%
Radio	32	32%	48	19%	224	49%	215	77%	74	35%	111	73%	97	54%
Newspapers	35	35%	50	20%	211	46%	214	78%	76	36%	144	94%	90	50%
Websites	80	80%	169	66%	329	72%	249	89%	140	65%	144	94%	116	65%
Social media	84	85%	196	75%	353	78%	259	93%	154	73%	151	99%	138	76%
Mobile	64	65%	118	46%	267	60%	230	82%	119	58%	38	26%	86	49%

**Table 53:** Access to media by region.  $p < 0.05$

**Syrian TV.** The distribution of the top 10 Syrian TV channels by region reveals the political divide across these regions. In other words, the presence or absence of opposition supporters is inferred through analysis of the most followed Syrian TV channels.

The first major finding here is the general domination of pro-government TV channels (vs. opposition channels, which are only present in some regions), and the absolute control of these pro-government channels in the regions of As-Suwayda, Damascus, Hama, Homs, Latakia, and Tartus. Sama and Al Ikhbariya al Souriya are the most popular Syrian TV channels, attaining a top-four spot in all regions except Idlib. Furthermore, Sama ranks higher than Al Ikhbariya al Souriya as the most watched of the Syrian channels in four regions (As-Suwayda, Damascus, Hama, and Homs).

Aleppo and Idlib offer two major exceptions. Aleppo is the only region that displays a strong competition for pro-government and pro-opposition audience shares, evident in the mix of pro-government and opposition channels that make it to the top ranks. While three of the most watched channels in Aleppo are pro-government (Al Ikhbariya al Souriya, Al Fadaiya al Souriya and Sama), the other two (Halab al Yawm and Orient) represent the opposition. Halab al Yawm ranks first, surpassing its closest follower Al Ikhbariya al Souriya by a large margin.

Finally, Idlib represents the strongest outlier in the group, as its residents claim to consume opposition channels across all ranks. Two of these channels (Orient and Halab al Yawm) are consumed in common with Aleppo, while the remaining three (Free Syrian Army, Deir ez Zor and Shaza al Horriya) are not observed in any other region. These figures indicate Idlib's strong political leaning towards the opposition (Table 54).

**Top Ranked Syrian TV Channels by Region**

Region	Rank				
	1	2	3	4	Other
<b>As-Suwayda</b>	Sama	Al Ikhbariya al Souriya	Al Dunia	Al Fadaiya al Souriya	Drama, Sham FM
<b>Aleppo</b>	Halab al Yawm	Al Ikhbariya al Souriya	Orient	Al Fadaiya al Souriya	Sama
<b>Damascus</b>	Sama	Al Ikhbariya al Souriya	Al Fadaiya al Souriya	Al Dunia	Syria TV, Sham FM
<b>Hama</b>	Sama	Al Dunia	Al Ikhbariya al Souriya	Syria Drama	Talaqi
<b>Homs</b>	Sama	Al Ikhbariya al Souriya	Al Fadaiya al Souriya	Al Dunia	Sham FM
<b>Idlib</b>	Free Syrian Army	Orient	Deir ez Zor	Shaza al Horriya	Halab al Yawm
<b>Latakia/Tartus</b>	Al Ikhbariya al Souriya	Al Fadaiya al Souriya	Sama	Al Dunia	Talaqi

**Table 54:** The four highly ranked Syrian TV channels and other channels that received significant responses.

**Arab/International TV.** The rankings of Arab/International TV channels are not as categorical as those of Syrian TV channels. Even in the regions categorized as completely pro-government in the above table (Table 54), breakthroughs of pro-opposition Arab/International TV channels (represented mainly by Al Jazeera) can be observed. Al Jazeera ranks 3rd in As-Suwayda, 5th in Damascus, 2nd in Hama, 1st in Homs and 5th again in Latakia and Tartus.

Among the pro-government Arab/International TV stations, Al Mayadeen, Al Manar, Sham FM and Al Jadeed are the most popular.

Again, Aleppo and Idlib depart from the norm. Aleppo leans more towards the opposition when consuming Arab/International TV (opposition channels occupy the first two positions in Aleppo's rankings). Idlib's opposition identity continues to show. The one pro-government channel in Idlib's list is Al Mayadeen, which only makes it to the 'Other' column in the ranking. Al Jazeera tops Idlib's list, followed by two channels with a pro-opposition orientation: Al Arabiya and Al Arabiya al Hadath. Towards the bottom of the highly-ranked channels, we find Sky News Arabia, the BBC and France 24 (Table 55).

**Top Ranked Arab/International TV Channels by Region**

Region	Rank				
	1	2	3	4	Other
<b>As-Suwayda</b>	Al Mayadeen	Sham FM	Al Jazeera	Al Jadeed	Al Manar, BBC
<b>Aleppo</b>	Al Jazeera	Al Arabiya	Al Arabiya al Hadath	Al Mayadeen	Sham FM, Al Manar, Al Jadeed, Russia Today
<b>Damascus</b>	Sham FM	Al Mayadeen	Al Manar	Al Jadeed	Al Jazeera, Russia Today, Sama, Al Aalam, BBC
<b>Hama</b>	Orient	Al Jazeera	Al Mayadeen	Al Jadeed	Russia Today, Al Arabiya al Hadath, Al Manar
<b>Homs</b>	Al Jazeera	Sham FM	Russia Today	Al Manar	Al Mayadeen, Al Arabiya, Orient, BBC
<b>Idlib</b>	Al Jazeera	Al Arabiya	Al Arabiya al Hadath	Sky News Arabia	BBC, Al Mayadeen, France 24
<b>Latakia/Tartus</b>	Sham FM	Al Manar	Russia Today	Al Jadeed	Al Jazeera, Al Mayadeen, NBN

**Table 55:** The four highly ranked Arab/International TV channels and other channels that received significant responses.

**Radios.** Sham FM is the incontestable dominant station, except in Idlib where it still ranks third. In all other regions, Sham FM ranks first, separated from its closest followers by a wide gap in four of these regions: As-Suwayda, Damascus, Hama, and Homs.<sup>27</sup> Otherwise, pro-government radio stations dominate all the regions, again with the exception of Idlib, which continues to follow its independent trend of favoring pro-opposition sources. In Idlib, Radio Fresh occupies the first position, with Hawa Smart coming in second. Monte Carlo radio, a news source considered neutral with regards to the Syrian conflict, also features among the top ranked channels (Table 56).

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted here again, though, that radio use in general is quite low and the numbers divided by region are even lower, especially in As-Suwayda, Aleppo, Homs, and Latakia and Tartus.

### Top Ranked Radio Channels by Region

Region	Rank			
	1	2	3	Other
<b>As-Suwayda</b>	Sham FM	Al Karmeh	Rayan, Sawt al Shabab	Al Madina
<b>Aleppo</b>	Sham FM	Sawt al Shabab	Al Madina	Al Quds, Dimashq, Ninar
<b>Damascus</b>	Sham FM	Al Madina	Ninar	Dimashq, Sawt al Shabab
<b>Hama</b>	Sham FM	Al Quds	Dimashq	Souria al Ghad, Al Madina, Ninar, Sawt Al Shabab
<b>Homs</b>	Sham FM	Dimashq	Al Madina	BBC, Orient, Sawt al Shabab, Zanoubia
<b>Idlib</b>	Radio Fresh	Hawa Smart	Sham FM	Rosana, Monte Carlo
<b>Latakia/Tartus</b>	Sham FM	Hala	Amwaj, Dimashq	Al Madina, Sawt al Shabab

**Table 56:** The three highly ranked radio channels and other channels that received significant responses.

**Newspapers.** Pro-government newspapers dominate, an expected finding when we consider the relative infancy of opposition newspapers and the publishing restrictions they face in certain regions. However, Aleppo and Idlib break the trend again, with major differences in the diffusion of opposition papers in the two areas. In Aleppo, pro-opposition newspaper Hibr comes in first, while Al Naba' ranks prominently. In Idlib, opposition newspapers occupy all the top ranks. Again, we see two patterns emerge: two political orientations compete in Aleppo, while the opposition dominates utterly in Idlib.

Among pro-government newspapers, the most popular are Teshreen and Al Baath, present in all regions except Idlib, followed by Al Thawra and Al Watan. Al Thawra does not appear in Aleppo, while Al Watan does not appear in Hama (Table 57).

### Top Ranked Newspapers by Region

Region	Rank			
	1	2	3	Other
<b>As-Suwayda</b>	Al Watan	Teshreen	Al Thawra	Al Baath, Baladna
<b>Aleppo</b>	Hibr	Al Watan	Teshreen	Al Naba', Al Baath
<b>Damascus</b>	Al Watan	Teshreen	Al Baath & Al Thawra	Al Akhbar, Al Bina', Assafir
<b>Hama</b>	Al Fida'	Teshreen	Al Baath	Al Thawra, Al Mawkef al Riadi, Al Riadiya
<b>Homs</b>	Al Watan	Al Baath	Teshreen	Al Thawra, Al Ourouba
<b>Idlib</b>	Maan	Honta	Oxygen	Gherbal, Enab Baladi
<b>Latakia/Tartus</b>	Teshreen	Al Baath	Al Watan	Al Thawra

**Table 57:** The three highly ranked newspapers and others that received significant responses.

**Websites.** The online environment seems to be more diverse, with websites mixing sources from both orientations in almost all regions.

Noteworthy here is the visibility of the pro-government site Sana, which occupies top spot in three regions (As-Suwayda, Homs and Latakia/Tartus), while also coming in second place in Hama and featuring high in Damascus (Table 58).

As-Suwayda, Damascus, Hama, Homs, Latakia and Tartus are largely dominated by pro-government web sites, with some incursions from pro-opposition web sites. In As-Suwayda, the only exceptions are Al Hayat, Al Jazeera Net and Orient, which rank highly but not among the top three. In Damascus, the exception is Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen, occupying the top position. As mentioned earlier, Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen is a source for which a clear allegiance could not be determined. It documents events of the conflict without explicitly taking sides and mainly deals with day-to-day matters that relate to the urgent and immediate needs of the Syrian people. In Hama, only Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen and Al Iqtisadi, both less political in nature, break the pro-government dominance of online news sources. In Homs, the exceptions are pro-opposition site Orient and the BBC. As for Latakia and Tartus, the two exceptions are opposition sites Koullouna Shouraka' (second place) and Orient (third place).

Aleppo, a contested area for traditional media, is dominated by pro-opposition sources when it comes to websites. All websites here (except Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen and pro-government Syria Steps) are pro-opposition.

Idlib once again exhibits its opposition-oriented identity by placing Al Jazeera Net in the top position, followed by Anadolu Agency and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The other highly ranked websites are the pro-opposition Koullouna Shouraka', Orient, and Aaks al Seir, as well as the BBC.

<b>Top Ranked Websites by Region</b>				
	<b>Rank</b>			
<b>Region</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>As-Suwayda</b>	Sana	Syria News	Russia Today	Al Hayat, Al Jazeera Net, Syria Now, Al Akhbar; BBC; Orient
<b>Aleppo</b>	Halab al Yawm	Orient	Al Khabar	Syria Steps, Aaks al Seir; Halab al An; Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen
<b>Damascus</b>	Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	Sham FM	Al Mayadeen	Sana, Damascus Now, Al Manar, Syria News, BBC, Damas Press
<b>Hama</b>	Syria News	Sana	Damas Press	Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen, Al Hadath News, The Seventh Day, Al Iqtisadi
<b>Homs</b>	Sana	Sham FM	Russia Today	Damascus Now, Orient, BBC
<b>Idlib</b>	Al Jazeera Net	Anadolu Agency	Syrian Observatory for Human Rights	BBC, Koullouna Shouraka', Orient, Aaks al Seir
<b>Latakia/Tartus</b>	Sana	Koullouna Shouraka', Syria News	Orient, Russia Today	Syria Now, Aajel, Top News

**Table 58:** The three highly ranked websites and others that received significant responses.

**Social media.** When it comes to social media, Facebook is the undisputed primary site in all regions, separated from others by large margins. After Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp attract considerable attention, with Twitter occupying second position in three regions (Hama, Homs, and Idlib) and third position in Aleppo and Damascus. WhatsApp takes second place in Aleppo and Damascus, and ranks third in Homs and Idlib (Table 59).

#### Top Ranked Social Media by Region

Region	Rank			
	1	2	3	Other
As-Suwayda	Facebook	-	-	Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn
Aleppo	Facebook	WhatsApp	Twitter	YouTube
Damascus	Facebook	WhatsApp	Twitter	YouTube
Hama	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Instagram
Homs	Facebook	Twitter	WhatsApp	YouTube
Idlib	Facebook	Twitter	WhatsApp	Skype, YouTube
Latakia/Tartus	Facebook	-	-	Twitter, WhatsApp

**Table 59:** The three highly ranked social media and others that received significant responses.

**Mobile news.** Facebook once again dominates the smartphone scene, coming first in all regions except Damascus and Hama. In Damascus, Facebook ranks second after the popular Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen, while in Hama it does not appear at all. Sana is the leading source of mobile news in Hama, followed largely by pro-government sources (with the exception of the economic-oriented Al Iqtisadi). Numbers for mobile sources being low, we cannot speak of a dominance of pro-government sources, although it is evident that apart from Facebook, people largely resort to pro-government sources on their mobile phones in all regions, except in Idlib where Souria al Hadath and Syria Live are also consulted (Table 60).

#### Top Ranked Mobile News Sources by Region

Region	Rank			
	1	2	3	Other
As-Suwayda	Facebook	As-Suwayda News, Top News	-	As-Suwayda al Hadath, Sana, Syria News
Aleppo	Facebook	Halab al Yawm	-	Dam Press, Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen
Damascus	Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	Facebook	Top News	Sham FM, Al Manar, Damascus Now
Hama	Sana	Aajel	Al Iqtisadi	Al Hadath News, Damas Post
Homs	Facebook	WhatsApp	Al Mayadeen, Top News	Syria News
Idlib	Facebook	Souria al Hadath, WhatsApp	-	Syria Live
Latakia/Tartus	Facebook	Top News	-	Al Ikhbariya al Souriya, Aajel, Dam Press

**Table 60:** The three highly ranked mobile news sources and others that received significant responses.

## Assessment of Media Content

Syrian audiences demonstrate a general trend towards largely uncritical assessment of the media they follow and who they believe offer truths and objective information. This trend tends to repeat itself in each of the seven geographical regions studied, registering a high of 91% in Latakia/Tartus and a low of 70% in Hama. Most individuals also overwhelmingly agree that the media they follow the most have their own political agenda. This is true in all regions except the opposition-controlled area of Idlib, where only 26% agree with the statement.

A big discrepancy, however, appears in people's opinions about the media offering objective information as opposed to reliable information. While most tend to believe media offer objective information, the numbers are weaker when it comes to perceiving the media as providing reliable information. For instance, in the government-controlled area of Damascus, while 87% of the people believe their preferred media offer truths and 74% believe these media provide objective information, only 44% think this information is reliable. The same pattern repeats itself across all regions. The biggest gap between opinions shows up in Aleppo, in which only one third of the population say the information from their preferred media is reliable, compared to 74% who believed it to be objective and 90% who say these media offer truths. The closest percentages appear in Idlib, where 73% of residents believe the media they follow the most offer objective information, and an almost equal 68% believe these media report reliable information (68%).

Geographically, media content assessment questions reveal an extremely interesting finding: the way in which people's perception of the truths in media content changes with the type of content they seek. While the majority of respondents in each of the seven regions say the media they follow the most offer truths, their faith in these media drops dramatically when the question specifies whether these media offer truths about the Syrian crisis in particular. In most regions, this drop translates to a general decline of percentages by half, as in the case of As-Suwayda and Hama. In Aleppo, the decrease is even sharper: falling from 90% (those who believe the media offer truths) to 36% (those who believe the media offer truth about the Syrian crisis). Again, the most consistent answers come from Latakia and Tartus residents, where 91% say their chosen media offer truths, and 79% claim they offer truths about the crisis.

Further analysis of public perception of media portrayal of the Syrian crisis reveals further divisions. Regions are split between a belief that chosen media are portraying the Syrian crisis in a partial or holistic manner. People in Latakia/Tartus (79%), Idlib (74%), and Damascus (64%) believe the media they follow the most offer a holistic portrayal of the crisis. Conversely, people in Aleppo (78%) and As-Suwayda (49%) tend to believe their chosen media provide partial pictures of the crisis. Although close to half the residents in Damascus, Homs, and Latakia/Tartus believe the media offer partial portrayals of the Syrian crisis (50%, 53%, and 48% respectively), these numbers represent a notable decrease from the percentages that perceive these media to offer holistic pictures (Table 61).

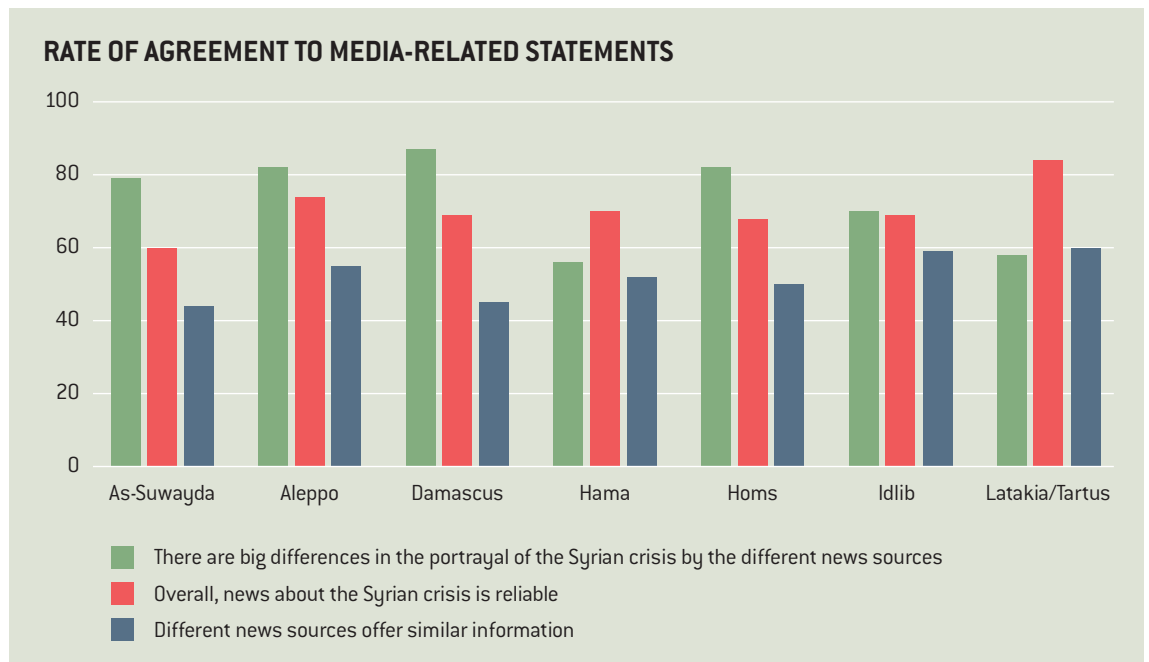
### News sources followed the most:

	As-Suwayda		Aleppo		Damascus		Hama		Homs		Idlib		Latakia/ Tartus	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Have their own political agendas regarding the Syrian crisis	73	73%	211	82%	361	79%	157	56%	153	71%	40	26%	144	80%
Offer truths	69	69%	234	90%	397	87%	197	70%	190	87%	127	83%	166	91%
Offer objective information	64	64%	229	89%	341	74%	170	61%	160	77%	110	73%	158	86%
Offer a partial portrayal of the Syrian crisis	49	49%	200	78%	227	50%	126	45%	113	53%	51	34%	87	48%
Offer reliable information	39	39%	86	33%	202	44%	127	46%	101	47%	103	68%	127	69%
Are only interested in the truth about the Syrian crisis	36	36%	97	38%	241	53%	98	35%	112	53%	82	54%	145	79%
Offer a holistic portrayal of the Syrian crisis	35	35%	85	33%	291	64%	120	43%	122	58%	113	74%	143	79%

**Table 61:** Assessment of news sources followed the most, by region

## General media content

Syrian audiences' assessment of media content in general reveals an overwhelming accord across all regions. At least half the people in two regions (Hama and Latakia/Tartus) and more than three-quarters of the respondents in the remaining regions (in As-Suwayda, Aleppo, Damascus, and Homs) believe different news sources portray the Syrian crisis in different ways. Interestingly, regardless of the area they live in, people are more often likely to report the news about the crisis to be reliable. The biggest support for this statement appears in Latakia/Tartus (84%) and the lowest in As-Suwayda (60%). As for media sources offering similar information, close to half the respondents in each region agree that different sources relay similar information, with the biggest support coming from Latakia/Tartus (60%) and Idlib (59%), and the least coming from Damascus (45%) and As-Suwayda (44%) [Table/Chart 62].



**Table/Chart 62:** Assessment of information offered by media in general, by region

## Media most followed

Respondents in all but one region (Hama) mostly believe their chosen media offers calls for peace. The highest percentage of people who agree with this statement come from Latakia/Tartus (86%) and Damascus (80%). Following the same trend, fewer people in all regions believe media content contains calls for war. Aleppo showed the smallest percentage of agreement with this statement (9%), while the opposition-controlled Idlib displays the highest percentage at 34%.

People's agreement that media content includes inflammatory content follows the above trend closely, but with a slight variation in Hama where 46% of respondents believe that media include inflammatory content (compared to 28% that believe the media calls for war). The opposite occurs in Idlib, where fewer people (16%) think the media include inflammatory content than those who think these media call for war (34%).

More often than not, people believe the media they follow the most contain patriotic speech, but with varying degrees of support depending on the region. While the overwhelming majority of respondents in Latakia/Tartus (90%), Damascus (79%) and Homs (75%) believe this to be the case, only half the population in Idlib (51%) and Aleppo (52%), and slightly more than a third in Hama (36%) share this belief. A similar picture appears when we look at opinions on whether media content calls for unity. Overall, respondents remain more or less consistent in their assessment of the type of speech they find in the media they follow the most [Table 63].



## Content offered by media followed the most

	As-Suwayda		Aleppo		Damascus		Hama		Homs		Idlib		Latakia/ Tartus	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Calls for peace	67	67%	170	66%	362	80%	134	48%	164	76%	108	72%	158	86%
Patriotic speech	63	63%	134	52%	357	79%	102	36%	162	75%	78	51%	166	90%
Calls for unity	53	53%	216	84%	356	79%	116	41%	157	73%	105	70%	166	90%
Calls for defecting	30	30%	11	4%	60	13%	52	19%	31	15%	25	16%	20	11%
Inflammatory content	28	28%	24	9%	71	16%	128	46%	47	22%	24	16%	14	8%
Calls for war	27	27%	23	9%	71	16%	79	28%	48	22%	52	34%	20	11%
Calls for fighting	27	27%	30	12%	62	14%	66	24%	38	18%	33	22%	13	7%
Sectarian incitement	25	25%	26	10%	67	15%	109	39%	36	17%	21	14%	27	15%
Hate speech	25	25%	18	7%	60	13%	87	31%	38	18%	31	21%	8	4%

**Table 63:** Assessment of content offered by media followed the most, by region

## Digital Literacy

As noted earlier in this report, the Syrian public generally has low levels of digital competencies. This lack of basic digital skill tends to be more pronounced in certain regions, notably Idlib followed by Homs and Latakia/Tartus. Almost across the board, participants from these regions register the lowest levels of comfort using various digital tools. On the other hand, Aleppo, Damascus, As-Suwayda and Hama tend to register high levels—though the individual tasks with which their residents are comfortable differ from region to region [Table 64].

## How comfortable do you feel doing the following tasks:

	As-Suwayda		Aleppo		Damascus		Hama		Homs		Idlib		Latakia/ Tartus	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Taking a photo...	87	87%	207	79%	372	80%	238	85%	136	62%	74	48%	147	80%
Recording a video...	71	71%	163	62%	234	50%	215	77%	85	39%	38	25%	76	41%
Posting images...	46	46%	128	49%	185	40%	142	51%	67	30%	33	21%	47	26%
Writing a news oped...	41	41%	15	6%	146	31%	80	28%	45	20%	18	12%	14	8%
Posting text...	39	39%	111	42%	184	40%	152	54%	86	39%	14	9%	78	42%
Posting video...	29	29%	72	28%	172	37%	108	38%	46	21%	49	32%	35	19%
Editing a photo...	24	24%	132	50%	119	26%	94	33%	51	23%	32	21%	34	18%
Editing a video...	11	11%	65	25%	64	14%	70	25%	21	10%	9	6%	6	3%
Editing/updating website	7	7%	8	3%	41	9%	33	12%	11	5%	16	10%	16	9%

**Table 64:** Digital skills, by region

## Digital engagement

Almost the opposite trend appears when we look at digital activity, with Idlib registering the highest level of digital activity almost across the board. Residents of Homs and Latakia claim to be among the least digitally active (Table 65).

### How often do you perform the following:

	As-Suwayda		Aleppo		Damascus		Hama		Homs		Idlib		Latakia/ Tartus	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Post photos...	44	45%	135	58%	184	41%	117	43%	78	37%	116	75%	54	29%
Post article/comment on social media	39	40%	113	48%	184	41%	118	43%	100	47%	111	73%	68	37%
Post videos	34	35%	105	45%	148	33%	98	36%	39	19%	96	63%	37	20%
Post article/comment on blog	21	21%	14	6%	68	15%	77	28%	39	19%	81	53%	31	17%
Comment on news articles online	19	19%	16	7%	87	19%	103	37%	42	20%	41	27%	45	24%
Participate in online discussion	16	16%	11	5%	37	8%	90	33%	18	9%	19	12%	27	15%

**Table 65:** Engagement in digital activities, by region

## Social media

No clear trend appears: the results are mixed, but largely similar across the regions (Table 66).

### Which of the following do you possess:

	As-Suwayda		Aleppo		Damascus		Hama		Homs		Idlib		Latakia/ Tartus	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
A Facebook account	80	80%	175	67%	343	74%	227	81%	149	68%	102	66%	135	73%
A smartphone with internet	76	76%	191	73%	338	73%	232	83%	156	71%	66	43%	141	77%
A Twitter account	31	31%	32	12%	115	25%	101	36%	62	28%	75	49%	59	32%
A Facebook group or page	26	26%	65	25%	179	38%	59	21%	59	27%	32	21%	29	16%
Other social media account/group	10	10%	109	42%	162	35%	81	29%	33	15%	21	14%	27	15%
A YouTube account	6	6%	24	9%	106	23%	73	26%	37	17%	54	35%	48	26%

**Table 66:** Possession of digital tool, by region

## Information Needs

No discernible trends appear across the Syrian regions.

# PART 4:

## COMPARING ACROSS DEMOGRAPHICS

This section compares the study's findings across various demographics, including age, education level, income level, gender, and refugee status (whether the participant considers himself/herself a refugee).

### SECTION SUMMARY

- **Both younger respondents and low-income groups tend to be more inclined towards the opposition media**, while older respondents and higher-income groups display a preference for government-controlled or pro-government media. The younger generations are also more digitally connected and active online.
- **Higher education relates to a more critical outlook on media, to higher levels of access to most media (especially the new technologies), and to the possession and active use of digital tools.** Digital engagement also increases with income, but social media, and particularly Facebook, escape this trend and remain largely the same across different income levels.
- **Higher-income groups are more satisfied that their socio-economic information needs are being met, while the lower-income groups are more satisfied that their political information needs are met**—and vice-versa.

### Comparison by Age

**Access to media and media most followed.** Access to traditional media is reported at a similar level among all age categories. A notable change comes in, however, when we look at new technologies: websites, social media and mobile telephony. The oldest age category in the study (46-65) significantly lags behind the younger generations in reported access to these newer media sources.

Responses to questions about the most watched news sources deliver an interesting picture. The younger generation (18-29) is more inclined to choose opposition media, as opposed to the midrange (30-45) and older age groups (46-65), which are more likely to follow pro-government media. For example, Halab al Yawm, Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, Radio Fresh, Hawa Smart radio, Gherbal (newspaper) and Honta (newspaper) are all outlets used more by younger respondents and less frequently by their older counterparts. On the other hand, the pro-government media, such as Al Ikhbariya al Souriya, Al Manar, Al Mayadeen TV, Al Thawra (newspaper) and Tishreen (newspaper) are more popular among the midrange and older age groups. Social media, however, escape this distribution, since most social media platforms are accessed by, and contain content aimed at, all sides.

The older generations tend to follow news most closely: except for news on social media, the internet, and mobiles, which is more frequently consumed by respondents in the youngest group. Older respondents also tend to be more knowledgeable about the owners of traditional news outlets than the younger ones, whereas the reverse is true when it comes to new media.

In sum, we can assume the older generations are more media-literate, while younger Syrians are more digitally-literate. This assumption is confirmed in analysis.

**Assessment of the media.** In general, the assessment of media content does not show meaningful or significant differences between the different age groups studied. For example, questions dealing with perceptions that the media offer truths or lies, or the reliability of information offered by media, or the number of news sources followed, yielded largely similar results across the age groups.

Some differences, however, appear in opinions related to the content of media most or least followed. The older audiences are more positive toward their favorite news sources than the other groups. For instance, more Syrians in the older category are convinced that the information offered by their chosen news sources always contains patriotic speech (32% compared to 24% of the midrange, and 28% of the youth categories). And when asked to consider negative content, for example content that contains calls for war and/or fighting, older respondents tended to express the belief that their favorite news sources are devoid of this kind of information.

The reverse is true when we look at the news sources respondents say they follow the least. Here, the older respondents are more negative in their attitude than the younger ones. Just 29% of those in the youngest age range think the media they follow the least never broadcast patriotic speeches. These numbers grow as we go up the age scale. For respondents in the middle age range, the percentage is 33%, and it reaches 38% for the older generation. This pattern repeats itself where respondents are asked to assess content for calls for unity.

**Digital literacy.** The general trend reveals older participants to be less digitally connected and engaged than their younger counterparts. The results show that the possession of digital tools, the performance of digital tasks, and the engagement in digital activities of Syrian audiences all decrease as we climb the age scale. Differences between the youngest and the middle age ranges are mild, but the gap between the youngest and oldest age ranges is substantial.

#### **Trusting internet-sourced content**

Results, mainly, are not significant, although they do suggest that younger respondents tend to trust the internet slightly more than older users. There is no difference between the age ranges when we examine political usage of the internet. Also, no apparent differences exist in each age group's estimation of the extent to which their information needs are met, or whether there is a need for more independent news sources.

### **Comparison by Education Level**

**Access to media and media most followed.** Television (both Syrian and Arab/International) is the only medium in which no significant differences are reported when we look at the various education levels. Radio, newspapers and the new media, on the other hand, enjoy higher levels of access among respondents with higher education levels. For websites, social media and mobile phones, a higher level of education also corresponds to a higher usage frequency. This usage frequency trend does not apply to TV, radio, or newspapers.

There is a relation between higher levels of education and more reported knowledge of the funding or owning parties of all media. Hence more educated Syrians may be assumed to have a higher media literacy level.

There is no clear pattern that could arguably link education to an explanation of media most followed. In other words, education level does not correspond to following pro-opposition or pro-government media. One interesting observation here, however, is that the respondents with the highest education level show a slight inclination towards foreign newspapers.

Facebook, determined in this study to be the dominant social media platform to which Syrians have access, shows interesting usage variations among the different education levels. The least educated group uses Facebook less frequently (47%), compared to high school graduates and university graduates (61% and 62%, respectively). This difference does not translate clearly to other social media: possibly because they are less diffused than Facebook.

**Assessment of media.** Responses suggest that a higher education level correlates with a more critical assessment both of the function of the media, and the information it conveys. For example, the more educated the participants are, the more likely they are to agree that news sources have their own agenda regarding the Syrian crisis—and the less likely they are to agree that these news sources offer a holistic portrayal of the Syrian crisis. Similarly, better educated respondents are less likely to believe that most news sources offer reliable information, and more likely to follow more channels to gather information and compare content.

Finally, when it comes to the number and media orientation of the news sources followed most, a higher number of the less educated respondents watch only one news station they agree with (16%, compared to 9% from each of the other groups). As to whether there is need for more independent news sources, responses generate no significant results. All three groups agree, in the majority, to this statement.

**Assessment of media content.** In terms of their ability to assess the media they follow most: no particular pattern can be drawn from comparing respondents' education levels.

When we look at the media followed the least, we notice that the highly educated are least sympathetic towards the content. They are more likely to proclaim that media they follow the least display inflammatory content, sectarian incitement, hate speech, calls for war, calls for fighting and calls for defecting. Similarly, they tend to give their least-followed media the lowest scores in terms of patriotic speech, calls for unity and calls for peace.

**Digital skills.** Predictably, digital skills increase with education. Interestingly, beyond a certain level of education, the differences in digital skill levels become less significant. In other words, a substantial difference exists between the digital skill levels of the least educated and the higher two groups, but not between high school graduates and university graduates.

Examine respondents' engagement in digital activities, however, and the pattern does not remain the same. While the least educated group continues to be the least digitally engaged, it is the middle group (high school graduates) and not the highest group that is the most active. Participation rate for high school graduates is the highest for almost all the activities listed. As for digital connectivity, the higher the education level, the greater the possession of the digital tools and accounts.

#### **Trusting internet-sourced content**

No clear pattern or significant difference is identified.

**Information needs.** Initially, university graduates seem to be the most satisfied with their perception of the fulfillment of their information needs. However, when we look at the respondents' assessments of specific information needs, the results only partially confirm this initial picture. More university graduates claim to feel their needs are fulfilled in terms of finding missing family members and reuniting families, understanding the security situation, locating safe and secure/open roads and areas, and getting information on evacuation and migration, new laws and legislations, and access to shelter and safe areas. The two lower-educated groups, though, tend to be more satisfied with information received regarding humanitarian assistance and aid, military developments inside Syria, political developments inside Syria, international diplomatic developments regarding Syria, and peace and reconciliation. Respondents showed no significant differences in their satisfaction with healthcare information, information on job opportunities, or the promotion of mutual understanding between the Syrian parties concerned in the crisis.

## Comparison by Income

The most interesting findings revealed by dividing respondents according to income categories concern the media followed most, digital literacy and information needs.

**Media followed the most.** The opposition is most popular among respondents with a very low income. For example, the very low income group reads opposition newspapers or listens to opposition radio more than the other income groups (in the case of radios, the only exception is Radio Fresh, which registers some rates among the low income and the middle income range, even if these remain very low – 0.2% and 0.6% respectively). The high income group, on the other hand, is mostly supportive of pro-government media. Many pro-opposition media (such as, Halab al Yawm, Al Jeish al Sourî al Horr, Al Jazeera Net) received null or close to null rates in responses from the high income group.

**Digital literacy.** Engagement in some digital activities increases with income. Higher-income respondents tend to participate more in online discussion forums, comment on news articles online, or post articles and comment on blog. However, social media platforms (particularly Facebook) are used across the board. These results seem to indicate that social media have become a popular and diffused platform accessible to all socio-economic groups in Syrian society. Higher income does, however, translate into better connectivity (e.g. smart phones with internet access, Twitter account, YouTube account).

**Information needs.** Overall, the different socio-economic categories seem to have the same levels of satisfaction when asked if their information needs are being met. There are, though, differences when we look at the specific areas in which different-income respondents feel their needs are serviced. The middle and higher-income groups are more satisfied with the provision of socio-economic information: information regarding humanitarian assistance and aid, access to healthcare, job opportunities, and access to shelter and safe areas. Low-income groups seem more satisfied with information related to political and military matters: political developments in Syria, international diplomatic developments regarding Syria, and military developments inside Syria.

The lowest-income group feels under-served when considering the provision of information related to peace: promoting mutual understanding between Syrian communities concerned in the crisis, and peace and reconciliation.

There is no significant difference between respondents of different income levels when we look at attitudes towards the provision of security information—for example, information on the security situation as a whole, on safe and secure/open roads and areas, or on evacuation and migration.

There is no significant pattern relating to the number and orientation of news sources followed, or a perceived need for more independent news sources.

## Comparison by gender or refugee status

When comparing the findings across gender and refugee status (whether a person considers themselves a refugee or not), no meaningful trends or significant differences emerge.

# PART 5:

## COMPARING ACROSS MEDIA ORIENTATIONS

This section investigates how the political orientation of the media that participants follow relates to their media and digital literacy levels, their assessment of media content, and their perception of how well their information needs are fulfilled. The “media orientation” concept uses the political orientation of the media participants follow as a proxy to infer the political preferences of these respondents. If the respondents follow pro-opposition media only, their media orientation is labelled “opposition.” If they follow pro-government media only, it is labelled “pro-government,” and if they follow both, it is labelled “mixed.”

### SECTION SUMMARY

- **Audiences who tend to only follow pro-government media believe that people in their community predominantly follow pro-government media, while those who only follow opposition media believe the opposite.** Those who follow both media orientations tend to fall in between. The responses show that the former groups are deeply divided in their media following and in their perceptions about their communities, while the latter group may have a better perception of reality.
- **Being open to both media camps does not immediately translate into a stronger critical view of the media.** All three groups of respondents have a positive view, in general, regarding the content of the media they follow the most.
- **The opposition audience is the most engaged in digital activities related to the Syrian crisis,** but not necessarily the most connected, as the three groups show no significant difference in this area.
- **The opposition audience is the most trusting of the internet,** but also the group more likely to believe internet information is manipulated by the different parties engaged in the conflict for political purposes.
- Finally, and in a finding consistent with earlier sections of this report, **the pro-government public are the most satisfied with the ways in which the media provide for their perceived information needs.** However, examination of specific satisfactions only confirms this trend partially.
- **Politically-mixed respondents are the least satisfied with the ways in which media provide for their perceived information needs.**

### Media Followed by Others in the Community

Since the assessment of the media most followed by participants constitutes the base of the “media orientation” variable, in this section we do not analyze responses concerned with the media participants themselves follow, but rather their responses concerning the media they believe others in their community predominantly follow. Our evaluation covers responses related to all types of media: Syrian TV, Arab/International TV, radio, newspapers, websites, social media and mobile.

For all media, we find the same results across the three categories: Syrians with a pro-government media orientation believe their community predominantly follows pro-government media only, and Syrians with an opposition media orientation believe their community predominantly follows opposition media only. People following mixed media come in between.

There are exceptions to this rule. Halab al Yawm, an opposition Syrian TV channel and website, receives high ratings from the followers of opposition media (26% for TV and 8% for the website), but even higher ratings from the followers of mixed media (33% for TV and 10% for the website). Hibr, an opposition newspaper, is given low ratings by followers of opposition media (2%) and higher ratings by followers of mixed media (8%).

It is worth noting the position of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. Since these are neutral platforms, they do not follow any trend in ratings. Only WhatsApp shows evidence of a unique pattern: the WhatsApp platform is rated very low by the fans of pro-government media (2%), but receives much higher ratings from consumers of mixed media fans and opposition media (12% and 16%, respectively) (Tables 67-73, Appendix B).

### **Assessment of Media Followed**

One would expect that mixed-orientation audiences - people following both kinds of news sources (pro-government and opposition) - have a more critical outlook on media in general. They see both sides of the spectrum, which creates the potential for a more informed opinion. However, the data only partially confirms this expectation.

Mixed-media oriented respondents do not follow the highest number of news sources: this distinction goes to the audience that consumes opposition media (51% of this group follow more than three sources). The mixed-media group comes first in the 'next-best' category for multiple media sources followed: following "two to three media sources," with a 47% rate.

Audiences of mixed-media orientation score highest (67%) for often or always comparing the different media they do follow. Close behind them in this category are the pro-government audience (63%), and the opposition media orientation audience (60%).

More pro-government media followers agree to the statement that different media "have their own political agendas regarding the Syrian crisis" than mixed media followers (73% for the former and 65% for the latter). Opposition media fans come in third here, with a 51% rate of agreement. By contrast mixed-media followers are most critical of the statement "news sources are interested only in the truth", with a 38% rate of agreement compared to 57% from pro-government respondents and 46% from opposition respondents. A similar situation prevails when respondents are asked to agree with the idea of "holistic portrayal of the Syrian crisis by the different media". Pro-government and opposition audiences have a similar opinion on this, with 61% and 60% respectively in agreement. Only 47% of the mixed-media audience agree with this statement.

Opinions are reversed when respondents are asked to agree that the media delivers only a "partial portrayal of the Syrian crisis".

Another interesting finding is linked to the nature of information offered by the various news sources. Mixed-media audiences are most in agreement that the information offered by the various news sources is similar (57%). Differences in opinion with the other two groups are small, however: 49% of the pro-government audience and 53% of the opposition audience support the same idea (Tables 74-76, Appendix B).

All three groups, then, are largely unconvinced that the media are interested in the truth. But this position changes when respondents are asked about the media they follow the most. Mixed-media spectators, especially, are 83% in agreement with the statement that "the media they follow the most offer truths (often or always)". The same group had just a 38% rate of agreement with the same statement as applied to media in general. This discrepancy may be illustrative of high levels of selective exposure rather than high levels of media literacy. Supporters of the other two types of media also record high variations in their answers to the media they follow the most compared to their answers on media in general.

Conversely, all three groups agree more that the news in general is reliable than they agree that the sources they follow the most offer reliable news. Opposition respondents are least convinced by the reliability of general news (63%, vs. 71% for mixed-media audiences and 72% for pro-government audiences). Mixed-media followers are least confident in the reliability of the news sources they follow most (42%, vs. 53% for the opposition audience and 51% for the pro-government audience).

All three groups show similarly high rates of agreement that news is objective. 73% of opposition media consumers agree the news sources they follow the most offer objective information (often or always), just slightly behind 75% of the mixed-media audience and 76% of the pro-government audience. Results for the least-followed news sources are not significant (Tables 74-76, Appendix B).

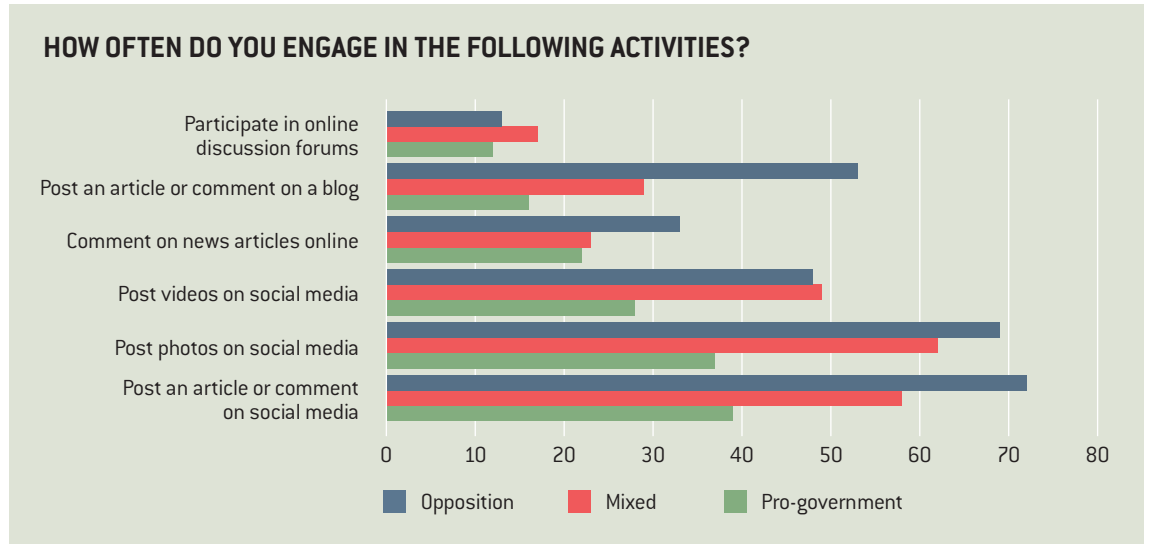
### **Assessment of media content**

All three groups strongly defend their favorite news sources. In general, the pro-government audience displays the most positive attitude toward the media it follows most, with some exceptions. P-government consumers also have the harshest stance on the media they follow the least (Tables 77-78, Appendix B).



## Digital Literacy

No clear pattern emerges when analyzing digital literacy by media orientation. In other words, media orientation does not seem to be a factor that can explain any differences in the ability to perform digital tasks (Table 79, Appendix B). However, important differences appear when we look at engagement in online activities related to the Syrian crisis. With two exceptions (participating in online discussion forums, and posting videos to social media), opposition audiences always exceed their counterparts in their engagement in digital activities (Table/ Chart 80).



**Table/Chart 80:** Engagement in digital activities, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Pro-government”)

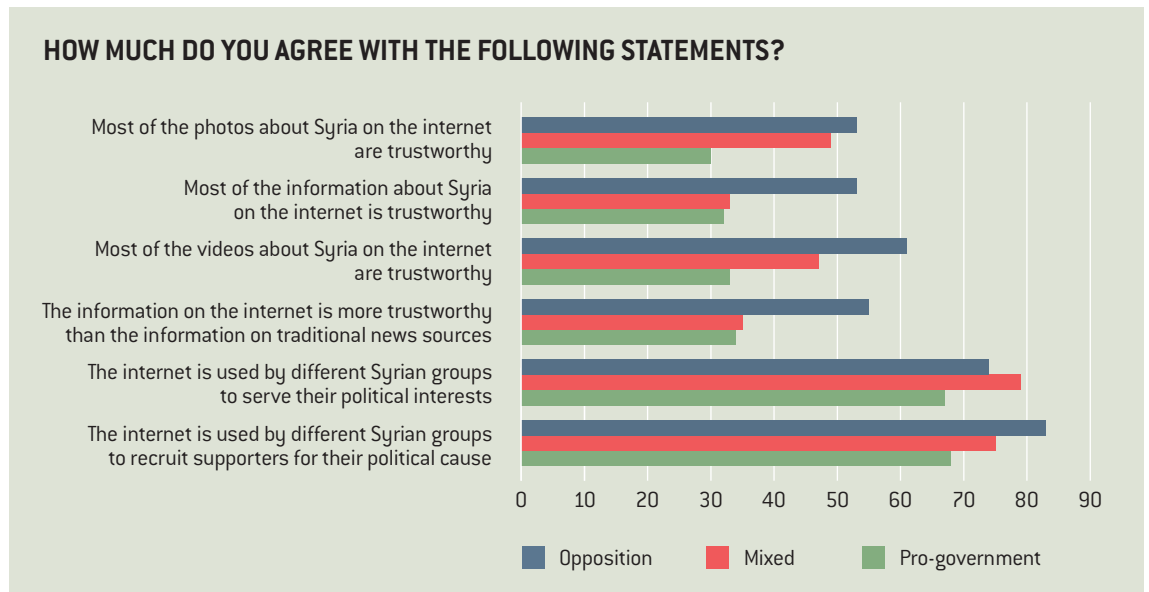
While it may be better engaged, the opposition audience shows no signs of being better connected. First, no significant differences can be noted regarding possession of Facebook accounts, Facebook groups/pages, or use of other social media. Moreover, the opposition audience is the least connected in terms of owning smartphones with internet access (58%, vs. 71% for the mixed-media consumers and 76% for the pro-government audience). The opposition media audience only enjoys better connection in terms of Twitter accounts and YouTube accounts (Table 81).

Which of the following devices or accounts do you possess?	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
A smartphone with internet access	760	76%	387	71%	29	58%
A Twitter account	279	28%	161	30%	25	50%
A YouTube account	197	20%	125	23%	16	32%

**Table 81:** Possession of digital tools, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Pro-government”)

## Trust in online information

The opposition media users once again detach themselves from the other two categories by displaying a higher confidence in the information presented on the internet, whether it is in absolute terms, or compared to traditional media, or in terms of photos or videos (Table/Chart 82).



**Table/Chart 82:** Internet trustworthiness, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Pro-government”)

## Information Needs

The mixed-media public generally perceives itself to be the least satisfied in terms of information needs, while the pro-government audience seems to be the best served. However, and in line with earlier findings in this report, a look at specific satisfaction of information needs only partially confirms the picture painted here.

Pro-government audiences and opposition audiences assert a roughly similar confidence that their information needs are being met in the following categories: “finding missing family members and reuniting families”, “obtaining humanitarian assistance and aid”, “the security situation”, “promoting mutual understanding between Syrian communities concerned in the crisis”, “peace and reconciliation” Pro-government opinion of the extent to which the need for information about evacuation and migration is satisfied falls behind the opinion of the opposition audience (34% for the former and 44% for the latter). Conversely, pro-government consumers feel more fulfilled than their counterparts when accessing information on “safe and secure/open roads and areas”, “access to healthcare information”, “finding job opportunities”, “new laws and legislations” and “accessing shelter and safe areas”.

The results for “military developments inside Syria”, “political developments inside Syria” and “international diplomatic developments regarding Syria” are not significant (Table 83).

Which of the following information needs do the media you mainly follow provide?	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
New laws and legislations	548	55%	168	32%	19	40%
Peace and reconciliation	548	55%	255	48%	28	57%
The security situation	536	54%	233	43%	26	53%
Promoting mutual understanding between Syrian communities concerned in the crisis	497	50%	221	42%	25	51%
Safe and secure/open roads and areas	479	48%	193	36%	18	37%
Evacuation and migration	340	34%	173	33%	21	44%
Accessing shelter and safe areas	328	33%	138	26%	12	24%
Access to healthcare information	317	32%	120	23%	11	22%
Obtaining humanitarian assistance and aid	297	30%	112	21%	15	31%
Finding missing family members and reuniting families	211	21%	69	13%	11	23%
Finding job opportunities	210	21%	82	15%	9	19%

**Table 83:** Satisfaction of information needs, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Pro-government”)

### Perceived need for independent news sources

A majority from each of the three categories agrees to a need for independent news sources. Within this spectrum, differences can be observed in the rates of agreement. At the bottom, the opposition audience records a 69% agreement, followed by the pro-government audience (76%). Both are beaten by mixed-media consumers (87%).

Differences between the top five perceived unfulfilled/missing information needs are not significant (Table 84). The number and orientation of news sources watched are also not significant.

What information that you need is not offered by the media?	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Job opportunities	37	4%	11	2%	1	2%
Economic news	20	2%	5	1%	0	0%
Arts	9	1%	2	0.4%	0	0%
Cultural	15	1%	3	1%	0	0%
Services	3	0.3%	31	6%	0	0%

**Table 84:** Information needs, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Pro-government”)

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

This report has examined the Syrian media landscape in a detail not previously available. The data revealed, and the analysis of that data, can help provide a solid foundation for targeted and informed interaction with Syrian media organizations and audiences. It can also provide a welcome platform upon which the framework of new studies may be built. For example, the researchers behind this study are currently conducting qualitative research into Syrian Audience behavior and media literacy. Their report will be published later this year.

As a 'first-step' study, conducted with the intention of empowering multiple end users with various requirements for the data, this report offers no prescriptions for action. Rather, it is intended to deliver facts that have not been accessible for the past five years. It is hoped this report will help its readers focus their efforts in more effective, profitable, and successful ways: reaching their audiences, and providing urgently-needed information to one of the most fragmented and troubled countries in the world.

# APPENDIX A

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **Q1: Questionnaire ID**

2. **Q2: Researcher initials**

3. **Q3: Date of interview**

4. **Q4: The person you interviewed was in:**

- inside a refugee camp
- outside a refugee camp

5. **Q5: In which country did you interview this person?**

- Lebanon
- Turkey
- Syria
- Other (please specify)

6. **Q6: The place you conducted the interview in:**

7. **Q7: Sample choosing protocol**

- Oldest female less than 65
- Oldest male less than 65
- Youngest female more than 18
- Youngest male more than 18

8. **Q8: Comments:**

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9. **Q9: Do you have access to local Syrian TV?**

- (1) No (Move to question 13)
- (2) Yes

10. **Q10: Which Local Syrian TV news channels do you regularly follow the most?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you follow the most. If you don't follow any, please leave empty.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

11. **Q11: How often do you watch \_\_\_\_\_ [channel mentioned first] for news?**

- Less than once a week
- One to three times a week
- Four to six times a week
- Everyday

12. **Q12: Do you know who owns or funds that TV station?**

- No
- Yes, mention it please
- Please specify

13. **Q13: Do you have access to satellite TV?**

- No [Move to question 17]
- Yes

14. **Q14: Which satellite TV news channels do you regularly follow the most?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you follow the most. If you don't follow any, please leave empty.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

15. **Q15: How often do you watch \_\_\_\_\_ [channel mentioned first] for news?**

- Less than once a week
- One to three times a week
- Four to six times a week
- Everyday

**16. Q16: Do you know who owns or funds that Satellite TV station?**

- No
- Yes, please specify
- Please specify

**17. Q17: Do you have access to radio?**

- No (Move to question 21)
- Yes

**18. Q18: Which radio news stations do you regularly follow the most?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you follow the most. If you don't follow any, please leave empty.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_

**19. Q19: How often do you follow \_\_\_\_\_ [channel mentioned first] for news?**

- Less than once a week
- One to three times a week
- Four to six times a week
- Everyday

**20. Q20: Do you know who owns or funds that radio station?**

- No
- Yes, please specify
- Please specify

**21. Q21: Do you have access to newspapers?**

- No (Move to question 25)
- Yes



22. **Q22: Which newspapers do you regularly follow the most?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you follow the most. If you don't follow any, please leave empty.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

23. **Q23: How often do you read \_\_\_\_\_ [newspaper mentioned first] for news?**

- Less than once a week
- One to three times a week
- Four to six times a week
- Everyday

24. **Q24: Do you know who owns or funds that newspaper?**

- No
- Yes, please specify
- Please specify

25. **Q25: Do you have access to internet websites?**

- No [Move to question 29]
- Yes

26. **Q26: Which news websites do you regularly follow the most?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you follow the most. If you don't follow any, please leave empty.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

27. **Q27: How often do you visit \_\_\_\_\_ [news website mentioned first] for news?**

- Less than once a week
- One to three times a week
- Four to six times a week
- Everyday

**28. Q28: Do you know who owns or funds that news website?**

- No
- Yes, please specify
- Please specify

**29. Q29: Do you have access to social media?**

- No (Move to question 33)
- Yes

**30. Q30: Which social media do you regularly follow the most?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you follow the most. If you don't follow any, please leave empty.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_

**31. Q31: How often do you visit \_\_\_\_\_ [social media website mentioned first] for news?**

- Less than once a week
- One to three times a week
- Four to six times a week
- Everyday

**32. Q32: Do you know who owns or funds that social media news website?**

- No
- Yes, please specify
- Please specify

**33. Q33: Do you have access to internet over a mobile phone?**

- No (Move to question 37)
- Yes

34. **Q34: Which mobile news sources do you regularly follow the most?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you follow the most. If you don't follow any, please leave empty.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

35. **Q35: How often do you access \_\_\_\_\_ [internet on mobile phone mentioned first] for news?**

- Less than once a week
- One to three times a week
- Four to six times a week
- Everyday

36. **Q36: Do you know who owns or funds that mobile news source?**

- No
- Yes, please specify
- Please specify

37. **Q37: Which local (Syrian) TV news channels do you think are the most followed by Syrians in your neighborhood/community today?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you think is the most followed.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

38. **Q38: Which satellite TV news channels do you think are the most followed by Syrians in your neighborhood/community today?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you think is the most followed.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

**39. Q39: Which radio news stations do you think are the most followed by Syrians in your neighborhood/community today?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you think is the most followed.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

**40. Q40: Which newspapers do you think are the most followed by Syrians in your neighborhood/community today?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you think is the most followed.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

**41. Q41: Which website news on Internet do you think are the most followed by Syrians in your neighborhood/community today?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you think is the most followed.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

**42. Q42: Which social media news websites do you think are the most followed by Syrians in your neighborhood/community today?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you think is the most followed.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

**43. Q43: Which news sources on mobile phones do you think are the most followed by Syrians in your neighborhood/community today?** Please list up to 4 of them, starting with the one you think is the most followed.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

**44. Q44: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements**

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The news sources that I mainly follow have their own political agendas regarding the Syria crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The news sources that I mainly follow are only interested in the truth about the Syrian crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The news sources I mainly follow offer a holistic portrayal of the Syrian crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The news sources I mainly follow offer a partial portrayal of the Syrian crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There are big differences in the portrayal of the Syrian crisis by the different news sources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**45. Q45: The news sources that you mainly follow about the Syrian crisis:**

- Offer only lies
- Offer mainly lies but some truths
- Offer mainly truths but some lies
- Offer only truths

**46. Q46: When it comes to the Syrian crisis, different news sources offer**

- Very different information
- Somewhat different information
- Somewhat similar information
- Very similar information

**47. Q47: Overall, is the news about the Syrian crisis reliable or unreliable?**

- It is totally unreliable
- It is mainly unreliable
- It is somewhat reliable
- It is totally reliable

**48. Q48: Based on the news sources you mainly follow, do you believe:**

- None of the news sources offer reliable information
- Few of the news sources offer reliable information
- Most of the news sources offer reliable information
- All the news sources offer reliable information

**49. Q49: How many news sources do you follow to obtain information about the Syrian crisis?**

- None
- One news source
- Two to three news sources
- More than three sources

**50. Q50: How often do you compare the coverage of the different news sources regarding the Syrian crisis?**

- Never
- Rarely
- Often
- Always

**51. Q51: When it comes to news sources that you use the MOST, do you believe that these news sources:**

- NEVER offer objective information
- RARELY offer objective information
- OFTEN offer objective information
- ALWAYS offer objective information

52. Q52: When it comes to news sources that you use the LEAST, do you believe that these news sources:

- NEVER offer objective information
- RARELY offer objective information
- OFTEN offer objective information
- ALWAYS offer objective information

53. Q53: Regarding news sources that you use the MOST, how often does their information contain:

	Never	Rarely	Often	Always
Inflammatory content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sectarian incitement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hate speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patriotic speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calls for unity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calls for war	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calls for fighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calls for peace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calls for defecting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

54. Q54: Regarding news sources that you use the LEAST, how often does their information contain:

	Never	Rarely	Often	Always
Inflammatory content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sectarian incitement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hate speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patriotic speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calls for unity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calls for war	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calls for fighting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calls for peace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calls for defecting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**55. Q55: Which of the following tasks do you feel capable of doing whether on a computer, mobile phone or using a camera or an audio recorder? (you can choose more than one option)**

- Taking a photo with a camera or a mobile phone
- Editing a photo on a computer or mobile phone
- Recording a video on a camera or mobile phone
- Editing a video on a computer or mobile phone
- Writing a news opinion article on a computer
- Editing and updating a website
- Posting text to a blog or social media platform
- Posting images to a blog or social media platform
- Posting video to a blog or social media platform

**56. Q56: How often do you engage in the following activities as a response to news related to the Syrian crisis?**

	Never	Rarely	Often	Always
Participate in online discussion forums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment on news articles online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post an article or comment on a blog	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post an article or comment on social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post photos on social media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post videos on social media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**57. Q57: Which of the following do you have? (you can choose more than one option)**

- A smart phone with no internet
- A smart phone with internet access
- A Facebook account
- A Facebook group or page
- A Twitter account
- A YouTube account
- Other social media account or group



**58. Q58: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

	Strongly disagree	disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Most of the information I read about Syria on the internet is trustworthy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The information I read on the internet is more trustworthy than information on TV, radio and newspaper (more traditional news sources)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most of the photos I see about Syria on the internet are trustworthy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most of the videos I see about Syria on the internet are trustworthy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The internet is used by different Syrian groups to serve their political interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The internet is used by different Syrian groups to recruit supporters for their political cause	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**59. Q59: If you use any internet tools/applications or websites to verify information, including news, photos and videos about the Syrian crisis, please list up to four (leave empty otherwise).**

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_

**60. Q60: The news sources in media you follow about the Syria crisis provides:**

- None of my information needs
- Very little of my information needs
- Some of my information needs
- All of my information needs

**61. Q61: Which of the following information needs do the media you mainly follow provide?**

Information about:

	No information is offered	A little bit of information is offered	Enough information is offered	A lot of information is offered
Finding missing family members and reuniting families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtaining humanitarian assistance and aid, such as food, hygiene items and medicines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The security situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safe and secure/open roads and areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evacuation and migration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Military developments inside Syria	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Political developments inside Syria	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
International diplomatic developments regarding Syria	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access to health care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finding job opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
New laws and legislations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessing shelter and safe areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promoting mutual understanding between Syrian communities concerned in the crisis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peace and reconciliation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**62. Q62: What other information needs (not mentioned above) are offered by the media sources you follow? Name up to two.**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

**63. Q63: What other information needs (not mentioned above) are NOT offered by the media sources you follow? Name up to two**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

**64. Q64: When watching TV news about the crisis in Syria, do you**

- Watch only one news station that you agree with
- Watch multiple news stations, but only those you agree with
- Watch multiple news stations, both those you agree and disagree with
- Watch multiple news stations, but only those you disagree with

**65. Q65: Do you believe there is a need for more independent news sources?**

- No
- Yes

**66. Q66: Gender**

- Male
- Female

**67. Q67: Age**

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**68. Q68: Education Level**

- Less than elementary school
- Completed elementary school
- Completed middle school
- Completed high school or vocational training
- Completed a university bachelor's degree
- Completed a graduate degree (MA/Ph.D/MDE)

**69. Q69: Approximate monthly income**

- Less than 10,000 Syrian Liras per month
- 10,000 - 25,000 Syrian Liras per month
- 25,001 - 50,000 Syrian Liras per month
- 50,001 - 100,00 Syrian Liras per month
- 100,001 - 200,00 Syrian Liras per month
- 200,001 - 400,000 Syrian Liras per month
- 400,001 - 800,000 Syrian Liras per month
- More than 800,000 Syrian Liras per month

**70. Q70: In which Syrian province did you live before the Syrian crisis started?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Hasakeh            | <input type="checkbox"/> Hama                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diraa                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Tartus                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Latakia               | <input type="checkbox"/> Aleppo                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Riqqa              | <input type="checkbox"/> Homs                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deir Ez-Zor           | <input type="checkbox"/> Damascus or Rif Dimashq |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quneitra              | <input type="checkbox"/> Idlib                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Al-Suwaydaa           |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify |  |
- 
- 

**71. Q71: Did you have to move and live in another place because of the crisis?**

- No, not at all. I'm still living in the same place
- Yes, I had to move temporarily but I am now back to the place where I used to live
- Yes, I had to leave my home and I am now living in a different place

**72. Q72: Do you currently consider yourself a refugee?**

- No
- Yes

**73. Q73: Have you ever heard of Syrnet?**

- No (end of survey)
- Yes

**74. Q74: How do you normally access Syrnet? [Note: do not ready answers] (choose all that applies)**

- Through radio
  - Through the internet
  - Through a mobile app
  - Other, please specify
  - Please specify
- 
- 

**75. Q75: How often do you follow Syrnet?**

- Less than once a week
- One to three times a week
- Four to six times a week
- Every day

# APPENDIX B

## TABLES

Most followed 10 Syrian TV channels	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Sama	385	38%	70	13%	1	2%
Al Ikhbariya al Souriya	210	21%	59	11%	2	4%
Al Fadaiya al Souriya	99	10%	19	4%	0	0%
Al Dunia	82	8%	27	5%	2	4%
Talaqi	32	3%	5	1%	0	0%
Al Khabar	31	3%	10	2%	0	0%
Syria Drama	19	2%	6	1%	0	0%
Free Syrian Army (FSA)	3	0.3%	42	8%	8	16%
Halab al Yawm	3	0.3%	176	32%	13	26%
Orient	1	0%	46	8%	7	14%

**Table 67:** Top 10 Syrian TV channels watched by others, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Pro-government”)

Most followed 10 Arab/ International TV channels	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Sham FM	199	20%	36	7%	0	0%
Al Mayadeen	171	17%	35	6%	0	0%
Al Jazeera	114	11%	232	43%	21	42%
Al Manar	77	8%	13	2%	0	0%
Al Jadeed	64	6%	19	4%	0	0%
Russia Today	60	6%	9	2%	0	0%
Al Arabiya	54	5%	70	13%	10	20%
BBC	29	3%	7	1%	0	0%
Top News	27	3%	4	1%	0	0%
Al Arabiya al Hadath	13	1%	25	5%	5	10%

**Table 68:** Top 10 Arab/International TV channels watched by others, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Pro-government”)

Most followed 10 radio stations	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Sham FM	454	45%	111	20%	8	16%
Al Madina	47	5%	7	1%	0	0%
Al Quds	44	4%	4	1%	0	0%
Dimashq	31	3%	7	1%	0	0%
Sawt al Shabab	30	3%	15	3%	0	0%
Ninar	21	2%	1	0.2%	0	0%
Souria al Ghad	20	2%	5	1%	0	0%
Hara	1	0.1%	29	5%	0	0%
Radio Fresh	0	0%	60	11%	14	28%
Hawa Smart	0	0%	17	3%	3	6%

**Table 69:** Top 10 radio stations followed by others, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Pro-government”)

Most followed 10 newspapers	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Al Watan	196	20%	31	6%	1	2%
Tishreen	170	17%	33	6%	0	0%
Al Thawra	121	12%	25	5%	1	2%
Al Baath	104	10%	21	4%	1	2%
Al Fida'	50	5%	5	1%	0	0%
Assafir	16	2%	3	1%	0	0%
Hibr	2	0.2%	44	8%	1	2%
Gherbal	0	0%	15	3%	8	16%
Honta	0	0%	19	4%	6	12%
Maan	0	0%	45	8%	5	10%

**Table 70:** Top 10 newspapers followed by others, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by "Pro-government")

Most followed 10 websites	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Sana	74	7%	27	5%	1	2%
Aajel	38	4%	3	1%	0	0%
Russia Today	36	4%	2	0.4%	0	0%
Facebook	28	3%	14	3%	2	4%
Syria News	26	3%	8	1%	0	0%
Sham FM	24	2%	5	1%	0	0%
Dam Press	17	2%	4	1%	0	0%
Al Jazeera Net	2	0.2%	38	7%	12	24%
Halab al Yawm	0	0%	53	10%	4	8%
Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	86	9%	13	2%	0	0%

**Table 71:** Top 10 websites followed by others, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by "Pro-government")

Most followed 10 social media sites	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Facebook	528	53%	341	63%	30	60%
Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	94	9%	6	1%	0	0%
Twitter	62	6%	20	4%	3	6%
YouTube	28	3%	13	2%	2	4%
WhatsApp	12	1%	66	12%	8	16%
Instagram	11	1%	3	1%	0	0%
Damascus Now	9	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Russia Today	3	0.3%	0	0%	0	0%
Top News	2	0.2%	1	0.2%	0	0%
Skype	0	0%	7	1%	2	4%

**Table 72:** Top 10 social media sites followed by others, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by "Pro-government")

Most followed 10 internet on mobile phone sites	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
	Yomyat Kzefeh Hawen	91	9%	10	2%	0
Facebook	73	7%	100	18%	7	14%
Sana	72	7%	14	3%	0	0%
Top News	53	5%	20	4%	1	2%
Aajel	32	3%	8	1%	0	0%
NBN	20	2%	13	2%	2	4%
Al Iqtisadi	15	1%	2	0.4%	0	0%
Al Hadath News	14	1%	1	0.2%	0	0%
Dam Press	13	1%	2	0.4%	0	0%
WhatsApp	6	1%	9	2%	2	4%

**Table 73:** Top 10 internet on mobile phone sites followed by others, by media orientation  $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Pro-government”)

How much do you agree with the following statements: News sources I follow the most...	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
	Offer truths	848	85%	447	83%	37
Offer objective information	752	76%	405	75%	35	73%
Have their own political agendas regarding the Syrian crisis	726	73%	353	65%	25	51%
Offer a holistic portrayal of the Syrian crisis	605	61%	254	47%	29	60%
Are only interested in the truth about the Syrian crisis	564	57%	205	38%	22	46%
Offer reliable information	504	51%	227	42%	26	53%
Offer a partial portrayal of the Syrian crisis	480	48%	310	58%	24	50%

**Table 74:** Assessment of media followed, by media orientation  $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Pro-government”)

How many news sources do you follow?	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
	None	46	5%	5	1%	0
One news source	135	14%	68	13%	6	12%
Two to three news sources	427	43%	252	47%	18	37%
More than three sources	388	39%	213	40%	25	51%

**Table 75:** Number of news sources followed, by media orientation



How often do you compare the coverage of the different media regarding the Syrian crisis?	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
	Never	106	11%	26	5%	2
Rarely	261	26%	150	29%	17	35%
Often	425	43%	264	50%	24	50%
Always	195	20%	85	16%	5	10%

**Table 76:** Frequency of coverage comparison, by media orientation

How often do the media you follow the most broadcast...?	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
	Calls for peace	751	75%	333	62%	31
Patriotic speech	721	73%	285	53%	19	40%
Inflammatory content	192	19%	102	19%	12	25%
Sectarian incitement	166	17%	111	21%	3	6%
Calls for war	150	15%	136	25%	12	26%
Calls for fighting	128	13%	109	20%	8	16%
Calls for defecting	125	13%	77	14%	7	15%

**Table 77:** Assessment of media followed the most, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by "Pro-government")

How much do the media you follow the least broadcast...?	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
	Sectarian incitement	667	67%	248	46%	27
Inflammatory content	651	66%	239	45%	24	49%
Calls for fighting	606	62%	205	39%	16	34%
Hate speech	605	61%	217	41%	21	45%
Calls for war	585	59%	226	43%	17	35%
Calls for defecting	576	58%	198	37%	13	28%
Patriotic speech	275	28%	187	35%	21	44%
Calls for peace	267	27%	174	33%	21	44%
Calls for unity	232	24%	178	33%	19	40%

**Table 78:** Assessment of media followed the least, by media orientation  
 $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by "Pro-government")

Which of the following tasks do you feel comfortable doing?	Pro-government		Mixed		Opposition	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Recording a video on a camera or a mobile phone	519	52%	318	59%	22	44%
Taking a photo with a camera or a mobile phone	791	50%	404	75%	29	58%
Posting text to a blog or social media platform	438	44%	203	38%	16	32%
Posting images to a blog or social media platform	367	37%	238	44%	25	50%
Posting video to a blog or social media platform*	296	30%	189	35%	18	36%
Editing a photo on a computer or mobile phone	244	24%	215	40%	15	30%
Editing a video on a computer or mobile phone	132	13%	101	19%	4	8%
Editing and updating a website	77	8%	46	9%	7	14%
Writing a news opinion article on a computer*	244	2%	105	19%	10	20%

**Table 79:** Digital skills, by media orientation

\*significant at the 10% level.  $p \leq 0.05$  (Ranked from highest to lowest by “Pro-government”)

## Colophon

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the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are poor has increased from 1.2 billion to 1.6 billion. The number of people who are extremely poor has increased from 600 million to 800 million.

The World Bank has estimated that the number of people who are poor in the world will increase to 2.1 billion by the year 2020.

The World Bank has also estimated that the number of people who are extremely poor will increase to 1.1 billion by the year 2020.

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