

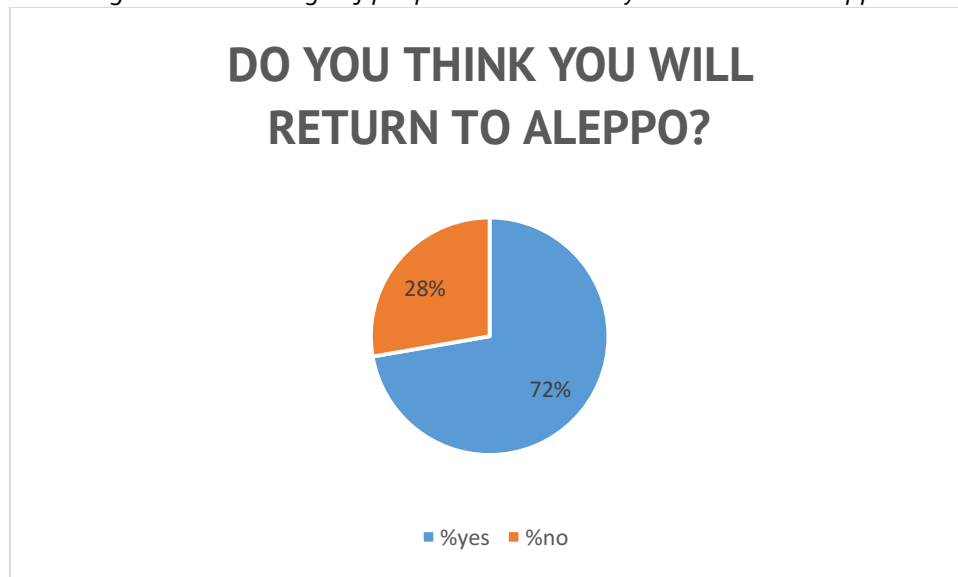


DATA SNAPSHOT: DO YOU THINK YOU WILL RETURN TO ALEPPO?



A post-conflict Aleppo will look markedly different than it did in mid-2012. Wars don't only destroy and damage buildings and infrastructure; they tear apart the underlying social fabric. An uncomfortable but important question for Aleppians remains not only how will they reconstruct their city, but who will live there when it is rebuilt.

Figure 1: Percentage of people who think they will return to Aleppo



Number of observations: 894

In late 2014 and early 2015, we [asked](#) 1001 Aleppians, “Do you think you will return to Aleppo?” For those who had left Aleppo, 72 per cent said “Yes” and 28 per cent said “No.”

[The Aleppo Project](#) is an open collaboration among people thinking about the future of a city torn apart by war. In the midst of conflict, as barrel bombs fall on Aleppo, it may seem premature to talk about reconstruction but the earlier thinking about the process starts, the more successful it is likely to be. Our aim is to gather as much as we can about the past of the city, document the horrors that have befallen it and think about what sort of future might lie ahead.

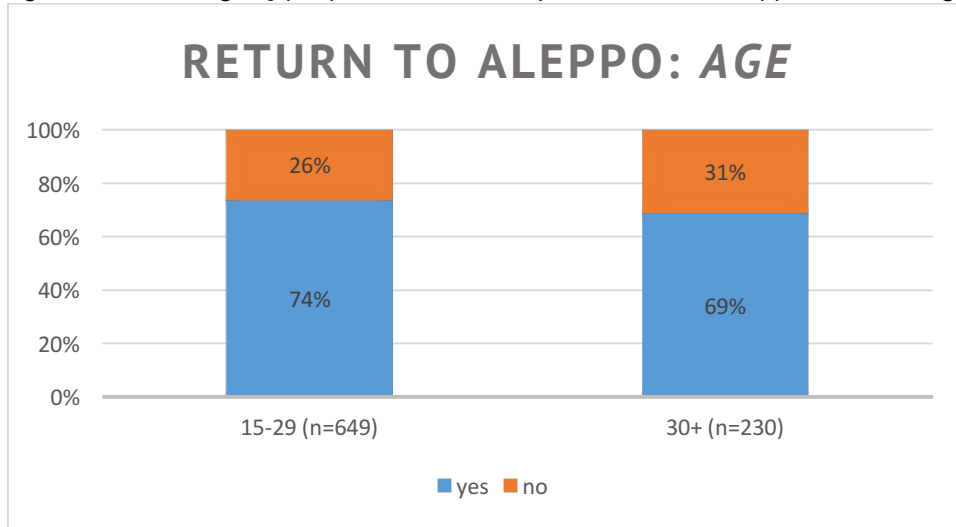


DATA SNAPSHOT: DO YOU THINK YOU WILL RETURN TO ALEPPO?

This held true within a few per cent whether or not someone was male or female, had children, owned real estate, or his/her house had been damaged or destroyed.

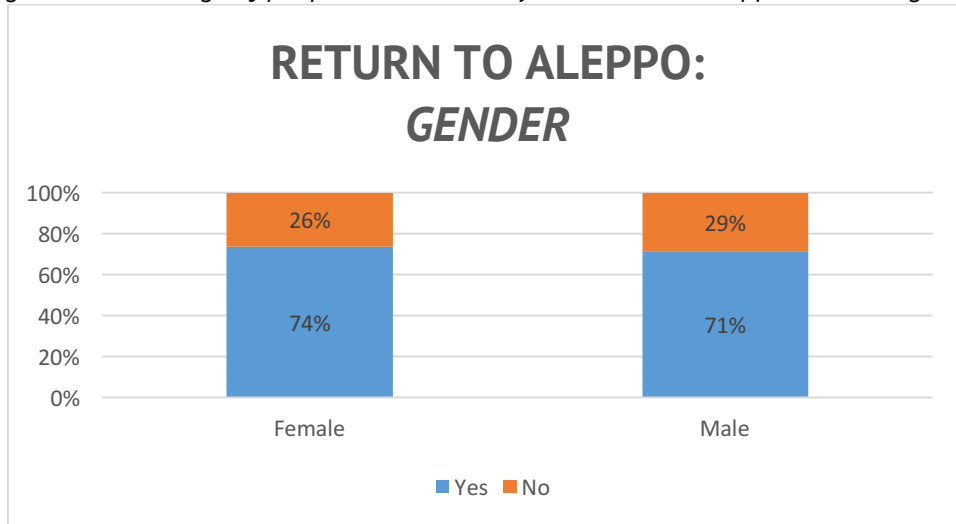
It did not hold true for level of education. If someone had at least some post-secondary education, he or she appeared 14 per cent less likely to return to Aleppo than someone without any post-secondary education.

Figure 2: Percentage of people who think they will return to Aleppo based on age



Total number of observations: 879

Figure 3: Percentage of people who think they will return to Aleppo based on gender



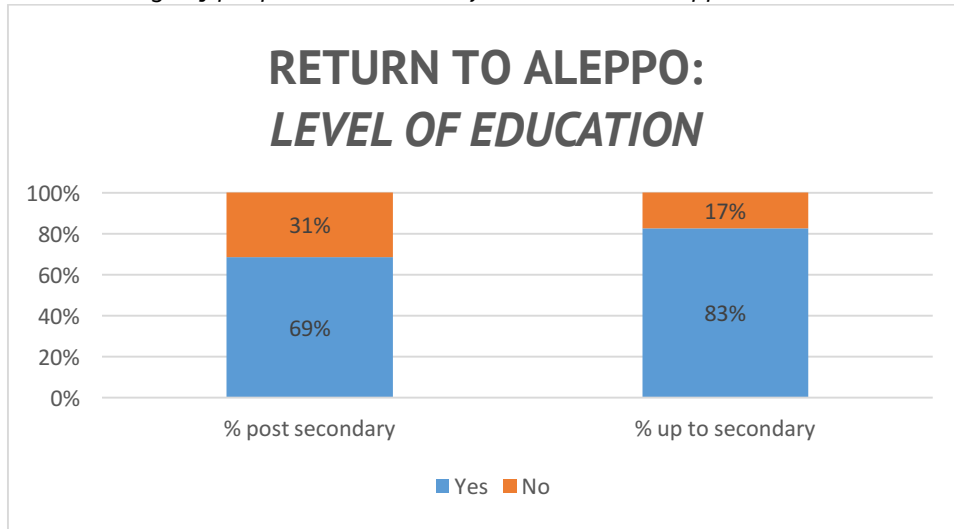
Total number of observations: 889



DATA SNAPSHOT: DO YOU THINK YOU WILL RETURN TO ALEPPO?

Age and gender did not appear to affect planned return rates by more than 5 per cent (Figures 2 and 3).

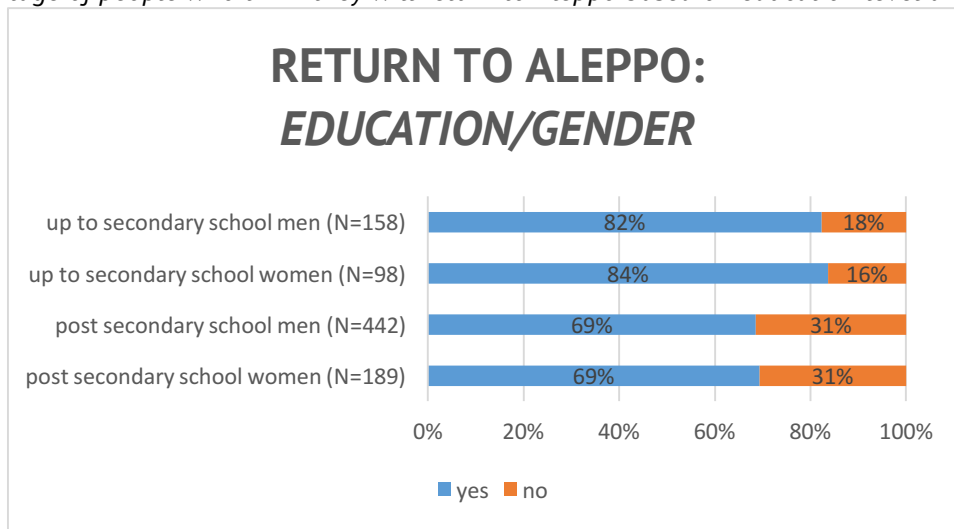
Figure 4: Percentage of people who think they will return to Aleppo based on education level



Total number of observations: 891

Education levels, however, were more associated with planned return rates (Figure 4). Aleppians with at least some post-secondary education consistently thought they would return at lower rates than those without. Those without any post secondary education seemed 14 per cent more likely to return than those with.

Figure 5: Percentage of people who think they will return to Aleppo based on education level and gender



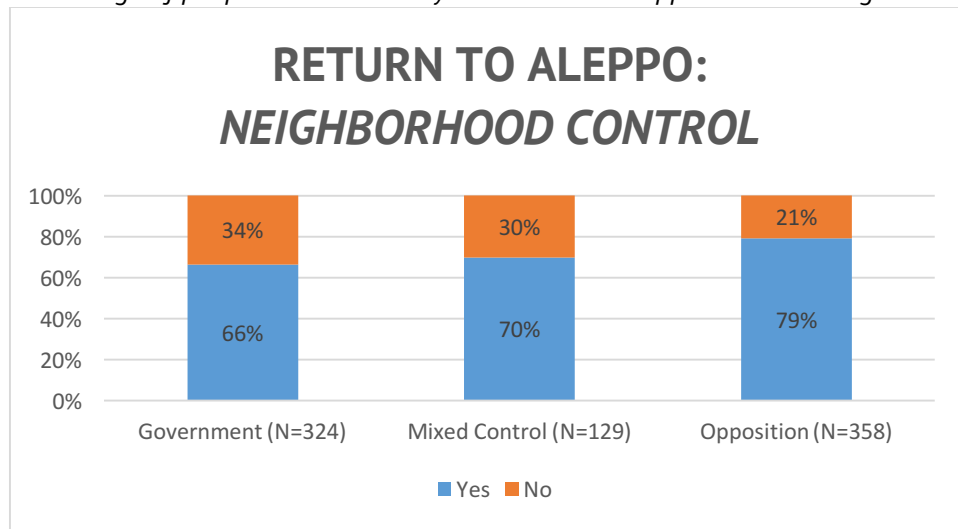
Total number of observations: 887



DATA SNAPSHOT: DO YOU THINK YOU WILL RETURN TO ALEPPO?

Gender differences were particularly significant. Although 86 per cent of women without a post-secondary education thought they would return, only 69 per cent of men with at least some post-secondary education thought they would (Figure 5).

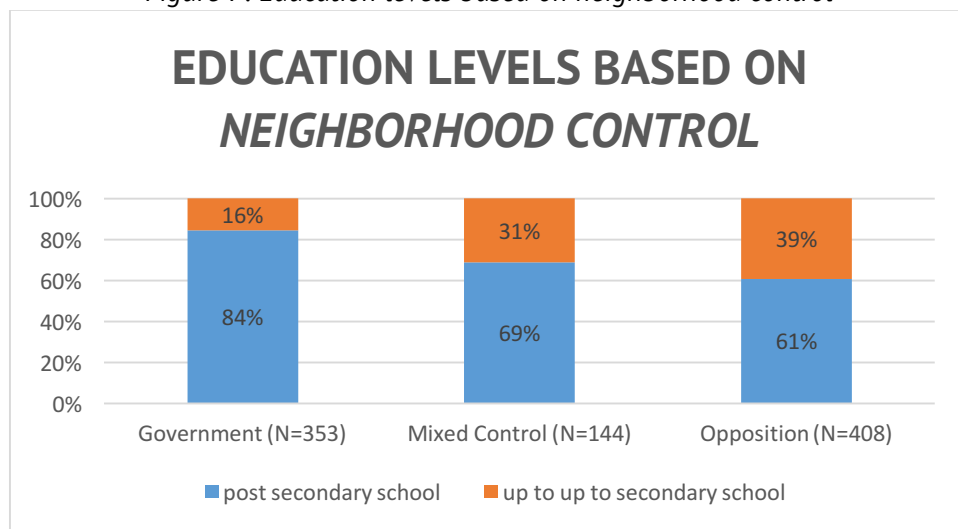
Figure 6: Percentage of people who think they will return to Aleppo based on neighborhood control



Total number of observations: 811

A significantly higher percentage of individuals from opposition controlled than government controlled neighborhoods thought they would return (Figure 6).ⁱ

Figure 7: Education levels based on neighborhood control

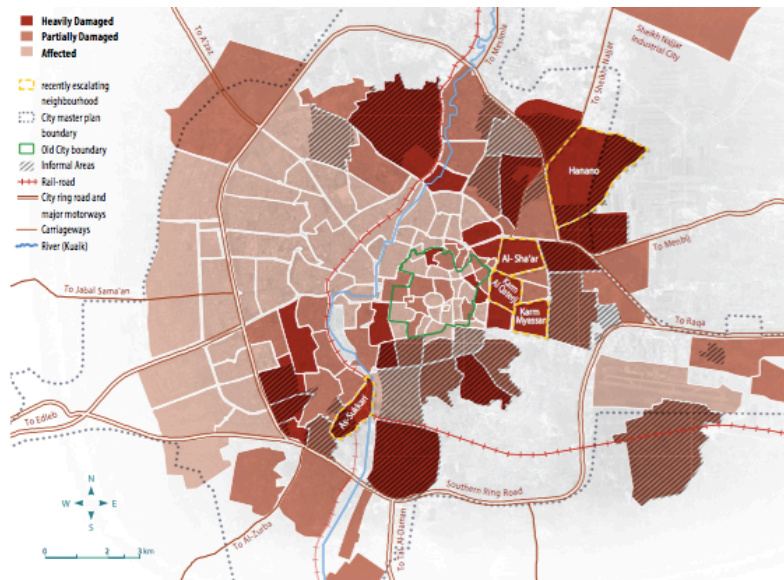


Total number of observations: 905



DATA SNAPSHOT: DO YOU THINK YOU WILL RETURN TO ALEPPO?

Among other factors, it is highly likely that education levels in the respective neighborhoods (Figure 7) contributed to the different planned return rates.



Aleppo Damage Assessmentⁱⁱ

Other factors may include that Aleppians from rebel-controlled neighborhoods are more likely to return because, as shown by U.N. and humanitarian reports, they fled in much larger numbers in the first place. Relatively safer than rebel-controlled areas, government-controlled Aleppo has not been subjected to regular barrel bombing, is significantly less damaged, and has higher levels of public services. As shown in figure seven, another factor may be related to lower education levels in rebel-controlled areas, which implies less valuable economic opportunities in abroad.

This may prove to be a particularly difficult reconstruction challenge, especially for opposition neighborhoods. Although not formally divided before the war, pronounced social and visual differences distinguished eastern and western parts of the city. Most social and economic indicators in what has become opposition-controlled eastern Aleppo were significantly worse and population densities were much higher than in what has become government-controlled or western Aleppo. This is especially true in informal settlements with high numbers of recent migrants from rural areas. Culturally, the two areas were also quite different with a more diverse, affluent, cosmopolitan western part of the city and a more conservative, less affluent, predominately Sunni eastern side. Not only have significantly more people been killed and displaced in opposition areas, but more buildings and infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and bakeries have been destroyed.



DATA SNAPSHOT: DO YOU THINK YOU WILL RETURN TO ALEPPO?

There were a few general narratives about *why* people would or would not return. On the one side, there was a longing to return to ‘my’ city, house, or neighborhood and a sense that it was “better than [the] alienation” of not belonging in another place.

As a 29-year-old university-educated female from a government controlled neighborhood said, “I hope I will return back as soon as possible. Dignity would cause me to return, as a person who leaves his or her country is without dignity.”

A 26-year-old university-educated female from a Kurdish controlled district summed up nicely the desires of those who hope to return to Aleppo when the war ends or safety returns. To come home, she would need, “the return of security and basic services, and also the possibility of building a simple and stable life with family and relatives.”

On the other side, there was a sense that ‘my’ Aleppo no longer exists and nothing would compel certain individuals to return permanently. As a 23-year-old university-educated male from an opposition-controlled neighborhood said, “nothing special is left in Aleppo, friends died or left, and memories were lost among the ruins.”

Although we cannot know who will return first or at all, we do know from other post-conflict environments that those who perceive they have the fewest economic opportunities elsewhere often return first. This is especially likely to be true in Aleppo where many of the most vulnerable have been displaced multiple times within the city, rural Aleppo province, or in refugee camps or communities in Turkey. In fact, eight women and nine men interviewed in Turkey specifically said they would return to Aleppo because, “[they did] not find resources for living in Turkey.”

Aleppo’s pre-conflict history of migration will also be relevant going forward. Thousands of rural, predominantly Sunni migrants with limited education have moved into Aleppo, oftentimes to eastern informal settlements over the past few decades. Recent fighting in the countryside has destroyed rural infrastructure. Given the pull factor of jobs in a city being rebuilt and limited rural employment opportunities, it is likely that rural migration will continue and very possibly increase.

Aleppo also has a history of professional emigration, sending many of its young university-educated men to work in the Gulf States, Europe, North America and Latin America. Many of Aleppo’s most educated and skilled have resettled in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries or were already abroad when the conflict started. In 2011, 225, 500 individuals born in Syria lived in OECD countries, of which 34.5% were highly and 34.1% low educated. In the decade before the conflict, Syrian emigration increased to OECD destinations dramatically with an



DATA SNAPSHOT: DO YOU THINK YOU WILL RETURN TO ALEPPO?

increase of 68.4% highly as opposed to 55.4% low educated Syrian emigrants between 2001 and 2011.ⁱⁱⁱ

Before the conflict, a number of young men who worked in Gulf States would save up money and return after a few years to raise children and work in Aleppo. Now, anecdotally, it appears that a number of these men are traveling to OECD destinations when their contracts end because they do not wish to return to a Syria at war. More generally, the longer the conflict goes on, the more likely it is that those who have integrated economically and socially into new communities will stay put and build new lives outside Aleppo. Wide ranging reports of individuals selling private and business properties and assets to finance their flight from the fighting support this idea.

Reconstruction plans should carefully consider who will return to Aleppo when the fighting stops. If, as is likely, the most vulnerable return first, and those with higher levels of education and more financial resources return much later, or not at all, the Aleppo of tomorrow will look very different than the Aleppo of yesterday.

A note about the numbers—Out of 1001 responses, 894 were either yes or no. We excluded all other responses, including those from about 90 individuals we believe were in Aleppo when surveyed.

ⁱ A note about neighborhood categories. We divided districts/areas into five groups based on which group controlled the area as of September 2015. We did not include blank, ISIS and Kurdish-controlled district responses in these graphs because their numbers were insignificant. Government-controlled neighborhoods (343 responses) included aj-Jamiliyeh, al-A'azamiyeh, al-Akramiyeh, al-Andalus, al-'Aziziyeh, al-Buhoth al-'Ilmiyeh, al-Furqan, al-Hamdaniyeh, al-Isma'iliyeh, al-Iza'a, al-Jamiliyeh, al-Khaldiyyeh, al-Kura, al-Mal'ab al-Baladi, al-Martini, al-Meridian, al-Midan, al-Mogambo, al-Muhafaza, al-Suleimaniyeh, al-Villat, al-Waha (outside city limits), ash-Shahba', ash-Sheikh Taha, as-Sabeel, as-Sayyed Ali, as-Siryani, as-Suleimaniyeh, az-Zahra', Baghdad Station, Masaken, New Aleppo, New Siryani, Nile Street, Qurtoba, Tishreen Street and University. ISIS-controlled neighborhoods (3 responses) included three areas outside the city limits, al-Bab, Manbij, and Tedef. Kurdish-controlled neighborhoods (29 responses) included al-Ashrafiyeh and ash-Sheikh Maqsoud. Mixed-control neighborhoods (143 responses) included al-Jdaydeh, as-Saba'a Bahrat, Citadel, Handarat Camp, Maysaloon Cemetery, Salah ad-Deen and Sayf ad-Dauleh. Opposition-controlled neighborhoods (393 responses) included aj-Jalloum, al-A'ajam, al-Abraj, al-Ansari, al-Ansari Sharqi, al-'Aqabeh, al-Aseeleh, al-Bayyada, al-Belleramoon, al-Farafra, al-Fardos, al-Hellok, al-Kallaseh, al-Mashhad, al-Qaterji, Aqyol, ash-Sha'ar, ash-Sheikh Fares, ash-Sheikh Khudr, as-Salheen, as-Sukkari, Azaz (outside city limits), az-Zebdiyeh, Ba'aedeen, Bab al-Hadeed, Bab an-Nairab, Bab an-Nasr, Bsetneh, Bustan al-Basha, Bustan al-Qaser, Aleppo Countryside (outside city limits), Hanano, Hretan (outside city limits), Jub al-Qubbeh, Kafar Hamrah (outside city limits), Khan al-Asal Villas (outside city limits), Masaken Hanano, Near Ummayyad Mosque, Ourem al-Kubra (outside city limits), Qadi Askar, Qal'et ash-Sharif, Qarleq, Sahet Bizah, Suleiman al-Halabi, Tareeq al-Bab and Tell az-Zarazeer.

ⁱⁱ UNHabitat and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. May 2014. [City Profile Aleppo](http://unhabitat.org/city-profile-aleppo-multi-sector-assessment/). Last accessed 4 February 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ OECD. *Connecting with Emigrants: A Global Profile of Diasporas*. 2015. OECD Publishing, Paris. Last accessed 4 February 2016. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264177949-en>