

A non-governmental human rights organisation and UK registered charity. We aim to fill information gaps relating to refugees and displaced people in Europe by conducting our own independent field research.

www.refugeerights.org.uk
info@refugeerights.org.uk
[@refugeedata](https://twitter.com/refugeedata)
[facebook/refugeerightsdata](https://facebook.com/refugeerightsdata)



ABOUT THE RESEARCH

RRDP is an independent, non-governmental and non-partisan human rights organisation that monitors and documents the situation of refugees and displaced people in Europe. On 11-18 May 2017, our field research delegation carried out 300 interviews with displaced people in the island of Chios, Greece, to investigate the human rights situation and humanitarian standards experienced there. Key findings are found in this summary report; a full report will be released in late June 2017.

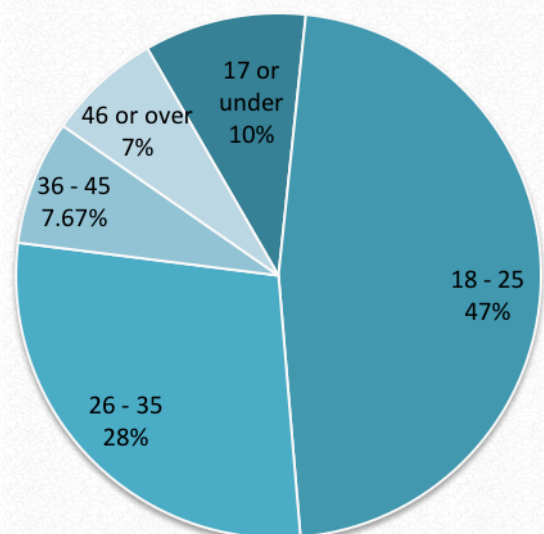
At the time of the study, UNHCR estimated that there were 3,782 refugees on the island¹. Meanwhile, local charities believed the number was smaller, between 2,000 and 3,000 people. The steady flow of new arrivals and departures makes it difficult to establish the exact number at any given moment. Nevertheless, based on these estimates, our research sample is likely to represent approximately 8-13% of the refugee population on the island at the time of the study.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. About the respondents

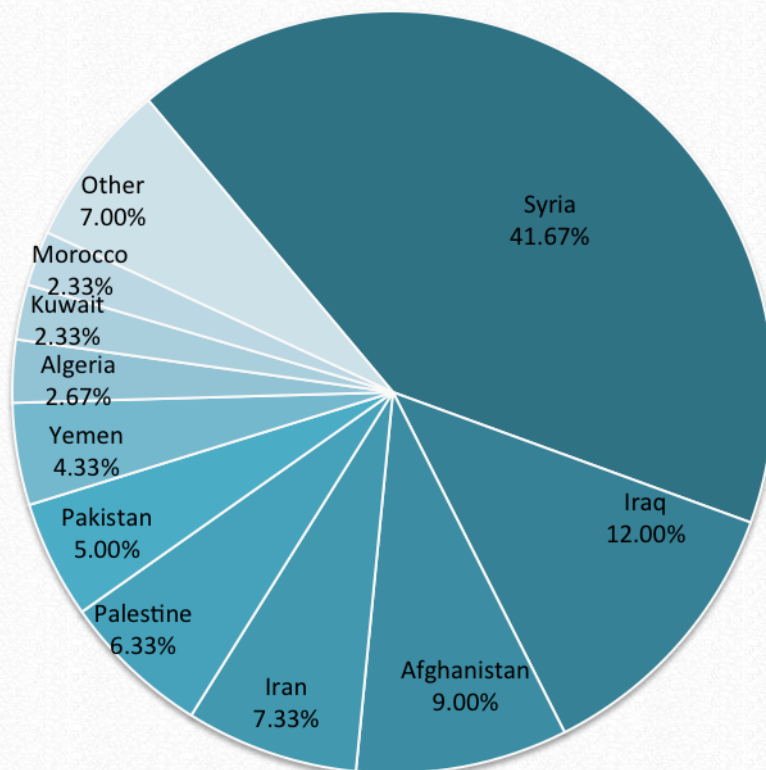
- 88.3% of respondents were male, and 11.7% were female.
- The average age of respondents was 27.2 years of age, with 10% of respondents being children of 17 or under. This included girl children.
- Graph 1 (on the right) outlines the age breakdown among respondents.

GRAPH 1: HOW OLD ARE YOU?



The biggest groups of refugees in Chios are currently thought to be Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghans, followed by an increasing number of from various African countries, Pakistan and Yemen. The respondents in our study came from the following countries:

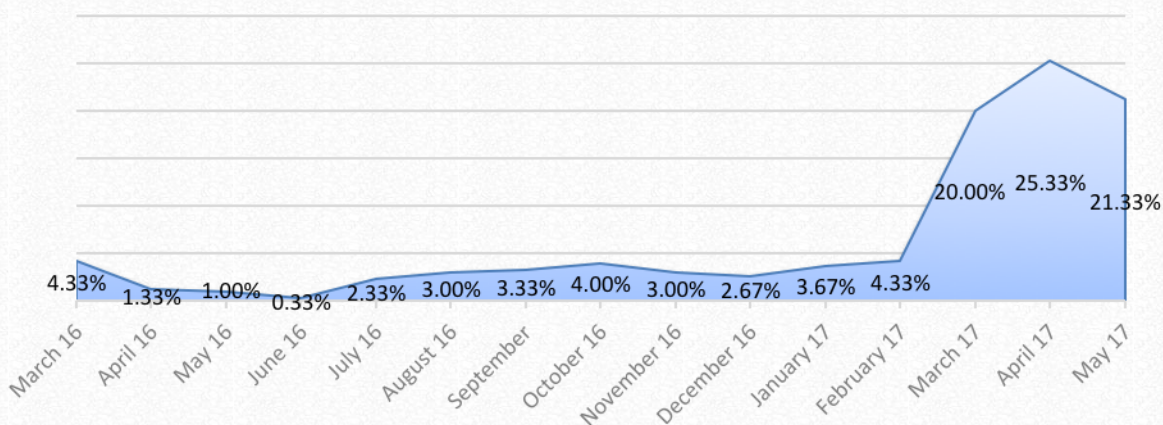
GRAPH 2: WHERE ARE YOU FROM?



The 'other' category included respondents from: Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

The average time respondents had spent in Chios was 3.2 months. Alarmingly, some 6.67% had been there for a year or longer (see graph 3). Only 33% of respondents were in Chios with one or more family members.

GRAPH 3: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN CHIOS?



2. Safety and Security

- 85.3% of respondents said they ‘never feel safe’ or ‘don’t feel safe’ in Chios. Only 2.7% said they ‘feel perfectly safe.’
- 18.4% had been arrested or detained since arriving in Chios.
- About a quarter (24%) had experienced police violence in Chios. 78.9% of these respondents described the violence as verbal abuse and 73.2% as physical violence (other than tear gas). 4.2% had been exposed to tear gas.
- In general the respondents described police treatment in Chios as ‘very bad’, even if they personally hadn’t had any problems with the police. Many reported that the police treated refugees “like animals”, using disproportionate violence and disrespectful language.
- A similar proportion (21.7%) had experienced violence by Greek citizens in Chios. 76.2% described this violence as verbal abuse, and 60.3% as physical violence.

Citizen violence in Chios

Chios is known for its small yet vocal far-right anti-immigrant group that organises demonstrations from time to time to express their dissatisfaction with the current refugee situation on the island. A few weeks prior to our research, one such demonstration had escalated into a physical attack on Souda refugee camp, with demonstrators throwing stones and Molotov cocktails into the camp without effective interference from the police. Many refugees described this incident to our researchers as extremely distressing and frightening - especially women and children who were forced to flee the camp, and thus were reminded of previous traumatic experiences in their war-torn countries of origin.

36.7% had experienced violence by other refugees in Chios (42.9% of women). This violence was often described as a result of mental exhaustion and tensions in overcrowded camps, combined with an absence of adequate security measures in and around camps.

77.1% described this violence as verbal abuse, and 68.8% described it as physical violence.

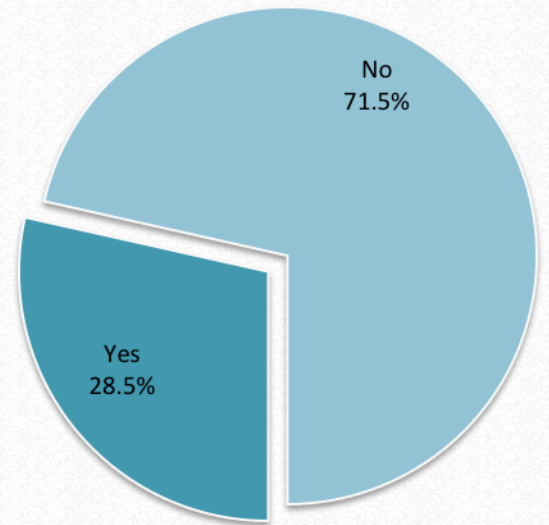


“We are afraid of leaving our tent, since anybody could just come here and steal all our stuff”

3. Health Situation

- 71.3% said they had experienced health problems since arriving in Chios. Less than a third of those people (28.5%) had been able to access medical care. The figure was even higher for women, with a whole 94.3% having experienced health issues in Chios. Less than a third (30.3%) of these women had been able to access medical care.
- While 37.1% said it was a common health problem that could happen anywhere, 40.8% said it had started due to the unhealthy environment in the camp. Alarming, 31% described their health problem as a mental health issue rather than a physical ailment.
- 39% of respondents had witnessed someone die in Chios. 87% of those said the death had occurred due to self-harm or suicide.

GRAPH 4: HAVE YOU RECEIVED ANY MEDICAL CARE FOR YOUR HEALTH PROBLEM?



“I saw one person setting himself in fire, and maybe I’ll be the next one. I feel so bad and depressed”



4. Absence of information and education

- A whole 86% said they don’t have access to information about their legal rights and opportunities to change their own situation.
- 78.3% said they don’t have access to information about European asylum law and immigration rules; an alarmingly high figure given the situation these respondents are in.
- 67% of refugees above 18 years old said they didn’t have access to any form of education in Chios.

5. Children in Chios

The situation in Chios is particularly harmful for children. Our research found the following:

- 50% of children interviewed were unaccompanied.
- 73.3% of children said they ‘never feel safe’ or ‘don’t feel very safe’.
- Only 20% of the children had received help from any organisations in Chios.
- 13.3% had experienced police violence in Chios, and 13.8% had been arrested or detained.
- 13.3% had experienced citizen violence, while 23.3% had experienced violence by other refugees.
- 28.6% had witnessed someone dying in Chios.
- 36.7% of children were experiencing health problems in Chios, but only 18.2% of them had received medical care.
- More than half of the children, 56.7%, did not have access to any form of education.
- Only 16.7% had access to advice about their rights and possibilities to change their situation
- Only 20% had access to information about European asylum law and immigration rules
- 72.4% had family somewhere in Europe



Children in Chios

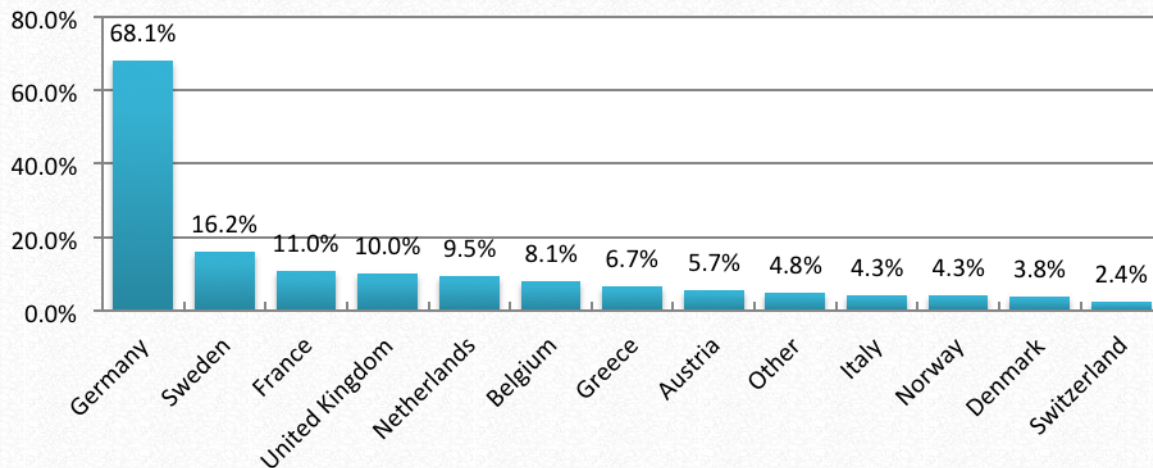
Major charities interviewed by RRDP were unable to disclose the number of unaccompanied minors currently in Chios. RRDP is nonetheless aware of several dozen unaccompanied children in the island. While the majority of these children have recently been moved to a “children’s house” in one of the camps, others decided to stay in regular tents and containers due to heavy police presence and limitations to movement in the “children’s house” (ten hour curfew from 10pm to 8am), which several minors described to our researchers as ‘prison conditions’. A small number of unaccompanied minors are also accommodated in special shelters alongside social workers in Chios town, selected in accordance with their vulnerability and protection needs.

“My wife and I had a baby and so we were promised to be moved to a flat instead of a tent, but nothing happened.”

6. Future Plans and Aspirations

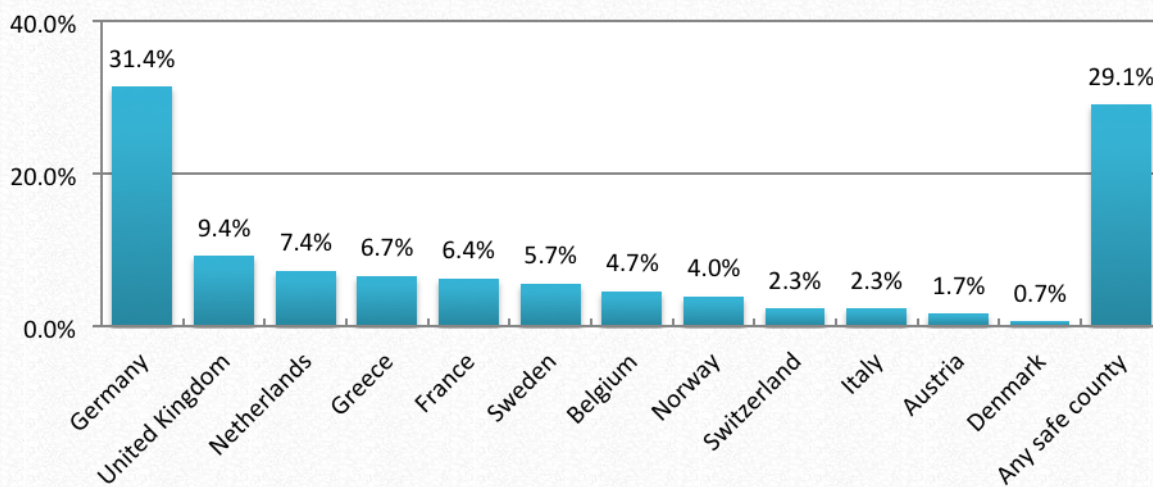
70.2% of respondents said they have family in Europe. About half of them (49%) had siblings in Europe, 9% parents, 6.7% spouses. Many others had cousins, uncles and aunts in Europe.

GRAPH 5: WHERE IN EUROPE ARE YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS?



While the most popular destination among respondents was Germany (31.4%), nearly a third said they didn't mind where they end up, as long as it's a safe country (29.1%).

GRAPH 6: WHICH COUNTRY ARE YOU HOPING TO REACH?



- The top three factors for respondents when choosing their target country were: presence of family members; safety of that country; and educational opportunities.
- Only 59.4% of all respondents had been able to submit their asylum application at the time of the study. 4.5% of them had had their application rejected and were awaiting deportation. One of the most oft-cited reasons for mental health issues was the uncertainty of the outcome of one's asylum applications and long waiting times. Many feared deportation and found it difficult to sleep at night in face of such uncertainty.
- 95.3% said they cannot go back to their own country, for fears of war, persecution or other.
- When asked how they feel about being in Europe right now, 69.5% said they felt 'very bad' or 'bad'.

Further research findings from Chios, Greece will be released in our forthcoming report in June 2017.

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