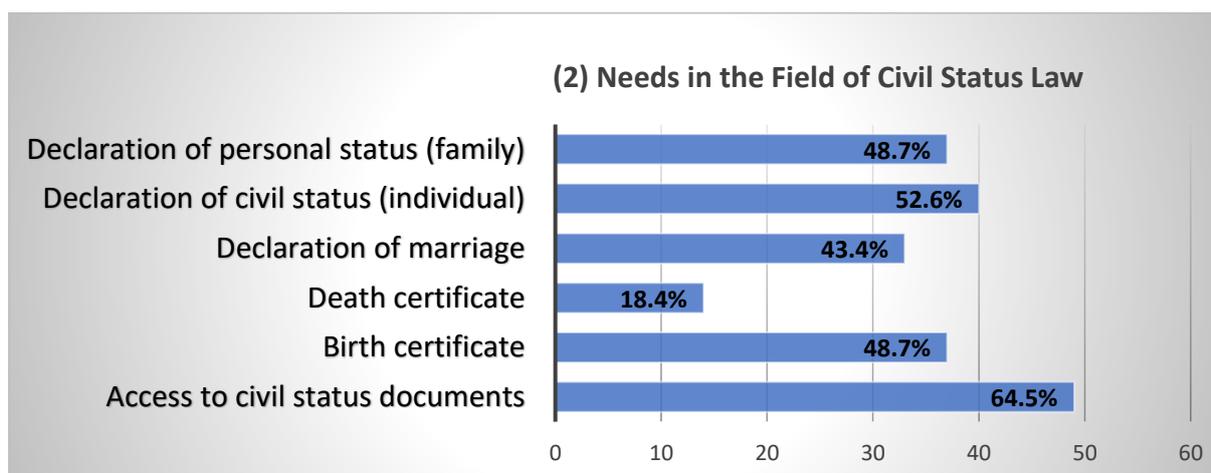
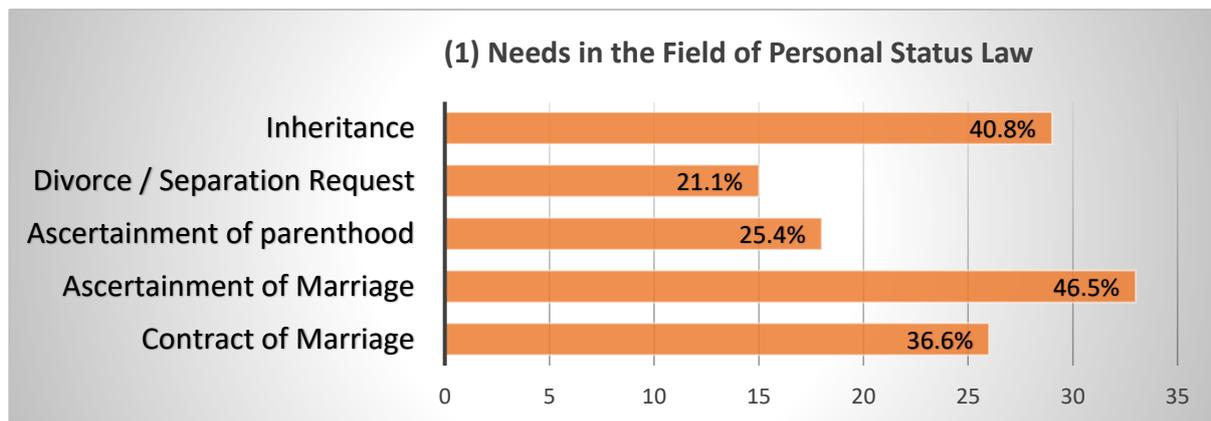


Assessment of the Legal Needs among Diaspora Syrians

15. September 2021

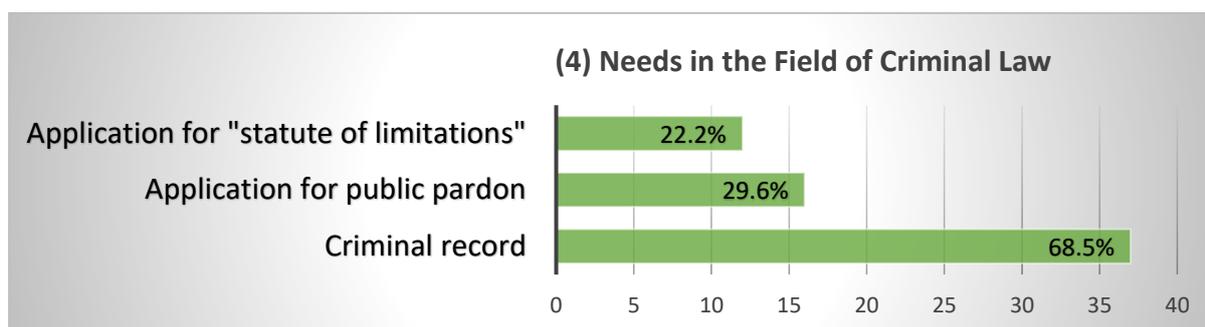
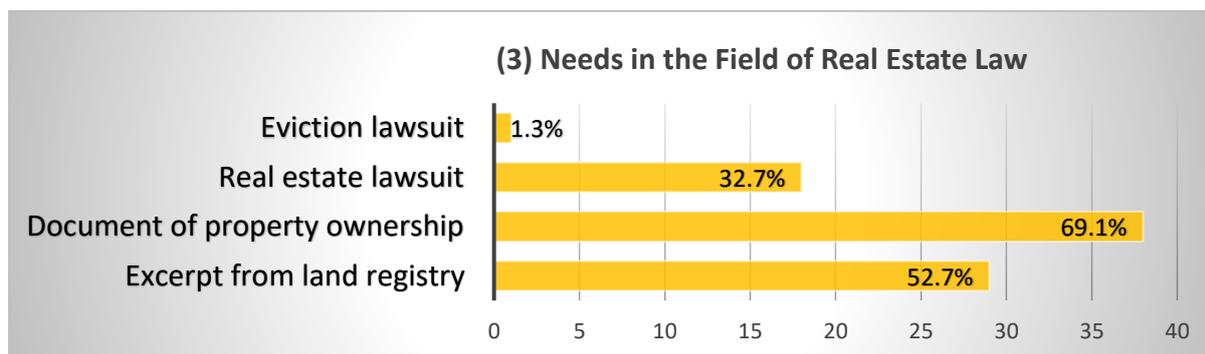
Background In July and August 2021, the FDSV e.V. assessed the need among diaspora Syrians for legal transactions in their home country. This needs assessment was done as an online survey with quantitative questions regarding legal needs in Syria and qualitative questions regarding any obstacles to processing these legal needs. About 150 respondents fully completed the survey. Another ca. 120 persons answered by requesting specific legal advice, but without disclosing any personal information online.

The **general findings** suggest that a majority of Syrians have neither the knowledge nor the ability to solve their legal affairs in Syria. While only a small fraction seems to understand the legal framework and relevant procedures, many citizens are afraid to even try. Our findings also indicate that nearly half of diaspora Syrians regard the Syrian state as a distant and predatory entity. Many seem convinced that they must refrain from any contact with the Syrian state in order to remain safe. Thus, their legal affairs remain unresolved and merely delayed. It should be noted that legal needs are a widespread, accumulating and persistent phenomenon, not only among diaspora Syrians, but applies to citizens everywhere. The quantitative findings are presented below, according to the following fields of Syrian law: (1) personal status law; (2) civil status law; (3) real estate law; (4) and criminal law.



Assessment of the Legal Needs among Diaspora Syrians

15. September 2021



Findings regarding the **main obstacles** to solving the legal affairs of Syrian citizens:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| • Is your knowledge about Syrian Laws and current regulations sufficient? | Yes - 28,6% | No - 71,4% |
| • Do you need legal advice about Syrian Laws and current regulations? | Yes - 92,4% | No - 7,6% |
| • Do you fear negative effects if you contact Syrian authorities? | Yes - 77,2% | No - 22,8 % |
| • Do you have a lawyer in SYR? | Yes - 26.1% | No - 73.9% |
| • Do you have a "notary agency" in SYR? | Yes - 20.7% | No - 79.3% |

The **specific findings** show that the legal needs of Syrians result from armed conflict and regime policies that seek to punish opposition members and their families. The most common needs are related to personal status law and civil status law, such as confirmation of marriage, divorce or parenthood, and the registration of birth, inheritance or personal property. Since millions of citizens lack such basic documents, they face considerable legal constraints to continuing their lives (marriage, registration of children, etc.). In turn, this phenomenon has adverse effects on Syrians in different countries: statelessness, reduced access to education, health care or UN support. The legal needs in this field also include official certification for deaths, disappearances, detention or defections from military service and governmental bodies. Such needs are especially prevalent among persons from certain opposition areas (Ghouta, eastern Aleppo, Idlib, Daraa or Deir Ezzor) that are unofficially cut-off from government services. As the Syrian regime has taken steps to dispossess Syrians who fled abroad, property owners now indicate an increasing need in the field of real estate law. Some owners point out that their property, business or family home is a crucial link to Syria - once lost or stolen, there will be no reason to ever return to Syria. Finally, many young men expressed legal needs in the field of criminal law, mostly to apply for "public pardon" for alleged crimes or to clarify whether they are wanted for terrorism charges by the security apparatus. Without such documents, they will remain unable to access any administrative procedure in Syria - a form of "civil death".

Conclusion We conclude that most Syrian citizens are in need of legal advice, regardless of their current place of residence. It is our assessment that a system of legal advice and referral could resolve most legal affairs with a comparatively low-threshold. This applies to personal status law, civil status law, as well as real estate law. Meanwhile, needs in criminal law could easily be clarified, but not solved.