



AN INVESTIGATION OF SYRIAN ASYLUM-SEEKERS' OPINIONS ABOUT THE PLACES THEY LIVE IN GAZİANTEP

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ABSTRACT

The asylum seeker Syrians have tried both to adapt to changing lifestyles of cities in which they have settled, mainly to border cities – Gaziantep being among the first – starting from 2011, using their existing culture and to conform their own life manner by making arrangements to adapt to this new situation.

First of all, family's not having a residence to live, found residence's being appropriate for social structure and satisfying the needs are important. In this study, characteristics of residences where Syrians lived in Gaziantep were evaluated. Several characteristics of residences and Syrians were evaluated by questionnaire for having information about current situation of residences, and to find out expectations. In order to compare residence characteristics, 185 Syrians in Gaziantep were interviewed in December, 2016. This study aims to shed light on how Syrian will be able to apply data obtained from vital locations within existing city order.

Keywords: Asylum seekers, housing, migration, refuge, residence, shelter, space.

INTRODUCTION

Migration refers to “the simple expression of people and groups going from one place to another due to economic, social, cultural and political reasons” (Tuzcu, 2008). Migration is generally considered as both internal and external migration. Internal migration is defined as “population movements within a country to settle from one place to another from settlements such as regions, cities and villages” (Üner, 1974). On the other hand, while “external migration can be as the movement of people between different geographies as individual or small communities, it can be also as in masses, especially in war situations” (Aksoy, 2012).

The Syrians were in danger of life-safety due to the events in Syria in 2011; they have begun to migrate mainly to Turkey, and then neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. According to the statistics, Turkey took the most immigrants. Turkey has not stood by for the events in Syria, but has embraced Syrian asylum seekers who are in danger of life safety.

The internal migration movements that started in Turkey in the 1950s left very deep and different effects on either immigrants, emigrant places or migration-receiving places. Depending on the industrialization, the cities became attractive, mass media and means of transportation supported internal migration. Gaziantep, which is one of the most important industrial, commercial and tourism centres of Turkey, has been heavily influenced by this change, and according to the research conducted by “The Wall Street Journal, the 9th city in the world with the highest population growth rate with a rate of increase of 47.8%” (Öztürk, Örgen, & Çelebi, 2011). Another reason for this increase is “the increase in the number of industrial production, exports, universities and students due to the increasing economic potential of the city since the early 2000s”. According to TUIK (Turkish Statistical Institute) data, “30% of people living in Gaziantep migrated from other cities. This amounts to about 600,000 people” (Öztürk et al., 2011). With migration, investments have increased, “new areas of work have been inadequate against the growing population, along with social and economic problems, as well as the need for urbanization, housing and slum problems” (Akan & Aslan, 2008).

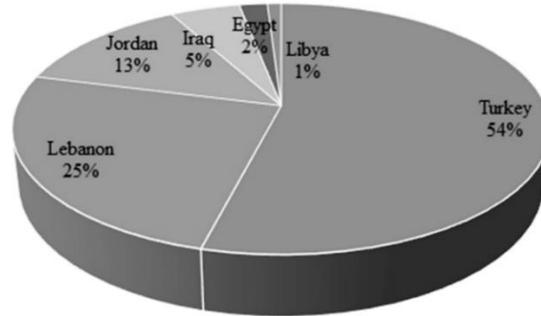


Figure 1. Distribution of Syrians by Country (Arslan, Bozgeyik, & Alancioğlu, 2016)

According to the Ministry of Interior dated 15.02.2017 in Turkey, “the number of people with Syrian asylum seekers is 3 million 551 thousand 78 people” (Soylu, 2017) and “48,738 people have a residence permit” (İçişleri Bakanlığı Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü, 2017).

According to AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) data, “the number of Syrian refugees in the Refuge Center as of May 2nd, 2017 is 248.103” (AFAD, 2017). Asylum seekers in the cities prefer Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Kilis, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Adana, Adıyaman, Osmaniye, Mardin, Malatya and Mersin, which are close to the border. While the city where Syrians live most is Istanbul; Istanbul is followed by Gaziantep. According to the records dated 05.06.2017 of Gaziantep Immigration Administration Provincial Directorate, “330,325 people are registered under temporary protection” (Gaziantep Govnership, 2017). Gaziantep district where the Syrians live the most is Şahinbey district with

168 896 people as seen in Table 1.1. In Şahinbey district, the neighborhoods where the Syrian family settlement is the most are as follows: Dumlupınar District 689, İstiklal District 673, Vatan District 614, Beydili District 504, Kıbrıs District 489, Güzelvadi District 457, Güneş District 432, Konak District 392 households have settlements in all neighborhoods. People with low economic levels who migrated both internal and external have always preferred the same neighborhoods in Gaziantep.

Table 1.1. Distribution of Syrians within the Scope of Temporary Protection as of 11.05.2017 according to Provinces of Gaziantep (Gaziantep Governorship Provincial Directorate of Immigration, 2017)

Araban	İslahiye	Karkamış	Nizip	Nurdağı	Oğuzeli	Şahinbey	Şehitkamil	Yavuzeli	Unknown	Total
854	20 756	9 652	46 569	2 367	3025	168 896	72 635	445	6 156	330 325

When the Syrians arrived in Gaziantep, they first faced with the problem of sheltering. Asylum seekers who first used to sleep in parks, bus terminal, on the roads have started to search for a place to locate their families as soon as possible. People who migrate to the city have a culture of their own. The economic conditions, family structure, lifestyle and expectation of the place where they came from have changed. In addition, the city has its own culture. They tried to make a new life plan that would absorb these three different situations.

According to the present situation and possibilities, they have adapted their residences according to their new lives. Mass movements to the city and changes in the income level of those arriving cause an increase in rents. For this reason, the spatial changes and the housing need of the old urban people also changed the quality of the housing problem. Gaziantep, which has already allowed immigrants in the past, is experiencing the population increase and the problems it brings with it and because these problems have not been fully resolved, have faced massive slum areas.

These habitats became much unhealthier by the asylum seekers coming from Syria with external migration into the neighborhoods, both structurally and physically unhealthy, as those who had experienced internal migration. Families who have been sheltering in a room, a warehouse, a shop, a corridor, without a kitchen, a toilet or a bathroom, have had to continue their lives in a room where women are living and in a room where men are living, which is not suitable for the family environment. As the demand for housing increased, the sales of residences, which were 8.006 units in Gaziantep in 2008, rose to 15.699 in 2011 and to 22.169 in 2014. The increase between 2011 and 2014 is striking. It is also seen that new housing prices have increased significantly in 2013 and 2017. In addition, due to the increasing number of asylum seekers, residence rents have increased significantly, “residence inadequacy has occurred in the city and transportation and infrastructure problems have begun to be observed in the city center” (Gürlesen, 2015).

A large majority of people coming from Syria to Gaziantep will want to go when the problem in their country is resolved. Some will want to return but will not be able to because of work, education or family ties.

The economic and sociological status of asylum seekers have been assessed and studied in this regard. However, it is necessary to look at the situation as a whole. Upon analyzing their experiences in Syria, changing of lifestyles when they come to Gaziantep, “the number of family members, education, business, and economic situation, housing type, need of space, favorable aspects of the residence, problems, interior properties and life expectancies well”, evaluating many variables together, it has revealed the importance of the need for shelter of these people for their new lives (Özyılmaz, 2001).

It is important to see the problems beforehand, identify them correctly, and seek solutions. On the one hand, there is a serious slum problem in the city non-sanitary structures, on the other hand, problems such as the space requirements of the asylum seekers coming from the migration, the future settlement areas and the compatibility of the users of the structures have arisen.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate the physical and social expectations, common and different aspects of asylum seekers from Syria to Gaziantep; to architects and sociologists; creating physical and social data, and integrating the city with the new buildings to be built.

Data Collection Tool

Survey questions were prepared in order to correctly diagnose first the characteristics of residences of asylum seekers who came from Syria to Gaziantep with migration in Syria, then the interior and external environment characteristics of the residence where they live when they came to Gaziantep. The survey which was prepared by Özyılmaz (2001) was based in the preparation of survey questions and editing was made (Özyılmaz, 2001). The questions which are asked later are closed-ended: question types such as graded answers, best answer, two option answers and answers with more than one option. The survey is made up of two axis and subdivisions. In the first main part of the survey, demographical information and questions related to the information about the spaces used in Syria take part. The second main part includes two sections, the first of which includes demographical and job information and the second of which includes questioning information related to the residence lived in Gaziantep. Surveys were carried out by Gaziantep University Arabic Architecture students with the refugees who come from Syria by migration face to face.

Sampling

Syrian refugees who are staying in Turkey under refuge and are living in Gaziantep are the samples of this study. Sampling group was chosen according to convenience sampling

method (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016) from those refugees who could be accessible through Gaziantep University Arabic Architecture students and who would represent different groups. Data related to identify the sampling is presented below.

The demographic status of the family (people living in residence)

185 mothers, 170 fathers, 650 children, 32 grandfathers, 18 grandmothers, and 8 other people were evaluated in the interviews with 185 Syrian adult asylum seekers. It is seen that the majority of asylum seekers from Syria to Gaziantep are children, the number of women is more than the number of men, and the number of elderly people is very small. The reason for the low number of elderly people is that the elderly people may not want to change places despite the severity of the conditions.

The educational status of family members

When the rates of asylum-seeking mothers are evaluated in the questionnaires; 11% are not literate, 7% are primary school, 4% are middle school, 30% are high school and 32% are university graduates. When the education rates of asylum-seeking fathers are evaluated in the questionnaires; 3% are not literate, 6% are primary school, 14% are secondary school, 26% are high school and 45% are university graduates. When the rates of first child education of asylum seekers are evaluated in the questionnaires; 9% are not literate, 22% are in primary school, 7% are primary school graduates, 15% are in middle school, 9% are middle school graduates, 8% are in high school, 9% are high school graduates, 9% are in university and 9% are university graduates. Rates for other children are very close. Approximately 60% of the mothers and 70% of the fathers have high school or higher education status. Asylum seekers are people who have the ability to analyze existing and potential risks that have a high level of education and are well trained in the post-war environment. The fact that children mostly study in primary school means that families with young children have migrated.

Economic status of family members

A large majority of asylum seekers who come with migration cannot work in their own profession and civil servants cannot serve. Children and trainees are unable to continue their training, or because of immediate financial needs, not only parents but also very young children have begun to work as apprentices.

When the asylum-seeking mother's employment status in Gaziantep is evaluated; 80% are unemployed, 13% are teachers, 2% are academicians, 2% are self-employed, 1% are engineers-architects, 1% are dentists and 1% are working in international aid organizations.

The surveyed asylum-seeking fathers in Gaziantep; 21% are unemployed, 1% are students, 7% are teachers, 2% are academicians, 26.2% are self-employed, 3% are engineer-architects, 3% are dentists, 9% are merchants, 3% are shopkeepers, 2.3% are lawyers, 1% are farmers, 5.3% are labor services, 6% are craftsmen, 1.2% are technicians, 4% are assistants - apprentices, 4% of them work in pharmacy and 3% work in international aid organizations.

When the asylum-seeking children's employment status in Gaziantep is evaluated, between 18-22% unemployed, between 56-58% for students, 5% for self-employed, 5-6% for international aid organizations, 3-4% for labour services, and they are also working at low rates in other professions.

When it comes to the occupational status of asylum seekers, it is understood that the vast majority of the unemployed mothers are housewives and the fathers are in the private sector and self-employed. A high self-employment rate can be the result of a person having no fixed job and having to deal with daily works. This is a situation that overlaps with the economic and cultural life in Syria. It is seen that children who migrated with their parents are students and those who are slightly older are unemployed. In the analysis of other children's professions, the rate of unemployment is increasing, while the student ratio remains approximately the same.

When the income of asylum seekers is considered, 21.1% is below TL 400, 25.4% is TL 400-799, 22.2% is TL 800-1199, 14.1% is between TL 1200-1799, 11,9% is paid for 1800-2499 TL, 4.3% is paid for 2500-4999 TL and 1,1% is paid for over 5000 TL. In parallel with the work performed by asylum seekers, it is seen that more than half of the workers are working at minimum wage and under, and 20% of the asylum seekers are receiving the minimum and over wages.

Data Analysis

Surveys were coded in SPSS program according to the questions asked, and data were input through data cast form. Cross table was used next to definitive statistics. Distributions were firstly checked for whether they have normal distribution for the comparison of quantitative data in Syria and Gaziantep. Descriptive statistical data calculated. Microsoft Excel was used to convert from data to graphs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics Of The Asylum Seeker's Residences in Gaziantep

When the asylum-seekers came to Gaziantep, the first basic necessities was sheltering. The new living situation, new jobs, new habits, the number of family members, the settlement of the people were the determinant of the dwelling as seen in Figure 2. When they first arrived, some of them are settled in camps and then have started to live city life but some of them have started to live directly in the city. Since they did not have a job when they first settled in the city, they settled in the most affordable housing for them. Later on, by changing the possibilities, they were able to determine and research the appropriate housing for their lives.

It is understood that small part of the asylum seekers lived in tents and containers, the vast majority of them were living in an apartment near the city centre with their acquaintances,

and a small part of them stayed in places that could not be considered as dwellings in urban centres.

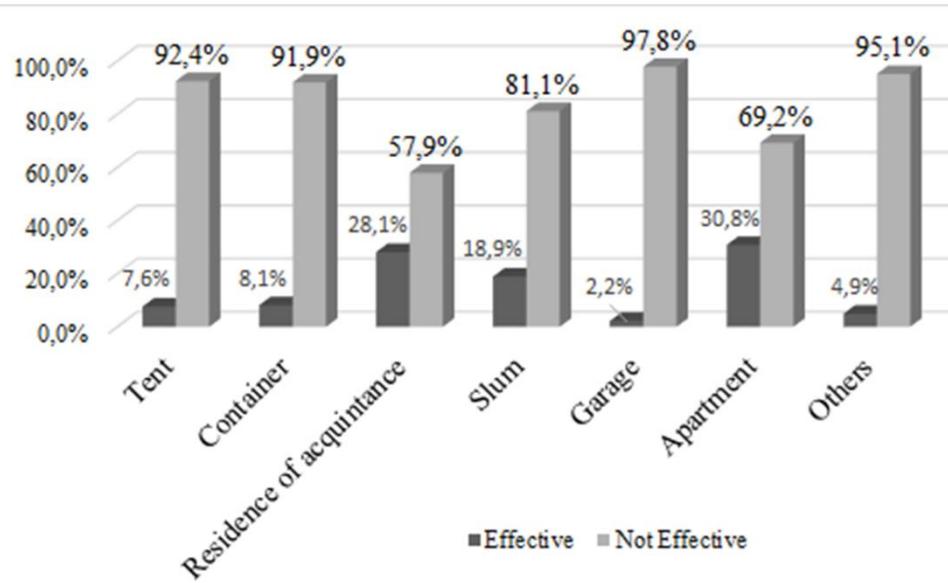


Figure 2. Places stayed until the first settlement when they came from Syria

While the vast majority of asylum seekers who came to Gaziantep had their own properties in Syria, Figure 3. shows that they are staying in Gaziantep either as property owners, tenants or for free. When it comes to home ownership, it is a low rate of home ownership among asylum seekers. Although the economic situation has been shown to be a major factor in this situation, it may also be effective for asylum seekers to see themselves permanently.

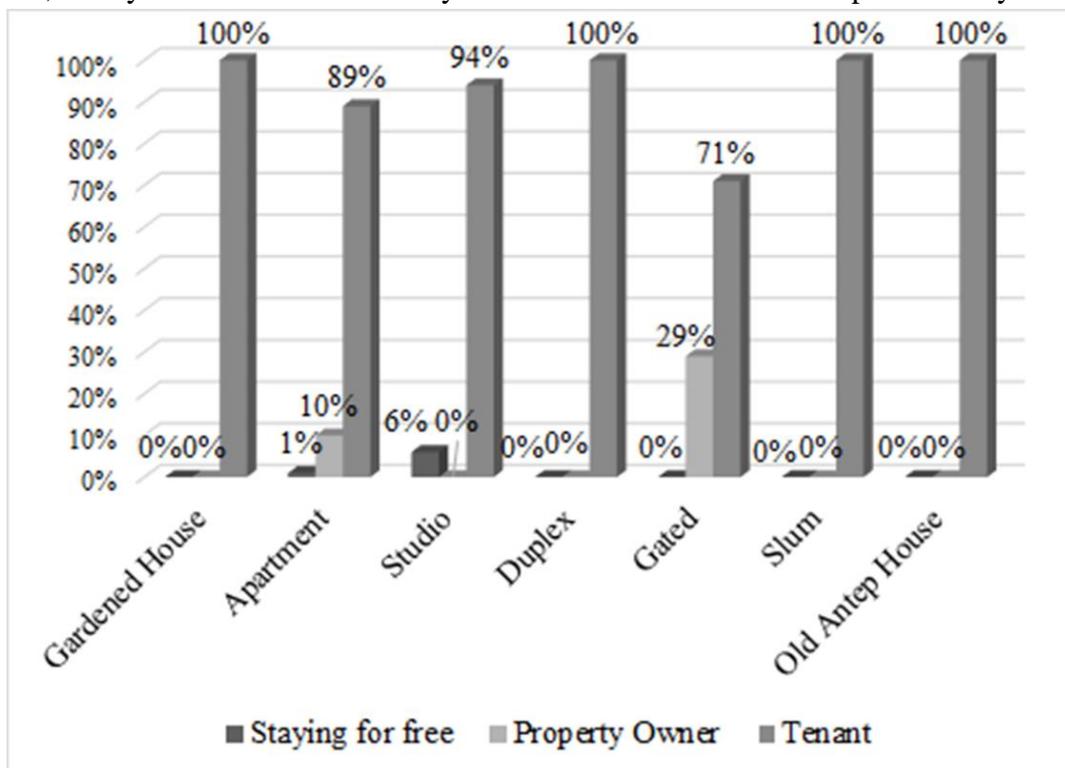


Figure 3. Characteristics of the residence of the asylum seekers in Gaziantep

It can be concluded that a large majority of asylum seekers live as tenants, very few of them have a residence, and that they live in apartments or slums and in a small studio apartment, as seen in Figure 4.

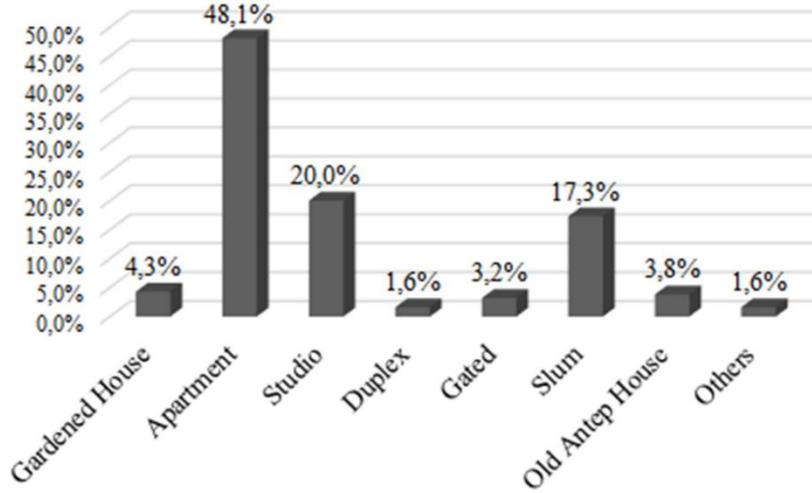


Figure 4. Housing type of asylum seekers in Gaziantep

When the sizes of house of the asylum seekers in Gaziantep are evaluated, as seen in Figure 5, families prefer small, 75-100 m² apartments according to the number of family members, due to their comfortable, peaceful and modern living preferences despite their inadequate economic conditions. Approximately 15% of asylum seekers live in 150m² and above.

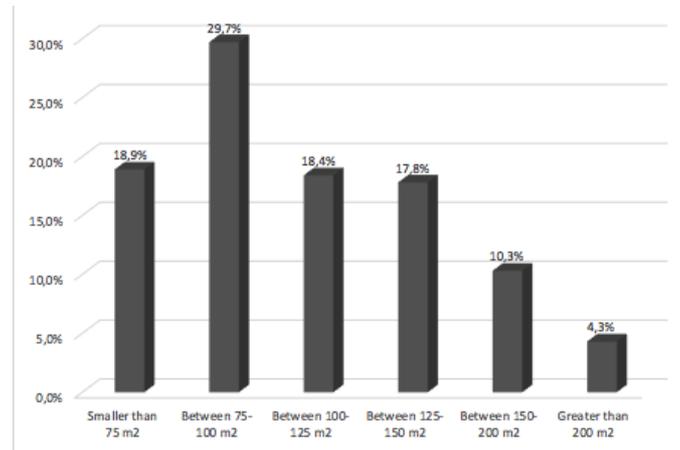


Figure 5 Sizes of asylum seekers' housing in Gaziantep

In this city where asylum seekers have left their residences according to their own lives, the housing needs and expectations are different from the expectation of a person. As seen in Figure 6, where housing is the main expectation of sheltering, asylum seekers do not consider too many options while making residence preferences, only basic needs are met; it has been determined that the rooms should be suitably large, cheap and close to the school.

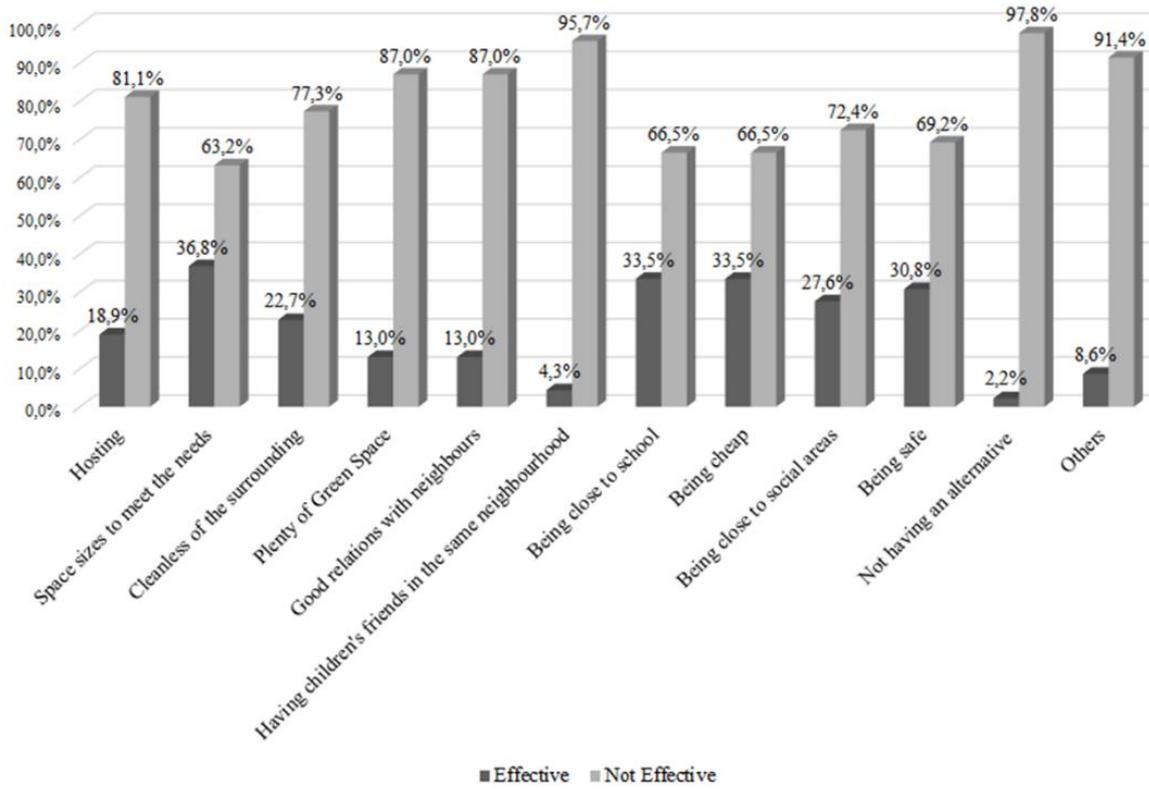


Figure 6 Reasons for the choice of asylum seekers' housing in Gaziantep

When the residences of asylum seekers in Gaziantep are evaluated, the housing preferences are based on the fact that whether the economic conditions, the number of people and the places with living habits can meet the maximum requirements. The places in the residences are evaluated as seen in Figure 7. The areas at maximum needs in the residences lived are saloon, a children's room, a living room and a kitchen. The preference of the bedroom is based on the cultural structure. It can be considered that the reasons for the separation of WC and bathroom spaces are also cultural and religious life habits. Having a storeroom, balconies and entrance can be explained by the fact that these places are in Gaziantep culture.

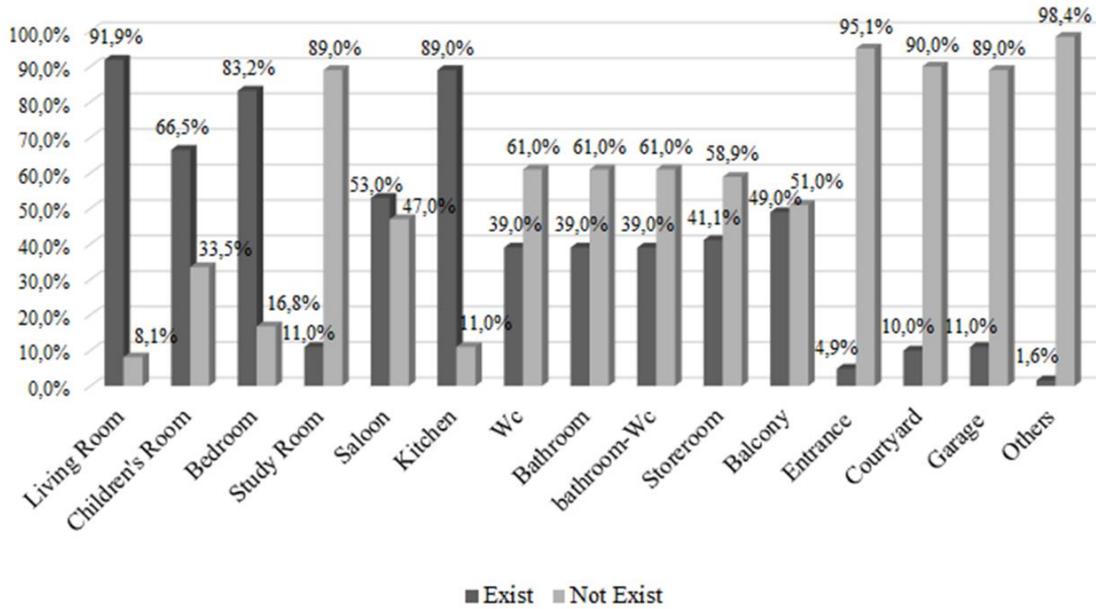


Figure 7. Areas in residences of asylum seekers in Gaziantep

Although they have a lifestyle of their own, the situation of making some changes as can be seen in Figure 8 in areas that does not meet the needs by size and usage of some areas of the residences the asylum seekers, whose lives have changed with a new city, a new culture and a new residence, has been evaluated. However, it is understood that there is no large structural change in the living areas, only the living room is evaluated according to the multiple needs. This is very normal if a large majority of asylum seekers are considered tenants. Moreover, it can be considered that economic conditions prevent these changes from being made.

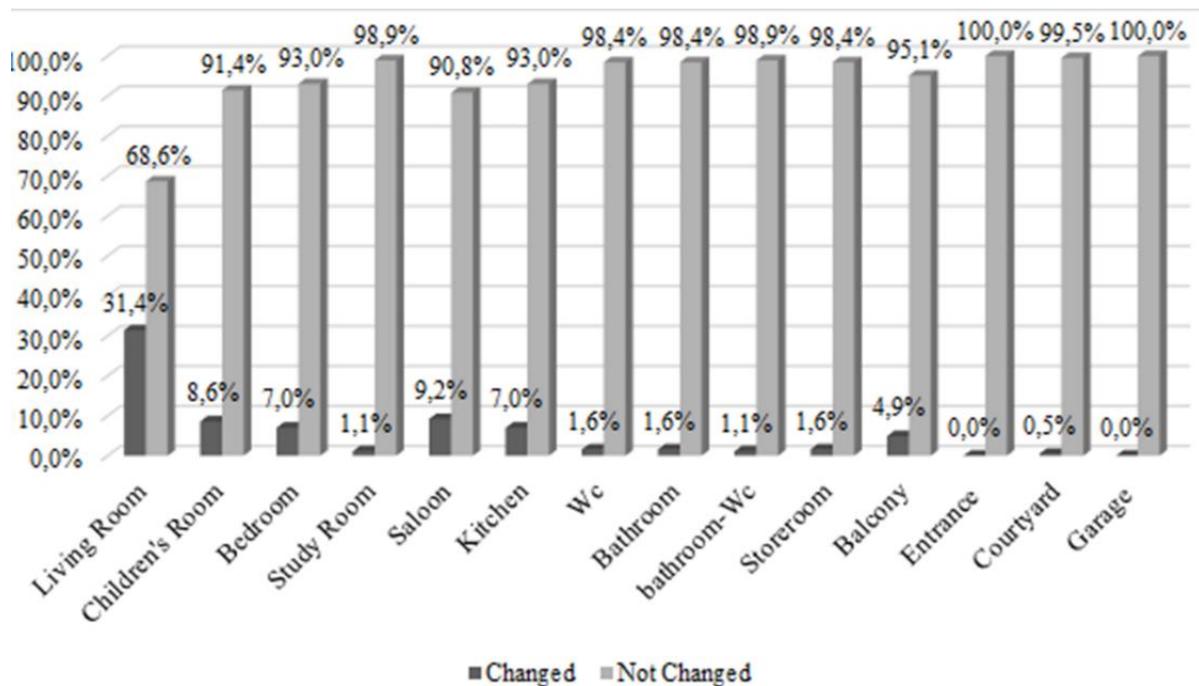


Figure 8. Areas where asylum seekers have changed in their residences in Gaziantep

While it is remarkable that there are fewer places that have been changed, and when the reasons for this are considered in Figure 9; it can be understood that they are tenants, their economic situation is not sufficient to make these changes, and other needs are in the foreground.

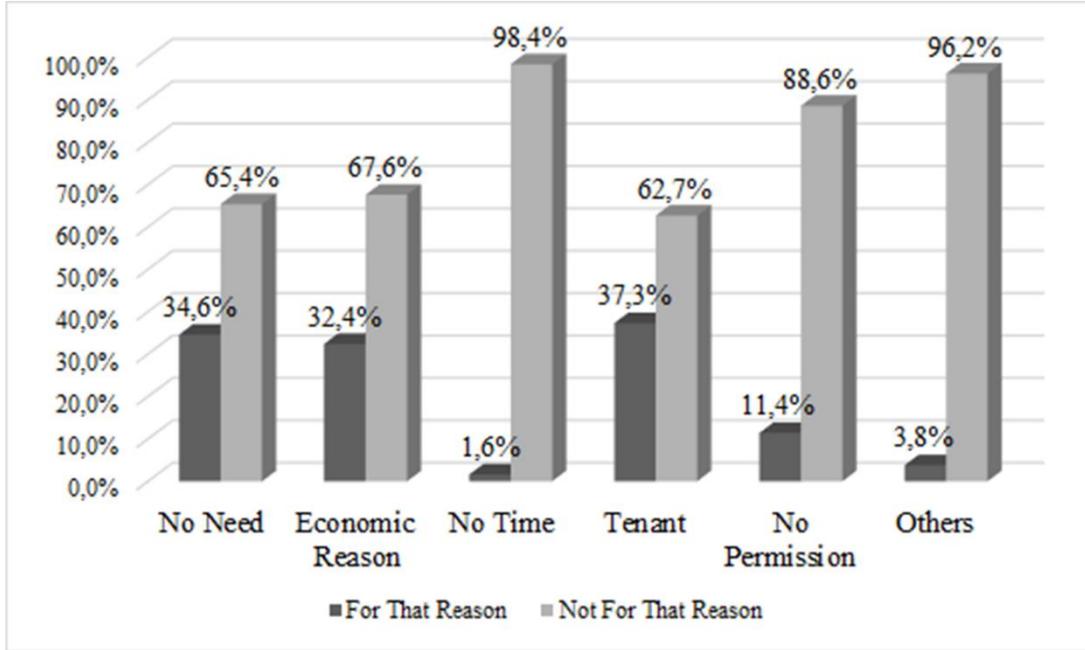


Figure 9. Reasons for asylum seekers to make changes in their residences in Gaziantep

Syrian people attach importance to their traditions and family ties. It is important for them to be comfortable and peaceful in their residences. Figure 10. assesses the appropriateness of housing to tradition. It can be said that the residences in Gaziantep are suitable for Syrian asylum seekers in the cultural sense.

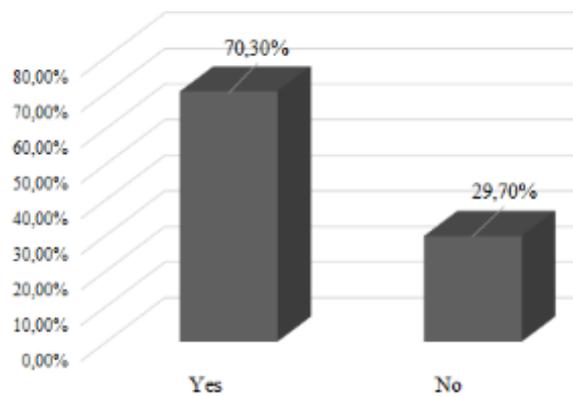


Figure 10. The appropriateness of housing to tradition of asylum seekers in Gaziantep

The majority of those who think that their residences are not in line with their traditions have stated the two most important reasons in Figure 11. as lack of space and the general architectural design of the residence does not conform to the structure they lived in Syria.

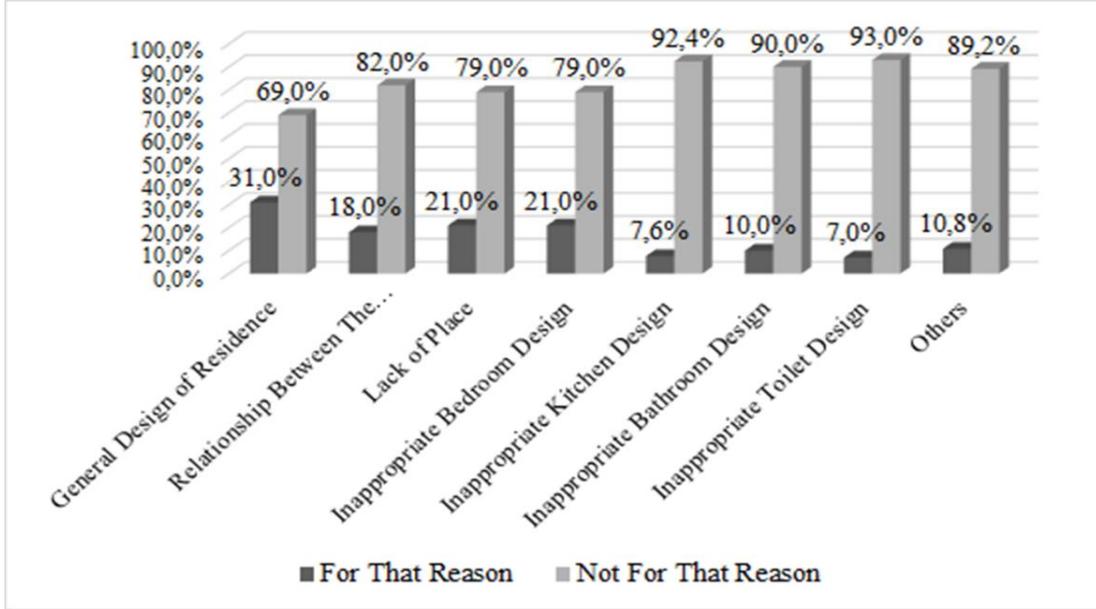


Figure 11. Reasons of asylum seekers saying that residences in Gaziantep are not suitable for their traditions

As seen in Figure 12., it can be said that almost half of the asylum seekers think about changing the residence where they live and the other half does not.

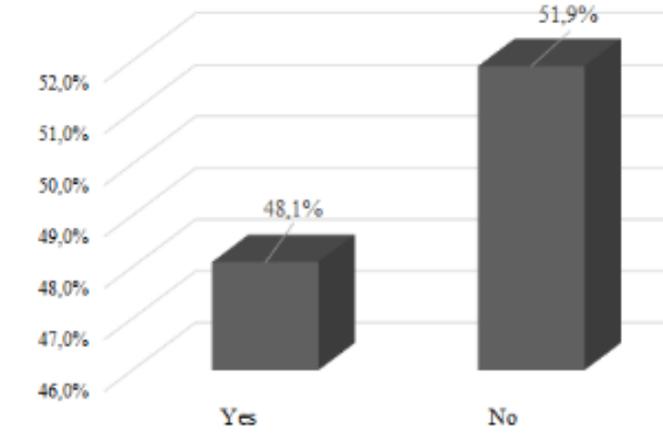


Figure 12. The idea of asylum seekers in changing the residence in Gaziantep

When the reason of asylum seekers who want to change the residence are evaluated in Figure 13., the most important factor is that the residence is small and inadequate.

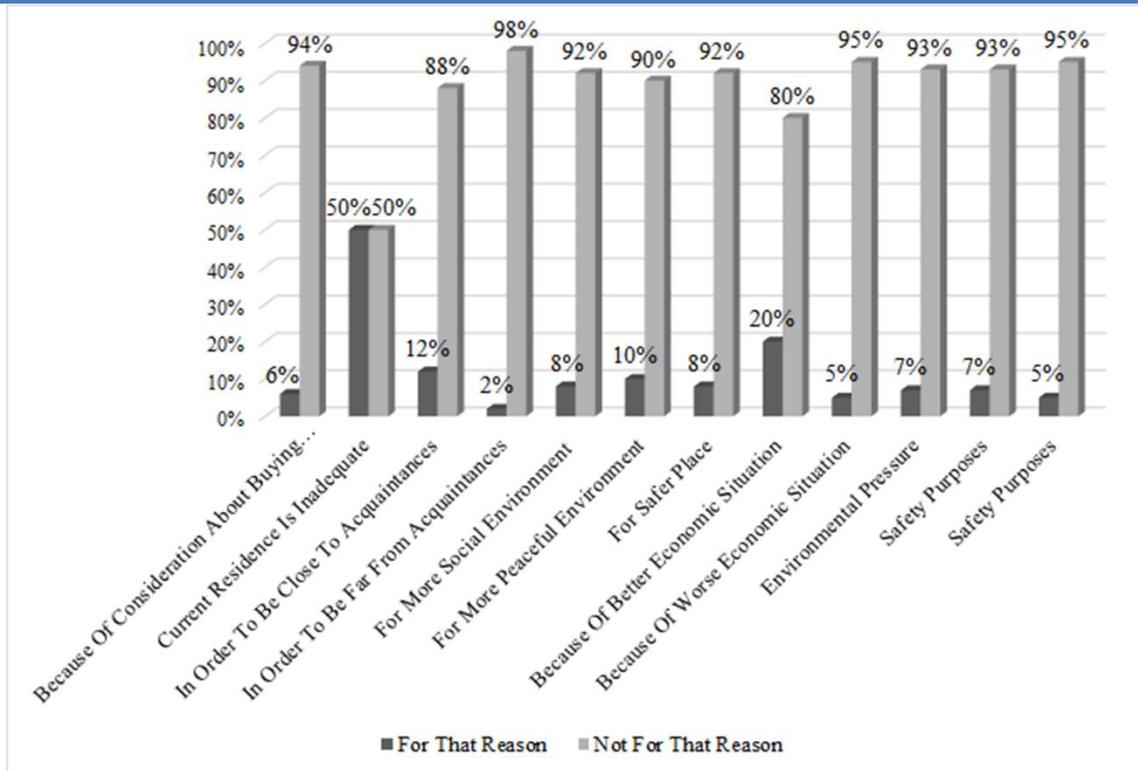


Figure 13. The reason for asylum seekers to change housing in Gaziantep

It is understood that the preferences of the residents are in the direction of the apartment building according to the changing life style, number of people and business facilities.

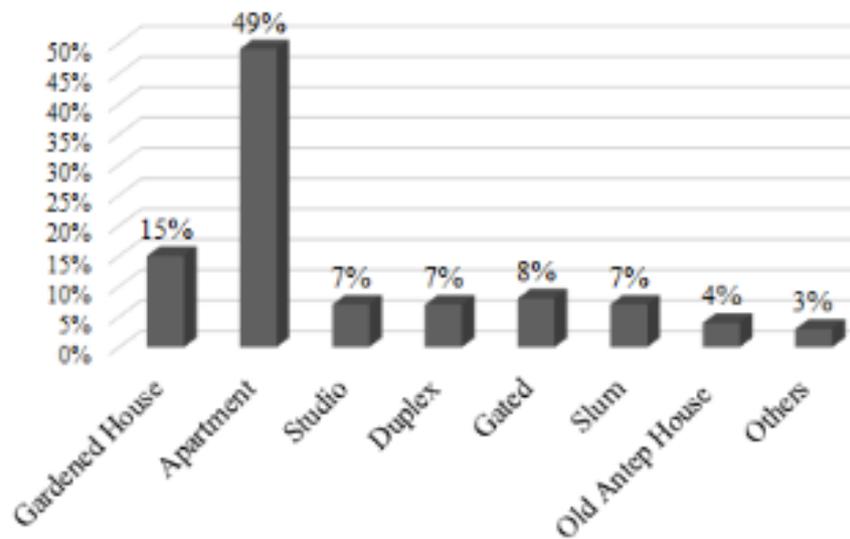


Figure 14.. Type of residence that asylum seekers want to move to in Gaziantep

The food culture of asylum seekers and Gaziantep is very close to each other. In Figure 15., the satisfaction of kitchen use is evaluated. It is seen that more than half of the users are satisfied with the kitchens and those who are not satisfied are still close to the half.

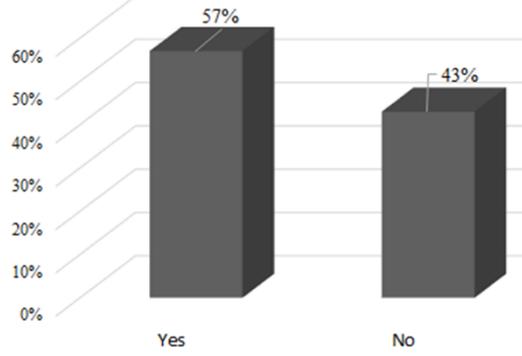


Figure 15. Satisfaction of kitchen use in asylum seekers in Gaziantep

When figure 16. showing dissatisfaction of asylum seekers with the use of the kitchen is studied, the reasons are based on the facts that the number of asylum-seeking families is large, the smallness of the kitchen, and the inadequacy of the cabinets and the lack of size to fit a kitchen table in the kitchen.

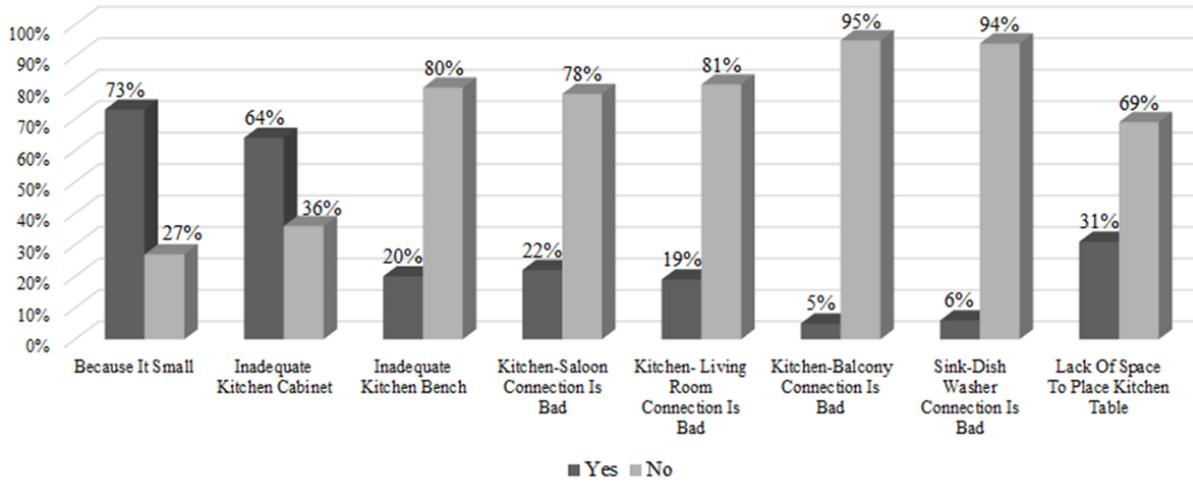


Figure 16. Reasons of dissatisfaction with the kitchen use of residences of asylum seekers in Gaziantep

As can be seen in Figures 17.a, b., c. and d., it can be said that half of the asylum-seekers living in the residences in Gaziantep are satisfied with the connection of areas among the residences they live in, that a part of them do not have the life standard to evaluate this, and that convenient places are liked. Those who do not like think that the district and the view of the residence are not nice, the saloon, the child and parents room are inadequate, the bath and we are together, there is no garage, the balcony and the kitchen do not meet the need.

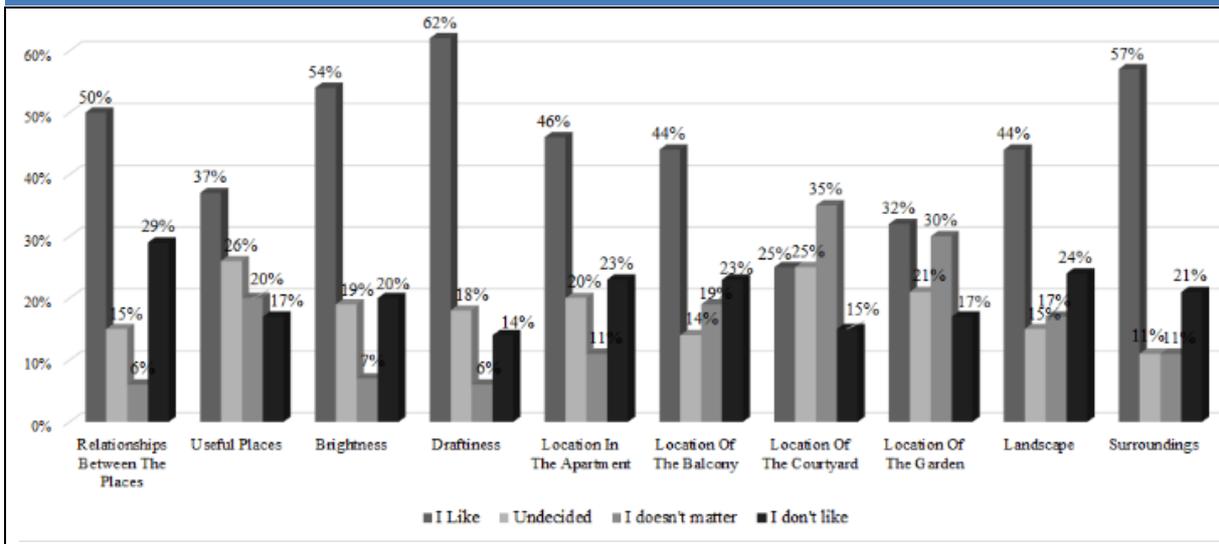


Figure 17.a. The evaluation of the residences of asylum seekers living in Gaziantep

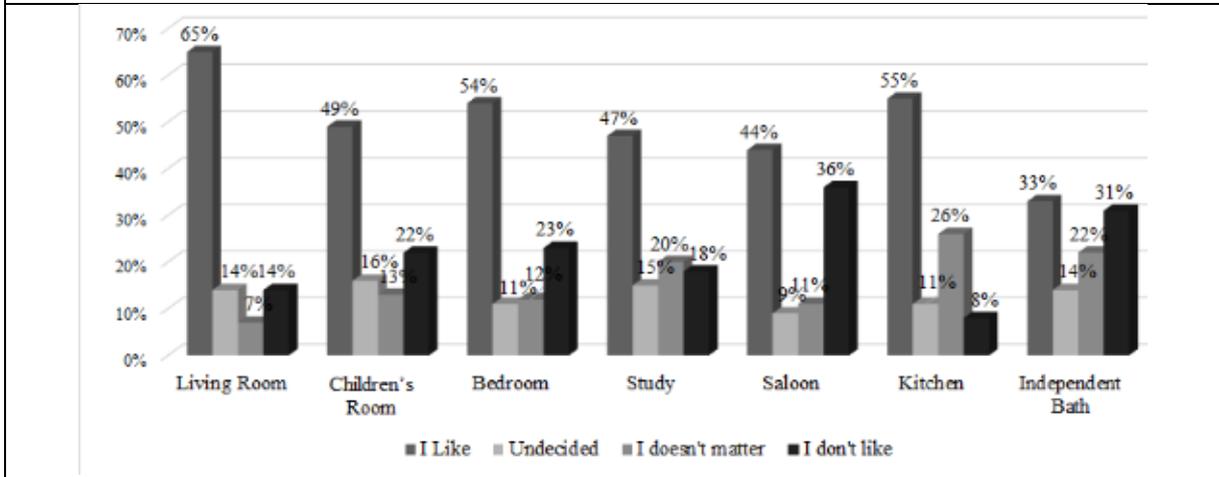


Figure 17.b. The evaluation of the residences of asylum seekers living in Gaziantep

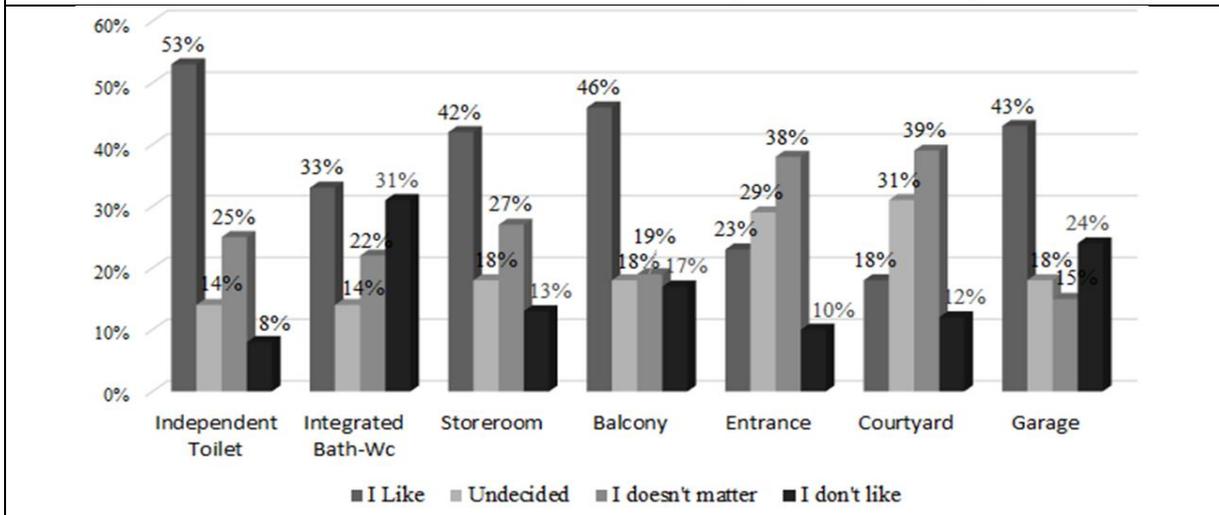


Figure 17.c. The evaluation of the residences of asylum seekers living in Gaziantep

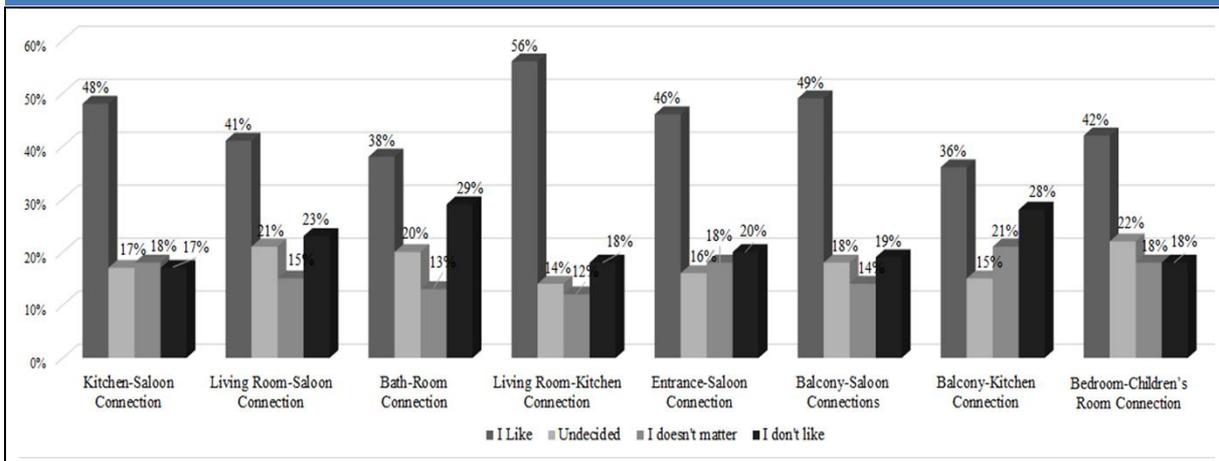


Figure 17.d. The evaluation of the residences of asylum seekers living in Gaziantep

As can be seen in Figure18., asylum seekers have been hosted in their own places due to the cultural structures of their relatives and guests who have come to Gaziantep in different time periods and/or may be new.

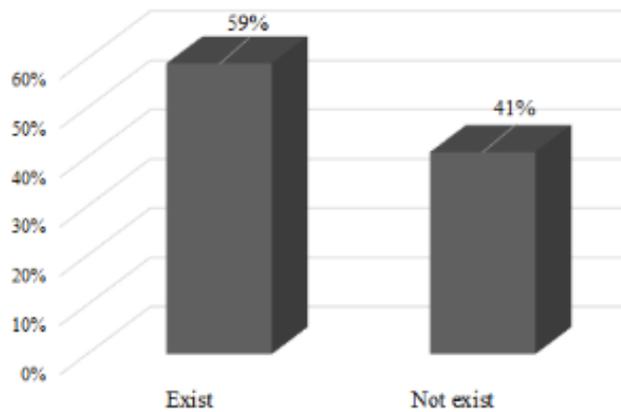


Figure 18. Situation of guests who came to the residence in Gaziantep where asylum seekers live

As seen in Figure 19, asylum seekers welcomed their guests in the lounge and living room as well as in the children and guest bedrooms.

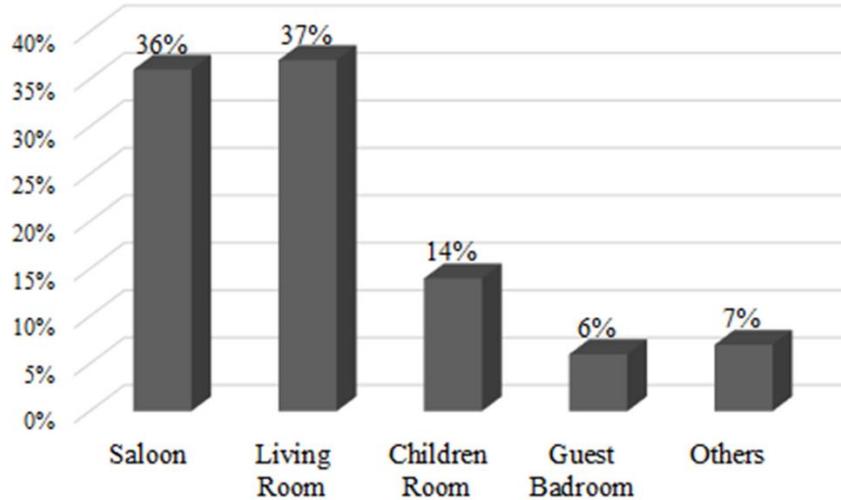


Figure 19. Places where asylum seekers' guests stay in Gaziantep

Survey Results

In general, we summarize the study results Asylum Seekers;

- Prefer safe spaces for themselves and their families,
- Want to live with their own neighbours and relatives,
- Care that the kitchen, children's room, bedroom and saloon are large, bath and wc are separate, and the balcony is close to the kitchen in terms of the quality and quantity of the residences they live in. The balcony is designed to be large in size for being a place to eat meal in the summer months, and the connection between kitchen and balcony should serve this purpose as well. It is desirable that the spaces are bright and cool.
- Prefer that residences are away from the congestion and irregularity, in a better district with a good landscape, and that they have a garage.
- It has been determined that guests have been overstayed for more than a few days. It is preferred that the rooms such as the living room and the saloon are large enough to welcome the guests.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

A large majority of asylum seekers live in dwellings in urban centres. Due to the low incomes of asylum-seekers, low-cost housing should be preferred. If the majority of asylum seekers are thought to return to their countries after the situation has been rectified, (urban transformation, habitats of citizens who came from internal migration, student houses, etc.) the use of these dwellings in the city's economy must also be included in the account. The cultural

structure is already close to being planned and new residences will meet both requirements. The reason why asylum seekers complain about kitchen measures, insufficiency of cabinets and inability to prepare dinner tables is that the number of people living in the residence is higher than that of an average family living in Gaziantep and is a collective food culture. It is also natural that the houses in Gaziantep are planned according to the number of households and small number of people. Families coming to Gaziantep and having a low economic status should be targeted to continue their lives in a healthier way in order to sustain their lives. The situation of the return of the asylum seekers coming from Syria to Gaziantep is uncertain. A large majority of refugees will be able to return to their country if the environment is relaxed, but some will still live because of their bonds. The aim of this study is to determine the average life standard of asylum seekers and to guide architects and social scientists, with the applications to be made, to make them feel safe, to establish good relations with the people living in the city and to integrate them, and to solve the problem of transportation, which is not in the centre of the city. It will shed light on the planning of areas where social, educational, religious needs can be met.

This research will determine the requirements for interior space, living space availability, situation, use of spaces and traditions; and the new residences will be assessed for them, it will not be allowed to change inside and outside of the residences constructed and it will not be possible to make attachments that create image pollution.

Meeting the needs of the inhabitants and ensuring the possibility of a healthy living space will provide a positive psychological impact on the refugees coming from Syria to Gaziantep and contribute positively to the public and urban life.

With the residences to be built in the city, these people will have healthy living areas, the residents of the city will feel comfortable with the housing problem, and the unhealthy slum areas will be drained while the healthy living areas are formed.

Architectural designs are becoming more important because people's habits move along with their lifestyles. Presenting haphazard designs and use of existing buildings for shelter needs constitute unhealthy habitats and bring about different problems.

The housing problem, rent increases, increase in property prices, and the reuse of evacuated unhealthy homes have raised the risk of creating new slum towns. These problems brought about problems such as drinking water, sewage, household waste, garbage, education and social areas, in particular security. Considering that the land prices in Gaziantep are high in the new areas to be constructed, efficient use of existing facilities will ensure that the needs and expectations are fully met.

Recommendations

When the places where the people from Syria lived in Gaziantep are evaluated, it is seen that these neighbourhoods are also areas where the inhabitants of the inner migration also experienced. At the same time, these neighbourhoods are the regions where the skewed

construction and the slums are also concentrated. New studies can be carried out in these neighbourhoods where people living with both internal and external migration evaluate the common needs of immigrants' life needs and expectations. Urban transformation studies can provide urgent planning and implementation support to Gaziantep and similar cities. Subsequent studies can be evaluated by performing regression analysis on the dependent variables.

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