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**Diaspora in Armenia: Immigration and Political Integration of Syrian Armenians**

By

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**Abstract**

Political integration of migrants is currently one of the concepts that have attracted the broader attention of scholars. Even though this concept is not discussed actively, it is an important component of migrants' overall integration in host societies. The lack of consensus on the definition of political integration of migrants and the ambiguity in identifying the factors that indicate or impact political integration are seen as obstacles for conducting empirical studies in this context. Nonetheless, in this Master's thesis, the political integration of Syrian Armenians in the life of the Republic of Armenia is examined. Political integration in this study is operationalized as the participation of the immigrants in some conventional (elections) and unconventional (protests, online political activities, and more) politics in Armenia. By conducting an online survey and qualitative interviews with Syrian Armenians residing in Armenia, the first part of the analysis established whether the Syrian Armenian immigrants are participating in the politics of Armenia, hence, becoming integrated politically. The second part studied the local Armenians' attitude towards the political participation of Syrian Armenian immigrants. The general conclusion derived from this study is that, over time, Syrian Armenian immigrants in Armenia are becoming more integrated into political life.

*Keywords:* Syrian Armenians, Diaspora, political integration, political participation, political awareness, local Armenians



## Chapter One – Introduction

The presence of the Armenian Diaspora in the Republic of Armenia, predominantly the increasing numbers of Syrian Armenians in the past ten years, have driven numerous scholars to explore the consequence of immigration and its impact on the social and economic life of Armenia. While several studies identified the challenges encountered by Syrian Armenians both in the Armenian and English languages, there has been scarce research exploring the political participation of Syrian Armenians and their political integration. Political integration per se is a theory-driven complex concept that lacks a clear definition and measurement (Morales, 2011). Conducting empirical studies of political integration is even a more difficult challenge. The ambiguity of this concept prevents the scholars from developing a set of fixed criteria that identifies the factors involved in its measurement.

There is a difference between the political culture in Armenia and the political culture in Syria. While in Syria, the society lacks interest in politics, in Armenia, the society has the interest and is provided with the opportunity to be engaged in the political process. After the resettlement in Armenia, Syrian Armenians experienced a change in the political environment. The new political culture led to the establishment of a new way of understanding politics. Therefore, this work examines whether the Syrian Armenians, after approximately ten years of immigration, were able to achieve political integration in Armenia. Since Syrian Armenians are becoming an inseparable segment of the society in Armenia, it is important to study their political integration in the life of Armenia, particularly from a societal perspective.

This Master's thesis proceeds with a background study where previous resettlement periods of the Armenia Diaspora are discussed along with the reasons for the 21st-century immigration of Syrian Armenians. Next, it covers the literature review to define important

concepts and review existing research on Syrian Armenian immigration to Armenia.

Following this, both the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data is provided. In the final section, there is a summary and discussion of the major findings.

### **1.1. Importance of the Study**

The political integration of migrants mainly depends on the political culture of the receiving countries and their level of political exposure in that countries. During the past ten years, the Republic of Armenia experienced several critical political developments. It is worth mentioning the three major political turning points in very recent Armenian history. In chronological order, the major political incidents are the Four-Day War of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2016, the Velvet Revolution in 2018, and the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020. Within this period, the developments greatly increased the amounts of political discussions in Armenia. Syrian Armenians closely observed these developments. The intense exposure to political incidents and being involved in political discussions possibly created impacts worth study. Therefore, this thesis is an effort to explore and measure the extent of the political integration of Syrian Armenians in Armenia.

The political integration of Syrian Armenians in Armenia can be studied from different perspectives since the research covering this subject is rare. In this study, however, the political inclusion of Syrian Armenians is measured from a societal perspective. The thesis discusses the differences between the political experience of Syrian Armenians in Syria and Armenia in terms of awareness and participation. Nonetheless, the primary emphasis is on the political engagement of Syrian Armenians in Armenia. The study examines the Syrian Armenians' participation in elections, protests, and online political activities in Armenia. It also explores whether the Nagorno Karabakh War of 2020 had a direct impact on enhancing political inclusion. Finally, the attitude of the local Armenians towards the direct political participation of the Diaspora is explored.

## **1.2. Research Questions**

This study aims to answer the following questions:

*Research Question 1.* To what degree did the Syrian Armenian immigrants integrate into the political life of the Republic of Armenia?

*Research Question 2.* To what extent has the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020 affected Syrian Armenian immigrants' political participation?

*Research Question 3.* What is the attitude of local Armenians towards the Diaspora's participation in the politics of the Republic of Armenia?

## Chapter Two – Background

### 2.1. Resettlement of Armenian Diaspora(s) in Armenia: Three Major “Repatriation”

#### Waves

Armenian Diaspora migration is not a modern phenomenon. Since antiquity, there have been several reasons driving the immigration and emigration of Armenians from their permanent residential areas. These reasons include “(a) political determinants, (b) ecological determinants, (c) repatriation, (d) economic and educational determinants, and (e) transient migration” (Kleiner, 2003). Historical migrations of ethnic Armenian groups to foreign territories led to the formation of the Armenian Diaspora(s) worldwide. Nevertheless, the contemporary Armenian Diaspora communities were established due to the forced deportation and exile of the Armenians in the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century from their ancestral homeland by the Ottoman Empire. In particular, the organized Armenian Genocide during World War I by the Young Turks is considered to be the leading reason. (Klein, 2019; Pattie, 2004). The experience of Armenian Diasporas “differ depending on the country in which the diaspora exists and the varied assimilation models adopted by that state” (Klein, 2019, p. 28). However, the contemporary Armenian Diaspora communities survived through maintaining the Western Armenian language, traditions, and culture. The Armenian Apostolic Church also played a significant role in preserving the Armenian identity (Hakobyan, 2015).

In the 1920s, Armenia became part of the Soviet Union. From the earliest stages of the Soviet administration, the fate of the deported Armenians and the subject of their “repatriation” in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic was carefully discussed (Մելիքսեթյան, 1983). It is reasonable to define the term “repatriation” in this context. In the literature, Armenian “repatriation” (հայրենադարձություն) “has been mainly defined as the return of Armenians living abroad to their historical motherland” (Harutyunyan, 2010). Since

the Armenians who returned to the Soviet Armenia have initially been residing in the Eastern parts of the present day-Turkey, Ginsburgs stats that in case of Armenian Diaspora "... [it is] not repatriation, strictly speaking, but resettlement or migration" (1957, p. 19).

The first Armenian repatriation period was between 1921 and 1936-39 when over 40,000 Armenians arrived in the homeland from various countries, including Bulgaria, France, and Greece (Grigorian, 1995; Harutyunyan, 2010; Մելիքսեթյան, 1983). One of the resettlement's main incentives was the desire of the deported Armenians to establish a new life in the newly formed country (Ginsburgs, 1957; Harutyunyan, 2010). Nevertheless, due to economic downturns and the domestic political developments in the Soviet Republic, repatriation was ended (Harutyunyan, 2010). The second immigration period, which is also known in the literature as the "Great Repatriation," took place between 1946 and 1949. The Great Repatriation resulted in the resettlement of an estimated number of 100,000 Armenians in the homeland (Darieva, 2011; Grigorian, 1995; Klein, 2019; Laycock, 2012). Harutyunyan mentioned that, during that time frame, the highest number of immigrants came from Iran (2010). The excessive migration flow was interpreted as the consequence of the integration challenges and troubling economic conditions that the Armenian Diaspora had witnessed in their "home" counties (Laycock, 2012).

The third repatriation wave during the Soviet regime was between 1962 and 1982 (Grigorian, 1995; Harutyunyan, 2010; Մելիքսեթյան, 1983). This immigration flow brought around 32,000 Armenian immigrants from different parts of the world to the homeland (Grigorian, 1995; Harutyunyan, 2010; Մելիքսեթյան, 1983). According to Harutyunyan, many immigrants in this period moved to the Armenian SSR recognizing that Armenia "could serve as a stepping stone for receiving migration visas to the United States" (2010, p. 17).

After the second independence of Armenia, the Diaspora was highly attracted to establish a life in Armenia and contribute to building the homeland. As a result, Armenia witnessed a new wave of immigration.

## **2.2. Reasons for the Major Armenian “Repatriation” in the 21st Century**

“21<sup>st</sup> Century Repatriation” is a term used by Klein (2019) to identify the “repatriation” of the contemporary Armenian Diaspora to the homeland. Several reasons are indicating the difference of contemporary immigration from the previous experiences. According to Klein, “[r]ecent returnees to Armenia vary both sociologically and economically. Return migrants are comprised of students, labor migrants..., migrants seeking permanent residence, rejected asylum seekers, irregular migrants, retired persons, etc.” (2019, p. 53). Besides the differences mentioned by Klein, two important points should be recognized: a) the contemporary immigration is not the result of an organized “repatriation” program – the repatriation was not initiated by the government of Armenia nor it was facilitated by the Armenian organizations in Diaspora – b) the returnees are not arriving in Soviet Armenia; rather they are arriving in the independent Republic of Armenia.

Even though spontaneous immigration occurred after the independence, the largest immigration flow of Armenian Diaspora to Armenia in the 21st century was initiated with the escalation of the Syrian conflicts in 2011. The conflicts in Syria left an adverse impact on the local Armenian communities. Preceding the conflicts, around 100,000 Armenians lived in Syria (Hakobyan, 2015). To provide a brief interpretation of the inclusion of Armenian Diaspora in Syria, it could be stated that hitherto Syrian Armenians are adequately integrated into the society of the country, contributing to the development of the economy and the social culture. Concerning the political position, Armenians in Syria maintained neutrality throughout the political developments. Despite the time factor, they have relatively limited participation in the Syrian political life compared with their participation in other domains.

The major reason driving the Syrian Armenians to depart from Syria is the economic downturn resulted from the conflict. From 2011 onwards, an estimated number of 15,000 – 22,000 Syrian Armenians have moved to the homeland (European Commission, 2018; Hayrapetyan, 2015; Sarvarian, 2018; United Nations Armenia, 2015). In particular, a great number of Syrian Armenians arrived in the homeland in summer 2012 when the fighting intensified in Aleppo and the nearby villages. The city of Aleppo ended up in a condition where there were shortages of food, water, shelter, electricity, and other basic requirements of life. Toghramadjian states that according to research done in 2018 by the Aleppo Compatriotic Charitable Organization (Aleppo-NGO), the main reason why Syrian Armenians preferred to resettle in Armenia is the fact that Armenia is considered to be their “homeland” (2018).

Several incentives encouraged the resettlement of the Syrian Armenian Diaspora in the homeland, including “(i) simplified acquisition of citizenship, (ii) accelerated asylum procedures or (iii) privileged granting of short, mid-term or long-term residence permits” (United Nations Armenia, 2015). Besides the mentioned reasons, Armenia’s developing tourism sector became a central actor in encouraging Armenian families arriving from Syria to establish a new life in the homeland.

Similar to any immigration, Syrian Armenians resettlement also constituted challenges for both the Republic of Armenia and the Syrian Armenian community in Syria. In this context, Harutyunyan (2010) states that:

repatriation is a challenge not only for Armenia but also for the Diaspora as during the time the latter is subject to disappearance. In case of Armenians their communities in Diaspora are rapidly disappearing due to number of national characteristics. (p. 8)

The Syrian Armenians carried their unique character to Armenia: their cuisine, traditions, and the Western Armenian language. According to Toghramadjian, this transformation helped to “attract repatriates from the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas, forming the center of a rapidly growing community of new Armenian citizens” (2018, p. 2) and to tighten the relationship between the Republic of Armenia and the worldwide Armenian Diaspora.

### **2.3. Armenian Diaspora(s) and their Relationship with the Homeland**

The relationship between the worldwide Armenian Diaspora and the Republic of Armenia is usually described as being complicated. The Armenian Diaspora consists of fragmented Diasporas. The Armenian Diaspora communities are divided into sub communities, primarily affiliated with three political parties and several non-profit charitable organizations. The political parties are:

- (a) the Armenian Revolutionary Federation or the Dashnak Party, socialist in doctrine, but which remained more of a nationalist party throughout history;
- (b) the social democratic Hunchak Party, which considered itself Marxist and was close to the Third International and progressive world movements, but with a nationalist element; and
- (c) the liberal democratic Ramgavar Party that advocated the application of democratic principles in Armenian public life. (Geukjian, 2007, p. 65)

The largest non-profit organization is the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) which has been “devoted to upholding the Armenian heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian programs” (AGBU, 2020). Diaspora parties and organizations have different ideologies concerning fundamental issues. The diverse principles and approaches of each party and organization influence the relationship between the Diaspora and Armenia.



The Armenian Revolutionary Federation is the largest nationalist and socialist party in Armenian diaspora communities across the world. Compared with liberal democratic Ramgavar and social democratic Hunchakian parties, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation plays a more vital and tangible role in Armenian politics. During the Soviet regime, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation's agenda distanced the Diaspora from the Armenian SSR (Bolsajian, 2018). In the same vein, after the second independence of Armenia in 1991, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation's position was opposing the agenda of the ruling party Pan-Armenian National Movement (ANM). These two parties had different ideologies considering the second independence of Armenian, the Armenian Cause, domestic and foreign politics of the country, the Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) issue, and the role of Diaspora in the newly established Republic of Armenia (Panossian, 2001). Due to the party's political position, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the first president of the Republic of Armenia, in 1994 has banned the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in Armenia (Panossian, 2001).

Following the forced resignation of Levon Ter-Petrosyan in 1998, Robert Kocharyan ascended to power. Kocharyan's government lifted the ban on the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, initiating new and advanced relations with the party and the Diaspora in general. Nevertheless, during Serzh Sargsyan's presidency, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation became further involved in Armenian politics. Whether the party was in alliance with Sargsyan's government or was in opposition, its involvement in the government tightened the connections between Diaspora and Armenia. Today, the presence of a greater number of Diaspora in Armenia is changing Armenia's reality, where the Diaspora is becoming more involved in Armenian politics.

#### **2.4. What limits Diaspora Armenians to Run for Political Positions?**

Preceding the discussion whether Armenian Diaspora must directly participate in the politics of Armenia, i.e., through running for political office, and preceding measuring the

desire of Armenian Diaspora for political participation in Armenia, it is important to identify the legal requirements that must be fulfilled to be eligible for attaining political positions. In this regard, the law concerning dual citizenship and durational residency should be studied. As presented in the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (2015), dual citizenship and durational residency can be considered obstacles for Diaspora Armenians to attain political positions (Manougian, 2020).

Who is eligible to become a member of the Parliament in Armenia?

Everyone who has attained the age of twenty-five, has held citizenship of only the Republic of Armenia for the preceding four years, has been permanently residing in the Republic for the preceding four years, has the right of suffrage and has command of the Armenian language, may be elected as a Deputy of the National Assembly.

*(Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, 2015 Article 48)*

The requirements set forth in the Constitution for a Deputy is identical to the requirements for being a member of the Government. The Constitution also provides the requirements for being elected a President of the Republic of Armenia:

Everyone having attained the age of forty, having held citizenship of only the Republic of Armenia for the preceding six years, having been permanently residing in the Republic of Armenia for the preceding six years, having the right of suffrage and having command of the Armenian language may be elected as President of the Republic. *(Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, 2015 Article 124)*

However, in the case of the requirements for local self-government bodies, there is no reference to dual citizenship and durational residency.

Citizens of the Republic of Armenia having attained the age of eighteen on the day of election or referendum shall have the right to elect and be elected during the elections of local self-government bodies, and the right to participate in a local referendum. The law may prescribe the right of persons not holding citizenship of the Republic of Armenia to take part in the elections of local self-government bodies and in local referenda. (*Constitution of the Republic of Armenia*, 2015 Article 48)

These requirements are perceived as being limitations for broader participation of the Armenian Diaspora in the politics of Armenia.

## Chapter Three – Literature Review

### 3.1. Immigration in the Contemporary Literature

*Immigration* is the term used to describe the movement of people from their residential area to settle in another country, whether temporarily or permanently (Kukathas, 2004). *Migration*, in the same manner, refers to a temporary or permanent residential change. While immigration occurs when people cross the borders of a country, in migration there is no distinction placed upon the movement within the political borders of a county or beyond the borders (Lee, 1966). There are a number of reasons that drive people to depart from their country of origin. Some of these reasons are social, economic, and political turbulence conditions, environmental causes, and family reunifications. In the same manner, there are several factors that attract people to a specific foreign country.

Lee studied the causes that impact the decision of migration; he highlighted four important factors: “1. Factors associated with the area of origin. 2. Factors associated with the area of destination. 3. Intervening obstacles. 4. Personal factors” (1966, p. 50). Based on the identified factors, Lee developed the “push and pull theory” of migration. The push and pull theory holds that positive, negative, and neutral factors related to the country of origin and country of destination impact the act of the movement (1966).

With increased numbers of international migration, research in this field has proliferated. According to the United Nations, the number of international migrants increased from 153 million in 1990 to 272 million in 2019 (United Nations, 2019). In further detail,

[g]lobally, the average annual net number of immigrants has increased steadily between 1950-1955 and 2005- 2010 (except for the period 1990-1995), from around 1.2 million per year during 1950-1955 to around 6.4 million per year during 2005-2010 ... It has since declined to around 4.9 million per year during 2015-2020. (United Nations, 2019)

In the contemporary world, the international migration issues divided the scholars into two polarized classes: academics pro-open immigration and others pro restricted immigration. The cosmopolitan scholars are proponents of open political borders. They argue that people need to be provided with just opportunities to enter or leave a country. In the same vein, they state that people should obtain the right and freedom of association (Hidalgo, 2016; Kukathas, 2004). Otherwise, in the case of restricting the act of the movement, individuals are being forced to reside in areas where they confront inequalities and persecution. Immigration restrictions “enable harm to foreigners and curtail their liberties” (Hidalgo, 2016, p. 141). In order to decrease discrimination, international organizations are responsible for developing migration policies (Hidalgo, 2016).

The proponents of close borders, on the other hand, argue that unconstrained movement can impact the cultural, social, and political stability of a country. According to David Miller, societies in a receiving country “want to be able to shape the way that their nation develops, including the values that are contained in the public culture” (2005, p. 200). Nonetheless, it is impossible to restrict migration completely. In this case, Miller’s argument holds that “the most valuable cultures are those that can develop and adapt to new circumstances, including the presence of new subcultures associated with immigrants” (Miller, 2005, p. 200). He distinguishes two concepts: “cultural rigidity” and “cultural continuity.” Based on the interpretation, Miller asserts that immigrants by their presence need not aim to change the overall picture of the culture in the new society, while the host society, in turn, needs to accept certain levels of change where cultural continuity is definite.

Similar to Miller (2005), Wellman (2008) also argues in favor of close borders. If countries, on the biases of the concept of equality and justice, are provided with certain freedoms, including the freedom of movement and the freedom of association, then, in the same way, they should be provided with the right of disassociation (Wellman, 2008).

Whether the scholars support open or closed borders, migration is a global issue in the present times. The evident consequence of migration is cultural change; hence, the adaptation to new societies. In this context, acculturation strategies have attracted broader attention. According to Berry, “[a]cculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (2005, p. 698). Based on two dimensions, which are the immigrants’ will to maintain their original cultural identity in the host society, or their will to be engaged with the host society, Berry developed four acculturation strategies (1997). These strategies include assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization (Berry, 1997, 2005). Berry argues that the conditions in the new country, along with the immigrants’ desire to engage with the new society, shape the adaptation process (1992).

*Assimilation* is one of the strategies of acculturation identified by Berry (1997). Since there is a lack of consensus on a single definition of assimilation, several interpretations are provided in the literature. Hirsch explores the concept and process of assimilation in a study and compares four definitions (1942). Nonetheless, in his study, the most exploratory definition is taken from Sarah E. Simons (Hirsch, 1942). According to Simons, immigrants’ assimilation is the “process of adjustment and accommodation which occurs between the members of different races, if their contact is prolonged and if the necessary psychic conditions are present” (as cited in Hirsch, 1942, p. 35). In Berry’s interpretation of assimilation, the term refers to the will of the migrated societies in denying their original culture and be acquainted with the host culture through intensive interaction (2005).

Another type of acculturation strategy is *integration*. Merriam-Webster defines integration as “the practice of uniting people from different races in an attempt to give people equal rights” (2020). The term integration in the context of immigration is also defined as the “participation [of newcomers] in different sectors of social life that follows a process of

conflict, negotiation, and compromise” (Jacob, 1994, p. 308). Berry indicated that integration occurs when migrants communicate with cultural groups of the host country and at the same time maintain their original cultural identity (2005).

*Separation*, which is contradictory to assimilation, is also a type of acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997). In this strategy, migrants hold firmly to their original culture and avoid communication with the receiving society (Berry, 2005). The final acculturation strategy identified by Berry is *marginalization*, which occurs “when there is little possibility or interest in heritage cultural maintenance ... and little interest in having relations with others” (1997, 2005, p. 705). From the four acculturation strategies, it is specified that the most favorable absorption is integration, the least is marginalization, and the intermediate is separation and assimilation (Berry, 1997; Yijala and Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2010).

### **3.2. Migrant Political Integration**

Political integration of migrants is a new branch in the literature covering the adaptation of foreign citizens in the destination community. Most integration research study the process and consequences of migration from the social and economic perspective; however, political integration with its ambiguity is the core of the recent research. In the contemporary world, i.e., functioning democratic systems, the political integration of migrants constitutes a critical fraction of integration and a matter worth paying attention to.

Nonetheless, there is a lack of consensus in defining political integration and identifying its indicators. According to Morales, “[academic] works have skipped the clear definition of what exactly is political integration or incorporation, how we go about measuring it and, especially, how we identify it when we see it” (2011, p. 20). This idea is also emphasized in Sajir’s paper (2015).

Preceding providing a definition for political integration, it is important to identify the factors that affect the inclusion process:

the will — and ability — of the receiving society to provide opportunities and lift barriers to the involvement of migrants and their descendants on one side, and the ability and willingness of migrants to seize these opportunities through their direct involvement in the society on the other side. (Sajir, 2015, p. 5)

The above-mentioned process is the dynamic of integration on all the distinct levels, be it social, legal, or cultural.

Due to the ambiguity and distinct interpretations of the political integration, it is difficult to conduct empirical research (Sajir, 2015). In this paper, political integration is operationalized as the participation of the immigrants in conventional (elections) and unconventional forms of politics (protests, public meetings, and online political activities). Although party affiliation and activity are core indicators of political interest, they are excluded from the operational definition of political integration of this paper. This is because, practically, it is challenging to get information about Syrian Armenians' party affiliations.

Few scholars (Johnston & Audunson, 2019; such as Strömblad & Adman, 2010) empirically studied political integration. The political participation of migrants in some research was identified by measuring migrants' participation in voting in elections, party activity, signing petitions, and their political interest (Strömblad & Adman, 2010). In Johnston and Audunson's work (2019), on the other hand, political inclusion is studied by observing conversations where immigrants discussed the common issues of the country with the natives.

In most studies covering migrant integration, the importance of the time factor is emphasized. But what about the impact of time on political integration? The time factor is crucial in political integration as well since, over time, the immigrants would get sufficient exposition to the political environment of the new society (Adman & Strömblad, 2018). It is evident that, compared with immigrants, natives obtain more political knowledge and are



more aware of the political development of their country. However, over the years, immigrants get exposed to political developments similar to the natives and experience political life. This, in turn, increases their political participation, hence, facilitating political integration.

Other than the time factor, a study conducted by Bartram (2016) aimed to identify whether the political culture in the country of origin of the migrants impacts their political participation. Contradictory evidence was obtained, which identified that it is the nature of political culture in the destination country which impacts migrants' political participation. Bartram argues that if the political participation of the natives in the destination country is high, then the political participation of the immigrants will be high correspondingly, and vice versa (2016).

Scholars who measure political integration, similar to scholars who study the impact of civil society on political participation (such as Almond & Verba, 1963), highlight the relationship between associational life and political participation. Strömblad and Adman (2010), in this regard, argue that general associational activeness increases the political participation of the immigrants in the destination society. Another concept from civil society theory that is used in political integration studies is Habermas's theory of the public sphere. The public sphere, as a concept, is the ability of people to discuss everyday issues freely (Habermas et al., 1974). In case-based research, Johnston and Audunson (2019) studied the impact of discussion on political integration. They argue that the public sphere increases the political integration of migrants. The distinct methodological approach confirms the absence of a set of fixed criteria to measure political integration.

### **3.3. The Case of Armenia**

#### ***3.3.1. Migration Policy in Armenia***

Migration policy identifies the strategies and responsibilities that governments hold towards the foreign citizens residing within the political borders of their countries. In the same manner, through laws and regulations, migration policy identifies the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of the migrants toward the authorities and society in the destination country.

Armenia is one of the countries that is known for its strong Diaspora communities. However, how Armenia manages migration or repatriation of the Diaspora is another question. In the literature, mainly in the Eastern Armenian language, there are studies examining the migration policy of Armenia and how it impacts the repatriation process of the Diaspora. It is important to mention that in the migration policy of Armenia, there is no distinct strategy for repatriation. Repats, dissimilar to “foreigners,” “returnees,” “internally displaced persons,” “asylum seekers,” “refugees”, and “forced deported persons,” does not constitute a separate category (Տսմազյան et al., 2020, p. 15).

The gap of well-defined migration policy in Armenia is a critical factor that discourages the movement of the Armenian Diaspora (Mkrtchyan, 2008; Stepanyan, 2016). The resettlement of young people and Diaspora professionals not only serves Armenia in terms of human resources rather it also serves in the growth of the labor force. Professionals and young people in any country have an enormous contribution to development and modernization. Nonetheless, as Mkrtchyan argues, in Armenia, “there is not an national agreement on basic values and maintaining rich and interesting diversities of West and East Armenians” (2008, p. 23).

Few researchers state that a repatriation policy is important in order to preserve the Armenian identity. According to Stepanyan (2016) and Tanajyan et al. (2020), Armenian

communities worldwide are fronting assimilation challenges. While this argument could be valid in the case of most Armenian communities in the West, US, and Canada, it should be carefully examined in terms of Diaspora communities in the Middle East. In this context, Karapetyan (2015) states that the repatriation could cause a threat to the survival of the Armenian communities in their home countries. In the case of the migration of Syrian Armenians, the community is losing the human resources which play an important role in maintaining the Western Armenian language, culture, and traditions in Syria and other Diaspora communities (Կարապետյան, 2015).

The development and implementation of a repatriation policy are also fundamental to eliminate the integration obstacles (Harutyunyan, 2010; Հովսեփյան, 2017). Most of the Diaspora migrants lack sufficient knowledge about everyday life in Armenia. There is a lack of awareness about the economy and social condition of the country, the legislation of Armenia, and the employment conditions and environment (Mkrtchyan, 2008; Հովսեփյան, 2017). In order to introduce the potential migrants to life in Armenia, the government should develop certain strategies and policies.

Stepanyan (2016) identified a few programs initiated by then the Ministry of Diaspora to attract the Diaspora and increase their awareness about the realities in Armenia. “Ari Tun” – a program which invited young people from Diaspora to discover Armenia –, “Hayern Aysor” – an online newspaper available in different languages –, “tundardz.am” – a portal that introduced the legal requirements for relocation – are some of the projects that enhanced the interaction between Diaspora and Armenia (Stepanyan, 2016).

In the same manner, Harutyunyan (2010) argues that by ensuring the government’s assistance to the migrants and introducing the services it provides, the migration process could be facilitated. The government should provide facilities in terms of accommodation, health-care services, education, employment, and more (Harutyunyan, 2010). Nonetheless,

the efforts of the Armenian government are limited in developing a repatriation policy (Mkrtchyan, 2008; Stepanyan, 2016). This restriction is related to the lack of budgetary resources of the government and “deficiencies in the labor market” (Stepanyan, 2016). Hovyan (2017), on the other hand, draws attention to the Diaspora organizations, implying that they also play a critical role in developing and implementing repatriation strategies.

The recent examination of the migration policy in Armenia by Tanajyan et al. (2015) implies that repatriation policy is not included in the forthcoming migration strategies of the government. Furthermore, neither the word ‘repatriation’ nor ‘Diaspora’ is mentioned in the “2021-2031 Strategy of the Migration Policy of Armenia on the Regulation of Integration and Reintegration Issues” (Տանազյան et al., 2020).

### ***3.3.2. Existing Research on Syrian Armenians’ Immigration in Armenia and Integration Challenges***

Over the past decade, spontaneous immigration of the Armenian Diaspora to the motherland has increased. However, with the immigration of Syrian Armenians, numerous independent (Կարապետյան, 2015; Հակոբյան-Գայանե, 2016, 2019; Միրզոյան & Հակոբյան, 2017; Ներսիսյան & Տանազյան, 2015) and institutional-based studies (CRRC Armenia, 2017; Open Society Foundations, 2017; Tanajyan, 2018; Տանազյան et al., 2020) were conducted to examine the capabilities of the Armenia government and the immigration challenges.

Based on the experience of Syrian Armenians in Armenia, several scholars identified housing and lack of employment to be leading problems of immigration in Armenia (Aleksanyan, 2014; Open Society Foundations, 2017; Toghramadjian, 2018; Հակոբյան Ա., 2017; Ներսիսյան & Տանազյան, 2015; Տանազյան et al., 2020). The absence of a working strategy to solve the accommodation problem, to a great degree, influence the immigrants’, in this case, Syrian Armenians’, decision and motivation whether to continue residing in the motherland

or leave the country (Միրզոյան & Հակոբյան, 2017). Additionally, the lack of adequate policy concerning the accommodation of immigrants can lead the Syrian Armenians to fall into poverty (Toghramadjian, 2018).

Employment is another big challenge for Syrian Armenians in Armenia. The needs of Armenia's labor market and the skills that Syrian Armenians obtain do not always match. In this regard, the primary obstacle is to find an adequate job that matches the Syrian Armenians qualification (Գրիգորյան, 2018). Syrian Armenians with higher education find more difficulties in the job market. According to Tanajyan, “[Syrian Armenians] with higher education can hardly find a fitting employment in Armenia” (2018, p. 7). Data provided by the CRRC report also demonstrates that the “employment rate [of Syrian Armenians] was the highest among those with vocational education (74.1%)” (2017, p. 33).

The immigration challenges are not limited to accommodation and employment; education and health services are also big issues (CRRC Armenia, 2017). In addition, the procedures of official documentations, socioeconomic change, communication, sociocultural differences (Տսևազյան et al., 2020), and legal problems (Հակոբյան Ա., 2017) are all considered to be immigration challenges and obstacles during the wider adaptation process.

Besides the challenges, there are a few studies conducted to measure the immigration consequences of Syrian Armenians on the economy of Armenia. The CRRC Report (2017) and the CRU Report (Uzelac & Meester, 2018) provides statistical analysis concerning the impact of Syrian Armenians residing in Armenia on the economy of the country and their engagement in the labor market. CRU Report, in this context, state that the Syrian Armenians mainly succeeded in the food services contributing to the GDP growth: “GDP and employment in the [food services] sector rose by a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14,8% and 5,4% respectively between 2013 and 2016” (Uzelac & Meester, 2018, p. 36).

Research covering the Syrian Armenian immigration period predominantly discussed the economic and social challenges. Since this thesis measures the political integration of Syrian Armenians, it is also important to look into studies that examined the political participation of Syrian Armenians in Armenia.

### ***3.3.3. Political Participation and Integration of Syrian Armenians in Armenia***

Hakobyan (2016) studied the political engagement of Syrian Armenians in Armenia, arguing that political involvement is crucial in becoming a full Armenian citizen. By comparing the political culture and participation of Syrian Armenians in Syria and Armenia, Hakobyan (2016) argues that since the political environment in Armenia is different Syrian Armenians have two options: either they will be integrated into the political life of Armenia, or they will be separated from the political reality.

An important point from Hakobyan's (2016) study is that those Syrian Armenian immigrants who have party affiliations are slightly more interested in politics. Political participation and integration are also studied by Mirzoyan and Hakobyan (2017). They describe Syrian Armenians' political integration indicating that neutrality and being distanced from politics in Armenia is due to certain factors related to the country of origin and general interest. The political culture in Syria, the lack of knowledge of Armenia's politics, and the lack of political interest, in general, are seen as important reasons that limit the political participation and engagement of Syrian Armenians in Armenia (Միրզոյան & Հակոբյան, 2017).

In order to increase the Diaspora Armenians political participation, in general, Cheterian (2021) argues that Diaspora communities at first hand need to be engaged in politics in their home country and be informed about their responsibilities towards the homeland. Cheterian emphasizes that the Diaspora should contribute to the politics in Armenia but not "replace" it (2021).

Diaspora should become simultaneously more political, but also know the limits of the scope of its political activities. To become partners, Diaspora institutions should not try to “replace” the state in Armenia, neither by attempting to take over some of its functions, nor attempting to take over the leadership role in Armenia. (Cheterian, 2021).

In the scope of this study, some political parties, charitable organizations and, NGOs identified that can enhance the community activities and participation of Syrian Armenians in politics in Armenia. These include:

1. «ALEPPO» Compatriotic Charitable Organization
2. Armenian Democratic Liberal Party
3. Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU)
4. Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF)
5. Center for Coordination of Syrian Armenians' Issues
6. Social democratic Hunchakian Party
7. Syrian Armenians Union NGO
8. Tekeyan Centre Fund – Armenia

## Chapter Four – Methodology

### 4.1. Research Design and Sample

This study is explanatory in its nature as it describes the immigration consequences of Syrian Armenians to Armenia from a political perspective. While several studies attempted to measure the social and economic absorption of Syrian Armenians and the impact of this inclusion on the local community, the primary focus of this thesis is to explore the political engagement of the immigrants. It is argued that the time factor plays a crucial role in the process of absorption; therefore, in order to identify the degree to which Syrian Armenians are integrated into the political life of the Republic of Armenia after approximately ten years of immigration, the impact of Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020 on the political inclusion of Syrian Armenians, and the attitude of local Armenians towards the participation of Diaspora in the politics of the Republic of Armenia both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (interviews) methods were employed.

For collecting the quantitative data of this study, Syrian Armenians in Armenia were asked to complete an online questionnaire during February 2021. The questionnaire was created using the Google forms in both English and Western Armenian languages (see Appendix 1) and distributed online due to the current pandemic situation. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to reach the survey participants. Facebook groups and pages, i.e., Aleppo Compatriotic Charitable Organization NGO, Syrian Armenian Union NGO, and Armenian Repatriates Network, posted the link of the survey questionnaire. The link was also shared on the Facebook and Instagram pages of the researcher. In some cases, Syrian Armenians were also contacted personally. In addition, several participants, in their turn, shared the survey link with other Syrian Armenians.

The survey participants completed a questionnaire that consisted of four sections. Before starting the survey, the respondents were informed that their participation is voluntary



and that anonymity is fully protected. In the first section, demographic and personal information were requested, including the respondents' immigration year, the status of Armenian citizenship, and intention to stay or leave Armenia. Respondents' satisfaction level regarding different aspects of life in Armenia and their contemplation about the level of their integration with the social, economic, and political life of Armenia were asked in the second section. The questionnaire also focused on the political participation of Syrian Armenians. In the next two sections, questions related to the political engagement of Syrian Armenians both in Syria and Armenia were asked, respectively. The respondents indicated how frequently they participated in political demonstrations, public meetings, and civic activities in both countries.

Furthermore, in the case of political participation in Armenia, the respondents were asked to reflect whether they participated in specific political events, including elections and demonstrations. This section was divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section included a set of questions related to respondents' participation in the political life of Armenia from 2013 to 2016, the second sub-section covered the incidents of 2017 and 2018, and finally, the third sub-section focused on the political developments of Armenia from 2019 until the present. This division is to understand the political development over time and the impact of political incidents on immigration. It also allowed immigrants to skip the questions according to their immigration year.

The total number of survey participants was 149, from which 140 respondents completed the questionnaire in Western Armenian, and nine respondents completed it in English. The quantitative data analysis was conducted by using the PSPP - statistical analysis tool to identify descriptive statistics and conduct inferential statistical tests.

Concerning the qualitative method, online semi-structured interviews were conducted with Syrian (see Appendix 2 for interview guidelines) and local Armenians (see Appendix 3

for interview guidelines) over a three-week period in February-March 2021. The semi-structured interviews were administered using Zoom Video Communications due to the pandemic situation. For interviews with Syrian Armenians, a purposive sampling method was employed. While there were some participants who showed their interest in the topic and their willingness to participate in the interviews by leaving their email addresses at the end of the survey questionnaire, there were others who were contacted personally. This is because the aim was to interview Syrian Armenians from different party or social organization affiliations, age groups, immigration year, and cities they lived in Syria.

Local Armenians were also interviewed via Zoom Video Communications. Similar to the Syrian Armenians, the interviews were administered in Spring 2021. The sampling methods used for the local Armenian interviews were purposive and snowball. Regarding the purposive sampling, respondents were chosen based on their educational background (those who obtained or are in programs of political science and international affairs, and others with no political background), age groups and acquaintance with Syrian Armenians. Snowball sample was used to increase the number of participants and to fill in gaps in sampling strategy, left by purposive sample. The overall guiding principle of the sampling strategy for both Syrian and local Armenians was to maximize the diversity of study participants in regard to the sampling criteria identified and described above (age, immigration year, education, and so on).

Before conducting the interviews, both with Syrian and local Armenians, the participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded for the purpose of thorough analysis, anonymity is fully protected, the data provided is confidential, and the information will be used for the purpose of this study only. The respondents orally consented by agreeing to participate, and they provided permission for recording the data. The length of the interviews was up to 25-30 minutes. Overall, twenty-two people participated in the

interviews, from which fourteen were Syrian Armenians, and eight were local Armenians.

The qualitative analysis approach was inductive, and the data was analyzed thematically by identifying patterns and categories.

## Chapter Five – Results

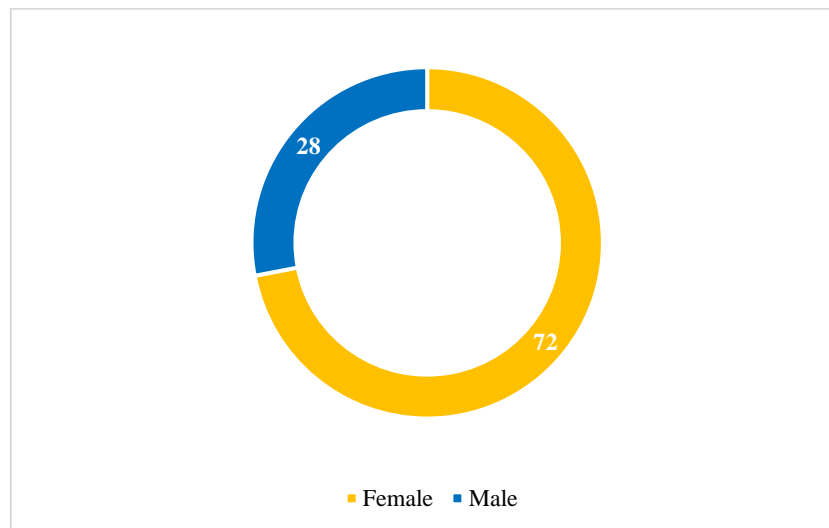
### 5.1. Analysis of Quantitative Data

#### 5.1.1. Descriptive Characteristics of the Survey Participants

The first part of the findings presents the descriptive characteristics of the survey participants. The total number of Syrian Armenians who completed the survey questionnaire is 149, where female participants are 108, and male are 41 (see Figure 1). The average age of participants is 32 years, and they ranged from 18 to 83 years of age (see Table 1). As shown in Table 2, 73 percent of the participants moved to Armenia between 2011 and 2015, 21 percent between 2016 and 2020, and only five percent moved between 1998 and 2010.

Figure 1

#### *Gender Distribution*



*Note.* Total number of participants is 149. The percentage results are rounded.

Table 1  
*Age Range of the Participants*

Age	Respondents	Percentage
18-24	50	34
25-34	56	38
35-44	18	12
45-54	8	5
55+	17	11

*Note.* Total number of participants is 149. The percentage results are rounded.

Table 2  
*Immigration Year of the Participants*

Immigration Year	Respondents	Percentage
1998-2010	8	5
2011-2015	109	73
2016-2020	32	21

*Note.* Total number of participants is 149. The percentage results are rounded.

Table 3 presents the educational background and employment status of the respondents. Among the participants, cumulatively 78 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with cumulatively 23 percent who attended middle, high, or vocational school. In terms of employment status, employed and self-employed participants cumulatively constituted 58 percent of the responses, unemployed participants constituted 19 percent, and those who are looking for a job constituted 10 percent. Additionally, the participants who are students constituted eight percent of the responses, and only five percent are retirees or chose the other option.

In the survey, the participants were asked about their Armenian citizenship status. The results indicate that most of the participants, 81 percent, hold Armenian citizenship, 13 percent hold a special residency passport of Armenia, three percent are planning to apply for Armenian citizenship, and cumulatively another three percent of participants either have

applied for Armenian citizenship, not planning to apply, or do not hold the Armenian citizenship. Considering the intention of the participants to stay in Armenia, Figure 2 shows that for 44 percent of the respondents, Armenia is a permanent resident country. Another 44 percent mentioned that they had not decided yet whether to stay in or leave Armenia. For the remaining 12 percent, Armenia is a temporary resident country; in other words, Armenia is a transit country.

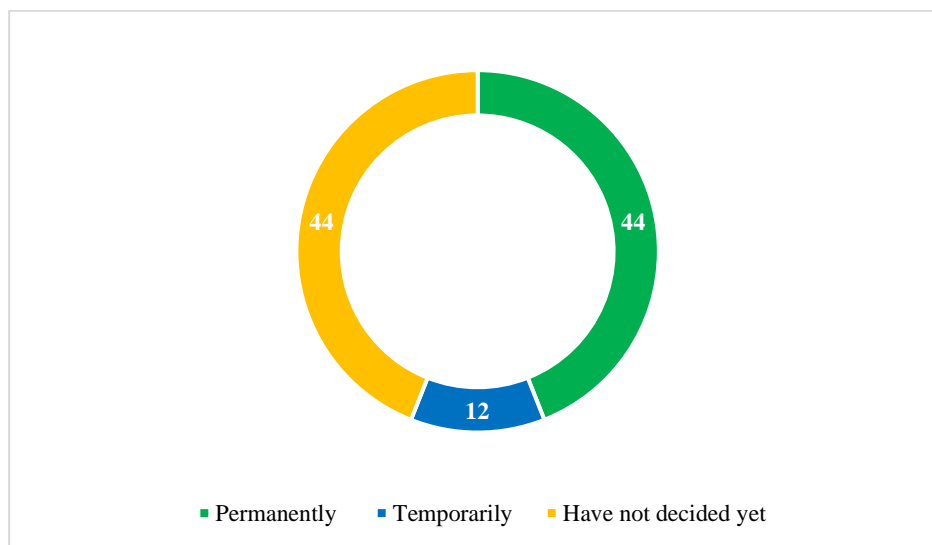
Table 3

*Descriptive Characteristics of the Participants*

Demographics	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Education</b>		
Middle School	4	3
High School	16	11
Vocational School	13	9
Bachelor	88	59
Masters	27	18
Doctorate	1	1
<b>Employment</b>		
Employed	67	45
Unemployed	28	19
Self-employed	20	13
Looking for a job	15	10
Studying	12	8
Retired / Other	7	5

*Note:* All 149 participants of the survey answered the questions related to the Education and Employment. The percentage results are rounded.

Figure 2

*Intention of the Participants to Stay in Armenia*

*Note.* Total number of responses is 142. The percentage results are rounded.

Table 4

*Armenian Citizenship Status of the Participants*

Citizenship Status	Respondents	Percentage
I hold Armenian citizenship	121	81
I hold a special residency passport of Armenian	19	13
I am planning to apply for the Armenian citizenship	4	3
Other	5	3

*Note.* Total number of responses is 149. The category other consists of one response indicating that the participant has applied for an Armenian citizenship, another one response indicating that the participant is not planning to apply, and three responses indicating that the participants do not hold the Armenian citizenship. The percentage results are rounded.

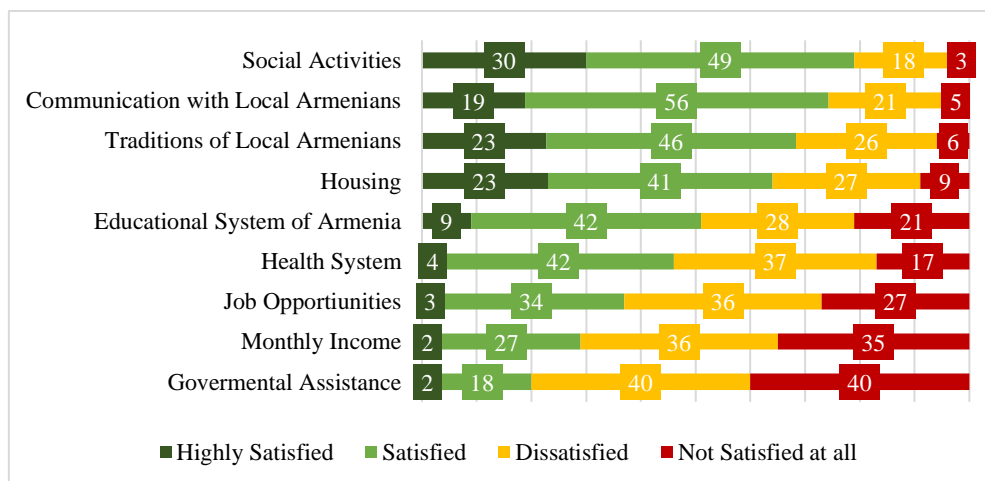
### 5.1.2. Immigration Experience of Syrian Armenians in Armenia

In the second section of the survey questionnaire, based on self-assessment principle, the participants were requested to reflect on their satisfaction level with different life aspects in Armenia. The level of satisfaction was measured on a scale of one to four, where one indicated that the participants are not satisfied at all, two dissatisfied, three satisfied, and four highly satisfied. The findings revealed that Syrian Armenians are mostly satisfied with the social activities in Armenia, as the mean value is 3.07, the highest compared with other aspects of life. The Syrian Armenians are also relatively satisfied with the life in Armenia in terms of communicating with local Armenians, traditions of local Armenians, and the housing system, with mean values of 2.89, 2.85, and 2.79, respectively (see Table 5).

Table 5 also shows that the Syrian Armenians are less satisfied with the educational (mean value 2.40) and health system (mean value 2.34) of Armenia. It also indicates that the immigrants are dissatisfied with life in Armenia in terms of job opportunities, monthly income, and governmental assistance, with mean values of 2.13, 1.96, and 1.83, respectively. A detailed description of all satisfaction questions is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3

#### *Levels of Satisfaction of Syrian Armenians with Different Aspects of Life in Armenia*



*Note.* Total number of responses is 149. The percentage results are rounded.



Table 5

*Mean Values of Syrian Armenians' Satisfaction with Different Aspects of life in Armenia on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very satisfied)*

Different Aspects	Mean Values
Social activities	3.07
Communication with local Armenians	2.89
Traditions of local Armenians	2.85
Housing	2.79
Educational system of Armenia	2.40
Health system of Armenia	2.34
Job opportunities	2.13
Monthly income	1.96
Governmental assistance	1.83

*Note.* Total number of responses is 149.

In order to study the perception of Syrian Armenians in terms of their social, economic, and political integration in Armenia, the survey questionnaire provided a question for self-assessment. The participants, on a scale of one to four, indicated their integration level. One meant that they are not integrated at all, two not integrated, three integrated, and four highly integrated. The findings revealed that Syrian Armenians, based on self-assessment principle, are more integrated socially, compared with the integration in the fields of economy and politics. The mean value for the social integration is 3.04, where it is 2.46

and 2.08 for the economic and political integration, respectively (see Table 6). For a detailed description of the Syrian Armenians' perspective in terms of their social, economic, and political integration, see Figure 4.

Table 6

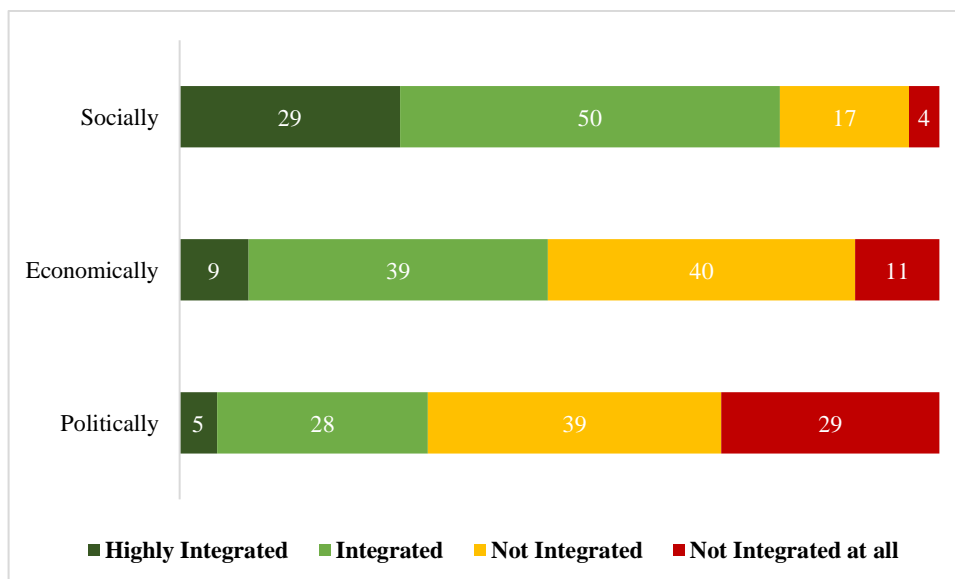
*Mean Values of Syrian Armenians' Preceptive in Terms of their Integration in the New Society on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 4 (highly integrated)*

Integration	Mean Values
Socially	3.04
Economically	2.46
Politically	2.08

*Note.* Total number of responses is 149.

Figure 4

*Perspective of Syrian Armenians in Terms of Social, Economic, and Political Integration*

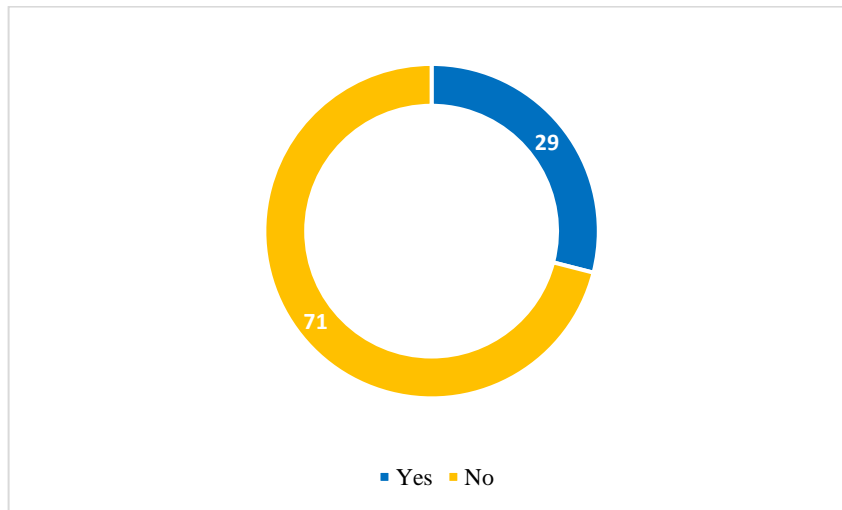


*Note.* Total number of responses is 149. The percentage results are rounded.

The Syrian Armenians were also asked to reflect whether or not they are a member of a non-governmental organization in Armenia. The total number of responses for this question was 144, from which 29 percent responded yes, and 71 percent responded no (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

*Membership in a Non-Governmental Organization in Armenia*



*Note.* Total number of responses is 144. The percentage results are rounded.

### ***5.1.3. Political Participation of Syrian Armenians in Syria***

The third section of the survey questionnaire assessed the respondents' political involvement in Syria by measuring their participation in political demonstrations, public meetings, civic activities, and elections. The level of participation was measured on a scale of one to four, where one indicated that respondents did not participate (or attend) at all, two rarely participated (attended), three infrequently participated (attended), and four actively participated (attended).

The findings implies that the respondents participated in civic activities relatively infrequently with a mean value of 2.38. In the same manner, they participated relatively infrequently in elections with a mean value of 2.31. In terms of public meetings and political demonstrations, the data shows that most of the respondents did not participate or attend public meetings and political demonstrations, with mean values of 1.33 and 1.13, respectively

(see Table 7). It is important to mention that for the variable “elections,” all the cases with an age range of 18 to 26 were eliminated. This is because those who were under 18 years of age at the time of their immigration were not eligible to participate in elections in Syria.

Figure 6 presents further detail for political participation of Syrian Armenians in Syria. The question related to the political demonstrations indicates that 90 of the survey respondents did not participate in political demonstrations at all; eight percent rarely participated, i.e., once or twice, and only two percent infrequently participated, i.e., a few times (see Figure 6). Similar results were obtained for respondents’ participation in the public meetings. Most of the participants, 79 percent, reported that they did not attend public meetings at all, 10 percent rarely attended, and nine percent infrequently attended. Only one percent reported that they actively attended public meetings (see Figure 6).

Table 7

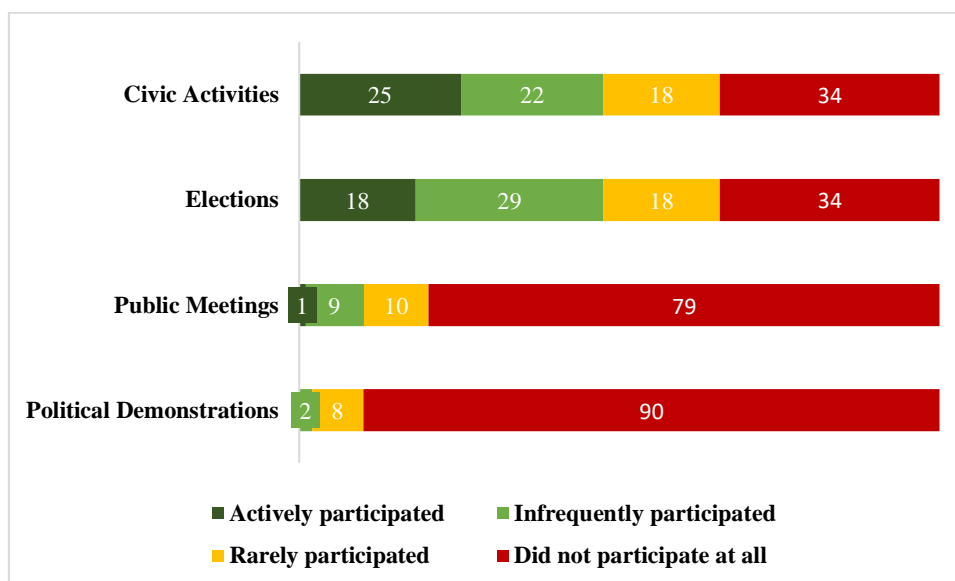
*Mean Values of Syrian Armenians’ Political Participation in Syria on a scale from 1 (did not participate) to 4 (actively participated)*

Political Activities	N	Mean Values
Civic Activities	148	2.38
Elections	82	2.31
Public Meetings	140	1.33
Political Demonstrations	144	1.13

Detailed results considering the question related to the civic activities are also presented in Figure 6, which shows that 34 percent of the participants reported that they did not participate in civic activities at all, 25 percent actively participated, 22 percent infrequently, and 18 percent rarely participated.

Another factor that implies political involvement is participation in elections. The respondents were asked to reflect how frequently they participated in elections in Syria. Based on the finding, 53 percent of the respondents did not participate at all, 18 percent infrequently participated, and another 18 percent rarely participated. Only 11 percent of the respondents reported that they actively participated in elections in Syria (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

*Political Participation of Syrian Armenians in Syria*

*Note.* Total number of responses for the question of civic activities is 148; elections 82; public meetings 140; political demonstrations 144. The percentage results are rounded.

The survey questionnaire also included questions that imply the respondents' political interest to some extent. In this regard, Table 8 portrays the respondents' frequency in following the local Syrian news and the Armenian news in Syria. The findings indicated that 32 percent of the participants followed the local Syrian news daily, 29 percent two-three times a month, 21 percent two-three times a week, and 18 percent did not follow at all. In

terms of the Armenian news, 31 percent followed the news two-three times a month, 24 percent daily, another 24 percent two-three times a week, and 22 percent did not follow at all.

Table 8

*Frequency of Following News in Syria*

Frequency	Syrian local news	Armenian news
Daily	32	24
Two-three times a week	21	24
Two-three times a month	29	31
Did not follow at all	18	22
Total number of respondents	147	144

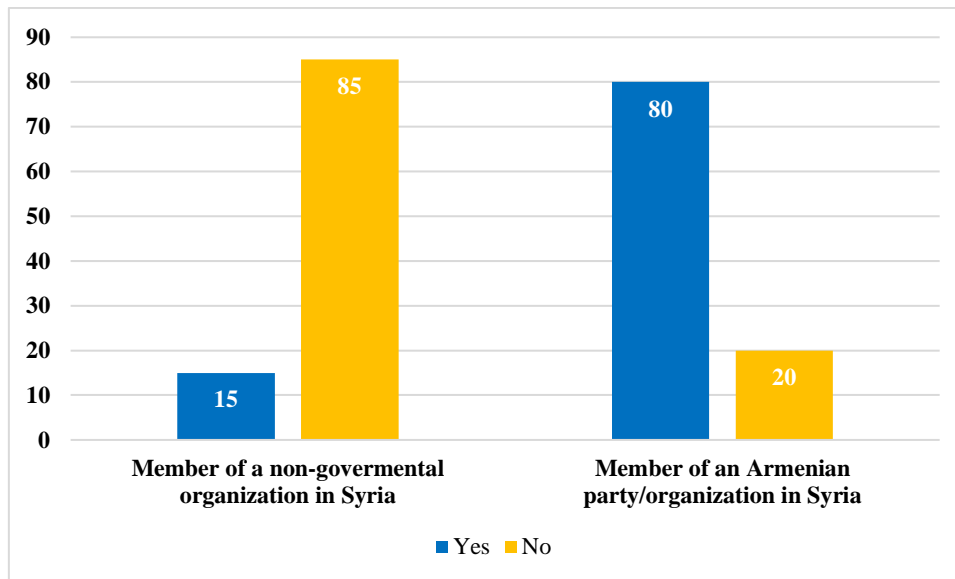
*Note.* The percentage results are rounded.

In order to understand whether the respondents were exposed to environments that encourage political participation, they were asked to reflect whether or not they were a member of a local non-governmental organization and whether or not they were a member of an Armenian party or organization in Syria. Figure 7 shows that only 15 percent of the participants were members of a local non-governmental organization in Syria, while 80 percent were members of an Armenian party or organization.

The final two questions in this section aimed to assess the survey respondents' frequency in sharing political news and posting political comments on their social media pages when living in Syria. According to Table 9, most of the participants, 73 percent, did not share political news at all. In the same manner, Table 10 revealed that 80 percent of the participants did not post a political comment at all.

Figure 7

*Comparison: Membership of Syrian Armenians in a Local Non-Governmental Organization and in an Armenian Party/Organization*



*Note.* Total number of responses for the question related to the membership in a local non-governmental organization is 146, while it is 142 for the membership in an Armenian party/organization. The percentage results are rounded.

Table 9

*The Frequency of Sharing Political News on Social Media in Syria*

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Actively shared	6	4
Infrequently shared	14	10
Rarely shared	20	14
Did not share at all	106	73

*Note.* Total number of responses is 146. The percentage results are rounded.

Table 10

*The Frequency of Posting Political Comments on Social Media in Syria*

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Actively posted	3	2
Infrequently posted	8	5
Rarely posted	18	12
Did not post at all	118	80

*Note.* Total number of responses is 147. The percentage results are rounded.

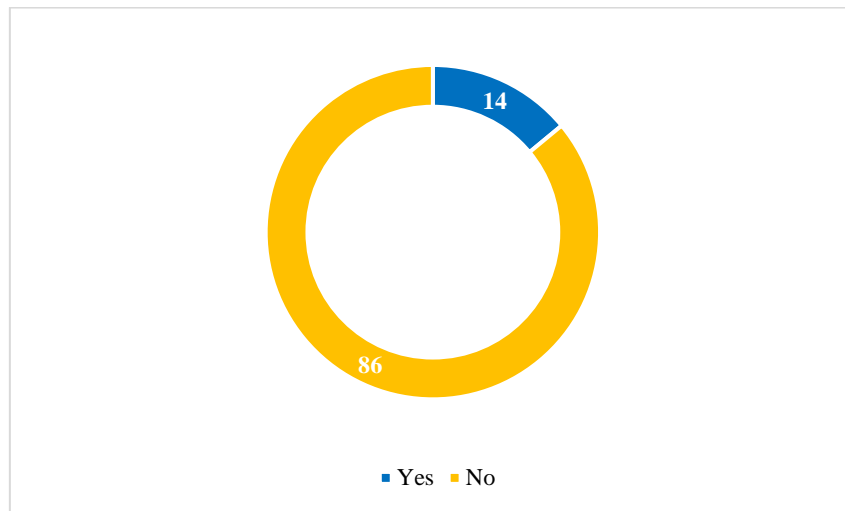
**5.1.4. Political Involvement of the Syrian Armenians in the Republic of Armenia**

The questions in section four attempted to understand the degree to which Syrian Armenian immigrants participated in politics in Armenia over time. Respondents were asked to report whether or not they voted in the presidential elections of 2013, the constitutional referendum of 2015, and parliamentary elections of 2017. To analyze participation in elections, only the eligible cases were selected, i.e., the respondents who hold an Armenian citizenship and were 18 years old in the year of the election. Figures 8, 9, and 10 portray the findings. Most of the respondents, 86 percent, did not vote in the presidential elections of 2013. In the same manner, 88 percent did not vote in the constitutional referendum of 2015, and 84 percent did not vote in the parliamentary elections of 2017.



Figure 8

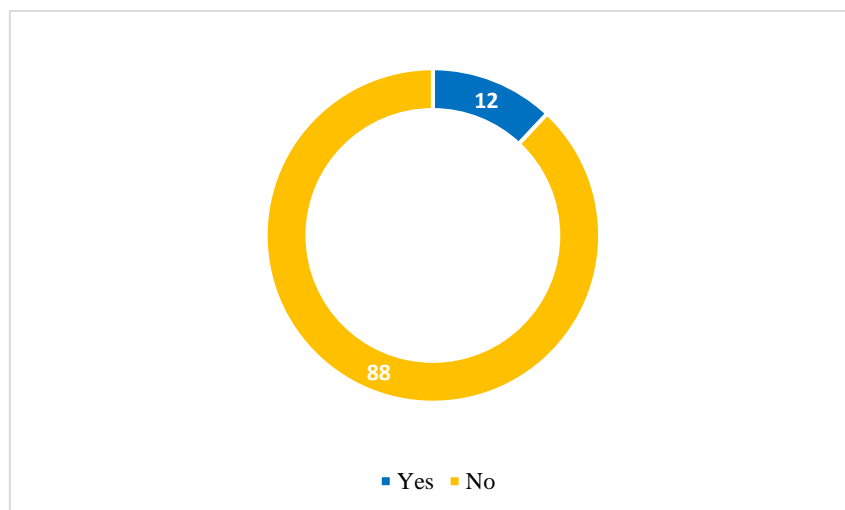
*Participation in the Presidential Elections of 2013*



*Note.* Total number of responses is 100.

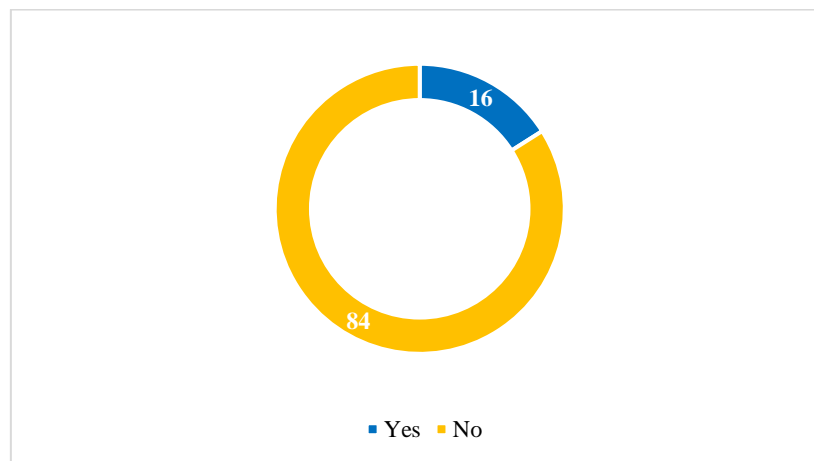
Figure 9

*Participation in the Constitutional Referendum of 2015*



*Note.* Total number of responses is 101. The percentage results are rounded.

Figure 10

*Participation in the Parliamentary Elections of 2017*

*Note.* Total number of responses is 102. The percentage results are rounded.

The participants were asked to reflect on the degree to which they were aware of the Armenian political developments during the period of the four-day war in Nagorno Karabakh in 2016. The responses indicated that 41 percent of the participants were not aware of the Armenian politics during the four-day war of Nagorno Karabakh in 2016, 34 percent were somewhat aware, 16 percent were very aware, and only nine percent were not aware at all.

Table 11

*Syrian Armenians' Awareness about the Armenian Politics during the Period of the Four-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh 2016*

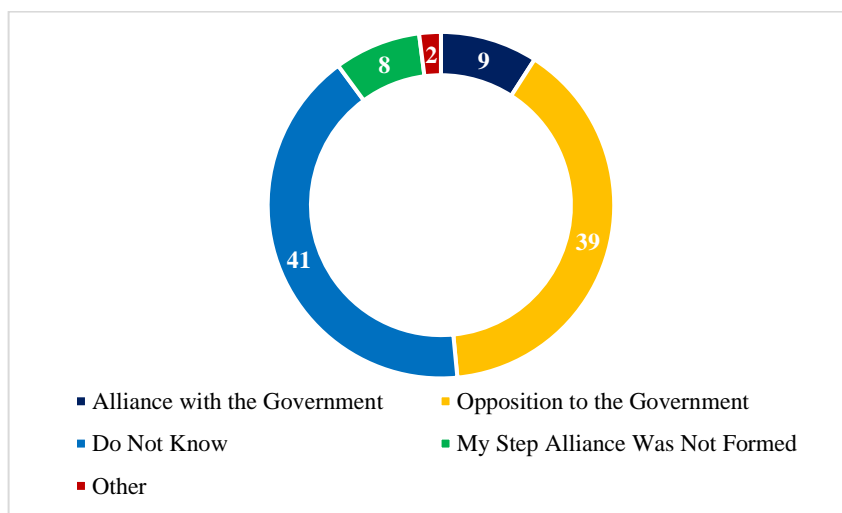
Level of Awareness	Respondents	Percentage
Very aware	17	16
Somewhat aware	37	34
Not very aware	44	41
Not aware at all	10	9

*Note.* Total number of responses is 108. The percentage results are rounded.

Nevertheless, in order to assess the validity of the previous question, the participants were asked about the political position of My Step Alliance in 2016. Figure 11 shows that only eight percent of the participant reported that My Step Alliance was not formed in 2016. This figure does not match the results of the respondents' awareness about the Armenia's politics in 2016, where cumulatively 50 percent reported that they are somewhat or very aware of the Armenia's politics during Nagorno Karabakh's four-day war 2016.

Figure 11

*Syrian Armenians' Responses about the Political Position of My Step Alliance in 2016*



*Note.* Total number of responses is 97. The percentage results are rounded.

The respondents were also asked about their participation during the Nagorno Karabakh war of 2016. Table 12 shows the answer to the question of "How did you participate during the Nagorno-Karabakh four-day war of 2016?" The respondents were given the possibility to select more than one option. Of the total number of survey participants, 75 respondents answered this question. As shown in Table 12, the respondents who reported that they participated by providing good donations constitute 59 percent of the total respondents; the option financial donation was selected by 44 percent of the total

respondents; 33 percent of the total respondents admitted that they volunteered during the Nagorno Karabakh war of 2016, and the other option was selected by 4 percent of the total participants.

Table 12

*Syrian Armenians' Participation during Nagorno-Karabakh Four-Day war of 2016*

Participation	Number of responses	Percentage
Goods donation	44	59
Financial donation	33	44
Volunteering	25	33
Other	3	4

*Note.* Total number of the respondents is 75. The percentage results are rounded.

Participation in the protests of April-May 2018 is also considered to be a robust indicator of the Syrian Armenians' involvement in Armenian politics. Therefore, the survey included a question in this context to assess the degree of the Syrian Armenians' political participation in the period mentioned above. According to the results, 56 percent of the respondents did not participate in the protests at all. On the other hand, 15 percent of the respondents rarely participated, another 15 percent infrequently participated, and yet another 15 percent actively participated (see Table 13).

Concerning the question "How often did you follow the local Armenian news during the protests in 2018?", most of the participants, 69 percent, mentioned that they followed the news on a daily basis, and only eight percent reported that they did not follow the news at all (see Table 14).

Table 13

*Syrian Armenians' Participation in the Protests in April-May 2018*

Participation	Respondents	Percentage
Actively participated	18	15
Infrequently participated	18	15
Rarely participated	18	15
Did not participate at all	69	56

*Note.* Total number of responses is 123. The percentage results are rounded.

Table 14

*The Frequency of Following the Local News in Armenia during the Protests in 2018*

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Daily	86	69
Two-three times a week	21	17
Two-three times a month	7	6
Did not follow at all	10	8

*Note.* Total number of responses is 124. The percentage results are rounded.

The same self-assessment question, i.e., the question considering the respondents' awareness of politics in Armenia, was also asked for the time period of 2018. The result implied that cumulatively, 76 percent of the respondents think that in 2018 they were somewhat or very aware of Armenian politics.

Table 15

*Syrian Armenians' Awareness about the Armenian Politics in 2018*

Level of Awareness	Respondents	Percentage
Very aware	32	26
Somewhat aware	60	50
Not very aware	23	19
Not aware at all	6	5

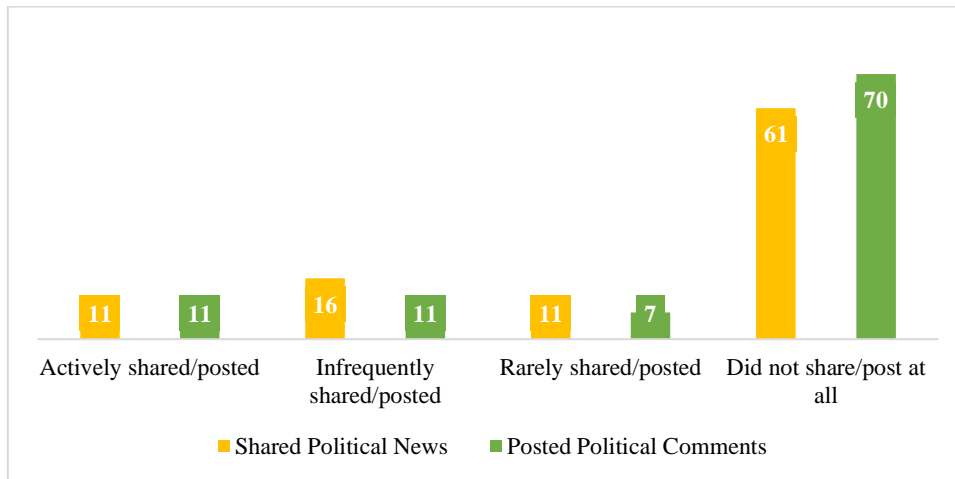
*Note.* Total number of responses is 121. The percentage results are rounded.

Besides the questions related to participation in protests and political awareness in 2018, the respondents were also asked to reflect on their online political activities during the same period. The data below implied that 70 percent of the participants did not post political comments in 2018. In the same manner, 61 percent did not share political news at all (see Figure 12).

Furthermore, in order to assess whether or not there is a change in terms of participation during the elections, the respondents were asked to report whether they voted in the snap parliamentary elections of 2018. Figure 13 shows that 36 percent of the participant voted in contrast to 64 percent. This finding indicates that there is an increase in the percentage of the respondents who voted in elections.

Figure 12

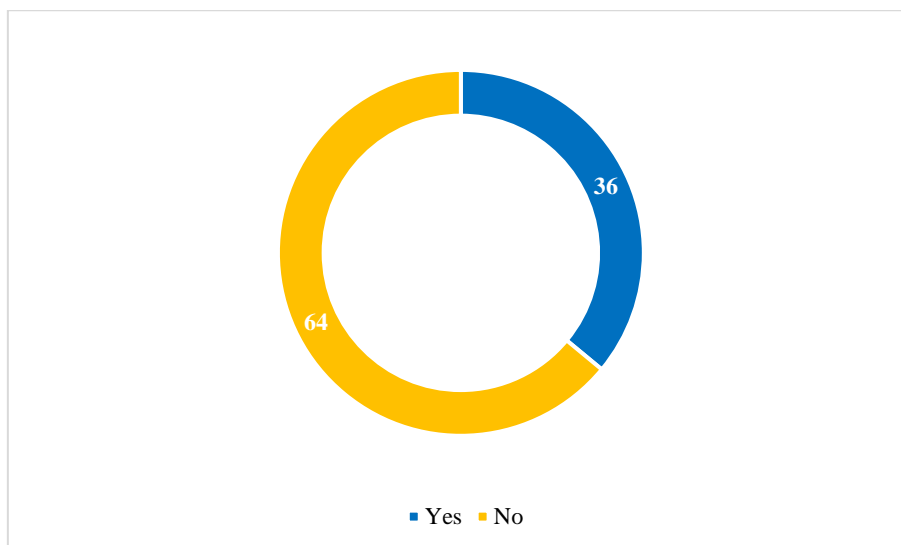
*Frequency of Sharing Political News and Posting Political Comments on Social Media Pages in 2018*



*Note.* Total number of responses for the question related to the frequency of sharing political news is 123, while it is 122 for the frequency of posting political comments. The percentage results are rounded.

Figure 13

*Participation in the Snap Parliamentary Elections of 2018*



*Note.* Total number of responses is 103. The percentage results are rounded.

In order to obtain information about the very recent political activeness of the Syrian Armenians, the survey questionnaire also covered questions related to the respondents' involvement during the Nagorno Karabakh war of 2020. Table 16 presented the answers to the question related to the respondents' participation during the Nagorno Karabakh war of 2020. The total number of respondents for this question was 135. The respondents were given the possibility to select more than one option. According to the data, 73 percent of the total number of respondents participated through good donation, 68 percent of the total participants contributed through financial donation, 44 percent of the total respondents volunteered, 16 percent of the total respondents organized donations, 6 percent of the total number of respondents participated through blood donation, and 5 percent of the total respondents mentioned other participation approaches.

Table 16

*Syrian Armenians' Participation during Nagorno of 2020*

Participation	Number of responses	Percentage
Goods donation	98	73
Financial donation	92	68
Volunteering	60	44
Organizing donations	22	16
Blood donation	8	6
Other	7	5

*Note.* Total number of the respondents is 135. The percentage results are rounded.

Similar to the previous questions related to the frequency of following local Armenian news and awareness about Armenian politics in 2018, the survey participants were asked to



answer relevant questions for the time period of 2020. Thus, Tables 17 and 18 show the respondents' frequency of following the local Armenian news and the level of political awareness during the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020, respectively. According to the data, the vast majority of the respondents followed the news with a percentage of 97. In the same manner, cumulatively, most of the respondents reported that they were somewhat or very aware of Armenian politics during the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020, with a percentage of 51 and 39, respectively.

Table 17

*The Frequency of Following the Local News in Armenia during the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020*

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Daily	143	97
Two-three times a week	1	1
Two-three times a month	1	1
Did not follow at all	2	1

*Note.* Total number of responses is 147. The percentage results are rounded.

Concerning online political activeness, cumulatively, 47 percent of the respondents reported that they actively or infrequently shared political news during the Nagorno Karabakh war of 2020. On the other hand, cumulatively, 35 percent of the respondents mentioned that they actively or infrequently posted political comments on their social media pages.

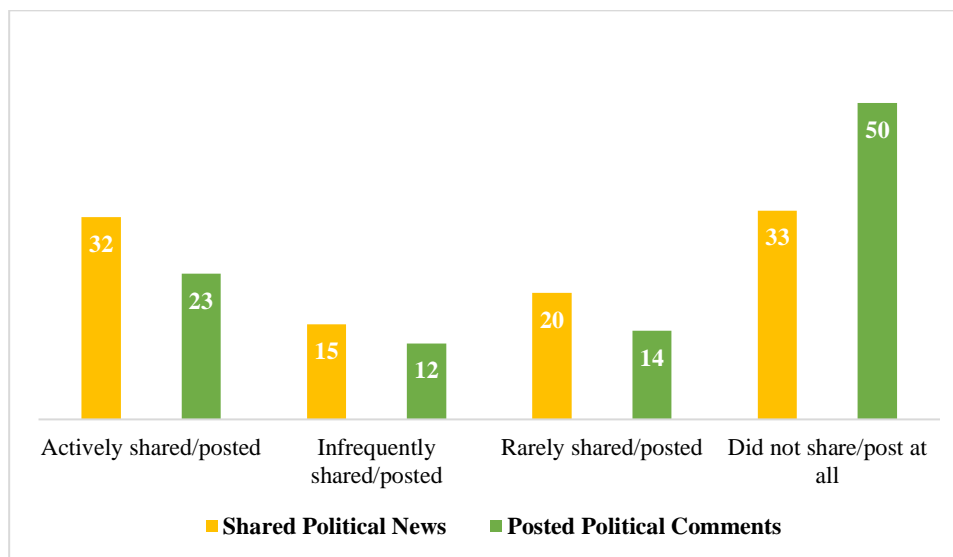
Table 18

*Syrian Armenians' Awareness about the Armenian Politics during the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020*

Level of Awareness	Respondents	Percentage
Very aware	56	39
Somewhat aware	73	51
Not very aware	10	7
Not aware at all	5	3

*Note.* Total number of responses is 144. The percentage results are rounded.

Figure 14

*Frequency of Sharing Political News and Posting Political Comments on Social Media Pages in 2020*

*Note.* Total number of responses for the question related to the frequency of sharing political news is 146, while it is 145 for the frequency of posting political comments. The percentage results are rounded.

The final question of the survey aimed to assess whether or not Syrian Armenians are involved in the very recent demonstrations (2020-2021). According to Table 19, 92 percent of the respondents did not participate in the recent demonstrations at all, four percent actively participated, 3 percent infrequently participated, and one percent rarely participated.

Table 19

*Syrian Armenians' Participation in the Demonstrations of 2020-2021*

Participation	Respondents	Percentage
Actively participated	6	4
Infrequently participated	4	3
Rarely participated	1	1
Did not participate at all	130	92

*Note.* Total number of responses is 141. The percentage results are rounded.

***5.1.5. Comparison of Political Participation of Syrian Armenians by Location and/or Time***

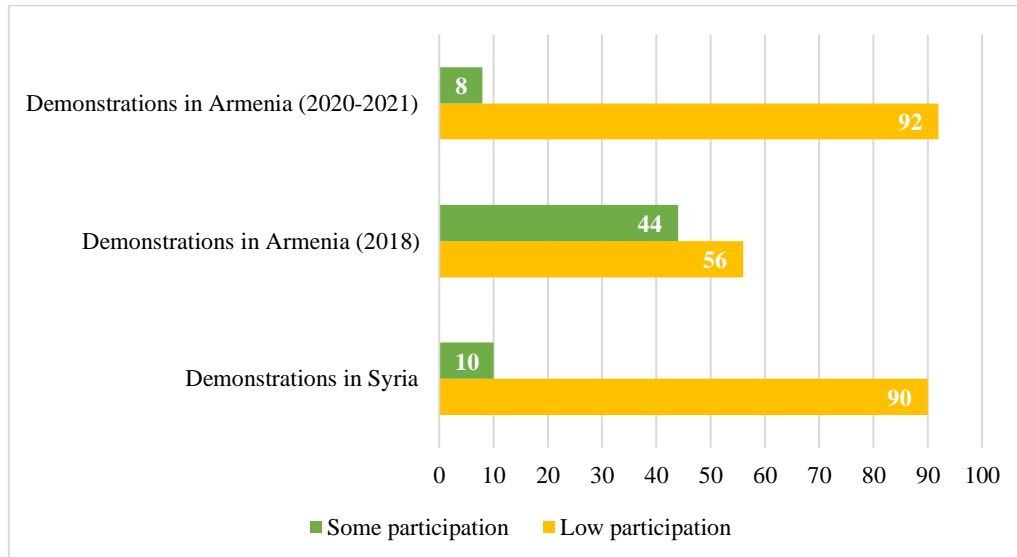
The findings of quantitative data show that the political participation of Syrian Armenians in Armenia increased to some extent. Figure 15 compares the Syrian Armenians' participation during demonstrations both in Syria and Armenia. In more detail, those who reported that they somewhat participated were compared with those who did not participate at all. Despite the location and time, the overall participation of the respondents in political demonstrations is rare. Nevertheless, Figure 15 outlined that during the demonstrations of April-May 2018, Syrian Armenians reported infrequent participation with a percentage of 44.

In the same vein, the respondents' participation during the elections in Armenia demonstrates that more residents are voting. Only respondents who obtained Armenian Citizenship status were selected to analyze the participation of Syrian Armenians during elections. The findings revealed that there is an increase in involvement during elections from

2013 to 2018 (see Figure 16). As shown in Figure 16, while 14 percent of the respondents voted during the presidential election of 2013, 36 percent voted in the snap parliamentary election of 2018. A precise comparison is provided in Table 20.

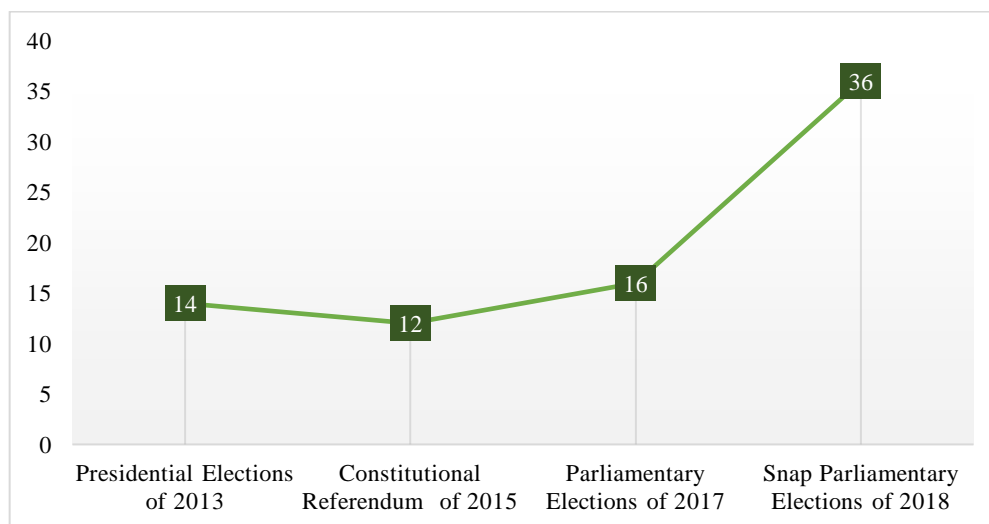
Figure 15

*Participation in Political Demonstrations by Location and Time*



*Note.* The frequency of participation was measured on a scale of one (not at all) to four (actively participated). Total number of respondents for demonstrations in Syria is 144; Armenia in 2018 is 123; Armenia in 2020-2021 is 141. The percentage results are rounded.

Figure 16

*Participation in Elections in Armenia*

*Note.* Total number of responses for the question related to the participation in presidential election of 2013 is 100, while it is 101 for the constitutional referendum of 2015, 102 for parliamentary elections of 2017, and 103 for snap parliamentary elections of 2018. The percentage results are rounded.

Figure 16 also shows that the increase between 2017 and 2018 is not due to new group of politically active Syrian Armenians who arrived and got engaged, rather it means the same people who did not vote in 2013, 2015, 2017 were integrated and voted in the snap parliamentary election 2018. Precisely 22 Syrian Armenians who did not vote in 2017 participated in 2018 election following the Velvet Revolution, making 36 percent of the total respondents.

Concerning the online political involvement of Syrian Armenians, the findings imply that online political participation is increasing (see Figure 17). Figure 17 demonstrates that while in average 36 percent of the respondents share political news in Syria, 45 percent shared political news in Armenia in 2018, and 62 percent in Armenia in 2020. In the same manner, while 32 percent posted political comments in Syria, 41 percent posted in Armenia in 2018, and 52 percent in Armenia in 2020. A more detailed analysis, i.e., the comparison of the frequencies for each experience, is provided in Tables 21 and 22.

Table 20

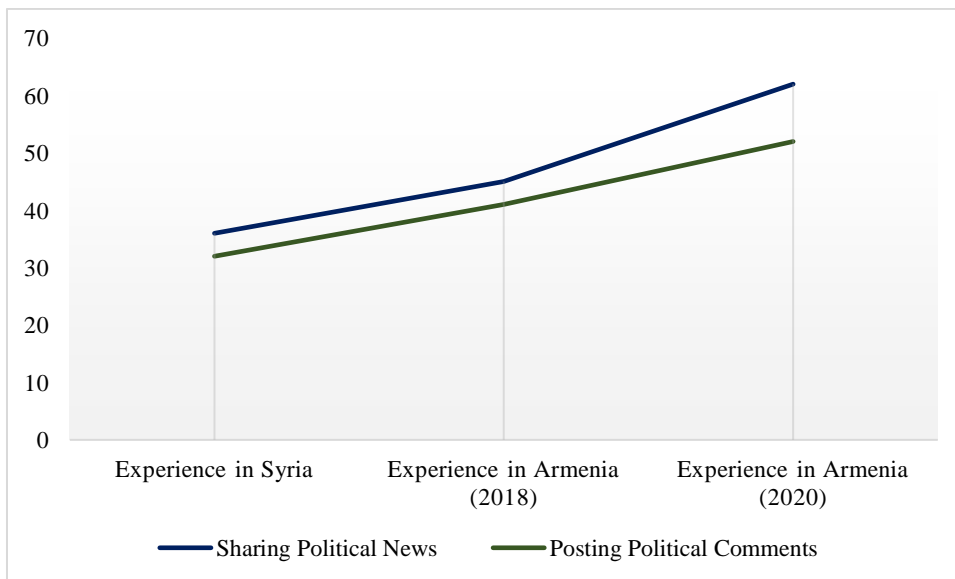
*Political Participation through Voting*

Participation	Presidential Elections of 2013	Constitutional Referendum of 2015	Parliamentary Elections of 2017	Snap Parliamentary Elections of 2018
Yes %	14	12	16	36
No %	86	88	84	64
N	100	101	102	103

*Note.* The percentage results are rounded.

Figure 17.

*Online Political Participation by Location and Time*



*Note:* The percentage results are rounded.

Table 21

*Sharing Political News on Social Media by Location and Time*

Frequency	Experience in Syria	Experience in Armenia in 2018	Experience in Armenia in 2020
Actively shared	4	11	32
Infrequently shared	10	16	15
Rarely shared	14	11	20
Did not share at all	73	61	33
N	146	123	146

*Note.* The percentage results are rounded.

Table 22

*Posting Political Comments on Social Media by Location and Time*

Frequency	Experience in Syria	Experience in Armenia in 2018	Experience in Armenia in 2020
Actively posted	2	11	23
Infrequently posted	5	11	12
Rarely posted	12	7	14
Did not post at all	80	70	50
N	147	122	145

*Note.* The percentage results are rounded.

In order to examine the correlation between the online activities of Syrian Armenians in Syria and Armenia, an index was created. Online activities in Armenia were measured by

computing four variables (sharing political news in 2018 and 2020 and posting political comments in 2018 and 2020), whereas online activities in Syria were measured by computing two variables (frequency of sharing political news and posting political comments in Syria). Likewise, an index that measured the frequency of following the Armenian news in Armenia was computed (frequency of following Armenian news in Armenia in 2018 and 2020).

The analysis in Tables 23 shows a statistically significant correlation between Syrian Armenians frequency of following the Armenian news in Syria and Armenia (.005). In the same manner, there is a statistically significant correlation between online activities in Syria and Armenia (.000), as portrayed in Table 24. The frequency of following the news was measured on a scale of one (not at all) to four (daily); likewise, online activities were measured on a scale of one (not at all) to four (actively shared or posted political news and comments). The correlations are positive, meaning that Syrian Armenians who followed the Armenian news more frequently in Syria, followed the Armenian news in Armenia more regularly. Besides, Syrian Armenians, who participated more commonly in online political activities in Syria, were similarly more engaged in online political activities in Armenia.

Table 23

*Correlation between Following Armenian News in Armenia and Following Armenian News in Syria*

		<i>Following Armenian News in Armenia</i>	<i>Following Armenian News in Syria</i>
<i>Following Armenian News in Armenia</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	1.00	.23
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.005
	<i>N</i>	149	149
<i>Following Armenian News in Syria</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	.23	1.00
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.005	
	<i>N</i>	149	149



Table 24

*Correlation between Online Activities in Armenia and Online Activities in Syria*

		Online Activities in Armenia	Online Activities in Syria
Online Activities in Armenia	Pearson Correlation	1.00	.53
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	119	116
Online Activities in Syria	Pearson Correlation	.53	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	116	145

***Political Integration of Syrian Armenians in Armenia***

The study conducted t-tests to examine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the Syrian Armenians who voted and did not vote in different elections in Armenia in terms of their age. In order to conduct the analysis, only the cases reporting that they obtain Armenian citizenship and were 18 years old in the year of the election have been selected. According to the data, there is no statistically significant correlation between the age and Syrian Armenians' participation in the Constitutional Referendum of 2015 and the Parliamentary Election of 2017. Nevertheless, Tables 25 and 26 portray that there is a correlation between their age and participation in the Presidential Election of 2013 (.000) and the Snap Parliamentary Election of 2018 (0.10). According to the data, older people participated more in both elections as the means values for those who answered *yes* are 53.50 and 40.57; while, for those who answered *no*, they are 36.42 and 32.75, respectively.

Table 25

*T-test. Relation between Age and Presidential Election of 2013*

Group Statistics						
		<i>Did you vote in the presidential election of 2013?</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>S.E. Mean</i>
Age	Yes		14	53.50	12.45	3.33
	No		62	36.42	12.84	1.63

## Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means								
		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Std. Error Difference</i>	95 % Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Age	Equal variances assumed	.02	.880	4.52	74.00	.000	17.08	3.78	9.55	24.61
	Equal variances not assumed			4.61	19.75	.000	17.08	3.71	9.34	24.82

Table 26

*T-test. Relation between Age and Snap Parliamentary Election of 2018*

Group Statistics					
Did you vote in the snap parliamentary election of 2018?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	S.E. Mean
Age	Yes	37	40.57	14.78	2.43
	No	60	32.75	13.89	1.79

Independent Samples Test										
		t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95 % Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Age	Equal variances assumed	2.33	.130	2.63	95.00	.010	7.82	2.98	1.91	13.72
	Equal variances not assumed			2.59	72.76	.012	7.82	3.02	1.80	13.84

The chi-square analysis showed no statistically significant difference between gender and Syrian Armenians' participation in elections. Similarly, there is no statistically significant difference between gender and Syrian Armenian participation in demonstrations, gender and online activities, gender and political awareness, and gender and the frequency of following the local Armenian news.

The impact of immigration year on online activities, political awareness, and the frequency of following the news was also examined. According to the analysis, there is no statistically significant correlation between the year of immigration and the online activities of Syrian Armenians and the immigration year and political awareness of Syrian Armenians. However, Table 27 shows a statistically significant correlation between Syrian Armenians immigration year and following the news (.000). The frequency of following the news was measured on a scale of one (did not follow at all) to four (daily). The correlation is negative, meaning that Syrian Armenians who immigrated to Armenia earlier followed the news more frequently.

Table 27

*Correlation between Immigration Year and Following Armenian News in Armenia*

		<i>Immigration Year</i>	<i>Following Armenian News in Armenia</i>
<i>Immigration Year</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	1.00	-.61
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.000
	<i>N</i>	149	149
<i>Following Armenian News in Armenia</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	-.61	1.00
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.000	
	<i>N</i>	149	149

Tables 28 and 29 also shows statistically significant correlations between immigration year and participation in the protests in 2018 (.001), and between immigration year and participation in elections in Armenia (.000). Note that elections in Armenia is an index constituted from four variables. In the former analysis (see Table 28) the correlation is negative, which means that the Syrian Armenians who moved to Armenia earlier participated more during the protests as participation in the protests was measured on a scale of one (not at all) to four (actively). In the latter, the correlation is positive (see Table 29). This means that Syrian Armenians who moved later participated more in the elections.

Table 28

*Correlation between Immigration Year and Participation in the Protests in 2018*

		<i>Immigration Year</i>	<i>Participation in Protests in 2018</i>
<i>Immigration Year</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	1.00	-.29
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.001
	<i>N</i>	149	123
<i>Participation in Protests in 2018</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	-.29	1.00
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.001	
	<i>N</i>	123	123

Table 29

*Correlation between Immigration Year and Participation in Elections in Armenia*

		<i>Immigration Year</i>	<i>Elections in Armenia</i>
<i>Immigration Year</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	1.00	.40
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.000
	<i>N</i>	149	113
<i>Elections in Armenia</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	.40	1.00
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.000	
	<i>N</i>	113	113

Furthermore, the analysis also revealed a correlation between the frequency of following the news and the political awareness of Syrian Armenians (.000) and the frequency of following the news and their online activities (.001). The frequency of following the news was measured on a scale of one (did not follow at all) to four (daily); in the same manner, the political awareness and online activities were measured on a scale of one (not at all) to four (highly). Since the correlation is positive in Tables 30 and 31, Syrian Armenians who followed the news more frequently are more aware of Armenian politics and participate in more online activities.

Table 30

*Correlation between Following Armenian News in Armenia and Awareness of the Armenian Politics*

		<i>Following Armenian News in Armenia</i>	<i>Awareness of the Armenian Politics</i>
<i>Following Armenian News in Armenia</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	1.00	.51
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.000
	<i>N</i>	149	120
<i>Awareness of the Armenian Politics</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	.51	1.00
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.000	
	<i>N</i>	120	120

Table 31

*Correlation between Following Armenian News in Armenia and Online Activities*

		<i>Following Armenian News in Armenia</i>	<i>Online Activities</i>
<i>Following Armenian News in Armenia</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	1.00	.29
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		.001
	<i>N</i>	149	119
<i>Online Activities</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	.29	1.00
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.001	
	<i>N</i>	119	119

This section analyzed the quantitative data collected for this study. The major finding implied from the quantitative data is that today Syrian Armenians are more actively engaged in politics compared with their experience in Syria and political participation at the early stages of immigration. The impact of time on political inclusion is notable. It is observed that

Syrian Armenian immigrants, over time, participate more in elections, are more aware of the politics of Armenia, and are more active in terms of online political activities. In the same manner, the data shows that political developments are critical and can enhance political integration to a great degree. It is worth noting that compared with previous experience in Syria, the participation in protests during April and May 2018 increased. Participation during the Nagorno Karabakh wars of 2016 and 2020 is also remarkable.

The survey data also implied that while the Syrian Armenians who moved later to Armenia have more actively participated in elections, Syrian Armenians who moved earlier have more actively participated during the 2018 protests.

## **5.2. Analysis of Qualitative Data**

### ***5.2.1. Sociopolitical Experience of Syrian Armenians***

#### **Social and Political Culture in Syria.**

After administrating the online survey, semi-structured online interviews with Syrian Armenians were conducted for a thorough understanding of their political involvement in Armenia. The participants were asked to reflect on the sociopolitical culture in Syria and their political participation in Armenia.

It is essential to make a comparison between the political culture of the departing and the host countries of immigrants to recognize the factors that influence or hinder political involvement in the receiving country. Positive, active, simple, easily connected, and enjoyable are a range of adjectives used to describe the social life in Syria. However, it is highly important to emphasize that the participants were describing their social life in Syria within the Armenian circle. One of the interviewees reflected:

In Syria, the social life [of Armenians] is more linked to an associational life, and it is divided into fragments. Each person is born in his/her [Armenian] association by luck; I mean that people do not decide their affiliations. When you are brought up in a

given association, you spontaneously organize your social life accordingly. After being eighteen years old, my social life got different colors: I had my university friends, my friends from the association I grew up in, and my friends from different fractions of the Armenian society.

For many of the respondents, the social life in Syria was limited to being involved in the Armenian community. Expressions such as “we lived in a balloon,” “we created an imaginary country,” “we lived in a small Armenia” reinforced the aforementioned comment.

Syrian Armenians in Syria distanced themselves from political conversations and limited their political participation. The political disengagement of Armenians in Syria is linked with several factors. Some of the respondents indicated that Armenians were satisfied with their living standards in Syria; therefore, they found no need to be engaged and interested in political life. Others stated that the Armenians who arrived in Syria after the Armenian Genocide had a fear of politics due to the incidents developed during the Ottoman Empire. One person conveyed:

Because you were a second or third generation after the Genocide, your parents always presented that there was the fear of losing, losing again (because it was still vital in their memories what has happened). Like an everyday meal, they were presenting that we have no interest in politics. We only care about our daily life, our job, and our family. The previous generations used to incite fear in us, despite the fact that the country welcomed us, and if people and the government did not want, they would not have had a welcoming attitude. But the fear was dominant. Even during my university years, I remember, the fear was present subconsciously.

Discussing politics with non-Armenians was much easier as the respondent, who was half Armenian and half Arab, conveyed.

We [the Armenians] were very apolitical, and still, we are. It was different with my Arab friends. They used to speak about political issues sometimes. ... Personally, I used to discuss political issues but more with my non-Armenian friends. I can say that it was difficult to discuss politics with Armenians.

An additional factor for the reasons of Syria Armenians avoiding political conversations, implied from the analysis, is that the country before war lived decades in peace and prosperity. That is to say that no major political developments occurred that have driven people's attention to politics. As mentioned by the vast majority of the respondents, political conversation intensified after the escalation of the conflicts in 2011 in the country and the region.

### **Integration and Social Culture in Armenia.**

Before discussing political involvement in detail, the interviewees were asked to reflect on their immigration integration experience in Armenia and describe the social culture in the host country. Some of the respondents highlighted the linguistics barrier as a crucial factor hindering effective communication. Vocabulary choices and their different meanings in various contexts are seen as a primary cause for misunderstandings and miscommunication. Others indicated that language was not the main obstacle for integration because Syrian Armenians hosted many artists and professionals from Armenia, which helped them get acquainted with the Eastern Armenian. Additionally, as a few participants reported, Syrian Armenians were familiar with the language through the literature. Other immigration integration issues mentioned during the interviews included housing, the school system, and low monthly income.

In terms of the social culture, despite the fact that some of the respondents were familiar with the culture of the host country, others mentioned that they were shocked. One of the respondents mentioned:

After moving to Armenia, I did not think that I would experience a culture shock. But for one year, I did. While walking in the streets, a lot of things looked strange to me. I was coming from an Arab world, and I was feeling a Syrian Armenian more than Armenian. Everything around me seemed so Western.

Another respondent commented:

We were different culturally, and I was shocked culturally. For me, it was very strange that people used harsh expressions and had stern faces. But later, I recognized that this is how it is; their attitude and being unfriendly was not directed to me; it was not something personal.

Some of the respondents reflected that when living in Syria they lacked the knowledge about the social culture of Armenia. The picture of the motherland, most interview participants had prior to arrival, was contradictory to current Armenia. Syrian Armenians, while living in Syria, were not aware of the lifestyle in Armenia. In this regard, a respondent emphasized the fact that having an insufficient historical background and insufficient knowledge of the Soviet system and culture are crucial factors that caused confusion:

In Syria, there are some social criteria that each Armenian needs to meet. When I came to Armenia for the first year, I was in that mindset, particularly on the 24th of April. I was asking why the shops are open? Why are people out? Why are they eating? Why are they happy? It was difficult for me to handle this in the first year [of



immigration]. But by time, I started to talk with people, and I understood why we are different and why they [the locals] are different.

We sometimes forget how the Arab culture impacted our identity very much and how people here are influenced by Russian culture. We forget, and even we do not know what the Soviet is. I had not learned it at school and did not know how Armenia was during the Soviet times because there is a [Armenian] history gap at [the Armenian] schools in Syria. The history stops with the Genocide and starts after independence. There are seventy-eighty years that we have no idea what has happened in Armenia.

The change of the socioeconomic conditions also caused misapprehension of the social culture in Armenia. For some period, this transformation influenced the absorption of the new social culture.

We used to live a “spoiled” life in Syria, and we expected the same from Armenia.

However, we saw that all of us are the same. On the one hand, this was good, but on the other hand, this was a challenge because we were not yet used to this new reality.

### **Political Culture in Armenia.**

In the final stage of the interviews, the respondents talked about the political culture of Armenia by using a range of expressions and providing instances from their experience. Political knowledge seemed to develop through being exposed to information and experiencing political incidents. When comparing the political culture in Syria and Armenia, many of the respondents indicated that the political culture in Armenia is open, and people express their concerns more freely. One of the respondents talked about the socioeconomic conditions of Armenia and how they influence political engagement, i.e., the low monthly income and standards of living in Armenia are causes leading the citizens to be more engaged in politics. Another respondent reinforced this idea by discussing the connection between

living a good life and disinterest in politics in Syria. Many of the interviews highlighted that demonstrations and public meetings were new concepts as they lacked similar experiences in Syria:

The political culture is very different from Syria. I think it was in 2013 when there was going to be an increase in the payments of the public transport. Maybe it was in 2013 or 2014; I do not remember it exactly, but the 150-Dram Protests emerged, and it was something frightening for me. Oh, protests. The words revolution or protests had a negative connotation. I was terrified; I did not leave the house. Okay, they are protesting. What is happening?

Another respondent conveyed:

During the 150-dram protests, I lived an extraordinary experience. Even when I did not want to pay 150 drams and wanted to join the movement, when I was on the bus (they already changed the payment and everyone was asking me only to pay 100), I could not pay only 100 because in Syria we were not acquainted with a culture of opposing. I paid 150 and left the bus rapidly.

For one of the respondents, it was odd to see university students discussing political issues.

When in my first year of the university, I observed how my friends were engaged in politics. I remember one of my friends was very much involved to the degree that everyone used the title “president” before calling her name. I was surprised to see that people in their eighteens are aware of politics to this degree. I also thought that it has some relation with knowing Armenian history. ... But for me, I had no idea at all. I

only knew the name of the president. Even the name of the foreign minister, I did not know at that time.

Syrian Armenians also described how they developed more interest in politics over time. For the respondents who moved to Armenia between 1997 and 2007, the events of the 1st of March were seen as a starting line for developing political interest, whereas, for most of the respondents who moved in 2012, the starting line was either the Yerevan's Bus Fare Protests or Electric Yerevan.

For the first few years, I was still in the mood of going back to Syria. Consequently, I was not that integrated politically. But I got exposed to many things inevitably, from the news, people around me, and my network. I used to hear more about these things and consequently became more aware compared with my previous experience in Syria. When during the Electric Yerevan, I saw everything live next to me, some kinds of interest have arisen in me, and I was like, okay, I can relate to this. These people are the ones living next to me, my neighbor, my friend. I know the people who are protesting. I know their problem; they are not the others. I started to understand more. I have become more into politics, and I started to develop in my mind the image of the utopian motherland that I wanted.

One of the respondents reflected on her experience:

At some point, I think the interest in politics started at the university. What is it? Why? Then, the protests of Electric Yerevan emerged. Although I did not understand why, but I tried to follow. During the revolution, I took my camera and went down to the streets. I was in the streets just to understand what was happening because even

though I knew why they were protesting; I did not know whom to follow. And this is how I started to become interested in politics.

Another respondent conveyed:

During the Electric Yerevan, I really wanted to participate because I followed my friends' posts on Facebook and also the news. But something was preventing me from participating, the feeling that maybe what I am doing is wrong because I was not used to this. Then, I went and passed by the protests to observe but did not participate. This situation changed on the 16th of April 2018.

From the aforementioned comments, it is recognized that the political developments in Armenia in the last ten years played a significant role in directing the attention of Syrian Armenians towards politics. When asked whether patriotism or residency is the driving force for being interested in politics, most of the participants mentioned that residency has a direct impact more than patriotism. However, there were few others who think that patriotism is a key factor that influenced their engagement and awareness of the politics of Armenia. One of the respondents mentioned:

I think now I am more aware of the politics of Armenia. This is because I am Armenian and the political developments that we witnessed during the last years increased the interests in general. Revolution is the turning point. Until the revolution, I still was not aware that much about politics. I started to know the names of the political parties [the main ones], and then my family participated in the election [the Snap Parliamentary Election of 2018]; because of this, we started to discuss political issues at our house.

Another comment in this context:

My interest in the politics of Armenia is because I am an Armenian and not because I am a resident. At the initial stages, I used to be involved in discussions with Turkish and Azerbaijani people on Facebook. During the conversations, I had to read in order to understand and be informed. This is how my interest in the politics of Armenia, in general, had emerged.

Concerning comments related to residency and developing interests in politics, one of the respondents reported that:

Definitely, there is a relation between my knowledge of politics in Armenia and being a resident. Maybe if I were in Syria, I would not have been interested in politics to this degree. I can say that I understand what is happening, maybe not in a professional sense, but when I compare my knowledge of politics with others, I think that I have adequate knowledge.

Another comment:

The interest in politics developed because I think that I have to be an active citizen. If I need a change, I also should participate and be involved in the change; and I can only make a change if I am well informed.

According to one of the respondents, being in close relation with local Armenians help to better understand politics.

The thing which helped me to understand politics is that I got integrated with the locals at the university. I integrated with people from the regions. I started to listen to their everyday problems. The issues I heard were not conveyed by a foreigner and were not the information broadcasted on a TV show. At my work, I saw the pros and cons of the Soviet influence; I saw the problems of the independence of Armenia.

On the other hand, there were also a few respondents who reported that politics is not their primary interest, and even though they were exposed to the political developments in Armenia, they still prefer to be distanced from politics.

I have never thought of politics in Syria. I had very basic information; I only knew few officials and the name of the governing party. The same case is also in Armenia. Until the Velvet Revolution, I even did not think about politics. In the aftermath of the revolution, okay, I knew that there is this X party and there is another Y party, and they are in conflict. But politics per se is not that interesting for me.

Another person reported:

I am not against the idea that people should have their own opinion about political developments. Rather I do not find it logical for everyone to force their opinions on social media or do political analysis.

Whether the participants were interested in politics or whether politics was an inessential issue for them, all interview respondents confirmed that they obtained adequate knowledge of Armenian politics, particularly during the Nagorno Karabakh War of 2020. The vast majority of the participants indicated that they frequently, if not daily, discussed politics during the war and continue to be engaged in political conversations as the country encounters an unstable political situation.

The interviews conducted with Syrian Armenians show that their inclusion in the political culture of Armenia is taking place over time. While Syrian Armenians encountered difficulties in understanding and adapting to the political environment of Armenia at the beginning of the immigration, today, they participate more in political activities and are more aware of the political developments. From the interviews, it is also implied that the Nagorno

Karabakh War of 2020 certainly impacted the political inclusion of Syrian Armenians as the majority of the participants mentioned that they were engaged in political discussions during the days of war and continue talking about the war consequences.

### ***5.2.2. Local Armenians' Attitude Towards the Political Involvement of Syrian Armenians***

#### **Consequences of Syrian Armenians' Immigration.**

Local Armenians were interviewed to identify their perception regarding the immigration consequences of Syrian Armenians. This is crucial as it implies the degree to which the receiving society absorbed immigrants into their community. In the interviews conducted with local Armenians, while general questions were covered to identify broader social issues, specific questions were asked to comprehend the degree to which the local society is prepared to tolerate the political engagement of Syrian Armenians. Syrian Armenian families predominantly settled in Yerevan with a few cases who preferred to settle in the regions or in Artsakh. In order to obtain rich data, local Armenians from different regions, who currently reside in Yerevan, were also interviewed. Many of the respondents from the regions implied that they became acquainted with Syria Armenians only after moving to Yerevan.

When I was in my town [DELETED], I have not noticed how the immigration process of Syrian Armenians was and how it influenced life in Armenia. You have some basic knowledge that there is a war, people moved, there is the issue of tax policies and privileges, and building districts for them. Why these tax issues? Why building these districts? ... but when I moved to Yerevan in 2016, I met Syrian Armenian students at my university; I noticed the restaurants the new cuisine. So, I felt the change in the daily life.

For those who were from Yerevan, they noticed new businesses owned by Syrian Armenians and became acquainted with Syrian Armenian staff. Jewelers and artisans for auto shops are professions mentioned by local Armenians where Syrian Armenians are very successful. The other socioeconomic consequence of immigration emphasized by the respondents is the constructive impact of diversity on the development in various aspects of life in Armenia. Initiating new businesses, increasing the population number, and bringing diversity in mindsets were among the benefits of immigration. One of the respondents conveyed:

Armenia has some demographic issues, and indeed, increasing population helps the country. For instance, new businesses, new working forces, growth in the budgets, and the economy are important consequences. It is another question, how the government managed the repatriation, and due to the mismanagement, what kind of negative consequences have arisen.

### **Factors that Hinder Communication and Integration.**

The interview participants were asked to reflect on the factors that can hinder communication between the local and Syrian Armenians. Linguistic barriers and cultural divergence were outlined by the respondents as factors that hinder communication between local and Syrian Armenians. Most of the interviewees either mentioned both or one of the reasons specified above. However, as reported by the majority, miscommunication decreases over time as both sides become acquainted with each other's language.

A different way of thinking and diverse mindsets are other factors that hinder communication, hence, integration.

We [local Armenians], despite the fact that we are trying to become modern, are not an open-minded society. We have some kind of firm understanding of how a boy



should look like, how he should communicate. And this is an obstacle for living any new experience or acquaintance with an individual. Diversity is not initiating interest; instead, it is enlarging the distance.

Also, Syrian Armenians, in their turn, should accept the change. I noticed that, specifically, Armenians coming from countries that have been in conflicts are firmly holding on to their identity.

For a few respondents, some negative stereotypes that Syrian Armenians hold regarding the local Armenians' attitude towards them also prevent integration.

A more serious problem [preventing integration] is the fact that many Syrian-Armenians, or let's say Armenians from Diaspora, think that the local Armenians are not accepting their presence. I have seen this. I think that they have their own reasons. They have some negative opinion. They think that we [the locals] will not accept them.

Another respondent conveyed that people from the Diaspora usually create a safe zone for themselves and mostly communicate and socialize with other Diasporans. This implies that disintegration is not only related to the refusal of the host society to accept immigrants in their community. Rather the immigrants are not willing to be integrated: "If you don't have any Diasporan friends, you're not going to get to know any other Diasporan people. That's the complication."

### **Impact of Diaspora on the Armenian Politics.**

The local Armenians who participated in the interviews were asked to discuss the role and impact of the broader Armenian Diaspora on the politics of the Republic of Armenia.

Most of the interview participants talked about the importance of financial support provided by the Diaspora to the motherland and how it can impact domestic politics.

I would not say that I like the fact that Diaspora is seen as a financial resource for Armenia. But indeed, it is. This is because the standard of living in Armenia is low. When there is an important political incident in Armenia, the Diaspora also has its say. The church in Diaspora plays an important role, and it has an indirect influence on politics.

Nonetheless, for some of the respondents, the involvement of the Armenian Diaspora should not be limited to monetary donations. Lobbying in favor of the Armenian government is also a sort of political participation. It was also mentioned that the networks and connections of the Diaspora are misused.

I cannot say that the Diaspora has no influence at all because it does have some impact. But the Diaspora is a misused resource (by saying resource, I am not necessarily talking about financial support). It is mismanaged. And its impact is lower than it should be.

On the other hand, there are some respondents who think that living in Armenia and/or obtaining Armenian citizenship are prerequisites to have the right to directly impact the politics in Armenia.

The influence is indirect because only an Armenian citizen has the right to impact domestic politics directly. If you are not an Armenian citizen, I mean, if you cannot participate in elections, you cannot have a direct impact. In this case, you can only have an indirect influence on those people who have a direct influence.

**Syrian Armenians and their Impact on Armenia's Domestic Politics.**

In the interviews, there were specific questions related to whether the immigration of the Syrian Armenians influenced the domestic politics of Armenia. According to some of the respondents, Syrian Armenians can have an impact on domestic politics by voting in elections and participating in demonstrations. One person conveyed:

I do not think that in the policymaking, the presence of the Syrian Armenians makes a change, or I do not think that in any major decision making anything changes. I mean, if we talk about voting and similar stuff, I see no impact. But considering the recent protests, I do believe that Armenians from Diaspora had a huge impact. [This comment refers to the recent demonstrations organized by the opposition (2020-2021 protests), where the members of the major political party of Diaspora participated]

Another respondent commented:

At least, I can see the growth and presence of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation directly. With the immigration of Syrian Armenians and Diaspora in general, the party started to work more actively. From this perspective only, I can see the impact of Syrian Armenians on the domestic politics of Armenia.

For a few respondents, citizenship is a key factor that determines the political participation of Syrian Armenians. If Syrian Armenians hold Armenian citizenship, then they have the right and duties for political participation.

If a Syrian Armenian is a citizen, then inevitably, he or she has an influence on domestic politics, and the extent of the impact is in his or her hand. They will decide whether or not they want to become involved in political life.

From another perspective, a few respondents think that it is the duty of the Armenian government to attract the Syrian Armenians and encourage their engagement in politics. In this way, only they can impact domestic politics. As one respondent emphasized, “no political party made an effort to attract the Syrian Armenians.” In his opinion, the presence of Syrian Armenians is not seriously considered by the political parties. Another person commented:

I can tell that only some individuals and non-governmental organizations initiated some kind of programs and thought about strengthening the relationship between the Syrian and local Armenians and increasing their social and political participation.

A question regarding whether ten years is a sufficient period for Syrian Armenians to get acquainted with the social and political culture of Armenia and whether this allows them to obtain a position in the government were asked to the participants. For the vast majority of the respondents, five years are also sufficient to acquire the political culture of Armenia.

The interviews with local Armenians were important to examine their attitude towards Diaspora’s political participation in Armenia, particularly Syrian Armenians’ political inclusion and participation. The findings indicate that the general attitude is neutral.

This chapter provided the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study. From the survey analysis and semi-structured interviews with Syrian Armenians, it can be implied that Syrian Armenians’ inclusion in the political life of Armenia achieved to some degree. The interviews with local Armenians, on the other hand, implied that the general attitude towards the political participation of Syrian Armenians is neutral.

## Chapter Six – Conclusion

This thesis examined the political integration of Syrian Armenians in Armenia. In order to conduct an empirical study for the political integration, some conventional and unconventional political participation of Syrian Armenians in Syria and Armenia were explored through an online survey. The quantitative data was supported with online semi-structured interviews with Syrian Armenians. Furthermore, online interviews with local Armenians were also conducted.

In the scope of this study, the following three questions were examined:

*Research Question 1.* To what degree did the Syrian Armenian immigrants integrate into the political life of the Republic of Armenia?

*Research Question 2.* To what extent has the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020 affected Syrian Armenian immigrants' political participation?

*Research Question 3.* What is the attitude of local Armenians towards the Diaspora's participation in the politics of the Republic of Armenia?

The combined results of the survey and semi-structured interviews with Syrian Armenians provide answers to *Research Questions 1 and 2*. From the findings, it can be implied that the political integration of Syrian Armenians in Armenia is achieved to some degree.

First, by comparing the political participation of Syrian Armenians in Syria and in Armenia, the study found that Syrian Armenians are more actively engaged in politics in Armenia. This, in turn, implies that the political culture of Armenia impacts Syrian Armenians' political participation.

Second, by comparing the participation of Syrian Armenians in political activities in Armenia at the early stages of immigration with their participation approximately after ten years, it is noted that Syrian Armenians are more actively involved in politics today. The combined results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis also reveal that the political awareness and political participation of Syrian Armenians in Armenia are increasing over time.

The major findings derived from the analysis are that the time factor and political developments played a crucial role in the process of political inclusion. By comparing voting in elections, following the news, and online activities at the earliest stages of immigration with today's reality, and by comparing the participation during Nagorno Karabakh Wars 2016 and 2020, the aforementioned argument is confirmed. The impact of political developments on the political integration of Syrian Armenians was not only concluded by looking at the participation of Syrian Armenians in the Nagorno Karabakh Wars. The study also looked into the participation of Syrian Armenians during the Velvet Revolution and implied that the participation during the protests of April-May 2018 and participation in snap Parliamentary elections are relatively high compared to other periods.

The findings of the study also indicate that the Syrian Armenians actively participated during the Nagorno Karabakh War of 2020 and continue discussing the consequences of the war and its impact on the social life of Armenia. As a result, the answer to *Research Question 2* is positive. It can be stated that the Nagorno Karabakh War of 2020, to a visible degree, positively affected Syrian Armenian immigrants' political inclusion.

By comparing these findings with existing literature, it is concluded that the argument provided by Adam and Strömbla's (2018) concerning the impact of time on political integration and the argument provided by Bartram (2016) concerning the impact of the political culture on political inclusion is supported.

In terms of *Research Question 3*, the semi-structured online interviews with local Armenians imply that the general attitude of local Armenians towards the political participation of the Diaspora is neutral. According to the local Armenians, the political participation of Syrian Armenians does not have an immense and direct impact on Armenia's domestic politics.

This study examined the Syrian Armenian political integration in Armenia. As a concluding note, it can be mentioned that Syrian Armenians to some degrees are integrated politically into the of Armenia. It is also noted that despite the desire of the Syrian Armenians to participate in the politics of Armenia and despite the attitude of local Armenians, the fulfillment of legal requirements is the factor that shape the broader political participation of Diaspora, in general, and Syrian Armenians in particular.

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**Appendix 1 – Survey Questionnaire (English Version)****Survey Questionnaire****Diaspora in Armenia: Immigration and Political Integration of Syrian-  
Armenians**

This thesis aims to explore the integration process of Syrian Armenian immigrants into the Armenian society. **Integration is the process when immigrants become adapted to the host society and vice versa.** Your participation is **voluntary**, and your **anonymity** is fully protected. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey and to contribute to the research. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher at

[mary\\_karamanoukian@edu.aua.am](mailto:mary_karamanoukian@edu.aua.am)

**Section I – Personal Profile:**

**Gender:**  Female     Male

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Please specify)

**Immigration year (the year when you arrived in Armenia, not as a tourist):**

\_\_\_\_\_ (Please specify)

**Education:**  Elementary school     Middle School     Higher school

Vocational school     Bachelor     Master

Doctorate

**Employment Status:**

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Self-employed
- Looking for a job
- Studying (not looking for a job)
- Retired / pensioner
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please specify)
- Don't want to answer

**Armenian Citizenship Status:**

- I hold Armenian Citizenship
- I have applied for an Armenian Citizenship
- I am planning to apply for an Armenian Citizenship
- I am not planning to apply for an Armenian Citizenship
- I am not planning to apply for an Armenian Citizenship **due to the military requirements**
- I hold a special residency passport of Armenia
- I have applied for a special residency passport of Armenia
- I do not hold an Armenian Citizenship

**Intention to stay in the country:**

- Permanently
- Temporarily (Armenia is a transit country)
- Haven't decided yet
- Don't want to answer

**Section II – Integration Process:**

*In this section, all the questions are related to your experience in Armenia.*

**1. Please indicate the level of your satisfaction with each of the below statements (using a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 indicates that you are not satisfied at all; 2 dissatisfied; 3 satisfied; 4; highly satisfied).**

	1	2	3	4
Communication with local Armenians				
Housing				
Educational system of Armenia				
Social activities				
Health system of Armenia				
Traditions of local Armenians				
Job opportunities				
Monthly income				
Government assistance				

**2. Please indicate the level of your integration (using a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 indicates that you are not integrated at all; 2 not integrated; 3 integrated; 4; highly integrated).**

	1	2	3	4
Socially integrated				
Economically integrated				
Politically integrated				

**3. Are you a member of a local non-governmental organization?**

- Yes    No    Don't want to answer

**Section III – Political Participation in Syria:**

*In this section, all the questions are related to your experience in Syria.*

**4. Have you been an active member of a non-Armenian party/organization?**

- Yes    No    Don't want to answer

**5. Did you participate in political demonstrations in Syria?**

- Actively participated (many times)  
 Infrequently participated (a few times)  
 Rarely participated (once or twice)  
 Didn't participate at all  
 Don't want to answer

**6. Did you attend public meetings?**

- Actively attended (many times)  
 Infrequently attended (a few times)  
 Rarely attended (once or twice)  
 Didn't attend at all  
 Don't want to answer



**7. Did you participate in civic activities in Syria? (such as non-political community gathering, volunteering ...)**

- Actively participated (many times)
- Infrequently participated (a few times)
- Rarely participated (once or twice)
- Didn't participate at all
- Don't want to answer

**8. Did you ever vote in elections in Syria?**

- Actively voted (many times)
- Infrequently voted (a few times)
- Rarely voted (once or twice)
- Didn't vote at all
- Don't want to answer

**9. How often did you follow Syrian local news?**

- Daily
- Two-three times a week
- Two-three times a month
- Didn't follow at all
- Don't want to answer

**10. How often did you follow the Armenian news in Syria?**

- Daily
- Two-three times a week
- Two-three times a month
- Didn't follow at all
- Don't want to answer

**11. How actively did you share political news on your social media pages in Syria?**

- Actively shared (many times)
- Infrequently shared (a few times)
- Rarely shared (once or twice)
- Didn't share at all
- Don't want to answer

**12. How actively did you post political comments on social media pages in Syria?**

- Actively posted (many times)
- Infrequently posted (a few times)
- Rarely posted (once or twice)
- Didn't post at all
- Don't want to answer

**13. Have you been an active member of an Armenian party/organization in Syria?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't want to answer

**Section IV – Political Participation in Armenia:**

*Did you move to Armenia before June 2016?*

- Yes    No

**14. Did you vote in the presidential elections of 2013?**

- Yes    No    Don't want to answer

**15. Did you vote in the constitutional referendum of 2015?**

- Yes    No    Don't want to answer

**16. What was the political position of My Step Alliance in 2016?**

In alliance with the government

Opposition to the government

Don't know

Don't want to answer

Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please specify)

**17. In your opinion, to what extent were you aware about the Armenian politics during the period of the four-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh 2016?**

Very aware

Somewhat aware

Not very aware

Not aware at all

Don't want to answer

**18. How did you participate during Nagorno-Karabakh four-day war of 2016?**

- Financial donation
- Goods donation
- Blood donation
- Volunteering (during good donation and similar activities)
- Mandatory military service
- Voluntary military service
- Don't want to answer
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please specify)

***Did you move to Armenia before March 2018?***

- Yes     No

**19. Did you vote in the parliamentary elections of 2017?**

- Yes     No     Don't want to answer

**20. Did you participate in the protests in April-May 2018?**

- Actively participated (many times)
- Infrequently participated (a few times)
- Rarely participated (once or twice)
- Didn't participate at all
- Don't want to answer

**21. How often did you follow the local Armenian news during the protests in 2018?**

- Daily
- Two-three times a week
- Two-three times a month
- Didn't follow at all
- Don't want to answer

**22. In your opinion, to what extent were you aware of Armenian politics in 2018?**

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Not very aware
- Not aware at all
- Don't want to answer

**23. How actively did you share political news during the protests in 2018?**

- Actively shared (many times)
- Infrequently shared (a few times)
- Rarely shared (once or twice)
- Didn't share at all
- Don't want to answer

**24. How actively did you post political comments on social media pages during the protests in 2018?**

- Actively posted (many times)
- Infrequently posted (a few times)
- Rarely posted (once or twice)
- Didn't post at all
- Don't want to answer

**25. Did you vote in the snap parliamentary elections of 2018?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't want to answer

**26. How did you participate during the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020? (Choose all that apply)**

- Financial donation
- Goods donation
- Blood donation
- Volunteering (during good donation and similar activities)
- Organized donation
- Mandatory military service
- Voluntary military service
- Don't want to answer
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please specify)

**27. How often did you follow the local Armenian news during the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020?**

- Daily
- Two-three times a week
- Two-three times a month
- Didn't follow at all
- Don't want to answer

**28. In your opinion, to what extent were you aware of Armenian politics in 2020?**

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Not very aware
- Not aware at all
- Don't want to answer

**29. How actively did you share political news during the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020?**

- Actively shared (many times)
- Infrequently shared (a few times)
- Rarely shared (once or twice)
- Didn't share at all
- Don't want to answer

**30. How actively did you post political comments on social media pages Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020?**

- Actively posted (many times)
- Infrequently posted (a few times)
- Rarely posted (once or twice)
- Didn't post at all
- Don't want to answer

**31. Have you participated in the demonstrations of 2020-2021?**

- Actively participated (many times)
- Infrequently participated (a few times)
- Rarely participated (once or twice)
- Didn't participate at all
- Don't want to answer

**Thank you for completing this survey. If you are interested in this topic and would like to participate in other steps of this research, please leave your email address in this box \_\_\_\_\_.**



**Appendix 2 – A Guideline for Interviews with Syrian Armenians**

1. I would like to start by asking about your life in Syria; how would you describe it?
2. It is perceived that Armenians in Syria are integrated into the country's social and economic life, but what do you think about the Syrian Armenians' political participation?
3. Did you use to discuss political issues with your friends back in Syria?
4. Now, we will concentrate more on your experience in Armenia. First, I would like to know the year of your immigration and why did you choose Armenia.
5. What were the main challenges that you have faced in the first years of your immigration?
6. When you arrived in Armenia, were you aware of the local Armenian culture (including the social and political culture)?
7. Do you think that you are aware of Armenia's politics and political parties? And if yes, in your opinion, what has affected getting political knowledge?
8. How often do you discuss political issues with your friends? (Did Nagorno-Karabakh war have an impact?)
9. What kind of issues do you discuss? (Economic conditions of the country, the consequences of war, social issues)
10. Do you have any comments?

**Appendix 3 – A Guideline for Interviews with Local Armenians**

1. Since 2012, an extensive number of Armenian Diaspora, mainly Syrian-Armenians, arrived in Armenia as immigrants; what do you think about immigration's consequences?
2. Do you know and communicate with Syrian Armenians? Do you think that knowing many Syrian Armenians helped you being acquainted with their culture?
3. In your opinion, what hinders communication with Syrian Armenians?
4. What do you think is the general attitude towards Syrian Armenians?
5. Do you think that Diaspora, in general, has an impact on Armenian politics?
6. In your opinion, does the presence of Syrian Armenians impact Armenia's politics?
7. Should the Diaspora, mainly Syrian Armenians, participate in Armenia's politics? And why?
8. Now that it has been approximately ten years of the Syrian Armenian immigration, do you think that the immigrants acquired enough political knowledge to participate in Armenia's politics? Do you think that they should obtain a position in the government?
9. Do you have any other comments?