Please cite as: EUAA, '2.4.6. Dom ' in *COI Report - Syria: Country Focus*, July 2025.

2.4.6. Dom

Dom (singular Domari), the Middle East Roma,450 is a diverse and unrecognised ethnic group in Syria.451 While the community identifies itself by the names Dom, Dummi, or Deman,452 other communities in Syria refer to them by various other terms, such as Nawar453 – the most commonly used454– as well as Qurbat, Zatt, and Ghajar, all of which are considered derogatory. 455 The Dom speak the Domari language within their communities456 but are also multilingual, 457 speaking Arabic, Kurdish, or a dialect of Turkish, depending on the region where they live. 458 The exact size of the Dom population in Syria in unknown, as many Dom used to conceal their identity due to discrimination, and official statistics did not record ethnic data.459 Pre-2011 estimates of the Dom population ranged widely, from 100 000 to 500 000,460 while a report published in a Syrian newspaper in 2012 gave a much smaller figure of over 60 000.461

The Dom in Syria have historically lived in rural areas, outskirts of villages,462 and impoverished urban neighbourhoods.463 According to a 2004 source cited by researcher Yeşim Yaprak Yıldız in 2016, Dom communities were mainly located in Aleppo and Damascus, with additional settlements in found in Saraqib, Latakia, Hama and Homs.464 Within Aleppo, the Dom communities have been residing particularly in Hadradiye and Sheikh Maqsoud districts. Some Dom groups have reportedly owned land around Damascus and the Jazira region and lived in villages.465 Although most Dom in Syria pursue a settled lifestyle, their economic activities often involve short-term special mobility,466 leading to their description as a semi-nomadic population.467 Since the outbreak of the war in 2011, many Dom in Syria had to cease nomadic way of life.468

In Syria, the Dom have been engaged in various professions, including playing musical instruments, fortune telling,469 iron and tin smithing,470 informal dentistry, and waste collection and sorting.471 However, the largest number of Dom have been employed as seasonal agricultural labourers or daily workers in construction and transport.472 Some Domari tribes in Syria have reportedly worked in manufacturing of food equipment and household utensils. Other communities in Syria frequently associate Dom with socially marginalised jobs, such as working in nightclubs and festivals, palm reading, and begging.473

The sources noted that the Dom in Syria have faced social and economic marginalisation474 and discrimination.475 As reported in 2021, to avoid discriminatory treatment, they often

identified themselves as Turkmen, Kurdish, or Arabs.476

As reported by the NGO Kırkayak Kültür, based in Gaziantep in Türkiye,477 many Dom in Syria, particularly those leading settled lives, were ‘documented as Syrian citizens’ and generally did not face obstacles in obtaining citizenship certificates, with their children having access to primary education. However, Dom leading an ‘informal life’ often had no documentation, such as identity cards, passports, and birth certificates. According to the same source, some Dom avoided population registers and official documentation either to evade compulsory military service or due to a traditional worldview without the modern concept of borders between countries.478 Similarly, a 2016 study noted that the Dom with migratory and nomadic lifestyles had no Syrian citizenship.479 A study from 2021 also noted that ‘although no official statistics exist, many have never been able to acquire Syrian nationality’.480

Following the outbreak of the Syrian war in 2011, the Dom ‘were among the first to be displaced due to their informal housing, lack of documentation, and precarious livelihoods.’ Those who fled to Lebanon ‘settled in makeshift camps along the northern border and in the Beqaa Valley, often among other Syrian refugees.’ However, because of their unclear legal status and absence of registration, they remained excluded from both national support programs and international protection mechanisms.481 Furthermore, Syrian Dom women refugees in Lebanon reportedly faced particularly severe challenges due to traditional gender roles that marginalise them within their own communities.482

No additional information was found regarding the treatment of Dom by state and non-state actors within the time constraints of this report.

- 450

  Stoupa, E.-P., The Dom in the Middle East: an ethnic group of wandering, Centre for Mediterranean, Middle East & Islamic Studies, n.d., url

- 451

  Kharboutli, M., Eternal Outsiders: Roma in Syria, Wanabqa, 12 February 2025, url

- 452

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42

- 453

Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42; Kharboutli, M., Eternal Outsiders: Roma in Syria, Wanabqa, 12 February 2025, url

- 454

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42

- 455

  Kharboutli, M., Eternal Outsiders: Roma in Syria, Wanabqa, 12 February 2025, url

- 456

  Yaprak Yıldız, Y., Nowhere to Turn – The Situation of Dom Refugees from Syria in Turkey, September 2015, url, pp. 13-16; Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42.

- 457

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42.

- 458

  Yaprak Yıldız, Y., Nowhere to Turn – The Situation of Dom Refugees from Syria in Turkey, September 2015, url, pp. 13-16

- 459

  Yaprak Yıldız, Y., Nowhere to Turn – The Situation of Dom Refugees from Syria in Turkey, September 2015, url, p. 16

- 460

  Kharboutli, M., Eternal Outsiders: Roma in Syria, Wanabqa, 12 February 2025, url

- 461

  Yaprak Yıldız, Y., Nowhere to Turn – The Situation of Dom Refugees from Syria in Turkey, September 2015, url, p. 16

- 462

  Kharboutli, M., Eternal Outsiders: Roma in Syria, Wanabqa, 12 February 2025, url

- 463

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42

- 464

  Yaprak Yıldız, Y., Nowhere to Turn – The Situation of Dom Refugees from Syria in Turkey, September 2015, url, p. 16

- 465

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42

- 466

  Yaprak Yıldız, Y., Nowhere to Turn – The Situation of Dom Refugees from Syria in Turkey, September 2015, url, p. 16

- 467

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42

- 468

  Kharboutli, M., Eternal Outsiders: Roma in Syria, Wanabqa, 12 February 2025, url

- 469

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42; Kharboutli, M., Eternal Outsiders: Roma in Syria, Wanabqa, 12 February 2025, url

- 470

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42

- 471

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42; Kharboutli, M., Eternal Outsiders: Roma in Syria, Wanabqa, 12 February 2025, url

- 472

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42

- 473

  Kharboutli, M., Eternal Outsiders: Roma in Syria, Wanabqa, 12 February 2025, url

- 474

Yaprak Yıldız, Y., Nowhere to Turn – The Situation of Dom Refugees from Syria in Turkey, September 2015, url, pp. 13-16; Diab, J.S and Saban, A., Nomads of the Void: Unpacking the Enigmatic Lives and Survival of Syrian Dom Refugee Women in North Lebanon, Journal on Migration and Human Security, 4 October 2024, url

- 475

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42; Albrazi, Z., Report on Citizenship Law: Syria, EUI, July 2021, url, p. 6

- 476

  Edgcumbe, S., Roma in Iraq and Syria – On the Margins of IDP Protection, Researching Internal Displacement, Working Paper No. 9, December 2021, url, p. 16

- 477

  Kırkayak Kültür, Who We Are?, n.d., url

- 478

  Kırkayak Kültür, Middle East Gypsies, Dom Research Workshop, n.d., url

- 479

  Foggo, H. et al, Dom Migrants from Syria Living at the Bottom: On the Road Amid Poverty and Discrimination, November 2016, url, p. 42

- 480

  Albrazi, Z., Report on Citizenship Law: Syria, EUI, July 2021, url, p. 6

- 481

  Saban, A., Invisible Struggles: Gender-Based Violence and the Displaced Dom Community in Lebanon, 17 April 2025, url

- 482

  Diab, J.S and Saban, A., Nomads of the Void: Unpacking the Enigmatic Lives and Survival of Syrian Dom Refugee Women in North Lebanon, Journal on Migration and Human Security, 4 October 2024, url

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu