

Labor precarity of migrants in Greece

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Abstract:

25 years after the start of mass migrant arrivals in Greece, the issue of their documentation and regularization remains largely unresolved, keeping migrants in a state of insecurity, continuous threat of expulsion, and widespread exploitation. The various irregular/illegal conditions, in which migrants find themselves in contemporary Greece, reflect a roll-down of migrants to a state of extended precariousness and insecurity. The struggle for survival is accompanied by more precarious working and living conditions. Migrants with legal status in Greece and positive network interactions are expected to live in less precarious working conditions. The case study is focused on Syrian asylum applicants with or without legal documents in Greece. Various on-the-spot interviews with asylum applicants in camps of the Attica region and workers in Reception Centers tend to show so far that knowledge of the host country's language remains the most crucial factor for labor precarity.

Keywords: precariousness, workforce, asylum seekers, migrants

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1. Introduction

Nearly a decade following the refugee crisis of 2015-2016, issues concerning the management of migration flows, documentation and regularization of migrants in Greece remain significantly unresolved. This has resulted in migrants existing in a vulnerable state, facing ongoing threats of deportation and widespread exploitation. Those migrants who arrived earlier have secured legal status, demonstrating relatively high levels of occupational mobility, elevated incomes, and broader social networks. Consequently, they appear less insecure yet exhibit enhanced resilience to local labor market fluctuations and crises. Conversely, migrants who experience greater insecurity tend to adjust more effectively to the crisis environment, leading to increased labor flexibility, the acceptance of precarious jobs, reduced wages, and unfavorable working conditions. This paradox presents scenarios in migration and refugee contexts that must be addressed by immigration and asylum policies (Papadopoulos, Fratsea, and Baltas, 2023).

Immigrants who came earlier have gained legal status, have comparatively higher occupational mobility, have gained higher incomes and expanded social networks, and thus appear to be less precarious and more resilient to fluctuations in the local labor market and the effects of the crisis. On the other hand, migrants facing higher insecurity and hopelessness show greater adaptation to the crisis environment that offers greater flexibility in work. They accept uninsured employment, lower payments, and poorer working environments. The struggle for survival is accompanied by more precarious working and living conditions.

In addition to registered immigrants, there are also irregularly established immigrants who either entered irregularly and remain without legal documents or lost their legal status of legal residence. Calculating the size of irregular migrants is difficult to estimate accurately. Precisely because undeclared immigration is not protected, it creates a form of Labor reserve that enters and exits the labor market. The result is that many undocumented immigrants try to deal with the problem of deportation by avoiding any relationship with the authorities of the state in which they reside. This process creates and reproduces the complex conditions of marginalization that we all know.

Although research has so far dealt with migrants' access to the labor market, the correlation between their legal residence status and their precarious working conditions has not been studied. The purpose of this thesis is to motivate, reform, and reorient research around the case study of the factors that determine the degree of the precariousness of the working conditions of immigrants in Greece. The research includes the in-depth study and observation of primary and secondary material and can be a useful tool for the formulation of migration policy, as well as for the formulation of employment and integration policies for migrants.

The primary objective of this article is to contribute to the discourse surrounding labor and migration while enriching existing literature by connecting precarity with asylum and migration policies. The starting point will be the definition of precarity, the types in which it can be distinguished, and its function from a sociological point of view. The following will be studied: the theories of migration regarding forced movement, integration of migrants and the precariousness of those who enter the labor market, whether asylum seekers or undocumented, since the mid-2010s. The legal framework for integration into work will also be studied with asylum seekers or recognized beneficiaries of international protection, as the most precarious groups of migrants.

Methodologically, the research will explore the factors that influence the level of migrants' salary from the main employment, the causes of wage differences based on demographic characteristics, human capital (level of Education, previous experience), social security, and their legal status of residence, the role of trade unions/ NGOs/ local bodies in facilitating migrants' access to work, as well as the degree of influence of language proficiency, sources of information and housing on migrants' participation in the labor force. Through the literature review and theoretical searches, research questions will be formulated, to which the empirical research will attempt to provide answers through interviews and questionnaires. In the end, the statistical analysis will attempt to predict the probability that a migrant third-country national has of experiencing precarious working conditions in Greece.

The paper is organized into four sections. The first section offers a concise review of literature related to the theoretical discussion, investigating the facets of migrant precarity, the typological characteristics of the interplay between labor precarity and socio-legal status, as well as the association between precarity and asylum and migration policies. The subsequent section delineates the methodological approach taken in the case study focusing on Syrian refugees in Greece, aimed at gathering qualitative data concerning the observed precariousness experienced by migrants and refugees when they enter the labor market. In the conclusion, we analyze our findings, identify the connections between migrants' precariousness and their legal status, and underscore the necessity for further exploration into the institutionalization of precariousness.

2. Literature Review

Approaching the issue of Labor precarity as a multifaceted phenomenon, it seems that the concept of precarity has been widely used in Migration Studies in recent years. Migrants make up a significant proportion of the world "precariat" (Standing 2011; Della Porta D., Silvasti T., Hänninen S. & Siisiäinen M. 2016).

The concept of "precariousness" encompasses a range of insecure, unstable, or vulnerable situations socio-economically tied to dynamics within the labor market. Precariousness is primarily discussed within research focused on forced labor and encapsulates the constantly evolving working conditions across various labor sectors, particularly among migrants who exhibit a significant degree of adaptability to such conditions (Standing 2011; Rodriguez-Planas and Nollenberger 2014). In their work titled "Precarity: a savage journey to the Heart of embodied capitalism," Tsianos and Papadopoulos delve into the notion of precarity as a more profound phenomenon intrinsically linked to modern capitalism and contemporary working conditions (Tsianos and Papadopoulos 2006).

A prevalent observation in the existing literature concerning precarity and migration is the restriction of migrants to certain administrative or productive areas within Greece or specific occupational sectors (such as agriculture or healthcare). In the article "The precarious status of migrant labour in Greece: evidence from rural areas," authored by Kasimis, Papadopoulos, and Zografakis, which is part of the collective research titled "The New Social Division: making and unmaking precariousness" (Della Porta et al., 2016), the authors delve into the labor precariousness of migrants in Greece, particularly emphasizing rural regions. Here, migrants are characterized as a "rural proletariat" a term that may be alternatively referred to as "rural precariat" (Kasimis, Papadopoulos, and Zografakis, 2015). This distinct category of migrant workers exhibits traits of both stable employment and

precarious seasonal jobs (Papadopoulos, 2013). The precarious situation experienced by migrants is primarily rooted in the unstable nature of their residency status. Simultaneously, being cognizant of the fluid circumstances surrounding them, these individuals demonstrate adaptability in their job search, opting for uninsured 'black' employment to secure some income and sustain their livelihood. In essence, they are willing to accept jobs without insurance as long as employment is available, even if these jobs do not correspond with their skills or offer long-term viability.

Nevertheless, precariousness extends beyond labor markets and impacts various facets of individual lives. The literature reveals four interconnected principal types of precariousness pertinent to the migrant workforce in affluent economies: Migrant precarious legal status, Migrant precarious working conditions, Migrant precarious living conditions, and additional aspects related to these experiences (Papadopoulos, Fratsea, and Mavrommatis, 2018). In their publication "*Governing migrant labour in an intensive agricultural area in Greece: precarity, political mobilization and migrant agency in the Fields of Manolada*" (2018), Papadopoulos, Fratsea and Mavrommatis scrutinize the proactive role of migrants in influencing their circumstances through the case study of Manolada. Within this specific local community, the capacity and initiative of migrants to make decisions and impact their lives, despite facing challenging situations, is notably evident. The active engagement of migrants in shaping their reality serves not only as a mechanism for transcending precarious conditions but also as a counterbalance to the challenging living situations that arise from their specific status. This article examines how migrants might leverage the vulnerabilities they confront to establish safer living environments by making choices that diminish uncertainty, precariousness, and risk associated with their migratory context. In this regard, migrants function more as active agents, employing personal strategies and actions, since participation in collective labor movements tends to be minimal, rather than merely passive receivers of an external reality.

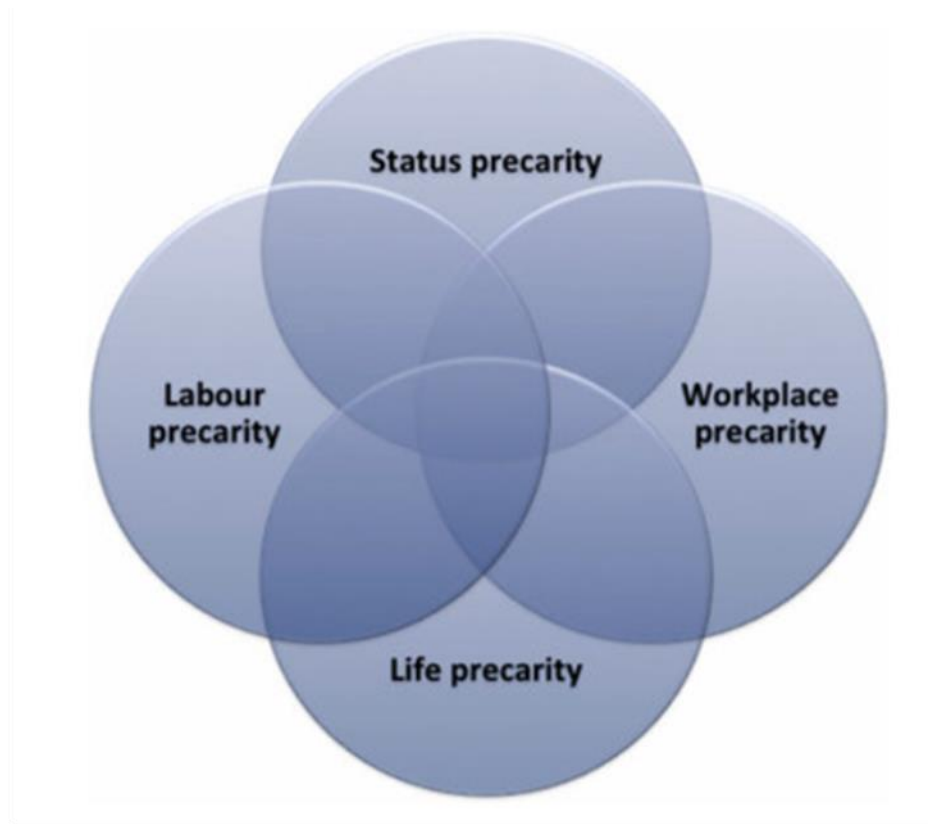


Figure 1: "The multiple dimensions of migrant labour precarity" (Papadopoulos, Fratsea, and Mavrommatis, 2018, p. 202)

Approaching the topic of precarity as a complex issue, the notion of precarity appears to overlap with labor relations and citizenship matters and has been extensively utilized in migration studies in recent times (Schrierup et al. 2015, Schierup and Jorgensen 2016). According to Standing (2011), migrants represent a considerable fraction of the global precariat, forming a "New Dangerous Class," characterized primarily by ongoing uncertainty and instability (Standing 2015). Prior studies have investigated the precarity of migrants and labor exploitation within the agricultural domain (Papadopoulos, & Zografakis 2015; Papadopoulos, Fratsea, & Mavrommatis 2018), as well as temporary employment within the hospitality (Maroukis 2016) and care sectors (Maroukis 2017).

Migrants who experience heightened insecurity tend to exhibit greater adaptability to their surroundings and enhanced flexibility in their employment. As a result, they often accept precarious jobs, lower compensation, and unfavorable working conditions. The fight for existence is accompanied by increasingly insecure working and living conditions (Rodriguez-Planas and Nollenberger 2014). The chance to remain in a certain location and establish a sense of belonging significantly influences an individual's capacity to experience contentment in an ever-evolving environment (Ikonen 2013). In a time marked by mobility and identity definition, it is crucial to acknowledge the role of migrants and refugees within a particular context, distinguishing between rural and urban settings (Papadopoulos AG and Fratsea L-M 2021).

Guy Standing has contributed greatly to the discussion around the conceptual approach of the term. Standing talks about the various components of precarious work and precarious situations (*"The New Social Division"* 2011), and analyses the precariat in three books: *"Work After Globalization: Building Occupational Citizenship"* (2009), *"The Precariat: the New Dangerous Class"* (2011), and *"A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to citizens"* (2014). In *"The Precariat: the New Dangerous Class"*, he defines precariat as consisting of those lacking seven different forms of security (Lewis and Waite 2015; 49–67).

Waite L. in his article *"A place and space for a critical geography of Precarity? Geography Compass"* (2009), focuses his study on the precarious employment conditions of immigrants especially in the lower-paid sectors of Labor and characterizes this group as a new social class ("the new precariat"). This new social group-class emerged through the reform-deregulation of forms of employment and immigration policy and is geographically located in the province in areas of employment such as agriculture, but now also in large cities in areas such as home employment

Charalambos Kasimis and Apostolos Papadopoulos in their article *"Employment and occupational mobility of migrants in two local labor markets"* (2012) note that immigrants' long stay and legal status are linked to finding better employment, higher incomes, and extensive and established social networks. Old-comers hold the most skilled and responsible jobs and are in a higher social position than new entrants to the labor market who occupy unskilled, lower-paid jobs and work under poor conditions.

The article *"Asylum, Immigration Restrictions, and Exploitation: Hyper-precarity as a lens for understanding and tackling forced labor"* by Hannah Lewis and Louise Waite, highlights the hyper-precarious situation of migrants and links employment conditions to their legal residence status, especially those involved in the asylum process (Lewis H. & Waite L. 2015).

The sexual division of labor and gender discrimination seems to be right at the heart of the nature of precarious work, a long-term relationship of cruelty that characterized industrial and post-industrial societies, as far as Italy is concerned.

Through research on migration and the concept of precarity, an ongoing and deeper engagement of Labor geography with precarity is highlighted. In critical studies of work and the employment relationship, precarity has not been widely analyzed by geographers. However, research on migrant labor and emerging labor relations through technological change, flexibilization, restructuring, and insecurity uses precarity as a multidimensional conceptual framework.

The experience of migrants can be used to better understand precarity and practice in the modern world, thus establishing a basis for further research on the relationship between precarity and migration (Paret & Gleeson 2016).

In general, the greater the difficulties immigrants encounter in the host country, the more important networks and social ties become for finding work, adapting to the new culture, obtaining legal residence documents, and, if it is impossible to obtain legal documents, avoiding arrest and deportation. A causal relationship between social networks, job precariousness, and legal residency status is thus identified, in the sense that job precariousness is positively affected by the lack of legal documents, but negatively by social networks.

Massey *et al* (1998) have argued that researchers look at the migration phenomenon either from the reasons that drive one to migrate or from the assimilation of immigrants. Increasingly researchers are focusing on issues of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. There is also increasing interest in the role of women, families, households, relationships, and networks, as well as in institutions and organizations that act as connecting links between migrants.

While through investigations (Lewis & Waite 2015) a typology has been developed that links precarious work to precarious immigration status, the factors that affect precarious work have not been identified according to the migrant profile, and it has not been explained why migrants with the same or similar migrant profile face completely different conditions of precarity at work.

Uncertainty is linked to specific sectors and types of work, such as construction, agriculture, and Home Services. The literature shows specific groups that are more likely to work in precarious conditions. The most commonly cited are young people, women, older people and immigrants. Undocumented immigrants are more likely to be involved in precarious work. Porthé *et al.* (2009) in their study of undocumented workers in four Spanish cities found that undocumented immigrants see themselves as experiencing "high labor instability, disempowerment due to lack of legal protection, high weakness exacerbated by their legal and immigration status, inadequate wages, limited social benefits and difficulties in exercising their rights, and finally, long and intense work".

Also, the countries of origin of "irregular" or "illegal" - as they are called - immigrants are mainly countries of the former Soviet Union, where family ties are particularly close, or developing Third World countries such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, where the need to find any kind of work is acute. (Schierup 2006)

Dorantes and Rica (2007) found differences in the assimilation of employment of various immigrant groups, providing evidence of discrimination based on ethnic origin.

When refugees' legal right to work is not protected, many are forced to find or create opportunities in the informal sector to provide basic livelihoods for themselves and their families. A study conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Jordan found that Syrian refugees are willing to work in low-skilled sectors, not preferred by Jordanian nationals. (Hillesund S., Stave, S.E. 2015)

Whether a migrant's working conditions are precarious or not depends on several factors. Migrant workers can be in more stable situations, for example, when employed with work permits that provide specific legal guarantees. A migrant could be in a state of precariousness when they are unable to return to their country of origin. Otherwise, the "choice" to remain negates precariousness. There are also "elite" migrants - those who are skilled and mobile-who mobilize their skills and resources to avoid being subjected to conditions of precarity.

Migrants are also more likely to be affected by unemployment, particularly as a consequence of the economic crisis. However, while migrants may not be able to rely on traditional support networks, they can exploit networks of "those who had done it before," they tend to be younger and can work better to improve their situation. Migrants are also often found in large cities with high living costs, which exacerbate the conditions of precarity.

The precarious legal status is linked to precarious work. Lack of citizenship and risk of deportation have driven immigrants into gray areas of the economy where wages are low, benefits nonexistent, and a protective workplace framework with limited scope.

The following factors have been identified concerning precarious work in the case of migrants:

- Lack of knowledge of the language of the host country
- Ignorance of rights.
- Legislation
- The interests of employers who encourage or pursue the informal employment of irregular migrants in their business

Both tight controls on immigration and the issue of work permits were associated as factors favoring precarious work. The requirement to renew work permits means that individuals would accept any job, regardless of the conditions attached to it.

Transnational social networks of migrants enhance migration and increase the likelihood of new entrants resorting to informal forms of work, but at the same time offer alternatives for survival, thus compensating for the job insecurity surrounding their residence status. The social networks of migrants act as a lever for finding employment, strengthen the bonds between them and offer the social safety net that is absent from the informal forms of protection. Therefore, the networks of migrants on the one hand increase the likelihood that irregular migrants will be employed in precarious conditions, and on the other hand act as a repressive force for the new entrants, as they provide them with the necessary help for survival (Schierup Carl-Ulrik 2006 p.38; Horgan & Iinamäa 2012)

As there are differences between precarious work in the Global North and South, it is possible to identify differences between sectors of precarious work, and intersections between precarious work and categories of gender, race, and citizenship.

Especially relevant for Greece is the examination of the labor precariousness faced by migrants who arrived post-mid-2010s, who can be classified as either asylum seekers or individuals lacking legal documentation and are approaching entry into the labor force. The country's strategic geographic position, economic restructuring, and societal transformations over recent decades have generated both demands and opportunities for migrant groups, who often fill the most vulnerable, marginal, and significantly exploited roles within a divided labor market. The sectors of this labor market include agriculture, construction, tourism, street vending, and domestic services (Kasimis & Papadopoulos 2005). Syrian refugees represent a considerable majority of the migrant population in Greece between 2014 and 2024. A noteworthy example involves Syrian refugees residing in Western Greece, who often lack close ties to available job opportunities and tend to engage in precarious and irregular employment, with exploitative conditions frequently persisting from their prior experiences in Turkey (before their arrival in Greece) into their current situation (Papadopoulos AG and Fratsea L-M 2021). Many find themselves in a state of 'wait-and-see' regarding their aspirations for an improved life, reflecting a condition of inertia (Papadopoulos AG and Fratsea L-M 2019). Within the framework of the economic crisis, the influx of migrants and refugees into Greek society intensifies discussions concerning social and spatial justice within the nation. Furthermore, the formulation and execution of migration and asylum policies has prompted an array of issues related to integration, which are examined in the concluding section (Papadopoulos AG and Fratsea L-M 2019).

Despite the preliminary legal framework regarding the employment rights of refugees, refugees in Greece face many issues with obtaining permits, finding work, and exercising their legal right to work. The right of a refugee to engage in salaried work depends on the acceptance of the application for asylum and the acquisition of a residence permit. For refugees taking leave, xenophobia can hinder one's ability to find paid work, a situation exacerbated by a hard-working market for nationals and non-nationals. Furthermore, refugees do not receive substantial safety or protection from national labor law and in cases of human rights violations and workplace violations, refugees cannot access legal justice. Most workplace violations, including widespread sexual harassment toward women, go unreported. In response to these abuses, NGOs active in the sector, such as the Greek Council for Refugees, are working to provide legal services and

protection to refugee communities. However, due to the country's instability, they often cannot reach those most in need.

Our argument is that the precarious conditions of employment of migrants are not affected by the legal status of residence so much as by the knowledge of the language of the host country. In order to confirm or refute our argument, we investigated through field research the labour precariousness of migrants that are granted legal status of residence relatively fast, if not within weeks, within months after their arrival in Greece. Through the methodology explained below, we focused our research on Syrian asylum applicants whose refugee recognition rate is extremely high (over 90% between 2022-2023¹ throughout EU+) and are one of the top nationalities that have claimed for asylum in Greece between 2022-2023². Therefore Syrian asylum applicants form a group of Third-Country Nationals that are expected to reside legally in Greece and have the possibility to settle down, follow integration programs and find stable working conditions. For this group of Third-Country Nationals, we looked into other factors that are expected to affect their precarity, such as the place of residence (urban- rural), the level of knowledge of language of the host country, their networks, sex, age, past experience and future aspirations. Through our research, it becomes evident that labour precarity is interconnected with language skills and future aspirations.

3. Case study: Syrian asylum seekers, with or without legal residence documents

Regarding asylum requests in Greece, on average 25% of all applications from June 2013 to February 2020 come from Syrians (Asylum Service statistics (from 07.06.2013 to 29.02.2020) http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Greek_Asylum_Service_data_February_2020_gr.pdf). Syrians are the main recipients of Housing and integration policies and have the highest recognition rate for asylum claims of nearly 100%. In Turkey, where Syrians make up a large proportion of the migrant population, it is characteristic that a percentage of them are employed in precarious working conditions but at the same time, there are different levels of social integration depending on their educational, economic, and living background. The population of Syrian migrants can therefore be divided into sub-groups depending on their social networks and acquaintances, their family ties, their level of satisfaction, and their future expectations from life.

The massive flows of migrants in the period 2014-2015 also brought about an increase in asylum claims. The EU-Turkey deal in 2016 brought a separation of newly arrived migrants into those under geographical restriction and those not, as well as a bottleneck of island hotspots with a migrant population. Applying for asylum is now a one-way street for those entering the country. Regarding the housing of migrants, the majority of the housing structures are located in Athens (53%) with Syrians (40%) having the primacy among the citizenships sharing the places in these structures (UNHCR 2019a; 2019b).

¹ <https://euaa.europa.eu/latest-asylum-trends-annual-analysis>

² chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/%CE%A0%CE%91%CE%A1%CE%91%CE%A1%CE%A4%CE%97%CE%9C%CE%91-%CE%91_%CE%94%CE%B5%CE%BA%CE%AD%CE%BC%CE%B2%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BF%CF%82-2022_%CE%A5%CE%9C%CE%91-GR-%CE%95%CE%BD%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%81%CF%89%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C-%CE%94%CE%99%CE%95%CE%98%CE%9D%CE%97-%CE%A0%CE%A1%CE%9F%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%91%CE%A3%CE%99%CE%91_%CE%9D%CE%95%CE%9F.pdf

Their stay in Greece is influenced, among other things, by language learning and job opportunities. But the key factors that determine their plans are family ties, experiences, and skills. (Papadopoulos A.& Fratsea L.-M. 2019)

Syrian migrants enjoy better treatment than other newly arrived populations, who stay for much longer periods in reception centers, alongside any delays in the asylum process.

Syrians in Turkey under temporary protection are employed in the secondary and/or informal labor market. The unskilled on the one hand find it difficult to gain access to the labor market or are offered low-paid jobs in the informal labor market, while those with financial resources, social capital, and social networks have the opportunity to set up businesses, establish connections with locals and participate in socio-cultural activities. Therefore, there are different levels of social inclusion for Syrians based on their economic resources and the characteristics of their social class.

Legal and Social Security precariousness, family networks, lifestyle satisfaction, experiences, aspirations and hope for a future return to Syria are factors that significantly influence Syrians' decisions on migration, as well as living conditions in preliminary arrival structures and reception centers.

The narratives of Syrian refugees depict their journey away from war and conflict in Syria to seek refuge and a better life in other countries, their living conditions in the places they stopped along the way, the challenges they face, and their plans. Young people show a greater ability to integrate into the labor market, while older people find it difficult to participate in the local economy and society. Another point seems to be a division between the newly arrived who are transported to the mainland and the rest who remain confined to the islands and at risk of deportation.

Therefore, Syrians constitute a group of migrants that combine different profiles of job precariousness and the characteristics mentioned in the bibliography.

- Undocumented, asylum seekers, recognized refugees, or residence permits holders
- With or without Networks, family, or support
- With or without knowledge of the Greek language
- With or without specific skills and knowledge from the country of origin

4. Methodology

To investigate the issue of labor precariousness among migrants in Greece, qualitative field research and empirical observations were carried out, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data primarily through semi-structured interviews conducted from 2022 to 2023. A total of 79 individuals were interviewed, primarily comprising Syrians residing in Reception and Identification Facilities (RIF), staff members of these facilities, and senior officials. Specifically, between February 2022 and June 2023, 52 in-depth interviews were conducted with migrants, alongside 23 interviews with immigration personnel, and additionally, 4 interviews with senior officials from the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum within that timeframe. In conducting interviews with senior officials, a narrative study approach (Rosenthal 1993, Widdershoven 1993) was utilized, which investigates individuals' life narratives and perspectives by considering their personal cumulative experiences. All interviews conducted with residents at the RIFs were held in their native languages, aided by interpreters working within those facilities, using semi-structured formats based on pre-designed questionnaires. The interviews with RIF employees were conducted in Greek,

also utilizing a semi-structured interview format grounded in questionnaires.

To choose an appropriate sample of Syrian migrants for the survey, several factors were considered: the presence of interpretation services in the native languages of the participants; variability in legal residency statuses; the inclusion of nationalities from migrant demographics characterized by lower likelihoods of being engaged in unstable employment situations, such as elevated rates of asylum acceptance, and residing in rural or tourist-centric regions; representation within both communities; and the presence of a range of nationalities proficient in both languages. The 'snowball' technique was employed, initiating from locations where large groups of migrants are housed. Moreover, to ensure accurate conclusions, testimonials were collected from workers who, along with the sampled migrants, possessed extensive experience and comprehensive insights into the daily issues and obstacles faced by migrants in Greece in recent years.

For the sample selection, the Temporary Accommodation Facilities managed by the Reception and Identification Service in Eleonas and Schisto in Attica, Filippiada in Preveza, and Katsika in Ioannina were ultimately chosen.

These locations presented several advantages: consistent availability of interpretation services in Arabic, Farsi, Dari, and English, which are the primary communication languages for individuals from the Middle East (including Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, etc.); significant housing capacity for Syrian individuals; job-seeking opportunities for those residing nearby or within proximity to the facilities; a diverse array of workers and associates engaged with the migrant populace, such as interpreters, social workers, medical and administrative personnel; a varied spectrum of legal residency statuses for the occupants, especially focusing on recognized refugees; and representation of both genders. During the 2022-2023 research period, individuals residing on the islands had not been in Greece for over six months. In contrast, the inland facilities chosen for the study housed individuals from the migrant population who had been relocated from the Aegean islands post-2020 as part of the efforts to alleviate overcrowding in the multifunctional Reception and Identification Centres. These individuals were anticipated to have resided in Greece long enough to provide valuable perspectives on the employment circumstances of migrants. This migrant group transferred from the islands to the mainland post-2020 in light of the reduction of congestion at reception and identification centers primarily consisted of asylum seekers who were moved to the mainland to continue their asylum applications following the removal of the geographical restrictions set forth by the Turkey-Greece Joint Agreement. At the time of the research, some participants had either completed their asylum procedures with recognition of refugee status or rejection of their applications, while others still had pending asylum claims (Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2019). Additionally, the selected facilities for this research exhibited geographical diversity, encompassing both urban (Eleonas, Schisto) and rural (Filippiada, Katsikas) environments. Thus, by opting for these locations, the survey aimed to include asylum seekers, recognized refugees, and those whose asylum applications had been denied, with the intention of examining whether the level of precariousness is affected by the geographical characteristics of their residence, whether urban or rural.

5. Discussion of research results

Based on the responses provided by the participants, it can be inferred that the geographic location of their residence (whether within or outside of Attica, and in urban or rural settings) does not influence job acquisition. Furthermore, they regard proficiency in Greek as the primary factor contributing to job insecurity, while neither experience nor salary level appears to be significant; rather, the presence of legal residency documents is deemed important.

The predominant view among participants was that they have not been provided with sufficient guidance on securing legal employment, obtaining insurance, and interacting with Greek public services. They regard social networks and health challenges as the second most significant aspect contributing to job insecurity. Furthermore, the absence of a family protector, in conjunction with inadequate welfare systems, inhibits their ability to seek employment. None of the respondents currently enjoy stable job positions or possess verifiable work experience, with all expressing a desire to relocate to another member state and establish themselves outside of Greece. Among the migrant women who took part in the survey, 80% indicated that they are not employed due to either lacking childcare options, having a dependent child requiring special care, or not having previous work experience, and expressing an unwillingness or inability to engage in employment: "... I have never worked in my life; I don't know...; I don't want to work..." (Samira G. , married, 30 years old). "... The child won't stay without me; where can I leave it..." (Zilan K. , unmarried, 19 years old). Only 20% occasionally engage in low-wage labor, such as gathering cardboard and aluminum cans for recycling to cover basic needs: "... The work I'm doing now with cardboard is to earn food, bread, water, cigarettes, and my expenses..." (Zilan M. , married, 23 years old). Among the male migrants surveyed living in the urban area of South Attica, 50% reported actively seeking employment, primarily in manual labor, yet faced challenges in securing jobs due to a lack of proficiency in Greek, insufficient experience, or a preference against relocating from Athens for positions available in the provinces. They are primarily engaged in low-paying informal work, such as collecting cardboard or boxes for recycling: "This job I'm currently doing, collecting cardboard, has no relation to my field of expertise... I am without funds; it is out of necessity... I don't know the language; we cannot acquire the language skills needed to find work related to my expertise..." (Ayham R. , married, 37 years old). Among those residing in rural areas, 75% reported that finding work in the agricultural sector is exceedingly challenging, citing a minimal demand for labor and perceiving Athens as offering greater employment prospects. Individuals working in labor-intensive roles or within the agricultural sector, particularly in citrus harvesting, work sporadically, without insurance, for very low wages, and believe that language skills and social connections are crucial for job seeking: "... If I knew the language, I could interact with you or others..." (Saig G. , married, 34 years old).

The accounts of Syrian refugees illustrate their escape from the violence and turmoil in Syria as they search for safety and improved living circumstances in various nations. They detail their situations in the locations where they paused during their journey, the obstacles encountered, and their aspirations. Factors such as legal and social insecurities, familial connections, satisfaction with their lifestyles, personal experiences, goals, and hope for a potential return to Syria greatly affect the migration choices of Syrians (Müller-Funk 2019). Additionally, conditions in pre-arrival accommodations and reception facilities further influence these decisions (Mavrommatis 2018, Kandyliis 2019). Younger individuals exhibit a stronger capacity for integrating into the workforce, while older individuals often struggle to engage in the local economy and society.

Their time in Greece is affected by, among other elements, language acquisition and the availability of employment. Nevertheless, critical determinants of their plans also include familial relationships, past experiences, and individual skill sets (Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2019).

The research findings regarding the precarious circumstances of Syrian migrants reveal that the instability faced by asylum seekers pertains to their vulnerable and uncertain legal status. Throughout the review of their asylum applications, applicants frequently endure living in precarious conditions, as they lack clarity on whether they will obtain the intended protection. Prolonged delays in the asylum procedure contribute to sustained uncertainty, trapping migrants in a status of indecision. Furthermore, the limitation of social and economic rights often results in asylum seekers being barred from the labor market or only being offered temporary and inadequately compensated employment (Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2019).

It establishes that the geographical location of residence and the legal status of migrants do not influence their precarious employment conditions. Concerning accommodation in reception centers or camps, numerous asylum seekers reside in facilities or shelters characterized by substandard living conditions, frequently within overcrowded environments that lack privacy and essential resources. These circumstances heighten their vulnerability while exacerbating potential risks to their mental and physical well-being. Asylum seekers often find themselves subjects of discrimination, racially motivated attacks, and social exclusion within their host nations. The prevailing stereotype portraying them as a "burden" to host societies aggravates their marginalization. Factors such as insecurity, traumatic histories from their countries of origin, and challenges related to their integration into host nations significantly impact their mental health. Extended periods of precarious living can result in anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The state of precariousness renders asylum seekers susceptible to various forms of exploitation, including human trafficking, forced labor, and sexual violence. Asylum seekers and refugees who have arrived in Greece confront substantial challenges concerning their living conditions and overall well-being, leading many of them to opt for relocation to another EU nation, irrespective of whether they have submitted asylum applications or received favorable decisions. While there is no official data indicating how many individuals granted protection have remained in Greece, numerous indications suggest that those issued travel documents legally transit to other European countries and submit new asylum requests in those locations (ex., Germany, France, Sweden) as they are unable to secure employment and sustain themselves in Greece. These so-called "secondary flows" are linked to the difficulties that refugees encounter in their efforts to integrate into host nations (Papadopoulos, Fratsea, and Baltas 2023).

The aforementioned details underscore the proactive stance of migrants concerning the socio-economic conditions of the host nation, thereby countering conventional narratives that depict them as "passive recipients" of integration measures and reinforcing their status as "agents." Despite the unfavorable circumstances they navigate, migrants continually adjust to their new environment and actively engage in practices and strategies aimed at ongoing survival and social advancement, as they constantly juxtapose their current living situation against an idealized place to which they could potentially relocate in the future. This dynamic is pivotal in shaping their migration agendas, fostering the development of social networks, and influencing their relationship with integration policies. They assert their place within society, compelling national immigration and asylum policies to evolve in response to the new realities to align with national strategies. Consequently, the precariousness experienced by migrants positions them as proactive contributors to policymaking, prompting them to discover new survival strategies that ultimately

undermine asylum and migration frameworks, which, in turn, strive to adjust to this shifting context (Fratsea & Papadopoulos 2020).

This ongoing interplay between precarious conditions and integration policies further accentuates the significant influence of migrants in the formation of asylum and migration regulations.

6. Conclusion

In the context of Greece, the term 'migration and refugee crisis' signifies a significant surge in the number of migrants and refugees over a short span, highlighting the inadequacies of the current immigration and asylum policy framework in addressing emerging social realities (Papadopoulos, Fratsea, and Baltas 2023). The prevailing perception of national migration and asylum policy is predicated on deterrence, articulated through mechanisms for managing asylum requests, stringent border controls, and various practices designed to dissuade social actors from aiding migrants and refugees (Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2019). This omnipresent atmosphere of deterrence not only estranges asylum seekers from the essential support systems they urgently require but also cultivates a climate of fear and uncertainty that affects the lives of individuals arriving in pursuit of safety and improved prospects.

Asylum seekers and refugees arriving in Greece encounter considerable challenges related to their living conditions and overall well-being; many opt to relocate to another EU nation in search of enhanced opportunities for themselves and their families. The living conditions of these newly arrived individuals are predominantly shaped by the (un)official state policy of 'deterrence,' which is evident in the presence of overcrowded camps, inadequate access to vital services, and a dearth of legal pathways for migration. However, refugees face substantial difficulties when attempting to establish themselves in the country, as they frequently confront bureaucratic obstacles, limited support systems, and a general environment of hostility. The ability of the host society to accept and integrate incoming migrant populations remains constrained, not solely due to the repercussions of economic austerity which has burdened public resources and services but also because of the reluctance of the local population to embrace newcomers, driven by fears of cultural erosion and competition for employment.

Newly arrived individuals are eager to relocate to other parts of the EU that are viewed as having superior reception infrastructures and that can provide them with job opportunities and improved living circumstances. This aspiration for relocation is motivated by the challenging realities they encounter in Greece, where legal employment options are limited and frequently exploitative. This dormant condition of 'limbo' can endure for extended periods, lasting many months or even years, placing migrant populations in a suspended state during a crucial time when they should be actively pursuing employment and integrating into the host society (Papadopoulos & Fratsea 2019). The prolonged nature of this limbo not only obstructs their efforts to rebuild their lives but also intensifies mental health challenges, as the uncertainty surrounding their future weighs heavily on their psychological state.

The autonomy of refugees is constrained, yet their job prospects continue to worsen, particularly if their application for asylum is approved, as the shift from asylum seeker to acknowledged refugee frequently does not assure access to consistent employment or social support. In Greece's context, its geographic positioning generates geopolitical theories and narratives that often neglect the socio-economic determinants and political circumstances influencing migration and refugee movements. The migration and asylum regulations established by the EU have led to Member States situated at the external borders confronting a social and humanitarian crisis

resulting from these enacted policies (Papadopoulos, Fratsea, and Baltas 2023). Although these policies aim to regulate migration patterns, they frequently result in vulnerable groups being pushed deeper into unstable situations, jeopardizing their rights and dignity.

In conclusion, despite the research's constraints (such as COVID-19 and newly arrived immigrant populations), it has underscored the instability faced by migrants as a determinant of their socio-political conditions, thereby associating instability with asylum and migration frameworks. This insecure status compels refugees to depend on informal employment sectors, where they encounter exploitation and mistreatment, thereby perpetuating a cycle of marginalization and vulnerability. Building on this, we highlight the necessity for additional research on the operational role of precarity as a foundation for comprehending the societal challenges and policy dilemmas that arise from managing migration and refugee movements of various magnitudes. Such investigations ought to not only document the experiences of migrants and refugees but also support policy reforms that prioritize their integration and rights within society, ultimately encouraging a more compassionate and equitable approach to the persistent migration crisis.

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