

Sharp increases in food-related coping in Dar'a despite of improvements in national food security situation

Key points



In July, slight improvements were found in overall food consumption, mainly driven by improvements in Damascus, Homs and Hama hard-to-reach areas and Tartous



While the dietary diversity remained at the same level as in June, the intake of nutrient-rich food continued on a downward trend



Nearly all households in Dar'a (93.6 percent) applied at least one food-related coping mechanism, reflecting in high increases in households relying on less expensive food, limiting portion sizes, reducing the number of meals and restricting adult consumption while providing preference for children to eat first.



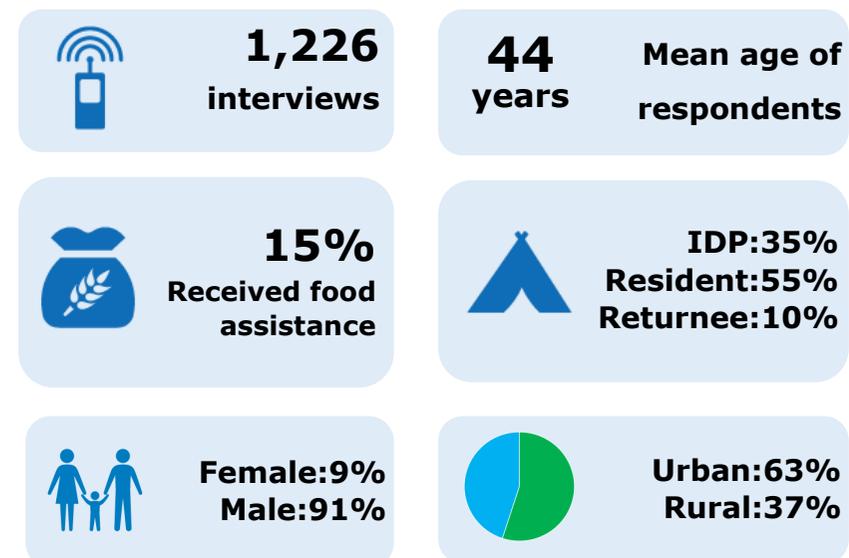
Situation update

Following the hostilities in the south-western areas of Syria starting mid-June, the Government of Syria has gained control over all of Dar'a Quneitra governorates. In the period from 16 to 20 July, close to 9,000 individuals fled from Dar'a and Quneitra to camps in Idleb and Aleppo governorates in close proximity to the Turkish border. In addition around 10,000 individuals, many being women and children, were evacuated from south-west Syria to Idleb and north-western parts of Syria due to severe concerns over their wellbeing.

Though the initial displacement numbers have been reduced and smaller-scale return movements reported, between 165,200 and 184,000 individuals are estimated to remain displaced of which around 100,000 individuals are displaced around the areas of the Golan Heights, bordering Israel.

After not having been able to reach Beit Jan in the south-western part of Rural Damascus since 2013, the first inter-agency convoy delivered humanitarian assistance to 19,500 people on 19 July. Though life-saving humanitarian assistance has been dispatched in the affected areas in the south-west through UN partners including food assistance for 463,955 IDPs and host community members, the response is being limited by access constraints due to the suspension of almost all cross-border assistance as well as low on-the-ground presence. In order to meet the most critical key humanitarian needs in the area, 300,000 individuals need immediate assistance.

Figure 1: Sample household characteristics





Overall food consumption slightly improved since June

In July, the national average of households with inadequate food consumption decreased by 2.2 percentage points, indicating an improvement since June. This was mainly driven by higher food consumption scores in Damascus, Tartous and hard-to-reach areas in Homs and Hama.

Additionally, a deterioration of the food consumption situation was seen in Rural Damascus and hard-to-reach areas of Aleppo, the latter facing the largest increase in borderline food consumption from 11.1 to 24.5 percent while poor consumption decreased from 7.0 to 2.4 percent, driving a total change of households with inadequate food consumption from 18.1 percent in June to 26.9 percent in July.

In Al-Hasakeh, Dar'a, Rural Damascus and hard-to-reach areas of Aleppo as well as Homs and Hama nearly every third household has either poor or borderline food consumption, indicating a nutrient gap in their diets.

In relation to residency status, significant changes were found for borderline food consumption which decreased from 18 to 14 percent. Borderline food consumption increased slightly for IDPs and returnees while poor food consumption saw a small decrease.

No data was available for Homs, Quneitra and hard-to-reach areas in Idleb and Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqah for the July mVAM round.

Figure 2: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption in aggregated governorates, February to July 2018

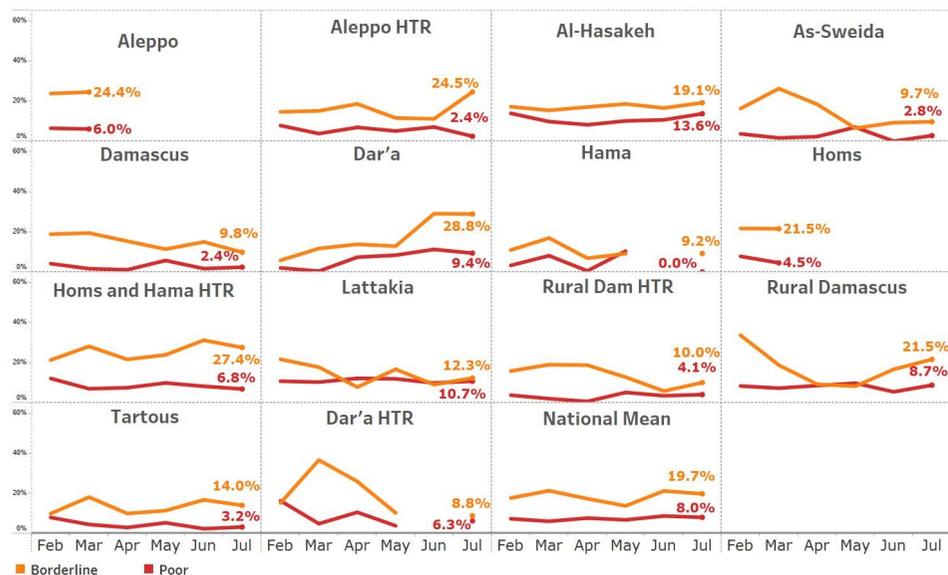
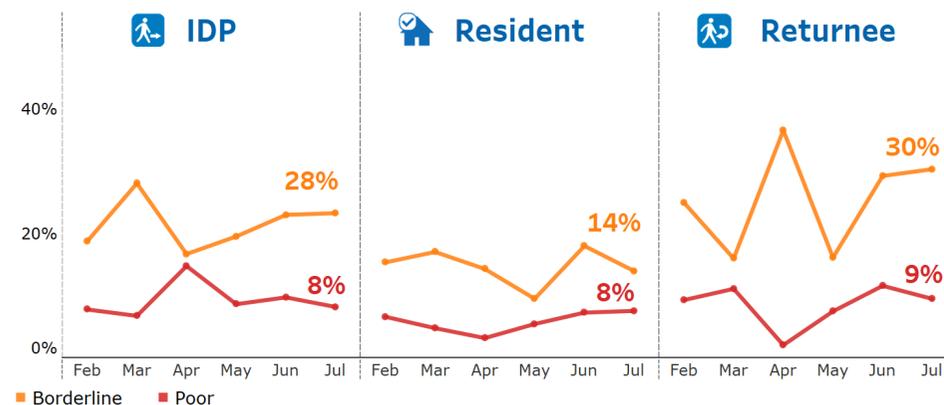
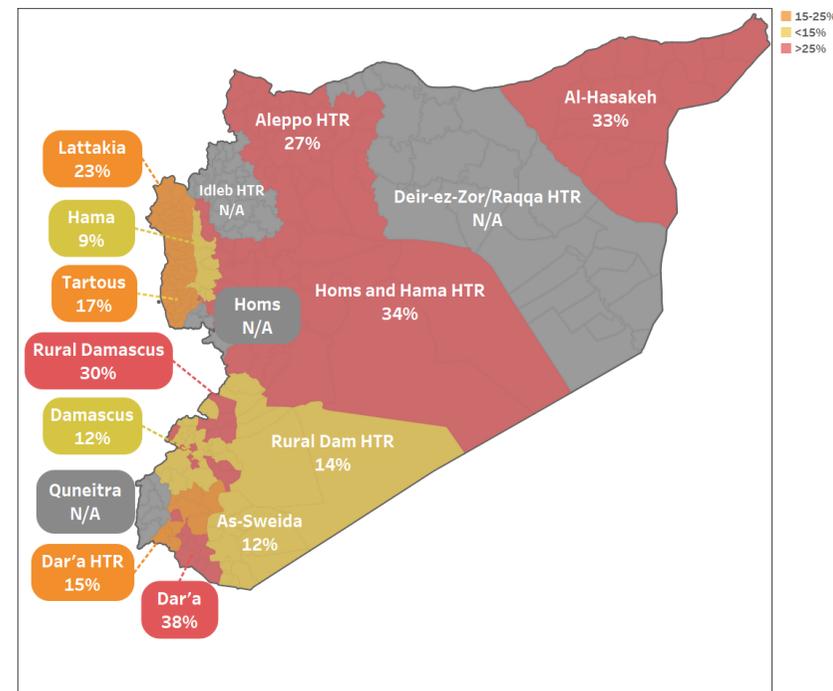


Figure 3: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption by residency status, February to July 2018



Map 1: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption by aggregated governorates, July 2018



Following the June trend, borderline food consumption for women-headed households (9 percent of the survey sample) increased further to 32.8 percent in July after a large increase from May (15.3 percent) to June (28.4 percent). In households headed by men (91 percent), food consumption improved since June.

In relation to coping strategies by gender of the head of the household, the rCSI¹ showed an overall downward trend for both male and female headed houses of 1% compared to June. Mainly due to an increase in households male and female reporting a lack of food or money to buy food.

Overall food consumption significantly improved for large households consisting of eight or more household members. Poor food consumption fell from 16.7 percent in June to 9.0 percent in July and borderline consumption decreased to 15.6 percent from 32.2 percent. At the same time, households with six to eight members saw an increase in borderline consumption of 7.2 percentage points translating into nearly one in four medium-sized households reporting borderline food consumption levels in July.

At the same time, especially large households applied significantly less food coping mechanisms. The proportion of households that relied on borrowing food fell by 13.6 percentage points, having to rely on less expensive food decreased by 16.9 percentage points while limiting portion sizes and reducing the number of meals saw falls of 13.9 and 10.6 percentage points respectively. The overall increase in rCSI for households with six to eight members was driven by a significant increase in households reducing the number of meals at least once the past week from 35.6 to nearly every second household (47 percent).

Significant decreases from 38.5 percent to 27.2 percent in borderline food consumption was found for respondents staying as guests. This was also reflected in the level of coping mechanisms reported which fell from 84.6 percent of households that applied at least one coping strategy in June to 75.5 percent in July.

In July, the dietary diversity score remained close to the June-level with the largest increase found in the number of days in one week households with poor food consumption were consuming sugar which increased from four to 5.7 days.

Overall, the intake of nutrient-rich foods decreased in July. Especially the intake of haem iron was low. Nearly 100 percent of households with poor food consumption reported a lack of haem iron in their diet compared to 73 percent for households with borderline food consumption and 26 percent for households with acceptable food consumption levels. Also intake of protein rich foods decreased across the three food consumption groups while the intake of vitamin A rich foods decreased for all groups but the poor.

Figure 4: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption by gender of head of household, household size and type of accommodation, July 2018

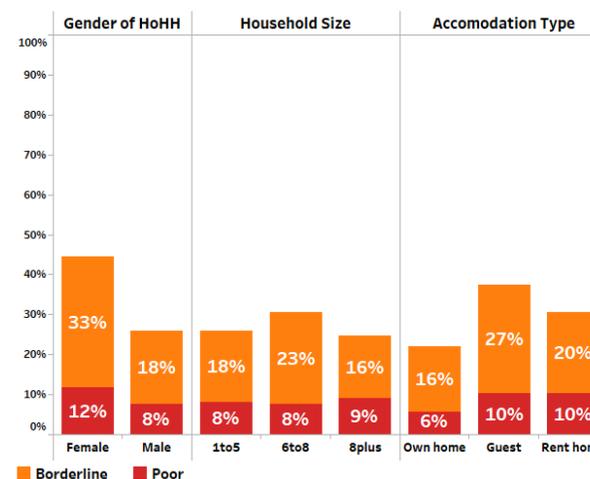


Figure 5: Mean rCSI by gender of head of household, household size and type of accommodation, July 2018

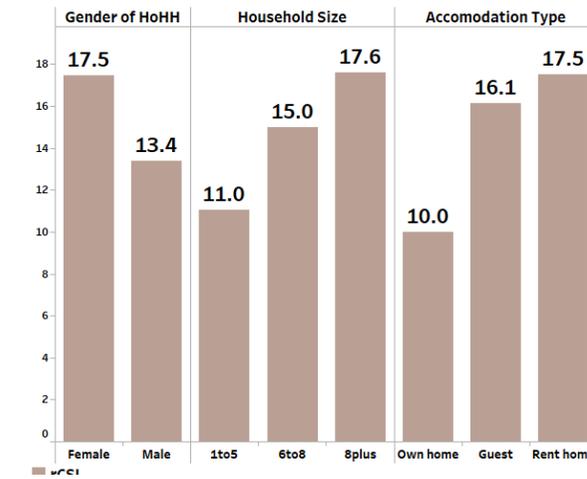


Figure 6: Dietary diversity by food consumption group (# of days food groups consumed), July 2018

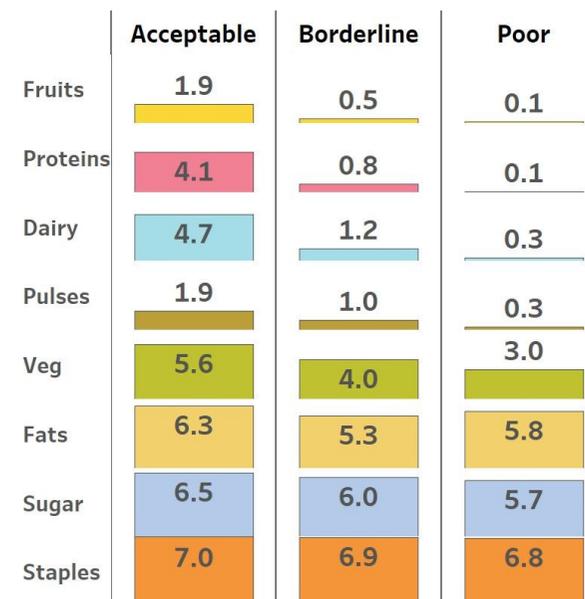
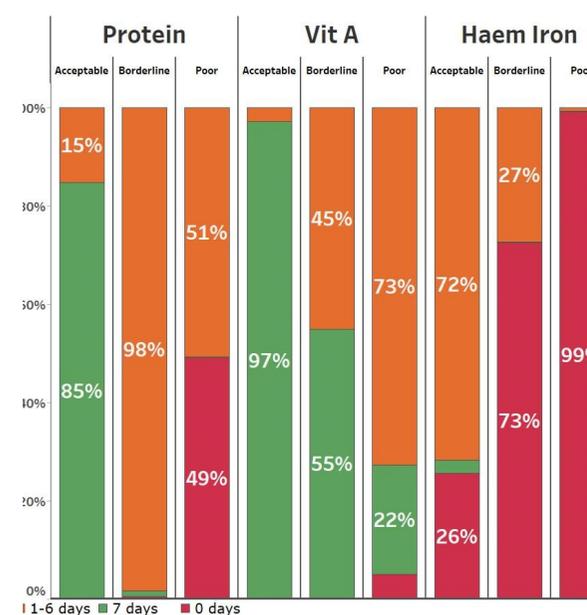


Figure 7: Frequency of consumption of nutrient-rich food by food consumption group, July 2018



1. rCSI refers to a simple and easy-to-use indicator of household food security. It is based on a series of responses (strategies) to a single question: "What do you do when you don't have adequate food, and don't have the money to buy food?" rCSI is measured over time and an increase in rCSI refers to a worsening of the food security situation while a reduction in rCSI refers to an improvement in the food security situation



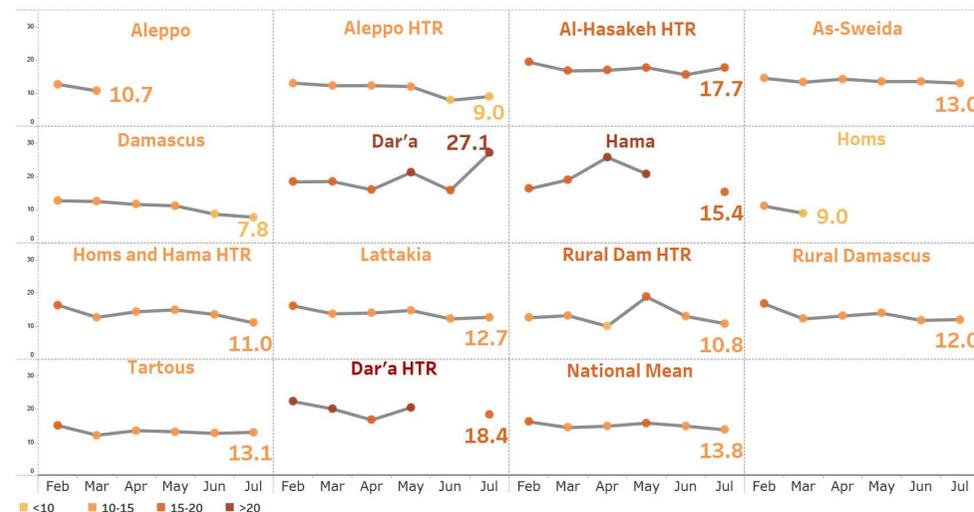
Sharp increases in the use of negative coping mechanisms in Dar'a

In July, the rCSI slightly decreased from 14.9 to 13.8 across Syria, however, 74 percent of interviewed households reported to still apply at least one food-related coping mechanism in the week prior to the survey. The fall was mainly driven by a significant decrease in rCSI in hard-to-reach areas of Homs and Hama where the number of households applying food-related coping mechanisms fell from 80.9 percent in June to 73.8 percent in July.

At governorate level, the highest significant increase in rCSI was found in Dar'a where the index almost doubled from 15.8 to 27.1 and the percent of households that adopted at least one food-related coping mechanism during the past week increased from 79.2 to 93.6 percent. Therefore, nearly all interviewed households in Dar'a governorate reported that they had engaged in at least one coping mechanisms in July. In particular significant increases were found in the number of households that relied on less expensive food (84.3 percent vs. 72.3 percent in June) and limiting portion sizes (57.4 percent vs. 36.1 percent in June), and the share of households reducing the number of meals and restricting adult consumption for children to eat have more than doubled since June. Other significant changes were found in hard-to-reach areas of Aleppo where the number of households applying food-based coping mechanisms increased by 17.8 percent in July.

Similar analysis for individual coping mechanisms by displacement status shows significant falls in IDPs and resident households who bought food on credit.

Figure 8: Mean rCSI by aggregated governorates, February to July 2018



Map 2: Mean rCSI by aggregated governorates, July 2018

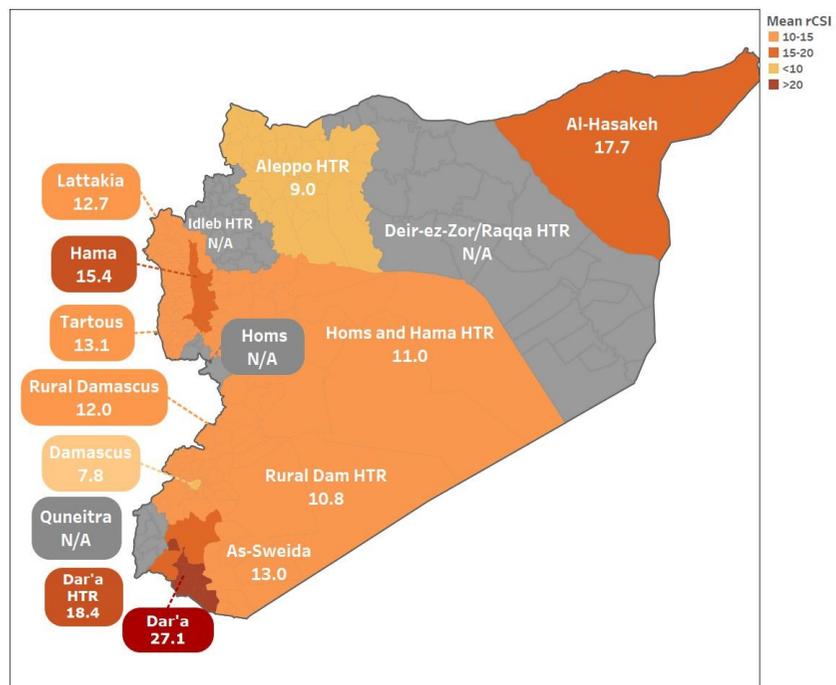
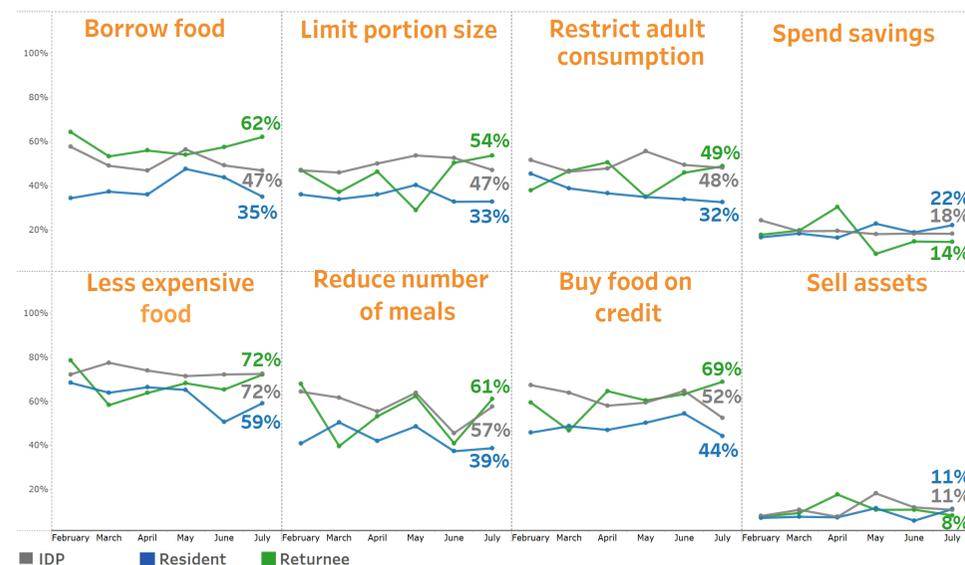


Figure 9: Coping mechanisms by displacement status, February to July 2018



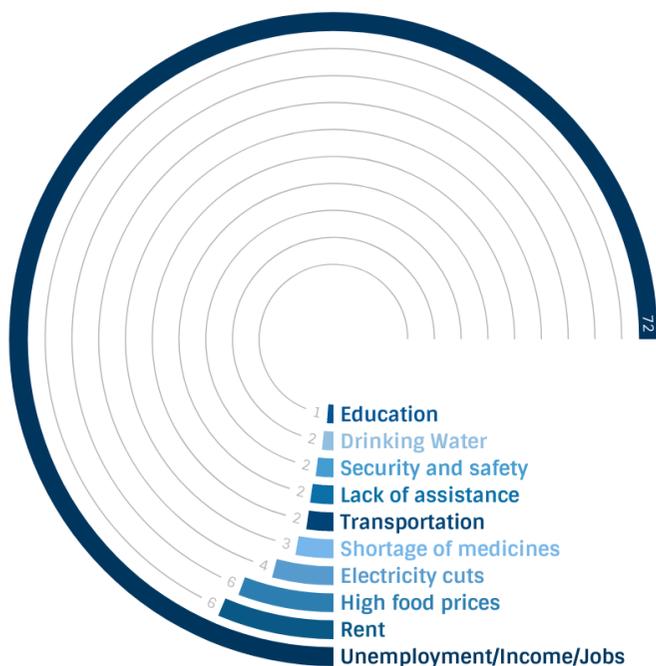


In the words of respondents

In July, respondents were asked to identify the main problems their families are facing. The vast majority of interviewed households reported their main constraints to be unemployment (72 per cent) followed by rent and high food prices each reported by six percent of interviewees. Electricity cuts were reported by four percent and shortage of medicine, three percent of respondents.

Between one and two percent reported transportation, lack of assistance, security and safety, drinking water and education respectively as the main issue they faced in July.

Figure 10: Main problems faced by surveyed households, July 2018



Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via live telephone interviews in July from households in locations across Syria. The telephone numbers called were generated using random-digit dialling, yielding 1,226 completed surveys.

The questionnaire contained questions on demographics, food assistance, household food consumption and nutrition, coping strategies, and primary food sources. A final open-ended question gave respondents the chance to share additional information about the food situation in their communities.

The data are weighted by the number of mobile phones owned by the household. Information collected through mobile phone interviews may be biased towards younger, somewhat better-off households who live in urban areas and have better access to electricity and phone-charging services.

Starting from May 2017, districts were combined into 18 strata based on their accessibility, in order to obtain more granular food security analysis. The composition of the 18 strata changes following the evolution of the situation in Syria in terms of accessibility.

Since May 2018, the accessible areas are Aleppo, As-Sweida, Al-Hasakeh, Damascus, Dar'a, Hama, Homs, Rural Damascus, Quneitra, Lattakia and Tartous. Hard-to-reach (HTR) areas are Aleppo HTR, Idleb HTR, Deir-ez-Zor, Ar-Raqqa, Homs and Hama HTR, Rural Damascus HTR and Dar'a HTR.

The sampling frame groups together areas with similar geography and accessibility, allowing for a large enough sample size to make statistically significant comparisons. More details on the methodology can be found [here](#).



For further information:

Arif Husain arif.husain@wfp.org
Jonathan Rivers jonathan.rivers@wfp.org

mVAM Resources:
Website: http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/
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