

Highlights



1,387

Households surveyed



11%

Female Headed Households



16%

Stay as guest



27%

Displaced Households

Situation Overview

- The economic situation in Syria continued to deteriorate in September, driven by acute fuel shortages across the country. This is largely believed to be related to the collapse of the Syrian pound and the imposed sanctions on Syria that reduces the ability of the country to import fuel, exacerbated by the regular maintenance at the largest Syrian oil refinery, the Baniyas refinery, which supplied two-thirds of the country's gasoline needs. As a result of inadequate availability of fuel, Syrian authorities imposed further rationing of both subsidized and unsubsidized fuel: private vehicles were limited to fill 30 liters of gasoline every four days and the allocated purchase quantity of unsubsidized fuel reduced from 400 to 100 liters per month. This suggests further complications across Syria through increasing transportation costs, reducing commercial activities and fluctuations in food prices, highlighting eroding resilience of the population and people's purchasing power.
- Meanwhile, the emerging shortage of bread in bakeries has also affected Syria in September, especially the southern governorates, largely due to wheat flour scarcity across the country, electricity cuts, as well as the ongoing fuel crisis. Syria is estimated to consume 3.7 million metric tons of wheat flour for national average food use, which is more than this year's production by around one million metric ton; highlighting the need for significant imports to cover the essential national demand. In response, Syrian authorities implemented a new distribution mechanism for subsidized bread, with an allocation between one to four bread bundles per family, per day, depending on household size. Meaning people need to seek out alternative staples or purchase bread from more expensive private bakeries to meet their family's bread needs.
- The COVID-19 crisis continues to surge considerably in Syria. As of 30 September 2020, around 4,200 COVID-19 cases were confirmed across the country; marking a 55 percent increase compared to the national rate of COVID-19 cases at the end of August. Furthermore, 90 percent of newly confirmed cases have not been traced to a known source, suggesting widespread community transmission. At the same time, the number of confirmed COVID-19 fatalities reached around 200 in September, representing almost a two-fold increase compared to the official announced death rate by the end of August. Infection rates among healthcare workers have been rising in Syria. As of 19 September 2020, around 143 healthcare workers were tested positive for COVID-19, which impacted the already over-stretched Syrian healthcare system.
- Explosive hazards and tensions between non-state armed groups were observed in northwest Syria. Multiple airstrikes were reported in Idlib and northern Aleppo, resulting in more than 4,000 people to have been displaced from southern Idlib towards Afrin, Darkosh and Salqin.
- The majority of WFP assistance continues to be provided from within Syria, reaching around 4.8 million people in September 2020. Following the re-opening of schools across government-controlled areas on 13 September, WFP resumed its school feeding programme targeting more than 600,000 students across the country, initially reaching 22,300 students with daily fresh meals in Aleppo. Moreover, against the wheat flour backdrop, WFP launched a bakery rehabilitation project in Dar'a, to further provide fresh bread to 40,000 people.

Sources: [Syrian Arab Republic: COVID-19 | September 2020](#), [COAR | Syria Update September 2020](#), [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Development Report No.20 | September 2020](#), [WFP Global Hunger map](#)



Key Points

- A three-fold increase in the proportion of surveyed households reporting poor food consumption has been recorded across Syria since May 2020, reaching 18 percent in September.
- Between August and September 2020, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) increased from 16.8 to 17.7, driven by applying more severe food coping mechanisms by households; almost 48 percent of surveyed households mentioned reducing consumption of adult members to let their children eat, in addition to 66 percent of households reported consumption of less expensive food in September.
- According to September mVAM data, 61 percent of households with limited access to markets have inadequate food consumption, marking more than double the level recorded since April 2020.
- In September, 46 percent of interviewed households reported not being able to purchase the necessary medicines, with the highest recorded among female-headed households (52 percent), due to lack of financial resources (67 percent) and shortage of medicines in pharmacies (30 percent).

Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via live telephone interviews in September 2020 from households in locations across Syria. The telephone numbers called were generated using random-digit dialing. In September 2020, data is collected from a sample of around 1,387 respondents per month across 13 governorates. As per standard survey procedures, respondents' consent was obtained prior to the interviews. For security and safety measures, all respondents were identified with an anonymous ID.

For Further Information

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COVID-19 Situation Overview I

- The epidemiological situation in Syria has tragically evolved, highlighting an increase in the risk of COVID-19 transmission, especially among the highly vulnerable people, as well as the potential for the healthcare capacity across the country being further compromised, impacting the existing humanitarian needs and further aggravating economic decline.
- The share of households reporting staying always at home as a preventive measure against COVID-19 has decreased by five percent compared to August 2020, reaching 89 percent in September. This decrease was mainly driven by the interviewed returnees' households who reported avoiding crowded places, down by 24 percent from August 2020. However, around 96 percent of respondents in Al-Hasakeh and Lattakia mentioned staying indoors to mitigate the COVID19 virus in September 2020.
- The COVID-19 outbreak is still disrupting access to markets and healthcare services. In September, around 24 percent of Syrian households reported not to have access to markets, with peaks recorded in Al-Hasakeh (35 percent) and Ar-Raqqa (32 percent). The main impediment cited by the respondents was COVID-19 travel-related restrictions across Syria (12 percent). However, 30 percent of returnees' households reported challenges to access markets (increased up by 15 percent from August 2020), compared to 22 and 23 percent with IDPs and residents' households, respectively, in September.
- The share of households facing challenges to access healthcare services has decreased by three percentage points compared with August 2020, reaching 12 percent in September, with a peak in Quneitra (23 percent). The decrease in the national average trend has been driven by returnees' households who reported a problem accessing hospitals (down by half from August 2020), reaching nine percent in September. However, 13 percent of surveyed households in Homs reported not to have access to healthcare facilities, which is almost double the recorded level in August 2020. Furthermore, approximately 46 percent of surveyed households reported not being able to purchase the necessary medicines in September, with the highest recorded among female-headed households (52 percent). The main impediments cited by Syrian households were lack of financial resources (67 percent) and shortage of medicines in pharmacies (30 percent).

Fig2: Percent of households facing challenges to access market in the last six months by governorate

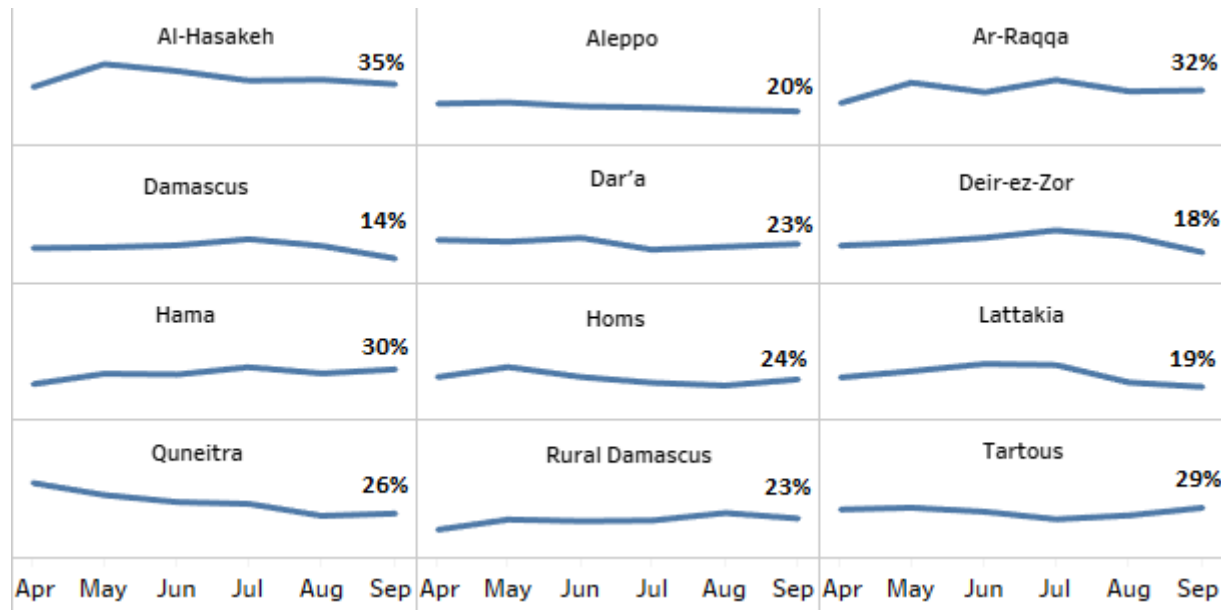
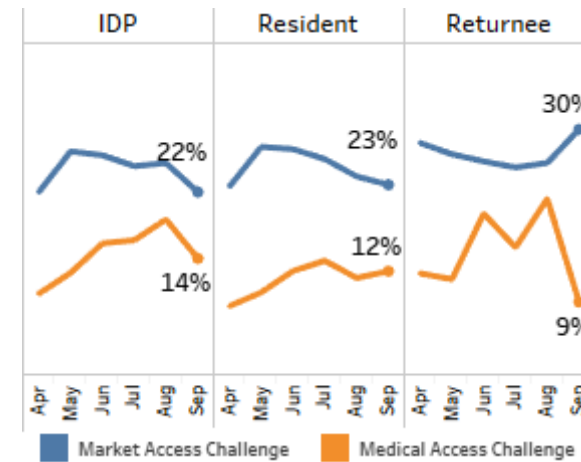


Fig1: Percent of households facing challenges to access market and medical services in past six months according to displacement status



Map1: Percent of households facing challenges to access medical services by governorate in September 2020

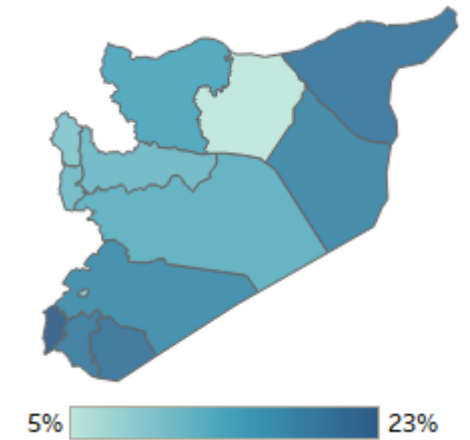
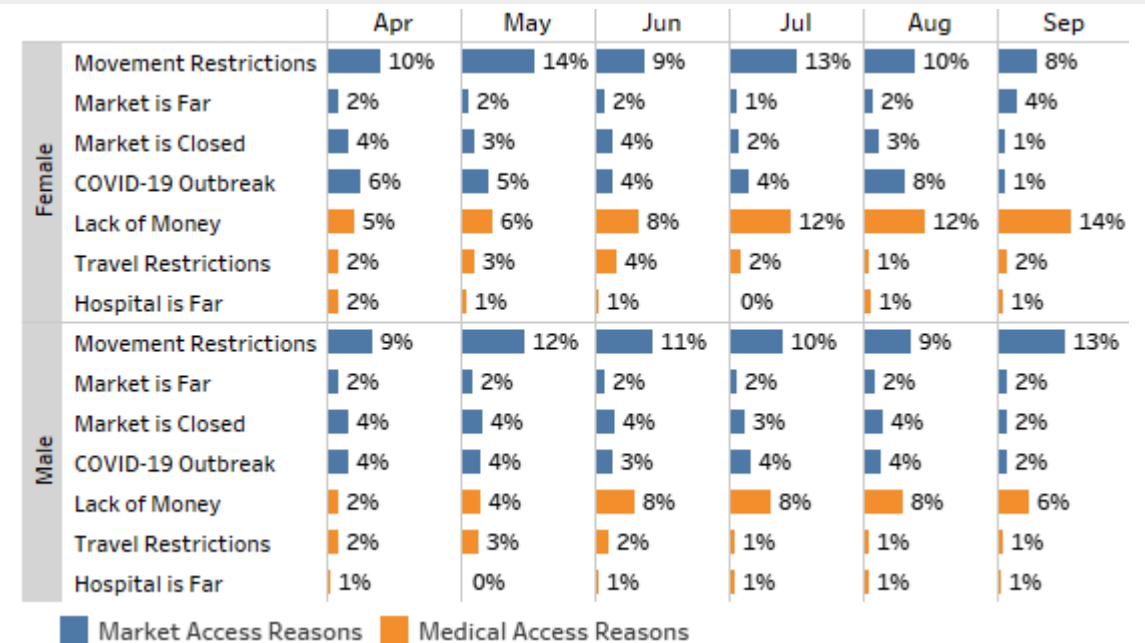


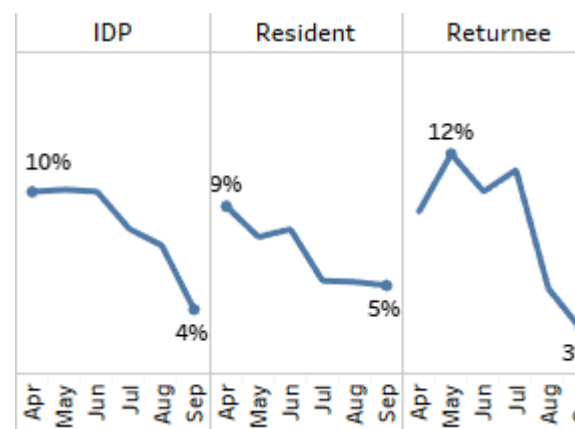
Fig3: Respondent reported reasons why accessing market and medical services was challenging



COVID-19 Situation Overview II

- According to the September mVAM data, around 61 percent of households with no regular access to markets have poor and borderline food consumption, increasing by 22 percent compared to August 2020 and more than double the level recorded since April 2020. Also, overall four percent of surveyed households in September reported that movement restrictions were the main impediment for households to obtain remittances and food assistance, with the highest recorded among female-headed households (nine percent). From August to September 2020, this trend decreased in most governorates, with however, a steep increase recorded in Ar-Raqqa, from three percent to ten percent.
- Syrian households continue to grapple with the closure of many work activities during the pandemic amid a deteriorating socio-economic situation across the country. Approximately 60 percent of the surveyed households reported that they had lost one or more sources of income because of COVID-19 related restrictions, even among households having university degrees who reported job lay-offs (59 percent) in September. Broken down by governorate, Damascus and Lattakia recorded the highest percent of respondents having lost one or more sources of income due to the pandemic (71 percent), with almost one out of four households in both governorates having lost almost entirely their September income, followed by As-Sweida (67 percent), and Ar-Raqqa (68 percent).
- In September, around 52 percent of surveyed households who reported losses of income have poor or borderline food consumption, representing a two-thirds increase of those households since April 2020 and up by 13 percent from August. In addition, 90 percent of these households reported having relied on at least one coping strategy in September. Moreover, according to mVAM data, the main problems faced by interviewed households in September were unemployment (47 percent), which is up 12 percent from August 2020, followed by the high price of commodities (20 percent).

Fig4: Percent of households facing difficulties receiving humanitarian assistance due to COVID-19 related restrictions, in the past six months according to displacement status



Map2: Percent of households facing difficulties receiving assistance in September 2020

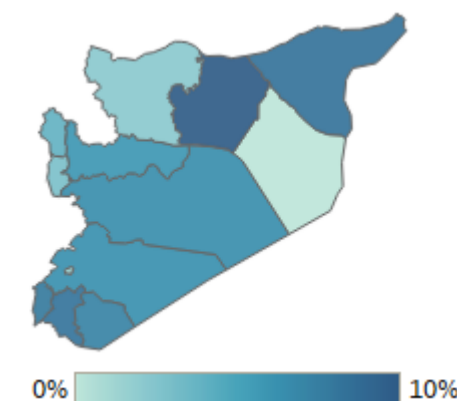


Fig5: Percent of households losing one or more sources of income in the last six months by governorate

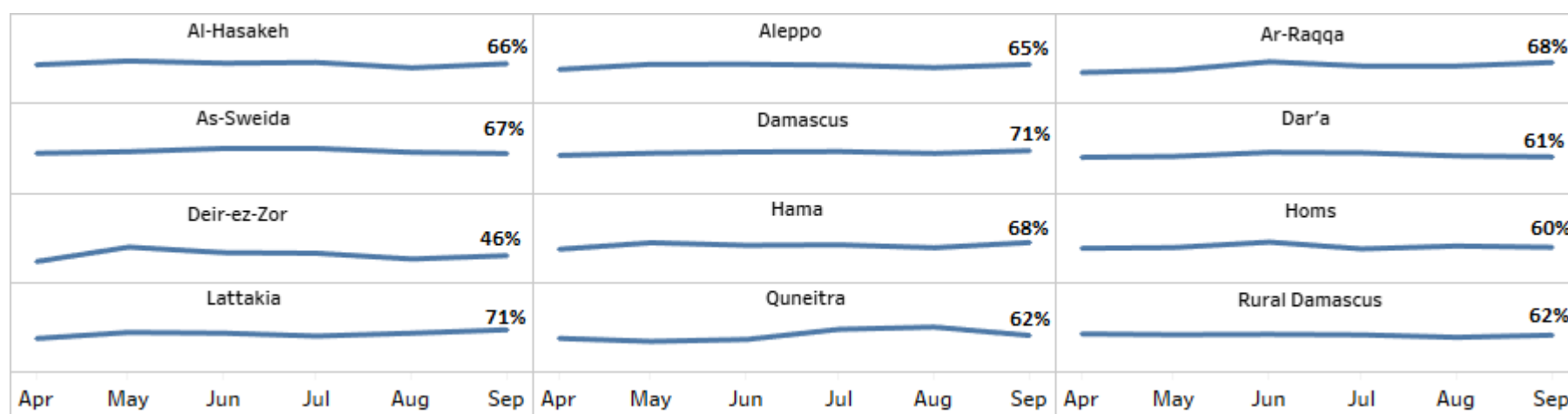
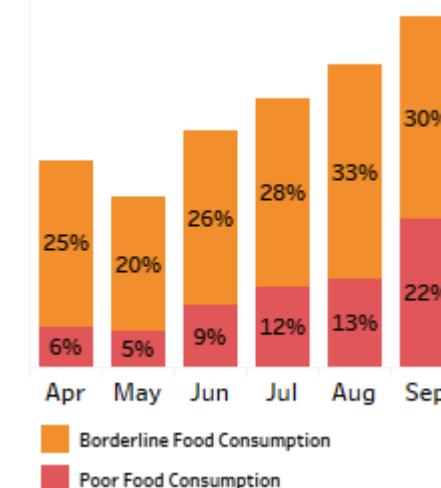


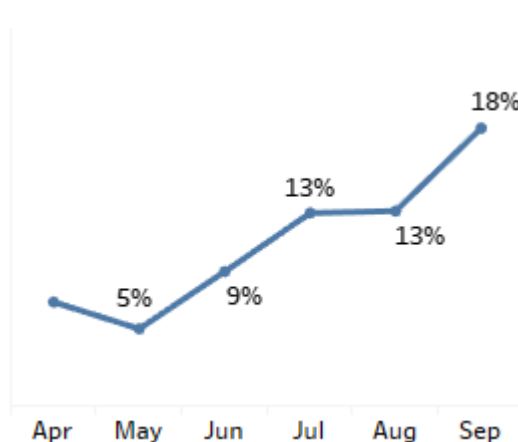
Fig6: Percent of households reporting having lost their income source since March 2020 with inadequate food consumption



Food Consumption

- The national average rate of inadequate food consumption (poor and borderline combined) increased in September by 26 percent compared to August 2020. Almost 54 percent of surveyed households reported poor and borderline food consumption in September, driven by the increase of levels recorded among returnees (up by 42 percent) and displaced households (up by 26 percent) compared to August 2020. The dramatic increase in Syrian households suffering from inadequate food consumption (double the level recorded in September 2019) is deeply concerning; highlighting a dire situation across the country.
- At the governorate level, in September 2020, the average proportion of households with inadequate food consumption was highest in Aleppo (57 percent), with a 24 percent increase comparing with August 2020. mVAM September data revealed that one out of four households has inadequate food consumption in Hama, Lattakia and Rural Damascus. Though, the lowest level of inadequate food consumption was in As-Sweida (32 percent), the governorate recorded the greatest increase in poor and borderline food consumption rate (up by 40 percent) compared to August 2020.
- A three-fold increase in the proportion of surveyed households reporting poor food consumption has been recorded across Syria since May 2020, reaching 18 percent in September, which was still higher by five percentage points compared to August 2020. At the governorate level, the share of households with poor food consumption was highest in Aleppo (26 percent), with almost double the level recorded in August 2020, followed by Deir-ez-Zor (22 percent) and Lattakia (20 percent).
- According to residency status, the main deterioration of inadequate food consumption was reported among returnees' households (70 percent), marking a three-fold increase since April 2020. Also, the total share of displaced and resident households with poor and borderline food consumption added up to 58 and 44 percent, respectively, in September 2020.

Fig7: The national average level of poor food consumption in the last six months



Map3: Percent of households by governorate reporting poor food consumption in September 2020

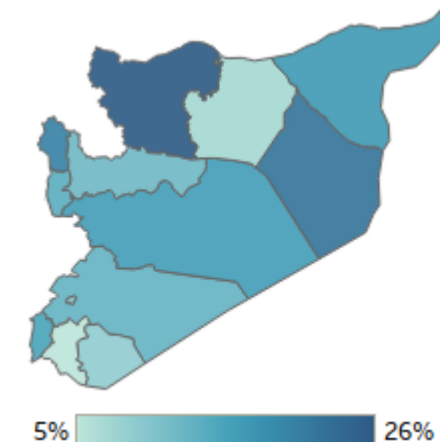


Fig8: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption in the last six months by governorate

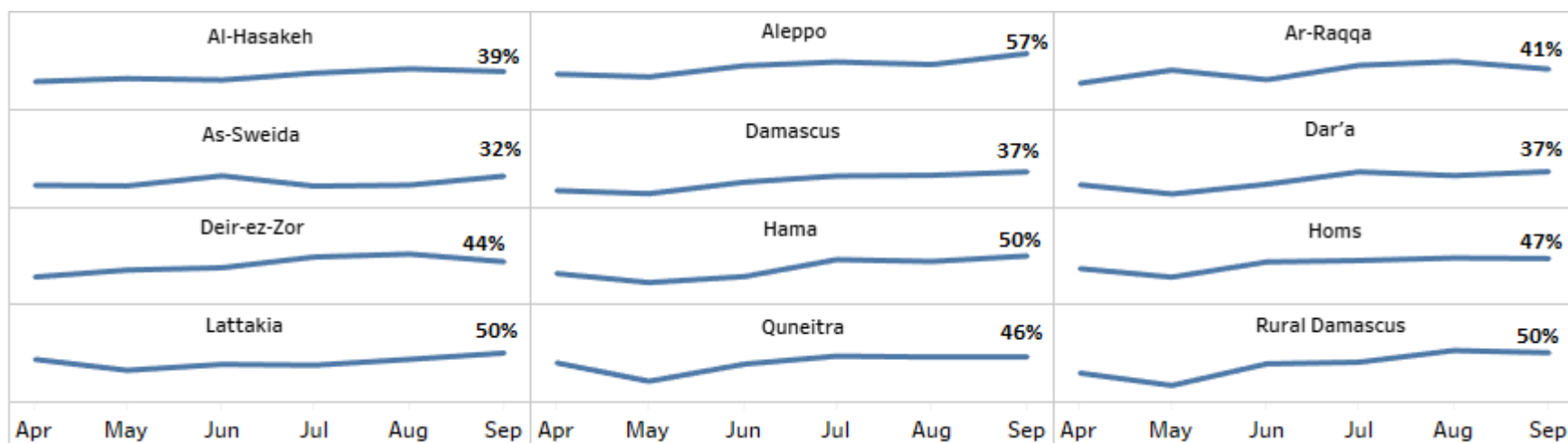
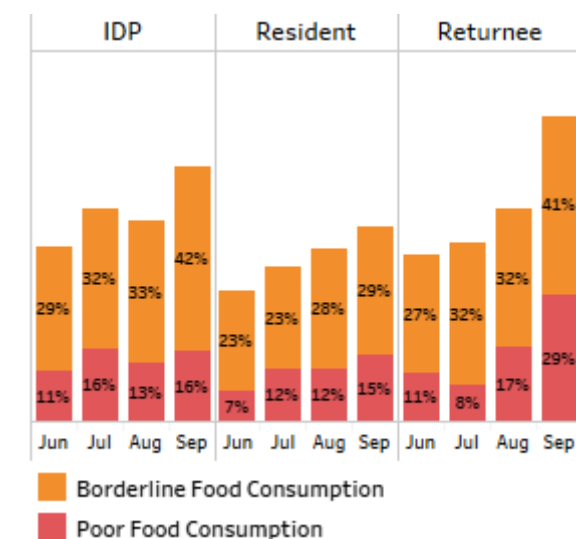


Fig9: Percent of households reporting poor and borderline food consumption according to displacement status



Coping Strategies

- Between August and September 2020, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) increased from 16.8 to 17.7. The share of female-headed households resorting to at least one food-based coping strategy was higher (93 percent) than the male-headed households (86 percent) in September. The national increase in rCSI is largely due to applying more severe food coping mechanisms by households: the proportion of surveyed households mentioned reducing consumption of adult members to let their children eat increased up by 23 percent compared to August 2020, reaching 48 percent in September. As well as, around 47 percent of respondents have reportedly borrowed food or money to buy food, which is higher by 15 percent compared to August 2020; highlighting worrying and continued worsening living conditions across the country.
- As a result of the recent further Syrian economic downturn, the intensification of unilateral coercive measures (economic sanctions) and the COVID-19 outbreak, coping capacities of people and services are already stretched. In September, using savings to cope with lack of food or lack of money to buy food was still not an option for 88 percent of the Syrian households, with peaks in Dar'a (93 percent), Ar-Raqqa and Rural Damascus (90 percent). Moreover, according to September mVAM data, around 17 percent of interviewed households reported to take their children out of school due to lack of financial resources, to have them work instead, bringing-in additional needed income for the household. This trend was more pronounced in Al-Hasakeh (33 percent) and Ar-Raqqa (32 percent) in September 2020.
- According to displacement status, the rCSI average has decreased among returnee households by 3.6 points compared with August, reaching 15.2 in September. However, 88 percent of returnees' households reported to rely on at least one food-based coping mechanism to cover their essential food needs, compared to 90 and 84 percent from IDPs and residents' households, respectively, in September 2020.

Fig11: rCSI average by governorate over the last six months

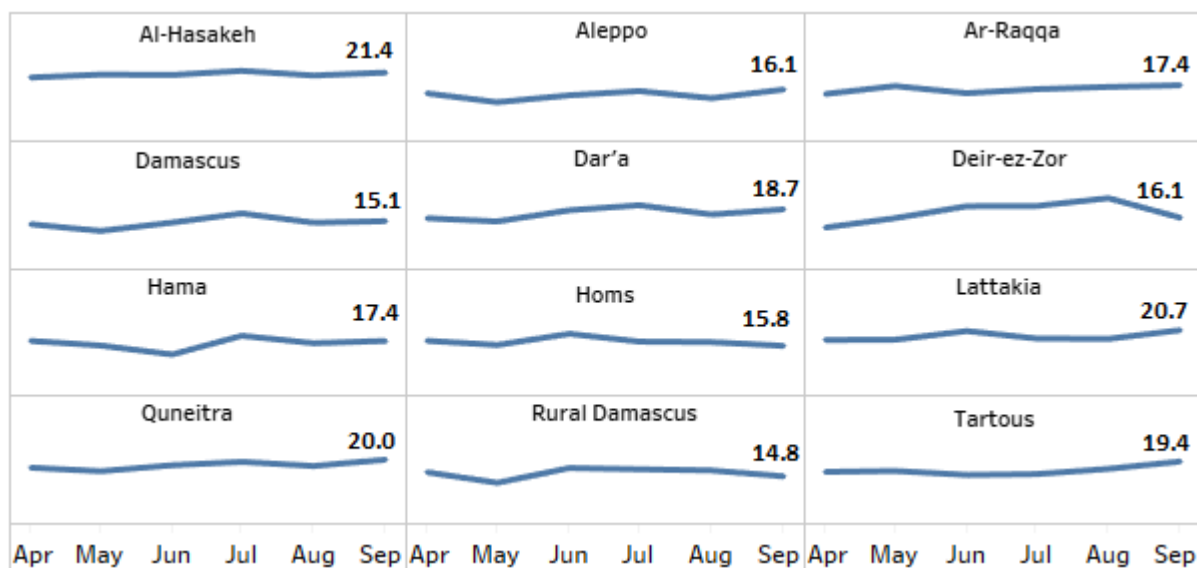
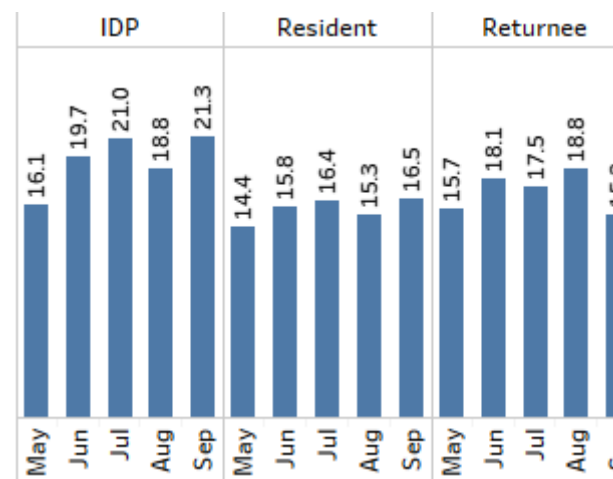


Fig10: rCSI average over the last five months according to displacement status



Map4: rCSI average by governorate in September 2020

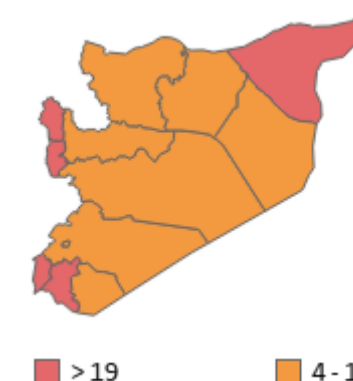


Fig12: Overall percent of households by adopted coping strategy over the past six months

