



1,319

Households surveyed



12%

Female Headed Households



17%

Stay as guest



26%

Displaced Households

Situation Overview

- On 8 October 2020, massive wildfires broke out across coastal and central areas in Syria, mostly in Latakia, Tartous and Homs governorates, affecting more than 28,000 households through destruction of assets, loss of power and water supply and limited access to services. As a result, around 80 people were admitted to hospital due to breathing difficulties, and 25,000 people reported to have been displaced. In addition, over 9,000 hectares of agricultural and forested land were affected, bringing to a total of 30,000 hectares of agricultural land across northwest Syria to have been burned during the wildfire incidents from early September till October 15th, 2020. It is believed that the wildfires will have a long-term impact on food production and on the livelihoods of at least 40,000 Syrian families directly affected by the fires.
- The Syrian pound continued to slide in the informal exchange rate market and reached SYP 2,339/USD in October 2020, depreciating by six percent month-on-month. Moreover, the crippling fuel crisis persisted in Syria throughout much of October. The Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection announced an increase in the price of subsidized industrial and commercial diesel fuel from SYP 296 to SYP 650 per liter, and the price of 95 octane has more than doubled from SYP 450 to SYP 1,050 per liter during October 2020. At the same time, the price of a subsidized bread bundle has also increased from SYP 50/bundle to SYP 75/bundle for loose bread sold without a bag and SYP 100/bundle for subsidized bread sold with a nylon bag. This increase in the subsidized price of bread coincided with a decision to reduce the subsidized bread bundle weight from 1.3kg to 1.1kg, highlighting limited national wheat reserves and a worsening economic and food security situation in Syria as consumers' purchasing power continues to be further eroded.
- The COVID-19 outbreak continued spreading in October. As of 30 October 2020, 5,683 cases of COVID-19 were officially confirmed by the Minister of Health in government-held areas in Syria, including 285 fatalities, marking a 35 percent increase compared to the national rate of COVID-19 cases at the end of September. In addition to the dramatic surge announced in opposition-held areas in northwest Syria, almost 100 new cases were being reported per day, reaching over 5,382 COVID-19 cases by end of October. The most affected areas were reported in Idleb and Al Bab sub-districts, together accounting for some half of all confirmed cases in opposition-held areas in northwest Syria. To note the WHO's representative for Syria announced that many COVID-19 cases were still going unreported across the country and that actual figures were significantly higher, suggesting a grave concern especially as colder winter months approach.
- In northwest Syria sporadic airstrikes continued to be reported, with shelling largely concentrated south of the M4 highway and around the M5 highway in Idleb. On 6 October, a bomb blast from a truck was reported in Al Bab city. This spate of violence is still impacting humanitarian workers in northwest Syria where over 2.8 million people are in urgent need of life-saving assistance. Additionally, the Islamic State is further engaging in fighting and attacks in eastern Homs and Hama, Deir-ez-Zor and southeast Ar-Raqqa.
- In October 2020, WFP continued dispatching food rations to around 4.8 million people across the country, including a mission to the town of Darayya in Rural Damascus to support some 12,500 people with food assistance, marking the first time the United Nations has been able to access this area in 2020. Also, to address the needs borne by the wildfire emergency, WFP has provided ready-to-eat rations to 22,500 people in Latakia and Tartous, as well as 75,000 date bars.

Sources: [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Development Report No.21 | October 2020](#), [OCHA Syria: Humanitarian Impact of Wildfires in Coastal Areas | October 2020](#), [WFP Global Hunger map](#), [COVID-19 Response Tracking Dashboard](#) | [Northwest Syria](#)



Key Points

- Approximately half of the surveyed households in Syria (49 percent) reported inadequate food consumption in October, marking a 44 percent increase compared to June 2020 and double the level recorded in October 2019.
- The share of Syrian households facing poor food consumption remained steady at a high level in October (17 percent), with almost double the level recorded in June 2020.
- Between September and October 2020, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) increased from 17.7 to 18.4, reaching the highest national level in 2020.
- In October 2020, half of surveyed households (51 percent) who reported losses of income have poor or borderline food consumption, representing a 42 percent increase of those households since June 2020.

Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via live telephone interviews in October 2020 from households in locations across Syria. The phone numbers were generated using random-digit dialing. In October 2020, data was collected from a sample of 1,319 respondents across 13 governorates. Note that, from October 2020, the recall period of COVID-19 questions has been changed to be over the past 30 days instead of start of pandemic (24 March 2020). 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.



vam
food security analysis

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COVID-19 Situation Overview I

- The pandemic outbreak continued to exacerbate the fragility of the Syrian economy, as well as spurring further deterioration of the general food security situation across the country.
- Syrian households continued taking social distancing measures, reaching the highest level across the country in June 2020 (95 percent). However this trend started to slightly decrease at the national level from September 2020 onwards. In October, around 84 percent of interviewed households reported permanently staying at home as a preventive measure against COVID-19, with peaks in Quneitra (96 percent) and Homs (94 percent).
- The COVID-19 outbreak has triggered challenges for most Syrian households to access markets. In October, approximately 26 percent of respondents reported not to have access to markets with peaks recorded in Quneitra (30 percent) and Lattakia (27 percent), due in large part to COVID-19 travel-related restrictions (nine percent) across the country and markets reportedly far away from the household (eight percent). Highlighting a food access concern given that around nine out of ten of the interviewed households in Syria mentioned relying on markets as a primary source of food. Besides, 26 percent of IDPs (increased by 18 percent from September 2020), in addition to 33 percent of returnees' households reported difficulties in accessing markets in October, compared to 24 percent of resident households. This trend was highest among returnee and IDPs largely believed to be related to reporting markets far away from both groups in October, reaching 21 percent and 11 percent, respectively, compared to two percent of residents.
- The share of surveyed households facing challenges to access healthcare facilities increased from 12 percent in September 2020 to around 21 percent in October, with peaks recorded in Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor (22 percent). Additionally, according to mVAM data, a four-fold increase among returnees reported deterioration in accessing hospitals from September 2020, reaching 35 percent in October compared to 20 percent of IDPs and 18 percent of residents. Furthermore, approximately 45 percent of surveyed households reported not being able to purchase the necessary medicines in October, largely due to lack of financial resources (66 percent) and shortage of medicines in pharmacies (13 percent). Hereby highlighting a health concern given that 15 percent of respondents have elderly members with chronic diseases.

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

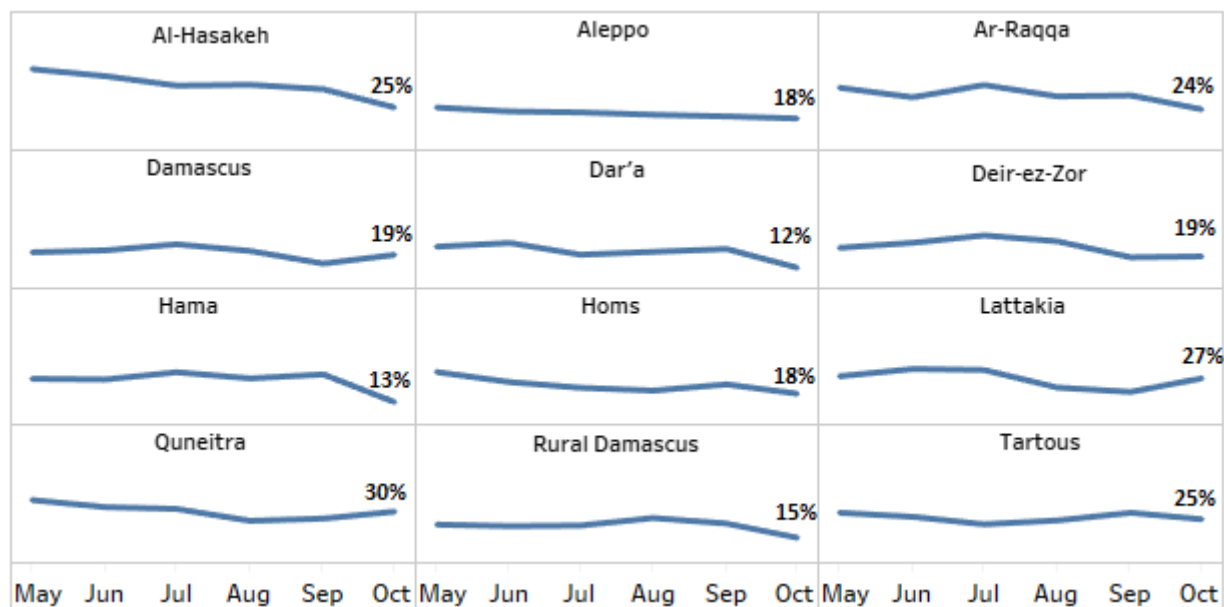
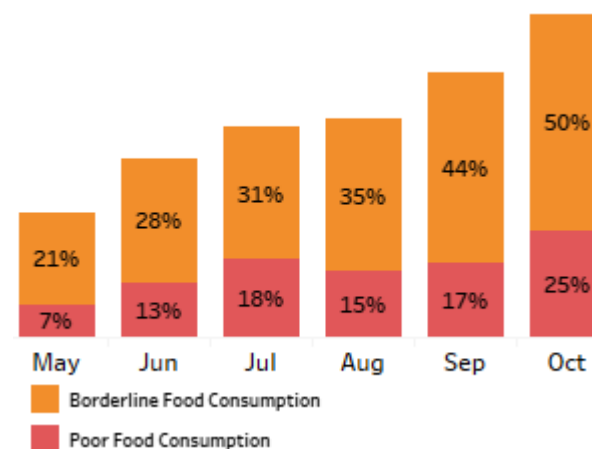


Fig1: Share of households with inadequate food consumption facing difficulties in accessing markets



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

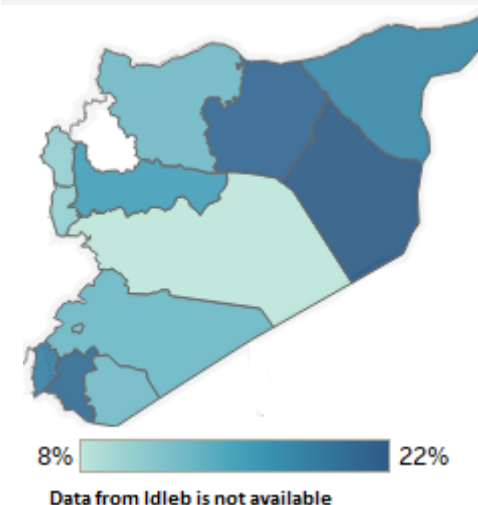
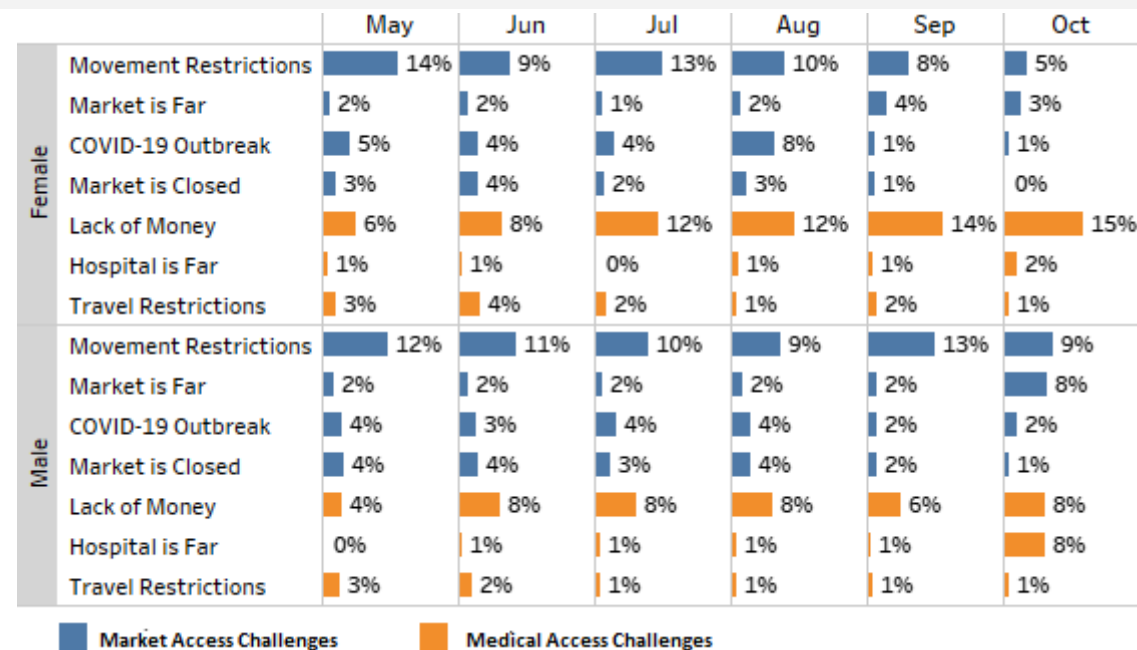


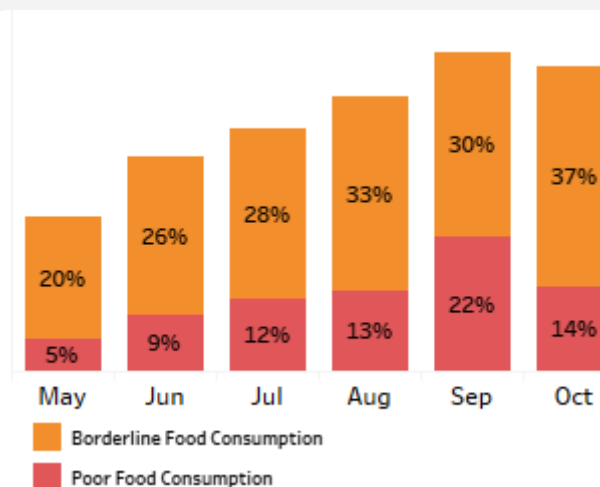
Fig3: Respondent reported reasons why accessing market and medical services was challenging



COVID-19 Situation Overview II

- According to October mVAM data, around 75 percent of households with no regular access to markets have poor and borderline food consumption, representing a 23 percent increase compared to September 2020 and close to a 83 percent increase from the level recorded in June 2020. In addition, 77 percent of respondents who reported medical healthcare inaccessibility in October, have inadequate food consumption. Hereby marking a 60 percent increase since June 2020. Furthermore, in October, overall 5.3 percent of surveyed households reported difficulties receiving remittances and/or food assistance due to movement restrictions, with the highest level recorded among male-headed households (six percent) compared to two percent of female-headed households.
- The knock-on effects of the COVID-19 crisis continue affecting Syria's social protection infrastructure and working sector, resulting in a high number of job lay-offs. In October, more than half of the surveyed households (53 percent) reported that they had lost one or more sources of income because of COVID-19 related restrictions. This was the case even among breadwinners having university degrees (47 percent). This trend recorded the highest level among displaced (63 percent) and returnees' households (59 percent) in October, with a slight increase compared to September 2020, however it decreased among resident households, down 33 percent compared to a month earlier, reaching 45 percent in October.
- Broken down by governorate, As-Sweida and Lattakia recorded the highest proportion of surveyed households having lost one or more sources of income due to the pandemic, reaching 64 percent and 62 percent in October, respectively, with almost one out of four households in Lattakia and 31 percent of respondents in As-Sweida having lost almost entirely their October income. Moreover, in October, around half the surveyed households (51 percent) who reported losses of income have poor or borderline food consumption, representing a 42 percent increase of those households since June 2020. In addition, 91 percent of these households reported having relied on at least one coping strategy in October 2020.

Fig4: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption reporting having lost their main income source



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

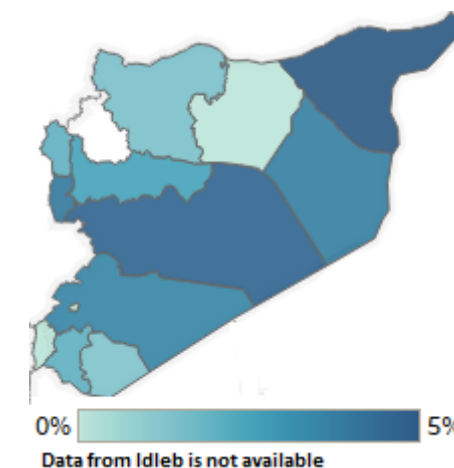
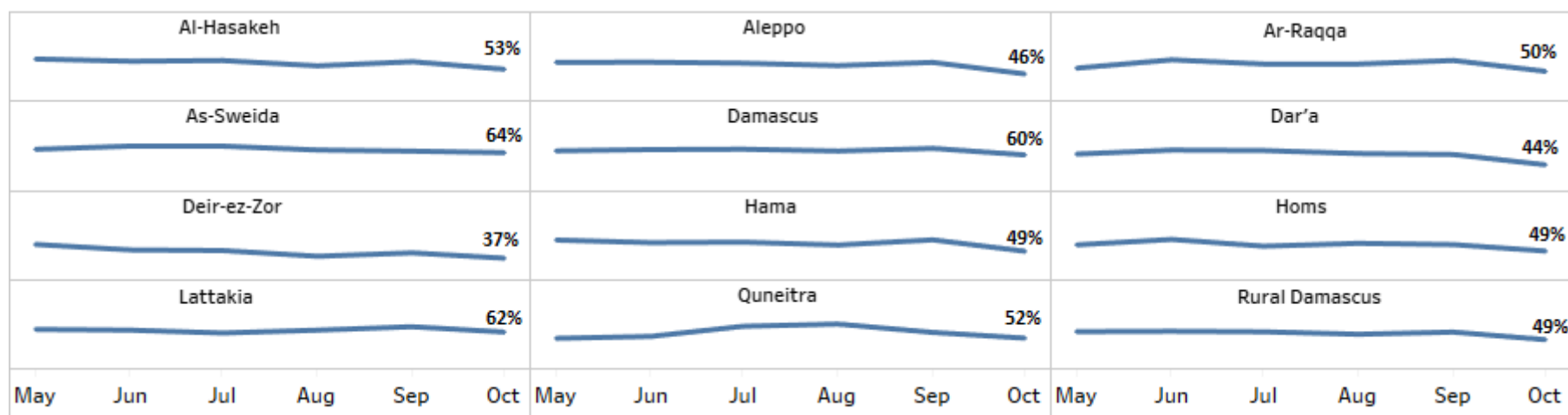
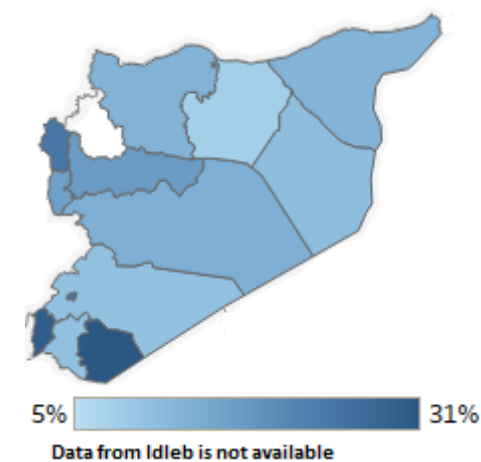


Fig5: Percent of households losing one or more sources of income in the last six months by governorate



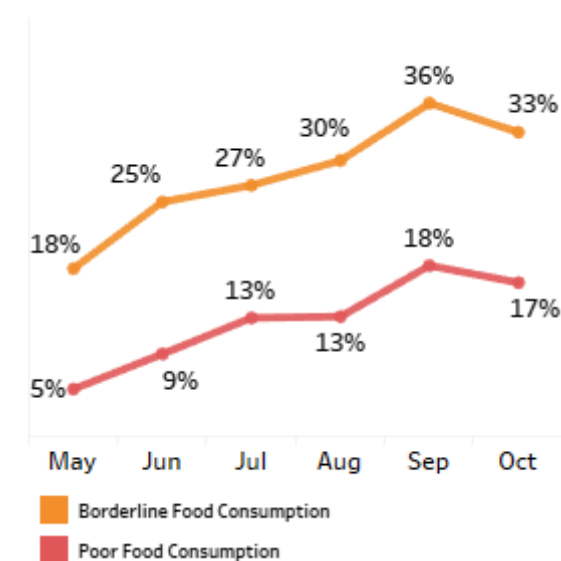
Map3: Percent of households losing more than 75% of their income sources in October 2020



Food Consumption

- Food security in Syria remained at critical levels and has been compounded by the collapse of the Syrian currency, high price of commodities and unilateral coercive measures. In October 2020, around half of the surveyed households (49 percent) reported poor and borderline food consumption, with the highest levels recorded among female-headed households (56 percent). Although the national average rate of inadequate food consumption (poor and borderline combined) slightly decreased by five percentage points in October from September 2020, it remains 44 percent above levels in June 2020 and almost double the level recorded in October 2019.
- Broken down by governorate, in October 2020, the average proportion of households with poor and borderline food consumption was highest in Quneitra (52 percent), which experienced an increase by almost a third of surveyed households reporting inadequate food consumption in June 2020. Also, mVAM October data revealed that approximately one out of two households have inadequate food consumption in Aleppo and Homs.
- The share of Syrian households facing poor food consumption remained steady at a high level in October (17 percent), suggesting many people are significantly in need of food assistance. Moreover, compared to September 2020, more than double the interviewed households in Hama and Dar'a reported poor food consumption, reaching 27 percent and 11 percent, respectively, in October 2020.
- In October 2020, the prevalence of inadequate food consumption was much higher among returnees (63 percent) and IDPs (51 percent) compared to residents (44 percent). Nevertheless, the share of households with poor food consumption increased among resident households (up by 30 percent) in October 2020 compared to a month earlier, reaching 20 percent in October. Marking the highest level among residents over the course of 2020.
- According to mVAM October 2020 data, a decrease in the national average consumption level of protein rich foods was reported by most households. Around 60 percent of surveyed households mentioned that they only ate animal-source protein or pulses fewer than two times a week, which is half the reported national consumption rate of the animal-source protein in October 2019. Highlighting a likely increase in malnutrition levels across the country.

Fig6: The national average level of poor and borderline food consumption in the last six months



Map4: Percent of households by governorate reporting poor food consumption in October 2020

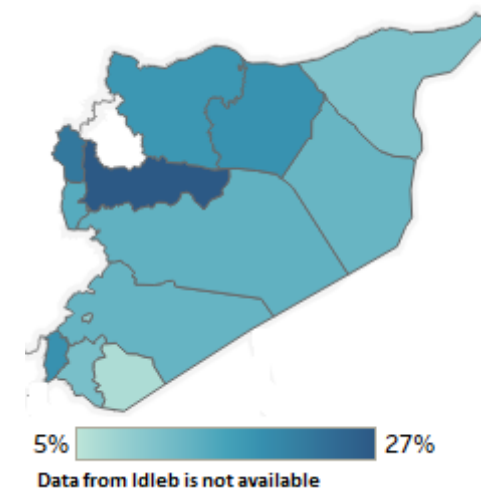


Fig7: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption in the last six months by governorate

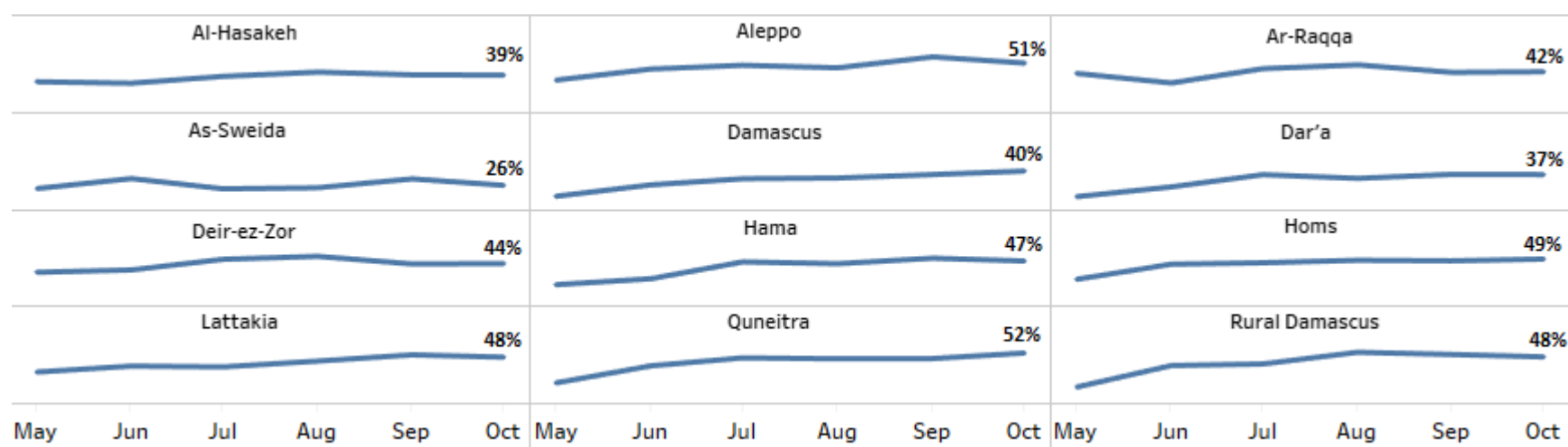
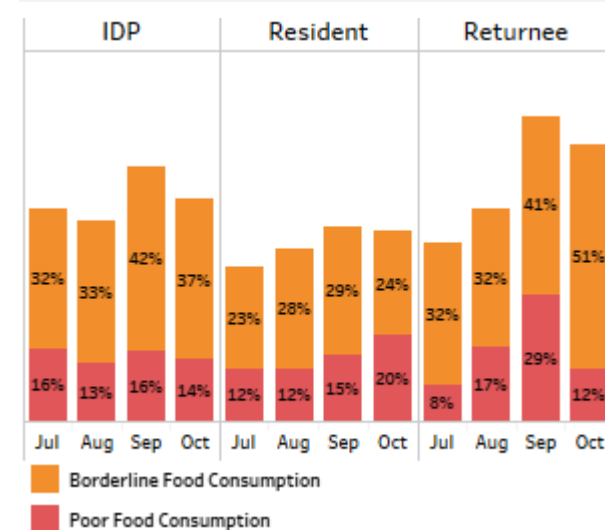


Fig8: Percent of households reporting poor and borderline food consumption according to displacement status



Coping Strategies

- Between September and October 2020, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) increased from 17.7 to 18.4, marking the highest national average level since the beginning of 2020, driven primarily by returnee households who recorded an average increase by 7.3 points from September 2020, reaching 22.5 in October. Also, households' limited purchasing power played a key role in pushing households into adopting coping mechanisms. More than 64 percent of interviewed households reported relying on less preferred and less expensive food. Around 54 percent reduced the number of meals eaten per day and 46 percent of respondents restricted the consumption of adults to prioritize their children's food consumption needs. Additionally, the share of female-headed households engaging in at least one food-based coping mechanism was higher (89 percent) than the male-headed households (83 percent) in October 2020. Moreover, mVAM October data revealed that around 14 percent of surveyed households reported to have taken their children (in the mandatory education age) out of school in the last month due to lack of financial resources as well as having the children contribute to household income through engaging in income generating activities. This trend was more pronounced in Al-Hasakeh (33 percent) and Deir-ez-Zor (28 percent).
- At the governorate level, the highest average rCSI was recorded in Lattakia (21.6) and Quneitra (21.0), where around 87 percent and 96 percent of surveyed households in both governorates, respectively, mentioned having adopted at least one food-based coping strategy in October 2020. While, the greatest increase in rCSI was reported in Hama (up by three points) compared to September 2020, reaching 20.4 in October. Also, according to October mVAM data, 66 percent of Syrian interviewed households mentioned they bought food on credit, with peaks among returnees (70 percent) and IDPs (66 percent) compared to residents (64 percent).

Fig10: rCSI average by governorate over the last six months

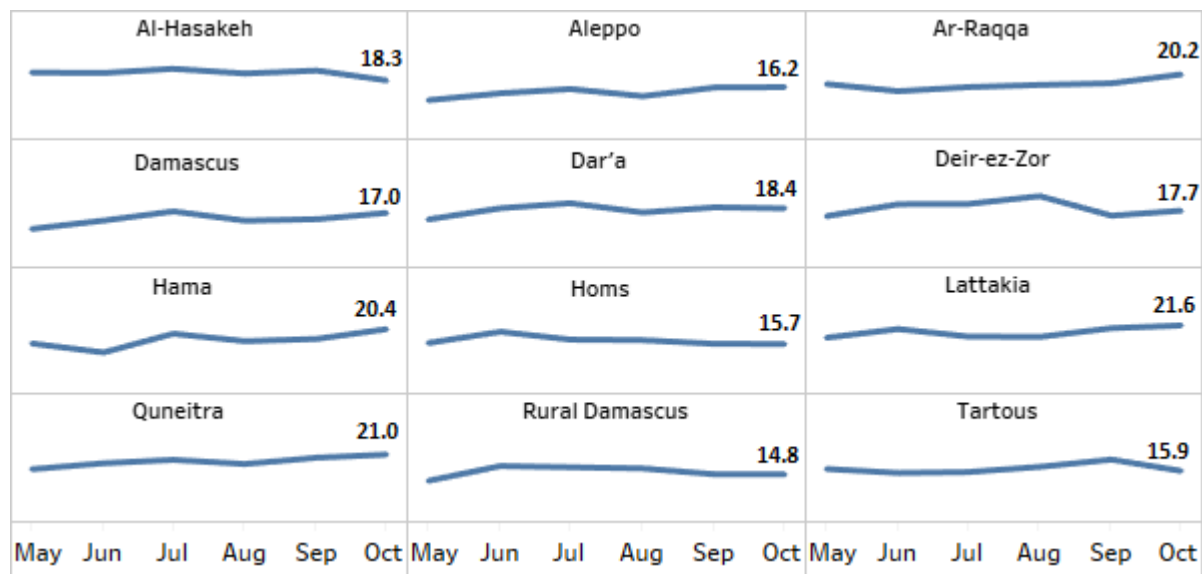
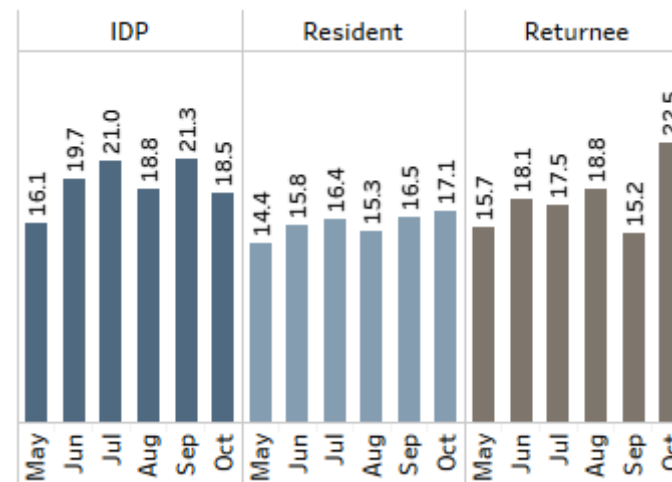


Fig9: rCSI average over the last six months according to displacement status



Map5: rCSI average by governorate in October 2020

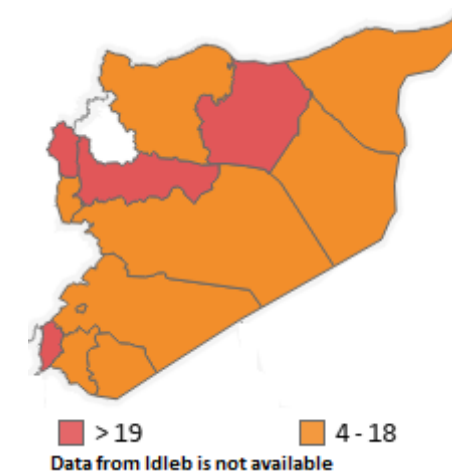


Fig11: Overall percent of households by adopted coping strategy over the past six months

Coping Strategy	Month						
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	
Female	Less Expensive Food	69%	74%	78%	61%	59%	67%
	Reduce Number of Meals	46%	55%	57%	50%	56%	57%
	Borrow or help	67%	64%	53%	51%	53%	48%
	Restrict Consumption	41%	38%	48%	37%	41%	41%
	Limit Portion Size	44%	45%	54%	43%	38%	40%
Male	Less Expensive Food	63%	71%	69%	61%	67%	63%
	Reduce Number of Meals	33%	53%	52%	46%	54%	54%
	Borrow or help	53%	53%	50%	40%	46%	45%
	Restrict Consumption	39%	43%	44%	39%	49%	46%
	Limit Portion Size	36%	46%	45%	39%	40%	42%