



1,296

Households surveyed



12%

Female Headed Households



17%

Stay as guest



26%

Displaced Households

### Situation Overview

- The COVID-19 situation continued deteriorating throughout the country. As of 30 December 2020, 11,344 cases of COVID-19 were officially confirmed by the Minister of Health in government-held areas in Syria, marking a 44 percent increase compared to the national rate of COVID-19 cases at the end of November. At the same time, the official COVID-19 related mortality rate in government-held areas across Syria has witnessed a two-thirds increase compared to a month earlier, reaching 704 COVID-19 fatalities in December. Additionally, since reopening schools in September 2020, sharp rises of COVID-19 cases in schools have been recorded, reaching 1,540 cases in 10 December. Highlighting challenges in preventing COVID-19 transmission in schools, given overcrowded classrooms, and damaged infrastructure.
- Meanwhile, a surge of COVID-19 cases was observed among populations in opposition-held areas in northwest Syria, reaching around 20,204 cases of COVID-19 by the end of December. Representing a one-third increase above the announced rate of COVID-19 cases at the end of November. The most affected areas were reported in Idlib city, Dana and Afrin sub-districts, together accounting for some half of all confirmed cases in opposition-held areas in northwest Syria. Highlighting a concern given colder winter months approaching, as well as, some 10 percent of the announced COVID-19 cases were living in camps and most people reported difficulties in following sanitation and hygiene measures.
- Increased hostilities were reported in northwest Syria during December, where 2.7 million people remain displaced and an estimated 80 percent of people in IDP sites are women and children. Explosive hazards and tensions between non-state armed groups were also observed in northwest Syria, highlighting a volatile security situation that is hindering safe access to highly vulnerable people who are in urgent need of life-saving assistance. Such escalation of violence continues impacting humanitarian workers in Syria; vehicle-borne IED (improvised explosive devices) attacks have caused around 10 aid worker casualties in the course of 2020, recording the highest observed level over the prolonged Syrian conflict since 2011.
- The wheat crisis in Syria continued impacting bread shortfalls across the government-held areas during December. This is exacerbated due to the Syrian government's reduced control over the country's richest wheat-producing regions; around 70 percent of total wheat production comes from Kurdish-held areas in northeast Syria. In addition, the plummeting of the Syrian pound and unilateral coercive measures on Syria complicated efforts to procure wheat on the open market. In response, the Syrian government has strengthened agricultural support for wheat farmers by providing subsidized wheat seed and fertilizer to cultivate wheat in a bid to address the limited national wheat reserves for the coming year.
- Major humanitarian needs persisted across all sectors in Syria, compounded by the ongoing economic downturn, increasing incidents of violence, and COVID-19 outbreak. In response to the multiple disruptive shocks in Syria, WFP dispatched food rations to around 4.7 million people countrywide in December 2020, including commodities for 1.4 million people delivered cross-border into northwest Syria.

Sources: [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Development Report No.22 | December 2020](#), [Syrian Arab Republic: COVID-19 | December 2020](#), [Aid Worker Security Database | December 2020](#), [COAR | Syria Update December 2020](#)



### Key Points

- In December 2020, nearly one out of five interviewed households in Syria (17 percent) had reported poor food consumption, representing more than a one-quarter increase since July 2020 and double the level recorded in December 2019.
- According to mVAM data, among those households that were interviewed in the previous rounds of the survey and reported borderline food consumption since July 2020, around 25 percent had poor food consumption in December 2020.
- Between November and December 2020, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) increased from 17.9 to 18.5, marking the highest national average level since the beginning of 2020.
- More than one-third of interviewed households in Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa reported difficulties in reaching markets, as well as, 20 percent of respondents in each governorate indicated a shortage of medicines in pharmacies in December 2020.

### Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via live telephone interviews in December 2020 from households in locations across Syria. The phone numbers were generated using random-digit dialing. In December 2020, data was collected from a sample of 1,296 respondents 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.



**vam**  
food security analysis

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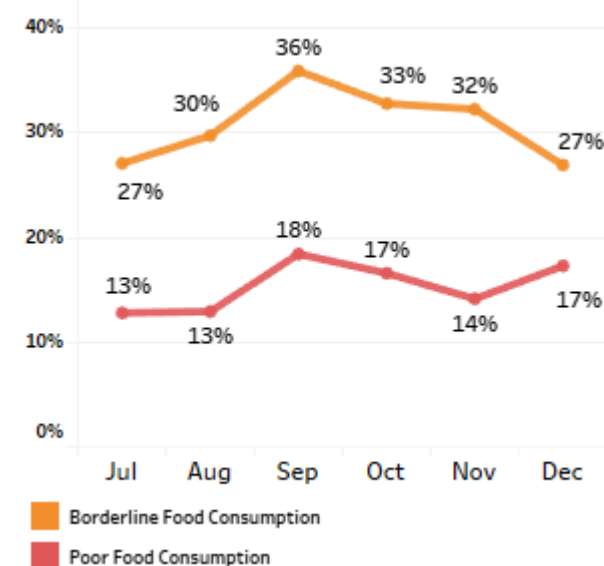
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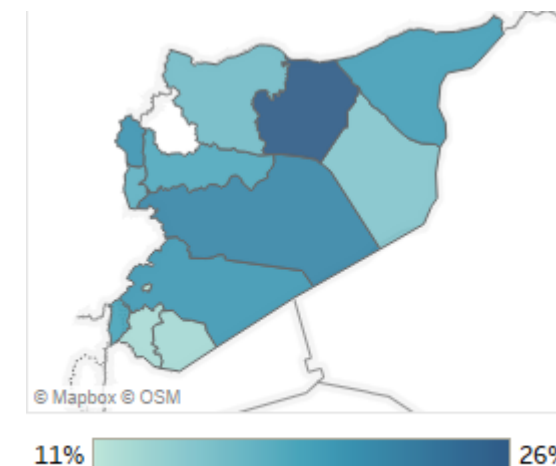
## Food Consumption

- Close to half of the surveyed households (44 percent) reported poor and borderline food consumption in December 2020, with the highest levels recorded among female-headed households (54 percent). Although the national average rate of inadequate food consumption (poor and borderline combined) remained steady at the same critical level reached in November 2020, it witnessed a 38 percent increase above the level recorded in December 2019. In addition, around one out of four households who were interviewed in the previous rounds of the survey and who had reported borderline food consumption since July 2020, had poor food consumption in December 2020, highlighting a grave food security situation.
- Broken down by governorate, in December 2020, the highest average proportion of households with poor and borderline food consumption was recorded in Aleppo, with more than half of the interviewed households (52 percent) reporting inadequate food consumption. Also, mVAM December data revealed that the greatest monthly increase of poor and borderline food consumption was detected in Dar'a and As-Sweida (up by more than one-third of respondents in each governorate compared to November 2020), reaching 47 percent and 34 percent, respectively, in December.
- During the reporting period, nearly one out of five interviewed households in Syria (17 percent) had reported poor food consumption, representing more than a one-quarter increase since July 2020 and double the level recorded in December 2019. At the governorate level, the share of households with poor food consumption was the highest in Ar-Raqqa (26 percent) followed by Homs (22 percent). Suggesting a further deterioration in food security situation throughout the country with much worse diet diversity and nutrient intake.
- According to residency status, the main deterioration of inadequate food consumption was reported among returnee households (55 percent) in December, marking a 40 percent increase since July 2020, with a two-fold rise of the poor food consumption level recorded a month earlier. Moreover, the total share of displaced and resident households with poor and borderline food consumption hiked up to 47 and 41 percent, respectively, in December 2020.

Fig1: The national average level of poor and borderline food consumption in the last six months



Map1: Percent of households by governorate reporting poor food consumption in December 2020



Data from Idleb is not available

Fig2: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption in the last six months by governorate

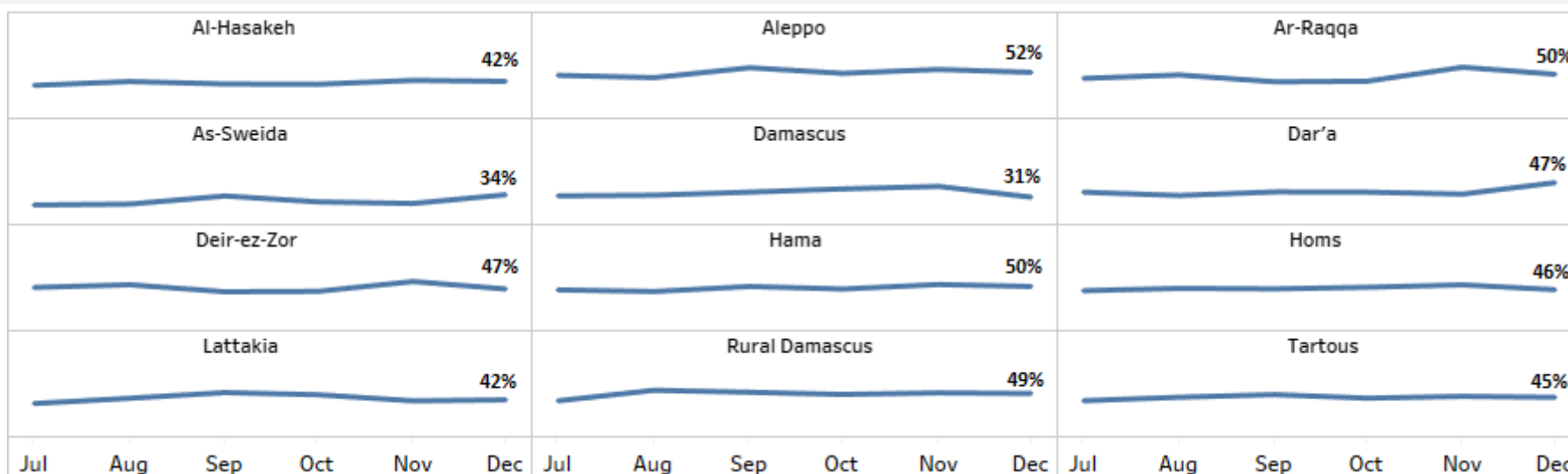
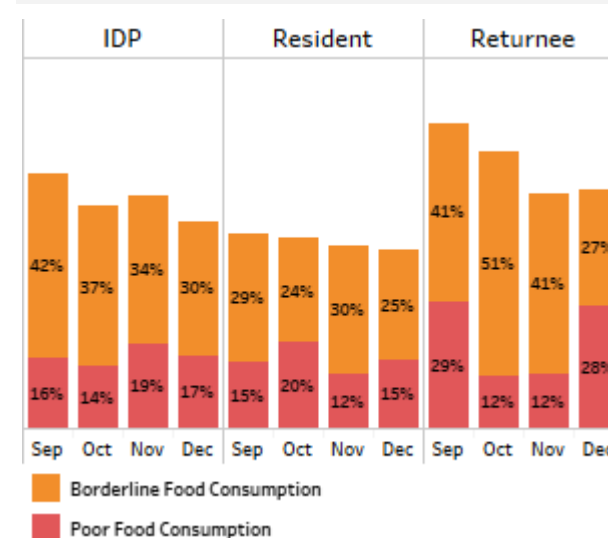


Fig3: Percent of households reporting poor and borderline food consumption according to displacement status



## Coping Strategies

- Between November and December 2020, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) increased from 17.9 to 18.5, with a peak recorded in Al-Hasakeh (22.1). Hereby marking the highest national average level since the beginning of 2020. mVAM December data outlined that around 85 percent of the surveyed households mentioned applying at least one food-based coping strategy, with the highest level recorded among female-headed households (92 percent). Moreover, four out of five interviewed households reported having already depleted their savings in December 2020 due to the worsening economic situation across the country. This indicates increasing pressure on the Syrian population to meet their food consumption needs and shows marked reductions in households' coping capacity to face-off further shocks.
- As a result of Syrians' weakening purchasing power, households reported relying on negative food coping mechanisms to source their essential food needs. More than 65 percent of interviewed households reported relying on less preferred or less expensive food, with peaks recorded in Quneitra (81 percent) and As-Sweida (77 percent). Besides, half of the surveyed households nationwide reduced the number of meals eaten per day and 44 percent of respondents restricted the consumption of adults to prioritize their children's food consumption needs. Hereby, highlighting worrying signs of food-related stress and eroding resilience of the population. Furthermore, some households were forced to rely on child labour as a coping mechanism. According to December mVAM data, one out of ten households reported to have taken their children (in the mandatory education age) out of school and having them contribute to household income through engaging in income generating activities. This trend was more pronounced in Al-Hasakeh (21 percent) and Deir-ez-Zor (15 percent).
- In line with the deterioration of the food consumption trend, the adoption of food-based coping strategies among vulnerable groups continued to worsen in December 2020. The rCSI average was much higher among IDPs and returnees, with around 88 percent for each group indicating relying on at least one food-based coping mechanism, compared to 83 percent from resident households in December. Nonetheless, suggesting dire and difficult living conditions for all Syrians notwithstanding their residency status (IDP, returnee or resident).

Fig5: rCSI average by governorate over the last six months

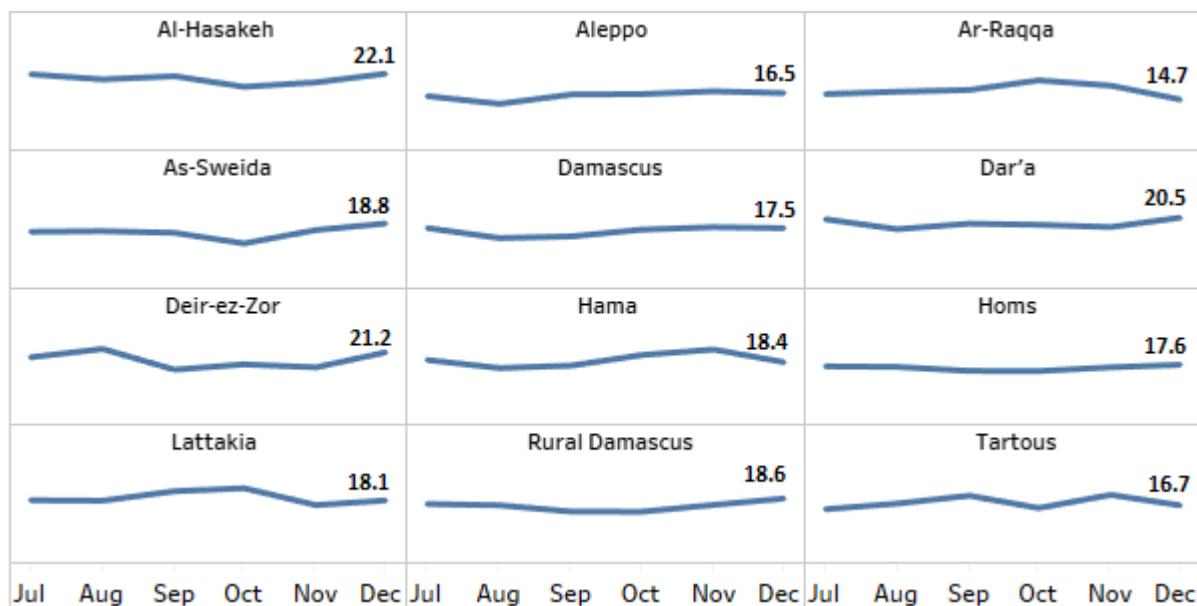
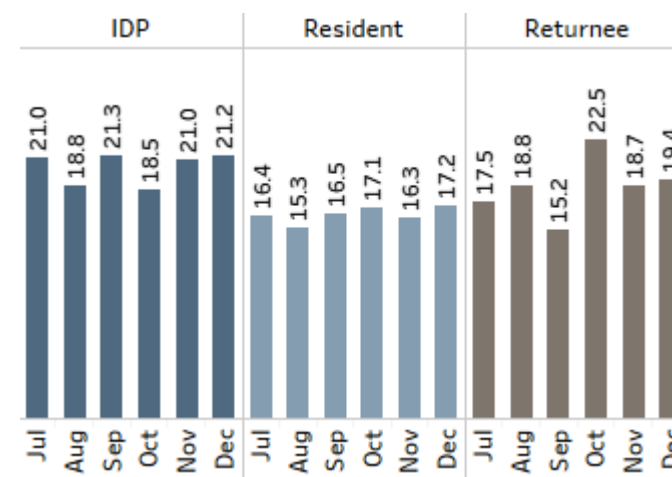


Fig4: rCSI average over the last six months according to displacement status



Map2: rCSI average by governorate in December 2020

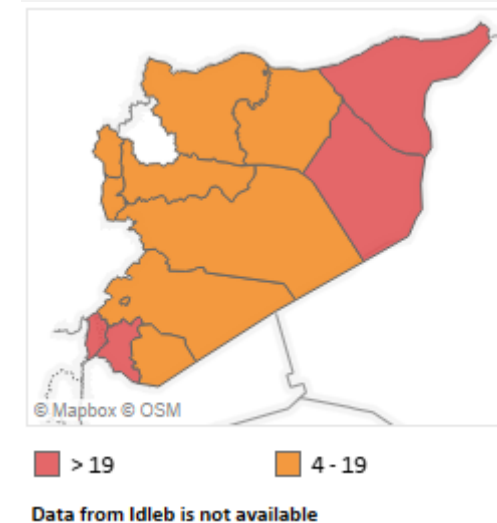
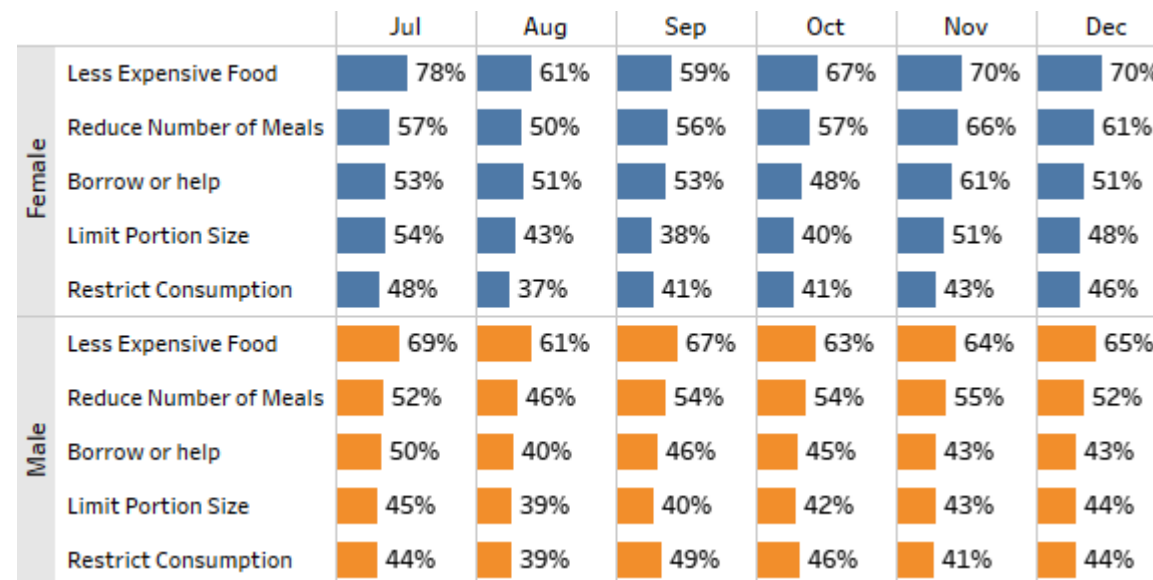


Fig6: Overall percent of households by adopted coping strategy over the past six months



## COVID-19 Situation Overview I

- In addition to the persisting conflict, the socio-economic turmoil and unilateral coercive measures in Syria, the COVID-19 pandemic has added a further layer of vulnerability on people already living a life of distress. COVID-19 poses widespread health threats to Syrian households and further aggravates humanitarian needs countrywide.
- In December 2020, more than four out five interviewed households in Syria (83 percent) reported staying permanently indoors and continued taking precautionary and social distancing measures against COVID-19. Though this trend remained high at national level, it witnessed a decrease by 10 percent since July 2020. At the governorate level, around nine out of ten households in Quneitra, Al-Hasakeh and Rural Damascus indicated avoiding crowded places to mitigate the pandemic outbreak in December.
- Syrian households continued to grapple with challenges to reach markets and medical facilities during the pandemic. In December 2020, nearly one out of four households in Syria (23 percent) reported not to have access to markets, with peaks recorded among female-headed households (28 percent). This trend was more pronounced in Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa, where more than one-third of respondents in each governorate (35 percent) reported difficulty in reaching markets in December, primarily due to COVID-19 travel-related restrictions (15 percent). Around one out of ten interviewed households in Ar-Raqqa indicated that markets were closed, in addition to four percent of respondents in Rural Damascus and Hama reporting markets to be far away from the home-stead in December 2020.
- The proportion of households reporting facing challenges to receive medical care services were 14 percent in December, with a peak recorded among returnee households (18 percent). This trend was observed more in As-Sweida (23 percent), largely due to lack of financial resources (17 percent). According to mVAM December data, close to half of the surveyed households (45 percent) in Dar'a, As-Sweida and Quneitra mentioned not being able to purchase the necessary medicines this month. Also, approximately one out of five households in Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa indicated shortage of medicines in pharmacies in December 2020. Hereby, highlighting a health concern given that 17 percent of respondents across Syria reported having elderly members with chronic diseases in their household.

Fig8: Percent of households facing challenges to access market in the last six months by governorate

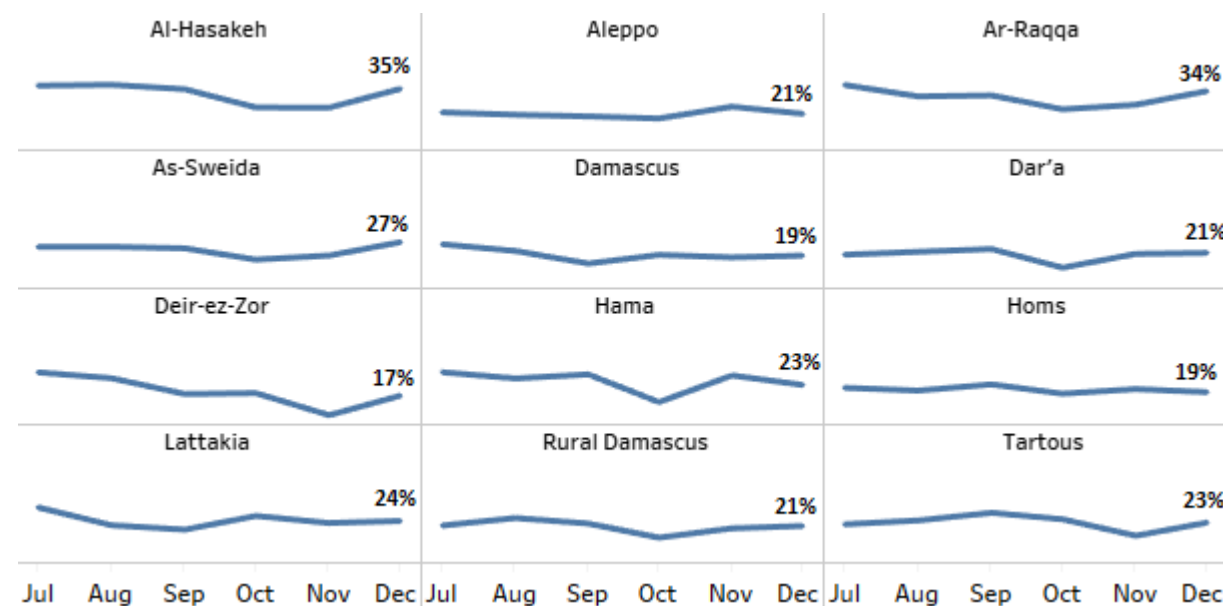
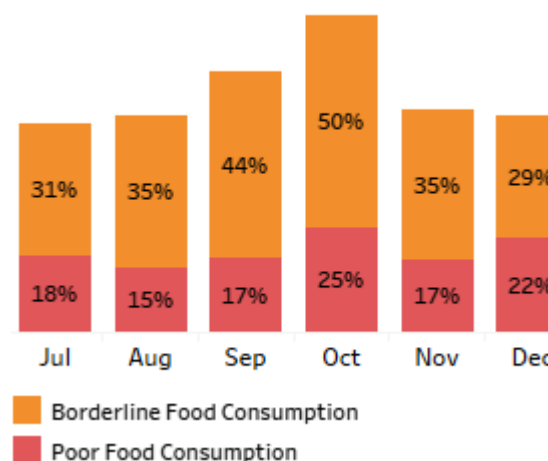


Fig7: Share of households with inadequate food consumption facing difficulties in accessing markets



Map3: Percent of households facing challenges to access medical services by governorate in December 2020

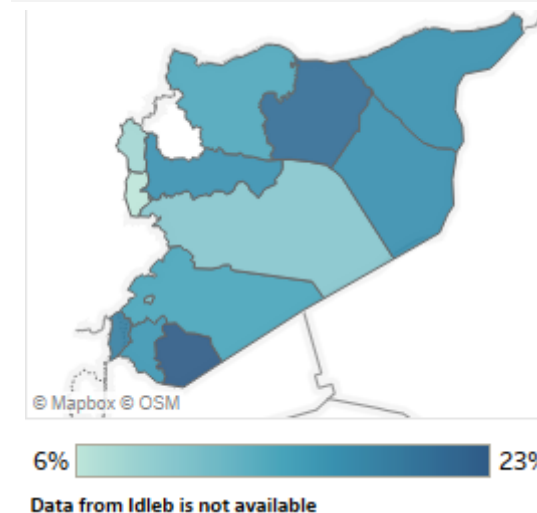
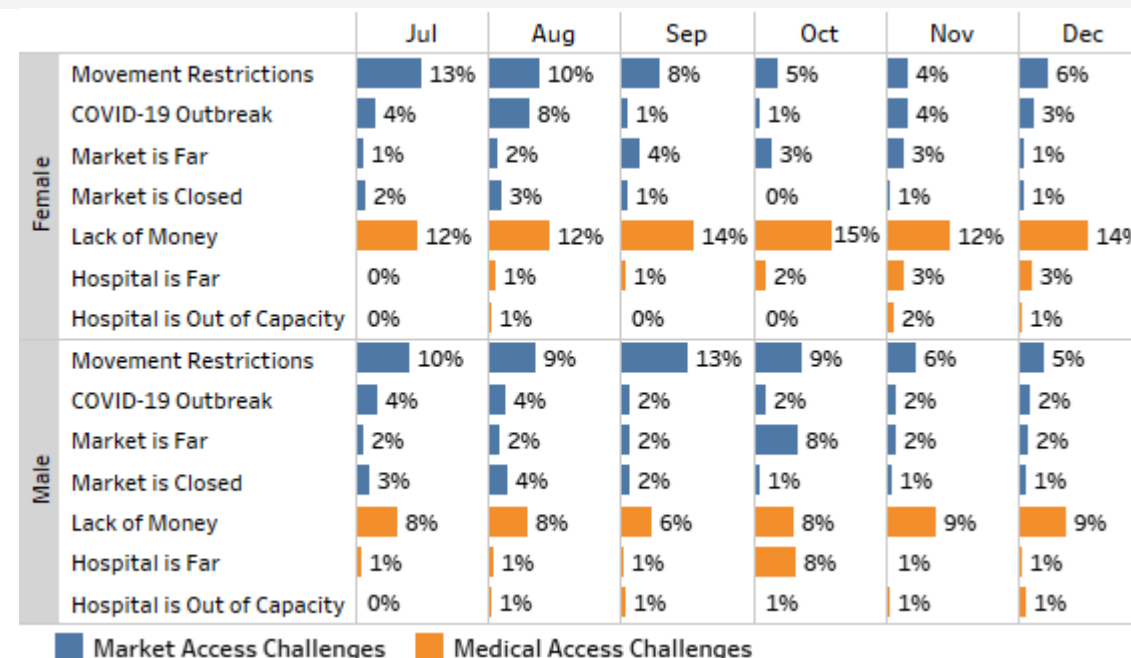


Fig9: Respondent reported reasons why accessing market and medical services was challenging



## COVID-19 Situation Overview II

- mVAM December data outlined that around half of the surveyed households (51 percent) with no regular access to markets have poor and borderline food consumption. Furthermore, 55 percent of respondents who reported medical healthcare inaccessibility in December, reported having inadequate food consumption, representing a 20 percent increase above the levels recorded in July 2020. Moreover, overall four percent of interviewed households reported difficulty in receiving remittances and/or food assistance due to movement restrictions in December, with peaks recorded in Ar-Raqqa (11 percent) and Quneitra (six percent).
- In December 2020, 45 percent of interviewed households reported that they had lost one or more sources of income because of COVID-19 related restrictions over the past month. This was the case even among breadwinners having university degrees (35 percent). Though this trend witnessed a decrease nationwide (down by nearly a third since July 2020), most Syrian populations continued facing difficulties in sustaining sources of income amid the ongoing economic crisis. In December, more than a third of surveyed households (36 percent) indicated having lost at least half of their monthly salary, suggesting a further undermining of livelihoods in Syria. Moreover, according to displacement status, nearly half of returnee households (48 percent) reported job lay-offs in December, compared to 44 percent of IDPs and 45 percent of residents.
- Broken down by governorate, As-Sweida and Ar-Raqqa recorded the highest proportion of surveyed households having lost one or more sources of income due to the pandemic, reaching 58 percent and 53 percent in December, respectively, with almost one out of four households in Ar-Raqqa and 14 percent of respondents in As-Sweida having lost almost entirely their December income. Furthermore, in December, 49 percent of Syrian households who reported losses of income have poor or borderline food consumption, representing a 20 percent increase of those households since July 2020. In addition, more than one out of ten (93 percent) of these households reported having relied on at least one coping strategy in December 2020.

Fig11: Percent of households losing one or more sources of income in the last six months by governorate

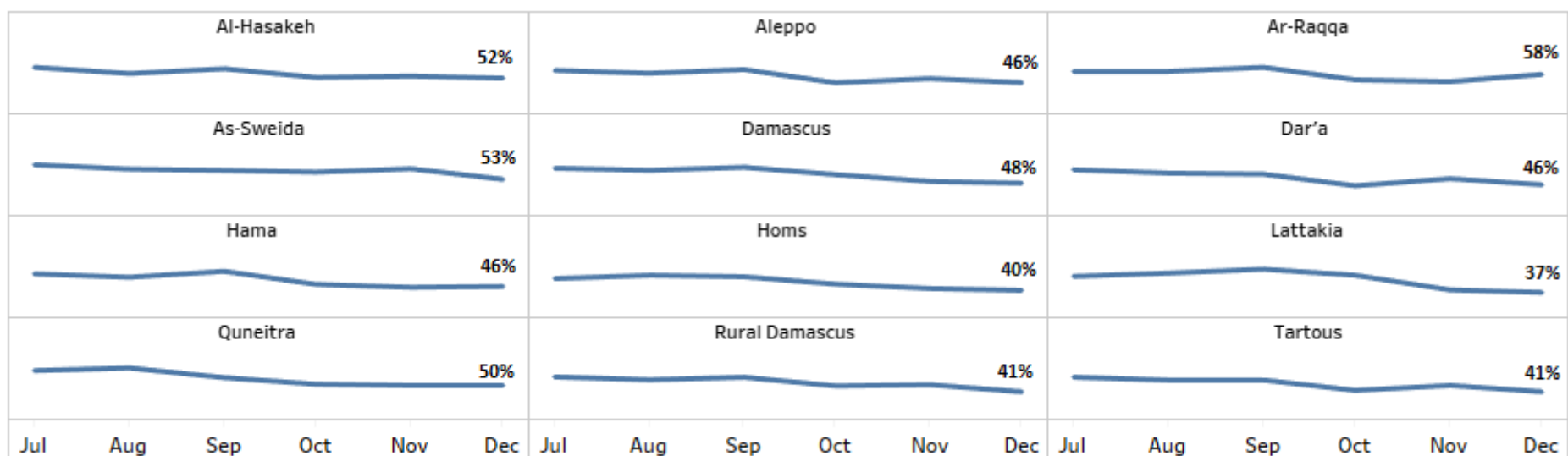
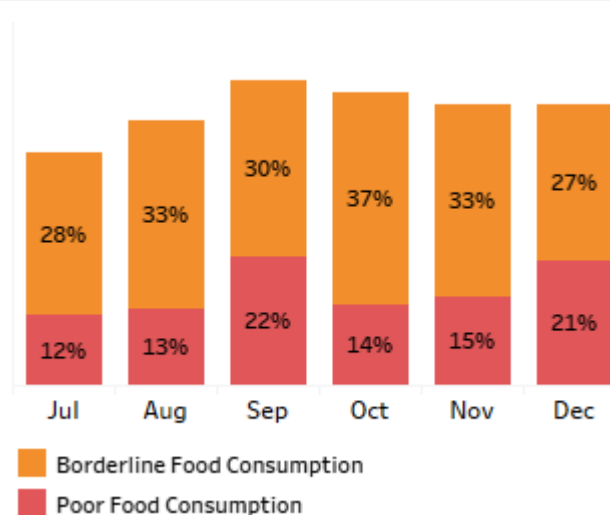
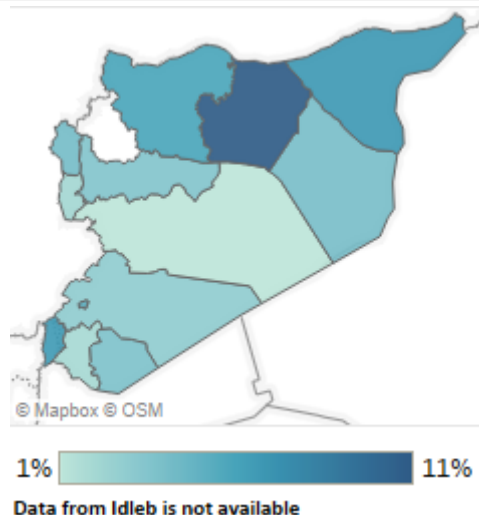


Fig10: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption reporting having lost their main income source



Map4: Percent of households facing difficulties receiving assistance in December 2020



Map5: Percent of households reporting losing more than half of their income sources in December 2020

