



2,664

Households surveyed



12%

Female Headed Households



18%

Stay as guest



25%

Displaced Households

### Situation Overview

- COVID-19 continued to spread across Syria. As of 28 February 2021, the total COVID-19 cases confirmed by the Health Minister in government-held areas of Syria were 15,588, including 1,027 fatalities. The monthly increase in COVID-19 cases in January (2,564 cases) and February (1,540 cases) signals a downward trend compared to December 2020 (3,547 cases). Nonetheless, COVID-19 cases in January 2021 remained the second highest monthly caseload since the beginning of the pandemic. In opposition-held areas in northwest Syria, around 21,175 COVID-19 cases were reported by the end of February 2021, raising concerns for over three million residents who are reportedly in need of water and sanitation services, which are a prerequisite to control the spread of the virus. Meanwhile, the Syrian Council of Ministers approved Syria's participation in the COVAX vaccine programme and started preparing vaccine deployment plans with the World Health Organization, which target priority populations in three phases and seek to immunize initially around 4.5 million Syrians nationwide by the second quarter of 2021.
- The fuel shortage crisis worsened further in Syria in early 2021, limiting Syria's access to fuel and reducing fuel supply in markets. Unilateral coercive measures on the country and the weakening of the Syrian pound are believed to be key drivers of the fuel shortage/limited access to fuel. On 10 January 2021, the Syrian Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources announced a temporary reduction in fuel allocations by 17 percent for gasoline and 24 percent for diesel across Syria and increased the price of subsidized gasoline from SYP 450 to SYP 475 per liter. Moreover, the Central Bureau of Statistics of Syria reported an average inflation rate of 200 percent in 2020 compared to 2019, with goods inflation reaching 300 percent. The food security situation in Syria has also worsened over the past year, with 12.4 million people estimated to be food insecure in 2020. This represents an increase of 4.5 million people (57 percent) compared to 2019, including twice as many severely food insecure people (1.3 million people).
- Tensions across northeast Syria remained high between the Self-Administration's security forces and the Government's official forces, with isolated yet regular attacks recorded in southern Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, and Deir-ez-Zor governorates. Artillery shelling and intensified bombardments were reported in northwest Syria, especially around the M4 and M5 highways, resulting in the displacement of around 23,000 people in January 2021. The spate of violence is also impacting humanitarian operations and aid workers in northwest Syria. The United Nations reported an average of one humanitarian worker killed every 30 days over the last 14 months in this region of Syria. Additionally, torrential rains and strong winds during January and February caused widespread damage to IDP sites across northwest Syria. Close to 142,000 displaced people across 407 IDP sites (around a third of IDP sites in northwest Syria) were reportedly affected by the severe flooding, as well as more than 25,000 tents were either destroyed or damaged, further aggravating the difficult living conditions of IDPs in these camps.
- In order to address the multi-faceted shocks faced by Syrians, WFP delivered general food assistance to approximately 4.7 million people in February 2021 across the country. Furthermore, WFP completed rehabilitation works at two bakeries in Aleppo and Dar'a governorates, benefiting more than 90,000 people under WFP's Farm-to-Bread concept that aims to restore the bread supply chain for the benefit of food insecure populations. WFP has also provided ready-to-eat rations to more than 73,760 people in northwest Syria affected by harsh winters and heavy rainfall since mid-January 2021.

Sources: [Syrian Arab Republic: Recent Development Report No.23 | January 2021](#), [COAR | Syria Update February 2021](#), [UNHCR | Floods in Northwest Syria February 2021](#)



### Key Points

- In February 2021, close to half of the surveyed households (47 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption throughout Syria, representing an increase of 48 percent from February 2020's recorded levels.
- Approximately 60 percent of interviewed households in Syria indicated consuming animal-source protein less than twice a week in February 2021.
- Seven out of ten interviewed households across Syria reported that they bought food on credit in February 2021 due to the continued worsening economic situation, marking an increase by 11 percent since December 2020.
- A third of interviewed households (33 percent) reported not being able to purchase necessary medicines, mainly due to lack of financial resources (76 percent) and shortage of medicines in pharmacies (17 percent).

### Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via live telephone interviews in January and February 2021 from households in locations across Syria. The phone numbers were generated using random-digit dialing. In January and February 2021, data was collected from a sample of 2,664 respondents across 13 governorates (Idlib is not covered). 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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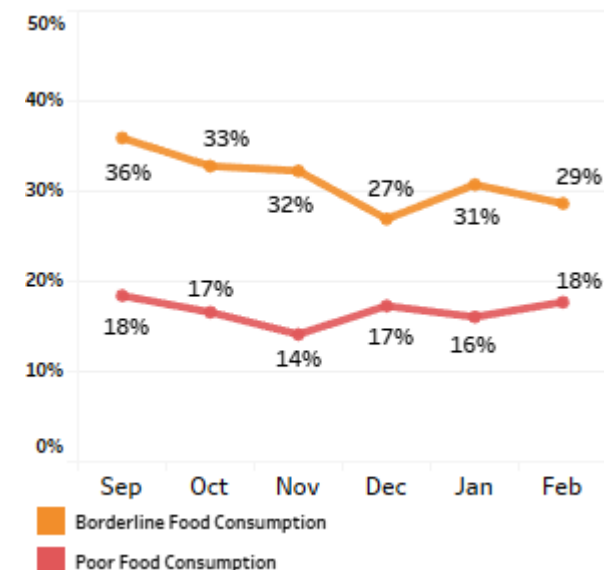
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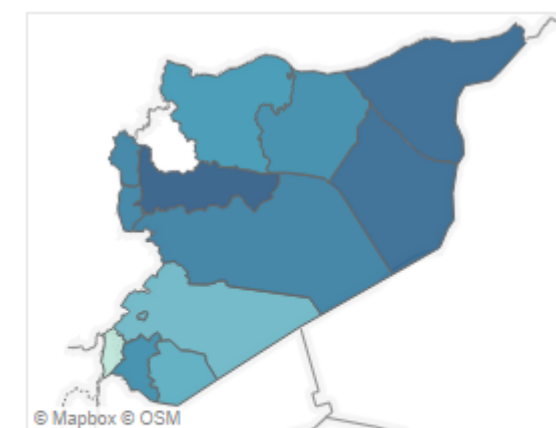
## Food Consumption

- In February 2021, close to half of the surveyed households (47 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption, with the highest levels recorded among female-headed households (59 percent). The national average rate of inadequate food consumption (poor and borderline combined) increased by almost half the level recorded in February 2020.
- Broken down by governorate, in February 2021, the highest proportion of households with poor or borderline food consumption was recorded in Hama, with around three out of five interviewed households (58 percent) reporting inadequate food consumption (representing a 16 percent increase since December 2020), followed by Dar'a (52 percent) and Ar-Raqqa (52 percent). A similar trend was observed in Aleppo in January 2021 (58 percent) before witnessing a marked decrease in February 2021 (49 percent). On the other hand, in February 2021 the lowest level of inadequate food consumption was reported in Damascus (36 percent); it however remained 40 percent above the level recorded in February 2020.
- During the reporting period, the share of Syrian households facing poor food consumption remained steady at a high level (18 percent), marking more than double the level recorded in February 2020. This trend was much higher in Hama, where one out of four interviewed households reported poor food consumption in February 2021. In Dar'a, the proportion of surveyed households reporting poor food consumption reached 18 percent in February 2021, a three-fold increase from September 2020. Around 23 percent of interviewed households in Syria who had been reporting borderline food consumption in previous rounds of the survey since August 2020 had poor food consumption in January and February 2021. This suggests a sustained worsening trend in the food security situation nationwide over the past six months.
- According to residency status, the food consumption of displaced households showed a further deterioration at the beginning of 2021. In January 2021, around 59 percent of IDPs reported inadequate food consumption, an increase of 26 percent from December 2020 and representing the highest level recorded since August 2020. This reduced to 51 percent of IDP respondents in February 2021. Furthermore, the total share of returnee and resident households with poor or borderline food consumption hiked up respectively from 51 and 41 percent in January 2021 to 57 and 43 percent in February 2021.
- Additionally, mVAM February 2021 data revealed that 60 percent of interviewed households in Syria indicated consuming animal-source protein less than two times a week. This negative trend is especially evidenced among households with poor or borderline food consumption, as they reported consuming animal-source protein less than once a week in February 2021. This trend signals that dietary diversity could decrease if the food security situation does not improve, potentially leading to a rise in malnutrition.

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



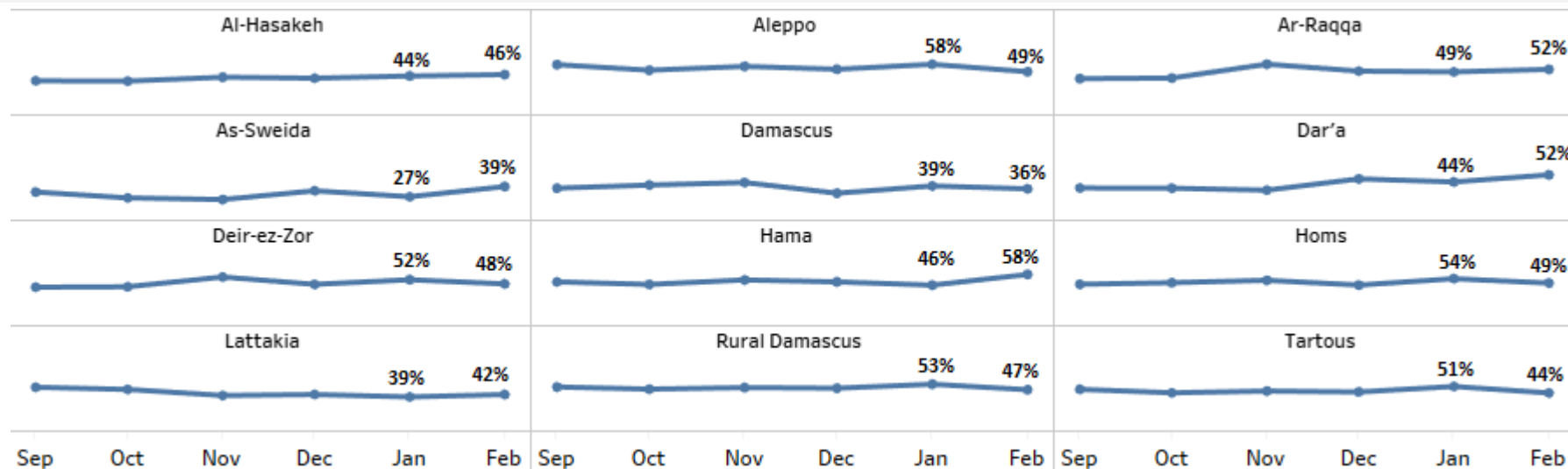
Map1: Percent of households by governorate reporting poor food consumption in February 2021



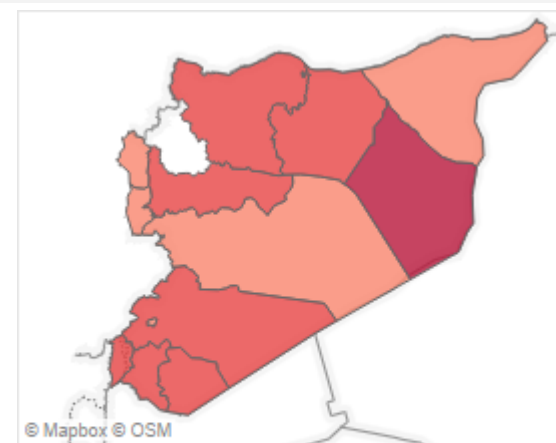
4% 25%

Data from Idleb is not available

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



Map2: Average weekly consumption by governorate for animal-source protein in February 2021



0 days 1 day 2 days

Data from Idleb is not available

## Coping Strategies

- Between January and February 2021, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) increased from 17.9 to 19.8, with a wide share of female-headed households resorting to at least one food-based coping strategy (94 percent) compared to male-headed households (88 percent) in February 2021. The national increase in rCSI is largely driven by households applying food coping mechanisms that are higher in severity. In February 2021, 47 percent of surveyed households reported reducing food consumption by adult members to prioritize their children's food consumption needs, an increase of five percentage points from January 2021. Also, to meet their food shortages, nearly half of the surveyed households (46 percent) reported borrowing food or borrowing money to buy food in February 2021, with a peak recorded in Dar'a (64 percent). In addition, more than two-thirds of the interviewed households (68 percent) reported relying on less preferred and less expensive food, with a peak recorded in As-Sweida (84 percent).
- According to displacement status, the rCSI average was much higher among IDPs and returnees. In February 2021, 96 percent of returnees and 93 percent of IDPs reported adopting at least one food-based coping mechanism to cover their essential food needs, compared to 86 percent of residents.
- As a result of soaring food inflation and the ongoing economic downturn and its impact on the dwindling purchasing power of Syrians, buying food on credit remained one of the main coping mechanisms. In February 2021, seven out of ten interviewed households at national level reported that they bought food on credit, an increase of 11 percent since December 2020, with peaks recorded in Dar'a (88 percent) and Quneitra (83 percent). This reflects a general upward trend in peoples' indebtedness across Syria in order to meet their food needs as well as an increase in their risk of default. The adoption of this strategy is most common among returnees (80 percent) while it remains very high also among IDPs (76 percent) and residents (67 percent), signaling a general degradation in the economic capacity of all population groups in Syria. Additionally, child labour and early school dropouts were reported among the coping strategies adopted by the interviewed households. In February 2021, one out of ten households reported taking children in the mandatory education age out of school and having them work instead in order to bring additional income to the household. This trend was more pronounced in Al-Hasakeh (26 percent) and among IDPs nationwide (15 percent).

Fig4: rCSI average by governorate over the last six months

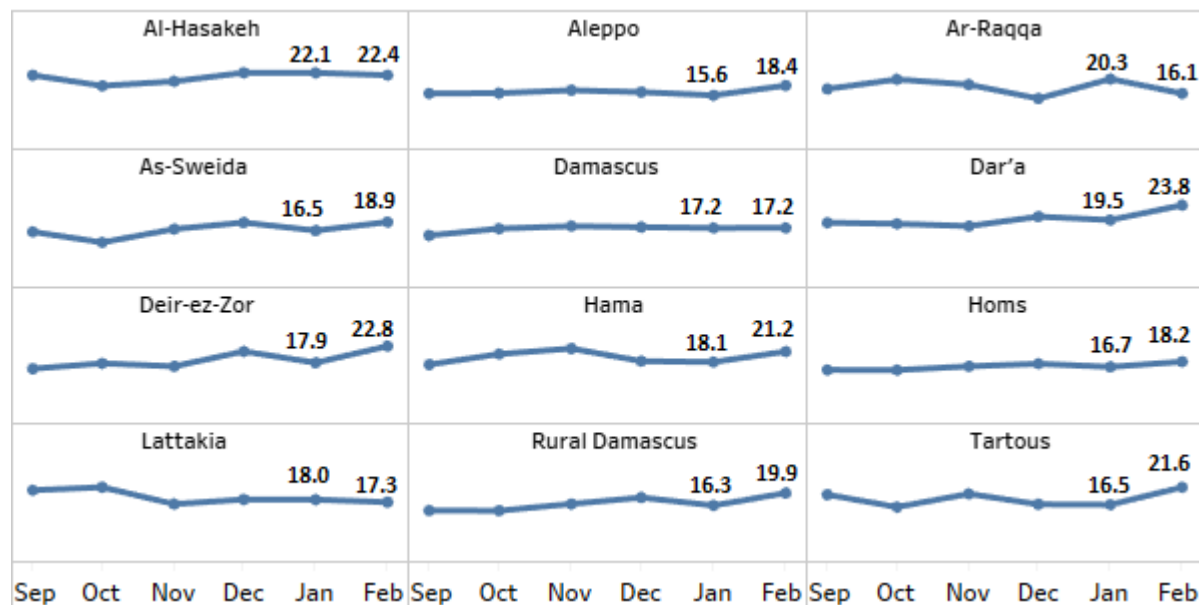
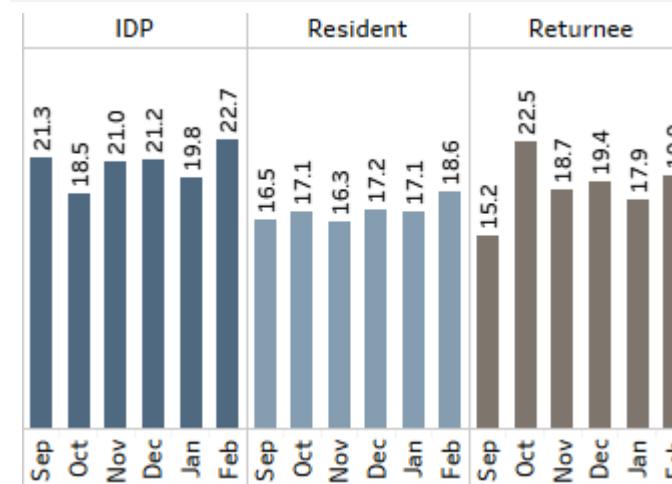


Fig3: rCSI average over the last six months according to displacement status



Map3: rCSI average by governorate in February 2021

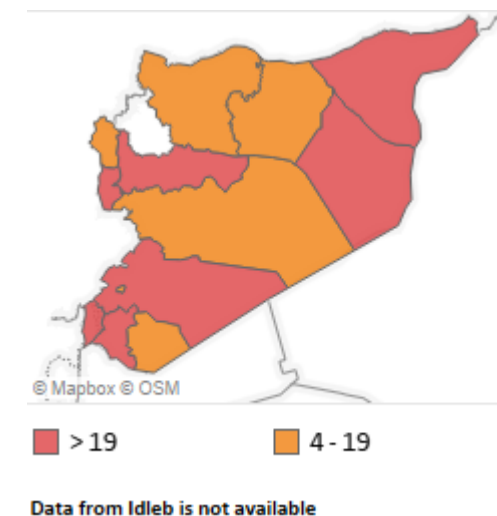
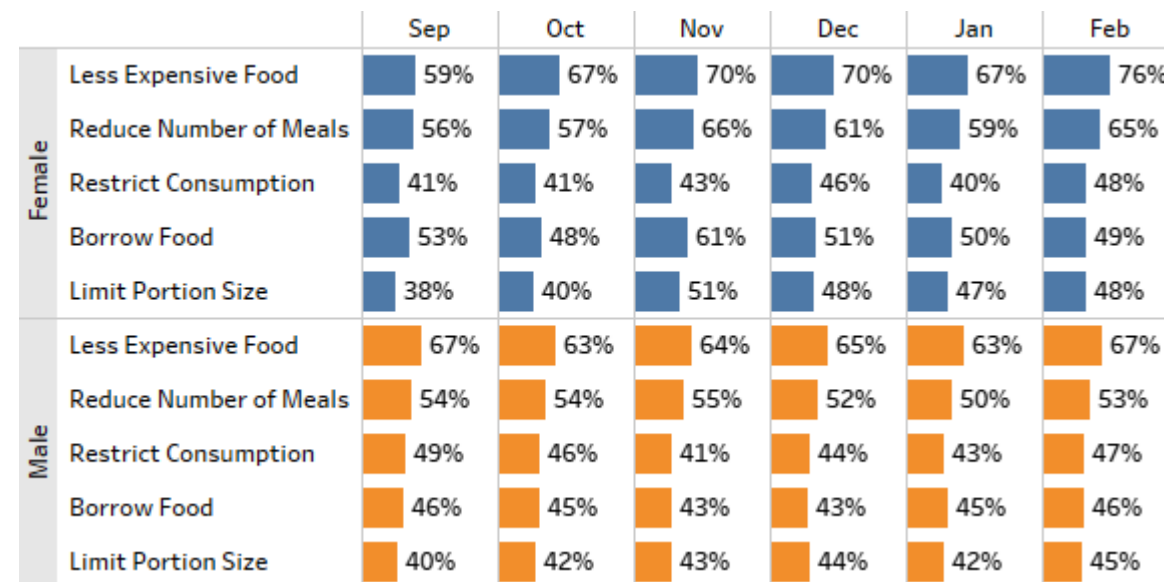


Fig5: Overall percent of households by adopted coping strategy over the past six months



## COVID-19 Situation Overview I

- The COVID-19 outbreak continued to exacerbate the worsening food security situation and acute humanitarian needs countrywide, further increasing the fragility of the Syrian economy.
- In line with the epidemiological analysis that indicated the emergence of the second COVID-19 wave in Syria from mid-December 2020, Syrian households maintained precautionary and social distancing measures against COVID-19. In February 2021, more than four out of five interviewed households in Syria (82 percent) reported staying permanently indoors or avoiding crowded places in a bid to mitigate the pandemic outbreak, with the highest recorded level in Tartous (88 percent). Though this trend remained high at national level, it witnessed a decrease by 10 percent since the beginning of the pandemic in late March 2020. Nonetheless, with reference to OCHA and WHO, it is understood that COVID-19 community transmission is widespread across the country and that containing the pandemic remains challenging nationwide.
- The COVID-19 pandemic continued to negatively impact households, especially by disrupting access to markets and medical services in some areas of Syria. In February 2021, one out of five interviewed households reported not having access to markets (decreased by 17 percent since September 2020), with peaks recorded among female-headed households (26 percent). This trend was highest in Al-Hasakeh (31 percent) due to COVID-19 travel-related restrictions. Besides, in February 2021, five percent of respondents in As-Sweida, Deir-ez-Zor and Lattakia indicated that markets were far away from their homes. In terms of displacement status, 23 percent of IDPs and 21 percent of returnees reported difficulties in reaching markets in February 2021, compared to 19 percent of resident households. From interviews conducted in February 2021, more than half of the households with no regular access to markets (55 percent) had poor or borderline food consumption, marking an increase by eight percent since December 2020. Furthermore, in February 2021, around five percent of surveyed households in Al-Hasakeh, As-Sweida and Dar'a reported difficulties in obtaining remittances and/or food assistance due to movement restrictions.

Fig7: Percent of households facing challenges to access market in the last six months by governorate

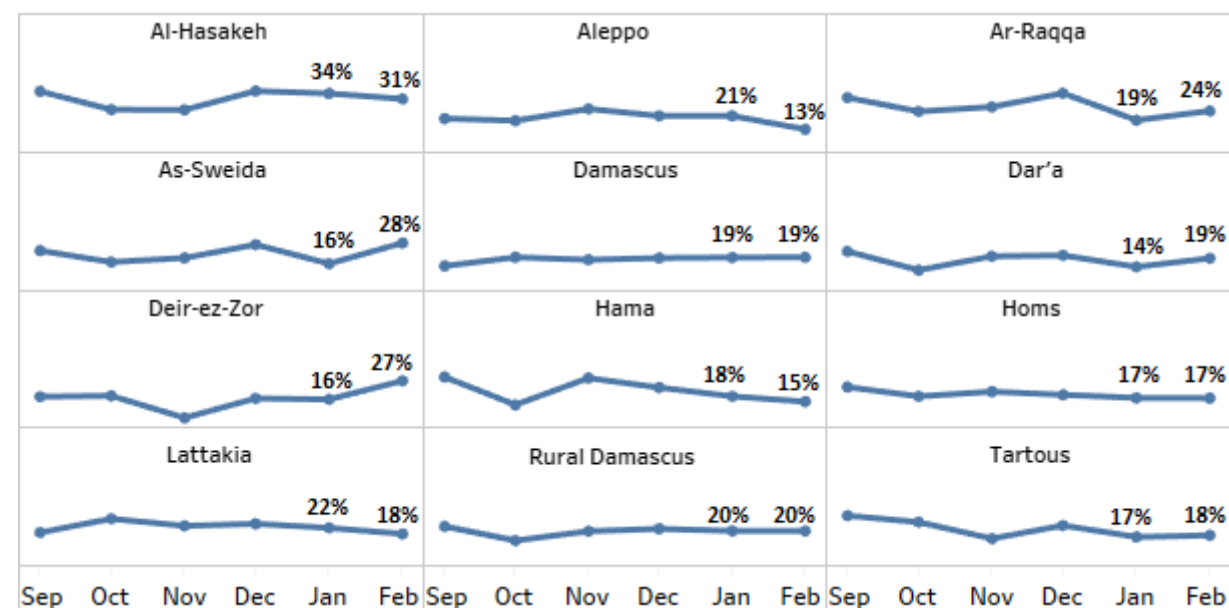
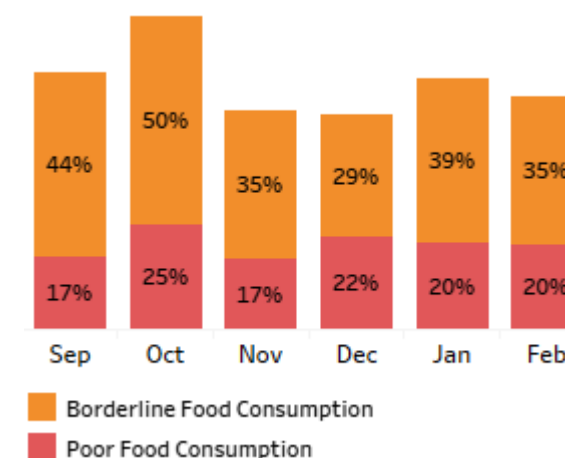


Fig6: Share of households with inadequate food consumption who reported facing difficulties in accessing markets



Map4: Percent of households facing challenges to access markets by governorate in February 2021

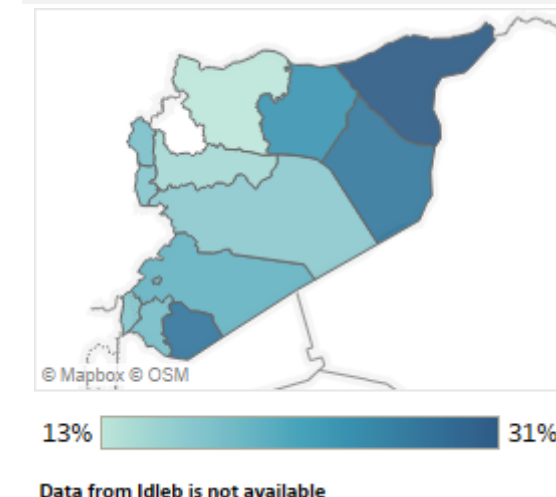
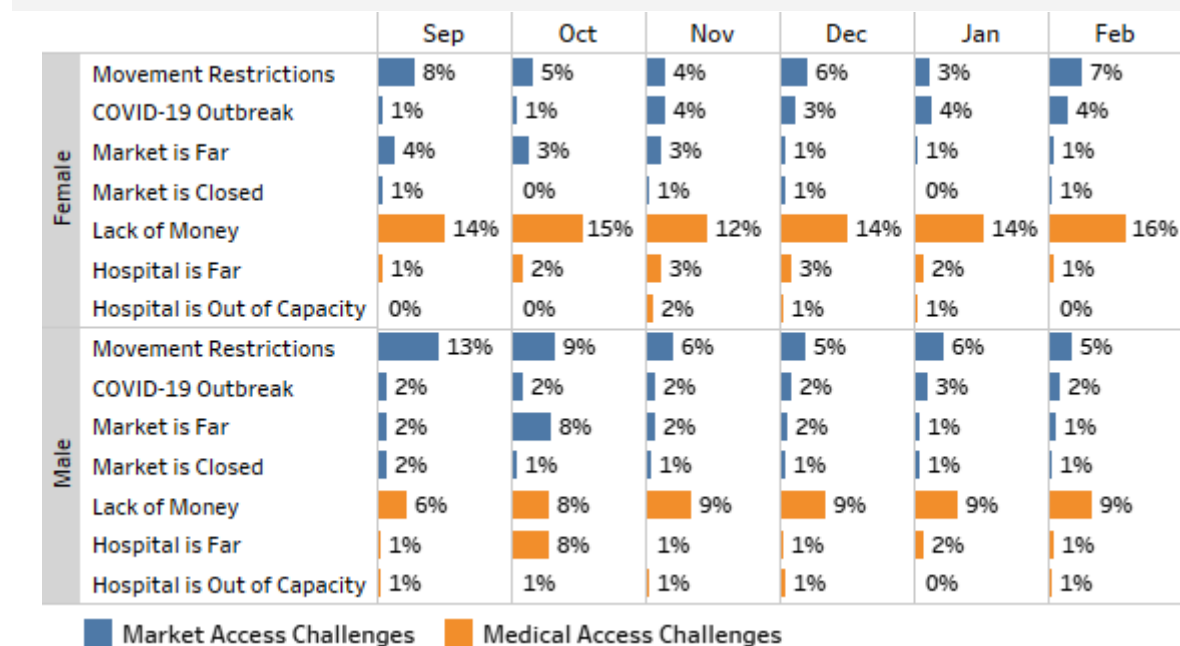


Fig8: Respondent reported reasons why accessing market and medical services was challenging



## COVID-19 Situation Overview II

- In February 2021, the proportion of households who reported facing challenges to access medical care services were 14 percent, with almost one out of five female-headed households (19 percent) indicating difficulty in accessing hospitals compared to 13 percent of male-headed households. The main impediment cited by the interviewed female-headed households was shortage of financial means (16 percent). Moreover, a third of interviewed households (33 percent) reported not being able to purchase the necessary medicines in February 2021, mainly due to lack of financial resources (76 percent) and shortage of medicines in pharmacies (17 percent). Also, approximately three out of five interviewed households with no regular access to medical healthcare reported poor or borderline food consumption in February 2021.
- Syrian households continued losing income and employment opportunities, while prices skyrocketed and the households' coping capacity eroded further. In February 2021, more than two out of five interviewed households (44 percent) indicated that they had lost one or more sources of income due to COVID-19 related restrictions, with 36 percent of them reporting to have lost more than half of their monthly salary.
- In February 2021, As-Sweida (58 percent) and Dar'a (51 percent) recorded the highest proportion of surveyed households having lost one or more sources of income due to the pandemic. Almost 16 percent of surveyed households in Dar'a and 12 percent in As-Sweida lost almost all of their February income. Furthermore, nearly half of the interviewed households who reported losses of income (48 percent) reported inadequate food consumption and more than nine out of ten of these households (94 percent) mentioned having relied on at least one coping strategy in February 2021. The widespread lack of livelihoods, income and employment opportunities make Syrian households more vulnerable to further economic shocks, which could have immediate ripple effects on their food security levels.

Fig10: Percent of households losing one or more sources of income in the last six months by governorate

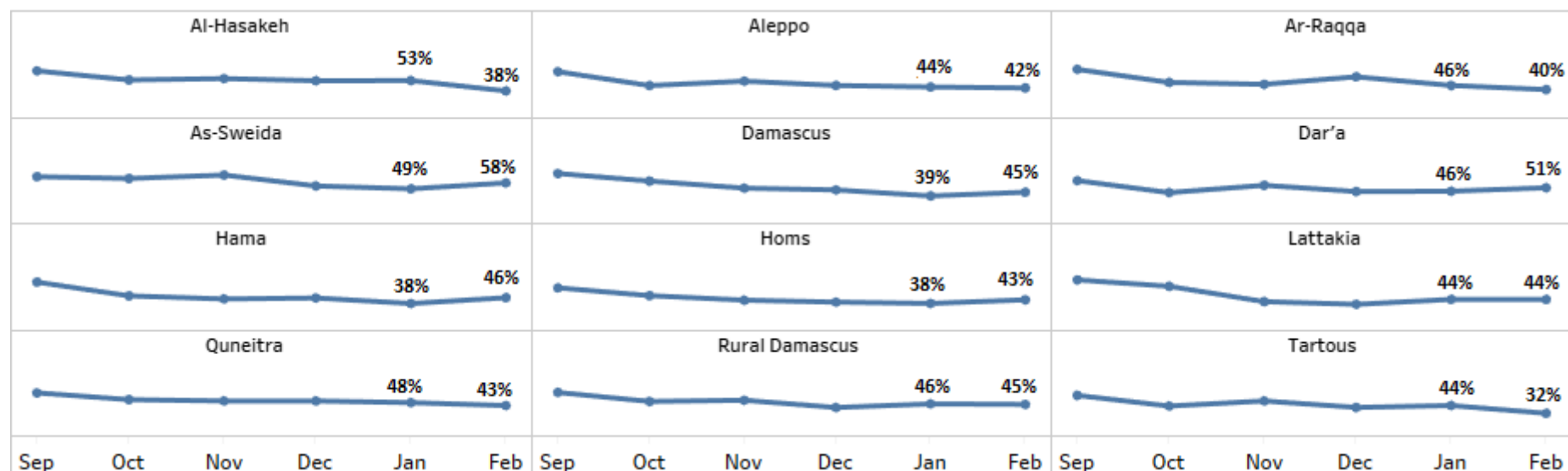
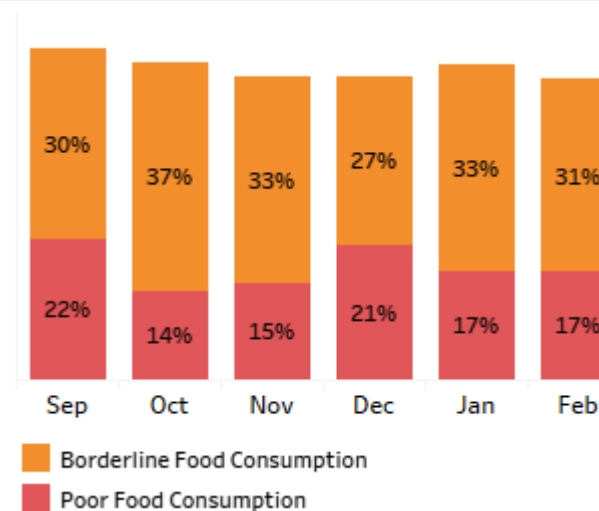
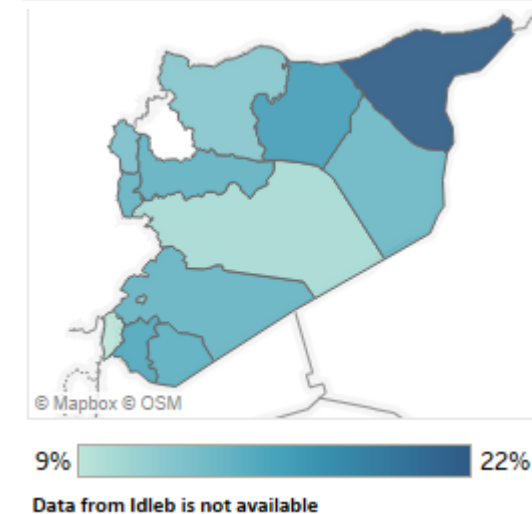


Fig9: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption who reported having lost their main income source



Map5: Percent of households facing challenges to access medical services by governorate in February 2021



Map6: Percent of households reporting losing more than half of their income sources in February 2021

