

Situation Overview

- COVID-19 cases continued to surge across Syria. As of 31 August 2021, a total of 27,915 COVID-19 cases, including 2,013 fatalities, were confirmed by the Minister of Health in government-controlled areas. The monthly increase in COVID-19 cases in August (1,952 cases) signals an upward trend compared to July 2021 (488 cases) and represents the highest monthly caseload since May 2021. In August 2021, around 20,611 COVID-19 cases were reported across northeast Syria, an increase of 1,960 new cases compared to the previous month, representing the second highest monthly caseload since December 2020. In opposition-held areas in northwest Syria, the epidemiological situation has significantly deteriorated. Approximately 39,271 COVID-19 cases were reported in northwest Syria by the end of August, an increase of 12,839 new cases compared to the previous month, representing the highest monthly caseload since the start of the pandemic. Simultaneously, as of 23 August 2021, around 218,900 people were vaccinated in government-controlled areas including in northeast Syria, in addition to 58,000 people in northwest Syria. This coverage reflects less than one percent of Syria's population. On 15 August, a second batch of COVAX vaccines arrived in Syria, about 138,000 jabs for government-controlled areas including in northeast Syria, and 36,000 for northwest Syria.
- The general security situation throughout Syria remained volatile in August. Intensified hostilities were reported in northwest Syria, with shelling largely concentrated in southern Idleb, northern Latakia and Aleppo, and western Hama. As of July 2021, 1.7 million internally displaced people (IDP) were reported in IDP sites across northwest Syria, with 80 percent of these IDPs being women and children. Furthermore, in Dar'a governorate in southern Syria, the security situation was tense with artillery shelling and ground clashes reported during most of August, in particular in the town of Dar'a Al Balad, resulting in civilian casualties and displacement of more than 38,600 people as of 17 August. The displaced people included around 15,000 women, over 3,200 men and elderly, and over 20,400 children. Most IDPs were hosted by relatives in Dar'a city, however, around 1,500 IDPs were accommodated in seven collective shelters. Moreover, Saraya crossing point, a humanitarian corridor between Dar'a Al Balad and Dar'a city, has been closed since 12 August, while between 21 and 22 August, it was temporarily opened to allow women, children and the elderly to exit. As a result, access to services and goods across Dar'a Al Balad was extremely challenging in August, with critical shortages of electricity, fuel and bread, as well as the inability to deliver wheat flour to Tishreen and Al Balad bakeries. In response, Dar'a authorities have reallocated this wheat flour to existing bakeries in Dar'a city, Bosra Esh Sham, Tiba, and Da'el to help meet the needs of IDPs. On 30 August, Al Shifa hospital and the National hospital of Dar'a were reportedly attacked by mortars, resulting in structural damage. On 31 August, the Government of Syria and the Dar'a Central Committee held a meeting and agreed to a complete ceasefire to take effect from September 2021 in Dar'a Al-Balad.
- On 7 August, Damascus governorate issued a decision to stipulate specific opening and closing times for all commercial markets, shops, restaurants, and various economic activities in the governorate, aiming to save energy to be redirected to residential users. On 16 August, the Syrian Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade issued a six-month ban on the import of specific commodities as part of a trade rationalization scheme to protect available foreign exchange reserves. This initiative could reduce import expenditures, and therefore save foreign reserves for essential imports, especially wheat flour. On 23 August, a leak from a fuel tank at the Baniyas power plant in Tartous discharged as much as 12,000 cubic meters of oil into the Mediterranean Sea. The World Wildlife Fund organization was deeply concerned about this incident, which could have immediate and long-term effects on coastal ecosystems and vulnerable communities in the area.
- In August 2021, WFP delivered general food assistance to approximately 4.7 million people across Syria in order to meet the immense humanitarian needs nationwide. Moreover, WFP dispatched 1,500 ready-to-eat rations to IDPs in Dar'a city, and an additional 5,160 rations for about 25,800 IDPs are planned to be distributed to address the dire humanitarian situation in Dar'a.

Sources: [OCHA | Hostilities in Dar'a Governorate](#), [COAR | Syria Update August 2021](#), [WWF Statement | The Oil Spill Off the Coast of Syria](#)



Key Points

- More than two out of five interviewed households (44 percent) at national level reported poor or borderline food consumption in August 2021, marking a two percentage points decrease compared to July 2021 and an increase by three percent from August 2020.
- In August 2021, overall 69 percent of surveyed households indicated that they bought food on credit, an increase of five percent year-on-year, with a higher share recorded in Dar'a (78 percent) and Al-Hasakeh (77 percent).
- In Dar'a governorate, nearly two out of five interviewed households (38 percent) reported not having access to markets, representing an increase of 10 percentage points from a month earlier.
- From interviews conducted in August, 70 percent of surveyed households in Syria reported their intent to have all household members vaccinated should the COVID-19 vaccine be made available to them free of charge.

For Further Information

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Key Characteristics



1,334
Households Surveyed



13%
Female Headed Households



19%
Stay as Guests



29%
Displaced Households

Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via live telephone interviews in August 2021 from households in locations across Syria. The phone numbers were generated using random-digit dialing. In August 2021, data was collected from a sample of 1,334 respondents across 13 governorates (Idleb 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.

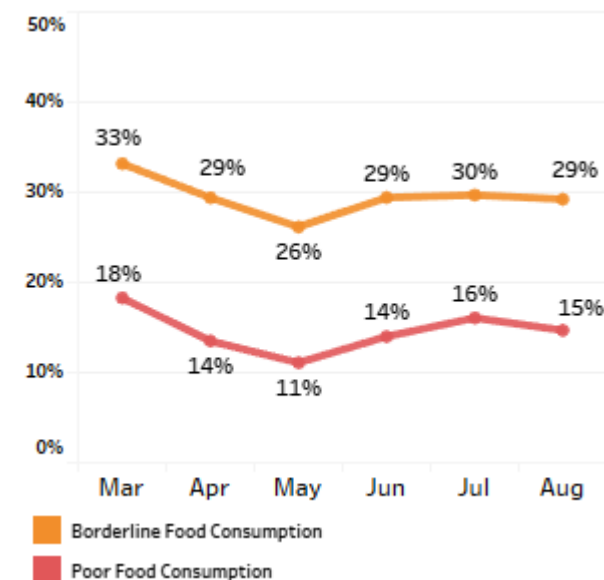




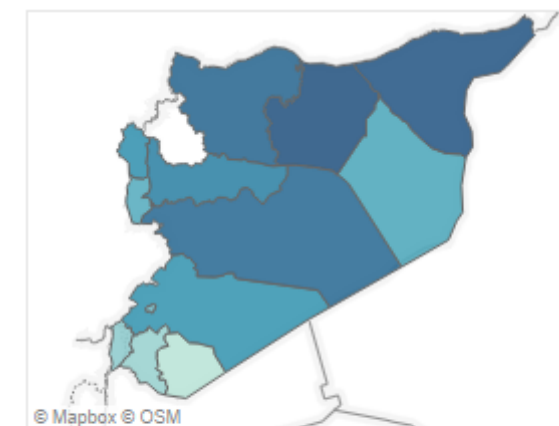
Food Consumption

- Food insecurity in Syria remained at critical levels. In August 2021, more than two out of five interviewed households (44 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption in Syria. The national average rate of inadequate food consumption (poor and borderline combined) slightly decreased by two percentage points from July 2021; it however witnessed an increase of three percent compared to August 2020. This trend was higher among female-headed households (49 percent) compared to male-headed households (43 percent). At the national level, around 20 percent of surveyed households in Syria who had been reporting borderline food consumption in previous rounds of the survey since March 2021, reported poor food consumption in August 2021.
- Broken down by governorate, in August 2021, the highest proportion of households with poor or borderline food consumption was recorded in Homs, with nearly three out of five interviewed households (57 percent) reporting inadequate food consumption representing a 19 percent increase year-on-year, followed by Aleppo (56 percent). On the other hand, As-Sweida (23 percent) and Damascus (33 percent) recorded the lowest level of inadequate food consumption this month. Moreover, the greatest monthly increase of surveyed households with poor or borderline food consumption was detected in Homs (up by 11 percentage points) and Ar-Raqqa (up by 10 percentage points), reaching 57 percent and 52 percent, respectively, in August 2021.
- During the reporting period, 15 percent of interviewed households in Syria reported poor food consumption, marking a two percentage points increase from the level recorded in August 2020. This trend was much higher in Ar-Raqqa (23 percent), an increase of eight percentage points year-on-year, followed by Al-Hasakeh (22 percent). The highest monthly increase of surveyed households reporting poor food consumption was recorded in Homs (up by eight percentage points) and Lattakia (up by three percentage points), reaching 20 percent and 16 percent, respectively, in August 2021.
- According to residency status, in August 2021, 53 percent of IDPs reported inadequate food consumption, an increase of 15 percent year-on-year. Moreover, the total share of returnee and resident households with poor or borderline food consumption reached 47 and 39 percent, respectively.
- Furthermore, insufficient consumption of protein-rich food items continued to be reported across Syria. In August 2021, the national average consumption rate of animal-source protein was less than twice a week (average of 1.95 times per week). While this trend remains generally low, it represents the third highest national average level since August 2020. The first and the second highest national levels throughout the past year were recorded during Ramadan 2021 (in April and May 2021).

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 August 2021



Data from Idleb is not available

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

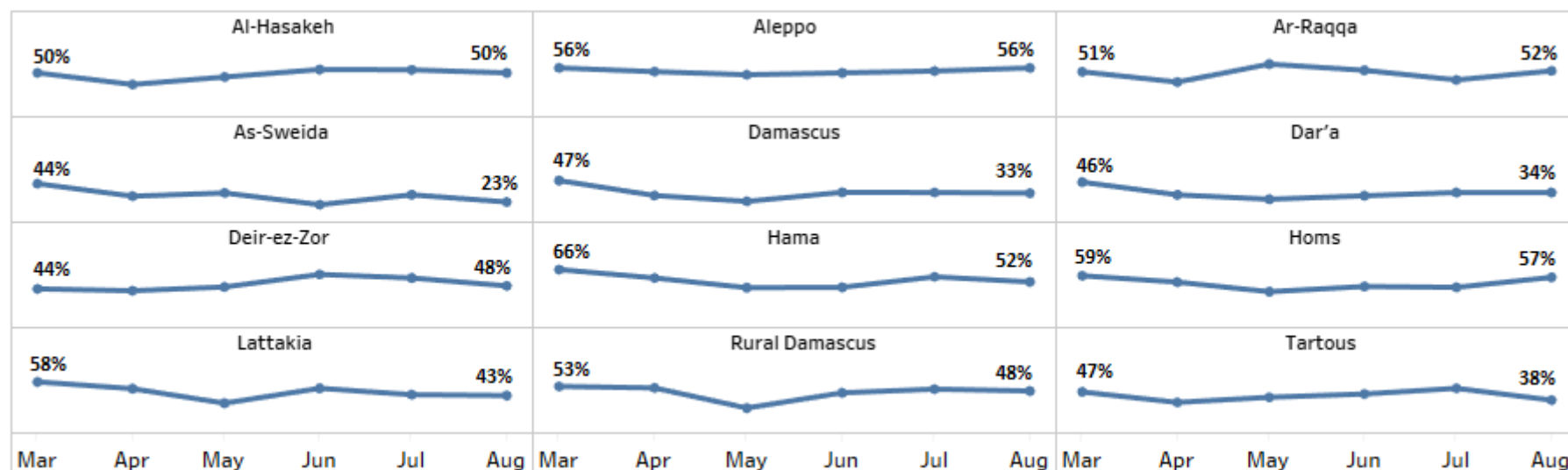
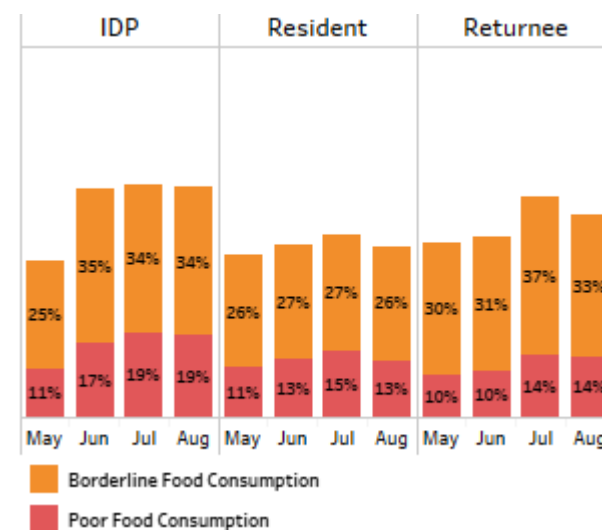


Fig3: Percent of households reporting poor and borderline food consumption according to displacement status





Coping Strategies

- Between July and August 2021, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) decreased from 19.8 to 18.2, representing the lowest national average level recorded since February 2021. Nonetheless, in August 2021, close to nine out of ten interviewed households in Syria (87 percent) reported applying at least one food-based coping mechanism to meet their food consumption needs, representing a five percent increase since August 2020. This trend was higher among female-headed households (92 percent) compared to male-headed households (86 percent).
- The further erosion of the purchasing power and the degradation in households' economic capacity pushed nearly seven out of ten interviewed households (69 percent) to buy food on credit (representing an increase of five percent year-on-year), with a wider share recorded among female-headed households (76 percent). The reported adoption of this strategy was most common among IDPs (72 percent) and returnees (71 percent), while it remained very high also among residents (67 percent), signaling a general worsening in economic living conditions for all population groups in Syria. At the governorate level, this trend was more pronounced in Dar'a (78 percent), with an eight percent increase compared to a month earlier and representing the highest level recorded in Dar'a since April 2021, followed by Al-Hasakeh (77 percent). Moreover, relying on child labor as a coping strategy for lack of food has become more prominent among Syrian households over time. In August 2021, 11 percent of surveyed households nationwide reported taking children of the mandatory education age out of school and having them work instead to bring in additional income to the household.
- In terms of displacement status, the average rCSI was highest among IDPs and returnees. In August 2021, 91 percent of IDPs and 88 percent of returnees reported adopting at least one food-based coping strategy to deal with insufficient food stocks and source their essential food needs amid the dire economic living conditions, compared to 85 percent of residents.
- The high price of commodities and the limited livelihood opportunities in Syria have led many families to adopt further food-based coping strategies. In August 2021, 68 percent of surveyed households reported relying on less preferred or less expensive food, up by 11 percent from August 2020, with peaks recorded in Quneitra (83 percent) and Al-Hasakeh (77 percent). Approximately three out of five interviewed households in Syria (57 percent) indicated a reduction in the number of meals consumed per day, an increase of 21 percent year-on-year, with a wider share recorded among returnees (63 percent) and IDPs (58 percent) compared to residents (54 percent). Additionally, to cope with food shortages, 44 percent of surveyed households reported reducing food consumption by adult members to prioritize their children's food consumption needs, representing an increase of 13 percent since August 2020, with a higher proportion recorded in Quneitra (67 percent) and Deir-ez-Zor (64 percent).

Fig5: rCSI average by governorate over the last six months

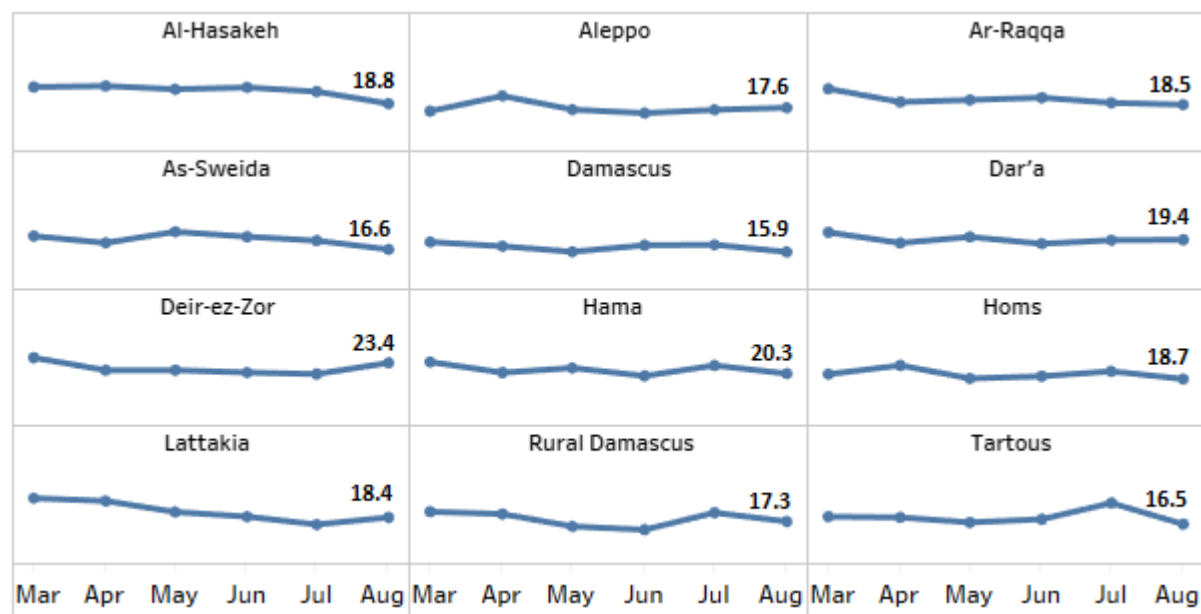
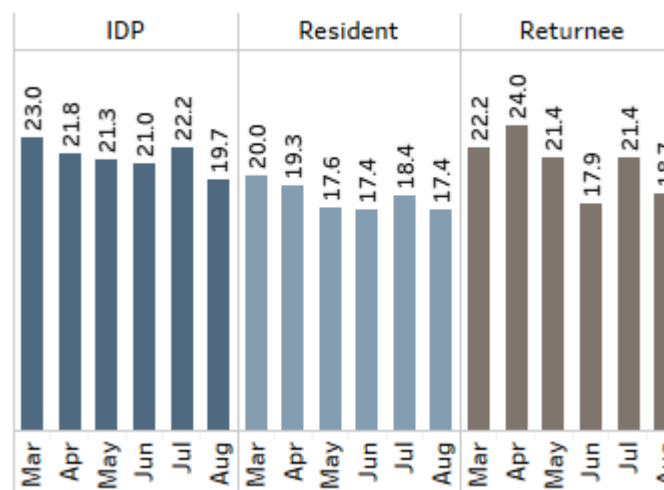


Fig4: rCSI average over the last six months according to displacement status



Map2: Percent of households buying food in credit in August 2021

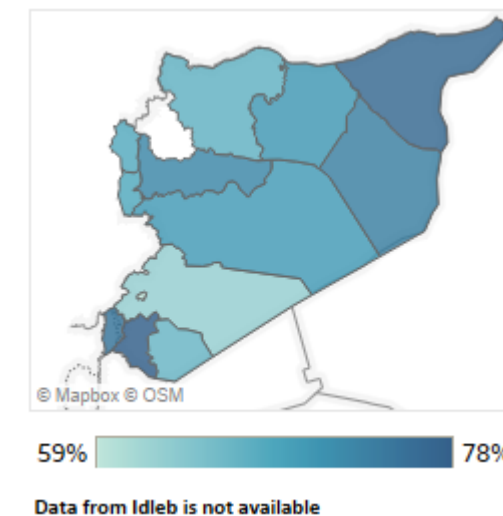


Fig6: Overall percent of households by adopted coping strategy over the past six months

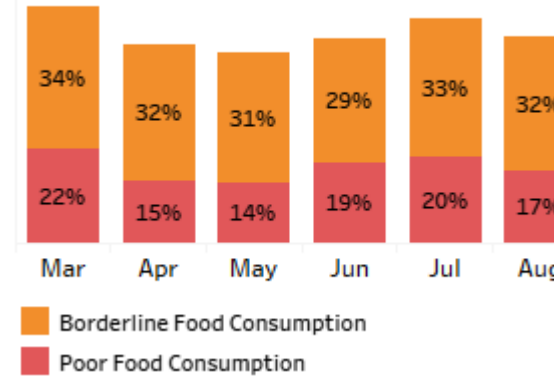
	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	
Male	Less Expensive Food	72%	72%	71%	68%	69%	68%
	Reduce Number of Meals	59%	54%	48%	52%	56%	57%
	Limit Portion Size	52%	51%	50%	45%	50%	49%
	Restrict Consumption	49%	49%	45%	44%	48%	45%
	Borrow Food	49%	48%	48%	45%	45%	43%
Female	Less Expensive Food	72%	74%	76%	74%	77%	68%
	Reduce Number of Meals	68%	57%	59%	65%	68%	56%
	Limit Portion Size	54%	54%	55%	54%	61%	46%
	Restrict Consumption	44%	42%	48%	42%	50%	38%
	Borrow Food	57%	49%	59%	52%	54%	51%



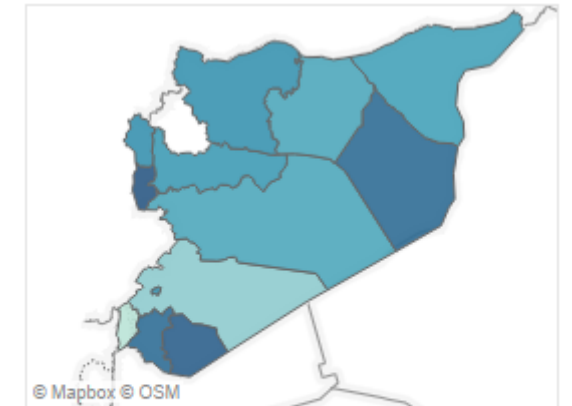
COVID-19 Situation Overview I

- The compounding impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is intertwined with the deteriorating socio-economic situation in Syria, hereby spurring widespread health and nutrition deterioration on Syrian households and further exacerbating the existing humanitarian needs nationwide.
- Syrian households continued to grapple with challenges to access markets. The ongoing fuel and electricity shortage experienced throughout Syria is reducing access to markets. In August 2021, more than a third of the interviewed households (34 percent) indicated facing difficulties in reaching markets, an increase of one percentage point from a month earlier and by nine percentage points year-on-year, marking the highest national average level recorded since April 2020. This trend was more pronounced in Tartous (40 percent), an increase of 15 percentage points compared to August 2020, followed by As-Sweida (39 percent). In Dar'a governorate, in August 2021, nearly two out of five interviewed households (38 percent) reported not having access to markets, representing an increase of 10 percentage points from a month earlier and up by 17 percentage points year-on-year. The monthly increase in the lack of access to markets in Dar'a was largely due to the intensified security issues and conflict in the governorate in August 2021. These findings generally highlight nationwide food access concerns. From interviews conducted in August 2021, close to half of the surveyed households with no regular access to markets nationwide (49 percent), had poor or borderline food consumption. Furthermore, in August 2021, overall five percent of interviewed households reported difficulties in obtaining remittances and/or food assistance due to movement restrictions or security issues. This trend was higher in Al-Hasakeh (11 percent), Ar-Raqqa (nine percent), Dar'a (eight percent) and Quneitra (eight percent).
- COVID-19 has added further strain on Syria's already overburdened health system. During the reporting period, one out of five interviewed households in Syria (20 percent) indicated facing challenges in accessing medical care services, an increase of five percentage points from the level of August 2020, with a higher proportion recorded in Deir-ez-Zor (30 percent) and Quneitra (29 percent). In Dar'a governorate, 25 percent of surveyed households reported difficulties in accessing healthcare facilities, marking the highest level recorded since August 2020. At the national level, this trend was more pronounced among returnees (24 percent) and IDPs (23 percent) compared to residents (17 percent). Additionally, 41 percent of interviewed households in Syria reported not being able to purchase the necessary medicines in August 2021, mainly due to a lack of financial resources (74 percent) and a shortage of medicines in pharmacies (22 percent). Furthermore, as the COVID-19 vaccinations are underway, around 70 percent of surveyed households countrywide reported their intent to have all household members vaccinated were the COVID-19 vaccine made available to them free of charge.

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



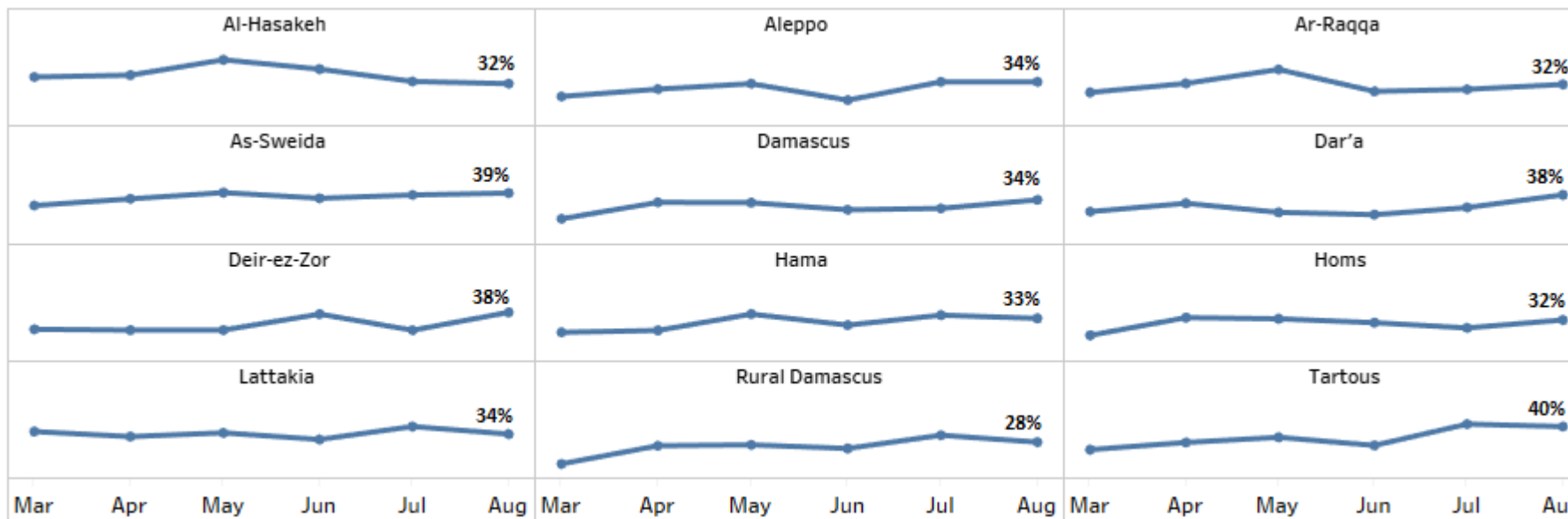
Map3: Percent of households facing challenges to access markets by governorate in August 2021



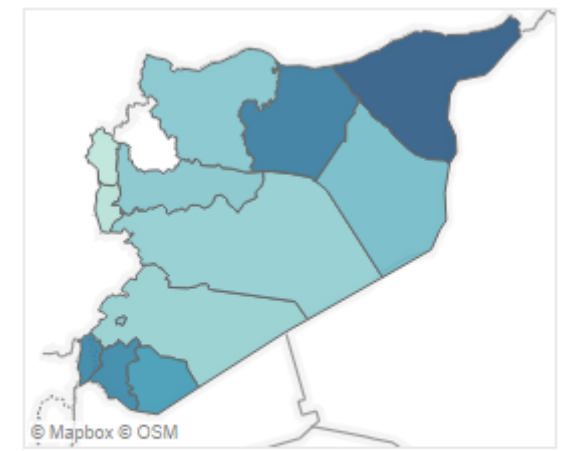
25% 40%

Data from Idleb is not available

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



Map4: Percent of households facing difficulties in receiving assistance in August 2021



2% 11%

Data from Idleb is not available



COVID-19 Situation Overview II

- In light of the deteriorating economic situation, Syrian households continued facing difficulties in sustaining income generating activities and livelihood opportunities, while prices of commodities remained high. In August 2021, more than one out of four interviewed households in Syria (28 percent) indicated that they had lost one or more sources of income over the past month, with a higher proportion recorded among returnees (33 percent) and IDPs (31 percent) compared to residents (26 percent). This was the case even among interviewed breadwinners nationwide who had a university degree (21 percent). Moreover, nearly one out of five interviewed households across Syria (18 percent) reported having lost more than half of their monthly income in August 2021, with peaks recorded in Rural Damascus (23 percent) and Hama (23 percent).
- The reported shortfall of households' income was due to different factors. Close to half of the surveyed households in Syria in August 2021 (47 percent) reported a reduction of revenues from business activities or agricultural sales, with a higher proportion recorded among male-headed households (49 percent) compared to female-headed households (36 percent). During the reporting period, 33 percent of interviewed households nationwide reported having been impacted by a reduction in working hours and thus receiving a partial salary, with peaks recorded in Homs (42 percent) and As-Sweida (42 percent). Furthermore, 16 percent of surveyed households indicated job lay-offs, with a peak recorded in Deir-ez-Zor (25 percent). In light of the above findings, it seems likely that the decision of limiting operating hours in Syria, if extended in time, could further reduce income opportunities in the labor market over the next coming months, hereby possibly further exacerbating the ailing economic recovery.
- At the governorate level, in August 2021, Hama (36 percent), Aleppo (35 percent) and As-Sweida (32 percent) recorded the highest proportion of surveyed households having lost one or more sources of income over the past month. Nearly one quarter of interviewed households in As-Sweida (22 percent) and 18 percent of respondents in Aleppo, lost more than half of their August income. Meanwhile, to cope with limited income and soaring inflation, 18 percent of surveyed households nationwide reported having been pushed to work more than one full-time job over the past month.
- The difficulties faced by the Syrian families in the labor market have a general negative impact on households' food security situation. In August 2021, more than half of the surveyed households across Syria (52 percent) who reported losses of income also reported inadequate food consumption, representing an increase of 13 percent year-on-year. Moreover, 95 percent of these respondents indicated having relied on at least one food-based coping strategy in August.

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

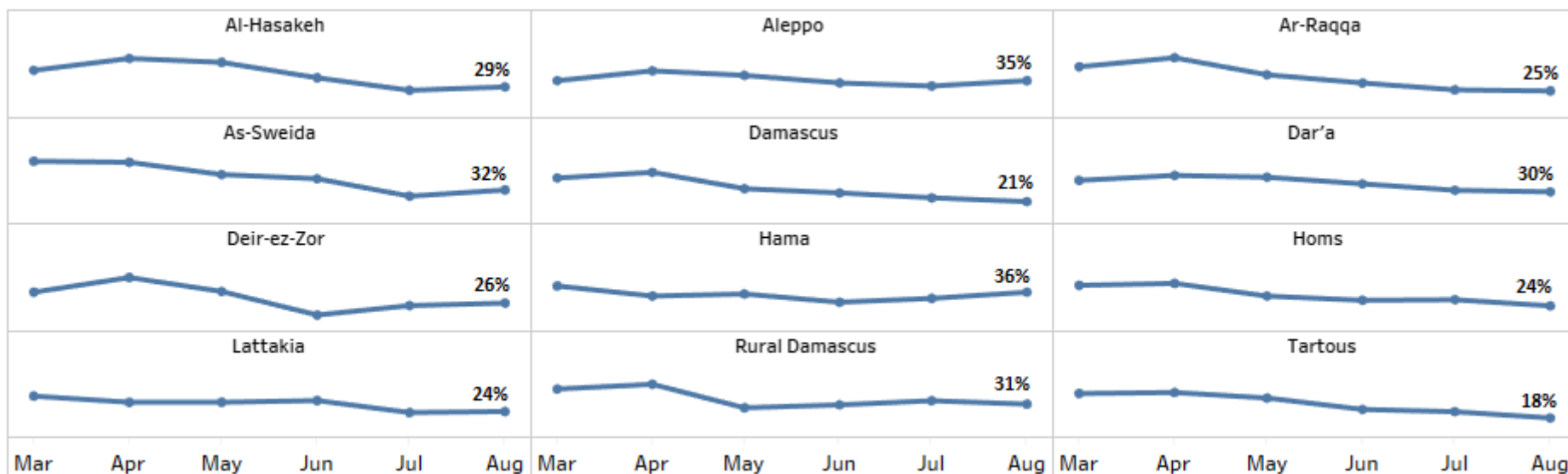
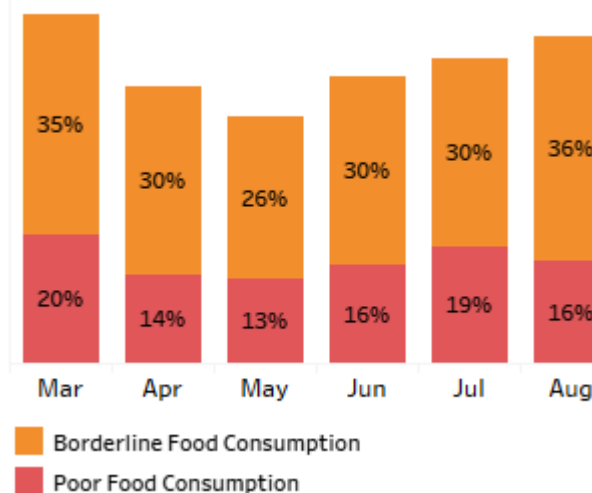
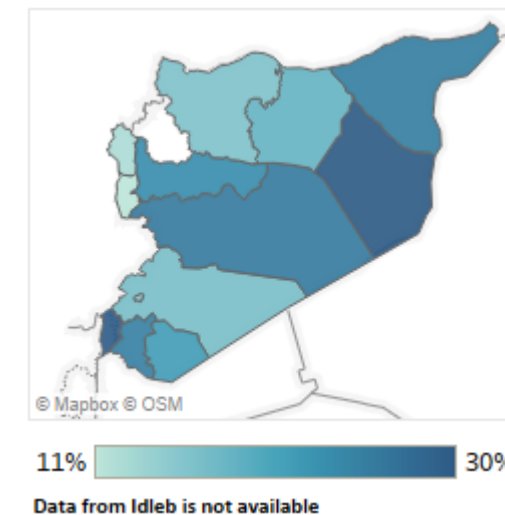


Fig9: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption who reported having lost their main income source



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



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

