

Situation Overview

- In September, COVID-19 cases continued to spread across Syria at an alarming rate. As of 30 September 2021, a total of 34,205 COVID-19 cases, including 2,247 fatalities, were confirmed by the Minister of Health in government-controlled areas. The monthly increase in COVID-19 cases in September (6,290 cases) signals a dramatic upward trend compared to August 2021 (1,952 cases) and represents the highest monthly caseload since the beginning of the pandemic. Nevertheless, schools were re-opened in early September and around 150 COVID-19 cases were recorded during the first two weeks of the scholastic year. In September 2021, around 28,073 COVID-19 cases were reported across northeast Syria, an increase of 7,462 new cases compared to the previous month, representing the highest monthly caseload since the start of the pandemic. In response, the Kurdish authorities imposed a lockdown in Kurdish-controlled areas across northeast Syria in late September. In opposition-held areas in northwest Syria, the epidemiological situation has also deteriorated. Approximately 73,455 COVID-19 cases were reported in northwest Syria by the end of September, an increase of 34,184 new cases compared to the previous month and representing the highest monthly caseload since the start of the pandemic. As a result, hospital intensive care units were full and COVID-19 centers reported an over 95 percent occupancy rate in northwest Syria. These findings generally highlight grave concerns nationwide on the spread of the virus especially as colder winter months approach. Simultaneously, as of 22 September 2021, around 448,399 people were vaccinated in government-controlled areas and northeast Syria, in addition to 119,158 people across northwest Syria. As a result, vaccination coverage stood at three percent of Syria’s total population (21.2 million people).
- The general security situation remained volatile in September. Intensified hostilities were reported in northwest Syria, with shelling largely concentrated in southern Idlib and northern Aleppo. On 14 September, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Syria indicated that “the Syrian Arab Republic does not yet offer a safe and stable environment for sustainable and dignified returns of refugees, nor for the 6.7 million displaced persons inside the country”. Furthermore, in the light of the economic crisis, food insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission recommended to remove all obstacles to humanitarian aid, including those unintentionally caused by the sanctions. In southern Syria, the security situation in Dar’a Al-Balad (in Dar’a governorate) has reportedly stabilized, following the 9 September ceasefire agreement between the Government of Syria and the Dar’a Central Committee. As of 21 September 2021, approximately 28,000 of the 36,000 IDPs from Dar’a Al-Balad and other areas returned to their homestead. Moreover, on 6 September, Sijneh and Saraya crossing points, main humanitarian corridors between Dar’a Al Balad and Dar’a city, were reportedly re-opened. Moreover, the Dar’a al Balad and Tishreen bakeries have also resumed operations after two months of being closed due to the tense situation in Dar’a.
- On 8 September 2021, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon set a roadmap to deliver Egyptian gas to Lebanon through the Arab Gas Pipeline, which is set to pass through Jordan and Syria. On 11 September 2021, the Syrian Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources announced that Syria would obtain quantities of gas in exchange for allowing passage of the gas through its country, hereby benefiting Syria in increased electric power generation. On 16 September 2021, the Syrian Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade stated that as of July 2021, Syria’s monthly exports amounted to approximately 57 million Euros, representing an increase of five million Euros compared to the same period in the previous year.
- In September 2021, WFP delivered general food assistance to approximately 4.7 million people across Syria in order to meet the growing humanitarian needs nationwide. Moreover, WFP dispatched food rations to 172,825 people in Dar’a governorate, including 36,325 returnees to Dar’a Al-Balad. Tishreen Bakery and the Dar’a Al-Balad Bakery, which benefitted from WFP rehabilitation, both of which have resumed operations on 13 September.

Sources: [OCHA | Hostilities in Dar’a Governorate](#) , [COAR | Syria Update September 2021](#) , [Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria Report](#) , [SANA | Syria’s Exports as of July 2021](#)



Key Points

- Close to half of the interviewed households (47 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption in September 2021, representing the second highest food insecurity level recorded since November 2020.
- In order to deal with insufficient food stocks, 49 percent of surveyed households reported reducing food consumption by adult members to prioritize their children’s food consumption needs.
- Nearly two out five interviewed households (37 percent) reported facing difficulties in reaching markets, an increase of 13 percentage points year-on-year and marking the highest level recorded since April 2020.
- From interviews conducted in September, 65 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.

Key Characteristics

1,412

Households Surveyed

11%

Female Headed Households

16%

Stay as Guests

25%

Displaced Households

Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via live telephone interviews in September 2021 from households in locations across Syria. The phone numbers were generated using random-digit dialing. In September 2021, data was collected from a sample of 1,412 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.

For Further Information

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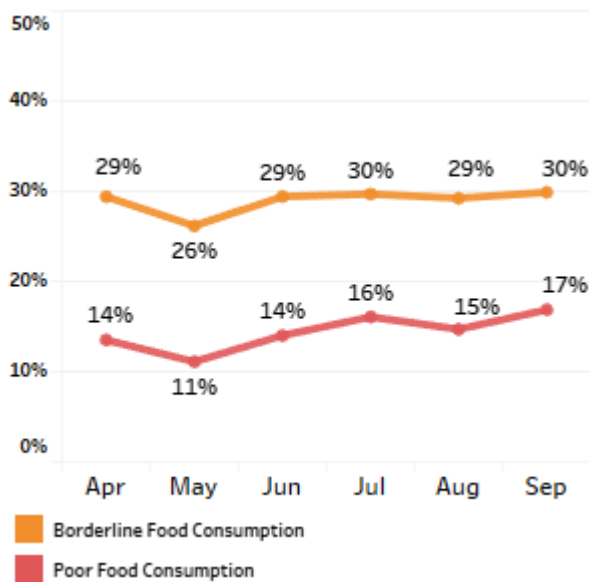
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Food Consumption

- In September 2021, close to half of the surveyed households (47 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption in Syria, representing the second highest food insecurity level recorded since November 2020. The national average rate of inadequate food consumption (poor and borderline combined) increased by seven percent from August 2021; it however decreased by 13 percent since September 2020. This yearly drop was mainly driven by the decrease in households reporting borderline levels of food consumption by six percentage points year-on-year. It is worth noting that the inadequate food consumption level in September 2020 (54 percent) was the highest rate recorded throughout the period from January 2019 till September 2021. Moreover, around 17 percent of interviewed households across Syria who had been reporting borderline food consumption in previous rounds of the survey since April 2021, reported poor food consumption in September 2021. This deterioration highlights an unfolding worsening trend in the food security situation countrywide over the past six months.
- Broken down by governorate, in September 2021, the highest proportion of households with poor or borderline food consumption was recorded in Aleppo, with nearly two-thirds of interviewed households (65 percent) reporting inadequate food consumption, representing a nine percentage points increase month-on-month. The greatest monthly increase of surveyed households with poor or borderline food consumption was detected in Damascus (up by 12 percentage points) and Lattakia (up by 10 percentage points), reaching 45 percent and 52 percent, respectively, in September 2021. On the other hand, As-Sweida (27 percent) recorded the lowest level of inadequate food consumption in September 2021, which however witnessed a four percentage points increase from a month earlier.
- During the reporting period, 17 percent of surveyed households in Syria reported poor food consumption, up by two percentage points from August 2021 and representing the highest national average level recorded since April 2021. This trend was much higher in Al-Hasakeh (29 percent), an increase of seven percentage points month-on-month, followed by Ar-Raqqa (24 percent). Also, in Dar'a governorate, 14 percent of interviewed households reported poor food consumption, marking almost double the level recorded a month earlier.
- Food insecurity also worsened among vulnerable groups. In September 2021, more than half of female-headed households (54 percent) indicated poor or borderline food consumption, an increase of 10 percent month-on-month, compared to 46 percent of male-headed households. According to residency status, 54 percent of returnees and 53 percent of IDPs reported inadequate food consumption in September, compared to 43 percent of residents.

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 September 2021

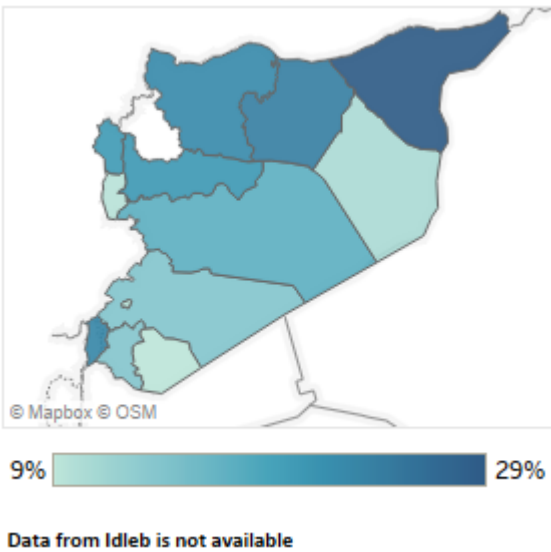


Fig2: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption in the last six months by governorate

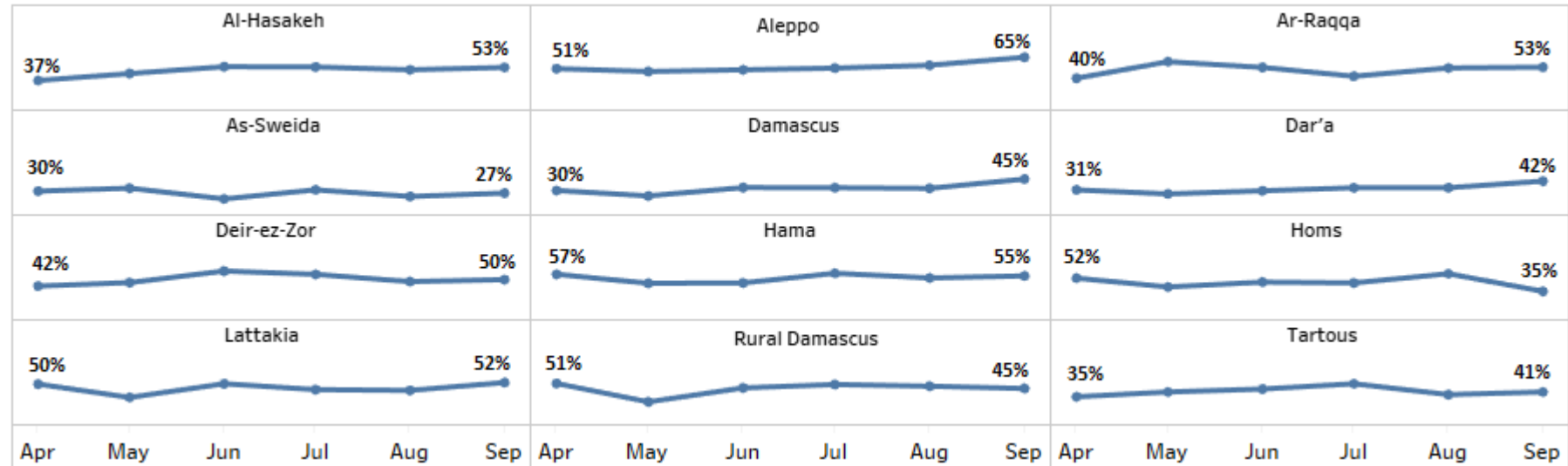
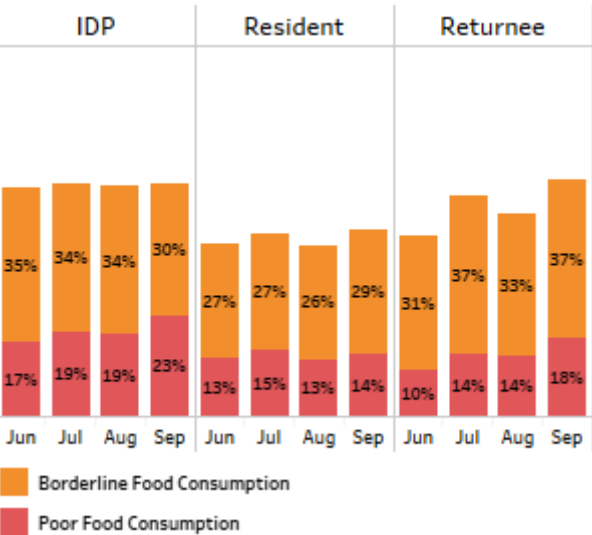


Fig3: Percent of households reporting poor and borderline food consumption according to displacement status





Coping Strategies

- Between August and September 2021, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) increased from 18.2 to 20.1, representing the highest national average level recorded since May 2021. In September 2021, nine out of ten interviewed households in Syria (90 percent) reported applying at least one food-based coping mechanism to deal with insufficient food stocks to meet their food consumption needs, marking a three percentage points increase year-on-year. This trend was higher among female-headed households (94 percent) compared to male-headed households (89 percent).
- In September 2021, consuming less preferred or less expensive food was the most widely adopted negative food coping strategy by surveyed households (70 percent), with a six percent increase year-on-year. The reported adoption of this strategy was highest in Deir-ez-Zor (78 percent) and Al-Hasakeh (76 percent). In addition, 58 percent of interviewed households nationwide indicated a reduction in the number of meals consumed per day, with a wide share recorded among female-headed households (65 percent) compared to male-headed households (57 percent). Moreover, to meet food shortages, 49 percent of surveyed households reported reducing food consumption by adult members to prioritize their children's food consumption needs, with a higher proportion among returnees (57 percent) and IDPs (56 percent) compared to residents (44 percent).
- In line with the deterioration of the food consumption trend, the adoption of food-based coping strategies continued to worsen among vulnerable groups. The average rCSI was highest among IDPs and returnees. In September 2021, 94 percent of IDPs and 92 percent of returnees reported adopting at least one food-based coping strategy to cover their essential food needs amid the consistent economic downturn, compared to 88 percent of residents.
- As a result of the consistently increasing food prices nationwide and the continued degradation of household coping capacity, more than four out of five interviewed households in Syria (84 percent) reported having already depleted their savings. The further erosion of the purchasing power pushed 71 percent of surveyed households to buy food on credit (representing an increase of nine percent year-on-year), with a higher proportion recorded in Quneitra (89 percent) and Al-Hasakeh (80 percent). The reported adoption of this strategy was most common among IDPs (78 percent) and returnees (70 percent), while it remained very high also among residents (69 percent). This generally outlines the worsening economic conditions for all population groups in Syria and signals an upward trend in peoples' reliance on debts to finance their food purchases. Additionally, child labor and early school dropouts were reported among the coping strategies adopted by the interviewed households. Around 15 percent of surveyed households across Syria reported taking children of the mandatory education age out of school to have them contribute to income generating activities.

Fig5: rCSI average by governorate over the last six months

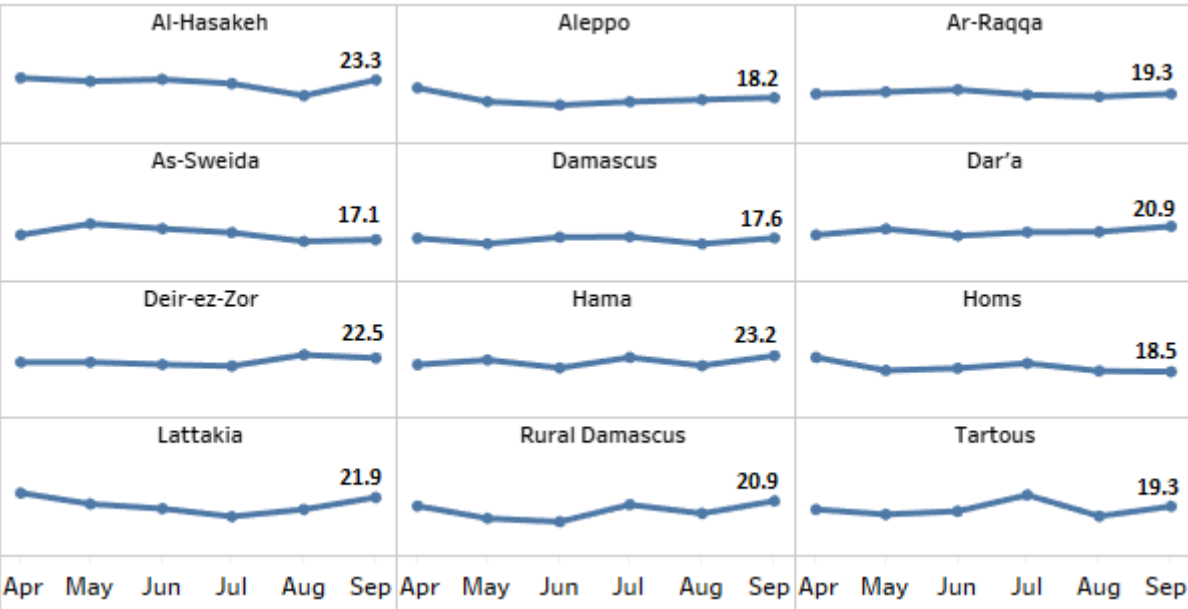
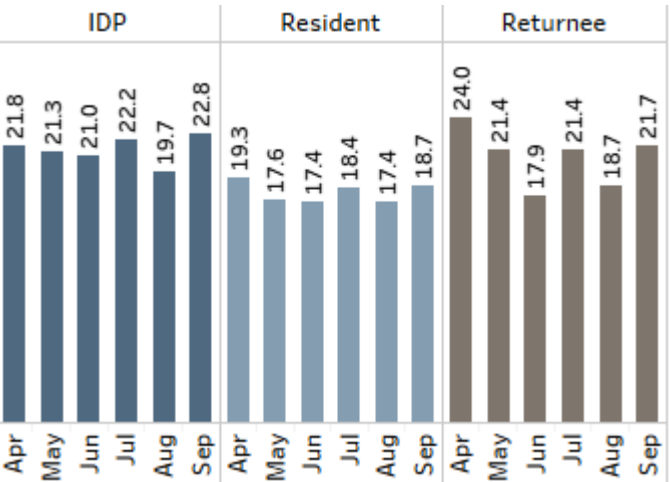


Fig4: rCSI average over the last six months according to displacement status



Map2: Percent of households restricting adult food consumption in September 2021

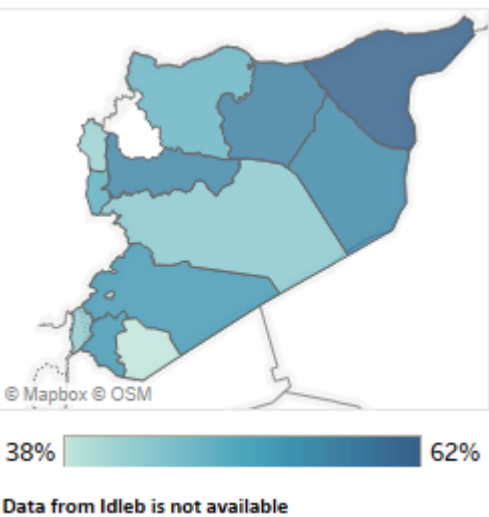


Fig6: Overall percent of households by adopted coping strategy over the past six months

		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Male	Less Expensive Food	72%	71%	68%	69%	68%	70%
	Reduce Number of Meals	54%	48%	52%	56%	57%	57%
	Limit Portion Size	51%	50%	45%	50%	49%	50%
	Restrict Consumption	49%	45%	44%	48%	45%	49%
	Borrow Food	48%	48%	45%	45%	43%	47%
Female	Less Expensive Food	74%	76%	74%	77%	68%	70%
	Reduce Number of Meals	57%	59%	65%	68%	56%	65%
	Limit Portion Size	54%	55%	54%	61%	46%	51%
	Restrict Consumption	42%	48%	42%	50%	38%	44%
	Borrow Food	49%	59%	52%	54%	51%	51%



COVID-19 Situation Overview I

- The COVID-19 situation has evolved rapidly across Syria. The compounding impact of the pandemic outbreak has led to a significant expansion in multi-sector needs, spurring further deterioration of the general food security situation, as well as the potential for the healthcare capacity being further compromised.
- Syrian households continued to grapple with challenges to access markets. A problem that has been exacerbated by the ongoing fuel and electricity shortages experienced across the country, as well as the surge of the COVID-19 pandemic during August and September. During the reporting period, nearly two out of five interviewed households (37 percent) indicated facing difficulties in reaching markets, an increase of three percentage points from August 2021 and by 13 percentage points year-on-year, marking the highest national average level recorded since April 2020. This trend was more pronounced in Homs (49 percent) and Deir-ez-Zor (47 percent), up by 17 and nine percentage points respectively from a month earlier. The reduced access to markets in Deir-ez-Zor was heavily impacted by the imposed curfew in northeast Syria during late September. From interviews conducted in September 2021, more than half of the surveyed households with no regular access to markets nationwide (51 percent) had poor or borderline food consumption. Furthermore, in September 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 Dar'a (12 percent), Al-Hasakeh (11 percent) and Ar-Raqqa (10 percent).
- Health needs in Syria are significant and the continued increase of COVID-19 cases has further aggravated the immense healthcare needs. In September 2021, one out of five interviewed households in Syria (20 percent) indicated facing challenges in accessing medical care facilities, an increase of eight percentage points from the level of September 2020, with a higher proportion recorded among female-headed households (28 percent) compared to male-headed households (19 percent). This trend was more pronounced in Ar-Raqqa (37 percent) and Al-Hasakeh (35 percent). In Hama governorate, five percent of surveyed households reported not having access to healthcare services since the hospitals had reached their full acceptance capacity. Additionally, 41 percent of interviewed households in Syria reported not being able to purchase the necessary medicines in September 2021, mainly due to a lack of financial resources (76 percent) and a shortage of medicines in pharmacies (17 percent). Furthermore, COVID-19 vaccination intentions were high countrywide, with 65 percent of surveyed households indicating their intent to have all household members vaccinated, were the COVID-19 vaccine made available to them free of charge.

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

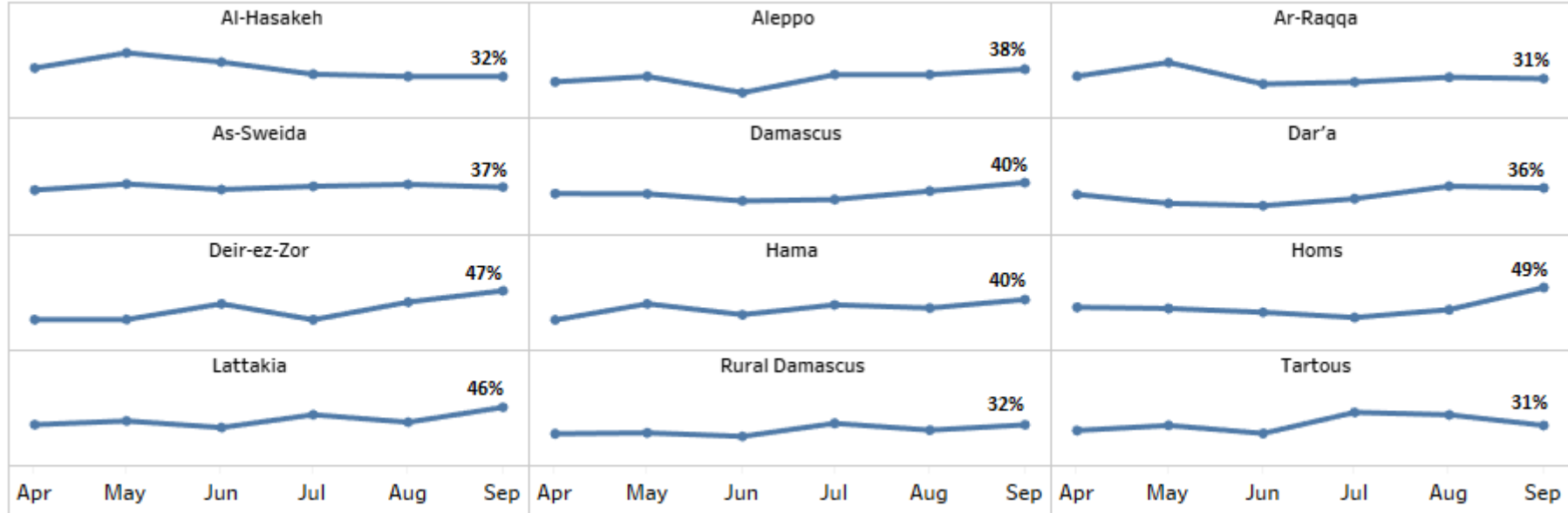
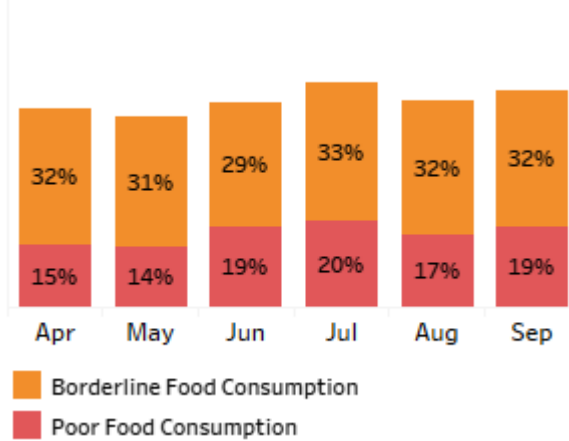
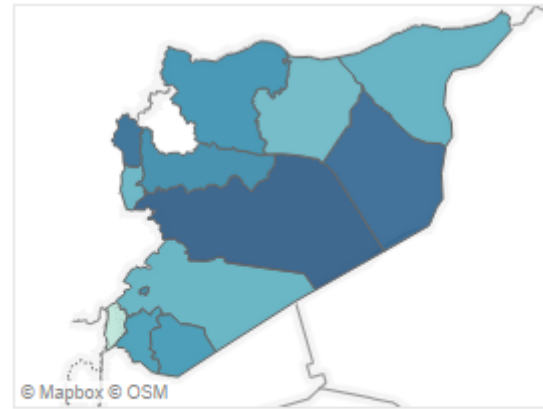


Fig7: Share of households with inadequate food consumption who reported facing difficulties in accessing markets



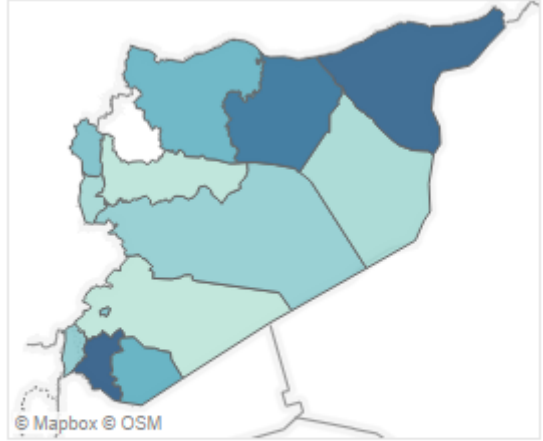
Map3: Percent of households facing challenges to access markets by governorate in September 2021



20% 49%

Data from Idleb is not available

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



1% 12%

Data from Idleb is not available



COVID-19 Situation Overview II

- In light of the worsening socio-economic situation and the high price of commodities nationwide, Syrian households continued facing difficulties in sustaining livelihood opportunities. In September 2021, one out of four interviewed households in Syria (25 percent) indicated that they had lost one or more sources of income over the past month, with a higher proportion recorded among IDPs (29 percent) and returnees (24 percent) compared to residents (23 percent). This was the case even among interviewed breadwinners countrywide who had a university degree (18 percent). Moreover, 16 percent of surveyed households across Syria reported having lost more than half of their monthly income in September 2021, with peaks recorded in Dar'a (21 percent) and Ar-Raqqa (21 percent).
- The lack of access to households' sources of income were reportedly due to different factors. In September 2021, more than two out of five interviewed households in Syria (43 percent) reported a reduction of revenues from business activities or agricultural sales, with a higher proportion recorded among male-headed households (46 percent) compared to female-headed households (23 percent). During the reporting period, 33 percent of surveyed households nationwide reported having been impacted by a reduction in working hours and thus receiving a partial salary. This trend was higher in Dar'a (38 percent), marking a 10 percentage points increase month-on-month, followed by Ar-Raqqa (38 percent). Furthermore, 19 percent of interviewed households in September indicated job lay-offs, up by three percentage points month-on-month, with a peak recorded in Deir-ez-Zor (30 percent).
- At the governorate level, in September 2021, Quneitra (34 percent), Ar-Raqqa (34 percent) and As-Sweida (31 percent) recorded the highest proportion of surveyed households having lost one or more sources of income over the past month. Nearly one out of five interviewed households (20 percent) among respondents in each of Quneitra and As-Sweida lost more than half of their September income. Meanwhile, to cope with the shortfall of households' income while prices remained high, 19 percent of surveyed households nationwide reported having been pushed to work more than one full-time job over the past month.
- Loss of employment opportunities as well as income generating activities have a negative ripple effect on households' food security situation. In September 2021, more than half of the surveyed households across Syria (54 percent) who reported losses of income also reported inadequate food consumption. Moreover, 97 percent of these respondents indicated having relied on at least one food-based coping strategy in September.

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

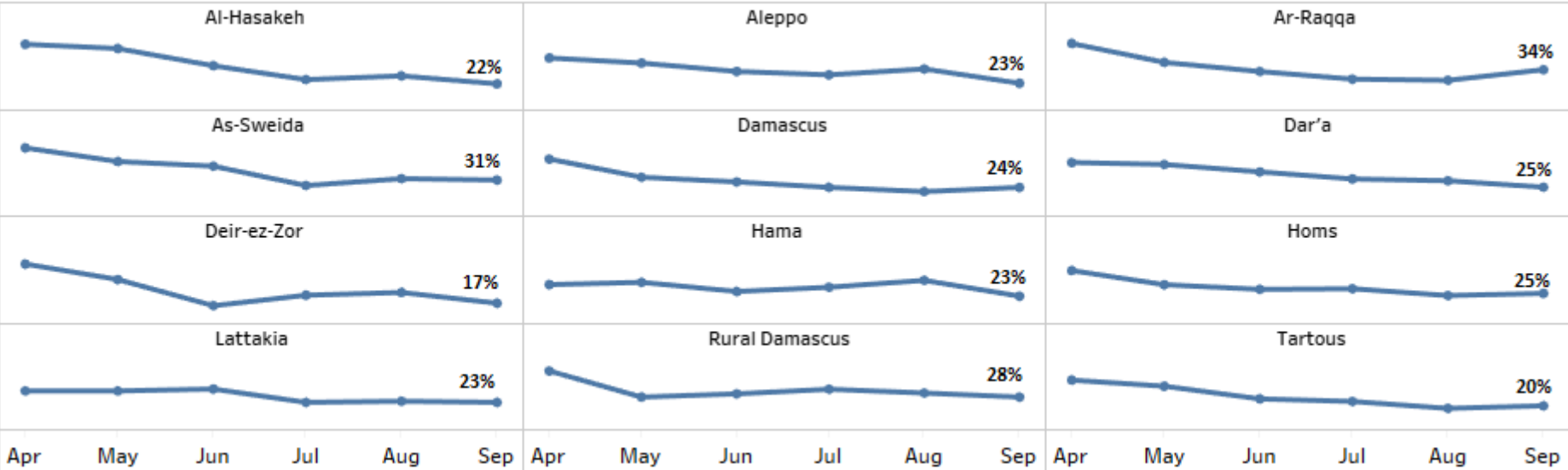
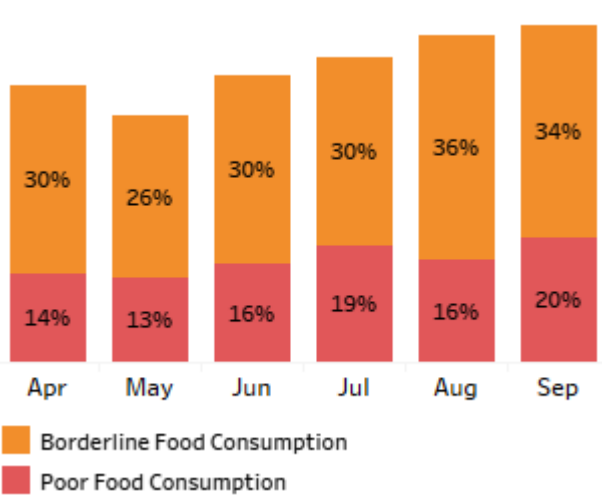
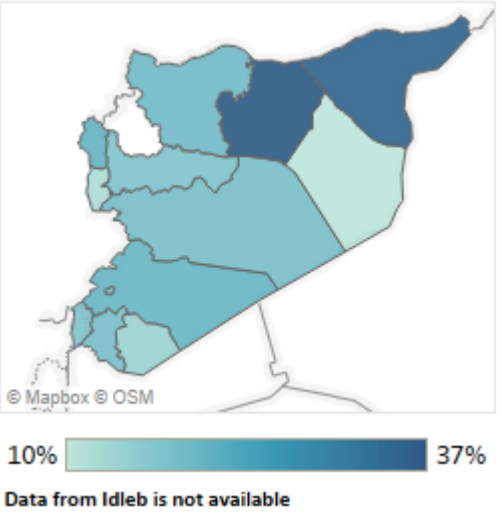


Fig9: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption who reported having lost their main income source



Map5: Percent of households facing challenges to access medical services in September 2021



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

