

Situation Overview

- In October, COVID-19 cases continued to spread across Syria at an alarming rate. As of 31 October 2021, a total of 43,146 COVID-19 cases, including 2,558 fatalities, were confirmed by the Minister of Health in government-controlled areas. The monthly increase in COVID-19 cases in October (8,941 cases) signals an upward trend compared to September 2021 (6,290 cases) and represents the highest monthly caseload since the beginning of the pandemic. As a result, the Syrian Government opened all healthcare centers across the governorates to provide the COVID-19 vaccination and allocated medical teams to visit ministries and public authorities to vaccinate the employees. In October 2021, around 35,513 COVID-19 cases were reported across northeast Syria, an increase of 7,440 new cases compared to the previous month, representing the second highest monthly caseload since the start of the pandemic. In response, the Kurdish authorities extended the imposed lockdown in Kurdish-controlled areas across northeast Syria throughout most of October. In opposition-held areas in northwest Syria, approximately 88,423 COVID-19 cases were reported by the end of October, an increase of 14,968 new cases compared to the previous month and representing the second highest monthly caseload since the start of the pandemic. On the other hand, as of 31 October 2021, a total of 503,394 people were reportedly fully vaccinated, representing around 2.3 percent of Syria's total population (21.7 million people) and an increase of 182,118 vaccinated people compared to a month earlier. These findings highlight concerns of a potential increase in the COVID-19 infection rate nationwide.
- The fuel shortage crisis continued to worsen across Syria. On 23 October, the Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection (MoITCP) increased the price of subsidized industrial and commercial diesel from SYP 750/liter to SYP 1,700/liter for private industrial facilities and private commercial and service activities. Moreover, as a result of the skyrocketing butane gas prices in the informal markets, on 24 October, MoITCP set the price of domestic and industrial butane gas cylinders for consumers and all sectors outside the electronic card at SYP 30,600/10 kg and SYP 49,000/16 kg, respectively. This decision would not affect the price of subsidized butane gas sold through the electronic card. Simultaneously, on 3 October, the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade announced the establishment of a solar power plant in Rural Damascus to provide 300 megawatts of power. On 19 October, a presidential Decree was issued to establish a fund to support renewable energies, raise energy efficiency and reduce the consumption of fuel and electric energy used in the main sectors.
- The general security situation remained volatile in October. Intensified hostilities were reported in northern Aleppo, concentrated in Tall Refaat and the nearby communities, resulting in a displacement of over 1,327 people from this area between 15 and 24 October. Also, on 20 October, a military housing corporation transport bus was targeted by an improvised explosive device (IED) attack in central Damascus, near to the country's military command and hotels used by international humanitarian organizations.
- The United Nations has sounded the alarm over the recent water crisis and drought-like conditions affecting Syria, coupled with existing damage and neglect of farmlands and irrigation systems as a result of a decade of crisis. Around 40 percent of the irrigated agricultural areas are no longer able to rely on availability of water. Wheat production throughout 2021 was estimated at around 1.05 million tons, down from 2.8 million in 2020, and only a quarter of the pre-crisis average of 4.1 million tons (from 2002 to 2011). The estimated harvested barley area (352,000 hectares) decreased by 75 percent from the last year, and the rainfed barley production in 2021 reached around 268,000 tons. Furthermore, on 19 October, the Syrian Government announced its initial budget projection for 2022, which was estimated at SYP 13,325 billion (an increase of around 57 percent from last year's budget projection of SYP 8,500 billion). The budget of 2022 allocates around SYP 5,529 billion to the state's social support and subsidy programmes.

Sources: [UN Statement | Syria October 2021](#), [COAR | Syria Update October 2021](#), [FAO | Crop Production in Syria](#), [SANA | Fuel Update in October 2021](#)



Key Points

- More than half of the interviewed households (52 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption in October 2021, representing the highest food insecurity level recorded since October 2020.
- During the reporting period, the national average consumption rate of animal-source protein was less than twice a week (average of 1.4 times per week), representing the lowest level recorded since October 2020.
- Overall 73 percent of surveyed households indicated that they bought food on credit, an increase of 11 percent year-on-year, marking the highest national average level recorded since January 2019.
- In October 2021, more than a third of interviewed households (36 percent) reported facing difficulties in reaching markets, an increase of 10 percentage points year-on-year and marking the second highest level recorded since April 2020.

For Further Information

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Key Characteristics



1,457
Households Surveyed



12%
Female Headed Households



17%
Stay as Guests



26%
Displaced Households

Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via live telephone interviews in October 2021 from households in locations across Syria. The phone numbers were generated using random-digit dialing. In October 2021, data was collected from a sample of 1,457 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.

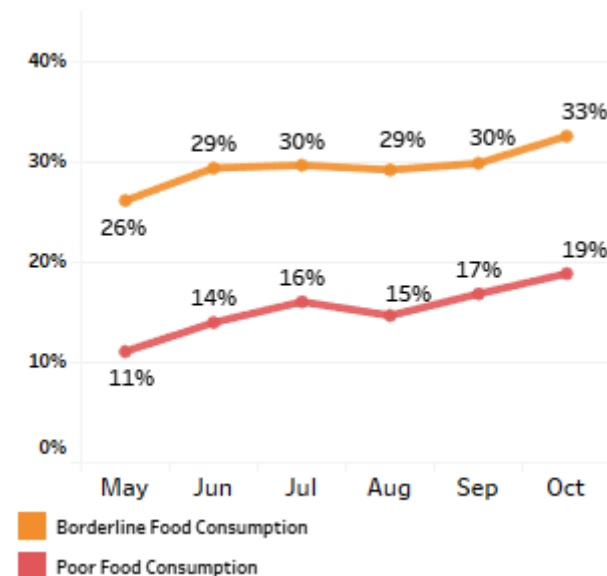




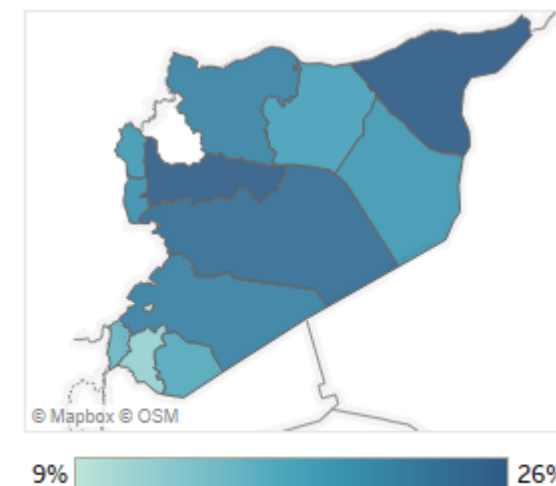
Food Consumption

- In October 2021, more than half of the surveyed households (52 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption in Syria, representing the highest food insecurity level recorded since October 2020 and the second highest level throughout the period from January 2019 till October 2021. The national average rate of inadequate food consumption (poor and borderline combined) increased by 11 percent from September 2021 and by six percent compared to October 2020. The continued deterioration of food security in Syria is largely induced by a decade of conflict and the ongoing economic decline compounded by a crippling fuel shortage, unilateral coercive measures on the country and the continued financial crisis in Lebanon.
- Broken down by governorate, in October 2021, the highest proportion of households with poor or borderline food consumption was recorded in Hama, with seven out of ten interviewed households (70 percent) reporting inadequate food consumption, representing a 16 percentage points increase from a month earlier, followed by Aleppo (65 percent). The greatest monthly increase of surveyed households with poor or borderline food consumption was detected in Homs (up by 17 percentage points), reaching 53 percent in October 2021. On the other hand, As-Sweida (32 percent) recorded the lowest level of inadequate food consumption this month, which nevertheless witnessed an increase by five percentage points compared to September 2021.
- During the reporting period, 19 percent of surveyed households in Syria reported poor food consumption, up by two percentage points from September 2021 and representing the highest national average level recorded since January 2019. This trend was much higher in Hama (26 percent), an increase of five percentage points month-on-month, followed by Al-Hasakeh (26 percent). The highest monthly increase of interviewed households reporting poor food consumption was recorded in Tartous (up by 10 percentage points), reaching 19 percent in October 2021.
- Food insecurity also worsened among vulnerable groups. In October 2021, two-thirds of female-headed households (66 percent) indicated poor or borderline food consumption, an increase of 12 percentage points month-on-month. In comparison, 50 percent of male-headed households reported poor or borderline food consumption in October 2021. According to residency status, 61 percent of IDPs and 57 percent of returnees reported inadequate food consumption in October, compared to 46 percent of residents.
- Furthermore, insufficient consumption of protein-rich food items continued to be reported across Syria. In October 2021, the national average consumption rate of animal-source protein was less than twice a week (average of 1.4 times per week), representing the lowest level recorded since October 2020. This trend was more evident among households with inadequate food consumption, as they reported consuming animal-source protein less than once a week (average of 0.7 times per week).

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 October 2021



Data from Idleb is not available

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

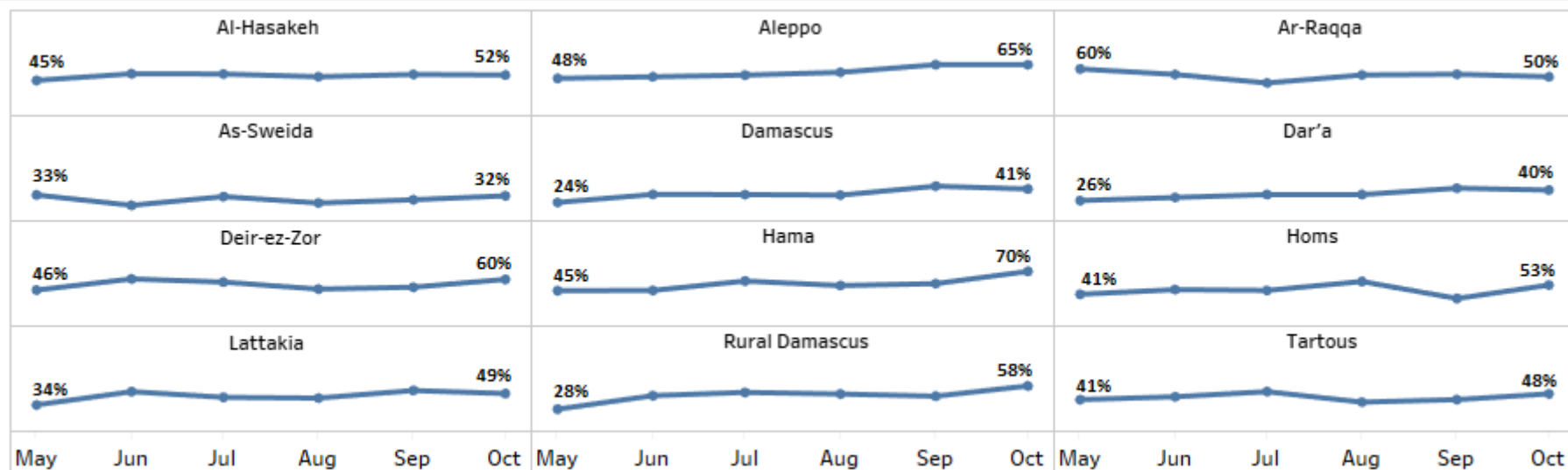
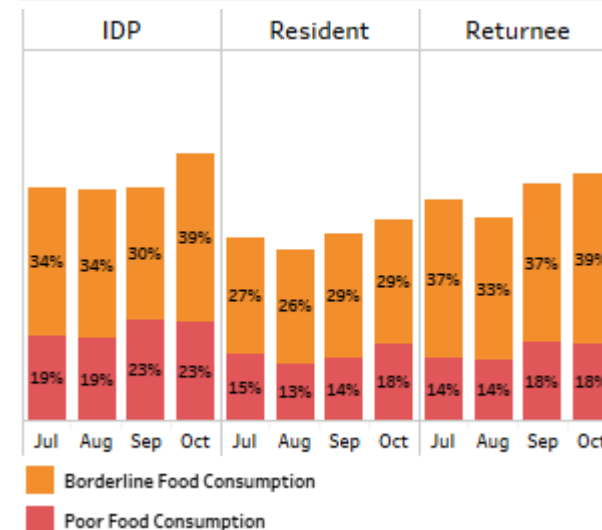


Fig3: Percent of households reporting poor and borderline food consumption according to displacement status





Coping Strategies

- Between September and October 2021, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) increased from 20.1 to 20.5, representing the highest national average level recorded since May 2021. In October 2021, more than nine out of ten interviewed households in Syria (91 percent) reported applying at least one food-based coping mechanism to meet their food consumption needs, marking an increase of eight percent year-on-year. This trend was higher among female-headed households (96 percent) compared to male-headed households (90 percent).
- The high price of commodities and the continued erosion of households' coping ability have led many families to adopt further food-based coping strategies. In October 2021, 72 percent of surveyed households reported relying on less preferred or less expensive food, up by 13 percent from October 2020, with peaks recorded in Homs (84 percent) and Hama (78 percent). Approximately three out of five interviewed households in Syria (59 percent) indicated a reduction in the number of meals consumed per day, an increase of nine percent year-on-year, with a wider share recorded among female-headed households (67 percent) compared to male-headed households (58 percent). Moreover, to cope with food shortages amid the dire economic living conditions, 49 percent of surveyed households reported reducing food consumption by adult members to prioritize their children's food consumption needs, representing an increase of seven percent since October 2020, with a higher proportion among returnees (56 percent) and IDPs (53 percent) compared to residents (46 percent).
- In line with the deteriorating food consumption trend, the adoption of food-based coping strategies remained heavily employed among vulnerable groups. The average rCSI was highest among IDPs and returnees. In September 2021, 95 percent of IDPs and 93 percent of returnees reported adopting at least one food-based coping strategy to deal with insufficient food stocks and source their essential food needs, compared to 88 percent of residents.
- The further erosion of households' purchasing power and the widespread loss of livelihoods pushed more than seven out of ten interviewed households (73 percent) to buy food on credit (up by 11 percent year-on-year), marking the highest national average level recorded since January 2019. This trend was more pronounced in Quneitra (91 percent) and Deir-ez-Zor (81 percent). These findings signal an upward trend in peoples' reliance on debt to finance their food purchases. Furthermore, relying on child labor as a coping strategy for lack of food has become more prominent among Syrian households over time. In October 2021, 14 percent of surveyed households nationwide indicated taking children of mandatory education age out of school and having them work instead in order to have them contribute to the household's income.

Fig5: rCSI average by governorate over the last six months

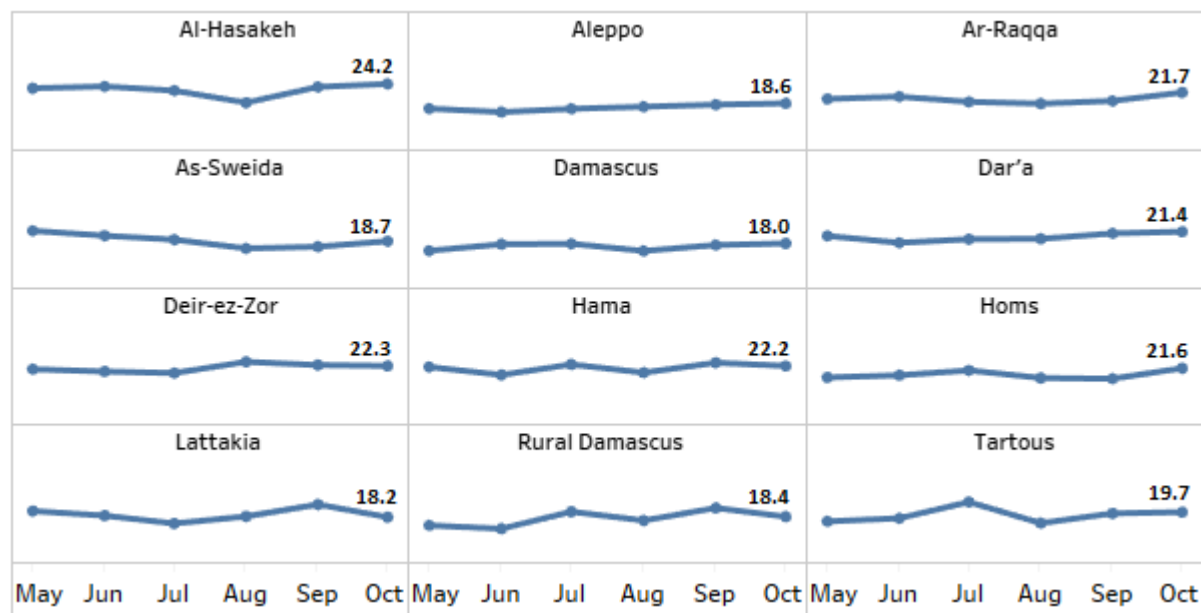
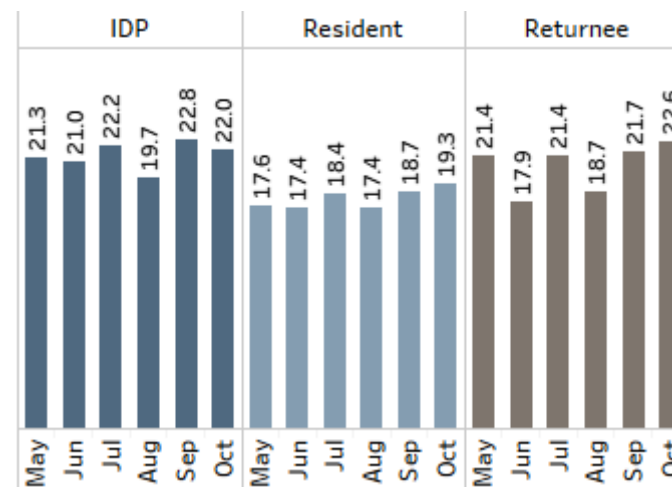
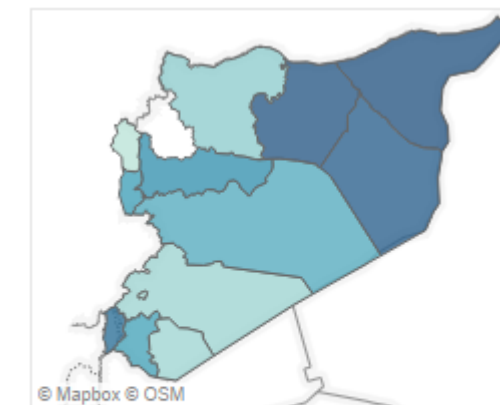


Fig4: rCSI average over the last six months according to displacement status



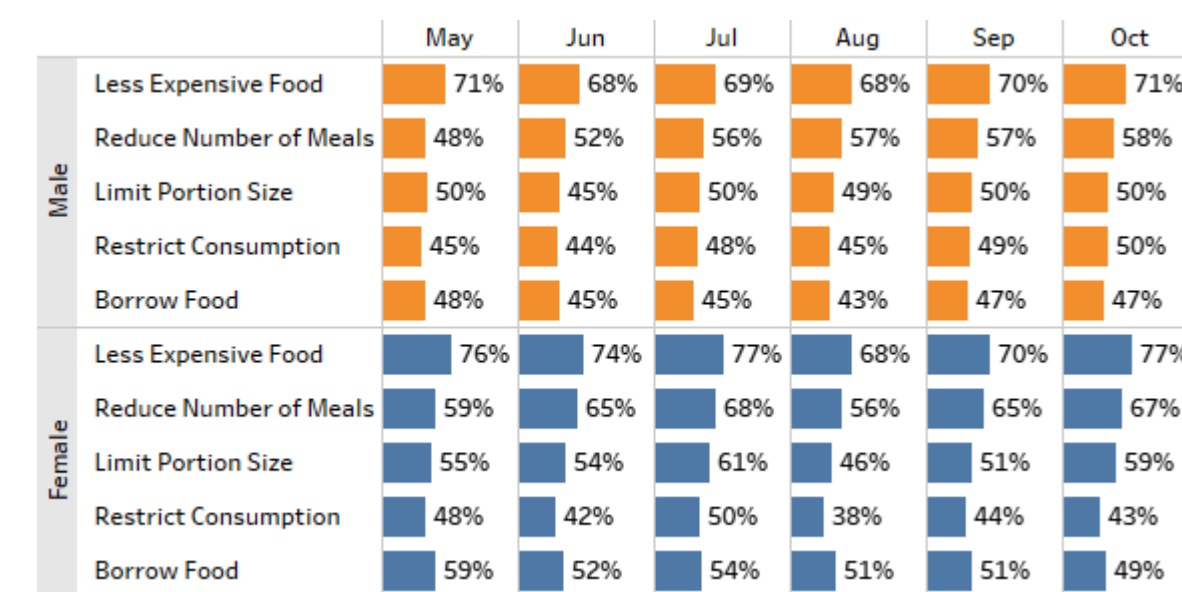
Map2: Percent of households restricting adult food consumption in October 2021



40% 62%

Data from Idleb is not available

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

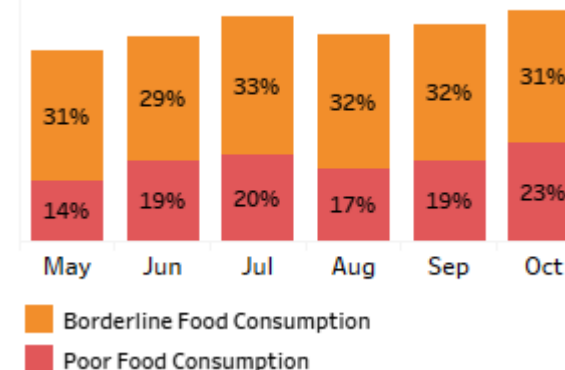




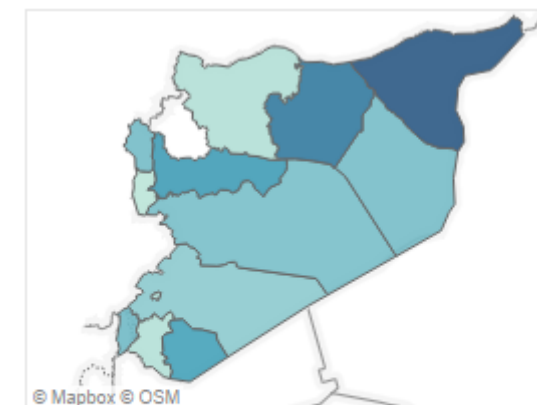
Access to Services and Income Sources I

- The COVID-19 situation has significantly worsened across Syria during September and October. The compounding impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is intertwined with the ongoing economic meltdown, hereby undermining the Syrian livelihoods and further exacerbating the acute humanitarian needs countrywide.
- During the reporting period, more than a third of interviewed households (36 percent) indicated facing difficulties in reaching markets, an increase of 10 percentage points from October 2020, marking the second highest national average level recorded since April 2020. The plight of accessing markets has been exacerbated by the ongoing fuel and electricity shortages experienced across the country, as well as the surge of the COVID-19 pandemic. This trend was more pronounced in Al-Hasakeh (52 percent) and Ar-Raqqa (47 percent), up by 20 and 16 percentage points respectively from a month earlier. The limiting access to markets in Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa was heavily impacted by the imposed curfew in northeast Syria during most of October. These findings generally highlight nationwide food access concerns. From interviews conducted in October 2021, more than half of the surveyed households with no regular access to markets nationwide (54 percent) had poor or borderline food consumption. Furthermore, in October 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 Ar-Raqqa (10 percent), Aleppo (nine percent) and Al-Hasakeh (eight percent).
- The COVID-19 outbreak has added further strain on Syria's healthcare system. In October 2021, nearly one out of five interviewed households in Syria (19 percent) indicated facing challenges in accessing medical care facilities, with a higher proportion recorded among IDPs (22 percent) and returnees (22 percent) compared to residents (17 percent). The lack of access to hospitals and healthcare services was more pronounced in Al-Hasakeh (32 percent), Ar-Raqqa (31 percent) and Dar'a (23 percent). These findings point to a nationwide health concern given that 16 percent of surveyed households have elderly members with chronic diseases. Additionally, 40 percent of interviewed households in Syria reported not being able to purchase the necessary medicines in October 2021, mainly due to a lack of financial resources (77 percent) and a shortage of medicines in pharmacies (18 percent). Furthermore, as the COVID-19 vaccinations are underway, 62 percent of surveyed households countrywide reported their intent to have all household members vaccinated were the COVID-19 vaccine be provided free of charge, while around 23 percent of respondents indicated unwillingness to get vaccinated. From interviews conducted in October 2021, nearly seven percent of surveyed households in Syria reported having already been vaccinated, compared to four percent in September 2021.

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



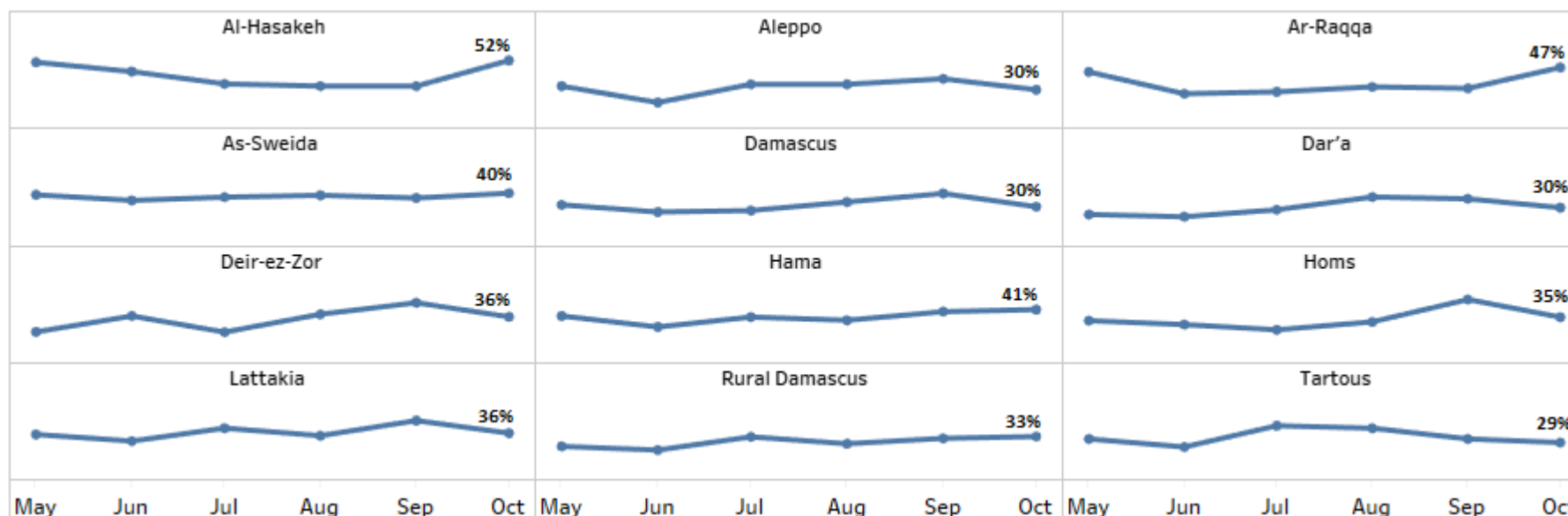
Map3: Percent of households facing challenges to access markets by governorate in October 2021



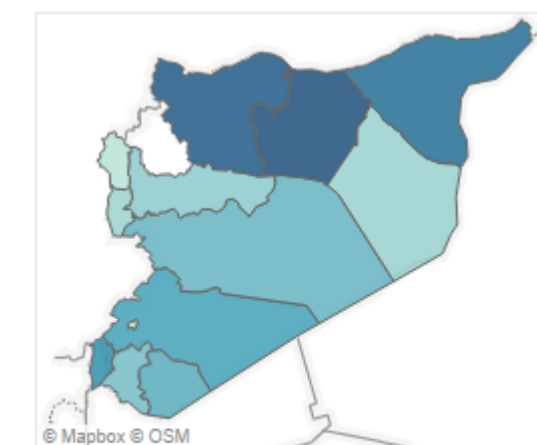
29% 52%

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 October 2021



2% 10%

Data from Idleb is not available



Access to Services and Income Sources II

- Syrian households continued to grapple with challenges to sustain income generating activities, while prices remained high and households' coping capacity was further eroded. In October 2021, more than one out of four interviewed households in Syria (26 percent) indicated that they had lost one or more sources of income over the past month, with a higher proportion recorded among IDPs (32 percent) and returnees (25 percent) compared to residents (24 percent). This was the case even among interviewed breadwinners countrywide who had a university degree (23 percent). Furthermore, 19 percent of surveyed households across Syria reported having lost more than half of their monthly income in October 2021, with peaks recorded in Al-Hasakeh (25 percent) and Ar-Raqqa (24 percent).
- In October 2021, more than two out of five interviewed households in Syria (42 percent) reported a reduction of revenues from business activities or agricultural sales, with a higher proportion recorded among male-headed households (42 percent) compared to female-headed households (34 percent). During the reporting period, 39 percent of surveyed households nationwide reported having been impacted by a reduction in working hours and thus receiving a partial salary, marking an increase of six percentage points compared to September 2021. This trend was higher in Ar-Raqqa (59 percent) followed by Rural Damascus (50 percent). Furthermore, 15 percent of interviewed households in October indicated job lay-offs, with a wider share recorded in Homs (29 percent) and Tartous (27 percent).
- At the governorate level, in October 2021, Al-Hasakeh (36 percent), Ar-Raqqa (35 percent) and Quneitra (34 percent) recorded the highest proportion of surveyed households having lost one or more sources of income over the past month. Almost 13 percent of interviewed households in Al-Hasakeh and eight percent of respondents in Ar-Raqqa lost almost all their income for October. Meanwhile, to cope with the lack of household income in light of the high price of commodities and the worsening socio-economic situation, 16 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 October 2021, more than half of the surveyed households across Syria (56 percent) who reported losses of income also reported inadequate food consumption, representing an increase of 10 percent year-on-year. Additionally, 96 percent of these respondents indicated having relied on at least one food-based coping strategy in October.

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

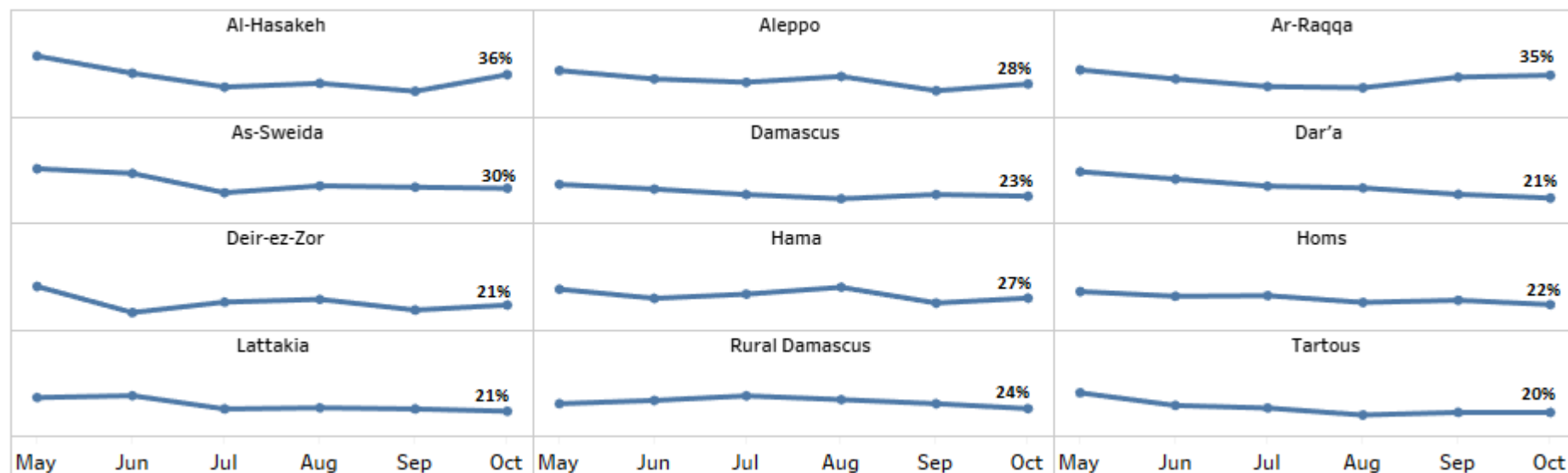
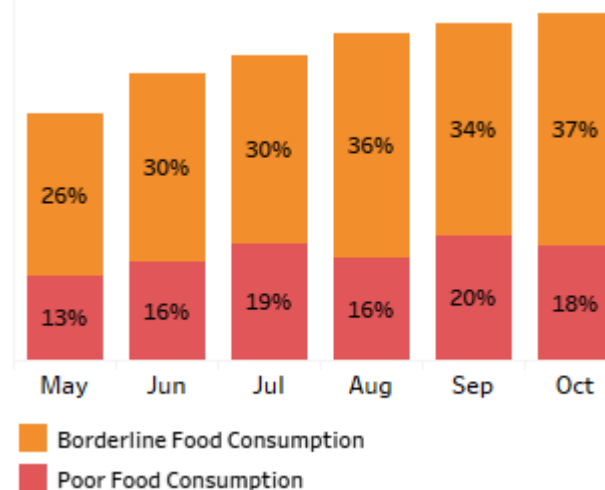
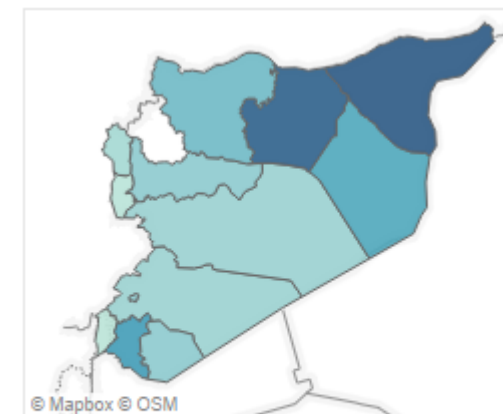


Fig9: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption who reported having lost their main income source

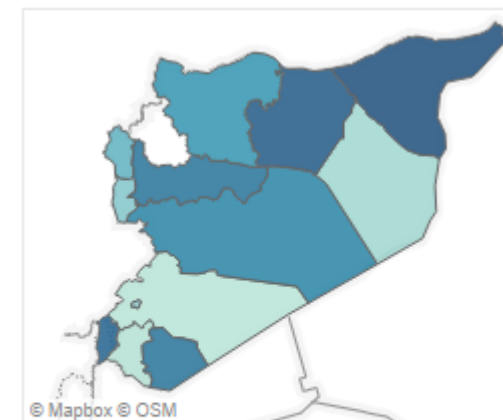


Map5: Percent of households facing challenges to access medical services by governorate in October 2021



13% 32%
Data from Idleb is not available

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



13% 25%
Data from Idleb is not available