

Situation Overview

- The fuel shortage crisis continued to worsen across Syria. On 11 December, the Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection (MoITCP) increased the price of the subsidized 90-Octane gasoline sold through the electronic card by 47 percent, from SYP 750/litre to SYP 1,100/litre. This represented the third increase of the price of subsidized 90-Octane gasoline since January 2021. However, the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources indicated that the new price of gasoline was still less than half of the cost incurred by the Syrian Government. The MoITCP reported that the price increase was necessary to "reduce the huge losses in the national oil budget, to ensure the continued provision of the commodity, and to avoid a reduction in its availability". In line with the recent increases in the price of food and non-food items, on 15 December, President al-Assad of Syria issued two Legislative Decrees, increasing salaries for both civilian and military public-sector workers by 30 percent, and pensions for retirees by 25 percent, as well as increasing the general minimum wage for the private sector to 92,970 Syrian Pounds per month. This represented the second increase in the level of official salaries during 2021.
- The general security situation remained volatile in December 2021. Intensified hostilities were reported in northwest Syria, with shelling largely concentrated in southern Idlib and northern Aleppo. In addition, the strong winds in December affected at least 105 internally displaced people's camps across Idlib and northern Aleppo, with more than 1,484 tents reportedly damaged or destroyed. In northeast Syria, frequent clashes reported in Tell Tamer (Al-Hasakeh governorate) and Ain Issa (Ar-Raqqa governorate) have damaged the electricity network that feeds the electricity station in Tell Tamer. The ongoing spate of violence continued to impact humanitarian operations and aid workers across Syria, thus further hindering safe access to vulnerable people who are in urgent need of life-saving assistance. Approximately 39 aid workers were reportedly killed countrywide during the course of 2021.
- On 28 December, several missiles targeted the container yard of Syria's main port of Lattakia, causing huge explosions and igniting fires in several containers, resulting in material damage of petrol and spare parts for machines and cars. Additionally, Al-Nada Hospital and some buildings adjacent to Lattakia port were reportedly affected or partially damaged as a result of the attack. A similar attack was reported on 7 December, targeting the container terminal and causing explosions.
- COVID-19 continued to spread across Syria. As of 31 December 2021, a total of 50,278 COVID-19 cases, including 2,897 fatalities, were confirmed by the Minister of Health in government-controlled areas. The monthly increase in COVID-19 cases in December (2,108 cases) signals a downward trend compared to November 2021 (5,024 cases). In opposition-held areas in northwest Syria, approximately 92,957 COVID-19 cases were reported by the end of December, an increase of 728 new cases compared to the previous month. In northeast Syria, the pandemic situation has reportedly deteriorated, and the lack of COVID-19 testing kits has pushed the central laboratory out of service from 10 November to 15 December. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Syria ranks among the worst COVID-19 affected countries in the Middle East and North Africa, resulting in additional strain on its over-stretched health care system nationwide. Simultaneously, as of 21 December 2021, a total of 781,603 people were reportedly fully vaccinated throughout the country, representing an increase of 42,393 vaccinated people compared to a month earlier. As a result, vaccination coverage stood at 3.6 percent of Syria's total population (21.2 million people). Moreover, WHO indicated that the challenges in vaccination efforts have been further compounded in Syria by a lack of vaccine availability, imminent expiry dates of recently delivered vaccines and a lack of trained medical staff.

Sources: [WHO Syria Emergency Appeal 2022](#) , [COAR | Syria Update December 2021](#) , [SANA | Fuel Update December 2021](#) , [Aid Worker Security Database](#)



Key Points

- Close to half of the interviewed households (49 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption in December 2021, representing an increase of 10 percent from December 2020.
- In December 2021, nearly nine out of ten interviewed households in Syria (89 percent) reported applying at least one food-based coping mechanism to deal with insufficient food stocks and meet their food consumption needs.
- Overall 75 percent of surveyed households indicated that they bought food on credit, an increase of 18 percent year-on-year, marking the highest national average level recorded since January 2019.
- During the reporting period, 14 percent of the surveyed households reported taking children of the mandatory education age out of school to have them contribute to income generating activities.

For Further Information

Arif Husain
Chief Economist & Director
Research, Assessment and Monitoring
Arif.Husain@wfp.org

Eliana Favari
Regional VAM Officer
Regional Bureau Cairo (RBC)
Eliana.Favari@wfp.org

Amira Swedan
Regional Data Scientist
Regional Bureau Cairo (RBC)
Amira.Swedan@wfp.org

Abdelrahman Hamza
VAM Programme Associate
Regional Bureau Cairo (RBC)
Abdelrahman.Hamza@wfp.org

Key Characteristics



1,081
Households Surveyed



11%
Female Headed Households



20%
Stay as Guests



29%
Displaced Households

Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via live telephone interviews in December 2021 from households in locations across Syria. The phone numbers were generated using random-digit dialing. In December 2021, data was collected from a sample of 1,081 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.

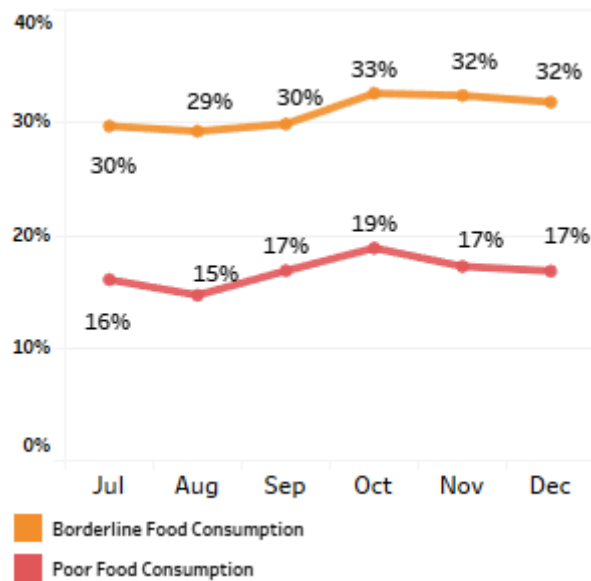




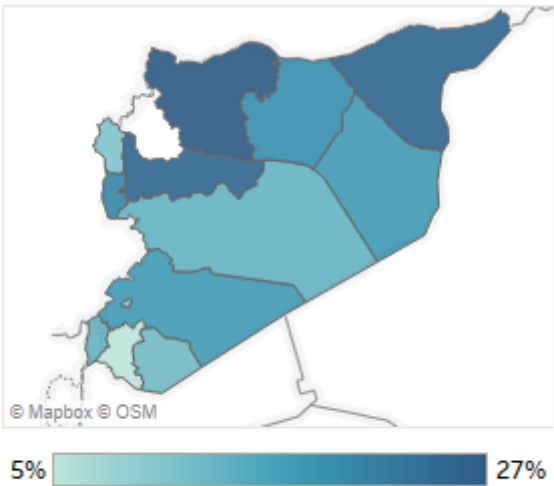
Food Consumption

- In December 2021, close to half of the surveyed households (49 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption in Syria, representing the third highest food insecurity level recorded throughout the past year. The national average rate of inadequate food consumption (poor and borderline combined) remained almost steady at the same critical level reached in November 2021; it however increased by 10 percent from December 2020. The continued deterioration of food security in Syria is a consequence of a combination of parallel and intertwined shocks including the persistent economic decline, continued conflict, hyperinflation and fuel shortages.
- Broken down by governorate, in December 2021, the highest proportion of households with poor or borderline food consumption was recorded in Ar-Raqqa - with more than seven out of ten interviewed households (71 percent) reporting inadequate food consumption, representing a 20 percentage points increase year-on-year, followed by Aleppo (60 percent). On the other hand, Damascus (35 percent) recorded the lowest level of inadequate food consumption this month, although this proportion has increased by 12 percent compared to December 2020. In Lattakia governorate, 48 percent of the interviewed households indicated poor or borderline food consumption.
- During the reporting period, nearly one out of five interviewed households in Syria (17 percent) reported poor food consumption. This trend was much higher in Aleppo (27 percent), an increase of eight percentage points month-on-month, followed by Al-Hasakeh (25 percent) and Hama (25 percent). The highest monthly increase of surveyed households reporting poor food consumption was recorded in Rural Damascus (up by eight percentage points), reaching 17 percent in December 2021.
- Food insecurity also worsened among vulnerable groups. In December 2021, two-thirds of female-headed households (66 percent) reported inadequate food consumption, an increase of nine percentage points from a month earlier, compared to 46 percent of male-headed households. In terms of residency status, 54 percent of IDPs and 52 percent of returnees indicated poor or borderline food consumption in December, compared to 45 percent of residents.
- Furthermore, insufficient consumption of protein-rich foods prevailed in Syria. In December 2021, approximately 62 percent of surveyed households nationwide indicated consuming animal-source protein less than twice a week. This trend was more evident among households with poor or borderline food consumption, as they reported consuming animal-source protein less than once a week. These findings could have worrisome implications for household nutritional status in the coming months.

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 2021



Data from Idleb is not available

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

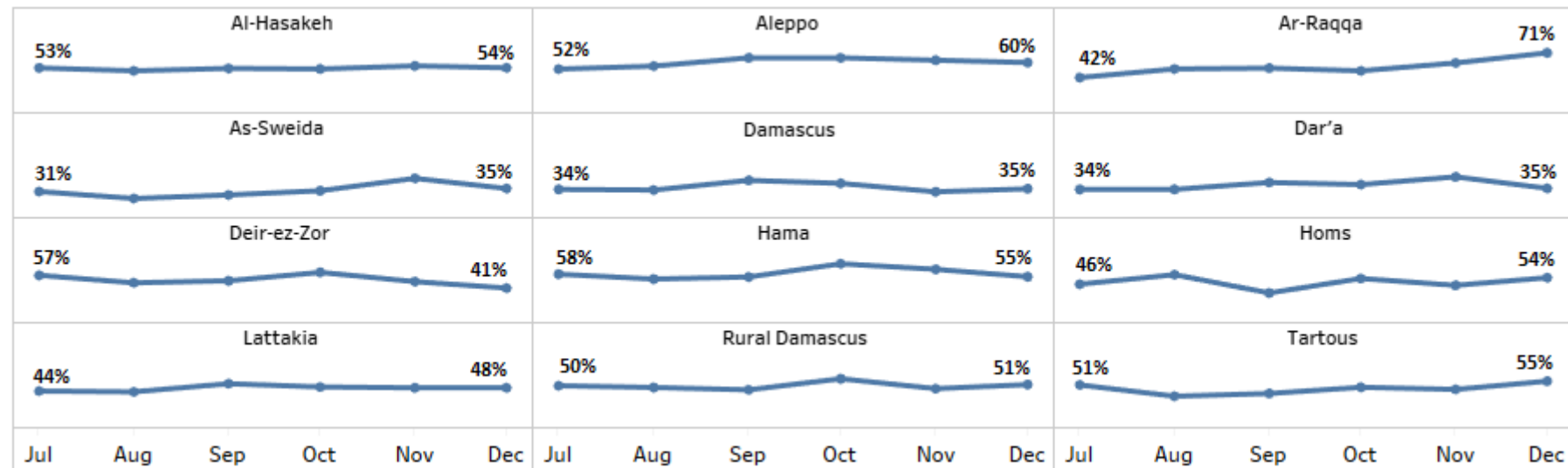
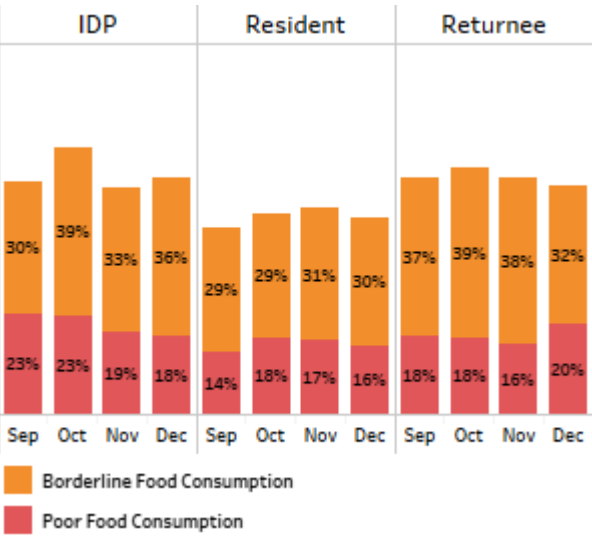


Fig3: Percent of households reporting poor and borderline food consumption according to displacement status





Coping Strategies

- Between November and December 2021, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) increased from 18.5 to 19.0. In December 2021, close to nine out of ten interviewed households in Syria (89 percent) reported applying at least one food-based coping mechanism to meet their food consumption needs, marking an increase of five percent compared to December 2020. This trend was higher among female-headed households (96 percent) compared to male-headed households (87 percent).
- The continued erosion of purchasing power and the further diminishing of livelihood sources pushed many Syrian households to buy food on credit. In December 2021, 75 percent of surveyed households across Syria reported that they bought food on credit in the last month, an increase of 18 percent year-on-year and marking the highest national average level recorded since January 2019. The reported adoption of this strategy was much higher among female-headed households (84 percent), marking an increase of 14 percentage points year-on-year. In comparison, 73 percent of male-headed households reported buying food on credit in December 2021. At the governorate level, this trend was more pronounced in Hama (82 percent) and As-Sweida (82 percent). Furthermore, approximately 14 percent of surveyed households across Syria reported taking children of the mandatory education age out of school to have them engage in income generating activities and contribute to the household's income.
- Similar to the deteriorating food consumption trend, the adoption of food-based coping strategies remained heavily employed among the most vulnerable groups in Syria. The average rCSI was highest among IDPs (20.4) and returnees (19.0) compared to residents (18.4). In December 2021, 93 percent of returnees and 91 percent of IDPs reported adopting at least one food-based coping strategy to deal with insufficient food stocks, compared to 86 percent of residents. These findings signal a general worsening in economic living conditions for all population groups in Syria.
- The consistent increase in food prices in Syria and the continued degradation of household coping capacity played a key role in pushing Syrian families into adopting food-based coping strategies. In December 2021, 69 percent of surveyed households reported relying on less preferred or less expensive food, up by six percent from December 2020, with a wider share recorded among female-headed households (75 percent) compared to male-headed households (68 percent). More than half of interviewed households in Syria (53 percent) indicated limiting the size of consumed meals, an increase of 20 percent year-on-year, with a peak recorded in Lattakia (71 percent). Additionally, to cope with food shortages amid the dire economic situation, 47 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 December 2020, with a higher proportion among returnees (55 percent) and IDPs (51 percent) compared to residents (44 percent).

Fig5: rCSI average by governorate over the last six months

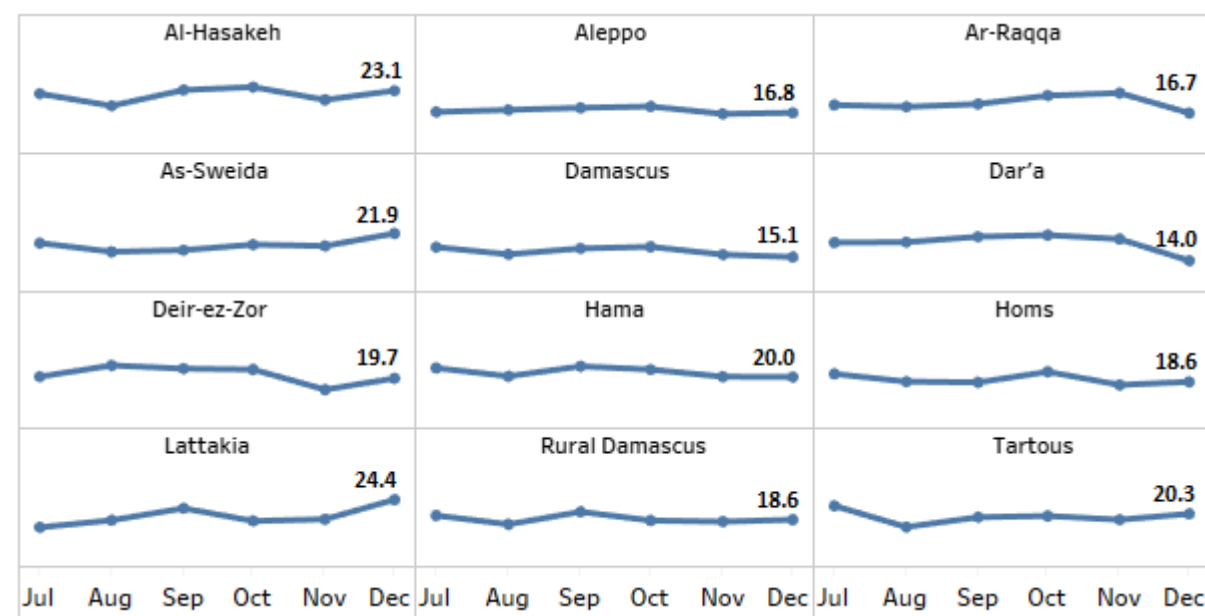
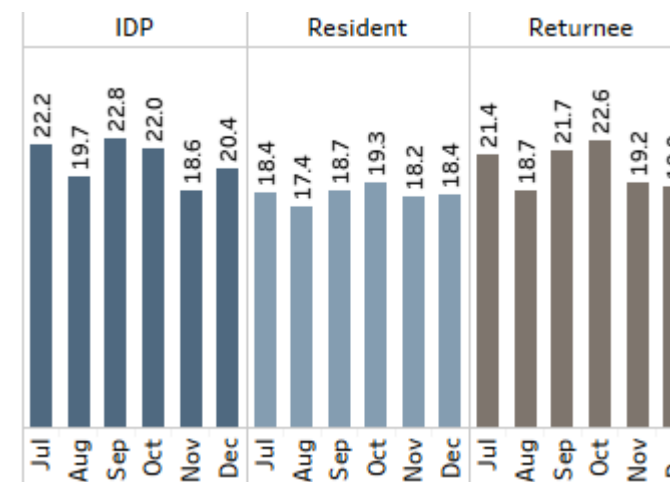


Fig4: rCSI average over the last six months according to displacement status



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

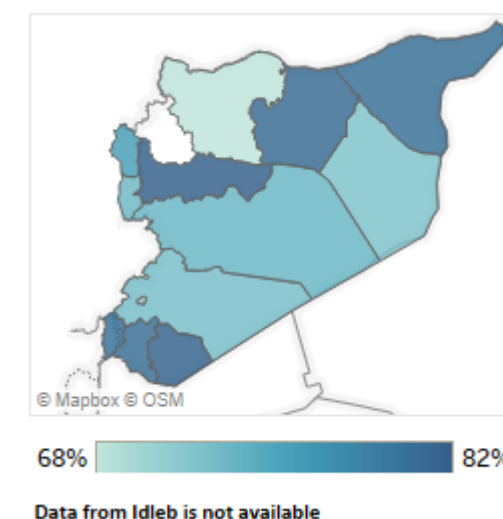


Fig6: Overall percent of households by adopted coping strategy over the past six months

		Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Male	Less Expensive Food	69%	68%	70%	71%	68%	68%
	Reduce Number of Meals	56%	57%	57%	58%	54%	55%
	Limit Portion Size	50%	49%	50%	50%	48%	52%
	Restrict Consumption	48%	45%	49%	50%	46%	46%
	Borrow Food	45%	43%	47%	47%	42%	44%
Female	Less Expensive Food	77%	68%	70%	77%	69%	75%
	Reduce Number of Meals	68%	56%	65%	67%	51%	64%
	Limit Portion Size	61%	46%	51%	59%	58%	62%
	Restrict Consumption	50%	38%	44%	43%	49%	56%
	Borrow Food	54%	51%	51%	49%	54%	58%



Access to Services and Income Sources I

- The deteriorating socio-economic situation in Syria, further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, continued to pose widespread health and nutrition threats to Syrian households, hereby worsening the general food security situation and exacerbating the acute humanitarian needs countrywide.
- In December 2021, more than a third of interviewed households (35 percent) indicated facing difficulties in reaching markets, representing an increase of 12 percentage points from December 2020. The plight of accessing markets has been exacerbated over time by the fuel shortages experienced across the country and by the surge of the COVID-19 infection rate across the country. These findings generally highlight nationwide food access concerns given that more than nine out of ten interviewed households across Syria (91 percent) reported relying on markets as a primary source of food. At the governorate level, As-Sweida (45 percent) and Al-Hasakeh (41 percent) recorded the highest proportion of surveyed households not having access to markets. Though this trend remained high in Al-Hasakeh, it decreased by 18 percent from November 2021, largely due to the lifting of the lockdown measures in northeast Syria. A similar trend was also monitored in Ar-Raqqa, which decreased by 27 percentage points month-on-month, reaching 29 percent in December. From interviews conducted in December 2021, more than half of the surveyed households with no regular access to markets nationwide (56 percent) had poor or borderline food consumption. Moreover, 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 more pronounced in Quneitra (13 percent), Al-Hasakeh (10 percent) and Dar'a (nine percent).
- Health services in Syria are overstretched and medical supplies are depleting fast to address the increased demands of the COVID-19 response. During the reporting period, nearly one out of four interviewed households in Syria (23 percent) indicated facing difficulties in accessing medical care facilities, an increase of nine percentage points from December 2020, representing the highest national average level recorded since April 2020. In addition, 48 percent of surveyed households reported not being able to purchase the necessary medicines in December 2021, mainly due to a lack of financial resources (55 percent) and a shortage of medicines in pharmacies (17 percent). The limiting of access to healthcare services is concerning throughout the country, given that 12.2 million people in Syria are estimated to be in need of health assistance in 2022 (source: WHO).

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

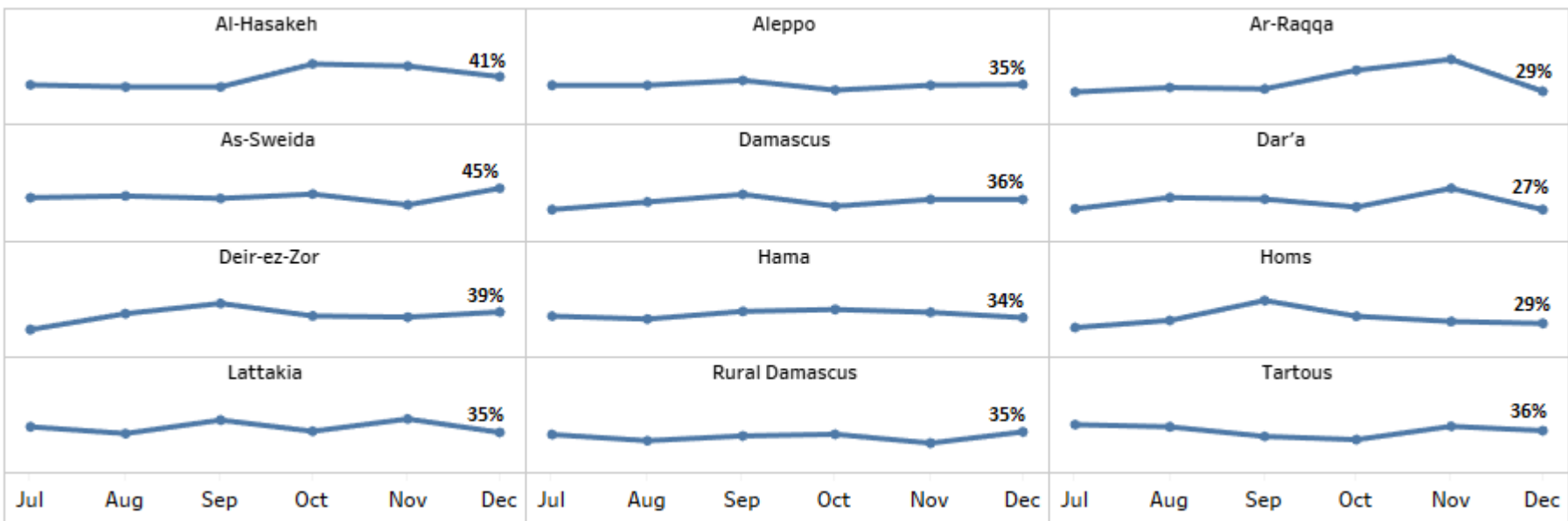
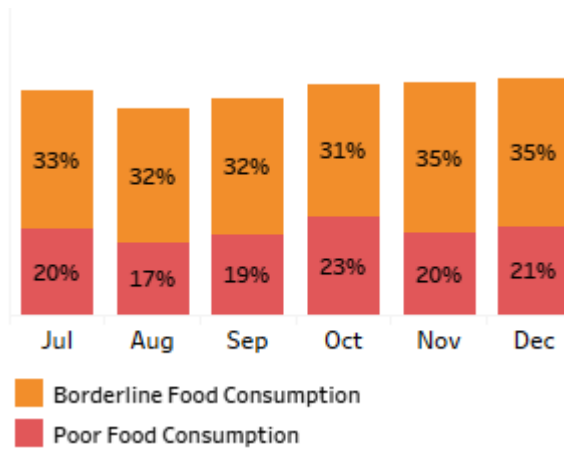
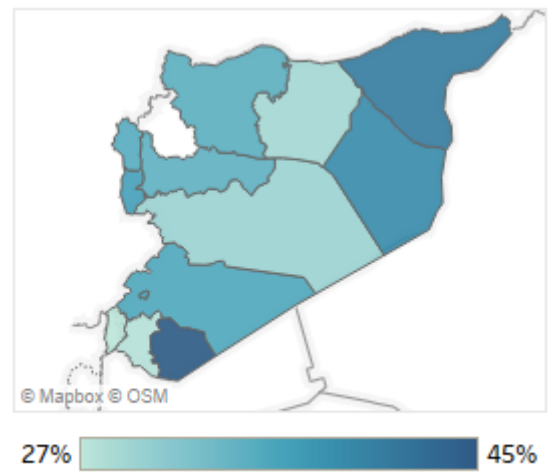


Fig7: Share of households with inadequate food consumption who reported facing difficulties in accessing markets

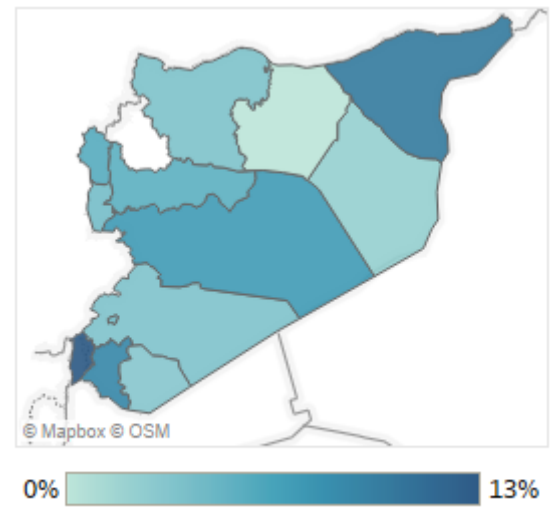


Map3: Percent of households facing challenges to access markets by governorate in December 2021



Data from Idleb is not available

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



Data from Idleb is not available



Access to Services and Income Sources II

- COVID-19 vaccinations are underway in Syria and nearly two-thirds of interviewed households countrywide (62 percent) reported their intent to have all household members vaccinated were the COVID-19 vaccine be provided free of charge, while around 21 percent of respondents indicated unwillingness to get vaccinated. From interviews conducted in December 2021, approximately 13 percent of surveyed households reported having already been vaccinated, compared to nine percent in November and seven percent in October 2021.
- Moreover, in light of the diminishing purchasing power and the high price of commodities nationwide, Syrian households continued to grapple with challenges to sustain income generating activities. In December 2021, nearly one out of four interviewed households in Syria (24 percent) reported that they had lost one or more sources of income over the past month, with a higher proportion recorded among returnees (31 percent) and IDPs (25 percent) compared to residents (22 percent). This trend was more pronounced among male-headed households (25 percent) compared to female-headed households (18 percent). Also, interviewees with a university degree reported losing one or more sources of income over December (17 percent). Furthermore, 16 percent of surveyed households across Syria reported having lost more than half of their monthly income in December 2021, with a higher proportion recorded in Al-Hasakeh (25 percent) and Deir-ez-Zor (24 percent).
- The reported shortfall of households' income was due to a number of issues: in December 2021, more than two out of five interviewed households in Syria (42 percent) reported having been impacted by a reduction in working hours and thus receiving a partial salary; approximately 35 percent of surveyed households nationwide reported a reduction of revenues from business activities or agricultural sales; and 16 percent of interviewed households in December indicated job lay-offs. These findings outline the pronounced and widespread lack of livelihood opportunities in Syria which continue to further erode Syrian household's resilience to face future shocks.
- At the governorate level, in December 2021, Quneitra (40 percent), Al-Hasakeh (31 percent) and Dar'a (29 percent) recorded the highest proportion of surveyed households having lost one or more sources of income over the past month. Almost 20 percent of interviewed households in Quneitra and 17 percent of respondents in Dar'a lost more than half of their December income. The difficulties faced by the Syrian families in the labor market have a general negative impact on households' food security situation. In December 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 seven percent year-on-year. Moreover, 96 percent of these respondents indicated having relied on at least one food-based coping strategy in December.

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

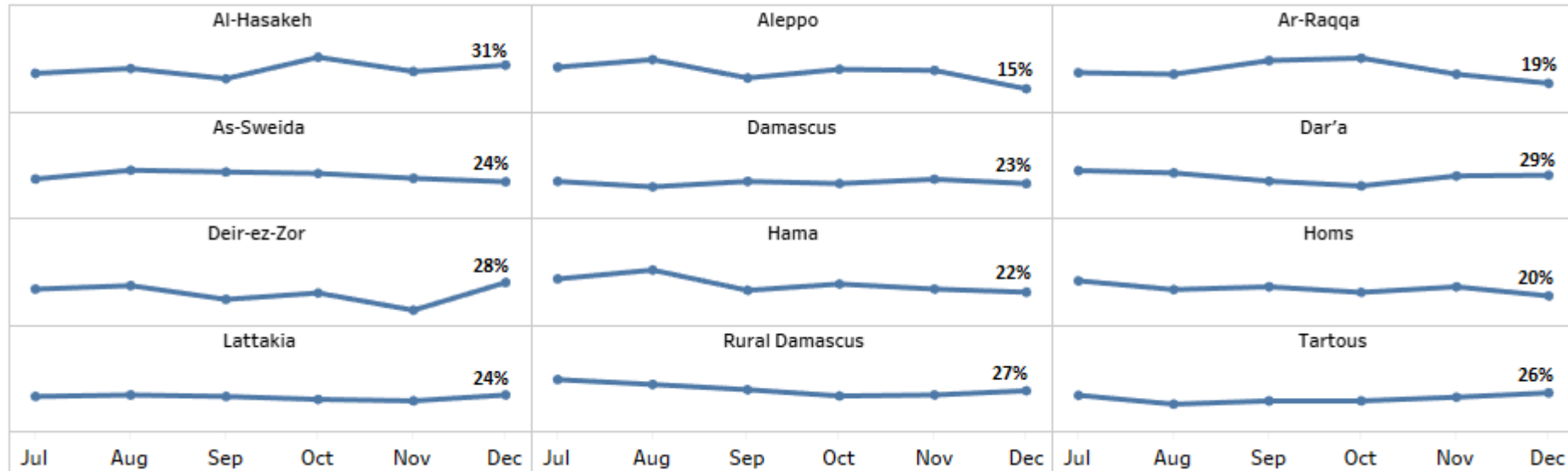
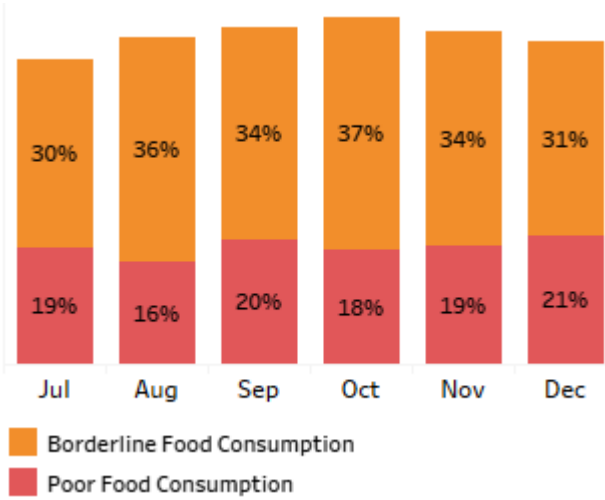
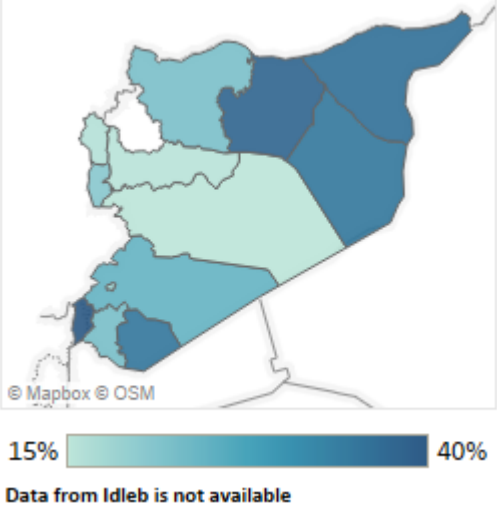


Fig9: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption who reported having lost their main income source



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



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

