

Protection Monitoring Findings

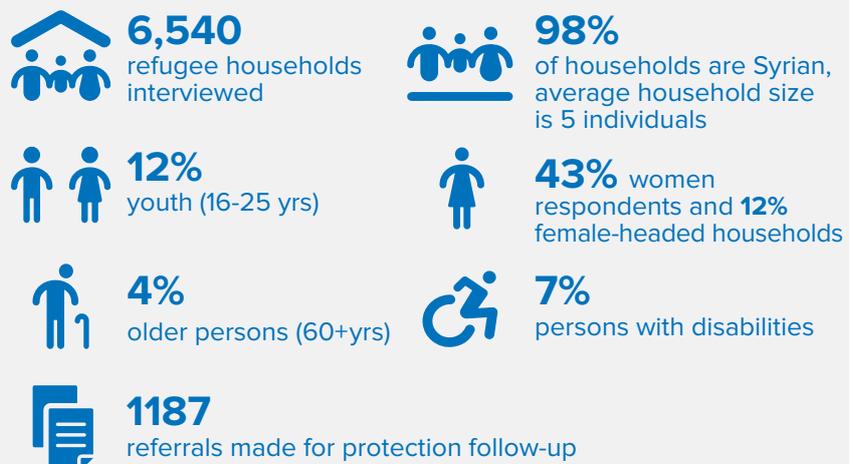
Lebanon – 1st Quarter 2023



Key highlights

- The average refugee household income reported by refugees in the first quarter of 2023 **still falls significantly below SMEB**. Humanitarian assistance plays a critical role in assisting refugee families make ends meet. Main socio-economic impacts include **nearly all households reporting reduced spending on food, rent, medicine and healthcare**. Insufficient household budgets continue driving large gaps in basic needs and result in negative coping among refugee households, maintaining a precarious protection environment for refugees in Lebanon.
- Refugees are increasingly entering into debt to address basic needs gaps and the rising cost of living. Q1 saw a sharp spike reported in cost of average household rent, resulting in refugees resorting to unsustainable household debt.
- Despite increasing costs of living, **reports of households actually being evicted and living under eviction notice continue to remain relatively low compared to previous periods**, trending downwards since the latter half of 2022. This is likely linked to families increasingly availing of debt and other negative strategies to pay rent and avoid eviction.
- Despite isolated reports of instances of social instability in different regions throughout the reporting period in addition to a sharp increase in negative refugee sentiment in media and public discourse since March, **overall reports of social tensions and restrictive measures by respondents continue to be low** (5% and 2% reporting instances of social tensions and restrictive measures, respectively), trending downwards from a peak in Q3 2022. Nevertheless, the impact of restrictive measures where they are in place appears to be more severe, with affected households reporting an increase in physical and verbal abuse.

Key numbers January to March 2023¹

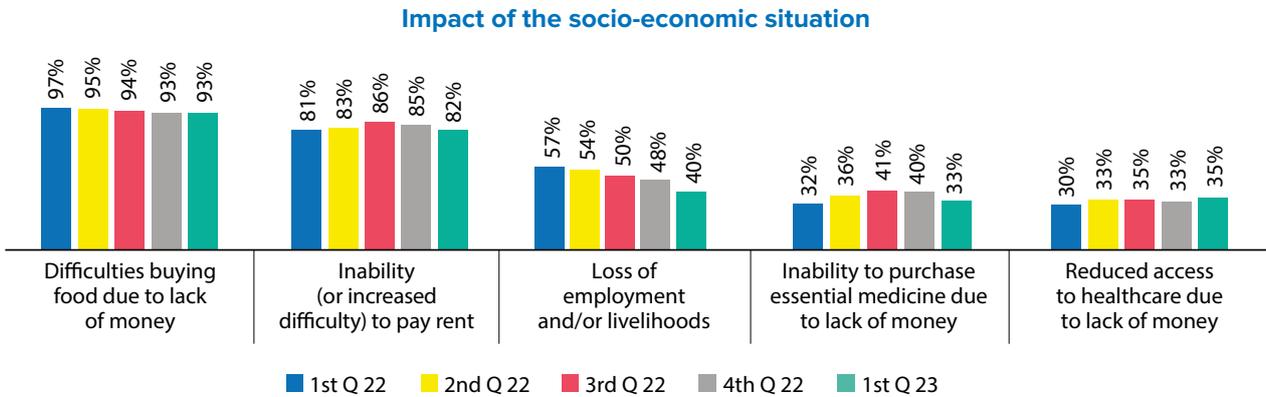


¹ UNHCR conducts protection monitoring surveys with refugee households together with partners SHEILD and Interos on an ongoing basis to analyse trends in the protection environment and risks facing refugees. This survey is one component of UNHCR's overarching protection monitoring programme in Lebanon, complementing other protection activities conducted by UNHCR and partners. The sampling of households and findings presented are representative both at the regional and at the national level. In addition, a number of interviews with key informants of different profiles complement the quantitative analysis from the household interviews. When needs for specific services, assistance or information are identified during interviews, UNHCR's protection monitoring partners refer the individuals concerned accordingly.

This report provides a summary of the protection monitoring findings from all regions of Lebanon in the first quarter (January to March) of 2023. The feedback from refugees is used to inform UNHCR's advocacy, and programmatic interventions with the aim of improving refugees' access to protection and essential services, assistance, and information.

Impact of the socio-economic situation

• A central aspect of UNHCR’s protection monitoring is to assess how refugees are managing the deteriorating socio-economic situation, with a focus on the main negative impacts of the situation, as well as coping strategies employed by refugees to mitigate negative consequences.

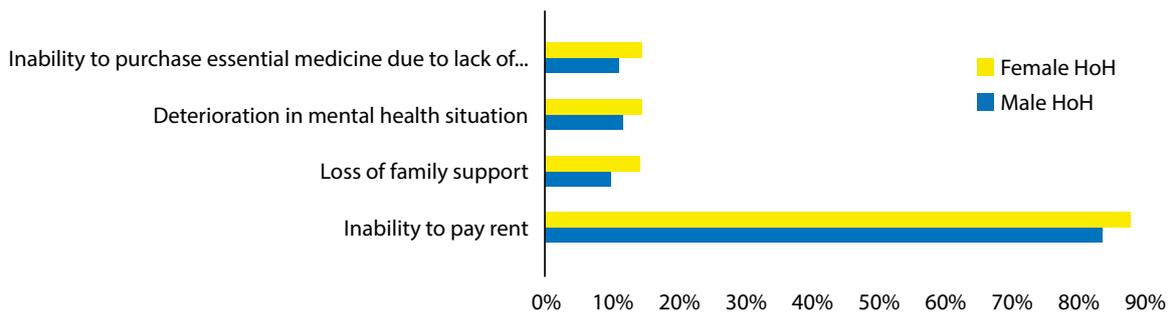


• In the first quarter of 2023, while negative impacts of the socio-economic environment remain relatively stable and consistent with previous quarters, refugees nonetheless continued to report large gaps in basic needs and the overall protection situation remains extremely precarious.

• Nearly all refugees faced difficulties feeding their household (93%) and struggled to pay rent (82%), while almost half reported loss of livelihoods (40%) and reduced access to healthcare (35%) and inability to purchase essential medicine (33%).

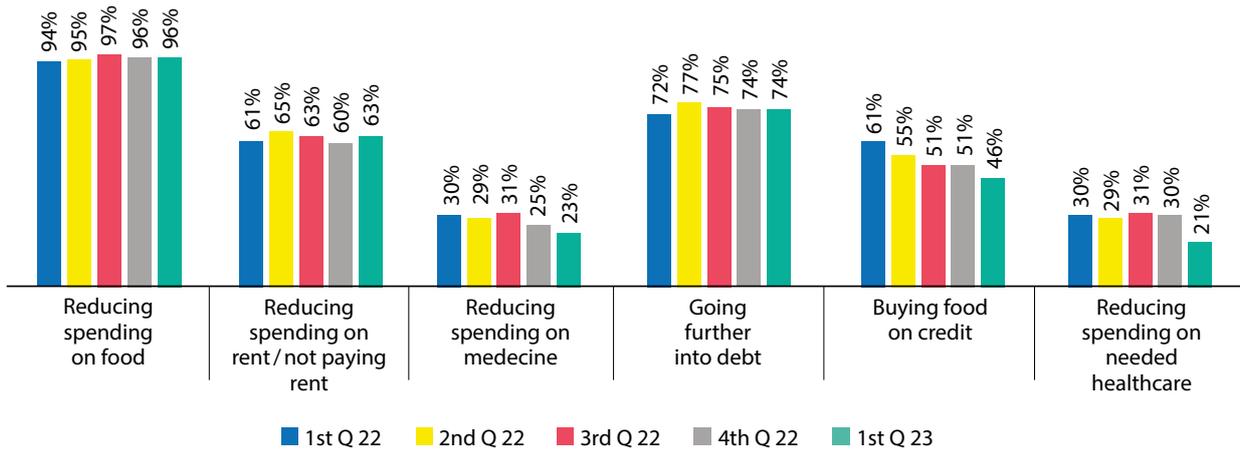
• Availability of support from family to meet financial needs is a key coping mechanism that since 2022 has seen a steady decline, from 2% of households at the beginning of 2022 to 10% in Q3 2023 reporting a loss of family support due to financial constraints. While analysis of socio-economic impacts by gender does not reveal major discrepancies, loss of family support due to financial constraints showed a much higher impact on female headed households compared to other indicators. The decrease in availability of this mechanism is particularly stark for persons with specific needs (PWSN), where households with PWSN reported an increase in reliance on family support (19% in Q1, up from 10% at the end of 2022).

Impact of deteriorating socio-economic situation in Q3 (by gender)

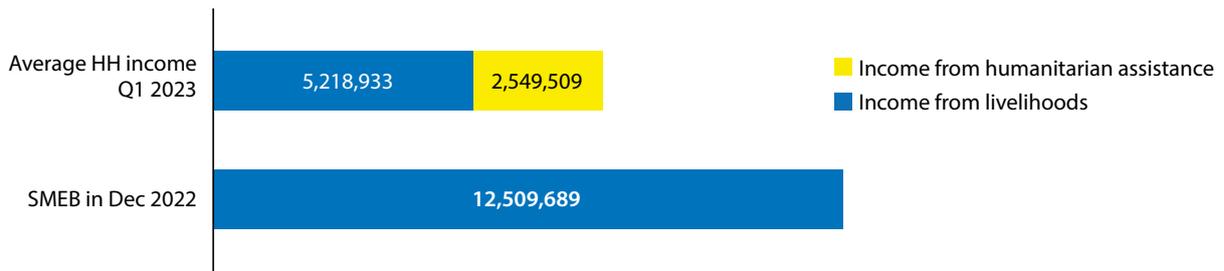


• These socio-economic challenges are also reflected in consistent prevalence of negative coping mechanisms employed by refugee households. As with previous quarters, lack of money has meant that nearly all households (96%) have reduced their spending on food, that 74% are going into debt, while 63% are struggling to pay rent.

Main Coping Strategies

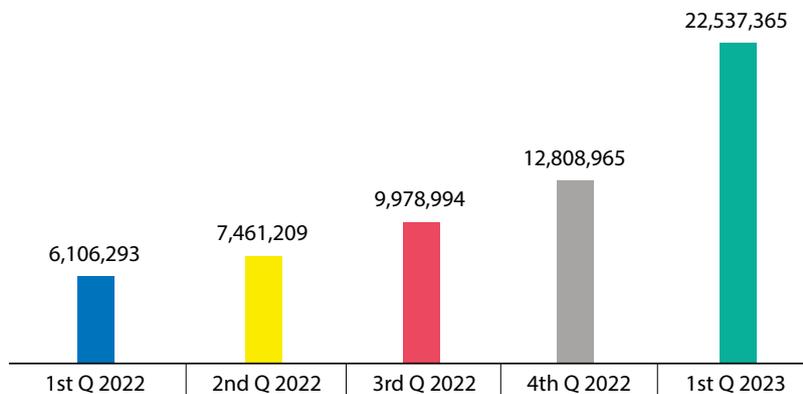


Average Q1 Household income compared to SMEB (LBP)



- As the value of the Lebanese Lira continues to decline while cost of basic goods increase, refugee households continue to report monthly income that falls far below what is required to make ends meet.
- The average refugee household income reported by refugees for the first quarter of 2023 was slightly higher than the previous quarter (5,899,609 LBP) at 7,768,442, which still falls substantially short of the average value of Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) last reported in December 2022. This continues to highlight the role of humanitarian assistance in bridging the gap, without which refugee households would have just 42% of what is needed for a family of five to meet their basic needs.
- Given these large gaps many refugees are going into debt as a coping strategy to meet basic needs, with almost all households relying upon some form of borrowing.

Average refugee household debt (LBP)



- The inability to keep up with rising costs is reflected in the increasing amount of debt held by refugee households. In the first quarter of 2023, households reported an average debt of 22,537,365 LBP, a stark 76% increase on average household debt in the previous quarter. Refugees continue to address widening gaps in their basic needs by taking on debt at unsustainable levels.

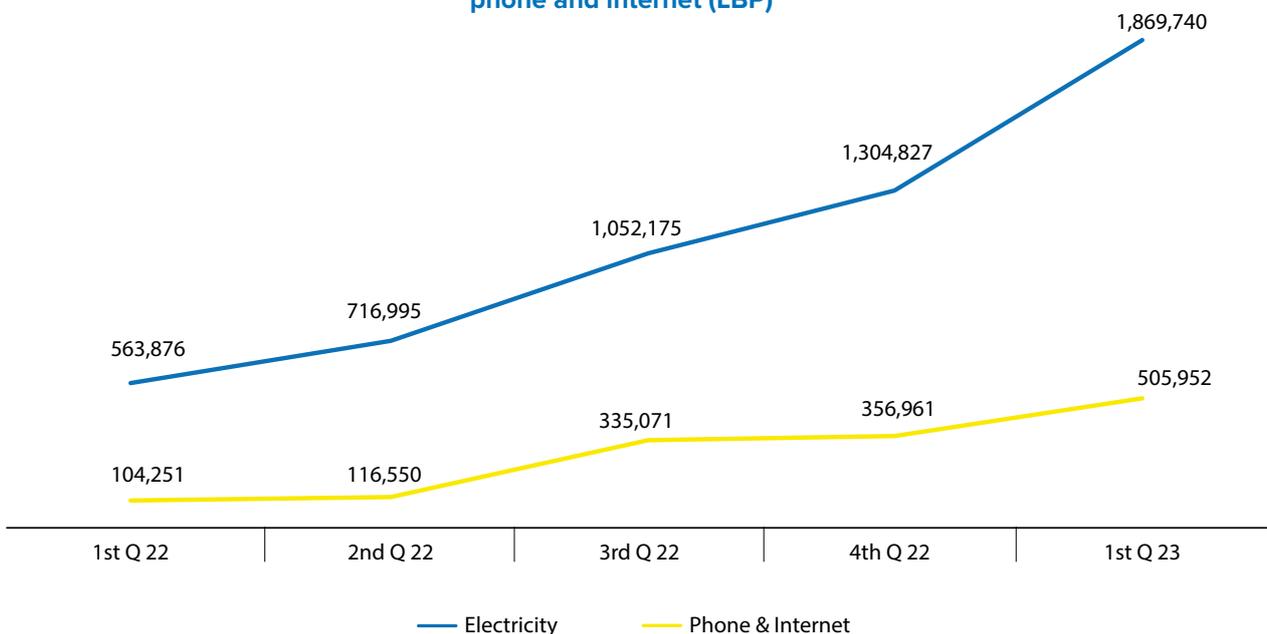
- Over the quarter, financial difficulties manifested in other challenges reported by refugee households, especially in the areas of nutrition and health. For example, 71% of households reported reducing the number of meals eaten per day, while 33% reported relying on worse quality food. 13% reported avoiding seeking healthcare they thought they needed, primarily for reasons related to affordability.



I am feeding my baby rice water instead of milk due to lack of baby formula in pharmacies, and due to its high price, when available.

- Syrian refugee, Saida

Avg monthly HH spending on electricity, phone and internet (LBP)



- Electricity, phone and internet are services critical to allowing refugees maintain a basic standard of living and level of communication with family, friends in order to remain up to date on developments and in contact with service providers (such as UNHCR and humanitarian actors).

- A continuing rise in telecommunication (43%) and electricity (38%) costs since the previous quarter entrench growing gaps in basic needs, further debt reliance and will make humanitarian assistance increasingly vital in the coming quarters.

Education and child labour



Each child has the right to study and continue his education, but still, the economic situation makes it difficult to meet this need.

- Syrian refugee, Sour

44%

of households reported having school aged children not attending school

6%

households reported having at least one child engaged in child labour

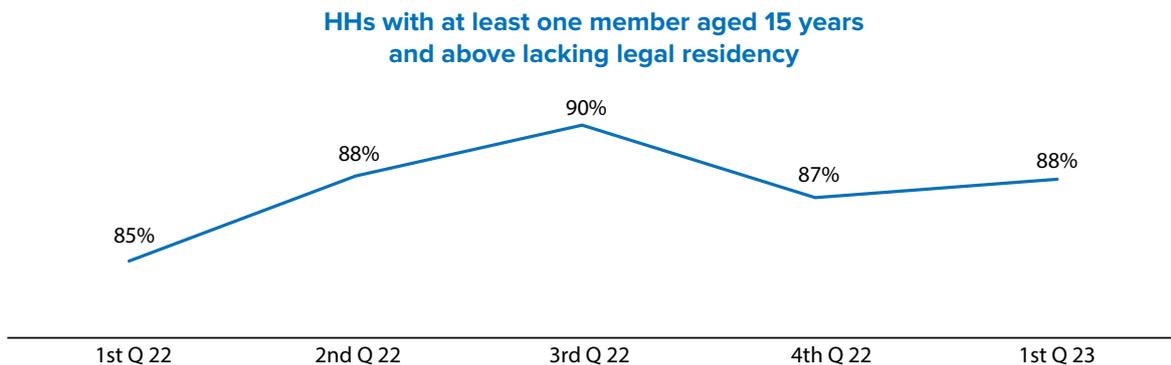
- The number of households reporting children out of school in Q1 2023 is a significant increase on the previous quarter's figure of 32%. The primary reason for this increase is likely the teacher's strikes in the education system that took place during the reporting period, with 83% of households whose children left school during the reporting period citing this as the primary reason during the quarter. Unaffordable transport and school fees/material costs as a reason for not sending children to school were the secondary factors expressed by refugees as cost of transport increases, in addition to increases in school related costs such as stationery and books.

- The percentage of households with children reporting child labour remained consistent with previous reporting periods this quarter at 6%.

The majority of these working children continue to be boys (87%). Children continued to be most commonly working in retail, (34%), street selling (20%) and agriculture (12%). In all, 24% of respondents indicated that children in their household are engaged in "high risk" labour, primarily working with dangerous tools or in physically demanding jobs, or working in the street.

- It is likely that figures related to child labour are underreported due to families' being reluctant to disclose such practices.

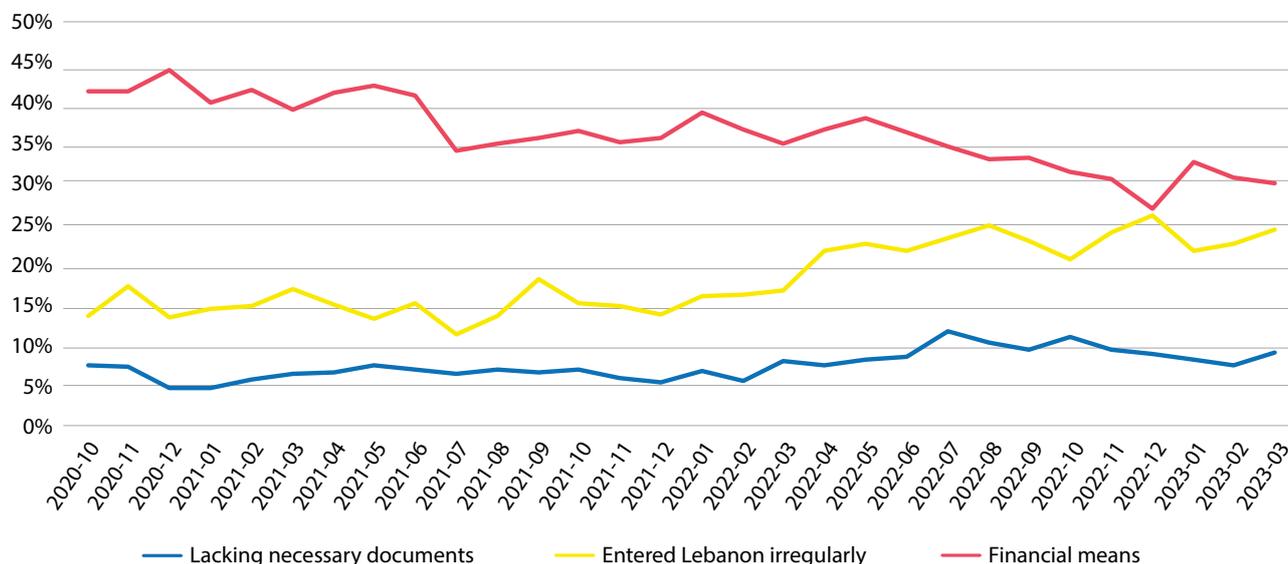
Legal residency



- Rates of households having all members with legal residency slipped slightly in the first quarter of 2023, while remaining higher than the record low number reported in Q3 2022.

- Lack of financial resources (32%), irregular entry to the country (23%) and inability to find a sponsor (21%) continue to be cited as the primary barriers for those lacking legal residency. However, in Q3 there is a steadily increasing trend in irregular entry and lacking documents as the main reason for lack of residency, while financial means cited as the main reason shifted downwards. The proliferation in negative refugee discourse in the media and public statements throughout Q3 could explain the reluctance of persons irregular in the country or lacking documentations to approach GSO to attempt to regularise their status.

Top reasons for lack of legal residency

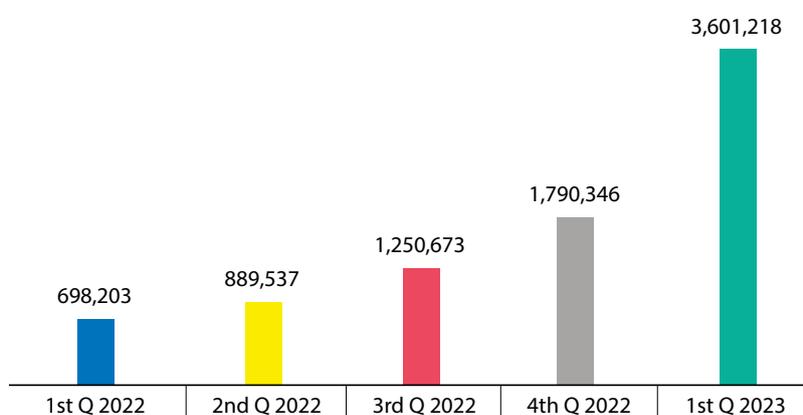


- Lack of residency impacts refugees’ lives in multiple ways, including increasing vulnerability to detention and deportation. To mitigate these risks, 49% of respondents report that members of their households lacking residency limit their movements and 11% avoid contact with friends and some family members to avoid coming to the attention of the authorities.

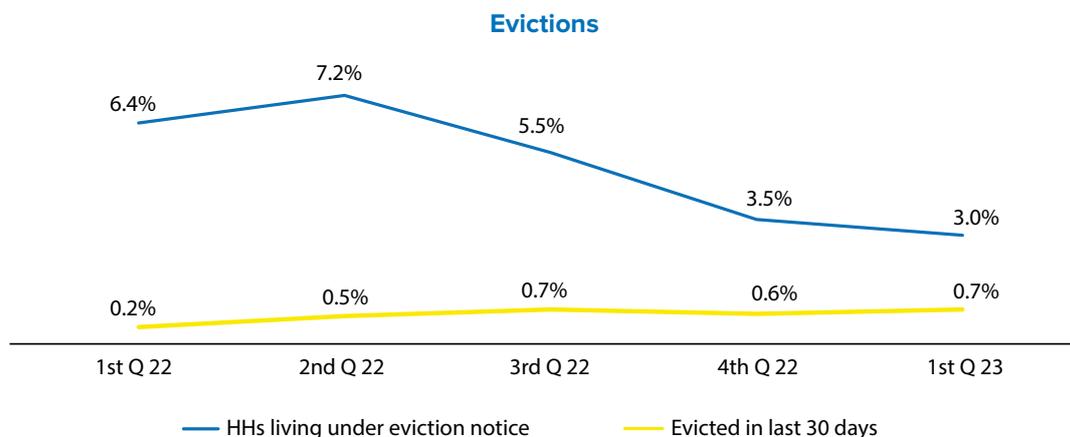
Rent and Evictions

- More than 85% of refugees reported inability (or increased difficulty) to pay rent this quarter, a figure which does not seem likely to reduce given the exponential increase in average cost of monthly rent per household.

Average HH Rent (LBP)



- Rental costs continue to increase sharply, with the average household's rent costing 101% more than it did the previous quarter, and 416% more than the same time last year. Correspondingly, the number of households reporting that they were able to make a full rent payment decreased to 37% from the previous quarter – increasing the risk of eviction.



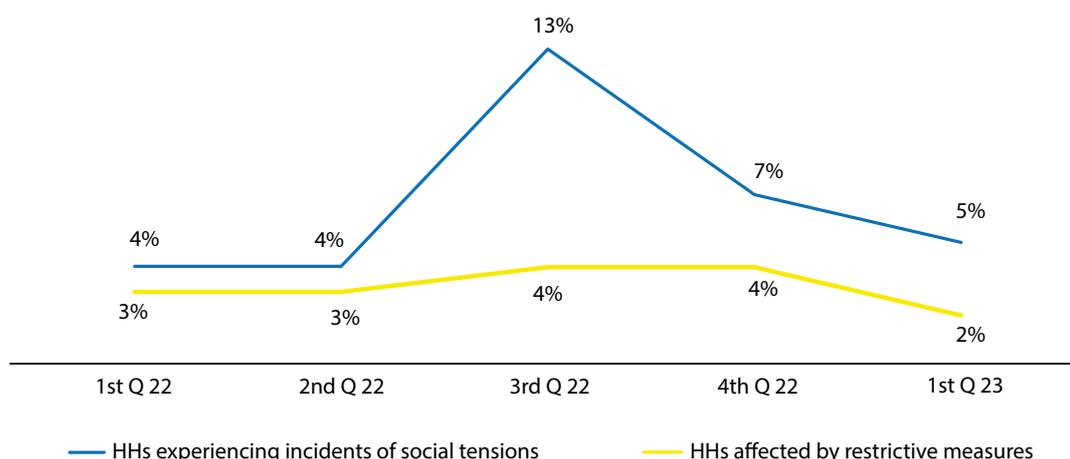
- Despite increasing costs of rent and living in general, reports of households actually being evicted and living under eviction notice continue to remain relatively low into 2023, compared to previous periods, trending downwards since the latter half of 2022. This is likely linked to almost all refugees reporting going into high levels of debt and availing of other negative coping strategies to pay rent and avoid eviction risks.



We were evicted for not being able to pay the rent as recently I had a health condition, which hindered me from working.

- Syrian refugee, Nabatieh

Social Tensions and Restrictive Measures

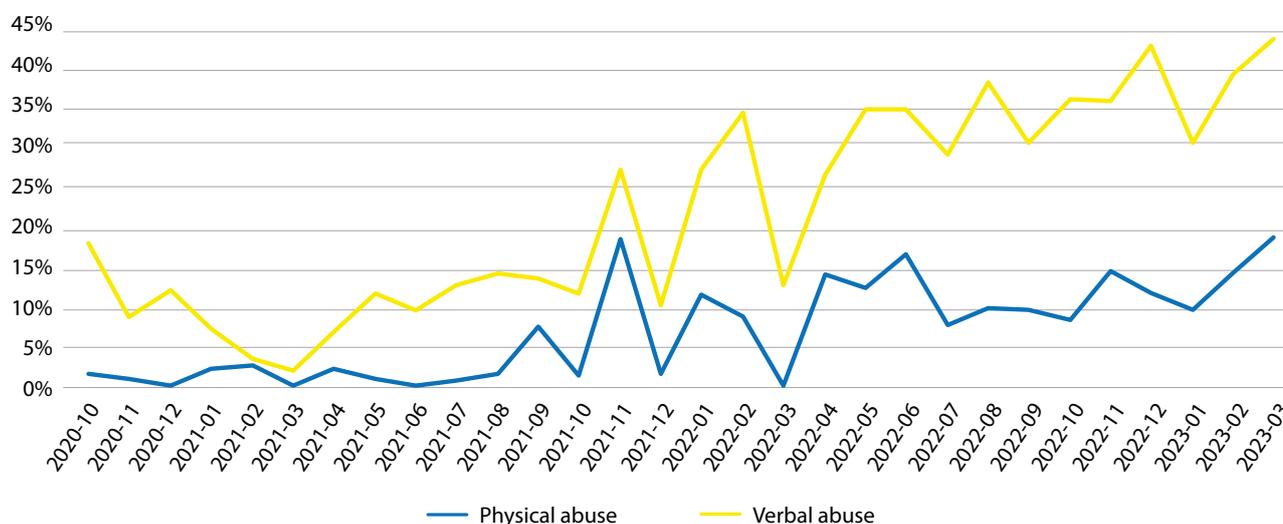


- After a spike in social tensions observed during the third quarter of 2022 (linked at the time to a nationwide increase in reports of tensions following a bread shortage in the country), reports of households experiencing incidents of social tension have since decreased to 5%.
- Similarly, reports of restrictive measures by the refugee community remain low, with 2% of households reporting to live under some form of restrictive measure in Q1 2023, most commonly under movement

restrictions such as curfews requiring people to remain indoors between specific hours or prohibitions to use certain public spaces. Most such measures were reportedly either targeting refugees only or were applied to them more harshly.

- Notwithstanding the low trends, throughout the country, ad hoc instances of municipalities applying unilateral restrictive measures such as discriminatory fees and taxes to refugee communities in relation to waste management or other municipal services continue to emerge. Other restrictive measures were reported ,for example, in the Bekaa, wage caps were applied to ‘foreign workers’, while in the South, some villages prohibited the stay of refugees without residency.
- While the full impact of recent public negative refugee discourse is not yet manifesting in real terms in protection monitoring findings, UNHCR continues to track reports of personal disputes resulting in verbal or physical harassment, with Syrians often reluctant to report such incidents due to a lack of legal residency and fear of reprisal. Indeed, despite the lower incidence of restrictive measures in general, where measures are put in place the impact of restrictive measures where they occur for refugees’ wellbeing appears to be increasingly severe. For example, households affected by curfews have been reporting a steady increase in reports of physical and verbal abuse in Q1 on previous quarters.

Impact of Curfews



- Finally, despite negative public discourse and increased severity of the impact of restrictive measures where they are in place, Q1 also saw an uptick in responses from refugee households indicating they received support or there was an awareness of support provided by the host community, with 8% indicating a generally supportive host community environment compared to a low of 4% the previous quarter, marking the first significant uptick in positive relations since a peak in Q1 2021 (16%).

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