

# Protection Monitoring Findings

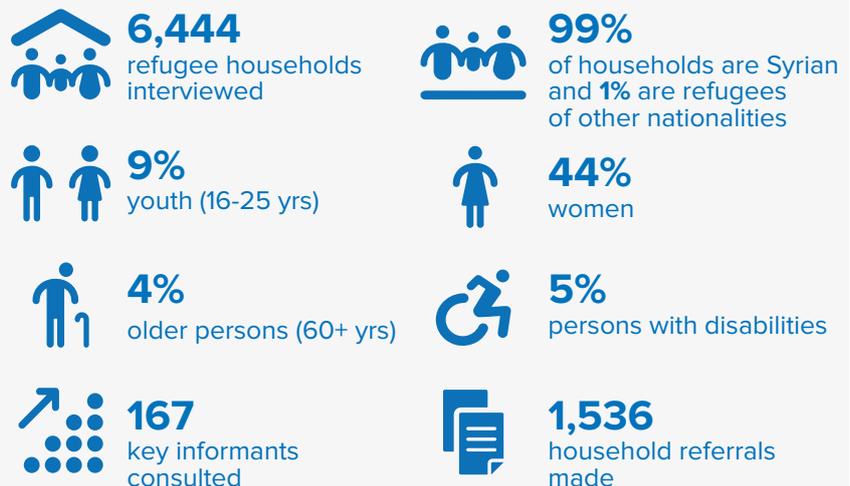
Lebanon –3rd quarter 2021



UNHCR conducts protection monitoring with partners on an ongoing basis to analyse trends in the protection environment and risks facing refugees. UNHCR’s protection monitoring partners – Caritas, INTERSOS and SHEILD – conduct interviews with refugee households to elicit their feedback on the overall protection environment in Lebanon and the impact of COVID-19 on their lives. The sampling of households and findings presented are representative both at the regional and national levels. In addition, partners conduct a number of interviews with key informants of different profiles to 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. Information on COVID-19 is systematically provided during each call, and persons needing help to register for vaccination are referred for assistance.

This report provides a summary of the protection monitoring findings from all regions of Lebanon in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter (July to September) of 2021.<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Key numbers July to September 2021



## Partner organizations



<sup>1</sup> Numbers and percentages presented are for the quarter (July-September 2021) unless otherwise specified.

# Impact of the socio-economic situation

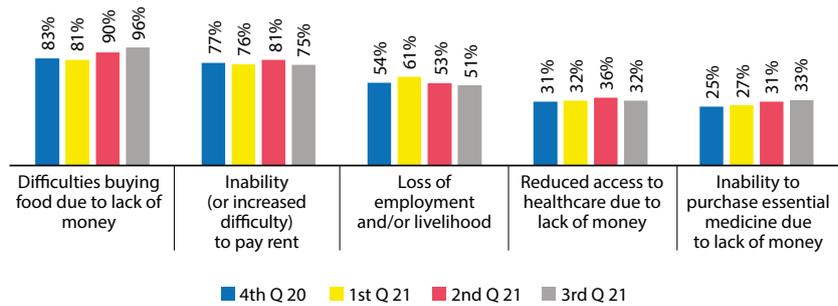


**In general, this is the worst period that the refugees have ever been through. There are requests for an increase of food assistance, [...] support with water to homes, desludging, electricity and rent. The prices have increased. It's become stressful and unbearable.**

- Syrian refugee, WhatsApp outreach

- Refugees continue to struggle to meet their basic needs in the face of Lebanon's deepening crisis. Significant gaps in livelihoods, health and ability to pay rent persist, while food insecurity has become highly acute.

## Most widely experienced impacts of the socio-economic situation

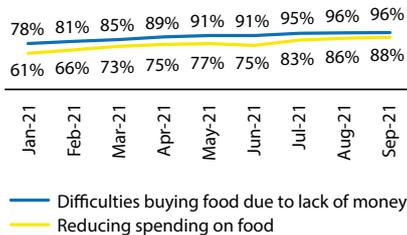


**Everything is so expensive [...]. What shall we do? I cannot go back to Syria, [...] and I am no longer able to buy milk for my kids. We are slowly dying here.**

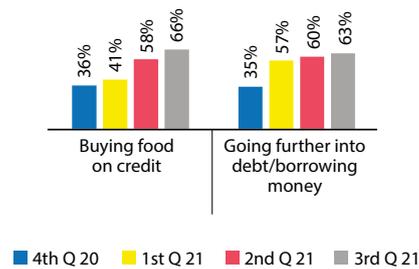
- Syrian father head of household, Registration interview

- The number of refugees reporting difficulty buying food and those forced to reduce spending on food has grown consistently since the start of this year. As a result, nearly every refugee is now food insecure.

## Food security impacts and coping mechanisms



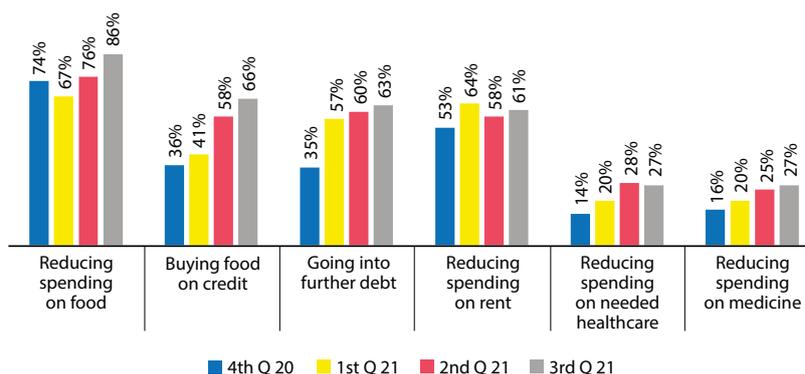
## Refugees relying on borrowing as a result of the economic situation



- To deal with this difficult situation refugees have also had to take on debt at rising levels. In September alone, 71% of respondents said that they had resorted to buying food on credit, and 64% said they had to borrow money to meet their basic needs. During the quarter, 92% of refugee households reported being in debt, with the overall average debt being 4,065,941 LBP. These debt levels have risen a stark 281% when compared to the debt levels recorded a year ago by the Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees (VASyR). Throughout the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter refugees reported adding an average of 1,066,802 LBP in the last 30 days to their overall household debt.

- Refugees have so far been able to avoid hunger and homelessness through borrowing, but with little prospects to pay existing debt and diminishing livelihoods it is likely that refugees will lose this lifeline in the near future. Over half of all respondents (57%) have reported losing work and pay this year, and according to the 2021 VASyR the average monthly income of refugee households was just 517,564 LBP, around a half of what they report to have borrowed in the past 30 days in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.

### Most widely resorted to coping strategies



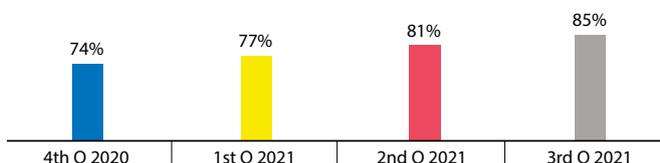
**A pack of medicines that we used to buy for 5,000 LBP is now for 150,000 and you may not even find it. I am afraid that if one of my children gets fever or gets ill I won't be able to do anything for them.**

- Syrian single mother

- In addition to reducing spending on food and debt coping strategies, nearly all leading coping mechanisms were reported at record highs this quarter compared to previous periods.

- Given the deteriorating economic situation, children remain at risk of being sent to work by their parents, with 3%<sup>2</sup> of all households interviewed reporting having at least one child working. All instances of child labour cited financial necessity for the household as the reason: 77% said children were forced to work due to the income from caregivers not covering household needs; 10% of children worked because a caregiver was physically incapable of working; 5% worked because a caregiver was absent from the household; and 8% worked for other issues related to financial necessity. Key informant interviews highlight that overall rates of school attendance are down because transportation costs have become too difficult to pay and a lack of electricity has meant that distance learning is no longer an option. Agriculture was the leading form of child labour this quarter (36% of all instances), followed by working in shops (20%) and the high-risk activity of street selling (18%). Boys continue to be more regularly involved in child labour, making up 79% of all child labour throughout the quarter. However, in September we saw the first significant rise in rates of child labour among girls, with girls making up 27% of child labour, up from a 14% average for all previous months.

### Children involved in child labour not attending school



- Mental health issues increased in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter with 27% of adults reporting mental health needs (up from the 24% average in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter and the 25% average in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter). Almost all (98%) of respondents who reported suffering from mental health issues said that the pressure of the economic crisis was a main cause. For a majority of respondents, symptoms are mild or isolated; however, this quarter 0.7% of all respondents required a referral due to risks of self-harm or harm to others. Serious incidents of self-harm have been observed at an increasing frequency by UNHCR and partners across the country.

<sup>2</sup> Considering the sensitivities of this issue it is likely that child labour (including its worst forms) is underreported. This is also supported by field reports and key informant interviews which note a higher prevalence of child labour in refugee communities and households than the data reported here.

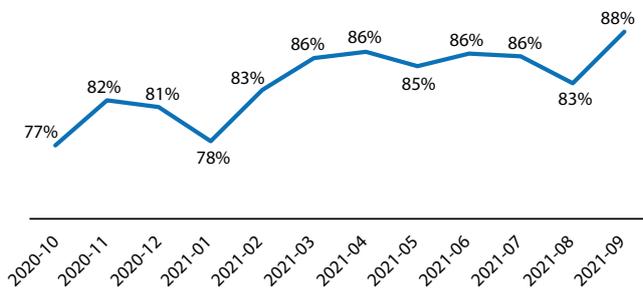
## Legal residency

- Rates of legal residency have continued to decline this quarter despite the reopening of the General Security Office (GSO) services following the national lockdown in spring this year. By September just 12% of households reported that all household members above the age of 15 have legal residency (a 15% average for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021 compared to a 20% average in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2020).

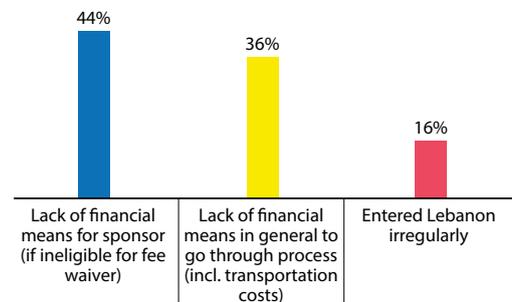
- As in the previous quarter, refugees continue reporting financial issues as the main barrier to obtaining legal residency (see chart on reasons for lack of legal residency).

- There is a correlation between increased economic vulnerability and lack of legal residency. For example, 84% of persons who were unemployed lacked legal residency, while only 16% of persons with legal residency were unemployed.<sup>3</sup> Households in which all members above 15 years do not have legal residency have 14% more debt than households in which all members above 15 years have legal residency. With the financial situation worsening, legal residency numbers are likely not to increase as families focused on their daily struggle may be forced to de-prioritize the challenging and costly task of obtaining legal residency.

Households where at least one member 15 years and older lacks legal residency



Main reasons why respondents reported not having legal residency

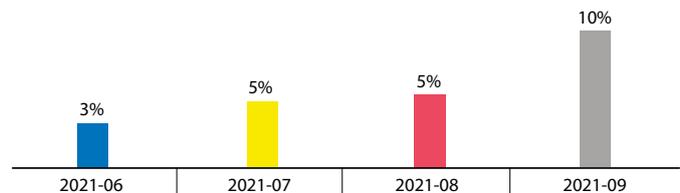


## COVID-19

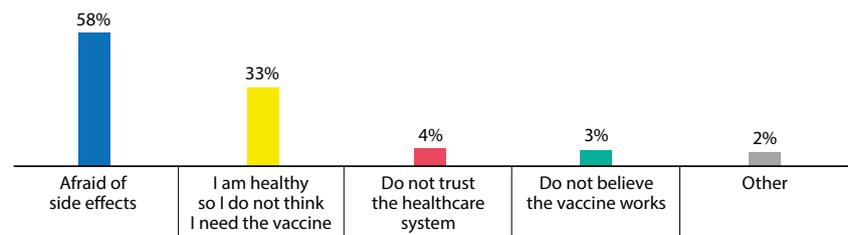
- In June this year the protection monitoring programme began collecting data to support vaccination campaigns. Since then, UNHCR has seen a small and gradual increase in persons reporting being vaccinated, from 3% of refugee households with all or some members vaccinated in June to 10% by the end of September. These improvements reflect the impact of UNHCR's ongoing community outreach campaigns, which have helped over 56,000 refugees register for vaccination.

- Nevertheless, significant challenges remain in getting the 73% of households where all members are hesitant to receive the vaccine registered and willing to proceed. The leading reasons for vaccine hesitancy have been fairly consistent throughout the quarter (please refer to the chart).

Households where all or some members have been vaccinated

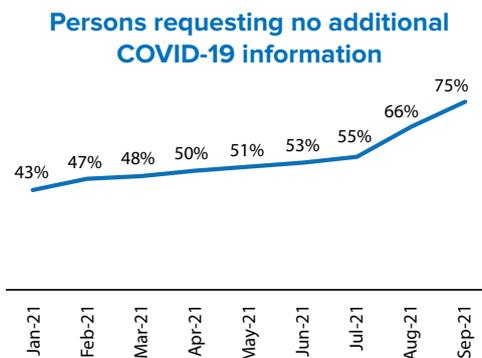


Reasons for vaccine hesitancy



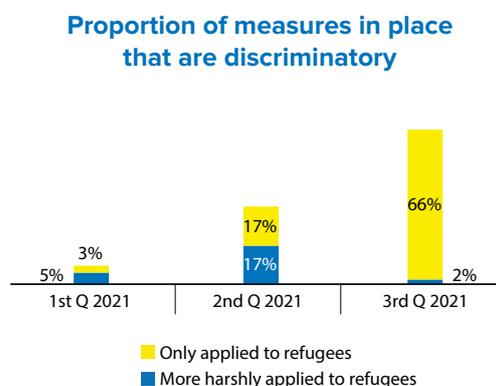
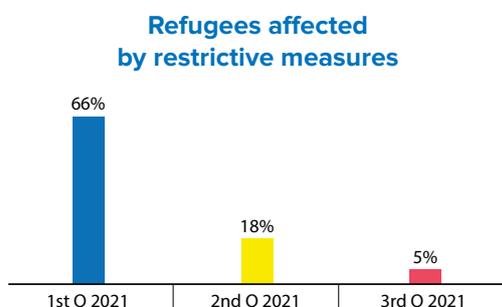
<sup>3</sup> According to 2021 VASyR.

- This quarter refugees increasingly said that they do not need further COVID-19 information, with 3 out of 4 refugees requesting no additional COVID-19 information at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter (this figure began at 43% in January of this year). This drop in demand for information is attributable to highly active outreach campaigns with large population reach, as well as a number of other factors including an apparent de-sensitization of communities to COVID-19 during periods when transmission rates remain limited.



## Measures impacting refugees

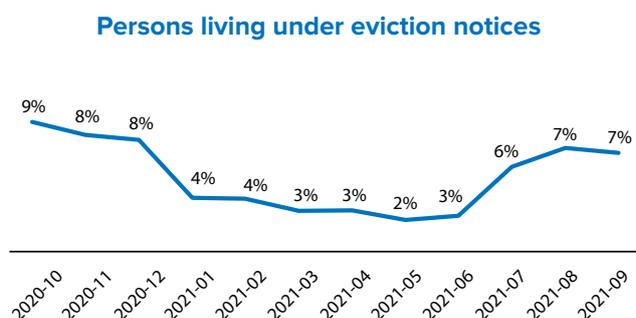
- A significant drop in refugees reporting to live under some form of restrictive measure continued since the period of the national lockdown in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the year, with 5% of refugees living under some form of restriction in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021.



- However, among those restrictive measures that have remained in place or have been introduced anew in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, a much greater portion are discriminatory. This is because the measures that remain are mostly curfews that apply only to refugees and which existed prior to broader national lockdowns. As of September 2021, a record high proportion of measures applied to refugees only (93%), with nearly all (98%) being in the form of curfews.

## Rent & Evictions

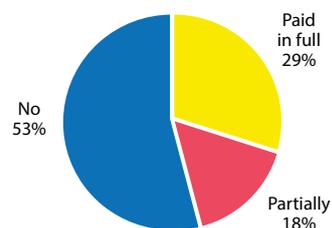
- Rates of refugees living under eviction notice increased in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter to 7%, up from 3% in the second quarter and 4% in the first. While this has not reached the rates seen in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of last year, it does indicate that the factors that affect refugees' ability to secure stable housing and sustain it over time are increasing, while landlords' leniency observed during the COVID-19 lockdowns may be waning. Further, key informant interviews highlight that higher rents are being sought by landlords both because of rumours



of refugees receiving high rates of assistance, and recently when actual assistance was increased. This practice by landlords adds to the pressure that refugees face in meeting housing needs.

- The growing housing insecurity facing refugees is supported by data on refugees' rental situations, which show that less than a third (29%) of the refugee population was able to make their last rental payment, while over half (53%) did not pay at all, and 18% made a partial payment. Refugees who were not able to make their last rental payment were most commonly four months or less behind on their rent; however, 14% of households owed more than four months of rent.

**Percentage of respondents able to make their last rental payment**



## Social Stability

- Rates of reports of tensions with the host community remain stable with 3% of respondents reporting that their household experienced such an incident in the past 30 days. Verbal harassment followed by physical harassment and then crimes targeting Syrians remained the most widely reported incidents of tension. In key informant interviews complementing household surveys, social stability issues were seen as more widely occurring in the second half of the quarter. Key informants report Syrians being prohibited from accessing fuel stations. There have also been widely reported tensions around access to ATMs with reports of various conflicts and extortion schemes being perpetrated against Syrian refugees trying to access assistance.