



FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT REPORT



SYRIA

OCTOBER 2015

Data collected May – June 2015



**World Food
Programme**

wfp.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Food Security Assessment report is a technical analysis of the food security situation in Syria covering over 19,000 households in safer parts of the country as well as in high conflict areas. This effort would not have been possible without the facilitation of the Government of Syria. Additionally, within the framework of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2139, 2165 and 2191, vital support was provided by cross-border NGO partners, notably International Humanitarian Relief and International Relief and Development, which gave this report its exceptional reach and insight, providing a fuller picture of the food security situation across the country.

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FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT: SYRIA, 2015

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security	CARI
Central Bureau of Statistics (Government of Syria)	CBS
Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission	CFSAM
Coping Strategies Index	CSI
Emergency Food Security Assessment	EFSA
Food consumption score	FCS
Internally displaced person	IDP
Planning and International Cooperation Commission (Government of Syria)	PICC
Coping Strategies Index	CSI
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	WASH

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FOREWORD

With Syria's conflict now in its fifth year and showing more signs of intensification than of abatement, the country and its people find themselves facing food insecurity and a humanitarian crisis. The expressions of that crisis are now all too familiar, both within and beyond Syria's boundaries. They are there in the camps that offer interim shelter to people forced to move from their homes to distant places of safety, in the women newly burdened with running and feeding their households alone, in the meagre or empty dinner tables across the country, and in the strong family and social networks that have been shattered by insecurity and displacement.

From a food security perspective, the headline figure is that one in three people in Syria do not have enough to eat. And that despite WFP and other food security sector partners having provided food assistance to six million people so far in 2015 alone.

Behind that figure, millions more people are marginally food secure. They have minimal adequate food consumption and use extreme coping strategies, such as incurring debt and selling their assets, which deepens the vicious circle of poverty and food insecurity in which they live. It means they cannot afford some essential non-food expenditure and, above all, it means that they stand at the edge of food insecurity.

Food security in Syria has already become a matter of serious concern, and the exceptional fluidity of the security situation has the real and immediate potential to erode that marginal food security and add many millions more to those who do not have enough to eat.

This report describes the food security situation in Syria. It is the product of a remarkable and wide-ranging research effort by WFP and its partners, and extensive consultation. It assesses the causes of food insecurity, analyses the strategies that people adopt to cope with food insecurity, and highlights geographical variations and needs. Many of its findings make for uncomfortable reading. It concludes with recommendations for action. And action is urgently required now – not just to continue supporting currently affected populations with food assistance, but to prevent many more people from slipping into food insecurity.

Matthew Hollingworth

Country Director

WFP Syria

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This [report](#) is the product of unprecedented, extensive and wide-ranging research and consultation. It offers a picture of the state of food security in Syria. It assesses the causes of food insecurity and highlights the major issues that expose conflict-affected Syrians to further risk, revealing the vulnerabilities and identifying areas where targeted assistance may be required.

The [picture](#) is highly fluid and rapidly changing. It is of a country and its people caught in complex conflict, assailed not just by the trauma of physical insecurity but by its many by-products, including displacement and hunger. The canvass is populated by images of women, men and children far from home and kin and unable to return; their faces lined with worry, their bodies leaner and more fragile than they once were; their dinner tables now frugal and sometimes empty from the necessity of circumstance; and the contents of their pockets translating into ever less, and less nutritious, food. It is a picture of people in the eye of a humanitarian storm.

[Food security](#) refers to availability of, access to, and utilization of food. The main [shocks](#) are conflict and insecurity; displacement; difficulties in moving from place to place; depleted assets; lack of employment opportunities; rocketing inflation; and high food and fuel prices.

Home to one of the most ancient civilizations on Earth, Syria is dominated by arid and semi-arid desert plateau, with mountains in the west. According to United Nations estimates, the population of Syria was 22 million in 2012.¹ Aleppo and Damascus are the only cities with populations of over one million (2.1 million and 1.7 million respectively), while Homs, Latakia and Hama are among the country's other significant urban centres. Syria's total land area is about 185,000 sq km, of which just 1,550 sq km is water. About three-quarters of Syria's land is agricultural, of which around one-quarter is arable, 44 percent is permanent pasture, with less than 3 percent forest. In 2010, it had a little over 13,000 sq km of irrigated land. Deforestation, over-grazing and soil erosion count among the country's key environmental risks.

This is a multi-dimensional study that has sought to identify the prevalence of food insecure people at national and governorate level, and to identify the underlying causes of food insecurity. It is the [first country-wide food security](#)

¹ <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Syrian%20Arab%20Republic>

survey ever done in Syria and will provide a baseline from which food security impacts can continue to be monitored. It will feed into future programming, the Humanitarian Needs Overview and national development plans. Furthermore, it will enable WFP to fine-tune response options and targeting for its 2015/16 programme.

The research followed standard WFP food security methodology. The sampling frame was developed with the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). The survey was conducted in May and June 2015, and was possible by the facilitation of the Government of Syria.

Within the framework of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2139, 2165 and 2191, the survey interviewed over 19,000 households across the country, including some of the more challenging areas. At the Damascus level, data were collected with the CBS enumerators and, in parallel, cross-border partners helped with data collection in areas not under government control. The sample design was representative at national, governorate, district, and urban and rural levels. It was not possible to conduct the survey in Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor governorates, because they were not accessible.

The report uses the consolidated approach for reporting indicators (CARI) of food security, combining a suite of food security indicators into a summary indicator. Indicators include the food consumption score (dietary diversity, frequency and nutrient density), adequacy of households' current food consumption, and households' economic vulnerability and asset depletion. These then combine to offer an overall picture of the prevalence of food insecurity in Syria.

Accurate, up-to-date population figures for Syria and its governorates are not available at present, which has made it difficult to determine the exact number of food insecure people. OCHA estimates suggest a population range of 14.9 million to 19 million people. Pending the availability of official population estimates, we have used the mid-range figure of 16.9 million.

Key findings The food security situation in Syria has now reached worrying proportions, not only in terms of its scale but also of its severity.

One in three Syrians – 6.3 million people – are food insecure.

2.4 million people are at high risk of food insecurity.

In addition to those already food insecure, **more than half** of all Syrians are at risk of slipping – quickly – into food insecurity. This figure would have been higher but for the assistance already provided by WFP and other Food Security Sector partners.

Less than 16 percent of the population are food secure.

More than 45 percent of people in Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo and Quneitra governorates are food insecure

These headline figures are of **serious concern**, the more so given a fluid security situation that has the potential to rapidly tip those currently just on the right side of food security into insecurity. The level of **food assistance** already provided by Food Security Sector partners – to a monthly average of 5.9 million people in 2015 in addition to agriculture-based livelihood support to over 600,000 people – has helped stabilize vulnerable people at the current food security level. Without that assistance, the overall picture is likely to have been very much worse. Without it, many more people will slip into food insecurity.

One in three people go to bed hungry between three and ten times a month

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) give rise to the greatest concern: they are the most vulnerable and the most food insecure. More than 40 percent of IDPs and returnees are food insecure. That compares to about 30 percent of host communities. Current assistance prioritizes assistance to IDPs, although host communities are increasingly seen to adopt detrimental coping strategies.

One out of three households reported that they have gone to bed hungry between three and 10 times per month, because there was not enough food to eat.

It is a diverse picture at the governorate level. In all governorates, the overwhelming majority of people are either already food insecure or at risk of becoming food insecure. The high number of critical sub-districts reflects a bleak picture of the food security situation in Syria. Further analysis of the 164 critical sub-districts shows variations in severity: there are 20 sub-districts with more than 80 percent prevalence of food insecure people and most sub-districts are within the 20-40 percent prevalence range.

The prevalence of food insecurity is higher in rural than in urban areas. This is in line with expectations, in part because people in urban areas typically have more markets and potential income opportunities than in rural areas. However, IDPs are mostly concentrated in urban areas and the difference between urban and rural prevalence is lower than would be expected in more normal situations, which further demonstrates the impact of displacement.

By sex of the head of household, there is a higher rate of severe food insecurity and vulnerability among female headed households than male.

Households that depend on casual labour or substantially on the generosity of friends and relations have higher rates of food insecurity, while food secure households are more likely to have regular incomes.

Most Syrians were found to use food-related coping strategies.² More than 60 percent of Syrians use livelihood coping strategies.³ Some of those strategies have long-term, harmful effects that reduce the possibility of climbing out of food insecurity.

At the time of the survey, more than half of all surveyed households across the country had gone into debt to pay for their food needs: the first step in a vicious circle. Rising food prices lead many people to buy food on credit. As their debt increases, so they become more vulnerable to food insecurity.

Conclusion

The survey's findings confirm those of the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment of May 2015. In addition to the huge number of already food insecure people, marginally food secure households are at risk of slipping into food insecurity, and require sustainable and continuous assistance to save and protect their lives and livelihoods.

Immediate joint action is required to protect these vulnerable households and to alleviate the impact of this humanitarian disaster.

² An indicator used to compare the hardship faced by a country's households by measuring the frequency and severity of the food consumption behaviours they engage in when faced with shortages of food.

³ This indicator is derived from a series of questions regarding the household's experience with livelihood stress and asset depletion during the 30 days prior to survey. Responses are used to understand the stress and insecurity faced by households and describes their capacity to regarding future productivity.

1 THE SYRIA CONTEXT



Geography

The country is dominated by arid and semi-arid desert plateau, with mountains in the west. There are some 190 km of Mediterranean coastline to the west, between Turkey and Lebanon. Syria's total land area is about 185,000 sq km, of which just 1,550 sq km is water. It has about 2,300 km of land borders, which it shares with Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel.

About three-quarters of Syria's land is agricultural, of which around one-quarter is arable, 44 percent is permanent pasture, with less than 3 percent forest. In 2010, it had a little over 13,000 sq km of irrigated land. Deforestation, over-grazing and soil erosion count among the country's key environmental risks. Syria has mild to cold winters, and dry, hot summers.

Population

Syria has seen substantial population growth in the last 50 years, rising from 4.5 million people in 1960 to nearly 22 million in 2012 according to United Nations estimates. Arabs – both Syrian and some Palestinians – make up around three-quarters of the country's population. Kurds make up nearly one-tenth of the population and are concentrated in the northeast of the country. Minorities include Christians, Turkmens, Circassians, Greeks and Armenians. Nearly 20,000 settlers live in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

Sunni Arabs make up some 60 percent of the population, with Shias accounting for around 13 percent, Christians 10 percent, and Druze 3 percent.⁴ The official language is Arabic, of which several dialects are spoken.

Syria's age distribution is overwhelmingly young; more than half its total population is aged 24 years or below. Just under 40 percent are aged between 25 and 54 years, while less than one in ten are over 54 years old. The median age is 23.3 years. The population growth rate has slowed steadily during the 21st century, falling from 2.58 percent in 2000 to 1.95 percent in 2010. Since the uprisings of 2011, and particularly since the onset of violent insecurity and civil war, the total population is believed to have declined. By September 2015, 4.1 million people had fled the country and 7.6 million had been internally displaced.⁵

⁴ Source: www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2006/71432.htm
⁵ www.unocha.org/syria

Aleppo and Damascus are the only cities with population over one million (2.1 million and 1.7 million respectively in 2004), while Homs, Latakia and Hama are among the country's other significant urban centres.⁶

Economy

Syria's economy has been ravaged by civil war and political strife in recent years. It has become, in large part, a war economy.

Until 2011, oil and its products dominated exports, with cotton and agricultural products also significant. Agriculture has accounted for about one-fifth of both GDP and employment. Between 2000 and 2008, real per capita GDP rose by 2.5 percent annually. The two most important sources of foreign exchange have been from oil exports and migrants' remittances.

Syria's economy has long been highly regulated and characterized by bureaucracy and, more recently, by US and European sanctions. These have run down the government's finances still more, contributing further to the decline in several productive sectors.

As the economy has slid, the currency has also lost most of its value. Many of the economic gains made before 2011 have now been reversed.

Poverty and human development

The conflict in Syria has profoundly wounded the country and its people. The consequences in human terms have a high and painful toll on those caught in its vicious embrace. The headline figures make dismal reading – GDP contracted by over 37 percent in 2013; nearly half of all public hospitals have been damaged; more than half of all students have dropped out of school; 90 percent of industrial enterprises have closed; more than half the population is unemployed, according to UNDP.

Within those and other, equally disturbing, figures are tales of despair for people, families and communities. UNDP has described the situation as catastrophic. "The conflict has resulted in the diversion of resources from productive to destructive activity in an anti-social environment that is compounded by criminality, lawlessness and terror. The continuation of such trends will have calamitous impact on the overall development in the country."

It goes on to describe the damaging effect of displacement that has led to a substantial part of the population departing or fleeing their normal place of residence, with over 4 million registered refugees from Syria in neighbouring countries, and another 6.5 million displaced internally within Syria.

Access to basic needs including food, water, electricity and medical supplies has been interrupted in areas witnessing intense conflict. Increasing numbers of unemployed people and soaring food and fuel prices across the country have also exacerbated the situation.

Security

Since March 2011, violence in Syria has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and injured countless civilians. The conflict has had a devastating effect on productive lives, with a concomitant impact on food security. Syria now has the world's highest number of IDPs, with many displaced twice, three times or more. Food productivity has declined significantly and access to markets has been severely disrupted.

⁶ www.cbssyr.org/new%20web%20site/General_census/census_2004/NH/TAB02-1-2004.htm,

2 METHODOLOGY



- The first comprehensive food security survey ever conducted in Syria
- Survey conducted in May and June 2015
- Over 19,000 households in 12 governorates surveyed – including high conflict areas
- State of food security assessed using the CARI method

OBJECTIVES

This Food Security Assessment is the first comprehensive food security survey conducted in Syria. It is a multi-dimensional, national study. The study aims to enhance the food security knowledge base, to inform programming and decision-making to develop appropriate responses for affected populations.

Its primary objectives are to:

- Update the prevalence and number of food insecure people at national and sub-national levels and identify underlying causes of food insecurity;
- Provide a baseline from which to monitor food security outcomes;
- Feed into the humanitarian needs overview plan, national and development plans; and
- Fine-tune the response options and targeting for the 2015/2016 WFP programme.

METHOD

Sampling methodology

The Government of Syria's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) provided the sampling frame. The sample design is representative for household data at the following levels:

- National;
- Governorate;
- District; and
- Urban/rural.⁷

⁷ Urban and rural distinctions use the government classification.

Sample size determination

The required minimum sample size for each governorate was determined using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{t^2 \times p \times q \times f}{(\varepsilon \times p)^2 \times H}$$

Where:

- N = Preliminary size of the represented sample
- t = Criterion against trust degree
- P = Probability of being in state of food insecurity
- Q = 1- p: Mathematical completion for the probability of being in state of food insecurity
- f = Fixed determination
- E = Allowed mistake/error percentage is 12 percent
- H = Family size average

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.12 \times 0.88 \times 1.5}{(0.12 \times 0.12)^2 \times 5.7} = 514$$

The total size of the sample will offer detailed indicators for each needed variable at national level in accordance with some recommendations related to the targeted groups.

To calculate the total sample size (nt) we use the following equation:

$$nt = n \times (D)^{0.65}$$

The value of (0.65) is adopted to control the sample size so that it is compatible with the field implementation capability under the assumption of the indicators at aggregated level (district-governorate-national), which are more trusted than using it at sub-district level.

$$nt = 514 \times (386)^{0.65} = 24674 \Rightarrow \frac{24674}{386} \cong 64$$

The total of 64 household is taken as a cluster – eight families in each cluster, and eight clusters in each sub-district.

The research followed standard WFP methodology. The main source of information for this analysis was primary data collected through household interviews and focus group discussions in all the communities visited.

Data management and limitations

Data were collected in parallel in May and June 2015 in 12 governorates. Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor governorates were not accessible during this time. Nearly all (99.5 percent) of respondents were interviewed face-to-face; the other 0.5 percent were interviewed by phone or through the internet. More than 250 enumerators and supervisors visited 301 sub-districts and neighbourhoods.

The assessment covered 19,156 households across Syria, excluding Ar Raqqa and Deir Ezzor governorates. These included 15,808 households in 11 governorates interviewed by CBS enumerators, covering some besieged and difficult to reach villages. Partners supporting cross-border operations from

More than 19,000 households were interviewed in over 300 sub-districts and neighbourhoods in 12 governorates

Table 1: Sampling table

Governorate	Sampling plan				Covered from within Syria		Covered from North		Covered from South		Total	
	No Sub district /neighborhood	number of clusters	number of households	sample size	No Sub district /neighborhood	sample size	No Sub district /neighborhood	sample size	No Sub district /neighborhood	sample size	Total household interviewed	% household covered
Damascus	35	8	8	2,240	35	2,240					2,240	100
Rural Damascus	40	8	8	2,560	31	1,984					1,984	78
Aleppo	76	8	8	4,864	32	2,048	7	464			2,512	52
Homs	30	8	8	1,920	24	1,536					1,536	80
Hama	31	8	8	1,984	24	1,536	2	184			1,720	87
Lattakia	28	8	8	1,792	28	1,792					1,792	100
Dir alzor	16	8	8	1,024	-	-					-	-
Idleb	29	8	8	1,856	-	-	26	1,656			1,656	89
Alhasakeh	21	8	8	1,344	13	832					832	62
Alraqa	12	8	8	768	-	-					-	-
AlSweida	14	8	8	896	14	896					896	100
Dara	19	8	8	1,216	11	704			15	793	1,497	123
Tartous	29	8	8	1,856	29	1,856					1,856	100
Quneitra	6	8	8	384	6	384				251	635	165
Syria	386	-	-	24,704	247	15,808	35	2,304	15	1,044	19,156	78

Turkey interviewed 2,304 households in 3 governorates (Idleb and parts of Hama and Aleppo), while from Jordan, 1,044 households were interviewed in 2 governorates (parts of Dar'a and Quneitra).

Given the extent of this undertaking, the survey was a huge challenge. A team of supervisors comprised of staff from WFP, CBS and PICC worked with enumeration teams to ensure data quality in data collection and data entry.

In Rural Damascus, an especially challenging governorate, all but one of the sub-districts were covered: a remarkable achievement to which WFP's partners made major and invaluable contributions.

Data were also collected in high-conflict areas in northern Aleppo, Idleb, Dara'a and Quneitra. The same standards were applied in all areas, with supervision provided by WFP teams.

Despite the exclusion of two governorates, it is as complete and representative of the national food security situation as is possible given the context.

MEASURING FOOD SECURITY

This report provides an overview of food security at the national (urban and rural) and governorate level in Syria. Food security depends on three main factors:

- 1. Availability** Food must be available in sufficient quantities and on a consistent basis. It considers stock and production in a given area and the capacity to bring in food from elsewhere, through trade or aid.
- 2. Access** Even when food is available, people cannot always access it. Food access is ensured when communities, households and all individuals have enough resources to obtain a sufficient quantity and quality of food for a nutritious diet. For Syria, this particularly includes the ability to physically access markets, which is challenging at best and impossible at worst in areas of conflict. People must be able to regularly acquire adequate quantities of food, through purchase, home production, barter, gifts, borrowing or food aid.
- 3. Utilization** Even if food is available and can be accessed, inadequate utilization of it will lead to malnutrition. Proper child care, providing a diet with enough energy and nutrients, safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, plus knowledge of food storage, processing, illness management and basic nutrition are essential to achieving adequate food utilization. Consumed food must have a positive nutritional impact on people. It entails cooking, storage and hygiene practices, individuals' health, water and sanitation, feeding and sharing practices within the household.

Food security is complex and multidimensional. There is no 'gold standard' for measuring it. But there are well-established proxy indicators. The Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI) was used to address the multiple dimensions of food security with transparent indicators that are consistent with internationally accepted food security concepts. CARI is a method for analysing and reporting the level of food insecurity within a population. Each surveyed household was classified by food security categories. This classification is based on the household's current status of food security (using food consumption indicators) and their coping capacity (using indicators measuring economic vulnerability and asset depletion).

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life

World Food Summit, 1996

To construct the CARI console (Figure 1), three indicators are considered: food consumption score (FCS), poverty, and livelihood coping strategies. These indicators describe two domains related to food security: current food consumption and coping capacity (summary of economic vulnerability and asset depletion).

Figure 1: CARI console: input indicators and their thresholds used in this study

	Domain	Indicator	Food secure		Food insecure	
			Food Secure (1)	Marginally Food Secure (2)	Moderately Food Insecure (3)	Severely Food Insecure (4)
Current Status	Food Consumption	Food Consumption Group	Acceptable ≥ 42	-	Borderline $28 \leq 42$	Poor $0 \leq 28$
Coping Capacity	Economic Vulnerability	Poverty	Total expenditure > 100% poverty line	--	100% poverty line > Total exp > 100% of food poverty line	Total exp < 100% of food poverty line
	Asset Depletion	Livelihood coping strategy categories	None	Employed Stress strategies	Employed Crisis strategies	Employed Emergency strategies

The console's domains represent two key dimensions of food insecurity. The first domain – 'current status' – uses food security indicators that measure the adequacy of households' current food consumption. Specifically, this domain is based on the food consumption score and/or food energy shortfall indicators. The second domain – 'coping capacity' – employs indicators that measure households' economic vulnerability and asset depletion. Specifically, this domain is based on a combination of the livelihood coping strategy indicator and either the food expenditure share indicator or the poverty status indicator.

The overall food security classification is calculated as follows:

1. Outcomes of each console indicator are converted into a standard four-point classification scale. The scale assigns a score (1-4) for each category, as shown below:

4-point scale category	Score
Food secure	1
Marginally food secure	2
Moderately food insecure	3
Severely food insecure	4

2. Construct each domain summary indicators for current status and coping capacity by averaging the scores of indicators for each domain;
3. Average the scores of current status and coping capacity domains, rounded to the nearest whole number, to derive the summary food security index (FSI).

Figure 2: Flow-graph of the CARI console components

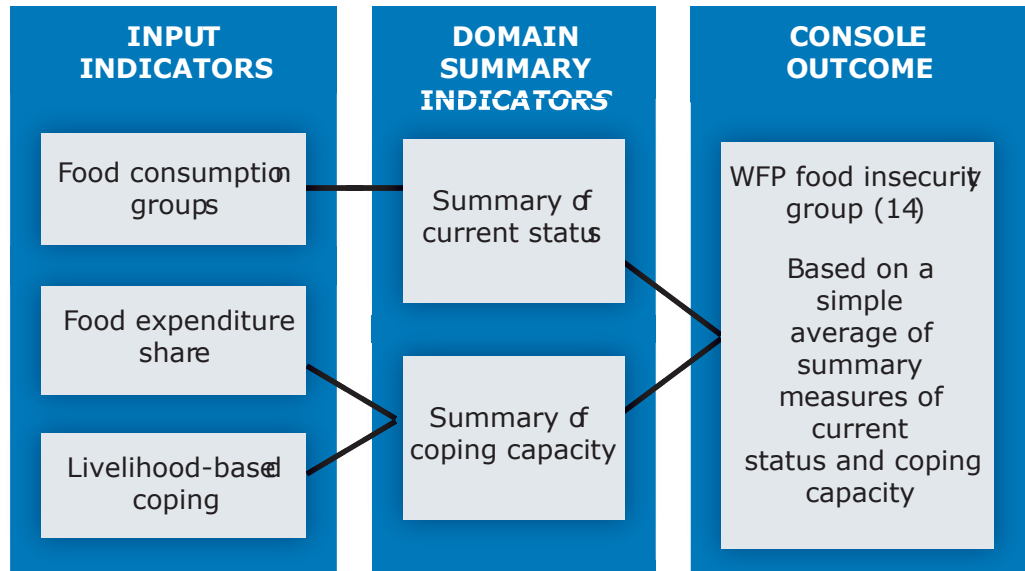


Table 2 shows the four FSI categories. The percentage of food insecure population is derived by summing the two most severe categories (severely and moderately food insecure).

Table 2: The four FSI categories

Food secure	Able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical coping strategies	Food secure
Marginally food secure	Has minimally adequate food consumption without engaging in irreversible coping strategies; unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures	Food secure
Moderately food insecure	Has significant food consumption gaps, OR marginally able to meet minimum food needs only with irreversible coping strategies	Food insecure
Severely food insecure	Has extreme food consumption gaps, OR has extreme loss of livelihood assets will lead to food consumption gaps, or worse	Food insecure

Food Consumption Group

The food consumption score (FCS) is a proxy to measure the adequacy of household food consumption. The FCS is calculated using the frequency and diversity of food items consumed by households in the preceding seven days. The analysis is run on the frequency of consumption from one or more items from the following food groups:

- Cereals/pasta (e.g. wheat flour, bread, pasta)
- Pulses (e.g. beans, groundnuts)
- Meat (e.g. beef, goat, poultry, eggs, fish)
- Milk and dairy products (e.g. milk, cheese, yoghurt)
- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Oils, fats
- Sugar

Households are grouped together to create three household food consumption groups: poor, borderline and adequate. Thresholds for separating these three groups were generated by a weighted food score. Each food group is given a weight based on its nutrient density, which is then multiplied by the number of days a household consumed one or more items from that group (Table 2).

A rank is then given to each household depending on its total food score. The minimum score is 0 and the maximum is 112. Note that the score is calculated weekly. Thresholds used in this assessment are 28 and 42 (Table 3), as almost all the households consume sugar and oil daily.

Table 3: Food groups and weightings

Food Item	Food groups	Weight
Maize, wheat, porridge, rice, sorghum, millet pasta, bread and other cereals	Cereals and Tubers	2
Cassava, potatoes and sweet potatoes		
Beans, peas, groundnuts and cashew nuts	Pulses	3
Vegetables and leaves	Vegetables	1
Fruits	Fruit	1
Beef, goat, poultry, eggs and fish	Meat and fish	4
Milk yogurt and other diary	Milk	4
Sugar and sugar products	Sugar	0.5
Oils, fats and butter	Oil	0.5

Table 4: Food consumption thresholds

Food consumption group	Standard threshold	Adjusted thresholds with oil and sugar eaten daily
Poor food consumption	0 – 21	0-28
Borderline food consumption	21 - 35	28 - 42
Acceptable food consumption	>35	> 42

Poverty

Counting the households that fall below the national poverty line is the most widely accepted approach for measuring a household's poverty status, or economic vulnerability. The poverty line represents the value – in local currency – of a standard consumption bundle of goods and services (both food and non-food) deemed adequate for an average adult to live satisfactorily. This consumption bundle comprises what has been determined as a person's minimum basic needs.

The food poverty line is part of the poverty line. It is an estimate of the cost of consuming a suitable daily intake of calories for an adult. Essentially, it is the minimum cost of a food basket required to ensure sufficient calorie consumption.

In this assessment, the poverty line is set as SYP10,916, and the food poverty line is SYP7,196, which are derived based on the poverty line and the food poverty line from the last Syria Income and Expenditure Survey in 2007. The FSA includes questions about household expenditures (food and non-food) in the previous 30 days, which is used to derive the poverty status of a given household.

HUNGER FOR DIGNITY

One of the survey’s enumerators recounts an incident that occurred as they interviewed people in one village in Hasakeh.

“We finished the interviews and sat down to drink the tea that the respondents had made for us. We noticed a motorbike a short distance away. Two men were riding it. At first, we thought nothing of it; it must just be passing through the village.

“But as we left, it continued to follow us at a distance. It started to come closer. We wondered what was happening. When it reached us, both men dismounted.

“Then something strange happened, something I’ve never seen before in 10 years working for WFP. Both men started crying. They cried for the dignity they were about to lose, because they asked us for food. They said that they had eaten only a few bits of bread in the last two days. They’d been displaced and were now living without shelter. They explained that they didn’t want the food for themselves, but for their families.

They had no clean water to drink either.

“I’ve never experienced anything like that before. Here, it’s shameful to beg for food and I’ve never before seen something like this.”

Livelihood coping and asset depletion

The Livelihood Coping Strategies indicator is derived from a series of questions on the household’s experience with livelihood stress and asset depletion (Table 5). Responses are used to understand the stress and vulnerability faced by households and describe their capacity for future productivity. All strategies are classified into three broad groups, including stress, crisis and emergency strategies.

During analysis, the most severe coping strategy the household reported is used to classify households.

Stress strategies, such as borrowing money or spending savings, are those that indicate a reduced ability to deal with future shocks due to a current reduction in resources or increase in debts.

Crisis strategies, such as selling productive assets, directly reduce future productivity, including human capital formation.

Emergency strategies, such as selling one’s land, affect future productivity, but are more difficult to reverse or more dramatic in nature.

Households engaging in routine economic activities that did not involve any of these strategies were considered equivalent to food secure in this indicator.

It was not the survey’s intention to measure malnutrition, although the questionnaire does include some nutrition indicators, such as child morbidity and water sources of the families.

Table 5: Livelihoods coping strategies questionnaire

Did anyone in your household have to engage in any following behaviour due to a lack of food or a lack of money to buy food?
Q.1. Sold household assets/goods (radio, furniture, refrigerator, television, jewellery, etc...) (Stress)
Q.2 Reduced non-food expenses on health (including drugs) and education (Crisis)
Q.3 Sold productive assets or means of transport (sewing machine, wheelbarrow, bicycle, car, etc...) (Crisis)
Q.4 Spent savings (Stress)
Q.5 Borrowed money/food from a lender, from bank (Stress)
Q.6 Sold house or land (Emergency)
Q.7 Withdrew children from school (Crisis)
Q.8 Sold last female animals (Emergency)
Q.9 Begging (Emergency)
Q.10 Sold more animals (non-productive) than usual (Stress)

If answer to question is 'no', why not? (1 = It wasn't necessary; 2 = I already sold those assets or did this activity within past 12 months and I cannot continue to do it; 3 = Not applicable)

3 FOOD SECURITY



- One out of three Syrians – 6.3 million people – are food insecure
- Many factors combine to create a fluid, changing and deteriorating food security situation
- About 60 percent more female-headed households are food-insecure and vulnerable than male-headed households.
- 8.7 million people need food assistance, and a disturbing number teeter precariously on the brink of severe food insecurity
- IDPs, returnees and women-headed households are the most food insecure

Many factors combine, often and unpredictably, to create a constantly changing and highly fluid food insecurity situation

OVERVIEW

Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Food insecurity in Syria has deteriorated over recent years. Some 6.3 million of its people (32.8 percent) do not have adequate access to food, and 8.7 million need some form of food assistance. Food insecurity in Syria is characterized by a high degree of economic vulnerability and asset depletion. A typical food insecure household has significant food consumption gaps with extreme loss of livelihood assets.

In rural areas, more than 35.7 percent of Syrians are food insecure. Urban areas are also of concern, with 30.6 percent of the population food insecure.

This study's results showed sharp variations in food security among governorates. More than 45 percent of people are food insecure in Hasakeh, Aleppo and Quneitra governorates. In terms of absolute numbers of people, Hasakeh, Aleppo and Rural Damascus have the greatest concentrations of food insecure populations.

Table 6: Food security group definitions

Food Security Index	Description	Food secure/ Food insecure
Food secure	Able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical coping strategies	Food secure
Marginally food secure	Has minimally adequate food consumption without engaging in irreversible coping strategies; unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures	
Moderately food insecure	Has significant food consumption gaps, OR marginally able to meet minimum food needs only with irreversible coping strategies	Food insecure
Severely food insecure	Has extreme food consumption gaps, OR has extreme loss of livelihood assets that will lead to food consumption gaps, or worse	

One in two people in both IDP and returnee household groups are food insecure.

Households that depend on food gifts, aid and unskilled labour have higher rates (40 percent to 55 percent) of food insecurity than those households that depend on remittances and private business, whose rates range from 27 percent to 32 percent.

One in three households reported that between three and 10 times per month they had gone to bed hungry because there was not enough food to eat.

A disturbing number of Syrians teeter precariously on the brink of severe food insecurity

Based on qualitative data, the study found the main reasons for food insecurity to include displacement, unilateral economic sanctions, insecurity, loss of assets, limited/no access to assets, limited income generating opportunities, rocketing inflation and high food prices, which negatively impact household purchasing power and food security. International sanctions have led to a marked reduction in the availability of crop protection chemicals and other agricultural inputs, and have also contributed to higher energy and import costs.⁸

Many factors combine and contribute – frequently and sometimes unpredictably – to a constantly changing, highly fluid food insecurity situation.

Of paramount concern are the 14 percent of Syrians – and 12 percent of WFP beneficiaries – that teeter precariously on the brink of food insecurity by using emergency and crisis coping strategies. The gravity of their situation – and of the overall picture of food insecurity in Syria – cannot be overstated. Given the highly fluid context of rapidly rising inflation, high unemployment, stagnating/stagnant salaries, inadequate access to markets and unpredictable security, it requires only a small adjustment in one or more of those factors to send them into a deep chasm of food insecurity. Despite food assistance, some people are still using negative coping strategies (Table7).

Table 7: Use of coping strategies, by WFP beneficiary/non-beneficiary

	Livelihood Coping strategy Categories			
	HH not adopting coping strategies	Stress coping strategies	Crisis coping strategies	Emergencies coping strategies
Non WFP beneficiary	40.0%	15.3%	10.4%	34.3%
WFP beneficiary	19.3%	16.4%	11.0%	53.4%

Until now, significant levels of food assistance have helped to keep those people out of food insecurity. But the humanitarian storm that already exists is a threshold to a major humanitarian catastrophe that has extensive onward implications both within and beyond Syria's boundaries. Urgent and immediate action is required to address widespread food insecurity in Syria.

FOOD CONSUMPTION, FOOD FREQUENCY, DIETARY DIVERSITY AND SOURCES OF FOOD

Food consumption groups are based on similar household food consumption characteristics and patterns. The standard food consumption groups are poor, borderline and acceptable. For the grouping, food consumption scores (FCS) were computed to distinguish between those different consumption groups.

Poor food consumption (0 – 28) in Syria corresponds to a diet that is dominated by cereals eaten on a daily basis, complemented by sugar. The mean percentage of people in the poor food consumption group at the national level for the poor food consumption group is 8 percent.

Borderline food consumption (29 – 42) The mean percentage of people in the poor food consumption group at the national level for the borderline food consumption group is 29 percent.

Acceptable food consumption (above 42) The mean percentage of people in the poor food consumption group at the national level for the acceptable food consumption groups is 62 percent.

It must be noted that acceptable and borderline food consumption are met at the expense of the households' future productivity and coping capacity.

Figure 3: Food consumption score, by governorate

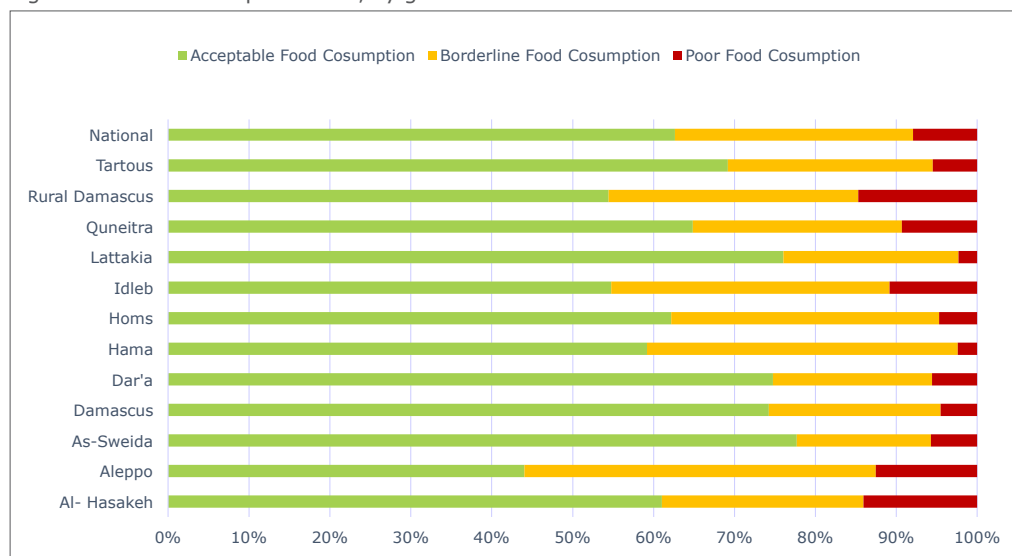
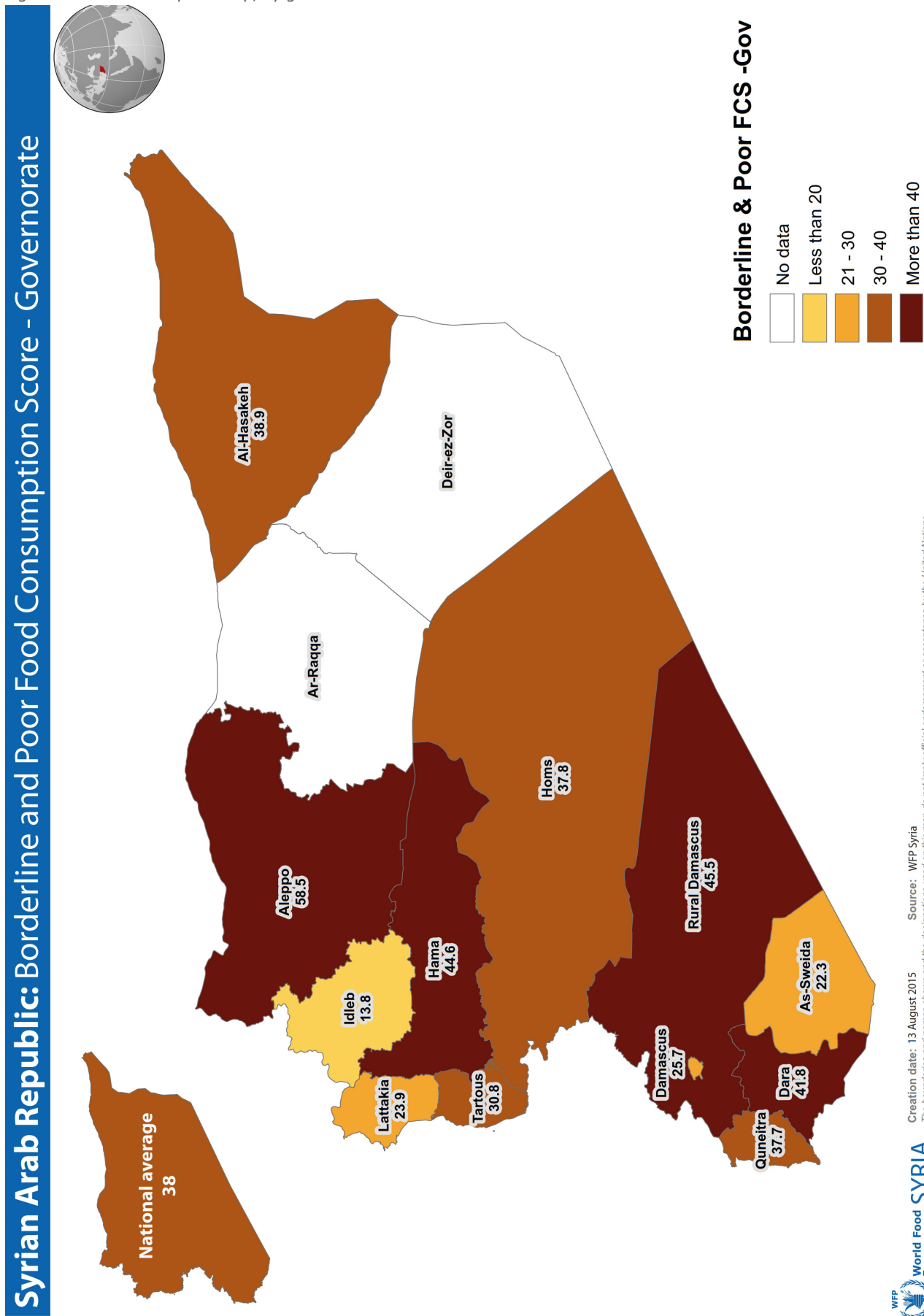


Figure 4: Food consumption map, by governorate



Dietary diversity The study uses FCS and dietary diversity. The FCS and HDD are used as proxy indicators of household access to food. Data collected for both indicators can also be used to analyse dietary patterns and the consumption of specific food groups. The household dietary diversity classification used a set of criteria based on the consumption of food items belonging to the main eight food groups: cereals; legumes and oilseeds; tubers and roots; vegetables and fruits; animal products; oils and fats; and milk and milk products. The criteria are:

- Low dietary diversity – the household consumes less than four different food items out of the seven main food groups each day.
- Medium dietary diversity – the household consumes at least four different food items each day, plus an additional food item two or three times per week.
- Better dietary diversity – the household consumes at least five food items and two additional food items each day on four or five days per week.

Low dietary diversity: 9.5 percent of households are characterized by poor dietary diversity consisting of cereal, sugar and oil. Vegetable about three times per week, and dairy, meat and fruit are consumed one to two times a week. They rarely consume other food items.

Medium dietary diversity: 24 percent are in this group. Compared to the poor food consumption group, this group has slightly better access to food, because many consume cereal, oil and sugar every day, with some also frequently consuming vegetables. They eat pulses and dairy items three to four times per week. Fruits and meat are rarely consumed by these households.

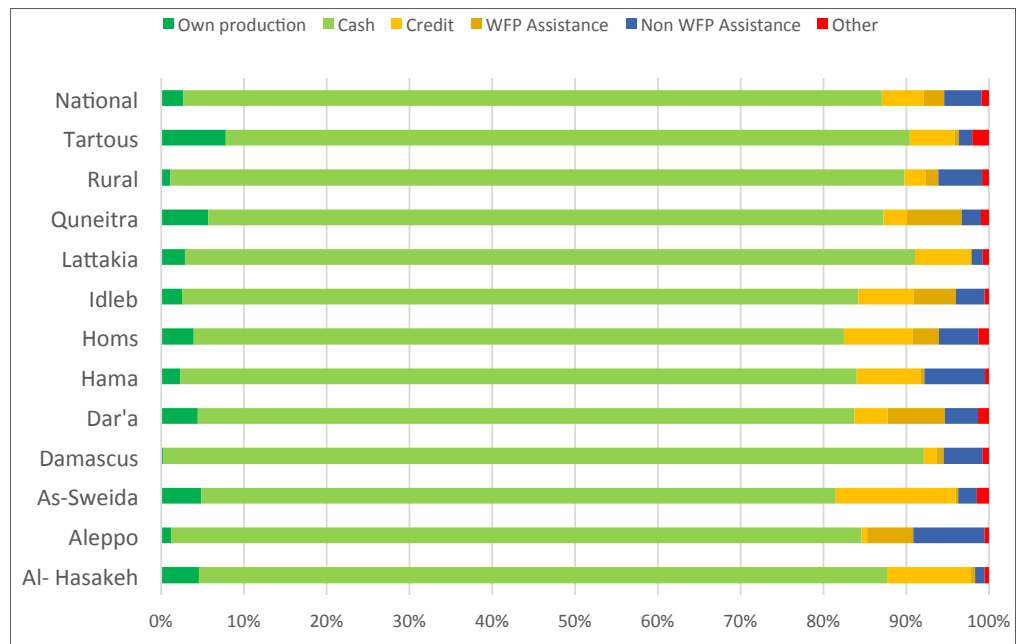
Better dietary diversity: the largest group of households in the sample (66 percent) have a slightly more diversified food intake. This group is characterized by a more diversified diet, although the different foods are consumed with varying frequency. They tend to eat cereals, oil and sugar every day, and most also consume vegetables. They also eat pulses, meat and fruit two to four times per week.

Table 8: Food consumption, by frequency of consumption and dietary diversity group

		Cereals / tubers	Meat / fish	Sugar	Vegetables	Fruits	Pulses	Dairy	Oil
Dietary diversity group	Low dietary diversity	6.98	0.06	6.69	2.86	0.02	1.35	1.79	4.79
	Medium dietary diversity	6.99	2.5	6.86	4.54	0.08	2.20	3.59	5.33
	High dietary diversity	6.00	1.86	6.93	5.43	1.58	2.94	4.33	5.39

Almost all Syrians are net buyers (89 percent in urban and 82 percent in rural areas), purchasing their food with cash from the market or shops, regardless of the household's food security and wealth status (Figure 3). Buying food is by far the most common source of food. For food secure households, over 90 percent of food is purchased by cash, while the figure for food insecure households is less than 80 percent. Overall, 30 percent of the food for poor and food insecure households comes through credit and assistance.

Figure 5: Sources of food, by governorate



WHO ARE THE FOOD INSECURE?

IDPs and returnees without sustainable livelihood strategies are among the most food insecure groups. In itself, migration increases vulnerability to food insecurity, particularly for poorer people. Conflict makes IDPs and returnees more food insecure. Some IDPs have been displaced more than once and, in some cases, more than twice, which exacerbates that vulnerability, increases dependence and further depletes assets.

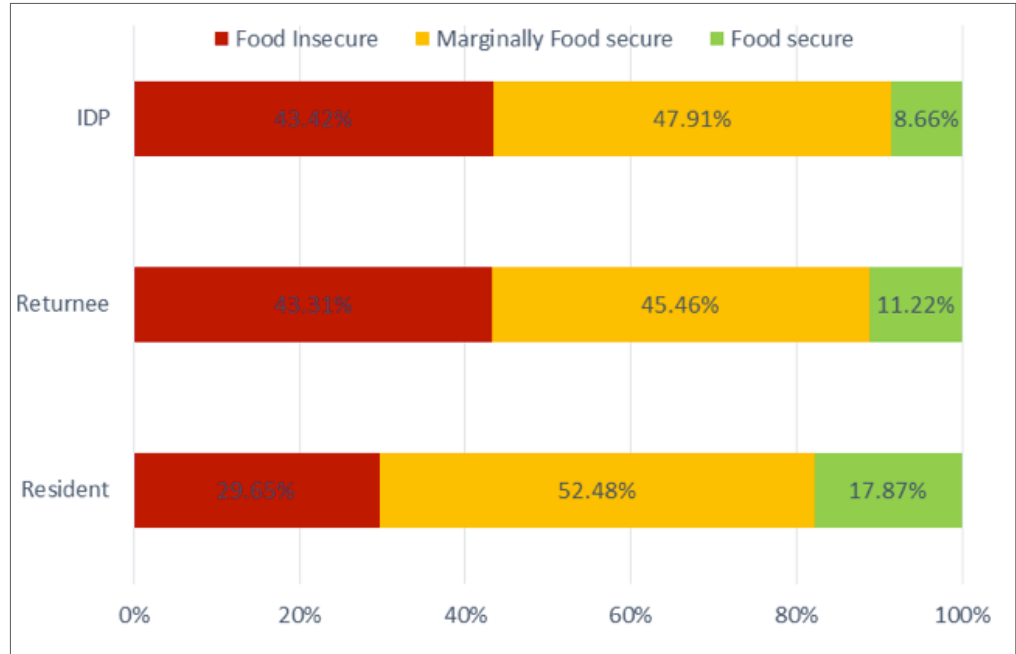
Female- and child-headed households, some of which are also IDPs, are the most vulnerable group. Many of these households have depended on remittances, which have become unpredictable. That has led to a high dependence on alternative sources of income, including from friends and relations.

Poor, rural households increasingly have limited or no access to markets and agricultural land. They have had to depend on casual labour, which has also become less available while reduced salaries and higher food prices have made them particularly vulnerable to food insecurity.

Households in besieged areas often have highly limited and unpredictable access to markets, while heads of household living with disability or chronic illness have experienced reduced access to medicines and health facilities. They typically have no regular or stable sources of income.

There can be considerable overlap between two or more of these groups, but together they represent 6 million people.

Figure 6: Food security status, by residency



WHERE ARE THE FOOD INSECURE?

The whole of Syria is food insecure. One-third of its population – more than 6 million people – do not have adequate access to food. What varies geographically is its severity and the extent to which it is influenced by external circumstances (Figure 7).

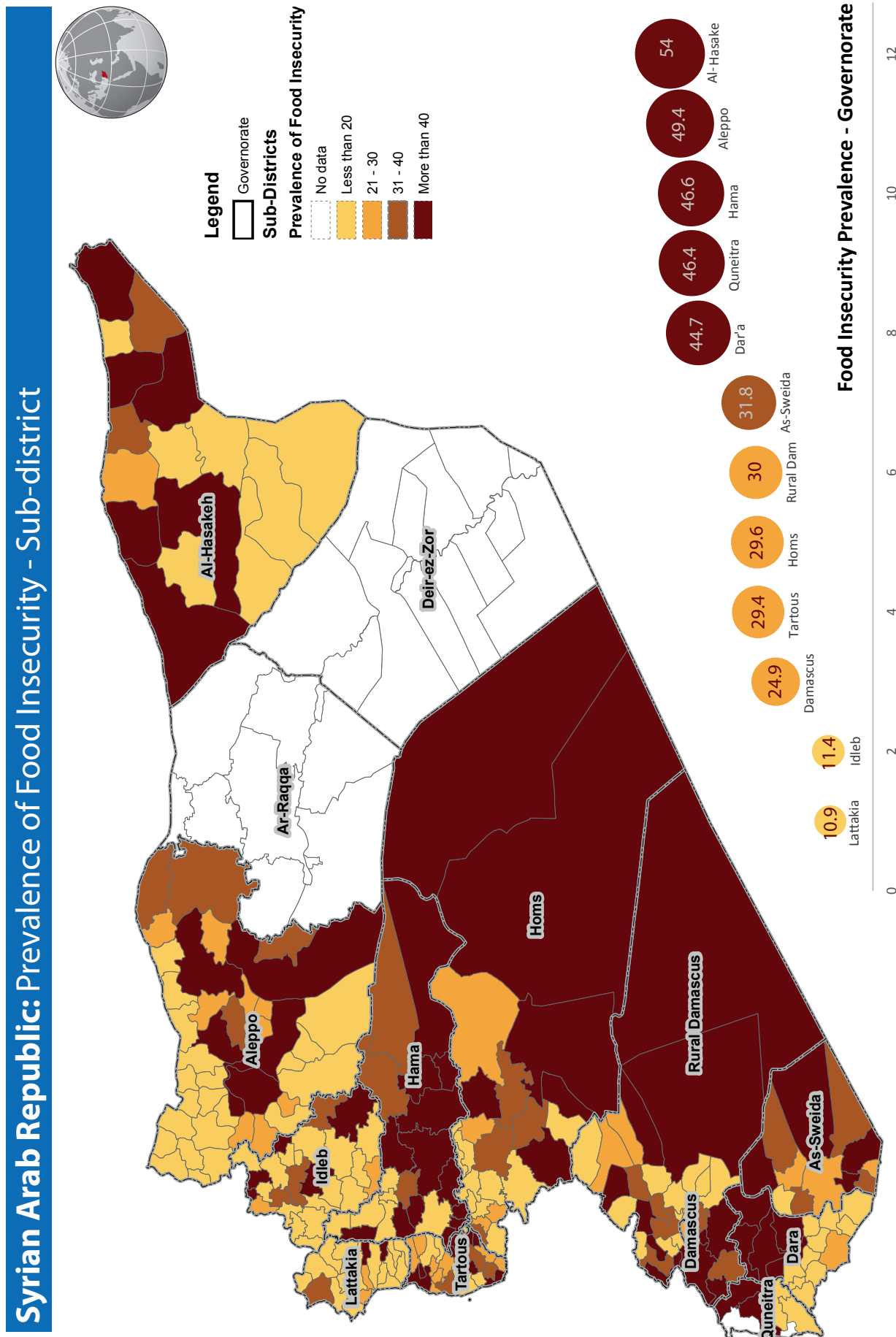
The situation is worst in Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Al Hassakeh, Hama and Dara governorates, where more than 40 percent of people are food insecure.

Food insecurity is higher in rural than in urban areas (Figure 8). This is to be expected, as the rural economy is dominated by agriculture, but the crisis has affected the rural sector and agriculture no longer contributes as much as it had before the crisis.⁹ However, the difference is not great. That is because IDPs have settled in urban as well as rural areas. There is a noted reluctance in IDPs to relocate to more remote areas for fear of, for example, limited access to support and services. This also affects agriculture, because a significant number of men in rural areas – those that would otherwise be farming – have either left the country or engaged in the conflict, leaving their families behind.

Above the figures for marginal food security – 50 percent in urban areas and over 53 percent in rural areas – stands the real and severe threat that these people will slip into food insecurity in the highly unstable environment of conflict, unemployment and rising prices.

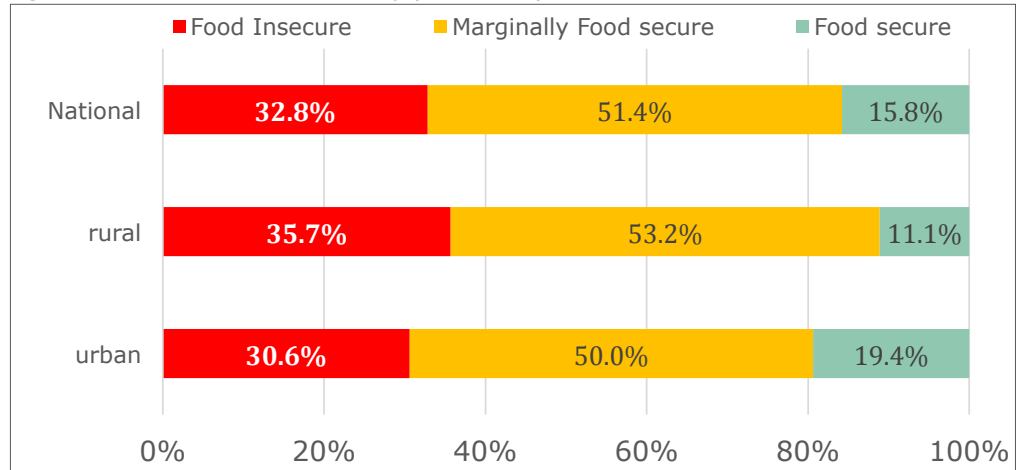
⁹ Government of Syria, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, 2010: National Programme for Food Security in the Syrian Arab Republic

Figure 7: Prevalence of food insecurity, by governorate and sub-district (%)



Creation date: 13 August 2015
 Source: WFP Syria
 The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Figure 8: Prevalence of food insecurity (rural/urban)



FOOD SECURITY AND THE SYRIAN FAMILY

Traditionally, the family has been extremely strong in Syrian society. This is reflected in many ways – through mutual support networks and a deep sense of solidarity.

It even has a role in promoting food security by, for instance, giving less fortunate family members food or money to buy food, inviting them for meals and, in rural areas, by sharing milk from a cow.

Internal displacement has threatened the strength of that fabric by severing networks and removing the practical means to share and support.

The north and northeast are Syria's traditional breadbasket regions. Al Hassakeh governorate alone accounts for one-third of aggregate wheat production. Final demand, however, is concentrated in the western governorates and the movement of wheat has been disrupted by conflict and rising transport costs. That has led to a reduction in the movement and trade of wheat, with the annual milling capacity down from about 3.8 million tonnes before 2011 to around 2.8 million tonnes in 2015. Damage to mills in Aleppo has left most functioning mills in Damascus and Homs. The fall of Palmyra in May 2015 further affected the routes used to move wheat from the east to Damascus.

WHY ARE THEY FOOD INSECURE?

The security situation continues to underpin and aggravate the various other factors contributing to food insecurity.

Years of conflict have had a cumulative effect not just on the country's economy, but on livelihoods and people's capacity to cope. Without a political solution to the conflict and adequate humanitarian assistance, household food security is expected to deteriorate. This presents a particularly high risk to more than half of Syria's population that was, at the time of this survey, marginally food secure and who are likely to join the worryingly high numbers of food insecure people.

One million people have already been displaced by conflict in 2015 alone, many for the second or third time, according to the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Displacement is one of the major drivers of food insecurity, because IDPs lose their livelihoods and productive assets. Since 2011, some 3 million jobs have been lost and unemployment in early 2015 stood at 57 percent – up from 10 percent at the start of the conflict. From January to April 2015 some 546,000 people were newly displaced, mainly in Idleb and Dara'a governorates, as a consequence of active conflict.

FSA findings show that more than one in three Syrians are already food insecure. In addition, more than half of all Syrians are at risk of slipping into food insecurity. In absolute terms, around 6 million Syrians are food insecure and require life-saving food assistance, while an additional 9 million Syrians are at risk of becoming food insecure and will require targeted interventions to protect their livelihoods and strengthen resilience to withstand further shocks.¹⁰

The 2015 Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) estimated a better wheat crop in 2015, but it noted that it still falls below the national food requirement, which leaves a forecasted deficit of about 800,000 tonnes of wheat. Increased production does not necessarily equate to increased food security, and the task of moving the food to where it is needed is far from assured. In some cases, substantial amounts of wheat (the main staple of the Syrian diet) have had to be stockpiled, because farmers have not been able to sell or transport them. That means that markets in parts of the country will not have sufficient stocks to meet demand, consumers will not have sufficient access to the wheat they require to feed their families, and both rural and urban livelihoods will be further stressed.

Unemployment and rapidly rising inflation make food significantly less affordable, even when it is available. Nearly two-thirds of the country's population live in extreme poverty and are unable to cover their basic needs, including food. Casual labour is the main income source for borderline households, but opportunities are increasingly scarce and IDPs and returnees have saturated such labour markets as do exist. Conflict has effectively crippled labour markets by undermining overall economic activity and restricting labour mobility. That, in turn, reinforces conflict by raising the appeal of employment by armed groups.

Rapid inflation is causing food prices to outstrip incomes, while the high costs of utilities and rent further pressurize already squeezed household budgets. For millions of Syrians, hunger has become a daily reality.

NUTRITION

Nutrition crosses sectoral boundaries and is influenced by numerous factors. Many of these factors existed before the crisis, but the situation has deteriorated since 2011. The most vulnerable groups are young children, women of child bearing age (particularly those who are pregnant or lactating), the elderly, the chronically and acutely ill, and households living in besieged or hard-to-reach areas and in informal shelters.

In Syria, several nutrition concerns were noted prior to the current crisis, with a reported 23 percent of children under-five being stunted, 9.3 percent wasted and 10.3 percent underweight.¹¹ Sub-optimal infant and young child feeding practices and micronutrient deficiencies, such as vitamin A, iron and iodine, also prevailed. After more than four years of crisis, which has resulted in mass population displacement and disruption in basic services, limited data is available to reflect the current situation in Syria.

A rapid nutrition assessment conducted by UNICEF in cooperation with the Syria Ministry of Health and Central Bureau of Statistics in 13 governorates between March and July 2014 indicate a continued poor public health nutrition situation, poor infant and young child feeding practices, moderate to severe micronutrient deficiency and an overburdened health system. The study found a global acute malnutrition (GAM) prevalence of 7.2 percent, with 2.3 percent severe acute malnutrition and 4.9 percent moderate acute malnutrition, indicating a poor public health situation.¹² Three governorates (Hama, Al-Hassakeh, and Deir Ezor) showed GAM above 10 percent, whereas the other seven governorates (except Dara, As-Sweida and Lattakia) reported GAM between 5 percent and 9 percent.

11 Syria Family Health Survey, Ministry of Health- 2009

12 Humanitarian Needs Overview (2015)-Syrian Arab Republic.

But it is noted that it was not a representative survey and that the data was predominantly gathered in government controlled areas.

Insecurity, restricted access to markets and high inflation have severely weakened purchasing power and consequently the food security status of poor households. Food prices of nutrient-dense fresh foods have increased more than staple foods, which potentially exacerbates the risk of micronutrient deficiencies that were recorded before the crisis. As more families adopt negative coping mechanisms and many are highly dependent on food assistance, the risk of malnutrition increases as their ability to supplement the food assistance with nutrient dense fresh food commodities decreases.¹³

Child health and nutrition

Before the crisis, infant and young child feeding practices in Syria were already less than optimal, with 46 percent of mothers starting to breastfeed within the first hour of birth. Exclusive breastfeeding rates were recorded at 43 percent, while 23 percent of mothers continued breastfeeding up to two years.¹⁴

Breast milk substitutes were widely used in Syria before the crisis and their distribution was controlled by government authorities. The Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment of 2014 reported “an increase in the vulnerability of children under five years old due to deterioration in nutritional status because of an increase in communicable diseases, inaccessibility to infant formula and increased risk of disease, particularly in areas with poor quality water, sanitation and hygiene. In the current survey, 86.5 percent of the children under six months of age were reported as breastfed on the previous day, 78.5 percent of those aged between six and 12 months and 28.1 percent of those between 13 and 23 months, which is slightly higher than the pre-crisis situation.

The breakdown in health services and deteriorated living conditions are reflected in high child morbidity. The current assessment found that more than half of the children aged between six and 23 months reported an episode of fever within the previous two weeks, and more than one-third had at least one episode of diarrhoea in the same period. This situation points to an increased risk of acute malnutrition in this extremely vulnerable age group. While 28.9 percent of children in this age group were reported to have received a fortified infant food product including specialized nutritious products provided by various agencies, the type of fortified food and the number of times received or duration was not determined. Frequency of solid foods eaten by children also appears to be lower than recommended. On average, children aged between six and 12 months consumed complementary foods twice a day while those aged between 13 and 23 months consumed a solid food three times a day. When energy density of the meals is between 0.8–1 kcal/g, breastfed infants aged between six and eight months need two to three meals per day, while breastfed children aged between nine and 23 months need three to four meals per day, with one or two additional snacks as desired.¹⁵

Given that a large proportion of families are unable to afford micronutrient-rich fresh foods including fresh vegetables and meats as is apparent from the food consumption data in this survey, a preventive component for the most vulnerable age groups especially children needs to be part of food assistance programmes.

13 WFP Nutrition Strategy, 2015–2017

14 Syria Family Health Survey, 2009.

15 WHO/PAHO. Guiding principles for complementary feeding of the breastfed child. Washington, DC, Pan American Health Organization, 2003

ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY

In the CARI console, a household's economic vulnerability is determined using the poverty status, based on the national poverty line.

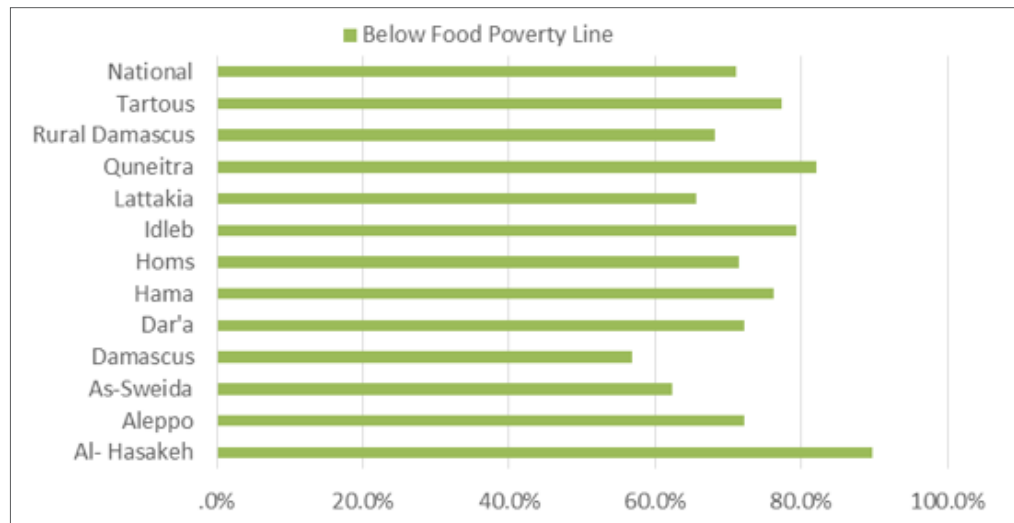
Poverty

Using the standard methodology set by the PICC and CBS, adapted to the national context, households are classified as above or below the absolute poverty line and food poverty line. This study established the poverty line at SYP10,916 and the food poverty line at SYP7,196, based on the last Syria Income and Expenditure Survey in 2006/07.

The food poor are those who spend less on food than is required to consume the minimum level of calories for a healthy, active life (based on the types of foods). Food insecurity and poverty go hand in hand.

Nationally, 71 percent of households fall below the food poverty line (Figure 9). By governorate, there are variations, ranging between 62 percent and 80 percent. Damascus governorate has the least poverty, with only 56 percent of households below the food poverty line. Food poverty is more prevalent in rural areas (77 percent) than in urban areas (63 percent).

Figure 9: Proportion of households below the food poverty line, by governorate



Livelihood coping and asset depletion

The Livelihood Coping Strategies indicator is derived from a series of questions about the household's experience with livelihood stress and asset depletion in the 30 days before the survey (Table 9). Responses are used to understand the stress and insecurity faced by households and describes their coping capacity level.

The livelihoods-based coping strategies module is used to better understand longer-term coping capacity of households. The module is adapted to suit the local context.

WHY NOT?

For some people, the entrepreneurial spirit offers another way of coping. ‘Syria: Why Not’ is a short film made by IOM in 2015. It tells the story of a man who had to leave his home in Aleppo and moved to a safe area in Tartous. There was no work, so he sold his small car, rented a basement and bought two long tables. From that emerged a small business in printing tee-shirts. He enlisted the help of relations and other local businesses and started a sewing unit where he made the clothes that would then be printed in that basement workshop. He now has a thriving small business that employs 60 local families and, despite frequent power cuts, sells to several of Tartous’s fashion outlets. Why not watch it now at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lY_tZb-BOPI&feature=youtu.be

Table 9: Coping Strategies Indicator questions

Did anyone in your household have to engage in any following behaviours due to a lack of food or a lack of money to buy food? (1=Yes; 2= no)
Q.1. Sold household assets/goods (radio, furniture, refrigerator, television, jewellery, etc...)
Q.2 Reduced non-food expenses on health (including drugs) and education
Q.3 Sold productive assets or means of transport (sewing machine, wheelbarrow, bicycle, car, etc...)
Q.4 Spent savings
Q.5 Borrowed money/food from a lender, from bank
Q.6 Sold house or land
Q.7 Withdrew children from school
Q.8 Sold last female animals
Q.9 Begging
Q.10 Sold more animals (non-productive) than usual

If answer to question is ‘no’, why not? (1 = It wasn’t necessary; 2 = I already sold those assets or did this activity within past 12 months and I cannot continue to do it; 3 = Not applicable)

All strategies are classified into three broad groups, including stress, crisis and emergency strategies.

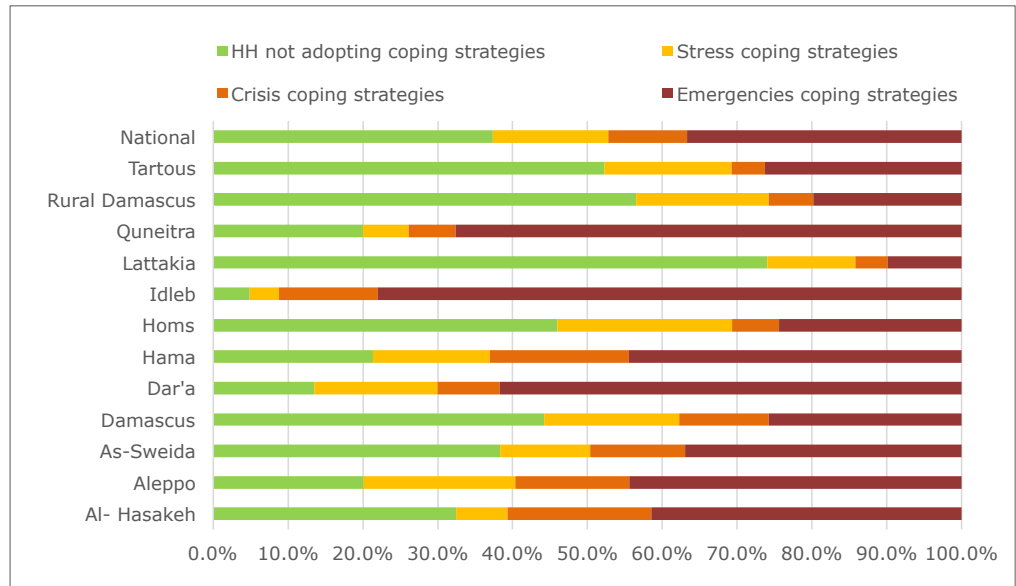
15 percent of Syrians have used stress strategies, such as borrowing money or spending savings. They have a reduced ability to deal with future shocks due to a current reduction in resources or increase in debts.

11 percent of Syrians have used crisis strategies, such as selling productive assets. This directly reduces future productivity, including human capital formation.

37 percent of Syrians have used emergency strategies, such as selling one’s land, selling the last female animals and begging. This affects future productivity. It is more difficult to reverse or more dramatic in nature.

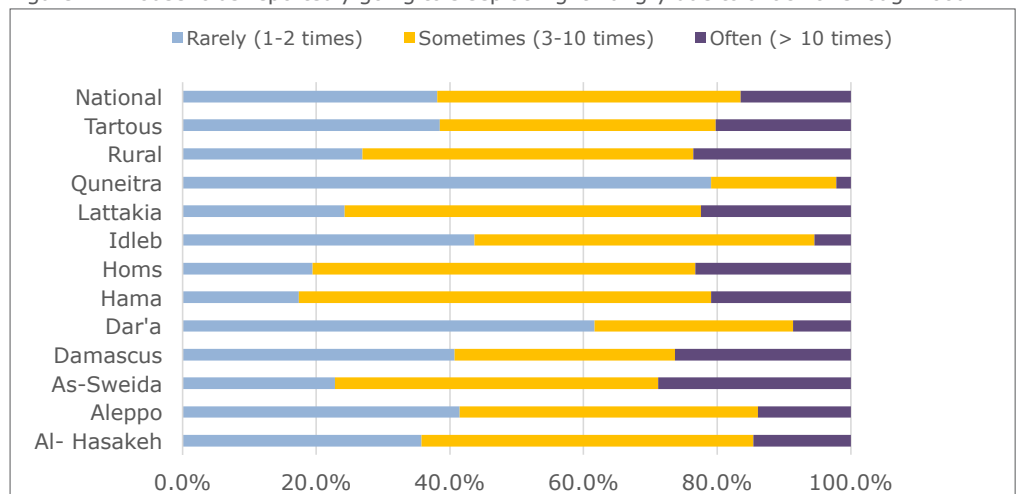
The remaining 37 percent of Syrian households have engaged in routine economic activities that did not involve any of these strategies. They are considered equivalent to food secure on this indicator.

Figure 10: Adoption of coping strategies, by governorate



16 percent of Syrians often go to bed hungry (>10 times per month), with a further 45 percent sometimes going to bed hungry (three to 10 times per month), because there was not enough food to eat. Another 38 percent have reported that they occasionally (once or twice per month) go to sleep at night hungry because there was not enough food to eat. That leaves 1 percent of Syrians who never go to bed hungry (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Households reportedly going to sleep at night hungry due to a lack of enough food



WOMEN AND FOOD SECURITY

There is a clear, strong link between the educational level of the household head and the food security status of the household. A good educational status for both men and women results in a significant decrease in their vulnerability to food insecurity; and a better food security status is likely to promote a higher educational attainment. The more limited the educational level of the household head, the less adequate the family's food consumption.

Women have a central and decisive role in the food security of their household, and in their children's health. Rural women are among the country's most disadvantaged people and suffer the most from poverty and its physical and social manifestations. They play important – but often invisible – roles in raising livestock, growing crops and processing food.

Many households have lost their traditional head of household, usually a man. The survey found that about 60 percent more female-headed households are food-insecure and vulnerable than male-headed households (Table 10). The absence of skilled employment for many rural women, along with a large number of households in which the male head has either migrated in search of work or has joined an armed force, renders women-headed households particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and other risks.

Table 10: Food-related indicators, by sex of household head

Indicator	Level	Sex of household head	
		Male	Female
Food consumption	Acceptable Food Consumption	63%	58%
	Borderline Food Consumption	29%	31%
	Poor Food Consumption	8%	12%
Dietary diversity	Low Dietary Diversity	9%	12%
	Medium Dietary Diversity	24%	28%
	High Dietary Diversity	67%	61%
Food-related coping	Low coping	35%	33%
	Medium coping	33%	33%
	High coping	32%	35%
Food security (CARI)	Food secure	15%	20%
	Marginally food secure	51%	44%
	Food insecure	33%	36%
Livelihood coping	Households not adopting coping strategies	37%	42%
	Stress coping strategies	15%	18%
	Crisis coping strategies	11%	10%
	Emergency coping strategies	37%	30%
Livelihood	Skilled labour	12%	6%
	Unskilled labour	11%	7%
	Informal/small business	9%	5%
	Savings	3%	3%
	Remittance	1%	6%
	Gifts from relatives and friends	1%	7%
	Salaries and pensions	49%	51%
	Services	3%	3%
	Agriculture	8%	4%
	Aid	1%	7%
Other	1%	1%	

“Everything comes down to one common denominator, and that is the conflict.

Many displaced people in Syria have moved two, three, four, five times over the last four years. Each time they

Food consumption Food consumption scores are lower for women-headed households across all levels. The difference is most acute at the poor food consumption level, with twice as many women-headed households eating poorly than male-headed households.

Dietary diversity A similar pattern is observed for dietary diversity, with women-headed households consistently eating a smaller range of foods than male-headed households.

move, they lose an asset. They sell something in order to keep living and after these years people just don't have anything else to sell. They can't afford to buy the food available in the market, and food items are costing five or ten times more than they did before the crisis. In the 2014 winter, there was excellent rain, so actually the food production improved, but the prices are just too high. And because of the conflict, it's very hard to move it around the country. WFP is moving 3,000 trucks every single month around the country. It's incredibly dangerous. The transporters we work with are the unsung heroes of the conflict. We've had ten to fifteen goes at reaching people in besieged or hard-to-reach areas, but when we do get access to people we know that what we're bringing them is not enough."

Matt Hollingworth,
WFP Syria
Country Director,
speaking on The
Food Chain, BBC
World Service
(September
2015)

Food-related coping There is a smaller difference between female- and male-headed households in food-related coping. Around one-third of all households surveyed adopt some kind of coping for food. Around 10 percent more female-headed households adopt food-related coping than their male counterparts.

Food security (CARI) Interestingly, around one-third more female-headed households are food secure than male-headed households. However, the figures for both are worryingly low. About one-third of all households are food insecure. The figures for marginally food secure households give arguably the greatest concern for the future, with more than half and almost half of all male- and female-headed households respectively in this category. Given the instability of the security situation, which is the major present driver of food insecurity, a large proportion of these households are at immediate risk of falling into food insecurity.

Livelihood coping Most Syrian families are now using livelihood coping strategies. Of greatest concern are the more than one-third of all families who have had to adopt emergency coping strategies. This figure is significantly higher, though, for male-headed households than female-headed households. Female-headed households use most of their debt to buy food, but have less access to credit than male-headed households.

Livelihoods Around half of all heads of household depend on salaries and pensions for their income. Approximately one in five households depend on skilled and unskilled labour. About six times more women-headed households depend on remittances and aid for their incomes.

DEBT

The availability of credit has reduced dramatically as a consequence of deteriorating economic and security situations. Collected data suggest that considerably fewer farmers have obtained loans from the Agricultural Bank – just 27 percent of interviewees in 2015 compared to more than half before the crisis. Most respondents said that they had used their loans for the agreed purpose. The highest proportion of loans was taken in Sweida province. This is largely because most fruit farmers take loans in May, when the survey was conducted, and because Sweida has been less affected by the security situation than other areas.

In Al Hasakeh, most wheat farmers are entitled to loans, particularly in Kurdish areas where fighting is less and the loan procedures are only marginally affected by the crisis. However, 34 percent were unable to repay their loans. This is a significantly higher rate than before the crisis.

Most IDPs (68 percent) could not obtain a loan, because they were unable to provide the guarantees and documentation required to secure the loan. A high rate (63 percent) of those IDPs that did have a loan were unable to repay it.

However, social capital plays an important role in Syria and most borrowing – particularly by IDPs – now occurs from friends and relations. This has become the first line of response to food insecurity. Most borrowing is sourced from within Syria, although in Sweida some people obtain loans from relations outside the country. This can become a high risk strategy for both lender and borrower, because resident households are also food insecure – albeit not as severely as IDPs.

Nearly one in every three households is indebted. The purchase of food is the main reason for that debt. Most (70 percent) source their debt from family and friends, with just 14 percent using formal credit sources. Rural households tend to be able to access more formal credit than their urban counterparts. Households in safer areas have better access to formal credit, which makes for a highly variable geographical pattern of debt (Figure 12). Female-headed households use most of their debt to buy food, but have less access to credit than male-headed households.

Overall, debt taken from traders accounted for 23 percent of all debt, with banks (14 percent) the next most favoured sources of credit. This may be explained by a combination of increased solidarity among family and close network members during times of crisis, and greater reluctance by traders to lend due to concerns over repayment.

In Lattakia, Tartous and Quneitra, most loans were taken from banks, while the greatest number of loans in Aleppo and Rural Damascus respectively were provided by family and friends.

Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of IDPs (84 percent) obtained loans from family and friends (Figure 13). Permanent residents, meanwhile, were more likely to get a loan from a trader than IDPs (26 percent against 15 percent, respectively).

Figure 12: Debt, by governorate

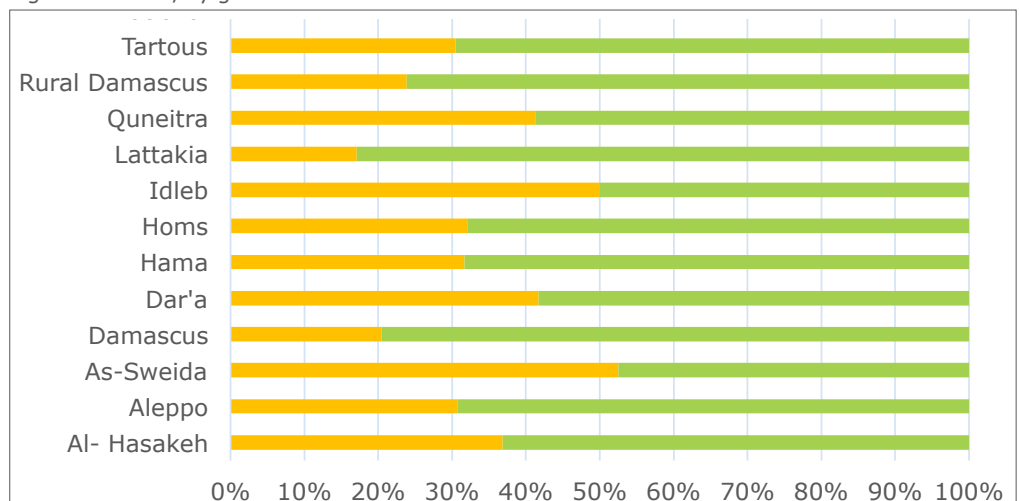
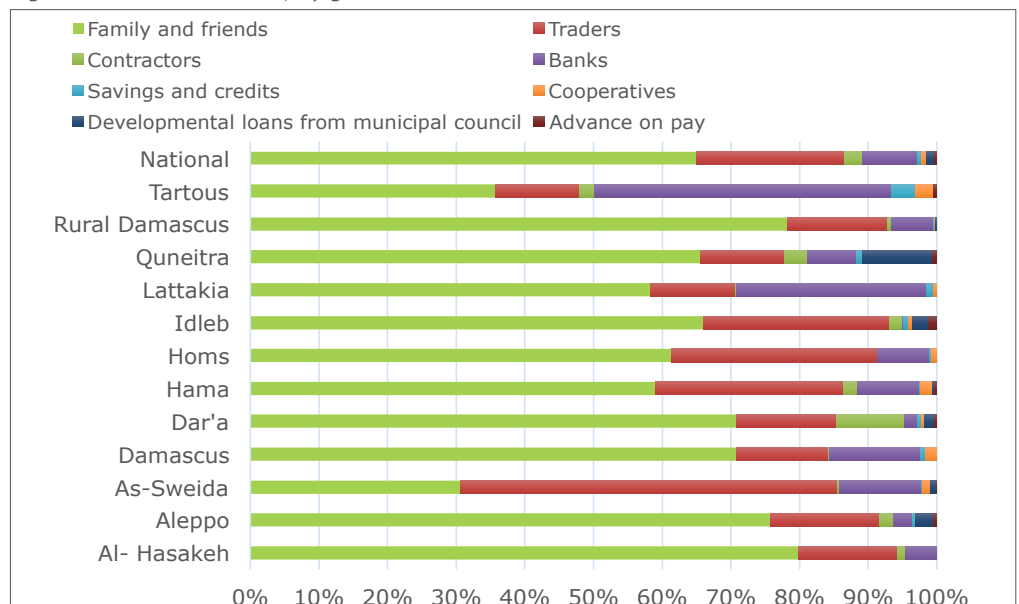
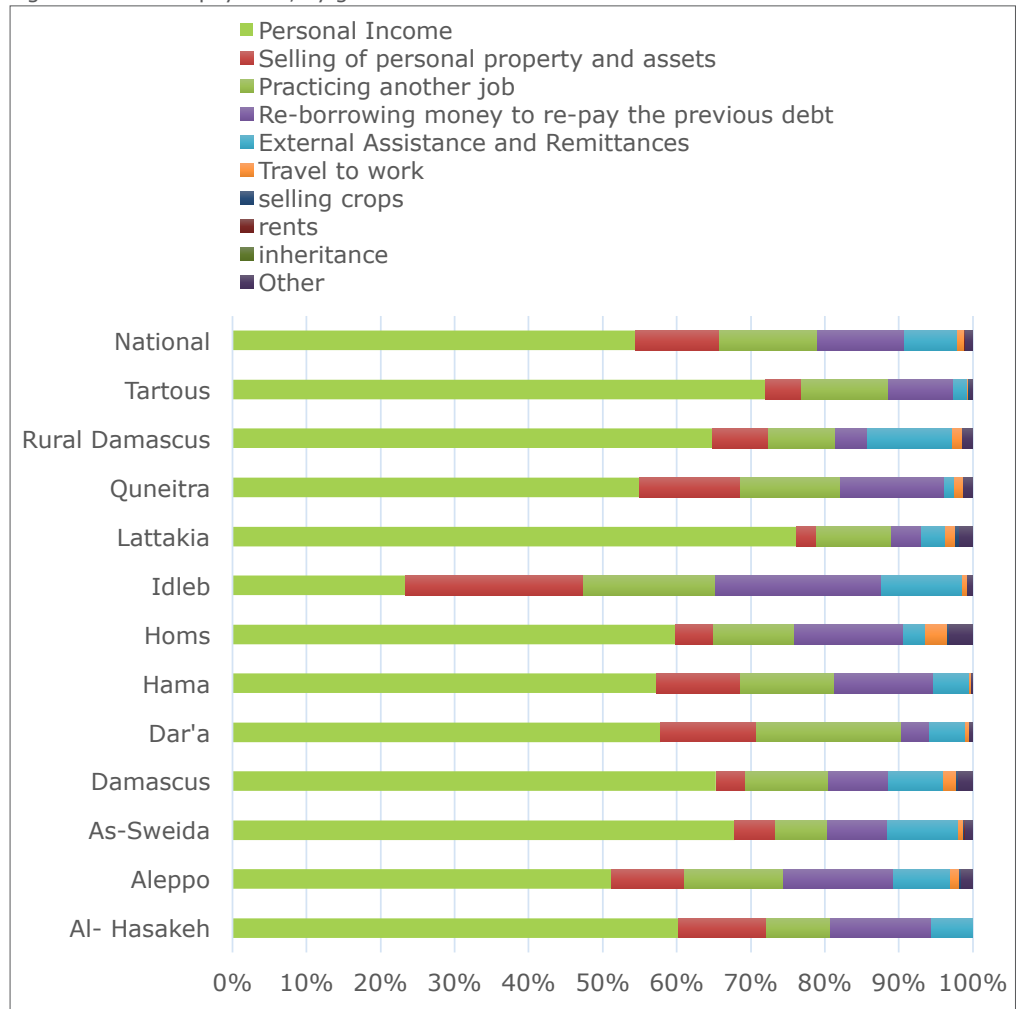


Figure 13: Sources of debt, by governorate



Most debt is repaid from personal income, although selling assets and personal property is, alarmingly, among the next most used repayment methods (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Debt repayment, by governorate



SHOCKS AND COPING STRATEGIES

Household food security is influenced by the external environment in which people live. Within the external environment, critical trends (e.g. population growth, national and international economic trends, governance and technological changes), seasonal cycles (of prices, production, livelihood strategies) and shocks (natural and resulting from human intervention) frame the vulnerability context. Within that vulnerability context, the risk of ensuing food insecurity is defined as the interaction between the probability of a given hazard of a certain intensity, the vulnerability of the population to the hazard and the size of the population.

The most pressing difficulties experienced by focus group discussion include high food prices, displacement, international sanctions, insecurity, loss of assets and rocketing inflation, which negatively impact household purchasing power and food security.

“What do you do when you don’t have enough food, and don’t have enough money to buy food?”

This simple question is the basis of the CSI.

Coping Strategies Index (CSI)

The Coping Strategy Index (or the consumption CSI) measures the behaviours adopted by households when they have difficulties in covering their food needs. This indicator assesses whether there has been a change in the consumption patterns of a given HH. It is calculated using standard food consumption-based strategies and severity weighting.

The CSI was used as another proxy indicator of household food security in order to better understand how Syrians cope in response to food access constraints. Households were asked on how many of the past seven days they experienced not having enough food or money to buy food. If households reported having experienced this difficulty by indicating the number of days, they answered five questions on five types of strategy that could be applied to make ends meet, including:

1. Rely on less preferred and less expensive food;
2. Borrow food or rely on help from friends/ relatives;
3. Limit portion size at mealtimes;
4. Restrict consumption by adults in order for small children to eat; and
5. Reduce the number of meals eaten in a day.

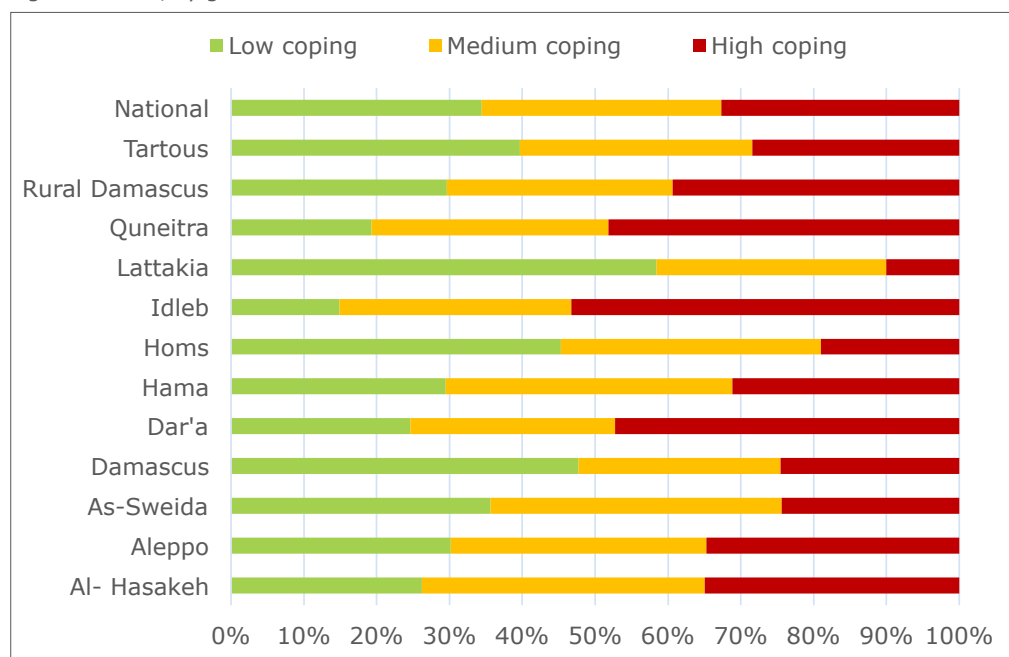
The information was used to compute a summative scale, the reduced CSI, which takes into account both the frequency and gravity of the strategy used.

CSI terciles were calculated as the terciles (low, medium and high) of the reduced CSI variable, each of which represents 33 percent of the households that report not having enough food or money to buy food.

At the national level, almost every household experienced difficulties in accessing food (Figure 15). The survey found that families choose their coping strategy by:

- Reliance on cheaper and least preferred foods (88 percent);
- Borrowing food and depending on help from friends and relatives (25 percent);
- Reducing the size of meals (40 percent);
- Reducing adult consumption in favour of more food for children (24 percent); and
- Reducing the number of daily meals (23 percent).

Figure 15: CSI, by governorate



4 HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS AND ACCESS TO SERVICES



- More than one in ten households are female-headed
- Average household comprises five members
- 11 percent of households have at least one person with a disability
- School attendance is highest in urban areas
- 70 percent of households have moderate access to public water networks

DEMOGRAPHY OVERVIEW

The age and sex breakdown from the food security analysis indicates that 36 percent of the population is 15 years of age or younger (school age/pre-school age). Some 60 percent of Syrians are between 15 and 64 years old (workforce), while only 4 percent are over 64 years old (dependence). 51 percent of the population are female and 49 percent are male (Table 11).

The average size of household in the survey is five, with a roughly equal number of females and males. Male-headed households are typically larger than those headed by women, with six and four members, respectively.

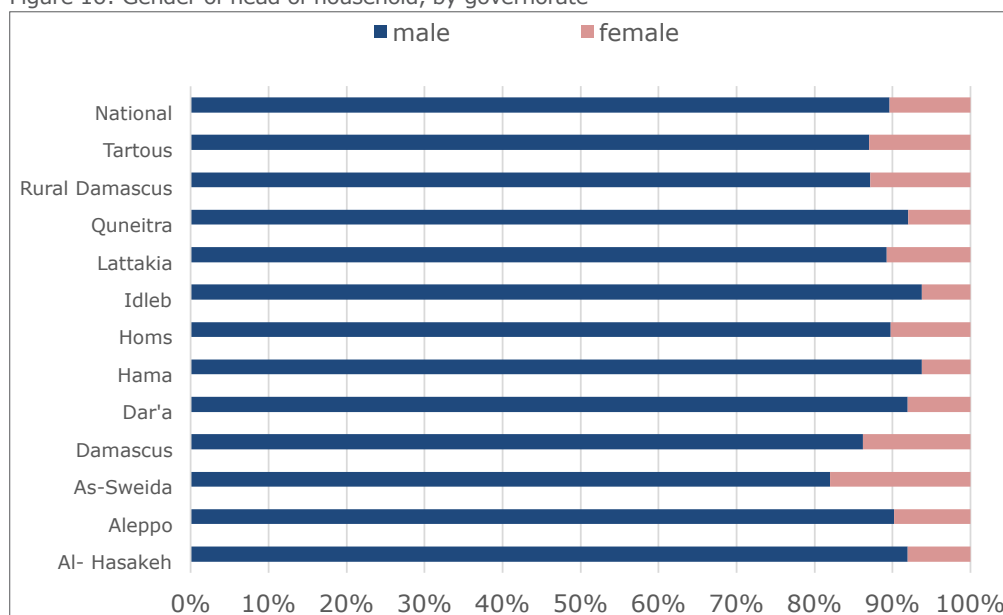
By governorate, Hasakeh has the largest household size with seven people, while Sweida has the smallest size, with four members. The survey found that food secure households are typically smaller than their food insecure counterparts, with four and six members, respectively.

Table 11: Age distribution, by governorate (%)

Governorate	Female <15 years	Female 15–64 years	Female >65 years	Male <15 years	Male 15–64 years	Male >65 years
Hasakeh	18	30	2	22	28	2
Aleppo	18	31	1	19	30	1
As-Sweida	14	36	7	14	30	6
Damascus	16	35	4	15	29	4
Dar'a	24	27	1	22	27	1
Hama	18	32	2	18	30	2
Homs	16	34	3	17	31	3
Idleb	24	27	1	22	26	1
Lattakia	13	38	3	12	35	3
Quneitra	20	30	1	19	30	1
Rural Damascus	18	32	2	20	29	2
Tartous	14	35	3	15	33	3
National	18	31	2	18	29	2

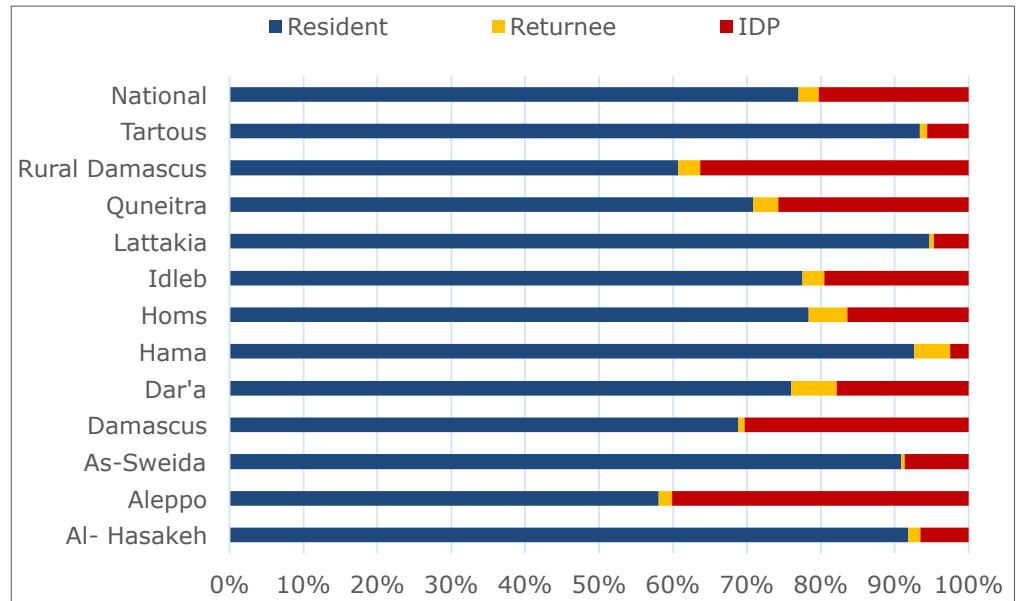
Female-headed households make up 11 percent of all those surveyed. The highest proportions of female-headed households are found in Sweida governorate, with rates ranging from 6 percent to 18 percent (Figure 16). However, there is no noticeable difference in the percentage of female-headed households by residential status (i.e. internally displaced, returnee or permanent resident). It was found, though, that female-headed households are more dependent on external income sources, such as remittances, savings, gifts and aid.

Figure 16: Gender of head of household, by governorate



Residential status Nationally, 21 percent of those surveyed are internally displaced, and 2 percent are returnees (Figure 17). Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Damascus and Dara all have higher rates of IDPs. Damascus attracts more IDPs, because it is relatively safe, has better access to assistance and because many IDPs are likely to have friends or relations there. There are 25 percent more IDPs in urban than in rural areas.

Figure 17: Household residential status, by governorate

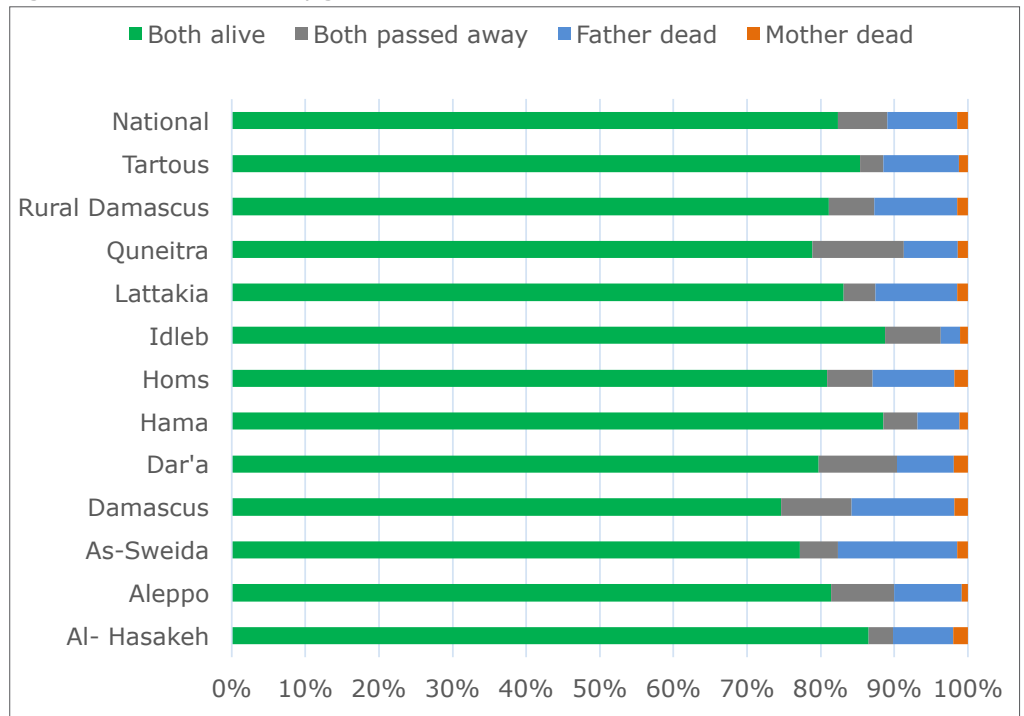


Parental status More than four out of five respondents (82 percent) reported that both their parents were alive (Figure 18). The father of 9.5 percent, and the mother of just 1.5 percent, had died. In 6.7 percent of respondents, both parents were dead. The fathers of 59 percent of female-headed households were dead. Damascus has the highest proportion of households that had lost at least one parent, while Hama has the lowest proportion at 6.4 percent. Households that had lost at least one parent were more likely to rely on external sources of income, such as remittances and gifts, rather than on their own income generation.





Figure 18: Parental status, by governorate



Age The average age of heads of household was 50. Some 11 percent of households had no male of working age, and 3 percent had no female of working age. But around 80 percent of males and 22 percent of females of working age do have a job.

Vulnerability 11 percent of all households include at least one disabled person. At 13 percent, that rate is higher in rural than in urban areas, which may be explained in part by limited access to rural health care. Hasakeh has the highest rate of households that include a person living with a disability (20 percent).

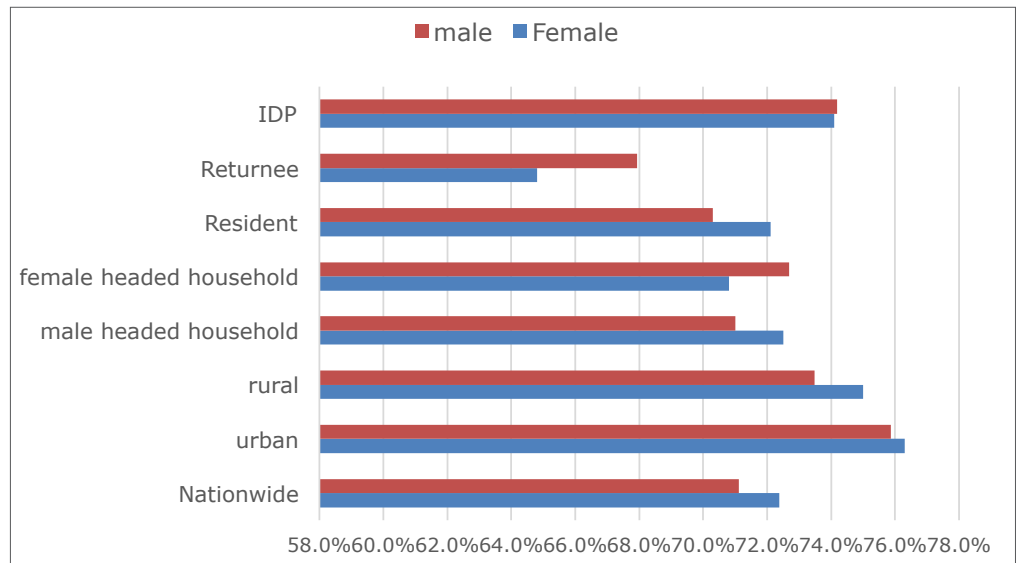
EDUCATION

The net enrolment ratio in primary education refers to the number of children aged between six and 15 years that are enrolled and attending primary school. Syrians put much store in education and this is reflected by the high school attendance rates. The FSA estimates the national average for attendance rates are almost identical for both boys and girls aged between six and fifteen: 71 percent and 75.2 percent, respectively. There is also no significant difference in attendance rates by residential status, so most IDPs and returnees as well as permanent residents all send their children to school (Figure 19). There are, however, lower attendance rates in returnee households, where 64 percent of girls and 68 percent of boys attend school.

By parental status, when both parents have died, the attendance rates fall to 66 percent of girls and 64 percent of boys.



Figure 19: Children enrolled in school, by sex and residency status



WATER AND SANITATION

A substantial majority – more than 70 percent – of Syria’s population has access to public water supply (Figure 20). In some areas, though, that access is limited. In Rural Damascus, for instance, just 54 percent of the respondents have access to public drinking water. This figure may be attributed to the destruction of infrastructure. Pre-crisis Syria maintained modern, state-owned water supply and sewerage systems, and access to safe drinking water was estimated at 92 percent in urban areas and 86 percent in rural areas, while access to sanitation was estimated at 96 percent in urban areas and 80 percent rural areas. Conflict has had a devastating impact on the WASH sector. Bombing and shelling have damaged infrastructure, limited power supply has undermined systems which were reliant on electricity, sanctions have prevented water authorities from accessing vital spare parts, testing equipment, and treatment chemicals, and live conflict, along with the exodus of skilled personnel, has hindered repairs and maintenance across the country. In 2014, compounding these issues, drought depleted valuable ground water sources and water production and distribution sources in the governorates of Aleppo, Damascus, and Homs were targeted and exploited as weapons of war.

Access to public water is variable, with much dependence on purchased water

The consistency and reliability of access is also limited in some areas, so access to the public water network does not necessarily mean that water supply is always available. The public supply is always subject to disruption by, for instance, power cuts. In Aleppo, the survey found that although 73 percent of the population had access, water was not always available. When it was available, people often had to queue for a long time to get it.

Many households without access to the public water network buy their supplies from water trucks. In Rural Damascus, for example, 35 percent of households rely on these trucks for some or part of their water supply. However, this can stress household budgets further.

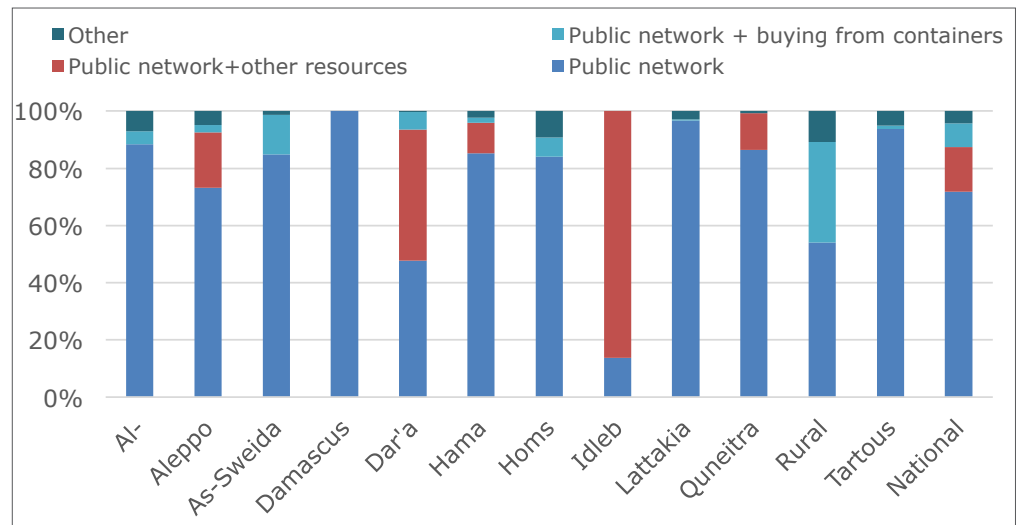
There is a marked difference between urban and rural areas in access to public drinking water, with 88.5 percent of urban households having such access, while only 79 percent of rural households do.

IDPs also have lower access to public drinking water (67 percent), which may be due to their housing arrangements. Many IDPs live in, for instance, public buildings and institutions.

Nearly two in five food insecure households (39 percent), along with those receiving aid and WFP beneficiaries, are likely to have more limited access to safe water. This often means that they have to buy their water, again stressing already stressed household budgets further.

Almost half of those without access to public water do have access to non-public water supplies within 15 minutes’ walking distance. But while it may be easy to get to the source of non-public water, people may have to wait a considerable time to obtain it – up to several hours, in some cases.

Figure 20: Sources of water, by governorate

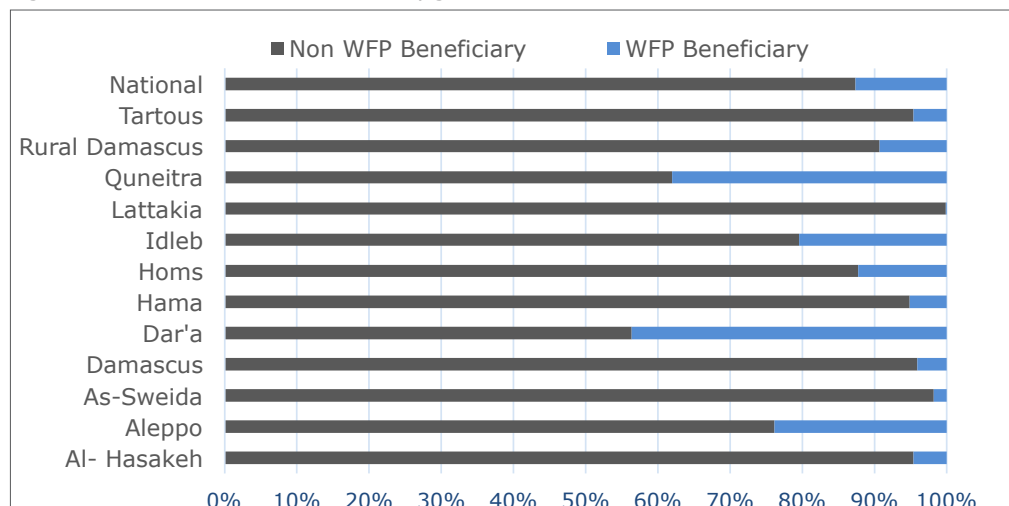


HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Every second household in Syria benefitted from food assistance in the 12 months before the survey (Figure 21). Among IDPs, this figure rises to 80 percent of households.

One in 10 households has benefitted from cash assistance over the same period (14 percent WASH and 4 percent other). Two out of 10 food assistance beneficiaries and one in three of WASH beneficiaries) also receive some form of cash assistance.

Figure 21: Food assistance beneficiaries, by governorate¹⁶



¹⁶ Figures are based on a seven-day recall period. It is noted that the number could be underreported, because some households may not be aware of the assistance provider.

5 FOOD AND MARKET AVAILABILITY



- 87 percent of households can access markets, but fragmented markets have affected food supplies and led to high prices
- Access to farms has become more difficult in some areas
- Rocketing inflation is a key reason for food insecurity

AGRICULTURE

Until 2011, agriculture contributed around 18 percent to Syria's GDP and employed some 17 percent of its population.¹⁷ This is down significantly from the pre-crisis situation, when it contributed up to one-quarter of Syria's GDP and employed nearly half of the population.¹⁸ Just under half of the country's population lived in rural areas, four out of five of whom derived their income from agriculture. Syria was the only country in the region that actually exported wheat. Other agricultural exports included cotton, sugar (over 150,000 tonnes in 2010), tomatoes (627,000 tonnes), potatoes (100,000 tonnes), fruit, olive oil, livestock, meat and eggs.¹⁹ Access to farms has become increasingly challenging in many parts of the country, which can lead to poor maintenance of a standing crop. At times, it has become impossible to harvest crops.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, arable land accounted for nearly one-third of Syria's total land cover in 2010, with 4.7 million hectares under active cultivation.¹³

A recent FAO/WFP report highlights the importance of agriculture and associated trades to the national economy. It says

"The trade sector, including food commodity trade, is one of the main employers of low-skilled workers. This sector incurred a major disruption due to a combination of factors, including reduction in demand because of reduced purchasing power, high food prices, bottlenecks in supply chains (risks, delays, etc. on roads bringing produce to market) and higher energy and import costs... The wheat supply chain has been substantially disrupted by the ongoing crisis. Wheat is particularly important in the Syrian diet, it provides about 40 percent of households' calorie consumption, and is consumed primarily as bread."²⁰

17 CFSAM, 2015

18 Government of Syria, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, 2010: National Programme for Food Security in the Syrian Arab Republic

19 FAO & WFP, 2015: Special Report, FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic

20 ibid

This assessment confirms the overriding importance of the agricultural sector for the livelihood of Syrians. Agriculture is the main source of income and provides regular income to 30 percent of the labour force are employed in the sector.



South Hasekeh has experienced both drought and insecurity in 2015. The governorate is a traditional bread basket, but water shortages and fighting have combined to reduce crop production and raise household food insecurity. Although the regions still does produce much wheat – in August 2015, Hasekeh reportedly had 400,000 tonnes of wheat in storage – that in itself does not translate into food security at the household level. Without access to markets, there is no income. And official market rates can be so low as to make such sales prohibitively unattractive.

It was reported that farmers in Deir-ez-Zor governorate (which was not covered by the survey) sell wheat to Iraq, thereby obtaining twice the price of selling domestically. It is possible, however, that this may worsen food insecurity for that governorate's households.

Reports from northern Hama suggest that some fields of standing crops have been burned during fighting. A large part of Hama's population is food insecure.

El Niño

The ongoing El Niño effect, officially declared in March 2015, will remain active throughout 2015 and is very likely to extend into the first quarter of 2016. The event is now strengthening towards its peak intensity, which should be reached in late 2015. There is a significant chance that this event could be close or even exceed the strongest levels on record. The event is influencing all growing season of the northern hemisphere of late 2015.

The impacts are wide-ranging and generally negative in countries facing food insecurity.



ACCESS TO MARKETS AND AVAILABILITY OF FOOD

Areas with the highest demand for food often experience the lowest access to food. Hasakeh is a predominantly agricultural governorate, but has experienced a marked reduction in productivity. This is largely a direct consequence of conflict. Movement of people has become challenging. Constrained movement means that many of its rural communities have been unable to plant crops as before, due to their limited access to, and high prices of, fuel, fertilizer and other agricultural inputs. Many farmers have been forced to return to a more traditional form of agriculture, with concomitant reductions in their output. This has combined in some areas with worse than usual rainfall to lower food productivity. Insecurity inhibits access to many parts of Hasakeh – and to its markets – contributes in turn to food insecurity.

Although the overall population was found to have reasonable access to functioning markets, the conflict has fragmented markets and undermined their capacity to meet people’s needs. Inflation, high transport and transaction costs and reduced purchasing power have combined to dampen demand and reduce turnover (Table 12).

Table 12: Major constraints to market functionality

Governorate	First constraint	Second constraint	Third constraint
Quneitra	High transport costs and insecurity	High prices	Low purchasing power
Aleppo	High transport costs and insecurity		
Raqqa	Rising prices	High transport costs and risks	Lower consumption
Deir Ezzor	Weak purchasing power	Insecurity	
Damascus countryside	Weak purchasing power	High prices	
Dara’a	High transport costs and insecurity	Insecurity	Security conditions
Hama	High transport costs and insecurity	Weak purchasing power	Rising prices
Hassakeh	Rising prices	Weak purchasing power	Instability of the
Homs	High transport costs and insecurity		
Idleb	Lack of storage capacity	High transport costs and risks	Instability of the
Lattakia	High transport costs and insecurity		
Sweida	High transport costs and insecurity	Closing share crossing	
Tartous	Rising prices	Weak purchasing	Lower

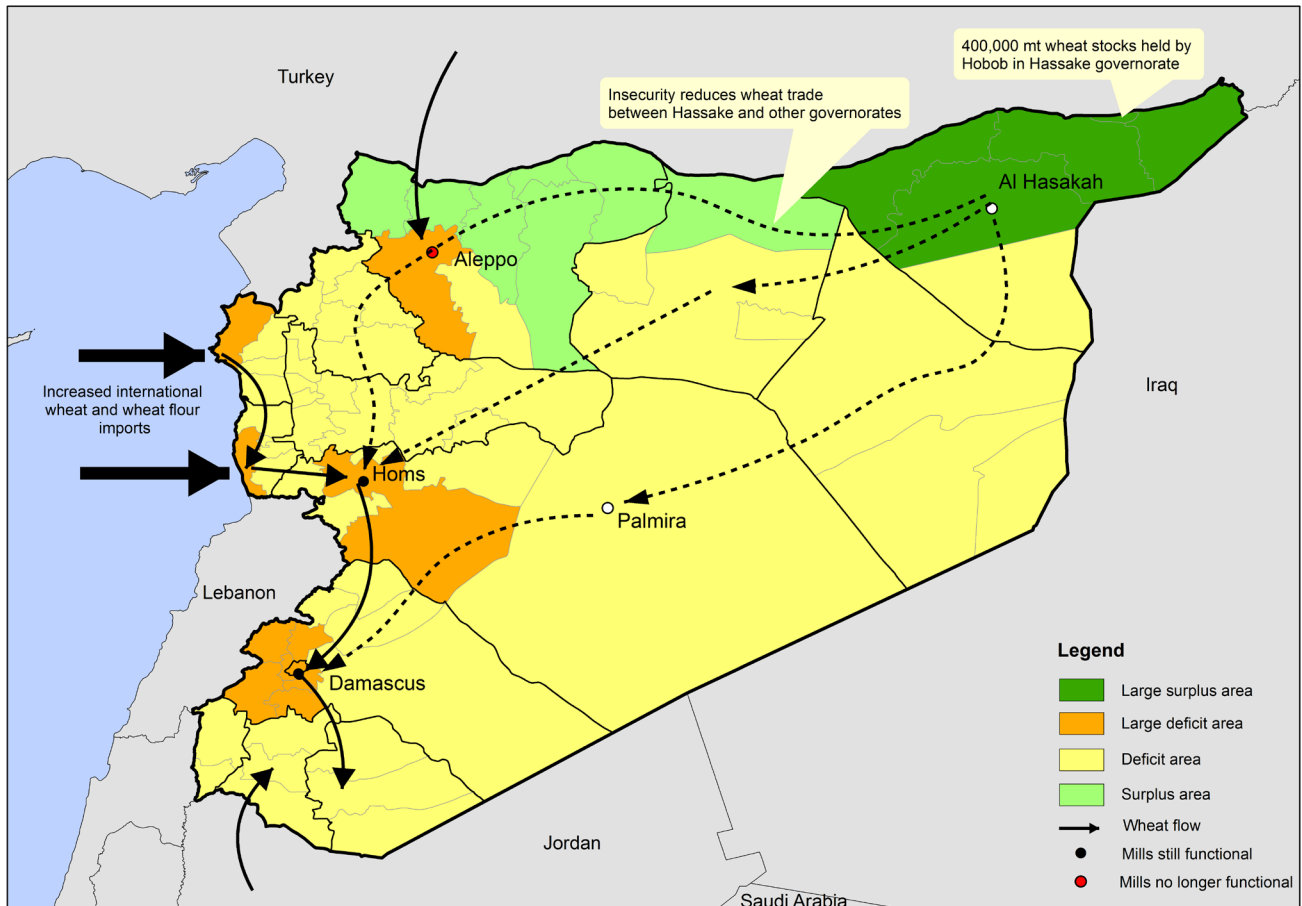
Source: CFSAM, 2015

In some rural areas, people only have access to weekly markets, and some access limitations were reported in Dara and Quneitra. The distance to functioning markets is also reportedly good, with 87 percent of the population having access to a functioning market within 30 minutes’ walk.

Wheat is Syria’s most important crop and the foremost staple in the national diet. From the region’s only wheat exporter, Syria’s has seen vital milling and storage infrastructure affected by conflict. That has led to the fragmentation of the wheat market and a slowing of the movement of wheat between areas of surplus and deficit (Figure 22). The security situation is further exacerbated by rising transport costs.



Figure 22: Domestic wheat flows, 2015



Source: CFSAM, 2015

There is an overwhelming reliance on markets as the primary food source. Around 50 percent of households have been able to rely on their own production for eggs, dairy and green vegetables. Households must usually pay cash for their food, although in less secure areas market traders may choose to extend loans to avoid risks associated with holding inventory.

As the movement of produce from farm to market has become increasingly challenging, so wastage has increased. Traders in Tartous wholesale market estimate that this has led to a doubling of wastage, which risks making their trade economically unviable. At the end of 2014, only 31 government-controlled grain collection centres existed, compared to more than 140 in 2011. That has more than halved the government's grain storage capacity from the 7 million tonnes it had in 2010. And the number of operational government-controlled cold stores for perishable fruit and vegetables has fallen to just 10 percent of its erstwhile level. The cost of livestock feed has risen steeply and the once regulated export trade of livestock products is now almost non-existent. Female livestock are increasingly being slaughtered, because farmers are finding it too expensive and too difficult to maintain their stocks, while many poultry units have either been abandoned or destroyed.

Overall, most markets are fully operational in areas less affected by the crisis, notably in Lattakia, Tartous, As-Sweida and Damascus. Although food commodities are available in all governorates, the amounts available for sale in local markets have reduced compared to previous months. Supply of essential food commodities has been disrupted in Quneitra, Dara'a and Rural Damascus, mainly due to fighting, which disrupted the regular flow of commercial goods by cutting access along some main supply routes. Furthermore, Idleb, Al-Hasakeh and rural Aleppo, as well as the north-eastern governorates, are also witnessing an interruption of food supply to local markets due to periodic clashes between armed groups. In Idleb, fuel shortages was reported, which will negatively impact local food availability and prices. Consequently, the purchasing power of poor households' – those that depend mainly on food purchases – will further deteriorate. That, in turn, will increase their dependence on external assistance to cover their basic food needs.

Rocketing inflation is a key reason for food insecurity

INFLATION AND PURCHASING POWER

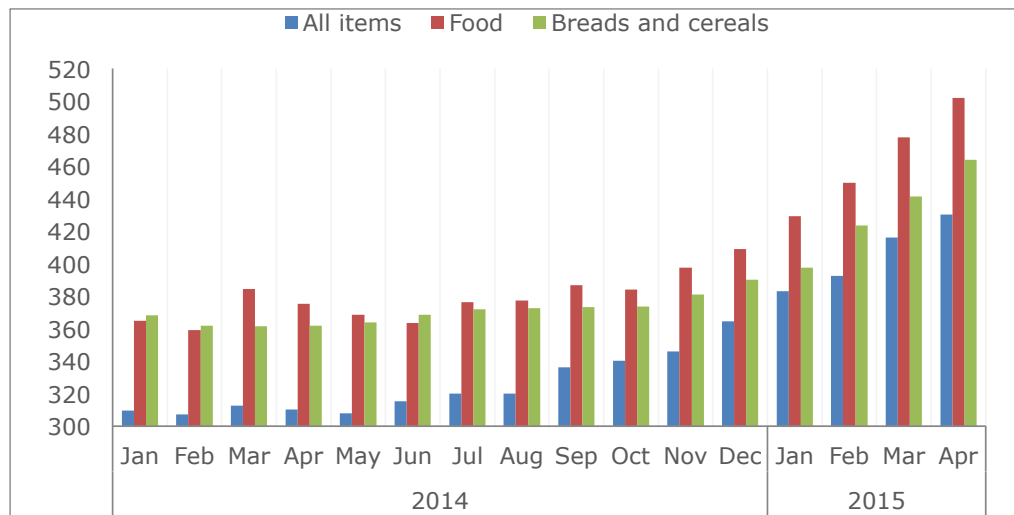
Until 2011, Syria was the only country in the region that exported wheat; such was the state of productivity and the role of agriculture in livelihoods. Since then, conflict and internal displacement have not only disrupted production, but have led to rocketing inflation. Running at up to 500 percent annually, this has made food – particularly wheat flour and rice – very expensive and is one of the key reasons for food insecurity.

The impact of staple food price changes on the cost of the basic food basket remains severe (Figure 9), while diesel prices more than doubled from 2014 and 2015 as the destruction of refineries in besieged areas exacerbated national fuel shortages and has further eroded purchasing power.²¹ Average wages have not risen and have been outstripped by inflation. The dramatic devaluation of the Syrian currency has also had a profound impact on the prices of imported goods.

Access to food has become increasingly problematic as conflict has spread. That is associated with a range of other factors influencing food security, such as reduced livelihood activities. As opportunities for paid work diminish, so food – the price of which is already rising very steeply – becomes less affordable, leading to the adoption of coping strategies, including debt and credit. This is just one of several vicious circles that people are being required to negotiate.

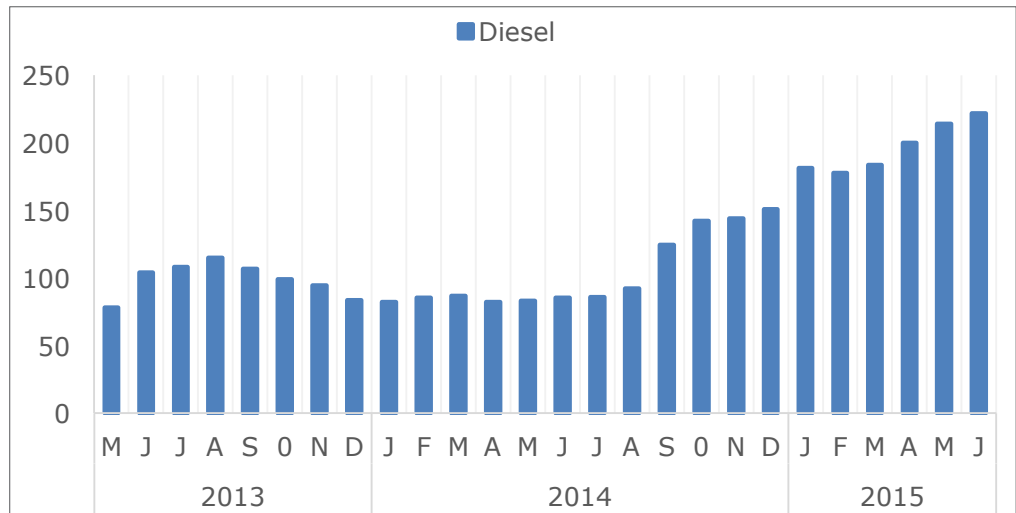
Fuel subsidies have steadily been removed since mid-2014. The consumer price index in the last year – and particularly since October 2014 – shows the dramatic effect of rising fuel prices on food (Figures 23 and 24).

Figure 23: Consumer price index (January 2014–April 2015)



21 <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp276400.pdf>

Figure 24: Retail price of diesel, May 2013–June 2015



Since 2011, the prices of the main food commodities have increased substantially both in nominal and in real terms. Average monthly prices of wheat flour in local currency have more than tripled since 2011 in several locations.

In early 2015, food prices began increasing sharply as government subsidies were curtailed and as the Syrian currency depreciated. Between January and June 2015, the nominal price of rice rose by 54 percent, while that of lentils more than tripled between 2012 and 2015 (Figure 25). The price of sugar also nearly tripled over that same three year period (Figure 26). Record increases in the price of fuel (50 percent) were also noted, resulting in higher energy costs for farmers, transporters, mills, bakeries and ultimately households. On average, the cost of a standard food basket was three times more expensive in mid-2015 than in the pre-crisis period. However, income levels have remained stagnant at SYP30,000 (c.\$600 before the crisis and currently \$100). This highlights a significant erosion of the purchasing power of ordinary Syrians and limited ability to meet the most basic needs.

Figure 25: Retail price of lentils, 2012–2015

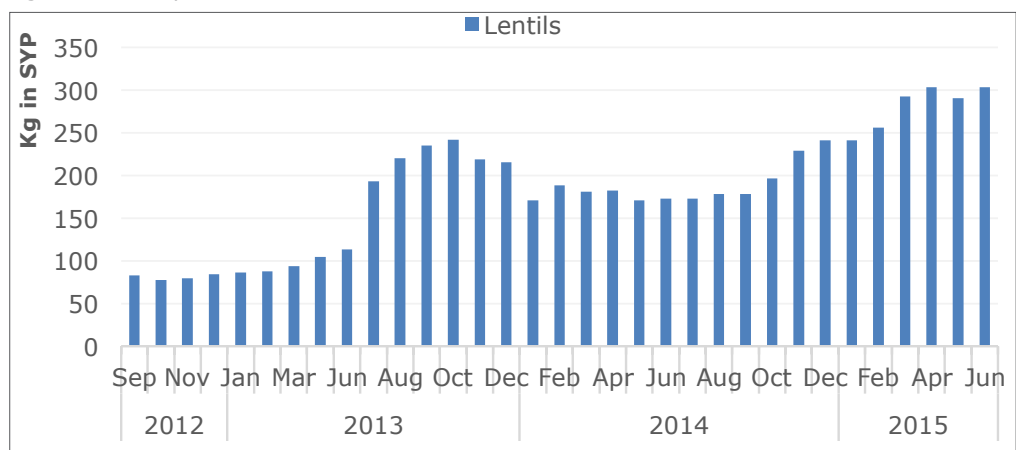
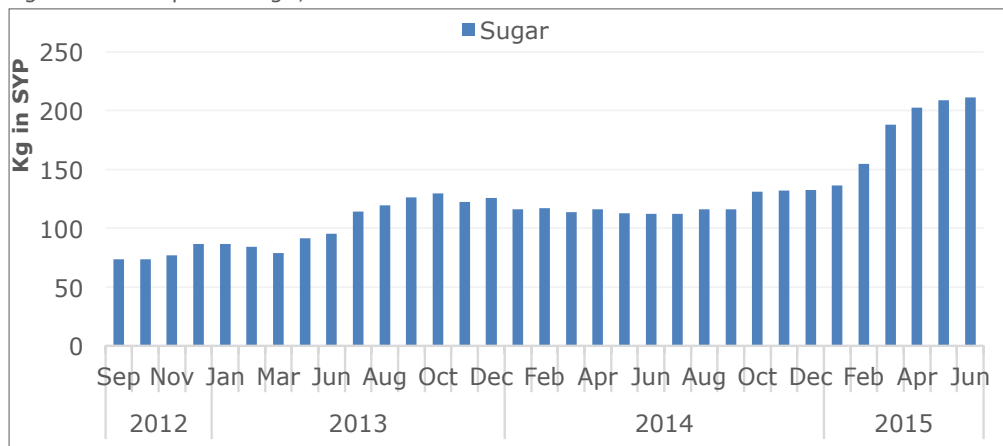


Figure 26: Retail price of sugar, 2012–2015



Local currency devaluation is not the only determinant of food price increases. When controlling for inflation due to the depreciation of the Syrian currency, food commodity price increases remain high. In USD terms, the price of wheat flour is now almost double its 2011 level, and vegetable oil and rice prices are about 25 percent higher. However, the increase in the price of sugar is less than 10 percent in USD terms.



6 LIVELIHOODS



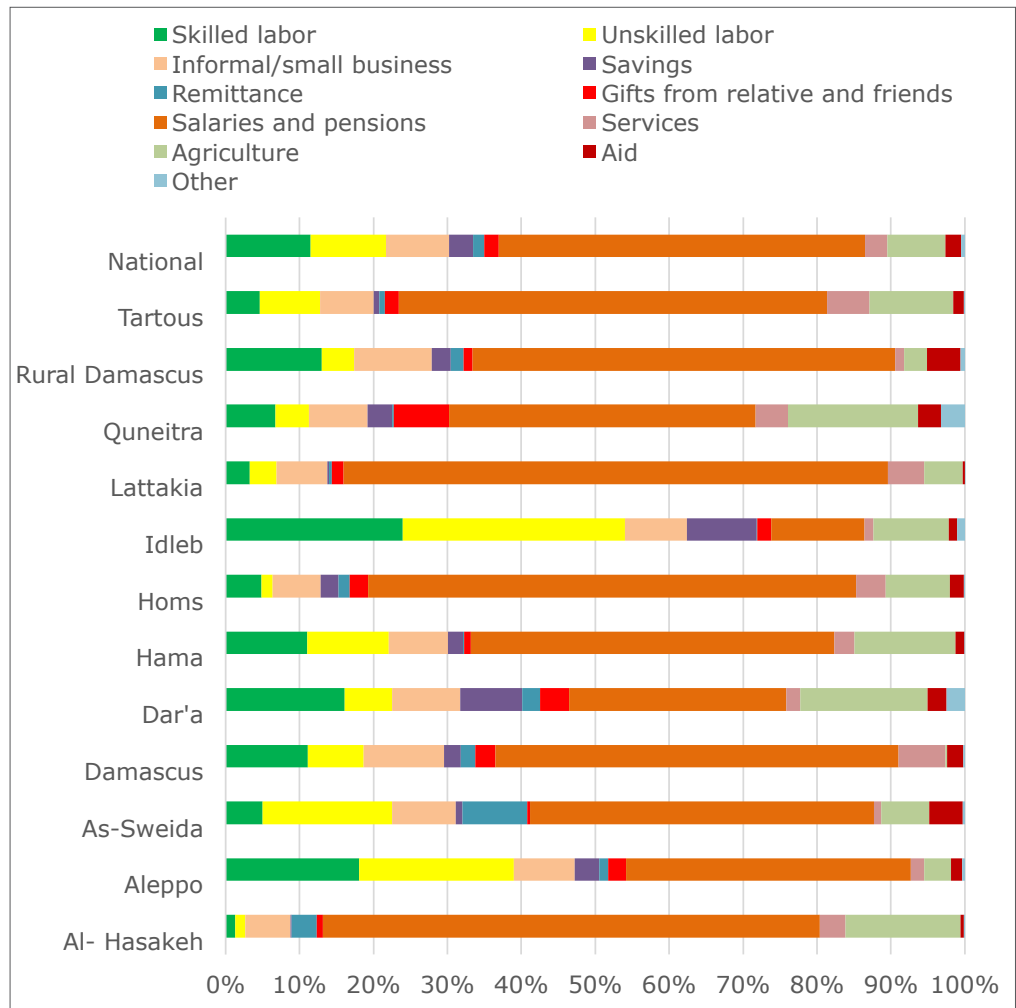
- Traditional livelihoods and pensions are the most important source of income
- Skilled and wage labour provides one in five Syrians with an income
- Around 70 percent of Syria's total population is below the food poverty line

LIVELIHOODS AND AGRICULTURE

Livelihoods are “the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living linked to survival and future well-being”. Syrian households were asked to indicate the main livelihood that provides the largest share of their income and ensures their families’ survival and well-being (Figure 27). Regular salaries and pension from Government employment are by far the most common income sources for half of the population, followed by skilled and wage labour, which provides one in five Syrians with an income. The importance of crop and livestock production may appear very low on the list, with only 8 percent of the population. However, this percentage hides considerable variations in the prevalence of livelihoods across governorates and rural/urban areas. Most importantly, it hides the large share of households receiving some income from agriculture to complement their main income from a non-agricultural livelihood. In fact, few rural households can make a living on agriculture alone because of low productivity and incomes and poor access to due to insecurity.

That contrasts sharply with the situation before the conflict. In 2010, agriculture contributed between 20 percent and 25 percent of the country’s GDP and was the main source of employment and income for 47 percent of the population.²²

Figure 27: Livelihoods, by governorate



At governorate level Dar'a and Al-Hasakah are more dependent on agriculture than other governorates.

Lattakia and Tartous, meanwhile, have low levels of food insecurity, but a relatively high proportion of IDPs. A number of wealthy households have also migrated to these governorates, probably because they are less affected by insecurity and have employment opportunities. IDPs have been able to find agricultural jobs, particularly in Tartous. Access to food is generally good and food is often cheaper than in other governorates.



A significant number of households in Dara have traditionally depended more than elsewhere on remittances from family members working in the Gulf. But the introduction of restrictions on money coming into the country has cut off that supply. In response, households have resorted to borrowing money and some have migrated to Jordan. Access to markets and from the countryside to towns and cities is often challenging, which inhibits supply of vegetables (notably tomatoes) to urban markets. That, in turn, leads farmers to cut back on their production.

Table 13: Food security classification, by livelihood group

Livelihood	Food Insecure	Marginally Food secure	Food secure
Skilled labour	35.8%	50.8%	13.4%
Unskilled labour	39.5%	46.5%	14.0%
Informal/small business	27.3%	53.0%	19.7%
Savings	39.8%	42.8%	17.4%
Remittance	25.1%	45.1%	29.8%
Gifts from relatives and friends	45.4%	42.1%	12.4%
Salaries and pensions	31.6%	52.6%	15.8%
Services	32.1%	49.9%	18.0%
Agriculture	32.6%	54.4%	13.0%
Aid	44.0%	45.9%	10.1%
Other	40.9%	41.7%	17.4%

INCOME

The head of household is in most instances the breadwinner, i.e. the person mostly responsible for household livelihood. As a result, the attributes of the household head are one of the strongest determinants of livelihood security. Regular income for male-headed households (45 percent) is 15 percent higher than those of female-headed households (29.4 percent).

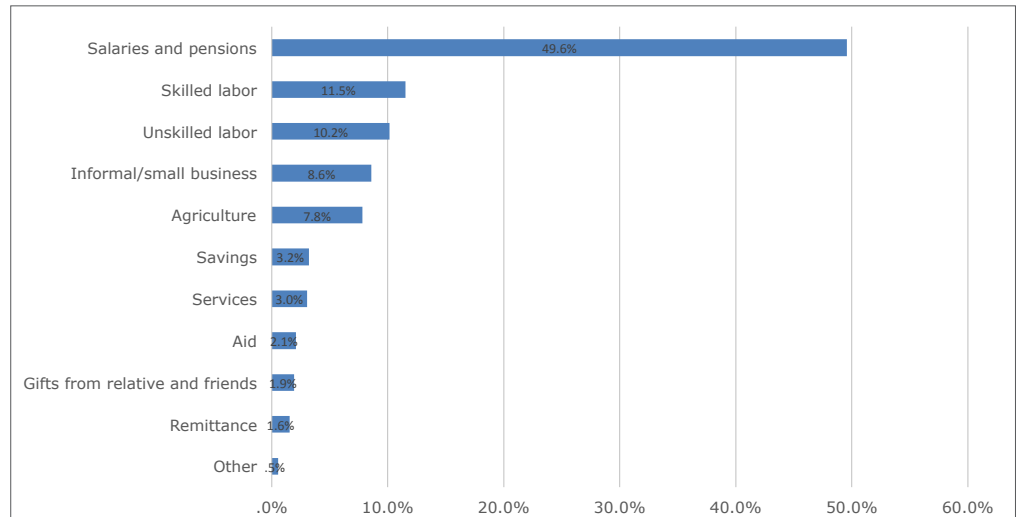
Overall, the average number of economic activities households engage in was 1.95, with a higher number among rural (2.1) than urban households (1.7). Having access to multiple income sources provides a buffer against potential shocks and a safety net in times of need, thereby generally decreasing households' overall vulnerability. Food insecure households had, on average, 1.77 income activities compared with the 2.12 of food secure households. Although the difference does not appear to be much, it is significant and is confirmed by key informant data.

Food insecure households predominately obtain their income from wage labour, external support such as in-country remittances and support from friends/family, humanitarian assistance and credit/borrowing money.

The assessment further identified that regular income for at least one member of IDP households is higher (48.3 percent) than for returnee households (37.5 percent) and local residents (43 percent).

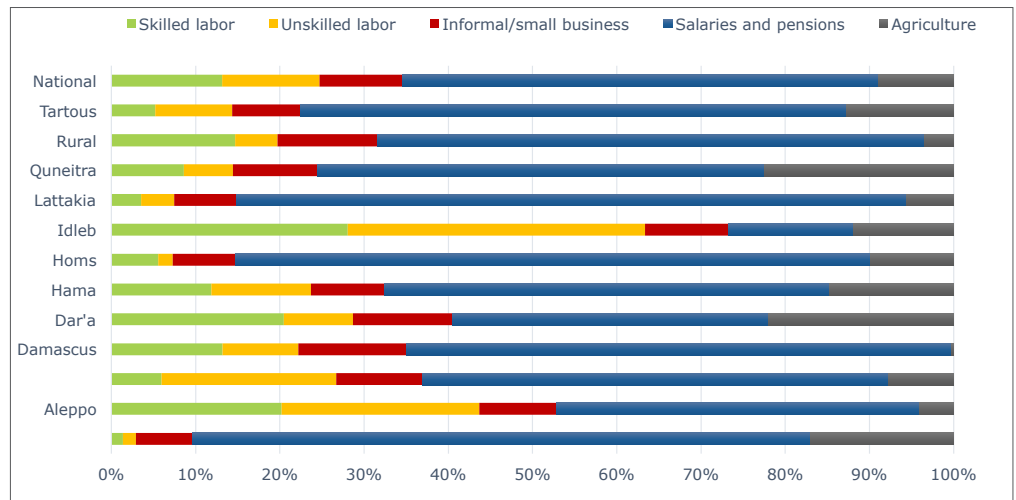
Coping strategies are adopted across all livelihood groups, but the use of emergency coping strategies is higher in the skilled labour (44 percent), unskilled labour (53 percent), savings (54 percent) and agriculture groups (51 percent). The use of emergency coping strategies is low in the services, and salaries and pension livelihood groups, each being around 27 and 29 percent respectively.

Figure 28: Income sources



There is considerable geographical variation in means of income, which depends largely on the predominance of traditional livelihoods, demand and the security situation (Figure 29). For instance, in Rural Damascus skilled labour and informal and small business are important sectors, while in Aleppo, skilled labour, followed by unskilled labour and agriculture are the major sector providing livelihoods to over 15 percent of the governorate population. Unskilled labour followed by remittances play a greater role in As-Sweida.

Figure 29: Major livelihood sectors, by governorate



Reduced income, falling salaries and fewer job opportunities are combining to drive people into poverty.

IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE

Abo Hassan rests his elbows on the low wall and lowers his tanned head into large, rough, farmer’s hands. He looks out across the Swaida camp that’s become his home in recent months. The sun is starting to set, its glow casting long shadows across the dusty camp. Abo Hassan looks older than his years. He has more wrinkles now and they’re etched around deep set eyes that stare blankly into the middle distance. He does that a lot these days, contemplating the middle distance, because there’s not much else to do.

His gaze takes him back to his farm in Dara and to the breakfasts he used to prepare: yoghurt, maktous, tangy olives, juicy red tomatoes, cucumbers, fresh fruits and fried eggs: all of it from the farm. The only thing he’d had to buy from the market was bread. Today, Abo Hassan can’t afford eggs. Or fruit.

He thinks back to the day he left the farm, when he'd taken his daughter Dalia into his arms and carried her wheelchair awkwardly with his spare hand. He had to move quickly, because the fighting was closing in. He didn't have time to look back at the farm and the little house he'd built. He'd urged his wife and two other children to hurry to the road and to the waiting vehicle that would take them towards Swaida. Towards safety. Dalia is fourteen now. She spends her days painting, which is more than he can do. He has no work and no income. The family will skip dinner tonight.

A sudden noise behind him claws him from his reverie and he turns around. But it's nothing, just the sound of a falling tin can. He exhales slowly, then turns back and resumes his gaze into the middle distance.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

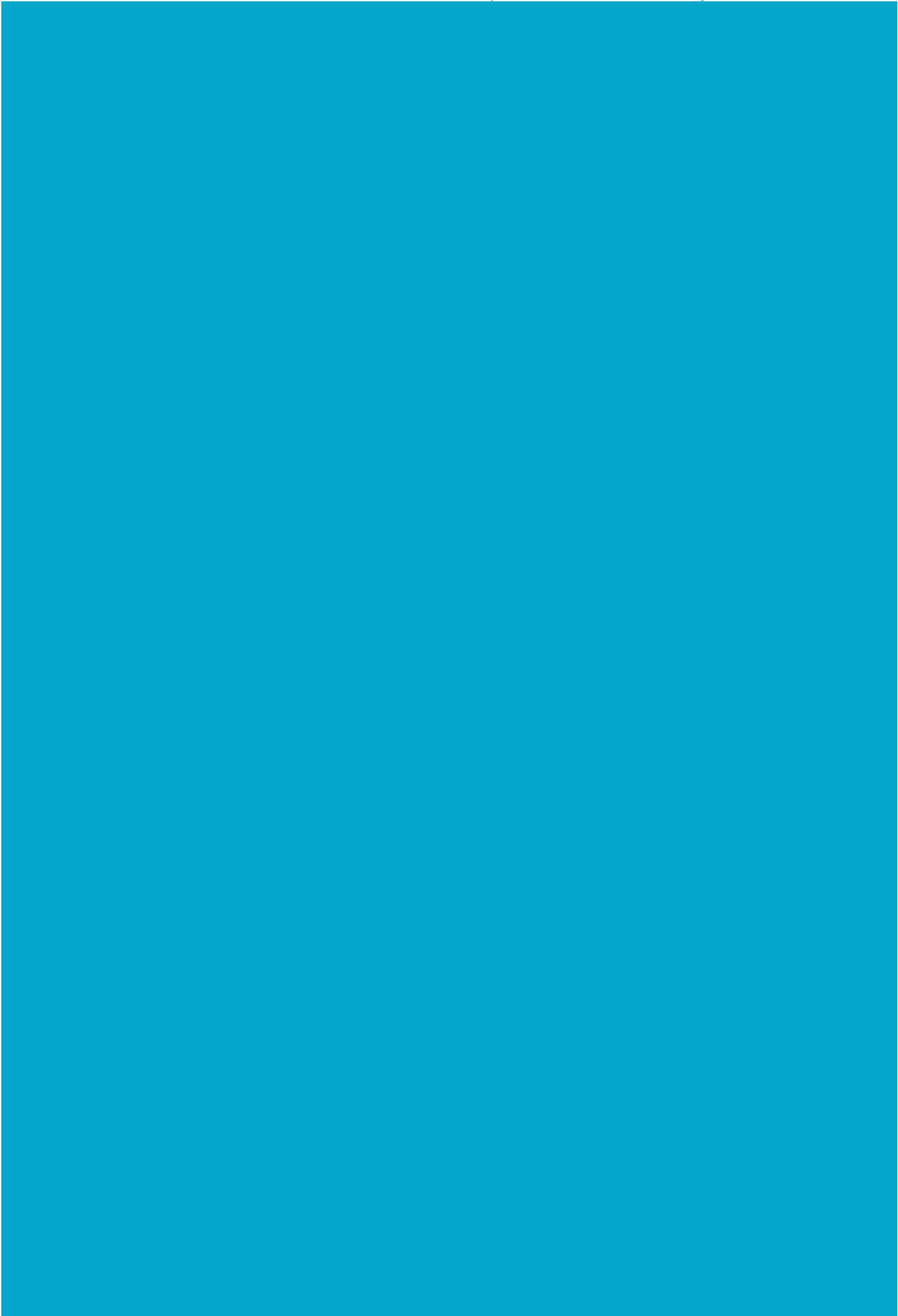


These actions are recommended in the context of substantial present needs and a potential torrent of future needs. It is noted that by appropriately addressing and prioritizing the current situation, a future scenario of vastly increased food insecurity in Syria may, to some extent, be ameliorated.

1. Emergency food assistance and livelihoods support for newly displaced people. Once a household is displaced, it becomes vulnerable. There are more than six million IDPs now. They are the most food insecure group and the most vulnerable to deeper food insecurity.
2. Food and livelihoods assistance for vulnerable returnee households.
3. Sustained food assistance and livelihoods support for other most vulnerable groups, including female- and child-headed households, people living with disability, elderly and chronically ill people.

4. Food based interventions to prevent acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies in children 6-59 months.
5. Sustained food assistance and livelihoods support for food insecure households without access to livelihood opportunities or markets in besieged and high-conflict areas.
6. Livelihoods assistance for both rural and urban food insecure households. Despite the pressing immediate needs, livelihoods must be restored for food insecurity to be reduced.
7. Nutrition-sensitive interventions to support dietary diversity for the most vulnerable groups.
8. Market-based interventions to improve access to food. These may include voucher transfers and support to bakeries.
9. Continuous assessment or monitoring of the food security situation given the fluid context
 - Livelihoods assessment to identify and livelihood profiles and opportunities;
 - Nutrition assessment to determine malnutrition levels; and
 - In-depth market assessment to determine market functioning for cash transfer responses.







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