

# Protection Monitoring Findings

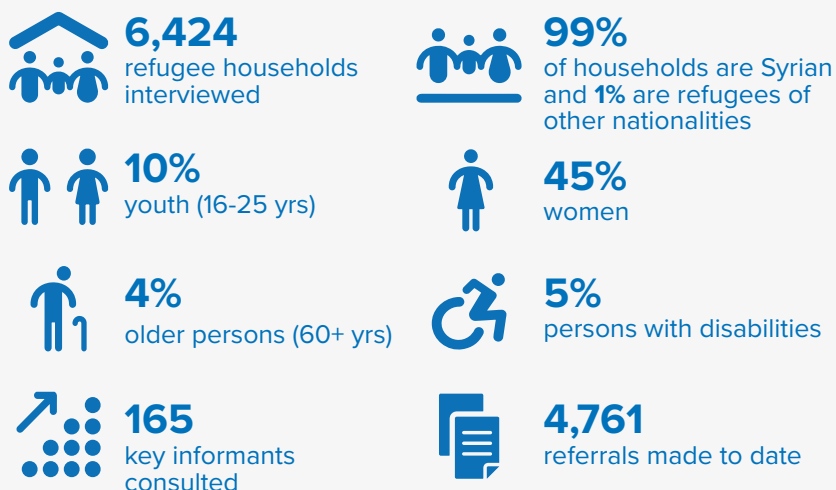
Lebanon – 2nd quarter 2021



UNHCR conducts protection monitoring with partners on an ongoing basis to analyse trends in the protection environment and risks facing refugees. UNHCR's protection monitoring partners - Caritas, Intersos, and SHEILD conduct interviews with refugee households to elicit their feedback on the overall protection environment in Lebanon and the impact of COVID-19 on their lives. The sampling of households and findings presented are representative both at the regional and at the national level. In addition, partners conduct a number of interviews with key informants of different profiles to complement the quantitative analysis from the household interviews. When needs for specific services, assistance or information are identified during interviews, UNHCR's protection monitoring partners refer the individuals concerned accordingly. Information on COVID-19 is systematically provided during each call, and persons needing help to register for vaccination are referred for assistance.

In March 2020, protection monitoring questions were adapted to address the COVID-19 crisis and assess its impact on refugees. Then as of October 2020, UNHCR reverted to a more expanded version of the questionnaire to collect information on the broader protection environment, while retaining relevant COVID-19 related questions. This report provides a summary of the protection monitoring findings from all regions in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter (April to June) of 2021.<sup>1</sup> The feedback from refugees is used to inform UNHCR's advocacy, and programmatic interventions with the aim of improving refugees' access to protection and essential services, assistance and information.

## Key numbers April to June 2021



## Contributing organizations



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

## Impact of the socio-economic situation



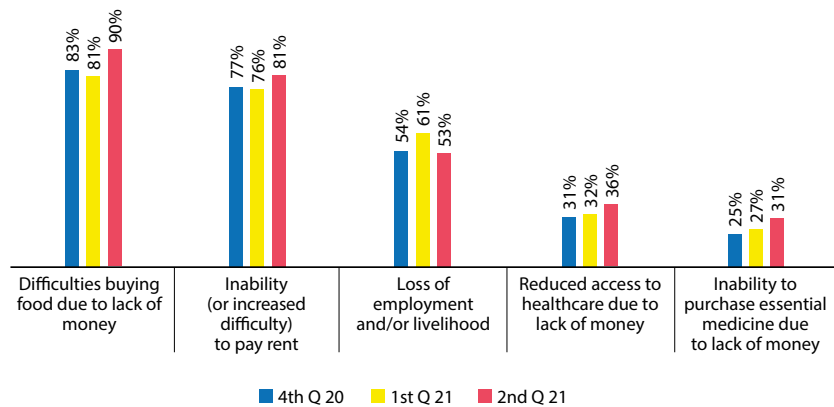
**We are on the brink of collapse.**

- Syrian refugee

- The deepening of Lebanon's ongoing crises has meant that high numbers of refugees, who were already struggling to meet their basic needs have become even more vulnerable. This quarter protection risks were reported at new highs, record rates of families turned to harmful coping strategies, and families are becoming increasingly vulnerable to exploitation.

- Key impacts of the economic crisis were reported at record highs this quarter, worsening a situation where the vast majority of refugees were already unable to cover their basic needs (see *chart on impacts*).

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

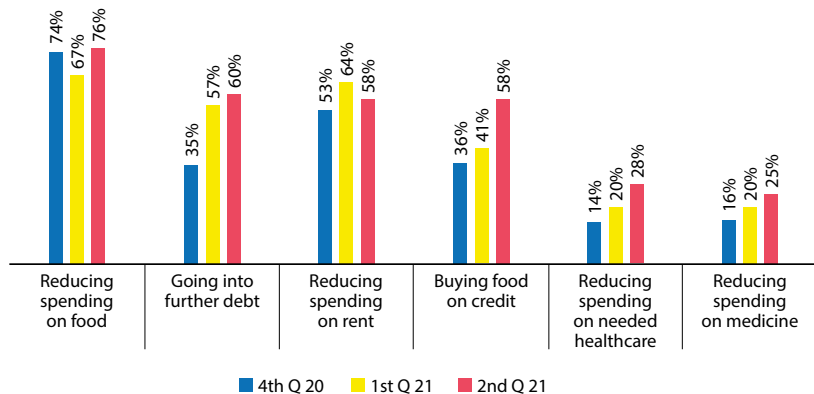


**Everyday is getting worse than the day before.**

- Syrian refugee

- Refugees growing struggle to meet their basic needs, has meant that increasing amounts have had no choice but to resort to negative coping strategies to survive. (see *chart on coping strategies*).

**Most widely resorted to coping strategies**



**Refugees are not paying rent and they might be evicted, their health is deteriorating, and the illiteracy increased among the refugee children.**

- Syrian refugee

- This quarter, increasing numbers of refugees indicated negative impacts of the economic crisis and harmful coping mechanisms related to health: 36% experienced reduced access to healthcare, while 31% struggled to buy medicine. These negative health impacts are particularly felt by older persons, with nearly half (47%) unable to access needed health care (compared to 36% for younger populations).
- Issues accessing food were increasingly reported this quarter. The most common impact of the socio-economic situation was an inability to purchase food, with 90% of respondents reporting this issue (up from 81% in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter). With rapidly eroding purchasing capacities and loss of livelihoods more families respond by decreasing their spending on basic needs like food and health (see *chart on coping strategies*). Further, food assistance became the most prioritized form of assistance, with 89% asking for food assistance. Previously, the most requested assistance was to help with rent. That nearly all refugees need food assistance is likely a reflection of the rising costs of food and the deteriorating value of the Lebanese Pound (LBP).

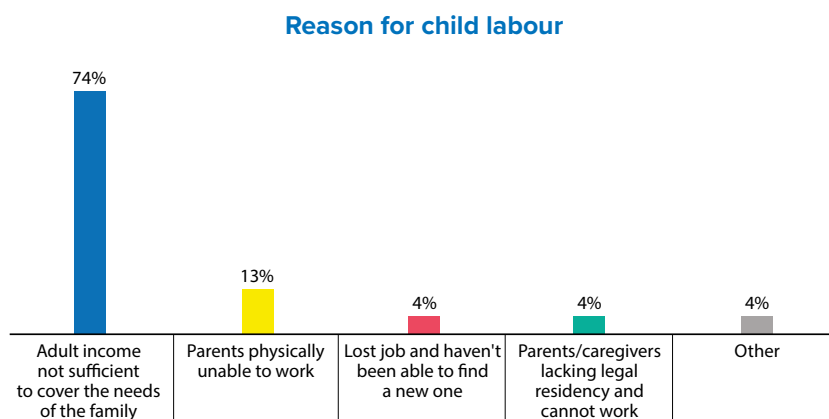


**We reached a point where we sold all our household items just to get food for one full day. We have nothing to sell anymore, we are dying slowly today.**

- Syrian refugee

- Given the deteriorating economic situation, children remain at risk of being sent to work by their parents, with 3%<sup>2</sup> of all households interviewed reporting having at least one child working, and all instances caused by financial necessity (see *chart*).

**3 in 4**  
working children  
are out of school



- 77% of all children involved in child labour were not attending school. While many of these children were not attending school because of COVID-19 closures (21%), the majority could not attend because their income was too important to the family (71%).
- 24% of adults reported mental health needs during the quarter. Almost all (98%) of respondents who reported suffering from mental health issues said that the pressure of the economic crisis was a main cause. For a majority of respondents, symptoms are mild or isolated; however each month a small number of those surveyed also report critical mental health issues, including self-harm, suicidal ideation and attempts.

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

## Unsustainable debt reliance and economic vulnerability

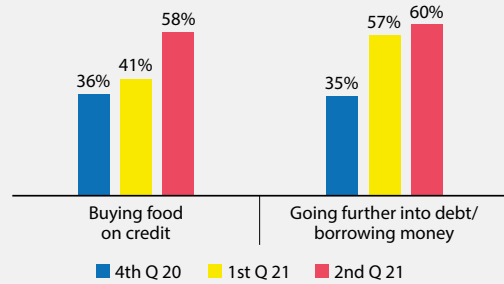
As refugees have increasingly struggled to afford rent, food and healthcare, we have seen a consistent rise in families relying on borrowing to meet their basic needs.

Concerningly, the rates of households resorting to buying food on credit and to borrowing to provide for other basic needs have risen each quarter (see *both charts on reliance on borrowing*).

In May UNHCR began to collect new information on household debt levels which has added to understanding of the unsustainable levels of debt reliance amongst refugee households. As of June, 93% of households reported being in debt, with the overall average debt being 3,284,518 LBP. The rate at which household debt levels are rising is particularly concerning. In June, households added an average of 691,081 LBP to their debt, or 21% of their average household debt. The rise becomes a stark 95% increase when compared to 2020 VASyR data, which recorded an average household debt of 1,683,360 LBP.

The sustainability of refugees relying on increasing levels of debt to meet their basic needs is likely extremely limited within the context of Lebanon's economic situation. Over half of all respondents have reported losing work and pay (57%) this year, and according to the 2020 VASyR the average monthly income refugee households was 1,366,580 LBP (just 42% of the average total household debt). Given that refugee households current income is already insufficient to meet their basic needs, it is unlikely that their diminishing income will allow them to meet their growing debt obligations. Therefore, refugees have so far been able to avoid hunger and homelessness through borrowing, but with little prospects to pay existing debt it is likely that refugees will lose their primary coping mechanism in the near future.

Participants relying on borrowing as a result of the economic situation



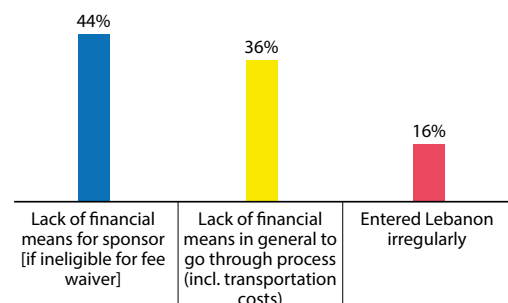
## Legal residency

- It was hoped that rates of legal residency would rebound this quarter with the reopening of GSO services following the national lockdown, however rates have continued their decline, with just 14% of households reporting that all household members above the age of 15 have legal residency (down from 20% in 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2020, and 18% in 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2021).

- Lack of legal residency remains a key protection problem affecting core aspects of refugees' lives. More and more refugees are reporting being negatively impacted by the lack of legal residency, as it limits refugees' ability to move freely (66%), their ability to access livelihood opportunities (31%), and their ability to interact within their own community (16%) amongst other negative impacts. Importantly, 6% of refugees report that a lack of residency has prevented them from accessing the justice system leaving them extremely vulnerable.

- This decline has likely occurred because financial barriers remain the main constraint mentioned by refugees in obtaining legal residency (see *chart on reasons for lack of legal residency*). With the financial situation worsening legal residency numbers are likely to continue their decline as families focused on their daily struggle may be forced to de-prioritize the challenging and costly task of obtaining legal residency.

Main reasons why respondents reported not having legal residency



## COVID-19

- From the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR and humanitarian partners have used multiple channels to share COVID-19 related information on a large scale. Survey results suggest that these efforts have been successful, as knowledge among refugee populations is strong in most areas. Nevertheless, important knowledge gaps remain (see *table*), which show the need for continuing communication efforts.

### Knowledge of COVID-19

**94%**

reported knowing COVID-19 symptoms

**94%**

reported knowing preventative measures

**77%**

reported knowing how to access testing

**66%**

reported knowing the MoPH hotline number

**50%**

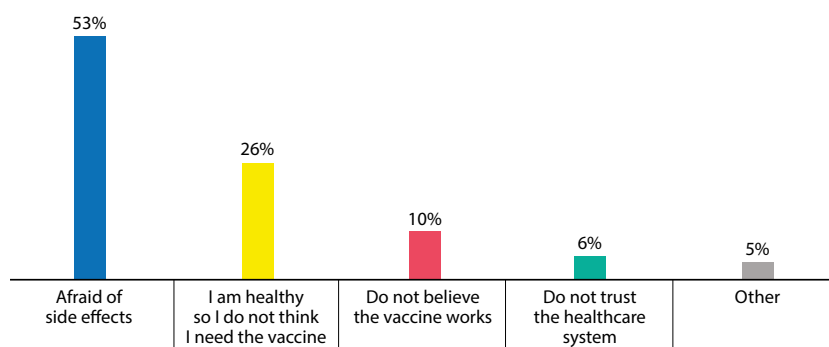
knew that costs of testing and treatment are covered

**52%**

did not need additional COVID-19 information

- In June protection monitoring began collecting data to support vaccination campaigns. 97% of households currently have no members vaccinated. The initial findings reiterate the challenge ahead as significant numbers of the population are either concerned with side effects, or the efficacy of the vaccines, or report a mistrust of the health system in general and therefore are unlikely to be vaccinated. This data can hopefully help guide communication efforts in addressing vaccine hesitancy (See *chart on vaccine hesitancy*).

### Reasons for vaccine hesitancy



## Measures impacting refugees

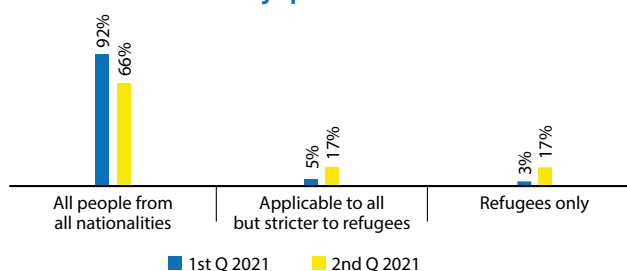
- With the end of the national lockdown, there was a large drop this quarter in refugees reporting living under some form of restrictive measure. This quarter 18% of refugees lived under a restrictive measure, compared to 66% in the previous quarter.

- Despite the end of the national lockdown COVID-19 movement restrictions remained responsible for 66% of restrictive measures in place throughout the quarter, followed by curfews (22%), and then instances of shop closures, restrictions of rentals, bans on motorcycles, unlawful taxes and unlawful searches by law enforcement.

- This quarter we saw a large increase in the proportion of refugees reporting to live under discriminatory restrictive measures (See *chart*).

This change which has seen the proportion of discriminatory measures rise from 8% in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter to 34% in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter is likely a result of the end of national lockdowns which applied to all nationalities.

### Who is targeted by measure: by quarter



## Rent & Evictions

- This quarter UNHCR began to collect new information on refugees' rental situations which has highlighted the precarious housing situation they face. Only 30% of refugees were able to fully pay their last rental payment, while 50% were not able to pay, and 20% were only able to partially pay. Refugees who were not able to make their last rental payment were most commonly four months or less behind on their rent, however 14% of households owed more than four months' rent.

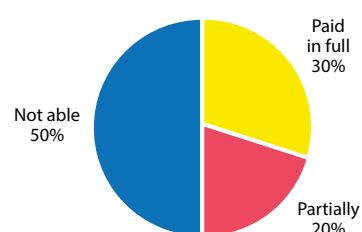


**The landlord asked us to pay 100 USD cash to cover the rent. What should I do?**

- Syrian refugee

- Thus, while eviction risks may seem relatively stable (with persons living under eviction notice decreasing just 1 percentage point to 3% this quarter, and rates of eviction remaining the same at 0.4% of all households), this new data substantiates reports from the field, and the socio-economic data on rental payment issues, to show that refugees are under increasing pressure when it comes to meeting their housing needs and that the risks of evictions are building.

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



## Social Stability

- Relatively low levels of tensions with the host community were reported though the household survey (with just 2% of respondents reporting incidents such as threats, disputes, COVID-19 based discrimination, armed and physical violence). In key informant interviews (which allow a bit more space for enumerators to discuss this very sensitive issue) social stability issues were seen as more widely occurring in the second half of the quarter, with competition over resources driving conflict. Key informants report Syrians being prohibited from accessing baby formula and petrol, as well as a lot of verbal harassment centred on aid perception bias and job competition.



**[The supermarket] refused to give us the items that are subsidized, especially the sugar, they were only given to the Lebanese. While queuing, they started to say rude things like when we will leave the country and that we took their rights.**

- Syrian refugee

- Refugees consulted however also noted continued instances of inter-community support in the context of the worsening socio-economic and COVID-19 crises affecting both populations. Despite the hardships they themselves face, Lebanese people occasionally supported refugees, with 13% of surveyed households reporting being aware of such instances of assistance. This support most frequently took the form of agreeing to reduce rental fees / postpone payment (46% compared to 49% in the previous quarter), allowing to buy food on credit (42% compared to 27% the previous quarter), and helping to buy or share food (36% compared to 33% the previous quarter).