

COVID-19 Pandemic in Turkey: An assessment of readiness and impact on Refugees living in-camps

Key Findings

- 70% of refugees have low level of knowledge on COVID-19 symptoms.
- 69% claim they are taking necessary precautions but only 4% practice prevention measures fully.
- Most frequently practiced measures are staying at home, wearing a mask outside and avoiding public spaces.
- 49% feel COVID-19 related anxiety and stress.
- 72% perceived markets/shops as more crowded after the outbreak but food and hygiene items mainly remain available.
- Average expenditure on hygiene items increased from 122 TL to 185 TL per month after COVID-19.
- One-third (34%) of refugees reacted to COVID-19 by stocking-up commodities.
- 69% had either lost their jobs or had reduced salaries after the outbreak.

access to basic food and hygiene item needs and; iii) Serve as a baseline for WFP's intervention in response to COVID-19.

This summary report only presents highlights of the survey findings ahead of a full report that will be forthcoming.

The survey was conducted with a representative sample of 267 refugee households living in six different camps (Adana, Kahramanmaras, Osmaniye, Boynuyogun, Yayladagi, Elbeyli) in 5 different provinces of Turkey. Data collection took place from 25 - 29 April 2020 through phone calls made by trained WFP field monitoring staff. The questionnaire used in this exercise was prepared by WFP in coordination and consultation with WHO.

Presence of High-Risk Groups

The average household size was found to be 5.4. Given that refugees are allocated single-room containers and the containers are close to each other, in-camp refugees live under crowded conditions and are unable to observe social distancing.

25% of households have at least one member with a chronic disease

One quarter of households have at least one member with a chronic disease and some additional 6 percent have an elderly person, both groups considered as high-risk for the virus infection.

Introduction

First reported in China at the end of 2019, COVID-19 spread rapidly across the globe. In addition to the impact on individual health and national health systems, COVID-19 also has a broader macro-economic impact such as disruptions in demand and supply, increase in unemployment or reduced earnings, reduced availability of commodities and corresponding price increases.

Since the outbreak, countries have enforced various measures to prevent further spread of the virus, along with assistance programmes for their citizens such as one-off transfers, unemployment cover, etc. WFP currently assists 11,648 households (around 56,000 people) living in refugee camps in Turkey and has taken quick action to respond to additional needs due to the pandemic, such as one-off unconditional cash assistance of 1000TRY per household and distribution of hygiene kits in the camps.

Objectives and Methodology

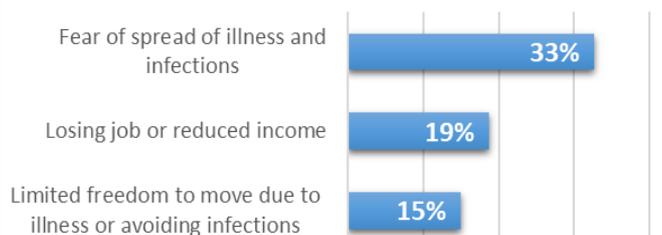
This assessment was intended to: i) assess the knowledge and practices related to COVID-19 among refugees in-camp; ii) assess the impact of COVID-19 on refugees' livelihoods and

Awareness and Perception of COVID19

All participants stated that they had heard of COVID-19 and its spread around the world, mainly through television and social media.

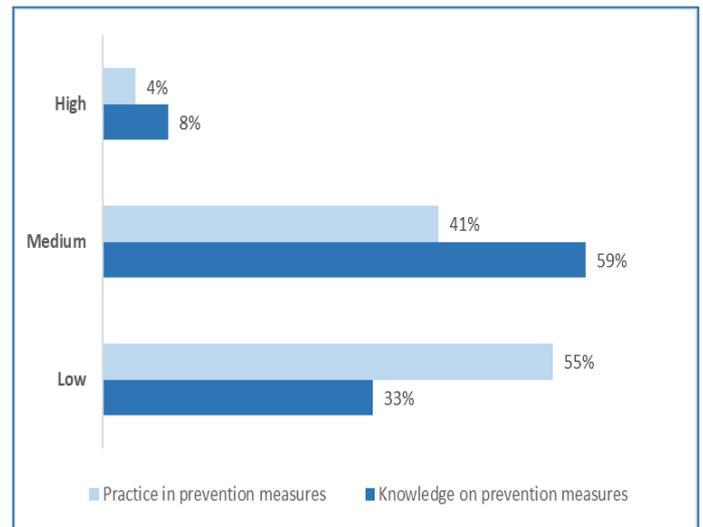
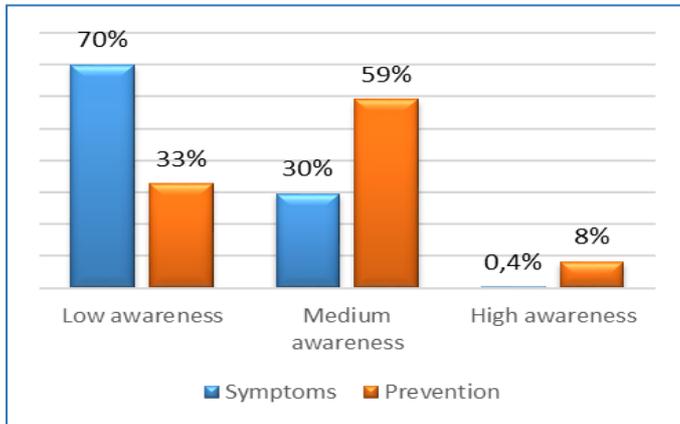
About half (51%) of refugees feel safe despite the COVID-19 threat because: i) access to camps is restricted; ii) they take all precautions and; iii) they pray for their safety. However, almost half the residents feel COVID-19 related anxiety and stress. The fear of illness and infection is the most frequent reason for stress.

49% feel covid-related anxiety and stress



Knowledge of Symptoms and Prevention Measures

Even though all participants declared that they had heard of the pandemic, most do not have enough information on symptoms and prevention measures¹. While more participants were aware of preventive measures, analysis shows that 60 percent of respondents only know one-half of the preventative measures officially announced by WHO.



Despite the hardship of their current circumstances, in general refugees were more likely to react positively when coping with stress. However, it was noted that some households were coping with stress negatively e.g. by isolating themselves.

Most known symptoms

- Fever
- Dry cough

Least known symptoms

- Loss of smell
- Diarrhea

Most known prevention measures

- Staying at home
- Wearing mask outside
- Avoiding public space

Least known prevention measures

- Not touching face
- Covering mouth/nose while sneezing, coughing

Mostly practiced measures

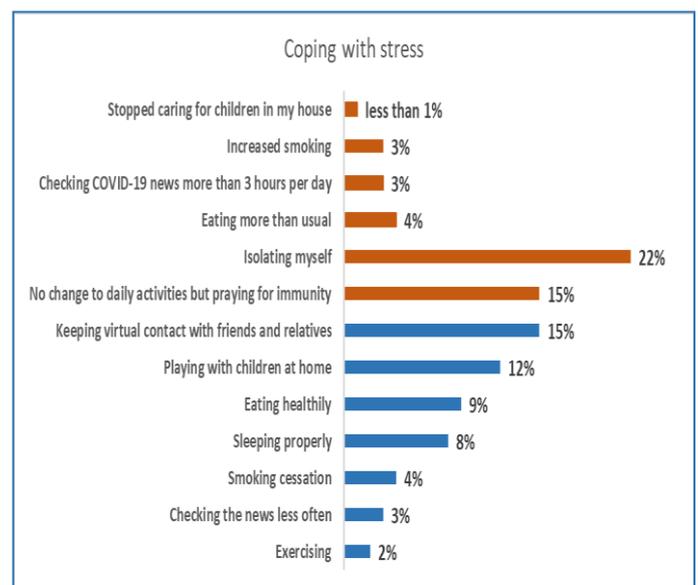
- Staying at home
- Wearing mask outside
- Avoiding public space

Least practiced measures

- Not touching face
- Covering mouth/nose while sneezing, coughing

Practices

Despite their knowledge, data reveals that refugees do not practice prevention measures² aligned with their knowledge for reasons such as not having enough money to buy hygiene items, having to go to work, other people not taking precautions, masks not being available, markets being crowded etc. While more than half (59 percent) had a medium level of knowledge, only 55 percent adopted up to four prevention measures. Among these; staying home, wearing a mask outside, and avoiding public spaces were applied more frequently by the refugees.



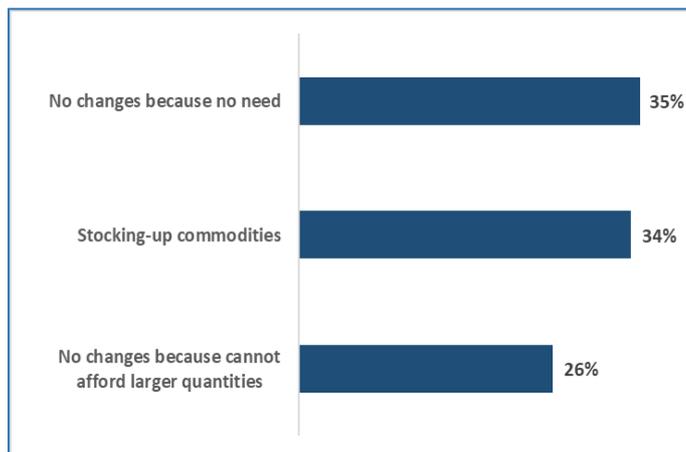
¹ Knowledge in symptoms and prevention measures were categorized in three groups: low, medium, and high level based on the total number of known symptoms/measures

² The level of practicing prevention measures was classified into three groups (low, medium, high) depending on the total number of measures being practiced by refugees

Access to Food and Hygiene Items

i- Markets in camps

Almost three quarters (**72 percent**) of camp residents informed they perceived **markets/shops as more crowded** than usual after the outbreak. This partially explains the fear and stress they feel about the risk of infection. Nonetheless, 35 percent of refugees did not change their shopping behavior, while 34 percent started stocking-up on commodities. An additional 26 percent said they would have stocked items had they been able to afford larger quantities.



ii- Product Availability

Food products and hygiene items are still available in the markets: 84 percent of refugees expressed that hygiene items were always available while 69 percent reported full availability of food products. One quarter of participants reported that food products were sometimes available, particularly fruit and vegetables for which stock was running out swiftly³.

iii- Affordability

More than half of the households indicated that the prices of hygiene items (54%) and food products (66%) had increased since March 2020. WFP market monitoring activities demonstrated that the average Food Basket cost in the camps, including both the contracted and noncontracted shops, was 151 TRY in January, 152 TRY in February, and reached 157 TRY in March 2020. Food basket cost later on increased by 10% in April compared to January and reached 167 TRY. This 10% increase in a short time explains the perceptions expressed by the refugees given the limited disposable income among refugees living in-camps.

Moreover, residents spent more on hygiene items, from an average of 122 TL in Q4 2019 to 185 TL in April 2020.



Income Sources

All refugees in camps receive assistance of 100 TL per person per month through the WFP e-voucher, and more than half (54 percent) reported this as being their main source of income.

69% lost jobs or reduced salaries

Some refugees had the possibility of employment off-camp with results showing that for some 29% of households, this was their main source of income. However, following the implementation of restrictions due to COVID-19, more than two-thirds (69%) of households formerly employed off-camp have lost their jobs or suffered a reduction in earnings. While the Food Basket price in Turkey and the Southeast remained stable through Q1 2020, the cost of a nutritionally balanced diet was already higher than the assistance transfer value. Moreover, Food Basket cost increased by 10% in April 2020 compared to January. This gap, combined with the loss of additional income and the increasing need for hygiene items, has led to increasing vulnerability among refugees living in-camps.



For further information:
WFP Turkey Country Office
VAM / M&E Unit
co.tur.m&e@wfp.org

³ The situation for stock of fresh produce has subsequently been improved in collaboration with the camp store management.