



# PERSISTING VULNERABILITIES

FINDINGS FROM THE EMERGENCY SOCIAL SAFETY NET  
POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING SURVEY (ROUND 13) IN TURKEY



Funded by  
the European Union



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abbreviations and Acronyms	4
List of figures	4
Background	5
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>8</b>
Purpose of the study	8
Objectives of the study	8
<b>CHAPTER 2: SURVEY METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>9</b>
Research design	9
Sample	9
Area of study	10
<b>CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS</b>	<b>11</b>
Income and employment	11
Expenditure	13
Coping strategies	19
Food consumption score	24
<b>Conclusion and recommendations</b>	<b>26</b>

# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>CCTE</b>	- - - -	Conditional Cash Transfer For Education
<b>COVID-19</b>	-	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>ESSN</b>	- - - -	Emergency Social Safety Net
<b>ECHO</b>	- - - -	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
<b>FCS</b>	- - - -	Food Consumption Score
<b>IFRC</b>	- - - -	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>LCSI</b>	- - - -	Livelihood Coping Strategy Index
<b>MEB</b>	- - - -	Minimum Expenditure Basket
<b>MOFSS</b>	- - -	Ministry of Family and Social Services
<b>NUTS</b>	- - - -	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
<b>OECD</b>	- - - -	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PDM</b>	- - - -	Post Distribution Monitoring
<b>RCSI</b>	- - - -	Reduced Coping Strategy Index
<b>TRC</b>	- - - -	Turkish Red Crescent
<b>TRY</b>	- - - -	Turkish Lira
<b>TURKSTAT</b>		Turkish Statistical Institute

## LIST OF FIGURES

Map of the study area	10
<b>Figure 1:</b> Median Monthly Household Income Excluding ESSN & CCTE Based on ESSN Status	11
<b>Figure 2:</b> Median Household Income Based on Region	12
<b>Figure 3:</b> Median Household Expenditure Based on ESSN Status	13
<b>Figure 4:</b> Median Expenditure Based on Region	14
<b>Figure 5:</b> Share of Expenditure Items	14
<b>Figure 6:</b> Households with expenditure above and below MEB	15
<b>Figure 7:</b> Percentage of households with debt	16
<b>Figure 8:</b> Amount of total household debt	17
<b>Figure 9:</b> Sources of debt	17
<b>Figure 10:</b> Top five reasons for acquiring debt	18
<b>Figure 11:</b> rCSI by eligibility status	19
<b>Figure 12:</b> Adoption of Reduced Coping Strategies	20
<b>Figure 13:</b> LCSI by ESSN eligibility status	21
<b>Figure 14:</b> Adoption of Livelihood Coping Strategies	23
<b>Figure 15:</b> Food consumption groups	24
<b>Figure 16:</b> Food Consumption Groups (FCG)	25

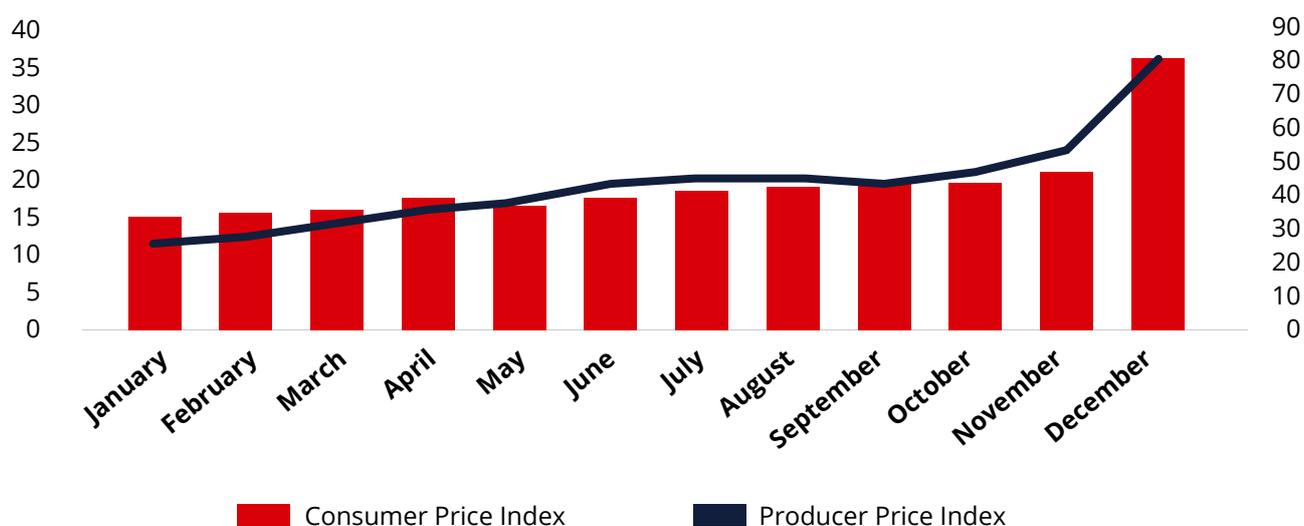
# BACKGROUND

## About the research

This Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) 13 report reflects findings from a survey conducted between September and November 2021 across Turkey by the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

During this period, the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative impacts were still acutely felt in Turkey, despite widespread vaccination efforts. Furthermore, the country experienced critical economic developments at the end of 2021, including the depreciation of the Turkish lira. Since production is heavily dependent on imports<sup>1</sup> in developing economies like Turkey's, the exchange rate and inflation relationship is vital as currency fluctuations affect prices significantly in such economies. Changes in the exchange rate affected not only the prices of imported consumer goods, but also production costs.

Combined with the adverse impacts of the pandemic, these negative trends resulted in a 13.58 per cent monthly increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in December 2021, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT). In addition, annual inflation rate, reached up to 36.08 per cent<sup>2</sup> which directly brought about an increase in the cost of living, with rising prices of essential items such as food, utility bills, rent and others. This negative trend heavily impacted the lives of refugees in Turkey as well as the host community, particularly as of November 2021.



1 • Monfared S.S and Akin F (2017). "The Relationship Between Exchange Rates and Inflation: The Case of Iran", *European Journal of Sustainable Development* (2017), 6, 4, 329-340.  
2 • For more detailed information please visit link: <https://www.tcmb.gov.tr/wps/wcm/connect/en/tcmb+en>



## About the programme

The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) provides unrestricted, unconditional cash assistance<sup>3</sup> to people living under temporary or international protection in Turkey. The programme aims to help vulnerable people, a majority of whom are Syrian among other nationalities including but not limited to Afghan, Somali, Iraqi, meet their basic needs. The ESSN is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented through a partnership of the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS), the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC). As of December 2021, the ESSN provides monthly assistance to over 1.5 million people. In April 2021, the transfer value of the programme was increased from 120 to 155 TRY per person. In addition, the Complementary Emergency Safety Net Programme (C-ESSN)<sup>4</sup> started in July 2021, providing unconditional cash assistance support to the most vulnerable households living in Turkey.

Within the context of the ESSN programme, PDM surveys are regularly conducted to understand the impact of the cash assistance on households receiving the assistance and to track socio-economic indicators such as debt, income and coping strategies for a representative sample of ESSN applicant households over time. PDM 11 may be referred to in this report, which covered data collected from November 2020 to January 2021.

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3 • For more information, please visit: [platform.kizilaykart.org](https://platform.kizilaykart.org) or [ifrc.org/emergency-social-safety-net-essn](https://ifrc.org/emergency-social-safety-net-essn)

4 • <https://platform.kizilaykart.org/en/t-suy.html>

# KEY FINDINGS



## **Despite higher levels of income, people are struggling to cover their basic needs**

Although households<sup>5</sup> had relatively higher levels of income than they did from November 2020 to January 2021, the increased cost of living (fuelled by a rising inflation) has left families still struggling to cover their basic needs.

Those receiving ESSN have a median monthly income of 2,000 TRY (excluding ESSN and conditional cash transfer for education (CCTE) assistance), with median expenses reaching almost double that at 3,889 TRY. Many households are resorting to even more severe negative coping strategies, such as reducing education and health expenses and pulling children out of school for work. In Turkey's current economic context, with an increasing CPI, both those receiving cash assistance from ESSN –and those not receiving assistance had difficulty in meeting their basic needs.



## **86% of families are falling deeper into debt**

The prevalence and amount of debt has deepened, with families having little to no capacity to repay their debt. The majority of households surveyed (86 per cent of those receiving ESSN and 77 per cent of those not receiving ESSN) were in debt by 2,500-3,000 TRY. Around 80 per cent of households receiving ESSN were indebted to local shops and 72 per cent borrowed from friends or relatives. The main reported reason for acquiring debt was to cover basic needs such as food, rent and other utilities. It was also reported that the ESSN assistance is playing a crucial role in allowing them to make debt repayments, however the burden of debt remains too high.



## **1 in 2 families did not have acceptable food consumption**

About half of the households surveyed had below acceptable food consumption scores. Many have been forced to reduce the amount and quality of food they consume or prioritize feeding their children over parents and other adults in the home. Should these low food consumption scores continue overtime, there may be irreparable damage done to the people's health and wellbeing.



## **Cash assistance plays an urgent and critical role now**

These findings underline the importance of a rapid response to the growing needs, including:

- re-evaluating the transfer value,
- providing additional one-time payment to respond to chronic debt and
- alleviating some of the financial stress among families who were not eligible for ESSN programme by demographic criteria, yet still vulnerable, by utilizing the Social Assistance and Solidary Foundations (SASF) allowance, which enables them to receive ESSN assistance.

5 • ESSN applicants consist of those applying for assistance and those already receiving it.

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to assess the impact of the ESSN on socio- economic conditions of its recipients, with particular focus on their level of expenditure, debt, coping strategies and food consumption. This study, conducted between September and November 2021, aims to compare the experiences of recipients and non-recipient households.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1** To measure the extent to which minimum expenses such as food, rent, utilities, non-food items (NFI), health, education, etc. are met.
- 2** To determine if/how income, debt and expenditure are critical in understanding households' economic resilience.
- 3** To determine the severity of the coping strategies adopted when facing economic/financial difficulties.
- 4** To assess how safe the food consumption habits are.



# CHAPTER 2: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

## RESEARCH DESIGN

PDM 13 is the first survey conducted after the launch of the C-ESSN programme in July 2021 which provides unconditional cash assistance support to the most vulnerable households living in Turkey and stands as a separate programme from ESSN. This has caused a change in the PDM survey sampling structure, thus establishing PDM 13 as a new baseline for future PDM studies. Hence, in this report, PDM 11 data collected between November and January 2021, is presented to provide only a general perspective on the ESSN applicants' situation a year ago.

This PDM survey adopted a cross sectional survey design. This involves observations of a sample or cross section of a population or phenomenon that have been made at a one point in time. The unit of analysis chosen for the PDM is the household.

## SAMPLE

The PDM sample is a stratified random sample, with a margin of error of five per cent and a confidence level of 95 per cent. The sample consists of two groups: recipient and non-recipient households. The sample design is focused on national and stratum level representation of the ESSN recipient and non-recipient households.

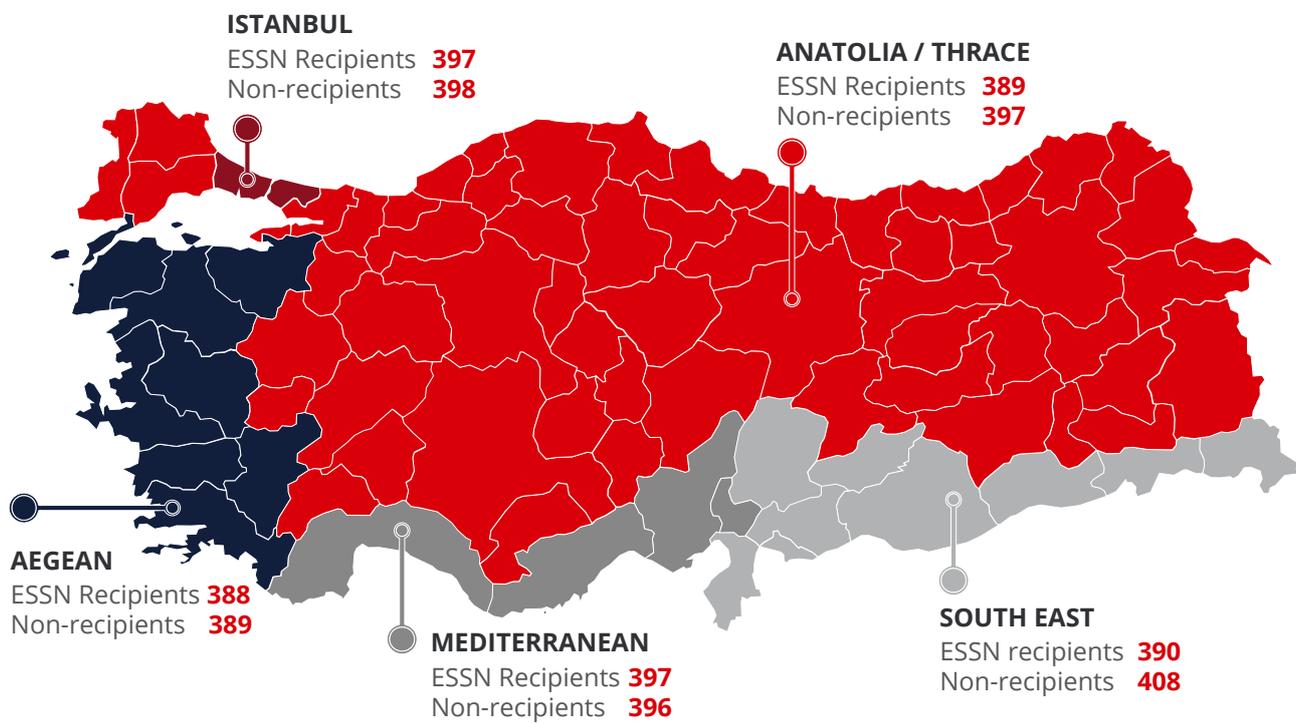
PDM 13 captured responses from a total of 3,949 households (1,961 recipient and 1,988 non-recipient households) across the country. The data was collected by enumerators from TRC's M&E unit in Gaziantep through phone surveys, with 40.6 per cent response rate.



# AREA OF STUDY

Considering the ESSN is a nationwide programme with recipients spread across different regions, with diverse socio-economic status and around 70 per cent of the ESSN applicants being concentrated in 10 provinces, a nationwide sampling might lead to sampling errors. For a better estimation of study parameters, a regional stratification based on the proportion of applicant households was applied. Black Sea, Eastern Anatolia, Central Anatolia and Thrace regions were combined as one stratum, based on relative similarities in their programme application figures and socio-economic dynamics. Istanbul was accepted as a stratum by itself because of its distinct socio-economic status as the main commercial city in Turkey; this is in keeping with its treatment as an independent stratum by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat). Independent random samples were drawn from these five regions as below.

Map of the study area



# CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

## INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT



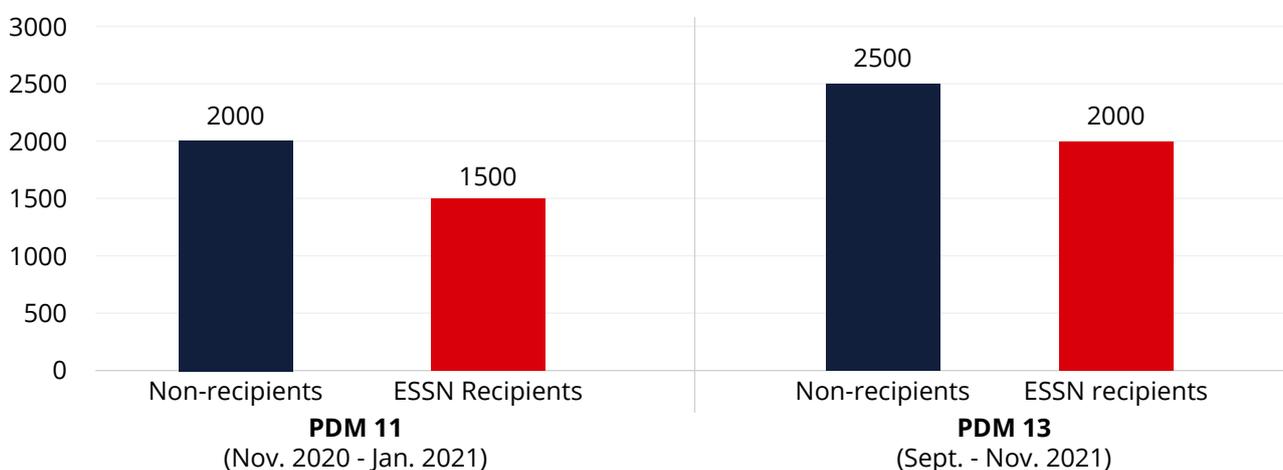
**2,000 TRY/month is the median household income for those receiving ESSN support.**

**2,500 TRY/month is the median household income for those not receiving ESSN.**

### Household monthly income

The median monthly household income was higher than last year. This can be linked to adjustments in wages<sup>6</sup> as a response to higher cost of living in the country as well as the return of more informal work opportunities as the lockdowns were lifted during the current reporting period. Excluding the ESSN and CCTE assistance, the median income of ESSN recipient households was lower than that of non-recipient households<sup>7</sup>.

**Figure 1: Median Monthly Household Income Excluding ESSN & CCTE Based on ESSN Status**



PDM 13 findings indicate that there is a significant gap in terms of median monthly household income across the different study regions<sup>8</sup>. Istanbul is the region with highest household income levels, while the South-East region has the lowest for both ESSN recipients and non-recipients. This can be attributed to varying employment opportunities in different regions in Turkey.<sup>9</sup>

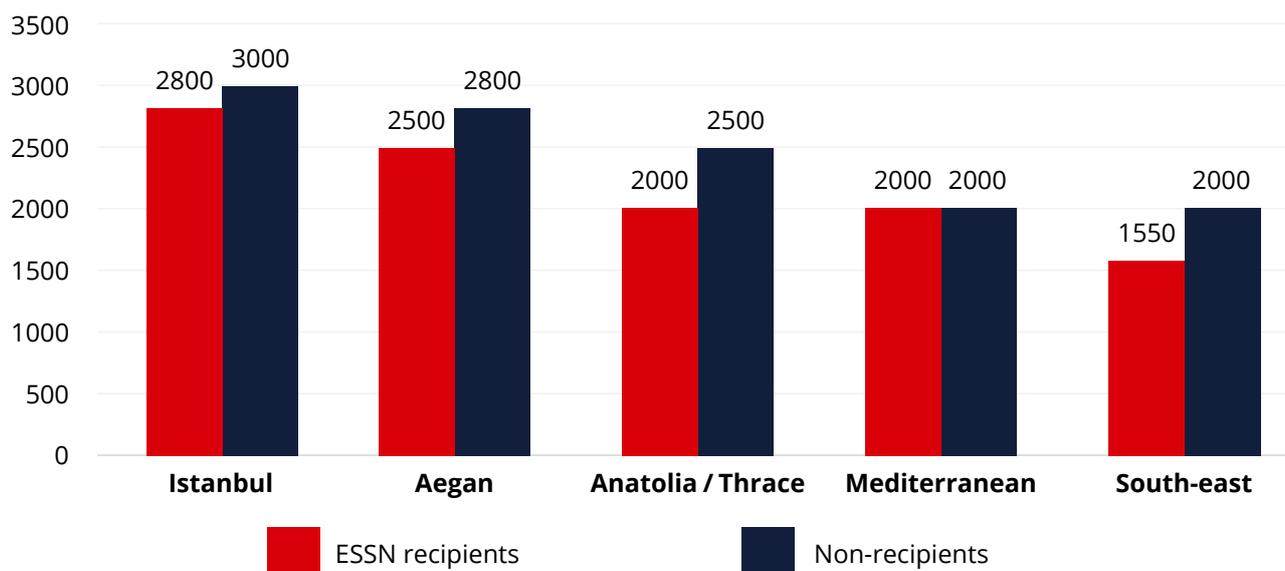
6 • For example, the minimum wage was increased by 21.56 per cent as of January 2021 <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/turkey-to-raise-minimum-wage-by-2156-in-2021/2090819>.

7 • Mood's median test was conducted to measure whether there is any statistically significant difference between recipient and non-recipient households in terms of their total income, excluding ESSN assistance. The difference between recipient and non-recipient households is statistically significant.

8 • Mood's median test was conducted to measure whether there is any statistically significant difference between strata in terms of their total income excluding ESSN assistance. The difference between strata is statistically significant.

9 • OECD (2013), Regional Unemployment in OECD Countries1, [<http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/3888243.pdf>]

**Figure 2: Median Household Income Based on Region**



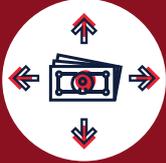
While around 9.6 per cent of the ESSN-recipient households have a member who earns income as in-kind item, this is about 8.3 per cent of among non-recipient households. These levels have remained fairly stable since PDM 11 (9.5 per cent for ESSN recipient and 8.8 per cent for non-recipient households).

## Unskilled labour is the main source of income for ESSN applicants

According to PDM 13, all participant households have at least one source of income i.e., assistance, salary, etc. While 94 per cent of the ESSN recipient households had at least one working household member, this was 92 per cent for non-recipients. Main income sources for the ESSN recipient households were unskilled labour (58.4 per cent) followed by skilled labour (21.1 per cent) and the ESSN card (18.1 per cent). For non-recipient households, the top three income sources were unskilled labour (55 per cent), skilled labour (34.6 per cent) and gifts (3.2 per cent). Even though ESSN assistance was not the main source of income for some recipient households, 77.6 per cent of these households considered it as the secondary source of income.



# EXPENDITURE

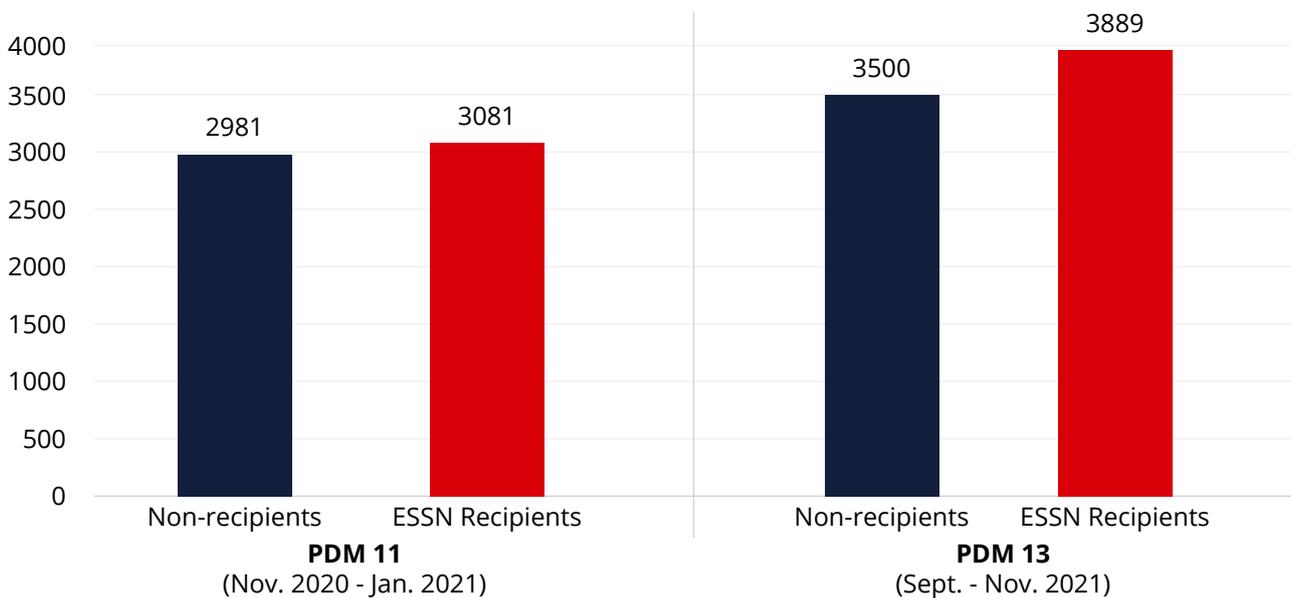


**Median household expenditure reached 3705 TRY. ISTANBUL was the region with highest median household expenditure.**

## Median household expenditure increased by 23 % for ESSN applicants

Median household expenditure reached 3,705 TRY for ESSN applicants. While it reached 3,889 TRY for ESSN recipients, it was 3,500 TRY for non-recipient households. Higher median monthly household expenditure levels can be partially explained by higher consumer item prices: the inflation rate was 21.31 annually and 3.51 per cent monthly as of November 2021<sup>10</sup>. The increase in income levels and higher transfer value for ESSN recipient households can be among other factors explaining this change in expenditure levels. In addition, ESSN recipients' higher median household expenditure can be related to their larger household size, which was associated with higher food expenditure.

**Figure 3: Median Household Expenditure Based on ESSN Status**

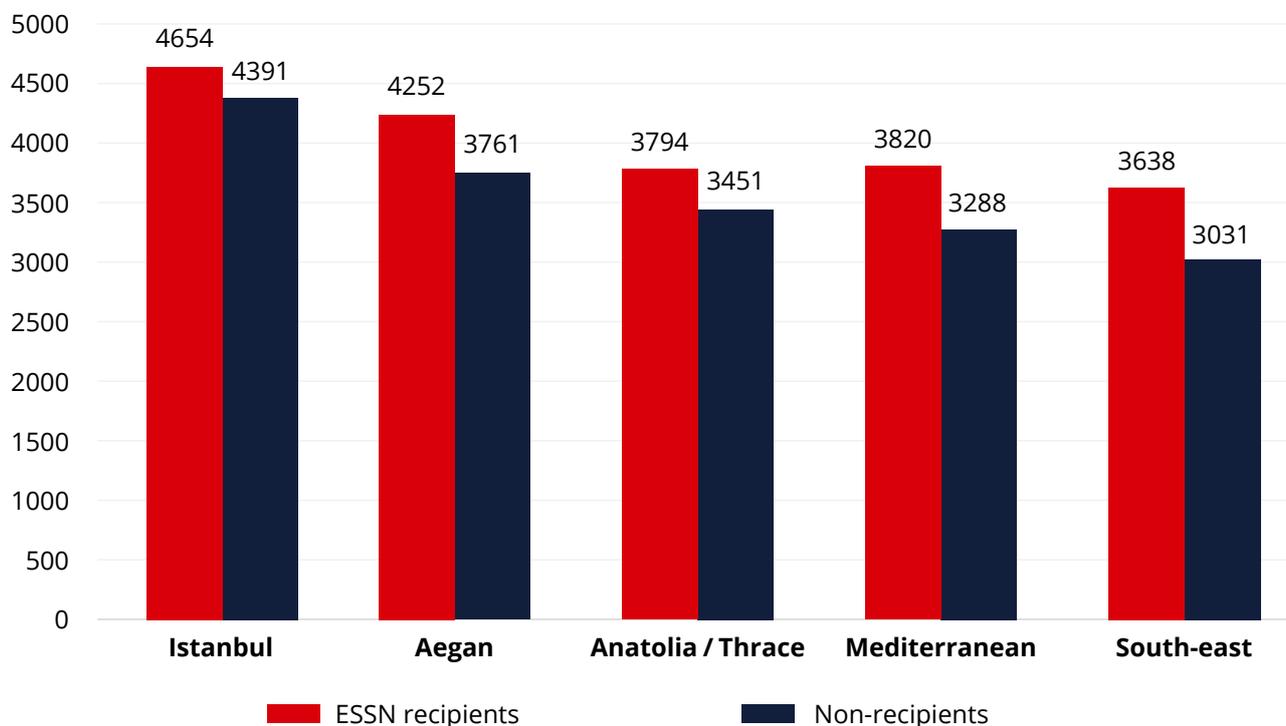


**We do not have enough money. We go to the markets, but return empty handed, we can't afford anything. Only my son works to provide for 11 people. Even if it is 5 kg of tomatoes to buy, it costs 15 TRY, 3 TRY per kg. Everything is expensive, everything has changed (...) I do not have the [ESSN] card, my spouse has passed away. I cannot do anything.** – Female, ESSN non-recipient, Gaziantep

10 • TurkStat, 2021. For more details, please visit this link: <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Tuketici-Fiyat-Endeksi-Kasim-2021-37389>

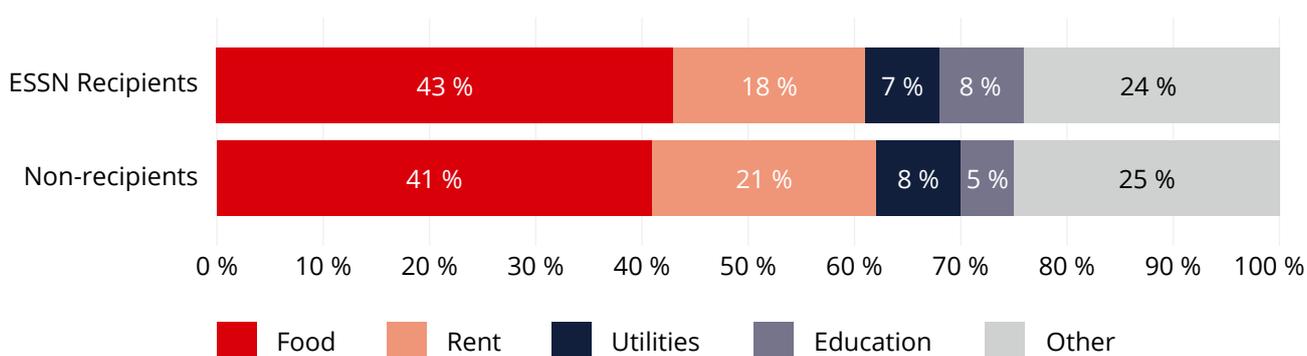
While Istanbul was the region with the highest median household expenditure; the South-East region recorded the lowest. This finding is in line with the ESSN monthly minimum expenditure basket (MEB) calculations, according to which Istanbul was the region with highest total expenditure for a 6-person household, followed by Izmir sub-region.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 4: Median Expenditure Based on Region**



In PDM 13, food, rent and utilities were the three items with the largest share in household expenditure, followed by education, hygiene, debt repayments (for applicants who were in debt) and water.

**Figure 5: Share of Expenditure Items**



For ESSN recipients, median monthly household expenditure on food was 1,714 TRY, while it was 1,286 TRY for non-recipient households. In PDM 11, it was 1,286 TRY for both. The higher food prices<sup>12</sup>, coupled with the larger household sizes of the ESSN recipient households, might have led to the higher food expenditures reported for them in PDM 13. Despite this monetary increase in expenditure, the share of food expenditure in the total expenditure is one percentage point lower than in PDM 11. In addition, the share of education expenditure is three percentage points higher than in PDM 11 which might be related to the resumption of face-to-face education.

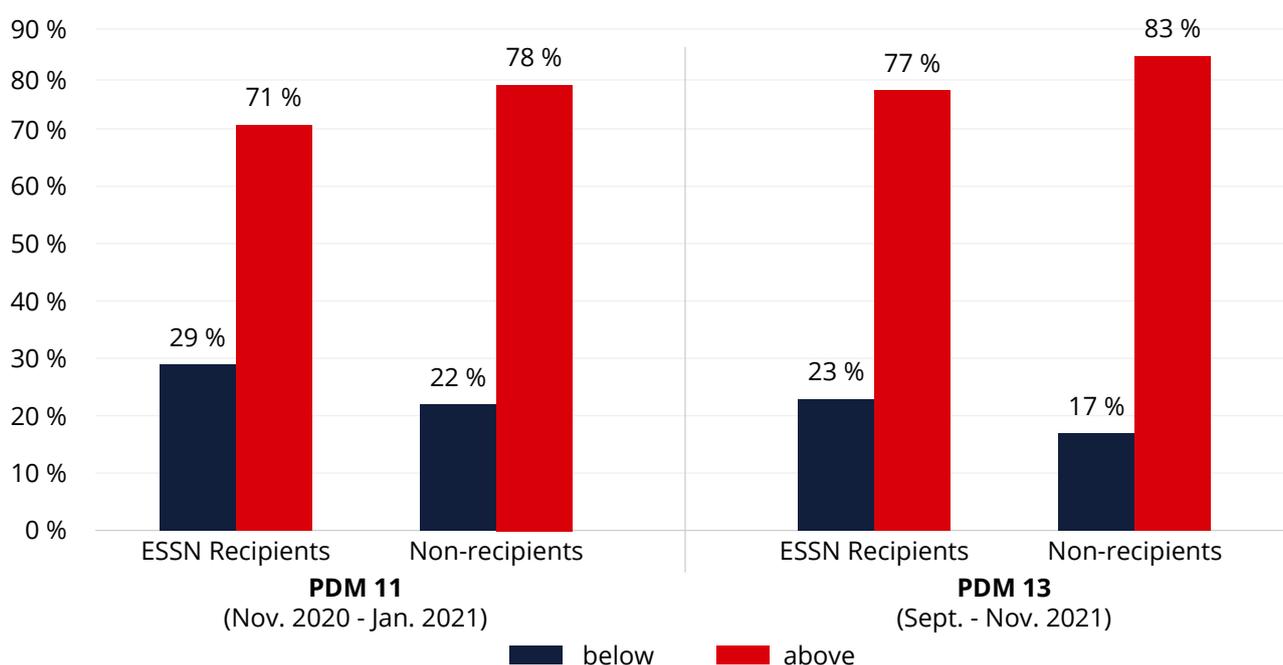
11 • MEB calculation is made using TurkStat data. This finding is from November 2021.

12 • According to Turkstat, the annual inflation rate for food and non-alcoholic beverages was 27.11 per cent in November 2021. For more detailed information, please visit <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Consumer-Price-Index-November-2021-37389&dil=2>

## Majority of households' expenditure are above the minimum expenditure basket

The Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) calculates the monthly cost of basic needs for a household of six members. The calculation is made based on estimations of the essential goods and services required, and adjusted, to ensure the households' food component provides basic nutritional requirements in line with the Sphere standards<sup>13</sup>. To assess the household relative poverty, the value of the MEB per capita is normally compared to the household expenditure per capita. If the household expenditure per capita is below the MEB per capita, then the household is considered to have fallen below the poverty line. In this study, calculation of the per capita expenditure relied on the square root scale<sup>14</sup>.

**Figure 6: Households with expenditure above and below MEB**



According to PDM 13, the majority of ESSN recipient (77 per cent) and non-recipient (83 per cent) households have per capita expenditure above the MEB per capita. The percentage of households with per capita expenditure higher than the MEB was more than PDM 11 values.

13 • Sphere standards intend to ensure quality humanitarian response and accountability. MEB is estimated as the cost of acquiring enough food to meet energy requirements, usually 2,100 calories per person per day. For more information, please visit <https://spherestandards.org/humanitarian-standards/core-humanitarian-standard/>

14 • Square root scale (the equivalence scale), used in the OECD Income Distribution Database, divides household income by the square root of the household size. This implies that, for instance, a household of four persons has needs twice as large as one composed of a single person.

# DEBT

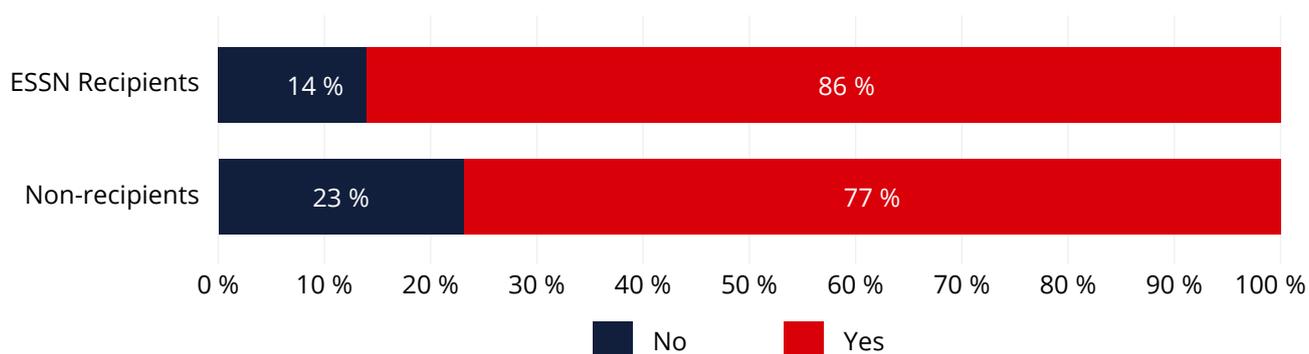


**80 PER CENT of households surveyed have debt. LOCAL SHOPS were the main source of debt for ESSN recipient households.**

## 86 per cent of the households receiving ESSN had debt

Debt continued to be a common coping strategy for ESSN recipients to meet their basic needs. According to PDM 13, 86 per cent of recipient households were in debt at the time of survey. ESSN status created a significant difference in terms of being in debt<sup>15</sup>. While higher debt prevalence among ESSN recipients compared to non-recipients can be explained by deeper economic difficulties, it can also be linked with borrowing being relatively easier for them thanks to the reliability of ESSN assistance. This is also a finding from the remote Focus Group Discussions (FDGs)<sup>16</sup>. Moreover, 76 per cent of the ESSN recipient and 68 per cent of non-recipient households incurred new debt three months before of data collection to cover their basic needs.

**Figure 7: Percentage of households with debt**



ESSN applicants had higher median household debt compared to PDM 11, with ESSN recipients recording a median household debt of 2,500 TRY and 3,000 TRY for non-recipients.

Furthermore, ESSN applicants reported very limited capacity to repay debt; only 37.4 per cent of ESSN recipient and 31.6 per cent of non-recipient households were able to repay their debts. Among those who could make debt repayments, the median repayment amount was 400 TRY for both recipients and non-recipient households. This might be because those who can repay their debts were repaying in installments. In addition, 51 per cent of ESSN recipient households shared that ESSN assistance helped them repay their debts.

15 • Pearson's Chi-square test was utilized here to measure whether there is any relationship between having in debt or not and eligibility criteria. As a result, there is a statistically significant difference between these two variables.

16 • For more information on the topic, please refer to [https://platform.kizilaykart.org/en/Doc/rapor/FGD-report\\_211207\\_EN.pdf](https://platform.kizilaykart.org/en/Doc/rapor/FGD-report_211207_EN.pdf)

**Figure 8: Amount of total household debt**



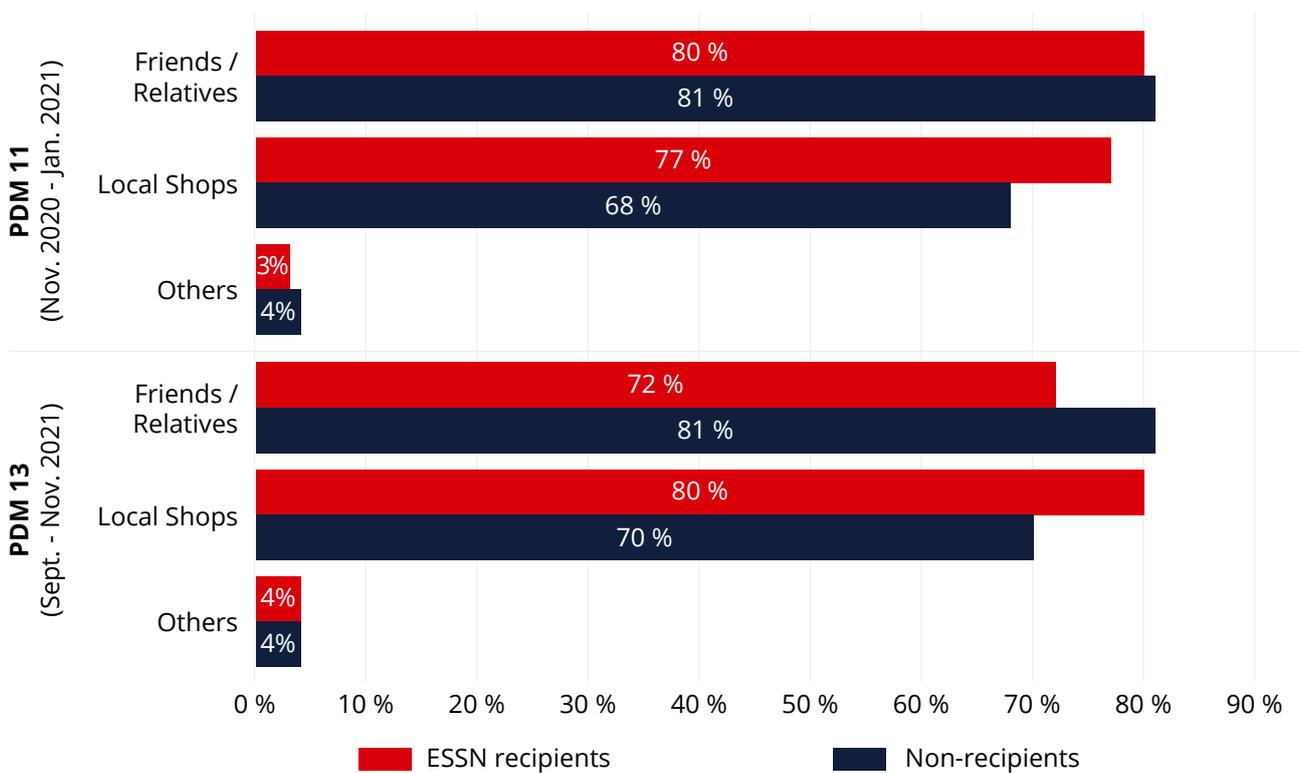
## Main source of debt: Borrowing from friends or relatives and local shops

Friends or relatives and local shops continued to be the main sources of borrowing for ESSN applicants. While 80 per cent of ESSN recipient households borrowed from local shops (usually owned by Syrian refugees<sup>17</sup>), 72 per cent borrowed from friends or relatives.

**“** We have to borrow when we don't have enough money. As long as we have work to do, thank God we can get by. But there is either no work or it's not regular, so we have to borrow money. **”**

– Male, ESSN non-recipient, İzmir

**Figure 9: Sources of debt**

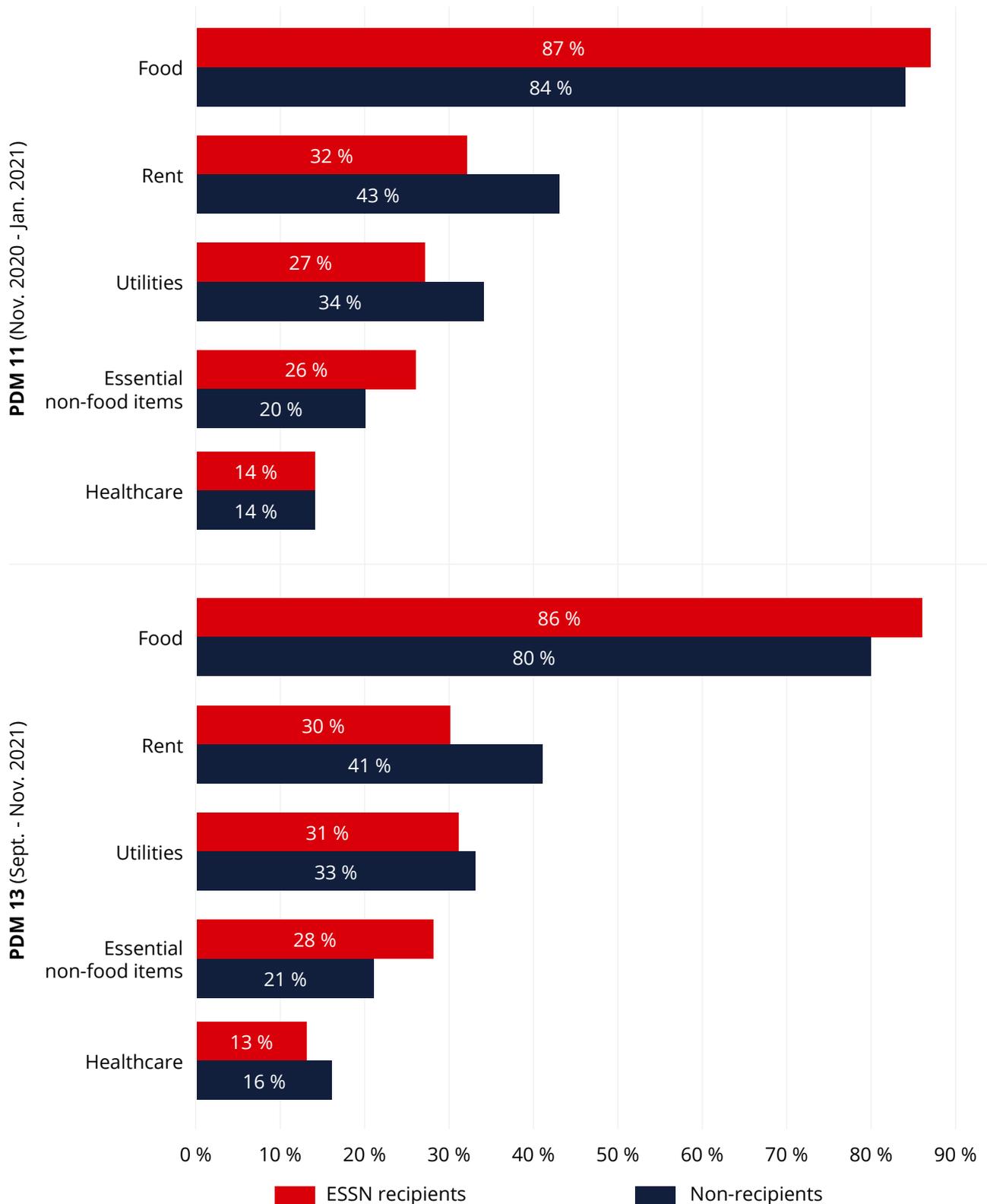


17 • For more information on the topic, please refer to [https://platform.kizilaykart.org/en/Doc/rapor/FGD-report\\_211207\\_EN.pdf](https://platform.kizilaykart.org/en/Doc/rapor/FGD-report_211207_EN.pdf)

## Food, rent and utilities were the main reasons for acquiring debt

ESSN applicants mainly resorted to borrowing to cover their most basic needs, namely food, rent, utilities, essential non-food items and healthcare.

**Figure 10: Top five reasons for acquiring debt**



# COPING STRATEGIES



**Regardless of receiving ESSN assistance or not, most surveyed households adopted **NEGATIVE COPING STRATEGIES.****

**44 % of households receiving ESSN resorted to cutting down on education.**

**34% of households receiving ESSN resorted to cutting down on health expenses.**

## Reduced coping strategy index (rCSI)

When livelihoods are negatively affected by a shock, households may adopt unusual strategies to cope with reduced or declining access to food. The Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) is often used as a proxy indicator of household food insecurity. It includes five specific consumption coping strategies, each given a standard severity weight, which are then aggregated into an index. The strategies include relying on less preferred or cheaper food; borrowing food or relying on help from friends or relatives; reducing the number of meals eaten per day; reducing the portion size of meals, and reducing the quantities consumed by adults so that children can eat. A higher score of rCSI is an indication of worsening of food security standards for the households and vice versa.

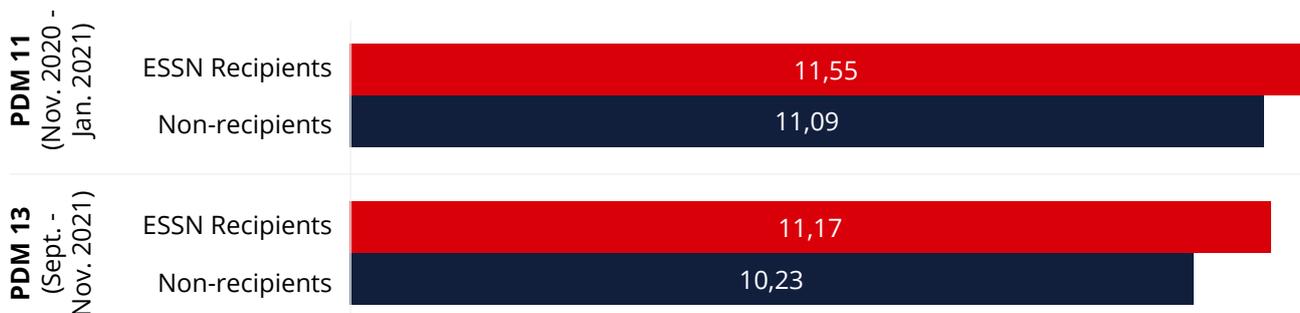
PDM 13 findings show that both ESSN recipients and non-recipients adopted food security related coping strategies at similar levels<sup>18</sup>. rCSI score remained stable from PDM11 (11,55) to PDM 13 (11,17) for the ESSN recipients, an indication that despite the increase in the transfer value in April 2021, and reportedly higher income and expenditure levels, ESSN recipient households still relied on food related coping strategies. Mean rCSI score was lower for non-recipient households compared to PDM 11 value, however this is not necessarily an indication of these households using food insecurity related coping strategies less.



**When we are unable to cover our expenses, we borrow from local stores. But if I can't work for a long time, we cut down on food expenses; we eat bulgur pilaf instead of chicken.**

– Male, ESSN recipient, Istanbul

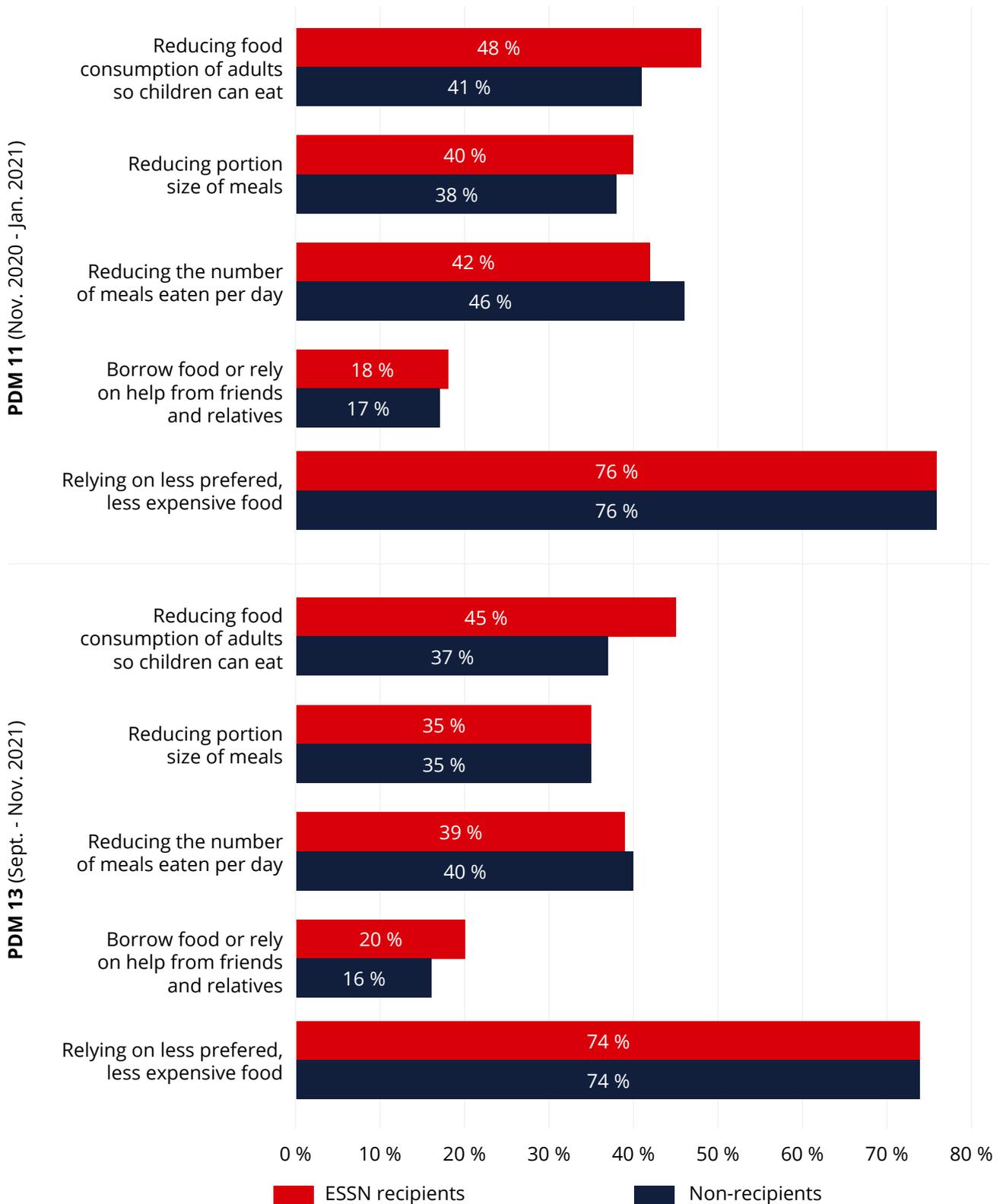
**Figure 11: rCSI by eligibility status**



18 • Kruskal Wallis test were applied to see whether any differences in rCSI by ESSN recipient status or not. As a result, rCSI does not differ depending on eligibility status.

Relying on less preferred or less expensive food was the most frequently used coping strategy. Compared to non-recipients, a higher percentage of ESN recipient households restricted adult food consumption and borrowed food or relied on help from friends or relatives.

**Figure 12: Adoption of Reduced Coping Strategies**

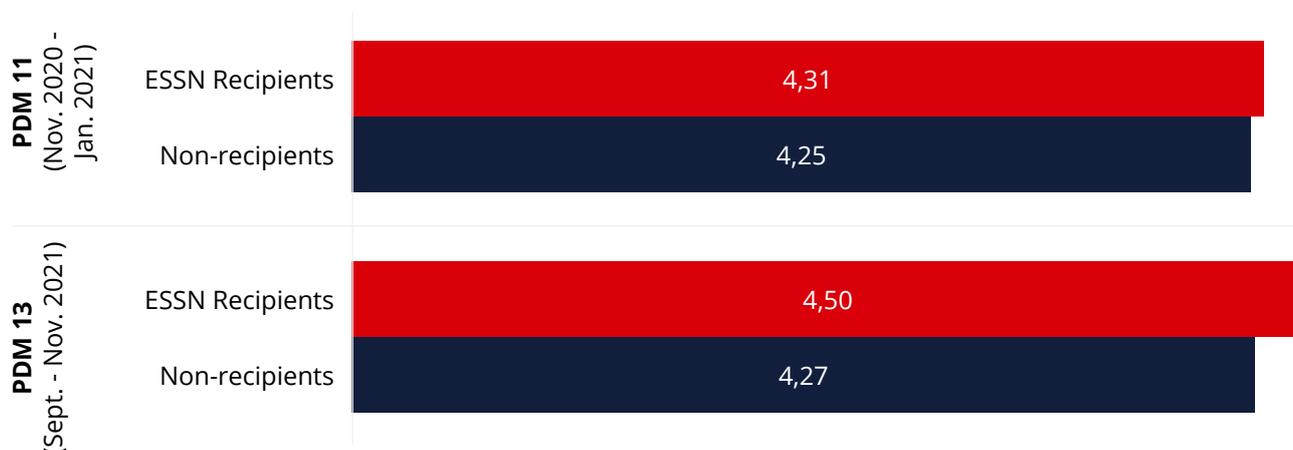


## Livelihood coping strategy index (LCSI): households facing stress and crisis coping strategies

The livelihood coping strategy index (LCSI) is used to assess household level livelihood and economic security based on income, expenditure and assets in order to understand households' longer term coping capacities in response to economic shocks. To measure LCSI, participants were asked if they had resorted to using any of the 13 pre-determined livelihoods coping strategies in the month prior to the survey (listed in Figure 12). The LCSI score is calculated after the responses were weighted depending on the severity of the strategy.

The livelihood coping strategies are categorized into three groups: stress, crisis and emergency. Each component represents sets of behavior with increasing degrees of severity. Understanding how households adapt to recent crises provides insights into not only the severity of their situation, but also how equipped they will be to face future challenges. Households were asked if anyone in their households had to engage in any of the ten coping strategies because there was not enough food or money to buy food during the past 30 days.

**Figure 13: LCSI by ESSN eligibility status**



PDM 13 findings suggest that both ESSN recipients and non-recipients adopted livelihood coping strategies at similar levels<sup>19</sup>. However, there are differences in terms of the type of preferred coping behaviour between the two groups. Households resorting to food related measures to cope with a lack of resources is on an increasing trend. Percentage of households adopting stress and crisis coping strategies was slightly higher than that of PDM 11.



**We borrow food from the local shop, and borrow from a Turkish friend. We owe 10,000 TRY. I still borrow from them and spend for children and the house. (...) We are still grateful to God.**  
 – Female, ESSN recipient, Ankara

19 • Kruskal Wallis test were applied to see whether any differences in LCSI by ESSN recipient status or not. As a result, LCSI does not differ according to eligibility status



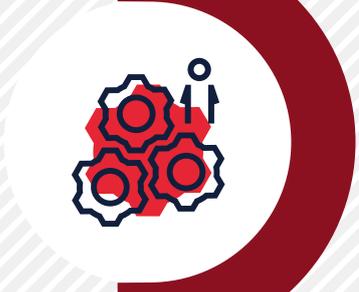
## STRESS COPING STRATEGIES

According to PDM 13, buying food on credit was the most widely adopted livelihood coping strategy among all categories for both ESSN recipients (75 per cent) and non-recipients (61 per cent). This strategy was followed by borrowing money from non-relatives. As expected, ineligible households spent savings more frequently than eligible households.



## CRISIS COPING STRATEGIES

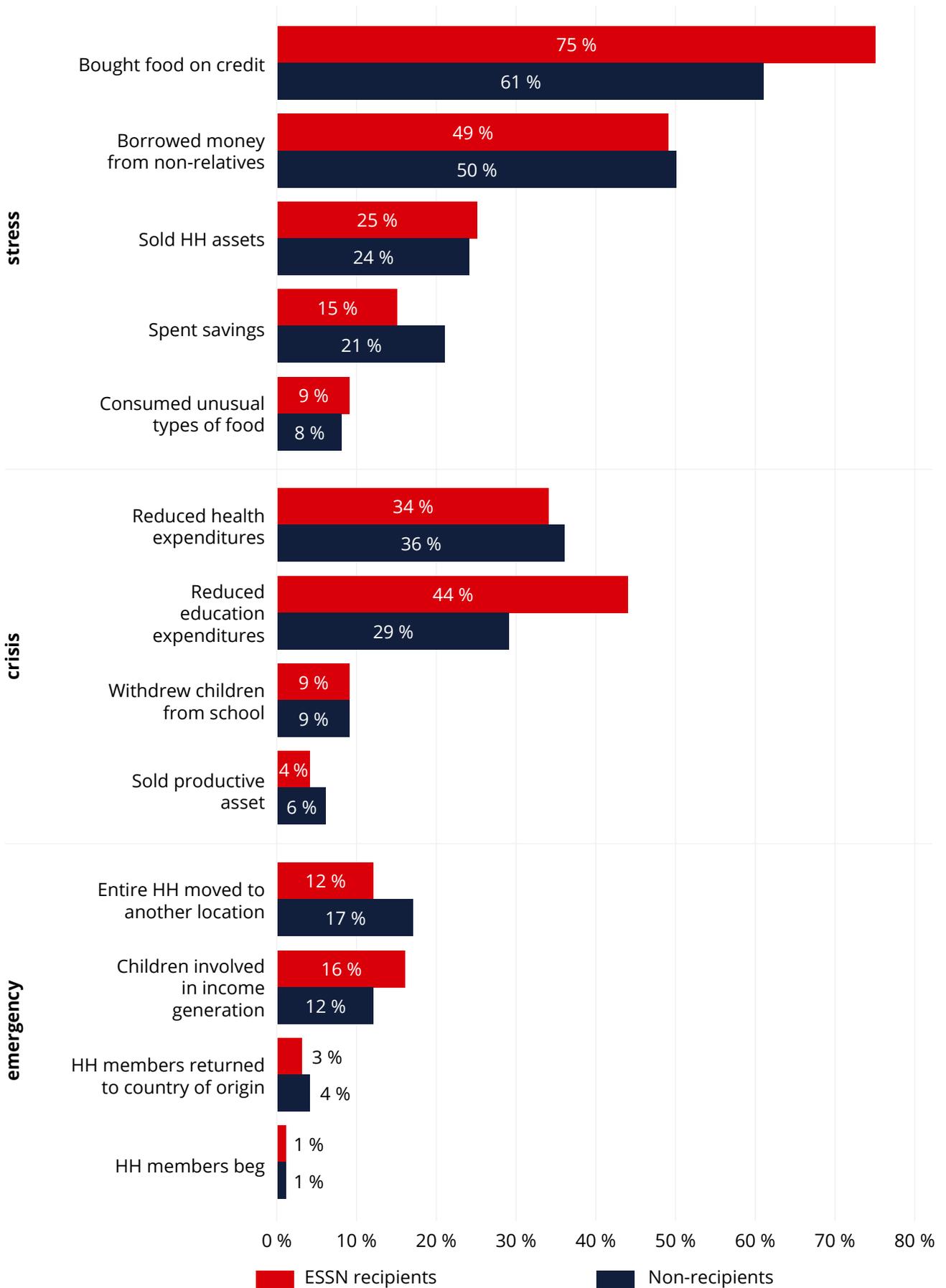
Most of the ESSN recipients resorted to cutting down on education (44 per cent) and health expenses (34 per cent), despite the increase in the share of education expenditure after transitioning to face-to-face education which costs more.



## EMERGENCY COPING STRATEGIES

For ESSN recipient households, involving children in income generation was the most adopted emergency coping strategy, indicating that there was at least one child worker in approximately every six household. Another emergency strategy used was to move locations, as reported by 17 per cent of non-recipient households. In addition, the percentage of ESSN households with member begging was one per cent lower in this reporting period than it was in PDM 11.

**Figure 14: Adoption of Livelihood Coping Strategies**



# FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORE

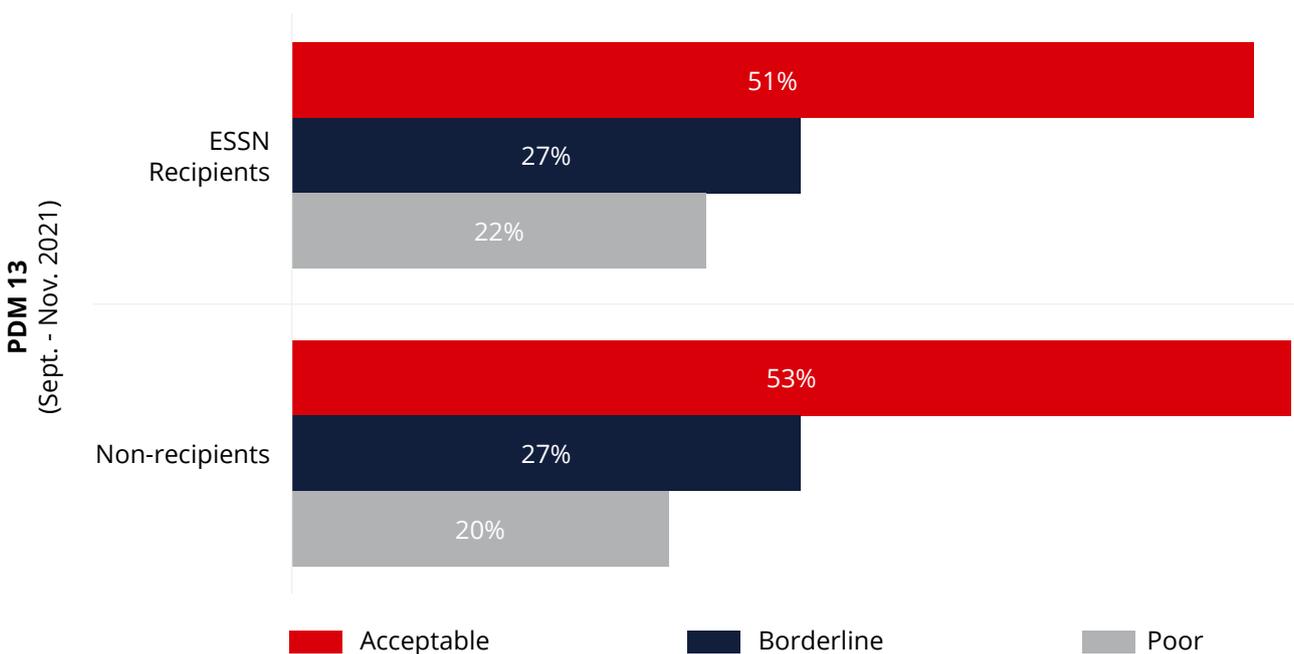


**HALF of households surveyed recorded BELOW ACCEPTABLE food consumption score threshold.**

The Food Consumption Score (FCS) is used to measure households' food consumption habits, including the diversity and frequency of the food consumed in the last seven days. These figures are then grouped under three categories: poor, borderline and acceptable.

The percentage of ESSN recipient households with acceptable food consumption was 51 per cent, indicating that one out of two households did not have enough nutritional intake, despite spending more on food-related expenses. Consumption levels were around 50 per cent since PDM 11, indicating a possibility of persistent lack of food consumption among ESSN recipient households which may have negative long-term effects on their health and well-being, especially on children.<sup>20</sup>

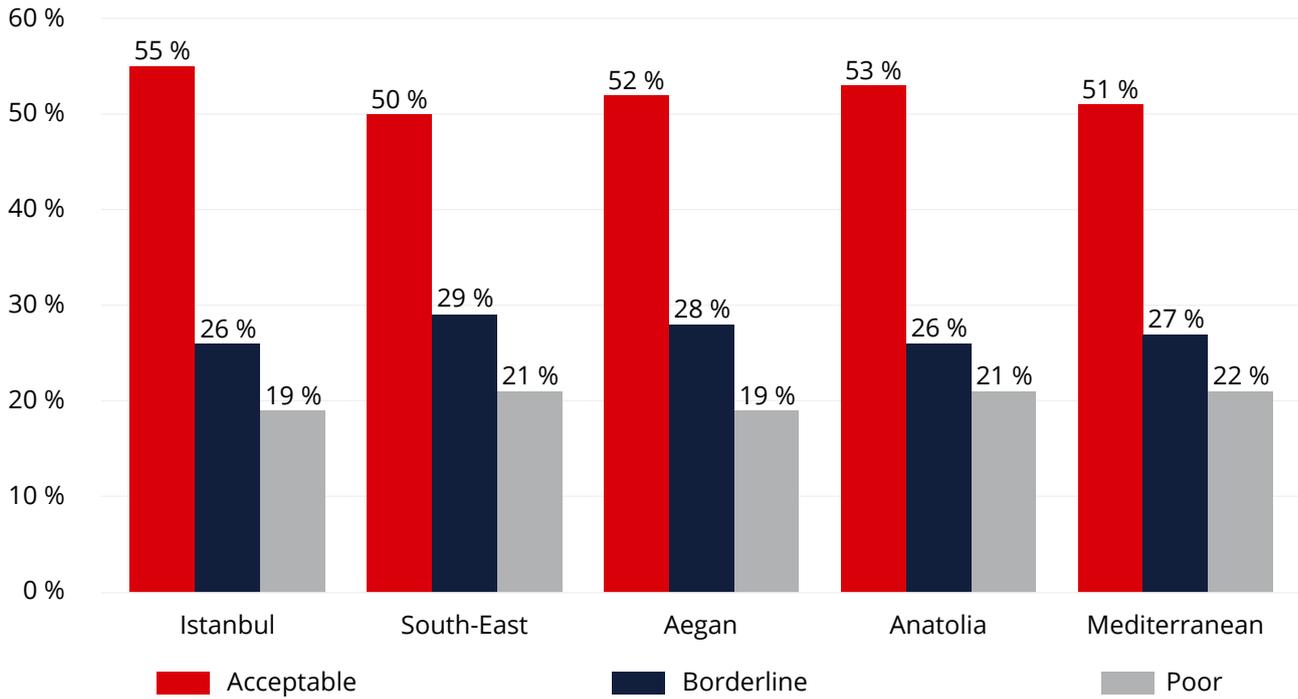
**Figure 15: Food consumption groups**



The majority of surveyed households reported consuming fruit (66 per cent of ESSN recipients and 57 per cent of non-recipients), pulses (62 per cent of ESSN recipients and 60 per cent of non-recipients) and meat (58 per cent of ESSN recipients and 52 per cent of non-recipients) one day or less within the previous week of the survey. This might be related to the increased prices of those items compared to PDM 11.

20 • Some research focusing on this relationship: Elgar, F. J., Pickett, W., Pfortner, T. K., Gariépy, G., Gordon, D., Georgiades, K., Davison, C., Hammami, N., MacNeil, A. H., Azevedo Da Silva, M., & Melgar-Quiñonez, H. R. (2021). Relative food insecurity, mental health and wellbeing in 160 countries. *Social science & medicine* (1982), 268, 113556. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113556>; Gallegos, D., Eivers, A., Sondergeld, P., & Pattinson, C. (2021). Food Insecurity and Child Development: A State-of-the-Art Review. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(17), 8990. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18178990>

**Figure 16: Food Consumption Groups (FCG)**



On a regional basis, the percentage of households with acceptable FCS was higher in İstanbul and Anatolia, while the percentage of households with poor FCS were higher in the Mediterranean region.



# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ongoing COVID – 19 pandemic, compounded by the increasing economic challenges, has made life even harder for vulnerable groups in Turkey, including refugees. This research indicates that, despite having relatively higher levels of income compared to the period between November 2020 and January 2021, surveyed households are forced to adopt negative coping strategies, including the most severe ones such as child labour, excluding the most vulnerable groups covered under the C-ESSN. With trends showing vulnerabilities and protection concerns in the increase, an effective protection referral mechanism is proving to be even more critical.

Families are falling deeper into debt, considering both the prevalence and the amount of debt. Many households' ability to repay their debt is limited. Despite the increase in the transfer value of the ESSN earlier in 2021, families are still struggling to cover even the most basic needs. Those not receiving ESSN are also increasingly vulnerable, which underlines the importance of the SASF allowance and in turn enables alleviation of the exclusion errors.

Limited food consumption continues to be a particular area of concern. Many have reduced the amount and quality of food or prioritized feeding their children over other adults in the home. This situation underscores the importance of supporting refugees in securing their basic needs. Cash assistance plays a crucial role in this. While cash continues to be critical, it is also important to focus on longer-term resilience through advocating for socio-economic empowerment of the affected population.

Given the key findings, these are the suggested recommendations:

- 1 CONSIDER A LARGE-SCALE STUDY ON ECONOMIC INDICATORS:** Further studies on income and expenditure need to be conducted in order to understand in more depth the patterns in socio-economic behaviours of households. More extensive and valuable information can be obtained through dedicated surveys and focus group discussions.
- 2 CONDUCT FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY:** Both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households have similar rCSI and LCSi scores. Quantitative studies can be triangulated with focus group discussions in order to understand the dynamics of multi-dimensional poverty for ESSN applicant households, especially during the pandemic process.
- 3 A ONE-OFF PAYMENT** can be considered within the scope of winter top-up in order to avoid more chronic debt.
- 4 RE-EVALUATE THE TRANSFER VALUE** and take into consideration the economic conditions.

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The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, reaching 150 million people in 192 National Societies, including Turkish Red Crescent (Türk Kızılay), through the work of 13.7 million volunteers. Together, we act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people.



## **TURKISH RED CRESCENT (TÜRK KIZILAY)**

**The largest humanitarian organization in Turkey**

The Turkish Red Crescent (Türk Kızılay) is the largest humanitarian organization in Turkey, helping vulnerable people in and out of disasters for years, both in the country and abroad. Millions of people currently receive support through our programmes in cooperation with the Government of Turkey. We are supporting vulnerable people impacted by disasters and other groups in need of humanitarian assistance.



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