



Lebanon

Monitoring & Evaluation Quarterly Report

Updates and results from post-distribution monitoring activities and key process monitoring findings

July–September 2014

HIGHLIGHTS

- * From July to September 2014, WFP assisted 895,287 persons. This includes 855,570 e-card beneficiaries, 17,501 new arrivals and 22,216 Palestinian refugees from Syria.
- * As of September 2014, WFP contracted 399 shops across Lebanon and injected over US\$314 million into the Lebanese economy through its voucher programme since January 2013.
- * Food consumption level continued to be relatively stable, with 82% of households in the post-distribution monitoring (PDM) group reporting acceptable food consumption scores in this quarter, compared to only 50% of households in the pre-assistance baseline (PAB) group with acceptable food consumption scores.
- * Households in the Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Lebanon region had higher food consumption scores than households in North Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, possibly due to a higher consumption of meat and vegetables in the Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Lebanon region.
- * Food consumption scores of beneficiary households appear to improve with length of stay in Lebanon. As beneficiaries start receiving assistance and are able to stabilise their food consumption, both of their food consumption levels and average daily dietary diversity also improve.
- * The average coping strategy index (CSI) for the July–September quarter remained the same as in the April–June quarter, at 18.6.
- * Forty two percent of households receiving WFP assistance reported that women are the primary decision-makers regarding the use of WFP assistance, while 28% of households reported that men and women in the household make these decisions together.

I. ACHIEVEMENTS

DISTRIBUTION ACHIEVEMENTS

As at the end of the third quarter of 2014, assistance was provided to **895,287 beneficiaries** (97% of the operational plan), with the breakdown per month shown in Table 1 below. The gap between planned and reached beneficiaries are primarily due to the number of new arrivals from Syria being lower than forecasted, therefore the number of food parcels distributed was lower than planned. In August 2014 WFP started assistance to Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), covering half of UNRWAS monthly caseload, through UNRWA's ATM card.

	July 2014			August 2014			September 2014		
	Planned BR12	Planned Operational	Actual	Planned BR12	Planned Operational	Actual	Planned BR12	Planned Operational	Actual
E-Cards	975,000	808,124	791,522	1,005,000	840,245	820,322	1,035,000	879,327	855,570
Parcels	40,000	40,000	17,189	40,000	40,000	23,052	40,000	40,000	17,501
PRS	85,063	0	0	85,063	21,884	20,160	85,063	20,830	22,216
Total	1,015,000	848,124	808,711	1,045,000	880,245	863,534	1,075,000	919,327	895,287

Table 1. Distribution figures from July to September 2014

Note: Actual e-cards beneficiaries refer to the beneficiaries who have actually redeemed their e-card values.

WFP reached the highest number of beneficiaries in September 2014 since the beginning of the operation as shown in Figure 1. The number of beneficiaries continues to increase in line with the increase in the number of UNHCR-registered refugees in Lebanon.

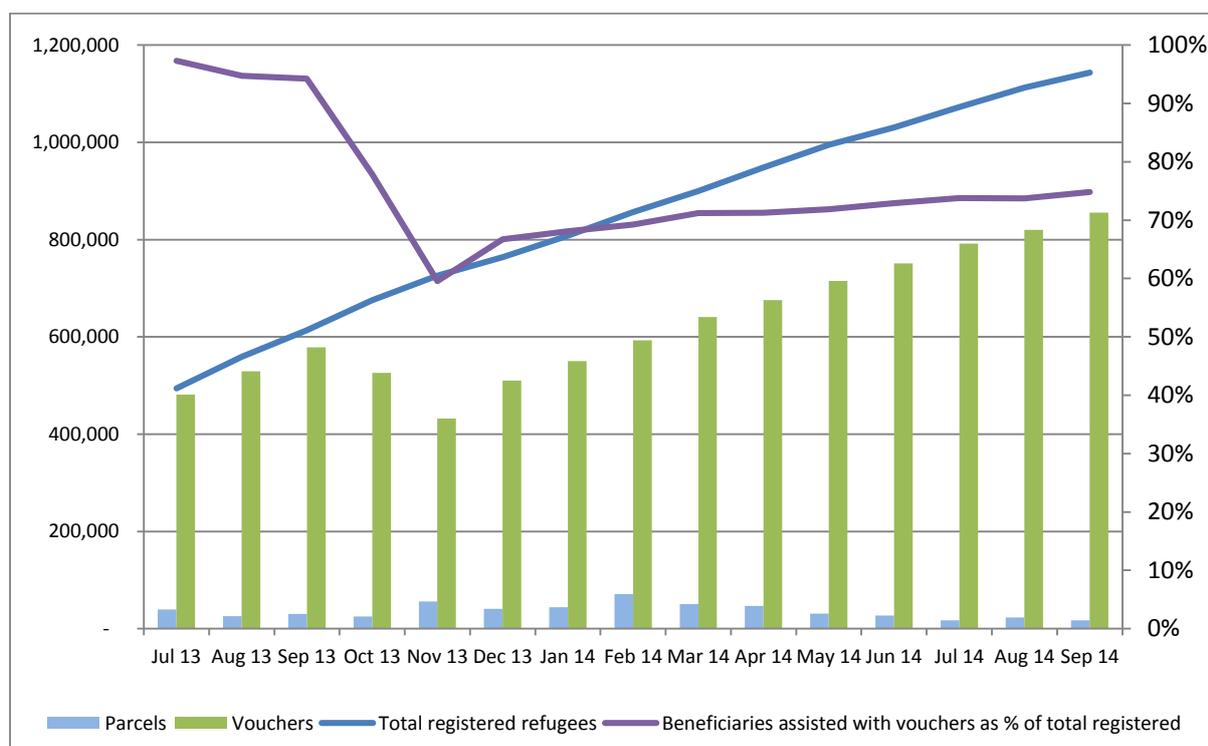


Figure 1. Beneficiaries reached from July 2013 to September 2014, compared to total registered refugees in Lebanon

CHALLENGES

Deteriorated security situation challenged programme and monitoring activities in some areas in North Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley.

In early August 2014, clashes erupted between Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF)/Internal Security Forces (ISF) and extremist groups in the Arsal area of the Bekaa Valley. Even though the physical access to the area was not allowed for UN and international NGOs, WFP continued providing assistance to some 35,000 beneficiaries by remotely loading e-card value as well as monitoring activities through phone calls to households and shops. Road blockages continued to occur, due to ongoing fallout from the abduction of LAF/ISF soldiers during the Arsal clashes, causing delays or cancellation of missions.

Wadi Khaled in North Lebanon also continued to be an area where WFP has little or no access. As shop monitoring in Wadi Khaled continued to be a challenge, WFP instituted specific restrictions on transactions at Wadi Khaled shops, such as setting a monthly redemption ceiling for shops and deactivating Point-of-Sale (POS) machines on weekends.

Some challenges in monitoring distributions conducted by cooperating partner (CP)s were also noted, mainly due to scheduling conflicts and limited resources. WFP's monitoring plan for both food parcel and e-card distributions aims for 33% of distributions to be monitored every month in each sub-office region, to achieve 100% of distribution points monitored in every quarter. The target of monitoring 33% of e-card distributions was achieved in all sub-office regions this quarter. Only about 20% of food parcel distributions were monitored in this quarter, which is mainly due to the decrease in new arrivals from Syria this quarter, thus the smaller number of food parcels distributed at once.

II. HOUSEHOLD MONITORING: RESULTS and OUTCOMES¹

1. FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORES²

Pre-assistance vs. Post-assistance

By the third quarter of 2014, food consumption levels amongst refugees receiving WFP assistance continued to be stable, with slightly improved levels from the second quarter of 2014 as shown in Figure 2. Refugees receiving WFP assistance (the post-distribution monitoring, or PDM group) also reported food consumption levels that are significantly higher than the refugees who are not yet receiving WFP assistance, constituting the pre-assistance baseline (PAB) group.³

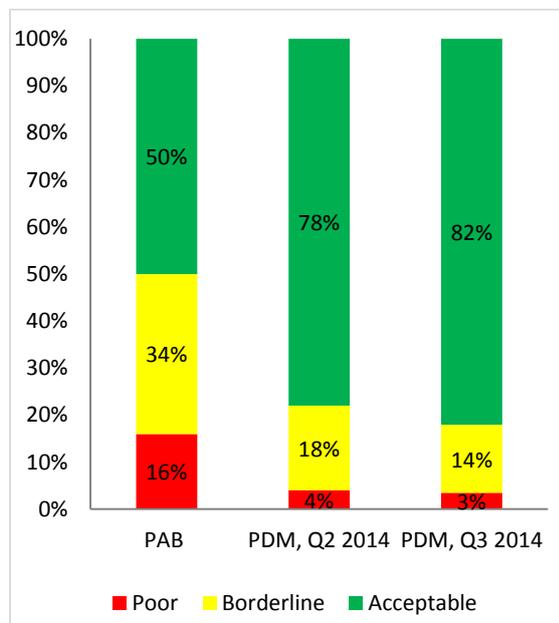


Figure 2. Food consumption scores, comparison between pre-assistance and post-assistance, Q2 and Q3 2014

1 All food security outcomes and process monitoring results reported pertain to the Syrian refugee caseload only. Country-level food consumption results are statistically reliable at an 85 percent confidence level with a precision level of ± 7 percent.

2 The Household Food Consumption Score is a WFP corporate food security outcome indicator. The score is a proxy of household's current access to food and is based on dietary diversity, consumption frequency of

Regional breakdown

Food consumption levels appear to follow the population vulnerability pattern in Lebanon. Households in the Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Lebanon region have higher food consumption scores than households in North Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. This may be due to a higher consumption of meat and vegetables in the Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Lebanon region (see Figure 11). Across all regions of the country, food consumption levels improved significantly after receiving WFP vouchers. The improvement is most noticeable in the Bekaa Valley, where 80% of the PDM sample reported acceptable food consumption scores in the third quarter of the year, compared to only 39% of the PAB sample—a more than 100% increase.

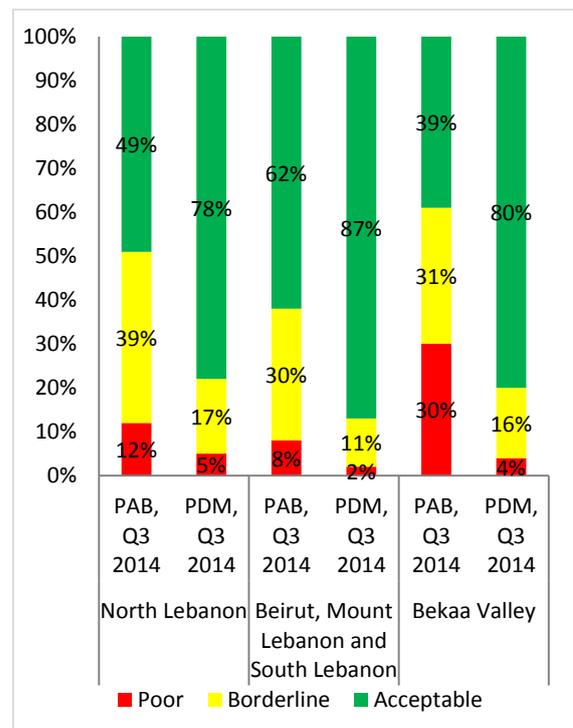


Figure 3. Food consumption scores, comparison between pre-assistance and post-assistance by region

food groups, and their relative nutritional importance. It is based on a recall period of seven days.

3 WFP collects pre-assistance baseline (PAB) data monthly from the households that are not receiving assistance yet. This exercise has been regularly conducted since January 2014, and generates a 'rolling' baseline every quarter, reflecting the dynamic nature of the refugee population in Lebanon and continuous enrollment into the voucher programme, as refugees arrive and are subsequently targeted for assistance.

Sex of household head

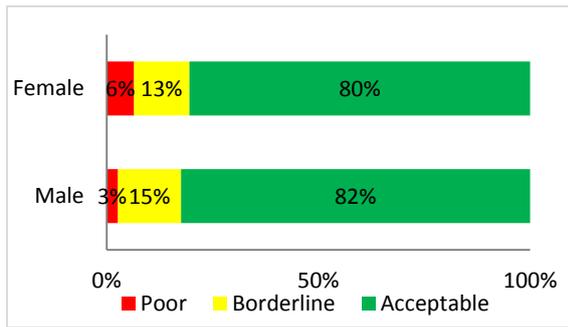


Figure 4. Food consumption scores by sex of household head, Q3 2014

Prior to receiving assistance, both male- and female-headed households reported poor food consumption scores. Improvements from baseline are observed for both groups after receiving WFP assistance.

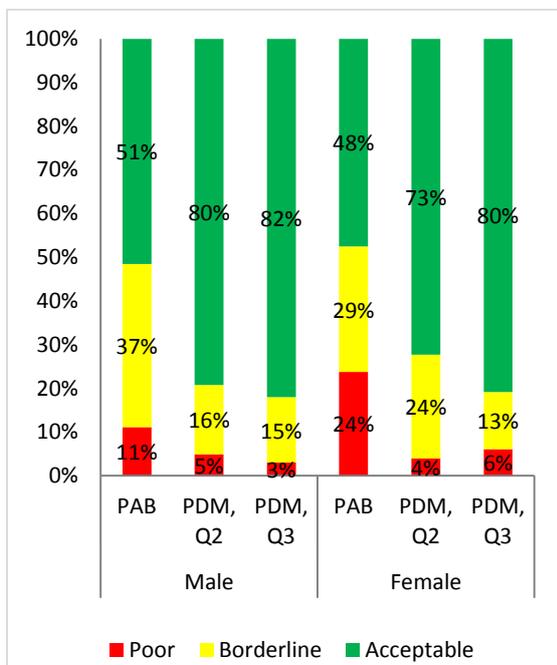


Figure 5. Food consumption scores by sex of household head, comparison between pre-assistance and post-assistance, Q2 and Q3 2014

Time of arrival in Lebanon

Consistent with previous results, food consumption levels seem to be improving with length of stay in Lebanon. Eighty two percent of beneficiaries who arrived more than 12 months ago report acceptable food consumption scores. Beneficiaries who have newly arrived or have arrived only recently, and have not yet been targeted for assistance, constitute the most vulnerable layer of the population. As they start receiving assistance

and receive it consistently on a monthly basis, their food consumption levels also improve.

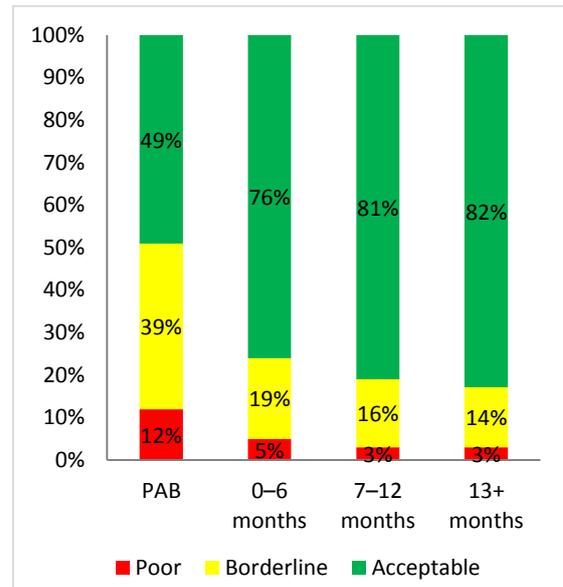


Figure 6. Food consumption scores per length of stay in Lebanon.

Type of shelter

Households living in tented settlements or transit centres were found to have worse food consumption levels than households living in other types of shelter (Figure 7).

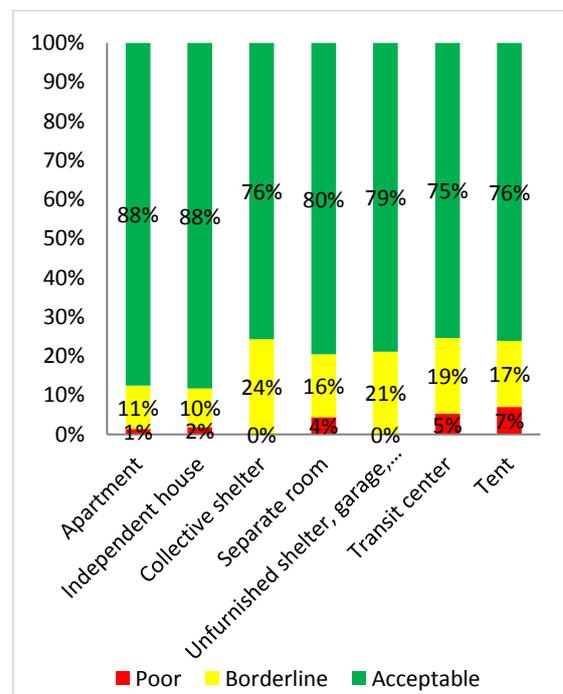


Figure 7. Food consumption scores per type of shelter
Note: Results for the categories of 'collective shelter', and 'unfurnished shelter, garage, magasin, warehouse or worksite' should be considered indicative, not statistically representative, due to a small sample size.

2. DIET DIVERSITY

Diet Diversity Score

During the reporting period, the average daily dietary diversity score was 5.8 food groups per day, compared to 5.7 in the previous quarter. In line with monitoring results from the previous quarter, male-headed households reported a daily dietary diversity score of 5.7 food groups per day, while female-headed households reported a daily dietary diversity score of 5.6 per day.

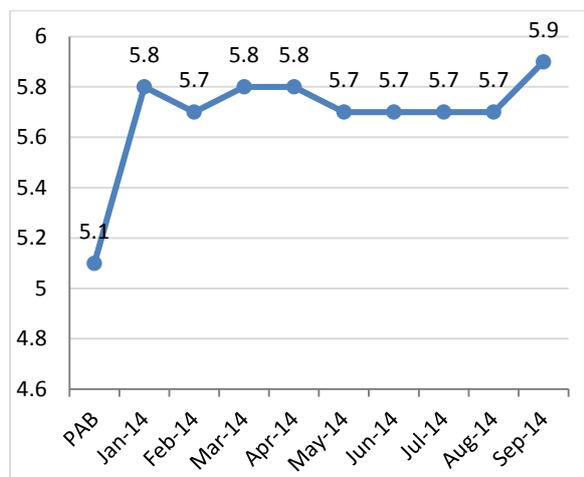


Figure 8. Average Dietary Diversity Score, January to September 2014

The average number of food groups consumed per day by beneficiaries appears to increase with the length of stay in Lebanon. As beneficiaries start receiving assistance and are able to stabilize their food consumption (see Section 1, Figure 6), their diet diversity also improves as shown in Figure 9.

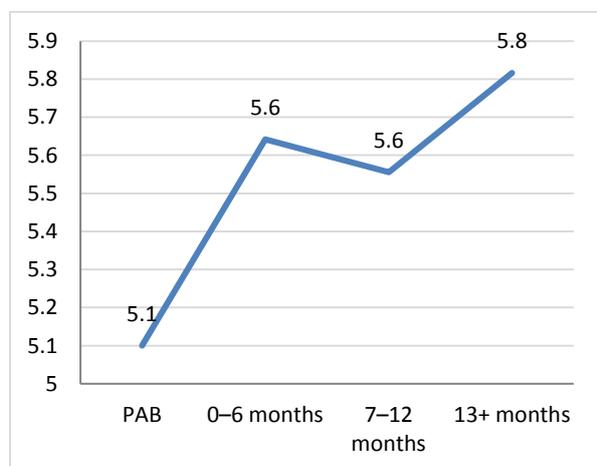


Figure 9. Diet Diversity Score per time of arrival in Lebanon

Food Groups Consumed

Figure 10 displays the average number of days each food group is consumed. Fruits, pulses and vegetables were still less consumed than other food groups. Cereals tended to be consumed on a daily basis, reflecting the population's high consumption of bread and rice. Oil/fats and sugar were also highly consumed.

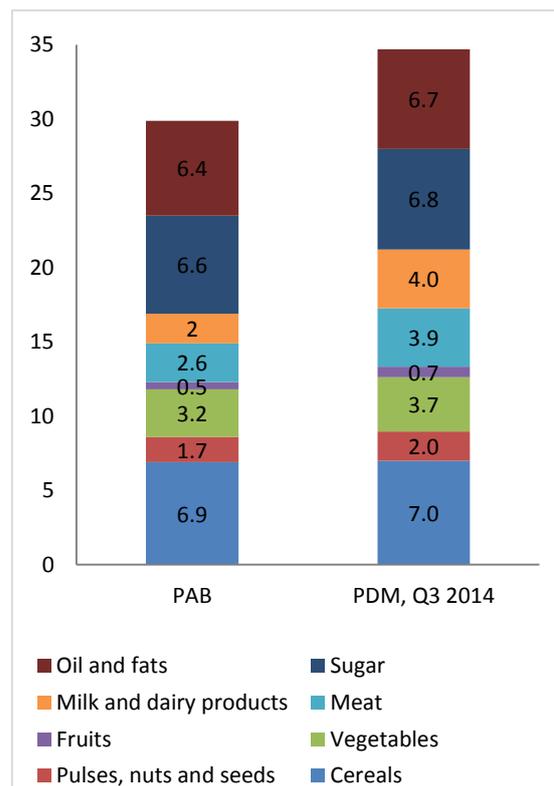


Figure 10. Average number of days each food group is consumed, pre- and post-assistance, Q3 2014

Beneficiary households in Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Lebanon appeared to consume more meat and vegetables than the other regions of the country. Apart from this, there were no significant differences in dietary patterns between beneficiary households in the three regions of the country. Figure 11 provides additional comparative details.

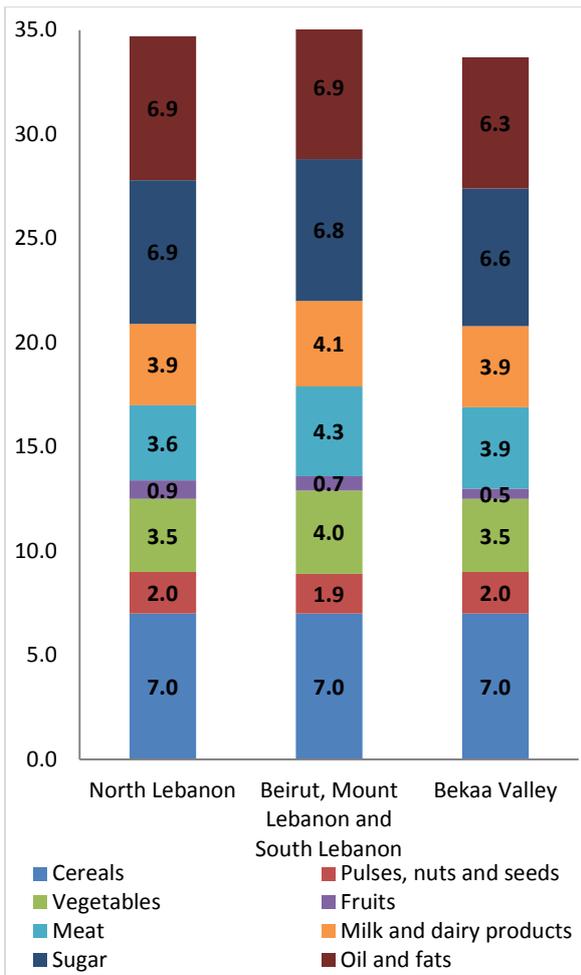


Figure 11. Number of food groups consumed per region

3. COPING STRATEGIES

Average Coping Strategy Index

The **average coping strategy index (CSI)** during the **third quarter of 2014** is **18.6**, the same as in the previous quarter. Households not receiving WFP assistance (the PAB group) reported a higher CSI (21.9) than households receiving WFP assistance (the PDM group); the PDM group is therefore less food insecure than the PAB group. The household CSI has remained broadly stable across the three quarters of 2014 to date.

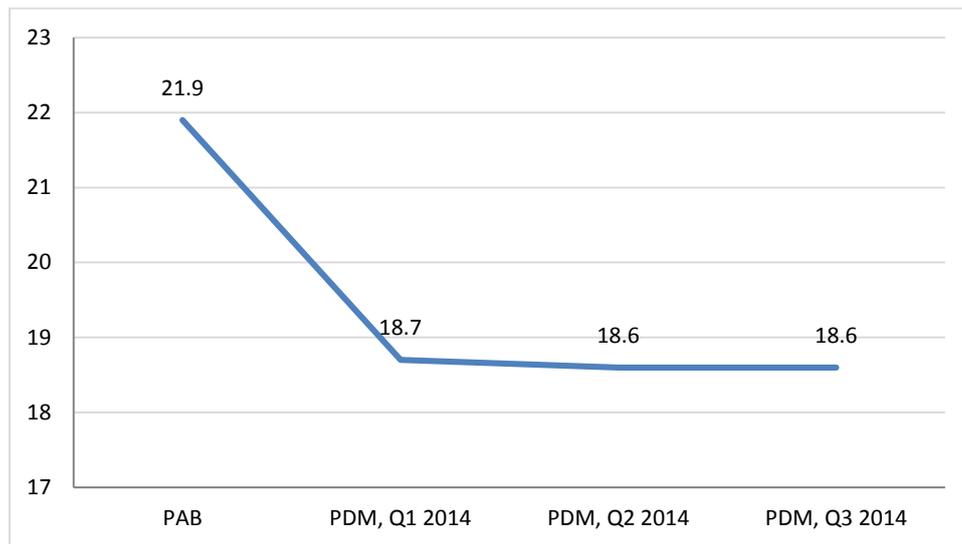


Figure 12. Coping Strategy Index, comparison between pre- and post-assistance, January to September 2014

Coping Strategy Index by sex of household head

Both male and female-headed households reported a lower CSI post-assistance than pre-assistance.

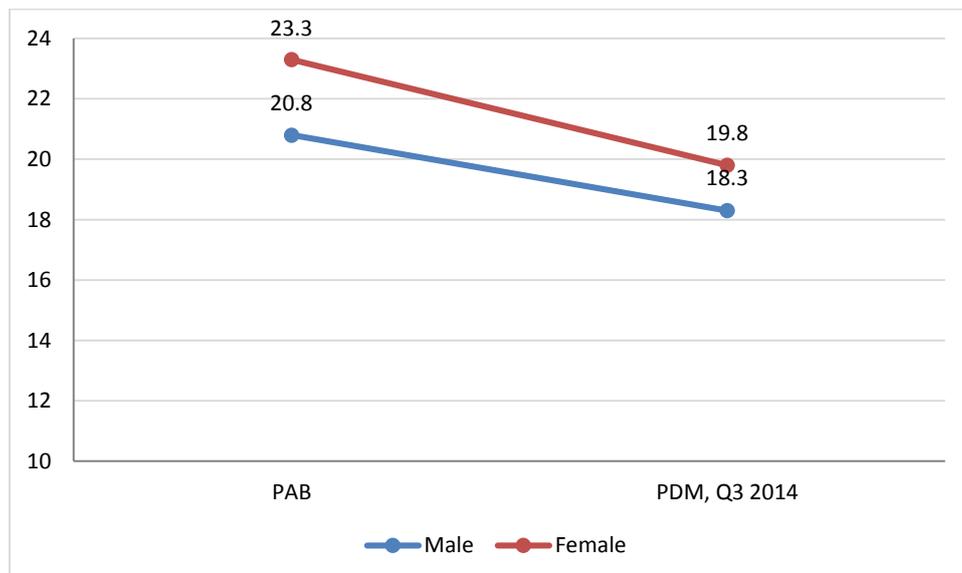


Figure 13. Coping Strategy Index, comparison between pre- and post-assistance by sex of household head, Q3 2014

Coping Strategy Index by arrival time

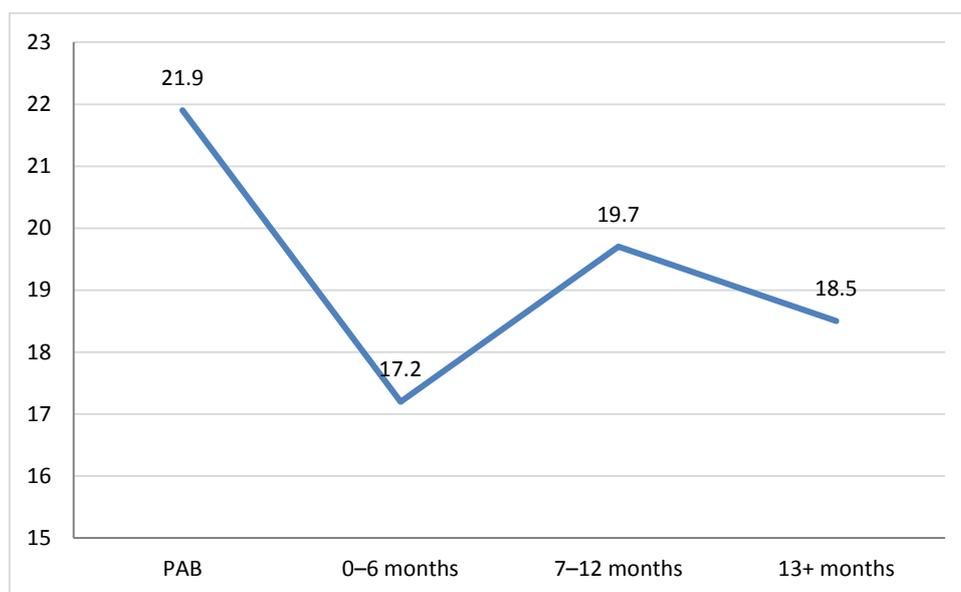


Figure 14. Coping Strategy Index by arrival time in Lebanon

Consumption-based coping strategies

No major differences were observed in the consumption-based coping strategies applied by households receiving assistance this quarter from the results in the previous quarter. Of note is that a lower proportion of households reported that they reduced the number of meals eaten in a day in this quarter (62%), compared to the previous quarter (70%).

The adoption of consumption-based coping strategies decreases once a household starts receiving WFP assistance. Households reported less need to borrow food or rely on relatives or friends for help, and less need to reduce the number of meals eaten in a day. They were also less likely to restrict the consumption of female household members. Generally, households relied on less preferred and less expensive food to cope with the lack of food or money to buy it, and this did not change even after receiving WFP assistance. While this implies that households tend to use WFP assistance to feed more people and increase the quantity of food eaten, not to consume more preferred foods, the exact reason for choice of coping strategies is unknown.

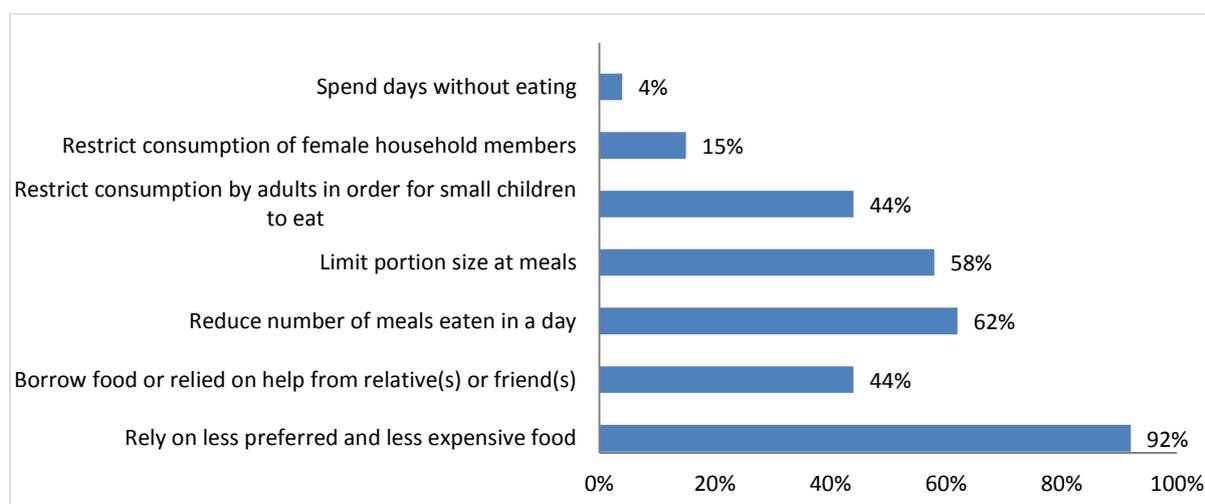


Figure 15. Consumption-based coping strategies, July-September 2014

Figure 16 shows consumption coping strategies by arrival time. Households who had been in the country for more than a year were less likely to borrow food or rely on friends or relatives for help. Aside from this, no major differences were noted this quarter between refugees by arrival time.

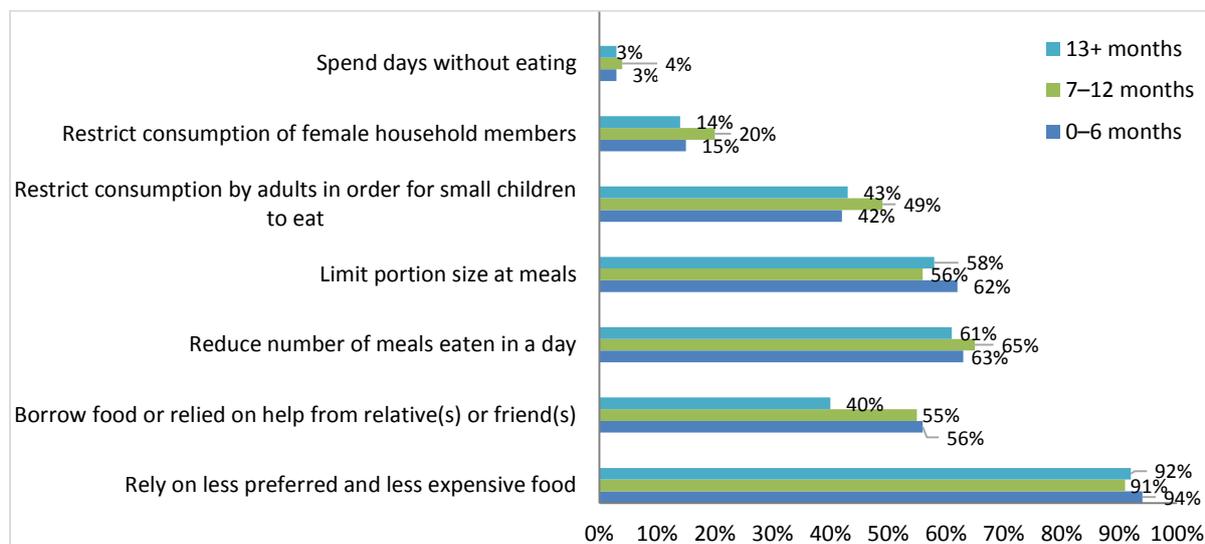


Figure 16. Consumption-based coping strategies by arrival time in Lebanon, July to September 2014

Livelihoods-based coping strategies

Livelihood coping strategies tended to have a longer-term impact on households' income earning potential and can also involve one-off asset sales.

In the third quarter of 2014, both PAB and PDM groups continued to heavily rely on credit to purchase food and reduce essential non-food expenditures such as expenditures on education or health. The biggest difference between the PAB and PDM groups was observed for households who reported having spent their savings or sold household goods to cope with the lack of food or money to purchase food. A higher proportion of households in the PAB group reported applying these coping strategies, possibly as they were new arrivals who had to spend their savings or assets to come to Lebanon and live in the country. Very few households in both the PAB and PDM groups reported having adopted the more severe coping strategies, such as sending household members to beg, marrying off underage children or accepting high risk/illegal/socially degrading/exploitative jobs as shown in Figure 17.

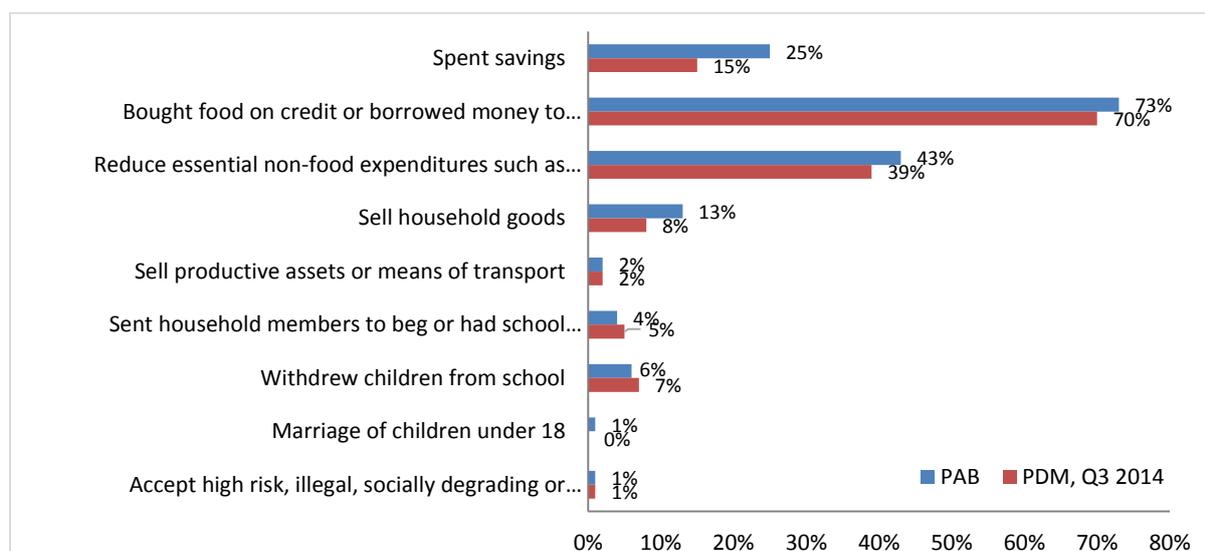


Figure 17. Livelihood coping strategies pre- and post-WFP assistance, July to September 2014

An analysis of livelihood coping strategies applied by households by time of arrival in Lebanon showed no significant differences in application of most livelihood coping strategies. The households who had been in Lebanon for longer than six months appeared to be more likely to buy food on credit or borrow money to purchase food and to reduce essential non-food expenditures. However, due to a small sample size of households who arrived 0–6 months ago, results for this level of analysis can only be considered indicative.

Female-headed households were less likely to reduce essential non-food expenditures such as spending on education or health (35%, compared to 41% of male-headed households) to cope with the lack of food or money to buy it. Apart from this, there were no major differences in adoption of livelihood coping strategies between female- and male-headed households (see Figure 18).

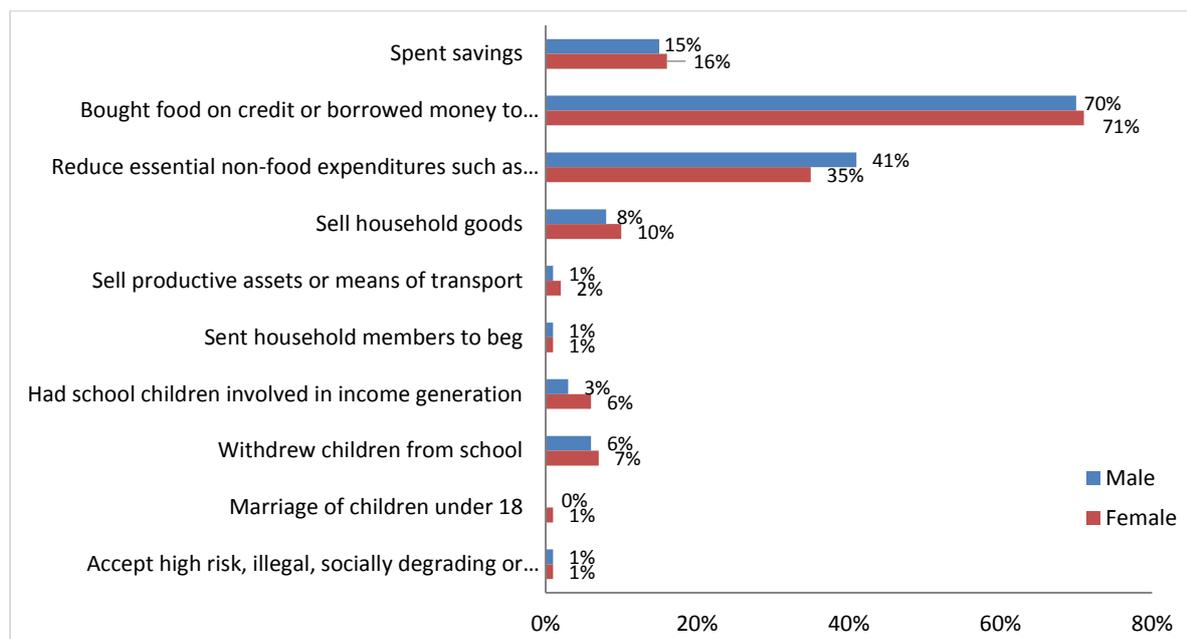


Figure 18. Livelihood coping strategies by sex of household head, Q3 2014

4. INCOME SOURCES

WFP e-cards remained the main source of income for the households receiving WFP assistance (73% of PDM households in the third quarter of 2014), followed by casual labour. In comparison, casual labour remained the first main source of income for households not receiving WFP assistance (33%), followed by gifts from family or relatives (22%). The households not receiving WFP assistance also tended to rely more on credits/debts/loans as an income source (17%) compared to the households receiving WFP assistance (3%). No significant differences were noted between income sources reported in the second and third quarter of 2014.

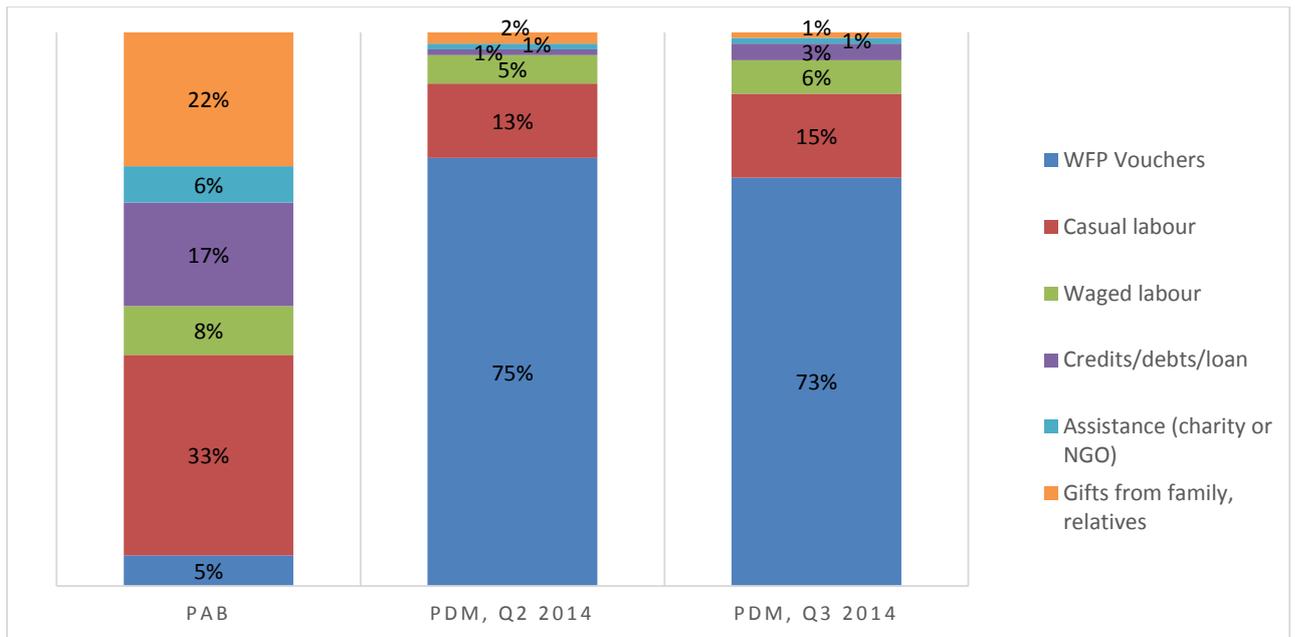


Figure 19. First main source of income, comparison between pre- and post-assistance, Q2 and Q3 2014

There are only small differences when looking at first main income source by arrival time. Figure 20, below, shows the four main sources of income. Households who had been in the country for more than a year were more likely to report casual labour and waged labour as a source of income. Households who had been in the country for less than six months were more likely to report WFP vouchers as their first main source of income. In all cases, the vast majority of households still appeared to rely on WFP vouchers (e-cards) as their first main source of income.

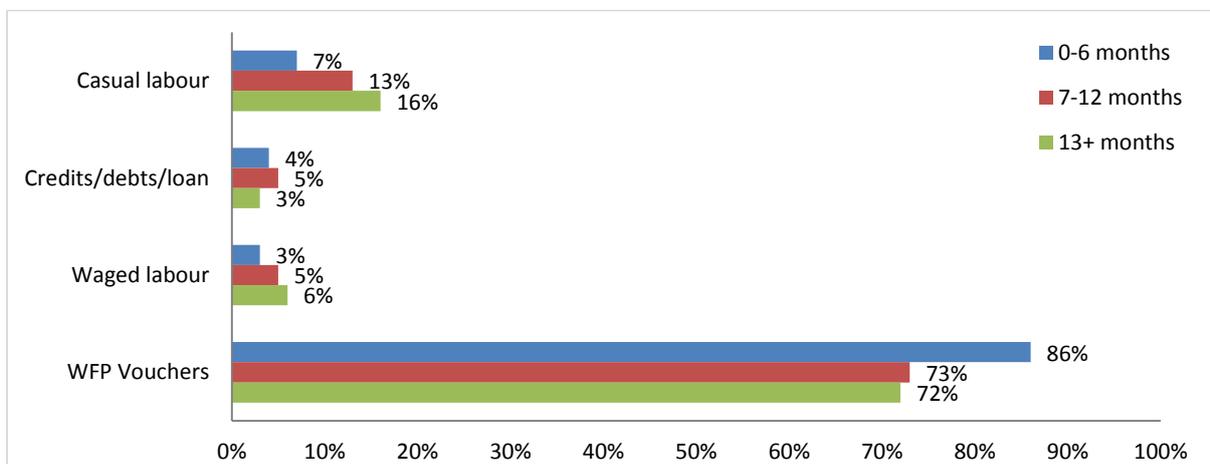


Figure 20. First main source of income by arrival time, Q3 2014

An analysis of first main income source by location strata (Figure 21) shows that more households in Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Lebanon reported casual labour as their first main source of income (23%), compared to households in the other regions of the country (10% in both North Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley). This could be because there are more opportunities for casual/informal labour (e.g. in construction) in South Lebanon and the greater Beirut region, due to the relative affluence and ongoing development of these areas compared to the North Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. There is also a higher concentration of Syrian refugees in the Bekaa Valley and North Lebanon, the areas less developed than Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Lebanon.

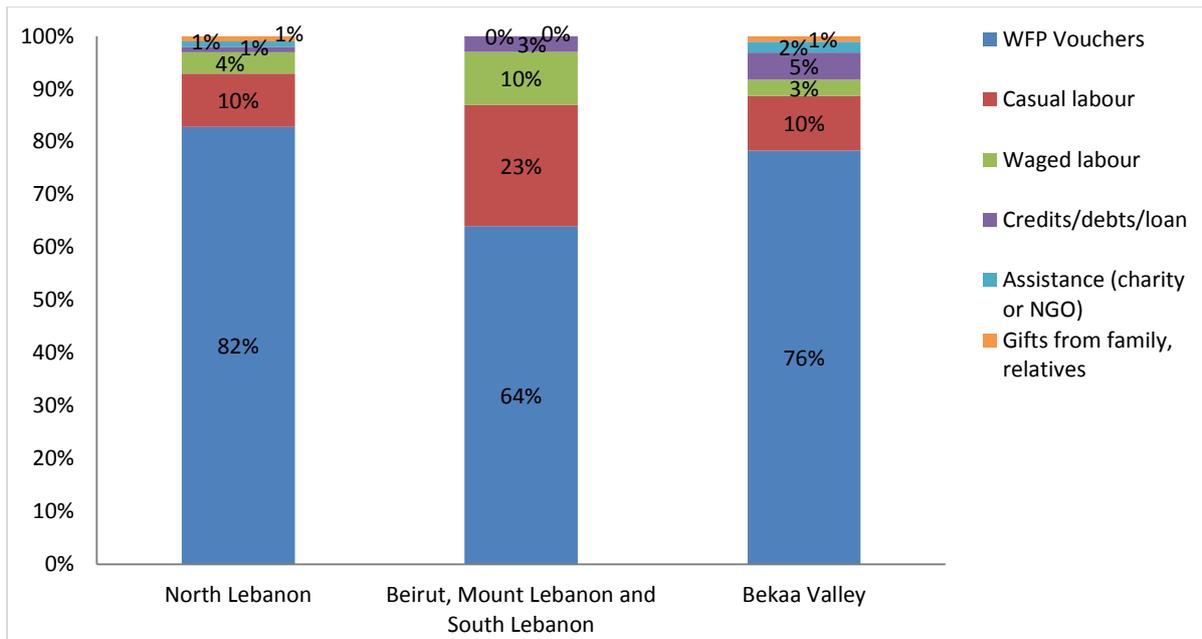


Figure 21. First main source of income by region, July-September 2014

A larger proportion of female-headed households (82%) receiving assistance reported WFP vouchers as their first main source of income, compared to male-headed households (71%). Male-headed households were also more likely to report casual labour as their first main source of income than female-headed households, both before and after receiving WFP assistance. Prior to receiving WFP assistance, female-headed households appeared to rely more heavily on gifts from family/relatives as a source of income.

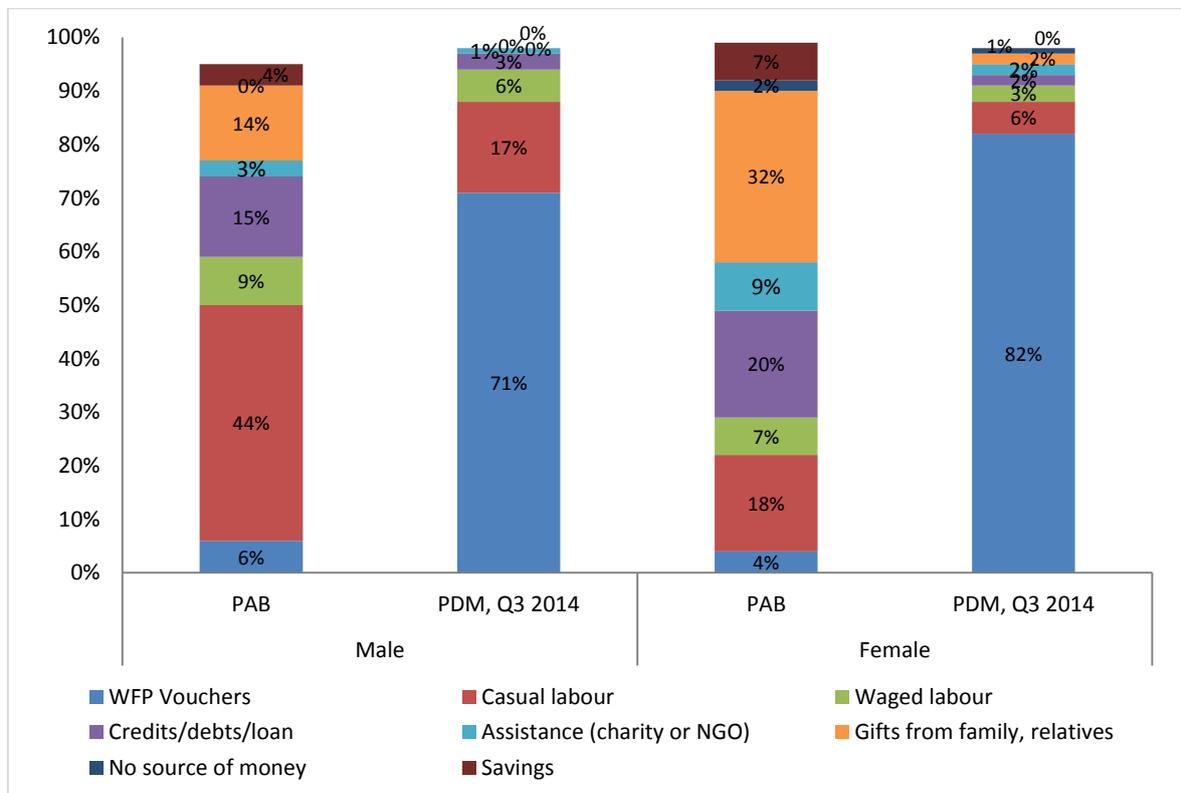


Figure 22. First main income source by sex of household head, comparison between PAB and PDM Q3 2014

5. USE OF ASSISTANCE

Commodities Exchanged

The main items that households reported to buy with the WFP e-card were cereals/rice/pasta (36%), oils and fats (25%) and sweets/sugar (18%). Vegetables and fruits make up only a small proportion (1%) of the commodities bought by beneficiaries with their e-card. These results are largely in line with the types of commodities that shops reported having sold to WFP beneficiaries (see Section IV, Figure 34), and can only be partly explained by the fact that only around 60–70% of WFP-contracted shops stocked fresh vegetables or fruits (see Section IV, Shop Monitoring, below).

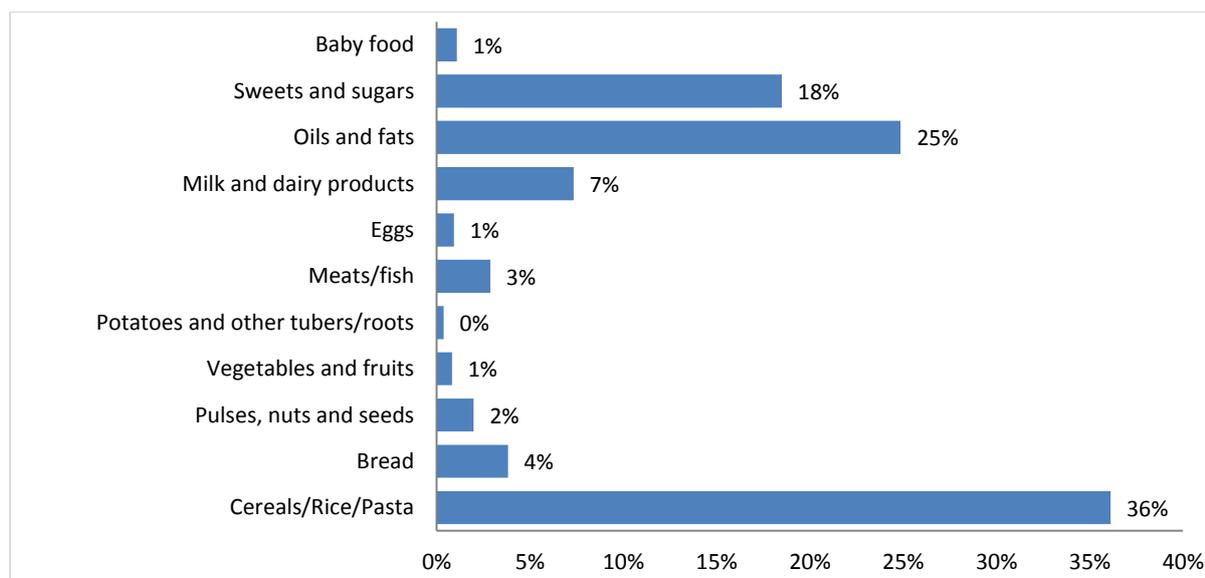


Figure 23. Food commodities most purchased by beneficiaries with their WFP e-cards, Q3 2014

Only 4% of households reported exchanging all or part of their WFP e-card balance for cash in the July–September quarter of 2014, a decrease from the 7% of households reporting this in the previous quarter. These households reported that 27% of their e-card balance was exchanged for cash on average. The four main needs they reported to be covered with the cash were hygiene or cleaning materials (32%), other needs (23%), medicines/health care (19%) and more food (16%).⁴

A larger proportion of male-headed households (57%) than female-headed households (22%) reported that they exchanged their WFP voucher for cash to buy hygiene/cleaning materials, and a larger proportion of female-headed households (24%) reported exchanging their WFP voucher for cash for medicines/health care and other needs. See Figure 24, below.

⁴ The results here and in Figure 24 are only indicative, not statistically significant, due to the small sample size reporting exchanging WFP vouchers for cash.

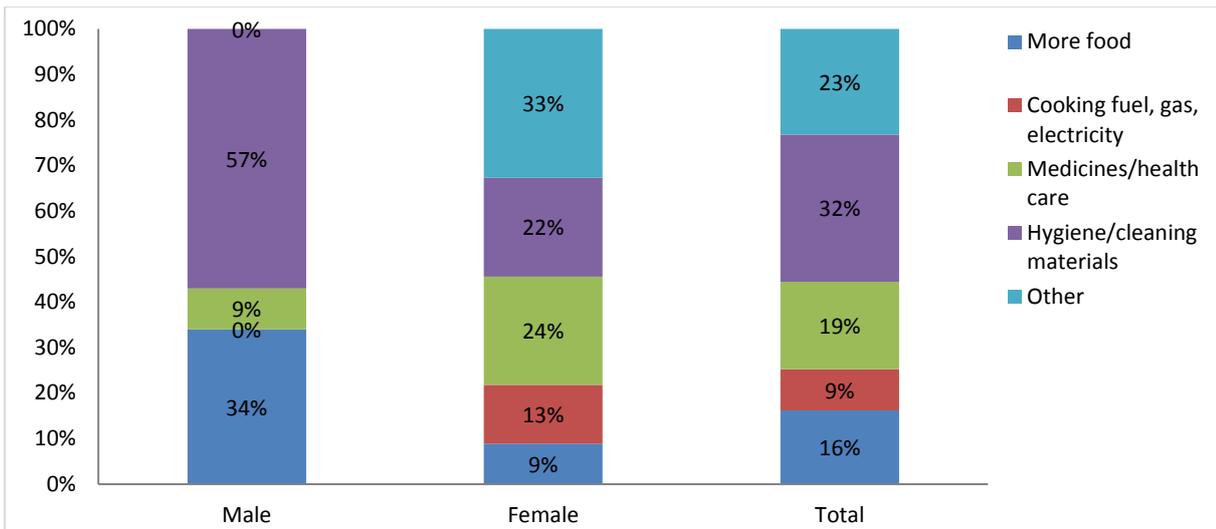


Figure 24. First main need to be covered by exchanging WFP vouchers for cash, by sex of household head

Note: Results in this figure are only indicative, not statistically significant, due to a small sample size of households reporting exchanging WFP vouchers for cash.

Twenty-seven percent of households reported sharing the food bought with WFP vouchers with non-WFP beneficiaries, in particular family members who were either unregistered or excluded from WFP's assistance.

Amongst households receiving WFP assistance, 42% reported that women are the primary decision-makers regarding the use of WFP assistance, such as what food items to buy, when and where. Only 28% of households reported that men and women in the household make these decisions together. See Figure 25, below.

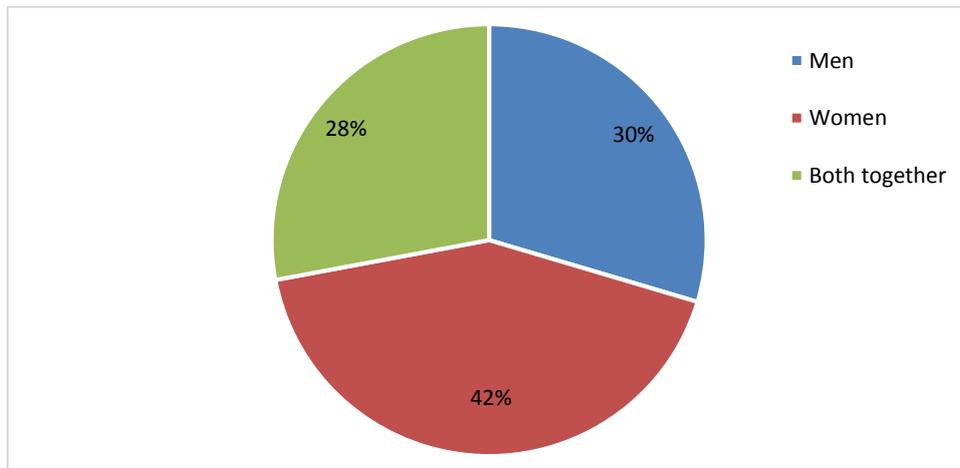


Figure 25. Sex of primary decision maker in the household over use of food assistance, Q3 2014

6. REDEMPTION PROCESS

Key facts and figures on redemption obtained through household visits during the reporting period can be seen in Box 1 below.

QUICK REDEMPTION FACTS			
	Q1 2014	Q2 2014	Q3 2014
Average travelling time to WFP shops	17.7 minutes	19.2 minutes	19.0 minutes
Average cost of transportation	LBP 6,614 (approx. US\$ 4.41)	LBP 10,968 (approx. US\$ 7.31)	LBP 10,386 (approx. US\$ 6.89)
Number of days WFP assistance covered food needs	20.6 days	20.0 days	19.0 days
Percentage of refugees that do not know who to call if they have an issue with WFP's food assistance	30%	26.5%	40%

Box 1. Key facts and figures on redemption

Beneficiaries were also asked during post-distribution monitoring whether they understood the components of WFP's e-card programme. In general, **over 95% of beneficiaries reported a clear understanding of how the e-card programme works**, including the value of their entitlement, redeeming cycles, types of products that they can redeem, location of WFP-contracted shops and the things they should not do with the e-card, for example exchanging e-card value for non-food item (NFI)s.

Issues faced at shops

As in previous quarters, the main problem reported by beneficiaries was long queues and overcrowding in shops (19%). Overcrowding in shops could be partly due to beneficiaries' spending patterns; beneficiaries tend to spend their e-card balances as soon as possible after receiving their monthly entitlements on the 5th of each month. From the 5th to the 8th of each month are considered 'peak' redemption days in shops. Beneficiaries also tend to redeem their e-card value all at once as shown in Figure 27, instead of spreading it out over several trips, possibly due to time and cost considerations, specifically cost of transport.

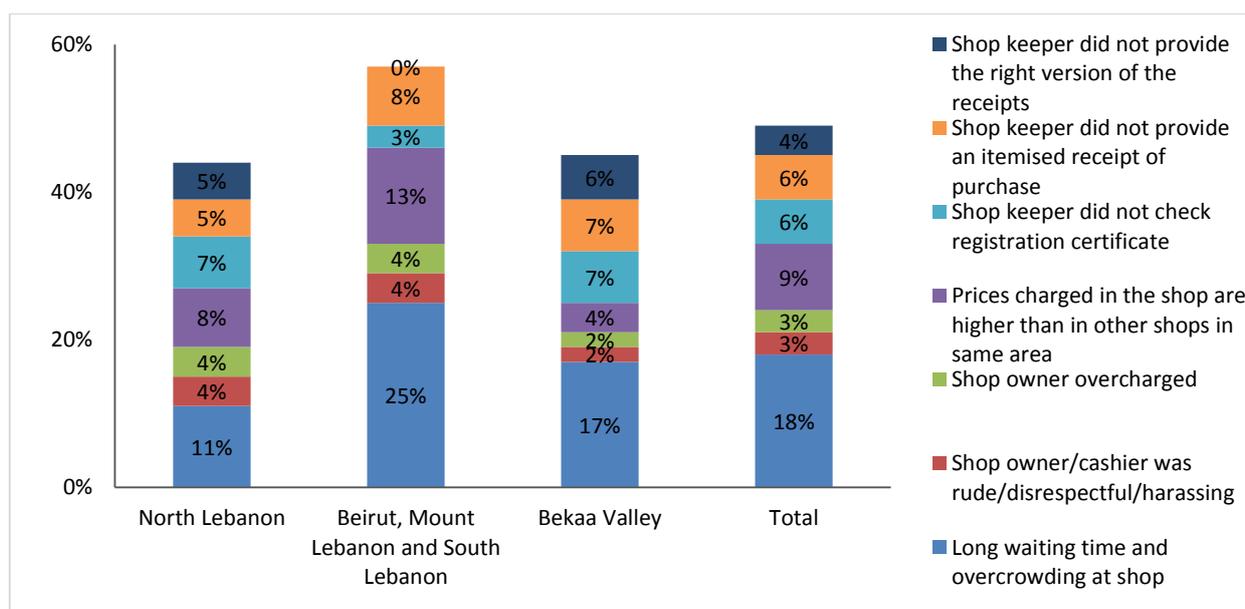


Figure 26. Issues at the shop level reported by beneficiaries

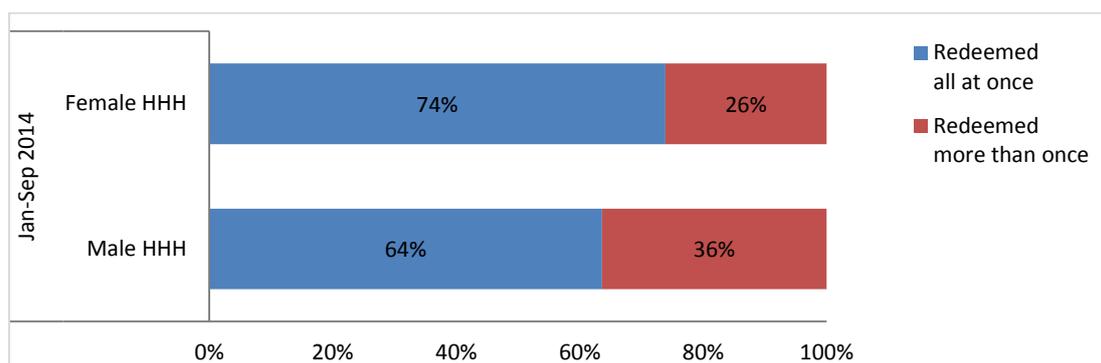


Figure 27. Spending patterns, by sex of household head

ACTION POINTS

- While beneficiaries generally demonstrate a good level of understanding of the e-card programme, 40% of beneficiaries in this quarter reported that they did not know who to call if they have a problem with the programme. WFP will continue sensitizing beneficiaries on beneficiary feedback mechanisms, including CP hotlines and will work with CPs to ensure that beneficiaries are well-informed of relevant CP hotlines.
- WFP will review its shop strategy to ensure that more shops are contracted in areas where the beneficiaries indicated that shops were overcrowded.
- WFP and its CPs will continue working with both beneficiaries and shops, to ensure that both parties are well aware of programme rules and regulations, particularly about the importance of providing itemized receipts to beneficiaries with the e-card balance.

III. DISTRIBUTION MONITORING

1. REDEMPTION

Until September 2013, WFP provided voucher assistance to all Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR. Targeting of food assistance started in Lebanon in October 2013. Beneficiaries have continued to maintain high redemption rates over time (Figure 28). Every month, WFP conducts investigative phone calls to beneficiaries to probe the reasons for not redeeming or collecting their e-cards. The most common reasons for beneficiaries not redeeming or collecting their e-cards were either because the contact details held for them (e.g. phone number or location) were wrong, or they were unreachable, possibly as they had returned to Syria.

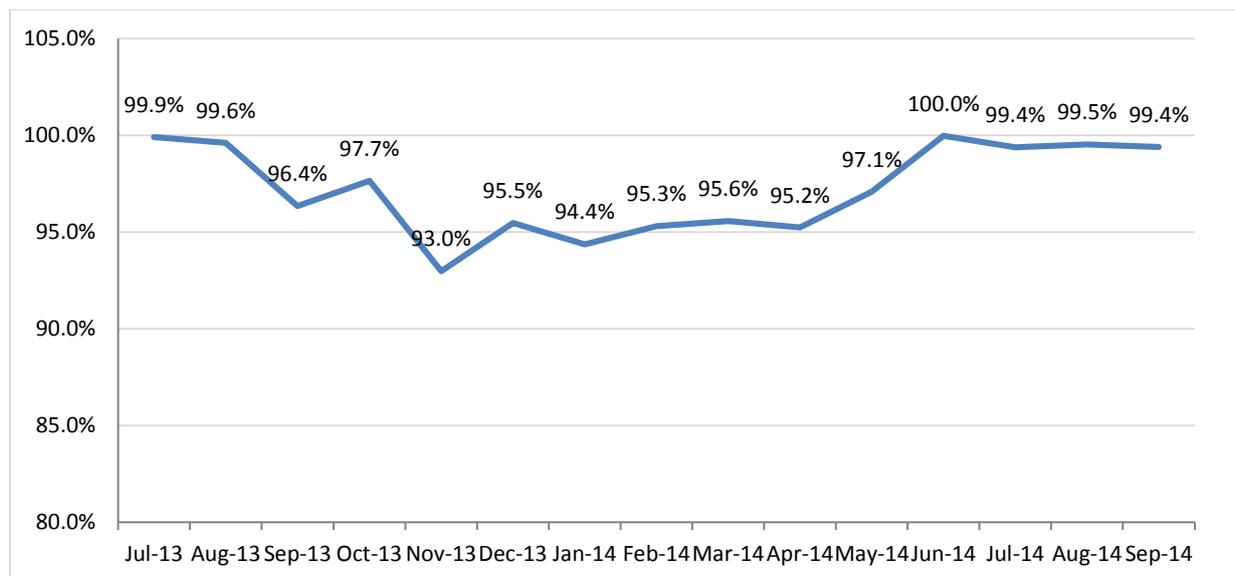


Figure 28. Money (US\$) redeemed versus distributed from July 2013 to September 2014

Figure 29 shows the vouchers distribution coverage over the reporting period. In September 2014, WFP reached its highest number of beneficiaries since the beginning of the operation.

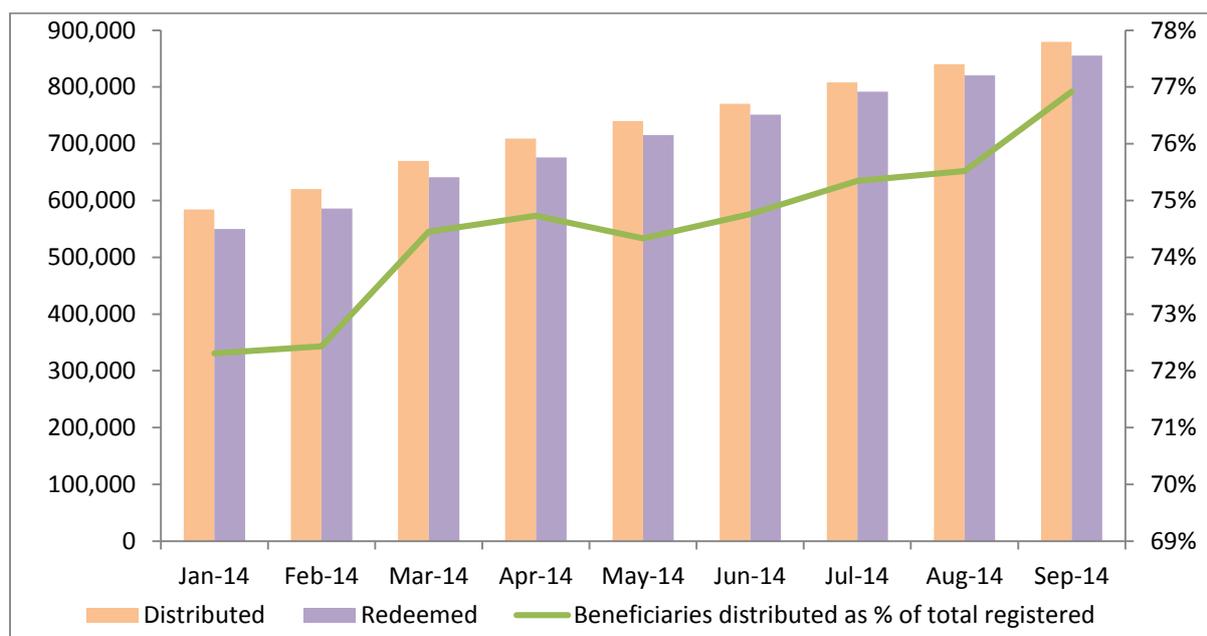


Figure 29. Number of e-card beneficiaries redeemed versus distributed, January to September 2014

2. BENEFICIARIES

For the quarter of July–September 2014, WFP assisted **895,287 beneficiaries**, with the detailed breakdown shown in Table 2.

	Number of Beneficiaries Assisted	Women (+18)	Men (+18)	Girls (age in years)		Boys (age in years)	
				<5	(5-18)	<5	(5-18)
Food Voucher	855,570	213,893	188,225	85,557	136,891	85,557	145,447
Food Parcels	17,501	4,375	3,850	1,750	2,800	1,750	2,975
PRS cash	22,216	5,554	4,888	2,222	3,555	2,222	3,777
Total	895,287	223,822	196,963	89,529	143,246	89,529	152,199

Table 2. Gender and age breakdown of assisted beneficiaries, July–September 2014

Distribution and monitoring challenges

- With limited resources and competing priorities, coordinating and planning monitoring missions to distribution sites remained a challenge. CPs were requested to submit their distribution schedules ahead of time but schedule conflicts occurred occasionally, particularly when a number of smaller distributions were planned at the same time.
- Access and security constraints to some areas were a challenge for WFP monitors, particularly when CPs changed their distribution schedules with short notice. The security situation continued to deteriorate during this quarter, particularly in the Bekaa Valley and North Lebanon. Municipalities imposed some restrictions on activities in their villages as part of their security control measures, and consequently, some monitoring missions were delayed or cancelled.
- There is room for improvement in incorporating protection considerations during distributions, such as ensuring that vulnerable cases are able to benefit from a preferential distribution system.
- Unrecorded movement of refugees continued to affect WFP operations with high levels of no-shows at distributions and difficulties in reaching households for monitoring activities.
- Identification of newcomers continued to be one of the main challenges for food parcels distributions.

IV. SHOP MONITORING

Figure 30 highlights the tighter monitoring procedures put in place by WFP and CPs after the transition to the e-card. It shows the average number of days since the last visit of CPs in shops, as reported by shop owners from January to September 2014. WFP and CPs continued to achieve a high level of monitoring of shops in response to challenges and observations detailed further in this section.

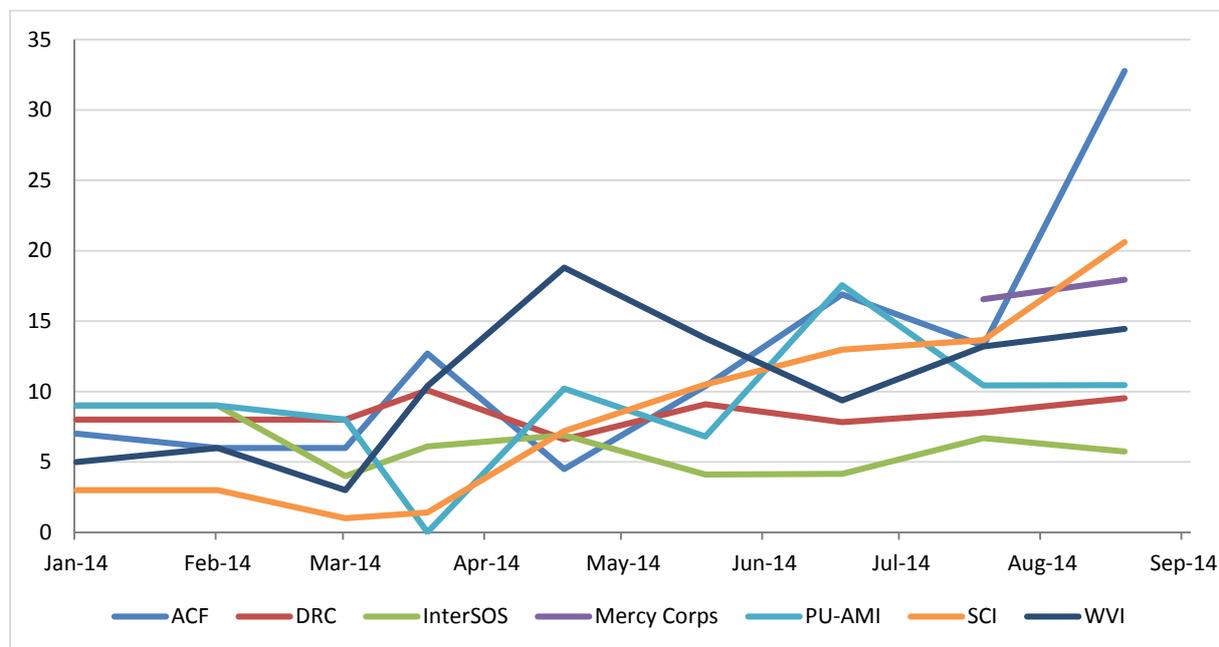


Figure 30. Average number of days since the last visit by CPs, January to September 2014

There has been a constant increase in the number of WFP-contracted shops since December 2012. By September 2014, WFP contracted 399 shops across the country.

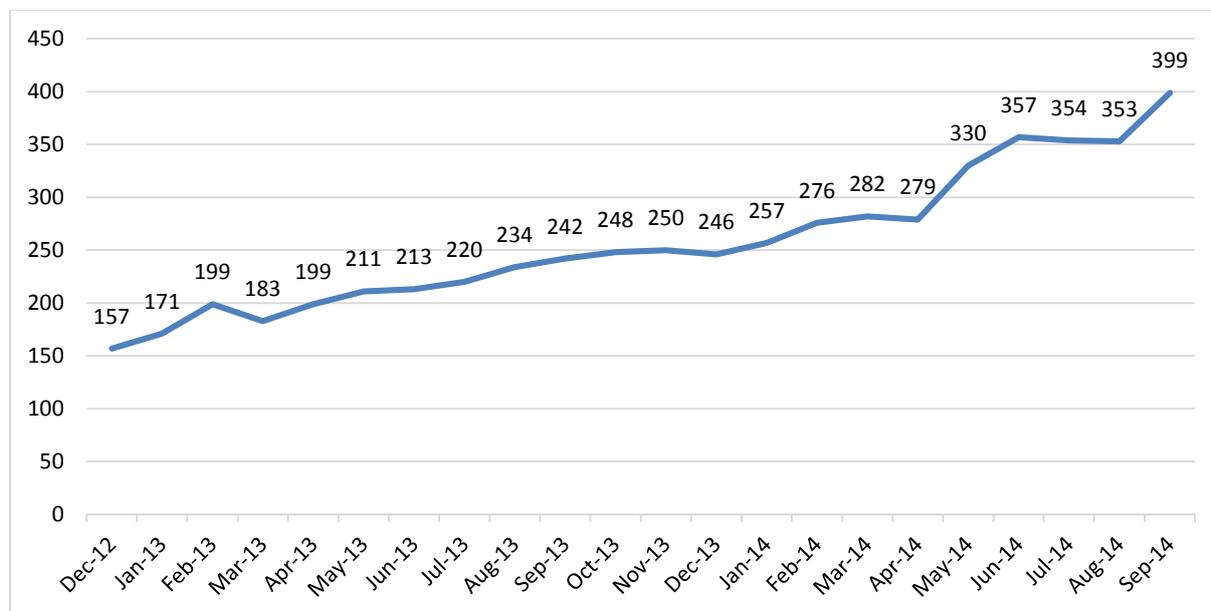


Figure 31. Number of WFP-contracted shops (or partner shops) since the beginning of the programme until September 2014

Note: The exact number of shops varies throughout a month, as WFP adds and cancels shops continuously. The numbers reported here are taken from one point in the month, usually at the start of the month.

WFP injected over US\$314 million into the Lebanese economy through the e-card programme since January 2013 until September 2014. Over US\$165 million were injected during 2014 alone.

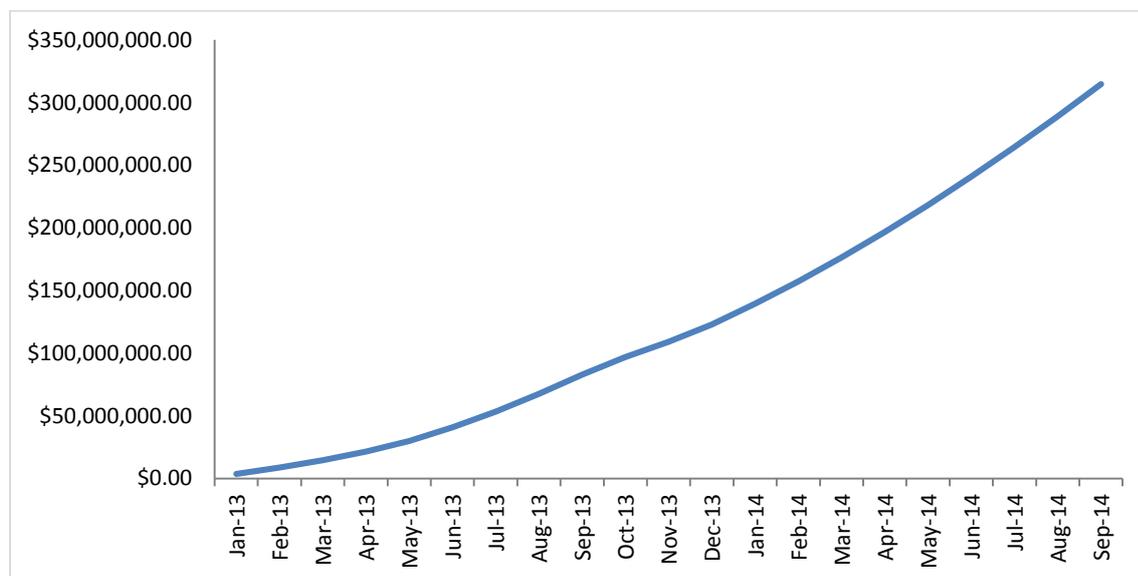


Figure 32. Amount of money injected into the Lebanese economy as of September 2014

Feedbacks and observations

Shop owners continued to report operational issues related to WFP’s e-card programme. The main problem reported was pressure from beneficiaries to break rules, such as requesting to exchange their e-card value for non-food items. Overcrowding in the shop also continued to be an issue, probably as beneficiaries tended to redeem their e-card values immediately after uploading.

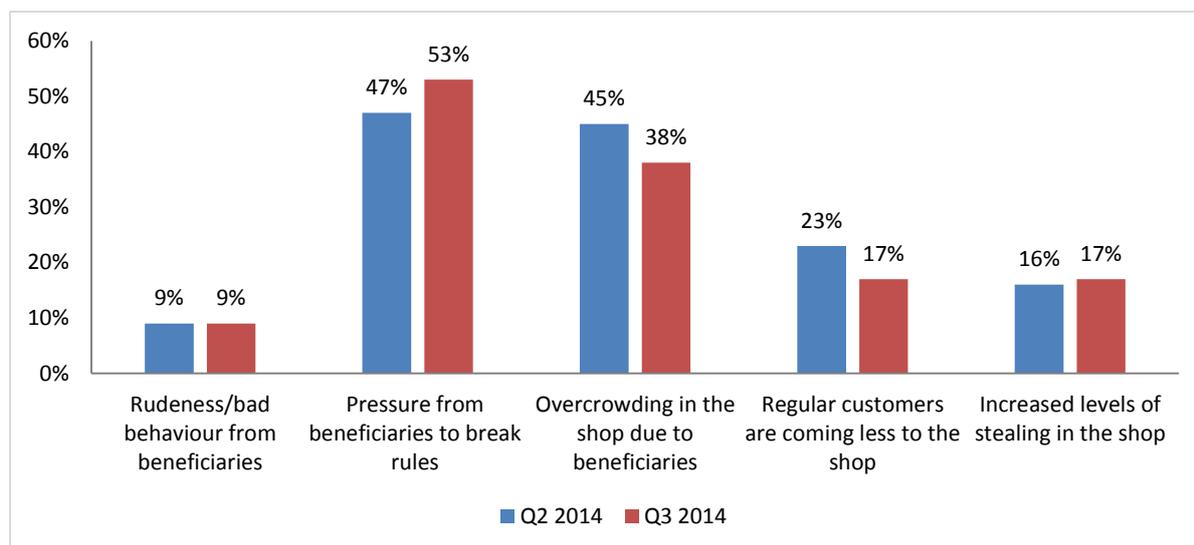


Figure 33. Operational problems faced by shop owners over time, comparison between Q2 and Q3 2014

In line with household data on the types of foods that households report exchanging their WFP voucher for (see Section II, Figure 23), shopkeepers reported that cereals/rice/pasta (26%), sugar/sweets (23%) and oils/fats (17%) were the most-commonly redeemed commodities by beneficiaries in the shops.

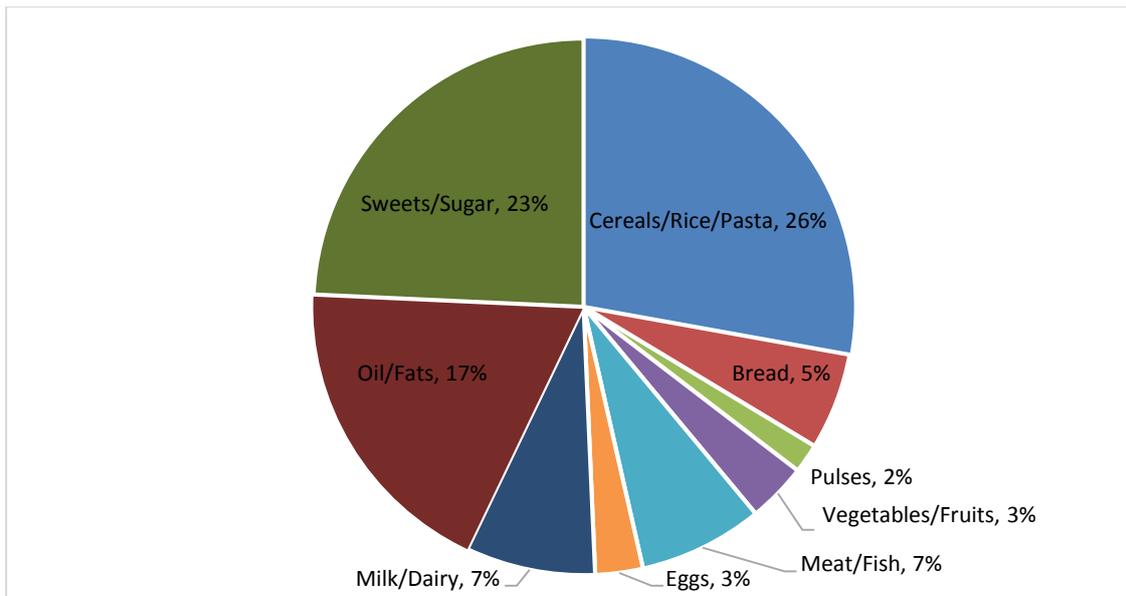


Figure 34. Type of foods most exchanged for in shops, as reported by shopkeepers, July–September 2014

In terms of availability of food commodities in shops, shop monitoring results in this quarter show that while virtually all shops had cereals, sugar/sweets, and pulses/nuts in stock, approximately 70% of shops had fresh vegetables in stock, 66% had fresh fruit and only about 61% had meat in stock based on field monitors' observations.

Challenges and action points

In this quarter, the main challenges reported at shop-level include:

- Increasing pressure by beneficiaries to redeem NFIs with their e-card balance, particularly since UNHCR stopped providing NFI kits in August.
- Shops did not always provide proper itemised receipts.
- Payment of beneficiaries' debts with e-card balances: There were a few reports that shopkeepers collect debts owed to them by beneficiaries through cashing or withholding part of e-card balance. A few reports were also received that some community leaders (*shawish*) had asked beneficiaries to pay their rent in the form of cash from e-card balances or part of their e-card balances.
- Non-contracted shops: A few non-contracted and cancelled shops were reported to be taking e-cards from beneficiaries and redeeming them at contracted shops, for a lower value, thus devaluing the assistance.

During the clashes between Lebanese Armed Forces and extremist groups in Aarsal in August landlines were not working for three days and this affected the functioning of POS machines in partner shops. Shopkeepers in Aarsal also reported that suppliers were not entering Aarsal during this time, therefore the shops undertook risky travel to reach suppliers in other areas.

WFP, in collaboration with its CPs, continued to monitor shops closely for suspicious or irregular behaviours. Apart from the regular shop monitoring, field monitors occasionally made long visits to partner shops to observe usage and trends of the e-card redemption, usually between the 5th to 8th of every month, during the peak redemption days, following the e-card uploading on the 5th of the month. WFP also instituted a penalty system, where shops either receive formal warning letters for failure to comply with programme regulations which can lead to cancellation if receiving more than one. For more serious transgressions such as collaborating with non-contracted shops to redeem e-cards presented at non-contracted shops, their contracts with WFP are terminated immediately.

Across the country, field monitors reported that WFP-contracted shops were improving hygiene practice and storage quality. WFP continued to work with the partner shops to support improvement in shop standards, through training and continuous communication.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DISTRIBUTIONS

- WFP should work with its CPs to ensure that the planned sample of distribution sites are monitored.
- WFP should continue to work closely with UNHCR to better record movements of refugees.
- WFP should continue to strengthen its beneficiary feedback mechanisms, including CP hotlines and ensuring that beneficiaries are well-informed of relevant CP hotline numbers.
- WFP and its CPs should continue to work to ensure that all protection issues and refugee concerns are being addressed at distribution sites. Help and information desks at distribution sites are an effective way of ensuring that refugees receive help or information in a timely manner. In addition, the needs of vulnerable beneficiaries should be considered in assessing and setting up distribution sites. For example seating should be available for women and the elderly, and priority should be given to them in distributions to avoid long waiting time.

2. SHOPS

- WFP should strengthen its monitoring of fraud and suspicious behaviours reported in shops. Follow-up is required to ensure that the penalty system instituted against non-compliant shops continues to be effective to discourage fraudulent behaviours.
- WFP and its CPs need to continue working on sensitization and information dissemination for beneficiaries, and to ensure that shops are aware of e-card transaction processes and rules, as well as penalties associated with non-compliance of the rules.
- In areas where the concentration of refugees is very high, WFP will have to contract more shops, to avoid price increase of goods at WFP-contracted shops and the distortion of local market dynamics.



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