

# Protection Monitoring Findings

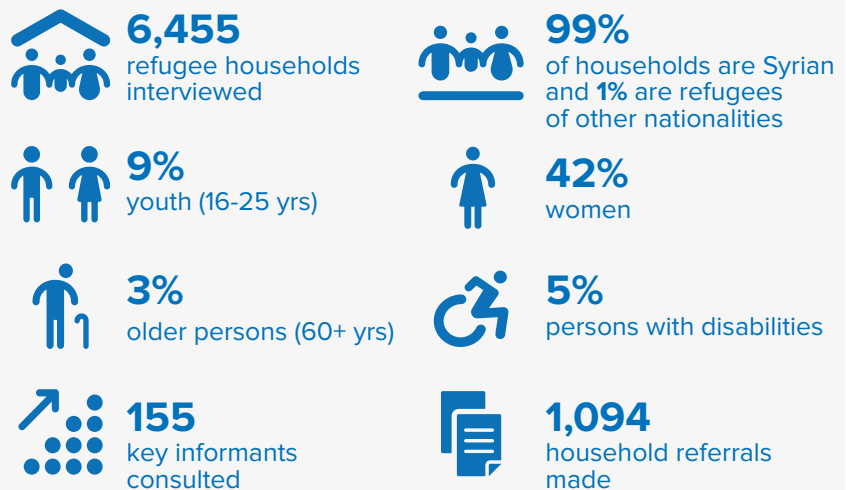
Lebanon – 4th quarter 2021



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.

This report provides a summary of the protection monitoring findings from all regions of Lebanon in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter (October to December) 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 October to December 2021



## Partner organizations



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

# Impact of the socio-economic situation



**We have reached a stage where we cannot use gas to cook, fuel to stay warm or heated water to shower, and our salaries are nothing compared to the value of dollars. I don't know what people will do during winter. I ask God to show his mercy on everyone.**

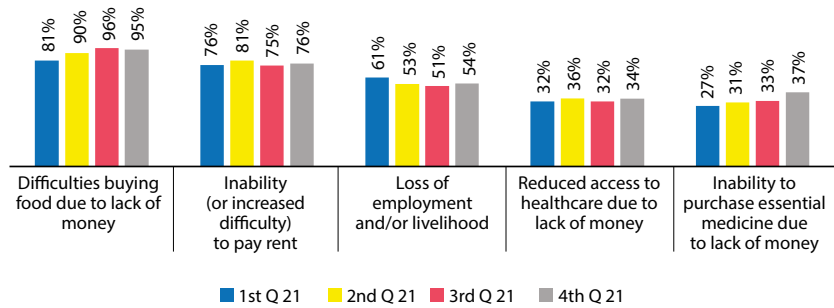
- Syrian refugee

- Refugees' struggle to meet their basic needs in the face of Lebanon's deepening crises remains acute, with significant gaps in food security, livelihoods, health and rent persisting.

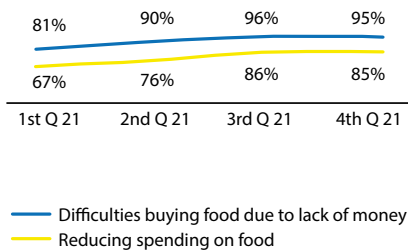
- The number of refugees reporting difficulty buying food and those forced to reduce spending on food has grown significantly since the start of this year. As a result, nearly every refugee is facing food insecurity. Key informants also highlight that food insecurity is exacerbated by a lack of electricity which requires that households' meal planning adapt to a complete lack of refrigeration.

- Refugees have also had to take on increasing debt to meet their basic needs. During the quarter, 64% reported buying food on credit and 67% said they took on debt to pay for basic necessities. Nearly all refugee households (91%) reported being in debt.

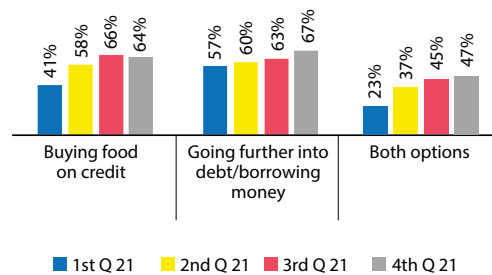
## Most widely experienced impacts of the socio-economic situation



## Food security impacts and coping mechanisms

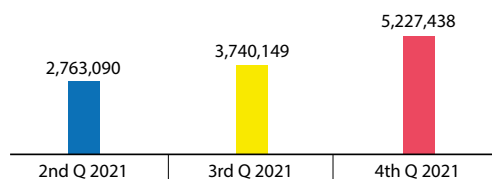


## Participants relying on borrowing as a result of the economic situation



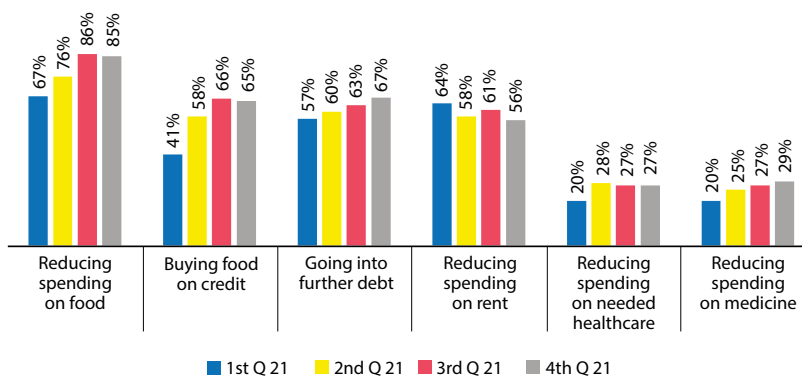
- Increased debt reliance has seen average household debt grow 40% from just the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter alone (from 3,740,149 LBP to 5,227,438 LBP in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter). This increase is even more concerning when we consider that the average household debt recorded by the 2020 VASyR was a significantly smaller amount of 1,066,802 LBP.

## Average household debt (LBP)



- Refugees have so far been able to avoid hunger and homelessness through borrowing, but with little prospects to pay existing debt due to diminishing livelihoods and growing expenses, it is likely that refugees will lose this lifeline in the near future. Over half of all respondents have reported losing work and pay (54%) this quarter, and according to the 2021 VASyR the average monthly income of refugee households was just 517,564 LBP, which is less than half (47%) of the average debt that a refugee household accumulated each month during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.

### Most widely resorted to coping strategies



- In addition to reducing spending on food and increased debt, other coping mechanisms also continued to be reported at near record high rates (*please refer to the chart above*).

- Protection monitoring has now tracked more specific access to healthcare information for two quarters. This data shows that during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 12% of refugees experiencing a health issue that required medical attention simply did not attempt to obtain healthcare due to a lack of money. Further, 24% of those who did attempt to obtain healthcare were unable to afford treatment. Thus, over a third of all persons requiring medical treatment (36%) were unable to access healthcare because they simply could not afford it.

- Given the deteriorating economic situation, children remain at risk of being sent to work by their parents, with 3.7%<sup>2</sup> of all households with children interviewed reported having at least one child working. All instances of child labour cited financial necessity for the household as the reason.

- Reports of girls working rose for the second quarter in a row, so that now 28% of all children working are girls, whereas prior to the second half of 2021 this rate was at 18%. Agriculture continues to be the leading form of child labour (38% of all instances), followed by working in shops (19%) and the high-risk activity of street selling (17%). Compounding the situation, 2 in 3 children involved in child labour were not attending school.

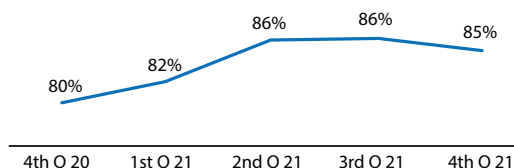
- Mental health issues continued to be reported by approximately a quarter of households, with 26% of adults reporting mental health issues. Almost all (97%) of respondents who reported suffering from mental health issues said that the pressure of the economic crisis was a main cause.

<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.

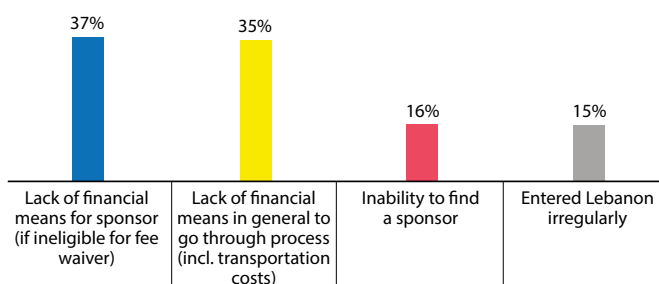
## Legal residency

- The year-long decline in rates of legal residency seems to have stabilized, with approximately 85% of all households having members 15 years and older without legal residency over the last three quarters.
- There is a link between increased economic vulnerability and lack of legal residency. For example, 84% of persons who were unemployed lacked legal residency, while only 16% of persons with legal residency were unemployed.<sup>3</sup> Households in which some members over the age of 15 lacked legal residency were more likely to report reduced spending on food (86% compared to 78%), more likely to buy food on credit (66% compared to 55%), more likely to enter into debt (69% compared to 55%) and were 11% more indebted.
- A lack of financial resources continues to be the main barrier for 72% of households lacking legal residency.

Households where at least one member aged 15 years and older lacks legal residency



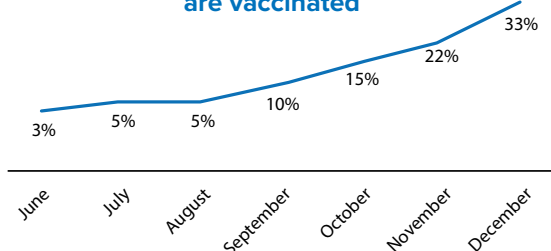
Main reasons why respondents reported not having legal residency



## COVID-19

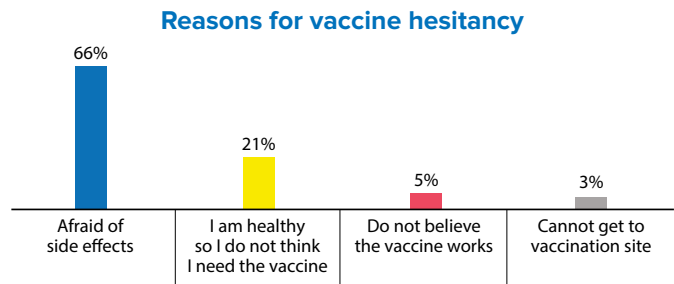
- Since June of this year protection monitoring has seen encouraging increases in households reporting being vaccinated, from just 3% of refugee households having some or all members vaccinated in June, to 33% in December. Another encouraging sign is the decrease in vaccine hesitancy. In June only 23% of households had some unvaccinated members willing to be vaccinated, and by December that figure had risen to 45%. These improvements likely reflect the impact of UNHCR's community outreach campaigns, which have helped over 118,000 refugees register for vaccination. Further, UNHCR protection monitoring helped to refer over 1,000 households this quarter who were interested in receiving the vaccine for support in registering on the Ministry of Public Health's IMPACT platform.

Households where all or some members are vaccinated



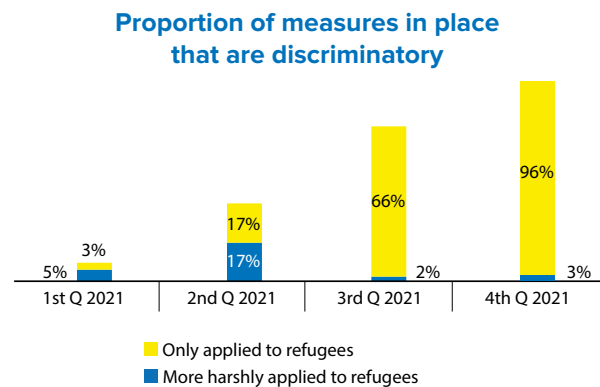
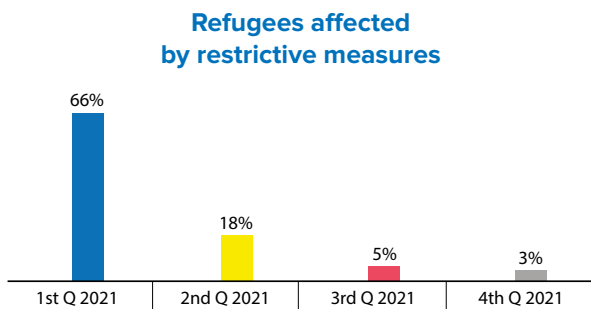
<sup>3</sup> According to 2021 VASyR.

- Nevertheless, challenges remain in getting the 55% of households where all members are hesitant to receive the vaccine registered and willing to proceed. The leading reasons for vaccine hesitancy have been fairly consistent throughout the quarter (please see the 'Reasons for vaccine hesitancy' graph for more details).



## Measures impacting refugees

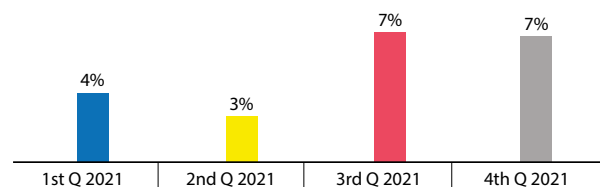
- Since the national lockdown ended earlier in 2021 there has been a continued significant drop in refugees reporting to live under some form of restrictive measure, with 3% of refugees reporting to live under some form of restriction by the fourth quarter of 2021. This decrease has been accompanied by a rise in the proportion of measures in place that are discriminatory.
- Measures reported as discriminatory are mostly curfews (84%), nearly all of which applied only to Syrians.



## Rent & Evictions

- At 7%, the rate of refugees living under threat of eviction is nearly double the rate from the first half of the year. While this has not translated into growing rates of actual eviction, it does indicate that the factors that negatively affect refugees' ability to secure stable housing and sustain it over time are increasing.

**Households living under eviction notices**

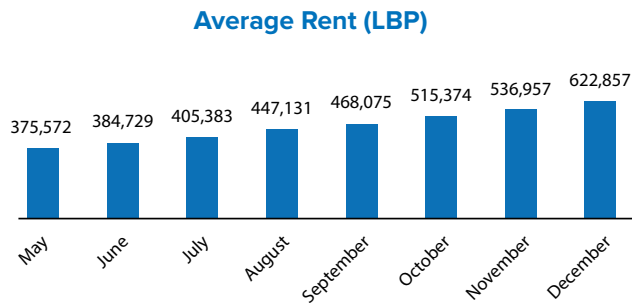


- This precarious situation is being exacerbated by a sharp increase in the price of rent. Rental prices increased 33% this quarter alone. As a result of rising costs, growing debt and diminishing livelihoods only a third of refugees were able to make their last rental payment.

- Key informant interviews and field staff highlight that there are likely several interrelated reasons for the relatively limited rates of actual evictions despite the rising eviction risks. In line with PM data, refugees are entering into debt to pay their rent; however, refugees are also increasingly moving to cheaper and/or shared accommodation to avoid eviction. Further, increases in both the amount of assistance and number of

persons receiving multi-purpose cash assistance and winterization assistance have helped.

- Finally, while landlords may be increasing the pressure they put on tenants, they are unlikely to evict because finding paying tenants will be difficult given the widespread nature of economic hardship and so landlords are willing to negotiate with tenants around payment. This final point is supported by protection monitoring data which showed that nearly all forms of recorded assistance by the host community took the form of lowering and deferring rent (88%).



## Social Stability

- Rates of reports of conflicts with the host community remain stable, with 3% of respondents reporting that their household experienced incidents of tensions in the past 30 days. Verbal harassment followed by physical harassment and crimes targeting Syrians remained the most widely reported incidents. Key informant interviews suggest that social tensions continue to have a strong regional dynamic, with many communities reporting strong integration, while others report a lack of tension but also a lack of integration. Other communities reported high rates of tensions resulting from job competition, particular incidents of conflict and aid perception bias.
- It is worth noting that households maybe underreporting issues of social tension. As highlighted by one key informant, refugees in his community have become desensitized to daily discrimination and harassment.