



## International Rescue Committee Protection Monitoring Report – October 2021

### IRC Protection Monitoring Report

#### Brief Context Update (20 October – 20 November)<sup>1</sup>

**Lifting of subsidies on medications** – in mid-November, Lebanon’s beleaguered health system faced a blow as the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) announced a further lifting of subsidies on key medications. The ‘Drugs Public Price List’, released on the 15 November, newly marked 1,504 medicines as “non-subsidized” (out of the total of 5,481 medications on the list). As a result, the amount spent on subsidized medicine will be drastically reduced from 120 million per month, to \$35 million.<sup>2</sup> The lifting of subsidies has affected infant milk formula and medications used to treat chronic illnesses such as hypertension and heart-disease. With prices having quadrupled overnight, the Chief Medical Officer at Beirut’s Rafik Hariri University Hospital noted that ‘we can expect a surge in deaths.’<sup>3</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights lambasted the move as ‘irresponsible’, particularly as social safety nets, which were intended to be in place prior to the lifting of subsidies in order to soften the social impact, still appear to be a distant prospect.

**Access to Education** – Lebanon’s multiple and compounded crises have severely disrupted children’s education and pushed the education system to the brink. In a recent brief by the Education Sector it was noted that ‘students have been out of meaningful learning for almost two academic years.’<sup>4</sup> However this dire situation has disproportionately impacted Syrian refugee children, 30% of whom have never attended school in Lebanon.<sup>5</sup> The formal commencement of back to school campaign, to support the enrolment of Syrian refugee children, was delayed as the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) had not released the approved list of ‘second shift schools’ for the upcoming academic year. This risks Syrian refugee children further falling behind. Moreover, parents have expressed growing concern over the inability to cover costs associated with education, such as transportation and stationery. Already, transportation costs are ‘the main reason behind missed years of formal education’ for Syrian children.<sup>6</sup> This barrier to education can only be expected to worsen as, in October, the cost of gasoline had risen 799% since the start of the year.<sup>7</sup> As highlighted in a recent NRC Advocacy Brief, in addition to the aforementioned barriers, during enrollment Syrian refugee parents and children are often requested by

<sup>1</sup> Note: context update covers 20 October – 20 November, while the protection monitoring data presented in the main section of the report covers from 1-31<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Lebanon Medicine Prices Skyrocket as Subsidies Lifted’ (The National, 20 November 2021) <  
<https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/lebanon/2021/11/16/lebanon-lifts-most-medicine-subsidies/>>

<sup>3</sup> ‘Doctor’s Fear ‘Surge in Deaths’ After Lebanon Lifts Drug Subsidies’ (Al-Jazeera, 19 November 2021) <  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/19/doctors-fear-surge-in-deaths-after-lebanon-lifts-drug-subsidies/>>

<sup>4</sup> See: ‘Lebanon: Education at Tipping Point – Education Sector Advocacy Brief’ (October 2021) available at  
[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lebanon\\_Education%20at%20a%20Tipping%20Point\\_Sector%20Advocacy%20Brief%5B1%5D.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lebanon_Education%20at%20a%20Tipping%20Point_Sector%20Advocacy%20Brief%5B1%5D.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees (VASyR 2021) Preliminary Findings 2021, slide 38 Available at: <  
<https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/7116/file>>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, ‘Lebanon: Education at Tipping Point – Education Sector Advocacy Brief’ (October 2021), p6.

<sup>7</sup> Food Security Working Group Presentation (12 October 2021) available at  
[https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/fsswg\\_national\\_october\\_12- presentation\\_final.pdf](https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/fsswg_national_october_12- presentation_final.pdf)

schools to provide identity documents which are not formally required within the Standard Operating Procedures issued by MEHE, or beyond the reach of Syrian parents.<sup>8</sup> This results in a further barrier to accessing education for those missing the documents requested.

**Fuel Crisis** – by late October, the release of the revised pricing on gasoline effectively ended the previous fuel subsidies. While the de-facto lifting of subsidies has ameliorated crippling fuel shortages, the price of gasoline is now beyond the reach of many. As noted in one media report, ‘filling up the gasoline tank in a standard vehicle in Lebanon now costs more than the monthly minimum wage.’<sup>9</sup> The skyrocketing cost of gasoline has impacted the costs of transportation and had a trickle-down impact on food prices.

**Visit of the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur** – In November, Lebanon received a two week visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Olivier De Schutter upon an official invite by the government. In scathing remarks De Schutter described Lebanon as ‘a failing State, with a government failing its population.’ He strongly urged the Government to institute a credible poverty alleviation plan and a social protection system.<sup>10</sup> A key criticism raised by De Schutter is the government’s delay in implementing social safety net programs, which were intended to mitigate the social impact of the removal of subsidies and provide targeted assistance to the most vulnerable families. In January 2021 the World Bank approved a loan of \$246 million for the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program, while separately the government planned to institute a “ration card” for the most vulnerable Lebanese families. However, to date, neither assistance programs has been rolled out and remain mired bureaucratic hurdles.

**Irregular migration** – The socio-economic conditions in Lebanon have led to an uptick in Syrian refugees, Lebanese and other population groups seeking to undertake perilous routes of onwards migration. On 17 November, Lebanon’s directorate general of civil aviation announced they would be restricting flights to Belarus amid growing concern that persons from Lebanon were among those stranded at the border between Belarus and Poland, seeking to access the European Union.<sup>11</sup> Separately, several onwards movement attempts have been intercepted by security forces. For example, on 20 November, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) reported that it had intercepted an attempt to smuggle 82 individuals to ‘Europe’ via Qalamoun.

**Changes in Humanitarian Assistance** – In September 2021, the transfer value of the Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) increased from 400,000 Lebanese Pound (LBP) per household to 800,000 LBP per household.<sup>12</sup> This amount now covers 70% of the non-food Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (non-

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<sup>8</sup> NRC Advocacy Brief: ‘Back to School in Lebanon: Specific Barriers for Refugee Children’ (November 2022).

<sup>9</sup> ‘In Lebanon Petrol is Now Priced Out of Reach’ (Al-Jazeera, 29 October)

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/10/29/in-lebanon-petrol-is-now-priced-out-of-reach>

<sup>10</sup> Statement by Professor Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, on his visit to Lebanon, 1–12 November 2021 [EN/AR]. Available at <

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/EN\\_13.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/EN_13.pdf)>

<sup>11</sup> ‘Lebanon imposes curbs for Belarus-bound air passengers’ (Agence France-Presse, 17 November 2021) available at: <<https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1281909/lebanon-imposes-curbs-for-belarus-bound-air-passengers.html>>

<sup>12</sup> See: Basic Assistance Working Group Meeting (28 October 2021) Minutes of Meeting,, p2. The updated transfer value for MPCA was effective as of September 2021.

food SMEB).<sup>13</sup> While food assistance provided by WFP increased from 100,000 LBP per person to 300,000 LBP per person (up to a maximum of six family members).<sup>14</sup> **It is noteworthy that in October, a number of key indicators measured through the IRC's Protection Monitoring demonstrated improvements, specifically for Syrian refugees.** As Protection Monitoring is not designed to measure causality, it cannot be concretely concluded that improvements in the context were a result of the increased MPCA transfer value.<sup>15</sup> However, while direct causation cannot be assumed, previous research in Lebanon has found that **the provision of MPCA "[leads] to a sizable and significant increase in the total reported monthly household expenditure (including food, rent, health etc)."**<sup>16</sup> This aligns with an assumption that positive developments observed through protection monitoring in October may be linked to the increased transfer value of MPCA which occurred in September.

Additionally, in October, Syrian refugee families were informed on their inclusion/exclusion in UNHCR and WFPs MPCA and food assistance program for the next 12-month cycle. Overall, 250,945 households (1,152,000 individuals) are included in the assistance for the next round of assistance, compared to 233,000 households assisted in September.<sup>17</sup> As a result, from November 2021, approximately 84% of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon will be assisted with either MPCA or food assistance.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Families receiving food assistance From WFP receive 300,000 LBP per person in the household (up to six family members). For example of family of five would receive 1,500,000 of assistance, while the maximum amount received for food assistance would be 1,800,000 per family.

<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that in September there was a brief strengthening of the Lebanese Pound following Government formation. This may have had a positive impact on some economic factors, although the rate had deteriorated by mid-October.

<sup>16</sup> 'Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance in Lebanon: Impact Evaluation on the Well-Being of Syrian Refugees' (CAMEALEON and AUB, 20 March 2020) available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/multi-purpose-cash-assistance-lebanon-impact-evaluation-well-being-syrian-refugees-20>

<sup>17</sup> As presented in the Basic Assistance Working Group Meeting (October 2021), in September approximately 233,000 households received MPCA. The majority of which, 222,500 were Syrian refugees. 1,217 were Lebanese and 8,300 were Palestinians from Syrian (PRS).

### Overview of Key Findings – October 2021

- In October, the IRC's Protection Monitoring documented several improvements in the protection context. While direct causation cannot be ascertained, positive developments may be linked to the increased transfer value provided through the Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) programs under the Basic Assistance and Food Security & Agricultural sectors, which was effective as of September 2021.
- An improvement in the protection context may also be linked to the intensification of the agricultural season over the months of September and October, particularly in the governorate of North Lebanon where a high number of Syrian refugees are employed by Lebanese landowners during the olive harvest season.
- In October, **the percentage of households who cited "borrowed money" as a key source of income decreased by 10 percentage points**, representing the lowest rate of debt incurrence since January 2021.
- The percentage of **Syrian refugees who reported 'reducing the number of meals eaten per day' decreased seven percentage point**, to 56% of respondents. However, **the percentage of Lebanese who reported reducing the number of meals eaten per day increased 10 percentage points**. Food insecurity remains highest in the Governorate of Akkar, where 77% of households reported reducing the number of meals eaten per day.
- In October, there was a **notable decline in the number of households at risk of eviction**, decreasing from a high of 9% in September, down to 5% in October. However, a concerning **trend emerged of landlords requesting increased rental fees from Syrian tenants**.
- Both Lebanese and Syrian refugees continue to report increased 'insecurity' in the wake of electricity outages across the country; however, such concerns are most apparent for Syrian refugees in the governorate of Baalbek-Hermel.
- In line with VASyR data, the IRC's Protection Monitoring has found that the rates of Syrian refugees holding valid legal residency has continued to decline. In October, there was an **increase in respondents citing that 'arrest/detention' were key safety concerns for men**, and at least two raids of Informal Tented Settlements were recorded.
- In October, there appeared to be a slight improvement in access to health care, with a **three-percentage point decline in the number of respondents who reported challenges in accessing health care** compared to the previous month. Again, this positive development was limited to Syrian refugee respondents and therefore may be linked to the increased transfer value of MPCA and food assistance.
- Awareness of the availability of COVID-19 vaccines is high, and improvements have been made in regarding to the number of Syrian refugees who register for COVID-19 vaccines. In October, **92% of Syrian refugees reported being aware that they can receive a COVID-19 vaccine in Lebanon free of charge**. However persistent misinformation on the efficacy of vaccines remains a key barrier to vaccine registration, particularly in the governorate of Akkar.

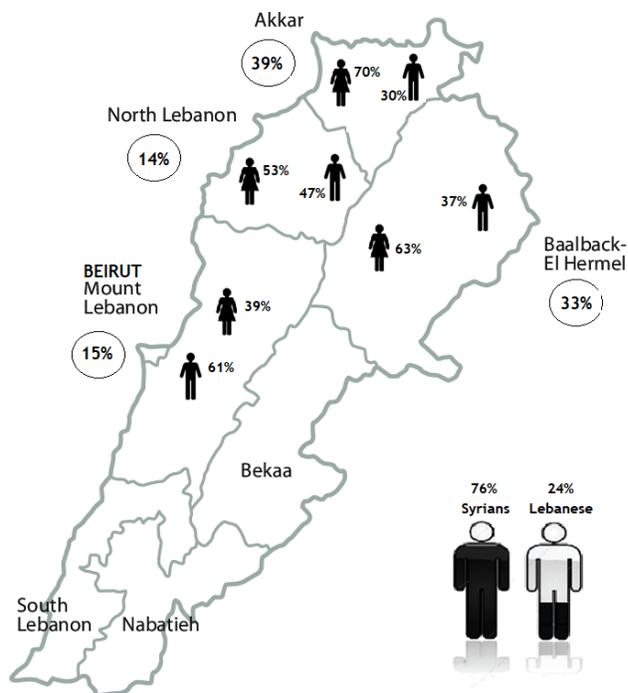
## Methodology

In October, the IRC’s Protection Monitoring Teams conducted a total of **700 household level assessments (reaching 3,433 individuals)**.<sup>18</sup> Protection Monitoring was conducted in the Governorates of Akkar, Baalbek-Hermel, Beirut & Mount Lebanon (BML) and North Lebanon.

In 2021, the IRC expanded Protection Monitoring to include Lebanese respondents. Of the total number of respondents reached in October, **76% were Syrian** and **24% Lebanese**.<sup>19</sup> While **39% of respondents were men** and **61% were women**.

Utilizing the Washington Group Question Short-Set (WGQ-SS), 14% of respondents reported having one or more disability related to vision, hearing, communication, cognition, mobility, and self-care.

During October, protection monitoring has primarily been conducted ‘in-field’, with a smaller number of assessments conducted remotely via phone. Persons at heightened risk who are identified through the IRC’s Protection Monitoring are either supported directly and/or referred to other humanitarian service providers. Information regarding COVID-19 vaccine registration has been systematically provided during assessments, and IRC’s Protection Monitors have assisted individuals to register for vaccination via the IMPACT platform.

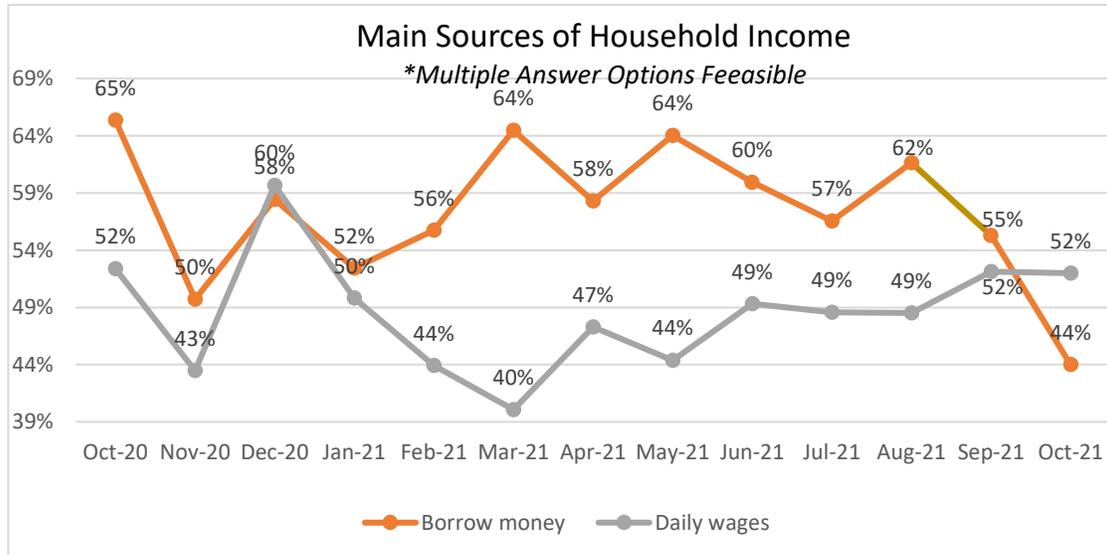


## Debt, Livelihoods, Food Coping Strategies and Child Labor

**Levels of debt** - since the onset of the economic crisis, COVID-19 lockdowns and the resulting loss of livelihoods, Syrian refugees have taken on high levels of debt. The sustainability of this coping mechanism has been flagged as a key concern by protection actors. However, **in October, the percentage of households who cited “borrowed money” as their main source of income decreased by 10 percentage points**, representing the lowest rate since January 2021.<sup>20</sup> In October, the governorate where there was the most significant decrease in households reporting having debt was in Baalbek-Hermel. While concrete

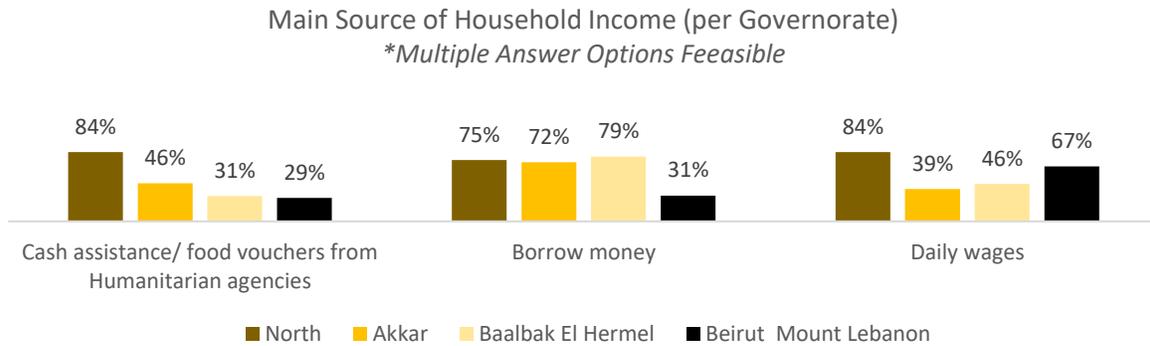
<sup>18</sup> The IRC’s Protection Monitoring Tool collects data at both the ‘household’ and individual level.  
<sup>19</sup> An important caveat to be noted throughout the report is that findings related to Lebanese are based on a relatively small sample size and thus are indicative only.  
<sup>20</sup> Although, strong regional variations exist in the levels of debt incurred. Compared to other governorates, the percentage of households in BML who reporting relying on “borrowed money” has remained relatively low; corresponding with high access to livelihoods opportunities.

conclusions cannot be drawn, the decreased reliance on debt in Baalbek-Hermel *may* reflect the impact of the increased transfer value of MPCA in September; allowing refugee households who receive MPCA to meet their basic needs without relying on borrowing to the same degree.

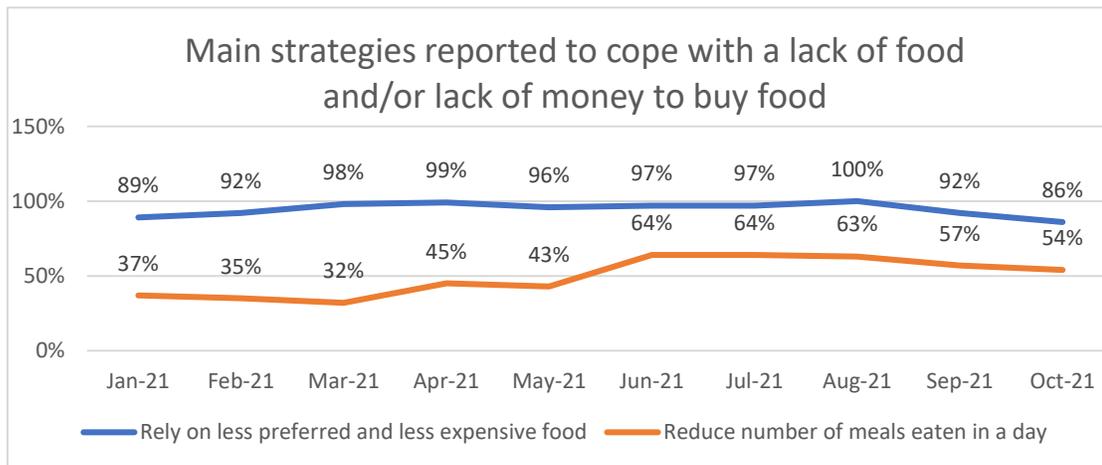


**Access to livelihoods** – In this period, a further factor which may have decreased reliance on borrowing is the intensification of the agricultural season, particularly in Baalbek-Hermel and North Lebanon. In North Lebanon, the olive harvest season has a clear and direct impact on access to livelihoods. Olive trees are concentrated in the districts of Koura, Zgharta and Bcharre (in the Governorate of North Lebanon) and Syrian refugees are traditionally hired by Lebanese landowners to support during the harvest season. In October, 84% of respondents in North Lebanon cited ‘daily wages’ as a key form of household income, compared to only 44% of respondents in the neighbouring governorate of Akkar. This indicates the high reliance of Syrian refugee households (in particular) on seasonal work opportunities. As shown in the above graph, access to ‘daily wages’ was reported at a similar level during the same period last year, and peaked in December 2020. This reflects the cyclical nature of the agricultural season, however in October 2020 reliance on debt was reported at a higher level than in October 2021.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The drop in access to livelihoods in November 2020 is most likely linked to a nationwide lockdown which was announced from November 14-30<sup>th</sup> to stem the transmission of COVID-19.



**Food coping strategies** – The IRC’s Protection Monitoring data in October also registered an *improvement* in the food security situation for Syrian refugees, and a worsening for Lebanese. Again, this correlates with the increased transfer value of the MPCA, which primarily reaches Syrians and was effective as of September. Research by CAMEALEON has previously demonstrated that **long-term MPCA leads to a ‘significant positive impact on the food security of households.’**<sup>22</sup> Of the households reached by IRC’s Protection Monitoring in October, there was a three percentage point decrease in the number of respondents who reduced the number of meals eaten per day (for all population groups). Additionally, the number of households who reported relying on ‘less preferred/less expensive food’ dropped to the lowest rate since January 2021.

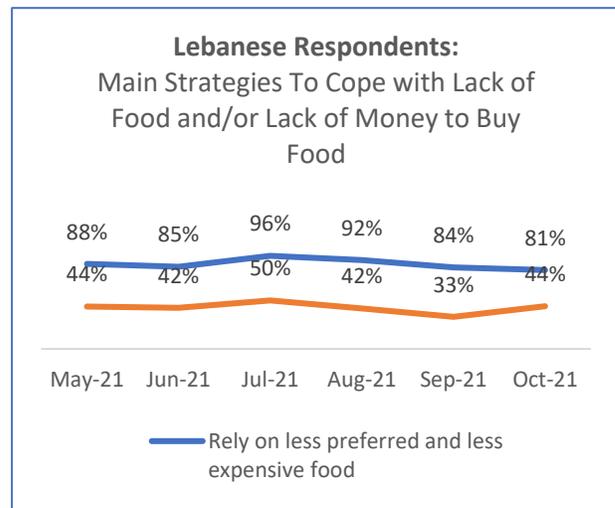
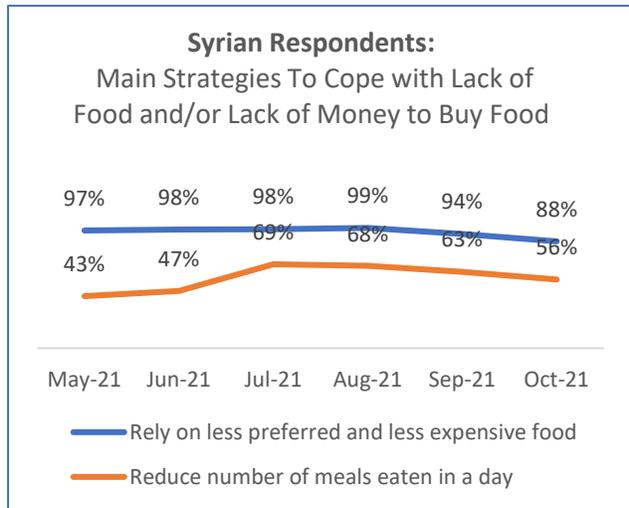


However, on further disaggregation, the positive development in food security applied to Syrian respondents, but not Lebanese. **While there was a seven-percentage point decrease in the number of Syrians cutting meals, there was a 10-percentage point increase in the number of Lebanese cutting meals.**

- **Syrian refugees:** in October, 56% of Syrian respondents reported ‘reducing the number of meals eaten per day’ compared to 63% reporting reducing meals in September 2021. This represented a seven-percentage point decrease.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid (n14), ‘Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance in Lebanon: Impact Evaluation on the Well-Being of Syrian Refugees’ (CAMEALEON and AUB, March 2020) p4.

- **Lebanese:** in October, 44% of Lebanese respondents reported ‘reducing the number of meals eaten per day’, compared to 33% in September 2021. This represents a 10-percentage point increase.



Despite the increased humanitarian assistance provided to Syrians, refugee communities still demonstrate higher levels of food insecurity compared to their Lebanese counterparts. This can be explained by the fact that 89% of Syrian refugees live below the *extreme* poverty line, in comparison to 36% of the wider Lebanese community.<sup>23</sup> However, significant data gaps still exist on the vulnerabilities of the Lebanese host community. Additionally, strong regional variations exist; for example, **food security was found to be the highest in the Governorate of Akkar, where 77% of households reported reducing the number of meals eaten per day.**

**Child labour** – In September, the percentage of respondents who reported that children in the household were engaged in child labour reached its highest rate in 2021, at 13%. **In October, the rate of child labour reported dipped slightly to 10%**; however, as the rates of child labour are typically underreported, this percentage is indicative only.<sup>24</sup> Overwhelmingly, parents cite the main reason for children engaging in labour as to provide financial support for their families. In short, the inability of adult family members to access livelihoods appears to be key drivers of child labour.

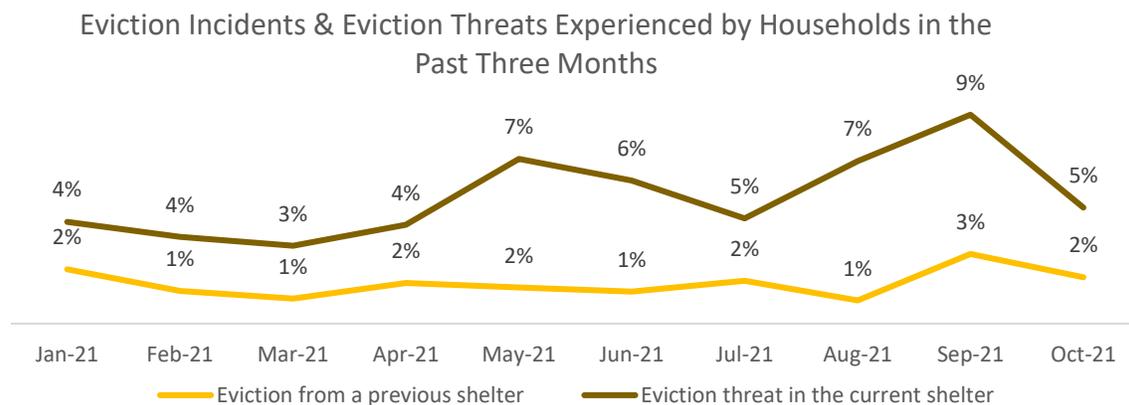
Moreover, the delayed start of ‘second-shift schools’ has no doubt had a detrimental impact on the protection of Syrian refugee children. **In October the IRC’s Protection Monitoring registered the highest ever percentage of children not engaged in either school or non-formal education since January 2021.** Continued delays in the full re-opening of ‘second shift classes’ and the lack of support to cover transportation/stationary costs may result in further increases in the number of children not attending school and engaged in child labour, including worst forms of child labour.

<sup>23</sup> Emergency Response Plan Lebanon, 2021-22 (OCHA, August 2021), p5.

<sup>24</sup> Note that data on child labor should be seen as indicative only as it is typically under reported.

## Eviction & Eviction Threats

In September, 9% of households reached by IRC’s Protection Monitoring reported living under a threat of eviction and 3% reported actually facing an eviction in the past three months. This represented the highest rate of refugees living under threat of eviction since the start of the year. However, **in October, the percentage of households at eviction threat declined four percentage points.** While a clear causation cannot be determined, the doubling of the MPCA transfer value in September and the new information on inclusion which was provided in October may have supported Syrian refugees to cover unpaid rental costs and/or re-negotiate the timeframe for rental payments. As noted above, research by CAMEALEON has demonstrated that a key use of MPCA is rental payments, hence inclusion and/or increased value of MPCA could be expected to directly affect the ability to pay rent.

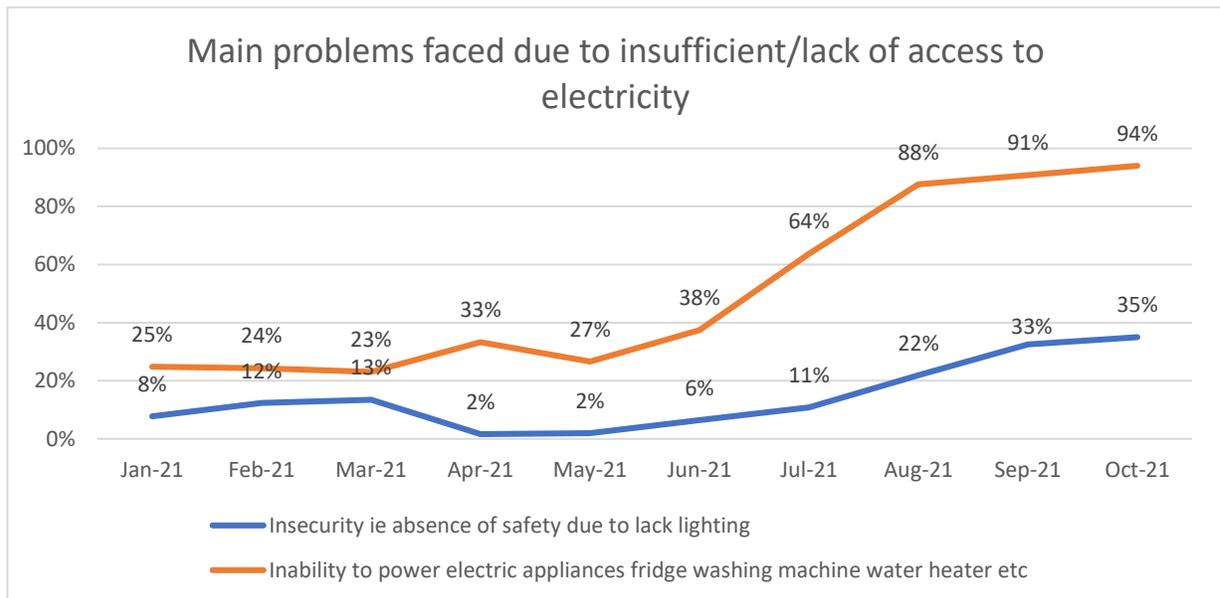


**Notwithstanding this positive development, at the field level a negative trend has been observed of landlords requesting Syrian refugees to pay increased rental fees.** This qualitative observation was reported by IRC’s frontline field staff across the governorates of Akkar, North, BML and Baalbek-Hermel. The precise amount of the rental increases did not follow a clear pattern. The trend of landlords requesting increased rental fees from Syrian tenants may be linked to persistent rumours that Syrian refugees are receiving humanitarian assistance in dollars, further deterioration of the Lebanese Pound (LBP) and/or the increases in the assistance provided (both in terms of coverage and transfer value).

Additionally, the IRC’s ad hoc Protection Incident Reports has indicated a continual increase in eviction threats impacting Syrian refugees residing in Akkar. The governorate of Akkar records some of the highest levels of extreme poverty, impairing the ability of refugee communities to cover rental payments. In addition to the 2% of households who reported being forcibly evicted from a previous shelter in the last three months, Protection Incident Reports identified a further **three households in Akkar who were evicted, in addition to three households in Akkar who pre-emptively moved based on an eviction notice.**

## Electricity Crisis & Rising Insecurity

In October, there have been marginal improvements in the amount of electricity provided through the national grid, however most parts of Lebanon still receive only one to three hours of public electricity per day. The complete removal of subsidies on the diesel fuel, used for private generators, has made electricity prohibitively expensive. By October the cost of diesel fuel had risen a staggering 1212% since January 2021 (according to WFP data).<sup>25</sup>



As shown in the graph above, respondents report that the primary impact of the electricity crisis is the inability to use electrical appliances, notably refrigerators. Additionally, concerns around insecurity due to lack of lighting has increased. **In October, 35% of respondents reported that a key impact of the electricity crisis was 'insecurity' linked to lack of lighting.** This was particularly high in the **Governorate of Baalbek Hermel, where 53% of respondents raised this concern.** Perceptions of insecurity is high in remote border areas where incidents of theft are reported to be on the rise, impacting both refugee and host communities.

While both Lebanese and Syrian respondents reported that the absence of lighting results in increased concerns around insecurity; however, **Syrian refugees were 10 percentage points more likely to report concerns around 'insecurity' due to lack of lighting.**<sup>26</sup> Syrians are likely to feel more vulnerable to criminality due to their lack of legal residency, limited community support networks and the fact that many Syrians live on the peripheries of urban areas. The IRC's ad hoc Protection Incident Reports

<sup>25</sup> Food Security Working Group Presentation (12 October 2021) available at [https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/fsswg\\_national\\_october\\_12- presentation\\_final.pdf](https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/fsswg_national_october_12- presentation_final.pdf)

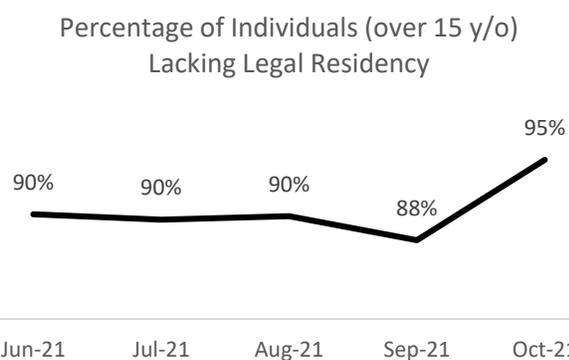
<sup>26</sup> Although noting the sample size of Lebanese reached is not representative.

underscores this analysis; the majority of Syrians who experienced aggravated robbery and physical assaults were reluctant to report such incidents to law enforcement because of their lack of legal residency.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, those residing in Informal Tented Settlements have described feeling more insecure due to the lack of protective structures in the settlements such as solid lockable doors.

Increased perceptions of insecurity are occurring against a backdrop of increased criminality across Lebanon and immense strain on the country’s security forces. As outlined in a recent report by International Crisis Group, the Army Chief Joseph Aoun has warned of an “implosion” of the armed forces, while the caretaker interior minister (responsible for most security agencies besides the LAF) noted that forces were “unable to carry out 90 percent of their tasks” leading to a breakdown in security across the country.

### Access to Legal Residency

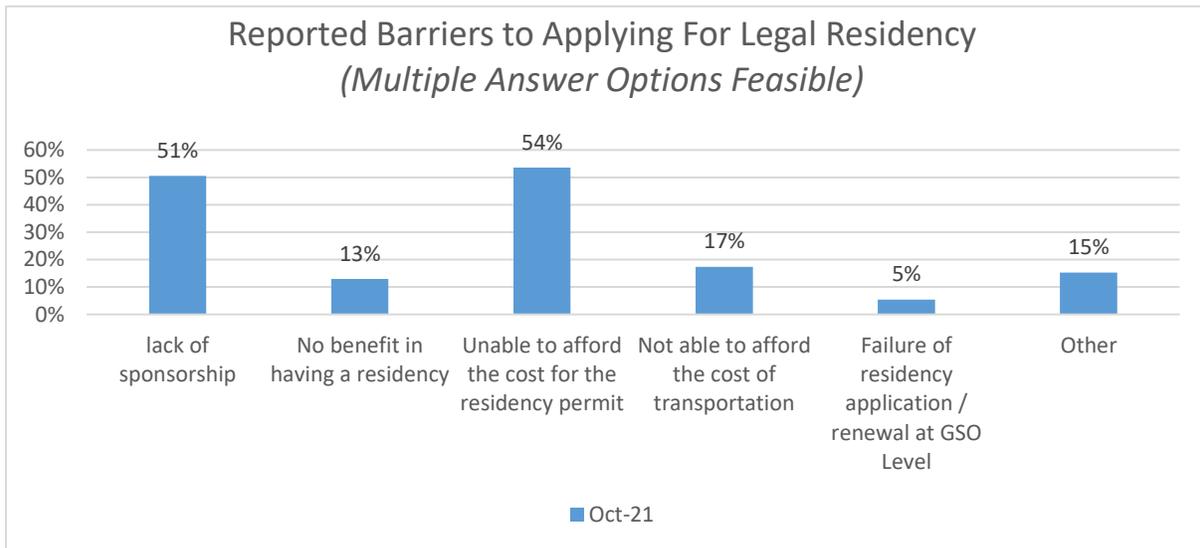
Access to legal documentation remains a pivotal protection concern for Syrian refugees. The onset of the economic crisis, COVID-19 lockdowns and the electricity/fuel crisis have heavily impacted the ability for Syrian refugees to access legal residency, civil status documentation and court representation.



In line with preliminary data from the Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees (VASyR) 2021, the IRC’s Protection Monitoring has shown a sharp decline in the number of Syrian refugees (over 15 years old) holding valid legal residency. While at national level, 84% of Syrian refugees lack legal residency, this figure is higher in the governorates of Akkar, Baalbek-Hermel and North Lebanon. Of those reached by IRC’s protection monitoring in October, **95% of respondents in North, 94% of respondents in Akkar and 87% of respondents in Bekaa respectively did not have legal residency.** Women continue to have lower rates of legal residency compared to their male counterparts.

The primary barriers to accessing legal residency are linked to both financial constraints and highly restrictive procedures for residency renewal. In October, **54% of refugee respondents cited the ‘inability to afford the cost’ as a key barrier to applying for legal residency at the GSO.** As the economic situation continues to deteriorate, IRC’s field teams have observed refugees ‘deprioritizing’ legal documentation over survival needs such as food, rent and health care. In order to overcome such barriers, humanitarian agencies may have to provide more direct financial support and/or accompaniment to ensure that persons at heightened risk access legal documentation (including marriage and birth registration).

<sup>27</sup> A recent report by International Crisis Group noted ‘men linked to political factions have beaten or threatened Syrians, with “no fear of consequences or even serious public awareness’ or condemnation.” p17 Available at < <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/east-mediterranean-mena/lebanon/228-managing-lebanons-compounding-crises>>



A key barrier to legal residency continues to be the highly restrictive ‘fee waiver’. In 2017, the Government of Lebanon introduced a fee waiver for persons eligible to renew their legal residency based on registration with UNHCR. However, any persons who has previously renewed their residency through sponsorship is excluded from eligibility for the fee waiver.<sup>28</sup> In practice, this has meant that a significant number of Syrian refugees are not eligible to benefit from the fee waiver and are required to obtain sponsorship from a Lebanese employer to renew their legal residency (this entails additional costs, often transferred to the Syrian applicant and/or requiring informal fees to be paid to the ‘sponsors’). However, the economic crisis has resulted in sharp contraction of the sectors in which Syrian refugees are typically employed; including construction and agriculture. As such, less and less Syrians have been able to access residency via sponsorship. In October, **51% of those without legal residency cited the ‘lack of a sponsor’ as a key barrier.**

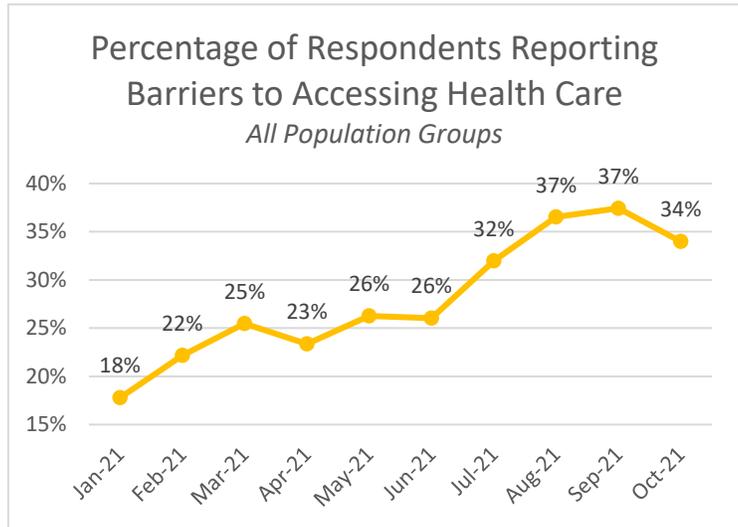
Notwithstanding the high number of Syrian refugees without legal residency, lack of access to legal stay remains a key protection risk. As noted in a 2019 report by UNHCR and UN-Habitat, **“illegal presence in Lebanon is a criminal offence for which people can be arrested and prosecuted. Laws make no exceptions for asylum seekers and refugees”**. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and overstressing of security forces, there has been a decline in the arrests, detentions, and deportations of Syrian refugees. However as there is no guarantee that such practices will not recommence, particularly as certain political factions scapegoat Syrian refugees for Lebanon’s economic woes. Already **in October, there was a four-percentage point increase in the number of refugee respondents who cited that the main safety concern for men is arrest/detention** (19% of respondents cited arrest/detention as the main security risk affecting men). Moreover, **in October at least two raids of Informal Tented Settlements**

<sup>28</sup> ‘Housing, Land and Property Issues of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon from Homs City’ (UN-Habitat & UNHCR, February 2019) p38. available at < <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/housing-land-and-property-issues-syrian-refugees-lebanon-homs-city-implications>>

were reported in the governorate of Baalbek-Hermel; persons without legal residency are more vulnerable to arrest and detention during these raids.

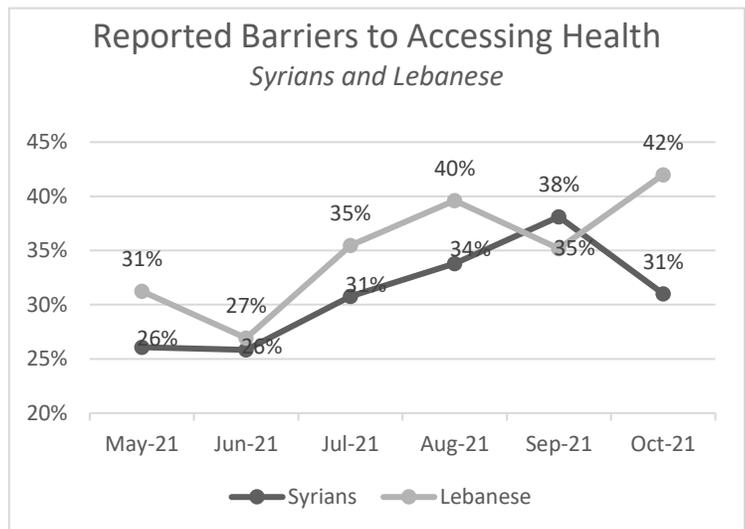
**Access to Health Care & COVID-19 Vaccines**

In October, the percentage of respondents who reported facing barriers to accessing health care remained relatively high, at 34%. However, again, there was an improvement from the data collected during September. **The three-percentage point decrease in respondents reporting barriers in access health care** may be linked to the increased transfer value provided through the MPCA and food assistance as of September. This assumption is supported by the fact that access to health care significantly improved for the refugee population, the primary recipients of MPCA, in comparison to Lebanese respondents



One notable finding is that Lebanese respondents reported facing barriers to accessing health care at a higher rate than Syrian respondents (with the important caveat that the sample size of Lebanese respondents was relatively limited - 166 households). However, this may reflect that the fact that **typically Lebanese had higher rates of access to health care, so are more acutely experiencing the shock of the rises in health care costs and shortage of medications**. Across all population groups, of those who reported facing barriers to accessing health care **the primary coping mechanism was simply to “go untreated”**.

**COVID-19 Vaccines** - In October, awareness on the availability of COVID-19 vaccines was high. **92% of Syrian refugees reported being aware that they can receive a COVID-19 vaccine in Lebanon free of charge, and 82% were aware of the IMPACT Platform for COVID-19 Vaccine pre-registration**. While this marks a significant achievement in terms of Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), information of vaccine availability has not translated into the equivalent levels of vaccine uptake.

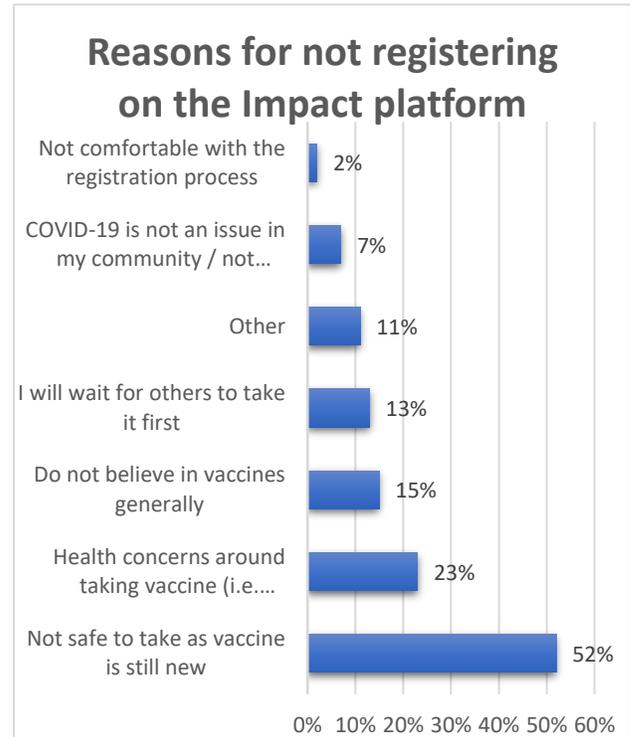


Of those who were aware of the IMPACT Platform for COVID-19 Vaccine pre-

registration (82% of respondents), **42% reported that they had registered themselves, representing a four percentage-point increase from one month prior.**

Of those who did register for a vaccine via the IMPACT platform, **14% reported that access to wifi had been a challenge during registration** and **8% cited concerns around their ability to cover transportation costs to vaccine centers.**

The primary reasons for not registering for COVID-19 vaccines continue to be reported as health concerns around the vaccine. **The Governorate of Akkar continues to have the highest rate of refugees citing safety concerns around receiving the vaccine.** A recent report by the Immigration Policy Lab, reaching more than 3000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon, found that 36% of respondents stated that they do not know if vaccines are effective, and a substantial number were 'not sure' or could not decide if certain COVID-19 conspiracy theories were true. For those who wish to register for the COVID-19 vaccine, the IRC's Protection Monitors systematically provide support with registration on the platform.



**\*Other**

- *Belief that 'those who took the vaccine in Syria died'.*
- *Do not consider the COVID-19 as necessary because their movements are restricted and they largely stay home.*
- *Do not believe in the existence of COVID-19*