

Situation Overview

- The Government's decision to revise eligibility criteria for subsidized commodities and remove around 600,000 beneficiaries from subsidy programmes sparked an escalation of protests in As-Sweida Governorate.
- On 5 February, a protest of volunteer teachers prompted the closure of more than 80 schools in Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) controlled areas in Idleb and Hama.
- On 8 February, media sources reported that security guards at al-Hol camp in northeast Syria opened fire on residents after women residents attacked them with rocks and knives. A 10-year-old child was killed in the shooting, and several women and children were wounded. During the same month, media sources reported that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) had started issuing identification cards for foreign women with perceived Islamic State (IS) affiliation residing in this camp. The reasons behind such a move are yet to be understood if at all true, though initial indications seem to point towards the facilitation of repatriation process. The ID programme does not currently include the Iraqi and Syrian nationals (85 percent) residents of the camp.
- On 14 February, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported complaints of drinking water polluted with diesel from leaking agricultural machinery in the village of Assadiya in Ar-Raqqa governorate. Syria has up to 40 percent less drinking water than it did in 2010 due to conflict-related destruction of water and sanitation systems, leaving many people dependent on costly and often unreliable water trucking services. Notably, irrigation with untreated wastewater can introduce toxic elements that damage crops and topsoil, while livestock can fall seriously ill and die because of drinking oil-contaminated water.
- On 21 February, the Syrian Telecommunication and Postal Regulatory Authority officially activated the license of a third mobile operator in Government-controlled areas, Wafa Telecom. Set to launch operations in November 2022, Wafa will target areas with poor coverage and provide a discount of up to 50 percent until it reaches three million subscribers. Wafa will also have an exclusive license to operate a fifth generation (5G) mobile network in the country.
- In February 2022, WFP reached some 5.5 million beneficiaries with in-kind food or cash-based transfers (CBT) through its five activities: general food assistance (GFA), school feeding, livelihood activities, and malnutrition prevention and treatment programmes in Syria

Sources: [COAR – Syria Updates: 14-Feb](#) | [21-Feb](#) | [28-Feb](#) | [WFP Syria](#)



Key Points

- More than half of the interviewed households (52 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption in February 2022, representing an increase of three percent compared to February 2021.
- In February 2022, nine out of ten interviewed households in Syria (90 percent) reported experiencing food access issues causing them to adopt at least one food-based coping mechanism to deal with insufficient food stocks and meet their food consumption needs.
- Overall, 72 percent of surveyed households bought food on credit due to lack of food money to buy food. This signals a downward trend from the spike (75 percent) observed during December 2021 (festive season).
- About 23 percent of interviewed households reported having had at least the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This is four percent more people compared to last month. Moreover, five out ten interviewed households reported their willingness to have all members vaccinated, implying that the rates of vaccinated people could further increase if more doses become freely available.

Key Characteristics



961
Households Surveyed



12%
Female Headed Households



21%
Stay as Guests



28%
Displaced Households

Methodology

This mVAM bulletin is based on data collected via live telephone interviews in February 2022 from households in locations across Syria. The phone numbers were generated using random-digit dialing.

In February 2022, data was collected from a sample of 961 respondents across 13 governorates (Idleb is not covered). As per standard survey procedures, respondents' consent was obtained prior to the interviews. For security and safety measures, all respondents were identified with an anonymous ID.

For Further Information

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Food Consumption

- In February 2022, more than a half of the surveyed households (52 percent) reported poor or borderline food consumption in Syria, same as the highest food insecurity levels recorded during 2021. For the last four months, the national average rate of inadequate food consumption (poor and borderline combined) remained stable. Compared to February last year, there was a six percent increase in households who reported poor and borderline consumption rates. Persistent economic decline and the conflict-related hyperinflation, exacerbated by ballooning fuel shortages remain the underlying causes of high levels of observed food insecurity among Syrians. The ongoing war in Ukraine will certainly have a disruptive effect on the global and regional economy, and its direct impact on the Syrian economy shall be featured in upcoming reports.
- By governorate, Ar-Raqqa recorded the highest percentage of households with inadequate food consumption (70 percent), representing a three percent increase compared to last month. This confirms Ar-Raqqa as the most food insecure governorate in Syria for the third month in a row. Other noticeable increases (five percentage points or more) in inadequate food consumption were observed in Damascus, Al-Hasakeh and Rural Damascus. Compared to last month, the food security situation slightly improved in Dar'a, Deir-ez-Zor, Homs and As-Sweida governorates.
- During the reporting period, close to one out of five interviewed households in Syria (19 percent) reported poor food consumption. This was much higher in Ar-Raqqa with 35 percent (highest recorded since 2021) followed by Al-Hasakeh and Aleppo (30 percent). Compared to last month, proportions of households with poor food consumption noticeably increased in coastal areas (Lattakia and Tartous) as well as Aleppo and Damascus governorates.
- Compared to last month, the food security situation among female headed households worsened by about four percentage points (from 55 to 59 percent) of households with inadequate food consumption. By residence status, IDPs struggled the most (58 percent) followed by returnees (54 percent) while inadequate food consumption among residents stood at 47 percent.
- Faced with difficult conditions, households tend to prioritize the consumption of more affordable food types, which reduces their ability to consume adequate and diverse nutrients. For example, consuming dairy products and animal source proteins for one day a week contributes to at least 20 percent of the adequate consumption threshold. During February 2022, about 45 percent of interviewed households did not consume any animal proteins during the week that receded interviews, while 28 percent did not consume any dairy products during the same period. During the reporting period, poor diets (five or less groups out of eight) were high among households headed by females, those with IDP residence status or those in governorates of Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa.

Fig1: The national average level of poor and borderline food consumption in the last six months

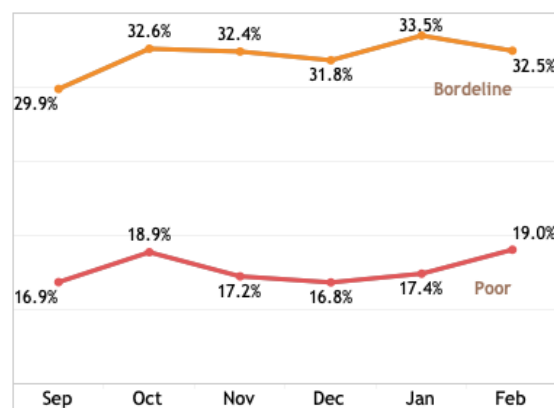


Fig2: Percent of households reporting poor and borderline food consumption according to displacement status

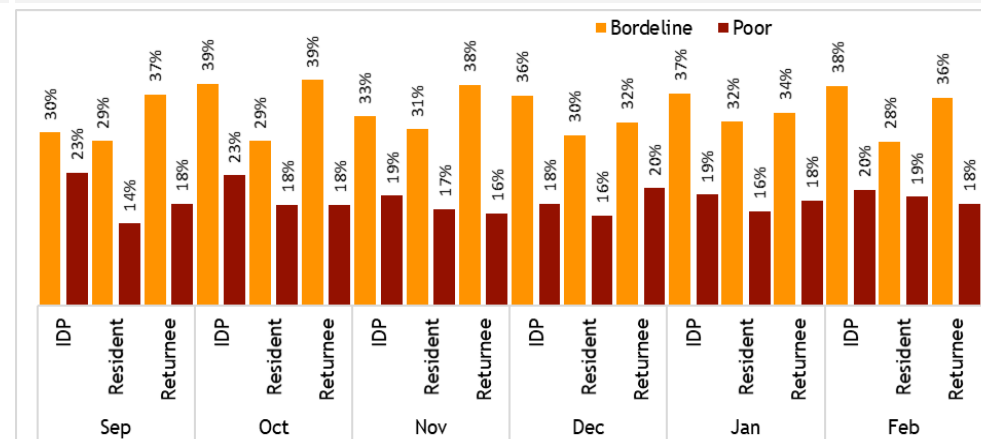
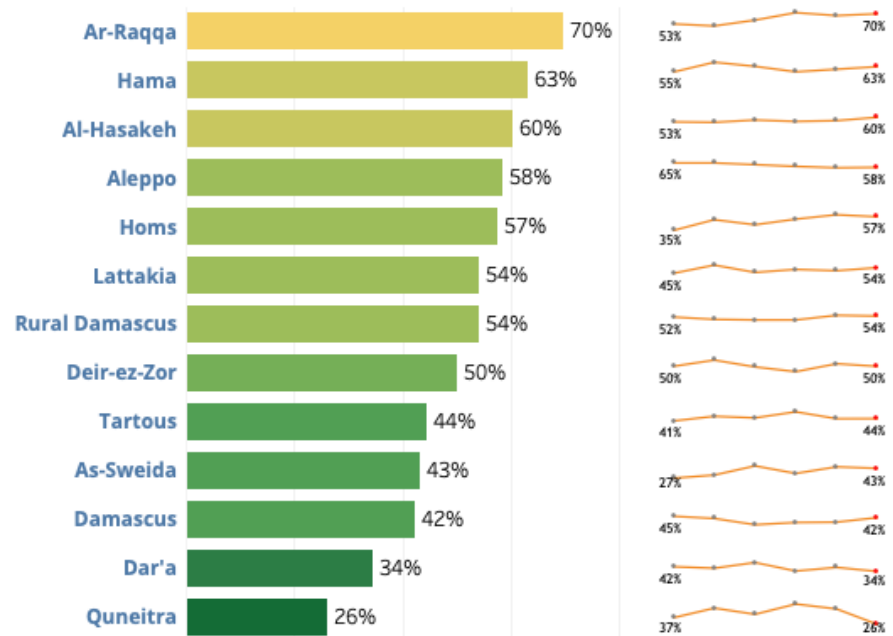
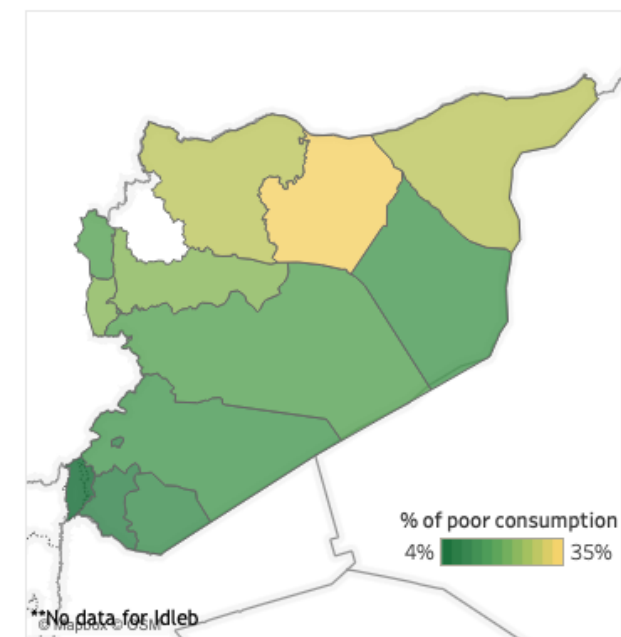


Fig3: Percent of households with inadequate food consumption and trends over the last six months in the last six months (Sep 2021—Feb 2022)



Map1: Percent of households by governorate reporting poor food consumption in February 2022





Coping Strategies

- In February 2022, the national average reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) stood at 19.6. During the month, around nine out of ten interviewed households across Syria (90 percent) reported not having enough food or money to buy food pushing them to adopt at least one food-based coping mechanism to meet their food consumption needs. 92 percent of female headed households reported having experienced food shortages compared to 90 percent of households headed by males. Food access issues affected all households regardless the residential status, however, IDP and returnees adopted dire mechanisms more frequently compared to residents.
- The continued erosion of purchasing power and unstable livelihood sources pushed many Syrian households to incur more debt. During February 2022, 72 percent of surveyed households across Syria reported having bought food on credit due to lack of food and or money to buy food.
- Despite national efforts to alleviate the negative impacts of the economic crisis (subsidies, exchange rate management, salary increments, etc.), several factors continue to diminish the Syrians' immunity to economic shocks. i.e.: the war in Ukraine will likely have a negative impact on prices of petroleum products both at policy level (fuel subsidies) and individual level (transportation and market prices for basic food and non-food needs). Countywide, more than nine in ten interviewed households (91 percent) relied on market purchases for their food consumption needs. More and more households tended to buy food on credit. Purchasing food on credit was much more common among IDPs and returnee households compared to residents. From the governorates of As-Sweida, Deir-ez-Zor and Hama, this mechanism was adopted by eight or more households among each ten interviewed.
- Coping mechanisms as severe as withdrawing children from school (less expenses on education and additional labor for households) are not uncommon in Syria. This practice deprives youth of education and exposes them to other safety and protection issues. Approximately 14 percent of surveyed households across Syria) reported taking children of the mandatory education age out of school to have them engage in income generating activities and contribute to the household's income. This proportion increased to 34, 32 and 30 percent in Al-Hasakeh, Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa, respectively.
- In February 2022, 77 percent of surveyed households reported relying on less preferred or less expensive food, up by four percent from February 2021. Moreover, 62 percent of households reported reducing the number of meals eaten per day to deal with lack of food for household consumption. IDP households were the most prone to adopt this coping mechanism (66 percent). In February 2022, about 51 percent of households especially those in Al-Hasakeh (68 percent), Ar-Raqqa (57 percent), IDPs (56 percent) and female headed (52 percent), had to restrict consumption by adults for their children to eat. Close to six in ten interviewed households reported having borrowed food or bought food on credit while the same proportion had to reduce portion sizes during mealtimes for at least two days a week to cope with insufficient food.

Fig6: Overall percent of households by adopted coping strategy over the past six months

		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Less Expensive Food	Male	70%	71%	68%	68%	71%	71%
	Female	70%	77%	69%	75%	66%	78%
Reduce Number of Meals	Male	57%	58%	54%	55%	57%	60%
	Female	65%	67%	51%	64%	62%	60%
Limit Portion Size	Male	50%	50%	48%	52%	50%	51%
	Female	51%	59%	58%	62%	49%	51%
Restrict Consumption	Male	49%	50%	46%	46%	47%	48%
	Female	44%	43%	49%	56%	47%	49%
Borrow food	Male	47%	47%	42%	44%	46%	44%
	Female	51%	49%	54%	58%	53%	48%

Fig5: rCSI average by governorate and last six months trends (Sept 2021— Feb 2022)

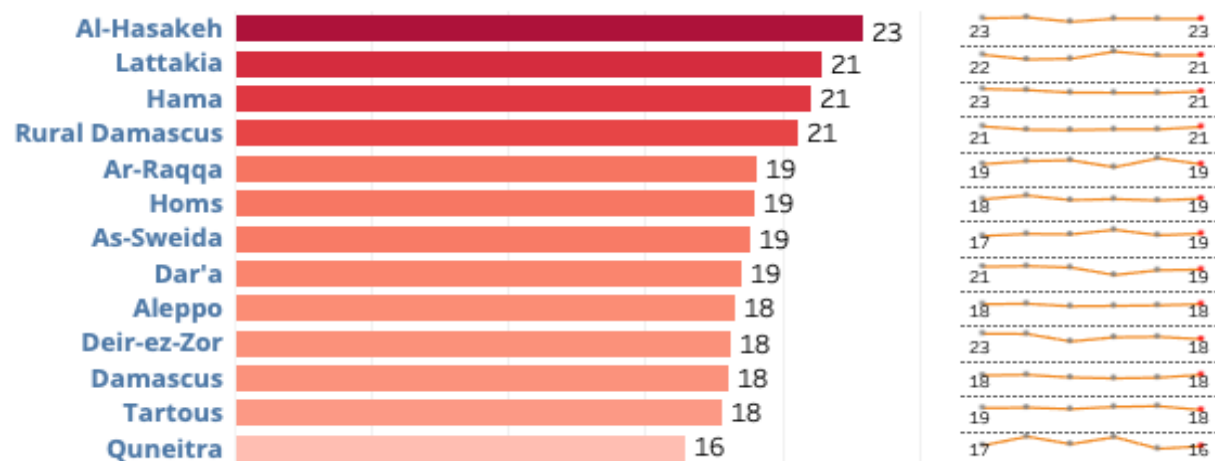
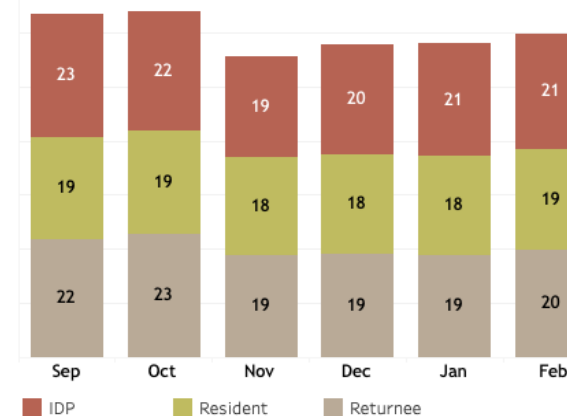
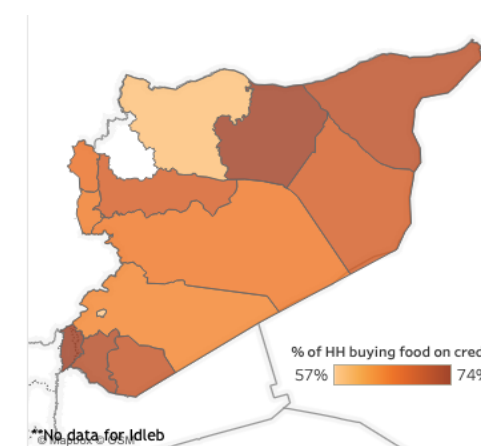


Fig4: rCSI average over the last six months by to displacement status



Map2: Percent of households buying food in credit in February 2022





Access to Services and Income Sources I

- The deteriorating socio-economic situation in Syria, further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, continued to pose widespread health and nutrition threats to Syrian households, thereby worsening the general food security situation and exacerbating the acute humanitarian needs countrywide.
- In February 2022, close to two in five interviewed households (39 percent) indicated facing difficulties in reaching markets, representing an increase of 19 percentage points from same period last year. Reported market access issues are mainly linked to diminished purchasing power vis-à-vis commodity and transportation prices. In February 2022, with a minimum monthly wage in Syria (92,970SYP) one could afford 40 percent of the national average price of a standard reference food basket monitored by WFP (necessary to cover 2,100 kcal for a family of five). Nationwide, nine out of ten interviewed households across Syria (91 percent) relied on market purchases as a primary source of food, implying that any physical and or economic limitations to accessing markets further erode food security levels. In fact, 55 percent of households with limited access to markets also reported inadequate food consumption compared to 49 percent of their peers with unhindered access to markets. During February 2022, 42 percent of returnees and 40 percent of residents reported having limited access to markets while respondents from Al-Hasakeh (57 percent), Ar-Raqqa (52 percent) and Lattakia (50 percent) exhibited high levels of limited access to markets.
- The ongoing electricity rationing, ballooning fuel prices and the overall economic situation are major factors negatively impacting the livelihoods of many Syrians. During February 2022, nearly three in ten (27 percent) interviewed households reported having experienced loss or reduction of income. Nationwide, this represents a five percentage points' increase compared to last month. Returnees and male headed households were most affected by losses or reduced income. At governorate level, proportions of reduced or lost income were high among respondents from As-Sweida (36 percent), Homs (34 percent), Damascus (34 percent) and Ar-Raqqa (30 percent). Compared to last month, respondents from Deir-ez-Zor, Damascus, As-Sweida and Homs experienced an increase of at least 10 percentage points of households reporting lost or reduced income. For 70 percent of those who reported lost or reduced income, the severity was as high as 50 percent of their accustomed income. Countrywide, close to one in ten (eight percent) did not have any member who could work to generate income. 60 percent of these households were also food insecure (poor and borderline food consumption).

Fig7: Proportion of households who reported facing difficulties in accessing markets by food consumption group and trends over the last six months (Sep 2021—Feb 2022)

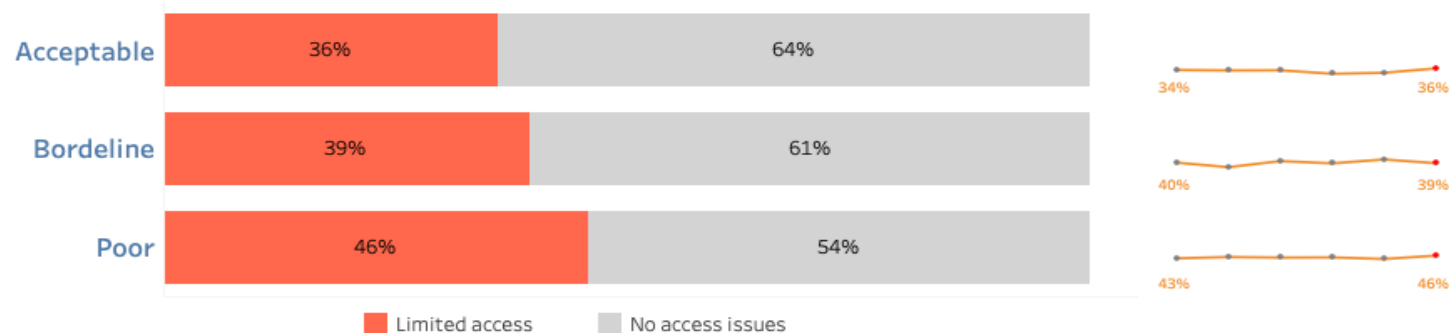
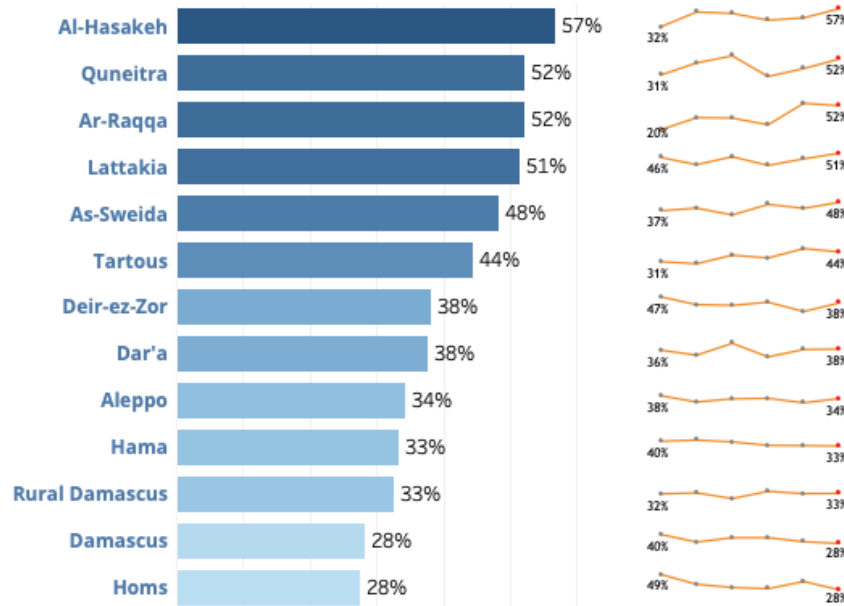
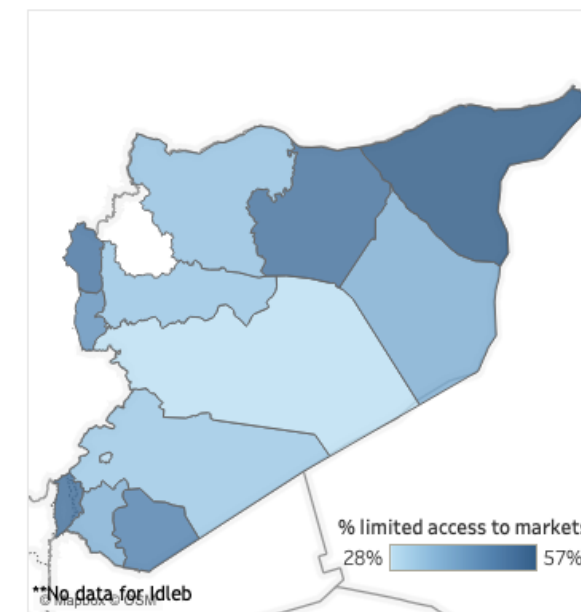


Fig8: Percent of households facing challenges to access markets by Governorate and trends over the last six months (Sept 2021—Feb 2022)



Map3: Percent of households facing challenges to access markets by governorate in February 2022





Access to Services and Income Sources II

- Apart from 15 percent of household who associated experienced lost or reduced income with complete job losses, other causes included reduced wages due to reduced working hours accounted (43 percent), reduced revenue from income generating activities (40 percent) and the rest two percent was reduced remittances. The ongoing fuel and electricity crisis in Syria and the revision of subsidy eligibility criteria in February which excluded about 600,000 people from government subsidies further exposed Syrians to challenges in meeting their basic needs.
- Reduced income or sources of livelihoods imply a diminished ability to meet basic needs and cope with food shortages. During February 2022, 61 percent of those who reported losses of income also reported inadequate food consumption, representing an increase of four percentage points compared to last month. Moreover, 87 percent of these households have had to rely on less expensive and less preferred food while 81 percent reported purchasing food on credit due to insufficient or lack of funds to buy food.
- During the reporting period, more than two out of ten interviewed households in Syria (22 percent), reported facing difficulties in accessing medical care facilities. This marked two percentage points less compared to the month before and an increase of eight percentage points compared to February 2021.
- As COVID-19 infections slowly fade out and restrictive measures eased, more Syrian households were reportedly vaccinated or eager to be vaccinated should vaccines become freely available in their areas. During February 2022, more than one in five interviewed households (23 percent) had already received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This marked a progressive increase in vaccinated Syrian households and a 21 percentage points increase since August last year. On the other hand, 55 percent are still willing to have all their household members vaccinated upon availability of vaccines while the rest (about 22 percent) would rather wait for the pandemic to end or never get vaccinated at all.

Fig9: Proportion of households who reported reduced or lost income by food consumption group and trends over the last six months (Sep 2021—Feb 2022)

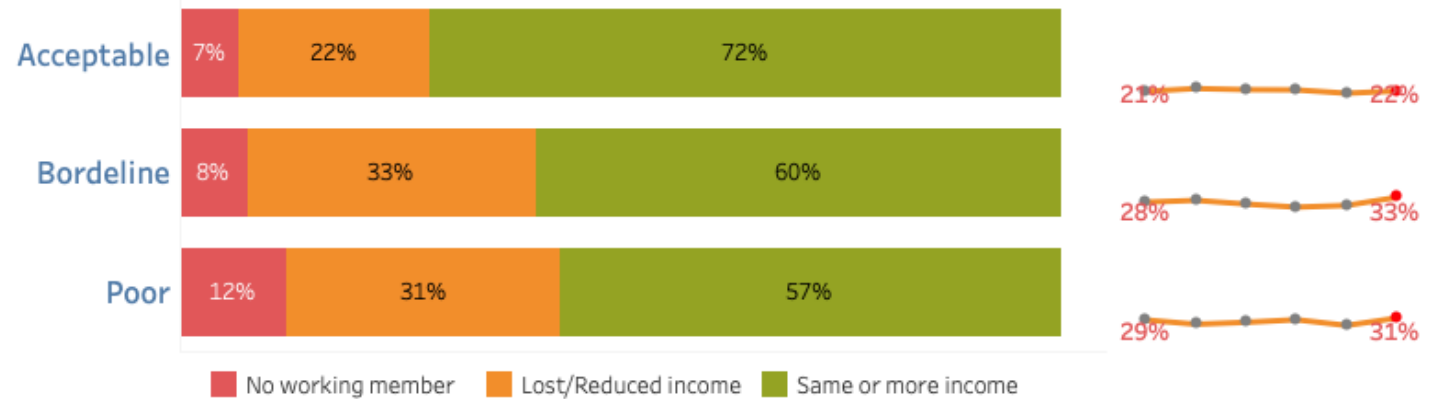
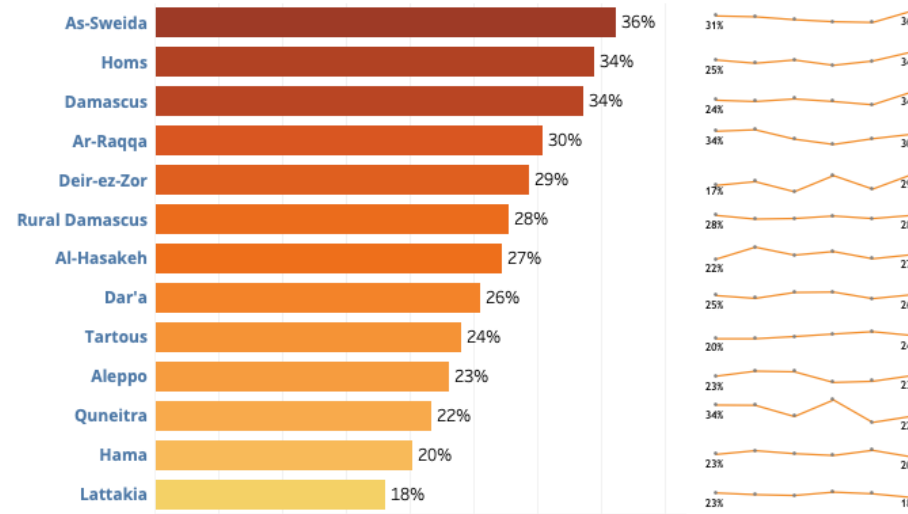


Fig10: Proportion of households who reported reduced or lost income by Governorate and trends over the last six months (Sep 2021—Feb 2022)



Map6: Percent of households reporting losing more than half of their income sources in January 2022

