



FOOD SECURITY

Food security implies that individuals have physical and economic access to enough quantities of safe and nutritious food at all times¹. This chapter assessed the food security and the extent of food insecurity of Syrian refugee households and disaggregated the results by governorate and district.

KEY FINDINGS

- Food security for Syrian refugees witnessed drastic deterioration in 2020. The share of households who were severely and moderately food insecure increased significantly by 20 percent (from 29 percent in 2019 to 49 percent in 2020).

Nearly one out of two households was food insecure.

- Food insecurity was the highest in the North (70%) and the South (67%).

- More than 90% of the households that were food insecure (moderately and severely) were living below SMEB.

- Food insecurity has increased in the three pillars of food security: food consumption, livelihood-based coping strategies and share of expenditures. The share of expenditures on food highly increased in 2020, following economic vulnerability rise.

- Food expenditure's share from the total expenditure increased from 44 percent in 2019 to 48 percent in 2020; additionally, the share of households spending that is less than 50% of their total expenditures on food has decreased from 64% to 54.5%, which indicated further economic vulnerability.

- Women-headed households were more food insecure than men-headed households (55% vs. 48% respectively). This followed a similar trend in comparison to 2019, where 35% of women-headed households were food insecure, compared to 28% of men-headed ones.

- Households living in non-residential shelters (56%) were more food insecure than those living in non-permanent shelters (54%) or residential shelters (46%).

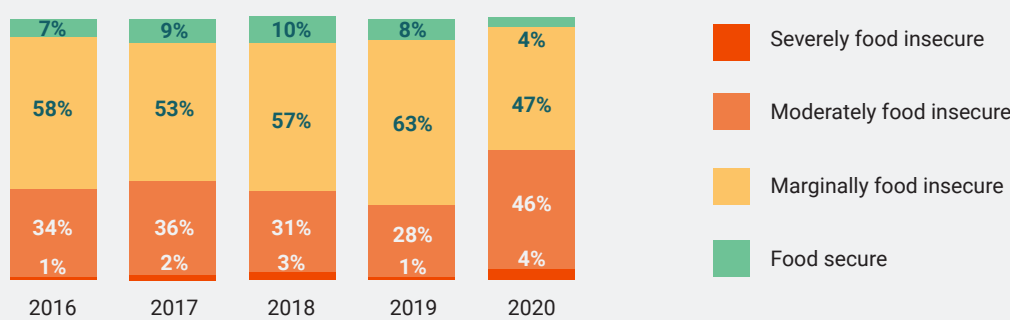
FOOD SECURITY METHODOLOGY

The food security status of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is measured using a composite indicator that combines three dimensions of food security:

- current consumption as determined by the food consumption score;
- food as a share of total expenditure reflecting economic vulnerability; and
- asset depletion strategies (livelihood coping strategies) which indicate the long-term coping capacity of livelihoods to shocks.

In order to compare the 2020 data with trends of the previous years, the methodology used to classify households was replicated as in previous VASyR assessments and detailed in Annex 28. Based on this methodology, households were classified into four categories: food secure, marginally food insecure, moderately food insecure and severely food insecure. Table 1 described the characteristics of the four categories.

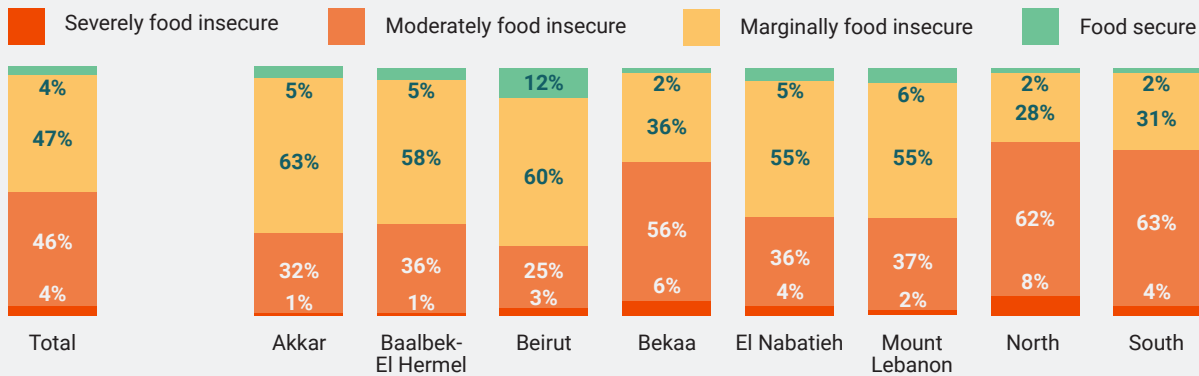
Figure 1: Food insecurity trends 2016-2020



Overall, food insecurity among Syrian refugee households has significantly increased by 1.7 times compared to 2019. Households witnessed 18% increase in moderately food insecure households and 3% increase in severely food insecure ones. These reported levels were the highest in comparison to previous years. Additionally, the share of food secure households has decreased by twofold, from 8% in 2019 to 4% in 2020 – the lowest level of food security reported over the past five years. Moreover, the share of marginally food insecure households has decreased by 16%.

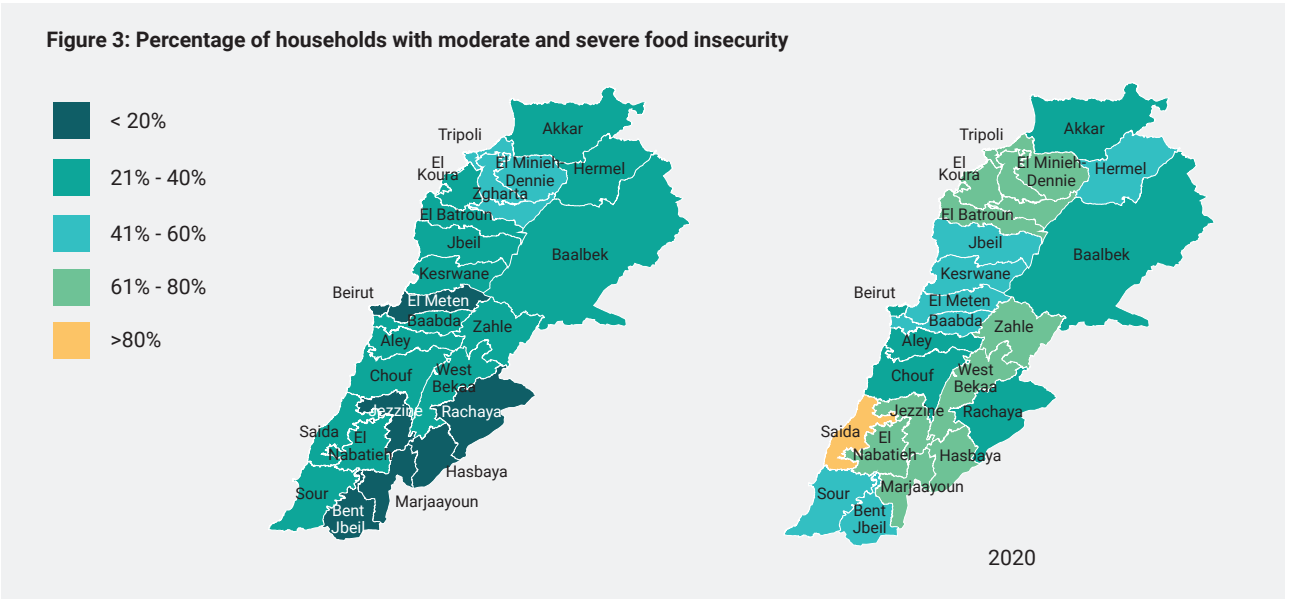
Lebanon witnessed a multi-faceted crisis starting with public unrest, economic slump, COVID-19 and Beirut Blast. The food insecurity results were in line with the overall situation. Almost 90% of the Syrian refugees were living below the SMEB with 34% increase compared to 2019, as well as 10% increase in the mean debt per household for households with debt, 7.3% decrease in households with working members and 7% decrease in average weekly per capita income for households with working members.

Figure 2: Food insecurity by governorate



Food insecurity has increased in all governorates. It almost doubled in the North (from 38% in 2019 to 70% in 2020), the Bekaa (from 26% in 2019 to 62% in 2020) and El Nabatieh (from 18% in 2019 to 40% in 2020), and almost tripled in the South governorate (from 23% in 2019 to 67% in 2020). Similar to 2018 and 2019, female-headed households were more food insecure than male-headed ones (55%

vs. 48%). Additionally, households living below the SMEB were the most food insecure (51%) compared to other S/MEB categories. Households living in non-residential shelters were more food insecure (56%) than those living in non-permanent (54%) and residential (46%) shelters; this followed the previous year trend.

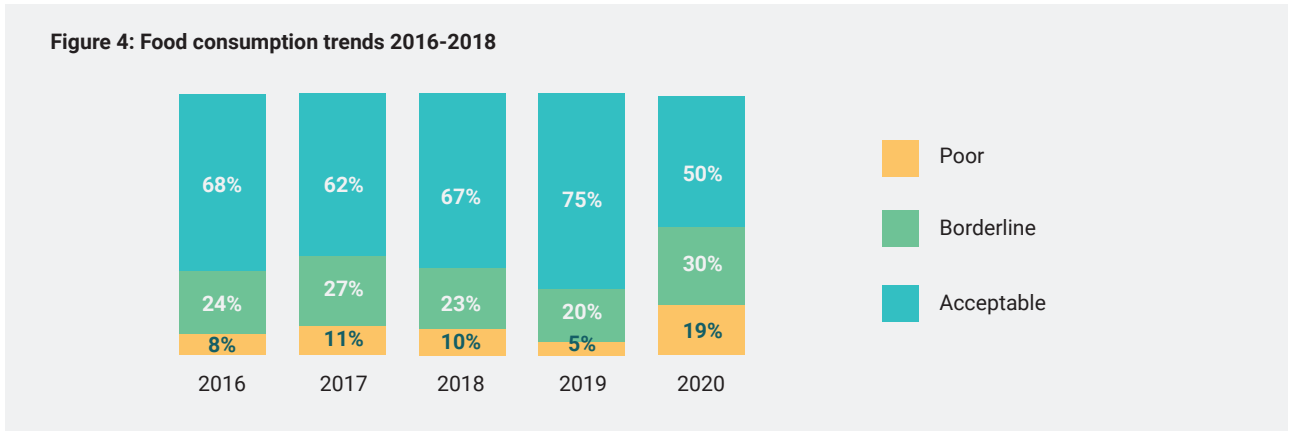


At a district level, the highest food insecurity level was reported in Saida at 83% (up by 60%) followed by Zgharta at 74% (up by 26%), El Minieh-Dennie at 72% (up by 31%) and Bcharre at 70% (up by 22%). The lowest food insecurity level was reported in Beirut at 28%, up by 9% compared to 2019.

COMPONENTS OF FOOD SECURITY

FOOD CONSUMPTION

As shown in the below figure, the level of poor and borderline food consumption (49%) was the highest and the level of acceptable food consumption (50%) was the lowest over the past years. This implies that the multi-pronged crisis that the country witnessed last year led to considerable deterioration in the food consumption level of Syrian refugees.



LIVELIHOOD COPING STRATEGIES TRENDS

Thirty-eight percent of Syrian refugee households were applying stress coping strategies, the highest level over the past years and up from 30% in 2019. Stress coping strategies included selling household goods, spending savings, buying food on credit and borrowing money. The share of households applying emergency coping strategies

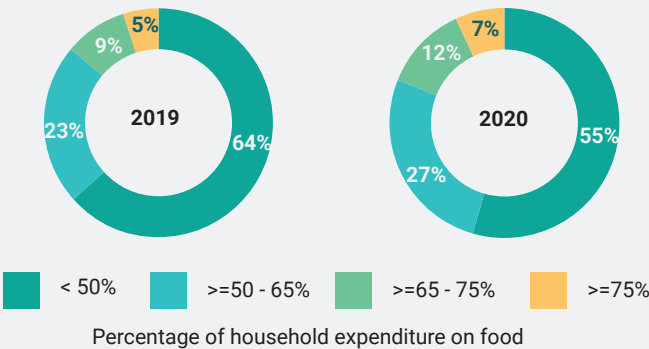
slightly decreased by 1.7% only between 2019 and 2020. Emergency coping strategies included begging, selling of house or land in Syria, accepting high risk, illegal and socially degrading activities, as well as involving school children in income generation.

FOOD AS A SHARE OF HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES

Forty-five point five percent of Syrian refugee households were spending more than 50% of their expenditure on food, up by 9.3% compared to 2019. The higher the share of household expenditure on food, the more they were economically

vulnerable; hence, the year 2020 figure (45.5%) showed that households were getting more economically vulnerable. Therefore, their food security was also deteriorating.

Figure 5: Food expenditure share trends 2019 - 2020



CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOD INSECURITY

The following section studied the characteristics of the food insecure households, especially in terms of sector indicators.

S/MEB: Ninety-eight point five percent of severely food insecure households were below the SMEB level, up by 24% compared to 2019. Moreover, 92% of moderately food insecure households were below the SMEB level.

Debt: Sixty-two point seven percent of severely food insecure households had debt greater than LBP 900,000, while 66.6% of moderately food insecure households were borrowing more than LBP 900,000. The majority of severely and moderately food insecure households were borrowing money to buy food at 95.9% and 94.3% respectively. The second reason to borrow money was to pay rent.

Expenditure level: The level of expenditure per capita among severely food insecure households was one of the lowest in comparison to the other groups, at LBP 117,705. The expenditure levels for all food security groups were overall higher than those in 2019, indicating the high

inflation in prices that took place in 2020. Moreover, severely food insecure households were the most economically vulnerable households among all groups.

Income Sources: Severely food insecure households were relying the most on informal credit/debt in comparison to other food security groups. They were the group to rely most on WFP food e-cards.

Working members: Food secure households had the highest level of working members at 67.4% while severely and moderately food insecure households had the lowest levels of working members (49.2% and 47.4% respectively) compared to the other food security groups.

Demographics: Twenty-two percent of moderately food insecure households were female-headed, similar to the figure reported in 2019. 15% of severely food insecure households were female-headed, down by 10% compared to 2019 (25%).

Table 1: Food security by sectors indicators

	Food Secure	Marginally Food Insecure	Moderately Food Insecure	Severely Food Insecure
S/MEB Categories				
>=125% MEB (>=)	13.2%	5.6%	3.9%	1.5%
MEB- 125% MEB (LBP 350,200- LBP 437,750)	6.6%	4.5%	2.6%	0.0%
SMEB-MEB (LBP 308,722-LBP 350,200)	7.9%	3.5%	1.7%	0.0%
< SMEB (LBP 308,722)	72.2%	86.4%	91.8%	98.5%
Debt and Borrowing				
Debt group: >LBP 900,000	31.9%	61.8%	66.6%	62.7%
Reason for borrowing:				
to buy food	87.0%	92.0%	94.3%	95.9%
to pay rent	36.3%	45.2%	50.0%	50.9%
to buy medicine	30.2%	32.5%	37.9%	12.4%
to cover health expenses	22.2%	21.1%	28.7%	13.2%
to repay debt	0.9%	2.7%	6.8%	2.8%
Total expenditure per capita	LBP 312,723	LBP 219,582	LBP 173,584	LBP 117,705
Main income source				
Credit/debt	7.7%	12.6%	20.6%	31.8%
WFP E-cards FOOD	15.4%	20.3%	21.4%	23.3%
Construction	12.0%	9.4%	10.8%	4.6%
ATM cards used in ATM machines from UN or humanitarian organizations	13.9%	19.2%	12.7%	0.5%
Other services: hotel, restaurant, transport, personal services	8.3%	4.8%	5.2%	13.3%
Agriculture	5.4%	7.4%	9.0%	10.8%
Working members				
Households with working members	67.4%	55.4%	47.4%	49.2%
Demographics				
Gender of the household head				
Women	15.1%	16.5%	21.6%	14.9%
Men	84.9%	83.5%	78.4%	85.1%

Annex 18: Food security classification

The Food security classification is based on the combination of three main indicators: food consumption score, livelihood coping strategies and expenditure share.

- The food consumption score measures the current food consumption. Households are grouped based on the variety and frequency of foods consumed as indicated in the FCS Annex. The FCS is grouped into three categories: acceptable, borderline and poor. Another group is created for the classification of food security combining those who have an acceptable food consumption and who applied any food related coping strategies.
- Share of food expenditures measures the economic

vulnerability. Households are categorized based on the share of total expenditures directed to food. Households which allocate more of their expenditures on food are more likely to be food insecure.

- The livelihood coping strategies measures sustainability of livelihoods. Households are categorized based on severity of livelihood coping strategies. Households which didn't apply any coping strategies fall under the category of food security.

Food security classification include four categories: food secure, marginally food insecure, moderately food insecure and severely food insecure

	Food Secure	Marginally Food Insecure	Moderately Food Insecure	Severely Food Insecure
Food consumption	Acceptable	Acceptable with food-related coping strategie	Borderline	Poor
Food expenditure share	<50%	50-65%	65-75%	>75%
Coping strategies	Household not adopting coping strategies	Stress coping strategies		Emergency coping strategies

The table below describes the combination of components for the FS classification.

Food Security Categories	Description
Food Secure	Able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical coping strategies.
Marginally Food Insecure	Has minimally adequate food consumption without engaging in irreversible coping strategies; unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures.
Moderately Food Insecure	Has significant food consumption gaps OR able to meet minimum food needs only with irreversible coping strategies.
Severely Food Insecure	Has extreme food consumption gaps OR has extreme loss of productive assets that will lead to food consumption gaps or worse.

The steps to compute food security categories are the following:

1. Convert the three food security indicators into four-point scale indices:
 - Coping strategy index
 - Food expenditure share index
 - Food consumption score index that was classified into four groups as follows:

FCS Groups	Score
Acceptable	1
Acceptable with food-related coping strategies	2
Borderline	3
Poor	4

2. Calculate the coping capacity indicator by computing a rounded mean for the coping strategies index and the food expenditures share index;

3. Calculate the 'Food security classification' by computing a rounded mean of the household's FCS score index and the Coping Capacities indicator. This variable will have a value from 1 to 4 and represents the household's overall food security outcome.

The FS methodology used in the VASyR slightly differs from the WFP CARI methodology. This choice was necessary in order to maintain consistency and comparativeness along the different VASyRs over the past six years while the CARI was developed and finalized only in 2015. The main difference in the two methods in 2019 consists in:

- The aggregation of food consumption and food related coping strategies in the second food consumption group as shown in the below table.

WFP advocates that the methodology should remain the same to ensure the comparability of results over the years.

As for the nomenclature for the food security categories as mentioned in the VASyR 2018 report; the VASyR 2019 is consistent with the WFP corporate definitions nomenclature by replacing mildly food insecure by marginally food insecure.

Please find below the link for more information about food security classification in CARI:

<http://www.wfp.org/content/consolidated-approach-reporting-indicators-food-security-cari-guidelines>

		Food Secure	Marginally Food Insecure	Moderately Food Insecure	Severely Food Insecure
CARI	Food consumption	Acceptable		Borderline	Poor
VASyR		Acceptable	Acceptable with food-related coping strategies	Borderline	Poor

Annex 19: Food security classification

Food Security Classification				
	Food Secure	Marginally Food Insecure	Moderately Food Insecure	Severely Food Insecure
	ROW N %	ROW N %	ROW N %	ROW N %
Total	4.2%	46.7%	45.5%	3.5%
Governorate				
Akkar	4.8%	62.6%	31.9%	0.6%
Baalbek-El Hermel	5.5%	57.9%	35.9%	0.7%
Beirut	11.8%	60.2%	25.2%	2.8%
Bekaa	1.8%	36.2%	56.3%	5.6%
El Nabatieh	4.9%	55.1%	35.8%	4.2%
Mount Lebanon	5.8%	54.6%	37.6%	2.0%
North	2.2%	28.2%	62.1%	7.6%
South	2.0%	30.8%	63.3%	3.8%
MEB/SMEB categories				
>=125% MEB (>=)	11.2%	52.3%	35.5%	1.1%
MEB- 125% MEB (LBP 350,200-437,750)	7.9%	59.0%	33.1%	.0%
SMEB-MEB (LBP 308,722-350,200)	12.0%	59.5%	28.4%	.0%
< SMEB (LBP 308,722)	3.4%	45.5%	47.1%	3.9%
Gender of Head of Household				
Female	3.0%	41.7%	52.7%	2.6%
Male	4.5%	47.9%	43.9%	3.7%
Shelter type				
Residential	4.9%	48.7%	43.1%	3.3%
Non-residential	2.8%	41.6%	50.4%	5.2%
Non-permanent	3.0%	43.4%	50.3%	3.3%