



FOOD SECURITY

This chapter assesses the food security status and vulnerability of Syrian refugee households residing in Lebanon. Food security implies that individuals always have physical and economic access to sufficient quantities of safe and nutritious food. In 2022, Lebanon's consumer price index (documenting the average change of prices) has increased by 1,066 per cent; food prices specifically have increased by 3,900 per cent since October 2019. Additionally, the Lebanese lira has continued to further devalue in 2022 and has lost more than 90 per cent of its value.

KEY FINDINGS

- More Syrian refugee households are falling into food insecurity in 2022, reaching 67 per cent, a drastic increase of 18 percentage points compared to food insecurity rates in 2021. Likewise, rates of severe food insecurity have doubled (from 3 per cent in 2021 to 6 per cent in 2022). The highest rates of moderately food insecure households were in Akkar (70 per cent), while North Lebanon hosted the highest proportion of severely food insecure households (10 per cent).
- All governorates reported an increase in food insecurity rates. Akkar and Baalbek-El Hermel witnessed the highest increases, both at 31 percentage points.
- A higher proportion of female-headed households (75 per cent) were food insecure compared to male-headed households (64 per cent).
- Similarly, food insecurity was highest among households in non-permanent shelters (82 per cent), followed by households in non-residential shelters (74 per cent). Households with no working members had a higher share of being food insecure (75 per cent) compared to households with at least one working member (62 per cent).
- A total of 69 per cent of households below the SMEB were food insecure, compared to 46 per cent among households above the SMEB.



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FOOD SECURITY

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

- FCS: reflecting current dietary consumption
- Food as a share of total expenditure: reflecting economic vulnerability
- Livelihood-based coping strategies: reflecting asset depletion strategies which indicate the long-term coping capacity of households to shocks

In order to compare the 2022 data with trends of previous years, the methodology used to classify households was replicated as in previous VaSyR assessments and detailed below. Based on this methodology, households were classified into four categories:

- food secure
- marginally food secure
- moderately food insecure
- severely food insecure

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

The FCS measures the current food consumption. Households are grouped based on the variety and frequency of foods consumed as indicated in the FCS index. 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.

Livelihood coping strategies measure the sustainability of livelihoods. Households are categorized based on severity of livelihood coping strategies.

Households which did not 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.

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

	Food secure	Marginally food insecure	Moderately food insecure	Severely food insecure
Food consumption	Acceptable	Acceptable with food-based coping strategies	Borderline	Poor
Food expenditure share	<50%	50–65%	65–75%	≥75%
Livelihood-based coping strategies	Household not adopting livelihood-based coping strategies	Stress coping strategies	Crisis coping strategies	Emergency coping strategies

The table below describes the combination of components for food security 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 marginally able to meet minimum food needs only with irreversible coping strategies.
Severely food insecure	Has extreme food consumption gaps OR has extreme loss of livelihood assets that will lead to food consumption gaps or worse.

The steps to compute the food security categories are the following:

1. Convert the three food security indicators into the following indices:

- Coping Strategy Index
- food expenditure share index
- FCS index, classified into four groups as follows:

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 index and the coping capacity indicator. This variable will have a value from 1 to 4 and represents the household's overall food security outcome.

FCS groups	Score
Acceptable	1
Acceptable with food-based coping strategies	2
Borderline	3
Poor	4

The food security methodology used in the VaSyR slightly differs from the WFP Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI) methodology. This choice was necessary in order to maintain consistency and comparativeness throughout the successive VASyRs over the past nine years, while CARI was developed and finalized only in 2015. The main difference between two methods since 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.

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

WFP recommends that the VASyR methodology should remain the same to ensure the comparability of results over the years. As for the nomenclature of the food security categories as mentioned in the previous edition of VASyR, the 2022 edition of VASyR is consistent with the WFP corporate definitions nomenclature, replacing "mildly food insecure" with "marginally food insecure".

In 2022, only 34 per cent of Syrian refugee households were considered food secure. A total of 67 per cent were either moderately or severely food insecure, equating to the highest food insecurity rates since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. Although rates of food insecurity were somewhat stable in 2020–2021, the rates sharply increased in 2022. This phenomenon reflected the changes in rates of food insecurity observed in 2019–2020. Compared to 2021, rates of severe food insecurity have doubled among the refugee population (6 per cent in 2022 versus 3 per cent in 2021). Likewise, rates of moderately food insecure households recorded an increase of 15 percentage points (61 per cent in 2022 versus 46 per cent in 2021).

More information about food security classification in CARI is available from the following link:

<https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000134704/download/>

Figure 1: Trends in food insecurity, 2017–2022

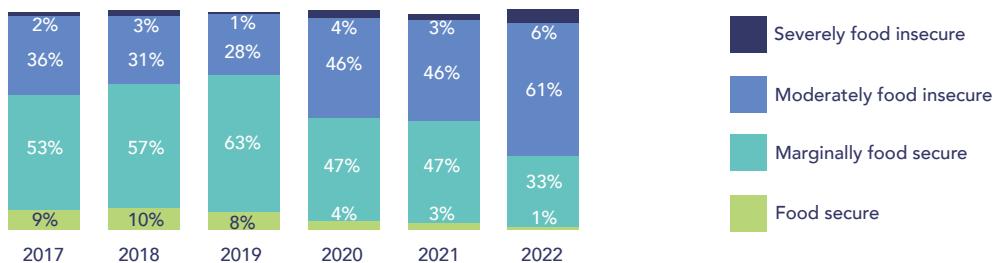
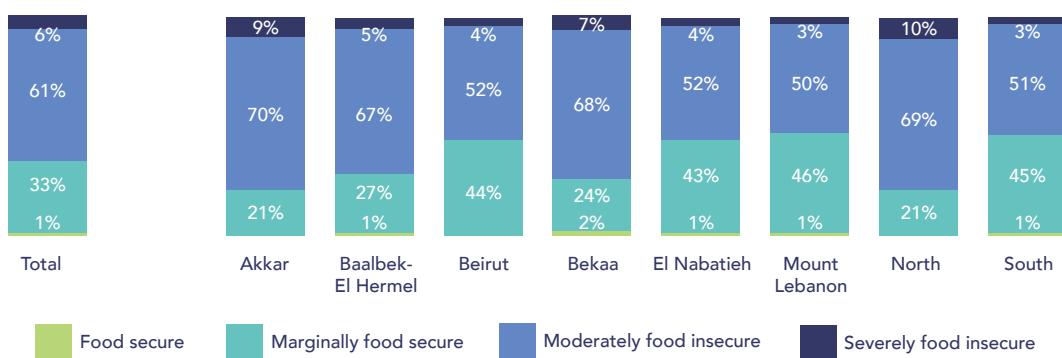


Figure 2: Food insecurity, by governorate



North Lebanon had the highest rates of severely food insecure households at 10 per cent, followed by Akkar at 9 per cent. Akkar also hosted the highest percentage of moderately food insecure households (70 per cent), followed by North Lebanon (69 per cent), Bekaa (68 per cent) and Baalbek-El Hermel (67 per cent). Increased rates of food insecurity compared to 2021 were observed in all governorates; Akkar (31 percentage-point increase) and Baalbek-El Hermel (28 percentage-point increase) witnessed the highest increases. Lesser increases were reported in El Nabatieh (6 percentage-point increase) and Mount Lebanon (3 percentage-point increase). The main increases in rates of severe food insecurity were observed in Akkar and North Lebanon (7 percentage-point increases).

Female-headed households had higher rates of moderate food insecurity (68 per cent versus 59 per cent) and severe food insecurity (7 per cent versus 5 per cent) than male-headed households.

The rates of food insecurity in residential shelters were slightly lower than the overall total rates (61 per cent in residential shelters versus 67 per cent overall). However, food insecurity was much higher in non-residential shelters (74 per cent) and non-permanent shelters (82 per cent). There were no observable differences in food insecurity rates among households receiving assistance versus those not receiving assistance (66 per cent). Households with no members with a disability, compared to households with at least

one member with a disability, had a 1 percentage-point higher rate of being food insecure (67 per cent versus 66 per cent). A higher proportion of households with no working member were found to be food insecure compared to households with at least one working member (75 per cent versus 62 per cent).

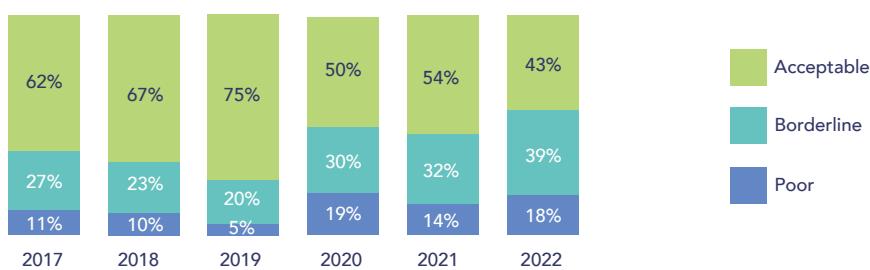
A total of 45 per cent of refugee households above the SMEB were food insecure, while the food insecurity rate among households below the SMEB was 69 per cent.

COMPONENTS OF FOOD SECURITY

Food consumption

Similar to food insecurity rates, the rate of inadequate food consumption (57 per cent) reported in 2022 is the highest in the past 6 years. Although Syrian refugees in Lebanon witnessed improved FCS from 2018 to 2019, food consumption among refugees has been deteriorating since then. FCSs in 2022, compared to 2021, show a 4 percentage-point increase in the rate of poor food consumption, and a 7 percentage-point increase in borderline food consumption, accompanied by an 11 percentage-point decrease in the rate of acceptable food consumption.

Figure 3: Trends in food consumption, 2017–2022



Trends in livelihood-based coping strategies

A household's coping capacity is measured by livelihood-based coping strategies, considered a food security determinant. Individuals and households keep on taking on more severe coping strategies to afford their essential needs until they have exhausted all their strategies. Coping strategies are directly linked to food insecurity, which is increased when individuals resort to more coping strategies.

In 2022, only 2 per cent of refugee households did not adopt any livelihood coping strategies, and 29 per cent applied stress coping strategies; these numbers are the lowest since 2018. However, 56 per cent of households adopted more severe crisis coping strategies and 13 per cent applied emergency coping strategies. These numbers indicate that refugees are shifting from stress coping strategies to more severe forms of crisis and emergency coping strategies.

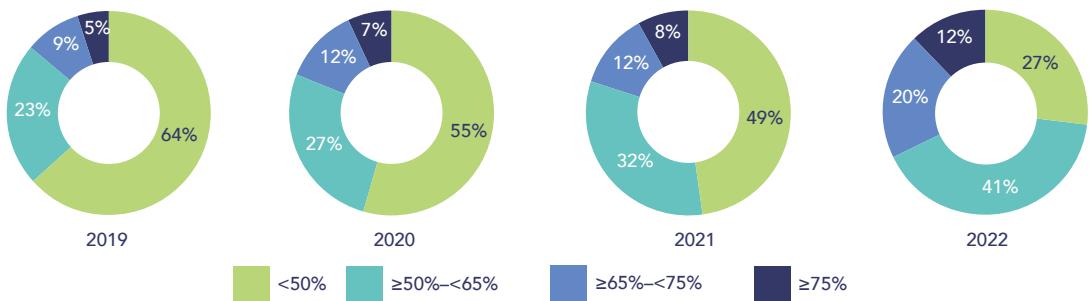
Food as a share of household expenditure

Food expenditure share is an indicator of economic vulnerability and food insecurity. The more a household spends on food compared to its overall expenditure, the more vulnerable it is considered. Food expenditure share is therefore directly proportional to food insecurity. Households that spend less than 50 per cent of their total expenditure on food are considered more food secure than those which spend more than 50 per cent of their expenditure on food.

In 2022, only 27 per cent of refugee households were spending less than 50 per cent of their expenditure on food. However, 20

per cent of households were spending 65–75 per cent of their expenditure on food, and 12 per cent were spending 75 per cent or more of their total expenditure on food. The increase in the percentage of households with a food expenditure share of 75 per cent and more has been increasing since 2019; however, the greatest increase was recorded this year (a 4 percentage-point increase from 2021 to 2022). These numbers indicate that more Syrian refugee households are becoming food insecure, given their food expenditure shares.

Figure 4: Percentage of household expenditure on food, 2017–2022



CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOD INSECURITY

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

SMEB/MEB: A total of 69 per cent of households below the SMEB were considered moderately and severely food insecure, compared to 46 per cent of households above the SMEB. Households above the SMEB had three times the rate of food security compared to those below the SMEB (3 per cent for households above the SMEB versus 1 per cent for households below the SMEB). Similarly, 68 per cent of households below the MEB were food insecure, compared to 47 per cent of households above the MEB.

Debt: The mean average debt among food secure households was LBP 5,488,521; among moderately food insecure households it was LBP 10,455,038; and among severely food insecure households, it was LBP 11,376,422. A total of 31 per cent of food secure households were debt free, compared to 5 per cent of moderately food secure households and 6 per cent of severely food insecure households. Marginally food secure households had the highest rate of having debt over LBP 20,000,000, at 11 per cent (versus 2 per cent in food secure households). Additionally, 93 per cent of households reported “buying food” as their main reason for taking on debt, followed by “paying rent” at 46 per cent.

Expenditure level: Food secure households had the highest mean total expenditures per household and per capita, LBP 10,211,396 and LBP 2,928,698 respectively. Severely food insecure households spent less than half the amount spent by food secure households (mean total expenditures per household and per capita of LBP 5,159,180 and LBP 1,130,311 respectively). In 2021, severely food insecure households had an average expenditure per capita of LBP 229,742; this vast difference between 2021 and 2022 was mainly due to inflation and the deterioration of the LBP exchange rate.

Income sources: Severely food insecure households had the

highest share of households relying on informal credit/debt at 12 per cent, and on E-cards used in WFP food shops as their main source of income at 34 per cent. Moderately food insecure households reported similar shares, 11 per cent of households relying on informal credit/debt, and 33 per cent of households relying on E-cards used in WFP food shops as their main source of income.

Working members: A total of 75 per cent of households with no working members were food insecure, and 62 per cent of households with at least one working member were food insecure. A total of 8 per cent of households with no working members were severely food insecure; this rate was halved (4 per cent) among households with at least one working member. This indicates that having a working member within the household may decrease the likelihood of food insecurity.

Demographics: Rates of food insecurity were higher among female-headed households compared to male-headed households. A total of 75 per cent of female-headed households were food insecure, compared to 64 per cent of male-headed households. Likewise, 7 per cent of female-headed households were severely food insecure, versus 5 per cent of male-headed households. Non-residential shelters had the highest share of households that are severely food insecure at 9 per cent, versus 7 per cent in non-permanent and 5 per cent in residential shelters respectively. However, non-permanent shelters had the highest share of refugees who were moderately food insecure at 75 per cent, versus 65 per cent in non-residential and 56 per cent in residential shelters respectively.

Annex 1: Food security classification table

	CARI_FES_updates				SMEB	
	Food secure	Marginally food secure	Moderately food insecure	Severely food insecure	Below SMEB	Above SMEB
Total	1%	33%	61%	6%	90%	10%
Governorate						
Akkar	0%	21%	70%	9%	96%	4%
Baalbek-El Hermel	1%	27%	67%	5%	94%	6%
Beirut	0%	44%	52%	4%	78%	22%
Bekaa	2%	24%	68%	7%	96%	4%
El Nabatieh	1%	43%	52%	4%	88%	12%
Mount Lebanon	1%	46%	50%	3%	84%	16%
North	0%	21%	69%	10%	90%	10%
South	1%	45%	51%	3%	81%	19%
Gender of the head of household						
Male	1%	35%	59%	5%	89%	11%
Female	1%	24%	68%	7%	93%	7%
Shelter type						
Residential	1%	38%	56%	5%	87%	13%
Non-residential	0%	26%	65%	9%	94%	6%
Non-permanent	0%	18%	75%	7%	96%	4%
HH receiving assistance						
No	2%	32%	60%	6%	66%	34%
Yes	1%	33%	61%	5%	94%	6%
At least one member with disability						
No	1%	32%	61%	6%	89%	11%
Yes	1%	33%	60%	5%	91%	9%
At least one working member						
No	1%	24%	67%	4%	94%	6%
Yes	1%	37%	58%		88%	12%