

# PROTECTION

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The deepening of Lebanon's ongoing crises has meant that high numbers of refugees, who were already struggling to meet their basic needs, have become even more vulnerable. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring findings for April-June 2021 saw protection risks reported at new highs. Record rates of families turned to harmful coping strategies and are becoming increasingly vulnerable to exploitation. The deteriorating situation has negative impacts across almost all key indicators, including access to health, food, and education.

*Indicators assessing the protection space of Syrian refugees in Lebanon through the VASyR are in relation to legal residency, civil documentation, and community safety. These indicators include residency status, birth registration, and marriage documentation, with a focus on births and marriages that occurred in Lebanon as well as inter- and intra-Syrian and Lebanese community relations. Indicators specific to child protection assessed through the VASyR include child labor, child marriage, and violent discipline.*

## Key findings

- A continuous decline in the rate of Syrian refugees with legal residency was noted, with only 16% of individuals aged 15 years and above holding legal residency (compared to 20% in 2020, 22% in 2019, and 27% in 2018). Similar to previous years, younger individuals (aged 25 years and below) had lower rates of legal residency as compared to their older counterparts. Across all age groups, a higher proportion of male respondents had legal residency compared to female respondents, with the exception of 15 to 19 years old where rates were almost the same (13% for female and 12% for male). A significantly higher proportion of male refugees reported obtaining their legal residency through sponsorship (42%) compared to female refugees (17%).
- Only 31% of births were registered at the Foreigners' Registry (28% in 2020 and 30% in 2019). The proportion of families that had the minimum level of documentation (doctor's or midwife's certificate) remained stable at 98%.
- The proportion of households that reported the discriminatory imposition of curfews only imposed on Syrians was 5%, with the highest rate of curfews reported in El Nabatieh (38%) followed by the South (10%).
- Almost one third of households (31%) reported perceived or real discrimination in the provision of aid as a key source of tensions between refugees and the host community. Competition for jobs was cited as the most common cause of tensions and increased slightly since 2020 (from 57% to 62%). Other factors cited included political differences (27%), cultural differences (25%), and scapegoating for the economic situation (22%).
- The percentage of children between 5 and 17 years old who were engaged in child labor in 2021 is 5.5%, an increase from 2020 (4.5%) and 2019 (2.5%).
- Similar to previous years, there was a large difference in the rates of child labor between boys (8%) and girls (2%).
- Twenty percent of girls aged 15 to 19 were married at the time of the survey. This shows a slight decrease from 2020 at 24% and 2019 at 27%. The South governorate reported the highest rate at 34%, compared to being the lowest governorate on early marriage in 2020.
- More than half (56%) the children aged between 1 and 14 were subjected to at least one form of violent discipline, an increase of 6 percentage points from last year. The rate of violent discipline did not differ between child and head of household's sex, child's age, and head of household's education levels. However, there was variation across regions and a 5 percentage point difference between children without a disability and children with a disability, at 56% and 61%, respectively.



## Legal residency

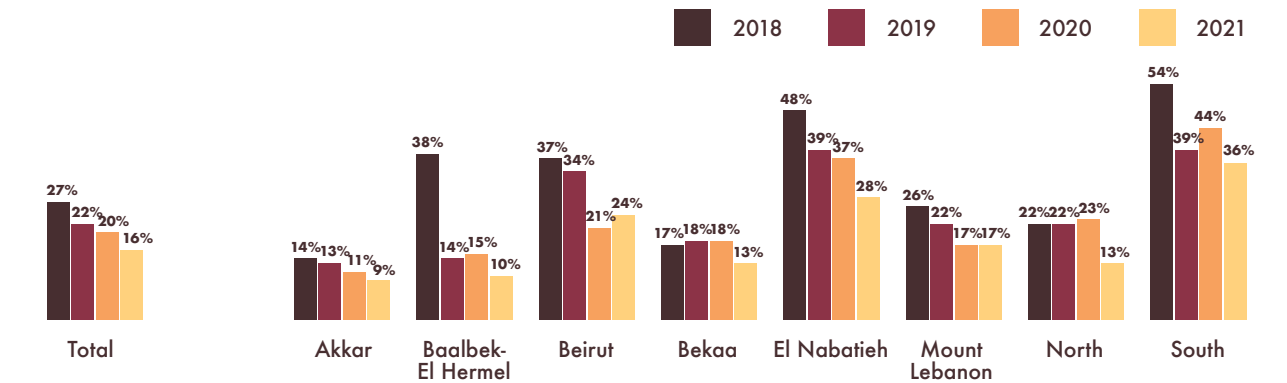
Based on the current regulations, Syrian refugees can renew their residency permits either on the basis of registration with UNHCR, through a pledge of responsibility by a local sponsor, courtesy permit (if the mother or wife is Lebanese), or through other categories such as a property ownership, tenancy, student visa, etc. Additionally, those who entered Lebanon legally as of 2015 had to do so based on one of the entry categories (such as tourism, medical visit, transit etc.) and could only renew their legal stay within the limitations set for the specific entry category. Each category has its own requirements, fees, and residency duration. In 2017, the residency fees were waived for Syrian refugees who registered with UNHCR prior to January 1, 2015 and who did not previously renew their legal residency based on categories such as tourism, sponsorship, property ownership, or tenancy. However, it is not possible to switch from a residency permit based on one of these categories to the UNHCR certificate residency permit.

An annual decline in the rate of legal residency continued to be noted. In 2021, only 16% of Syrian refugees above the age of 15 held legal residency permits (compared

to 20% in 2020, 22% in 2019, and 27% in 2018). Most notable, rates in the North declined from 23% in 2020 to 13% in 2021. Akkar continued to have the lowest rate with only 9% of individuals aged 15 years and above with legal residency, followed by Baalbek-El Hermel (10%) and Bekaa (13%). The highest rates of legal residency were found in the South (36%) and El Nabatieh (28%).

Three quarters of those without legal residency at the time of the survey also reported not having had a past residency based on sponsorship, tourism, lease agreement, property owner, or courtesy. It is important to note that 53% of surveyed refugees above 15 years old are eligible to benefit from legal residency based on the UNHCR certificate according to existing regulations. Of those who registered with UNHCR prior to 2015, around 72% are eligible to benefit from legal residency based on UNHCR registration. Among those without legal residency, 58% reported that they have never approached the General Security Office (GSO) to renew, 32% reported that they had approached the GSO prior to 2019, 5% in 2019, 4% in 2020, and only 1% in 2021.

Figure 1: Percentage of Syrian refugees aged 15 years or above holding legal residency permits, by governorate



Trends of legal residency by sex and age group were similar to previous years where the highest rates of legal residency were found among the 35 to 54 years old. Female refugees across all age groups (except between 15 and 19 years old) had lower rates of legal residency than male refugees. At the governorate level, in Beirut, the proportion of male refugees with legal residency was notably higher than that of female refugees (30% compared to 17%), which was also the case in the Bekaa (16% compared to 9%).

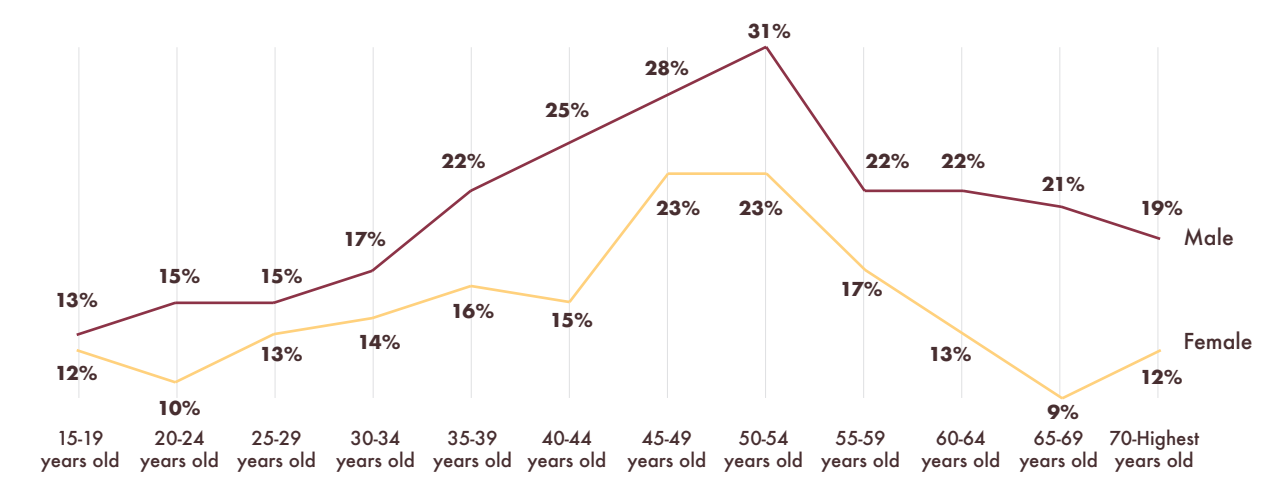
Households in non-permanent shelters had lower shares of legal residency (10% compared to 18% in residential and 16% in non-residential shelters). This is in line with the rates of legal residency in specific regions where living in non-permanent shelters is more common (Baalbek El-Hermel, Akkar, and Bekaa). Examining residency categories by shelter type, it is notable that among those living in residential shelters, the rates of having a courtesy residency was higher than in other shelter types (14% in residential shelters compared to 3% and 10% in non-residential and

non-permanent shelters respectively). Rates of sponsorship-based residency were similar across shelter types.

Examining rates by expenditure, individuals whose households had a higher monthly expenditure, also had slightly higher rates of legal residency (18% among households in the top quintile of expenditure compared to 13% among those in the bottom quintile). Rates of sponsorship-based residency decreased in line with decreasing expenditure: Among households in the bottom expenditure quintile, 24% of individuals with residency had sponsorship permits compared to 35% in the top expenditure quintile. Conversely, having a residency based on UNHCR certification was higher in the bottom quintile compared to those in the top quintile (65% compared to 51%).

Among the unemployed, the proportion of individuals that did not have legal residency was slightly higher than those that were employed (84% among the employed compared to 79% among the unemployed).

Figure 2: Percentage of Syrian refugees aged 15 or above holding legal residency permits, by sex and age group



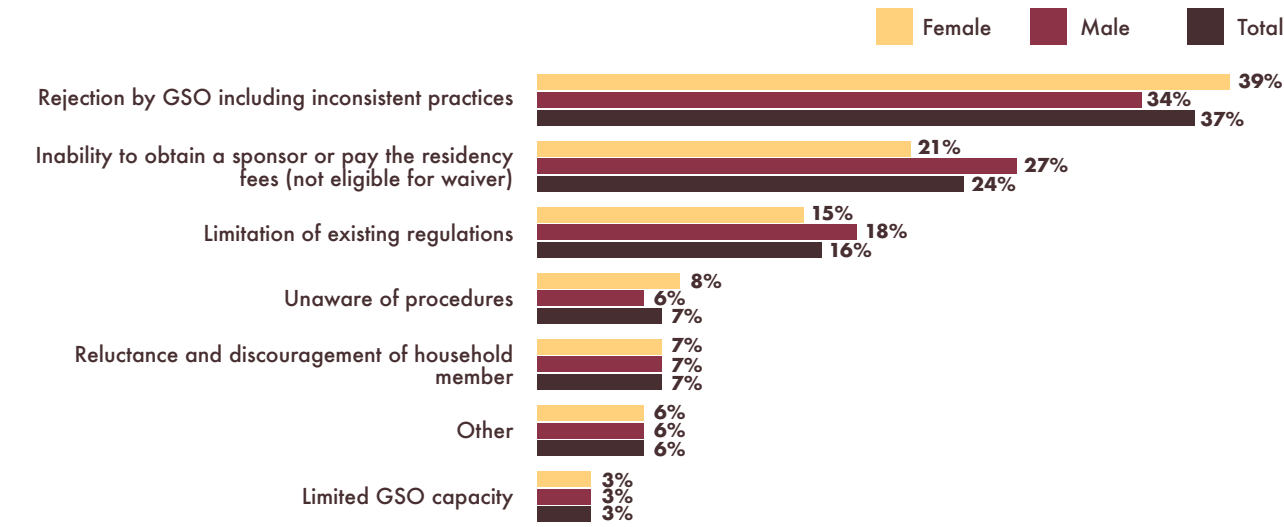
At household level, rates of legal residency also declined with only 8% of households reporting that all members held legal residency (11% in 2020, 10% in 2019, 17% in 2018, and 19% in 2017) and only 24% had at least one member with legal residency (30% in 2020, 33% in 2019, 38% in 2018, and 45% in 2017). Similar to trends noted at the individual level, a higher proportion of households in non-permanent shelters or with lower monthly expenditures had no members with legal residency. Among individuals 15 years and older with legal residency, 33% were enrolled in school. For those without legal residency, 17% were enrolled.

Similar to 2020, rejection by GSO, including inconsistent practices across GSO branches or per regulations, were the most commonly cited reasons (37%) for not having legal residency. Nearly a quarter (24%) of individuals cited the inability to obtain a sponsor or pay residency fees – the latter being slightly more commonly cited by male refugees than by female refugees (27% compared to 21%). Limitations of the

existing regulations, which included having an unrenewable and expired residency (11%) or lacking ID documents (5%), was cited by 16% of individuals as the reason for not having legal residency (up from 12% in 2020). Seven percent of individuals stated personal reluctance (lack of time, being sick) and discouragement (fearful of GSO, or rumors GSO did not renew permits) as the reason they did not apply for legal residency. Among individuals with a disability, 26% cited not being able to obtain a sponsor or pay the fees, 36% said due to GSO rejection and inconsistent practices, 10% were reluctant or discouraged to approach the GSO, and 10% cited having had a non-renewable and expired residency.

At the governorate level, being unaware of correct procedures to renew legal residency was significantly higher in Akkar (27%) than any other region, followed by Bekaa and El Nabatieh at 11% and 12% respectively. Individual reluctance was cited most commonly in the Bekaa at 12%, followed by Akkar (8%), and Mount Lebanon (8%).

Figure 3: Reasons for not holding legal residency permits, by sex



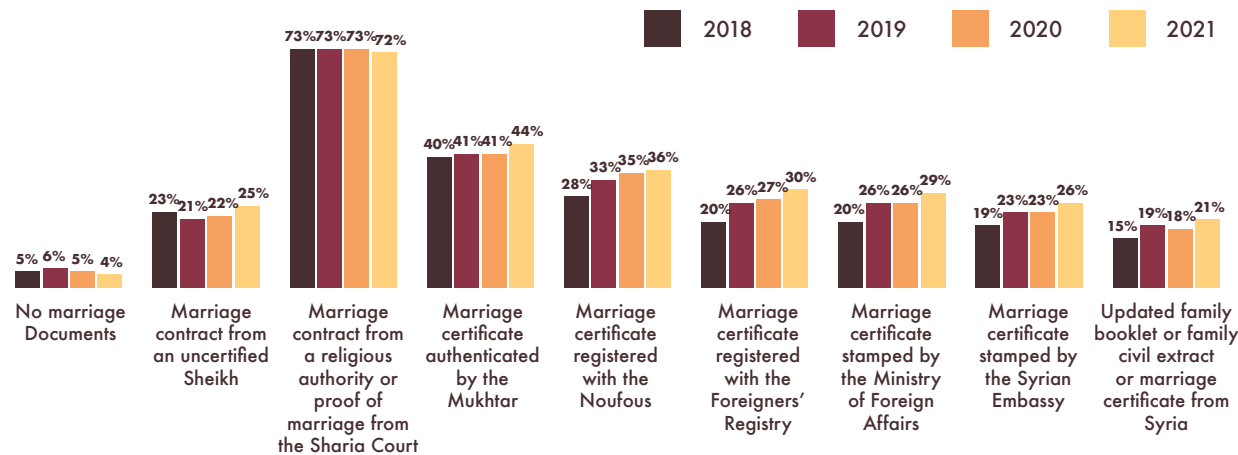
Similar to previous years, more than half of legal residencies (54%) were through UNHCR registration certificates, followed by sponsorship (31%) and courtesy (12%). UNHCR registration certificate permits were significantly more common among female refugees (69%) than male refugees (41%), with the opposite true for sponsorship (42% for male and 17% for female). The highest rates of courtesy permits were in the North (23%), Bekaa (21%), and Akkar (18%), while sponsorship permits were markedly higher in Beirut (81%) than in the rest of Lebanon.

## Marriage and birth registration

Recognizing the challenges faced by Syrian refugees in registering the birth of their children, the Government of Lebanon in past years adopted key policies and measures to address these difficulties. The policies include exemption from the procedure of late birth registration for children born between January 1, 2011 and February 9, 2019; a waiver of the requirement of legal stay to register the birth of Syrian children, and those of Palestinian refugees from Syria; a partial waiver (only one spouse) of legal stay to register marriages among Syrian nationals and

Palestinian refugees from Syria; and the facilitation of proof of marriage to register births by allowing Syrian parents married in Lebanon to present a marriage certificate executed in Lebanon instead of the family booklet or marriage certificate issued from Syria as previously required. Accordingly, Syrians married in Lebanon need to finalize the registration of their marriage in Lebanon to register the birth of their children. Syrians married outside of Lebanon need to present an official proof of marriage issued in Syria to register the birth of their children born in Lebanon.

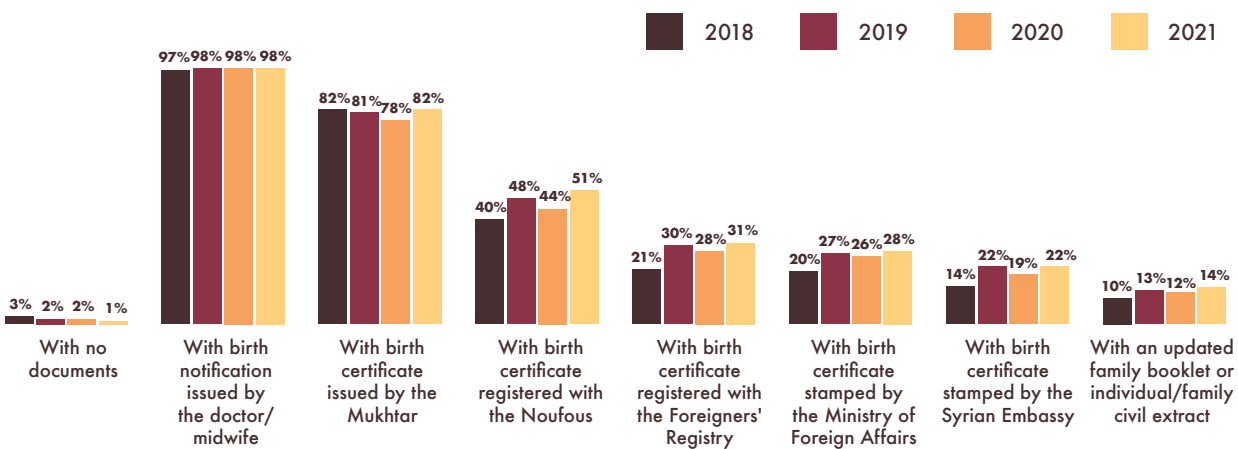
Figure 4: Percentage of Syrian refugees having completed the required steps of marriage registration, for marriages in Lebanon



Twenty-nine percent of the married respondents were married in Lebanon. The proportion of marriages with no legal documentation, including those without any documentation (4%) and those with documentation only from an uncertified Sheikh (25%), remained similar to 2020 at 29% (27% in 2019). Akkar had the highest proportion of undocumented marriages with 51% reporting

to have a certificate from an uncertified Sheikh and 4% having no documentation. Almost three quarters (72%) met the minimum requirement for documentation of either a marriage contract from a religious authority or proof of marriage from the Sharia Court. The proportion of marriages registered at the Foreigners' Registry increased slightly to 30% (27% in 2020 and 26% in 2019).

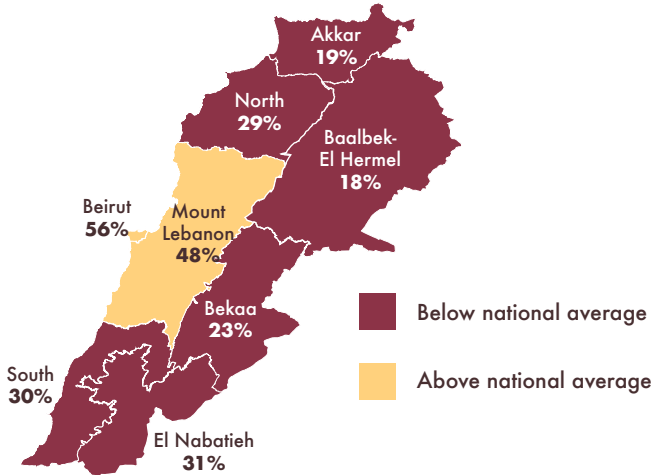
Figure 5: Cumulative percentage of highest-level birth registration document for Syrian children born in Lebanon. Children registered at the level of the Foreigners' Registry are considered as 'registered' under Lebanese law



Birth registration rates in 2021 returned to rates similar to 2019 after a slight drop in 2020 was noted. In 2021, 31% of births were registered at the Foreigners' Registry, compared to 28% in 2020 and 30% in 2019. Only 2% of births had no documentation with almost all births having the first step of the birth registration process completed (notification from a doctor or midwife). Nearly all (93%) births in Lebanon took place in the hospital, slightly down from 95% in 2020, with 4% taking place in another type of health care facility (1% in 2020) and 3% took place at home (5% in 2020).

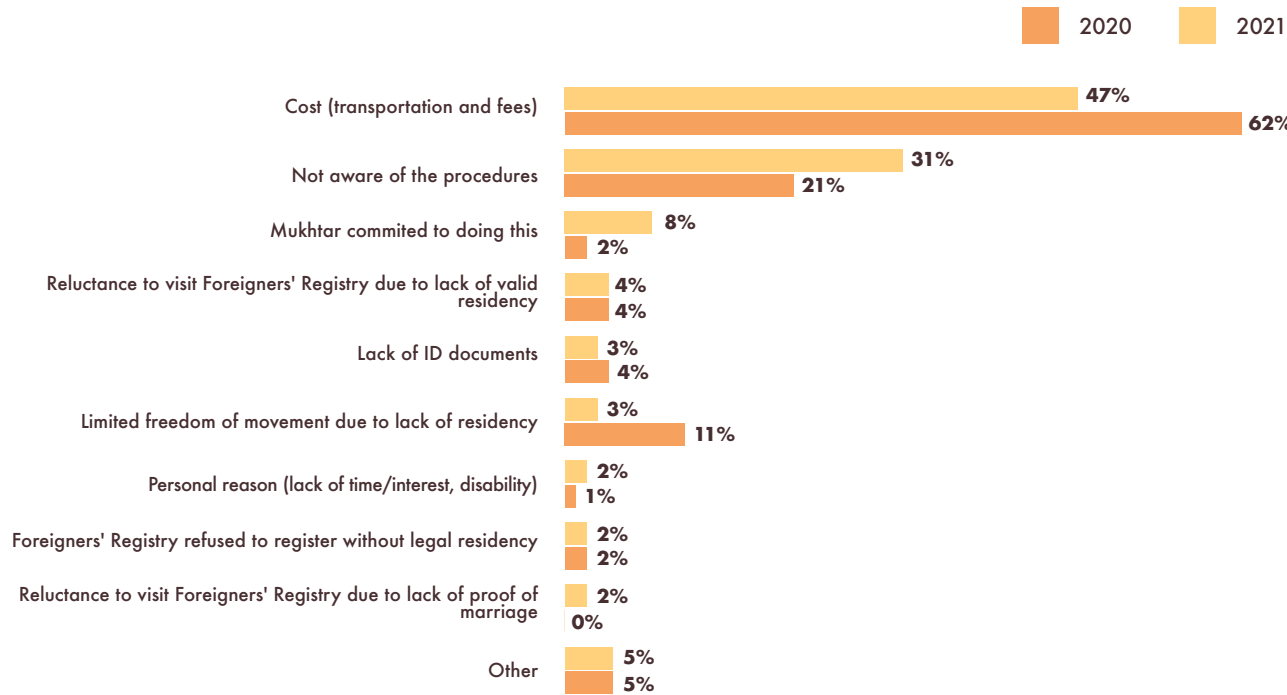
The highest rate of birth registration with the Foreigners' Registry are among families living in Beirut (56%). While Akkar continued to be the governorate with the lowest rate of birth registration at the Foreigners' Registry (19%), a significant improvement was noted since 2020 (8%). No marked difference was noted in birth registration rates when comparing boys and girls (32% versus 30%). Similar to trends recorded in previous years, birth registration rates differed by shelter types. The lowest rate was found in non-permanent shelters (17%), followed by non-residential (19%) and residential shelters (39%).

Figure 6: Percentage of children born in Lebanon with births registered at the Foreigners' Registry, by governorate



With regards to barriers to birth registration, the proportion of respondents that cited not being aware of procedures to register their child with the Foreigners' Registry (among those registered with the *Noufous*) increased to 31% from 21% in 2020, while those citing cost decreased significantly (47% versus 62% in 2020). Citing that the *Mukhtar* would complete this step increased from 2% in 2020 to 8% in 2021 and citing limited movement due to illegal residency decreased (3% in 2021 versus 11% in 2020).

Figure 7: Reasons for not registering at the Foreigners' Registry among those who registered at the level of the *Noufous* but not beyond



## Safety and security

At the time of data collection, no COVID-19 lockdown measures were in place to restrict movement. Five percent of households reported that discriminatory curfews were enforced specifically where Syrians live and 4% cited curfews as a safety and security concern (a decrease from 11% in 2020). El Nabatieh had by far the largest proportion of

households reporting curfews at 38% followed by the South at 10%. Curfews were mainly imposed by the municipality (94%) followed by the local community (15%). The most common sanction imposed for breaching curfews was cited to be a verbal warning (86%), while 14% reported fines or verbal abuse.

Figure 8: Level of safety reported while walking around the area of residence, by sex

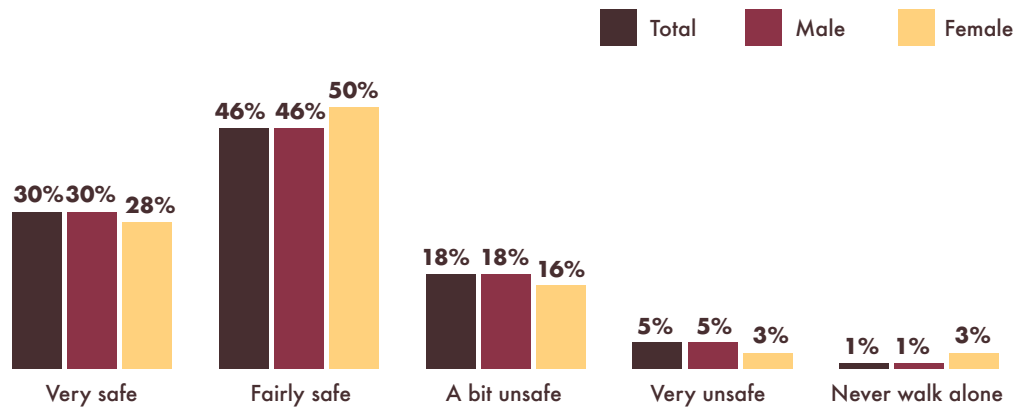
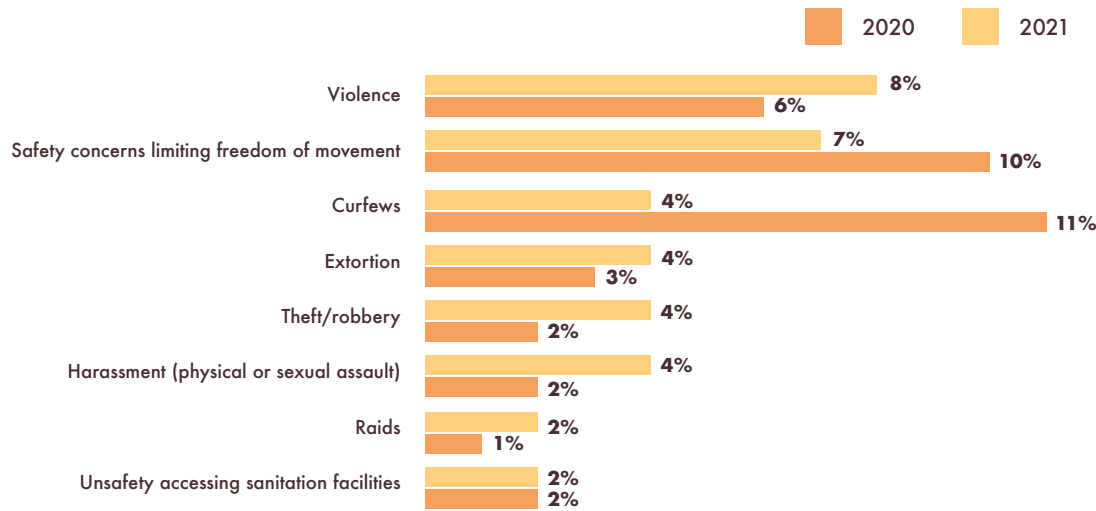


Figure 9: Percentage of households who experienced any of the following safety/security incidents during the previous three months



Between 2-4% of households reported that they worried about a household member being sexually exploited while accessing services such as housing, food, health services, legal services, and employment, which was similar to 2020. However, less than 1% reported having heard of actual incidents of sexual exploitation in the 3 months preceding the interview.

It is important to mention that the interviews for this survey were mostly conducted with the heads of families or other adult members. Confidential interviews with individual household members were not conducted, making incidents related to physical and sexual harassment or exploitation likely to be underreported.

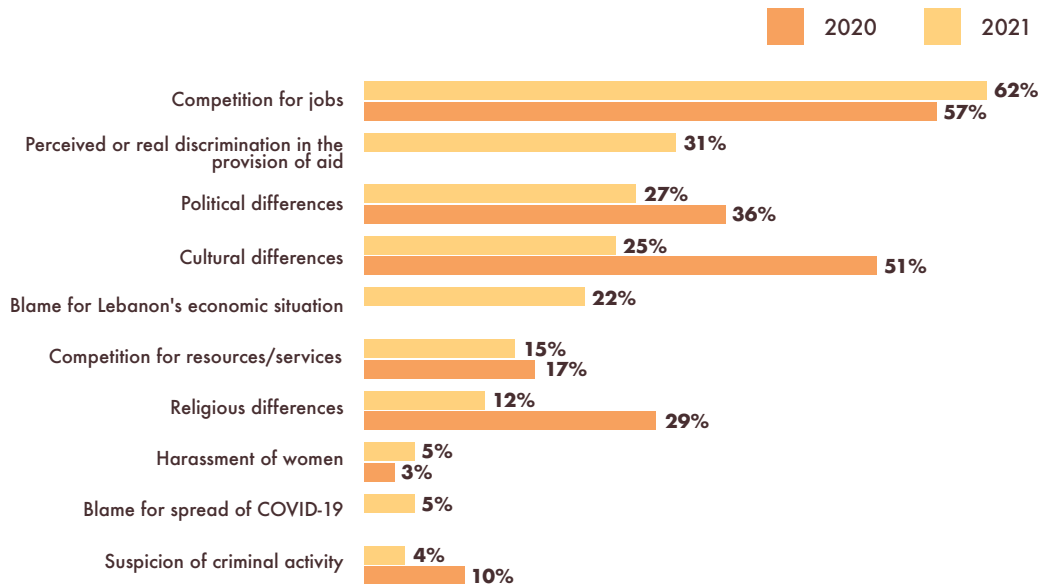
## Community relations

Most refugee households rated the relationship between refugees and host communities as positive (42%) or neutral (41%), 13% rated the relationship as very positive and only 4% rated it as negative or very negative.

The proportion of households citing competition for jobs as the most common source of community tensions (62%) was

up from 57% in 2020. Almost one third (31%) of households reported the perceived or real discrimination in the provision of aid a key source of tension. Political and cultural differences were also commonly cited (27% and 25% respectively). Other common sources included blaming refugees for Lebanon’s dire economic situation (22%), competition for resources (15%), and religious differences (15%).

Figure 10: Key issues cited by refugees as drivers of tensions between refugee and host communities



## Communication

Most refugees (88%) relied on SMS as their primary source to receive information related to refugee services while 8% reported primarily relying on hotlines and 2% on word of mouth from friends, neighbors, or relatives.

Most households (92%) reported having a mobile phone and 85% reported having a smartphone, of which 75% had an active data plan (compared to 66% in 2020). A significant increase was noted in the percentage of households with internet access at home (62% compared to 41% in 2020).

The majority of households (89%) reported using some form of social media (83% in 2020). The most common type was WhatsApp (89%) followed by Facebook (33%). Only 2% reported using Instagram.

# Child protection

## Child labor

**Child labor** is defined as a child having performed either economic activities or household chores during the last week for more than the age specific number of hours, or exposure to hazardous conditions during economic activity or household chores.

- **Economic activities:** aged 5-11: 1 hour or more; aged 12-14: 14 hours or more; aged 15-17: 43 hours or more
- **Household chores:** aged 5-14: 28 hours or more; aged 15-17: 43 hours or more
- **Hazardous conditions:** any exposure to the following conditions during economic activity or household chores: carrying heavy loads; working with dangerous tools; exposed to dust, fumes, or gas; exposed to extreme cold, heat or humidity; exposed to loud noise or vibration; required to work at heights; required to work with chemicals; exposed to other things bad for his/her health

Since 2019, the share of children aged 5-17 engaged in child labor witnessed an increase from 3% to 4.5% in 2020 and 5.5% in 2021. Additionally, and similar to previous years, child labor was persistently higher among boys (8%) than girls (2%).

On a regional level, El Nabatieh had the highest rate of child labor with 9%. Despite Baalbek-El Hermel having the lowest rate (4%), the region witnessed a great increase from 1% in 2019. Additionally, child labor was reported at a higher rate among female-headed households (8%) compared to male-headed ones (4%). There were no notable differences across expenditure quintiles.

Figure 11: Child labor (5 to 17 years old), by governorate

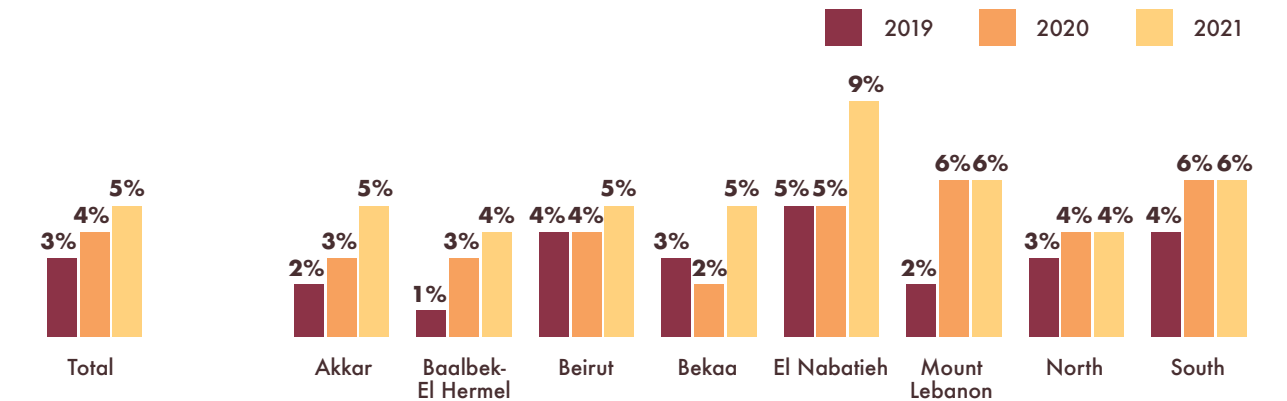
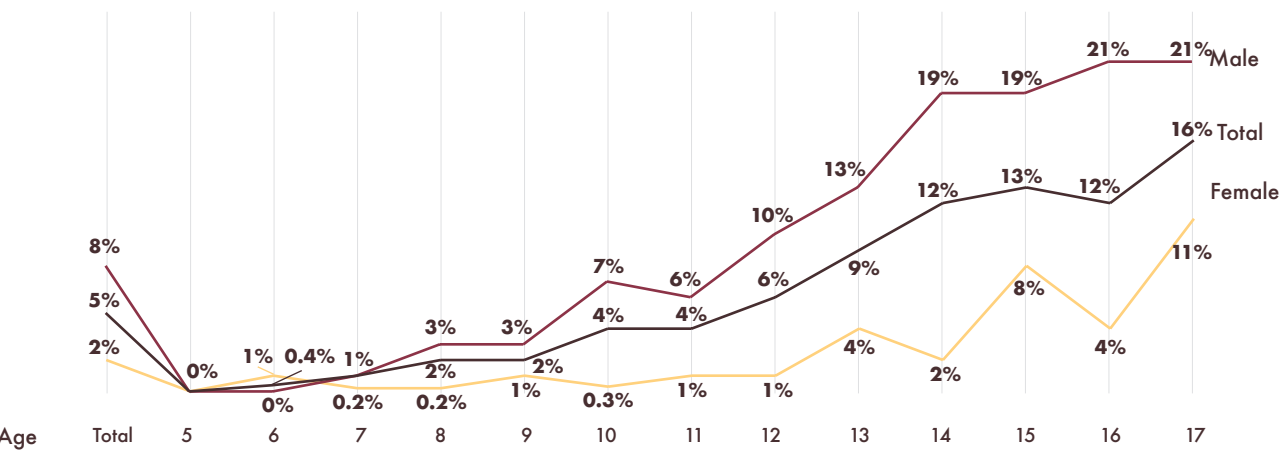


Figure 12 below shows that child labor increased drastically with age, as does the gap between boys and girls. The rate reached 16% among children aged 17 years of age, with boys engaged in child labor twice as much as girls, 21% and 11% respectively. Notably, only 4% of girls aged 16 were reported to be engaged in child labor compared to 21% of boys.

Figure 12: Child Labor by age (5 to 17 years old)





## Field insights: child labor

Field insights are based on the contextual knowledge of key actors in the field, as opposed to quantitative data. Insights were collected during analysis discussions around the results of the 2021 VASyR.

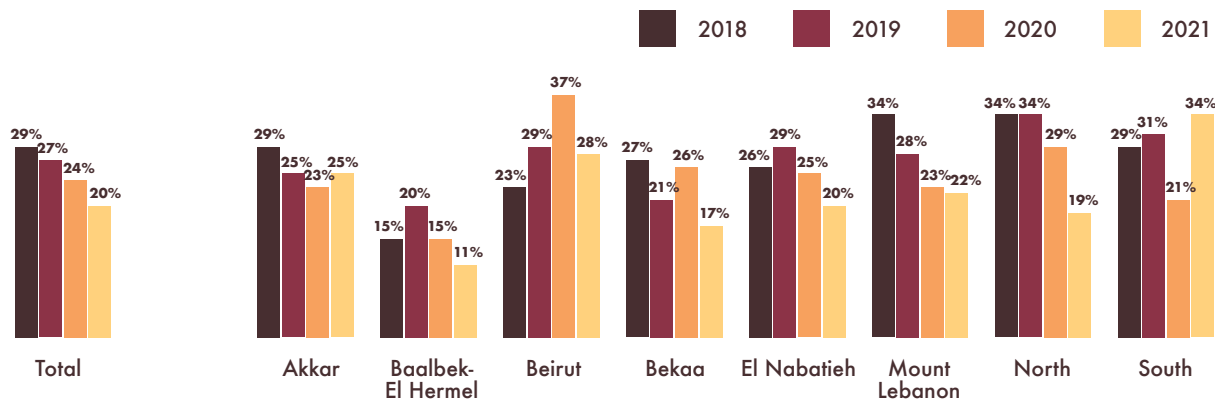
- Multiple factors explain the increase in children engaged in labor, such as high unemployment, increase in street-connected children, poverty, and poor shelter. Additionally, there were challenges in accessing schools and online education, and the deteriorating economic situation further increased the likelihood of a child engaging in labor.
- Child labor is consistently under-reported compared to observations on the field. This might be due to fear of losing humanitarian assistance.
- Regional variations in child labor are linked to seasonal work in agriculture, where child labor is the highest, for example in the South.

## Child marriage

Child marriage was measured as children between the ages of 15-19 who are currently married.

One in five girls aged 15 to 19 were married at the time of the survey, a decrease of 4 percentage points from 2020 (24%). The highest rate of child marriage was found in the South at 34%, with an increase in 10 percentage points from 2020, while the lowest rate was in Baalbek-El Hermel at 11%.

Figure 13: Children aged 15-19 who are married



## Field insights: child marriage

Field insights are based on the contextual knowledge of key actors in the field, as opposed to quantitative data. Insights were collected during analysis discussions around the results of the 2021 VASyR.

- The decrease in child marriage could be, at least partially, explained by the fact that the Sunni court raised the minimum age of marriage to 18 in April 2021.
- Child marriage is generally understood as a negative coping strategy that families resort to in times of financial hardship. This could explain the significant regional differences, with some governorates feeling the effect of the economic crisis more than others, such as the South.

Violent discipline

Violent discipline is any form of psychological, physical, or severe aggression.

**Psychological aggression:** if the child is shouted, yelled, or screamed at; called an insulting name (dumb, lazy, etc.).

**Any physical aggression:** shaking him/her; spanking, hitting, or slapping him/her on any part of the body.

**Severe physical aggression:** hitting or slapping in the face.

Non-violent disciplinary practices include: taking away privileges; explaining why a behavior is wrong; giving him/her something else to do.

Although 63% of parents reported utilizing positive and non-violent parenting methods, more than half of children (56%) aged between 1 and 14 had experienced at least one form of violent discipline, approximately the same as 2020 (57%). The same estimate increased 5 percentage points among children with disabilities.

Almost half the parents (47%) reported resorting to physical aggression and 41% to psychological aggression, while severe violence was reported at 4%. Both indicators showed no difference with regards to the sex of the child or the head of household, the age of the child, or the head of household’s highest level of education level reached.

The prevalence of children experiencing violent disciplinary methods varied between regions. The highest was reported in the Bekaa governorate (78%) and the lowest in Mount Lebanon (33%). There was no significant difference between girls (56%) and boys (57%).

Figure 14: Children aged 1 and 14 that have experienced at least one form of violent discipline

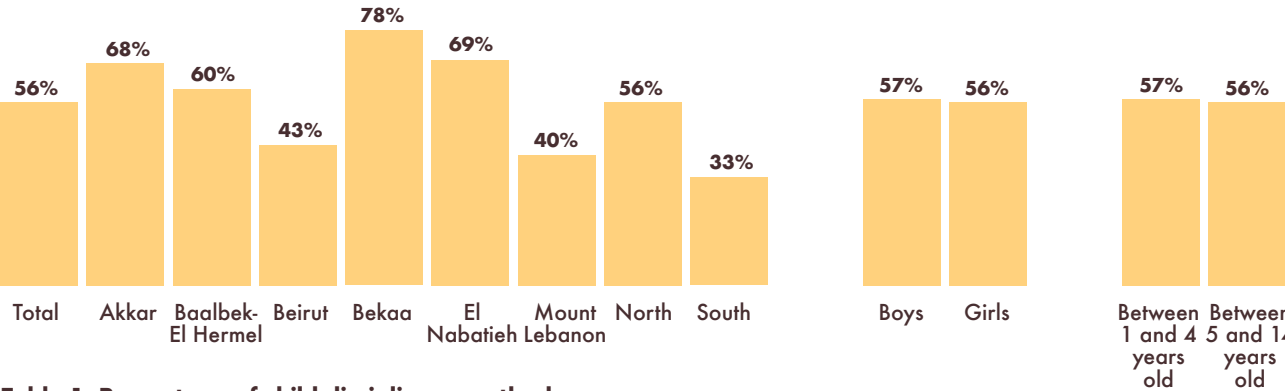


Table 1: Percentage of child disciplinary method

		Psychological aggression	Any physical aggression	Severe aggression	Only non-violent	Any violent disciplinary method
Total		47%	41%	4%	63%	56%
Governorate	Akkar	55%	53%	7%	78%	68%
	Baalbek-El Hermel	44%	44%	1%	80%	60%
	Beirut	30%	35%	3%	49%	43%
	Bekaa	70%	53%	8%	82%	78%
	El Nabatieh	62%	58%	8%	81%	69%
	Mount Lebanon	33%	27%	2%	35%	40%
	North	44%	43%	3%	60%	56%
	South	24%	24%	1%	65%	33%
Sex of child	Boy	48%	42%	4%	63%	57%
	Girl	46%	40%	4%	63%	56%
Age groups	Between 1 and 4 years old	46%	42%	4%	63%	57%
	Between 5 and 14 years old	47%	41%	4%	63%	56%
Disability status	No	47%	41%	4%	63%	56%
	Yes	53%	47%	6%	67%	61%
Sex of head of household	Man	47%	41%	4%	63%	56%
	Woman	47%	42%	6%	62%	58%



With regards to the social norms around using violent disciplinary methods, only 9% of caregivers reported community expectations to use such methods to teach children behaviors. This finding varied greatly across regions, being highest in the North (21%) and lowest in Baalbek-El Hermel (2%). As for being judged for using violent methods on their children, 8 out of 10 caregivers believed that they would not be judged by their community for disciplining their child using violent measures.

	Percentage of parents who felt community expectations to teach children behaviors through violent disciplinary methods.	Percentage of parents who did not believe they would be judged by their community for disciplining their child using violent measures.
Total	9%	78%
Akkar	13%	77%
Baalbek-El Hermel	2%	69%
Beirut	3%	81%
Bekaa	7%	89%
El Nabatieh	16%	68%
Mount Lebanon	2%	78%
North	21%	76%
South	17%	68%

Annex 1: Legal residency and birth registration

	Legal residency			Birth registration	Reported key issues that drive community tensions							
	Proportion of individuals (above 15 years old) with legal residency	Households with all members having legal residency	Households with at least one member having legal residency	Households with no members having legal residency	Births that occurred in Lebanon and registered with the Foreigners' Registry	Competition for jobs	Competition for resources/ services	Political differences	Religious differences	Cultural differences	Perceived or real discrimination in the provision of Aid	Escape-goat-ing for economic situation
Total	16%	8%	24%	76%	31%	62%	15%	27%	12%	25%	31%	22%
<b>Governorate</b>												
Akkar	9%	4%	16%	84%	19%	24%	47%	6%	6%	12%	18%	6%
Baalbek-El Hermel	10%	5%	17%	83%	18%	64%	0%	36%	4%	4%	4%	64%
Beirut	24%	14%	34%	66%	56%	79%	8%	8%	0%	33%	29%	17%
Bekaa	13%	4%	21%	79%	23%	31%	3%	2%	0%	3%	22%	78%
El Nabatieh	28%	17%	42%	58%	31%	88%	10%	14%	17%	7%	16%	3%
Mount Lebanon	17%	10%	22%	78%	48%	72%	16%	35%	10%	27%	35%	18%
North	13%	7%	22%	78%	29%	52%	21%	22%	8%	32%	40%	4%
South	36%	21%	50%	50%	30%	40%	0%	46%	48%	58%	44%	31%
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Gender of the head of household</b>			<b>Gender</b>	<b>Gender of the head of household</b>						
Female	14%	8%	16%	84%	30%	61%	0%	5%	15%	32%	36%	16%
Male	19%	8%	25%	75%	32%	62%	18%	31%	12%	24%	30%	22%
<b>Shelter type</b>												
Residential	18%	10%	26%	74%	39%	64%	15%	31%	12%	24%	30%	21%
Non-residential	16%	9%	24%	76%	19%	71%	14%	17%	22%	40%	50%	7%
Non-permanent	10%	4%	17%	83%	17%	31%	21%	2%	7%	15%	13%	47%