

Protection Monitoring Survey Findings

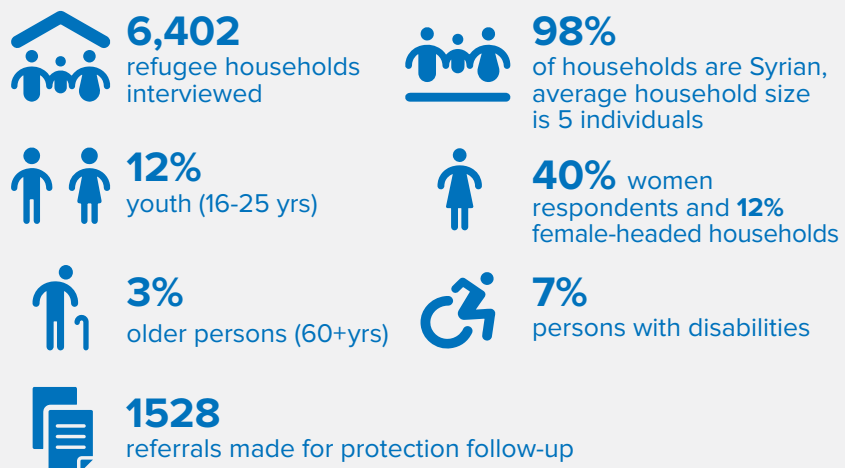
Lebanon – 2nd Quarter 2023



Key highlights

- The protection space for refugees shrank further in Q2, with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) conducting widespread raids, arrests, and other operations resulting in group deportations across the country, and a circular issued by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MOIM) calling on governors to register Syrians within their municipalities. While not translating into an increase in actual reports of restrictive measures or social tensions, these developments have had clear psychological impact on the refugee community, with **a sharp increase in reports of psychological distress from 2% to 10% amongst households with persons lacking legal residency** during the quarter.
- The average refugee household income **still falls significantly below the Standard Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB)**, while the cost of living continues to rise. Humanitarian assistance plays a critical role in assisting refugee families make ends meet. Main socio-economic impacts include **nearly all households reporting reduced spending on food, rent, medicine and healthcare**, resulting in negative coping mechanisms among refugee households (having greater impact on households with persons with specific needs).
- Despite increasing costs of living, including significant quarterly increases in rent prices, reports of evictions continue to remain relatively low, trending downwards since the latter half of 2022. This is likely linked to families increasingly amassing more debt and other strategies to avoid eviction.

Key numbers April to June 2023¹



¹ UNHCR conducts protection monitoring surveys with refugee households together with partners SHEILD and Intersos on an ongoing basis to analyse trends in the protection environment and risks facing refugees. This survey is one component of UNHCR's overarching protection monitoring programme in Lebanon, complementing other protection activities conducted by UNHCR and partners. The sampling of households and findings presented are representative both at the regional and at the national level. In addition, a number of interviews with key informants of different profiles complement the quantitative analysis from the household interviews. When needs for specific services, assistance or information are identified during interviews, UNHCR's protection monitoring partners refer the individuals concerned accordingly.

This report provides a summary of the protection monitoring findings from all regions of Lebanon in the second quarter (April to June) of 2023. The feedback from refugees is used to inform UNHCR's advocacy, and programmatic interventions with the aim of improving refugees' access to protection and essential services, assistance, and information.

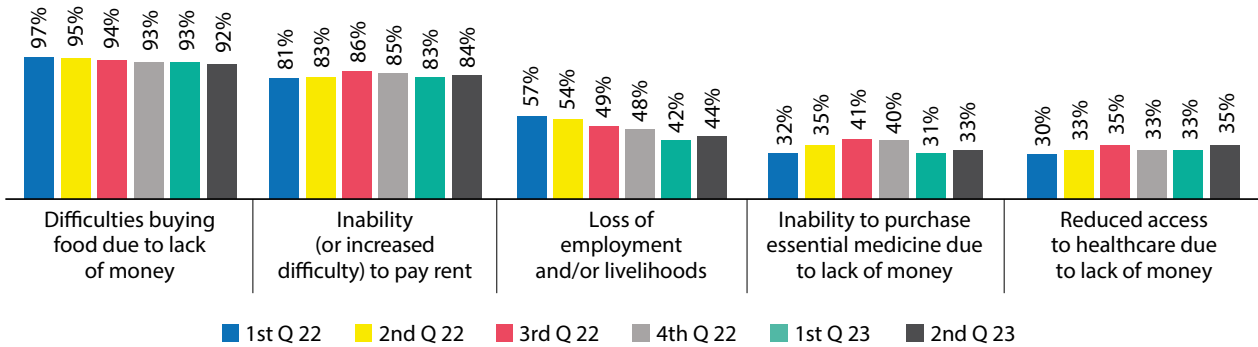
Impact of the socio-economic situation



Those with illness are unable to obtain medication because they cannot afford the fees.

- Syrian refugee, the Bekaa

Impact of the socio-economic situation



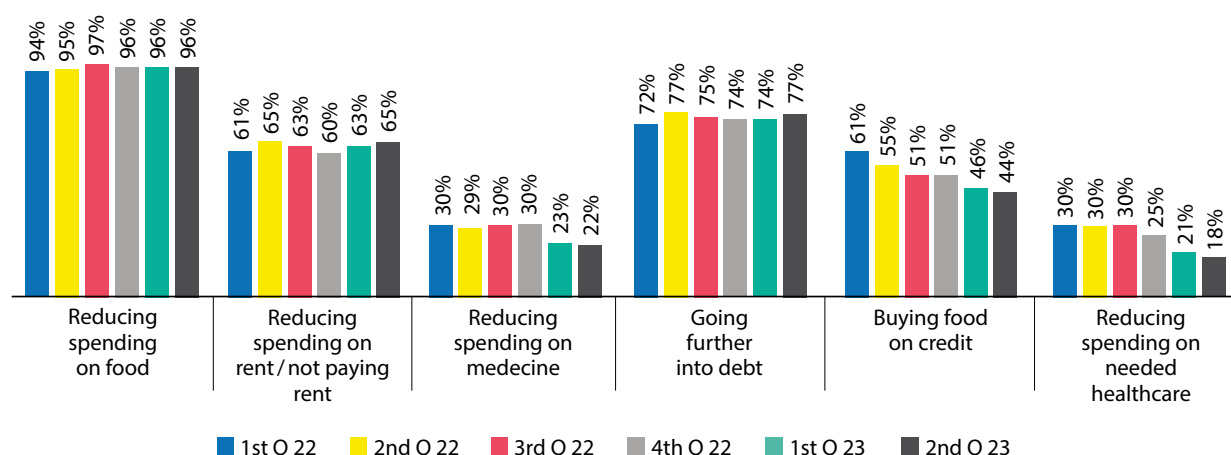
- In the second quarter of 2023, negative impacts of the socio-economic environment remain consistent with previous quarters, with refugees continuing to report large gaps in basic needs and highlighting the precarity of the overall protection situation.
- Nearly all refugees continue to face difficulties feeding their household (92%) and struggling to pay rent (83%), while almost half reported loss of livelihoods (44%), reduced access to healthcare (35%) and inability to purchase essential medicine (33%).
- Availability of support from family to meet financial needs is a key coping mechanism that since 2022 has seen a steady decline, from 2% of households at the beginning of 2022 to 10% in Q2 2023 reporting a loss of family support due to financial constraints. Furthermore, at the end of Q2 and compared to the general respondent pool, households accommodating persons with disabilities reported higher difficulties purchasing essential medicine, paying rent and being able to afford healthcare, than the general respondent pool, highlighting the higher impact of the crisis on this cohort.
- These socio-economic challenges are also reflected in consistent prevalence of negative coping mechanisms employed by refugee households. As with previous quarters, lack of money has meant that nearly all households (96%) have reduced their spending on food, that 77% are deepening their debt, while 65% are reducing spending on or not paying their rent.



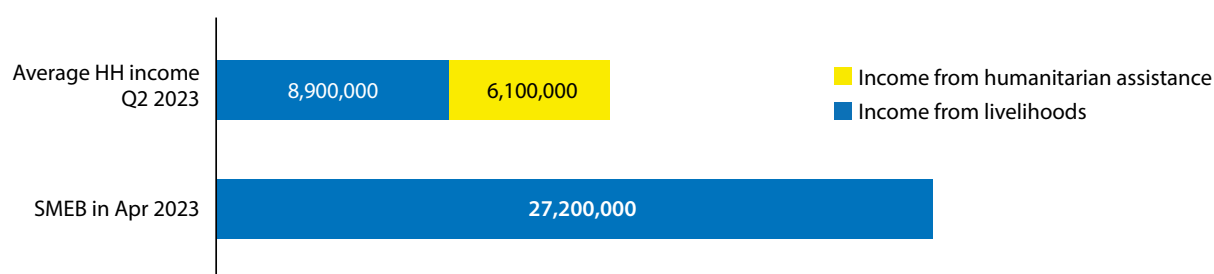
We prefer to decrease the quantity of food to be able to afford the rental fees.

- Syrian refugee, Bekaa

Main Coping Strategies



Average Q2 Household income compared to SMEB (LBP)



- As the value of the Lebanese Lira continues to decline while cost of basic goods increase, refugee households continue to report monthly income that falls far below what is required to make ends meet.
- While the average refugee household income reported by refugees for the second quarter of 2023 (8,900,000 LBP) was slightly higher than the previous quarter (7,800,000 LBP), there was a slight increase in reported humanitarian assistance (likely due to the shift in assistance disbursement from LBP to dual currency in June). Nonetheless, the total income reported by refugee households still falls substantially short of the latest value of Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) last reported in April 2023. This continues to highlight the role of humanitarian assistance in bridging the gap, without which refugee households would have just 32% of what is needed for a family of five to meet their basic needs.

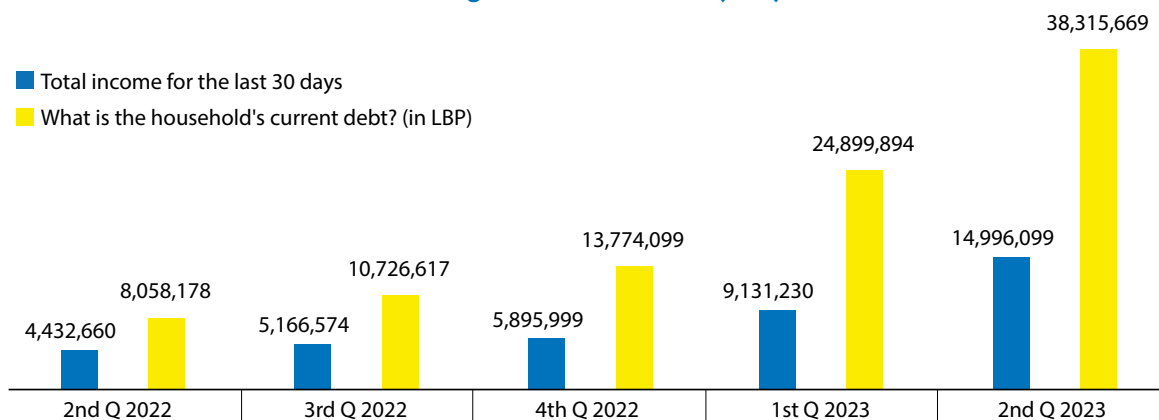


Milk and formula are so expensive, we are borrowing money or switching to mashed rice, potatoes, bananas, or yoghurt instead of milk.

- Syrian refugee, Mount Lebanon

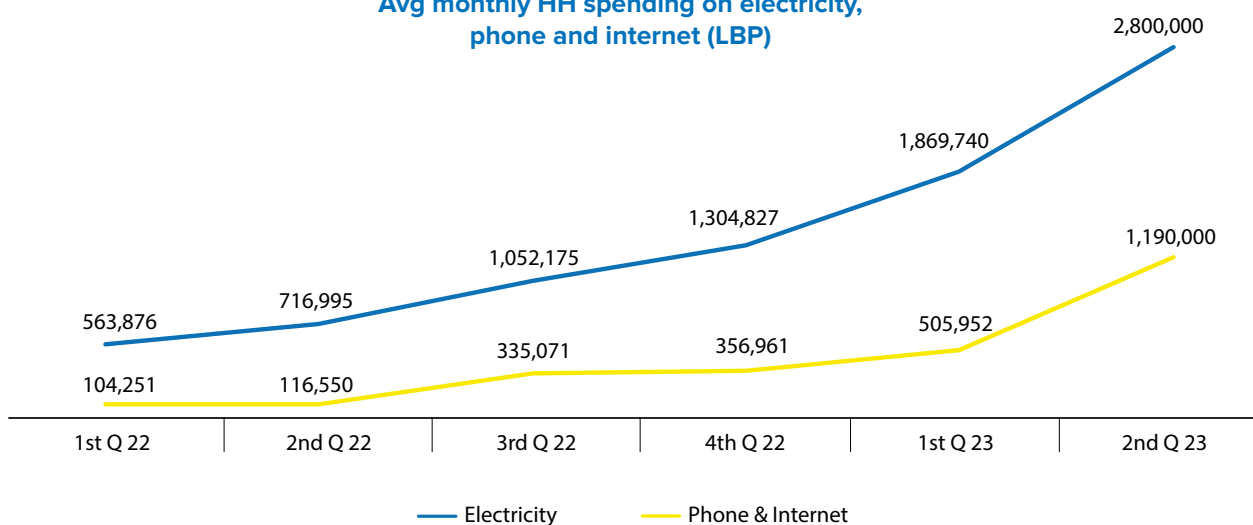
- Given these large gaps many refugees are going into debt as a coping strategy to meet basic needs, with almost all households continuing to rely upon some form of borrowing.

Average Debt and Income (LBP)



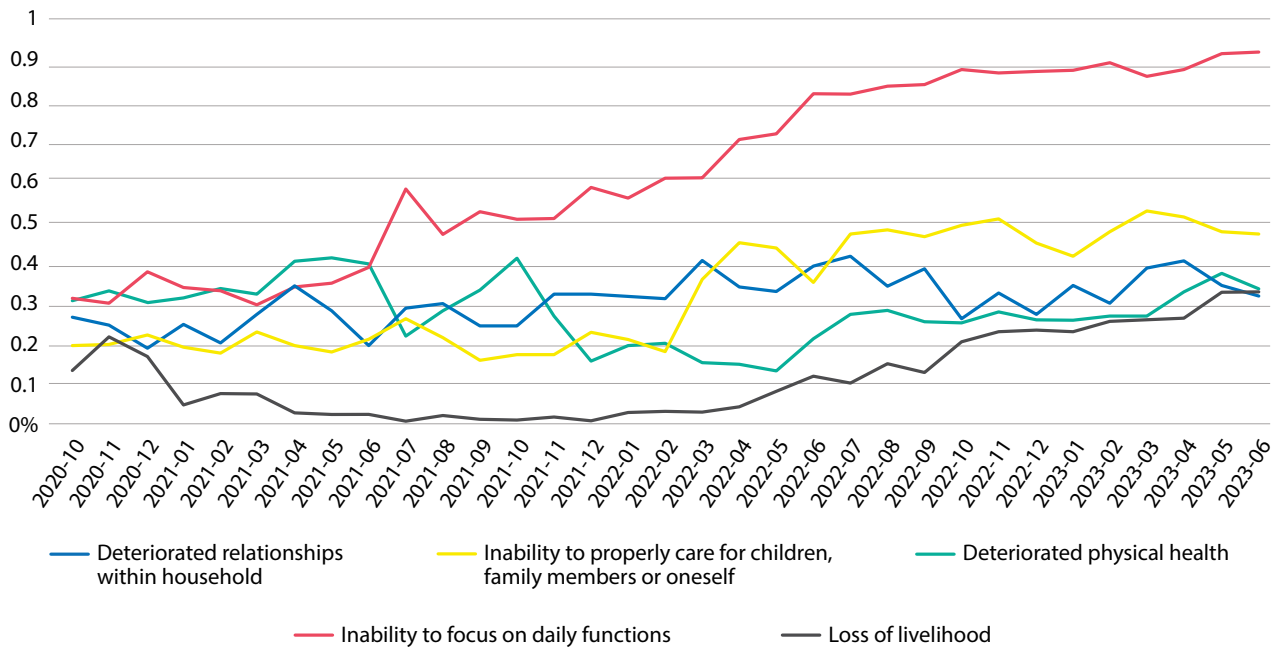
- The inability to keep up with rising costs is reflected in the increasing amount of debt held by refugee households. In the second quarter of 2023, households reported an average debt of 38,320,000 LBP, a 70% increase on average household debt in the previous quarter. Refugees continue to address widening gaps in their basic needs by taking on debt at unsustainable levels.
- Over the quarter, financial difficulties manifested in other challenges reported by refugee households, especially in the areas of nutrition and health. For example, 71% of households reported reducing the number of meals eaten per day, while 46% reported relying on worse quality food and 31% reported that heads of households eat less in order to ensure children are better fed. Of those who avoided seeking healthcare they thought they needed, the vast majority cited affordability as the primary reason.

Avg monthly HH spending on electricity, phone and internet (LBP)



- Electricity, phone and internet are services critical to allowing refugees maintain a basic standard of living and level of communication with family and friends in order to remain up to date on developments and in contact with service providers (such as UNHCR and humanitarian actors).
- A continuing rise in telecommunication and electricity costs since the previous quarter entrench growing gaps in basic needs, further debt reliance and will make humanitarian assistance increasingly vital in the coming quarters.
- The deteriorating socio-economic situation continues to impact on the mental health of refugees. In Q2 15% of survey respondents (consistent with previous reporting periods, noting that mental health issues are likely underreported given the methodology of the survey which does not allow for in depth consideration of mental health related issues) indicated that either they or someone in their household was experiencing mental health symptoms, of which 95% attributed the reasons for this to the economic situation.

Impact of Mental Health Situation



Education and child labour



It is risky for the children to walk all the way to the main road, and the transportation fees are high because they live far away from the village.

- Syrian refugee, Sour, on the difficulties for children accessing education

26%

of households reported having school aged children not attending school

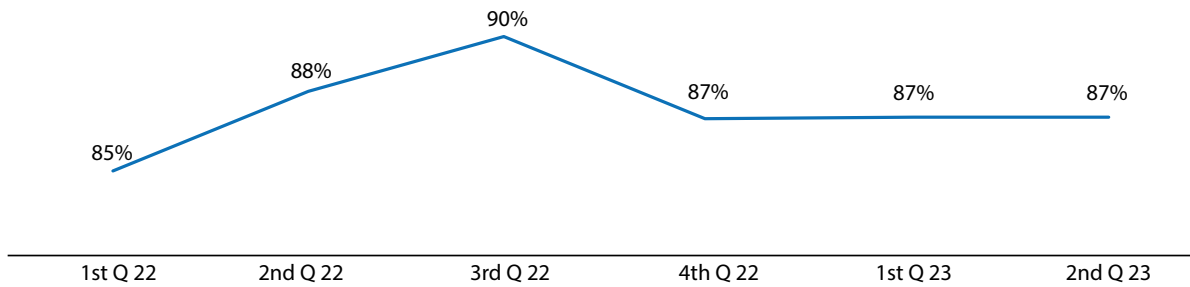
6%

households reported having at least one child engaged in child labour

- The number of households reporting children out of school in Q2 2023 has decreased on the previous quarter, likely due to the end of the teacher’s strikes (which decreased significantly by 67% as a cited reason this quarter) and the beginning of the summer holiday period. Unaffordable transport and school fees/material costs reappeared as the main reasons expressed by refugees for not sending children to school, as school related (such as stationery and books) and transport costs have increased,
- The percentage of households with children reporting child labour remained consistent with previous reporting periods at 6%.
- The majority of these working children continue to be boys (85%). Working children continued to be most commonly involved in retail, (26%), street selling (17%) and agriculture (22%). In all, 20% of respondents indicated that children in their household are engaged in “high risk” labour, primarily working with dangerous tools or in physically demanding jobs, or working in the street. As reported in North Lebanon, 70% of children engaged in child labour were not attending school. Out of the remaining 30%, only 15% attended school on a full-time basis.
- It is likely that figures related to child labour are underreported due to families being reluctant to disclose such practices.

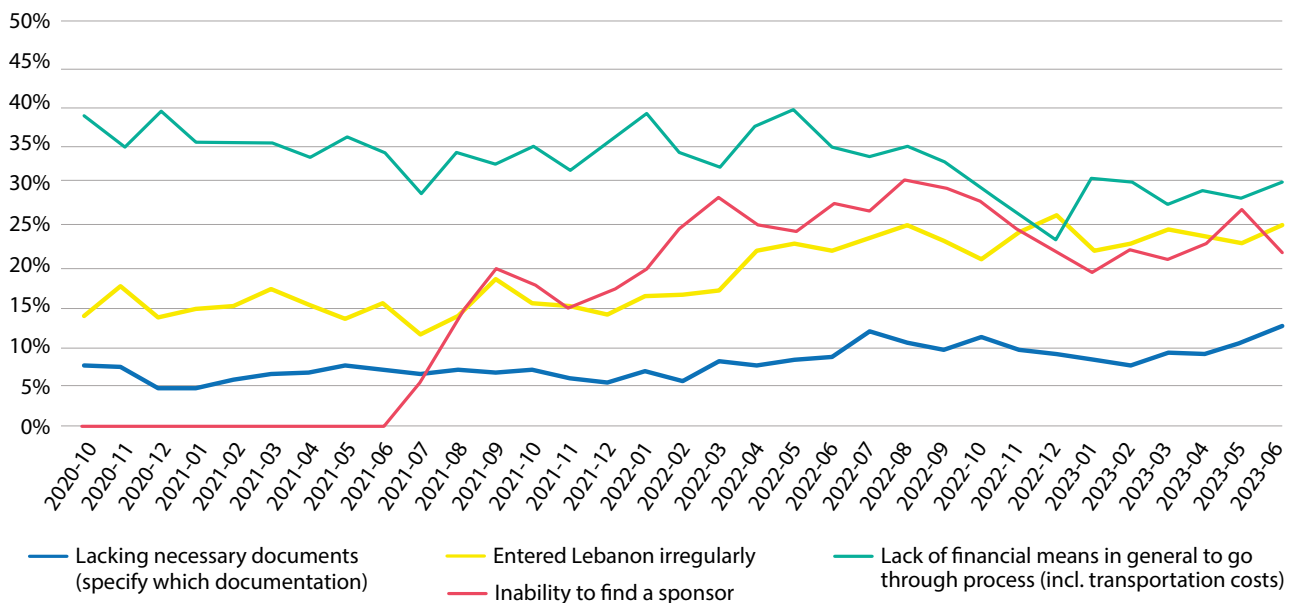
Legal residency

HHs with at least one member aged 15 years and above lacking legal residency



- Rates of households having all members with legal residency slipped slightly in the first quarter which was maintained, at only 13% in Q2, while remaining slightly higher than the record low number reported in Q3 2022.
- Lack of financial resources (30%), irregular entry to the country (24%) and inability to find a sponsor (24%) continue to be cited as the primary barriers for those lacking legal residency. However, in Q2 there is a steadily increasing trend in irregular entry and lacking documents as the main reason for lack of residency, while financial means cited as the main reason shifted downwards. The proliferation in negative refugee discourse in the media and public statements throughout 2023, together with the military raids targeting Syrians without legal residency, likely contribute to the increase in lack of legal documentation as a main reason for approaching the authorities to regularise their status.

Top reasons for lacking legal residency



- Lack of residency impacts refugees’ lives in multiple ways, including increasing vulnerability to detention and deportation. This was particularly stark during the reporting period when LAF raids and arrests led to widespread anxiety within the refugee community. To mitigate these risks, 62% of respondents report that members of their households lacking residency limit their movements, a significant increase from last quarter at 49% and 15% reduce contact with friends and some family members to avoid coming to the attention of the authorities. Q2 also saw an increase in persons reporting psychological distress as a result of lacking legal residency (10% of respondents with HHs lacking legal residency, as compared to 2% the previous quarter) – this is likely due to the heightened interest in legal residency during the reporting period as a result of increased LAF raids targeting Syrian communities.

Rent and Evictions

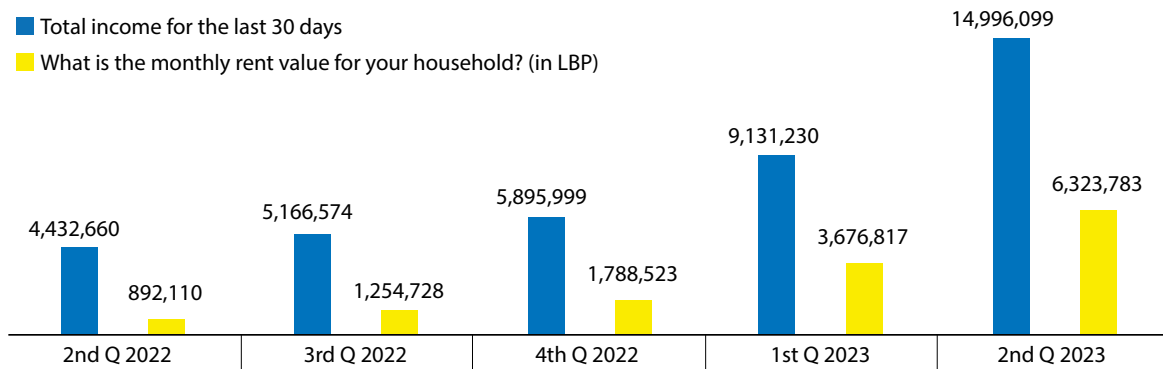


We used to pay 800,000 LBP for rent and it has recently increased to 100\$. We are looking for alternative residence but the rents are too high to afford.

- Syrian Refugee, South Lebanon

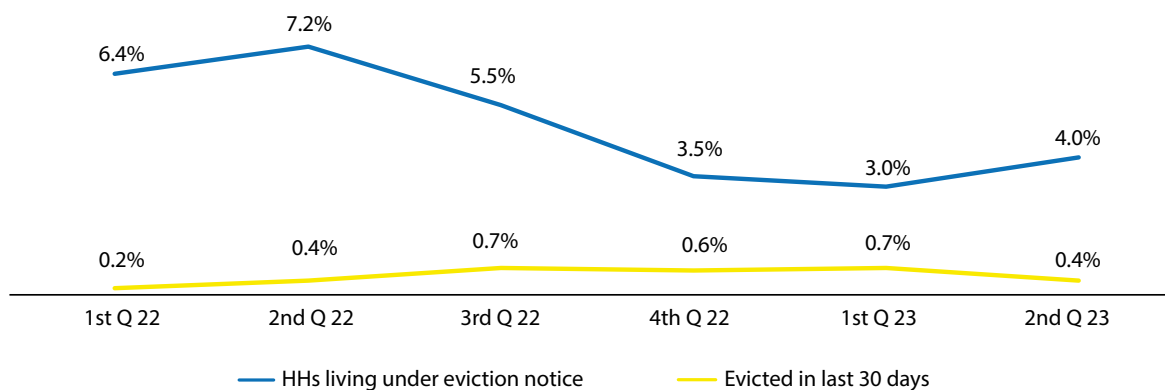
- More than 83% of refugees reported inability (or increased difficulty) to pay rent this quarter, a figure which does not seem likely to reduce given the exponential increase in average cost of monthly rent per household.
- Rental costs continue to increase sharply, with the average household's rent costing 77% more than it did the previous quarter. Correspondingly, the number of households reporting that they were able to make a full rent payment decreased to 35% from 37% the previous quarter.
- Despite increasing costs of rent and living in general, reports of households actually being evicted remain low into 2023, compared to previous periods, trending downwards since the latter half of 2022.

Average Rent and Income (LBP)



- This is likely linked to almost all refugees reporting going into high levels of debt and availing of other negative coping strategies, like accumulating rental fees and relying on less quality and quantity of food to pay rent and avoid eviction, which is potentially reflected in the slight increase in households reporting to be living under eviction notices since Q1.

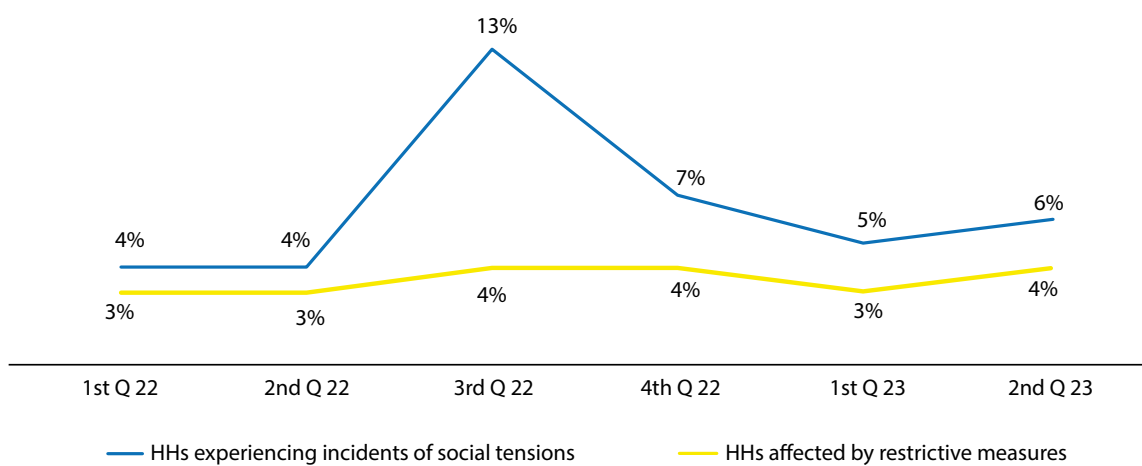
Evictions



- In North Lebanon, some positive coping mechanisms were also reported by refugees, who are actively engaging in finding friendly solutions due to the scarcity of safe shelters and the costs associated with moving to a new one. This includes negotiating in good faith with property owners to find mutually beneficial solutions, assisting each other in negotiations and vouching for relatives and friends.

Social Tensions and Restrictive Measures

- In Q2, the protection space shrank further for refugees due to targeted measures by the authorities, with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) conducting widespread raids, arrests, and other operations resulting in group deportations across the country and a circular issued by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities calling on governors to register Syrians within their municipalities.



- Despite the increasingly restrictive environment, reports of households experiencing incidents of social tension have so far remained consistent in 2023.
- Similarly, reports of restrictive measures by the refugee community remain generally low but with a slight uptick in Q2 from 2% to 4% of households reporting to live under some form of restrictive measure. The most commonly cited situations included movement restrictions such as curfews requiring people to remain indoors between specific hours or prohibitions to use certain public spaces. Most such measures were reportedly either targeting refugees only or were applied to them more harshly.



Syrian refugees in the village completed the registration procedures at the municipality and paid the 20\$ housing tax and are working on regularizing their documents to become legal residents out of fear of deportation.

- Syrian Refugee, South Lebanon

- Throughout the country, instances of municipalities applying unilateral restrictive measures – including in the context of implementation of the aforementioned MOIM circular – continue to be reported. For example, during Q2 there were increases in reports of **ad hoc** checkpoints, arbitrary fees for registering within the context of the MOIM circular and continued implementation of curfews.

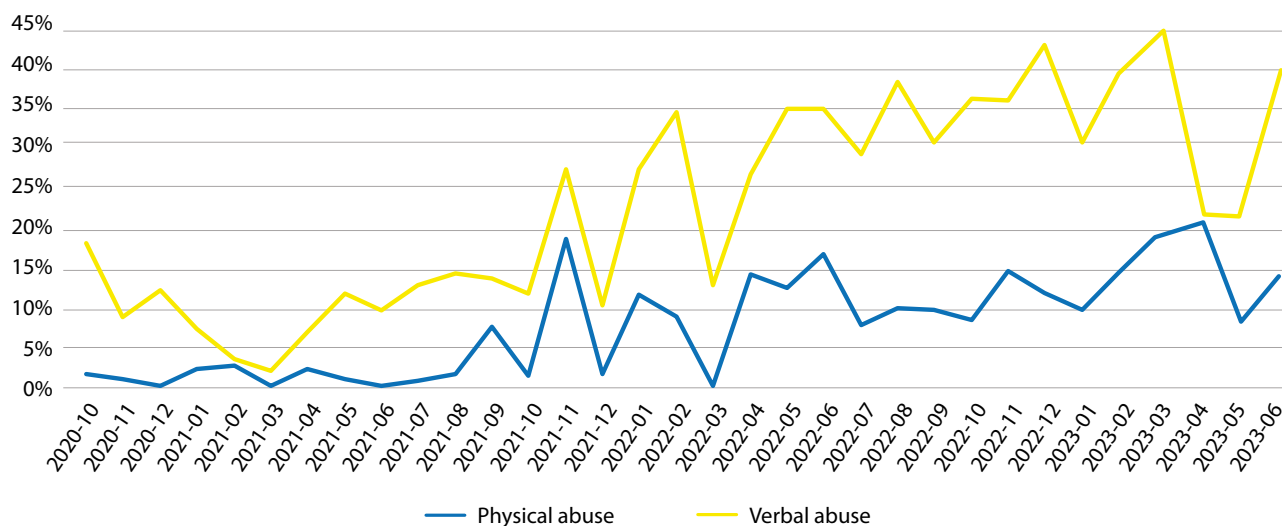


The fee added a further burden on our family, my husband is not working, and we are depending on debt for living.

- Syrian Refugee, South Lebanon, on municipal registration fees

- While the full impact of recent public negative refugee discourse is not yet manifesting in real terms in protection monitoring findings, UNHCR continues to track reports of personal disputes resulting in verbal or physical harassment, with Syrians often reluctant to report such incidents due to a lack of legal residency and fear of reprisal. Nonetheless, where measures are put in place the impact of restrictive measures appears to be increasingly severe. For example, households affected by curfews have been reporting a steady increase in physical and verbal abuse since Q1 on previous quarters.

Impact Where Curfews Are in Place



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