

PROTECTION MONITORING

**Situation of Forcibly Displaced
Syrians in Lebanon**

Methodology

• Since 2019, UNHCR, in partnership with various organizations, has conducted monthly Protection Monitoring (PM) surveys with Syrian refugees across Lebanon. As of January 2024, this activity is centralized and implemented by INTERSOS, using household-level and Key Informant interviews, with a sampling methodology that is representative based on the presence of the Syrian refugee population both at national and regional levels. The PM surveys aim to gather information on refugees' situations, analyse protection trends, assess gaps, and inform responses. This supports evidence-based advocacy and programming under the Lebanon Response Plan. It incorporates UNHCR's Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach to identify vulnerabilities. Referrals for specialized services are made when specific needs arise.

Disclaimer for Q3 2024: The escalation of the conflict in September 2024 has considerably affected the regular collection of PM data during Q3, especially in the South. The undertaking of PM surveys, in particular household visits, was impacted by the massive displacement of people, security considerations and accessibility issues. The protection trends and information presented in this report combine data extracted from the regular PM interventions and information collected by UNHCR and partners through other monitoring and emergency-response initiatives.

Summary figures from Protection Monitoring surveys Q3 July-September 2024



4,436
refugee households interviewed,
with an average household
size of 5 individuals



40% women
respondents and **10.5%**
female-led households



10%
youth (16-25 yrs)



11%
persons with disabilities



4.5%
older persons (60+yrs)



468
referrals made for follow-up

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I. Q3 key highlights & operational context

- ▶ **ESCALATION OF THE CONFLICT IN LEBANON & DISPLACEMENT:** The year-long conflict initiated in October 2023 has escalated significantly as of September 2024, spreading beyond border areas and causing large-scale displacement, losses among civilian population, damage to infrastructure and disruption of basic services in many areas of Lebanon. This was ignited by the pager and walkie-talkie attacks in mid-September and followed by numerous airstrikes targeting the densely populated Southern Suburbs and center of Beirut since 23 September, in addition to the constant bombardment by Israeli forces in Southern Lebanon, Bekaa, Baalbek and Hermel. The severity of the conflict has triggered unprecedented large-scale displacement across the country, with at least 500,000 new displacements during the first week of the escalations (as per DMT) while Government sources refer to more than a million people affected during the same period.. Infrastructure and residential areas continue to be heavily damaged by airstrikes, posing questions on viability of return in the future to some areas, in particular in the South. Moreover, the conflict has forced the closure of one third of the public health facilities in the country, especially in the South. Education services have also been heavily disrupted, as half of the public schools have been repurposed as shelters to accommodate the displaced.
- ▶ **EXACERBATED RISKS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES:** In this context refugees are facing heightened risks. More than 80% of them lack valid legal residency, which already in a pre-crisis situation constrained their protection situation, freedom of movement and access to livelihoods and housing. The conflict has aggravated this situation as refugees faced also with serious challenges in accessing emergency services/collective shelters, and limited possibilities of receiving support from social networks. Moreover, their presence in heavily bombed areas is known to be high, with 340,000 refugees known to reside pre-crisis in areas most affected by airstrikes. UNHCR is aware of dozens of Syrians who were killed or wounded due to hostilities and has identified the secondary displacement of at least 27,000¹ refugees since the beginning of the conflict up until the end of September 2024. This is taking place following the peak in anti-refugee rhetoric during Q2, which likely contributed to potential violence and unequal treatment. Syrians and refugees from other nationalities are denied access to the collective shelters and they are often unable to afford private accommodation due to increases in rental prices and prioritization of Lebanese by owners of dwellings.
- ▶ **LEGAL RESTRICTIONS & ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES:** During Q3, the introduction of new administrative measures on Syrian refugees has significantly decreased after the peak experienced in Q2. Nevertheless, refugees increasingly report being unable to pay the increasing fees for their legal residency renewal. Moreover, following the significant escalation of the conflict at the end of September 2024, the General Security Office (GSO) announced that all Syrians and Palestinians refugees may leave Lebanon regardless of their regular or irregular entry in the country, while continuing to apply re-entry bans, including to those with valid residency based on their UNHCR certificate.
- ▶ **SOCIO ECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES:** The risk of poverty for Syrian refugees continues to rise, as 97% reported not being able to afford food and 87% cannot pay their rent. This is taking place in an already dire socio-economic situation with limited livelihood opportunities and a strained capacity to access basic needs.

¹ This figure refers to the number of secondary displaced refugees recorded by UNHCR as of the end of September 2024. By 1st November, this number has significantly increased, reaching over 84,000 refugees.

II. Escalation of the hostilities in Lebanon as of September 2024

The following analysis captures the effect of the escalation of the hostilities in Lebanon on Syrian refugees as of mid-September 2024. The trends pertaining to their Protection Situation during Quarter 3 (July-September), as per the conduction of regular Protection Monitoring programme, can be found in the third chapter of this document.

a. Overview of the situation

Until mid-September 2024, the conflict has been mainly impacting the border areas of Lebanon, especially the Southern and Eastern regions. In the last two weeks of September, a serious escalation expanded the hostilities to the Bekaa and BML governorates. The security context rapidly deteriorated as of September 23, with a continuous aerial campaign by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) that included intense airstrikes in South, Bekaa, Baalbek and Hermel, Mount Lebanon and Beirut, combined with evacuation alerts, as well as targeted attacks against individuals and/or strategic sites in other areas of Lebanon. Only in a week period, the death toll among civilians exceeded the reported casualties since the beginning of conflict in October 2023. As estimated by the Lebanese Ministry of Health, the escalations during the second half of September resulted in more than 1,640 people death and 8,408 injured². UNHCR estimates that these numbers also include dozens of Syrian refugees/displaced killed or wounded due to the hostilities, including women and children.

b. Displacement trends within Lebanon & movements into Syria under duress

As of mid-September 2024, the intensification of violence provoked by the IDF airstrikes and the destruction of residential areas has forced thousands of individuals to flee their homes in search of safety, leading to a massive influx of internally displaced people to North and BML governorates.

- **Scope of displacement:** By September 30, it is estimated that over 540,000 individuals have been displaced (DTM) within Lebanon, while the Government of Lebanon estimates higher numbers of at least 1.2 million. Since the beginning of the conflict in October 2023, UNHCR has verified the secondary displacement of over 27,000 refugees by the end of Q3. Out of those, at least 10,500 were displaced only during the last week of September.
- **Movement towards North:** The displacement patterns of Syrian refugees during the first week of the escalation seemed to prioritize locations in the North of the country, as they are perceived safer, while the vast majority of collective shelters are located in Beirut and Mount Lebanon governorates. At the start of the conflict, refugees from Hasbaya and Marjaayoun districts were initially displaced to the Bekaa due to its proximity and cheaper transportation, but as soon as this governorate started to be heavily targeted by the IDF airstrikes, the displacement trend shifted to Beirut and Tripoli.

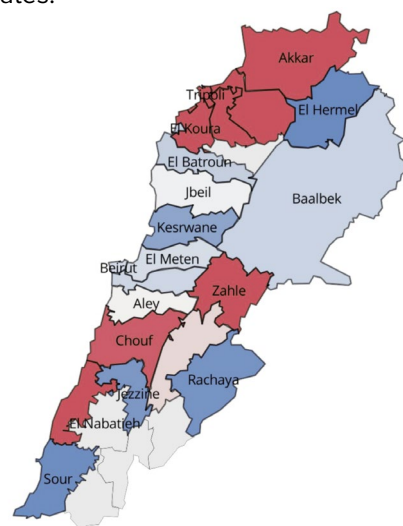


Chart 1. Locations of Syrian refugees affected by the conflict (displaced or remaining in unsafe areas) between 23 and 30 September 2024

² Government Emergency Committee report #7, 30 September, accessible at this link. By the first of November, this number increased to 2,897 people death and 13,150 injured (Government Emergency Committee report #34)

- **Displacement within the same governorate** is also taking place, mainly in the southern governorates, Baalbek and Hermel, emphasizing security risks, limitations of freedom of movement and lack of financial capacity to attempt further displacement. Public transportation is reported to be largely unavailable and taxi rides have significantly increased their prices. Additionally, refugee families having members with disabilities (7% of those identified as remaining in conflict-affected governorates as of the end of September) find it extremely difficult to relocate leading to the situation.
- **Movements into Syria under duress:** The escalation of hostilities in Lebanon has led to significant movements under adverse conditions into Syria since 23 September. UNHCR Syria estimates that as of 30 September, a total of approximately 128,000 people³ (both Lebanese and Syrians) have crossed from Lebanon to Syria up to the end of September 2024. It is estimated that around 70% were Syrians and 30% were Lebanese nationals.⁴
- **Re-entry bans:** On 26 September 2024, GSO announced that all Syrians and Palestinians from Syria may leave Lebanese territory through land border points, regardless of the length of their overstay or if they entered irregularly. Key informants have indicated that GSO applies re-entry bans towards those leaving Lebanon Syrian nationals who either lack valid residence permits (overstayed or entered irregularly), or they have legal residency based on the UNHCR certificate. The duration of re-entry bans varies and depends on several factors, including whether individuals pay overstay fees upon exiting and how they entered the country (regularly/ irregularly). The application of re-entry bans may influence some individuals to use irregular crossing-points, with elevated risks related to landmine harm, exploitation, airstrikes and abuse.
- **Family separation, risk of GBV & inability to leave the conflict-affected areas:** Preliminary reports indicate several instances of family separation as a result of displacement. Also, refugees and partners inform about increased emotional violence against displaced women and higher frequency and severity of intimate partner violence, both in conflict-affected regions and in the places of displacement. Those remaining in conflict-affected areas and/or unable to relocate are experiencing increased risks. These include safety and security risk due to proximity to airstrikes and bombardment, high risk of harm for perceived affiliation to one of the parties of conflict, lack of access/availability of services .



The worst thing is feeling unsafe in the country where you sought asylum, while your country of origin remains an unsafe place for you.

- Syrian OV in Bisarieh

c. Impact of the escalation of the conflict on Syrian refugees

Limited ability to seek safety: Significant barriers in securing livelihoods, unequal access to shelters, housing, and assistance, and a generally restrictive administrative approaches and discourse towards Syrian displaced refugees adversely impact their ability to leave conflict-affected areas. Refugee respondents consistently refer to an existing concern that while seeking safety from hostilities they face imminent fear of being arbitrarily arrested and immediately deported due to the lack of legal residency, or fear of not being able to settle in new areas. This is taking place within a dire context, as conflict-affected areas have experienced severe damage on infrastructure and residential areas, impacting also roads, schools, health and water facilities.

Access to shelter and evictions: As of the end of September, only marginal number of refugees reported that they were housed in collective shelters across the country. Reports show that the vast majority of official shelters do not accept displaced Syrians and Palestinians forcing them to resort to precarious housing options

³ UNHCR Syria Flash Update #5 (Response to Displacement from Lebanon to Syria)

⁴ As of the beginning of November 2024, the number of people known to have crossed the border has reached 528,000 , including both Syrians and Lebanese.

in informal shelters or gather in the streets, squares or parking lots. In some instances, Syrian families were initially admitted to collective shelters, however, later were served with eviction notices. Refugees report a growing risk of evictions and an inability to find affordable accommodation, while many report to be homeless. Reports indicate that most refugees are unable to meet the demands of the rental market, as many landlords significantly raised rental prices following the escalation of the conflict or agree to rent the apartments only to women and children and/or select Lebanese families. In addition to the heightened vulnerability to physical attacks and abuse when sleeping in public places using tents or cars, the upcoming winter will pose additional serious challenges for refugee families who will be unable to find an accommodation. As monitored by UNHCR, at least 15% of secondary displaced Syrian refugees were in the situation of homelessness due to the hostilities at the end of Q3.



If we leave our homes, we won't be able to find other shelters.

- Syrian refugee residing in Baalbek

Municipalities and state security forces have also taken measures to **remove homeless Syrian refugees from public areas**, sometimes leaving them with few or no options for safe refuge. For example, in South governorate, several groups of displaced Syrians were evicted from various public areas without providing them with any alternative. In the Bekaa, displaced Syrians are not always allowed to stay with their friends or relatives in the Informal Tented Settlements (ITSs) or settle in certain areas unless they have Lebanese or Syrian friends or relatives who can vouch for them.



The municipality tells us that we cannot stay in the streets, but whenever we go to schools, we are told that schools are for Lebanese only.

- Displaced Syrian refugee in Saida, South Lebanon

Priority needs: Access to safe shelters, core relief items, food, cash assistance, health protection services are among the most urgent needs of displaced populations. Also, the escalation of the conflict has led to closure of 98⁵ primary healthcare centres and hospitals and disrupted the education for more than 200,000 children in primary school⁶. By the end of September 2024, more than half of the public schools in the country were being used as official collective centres to provide shelter to those displaced mainly concentrated in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. As observed during UNHCR field visits to some schools converted into shelters, the overcrowded spaces are forcing men, women and children to share sleeping spaces and bathrooms. The lack of lighting, partitions and privacy are **increasing the risk of GBV**. Residents, especially children, are experiencing high levels of distress and trauma, with limited access to mental health services and medications for chronic illnesses. Hygiene issues like lice infestation, lack of washing facilities, and insufficient hygiene kits are prevalent, exacerbating fears among residents, particularly women.

⁵ OCHA, *At a Glance - Escalation of hostilities in Lebanon, as of 03 October 2024*, accessible at this link.

⁶ Noting that another 200,000 children of primary school age are known to be out of school altogether.

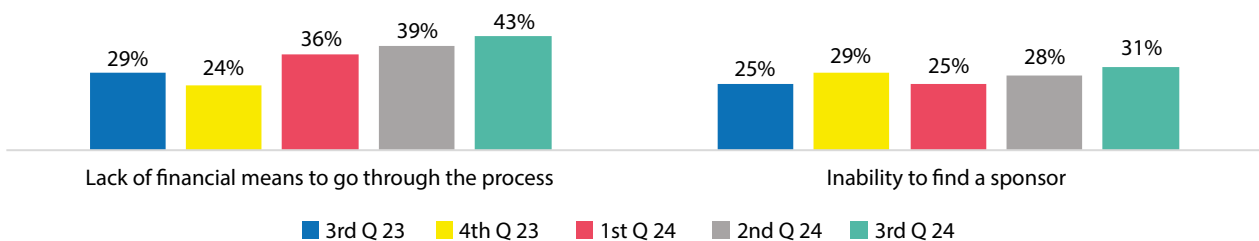
III. Protection situation and trends during Q3 2024

a. Legal developments & administrative measures

Conflict escalation, intensification of airstrikes and massive displacement at the end of September 2024 took place against an already restrictive environment for Syrians in Lebanon. During the previous quarter, Syrian refugees faced increased level of tensions with the hosting community, driven by a strong anti-Syrian narrative and the reiteration of administrative measures that further affected their protection environment. This included a significant increase of official fees for the renewal of legal residency, new restrictions on access to livelihood opportunities, and peak in collective evictions.

- In Q3 2024, **the lack of legal residency** continued to be a major concern for refugees, as it directly affects their living conditions and livelihood opportunities in the country, while exacerbating their risk of discrimination, arrest, and deportation. Nearly half of the Protection Monitoring respondents (43% in Q3, compared to 36% at the beginning of the year) reported being **unable to pay the fees associated with the renewal of legal residency**, a challenge that has gradually increased in line with the **growing fees**. Additionally, the inability to find a sponsor keeps rising, reported by 31% of Q3 respondents compared to 25% in the same period last year, which may be related to the heightened tensions with the host community experienced in previous months. Also, closure of some GSO offices, for example in the Bekaa, due to the security situation limits the opportunities to renew legal residency for those who can afford covering the fees.
- During this quarter, more than half of the respondents (54%) reported **severe limitations on their freedom of movement** due to the absence of legal residency, which further exacerbated their vulnerability as their ability to access essential services, healthcare, education, and employment is limited.

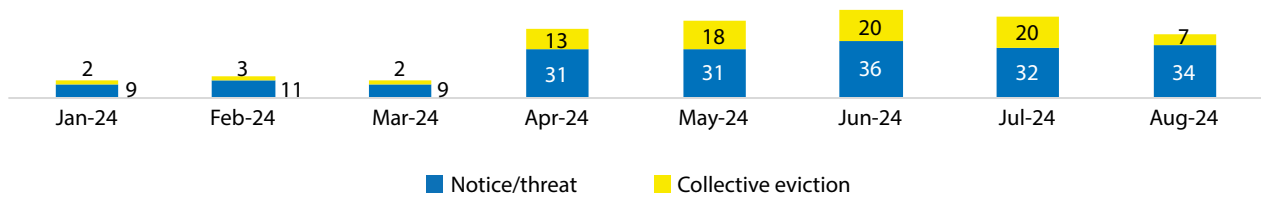
Chart 2. Reasons for lacking legal residency between Q3 2023 and Q3 2024



The introduction of **new administrative measures on Syrian refugees has decreased by the end of Q3, coinciding with the escalation of the conflict** and potentially due to the ongoing military operations. As per UNHCR records, at least 116 new measures were announced between July and September, representing a 71% decrease from Q2. These include reports of curfews targeting Syrians and several instances of checkpoint arrests, taxes/fees affecting refugees as well as movement restrictions and rental restrictions. When asked about the reasons behind these measures, 40% of PM respondents cited discrimination, while lack of legal residency (48%) was the main reason in the North (48%) and 76% of respondents in BML mentioned security considerations. **Raids** on Syrian Informal Tented Settlements (ITSs) spiked in August, mostly taking place in the Bekaa and some in the North. Also, many Syrian-owned shops and homes were raided by law enforcement agencies, frequently resulting into arrests and consequent deportation. 69% of those arrested were deported.

Following the numerous announcements by municipalities requiring valid legal residency from Syrian individuals renting dwellings in certain areas of the Bekaa, North and Mount Lebanon, June and July 2024 witnessed the highest numbers of collective evictions of the year (see chart 3 below).

Chart 3. Incidents of collective evictions of Syrians recorded by UNHCR ad-hoc assessments⁷



As reported through Protection Monitoring, most evictions (both individual and collective) of Syrian refugees implemented by municipalities were due to the lack of legal residency, while landlords are evicting tenants over **unpaid rent, rising tensions with host communities, and municipal pressure to formalize rental agreements**. Reports from the North indicate that some municipalities issued a notice period of 15 days to Syrians with no legal residency, prior to evicting them at a later stage. The houses of Syrians identified for eviction were allegedly sealed with red wax to prevent reentry.



They are trying to force us out to reduce the number of Syrian refugees in the village.

- Syrian refugee in the Bekaa Governorate

Additionally, attempts of **onward movements** continued to take place throughout the Q3, with Italy as a more common destination due to the heightened vigilance in Cypriot waters. The numbers of actual and attempted boat departures from Lebanon have been decreasing since the beginning of 2024 and reached the lowest number in Q3.

b. Social tensions, socio-economic vulnerabilities & mental health

The negative public discourse against Syrians, generating unwelcoming environment and tensions with the host community in Lebanon, has severely impacted mental health and well-being of Syrian refugees since the start of 2024. The intensified hostilities across the country have exacerbated symptoms related to anxiety and depression and caused sleep disturbances and social withdrawal among Syrian refugees, bringing back the fears that once pushed them to flee from their home country.



Every time I hear the sound of warplanes, I feel like it's the end. My children won't sleep, and I have no way to calm them. We're all living in fear.

- Syrian refugee residing in Marjaayoun, South Lebanon

- The **anti-Syrian narrative** was reinforced at the end of Q3 following the escalation of the conflict, driven by **perceived competition for scarce emergency shelter and humanitarian aid**.
- Following the peak in **violence against refugees** during Q2, incidents of violence or tensions between Syrians and host community have continued into Q3, but have been reported at lower rates.
- **Misinformation and rumors** circulating on social media have further contributed to a decline in support for refugees, linking certain Syrian individuals to political affiliations involved in the conflict.

⁷ The collection of data for September was affected by the hostilities and therefore not included in the chart for accuracy purposes.

- **26%** of Syrian PM respondents have reported that their irregular legal status, fear of detention, and the deteriorating security situation is contributing to **heightened psychological distress**.

In addition to these challenges, the socio-economic situation in Lebanon remains critical for Syrian refugees, as it has been reported in previous quarters: **97% of respondents faced difficulties buying food and 88% could not pay their rent** between July and September 2024.

In Q3, Syrians continued to rely on **coping mechanisms such as reducing food expenditures (96%), increasing unpaid debt (88%)** along with buying food on credit (69%) and **not paying rent (81%)**. In line with the disruption of health services and shortages of medicines, there has been an increase of those having to reduce on their medicine spending, reaching 30% in Q3, up from 25% in Q1. **Difficulties accessing healthcare kept in the rise during 2024**, with half of respondents (47%) reporting reduced access to health services due to the socio-economic situation in Q2 and Q3, compared to 32% at the beginning of 2023.

This comes into place in a situation where the **risk of eviction** for Syrians has become significantly higher, whereas those Syrian refugees who lack valid legal residency face serious challenges to find new shelter resulting in increased risk of homelessness, disrupted livelihoods, school dropouts and child labor. The escalation of the conflict at the end of September has sharply elevated **rental prices**, with reports of landlords demanding prices much higher than a few months before, as well as inflated the cost of goods and services.

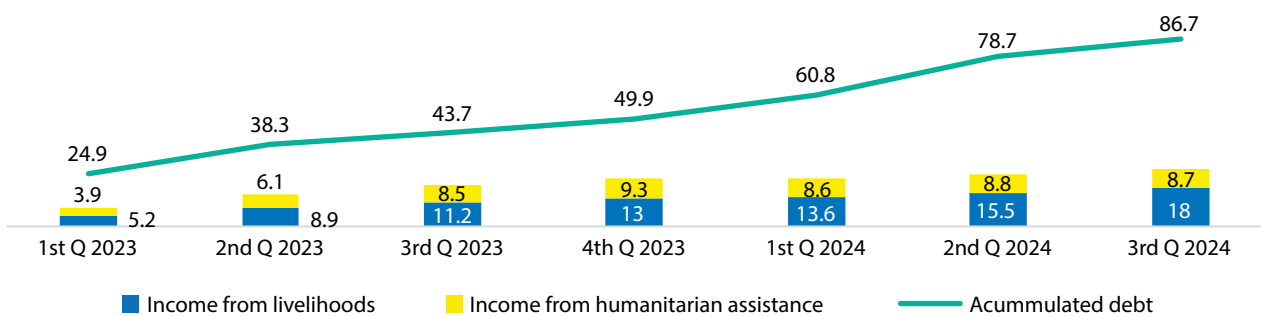


The farm where I work was hit, and now there's no job to return to. We barely had enough before, and now I don't know how we'll survive.

- Syrian refugee residing in the South

The levels of accumulated debt of refugee households keep surpassing their monthly income. As reflected in the Chart 4 below, the levels of humanitarian assistance received by Syrian refugees remained stable throughout 2024, despite the increasing needs. This follows the reduction in assistance observed at the end of 2023; previously, humanitarian aid had been rising in proportion to escalating living costs, but the recent cutbacks have halted this upward trend to an average of 8 million LBP per month. **For Q3, the unpaid debt accumulated by Syrian families (86.7 million LBP) triples their monthly income (26.7 million LBP).**

Chart 4. Average monthly income per quarter vs accumulated debt



c. Child labour & education

The escalation of the conflict, worsening of economic conditions and the impact of the lack of legal residency in many refugee households during Q3 have affected the education opportunities for Syrian refugees:

- With an estimated **closure of half⁸ of education public facilities that turned into shelters** by the end of September 2024, over 420,000⁹ school aged children are out of school, impacting their well-being and academic progress for the 6th year on a row. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) plans to ensure education in emergencies and hopes to start the school year of 2024/2025 in November.
- **30% of PM respondents indicated that their children are out of education**, Similar to Q2, the primary reasons for dropping out from education are related to financial aspects, such as transportation costs (43%), which have increased from 35% in Q1.

Albeit known to be underreported, the number of PM respondents referring to **child labour have increased during Q3, potentially linked to legal residency constrains restricting movement and affecting the access to livelihoods opportunities of heads of households:**

- Reports of **child labour** among families with children have slightly increased in Q3 2024 to 6%, while during the rest of the year and throughout 2023, it remained at a stable 4-5% trend. These figures are still considered as underreporting.
- Self-restriction of movements due to fear of checkpoints and the large-scale displacement provoked by the conflict have affected the ability of Syrian refugees to seek employment or livelihoods. This has likely created further **push factors for children to engage in work throughout Q3**, confirmed by several FGD organized in the North where child labour was reported as a main protection concern for secondary displaced Syrians.
- Children were mostly working in agriculture (29%) and shops (25%) during Q3. Child labour in agriculture was most prevalent in the Bekaa (57%), while work at shops dominated in South (39%) and BML (38%) and selling items in the street was the highest in the North (27%).

Community members displaced in the South and Bekaa have indicated that children are being sent to work as there is heightened fear of adults to be caught by GSO working without legal residency, a perceived reduced risk of arrest for children, heightened need of income due to lack of job opportunities, lack of assistance and no schools. Similarly, the deteriorating security conditions have disrupted community support systems, making it more likely that children are drawn into labor to help their families cope with economic strain.



Our children are working instead of us because we cannot find job opportunities due to our expired legal residencies.

- KI residing in Mount Lebanon Governorate

⁸ These figures were confirmed as of the end of September 2024. By 14 October 2024, MEHE reported that some 77% of public schools either closed because they are in unsafe areas or turned into shelters.

⁹ Including children already out of school and those whose education has been disrupted by the conflict.

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