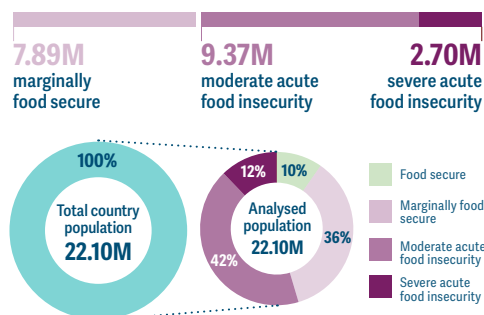


Syrian Arab Republic

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY 2022

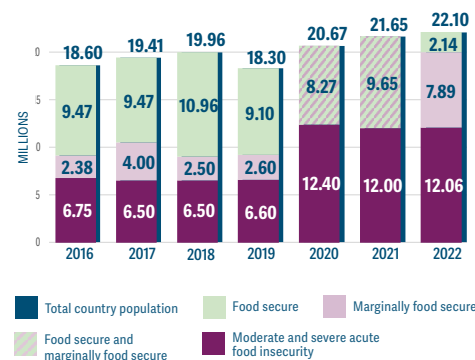
12.06M people or **55%** of the analysed population faced moderate or severe acute food insecurity in 2022



The analysis covered 100% of the Syrian Arab Republic's population of 22.1 million people.

Source: HNO 2023, December 2022.

Acutely food-insecure and food-secure populations, 2016–2022



Source: HNO/HRP.

Food crisis overview

An estimated 12.06 million people in the Syrian Arab Republic were facing acute food insecurity in 2022. Of them, 9.37 million were estimated to be moderately food insecure and 2.7 million severely food insecure, representing more than half (55 percent) of the total population, based on the CARI methodology. This number includes the 2 million people living in displacement camps, all of whom were deemed to be acutely food insecure (HNO, December 2022).

Acute food insecurity levels are high in Idlib, largely attributable to conflict and economic crisis, as well as in Quneitra, Al-Raqqa, Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, Al-Hasakeh and Hama governorates, which experienced poor harvests (HNO 2023, December 2022).

Even before the earthquakes struck on 6 February 2023, the food security outlook for 2023 was precarious with an additional 2.9 million people estimated to be at risk of acute food insecurity. Prices of imported fertilizers, foods and fuels are expected to continue to be volatile through 2023, which will weigh heavily on households' purchasing power (HNO, December 2022).

The first significant rainfall of the 2022–23 cropping season was recorded in November, with above-average amounts in all governorates. However, December 2022 rainfall was significantly lower than average across the country, with the largest differences in Al-Hasakeh (the main cereal-producing governorate) and southern parts of the country (FAO-GIEWS, January 2023).

Acute food insecurity since 2016

The number of acutely food-insecure people increased from 6.5 million in 2018 and 6.6 million in 2019 to 12.4 million (60 percent of the population) by November 2020. This was due to protracted and intensifying conflict leading to further displacement, high unemployment and increasing food prices but also to a change in methodology for the Food Security and Livelihoods Assessment. Since 2020, the number of acutely food-

insecure people remains persistently high at around 12 million, representing 56 percent of the population, due to the continuation of hostilities and compounding effects of the pandemic, adverse weather events, regional fragility and macroeconomic instability.

Drivers of the crisis, 2022–23

Economic shocks The impact of the war in Ukraine on the global macroeconomic environment exacerbated the Syrian Arab Republic's already deep economic crisis resulting from protracted conflict, sanctions, the COVID-19 pandemic and the financial collapse in Lebanon (WB, June 2022).

The Syrian pound continued to depreciate on the parallel market in 2022, leading to rampant inflation, erosion of real wages and further decreases in household purchasing power (FAO-GIEWS, January 2023).

As the country is highly dependent on imports for food and fuel the soaring commodity prices sustained by the impact of the war in Ukraine aggravated inflation (HNO, December 2022). By October 2022, the standard reference food basket cost 52 percent more than it did at the outset of the war – a record high – and was 91 percent more expensive compared with a year earlier (WFP, November 2022).

In response, the Syrian government scaled back subsidy programmes and rationed essential foods, such as wheat, rice and potatoes, as well as reduced fuel allocations for public institutions and heating oil for families (WB, June 2022). The high price of fuel led to shortages throughout the country (FAO-GIEWS, January 2023).

Conflict/insecurity Twelve years since the start of the conflict, despite significant improvements in the security situation across most of the country, some regions remained volatile in 2022 with bombardments continuing to drive civilian casualties, internal displacement and constraining humanitarian access (HNO, December 2022). Violence peaked in October–December 2022 with a 21 percent

increase in the number of incidents of explosions and remote violence compared with the year before (ACLEDA, January 2023), particularly affecting the northwest and northeast, especially Idlib and Aleppo governorates (HNO, December 2022).

These hostilities affected people's welfare and livelihoods through the destruction of physical capital, forced displacement and collapse of economic activity, which increased the use of negative food and livelihood coping strategies (WB, June 2022).

Conflict also hindered humanitarian assistance as damage to roads, electricity and communication networks made it difficult to reach affected populations and violence interrupted operations (HNO, December 2022).

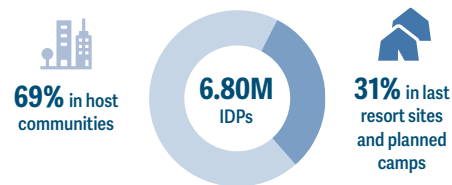
By February 2023, more than 5.4 million Syrian refugees were registered in neighbouring countries, primarily in Türkiye, Lebanon and Jordan (UNHCR, February 2023), and 6.8 million people were internally displaced. See Lebanon country brief for IPC acute food insecurity analysis of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Weather extremes Recurring drought-like conditions persisted in most of the country due to insufficient and poorly distributed rainfall and higher-than-average temperatures. Water scarcity affected rainfed crop systems as well as irrigated crops, such as legumes and cereals, as the Euphrates River has experienced low water levels since 2021.

High prices for agricultural inputs in combination with weather anomalies and water scarcity drove the reduction in crop yields and consequently food and livestock feed availability (HNO, December 2022). The 2022 cereal harvest continued to be below average, with the estimated 1.1 million tonnes of wheat produced similar to that of last year, but still a quarter of the pre-conflict average (FAO-GIEWS, January 2023).

DISPLACEMENT

IDPs living in host communities or displacement sites, 2022



Source: HNO 2023, December 2022.

IDPs As the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic enters its twelfth year, the country still has the highest IDP population in the world at 6.8 million. Nearly 80 percent of IDP households have been displaced for at least five years and many have experienced multiple displacements (OCHA, February 2023).

The majority (69 percent) live out of camps, many of them in northwestern Aleppo and Idlib (HNO 2023, December 2022) – the governorates hit by the devastating earthquakes in February 2023 – as well as in Rural Damascus.

The remainder – mainly women and children – are in ‘last resort’ sites in the northwest and planned camps and collective centres in the northeast. Some 86 percent of the 1.8 million IDPs in sites in the northwest are also in Idlib and Aleppo governorates and were enduring extremely harsh living conditions even before the earthquakes. An additional 278 400 IDPs live in over 260 sites in the northeast (HNO 2023, December 2022).

Conflict-driven population displacements continued throughout 2022 ranging from 7 000 to 11 000 new displacements per month on average in the northwest. In the northeast, 3 000 new arrivals were reported in camps (HNO 2023, December 2022). The earthquakes led to additional displacement due to destroyed, damaged or unsafe shelter: in the immediate aftermath, more

than 30 000 displacement movements were recorded in the northwest between 6 February and 8 February 2023 (OCHA, February 2023).

Although no specific food security or nutrition assessments are available, surveys indicate that IDPs are vulnerable to both; two-thirds of IDPs across the country report needing access to livelihoods (68 percent) and basic services (67 percent), and more than half (55 percent) need food (HNO 2023, December 2022).

According to community-level assessments conducted by IOM partners, IDPs mentioned the lack of job opportunities and required skills to qualify for jobs as the primary reasons for lacking a stable income (IOM, December 2022).

Those in camps and informal sites reside in tents or makeshift shelters that are often damaged, overcrowded and inadequate during the winter and rainy seasons. In 2022, 30 percent of IDP sites in the northwest flooded, affecting over 540 000 people (HNO 2023, December 2022).

WASH infrastructure is inadequate. According to the WASH sector’s household assessment, only 39 percent of IDP sites are connected to sewage networks, with implications for public health evidenced most recently by a cholera outbreak. In the northwest, only 21 percent of camps are connected to water networks, leaving the majority of IDPs reliant on expensive sources of safe drinking water (HNO 2023, December 2022).

Overburdened host communities and IDPs who have returned to their (often damaged or destroyed) areas of origin (mainly in Idlib and Rural Damascus) face significant challenges meeting their basic needs. Surveys suggest that conditions, whether physical, material, psychosocial or legal safety, are not yet conducive to return anywhere in the country and expressed intention to return to places of origin remains low (HNO 2023, December 2022).



Refugees The Syrian Arab Republic is home to more than 438 000 Palestine refugees. Around 420 000 of them are in need of food assistance. Most (82 percent) live on less than USD 1.90 a day (UNRWA, January 2023).

Of the 35 000 children living in detention-like camps, such as Al-Hol and Al-Roj in the northeast, 12 000 are Syrians, 16 200 are Iraqis and 6 800 are from 60 other nationalities. During 2022, 405 third-country national women and children were repatriated, and 2 367 Iraqis voluntarily returned to Iraq (UNICEF, February 2023).

Since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011, protection for refugees has seriously deteriorated, with over half of the Palestine refugees in the country displaced by violence at least once, including 120 000 who sought safety in neighbouring countries, mainly Lebanon and Jordan (UNHCR, December 2021; UNWRA, March 2021).

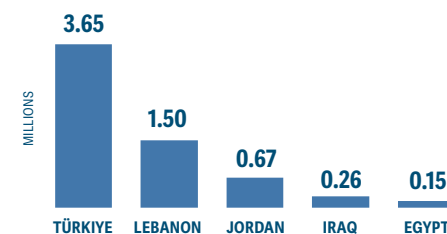
Syrians hosted in neighbouring countries

The protracted nature of the Syrian crisis has led to increased needs and deepening vulnerabilities among most of the 6.8 million Syrian refugees, dispersed across Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, many of whom are now past their twelfth year of displacement (3RP, February 2023).

During 2022, the number of Syrian refugees in host countries remained relatively stable, without major influxes, onward movements or large-scale returns. Between January and November 2022, UNHCR verified the return of around 47 600, with few intending to repatriate within the next 12 months (only 1.7 percent at the beginning of 2022) (3RP, February 2023).

In this context of protracted displacement and limited opportunities for durable solutions, the COVID-19 crisis and war in Ukraine aggravated pre-existing structural challenges and vulnerabilities in all neighbouring host countries. Overstretched resources and capacity of social safety nets in some countries as well as limited accessibility to refugees resulted in refugee families resorting to harmful coping strategies, such as meal reduction, child labour and child marriage (3RP, February 2023).

Numbers of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries



According to UNHCR, around 814 700 Syrians are registered as refugees in Lebanon. However, according to the Government of Lebanon, an additional 685 300 Syrian refugees are not registered, bringing the total number of Syrian refugees to 1.5 million.

Source: 3RP.

The worsening situation for Syrian refugees has been highlighted by needs assessments conducted in all host countries. For instance, the percentage of the population in IPC Phase 3 or above ranged from 55–60 percent in seven districts of Lebanon (IPC, December 2022).

In Jordan, findings of the Food Security Outcome Monitoring for the second quarter of 2022 showed that 77 percent of refugees living in host communities were food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity (3RP, February 2023).

In Türkiye, according to the latest Inter-Agency Protection Sector Needs Assessment, 90 percent of refugees could not fully cover their monthly expenses or basic needs, while 94 percent adopted a survival strategy by reducing food consumption and borrowing money (3RP, February 2023). According to government estimates, more than 1.7 million Syrian refugees lived in the ten southern Turkish provinces devastated by the earthquakes in early February 2023 (UNHCR, February 2023).

In Egypt, 46 percent of the Syrian population was estimated to be living under the national poverty line in 2022 with 28.5 percent scoring poor or borderline food consumption. In Iraq, 86 percent of refugees living in camps remained food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity (3RP, February 2023).

NUTRITION

Number of children under 5 years old with wasting, 2022



544 800 pregnant and lactating women acutely malnourished, 2022

Source: HNO 2023, December 2022.

The number of children suffering from wasting was estimated at about 363 500 in 2022, including 75 700 severely wasted children, representing a significant deterioration compared with 236 380 wasted children in 2021, of whom 51 000 were severely wasted (HNO 2023, December 2022). This followed a significant increase in 2021, when the number of wasted children was about 42 percent higher compared with the estimated levels in 2020 (HNO, 2022).

Maternal malnutrition is concerning, with acute malnutrition prevalence ranging from 11 percent in the northwest and parts of Damascus to 25 percent in the northeast. Overall, about 544 800 pregnant and lactating women suffered from moderate acute malnutrition in 2022, including about 460 100 suffering from anaemia.

An estimated 610 000 children below 5 years of age were stunted in 2022, with stunting prevalence ranging from 25 percent to 28 percent across different geographical areas (HNO 2023, December 2022).

This alarming situation in 2022, which was estimated before the earthquakes hit northwestern areas in early February 2023, is likely to deteriorate further due to the catastrophic impact on the children and families from the most affected areas. The earthquakes left hundreds of thousands in precarious conditions in temporary shelters, often facing freezing temperatures, while they

also caused widespread damage to schools and other essential infrastructure, further jeopardizing the health, nutrition and wellbeing of an estimated 2.5 million children and their families (UNICEF, February 2023).

Drivers of undernutrition

Food insecurity and lack of access to healthy diets High levels of food insecurity, in terms of both quantity and quality, was the major driver of increasing malnutrition rates among children and women in the Syrian Arab Republic. The deteriorating macroeconomic situation and sharp decline in household purchasing power made access to food more difficult (HNO 2023, December 2022).

Inadequate maternal and child-feeding practices Gender-based violence (GBV), exacerbated by poverty and protracted conflict, has been identified as a key driver for the worsening nutrition situation and an important barrier for uptake of optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices (HNO 2023, December 2022). In the northwest, only 56 percent of infants under 6 months are exclusively breastfed and fewer than 5 percent of children aged 6–23 months received the Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD), a decrease from almost 11 percent in 2021 (SMART, 2022).

More than 460 100 pregnant and lactating women and around 721 400 children suffer from anaemia, representing 25 percent of the under-5 population, indicating a 'moderate' public health problem (HNO 2023, December 2022).

Limited access to health and nutrition services The Syrian healthcare system is overstretched and fragile. The years of conflict have severely disrupted people's access to basic services, including healthcare, as well as its availability and quality, which compounds household vulnerabilities and contributes significantly to malnutrition. In 2022, 41 percent of public hospitals and 43 percent of primary health care facilities were either partially functioning or not functioning (HNO 2023, December 2022).

Poor household environment Access to WASH services decreased in 2022, with almost half a million more people in acute need of WASH assistance and an additional 10 percent of subdistricts reported to

be in severe need. Power shortages across the country have affected the functionality of water systems, including distribution to households (HNO 2023, December 2022). Inadequate rainfall, low water levels in the Euphrates River and mismanagement of water systems also affected the quantity and quality of water. Access to safe water and sanitation is a major concern following the February earthquakes in northwestern areas (UNICEF, February 2023).

High prevalence of infectious diseases The lack of safe water means that up to 52 percent of the population rely on unsafe water sources to meet or complement their needs and contributed to recurrent water-borne and vector-borne disease outbreaks (HNO 2023, December 2022). Not only were there outbreaks of COVID-19, measles, acute watery diarrhoea and leishmaniasis, but the unsafe water also led to a major cholera outbreak in September 2022 – the first one in decades. The outbreak exerted more stress on the fragile healthcare system and exacerbated the existing challenges people face accessing essential healthcare and nutrition services. This may lead to the number of severely wasted children increasing sharply in 2023 (HNO 2023, December 2022).