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# COVID-19: INCREASED VULNERABILITY AMONG REFUGEES IN TURKEY

## INTERSECTORAL VULNERABILITY SURVEY

The COVID-19 pandemic is both a public health emergency and a humanitarian crisis affecting the lives, health, and livelihoods of people and communities around the world. For many of those most vulnerable, including refugees, the pandemic has brought on new challenges, risks, and threats.

A large-scale remote survey was conducted by the Turkish Red Crescent and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) under the EU-funded Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) to better understand the severity of humanitarian conditions across different refugee groups<sup>1</sup> in Turkey; identify further information needs and help improve the ESSN programme and accountability to the refugee population.

The research has found that the socio-economic situation brought on by COVID-19 has significantly eroded the ability of refugees to meet their basic needs. Cash assistance through ESSN is providing refugees with an important financial buffer compared to ones who do not receive assistance; however, the economic pressures have affected everyone significantly. Their resources and coping strategies have been exhausted, debt levels are rising, and if restrictions continue, the needs of refugees could increase dramatically. Although ESSN supports the most vulnerable households, the needs among refugees not receiving ESSN is growing and could soon equal the proportion of those ESSN targets.



### CASH ASSISTANCE

through ESSN is providing refugees with an important financial buffer



### THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE IN NEED COULD DOUBLE

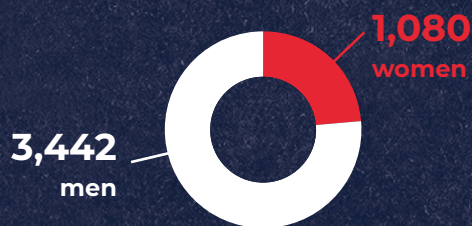
in the coming months if COVID-19 restrictions continue

BETWEEN AUGUST 2020 - FEBRUARY 2021, WE SURVEYED:



### 4,000 HOUSEHOLDS

(25,918 individuals)  
through phone surveys



### 97%

were Syrian and Iraqi refugees

<sup>1</sup> Households receiving cash assistance are identified as "eligible" while those not receiving support are "non-eligible"



## FINDING 1

### SHARP INCREASE IN DEBT AND UNEMPLOYMENT DUE TO COVID-19

The primary source of income for most refugees surveyed are from unskilled or semi-skilled labor positions, such as construction, manufacturing, food, agriculture and hospitality. With COVID-19 restrictions, these income sources have been severely impacted. This has sent debt levels to skyrocket.



**70%**  
increase in debt  
over the past year

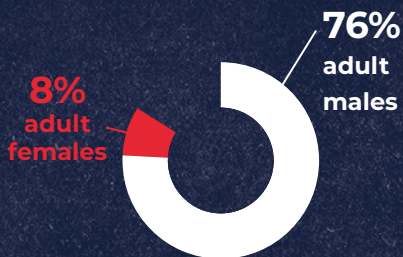


**70%**  
are buying food  
on credit



**62%**  
are borrowing  
money to cope

Most of income sources  
come from men:



## FINDING 2

### FAMILIES ARE STRUGGLING TO AFFORD ESSENTIAL ITEMS, LIKE FOOD, HOUSING AND ENERGY

Food, housing and energy are considered the top priority needs by those surveyed and account for 74% of the total monthly expenses. To cover these costs, families have to sacrifice other important expenses, including education, communication and health-related costs.

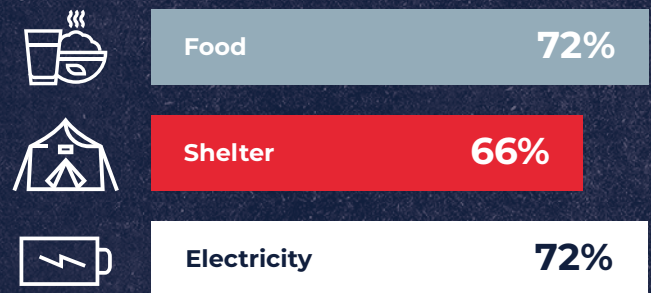


**59%** said they can rarely afford basic needs, like food, shelter, water and sanitation.



**38%** have at least one child not attending the online school curriculum

Essential needs that people struggle to afford:

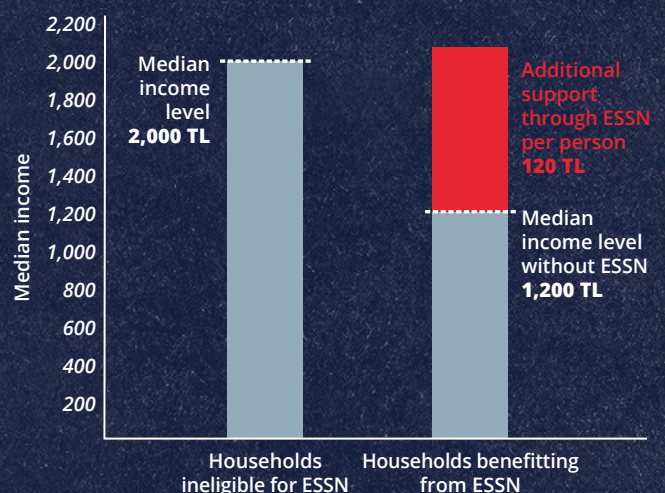


## FINDING 3

### CASH ASSISTANCE HAS PROVIDED REFUGEES WITH AN IMPORTANT FINANCIAL BUFFER, BUT NEGATIVE COPING STRATEGIES STILL EXIST FOR ALL REFUGEES

ESSN has been supporting 1.8 million refugees in Turkey since April 2020. Millions of refugees have benefitted from monthly cash assistance to help them pay for the things they need most. While this is providing a critical financial buffer to cover the things they need most, the current economic situation in Turkey coupled with a global pandemic puts a massive burden on refugees' shoulders. Families are reducing their most critical needs, including food, which means they are decreasing the number of meals they can provide or the types of nutritious foods that maintain a healthy diet.

ESSN is providing a critical financial buffer





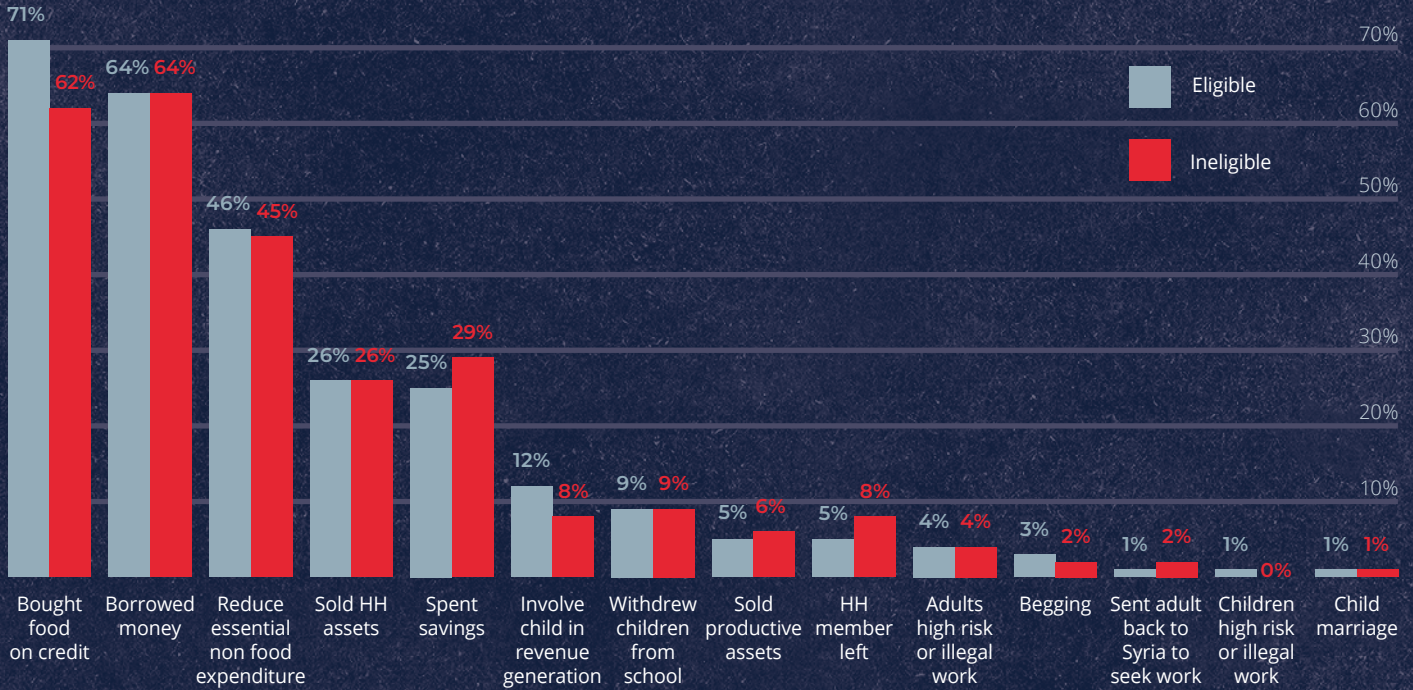


**1 in 4** said they have exhausting nearly all their resources, buying food on credit, borrowing money and reducing other essential items



**79%** said they are reducing their number of meals and portion sizes as well as buying cheaper less-desired food

Without enough money to afford basic needs, households have been forced to cope in the following ways:



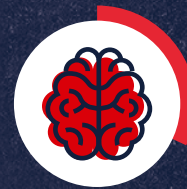
## FINDING 4

### PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH HAS DETERIORATED

Common health issues have been reported by half the households interviewed but are not access services, suggesting that families are delaying a visit for economic reasons or fear of COVID-19 infections.



**16%** said their general physical and mental well-being conditions have seriously deteriorated and require immediate medical attention



**32%** of the households reported signs of psychological distress, more frequently for ineligible adults and eligible children





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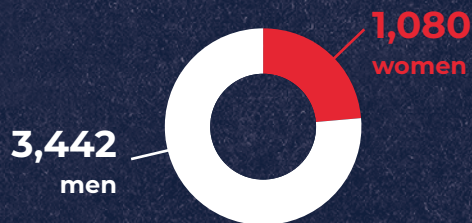


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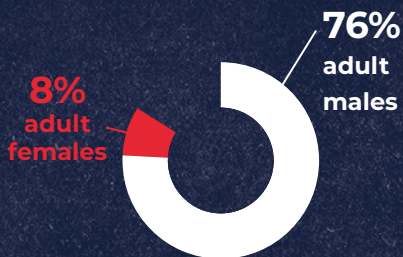


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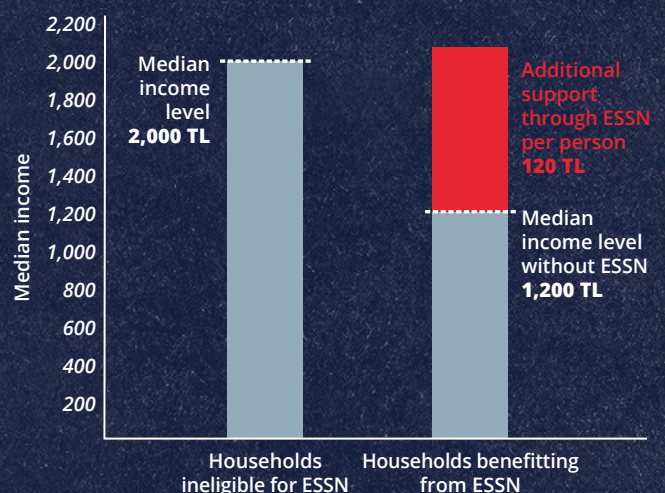


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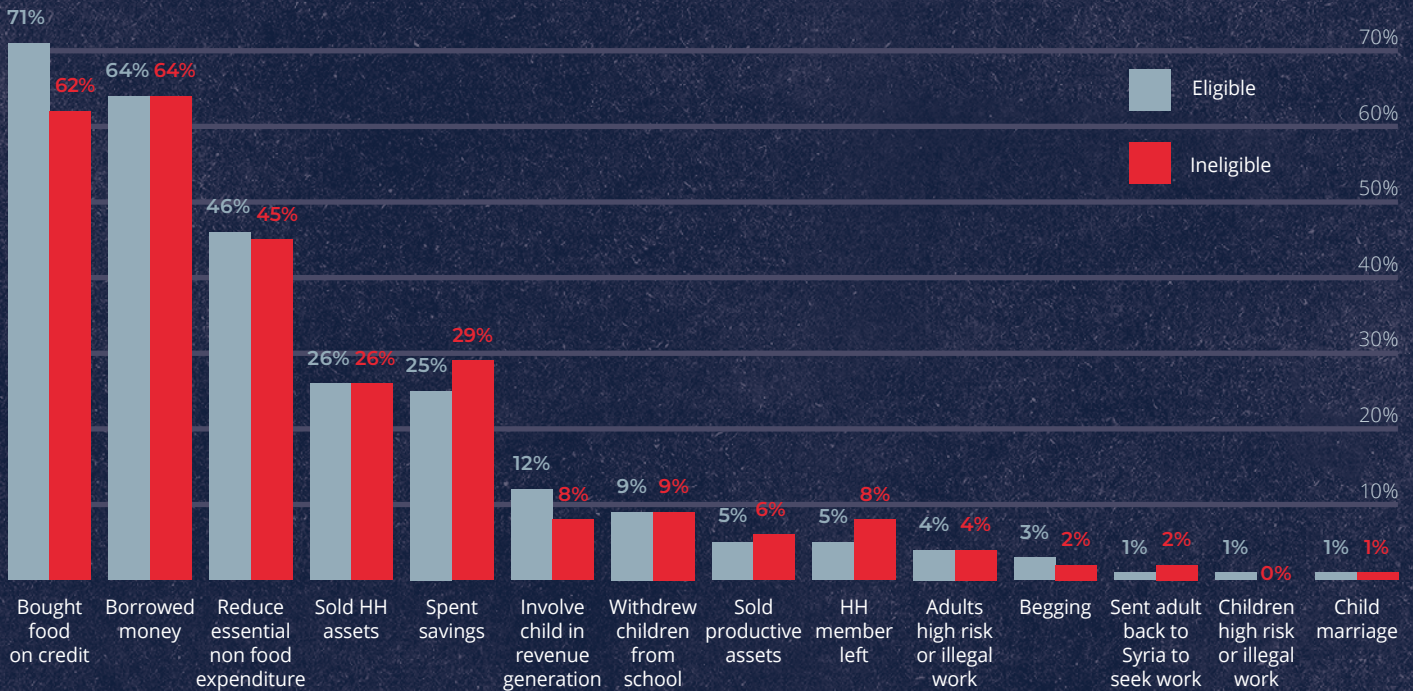


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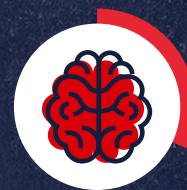
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