



DEEPENING POVERTY AND DEBT

Fact sheet:
*Socioeconomic impacts from
COVID-19 one year on in Turkey*

The enormous socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have not affected everyone equally. Many are facing reduced employment or loss of income; increased food insecurity; fewer protections against violence; and exacerbated mental health issues¹. Vulnerable groups who were already struggling before the pandemic have been hit particularly hard, including refugees. Latest research conducted by the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) with 3,208 refugee² households have shown that despite a recovery in income sources, many are struggling to pay for food, utilities and rent, among other basic needs and are falling deeper into debt³.

Families are denying themselves the necessities, including food.

Food consumption has deteriorated considerably with a 20 per cent decrease in households with acceptable food consumption. Families are decreasing the number of meals they can provide or the types of nutritious foods that maintain a healthy diet.

An increase in income and cost of living.

There was a 33 per cent increase of income due to easing lockdown restrictions among those surveyed. However, this did not compensate for the increases in expenditure. Around 88 per cent of ESSN applicant households were shown to have a level of income (excluding ESSN and CCTE) below total expenditure.



↓ **20% decrease** in households with acceptable food consumption since last



¹ IFRC, 2021: Drowning just below the surface: The socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

² Refugee is referring to foreigners who are under international protection or temporary protection according to the Law on Foreigners and International Protection. Herein the term is used to refer to their legal status

³ TRC and IFRC (2021): Deepening poverty and debt: socioeconomic impacts for refugees in Turkey one year on from COVID-19 (Findings from the Emergency Social Safety Net Post-Distribution Monitoring Survey Round 12 in Turkey

⁴ 40 per cent - 44 per cent of refugee households surveyed did not have acceptable food consumption.

⁵ 88 per cent of refugee households were shown to have income below their total expenditure.

Debt levels continue to rise as well as negative coping strategies.

Food was one of the largest burdens on families putting them deeper into debt. 80 per cent of those surveyed accumulated more debt in the last three months, with debt doubling for refugee households surveyed since the beginning of the pandemic. To cover these costs, they are also sacrificing other important expenses, including nutritious food, education, communication, and health-related costs.

Cash assistance is helping prevent many from going further into debt.

With funding from the EU, IFRC and the Turkish Red Crescent are supporting 1.5 million vulnerable refugees in Turkey. We are helping to provide regular and predictable cash assistance through debit cards so people can cover what they most critically need. The cash helps families pay for food, rent, bills, medication, among other items.

Thanks to the cash assistance, refugees can pay for the things they need most in a dignified way and invest it back into Turkey's economy. The cash assistance has also helped ensure better inclusion by linking to the national social safety nets.



DEBT LEVELS HAVE MORE THAN DOUBLED

for refugees surveyed since the COVID-19 pandemic began⁶.



80% accumulated more debt in the last three months.



1 IN 2 households receiving assistance has said ESSN helped them manage their debt.

⁶ Median debt increased from PDM 8 to PDM 11 from 1000 TRY to 1900 TRY for ESSN recipients and from 1000 TRY to 2300 TRY for non-recipients



“Before we got the Kizilaykart, my children were working. They brought some money home, but it was never enough. We were forced to go into debt.”¹⁰



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