



CAPTURING THE RESILIENCE OF REFUGEES IN TURKIYE AMIDST PRE-DISASTER STRUGGLES

FINDINGS OF POST DISTRIBUTION MONITORING SURVEY (ROUND 16) | MARCH 2023



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PHOTO CREDITS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

About the program

The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program provides unrestricted, unconditional cash assistance to people living under temporary or international protection in Turkey to help them meet their basic needs. The ESSN is funded by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and implemented through a partnership of the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS), the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Türk Kızılay. As of January 2023, the ESSN has provided monthly assistance to over 1.6 million people.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of ESSN assistance on the socio-economic conditions of recipients, with a particular focus on their level of expenditure, debt, coping strategies, and food consumption. Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) aims to track changes over time and compare the experiences of ESSN recipient and non-recipient households.

Objectives of the study

- 1 To measure the extent to which minimum expenses such as food, rent, utilities, non-food items (NFI), health, education, etc. are met.
- 2 To determine if/how income, debt, and expenditure are critical in understanding households' economic resilience.
- 3 To determine the severity of the coping strategies adopted when facing economic/financial difficulties.
- 4 To assess how secure food consumption habits are.

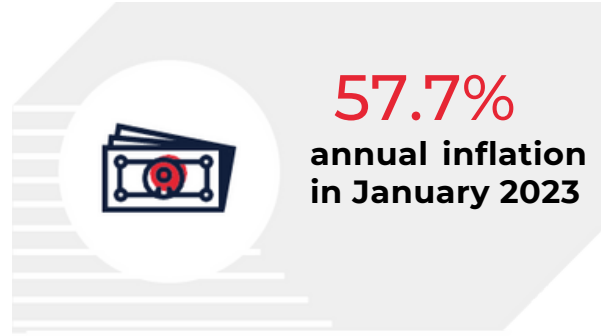


ESSN assistance especially helps with rent expenses. I used to worry when it was time to pay rent, now I'm better thanks to the card. Apart from that, our food consumption has increased and we started to consume more meat and vegetables.

Male, ESSN Recipient, Gaziantep

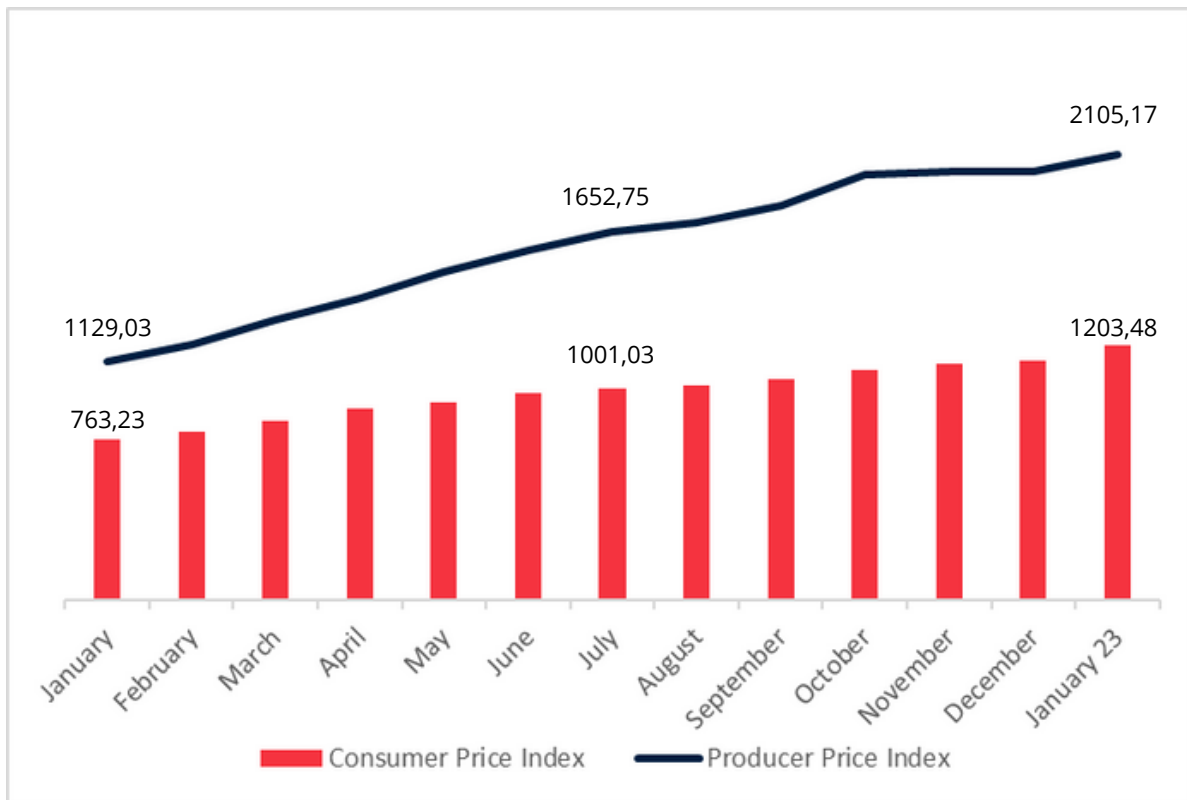
Background & statistics

Since late 2021, there has been an ongoing increase in the cost of living in the country. In January 2023, annual inflation was about 58 per cent. Prices of main expenditure items, namely food, rent, and utilities continue to increase up to this day.¹ It is unclear how the inflation is going to be impacted after the earthquakes.



The earthquakes which affected 11 provinces in South-East Türkiye has irreversibly changed lives of over 16 million people, including refugees. Approximately 49² per cent of registered refugees used to live in Kahramanmaraş, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kilis, Osmaniye, Adana, and other earthquake affected provinces while this was 47³ per cent for ESSN recipients. People lost their lives, homes, and livelihoods, sustained injuries and also relocated as a result of the earthquake. Estimated 2⁴ per cent of refugees living in the area went back to their country of origin. Hence, the earthquake has changed demographics in the affected area, which makes this study the last one that informs regarding pre-disaster population living in the affected area.

Figure 1: Annual Rate of Changes in CPI and PPI (%)



1 • According to Turk Stat, the annual inflation for food and non-alcoholic beverages was 71 per cent; for housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, it was 56.24 per cent. For more detailed information, please visit: <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Tuketici-Fiyat-Endeksi-Ocak-2023-49655>
2 • For more detailed information, please visit: <https://goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638>
3 • November 2022 Türk Kızılay Admin Data
4 • For more detailed information, please visit: <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/bakan-akar-40-42-bin-suriyeli-ulkelerine-guvenli-ve-gonullu-olarak-dondu-749594.html>

CHAPTER 2: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Research design

This PDM 16 survey adopted a cross-sectional research design, hence findings provide information only about the period when the data was collected. Since data was collected before the earthquakes, the study provides information regarding the situation of ESSN applicant households before the earthquake. Most of the earthquake-affected provinces are located in the South-east region; hence, regional comparisons are provided as an indication of the situation in the affected area in the report.

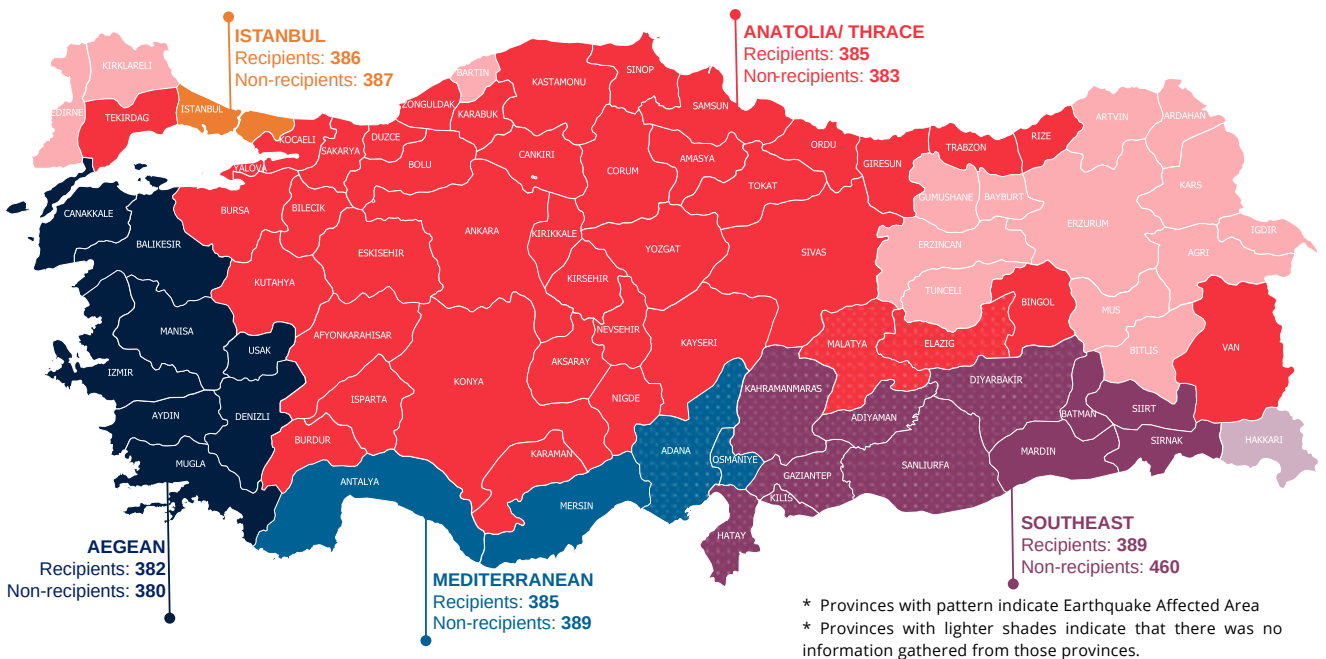
Sample

Sample sizes for both ESSN recipient and non-recipient groups were calculated at 95 per cent confidence level and 5 per cent margin of error. PDM 16 was conducted between November 2022 - January 2023, capturing responses from 1,927 ESSN recipients and 1,924 non-recipients. Comparisons were drawn using the results from PDM 15 which was conducted between June and October 2022. Data was collected by enumerators from Türk Kızılay's 168 Call Centre in Gaziantep through phone surveys.

Area of study

Regional stratification based on the proportion of applicant households was applied for sampling. The Aegean, Anatolia, Istanbul, Mediterranean, and South-east regions were used as stratum based on the similarities in the programme application figures and relatively in socio-economic dynamics. Besides, Istanbul, the main commercial city of Turkey, was accepted as a stratum by itself because of its distinct socio-economic status⁵. Independent random samples were drawn from these five regions as per Figure 1.

Figure 1: Map of Study Area



⁵ The province is also considered an independent stratum by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat).

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

Income

From PDM 15 to PDM 16, median household income for paid labour slightly increased from 4,500 TRY to 4,800 TRY for ESSN recipients (excluding ESSN and CCTE assistance) whilst it rose from 4,500 TRY to 5,500 TRY for non-recipients.

Compared to Istanbul, which is the region with the highest household income amount, South-east region, where most of the earthquake-affected provinces are located, has considerably lower income for both ESSN recipients and non-recipients. Furthermore, unskilled labour is still the main source of income for both ESSN recipient (63 per cent) and non-recipient (57 per cent) households. The fact that many people in the region lost their livelihoods after the earthquakes indicates that, it is safe to assume that their income levels will be severely affected.

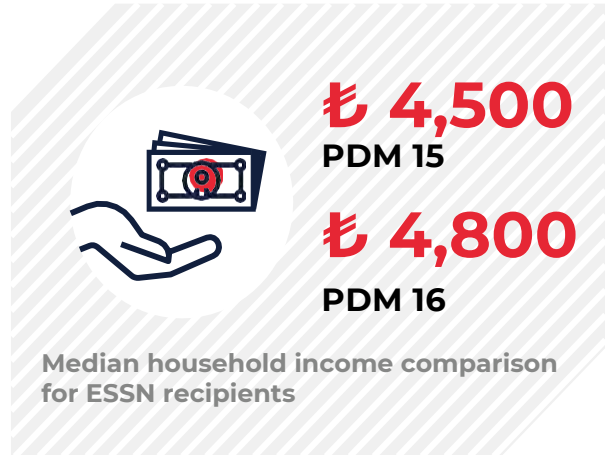
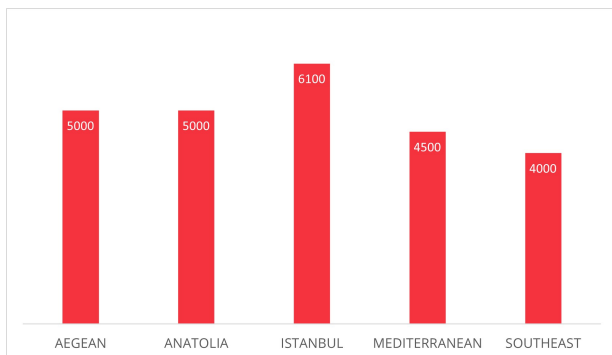


Figure 2: Median Labour Income



Furthermore, for ESSN recipient households, ESSN card (23 per cent) and skilled labour (12 per cent) constitute the other main sources of income. In addition, the South-east region has the least median labour income amount as shown in Figure 2. ESSN recipient households in the Southeast region relies heavily on unskilled labour for income (63 per cent), Kızılaykart (29 per cent), and skilled labour (8 per cent). Considering the infrastructural and economic devastation of the earthquake, along with a possible wave of inflation which will exacerbate the vulnerability of the people living in the region.

Expenditure

Median household expenditure reached to 9,472 TRY for ESSN recipient and 9,636 non-recipient households. The region with the highest median household expenditure for both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households was Istanbul. Istanbul was followed by Aegean and Anatolia for ESSN recipient, Anatolia and Mediterranean for non-recipient households. The study was conducted during winter, share of the clothing in household expenditure decreased and was replaced with education. A possible explanation for this can be overall increase in the prices of clothing which makes it unaffordable. Another possible explanation is, since the data was collected during school semester, the money used to be spent for clothing, might have been re-allocated for education expenses.

Figure 3: Per capita expenditure by ESSN Status

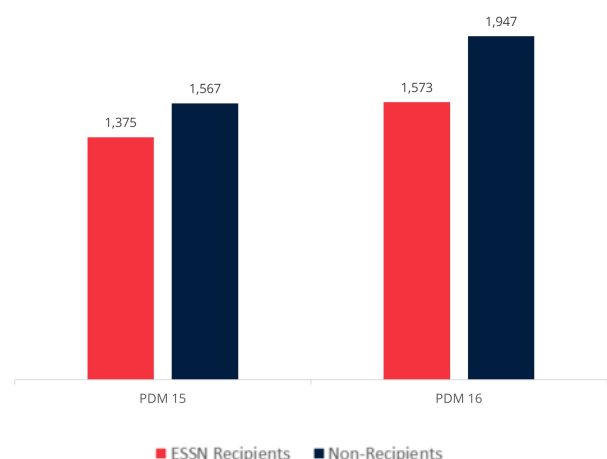
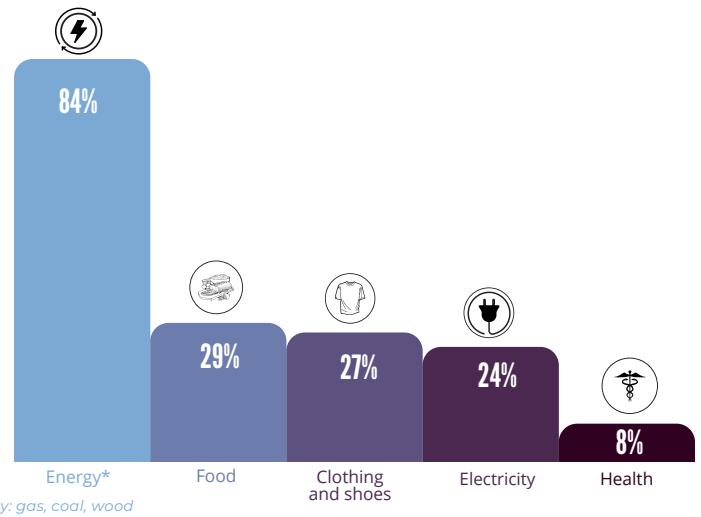


Figure 4: Winter expenditure increase



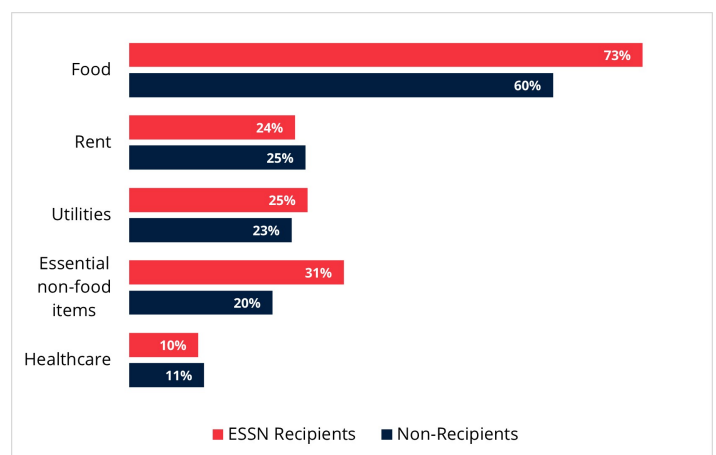
According to survey results, the largest five main expenditure items of households are food, rent, education, clothing, and utilities. Median food expenditure increased from 3,000 TRY to 3,429 TRY for ESSN recipients while it soared beyond 3,500 TRY for non-recipient households, reaching 3,643 TRY. Considering the increases in the overall household expenditure, 72,4 per cent of ESSN recipient and 70,5 per cent of non-recipient households had per capita expenditure levels above the MEB. Findings show that households with expenditure above the MEB rose for both ESSN and non-recipient households. (67 to 72,5 and 61 to 70,5 per cent respectively) compared to PDM 15 (June-October 2022).

The survey also revealed that household expenditures increase for 95 per cent of the ESSN recipient and 93 per cent of non-recipient households in winter. Energy (84 per cent), food (29 per cent), clothing & shoes (27 per cent), electricity (24 per cent), and medical expenses (8 per cent) were the expenditure items that increase in winter for most of the ESSN recipient households.

Debt

Debt continues to be part of ESSN recipient households' lives. Seventy-nine per cent of the ESSN recipient households have debt according to PDM 16 analysis results. Compared to PDM 15, the median debt amount increased slightly from 3,500 TRY to 3,600 TRY for ESSN recipients, while it increased a lot more for non-recipient households, from 3,620 TRY to 4,300 TRY. Analysis indicates that borrowing for food and essential non-food items has an average of 11 per cent increase for ESSN recipient and non-recipient households which might be the underlying reason for the median debt amount increase. Local shops were still the main sources of debt for ESSN recipients (66 per cent) whereas friends and relatives were the main source of debt for non-recipient households (56 per cent). Moreover, ESSN recipient and non-recipient households borrowed to meet their most basic needs, namely food, rent, utilities, essential non-food items, and healthcare.

Figure 5: Debt reasons by ESSN Status



In Southeast region which was heavily impacted by the earthquakes, PDM16 analysis results showed that even though the region has the least amount of median total debt (3,500 TRY) comparing other regions, both the ratio of debt to expenditure (41 per cent) and debt to income (88 per cent) are high. Taking into consideration of the devastation caused by the earthquakes, the main source of debt for the recipients, local shops, may be lost which results that the recipients in the region are expected to become more vulnerable and the level of indebtedness to rise in the long term.



Coping Strategies

Reduced coping strategy index (RCSI)

Comparing PDM15 with PDM16, the rCSI score slightly decreased from 12.10 to 11.70 for ESSN recipients and stayed the same as 11.50 for non-recipient households.⁶ Relying on less preferred/ less expensive food was the most frequently adopted coping strategy for both ESSN recipient (75 per cent) and non-recipient (74 per cent) households. Around 40 per cent of participants' households shared that they reduced the number of meals and portions consumed in a day.



Livelihood coping strategy index (LCSi)

Overall, the LCSi score was almost the same compared to PDM 15 for ESSN recipient (from 3.78 to 3.88) and slightly higher for non-recipient (from 3.28 to 3.84) households.⁷

Stress coping strategies According to PDM 16, buying food on credit (72 per cent) and borrowing money from non-relatives to meet basic needs (44 per cent) were adopted the most as livelihood coping strategies by both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households. For non-recipient households these figures were 60 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively.

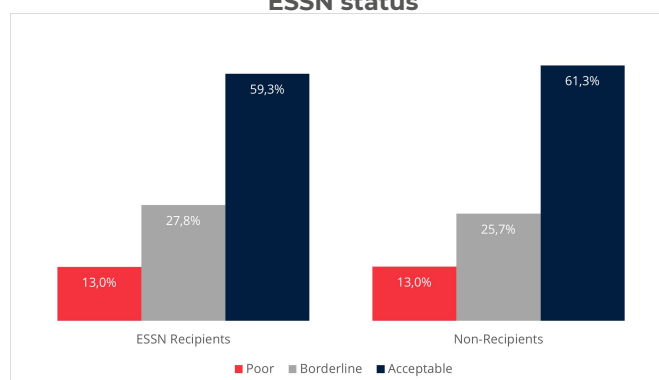
Crisis coping strategies Both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households reduced their expenditure on education (41 per cent for ESSN recipient and 28 per cent for non-recipient households) and health expenditures (32 per cent for ESSN recipient and 35 per cent for non-recipient households). In addition, 4 per cent of the ESSN recipient households withdrew their children from school while this was 2 per cent of non-recipient households.

Emergency coping strategies Both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households, involving children in income generation was the most frequently adopted emergency coping strategy (8 per cent and 6 per cent).

Food security

Food security is defined as “when all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life”.⁸ Food Consumption Score (FCS) was used in this study to measure participant households' food security levels. FCS indicates that participant households face high levels of food insecurity, ESSN recipient and non-recipient households alike.

Figure 7: Food consumption group by ESSN status



6 • There is not a statistically significant difference between ESSN recipient and non-recipient households.

7 • There is not a statistically significant difference between ESSN recipient and non-recipient households.

8 • For more detailed information, please visit: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update/what-is-food-security>

Acceptable food consumption score is still rising. The percentage of households with acceptable FCS has increased for both ESSN recipients (51.5 per cent to 59.3 per cent) and non-recipient (52.1 per cent to 61.3 per cent) households compared to PDM 15. This might be related to the higher food expenditure levels of the ESSN recipient households which increased (3,000 TRY to 3,429 TRY) from PDM 15 to PDM 16.

Furthermore, the Southeast region has the least score for both acceptable food consumption (57.8 per cent) and mean Food Consumption Score (48,6) in comparison to the other regions. Given the fact that food is still among one of the priority needs in the earthquake-affected region,⁹ the gap between the regions in regard to FCS is expected to become even more significant.

Conclusion

With the devastating earthquakes that hit the Southeast region of Türkiye, 16 million people in over 11 provinces have been affected, including refugees. Almost half of the refugees and half of the ESSN recipient households were residing in the earthquake-affected region when the disaster happened. Hence, understanding their situation before the earthquakes is essential to foresee and respond to new vulnerabilities that emerged afterwards. The findings show that, despite the support provided to ESSN recipient households, they were in a vulnerable situation, even before the earthquakes and disaster is expected only to exacerbate the situation for at least half of these households.

Increase in household expenditure exceeds the increase in income and as a result, the gap between them becomes even larger. Taking into account the increase in expenses of households in winter, findings show that households with expenditure level above the MEB have increased compared to PDM 15.

Debt is still a part of both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households' lives. In the Southeast region in particular, debt levels correspond to 41 per cent of the household expenditure. Compared to PDM 15, borrowing for food and non-food items increased by 11 per cent on average for ESSN and non-recipient households. ESSN recipient households continued to rely on local shops as their main source of debt, whereas it was friends and relatives as the main source of debt for non-recipient households.



Even though there is a slight decrease in the RCSI and an increase in the FCS scores for ESSN recipient households compared to PDM 15 results, they still adopt food-related negative coping strategies more than non-recipient households.

The Southeast region suffered extensive damage to its infrastructure and housing due to the earthquakes. As a result, the region's economy and livelihoods have been severely affected, leaving the people more vulnerable. With many people now relocated and facing economic hardship, the long-term effects of the earthquakes are likely to be significant, making it more difficult for the region to recover and rebuild. It is important to support the people and communities in the Southeast region to help them overcome the challenges posed by earthquakes and increase their resilience to future disasters.

All in all, considering the impact of the earthquakes, the findings suggest that at least half of the ESSN recipient households will experience difficulties in the near future. In addition, there might be new households with vulnerabilities. Hence, further steps need to be taken to identify and support those who were affected with improvement of the programme and with future collaborations.

⁹ For more detailed information, please visit: <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-rushes-vital-food-assistance-families-syria-and-turkiye-affected-devastating-earthquakes>

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