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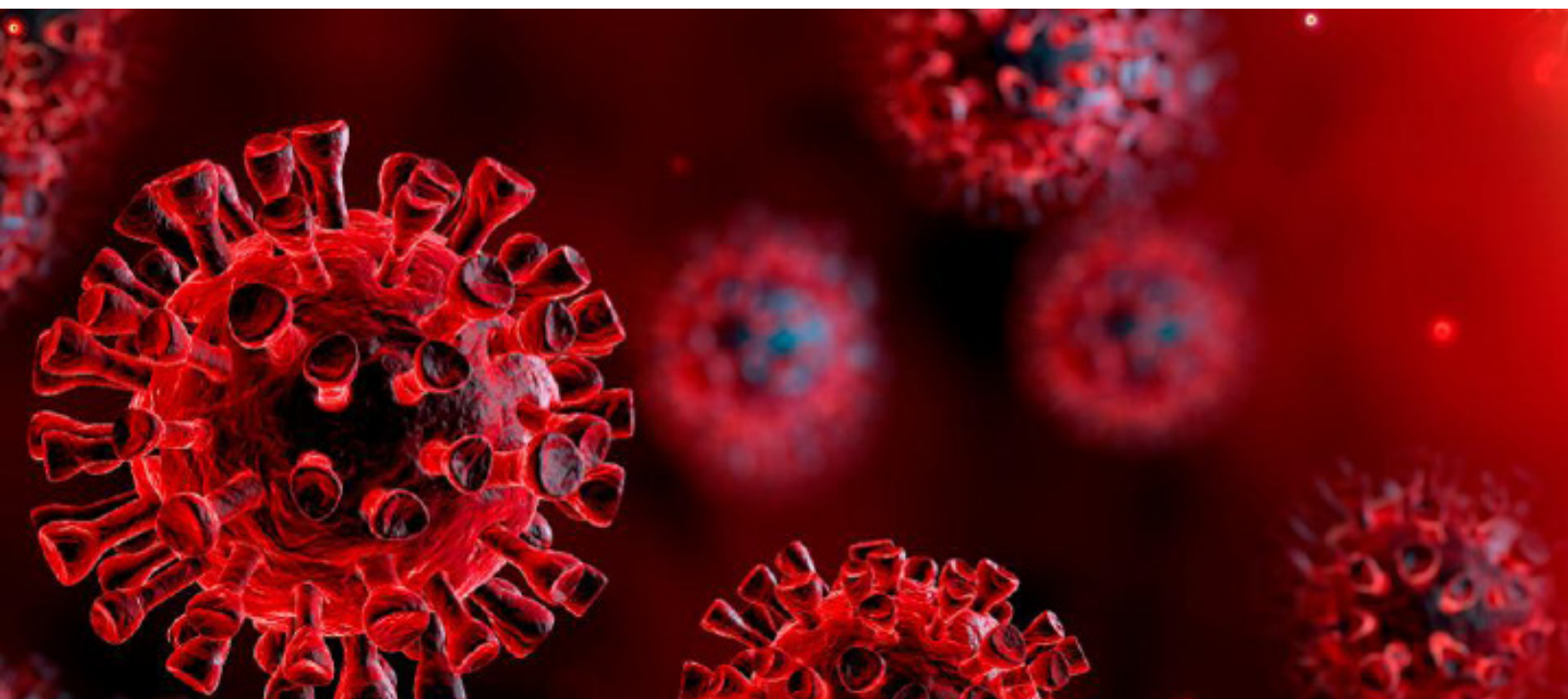


COVID-19 SITUATION ANALYSIS

SECOND ANNUAL REVIEW - NUTRITION,
SHELTER, LOGISTICS, EDUCATION, AND
WASH SECTORS.



July 2020 - August 2021



Better Data | Better Decisions | Better Outcomes






This report is the result of a secondary data review exercise that cross-analyzes a number of cited information sources, including the media. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, the United States Government, the humanitarian clusters for Syria or any one of their individual sources.

The outbreak of disease caused by the virus known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV-2) or COVID-19 started in China in December 2019. The virus quickly spread across the world, with the WHO Director-General declaring it as a pandemic on March 11th, 2020.

The virus's impact has been felt most acutely by countries facing humanitarian crises due to conflict and natural disasters. As humanitarian access to vulnerable communities has been restricted to basic movements only, monitoring and assessments have been interrupted.

To overcome these constraints and provide the wider humanitarian community with timely and comprehensive information on the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, iMMAP initiated the *COVID-19 Situational Analysis project* with the support of the USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (USAID BHA), aiming to provide timely solutions to the growing global needs for assessment and analysis among humanitarian stakeholders.

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INTRODUCTION

About this report

Food, livelihoods, WASH, education and protection needs were significantly exacerbated in Syria by the economic consequences of COVID-19 related restrictions. While the COVID-19 outbreak might be perceived as a public health emergency, with a response oriented towards the containment of the epidemic and treatment of patients, the range of interventions and policies implemented also led to significant additional secondary impacts. A decade of conflict, mass displacements, economic shocks in the country and neighboring countries, military operations, and violence had already severely affected the population and infrastructure, with high levels of cross-sectoral needs, diminishing capacities to face this new shock. These additional disruptions of public and private services complexified even further the humanitarian landscape in Syria.

The BHA COVID-19 support project, implemented by IMMAP and DFS in six countries (DRC, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Syria, and Colombia), has been analyzing the main concerns and unmet needs that have emerged across humanitarian sectors due to the COVID-19 pandemic since the summer of 2020. Now over a decade of conflict, economic challenges over the past years, and high levels of vulnerabilities, untangling the specific effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on humanitarian needs from other factors at play in the country has been challenging.

However, across all sectors, three main drivers were identified:

- Containment measures such as lockdowns and curfews exacerbated existing inequalities and significantly impacted sources of livelihood, an impact lasting even beyond the end of such measures, and hampered access to services (health, protection, education).
- Rising prices, coupled with lower income and devaluation of the currency, and compounded by COVID-19 measures such as closure of borders and disrupted market supplies, resulted in unaffordability being the main challenge reported across sectors, especially food and WASH.
- Fear of COVID-19 among the population and stigmatization had harmful effects on willingness or ability to utilize services, notably health and, to a lower extent, education.

This report reviews the data collected between July 2020 and August 2021 and highlights the main issues and evolution of humanitarian needs in Syria. This review was divided into two parts. The [first report published in July 2021](#) presented an overview of the epidemiological situation in the three areas of control over the past year, as well as the containment measures implemented by authorities in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. It also highlighted the macro and microeconomic developments that have emerged over the year and the impact of these developments on Displacement trends and the Livelihood, Food Security, Agriculture and Protection sectors. This new report focuses on the evolution of knowledge, attitude and practices of the population towards COVID-19 and the impact of the crisis on the Nutrition, WASH, Education, Logistics and Shelter sectors.

NUTRITION

Even before the pandemic, suboptimal child feeding practices, high rates of maternal malnutrition and poor care practices, as well as high levels of conflict and insecurity, food insecurity, and reduced access to health facilities contributed to the poor nutritional status of the population ([OCHA](#) 10/09/2020). COVID-19 related disruptions, leading

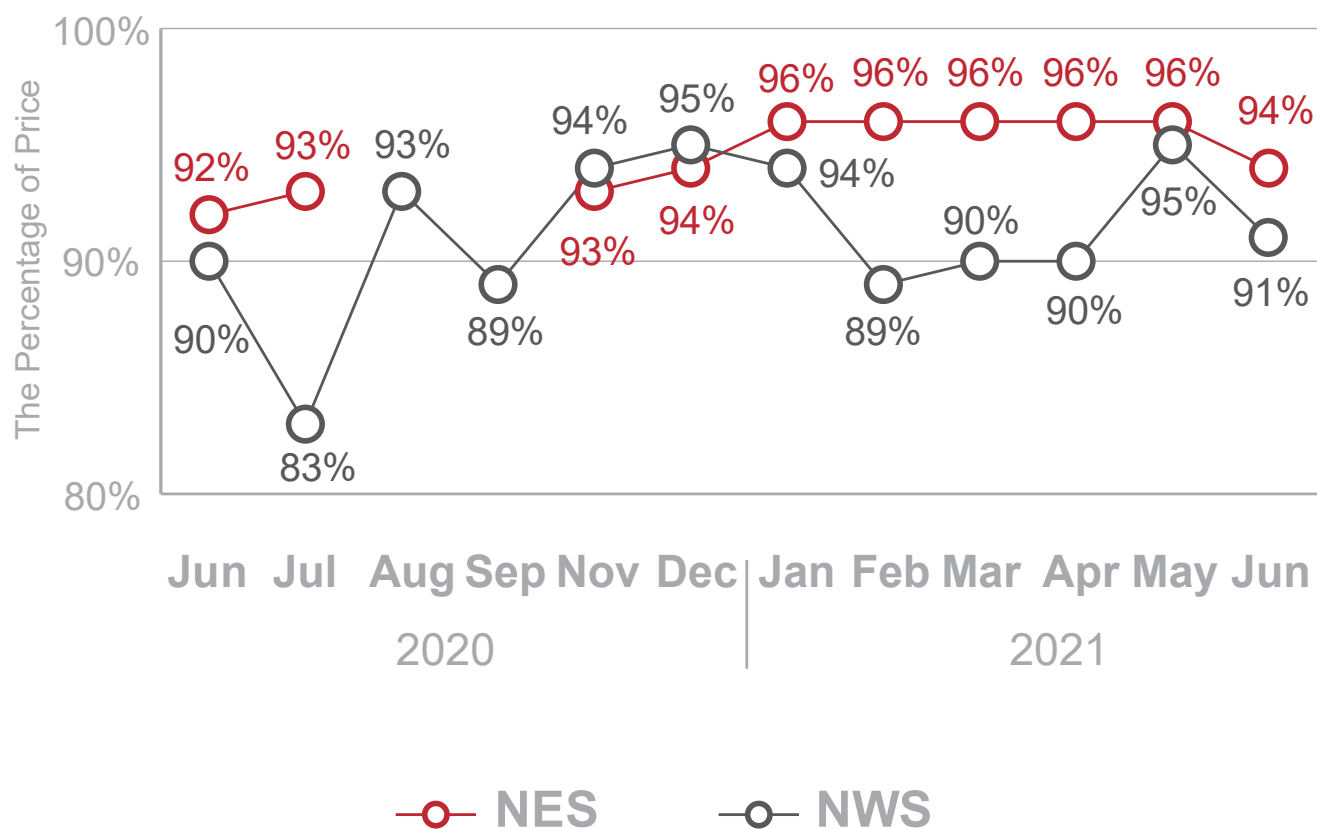
to dysfunctional markets, worsening economic conditions, limited livelihoods opportunities, inflation, low purchasing power, increased food insecurity, and further reductions or disruptions of health and WASH services exacerbated the situation ([OCHA](#) 21/10/2020, [IRC](#) 22/10/2020).

Worsened dietary quality and diversity

With increasing levels of food insecurity emerging throughout 2020 as a result of COVID-19 disruptions and related worsened economic conditions, dietary quality and diversity have been negatively affected. Studies have shown that food-insecure households consume less meat and fewer fresh fruits and vegetables; a practice that, if prolonged, can result in higher risk of stunting or chronic malnutrition among children ([Save the Children](#) 28/09/2020, [FAO](#) 2020). 60% of households ate protein fewer than two times a week from October 2020 to March 2021, half the level than during 2019. Among households with inadequate food consumption, 60% only ate protein one time a week in November 2020. As with every year, the Ramadan months, April and May in 2021, saw a slight improvement of the food security situation. Households reported an increase in the consumption of animal-source protein in April, on average two times a week. While this was the highest average consumption rate of protein over the past six months, this trend however remained below the levels reported during the month of Ramadan in 2020, when households consumed animal-source protein on average three times a week ([WFPmVAM](#) 05/2020-06/2021). High water shortages, particularly experienced in the northeast ([REACH Initiative](#) 23/06/2021), as well as further rise expected in bread prices, limiting further access to food, is expected to exacerbate children's malnutrition in the coming months.

Due to the inflation, affordability issues also contributed to lack of access to adequate diet for infants. The high price of suitable food or formula was the most commonly reported challenge to feed young children from June 2020 to June 2021, by almost all key informants in assessed communities in both northwest and northeast Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021).

Figure 1. Communities reporting high price of suitable food formula as a challenge to feed young kids in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021)



Rising levels of malnutrition in 2020–2021

Due to the worsening economic crisis, a significant increase in severe food insecurity levels was recorded in 2020 ([WFP](#) 23/03/2021), leading to a notable deterioration of the nutrition situation, with both increasing acute and chronic malnutrition, particularly among IDPs and in the northwest ([Needs and Response Summary](#) 22/02/2021). An estimated 3.7 million people were in acute need of nutrition interventions as of May 2021 ([Nutrition Sector WoS](#) 28/05/2021), with almost 90,000 children under five acutely malnourished across the country ([Needs and Response Summary](#) 22/02/2021).

No comparably detailed data has been released since, however the latest trend in 2020 highlighted a severe deterioration of the nutrition situation, with a rising number of admissions in treatment centers of malnourished children with complications, an increase by two-folds in some districts compared to early 2020 ([Needs and Response Summary](#) 22/02/2021). In northwest Syria, a 55% increase in cases of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) was recorded between January 2020 and January 2021 ([OCHA](#) 02/03/2021). The prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) doubled over the same period, reaching the severe emergency standard of 2% ([OCHA](#) 21/10/2020), with hospital admissions for severely malnourished children increasing by over 70% from March 2020 compared to the same period in 2019 ([OCHA](#) 21/12/2020, [Nutrition Sector](#) 08/12/2020). Similarly, the prevalence of chronic malnutrition among under-five children increased from 19% to 34% between May 2019 and October 2020 ([Nutrition Sector](#) 08/12/2020). Precise data is lacking for the northeast, but available evidence points to similar proportions of malnutrition, with up to one in three children suffering from stunting in some areas ([OCHA](#) 25/02/2021).

Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLWs) also reported high rates of acute malnutrition in the northwest, with 11% in October 2020 ([HNO](#) 2021), with even more serious rates in areas affected by displacement, where between 20% and 37% of mothers were reportedly malnourished ([Nutrition Sector](#) 08/12/2020) and 40% around Idlib ([HNO](#) 2021). Almost one in three pregnant women were anemic in 2021, a figure which is expected to continue rising due to the deteriorating socio-economic conditions ([Action Against Hunger](#) 12/04/2021).

Needs exacerbated by disrupted access to nutrition services

While nutrition conditions worsened, less than 20% of PLWs and under-five children were reached in 2020 ([Nutrition Sector WoS](#) 04/05/2021). In the northwest, 2,000 people in need could not be reached in 2020 by nutrition partners due to COVID-19 restrictions ([OCHA](#) 26/01/2021). On-the-job training and supervision of frontline staff remained a challenge due to COVID-19 related restrictions in this area, further preventing a rapid scale-up of the nutrition response ([OCHA](#) 18/11/2020), as well as shortages of malnutrition treatment supplies reported already from mid-September 2020 ([USAID](#) 29/09/2020).

About 6.7 million people remained internally displaced pre-COVID-19 in March 2020, with 5.65 million people across the country in need of shelter ([Shelter & NFI Sector WoS](#) 31/03/2020). The shelter situation continued to deteriorate in 2020, with higher levels of unavailability of affordable shelter reported due to lower occupancy rates in communal shelters following COVID-19 preventive measures, and continued insecurity and displacement movements in northern Syria ([Needs and Response Summary](#) 22/02/2021). As inadequate shelter is estimated to increase the risk of

illness and disease by 25% over the course of a person's lifetime, and overcrowding shelter conditions greatly increase the spread of infectious diseases, people living in poor shelter conditions are at greater health risks during the COVID-19 pandemic ([Interaction](#) 19/02/2020). Additionally, intergenerational living being common in displacement situations, elderlies were further exposed to potential contamination from other household members, with limited isolation possibilities ([GDC UNICEF](#) 03/06/2020).

Widespread poor living conditions

While no new large-scale displacement movements were reported from March 2020, a slight increase in people in need of shelter was recorded in October 2020, reaching 5.88 million people ([Shelter & NFI Sector WoS](#) 14/02/2021). Poor shelter conditions were most prevalent in Idlib, Aleppo, Rural Damascus governorates, Ar-Raqqa city and in camps in the northeast and northwest. More than 30% of people were estimated to be living in inadequate shelter conditions by the end of 2020, including emergency shelters, tents, damaged and/or unfinished buildings, public buildings such as schools, and other non-residential buildings. Displaced populations were disproportionately affected, with almost 2 million IDPs living in inadequate shelter conditions, residing in informal last-resort and spontaneous settlements ([Needs and Response Summary](#) 22/02/2021). Almost 50% of returnees lived in damaged buildings, and slightly more than 25% of IDPs resided in damaged and/or unfinished buildings or public buildings early 2021 ([HNO](#) 2021, [Shelter & NFI Sector WoS](#) 04/04/2021).

Poor living conditions, with people living in unsuitable shelter types, such as damaged houses or tents, continued to be highly reported in 2021, in more than half of the assessed locations across Syria. This was less of an issue in GoS-held areas, with the exception of Al Tall district, Rural Damascus governorate, where 90% of assessed communities reported unsuitable shelter as of April 2021 ([REACH Initiative & HNAP](#) 17/05/2021).

In the northwest, 1.5 million people, of which close to 80% were women and children, lived in 1,160 camps/sites that are often overcrowded with poor access to safe water in 2020 ([OCHA](#) 21/10/2020). Of the three million people living in Idlib, Al Jazeera reported that nearly half lived in makeshift homes and tents ([Al Jazeera](#) 02/11/2020). In the northeast, Al-Hol camp was originally designed to host a maximum number of 10,000 people but was hosting close to 70,000 in October 2019, causing high levels of overcrowding ([REACH](#) 10/2019, [WHO](#) 03/2019).

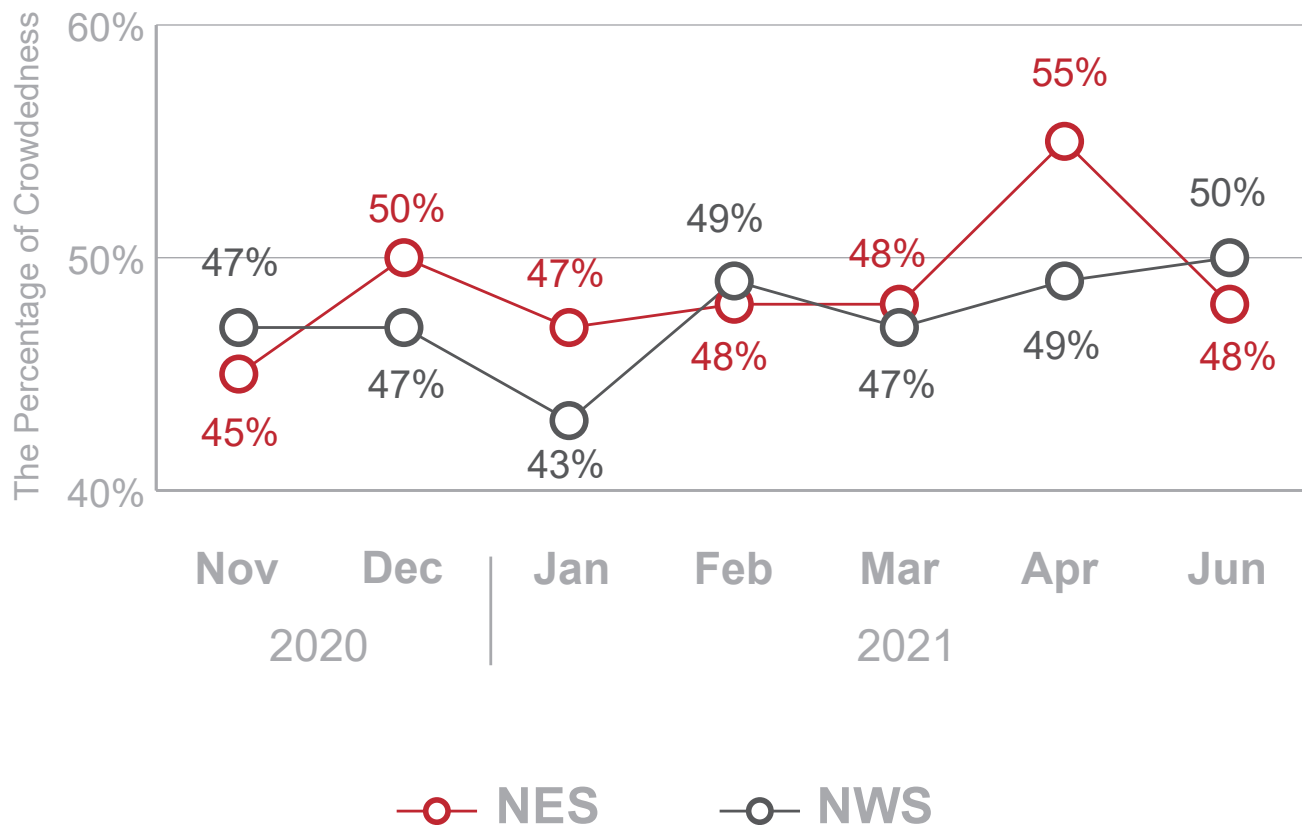
Overcrowding in camps limiting physical distancing

Crowded conditions in camps and poor access to basic services makes it nearly impossible to adhere to physical distancing or other public health precautions properly ([WHO in The Lancet](#) 31/03/20, [Al-Araby](#) 20/11/2020, [Human Rights Watch](#) 15/10/2020).

Nationwide, 25% were not in finished houses/apartments but rather in unfinished homes, tents, makeshift shelters and others as of the summer of 2021. This rises to 28% in north Syria and 56% in northwest Syria. 28% of all households reported lack of space inside their shelter, rising to 77% of those living in makeshift shelters, of which most are in northwest Syria. ([HNAP SUMMER 2021 REPORT SERIES - SHELTER SITUATION](#) 5/8/2021). Overcrowding was reported as a challenge by 17.5% of communities in the northeast, 13% in the northwest and 10% in GoS-held areas, with a striking rate of 45% in Duma district ([REACH Initiative & HNAP](#) 17/05/2021). As a result, about half of the communities with COVID-19 risk indicator reported overcrowding as a shelter inadequacy in northern Syria from November 2020 to June 2021 ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-06/2021).

Almost all camps in the northeast reported a higher number of individuals sharing a household than the national average of 5 individuals, with 5.9 individuals per shelter recorded in January 2021 in Washokani camp, Al-Hassakeh governorate ([REACH Initiative](#) 12/01/2021), 5.6 in Mahmoudli camp in Ar-Raqqa governorate ([REACH Initiative](#) 12/01/2021), and 5.4 in Abu Khashab camp in Deir-ez-Zor governorate ([REACH Initiative](#) 12/01/2021). Across informal sites and settlements in Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa governorates, all residents reported their living conditions did not allow them to practice social distancing in February 2021 ([REACH Initiative](#), [REACH Initiative](#), [REACH Initiative](#), [REACH Initiative](#) 11/05/2021).

Figure 2. Communities with COVID-19 risk indicator reporting overcrowding as shelter inadequacy in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-06/2021)



High levels of COVID-19 infection in camp-settings

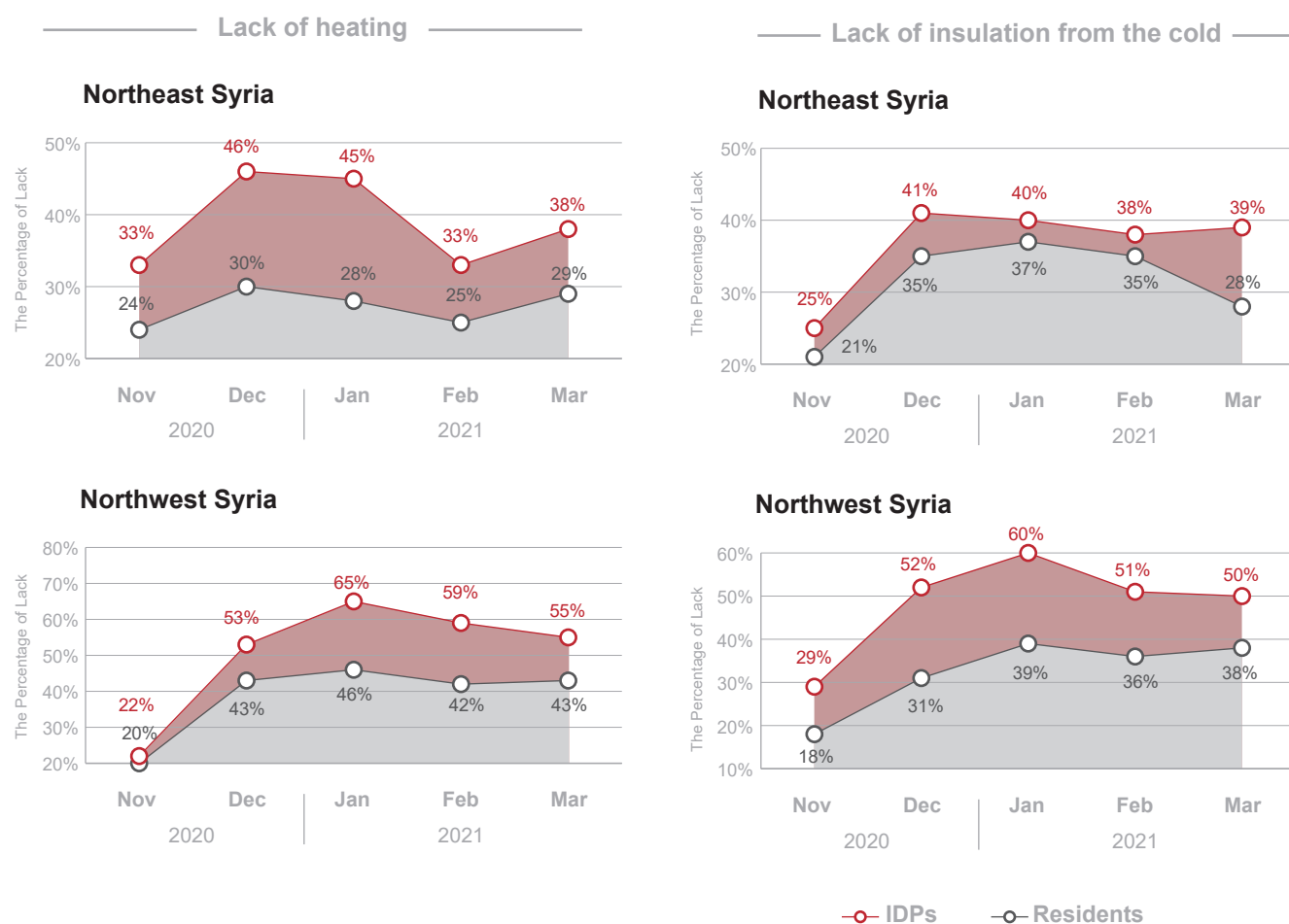
As a result of such poor shelter conditions, overcrowding and limited access to shelter, high levels of COVID-19 infection have been suspected. In the northeast, more than 415 cases have been recorded in camp-setting as of July 2021 ([NES dashboard](#), Source: Kurdish Red Crescent 06/07/2021). In the northwest, the vast majority of the cases have been reported in camp-setting (88%), with most in Idlib (17%), Dana (14%) and Afrin (11%) sub-districts ([NWS dashboard](#), Source: Health Cluster 07/07/2021).

Needs were exacerbated during the winter season

During the winter season, from December 2020 to March 2021, needs are seasonally exacerbated. In the northwest, more than 40% of residents and close to 60% of IDPs reported lack of heating, and about a third of residents and 40% of IDPs lacked insulation from the cold throughout the period. Similar rates were reported in the northeast: about a third of residents and 40% of IDPs reported lacking

heating and insulation from the cold throughout the period ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES 11/2020-03/2021](#)). In February 2021, in GoS-held areas, heating diesel allocations were cut by half to 200 litres per household, with in practice being closer to 100 litres in many governorates, further reducing access to such critical supply ([WFP 31/05/2021](#)).

Figure 3. Communities reporting lack of heating and insulation from the cold in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES 11/2020-03/2021](#))

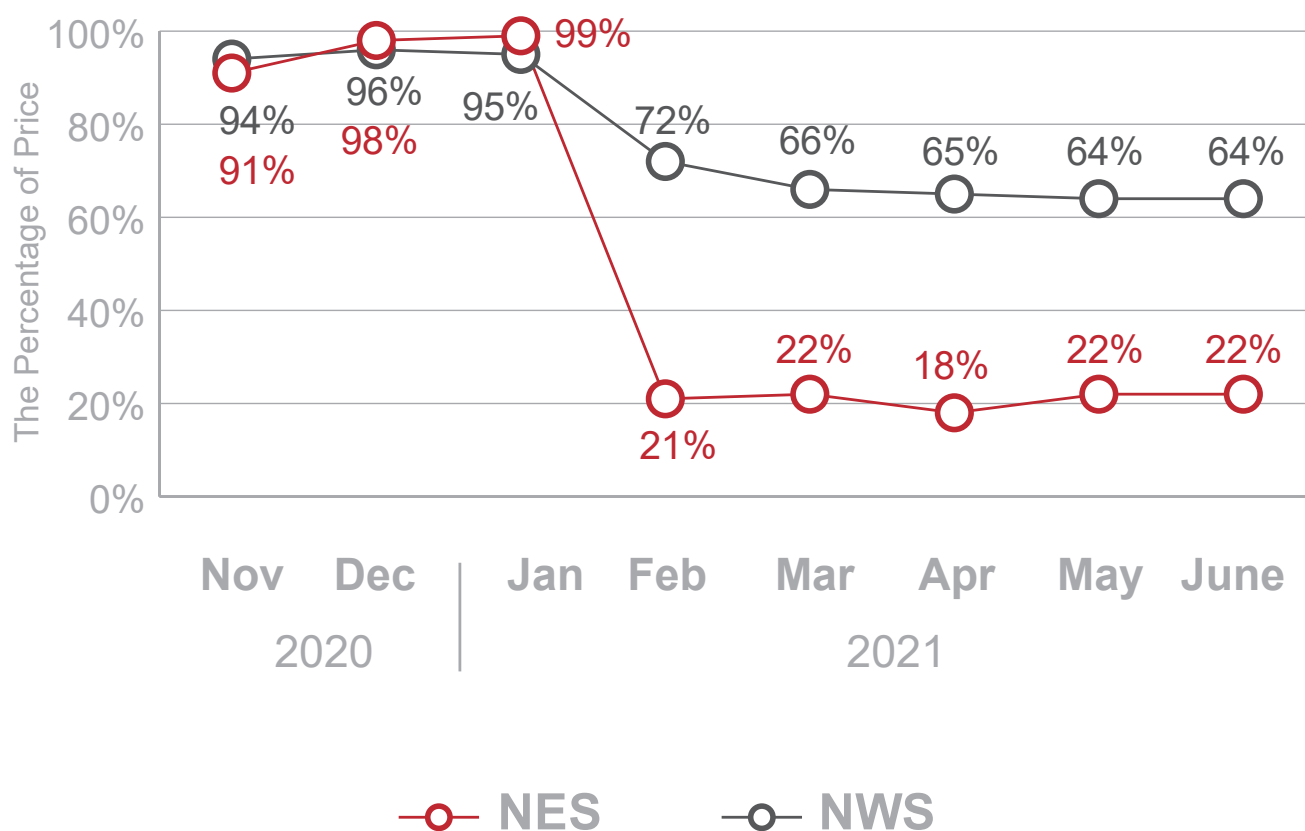


Unaffordability hampered access to shelter across the country

Following currency depreciation and rising inflation levels, access to shelter was also hampered by high rent prices. Almost all communities in both northwest and northeast reported rent prices being unaffordable from November 2020 to January 2021, when shelter needs were even higher ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES 11/2020-04/2021](#)). Across the country, 15% of households mentioned rental

subsidies as one of their top priority need in January 2021, a proportion even higher among very vulnerable households ([HNAP SPRING 2021 REPORT SERIES - PRIORITY NEEDS AND SERVICES 25/03/2021](#)). In the northwest, this remained an issue beyond the winter months, with about 65% of communities still facing such a challenge in June 2021 ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES 11/2020-06/2021](#)).

Figure 4. Communities reporting rent prices unaffordable in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES 11/2020-06/2021](#))



As prices of basic items have continued to increase, access to NFIs continues to be lifesaving, especially during winter when vulnerable families could not access basic items to keep them warm, such as blankets and winter clothes ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-03/2021). In almost all communities assessed (97%), more than half of essential non-food items were still inaccessible to most of the population in the northeast in March 2021. High rates were also reported in other regions: 88% in the northwest and 80% in central and south Syria, highlighting the inflation of most items across Syria ([REACH Initiative & HNAP](#) 17/05/2021). As of June 2021, 20% of all households nationwide reported NFIs as their top priority need ([HNAP SUMMER 2021 REPORT SERIES - PRIORITY NEEDS AND SERVICES](#) 5/8/2021).

Fuel, gas and electricity became scarcer and more expensive over the year. Coupled with widespread loss of income due to the COVID-19 crisis, this has been preventing people from accessing vital supplies and heating sources ahead of the winter season ([Shelter & NFI Sector](#) 17/11/2020, [OCHA](#) 21/10/2020). Gas prices increased significantly, almost doubling between June 2020 and June 2021 country-wide ([WFP mVAM](#) 05/2020-06/2021).

Heating fuel was widely reported to be unaffordable across communities in northern Syria during the winter season ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-03/2021). In December 2020, heating fuel prices increased by 20% in one month country-wide, with Idlib and Aleppo governorates reporting the highest increase ([WFP](#) 19/01/2021). Unofficial heating fuel market prices were up to ten times the subsidized rate in January 2021 ([OCHA](#) 20/01/2021). As a result, more than 70% of communities in the northwest reported that the high cost of fuel for generators was a challenge between July 2020 and February 2021. While this proportion decreased slightly after the end of the winter season, still more than half reported facing this challenge ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021). About 70% of households indicated a need for fuel in January 2021, a significant increase compared to the 32% a year ago ([HNAP SOCIO ECONOMIC AND POVERTY COMPARISON JANUARY 2020-2021](#) 12/04/2021).

The proportion also doubled in the northeast from January 2020 to 2021, with about a quarter of households reporting electricity as a second priority need ([HNAP SOCIO ECONOMIC AND POVERTY COMPARISON JANUARY 2020-2021](#) 12/04/2021). It increased again by the summer, where 39% of households reported electricity as a top priority need ([HNAP SUMMER 2021 REPORT SERIES - PRIORITY NEEDS AND SERVICES](#) 5/8/2021). In the northeast, about a third of communities reported the high cost of fuel for generator as a challenge between December 2020 and February 2021 but since then, the proportion rose to close to 55% in June 2021, highlighting a worsening critical gap ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021).

In GoS-held areas, according to a study conducted in December 2020 in three neighborhoods of Damascus, about 30% of respondents reported they were not able to secure any of their needs for diesel heating fuel for the 2020-21 winter season ([OPC](#) 22/06/2021).

Figure 5. Communities reporting winter items being unaffordable in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-03/2021)

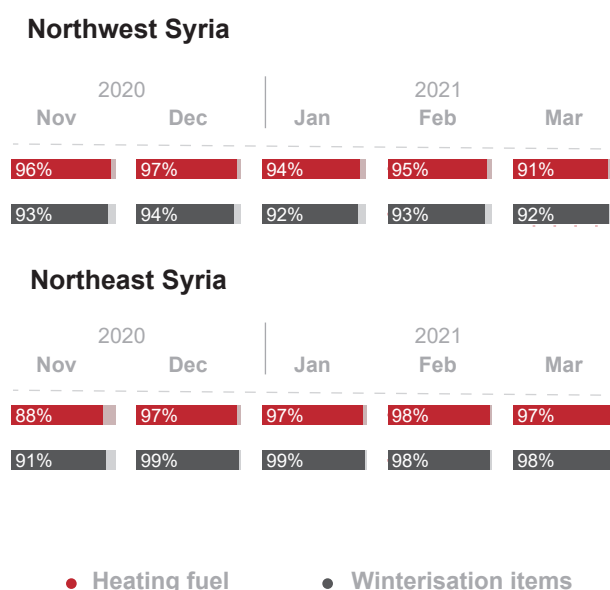


Figure 6. Communities reporting high cost of fuel for generator as a challenge in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-05/2021)

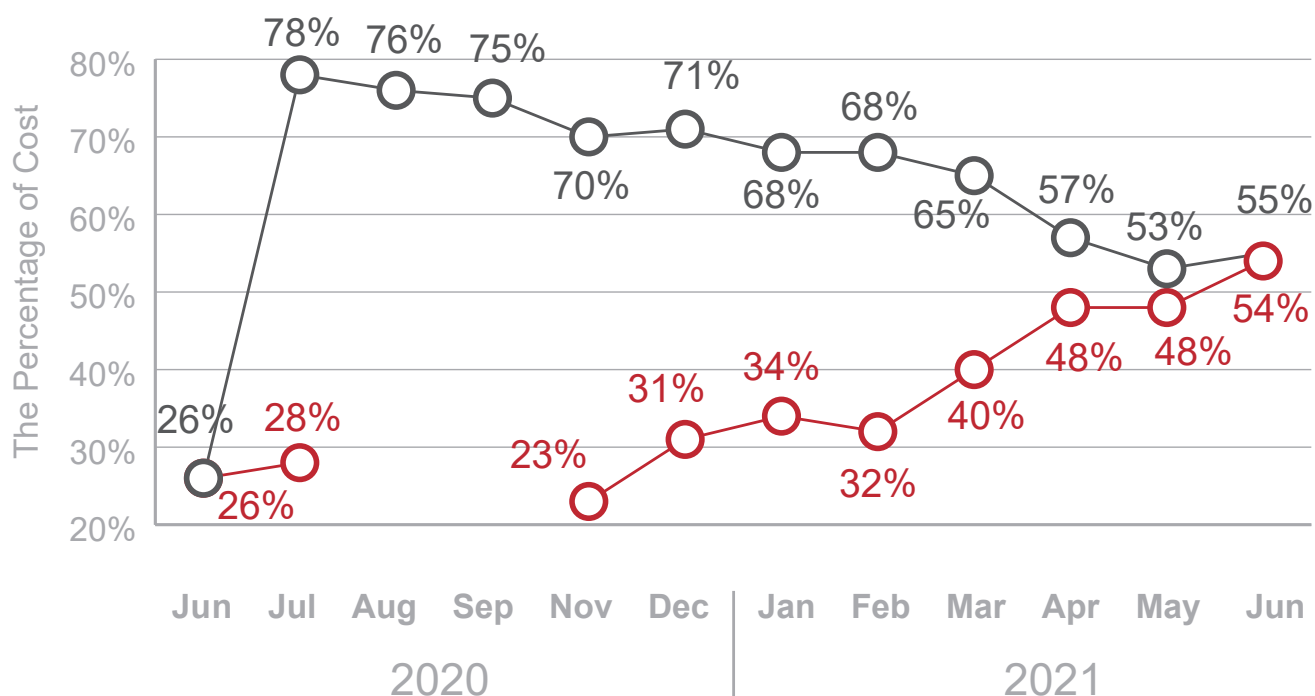


Figure 7. Informal butane gas prices (SYP per 25,000L refill) ([WFP mVAM](#) 05/2020-06/2021)



Low availability of fuel

Syria domestic fuel production has not been able to meet the population's requirements over the past years, leading to significant external supply reliance. However, according to multiple sources, the closure of borders and delays in imports due to the COVID-19 context would have impacted the availability of external fuel supplies, which significantly decreased, leading to severe fuel shortages in the country from September 2020, particularly in GoS-held areas ([Carter Center](#) 12/2020). Maintenance work at the Baniyas refinery in September 2020, where two-thirds of all supply in GoS-held areas came from, reportedly severely impacted the availability of fuel in the country from mid-2020 ([AP NEWS](#) 17/09/2020, [COAR](#) 21/09/2020, [Daily Sabah](#) 22/10/2020, [Mercy Corps](#) 30/09/2020, [VOA News](#) 22/09/2020).

The situation worsened from January 2021 following the suspension of the delivery of fuel supplies from the northeast to GoS areas, due to lower extraction levels. Attacks against a fuel refinery and markets in northern Aleppo in early March 2021 led to the destruction of between 200 and 300 fuel trucks, further restricting this critical supply line, which serves as the main fuel entry point into GoS-areas from the northeast. Delays resulting from the Suez Canal blockage mid-March 2021 further exacerbated the shortages ([WFP Market Price Watch](#) 04/2021).

80% of surveyed fuel vendors in the northeast mentioned limited manually refined petrol supply in the market in January 2021 and 85% in March, driving further up the prices for high quality diesel and petrol, mainly imported from Europe via Turkey ([REACH Initiative](#) 22/02/2021, [REACH Initiative](#) 13/04/2021). Dollar exchange and transportation cost were also cited as main challenges ([NES Cash Working Group](#) 20/01/2021). In December 2020, vendors in northwest Syria also faced similar supply challenges, with limited supply from their suppliers and import restrictions due to the border closings ([Reach Initiative](#) 20/01/2021). Manually refined fuels remained frequently unavailable in the northwest in July 2021, due to low levels of import and insecurity around refineries in May 2021 ([REACH Initiative](#) 13/07/2021). As a result, fuel smuggling was reported on the rise between the northeast and GoS-held areas, as well as territories under the control of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army ([Mercy Corps](#) 14/01/2021).

In addition to reduced supply and increased prices, communities in northern Syria were also constrained by the limited number of places where fuel was actually available for purchase. In the northwest, while about half of the communities had a fully functioning fuel market, only a third had a fuel station as of November 2020 ([REACH Initiative](#) NWS 01/03/2021). In the northeast, about 80% of the communities did not have a fully functioning fuel market in November 2020 and similarly, only a third of communities had a fuel station ([REACH Initiative](#) NES 01/03/2021).

Reduction in allotments and subsidized fuel prices in GoS-held areas leading to further increases in prices

Following lower fuel availability, fuel allotments in GoS-held areas on which a large population relies were significantly reduced by 50% in January 2021. This led to shortages in domestic and agricultural use and increased demand on unofficial markets, resulting in prices skyrocketing ([OCHA](#) 20/01/2021). On top of the cut, allocations were not always timely distributed. At the end of February 2021, only around 40% of Syrians had actually received their fuel allocations for 2021 ([WFP](#) 31/05/2021). In March 2021, fuel allocations were cut once more, by 15% for petrol and 20% for diesel ([WFP](#) 13/04/2021). The government also stopped subsidizing the most used Octane-90 gasoline and set a unified price of SYP 750 per liter, a more than 60% price increase compared to the month before ([The Syria report](#) 23/03/2021). The official price of the 95-Octane and 90-Octane gasoline also increased by almost 50% and 66% respectively, while non-subsidized fuel prices rose by 15% ([WFP](#) 13/04/2021). Mid-July, the Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection announced a new increase in the official subsidized price of diesel by close to 170%, reaching SYP 500, as well as the official liter price of Octane 95 gasoline, from SYP 2,500 SYP to 3,000 ([FSC](#) 17/08/2021, [Roya news](#) 11/07/2021, [Aljazeera](#) 11/07/2021).

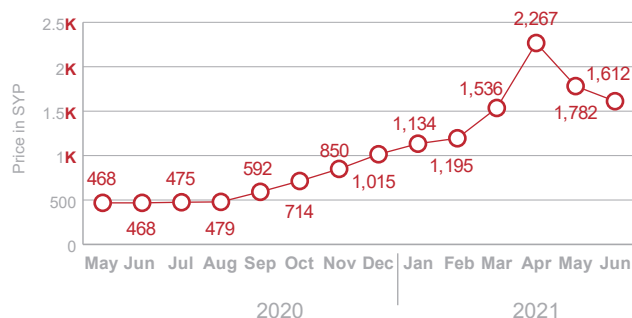
To facilitate the retrieval of fuel, the government set up an SMS system to manage waiting lines in April 2021, which allowed registered residents to receive a text every seven days to claim their 20 litres at a specific petrol station and specific time. However, government measures to manage fuel distribution resulted in heavy queues at petrol stations and severely affected the smooth running of many businesses and services ([WFP](#) 17/05/2021, [WFP](#) 01/06/2021). In most governorates, not all stations were functioning, and the waiting times ranged from three hours in Quneitra governorate to three days in As-Sweida governorate ([WFP](#) 31/05/2021).

The allocation limit was then updated to 25 liters of Octane 90 fuel and 30 liters of Octane 95 per week in April and part of May, except in Aleppo governorate where Octane 95 was serviced sporadically throughout the petrol crisis in March ([WFP](#) 01/06/2021). Rationing was finally lifted mid-May as the Syrian Government reached an agreement with the Kurdish Administration ([WFP](#) 01/06/2021).

Fuel prices skyrocketing

Due to the severe unavailability of lower quality and less-expensive fuels, as well as the devaluation of the local currencies, high-quality diesel and gasoline prices spiked in September in GoS-held areas and in February 2021 in northwest Syria. Countrywide, informal diesel prices increased by more than 240% between May 2020 and June 2021 ([WFP mVAM](#) 05/2020-06/2021).

Figure 8. Informal transport diesel prices (SYP/L) ([WFP mVAM](#) 05/2020-06/2021)



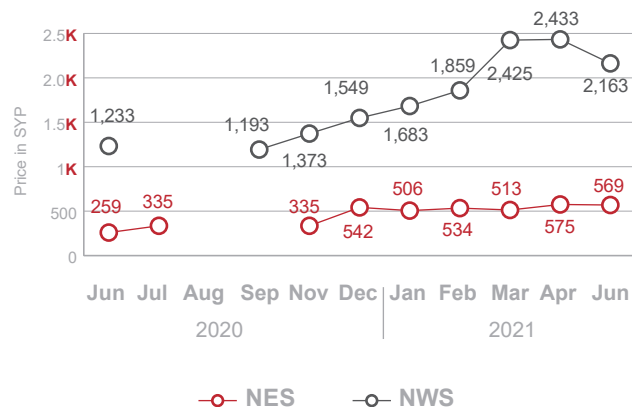
In GoS-held areas, the steep decrease in state-supplied fuel led to an increased demand on the black market, with unofficial prices skyrocketing, increasing on average by 172% for benzene and 42% for diesel between September and October 2020 ([APNews](#) 07/11/2020, [Mercy Corps](#) 30/09/2020). Though the government set an official unified price of SYP 750 per litre for the Octane 90 gasoline in April 2021, the actual informal price was between SYP 2,000 to 4,000/litre in May, an increase by almost two-third since 2019 ([The Syria report](#) 23/03/2021 [WFP](#) 01/06/2021).

In December 2020, the informal price of transport diesel had increased by close to 20% in a month country-wide and by almost 120% since June, with highest prices reported in Idlib and Aleppo governorates, in the northwest ([WFP](#) 19/01/2021). Between February and March 2021, the overall price of transportation fuels further rose by 30% in the northwest, with a median price of SYP 2,425 per litre ([REACH Initiative](#) 13/04/2021). This was less significant in the northeast: while high-quality petrol prices increased by 25%, transport fuel prices decreased slightly in March and manually refined petrol prices only slightly increased ([REACH Initiative](#) 08/04/2021, [REACH Initiative](#) 13/04/2021).

In June 2021, highest informal transport prices were reported in the northwest: SYP 2,240 in Idlib governorate and SYP 2,100 in Aleppo governorate. Damascus and Rural Damascus governorates, GoS-held areas, also recorded striking high prices, SYP 2,100. In comparison, in the northeast, informal fuel was sold at SYP 254 in Al-Hassakeh and SYP 875 in Ar-Raqqa governorates ([WFP](#) 22/07/2021).

As a result, the price of the transport component of the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket increased by 120% in the northeast between June 2020 and April 2021 and almost doubled in the northwest ([REACH Initiative Market Monitoring NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021).

Figure 9. SMEB transport cost in northern Syria (SYP) ([REACH Initiative Market Monitoring NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021)



Fuel became unaffordable for most households

Price increases made fuel unaffordable for the majority of Syrians, forcing them to queue, for as long as three days, in order to buy fuel at more affordable subsidized prices ([APNews](#) 07/11/2020, [Mercy Corps](#) 30/09/2020) ([WFP](#) 31/05/2021). People resorted to procuring more expensive fuels on the unofficial markets, further reducing households' income and purchasing power ([Logistics Cluster](#) 02/10/2020).

With the shortage of subsidized fuels, affordable public transportation became almost non-existent for residents in the northeast, with residents of Deir-ez-Zor governorate

reporting the highest rate of people facing overpriced transportation (77%) in February 2021 ([REACH Initiative](#) 11/05/2021, [REACH Initiative](#) 11/05/2021). In GoS-held areas, in April 2021, severe fuel shortages affected people's ability to reach humanitarian distribution points, as well as other services, due to the increasing prices of public transportation ([WFP](#) 24/05/2021). More than 85% of humanitarian organizations in GoS-held areas reported the fuel crisis impacted their mobility and budget in 2020, resulting in a rise in operational costs, as well as reduced field missions, impacting program delivery and monitoring ([Logistics Cluster](#) 02/10/2020, [Mercy Corps](#) 30/09/2020).

Lack of electricity infrastructure further restricting access to services

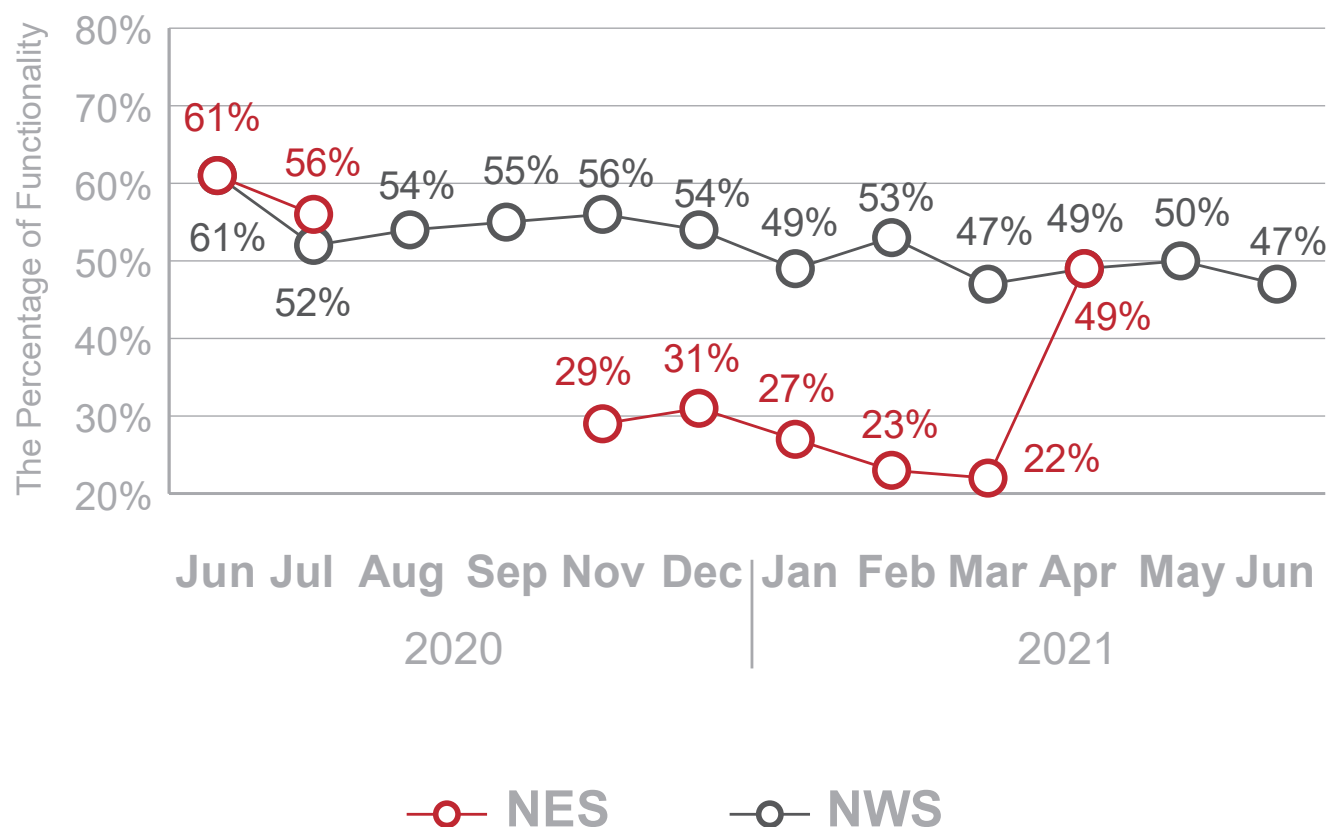
About 60% of households across the country reported to not have access to electricity in January 2021 ([HNAP SPRING 2021 REPORT SERIES - PRIORITY NEEDS AND SERVICES](#) 25/03/2021), notably negatively impacting WASH, heating and health services ([HNO 2021](#) 30/03/2021). By mid 2021, only 14% of households had meaningful access to electricity networks (where electricity is available and sufficient to meet basic needs), particularly low in central and southern Syria (13% and critically low in northwest Syria (3%)) ([HNAP SUMMER 2021 REPORT SERIES - PRIORITY NEEDS AND SERVICES](#) 5/8/2021).

About 50% of communities in the northwest and 30% in the northeast from November 2020 to June 2021 reported that the main network was completely or partially not functioning, with on average about 5 to 6 hours of electricity per day in both regions ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-05/2021). In June 2021, rationing by local authorities was reported as a barrier to access electricity by key informants in close to 70% of communities in the northeast ([REACH Initiative](#) 29/07/2021).

As a result, a third of households identified electricity as their fourth priority need across the country early 2021 and rising to their third priority mid-2021 ([HNAP SPRING 2021 REPORT SERIES - PRIORITY NEEDS AND SERVICES](#) 25/03/2021, [HNAP SUMMER 2021 REPORT SERIES - PRIORITY NEEDS AND SERVICES](#) 5/8/2021). This became an even more acute issue in the northeast: electricity infrastructure was a priority need between March and May 2021, being mentioned by about 30% in May, with the need of an expansion of the main network reported in close to half of the assessed locations ([REACH Initiative](#) 24/06/2021). COVID-19 only slightly exacerbated these poor conditions, with 3% of communities in the northeast reporting that repairs to electricity infrastructure had been delayed due to COVID-19 measures ([REACH Initiative](#) 24/03/2021).

GoS-held areas had many power cuts and lower availability of electricity, with significant shortages reported at the end of June 2021 due to a heatwave, where electricity was available for only a few hours a day and dispersed by power cuts. ([Syria HR](#) 01/07/2021, [Syrian Observer](#) 25/06/2021).

Figure 10. Communities reporting main network completely or partially not functioning in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021)



Prolonged school closures due to COVID-19

COVID-19 preventative measures led to the nearly complete closure of schools in 2020. Following the first reported cases in Syria at the end of March 2020, schools were closed across the areas of control.

Across 434 assessed locations in the northeast in IDPs communities, schools were not in sessions in April 2020 due to COVID-19 related restrictive measures put in place by local authorities ([REACH Initiative](#) 01/05/2020). A gradual re-opening of schools and learning centers took place at the beginning of the summer, in June 2020. Basic (Grade 9) and high school (Grade 12) exams started in June 2020 in GoS-held areas for 500,000 students, including around 3,000 who travelled cross-lines from Lebanon to sit for their exams ([OCHA](#) 14/07/2020). However, they mostly had to close again following rising levels of infection, with most schools ending the academic year early. After prolonged school closures and despite the high number of cases, schools reopened between late September and early October 2020, in all areas of Syria, with more than 3.8 million students returning to school ([The Syria Report](#) 30/09/2020, [SOHR](#) 24/09/2020, [The Syria Report](#) 16/09/2020).

While schools remained officially open until the end of the school year in 2021, many facilities actually closed down

While schools remained officially open until the end of the school year in 2021, facilities were intermittently closed due to fluctuating levels of infection among the education personnel and students or disinfection procedures, particularly in November 2020 and throughout the spring of 2021 in northeast Syria. In November 2020, more than 90% of educational facilities remained fully open in GoS-held areas, 27% in the northwest and less than 60% in the northeast ([HNAP COVID-19 Rapid Assessment](#) 17/11/2020). In the northwest, due to the sharp increase in cases in Idlib governorate and sub-district, local authorities closed schools early November 2020 ([OCHA](#) 18/11/2020). In November and December 2020, more than 80% of education services were reported to have been closed for some days due to COVID-19 in the northwest. Communities in the northeast also faced similar problems, with in December 2020, close to 70% of them reporting reduction of classes due to COVID-19 ([REACH Initiative](#)

[HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-04/2021).

Schools reopened again following the end of the year break. Still, in January 2021, 70% of communities in the northwest reported that education services were not always functioning in person, as classes were reduced due to COVID-19. This continued to be a barrier in February, with about 30% of communities facing such issues. In the northeast, in January 2021, about 20% of education services were reportedly not always opened due to COVID-19 cleaning and disinfection. While the proportions decreased since then, in May 2021, close to 90% of communities reported a reduction of classes due to COVID-19 with the implementation of the latest restrictions in this area ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-04/2021).

Similar to 2020, in GoS-held areas, the Ministry of Education announced an early end of the school year from kindergarten to Grade 7 early April 2021 ([OCHA](#) 05/04/2021). More than 1.5 million secondary students in GoS-held areas who continued to attend schools held their second semester exams at the end of April ([UNICEF](#) 26/05/2021). Classes in private and public universities and technical institutes were also suspended in April ([Ministry of Education](#) 04/4/2021, [Ministry of Education](#) 19/4/2021, [Ministry of tourism](#) 21/04/2021).

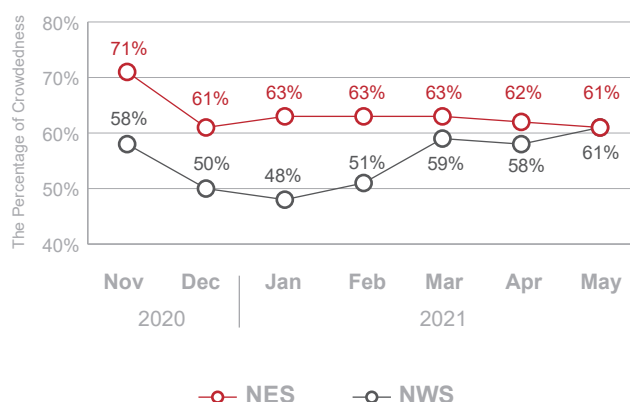
Inadequate infrastructure and poor education conditions led to high levels of COVID-19 transmission

Pre-pandemic education needs were already high: 43% of the education infrastructure was estimated to be non-functional in Syria by 2017, especially secondary and vocational schools, with more than 14% of the buildings fully damaged ([World Bank](#) 10/07/2017). As of July 2020, more than 300 schools were out of operation in the northwest ([OCHA](#) 13/07/2020), with most secondary and primary schools reported to still be unavailable as of January 2021 (76% and 86% respectively) ([OCHA](#) 26/01/2021). Similarly, the number of teachers in the formal education system as of 2019 was less than half the pre-war level ([World Bank](#) 06/02/2019).

Lacking the necessary infrastructure, schools have been unable to implement proper preventive measures and guarantee a safe and secure environment. Classrooms have been overcrowded and schools lacking functioning toilets and hand-washing facilities ([UNICEF](#) 30/03/2021, [OCHA & WHO](#) 16/02/2021). According to Enab Baladi, these two factors, coupled with a lack of training on Infection Preventive Control measures, contributed to the increasing risk of infection among students and teachers ([Enab Baladi](#) 17/04/2021). According to data from close to 3,700 schools in northern Aleppo, Idlib, Ar-Raqqa, Al-Hassakeh and eastern Deir-ez-Zor governorates in November and December 2020, only 26% of schools implemented physical distancing. Insufficient quantities of cleaning materials and soaps were reported in close to 80% of schools and 65% did not have sterilization materials ([ACU](#) 04/2021). Similar levels were found in camps in the northwest. Based on data from about 190 schools in 175 camps across Idlib and Aleppo governorates in December 2020 and January 2021, only about 31% of schools implemented physical distancing and half had sufficient quantities of cleaning materials and soap ([ACU](#) 04/2021).

More than 50% of communities with COVID-19 risk indicator reported school overcrowding as a challenge to access education in the northwest and more than 60% in the northeast throughout November 2020 to May 2021 ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-05/2021). In April 2021, anecdotal information in Dara'a and Damascus governorates, GoS-held areas, highlighted cases of overcrowded classes and lack of adequate hygiene and health conditions ([Enab Baladi](#) 17/04/2021).

Figure 11. Communities where school overcrowding was reported as a challenge to access education in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-05/2021)



As a result of poor conditions and overcrowding, schools reopening led to a spike in the number of COVID-19 cases among students and education staff. In GoS-controlled areas, almost 25% of COVID-19 tests conducted among school children and personnel at the end of September-early October 2020 came back positive ([The Syria Report](#) 07/10/2020). Cases reported in schools increased by four-fold in December 2020 compared to November and doubled again between mid-December and mid-January 2021 ([WHO & OCHA](#) 01/02/2021, [OCHA & WHO](#) 23/12/2020), reaching more than 2,500 cases as of April 2021 ([OCHA & WHO](#) 05/04/2021).

In light of the spread of the epidemic, a growing number of parents were reluctant to send their children to school, fearing they might become infected ([OCHA & WHO](#) 29/10/2020, [Syria TV](#) 25/10/2020). Fear of COVID-19 and school closure due to COVID-19 were reported at low levels in Abu Khashab (17%) and Serekaniye camp (3%) in January 2021 ([REACH Initiative](#) Abu Khashab 12/02/2021, [REACH Initiative](#) Serekaniye 12/02/2021). Fear of catching the virus reportedly prompted more than 2,000 teachers in

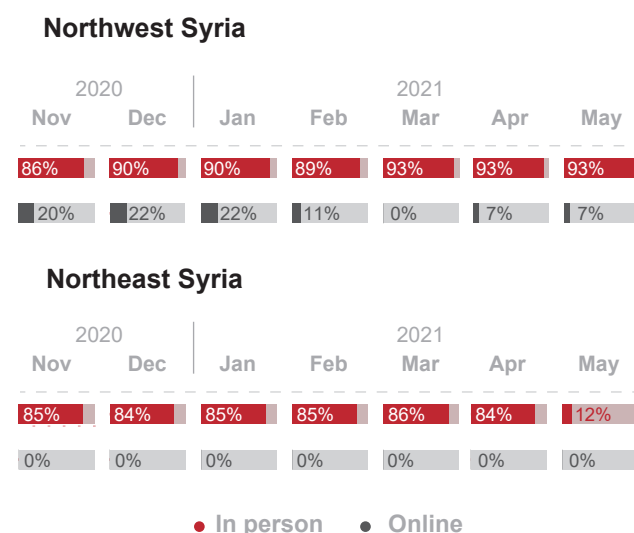
As-Sweida governorate, GoS-held areas, in November 2020, to request referrals and sick leave out of concern for themselves and the students, due to the lack of proper precautionary measures in schools, reported Al Watan ([Al Watan Online](#) 06/12/2020). As such, distance and blended learning support have been reported as the main priority, including provision of support to education personnel and teacher incentives and training for learning to be continued ([OCHA](#) 18/11/2020).

Challenges with remote learning

Given pre-COVID-19 challenges, the education system was unprepared to shift to online learning. Following the interruption of classes from March to September 2020 and again in January 2021, with school closures linked to increasing levels of infection, remote or mixed education programs were implemented. However, the implementation of remote learning has been challenging, notably due to limited electricity and internet networks, a lack of electronic devices and an inability to buy credit.

In June 2020, in the northwest, key informants in about half of the communities affected by school closures reported that students were able to access education online, using improvised methods such as WhatsApp ([REACH Initiative](#) NWS 06/2020). However, this proportion dropped to about 20% from November 2020 to January 2021 ([REACH Initiative HSOSNWS/NES](#) 11/2020-05/2021). While no online programmes were reported by REACH Initiative during the time period in the northeast, data collected by ACU from close to 3,700 schools in northern Aleppo, Idlib, Ar-Raqqa, Al-Hassakeh and eastern Deir-ez-Zor governorates in November and December 2020 showed that about 23% of schools provided distance learning programs for students ([ACU](#) 04/2021). The situation was even better in camps in the northwest. Based on data from about 190 schools in 175 camps across Idlib and Aleppo governorates in December 2020 and January 2021, about 70% of schools provided such online learning possibilities ([ACU](#) 04/2021).

Figure 12. Communities where KIs reported on the functioning of education services in northern Syria (REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES 11/2020-05/2021)



However, the absence of coherent remote curricula, coupled with insufficient or lack of internet/phone coverage and the lack of money needed to purchase internet or phone access have been significant barriers to access remote education ([Save the Children](#) 10/12/2020). Between November 2020 and January 2021, about 30% of communities reported lack of internet, electricity and/or equipment as a barrier to access online education services in northwest Syria. While this rate decreased to about 10% in April, this rather likely reflected the lower reliance on remote schooling after February rather than an improvement in accessing online learning ([REACH Initiative HSOS](#) 11/2020-04/2021). Similarly, in the northeast, the main barrier was insufficient network, reported by around 85% of families with school-aged children in Ar-Raqqa governorate, northeast, in October 2020, followed by

unaffordability to buy credit, reported by 80% in Ar-Raqqa and Quneitra governorates. Homs governorate, GoS-held areas, reported the lowest rate, with 55% of families reporting not having the needed devices for their children ([HNO](#) 2021). No key informants in any community in northeast Syria reported the functioning of online education services between November and May 2021 ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-05/2021).

Figure 13. Communities where KIs reported that the lack of access to internet, electricity and/or equipment was a barrier to accessing online education services in northwest Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS](#) 11/2020-04/2021)



Education costs became unaffordable for many households

With the loss and reduction of incomes, the weakening Syrian Pound, and the increase in expenditure, more children have been dropping out of school in 2020, to generate additional income or because the associated expenses of education could not be met. Thus, an effective COVID-19 response alone is unlikely to significantly improve attendance if the enduring economic downturn does not improve.

Around 63% of teachers interviewed at the end of 2020 reported that poverty was hampering caregivers from sending their children to schools ([Save the Children](#) 01/12/2020). For IDP households that had at least one child not attending education, unaffordability was the primary barrier reported; a proportion that was even higher among households with at least one member having a disability and among very vulnerable displaced households (age 12+ only) ([HNAP DISABILITY PREVALENCE AND IMPACT - IDP Report Series 2020](#) 16/12/2020, [HNAP DISABILITY IN SYRIA](#) 2021 12/4/2021).

In the northwest, authorities implemented mandatory facemasks wearing in schools in 2020, however without making them available for free to the students. Masks were available in local pharmacies for about 1 Turkish lira but remained out-of-reach for many households, leading to more school-children being taken out of schools ([Al-araby](#) 20/11/2020, [The Washington Post](#) 25/09/2020). According to data from close to 3,700 schools in northern Aleppo, Idlib, Ar-Raqqa, Al-Hassakeh and eastern Deir-ez-Zor governorates in November and December 2020, masks were only distributed free of charge in less than 20% of schools ([ACU](#) 04/2021).

With an increasing cost of living and lower revenues sources due to the pandemic, more than 60% of teachers interviewed at the end of 2020 also cited child labor as one of the primary reasons preventing children from attending school ([Save the Children](#) 01/12/2020). In northwest Syria, about 80% of communities reported this barrier preventing children from going to schools throughout November 2020 and May 2021. Slightly lower rates were found in the northeast, about 60% ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-05/2021). Similarly, early marriage, used as an extreme coping mechanism to meet basic needs was also found to be preventing children from going to schools, about 40% in the northwest and more than 20% in the northeast. The situation rapidly deteriorated in the northeast with 55% of communities mentioning this negative coping mechanism as a barrier preventing children from attending schools in May 2021, likely reflecting the exhaustion of savings and other revenues sources ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-05/2021)

Figure 14. Communities where child labour prevented children from going to schools in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-05/2021)

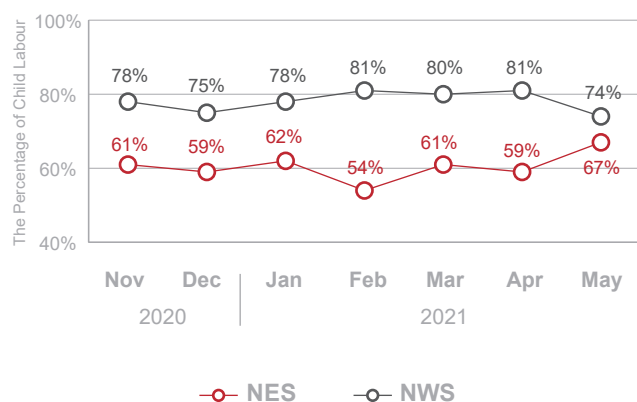
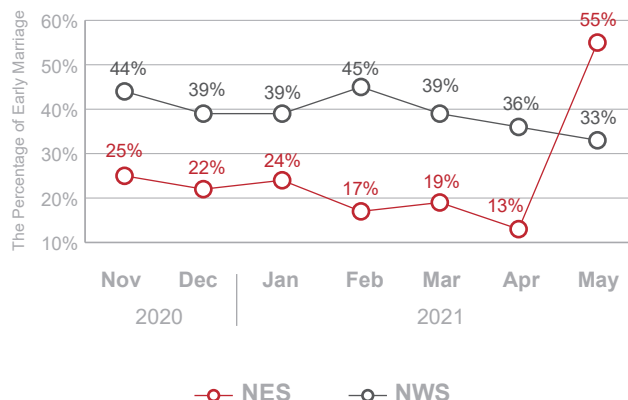


Figure 15. Communities where early marriage prevented children from going to schools in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 11/2020-05/2021)



Inflation, currency depreciation and overall economic deterioration also affected teachers' salaries in 2020, in particular in the northwest. In northwest Syria, one out of three teachers (6,000) had not been paid for over a year, and one out of four schools (320) was running with unpaid teachers in early 2021 ([Education Cluster](#) 26/03/2021).

High rates of school drop-out

In 2020, almost 95% of all school-aged children already lived in areas where education conditions were assessed as catastrophic, especially in Aleppo, Idlib and rural Damascus governorates, resulting in a risk of 1.6 million children dropping out of school ([UNICEF](#) 03/12/2020). The COVID-19 context exacerbated these poor conditions. Lack of suitable alternatives to remote learning, coupled with reduced livelihood opportunities for parents, led to a high drop-out rate amongst children in 2020 across the country, especially in northern Syria. About two-thirds of protection partners surveyed in December 2020 reported that children's access to education worsened due to COVID-19 ([Protection and Community Services Sector](#) 01/02/2021).

In 2021, 6.6 million children were assessed to be in need of education country-wide, including 2.45 million out of schools, an increase of more than 15% from the year

before ([OCHA](#) 30/12/2020, [UNICEF](#) 26/05/2021). While in March 2021, only 13% of school-aged children reported not being in school in GoS-held areas, these proportions were much higher in the northeast and northwest, 37% and 50% respectively ([REACH Initiative & HNAP](#) 17/05/2021). Children in IDP households and living in camps are also reporting high rates of school non attendance with about 50% of them not going to schools at the end of 2020, except in GoS-held areas where this proportion decreased to about 30% ([HNAP PRIORITY NEEDS AND ACCESS TO SERVICES - IDP Report Series 2020](#) 16/12/2020). In camps in the northeast, similar rates were reported by teachers in Al-Hol, Roj, and Areesha, with at least 5,500 children dropping out of school in 2020 ([Save the Children](#) 10/12/2020). By mid-2021, less than half of households reported having meaningful access to education nationwide ([HNAP SUMMER 2021 REPORT SERIES - PRIORITY NEEDS AND SERVICES](#) 5/8/2021).

The poor coverage and quality of WASH infrastructure were driving up WASH needs even before the pandemic. Before the war, while most urban areas had adequate sewage systems, only some of them were actually connected to treatment plants and there were only around 20 treatment facilities across the country ([Delegation of the European Commission to Syria](#) 04/2009). Due to the conflict, as of 2019, about 26% of water infrastructures were damaged, including 51% of wells, 23% of water towers/tankers, and 9% of pumping stations ([World Bank](#) 06/02/2019). Regional water shortages and continued disruptions to infrastructure under Turkish control that

supplies water to northeast Syria continued to further decrease water availability, limiting the implementation of COVID-19 preventive measures. By mid-2021, only half of all households nationwide reported meaningful access to water with much lower rates in rural areas and critically low in northeast Syria (22%). For One third of all households in northern Syria and northeast Syria, water was the priority need, and in both cases the majority preferred in-kind water assistance rather than other modalities such as cash or vouchers, demonstrating the chronic lack of availability ([HNAP SUMMER 2021 REPORT SERIES - PRIORITY NEEDS AND SERVICES](#) 5/8/2021).

Lack of or poor WASH infrastructure

Unreliability of piped water system in the northwest

Access to safe water through piped systems remained a challenge during the pandemic in northwest Syria, with only 65% out of 209 systems in Idlib and slightly more than half of 241 systems in Aleppo functioning as of March 2021 ([OCHA](#) 26/03/2021). About 45% of communities reported relying on private water trucking from July 2020 to May 2021, as opposed to the northeast where piped water network was the main source of water throughout this time period, highlighting the poor state and unreliability of the water system in the northwest ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-05/2021).

In densely populated camps, 70% of IDPs continue to rely on humanitarian organizations to provide trucked water on a daily basis ([OCHA](#) 18/11/2020). Among the IDPs living across 410 sites in northwest Syria, about 20% reported no chlorination of water and about 15% of the stations in Aleppo and Idlib were running without being chlorinated ([OCHA](#) 26/03/2021). As a result, in the northwest camps, 70% of IDPs rely on trucked water from WASH partners. In Idlib governorate, 1.7 million people, two-thirds of which were in camps and half in communities, were fully relying on water trucking as of March 2021 ([OCHA](#) 26/03/2021).

Gap analyses reported by WASH cluster's partners in October 2020 indicated that, across 27 sub-districts, 1.3 million people lacked some form of WASH service, including water trucking, connection to piped water networks or hygiene kit distributions ([OCHA](#) 21/10/2020). Most of these gaps were found in Dana sub-district (31%) followed by Idlib (21%), Maaret Tamsrin (12%) and Atareb (9%) ([OCHA](#) 18/11/2020).

Continued disruptions of Alouk water station operations in the northeast

Water supply from the main water station in the northeast, Alouk, was significantly disrupted by the Turkish forces and proxies who have been deliberately cutting access to the pump over the past few years. A situation that continued during the pandemic, impacting about 460,000 people in Al-Hassakeh governorate ([OCHA](#) 27/08/2020).

Severe cuts occurred in 2020, with the water station only operating at partial capacity in late November and suspended entirely early December 2020 ([REACH Initiative](#) 20/01/2021, [UNICEF](#) 30/11/2020). Electricity interruptions also affected the functionality of the Al-Hamma water purification plant, thus affecting the water quality in Al-Hasakah city and other areas supplied ([NES Cash Working Group](#) 17/12/2020). Operations resumed briefly early January 2021, before being suspended again for a week mid-month ([NPA](#) 16/01/2021, [DW](#) 24/01/2021). Early April, two new water stations, Al-Abbas and Mahqan, restarted their operations, increasing the total number of operational water stations in Deir-ez-Zor governorate to 66 out of 69 ([Al Watan online](#) 29/03/2021). However, a fire at the electricity station supplying the water station mid-April led to new interruption for another two weeks. While the station returned operational on 27 April, its capacity remained insufficient to supply the majority of the population, with only one pump functioning. The disruptions led people to resort to unsafe water sources such as trucked water, already affected by the ongoing fuel crisis, and wells, or even reduce their daily water usage ([SANA](#) 08/05/2021, [OCHA](#) 28/04/2021). At the end of June 2021, the only source of power of the water station was cut, leading to another complete shut-down, the 24th disruption recorded by OCHA since November 2019 ([OCHA](#) 01/07/2021). As of 30 July, the station was still partially operational ([FSC](#) 17/08/2021).

About 40% of communities in the northeast reported relying on piped water systems from June 2020 to May 2021, highlighting the high dependence of the population on such unreliable water systems ([REACH Initiative HSOS NES](#) 06/2020-05/2021). Disruptions to an already under-providing water infrastructure increased reliance on alternative, more expensive and less hygienic, water sources, further complicating the prevention of COVID-19 and increasing the risk of transmission ([UNICEF](#) 02/02/2021). 97% of IDP households in al-Hasakeh city cited water as their priority WASH need in May 2021, with 60% drinking less water as a coping mechanism ([HNAP Al-Hasakeh City Investigation on the demographics, needs and future intentions of IDPs](#) 23/6/2021)

Water availability further reduced by drought conditions and insecurity

Government-held areas, especially Rural Damascus governorate, faced severe water shortages in the summer months, notably in August 2020, as lack of fuel and electricity impeded the functionality of water pumps and stations. While frequent in the summer, the shortages intensified throughout the last months of 2020, despite heavy rainfalls, as fuel and electricity had become scarcer in the country ([Mercy Corps](#) 10/01/2021).

In the northeast, decreasing water levels of the Euphrate river since early 2021 due to a drought, reached a critical situation in May 2021, with a reduction in the water flow from Turkey from 500 m³ to 200 m³ per second. As a result, many water stations in the northeast, fully dependent on the river, have been partially or fully non-functional, leading to significant reduction in water availability, notably in Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor governorates. The capacity of two of the most significant reservoirs in Syria, Tishreen and Tabqa Dams, have been significantly reduced, leading to power blackouts across the region and only one to two hours a day of electricity available in some locations ([SOHR](#) 30/05/2021, [OCHA](#) 26/05/2021, [Syria Direct](#) 09/05/2021). Compounded by ongoing fuel shortages, water pumping activities have also been severely reduced, significantly impacting available drinking water availability in the northeast ([OCHA](#) 17/06/2021). As of May 2021, 57 water stations out of 73 in the northeast have been impacted by the lower water levels, with 11 shut down. Close to 100 communities and 60 IDPs settlements have been relying on water stations that are partially or fully impacted, affecting about 576,000 people ([REACH Initiative](#) 23/06/2021, [OCHA](#) 17/06/2021).

In March 2021, airstrikes in the northwest, northern Idlib, resulted in a heavy impact on humanitarian and COVID-19 operations, further damaging WASH infrastructure. As a result of shelling, fires broke out in a CARE-supported warehouse, leading to the destruction of hygiene and other humanitarian supplies planned for about 25,000 people ([CARE](#) 23/03/2021). At least five NGOs temporarily suspended operations, including WASH distributions and health support at medical centres ([UN](#) 26/03/2021).

Water and hygiene unaffordable

Water cost increasing

As most of the WASH infrastructure is considered poorly or non-functional, access to basic services has been severely restricted and increasingly unaffordable throughout the pandemic. High levels of poverty have been hindering access to WASH services and supplies for most of the population, with people prioritizing other essential items such as food, increasing their reliance on humanitarian aid for such services ([OCHA 22/03/2021](#)). Overall, about 60% of communities in Syria reported an increase in spending on WASH items between August and September 2020 ([HNAP Key WASH Commodity Price Monitoring 09/2020](#)). In May 2021, 81% of IDP households in al-Hasakeh city noted that the cost of water was too high in May 2021, at a time where 81% of households nationwide reported that their income was not sufficient to meet basic needs ([HNAP Al-Hasakeh City Investigation on the demographics, needs and future intentions of IDPs 23/6/2021](#), [HNAP SUMMER 2021 REPORT SERIES - SOCIOECONOMIC SITUATION 5/8/2021](#)).

In the northwest, in March 2021 a monthly spike in water prices (+ 40%) was recorded, but since May, water expenses remained at similar levels than in November 2020. However, about 85% of communities in the northwest reported high cost of water trucking as a barrier to access water from July 2020 to January 2021. While February to April 2021 saw a decline in communities reporting this challenge, May 2021 recorded similarly high levels, reaching 83% ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES 11/2020-06/2021](#)).

In the northeast, monthly household expenses for water almost doubled between November 2020 and May 2021, with prices significantly increasing from January 2021. While less relying on water trucking than the northwest, still half of communities in the northeast reported the high cost of water trucking as a barrier to access water between June 2020 and January 2021. Similarly to the northwest, these rates were declining since then, until they started re-increasing in May 2021 ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES 11/2020-06/2021](#)).

Figure 16. Monthly household expense for water in northern Syria in SYP ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES 11/2020-06/2021](#))

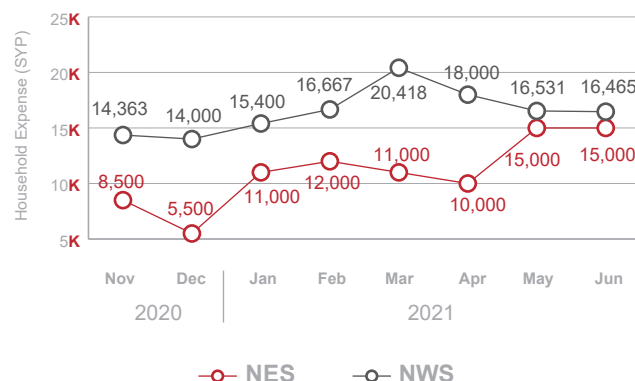
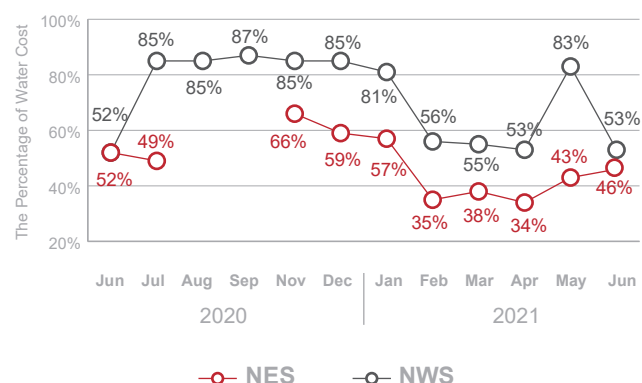


Figure 17. Communities reporting high cost of water trucking as a barrier to access water in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES 06/2020-06/2021](#))



Hygiene items mostly unaffordable

Between February 2020 and June 2021, the prices of all COVID-19 related items recorded significant price hikes compared to pre-COVID-19 prices. On average, across Syria, the prices of surgeon masks, a pair of gloves, alcohol spray, bleach bottle, hand gel and soap spiked, increasing

by more than 330%, 690%, 435%, 240%, 350% and 240% respectively. While most of the increase was recorded in 2020, between February and June 2020, prices kept increasing throughout the pandemic, with gloves prices still increasing by more than 25% in a month in May 2021 ([WFP Market Prices Watch](#) 02/2020-06/2021).

Figure 18. Cost of main COVID-19 items ([WFP Market Prices Watch](#) 02/2020-06/2021)

	2020											2021						Percentage of increase
	Feb	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun		
Surgeon mask	79	353	355	386	369	489	371	344	340	340	347	365	391	375	451	341	330%	
Gloves (pair)	67	163	185	230	273	406	334	328	345	356	352	365	474	509	643	529	690%	
Alcohol spray (200ml)	418	980	1,023	12,49	1,385	1,589	1,608	1,564	1,617	1,718	1,765	1,831	2,085	2,194	2,263	2,236	435%	
Bleach bottle (L)	416	591	664	997	1,115	1,169	1,053	1,074	1,104	1,126	1,178	1,261	1,456	1,456	1,512	1,415	240%	
Hand gel (50 ml)	241	581	585	769	902	1,020	927	936	929	966	967	1,022	1,117	1,140	1,211	1,100	350%	
Soap bar	149	258	276	387	388	469	373	357	354	376	390	434	539	546	615	512	240%	

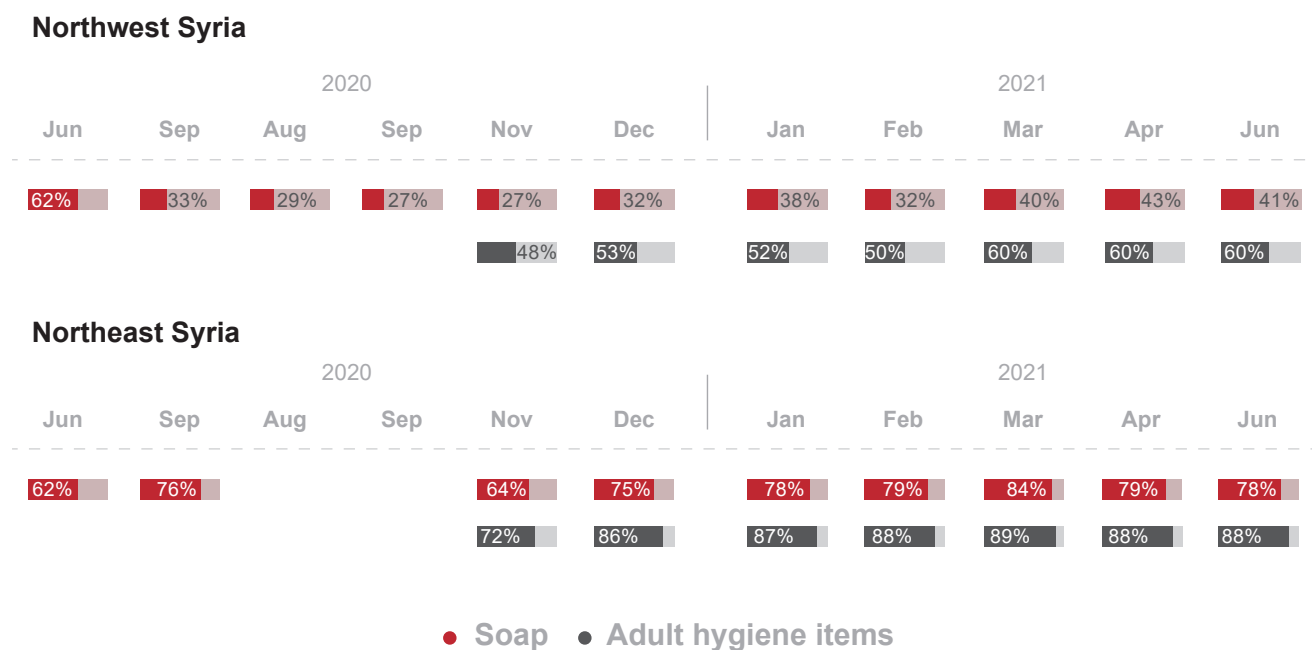
Following such price increases, the cost of the hygiene component of the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket more than doubled in the northeast between June 2020 and June 2021, with an even higher peak in March. In the northwest, it also recorded a significant increase, +75% during the same time period ([REACH Initiative Market Monitoring NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021).

Figure 19. Cost of SMEB hygiene component in northern Syria in SYP ([REACH Initiative Market Monitoring NWS/NES 06/2020-06/2021](#))



As a result, soap and hygiene items became increasingly out of reach for many households, at a time when their use was even more crucial. In the northwest, about a third of communities reported soap as unaffordable for most people and about 55% adult hygiene items between July 2020 and June 2021. In the northeast, the issue was even more dire, with about 75% of communities reporting soap as unaffordable for most people and 85% adult hygiene items between the same time period ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES 06/2020-06/2021](#)).

Figure 20. Communities reporting soap and adult hygiene items unaffordable for most people in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021)



Insufficient access to water

More than half of the assessed communities in northern Syria reported insufficient access to potable water throughout 2020 and 2021, increasing the risk of transmission.

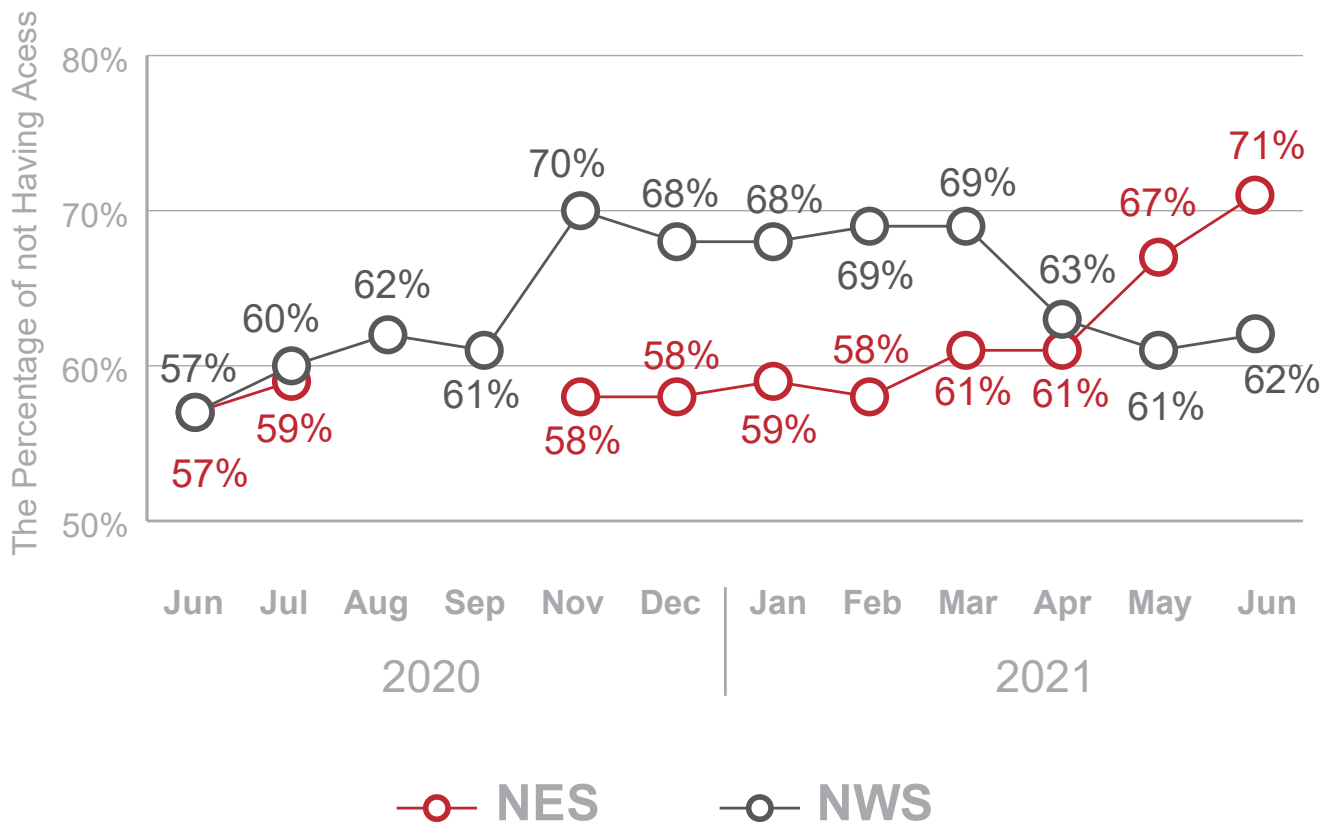
In about 60% of communities in the northwest not all households have had access to sufficient water on average between June 2020 and June 2021. This even climbed to 70% between November 2020 and March 2021 in the northwest ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021). According to a 2021 WASH Cluster household level survey, almost 80% of people stated they did not have access to sufficient water during the previous month in the northwest ([OCHA](#) 26/03/2021). Among 205 IDP sites in northwest Syria, almost two-thirds reported not having sufficient water storing capacity for one day in January 2021([OCHA](#) 26/01/2021).

Similar issues were reported in the northeast, with not all households having had access to sufficient water on average between June 2020 and June 2021 in about 60% of communities, spiking to more than 70% in June 2021. According to HNAP data, households in the northeast had the lowest access nationwide to safe water (63%) in January 2021 ([HNAP Spring 2021 Series - Priority Needs and Access to Services](#) 25/03/2021). Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hassakeh governorates were particularly affected, with in half assessed sub-districts, all assessed communities reporting insufficient access to water for at least a proportion of households ([REACH Initiative](#) 24/03/2021). As a result, WASH was the third priority need for residents in the northeast, reported by around 55% of the communities from June 2020 to June 2021 and even climbed to 62% in May ([REACH Initiative HSOS NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021).

Lack of access to water was less reported in GoS-held areas, with only around 10% of the population reportedly having insufficient access to water in March 2021, with the exception of Duma District, Rural Damascus governorate where this figure jumped to 55%, following heavy military destruction of the infrastructure ([REACH Initiative](#) 17/05/2021).

Returnee households across Syria with members with disabilities reported lower access to water compared to those without members with disabilities (82% compared to 91%) in January 2021. In the northeast, around two thirds of households with members with disabilities had no access to regular water, while this fell to about one fifth in the northwest ([HNAP](#) 16/04/2021).

Figure 21. Communities reporting not all households have access to sufficient water in northern Syria ([REACH Initiative HSOS NWS/NES](#) 06/2020-06/2021)



Access to hygiene items remained limited

While surveys show that practicing good hygiene, such as handwashing, is the most widely adopted measure to protect oneself against the virus (see Communication section), access to hygiene items have been restricted.

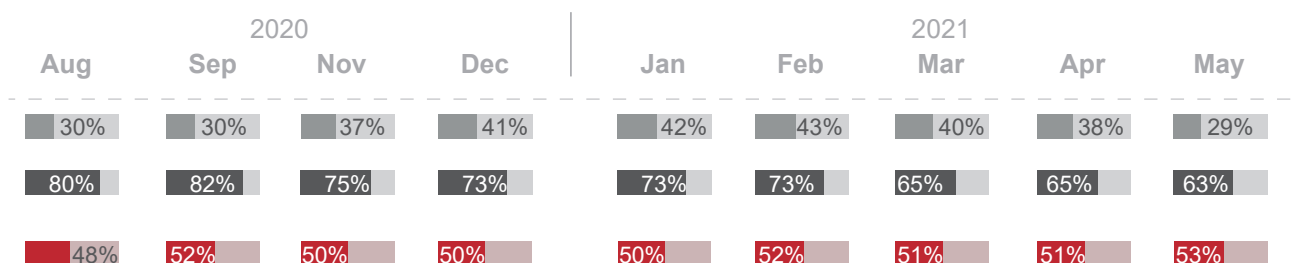
About 40% of sub-districts in GoS-held areas reported to be in need of soap or water between December 2020 and April 2021. In the northwest, 80% of sub-districts reported such need earlier on in the pandemic, between August and September 2020 but the levels have since then declined to reach more than 60% in May 2021 ([HNAP Rapid COVID-19 assessments](#) 08/2020-05/2021). Only less than half of the camp populations in the northwest had access to both soap and water and handwashing facilities in March 2021, while about 20% had no soap at all or no handwashing facilities ([OCHA](#) 26/03/2021). Compounding these needs, 70% of the sites did not receive hygiene kits in the last three months of 2020 ([OCHA](#) 26/01/2021). In the northeast, about 50% of the sub-districts did not have enough soap or water throughout August 2020 to May 2021 ([HNAP Rapid COVID-19 assessments](#) 08/2020-05/2021).

About 60% of sub-districts in GoS-held areas were in need of disinfectant between August 2020 and February 2021, before declining below half. In the northwest and northeast, this need was very acute between August and September 2020, with more than 85% of sub-districts lacking disinfectant, before declining to around 75% ([HNAP Rapid COVID-19 assessments](#) 08/2020-05/2021).

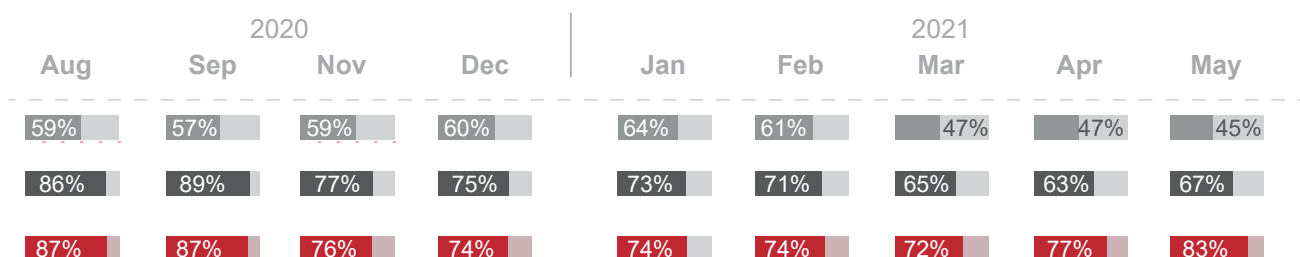
About 55% of sub-districts reported to be in need of masks between August 2020 and February 2021, declining slowly since then. In the northwest, about 75% of sub-districts reported such needs between August 2020 and January 2021, decreasing by about 10 percentage points from then until May 2021. In the northeast, a peak of 80% of sub-districts were reportedly lacking masks between August and September 2020, remaining at about 70% afterwards ([HNAP Rapid COVID-19 assessments](#) 08/2020-05/2021).

Figure 22. Proportion of sub-districts reporting in need of soap or water, masks and disinfectants ([HNAP Rapid COVID-19 assessments](#) 08/2020-05/2021)

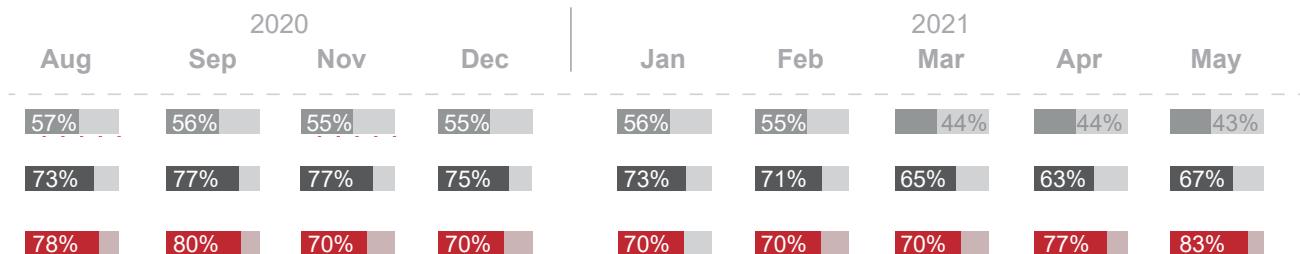
Soap or Water



Disinfectant



Masks



Use of extreme coping strategies

Due to the disruptions in the water system, people resorted to unsafe water sources and wells, or even reduced their daily water usage altogether.

In GoS-held areas, 20% of all assessed communities reported borrowing money to buy water in March 2021 ([REACH Initiative & HNAP](#) 17/05/2021).

In the northwest, in March–April 2021, around 30% of communities had resorted to using at least two severe coping strategies to compensate for the lack of water, such as using money allocated for other things, bathing and doing laundry less frequently, buying water on credit, or reducing drinking water consumption ([REACH Initiative](#) NWS 03/06/2021, [REACH Initiative & HNAP](#) 17/05/2021). Across 410 IDP sites, due to limited income and infrastructure, households had also been limiting their water usage, with the average drinking water consumption standing at 26 liters in the northwest in February 2021, below the daily SPHERE standard of 30 liters ([OCHA](#) 26/03/2021).

As for the northeast, where access to adequate water is lower than average, around 25% of communities resorted to using severe coping strategies in March 2021 ([REACH Initiative & HNAP](#) 17/05/2021). While this proportion fell to 15% of assessed communities in May, reducing drinking water consumption was highly prevalent in Deir-Ez-Zor governorate, reported by 44% of the assessed communities. In more than 50% of assessed communities across the region and close to 70% in Deir-Ez-Zor governorate, drinking water was among the three most important WASH needs ([REACH Initiative](#) 23/06/2021). Most IDP households in al-Hasakeh city were reportedly drinking less water to cope with critical water needs ([HNAP Al-Hasakeh City Investigation on the demographics, needs and future intentions of IDPs](#) 23/6/2021).

Water-borne diseases

Due to reduced water availability and the disruption of disease surveillance systems, water-borne diseases increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Already in August 2020, more than a 1,000 cases of acute diarrhea were reported in Al-Hassakeh governorate, northeast, due to water coming from contaminated wells ([OCHA](#) 28/08/2020). According to WHO data, more than a 50% increase in cases of was reported in this governorate between January and early June 2021, compared to the same period in 2020, with a substantial amount in Al-Hol sub-district from the end of April ([OCHA](#) 01/07/2021). In May 2021, more than a 130% increase in acute diarrhea cases were recorded compared to May 2020, reaching more than 17,000 cases ([OCHA](#) 17/06/2021).

In the northwest, thousands more cases of water-borne diseases were reported in September 2020 compared to the same month in previous years, with hotspots in Ar-Ra'ee and Jarablus sub-districts ([OCHA](#) 21/10/2020). About a 30% increase in the number of cases of water-borne diseases was reported in the region in January 2021, compared to 2017 ([OCHA](#) 26/01/2021). Dana, Azaz, Idlib, Albab, Maaret Tamesrin, Daret Ezza, Afrin and Atareb sub-districts were still significant hotspots for waterborne disease, with Dana, Maaret Tamesrin, Afrin, Azaz and Al-Bab sub-districts reporting the highest number of leishmaniasis cases ([OCHA](#) 26/03/2021).

IMPACT ON NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

1. Less frequent data collection exercises in 2020 following COVID-19 restrictions

At the field level, clusters and organizations working in Syria have had to significantly change the modality, scope and scale of data collection activities in 2020, as well as postponing some altogether due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Humanitarian actors had to scale-back or even cease certain activities that could not be adapted to the COVID-19 environment in 2020, in an effort to keep people in need and humanitarian staff safe ([OCHA](#) 05/06/2020, [UNHCR](#) 01/07/2020). Humanitarian partners suspended non-emergency and non-essential activities between March and November 2020, only conducting operations related to health, hygiene, and food ([OCHA](#) 29/04/2020). Despite a general relaxation of COVID-19 public health measures issued in the various parts of the country

from end April 2020, impact on humanitarian activities continued until the end of 2020, as interventions kept being implemented remotely to ensure physical distancing, such as the implementation of home learning kits and e-learning. Although primary data collection continued, some assessments were delayed in 2020, resulting in a lesser understanding of needs and made it difficult to evidence them when seeking funding or targeting assistance. However, the frequency of assessments increased during the second half of the year, due to the establishment of new modalities, as well as reductions in restrictions by authorities. However, challenges remained to ensure staff and communities were not at-risk during data collection exercises.

2. Remote data collection challenges

Data collection activities in Syria in the COVID-19 context faced numerous challenges, primarily affecting field-level data collection modalities and organizations' ability to conduct them in a timely and efficient manner, and to an extent burdened the coordination mechanisms that support them.

Many data collection activities shifted to remote methods in order to mitigate COVID-19 risks altogether. This brings with it the familiar challenges that often arise from remote data collection yet have been implemented for exercises that would otherwise have been conducted using face-to-face methods. The shift to remote collection methodologies, such as replacing household level interviews with telephone interviews with key informants, has generated lower quality data while requiring more time for preparation, cleaning and validation. The resulting burden on operations and resources has been hindering the data collection process for many actors.

3. Actors adapted to new data collection methodologies, yet still faced key challenges in data coverage and quality

Alterations to the modalities of data collection to reduce risk of infection transmission among staff and populations were put in place, with more established guidance, procedures, and training at the end of 2020. Such modifications include conducting household-level interviews outside the home, for shorter periods, with the head of household only; conducting focus group discussions and key informant interviews remotely via phone or social media and messaging services such as WhatsApp; reducing the number of participants when data collection was done in parallel with aid distribution to avoid overcrowding, and instead increasing frequency and planning; dividing up focus groups in Women and Girl Safe Spaces into separate rooms but linked by video; reducing the amount of travel for staff; enforcing use of

personal protective equipment; and developing plans in case of an enumerator or participant show symptoms. Assessments and operations are now also often coupled with COVID-19 risk communication and response, often including the distribution of information and/or PPE to respondents. Although interviews were being shortened to accommodate these new measures, the data collection process has been taking longer, delayed by the need for extra training on safety measures, restricted due to difficulties in travelling to households and precautionary limiting the movement of enumerators. These in turn have in many cases affected the scope of assessments and increased cost and time needed to collect the same amount of data.

4. Mobilization of staff still difficult

Mobilization, recruitment and relocation of staff have remained difficult with both international and national travel restrictions on individuals as well as humanitarian operations. Even in cases where humanitarian staff have had allowances or exemptions for restrictions, this often still requires additional processes or resources to arrange, with the amount varying significantly depending on the appropriate channels or authorities. This has been affecting both data collection teams in the field, as well as supporting staff working remotely either within or outside the country. Measures taken to mitigate the barriers created by COVID-19 in data collection as well as other operational activities include a move to remote management mechanisms, reducing the amount of travel for staff, sterilizing equipment, enforcing use of personal protective equipment, developing plans in case of an enumerator or participant show symptoms, and avoiding crowd-gathering activities.

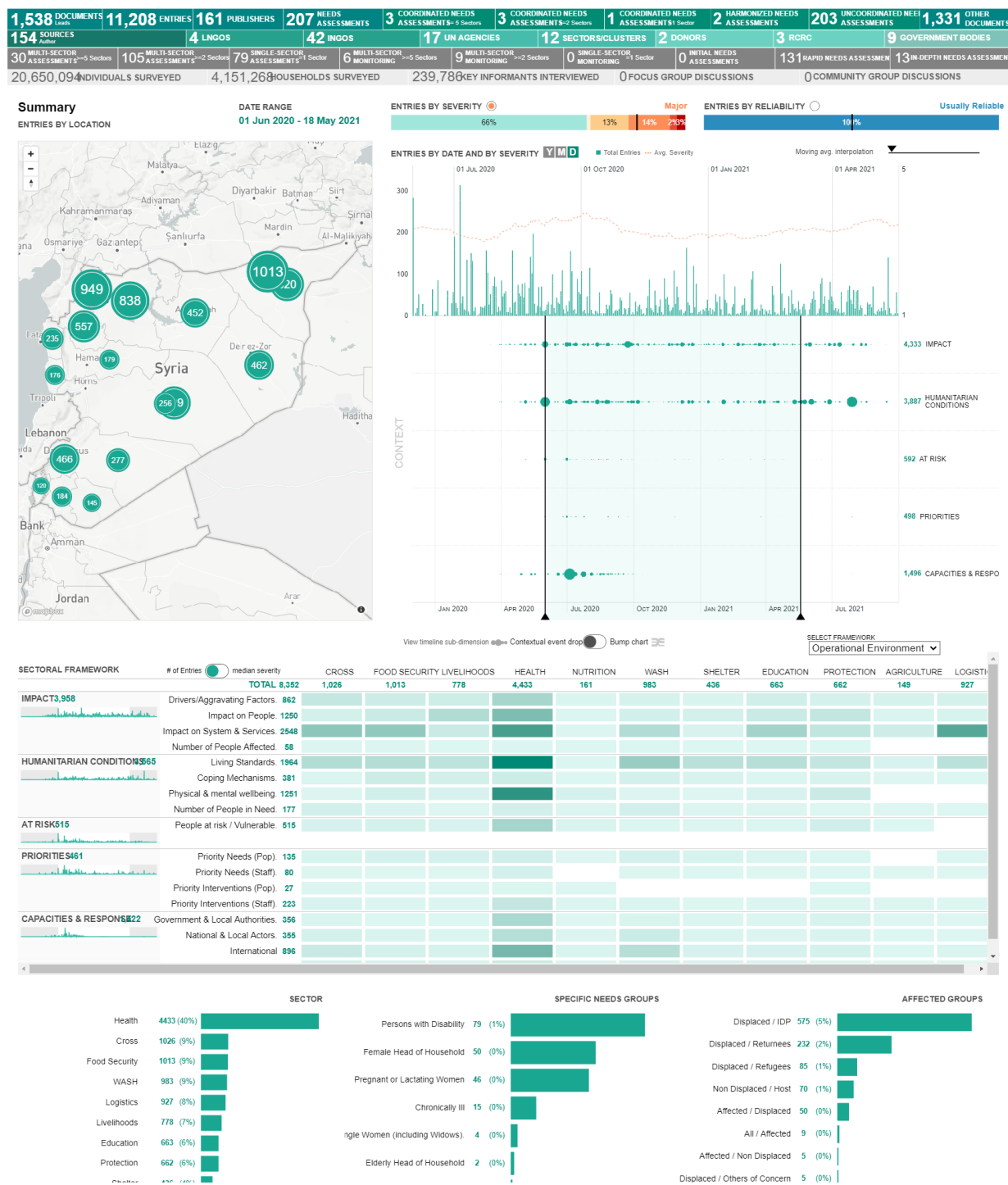
Not only have the number of personnel required to conduct assessments increased (in some cases doubled) to address such challenges, but the travel and deployment of personnel have been limited due to measures both put in place by authorities and the organizations themselves. Coupled with the increase in time and resources required to train staff on COVID-19 related practices, this difficulty puts a strain on the ability of organizations to get staff where they need to be in order to safely and efficiently conduct data collection. Furthermore, managerial staff are more likely to be working from home and training is being conducted online in a limited capacity, which has affected the capability of some organizations to conduct assessments.

METHODOLOGY AND REVIEW OF DATA

The DEEP structured and searchable information repository forms the basis of the analysis. Details of the

information captured for this report are available below.

Figure 31. Information captured for Syria in DEEP between 01/06/2020 and 15/08/2021



Review of COVID-19 humanitarian assessments conducted in 2021

Between June 2020 and mid-August 2021, more than 12,500 COVID-19 relevant pieces of information have been identified overall and at least 230 humanitarian needs assessments related to COVID-19 were conducted in Syria. About half were rapid assessments, with most using key informant interviews, highlighting the limitations posed by the COVID-19 context. Very few of these assessments were at household level. However, the unit of analysis and reporting in almost half of the assessments was the sub-district, providing a good level of data disaggregation. Unsurprisingly, health was the sector most covered, followed by the WASH sector, then Education since the reopening of schools in September. Containment measures and communications were also topics on which the humanitarian community mostly reported on, especially from April up to the summer 2020. Most of the assessments looked at all population groups, but IDPs were the top-ranking group being surveyed when needs assessments had a specific vulnerable group focus.

Overall, Syria's COVID-19 information landscape remains rich, and sector-specific information is being collected and shared regularly. Health remains the sector with the most related information, followed by food security and livelihoods and WASH, without surprise as these are the most disrupted sectors, significantly impacted by COVID-19 related restrictions. A low number of COVID-19 related needs assessments in the protection sector makes quantifying identified impacts and trends difficult. Although it is to be expected that such sensitive assessments would be less frequent, a rise in protection issues was reported among protection actors and reported in our monthly reports. Information is often available for different vulnerable groups – displaced populations, female-headed households, children, etc. It is also possible to disaggregate information by geographical areas, although central and southern Syria are the areas where needs are least reported. However, data is only available in areas with regular access. When assessments have not been conducted, there is a general tendency to center the analysis and draw conclusions from information or data from main cities and extrapolate these findings to generalize it to the entire governorate, erasing some of the disparities that may exist between urban and rural areas.

Lack of information on GoS-controlled areas

Less information has been available for GoS-controlled areas overall, compared to northern Syria. While for the northwest and northeast, regular monthly assessments and updates were released, the GoS-held areas were more scarcely covered, likely resulting from more constraining access issues. Between January and mid-August 2021, about 2,130 COVID-19 relevant pieces of information have been identified for the northeast and 1,380 for the northwest. For GoS-held areas, 1,780 entries have been

identified, about the same amount as the northwest, however for a territory at least three times larger, highlighting an information disparity. In addition, most of the information for GoS-controlled areas are coming from media sources, with various levels of reliability, compared to northern Syria, where the majority of the information comes from more reliable national or international humanitarian actors.

Methodology

A comprehensive Secondary Data Analytical Framework has been designed to address specific strategic information needs of UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, clusters, and HCTs at the country level. It is essentially a methodological toolbox used by Analysts and Information Management Officers during the monthly analysis cycle. The Analytical Framework:

- Provides the entire suite of tools required to develop and derive quality and credible situation analysis;
- Integrates the best practices and analytical standards developed in recent years for humanitarian analysis;
- Offers end users with an audit trail on the amount of evidence available, how data was processed, and conclusions reached;
- Aligns with global efforts and frameworks.

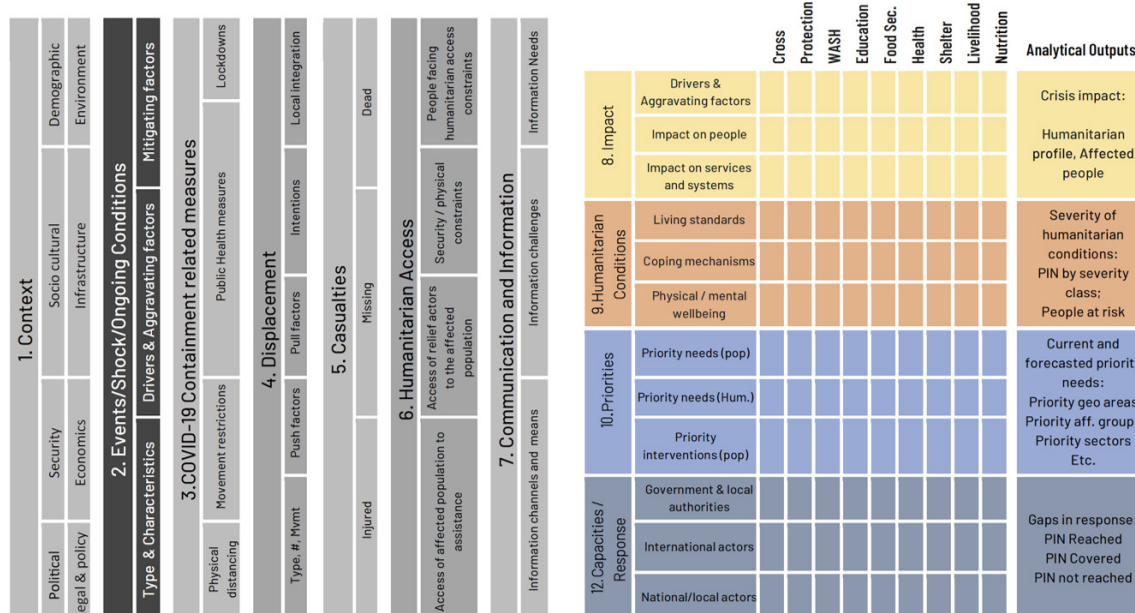
The two most important tools used throughout the process are the **Secondary Data Analysis Framework (SDAF)** and the **Analysis Workflow**.

Secondary Data Analysis Framework

The Secondary Data Analysis Framework focuses on assessing critical dimensions of a humanitarian crisis and facilitates an understanding of both unmet needs,

their consequences and the overall context within which humanitarian needs have developed and humanitarian actors are intervening.

Figure 32. Secondary Data Analysis Framework





Thank you.



Contact

Global project manager

Benjamin Gaudin

email: bgaudin@immap.org

Syria project lead

James Whitaker

email: jwhitaker@immap.org

Website

Direct Link : <https://immap.org/>



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