

NEEDS AND VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT OF MIGRANTS IN LEBANON

MAY 2021



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Cover

IOM staff carry out a distribution of pre-loaded ATM cards to a group of migrant workers from Sierra Leone. © IOM 2020/Muse MOHAMMED

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↑ IOM enumerators carry out door-to-door assessments in partnership with the Lebanese Red Cross in areas affected by the Beirut explosions to help the humanitarian community better understand the needs, plan and provide assistance. © IOM 2020/Muse MOHAMMED

KEY FINDINGS

- Findings indicate that food assistance followed by rent assistance are the priority needs among respondents, with a 6 and 12 per cent rise in their respective needs, since the baseline assessment.
- Substandard and insecure shelter conditions were widely reported. Detected among approximately half of all respondents (565), substandard conditions were characterized by inadequate shelter structures, unaffordable rent, threat of imminent eviction, and damaged homes resulting from the 4 August 2020 Beirut Port Explosion.
- Over 50 per cent of respondents (589) reported inability to meet food needs, with food insecurity increasing by 5 per cent since the baseline report. The assessment also showed a minority of respondents (229) and predominantly female, have resorted to degrading, exploitative, dangerous, or illegal work to ensure their basic food needs.
- 45 per cent of respondents (479) indicated insufficient household access to clean drinking water. Nearly one third (305) also reported inadequate toiletry facilities, as well as substandard cooking or cleaning facilities.
- 50 per cent of respondents (529) reported being unemployed, with the majority losing their jobs in the last quarter of 2020. This represents a decline in the unemployment rate since the baseline but also raises protection concerns surrounding exploitative work among migrants.
- 50 per cent of all surveyed migrants (510) reported being in debt.
- 20 per cent of respondents (203) reported health problems, with approximately half of these suffering chronic health issues, both physical and mental, that required continuous treatment. However, migrants also reported higher awareness of health-care services available, particularly in relation to COVID-19, and better access to protective equipment since the baseline assessment.
- Return intentions remain high, despite decreasing since the baseline assessment, with nearly half of all surveyed migrants (466) confirming their desire to return home. As the economic situation deteriorates further and employment opportunities remain limited, staying in Lebanon may increase migrants' vulnerability to exploitation.
- Nearly all respondents (1,003) opted for cash as their preferred mode of assistance.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout 2020, Lebanon continued to experience severe economic difficulties, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the devastating Beirut Port Explosion.

Given the continuing economic deterioration, the worsening COVID-19 crisis and its resultant lockdown measures, unemployment is high. Local sources have estimated unemployment rose from approximately 11 to 30 per cent from the start of 2019 until mid-2020, with an estimated 350,000 private sector jobs lost during this period.

Meanwhile, inflation has been severe. The average cost of the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) increased by 183 per cent from September 2019 until the close of 2020.¹ The local currency continues to devalue dramatically, reaching a 90 per cent value loss on its pre-crisis rate. As a result, economic hardship is intensifying and driving the cost of living to increasingly unaffordable levels. According to a 2020 UNESCWA report, “more than 55% of the country’s population is now trapped in poverty and struggling for bare necessities, i.e., almost double last year’s rate which was 28%. Extreme poverty has registered a threefold increase from 8% in 2019 to 23% in 2020”.²

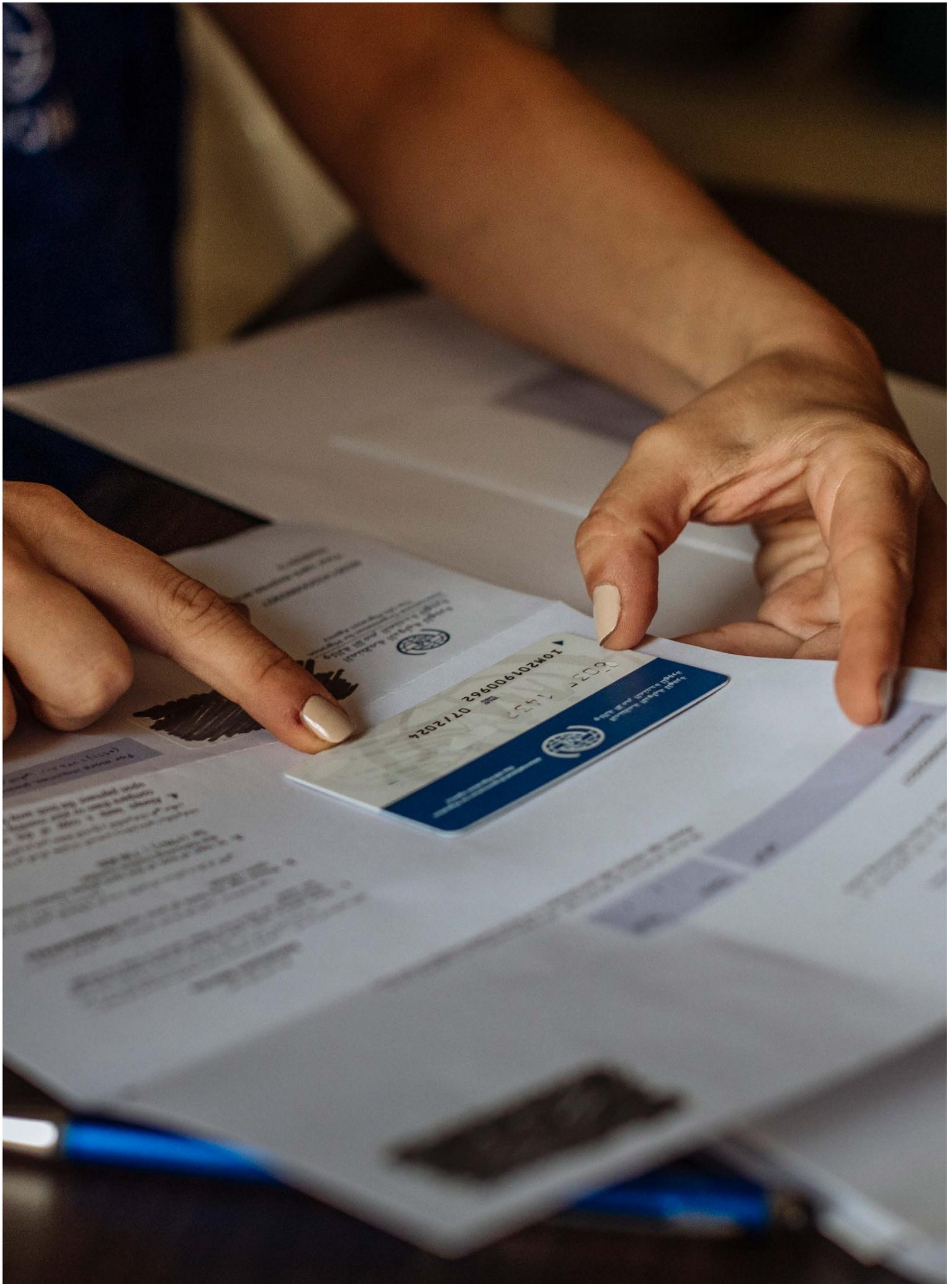
In Beirut, these difficulties were dramatically heightened by the Beirut Port Explosion on 4 August 2020 that killed over 200 people and left approximately 300,000 people temporarily homeless. The explosion caused significant damage to commercial venues, leading to the forced closure of many local businesses, with the Beirut Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) estimating 1 in 5 employees losing their jobs in areas affected by the blast. The explosion also damaged hospitals and schools and caused massive trade disruptions at the national level.

These developments have severely affected the well-being of vulnerable populations in Lebanon, including migrants. IOM data collection work throughout 2020 consistently demonstrated that migrants are being affected by the economic and related crises in country, with high levels of unemployment and resulting increases in poverty rates. Furthermore, migrants tend to be overlooked for humanitarian assistance. However, given socioeconomic conditions in Lebanon, and combined with a history of employment abuse, and lack of familial support networks, migrants are an extremely vulnerable group in Lebanon.

The Needs and Vulnerability (N&V) assessment was designed to identify priority needs and risks among the migrant population in Lebanon, resulting from the economic crisis, the COVID-19 outbreak, and from the Beirut Port Explosion. Specifically, the assessment looks at how these negative developments have affected the protection, social, economic, financial and health situation of migrants living in Lebanon. It seeks to inform humanitarian programming, as well as longer-term protection and assistance interventions targeting migrants in vulnerable situations in Lebanon.

1. “VAM Update on Food Price and Market Trends”, World Food Programme, December 2020.

2. “Poverty in Lebanon: Solidarity is Vital to Address the Impact of the Multiple Overlapping Shocks,” United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), August 2020.



↑ IOM staff carry out a distribution of pre-loaded ATM cards to a group of migrant workers from Sierra Leone. © IOM 2020/Muse MOHAMMED

METHODOLOGY

The Needs and Vulnerability assessment was designed to collect data on migrants' needs and vulnerabilities in Lebanon, considering the ongoing economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Beirut Port Explosion. The data was collected by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) between October 2020 and February 2021. It is based off 1,061 individual interviews, predominantly conducted in the Beirut and Mount Lebanon area. The assessment is intended as a follow-up to the baseline assessment conducted by IOM between May and July 2020.

The assessment was designed to produce indicators relating to migrants' welfare regarding shelter, food, water and sanitation, health care, and employment. It also collected data on migrants' legal status in Lebanon, their reasons for emigrating, and return intentions. Through comparative analysis against the baseline assessment, this assessment also provides comparative information demonstrating how migrants' needs and vulnerabilities have evolved since August 2020.

SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS

Since the publication of the baseline assessment, IOM has assessed a further 1,061 migrants living predominantly in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. The participants for the assessment were identified through a variety of channels, including referrals from embassies and consulates; respondents from the Lebanese Red Cross' 2020 Multisector Needs Assessment (MSNA); IOM partner organizations and migrant community groups; member organizations of the Migrant Workers Coordination Group; and intra-IOM referrals from the Migrant Protection and Assistance Unit. The sample is not statistically representative of all migrants in Lebanon, as the total number of migrants in Lebanon and their characteristics is not known for certain.

DATA COLLECTION MODALITY

Data was primarily collected through remote interviews with individual migrants. This was due to the COVID-19 lockdown measures hindering mobility of both IOM staff and respondents. However, some in-person interviews did take place with respondents and in compliance with WHO guidance on preventative measures. The assessment tool included questions on demographics, legal status, migration history and future intentions, employment, living arrangements, access to health care, and water and sanitation. Specific questions on food security were also incorporated based on WFP's standard food security indicators. All data was entered into a central database and analysed by IOM.

LIMITATIONS

Due to mobility and access restrictions linked to COVID-19, most interviews were conducted remotely. This limited the enumerators' capacity for identification and selection of additional responses that would have occurred more naturally had field mobility been possible.

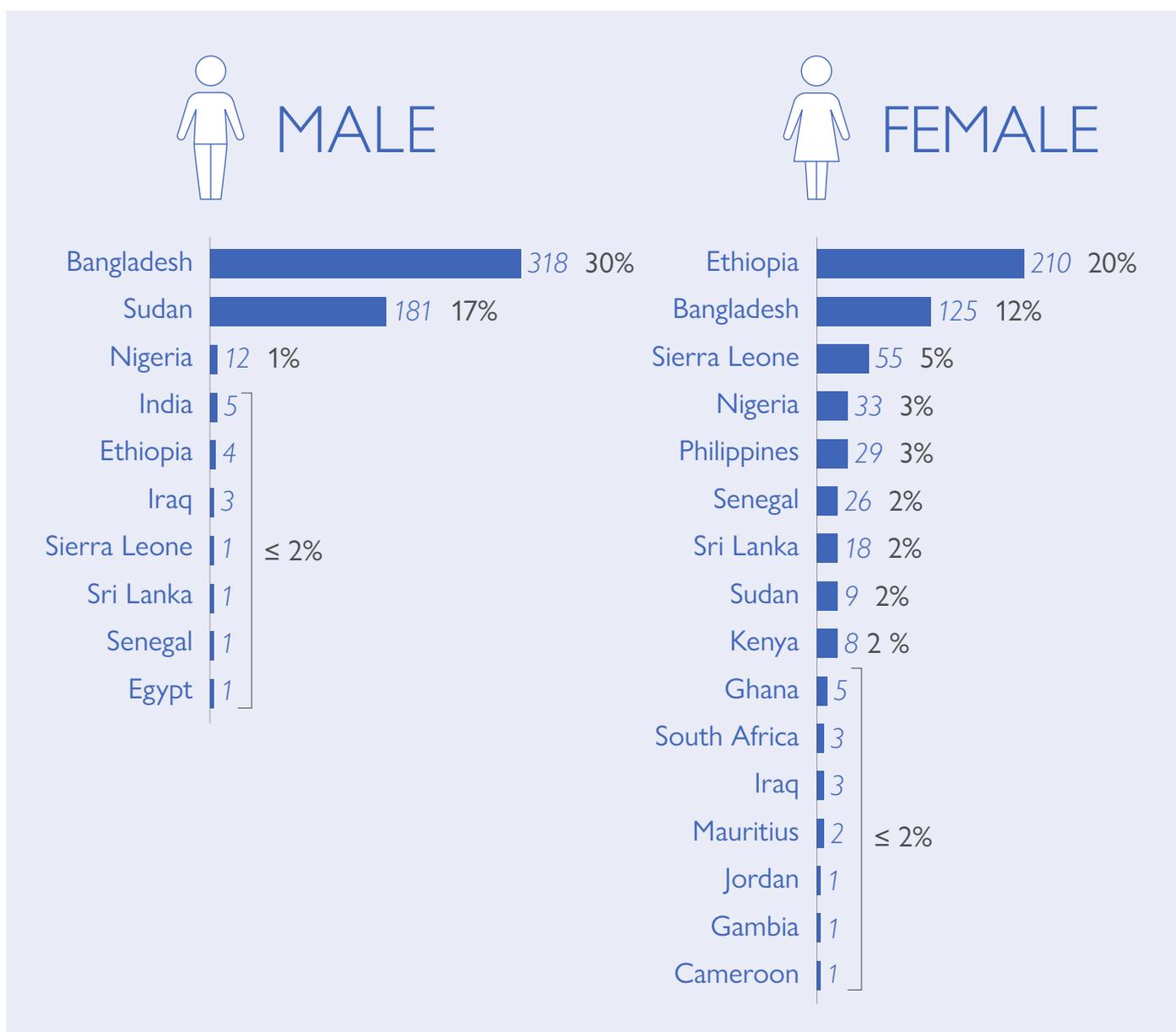
Also, the N&V assessment's sample caseload stems from a narrower representation of overall migrant experiences in the country, due to the predominant focus on Beirut and Mount Lebanon. However, this geographical imbalance does not mean that the N&V's sample necessarily represents a certain experience above another, nor that the N&V only shines light on a single aspect of migrant experiences in Lebanon. Instead, it suggests that IOM's findings be taken as tentative indicators, given the limits of representational diversity among the sample caseload. Finally, the objective of the N&V assessment is to represent a wide range of foreign nationalities in Lebanon. However, the sample caseload is predominantly drawn from a small handful of specific nationalities with others underrepresented. This was partly due to a reluctance by several foreign embassies to share data related to their individual nationals.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE CASELOAD

GENDER

The total caseload comprised 1,061 individual migrants. Both genders were equally represented. Almost all migrants surveyed were between 18 and 60 years old. Approximately 78 per cent of respondents reported being in Lebanon alone, while 22 per cent reported being in Lebanon with their families or close relatives. The top nationalities targeted by the assessment were from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, the Sudan and Sierra Leone. Male respondents were predominantly Bangladeshi or Sudanese nationals, while female respondents were mostly Ethiopian, followed by Sierra Leonean and Nigerian.

BREAKDOWN OF NATIONALITY PER GENDER

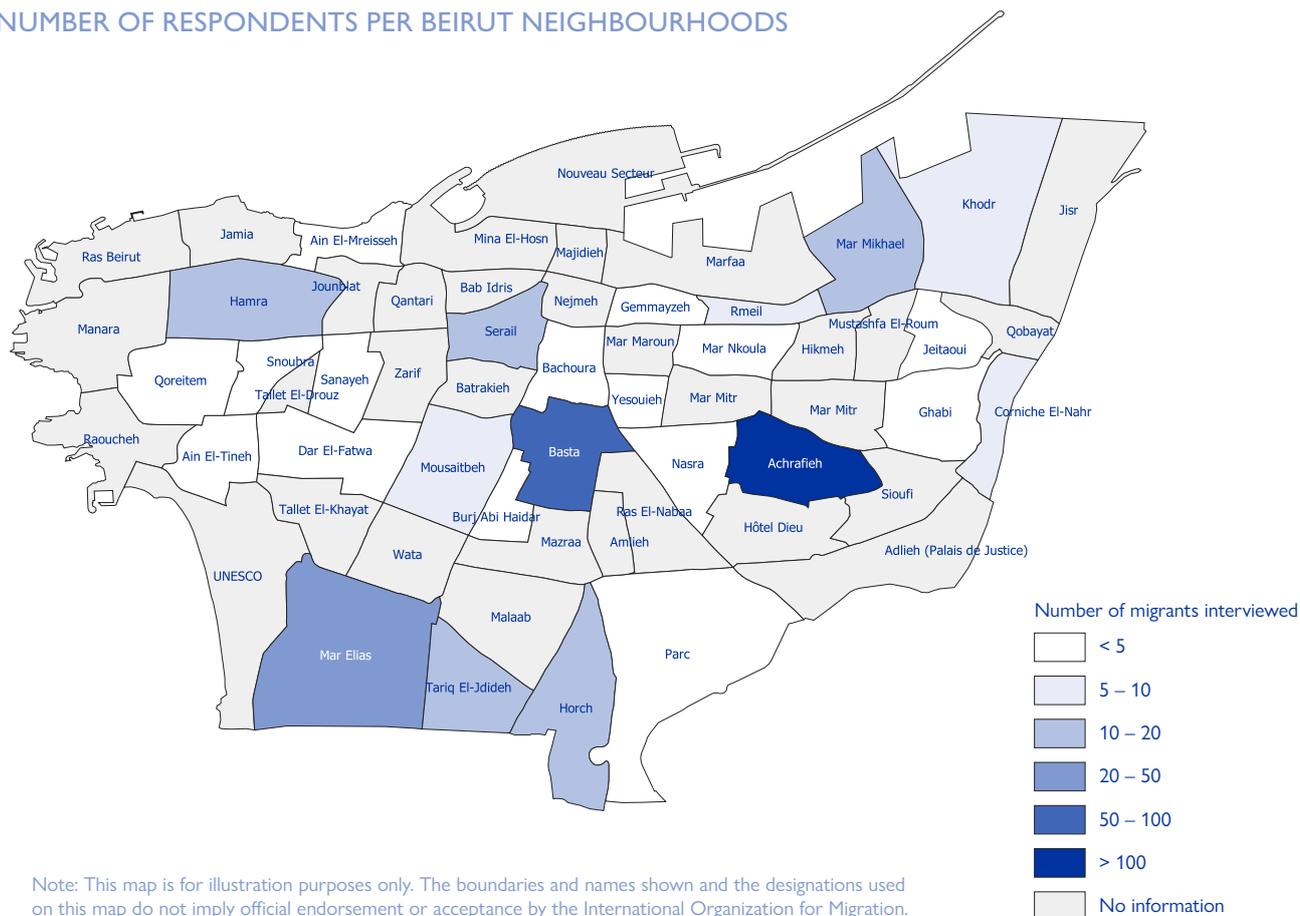


GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD OF RESPONDENTS

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Governorate	Beirut	Mount Lebanon	South	North	El Nabatieh	Akkar	Baalbak – El Hermel	Beqaa	No answer
Number of Interviews	711	195	25	16	6	4	2	1	101
Total	1,061								

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS PER BEIRUT NEIGHBOURHOODS



Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

LEGAL STATUS

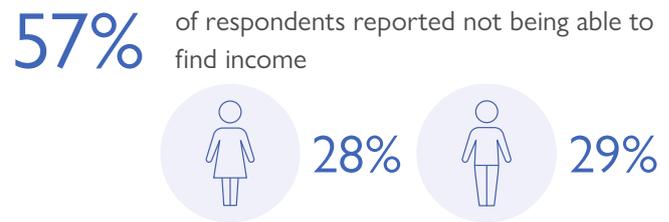
Most surveyed migrants (863) reported being in the country regularly – i.e. they have a permit to work or stay in Lebanon. However, these figures could be misrepresented as migrants may be reluctant to disclose their irregular status. Also, migrant workers may sometimes be unaware of their migration status in the country, as immigration procedures and work permits can be processed directly by employers or recruitment agents and bypass the migrant in question.

EMPLOYMENT

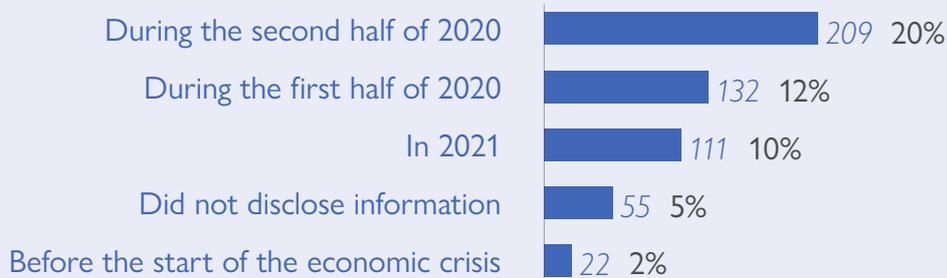
Most surveyed migrants (868) reported that the main reason they decided to migrate to Lebanon was to seek livelihood opportunities. A high number of respondents (333) indicated that they travelled to Lebanon to escape conflict and insecurity. 8 migrants reported that they migrated to the country to access better health-care services.

Approximately half of all surveyed migrants (529) reported being unemployed at the time of interview. Those who indicated that they were employed, cited a variety of employment statuses. Most of these were fulltime employment (344), but also daily labour (103) and part-time employment (80).

43 per cent of unemployed female migrants were Ethiopian (113). Other nationalities included Sierra Leonean, Nigerian, Bangladeshi, Senegalese and Sri Lankan. 58 per cent of unemployed males were Sudanese (169), followed by Bangladeshi, Nigerian, Indian and Ethiopian. While significant job losses occurred throughout 2020 and into 2021, findings indicate most migrants currently unemployed lost their jobs in the last quarter of 2020 (153).



PERIOD IN WHICH LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT OCCURRED

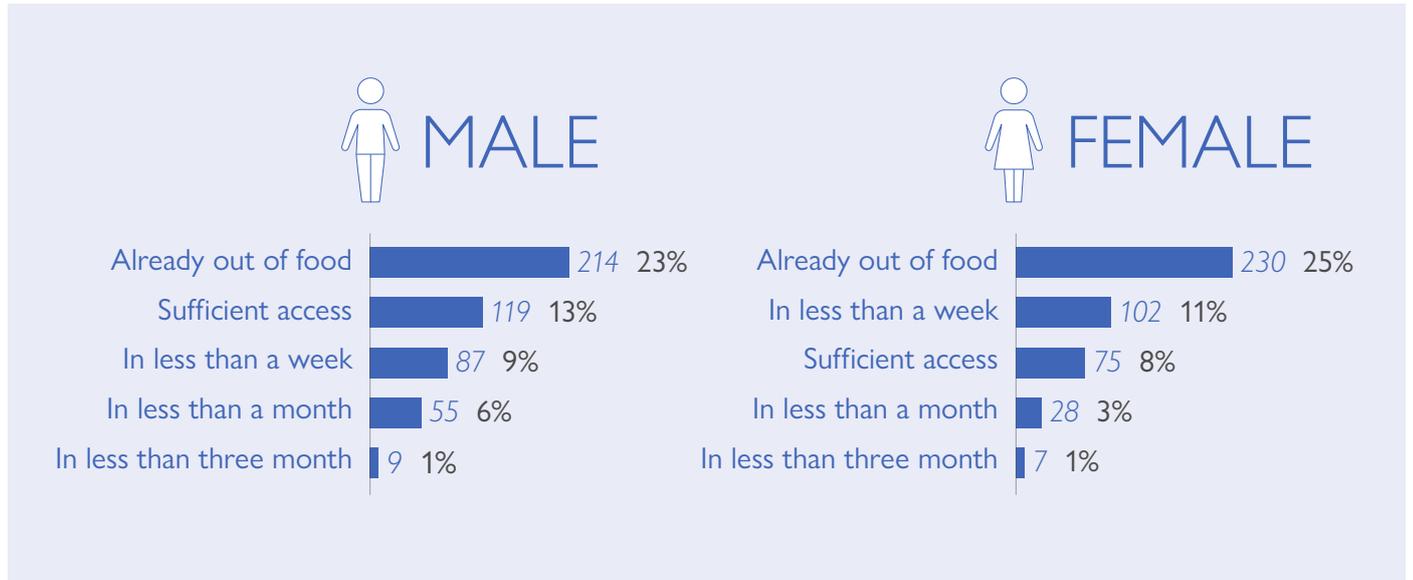


Most surveyed migrants (606) said they are unable to earn an adequate income, with a small number citing unpaid wages (81). Nearly half of respondents (420) noted their contracts had been terminated by employers. This may put migrants at risk of falling into an irregular status should they not find alternative employment. Given current economic conditions, the prospect of finding suitable alternative employment is low.

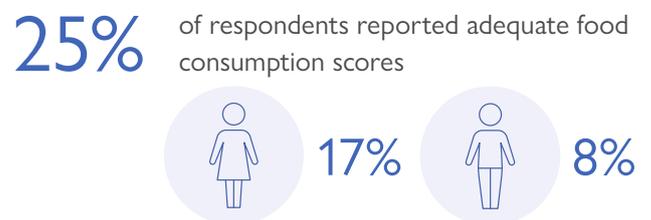
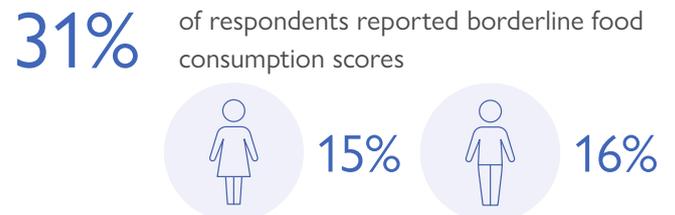
FOOD SECURITY

Findings relating to food security are the most alarming indicators produced by the assessment. The assessment identified over 50 per cent of respondents (589) as food insecure, suggesting food insecurity to be highly prevalent among migrants. Most respondents reported not having reliable access to basic foodstuffs, and already suffering food shortages. Findings also suggest that nutritional health among migrants is poor, with low dietary diversity recorded among approximately 60 per cent of respondents (674).

PROSPECT OF FUTURE FOOD INSECURITY



The below infographics provides a disaggregation by gender and nationality of respondents reporting “poor” food consumption scores, and by consequence demonstrating severe food insecurity. To note, food consumption scores are a proxy indicator measuring dietary diversity and consumption frequency of nutritionally important foodstuffs, over a seven-day period. “Poor” is the most severe food score, followed by “borderline” and “adequate”.



The food consumption scores mark a significant increase in food insecurity compared to findings in the 2020 baseline. Employment status appears to be the primary determining factor driving food insecurity. Consistently overall, higher levels of inadequate food consumption were reported among casual daily labourers, as opposed to those enjoying regular employment.

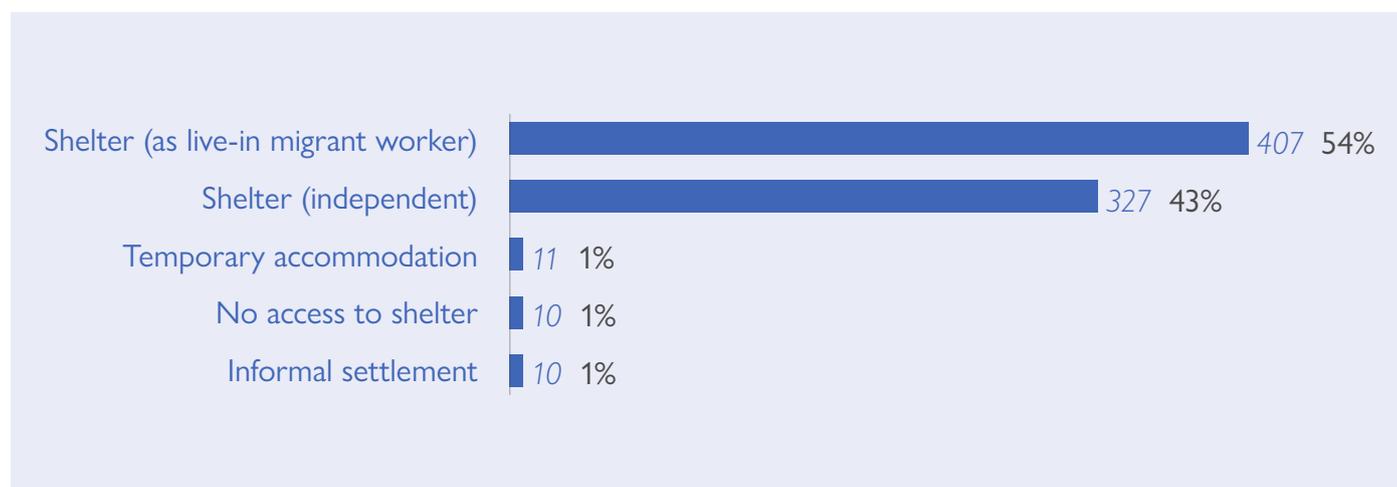
Findings also identified a range of negative coping mechanisms being adopted due to food insecurity. These include the purchasing of alternative and often nutritionally inferior foodstuffs; relying on food provision from friends and relatives; limiting meal portions; and reducing the number of meals per day. Food insecurity is also leading individuals to adapt non-food related negative coping mechanisms, such as spending their typically limited savings; reducing educational and health expenditure; or selling personal items of value. Finally, 22 per cent of respondents (229), the majority being women, reported accepting degrading, exploitative, dangerous, or illegal work to ensure their basic food needs were met.



↑ IOM staff provide hygiene and PPE kits and conduct medical assessments to stranded migrants at a medical campus outside the Kenyan consulate in Beirut. © IOM 2020/Muse MOHAMMED

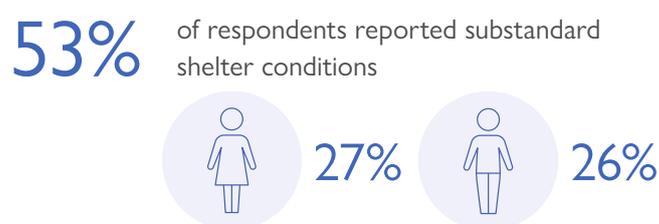
SHELTER AND ACCOMMODATION

TYPE OF CURRENT ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENT

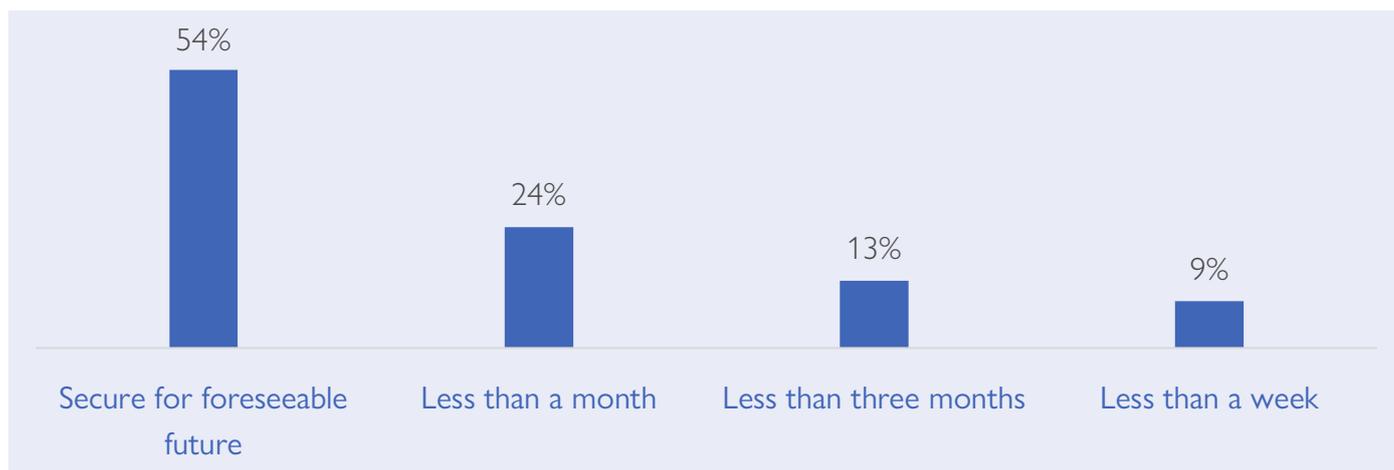


Findings suggest that a significant portion of migrants in Lebanon live in substandard and/or insecure shelter conditions. Results show that a high number of respondents' dwelling did not provide adequate insulation against harsh weather conditions, with cracks in walls, broken windows, and reoccurring leakages. Others reported that their dwellings lacked basic security or privacy, with unlockable doors and windows, and overcrowded conditions. A cross analysis of the data clearly indicates that these conditions are prevalent among unemployed migrants, particularly among Bangladeshi, Sudanese and Ethiopian nationals by 17, 15 and 10 per cent, respectively. However, it is also important to note that a significant portion of respondents, close to a third, were unwilling to disclose information related to their living conditions.

Accommodation security among those assessed presented a variety of circumstances, with the majority reporting they felt secure in their current accommodation. However, financial difficulties meeting rent payments were also reflected in the findings, with over a quarter of respondents reporting they would be unable to remain at their current accommodation for more than a month. Those facing immediate threat of homelessness were women from Sierra Leone and Ethiopia, and men from the Sudan and Bangladesh.



EXTENT OF ABILITY TO MEET FUTURE RENTAL OBLIGATIONS



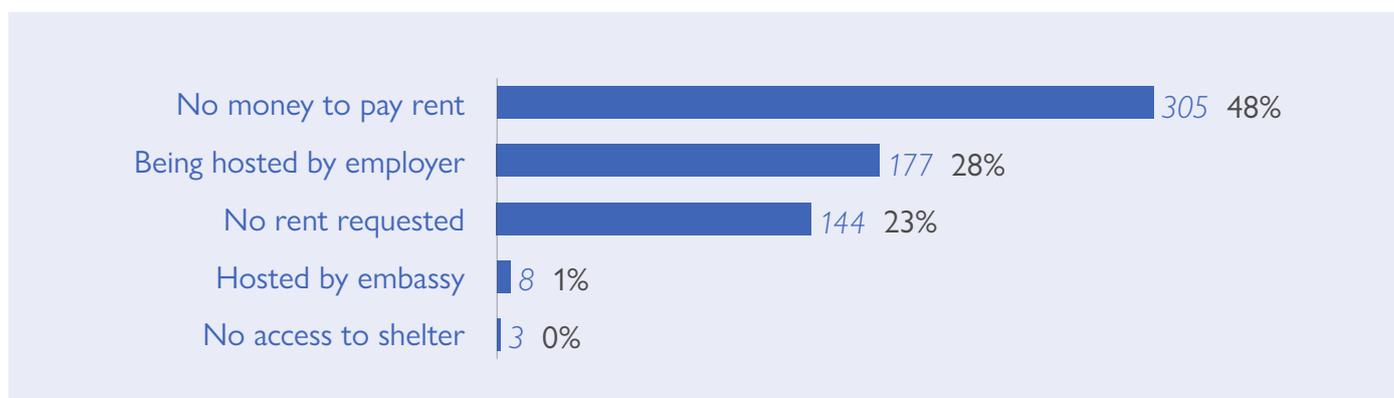
Findings also indicate that most respondents (637) are not paying rent on a regular basis, having not done so in the 30 days preceding the assessment. This trend was also noted in the 2020 baseline assessment, with the proportion of non-payment increasing. However, a portion of those not paying rent are live-in migrant domestic workers hosted by their employers. The majority however were not paying rent due to financial inability, that either meant they had not paid their landlords/ladies, or they were already living in non-rental conditions, such as lodging with family, friends support networks, or by their embassy. Nearly a third of all surveyed migrants reported not paying rent due to financial inability. This was most prevalent among female migrants from Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, respectively. Inability to afford rent among males was most prevalent among Sudanese and Bangladeshi nationals.

29% of respondents reported financial inability to pay rent

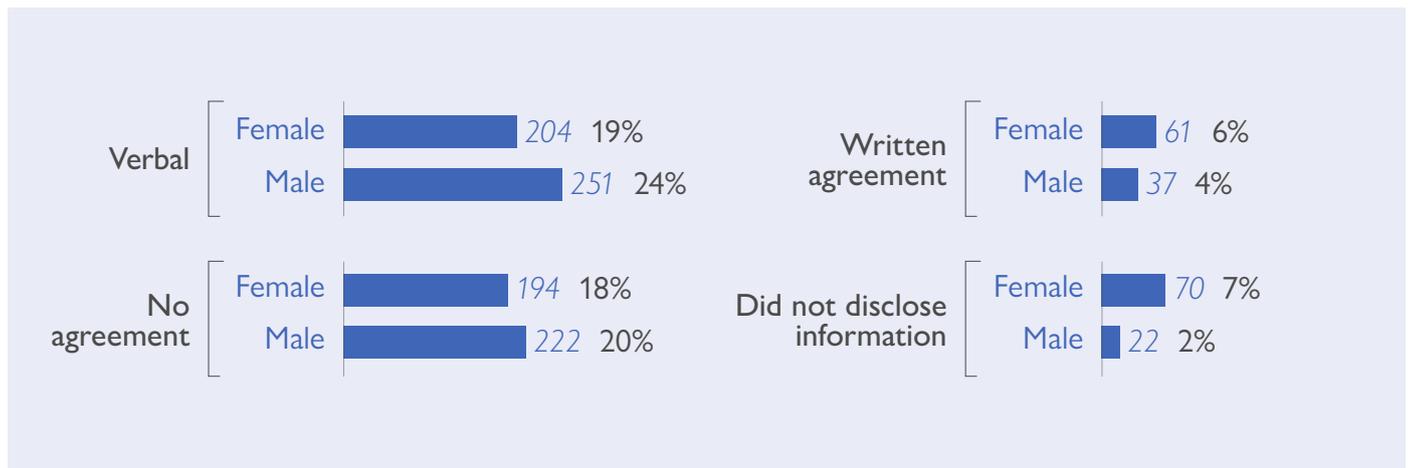


An examination into the various rental agreements migrants agree to as tenants, suggests that most agreements are informal and verbal in nature. There are also widespread instances in which no form of agreement has been established. This raises protection concerns regarding tenancy rights, particularly given the current context in which inflated rent prices and extensive property damage from the Beirut Port Explosion are affecting accommodation conditions.

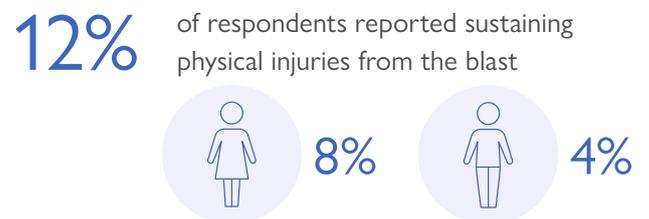
REASONS FOR NON-PAYMENT OF RENT



TYPE OF RENTAL AGREEMENTS



A large portion of respondents (318) reported damage to their homes from the Beirut Port Explosion, with a smaller portion indicating they had been physically harmed by the explosion, and others being forced to change their living location.



WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Similarly to shelter conditions, the assessment's findings indicate that substandard water, sanitation and hygiene conditions are predominantly found among unemployed migrants. The most widespread problem demonstrated by the assessment's findings is a lack of clean drinking water to meet household needs, a problem faced by almost 50 per cent of respondents (479). This marks a significant increase compared to findings from the 2020 baseline. Furthermore, nearly one third of respondents (305) reported inadequate toilet facilities, as well as substandard cooking or cleaning facilities.



↑ IOM staff provide hygiene and PPE kits and conduct medical assessments to stranded migrants at a medical campus outside the Kenyan consulate in Beirut. © IOM 2020/Muse MOHAMMED

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

A total of 203 respondents reported suffering from physical or mental health issues. Approximately half of these (91) are believed to be chronic illnesses.

Findings from the assessment indicate a significant improvement in migrants' health awareness, with 736 migrants reporting an adequate awareness of services available to them. These findings indicate a strong increase in awareness since the baseline assessment, in which 84 per cent of the surveyed population reporting little awareness on services. However, the findings also indicate a disparity between males and females, with the latter group having less awareness of specific services available to them. Given the high number of female domestic live-in workers in Lebanon, this gender disparity regarding awareness, may suggest that lower awareness among females is due to the limited mobility and access to information that characterizes live-in domestic work in Lebanon. Finally, the assessment registered an improved awareness of available health-care services related to COVID-19 and access to protective equipment such as gloves, sanitiser and soap. This contrasts to the 2020 baseline, in which almost half of respondents struggled to access protective equipment.

Breakdown per nationality of chronic health issues

Bangladesh	36
Sudan	20
Ethiopia	18
Senegal	7
Sri Lanka	4
Nigeria	2
Iraq	1
Jordan	1
Kenya	1
Philippines	1
Total	91

RETURN INTENTIONS

The assessment's findings suggest a close balance between those wishing to remain in Lebanon and those wishing to return to their country of origin. Return intention remains high, despite marking a decrease on 2020 figures.

Many female Ethiopian migrants (representing 42% of all respondents) indicated their intention to remain in Lebanon. This likely reflects their relatively stable employment as domestic workers. However further specialized analysis is needed to identify other determining factors, such as outbreaks of conflict and insecurity in countries of origin. Findings also show that a high proportion of women from Sierra Leone wish to return to their country of origin, potentially reflecting a disparity in employment protection among different nationalities, to the detriment of Sierra Leoneans in comparison to those from Ethiopia or the Philippines.

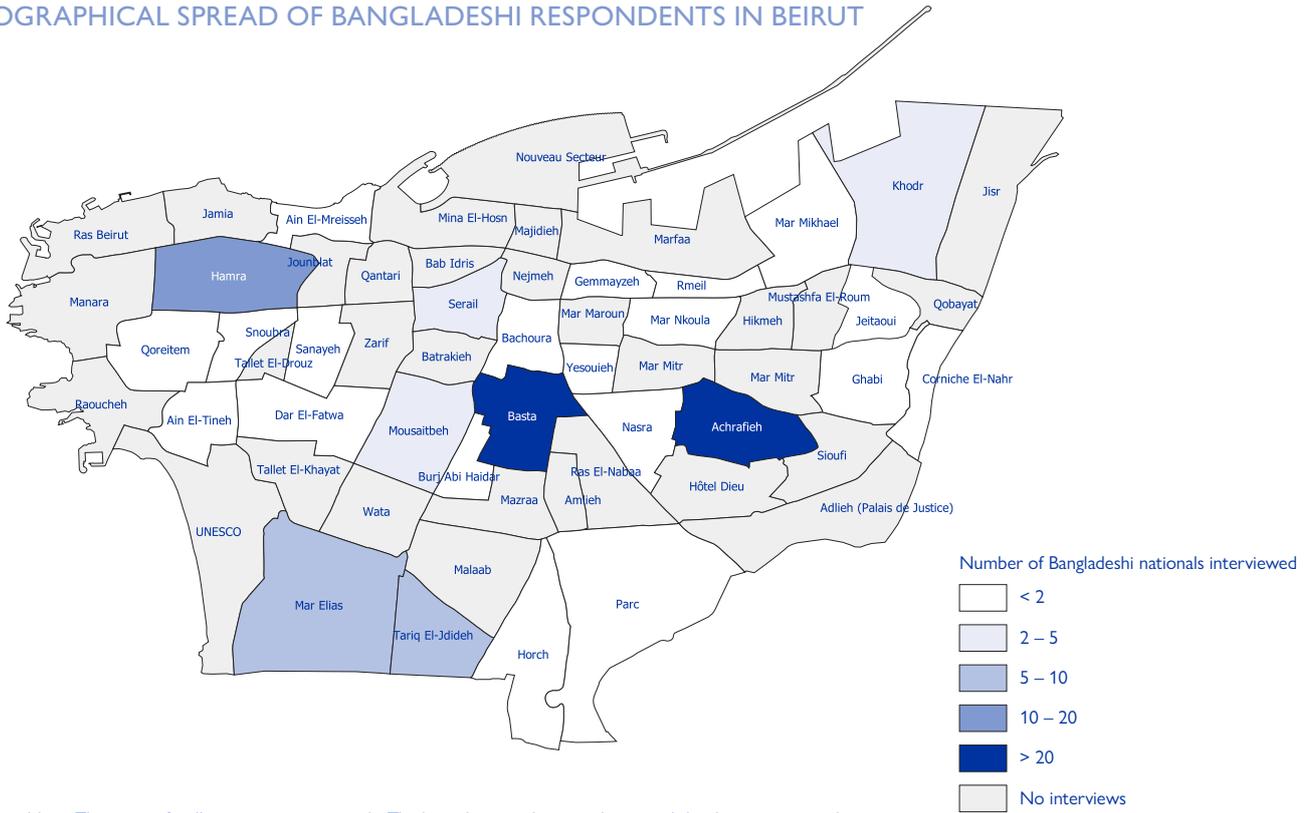
44% of respondents want to return to their country of origin



43% of respondents intend to stay in Lebanon in search of income opportunities

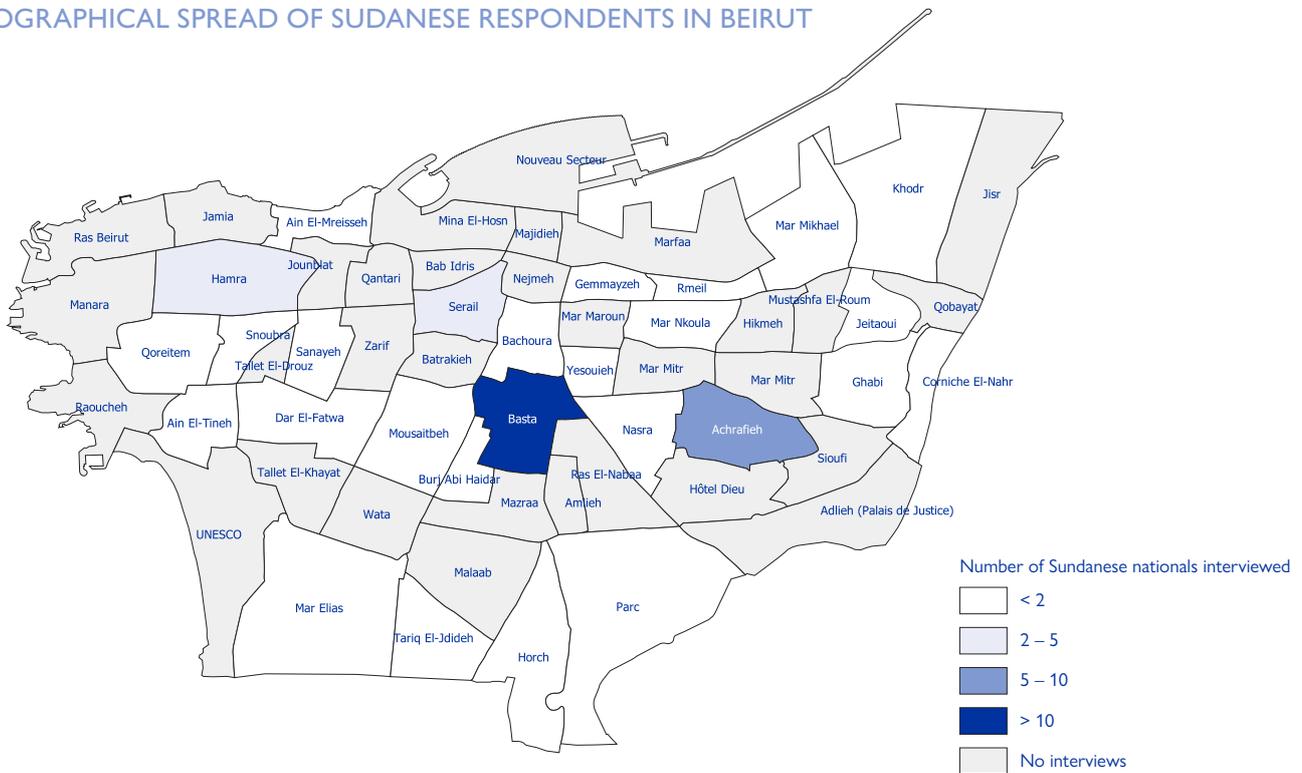


GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF BANGLADESHI RESPONDENTS IN BEIRUT



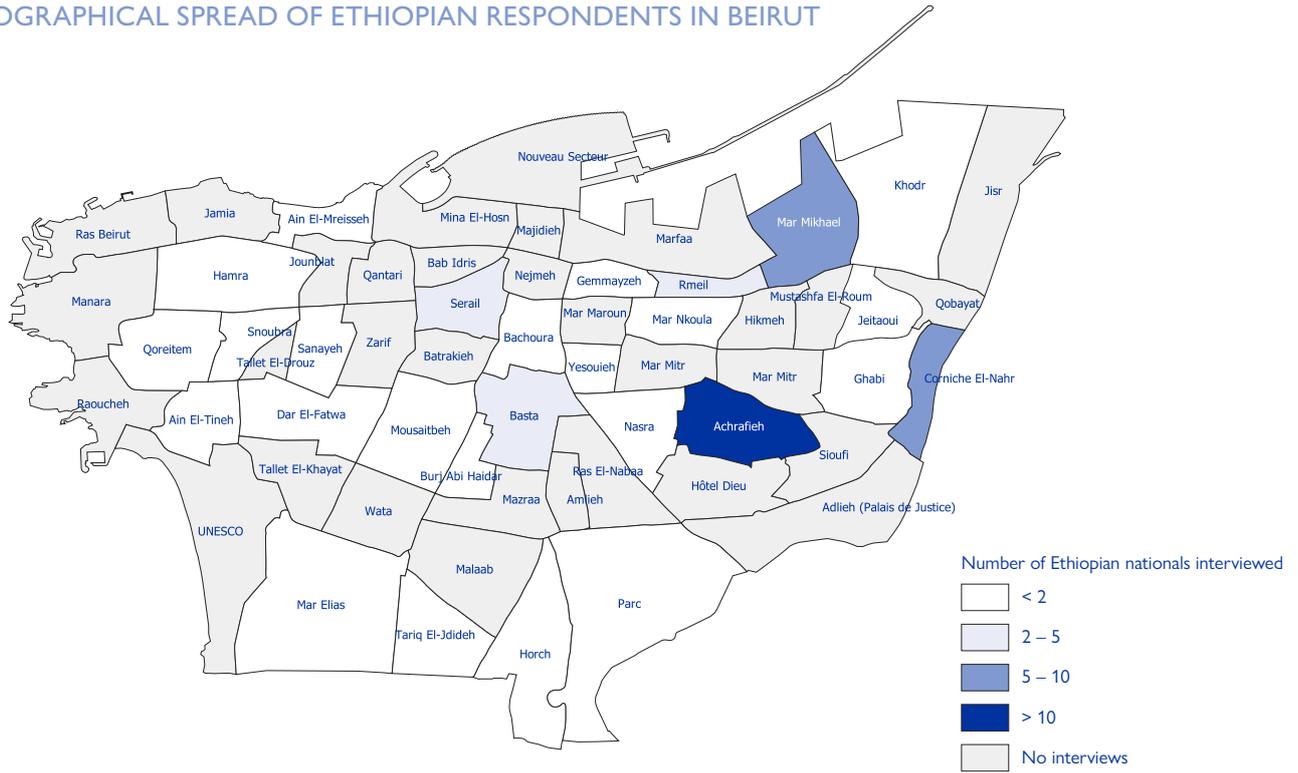
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GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF SUDANESE RESPONDENTS IN BEIRUT



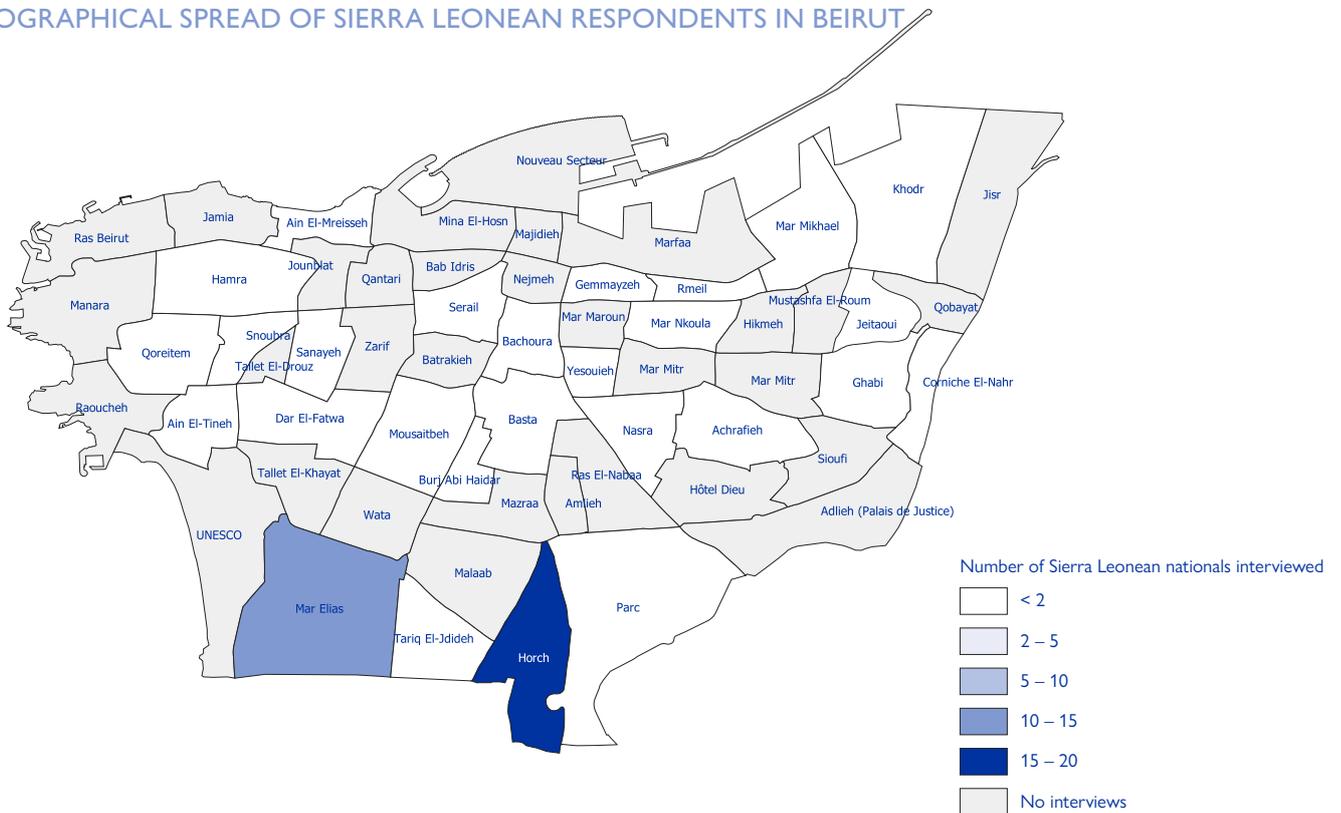
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GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF ETHIOPIAN RESPONDENTS IN BEIRUT



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GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF SIERRA LEONEAN RESPONDENTS IN BEIRUT



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