

A FRAGILE REFUGE:

A Socioeconomic Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Egypt

April 2016



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Cover Photo: Syrian refugee originally from Homs looks out of the window of her family's rented apartment in 6th October © UNHCR/ S. Baldwin

Photo opposite page: UNHCR Staff at a registration mission in Alexandria. © UNHCR/L. Cecco

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2011, as a result of the conflict in Syria, thousands of displaced people fled, mainly to neighbouring countries. Despite not sharing borders with Syria, Egypt became host to significant numbers of Syrian refugees.

Prior to the Syria conflict, Egypt was already host to thousands of asylum seekers and refugees from various countries including Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Eritrea. The number of Syrian refugees, who began to enter Egypt in 2011, reached a peak in July 2013. At the end of 2015, there were 117,658 refugees from Syria registered with UNHCR in Egypt and a further 62,983 refugees and asylum seekers from other countries.

It should be noted that a significant number of Syrian refugees who may have acceptable living standards or other compelling reasons, prefer not to approach UNHCR and are not registered as refugees in Egypt. The Government estimates that the number of Syrians residing in Egypt is at least 300,000 persons.

According to UNHCR registration data, Syrian refugees are predominantly concentrated in and around the urban centres of Greater Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta. Refugees' access to basic services and opportunities for self-reliance are closely related to those available to the host community. In Egypt, recent political instability, high unemployment and increasing costs of living have affected local communities and refugees, contributing to increased vulnerability for both. In addition, though refugees may apply for work permits, these are hard to obtain and are prohibitively expensive. Refugees and asylum seekers are often forced to turn to the informal labour market to survive, where they are paid little and work in precarious conditions, or they resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as begging and child labour.

Much of the information about the lives of Syrian refugees is anecdotal. In order to further understand the reality of the situation of Syrian refugee households, UNHCR initiated a socioeconomic assessment in September 2014. Between September 2014 and November 2015, data was collected from 21,885 households (96,474 individuals), comprising approximately 80% of the total Syrian refugee population registered with UNHCR in Egypt.



Syrian children stand at a registration desk at UNHCR.

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To assess the vulnerability of Syrian refugees, UNHCR used an analysis framework that included an econometric model to predict households' monthly expenditure, with welfare being measured by predicted expenditure per capita net of assistance received. Households' vulnerability was assessed against four thresholds, designating severe, high, mild and low vulnerability.

Those households in the severe and high vulnerability groups were unable to meet the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) identified as comprising the minimum quantities of basic food and non-food items needed for a Syrian household to be able to maintain a basic but dignified life in Egypt. In addition, the enumerators also gathered information on challenges related to gender roles and expectations, access to health care and education and security related issues, especially with regard to children.

The purpose of this report is to present a descriptive analysis of this data, to give a snapshot of the situation of Syrian refugees and to provide a baseline from which to track future changes. It is also envisaged that it will provide necessary data to enable UNHCR and partners to develop and implement appropriate interventions.

The assessments of Syrian refugee households will be conducted on a periodic basis to ensure that the information remains current and relevant.

As the Syrian crisis grows increasingly protracted, it is important to enable refugees to attain greater self-reliance. In the absence of secure employment opportunities, Syrian refugees in Egypt are exhausting their resources, falling into debt and resorting to a range of negative coping strategies. Ensuring refugees' access to sustainable livelihood opportunities is crucial to addressing their high levels of vulnerability in the medium to long term. This calls not only for the provision of work rights to refugees, but also a range of measures to promote economic growth in hosting communities and to improve economic opportunities for both Egyptians and refugees.

The key findings and the ensuing recommendations of the assessment are listed on the pages that follow.

KEY FINDINGS

In Egypt, 93% of Syrian refugees are unable to meet the minimum expenditure for their families, with 59% of households (67% of individuals) being severely vulnerable and a further 28% of households (26% of individuals) being highly vulnerable.

Nine out of ten Syrian refugees in Egypt **lack the resources** required to meet their **basic daily needs**.

Nearly two thirds (65%) of female-headed households are severely vulnerable, compared to 56% of male-headed households. Female-headed households also have much lower levels of employment, partly on account of protection concerns faced by women in public spaces and other cultural barriers.

Female-headed households are more likely to be **vulnerable** than male-headed households.

Expenditure on food represents the largest proportion (36%) of overall spending. Rising food prices have the greatest impact on more vulnerable households, for whom food represents a larger proportion of expenditure. Rent is the next largest expenditure overall (27%), and the insecure nature of many households' tenancy arrangements is a cause of significant anxiety amongst refugees. The majority of households identified their most important unmet need as additional support for rent or improved shelter. Health represents the third largest expense (10% of overall expenditure), followed by education-related costs (7%).

While generous Egyptian government policies and humanitarian interventions have facilitated the availability of healthcare and education for Syrian refugees, increasing vulnerability may undermine their ability to access essential services. Even though the Egyptian government has granted Syrian refugees access to public health and education facilities, and UNHCR provides financial support to reduce the cost

Refugee households spend most of their resources **on their basic needs**.

of accessing services, some out-of-pocket expenses remain. In a context of insecure or diminishing household resources, these costs represent barriers to access services for the most vulnerable households. The majority of households (70%) have reduced their expenditure on essential non-food items, such as health and education, in order to meet other basic needs of the household.

Vulnerability is linked to a lack of secure livelihood opportunities. Refugees' opportunities for employment in Egypt are generally scarce, precarious and poorly paid.

Amongst Syrian refugees **37%** of working-age **males** and **96%** of working-age **females** are unemployed.

Only 30% of working age males were regularly employed during the time of the assessment, and 31.5% were temporarily employed. More vulnerable households have a higher proportion of members who are unemployed, are less likely to have a head of household who is employed, and earn less for their labour than households living above the minimum expenditure basket/poverty line.

Cash and food assistance from humanitarian organizations represent an important, but **shrinking, source of support** for vulnerable households.

Overall, 73% of households received food vouchers in the preceding month, and 20% received cash assistance. However, humanitarian agencies have had to reduce this support in the face of funding constraints.

Nearly half of all households stated that they had already exhausted their savings, and 55% of households needed to borrow money or purchase on credit in the previous month in order to meet their basic needs. Three quarters of male-headed households and two thirds of female-headed households have gone into debt since arriving in Egypt, with more vulnerable households being more likely to be in debt.

In the absence of secure livelihoods, households are **depleting** what **savings** and **assets** they arrived with and are going into **debt**.

Some households are resorting to emergency coping strategies to survive, raising particular protection concerns. These include engaging in risky, exploitative or illegal jobs; begging; early marriage; and sending children to work. Amongst children in the surveyed population, 2.7% were reported as working. The vast majority of working children were boys from severely or highly vulnerable households and two thirds did not attend school.

Around **one in ten households** stated that a member of their family had **attempted to migrate from Egypt in the last year**.

While it is difficult to gain a full picture of onward migration, these households appear to represent a cross section of the overall Syrian refugee population in Egypt, with the majority being under the severe or high vulnerability thresholds.



A Syrian refugee preparing and selling food in the street to help his family.
© UNHCR/S. Nelson

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are based on the key findings of the analysis and represent ways forward for addressing the needs and challenges identified.

Basic Needs

It is clear from the analysis contained in this report that while Syrian refugee families may have initially been able to meet their basic needs, as their stay in Egypt becomes extended they are exhausting their abilities to meet basic needs. Many are resorting to increasingly negative coping mechanisms. In order to address this, UNHCR and partners need to extend and expand their programs.

Refugees face challenges in finding employment and are depleting their resources. The high cost of housing is also creating many challenges in terms of overcrowding and insecurity. Current cash assistance by UNHCR is given to a very limited number of vulnerable refugees and only covers approximately 30% of the MEB. Cash assistance should be increased and be extended to a wider number of families.

With increasing costs of living, inflation and high rents, refugees often have to choose between food and other needs. Food assistance should be extended not only to the severely vulnerable, but also to other families that are unable to meet their basic needs, especially female headed households.

Livelihoods/ Employment

The context for livelihoods and employment in Egypt is complex; many Syrians have been able to find work in the informal economy, but there are protection concerns about the type of work and the working conditions. Additionally, women face numerous cultural barriers to accessing gainful employment. Many of those who are willing and able to work express frustration at not knowing how to access safe and dignified livelihood opportunities. The recommendations below build on and complement UNHCR's current livelihood program.

- Recognizing that for many women, the refugee context is the first time they find themselves required to earn a living, conduct workshops, especially for female heads of households, on developing small business, especially in the home or as collectives;
- There are limited employment opportunities and even fewer formal and secure opportunities for refugees in Egypt. A market assessment could highlight gaps in availability of skills and expertise, after which targeted vocational training could increase potential for employment;
- Continue to develop links with the private sector, and explore opportunities for employment with local businesses, through a market assessment and liaising with local business communities;
- In order to enable refugees to be legally employed, their access to work permits should be eased;
- UNHCR should lead advocacy work with partners to exempt refugees from some of the requirements imposed through the regulations on work permits for foreign nationals. Amongst others, one possible exemption could be related to the payment of the permit cost;
- Funding national training institutions and incorporating host communities in projects must be prioritized.

Health

As with education, basic health services for Syrian refugees are available through government facilities. Nonetheless, many refugees experience challenges accessing these services, are not familiar with what services they can access or have other challenges, including distance and health needs not covered by the government clinics. In order to address these issues UNHCR and partners should build on current work:

- Continue advocacy on access to extended health care and reduced costs for vulnerable refugees;
- Increase awareness raising and outreach activities to provide information to refugees on where to access affordable health care services;
- Raise awareness about issues related to early marriages, especially in terms of health and psychological well-being of young girls.

Education

Although in principle Syrian refugee families should be able to send their children to Egyptian government schools, in reality many families experience challenges and barriers to ensuring their children are able to continue their education. The recommendations below are a continuation of the work of UNHCR and partners on educational support for Syrian refugees.

- Organize workshops/awareness raising sessions to help parents who are not prioritizing education, to understand the importance of having their children continue their schooling;
- To address the negative experiences many refugee children articulate, develop programs that assist children in host and refugee communities to learn about each other and build bridges;
- In response to concerns raised by refugee children, conduct training for teachers in school on security related issues that refugee children experience and how to support them in the classroom.

SGBV/Child Protection

A number of different sexual and gender based violence issues, and child protection issues, were identified through the course of this analysis.

Several options could be implemented to mitigate these, including:

- In light of concerns from women and children on safety and security on the streets and in schools, conduct awareness raising sessions for women and children on key security issues and how they can address them;
- As many children reported incidents of discrimination from children from the host communities, organize awareness raising sessions for children from host community on cultural diversity, the impact of bullying, co-existence and on creating a peaceful learning environment;
- To address women's experiences of vulnerability on the streets and the work place, offer sessions on self-defense to increase women's feelings of empowerment and control;
- In recognition of the reality that many refugee families need the incomes from the employment of their older children, create programs that enable children to engage in education/vocational training, along with their employment. This could be programs that offer education/training outside of school times or on weekends. The employment of younger children should be addressed.

BACKGROUND

The dramatic scale of the Syrian refugee crisis has displaced the largest number of people since the Second World War, with at least 6.6 million people internally displaced and over 4.8 million fleeing across the country's borders. This report examines the specific vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees in Egypt, a host country often neglected in coverage of the Syria refugee crisis.

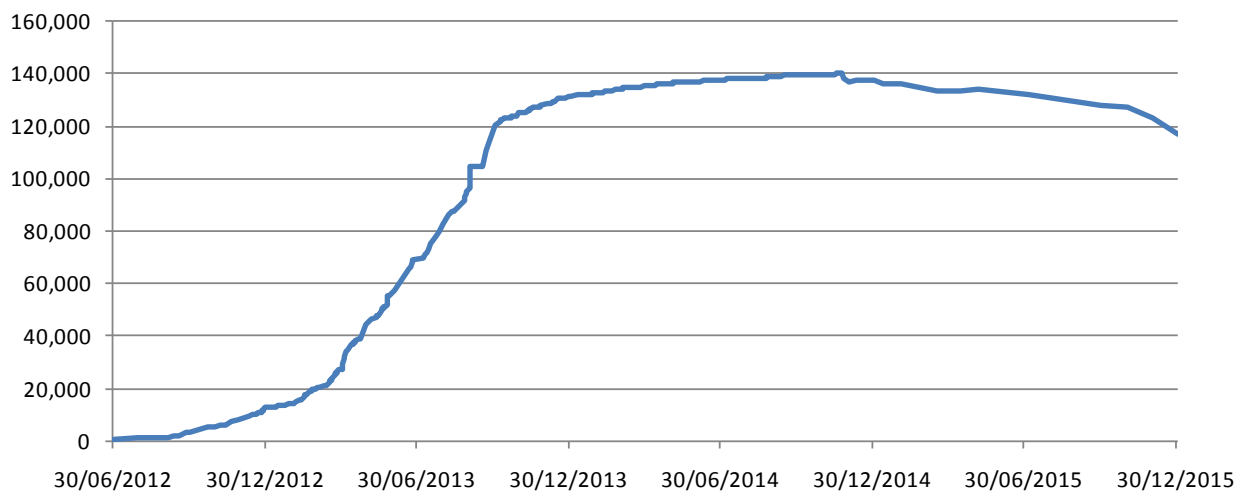
At the end of December 2015, there were 117,658 Syrian asylum seekers and refugees registered with UNHCR in Egypt. Egypt also hosts 62,983 asylum seekers and refugees from other countries, predominantly Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Eritrea.

The Government of Egypt estimates that at least the same number of Syrian nationals are unregistered and living among the Egyptian community. It is important to note that as it is not compulsory for Syrian nationals to register with UNHCR in Egypt, those who consider that they have no need for protection (residency) or humanitarian assistance from UNHCR may not be registered as refugees. Therefore it is believed that the Syrians who register with UNHCR are the most vulnerable and require assistance.

In recent years, Egypt itself has undergone a period of massive political, social and economic upheaval. In January 2011, the country experienced numerous popular protests, leading to the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak. Following a period of rule by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, a series of elections saw the Muslim Brotherhood take power in June 2012, led by President Mohammed Morsi. Within one year, widespread opposition to Morsi's rule gave rise again to mass demonstrations across the country, and his government was deposed in July 2013 by General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, who was elected as president in 2014 and continues in the role.

At the onset of the crisis, Syrian refugees were able to enter Egypt freely. Unlike other refugee populations in Egypt, Syrians were granted access to public education and healthcare facilities by the government, enabling them to freely utilize these essential services. A range of actors stepped in to support refugees, from international agencies to community and faith-based organizations, as well as local community members.¹

Figure 1: Number of Syrian Refugees registered with UNHCR in Egypt



Source: UNHCR Egypt registration database



Part of the socioeconomic assesment process
© UNHCR/T. Argaz

However, the political upheaval of mid 2013 dramatically changed the protection environment for Syrian refugees, who were perceived by some to have supported the Muslim Brotherhood. Public attitudes towards Syrian refugees hardened, and support provided to them declined.² In July 2013, the government imposed entry restrictions requiring all Syrians to have a valid visa and security clearance prior to entering Egypt.³ In practice, this dramatically reduced Syrians' access to asylum in Egypt, and new arrivals dropped from a peak of 15,890 in the month of May 2013 to an average of 350 per month in 2015.

While anti-Syrian rhetoric has since reduced and the overall protection environment improved for Syrian refugees, Egyptians are experiencing many economic and political challenges that also affect refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt.⁴

The political uncertainty in Egypt over recent years has had a major impact upon the Egyptian economy, reflected in significantly lower economic growth and increasing numbers of people falling into poverty.⁵ Unemployment in Egypt was at the high-level of 13% in 2014; 28.4% of Egyptians between the ages of 15 and 29 were unemployed in 2013.⁶

Further, the government embarked on a structural economic reform program in 2014, which included an increase in taxes, reduction of energy subsidies and changes to the system of food subsidies.⁷ These measures resulted in an increase in electricity and fuel prices, and a marked rise in the cost of living, particularly affecting more vulnerable households.⁸

Refugees in Egypt are principally concentrated in a small number of urban areas, where they live side-by-side with Egyptian nationals, sharing schools, health clinics and other facilities.

¹ Save the Children, Syrian refugees emergency needs assessment report, Cairo, February 2013.

² Refugee Council USA, At the breaking point: refugees in Jordan and Egypt, 2015, p21; Refugees International, Tough times for Syrian refugees in Egypt, 8 May 2014.

³ Ayoubi, Z. Joint assessment for Syrian refugees in Egypt, November 2013, p8.

⁴ Refugee Council USA, At the breaking point: refugees in Jordan and Egypt, 2015, p21.

⁵ World Bank, Project appraisal document on a proposed loan in the amount of US\$400 million for a strengthening social safety net project, 20 March 2015, p2.

⁶ UNICEF, Children in Egypt 2015: A statistical digest 2015, UNICEF Egypt, Cairo, June 2015, p224-226.

⁷ World Bank, Project appraisal document on a proposed loan in the amount of US\$400 million for a strengthening social safety net project, 20 March 2015, p2.

⁸ Peter Griffin et al, Egypt: Guiding Reform of Energy Subsidies Long-Term, World Bank, February 2016.

Increasing costs of living, overstretched services and rising levels of unemployment may have a twofold negative impact on vulnerable refugees; first by directly increasing their economic vulnerability, and secondly because of the pressure on the hospitality of local host communities, whose resources are increasingly stretched.

UNHCR provides protection and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt. While Egypt is a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, national asylum systems have not been put in place, and registration and refugee status determination are undertaken by UNHCR. In partnership with the government, UNHCR also coordinates the refugee response, working together with sector lead agencies and partners in the areas of protection, food security, health, education, basic services and livelihoods.

A variety of programmes have been put in place to support Syrian refugees and host communities, including under the current Refugee Resilience and Response Plan (3RP). Resource constraints have prompted UNHCR and other agencies to move towards more targeted approaches to assistance. In 2014, UNHCR initiated a socioeconomic assessment, the main purpose of which was to develop analysis which could further inform the targeting of assistance based on vulnerability, shifting from the previous approach of targeting by geographical location and social group profiling. Initial analysis of this data has already been used for the targeting of food assistance by WFP and cash assistance by UNHCR, from April 2015.

The purpose of this report is not to directly inform the targeting of assistance but to provide a snapshot of the situation of Syrian refugees in Egypt, based on the rich data collected through the assessment, and to provide a baseline to track the situation of Syrian refugees over time.

Case Study: Nawal

Nawal is a 38 year old Syrian woman from Daraa. Although her husband came with her to Egypt and helped her settle in Cairo, he was unable to find a suitable job. Eventually he was able to find work in Alexandria.

She only sees her husband once a month. With her husband away, Nawal struggles with the reality of being a female head of household for a family of eight. She has to be creative every month to meet the expense of looking after her own five children and two older children from her husband's first marriage.

Nawal has many worries but one great regret: "I wish I had been able to finish my education in Syria all those years ago; if I had I would have learnt a skill and this would have helped me to work here in Egypt."

She takes some comfort from the fact that her children are all in school and doing well, even though they struggle with the new school system and understanding the Egyptian dialect.

2 METHODOLOGY

A) DATA USED IN THE REPORT

In addition to analysis of the data from this assessment, the author undertook desk-based research and key informant interviews with staff of UNHCR Egypt and partner organizations, to verify the findings. Supplementary data has been drawn from UNHCR's registration database, proGres.

For the socioeconomic assessment, UNHCR, in consultation with partners, developed a standard questionnaire, based on similar assessments conducted by UNHCR in Lebanon and Jordan. The questionnaires were administered by UNHCR partners Save the Children (Greater Cairo), Caritas (Alexandria) and Resala (Damietta), and later by the Egyptian Red Crescent Society.

Interviews were generally undertaken by a team of two enumerators (one male and one female) during visits to refugees' homes. The exception was in Greater Cairo, where interviews were initially conducted during home visits, but later were also conducted at UNHCR offices due to programming constraints. Interviews commenced in September 2014 in Greater Cairo, and in late 2014 in other areas. At the time that this analysis was conducted, data collection with remaining Syrian households was on-going, and was completed in January 2016.

Refugees were encouraged to participate in the assessment through mass information campaigns and through partner organizations. Information about the assessment, and its purpose for determining eligibility for assistance, was widely conveyed. The sample may be biased towards more vulnerable households, as those not in need of assistance may have been less likely to participate in the assessment.

A comparison of the age and gender profiles, geographical distribution of the sampled population and the total registered Syrian refugee population in Egypt indicates an under-representation of males aged 20-29 in the sample. A number of males in this age group may not have participated in the assessment either because they did not consider themselves to be in need of assistance, or were unavailable to participate in the interview due to work or the search for employment.

There also appears to be an over-representation of children aged 0-4 years in the sample. It is possible that this reflects the presence of children who do not have Syrian nationality but who are members of Syrian households or children for whom birth certificates have not yet been obtained or are pending registration. These children would have been included in the socioeconomic assessment, but would not be reflected in the population pyramid for registered Syrian refugees.¹

¹ In order to have Syrian nationality a child has to have a Syrian father, therefore the children of Syrian mothers married to someone with a different nationality will take the nationality of their father only.

Figure 2: Population pyramid of socioeconomic assessment sample by age and gender

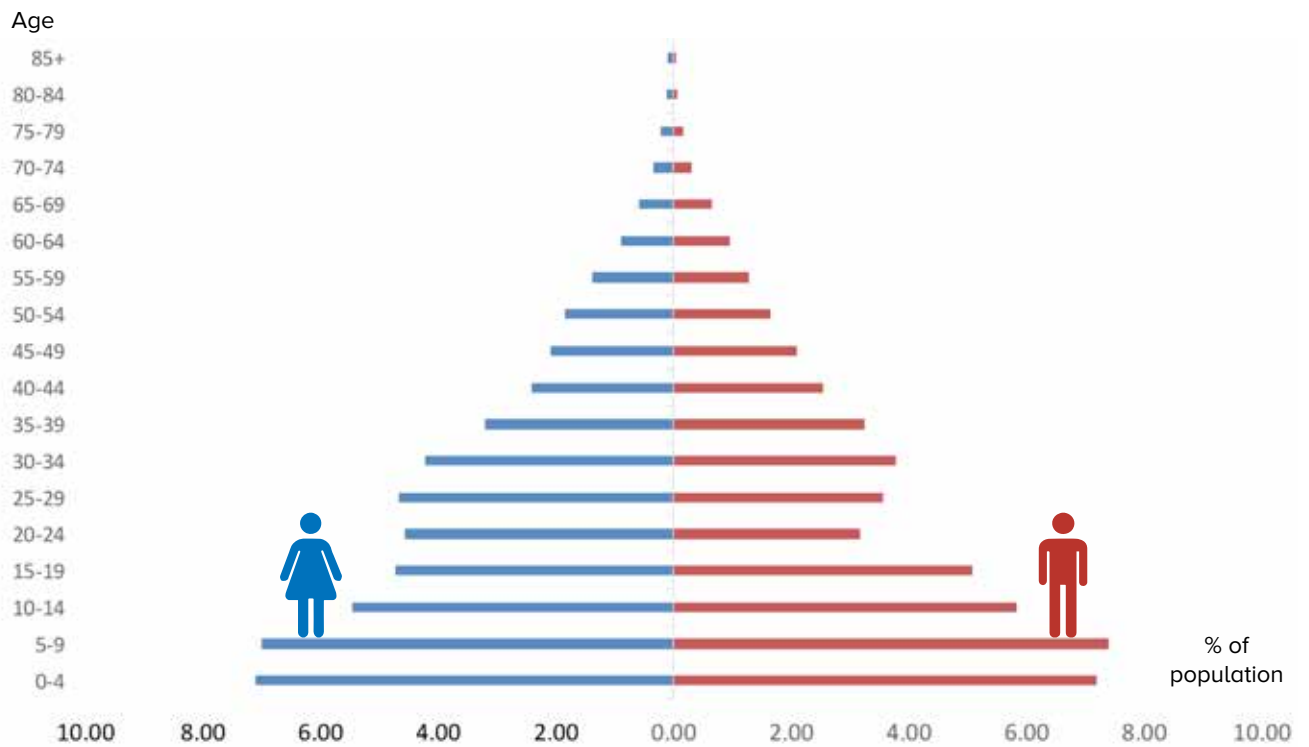


Figure 3: Population pyramid of total registered Syrian refugees by age and gender

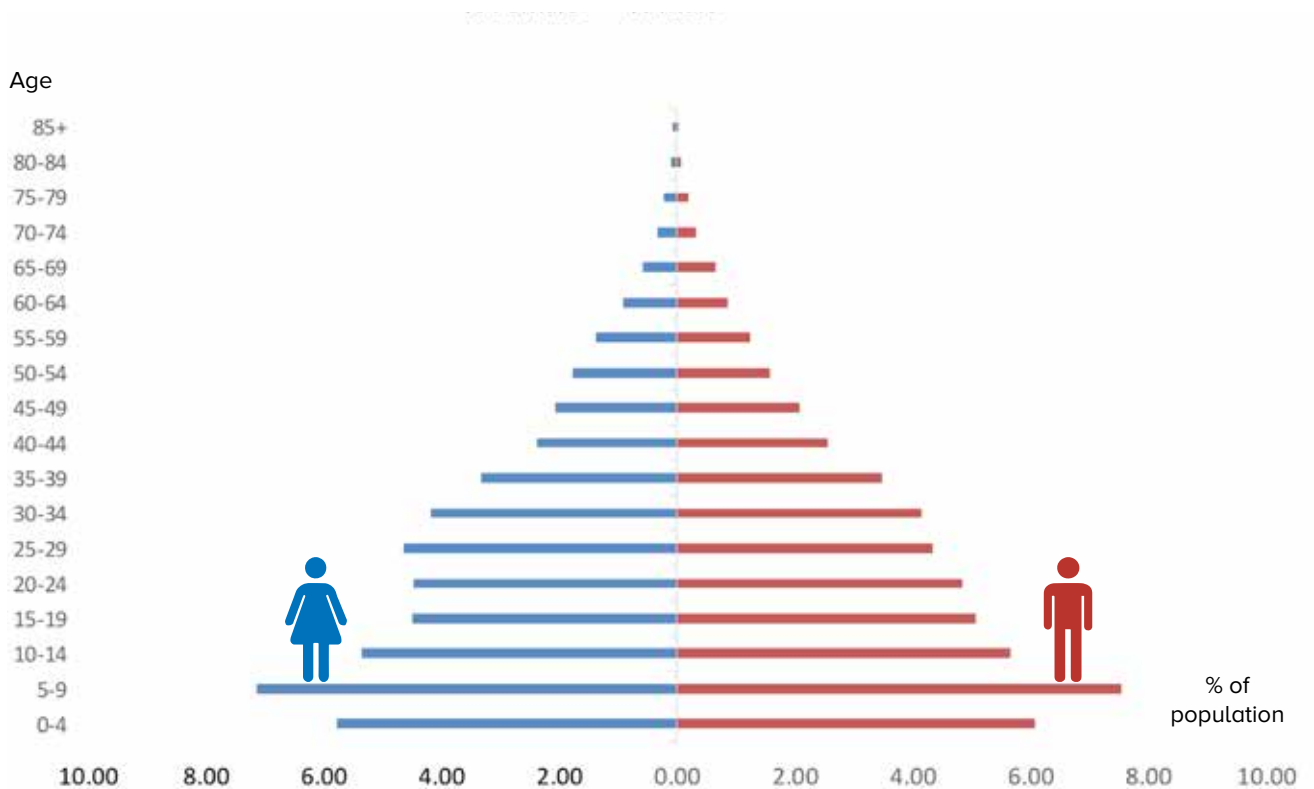
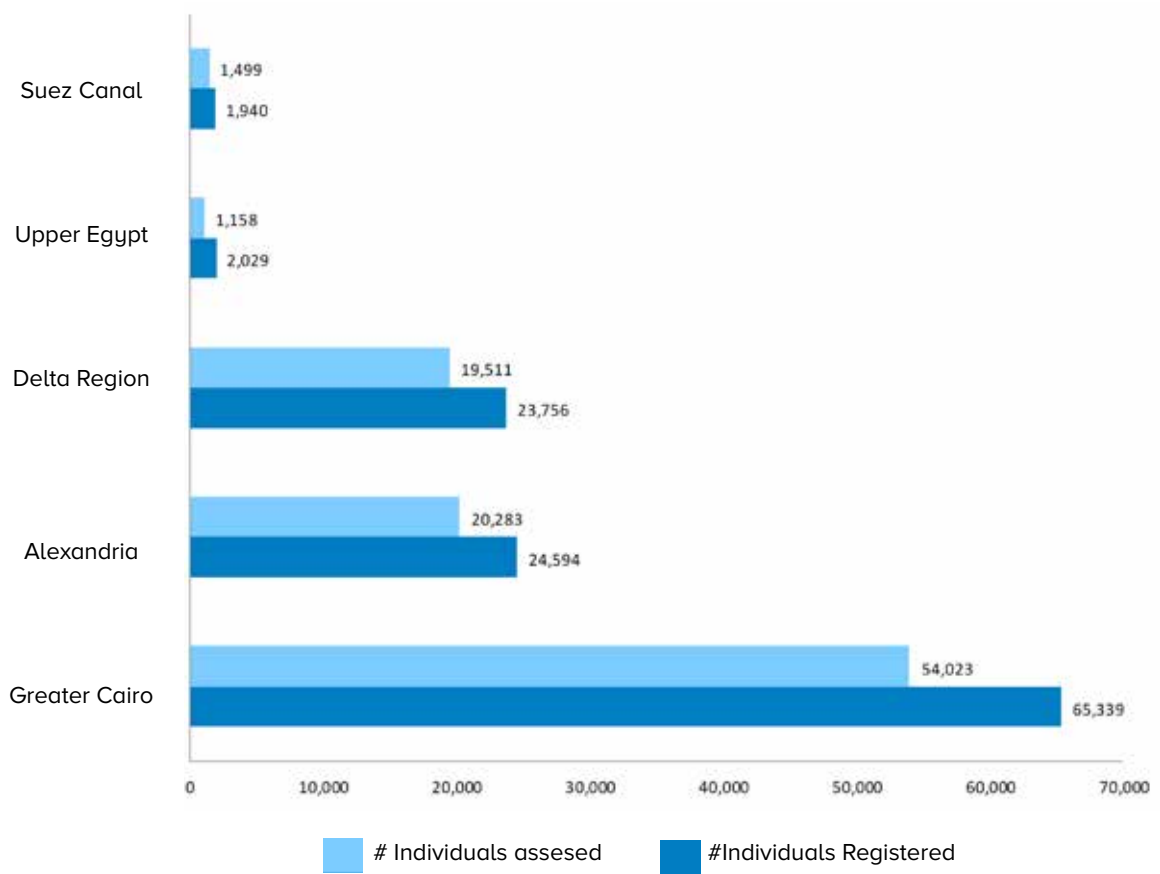


Figure 4: Geographical distribution of socioeconomic assessment sample and total registered Syrian population



Source: UNHCR Egypt registration database

B) DEFINITION OF VULNERABILITY THRESHOLDS

In order to provide a basis for the targeting of assistance, UNHCR developed a welfare model based on econometric analysis. This drew on comparable models that have been developed for the same purpose in Jordan and Lebanon, through a partnership between UNHCR and the World Bank. The model predicts the net monthly expenses of refugees, based on eight key variables, using data collected through the socioeconomic assessment. Welfare is measured by expenditure per capita net of assistance received, a commonly used proxy indicator of welfare and vulnerability. Lower expenditure per capita is taken to indicate that a household has less economic resources to deal with risks, and is therefore more vulnerable.

Using predicted expenditure generated by the welfare model, vulnerability is assessed in accordance with particular vulnerability thresholds. These are determined with reference to a Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), which reflects the minimum quantities of basic food and non-food items needed for a Syrian household to lead a basic but dignified life in Egypt. The MEB was calculated through a combination of focus group discussions with Syrian refugees to determine their needs and preferences, followed by market assessments in Greater Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta in August 2014. Based on this process, the MEB was calculated as EGP 592.4 (USD 79) per capita per month, or EGP 2,962 (USD 394) for a household of five members.²

Of this, the MEB for food was calculated by WFP as EGP 201.1 (USD 27) per capita per month, or EGP 1,005.5 (USD 134) per household.

For the purposes of identifying those most vulnerable, UNHCR adopted the following vulnerability thresholds for net expenditure per capita:

Table 1: Definition of vulnerability thresholds

Threshold	Definition	Amount
Severe vulnerability	Up to 50% of the MEB	< or = EGP 296.2 (USD 39)
High vulnerability	51-99% of the MEB	EGP 296.2 (USD 39) to EGP 592.4 (USD 79)
Mild vulnerability	100-149% of the MEB	EGP 592.4 (USD 79) to EGP 888.6 (USD 118)
Low vulnerability	150% of the MEB and above	> EGP 888.6 (USD 118)

These thresholds define four corresponding welfare groups, which are referred to throughout this report.

The MEB is also referred to as the 'poverty line' in this report. This is distinct from the national poverty line for Egypt, and is considered a more suitable point of measurement as it relates specifically to the minimum costs of living for Syrian refugees in Egypt.

It should be noted that the overall costs of living have risen in Egypt during the period of data collection. The headline Consumer Price Index was 11.06% in December 2015 from the same month the previous year.³

² The exchange rate used throughout this report is EGP 7.5096 = USD 1. This is the average UN rate of exchange over the period of data collection (September 2014 to Nov 2015).

³ Central Bank of Egypt, Inflation Statistics, accessed 5 March 2016.



Syrian mother living in Alexandria with her children waiting to get their vaccination.
© UNHCR/ P. Costa

POPULATION PROFILE

A) ARRIVAL, REGISTRATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Syrian refugees began to enter Egypt in 2011, with numbers increasing over 2012 to a peak in 2013. Arrivals dramatically decreased from mid-2013, with the imposition of tighter visa restrictions. Consistent with this overall pattern of arrivals, a small proportion of surveyed households (2%) arrived in Egypt prior to 2012, 30% arrived in 2012 and the majority (62%) arrived in 2013. The number who arrived in 2014 (4%) and 2015 (1%) were considerably smaller.

When refugees register with UNHCR, they receive an asylum seeker card known as a 'yellow card', which is valid for 18 months. 99% of respondents have a UNHCR asylum seeker card. This card is important proof of registration with UNHCR and can facilitate access to a residency permit, as noted below.

All Syrians, regardless of whether they are registered with UNHCR or not, are required to obtain a residency permit from the Egyptian government. There are different types of residency permits, but registered refugees are advised to have a residency permit, which is valid for six months, on their asylum seeker card.

Syrian refugees with school age children can obtain a one year visa once their children are registered in a Ministry of Education supervised school, provided that they have an official school acceptance letter, stamped by the relevant local education administration.

Refugees must obtain their residency document from the Department of Immigration based in Cairo, which entails additional costs for those residing outside the capital. Further, for asylum seekers, the residency permit is put on the yellow card and a stamp is placed on the individual's passport, indicating this.

Focus group discussions identified this as a concern for refugees, fearing that they may face negative consequences when approaching the Syrian embassy (for example, for passport renewal). Perhaps as a result of these barriers, only 58% of those surveyed have a valid residency permit. This lack of valid legal documentation is a protection concern, increasing refugees' risks of arrest and detention, and impeding access to some key services, such as education.





Young Syrian girl waiting her turn to get vaccinated in Alexandria.
© UNHCR/T. Argaz

B) GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Over half (56%) of the Syrian refugee population in Egypt resides in the Greater Cairo region. The 6th October City (located west of Cairo in the Giza governorate), hosts almost a quarter of the entire Syrian refugee population in Egypt, being the area where the first significant numbers of Syrians concentrated. Other areas hosting high numbers of Syrians in Greater Cairo are Al Obour, East Nasr City and Ain Shams.

The next largest concentration of Syrian refugees is in Alexandria (21%), Egypt's second biggest city, in particular in the districts of Al Montazah and Amreya.

Damietta, in the Delta region, hosts the third major population of Syrian refugees, representing 8% of the total registered Syrian population in Egypt (9% of the sampled population).

Historic ties between Damietta and Syria (particularly relating to the construction and trade of furniture), coupled with the availability of affordable housing, are amongst the key reasons why Syrians have been drawn to the area.

A smaller concentration of Syrian refugees are in Sharkia (6% of the total Syrian population in Egypt, and 5% of the sampled population), Egypt's third most populous governorate, located in the Delta region. Syrian refugees are concentrated mainly in 10th Ramadan City in Sharkia, an industrial area where many refugees are able to find employment.

C) GOVERNORATE OF ORIGIN

The majority of Syrian refugees in Egypt came from Damascus and Rural Damascus, representing 31.7% and 30.8% respectively. There is also a significant number of refugees from Aleppo (12.8%), from Homs (12.6%), and a smaller number from Dar'a (4.9%) and other governorates.

D) AGE AND GENDER

The surveyed population is 51% female and 49% male. Half of the population are adults of working age (18-59 years), 46% are children (17 years and under) and 4% are aged 60 and over.

Map 1: Geographical distribution of Syrian refugees in Egypt

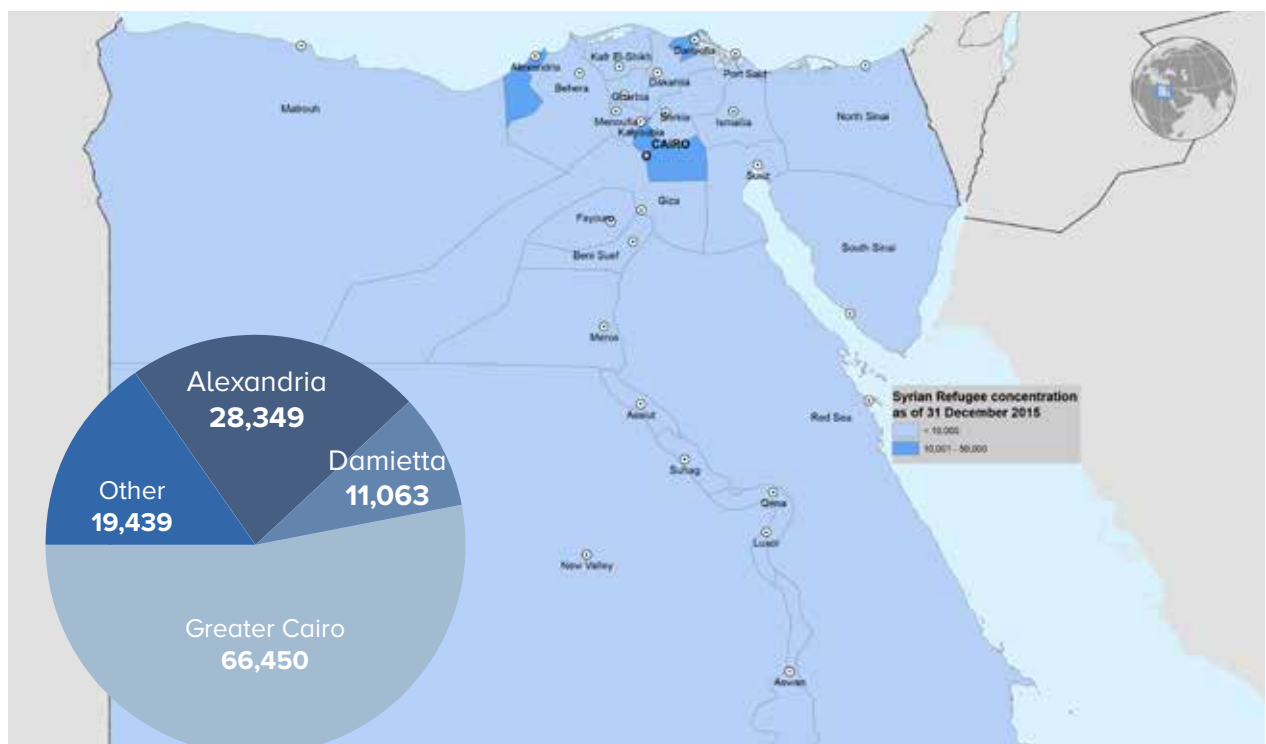
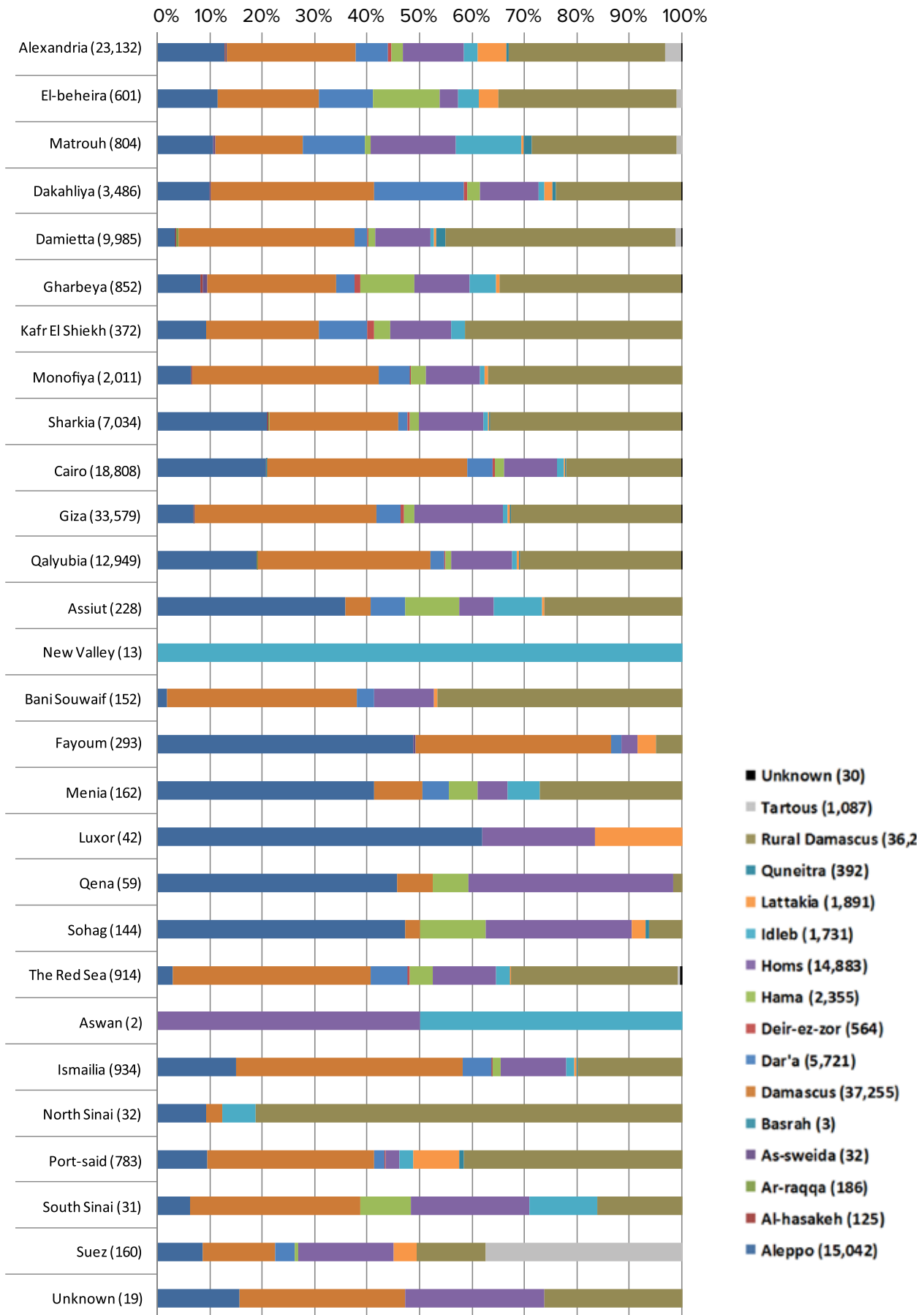


Figure 5: Total registered Syrian population by place of origin in Syria and governorate of destination in Egypt



E) EDUCATION AND PRIOR OCCUPATION

The Syrian refugee population in Egypt has relatively high levels of education with 13.5% completed higher education and over half (53%) completed secondary school, while 28% completed only primary school education. Close to 5% reported no education. Overall, there are no significant differences between the levels of education attained by men and women.

Amongst surveyed adult women of working age (18-59 years), the majority (84%) of females did not have a profession in Syria. Around 6% were students in Syria, while 3% were teachers, 1% were health professionals and 1% worked in a craft or trade.

Amongst surveyed males of working age, the most common prior occupation in Syria was as a craftsman or tradesman (25%). This included a range of skills, including work with wood, leather or glass, textile, printing and painting. A further 12% worked in retail and customer service, 4% as drivers, and 3% respectively as managers, or in mining, construction and manufacturing.

A smaller number (1% respectively) were teachers, administrative workers, health professionals and protective services workers. A further 24% worked in a range of other professions and 10% were students. 13% reported no profession in Syria.

F) HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

The vast majority of Syrian refugees have come to Egypt as family units, with the average refugee household of 4.4 people, with children on average, comprising nearly two fifths (39%) of the household.

Overall the average age of a head of household is 40.6 years. Over 91% of households are headed by an adult between the ages of 18 and 59 years. Over 8% of heads of household are aged 60 and above. Nonetheless over 4300 households, approximately (0.2%), are headed by someone under 18 years of age.

Of those households surveyed, 9% were single; the majority of these (70%) are male adults of working age and 18% are females of working age. Elderly persons (60+ years) comprise 11% of single-person households, of which the majority (63%) are female.

21 households of unaccompanied children living alone were identified in the surveyed population, representing 1% of single person households.



Syrian refugees work in a Syrian owned factory in New Damietta.
© UNHCR/S.Nelson

G) SPECIFIC NEEDS

The socioeconomic assessment questionnaire focused principally on how households are meeting their basic needs, and should not be considered a protection assessment tool. This was largely because a survey of this kind is not an appropriate tool through which to inquire about sensitive protection issues. However respondents were also asked if individual household members have any specific needs, which would be relevant to a households' eligibility for some forms of assistance.¹

In analysing the socioeconomic assessment data on specific needs, it should be noted that, while enumerators were trained in collecting the information for the assessment, they did not necessarily have specialist skills to identify particular needs, such as protection needs or other sensitive issues. It is therefore possible that certain specific needs were either under or over reported.

The most commonly identified specific need was related to serious medical conditions, which were noted by 26% (24,827) of surveyed individuals; of these, close to half had chronic illnesses. Disabilities were reported amongst 11% of surveyed individuals. This included physical and mental disabilities and hearing, and sight and speech impairments.

While enumerators did seek to check any relevant medical documentation when collecting this information, they were not trained health professionals and were unable to verify the reported medical needs or disabilities. As such, the reported levels of medical need and disability can be taken as an indication of refugees' perception of these needs.

Close to 1,500 women were identified as being a woman at risk, in accordance with criteria defined by UNHCR. This included single female heads of household, women unaccompanied by an adult male family member, and women in polygamous relationships.

One fifth (849) of surveyed individuals over 60 years of age were identified as older persons at risk. This included older people without accompanying family members, those who had to care for children, or those who were unable to care for themselves.

The assessment identified
953 children at risk
 (close to 2% of surveyed children).

Children at risk included unaccompanied or separated children, child heads of household, at risk of not attending school, had special education needs or responsibilities to care for another family member.



A Syrian boy working in a car repair workshop to financially support his family.
 © UNHCR/S. Nelson

¹ Note, however, that the principal source of information for the purposes of determining eligibility for assistance is UNHCR Egypt registration database.

4

WELFARE GROUPS

UNHCR's welfare model and vulnerability thresholds identify refugees as falling within one of four welfare groups, denoting severe, high, mild or low vulnerability.

Based on the welfare model, 59% of Syrian refugee households (67% of individuals) fall under the severe vulnerability threshold and a further 28% of households (26% of individuals) fall under the high vulnerability threshold.

Altogether, **87% of households**, or 93% of individuals, **live below the poverty line**, meaning that they cannot afford the minimum required for a dignified life.

Table 2: Distribution of households and individuals by welfare group

	Households		Individuals	
	#	%	#	%
Severe Vulnerability	12,808	59%	65,064	67%
High Vulnerability	6,177	28%	25,010	26%
Mild Vulnerability	1,508	7%	3,944	4%
Low Vulnerability	1,391	6%	2,456	3%
Grand Total	21,884	100%	96,474	100%

While the proportion of female- and male-headed households falling below the poverty line is comparable (89% and 86% respectively), female-headed households are more likely to be severely vulnerable.

Nearly **two thirds** (65%) of **female-headed households are severely vulnerable**, compared to 56% of male-headed households.

Table 3: Distribution of households by welfare group and gender of head of household

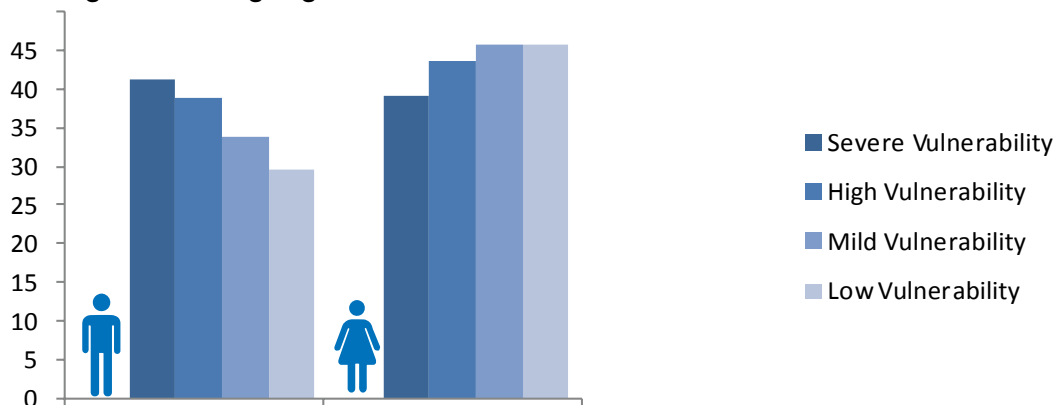
	Male		Female	
	#	%	#	%
Severe Vulnerability	9,508	56%	2,714	65%
High Vulnerability	4,986	30%	1,001	24%
Mild Vulnerability	1,195	7%	274	7%
Low Vulnerability	1,190	7%	161	4%
Grand Total	16,879	100%	4,150	100%

A) HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

The age and gender profiles of heads of household differ across vulnerability groups, with more vulnerable households tending to be headed by older males or younger females. Male heads of household in the severe vulnerability group are, on average, almost 12 years older than those in the low vulnerability group.

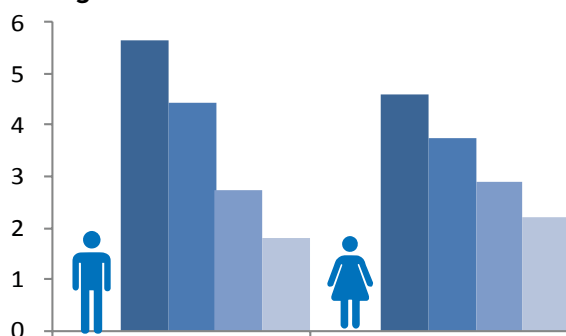
By contrast, female heads of household in the severe vulnerability group are nearly 7 years younger on average than those in the low vulnerability group. The average age of a single male head of household above the poverty line is between 27 and 28 years, compared to 41 years under the severe vulnerability threshold. The average age of a single female head of household above the poverty line is between 45 and 50 years of age, compared to between 51 and 54 years below the poverty line.

Figure 6: Average age of head of household



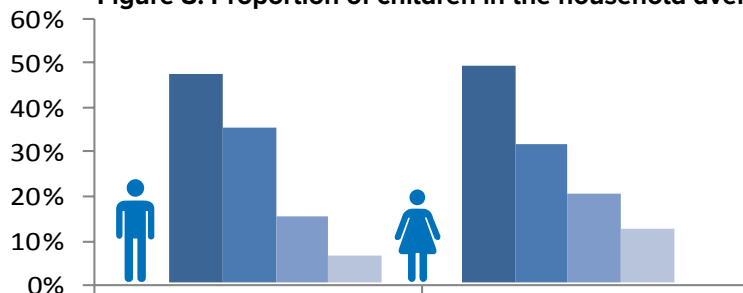
The majority of the vulnerable households tend to be larger, with an average household size of 5.1 in the severe vulnerability group, compared to 2.3 in the low vulnerability group. Single person households in better off groups tend to be younger than those in more vulnerable groups.

Figure 7: Household size



Households comprising only one member feature prominently in less vulnerable groups. In the low vulnerability group, 68% of male-headed households and 48% of female-headed households have only one member. Single person households represent a progressively smaller proportion of more vulnerable groups, with only 2% of male-headed and 9% of female-headed households under the severe vulnerability threshold.

Figure 8: Proportion of children in the household average



Level of education

Across all welfare groups, around half of household heads completed secondary or technical education.

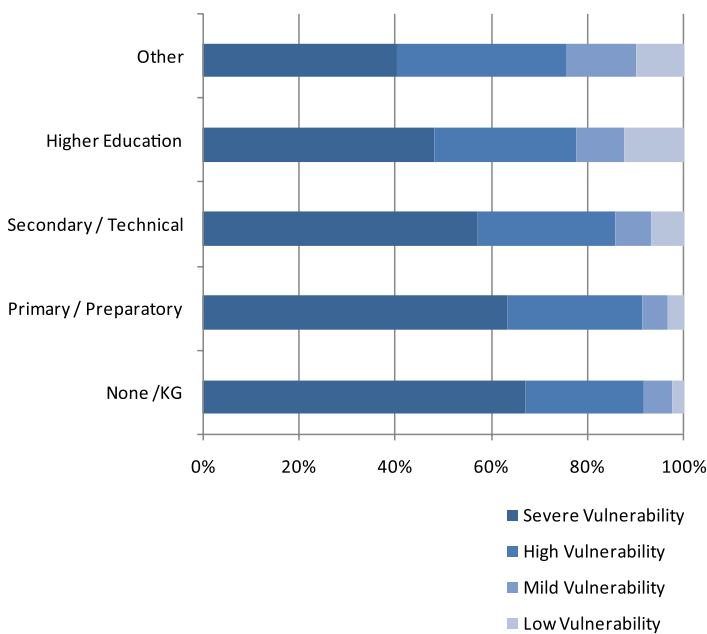
However, **vulnerable households are more likely** than better off households to have a head of household who **completed only a primary level of education.**

This means 35% in the severe vulnerability group compared to 16.5% in the low vulnerability group.

Conversely, higher education is more prevalent amongst heads of households in the low vulnerability group (28%) and progressively less so amongst more vulnerable groups, reaching 12% in the severe vulnerability group.

Nevertheless, over three quarters of all households whose head completed higher education are below the high vulnerability threshold, as are over 90% of households whose head completed only primary education.

Figure 9: Level of education of head of household



Year of arrival

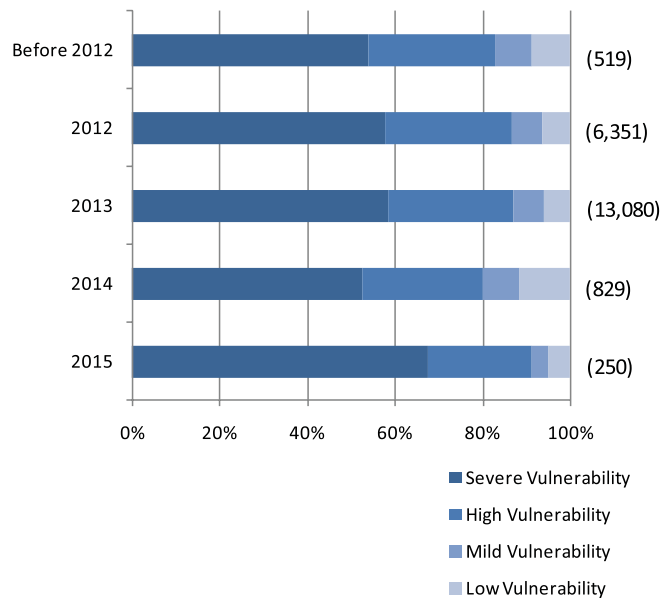
The **majority** of Syrians fall in the **severe or high vulnerability** group, **regardless of year of arrival** in Egypt.

In 2011, at the outset of the Syria crisis, many Syrians who sought refuge in Egypt had business, personal or family connections in the country. Many of these early arrivals were able to establish businesses, find employment or (at least initially) rely on personal savings, giving rise to the perception that Syrian refugees in Egypt were relatively self-reliant.

While there are some Syrian households in Egypt who are able to meet their needs without assistance, many of which are not registered with UNHCR, data from the socioeconomic assessment shows that amongst those households who are registered with UNHCR, the early arrivals are not better off than later arrivals.

Amongst surveyed households, there is little difference in the distribution of vulnerability based on the year of arrival of the head of household.

Figure 10: Distribution of wealth groups by year of arrival of head of household



A Syrian mother holding her children waiting to get their vaccinations.
© UNHCR/ P. Costa

B) GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF WELFARE GROUPS

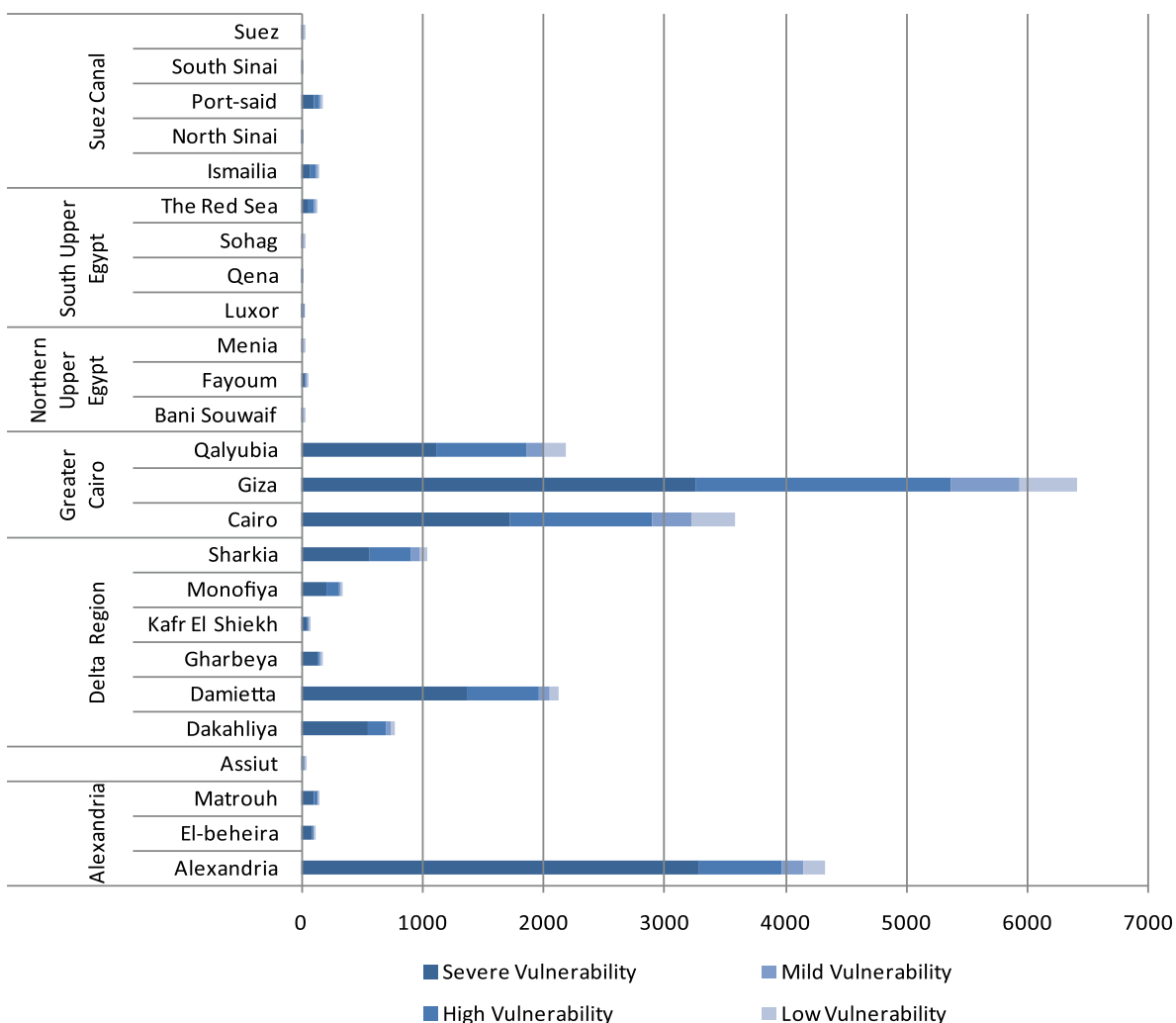
The largest absolute numbers of refugee households under the severe and high vulnerability thresholds are found in the Greater Cairo region, reflecting its high population concentration. Approximately half of households in the Greater Cairo region are in the severe vulnerability group, and one third are in the high vulnerability group. This same distribution is found in 6th October and Al Obour, the districts with the largest population of Syrian refugees. However, this region also has the highest proportion of refugees in the mild (8.5%) and low (8.3%) vulnerability groups. This reflects the greater variety of population and skills to be found in a large urban centre.

Alexandria has both the largest number and the highest proportion (75.9%) of refugees in the severe vulnerability group of all the governorates, with 16% of households in the high vulnerability group. In the district of Al Montaza, 75% of households are severely vulnerable and 17% highly vulnerable. In Amreya district, 82% are in the severe and 13% in the high vulnerability group.

Over 90% of Syrian refugee households in Damietta are below the poverty line, with 65% and 28% respectively in the severe and high vulnerability groups.

The vast majority of Syrian households who are registered with UNHCR reside in urban areas (95%), with only 5% of registered households living in rural areas. Vulnerability is greater amongst those households living in rural or peri-urban areas, with 70% in the severe vulnerability group compared to 58% of households living in urban areas.¹

Figure 11: Geographical distribution of welfare groups



¹ In 2012/2013, the poverty rate in Lower Egypt was 11.7% in urban areas compared to 17.4% in rural areas, and in Upper Egypt the poverty rate was 26.7% in urban areas compared to 49.4% in rural areas. (CAPMAS, Egypt in Figures 2014, p115).



A Syrian instructor drawing with Syrian kids at the women friendly space in 6th October City facilitated by Care international.
© UNHCR/ P. Costa

C) HOUSING AND LIVING CONDITIONS

While the **majority of Syrian refugees are living in formal housing**, with access to essential services such as electricity, water and sanitation, **household crowding is a problem**, particularly amongst most vulnerable households.

The majority of refugee households (92% overall) live in an apartment or house together with other refugees who are part of their extended family. The average household living in this type of housing consists of 4.6 members.

A small proportion of refugees (6.4% of households) share a 'separate room' in a dwelling with others who are not part of the same household. This housing type is more common amongst less vulnerable households (22.4% compared to 4.4% in the low and severe vulnerability groups respectively). Households in this kind of living arrangement tend to be smaller than those occupying a whole apartment, with an average household size of 2.7 members. One third of those households living in separate rooms are comprised of single males, with an average age of 28 years.

The majority of refugees living in apartments or houses have access to electricity (98%), gas (98%), and sufficient water for drinking, cooking, washing and toilet purposes (at least 35L/person/day) (over 97%). The average number of rooms is 5.4 (including kitchen, bathroom, etc.), and most households (95%) have exclusive access to a latrine.

A small proportion of refugee households (1%) live in an 'unfinished shelter, basement, garage, warehouse or work site'. The majority (82%) of these are in the Greater Cairo region, with 6% each in Alexandria, Delta region and Suez Canal. A higher proportion of households in the mild (4.2%) and low (5.6%) vulnerability groups are living in this kind of housing, compared to less than 1% of households in the severe and high vulnerability groups. This most likely reflects the situation of refugees living in factories or workshops, where they work during the day and sleep at night. The vast majority (92%) of households living in these settings are male-headed. 65% were single males, with an average age of 26 years. Those living on work sites or other 'informal' housing tend to have

electricity (92%) and access to sufficient water (89%), but over half (57%) lack exclusive access to a latrine.



Across all welfare groups, most refugees (94% overall) rent their dwelling. Of these, over half rent an unfurnished residence. It is very uncommon for refugees to own their own apartment or house; less than 0.1% of surveyed households own their residence.

Around 1% of surveyed households live in shelter provided through humanitarian assistance. A fraction of the surveyed population lives in hostels or is squatting, and a small number of individuals surveyed presented themselves as being homeless. Around 5% of households are hosted for free, either by Syrian or Egyptian families. This is not linearly related to welfare grouping, and may be more closely related to the social links of the household.

While the socioeconomic assessment collected information about refugees' access to basic services, it provided limited additional information about the quality of housing. In participatory assessments, some refugees noted that they had no choice but to rent accommodations in poor or unhygienic conditions.

Further, while information about the security of tenancy arrangements was not collected through the socioeconomic assessment, anecdotal information indicates that many refugees rent through informal agreements with the landlord, rather than having formal signed contracts. This enables landlords to quickly evict refugees, should the opportunity for a more lucrative tenancy arise. This means that refugees have limited housing security and considerable anxiety around meeting the significant costs for rent. Refugees across all welfare groups identified support for rent as the most important unmet need of their household.

Table 4: Average household crowding by gender of head of household

			Overall average
Severe Vulnerability	1.05	0.87	1.01
High Vulnerability	0.83	0.69	0.80
Mild Vulnerability	0.56	0.53	0.55
Low Vulnerability	0.40	0.42	0.40
Grand Total	0.90	0.79	0.88

Further, household crowding is a concern for many refugees. In UNHCR's analysis, household crowding is calculated by the number of people sharing a space divided by the number of rooms.²

Crowding is highest amongst the severe vulnerability group and is progressively lower amongst high, mild and low vulnerability groups. In a dwelling of five rooms, a severely vulnerable household would typically have five people, a highly vulnerable household would have four, a mildly vulnerable household almost three, and a low vulnerable household would have two.

The extent and severity of overcrowding needs to be understood not only with reference to the number of people sharing a space but also the age and gender composition of the household.

For instance, in some cultural contexts it is not considered appropriate for children of different genders to share a room after the age of 12. This could be a factor in determining whether a household lives in over-crowded conditions.

In participatory assessments conducted by UNHCR, refugees noted that in Syria they typically lived with their nuclear family only, but that they now need to share accommodation with extended family members, and sometimes with non-family members, in a considerably smaller space. This results in a lack of privacy, and tension within the household, both of which may be a source of protection concerns.

Sharing a residence with non-family members, particularly in crowded conditions, may raise particular protection risks for women and children, including risks of sexual and gender based violence.



Syrian boy living in Masaken Osman carrying water during one of the 20 trips he makes per day so that his family has enough to drink, cook and clean with.
© UNHCR/S. Nelson

5

UNMET NEEDS

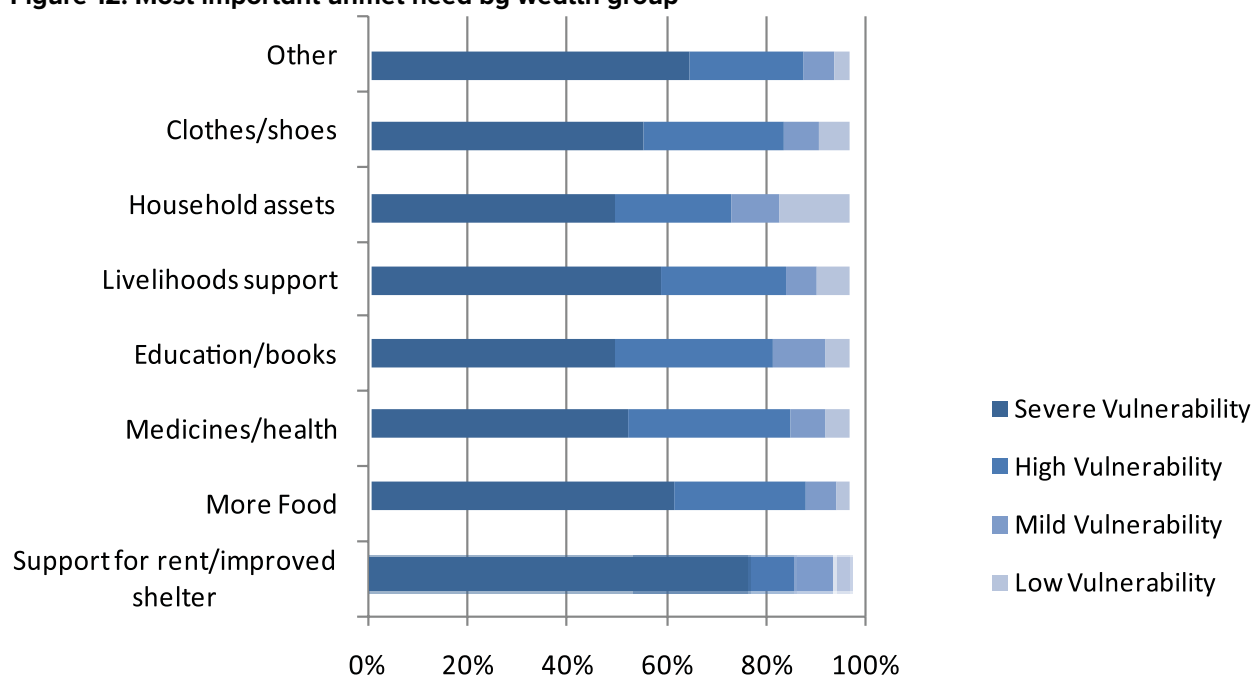


Syrian mother with her injured son in 6th October City.
© UNHCR/S. Nelson

Across all welfare groups, households most commonly identified support for rent or improved shelter as their most important unmet need.

This was identified most frequently amongst more vulnerable groups than amongst less vulnerable groups. Access to additional food was the second most common unmet need across all groups (17% overall). Medicines and additional health related support were identified as the third most common need. Education or books was the fourth most common response amongst all groups (5%), with 'legal assistance/documentation' ranked equally by those in the low vulnerable category. Household assets, clothes and shoes, livelihoods support and access to credit were also noted as unmet needs. 'Other' unmet needs included baby food, child care, physical security and psychosocial support.

Figure 12: Most important unmet need by wealth group



Case Study : Mustafa's Story

Mustafa is 35 years old. He left Syria four years ago with his wife and two daughters, abandoning their home in a hurry. By the time he had finished paying to leave and come to Egypt, he had only 50 USD left in his wallet.

Despite the many challenges in the new country he was able to find a place to live and secure a basic job.

Mustafa works as an assistant chef in a restaurant in 6th October, earning a basic wage that just about manages to cover the family's basic needs. However, one of his great worries is his health; he has back problems and unfortunately the work at the restaurant requires him to spend 12-14 hours a day standing. In some weeks the pain is more than he can bear and he has to stay home; sometimes for weeks at a time.

It is during these weeks that the family really struggles. Mustafa says he worries constantly about how he is going to be able to pay the rent, make sure the family has enough food and most importantly, to make sure they have enough money to continue to send his daughters to school.

Mustafa told UNHCR: "My only hope is that my health allows me to continue working, as by working I can manage to continue to send my daughters to school. My hope is that by letting them get an education I can, in some small way, give them back the childhood they have lost."



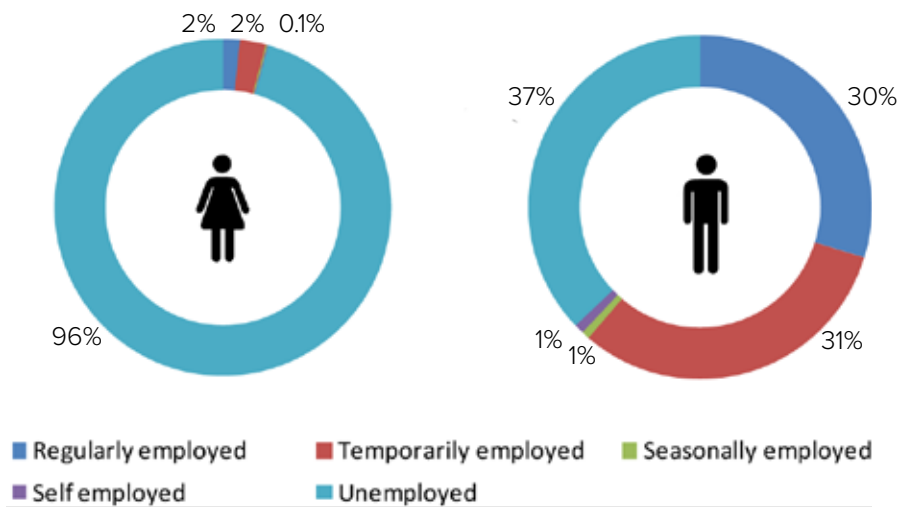
15 year old Syrian refugee sews clothes with other Syrian teenagers in a small Syrian owned clothing factory near Alexandria.
© UNHCR/S.Nelson

EMPLOYMENT

Refugees face a number of barriers in seeking employment in Egypt. The country suffers from high levels of unemployment and job insecurity, with increasing numbers of Egyptians working in informal or insecure jobs.¹ Further, it is very difficult for foreigners to obtain the right to work in Egypt. As a result, those refugees who do find employment generally do so in the informal sector or undertake home-based work.

The informal nature of refugees' work leaves them vulnerable to exploitation. In a participatory evaluation of UNHCR's livelihoods programme in April 2015, refugees noted long working hours, the precarious nature of available work, and low wages as particular challenges relating to employment in Egypt.

Figure 13: Employment status of adults (age 18-59 years), by gender



¹ World Bank, More jobs, better jobs: A priority for Egypt, Report No. 88447-EG, June 2014.

Syrian man making kanafa in a pastry shop in a street in 6th of October. This street is called Little Damascus as it is full of Syrian shops. ©UNHCR/P. Costa



A young Syrian boy making wooden boxes in a workshop in 6th of October.
© UNHCR/S. Nelson



37% of working age males and **96% of females** of working age (18-59 years) are **unemployed**.

30% of working age males are regularly employed and 31.5% are temporarily employed, with less than 1% either seasonally or self-employed. By contrast, the vast majority (96%) of females of working age are unemployed, 1.6% are regularly employed and 2.5% are in temporary employment.

Of those refugees who have an occupation in Egypt, 34% work in a craft or trade and 18% work in retail. Around 4% work as drivers and 3.5% work in the construction or manufacturing sector. Less than 2% respectively work as teachers, health workers, protective service workers or administrative workers.

Of those male respondents who are unemployed, 15% stated that the reason for their unemployment was a physical inability to work. This may include physical or mental illness, or disability, but may also reflect the perception that many of the jobs available involve physically demanding tasks that many may not feel capable of undertaking. Lack of employment opportunity was noted as the other key reason

for unemployment (14% of male respondents), which may be linked both to the strained labour market and a lack of work rights.

When asked about their reason for unemployment in Egypt, one third of females stated that they were unwilling to work, 29% cited 'gender related issues' and 12% stated that they were physically unable to work. One in ten women noted a lack of employment opportunities as the main reason they did not work.²

These answers must be understood within the protection context in Egypt, where refugees frequently note concerns about women's physical safety outside the home, including harassment and risks of pickpockets and crime. As a result of these concerns, Syrian women's mobility outside the home is highly constrained, undermining their access to services and opportunities to work.

Gender roles and expectations are also highly relevant, as the vast majority of working age women did not have any occupation in Syria. However, economic hardship in Egypt may have an effect on those roles, and in participatory assessments with UNHCR Egypt, refugee women have expressed willingness to engage in income generating activities within the home, and requested support for such opportunities.³

² This included cultural norms and perceptions about appropriate roles for women, as well as concerns about sexual and gender based violence at or on the way to work.

³ UNHCR has introduced livelihoods programmes based on a graduation approach, which seeks to promote economic empowerment through supporting refugees with training and inputs to start a business or engage in wage labour. The programme seeks to empower men and women equally, and women represented almost half of programme beneficiaries in 2015. In 2015, 985 women and 1019 men were provided with training under UNHCR livelihoods programmes. (UNHCR, The Graduation Approach: Annual Report Egypt, (Jan - Dec 2015))

EMPLOYMENT AND WELFARE GROUPS

Vulnerability has a **direct relationship** with the **employment status** of members of the household.

More vulnerable households are likely to have a head of household who is unemployed and are less likely to have a head of household who is regularly employed. Over half (56%) of households under the severe vulnerability threshold have a head of household who is unemployed. By comparison, 28% of households in the low vulnerability group have an unemployed head of household.

Conversely, close to half (46%) of households in the low vulnerability group have a head of household who is regularly employed, compared to 16% in the severe vulnerability group. Around one quarter of heads of household across all welfare groups are in temporary employment.

More vulnerable households also had a much lower proportion of household members who worked in the last month compared to better off households, as shown in the below table.

Table 5: Average of proportion of household members who worked in last month

	Male-headed households	Female-headed households	Overall average
Severe Vulnerability	0.13	0.08	0.12
High Vulnerability	0.26	0.19	0.25
Mild Vulnerability	0.49	0.25	0.44
Low Vulnerability	0.70	0.21	0.65
Overall average	0.24	0.13	0.21

On average, a household in the severe vulnerability group had one out of eight members working in the last month. While households in the high vulnerability group had, on average, one in four members working, households in the mild vulnerability group had between one third and half of household members working in the last month. On average, a household in the low vulnerability group had two out of three members working in the last month.

Employment amongst female-headed households is much lower than amongst male-headed households. Across all welfare groups, female-headed households have on average a much lower proportion of household members who worked in the last month than male-headed households in the same welfare group.

Further, the majority (88%) of female heads of household are unemployed, with only 4% being regularly employed and 7% temporarily employed (compared to 38%, 30% and 31% respectively for male-headed households). The lower access to employment amongst female-headed households is consistent with their higher representation in more vulnerable groups.

Case Study : Bushra's Story

Bushra came to Egypt from Lebanon after having escaped the violence in Syria. She came with her 3 daughters and 1 son, encountering many difficulties as a woman travelling alone.

She moved to Egypt because she thought it would be cheaper and easier to live here than in Lebanon. But in fact she has found it very difficult to manage. One of her daughters has a serious medical condition that needs regular treatment. Additionally, another daughter suffers from serious psychosocial distress as a result of the violence and displacement; she has lost a lot of her hair and is bald in patches. Her condition has also affected her schooling and her ability to understand what is going on around her. Bushra is very afraid that without appropriate psychosocial/psychological treatment she will never recover.

Bushra has not been able to find a job in Egypt that allows her to work and look after her children and the rest of her family have scattered across the world. She finds herself totally alone in Egypt, relying on charitable donations and the kindness of others. Although she is receiving WFP vouchers, she often has to sell things to pay for other things; she worries that her children are suffering from malnutrition.

Back in Syria, Bushra was a middle class woman; her family owned their house and she had everything she needed. Now she says she can't even get her children proper education or medical assistance and she is constantly under threat of eviction from their rented flat. The landlord has forgiven her many months' rent but is increasingly impatient and she is scared they will end up in the street.

"I have suffered a lot; I suffer every day here as a woman alone. People abuse me but the very worst thing is seeing my children suffer. I have reached a level of desperation where I can't think of anything except not being able to fulfil any of my children's wishes. Then on top of that, when I see the fear in my children whenever there are air planes in the sky, it kills me."





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Syrian and Egyptian kids playing together during their school break at a public school in Alexandria.
© UNHCR/P. Costa

HOUSEHOLD INCOME, DEBT AND EXPENDITURE

A) SOURCES OF INCOME

Labour

Overall around **two thirds** of households report income from **labour**.

Labour is a source of income for only **65%** of male-headed and **35%** of female-headed households in the severe vulnerability group.

More vulnerable households are less likely than better off households to earn any income from labour. Only 65% of male-headed households in the severe vulnerability group report income from labour, compared to over 80% of male-headed households above the high vulnerability threshold. Amongst female-headed households, those in the high vulnerability group report income from labour more frequently (54%) than those in the severe vulnerability group (35%) and those above the poverty line (36-49%). For both male- and female-headed households, the average amount of income earned is lowest in the severe vulnerability group, and progressively higher in better off groups.

Table 6: Income from labour in the past month

	Male-headed		Female-headed		Total	
	# of responses	% of wealth group	# of responses	% of wealth group	# of responses	% of wealth group
Severe Vulnerability	6,134	65%	942	35%	7,076	58%
High Vulnerability	4,264	86%	544	54%	4,808	80%
Mild Vulnerability	983	82%	134	49%	1,117	76%
Low Vulnerability	964	81%	58	36%	1,022	76%
Total	12,345	73%	1,678	40%	14,023	67%

Across all four welfare groups, a higher proportion of household report income from unskilled labour than from skilled labour. Average reported income from skilled labour is lowest in the severe vulnerability group in both frequency (22%) and amount (average EGP 982 (USD 131), which both grow progressively higher amongst better off groups, to EGP 1,886 (USD 251) per month in the low vulnerability group. The average income from unskilled labour is EGP 910 (USD 121) per month in the severe vulnerability group and grows progressively larger amongst better off groups, to EGP 1,446 (USD 193) per month in the low vulnerability group.

Female-headed households report income from labour far less frequently than male-headed households. Overall 12% of female-headed households report income from skilled labour and 31% from unskilled labour, compared to 28% and 43% respectively for male-headed households. For those households who work, the average income from both skilled and unskilled labour is less for female-headed households than for male-headed households, across all welfare groups.



Two ladies helping each other as part of a handicraft project called Nilfurat, which teaches refugees and Egyptians product design.
© UNHCR/P. Costa

Overall, only around 2% of households report income from small commerce, with male-headed households typically earning more than female-headed households from this income source

Table 7: Average income from skilled labour and unskilled labour

	Skilled labour			Unskilled labour		
	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female	Overall
Severe Vulnerability	1,006	776	982	942	731	910
High Vulnerability	1,475	1,312	1,460	1,354	1,118	1,324
Mild Vulnerability	1,615	1,499	1,604	1,354	1,164	1,329
Low Vulnerability	1,910	1,430	1,886	1,434	1,386	1,431

Savings and sale of assets

Only 15% of households drew on savings in the last month, with nearly **half of all households** stating that they **had exhausted their savings or assets** they may have arrived with.

More vulnerable households report income from savings less frequently than better off households, ranging from 10% in the severe vulnerability group to 31% in the low vulnerability group. Amongst those households that report income from savings, the average amount of savings is considerably lower in the severe vulnerability group; EGP 534 (USD 71) compared to others from EGP 1,035 (USD 138) in the high vulnerability group to EGP 2,894 (USD 385) in the low vulnerability group. In general, male-headed households report higher levels of savings than female-headed households in the same welfare group. Sale of assets is reported roughly equally across welfare groups, and is a source of income for 9% of households. The average income from sale of assets is EGP 1,075 (USD 143).

As noted below under ‘Coping Strategies’, a significant number of households have exhausted what savings or assets they may have arrived with, suggesting that these will become increasingly unavailable as a source of income for refugee households as their stay in Egypt becomes prolonged.



Remittances and gifts

Remittances and gifts **from family members** were received **more often by female** than male-headed households, and were received more frequently and in higher amounts **amongst better off households.**

Remittances are a source of income for a larger number of female-headed households than male-headed households (12% of female-headed compared to 6% of male-headed households). This is a particularly significant source of income amongst female-headed households in the mild (32%) and low (42%) vulnerability groups, compared to male-headed households (10% and 14% in these respective categories).

Gifts from family members are also more prevalent amongst female- than male-headed households. 8% of male-headed households report receiving gifts from family members in the last month, with little variation across welfare groups. By contrast, this income source is reported by 12% of female-headed households in the severe vulnerability group, ranging up to 20% and 18% in the mild and low vulnerability groups respectively. The average amount of income from this source ranges from EGP 333 (USD 44) in the severe vulnerability group up to almost EGP 1,800 (USD 240) in the low vulnerability group.

Cash and food assistance

Food vouchers were received by nearly **three quarters (73%)** of households, and **cash assistance** by almost **one fifth (20%)**.

Both had to be reduced during the period of data collection due to insufficient funding.

Table 8: Number of households receiving cash and food assistance in the previous month

Wealth group	Cash assistance		WFP food voucher	
	# of responses	% of wealth group	# of responses	% of wealth group
Severe Vulnerability	3,271	26%	10,202	80%
High Vulnerability	846	14%	4,306	70%
Mild Vulnerability	106	7%	839	56%
Low Vulnerability	58	4%	545	39%
Grand Total	4281	20%	15892	73%

Cash assistance and food vouchers are more frequently reported as income amongst more vulnerable households, and progressively less frequently amongst better off groups. Overall, 73% of households report income from food vouchers, and 20% report receiving cash from aid organizations in the preceding month. This may include not only cash assistance from UNHCR, but also other NGOs or philanthropic organizations or individuals. Around 3% of households also report income from the sale of food aid, valued between EGP 50 and 250 (USD 7 and 33) on average. Female-headed households receive cash assistance more frequently than male-headed households (24% compared to 18%), although food vouchers are received roughly equally by male- and female-headed households overall.

During the course of 2015, while data was still being collected, funding shortfalls led to the reduction of food vouchers by WFP and cash assistance by UNHCR. WFP reduced its food vouchers by 30% from approximately EGP 180 to 125 (USD 24 to 17). From May 2015, distribution of food vouchers began to shift from geographic to vulnerability-based targeting, based on a combination of food consumption score, severe coping strategies and predicted expenditure. As a result, the number of beneficiaries of food vouchers reduced from 96,000 to 41,600.¹

UNHCR cash assistance also shifted from geographic to vulnerability-based targeting (commencing in Cairo and later rolled out nationally), resulting in a reduction in beneficiary numbers. Households eligible for cash assistance are those which are in the severe or high vulnerability groups based on the welfare model, are relying on negative coping strategies and/or have specific protection needs. Cash assistance is either provided on a one-off basis for emergency cases, or monthly over a six month period, after which the household's vulnerability is re-assessed. The amount of cash assistance varies between EGP 400 (USD 53) and EGP 1,300 (USD 173) depending upon the size and vulnerability of the household. Some 31,200 Syrian refugees were assisted with cash grants in 2015, compared to 57,100 at the beginning of 2014.

¹ WFP Egypt Country Brief, January 2016, <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ep/wfp273365.pdf>

Borrowing

Borrowing money or purchasing on **credit** were **relied upon by 55%** of refugee households overall, and was **more prevalent amongst poorer households.**


Borrowing money or purchasing on credit were relied upon by 55% of refugee households overall in the preceding month. This is most commonly reported amongst more vulnerable households, with 63% of severely vulnerable and 51% of highly vulnerable households relying on borrowing in the preceding month. Borrowing is slightly less prevalent amongst better off groups, where it is used less amongst female-headed households (28% amongst female-headed households compared to 43% amongst male-headed households in the low vulnerability group).

On average, male-headed households borrow larger amounts than female-headed households across all welfare groups. The difference is greatest within the severely vulnerable group, where male-headed households borrowed EGP 1,021 (USD 136) on average in the preceding month, compared to EGP 760 (USD 101) amongst female-headed households. Overall, male-headed households borrowed an average of EGP 1,013 (USD 135) in the preceding month, compared to EGP 769 (USD 102) amongst female-headed households.

B) DEBT



Households were asked to provide information about the total amount of debt that they have accumulated since arriving in Egypt.

Poorer households are more frequently found to be in debt than better off households, with male-headed households being indebted more frequently than female-headed households. In the severe vulnerability group, 79% of male- and 71% of female-headed households report having some level of debt. Amongst highly vulnerable households, 69% of male- and 61% of female-headed households report having debt.

A young Syrian refugee man is walking on a sidewalk in Masaken Osman, carrying four large plastic water bottles. He is wearing a blue and white striped polo shirt, blue jeans, and sandals. The background shows a building with a window and a door.



A Syrian refugee carries heavy bottles of water the nearest clean water tap in Masaken Osman.
© UNHCR/S. Nelson

Table 9: Total amount of debt accumulated

	Debt=0  Debt >0				Debt=0  Debt >0			
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Severe Vulnerability	2,022	21%	7,486	79%	799	29%	1,915	71%
High Vulnerability	1,567	31%	3,419	69%	392	39%	609	61%
Mild Vulnerability	431	36%	764	64%	128	47%	146	53%
Low Vulnerability	504	42%	686	58%	99	61%	62	39%
Grand Total	4,524	27%	12,355	73%	1,418	34%	2,732	66%

On average, male-headed households have accumulated higher amounts of debt than female-headed households, across all categories. The average amount of debt for male-headed households is close to EGP 6,000 (USD 799) and EGP 3,350 (USD 446) for female-headed households.

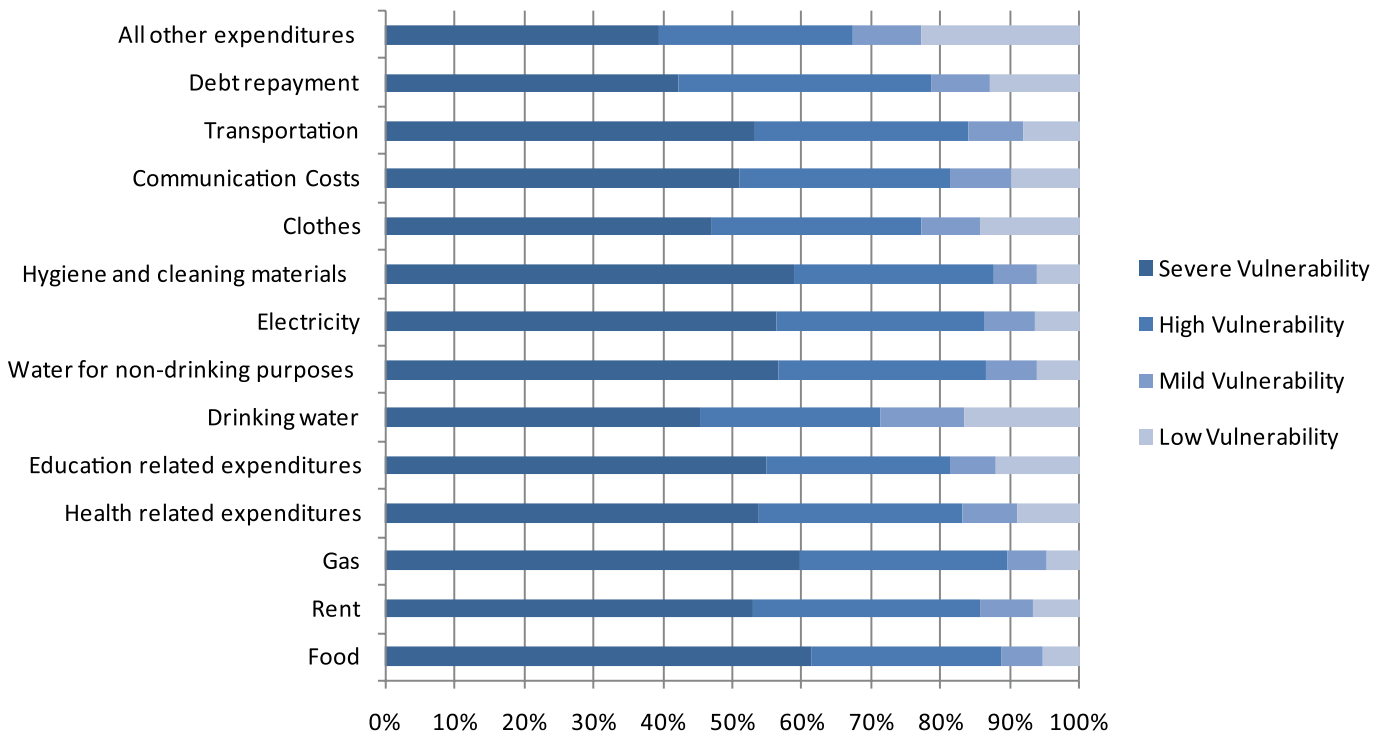
Table 10: Average debt by year of arrival of head of household (EGP)

			Total
Before 2012	10,601.2	3,209.2	8,806.6
2012	6,914.6	4,076.8	6,308.2
2013	5,462.2	2,854.4	4,981.9
2014	5,752.4	3,157.4	5,148.3
2015	3,227.0	7,703.8	4,391.0

Those households which arrived earlier have higher levels of debt on average than those which arrived later. Of those households which arrived before 2015, 73-76% of male-headed households report having some amount of debt, and 63-67% of female-headed households report debt. However, amongst those who arrived in 2015, the proportion of households in debt is lower (68% amongst male-headed households and 43% amongst female headed households).

This suggests that as households exhaust the savings that they arrive with, they resort to borrowing, and many find themselves unable to repay their debts at a faster rate than they accumulate additional debt.

Figure 14: Overall reported expenditure by category



Food

The average monthly expenditure on food is EGP 238 (USD 32) per person. Food prices in Egypt have been on the rise, with inflation up 14.6% from December 2015 for food and beverages.² Food comprises a higher proportion of overall expenditure in the most vulnerable welfare groups (40% for severe, 33% for high, 29% for mild, and 26% for low vulnerability groups). Per capita expenditure on food is lower in the severe and high vulnerability groups than in the mild and low vulnerability groups.

This amount of expenditure includes the value of food vouchers used to purchase food. Food vouchers are more commonly received by poorer households than better off households (as noted above under income).

The average per capita expenditure on food was highest in the governorates of Alexandria, Dakahlia and Damietta, EGP 264 to 281 (USD 35 to 37). It was slightly lower in the governorates of Qalyubia, Giza and Cairo, EGP 218 to 235 (USD 29 to 31).

Rent

The average per capita monthly expenditure on rent is progressively higher from the severe vulnerability group, EGP 138 (USD 18) through to the low vulnerability group, EGP 444 (USD 59). The average per capita rent for an apartment or house is EGP 193 (USD 26), compared to EGP 177 (USD 24) for a separate room and EGP 68 (USD 9) for an unfinished shelter, garage or work site.

On average, per capita monthly rent is highest in the governorates of Cairo, Alexandria and Giza, from EGP 197 to 211 (USD 26 to 28). Rents are generally below the overall average in Damietta, Qalyubia and Sharkia, from EGP 172 to 141 (USD 19 to 22).

Other assessments have noted that in some areas, such as Cairo, refugees tend to pay higher rents than Egyptians for similar accommodation.³ Further, the high concentration of refugees in certain neighbourhoods has been linked to increasing rents.³ As noted above, support to meet the costs of rent or improved shelter was identified by a majority of refugee households as their most important unmet need.



UNHCR staff interviewing Syrian ladies who cook for children at Syria Center in Alexandria.
© UNHCR/ S. Nelson

² Central Bank of Egypt, Headline and Core Inflation, December 2015.

³ Refugee Rights Assessment in Egypt: Final Report, study commissioned by Plan International, Cairo, May 2015, p8.

⁴ Refugee Response and Resilience Plan 2015-6, UNHCR Egypt, p66.

C) EXPENDITURE

Households were asked to provide information about their expenditure in the preceding month. Food represents the largest proportion of overall expenditure of surveyed households (36% overall), followed by rent (27%). Expenditure on health is the third largest expense (10% overall), with education related expenses (6%) being the fourth category.

Health

In 2012, the Ministry of Health issued a decree providing Syrian refugees access to public primary healthcare facilities at the same level as Egyptians.⁵ As a result, any Syrian can access public primary healthcare services in Egypt upon presentation of an identity document, regardless of whether they are registered with UNHCR. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, humanitarian partners in the health sector have developed a main streaming strategy to integrate Syrian refugees into public health services.⁶ This has included efforts to strengthen existing national health systems, upgrade services in refugee-hosting areas, and scale up community outreach to facilitate access and awareness of available services.

Despite these efforts, health facilities in areas hosting a high concentration of Syrian refugees are over stretched. It has been noted that the affected quality of health services remains a central barrier to refugees' utilization of these services. Further, Syrian refugees experience a high incidence of chronic disease, such as diabetes and hypertension, and other health issues not comprehensively covered by primary healthcare in Egypt. The cost of secondary and tertiary care in Egypt is high, not only for Syrians but also for Egyptian nationals. While some additional healthcare services are provided by NGOs, humanitarian resources to provide financial support for complex and acute needs are limited, with priority given to life-threatening conditions.

Syrian refugees are able to access the national family medicine programme, providing access to a package of primary healthcare services, with an initial contribution of EGP 30 (USD 4) plus a nominal fee with each consultation. They also receive a subsidy of 85% of the costs of medication, with the amount being entirely waived for severely vulnerable patients. However, Syrian refugees must pay for secondary and tertiary care at the same rates as Egyptians, which may entail significant out of pocket expenses.

Health related expenses were reported more frequently in more vulnerable households than those that were better off; 85% of households in the severe and high vulnerability groups, compared to 77% in the mild and 64% low vulnerability groups.

The average amount of health related expenditure is lowest in the poorest households and progressively higher amongst better off households. Those in the severe and high vulnerability groups spend a per capita average of EGP 55 (USD 7) and EGP 70 (USD 9) respectively on health related expenses. By contrast, the average per capita monthly expenditure on health amongst households in the low vulnerable group is EGP 191 (USD 25). This reflects the amounts spent by households out of pocket, and does not include the value of medical subsidies for health services and medications provided by UNHCR.

⁵ MOH decree 601/2012

⁶ UNHCR, Primary Health Care Mainstreaming of Syrian Refugees in Egypt, Cairo, 2016.

Syrian children attending a Syrian community school, run by the Fard organization in 6th October.
© UNHCR/J. Rashad



Education

Under an annual decree from the Egyptian Ministry for Education, Syrian refugees and all those affected by the Syria crisis have been permitted full access to public education on the same footing as Egyptians. Syrians have also been granted access to higher education, although current requirements for admission present a barrier to many students. Students must show a secondary school certificate in order to enrol in Egyptian universities, requiring either that they provide a Syrian accredited and stamped document or sit for the final year of the national Egyptian exams.

Amongst the surveyed population, 84% of children aged 6-17 report being enrolled in school, with no major difference between boys and girls. Some household questionnaires would have been administered during school holidays, and may thus not reflect the enrolment status of school-aged children within the family during the school term. Thus, these figures are comparable to the results of a verification exercise undertaken in December 2014, which found the enrolment of Syrian children to be 88%.

Amongst children aged 3-5 years, around 30% attend pre-primary education. This is equal to the access to pre-primary education of Egyptian children, which also stands at 30%. Amongst children of 6-11 years, 90% are enrolled in school. Enrolment drops to 86% in the 12-14 year age group and down to 66% in the 15-17 year age group. Across all age groups, enrolment rates are comparable between boys and girls. The reasons for dropout are discussed below.

The majority (81%) of Syrian children in surveyed households attend public schools, and 9% attend private schools, both supervised and accredited by Egypt Ministry of Education. Close to 10% attend ‘community schools’ or ‘education centres’. Children who attend these centres are officially enrolled in public schools, but attend classes in community schools where they are taught by Syrian teachers following the Egyptian curriculum. These arrangements allow Syrian children to study in familiar surroundings, in their own dialect and away from overcrowded classrooms in the Egyptian public schools, while also being able to sit for the Egyptian exams and thus obtain a certificate of completion at the end of each grade.

In order to enrol in public schools, Syrian children require either an asylum seeker card (UNHCR registration document) or a Syrian passport, and must also have a valid residency permit in Egypt. Of those children who are not enrolled in school, 49% do not have a valid residency permit. One quarter of students are enrolled but not in possession of a valid residency permit. This may be because some schools allowed a grace period during which students could be enrolled whilst their parents or guardian sought the relevant residency documents. Because residency permits are valid only for a period of 6 months, and take time to be renewed, this may also reflect the situation of students whose residency permits lapsed during the school year.

Reasons for non-attendance

Those households with children out of school were asked to provide the top three reasons for non-enrolment. Over half of respondents (54%) state that the most significant barrier is the cost of education, and 29% note the most important reason as problems with documentation either because the household does not possess the relevant documents, or because the documents were not accepted by the school. It should be noted that the Ministry of Education has issued guidance for all education directorates to facilitate access to schools for Syrian children without documentation, providing that they sit a placement test to determine their level of education, and place them in the correct grade for their age where possible.

The cost of transport is the third ranked reason for not attending school. Around 5% of respondents note poor quality of education in their top three reasons, and a further 5% note disability or a serious medical issue, which includes children being affected by trauma. Around 2.5% of respondents note the need for children to work to support the family (more commonly noted for boys than girls), and less than 2% note discrimination or harassment in their top three reasons for children’s non-attendance at school.

This is broadly consistent with the results of a household telephone survey conducted by Save the Children International, Ford Foundation and UNHCR, from December 2015 to January 2016, which examined the reasons for Syrian refugee children being out of school. Preliminary results from this survey indicate that the costs of education are the main reason for children dropping out of school (50% of respondents), followed by children being involved in work (19%), psychosocial concerns (6%) and illness (3%).

The reasons listed above are not likely to be mutually exclusive; instead, factors relating to economic vulnerability, protection concerns and limitations on the quality of education may combine to form barriers to education. These factors include strained educational resources, overcrowded classrooms, and discrimination at or on the way to school, psychological distress, bureaucratic requirements and economic hardship. Measures to improve the capacity of Egyptian education facilities, including upgrades to physical infrastructure and capacity building measures, are being pursued in order to improve the access to quality education for both Syrian and Egyptian children. Meanwhile, as discussed below, assistance with meeting the costs of education is intended to alleviate the financial barriers to school attendance.

Education Expenses

Both Syrian and Egyptian student enrolment in public schools costs EGP 57 (USD 7.5) per child annually. Attending a community school may entail a fee of around EGP 100 (USD 13) per month, whereas enrolment in a private school may cost upwards of EGP 3,500 (USD 466) annually. Additional expenses relating to education include the costs of books, stationery, uniforms and transportation.

In order to assist with these costs, UNHCR provides a targeted education grant for every household with a child enrolled in a public or community school. The amount ranges from EGP 600 to 1,400 (USD 80 to 185), depending on the number of children in the household. Education grants are disbursed in two installments per year. The education expenditure reported by households in the socioeconomic assessment reflects the amounts spent out of pocket by the household on education, including amounts spent from the education grant.

Education related expenses were reported by around half of severely vulnerable households, and progressively less frequently amongst better off households, reflecting the smaller number of households with children amongst better off households. On average, per capita expenditure on education is EGP 26 (USD 3.5) per month in the severe vulnerability group, increasing up to EGP 44 (USD 6) and EGP 106 (USD 14) in the mild and low vulnerability groups respectively.

While only one quarter of low vulnerable households report education related expenditure, the average amount is considerably higher than the other three groups. This most likely reflects a small number of households with a student in private schools and universities.

The total costs of attending a private school can conceivably reach EGP 12,000 (USD 1,600) per year, and the costs of attending a private university can range up to EGP 20,000 (USD 2,665) for a single student.



Case Study : Osama's Story

Osama, a 38 year old father of 5, arrived in Egypt in March 2013 from Lebanon with his family.

“I used to own my own business back home but now I sell vegetables in the market. Though I work for twelve hours a day, I am only paid 1500 EGP (USD 169),” he said. Osama pays 1300 EGP (USD 146) for a 2 bedroom flat. “I tried to move to a cheaper place but the children would get harassed every time they would go down and play with the other children”.

His children attend a public school but Osama feels heartbroken when he thinks about the education he could have given them in Syria.

Even though Osama benefits from the UNHCR cash assistance programme and WFP food vouchers, he burst into tears when he said, “the children keep asking me to buy them a shawarma sandwich. I cannot even afford to buy a shawarma sandwich for my kids.”

Osama is facing many difficulties in renewing his residency permit, which is stamped on his passport that is due to expire soon. “I need 400 USD to renew my passport; this is my biggest nightmare right now,” he added. “There is no future for me or my children here. The only possible solutions I see is either to move to another country or maybe wait here until one day we can return to Syria.”



A Syrian woman walking to protect her daughter on the way to school.
© UNHCR/P. Costa

COPING STRATEGIES

Coping strategies are activities undertaken by households in order to meet their basic needs and provide an indication of the household's vulnerability. Coping strategies differ in their severity, and are classified as follows:¹

- Stress strategies are those which indicate a reduced ability to deal with future shocks due to a current reduction in resources or increase in debts. These include borrowing money or purchasing on credit.
- Crisis strategies directly reduce future productivity, including human capital formation. These include spending savings, selling productive assets, and reducing spending on essential non-food items, such as education.
- Emergency strategies affect future productivity, but are more difficult to reverse or more dramatic in nature. These include begging, engaging in exploitative or high-risk jobs, and sending children to work.

Households were asked to provide information about what strategies they relied upon to meet their basic needs. The questionnaire recorded that the household utilized the coping strategy in the last month, did not utilize the coping strategy in the last month, or had exhausted the coping strategy.²



Syrian boy working in a market to support his family's expenses.
© UNHCR/S. Nelson

¹ World Food Programme, VAM Guidance Paper: Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI), 2014.

² In interpreting the responses, it should be noted that those households which did not rely on a particular strategy may include some which lacked the capacity to utilize the coping strategy, and some which retained an ability to rely on the coping strategy in future.

STRESS STRATEGIES

46% of households borrowed money for food or purchased food on credit.

Borrowing money or food, or purchasing food on credit, are considered stress strategies, indicating that the household is taking on debt and reducing its ability to deal with future shocks.

Of households that provided information about borrowing food,³ 29% said that they had done so in the last week, with only slight variation between welfare groups.

46% of respondents had bought food on credit or borrowed money to purchase food in the last month.⁴ This coping strategy was more commonly used amongst more vulnerable households (50% in severe vulnerability group) and progressively less amongst better off households (31% in low vulnerability group).

Beyond borrowing or purchasing on credit to meet food needs, data about households' sources of income (see above) indicate that borrowing money and purchasing on credit in general were relied upon by 55% of households overall, and an even higher proportion of households in the severe vulnerability group (63%).

CRISIS STRATEGIES

49% of households have exhausted their savings.

When asked about whether they spent from savings in the preceding month, 49% of respondent households indicated that they had already exhausted this strategy.⁵ This response was high across all welfare groups, from 52% amongst the most vulnerable to 39% amongst the least vulnerable.

Spending from savings was more frequently used in the last month by households in the low vulnerability group (31%) than more vulnerable households (11% in the severe vulnerability group). This may be because better off households had more savings from which to spend compared to poorer households.

Selling household goods is similar in effect to spending savings, reducing the household's resilience to future shocks. This strategy was used in the preceding month by 10-12% of respondent households, at comparable levels across all welfare groups.⁶ However, poorer households were slightly more likely to have exhausted this coping strategy, with 34% of respondents in the severe and high vulnerability groups indicating that they had done so, compared to 29% of mild and 24.5% in the low vulnerability groups.

Sale of productive assets or means of transport was not frequently used in the preceding month (less than 1% of respondents across all welfare groups), and was also reported as exhausted by only a fraction of households (less than 2% overall).⁷ This may be because few households brought productive assets with them, or have been able to acquire them in Egypt.

Reducing expenditure on essential non-food items, such as education and health, is considered a crisis strategy because it undermines the human capital of the household and reduces its capacity for future productivity.⁸ This was very commonly used in the previous month across all welfare groups, with around 71% of households in the severe and high vulnerability group, 67% and 56% of households in the mild and low vulnerability groups respectively. Less than 2% of households across all welfare groups indicated that they had exhausted this strategy.

³ 84% of surveyed households provided information about this coping strategy.

⁴ 87% of surveyed households provided information about this coping strategy.

⁵ 89% of surveyed households provided information about this coping strategy.

⁶ 84% of surveyed households provided information about this coping strategy.

⁷ 76% of surveyed households provided information about this coping strategy.

⁸ 91% of surveyed households provided information about this coping strategy.

EMERGENCY STRATEGIES

Emergency coping strategies affect the future productivity of the household, possibly in irreversible ways, and may raise serious protection concerns, including a loss of human dignity.

Engaging in high risk, exploitative and/or illegal jobs is an emergency coping strategy, creating immediate protection risks as well as risks to the household's future productive capacity. Of those households which provided information about this coping strategy, close to 14.5% indicated that they had used this strategy in the last month.⁹ Households in the severe vulnerability group used this strategy less frequently (13%) than households in the other groups (16-18%). While engaging in this strategy may reduce the immediate financial vulnerability of the household, it is not sustainable and raises protection concerns.

Begging is an emergency strategy that was reported infrequently, though it is possible that some households were reluctant to admit this activity.¹⁰ Begging by adults was reported amongst over 200 households in the preceding month (1.6% in the severe vulnerability group respondents, 1% in the high vulnerability group, close to half a percent in the mild and low vulnerability group), with 77 households (0.5%) reporting having exhausted this coping strategy. Sending children to beg was reported by over 100 households, representing 1% of severely vulnerable respondents, and a handful of individual cases in other groups. 43 households (0.3% of respondents) reported having exhausted this coping strategy.

Some households consider the marriage of daughter at an early age to be a means of providing young female family members with a more secure future.

While this practice existed in Syria prior to the conflict, it has been observed that the prevalence of early marriage amongst Syrian refugees across the region has increased as a result of insecurity arising from displacement.¹¹

Early marriage raises particular protection concerns, and may be linked to cessation of education, risks of sexual and gender based violence, and health risks.

Of those households providing information about this practice, 133 noted that they had married a daughter over the age of 18 in the past year, and 112 noted that they planned to do so in the future. Further, and of particular concern, 65 households stated that they had married a daughter under the age of 18 in order to ensure her financial security, and an additional 88 said they planned to do so. For each of these responses, the vast majority of households were in the severe or high vulnerability groups.¹²

CHILD LABOUR

2.7% of **children** were found to be **working**, of which **65% do not attend school**.

67% of working children came from **severely vulnerable households**, and **29%** from **highly vulnerable households**.

Of households which provided information about the use of child labour as a coping strategy, 6.2% stated that they used this strategy in the previous month.¹³

⁹ 84% of surveyed households provided information about this coping strategy.

¹⁰ 77% of surveyed households provided information about this coping strategy.

¹¹ Hasan, G. et al (2015) Culture, context and the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of Syrians: A review for mental health and psychosocial support staff working with Syrians affected by armed conflict, Geneva: UNHCR, p19; UNHCR (2014) The future of Syria: Refugee children in crisis. Geneva: UNHCR

¹² 71-74% of surveyed households provided information about past and future plans to marry a daughter to provide for her financial security.

¹³ 80% of surveyed households provided information about this coping strategy.

1,180 children were found to be working, representing 2.7% of children in the surveyed population. Boys were far more likely than girls to be working, representing 96% of working children. Two thirds of children who worked came from households in the severe vulnerability group, and a further 28% were in the high vulnerability group.

The average age of children who reported working was 15 years. Over half of those children who reported working were aged 16 or 17 years, although there was a higher proportion of children aged 15 and under in the severe (55%) and high (43%) vulnerability groups than in better off groups.

Boys are more likely than girls to be working, representing **96% of working children.**

Children most commonly work in the food sector (principally serving in restaurants or cafes), selling goods (either in shops or on the street), or in factories (particularly in the textile industry). Around 60% of children who work do so for more than 43 hours per week, with about one quarter engaging in work for between 14 and 43 hours per week. These long hours make employment incompatible with school for many, and of those children who work, close to 65% reported that they do not attend school.

Case Study : Maha's Story

Maha and her elderly mother live on their own in Beit El Eila in Cairo, in a rented apartment, for which they pay 800 EGP (USD 90) a month. They came from Syria together, bringing with them all the money they had. Maha's mother, Amal, is very sick and cannot be left alone.

"We had money when we came from Homs," Maha explains. "All of that has been spent on the rent and on my mother's medication. Now we have to depend solely on the UNHCR cash assistance programme and WFP food vouchers."

This 27 year old woman is limited in what she can do to improve their living conditions. She cannot leave her mother at home and go out to work because she is worried about how she will manage. She cannot even enroll herself in classes organized in the community centres, which would enable her to develop her skills and look for employment opportunities.

"I have to be around all the time. I might need to take my mother to the doctor at any time of the day," she said. "We don't have friends or acquaintances here but Egypt is still home to us. We would never consider leaving here, except to go back home to Syria."



A Syrian boy working in a bakery to financially support his family.
© UNHCR/S. Nelson



An inflatable boat full of refugees and migrants, escorted by a Frontex vessel, arrives at the port of Mytilene having crossed part of the Aegean sea from the coast of Turkey to Greece.
© UNHCR/A. Zavallis

ATTEMPTING TO MIGRATE

It is very difficult to gain an accurate picture of the prevalence of onward migration of refugees from Egypt, and the profiles of those who attempt it. It is understood that the majority of those who migrate seek to move irregularly to Europe, in addition to regular movement to countries such as Turkey. The dangers of irregular journeys to Europe across the Mediterranean are well known, and increasing numbers of deaths at sea have galvanised concern.

The Egyptian government has ramped up efforts to prevent irregular migration out of the country recently establishing an Inter-ministerial National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Prevent Illegal Migration (NCCPIM).

Those who are intercepted seeking to leave Egypt irregularly are detained, and UNHCR continuously advocates for the release of detainees who are persons of concern to the agency, with significant success. In gathering information about refugees' coping strategies, the socioeconomic assessment asked whether households had a family member try to migrate in the last year.¹⁴

Around one in ten households stated that they did have a family member attempt to do so in the last year, and a further 0.8% stated that they had already exhausted this coping strategy, indicating that family members had tried to migrate more than one year prior to the interview.

Table 11: Distribution of households with a family member who attempted to migrate by welfare group

	#	♂	%	#	♀	%	Grand Total	
							#	%
Severe Vulnerability	925		54%	331		65%	1256	57%
High Vulnerability	489		29%	112		22%	601	27%
Mild Vulnerability	139		8%	43		8%	182	8%
Low Vulnerability	161		9%	21		4%	182	8%
Grand Total	1714		100%	507		100%	2221	100%

¹⁴ 83% of surveyed households provided information about this coping strategy.



In addition, UNHCR records in its registration database whenever the organization is informed of a registered refugee leaving Egypt. This information usually comes from family members or occasionally from the individuals themselves closing their UNHCR file prior to departure. This does not provide a comprehensive record of those who have moved abroad, and it is likely that a significant proportion of those who move do so without informing UNHCR.

For this report, the socioeconomic assessment data was analysed for those households who indicated that a family member migrated as a coping strategy, and those households who were identified through UNHCR's registration database as having a family member leave the country during 2015, excluding those who were recorded as returning to Syria. This provided a sample of 2,221 households with a family member who tried to migrate from Egypt.

Amongst these households, the distribution across welfare groups was more or less proportional to that of the overall population.¹⁵

The sample with a family member who tried to migrate, 57% of households were in the severe vulnerability group, 27% in the high vulnerability group, and 8% respectively were in the mild and low vulnerability groups.

Examination of the household size, ratio of children to adults in the household, employment status of the head of household and year of arrival suggested no marked differences between the population with a family member known to have migrated and the overall sampled population.

This suggests that those Syrian refugees who attempt to migrate out of Egypt represent a cross section of the overall Syrian refugee population in the country. Just as the vast majority of Syrian households in Egypt have been designated by UNHCR to be severely or highly vulnerable, so also the population who are seeking to migrate are predominantly from households living below the poverty line. In the context described here of dwindling savings, limited and insecure livelihood opportunities, over stretched infrastructure – and with no end to the Syrian conflict in sight – it is perhaps not surprising that many would cast their eyes beyond Egypt for a durable solution.

¹⁵ Statistical analysis of the difference in proportions suggest that this is significant at $P < 0.10$. The Z score is -1.7995 and the P value is 0.07186.



9 CONCLUSION

This report has highlighted that Syrian refugees in Egypt experience high levels of vulnerability, and that many are caught in an increasingly deteriorating situation. Faced with scarce and insecure employment opportunities, refugees are exhausting their resources, taking on debt and resorting to a range of negative coping strategies.

While access to public health and education has been facilitated by laudable government policies and other interventions, facilities are stretched, and growing levels of vulnerability threaten to undermine refugees' access to these essential services.

Humanitarian assistance has provided an important source of protection and support to many Syrian households in Egypt, but has not been able to keep pace with refugees' needs.

In this context, efforts are now required to enable refugees not only to meet their basic needs, but to achieve a measure of self-reliance. Removing formal obstacles to refugees' employment would be an important step, particularly through easing their access to work permits. Beyond this, the promotion of refugees' livelihoods must be integrated within a broader set of policies and investments, designed to enhance economic growth and expand income-generating opportunities in refugee-hosting communities.

Such an approach builds upon the growing recognition that through harnessing development approaches to displacement challenges, opportunities can be fostered to promote the welfare of both refugees and their hosts.

The findings demonstrate that humanitarian assistance, in the forms of cash and food assistance, is essential in supporting the most vulnerable refugees to meet their basic needs and mitigate the threat of resorting to negative coping mechanisms. However, it is also clear that families require other forms of support.

As discussed above, education and health facilities are being provided by the Egyptian government but many refugees still face challenges in accessing these facilities. It is essential that public systems continue to be accessible to the largest possible number of refugees and that support mechanisms provide essential outreach and awareness raising. Many within the Syrian refugee community continue to face challenges associated with displacement and insecurity. The work of the community-based protection and outreach teams and partners is essential in ensuring that UNHCR is able to identify those families most in need of psycho-social and other forms of support.

Finally, the situation of Syrian refugees in Egypt remains precarious and relies on the continued goodwill of the Egyptian community and government. It is therefore essential that UNHCR is able to continue to monitor and advocate for the rights of these refugees and to ensure their protection status.

There are clear indications that unless Syrian refugee families are at least able to maintain their families to a minimum level of basic needs in Egypt, they will increasingly seek more dangerous and potentially harmful ways of supporting their families; including seeking to reach third countries informally.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was principally authored by Frances Voon with research assistance from Malek Fourati (Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law), and is drawn from the socioeconomic assessments done with 21,885 Syrian refugee households/ 96,474 individuals, during 2014-2015, as well as other reports, data and analysis on the Syrian refugee population in Egypt.

UNHCR would like to thank the assessment teams of Save the Children, the Egyptian Red Crescent Society and Caritas who collected the socioeconomic assessments data.

The following UNHCR Egypt staff were key to the development of the report:
Bernadette Castel-Hollingsworth, Sofia Tekidou, Kate Washington, Mohamed Aly, Robert Attallah, Fady Soliman, Ragnhild Ek, Jacinta Goveas and Yahia Khelidy.



DONOR SUPPORT

UNHCR is grateful for the financial support provided by donors to its refugee response in Egypt. Donors who contributed to the cash assistance and other programs in Egypt in 2014 - 2015 were:



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