



DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

SYRIAN REFUGEE YOUTH IN LEBANON

FES MENA Youth Study: Results Analysis

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Priorities of Syrian refugee youth in Lebanon are largely rooted in their socio-economic standing and that of their households. This ultimately serves as a push factor influencing their desire to leave the country and defend their rights.



The compounded crisis in Lebanon has had a profound impact on the identity, self-expression and psychosocial well-being of Syrian youth, as well as their ability to express themselves.



Excluding Syrian refugees from national and formal systems increases their vulnerability and reduces their quality of life. National policies of exclusion, coupled with the Lebanese government's strategic indifference towards refugees, generates new forms of vulnerability and imbalances of power.



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Based on a survey carried out among Syrian refugees in Lebanon aged between 16 and 30 years, this study found that the priorities of Syrian refugee youth in the country were largely rooted in their socio-economic standing and that of their households. This ultimately serves serving as a push factor influencing their desire to leave the country and defend their rights. It also found that the compounded crisis in Lebanon (economic, political, humanitarian and health) has had a profound impact on the identity, self-expression and psychosocial well-being of Syrian youth, as well as their ability to express themselves.



In the current climate in Lebanon, questions surrounding refugee youth's livelihoods, health and well-being have centred on the ongoing decline of the country's economy, the worsening living conditions, as well as questions around migration, human rights and freedoms—particularly for the country's young people. The crises have relegated young people's voices, needs and priorities to the back seat—with essentially no government policies fostering or reinforcing their economic and political participation. Local NGOs, international humanitarian organisations and academic institutions have stepped up to fill this void. Essentially, there are no safe civic spaces for young people to voice their views, express themselves freely and integrate into a healthy society.



Excluding Syrian refugees from national and formal systems increases their vulnerability, reduces their quality of life and limits their future plans. This study demonstrates how national policies of exclusion, coupled with the Lebanese government's strategic indifference towards the refugee communities it hosts, generates new forms of vulnerability and imbalances of power—namely between refugees and landlords, employers and local authorities who exploit refugees for their own gains. This study also highlights that the well-being of the refugee community depends strongly on their empowerment and their inclusion in legal structures/ service provision.

Further information on the topic can be found here:

<https://mena.fes.de/topics/youth-study>

<https://syria.fes.de>

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1

INTRODUCTION

Lebanon continues to endure what the international community has deemed a continuously deteriorating economic, financial, political, health and humanitarian crisis. More than half of the country's population (55 per cent) currently lives at or below the poverty line (this figure includes refugees), and unemployment rates continue to increase (now above 30 per cent) amidst an economic crisis that has seen the Lebanese pound (LBP) lose more than 90 per cent (AFP 2021) of its market value (UN ESCWA 2020). The ongoing crisis is even more severe for the country's refugee population. Lebanon continues to host the largest concentration of refugees per capita in the world (more than 40 per cent of the country's population) (UNHCR 2021).

The explosion at Lebanon's main port in August 2020, at a time when the aforementioned crises had already begun to engulf the country, has led to a more immediate emergency (BBC 2020). More than 300,000 people were left homeless, over 5,000 people injured and hundreds lost their lives as a result, with many dying years later from injuries sustained during the blast (BBC 2020). In terms of human losses, the suffering of the Syrians was second only to the Lebanese. At least 43 Syrians were reportedly killed in the explosion at the port in Beirut (Georgy/Francis 2020). The blast, coupled with the largely mismanaged Covid-19 pandemic, has placed unimaginable strains on the country's already ill-equipped medical and healthcare resources (Bizri/Khachfe/Fares/Musharrafieh 2021: 487-493). The World Bank describes the country »as sinking into one of the most severe global crises episodes« and »prolonged economic depression« of the twenty-first century (World Bank 2021). To date, justice and accountability for the explosion have yet to be achieved, with little or no compensation for the loss of loved ones, livelihoods and people affected physically and psychologically (Fakih 2021).

With food and basic needs costing more than five times as much as they did just two years ago and over half of the Lebanese population living in poverty, the most vulnerable (refugees, migrant workers, children and the elderly) continue to be hit hardest by the situation. According to a recent

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) assessment, 77 per cent of households in Lebanon (and 99 per cent of Syrian refugee households) do not have enough money for food, medication and basic needs (UNICEF 2021). The situation is similarly dire for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon where those living in Lebanon's 12 registered refugee camps endure increasing levels of stress, anxiety, violence and child labour just to make ends meet (Aisha 2021). With many of the country's main hospitals and health facilities either damaged or at full capacity (France24 2020), and essential medical supplies in short supply or completely unavailable (TRT World 2021), the people of Lebanon are not merely facing a health, political and economic crisis, but are also confronted with severe obstacles in access to education, fuel, electricity and connectivity in many areas (Gavlak 2021). International non-governmental organisations (INGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies and international relief and humanitarian organisations have had a strong presence on the ground to assist some of the country's most vulnerable, with the Lebanese government doing little to provide protection for its citizens and the refugee communities residing within its borders (Human Rights Watch 2020).

The aforementioned intersectional crises have relegated young people's voices, needs and priorities to the back seat—with essentially no government policies fostering or reinforcing their economic and political participation. Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international humanitarian organisations and academic institutions have stepped up to fill this void. Essentially, there is a lack of safe civic spaces for young people to voice their views, express themselves freely and integrate into a healthy society.

2

METHODOLOGY

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) views young women and men as instrumental for democratic development in the region and is keen to strengthen their potential to initiate change in the world of politics and across society. Based on the results of a long-term survey, launched in 2016, the FES seeks to provide insight into young people's situation in the MENA region. In 2021, FES launched its second large-scale representative survey in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as well as in Tunisia and Yemen. With the 1,000 in-depth interviews conducted for each country, the FES MENA Youth Study generates a large database of responses to around 200 questions concerning the personal background of the interviewees and their views on a variety of topics.¹

2.1 SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

For reasons of feasibility, a nationwide quota sampling method was chosen, with the aim of conducting a total of 1,000 interviews per country. This sample size is considered adequately representative of the target group as well as socio-demographic and regional subgroups (e.g., age, gender, level of education).

In Lebanon, the local institute responsible for fieldwork and sampling was ARA Research and Consultancy. The institute has an established set of methods for selecting sampling points and identifying eligible households to survey, with the aim of randomising the selection process as much as possible. The aim was to ensure a geographic spread of respondents that was as close as possible to the distribution of the survey universe in the respective country. For each geographic area, the institutes provided a list of sampling points.

The fieldwork phase was conducted between September and November 2021. The survey ultimately reached 1,031 Syrian refugees in Lebanon aged between 16 and 30 years.² All interviews were carried out in the local Arabic dialect. Interviews were held at respondents' homes or in public places, such as cafés, community centres and the like. It was of major importance that the respondents felt comfortable and the interview locations were chosen accordingly.

The data was collected in face-to-face interviews conducted with computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) technology. The data collected was transferred to and stored in a central CAPI database. During the fieldwork, Kantar Public, a specialist research, evidence and advisory business, carried out data validation with sets of interim data via Excel and SPSS (statistical software program) syntaxes. In parallel, Kantar Public and the University of Leipzig conducted the final comprehensive data check. To ensure that the final structure of the sampling reflected the structure of the survey universe, differences were reduced with factorial weighting. The survey data was weighted for all target groups with respect to the structural variables of age, gender and region, based on the available statistics.

¹ For more information on the FES MENA Youth Study: <https://mena.fes.de/topics/youth-study>

² For reasons of comparability with the 2016 sample, a similar distribution of legal status of the respondents was selected: 43 per cent of the young people interviewed are registered as refugees with the UNHCR, 5 per cent are registered by/with the UNRWA. A total of 16 per cent of the respondents reside in Lebanon with a visitor's visa (this number was 30 per cent in 2016), 24 per cent are registered as residents in Lebanon (11 per cent in 2016). Overall, 13 per cent of the youth who participated in this survey are not registered at all. On a personal level, 89 per cent of all young people state that they see themselves as refugees (94 per cent in 2016).

2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Of the surveyed population, 22 per cent resided in medium-sized cities (100,001-500,000 people), 19 per cent resided in small cities (20,001-100,000 people), 17 per cent resided in refugee camps, 14 per cent resided in villages (50-1,000 people), 11 per cent resided in large cities (500,000 people or more), and 7 per cent resided in rural/central cities (1,001 to 20,000 people). Of the total number surveyed, 75 per cent identified as youth, and 24 per cent identified as adults. Moreover, 49 per cent of the total sample reported that they were married (higher among females (61 per cent) than males (38 per cent)), and 48 per cent stated that they were single. A little less than half the sample (46 per cent) stated they had children (54 per cent reported they did not), with the highest percentage (78 per cent) among respondents in the 26-30 age bracket. From a gendered perspective, 58 per cent of female respondents informed us that they had children (correlated to the higher percentage that were married), while 33 per cent of males stated they had children. The average household size across respondents is 5.7 persons per household with 3.4 persons aged between 16 and 65 years old.

With regard to living situation, 53 per cent of respondents stated that they lived in the same house as their parents, 41 per cent lived with their own nuclear family (with their partner/without their parents). A total of 5 per cent stated they either lived alone or with friends. When it comes to the head(s) of the household (multiple answers were possible), 39 per cent stated the head of the household was their father, 30 per cent stated they were the head of the household, 26 per cent responded that their husband/wife was the head of the household, with 13 per cent stating that their mothers, or »someone else« headed the household (9 per cent mother; 4 per cent someone else). In line with more traditional family dynamics/views, female respondents (51 per cent) stated that their husbands were heads of the household, while a mere 1 per cent of males told us that their wives were the head of the household. When asked to broadly assess their family situation at the time of the survey, the overwhelming majority of respondents (79 per cent) informed us that their family situation was very/rather bad—up nearly 40 per cent from 2016.

The majority of respondents (89 per cent) stated that they were in fact not students/in school, and a little less than half the sample (49 per cent) reported that they only had primary school education. This is largely due to the latest policies by successive governments to exclude Syrians from the education system for the sake of »prioritising Lebanese students« that have flocked to the public sector due to the dollarization of private education (in violation of Law 515)³ (Chaccour 2022). According to the Ministry of Education, by mid-2020, close to 40,000 students had switched from private to public education during the current school year (Le Commerce 2020). Small percentages of respondents reported having completed vocational training (1 per cent) and some form of university education (2 per cent). Furthermore, 25 per cent completed secondary/intermediate schooling, and 9 per cent completed baccalaureate-level schooling, while 3 per cent of the sample confirmed that they could read and write but that they did not have any formal education. A total of 12 per cent were illiterate.

The study broadly explores aspects around: (1) the socio-economic standing of refugee youth; (2) identity and psychosocial well-being; and (3) self-expression, participation and freedom of speech. The aforementioned themes serve as pivotal areas of focus given the current situation in the country, and are also the main areas where shifts in attitudes, perceptions and realities have been witnessed since 2016. In the current climate in the country, questions about refugee youth's livelihoods, health and well-being have centred on the ongoing decline of the country's economy, the worsening living conditions, as well as questions around migration, human rights and freedoms—particularly for the country's younger generation.

³ Law 515 prevented schools in Lebanon from dollarizing their tuition.

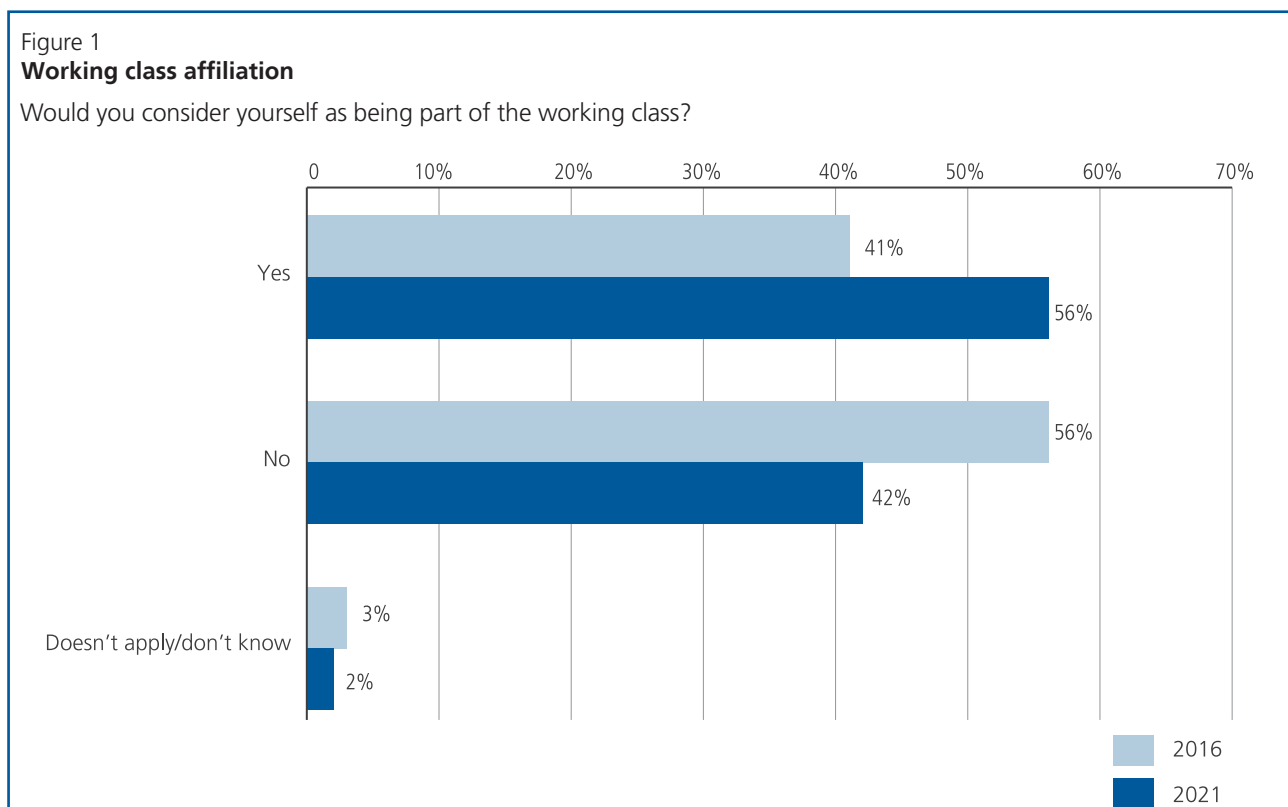
3

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STANDING OF REFUGEE YOUTH

3.1 HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC SITUATION

Of all the refugees surveyed, 56 per cent (a 15 per cent rise since 2016) consider themselves part of the working class, while 42 per cent do not consider themselves part of the working class. While the term »working class« is not defined in broader socio-economic terms, it is interpreted for the purposes of the survey as meaning having a job or generating an income (i.e. working for money). The increase in the percentage of individuals who consider themselves part of the working class coincides with Lebanon's ongoing economic and financial crisis—a reality that has reportedly pushed more and more members of the household to seek employment and a source of income (UNHCR 2021). Moreover, by 2021, more family members had taken on poorly paid jobs, high-risk jobs or extra shifts to make the same income as prior to the economic crisis, or even just the year

before (UNHCR 2021). The total number of respondents who considered themselves part of the working class was unevenly distributed by gender—73 per cent of male respondents (an increase of 7 per cent since 2016) considered themselves part of the working class, while only 39 per cent (a 23 per cent increase from 2016) of female respondents considered themselves as such. As already mentioned, the sharp increase among female respondents highlights the fact that more women had taken on employment roles outside the household since 2019 to increase household income (Salti/Mezher 2020). The highest percentage of respondents who identified as part of the working class were aged 26-30 (66 per cent), followed by those between the ages of 21 and 25 (59 per cent) and 16-20 (46 per cent). Each of these age groups had witnessed an increase since 2016, by 23 per cent, 21 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively.

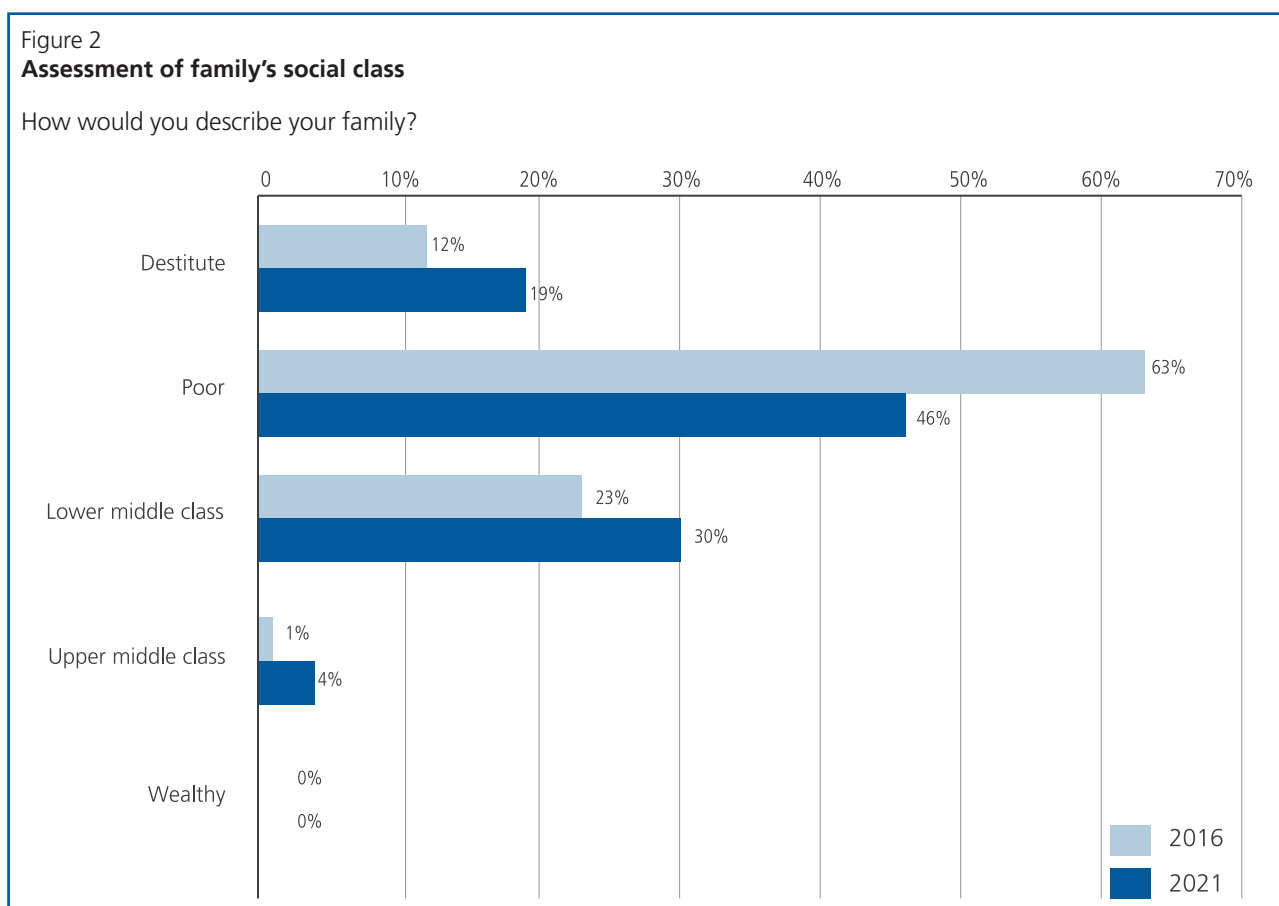


The need for more family members to work due to the crisis rendered education less relevant when it came to who identified as part of the working class. Those with a »high« level of education that considered themselves part of the working class stood at 49 per cent, with those who had a »medium« level of education and those with a »low« level standing at 52 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively. While respondents with a high/medium level of education witnessed a minor increase, those with low levels of education saw an increase of 22 per cent. The sharp increase of school dropouts during Lebanon's economic crisis, largely among those below the age of 18, has resulted in a significant percentage of Syrian refugees working with very limited levels of education (Topalian 2021). The percentage of those who identify as part of the working class is highest in rural areas (58 per cent), with 51 per cent living in large cities and 43 per cent in smaller cities.

Across the entire 16-30 year age bracket, between 46 and 47 per cent identified as poor when asked where they position their family, with between 28 and 33 per cent identifying as lower middle class. Across gender, responses were largely unanimous as well, with 29-30 per cent of males/females identifying as lower middle class and 46 per cent of males/females identifying as poor. Poverty has risen in Lebanon since the beginning of 2019, reportedly reaching 90 per cent among Syrian refugees in 2021 (Karasapan/Sajjad 2021). Education has proven to be a defining factor when it comes to family status, as among respondents with high levels of education, 9 per cent identified as part of the

upper middle class despite the overwhelming majority (43 per cent of respondents in this category) still maintaining that they were part of the lower middle class. No respondents identified as wealthy.

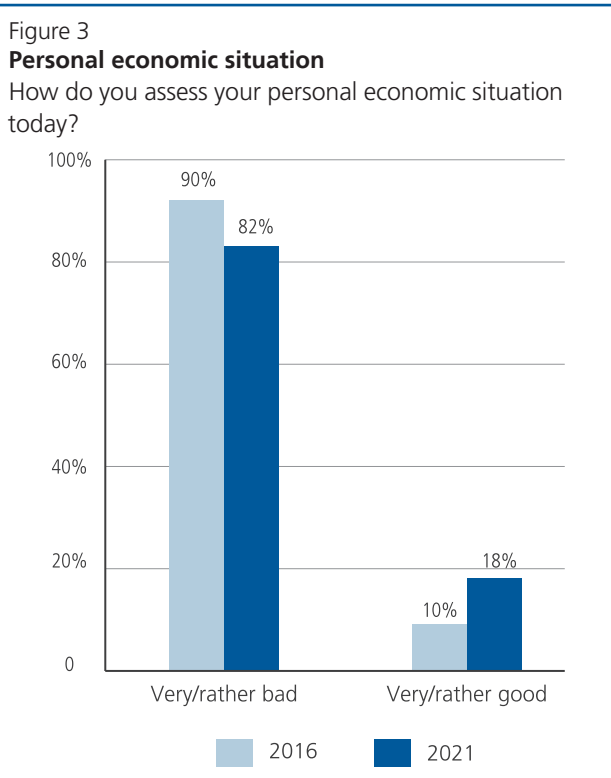
As the economic crisis persists, and now enters its third year, the declining opportunities for employment among Syrian refugees in the country has pushed multiple Syrians into unemployment/feeling destitute (ACTED/CARE et al. 2019). Presently, amidst calls by the Lebanese government to repatriate Syrian refugees or for their forced return (Al Jazeera 2022) (significantly violating the non-refoulement principle according to international human rights organisations) (Fakih 2022), long-term/durable employment and livelihood solutions for upward socio-economic mobility remain scarce and unreachable according to several respondents. Seventeen per cent of respondents aged 26-30 consider themselves destitute (a 5 per cent increase since 2016), while 24 per cent of those aged 21-25 and 18 per cent aged 16-20 consider themselves as such (an increase of 9 per cent and 7 per cent respectively since 2016). When it comes to the milieu of residence, many respondents who reside in the rural areas of the country identify as destitute (22 per cent). This percentage is 13 per cent higher than in 2016. This sharp rise may be largely attributed to the increased tensions between host and refugee communities in rural areas, as they continue to compete for resources and livelihood opportunities (Massabni 2019).



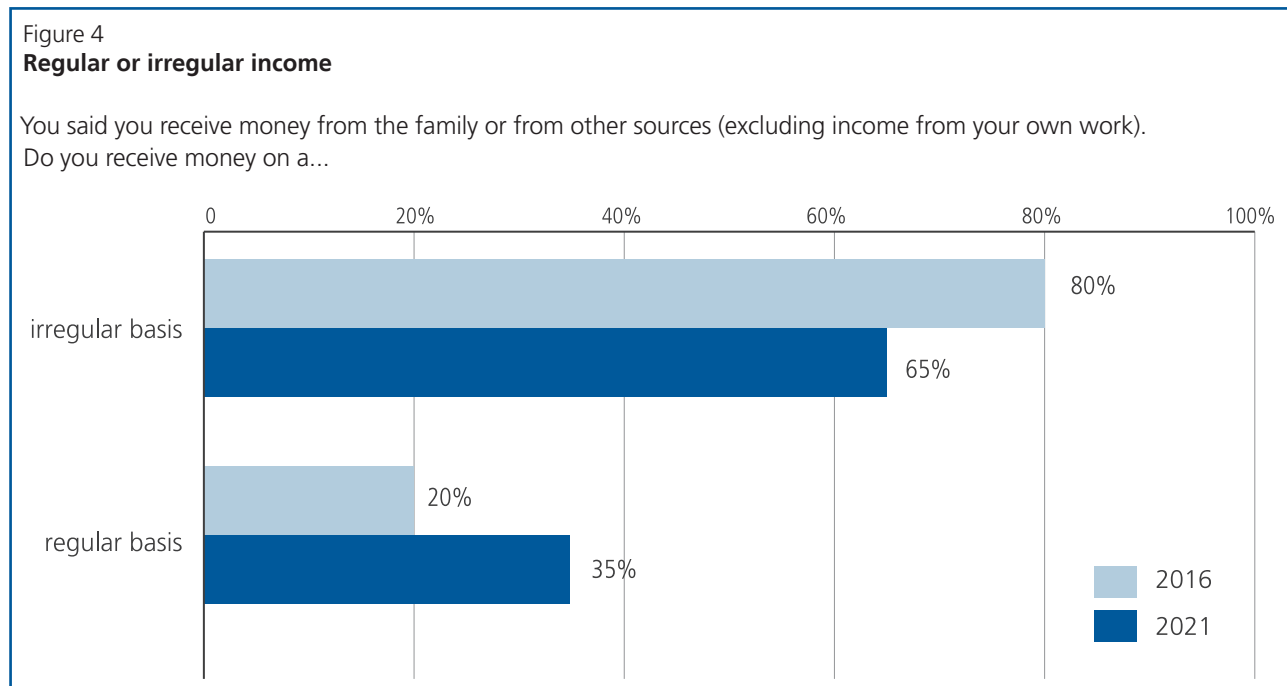
3.2 PERSONAL ECONOMIC SITUATION

Across both male and female respondents, 82 per cent described their personal economic situation at the time of the interview as very/rather bad, while conversely, 18 per cent described their situation as very/rather good. The dire economic situation that continues to sweep through the Syrian refugee community in Lebanon has tipped the overwhelming majority of Syrians into food insecurity. Food prices in Lebanon had almost tripled by 2020, increasing by about 174 per cent according to the World Food Program (WFP 2020). In 2022, the monthly consumer price index recorded its 19th triple-digit increase in the country (Farah 2022). The figure, up 239.68 per cent between early 2021 and early 2022, was the largest percentage increase since the beginning of the crisis in 2019 (Farah 2022). Those with medium to high levels of education fared better when it came to this self-assessment, with 75 per cent identifying as having a very/rather bad economic standing at the time of the survey as opposed to 86 per cent among those with low levels of education. No respondents (across all age brackets) have a private bank or postal account, nor do any own a private credit card (less than 1 per cent responded positively to this question). As all refugees in Lebanon continue to be prohibited from opening bank accounts, this has made their access to remote work (for those with higher education degrees) and online modes of payment for purchases/other applications virtually impossible, often leaving them trapped in cycles of poverty (Brosset 2021).

When asked to describe their current situation, 42 per cent of respondents highlighted that they were working for money, 25 per cent reported temporarily not working for money/being unemployed (but willing to work), and 24 per cent of respondents stated that they were permanently not working for money (nor were they interested in working for money). Comparing by gender, 63 per cent of male



respondents were working for money, as opposed to only 21 per cent of female respondents. This is mainly linked to the more traditional family dynamics and societal roles within the community, whereby the woman is largely still not seen as the household breadwinner. On another level, the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with the economic crisis, increased the amount of unpaid care and other household work expected of women (of all nationalities) in Lebanon (Aragie Kebede/Stave/Kattaa 2020). Despite the fact that there is still a large discrepancy between the numbers of males and females who work, trends and shifts in this mindset have been seen since the onset of the



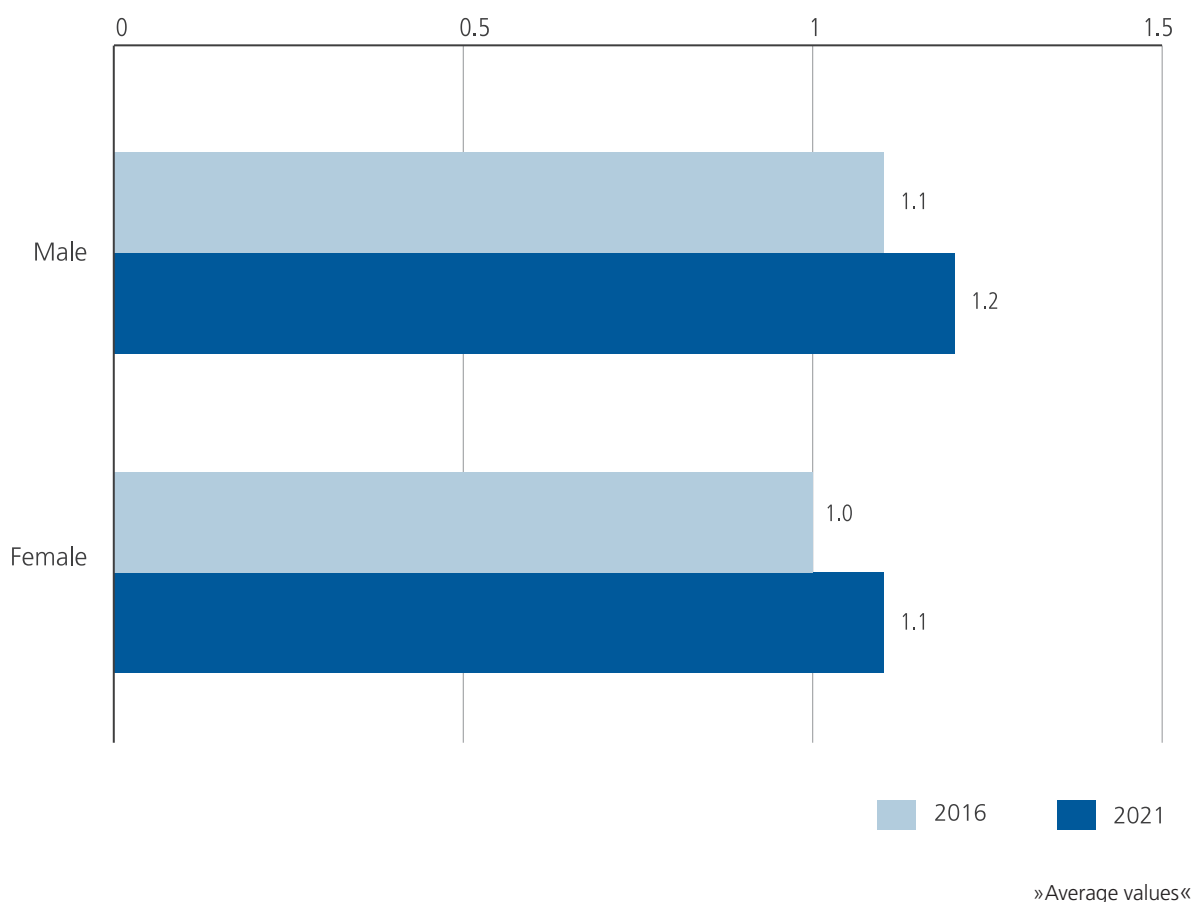
economic crisis (as well as the peak of Covid-19), as many Syrian women have defied traditional roles and entered the workforce at higher rates than usual—though still at significantly lower rates than men (Bonet 2022). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), only 7 per cent of women were part of the refugee labour force before 2017 (Bonet 2022). However, between 2020 and 2021, a total of 17-19 per cent of Syrian women became heads of households/breadwinners (Bonet 2022). By age group, 48 per cent of respondents aged 26-30 were working for money, as opposed to 45 per cent of those ages 21-25, and 35 per cent of those aged 16-20 (of which 21 per cent of respondents were either a university student or still attending school).

The overwhelming majority, between 87 and 93 per cent of respondents (across gender, milieu of residence, age and level of education), reported not having enough funds available from either working, family or other sources. A small percentage of those with high levels of education (19 per cent) stated that they did have some form of money available (in direct correlation with the fact that this category also has the highest rate of employment and income security). Respondents that secured an income from a job typically hold one (84 per cent) or two jobs (15 per cent), with the

majority (more than 42 per cent) of them working as daily labourers in what is described as »unstable employment« and/or receiving »unstable income«. As Lebanese law continues to restrict the sectors Syrian refugees are allowed to work in and the nature of employment they can accept (agriculture, construction and cleaning) (Dziadosz 2016) this majority echoes findings from similar studies. A 2021 study conducted by the American University of Beirut found that 92 per cent of Syrian refugees work in different sectors of the informal economy without employment contracts and 72 per cent are paid seasonally (Turkumani 2021). The overwhelming majority of working respondents (96-97 per cent of this category) indicated that they do not possess a work contract, nor a retirement pension, nor are 96 per cent of all respondents able to save money—a finding largely linked to the Lebanese government’s requirement for sponsors to pay more than 250 US dollars in charges/legal paperwork (Sewell 2019).

Figure 5
Number of current jobs

If you work for money, how many jobs do you have today?

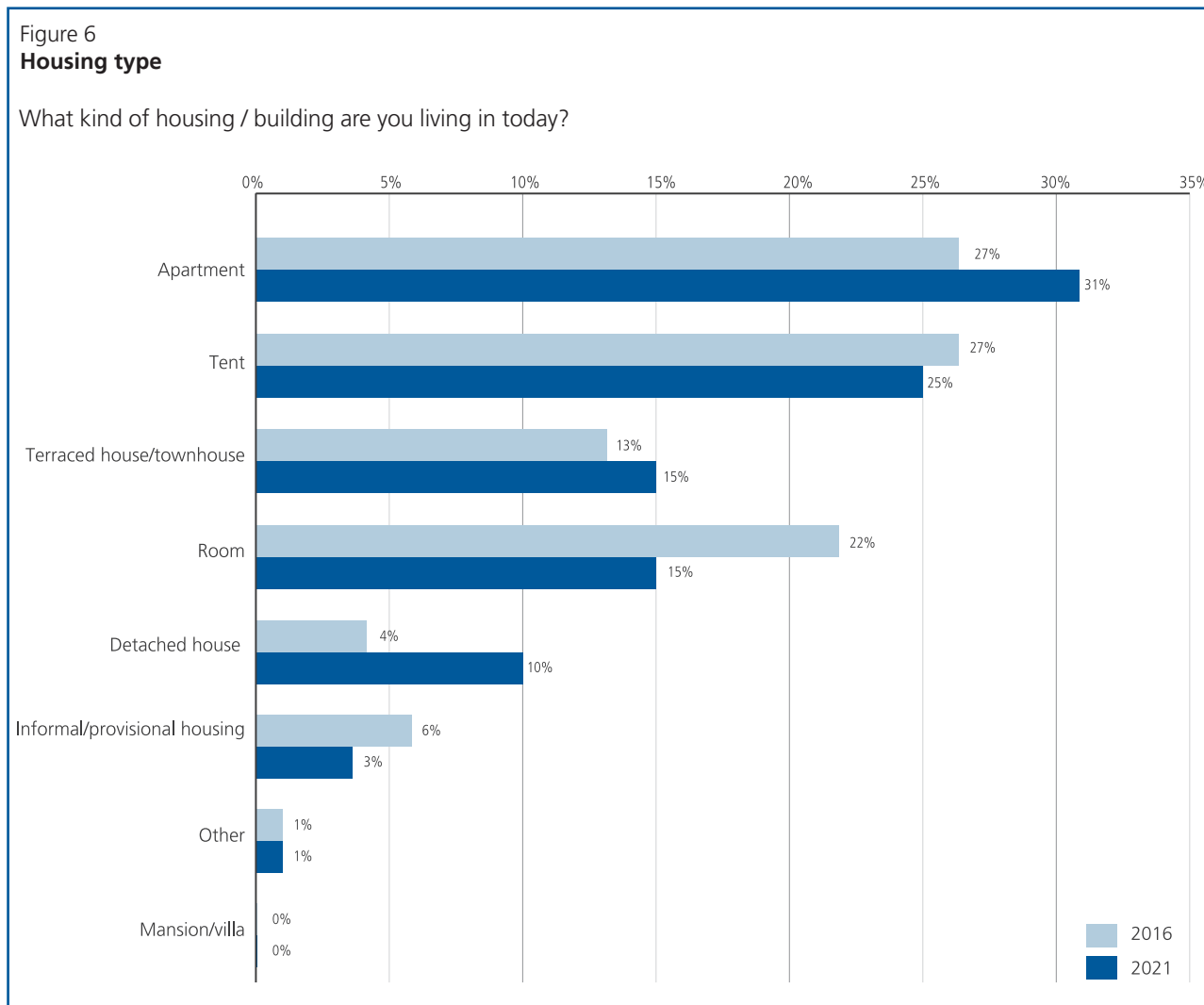


3.3 HOUSING REALITIES

In line with government policy, no formal refugee camps were established in Lebanon in response to the influx of Syrian refugees (Rainey 2021). Consequently, the Syrian refugee community in Lebanon resides in cities, villages or tented settlements spontaneously set up throughout the country (Rainey 2021). The survey found that 63 per cent of respondents reside in private housing (up 5 per cent from 2016), 28 per cent reside in what they deemed »refugee camps« (though these are in fact informal tented settlements), and smaller percentages live in informal housing or public housing (less than 4 per cent in each case). Lebanon's policy not to establish formal refugee camps (in order to avoid its previous experience with Palestinian refugees who reside in 12 formal camps across the country) has resulted in diverse housing solutions (whether private or shared) depending on refugees' socio-economic standing. A total of 31 per cent of the sample live in apartments, 25 per cent live in tents, 15 per cent live in townhouses/a room and 10 per cent live in a detached home. The no-camp policy has given Syrians greater autonomy over where they want to live, which can improve their well-being (as relatively structured environments such as camps often prevent them from having agency over their lives). Moreover, Syrians have pursued

their own housing solutions, rapidly shifting over the last decade from rural border areas to the cities. This has exacerbated existing shortages of affordable housing caused by poor urban planning and a dysfunctional/unpredictable Lebanese housing market (Ford/Lintelo 2018). As rents have quickly risen, relatively low-cost housing in urban informal settlements has increasingly attracted the poorest refugee, migrant and groups from the host country.

The majority of individuals who live in apartments are found among urban refugees living in cities/large cities (47 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively). These percentages have seen a collective increase of 15 per cent since 2016. Urban refugees continue to have more access to employment opportunities (such as construction, refuse collection and other daily work paid by the hour) and support in the major cities where they reside, in comparison to those who reside in more rural areas (who mostly work in agriculture). For comparison, only 27 per cent of respondents residing in rural areas live in apartments (down 9 per cent from 2016). Since the Lebanese government's 2014 Policy Paper on Syrian Refugee Displacement, tighter regulations on Syrian refugees have deprived them of a number of rights and privileges, including: (1) accessing most public services, (2) legally owning or renting a dwelling, (3) participating in

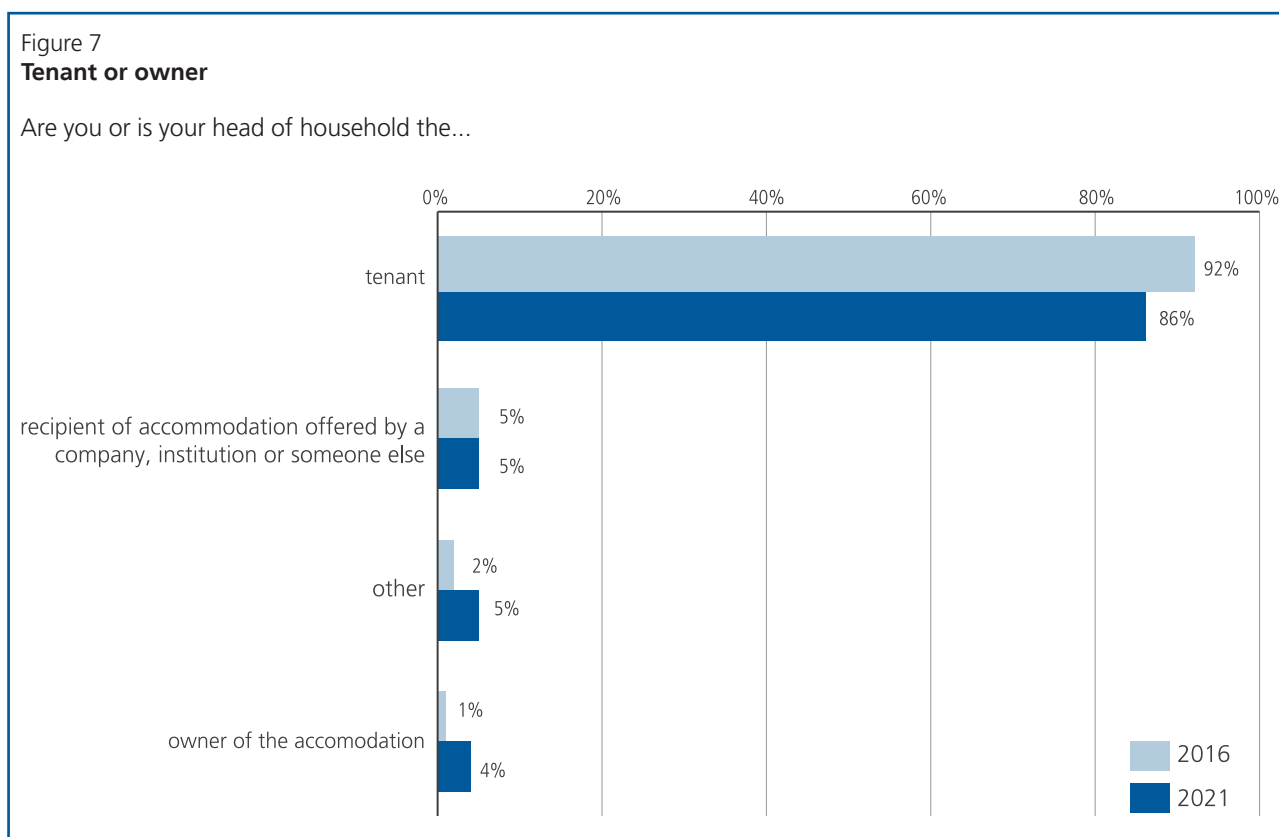


the formal job market, (4) seeking aid and protection from official institutions, and (5) moving freely within the country (Kikano et al. 2021).

The Lebanese government’s decision to grant refugees the freedom to settle is a double-edged sword, as it brings about a number of challenges. In the majority of cases, arrangements between Syrian refugees and Lebanese property owners have been based on illegal rental agreements, which puts the renters at the risk of frequent evictions and exploitative rent prices. Moreover, in most areas with high refugee density (such as cities and large cities), informal housing solutions have led to the overcrowded spaces and uncontrolled emergence of spaces that are significantly altering the landscape, straining services and negatively impacting the environment (UN-Habitat/UNHCR 2018). According to the survey, 86 per cent of respondents confirm that they are tenants, with minor percentages (less than 5 per cent) reporting that they own the property in which they live or that their residence is provided by a company, institution or someone they work for.

Largely due to the nature of the living conditions of refugees at the national level, 73 per cent state that they do not have their own room. While privacy may be a challenge, the amenities available in refugee households indicate that homes are well equipped when it comes to technology. Ninety-two per cent of the total sample shared that their

homes had at least one smartphone, 87 per cent confirmed that they had electricity (though the number of hours of power availability was not specified), 84 per cent confirmed that they had running tap water, 68 per cent confirmed they had a television, 57 per cent that they had a refrigerator, 50 per cent that they had internet access and 46 per cent reported that they had satellite antennae. Access to means of transportation remained a challenge, with 18 per cent of the sample owning a moped/motorcycle and 9 per cent having a car, pickup lorry or tractor (both percentages up 9 per cent from 2016). Less than 5 per cent of respondents reported having a computer/tablet, air conditioning and a telephone landline. The overwhelming majority of the sample (95 per cent) told us that they would not be able to repair important devices within their households immediately if they broke down, or replace them with another device. Between 92 and 97 per cent of respondents’ households do not have livestock or agricultural land attached to the property, nor does the household produce food for the consumption of its residents/family members.



3.4 KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 56 per cent (a 14 per cent rise since 2016) consider themselves part of the **working class**, while 42 per cent do not. This increase coincides with Lebanon's ongoing economic and financial crisis—a reality that has pushed more and more members of the household to seek additional sources of income.
- The majority of those who **hail from rural areas** identify as part of the working class (58 per cent), with 51 per cent in large cities and 43 per cent in smaller cities reporting the same.
- 63 per cent of male respondents were working for money, as opposed to only 21 per cent of **female respondents**.
- Those with a »high« **level of education** that considered themselves part of the working class stood at 49 per cent, while those with a »medium« and those with a »low« level of education who reported having this affiliation stood at 52 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively.
- **Poverty** has risen in Lebanon since the beginning of 2019, and reached 90 per cent among Syrian refugees in 2021.
- **Education** is a defining factor when it comes to family positionality, as 9 per cent of respondents with high levels of education identified as part of the upper middle class despite the overwhelming majority (43 per cent of respondents in this category) still maintaining that they were part of the lower middle class. Overall, 62-78 per cent of all respondents identified as being lower middle class or poor.
- Among male and female respondents, 82 per cent described their **personal economic situation** as very/ rather bad. The dire economic situation has tipped the overwhelming majority of Syrians into food insecurity.
- A total of 87-93 per cent of respondents insisted that they did not have enough available funds whether from working, family or other resources.
- The Syrian refugee community in Lebanon resides in cities, villages or tented settlements spontaneously set up throughout the country as a result of the country's **no camp policy**. Overall, 63 per cent of respondents reside in private housing (up 5 per cent from 2016), 28 per cent reside in what they deemed »refugee camps« (though these are in fact informal tented settlements), and smaller percentages live in informal housing or public housing (less than 4 per cent, respectively).
- Urban refugees living in cities/large cities have more access to **employment opportunities**, in comparison to those who reside in more rural areas.
- The Lebanese government's decision to grant refugees the freedom to settle is a double-edged sword. In the majority of cases, arrangements between Syrian refugees and Lebanese property owners have been based on illegal rental agreements—ultimately putting renters at **risk of exploitation**.

4

IDENTITY AND PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING

4.1 SOCIETY AND IDENTITY

In the area of perceived overall satisfaction with life among people in the country (1 = lowest satisfaction and 10 = highest satisfaction), the average response (across the entire sample regardless of gender, age, education and milieu of residence) stood at 3.8. The response is in line with other trends observed at the national level. The tenth annual World Happiness Report for 2022 (which took into account the impact of Covid-19 as well as political, social and economic realities), ranked Lebanon the second lowest among 146

countries in the ranking of happiness for three years (2019-2021) (Naharnet Newsdesk 2022). Personal life satisfaction among respondents stood between 3.5 and 3.7 (across all sample categories). Additionally, 42 per cent stated they felt they had »bad luck«.

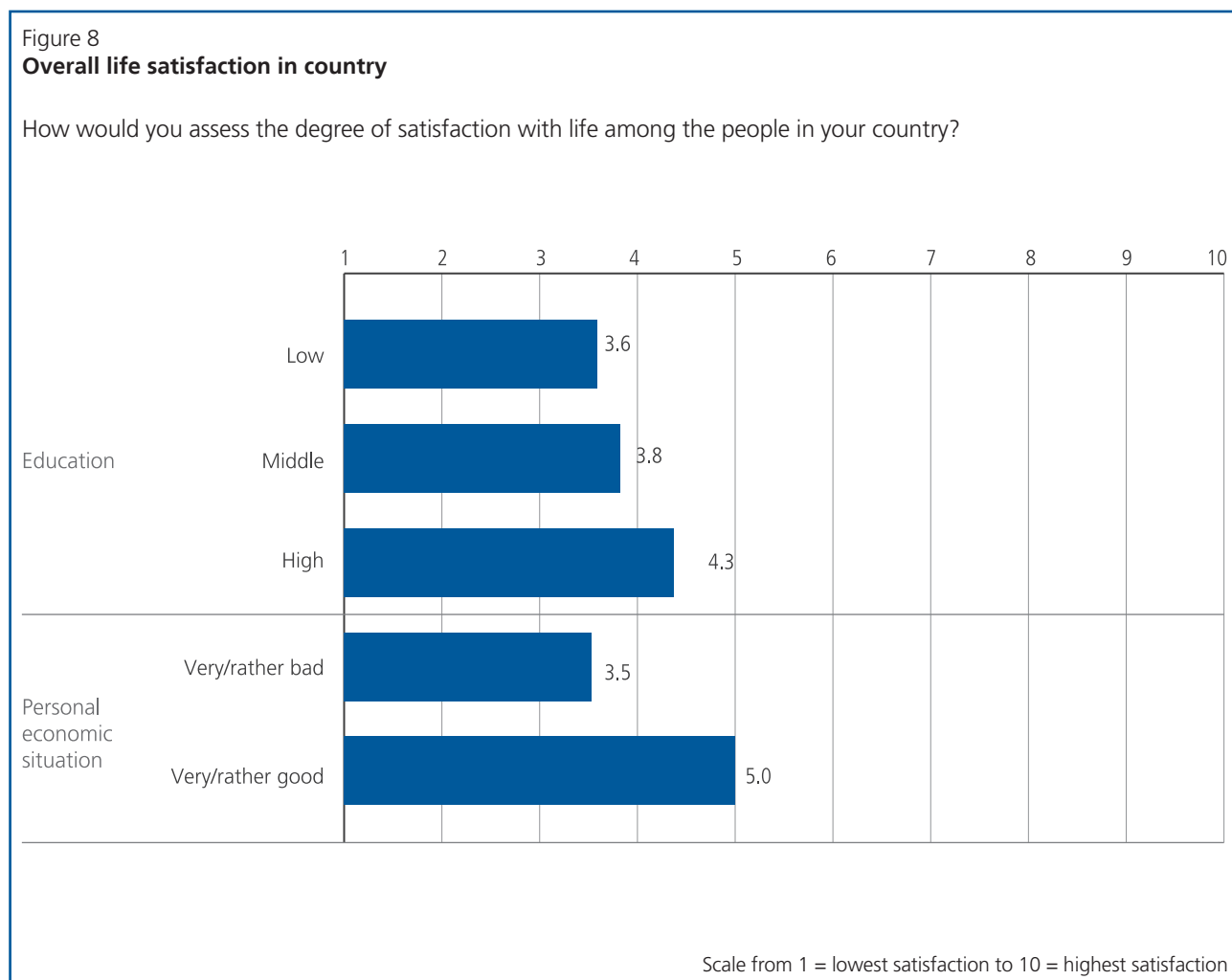
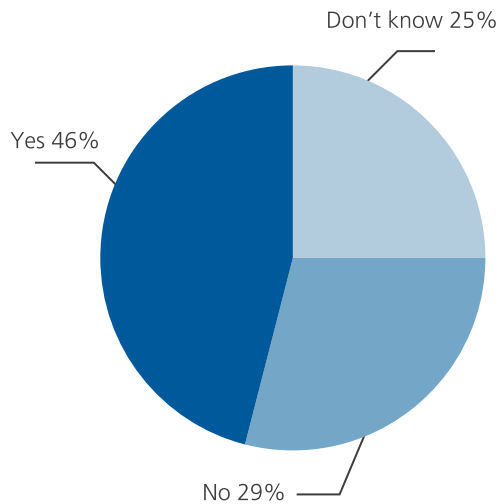


Figure 9
Recent events

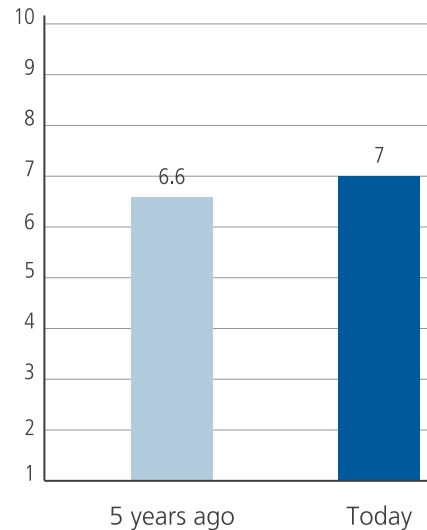
Are there recent events or movements in your country that are similar to those of 2010/11?



Many respondents do not see the situation back home in Syria as providing a safer solution. Overall, 46 per cent stated that there were recent events or movements in their country that remained similar to those of 2010/2011. The majority of respondents (33 per cent) felt that there was a general state of anarchy and 32 per cent believed there was foreign interference in the country's internal affairs. According to Amnesty International's latest reporting, many regions in Syria remain unsafe, and many of those who returned home after seeking refuge abroad were detained, disappeared or were tortured, including sexual violence by security forces (Amnesty International 2021). A more recent report, published by the Middle East Institute in 2022, found that nowhere in Syria is safe for return given that the Syrian government and other actors obstruct the UN from implementing independent and robust monitoring mechanisms throughout the country—ultimately resulting in incomplete data regarding the frequency of violations experienced by returnees (Jordan/Akil/Shaar 2022). Moreover, 51 per cent of respondents believed the situation in their country in the past five years had »significantly deteriorated«, with an additional 20 per cent believing that the situation had

Figure 10
Religiousness

How religious are you today?



Scale from 1 = not religious at all to 10 = very religious

»somewhat deteriorated«. According to the latest United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Regional Situation Report for Syria Crisis, the situation in Syria continues to be dire, further complicated by a deteriorating economy, increasing hostilities and an unrelenting Covid-19 pandemic (UNFPA 2022).

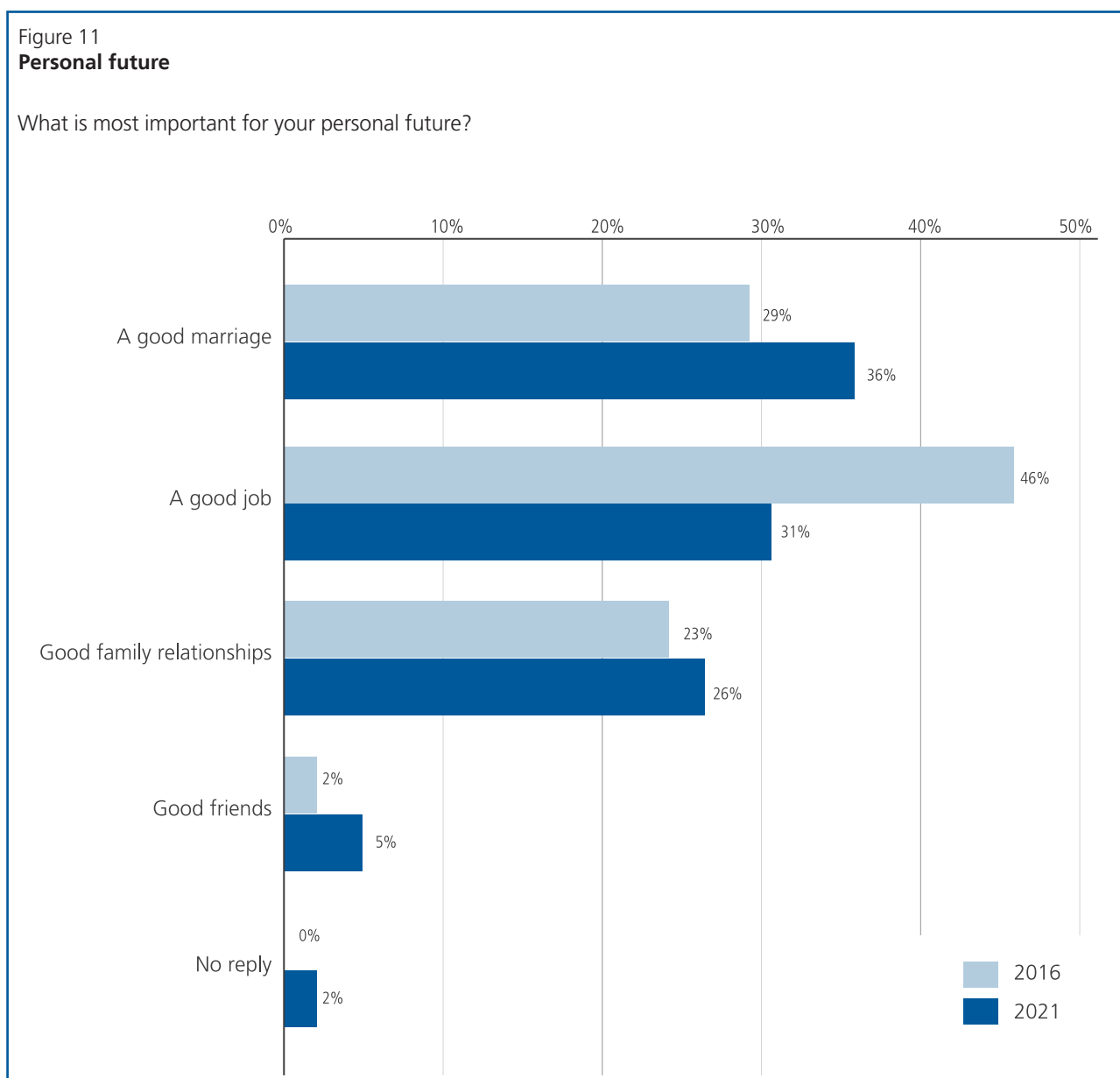
In the areas of self-perceived religiousness (1 = not religious at all and 10 = very religious), the average response across the sample stood at 7 (a minor increase from the rate five years ago, which stood at 6.6). The overwhelming majority of respondents (97 per cent) were Muslim, and 88 per cent believed that religion is a private matter that »nobody« should interfere in. Despite this assumption, 46 per cent of respondents (male and female) believe that Islam should play a larger role in public life.

4.2 PERSONAL LIFE, EXPOSURE AND EXPERIENCES

When it came to what was most important to our respondents for their »personal futures«, 36 per cent believed a good marriage to be important, while 31 per cent thought a good job was important and 26 per cent considered good family relations to be pivotal. Responses clearly varied between males and females—once again reconfirming socio-cultural and gendered norms within the community. Among males, 41 per cent of respondents highlighted the importance of a good job for their personal futures, while 45 per cent of women stated they would need a good marriage. The Covid-19 pandemic, coupled with the refugee and economic crisis in Lebanon, has led to a staggering increase in child marriages amongst Syrian refugees in the country, with the rate of child marriage increasing fourfold since the Syrian conflict began. Some of the most prevalent causes include poverty, gender inequality, insecurity caused

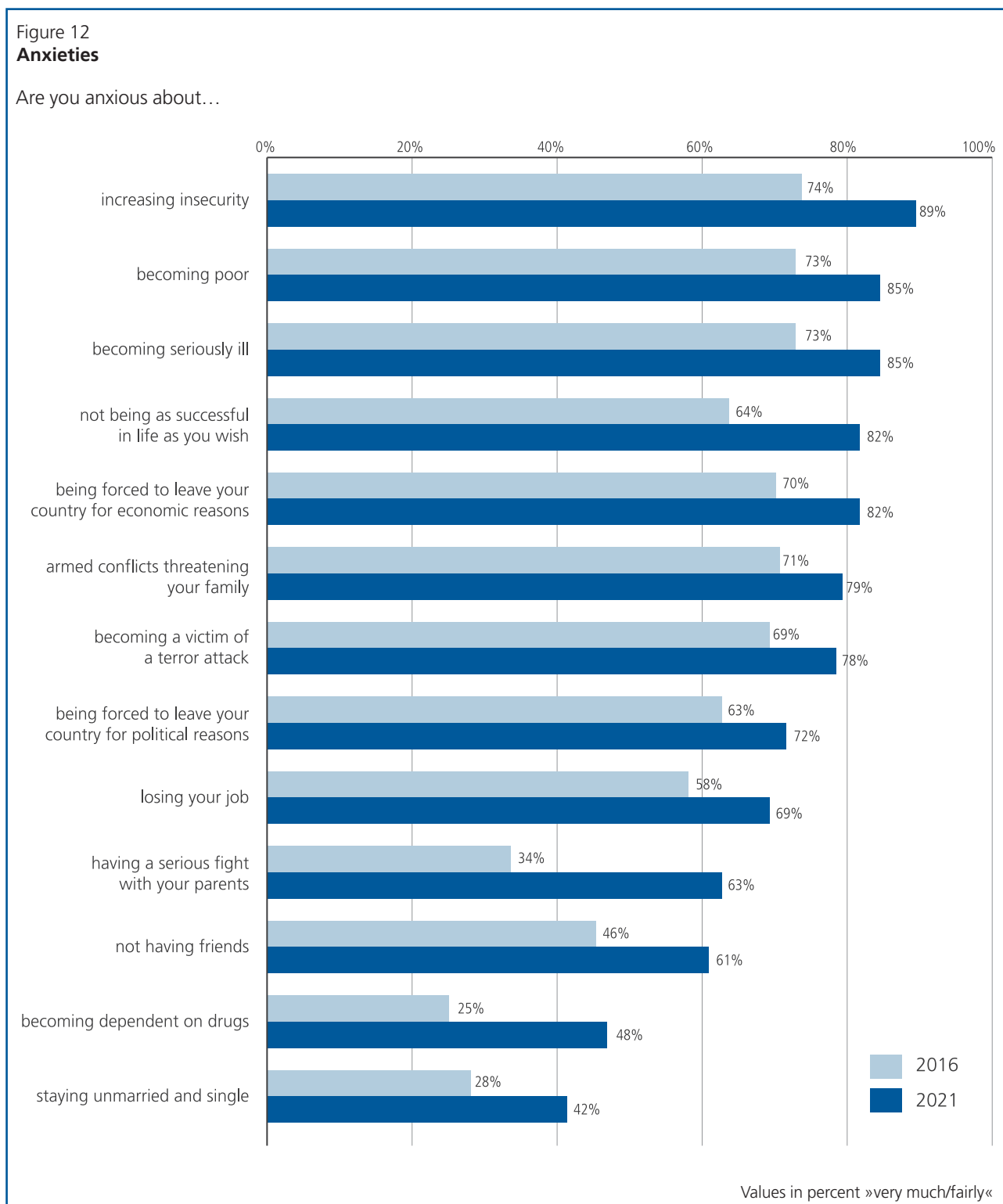
by war and displacement, as well as certain harmful societal norms, expectations and religious beliefs (Monla-Hassan/Yacoubian 2020). On rare occasions, young refugee boys are also forced into marriage; however, this issue predominantly affects young refugee girls (Diab 2021). Furthermore, 87 per cent of the sample agreed that people »need a family«—a figure that was higher among females (92 per cent) than males (83 per cent). In support of this finding, 82 per cent of the sample agreed that people need their own children in order to live a happy life—a figure that was higher among female respondents (87 per cent) than male respondents (76 per cent).

The overwhelming majority of respondents (89 per cent) reported facing increasing insecurity—with 82 per cent additionally stating that they »slightly« or »very much« feared they would be forced to leave the country due to economic reasons, and/or not being successful and being able to lead the lives they wanted. Also on the issue of fears, 85 per cent



of respondents fear becoming poor or becoming seriously ill. These anxieties are indeed linked to Lebanon's ongoing health crisis. Doctors without Borders have reported that as the situation in Lebanon deteriorates and the economic crisis worsens, the healthcare system has been pushed to its limits. Lebanon also continues to experience a shortage of basic drugs and medication across distributors and pharmacies, most of which cannot be produced or made available locally (MSF 2021). As refugees in Lebanon are not eligible for state healthcare services, they can only access healthcare

through private sectors, which have high fees, or provided by international organisations (Saleh/Ibrahim/Diab/Osman 2022). Changes that were deemed »important« or »very important« in the lives of the youth surveyed in the last five years included food shortages (85 per cent, up 6 per cent from 2016), followed by job losses (78 per cent, up 1 per cent from 2016) and threats from the Covid-19 pandemic (70 per cent).

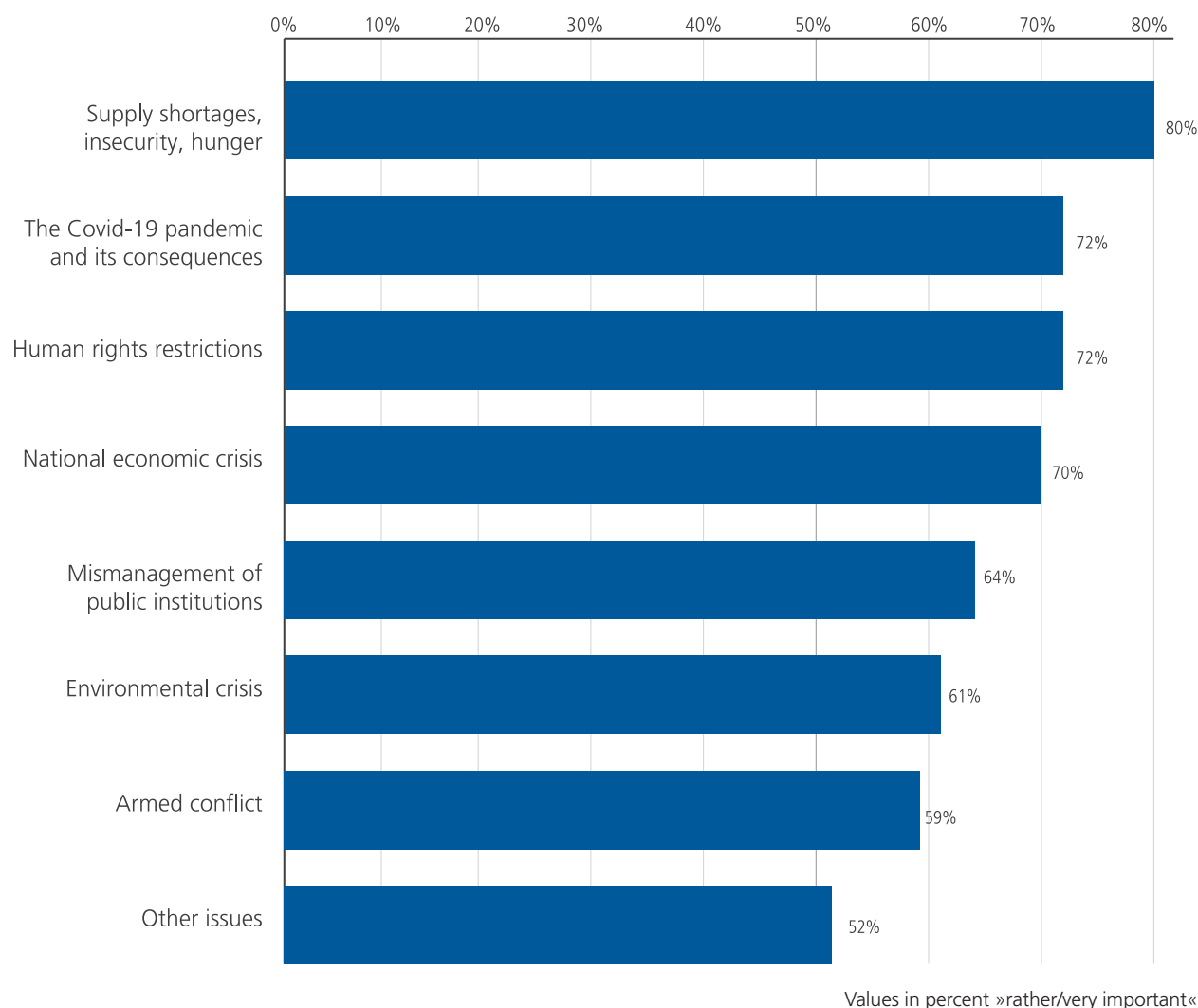


In ranking their personal experience of problems/crises in their daily lives, 80 per cent of respondents stated that experiencing supply shortages, insecurity and hunger was »rather« or »very important«; 72 per cent said the same about human rights restrictions/the consequences of Covid-19; and 70 per cent gave this response about the country's national economic crisis. A 2021 report highlighted that 80 per cent of households in Lebanon did not have enough food or money to buy food—this included nearly 100 per cent of all Syrian refugee families residing in Lebanon (Trew 2021). Another report from the same year reveals that 67 per cent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon were skipping meals (Chehayeb 2021). Most recently, the WFP has warned that even more households could become food insecure (particularly refugee and vulnerable host communities) amidst the outbreak of war in Ukraine (WFP 2020). The war reportedly threatens to send food prices »skyrocketing« and push basic foods out of reach nationwide, as Lebanon imports more than 50 per cent of its wheat from Ukraine (WFP 2020). In the areas of human rights more specifically,

this percentage is an accurate representation of the ongoing human rights landscape in the country—particularly, when it comes to the rights of Syrian refugees. A 2022 study published by the Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) that outlined the violations committed against Syrian refugees in Lebanon during 2021 by reviewing primary information from monitoring and documenting various human rights violations involving refugees, found that 1,738 cases of human rights violations were committed (ACHR 2022). Of the 1,738 violations against the Syrian refugee community, 955 constituted confiscation of identity documents, 336 involved discrimination because of thoughts or beliefs, 153 incitements to violence or hate speech, and 139 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention (ACHR 2022). Other violations included abuses of power by authorities, arbitrary deportation, torture/ill treatment, enforced disappearance, forced eviction and one case of intentional murder (ACHR 2022).

Figure 13
Importance of problems/crises in daily life

How important are the following problems/crises in your daily life? Please indicate how you perceive your personal exposure to these issues.



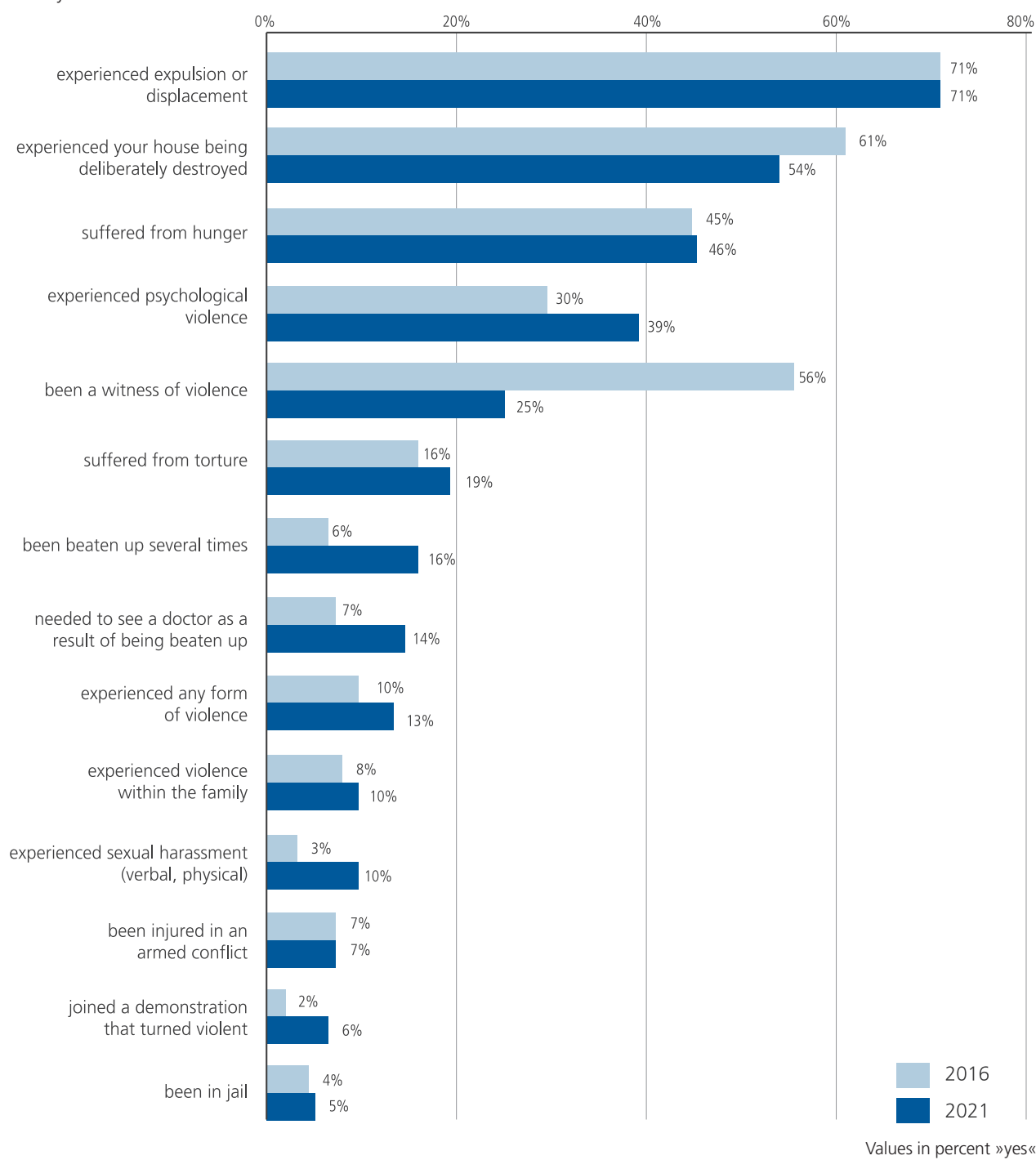
On another front, 64 per cent of respondents reported having experienced the mismanagement of public institutions, 61 per cent informed us that they had experienced environmental crises and 59 per cent armed conflict. As reported by the United Nations, Lebanon currently faces an acute environmental crisis, largely due to contamination from hazardous chemicals, landfill sites at capacity, a waste crisis and water pollution (United Nations 2020). Furthermore, Beirut's waste management systems are now at breaking point, with one of the two plants serving the city, severely damaged in the explosion in 2020 (United Nations 2020). Environmental challenges also take the form of limited access to clean water for many Syrian refugees across the country. Even prior to the ongoing economic crisis, Lebanon's water supply and wastewater services were already fragile, and the cost of accessing water represented a major financial strain for vulnerable families from both host and refugee communities. As per a 2021 UNICEF report, for Syrian refugees poor access to clean/unpolluted water is a major health risk—making them particularly vulnerable to Covid-19 (UNICEF 2021).

While armed conflict has not emerged as a significant trend within informal tented settlements for Syrian refugees, reports of radicalisation from within the Syrian refugee community as well as the influence of terrorist groups operating on the Lebanese-Syrian border have appeared over the last decade (Levant 2015). In early 2021, the Lebanese Army announced that it had arrested 18 people, some Lebanese and some Syrian, with links to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group (Reuters 2021). Despite the fact that armed conflict is not widespread, respondents still highlighted their considerable exposure to different forms of violence or the deliberate destruction of their means of production. Seventy-one per cent of respondents reported having experienced expulsion or displacement, 54 per cent said that they had experienced their house/place of residence being deliberately destroyed and 46 per cent stated they had suffered from hunger. According to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), in many parts of the country Syrian refugees continue to face evictions from their homes, as they are increasingly unable to pay the rent and are resorting to desperate measures to cope amidst soaring fuel and food prices (NRC 2022). In January 2022 alone, there were 56 requests for support by Syrian refugees facing evictions in different areas of Lebanon. In 2021, the NRC received more than 800 such requests (NRC 2022). In the last three months of 2021, the NRC also received requests for cash support from 5,785 Syrian refugees who could not afford to pay rent (NRC 2022). The situation for thousands of Syrian refugees in tented settlements has been made worse in recent years following the Lebanese government's decision in 2019 to demolish concrete walls higher than one metre in order to prevent settlements becoming permanent shelters (NRC 2019).

Moreover, when asked about experiencing violence in Syria as well as in Lebanon, 39 per cent of respondents shared that they had experienced psychological violence, 25 per cent shared that they had witnessed violence, 19 per cent that they had suffered from some form of torture, 16 per cent had been physically assaulted (14 per cent stated they needed to see a medical professional as a result), and 10 per cent had experienced sexual harassment both verbally and physically (with this estimate being higher among females than males). Violence against Syrian refugees in Lebanon has been rampant for years (Human Rights Watch 2014). More recently, in late December 2020 for instance, a group of Lebanese men reportedly set fire to an informal refugee settlement near the town of Bhanine in the country's northern Miniyeh region (Hodzic 2021). The fire destroyed shelters housing some 370 Syrian refugees, including dozens of children, leaving them with no shelter or possessions in the middle of winter. A number of refugees also suffered burn injuries as a result of the attack (Hodzic 2021). In mid-2021, the Lebanese authorities were accused of torturing detained Syrian refugees (MEE Staff 2021). According to a report published by Amnesty International, prisoners and detainees were beaten with metal poles, electric cables and plastic pipes (Amnesty International 2021). Detainees were also reportedly hung upside down and held in stress positions for long periods of time (Amnesty International 2021). At least 14 of the refugees that took part in the Amnesty International study said they confessed to crimes they had not committed after being exposed to physical and psychological violence, torture and threats (Amnesty International 2021).

Figure 14
Experience of violence

Have you ever...



In 2021, the United Nations expressed their concern about the increasing »xenophobic attacks« on Syrian refugees in Lebanon amidst the failure of local authorities to halt them (Committee for Justice 2021). In a memorandum sent to the Lebanese government in April that year, human rights experts described how the homes of Syrian refugees in the city of Bcharre had been attacked in late 2020, when a number of local men and boys gathered in the streets armed with guns, knives or wooden sticks, descending on homes and injuring 13 Syrian refugees, including a pregnant

woman who miscarried while trying to escape (Committee for Justice 2021). The police did not intervene in the attacks. Experts additionally confirmed that just one month after the attacks in Bcharre, a group of Lebanese young men shot at and set fire to tents where Syrian refugees were living in Zouk Bhanine (North Lebanon), following a dispute between refugees and the host community. This led to the displacement of all 401 residents of the tented settlement (Committee for Justice 2021).

Amidst the eruption of violence against Syrian refugees across the country, the overwhelming majority (89 per cent) of respondents »agree« or »strongly agree«, and that they »cannot stand people suffering from it«. Furthermore, 84 per cent of respondents admit that all the violence shown in the media saddens and depresses them, while 81 per cent of respondents believe that the use of violence will only cause further violence and that the public space is becoming increasingly violent. While significant percentages of respondents oppose violence in all its forms, resorting to violence as a survival mechanism remains common. Against this backdrop, 69 per cent of the sample claim that they were afraid that armed conflicts would threaten their livelihoods and those of their families, and 58 per cent believe that in the case of severe conflicts, there is no other solution but to resort to violence. Furthermore, 54 per cent reported that in cases where they needed to defend themselves or their family, they saw violence as legitimate.

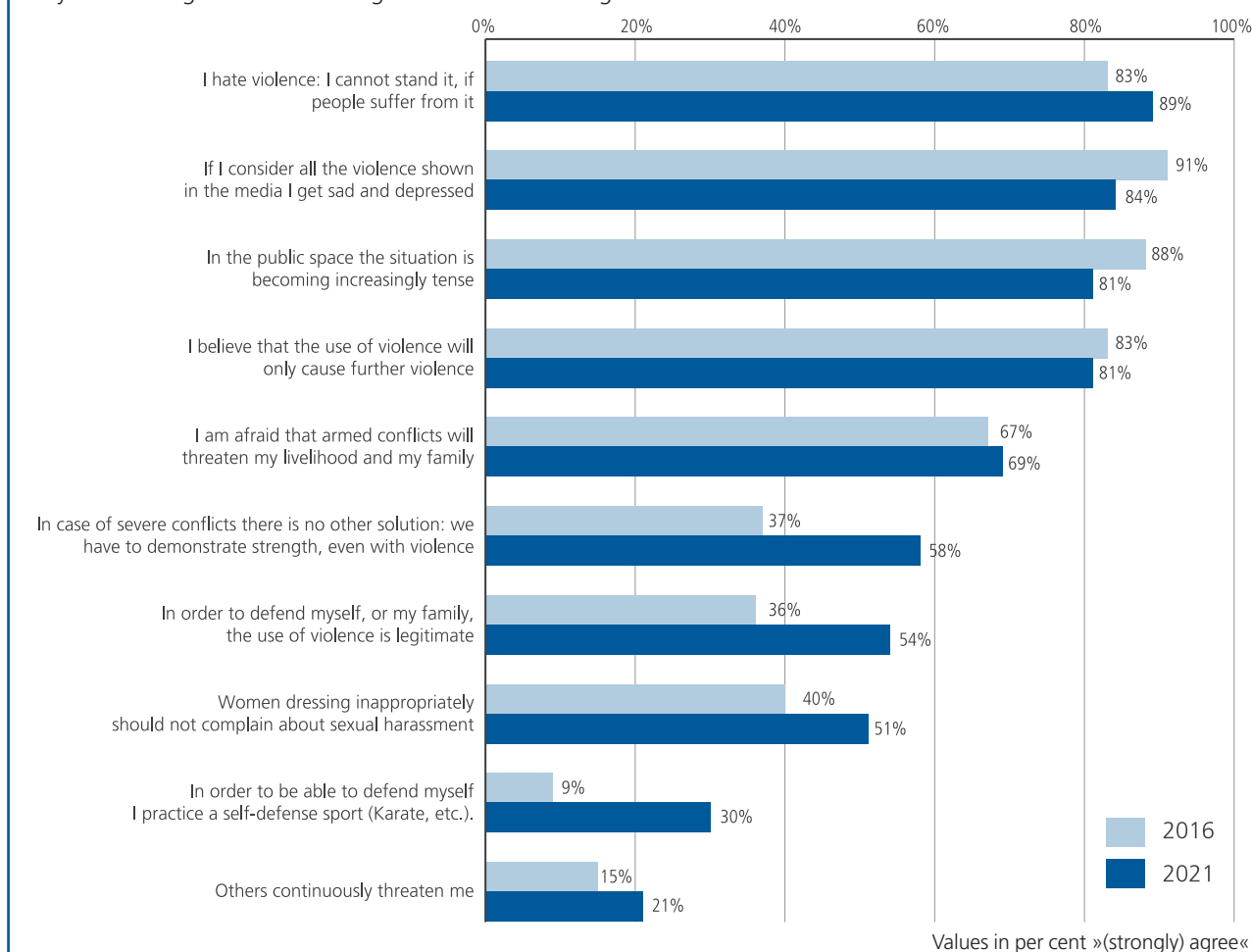
Other forms of gendered violence remain rampant within the Syrian refugee community, with reports highlighting the heightened risks Syrian refugee women in Lebanon are exposed to, including exploitation, gender-based violence (GBV), intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual harassment (Amnesty International 2016). For years, human rights or-

ganisations have reported that women refugees from Syria are being sexually harassed by employers, landlords and even faith-based aid distributors in Lebanon (Human Rights Watch 2013). A survey conducted in 2019 found that GBV is common among Syrian refugee women (Potts 2019). Over one-third of the 969 women surveyed indicated having been married before the age of 18 and over three-quarters of women reported having experienced GBV/IPV (Potts 2019). A 2020 study found that sexual exploitation, trafficking and abuse remains a major concern for Syrian refugee women and girls, and that even local and international aid workers are potential perpetrators. Covid-19 has only exacerbated the problem, with women's isolation within their homes leading to increased rates of unreported GBV and domestic violence, as well as exposure to sexual harassment (Roupetz 2020). The prevalence of sexual harassment within the community largely stems from patriarchal and misogynistic views on women's bodies, their agency and their sexuality. Along these lines, 51 per cent of respondents (of both genders) agreed or strongly agreed that women dressing inappropriately should not complain about sexual harassment (up 11 per cent from 2016)—although what is deemed (»)»(w+)(«) was not elaborated upon.

Figure 15

Threats/conflicts

Do you rather agree or rather disagree with the following statements?



4.3 MIGRATION, LIVING ABROAD AND ASPIRATIONS

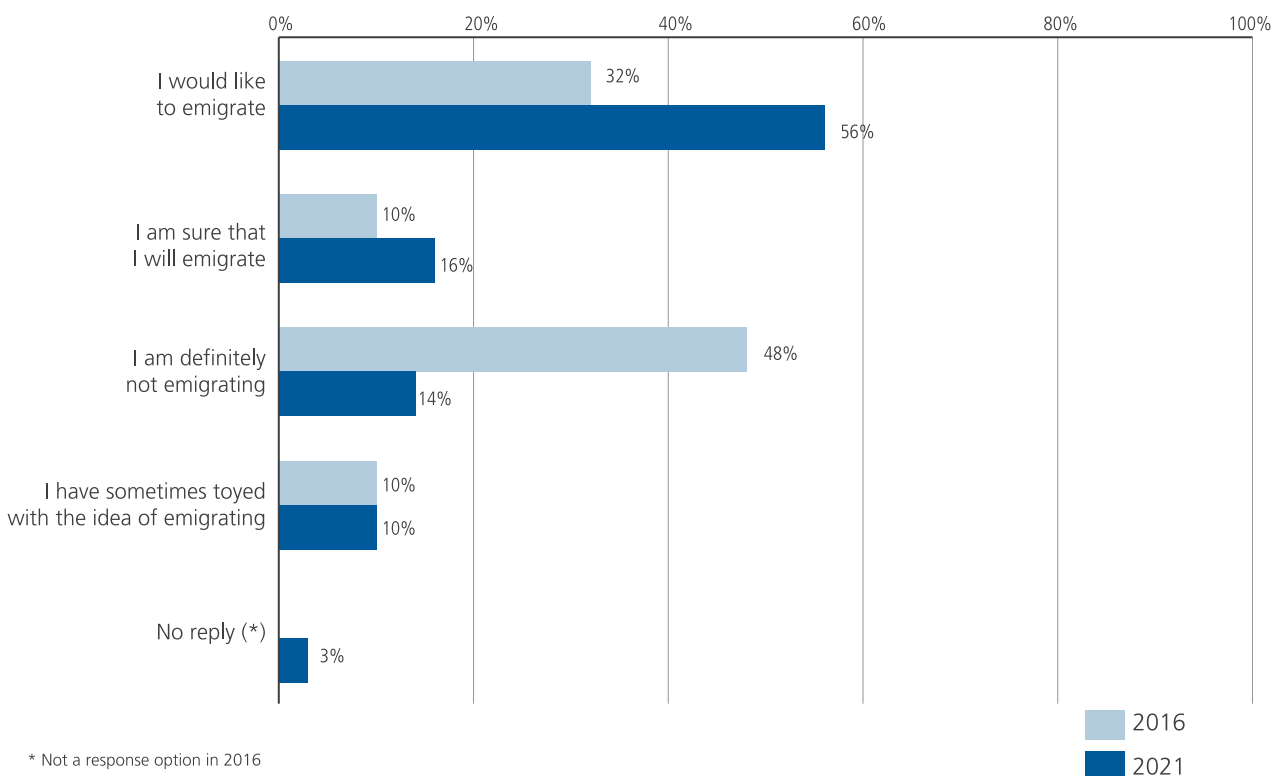
Ninety per cent of respondents stated that they had in fact lived outside their country of origin, with 96 per cent reporting having lived in »another Arab country«. Smaller percentages of respondents (under 4 per cent), reported living in parts of Asia, Europe and the Gulf. Furthermore, 18 per cent of the sample shared that someone in their family had migrated to a foreign country, with the main destinations being Europe (61 per cent), followed by the United States/Canada (15 per cent). While it remains difficult to gauge the true number of Syrians who have been repatriated to safe third countries in Europe, since the economic crisis began in late 2019, a growing number of Lebanese and Syrian citizens are resorting to migration to Europe by both regular and irregular means. Refugees (and Lebanese citizens) looking to flee have reportedly paid thousands of dollars for smugglers to take them on boats to EU Member States such as Cyprus, Greece and Italy (Al Jazeera English 2021). The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has stated that at least 1,570 people, 186 of them Lebanese, left or tried to leave by sea from Lebanon between January and November 2021 (Al Jazeera English 2021). In June 2022, the Lebanese Army arrested 64 people (Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian citizens) trying to sail from North Lebanon in an attempt to get to Europe (Al Jazeera English 2022). This came just

weeks after a boat carrying more than 60 migrants sank off the coast of Tripoli, with six people on board losing their lives and 48 being rescued (Al Jazeera English 2022). In line with the drastic measures Syrian refugees are resorting to in order to leave Lebanon, findings from the survey highlight that 74 per cent of those respondents with a family history of migration (up 16 per cent from 2016) find it personally important.

Moreover, 54 per cent of those respondents with a family history of migration shared that they were fascinated by the idea of migrating to a foreign country, and that their wish to emigrate has grown (this percentage is up 28 per cent from 2016). Subsequently, 72 per cent of the entire sample shared that they would either »like« to emigrate or that they will »definitely« emigrate (almost double the 2016 figure which was 48 per cent). Forty-nine per cent of respondents wishing to emigrate would prefer to go to Europe, 21 per cent wish to emigrate to the United States or Canada, with smaller percentages wishing to emigrate to another Arab country (8 per cent), the Gulf (6 per cent), Australia/Oceania (4 per cent) and Asia/sub-Saharan Africa (2 per cent). Against the backdrop of an increasing inclination towards emigration and an escalating economic crisis, 69 per cent expressed that they would be willing to accept work in a rural region in Europe, 65 per cent expressed that they would accept work in rural regions of their own coun-

Figure 16
Personal emigration plans

What would best describe your situation?



try and 63 per cent stated that they would accept work in a rural region in an Arab country. A significant percentage of respondents (35 per cent) said they would accept work that is »very much below« their qualifications, and 30 per cent shared that they would leave their family to emigrate even if their lives were at risk. Despite the fact that a large portion of the Syrian refugee community is highly skilled and educated, this has not translated into adequate integration into the workforce. A study conducted by the ILO found that less than 26 per cent of Syrians in Lebanon work as skilled labour, and that this remains largely related to the challenges/high costs associated with employers sponsoring Syrians, legal restrictions as well as the fact that many of them cannot provide proof of their credentials (academic and professional) (ILO 2013). While labour mobility pathways are an option available to Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the region at large, a report published by Talent Beyond Boundaries in 2022 found that with annual opportunities for resettlement meeting less than 5 per cent of the identified demand, resettlement remains out of reach for the vast majority of refugees in need of urgent solutions (Talent Beyond Boundaries 2022).

4.4 KEY TAKEWAYS

- A total of 46 per cent believed that there were recent events or movements in their country that **were similar** to those of 2010/2011—with the majority of respondents (33 per cent) being of the view that there was a general state of anarchy, and 32 per cent reporting the presence of foreign interference in the country's internal affairs.
- Altogether 97 per cent of respondents were **Muslim**, and 88 per cent believed that religion is a private matter that »nobody« should interfere in. Despite this assumption, 46 per cent of respondents believe that Islam should **play a larger role** in public life.
- Socio-cultural and gendered norms within the community are evident. Among males, 41 per cent of respondents highlighted the importance of a **good job** for their personal futures, while 45 per cent of women believed they would need **a good marriage**.
- The Covid-19 pandemic and economic crisis has led to an increase in **child marriages** amongst Syrian refugees. Some of the most prevalent causes include poverty, gender inequality, insecurity caused by war and displacement, as well as certain harmful societal norms, expectations and religious beliefs.
- A total of 89 per cent stated that they faced **increasing insecurity**—with 82 per cent additionally reporting that they feared they would be forced to leave the country due to economic reasons, and/or not being successful and being able to lead the lives they wanted.
- **Changes** in the lives of the young people surveyed over the last five years included food shortages (85 per cent, up 6 per cent from 2016), followed by job losses (78 per cent, up 1 per cent from 2016), threats from the Covid-19 pandemic (70 per cent).
- Overall, 80 per cent of respondents reported having faced supply shortages, insecurity and hunger; 72 per cent reported having experienced human rights restrictions/the consequences of Covid-19; and 70 per cent focused on the country's national economic crisis.
- A total of 64 per cent of respondents reported having experience of the **mismanagement of public institutions**, 61 per cent of environmental crises and 59 per cent of armed conflict. As reported by the UN, Lebanon currently faces an acute environmental crisis, largely due to contamination from hazardous chemicals, landfill sites at capacity, a waste crisis and water pollution. Furthermore, Beirut's waste management systems are now at breaking point after the Beirut blast.
- In 2021, the UN expressed their concern about the rise in **»xenophobic attacks«** on Syrian refugees in Lebanon amidst the failure of local authorities to halt them. Overall, 39 per cent of respondents shared that they had experienced psychological violence, 25 per cent reported having witnessed violence, 19 per cent said that they had suffered from some form of torture and 16 per cent had been physically assaulted.
- The prevalence of sexual harassment within the community largely stems from patriarchal and misogynistic views about women's bodies, their agency and their sexuality. Along these lines, 51 per cent of respondents claimed that women dressing inappropriately should not complain about **sexual harassment** (up 11 per cent from 2016)—although what is deemed »inappropriate« was not elaborated upon.
- All in all, 54 per cent of respondents with a history of migration in their families shared that they were fascinated by the idea of **migrating to a foreign country**, and that their wish to emigrate has grown (this percentage was up 28 per cent from 2016). A total of 72 per cent of the sample shared that they would either **»like«** to emigrate or that they will (»)(w+)(«) emigrate (almost **double the** 2016 figure which was 48 per cent).
- Altogether 35 per cent stated that they would accept work that is »very much below« their qualifications, and 30 per cent shared that they would **leave their family to emigrate** even if their lives were at risk.
- Despite the fact that a large share of the Syrian refugee community is highly skilled and educated, this has not translated into **adequate integration** into the workforce.

5

SELF-EXPRESSION AND PARTICIPATION

5.1 COMMUNICATION

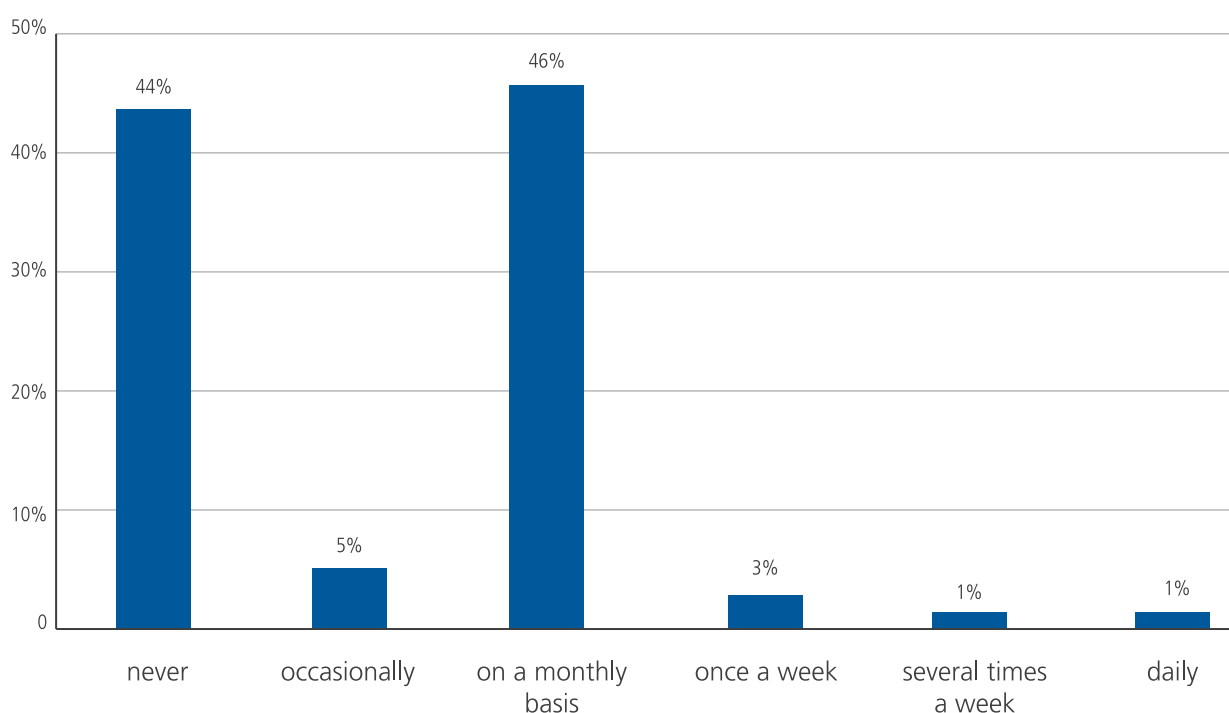
Respondents purchased their first mobile phones in Lebanon between 2011 (the initial stages of the Syrian conflict) and 2018, with each respondent reportedly possessing less than one mobile phone/smartphone. The overwhelming majority (83 per cent) have prepaid lines that permit you to control consumption, while only 14 per cent have contracts (postpaid lines). When it comes to internet usage, 69 per cent of respondents confirmed that they use the internet (up 14 per cent from 2016). According to Datareportal, there were 6.01 million internet users in Lebanon in January 2022, and the country's internet penetration rate stood at 89.3 percent of the total population at the start of 2022 (Datareportal 2022). Internet consumption rates in the country in general remain disparate due to high costs, and

are in fact very low in more rural areas. The 2020 explosion at the port of Beirut resulted in massive damage to the city's telecommunications infrastructure, leading to internet outages across the country (Freedom House 2021). The ongoing economic crisis has created financial obstacles for internet service providers and users alike (Freedom House 2021). Lebanon continues to face internet service interruption amidst frequent fuel crises—particularly North Lebanon (Tripoli and Akkar) where a large percentage of the Syrian refugee community is based (Arab News 2022). Respondents with internet access reported using the internet for an average of 5.3 hours per day. A 2019 study highlights the importance of mobile phones for Syrian refugees in reviving, maintaining and leveraging social capital for the purpose of securing livelihoods in a context of precarity and restricted movement (Goransson/Hultin/Mahring 2019).

Figure 17

Use of payment systems via mobile phone

How frequently do you use payment systems via mobile phone?



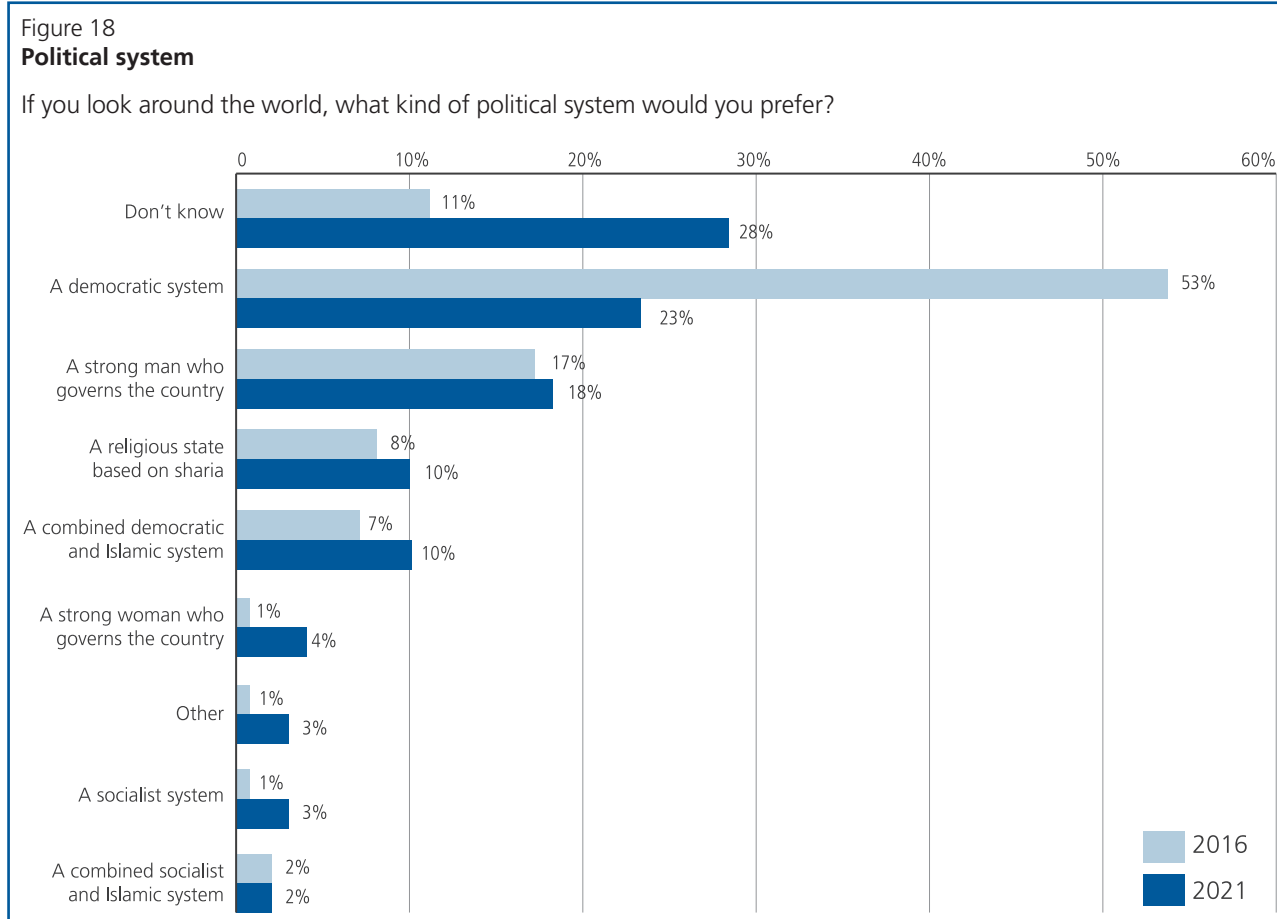
In the areas of instant messaging and social media platforms, an average of 97 per cent of internet-using respondents use WhatsApp (popular across all age groups, genders, levels of education and milieus of residence). This was followed by 69 per cent using Facebook, 46 per cent using TikTok and 35 per cent using Instagram. A 2019 study found that the possession of mobile phones/access to social media amongst Syrian refugees in Lebanon offers important means for reviving social networks in exile, managing supportive relationships that have been established in Lebanon and liaising with employers (Goransson/Hultin/Mahring 2019). As such, they constitute valuable tools for coping with a context shaped by legal exclusion, restricted movement, police harassment, decentralised aid provision and a geographical dispersal of support networks, even though they remain a costly investment with uncertain returns (Goransson/Hultin/Mahring 2019). Responses from the survey echoed these findings, as 89 per cent of internet users highlighted that they »always« or »frequently« used social media to keep in contact with friends and family, 54 per cent to look for work opportunities and 52 per cent to organise meetings with friends. Additionally, 65 per cent used social media for entertainment.

5.2 POLITICS, ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT

When asked which political system they prefer, the highest percentage of respondents (28 per cent) answered that they

did not know, while 23 per cent stated that they preferred a democratic system. In the area of trust in institutions in general, percentages reflect an overall widespread lack of trust—with 86 per cent stating that they trusted family, 56 per cent trusting the Lebanese military and 54 per cent expressing trust in the UN. This was followed by 50 per cent of respondents reporting that they trusted the police. Government trust stood at 24 per cent—a finding largely in line with the results of a 2016 survey which showed that civic engagement occurs outside institutions (predominantly in civil society). Furthermore, 62 per cent of the sample related that they believed the state should play a larger role in the daily life of individuals. Despite this finding, 85 per cent of respondents stated that they were not interested in politics, and 92 per cent (up 9 per cent from 2016) did not bother to keep informed about politics at all. In light of this, an overall disconnect from politics was one of the findings of this survey.

When asked what they associate with the word »politics«, 32 per cent of respondents stated that they did not know (a figure that is wholly consistent with the 2016 finding that MENA youth distance themselves from politics), 30 per cent stated they associated the word with corruption and 22 per cent associated it with government (multiple responses were possible). This trend is not surprising. A 2019 systematic scoping review that explored trust amongst refugees and asylum seekers in resettlement settings found that trust was temporal and contextual based on refugee journeys, hardships experienced and resettlement. A major theme



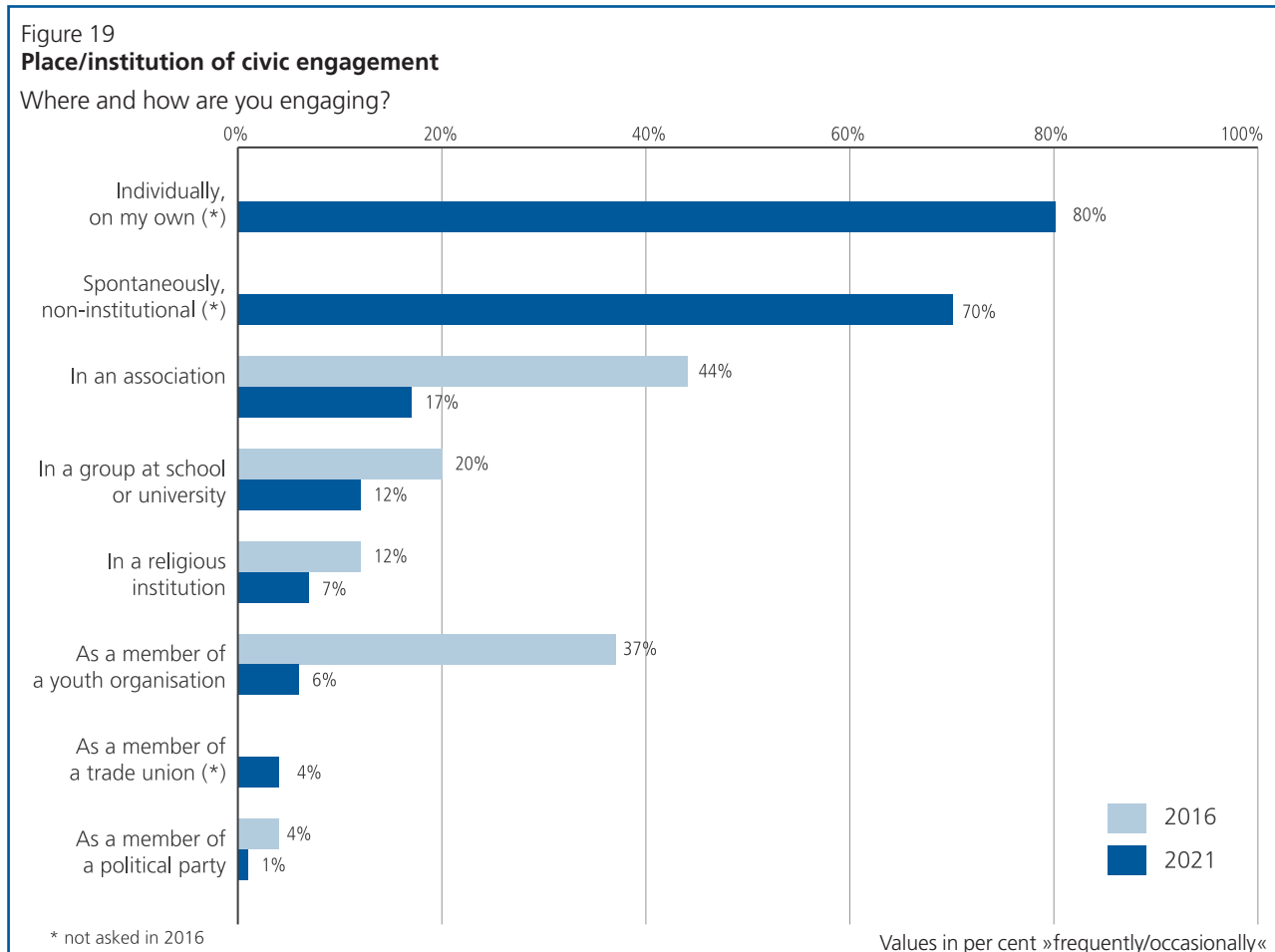
was the fundamental need in resettlement to restore lost or damaged trust (Essex 2019). An overall lack of trust in the political arena is a repeated theme, whether discussing Syrian refugees’ trust in host governments or their own. While reports have circulated about Syrians’ longing to return, an overall lack of trust in the regime, coupled with a general fear of threats to their security upon return have been widespread for years (Hubbard 2020). While political engagement and interest remains minimal, civic engagement within the community is widespread. Between 70 and 80 per cent of respondents reported having been engaged in civic activity either on their own, or spontaneously/without an institution. A small percentage (17 per cent) also expressed that they had been involved with the activities of an association.

When it comes to accessing political information in general, about half of the 8 per cent of respondents who do so rely on television, 41 per cent of them rely on websites, 35 per cent on social media, with smaller percentages relying on face-to-face conversation (23 per cent), radio (9 per cent) and newspapers (3 per cent) (multiple responses were possible). Particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, concerns over access to information within the Syrian refugee community increased. Within the community, there are several obstacles to registration for services, obtaining legal paperwork and accessing information on the aforementioned. These are largely related to a fear of deportation or arrest if information is sought out (Hubbard 2020).

5.3 ACTIVITIES, TIME MANAGEMENT AND LEISURE

In the area of leisure activities most undertaken within the community, the majority (52 per cent) expressed that they watch television, 39 per cent surf the internet and 32 per cent visit neighbours and relatives. These recreational activities are organised around commitments in the areas of school and studies, working from home/outside the home, household chores and activities outside the home (sports, shopping, etc.). The entire sample had between 8.5 and 8.6 hours of sleep each day. For the male respondents, the majority of time each day (7 hours) was spent working outside the home—in line with the male role of breadwinner and the aforementioned nature of the sectors they work in and jobs they take on. Conversely, women spent an average of 2 hours working outside the household.

The majority of working women worked from home and did so for an average of 3.2 hours per day. In line with the social roles within the household and the community, female respondents spent an average of 6.5 hours per day on activities within the home, as opposed to only 3.6 hours male respondents spent doing the same. The Covid-19 pandemic has largely led (in Lebanon and globally) to the expansion of women’s roles within their household—ultimately restricting their ability to generate an income outside the household (Mounzer 2020). This has been true for citizens and refugees alike (Mounzer 2020). Refugee women’s



livelihoods have been hit the hardest by Covid-19. They continue to endure widespread and systemic gender inequality, diminished access to resources, services, and opportunities, as well as higher risks of violence and abuse (Diab 2021). According to a 2019 report by UN Women, Syrian women are 9 per cent less likely to have a legal residency status in Lebanon than their male counterparts and Lebanese sponsorship is very rarely granted to refugee women. Living without a legal residency permit has resulted in insecurity on almost every level, including the right to work, access to formal and informal educational opportunities and health-care, and has additionally resulted in a heightened risk of arrests, arbitrary detention or, in extreme cases, deportation (Diab 2021).

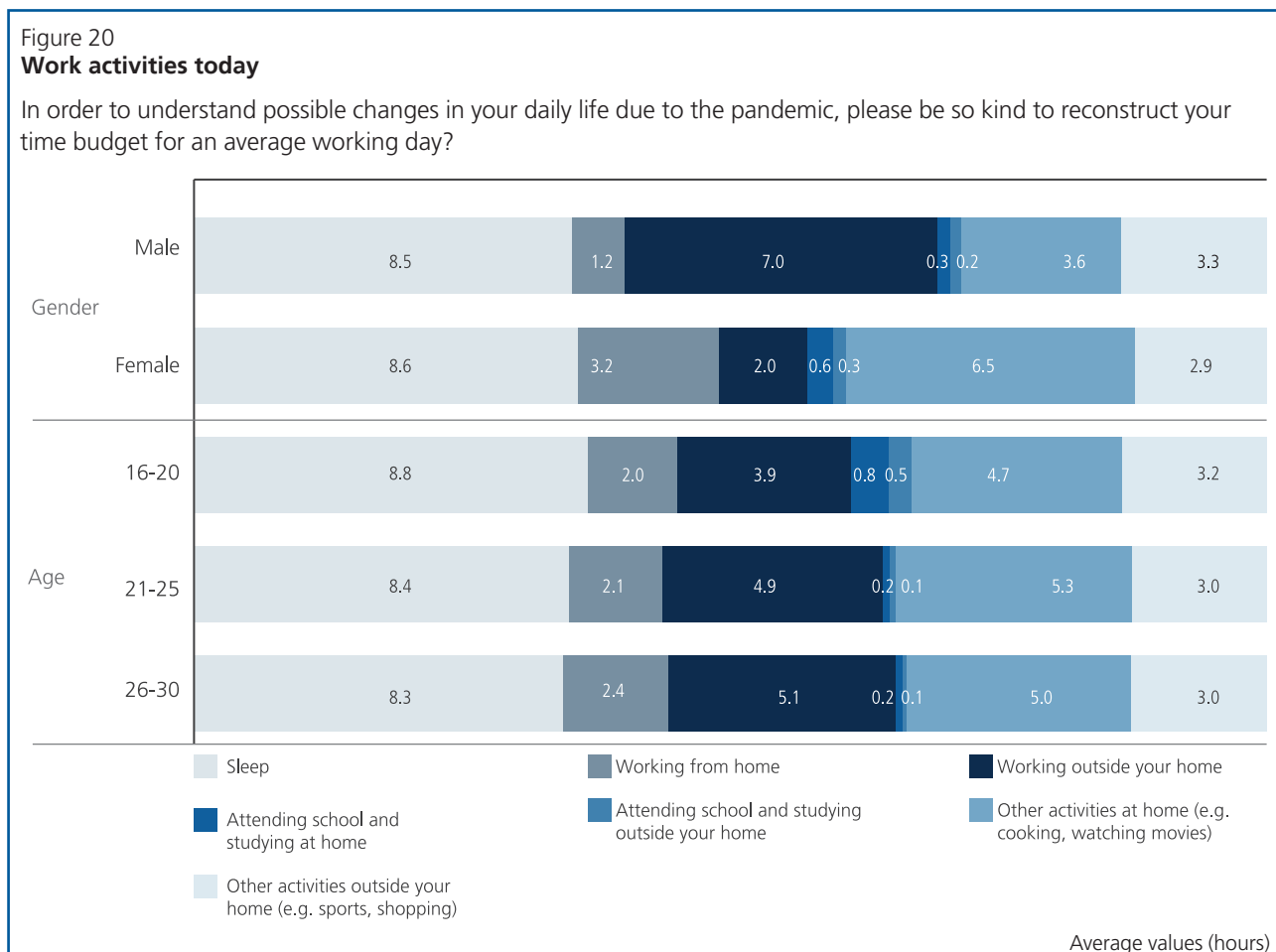
Across all age categories, the largest portion of time is spent working outside the household. This is mostly true for the 26-30 age bracket that spends an average of 5.1 hours per day working outside their homes, followed by the 21-25 age bracket that spends 4.9 hours, and the 16-20 age bracket that spends 3.9 hours. The nature of daily work, particularly for those working in the areas of agriculture and manual labour, required the majority of employed Syrians to carry out their jobs outside their homes (despite Covid-19 restrictions) in order to generate an income—largely because they are paid hourly or daily. While large groups of Syrian refugees still maintain daily odd jobs, it is important to put these numbers in the context of the current climate. A study conducted in 2021 on vulnerable workers in Lebanon showed

that 60 per cent of Syrian refugees were permanently laid off and 31 per cent temporarily laid off from their jobs that year (Diab 2021). The number of working hours shown by the survey reflects potentially reduced working hours, lower rates of odd jobs and the inability to secure as many working hours as during the period prior to the 2019 economic crisis.

Despite impending circumstances, and the deterioration of life in Lebanon overall (on the social, economic and political levels), 35 per cent of respondents are »rather optimistic« about their futures and personal lives, while 27 per cent feel rather pessimistic. Thirty-seven percent expressed not feeling »either one or the other«. Similarly, 40 per cent of respondents did not feel »either pessimistic or optimistic« about the future of society - with males and females across all age groups, levels of education and milieus of residence expressing the same view. Those that felt »rather optimistic« constituted 26 per cent of the sample, with 34 per cent feeling »rather pessimistic« about what the future holds for society.

5.4 THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19

While the impacts of Covid-19 can be seen across responses, the large majority of respondents (73 per cent) reported that no one close to them had been infected with Covid-19 with only a small percentage (27 per cent) stating that some-



one they knew had caught the virus (with various levels of severity of infection). Framing these responses within their broader contextual realities is pivotal, as testing within the Syrian refugee community in Lebanon remains quite low (Fouad 2021). Despite a substantial scale-up of the country's testing capacity over time, testing of Syrian refugees has remained limited (Fouad 2021). Consequently, although respondents perceived rates of infection are still low, this contradicts a multitude of studies that fear these numbers continue to be under reported. As one 2021 study highlights, Syrian refugees live in close contact with the host community, and their living conditions are conducive to epidemic spread (Fouad 2021). The study found that the high levels of crowding within Syrian refugee households and among those in informal tented settlements, the inadequate water supply and sanitation, limited use of masks, poor access to health care, and inadequate community awareness levels are vulnerability factors that directly impact important parameters of transmission dynamics, leading to larger scale epidemic (Fouad 2021). While the young age structure of the Syrian refugee population might play a protective role against the scale, disease burden and severity of infection with Covid-19, inadequate access to information within the community as well as low vaccination rates continue to make it difficult to assess the true number of cases (Jamad 2021). There are frequent reports on increased rates of vaccine hesitancy among refugee groups, primarily due to concerns over safety and possible side effects. A recent survey found that 37 per cent of non-Lebanese respondents think the Covid-19 vaccine is unsafe, while more than 30 per cent of non-Lebanese feel that they still lack adequate information about the content of the vaccine (Diab 2021).

Respondents informed us of the impact the pandemic had on their emotional well-being throughout this period—stressing that they often or constantly had various negative feelings including boredom (51 per cent), fatigue (43 per cent), depression (40 per cent), lack of productivity (38 per cent), a reduced ability to concentrate/anxiety/panic attacks (36 per cent) and frustration (35 per cent). Smaller percentages of respondents highlighted feeling helpless (21 per cent) and aggressive (15 per cent) on a regular basis. Among females in general, rates of frequent boredom were relatively higher (57 per cent in females, as opposed to 45 per cent among males)—this is linked to the fact that women spend more time in the household, and that their roles within the household have, in general, expanded as a result of the pandemic (Diab 2021). These findings are also likely to be connected with the limited ability of women and their children to socialise for prolonged periods of time (Diab 2021).

The majority of the sample (78 per cent) »rather« or »fully« agreed that the pandemic had forced them to fundamentally change their consumption priorities, with 72 per cent of the sample highlighting that it substantially reduced their personal career opportunities. Consumption priorities at the national level shifted largely as a result of the pandemic. The WFP reports that in 2021, both Lebanese citizens and refugees suffered from high levels of poverty and food inse-

curity (WFP 2021). According to the UN agency, 2.1 million Lebanese citizens and 1.3 million Syrian refugees remained vulnerable and in need of assistance (WFP 2021). Earlier this year, the Central Statistics Department in Lebanon issued the monthly price index revealing that Lebanon's annual inflation in January 2022 had hit a record high of 239.69 per cent, with inflation on food and beverage prices reaching up to 483 per cent, after being up 438.65 per cent in December 2021 (Keuchkerian 2022). The Federation of Bakeries Syndicates in Lebanon has warned that the country could in fact face bread shortages if the Ministry of Economy does not issue the required flour delivery permits—a challenge given the dwindling currency reserves and the inability of the Lebanese government to adequately subsidise wheat. While the shortage of bread has certainly affected the entire country, it hit the country's rural areas hardest of all, due to a lack of monitoring capacity by authorities (Ricour-Brasseur 2022). Seventy-eight per cent of respondents from rural areas reported having changed their consumption priorities. Moreover, 35% in large cities, 42% in medium cities, 48% in rural settlements, and 71% in refugee camps stated they "suffered from hunger" at one point in time.

With the decreased ability of Syrian refugees across the country to secure a steady income due to the aforementioned nature of their jobs and the sectors they are restricted to, the community has been overwhelmed by debt. The majority of the sample (72 per cent) »rather« or »fully« agreed that personal debts have grown since the onset of the pandemic—and this number was even as high as 79 per cent among respondents between the ages of 26 and 30. A 2021 study found that out of 129 Syrian refugee families surveyed, 92 per cent had new debts, 79 per cent had lost their jobs and 68 per cent had faced a salary cut as a result of the pandemic (Abu-Sittah/Hajjar 2021). On the social level, 69 per cent stated that the pandemic had brought families closer together, and 71 per cent said that due to the pandemic, the intensity of the relationships among friends has notably decreased.

The prevalence of health concerns against a backdrop of significant mistrust in the public healthcare system was a pivotal finding of this survey, with 61 per cent of respondents expressing the view that the public system was »useless«. The country's healthcare system has rapidly deteriorated under the weight of economic collapse and Covid-19 since late 2019. With hundreds of healthcare workers having fled the country, the healthcare system remains unable to withstand the chronic shortages of staff, basic medical supplies and pay (Ramadan 2021). The August 2020 Beirut port explosion damaged 292 health facilities. As the economy continues to struggle and poverty continues to rise, private healthcare has become unaffordable for many, increasing the strain on the already fragile public health sector (Kawa/Abisaab 2021). The health system is consequently now not only under-resourced, but also understaffed and overwhelmed, compromising not just the Covid-19 response, but access to quality healthcare more broadly (Kawa/Abisaab 2021). These persisting challenges have rendered Lebanon one of the worst countries in the world in terms of managing the

pandemic response and vaccination effort, and it remains in dire need of additional support given its ineligibility for many forms of international health and humanitarian aid (Todman 2021). More recently, medics warned that hospitals in Lebanon would struggle to cope with the large influx of Covid-19 patients amidst a surge in the number of new cases triggered by the highly contagious Delta variant (Kaymakamian 2021).

While an overall mistrust in the public health system persists from within the Syrian refugee community, 54 per cent stated that they felt »very positive« about getting vaccinated against Covid-19, with the highest percentage recorded among respondents with middle and high educational standings (60 per cent). While this sentiment is promising, gaps in the country's vaccine strategy paint a different picture when it comes to access and coverage. While the country's national plan originally aimed at covering all residents of Lebanon, including both Lebanese and non-Lebanese citizens, equal access to the vaccine remains unattainable for significant factions of the country's refugee and migrant populations (Ahmad/Aoun 2021). Furthermore, a clear and comprehensive strategy that addresses bottlenecks faced by refugees in accessing vaccination services and that aims to build vaccine confidence among refugee populations remains missing (Ahmad/Aoun 2021).

Along the lines of an overall sense of mistrust in the public health care system, 34 per cent of respondents believed that

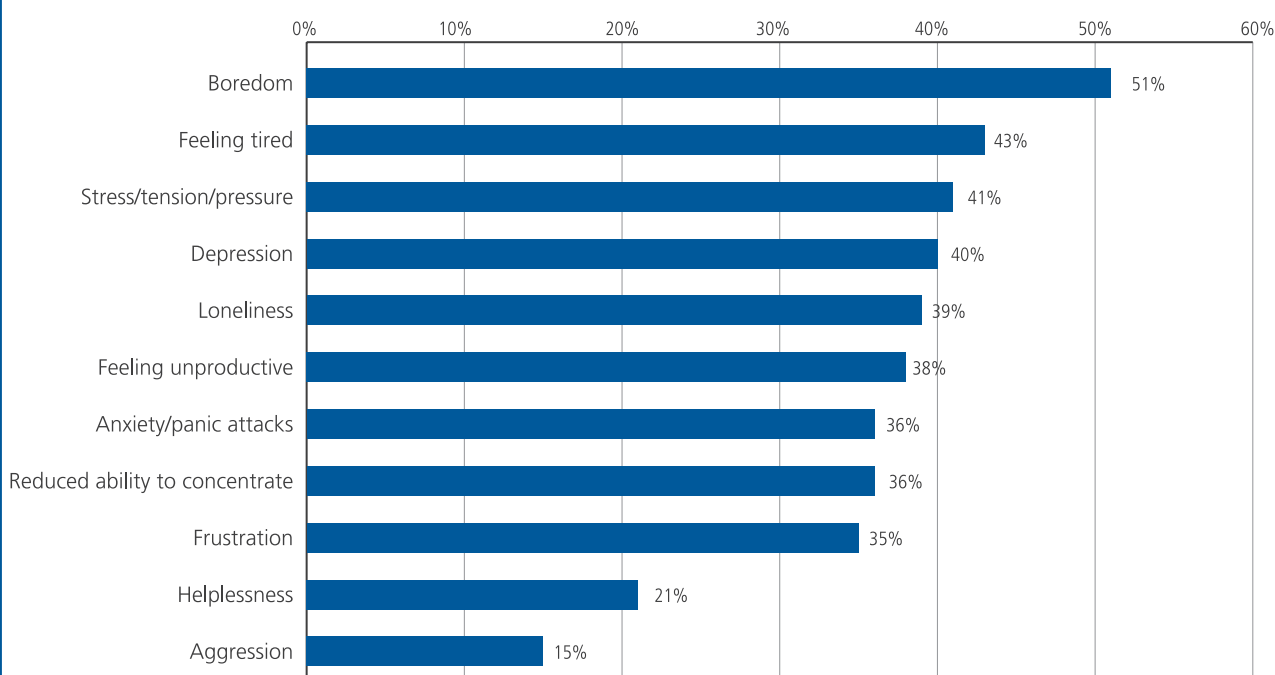
the country has not handled the Covid-19 crisis well/well at all, with a combined 43 per cent of respondents insisting that the country handled it reasonably well/so-so. A small percentage of 9 per cent believed the country handled it »very well« – this figure is true for both genders.

On a separate note, 58 per cent maintained that solidarity within society has become stronger due to the experience of the pandemic, and 51 per cent (rather) agreed that the pandemic does in fact offer »an excellent opportunity to change our society for the better«. While Covid-19 may present an opportunity to increase social cohesion within the community, tensions between refugee and host communities in the country persist. According to the NRC, against the background of the ongoing economic crisis that coincided with the impacts of Covid-19, tensions have emerged due to perceptions of differential treatment between the two groups. This has ultimately been exacerbated by the high levels of inequality and poverty, a stagnant labour market and weak social service provision (NRC 2021). While tensions persist, the Lebanese government's strategic indifference remains the norm. Just 55 per cent of respondents believe that the concerns of young people have (rather) been adequately taken into account throughout the pandemic. Moreover, 62 per cent of respondents with a high level of education also hold this view.

Figure 21

Emotional life during the pandemic

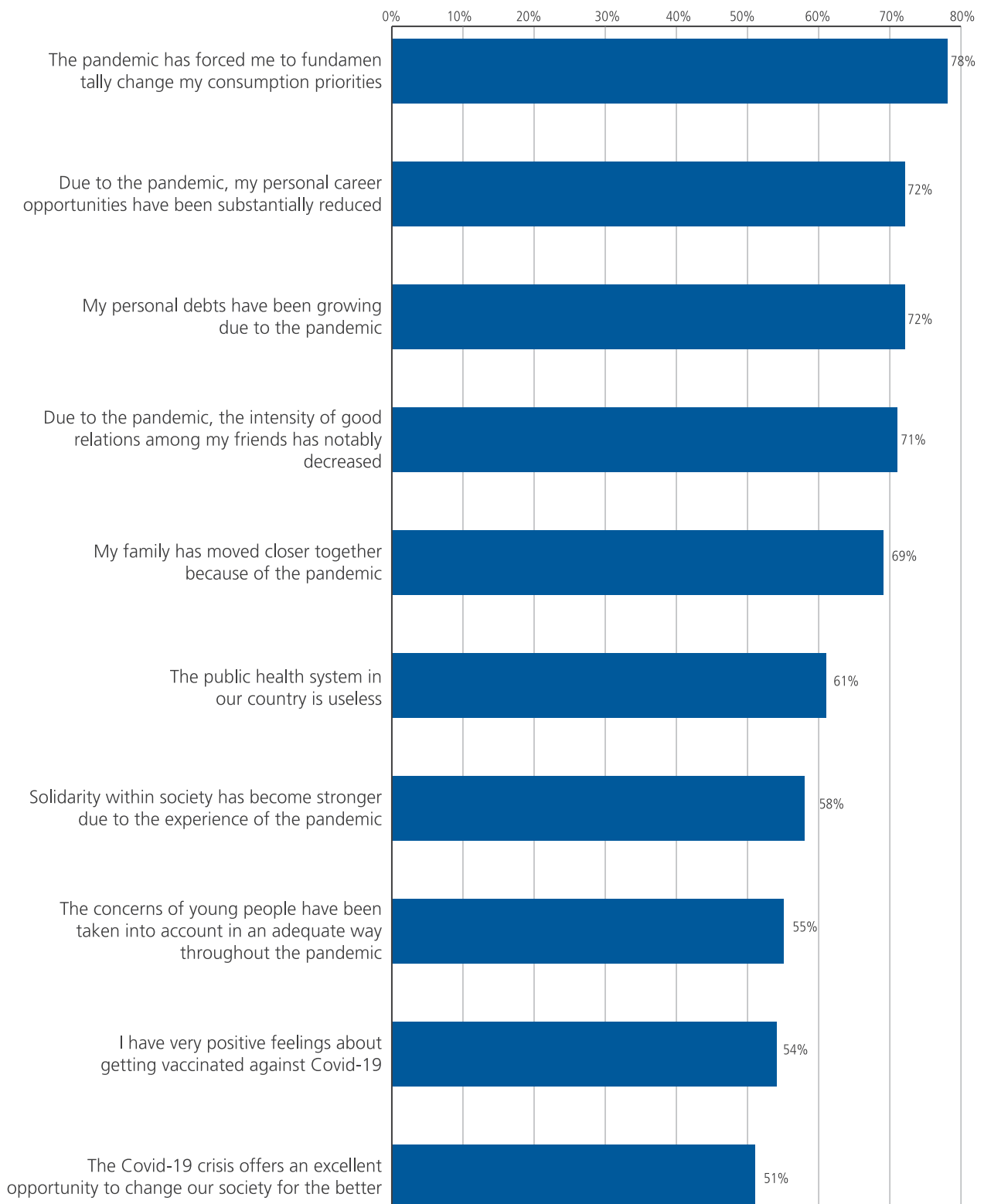
The following feelings are mentioned by many young people in connection with the pandemic. How frequently have you felt these emotions in recent months?



Values in per cent »often/most of the time/all the time«

Figure 22
Life during Covid-19

Do you rather agree or rather disagree with the following statements?



Values in per cent »rather/fully agree«

5.5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Respondents purchased their first **mobile phones** in Lebanon between 2011 and 2018. A total of 83 per cent have prepaid lines that permit them to control consumption. In the area of internet usage, 69 per cent of respondents reported using the internet (up 14 per cent from 2016).
- The ongoing economic crisis has created financial obstacles for **internet service** providers and users alike. Lebanon continues to face internet service interruptions due to frequent energy crises—particularly in North Lebanon (Tripoli and Akkar) where a large percentage of the Syrian refugee community is based.
- Overall, 97 per cent of internet users use **WhatsApp** (popular across all age groups, genders, levels of education and milieus of residence).
- A total of 28 per cent responded that they did not have a preferred **political system**, while 23 per cent expressed their preference for a democratic system. When it comes to trust in institutions in general, percentages reflect an overall widespread lack of trust—with only 56 per cent stating that they trust the Lebanese military, and 54 per cent saying the same about the UN.
- When asked what they associate with the word »politics«, 32 per cent of respondents stated that they did not know (a figure that is wholly consistent with the 2016 finding that MENA youth **distance themselves** from politics), 30 per cent associated the word with corruption and 22 per cent with government.
- The majority of working **women worked from home** and did so for an average of 3.2 hours per day. In line with the social roles within the household and the community, female respondents spent an average of 6.5 hours per day on activities within the home, as opposed to only 3.6 hours male respondents spent doing the same.
- The majority of time is spent **outside the household** working. This is mostly true for the 26-30 age bracket which spends an average of 5.1 hours per day working outside their homes.
- While the impacts of Covid-19 can be seen across all responses, the large majority of respondents (88 per cent) reported that no one close to them **had been infected** with Covid-19—with only 12 per cent stating that someone they knew had actually **caught the virus** (with various levels of severity of infection).
- Increased rates of **vaccine hesitancy** among refugee groups are widely reported, primarily due to concerns over its safety and possible side effects.
- Despite mistrust in the public health system, 54 per cent stated that they felt »very positive« about **getting vaccinated** against Covid-19, with the highest percentage recorded among respondents with medium and high levels of education (60 per cent).
- Respondents highlighted that **during Covid-19** they often experienced boredom (51 per cent), fatigue (43 per cent), depression (40 per cent), lack of productivity (38 per cent), a reduced ability to concentrate/anxiety/panic attacks (36 per cent) and frustration (35 per cent).
- A total of 78 per cent reported that the pandemic had forced them to change their **consumption priorities**. Overall, 72 per cent highlighted that the pandemic reduced their personal career opportunities.
- With the reduced ability of Syrian refugees across the country to secure **a steady income** due to the sectors they are restricted to, the community has been overwhelmed by debt. The majority of the sample (72 per cent) told us that their **personal debts** had grown since the onset of the pandemic.
- A total of 61 per cent of respondents viewed the public system as »**useless**«. The country's healthcare system has rapidly deteriorated under the weight of the economic collapse and Covid-19 since late 2019.
- Over half the respondents felt that **solidarity** within society had become stronger due to the experience of the pandemic, and that the pandemic does in fact offer an »excellent opportunity to change our society for the better«.

6

CONCLUSION

By engaging in the debate on the shared experiences of Syrian refugee youth in Lebanon, this study aims to contribute to a growing literature on refugee policies and livelihoods, going beyond the reductive narrative of refugee exclusion. Based on the survey's qualitative exploratory approach, this study shows that excluding Syrian refugees from national and formal systems increases their vulnerability, reduces their quality of life and limits future plans. It also demonstrates how national policies of exclusion, coupled with the Lebanese government's strategic indifference towards the refugee communities it hosts, generates new forms of vulnerability and imbalances of power—namely between refugees and landlords, employers and local authorities who exploit refugees for their own gains. This study also highlights that the well-being of the refugee community depends strongly on their empowerment and their inclusion in legal structures/service provision. As the study finds, in protracted conflicts, refugee spaces/realities rarely remain temporary, despite the national rhetoric/insistence on perceiving them as such.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACHR	Access Center for Human Rights
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAPI	Computer-assisted personal interviewing
GCFF	Global Concessional Financing Facility
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration/UN Migration Agency
LBP	Lebanese pound
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MSF	Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
UN	United Nations
UN ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
USD	United States Dollar
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

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ABOUT THE FES MENA YOUTH STUDY

The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) views young women and men as instrumental for democratic development in the region and is keen to strengthen their potential to initiate change in the world of politics and across society. Based on the results of a long-term survey, launched in 2016, FES seeks to provide insight into young people's situation in the MENA region.

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