

# Qualitative Perspectives on Safety and Security in Lebanese Urban Spaces

June 2024 | Lebanon

## Context & Rationale

Since 2019, Lebanon has faced an escalating economic and humanitarian crisis that has profoundly impacted safety and security across the country. The severe economic collapse coupled with the devastating August 2020 Beirut blast and healthcare crisis has pushed over half the population into poverty.<sup>1</sup> This crisis transcends nationality, gender, or background, affecting both Lebanese citizens and non-Lebanese residents alike. The deterioration of job opportunities, quality of healthcare, reliable power, clean water, and basic necessities exacerbates the situation for all residents.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, safety and security have been compromised throughout the country due to an increase in incidents such as theft, domestic disputes, and heightened tensions between communities.

Data from the 2023 Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA), alongside a comparative analysis with 2022 findings, reveals shifts in the types and prevalence of safety and security concerns among different population groups in Lebanon. Among Lebanese households, 23% reported safety and security concerns for women in 2024, compared to 20% in 2022, while reports of concerns for men were at 25% in 2024, up from 20% in 2022.<sup>i</sup> Palestinian refugee households in Lebanon (PRL) reported higher levels of safety concerns, with 51% expressing concerns for men in 2024, compared to 37% in 2022, and concerns for women rising from 37% to 56% during the same period. While these figures suggest notable differences over time, no statistical tests were conducted to determine the significance of these changes. Live-out migrant households similarly noted significant upticks in safety concerns, particularly for women, which surged to 37% in 2023 from 21% in 2022.<sup>ii</sup> The primary safety concerns for women vary among population groups, with robbery being a top concern overall. However, specific risks such as kidnapping for women and girls among Palestinian refugees from Lebanon (PRL) households and sexual harassment among Lebanese were reported. On the other hand, being robbed was primarily reported as a safety concern among men across all population groups.

While quantitative data provides insights into the magnitude of safety and security concerns within the country, it falls short of fully capturing the practical experiences of affected populations. Significant gaps in literature persist, particularly in understanding the specific drivers, reasons and the broader context behind safety concerns and physical hazards within vulnerable communities in Lebanon. This research aims to bridge these gaps by conducting an in-depth exploration of the safety and security - including physical hazards<sup>iii</sup> - experiences of affected populations within various neighborhoods throughout Lebanon. The study focuses on exploring the perceptions around these safety concerns, identifying their underlying causes, and assessing their impact on daily life. Additionally, the research seeks to comprehend how affected populations perceive and interact with humanitarian assistance. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to establish a foundational understanding that will guide the development of policies and interventions aimed at enhancing safety and

## Key Messages

- Security issues in Lebanese neighborhoods are driven by **economic instability, inadequate security oversight, and the erosion of public services and infrastructure. These issues contribute to a cycle of insecurity**, hindering individuals, particularly those from vulnerable groups, from engaging in everyday activities such as accessing basic needs or resuming work and education. **This environment may increase the likelihood of individuals resorting to unsustainable behaviors as a means of coping with their circumstances.**
- **Response actors, including humanitarian and governmental bodies, must address the root causes of insecurity, such as economic challenges, inadequate public services, and insufficient regulation enforcement, while also raising awareness.** An integrated, multi-sectoral strategy is essential to effectively reduce security incidents and improve overall stability within the country.
- **Aid distribution challenges, such as logistical and communication barriers, and lack of transparency in selection criteria, can heighten safety and security concerns.** When assistance is not distributed fairly or efficiently, individuals are left without essential resources, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and potentially leading to actions that further compromise their safety and security.

## Methodology Overview

This study employed a qualitative research design using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to explore the experiences, perceptions, and challenges concerning safety and security as faced by different population groups. This approach will facilitate an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences and the social dynamics that shape their everyday lives.<sup>3</sup> FGDs were conducted in April 2024, in Beirut and Mount Lebanon with three population groups: Lebanese nationals (LBN), Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (PRL) and live out migrants (MIG).

A total of 12 FGDs were conducted, with 6 to 10 participants each. The FGDs were segregated by location (Mount Lebanon and Beirut), population group (LBN, PRL, and MIG) and gender. Specifically, two FGDs were held for each population group: one with males and one with females, in both Beirut and Mount Lebanon governorates.

Participants for the FGDs were selected using purposive sampling, targeting individuals residing in the selected areas who were knowledgeable about the safety and security concerns in their communities. Recruitment was conducted through community outreach via local organizations.

Data was collected through semi-structured FGDs, guided by a discussion framework that included open-ended questions aimed at understanding persistent safety issues, the impact of safety and security concerns on daily lives, coping mechanisms employed, and suggestions for improving safety and security within the areas. The guide was developed based on the findings from the initial MSNA qualitative analysis, ensuring that the tool was tailored to address the key themes and insights identified during the earlier phase.

Data collection was conducted by a facilitator, and a note taker who documented the discussion in detail. The notes were subsequently transcribed and translated for analysis.

Data was analyzed using a phenomenological approach to explore and describe participants' lived experiences with safety and security concerns, if they exist. This method involved systematically coding transcripts to identify recurring themes and key discussion points across the different FGDs.

The study strictly adhered to ethical guidelines to safeguard participants' privacy and confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained, ensuring that participants fully understood the study's purpose and voluntarily chose to participate. To protect privacy, all quotes and shared information were anonymized,

## LIMITATIONS

- FGDs may not fully capture the broader population's views. Consequently, the findings may not be generalizable to all residents in the studied areas or to other regions.
- Participants were recruited through local networks and community organizations, which may have introduced selection bias. Those who chose to participate might have different perceptions and experiences compared to those who did not, potentially skewing the results.
- Given the extended gap in time between the MSNA quantitative survey conducted in June 2023 and the qualitative study in April 2024, the latter serves as a follow-up, offering an in-depth exploration of topics where information gaps were previously identified.

## Protection Qualitative Key Findings

### 1. Security Concerns Within Lebanon Neighborhoods

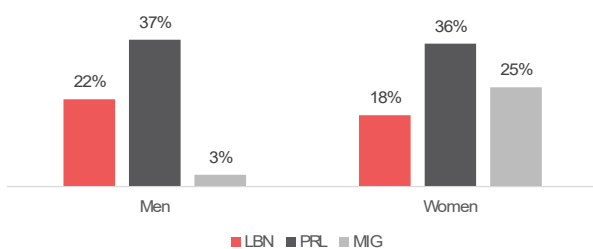
Participants from various population groups in Beirut and Mount Lebanon reported widespread insecurity, primarily attributed to economic instability, inadequate police presence, cultural tensions, and a lack of community cohesion. These issues have notably intensified following the economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, and were further compounded by the Beirut blast in 2020.<sup>4</sup>

Data from the MSNA, collected between July 24 and October 14, 2023, indicated significant safety concerns, with approximately 24% of households reporting safety and security issues for women and girls and 26% for men and boys within their neighborhoods. Notably, 37% of migrant households and 36% of Palestinian refugee households reported safety concerns specifically for women and men, respectively, underscoring the particular vulnerabilities faced by these groups.

These numbers are derived by several factors as highlighted by the FGDs, which may vary across different neighborhoods and population groups.

**Robberies** have emerged as a significant concern across all population groups, with Palestinian households identifying it as a primary safety issue for both men (37%) and women (36%). This concern is somewhat less pronounced among Lebanese households and is notably lower among migrant households compared to the other groups.

#### % of Households Identifying Robberies as a Safety Issue by Gender (increase font)



The FGDs revealed that robbery incidents often coincide with payday at the start of each month, with people being subjected to theft of money and frequently involve threats of violence.

*“My husband was robbed at a gunpoint while riding his motorcycle at night. He lost his ID card, mobile phone and motorcycle. - Lebanese woman, Mount Lebanon*

This issue also extends to migrants reporting thefts not only of money and valuables but also of personal belongings such as phones and bags. Migrant participants agreed that robbery is particularly concerning in taxis, where taxi drivers could drive them to different locations, threaten them with violence, and then rob them.

*“I was going to Achrafieh at night when the taxi took me to a different destination, threatened me with a gun, robbed me and left me on the street - Migrant woman, Beirut*

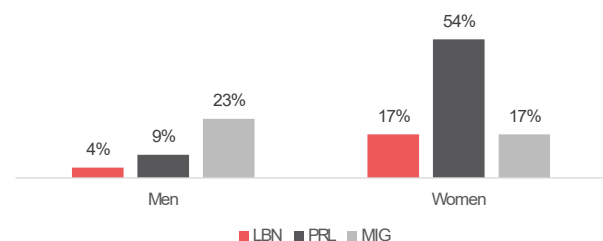
Not only personal belongings are targets of thefts, but also public goods, including electrical cables and manhole covers, which are often stolen and sold for cash. This not only undermines community infrastructure but also poses significant physical risks, a topic that will be explored in further details in the subsequent sections of this report.

While the quantitative data highlights robbery as a primary safety concern for Palestinian households, this concern appears less prevalent among those residing specifically in Mount Lebanon's camp. These residents reported feeling relatively secure from theft, attributing this sense of safety to the security cameras installed within the camp. However, they emphasized that safety levels decline significantly once outside the camp boundaries.

Geographically, Beirut experiences more widespread theft compared to Mount Lebanon, which serves as an example of the regional disparities in safety across different areas.

**Harassment**, including verbal, physical, and sexual forms, has emerged as a significant concern, with reports primarily from women across all population groups, as well as from migrant men.

#### % of Households Identifying Harassment as a Safety Issue by Gender



FGDs revealed that violent incidents, including rape and abuse, are widespread in many of the assessed areas. Women, especially those from Palestinian refugee and migrant communities, disproportionately experience verbal abuse and shaming. Migrant women frequently face verbal and sexual harassment rooted in prejudiced assumptions about their type of occupations in Lebanon, leading to inappropriate stereotyping.

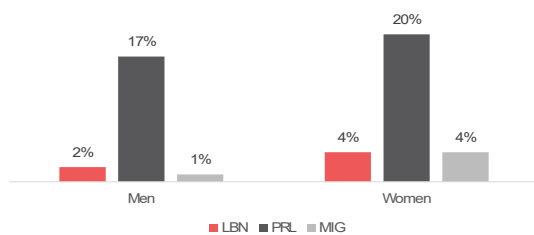
*“Whenever we walk on the streets, people label us with inappropriate terms, simply because we are migrants. We came here to work with dignity, yet we often face this unfair judgment. - Migrant woman, Beirut*

Additionally, Lebanese participants noted that abuse and violence are prevalent in many neighborhoods. They highlighted a specific incident where a rape occurred in a public garden in a Beirut neighborhood, prompting the closure of several public gardens. Moreover, children have been targets of harassment; where participants discussed a recent case involving a hairdresser who used social media to lure and abuse children. This incident has garnered widespread media attention and triggered official investigations. These incidents have highlighted the increasing vulnerability of children, raising the community's concerns about their safety and well-being.

On the other hand, Palestinian refugees in Mar Elias camp generally reported feeling safe within the camp, which contrasts with the higher number of safety-related incidents reported in other areas outside the camp.

**Kidnapping** emerged as a significant safety concern among PRL households, who identified it as a major issue affecting both men and women at notably higher rates compared to Lebanese and migrant households, as highlighted in the MSNA findings.

#### % of Households Identifying kidnapping as a Safety Issue by Gender



During the FGDs, men across all population groups noted that kidnapping is not very widespread across the country. It was suggested that this may be partly due to the context, where many individuals lack the financial means to pay a ransom. Where it does occur, kidnapping is viewed as a greater concern among women and is more prevalent in the Beirut area than in Mount Lebanon.

Participants shared accounts of kidnapping incidents associated with human trafficking, which, although isolated, highlight the security threats present in the area.

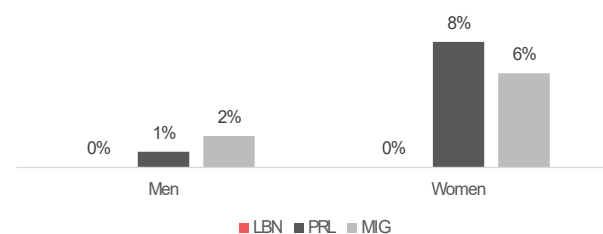
Additionally, during some FGDs with migrants, participants recounted kidnapping risks, including a near-miss incident in Beirut where three girls walking at night almost fell victim to an abduction.

FGDs with PRLs in Beirut and Mount Lebanon camps indicated no reported kidnapping incidents locally, though participants were aware of such cases in other camps nationwide. While this contrasts with national quantitative data, it aligns with geographically disaggregated findings,

showing lower percentages of households citing kidnapping viewed as a primary safety concern in Beirut (4%). This underscores notable regional differences in both the occurrence and perception of kidnapping risks.

**Discrimination** was identified as a major concern among PRL and migrant population groups, as highlighted by the MSNA 2023 data. Specifically, FGDs with migrants reveal that this issue is prevalent in both Beirut and Mount Lebanon, often rooted in factors such as nationality and skin color. For example, a migrant man in Beirut recounted how a colleague repeatedly referred to him as "charcoal" due to his skin color. Such incidents can cause psychological distress in addition to other issues. In this instance it reportedly led to conflict in the workplace and ultimately forced him to abandon his source of livelihood.

#### % of Households Identifying discrimination as a Safety Issue by Gender



This form of discrimination also extends into educational settings, where children are affected by bullying. In schools, both peers and teachers may target migrant children based on their nationality, race, or language, further exacerbating the issue. Such experiences not only impact the immediate well-being of these children but also have long-term effects on their academic engagement and future career opportunities.

*“ My daughter once asked me to scrub her well so that she could become white, believing that it would make her teachers love her - Migrant woman, Mount Lebanon ”*

Safety and security concerns expressed during the FGDs are multifaceted and vary significantly across population groups and regions in Lebanon, shaped by economic instability, cultural tensions, and regional disparities. Key issues such as robbery, harassment, and discrimination disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, including Palestinian refugees and migrants. Women, particularly in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, report heightened fears of harassment and assault, while men are more concerned with theft, violence, and drug-related crimes. The contrasting experiences of safety across different regions and geographical areas underscore the complex interplay of localized dynamics and the shared vulnerabilities shaped by the unique characteristics of individuals and communities.

## 2. Drivers of Safety and Security Concerns

### 2.1 Socio-economic Hardships

#### Economic Crisis Effects

Participants highlighted financial hardships, characterized by inadequate income and rising living costs, as a significant driver of illegal and deviant behaviors, including theft, violence, drug dealing, and sex work. These behaviors were identified as coping mechanisms adopted by some community members in response to economic strain.

The economic crisis was consistently emphasized across all FGDs as a primary factor exacerbating safety and security concerns within various population groups and neighborhoods. Limited job opportunities and declining financial stability were reported to have increased poverty and tensions, thereby intensifying protection concerns. These conditions have created an environment conducive to criminal activities and other forms of insecurity.

The discussions further revealed that vulnerable groups, including Palestinian refugees and migrants, are disproportionately affected by these economic challenges. Barriers to stable employment and limited access to support systems have heightened their exposure to unsafe situations and economic exploitation.

#### Threat of Eviction

All population groups expressed that rent prices have increased significantly following a series of events in the country, ranging from the influx of refugees and the COVID-19 pandemic to the ongoing economic crisis. The primary drivers of these rental increases include currency fluctuations along with high rental demand, which have collectively led to higher rents and consequently, a rise in evictions.

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“ Now, landlords would double the rental prices, and if we can't pay, they can easily find another tenant. - Palestinian woman, Mount Lebanon ”

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The threat of eviction, coupled with the challenge of finding affordable housing, has heightened tensions between tenants and landlords, occasionally leading to violent confrontations and the use of weapons.

Those evicted often find themselves compelled to settle for less desirable housing options in more affordable areas, which increases their exposure to safety and security risks. Specifically, Palestinian refugees and migrants reported that they are often forced to move into informal settlements or overcrowded neighborhoods as per the global shelter cluster, these shelter conditions significantly heighten the vulnerability to various protection concerns.<sup>5</sup>

### Security Services and Political Interference

Participants reported that police stations frequently encounter fuel shortages due by high fuel prices and lack of financial means within the municipalities, which hampers their ability to conduct regular patrols or respond promptly to incidents. Consequently, the lack of continuous monitoring weakens law enforcement control, prompting residents to take matters into their own hands. As a result, tensions escalate, and the risk of crime increases, exacerbating the community's sense of insecurity and the need for reliable law enforcement interventions.

It was mentioned in one FGD that when police successfully apprehend individuals involved in incidents, there are often allegations of political interference, which can lead to these individuals being released prematurely. This interference undermines the role of law and erodes public trust in the effectiveness and impartiality of law enforcement.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.2 Infrastructure and Public Services

**Electrical hazards**, such as exposed wires, pose a significant risk across various neighborhoods, particularly in Beirut, where low-hanging cables can be severed by passing vehicles, potentially leading to electrocution for pedestrians. Lebanese participants reported several incidents in the past year involving electrocution, some of which were nearly fatal. Although some NGOs have attempted to address this problem, the reduction in risk has been minimal.

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“ During winter, I always fear that my umbrella might touch the uncovered electrical wires, risking an electrical shock. - Palestinian woman, Mount Lebanon ”

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These hazards, along with frequent and prolonged **electricity outages**, primarily contribute to accidents rather than direct protection risks but have broader implications for community well-being. For instance, the lack of adequate street lighting, compounded by outages, not only increases the likelihood of traffic accidents and other safety-related incidents but also exacerbates residents' feelings of vulnerability and insecurity. While not directly linked to protection risks, these infrastructure issues indirectly affect the overall sense of safety and stability within affected neighborhoods.

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“ My neighbor, an electrical technician, died from an electrical shock while fixing wires on a neighboring street. - Lebanese woman, Mount Lebanon ”

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Conversely, improvements have been noted in the Beirut camp by PRL participants, who mentioned that infrastructural enhancements were made over the past year. The separation of water pipes from electrical cables have enhanced the safety of their environment.



This initiative serves as a practical example of how similar safety enhancements could be effectively replicated in other neighborhoods and regions across the country.

**Water supply issues**, characterized by chronic shortages and irregular deliveries, have placed significant financial strain on residents, often forcing them to purchase water for essential needs. This unreliable access exacerbates economic burdens and fuels conflicts within and between communities over the allocation of limited water supply, particularly in areas with shared or unequal access. Women, typically responsible for managing household water needs, are disproportionately affected, spending extra time sourcing water and managing its use, which increases their workload and stress.

**Poor drainage systems** pose significant challenges, particularly in overcrowded areas. Participants, especially those from Beirut, reported that their neighborhoods experience annual flooding during winter due to infrequent cleaning of the drainage network by the municipality. This issue is further exacerbated by **solid wastes mismanagement** and the accumulation of trash on the streets and in drainage systems. These conditions create environmental hazards that directly affect public health, causing issues like water contamination, foul odors, and insect infestations.<sup>7</sup> While not directly linked to previously mentioned security concerns, they compromise residents' well-being and contribute to unsafe living conditions.

**Poor road conditions**, particularly the prevalence of potholes, have significantly increased physical injuries and fatalities from accidents. Even when repairs are attempted, they are frequently inadequate, causing the potholes to reemerge. This issue has reportedly led to a higher incidence of automobile accidents, particularly in winter when these potholes get filled with water.

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“Once, a motorcycle hit an uncovered manhole, leading to an accident that caused the death of a man in our area.”  
- Lebanese woman, Beirut

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This issue also poses a particular danger to children who risk falling into these openings, potentially resulting in fatal injuries.

Additionally, sidewalks cluttered with market goods pose risks to both pedestrians and automobile drivers. The limited space can lead to frequent accidents, especially for drivers who are unfamiliar with the area, attempting to navigate these areas during congested periods.

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“I hesitate to walk on roads during heavy traffic; I'm concerned about the possibility of sudden conflicts between drivers due to traffic.” - Migrant woman, Beirut

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It is important to highlight that residents as well play a significant role in infrastructure-related issues. Many FGDs revealed that the theft of manhole covers, electrical wires, and waste bins to sell for scrap is a common practice reported across various discussions. While this is adopted as a coping mechanism to generate income, it simultaneously causes serious problems for the community, significantly compromising safety and contributing to infrastructure degradation.

## 2.3 Community Dynamics

### Intra-communal Relationships

FGDs revealed that people within the same community shared instances of positive relations, emphasizing mutual support, particularly during health-related incidents. Neighbors are quick to assist one another, often organizing fundraisers to cover medical expenses, especially among PRL and migrant groups. Both PRL and Lebanese participants also engaged in community-led initiatives such as neighborhood clean-ups and waste management activities to promote recycling and sorting. Participants noted the positive impact of these initiatives on cleanliness, community relationships, and providing youth with constructive activities. Additionally, participants reported guiding each other on how to access humanitarian assistance, creating an informal network of support that helps navigate the often complex processes involved in securing aid. This peer-to-peer assistance not only enhances individual and communal access to necessary resources but also strengthens bonds within the community, fostering a sense of solidarity and mutual aid during times of need.

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“The community helps each other and they guide each other to humanitarian assistances.” - Lebanese man, Beirut

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Given the prevailing security situation, male participants across all population groups mentioned forming support groups in response to government and municipal inaction, organizing patrols, particularly at night, to monitor safety in their areas. In Mount Lebanon, these patrols were particularly effective in deterring petty crimes and creating a sense of security among residents across all population groups.

Despite the economic crisis, all FGDs indicated that residents within the same population groups still gather for social interactions on special occasions, although less frequently than before. However, disputes over resources such as parking, water, electricity, and noise are common, causing friction and tension given the increased economic burdens.

## Inter-communal Relationships

Relationships between different communities were perceived to be more challenging than positive.

Migrants, particularly women, reported facing significant challenges in their relationships with other community members, largely due to differences in nationality, ethnicity, and background. Verbal harassment and shaming are common sources of tension between migrants and other communities. Migrants often encounter negative comments on the streets, particularly misconceptions about their employment, which is frequently associated with sex work. Furthermore, they are often vulnerable to accusations, routinely being blamed as the culprits for any thefts in homes or work sites.

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“ We are often accused for things we didn't do, which makes us feel very unsafe. - Migrant man, Mount Leb

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As reported by migrants, these experiences have severely impacted their well-being and daily lives, as they are compelled to endure such accusations and comments without the capability to effectively respond. Indeed the kafala<sup>iv</sup> system in Lebanon restricts the rights and freedoms of migrants, especially domestic workers, which could increase possibilities of abuse in many shapes.<sup>8</sup>

This ongoing social stigma not only affects their mental health but also limits their ability to integrate, exacerbating social exclusion and inhibiting community cohesion.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, It was consistently reported across some of the population groups that tensions most frequently arise with Syrian refugee communities. These issues are largely attributed to overpopulation, which exacerbates problems such as noise and competition for essential resources like jobs, shelter, and public services. According to Lebanese participants, the increased number of syrian refugees strains the already scarce resources in the neighborhoods. This situation, combined with inadequate security and monitoring measures, frequently leads to tensions and sporadic incidents of violence. This aligns with a 2023 report issued by Amnesty International that highlighted the escalating tensions between Lebanese and Syrian refugees, further increasing vulnerabilities within the country.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these challenges, there were notable instances where positive relationships flourished between different communities. Both Lebanese and migrants participants frequently reported providing financial support to individuals from other nationalities or backgrounds. One FGD involving migrants emphasized occasions when they received crucial support from non-migrants, which was instrumental in obtaining essential documentation required for employment.

## Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Although not frequently reported in the MSNA quantitative data, this issue was prominently discussed in the FGDs, particularly among Lebanese and Palestinian refugee populations. Participants expressed concerns about areas within neighborhoods known for drug abuse and the presence of drug dealers. This situation fosters a pervasive sense of insecurity, as these individuals are seen as primary contributors to tensions and violence within communities. This was mentioned more frequently among Palestinian refugees in the Mount Lebanon camp, where it has led to significant material losses and human casualties.

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“ Some children have even started exhibiting violent behavior themselves, influenced by the actions of others. - Palestinian woman, Mount Lebanon

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Alcohol abuse was also reported among both Palestinian refugees and Lebanese residents, where participants expressed worries about children being exposed to such behaviors, which could negatively impact their mental well-being and behavior.

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“ My son was walking when a conflict broke out between two drug dealers; he was affected resulting in a permanent vision loss. - Palestinian woman, Mount Lebanon

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It is important to mention that drug and alcohol use is often closely linked with theft, as many individuals resort to stealing to cover their drug expenses.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.4 Legal and Institutional Barriers

Legal and institutional barriers significantly impact the safety, security, and quality of life for various communities. Participants across different neighborhoods expressed substantial challenges related to obtaining and renewing legal documentation, which in turn affects their access to essential services, including healthcare. Lebanese residents, in particular, reported facing difficulties with documentation renewal due to administrative strikes and public human resource shortages.

Migrant participants reported facing challenges due to issues with legal documentation, which exacerbate their vulnerabilities in the workplace. Many noted that employers occasionally delay or withhold wages, taking advantage of their limited legal recourse. When wages are questioned, some employers reportedly threaten termination as a means to avoid payment, leveraging the migrants' restricted options for employment elsewhere due to legal and economic constraints. This situation contributes to a cycle of job insecurity and exploitation within this group.

“ Sometimes, our husbands work for an entire month without receiving payment, and they can't complain. - Migrant woman, Mount Lebanon

Palestinian refugees also reported facing legal challenges that restrict their ability to engage in normal daily activities, such as joining public associations, securing loans, or opening bank accounts. The absence of these fundamental legal rights intensifies their feelings of vulnerability and marginalization, further exacerbating their social exclusion.

### 3. Safety and Security Impacts

Safety and security concerns have profoundly impacted the lifestyles of various communities, affecting their social interactions as well as their mental and physical health.

A widespread **fear of venturing outside at night** emerged as a common theme across all population groups, aimed at minimizing the risk of security incidents after dark. FGDs with Lebanese women, particularly those in Beirut, revealed their reluctance to engage in nighttime activities or gatherings due to heightened concerns about robbery, violence, and abuse.

Men also shared similar concerns, which have led many to adjust their work schedules and forego night shifts or secondary night employment opportunities, such as driving or security work. This reduction in working hours has placed considerable **impact on the economic and financial stability**, including significant loss of additional income, which was crucial for covering essential needs.

“ Previously, having two shifts increased our salaries and helped us meet more of our basic needs; but now we can only work during the day. - Migrant man, Beirut

Additionally, participants from two FGDs mentioned that due to security concerns, markets are closing earlier than usual, while pharmacies are restricting customer entry as a precaution against theft. This fear was reported to cause reduced social interactions and restricted access to essential services during nighttime hours, substantially altering community dynamics and exacerbating social isolation.

Given the child-specific security concerns discussed earlier, participants, particularly parents, have become increasingly vigilant about their children's safety. This vigilance has led to restrictions on outdoor activities and reluctance to allow children to visit public places unaccompanied. Additionally, safety concerns within educational settings have contributed to an increase in school dropouts, particularly due to instances of bullying and harassment.

“ I prefer that my children stay with me at home rather than hearing any bad comments. - Migrant woman, Mount Lebanon

This limitation on social interaction and educational access poses a serious risk to the social and educational development of children. The restricted engagement in both public and educational environments can hinder their ability to develop critical social skills and achieve academic success, potentially impacting their long-term prospects and well-being<sup>7</sup>.

This atmosphere of worry and uncertainty about safety is likely to **affect the overall mental health** among community members.

“ Living in constant fear of theft and violence has become the norm in our community, affecting our mental well-being and quality of life. - Lebanese woman, Beirut

This constant stress can lead to a range of psychological issues, including chronic anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), particularly in areas frequently experiencing violence or crime. The cumulative effect of living in a heightened state of alertness can also strain interpersonal relationships and reduce overall quality of life, as individuals find themselves perpetually concerned for their safety and that of their loved ones.<sup>11</sup>

“ We've become used to these conditions because we don't see effective solutions coming our way. - Palestinian man, Mount Lebanon

### 4. Perspectives on safety enhancing Interventions

Several interventions have been proposed by participants to address the safety and security concerns across various neighborhoods, reflecting the diverse challenges faced by the communities.

Installing security cameras is seen as a pivotal measure to monitor the safety conditions within the areas and enhance accountability in case of any incident.

“ Installing security cameras in our neighborhood would greatly improve safety by deterring criminals and providing evidence in case of incidents. - Lebanese man, Beirut

Additionally, **addressing the fuel shortages** for security offices was viewed as critical for enabling effective patrols and responses. Frequent patrols by security officers will likely decrease safety incidents and improve the overall sense of security within the neighborhoods.



“ The lack of fuel for security offices is concerning. Without proper fuel supply, the security personnel cannot effectively patrol our area, leaving us vulnerable to crime. - Lebanese man, Mount Lebanon

While improved lighting was frequently suggested by participants, they deemed it insufficient to ensure safety. Improving street lighting is also identified as a key intervention, recognized by Lebanese participants from Beirut and Mount Lebanon for its role in increasing visibility and reducing crime, especially at night. This measure is particularly important to female participants who emphasized lighting for personal and family safety.

**Facilitating the safe return of refugees** to alleviate population density and reduce pressure on scarce resources was a frequent suggestion among Lebanese participants, aimed at diminishing tensions. However, this proposal received mixed reactions. Palestinian refugees and migrants expressed apprehension, perceiving the suggestion as potentially discriminatory.

**The need for improved embassy services** was emphasized by migrants, underscoring the importance of such services in facilitating legal procedures and improving documentation. Enhanced embassy support would assist migrants in securing employment and managing daily life, ultimately enhancing their overall quality of life.

Despite these proposed interventions, many participants expressed a sense of resignation, feeling that these safety and security concerns are deeply embedded within the community and systemic structures, leading to skepticism about the attainability of effective solutions.

## 5. Accountability to Affected Populations

The MSNA 2023 findings revealed that a low percentage of households across various population groups reported receiving aid in the last 12 months from different humanitarian organizations.

LBN	19%	■
PRL	42%	■
MIG	8%	■

**Unequal distribution of aid** was identified as a primary reason for the inaccessibility of assistance, stemming from various factors including **poor coordination among humanitarian organizations**. This lack of coordination sometimes results in the same household receiving aid multiple times while others receive none.

Additionally, **not all NGOs maintain clear selection criteria**, which has been particularly distressing for Palestinian refugees and migrants. These groups perceive aid distribution as biased and influenced by connections rather than based on actual need.

“ Humanitarian organizations do not coordinate together, resulting in some households receiving aid multiple times while others are left without support, creating inequalities. - Palestinian woman, Mount Lebanon

Additionally, many participants highlighted that they usually miss aid distributions due to **lack of awareness** about the timing and settings of these events, pointing to a need for more frequent and effective communication to ensure all households are informed.

Migrants, especially those in high-crime or resource-limited areas, reported difficulties in accessing aid due to **logistical challenges** and a lack of sensitivity to recipient needs.

Frustration also arises when multiple organizations collect information for assessments but fail to follow up, leaving households uncertain and disillusioned about the aid process.

If aid is received, satisfaction with the quality and quantity of the materials is not always guaranteed. Participants have reported instances where the quality of materials was so poor that they could not be used effectively, or the quantity provided was insufficient to meet the needs of all household members. This is validated through MSNA data that shows the below.

**Main reason of satisfaction of Aid, according to MSNA quantitative data::**

	LBN	PRL	MIG
Aid was Insufficient	55%	95%	75%
Aid was of poor quality	20%	1%	24%
Assistance inadequate to needs	23%	23%	35%

## 5. Conclusion

This study underscores the complex interplay of factors contributing to declining security in a sample of Lebanese neighborhoods. The assessed areas have experienced frequent incidents of robbery, harassment, and violence, which significantly disrupt the daily lives and well-being of residents. Several key drivers of these security issues, including economic instability, inadequate police presence and measures, and fragmented community cohesion. Economic challenges exacerbate resource scarcity, while limited security monitoring facilitates criminal activity.

Additionally, institutional barriers and the lack of essential public and infrastructural services further undermine community safety and erode trust in law enforcement. Access to humanitarian aid emerges as another critical area of concern for the assessed neighborhoods. The study highlights significant challenges in aid distribution, such as unequal allocation, unclear selection criteria, and ineffective communication.

The findings of this qualitative study highlight a number of potential areas that would help alleviate such security concerns. These include addressing economic instability, strengthening law enforcement, improving aid distribution, and fostering community unity. While these suggestions provide valuable insight into community perceptions, further research and targeted interventions are needed to evaluate their effectiveness in enhancing safety. These findings, however, offer a foundational understanding of the concerns and challenges faced by residents.

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## Notes:

- i- Observed differences may not be statistically significant and could fall within the margin of error, so they should be interpreted with caution. For further data, please refer to the Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment on the IMPACT Initiatives Resource Centre.
- ii- A live-out migrant is an individual who relocates from their country of residence, either temporarily or permanently, for reasons such as employment, but resides independently and outside the premises of their employer.
- iii- Physical hazards in neighborhoods refer to environmental or infrastructural conditions that can directly threaten the health and safety of individuals, such as deteriorating roads, inadequate street lighting, exposure to pollution, and the risk of accidents or natural disasters, all of which contribute to the overall sense of insecurity in these communities.
- iv The Kafala system in Lebanon is a sponsorship-based framework that governs the residency and employment of migrant workers, mainly in domestic and low-wage sectors. It has been widely criticized for creating power imbalances, limiting workers' freedoms, and increasing their vulnerability to exploitation.

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