

National Household Survey on Community Perceptions and Recent Changes in Humanitarian Assistance in Syria

September 2025 | Syrian Arab Republic

Key Messages

- Since January 2025, 81% of households noted a decline in the type or amount of assistance received, of those 66% describing a significant decrease. Food distributions and basic services were most affected.
- Among the 52% of households that provided reasons, most cited the US funding suspension (70%), donor cutbacks (41%), and programme closures (33%).
- 38% of respondent who thought that the recent changes in aid have affected HH directly reported severe consequences, such as less food (74%), reduced healthcare access (42%), debt accumulation (40%), and reliance on harmful coping mechanisms including borrowing (83%), selling assets (26%), and child labour (23%).
- Only 18% of households received information on available humanitarian services in the last six months, and more than half (53%) judged it as insufficient. Communities relied primarily on social media (27%) and local networks (38%).
- The suspension has reduced trust: 58% reported less trust in aid organisations, compared to only 2% who reported increased trust.
- Among all, female-headed households (75%), IDPs (61%), older persons (55%), and persons with disabilities (45%) were identified as disproportionately impacted, underscoring rising vulnerabilities among already at-risk populations.

Context & Rational

The humanitarian landscape in Syria has been significantly affected by recent shifts in funding, most notably the suspension of US support, which fell from USD 524.6 million in 2024 to USD 42.8 million in 2025. Historically, the United States has been one of the largest donors, supporting critical sectors such as food security, health, WASH, and protection. The sudden reduction in funding represents a major shock to a humanitarian system already operating under protracted crisis conditions, with high levels of vulnerability, limited livelihood opportunities, and constrained access to basic services. This assessment was launched to capture the direct and perceived impacts of these changes on Syrian households, including access to aid, coping mechanisms, and information needs, with a focus on community feedback and accountability. The findings aim to provide evidence to guide humanitarian actors, donors, and coordination bodies in adapting programmes, prioritizing resources, strengthening advocacy for sustained funding, and ensuring that assistance remains needs-driven, equitable, and responsive to the realities faced by affected communities. By documenting how households are affected and how they respond, the assessment also supports more inclusive communication and engagement with communities, contributing to principled, effective, and accountable humanitarian action.

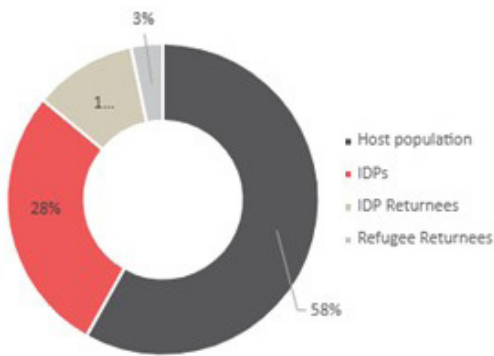
Assessment Overview

In July–August 2025, REACH conducted a nationwide household-level assessment across 12 governorates of Syria, surveying 1,153 households (96 per governorate) through a probability-based, stratified random sampling approach. The survey aimed to capture Syrian communities' perceptions of and experiences with recent changes in humanitarian assistance, following the sharp reduction in US funding in 2025, from USD 524.6 million in 2024 to just USD 42.8 million.

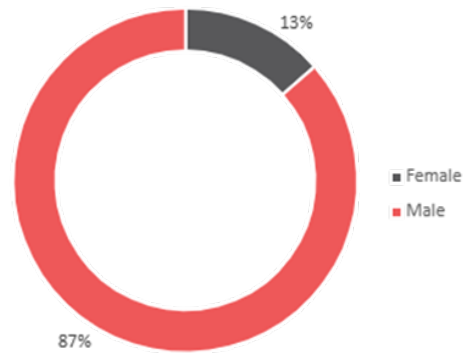
The evidence generated will serve as a critical tool for humanitarian actors, coordination bodies, and donors, ensuring that decision-making is grounded in the realities faced by affected populations. It also seeks to strengthen collective advocacy efforts for sustained and diversified funding to the Syria response.

Households' Profile

Households' Displacement Status (n=1153)



Gender of the Head of the Household (n=1153)

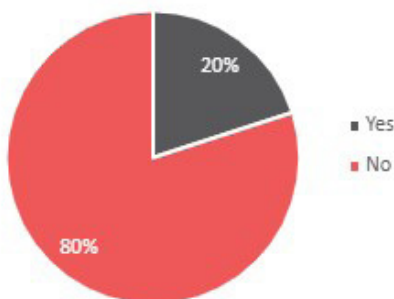


Surveyed households were predominantly male-headed, with an average of six members per household. 58% of the households in all of the assessed governorates are hosts, 28% are IDPs and 11% are IDP returnees. Only 3% are refugee returnees. The governorates with the highest share of IDP returnees were: Deir-ez-Zor (43%), Homs (38%), Dar'a (22%), and Hama (15%). and those with the highest share of IDPs were: Idleb (50%), Rural Damascus (38%), Aleppo (36%), Al-Hasakeh (35%), Latakia (22%), Ar-Raqqa (21%), and Hama (19%). While informal employment (40%) and small businesses (29%) remain key income sources in the assessed households, **reliance on humanitarian aid is very limited (1%, n=10/1153)**, reflecting both reduced availability and coverage.

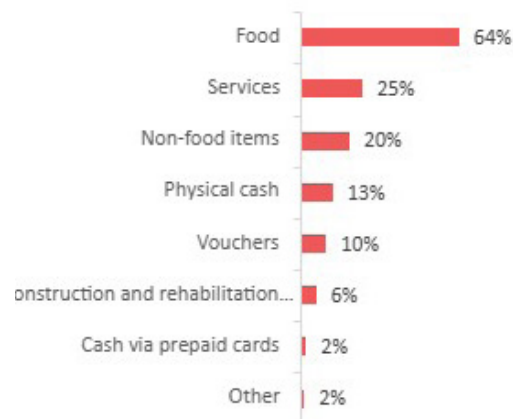
→ Access to Humanitarian Aid

Only 20% of households across 12 governorates in Syria reported that they received humanitarian assistance in the past 12 months. When disaggregated by displacement status, in several governorates **IDPs were more likely to report receiving aid compared to host communities. For example in Al-Hasakeh (47% of IDPs vs. 16% of hosts), Hama (33% vs. 12%), and Rural Damascus (26% vs. 14%). Conversely, in Idleb, both IDPs and host communities reported relatively high levels of aid coverage (50% and 41%, respectively)**, standing out from other governorates where assistance was far lower. At the same time, **IDP returnees consistently reported limited access to aid across most locations**, with 20% in Rural Damascus, and 5% in Dar'a, indicating a critical gap for this population group. Refugee returnees also appear to be among the least supported, with near-total exclusion in several governorates.

Households Receiving Humanitarian Aid in the Past 12 Months (n=1153)



Types of Humanitarian Aid Received by Households (n=1153) NB: respondent could select multiple options

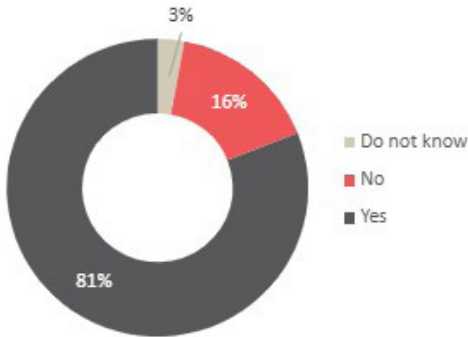


Among households that reported receiving humanitarian assistance, **the majority (64%) identified in-kind food aid as the primary form of support**. Other commonly reported types included services (25%), non-food items (20%), and vouchers (10%). Smaller proportions received physical cash (13%) or support through construction and infrastructure rehabilitation (6%), while very few reported assistance via prepaid cards (2%) or other modalities (2%). **Overall, the findings point to a heavy reliance on in-kind assistance, with relatively limited diversification across cash-based or service-oriented modalities.**

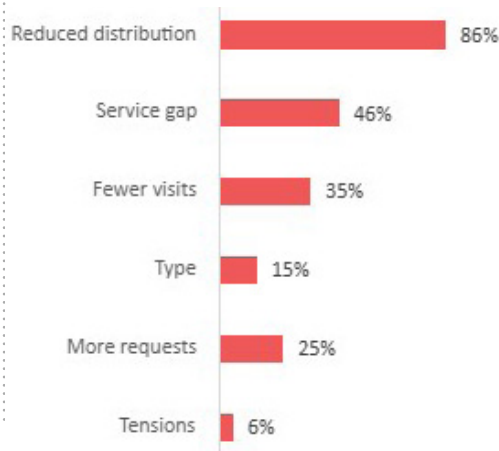
Impact on Households

Since January 2025, more than four out of five households (81%) reported a reduction in the amount or type of aid received. Most described a significant decrease in distributions (86%) and gaps in service provision (46%).

Change in the Type or Amount of Aid at the Household Level since 15 Jan 2025 (n= 236)



Shifts in the Composition of Aid Provided (n= 189)
NB: respondent could select multiple options



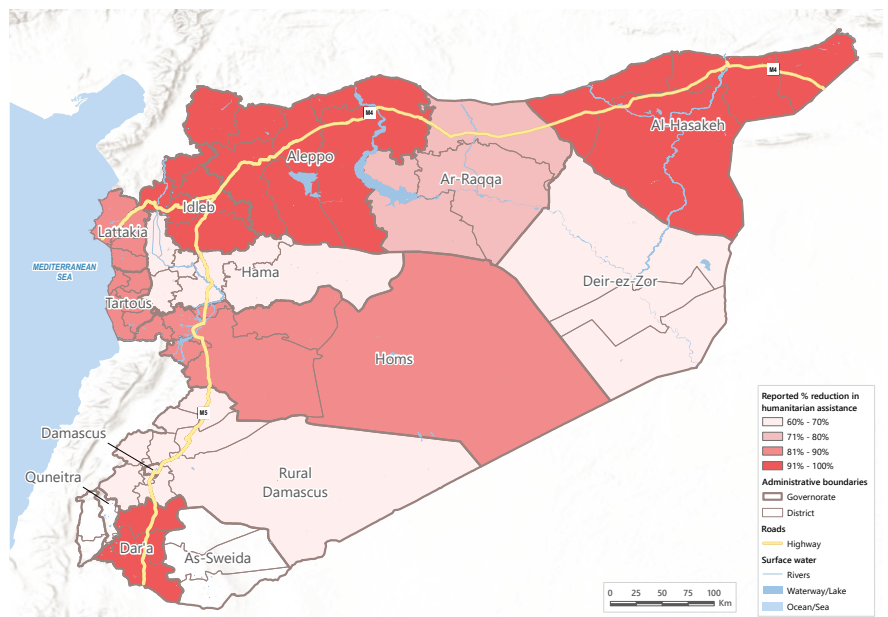
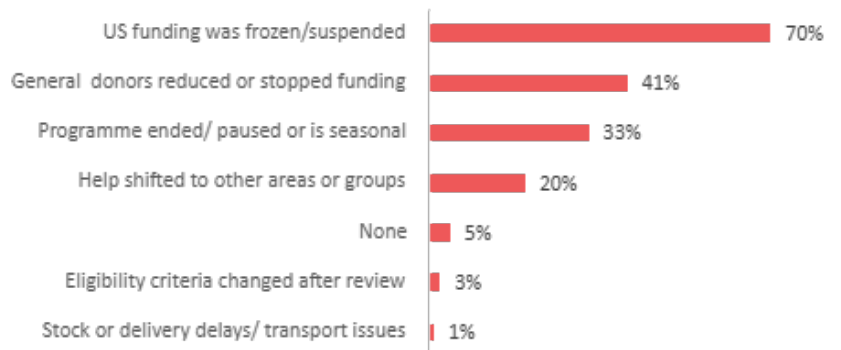
The primary reasons communicated for these reductions were the suspension of US funding (70%), general donor cutbacks (41%), and program closures or seasonal adjustments (33%).

Impact at the Community

At the community level (n=1153), the majority of surveyed households (61%) reported observing visible changes in humanitarian assistance within their communities since 15 January 2025, while one-third (33%) indicated no changes and 6% were unsure. Among those who noticed changes (n= 643), the most common was a reduction in distributions (76%), followed by gaps in services (54%) and fewer visits from humanitarian actors (41%). Communities also highlighted an increase in requests for assistance (42%), suggesting growing unmet needs. Smaller proportions reported changes in the types of aid provided (8%) or the emergence of tensions within the community (5%) linked to aid reductions dynamics.

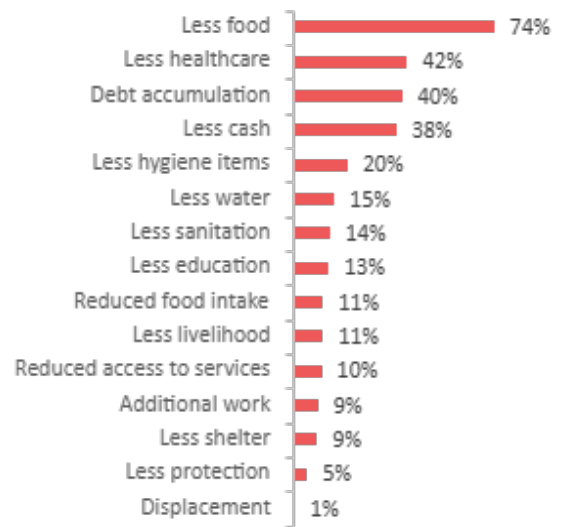
The impact has been considerable: **81% of households reported their living conditions were directly affected**, and of those, 38% rated the impact as severe and 50% as moderate. Key reported consequences included less food (74%), debt accumulation (40%), reduced access to healthcare (42%), and fewer hygiene items (20%). Coping strategies have often been negative, such as borrowing money (83%), selling assets (26%), reducing meals (28%), and child labour (23%).

Reported Reasons for the Change in the Type or Amount of Aid at the Household Level since 15 Jan 2025 (n= 90)
NB: respondent could select multiple options



A large majority of surveyed households that reported being affected by the change in aid (n= 529, 81%) reported resorting to alternative ways of meeting their needs in the face of reduced humanitarian assistance, while only 18% had not, and 1% were unsure. The most widespread coping mechanism was borrowing money (83%), followed by using savings (36%), reducing healthcare expenditures (29%), and reducing meal consumption (28%). Other strategies included selling assets (26%), child labor (23%), and migration (15%), with smaller shares reporting reduced spending on education (12%) or other measures (1%). These results highlight the severe financial strain and erosion of household resilience across Syrian communities. The reliance on borrowing and asset depletion indicates that many households are exhausting already limited coping capacities, while the resort to child labor and reduced access to health and education services points to longer-term protection and wellbeing risks.

Impact of Aid Reduction on Households (n= 529)
NB: respondent could select multiple options



Overall, female-headed households (75%), older persons (55%), IDPs (61%), and persons with disabilities (45%) were identified as being particularly affected by the reductions in assistance, underscoring the disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups.

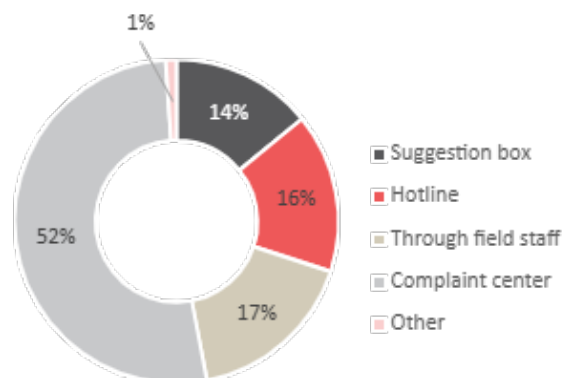
Information and Accountability Gaps

Only 18% of households reported receiving information on available humanitarian services in the past six months, and more than half (53%) judged the information as "not enough." Social media (27%) and community channels (38%) were the main sources of information. Feedback and accountability mechanisms remain underused: only 31% of households know how to submit feedback or complaints, and just 16% reported doing so in the past six months. Among those who did, about half received a response. Key barriers include lack of trust in aid organisations (11%) and the belief that "nothing will change" (32%).

Trust and Participation

The recent reduction and changes in humanitarian aid have impacted household's trust in aid organizations, as reported by over half of respondents (58%) reporting that their trust in humanitarian aid providers has subsequently reduced. Given the high citations of disproportionate effects on vulnerable groups, the perceived uneven impact of aid reductions may further erode trust in aid systems.

Preferred Channels of Communication across all Surveyed Households (n=1153)



Methodology Overview

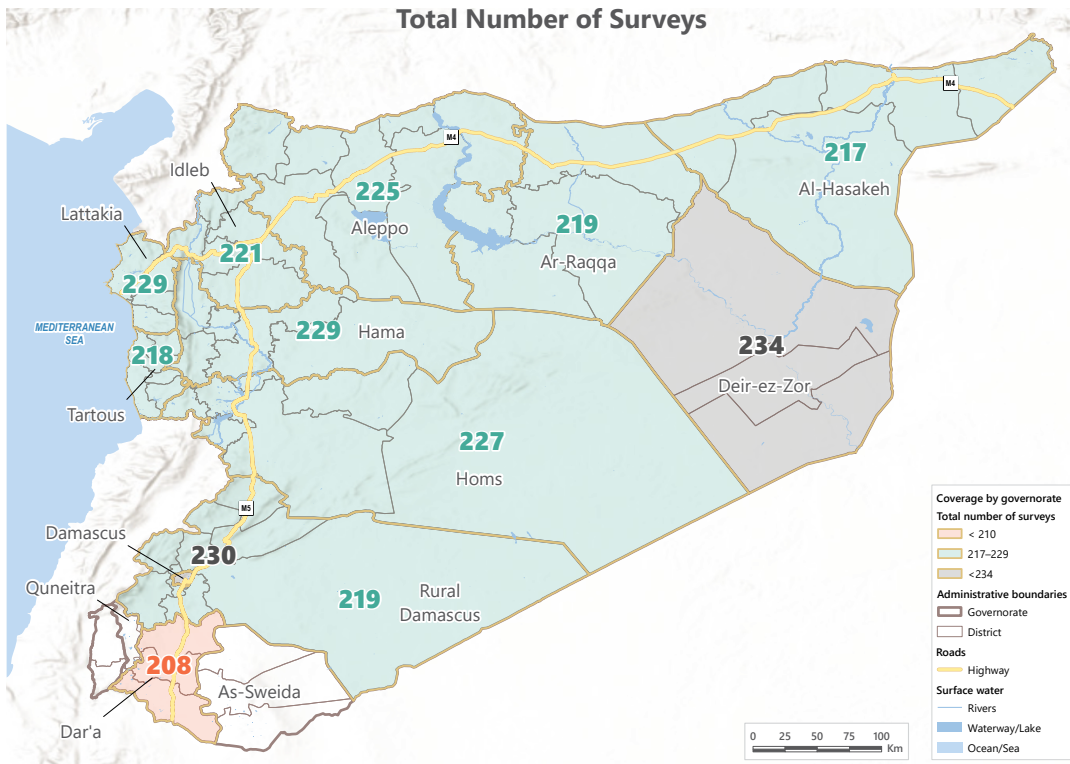
This assessment employed a **nationwide, quantitative household survey to understand Syrian communities' experiences and perceptions of recent changes in humanitarian assistance, particularly following the suspension of major funding streams.** A stratified random sampling approach was applied across 12 governorates (excluding As-Sweida and Quneitra for security reasons), with proportional allocation to urban and rural communities and to host, IDP, and returnee populations. The sample was based on the March 2025 Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) population data, with a 95% confidence level and 10% margin of error at governorate level. Data were collected

face-to-face from heads of households or adult members by trained enumerators between July 28 and August 28, 2025, using a **structured survey tool covering household demographics, access to aid, accountability to affected populations, and trust in humanitarian assistance.** The tool was designed to be culturally appropriate and brief, taking approximately 10 minutes per interview. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and ethical principles, including confidentiality, do no harm, and safeguarding respondents' dignity, were strictly observed. Data submission and management were conducted digitally using KoBo Collect and KoBo Server platforms, with triangulation and follow-ups to ensure data quality.

Assessment Coverage

The survey was conducted across 12 governorates in Syria, covering both urban and rural areas in locations accessible to field teams. It included a representative mix of host communities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and returnee households to capture diverse experiences of humanitarian assistance. Sampling within each governorate was proportional to population size, ensuring that findings reflect the distribution of households in accessible areas. Overall, the coverage allows for a comprehensive understanding of how recent changes in aid have affected different population groups across the country.

Total Number of Surveys



ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).