

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MARKETS IN NORTHERN SYRIA

Snapshot: 6-9 April 2020

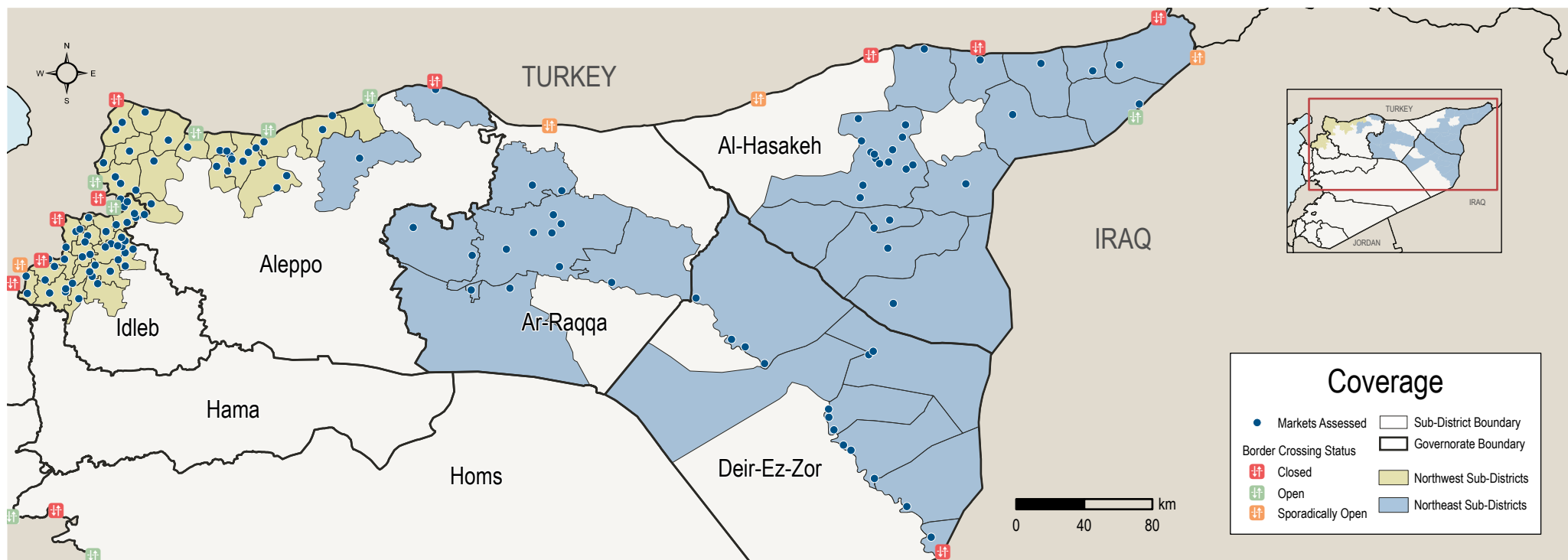
INTRODUCTION

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic, urging states to take swift preventative measures for containment and to mitigate the spread, such as isolation, case monitoring, and dissemination of information related to health and safety practices. In the areas of northeast Syria (NES) typically covered by REACH's monthly [Market Monitoring Exercise](#), authorities began to take precautions to mitigate the risk of an outbreak, including curfews, shop closures, and movement restrictions. Meanwhile, very few mitigation measures were reported in the opposition-controlled areas of northwest Syria (NWS), and markets reportedly continued to function as usual. Border closures affected all regions of Syria, as neighbouring countries implemented mitigation measures, and many of the most significant crossings into northern Syria were either restricted or closed, including limitations at Bab Al-Hawa and Bab Al-Salame border crossings between NES and Turkey and a temporary closure of the Semalka crossing between NES and the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI).

Due to the lack of detailed, region-specific data about the impact of COVID-19 on markets, REACH launched an assessment in early April 2020 to better understand how markets were responding to the pandemic. The assessment focused on the availability and prices of a few key goods, including plastic gloves and antibacterial gel. It also asked about the functionality of local markets, including vendors' supply and financing challenges. Finally, REACH asked about mitigation measures imposed on communities and taken by shopkeepers to slow the spread, such as limiting crowds and utilising face masks. Between 6-9 April 2020, REACH enumerators collected data from a network of vendor key informants (KIs) in northern Syria; these activities were conducted remotely due to the pandemic. The final dataset includes data from 2,998 shops in 60 sub-districts within the governorates of Aleppo, Idlib, Al-Hasakeh, Deir-ez-Zor, and Ar-Raqqa.

The following Situation Overview presents findings per hub across northern Syria. Key findings of NES are presented first, followed by NWS, and focus on market functionality, market accessibility, supply and demand, re-stocking and measures taken by shop owners.

MAP 1: OVERVIEW OF ASSESSED MARKETS IN NORTHERN SYRIA



METHODOLOGY

Indicators for this assessment were developed with the NES and NWS Cash Working Groups and Food Security/Livelihoods Clusters. Data collection for this analysis took place remotely between 6-9 April 2020 by REACH as part of the monthly Syria Market Monitoring Exercise (MM), with market vendors as key informants (KIs) across Northern Syria. Vendors from 12 different shop types were surveyed, namely bakeries, butcher shops, communications services, informal exchange rate shops, general food shops, fuel and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) suppliers, hygiene item shops, pharmacies, vegetable shops, and water trucking services. In selecting markets for inclusion, markets had to be permanent in nature, large enough to support at least two wholesalers, and diverse enough to provide a sufficient variety of goods and commodities. Additionally, shops surveyed within each market were housed in permanent structures and sold Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB)¹ items. Per region, 837 vendor KIs were surveyed in NES and 1,887 vendor KIs in NWS, amounting to a total of 2,998 surveyed market vendor KIs in 118 communities across 60 sub-districts in Northern Syria. Due to the current security situation and COVID-19 precautions, data collection for this analysis was conducted remotely via phone or WhatsApp by the REACH enumerator team, who contacted an already existing vendor KI network in NWS and NES. The dataset can [be found here](#).

Additionally, KIs who reported that their shops were not open were not asked further questions regarding their shops, and instead were only asked questions about the market situation in their communities more generally. While the majority of indicators were collected only by REACH enumerators, some indicators were collected by both REACH and partner organisations. Furthermore, to ensure high data quality, responses which were contradictory and/or could not be confirmed by field teams were removed from the data set and subsequent analysis, which led to different numbers of surveyed vendors for some of the indicators in this analysis.

Lastly, starting in the month of April 2020, REACH also began monitoring prices and availability of items relevant to the current COVID-19 situation. These items include face masks, plastic gloves, bottled bleach, hand sanitiser, sterile alcohol and trash bags. Prices for these items will be collected on a monthly basis in conjunction with the regular Market Monitoring Exercise.

Due to the developing situation with COVID-19 and the complex humanitarian situation in Northern Syria, this analysis is not representative of all markets nor the COVID-19 situation of all NWS and NES, but should rather be seen as indicative only in the context where and when information was collected as reported by market vendor KIs.

¹ The SMEB outlines the minimum culturally-adjusted items (food, water, hygiene items, cell phone data, and cooking fuel) that an average six-person household in Syria needs to purchase in one month.

KEY FINDINGS

NORTHEAST SYRIA

- Against the backdrop of what may be an upcoming COVID-19 outbreak in Syria, **almost all vendor KIs in NES (95%) reported that only essential stores were open**. Curfews imposed by authorities were also widely reported across assessed sub-districts in NES.
- Across governorates in NES, **nearly half (46%) of vendor KIs reported market demand had increased** after the emergence of the COVID-19 situation – most commonly reported by hygiene item vendors (90%), pharmacists (78%) and general food stores (63%). Twenty per cent (20%) of vendor KIs reported stockpiling behaviour by customers in their shops.
- **Vendors faced supply challenges**: 60% cited price inflation, and 39% of KIs reported that supply could not keep up with demand.
- **Over half (51%) of assessed vendors in NES reported financial challenges** of limited cash flow for vendors.
- Precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as limiting shop opening hours, had reportedly been implemented by local authorities on the majority of surveyed vendor types.
- **Vendors were practicing mitigation measures in their shops**, including using face masks (73%), gloves (72%) and antibacterial gel (47%) in light of COVID-19.
- **Community members faced new challenges in accessing markets** due to COVID-19. Eighty-two per cent (82%) of vendor KIs reported that community members had been avoiding markets due to fear of the virus.

NORTHWEST SYRIA

- **Prevention measures against the spread of COVID-19 had reportedly not been firmly imposed by local authorities** across the assessed sub-districts in NWS. The majority of vendor KIs reported an absence of mitigation measures imposed by authorities, whether in their communities (55%) or in their shops (81%). Nonetheless, **72% of vendor KIs adopted their own measures** such as using gloves in their shops.
- **20% of surveyed vendors reported an increase in market demand after the emergence of COVID-19**. This was mainly reported by pharmacy vendor KIs, followed by surveyed hygiene vendors.
- **Vendor KIs reported facing supply challenges**, first and foremost price inflation (65%). **Nearly half of pharmacists reported they had run out of stock in the month before data collection**. Additionally, if supply lines were to be cut, 63% of pharmacists reported that their stock would run out within a week.
- **Furthermore, almost half of KIs (46%) reported financing challenges**, namely limited cash, most commonly reported among LPG vendors (66%).
- **Half of vendor KIs reported that community members had no issues in market access**. Low purchasing power was the major reported barrier otherwise (40%).
- **Stockpiling behaviour by customers in relation to COVID-19 was rarely observed by surveyed shop owners (10%)**, and 75% of vendors reported that COVID-19 did not lead to a change in the number of visitors to their shops in NWS.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MARKETS IN NORTHEAST SYRIA



MARKET FUNCTIONALITY

Under the current situation, mitigation measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 were reportedly being implemented by authorities widely across NES. Of 773 vendors surveyed in communities across NES, 95% reported that only essential services (shops) were open within their communities (see figure 1). Almost all vendors reported this across all sub-districts (with the exception of Mansura in Ar-Raqqa governorate). Curfew hours were also widely implemented across NES, with 85% of vendors reporting these measures taking place within their communities. Curfew hours were reported across all sub-districts, with the exception of Qahtaniyyeh and Ya'robayah sub-districts in Al-Hasakeh governorate and Hajin sub-district in Deir-ez-Zor governorate. Additional social measures to curb the spread of COVID were also reportedly implemented by local authorities across governorates, such as social distancing (68%) and limiting how many people can gather (21%) (see map 2). Across governorates, no KIs reported that certain people had been asked to self-isolate or that full lockdown had been imposed on their communities.

Figure 1: Main prevention measures in place in communities as reported by vendor KIs (773 respondents)*



*Multiple answers allowed, thus findings may exceed 100%

MEASURES INTRODUCED ON INDIVIDUAL SHOPS

Of all assessed vendor types, only vendors of informal exchange shops and communication

services reported that their shops were closed due to COVID-19, more specifically 23% in al-Hasakeh, 3% in Deir-ez-Zor and 1% in Ar-Raqqa, amounting to 7% at the regional level.

Similarly, when 769 vendors were asked more generally about which shop types were still open in their communities, the most commonly reported were pharmacies (reported open by 100% of vendors), fresh food shops (95%), bakeries (95%), bulk food shops (88%), hygiene shops (85%), and fuel (83%). The least-commonly reported operational service was water trucking (61%).

At the regional level, 26% of 712 surveyed vendors reported that price ceilings had been put in place in their shops, in particular in Al-Hasakeh governorate (as reported by 46% of assessed vendors in the governorate), followed by Ar-Raqqa (29%) and Deir-ez-Zor (9%). Price ceilings were reported across all shop types, except for communications and informal exchange rate shops. In addition, 72% of vendor KIs reported limited opening hours in their shops, 23% reported that there was a limit to how many customers could be in their shop at a time, and 18% reported that no measures had been imposed on their shop.

OTHER DELIVERY OPTIONS WIDELY UNAVAILABLE

At the regional level, barely any door-to-door delivery services were reported available by vendor KIs, with the exception of bread deliveries in the sub-districts of Hole (Al-Hasakeh governorate), and Karama (Ar-Raqqa governorate).

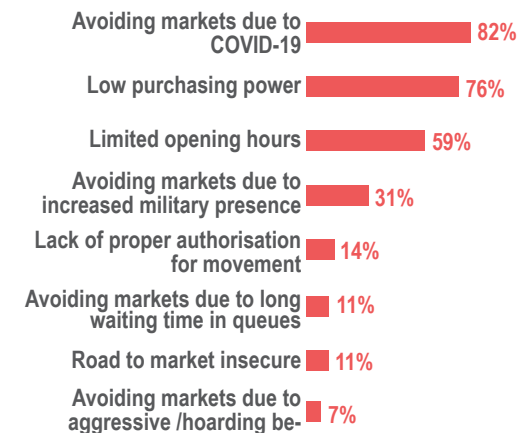


MARKET ACCESSIBILITY

COMMUNITY MEMBERS REPORTED TO AVOID MARKETS DUE TO FEAR OF COVID-19

COVID-19 presented new market access challenges for communities. According to market vendors, barriers to markets included community members avoiding markets due to fear of COVID-19 (as reported by 82% of vendor KIs) and limited opening hours due to curfew (59%) (see figure 2). Non-COVID-19 barriers also remained; across governorates, KIs reported low purchasing power of community members (76%) as a main barrier. Lastly, 31% of all vendors reported that community members were avoiding going to markets due to increased military and/or police presence in their communities.

Figure 2: Most commonly reported barriers for community members in accessing markets (769 respondents)*



*Multiple answers allowed, thus findings may exceed 100%

REPORTED INCREASED BARRIERS FOR SOME POPULATION GROUPS

The same vendors were also asked whether certain population groups were experiencing increased barriers to accessing markets. Here, 221 vendors (29%) reported that not all community members had equal access to markets; 23% reported that persons with disabilities faced more barriers, followed by persons with medical conditions (22%) and elderly persons (20%). Persons with disabilities were more commonly reported to experience increased barriers in accessing markets in the governorates of Ar-Raqqa (29%) and Deir-ez-Zor (26%), compared to Al-Hasakeh governorate (11%).

STOCKPILING BEHAVIOUR

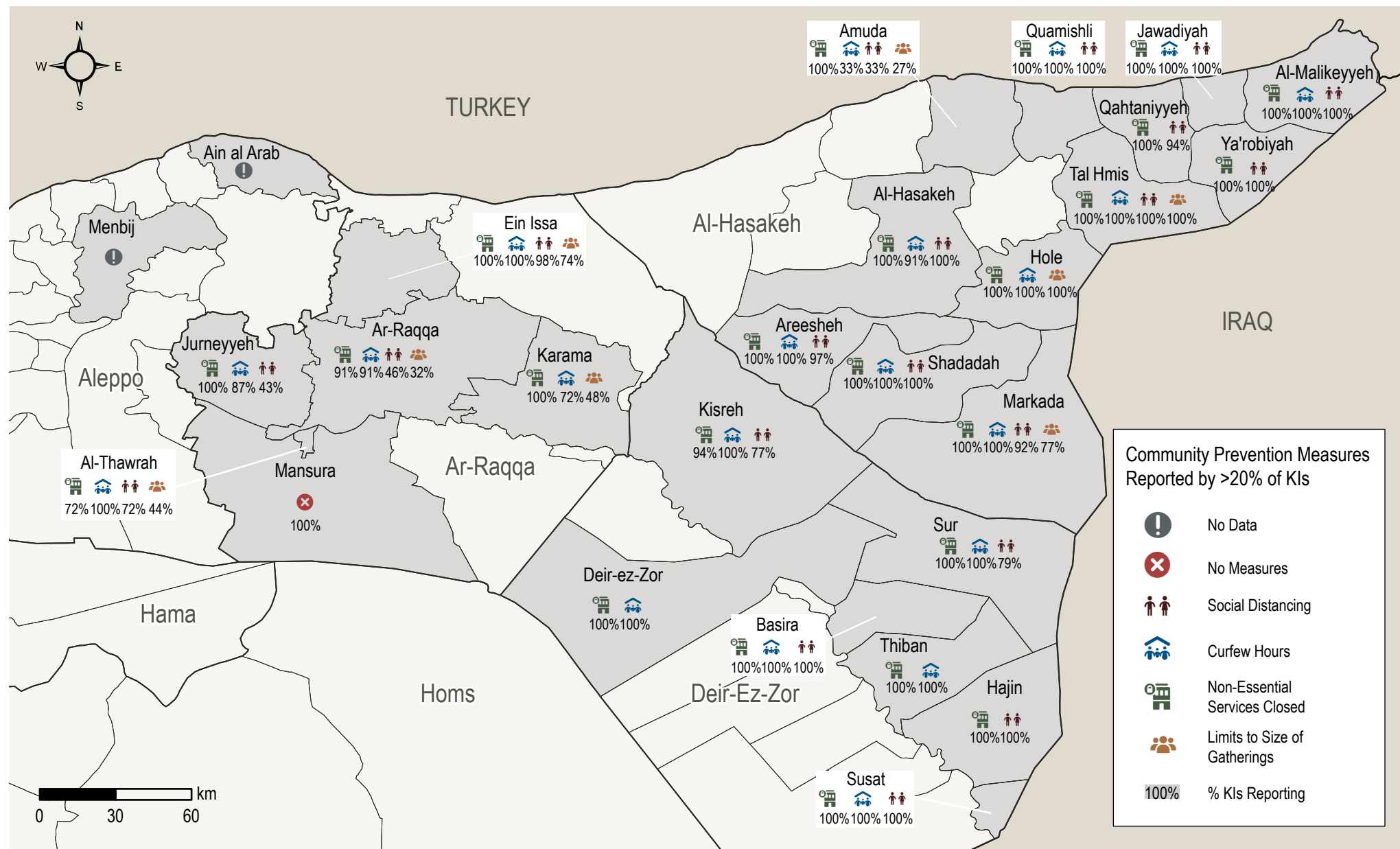
Of all 715 vendor KIs who were asked about stockpiling, 20% reported that they had witnessed stockpiling behaviour in their shops (see figure 3). This was most commonly reported in Al-Hasakeh governorate, where 42% had witnessed stockpiling behaviour, compared to 18% in Ar-Raqqa and 8% in Deir-ez-Zor. Stockpiling behaviour was mostly observed in general food shops (42%), pharmacies (35%), vegetable shops (19%), and water services (18%).

Figure 3: Percentage of vendors reporting witnessing stockpiling behaviour in their markets



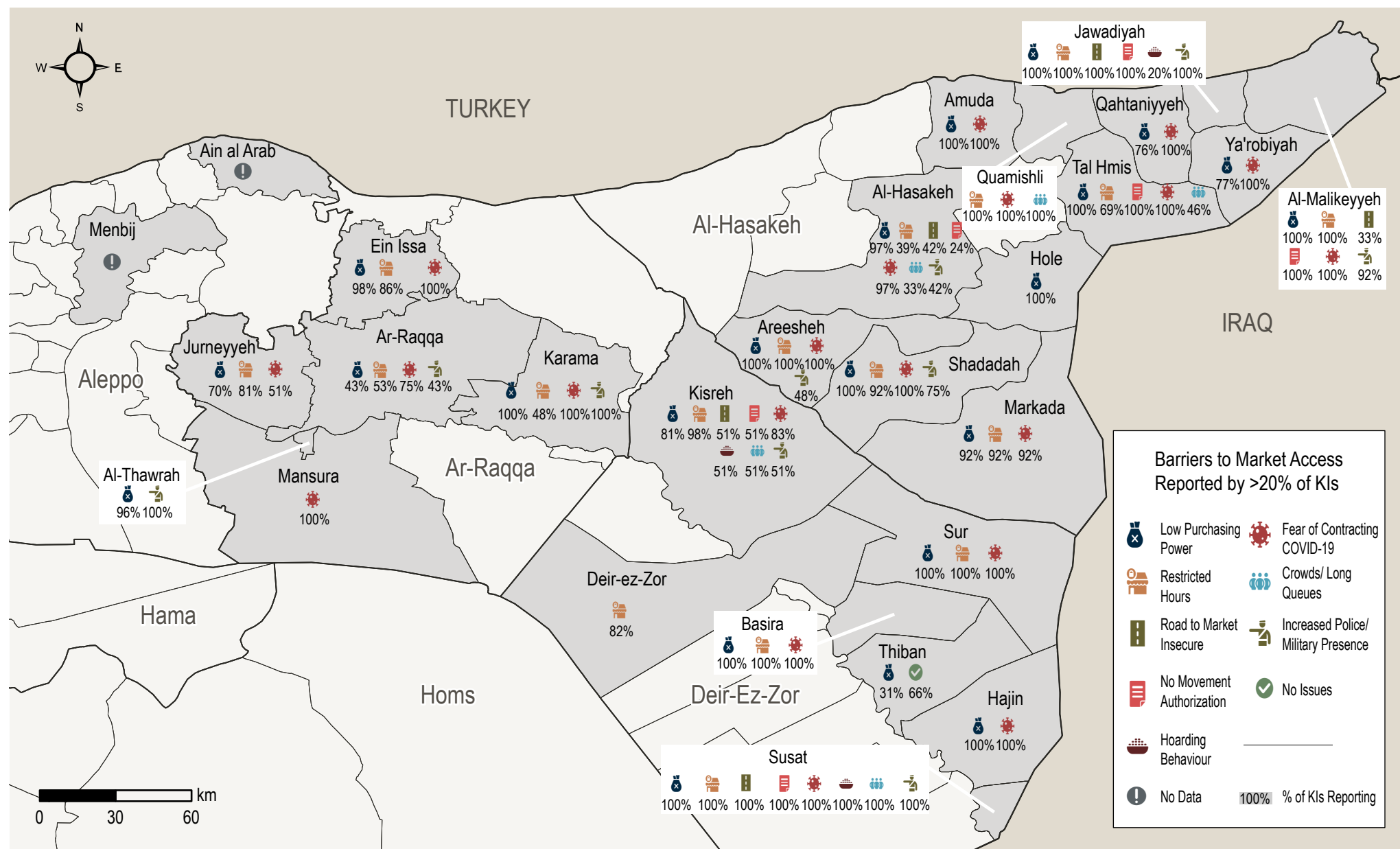
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MAP 2: MOST COMMONLY REPORTED COMMUNITY PREVENTION MEASURES IN NES



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MARKETS IN NORTHEAST SYRIA

MAP 3: MOST COMMONLY REPORTED BARRIERS FOR ACCESSING MARKETS IN NES



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SUPPLY AND DEMAND

COVID-19 CAUSES INCREASE IN DEMAND

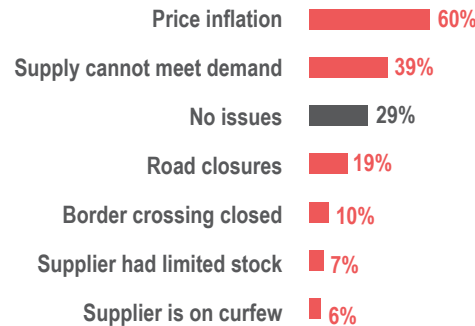
Nearly half (46%) of 715 surveyed vendors reported an increase in demand due to COVID-19. This was largely reported in Al-Hasakeh governorate (62%), followed by Ar-Raqqa (43%), and Deir-ez-Zor (41%). Increase in demand was most frequently reported by hygiene vendors (90%), pharmacists (78%) and general food shop vendors (63%), likely all closely linked with communities' responses under COVID-19 and relevant preventative measures. In Al-Hasakeh, all vendors also reported an increase in the demand for communication services and LPG.

Increases in demand were also causing supply challenges. Of 732 vendors in NES, 39% reported that the supply in their shop was not able to meet the increased demand. This was most commonly reported in Al-Hasakeh governorate (61%), followed by Deir-ez-Zor (58%) and Ar-Raqqa (23%). In Al-Hasakeh governorate, the majority of all vendor types (except for communications services and informal exchange rate shops) reported that supply could not meet demand. Similarly, in Deir-ez-Zor governorate, a majority of all vendors reported challenges in meeting demand, especially for hygiene items (100%), vegetables (100%) and LPG (88%). In Ar-Raqqa, this was most widely reported by vendors selling fuel and LPG (67%), and pharmacists (34%).

SUPPLY CHALLENGES FACED BY VENDORS

Other supply challenges were also reported. When 775 vendors were asked about their main supply challenges, 60% reported price inflation (see figure 4). Twenty-nine percent (29%) of vendors reported no issues and 19% reported that road closures/ from their community was a challenge to supply.

Figure 4: Main supply challenges as reported by vendor KIs (773 respondents)*



*Multiple answers allowed, thus findings may exceed 100%

MAIN ORIGIN OF SUPPLY FROM WITHIN SYRIA

Vendors who reported road closures as a supply challenge were also asked where their supply was located. Most vendors' supplies were from Syria or Iraq. Specifically, 84% of vendor KIs reported procuring from another governorate within Syria, followed by 25% of vendors reporting main supply coming from within the same governorate, 28% reporting procuring items from Iraq, and 9% from Turkey. At the governorate level, 72% of vendors in Al-Hasakeh governorate reported that supply was coming from Iraq compared to 29% in Ar-Raqqa and 14% in Deir-ez-Zor governorates. These vendors were primarily communications services (55%), general food stores (49%), informal exchange vendors (44%), and hygiene vendors (33%). Vendors in Ar-Raqqa governorate were the only ones to report that their main supply was coming from Turkey (33%). This included hygiene vendors (33%), communications services (18%), butchers (17%), and fresh vegetable vendors (15%).

INCREASE IN NUMBER OF DAILY CUSTOMERS

While nearly half of vendors reported an increase in demand, this did not necessarily imply more customers were visiting their shops. Among 715 vendors, 41% reported that the number of customers visiting their stores had stayed the same, 40% that visits had increased, and 19% that visits decreased. This implies that the reported increase in demand was from customers buying more, rather than from more visitors. Fuel vendors more frequently reported a decrease in the number of daily customers (36%), followed by informal exchange rate vendors (34%), and butchers (26%). Hygiene vendors most commonly reported an increase in daily visits to their stores (90%), followed by pharmacists (68%), general food stores (52%), and water trucking services (51%).

VENDORS RAN OUT OF SUPPLIES IN THE PAST MONTH

Relatedly, vendors who identified issues meeting demand were also asked if they had run out of supplies in the month prior to data collection. Of 294 vendors, 48% reported they had run out, with the majority being in Deir-ez-Zor (57%), followed by Al-Hasakeh (54%) and Ar-Raqqa (26%). This shortage challenge was most commonly reported by hygiene vendors (71%), pharmacists (68%), and LPG vendors (64%). Given that these vendor types also reported an increase in demand in the current COVID-19 context, supply may continue to be a challenge, in particular if travel routes continue to be impacted.

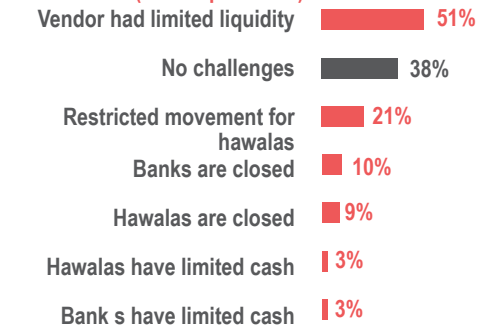
FEW VENDORS LIMITED NUMBER OF ITEMS SOLD TO AVOID RUNNING OUT

In NES, only 6% of 715 vendors reported limiting the number of items to be sold per household. No vendors in Deir-ez-Zor governorate reported this, whereas 21% of vendors in Al-Hasakeh reported this strategy. Of these, all LPG vendors reported limiting the sale of gas, specifically that only one cylinder of gas was sold per family. Forty-seven per cent (47%) of pharmacists reported similar measures, including limiting the sale of sterile alcohol, face masks, gloves, and medication for chronic diseases. One quarter of vendors in Al-Hasakeh governorate reported limiting the number of bread pieces sold per household (see page 7).

VENDORS REPORTED HAVING LOW LIQUIDITY

When 773 vendors were asked if they faced any financing issues, 51% reported limited liquidity, followed by 38% reporting no current financing challenges (see figure 5). At the governorate level, challenges differed. For example, 17% of vendors in Al-Hasakeh and 10% in Ar-Raqqa reported that hawala agents were closed, while only 2% reported this in Deir-ez-Zor (see map 4).

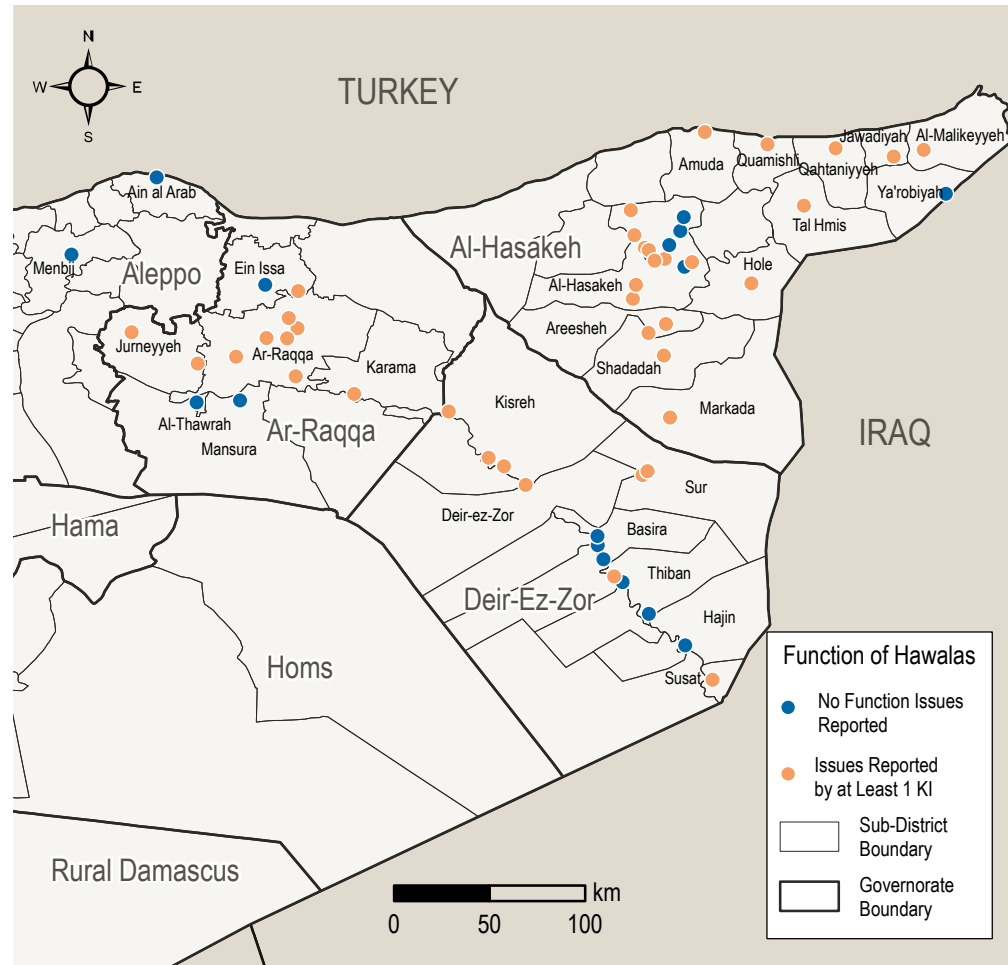
Figure 5: Main financing challenges as reported by vendor KIs (773 respondents)*



*Multiple answers allowed, thus findings may exceed 100%

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MAP 4: REPORTED FUNCTIONALITY OF HAWALAS IN NES



RESTOCKING

RESTOCKING CHALLENGES REPORTED

Though supply challenges were reported, most vendors did not conclude that their supply of their usual goods would be completely cut. At the time of this assessment, 16% of 775 surveyed vendors reported that they would not be able to restock if they were to run out of supplies. The highest proportion of vendors reporting this were found in Deir-ez-Zor governorate (29%), followed by 22% in Al-Hasakeh and 8% in Ar-Raqqqa governorates. Across vendor types, hygiene item vendors most commonly reported not being able to restock if supplies were to run out (33%), followed by 23% of pharmacists and 21% of bakers.

At the governorate level, challenges to restocking differed across vendor types. In Al-Hasakeh, the main vendor types reporting challenges to restocking were vegetable vendors (50%), butchers (33%) and pharmacists (32%). In Ar-Raqqqa, the main vendor types were water trucking services (33%), informal exchange rate vendors (21%) and bakers (16%). Lastly, in Deir-ez-Zor, which had the highest proportion of vendors reporting restocking challenges overall (29%), it was mainly hygiene vendors (83%), vegetable vendors (64%) and LPG vendors (63%). However, since this assessment, the Semalka border crossing has reportedly reopened, which may ease re-stocking challenges reported by vendors.

DEPLETION OF STOCK LEVELS IF NOT ABLE TO RESTOCK

The same vendors were also asked after how many days they would run out if they were not able to restock. Sixty-eight per cent (68%) answered

that they would run out within a week. At the governorate level, the majority of vendors who answered that they would run out within three days were in Ar-Raqqqa (47%), Deir-ez-Zor (35%), and Al-Hasakeh (30%). The majority of vendors reporting on depletion of stock levels within three days were water trucking services (98%), vegetable vendors (80%), butchers (65%) and communication vendors (51%). While more limited stock is to be expected from vegetable vendors and butchers due to perishability of goods, limited stock for water services and communication vendors might indicate more serious supply issues.

Related to COVID-19, 60% and 46% of hygiene and pharmacists, respectively, reported a depletion of stock levels within a week (see figures 6 and 7). Notably, both hygiene and pharmacists were the ones who most commonly reported that they would not be able to restock if current supply was cut off.

Figure 6: Reported number of days before hygiene vendors would run out of stock, if supply lines were cut (15 respondents)

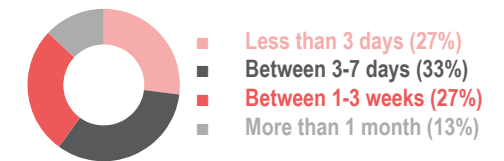


Figure 7: Reported number of days before pharmacies would run out of stock, if supply lines were cut (102 respondents)





MEASURES TAKEN BY SHOP OWNERS

Across NES, 86% of vendors reported taking precautionary measures in their shops, implying that most had awareness of the virus. When 715 vendors were asked which measures they were taking in their shops in light of COVID-19, the most commonly reported measures were using face masks (73%) and gloves (72%), followed by the use of antibacterial gel (47%). However, it is unclear whether shop vendors were requiring customers to adopt these measures as well. Overall, a higher proportion of shop vendors in both Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa governorates

reported taking measures against the spread of COVID-19 compared to vendors in Deir-ez-Zor governorate, where 19% reported not taking any measures (see table 1). At the regional level, 12% reported priority care for older adults; however, wide differences existed across sub-districts (see map 5). For example, priority care was reported as a measure by all vendors in Quamishli sub-district, followed by 70% in Jawadiyyeh and al-Hasakeh, 50% in al-Malikkeyyeh and 44% in both Karama and Shadadah sub-districts.

TABLE 1: MOST COMMONLY REPORTED MEASURES TAKEN BY INDIVIDUAL SHOP OWNERS TO CURB THE SPREAD OF COVID-19*

	Regional	Al-Hasakeh	Ar-Raqqa	Deir-ez-Zor
Use of face masks	73%	81%	71%	70%
Use of gloves	72%	82%	66%	74%
Use of antibacterial gel	47%	54%	42%	49%
Ensuring social distancing in queues	21%	37%	23%	7%
Limiting the number of people inside shop	17%	20%	23%	8%
None	14%	9%	11%	19%
Priority care for older adults	12%	37%	10%	0%
Providing handwashing facilities	8%	5%	16%	1%
Set up fence/barriers for order	0%	0%	1%	0%

*Multiple answers allowed, thus findings may exceed 100%



BAKERIES

54 surveyed bakers were asked whether they had changed activities after COVID-19. Across governorates, 37% reported that there were no change in their bakeries' activities and none reported that bakeries were generally closed in their community. However, 56% reported that they were working shorter hours, mainly in communities that were also experiencing curfew hours. Seventeen percent (17%) also reported that they were limiting the number of people inside their shops. In order to avoid shortages, 25% of bakers in Al-Hasakeh reported that they limited the number of pieces of bread sold per household. Similar measures were reported by 8% of bakers in Ar-Raqqa. No vendors in Deir-ez-Zor reported limiting bread sold per household.

MEDIAN NES PRICES OF COVID-19 RELATED ITEMS

- 6,000 SYP** For a box of 100 plastic gloves (non-reusable). In Al-Hasakeh governorate, the median price was recorded at 6,000 SYP and at 4,500 SYP in Deir-ez-Zor.
- 350 SYP** For a single face mask. In Ar-Raqqa governorate, the price was recorded at 400 and in Al-Hasakeh, the price was recorded at 250.
- 2,500 SYP** For 500 ml of hand sanitizer. In Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa governorates, the price was recorded at 2,800 SYP compared to 2,050 in Deir-ez-Zor.
- 4,000 SYP** For 1 L of sterile alcohol. In Ar-Raqqa governorate, the median price was recorded at 6,667 SYP, 2,500 SYP in Deir-ez-Zor and 3,500 in Al-Hasakeh.
- 675 SYP** For 1 L of bottled bleach. In Al-Hasakeh governorate, the median price was recorded at 700 SYP, 600 in Ar-Raqqa and at 725 SYP in Deir-ez-Zor.
- 1,300 SYP** For a roll of 30 trash bags. In Al-Hasakeh governorate, the median price was recorded at 1,200 SYP, compared to 1,250 SYP in Ar-Raqqa and at 1,350 SYP in Deir-ez-Zor.

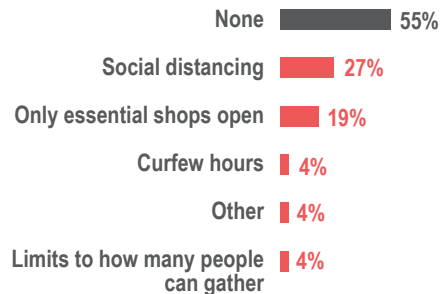
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MARKET FUNCTIONALITY

In contrast to NES, mitigation measures were less widespread in NWS. When asked what measures were being imposed by authorities in their communities in an attempt to limit the spread of COVID-19, 55% of 1,855 surveyed vendors reported that no measures were in place (see figure 8). Where measures were in place, social distancing (see map 6) was most commonly reported (27%), followed by only essential shops remaining open (19%). Curfew hours, limits to the number of people allowed to gather and other measures (such as the closure of weekly markets) were also reported less frequently (see figure 8).

Figure 8: Main prevention measures imposed on markets as reported by vendor KIs (1,855 respondents)*



*Multiple answers allowed, thus findings may exceed 100%

MEASURES IMPOSED ON INDIVIDUAL SHOPS

Further, only 1% of vendors across NWS reported having closed their shops as a result of COVID-19. A higher proportion of vendors reported closure of their shops in Aleppo governorate, where communication services, informal exchange vendors and hygiene vendors all reported shop closures at 8%.

When vendor KIs were asked more generally about which shop types were still open in their communities, the most commonly reported were

pharmacies (reported open by 100% of vendors), followed by fresh food shops (99%) and hygiene item shops (96%). At the governorate level, the shop types least commonly reported as remaining open were bulk food shops in Aleppo (79% reported as open), and bakeries in Idlib (90% reported as open).

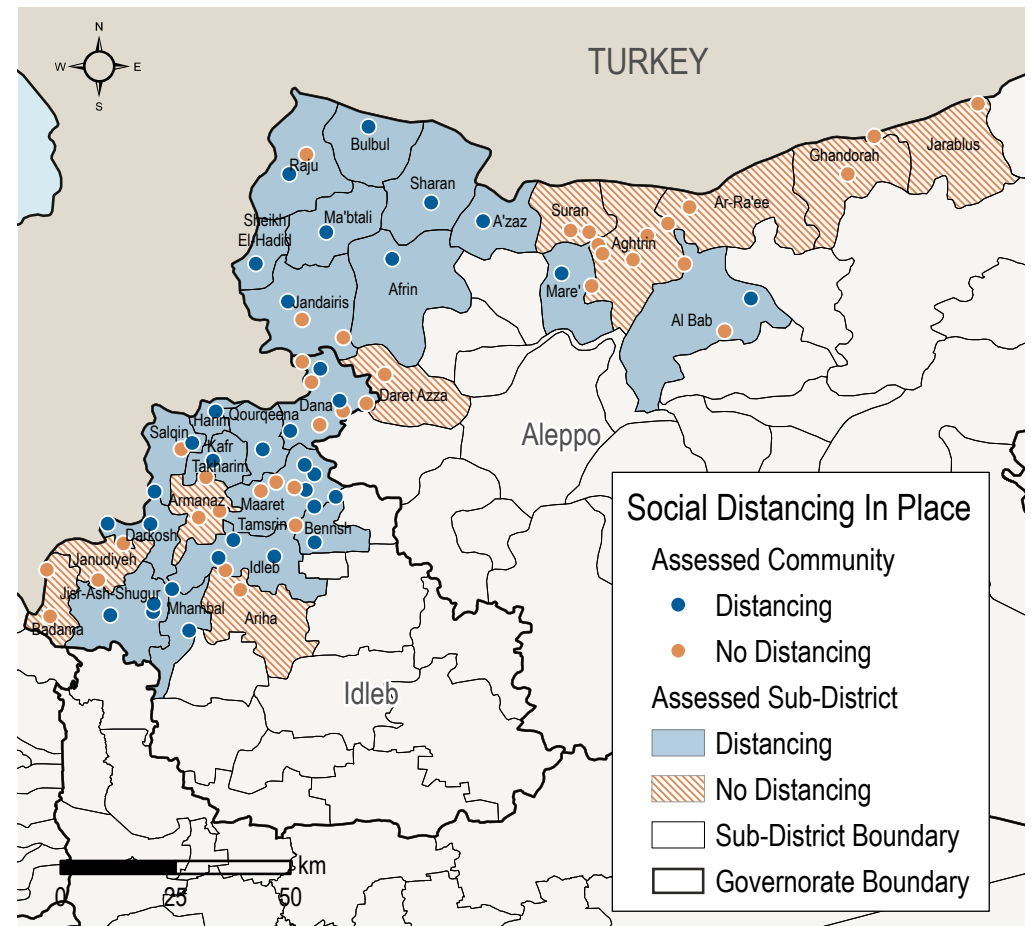
At the regional level, 81% of 1,830 vendors reported that no measures had been imposed on their shops. However, across NWS, 10% of vendors reported that there was a limit to how many customers could be in their shop at a time. This was reported across all vendor types, except for fuel, LPG, and water vendors in Aleppo governorate.

Six percent (6%) of vendors in both Aleppo and Idlib governorates reported the imposition of price ceilings by local authorities. In Aleppo governorate, this was most commonly reported by bakers (25%), and in Idlib governorate by LPG vendors (38%). Finally, 5% of vendors across NWS reported limited opening hours of their shops.

OTHER DELIVERY OPTIONS AVAILABLE

Seventy-two percent (72%) of 1,855 surveyed vendors reported that delivery (door-to-door) services were available in their communities. Water trucking services were most commonly reported as available in both Aleppo (70%) and Idlib (73%) governorates. Other delivery options were commonly available in Aleppo, including food delivery (18% in Aleppo; 6% in Idlib) and LPG (13% in Aleppo; 3% in Idlib). Bread delivery was reportedly available to a similar degree in Aleppo (4%) and Idlib (5%).

MAP 6: REPORTED SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES IN COMMUNITIES IN NWS



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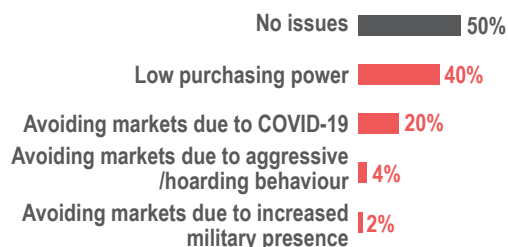


MARKET ACCESSIBILITY

MAIN REPORTED BARRIERS TO ACCESSING MARKETS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Non-COVID-19 specific challenges were the most commonly reported barriers to accessing markets in NWS, according to vendors. Across governorates, the main reported barriers for community members in accessing markets were low purchasing power of community members (40%). However, 20% did report that avoiding markets due to COVID-19 was a barrier for community members (see figure 9). Avoiding markets due to COVID-19 was most commonly reported in A'zaz (100%), Bulbul (82%) and Raju (71%) sub-districts of Aleppo governorate, and in Badama sub-district of Idlib governorate (58%).

Figure 9: Main barriers to accessing markets for community members as reported by vendor KIs (1,848 respondents)*



*Multiple answers allowed, thus findings may exceed 100%

REPORTED INCREASED BARRIERS FOR SOME POPULATION GROUPS

A total of 1,848 vendors were also asked whether certain population groups were experiencing increased barriers to accessing markets. Here, 147 vendors (8%) reported that not all community members had equal access to markets. Five percent (5%) reported that persons with disabilities

faced more barriers, followed by persons with medical conditions (4%), and elderly persons (4%).

STOCKPILING BEHAVIOUR BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Of 1,830 vendor KIs who responded, 10% reported that they had witnessed stockpiling behaviour in their shops (see figure 10). This was reported to similar degrees in both Aleppo (9%) and Idlib (10%) governorates. Stockpiling behaviour was most commonly observed in pharmacies (33%), hygiene shops (19%), fuel services (19%) and general food shops (18%).

Figure 10: Percentage of vendors reporting witnessing stockpiling behaviour in their markets (1,830 respondents)



MEASURES TAKEN BY SHOP OWNERS

Across NWS, 72% of vendors reported taking one or more measures in their shops to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including the use of gloves (50%), face masks (44%), and antibacterial gel (27%). However, as with NES, it is unclear whether vendors were requiring customers to adopt these measures as well.

Overall, a higher proportion of shop vendors in Idlib governorate reported taking measures against the spread of COVID-19 (80%) compared to vendors in Aleppo, where 40% reported taking measures (see table 2). Beyond the three most commonly reported measures, this pattern applied to additional measures as well. For example, 26% of vendors in Idlib reported providing hand-washing facilities, compared to 3% of vendors in Aleppo. Additionally, 18% of vendors in Idlib reported priority care for older adults, while 6% of vendors in Aleppo reported the same.

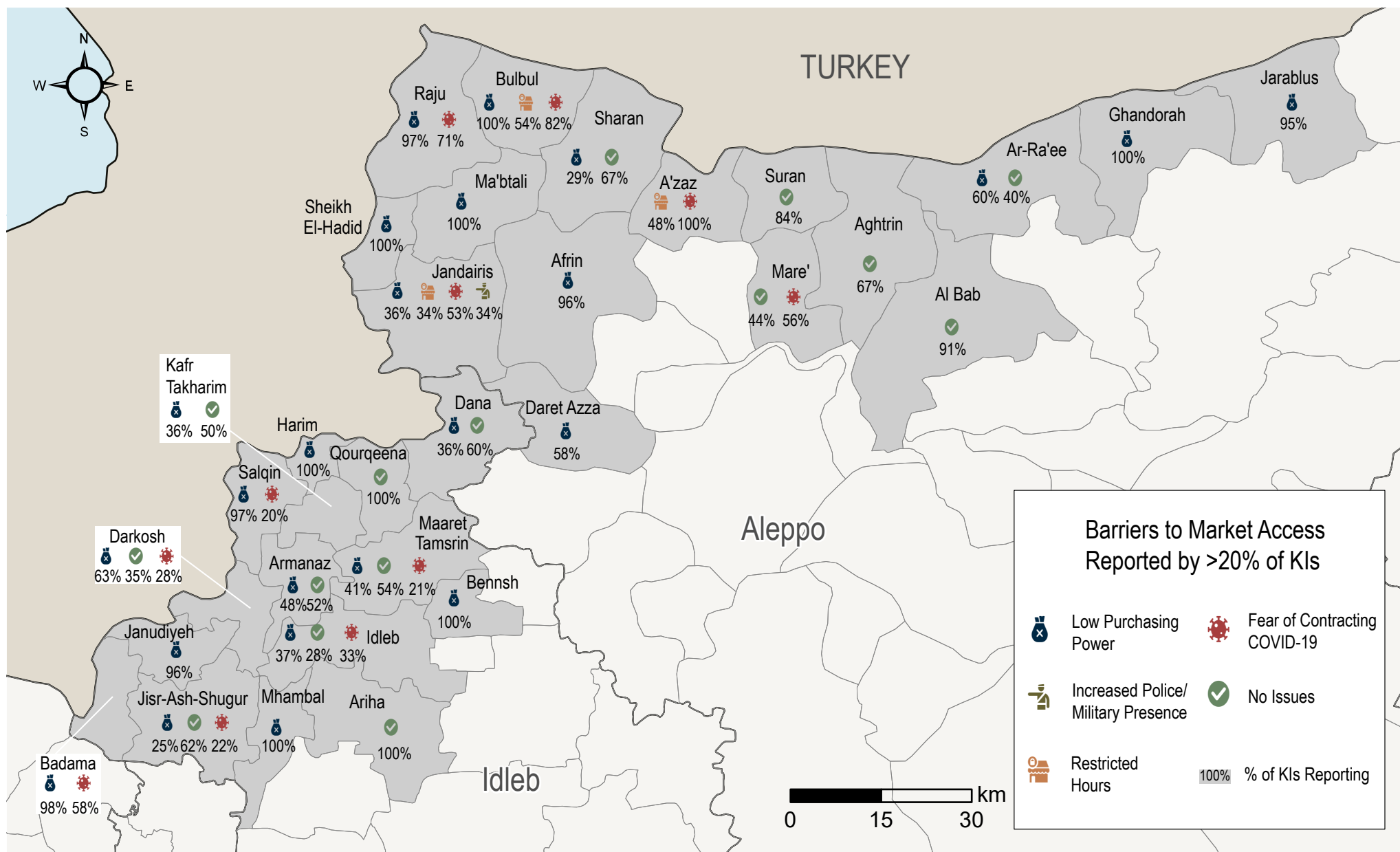
TABLE 2: MOST COMMONLY REPORTED MEASURES TAKEN BY INDIVIDUAL SHOP OWNERS TO CURB THE SPREAD OF COVID-19*

	Regional	Aleppo	Idlib
Use of gloves	50%	48%	51%
Use of face masks	44%	38%	49%
None	28%	40%	20%
Use of antibacterial gel	27%	23%	29%
Providing handwashing facilities	16%	3%	26%
Priority care for older adults	13%	6%	18%
Ensuring social distancing in queues	11%	8%	12%
Limiting the number of people inside shop	5%	1%	8%
Setting up fence/barriers for orders	1%	0%	1%

*Multiple answers allowed, thus findings may exceed 100%

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MARKETS IN NORTHWEST SYRIA

MAP 7: MAIN REPORTED BARRIERS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN ACCESSING MARKETS IN NWS



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MARKETS IN NORTHWEST SYRIA



SUPPLY AND DEMAND

DEMAND AFTER COVID-19

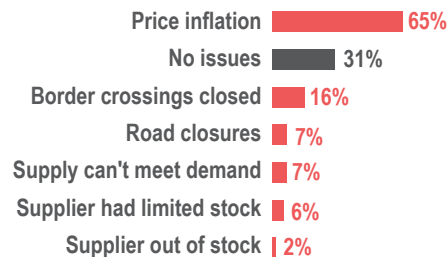
Across both governorates, 20% of 1,830 surveyed vendors reported an increase in demand due to COVID-19. This was mainly reported by pharmacists in Idleb (83%) and Aleppo (77%) governorates. Hygiene vendors also reported an increase in demand in both governorates, as reported by 58% of hygiene vendors in Idleb and 46% in Aleppo. Additionally, in Idleb governorate, 31% of fuel vendors and 24% of general food shop vendors reported increased demand, along with 14% of general food shop vendors in Aleppo governorate.

Although one-fifth of vendors reported an increase in demand, for the most part this did not represent a challenge. Regionally, 7% of vendors reported that their supply was unable to meet demand. Vendors most commonly reported this issue in Bulbul sub-district of Aleppo governorate (39%) and in Kafr Takharim (36%) and Janudiyeh (35%) sub-districts of Idleb. Pharmacists most commonly reported being unable to meet demand, where 26% reported this in Aleppo governorate, and 17% in Idleb.

SUPPLY CHALLENGES FACED BY VENDORS

Yet, other supply challenges did exist more widely. Across NWS, 64% of 1,862 surveyed vendors reported supply issues, with the most commonly reported supply issues being price inflation (65%) and closure of border crossings (16%) (see figure 11). Border closures reportedly affected supply more commonly for vendors in Aleppo governorate (28%), compared to 8% Idleb (see map 8).

Figure 11: Main supply challenges as reported by vendor KIs (1,862 respondents)*



*Multiple answers allowed, thus findings may exceed 100%

MAIN ORIGIN OF SUPPLY

The 314 vendors who reported issues with road and/or border closures were asked where their main supply was coming from; a majority of vendors reported procuring from Turkey (91%), followed by 83% procuring from a different governorate in Syria, and 64% procuring items from within the same governorate. Notably, a February REACH Market Network analysis² found that less than 1% of vendors were crossing areas of influence in order to restock supplies. While all vendor types that responded to this supply question commonly reported sourcing items from Turkey, this was more commonly reported in Aleppo governorate, with 93% reporting their supplies were from Turkey, compared to 85% in Idleb governorate. Similarly, vendors in Aleppo governorate more commonly reported sourcing from a different governorate within Syria (86%) than did those in Idleb (76%). Depending on developments related to border crossings under the COVID-19 environment, such supply challenges may remain, particularly for vendors supplying from Turkey or other governorates within Syria.

NUMBER OF DAILY CUSTOMERS INCREASED FOR SOME VENDORS

Vendors were also asked whether the number of customers visiting their store had changed in the past month. Seventy-five per cent (75%) of 1,830 vendors answered that it had stayed the same. However, by vendor type, nuances were reported in increased or decreased shop visits in Aleppo and Idleb governorates. Pharmacy and hygiene vendors most commonly reported that visits to their stores had increased, reported by 75% and 45% respectively in Aleppo, and 59% and 39% in Idleb. Conversely, butchers and vegetable vendors reported less frequent visits, reported by 30% and 20% respectively in Aleppo, and 22% and 14% in Idleb governorate.

Of the 364 vendors who reported an increase in daily visits to their store, 73% reported an increase of up to 25%, and 22% reported an increase of up to 50% in daily visits. Of the 130 vendors who reported a decrease, 83% reported up to a 25% decrease of daily customers and 55% reported a decrease of daily customers up to 50%.

VENDORS — ESPECIALLY PHARMACISTS — HAD RUN OUT OF SUPPLIES IN THE PAST MONTH

Relatedly, vendors who identified experiencing issues meeting demand were also asked if they had run out of supplies in the month prior to data collection. Of 130 vendors, 25% reported they had run out, with similar levels in Aleppo (27%) and Idleb (25%) governorates. **Pharmacists were the vendor type that most commonly reported issues keeping up with demand in both governorates and, of those who did report issues, 53% (10 of 19) reported running out of**

stock in Idleb governorate, and 44% (8 of 18) reported running out in Aleppo.

FEW VENDORS REPORTED LIMITING NUMBER OF ITEMS SOLD TO AVOID RUNNING OUT

At the regional level, only 2% of 1,830 surveyed vendors reported that they were limiting the sale of certain items sold per household in their shops. At both the regional and governorate levels, pharmacists most commonly reported limiting the sale of some items sold in their shop, with 22% reporting this in Aleppo governorate, and 13% in Idleb. These items included face masks (86%), gloves (76%), and sterile alcohol and other disinfectants (34%).

VENDORS REPORTED LIMITED LIQUIDITY

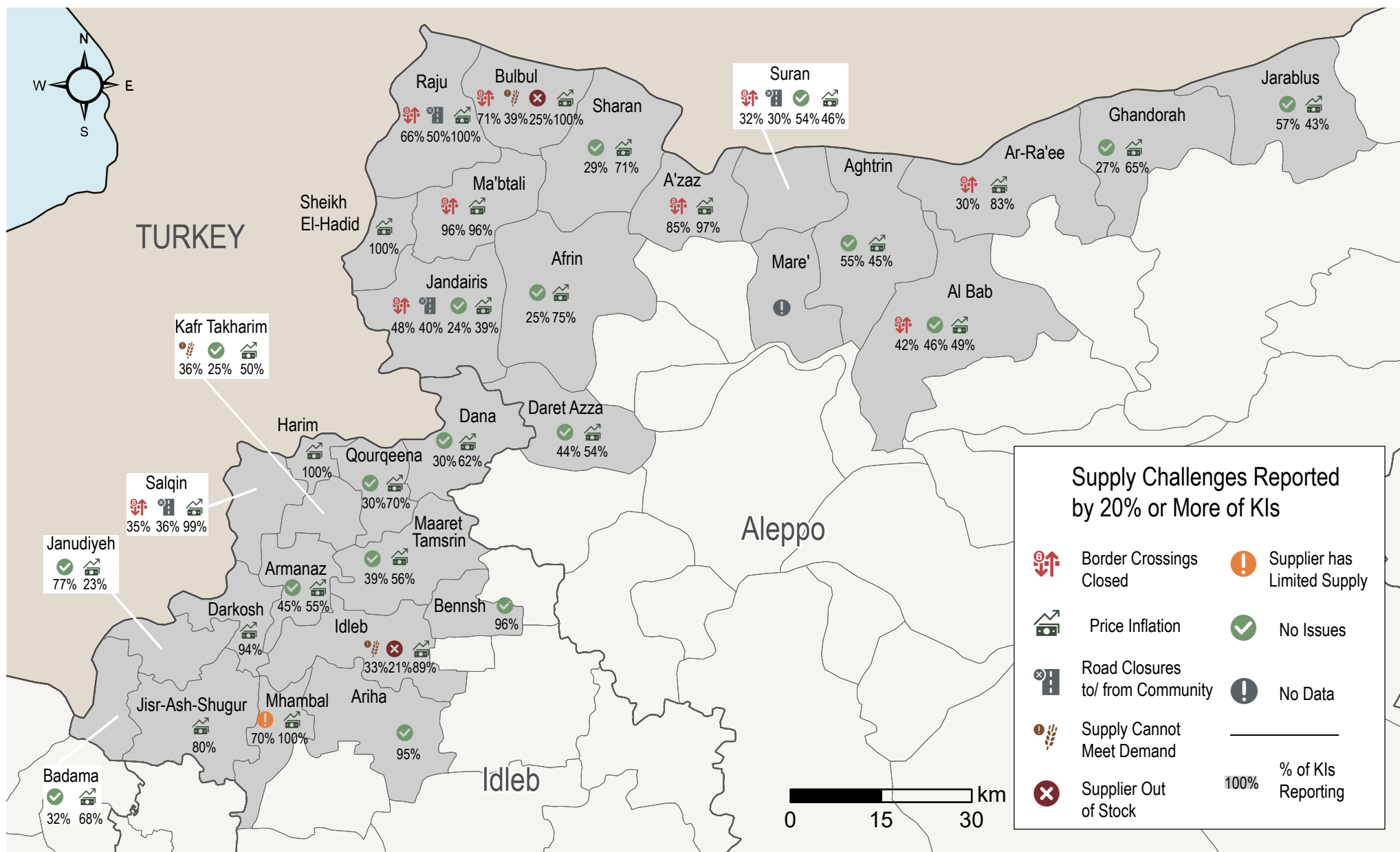
Forty-six percent (46%) of 1,855 vendors reported facing one or more financing challenges (see figure 12). The most commonly reported financing challenge was vendors' own lack of liquidity, reported by 50% of vendors in Idleb governorate and 35% in Aleppo. The vendor types most commonly reporting this issue were LPG (66%) and fuel vendors (60%), vegetable (59%) and general food vendors (55%).

Few vendors identified experiencing additional financial challenges, and those that did primarily cited issues regarding hawalas. For example, 2% of vendors reported that hawala agents had limited cash, 2% reported hawala agents had restricted movement, and 1% reported hawala shops were closed.

² Product is available upon request.

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MAP 8: MAIN REPORTED SUPPLY CHALLENGES FOR VENDORS IN NWS



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MARKETS IN NORTHWEST SYRIA



RESTOCKING

REPORTED INABILITY TO RESTOCK IF SUPPLY WAS TO RUN OUT

At the time of this assessment, 8% of 1,830 vendors in both Aleppo and Idlib governorates reported that they would not be able to restock if they were to run out of supplies. Across vendor types, informal exchange and fuel vendors most commonly reported being unable to restock if supplies were to run out (14%), followed by LPG and communication services (11%).

Among pharmacists, 8% and 10% of KIs in Idlib and Aleppo governorates, respectively, reported that they would be unable to restock if supply ran out. Given that nearly half (49%) of pharmacy KIs also reported that they had run out of stock in the month prior to data collection, this raises supply concerns, particularly within the context of COVID-19.

At the governorate level, reported challenges to restocking differed according to vendor type. In Aleppo, the vendor types who most commonly reported challenges to restocking were fuel (21%) and LPG (17%) vendors, communication services (11%), and pharmacists (10%). In Idlib governorate, the main vendor types reporting this were informal exchange vendors (17%), communication services (11%), and hygiene item vendors (10%).

DEPLETION OF STOCK LEVELS IF NOT ABLE TO RESTOCK

The same vendors were also asked after how many days they would run out, if they were not able to restock. Seventy-three percent (73%) of vendors answered that they would run out within a

week. The majority of vendors who answered that they would run out within three days were in Idlib governorate (43%), followed by Aleppo (40%).

The majority of vendors reporting on depletion of stock-levels within three days were water trucking services (74%), vegetable vendors (70%), butchers (65%) and fuel vendors (47%). While more limited stock is to be expected from vegetable vendors and butchers due to perishability of goods, limited stock for water services and fuel vendors might indicate more serious supply issues.

Furthermore, 62% and 63% of hygiene and pharmacists, respectively, reported a depletion of stock levels within a week (see figures 13 and 14). These were also the shop types that most commonly reported an increased demand since the emergence of COVID-19, with pharmacists also reporting running out of supplies within the month prior to data collection (page 12).

Figure 13: Reported number of days before hygiene vendors would run out of stock, if supply lines were cut (179 respondents)

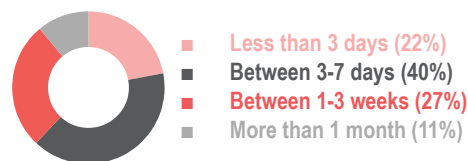
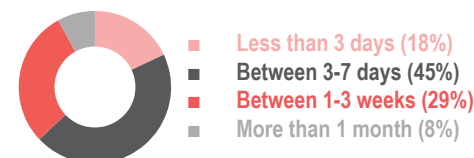


Figure 14: Reported number of days before pharmacies would run out of stock, if supply lines were cut (178 respondents)



BAKERIES

Eight per cent (8%) of 1,848 vendors reported that not all bakeries were open in their communities. This was more frequently reported in Ariha (100%) and Idlib (56%) sub-districts of Idlib, and in Jarablus sub-district of Aleppo (46%). Additionally, 96 bakers were asked whether they had changed activities after COVID-19. Notably, a higher proportion of bakers in Idlib reported changed activities (28%) than in Aleppo governorate (4%). Where changes to bakery activity were reported, changes in distribution methods were most commonly reported across both governorates, by 15% of bakers in Idlib, and by 4% in Aleppo. Only 4% of bakers reported limiting sale of certain items, namely flour and bread.

MEDIAN NWS PRICES OF COVID-19 RELATED ITEMS

7,000 SYP	For a box of 100 plastic gloves (non-reusable) . In Aleppo governorate, the median price was recorded at 7,500 SYP and at 5,500 SYP in Idlib.
300 SYP	For a single face mask . In Aleppo governorate, the median price was recorded at 300 SYP and at 325 SYP in Idlib.
2,000 SYP	For 500 ml of hand sanitizer . In Aleppo governorate, the median price was recorded at 2,000 SYP and at 2,000 SYP in Idlib.
4,700 SYP	For 1 L of sterile alcohol . In Aleppo governorate, the median price was recorded at 5,000 SYP and at 4,700 SYP in Idlib.
600 SYP	For 1 L of bottled bleach . In Aleppo governorate, the median price was recorded at 600 SYP and at 600 SYP in Idlib.
1,200 SYP	For a roll of 30 trash bags . In Aleppo governorate, the median price was recorded at 1,000 SYP and at 1,300 SYP in Idlib.

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).

REACH AND THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

As an initiative deployed in many vulnerable and crisis-affected countries, REACH is deeply concerned by the devastating impact the COVID-19 pandemic may have on the millions of affected people we seek to serve. REACH is currently working with Cash Working Groups and partners to scale up its programming in response to this pandemic, with the goal of identifying practical ways to inform humanitarian responses in the countries where we operate. COVID-19-relevant market monitoring and market assessments are a key area where REACH aims to leverage its existing expertise to help humanitarian actors understand the impact of changing restrictions on markets and trade. Updates regarding REACH's response to COVID-19 can be found in [a devoted thread](#) on the REACH website.

For more information please visit our website: www.reach-initiative.org. You can contact us directly at: geneva@reach-initiative.org and follow us on Twitter [@REACH_info](https://twitter.com/REACH_info)

ABOUT THE CASH WORKING GROUP

The Cash Working Group (CWG) was established in May 2014 to analyse the impact of the ongoing conflict on markets in Syria and guide the implementation of humanitarian cash and voucher programmes within those markets. REACH and the CWG have been partners on the Syria Market Monitoring Exercise since early 2015.

For other REACH Syria products related to COVID-19 and this Situation Overview, please see:

[NWS: Multi-sectorial Rapid Needs Assessment COVID-19 Zoom-in \(March 2020\)](#)

[NES: Market Monitoring Exercise April 2020](#)

[NWS: Market Monitoring Exercise April 2020](#)

[NWS: Supply Analysis February 2020](#)