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This publication is no longer up to date due to current events in Syria. We are reviewing the situation and will issue an update in due course.



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Syria: Humanitarian situation

Version 1.0

June 2022

Archive

Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into 2 parts: (1) an assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note - that is information in the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw - by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies:

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- that the general humanitarian situation is so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to inhuman or degrading treatment as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iii\) of the Immigration Rules](#)/Article 3 of the [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#)
- that the security situation is such that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because there exists a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iv\) of the Immigration Rules](#)
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate and balanced, which is compared and contrasted where appropriate so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture is provided of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote. Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the bibliography.

Feedback

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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Assessment

Updated: 7 June 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 That the general humanitarian situation in Syria is so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment as defined in paragraphs 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules/Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

Official – sensitive: Start of section

2.1.4

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Official – sensitive: End of section

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2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 2.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).

- 2.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

Official – sensitive: Start of section

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Official – sensitive: End of section

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2.3 **Convention reason(s)**

- 2.3.1 A severe humanitarian situation and/or a state of civil instability and/or where law and order has broken down, which might exist in some places outside of government control, do not of themselves give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution for a Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.3.2 In the absence of a link to one of the 5 Refugee Convention grounds necessary to be recognised as a refugee, the question to address is whether the person will face a real risk of serious harm in order to qualify for Humanitarian Protection (HP).
- 2.3.3 However, **before considering whether a person requires protection because of the general humanitarian and/or security situation, decision makers must consider if the person faces a reasonable degree of likelihood of persecution for a Refugee Convention reason.** Where the person qualifies for protection under the Refugee Convention, decision makers do not need to consider if there are substantial grounds for believing the person faces a real risk of serious harm and a grant of HP. Decision makers must consult the [Country Policy and Information Note \(CPIN\) on Syria: Returnees](#) prior to making any decisions regarding HP.
- 2.3.4 For further guidance on Convention reasons see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.3.5 For guidance on Humanitarian Protection see the Asylum Instruction, [Humanitarian Protection](#).

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2.4 **Risk**

a. **General risk on return**

- 2.4.1 In the Country Guidance case of [KB \(Failed asylum seekers and forced returnees\) Syria CG \[2012\] UKUT 426 \(IAC\) \(20 December 2012\)](#), heard 6-7 March 2012, 7 August 2012 and promulgated on 20 December 2012, the Upper Tribunal (UT) found that:

‘... in the context of the extremely high level of human rights abuses currently occurring in Syria, a regime which appears increasingly concerned to crush any sign of resistance, it is likely that a failed asylum seeker or forced returnee would, in general, on arrival face a real risk of arrest and

detention and of serious mistreatment during that detention as a result of imputed political opinion. That is sufficient to qualify for refugee protection. The position might be otherwise in the case of someone who, notwithstanding a failed claim for asylum, would still be perceived on return to Syria as a supporter of the Assad regime' (paragraph 32).

- 2.4.2 Based on the available country evidence, there are not very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence to depart from the findings in KB. As such, it is considered likely that most forced returnees would, in general, on arrival face a real risk of arrest and detention and of serious mistreatment during that detention that would qualify them for refugee protection. For more information see the [Country Policy and Information Note Syria: Returnees](#).

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b. Humanitarian situation

- 2.4.3 On the available evidence, regarding the proportion of governorate populations who are considered to be in extreme and catastrophic need of humanitarian assistance, it is considered that the humanitarian situation in Al-Hasakeh, Idlib and Ar-Raqqa governorates is so severe that a person is likely to face a real risk of serious harm as conditions amount to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment as defined in paragraphs 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules/Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- 2.4.4 However, living conditions in other parts of the country vary. Groups who may be particularly vulnerable to serious harm because of their status and individual circumstances, such as women, children, the elderly and the disabled, may face a risk of a breach of Article 3. Decision makers must consider, on the facts of the case, whether a returnee, by reason of their individual circumstances, would face a real risk of serious harm contrary to paragraphs 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules/Article 3 ECHR as a result of the humanitarian situation.
- 2.4.5 According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) there are 14.6 million people in Syria in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022, totalling 67.2% of the population. An increase of 1.2 million compared to 2021 (see [People in need – numbers and location](#)).
- 2.4.6 The civil war has led to widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, explosive ordnance contamination and the largest number of internally displaced people (IDP) in the world, 6.9 million people, equating to 32% of the population of Syria. Of these, over 2 million reside in 1,760 'last resort sites' such as informal settlements and camps, planned camps and collective centres, with the vast majority living in Idlib (69%) and Aleppo (22%) with the remaining residing in Ar-Raqqa, Deir-ez-Zor, Al-Hasakeh, Damascus and Rural Damascus. Available evidence indicates that those living in last resort sites often experience worse living conditions and adopt harmful coping strategies more frequently than those IDPs living outside of sites/camps (see [Overview](#) and [Internally displaced people \(IDPs\)](#)).
- 2.4.7 According to UNOCHA, the humanitarian aid sectors with the highest numbers of people requiring assistance are food security (13.9 million)

water, sanitation and hygiene (13.2 million) and healthcare (12.2 million) (see [Humanitarian situation](#)). Syria is currently facing its worst economic crisis since the civil war began, with the combined effects of currency depreciation, soaring prices for food, fuel and basic goods, reduced fiscal spending and economic sanctions likely to deepen the humanitarian crisis in Syria, particularly regarding food insecurity (see [Economy](#)).

- 2.4.8 Aleppo (2.7 million), Idlib (2.7 million) and Rural Damascus (2.4 million), Al-Hasakeh (1 million) and Hama (1 million) are the 5 governorates hosting the largest numbers of people in need (see [People in need – numbers and location](#)).
- 2.4.9 The governorates with the highest proportion of people in need out of the total population are Quneitra (100%), Idlib (93%), Al-Hasakeh (91%), Ar-Raqqa (88%), Deir-ez-Zor (82%), Rural Damascus (80%) and As-Sweida (75%). Additionally, the governorates with the highest proportion of people in 'extreme' and 'catastrophic need' (see paragraph 4.2.1 for information regarding the methodology underpinning these severity classifications) are Al-Hasakeh (65%), Idlib (60%) and Ar-Raqqa (58%) (see [People in need – numbers and location](#)).
- 2.4.10 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.5 Certification

- 2.5.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.5.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

Section 3 updated: 7 June 2022

3. Socio-economic situation

3.1 Basic indicators

Population	21.7 million ¹
Life expectancy	74.01 years (2021 estimate) ²
Maternal mortality rate (deaths per 100,000 live births)	31 (2017 estimate) ³
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	14.0 (2020 estimate) ⁴ , 16.27 (2021 estimate) ⁵
Child malnutrition (under age 5)	3.7 million (245,000 acutely malnourished, 553,000 chronically malnourished) ⁶
Literacy rate (age 15 and older)	80.845% (2004 estimate – latest data available) ⁷
Population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older)	41.0% (2020 estimate) ⁸

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3.2 Economy

3.2.1 On 15 December 2021 the International Rescue Committee (IRC) published its 2022 Emergency Watchlist for humanitarian situations across the world. The report ranked Syria as having the 9th worst humanitarian situation in the world and stated:

‘Syria is facing the worst economic crisis since the war began—a situation that is likely to deepen in 2022 and exacerbate food insecurity for millions. The crisis is driven by a range of factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic collapse in neighboring Lebanon. The average price of essential food items increased by 236% between December 2019 and December 2020, while the Syrian pound lost 82% of its value against the dollar as the Lebanese economic crisis deepened between October 2019 and October 2021. The economic situation has contributed to record levels of food insecurity; 60% of the population are now facing food insecurity. As

¹ UNOCHA, [‘2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic’](#) (page 3), 22 February 2022

² CIA World Factbook, [‘Syria – People and Society’](#), updated 14 March 2022

³ CIA World Factbook, [‘Syria – People and Society’](#), updated 14 March 2022

⁴ United Nations Development Programme, [‘Syrian Arab Republic’](#), 2020

⁵ CIA World Factbook, [‘Syria – People and Society’](#), updated 14 March 2022

⁶ UNOCHA, [‘2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic’](#) (page 30), 22 February 2022

⁷ World Bank, [‘Literacy rate, adult total \(% of people ages 15 and above\) ...’](#), 2004

⁸ United Nations Development Programme, [‘Syrian Arab Republic’](#), 2020

Syrians run out of options, they are increasingly forced to adopt negative coping mechanisms that include child labor and child marriage.⁹

- 3.2.2 On 22 February 2022 the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) published a report (the UNOCHA report) on the projected humanitarian situation in Syria in 2022. The report entitled '2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic' stated:

'The Syrian economy has shrunk by more than half since the onset of hostilities in 2011 and the sharp macro-economic deterioration continues unabated. The combined effects of currency depreciation, soaring prices for food/fuel and basic goods, reduced fiscal spending, as well as economic sanctions have plunged additional segments of the population into humanitarian need, even in areas historically less affected by hostilities and displacement. Non-displaced Syrian residents, who have fared better in many ways historically, are now increasingly vulnerable.

'The Syrian Pound exchange rate has undergone a 70-fold depreciation since the onset of hostilities in 2011. This decline has accelerated since late 2019, after the start of Lebanon's currency crisis. New US sanctions that took effect in June 2020 also added to depreciation pressure, losing at least 36 per cent of its value since September 2020 alone. Meanwhile the value of the Turkish Lira (TRY) has lost over 40 per cent on the US dollar in 2021 and hit a record low in November, introducing another economic shock.¹⁰

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Section 4 updated: 7 June 2022

4. Humanitarian situation

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 The UNOCHA report stated:

'Syria remains a complex humanitarian and protection emergency characterized by over 10 years of ongoing hostilities and their long-term consequences including widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, explosive ordnance contamination and the largest number of internally displaced people in the world. More than ten years of crisis have inflicted immense suffering on the civilian population, who have been subject to massive and systematic violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. More recently, the accelerating economic deterioration and impacts of climate change have increasingly become additional key drivers of needs, compounding vulnerabilities even further.¹¹

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4.2 People in need – numbers and location

- 4.2.1 The UNOCHA report stated that of Syria's population of 21.7 million, 14.6 million (67.2% of the population) are in need of humanitarian assistance. Of this 14.6 million, 9.6 million people are in severe need (44.4% of the population), 4.9 million are in extreme need (22.5% of the population) and

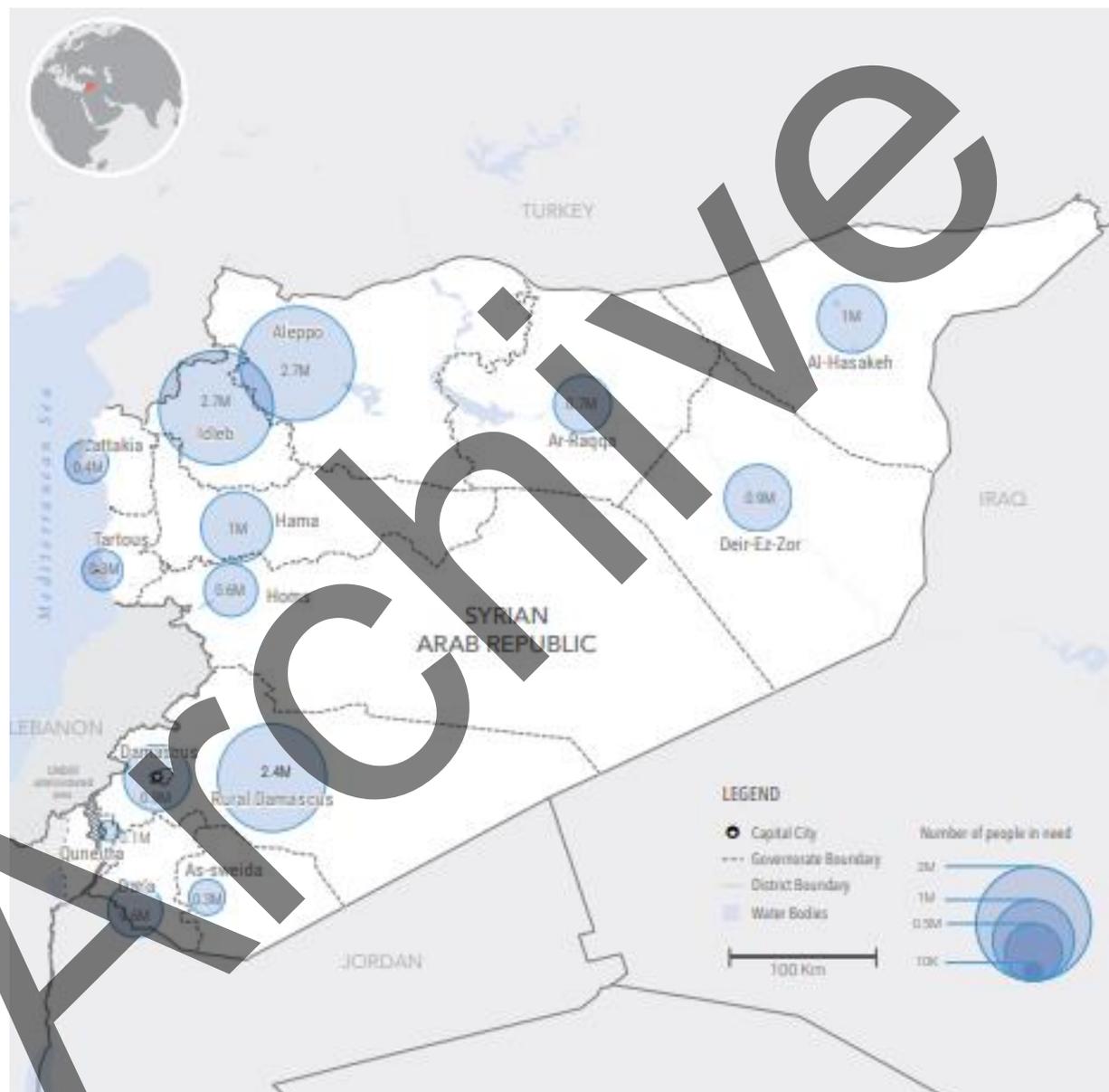
⁹ IRC, '[2022 Emergency Watchlist](#)', (page 41), 15 December 2021

¹⁰ UNOCHA, '[2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#)' (page 12), 22 Feb 2022

¹¹ UNOCHA, '[2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#)' (page 8), 22 February 2022

0.06 million (0.3% of the population) are in catastrophic need¹². For information regarding the methodology underpinning the different severity classifications see section 4.4 (page 94-97) of the [UNOCHA report](#). The people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022 has increased by 1.2 million since 2021¹³.

- 4.2.2 The same source additionally provided the following gender, age and population group breakdowns of people in need (PiN) and a map showing the distribution of people in need across Syria's governorates¹⁴:



¹² UNOCHA, [‘2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic’](#) (page 3), 22 February 2022

¹³ UNOCHA, [‘2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic’](#) (page 3), March 2021

¹⁴ UNOCHA, [‘2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic’](#) (page 3, 7), 22 Feb 2022

PiN by age and gender

AGE	PEOPLE IN NEED	% PIN
Women (Over 18 years)	4.3M 	29%
Men (Over 18 years)	3.8M 	26%
Boys (0-17 years)	3.6M 	25%
Girls (0-17 years)	2.9M 	20%

By Population Groups

POPULATION GROUP	PEOPLE IN NEED	% PIN
Residents	9.2M 	63.1%
IDPs out of camps	3.3M 	22.7%
IDPs in camps	2M 	13.8%
Returnees	56.7K 	0.4%

4.2.3 The below table showing a breakdown of the people in need in each of Syria's governorates was produced by CPIT using data taken from the UNOCHA report¹⁵:

Governorate	Total population (million)	People in need (million)	People in extreme and catastrophic need (million)	% of governorate population in need	% of governorate population in extreme and catastrophic need
Aleppo	4.2	2.7	0.67	64%	16%
Al-Hasakeh	1.1	1.0	0.71	91%	65%
Ar-Raqqa	0.8	0.7	0.46	88%	58%
As-Sweida	0.4	0.3	0.01	75%	3%
Damascus	1.8	0.9	0.04	50%	2%
Dar'a	1.0	0.6	0.17	60%	17%
Deir-ez-Zor	1.1	0.9	0.22	82%	20%
Hama	1.5	1.0	0.01	67%	1%
Homs	1.5	0.6	0.00	40%	0%
Idlib	2.9	2.7	1.73	93%	60%
Latakia	1.3	0.4	0.00	31%	0%
Quneitra	0.1	0.1	0.00	100%	0%
Rural Damascus	3.0	2.4	0.91	80%	30%
Tartous	0.9	0.3	0.00	33%	0%

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¹⁵ UNOCHA, '[2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#)' (page 48), 22 Feb 2022

4.3 Education

4.3.1 The UNOCHA report stated that 6.6 million people were in need of education assistance across Syria, of which 6.4 million (97%) are children aged 3-17 years old¹⁶. The same source further stated:

- Attendance rates between boys and girls were similar but older children (12-17 years) were less likely to attend than younger children (5-11 years)
- At national level, the data reveals that 18 per cent are out of school and half of the children who are not in school have never enrolled
- Rates of non-attendance were highest in Ar-Raqqa (35 per cent), Al-Hasakeh (30 per cent), Idlib (28 per cent), Aleppo (26 per cent), and Deir-ez-Zor (25 per cent)
- Economic factors, including children working to support the household, continue to be a key reason why children are not attending school
- Over a quarter of households with school aged children indicated that their children are not in school because there is no school to send their child to
- Over three quarters of 12-17-year-olds who were not in school had dropped out. School dropout exposes children to protection threats such as child labour (mainly for boys) and early marriage (mainly for girls)
- From eleven years old there is a steep dropout impacting boys more than girls. Lack of access to secondary education in many areas limits the ability of adolescents to continue their education; the lack of vocational education prevents adolescents who will not return to school from learning skills needs for economic opportunities. In nearly a third of households with children not in school it was because children were working¹⁷.

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4.4 Food security

4.4.1 The UNOCHA report stated there are 12 million people facing acute food insecurity with a further 1.9 million people at risk of sliding into food insecurity¹⁸. The same source additionally stated:

- At least 4 per cent of the total population (6 per cent of the PIN) are severely food insecure, implying that they are unable to meet their immediate food needs.
- Food needs are widespread across Syria and the majority of the food insecure are significantly concentrated in Idlib (69 per cent), Hama (66 per cent), Quneitra and Deir-ez-Zor (both at 58 per cent), Aleppo (57 per cent), Dar'a (56 per cent), Al-Hasakeh (54 per cent) and Ar-Raqqa (53 per cent) governorates

¹⁶ UNOCHA, ['2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic'](#) (page 67), 22 Feb 2022

¹⁷ UNOCHA, ['2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic'](#) (page 67-68), 22 Feb 2022

¹⁸ UNOCHA, ['2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic'](#) (page 70), 22 Feb 2022

- the remaining governorates also having an unacceptably high prevalence of food insecurity; these are: Homs (51 per cent), As-Sweida and Tartous (both at 50 per cent) and Rural Damascus (46 per cent) governorates. Even the governorates with the lowest prevalence of food insecurity (Damascus and Lattakia governorates) records levels of 41 per cent and 40 per cent respectively
- Adult women and men are specifically strained and impacted by food insecurity as they frequently engage in adverse coping mechanisms to ensure that their children have enough food to eat
- At least 69 per cent of assessed families have no option but to consume less nutrient-rich and cheaper foods to meet their basic food needs, which can have serious impacts on the nutritional health, growth and development of younger children
- Access to food remains constrained due to the devaluation of the local currencies (Syrian pound and Turkish Lira), high fuel and energy costs, high transportation and living costs, high unemployment rates and stagnant wages thus impeding the purchasing power of the Syrian population
- The situation is expected to worsen throughout the country in 2022 in light of the worsening economic and agro-climatic conditions¹⁹.

4.4.2 On 4 March 2022 the US Agency for International Development (USAID) published a fact sheet on Syria which stated:

‘January [2022] marked the fifth consecutive month that food prices reached record highs across Syria, according to a recent UN World Food Program (WFP) market price analysis. During the month, the national average price of the WFP standard reference food basket—the cost for a group of essential food commodities, including bread, lentils, rice, sugar, and oil—increased 34 percent compared to July and 86 percent compared to January 2021, reaching more than 225,000 Syrian Pounds, or approximately \$90 [£68.74 GBP²⁰], and representing the highest recorded monthly average reference food basket price in Syria since the UN agency began monitoring in 2013. The price of the standard reference food basket increased significantly across all of Syria’s 14 governorates in January compared to the same period in 2021, with the highest spike recorded in Dar’a Governorate at approximately 110 percent, followed by Tartous Governorate at more than 100 percent.

‘The rising cost of food is a primary factor contributing to food insecurity in Syria, along with the devaluation of the Syrian pound and Turkish lira, water scarcity, climate- and crisis-induced losses in agriculture outputs, and reduced or lack of household income ...’²¹

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¹⁹ UNOCHA, ‘[2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#)’ (page 72-73), 22 Feb 2022

²⁰ XE.com, ‘[Currency converter – USD to GBP](#)’, 6 April 2022

²¹ USAID, ‘[Syria – Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #4](#)’, 4 March 2022

4.5 Healthcare including Covid-19

4.5.1 The UNOCHA report stated:

- A total of 12.23 million people are in need of health services in 2022, including 4.4 million displaced persons, 1.33 million children under 5 years – including an estimated 503,000 live births expected, and 3.38 million women of reproductive age (15-49 years)
- Just over 500,000 older people will require inclusive health services, as well as those with early onset non-communicable diseases (NCDs) which are estimated to account for 45 per cent of all mortality in Syria
- 3.46 million persons are estimated to have a disability which places them at greater risk for exclusion from health services
- The governorates with the highest levels of need severity are Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, Deir-ez-Zor and Idlib
- Dense urban settings, crowded and overburdened areas, as well as last resort sites including camps and camp-like settings, continue to be at particular risk of poor health outcomes due to shortages in water and hygiene supplies, risk of communicable disease and likelihood of overcrowding and long waiting times at health facilities
- As of June 2021, out of the 211 available hospitals, 35 per cent were either non-functioning or only partially functioning. As for the 1,791 available public health centres (PHC), 44 per cent were either non-functioning or only partially functioning
- In the absence of regular and reliable electricity, health facilities are forced to depend on generators and solar energy systems that provide the minimum power requirement, heightening the risks to continuity of health services, including surgery, cold chain storage, sterilization, safe blood storage, and timely and accurate diagnosis. Basics such as lights, anaesthesia machines autoclaves, and imaging equipment become impossible to operate during power cuts²².

4.5.2 The same source additionally stated:

'The fragile health system in Syria continues to face concurrent emergencies and chronic challenges which affect the availability and quality of health services across Syria, as well as the physical and mental wellbeing of the population. With more than 164,000 confirmed cases and close to 5,800 deaths, COVID-19 continues to disrupt the already-fragile health services and systems due to low levels of COVID-19 vaccination, lack of adherence to preventive measures, and emerging variants which, together, strain attempts to stabilize and restart services affected by the pandemic, including gaps in routine childhood immunization services.'²³

4.5.3 For more information regarding Covid-19 in Syria see page 19 of the [UNOCHA report](#).

²² UNOCHA, '[2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#)' (page 20, 75), 22 Feb 2022

²³ UNOCHA, '[2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#)' (page 74), 22 Feb 2022

4.5.4 On 15 December 2021 Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) published a report entitled 'Destruction, Obstruction and Inaction: The Makings of a Health Crisis in Northern Syria' which stated:

'Many factors contribute to the current desperate state of the health systems – or lack of systems altogether – in northern Syria. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed enormous additional strain on health care actors. The Syrian government's decade-long policy of targeting medical facilities for destruction and its persecution and arbitrary detention of health care workers has led to a decrease in both health care workforce and infrastructure. The lack of political will and consensus at the UN Security Council has resulted in greatly diminished humanitarian assistance and closure of access points. The political instability in northwest, northeast, and Turkish-controlled areas of Syria has resulted in a dangerous absence of a coordinated health response and a patchwork of unaccountable and under-resourced systems.

'... Each area faces public health emergencies caused by insufficient and unevenly distributed health facilities, critical shortages of qualified, specialized health care workers, and lack of reliable and affordable access to medical equipment and supplies, especially medications. Women, girls, and people living with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by lack of access. Conflict and displacement have resulted in psychological trauma, and increasing levels of poverty compound the health care crisis and create further obstacles to health-seeking behaviors and adherence to COVID-19 prevention measures. The population's mistrust of government services following years of atrocities, together with the government's demonstrated lack of will and capacity, make it unlikely that cross-line aid will be effective in the near future. These challenges have severely impacted the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality of health care in each region and pose a serious threat to the well-being of millions of Syrians in the north.

'... In the meantime, the COVID-19 pandemic presents an existential challenge to the health systems in northwest Syria, northeast Syria, and Turkish-controlled areas. All regions lack the capacity to manage outbreaks of COVID-19 without sacrificing the quality and availability of other health services. In addition to unpredictable funding and lack of vital COVID-19 supplies, including vaccines, the lack of adherence to public health guidelines among the general population threatens to undermine the COVID-19 response further.'²⁴

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4.6 Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

4.6.1 The UNOCHA report stated that 13.2 million people are in need of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) assistance²⁵. It additionally stated:

- WASH systems have suffered from damage owing to hostilities, strain from years of functioning at high capacity due to the growing demand, limited or no maintenance, continuous drain of technical staff and poor

²⁴ PHR, '[Destruction, Obstruction and Inaction: The Makings of ...](#)' (page 20-21), 15 December 2021

²⁵ UNOCHA, '[2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#)' (page 84), 22 Feb 2022

water resource management, exaggerated by cascade effects of climate change, economic downturn, and electricity and fuel supply crisis

- IDPs [Internally Displaced People] living in displacement sites are often fully dependent on humanitarian assistance, and those in informal sites often experience worse WASH conditions making them particularly vulnerable
- Women and girls, people living with disabilities (PLWD) and the elderly, together with female headed households face more constraints and various protection risks in accessing WASH services
- All population groups in the community could be affected by limitations in functionality and efficiency of WASH infrastructure and services, this is true both in urban and rural communities. Particularly impacted are the overburdened communities hosting a high ratio of IDPs and areas of high returnees, where water and sanitation infrastructure was not designed for the increased demand, was damaged or undermaintained over years
- The population underserved by public services are collectively in a worse situation, and so highly dependent on informal water sources, facing water supply shortages and insufficiency, poor water quality, severe issues with sewage disposal or lack of garbage removal services
- Communities in areas with access constraints (parts of Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor and Idlib governorates) can face similar issues with infrastructure functionality, and it is unlikely they could be reached with humanitarian assistance. Even in areas with secure access, there are high severity sub-districts, with people experiencing WASH needs and with very limited humanitarian assistance provided
- Amongst all the above areas the most financially vulnerable households, households with PLWD, female-headed households or households with children with special needs may face more challenges for equitable access to WASH services²⁶.

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4.7 Shelter and non-food items (NFI)

4.7.1 The UNOCHA report stated:

‘It is estimated that 5.92 million people in Syria will require shelter support in 2022. In accordance with the MSNA [Multisectoral Needs Assessment] findings, over 15 per cent of the overall population live in substandard shelter types. Of the remaining population (85 per cent), 28 per cent reside in finished residential buildings classified as damaged and/or displaying inadequate conditions. As such, a total of 38 per cent of the overall population lives in substandard, damaged, and/or inadequate shelter. Access to basic services, protection from the elements, and safety and security are among the top shelter inadequacy issues reported.

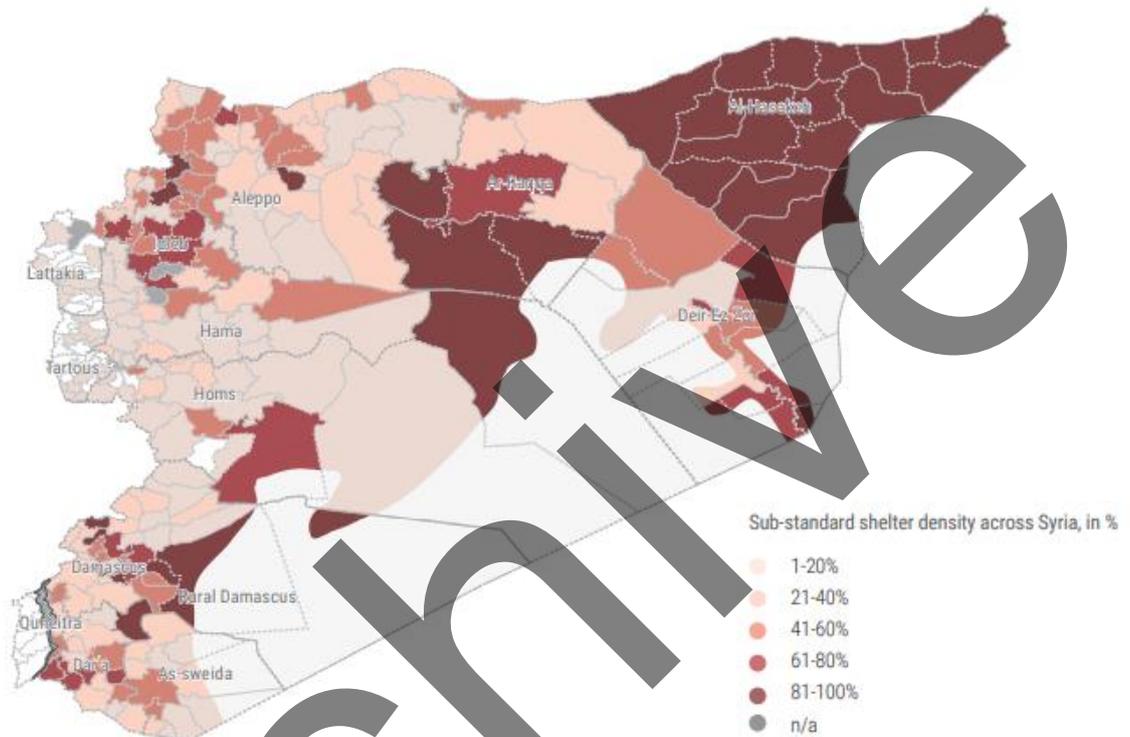
‘... It is estimated that of the 6.92 million people displaced, 3.73 million reside in substandard, damaged, and/ or inadequate shelter conditions,

²⁶ UNOCHA, [‘2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic’](#) (page 85-86), 22 Feb 2022

primarily being driven to move to such locations due to hostilities, security concerns, and economic deterioration. Of those displaced, 2.02 million people live in sites of last resort mainly within the Northwest and Northeast of Syria²⁷

4.7.2 The same source produced the following map and further stated:

Sub-standard shelter density across Syria, in %.



- [A]n estimated 48 per cent of residential properties are uninhabitable in Duma, Rural Damascus Governorate, followed by Deir-ez-Zor (41 per cent); Ar-Raqqa (40 per cent); Dar'a (15 per cent), Aleppo (14 per cent) and Idlib cities (13 per cent) contributing to long and protracted displacement.
- An estimated 54 per cent of IDPs live in substandard, damaged, and/ or inadequate shelter. The average period of household displacement is currently in excess of 6 years with more than four out of ten households being displaced three times or more.
- According to latest findings, 25 per cent of IDPs continue to reside in sites of last resort, primarily in the northwest and northeast, which lack crucial infrastructure and rely on emergency shelter solutions and continued humanitarian support.
- Around 55 per cent of returnees live in substandard, damaged, and/ or inadequate shelter with nearly 80 per cent stating inability to meet their basic needs.
- Host communities in 24 sub-districts in Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Homs, Idlib and Al Hasakeh are overburdened hosting more IDPs than their

²⁷ UNOCHA, ['2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic'](#) (page 80), 22 Feb 2022

resident population. Alongside the displaced, nearly 30 per cent of the host community households are living in damaged and/ or inadequate shelters where repair/rehabilitation is needed alongside a multisectoral response to ensure access and availability to basic services.’²⁸

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4.8 Internally displaced people (IDPs)

4.8.1 The UNOCHA report stated:

‘Syria’s internally displaced population constitutes 37 per cent of the people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2021. Of the 6.9 million IDPs, over two million reside in 1,760 last resort sites such as informal settlements and camps, planned camps and collective centres, the vast majority in Idlib (69 per cent) and Aleppo (22 per cent) governorates, with three sub-districts – Dana, Maaret Tamsrin in Idlib, and Azaz in Aleppo - alone hosting more than two thirds of all IDPs in last resort sites in the country.

‘... Areas controlled by the Syrian government maintain the highest proportion of IDPs who have been displaced for six or more years, while IDPs who have been displaced more recently (up to five years) are concentrated in Northwest Syria, most of whom in last resort sites.

‘The severity of humanitarian conditions and needs of IDPs depend on a variety of factors, including the type of settlement and shelter they live in – whether in a last resort site or residential area - how long and frequently they have been displaced, their income and financial situation, as well as their specific vulnerability characteristics related to gender, age and disabilities, amongst others. In comparison with IDPs living outside sites/camps, the population in last resort sites experience diverse challenges and associated needs, often experiencing worse living conditions and adopting harmful coping strategies more frequently which put their physical and mental health at risk.’²⁹

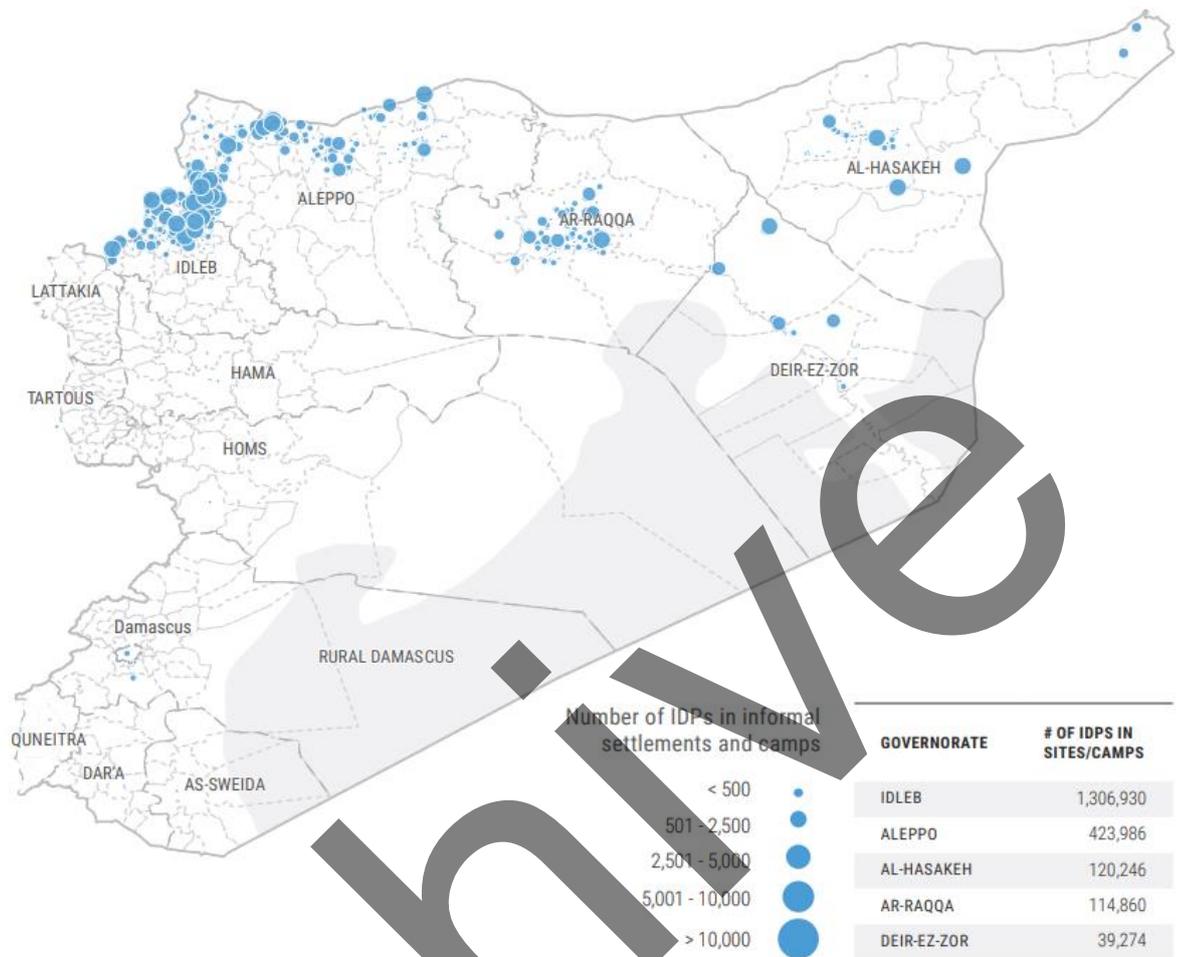
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a. IDPs in informal settlements and camps

4.8.2 The UNOCHA report published the following map showing informal settlements and camps across Syria and additionally stated:

²⁸ UNOCHA, [‘2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian ... Republic’](#) (page 19, 81-83), 22 Feb 2022

²⁹ UNOCHA, [‘2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian ... Republic’](#) (page 33), 22 February 2022



‘Despite the temporary nature of IDP sites, designed to act as a last resort for the short term, millions of IDPs today find themselves trapped in IDP sites/camps as an only means to survive. Where IDP sites are built on private lands, there is a constant risk for populations living there of eviction, which is a special risk for women and children.

‘Households displaced in Northeast Syria are increasingly trying to access formal camps, many of whom reside in self-settled IDP sites which often lack camp management systems. Population density in last resort sites is of great concern with a growing IDP population, as they are particularly vulnerable climactic and epidemiological shocks.’³⁰

4.8.3 The same source further stated:

- Many of the 2 million IDPs living in overcrowded sites/camps have exhausted their (financial) capacity to cope (and afford more adequate shelter), often following repeated episodes of displacement, or have had little choice but to move to these locations due to hostility dynamics
- Most IDPs in sites/camps of which have been uprooted more than once (81 per cent) since the start of the crisis
- Three quarters of IDP households report inability to sufficiently meet their household member’s basic needs, citing lack of income as the primary

³⁰ UNOCHA, ‘[2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#)’ (page 35), 22 Feb 2022

reason (97 per cent), and unaffordability of food and essential goods (86 per cent)

- While conflict and insecurity remain the two most important reasons for displacement, the deteriorating economic situation and lack of access to services have become push factors for people to leave and seek improved conditions elsewhere³¹.

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b. IDPs outside of camps

4.8.4 The UNOCHA report stated that there are 3.3 million IDPs that live out of camps, making up 61% of the total number of internally displaced persons needing humanitarian assistance. The same source additionally stated:

- The vast majority of IDP households out of sites/camps are concentrated in Rural Damascus (24 per cent), with another 41 per cent found across northern Syria, primarily in Aleppo (18 per cent) and Idlib (10 per cent) governorates
- The vast majority of the IDP population in Syria originate from central and south Syria, followed by northern parts of Syria
- Over 70 per cent of the IDP population in residential areas report being unable to meet the basic needs of all household members, with 73 per cent reporting a deterioration in their ability driven by limited income and high prices
- IDP households outside of sites/camps are more likely to share their sleeping area with one or more households, particularly in Quneitra (26 per cent) and Deir-ez-Zor (23 per cent) governorates. This figure increases for female-headed households, particularly widowed households which make up 43 per cent of female-headed IDP households residing outside of sites/camps
- Thirty per cent of female-headed IDP households in non-camp settings also report sharing access to functional toilets³².

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³¹ UNOCHA, ['2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic'](#) (page 36), 22 Feb 2022

³² UNOCHA, ['2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic'](#) (page 38), 22 Feb 2022

Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- **Humanitarian conditions**

- socio-economic indicators, including statistics on life expectancy, literacy, school enrolment, poverty rates, levels of malnutrition³³
- socio-economic situation, including access and availability to:
 - food
 - water for drinking and washing
 - accommodation and shelter
 - healthcare – physical and mental
 - education
 - support providers, including government and international and domestic non-government organisations
 - variation of conditions by location and/or group
 - whether government is purposely withholding or not delivering support services, if so to which areas/groups
- internally displaced persons (IDPs) – numbers, trends and location

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³³ See, for example, the UN's [Human Development Index](#) for country-specific data, not date

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Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **16 June 2022**

Official – sensitive: Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

Changes from last version of this note

First version of a discrete CPIN focussing on the humanitarian situation.

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Archive