ATLANTIC EQUITY CHALLENGE
SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CRISIS OF URBAN INEQUALITY: TRANSNATIONAL ANALYSES OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST, SOUTH ASIA, AND AFRICA.

EXTERNAL REPORT

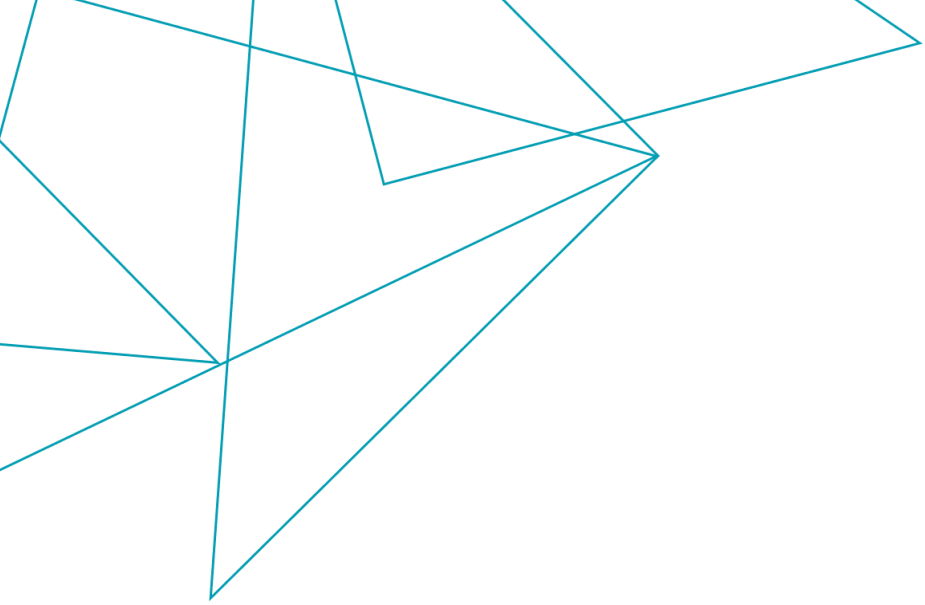
SUBMITTED TO:

Atlantic Fellows for Social and Economic Equity (AFSEE)

First Draft: December 13, 2022

Second Draft: April 27, 2023

TRIANGLE
POLICY | RESEARCH | MEDIA



ABSTRACT

This research report is a comprehensive analysis of access to information technology, and the use of social media by refugee and host communities in districts of Lebanon's North Governorate. The research findings help fill extensive gaps regarding the use of information technologies as essential tools of resilience for refugee and host communities. Furthermore, the research discerns different sources of information used by displaced populations and Lebanese local communities in the North Governorate and to what extent segmented displacement dynamics influence this access in the urban and rural space. Based on an in-depth literature review, surveys with 460 respondents and eight focus group discussions, this research shows that social media use is double-edged. While social media can bridge divides and facilitate access to information, it can also deepen divergences between communities and further entrench inequalities. This external case study report is submitted as part of the project Social Media and the Crisis of Urban Inequality: Transnational analyses of Humanitarian Responses across the Middle East, South Asia and Africa with Dr Romola Sanyal as PI, Action Aid India, Triangle Lebanon, and Urban A as Co-Is. The work on the project was made possible with support from the Atlantic Fellows for Social and Economic Equity programme, administered by the International Inequalities Institute of the London School of Economics and Political Science"." The research project examines how social media is used to navigate the terrain between humanitarianism and inequality in the Global South, through a transnational study spanning three cities in Lebanon, India and Uganda. The research presented in this report looks at the case study of Lebanon's Tripoli and adjacent districts and includes analysis of preliminary findings, discussion and conclusions.

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AFSEE	Atlantic Fellows for Social and Economic Equity
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
ITS	Informal Tented Settlement
LSE	London School of Economics
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
USD	US dollar

LIST OF ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

KEY THEMES & DEFINITIONS

Displaced person	According to the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), this term covers both internal and cross-border displacement. A displaced person comprises people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular because of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.[1] Usually not defined by a group, like refugee or migrant.
Fake news	Fabricated, packaged and distributed information to appear as legitimate news, usually created to gain attention, mislead, deceive or damage a reputation.[2]

[1] International Migration Law, Glossary on Immigration, 2019. United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM). Available at: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf
2 "Fake News," Lies and Propaganda: How to Sort Fact from Fiction, Available at: https://guides.lib.umich.edu/fakenews

Hate speech	Any kind of offensive discourse and communication in speech, writing or behaviour that targets or attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language towards a group or individual based on inherent characteristics such as race, religion, gender, ethnicity, nationality, or other identity factors.[3]
Host community	The country of asylum and the local, regional, and national governmental, social and economic structures within which refugees/displaced/migrants live. Within this case study's context, the host community is the Lebanese and Palestinian refugee population with its associated politico and socio-economic structures.[4]
Migrant	Any person who has resided away from their place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, regardless of the person's legal status, whether the movement is involuntary or voluntary, what are the causes behind the movement, or the length of the stay outside their place of usual residence. Certain categories of short-term migrants are also included, such as seasonal agricultural workers, who migrate at planting or harvest time.[5] In this study's context, we refer mostly to migrant workers, other than Syrian citizens or Palestine refugees.
Social media	A computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual networks and communities.[6]
Tripoli T5 area	Tripoli's so-called T+5 area comprises Tripoli and five administrative districts: Minnieh-Dannieh, Zgharta, Bcharreh, Batroun and El-Koura. This study uses an amended version of the T+5 area.

[3] United Nations, Understanding Hate Speech. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech

4 UNHCR, Toolkit for Practical Cooperation on Resettlement. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/4cd7d1509/unhcr-ngo-toolkit-practical-cooperation-resettlement-community-outreach.html

5 International Migration Law, Glossary on Immigration, 2019. United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM). Available at: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf

6 https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-media.asp

Refugee	As defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. In this study's context, Syrians and Palestinians are automatically considered refugees, even if not registered with UNHCR or UNRWA as such.

1. INTRODUCTION

Northern Lebanon – broadly encompassing Akkar Governate and Northern Governate - has proven disproportionately affected by the compounded crises experienced by the country in recent years. Lebanon's economic collapse, the popular uprisings that began in October 2019, the influx of refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict since 2011 and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic are all taking a toll on the population of the region. This is partly the consequence of historic infrastructural neglect in the north of the country (Reuters, 2021).

In Lebanon's ever-evolving situation, information technologies are an essential tool for Palestinian and Syrian refugee communities and Lebanese host communities' ability to access basic services, obtain accurate information, and communicate between and within their communities. Yet, a granular analysis of the nuances of city, district, and regional patterns in access to information technology and the use of social media by refugee and host communities in Northern Lebanon does not exist. The study at hand is intended to allow us to discern the different sources of information used by displaced persons and communities and what segmented displacement dynamics are at play in a particularly complex collection of districts (T5) in Northern Lebanon. This external report includes research findings, a discussion and conclusions.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Geographical Background

Lebanon's North Governate spans across the Mediterranean coast and includes a capital district, Tripoli, and five adjacent districts of Bcharreh, Koura, Minnieh-Dannieh, Batroun, and Zgharta, commonly referred to as T5 (UNHCR, 2022). The Tripoli urban area, encompassing Lebanon's second largest city after Beirut, itself sprawls over two of the governate's six districts and is constituted of eighteen cadastres (territorial units) (UN Habitat, 2016).

The T5 area has approximately 949,197 Lebanese and is currently hosting about 124,008 Syrian refugees according to the most recent published statistics (UNHCR, 2022). T5 is composed of urbanized areas, mainly concentrated in the city of Tripoli, mixed rural areas in the city's surrounding land, as well as natural areas in the rest of the region. Furthermore, the high altitude of out-lying areas of the North Governate, in particular, Bcharre, have led to several humanitarian projects focusing on comprehensive winterisation interventions (OCHA, 2018).

This study focuses on five districts within the T5 region that are characterised by the large refugee populaces residing within their remit: Tripoli, Zgharta, Koura, Bcharreh, and Minnieh-Dannieh. (See Refugee Populace Section).

Tripoli District

Despite the small size of the Tripoli District, it remains one of the most densely populated and heavily urbanised districts in Lebanon. It consists of the city of Tripoli, the administrative centre of North Governate, that has long been the central economic hub of the northern region (LocalLiban, 2023).

Bcharre District

Bcharre District is marked by its mountainous geography. Bcharre district contains a population of around 32,000 of which a large portion is both presently and historically Christian. (LocalLiban, 2023).

Zgharta District

Zgharta district is constituted of 37 villages covered by 30 municipalities. Agriculture is a key activity of the district, including a thriving olive oil production sector in the coastal area and fruit cultivation in the mountainous areas of the district (LocalLiban, 2023).

Koura District

Koura District stretches from the Mediterranean Sea up to Mount Lebanon and is marked by a series of foothills surrounding a low-lying plain where an olive tree cultivation and olive oil production economy is predominant (LocalLiban, 2023).

Minnieh-Dannieh District

The district of Minnieh-Dannieh stretches across the northern and western hills of Al-Makmel mountain and is constituted by a fertile coastal plain. The mouth of the Nahr El Bared River marks its northern most border (LocalLiban, 2023).

Socio-Economic Background

Whilst the local economy of the city of Tripoli has undergone thorough analysis in academia and the development sector, up-to-date contextualisation within the wider regional economy remains distinctly lacking. The region of North Lebanon, encompassing both Northern and Akkar Governates (separated as two distinct districts in 2003 by the Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri) has long been one of Lebanon's most deprived areas. The UNDP 'Millennium Development Goals: Lebanon Report 2008' measured that the north was home to 20.7% of Lebanon's population but 38% of the country's poor and 46% of its extremely poor (UNDP, 2008).

Research by the Investment Development Authority of Lebanon in 2017 identified the main economic indicators of the Northern Governate as trade activities encompassing industrial, wholesale and retail. The industry and wholesale and retail sectors contributed more than 75% to Northern Governate's gross added value in 2017 (IDAL, 2017). The IDAL identified the furniture cluster in Tripoli as a potential investment opportunity with 'all the right elements to flourish' including a high labour force, the concentration of furniture factories, and high-quality experienced craftsmanship. It simultaneously identified olive cultivation in the North Governate as a potential sector for growth and development with the region being home to 50% of the olive mills in Lebanon (Ibid., 2017).

Refugee Populace

As of 2022, Lebanon hosts the largest number of refugees per capita worldwide (UNHCR, 2022). On a national level, Lebanon's registered refugee populace includes more than

825,000 Syrians, 28,000 Palestinians from Syria, 180,000 Palestinians, and 20,000 refugees of other nationalities (European Commission, 2022). On a regional level, 27.8% of Lebanon's registered refugee reside in North Lebanon (UNHCR, 2022).

The outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 has had far reaching consequences for the social makeup of the Akkar and North Governates, and specifically the T5 area. Due to both the geographical proximity and historical and social ties, Syrians fleeing the conflict first took refuge in North Lebanon, particularly in the areas from Wadi Khaled on the Syrian border to Tripoli (Oxfam, 2016). A UNHCR report on the distribution of registered Syrian refugees per cadastre in the North Governate showed the largest concentration of refugees to be in the Tripoli district and lowest number in the Batroun district (UNHCR, 2022). As a consequence, the focus on this research report has been on the five districts of the North Governate with the largest refugee populaces: Tripoli, Bcharre, Minnieh-Dannieh, Koura, and Zgharta (T5). The highest concentration of Syrian refugees in the T5 area and outside Tripoli (district) is in Minnieh-Dannieh, with approximately 17,808 refugees. In Zgharta, refugee populaces are concentrated in Miziara, Ehden, Zgharta and Majdaliyya Zgharta. The highest concentrations of refugees in Koura district are in the areas of Ras Masqa, Qalamoun, and Chikka (Oxfam, 2016).

The long history of Palestinian presence in Lebanon has contributed to understanding of the Palestinian refugee community in the country as one of "protracted refugees" as opposed to refugees fleeing from recent conflict (AUB, 2011). The North Governate and Akkar Governate have historically been the heart of Palestinian refugee settlement in the country, with 40,000 registered Palestinian refugees, including 3,860 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) (OCHA, 2018). There are currently 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, whilst in the North specifically, Palestinian refugees predominantly reside in the camps of Nahr al-Bared in the southern-most part of the Akkar region and Baddawi in the district of Tripoli (OCHA, 2018). UNRWA is primarily responsible for providing aid to Palestinian refugees in Northern Lebanon, alongside its field offices in the wider MENA region.

The impact of the 2019 financial crisis

Lebanon began its descent into a severe economic crisis in 2019, ranked by the World Bank as one of the world's worst since the mid-19th century (World Bank, 2021). The T5 area which had been amongst the country's most deprived regions for years, has

witnessed rising poverty levels, growing numbers of refugees, and some of the worst unemployment rates in the country (World Bank, 2020). Indeed, research by World Food Programme in 2020 measured that Lebanese household income in North Governate, more widely, had reduced for 66% of respondents surveyed (WFP, 2020). Furthermore, the highest number of respondents that reported feeling worried about not having enough to eat came from the Northern Governate, alongside Baalbek and Akkar (WFP, 2020).

As the economic situation deteriorated in Tripoli's urban areas, more so than anywhere else in the Northern Governate, has witnessed rising crime levels – predominantly theft (Middle East Monitor, September 2021). The desperate nature of many of these crimes mirrors the wider Northern Governate's increasing destitution. Nevertheless, security services lack the resources or capacity to deal with the rising number of crimes, many of which are escalating violently (International Crisis Group, 2021). This absence of the rule of law has created a vacuum that communities have been forced to fill by taking up arms and creating informal community watch groups (France24, July 2021). This situation has contributed to a deepening divide between Syrian refugees and host communities in areas of the region with large refugee populaces with, for example, violent clashes breaking out in Tripoli in September 2022 (L'Orient de Jour, 2022).

In a national trend, almost all Syrian refugees – who have limited working rights in Lebanon – have been pushed into severe economic vulnerability as a result of the 2019 financial crisis. An increasing number of Syrians are indebting themselves to afford to pay for rent and necessities such as food, water, and medicines (UNHCR et al., 2021).

Technology and its effect on resilience

For the inhabitants of the T5 region, access to all services is an ongoing challenge – including communication, information, and technology. Given the diverse and evolving uses of the internet and smartphones, particularly in the past 25 years, technology has been recognised as an essential resilience tool for refugees at all stages of their migration journey (UNHCR, 2016). Several studies have found that smartphones give refugees access to wide-ranging information and enable positive participation in their host communities' social, political, and economic life (PLOS One, 2019; GSMA, 2023). A global UNHCR research on refugee connectivity found that limits to up-to-date information hindered refugees' access to essential services such as health and education and

ultimately their path to self-reliance (UNHCR, 2016). Data shows that around a third of refugees were willing to pay a third of their disposable income in order to stay connected.

The latest vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) found that 92% of households had a mobile phone, 85% had a smartphone, and 75% had an active data plan – a slight increase from the previous year (UNHCR et al., 2021). Data showed a significant increase in the percentages of households with internet access at home – 62% in 2021, compared to 41% in 2020 (UNHCR et al., 2021). Furthermore, 83% of households reported using social media, with the most common types being WhatsApp and Facebook (UNHCR et al., 2021).

Some of the critical bottlenecks to accessing communication technology in Lebanon's north include the dwindling provision of state electricity in the area and the prohibitive costs of alternatives such as diesel generators to charge devices and access an internet connection (Arab News, 2021). Two government-owned telecom companies have a monopoly on Lebanon's telecom industry, setting high fees for their services. Amid the financial crisis, these companies are struggling to provide their services to rural areas due to a lack of electricity and diesel to run their infrastructure (The New York Times, 2021). Official birth registration with the state is also a growing concern in the North, with many Syrian and Lebanese parents not registering the birth of their children (Ramadan and Tabbara, 2021). Without such registration in the state records, and the subsequent allocation of identity and citizenship documentation, individuals are likely to face future difficulties when attempting to buy a phone SIM card as all major mobile service providers require identification documents (identity card, valid passport, or civil records) to complete a SIM card purchase. Finally, the low literacy rate among Syrian refugee youth (aged between 15 and 24 years old) also affects their ability to utilise technology and access information online (UNESCO, 2020).

In the longer term, the proliferation and continuous transformation of digital technologies and social media platforms influence young people's social participation (Marlowe, Bartley and Collins, 2016). With the Syrian war now in its eleventh year, the social inclusion of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is a significant issue confronting both refugee and host communities. While humanitarian aid organisations in Lebanon are increasingly focusing on promoting social cohesion, little is known about technology's role in shaping these

dynamics, including the opportunities and the risks. In particular, whilst studies have focused on how technology affects refugees' resilience and access to capital, utilities, and identity services in other countries (GSMA, 2019), none have studied these dynamics in Lebanon's northern T5 context and its inequalities. Greater research and data will be invaluable in furthering our understanding of the nuances of the regional and social context that shapes access to, or lack thereof, and use of information in the T5 area. This, in turn, will ensure that responses are grounded in a contextualised awareness of the challenges and possibilities of the social landscape of the T5 region.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology was inspired by a systems approach to resilience analysis grounded in a methodology devised by the OECD.[7] The approach was predicated on analysis at the community level – ie. Lebanese and non-Lebanese communities in the North Governorate's selected districts – and how those communities' systems are set up to respond to shocks and change.

In tandem, this systems resilience approach was merged with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework detailed in Figure 1 – adopted by DFID, CARE International and Oxfam – which elaborates on how the well-being of a community depends on a system with six different categories of assets or "capitals": financial, human, natural, physical, political, and social capital.[8]

[7] See: OECD (2014), Guidelines for Resilience Systems Analysis, OECD Publishing.
[8] See: OECD and UNICEF (2014) Final Report: Resilience Systems Analysis, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

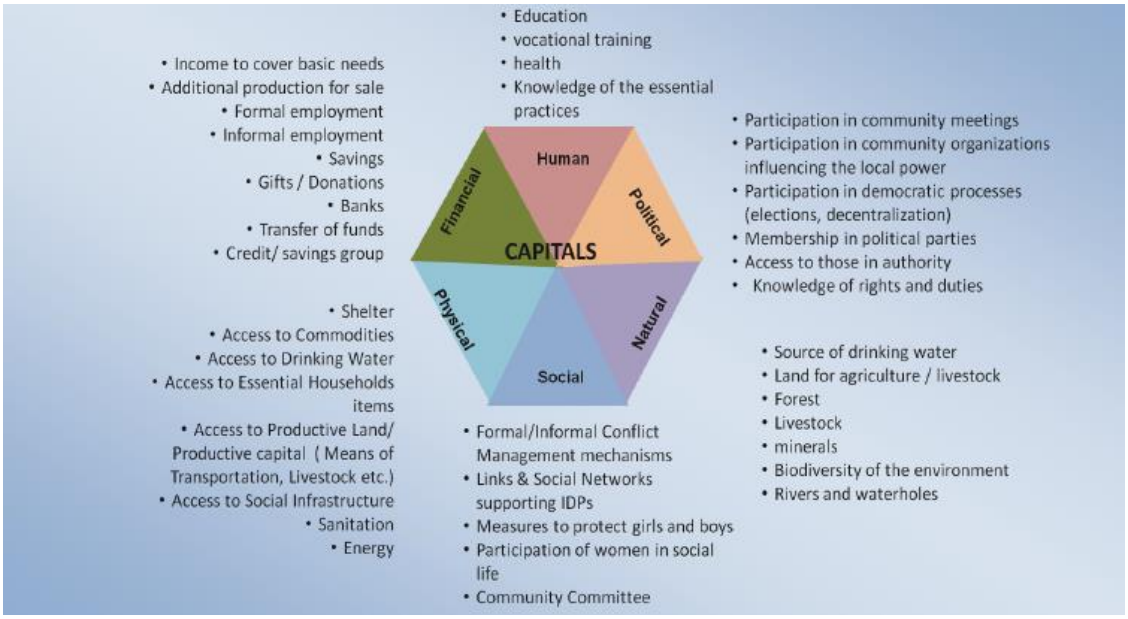


Figure 1: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework[9]

Following several methodological meetings with fellow research partners, a collaborative framework was then used to study the different kinds of information people access based on socio-economic, migrant and displaced identities, and how that links with information and support provided by and made available by the UN, (I)NGOs, local authorities, and civil society actors. The collaborative approach was based on customising the research methodology for the global south context. The research tools were then adapted to the updated methodology and Lebanon's context.

Emphasis was put on some resilience assets and their relation to social media, particularly access to education and vocational training, access to physical capital such as water, community engagement and the participation of women.

As outlined in the introductory section, this study focuses on five districts within the T5 region that are characterised by the large refugee populaces residing within their remit: Tripoli, Zgharta, Koura, Bcharreh, and Minnieh-Dannieh.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & FRAMING

The societal meaning and impacts of social and communication media in Lebanon's north governorate were explored through the following research questions which then guided the design of the research tools, implementation, and analysis:

[9] Source: OECD and UNICEF (2014) Final Report: Resilience Systems Analysis, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

1. What are the differences in sources of information used by displaced populations and host communities in the Tripoli+5 area?
2. To what extent is information on access to shelter, livelihoods, and other necessities shaped by refugee status?
3. To what extent is the urban space segmented by displacement dynamics, and how is that segmentation produced by and reflected in access to different types of information?

3.1 RESEARCH TOOLS & METHODS

Primary data

Researchers conducted 460 individual surveys, articulated as a semi-structured questionnaire. The sampling strategy employed purposive quota sampling to produce representative data across geographies, nationalities, and genders. See Annex A for the detailed survey questionnaire deployed.

The surveys were conducted across five districts in the northern governorate, including Tripoli, Minnieh-Dannieh, Zgharta, Bcharreh, and El-Koura. An even number of enumerators were sent to each district (23 per district).

Half of the surveys were conducted with Lebanese individuals and the other half with non-Lebanese. Survey respondents were asked for their place of origin and, if non-Lebanese, whether they were a refugee or migrant. Furthermore, refugees were asked if they were registered with a UN agency such as UNHCR or UNRWA. Due to the low representation of Palestinians in the survey data, related results will be presented in both percentages and the number of respondents.

TABLE 1: SURVEY SAMPLING FRAME.

Strata	**Target number**	**Target number per district**
Lebanese Male	115	23 per district
Lebanese Female	115	23 per district
Non-Lebanese Male	115	23 per district
Non-Lebanese Female	115	23 per district
Total	**460**	

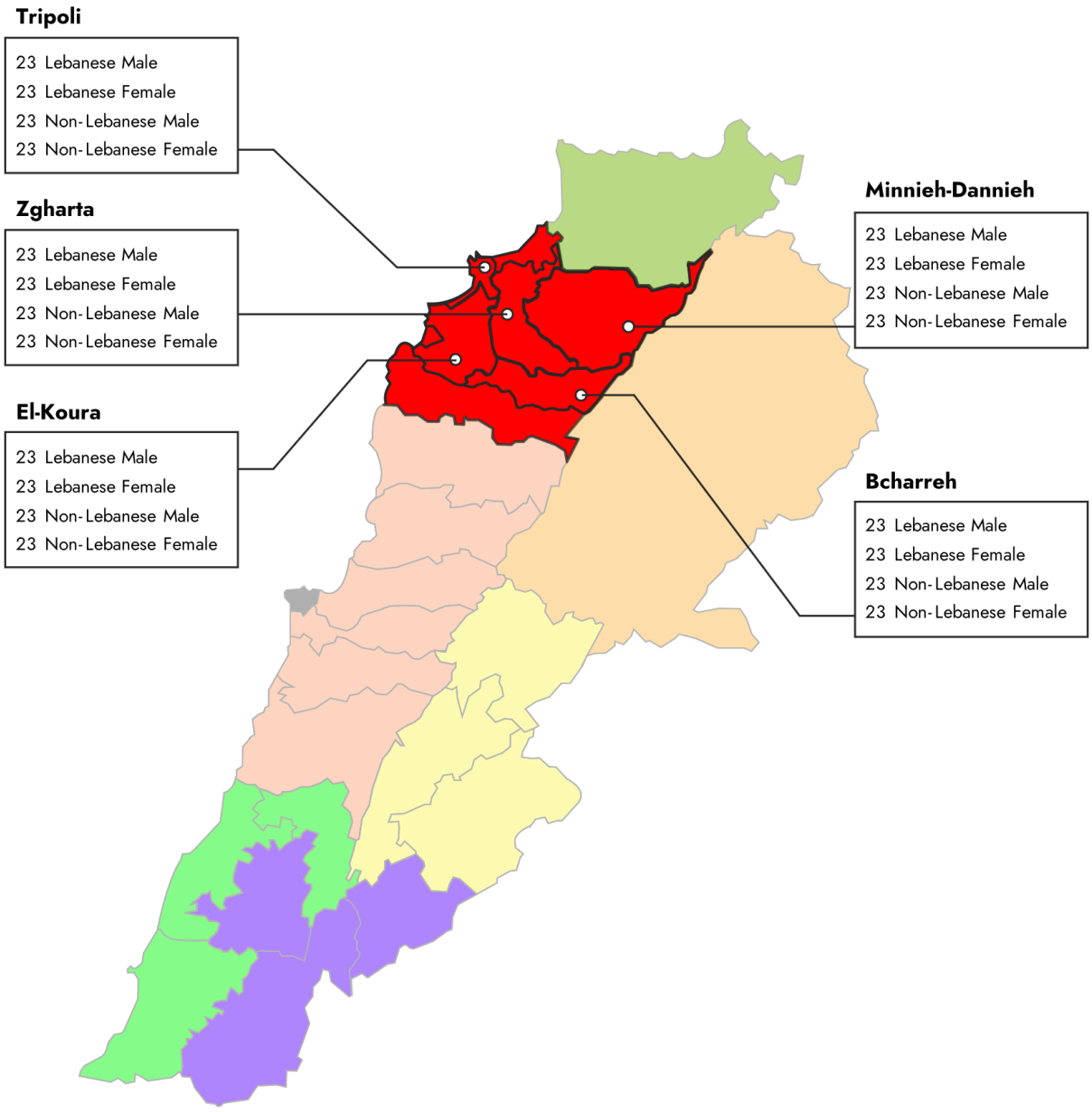


Figure 2: Map of the survey data collection and disaggregation.

Additionally, researchers conducted a total of nine focus group discussions (FGDs) to elaborate upon, validate and draw out nuanced dynamics to inform the analysis and conclusions. Samples for FGDs were further stratified according to displacement identity, shelter type, class, and gender. See Annex B for detailed FGD questionnaire deployed.

FGDs with non-Lebanese refugees were all held according to two types of shelters: informal tent settlements (ITS) and finished homes. It is important to differentiate finished homes from unfinished ones, as it is common for refugees in Lebanon to live in substandard unfinished homes. To capture class differences, FGDs with Lebanese were held in two different areas: inner Tripoli city with upper-class residents and Minnieh-Dennieh with lower-class residents. Overall, FGDs were conducted with non-Lebanese refugees and Lebanese. There was no further disaggregation for Palestinians.

TABLE 2: FGD SAMPLING FRAME

FGD No.	**Category**	**Gender**
1	Refugee - ITS	Female
2	Refugee – ITS	Male
3	Refugee – Finished house	Female
4	Refugee – Finished house	Male
5	Lebanese – Tripoli city (upper class)	Female
6	Lebanese – Tripoli city (upper class)	Male
7	Lebanese – Minnieh-Dennieh (lower class)	Female
8	Lebanese - Minnieh-Dennieh (lower class)	Male

Secondary data

A literature review accompanied primary data collation to triangulate findings and substantiate recommendations. This included literature shared by the project partners, INGO & NGO reports including social media and information access analysis, as well as other open-source literature such as academic papers and working reports.

3.2 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS & MITIGATION MEASURES

Some of the lines of inquiry in this study bore different safety and security risks for field teams and research participants. While Triangle investigated all lines of inquiry in all areas, the specific research tool (surveys and FGDs) used in each district were adopted according to a conflict-sensitive methodology that reflects principles of Do-No-Harm and broader safety and security risks.

The worsening economic context in Lebanon also impacted the information shared during the discussions, with priority needs – such as fuel and electricity – being a greater concern for many of the poorer populations. To mitigate this, the team worked to redirect the focus of the interviews to specific research areas, such as information use.

Initially, Triangle aimed to disaggregate the survey data according to the five different districts of the North Governorate. Field enumerators were sent daily to specific districts to meet the defined quotas. However, the survey questionnaire maintained a question about whether the respondent was from an urban, semi-urban or rural area, so we could maintain some geographical disaggregation.

4. DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Place of origin

- Half of the survey respondents identified as Lebanese (230 respondents). The other half identified as 48% Syrians (221) and 2% Palestinians (nine).

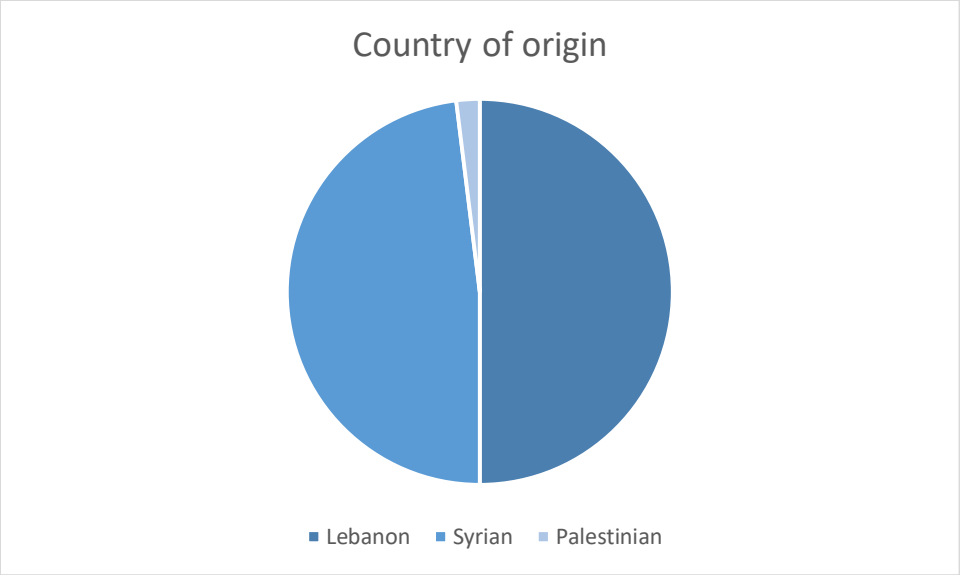


Figure 3 – Country of origin of survey respondents.

- Almost three-quarters of Syrians (74%) had lived in the North Governorate districts for more than seven years. All Palestinians (nine respondents) said they had been there for over ten years.
- Most respondents who identified as refugees were registered with a UN agency. 83% of refugee respondents were registered with UNHCR (171 respondents), and 63% were registered with UNRWA (17 respondents). The rest were unregistered (25 respondents).
- Out of the respondents, 16% said they were sure to migrate to a new place or – if a migrant or refugee – to return home.
- More than half of Syrians (57%) wishing to leave Lebanon said they eventually wanted to return to Syria.
- A fifth of Syrians and 23% of Lebanese said they wanted to emigrate to Europe. Furthermore, 14% of Lebanese wanted to emigrate to Australia.
- Almost half of the survey respondents described their neighbourhood as semi-urban, 30% as urban and 23% as rural. A higher concentration of Syrian respondents lived in rural areas, compared to Lebanese (29% vs 19% respectively).

Household dynamics

- About half of the people surveyed were married (52%), and about a third were single (30%). Notably, 80% of married survey respondents were between the ages of 36 and 64.

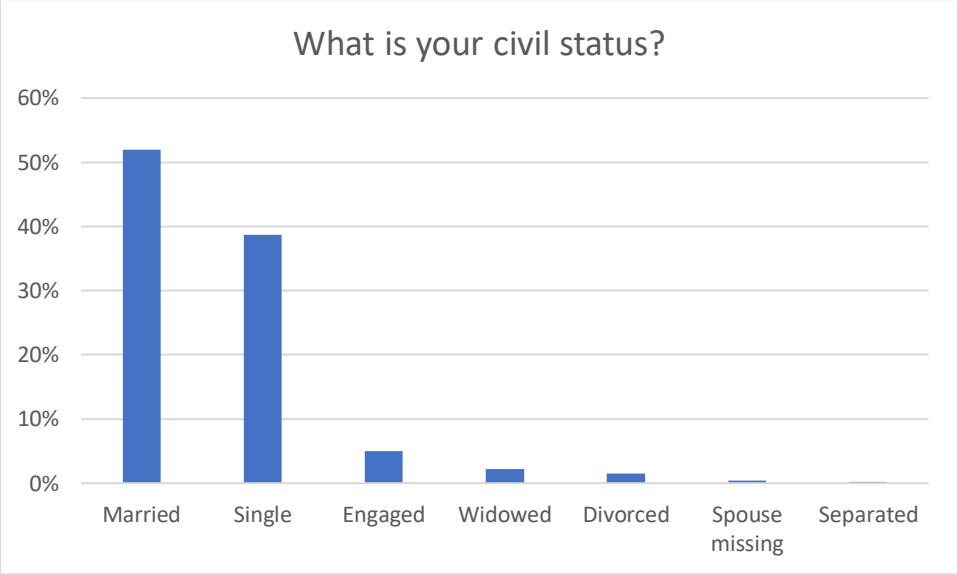


Figure 3 – Civil status of survey respondents.

- Three-thirds lived in a private apartment or house (75%) or rented a room (18%).
- About four or five people lived in each household on average (42%). Most of the people lived with their family members (93%).
- More than a third said they were head of household (37%). More than half of households included one dependent (59%). Lebanese households had a higher percentage of dependents.

Work and education

- A fifth of survey respondents completed graduate education (21%) or lower secondary school (20%).

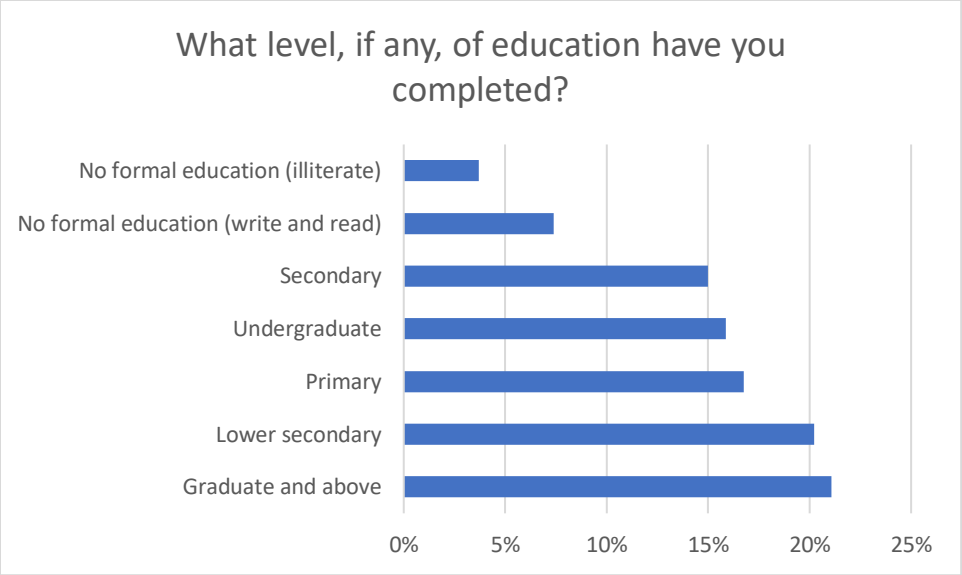


Figure 4 – Education level of survey respondents.

- More than a quarter were unemployed (26%). Of these, 30% were Syrians, and 21% were Lebanese. Regardless of respondent group, the Lebanese financial crisis was cited as a critical barrier to accessing work.
- Out of the employed respondents, 57% had no written contract. Only 25% had a formal written work agreement.
- The average monthly household expenditure was 368 USD. Lebanese reported a monthly average of 453 USD, Palestinians 244 USD, and Syrians 284 USD.
- Almost all respondents reported speaking Arabic at home (96%), followed by Arabic and English (2%) and Arabic and French (1%).

5. PRELIMINARY RESULTS & ANALYSIS

5.1 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Section Summary: *The study found that individuals residing in the North Governorate relied heavily on their social networks for information. Social media was a popular platform for accessing information and communicating with family and friends. WhatsApp and Facebook were the most commonly used social media platforms, serving different purposes such as fast communication with relatives and as a digital community board for searching for services and information. Social media was used primarily for staying up-to-date on daily events, road closures, and exchange rates. The language used on social media was reportedly easy to comprehend when accessing services.*

People living in the North Governorate districts overwhelmingly relied on people in their social circles – such as friends, relatives and neighbours – for information. When seeking information related to finding housing and rentals, 62% of survey respondents said they turned to their social circles first. The same trend was noticeable for information about essential household items like gas and cooking appliances (55% of respondents), essential basic urban services like electricity and water (37%), and education (48%). People living in the North Governorate districts also reported sharing information they found via social media with other household members or friends. Qualitative data from FGDs showed that non-Lebanese were more likely to rely on their community for information than Lebanese.

Social media platforms were primarily used to communicate with friends and family abroad, especially by non-Lebanese. About three-quarters of survey respondents said they had social networks with whom they kept in touch, in person or through the internet, beyond their community in the North Governorate. Overall, 81% of respondents said they used social media to communicate with friends and family abroad. Social media platforms were also used to read the news (53%) and search for information about access to various services and opportunities (26%). Furthermore, 68% of Lebanese respondents said they used social media platforms for entertainment, compared to only 48% of Syrians. During FGDs, lower-income FGD participants reported using social media for information to access basic needs. The difference was notable with Lebanese women from a higher income class who said they liked to use social media for "shopping". They also noted the "addictive" nature of social media, mainly when used for entertainment.

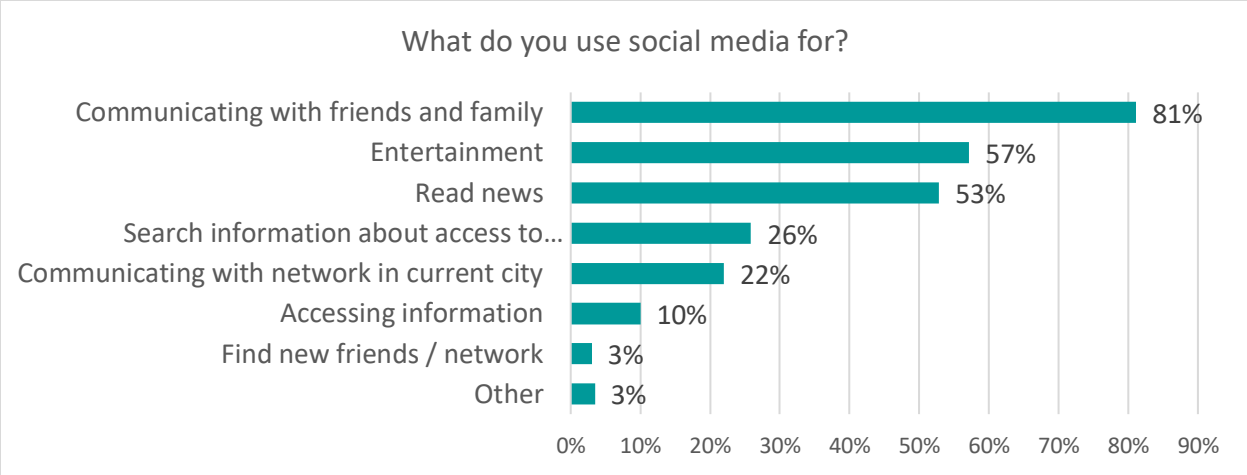


Figure 5 – Use of social media (total).

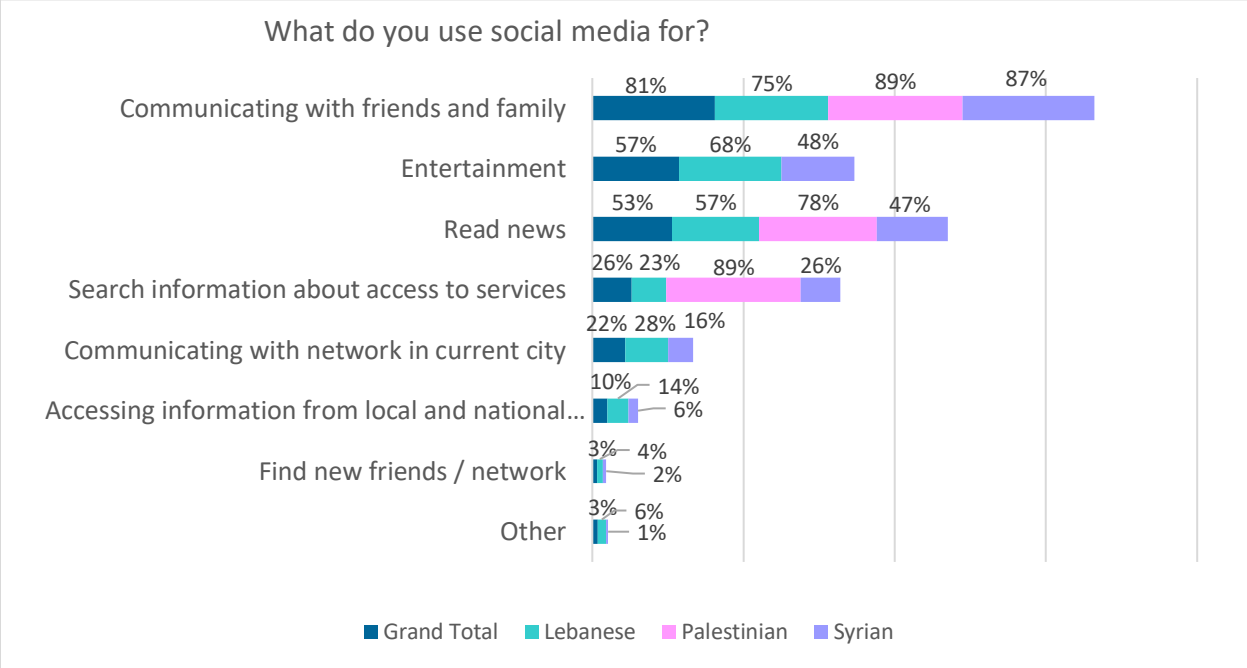


Figure 6 – Use of social media (disaggregated by place of origin).

The most popular digital social media platforms were WhatsApp and Facebook, and among younger populations, Instagram. Qualitative data from FGDs showed that people used these three applications for various purposes. While WhatsApp enabled fast communication with relatives, Facebook was used as a digital community board to search for services and information, such as death notices and blood donations. Indeed, almost all survey respondents said they used WhatsApp (97%), followed by Facebook (75%). About half said they used Instagram (49%), with the platform particularly popular with youth aged 16 to 18 and young adults aged 19 to 25. Overall, respondents living in rural

neighbourhoods used less social media platforms than those living in semi-urban or urban areas.

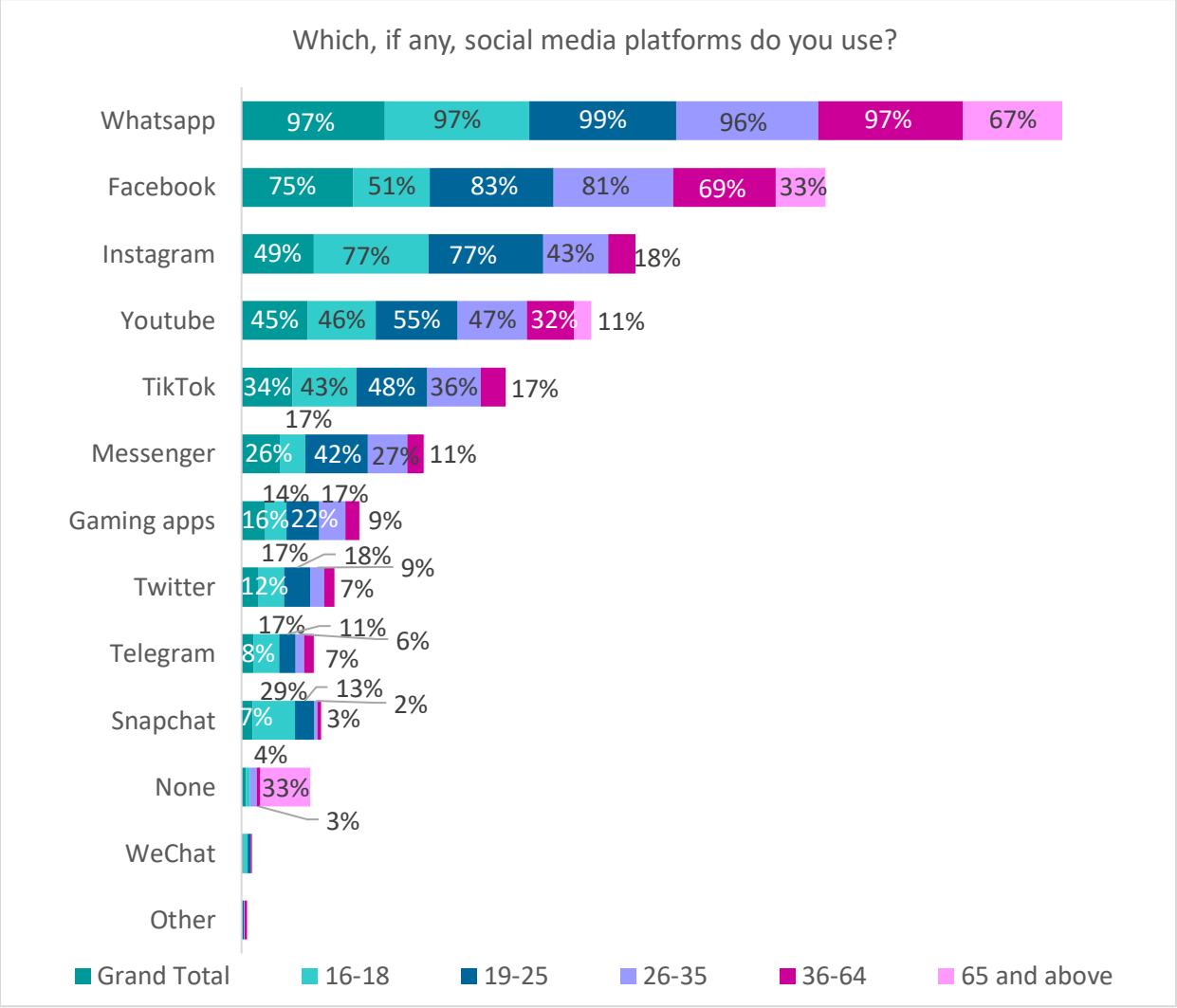
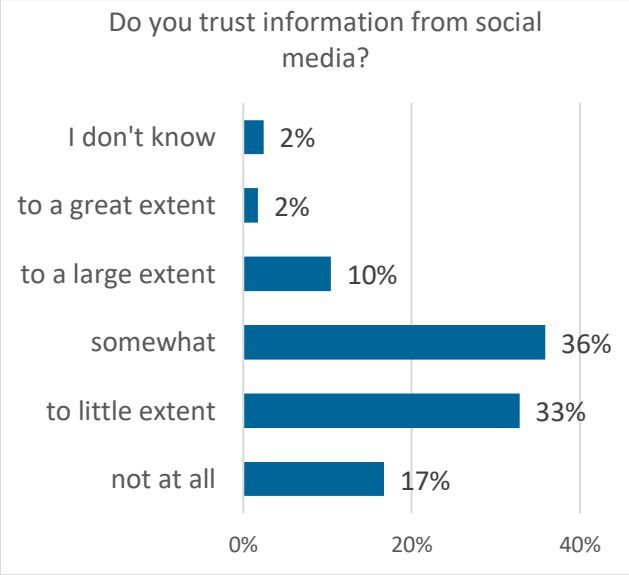


Figure 7 – Use of social media platforms (disaggregated by age).

"When there was no milk, everyone was asking on Facebook for it," – lower-income Lebanese man (FGD).

Most people "somewhat" trusted information gathered from social media. There were no notable differences in trust levels between respondent groups. Overall, 10% of survey respondents said they never double-checked information from social media with other sources. Almost half (46%) of respondents said they did double-check, and 44% said they sometimes did. Notably, 67% of people over 65 said they never checked another source of information. Overall, Lebanese reported double-checking news sources more than non-Lebanese. During FGDs, upper-income Lebanese men also reported checking

the political agendas of news sources and raised concerns regarding the spread of fake news and freedom of speech.



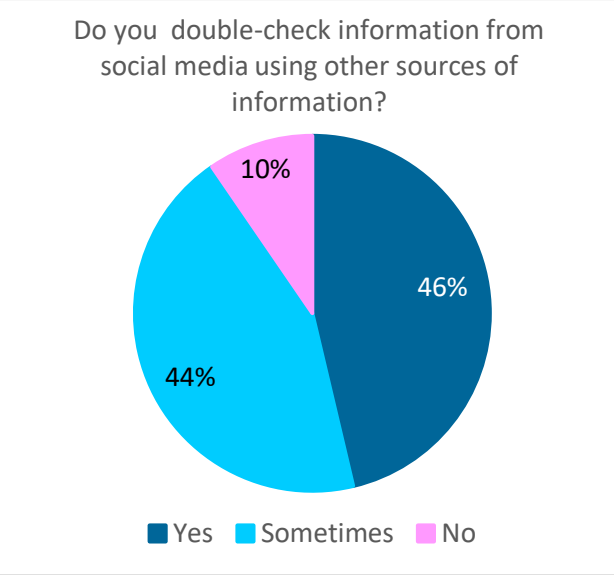


Figure 8 (left) – Extent to which respondents trust social media (total).

Figure 9 (right) – Whether respondents double-check information from social media with other sources (total).

The North Governorate districts' population, regardless of place of origin and socio-economic status, reported wanting information about the day's exchange rate and road closures. Most research participants said they required up to date news about the rate of the Lebanese pound to the US dollar, which has fluctuated daily since the beginning of the Lebanese financial crisis in 2019. Furthermore, they needed information about road closures due to frequent protests. Residents from lower socio-economic areas said they also needed information about electricity timing, water availability and bakery opening times. On the other hand, Lebanese residents of higher socio-economic neighbourhood reported wanting more political news (men) and shopping information (women).

"There are groups on Facebook to know if the bakery is open or not," – non-Lebanese man living in a finished house (FGD).

Most information on social media was reportedly provided in a familiar language (Arabic). Almost all survey respondents said they found the available content linguistically understandable (93%). However, 22% of survey respondents over 65 and 10% of Syrian respondents said that most information wasn't provided to them in a familiar language. Qualitative data from FGDs showed that populations from less

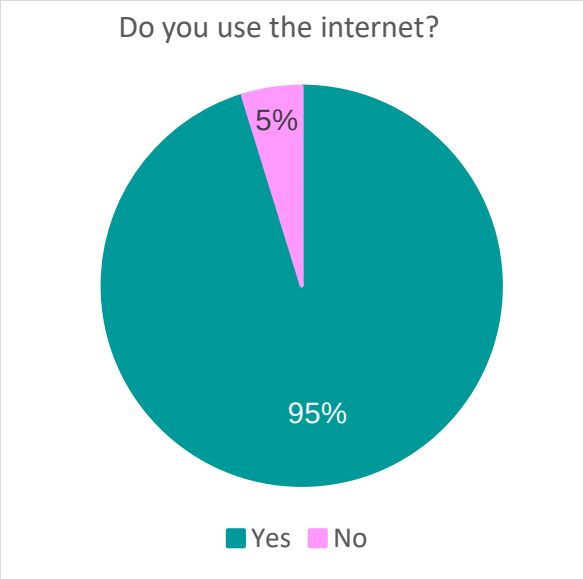
educated backgrounds sometimes had difficulties using Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) to search for information. Instead, Facebook was seen as a more accessible platform for navigating information because the content was often written in dialect, rather than MSA. Qualitative data from FGDs also showed that non-literate persons preferred to use WhatsApp to send and receive voice notes and videos.

5.2 INFORMATION ACCESS

Section Summary: *The majority of survey participants reported using their smartphones and home Wi-Fi to access the internet. A significant number of Syrians used a SIM card registered under another person's name. Social media was deemed crucial for both men and women to obtain information on local basic and social services. However, when it comes to healthcare access, more than half of respondents sought information from their acquaintances instead. Syrians relied more on social connections for financial-related information, whereas Lebanese sought such information on social media. The majority of participants also accessed information from UN agencies or (I)NGOs on social media. Despite this, the high cost of internet subscriptions and data was a significant obstacle to information access. Non-Lebanese populations encountered greater difficulty accessing relevant information on basic and social services or goods through social media. Syrian refugees from lower socio-economic areas were more likely to seek information in person, usually at schools or hospitals, than their Lebanese counterparts. Rural residents and those over the age of 65 reported less use of social media.*

Access enablers

Most survey respondents reported using the internet via phone and Wi-Fi at home. Nearly all respondents said they owned or had access to a phone (97%) for personal use. Furthermore, about 21% said they used or had access to a laptop – which was more prevalent among Lebanese. About three-quarters of survey respondents (76%) said they had a home Wi-Fi subscription, and 53% said they used their phone's 3G,4G or 5G. While 75% of Lebanese used their phone, only 32% of Syrians did. Internet usage was slightly lower among Syrian than Lebanese. Additionally, very few Lebanese reported sharing their internet connection; meanwhile, 15% of Syrians did so.



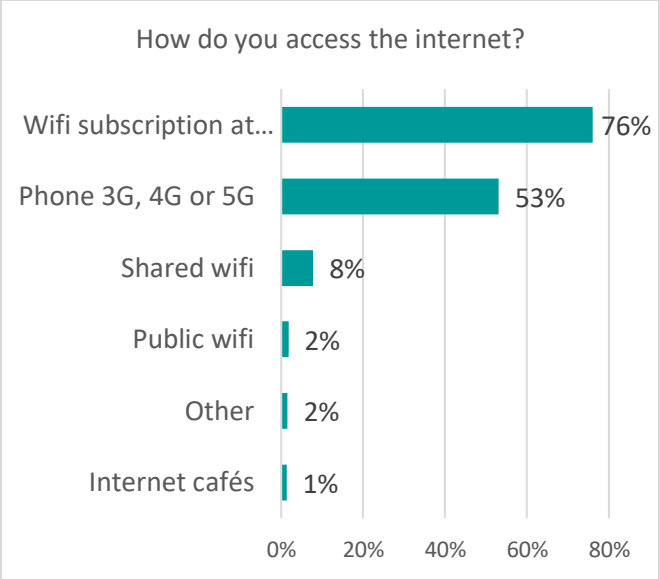


Figure 10 (left) – Internet usage (total).

Figure 11 (right) – Ways respondents access the internet (total).

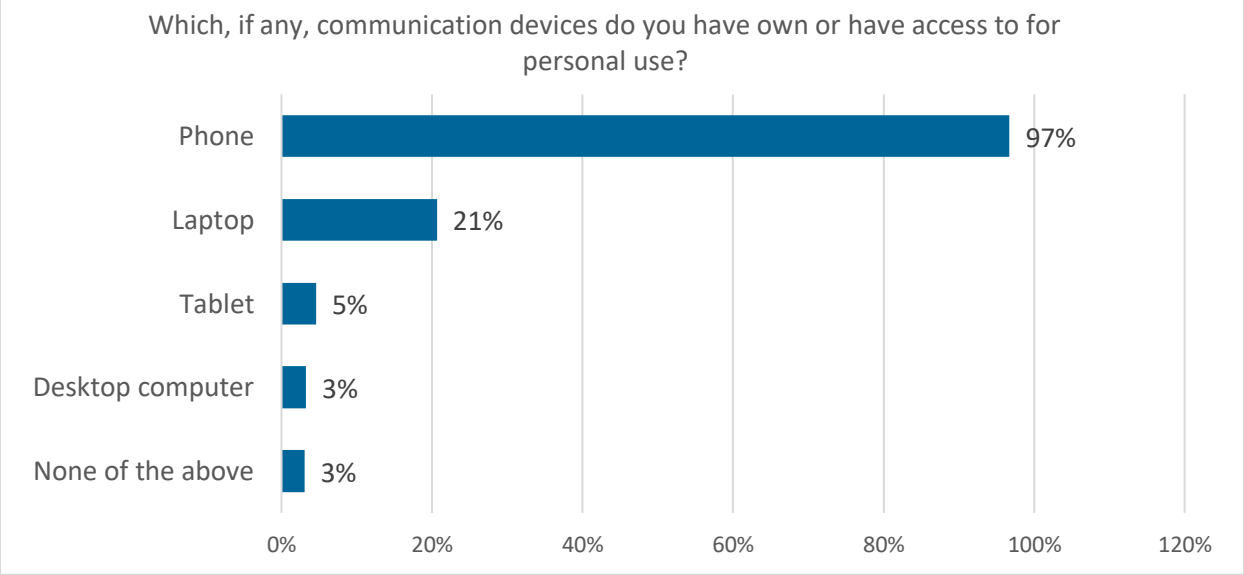


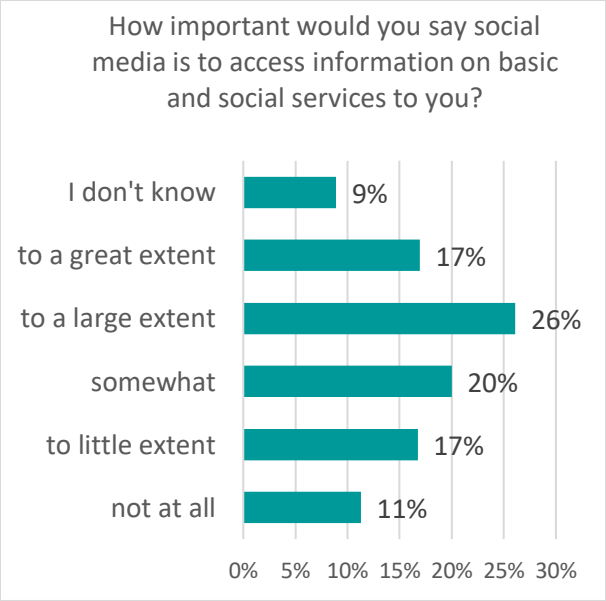
Figure 12 – Communication devices owned or accessed for personal use (total).

About a third of Syrians said they used a telephone SIM card registered under someone else's name. Secondary data showed that Syrians faced several barriers to accessing a working SIM card, primarily due to a lack of valid ID papers to complete the registration process. Out of the survey respondents who used a SIM card registered under

someone else's name, 30% of lived in rural areas, 17% in semi-urban and 15% in urban. Overall, more than three-quarters of survey respondents said they had a working SIM card registered under their own name. Furthermore, 4% said they didn't have a card at all.

"Some people can't buy phones or don't have the money to use them", – lower-income Lebanese man (FGD).

Social media was perceived as an essential tool for accessing information on local basic and social services. Qualitative data from FGDs showed that social media platforms were significantly used to organise day-to-day life. This includes knowing when the electricity would be on, which roads were closed, and which bakeries were open. It also helped them coordinate their schedules with family members and friends. While the opinions of survey respondents varied greatly among respondent groups and ages, a fifth of survey respondents said that social media was essential (26%). Respondents living in urban neighbourhoods reported relying more on social media for such services than those living in rural or semi-urban areas.



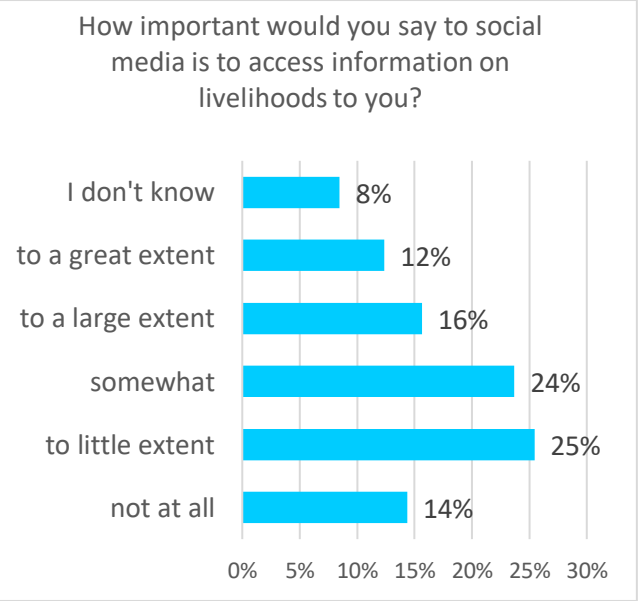


Figure 13 (left) – Importance of social media to access information on local basic and social services (total).

Figure 14 (right) – Importance of social media to access information on livelihoods (total).

More than half of the people living in the North Governorate districts asked people they knew for information about healthcare access. Notably, 35% of Syrian survey respondents and 67% of Palestinians (six people) said they asked their employer, contractor or colleagues for such information. The majority of survey respondents (67%) did not have health coverage. Out of the 33% who did, nearly half used public insurance

(49%) or health services provided by those registered with the United Nations. Notably, 75% of rural residents did not have health coverage, in comparison to 61% of semi-urban and 69% of urban residents. Rural residents also relied more on public health coverage than private providers. A quarter of Lebanese said they used a private provider for their health insurance, while very few Syrians or Palestinians did. All Palestinians with health coverage (four respondents) said it was through non-governmental organisations. During FGDs, most women said they consulted each other for healthcare needs and then called a family doctor if needed.

"If someone needs an operation, there is nothing printed, so they have to go ask people", – lower-income Lebanese man (FGD).

While Lebanese mainly relied on social media to access financial-related information (53%), Syrians were more likely to ask people in their social networks (45%). Most survey respondents (81%) did not have a bank account in Lebanon. While 30% of Lebanese had a bank account, only 4% of Syrians and no Palestinians had one. Lebanese were more likely to use an online mobile application to manage their finances. No Palestinians, and only 11% of Syrians, reported using such applications for their money. Social media was seen as an essential tool to access information on livelihoods for Palestinian respondents. Indeed, Palestinians mainly relied on their employer, contractor or colleagues for financial information.

Social media was not seen as an essential tool to inform decisions on moving to other areas. Indeed, almost three-quarters of all survey respondents said social media wasn't crucial for this purpose. The younger survey respondents were likelier to use social media to make moving decisions. While 46% of teenagers aged 16 to 18 agreed that social media was necessary for such choices, none of the respondents above 65 agreed. Furthermore, Lebanese were more likely to turn to social media for such information (35%) than Syrians (18%). People wanting to move to other areas mostly searched for information about new locations, job calls and available services.

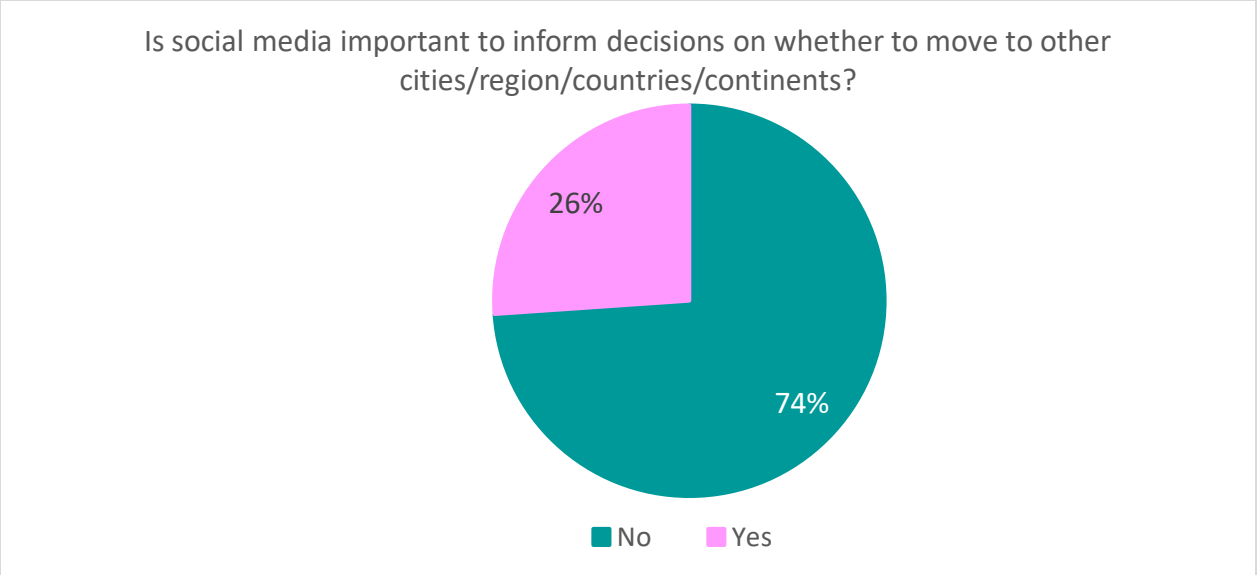


Figure 15 – Importance of social media to inform decisions on whether to move to other areas (total).

Almost 70% of respondents said that they accessed some information related basic and social services on social media from organisations such as the UN, (I)NGOs or CBOs. However, qualitative data from FGDs showed that Lebanese and non-Lebanese perceived information gaps provided by such organisations. Non-Lebanese living in the North Governorate districts wanted more clarity regarding the criteria used by aid organisations for aid and opportunities to relocate. Non-Lebanese also noted that the requirements were not transparent, for example, regarding why some families got benefits or travelled while others didn't. There is limited information about how aid organizations in Lebanon have implemented feedback loop mechanisms, to improve the effectiveness and relevance of their programs, or involve community engagement and participatory decision-making processes. These mechanisms are crucial in adjusting aid programs to meet the changing needs of the population and ensuring that the aid provided is relevant and effective. More than a third of survey respondents (35%) said that social media did not provide an opportunity to provide feedback to national or local governments, the UN or other aid organisations. Notably, limited research has been conducted in Lebanon about the effectiveness of authorities and organisations' feedback systems and whether these created feedback loops.

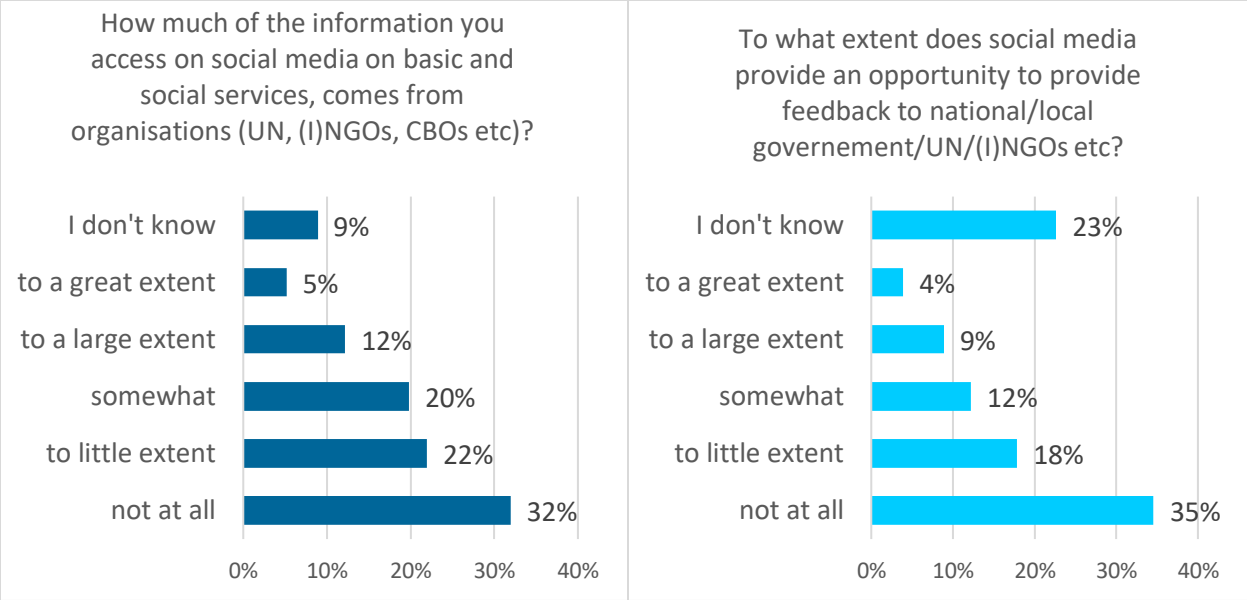


Figure 16 (left) – Amount of information accessed on social media on basic and social services, provided by UN, (I)NGOs, CBOs to survey respondents (total).

Figure 17 (right) – The extent to which social media provides an opportunity to provide feedback to national/local government, UN, or non-government organisations (total).

"Syrians have more access to information because the UN gives them more benefits," – lower-income Lebanese man (FGD).

Most of the North Governorate districts' residents perceived social media and communication as equally accessible for men and women. Indeed, 42% of survey respondents said it was "to a large extent" enjoyed by all genders, and 44% said it was to a "great extent". Survey respondents who disagreed reported that women often could not access information and communication technologies. During FGDs, there were mixed reports regarding women's access to communication tools. For example, some families with only one phone reported that women had priority because they stayed at home with the children. However, others said that men took the phone to work. Furthermore, some research participants perceived that women had access to more information because they regularly sat together and shared knowledge. Others said that men received more information because they were more in contact with others outside the home due to their 'breadwinner' role.

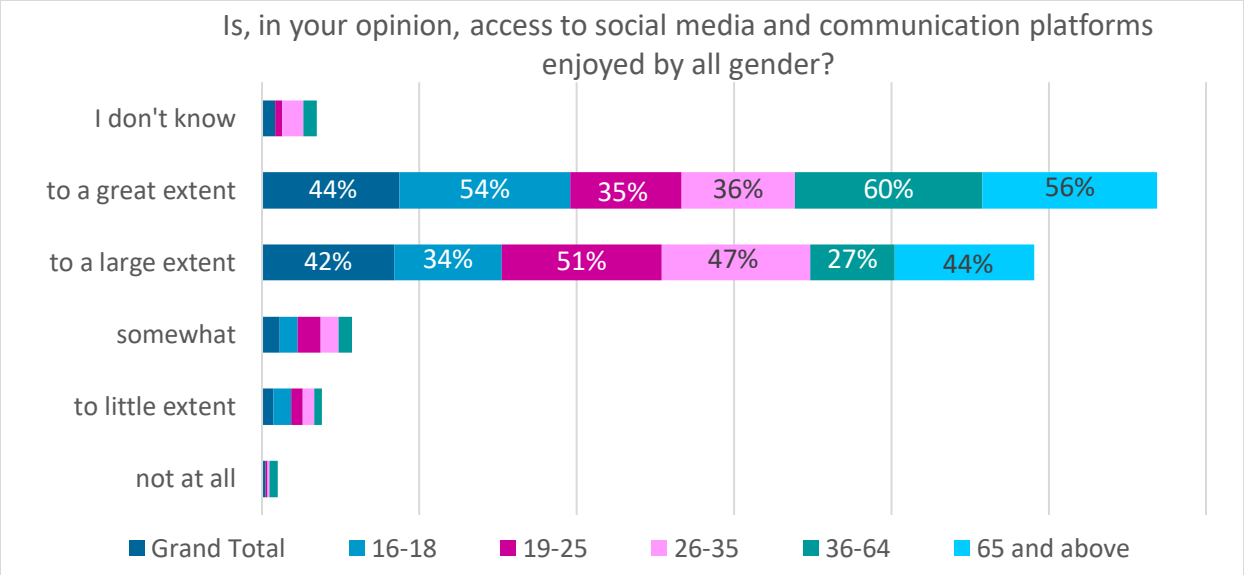


Figure 18 – Gender equality for access to social media and communication platforms (disaggregated by age).

"The man is on the road, so he is in contact with more people, so he has access to more information than, for example, a housewife," – non-Lebanese woman living in a finished home (FGD).

Access barriers

The rising cost of internet subscription/data was one of the biggest challenges cited by the North Governorate districts' population for information access. The increasing cost of electricity and the Lebanese government's recent price hike in telecommunication services created difficulties for all, regardless of respondents' place of origin. More than half of those surveyed said they sometimes faced problems accessing the internet (59%). Issues were reportedly higher in rural and semi-urban neighbourhoods. Overall, the most common reasons were power cuts (80%), bad network coverage (71%) and insufficient balance (24%). Residents from rural areas were more likely to face bad network coverage (77%), while urban residents reported more power cuts (79%). Qualitative data from FGDs showed that the lack of electricity had a knock-on effect on other communication tools. For example, frequent power cuts made it difficult for people to charge their phones or turn on the television. Furthermore, people reported being unable to buy data or buying a lesser amount due to its increasing cost.

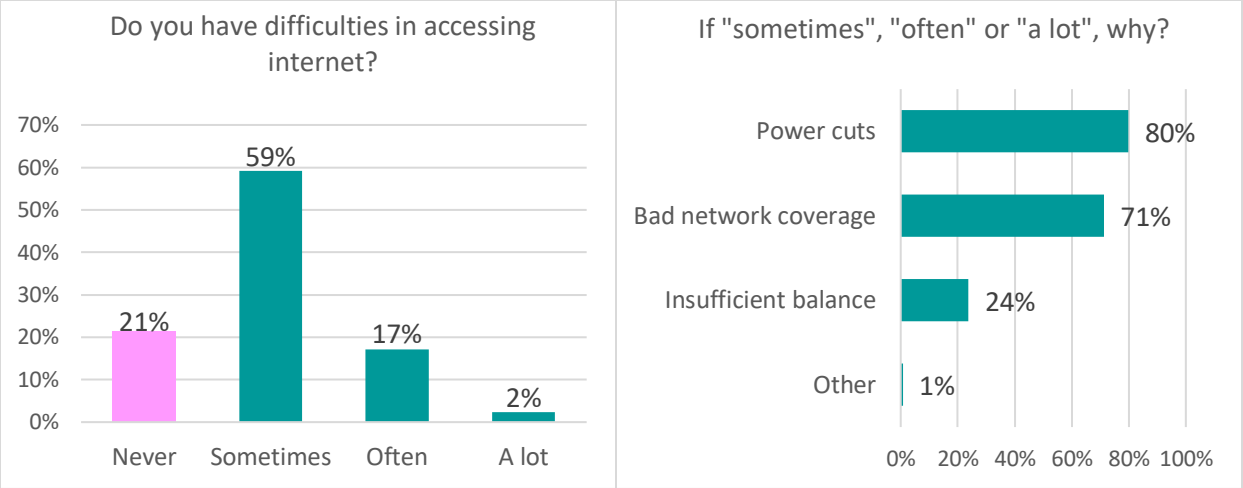


Figure 19 (left) – Difficulties in accessing the internet (total).

Figure 20 (right) – Reasons for difficulties in accessing the internet (total).

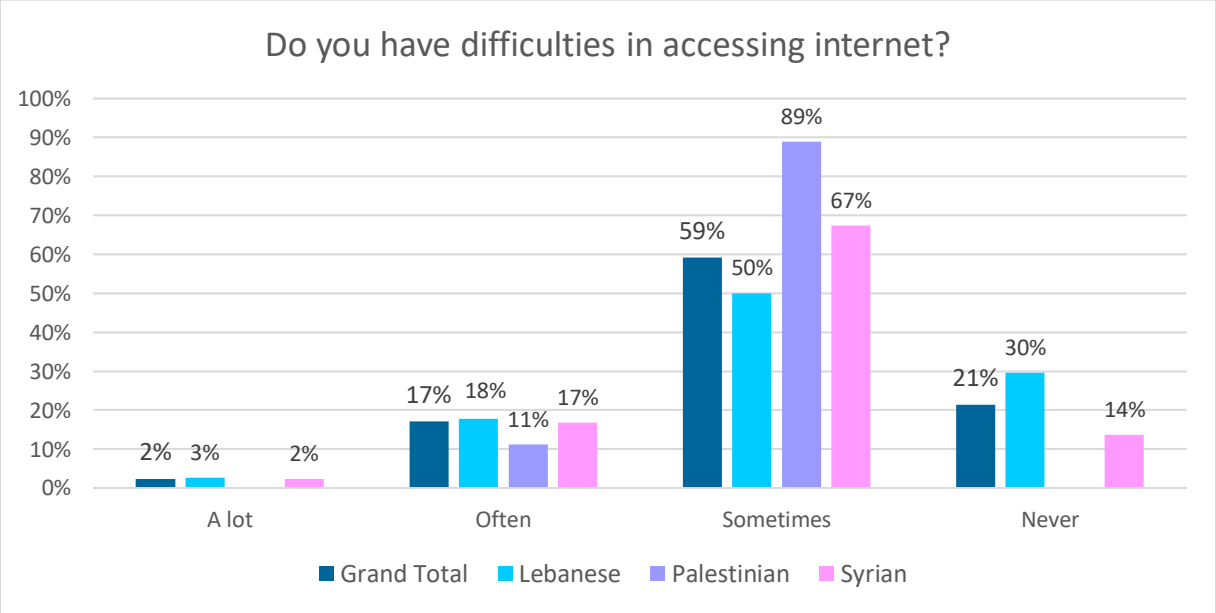


Figure 21 – Difficulties in accessing the internet (disaggregated by place of origin).

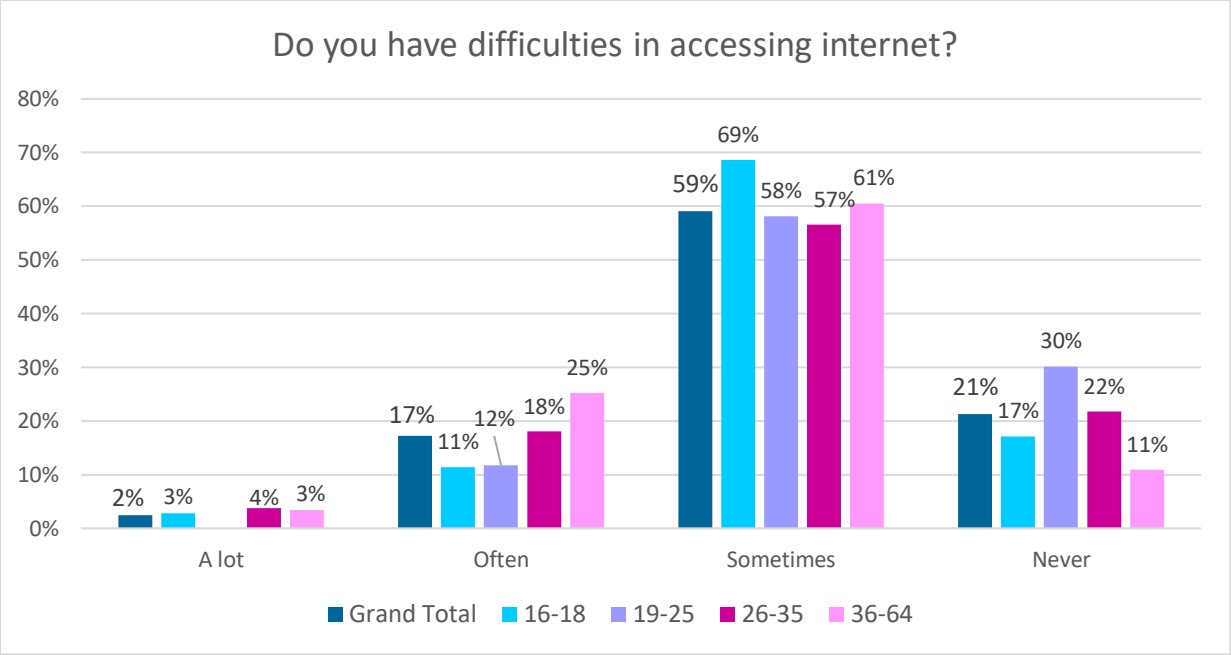


Figure 22 – Difficulties in accessing the internet (disaggregated by age).

Lebanese reported paying almost double the amount of money to access the internet than Syrians. While Lebanese reported paying an average of 10.2 USD monthly for an internet subscription, Syrians said they paid only 5.9 USD. For a phone subscription with the internet, Lebanese said they spent about 11.4 USD each month compared to 5.4 USD for Syrians. These prices, however, do not indicate a cheaper price of internet for Syrians. Qualitative data from FGDs showed that non-Lebanese from lower-income neighbourhoods were buying less credits based on what they could afford. Hence, when telecommunication prices rose, these populations reduced their phone usage. Additionally, respondents living in semi-urban neighbourhoods reported paying more for internet and phone subscriptions each month, in comparison to those living in rural or urban areas. Notably, women reported paying slightly higher prices than men (about 1 USD extra) for these services.

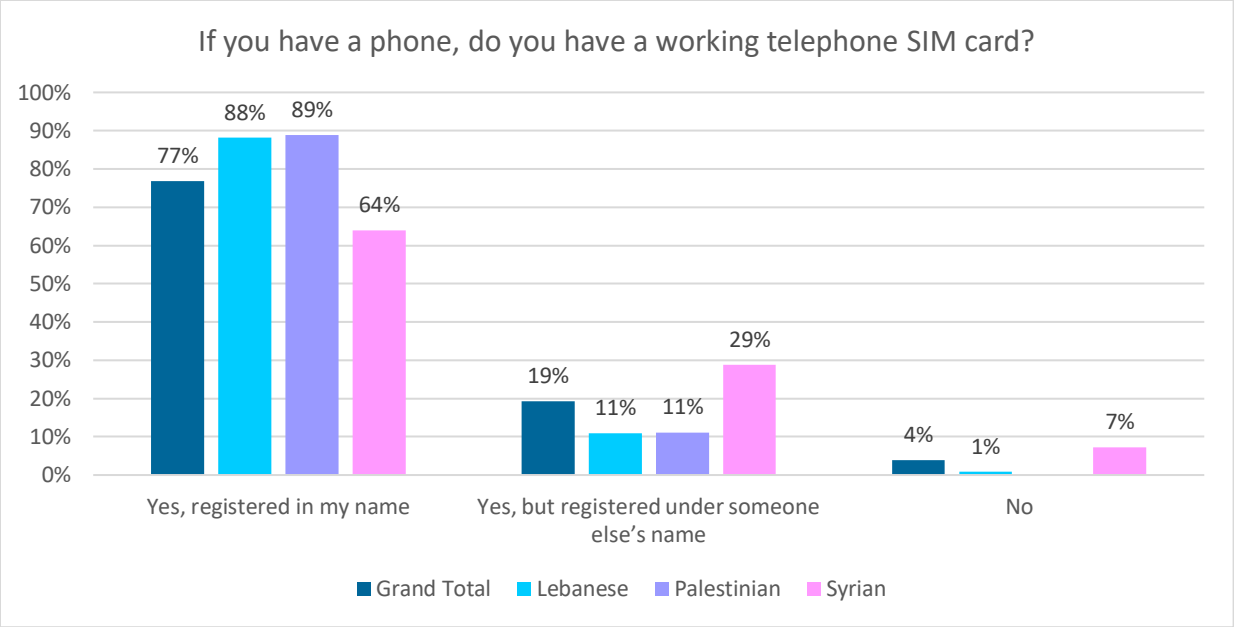


Figure 23 – Access to a working telephone SIM card (disaggregated by place of origin).

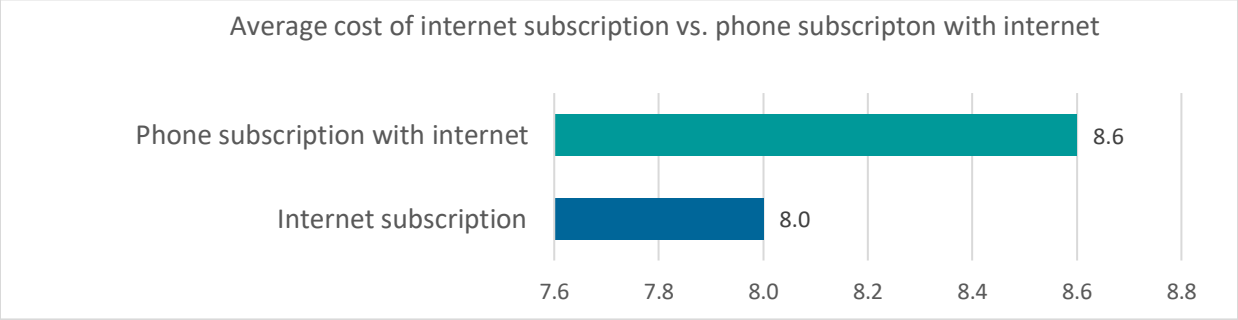


Figure 24 – Average cost of internet subscription compared to phone subscription with internet.

"Some people have a phone but can't use it because the SIM card expired because it was not recharged," – non-Lebanese woman living in a refugee tented settlement (FGD).

Non-Lebanese populations reportedly found it harder to access relevant information on basic and social services or goods on social media. Indeed, 12% of Syrian respondents said it was "not at all" easy to find such information, compared to only 3% of Lebanese. While 37% of Lebanese said it was, to a large extent, easy, only 26% of Syrians reported the same. Overall, a quarter of survey respondents said there was an information overload to find information on how to access basic and social services. Qualitative data from FGDs also showed that information overload affected all respondent groups and it made it harder to find the information they needed. Information overload

reportedly impacted people's mental health because it was time consuming to find good information

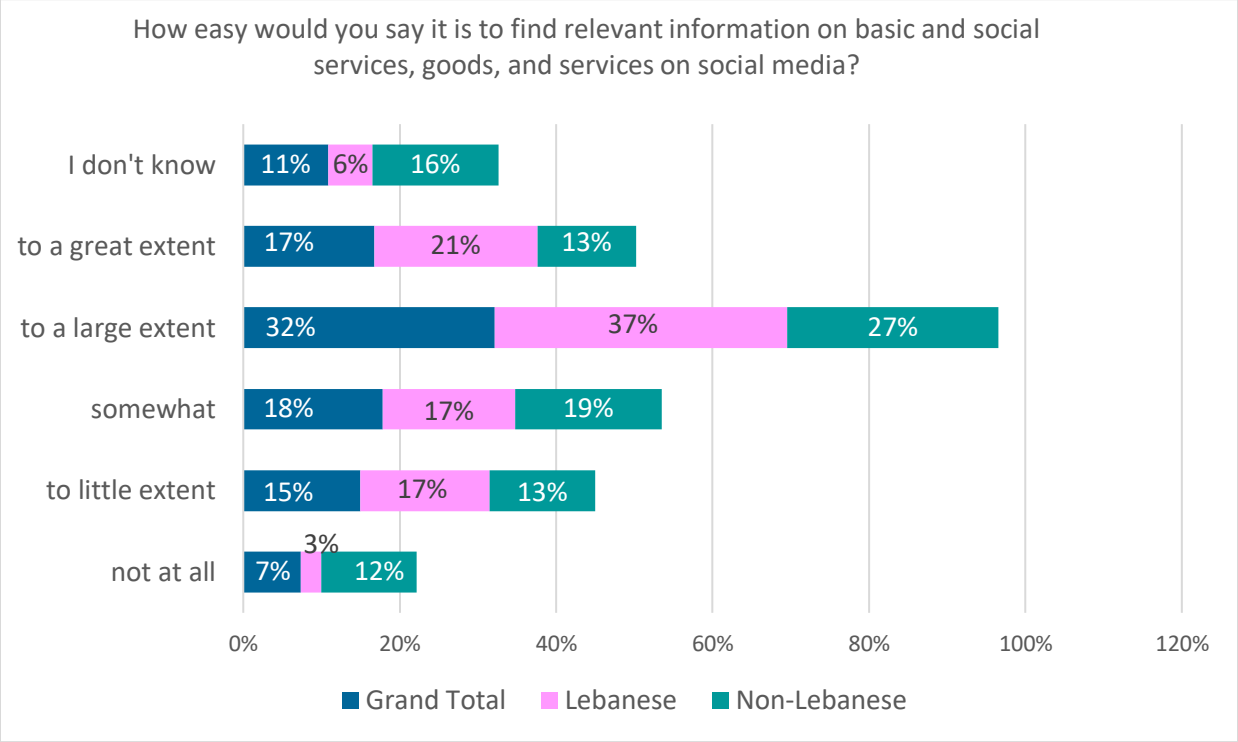


Figure 25 – The facility to find relevant information on basic social services, goods and services on social media (disaggregated by nationality).

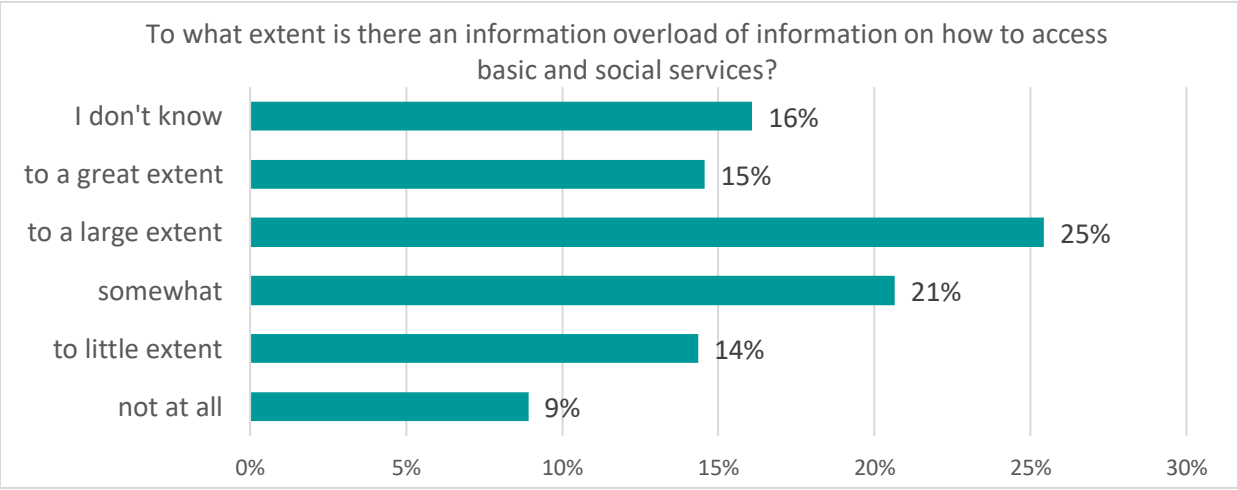


Figure 26 – Information overload of information on how to access basic and social services (total).

"We get lost in the information… from all the noise," – lower-income Lebanese woman (FGD).

Syrian refugees from lower socio-economic neighbourhoods were more likely to seek information in person – mostly at schools and hospitals – than Lebanese. Reasons cited during FGDs included a lack of updated information about available services and prices, especially since the start of Lebanon's 2019 financial crisis. Many non-Lebanese women reported going directly in person to ask for specific health or education-related information. However, they noted that this type of information-chasing impacted their physical and emotional wellbeing.

"It's a lot of effort to go get information in person," – non-Lebanese man living in a tent settlement (FGD).

Residents from rural neighbourhood reported relying less on social media for information. Overall, survey respondents from rural neighbourhoods relied more heavily on their social networks than social media for information related to accessing basic services. For example, 73% of rural residents said they relied on their social network for information related to housing, compared to only 21% on social media. Slightly more rural residents said they did not use the internet, compared to semi-urban and urban residents. Notably, respondents from rural neighbourhoods were also less likely to double-check information from social media using other sources of information.

Out of the 5% of survey respondents that reported not using the internet, 44% were over the age of 65. Overall, nearly half of survey respondents said that access to social media and community platforms were enjoyed by all ages. However, about a third of respondents over 65 said they didn't use social media platforms at all. Further, respondents over the age of 65 said social media was not important to inform their decisions on whether to move to other cities, regions or countries. Qualitative data from FGDs showed that elderly residents found it harder to navigate digital platforms.

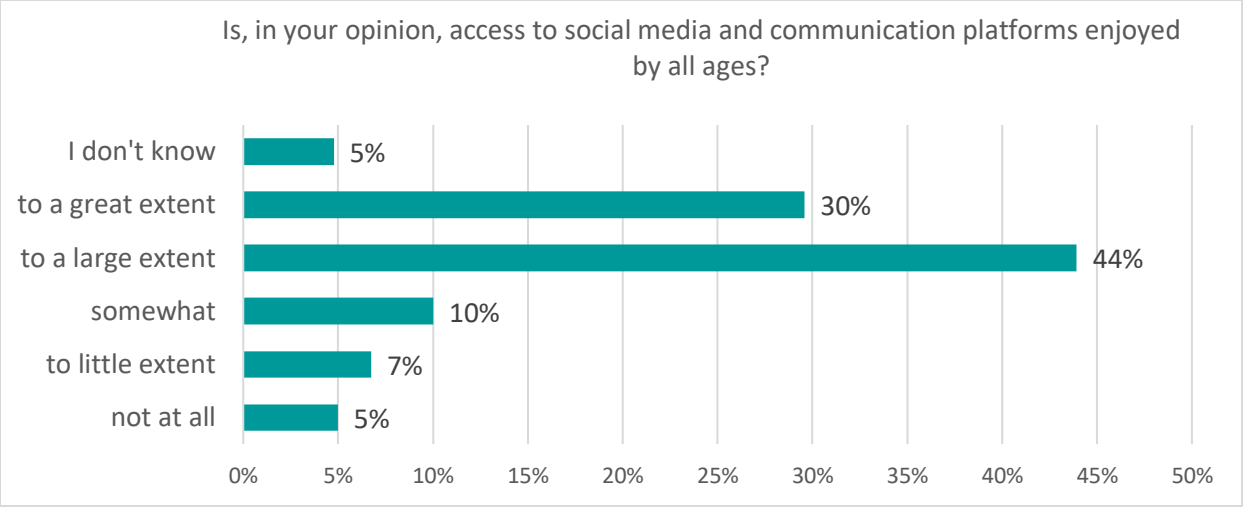


Figure 27 – Perception about equality between ages to access social media and communication platforms (total).

Syrian and Lebanese women reported difficulties supporting their children's education amid the 2019 Lebanese uprisings and COVID-19 crisis. While most survey respondents said all ages enjoyed access to social media and communication platforms, children under 18 reportedly faced additional difficulties. Qualitative data from FGDs showed that the school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and the road blockages due to the Lebanese protests from October 2019 had a significant impact on children from lower socio-economic households, especially on their education. Furthermore, increasingly frequent electricity cuts made it difficult for them to access the required online modules. In FGDs, women also cited safety concerns related to their children's use of online platforms. Non-Lebanese women also reported wanting more information about their children's education.

5.3 DISPLACEMENT DYNAMICS

Section Summary: *Lebanese individuals expressed a greater sense of insecurity in their communities compared to Syrians. The general perception of safety was higher in rural neighbourhoods than in urban ones. More than a third of Syrians and half of Palestinians reported experiencing discrimination in their community based on their country of origin. Lebanese participants perceived a greater level of inequality between host and refugee communities concerning access to services, housing, and support systems. Although social*

media was viewed as a vital tool in promoting social engagement within communities, these digital platforms were also perceived to exacerbate community tensions.

Lebanese reported feeling more unsafe than Syrians in their community. Overall, a quarter of survey respondents said they did not feel safe in their community – 31% Lebanese, compared to 21% Syrian. Almost half of Lebanese (45%) said they did not feel they could rely on others in their community in times of stress and instability, compared to 38% of Syrians. Syrians were, however, less likely to feel part of their community than Lebanese. Older populations reported feeling safer than younger ones. Notably, nearly half of survey respondents over 65 said they could rely on others in their community to a large extent.

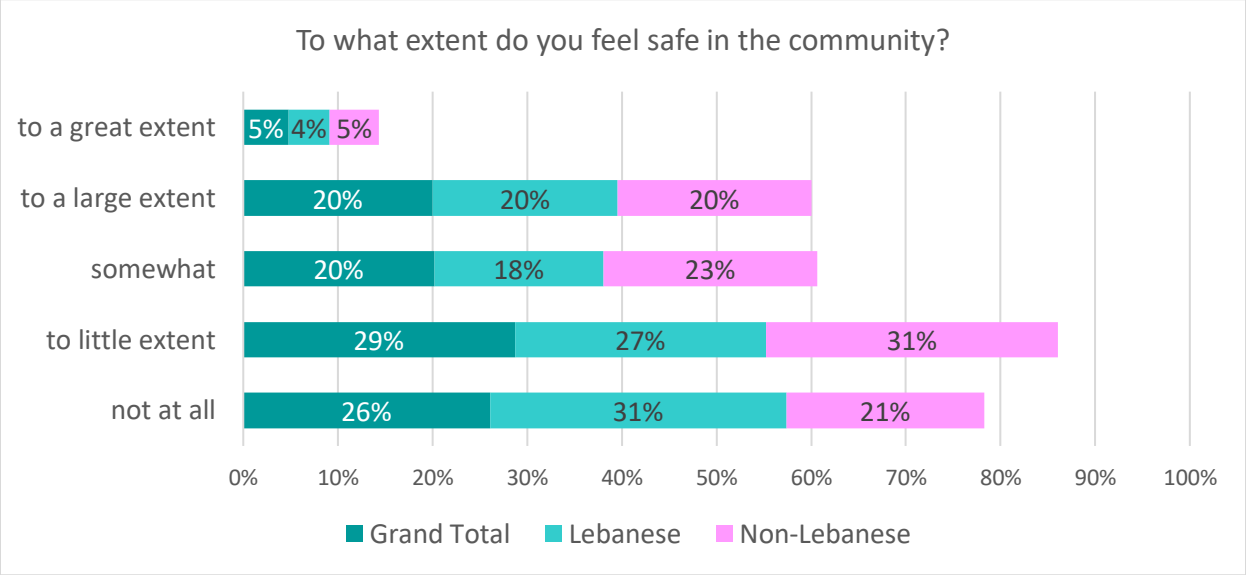


Figure 28 – Perception of safety within the community (disaggregated by nationality).

"As Syrians, we are scared of going outside sometimes," – non-Lebanese man living in a finished house (FGD).

Overall, the perception of safety was higher in rural than in urban neighbourhoods. More than half of urban residents (57%) said they felt they could not at all rely on others in their community in times of stress and instability. Furthermore, 35% of urban residents reported not feeling safe at all in their community, compared to 21% of rural residents and 23% of semi-urban residents. Urban residents also trusted information from social media less than those from rural or semi-urban areas. Overall, a higher percentage of urban residents said they felt social media contributed to tensions in their community.

About half of the urban residents said they sometimes chose not to post on social media due to potential consequences. On the other hand, 45% of urban residents also felt that social media increased interaction between refugees, migrants and hosts in their community to a large extent.

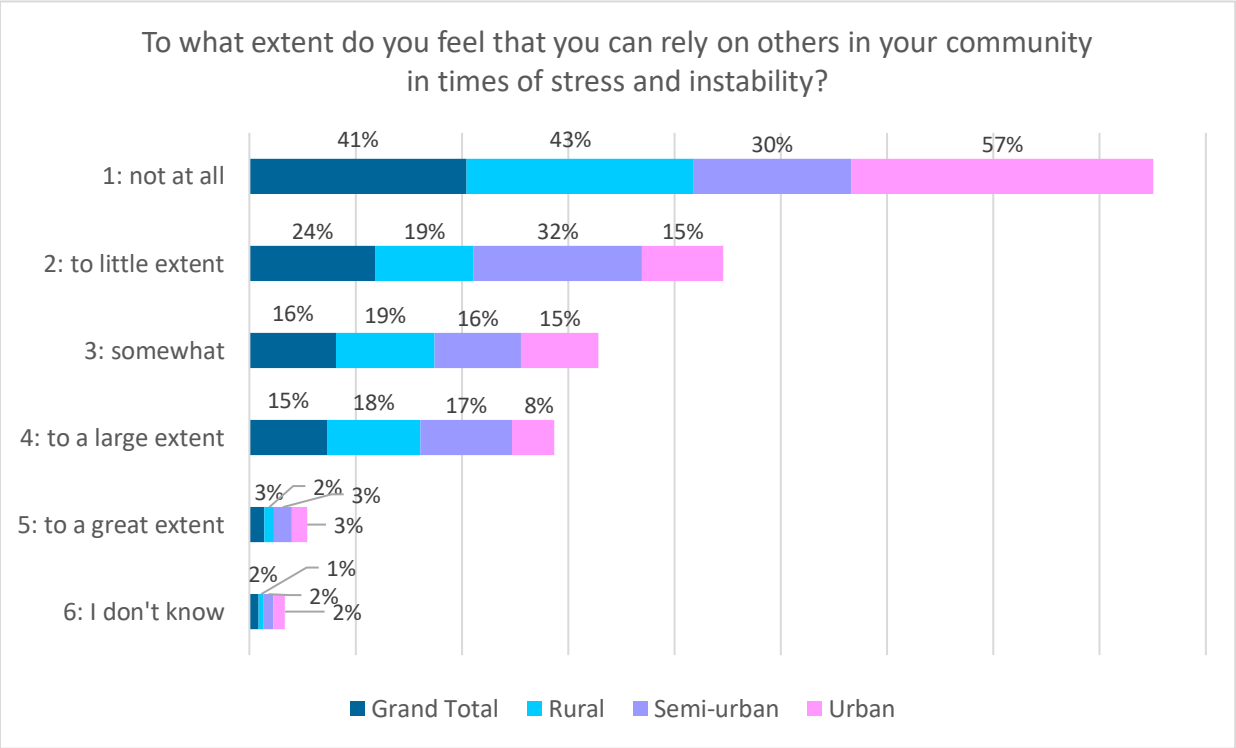
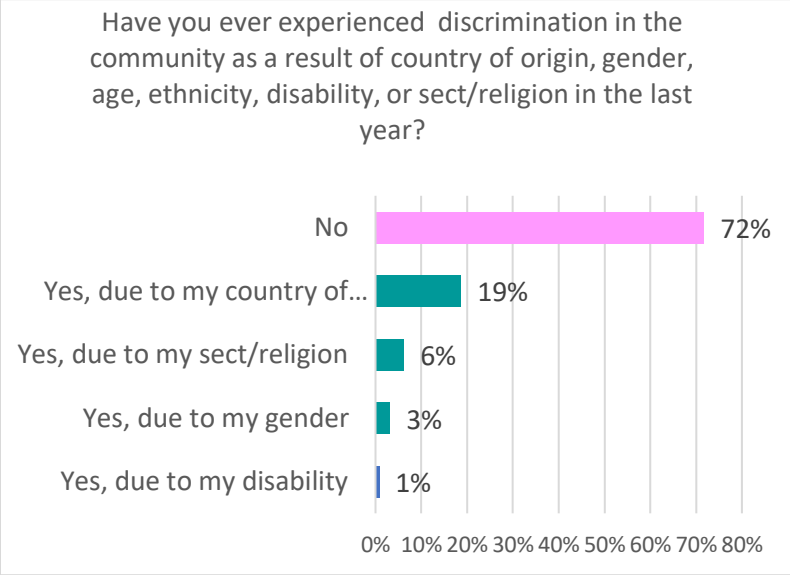


Figure 29 – Perception of safety within the community (disaggregated by neighbourhood type).

More than a third of Syrians (36%) and half of Palestinians (56%) said they experienced discrimination in their community due to their country of origin. Overall, almost half (46%) of those who faced discrimination said it was between one and three times a year. Nearly a third of Syrians (31%) and 40% of Palestinians (five respondents) said they faced discrimination about once a month. Additionally, all Palestinians surveyed, and 56% of Syrians said their refugee status limited their job options. Most Lebanese (84%) said they never faced discrimination, and those who did said it was due to their sect or religion (11%). During FGDs, many non-Lebanese – particularly Syrians – said they also experienced discrimination outside their communities, particularly due to their country of origin. Notably, about a third of rural residents said they had experienced discrimination in their community as a result of their place of origin.

This could be due to the higher number of Syrian respondents reporting living in rural areas.



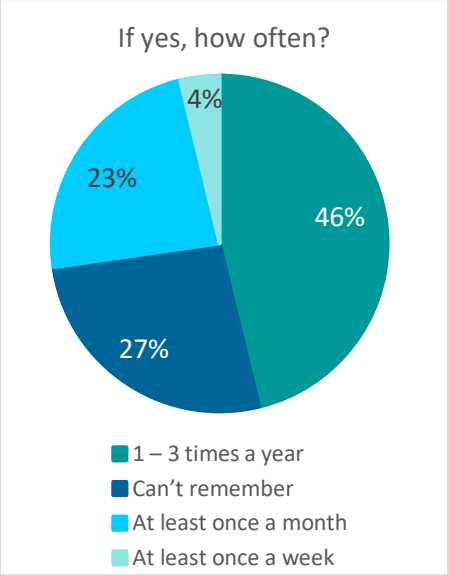


Figure 30 (left) – Experienced discrimination within the community (total).

Figure 31 (right) – Frequency of facing discrimination (total).

Lebanese perceived higher inequality between host and refugee communities for access to services, housing and support mechanisms. Nearly three-quarters of Lebanese survey respondents (72%) said there wasn't equal access to services, compared to 62% of Syrians who thought the same. Notably, all Palestinians said the access to services, housing and support mechanisms was unequal. Furthermore, 38% of Syrians said they had equal access, compared to only 28% of Lebanese. Differences between income classes were also cited as a reason for the inequality of such services.

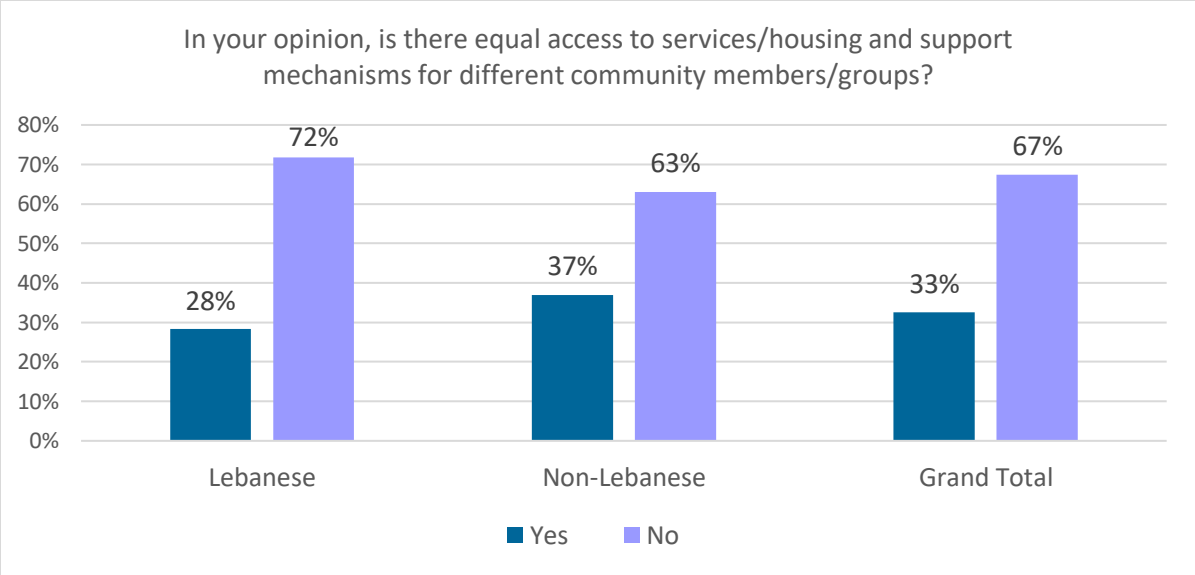


Figure 32 – Perception of equality for access to services/housing and support mechanisms within the community (disaggregated by nationality).

Social media was perceived to play an essential role in enhancing social participation in communities. Almost half of the survey respondents (47%) said it enhanced such participation "to a large extent", and a quarter (25%) to a "great extent". Younger generations were more likely to report social media playing a role in social cohesion. Notably, 78% of Palestinians (seven survey respondents) said social media enhanced social participation to a great extent. Only 35% of all survey respondents said social media increased interaction between refugees, migrants and hosts in their communities to a large extent. During FGDs, research participants of all respondent groups noted that social media helped enhance social participation within their own community, but less so with other communities.

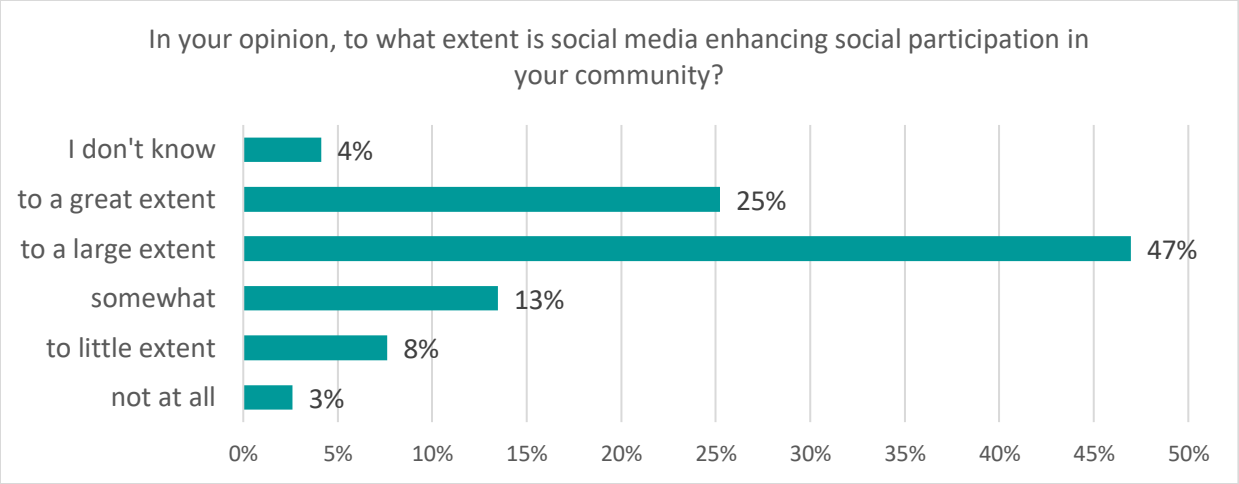


Figure 33 – The extent to which social media enhances social participation at the community level (total).

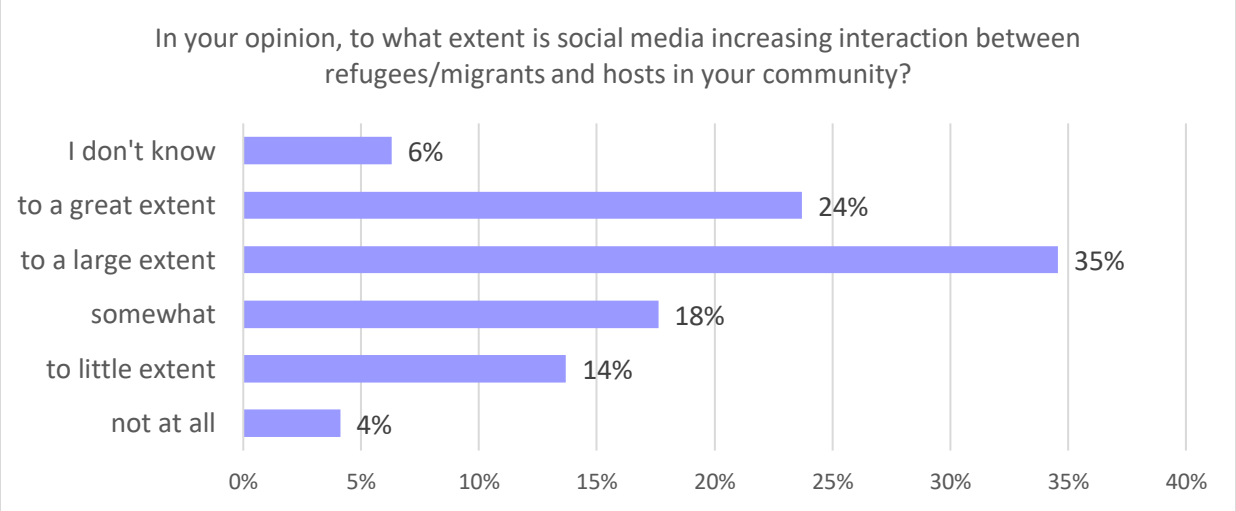


Figure 34 – The extent to which social media increased interaction between refugees/migrants and hosts at the community level (total).

"We don't feel in such a bubble, we can see what is happening around the world," – upper-income Lebanese woman (FGD).

Conversely, social media was also perceived to contribute to community tensions. Almost three-quarters of survey respondents (73%) said social media played a part in creating tensions. Lebanese were slightly more likely to perceive social media as a contributor. During FGDs, non-Lebanese – particularly Syrian – were more likely to report the negative impact of hate speech and fake news - mostly propagated through social media - on social cohesion among refugee and host communities in Lebanon. During FGDs, Syrians gave several recent examples of information circulating on social media,

which negatively impacted their daily lives. These recent incidents included news of the Lebanese government's new plan to forcibly return Syrian refugees to Syria, as well as Syrians and Lebanese being forced to stand in different lines at bakeries.

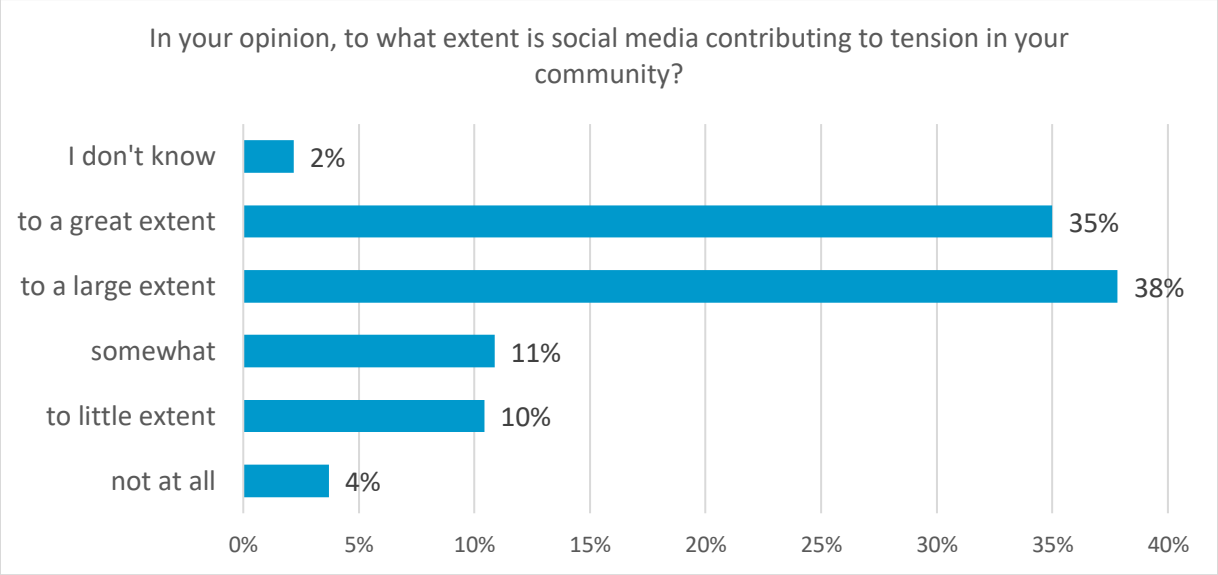


Figure 35 – The extent to which social media contributed to tensions at the community level (total).

Half of the survey respondents said they sometimes chose not to post on social media due to the potential consequences, such as social acceptance. Qualitative data from FGDs showed that the most common security concern for non-Lebanese men was the online monitoring of intelligence services and its possible consequences, such as being forcibly returned to Syria. During FGDs, women across all respondent groups mentioned their distrust of talking to people on social media more often because they were not always sure of the other person's identity.

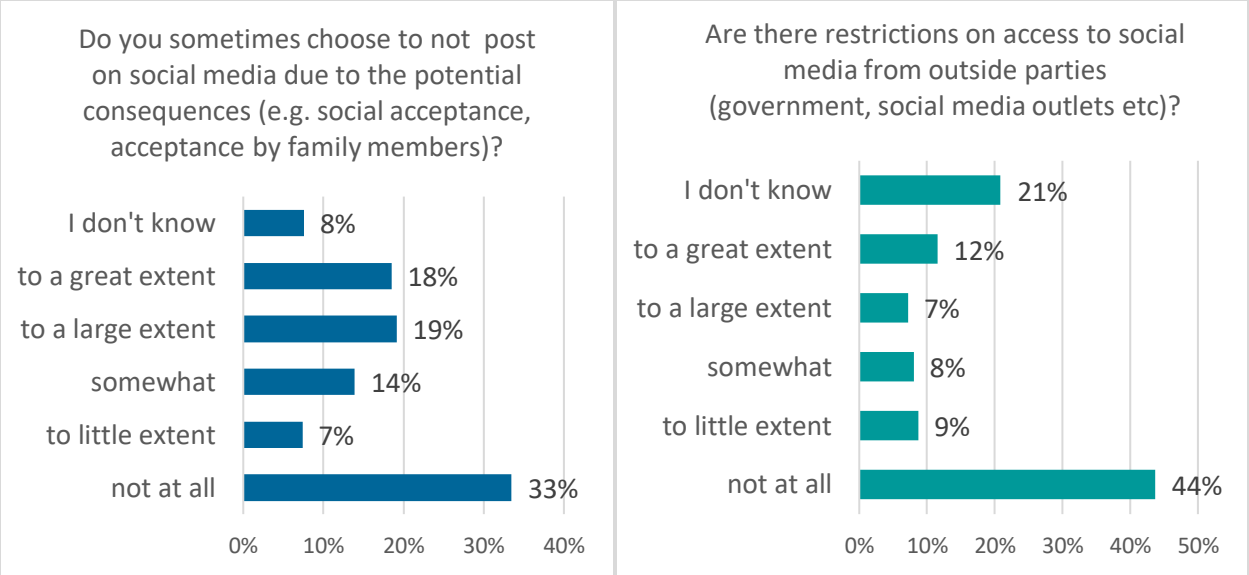


Figure 36 – The decision to post something on social media or not, based on consequences (total).

Figure 37 – The restrictions on access to social media from outside parties (total).

"We worry about public opinion, so think before publishing something," –upper-income Lebanese woman (FGD).

6. DISCUSSION

The research findings suggest that the opportunities provided by social media are double-edged. On the one side, social media magnifies social connection and creates a virtual community that can extend and enhance access to information. On the other side, it creates a platform where hate speech and fake news can rapidly proliferate and exacerbate social tensions within communities. Those who get marginalised and excluded are usually the most vulnerable, such as the elderly, who are unable to navigate such platforms.

In the context of the North Governorate, the majority of people reported relying on their social networks for their information needs. Online platforms have become a space where different communities virtually recreate their present social networks, reducing distance barriers. These platforms magnify and help strengthen links between already-existing social networks. People use WhatsApp to stay in touch with their families and friends. They log onto Facebook to stay up to date with births, deaths and marriages, and interact on special occasions. On a day-to-day basis, social media is also used to navigate daily life in Lebanon's north – health services, the exchange rate, road closures and bakery opening times.

The heavy reliance on social networks for information access and the challenges associated with accessing information through formal channels highlight how social structures and access to resources can lead to divided societies. The use of social media as a platform for information access can both reinforce and challenge existing social structures, as individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds may have varying levels of access to social media platforms due to the high cost of internet subscriptions and data.

Furthermore, while social media enhances communication with other people, it does not necessarily enhance access to reliable sources of information. Social media allows for horizontal connections, rather than vertical ones. It allows people to connect with their peers, but less with external sources. Algorithms create so-called "echo chambers" – an environment in which a person encounters only beliefs or opinions that coincide with their own, hence reinforcing their existing views without considering alternative ideas. Social media users don't necessarily get integrated into new communities. Furthermore, these platforms are conduits for the spread of hate speech and fake news.

Syrians are increasingly the target of hate speech and fake news campaigns in Lebanon. However, this research showed that some communities are less prepared than others to face such phenomena. While both Lebanese and Syrians were aware of the concept of fake news, the knowledge of how to combat it was not widespread. Overwhelmed with information, most research participants said they relied on their social networks to validate whether information was 'accurate' or not. Only upper-income Lebanese reported discerning between different sources and how to access quality information. People living in the North Governorate's lower socio-economic areas remain vulnerable to fake news and its impact. While social media can bridge divides and facilitate access to information, it can also deepen divergences between communities and further entrench inequalities.

The study's findings on perceived discrimination based on country of origin and the perceived inequality between host and refugee communities in access to services, housing, and support systems also highlight how social exclusion can be perpetuated in these contexts. Such exclusion may result in the formation of certain kinds of social networks, whereby individuals rely more on informal systems for information and support due to their limited access to formal systems. This can further entrench the systems that perpetuate social exclusion, resulting in modern forms of divided societies.

Overall, in analysing the data, it is important to consider these social implications and the potential impact they may have on community cohesion and social inclusion. Understanding the ways in which social networks and access to resources contribute to divided societies can inform the development of more effective strategies to promote social cohesion and address social exclusion.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This study sheds light on access to information technology and the use of social media by refugee and host communities in Lebanon's North Governorate. The research helps fill gaps regarding the use of information technologies as essential tools of resilience for refugee and host communities. In recent years, social media has become a ubiquitous and powerful tool for communication and information sharing. While social media platforms offer many opportunities for social connection and the dissemination of information, the research findings suggest that they also pose significant challenges to social cohesion and inclusion.

One of the key findings is that social media can magnify social connections and create virtual communities that extend and enhance access to information. However, it is also noted that social media platforms tend to create "echo chambers" in which individuals are only exposed to information that reinforces their existing views, rather than challenging them with alternative perspectives. This can create an environment in which individuals are more likely to accept fake news and hate speech, which can exacerbate social tensions and deepen existing divides within communities.

Moreover, the research highlights the challenges associated with accessing information through formal channels, which can lead to divided societies. People who are unable to navigate social media platforms or lack the financial resources to access the internet can find themselves excluded from the benefits of these platforms. This can perpetuate existing inequalities and reinforce social exclusion, especially for marginalized and vulnerable populations, such as the elderly or those living in poverty.

The research also sheds light on how social exclusion can be perpetuated by perceived discrimination and inequality in access to services, housing, and support systems. In this context, individuals may rely more on informal systems for information and support due to their limited access to formal systems. This can further entrench the systems that perpetuate social exclusion, resulting in modern forms of divided societies.

It is important to recognize that social media can both reinforce and challenge existing social structures. While social media platforms can facilitate the formation of new communities and connections between individuals, they can also deepen divergences between communities and further entrench inequalities. Therefore, it is crucial to develop effective strategies to promote social cohesion and address social exclusion.

The study's findings highlight the need to consider social implications and potential impacts on community cohesion and social inclusion when analysing data related to social media and its use. By understanding how social networks and access to resources contribute to divided societies, policymakers and stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to promote social cohesion and address social exclusion. This can be achieved by investing in digital literacy training, providing equitable access to formal information channels, and promoting media literacy to help individuals discern between reliable and unreliable sources of information.

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9. ANNEXES

ANNEX A: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

AEC FGD Questions

INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of study

We are undertaking a study whose purpose is to better understand how people in and around Tripoli access different types of information, and if/how it affects inequality between Lebanese and refugee communities in this area.

2. FGD Locations

FGDs should only be carried out in safe and secure places where participants will not feel expected or pressured to respond in a certain way. Should interviewers observe the presence of any authority figures or persons who could intimidate respondents or cause them to alter their responses, they must contact their field coordinator to assess whether to hold the FGD. Additionally, in light of COVID-19, all FGDs must be limited to 4 or 5 individuals, appropriately spaced and with protective measures (including requirement of masks) taken into consideration, ensuring that all feel comfortable to participate.

3. How FGDs Will Be Conducted

FGDs will take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete, depending on the depth of the responses provided; participants will be informed of this in advance. During the FGDs please remember the following:

- Ensure to first establish a safe space for discussion (including reading the statement of consent) before commencing FGD through an icebreaker/ that encourages respect for other views, that everyone should have space to express their opinion and that no personally identifiable information will be recorded
    - Please first ensure proper COVID-19 precautions are taken and that everyone is provided a mask and appropriately distanced within the space provided, with sanitary materials available
- Ask each main question (below) using identical language;
- DO NOT express your own opinion or express support or lack of support of any opinion;
- Demonstrate the required flexibility during the dialogue paying attention not to divert too far from the specific talking points;
- Let the respondent choose his/her own words – do not correct or paraphrase;

- Encourage the respondent to offer more information by asking follow-up questions and probes.
- Be aware of time constraints and feel free to politely interrupt the respondent and move on to the next question if the respondent is being overly-repetitive or not offering additional insight.
- Remain sensitive to the nature of the discussion and possible discomfort of participants, ensure safe referral information is available.
- Reinforce that identifiable information should not be used when recounting specific incidents
- Ensure that an adequate number of research team or partner staff are available in the event any participant needs to step away from the discussion to be provided immediate support

4. Presentation & Informed Consent

At the beginning of the discussion, please read the informed consent statement explaining the purpose of your work. Be sure to explain that all information shared and obtained during the FGD will be anonymised. It is also necessary to be clear that participation is entirely voluntary and that their participation or non-participation has no impact on access to assistance.

Once the above has been explained, enumerators must establish informed consent by asking respondents if they have understood and agree to the terms, purpose and intention of the FGD. Only when respondents state that they have understood and agreed to the terms, purpose and intention of the FGD, should enumerators commence with questions. Enumerator should sign off on this on the next page.

Accordingly, **the following statement of consent should be read out loud before commencing activities**:

مرحبًا ، اسمي _____ وأنا جزء من فريق بحث مستقل يجري دراسة نيابة عن "لندن سكول" لفهم كيفية وصول الأشخاص بطرابلس وحولها للأنواع المختلفة من المعلومات، وإذا كان يأثّر وكيف يؤثر على عدم المساواة بين المجتمعات اللبنانية واللاجئين بالمنطقة. نحن منتشكّر استعدادكم للتحدث معنا طوال هذه الدراسة ومنقدر الوقت ايلّي قدّمتو لمشاركة وجهة نظركم، وماعدتكم النا لدراسة عدم المساواة.

رح نركز على مواضيع مثل كيف ووين تصلون للمعلومات ؛ نوع المعلومات يللّي بتفيدكم ؛ وتصورك لتأثير المعلومات على المجتمعات. منحب نعرف تصوراتكم - لكن لن نسأل بأي شكل من الأشكال عن تجاربكم الفردية ، بل شومواقفكم يلّي بتتعلّق بهذا الموضوع.

كل المشاركة في هذا النقاش تطوعية ومجهولة. من المهم الشعور بالأمان وحرية التحدث. إذا وافقتو على المشاركة بالبحث ، فسيتم تسجيل المناقشة مع ضمانة السرية وابقاء المصدر مجهول .. لن يتم مشاركة نتائج هذه المناقشة مع جيرانك أو أي سلطة ، ولن يتم الإبلاغ عن أي نتائج بأي طريقة ممكن تسمح بتحديد هويتك. لن يتم طلب الأسماء الخاصة بكم أو استخدامها.

الجميع مهم بالمناقشة وكل أصواتكم قيّمة ومتساوية. منشجع الجميع على مشاركة آرائهم واحترام رأي الآخرين. منطلب منكم التأكيد على الحافظ على سرية المشاركة وسريّة إجابات بعضنا البعض.

إذا موافقين على المشاركة، يمكن تغيير رأيكم في أي وقت خلال المجموعة المركزة من دون أي آثار. لا للمناقشة من أي مخاطر عليكم أو على صحتكم. إذا تسببت أحدى الأسئلة بأي قلق أو إزعاج ، فيمكنك أيضًا عدم الإجابة دون إبداء الأسباب. لا تتضمن المشاركة في هذا التمرين أي فوائد مباشرة وفورية، ومشاركتكم ما ترطبت بتلقيكم أي خدمات

مدّة المناقشة من 1 إلى 1.5 ساعة. إذا أثارت المناقشة أي مخاوف، بمكن طرحها معنا على انفراد بعد الجلسة.

ممكن نتفق على شو ذكرت ؟ في أي أسئلة قبل ما نبدأ؟

Ensure that each interviewees provides verbal agreement. Interviewer should sign off on having acquired the informed consent of the interviewees:

"I _____confirm that all participants have provided informed verbal consent to participate in this focus group discussion."

Enumerator signature: _____

Introduction			
	Ask to	**Questions**	**Probe/Follow up**
1.	**Ask All**	(Start by asking general questions to open up the discussion.) How are you all feeling today? What has been happening in Tripoli? **كيف حاسّين حالكم ليوم ؟** **كيق وصلتو لهون؟** **كيف الوضع بطرابلس هالأيّام ؟**	(Ask how participants are feeling today and thank them for participating.) Thank you for your participation. Potential questions: - How did you get here today? Did you find the place easily? - What has been on the news in Tripoli lately?

2.	**Ask All**	(Start by going around the room and asking participants about their daily activities.) What does a typical day look like for you? What do you have to do every day? **شو أنشطتكم اليومية؟ وين بتمضو وقتكم ؟ شو أبرز المشاكل اللي بتواجهوها بجتمعكن ؟**	(Probe how they usually spend their time (work/study/housework). Just try to understand what participants do each day and the locations where they are most of the day.) - What do your typical Mondays look like? - Where do you go to most days? - Where do you spend most time? اكتشف كيف يقضون وقتهم عادة (العمل / الدراسة / الأعمال المنزلية). فقط حاول تفهم ما يفعله المشاركون كل يوم والمواقع التي يتواجدون فيها معظم اليوم.
How does technology affect resilience in the Tripoli T5 area?			
What are the differences in sources of information used by displaced populations and host in the Tripoli+5 urban setting?			
3.	**Ask All**	What is the information you need for your daily life in Tripoli? Why? Where and how do you access it? We'd like to understand more about the type of information that people use in the Tripoli area. Within your community, what sort of information do people typically have access to? **حابين نعرف أكثر عن نوع المعلومات يلي بيستخدموها الناس وبحاجة الها بطرابلس بشكل يومي.**	Provide examples to probe, such as the following: 1. People in their social circles 2. Internet apps/websites 3. Government or municipal institutions 4. Community leaders/Shawish 5. Billboards/pamphlets 6. Traditional media: TV, radio, newspapers 7. Other قدم أمثلة : الناس بدوائرهم الاجتماعية تطبيقات / مواقع الإنترنت

		بمجتمعكم شو مصادر المعلومات يلي الاشخاص بيقدرو يوصلولها ؟	الحكومة أو المؤسسات البلدية قيادات المجتمع / الشاويش لوحات إعلانية / كتيبات وسائل الإعلام التقليدية: التلفزيون والراديو والصحف أخرى
4.	**Ask All**	Do you feel everyone has equal access to information? Who in the community usually has access to the most and the least information? **هل برأيكم كل الأشخاص قادرين يوصلوا لكل المعلومات اللي عايزينها بشكل متساوي ؟** **مين بالمجتمع بيتمتع بقدرة الوصول للمعلومات ؟ والعكس ؟**	Specify access by nationality, gender and age – what do you think is the primary reason that they have access to more/less information, in your opinion? Probe: What is the difference between the information that refugees and host communities have access to? **حدد الوصول حسب الجنسية والجنس والعمر - شو هو برأيك السبب الرئيسي يلّي بيجعلهم قادرين للوصول إلى معلومات أكثر / أقل؟** **التحقيق: شو هو الفرق بين المعلومات يلّي يمكن للاجئين والمجتمعات المستضيفة الوصول إلها؟**
5.	**Ask All**	If not everyone in the community is able to access information, what are the reasons? **اذا البعض لا يصلون للمعلومات، شو الأسباب؟**	If needing examples, probe for specific reasons using the following prompts: - People are not aware of the available information - Information is inaccessible to some populations (e.g. refugees) - People don't know where to access different types of information - People don't have the devices (phone/laptops) to access information - Some information is too expensive to access - Some services are difficult to access for older persons

			- Other إذا كنت بحاجة لأمثلة ، فابحث عن أسباب محددة باستخدام التّالي: - الناس ليسوا على علم بالمعلومات المتاحة - المعلومات غير متاحة لبعض السكان (مثل اللاجئين) - لا يعرف الأشخاص أين ممكن الوصول لأنواع مختلفة من المعلومات - ليس لدى الأشخاص الأجهزة (الهاتف / أجهزة الكمبيوتر المحمولة) للوصول إلى المعلومات - بعض المعلومات مكلفة كتير للوصول إلها بيصعب على كبار السن الوصول لبعض الخدمات - آخر
To what extent is information on access to shelter, livelihoods, and other necessities shaped by refugee status?			
6.	**Ask All** **(change wording depending on the community)**	Syrian FGDS: Can you describe the information that Syrian refugees need to have? How does it compare with the information that Lebanese need? **شو المعلومات يلي بيحتاجها اللآجئين السوريين ؟ وكيف ممكن تفرق مقارنة بالمعلومات يلّي بتحتاجه المجتمعات المحليّة/المستضيفة ؟** Lebanese FGDS: Can you describe the information that Lebanese need to have? How does it compare with the information that Syrian refugees need?	Examples for probing can include information related to: - Finding a house/rental - Household items (gas, cooking appliances, washing machine, heating) - Acquiring electricity and water - Transportation What are the main reasons for different types of information needs between refugees and host communities? يمكن أن تتضمن أمثلة التحقيق معلومات تتعلق بما يلي - إيجاد منزل / إيجار - الأدوات المنزلية (الغاز ، أجهزة الطبخ ، الغسالة ، التدفئة) - الحصول على الكهرباء والمياه

			وسائل النقل - شو الأسباب الرئيسية لإختلاف احتياجات المعلومات بين اللاجئين والمجتمعات المضيفة؟
7.	**Ask All**	How do you feel about the information available to you? Is this enough? What type of information would you like to have more access to? **كيف بتلاقوا كمية المعلومات المتاحة الكم ؟** **وشو المعلومات يلي بتحبو توصلولها اكثر؟**	Probe: Do you feel you have enough information to have access to: - Housing/rental - Household items (gas, cooking appliances, washing machine, heating) - Acquiring electricity and water - Transportation - Health - Education - Livelihood :دقق: هل تشعر أن عندك معلومات كافية للوصول إلى سكن / إيجار - الأدوات المنزلية (الغاز ، أجهزة الطبخ ، الغسالة ، التدفئة) - الحصول على الكهرباء والمياه - وسائل النقل -
8.	**Ask All**	Can you describe how social and communications media help you organise your life? How does it help you facilitate securing basic needs?	Probes: - Arriving in a new city - Accessing housing - Accessing jobs

		كيف بتساعدكم وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بحياتكم اليومية ؟ **كيف بتسهّل تلبية احتياجاتكم الرئيسية؟**	- Moving around and transportation القدوم إلى مدينة جديدة - الحصول على السكن - الحصول على الوظائف - - التنقل والمواصلات
9.	**Ask All**	Do you have safety and security concerns regarding certain information sources or platforms? Can you describe these? **عندكم أي اعتبارات او مخاوف متعلّقة بالأمن والسّلامة إلها علاقة بمصادر المعلومات أو منصّات معيّنة؟** **ممكن توصف أكثر لو سمحت؟**	Probes: - Monitoring of communication lines - Data safety - Scams or fraud - Child safety/trafficking - مراقبة خطوط الاتصال - سلامة البيانات - الغش أو الغش - سلامة الأطفال / الاتجار
To what extent is the urban space segmented by displacement dynamics and how is that segmentation produced by and reflected in access to different types of information?			
10.	**Ask All**	What type of information help shape your decision to settle in a specific neighbourhood? **شو نوع المعلومات يلي بتساعدكم لتآخدو قرار حول المكان (الحي) يلي بتريدو تسكنو فيه ؟**	When deciding on which area to settle in, what type of information do you seek to make your decision? On what information did you base your decision to settle in the community where you currently live? If you were to move, what type of information would you seek? **شو نوع المعلومات ا تحتاجوها لاتخاذ قرار عند تحديد المنطقة يلّي رح تستقرو فيها ؟**

			شو المعلومات يلّي بنيتو عليها قراركم بالاستقرار بالمجتمع يلّي بتعيشو فيه حاليًا؟ **إذا كنتم ستنتقلون ، شو نوع المعلومات التي تريدنها؟**
11.	**Ask All**	How would you describe the information available to rural/semiurban or urban communities? **هل يوجد فرق بتوفّر المعلومات بين المناطق الرّيفيّة وغيرها ؟ شو الفرق بالمعلومات المتوفرة؟**	How does availability of information differ depending on neighborhoods? What are the more available sources of information in rural/semiurban/urban settings? **كيف بيفرق توفر المعلومات مع اختلاف الحياء السّكنية ؟**
12.	**Ask All**	How would you describe the accessibility to this information? How do you access information? **ممكن تحكولنا عن الوصول لهذه المعلومات ؟كيف بتوصلولها ؟**	Does access to information differ depending on neighbourhoods? What are some of the difficulties that rural areas face in accessing information? **هل بيختلف الوصول لالمعلومات باختلاف الأحياء؟** **ما هي بعض الصعوبات التي تواجهها المناطق الريفية بالوصول إلى المعلومات؟**
13.	**Ask All**	How do the recent conditions in Tripoli affect your access to information, and what are the external factors affecting availability and access? **هل يوجد تأثير للأوضاع في طرابلس حاليّا على الوصول للمعلومات ؟ وشو العوامل الخارجيّة يلّي عم تأثّر على توفّر المعلومات والوصول الها ؟**	How has the recent price increase in telecommunication services impacted the way you access information online? Has the financial crisis affected your access to certain tools of communication (buying a laptop/phone)? **كيف أثّر الغلاء بخدمات الأتصال على كيفيّة وصولكم للمعلومات ؟ هل أثّرت الأزمة الماليّة وصولكم لأدوات التواصل مثل الحاسوب أو الهاتف ؟**

14.	**Ask All**	How do you feel about the accuracy of the information available to help you make decisions? **كيف بتلاقي دقّة المعلومات المتوفرة يلي بتساعدك تآخد قرارات ؟**	How do you decide whether to trust an information source or not? How do you usually check the information that you base your decisions on? In your experience, what sort of information is usually correct or incorrect? **كيف بتقرر تثق بمصدر المعلومات أو لا؟** **كيف بتتحقق عادة من المعلومات ايلّي بتبني عليها قراراتك؟**
15.	**Ask All**	What are the ways in which the information available to you could be more accessible through its language (both English/Arabic/ the terms being used) **شو هي الطّرق يلّي بتسهّل لغوياً الوصول للمعلومات المتوفرة لكم ؟**	Is the information you access in a language familiar to you? Are the terms being used easily understandable by all? **هل المعلومات يلّي بتصلون إليها بلغة مألوفة لكم؟** **هل المصطلحات المستخدمة سهلة الفهم من قبل الجميع؟**
16.	**Ask All**	How would you describe the effect of the use of social and communications media on your community? Is it mostly positive or negative? Why? **شو برايك تأثير استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على مجتمعك ؟** **أكثر ايجابي او سلبي برأيك ؟ لماذا ؟**	Do social and communications media contribute to social divisions? Or does it help build bridges between refugee and host communities? What are the reasons for this? Are there any other effects? **هل بتساهم وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بالانقسامات الاجتماعية؟ أم أنها بتساعد لبناء الفراغ الموجود بين اللاجئين والمجتمعات المضيفة؟ شو الأسباب؟**
Thank people for their time and share contact information if they have any follow up queries.			

ANNEX B: DATA ANALYSIS

Data acquired during the desk review have been incorporated across several levels of the research to inform sampling, tools, analysis and reporting. Given the timeframe associated with this project, the analysis team commenced cleaning and analysing all qualitative and quantitative data as it came in from field teams. Upon completion of the data collection and analysis, Triangle presented the initial findings in a progress report on November 17, 2022.

A team of research analysts conducted the analysis to draw robust and meaningful conclusions rooted in the Lebanese context. All research activities were reviewed directly in Arabic by Triangle's in-country teams to avoid loss of information in translations and reverse translations.

Triangle analysed all qualitative and quantitative data collected using the grounded theory method, also known as the Glaser-Strauss method. Under this approach, the analysis team iteratively reviewed data according to principles of inductive reasoning instead of working deductively from a hypothesis and/or predicted finding(s). The grounded theory method allowed the analysis team to validate the information from the field as necessary, further reinforcing the iterative research philosophy.

Accordingly, three main approaches were employed during qualitative analysis:

1. Categorising and classification: The analysis team defined generalisable categories iteratively according to principles of inductive reasoning instead of working deductively from a hypothesis and/or predicted finding(s).

2. Comparing, contrasting and synthesis: The analysis team then identified particular passages from interviews as they relate to emerging analytic categories. The writing of integrative memos allowed for the correlation of different themes and categories and explored their interrelation. Data then was disaggregated by demographic indicators (geographical location, gender) to look for patterns and correlations.

3. Triangulation: The evaluation team then triangulated data gathered through literature review, FGDs and the survey to ensure the integrity of the findings. A minimum of two methods were necessary to inform a finding.

ANNEX C: SAFETY AND SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

SAFETY AND SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

Security and Do No Harm

The security situation varies widely in Lebanon, presenting different risks for staff and research teams. Triangle regularly assessed security risks facing its field staff and beneficiaries to maintain operational integrity and a Do No Harm[10] approach. The "Do no harm" approach minimised research risks for all stakeholders while seeking the most significant benefits for research projects. To ensure the minimisation of risks to stakeholders, Triangle and its staff respected research subjects' decisions on participation (in whole or in part), always ensured voluntary and informed consent of research subjects, as well as made an effort reasonable effort to protect research subjects from foreseen risks (e.g. through safe places for KIIs). Research teams were trained in the Do No Harm and signed confidentiality agreements with Triangle. FGD participants gave their informed consent to agree on which information would be shared. All research activities, followed strict privacy and anonymity procedures. Participants were also given the chance to opt out if they changed their minds or felt uncomfortable, and data was anonymised and securely held. If a subject disclosed or was suspected to be at risk outside the study, a referral system was in place to refer the subject for relevant support. Triangle's data protection policies were be applied throughout this research, including informed consent and safe ID. Upon confirmation with AFSEE, all data will be destroyed after completing all research activities, within an agreed timeframe. All Triangle researchers were be trained to abide by data protection policies, research ethics and soft skills, Do-No-Harm and safe identification. Regular updates of security risks were provided to research teams.

Emergency protocols were read to be activated in case of an emergency in the field. Protocols entailed that whenever an incident occured, the field team in question immediately notified the senior field coordinator, who, in turn, informed agency focal points and the team leader of the security issue. As a matter of principle, whenever a security issue occurs, all field teams are withdrawn from the field to a safe location in a prompt manner but, as much as possible, does not raise suspicion or concern amongst the local community. At the same time, agencies, the senior field coordinator, and the team leader consider the threat level and then direct field teams to either return to the field, remain in place, or relocate to a safe location.

[10] Following the OECD DAC Guidelines's standard definition, "Do-No-Harm" is here defined as: "Ways in which international humanitarian and development assistance given in conflict settings may be provided so that, rather than exacerbating and worsening the conflict, it helps local people disengage from fighting and develop systems for settling the problems which prompt conflict within their societies."OECD (2012) *Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility: Improving Learning for Results*, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, OECD Publishing, p. 11

ORGANISATIONAL RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Risk Management Matrix

Risk	Likelihood	Mitigation Measures
Inaccessibility of project area of operations due to security or public health concerns.	High	♦ Slightly postponing the field activities in a particular locality or seeking an equivalent locality from a sampling perspective in a more secure locality. ♦ Shifting methods in a particular locality to remote modalities (KIIs).
Risk of harm to research team and research participants by government agents or armed groups.	Low	♦ In cases where there is an emergency in the field, emergency protocols will be activated and AFSEE will be immediately informed. The protocols entail that whenever an incident occurs, the field team in question will immediately inform the senior field coordinator who, in turn, informs agency focal points and the team leader of the security issue. ♦ As a matter of principle, whenever a security issue occurs, all field teams will be withdrawn from the field to a safe location in a manner which is prompt but, in as much as possible, does not raise suspicion or concern amongst the local community. At the same time, agencies, the senior field coordinator and the team leader will consider the threat level, and then direct field teams to either return to the field, remain in place, or relocate to a safe location.
Exposure to infection and spreading of COVID-19 to research team, research stakeholders, and local communities in the area of operations.	High	Strictly adhering to COVID-19 containment measures (e.g. social distancing, mask-wearing, use of gloves and hand sanitation) in case of low risk. In case of high risk, cancel field trip to area of operations, and adopt remote

		evaluation modality and limited research scope in that particular locality.

ANNEX D: QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS & PROCEDURES

TRIANGLE QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS & PROCEDURES

Triangle maintains rigorous quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that data collection, analysis and reporting standards are maintained and developed throughout project lifecycles. These assurance mechanisms are centred around six core mechanisms to ensure that research produced by Triangle is rigorous, ethical, adheres to international best practices and meets the highest quality research standards. Triangle's management team are the ultimate duty-bearers of quality assurance mechanisms while team leaders are tasked with upholding standards throughout project cycles. In turn, Triangle's management team holds bi-weekly meetings with team leaders in order to ensure that quality assurance mechanisms are adhered to and corrective actions are taken in due course.

ADHERENCE TO LEGAL AND ETHICAL GUIDELINES

Research conducted by Triangle seeks to ensure accordance with local laws and regulations as well as the adoption of ethical research principles throughout project cycles. As such, Triangle's management team first conduct legal and ethical briefings with team leaders and primary staff involved in research activities prior to the commencement of research activities. During this process, contextual legalization and regulations are reviewed in order to ensure that research activities fall within the law of any localities where the company operates. Subsequently, an assessment of ethical considerations is conducted depending on the research in question; for example, with regard specific ethical considerations pertaining to research involving children, survivors of sexual- and gender-based violence.

Accordingly, team leaders will be tasked with ensuring that legal and ethical guidelines are maintained and upheld. Monitoring and assurance of legal and ethical guidelines are conducted by Triangle management who review progress at project milestones and during bi-weekly quality assurance meetings with team leaders.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project management procedures at Triangle are an integral part of research activity and resource allocation. Triangle's management team consistently allocates and manages human

and non-human resources to particular projects during the proposal phase, so as to ensure that such resources are available when projects commence, according to the level of effort planned.

When projects commence, Gantt charts are only the start of project planning and resourcing at Triangle. During the inception phase of projects, Triangle engages in a deep assessment of project requirements and reallocates resources according to an updated set of needs and timelines. During this process, a set of internal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are set by Triangle management and agreed to as realistic and achievable by team leaders. Team leaders are mandated to produce bi-weekly quality assurance reports and present them to Triangle's management team for approval of project progress and agreement upon adjustments, if required.

TRAINING & TECHNICAL CAPACITY

Triangle believes that each research project requires a specific set of general skills and competencies that are supplemented by project-specific training to ensure that quality assurance standards and mechanisms are understood as well as adhered to by all research team members. Each team member undergoes a one-on-one assessment by a team leader to ensure that they have the technical capacity and resources to implement research activities accorded to them. Once the assessment is complete, any general training is scheduled and resources are allocated accordingly. When all team members are assessed to have the general training, skills and resources to conduct research activities, team leaders engage with Triangle's management team to identify project-specific training, technical capacity, and resources. Having identified these needs, Triangle management schedule and conduct project-specific training in advance of deployment.

TOOLS & ADAPTATION

Research tools developed by Triangle's team undergo a rigorous process of review by team leaders, technical advisors and external quality assurance officers. Once tools are compiled by Triangle's team, they are passed on to a technical advisor with knowledge of the project for review. Doing so ensures that the tools adhere to the technical specifications of project sector's as well as any project requirements that may have been overlooked during tool compilation. Once technical comments are incorporated, tools are then submitted to for external quality assurance to Triangle management before they are submitted to clients for review.

After client review, tools are translated and formatted according to the needs of the project (for instance programming on hand-held devices). In particular, translated tools are reviewed to ensure meanings translate across languages. Once this process is complete, the Triangle team takes a segment of research subjects and pilots research tools on these subjects accordingly. Data from the pilot testing is then assessed by project teams in order to identify areas that are

non-applicable or can be tailored to make tools more context-specific and results oriented. Finally, tool adaptation is discussed between team leaders and management teams at Triangle before amendments are agreed and adapted for deployment.

Adaptation of tools at Triangle continues throughout field research. Team leaders cover the need or lack thereof for tool adaptation with management teams during bi-weekly quality assurance meetings and at key project milestones. Decisions on the applicability of adaptation are then taken jointly between team leaders and clients.

ANALYSIS & REPORTING

Upon completion of research activities, data from the research activities undergoes a process of review and cleaning before analysis commences. Data and formats are reviewed by team

leaders and analysts to identify any gaps in deliverables or number of research activities. If such gaps are identified, field teams are queried for justification and/or further completion of research activities. Field teams also remain on standby throughout the analysis and reporting phase for probing and clarification of any emerging needs from analysis teams.

Analysis frameworks vary from project to project based on the nature of the research in question. That said, each project contains a built-in analysis framework which team leaders monitor and ensure adherence with by analysts. These frameworks are developed during the pre-project and inception phases, and are adapted during the field research phase to reflect data collection realities.

Triangle ensures a minimum of two analysis rounds in order to ensure that findings are grounded in rigorous consideration and review, while the expectations and needs of clients are also incorporated in analysis and reporting. Triangle analysts employ analysis frameworks to produce a set of preliminary findings, trends and patterns from the data provided by field teams. These preliminary findings are then discussed by core team members to identify areas for further probing and quality assurance. In order to ground-truth, preliminary findings are shared with field teams for their input. Only then are preliminary findings shared with clients for review and further discussion on probing, direction and areas for recommendation.

Once this multi-stakeholder feedback has been compiled, analysts conduct another round of assessment in order to wean out nuanced findings and conduct further probing of priority areas. This process could, upon the approval of Triangle management, require further fieldwork to be conducted. At the end of this process, preliminary findings are updated and compiled as findings. With findings completed, analysts, the team leader and Triangle management discuss appropriate recommendations to meet client needs and address research questions in full.

The writing process at Triangle is both iterative and adaptive: team leaders ensure that analysis outputs are formulated in a manner which can be incorporated into clear, concise and accessible language that reflect previously agreed upon reporting formats. Reports are compiled jointly by writers, editors, analysts and overseen by team leaders. At the end of the first draft, an external quality assurance officer who is knowledgeable of the research field in question is informed of project and client requirements and mandated with a thorough review of the document in question. Project teams then address external quality review concerns before first draft reports are copy-edited and submitted for client review, comment incorporation and report finalisation.

LESSONS LEARNED & PROJECT COMPLETION

Triangle believes in fostering relationships with clients beyond project completion. That is why Triangle engages clients in a post-project debrief to identify lessons learned, areas for further cooperation, as well as methods to improve quality assurance during future research projects. Project review workshops produce written reports on the aforementioned areas, which are then reviewed for accuracy by clients and filed accordingly.

END OF QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS & PROCEDURES

ANNEX E: CODE OF CONDUCT

INTRODUCTION

Triangle's Code of Conduct lays out ethical standards which ensure the protection of, and respect for informants, clients, and programme beneficiaries, as well as Triangle employees, consultants, partners and their employees. Further, the Code of Conduct is designed to ensure effective processes and accountability for assignments. All those contracted by Triangle (hereafter: staff) shall act by, and uphold the core values and guiding principles laid out in the document below in all their professional activities to avoid misconduct in workplace settings[11]. Outside of workplace settings, staff should uphold the standards set out in this code of conduct so as to ensure that no ill repute comes to themselves or to Triangle. Senior personnel at

[11] A 'workplace setting' is defined as any location or conveyance used in connection with Triangle's activities, including, but not limited to Triangle's offices, client offices, field research locations, conferences, social events connected with Triangle or its clients, email correspondence or phone conversations.

Triangle have a particular responsibility to uphold these standards and shall set a good example in all their activities.

To ensure that the Code of Conduct is enforced at all times, Triangle will train its staff on its Code of Conduct regularly. External research personnel contracted by Triangle will be instructed on research subjects' protection. Triangle is also committed to keep its Code of Conduct updated and will inform and educate its internal and external staff about any updates.

CORE VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Do no harm

Triangle's "Do no harm" philosophy commits to the values of the Charter of the United Nations, the respect for human rights, social justice, human dignity, and respect for the equal rights of men and women. The "Do no harm" approach minimises research risks for all stakeholders, while seeking greatest benefits for research projects. To ensure the minimisation of risks to stakeholders, Triangle and its staff respect research subjects' decisions on participation (in whole or in part), will always ensure voluntary and informed consent of research subjects, as well as will make effort reasonable effort to protect research subjects from foreseen risks (e.g. through safe places for KIIs).

Respect and equality

Triangle and its staff acknowledge and respect local cultures, customs, and traditions and always take into account cultural differences and corresponding approaches. As such, all stakeholders (i.e. research subjects, staff and clients) will be treated with courtesy and respect. The selection of research subjects will be fair and based on circumstances on the ground. Triangle and its staff will act — and interact with all stakeholders — truthfully and without deception at all times. Triangle is also committed to treating all stakeholders fairly, regardless of gender, ethnicity, national or religious background, age, disability, marital status, parental status or sexual orientation.

Vulnerable groups

Triangle and its staff are aware that vulnerable groups (such as—but not limited to—children, youth, women, and people with disabilities) are predominantly prone to violence, exploitation and/or neglect, which gives extra reason to commit to handling their participation in the research process according to internationally-recognized best practices. Triangle and its staff also recognise, respect, and understand the physical and emotional privacy of participants of the vulnerable populations. Apart from emotional safety, Triangle and its staff recognise the need

for a physically safe environment to conduct research activities and will strive to ensure gender- and context-sensitivity at all times. Furthermore, Triangle and its staff will strive to facilitate accessible venues for people with disabilities to secure their participation in the research process.

Quality of work and fairness

Triangle offers a comprehensive approach to its work to impress upon stakeholder's competence, integrity, and honesty. By agreeing to an assignment, Triangle acknowledges to have understood projects' objectives, to possess staff qualified to achieve those objectives, as well as to have the necessary capacity to process the assignments' tasks. Triangle always seeks to establish a mutual understanding with clients about objects, scope of work, and workplan. Furthermore, Triangle stands for fairness and impartiality and acknowledges the fact that all disputes are multifaceted. For this reason, Triangle and its staff will seek to provide balanced objective reporting, no matter the complexity of the subject at hand. Triangle and its staff will abstain from personal opinions and will confine themselves to evidence-based reporting and recommendations.

Confidentiality and privacy

Triangle is aware of the sensitivity and confidentiality of data collected in the field. Therefore, Triangle and its staff will protect the privacy of research subjects and will not disclose any confidential information (such as names, addresses, etc.) unless prior approval by the research subject is provided. Qualitative and quantitative information gathered during the research process will be used in an aggregated format or will be cleaned from identifying information to ensure that any agreed upon anonymity is upheld.

Conflicts of interest

Triangle strongly avoids conflict of interest to rule out biased objectivity in its research process. However, in case conflicts of interest occur, Triangle and its staff will inform all parties involved in a transparent manner and endeavour to remove or mitigate the effects of any conflicts of interest. Triangle and its staff and the work they produce is and will always be independent and will not be influenced by political or social pressures or economic incentives, bribes or favours.

Harassment and anti-fraternization

Triangle is committed to providing a safe environment for all its staff and stakeholders free from discrimination on any grounds and from harassment at work including sexual harassment.[12] [13] Triangle operates a zero tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment in the workplace, treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment. Any staff member found to have sexually harassed another will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment. All complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously and treated with respect and in confidence and no one will be victimised for making such a complaint. Triangle also recognises that anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and of the sex of the harasser. Triangle recognises that sexual harassment may also occur between people of the same sex. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

Triangle also upholds anti-fraternization policy which prohibits all supervisor-subordinate romantic relationships and requires staff to notify Triangle's management of romantic relationships with other staff, so that the Triangle may place the staff in different departments or projects. Any relationship that interferes with the company culture of teamwork, the harmonious work environment or the productivity of employees, will be addressed by applying the progressive discipline policy up to and including employment termination. Adverse workplace behaviour —or behaviour that affects the workplace that arises because of personal relationships — will not be tolerated.

END OF CODE OF CONDUCT

END OF DOCUMENT

[12] Sexual harassment is defined as an unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. It includes situations where a person is asked to engage in sexual activity as a condition of that person's employment, as well as situations which create an environment which is hostile, intimidating or humiliating for the recipient. Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal and non-verbal.

[13] UNSG (2017) 'Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach '. https://undocs.org/A/71/818