

ISSUE 5: AUGUST 2020

EMERGENCY SOCIAL SAFETY NET (ESSN)

Thanks to European Union funding and a partnership between the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRC), over 1.7 million refugees living in Turkey are receiving humanitarian support through monthly cash assistance.

August snapshot



1,770,580 individuals
reached with cash assistance



327,422,960 TRY
cash transferred to 311,430
households



30,750 individuals
included through SASF
discretionary allowance



140 protection cases
referred in August

Highlights

Four consecutive top-ups

On 31 August 327,422,960 TRY was transferred to 1,770,580 individuals (311,430 households) living under temporary and international protection in Turkey. The transfer amount included the quarterly top-up of 107,804,600 TRY, which is transferred every three months to eligible households, aiming to bring equity between small and large eligible households. The previous top-up took place in May and was followed by two instalments of the economic top-up in June and July to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, bringing the total number of consecutive top-ups to four. This aimed to bring some financial relief to ESSN recipient households during these challenging times.

This transfer is the fifth to be made since IFRC took over the ESSN in April in partnership with TRC. The total amount of cash transferred to ESSN recipients since April is 1,587,341,940 TRY.

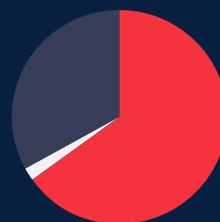
Operational context: the new normal

SASFs continue to operate under the new normal following the lockdown period, restricting the number of people allowed in their offices and not conducting household visits as per instructions from the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services. TRC field staff continue to reach out to vulnerable households to remove barriers related to registrations, applications and accessing the ESSN.

Cash transfer breakdown

Quarterly top-up
107,804,600 TRY

Severe disability top-up
6,202,200 TRY



Regular monthly transfer
213,416,160 TRY



Funded by
European Union
Humanitarian Aid

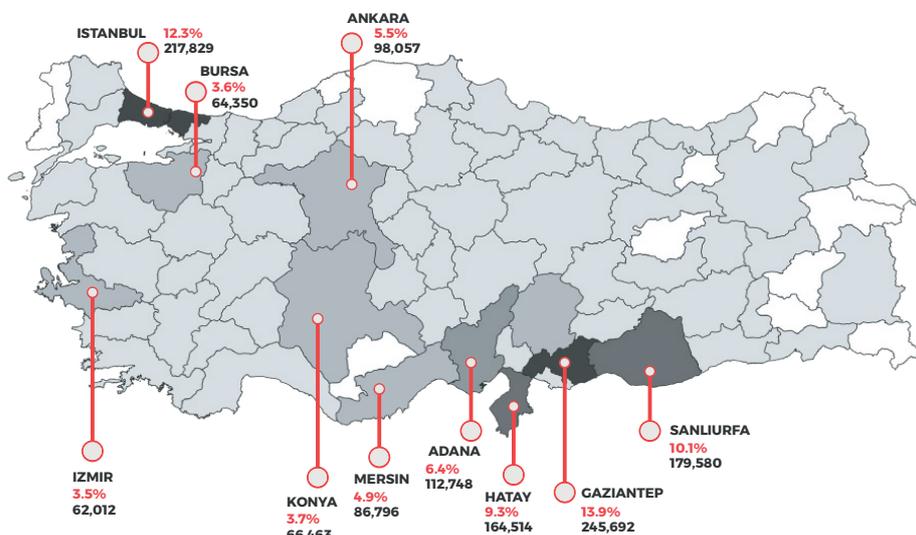
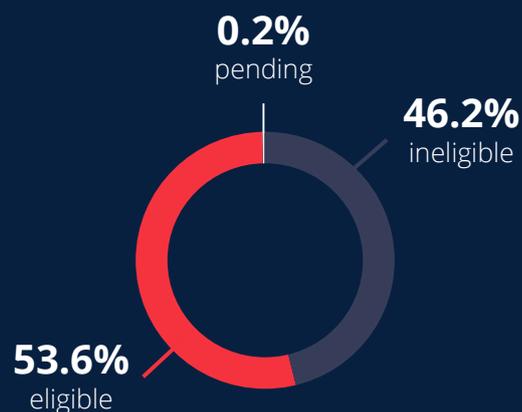


APPLICATIONS

Since the rollout of the ESSN and until 31 August, 588,572 households have applied for the ESSN via TRC service centers and SASF offices, of which 315,273 are eligible, 272,074 ineligible, and 1,225 pending assessment. 3,179 applications were received in August. Applications had increased by 60.4 per cent in July compared to June, bringing the monthly application rate back to its average prior to the pandemic. However, in August, a considerable decrease of 31 per cent in applications was observed, perhaps due to the gradual increase of COVID-19 cases in Turkey. The trends are being monitored closely and potential reasons examined.

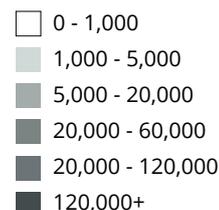
In August, 31.8 per cent of applications were received at TRC service centres and 68.2 per cent were received at SASF offices.

ELIGIBILITY RATE

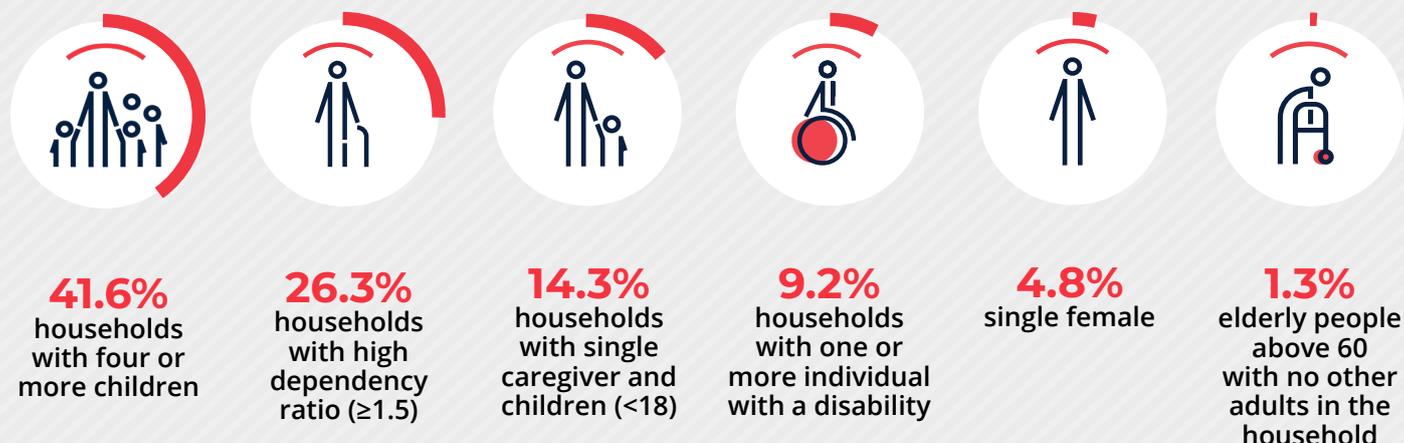


Province breakdown of ESSN recipients

Number of individuals



CRITERIA BREAKDOWN ¹



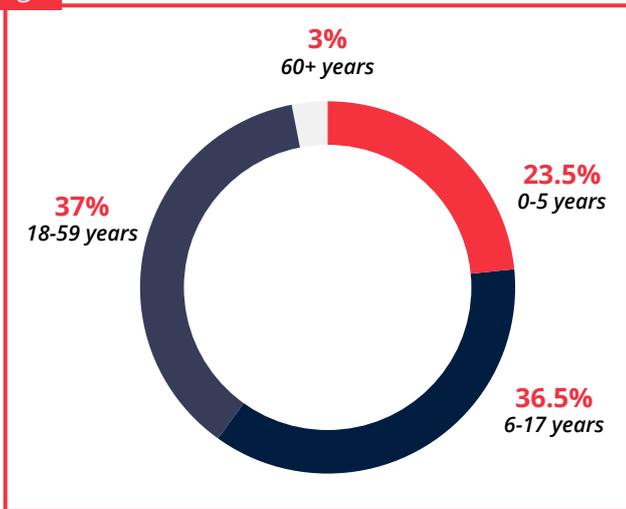
***2.5%** of households (7,667 HHs) receive the ESSN assistance within the scope of SASF discretionary allowance.

¹ 129,592 households with four or more children; 81,922 households with a dependency ratio equal to or above 1.5; 44,502 households with a single parent with no other adults and at least one child under 18 years of age; 28,680 households with at least one individual with a disability rate of 40%; 14,940 single females; 4,127 households with elderly people above 60 with no other adults in the household.



IN NUMBERS: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PEOPLE WE SERVE

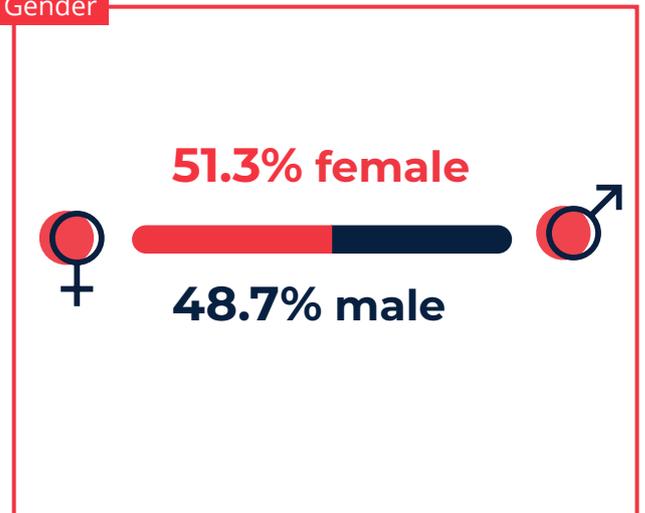
Age



Age breakdown of ESSN recipients for August:

- 0 - 5 years:** 416,795
- 6 - 17 years:** 646,367
- 18 - 59 years:** 655,714
- 60+ years:** 51,704

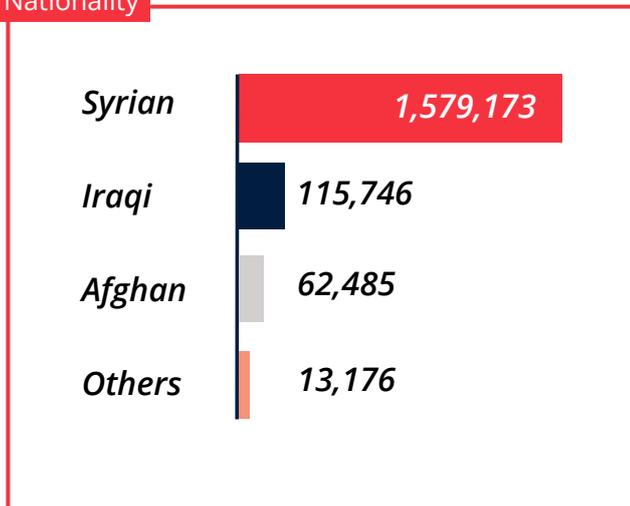
Gender



Gender breakdown of ESSN recipients for August:

- Female:** 909,097
- Male:** 861,483

Nationality



Among the 'others' category are Iranian, Somali, Pakistani, Chinese and Palestinian nationals.

Disability



10,300 individuals with a valid severe disability health report received the additional top-up of 600 TRY per individual.

Remote focus group discussions with affected people enable us to stay connected despite physical distancing

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are research tools used to collect qualitative data from groups of people who share similar backgrounds and experience. The groups respond to questions by sharing and discussing their ideas, opinions, and experience. Since the beginning of the ESN, TRC has engaged in FGDs with the affected populations either at a suitable home address or at TRC community centres. However, the potential health risks of COVID-19 have made face-to-face FGDs challenging, which is why IFRC and TRC introduced remote FGDs (rFGDs) to continue engaging with the affected populations during these challenging times. rFGDs have proven to be practical as they enable a broad geographical coverage and increase the accessibility of people who normally might have difficulties attending regular FGDs.

Households were chosen among sampling lists in the provinces of Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara, Samsun, Van, Hatay, and Gaziantep, and were asked to participate in the rFGD. Mobile phones and tablets were used to connect the participants, which were delivered to the households by the field teams. Field teams strictly adhered to physical distancing and hygiene rules, and waited outside of the homes of the participants to assist them in case of connectivity issues, and to collect the phones at the end of the rFGD. Through the use of technology, we were able to stay connected with the people we serve even under the current challenging conditions.



“With the start of COVID-19, we lost our jobs... Our income decreased, but our expenses increased.”

– Female participant from Gaziantep. (Photo: TRC)

Early findings of the rFGDs support the findings of COVID-19 assessment survey results. All participants reported that the pandemic has affected their work, income, social life and their children’s education. They all agreed that they lost their main source of income during the pandemic, and while some have been able to find jobs after curfews were lifted, their jobs remain unstable and irregular. The majority of rFGD participants confirmed that the ESN was their main source of income during the three months of lockdown, and that they depended on accumulating debt from the mini markets in their neighbourhoods to access some of their basic needs. Many participants reported having to give up certain food groups and rely on cheaper basic food items, and reported the negative impact of their financial constraints on their psychological well-being. All participants said that they were confined to their homes during the lockdown period and resorted to accumulating debts to their lessors as they could not afford to pay their rent. Many participants with health problems added that they were not able to access medical care either because they were afraid of the risks of COVID-19 or because they were not able to make appointments because of the long waiting lists.

According to the feedback of the rFGD facilitators and participants, rFGDs have proven to be more inclusive than regular FGDs as they can reach the most vulnerable people without any operational and geographical obstacles. Thanks to this innovative approach, we were able to continue with our monitoring activities and listen to the people we serve. Achievements pertaining to the use of rFGDs as a monitoring tool include its ability to include people who might otherwise have not been able to attend regular FGDs due to disabilities, household responsibilities, location or other vulnerabilities. Additionally, the rFGDs also reassured the people we serve of how much we value staying in touch with them and that no matter the circumstances, we will always find a way to stay connected.



PROGRAMMATIC HIGHLIGHTS

Monitoring and evaluation:

TRC and IFRC teams continue focused M&E activities to monitor the implementation of the programme and evaluate its effectiveness in reaching specified objectives. Data collection for Turkey Vulnerability Framework (TVF), a multisectoral needs and vulnerability classification tool, started in early August with the first phase of data collection expected to be complete by the end of September. This will be representative on national level and the data will be used for preliminary reporting. PDM-10 data collection is ongoing and is expected to end by mid-September.

Accountability to affected populations:

The ESSN website addressing to affected population now features a FAQ section on COVID-19, tailored based on the feedback received via our different communication channels. Additionally, 26 Facebook posts were shared in Turkish, Arabic, English, Farsi. The posts aimed to:

- Warn against fraud stressing that all support within the framework of the ESSN is free, and that during household visits, people should ask to see staff ID.
- Provide information about our complaint mechanisms.
- Announce that ESSN recipients may withdraw their assistance from any Halkbank, Ziraat Bank, or Vakif Bank ATM.
- Provide information on sweepbacks, reminding eligible households to withdraw their assistance within six months.
- Remind applicants to provide accurate information when applying for the ESSN.
- Explain the procedures related to address

registration.

- Remind people to make sure their phone numbers are always updated at the SASF offices and TRC service centres.

For August, the number of Facebook followers is 91,544 and the number of questions responded to is 39,379; the number of messages received on the ESSN website is 71 all of which were answered; the number of SMS messages sent is 67,108 regarding removal off the ESSN, uncollected cards, ineligibility and discrepancy. The call centre received 11,197 calls of which 79 per cent were in Arabic and from 79 provinces.

Referrals and outreach:

Referral and outreach teams continue to sensitize local authorities regarding the ESSN, and to solve problems regarding barriers to registration or accessing the ESSN. In August, the teams visited over 400 institutions in 35 provinces. The teams observed a decrease in access issues caused by the pandemic, and that institutions are generally implementing their activities pre-pandemic. However, there remain some institutions which are temporarily closed or are working with some restrictions due to COVID-19 having been detected in their institutions. If a visit to the institution is not possible, access problems are solved by calling the relevant institution.

Coordination:

In the national and regional online Basic Needs Work Groups meetings with the participation of Istanbul, Gaziantep and Ankara task force partners, IFRC & TRC coordination representatives represented the ESSN touching upon the regional and national programmatic updates including economic top-ups, findings of field activities by referral and outreach as well as some crucial rumors which have been addressed.