



Navigating Socioeconomic Realities: Insights from Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) III Programme

FINDINGS OF POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING SURVEY (ROUND 18) | NOVEMBER 2023



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— — EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Monitoring and Evaluation activities are crucial to strengthening the quality and accountability of the programme. The Post-Distribution Monitoring Survey details the socioeconomic situations of ESSN recipients and non-recipients in Türkiye and plays a vital role in assessing the effectiveness of assistance and its impact on recipient households. The PDM survey collects data at the household level, including income, expenditure, debt, and coping-oriented variables.

To ensure representation at both national and regional levels, a stratified simple random sample is used for data collection between August and October 2023 through remote outbound calls. The PDM surveys are conducted three times a year with approximately 4,000 participant households consisting of earthquake-affected as well as non-affected households. This round marks the conclusion of ESSN III.

The household total income has been affected by earthquakes and growing living expenses in Türkiye, for both families receiving ESSN and those not receiving it. However, families affected by earthquakes have significantly lower incomes, highlighting the need for more livelihood options. In Türkiye, families rely on both skilled and unskilled labour and the ESSN, which results in income disparities across the five regions: Aegean, Anatolia, İstanbul, Mediterranean, and Southeast.

Due to economic hardship, median household spending for ESSN and non-recipient families increased, exceeding the country's minimum wage. Price increases for food, rent, and utilities were constant.

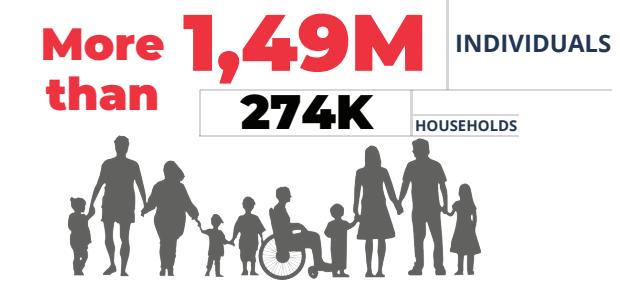
The median debt for ESSN recipients climbed, with over 75 per cent not paying off their obligations in the month before the research. Stress-coping strategies like borrowing money and buying food on credit are still used by recipients and non-recipients.

Food security has improved for ESSN recipients and non-recipients, although earthquake-affected families still struggle. A considerable rise in median ESSN debt and debt repayment issues indicate persistent financial constraints.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

About the Programme

The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Programme provides unrestricted, unconditional cash assistance to people living under temporary or international protection in Türkiye to help them meet their basic needs. The ESSN is funded by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and implemented through a partnership between the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS), the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Türk Kızılay. As of July 2023¹, the ESSN has provided monthly assistance to



Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of ESSN assistance on the socioeconomic conditions of recipients, with a particular focus on their level of expenditure, debt, coping strategies, and food consumption. Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) aims to track changes over time and compare these to the ones experienced by non-recipient households. As of August, the Programme was handed over to NEAR and MoFSS and this report is the final phase of ESSN III.

Objectives of the study

- 1 To measure the extent to which minimum expenses such as food, rent, utilities, non-food items (NFI), health, education, etc. are met.
- 2 To determine if and how income, debt, and expenditure are critical in understanding households' economic resilience.
- 3 To determine the severity of the coping strategies adopted when facing economic or financial difficulties.
- 4 To assess how secure food consumption habits are.



“

KIZILAYKART removed a big burden from my shoulders. I have four kids and raising them in such circumstances is extremely difficult. To be honest, KIZILAYKART's contribution was better before but after the economic hardship it became very limited. Previously my house rent was TRY 700 so KIZILAYKART could cover it. Sometimes I use it or the top up's for school expenditures like stationary.

Female, İstanbul, ESSN Recipient

¹ Date of ESSN III Programme handover from IFRC to DGSA.

Background & statistics

The country experienced a sustained increase in the overall cost of living from the end of 2021, mainly due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Moreover, with the Pandemic crisis, economic growth in Türkiye, like in all other countries, fell below zero, and this shock happened on the production side of the economy, affecting the demand-supply balance and causing the unstable state. Although the annual rate of change shows a downward trend since December 2023, it starts to rise again from July 2023. By September 2023, the annual rate of inflation is almost 62² per cent, with price rises continuing in basic expenses such as food, rent and utilities.



46 %

**ESSN recipients
were living in the
earthquake zone**

On 6 February, Türkiye was hit by a devastating series of earthquakes measuring over 7.5 on the Richter scale in Pazarcık - Kahramanmaraş. The earthquakes, which affected 11 provinces in South-Eastern Türkiye, have irreversibly changed the lives of more than 16 million people, including refugees. About 49 per cent of registered refugees used to live in Kahramanmaraş, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kilis, Osmaniye, Adana and other earthquake-affected provinces, while the proportion of ESSN beneficiaries was 47 per cent.³ As a result of the earthquake, people lost their lives, homes and livelihoods, suffered injuries and were also relocated. To reduce the hardship faced by those affected, both national and international organisations provided assistance in the form of search and rescue, shelter, in-kind, cash and other support.

The current economic climate and the effects of the earthquake have had a snowball effect. Although eight months have passed since the earthquake, the effects of the earthquake are still being felt, and this is limiting the ability to monitor the impact of the cash assistance provided.

Figure 1 shows yearly changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Producer Price Index (PPI). It provides information about fluctuations in living costs and potential financial stresses. Comparing these changes can help understand economic health.

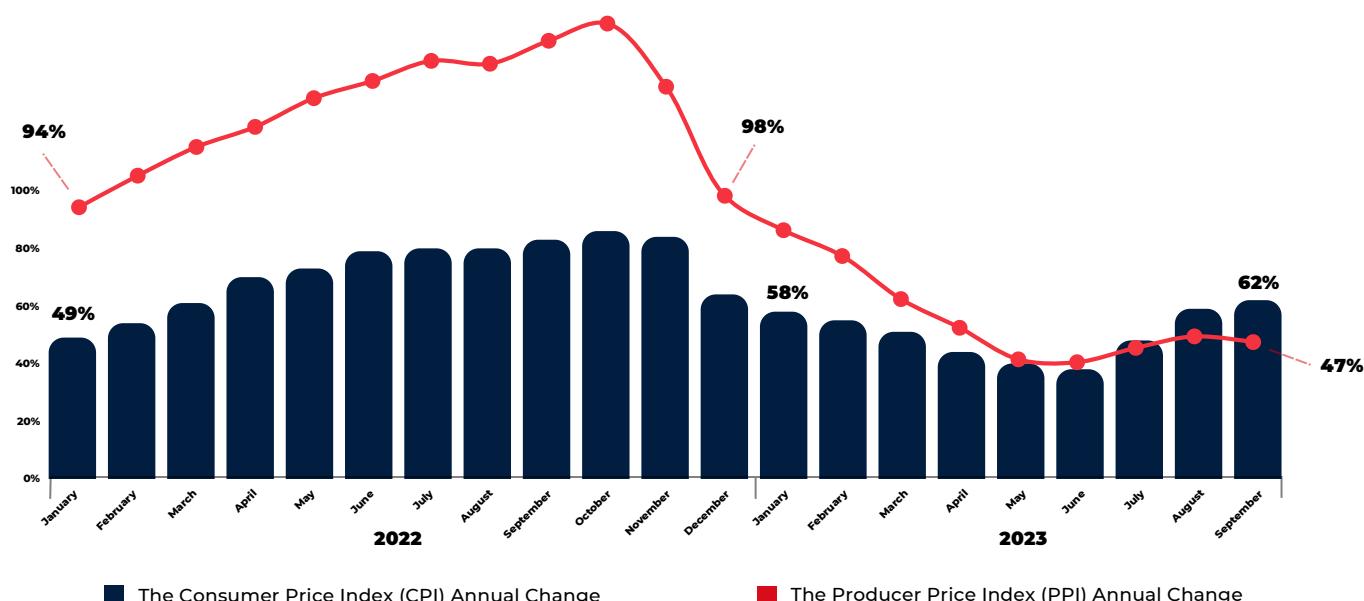


Figure 1: Annual Rate of Changes in CPI and PPI (%)

² According to Turk Stat, the annual inflation for food and non-alcoholic beverages was 72.86 per cent; for housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, it was 24.97 per cent. For more detailed information, please visit: <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Buletin/Index?p=Consumer-Price-Index-August-2023-49650>

³ July 2023 Türk Kızılay Admin Data

CHAPTER 2: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Research design

This PDM 18 survey adopted a cross-sectional research design. This type of study provides a snapshot of a certain situation that was investigated within a particular timeframe. For PDM 18, data collection was conducted between July - September 2023. The unit of analysis is the household. Just as in the previous survey (PDM 17), questions regarding the earthquake were also included in the questionnaire to observe the changing conditions of those who used to live in or continue to live in the affected area.

Sample

Sample sizes for both ESSN recipient and non-recipient groups were calculated at a 95 per cent confidence level and 5 per cent margin of error. PDM 18 captured responses from 1,933 ESSN recipients and 1,937 non-recipients. 1,155 out of 3,872 participants were earthquake-affected. Comparisons were done using the results from PDM 17 conducted between May 2023 – July 2023, which had 1,489 ESSN recipients and 1,066 non-recipient participants. Enumerators from 168 Kızılay Call Center in Gaziantep collected data over the phone.

Area of study

A nationwide sample may result in sampling errors as the ESSN is a nationwide programme with recipients dispersed across the various regions with varying socioeconomic situations, and 80 per cent of ESSN applicants are concentrated in 10 provinces. With that, regional stratification was adopted, with the percentage of applicant families serving as the basis, to improve the estimation of research parameters. The regions categorised as Aegean, Anatolia, İstanbul, Mediterranean, and South-East were specifically selected due to their comparable programme application rates and socioeconomic characteristics. İstanbul, Türkiye's largest commercial centre, was acknowledged as a stratum itself due to its unique socioeconomic standing. As shown in Figure 1, independent random samples were taken from these five regions.

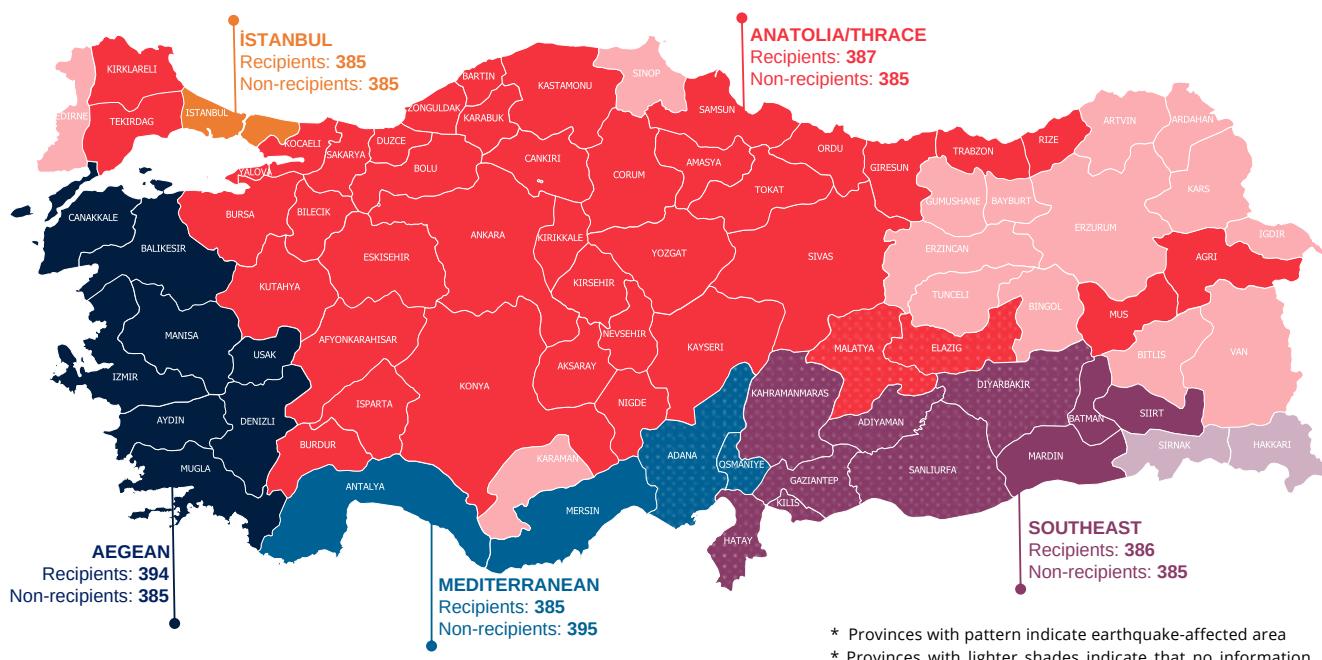


Figure 2: the Map of Study Area

4 • The province is also considered an independent stratum by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat).

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

Income

Minimum wage increase leads to 34% hike in median total income of ESSN beneficiary households, while insights on regional differences stands out.

The household median total income experienced a significant increase of more than 34 per cent between PDM 17 and PDM 18. This growth can be attributed to the recent minimum wage hike in July. Notably, households receiving ESSN and residing in earthquake-affected provinces also witnessed an increase in their total income. In PDM 17, eligible households living in unaffected provinces had a higher median total income compared to those from affected provinces by over 42 per cent. Meanwhile, this discrepancy reduced to about 18.75 per cent during PDM 18. The improvement here can be explained by the additional payments made to the region during the earthquake period within the scope of shock responsiveness.

■ ESSN Recipient ■ Non - Recipient

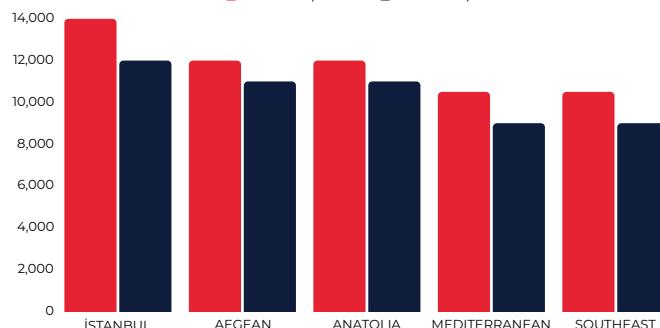
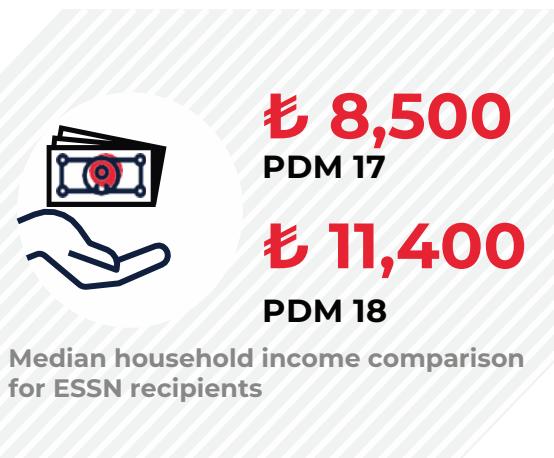


Figure 3: Median Labour Income



In terms of income sources, unskilled labour (57%) and skilled labour (28%) remain the main contributors for both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households. Furthermore, 13 per cent of ESSN recipient households rely primarily on KIZILAYKART as their source of income. Income disparity is also evident across different regions in Türkiye, with İstanbul having the highest median total income at TRY 12,000 followed by the Aegean and Anatolia stratum at TRY 11,000 while the Southeast and Mediterranean regions have a median total income of TRY 9,000 between ESSN recipient households.

Expenditure

Spending increased substantially between PDM 17 and PDM 18, 23 per cent for non-recipient households and 25 per cent for recipient households.

Between PDM 17 and PDM 18, expenditure has continued to rise. For households receiving assistance, the median total expenditure increased from TRY 13,604 to TRY 16,979 (a 25% increase), while for households not receiving assistance, the median total expenditure also rose from TRY 13,649 to TRY 16,744. Unlike in PDM 17, the Aegean Region now has the lowest expenditure levels for both recipient and non-recipient households (TRY 13,874 - TRY 14,091). However, İstanbul still maintains its position with the highest expenditures between both groups (TRY 18,899 - TRY 18,600).

According to the PDM 18 results, food, rent, and clothing are identified as the primary expenses for households. Food and rent together account for over half of the total expenditure incurred by households. The median spending on food is observed to be TRY 6,429 for both recipient and non-recipient households.

5 • The Kruskal-Wallis test, a non-parametric method, is employed to assess whether there are statistically significant differences among PDM studies for recipient or non-recipient groups throughout the report.

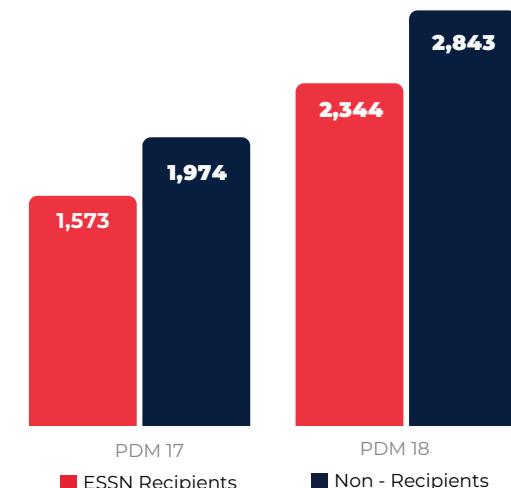


Figure 4: Per capita expenditure by ESSN status

Over 96 per cent of all participating households live in rented accommodation and pay an average monthly rent of TRY 3,000 for both groups of households. At the time of the study, about 6 per cent of earthquake-affected households were still living in tents, which is lower than the PDM 17. While 12 per cent of non-affected individuals shared a house with other households, this figure rises to 16 per cent for affected households.

The results also show that 40 per cent of ESSN recipient households and 53 per cent of non-recipient households were above the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), while the figures for PDM 17 were 59 per cent for ESSN recipients and 57 per cent for non-recipients. The sharp fall in the proportion of households above the MEB suggests that living standards are deteriorating for both recipients and non-recipients. The survey shows that both ESSN recipients and non-recipients experience an increase in household expenditure during the winter season, with 91 per cent of ESSN recipients and 90 per cent of non-recipients reporting an increase. Among these households, the primary expenditure items that tend to increase during the winter months are energy (84%), electricity (18%), food (18%) and clothing (17%) and education (9%), particularly for ESSN recipient households.

Debt

77 per cent of beneficiary households and 68 per cent of non-beneficiary households were found to have debt according to PDM 18.

Reliance on debt as a means of survival persists among ESSN households. Compared to PDM 17, the median debt amount for recipient households increased slightly from TRY 4,800 to TRY 5,000, while it remained at TRY 6,000 for non-recipient households.

A more specific analysis of recipient households' reasons for getting into debt shows that more than 60 per cent of households borrow for food, followed by non-food items and rent. Findings indicate that the majority of people buy items on loan from local markets. Another major source of debt is friends and relatives. The analysis showed that ESSN recipients are more likely to borrow from local shops (57 per cent), while non-beneficiaries are more likely to borrow from friends and relatives (49 per cent).

A significant majority, exceeding 75 per cent, of these households did not settle their debts in the month preceding the survey. Among those who were able to make repayments, the median debt amount was TRY 1,500 for both ESSN recipients and non-recipients. Consequently, the capacity of both ESSN and non-recipient households to meet their debt obligations remains constrained.

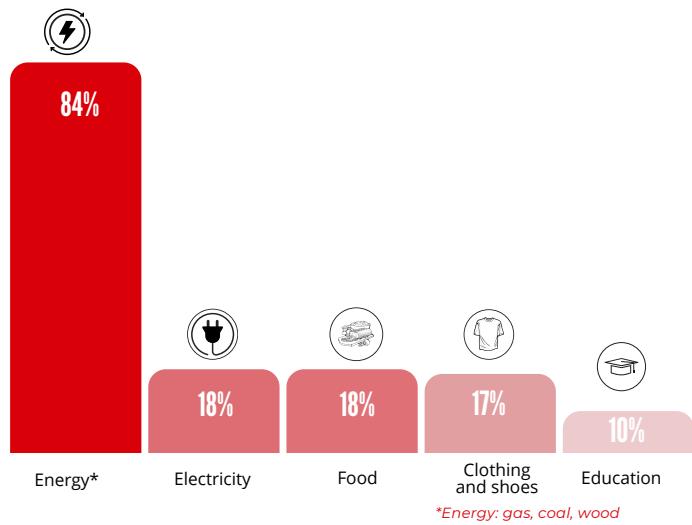


Figure 5: Winter expenditure increase

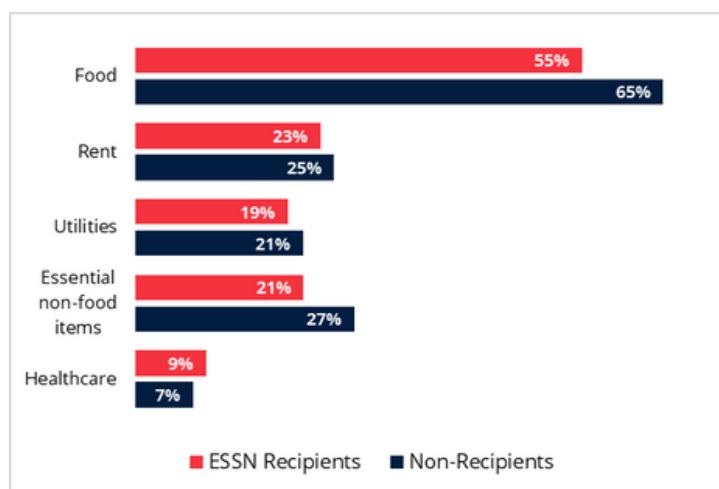


Figure 6: Debt reasons by ESSN status



Coping Strategies

Reduced coping strategy index (rCSI)

ESSN recipient households showed no significant change in rCSI scores, while non-recipients saw a decrease in scores. The most common coping strategy for both was relying on cheaper or less preferred food. Several households reduce adult food consumption to ensure children can eat. The Mediterranean Region had the lowest rCSI score, while the Southeast had the highest.

The Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) serves as a proxy indicator based on household food insecurity. It is a negative indicator that reflects the frequency with which households resort to coping strategies. According to survey results, there was no significant change in the average rCSI scores among ESSN recipient households between the 18th and the previous round (10.14 to 10.36). In contrast, a significant decrease was observed in the rCSI scores of non-recipient households between the 18th and the 17th rounds (9.54 to 8.45), unlike the ESSN recipient households.

The most common coping strategy employed by both recipient and non-recipient households is to rely on less preferred or cheaper food, with 73 per cent of both groups resorting to this strategy. Additionally, a significant portion of households, 42 per cent of recipients and 26 per cent of non-recipients tend to reduce adult food consumption to ensure children can eat. When examining the average rCSI scores of recipient households by region, those in the Mediterranean Region had the lowest score at 7.63, while the Southeast Region recorded the highest rCSI score at 11.24 among the regions.

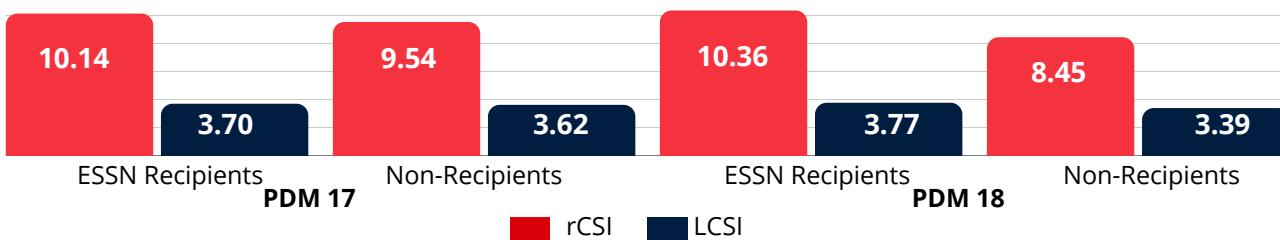


Figure 7: Coping strategies by ESSN status



Coping Strategies

Livelihood coping strategy index (LCSI)

Overall, there was a slight increase in the LCSI score for ESSN recipients when compared to PDM 17 (rising from 3.70 to 3.77); however, this change was not statistically significant and can be disregarded. In contrast, for non-recipient households, the LCSI score shows a minor decrease, from 3.62 to 3.39.

Emergency coping strategies:

These affect future productivity but are extremely difficult to reverse or more dramatic in nature.

As shown in Figure 8, the analysis revealed that for ESSN recipient households, the most frequently adopted emergency coping strategy was involving children in income generation, with a rate of 11 per cent. In contrast, for non-recipient households, the most common strategy, adopted by 7 per cent of them, was relocating the entire household to another location. Additionally, female-headed recipient households (18 per cent) show a higher tendency to relocate to a different location compared to male-headed households (7 per cent).

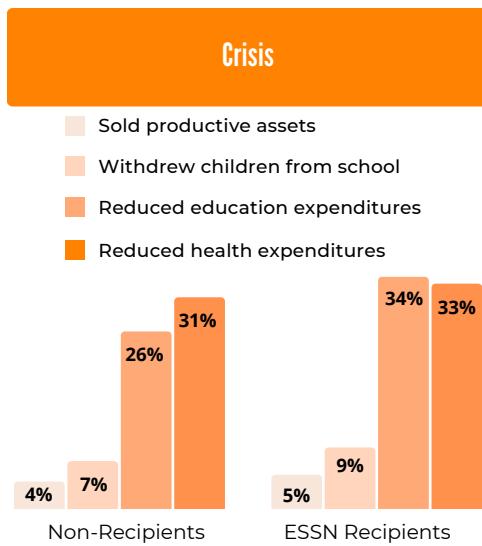


Figure 8: Emergency strategies by ESSN status

Crisis coping strategies:

These could potentially undermine their long-term resilience capacity.

As indicated in Figure 9, the most commonly used livelihood means of coping for both ESSN recipients and non-recipient families for PDM 18 were borrowing money from non-relatives to fulfil essential needs (67%) and buying food on credit (46%). These rates were 54% and 42% for non-recipient households, respectively. Purchasing food on credit has also been adopted by 68% of recipient male-headed households and 56% of recipient female-headed households.

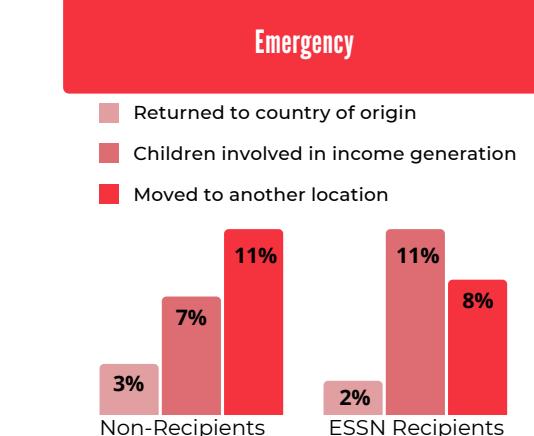


Figure 9: Crisis strategies by ESSN status

Crisis coping strategies:

These could potentially undermine their long-term resilience capacity.

Both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households reduced their expenditure on education (by 34 per cent for ESSN recipients and 26 per cent for non-recipients) and health expenses (by 33 per cent for ESSN recipients and 31 per cent for non-recipients).

Additionally, 9 per cent of ESSN recipient households had to withdraw their children from school, whereas for non-recipient households, this percentage was 7 per cent. These percentages are slightly higher compared to PDM 17, which recorded rates of 9 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively. It has been observed that the frequency of recipients adopting this strategy is nearly the same for both male-headed and female-headed households.

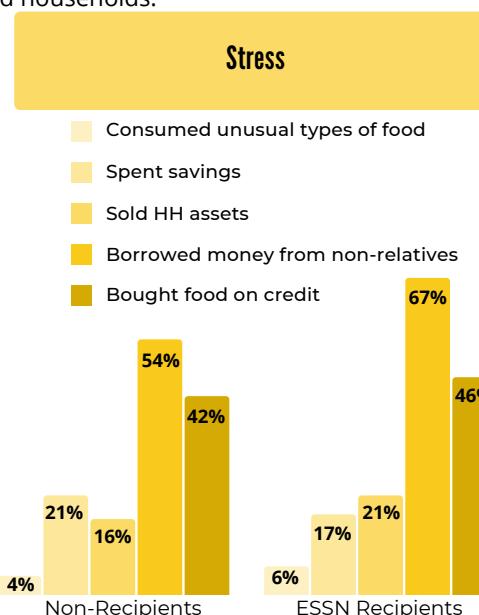


Figure 10: Stress strategies by ESSN status

Food security

The percentage of households meeting the acceptable food consumption score increased for both ESSN recipients and non-recipients in PDM 18, likely attributed to heightened expenditure levels amid challenges meeting basic needs, with a notable distinction indicating lower FCS levels in earthquake-affected areas, underscoring the enduring impact of the earthquake.

Food security⁶ is described as “when all people, at all times, have both physical and economic access to adequate food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life”. In this study, the Food Consumption Score (FCS) was utilized to assess the level of food security of participating households. According to the FCS, the degree of food security of participating households is increasing, both for ESSN participants and non-recipients.

When compared to PDM 17, the percentage of households exceeding the acceptable food consumption score criterion increased for both ESSN beneficiaries (from 67.4 to 71 per cent) and non-recipients (from 70 to

73 per cent.) The most likely cause for the increase in the percentage of households above the permissible FCS threshold is an increase in spending, but the households were unable to fulfil their basic needs with their income, so they are still in debt.

Furthermore, for both ESSN recipients and non-recipients, the study found a significant difference between earthquake-affected and non-affected families. In earthquake-affected areas, the percentage of households with an acceptable level of FCS is much lower for both groups, recipients and non-recipients. While 64.4 per cent of earthquake-affected ESSN recipient households have an acceptable level of FCS, 72.4 per cent of non-affected ESSN recipient households have an acceptable level of FCS. This result indicates that the earthquake's effects remain endured.

Conclusion

The findings of PDM 18 provide a detailed assessment of the socioeconomic conditions of ESSN recipients and non-recipients and signals the end of the ESSN III phase. Several important findings emerged from the analysis:

1. Basic needs cash interventions, such as ESSN, have continued to play an important role in providing unlimited, unconditional financial assistance to not only those affected by the earthquakes but also other recipients residing in Türkiye. A considerable proportion of earthquake-affected ESSN recipients continued to have access to cash assistance after the disaster, demonstrating the Programme's capacity and efficacy in the face of disaster.

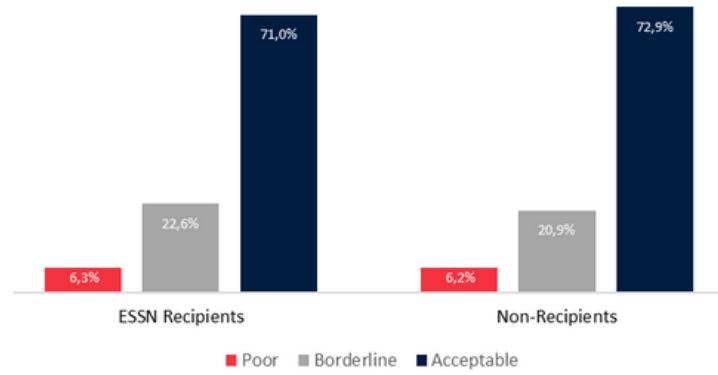


Figure 11: Food consumption group by ESSN status



6 • For more detailed information, please visit: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update/what-is-food-security>.

2. Despite the challenges of earthquakes and rising living costs, there was a significant increase (34 per cent) in **household total income** for both recipient and non-recipient households, mainly due to seasonal agricultural employment. However, households directly affected by the earthquake had significantly lower income levels, highlighting the need for more livelihood opportunities. Additionally, the diverse income sources within households in Türkiye, including a significant reliance on unskilled and skilled labour as well as KIZILAYKART, reveal the variations in regional income disparities.

3. Median household expenditure increased by 24 per cent for both recipient and non-recipient households, persistently surpassing the country's minimum wage, driven by economic hardships in living costs. Notably, essential expenses like food, rent, and utilities experienced consistent economic fluctuations. When compared to PDM 17, both food and rent expenditures for ESSN recipient households increased by 50 per cent, imposing additional economic strains on these households.

4. The median recorded amount of **debt** has increased from TRY 4,800 to TRY 5,000 for ESSN recipients from PDM 17 to PDM 18. More than 75 per cent of the households did not pay off their debts in the month prior to the study. This highlights the financial strain experienced by these households, emphasizing the continued need for financial assistance.

5. Coping strategies employed by recipients and non-recipients alike continue to range in a wide spectrum. Stress coping methods, such as borrowing money and purchasing food on credit remain prevalent. Reductions in education and health spending, along with child school withdrawals, underscore crisis coping methods. Emergency coping mechanisms encompass income generation involving children and household relocations. Though these strategies assist families in navigating financial challenges, they also mirror the hurdles they encounter in sustaining their livelihoods.

6. Food security has shown improvement for both ESSN recipients and non-recipients, compared to the previous PDM rounds. However, households in earthquake-affected areas continue to face challenges, indicating the persistent impact of the earthquake on food security in those regions. Concurrently, a significant increase in median recorded debt among ESSN participants, coupled with difficulties in debt repayment, highlights ongoing financial strains. Simultaneously, a substantial proportion (46 per cent) resorting to borrowing food on credit underscores the urgency in addressing basic necessities. This suggests a nuanced situation where progress in food security is accompanied by persistent economic challenges, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of well-being in refugee communities.



Annex 1: Food related indicators



Food Consumption Score¹

Food Consumption Score (FCS) indicator is a composite score based on households' dietary diversity, food frequency, and the relative nutritional importance of different food groups. The FCS is calculated by inspecting how often households consume food items from the different food groups during a seven-day reference period. The FCS is a proxy indicator of household access to food. It has been validated against the quantity of caloric intake.



Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)²

The consumption-based coping strategy index is used to assess the level of stress faced by a household due to food shortages. It is measured by combining the frequency and severity of the reduced strategies households are engaging in to cope with lack of food or money to buy it. It is calculated using the five standard strategies using a 7-day recall period.

1. Rely on less preferred and less expensive food
2. Borrow food or rely on help from relative(s) or friend(s)
3. Limit portion size at meals
4. Restrict consumption by adults/mothers to allow small children to eat
5. Reduce number of meals eaten in a day



Livelihood Coping Strategy Index (LCSI)³

The livelihood coping strategies for food security are indicators used to measure the extent of livelihood coping that households needed to utilise as a response to a lack of food or money to purchase food during the 30 days prior to the survey.

The formulation of an LCS-FS module requires the selection of at least four stress strategies, three crisis strategies, and three emergency strategies from the standardised available master list while taking into consideration the local context.



Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB)⁴

A minimum expenditure basket (MEB) is an operational tool. It is used to identify and calculate, in a particular context and for a specific moment in time, the average cost of a socioeconomically vulnerable household's multisectoral basic needs that can be monetized and accessed in adequate quality through the local market. Goods and services included in the MEB should enable households to meet basic needs and minimum living standards without resorting to negative coping strategies or compromising their health, dignity, and essential livelihood assets. An MEB can be calculated for different household sizes.

1 • For more detailed information, please visit: <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/data-analysis/quantitative/food-security/food-consumption-score>

2 • For more detailed information, please visit: <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/data-analysis/quantitative/food-security/reduced-coping-strategies-index>

3 • For more detailed information, please visit: <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/data-analysis/quantitative/food-security/livelihood-coping-strategies-food-security>

4 • For more detailed information, please visit: <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Calculating-MEB-A-guide-to-practice.pdf>

TÜRK KIZILAY (TURKISH RED CRESCENT)

The largest humanitarian organization in Türkiye

Türk Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent) is the largest humanitarian organization in Türkiye, helping vulnerable people in and out of disasters for years, both in the country and abroad. Millions of people currently receive support through our programmes in cooperation with the Government of Türkiye. We are supporting vulnerable people impacted by disasters and other groups in need of humanitarian assistance.



THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC)

The world's largest humanitarian network

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, reaching 150 million people in 192 National Societies, including Türk Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent), through 13.7 million volunteers. Together, we act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people.



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