



REFUGEES IN TÜRKİYE: TRAPPED IN A CYCLE OF POVERTY

FINDINGS OF POST DISTRIBUTION MONITORING SURVEY (ROUND 15) | JANUARY 2023



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PHOTO CREDITS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

About the program

The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program provides unrestricted, unconditional cash assistance to people living under temporary or international protection in Turkey 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 of 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 November 2022, the ESSN has provided monthly assistance to over 1.5 million people.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of ESSN assistance on the socio-economic conditions of recipients, with 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.

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/ 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/financial difficulties.
- 4** To assess how secure their food consumption habits are.



“

Since I have more expenditures than my income, I can't spend much. So, we are constantly affected. I'm now 41 years old and for the first time in my life, I am buying items on credit from the grocery store.

– Male, non-recipient, Izmir

Background & statistics

The annual inflation rate has been increasing exponentially in Turkey since November 2021. Cost of living has been severely impacted and prices of main expenditure items, namely food, rent and utilities have continued to increase¹.

Accordingly, minimum wage has been increased more than 50 percent in January 2022. Along with an additional 30 per cent increase in July, minimum wage has been increased by 95 per cent cumulatively comparing last year². Since March 2022, COVID-19 measures in the country have been eased further and the requirement to wear masks in open areas has been removed.

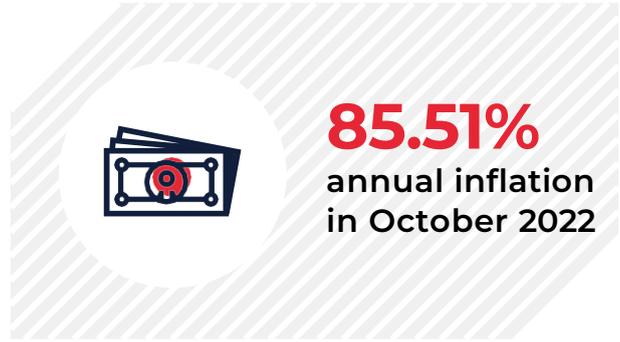
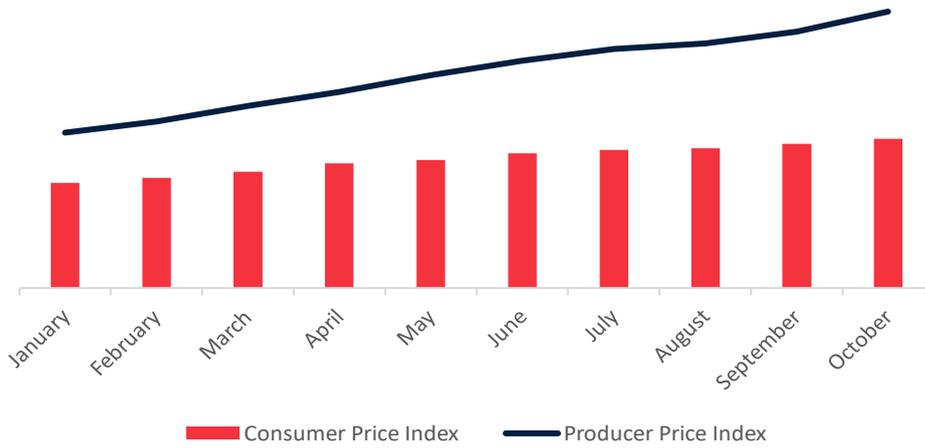


Figure 1: Annual Rate of Changes in CPI and PPI (%)



1 • According to Turk Stat, the annual inflation for food and non-alcoholic beverages was 99.05 per cent; for housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, it was 85.17 per cent. For more detailed information please visit: <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Tuketici-Fiyat-Endeksi-Ekim-2022-457991>

2 • For more detailed information please visit: <https://www.csgb.gov.tr/cgm/haberler/2022-yili-icin-yeni-asgari-ucret-5-bin-500-tl-olarak-belirlendi/>

CHAPTER 2: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Research design

This PDM 15 survey adopted a longitudinal research design which is usually preferred when the objective is to understand the change of an outcome or variables over a period of time. It involves repeated observations of the same respondents over short or long periods of time. The unit of analysis is in the household level.

Sample

Sample sizes for both ESSN recipient and non-recipient groups were calculated at 95 per cent confidence level and 5 per cent margin of error. PDM 15 was conducted between June-October 2022, capturing responses from 2,558 ESSN recipients and 2,306 non-recipients. Comparisons were done using the results from PDM 14 which was conducted between January and February 2022. Data was collected by enumerators from Türk Kızılay's 168 Call Center in Gaziantep through phone surveys.

Area of study

Considering that the ESSN is a nationwide program with recipients spread across the different regions with diverse socio-economic statuses and with 80 per cent of the ESSN applicants being concentrated in 10 provinces, a nationwide sampling may lead to sampling errors. For a better estimation of study parameters, regional stratification based on the proportion of applicant households was applied. Aegean, Anatolia, Istanbul, Mediterranean and South-east regions were used as stratum based on the similarities in the programme application figures and relatively in socio-economic dynamics. Besides, Istanbul, the main commercial city of Turkey, was accepted as a stratum by itself because of its distinct socio-economic status³. Independent random samples were drawn from these five regions as per Figure 1.

Figure 1: Map of Study Area

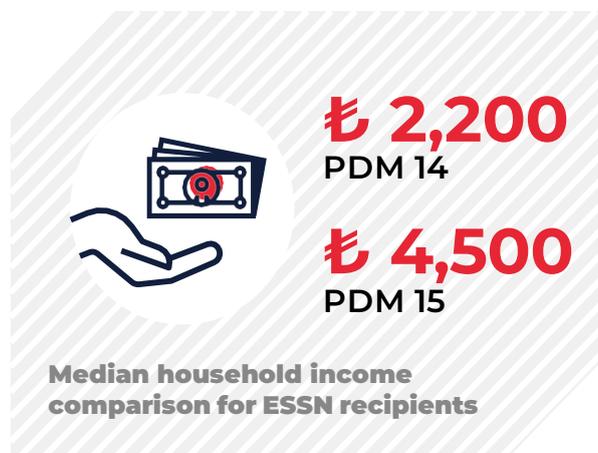


3 • The province is also considered an independent stratum by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat).

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

Income

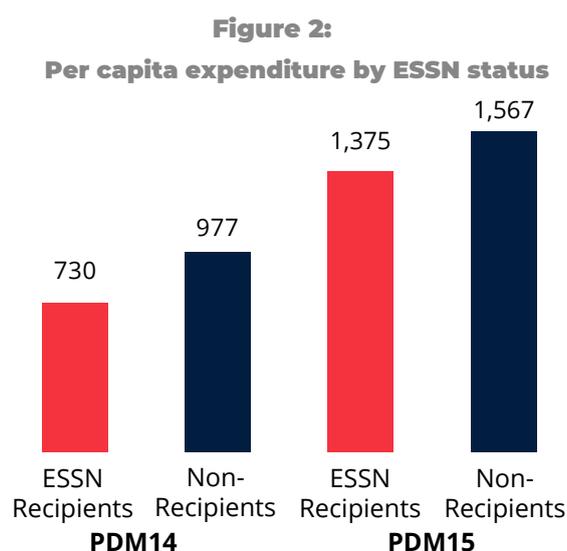
From PDM 14 to PDM 15, median household income for paid labour increased from 2,800 TRY to 4,500 TRY for non-recipients whilst it rose from 2,200 TRY to 4,500 TRY for ESSN recipients (excluding ESSN and CTE assistance). Compared to Istanbul, the region with highest household income amount, South-east region has considerably lower income for both ESSN recipients and non-recipients. Furthermore, unskilled labour is still the main source of income for both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households. According to PDM15 analysis results, unskilled labour, KIZILAYKART and skilled labour remained the same for ESSN recipients as the result in the previous PDM 14 study.



Expenditure

Median household expenditure reached to 8,367 TRY for ESSN recipient and 7,094 non-recipient households. The region with the highest median household expenditure for both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households was Istanbul followed by Aegean and Anatolia. The share of the utilities in household expenditure decreased which might be because the study is conducted in summer. According to PDM 15, five main expenditure items with largest share among household expenditures are food, rent, clothing, utilities and hygiene. Median food expenditure increased from 2,143 TRY to 3,000 TRY for ESSN recipients while it soared from 1,714 TRY to 2,571 TRY for non-recipient households.

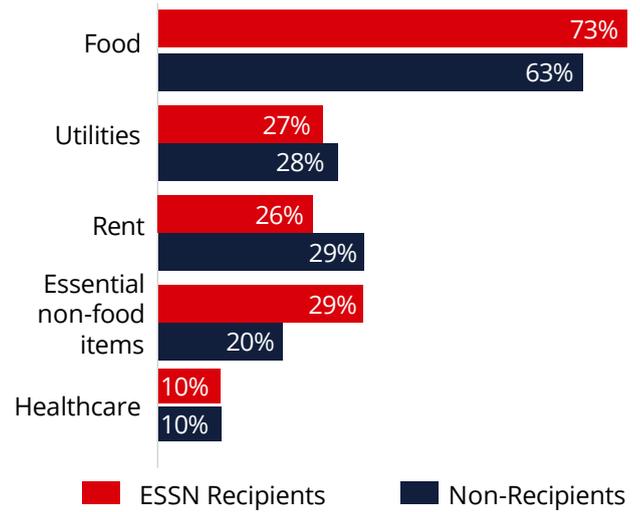
High inflation rates as well as foreign trade balances can be considered as main reasons of higher prices of the goods and services, hence higher expenditure levels observed in this study. The majority of both ESSN recipients (67 per cent) and non-recipient (61 per cent) households had per capita expenditure levels above MEB. Findings also show that, ESSN-recipient households with expenditure above MEB remained the same while non-recipient households shrunk (from 83 per cent to 61 per cent) compared PDM 14. Furthermore, according to PDM 15, 94 per cent of the respondents, for both ESSN recipients and non-recipients, indicated that their expenses increased during winter. Most prominent expenses increases were energy (88 per cent), electricity (27 per cent), food (25 per cent), clothing & shoes (18 per cent) and water (12 per cent).



Debt

Eighty-one per cent of the ESSN recipient households have debt according to PDM 15 analysis results. Compared to PDM 14, the median debt amount increased from 3,000 TRY to 3,500 TRY for ESSN recipients, while it increased from 3,000 TRY to 3,620 TRY for non-recipient households. PDM 15 analysis indicates that there is not a major change in terms of respondent household's indebtedness compared to PDM 14. Local shops were still the main sources of debt for ESSN recipients (65 per cent) whereas friends and relatives were the main source of debt for non-recipient households (58 per cent). Moreover, ESSN recipient and non-recipient households borrowed to meet their most basic needs, namely food, rent, utilities, essential non-food items and healthcare.

Figure 3: Debt reasons by ESSN status

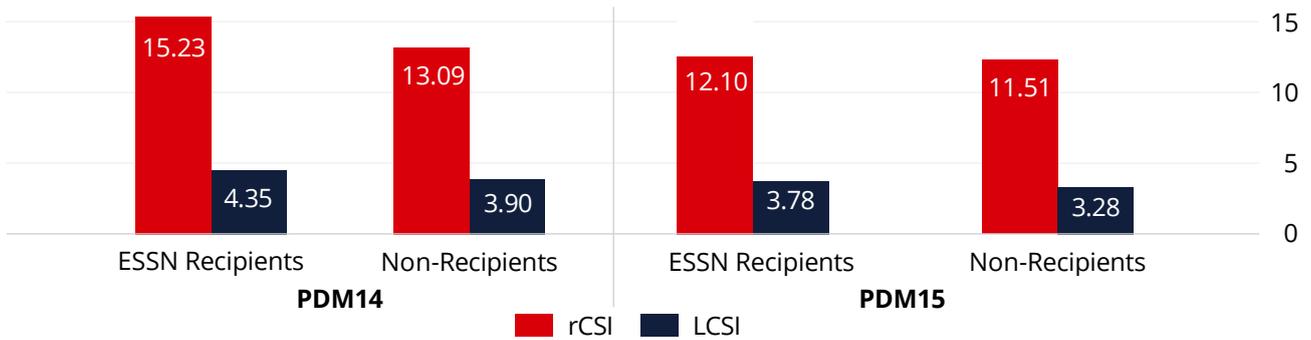


Coping Strategies

Reduced coping strategy index (RCSI)

Comparing PDM14 with PDM15, the rCSI score decreased from 15.23 to 12.10 for ESSN recipients, and from 13.09 to 11.50 for non-recipient households⁴. Relying on less preferred/ less expensive food was the most frequently adopted coping strategy for both ESSN recipient (80 per cent) and non-recipient (76 per cent) households. Around 50 per cent of participants' households shared that they reduced the number of meals consumed in a day.

Figure 4: Coping strategies by ESSN status



Livelihood coping strategy index (LCSI)

Overall the LCSI score was slightly lower compared to PDM 14 for ESSN recipient (from 4.35 to 3.78) and non-recipient (from 3.90 to 3.28) households⁵.

Stress coping strategies According to PDM 15, buying food on credit (68 per cent) and borrowing money from non-relatives to meet basic needs (44 per cent) were adopted the most as livelihood coping strategies by both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households.

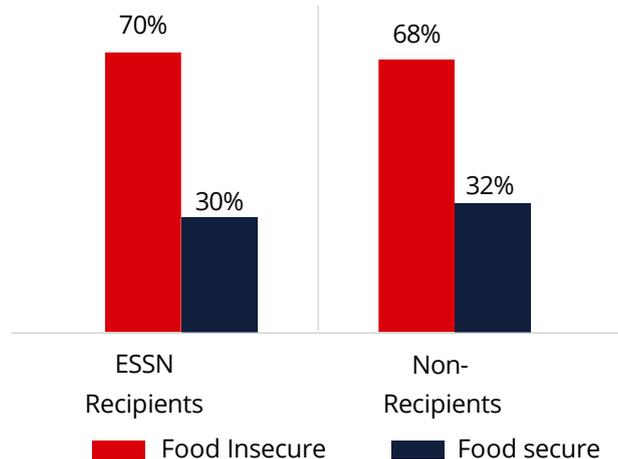
Crisis coping strategies Both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households reduced their expenditure on education (38 per cent and 22 per cent) and health expenditures (both for 34 per cent). In addition, 7 per cent of the ESSN recipient households withdrew their children from school while this was 5 per cent of non-recipient households.

Emergency coping strategies The most severe negative coping strategies continued to be adopted by both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households. For ESSN recipient households, involving children in income generation was the most frequently adopted emergency coping strategy (11 per cent), while it was moving the entire household to another location (11 per cent) for non-recipient households.

Food security

Food security is defined as “when all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life”. Food Consumption Score (FCS) and HFIAS (Household Food Insecurity Access Scale) score were used in this study to measure participant households' food security levels⁶.

Figure 5: Household food insecurity access scale by ESSN status

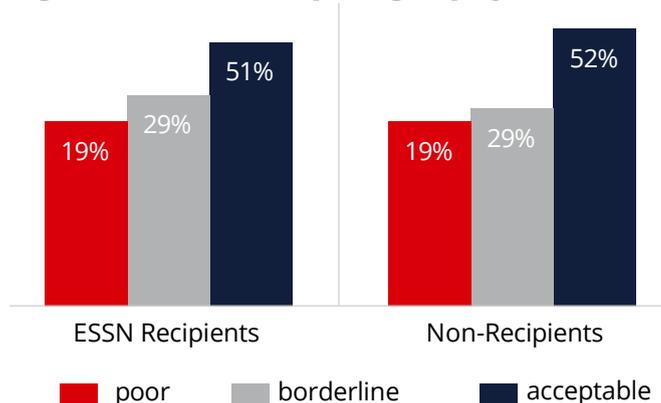


4 • There is a statistically significant difference between ESSN recipient and non-recipient households.

5 • There is a statistically significant difference between ESSN recipient and non-recipient households.

Both indicate that participant households face high levels of food insecurity, ESSN recipient and non-recipient households alike. Seventy per cent of ESSN recipient and 68 per cent of non-recipient households are categorized as food insecure, relying on HFIAS index score. Similarly, half of both ESSN recipient (51.5 per cent) and non-recipient households (52.1 per cent) have acceptable food consumption scores. Percentage of households with acceptable FCS has increased for both ESSN recipient and non-recipient households compared to PDM 14. This increase might be due to notable increase in the food expenditure for the ESSN recipient households (2,143 TRY to 3,000 TRY) from PDM 14 to PDM 15), and seasonality.

Figure 6: Food consumption group by ESSN status



Conclusion

Households still struggle to meet even the most basic needs, ESSN recipient households adopt food related negative coping strategies more than non-recipient households. RCSI score is slightly higher, FCS and HFIAS scores are similar compared to PDM 14 results.

Household expenditures increased even further as well as income, however this increase does not reflect as improved well-being for ESSN recipient and non-recipient households.

Even though household income for paid labour is doubled, expenditure and debt of the households also increased with it. Comparing PDM 14, expenditure increased about 87,4 per cent, along with 17 per cent increase in debt.

Food insecurity is improved slightly comparing PDM 14 results. About 70 per cent ESSN recipient households are food insecure. Households suffering from severe food insecurity were more likely to adopt coping strategies.



6 • The eighteen-question U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module (US HFSSM) asks respondents to describe behaviors and attitudes that relate to these various aspects, also called 'domains', of the food insecurity experience (Hamilton et al., 1997). Responses are summarized in a scale to provide a continuous indicator of the degree of a household's food insecurity and households are food secure or not. These data are used to monitor food assistance programs and to report on national prevalence of household food insecurity.

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