UPINION

Voices of Lebanon amidst war: Insights from affected communities and best ways to help

October 2024

Introduction

In the context of the current Israeli attacks on Lebanon, over 2 000 people have been killed and 9 000 wounded[1] since the 8th of October 2023, with an estimated 1.2 million civilians[2] who have been forced to flee their homes, living in a limbo state, without stable access to the internet, food, water, medical assistance, or primary resources. For this reason, Upinion decided to hold a conversation with its community in Lebanon in order to identify their most pressing concerns, displacement needs, and gather their input about the current situation to discern the best ways to help and share back relevant information. Upinion also continued an ongoing conversation it has been having with Syrian and Lebanese communities in Lebanon about safety and security, social tensions, evictions, and future plans.

As stressed by the results of these conversations, while some people were relocated to approved shelters in schools around the country and others found alternative housing, many are still left without shelter at all, and without the necessary information or infrastructure to support their family, which was their dominant concern. When asked what they needed the most at the moment, respondents who have been displaced predominantly answered food and water access, followed by shelter, medical services, and clothes.

Upinion's conversations

The first set of two conversations Upinion held took place from the **30th of September** to the **3rd of October 2024,** and the follow-up conversation was launched on the **3rd of October** and is ongoing. The conversations were shared via Upinion's digital engagement platform with its Syrian and Lebanese communities currently residing in Lebanon. The first conversation aimed to gather input on the impact of the Israeli attacks, followed by a second conversation on both groups' experiences with safety, social tensions, deportation, and their future plans. A third, follow-up conversation was designed to share additional information with our communities in Lebanon and ask them specific questions about displacement and primary needs. **512** respondents answered the first question of the first conversation. **499** completed the first conversation. **417** people answered the first question of the second conversation. **383** people went until the end of the second conversation. **517** respondents answered the first question and **462** completed the third, follow-up conversation.

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[1] WAFA News Agency, 2 October 2024. Retrieved from https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/149847
[2] UNHCR, 6 October 2024. Retrieved from
https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/displaced-families-lebanon-yearn-peace-and-return-home#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20the%201.2,Syrians%2C%20Lebanese%20and%20Palestinian%20refugees.

Information-sharing

Thanks to Upinion's two-way communication digital platform model, we were able to send relevant information throughout multiple conversations. The conversations were preceded by a short introduction, which gave all respondents the possibility to choose not to answer any of the questions and immediately receive an information message containing emergency contact numbers, verified school shelters, as well as alternative shelters across different areas. The conversations were then split into two parts, each segment ending with an information message. 66 per cent of the respondents rated the information message as 4 or 5 stars.

It is important to note that due to the sample size of the study, the following findings do not amount to a quantitative analysis, and thereby cannot be used as quantitative evidence, but rather serve as an indicator of possible patterns or emerging trends.
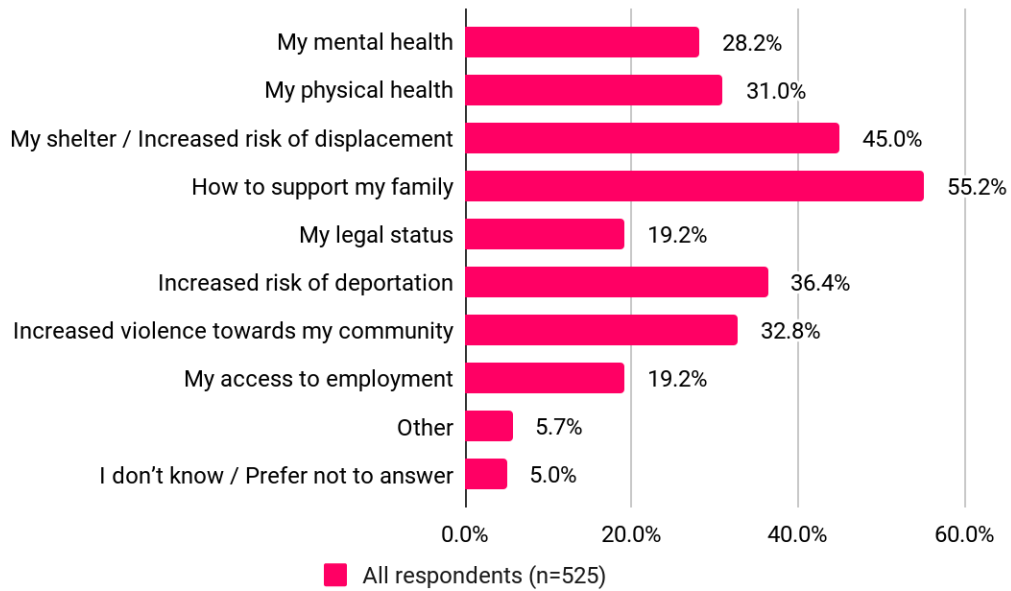
Data findings

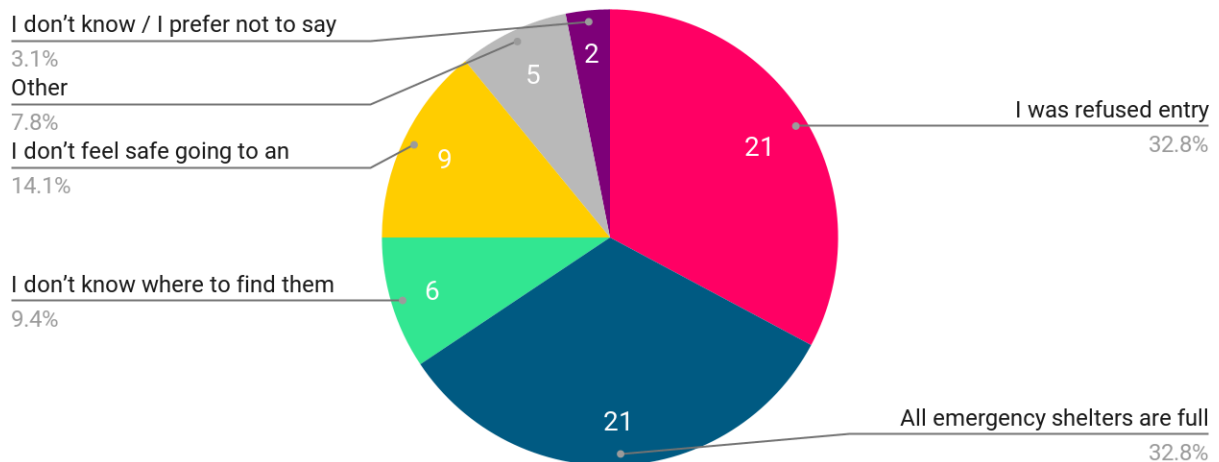## Conversation 1 - Attacks on Lebanon

Priority concerns and displacement

The main concerns of both Syrian and non-Syrian respondents was how to support their family (**55%**, n=525) as well as finding or losing shelter, linked to the rising risk of displacement (**45%**). Other concerns were also considerably mentioned. See the bar chart below.

Figure 1. "You can share with us below what your main concerns are in light of the recent attacks." - multiple answers - all respondents

In addition, **43%** (n=520) of the respondents were displaced because of the attacks. Some found shelter either in schools, with relatives, or through other alternatives (**69%**, n=222), but a remaining **29%** are yet to find emergency shelter. Out of the people who answered they have not found shelter (n=64), **33%** mentioned they were refused entry to the shelter and **32%** that the shelters were full. See the pie chart below.
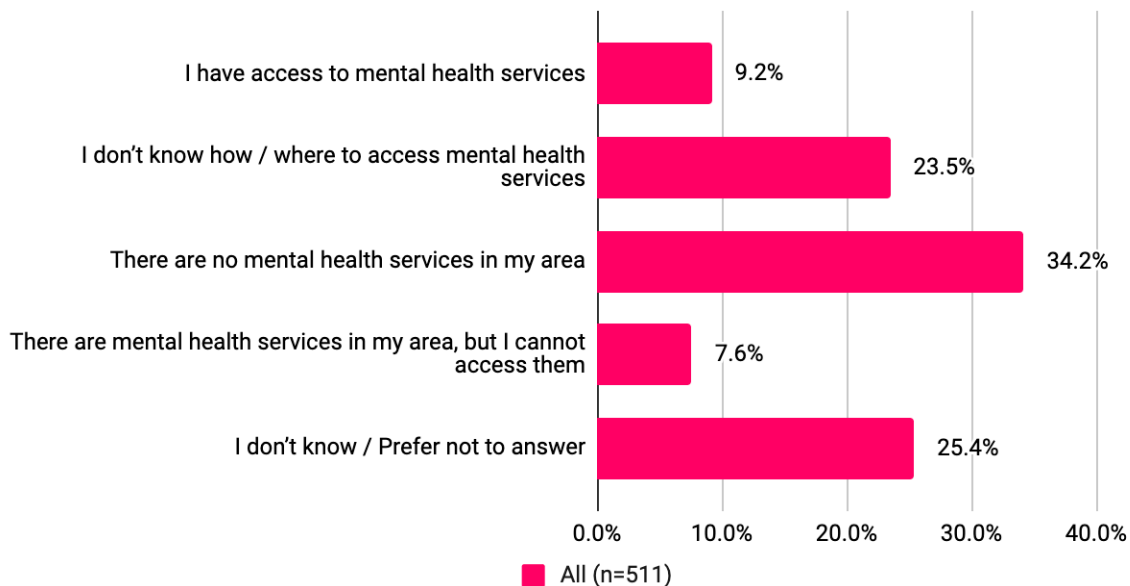
Figure 2. "Could you elaborate on why you have not been able to find emergency shelter?" - Single answer - if "No" to "Have you been able to find emergency shelter (e.g. schools, rehabilitated buildings)?"

Mental health

When asked about their access to and awareness of mental health services in their area, only **9%** (n=511) of the respondents said they had access to mental health services (although **25%** also preferred not to answer), for **34%** saying there were no mental health services in their area and **24%** who shared that they did not know how or where to access mental health services.

Figure 3. "Do you have access to mental health services or do you know how / where to access services in your area?" - Single answer - all respondents

Conversation 2 - Feelings of safety, social tensions, evictions & future plans

Safety and security in Lebanon

87% (n=427) of both Syrian and non-Syrian respondents reported to not feel safe at all in Lebanon. This was followed by **8%** who indicated to feel somehow safe, and **3%** who felt completely safe.

For both Syrian and non-Syrian respondents, feelings of insecurity are mostly motivated by a fear of the escalation of the attacks (**77%**, n=223 and **73%**, n=181 respectively), complemented for Syrians by a fear of not being able to move abroad or resettle somewhere else (**64%**). For

non-Syrian respondents, the deterioration of access to public services was their second main concern (**42%**).

Deportations: Syrian individuals

Most respondents shared that their fear of deportation within the next 3 months was very high (**70%**, n=221), while **15%** were mitigated, **5%** fear deportation a little, and **6%** not at all. When asked about the reasons motivating this feeling, respondents primarily answered it was due to the fear of increased social tensions because of the war (**70%**), the difficulty to renew legal documents (**47%**), and threats of deportation from Lebanese authorities (**40%**).

To the question of who the main responsible actors for these threats were, most respondents answered the Lebanese General Security (GDGS) (**40%**, n=218), Lebanese municipalities (**33%**), and the government and ministers (**30%**).

Plans to leave Lebanon

A large proportion of both Syrian and non-syrian respondents expressed the will to leave Lebanon within the next six months without having decided on a plan yet. In figures, **54%** (n=179) of non-Syrian people plan to leave but don't know how, for **76%** (n=216) of Syrian respondents.
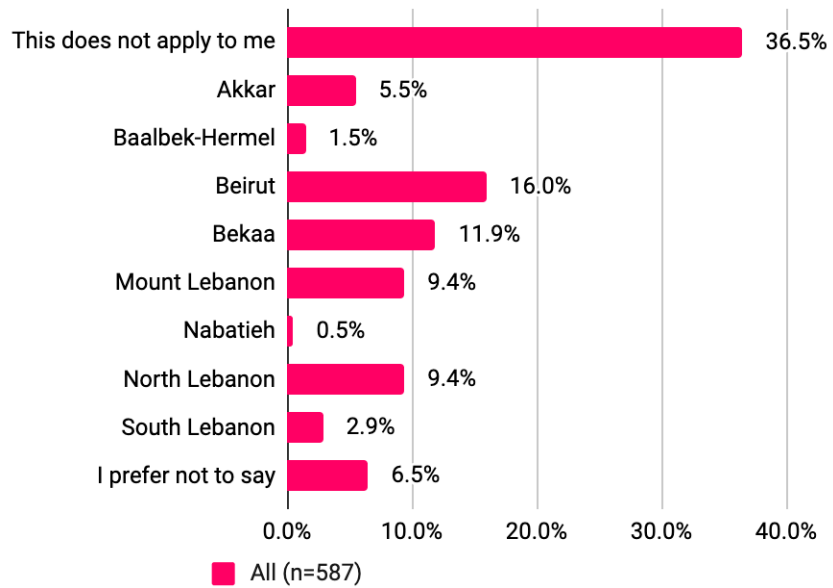
Both groups' most common reason for this choice was the fear of war in Lebanon (**74%**, n=114, for Syrians and **79%**, n=186, for non-Syrians), followed by increased safety and security concerns (**55%** and **48%**, respectively). Syrian respondents also shared that threats of deportation were motivating this decision (**51%**). Whereas for non-Syrians, the urgency to migrate now, before it gets more difficult (**40%**) seemed also considerable.

Lastly, a close percentage of Syrians and non-Syrians respondents mentioned they would consider leaving Lebanon irregularly (**41%**, n=163, and **37%**, n=94, respectively). Following this question, most people shared that they did not know which route they would take, but out of the people that knew, Italy was the most chosen.

Follow-up conversation

Among the respondents that answered the follow-up conversation, **37%** (n=587) were not displaced. Out of the people that were displaced, **16%** are now in Beirut, **12%** in Bekaa, **9%** in North Lebanon, **9%** in Mount Lebanon, and **6%** in Akkar.

Figure 4. "We would like to know where you have been displaced to. If you have not been displaced, choose "This does not apply to me"." - all respondents

When asked about what the main need was right now, people that have been displaced predominantly answered food and water access (**56%**, n=284), followed by shelter (**29%**), medical services (**25%**), and clothes (**20%**). For the respondents that were not displaced, their priority needs were updates and food and water distribution services in their area (**37%**).