



UPINION

## **Staying informed in times of conflict: people in Lebanon share their priority needs**

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*October 2024*

# Key findings

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## Conversation 1: displacement patterns and primary needs (03/10/24 - 17/10/2023)

- *Displacement status:* 56% of respondents (n=633) were displaced, comprising 16% in Beirut, 12% in Bekaa, 9% in North Lebanon, 9% in Mount Lebanon, and 5% in Akkar. 59% of displaced persons in this panel are Syrian and 22% Lebanese.
- *Priority needs:* Top needs for displaced individuals include food and water (55%), shelter (32%), medical services (24%), and clothing (22%). Non-displaced respondents prioritized updates on food and water distribution (37%).
- *Open responses:* Many highlighted a need for affordable housing and resettlement assistance.

## Conversation 2: information needs (18/10/24 - now)

- *Displacement status:* 38% of respondents indicated to have been displaced, although 15% preferred not to answer the question. Among those displaced, 55% are Syrian and 21% Lebanese.
- *Information priorities:* 71% prioritized information on food and water assistance; 28% focused on education for children, and 26% on medical assistance.
- *Shelter arrangements:* 39% are staying with family or friends and 22% find themselves on the streets or in tents, with only 1% in formal shelters, indicating a significant support gap.
- *Engagement with information:* 21% showed interest in food services information around Beirut; however, this type of information should be expanded to other regions as 61% found the information not applicable to their situation.

## Trends across both conversations

- *Consistent needs:* Food and water access emerged as the primary need in both conversations and across both displaced and non-displaced respondents, indicating a stable concern for basic necessities.
- *Shelter challenges:* The reliance on informal housing remains a critical issue, with close to a quarter of the displaced respondents living on the streets.
- *Growing information demand:* There is an increasing need for timely and relevant information, particularly regarding food, water, and education opportunities for children.

# Introduction

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The ongoing Israeli attacks against Lebanon at the time of writing have killed 2,483 people and wounded another 11,628<sup>1</sup> since the 8th of October 2023. Displaced civilians - an estimated 1.2 million<sup>2</sup> - who have been forced to flee their homes are facing increasing difficulties accessing food, water, medical assistance, or primary resources. Upinion has been conducting regular conversations with its communities in Lebanon in order to gather timely and direct insights on their priority needs, whether related to displacement, services, aid, or information.

## Upinion's conversations

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This report summarizes and interprets the results of the most recent two conversations Upinion held with its Syrian and Lebanese communities in Lebanon. Preliminary results from the first conversation were shared in our previous short brief '*Voices of Lebanon amidst war: Insights from affected communities and best ways to help*' which can be accessed [here](#). This conversation was launched on the **3rd of October** and closed on the **17 October 2024**. The second conversation was launched on the **18th of October 2024** and is still active, which aims to continue monitoring displacement status, particularly including movements at the Syria-Lebanon border, as well as sharing different types of information and identifying information priorities. **633** respondents answered the first question of the first conversation. **613** completed the first conversation. **451** people have answered the first question of the second conversation so far. **553** people went until the end of the second conversation, out of which **181** did not answer the first question, but chose to directly receive the information messages.

### *Information-sharing*

Thanks to Upinion's two-way communication digital platform, 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 any of three information messages, including free food

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<sup>1</sup>National News Agency (NNA), 21 October 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/en/security-law/732083/public-health-emergency-operations-center-total-de>

<sup>2</sup> 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.>

services in Beirut, information about the Syrian-Lebanese border, and an educational sheet on how to spot harmful information.

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

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### Conversation 1 - Displacement patterns and primary needs

#### *Areas of displacement*

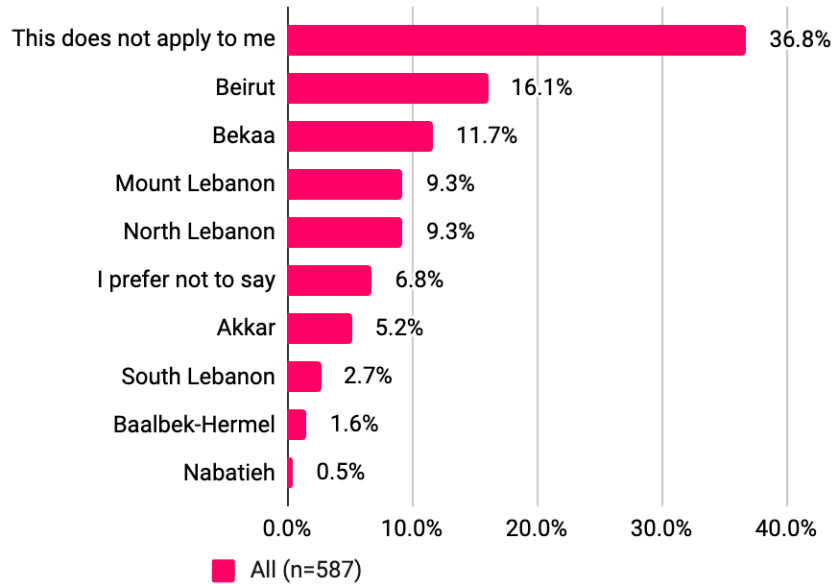
Among the respondents that answered the conversation, **56%** (n=633) were displaced, comprising **16%** in Beirut, **12%** in Bekaa, **9%** in North Lebanon, **9%** in Mount Lebanon, and **5%** in Akkar. **37%** of the respondents were not displaced. It is important to note that compared to recent NRC figures<sup>3</sup>, Akkar continues to be the more favorable area, with the region hosting **61%** of IDPs, and **24%** of the IDPs reportedly relocated to areas within Beirut and Mount Lebanon (BML).<sup>4</sup> Out of the people that have been displaced, **59%** are Syrian and **22%** Lebanese.

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<sup>3</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), 18 October 2024. Lebanon Crisis: Rapid Needs Assessment - Key Findings #4. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-rapid-needs-assessment-key-findings-4-18-october-2024>

<sup>4</sup> As of 17 October, the NRC's assessments involved 1,892 displaced families, comprising 8,877 individuals. While the sample size is larger than the one in this study and serves as useful comparative data, it is important to note that it remains a qualitative enquiry and cannot be translated to quantitative evidence.

Figure 1. "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



### Priority needs

When asked about what the main need was right now using a multiple-answer format, people that have been displaced predominantly answered food and water access (**55%**, n=349), followed by shelter (**32%**), medical health services (**24%**), and clothes (**22%**). For the respondents that were not displaced, their priority needs were updates and food and water distribution services in their area (**37%**, n=269).

Figure 2. "We would like to know: what are you in need of the most at the moment?." - Multiple answers - if indicated an area of displacement to "We would like to know where you have been displaced to"

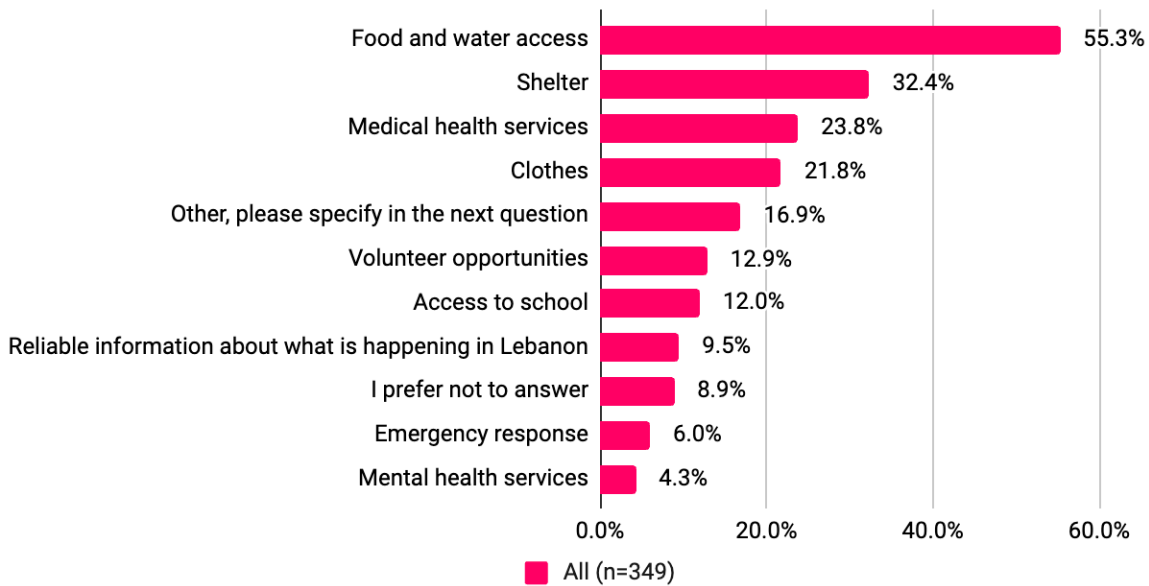
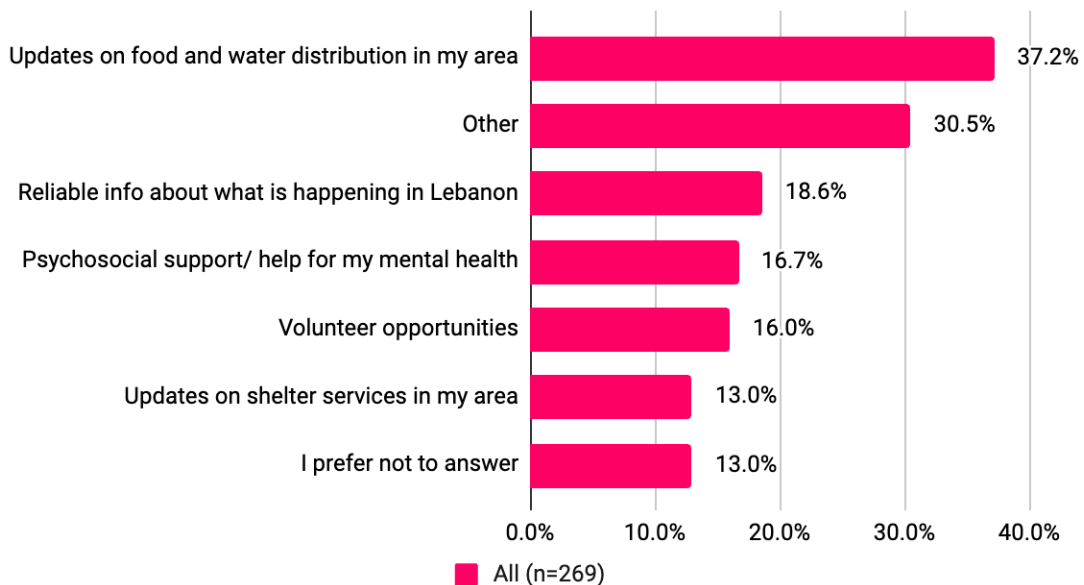


Figure 3. "We would like to know what your priority needs are at the moment to see how we can help best." - Multiple answers - if not displaced - all respondents



For both groups of displaced and non-displaced people, housing and employment, intrinsically tied to money and the unaffordable price of rent, as well as help with resettlement or leaving the country were the most mentioned by the respondents who described other priority needs during the conversation via open answers.

*" I need financial support because I am currently out of work and do not have the money to pay the house rent and meet my family's food needs." - Syrian male living in Bekaa*

*"Leaving Lebanon to a third country to live in safety. We are terribly tired because we have lived in war since 2011 until now." - male living in Beirut*

Following this, a lot of the open answers also included the urgent need for food and medical assistance, which were also listed as options in the previous question.

*"I have two children who are hearing-impaired, and I am the sole breadwinner for my family. I have reached a point where I am no longer able to afford their medicines, treatment, and the exorbitant expenses of house rent, electricity, and the like. I cannot return to Syria, no matter what happens, and staying in Lebanon is impossible. " - Syrian male living in Beirut*

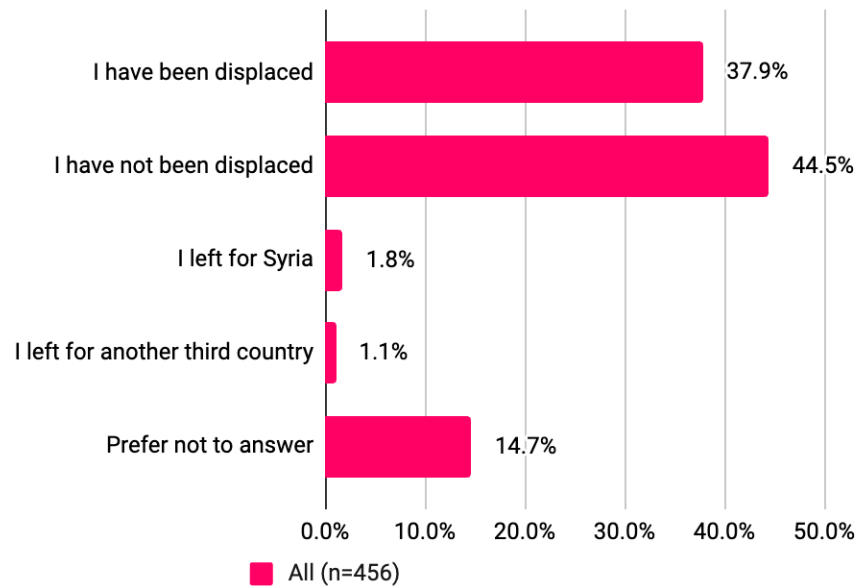
*"In the event of displacement, there is an urgent need to provide money first to provide housing, and if you are displaced when your relatives take the money, the most important thing in this ordeal is to provide basic materials, food, and personal hygiene." - Lebanese female displaced to Bekaa*

## Conversation 2 - informational needs

### *Displacement status*

In this conversation, **38%** (n=456) of respondents indicated to have been displaced, although **15%** preferred not to answer the question, which is two times more than conversation 1 (**7%**, n=587). Among those displaced, **55%** are Syrian and **21%** Lebanese, a similar distribution as conversation 1.

Figure 4. "We would like to ask again about your displacement status." - Single answer - All respondents



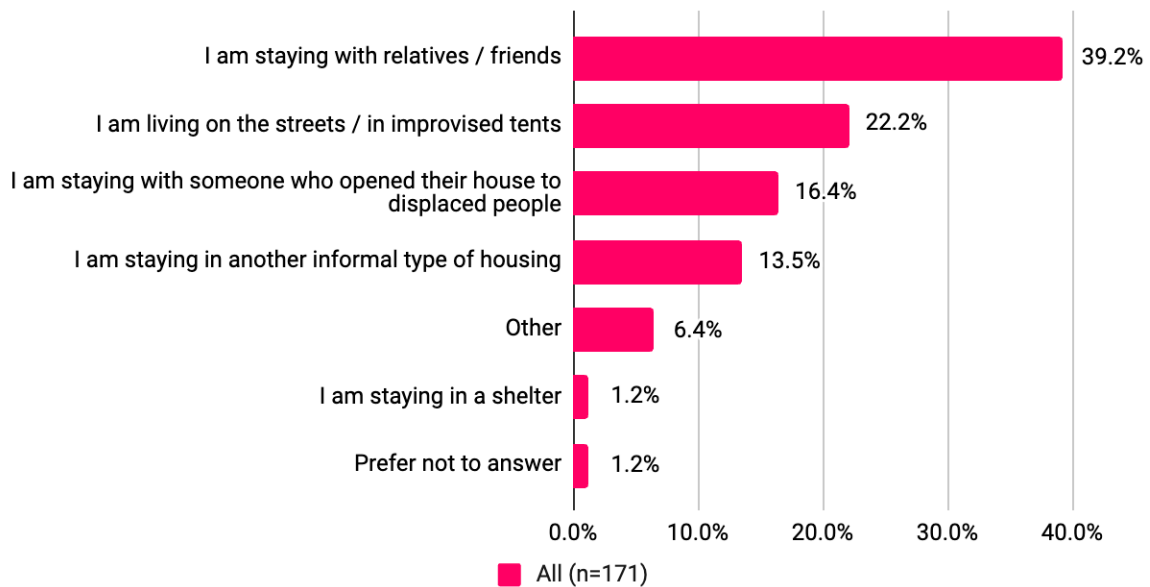
### Type of shelter

Displacement patterns reveal that many individuals are relying on informal arrangements for shelter. A substantial **39%** (n=559) are staying with relatives or friends, while still more than one-fifth (**22%**) find themselves on the streets or in tents. Another **17%** are accommodated in private homes, and **13%** are living in other types of informal housing. Notably, only **1%** of respondents reported staying in formal shelters, indicating a significant gap in support for those displaced, as recent UN data simultaneously reported that most official shelters around the country are full.<sup>5</sup> The findings highlight the lack of responsiveness from formal structures, while a strong presence of local support systems exists.

<sup>5</sup> Reuters, 4 October 2024. *Most of Lebanon's displacement shelters are full, UN says*. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/most-lebanons-displacement-shelters-are-full-un-says-2024-10-04/>



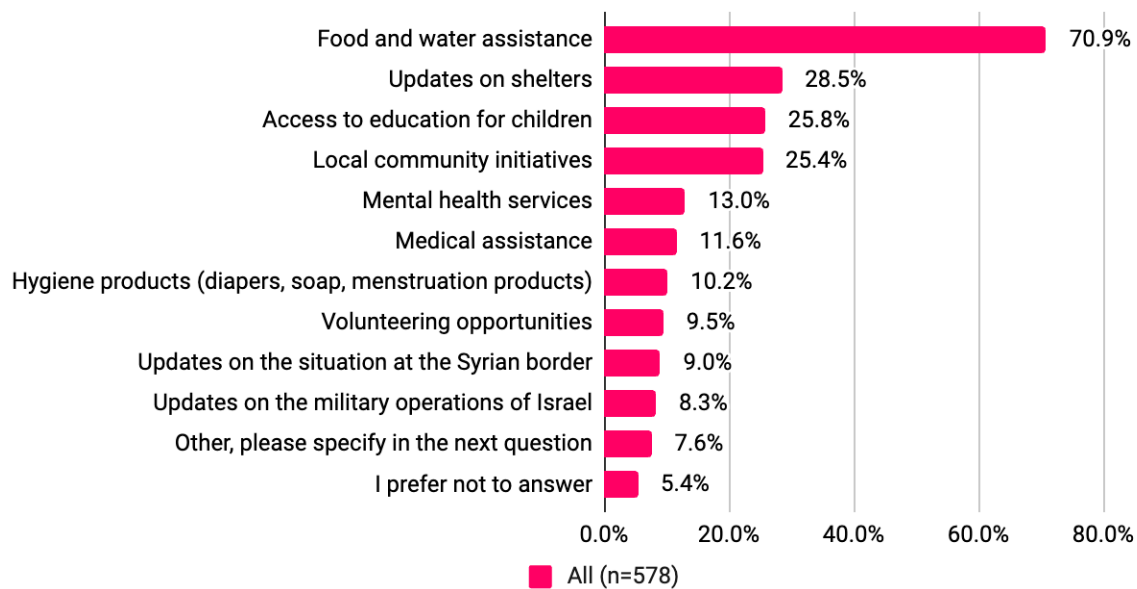
Figure 5. "As you mentioned you have been displaced, we would like to know where you now find yourself." - Single answer - if "I have been displaced" to "Could you share with us whether you have been displaced due to the Israeli attacks"



### Informational needs

Data from our latest and still ongoing conversation with Lebanese and Syrian communities on the ground reveals that a large majority of displaced individuals prioritize information about food and water assistance, with **71%** (n=559) of respondents identifying this as their primary need. Additionally, access to education for children is a critical concern for **28%** of those surveyed, highlighting the impact of displacement on the younger population both for children who have been displaced but also for the general youth as many schools have been shut down to be able to serve as shelters. Medical assistance and hygiene products are also essential, each needed by **26%** of respondents, underscoring the overall health and well-being challenges faced by displaced families. Only **12%** of respondents selected updates on shelters, which contrasts with conversation 1 where **22.5%** desired to know about available shelters.

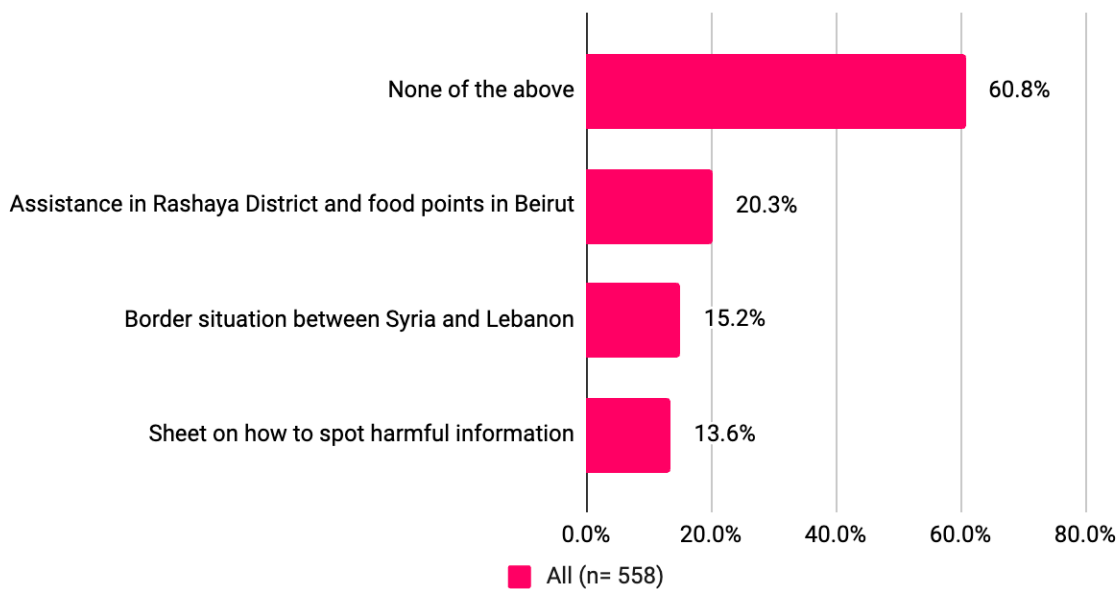
Figure 6. "what type of information or services you would like to get updates on" - Multiple answers - to all respondents



### Information shared

As part of our information-sharing feature, we offered participants the option to choose from three different information messages. They could decide to skip all of them if none were relevant to their situation or see as many as applied. Out of all respondents that answered (n=540), **21%** selected the information sheet about food services in Beirut and general assistance in the Rashaya district. **15%** wanted to know about the border situation between Lebanon and Syria. **13%** were interested in learning about how to spot harmful information.

Figure 7. "You can choose here which information sheet you would like to see." - Multiple answers - All respondents



**It is important to note that 61% chose none of the above information messages**, which is reflective of the priority informational needs respondents had previously mentioned in the conversation. Emphasis should be placed for future messages on food and water services in other regions, as well as access to education, hygiene products, and medical services.

## Conclusion

While Beirut and Bekaa remain the main areas hosting displaced people, the displacement patterns of respondents highlight a heavy reliance on informal housing, whether through private persons or friends and family, as well as a notable part of the displaced population living on the streets.

Many of the housing challenges exposed are deeply intertwined with financial constraints, the burdens of unaffordable rent, and unemployment. The expressed desire to resettle, move to a third country, or seek funding to self-plan their departure highlights the uncertainty of the situation. As informal networks have emerged as more responsive and effective in providing assistance for shelter and housing, it showcases the important role of community initiatives. With a considerable group still living under precarious conditions and formal support channels appearing insufficient, such a disparity suggests a need for a reevaluation of how support systems are structured, underscoring the urgent need for more action from institutional actors.

Regarding informational needs, updates on regional food and water services remain the most urgent priority for all respondents, taking into consideration the regional displacement distribution, a priority action should be to share accurate and timely information about local initiatives across the country. Secondly, updates on where to find medical services and what type of treatments are available should be prioritized, as it was mentioned through both conversations as an important priority. Lastly, the second conversation stresses the need for more information about schools available or educational initiatives.