“Save what remains of Gaza.”

Community perspectives on aid, survival and humanity during the genocide.

Gaza, occupied Palestinian territory | September 2025



GROUND TRUTH SOLUTIONS

AWRAD أوراد
مركز العالم العربي للبحوث والتنمية
Arab World for Research & Development

Our life is hell • Our life is torture • Protect us from death • Our children are looking for bread and they can't find any • There is no life in Gaza in any form • Enough silence, enough inaction, end the war, enough death, destruction and genocide • We are not treated as human beings • We do not ask the impossible from you, just be with us and stop the genocide • We are living a war of extermination, hunger and lack of the most basic necessities of life • The most important thing is to stop the war • If you lived in our place for one hour, you would not be able to bear what we lived • We live a life devoid of all the necessities of life • End the war • We are suffering from great injustice, our situation is very dangerous and no one feels for us • We want to live like everyone else • We are living a catastrophe in every sense of the word, a deprivation of all our rights and freedoms, and genocide • We live a life of terror, fear, depression and anxiety • Ceasefire in Gaza • I am dead and I am alive • We never live, we just wait for death every day • No matter how much we describe to them the extent of the fatigue and suffering, we will not be able to describe it properly • Gaza has become a pile of ashes • We are a people who love peace and want to live in dignity • The suffering is intense, the heat, the tents, the humiliation, and the lack of food • We did not choose war, it was imposed on us • We are living, but we are passing the time, waiting to die because there is no security for us or our children • We are tired, but we are just living in anxiety and fear • Protect Palestine • Abide by international law • We don't want anything else but for them to stop the war • Stop the war, open the crossings, let aid in to all the people • The whole world must stand up against the occupation and stop the war • End the humiliation • Do you want to stop the war or not? • There is no security and we cannot be safe as long as the war continues • I could be in my tent and a shrapnel would come and kill me • There is no safety, not even a second, even in a dream there is no safety • There is no guarantee of life anywhere in Gaza • We want to live a decent life and we don't want to leave • We suffer in all aspects of life and live each day hoping that the war will stop • People suffer from the loss of their dignity on a daily basis, and this war deprives us of the most basic rights • Enough bloodshed • We are not numbers • Our children are in danger and hunger is eating our children away • I don't want to know anything, I just want the war to stop • How long will the genocide continue? • We live a life of death and terror • We want to live in safety and return to our homes • We ask the world to hear our voice and end the war • We live in constant humiliation • We had ambitions and dreams • We want to live with dignity like the rest of the world • We live in fear every day of losing our children, and we cannot protect them • You either die from missiles or you die because there are no hospitals or treatments • Every honest, free person must stand with the people of Gaza • We are living the worst days of our lives • Have mercy on us, we are tired, give us some breathing space • If there is life, there is hope • **On this land there is something worth living for, save what remains of Gaza.**

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Thank you in advance to the international community, for listening.

This report was co-written by Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) and Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD).

Who we are

Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) is an international, non-governmental organisation dedicated to ensuring the priorities of people affected by crisis are systematically considered in humanitarian action and other global support systems, from individual responses to system-wide reform. Evidence and ideas gathered through rigorous research and inclusive dialogue enable crisis-affected communities to actively shape the decisions that impact their lives. Headquartered in Austria, GTS works globally as an independent advocate, collaborating closely with local partners who share our vision.

Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) is a pioneering research, consulting and development firm. Based in Palestine, AWRAD is one of the Arab region's leading firms, providing partners with a full range of consulting and technical services for sustainable development and institution building. With a diverse and dynamic team – including expertise in research, economic and institutional development, gender studies, monitoring and evaluation including third-party monitoring – AWRAD offers research, technical assistance and data collection and analysis across a diverse range of technical areas.

To find out more about our work in Palestine please contact Samer Said awrad@awrad.org or Pamela Saab pamela@groundtruthsolutions.org

Introduction

Nine months into 2025, Israel continues its relentless assault on the people of Gaza. Levelling entire neighbourhoods, violently killing children, women and men, and depriving a population of its basic rights and needs. For almost two years, people besieged and under occupation in the Gaza strip have endured relentless bombardment, numerous displacement orders, short-lived ceasefires, a total blockade,[1] the collapse of essential sectors, countless human rights violations, the establishment of dangerous militarised aid distributions,[2] and a food system pushed to collapse.[3]

The strip is facing one of the most destructive and prolonged military assaults in modern history.[4] The territory is recognised as one of the deadliest places for humanitarian workers and journalists.[5] Over 65,000 Palestinian people, 543 humanitarian workers and 247 journalists have been killed.[6] In September 2025, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory confirmed that Israel has committed genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.[7]

As a result of months of blockade, catastrophic shortages of food have created a hunger crisis. The known number of people harmed while trying to access aid supplies has increased to more than 2,500 fatalities and more than 18,000 injuries, and as of 19 September, at least 400 malnutrition-related deaths have been recorded, including 143 children.[8] In August 2025, the Famine Review Committee determined the Famine (IPC Phase 5) is occurring in Gaza City, and with the same threshold likely to be crossed in Deir al-Balah and Khan Yunis Governorates in the coming weeks. They declared that **"this Famine is entirely man-made, (...) starvation is present and is rapidly spreading."**[9]

Humanitarian actors trying to deliver life-saving aid in the Gaza Strip face impossible conditions while they try to respond to ever-growing needs. Delays and impediments to the delivery of aid continue with only around 50% of planned aid missions permitted by the Israeli authorities, taking hours to complete on roads that are often dangerous or congested.[10]

In the face of the genocide, civil-society-led global solidarity movements have served to raise awareness of the territory's ongoing occupation, illegal under international law, and human rights abuses. More than 40,000 protests and events have been held across Europe alone since October 7, 2023.[11]

Widespread trauma, material devastation and acute shortages of food and other essentials have created an existential crisis for Gaza's population, marked by pervasive despair alongside a relentless determination to survive.[12]

Our study

Since late 2023, Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) and Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) have been speaking to people in Gaza to find out what they want from the international community, and what humanitarian aid looks like from their perspective. At the end of 2023, (published January 2024), this work took place before any other large-scale quantitative analysis of the humanitarian response, driven by the ambition to give communities space to share and record their views. In August 2024 we continued, exploring how mutual aid was functioning, what resources were available for communities in crisis and how these lifelines could be better supported. These reports have been used across the world for humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy, as well as by actors looking to better support community-led responses.

1 Norwegian Refugee Council. August 2025. "Gaza joint statement: Israel threatens to ban major aid organisations as starvation deepens."
2 Médecins Sans Frontières. August 2025. "This is not aid. This is orchestrated killing."
3 The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). August 2025. "Famine Review Committee: Gaza Strip, August 2025."
4 Science Direct. August 2025. "Voices from Gaza: Coping strategies during the war on the Gaza Strip- A qualitative study."
5 ACLED. September 2025. "Middle East Overview: September 2025."
6 UNOCHA. September 2025. "Humanitarian Situation Update #323 | Gaza Strip."
7 UN Office of the Hich Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). September 2025. "Israel has committed genocide in the Gaza Strip, UN Commission finds."
8 UNOCHA. September 2025. "Humanitarian Situation Update #323 | Gaza Strip."
9 The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). August 2025. "Famine Review Committee: Gaza Strip, August 2025."
10 UNOCHA. September 2025. "Humanitarian Situation Update #323 | Gaza Strip."
11 Middle East Monitor. August 2025. "Report: 42,000 pro-Palestine protests, events held in Europe since Gaza war."
12 Cambridge University Press. February 2025. "War-related trauma in narratives of Gazans: challenges, difficulties and survival coping."

Our work has focused on giving space to communities to share their views since October 2023. Little information is coming out of Gaza, as local journalists are targeted and killed and foreign observers mostly blocked from entering. With access to Gaza severely restricted by Israel, more acutely so in more recent months, humanitarian research has been limited mostly to needs assessment and monitoring activities. With formal governance structures largely non-functional and Israeli displacement orders now covering around 93% of the strip,[13] listening to people's perceptions in the remaining accessible governorates is more urgent than ever.

This third report contains insights generously shared by 700 people in the Gaza Strip between August 16 and 26, 2025, via face-to-face surveys and in-depth conversations, and 12 interviews with key informants and diary keepers. It aims to understand how Palestinians in Gaza are surviving – practically, socially, and emotionally – in a context of war, blockade and bombardment, by looking at their current coping mechanisms and priorities for recovery, as well as their access to aid systems. Through this work, we aim to elevate Palestinian voices, priorities, and realities to inspire and inform global action.

About the process

This third round of data collection started soon after the Israeli cabinet approved plans to take control of Gaza City,[14] the targeted assassination of Al-Jazeera staff in Gaza,[15] and the targeting of emergency aid workers trying to help people in Gaza City.[16] Over the course of the data collection, besides repeated assaults and continuous violations of international humanitarian law, Israel intensified attacks on Gaza City forcing people to flee,[17] while chaotic airdrops resulted in deaths.[18]

"I was in [an area] and an airdropped pallet of aid fell without a parachute, landing nearby and injuring many people." – Researcher in Khan Yunis

The research took place under dangerous conditions, in an environment where no place is safe, during the hottest days of summer, with limited transport options and few chances to charge devices.

The research team – themselves affected by war, bombardment and displacement – spent long hours reaching sites, often walking through rubble and overcrowded areas. The scarcity of resources made it hard to reach participants as they were often out of their homes looking for food, water, and other survival needs. Some interviews took place often in small and overcrowded tents – serving as bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom for entire families. Besides harsh physical challenges for data collection, the AWRAD research team in Gaza also told us that the emotional toll of data collection was heavy and "one of the greatest challenges they had to overcome."

"When asked how many family members they were before and after October 7, an elderly man said he had lost his loving son who used to care for him – his provider and support. He broke down crying, and I cried with him." – Researcher in Deir al Balah

Despite these extreme conditions, the team felt the value and urgency of this research made gathering this data essential. Alongside rigorous risk assessment combined with close monitoring of the evolving reality on the ground, the team remained dedicated to collecting data to high standards of sampling, interviewing, and data management – enabling us to present robust evidence of what it is like to live in Gaza. All research activities were carried out with strong ethical safeguards to protect both researchers and respondents, ensuring dignity, confidentiality, and safety. It is now up to everyone to listen.

Who we talked to

We surveyed 700 people face-to-face, and spoke with 12 people via in-depth interviews and diary keeping.

Quantitative sample:

Gender

- **52%** women (363)
- **48%** men (337)

Age

- **25%** 18–30 years old (177)
- **49%** 31–50 years old (345)
- **26%** 51+ years old (178)

Forcibly displaced since 7 Oct 23

- **96%** displaced (673)
- **4%** non-displaced (27)

Number of times displaced

- **23%** displaced 1–3 times (164)
- **40%** displaced 4–6 times (277)
- **33%** displaced 7+ times (227)

Current location

- **42%** Deir Al Balah (291)
- **40%** Khan Yunis (282)
- **18%** Gaza City (127)

Origin of the displaced

- **29%** Khan Yunis (204)
- **22%** Gaza City (153)
- **17%** Rafah (119)
- **16%** North Gaza (114)
- **16%** Deir Al Balah (110)

Type of current residence

- **41%** organised tented site (290)
- **27%** groupings of scattered tents (188)
- **18%** Undestroyed or damaged private house or apartment (125)
- **14%** building serving as an organised shelter managed by UNRWA or other actors (97)

[13] UNOCHA. Sepatember 2025. "Israeli military displacement orders."
[14] Reuters. August 2025. "Israel's security cabinet approves plan to take control of Gaza City."
[15] Al Jazeera. August 2025. "Al Jazeera condemns killing of its journalists by Israeli forces in Gaza."
[16] Al Jazeera. August 2025. "Israel targets emergency workers trying to help people trapped in Gaza City."
[17] Al Jazeera. August 2025. "Israel intensifies Gaza City attacks, forcing starving Palestinians to flee."
[18] Al Jazeera. August 2025. "Palestinian boy killed in Gaza aid drop as starvation toll rises to 217."

Key findings

Nowhere is safe

Almost nobody we spoke with in Gaza feels safe in their day-to-day life (94% reported feeling unsafe). The vast majority described their primary "safety strategy" not as proactive coping, but as a desperate response to survival pressures, evacuation orders, and repeated relocations from one displacement site to another. Sixty-four percent said they had moved in search of a "safer" place within Gaza, while one in three (33%) reported being displaced more than 7 times since October 2023. Alarmingly, 26% said they had no reliable strategy at all to ensure their family's safety.

"There is no guarantee of life anywhere in Gaza."

When asked about their greatest concerns, the findings reveal a stark reality: people in Gaza are focused less on adaptation and more on day-to-day decisions related to the immediate survival of themselves and their loved ones. Eighty percent cited death or the loss of a loved one as their biggest fear; 49% worried about running out of life-sustaining supplies; 42% feared the permanent loss of their homeland; 39% feared injury or personal safety risks; and 35% expressed deep concern over the loss of future prospects.

Acute shortages are having horrific impacts

Almost everyone we spoke to self-reported weight loss since October 7th, with 23% of people saying they had lost a quarter of their bodyweight or more. Everyone we spoke with has reduced the quality of the food they are consuming (100%), rationed meal sizes for themselves and their families (99%), postponed showering or cleaning due to the lack of water and/or cleaning supplies (89%), and an alarming majority drank unhealthy or polluted water (76%). Almost half of the people we spoke with told us they had to send their children to work and/or look for food (43%). Everyone we spoke to stated that water (100%), food (100%), and their own and their family's safety and security (100%) are their most urgent priorities.

Mutual aid and community solidarity are under severe strain

The overwhelming majority of people say that their ability to support their own community has decreased (90%). Most people we spoke with told us that they had either offered or received water, food, and medicine and/or first aid, among other forms of mutual aid with their community. The majority (59%) say that relationships within the community have worsened in the last 12 months, which people attribute to individuals being forced to prioritise their own survival (30%), and to the limited resources available to help each other (24%).

Aid distributions are dangerous: people face impossible choices between hunger and harm

Almost two-thirds (63%) of people we spoke with told us that them or someone in their household had faced danger and/or harm while trying to get aid in the last three months. The majority (77%) reported that theft is the main barrier to accessing aid, while 54% reported risks of violence at distribution sites among their biggest barriers.

Data collection took place shortly after some limited aid had been allowed back into the Gaza Strip. An alarming 30% of people say they have not received any assistance at all in the last three months. Of those who had received aid, people tell us that they have received the most aid from UN agencies (35%), INGOs (22%), and national actors (17%). Half of the people (51%) we spoke with reported having received assistance related to water, sanitation and hygiene, less than half (45%) have received food, a third (31%) received healthcare, first aid, and/or medicine, and 12% said they had received cash assistance. Many of those who have received aid say it helped them to meet immediate priorities (66%).

People struggle to access trusted information to support life-or-death decisions

Trust in the information people access is low. Humanitarian actors and the UN (31%), family and friends (31%), and local journalists (14%) are the most trusted sources of information amongst people we spoke with about access to aid and services. Twelve percent do not trust any sources with any information. With formal systems collapsing, people rely heavily on word of mouth (63%), messaging applications (42%) and social media (30%) to access information about access to aid.

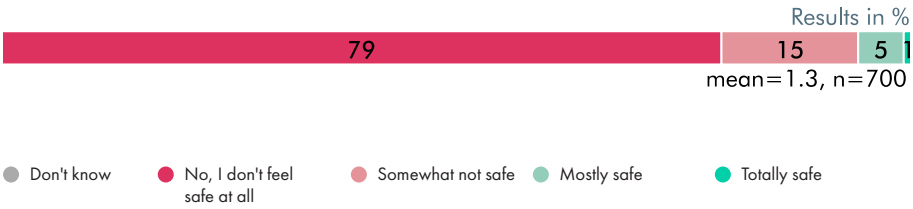
Surviving where nowhere is safe

Gaza is now the most dangerous and violent place in the world.[19] Twenty-three months after the commencement of the latest attacks on Gaza, people have suffered through on average 700 explosions a month.[20]

> “It’s not really adaptation – it’s survival by force. Life, and conditions were imposed on us, but we have no choice
>
> *Man in Deir al Balah*

Figure 1:

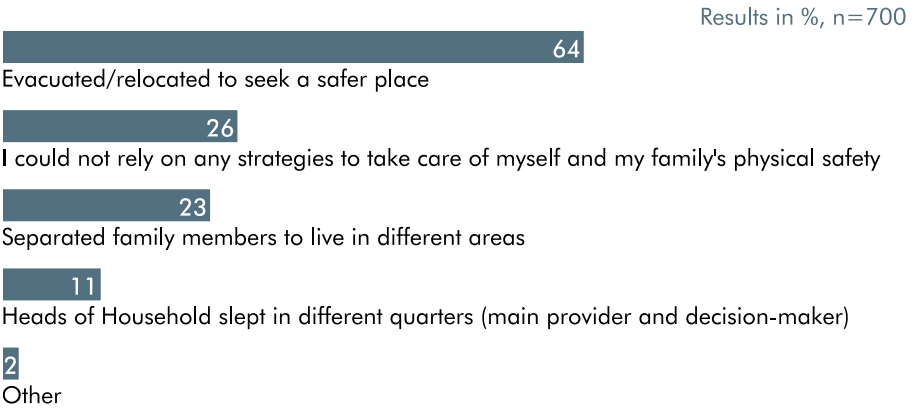
How safe do you feel in your day-to-day life?



Almost nobody we spoke with in Gaza feels safe in their day-to-day life. People are in a constant state of fight or flight, with 32% of people we spoke with being displaced more than 7 times since October 2023, not knowing where to go, in a place where nowhere is safe.[21]

Figure 2:

During the past three months, have you used any of the following methods to take care of yourself and your family’s physical safety?



Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

To cope with high levels of physical insecurity, the majority of people we spoke with (64%) indicate that they have evacuated or relocated to seek a “safer” place in Gaza. Almost one in four families had split up across different areas as a survival tactic. An alarming 26% told us that they have not been able to rely on any strategies to ensure their and their family’s safety at all.

Amongst the non-displaced people we spoke with, almost half (44%) reported not having any ways to take of themselves and their families’ physical safety,

[19] ACLED. Access September 2025. “Conflict index.”
[20] ACLED. September 2025. “CAST Monthly Report: September 2025.”
[21] United Nations. August 2025. “UNRWA Commissioner General on Gaza: No place is safe in Gaza. No one is safe.”

in comparison with displaced individuals currently staying in shelters, in tented settlements and in groupings of scattered tents (25%, 22%, and 20% respectively).

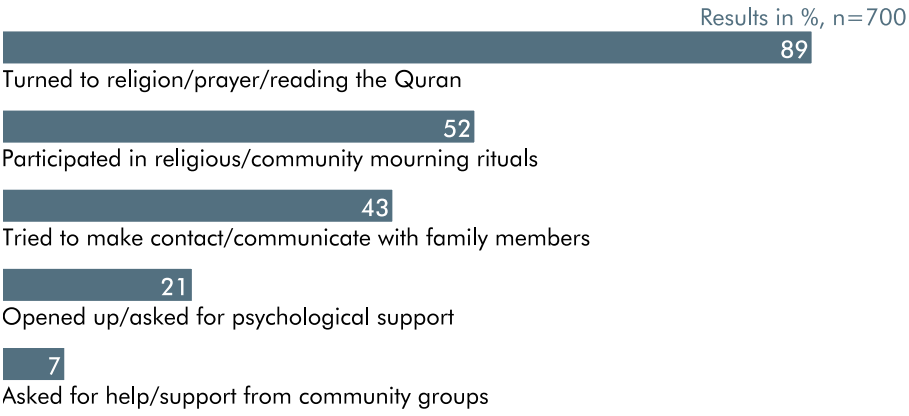
Some people told us they could not evacuate either because of high costs of displacement or due to the presence of a person with limited mobility in their household. In a recent update from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) partners estimate that the cost of transport for those considering moving or relocate within a governorate is of 950 NIS (≈ 240 EUR) and up to 4,000 NIS (≈ 1,015 EUR) between governorates. These costs are even higher at 1,330 NIS (≈ 337 EUR) for transport within a governorate or 5,600 NIS (≈ 1,420 EUR) between governorates for families with disabilities or older persons.[22]

People we spoke to in interviews stressed that every new displacement brings physical and emotional costs, draining families of their limited resources. Every new displacement means finding a place to stay – on average limited to 0.5 square meters per person,[23] securing expensive transport or going long distances by foot,[24] and rebuilding a life in a fragile and new environment, which few can afford.

When asked what makes them feel unsafe, people spoke of the toll of war and bombing. One woman in Khan Yunis told us: **"There is no security, and we cannot be safe as long as the war continues."** For another woman in Gaza City: **"There is no guarantee of life anywhere in Gaza."** A very small number of people (6%) told us they feel safe in their day-to-day life, primarily attributing this feeling to "**having [their] family around,**" as a woman in Khan Yunis told us.

Figure 3:

During the past three months, have you used any of these coping mechanisms?



Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

In a place where **"there is no safety, not even a second, not even in a dream,"** a study conducted among Palestinian healthcare workers who continue to deliver critical medical and emotional support in Gaza reveals that despite profound personal losses, faith-based practices were a form of emotional survival and key to sustaining emotional endurance.[25]

While Israeli forces continue to systematically destroy religious sites,[26] people we spoke with tell us that they turn primarily to faith (89%) to take care of themselves. Over half (52%) of people we spoke with indicated participating in religious and/or community mourning rituals.

Amidst catastrophic levels of destruction, many people sustained their interpersonal bonds, not only to reinforce their emotional security but also as a practical survival function.[27] But relationships are under strain – less than half (43%) of people we spoke with tried to make contact or communicate with their family members, less than

> We pay heavy costs with every displacement. The last time we left without taking any of our belongings.
>
> *Woman in Deir al Balah*

> Displacement worsened things since everything – water, firewood, food – must be bought, but I have no money.
>
> *Man in Deir al Balah*

> Right now, we are displaced and do not even have money to move to so-called 'safe zones.'
>
> *Woman in Gaza City*

> We sit with our hands on our hearts. Who was bombed? Who died? Where did the missile land?
>
> *Woman in Khan Yunis*

[22] UNOCHA. September 2025. "Humanitarian Situation Update #321 | Gaza Strip."
[23] Site Management Cluster oPt. September 2025. "Statement On Escalating Forced Displacement in Gaza."
[24] UNOCHA. September 2025. "Humanitarian Situation Update #321 | Gaza Strip."
[25] Science Direct. August 2025. "Voices from Gaza: Coping strategies during the war on the Gaza Strip- A qualitative study."
[26] Palestine Chronicle. February 2025. "Religious Sites in Ruins: Israeli Forces Destroy 79% of Gaza Mosques, 3 Churches."
[27] Science Direct. August 2025. "Voices from Gaza: Coping strategies during the war on the Gaza Strip- A qualitative study."

a quarter (21%) opened up or asked for psychological support and even fewer (7%) have asked for help and/or support from community groups.

Diaries from a genocide

Zaher[28] is a 43-year-old doctor who used to live in a displacement camp with his wife and their children. With his family, he managed to return back to his family home in Khan Yunis. In his diary, Zaher describes his family's life in the camp and their journey returning to their home.

One day in the camp, after lunch and before prayer, **"the army launched heavy gunfire toward our area. They fired 8 shells, and the bullets passed over our heads. We all lay flat on the ground for more than 10 minutes. Several people were injured and were taken by ambulance to the hospital."**

Soon after Zaher and his family learnt that their family home has been covered by an "expanded humanitarian area," they decided to return. Zaher's impressions as he returned to his former home were **"catastrophic: rubble in the streets."** Once they entered **"the house was very dirty and full of insects because we had left it for more than two months."**

"We were extremely tired from cleaning the house and struggled to get water because the area still had no water supply. After finishing the cleaning and moving and arranging the belongings, it was already late, and we decided to go to sleep, but we could not sleep because of the large number of mosquitoes and insects."

"I am happy because my area has become safe – at least temporarily – since the upcoming military operation will be in Gaza City and not here in the south. But expanding the safe area here means new displacement in the north and new suffering for the people."

At work in the hospital, Zaher and his colleagues were dealing with a constant stream of wounded people, including many injured trying to get aid at distribution points. Most of the cases were critical.

"It is very difficult for us to live this life. We try to cope, but the war makes life so much harder. The insects and mosquitoes prevent us from sleeping, and the sounds of bombing and explosions continue all night. I wish for the war to end so that security and peace may return."

"The daily routine is very boring. Every day we do the same things; nothing new – just waiting for joy, waiting for the war to end, while living the same routine and the same challenges that are very difficult to overcome."

[28] The name of the diary keeper was replaced to safeguard their anonymity.

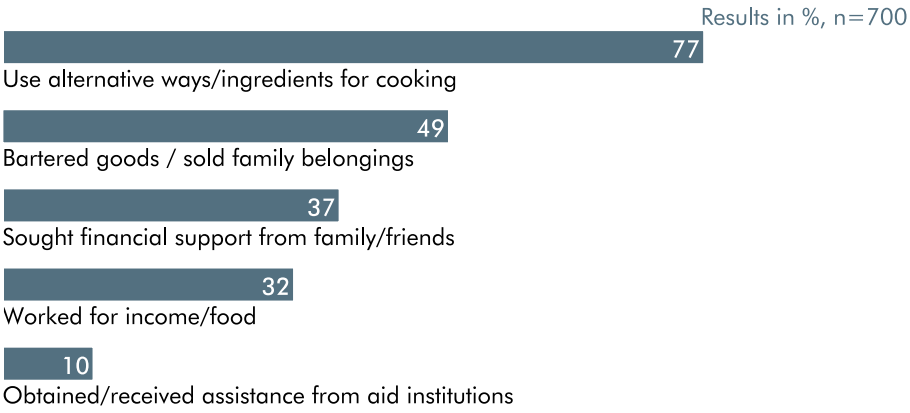
An impossible reality

Israel has long controlled and restricted what comes in and out of Gaza. Since October 7, aid and supplies have been blocked from entering to various degrees until very little was available, and a total blockade was imposed between March and July 2025. Coping is a balancing act. Everyone we spoke with in Gaza mentioned relying on a mosaic of survival strategies to take care of themselves and their family's physical safety, financial needs, and faith and mental health.

In the Gaza strip, a context of prolonged siege, war and blockade, where individuals are subjected to structural violence, people adopt multiple coping strategies, both to ensure their survival and to endure the extreme conditions of war and humanitarian collapse.[29]

Figure 4:

During the past three months, have you used any of the following methods to meet your family's financial needs?



Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

To meet financial needs, the majority of people we spoke with (77%) reported using alternative methods and ingredients for cooking, almost half (49%) have bartered their goods or sold their family belongings, some (37%) have sought financial support from others, and less (32%) have managed to work for food and/or income. Only 10% of people we spoke with report having received financial assistance from aid institutions. These results show fewer options for financial support since our last research[30] as Palestinians in Gaza are now surviving on the last of their resources.[31]

The closure of the crossings and the near-total imposed blockade have now made coping almost impossible. People told us that even if they had some financial resources to support themselves, soaring prices and merchants monopolising goods mean money doesn't go far at all.[32]

> For me, coping is not possible. What I'm living is just surrendering to reality. At first, it was very hard to adapt, but eventually I just gave in.
>
> *Woman in Gaza City*

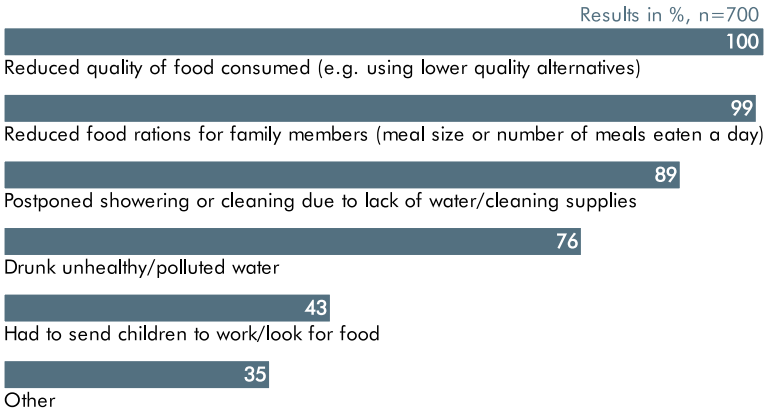
> I never imagined in my worst nightmares that we would buy sugar by the spoonful.
>
> *Woman in Deir Al Balah*

> Recently, some goods have entered Gaza, but at extremely high prices. With no income and destroyed infrastructure, rich and poor now face the same level of need.
>
> *Community volunteer in Deir Al Balah*

[29] Science Direct. August 2025. "Voices from Gaza: Coping strategies during the war on the Gaza Strip- A qualitative study."
[30] Ground Truth Solutions. August 2024. "'We do not want aid from the world. We want to stop the war.' Community priorities and perceptions of aid and support in Gaza."
[31] Global Protection Cluster. August 2025. "Gaza Protection Cluster Snapshot: Protection monitoring."
[32] Al Jazeera. August 2025. "Palestinians won't tolerate war profiteering in Gaza."

Figure 5:

Please tell me if you or your family have used this coping method in the last three months.?



Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

The worst-case scenario is unfolding in the strip. To survive in famine conditions, with access to all basic services severely constrained, people have been forced to take drastic measures. Everyone we spoke with has reduced the quality of the food they are consuming (100%) and are rationing meal sizes for themselves and their families (99%). Nine in ten are postponing showering or cleaning due to the lack of water and/or cleaning supplies (89%). An alarming majority have reported drinking unhealthy or polluted water (76%), and almost half of the people we spoke with told us they had to send their children to work and/or look for food (43%).

Children in Gaza are at the heart of their families' sacrifices and coping strategies, yet they also face a heavy burden: since last year,[33] more people told us that they had to send their children to work and/or look for food (43% in comparison with 13% of people who reported having to send their children to work in 2024).

When asked about other ways they have been coping, many told us that they have also relied on alternative ways of doing some of their essential household chores such as cooking and cleaning. People light fires using anything they can find such as wood and nylon from bombed areas, garbage from the streets and even their clothes, and sometimes having to light them in their tents. Others have turned to washing their utensils and dishes using sand.

With over 65% of health points destroyed[34] in Gaza, and due to critical shortages of medications in the strip, people struggle to meet their and their family's medical needs. Some mentioned that they have turned to **"using oils and herbs"** for treatment instead of medicines. One woman in Deir Al Balah told us that at the beginning of the war when she was working with a local organisation **"women approached [her] for menstrual suppression pills due to shortages of sanitary pads, poor restroom facilities, and lack of privacy during displacement."**

We are trying to gather information on the scale of the famine in the Gaza Strip. We would like to ask you about weight loss – your answer to this question is completely voluntary, you may choose not to answer if you feel comfortable sharing this information.

> We are living a war of extermination, hunger and lack of the most basic necessities of life.
>
> *Woman in Deir Al Balah*

> Beans and lentils were ground to [substitute for] flour, semolina was mixed with flour to increase the quantity, and tree leaves were eaten as a food substitute during the famine.
>
> *Man in Deir Al Balah*

> We started bathing in sea water, but this has caused us many skin diseases.
>
> *Man in Khan Yunis*

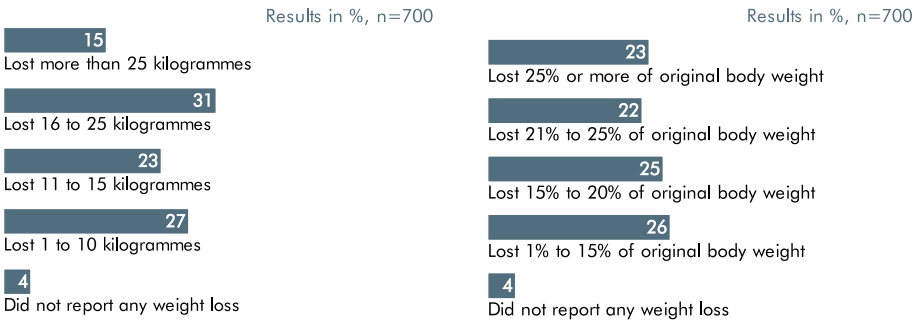
> We live under a cloth, lacking bathroom space. We have been cooking over fire which made us sick, sometimes burning our clothes to light it.
>
> *Woman in Khan Yunis*

[33] Ground Truth Solutions. August 2024. "'We do not want aid from the world. We want to stop the war.' Community priorities and perceptions of aid and support in Gaza."

[34] Health Cluster. Accessed September 2025. "oPt Country Dashboard."

Figure 6:

How much did you weigh before October 7, 2023? How much do you weigh now?

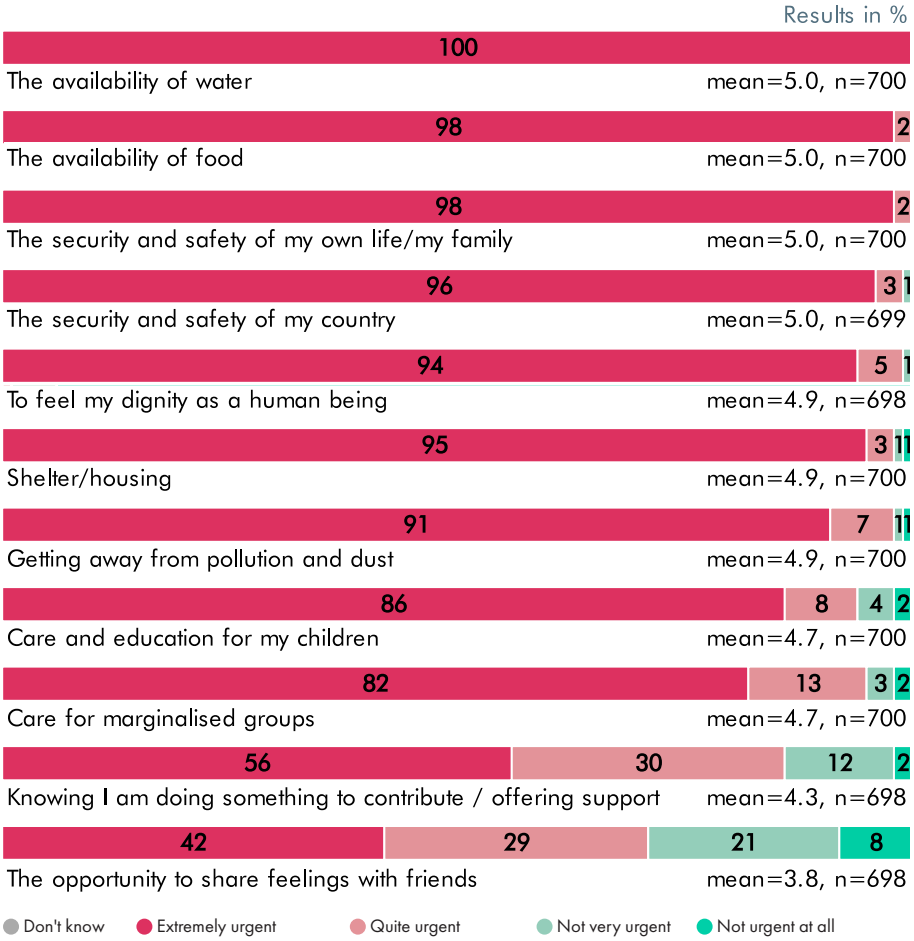


In a context where starvation has been used as a weapon of war,[35] people often speak of their weight loss. As a result, we invited people to self-report how much weight they think they have lost, and 100% of respondents chose to share this information, revealing a determination to voice to the world the impact that starvation and famine conditions are having on their well-being. The results paint a harrowing picture: 96% of people we spoke with say they have lost weight since October 7, 2023, with 23% of people having lost a quarter of their bodyweight or more.[36] Shortly after data collection, the Famine Review Committee (FRC) determined that Famine (IPC Phase 5) is currently occurring in Gaza Governorate, with thresholds likely to be crossed in Deir al-Balah and Khan Yunis Governorates in the coming weeks.[37]

A coordinator for a local organisation in Deir Al Balah told us that **"families are trying to preserve their dignity – by eating one meal a day, dividing bread, and pretending not to like certain foods so children can have enough. I sometimes say I don't like beans so my children can eat them."**

Figure 7:

How urgent are the following priorities for you and your family?



> "[As adults, we are skipping meals] for days to provide for our children who are not familiar with the meaning of hunger.
>
> *Woman in Deir Al Balah*

[35] The Lancet. August 2025. "Break the selective silence on the genocide in Gaza."

[36] Percentage of body weight lost was calculated based on the self-reported weight before October 7, 2023, and their body weight at the time of data collection.

[37] The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). August 2025. "Famine Review Committee: Gaza Strip, August 2025."

People are urgently calling for the same priorities they did a year ago.[38] Everyone we spoke to stated that water (100%), food (100%), and their own and their family's safety and security (100%) are their most urgent priorities.

They desperately call for the safety and security of their country (99%) the need to feel their dignity as human beings (99%), access to housing and shelter (98%), escaping pollution and dust (98%), care for marginalised groups (95%), and care and education for children (94%). Beyond these immediate life-saving needs, priorities are for people to feel they are contributing and/or offering support (86%) and to be able to share their feelings with others (71%).

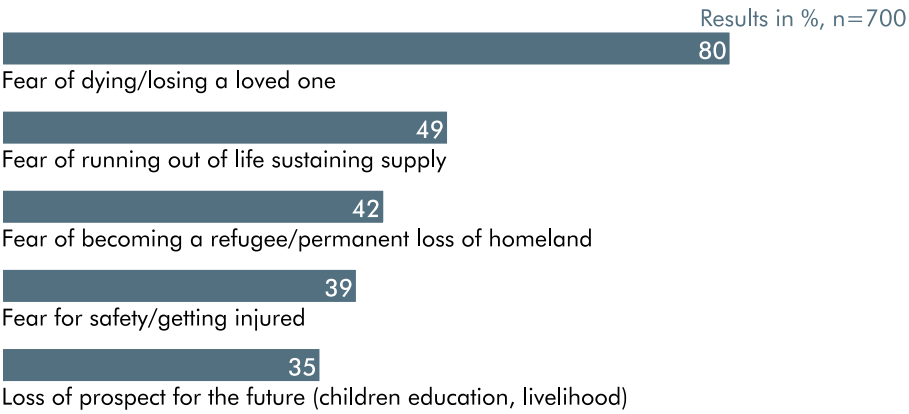
Education and care for children remains a priority for parents in Gaza. In a context of daily survival and constant displacement, and where almost all of the schools are either destroyed or severely damaged,[39] care and education for children remain a priority for almost everyone regardless of their gender, age, and displacement status. A worker at a Palestinian grassroots movement told us **"people still try – first by finding a place in a camp, then looking for ways to educate their children, (...)"**, and another woman in Gaza City told us that they have been supporting people around them by **"teaching some children in the area and helping them with reading and writing."**

Additional priorities raised by people we spoke to include: access to medicine and medical treatment, detergents and cleaning products, personal hygiene items, job opportunities, and opening the crossings.

People also mention the opportunity to travel or migrate. This is a sensitive issue and should be seen in broader context. It is estimated that life expectancy in Gaza has declined by approximately 35 years,[40] people not only risk death from attacks and starvation, but are also exposed to rapidly worsening soil, water and air pollution.[41] And these issues long predate the genocide: a report in 2015 by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development warned that the strip could become "uninhabitable" by 2020.[42] While Palestinians have strong attachment to their land[43] and their homes, they are also the victims of a policy of systemic de-development spanning years.

Figure 8:

What are the biggest concerns for yourself and your family?



Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

When asked about their biggest concerns, most people say they fear dying or losing a loved one (80%). Nearly half worry about running out of food, water, and other life-sustaining supplies (49%). Others fear permanent loss of their homeland (42%), of their safety or getting injured (39%), and of the loss of future prospects (35%).

> We are hungry. We need life. We live without food. We live without dignity.
>
> *Man in Khan Yunis*

[38] Ground Truth Solutions. August 2024. "'We do not want aid from the world. We want to stop the war.' Community priorities and perceptions of aid and support in Gaza."

[39] UN News. September 2025. "Gaza: With a suitcase for a school bag, classrooms have become shelters."

[40] The Lancet. August 2025. "Break the selective silence on the genocide in Gaza."

[41] UN Environment Programme. June 2024. "Damage to Gaza causing new risks to human health and long-term recovery - new UNEP assessment."

[42] United Nations. September 2015. "Gaza could become uninhabitable in less than five years due to ongoing 'de-development'– UN report."

[43] Anera. March 2021. "Palestinian Culture."

Diaries from a genocide

Salam[44] is a 23-year-old single woman living with her widowed mother and her 18-year-old brother. The three were displaced from Khan Yunis to Deir Al Balah about four months ago, following evacuation orders issued by the army.

After a difficult night enduring extreme heat, no electricity, and a powerful explosion shaking the neighborhood, Salam undertook the difficult and dangerous journey to Gaza Beach Camp to visit relatives. She was shocked at the poor health of some of her family members, including seeing signs of malnutrition in a young cousin, who was also suffering from an old, untreated wound. The next morning, they woke to the sounds of children screaming, heavy shelling and drones dropping eviction leaflets, which were **"terrifying for everyone, triggering collective breakdown amid displacement and grim news."** After helping a cousin to take an online exam, despite internet outages and constant noise, they undertook a dangerous and exhausting return journey through destroyed towers and heavy congestion.

"I lived this day between shelling and evacuation orders – between children's fear and adults' psychological collapse; between congestion and danger on every road; and between our small attempts to survive or self-soothe – fetching water or cooking pasta to give us the energy to keep up with events."

"What I want others to know is that life here is a chain of survival attempts. The small details that may seem obvious to you – like drinking water or trying to sleep calmly – are daily battles for us. I ask everyone outside my community to grasp the extent of the tragedies, fear, and terror people in Gaza endure – not as fleeting headlines but as full lives trapped by fear and anxiety."

Solidarity amidst a collapse

Palestinians share unique traditions rooted in hospitality and social bonds. People in Gaza have tried to hold on to celebrations, gatherings and mostly, sharing meals together.[45] Yet even this is now waning, with families torn apart, unwell and exhausted. The overwhelming majority of people say that their ability to support their own community has decreased.

Figure 9:

How has the support in your immediate community changed compared to 12 months ago?



Extreme conditions and limited access to resources are harming community ties.

"Today, access to resources is extremely difficult, which affects social ties. I avoid leaving the tent because I have nothing to offer anyone. Everyone is equally struggling. If I visit someone, I can't help them, and if I complain, they can't help me either. This makes me depressed and hopeless."

– Man in Deir Al Balah

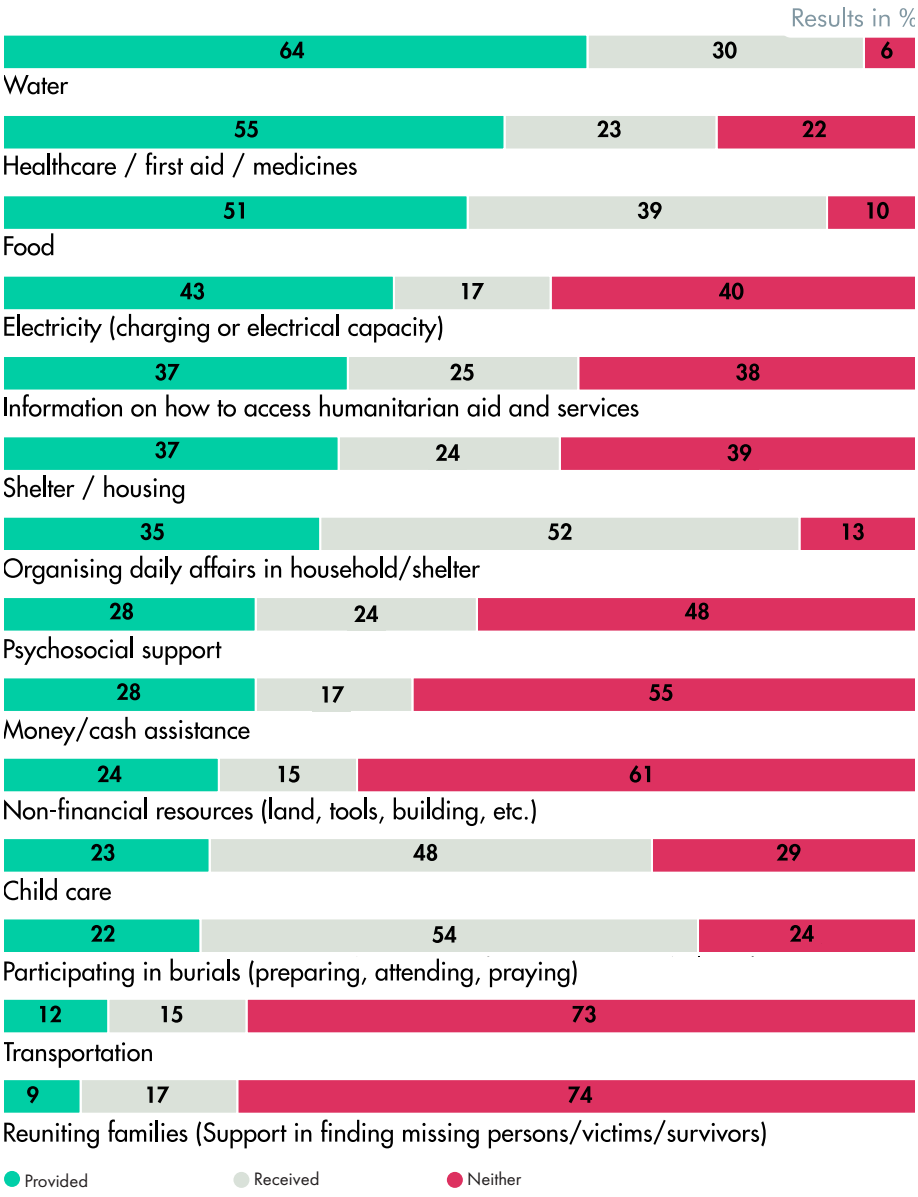
> I feel ashamed asking for financial help from relatives or friends now, since resources are scarce for everyone.
>
> *Man in Deir Al Balah*

[44] The name of the diary keeper was replaced to safeguard their anonymity.

[45] Anera. March 2021. "Palestinian Culture."

Figure 10:

In the last three months, have you provided and/or received any of the following help or support from other community members in your area?



Still, despite what little resources they have, most people we spoke with told us that they had either offered or received support with people in their surroundings.

Many **"wish [they] had more to offer others and help them"** told us one man in Deir Al Balah. Survey results show that people predominantly received water (64%), healthcare, first aid or medicine (55%), food (51%), and access to electricity (43%). People have helped each other in organising burials (54%), organising daily affairs (52%), childcare (48%) and obtaining and sharing food (38%).

People highlighted how the small-scale cooperation between their neighbours has reduced the burden of survival. One woman in Deir Al Balah told us that the **"daily interactions with neighbouring families in the collective shelter, by sharing cooking utensils, borrowing firewood, sharing cleaning duties, and preparing fores together helped reduce some of the daily hardship."**

Many say they have also supported their communities with forms of mutual aid such as teaching children in the camp and organising activities to entertain them, helping with food by either baking it or offering it to others, support in setting up tents for newcomers, and providing blankets or clothes.

> In Rafah, phones and batteries were charged at a supermarket that became a charging station after running out of goods.
>
> *Woman in Deir Al Balah*

Figure 11:

In view of relations between neighbours in your surrounding community, would you say that current community relations have improved, worsened, or stayed the same compared to 12 months ago?

Results in %, n=700

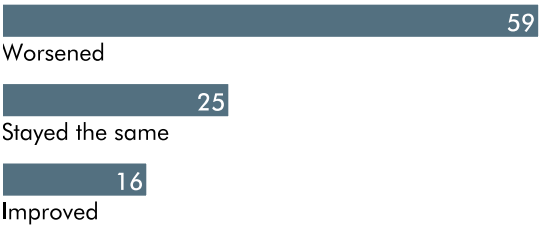
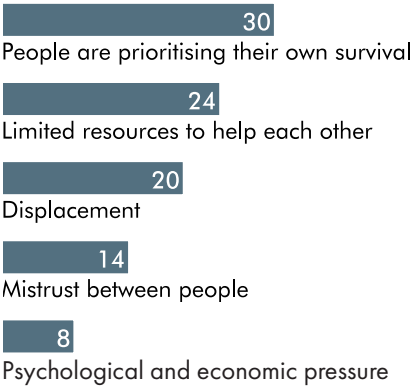


Figure 12:

If worsened, what do you think is the main reason for that?

Results in %, n=409



Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

Fifty-nine percent of people we spoke with say that the relationships within the community have worsened in the last 12 months, which 30% attribute to people being forced to prioritise their own survival. Others point to the limited resources to help each other (24%), the impacts of displacement (20%), growing mistrust between people (14%) and the psychological and economic pressure[46] people are under (8%).

Markets in freefall: soaring prices, hoarding goods, and a liquidity crisis in a survival economy

In 2024, people we spoke with highlighted the acute cash shortages and profiteering around them. Today, this has been further exacerbated by the near-total blockade people in Gaza are under.

People in qualitative interviews describe ordinary goods being sold at massively inflated prices, making it even harder for them to survive. One woman in Deir Al Balah said **"Markets were nearly empty, with remaining goods sold at exorbitant prices."** Another community volunteer told us that while **"traders monopolised goods, and prices soared, families could not buy food, forcing them to rely entirely on communal kitchens for one meal a day."**

Accessing cash is an additional challenge, due to fees imposed by financial service providers and profiteering by merchants, as well as the lack of liquidity. **"To obtain cash money for use, you lose about 40% of your funds. Everything – transportation, firewood, and food supplies – has to be bought and paid for in cash. As a result, we lose almost half of our salary just to get money because of the bank closures." – Zaher, author of Diary 1 above**

> We are living in psychological pressure due to the ongoing war and aggression.
>
> *Man in Deir Al Balah*

> [Displacement] weakens relationships, since survival is focused only on finding shelter, water, and a little bread.
>
> *Man in Deir Al Balah*

[46] This answer option was not included in the original list provided at the time of data collection but was recoded manually after being raised in the "other" answer option category by survey respondents.

With little cash, empty markets and sky-high prices, a worker at a Palestinian human rights organisation also informed us that goods have become a currency in themselves during the war: **"People would resort to Facebook and post that they have an extra kilo of rice, or oil for example and that they are willing to trade it for 2 litres of cooking oil."** A woman in Gaza City shared a similar experience, **"I work in a bakery, and if someone doesn't have enough money [to pay for] baking bread, I would take a loaf from them in exchange for baking."**

The collapse of markets also affects community-led initiatives, such as community kitchens, in their mission to support people around them. **"When some initiatives (...) buy goods at inflated prices, traders profit while aid remains limited, reaching only 100 families in a camp,"** a worker at a Palestinian grassroots movement told us.

Risk losing a loved one, or risk dying of hunger? The realities of 'blood-soaked aid'

At the time of this research, after months of blockade, some amount of aid had just been allowed back into the Gaza strip towards the end of July,[47] shortly after the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) released their alert which **"which detected a risk of Famine."**[48] A total blockade on aid was imposed in March 2025, and the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation was established in May, bringing dangerous and abusive "militarised aid" distributions to Gaza.[49] While the amount of aid now being allowed to trickle into the territory is still woefully insufficient to meet the overwhelming needs – Israel still only allows in around 50% of all planned aid convoys[50] – the reflections people shared with us convey both the trauma of facing huge risk to access the scraps of aid that have been available over the past months, and the relief and hope that the reestablishment of "principled aid" offers hope of more and better support to come.

Seeking aid brings major risks

Figure 13:

Have you or someone in your household faced danger and/or harm while trying to get aid in the last 3 months?



Almost two-thirds of people we spoke with told us that them or someone in their household had faced danger and/or harm while trying to get aid in the last three months. People spoke about the impossible choice between facing starvation and facing danger at distribution sites. More than half of people said 'risks of violence at distribution sites' were among their biggest barriers to accessing assistance.

People in interviews say that they have no other choice, and that **"aid does not reach those who stay put – it only goes to those who risk everything to chase it"** as one man in Khan Yunis stated. A mother in Gaza City also shared that she does not **"even have a single shekel to buy food for [her] kids. That is why [her son] goes after aid the one who risks his life to get aid and bring food for his siblings."**

> "Wherever aid or cheaper goods are available, danger and chaos are guaranteed.
>
> *Man in Khan Yunis*

> "Sadly, those who get aid now are the ones who steal it – either [at the crossings] or at American aid.[51] Both paths are dangerous and can cost you your life if you try to access them.
>
> *Community volunteer in Deir Al Balah*

[47] Al Jazeera. August 2025. "How much aid has entered Gaza?"
[48] IPC. July 2025. "IPC ALERT: Worst-case scenario of Famine unfolding in the Gaza Strip."
[49] Médecins Sans Frontières. August 2025. "This is not aid. This is orchestrated killing."
[50] UNOPS. Accessed September 2025. "UN2720 Mechanism for Gaza."
[51] People we spoke to often used this term to refer to the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation

One man in Deir Al Balah explained: **"My nephews told me they faced bullets and injuries while trying to get aid – some people next to them were killed." Another man in Khan Yunis told us that they have seen packages of "blood-soaked aid."**

The danger at aid distributions is driven both by two factors. Firstly, by the inhumane and unprincipled behaviour of militarised aid actors – the "Gaza Humanitarian Foundation" – who have inflicted extreme violence, exploitation and humiliation on aid seekers.[52] While people we spoke to ranked the GHF last on a list of "important sources of support" and a negligible number of respondents said they had been able to access significant amounts of support from the GHF, most were aware of it, and the qualitative data was full of reports of the danger and violence that surrounded their distribution sites. Of the small number of respondents who did list the GHF as a major source of support, almost all responded that aid was not provided safely, nor in ways consistent with human dignity.

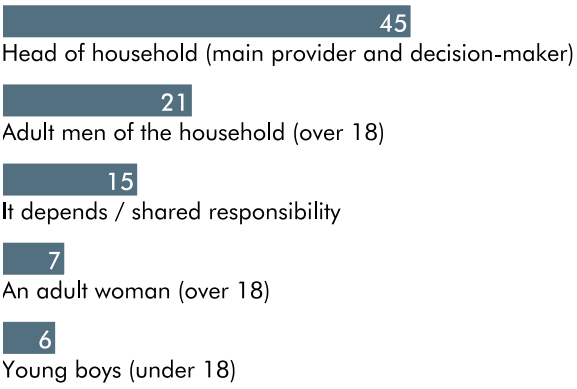
The second driver of danger is the intense competition over woefully insufficient aid supplies which can lead to violence and injury from other people seeking assistance. The scarcity of resources and recent restrictions on aid actors securing their convoys is driving dangerous attempts to access aid, including interceptions of convoys, exposing people to violence, exploitation and exclusion, and undermining their right to life, health and dignity.[53]

A woman we spoke with in Gaza City said: **"It's life-threatening: You either survive or not. The risk is death, and it is just to get food."**

Figure 14:

In the last three months, who has been the person in your household usually getting aid and bringing it home?

Results in %, n=491



Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

The man-made famine is forcing people to live in a dystopian "hunger games"-like reality[54] where families are forced to choose who is going to face danger or harm next. Many people we spoke with (45%) told us that the head of household usually goes in search of aid, less than a quarter (21%) tell us that is the adult men of the household and a smaller number (15%) state that it is a shared responsibility. Recent reports from UN OCHA state that younger men and older boys continue to constitute the vast majority of deaths and injuries amongst people seeking assistance, with most casualties reportedly the result of live fire.[55]

How much aid is getting through?

Despite the recent lifting of the total blockade on aid, nearly one in three people told us they had not managed to receive any aid at all in recent months. It should be stressed that the 70% of people who said they had managed to access aid of some kind were not talking about being targeted with assistance in regular distributions, but those who had managed – in whatever way they could – to receive one or more items of aid over that three-month period.

> "Aid points, especially American distribution centres, are dangerous with heavy gunfire, overcrowding, and looters.
>
> *Man in Deir Al Balah*

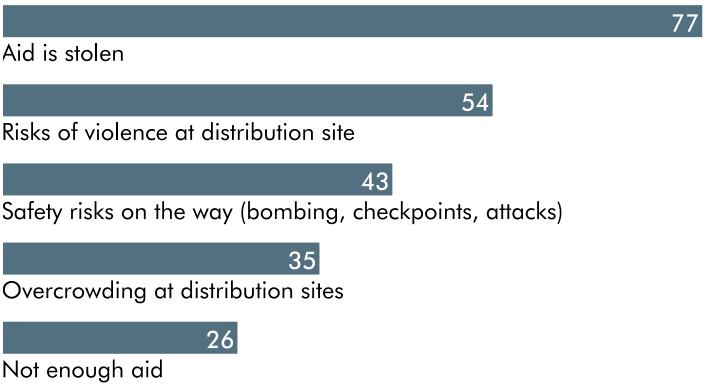
> "I risk my life and go to aid distribution points to bring food for my family.
>
> *Man in Deir Al Balah*

[52] Global Protection Cluster. August 2025. "Gaza Protection Cluster Snapshot: Protection monitoring."
[53] Ibid.
[54] Al Jazeera. June 2025. "In Gaza, the Israelis are staging Hunger Games."
[55] OCHA. September 2025. "Humanitarian Situation Update #321 | Gaza Strip."

Figure 15:

Based on what you see around you, what makes it difficult for your community to access assistance?

Results in %, n=700



Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

The majority of people (77%) we spoke with tell us that theft is a huge barrier to accessing assistance. In qualitative interviews, people recall accounts of organised theft and corruption resulting in not just the loss of aid, but also the erosion of trust in support institutions and community cohesion. A little over half of people (54%) we spoke with fear the risk of violence at distribution sites, while almost half (43%) worry about safety risks on the way, a little over one third (35%) mention overcrowding at distribution sites. A quarter (26%) reiterate the fact that there is simply not enough aid.

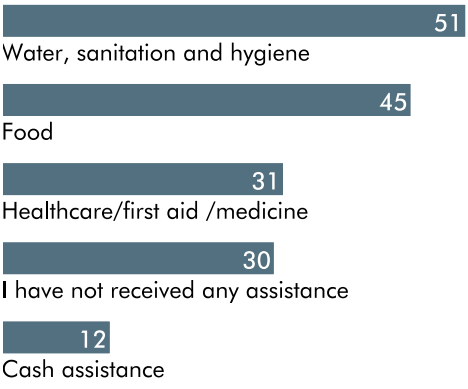
> "Recently, with crossings partially reopened, operations resumed slightly, but mismanagement, chaos, and corruption – much of it orchestrated by the occupation – plague aid distribution. Theft, looting, and favouritism are rampant, I personally witnessed deals where a distributor would offer 160 urgent parcels, but only if he could select 40 names for himself, while I had to provide 120 names."
>
> – Community volunteer in Deir Al Balah

Key informants highlight in their interviews that journeys to distribution sites are costly and long on foot, with danger beginning even before reaching distribution points, as people face looting and truck interceptions along the way: **"A major challenge is people intercepting aid trucks because of famine – sometimes depriving more vulnerable groups (e.g., women-headed households) from receiving aid,"** said a coordinator working with a local organisation in Deir Al Balah.

Figure 16:

What type of assistance has your household directly received from aid agencies during the last three months?

Results in %, n=700

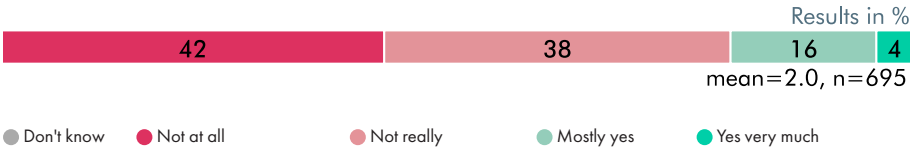


Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

Half of the people we spoke with (51%) reported having received assistance related to water, sanitation and hygiene,[56] less than half (45%) have received food, a third of people (31%) indicate having received healthcare, first aid, and/or medicine. Around 1 in 10 individuals (12%) stated receiving cash assistance.

Figure 17:

Do aid and services go to those who need it most?

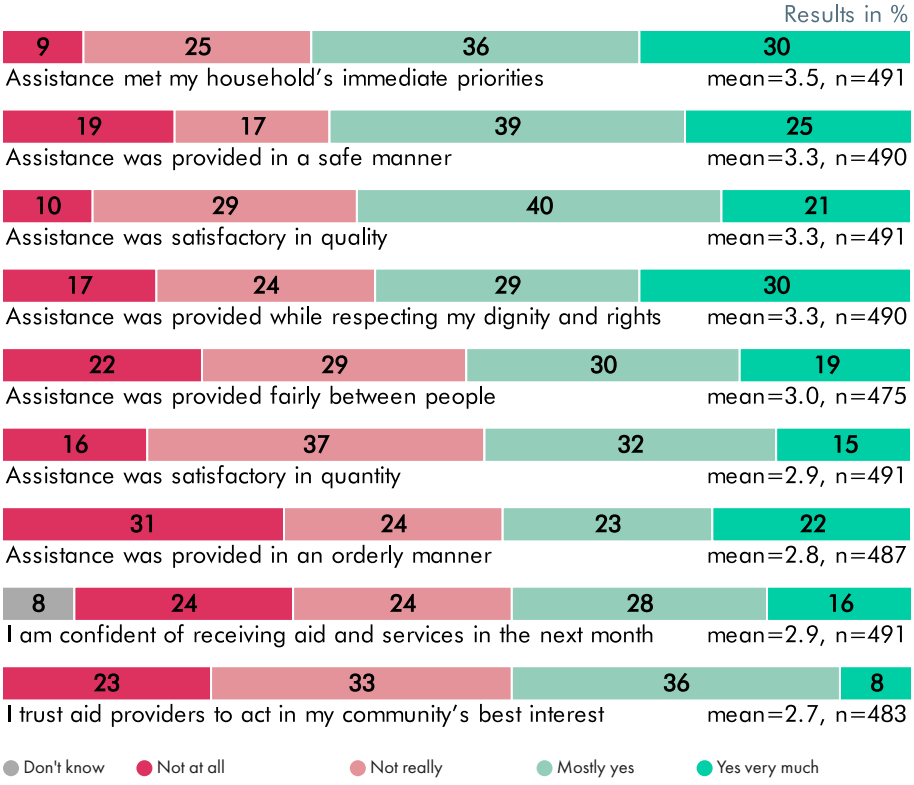


Only 20% of people we spoke with think that aid and services are going to those who need it the most. While everyone in Gaza is in dire need of support, people in qualitative interviews call on aid providers to consider the specific needs of more vulnerable groups such as children – especially children with no surviving family, older persons and women.

When we asked people who had received aid about the quality of that aid, we were surprised to see far higher perception scores than those shared a year previously.[57] Given the timing of this research – coming shortly after the blockade on aid had been lifted – analysis suggests scores may reflect both a lowering of people's expectations and relief at the resumption of some level of principled aid, after months of relying on militarised aid distributions and chaotic airdrops. The volumes of aid Israel is allowing into the Gaza strip continue to be woefully insufficient to meet overwhelming and growing needs.[58]

Figure 18:

Related to the assistance you received from the aid provider you have mentioned, please rate each of the following statements.



> Some NGOs began providing infant formula and diapers, but adult diapers for elderly patients cost around 300 shekels and are unaffordable.
>
> *Community volunteer in Deir Al Balah*

> Providing treatment for the elderly and the disabled, especially those with chronic illnesses.
>
> *Woman in Deir Al Balah*

> Relief organisations must pay attention to women's special needs and their requirements for personal care and psychological support.
>
> *Woman in Deir Al Balah*

[56] Additional consultations with operational actors supporting the response in the Gaza Strip as well as open-ended answers from survey respondents indicate that the primary source of support received from this category is water through desalination activities.

[57] The research in 2024 and 2025 surveyed different individuals, so there is no direct comparison.

[58] OCHA. September 2025. "Humanitarian Situation Update #321 | Gaza Strip."

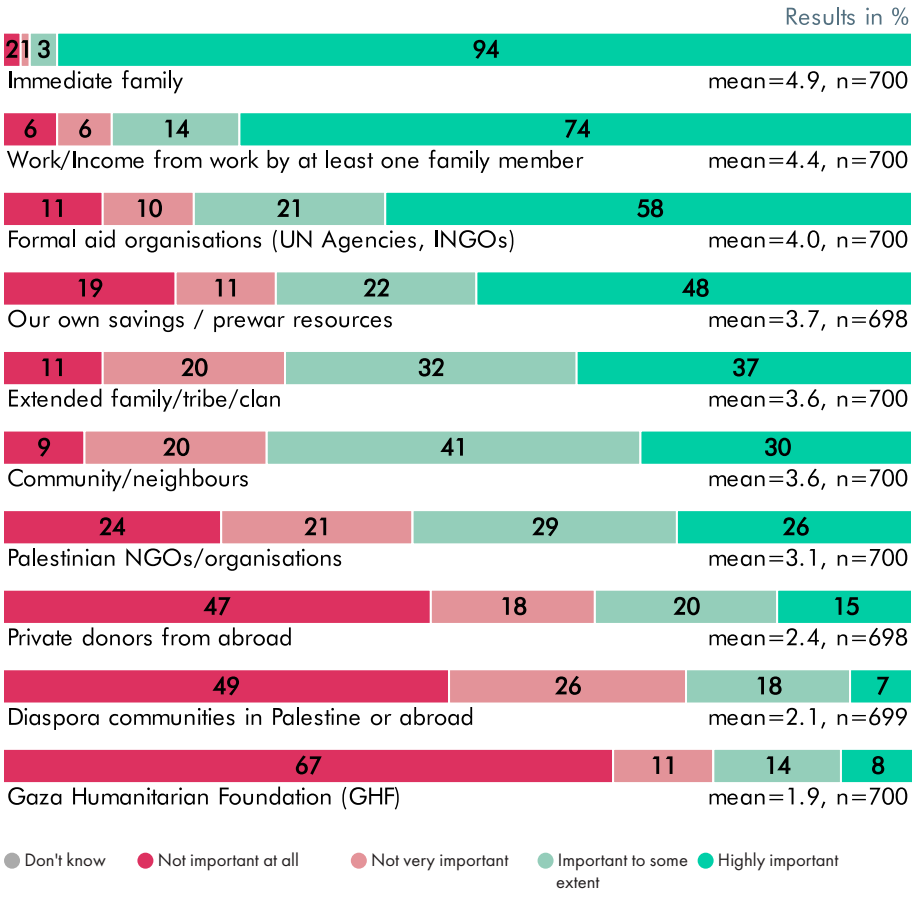
Many of those who have received aid say it helped them to meet immediate priorities (66%), almost two thirds said the distribution mechanism was safe (64%), others said the aid was of satisfactory quality (61%), and others that it was provided in a dignified manner (59%).

Just under half (49%) of people we spoke with who had received some aid said the aid was fairly provided between people, 47% said that the assistance provided was of satisfactory quantity, 45% said the aid was provided in an orderly manner. Almost half (44%) reported trusting aid providers to act in their community's best interest.

Where is aid coming from?

Figure 19:

How important are the following sources of support for you and your household to cope with the current situation?

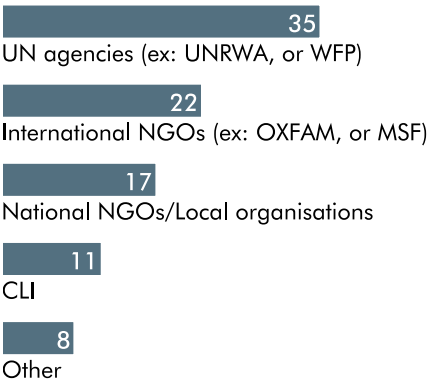


When asked what importance people place on different sources of support, almost everyone we spoke with (97%) tells us that their immediate family is still their most important source of support, followed by work and/or income by at least one family member (88%), communities and neighbours (71%), their own savings and/or pre-war resources (70%), and their extended families, tribes or clans (69%). People also attribute significant importance to the support from aid organisations such as UN Agencies or international non-governmental organisations (NGOs, 79%) as well as Palestinian NGOs (55%). Private donors from abroad were important to one in four people (25%) as was support from diaspora communities (22%). Mutual aid initiatives from across the globe have been on the rise, and their impact is felt.

Figure 20:

Who have you received the most support from in the last three months?[59]

Results in %, n=491



However, when asked who they have actually received the most support from outside the family in the last three months, about one in three respondents tell us that they have mostly received support from UN agencies (qualitative follow up indicates this usually refers to UNRWA), with others citing international NGOs (22%), as well as national and/or local organisations (17%), and community-led initiatives (11%).[60]

Community-led initiatives have provided lifesaving support in the absence of international aid, but are under increasing strain

When the bombardment started in 2023, one community volunteer told us that **"through local volunteers, youth initiatives, and other organisations, [they] coordinated to support Palestinian society. At first, the response was chaotic. Later, [they managed to set up] shelters in schools and empty government buildings filled with displaced families, especially from northern Gaza."** Another key informant working with a local organisation told us that communities see the role of local initiatives as **"as essential in the absence of government support, [communities] rely on us to meet their basic needs".**

Some key informants in interviews warned us that "local initiatives vary", with particular scepticism for some individually-led initiatives. One local coordinator for a development organisation in Deir Al Balah said **"some individual initiatives are questionable; some received money but didn't fully use it for aid, while some others did."** A community volunteer in Deir al Balah told us: "**Some volunteers provide a few water tanks or small pots of food weekly for 20-30 families. Others run larger operations but often abuse publicity, humiliating Palestinians by filming them for social media".**

"[Community initiatives] play a vital role, mobilising local human, natural, and financial resources. They ensure sustainability and target larger beneficiary groups, unlike individual initiatives, which focus on personal publicity rather than impact."

– Coordinator for relief activities in Deir Al Balah

The UN and INGOs are valued for their role in principled aid provision, and as advocates

Key informants highlighted that the work of UN agencies and INGOs is appreciated for their ability to "continue efforts and pressure to allow aid entry" as one coordinator for relief activities with a local organisation told us. Another coordinator in a local organisation told us that the "UN has played a key role in applying pressure and must continue doing so." Almost everyone we spoke with thinks that UN agencies should be responsible for ensuring that people in Gaza receive life-saving aid.

"Families could not buy food, forcing them to rely entirely on communal kitchens for one meal a day.

Community volunteer in Deir Al Balah

"In general, community initiatives are crucial for survival – providing shelter, clothes, water, mobile toilets, kitchenware, and other essentials, even if only temporarily.

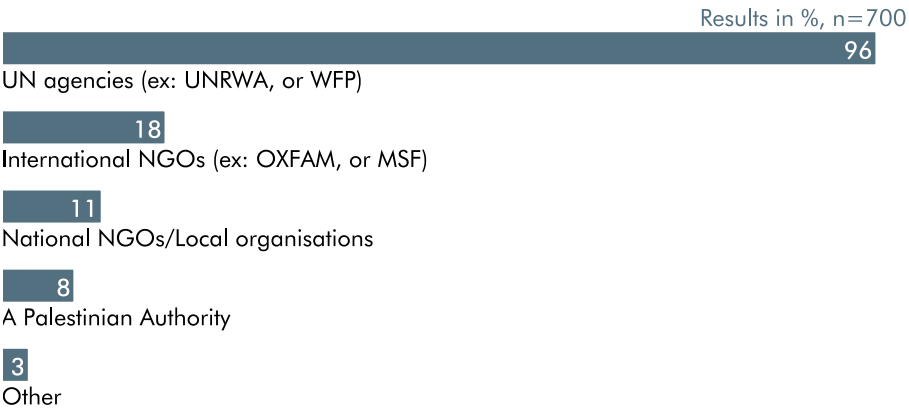
Coordinator at a local organisation in Deir Al Balah

[59] This question was only asked to individuals who reported receiving some form of aid in the last three months (n=491).

[60] This answer option was not included in the original list provided at the time of data collection but was recoded manually after being raised in the "other" answer option category by survey respondents.

Figure 21:

In your view, who should be responsible for ensuring that people in Gaza receive life-saving aid?



Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

People who reported receiving aid from UN agencies (mostly citing UNRWA) in the last three months have the most positive perceptions vis-à-vis people who have received aid from other aid providers. Many say that the aid was provided in a safe manner (74%), met their most important needs (72%), was provided in a dignified manner (72%), and that it was of satisfactory quality (67%). People in qualitative interviews especially praise UNRWA's distribution mechanism and call on other actors to adopt the same modality.

Local leaders in qualitative interviews also share an important concern: although they trust UN agencies to deliver life-saving aid, they also expect these agencies to engage with community-led initiatives and local actors in the process.

"Improve coordination among institutions – centralised planning, division of roles, geographic distribution of coverage. Needs span food, psychosocial support, infrastructure, health, shelter, universities, and schools. Rebuilding Gaza requires coordinated management, ideally by the UN in partnership with local institutions."

– Coordinator for a local organisation in Deir Al Balah

"The top priority is establishing an aid distribution system similar to UNRWA's, which Palestinians are accustomed to for its order and transparency.

Man in Khan Yunis

"Rebuilding Gaza requires coordinated management, ideally by the UN in partnership with local institutions.

Community volunteer in Deir al Balah

"People's incomes are exhausted, and they now rely on free essential goods (sugar, flour, oil, rice) from UNRWA or others.

Community volunteer in Deir al Balah

Diaries from a genocide

Omar[61] is a 37-year-old man living in a camp Deir al-Balah with his young son. He works as a volunteer supporting people with disabilities. His story echoes the story of many parents in Gaza who are desperately trying to preserve their children's wellbeing under war and bombardment.

Palestinian children have been disproportionately affected by the war on Gaza. The strip has recorded more child deaths than any other conflict zone and has the highest number of children with amputations per person in the world.[62]

As Omar kept this diary his son, who was already suffering from a broken leg, as well as a calcium deficiency and general ill heath, was found to have infected tonsils and required urgent surgery. He felt hopeless not to being able to offer him nutritious food.

"I fed my son with my hands while giving him affection because he noticed my tear at not being able to provide him with the simplest things. He hugged me and tried to give me a glimmer of hope to continue my day."

"[When I packed to visit my mother's house] I wished I had nice things to put like biscuits, milk or juice, every time I put the belongings in the bag, I remembered the days of going to my mother, I used to put many things and items, I used to buy her from the market everything she needed, and everything my son needed, oh oh oh from the torment we are in and the situation we are living in."

Omar works with a local organisation, during the time he kept his diary, he coordinated two food deliveries for the camp, collecting 1000 rice meals which involved difficult and dangerous travel on foot and by donkey cart. He also arbitrated a dispute between two women in the camp and helped to organise a conflict resolution workshop. With his mother, they took his son for surgery.

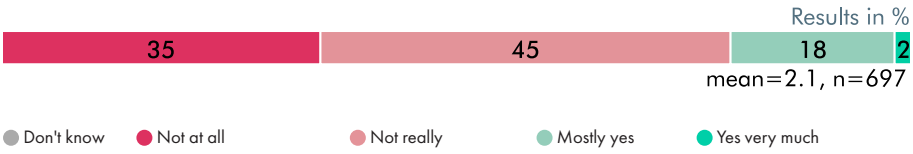
"I found my son sad and unhappy, and full of sadness, when he told me I do not feel I am a child, I feel that I am a man and I must be your support my dear father, so I hugged him and put him in my arms and tried to make him happy."

Life-or-death decisions with limited information

As people in Gaza face impossible decisions trying to navigate their daily lives – to relocate, to relocate again, to risk aid distribution sites – they often face significant information gaps. From a low bar (30% in 2024), even fewer people felt informed about ways to access aid and services (20%).[63]

Figure 22:

Based on the information you received, do you feel informed enough about how to access assistance?

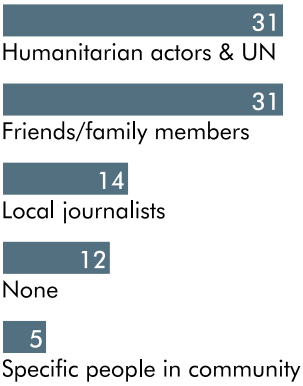


[61] The name of the diary keeper was replaced to safeguard their anonymity.
[62] The Lancet. August 2025. "Break the selective silence on the genocide in Gaza."
[63] Ground Truth Solutions. August 2024. "'We do not want aid from the world. We want to stop the war.' Community priorities and perceptions of aid and support in Gaza."

Figure 23:

Who do you trust for information about assistance available?

Results in %, n=700



Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

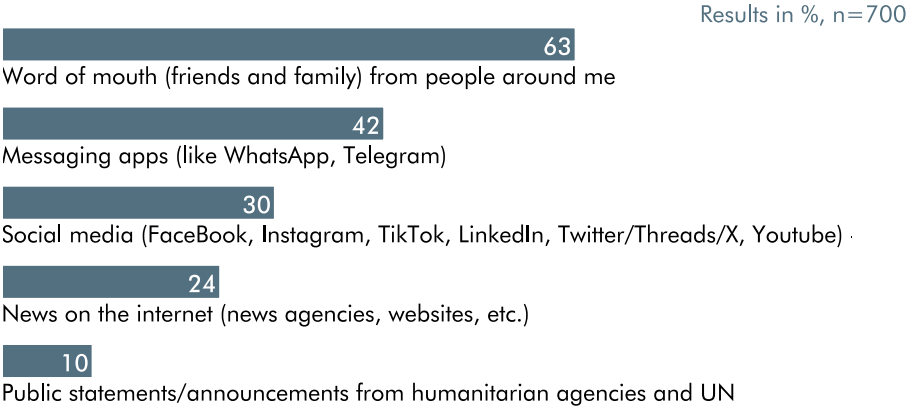
Levels of trust in the information people can access are low. Just over 30% of people we spoke with trust the information they receive from humanitarian actors and the UN when it comes to learning about available assistance, the same percentage as those who trust information from family and friends. Fourteen percent say they trust the information received from local journalists for this purpose. More than one in ten people do not trust any sources with any information about accessing aid and services.

Trust levels also vary across some demographic groups. In a context where 21% of people tell us it is usually the adult men of the household for getting aid and bringing it home, men trust humanitarian actors and the UN (35%) more than they trust family and friends (29%). Conversely, women trust family members and friends (33%) more than humanitarian actors (27%). Amongst all age groups, people aged between 31- and 50-years old trust humanitarian actors the most (35%).

Figure 24:

In the past three months, how have you accessed information about assistance available?

Results in %, n=700



Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.

Data show that the channels people use to access information have changed since 2024. With formal systems collapsing, people rely heavily on word of mouth, messaging applications and social media to access information about aid and services available. Word of mouth remains the primary way people access information since our last research (63%), while the use of messaging applications (42%), social media (30%) and accessing news on the internet (24%) have become more popular. Although humanitarian actors and the UN are seen as a trusted source of information for many (31%), only 10% of people we spoke with report

having accessed information about assistance available through them.

Channel preferences differ amongst demographics. People aged 51 years old and older receive information via word of mouth (71%) more than younger people aged between 18- and 30- years old (58%). Younger people (18-30 years old) receive information via messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram (51%) more than their older counterparts (51 years old or more - 30%).

Diaries from a genocide

Tala[64] is a 26-year-old mother living with her husband and 5-year-old daughter. Originally from northern Gaza the family have been displaced several times and now live in shared housing run by an international organisation.

Life in the shared house is cramped and noisy, with no privacy, constant power cuts and a lack of water. Insects and other pests make cooking unsanitary and sleep near impossible. After talking with neighbours about market prices and available goods she heard the sound of nearby bombardment **"this made us afraid and anxious, especially since the news says the area we're in is not within designated humanitarian zones".**

She searched the internet for news on the security and political situation, contacting relatives outside Gaza and friends displaced in other areas for updates. Bartering food and utensils between neighbours to make lunch for her family, she noticed that her daughter's hair was falling out – a sign of vitamin deficiency. When another family arrived, they had to pack up their things and squeeze into an even smaller room, making her feel anxious and out of control.

"I want others to know that the daily life of displaced people who lost their homes is not just about practical challenges, but about ongoing and exhausting attempts to adapt and cope with unsuitable and unjust conditions. We face suffocating heat, limited electricity and water, internet cuts, recurring insect problems, and lack of essential resources for any family while caring for a young child and managing daily life in a communal shelter that houses families from different backgrounds and places.

The small moments of feeling support or gratitude, like my neighbour's help or my husband's cooperation, become essential sources of psychological resilience during the war. But they cannot erase the constant anxiety or the sense of helplessness in the face of the harsh environment we are forced to live in. We have no choice in shaping our lives, and this is unfair and doesn't happen elsewhere in the world.

We fight against time and circumstances every day, I feel that I will lose my patience very soon, there is no space or chance for collapse. Sometimes I feel that controlling the small details is the only thing I can hold on to... I also think that these efforts are meaningless if there is no hope for the future. We want to build a dignified life, we want homes, not only to protect ourselves from destruction."

[64] The name of the diary keeper was replaced to safeguard their anonymity.

Save what remains of Gaza – what people in Gaza want us to know

Destruction, displacement and death have taken the lives of people in Gaza hostage for almost two years now. We asked interviewees what they wanted the world to know about their lives in Gaza and what they wanted the international community to do. Their responses articulate clear priorities for both immediate survival and longer-term recovery, and a plea to the world to **"just be with us and stop the genocide."**

An overwhelming number of responses equate life in Gaza with hell – one riddled with extreme fear, anxiety and trauma mixed with a feeling of abandonment, injustice and despair. Deprived of all basic necessities for a dignified life, people describe extreme conditions of survival and daily suffering in a reality they did not ask for, that **"no one would be able to bear, even for an hour."**

As people exhaust the last resources available to them to survive a genocide, they call on the world to see them as human, and **"not numbers"**, as people who had **"ambitions and dreams, (...) but were wronged by the war and destroyed."**

Beyond ending the war, people in Gaza appeal to the world's humanity to **"save what remains of Gaza,"** and reiterate the urgent need for food, clean water, healthcare, shelter and protection. They also remind us that life is more than just survival: life is about justice, accountability, and the acknowledgment of their humanity as the foundations for any real recovery.

"The world must stand with [us] and help us realise our rights as human beings."

– Man in Deir Al Balah

"If there is life, there is hope."

– Man in Gaza City

"On this land there is something worth living for. Save what remains of Gaza. We hope that you will be a support for Gaza."

– Man in Khan Yunis

"We want to live a life without hunger, poverty, worry and destruction.

Woman in Khan Yunis

"No matter how much we describe to them the extent of the fatigue and suffering, we will not be able to describe it properly.

Man in Gaza City

"Look at us with mercy and compassion, for we are human beings who need mercy.

Woman in Deir Al Balah

"People with humanity feel for us. We are people who love peace and want to live in dignity.

Man in Gaza City

Methodology

The study we conducted in Gaza was composed by two data collection activities:

1. Quantitative data collection
2. Qualitative data collection

Both activities and their respective tools were designed jointly between AWRAD and GTS and informed by the results of the first two rounds of data collection conducted in 2024 as well as with extensive review of the most recent developments on the state of the war in Gaza, informal discussions with humanitarian actors, civil society organisations, academics and human right activists.

The development of the tools was guided by the following research questions:

- How are people in Gaza surviving and coping under extreme conditions of war and blockade?
- What are their views, priorities and expectations regarding aid systems?
- How are these aid systems shaping people coping strategies, safety, access to support, and the social cohesion of their communities?

Qualitative data collection

For this round of qualitative data collection, we deployed two qualitative data collection methods: key informant interviews, and diary approaches. Both methods utilised semi-structured approaches.

- **Key informant interviews (KIIs)** with citizens and local aid providers provided in-depth information on individual perspectives and more confidential experiences that are better explored one on one such social cohesion, coping, available resources and how people access them.
- **Diary keeping** provided a more personal and detailed account of daily life in Gaza during the war.

Sampling

We conducted a total of 12 qualitative interviews through key informant interviews and diary keeping with a 50-50 split in terms of gender, and balanced distribution across accessible areas, while being mindful of people's willingness to voluntarily participate in such activities. We prioritised geographical targeting evenly between participants across accessible areas.

Approach	Men	Women	Total
Key informant interviews with citizens	2	2	4
Key informant interviews with aid providers	2	2	4
Diary approach with citizens	2	2	4
			12

Quantitative data collection

Target population and sample size

The study targeted the general adult population (aged 18 years and older) living in the Gaza Strip. The sample was designed to include 700 household interviews, conducted in areas of the governorates of Gaza City, Deir Al Balah and Khan Yunis that were accessible at the start of data collection on August 16th.[65] The final sample achieved 700 completed interviews.

Sampling frame

The sampling frame combined two main sources:

1. Gridded Enumeration Zones (EZs): These were used as primary survey units (PSUs) to better account for a population experiencing constant displacement. The EZs were provided by Claire Dooley (Lecturer, University College London, UK) and generated with the gridEZ algorithm.[66] Each EZ was designed to cover a population of 300–700 people, based on population estimates from May 19, 2025 (Leasure & Qaimary, 2025).
2. Collective Centres: A list of collective centres (both UNRWA and non-UNRWA), including tents, makeshift shelters, and buildings, was provided by the Site Management Cluster on February 9, 2025.

Sampling approach

We used a two-stage stratified sampling design. To ensure perspectives from different living situations were represented, we stratified the sample based on displacement type:

- **Buildings serving as organised shelters (UNRWA and/or other actors):** e.g., schools or other shelter buildings.
- **Organised tented sites.**
- **"Non-site" dwellings:** including both undestroyed/partially destroyed or rebuilt private house and/or apartment and grouping of scattered tents (e.g. built over the ruins of destroyed buildings).

Stage 1: PSU selection

Within each stratum, PSUs were selected with probability proportional to size (PPS).

- For organised shelter buildings and tented sites, PSUs came from the Site Management Cluster list.
- For "non-site" dwellings, PSUs were drawn from the EZ dataset.

A total of 70 PSUs were selected initially. To account for possible displacement or inaccessible areas during fieldwork, an equal number of replacement PSUs were also drawn, giving a total pool of 140 PSUs.

Approach	PSU
Buildings serving as organised shelters	12
Organised tented sites	28
Non-site (EZs)	30
Total	70

Table: PSU sampled in each stratum

[65] Updates on the new Israeli forced displacement orders to assess accessible areas for the data collection were taken from OCHA dashboard on Israeli military displacement orders, Databases for Palestine project (Gaza Maps) and key informants on the ground.

[66] Dooley CA, Clary C, Rhoda D, Tatem A and Thomson DR. 2025. gridEZ: an R package to generate a gridded sampling frame, version 2.1.

Stage 2: Household selection

Within each PSU, **10 households** were randomly selected. The method varied by stratum:

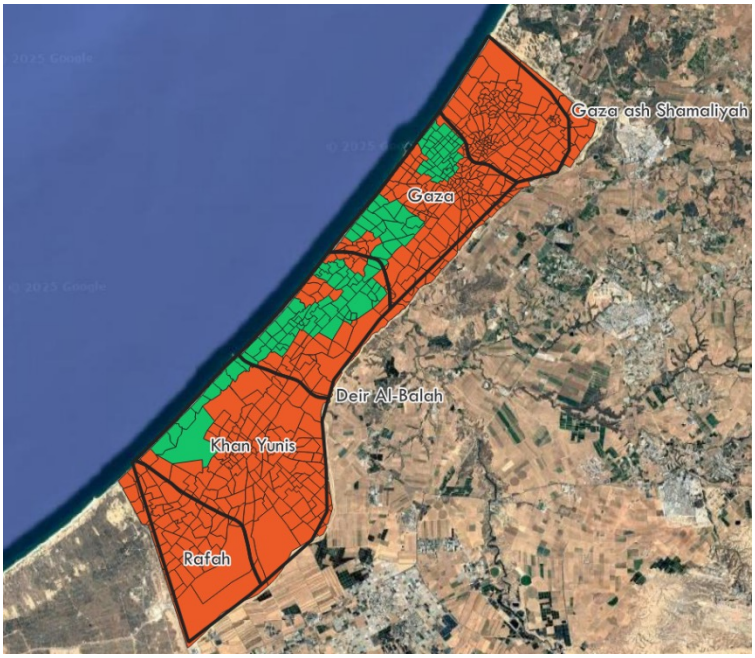
- **Non-site (EZs):** Enumerators used a systematic count interval to sample every 5th household or households separated by a max of 50 meters apart (whatever came first).[67] The same sampling method would apply for scattered tents.
- **Buildings serving as organised shelters (UNRWA and/or other actors):** Enumerators counted every fifth classroom or room and selected one household within it.
- **Organised tented sites:** Enumerators used a systematic count interval to sample every 10th tents.

For respondent selection within households, enumerators used a Kish table, listing all adults (18+) from youngest to oldest, to ensure a randomized selection, while maintaining a 50/50 gender split.

Coverage and exclusion

The sampling plan had to be updated repeatedly due to Israeli military displacement orders. In fact, between August 15th and August 26th alone, 3 Israelo forced displacement orders have been issued affecting 23 blocks around Gaza City.[68] Only areas accessible as of August 16th were included (see figure 22).

Figure 25: The available accessible blocks as of August 16th (in green).



During the data collection:

- 17 PSUs were replaced due to inaccessibility or security concerns.
- 2 additional replacement PSUs were added to address slight under-sampling in the previously covered PSUs.

This resulted in a final total of 72 PSUs covered.

Limitations

No GPS navigation: For security reasons, enumerators could not use GPS devices. They instead prepared their random walk starting points in advance. In some cases, interviews were conducted just outside the assigned EZs. These instances were jointly reviewed by AWRAD and GTS during quality checks.

[67] Note that all multi-story buildings were treated as one unit and only one interview was conducted in that building regardless of how many households it held.

[68] See Israeli displacement orders tracking on the Databases for Palestine project

Weighting

Survey design weights reflecting the two-stage sampling approach were applied in all analyses. Given the lack of reliable demographic benchmarks, no post-stratification (raking) was performed.

Precision of estimates

Margins of error were calculated using the Survey package in R, specifying the survey design as described above.

For questions asked to at least 90% of respondents:

- 4-point Likert scale questions: average margin of error of ±3.34 percentage points.
- Binary questions: average margin of error of ±6.9 percentage points.

Because of the high population density in accessible areas, EZs covered relatively small geographic zones. This reduced travel distance and risk for field teams but resulted in a relatively high average intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) of 0.25.

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