Data Documentation: Syrian Refugee Life Study (S-RLS) Urban Sample

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1 Team + Acknowledgements

The Syrian Refugee Life Study (S-RLS) is a joint effort between Dr. Edward Miguel (UC Berkeley), Dr. Sandra Rozo (World Bank), and Emma Smith (Harvard University). This work has depended heavily on the support and guidance of numerous researchers and field staff, including Dr. Samuel Leone (McKinsey), a founding member of S-RLS. Our research coordinator, Sarah Stillman, has been an invaluable asset to the project and its success. The project has also benefited from theoretical and technical contributions from Bailey Palmer and Abdulrazzak Tamim, as well as excellent research assistance from Joaquin Fuenzalida, John Gorham, and Andy Theocharous. Our competent field team directed by Mindset has been crucial to the success of the project. We thank Mohammad Qardan, Rana Samara, Majd Haddad, Mohammad Qaryouti, and the team of enumerators. We also thank members of the academic and policy community who gave valuable feedback during workshops and seminars.

2 Introduction

The Syrian Refugee Life Study (S-RLS) is among the first systematic efforts to survey a large, representative refugee sample and follow that sample over time. The sample includes approximately 2,500 Syrian refugee households residing in camps and in host communities. S-RLS currently collects information on Syrian refugees' economic well-being, health, integration, migration patterns, and intention to return and will track changes to these outcomes over time.

2.1 Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study serves as the first long-term panel of Syrian refugees in Jordan (to our knowledge), and one of the first globally, providing unprecedented spatial and temporal coverage of a population that is considered extremely hard to successfully track. More broadly, this comprehensive and representative data can provide

policymakers with insights into the long-run effects of refugee crisis responses, and offer credible evidence for formulating more effective policies in future crises. The panel nature of the data also significantly expands the type of research designs available to researchers, and the interdisciplinary scope of the instrument will likely prove useful for many different lines of inquiry.

2.2 Overview of S-RLS Survey Instruments

The S-RLS consists of two sub-projects: a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) and a panel. Currently, only a subsample of the first round of panel interviews is publicly available, but we outline the entirety of the project below for clarity.

- **Panel** The panel began with an in-person survey module that rolled out in February, 2020. The panel sample consists of a representative sample drawn from the universe of Syrian refugees registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan. The February 2020 survey module is extremely detailed and gathers information about household finances, housing, consumption, education, labor, marriage, fertility, attitudes, migration history, etc. Approximately 500 individuals were surveyed before in person surveying was halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from this subsample is currently available to the public. Because this subsample is disproportionately urban, we refer to this sample going forward as the *urban subsample*.

  Following the study's halt, the entire sample was resurveyed using an abridged phone survey from December 2020 to March 2021. This shorter survey focused on housing quality, basic labor and credit outcomes, a household roster, child school attendance, and COVID-19 topics. This data is not yet available, but will be made public in the future.

  A second round of in-person interviews will begin in late 2021. This round covers the same topics as the first in-person round conducted in February 2020 with some updates.

- **RCT** This research team also conducted a RCT evaluating the impact of a housing program run by the Norwegian Refugee Council called Urban Shelter (FLEX module). The RCT sample differs from the panel sample, but was first surveyed using the same abridged phone survey as the panel sample. A second, follow-up survey was begun in September 2021. This followup survey uses a long-form instrument similar to the in-person panel surveys.

2.3 Timeline of Activities

Panel

Nov. 2019	UNHCR/University of California, Berkeley (UCB) Data Use Agreement signed
Jan. 2020	UNHCR shares deidentified universe of refugees
Jan. 2020	UCB selects representative sample
Jan. 2020	Survey piloting
Feb. 2020	UNHCR shares initial batch of cases
Feb. - Mar. 2020	In-Person Survey rollout (halted due to COVID-19)
Dec. 2020 - Mar. 2021	Phone Survey rollout with full sample
Dec. 2021 - Mar. 2022	In-Person Survey rollout with full sample

RCT

Aug. 2018 - Mar. 2020	Shelter Program applications open
Feb. 2019	NRC/UCB Memorandum of Understanding signed
Aug. 2019 - Mar. 2020	RCT randomization
Aug. 2019 - Aug. 2021	RCT implementation
Jul. 2020 - Sep. 2020	Phone Survey rollout
Sep. - Nov. 2021	In-Person Survey rollout

2.4 Principal Investigators

S-RLS was designed by PIs Samuel Leone, Edward Miguel, Sandra Rozo, and Emma Smith. Samuel Leone is a management consultant with McKinsey & Co. Edward Miguel is a Professor of Economics at the University

of California, Berkeley. Sandra Rozo is a research economist with the World Bank's development research group. Emma Smith is a PhD candidate in Public Policy at Harvard University.

3 S-RLS Sample and Tracking Design

3.1 Panel Sample Selection

After establishing a Data Use Agreement between UC Berkeley and the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UNHCR Jordan country office shared the deidentified universe of registered Syrian refugees in Jordan ($\sim$ 655,000 total observations) with the research team. The team then randomly selected 6,997 adult individuals, stratifying on age, gender, and location in Jordan (governorate), to create a representative sample. Within these cases, a subset of 2,534 were selected as the "core" sample.

UNHCR shared contact details for our sample of 6,997 adults. These details included locality-level geographic information and between one and four phone numbers per case. For cases where we were unable to contact the designated respondent (due to out-of-service or wrong numbers), we requested additional contact details from UNHCR. For our phone survey, we were only able to reach 61% of the original 2,495 respondents we attempted, due mainly to outdated phone numbers. As such, we then selected an additional 1,648 cases so that our total selected sample rounded to $\sim$,100. Ultimately, 62% of these cases (2,567) were surveyed in our first round.

3.2 Panel Tracking Design

In the first interview with each respondent, we collect very detailed contact information. This includes an email address, Facebook account and two phone numbers where they may be contacted. We also collect detailed contact information for two other individuals who will reliably know where the focus respondent lives.

To schedule an interview, we contact each phone number listed for each household up to five times (i.e., up to 20 points of contact), calling on different days, at different times, and with different enumerators to boost our response rate. We also keep track of travelling cases, deceased cases (which are replaced with other household members), and cases whose phones are turned off (whereby we may call > 5 times over the course of several weeks in case the phones are turned back on). For those cases who do not answer or whose phone numbers were no longer working, we engage in intensive, in-person tracking. Our detailed location data (collected orally and via GPS) allow us to visit the respondent's last known address.[1]

4 S-RLS Questionnaire Design

The S-RLS in-person questionnaire was designed to capture a full picture of the focus respondent's individual and household-level life outcomes. We survey focus respondents (FRs) on housing quality, household consumption, asset ownership, credit, aid, and transfers. We also ask individuals about income generating activities including self and wage-employment, migration history and intent to return, risk and time preferences, raven's tests, social attitudes and community relations, health, marriage, and fertility.

4.1 Interview Details and Respondent Burden

The questionnaire was translated to Modern Standard Arabic by staff translators at Mindset, with revisions translated by our bilingual field coordinator, Mohammad Qardan and Research Associate Abdulrazzak Tamim. Where appropriate, we used Arabic-validated questions and modules. For example, the Time and Risk Preferences are taken from the Jordanian version of the Global Preference Survey (in Arabic). Respondents are compensated for their time with a payment of 5 Jordanian Dinar ($7 USD).

[1] For our phone survey round, we also attempted to send small incentives that would ensure phones were working prior to interview, but this resulted in only a few additional responses.

4.2 Survey Modules

The survey has 25 sections, with 5 minute breaks scheduled after sections 9 and 21

4.2.1 Introduction and Consent

This section gathers basic information about the focus respondent and collects consent.

4.2.2 Confirmation of Identity

This section collects full name, birth date, parent's full names and information of identification documents.

4.2.3 Contact information

This section collects numerous forms of contact information for the focus respondent and for two other individuals who would know how to contact the FR if they moved away, and who would not move with the FR. We also collect information on the likely moves in the future.

4.2.4 Schooling History

This section collects information on each level of schooling the FR has entered. For each level we collect public/private status, year last attended, country, and length of time spent in the level. See section 6.3 for comments on data issues in this section.

4.2.5 Household Rosters

We first collect information on the current household roster. For each member in the household, we ask name, whether they slept in the home last night, gender, age, relationship to FR, highest level of education completed, primary occupation, school attendance for children under 18, citizenship, and whether they were a member of the household in January 2011.

We then collect data on individuals who lived in the household in 2011 but do not currently.

4.2.6 Dwelling Characteristics

This section collects data on characteristics of the home, including number of rooms, number of families occupying the dwelling, building materials, access to and quality of utilities, rent/own status and information of rent/mortgage payments, and time use on chores.

4.2.7 Food Consumption

This section collects information on food consumption in 9 food categories. We disaggregate consumption into assistance, home production and market purchases. We also ask several food security questions.

4.2.8 Non-Food Purchases

This section collects monthly and annual household expenditures in 9 categories. The categories include utilities, water, infant needs, household and hygiene items, debt repayment, linens, clothing, reusable household items, and "school fees, taxes, insurance and phone bills".

4.2.9 Durables

This section collects annual expenditure and ownership of 8 categories of durable goods. See section 6.6 for comments on data issues in this section.

4.2.10 Farming and Agriculture

This section collects data on commercial agriculture and home production of food. We collect land size, ownership, rent, crop mix, commercial activity, employment of laborers, revenue and profits, and hours worked. Because of the very low rates of agricultural cultivation in the urban subsample, this section will be omitted in subsequent waves of surveys. Basic agricultural questions will be subsumed into the food consumption and self-employment sections.

4.2.11 Self-Employment and Wage Employment

The self-employment section collects detailed financial information on all self-employment activities in the past 12 months. This includes industry and occupation, months active, regularity, hours worked (typical or last week), employment of workers, revenues, expenses and profits.

The employment section captures the three most important jobs held in the last 12 months. For each job, we ask respondents about the start date, occupation, industry, contract status, working patterns, hours, salary, taxes, additional compensation, and commute time. We ask unemployed workers about search patterns, and all focus respondents about occupation, industry, own income, and household income in 2011.

4.2.12 Transfers

This section elicits information about transfers between households. For both sending and receiving relationships, we survey respondents about the 3 most important transfer relationships. For each relationship, we ask about location of transfer partner, mix of cash/goods, use of funds, total value over 12 months, and reciprocation. We also collect data on total transfers send/received over the past 12 months.

This section reports relatively low levels of inter-household transfers in this population. This result was initially surprising to the research team. In response we conducted several focus groups to further probe the results. After these investigations, we believe that this data is accurately capturing the prevalence of remittances and other transfers among the interviewed focus respondents, though we cannot rule out some under-reporting.

4.2.13 Interaction with NGOs and Government Programs

This section elicits information about receipt of cash, goods and employment aid from NGOs or community groups and government programs. This section will ask about aid from specific organizations in forthcoming waves.

4.2.14 Savings and Credit

This section surveys focus respondents about savings behavior in banks and community groups. It also elicits information about application and receipt of formal and informal loans in the past 12 months. We ask for the total amount of purpose of all loans, and for the interest and due date on the most recent loan. See section 6.7 for information on data issues affecting the data on interest.

4.2.15 Risk Preferences, Time Preferences, Ambiguity, Trust, Raven's Tests and Happiness

We elicit risk and time preferences according to the Jordan version of Global Preferences Survey. We elicit ambiguity preferences using a variant of the traditional two-urn Ellsberg choice. Trust in various different groups is measured using a variant of the Dictator Game. We measure trust in other Syrian refugees, other refugees in Jordan, the average Jordanian in the same religious community, the average Jordanian in a different religious community, a Jordanian solider/police officer, a Jordanian public servant, and an employee of an international NGO. The preference elicitations are not incentivized. We measure cognitive skills with a Raven's test, and we measure happiness using a 1-7 scale.

4.2.16 Migration

The migration section asks focus respondents where they lived in January 2011, before the onset of conflict in Syria. We then ask respondents about each of their moves longer than four months between then and now. For each move, we ask respondents when they moved, to where, why they left, and with whom they moved. We also ask numerous questions about the circumstances under which they fled Syria and their arrival to Jordan. We then ask about any steps they are taking to move again, and their intent to return to Syria.

4.2.17 Health, Nutrition, Sleep, Stress, and Grit

These sections capture various aspects of physical and mental health. Section 17.1 captures prevalence of common symptoms and illnesses, doctor visits and medical expenditures in the past month, including skipped visits. We survey respondents about major illnesses or injuries since January 2011, and capture disability using the Washington Group Short Set on Disability. Section 17.3 evaluates mental health and welbeing. We measure depressive symptoms using using the CESD-10. Both of these instruments are validated. In section 17.3 we survey respondents amount and quality of sleep, and in section 17.4 we use the 4-item Perceived Stress Scale to measure perceived stress. Finally, we ask two questions selected from the Grit Scale to measure grit in focus respondents. The Grit Scale was developed by Angela Duckworth, a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania.

4.2.18 Child Strengths and Difficulties and Child Sleep

This section first administers the validated Child Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire to a randomly selected child between the ages of 3 and 8. The questionnaire differentiates between children aged 3 and 4+ to account for normal patterns of child development. We then ask about quantity and quality of this child's sleep, including naps. This section will likely be significantly expanded in subsequent waves of the panel. See section 6.9 for comments on data issues in this section.

4.2.19 Religion

This section asks respondents their religion or denomination. We then elicit the level of religiosity in the community, and whether this level has changed in the past 12 months. We ask about religious donations, and whether nationality or sect is more important in the respondent's life.

4.2.20 Host Community Relations

This section surveys the respondent about integration with the host community and language acquisition.

4.2.21 Community Groups, Social Capital and Political Attitudes

This section asks respondents an open-form question about how describe themselves - as a Syrian, Muslim, Sunni, woman, etc. We next ask about participation in community groups, charitable giving, religious attendance, news consumption, and political engagement. We also included several questions about democracy, politics, corruption and gender issues from the Arabarometer. We conclude this section by asking respondents if they were ever arrested or imprisoned in Syria.

4.2.22 Community Problems, Safety and Crime Victimization

Section 22.1 asks detailed questions about bribery. These questions will be excluded from subsequent waves. Section 22.2 asks about victimization of theft and physical assault, and perceived safety.

4.2.23 Marriage

This section surveys all ever-married respondents about characteristics of each of their marriages. For each marriage, we ask respondents the first name of the spouse, age at marriage, how long they had known the spouse before marriage, whose decision it was to get married in general, and to the spouse in particular, the amount of the prompt and deferred dowry in the marriage contract, whether the marriage was registered

in court, birth control usage, whether the spouse is still living and cause of death if deceased, religion, governorate of birth and education level of the spouse, when the marriage ended if applicable, and whether the marriage was polygamous.

4.2.24 Fertility

This section first asks women their age at menarche. Then all respondents are asked whether they or a partner have ever been pregnant. Then characteristics of each pregnancy are discussed. We elicit whether prenatal care was sought and where, how the pregnancy ended (live birth, still birth, miscarriage or abortion), when the pregnancy ended if not live birth, where the baby was born if a live birth, the baby's gender, birthdate, vaccination status and whether the child is still living. If the child has passed away, we ask when the child died. For children still living we ask about the child's subjective level of health and who the child lives with if they do not reside in the household. We also ask respondents who makes important child-rearing decisions in the household. See section 6.11 for data usage issues.

4.2.25 Conclusion

In the conclusion section, we ask about data reliability, fluency with Arabic and collect the GPS coordinates of the home.

5 S-RLS Data Collection

5.1 Field Staff

We partner with Mindset, a Jordanian market research firm, to collect the S-RLS data and aid with data processing. Under the S-RLS's team direction, Mindset prepares electronic survey materials; hires, trains, and manages a team of local enumerators; oversees survey implementation and quality assurance; and conducts basic data preparation of the survey after enumeration. Mohammad Qardan serves as our Jordan-based project coordinator. Our partnership is led by Rana Samara, Mindset's Research Director, and Nada Shannak, Mindset's Research Manager. Data processing and quality assurance is led by Mohammad Qaryouti, with the initial rollout spearheaded by Ammar Touban. Enumerator training and operations were handled jointly by Mohammad Qardan and Majd Haddad. Throughout the life of the project, we have worked with over 50 enumerators and 15 supervisors, with team size fluctuating between 10 and 35 at a given time.

5.2 Data Quality Management

Data quality management procedures for the S-RLS include in-field monitoring where at least 20% of interviews are monitored by a supervisor. Each interview's GPS location is plotted on a satellite map to confirm that the interview was conducted in the respondent's address, and survey administration time is monitored to ensure outliers are rectified.

Mindset also conducts backchecks to assure data quality after the interview is completed. Mindset staff call at least 20% of the interviewees afterwards to confirm that the respondent was actually interviewed and ask five random questions from a list of 20 questions from the survey. If more than half of the callback data differs from the original data collected, the entire survey is recollected. If the mismatch rate is less than 50%, enumerators correct the questions which differ but otherwise do not resurvey the household.

6 Special Data Collection and Usage Issues

This section outlines challenges encountered during the February 2020 round of data collection (corresponding to the urban subsample) which impact data structure or quality.

6.1 COVID-19

This round of data collection began in February 2020 and was cut short by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We surveyed 468 households before operations were halted. These households were disproportionately urban, which informs why we refer to this sample was the "urban subsample". Data users should note well that while the full S-RLS sample is representative, the urban subsample is not representative by definition.

6.2 Callbacks

Due to issues with skip patterns that were not detected until after data collection, we called focus respondents after in-person enumeration to recollect data on several questions. Callbacks occurred in October 2020. In these callbacks, enumerators re-collected data in the first three sections. They then recollected the entirety of sections 7, 8 and 9. Four respondents were also resurveyed regarding section 24. Each callback then collected section 25, which concludes. For section 1-3 and 25, we report the in-person and callback values. Callback values in these sections are distinguished with the suffix `_callback`. For section 7, 8 and 9, we report callback values only.

In a limited number of cases we were not able to contact the original respondent. These cases are flagged in the variable `samefr_callback`. There are 11 cases where we were not able to recontact anyone at all, and 11 (different) cases where we were not able to interview the same individual as the original interviewee. We decided that a callback FR was the same as the original FR if they met any of the following conditions:

1. Match on first name, year of birth, and gender
2. Full name matches
3. Match on exact DOB and sex and fuzzy match on name

All other cases are considered to be a different person. The callbacks were also followed by a short number of pilot network related questions.

Also note that callback enumerators were different from the in-person enumerators. In some cases in-person enumerators also performed callbacks, but they did not necessarily call back the same person they interviewed. The enumerator IDs for in-person and callbacks are completely separate.

6.3 Schooling (Section 4)

This section was poorly enumerated. The intention was to collect data on each schooling spell the respondent participated in (ie, post-secondary, secondary, and primary), but most enumerators only collected data on the most recent schooling level. Use caution when calculating years of schooling. If imputing years of schooling, note that the Jordanian and Syrian school systems separate primary from secondary schooling differently.

6.4 Household Roster (Section 5)

Information regarding the fifth and sixth members of household number 3931-9784 was not well enumerated. Their first names (redacted for public release) are nonsensical, and this household also did not complete section 18, despite the reported ages of these members being in the eligible range. Information on these members will be clarified in the next round of panel surveys.

6.5 Consumption

This section was re-enumerated using callbacks because of a surveying error that omitted the last 3 food categories from the food consumption survey. The data reports the values from the callback.

6.6 Durable Assets (Section 9)

This section was also called-back but still suffered from a faulty skip code. Only households who had purchased an item in a given category were asked about their ownership of goods in this category. Therefore, data on durable ownership is not reliable. This section should only be used to calculate the number of purchases or gifts in the past year.

6.7 Savings and Credit (Section 14)

Because we asked respondents about the amount of interest charged on the last loan they took, but did not ask about the principal of the most recent loan, we cannot calculate interest rates. This oversight will be corrected in later waves.

6.8 Migration (Section 16)

Several households in our sample report living in Jordan as of January 2011 (where our migation history starts), so we cannot determine when they originally moved to Jordan. There are also a few cases where the last move recorded in the migration section does not match the current residence. These issues are limited, but data users should carefully examine the data before using.

6.9 Child Strengths and Difficulties and Child Sleep (Sections 18.1 and 18.2)

Our intention was to survey the focus respondent about the development and sleep of a randomly selected child in the household aged 3-8. We did not intend to make any restrictions on the relationship between the focus respondent and the child. In practice, the survey instrument did randomly select a child aged 3-8 as desired, but sections 18.1 and 18.2 were only administered to households where the focus respondent had a biological child aged 3-8. Therefore, there are 59 households which contained an eligible child, but because the focus respondent did not have any eligible biological children, these sections were skipped.

Additionally, some bedtimes (question 1) are coded using a 12-hour clock while others are coded using a 24-hour clock due to enumeration inconsistencies. Responses to question 2 are also consistent with some parents reporting time spent asleep instead of time taken to fall asleep. Researchers should use their best judgement when using this data.

6.10 Host Community Relations (Section 20)

4 Focus Respondents report speaking "no languages". This option has been removed from the survey in subsequent rounds.

6.11 Fertility (Section 24)

Due to a faulty skip code, this section failed to capture the birth day of children who have since passed away. Data users calculating the parent's age at first birth should keep this in mind.

Parents are also disproportionately likely to report January as their children's birth month or as the month that a pregnancy ended. For pregnancies that ended in live birth, this may be an enumeration error, or it may reflect the fact that refugees (or agencies like UNHCR) are more likely to report January as the birth month on their birth certificates. For pregnancies that did not end in live birth, this likely reflects enumeration errors. Data users should also keep this in mind.