



PALESTINE
SHELTER CLUSTER

Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements

Shelter Severity and Household Needs Across Accessible Areas of Gaza

Key findings
Comprehensive Shelter and NFI Needs Assessment
August 2026

Shelter Severity Classification

The Shelter Severity Classification (SSC) is a harmonized, household-level framework carried out in June/July 2026 to classify shelter conditions and estimates People in Need (PiN) to inform targeting, prioritization and response planning across Gaza.



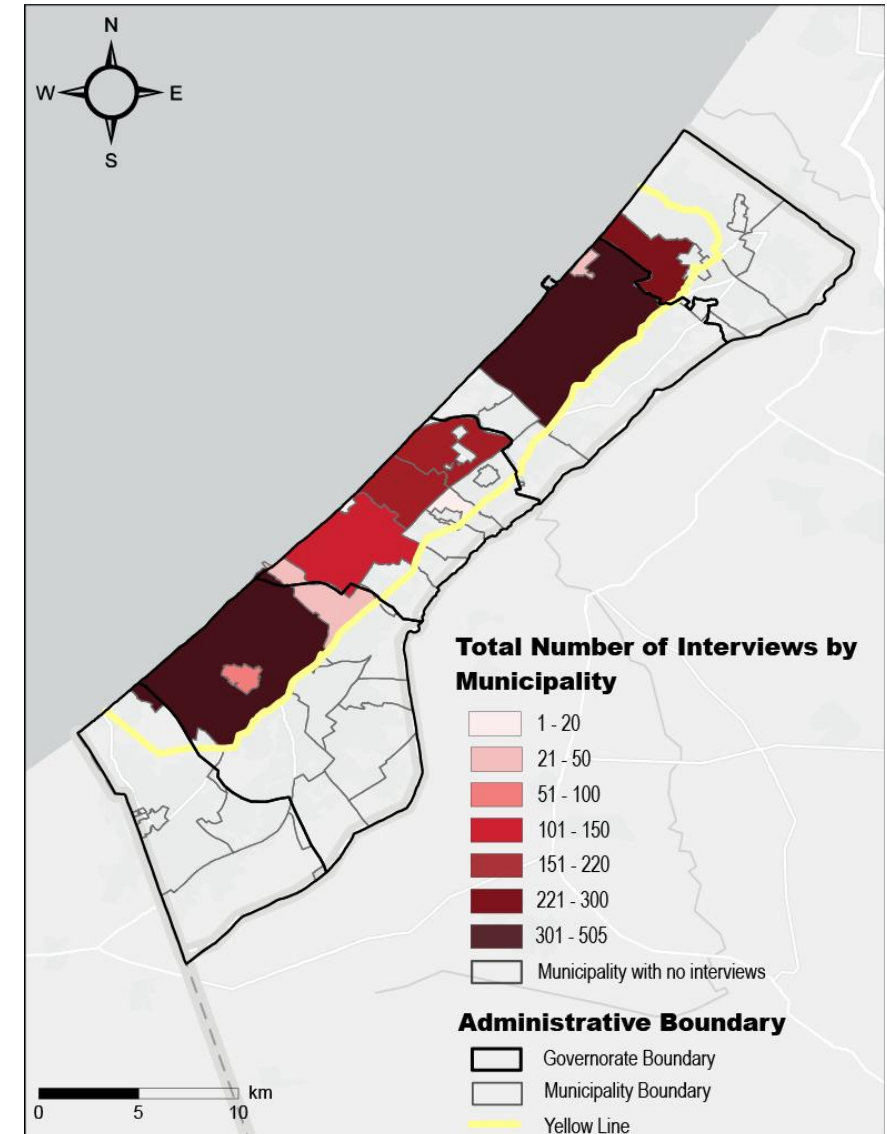
1951 in-person household interviews across the Gaza Strip



2-stage random sampling to ensure geographic coverage and HH representivity



Representative at Gaza Strip and governorate levels (accessible areas)



94% of the assessed population are in need of shelter and NFI assistance

1.98m

people classified in Shelter Severity Phases 3, 4 or 5 (Crisis, Critical, or Catastrophic).

These phases constitute the Shelter

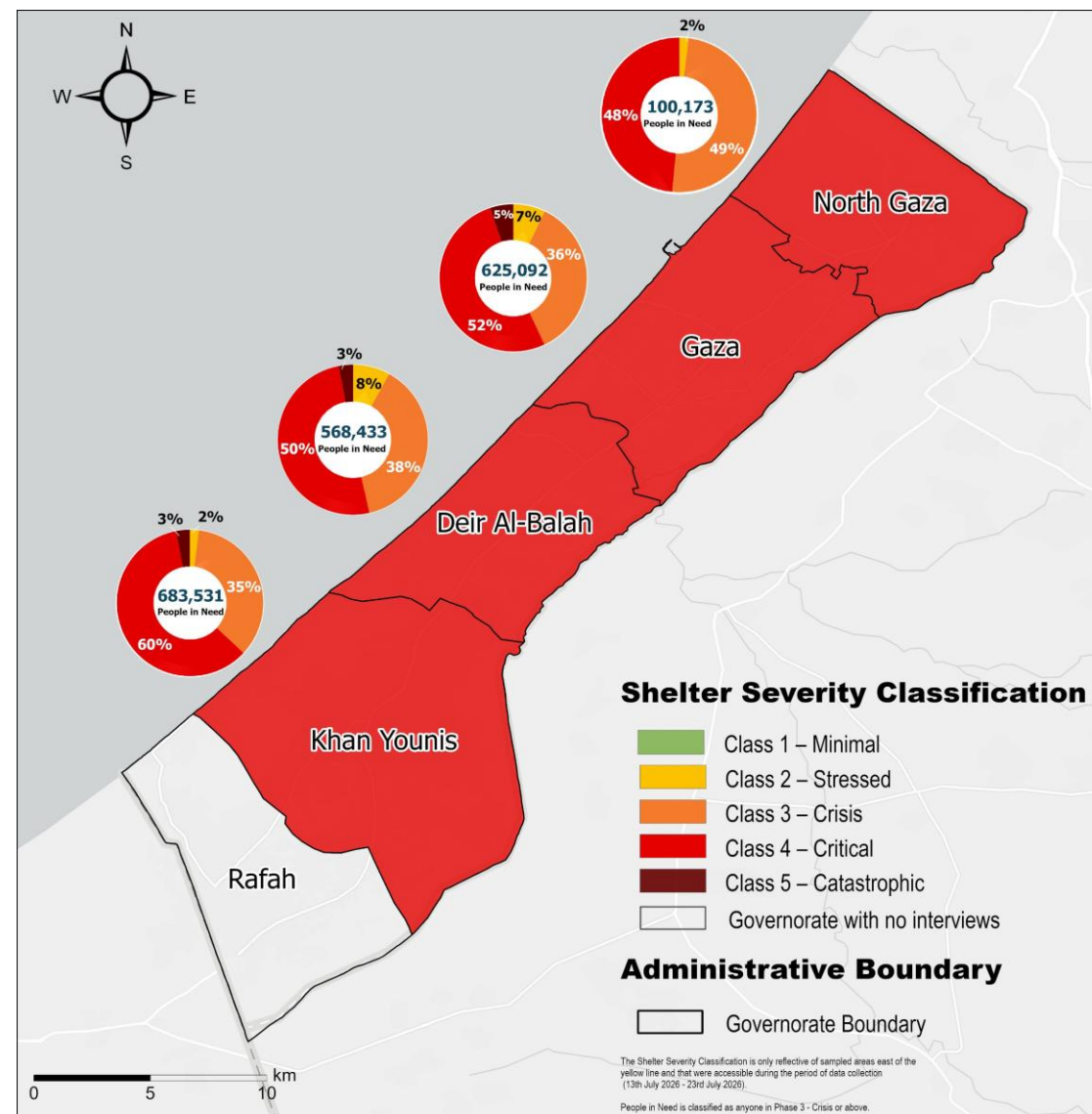
People in Need, reflecting households with significant to life-threatening needs.

Phase 4	All four assessed governorates classified in Critical
58%	in Phase 4 or 5 — about 1.20 million people
65%	living in tents or makeshift shelters
10%	received shelter or NFI assistance in the previous month
2x the odds	of severe shelter need among households with one+ person with a disability or 7+ members

1.98m

people classified in Shelter Severity
 Phases 3, 4 or 5 — the Shelter
 People in Need

94% of the assessed
 population are in need of
 shelter and NFI assistance



What drives Shelter Severity?

	Pillar 1 The Shelter	Pillar 2 Living Conditions	Pillar 3 The Surrounding Areas
Pillar focus	Shelter adequacy and physical protection	Ability to meet essential domestic needs	Safety and access in the surrounding environment
Key dimensions	Shelter condition, damage, safety, privacy, ventilation, space, and HLP	Sleeping, cooking, lighting, thermal comfort, hygiene, storage, energy, fuel and NFIs	Water collection, markets and services, transportation and environmental hazards
Core constraints defined	Inadequate, damaged and deteriorating shelters	Insufficient resources and infrastructure for daily life	Hazardous surroundings and constrained access to water and essential services

Key analytical takeaway:

The drivers are overlapping and complimentary. Shortage of fuel affects multiple dimensions, but the usage of fuel is shaped by your shelter type. Flooding affected shelters as well as food stocks, sanitation facilities, and essential household items. Rodents present in and around shelters contaminated food and damaged possessions inside them.

Shelter type, governorate or visible shelter damage alone doesn't act as a proxy for vulnerabilities. Severe domestic living constraints also remained widespread among households occupying comparatively well maintained tents and buildings. **Addressing these conditions requires integrated support.**

1,951 households were surveyed across four governorates

In-person interviews from 14 to 28 June 2026, using a stratified two-stage cluster design on the OCHA population surface of 6 May. Findings are representative of households in accessible areas.

The Shelter Severity Classification

- Combines three weighted pillars: **shelter** (50%), **living conditions** (30%), and the **surrounding area** (20%)
- Assigns each household a shelter severity phase (1-5).
- Governorate classifications follow the SSC 20% rule, while households in Phases 3–5 constitute the Shelter People in Need (PiN).

Classifications were agreed at a workshop with SSC partners.

GOVERNORATE	SURVEYS	MARGIN OF ERROR
North Gaza	279	±5.9%
Gaza City	541	±4.2%
Deir al-Balah	517	±4.3%
Khan Younis	614	±4.0%
Total	1,951	±2.4%

Limitations: Findings cover accessible areas within the operational sampling frame only; Rafah and other inaccessible locations were excluded, and estimates are reported at household level.

Living conditions are the most severe of the three pillars

PILLAR 1 · THE SHELTER

88%

in Phase 3 or above. Damage, deterioration and lack of space and privacy, especially in temporary shelters.

PILLAR 2 · LIVING CONDITIONS

97%

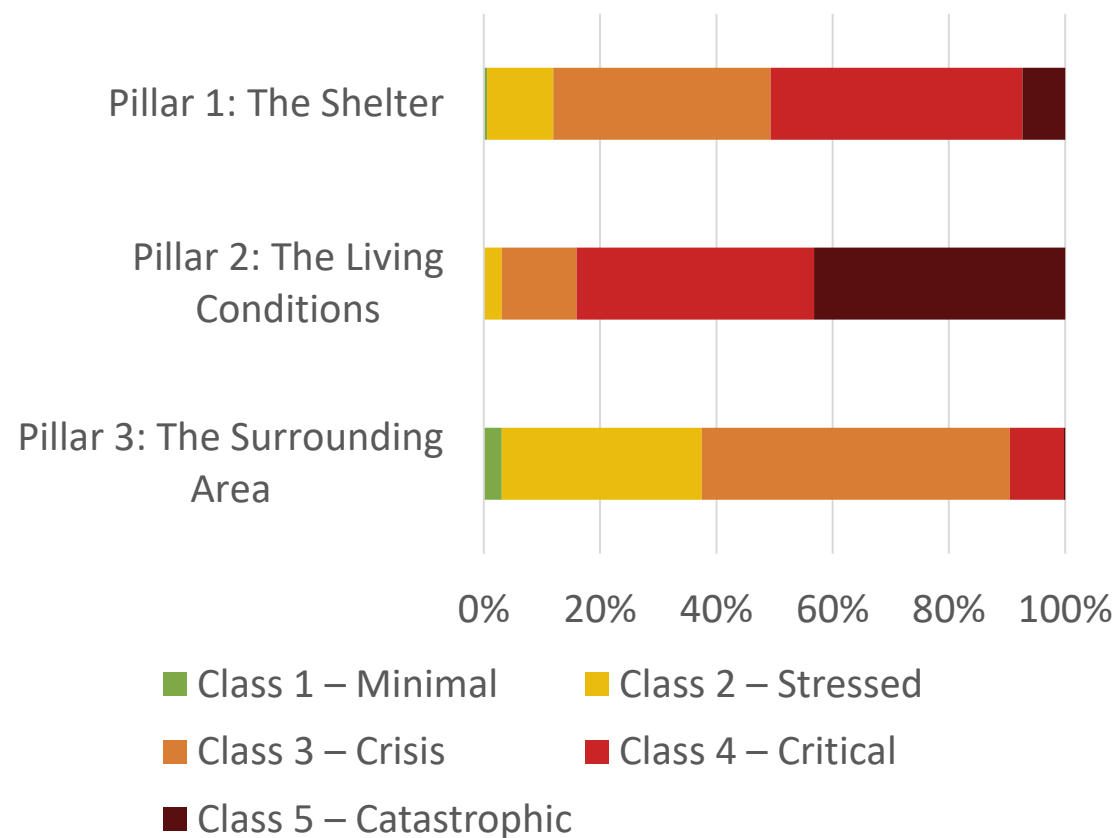
In Phase 3 or above, including 43% in Phase 5 alone — the highest proportion of any pillar across all governorates.

PILLAR 3 · SURROUNDING AREA

62%

in Phase 3 or above. Despite nearby services, interruptions, affordability, transport constraints, and environmental hazards limited safe and reliable access.

Proportion of Households by SSC pillar and Severity Phase



Shelter inadequacy extends beyond visible damage



54%

of tents and makeshift shelters were in poor or very poor condition, and 54% of households had used the same tent for over a year.

97%

Reported at least one shelter issue—most commonly rodents (89%), inadequate thermal comfort (59%), leaks during rain (54%), and lack of privacy (50%).

71%

were affected by flooding since the onset of last winter; 44% live below the 3.5 m² per person minimum.

Tent and makeshift condition n=1,220. Flooding and infestation were reported across all shelter types and damage levels.

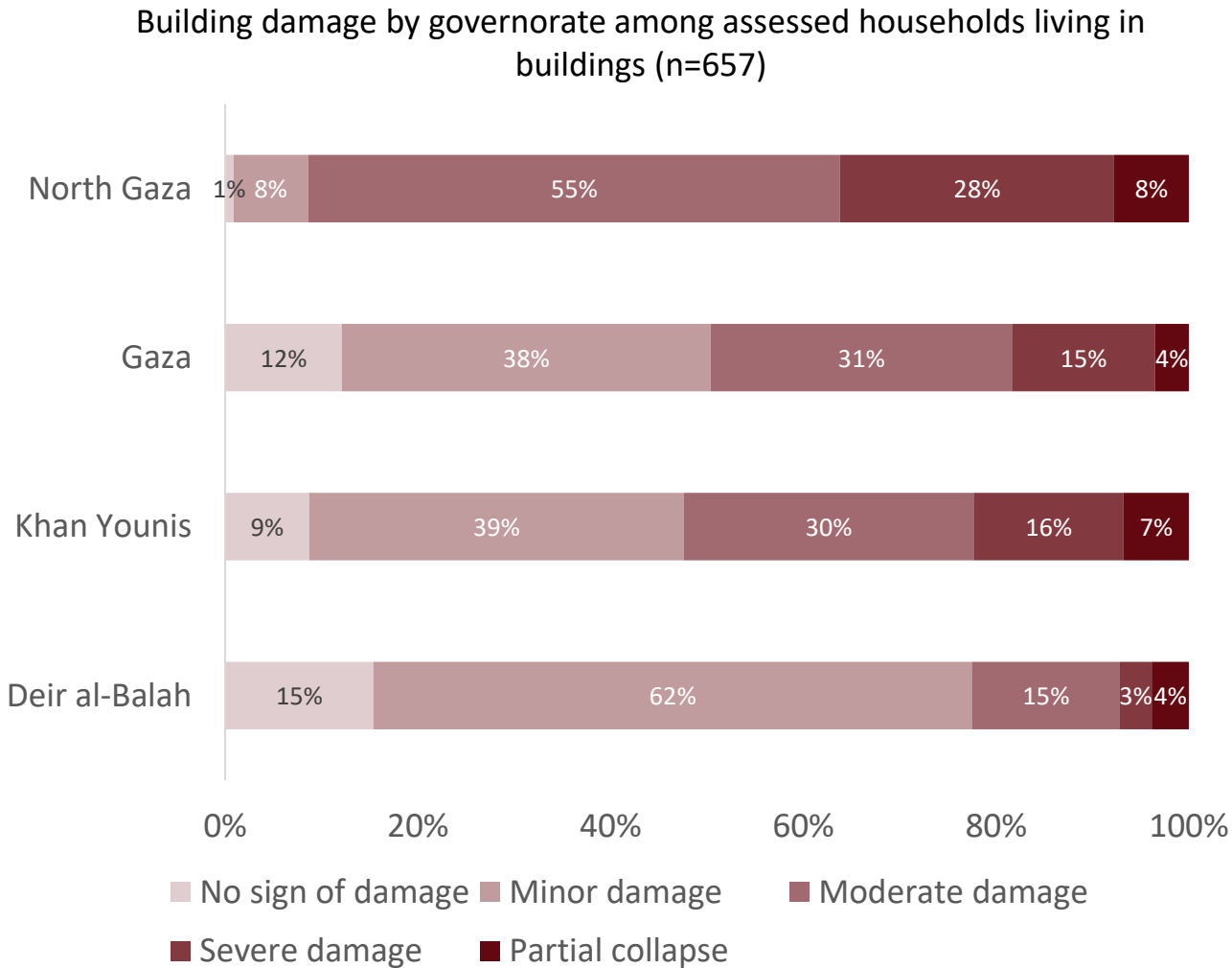
The condition of buildings varied across governorates



The condition of buildings varied across governorates. North Gaza had the highest proportion of households living in severely damaged or partially collapsed buildings, followed by Khan Younis, Gaza and Deir al-Balah.



Repair remained beyond the reach of many households. Among households living in damaged buildings (n=524), **71%** reported being unable to afford the materials needed for repair, while **49%** said materials were unavailable in local markets.



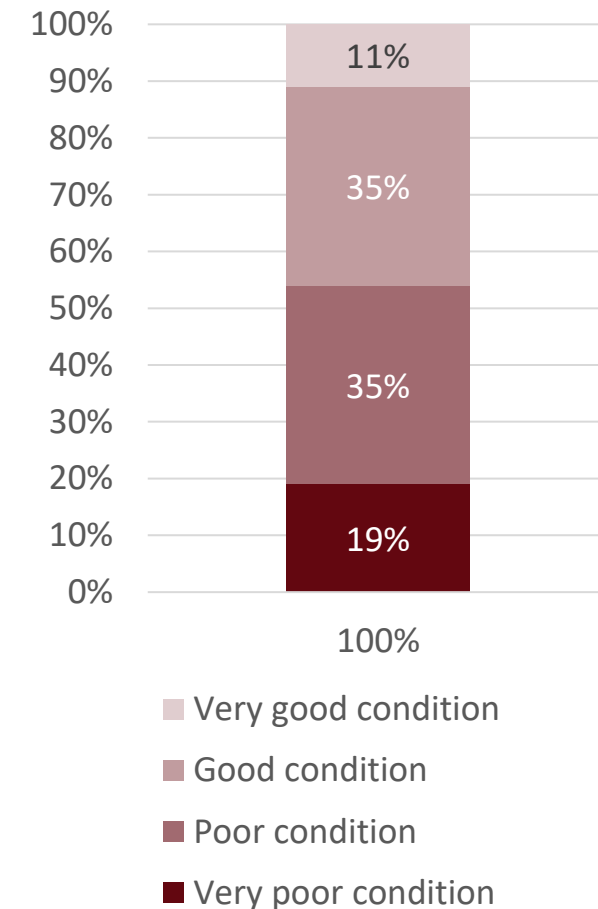
Temporary shelters showed widespread deterioration

 **54% of assessed tents and makeshift shelters were in **poor** or **very poor** condition**

 **Many households had remained in the same temporary shelter for extended periods.** At least **54%** had lived in the same tent for one year or longer, increasing exposure to rain, flooding, wind and extreme temperatures.

 **Length of use alone did not explain shelter condition.** Tents of a similar age varied considerably in condition, suggesting that **initial design, materials, maintenance and repairs** also influenced deterioration.

Tent and makeshift shelter condition among assessed households living in temporary shelters (n=1220)



Shelter issues were nearly universal

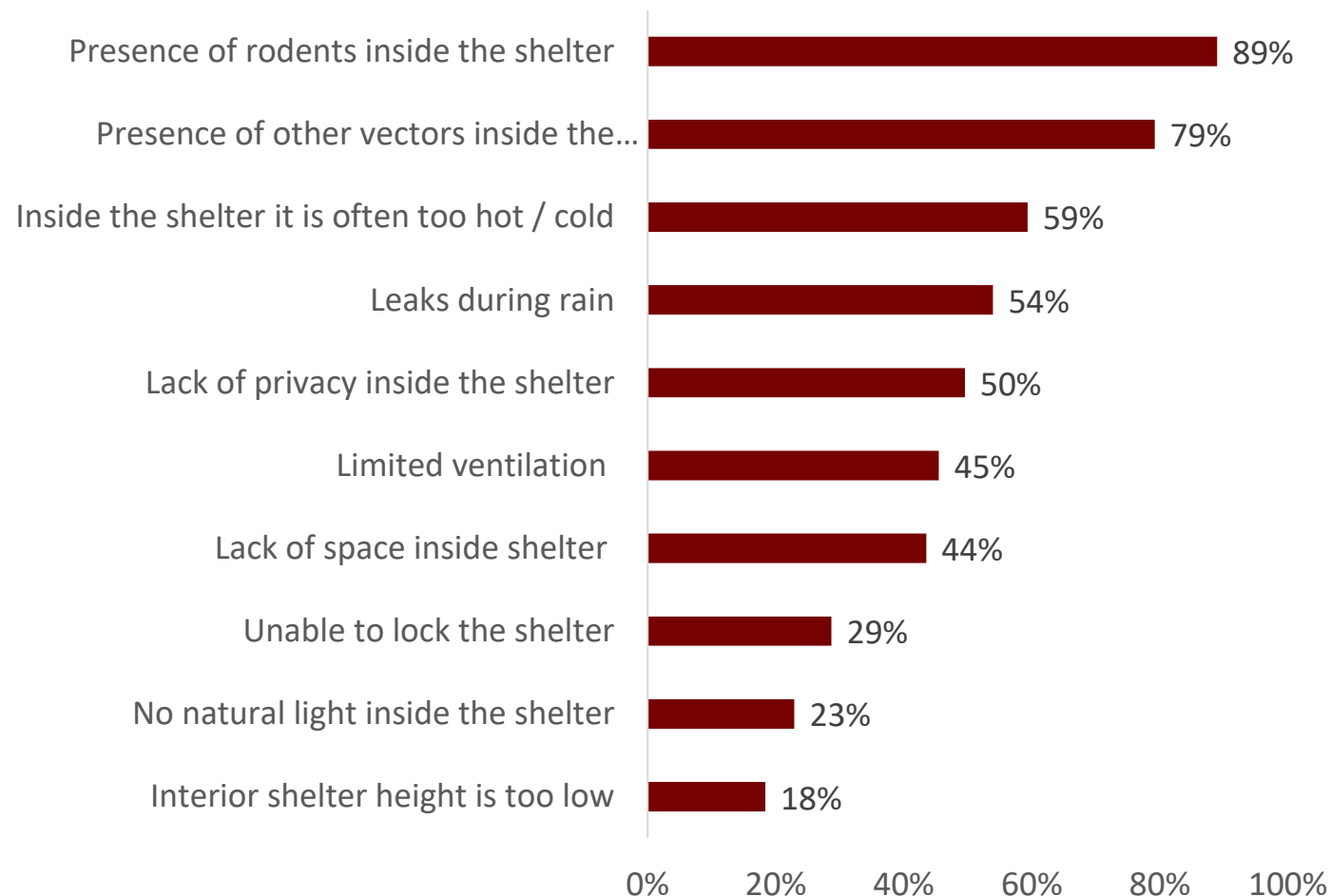


97% of households reported at least one deficiency affecting health, safety, privacy or the ability to use shelter as a functional living space, demonstrating that shelter inadequacy extended well beyond visible structural damage.



The reported deficiencies affected both the shelter structure and everyday life, including exposure to rodents and vectors, inadequate protection from weather, limited privacy, poor ventilation and insufficient living space.

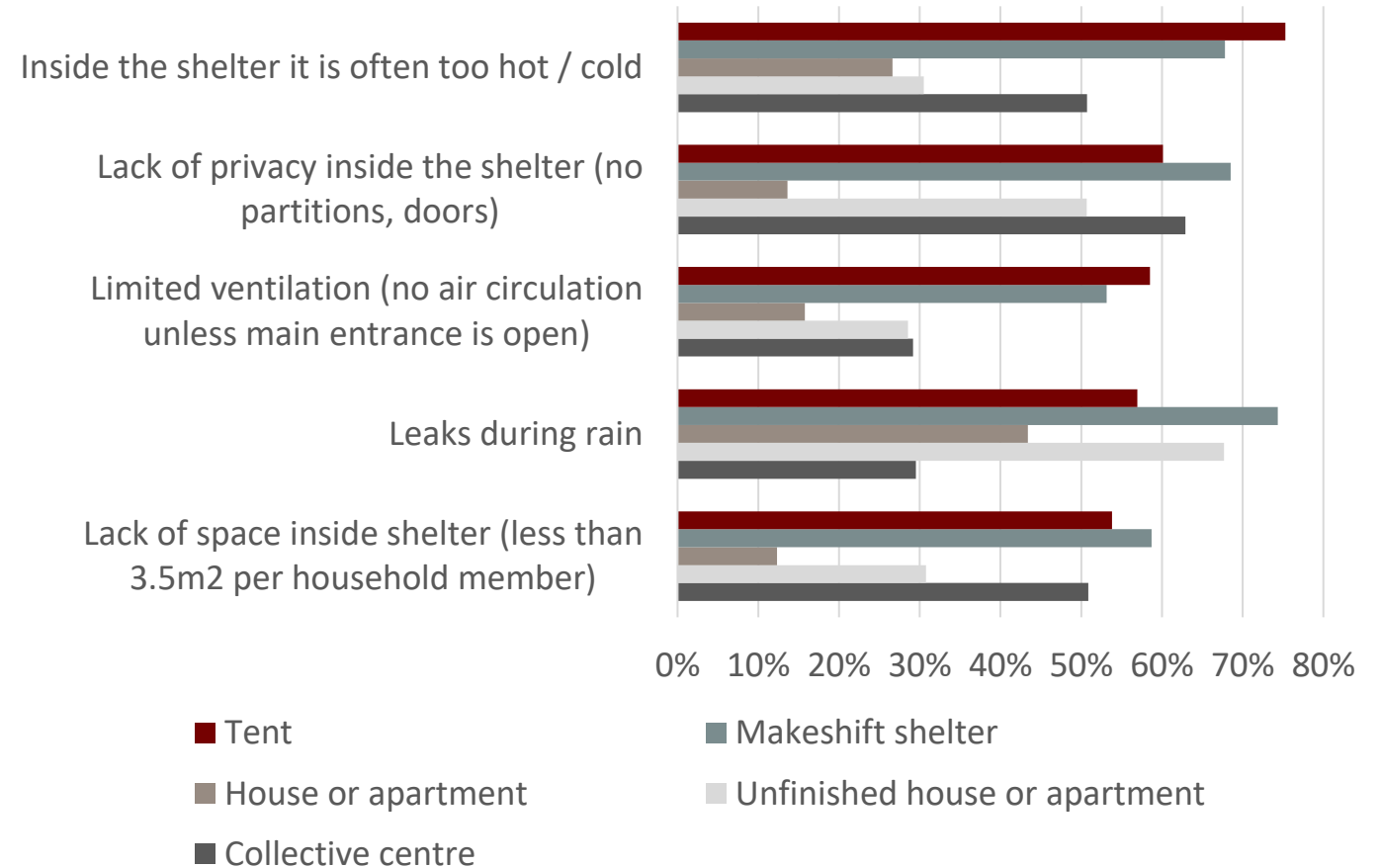
Most commonly reported shelter issues



Shelter issues varied by shelter type

-  **Temporary shelters were more likely to report inadequate thermal comfort, privacy and ventilation** than houses or apartments.
-  **Makeshift shelters were particularly affected by rainfall leakage**, while tents also reported high levels of weather-related deficiencies.
-  **Buildings generally performed better than temporary shelters**, although many households living in buildings still reported substantial shelter deficiencies.

Shelter issues by shelter type



Environmental hazards compounded shelter deficiencies

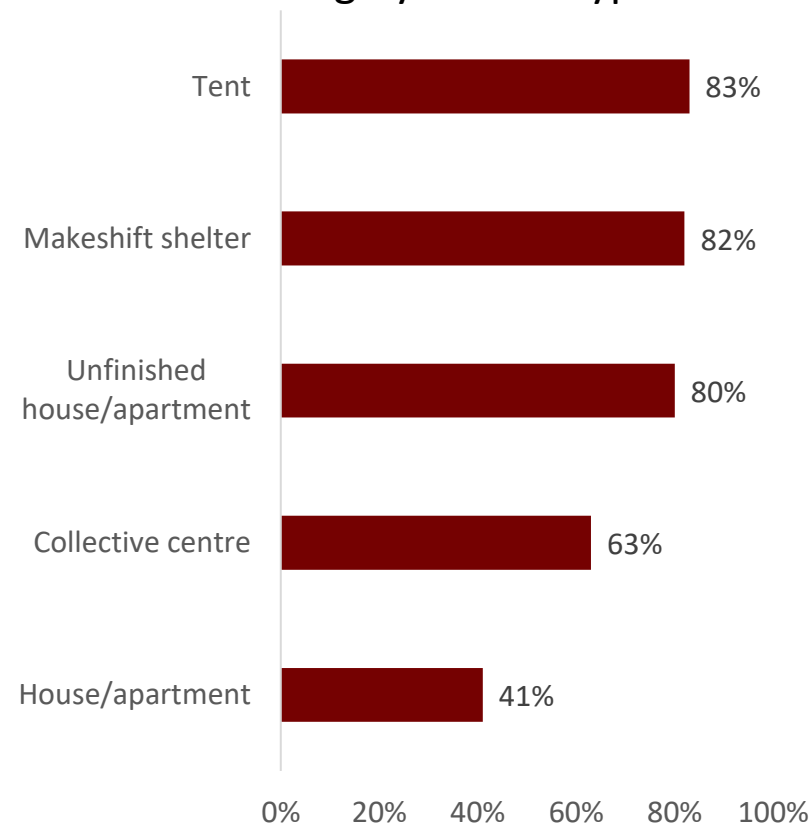
Physical shelter deficiencies and environmental hazards combined to expose households to serious health and safety risks across shelter types.

89% of households reported **presence of rodents** inside the shelter.

71% of households reported **flooding** since the onset of last winter.

Although flooding was most common in tents and makeshift shelters, **80% of households living in unfinished buildings also reported flooding**, demonstrating that environmental hazards extended beyond temporary shelters.

Proportion of households reporting flooding by shelter type



Households cannot cook, sleep or keep warm safely inside their shelters



3 hours

of lighting a day on average; 84% report ineffective heating and 91% ineffective cooling.

68%

lack the space or items to cook, and 48% burn plastic, tyres, garbage or cardboard to prepare food.

71%

report difficulties sleeping, 64% cannot store food and water safely, and 61% lack basic hygiene items.

Phase 4 or 5 was recorded for 59% of households in undamaged buildings and 62% of those in buildings with minor damage — structural condition alone does not identify these households.

Domestic living constraints affected every aspect of daily life



Households had very limited means of regulating indoor temperatures.



Preparing meals safely was constrained by inadequate space, fuel and equipment.



Many households lacked the space and essential items needed for safe sleep.

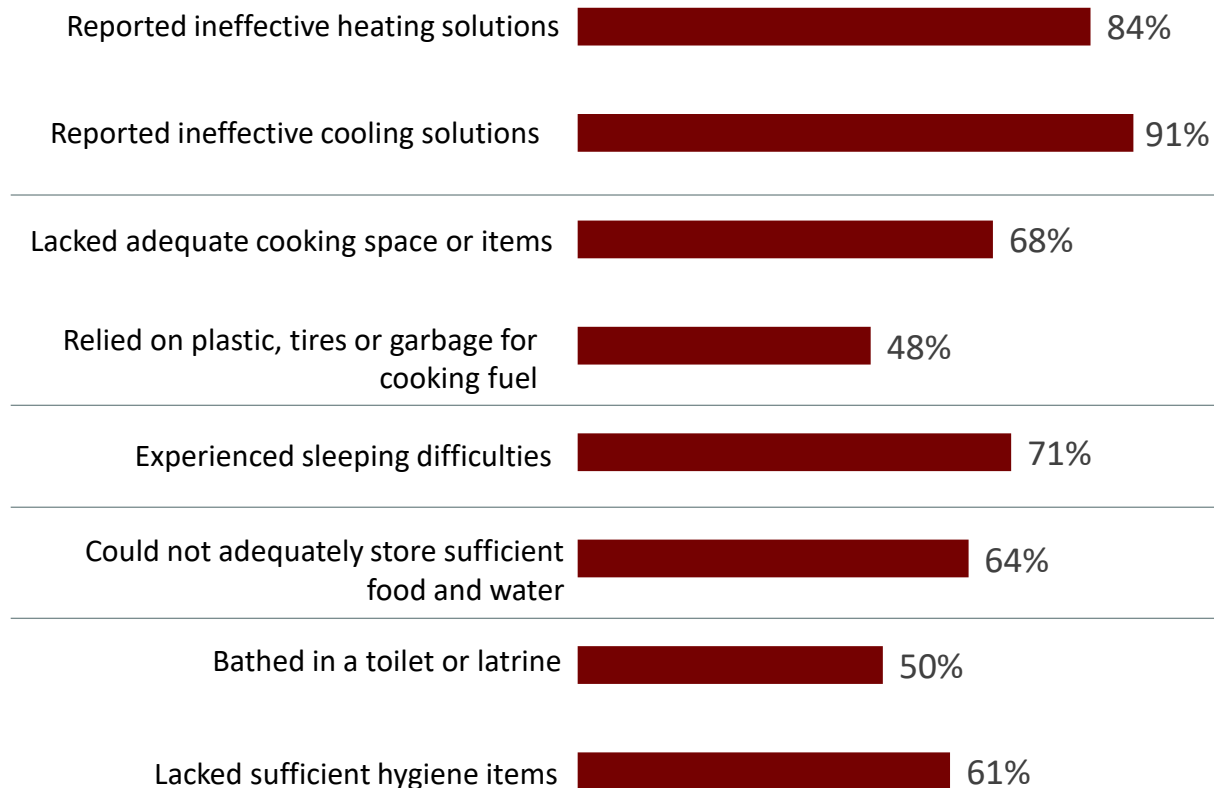


Safe storage of food and water remained a major constraint on daily life.



Limited facilities, privacy and hygiene items constrained safe personal hygiene.

Proportion of households reporting key domestic living constraints



Affordability, limited availability of essential items, inadequate space and unsuitable facilities constrained multiple aspects of daily life simultaneously, rather than affecting a single domestic function in isolation.

The same barriers constrained multiple aspects of daily life

Barrier	Heating	Cooking	Sleeping	Storage	Hygiene
Affordability	✓	✓			
Limited availability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Insufficient space/privacy		✓	✓	✓	✓
Unsuitable/unsafe facilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Affordability, limited availability of essential items, inadequate space and unsuitable facilities affected multiple aspects of daily life simultaneously, rather than a single domestic function in isolation.

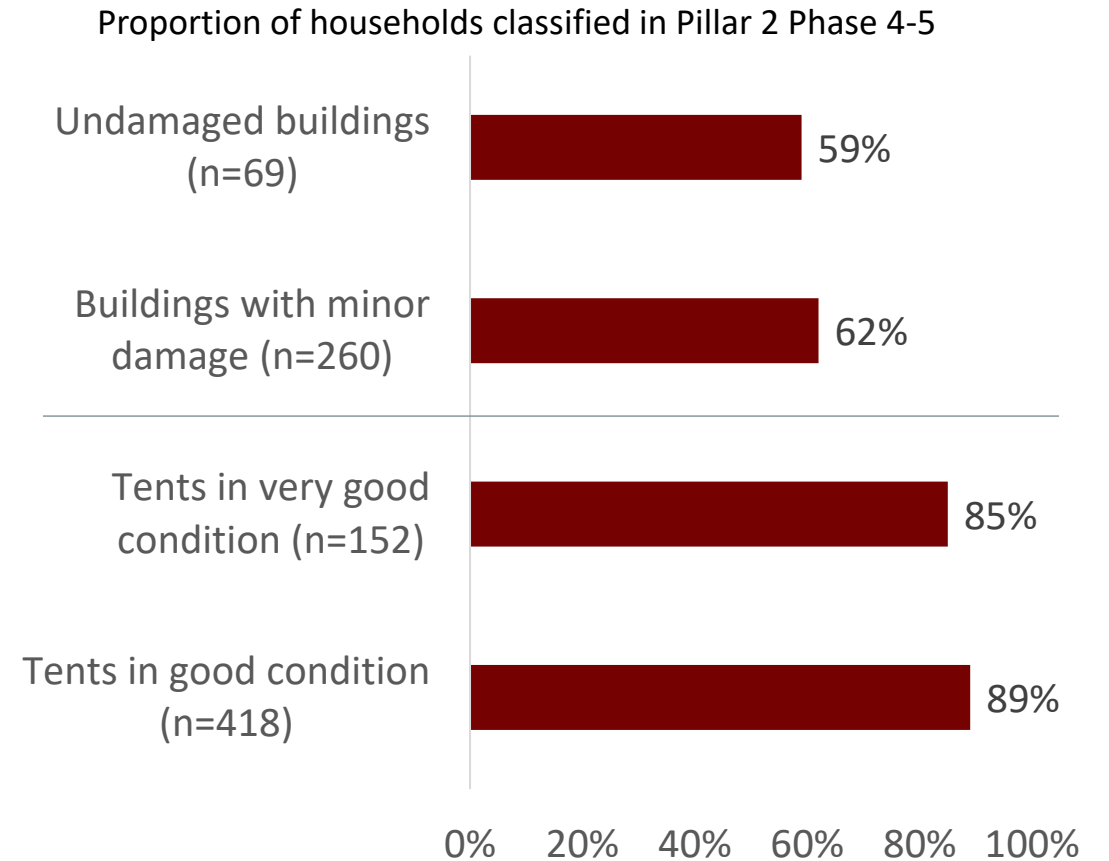
Structural condition alone did not determine shelter adequacy



Pillar 2 severity remained **widespread even among households** whose shelters appeared comparatively adequate.

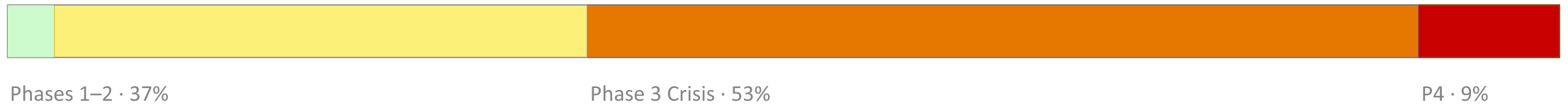


Shelter adequacy depended **not only on the physical structure**, but also on households' ability to carry out essential daily activities.



Indicative analysis of selected shelter-condition subgroups.

Proximity to services does not mean households can use them



98%

have at least one environmental hazard within 10 metres of the shelter, and 86% have two or more.

73 / 68%

reach a health facility or a market within 30 minutes — yet 69% cite unavailable medicines and 81% cite cost.

63%

depend on water trucking; only 15% receive drinking water at the shelter and 67% lack storage containers.

Hazards varied geographically: rubble affected 87% of households in North Gaza against 18% in Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis.

Physical proximity did not ensure effective access to essential services

Across water, healthcare and markets, **physical proximity generally did not translate into effective access.**

Service	Nearby service	Yet...
Drinking water	74% collected within 30 min	Only 15% received water directly at their shelter; collection and transport remained necessary.
Domestic water	64% collected within 30 min	Reliable access remained constrained: 59% still relied on containers and supplies were often irregular.
Healthcare	73% reached a facility within 30 min	69% cited unavailable medicines or services.
Markets	68% reached a market within 30 min	81% said the cost of goods prevented effective access.
Education	54% reliable access	Access was interrupted and varied substantially by governorate.

Affordability, service availability and transport constraints were consistently greater barriers than distance.

These constraints were reported across shelter types and governorates, indicating they reflected wider service systems and household purchasing power rather than accommodation type alone.

Environmental hazards were nearly universal around shelters

Environmental hazards were nearly universal and often overlapping, creating risks to households' health, physical safety, and their ability to move safely around their shelters.

98% reported **at least one environmental hazard** within 10 metres of their shelter

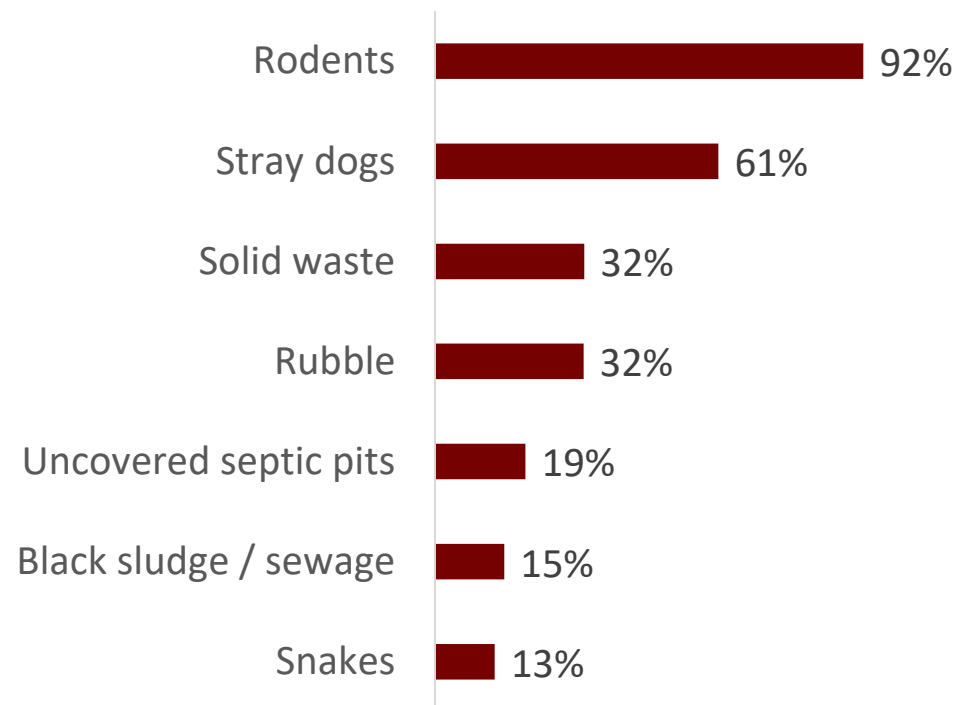


Most households experienced multiple hazards

86% reported **two or more environmental hazards**.

Environmental hazards compounded the shelter deficiencies identified under Pillars 1 and 2, **reinforcing risks to households' health, safety, and their ability to use surrounding services safely.**

Most commonly reported environmental hazards



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Multiple choice question; percentages may not add up to 100%

Households reported extensive shelter and NFI needs



Needs extended beyond shelter materials, including hygiene items, clothing, cooking fuel and utensils, water storage, bedding and lighting.



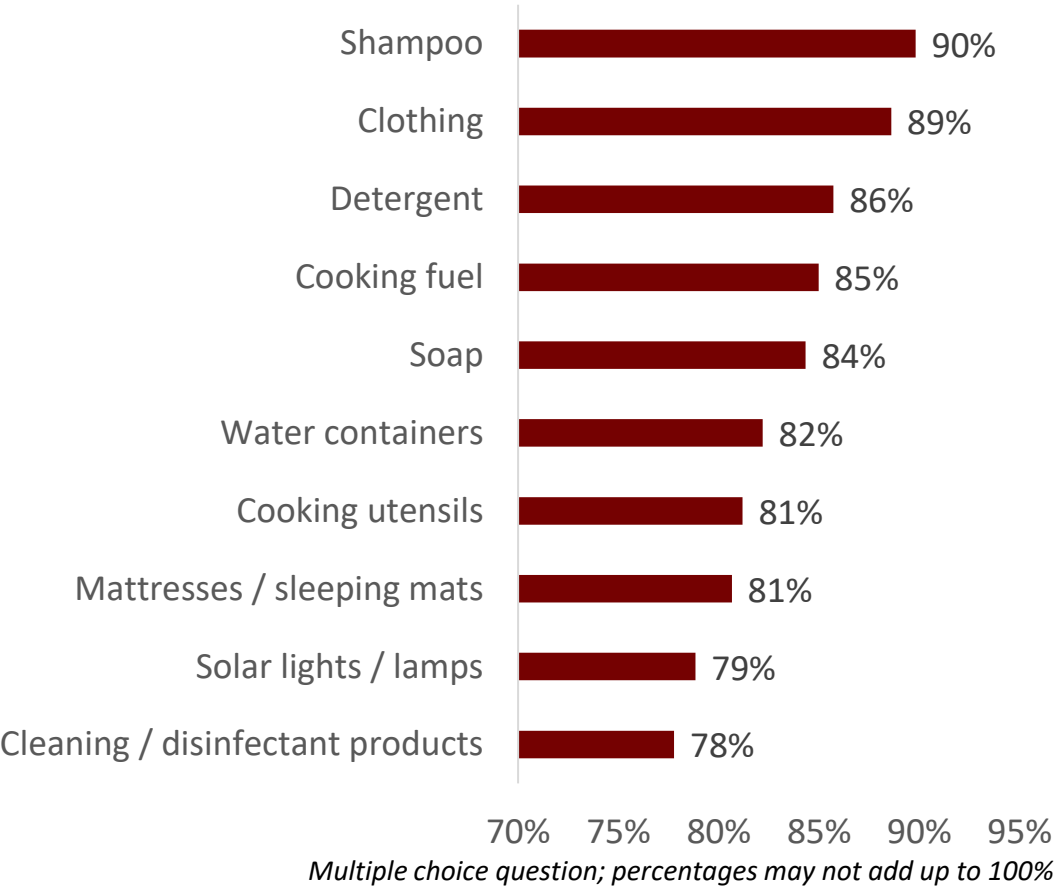
The most widely reported needs aligned closely with Pillar 2, reflecting households’ difficulties cooking, sleeping, maintaining hygiene and storing food and water.



Shelter materials also remained widely needed, reflecting damage, deteriorating and leakage documented under Pillar 1.

Reported needs closely mirrored the conditions driving shelter severity, demonstrating that effective shelter assistance must address the shelter itself, the daily functions it supports, and the surrounding environment.

Most commonly reported shelter and NFI needs



Recommendations for Donor States



Remove restrictions and ensure predictable humanitarian and commercial entry. Press Israel to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded entry of humanitarian relief, while ensuring predictable entry of shelter materials and commercial goods to sustain the response and stabilize markets.



Fund the immediate shelter and NFI response. Provide predictable, flexible, multi-year funding for emergency shelter and NFI assistance, contingency stocks, and sustained delivery pipelines that reflect the scale and severity of identified needs.



Expand transitional shelter alongside continued emergency assistance. Fund dignified transitional shelter alongside emergency assistance, while enabling safe repair, debris clearance, and restoration of basic services. Transitional shelter should complement—not replace—the repair and reconstruction of damaged housing.



Protect housing, land and property rights throughout recovery and reconstruction. Ensure recovery and reconstruction incorporate robust housing, land and property safeguards, protect ownership, tenancy and occupancy rights, and support voluntary return, repair and reconstruction without entrenching displacement.

10%

received any shelter or NFI assistance in the month before data collection – targeting alone unable to address this but just mitigate effect on most vulnerable.

Recommendations for Humanitarian Actors



Prioritise domestic functionality within shelters. Support households to safely cook, sleep, maintain hygiene, regulate temperature, store food and water, and use lighting with dignity through integrated shelter and household assistance.



Apply multidimensional targeting and prioritisation. Target assistance using Shelter Cluster vulnerability criteria, considering household composition, accessibility, shelter condition, barriers to domestic activities, and access to essential services.



Tailor assistance to shelter type, condition and repairability. Deliver shelter assistance tailored to shelter type and condition, including repairs to damaged buildings, replacement of failed temporary shelters, and improvements to weatherproofing, ventilation, privacy, accessibility and usable space.



Address environmental, health and safety hazards around shelters. Expand coordinated area-based interventions to address flooding, drainage, waste, sewage, rubble and other environmental hazards that cannot be resolved through household-level assistance alone.

Recommendations for Humanitarian Actors



Implement a dedicated multisectoral response to rodent infestations, combining waste management, safe pest control, shelter improvements and protected food and water storage to address widespread rodent infestations.



Strengthen housing, land and property documentation and referrals. Support households to document ownership, tenancy and occupancy rights and access HLP information, legal assistance and referral pathways to protect claims during displacement and recovery.



Meet urgent shelter needs while preparing for safe, rights-base recovery. Sustain emergency shelter assistance while enabling safe repairs, site improvements and early recovery that support voluntary return, protect HLP rights and do not entrench displacement.
