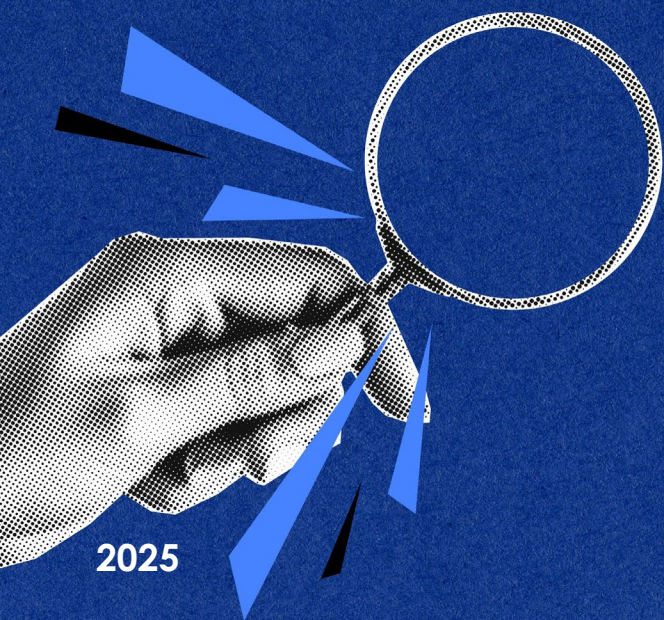
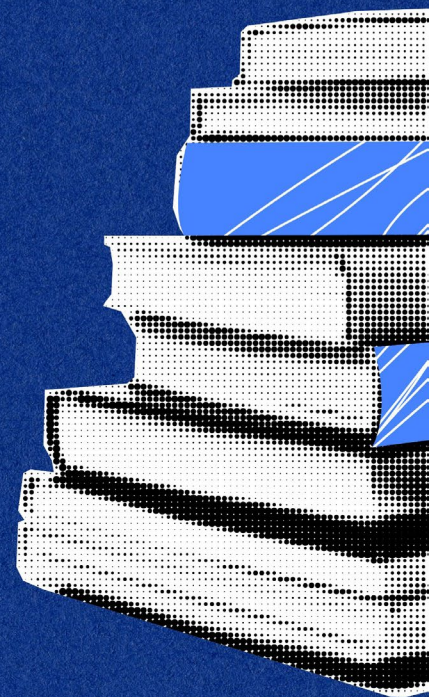


Families on Edge: The Struggle to Keep Children in School in Lebanon

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2025

Lebanon’s education system remains under sustained pressure in 2025, with parents reporting persistent financial difficulties and continued learning disruptions linked to economic hardship and the recent Israeli aggression. This year’s Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS) parents’ survey provides a comparable view to the previous three waves conducted between 2022 and 2024 (Hammoud and Shuayb, 2022; Hammoud, 2023; Hammoud and Brun, 2025), enabling us to track household finances, changes in schooling patterns, and perceived impacts on learning and wellbeing over a four-year period.

This year’s online survey engaged 1,089 parents across all eight Lebanese governorates. Of these, 95% were Lebanese, while 8% had children enrolled in pre-school, 47% in primary school, 29% in intermediate school, and 17% in secondary school. The majority of participants (86%) reported having their children in private schools, compared to 8% in public schools and 6% in tuition-free private schools. Moreover, 4% of respondents indicated that they have a child with a disability. It is important to note several limitations to this study. Due to the online approach, parents residing in the South, those with children in public schools, as well as Syrian and Palestinian parents, are underrepresented in the sample. Another limitation inherent to online surveys is their inability to adequately capture the perspectives of the most vulnerable groups, particularly households without reliable internet connectivity or access to digital devices.

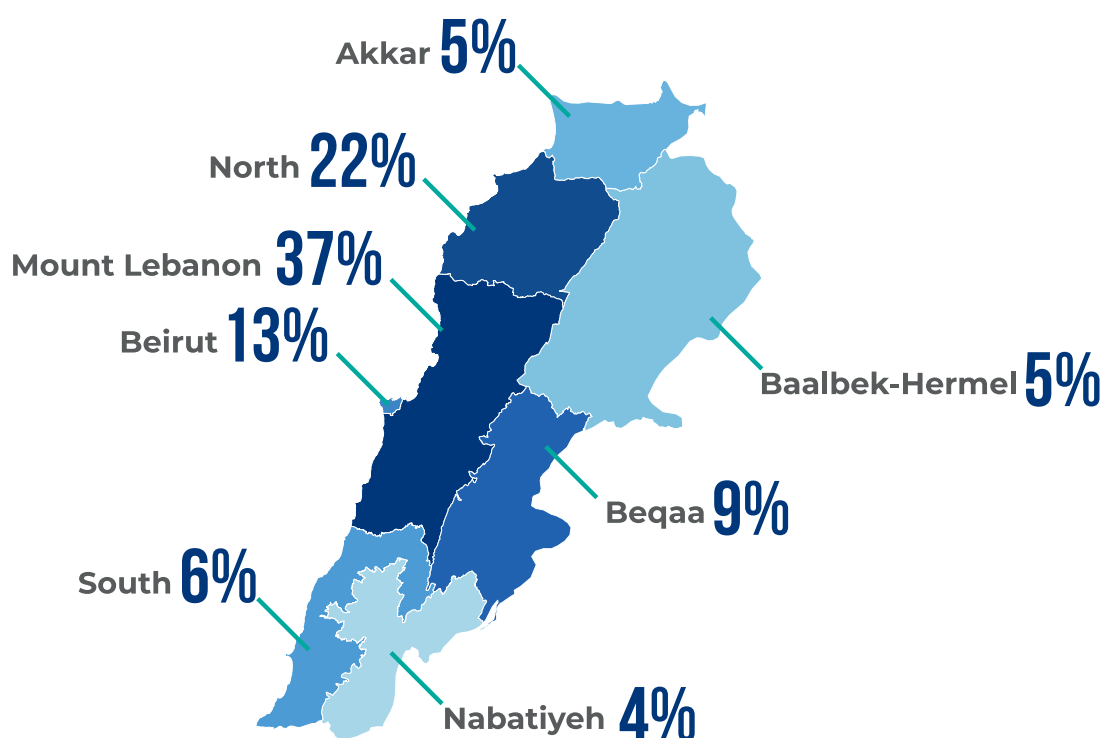


Figure 1. Sample distribution by governorate

Migration from public to private schools remained marginal among respondents, with only 3% reporting such a transfer for the academic year 2025–2026. Among those who made the move, half cited declining education quality in public schools as the main reason. By contrast, nearly half of families (46%) in the public system reported that they had moved their child from private to public schools for 2025–2026, primarily due to the inability to pay private fees, as indicated by 90%. These patterns suggested that sectoral migration were driven more by affordability than by preference, and that concerns over quality in public schools were insufficient to counter the broader cost dynamic that continued to push families out of private schools.

Parents reported average annual household income continued to increase from 2024 to 2025, rising from 10,260 to 12,216 US dollars. Over the same period, the average annual private-school tuition and transportation cost for one child rose from 3,964 to 4,417 US dollars. While both household income and schooling costs rose again this year, income increased at a faster pace than schooling costs over the period from 2022 to 2025. Average annual household income more than doubled during these four years, rising by 120%. By comparison, private-school tuition and transportation costs grew by 88% over the same period.

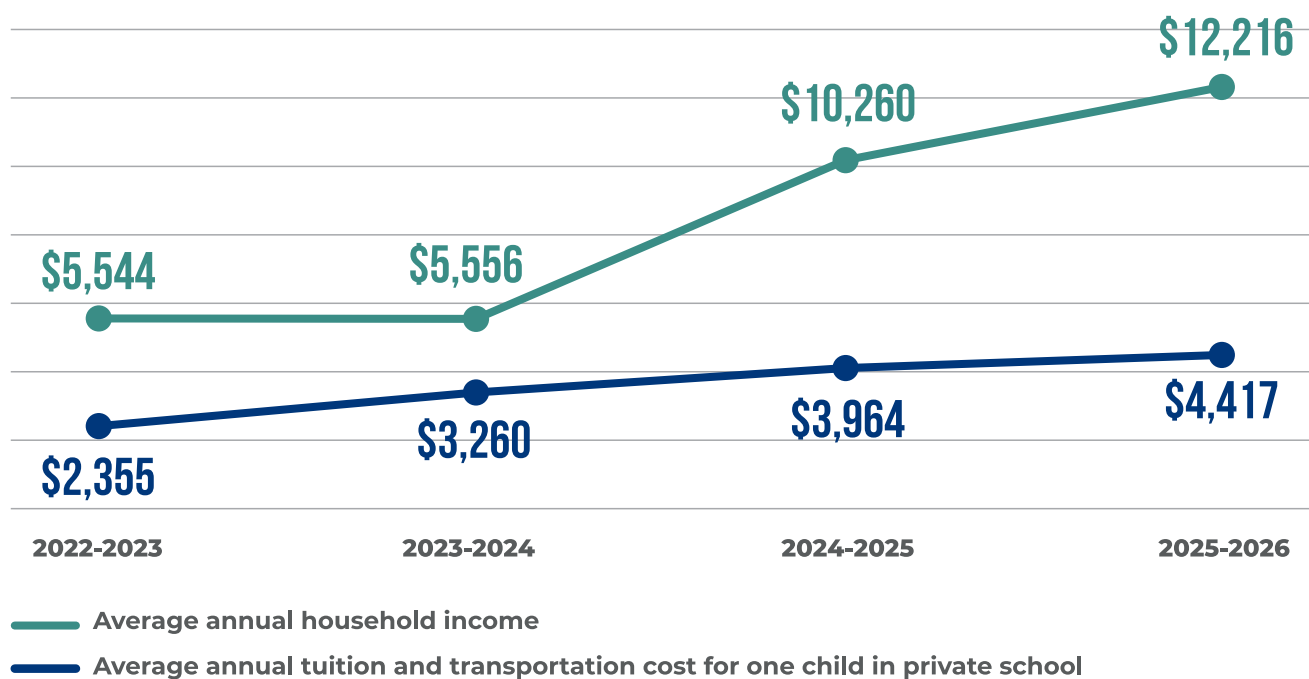


Figure 2. Average annual household income and average annual tuition and transportation cost for one child in private school

Despite these income gains, affordability remained a pressing challenge. In 2025, the cost of private schooling for one child is still equivalent to more than four times the average monthly household income, absorbing 36% of annual earnings. Although this represents a notable improvement from the 59% burden recorded in 2023, the gap remains unsustainable. Even with rising incomes, families continued to face a severe mismatch between earnings and education costs, forcing many to borrow, cut essential spending, or transfer children to public schools, as reflected in earlier findings. For instance, two-thirds of families indicated that they always struggled to pay household bills, and similar proportions reported borrowing to cover both household expenses and education costs. Improved income figures, therefore, did not close the affordability gap.

Against this backdrop of rising private school costs, the Ministry of Education this year reduced instructional days in public schools to four per week. This decision was not universally welcomed. Parents were divided: 49% supported the change, mainly to ease transport costs (48%) and reduce lesson pressure on children (66%), while 40% opposed it, citing reduced learning time (64%) and added challenges in addressing learning loss (53%). The split highlights a difficult policy trade-off, where measures that alleviate immediate financial pressures may simultaneously risk deepening learning deficits unless supported by robust catch-up programmes and effective classroom time management.

These structural and financial strains on the education system have been further compounded by the Israeli aggression on Lebanon, which not only disrupted daily schooling but also intensified the hardships faced by already vulnerable families. Nearly three in

ten respondents lived in areas directly affected by the Israeli aggression. Displacement among these families was widespread, with 86% reporting that they had been forced to leave their homes. Of those displaced, a large majority (83%) eventually returned. However, when looking at the children of all displaced families, only 75% re-enrolled in the same school. By contrast, 9% did not enrol at all this year, and 16% transferred to a different school. Among those who changed schools, three in four cited financial reasons, underscoring both the direct burden of increased tuition fees and the indirect economic effects of displacement. In addition, 21% reported changing schools because their home had been destroyed during the aggression, while 16% attributed the transfer to security concerns.

A closer look at interruptions to in-person schooling for students residing in affected areas revealed that, over the past two academic years, 27% experienced closure-related disruptions. These closures most commonly lasted between one and three months (65%), but in some cases extended to a full academic year (4%) or even two years (1%). During these periods, learning continuity was inconsistent: only 18% reported receiving regular online provision, 41% reported irregular provision, and 41% reported no provision at all. These results mirror findings from earlier survey waves and highlight the persistent gaps in schools' capacity to sustain instructional time during closures (Hammoud and Brun, 2025). These disruptions were not only logistical but also psychological; across the entire sample, parents reported pronounced psychosocial effects on their children due to the aggression. Overall, 48% observed increased fear or anxiety, 32% noted difficulty concentrating, and 16% reported sleep problems.

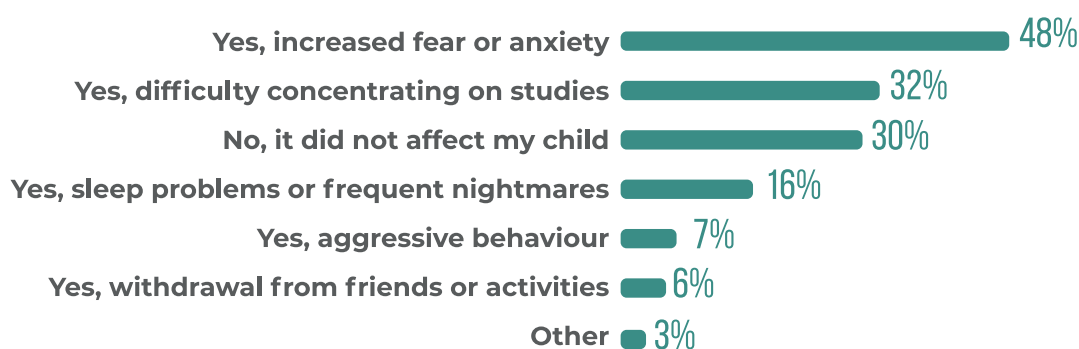


Figure 3. The impact of the Israeli aggression on children's psychological wellbeing

Amid these challenges, only 25% of parents were confident that their child would be able to continue their education, while the majority (75%) remained uncertain about their child's educational future. Moreover, 9% of surveyed parents reported having at least one child under 18 who has dropped out of school. Consistent with prior waves (Hammoud and Brun, 2025), affected children are more often male, with parents reporting around two-thirds of dropouts as males. While the survey does not capture detailed pathways, the combination of cost pressures, interrupted schooling, and labour market pull factors for young males remains a central risk.

In light of these findings, Lebanon's educational policymakers must act decisively. Regulating private school tuition to ensure affordability relative to household income, maintaining free access to public education, and safeguarding educational quality despite reduced instructional days are critical priorities. Equally important is the introduction of targeted support for families in conflict-affected or displaced communities. Without such measures, the financial, social, and psychological pressures documented in this year's survey will continue to undermine children's right to stable and equitable education

About ERICC

This survey was conducted and data collected as a part of the ERICC Research Programme Consortium which aims to build a robust and coherent body of rigorous research evidence to inform education policy and practice to effectively improve learning and well-being for children in conflict and crisis settings and contribute to more peaceful, equitable and socially just societies. ERICC is led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) with Academic Lead IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society, and expert partners include Centre for Lebanese Studies, Common Heritage Foundation, Forcier Consulting, ODI, Osman Consulting, Oxford Policy Management and Queen Rania Foundation. ERICC is supported by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

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