



The Growing Struggle to Keep Children in School in Lebanon Amid Rising Costs and Renewed Israeli Aggression

Mohammad Hammoud

Lebanon's education system enters the 2026–2027 academic year bearing the accumulated weight of compounded crises and the latest Israeli aggression in March 2026. Parents reported persistent financial difficulties and renewed disruption to their children's education. Although average household income rose, families continued to struggle with daily expenses and education costs as the cost of living increased. This year's Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS) parents' survey provides a comparable view to the previous four waves conducted since 2022 (Hammoud and Shuayb, 2022; Hammoud, 2023; Hammoud and Brun, 2025; Hammoud, 2025), enabling us to track household finances, changes in schooling patterns, and perceived impacts on learning and wellbeing over a five-year period.

Sample and limitations

This year's online survey engaged 861 parents across all eight Lebanese governorates. Of these, 93% were Lebanese, 3% Syrian, and 3% Palestinian. Eleven percent had children enrolled in pre-school, 50% in primary school, 23% in intermediate school, and 16% in secondary school. The majority of participants (83%) reported having their children in private schools, compared with 9% in public schools, 7% in tuition-free private schools, and less than 1% in UNRWA schools. It is important to note several limitations to this study. Due to the online approach, parents with children in public schools, as well as Syrian and Palestinian parents, were underrepresented in the sample. Online surveys also do not adequately capture the perspectives of the most vulnerable households, particularly those without reliable internet connectivity or access to digital devices.

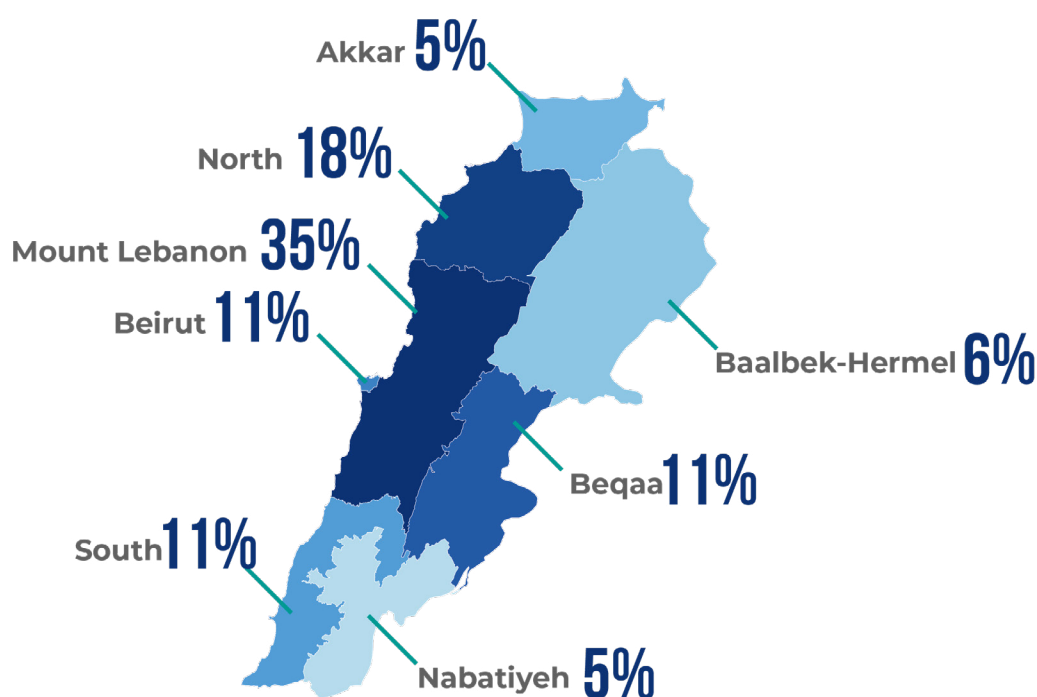


Figure 1. Sample distribution by governorate

School choice under compounded crisis

Almost one in four families (23%) changed their child's school for 2026–2027, while 77% remained in the same school. Among all respondents, 8% moved a child from a private to a public school, while only 2% reported moving their child from a public to a private school. A further 13% changed schools within the same sector. The greater movement from private to public schools was consistent with the financial pressures reported below in the survey and with findings from 2025 (Hammoud, 2025).

The cost of schooling

Parents reported that average annual household income continued to increase, rising from 12,216 to 14,808 US dollars between 2025–2026 and 2026–2027. Over the same period, the average annual private-school tuition and transportation cost for one child rose from 4,417 to 4,719 US dollars. Income rose by 21% while tuition and transportation costs rose by 7%. Since 2022–2023, average annual household income has risen by 167%, compared with a 100% increase in tuition and transportation costs.

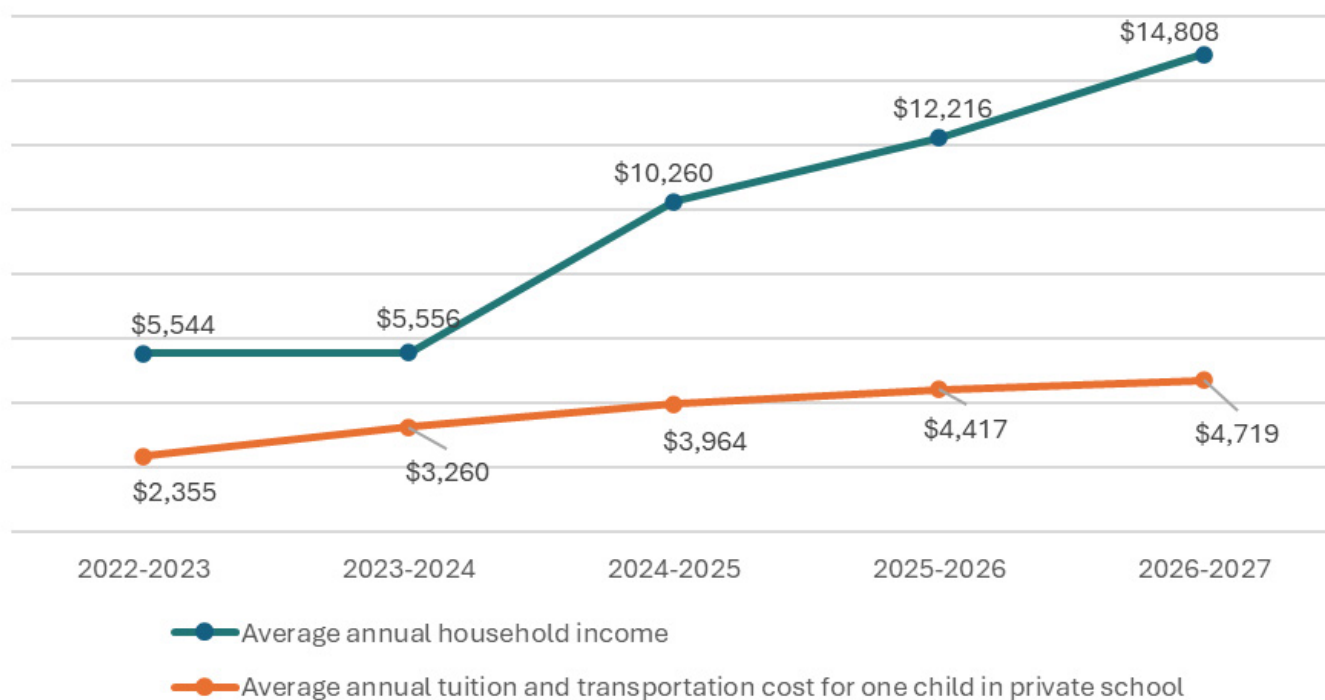


Figure 2. Average annual household income and average annual tuition and transportation cost for one child in a private school

Private-school tuition and transportation for one child were equivalent to 32% of average annual household income in 2026–2027, compared with 36% in 2025–2026 and 59% in 2023–2024. This is equivalent to 3.8 months of average household income. However, these figures should not be simply interpreted as an improvement in affordability. Especially since three-quarters of families (75%) reported always struggling to pay household bills this year, up from around two-thirds a year earlier. A further 23% sometimes struggled, while only 1% never did. Nearly three-quarters had recently borrowed to cover household expenses (73%) or education costs (71%), and a further 16% and 19% expected they might have to borrow. Lebanon's year-on-year inflation rate stood at 15.69 % in July 2026 (Estephan, 2026), meaning that consumer prices were 15.69% higher than a year earlier. This continued rise in prices helps explain why higher nominal incomes did not ease the pressure on household budgets and why many families continued to finance education through debt.

Awareness of national education policies

Awareness of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's free summer learning support and catch-up program for grades one to nine was low. Four in five parents (80%) who answered had not heard of the program. Only 2% reported that their child had taken part, while 8% had heard of it but could not register, and a further 8% were told it was not available at their child's school or in their area. Similarly, awareness of the new national curriculum framework, launched

by the Ministry and the Center for Educational Research and Development, was also limited. More than half (53%) had never heard of it and 39% had heard of it without knowing any details. As a result, 92% had little or no knowledge of a reform that will shape what their children are taught.

Overall, public-school parents expected the reduction of instructional time to four days per week to do more harm than good. Among parents who answered, each able to select up to three effects, 64% of all responses pointed to negative consequences and 28% to potential benefits. The effects anticipated most often were greater lesson pressure (40%) and difficulty making up learning lost last year (38%), followed by savings on transportation (29%) and a greater need for private tutoring (26%). The findings indicate that fewer teaching days may add to learning pressures and shift further costs to households.

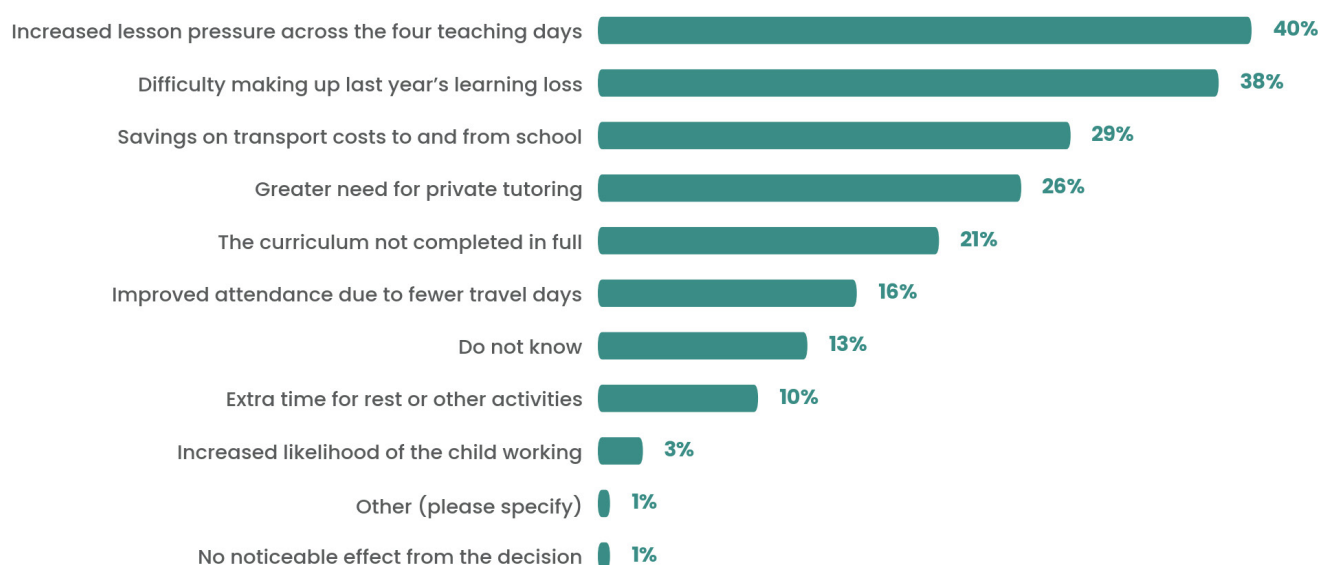


Figure 3. Expected effects of reducing public-school instruction to four days per week

The impact of the Israeli aggression on families and schooling

The March 2026 Israeli aggression added to these financial and structural pressures. More than one-third of respondents (36%) reported living in directly affected areas. Displacement among these families was widespread, with 85% forced to leave their homes. By the time of the survey, only 57% had returned to their original home, while 29% were renting elsewhere, 10% were staying with relatives or friends, and 1% remained in a shelter. Two in five displaced families were therefore still living away from their original home.

The findings for the coming academic year indicate substantial disruption. Among children in these families, 62% are expected to return to the same school. Overall, 37% are expected to attend in person, 15% remotely, and 10% through a blended arrangement. A further 14% are expected to transfer to another school, while 23% are not expected to enroll this year, compared with 9% in 2025. Among the small number expected to change schools, financial reasons were cited most often (72%), followed by displacement (47%) and security concerns (34%). Other reasons included the destruction of the family home (22%), damage to the school building (19%), and the school's location within the occupied strip (13%).

Learning loss and children's wellbeing

Interruptions to in-person schooling extended beyond the directly affected areas. Across the full sample, 48% of parents reported that their child's education was interrupted by the aggression in March 2026. Among those reporting an interruption, 52% said it lasted between one and three months, 24% less than a month, and 24% more than three months.

During these interruptions, remote learning provision was more common than in 2025, but it remained inconsistent. Regular provision rose from 18% to 23%, while the proportion receiving no remote learning fell from 41% to 20%. However, 57% still reported irregular provision. Where remote learning was provided, 46% of parents rated it poor or very poor, while only 14% rated it good or very good.

Moreover, when asked about learning loss, 39% judged it moderate or greater, including 14% who considered it large or very large. A further 17% could not assess the learning loss, indicating how little information some families had about their children's progress. Schools, therefore, need to assess learning loss and communicate the results to parents so that children who have fallen behind can receive appropriate support.

Parents also reported widespread behavioral and emotional effects. Since the aggression, 42% observed increased fear or anxiety in their child, 36% reported difficulty concentrating on schoolwork, and 28% reported a declining willingness to attend school. Sleep problems or frequent nightmares were reported by 15%, aggressive behavior by 8%, and withdrawal from friends or activities by 8%.

Children out of school

Amid these pressures, the proportion of surveyed parents with at least one child under 18 out of school rose from 9% in 2025 to 16% this year. Males continued to account for the majority of out-of-school children (58%). Parents also remained uncertain about whether their children would be able to continue their education. Only 26% were confident that their child would continue, while 14% said their child would not, and 60% did not know. Together, nearly three-quarters could not say with confidence that their child had a secure educational path.

Policy implications

In light of these findings, Lebanon's education policymakers must act decisively. Although average annual household income increased, private-school tuition and living expenses also rose, and families continued to struggle with bills and rely on borrowing. Nominal income growth, therefore, did not translate into improved affordability for households. Private-school tuition should be regulated in proportion to household income and the rising cost of living. The public system must also accommodate families who are moving from private schools while preserving free access and instructional quality.

The Ministry and other education authorities must communicate national programs, policies, and reforms clearly and widely, explain how they will affect children, and ensure that families can access available support. With four in five respondents unaware of the summer learning support and catch-up program and nine in ten knowing little or nothing about the curriculum reform, communication with parents must be treated as an essential part of implementation. Families affected by the Israeli aggression, particularly those who remain displaced, need

sustained support, with priority given to children who are not enrolled this year and families still living away from home. Without such measures, the financial, educational, and psychological pressures documented in this year's survey will continue to undermine children's right to stable and equitable education.

References

- Estephan, M. (2026). [Lebanon's Inflation Rate increased 15.69% YOY by July 2026](#).
- Hammoud, M. (2023). [Children in Lebanon are at risk of losing another academic year](#). Centre for Lebanese Studies.
- Hammoud, M. (2025). [Families on edge: The struggle to keep children in school in Lebanon](#). Centre for Lebanese Studies.
- Hammoud, M., Brun, C. (2025). [Education and crises: The cost of delayed recovery in Lebanon](#). ERICC report, ERICC and Centre for Lebanese Studies.
- Hammoud, M., Shuayb, M. (2022). [Children in Lebanon cannot afford to lose another academic year](#). Centre for Lebanese Studies.