



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

People in food crisis or worse Numbers explained

The magnitude and severity of food crises worsened in 2020, driven by conflict, climate shocks and the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. WFP's warnings, at the beginning of 2020, of a sharp rise in acutely food-insecure people are steadily materializing, pointing to a grim outlook for 2021, with millions at risk of sliding into famine.

The following document, produced by the Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division, aims to clarify the different figures and data used in WFP advocacy initiatives.

How many people were acutely food insecure in 2020, and how does this compare to 2019?

In 2020, 155 million people were in food crisis or worse (Integrated Food Security Phase

Classification [IPC] / Cadre Harmonisé [CH] Phase 3 or above) across 55 countries covered in the [2021 Global Report on Food Crisis](#) (GRFC), published on May 5th. This is a 20 million increase in comparison to the 135 million reported in 2019.

For both years, the report covers 55 countries. However, some **countries covered in 2020 differ from those covered in 2019**. For five countries, no data on food insecurity was available in 2020. These five countries accounted for 11.3 million people in food crisis or worse in 2019.

In the five newly covered countries, only 0.85 million were reported to be in food crisis or worse. If the coverage between the two years was the same, there could have been an additional 10 million people in food crisis in 2020.

How many people are food insecure in 2021?

The GRFC 2021 provides projections for 2021 for a limited number of countries. At least **142 million across 40 countries** are projected to be in food crisis or worse in 2021 – for the remaining 15 countries, no IPC/CH projections were available yet for 2021. The final figure with a more comprehensive coverage will be published in 2022. An interim report covering selected crisis countries will be available in September 2021.

Across 79 countries where WFP operates, it is estimated that up to **270 million people are acutely food insecure** ([Global Operations Response Plan](#)). This includes 174 million in food crisis or worse across 58 countries, where IPC/CH data is available ([Joint FAO/WFP Hunger Hotspots](#) report).

How many people are at risk of famine if no action is taken?

For 2020, the GRFC reports **28 million people in Emergency (IPC/CH Phase 4) in 38 countries**. Additionally, 2.6 million people were severely food insecure in the Syrian Arab Republic and Palestine based on WFP data.

For 2021, the [WFP-FAO Hunger Hotspots Report](#) estimated **34 million people in IPC/CH Phase 4 across 41 countries**. This estimate was based on projections 2021 available by February or the highest reported numbers in 2020, where no projections were yet available. This number is regularly updated with new information becoming available.

Why do numbers from different sources differ?

The numbers of people facing acute food insecurity reported in the GRFC and the WFP Global Response Plan (GORP) are not directly comparable due to **differences in time references, countries covered, and population groups**—such as refugees and urban populations partially or fully covered. In addition to covering fewer countries, the GRFC only covers areas with IPC/CH or equivalent analysis and excludes refugee and urban populations in many countries. The analysis conducted for the WFP GORP has a broader geographical and populational coverage (see Table 1 for more details).

The GRFC coverage from year to year also varies depending on data availability. Hence, strict comparability from year to year is challenging.

Main sources and other additional resources for tracking acute food insecurity



The Global Report on Food Crises is a joint and consensus-based analysis of acute food insecurity situations worldwide by 16 partner organizations. It reports food insecurity based on IPC/CH data and data endorsed by all partners.

24 countries considered based on their context were not included due to data gaps or lack of agreement on the validity of existing evidence.

The 55 countries covered by the report represent 97 percent of the currently provided humanitarian assistance.

WFP's Global Operation Response Plan provides a regular update of the estimated number of acute food insecure people or those at risk across 79 countries where it operates. Its main purpose is to inform WFP operational planning. Sources are IPC/CH data, where available, most recent needs assessment data, and predictions to estimate the number of people affected by COVID-19 where data gaps exist. It also covers refugee populations in the estimations. For further details on the prediction module, please refer to the [methodological note](#).

The **FAO-WFP Hunger Hotspots report** is a forward-looking, early warning analysis of countries and situations where acute food insecurity is likely to deteriorate over the coming months. It is published three times yearly. The hotspots are identified through a consensus-based analysis of food insecurity key drivers, their likely combination and evolution across countries and regions.

The **HungerMapLIVE** is WFP's global hunger monitoring system that provides near real-time estimates of key food security indicators in over 90 countries. The main metric is the prevalence of insufficient food consumption. The information is comprised of actual data from WFP's remote, near real-time food security monitoring systems for more than 30 countries, as well as predictions generated by a machine learning-based predictive model.

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF FOOD SECURITY NUMBERS BASED ON IPC/CH AND OTHER SOURCES

	135 MILLION IN FOOD CRISIS OR WORSE (2019)	155 MILLION IN FOOD CRISIS OR WORSE (2020)	174 MILLION IN FOOD CRISIS OR WORSE (PROJECTED 2021)	UP TO 270 MILLION IN FOOD CRISIS OR WORSE (PROJECTED 2021)
Source	Global Report on Food Crisis 2020	Global Report on Food Crisis 2021	FAO-WFP Hunger Hotspots Analysis	WFP Global Operational Response Plan Feb 21
Purpose	Consensus-based joint analysis of acute food insecurity situations by 16 partner organizations.	Consensus-based joint analysis of acute food insecurity situations by 16 partner organizations.	Monitoring trends in countries covered by 2020 GRFC (plus new IPC/CH countries)	Estimate number of people in need of food assistance across countries with WFP operations
Number of countries	55 countries	55 countries (coverage different than GRFC 2020) <u>Not included in 2021 edition:</u> Colombia, Ecuador (both Venezuelan migrants), Myanmar, Rwanda, Venezuela These countries made up 11.3 million in the 2020 edition <u>New in 2021 edition:</u> Congo, Djibouti, Egypt (refugees), Jordan (Syrian refugees), Togo Adding up to 0.85 million people	58 countries (mostly GRFC 2020 coverage, plus countries with new IPC/CH: Benin, Djibouti, Ghana and Togo)	79 countries with WFP operations and data available
Data source/ methodology	IPC/CH Phase 3+ or equivalent for 2019 (highest estimate during the calendar year)	IPC/CH Phase 3+ or equivalent for 2020 (highest estimate during the calendar year)	IPC/CH for most countries (or equivalent aligned with 2020 GRFC)	Updated IPC/CH or equivalent for 39 countries where available; for the remaining 40 countries baseline from latest pre-COVID figures and predictions based on effects of job and remittances losses due to COVID-19
Coverage	IPC/CH coverage depends on country and can range from 3% to 100% of the entire population, in many countries bias towards rural populations.	55 countries in GRFC cover 97 percent of the humanitarian assistance IPC/CH coverage depends on country and can range from 3% to 100% of the entire population, in many countries bias towards rural populations.	IPC/CH coverage depends on country and can range from 3% to 100% of the entire population, in many countries bias towards rural populations.	For estimated COVID-19 additions: Urban and rural, 100% of populations covered. For baseline: 100% of populations covered where data available.

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Population groups covered	Refugees mostly excluded	Refugees mostly excluded	Refugees mostly excluded	Refugees included
Population in IPC4+ (or equivalent)	27 million in 34 countries	28 million in 38 countries (from 43 countries with IPC/CH data) 2.6 million severely food-insecure in 2 countries (not included in the 28M)	34 million in 41 countries with populations in IPC4+ (based on estimated peaks for 2021; 2020 used where 2021 peaks not yet available)	34 million in 41 countries with populations in IPC4+ (based on estimated peaks for 2021; 2020 used where 2021 peaks not yet available)
Time reference	Peaks for 2019 (highest estimate registered during the calendar year)	Peaks for 2020 (highest estimate registered during the calendar year)	Projected peaks for 2021 (or estimated based on 2020 peak figures where 2021 peaks not yet available)	Estimated peaks for 2021
Frequency of update	Yearly publication in April/May <i>Update for selected countries in September</i>	Yearly publication in April/May <i>Update for some countries in September</i>	Regularly updated, most recent Feb 2021	Three times per year (Jun, Nov, Feb)
Publications/ references	https://www.wfp.org/publications/2020-global-report-food-crises	https://www.wfp.org/publications/global-report-food-crises-2021	https://www.wfp.org/publications/hunger-hotspots-fao-wfp-early-warnings-acute-food-insecurity-march-july-2021-outlook	Up to 270 million: https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-global-operational-response-plan-2021 34 million: https://www.wfp.org/publications/hunger-hotspots-fao-wfp-early-warnings-acute-food-insecurity-march-july-2021-outlook

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