Bangladesh

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

OCTOBER 2022

Remote Household Food Security Survey Brief

Bangladesh:
IN NUMBERS

Two in ten households are currently food insecure

20%
OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)[1]

People are relying on coping strategies to buy food

63%
RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES
Livelihood-based coping strategies [2]

39% purchased food on credit

38% had debts

25% spent their savings

Food security varies across the population

39%
of low-income households were moderately to severely food insecure, and 13% of these households had no iron-rich food intake.

76%
of the households are worried about food prices, with a significant increase in the majority of the food commodities compared to last year.

1. *Remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Insecurity (CARI). The remote comprehensive food security index (rCARI) is an aggregated food security index used to report on a population's comprehensive food security. The indicators used to calculate this are: (i) food consumption scores, (ii) livelihood coping mechanisms, (iii) income sources, and (iv) income changes due to the shock .*
2. *The Livelihood Coping Strategies Index (LCSI) builds on the understanding of the behaviours vulnerable households engage in to meet their immediate food security needs in times of crisis or shock.*
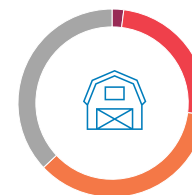
In Brief

One in five households in Bangladesh are moderately to severely food insecure. This comes amid the global food crisis, high national inflation rates, natural calamities, and high food prices for several key food commodities. Among the households surveyed, it is remarkably noticeable that a very minimum percent of households were food secure and the majority of households surveyed met the comprehensive marginal food secure criteria. It indicates that the marginally secured households might not have compromised with food quantity, but they were anxious about food insufficiency or stock for a long time.

Food insecurity varies greatly across different parts of the country, and by income. Divisions such as Rangpur and Sylhet have the highest rates of food insecurity in the country. Sylhet, which has the highest rates of food insecurity nationally since July, was worst-hit by floods resulting from the monsoon season. Low-income households were more vulnerable to food security; the survey revealed that in low-income households, 39 percent were food insecure, compared to 9% in medium-income households and 1% in high-income households.

Food price increases have been the most significant worry across households. Some 76 percent of households say that the rise in food prices is their highest concern. In comparison, over one in four households mentioned the second highest concern was of the loss of income, and health expenditure increase (27 percent for both). These concerns come as prices for key commodities like rice remain far higher than in the previous year (10 percent higher than in September 2021).
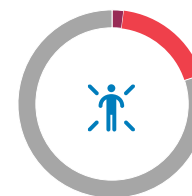
Households continued relying more on coping strategies to keep food on the table. Around six in ten households applied livelihood-based coping strategies such as borrowing money, selling productive assets, or going into debt in order to buy food. In October, the percentage of households using stress-levels of coping reached a high of 36 percent since July, and emergency coping remained at 2 percent of households. At the same time, households not using any strategies increased since July, from 26 percent to 37 percent.

More than half of the population is using coping strategies

63%
RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES*

20%
FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)

The Livelihood Coping Strategies Index (LCSI) builds on the understanding of the behaviours vulnerable households engage in to meet their immediate food security needs in times of crisis or shock.
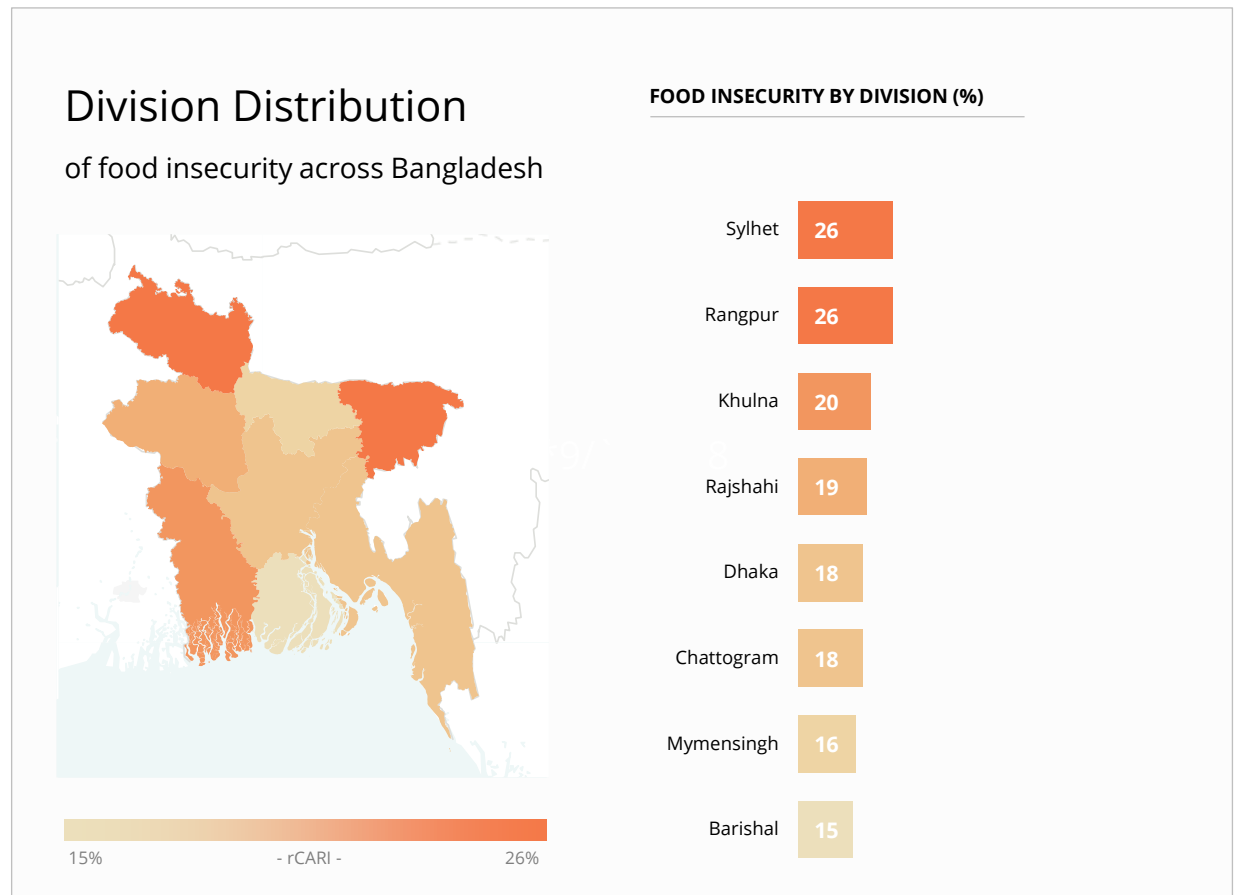
Findings

One-fifth of the households surveyed (20 percent) are food insecure. Almost all of these are at moderate levels of food insecurity, while a small proportion are facing severe levels (2 percent of the population).

However, there is variation across divisions. In the Sylhet division, 3 percent of the surveyed households were found to be food secure, which is an improvement over the last month from 0 percent. Nevertheless, Sylhet and Rangpur divisions are the worst hit, facing higher levels of food insecurity at 26 percent, compared to the average in the other eight divisions at 20 percent. Frequent floods in the monsoon season and high food prices let households rely on negative coping mechanisms for a long time. Some divisions such as Barishal, Mymensingh, Dhaka, and Chattogram improved compared to the previous months.

A monthly variation was also prominent. A four-month comparison showed a negative trend in moderate to severely food-insecure households. In July, On average, 20 percent of households added up to the moderate and severely food insecure percentage, compared to September.

Division Distribution

of food insecurity across Bangladesh

15%   - rCARI -   26%

FOOD INSECURITY BY DIVISION (%)

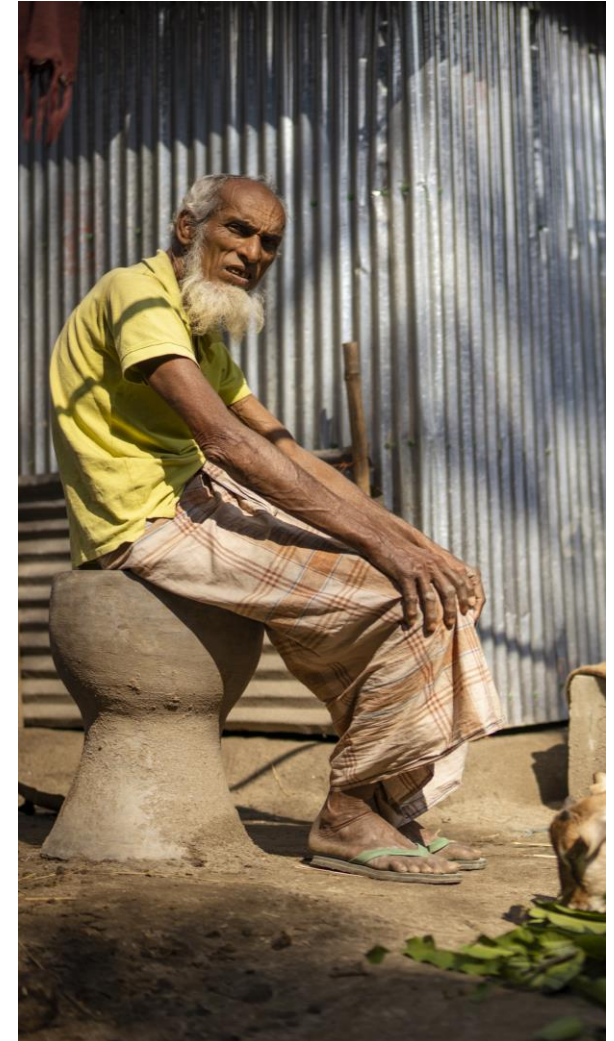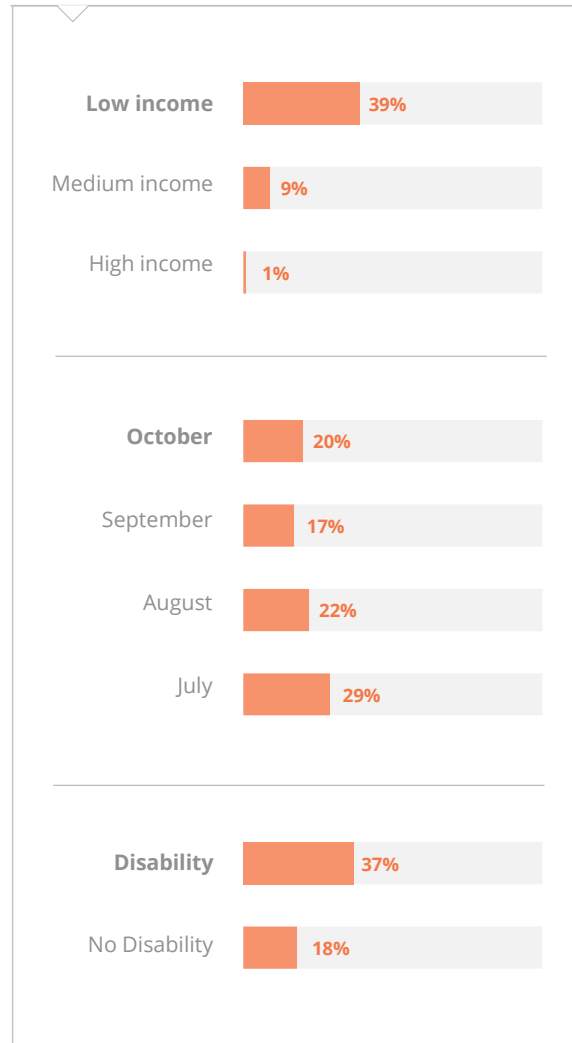| Division	%
Sylhet	26
Rangpur	26
Khulna	20
Rajshahi	19
Dhaka	18
Chattogram	18
Mymensingh	16
Barishal	15

There is inequality among different segments of the population.

There is a large gap between households of different income groups. Low-income Households relying on informal sources, such as petty traders, and labourers, were more likely to be food insecure (39 percent on average). A high rate of inflation* in October of 8.9 percent, the highest non-food inflation of 9.85 percent, coupled with lean season's unemployment pushed this livelihood group hard on their well-being. High–Income group households who have highly paid professional jobs or are owners of large agricultural farms, were stable all through the survey from July to October, with only 1 percent of households reported being vulnerable.

Households with disability are more food insecure than households without. This is People with disability in Bangladesh are more disadvantaged, as they have very less opportunities to earn a living. Moreover, households with disabled people reported being overburdened with medical expenses and income loss of other earning members due to caregiving time at home.

FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)

Low income	39%
Medium income	9%
High income	1%
October	20%
September	17%
August	22%
July	29%
Disability	37%
No Disability	18%

*Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, October, 2022.*

Three in ten households are not consuming adequate diets.

In October, an average of 72 percent of households in eight divisions had an acceptable diet, which is 2 percent higher than in September, but 8 percent less than in July. In seven days, average households ate protein and vegetables less than five days and reported having fruits and dairy less than two days.

Female-headed households are eating less diverse diets – more than half (51 percent) are facing insufficient food consumption, compared to four in ten male-headed households (39 percent). Female-headed households are eating less of every single food item, with the exception of pulses and sugar. Households with elderly person/s were also unequally facing insufficient food consumption (52 percent, compared with 22 percent)
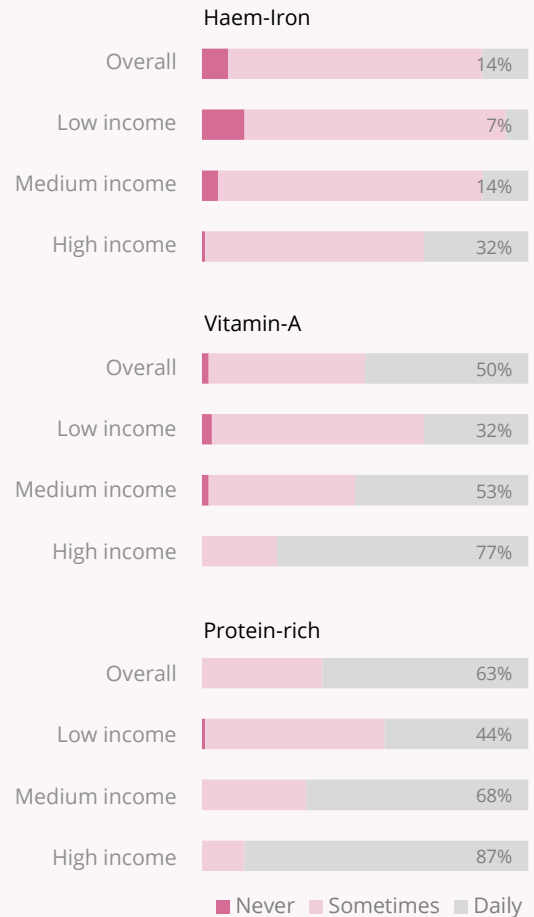
The consumption of iron-rich food is alarmingly low, especially for low-income households. Only 15 percent of households had iron-rich food in their regular diet; 78 percent had it sometimes, and 8 percent had no iron-rich food on their plates in the last seven days. Low-income households suffer the most from lack or iron, due to low purchasing power to access food due to loss of income, lean season impact on employment, and high food and non-food inflation. Five in ten households had an acceptable diet in this group.

FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP

28%

HAVE INSUFFICIENT FOOD CONSUMPTION

JUL   AUG   SEP   OCT

72.2%
ADEQUATE

24.0%
BORDERLINE

3.7%
POOR
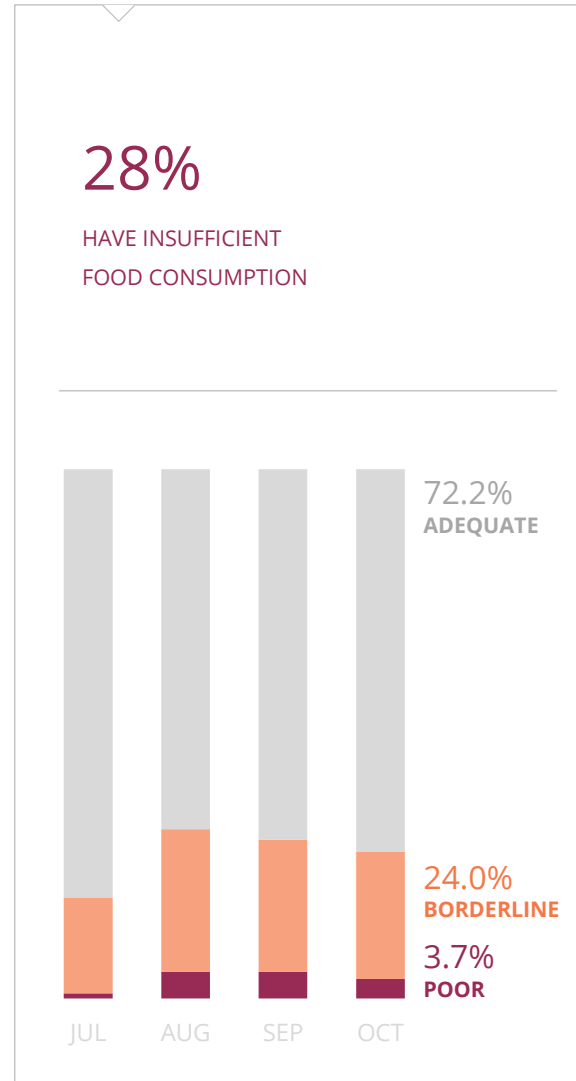
OCTOBER FOOD CONSUMPTION - NUTRITION

Number of days the average household consumes the following nutrient food groups (every seven days)

Haem-Iron
Overall — 14%
Low income — 7%
Medium income — 14%
High income — 32%

Vitamin-A
Overall — 50%
Low income — 32%
Medium income — 53%
High income — 77%

Protein-rich
Overall — 63%
Low income — 44%
Medium income — 68%
High income — 87%

■ Never ■ Sometimes ■ Daily

* The "Food consumption score" (FCS) is a score calculated using the frequency of consumption of different food groups consumed by a household during the 7 days before the survey. There are standard weights for each of the food groups that comprise the food consumption score.

Large portions of the population are adopting coping strategies.

Four in ten households are relying on food-based coping strategies such as relying on less preferred food, limiting portion sizes, or sacrificing the meals of adults so that children can eat. Reliance on crisis coping strategies at high levels could be alarming as the impact of constant high prices can deteriorate food security in the coming days.

Coping strategy use varies across divisions, income groups, and months. Despite increasing food insecurity and the use of negative food-based coping strategies*, many of the households had acceptable food consumption scores. This means that many households are only maintaining food consumption levels by turning to negative coping strategies. The four-month trend shows a large number of households relying on negative coping strategies, with the proportion increasing in October.

Income instability was making a big difference in both food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies. Low-income households were turning to more food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies to meet food and basic needs for their well-being, as compared to other households.

37% relying on **food-based** coping strategies

■ Crisis or above ■ Stress ■ No/Low

63% relying on **livelihood-based** coping strategies

■ Emergency ■ Crisis ■ Stress ■ None

BY INCOME GROUPS

High income   Medium income   Low income

BY INCOME GROUPS

High income   Medium income   Low income

* Reduced food-based coping strategies (rCSI) scores are used as a proxy variable for food insecurity. The rCSI is based on the frequency and severity of coping mechanisms for households reporting food consumption problems and assesses the stress level of households due to a food shortage. A high score indicates a higher stress level, and a lower score means that the household is less stressed..
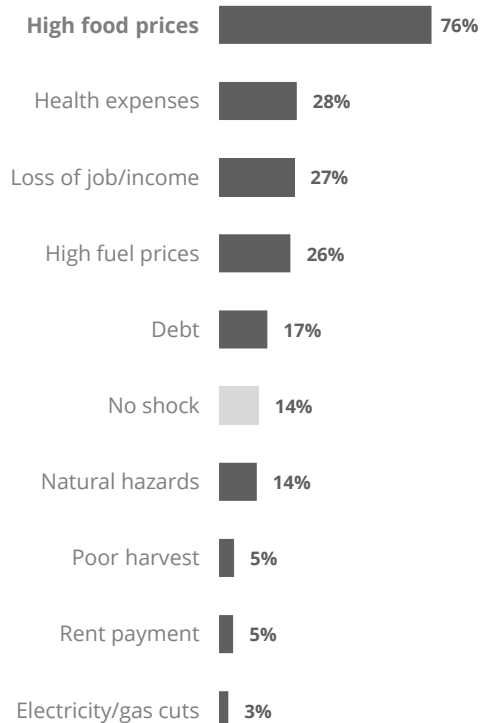
High food prices are affecting the most households

Over seven in ten households have been hit by high food prices in the last six months. This shock comes as prices for key commodities spiked over a year from 2021, especially after the global food crises. The major food commodities are rice, wheat, soybean oil, sugar, eggs, potatoes, and red lentils, major food items of regular diet in the country at all levels of income group. The next-most experienced shocks were health expenditures, and loss of income or employment.
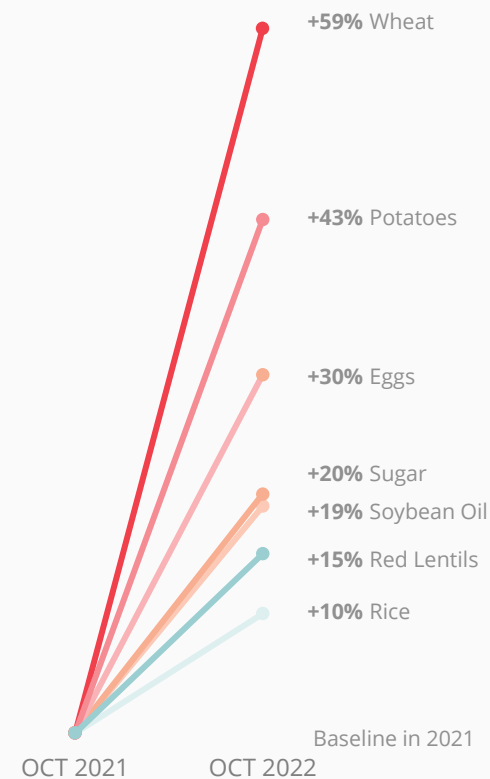
High food prices stand out as the biggest shock

% HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY SHOCKS

High food prices	**76%**
Health expenses	28%
Loss of job/income	27%
High fuel prices	26%
Debt	17%
No shock	14%
Natural hazards	14%
Poor harvest	5%
Rent payment	5%
Electricity/gas cuts	3%

Prices of commodities are increasing*

% PRICE INCREASE YEAR-ON-YEAR*

+59% Wheat
+43% Potatoes
+30% Eggs
+20% Sugar
+19% Soybean Oil
+15% Red Lentils
+10% Rice

Baseline in 2021
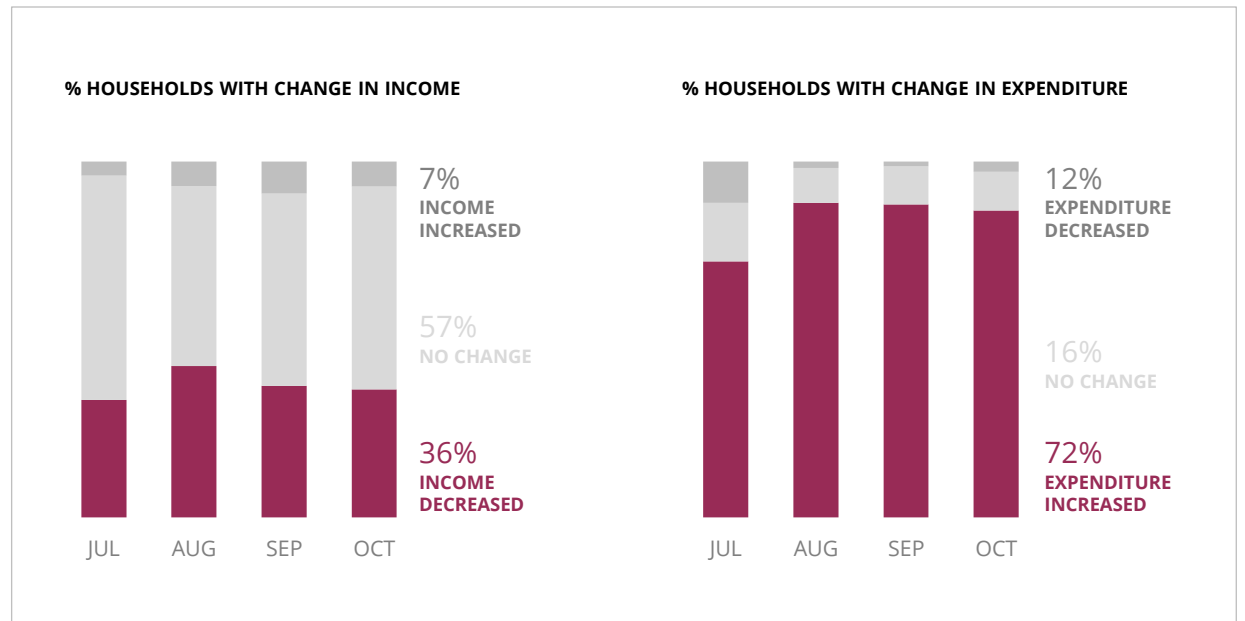
OCT 2021   OCT 2022

* Consumer Price Index, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics October 2022

Incomes are decreasing while expenditures are rising

Incomes are not keeping up with the increase in expenditures in the last four months. In October, 36 percent of households reported a decrease in income in the last six months. While the proportion of households with less income has remained at around one-in-three, this does not necessarily signal stability – household incomes could have decreased and remained low, or are decreasing repeatedly. Meanwhile, a majority of households (86 percent) have increased their expenditures. In October, 88 percent of households have been doubly-hit, with decreased incomes but increased expenditures.

Most households have lost up to half their income in the last six months. In all the divisions, a significant percentage of households (36 percent) reported income loss over the last six months, which is high in Barishal and Rangpur (40 percent or higher). A four-month trend revealed a positive but slow recovery from income loss over the last month, as in September.

Many factors contribute to the loss in income. The economy in Bangladesh Is going through a difficult period – many are losing income due to loss of employment, fewer daily labour opportunities, disruption in market functionality, price hikes, lack of assistance, illness, and health expenditure increase, all amidst a global food crisis.

% HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHANGE IN INCOME

7%
INCOME INCREASED

57%
NO CHANGE

36%
INCOME DECREASED

JUL   AUG   SEP   OCT

% HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHANGE IN EXPENDITURE

12%
EXPENDITURE DECREASED

16%
NO CHANGE

72%
EXPENDITURE INCREASED

JUL   AUG   SEP   OCT

Background and Methodology

The remote food security monitoring system (mVAM) in Bangladesh was launched in July 2022 and collects data via telephone interviews from households across the country. Data was collected from 1,200 respondents across eight divisions since July; thus, the report is entirely based on these surveyed households. The data precision is +-8%, with a 95% confidence level at the divisional level. The mVAM survey was launched to provide near real-time analytics on food security and essential needs analysis across the country. It allows regular assessment of the impact of shocks, including the developing global food crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, and floods.

Bangladesh's situation comes in the midst of a global food crisis which has generated a wave of upheaval in markets and which risks exacerbating the situation even further. Globally, conflict, COVID-19, the climate crisis and rising costs have combined in 2022 to create jeopardy for up to 828 million hungry people across the world. Learn more here.

Other Resources

Q3 MARKET MONITOR

A regular summary of changes in the market, with a focus on recent developments

COUNTRY BRIEFS

A monthly **overview** of WFP's activities in Bangladesh, including situational and operational updates

Annex: Tables

Overall

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	OCTOBER (%)
Food Secure	2.2
Marginally Food Insecure	78.2
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	20.0

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies	
None	36.6
Stress	35.8
Crisis	25.4
Emergency	2.2

Food-based Coping Strategies	
No/Low	63.0
Medium	32.6
High	4.5

Food Consumption Group	
Acceptable Food Consumption	72.2
Borderline Food Consumption	24.0
Poor Food Consumption	3.8

Annex: Tables

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	Income Group (%)			Sex of Head of Household (%)		Disability (%)	
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	FEMALE	MALE	YES	NO
Food Secure	0.2	3.5	4.1	2.5	2.2	2.2	2.2
Marginally Food Insecure	61.1	87.9	94.9	60.5	79.4	61.3	79.5
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	38.7	8.7	1.0	37.0	18.4	36.6	18.3

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	FEMALE	MALE	YES	NO
None	19.3	38.7	65.8	29.6	37.1	24.7	37.6
Stress	43.3	35.1	23.0	37	35.7	26.9	36.5
Crisis	34.1	24.7	10.3	24.7	25.5	44.1	24
Emergency	3.3	1.5	1.0	8.64	1.72	4.3	1.99

Food-based Coping Strategies	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	FEMALE	MALE	YES	NO
No/Low	40.7	68.8	95.6	54.3	63.6	46.2	64.3
Medium	49.8	30.1	4.1	37	32.3	41.9	31.8
High	9.5	1.1	0.3	8.6	4.2	11.8	3.9

Food Consumption Group	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	FEMALE	MALE	YES	NO
Acceptable Food Consumption	55.8	79.7	91.1	8.6	3.4	59.8	76.6
Borderline Food Consumption	37.4	18.2	8.2	28.4	23.8	38.8	23.4
Poor Food Consumption	6.8	2.2	0.7	63.0	72.8	1.4	-