Bangladesh

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

Bangladesh:
IN NUMBERS

Almost Two in ten households are currently food insecure

17%
OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)[1]

People are relying on coping strategies to buy food

57%
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.

71%
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

The food security situation improved slightly and 17 percent of the households are currently food insecure (moderate to severe). The overall food security situation has improved on average since July. November survey revealed an increase in food security from 2 percent to 6 percent compared to October. Despite an increasing trend in food security, 17 percent of households reported struggling with meeting food and non-food basic needs.

Disaster greatly impacts food security and varies by income and gender. Food insecurity was above average in two divisions of the country, Khulna and Barishal, situated in the coastal zone. The households were the worst hit by storms and heavy rainfall due to Cyclone Sitrang on 24 October. According to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), 10,000 houses and crops of 6,000 hectares had been damaged. Another 1,000 fish enclosures were destroyed.
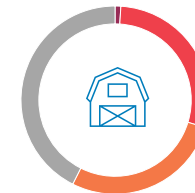
The low-income households were more vulnerable to food security; the survey revealed that 33 percent struggled to access food and basic needs in moderate to severe situations.

The female-headed households and households with disability were also more prone to food insecurity. Among the households, food insecurity was double in female-headed compared to male-headed households.

Food price increases continue to be the most significant constant worry across households. November was not an exception to the previous months. Some 71 percent of households said the rise in food prices was their highest concern. In comparison, 20 percent of households mentioned the second highest concern for the loss of income and health expenditure increase (25% for both).
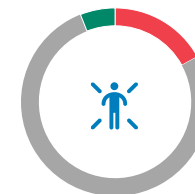
Reliance on the coping strategy of keeping food on the table remains similar to the previous five months. More than five in ten households applied livelihood-based coping strategies such as borrowing money, selling productive assets, or going into debt to buy food. At the same time, more households reported no coping, around 43 percent in November and 26 percent in July.

More than half of the population is using coping strategies

57%
RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES*

17%
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.
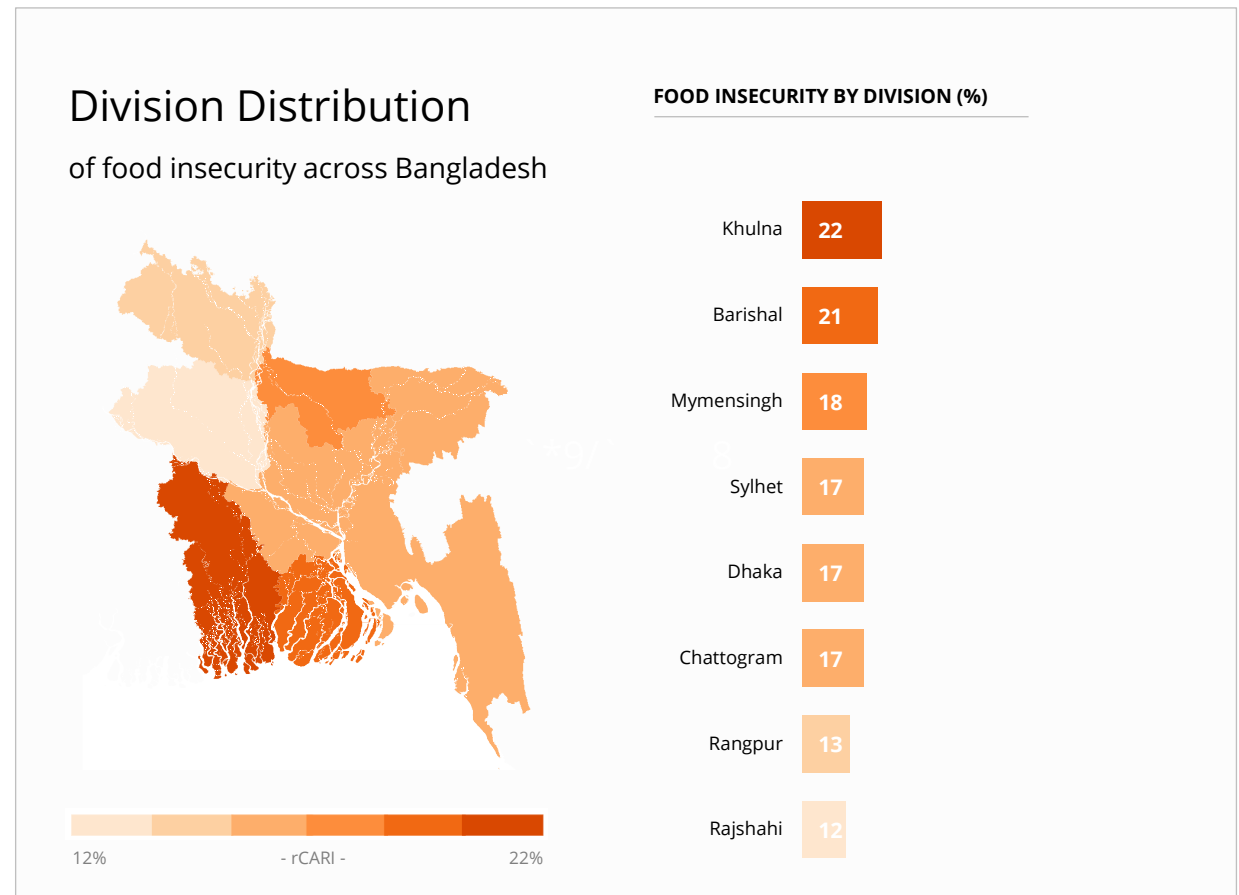
Findings

Almost six of ten households surveyed (17 percent) are food insecure. Most of these were at moderate levels of food insecurity, while a small proportion faced severe levels (1% of the surveyed population). There was a slight improvement in the percentage of severely food-insecure households than in October.

However, there is variation across divisions. In Khulna and Barishal divisions, 22 and 21 percent of the surveyed households were found to be food insecure, respectively, which is an impact of the recent cyclone hit Sitrang. Some improvement in the Sylhet division was observed due to a small comeback to the daily paid activities in the agricultural field for winter vegetables, brickfields, etc. Some divisions, such as Rangpur and Rajshahi, showed much improvement compared to the previous months.

A monthly variation was also prominent. A five-month comparison showed a positive trend of an increased percentage of food-secure households; on average, a 6 percent increase was observed since July. On the other hand, a 12 percent decrease in moderate to severely food-insecure households was reported,

Division Distribution
of food insecurity across Bangladesh

12%   - rCARI -   22%

FOOD INSECURITY BY DIVISION (%)

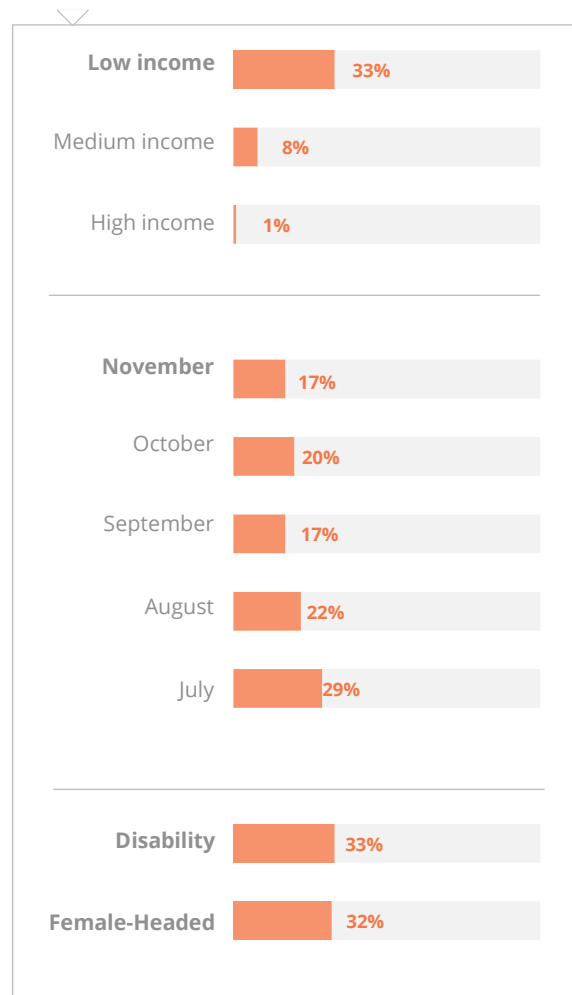| Division	%
Khulna	22
Barishal	21
Mymensingh	18
Sylhet	17
Dhaka	17
Chattogram	17
Rangpur	13
Rajshahi	12

There is inequality among different segments of the population.

There is a large gap between households of different income groups. Only 15 percent of households had few food sources from their production, and the rest entirely depended on markets. Low-income group households relying on informal sources, such as petty traders and skilled and non-skilled labourers, were more likely to be food insecure (33% on average, a slight reduction from October). High–Income group households with high to moderate salaried jobs or owners of large agricultural farms were stable throughout the survey from July to November. Only 1 percent of households in the high-income group reported being vulnerable.

Female-headed households and households with disability are more food insecure than households without. This is because female-headed households had less access to job opportunities, and the wage rate was also low compared to male labourers. According to BBS*, the wage rate of a female agricultural labourer was 35 percent lower than that of a male. On the other hand, women-headed households earn half for staying at home for caregiving purposes. Similarly, people with disability were more disadvantaged, as they had fewer opportunities to earn a living. Moreover, households with disabled person reported being overburdened with medical expenses and income loss of other earning members due to staying at home for caregiving.

FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)

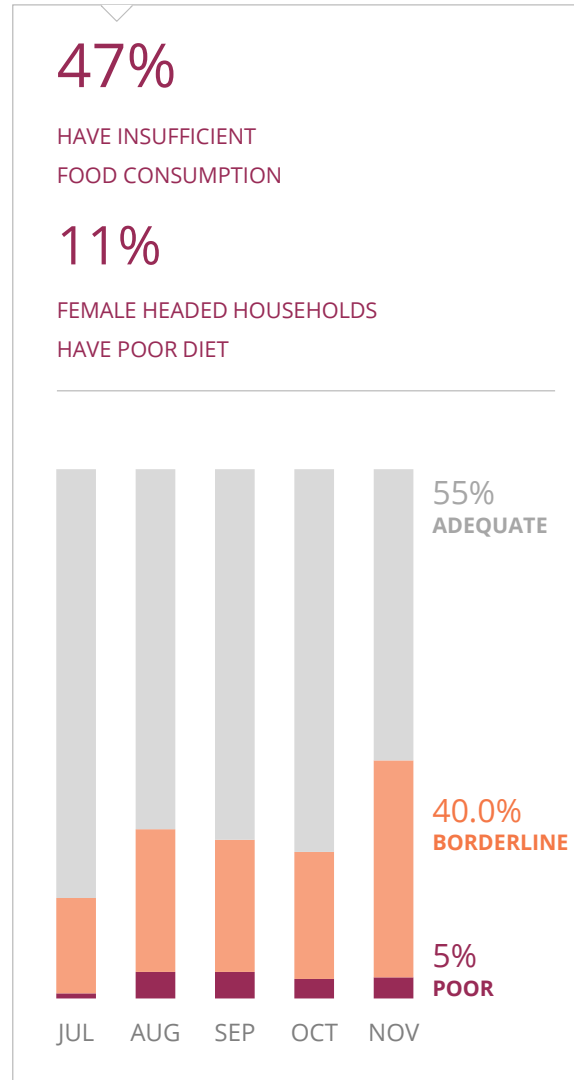| Household characteristic	%
Low income	33%
Medium income	8%
High income	1%
November	17%
October	20%
September	17%
August	22%
July	29%
Disability	33%
Female-Headed	32%

* Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, October, 2022.

Almost five in ten households are not consuming adequate diets.

In November, an average of 55 percent of households in eight divisions had an acceptable diet, which is 20 percent less than in October. The food consumption gap is reportedly the highest in November over the last five months. In seven days, average households ate protein and vegetables less than four days and reported having less than one day of fruits and sugar.

Female households ate less diverse diets – more than half (50 percent) faced insufficient food consumption, compared to four in ten male-headed households (46%), women-headed households ate less of every food item, with less access to dairy. Households with disabled persons were also unequally facing insufficient food consumption.
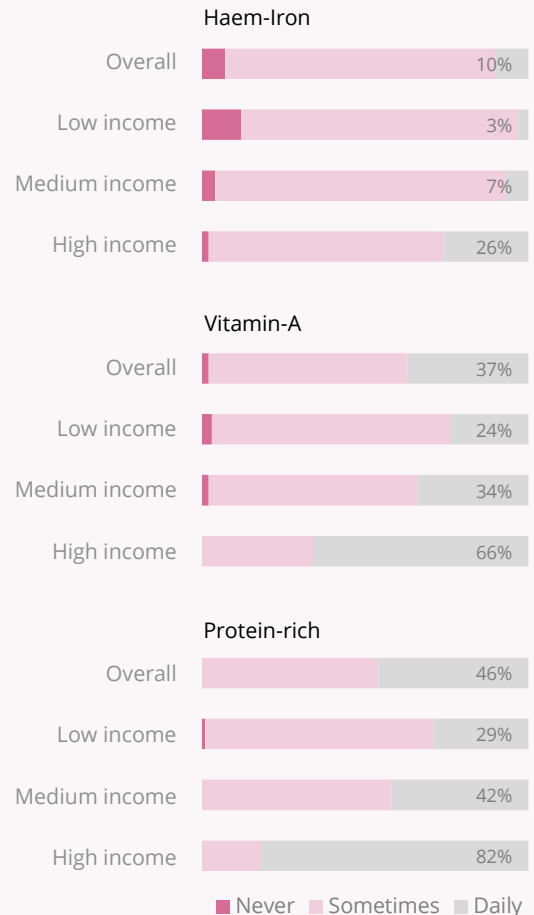
The consumption of iron-rich food is alarmingly low, especially for low-income group households. Only 15 percent of households had iron-rich food in their regular diet; 78 percent had it sometimes, and 8 percent had no iron-rich food on their plates in one week. Low-income group households suffer the most from a lack of iron due to low purchasing power to access food. They had challenges with loss of income, lean season impact on employment, and high food and non-food prices. Less than five in ten households had an acceptable diet in this group.

FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP

47%
HAVE INSUFFICIENT
FOOD CONSUMPTION

11%
FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS
HAVE POOR DIET

55%
ADEQUATE

40.0%
BORDERLINE

5%
POOR

JUL   AUG   SEP   OCT   NOV

OCTOBER FOOD CONSUMPTION - NUTRITION

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

Haem-Iron
Overall	10%
Low income	3%
Medium income	7%
High income	26%

Vitamin-A
Overall	37%
Low income	24%
Medium income	34%
High income	66%

Protein-rich
Overall	46%
Low income	29%
Medium income	42%
High income	82%

■ 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 with exhaustion over time.

Four in ten households rely on food-based coping strategies, and six rely on livelihood-based coping. Households relied more on non-reversible coping strategies in November, and the number of households with no coping increased. There was less access to an acceptable diet than in the previous months, and it is assumed that the households might already have very few options left for coping. Continued price hikes, loss of income, less opportunity for employment, disaster hit, etc., were the significant challenges that pushed them to rely on more crisis coping with putting food on the table. This is alarming in the long run as crisis coping is a non-reversible tool as the households sell their productive assets to access food and meet non-food needs.

Income instability made a big difference in both food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies. Low-income households had been turning to more food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies to meet food and basic needs for their well-being, compared to other households. This has been a constant trend since July. The lower-income households were the most vulnerable and the hardest hit by any crisis.

40%
relying on **food-based** coping strategies

■ Crisis or above ■ Stress ■ No/Low

57%
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..
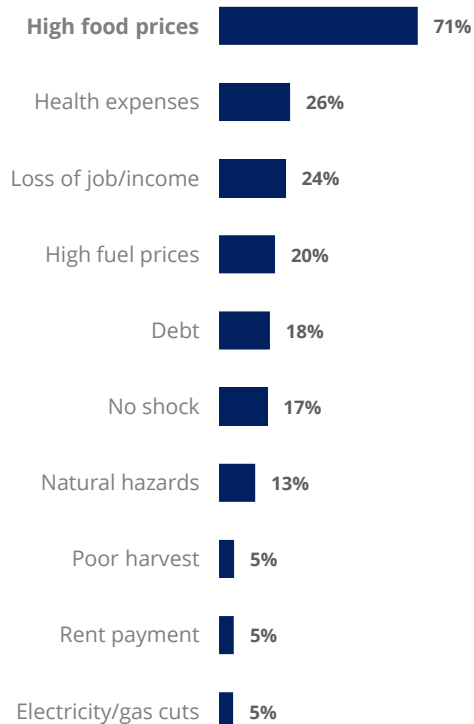
High food prices are affecting the most households

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 the regular diet of the majority of households. The global export import crisis impacted the wheat price to rise by 67 percent yearly. The non-food inflation rate had also hit the highest since July, which was 9.98 percent* in November. The next most reported shocks were health expenditures and loss of income or employment.
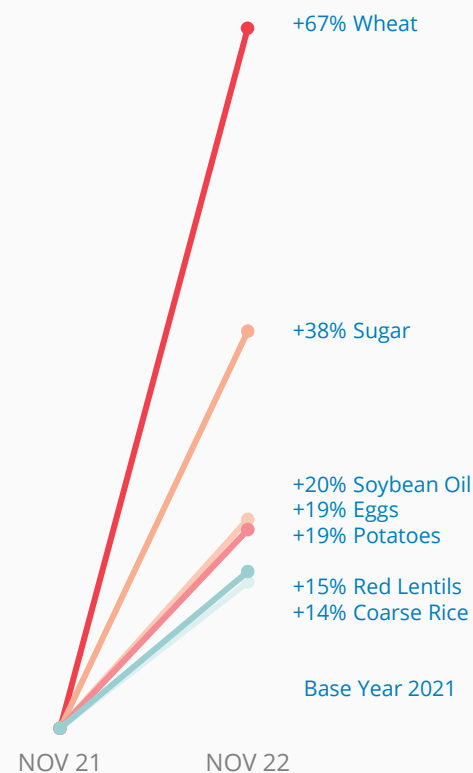
High food prices stand out as the biggest shock

% HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY SHOCKS

Shock	%
High food prices	71%
Health expenses	26%
Loss of job/income	24%
High fuel prices	20%
Debt	18%
No shock	17%
Natural hazards	13%
Poor harvest	5%
Rent payment	5%
Electricity/gas cuts	5%

Prices of commodities continues to increase

% PRICE INCREASE YEAR-ON-YEAR*

+67% Wheat

+38% Sugar

+20% Soybean Oil
+19% Eggs
+19% Potatoes

+15% Red Lentils
+14% Coarse Rice

Base Year 2021

NOV 21   NOV 22

CPI – Consumer Price Index, BBS 2021, 2022. A CPI is an index to measure monthly change in prices paid by the consumers.
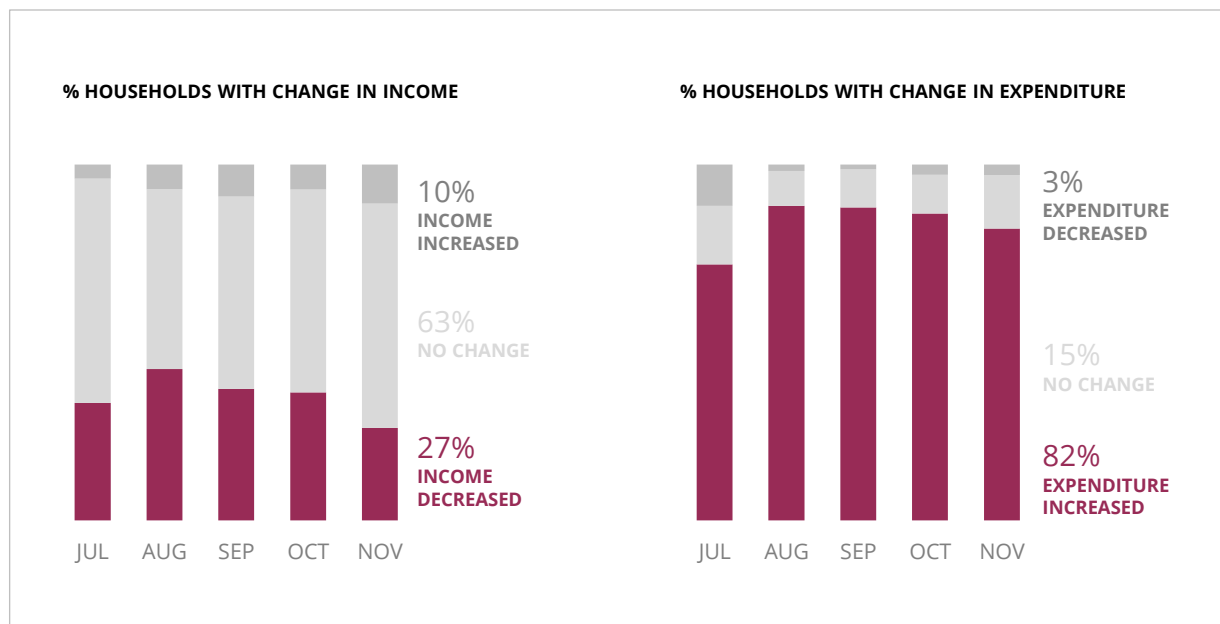
Incomes are decreasing while expenditures are rising.

Incomes are not keeping up with the increase in expenditures in the last six months since July. Amidst high food and non-food prices, on average, 27% of households reported a decreased income in the last six months, which is low compared to the previous months. While this decrease does not necessarily signal stability – household incomes could have decreased and remained low or repeatedly decreased. Furthermore, disaggregated, 65 percent of the food-insecure households reported an income decrease, almost double the average. Meanwhile, most households (82 percent) reported having increased expenditures.

Most households are recovering slowly and still reported losing up to one-third of their income in the last six months. Loss of income varies across the divisions. Among the divisions, the southeast division of Khulna reported the highest (30%) and almost 13 percent of households reported high-income loss (20% – 50%) resulting from the hit of Cyclone Sitrang. Many households in Khulna and Barishal reported income and asset loss due to damage to crops, fisheries, homestead and vegetable gardens, shelters, etc.

Many factors contribute to the loss of 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, frequent disaster hit in different regions at different times, high inflation, lack of assistance and social safety net coverage, illness, health expenditure increase, all amidst a global food crisis.

% HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHANGE IN INCOME

10%
INCOME INCREASED

63%
NO CHANGE

27%
INCOME DECREASED

JUL   AUG   SEP   OCT   NOV

% HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHANGE IN EXPENDITURE

3%
EXPENDITURE DECREASED

15%
NO CHANGE

82%
EXPENDITURE INCREASED

JUL   AUG   SEP   OCT   NOV

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 percent, with a 95 percent 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, floods and cyclones.

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	6.1
Marginally Food Insecure	76.7
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	17.1

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies	
None	42.5
Stress	27.5
Crisis	28.5
Emergency	1.35

Food-based Coping Strategies	
No/Low	60.6
Medium	35.7
High	3.5

Food Consumption Group	
Acceptable Food Consumption	54.7
Borderline Food Consumption	40.0
Poor Food Consumption	4.9

Annex: Tables

	Income Group (%)			Sex of Head of Household (%)		Disability (%)	
Food Insecurity (rCARI)	**LOW**	**MEDIUM**	**HIGH**	**FEMALE**	**MALE**	**YES**	**NO**
Food Secure	1,3	10.6	8.1	2.1	6.4	0.0	6.4
Marginally Food Insecure	66.0	81.0	90..8	66.3	77.5	67.1	77.3
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	32.7	8.4	1.1	31.6	16.1	32.9	16.0
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies	**LOW**	**MEDIUM**	**HIGH**	**FEMALE**	**MALE**	**YES**	**NO**
None	25.6	44.4	72.8	37.9	42.9	25.3	43.7
Stress	35.9	25.8	14.0	35.8	26.9	21.5	27.9
Crisis	37.0	28.3	12.5	23.2	29.0	51.9	27.0
Emergency	1.5	1.6	0.7	3.2	1.2	1.27	1.35
Food-based Coping Strategies	**LOW**	**MEDIUM**	**HIGH**	**FEMALE**	**MALE**	**YES**	**NO**
No/Low	40.7	68.8	95.6	47.4	47.4	41.8	61.9
Medium	49.8	30.1	4.1	41.1	41.1	49.4	34.9
High	9.5	1.1	0.3	11.6	11.6	8.9	3.2
Food Consumption Group	**LOW**	**MEDIUM**	**HIGH**	**FEMALE**	**MALE**	**YES**	**NO**
Acceptable Food Consumption	36.0	54.7	85.6	49.5	53.9	40.5	54.4
Borderline Food Consumption	55.8	42.1	14.3	39.0	42.1	50.6	41.4
Poor Food Consumption	8.0	3.0	0	11.6	4.0	8.9	4.2