



Bangladesh

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

February 2023

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



This brief was developed by WFP in March 2023, based on remote household food security surveys conducted in early February 2023.



Bangladesh: IN NUMBERS



More than one in ten households are currently food insecure



11%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)¹



Food security situation improved slightly on average, with low-income group being more food insecure.



51%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES
Livelihood-based coping strategies²



27% purchased food on credit



19% had debts



14% spent their savings



13% received assistance

Food security varies across the divisions and population



23%

Low-income households were moderately food insecure, and 8% had no iron-rich food intake.



68%

of the households were significantly affected by food prices, with a significant increase in most 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

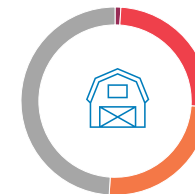
Food security situation has mostly stayed the same over the last month with a slight improvement. More than one in ten households (11 percent) was moderately food insecure, a slightly declining trend compared to the last month. Approximately 51 percent reported resorting to livelihood-based coping, which was 53 percent in January. The root cause of the slightly less reliance on coping was primarily the exhaustion of the coping tools over a long period. The improvement was primarily due to some seasonal occupational opportunities, such as in brickfields. The global food crises and inflation continued to impact every business sector, including agricultural production, construction, restaurant, tourism, handloom and all kind of daily labourers.

Food security varied in divisions, with some slow recovery. There were variations in divisional food insecurity, with some observations of slow recovery in some divisions; Barishal division remained the highest, having the most food-insecure population. Hardship in putting food on the table is a common long-time scenario primarily for households with low-income, women-headed, and disabled members.

The survey revealed that 23 percent were food insecure in low-income households, compared to 6 percent in medium-income households and less than 1 percent in high-income households. **High food prices remained to be the biggest shock.** Some 68 percent of households said the rise in food prices was their deepest concern and significantly affected their well-being. In comparison, 24 percent of households worried about health expenditure increases, and 19 percent mentioned the burden of debt or loans to cope with food insecurity. Most of the major food commodity prices kept rising.

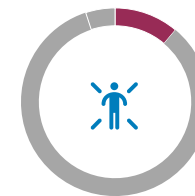
Relying on coping strategies to keep food on the table was common. More than half of the households applied livelihood-based coping strategies such as borrowing money, selling productive assets, or going into debt to buy food. On average, the percent households adopting stress and emergency was almost similar to the previous month. Households continued relying both on food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies. Some 26 percent of households applied food-based coping, among which 42 percent were in the low-income group. Households with disability faced severe challenges, and 46 percent coped by eating smaller portions and low-quality food.

A little less than half of the households are using coping strategies



51%

RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES*



11%

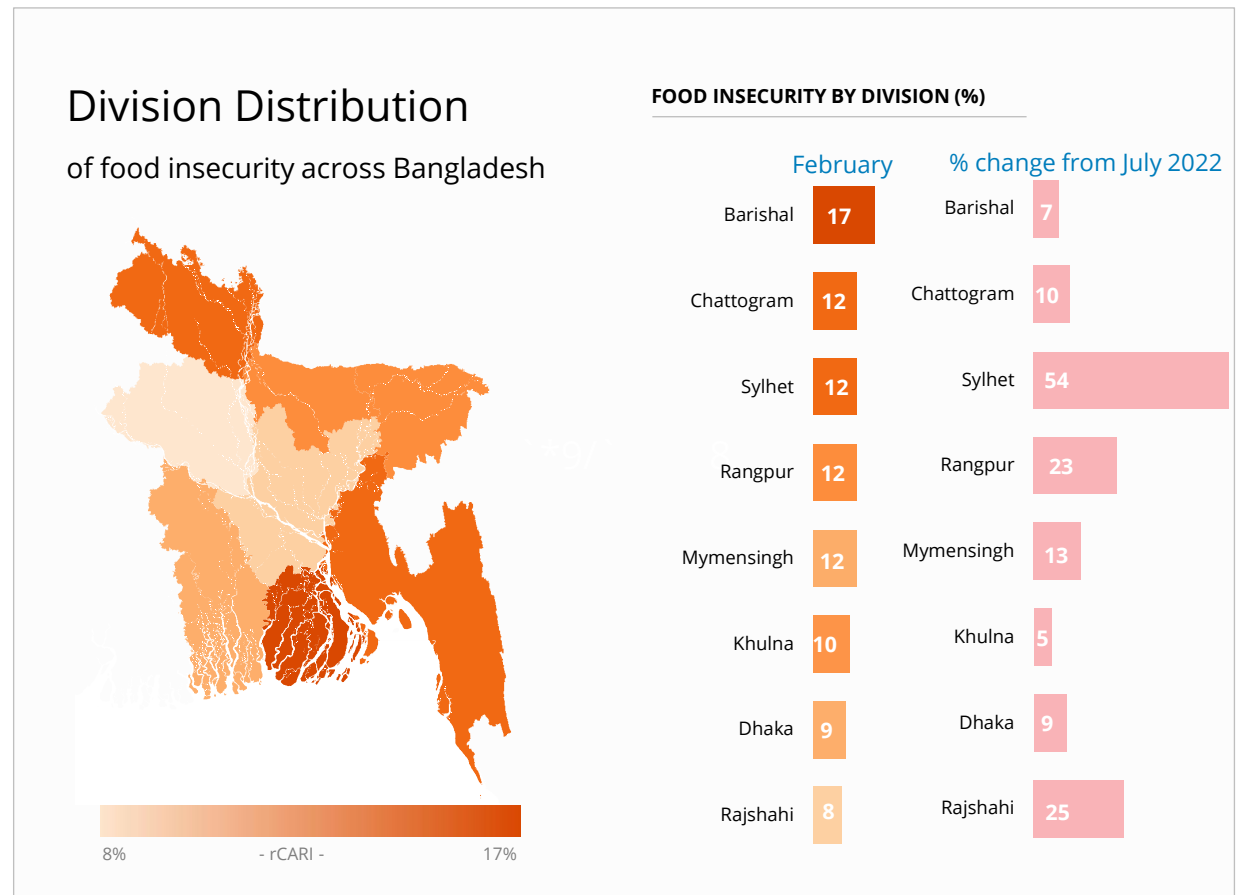
FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)



Findings

Food insecurity slightly improved, still with more than one in ten households surveyed (11 percent). All these households were at moderate levels of food insecurity, and there were no severely food insecure households in February, followed by January. **However, some divisions showed a slow recovery trend from food-insecurity over a long period.** On average, households in almost all the divisions showed positive change compared to January. Compared to July 2022, Barishal, Dhaka and Khulna had the slowest recovery in eight months. The Barishal division had a baseline food insecurity of 30 percent in July, a middle position among the divisions with the highest low-income households. Almost 17 percent of those low-income households had food insecurity in February, which is higher than average, with a 7 percent change since July.

Different households coped differently to put food on the table. The labour market in Barisal was very critical, with fewer job opportunities and a lower wage rate. On the contrary, the households in Sylhet division progressed faster with a high negative coping as the households struggled to recover from the worst floods in June-July 2022. The survey observed a 54 percent improvement against the comprehensive food security measurement in Sylhet.



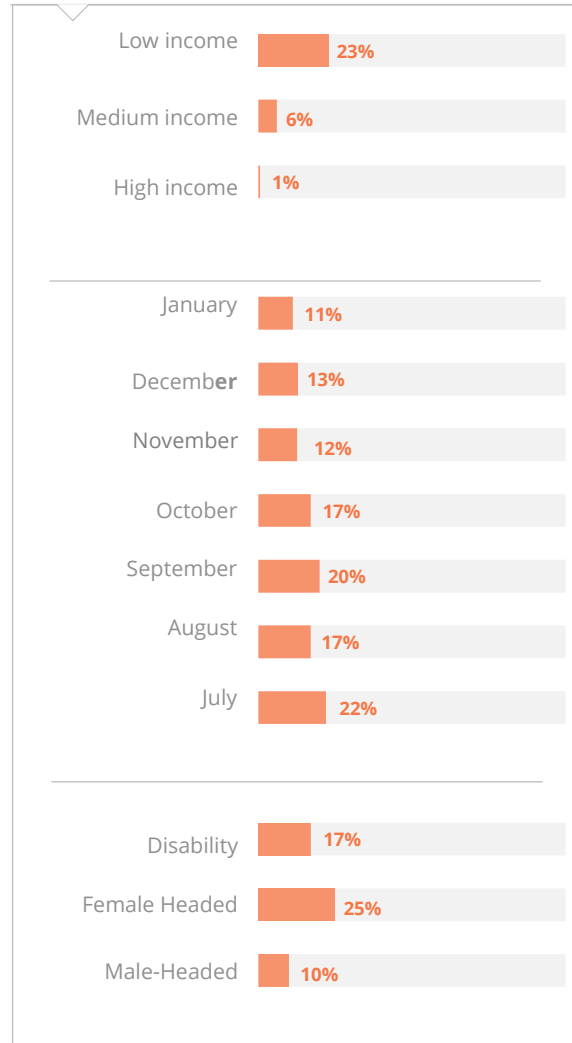


Low-income, disability and female-headed households were the hardest hit.

There is a large gap in different sections of the population. On the eighth row since July, the mVAM survey revealed that the low-income group has always been very vulnerable to shocks, and food insecurity was double the average. Households struggled double the burden of debts and increased expenditures for severe price hikes. Many households reported borrowing money to put the minimum food on the table. For the skilled and nonskilled daily labourers, and unemployment are huge issues as they remain idle with no alternative income sources. Poor households highly relied on different coping strategies; selling productive household assets, buying food on credit and borrowing cash were found to be very common. Except for Rangpur (1.5 percent) and Sylhet (3.5 percent), no food-secure households in the low-income category were reported in any divisions.

Households with disability and Female-headed households were more food insecure than households without. Households with disabled people reported being overburdened with health expenses and income loss of other earning members due to caregiving time at home. Female-headed households experienced difficulties putting food on the table due to less skill and readiness to work, unavailability of time after caregiving the kids, social stigma, safety concerns, etc. This has been a common picture all over the rounds of surveys since July and these households depended on assistance from others.

FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



Less than seven in ten households afforded somewhat adequate diets.

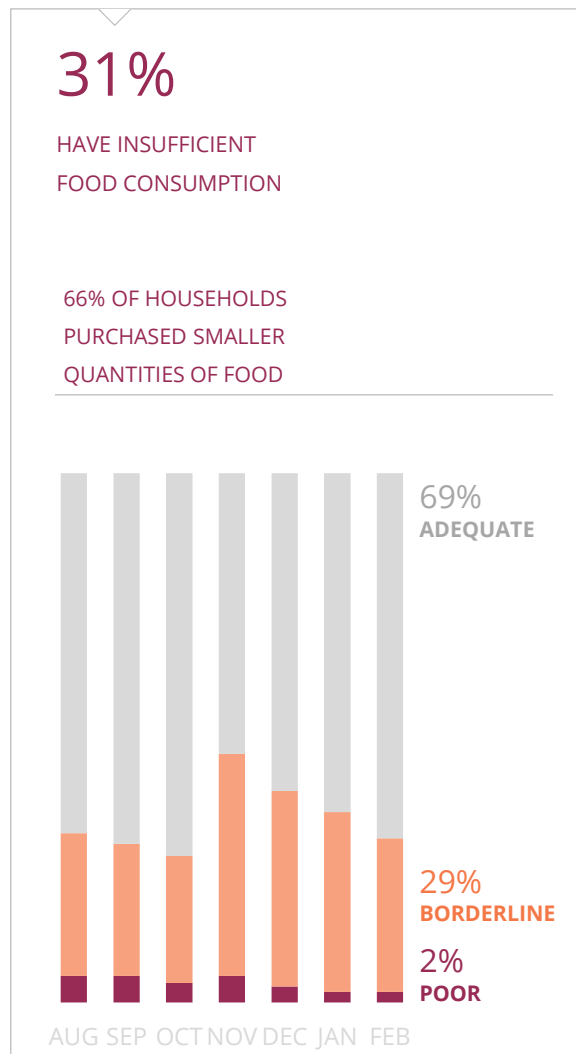
In February, an average of 69 percent of households in eight divisions had a somewhat acceptable diet, which was 5 percent higher than in January. On the contrary, 66 percent of households reported having small quantities and less expensive food. Only 17 percent reported having their own source of food production. The rest (83 percent) entirely depended on buying food from the market.

The consumption of micronutrient-rich food did not improve over the last eight months.

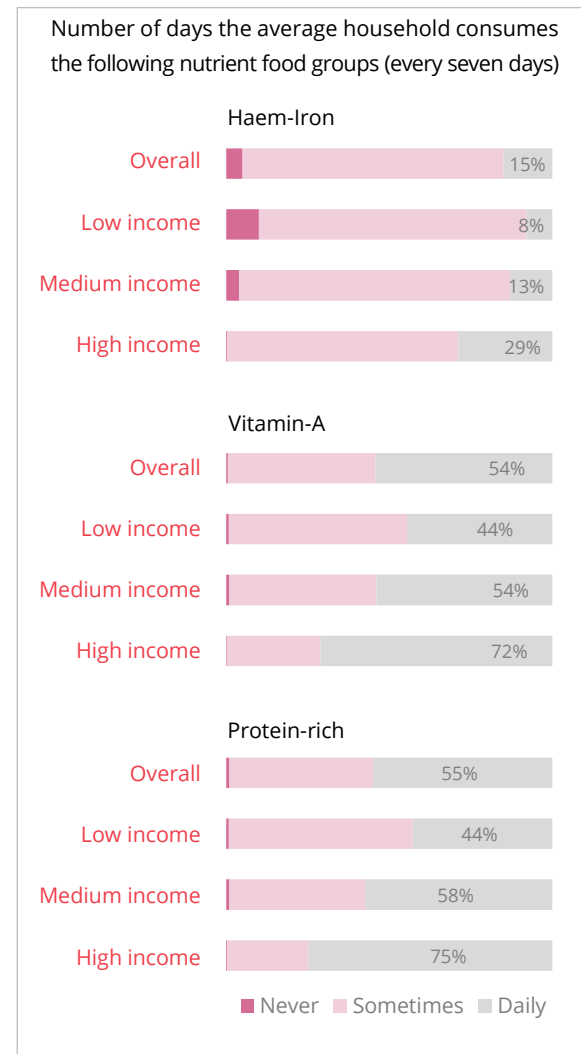
Only 15 percent of households had iron-rich food in their regular diet; 80 percent had it sometimes, and 5 percent had no iron-rich food on their plates, reported from their last seven days' recall. Low-income households barely afford to put nutritious food on their plate. Less than five in ten households had a poor diet with lower protein and vitamin-A. Most of their calorie intake came from rice. In low-income households, 66 percent, in seven days, reported having protein and vegetables less than five days and fruits and dairy less than one day. Lentils had been the regular source of protein in general, with a minimum quantity of consumption.

Households with disability and low-income groups were eating less diverse diets than average – on average more than one-third (44 percent) were facing insufficient food consumption. On average, 59 percent reported having members with a disability in low-income groups.

FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



FEBRUARY FOOD CONSUMPTION - NUTRITION



* 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.

Portions of households adopting coping strategies had remained the same, increased in low-income groups.

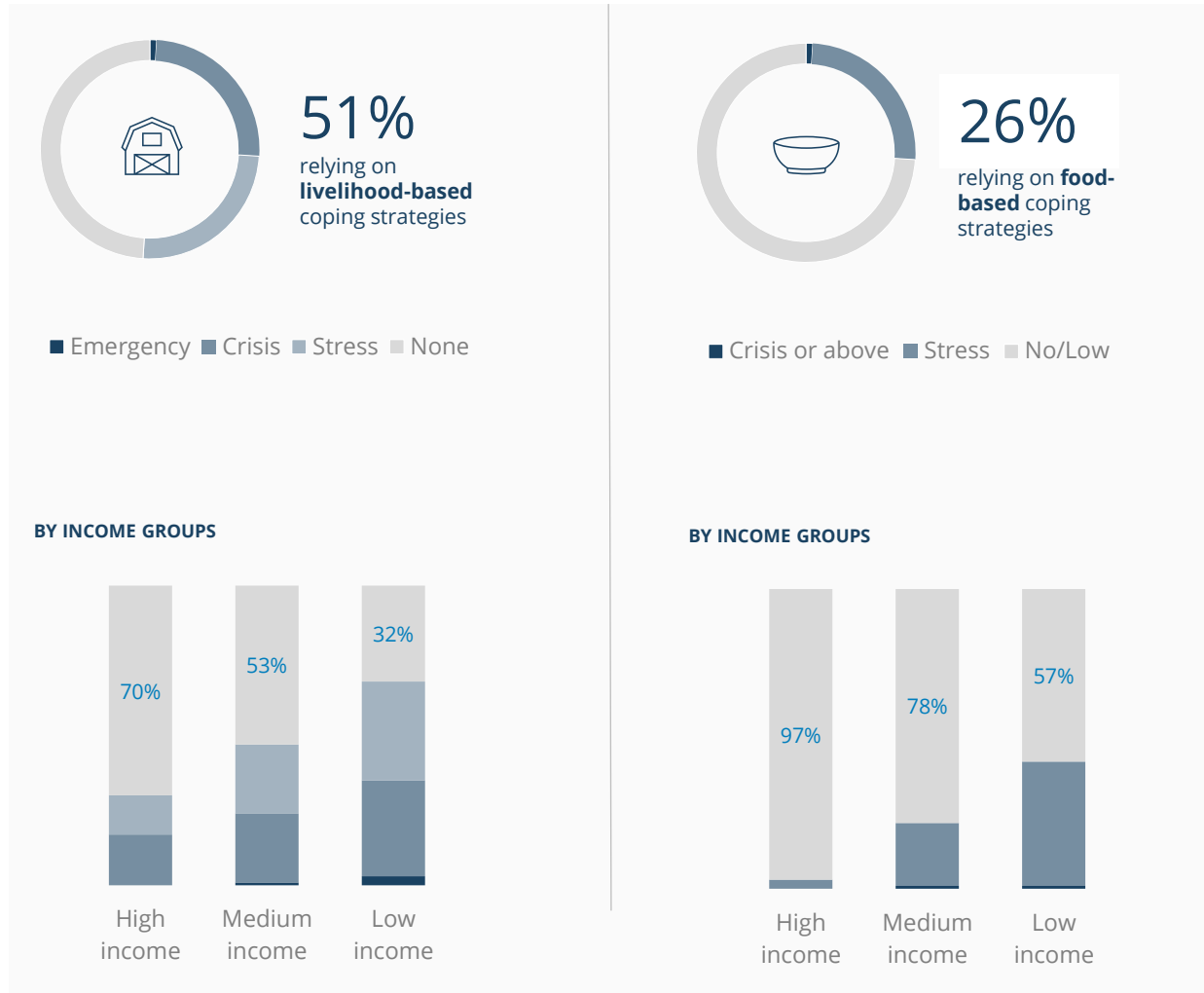
Reliance on negative coping strategies had been the common observation in the low-income group.

It is alarming that 2 percent of households in low-income groups also relied on emergency coping this month, which includes selling lands and residences and migrating to other places to look for earnings. It has been observed for a long time and this negative coping puts the most vulnerable at threat of any future shocks. Households reported having fewer employment opportunities with more competition in the labour market, and with low wages due to increased production costs. Only 13 percent of surveyed households reported receiving assistance.

Almost three in ten households relied on food-based coping strategies. Households had struggled to meet the required diets and compromised by eating less preferred food, limiting portions, or sacrificing adults' meals so children could eat. Reliance on negative coping strategies had increased due to slow debt recovery and increased food prices.

Income instability made a big difference in both food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies.

Low-income households were turning to food-based (41 percent) and more to livelihood-based (65 percent) coping strategies to meet food and basic needs for their well-being compared to other households. In Barishal, 4 percent of low-income households relied on emergency coping, which were also high in Sylhet and Rangpur division.

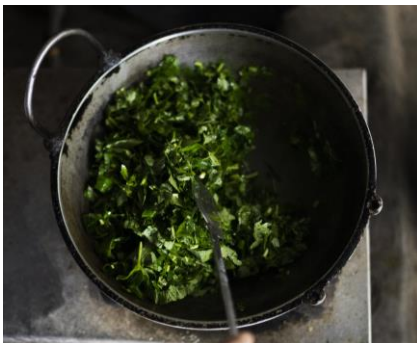


* Reduced food-based coping strategies (rCSI) scores are used as a proxy variable for food insecurity. The rCSI is based on the frequency and severity of coping mechanisms for households reporting food consumption problems and assesses the stress level of households due to a food shortage. A high score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



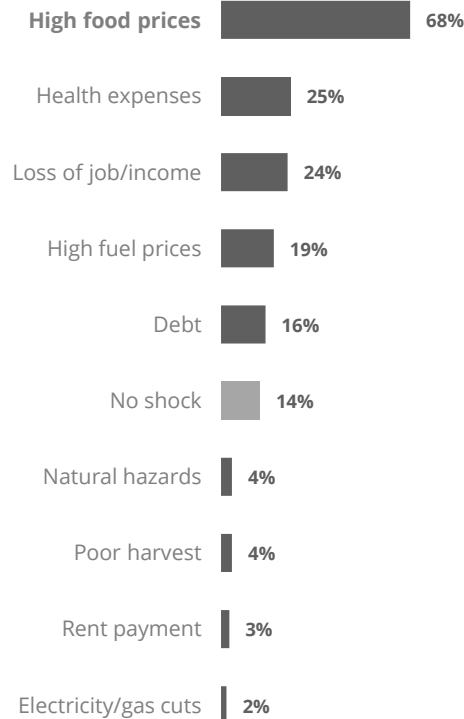
High food prices are the hardest hit, and food inflation rose again (8.13 percent).

Food inflation has risen and almost seven in ten households have been hit by high food prices in the last six months. This shock continues 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 income group levels. Some individual commodities in the spice group, such as green chili, which is widely used in all households, rose up to 142 percent year on year. The global export import crisis impacted the wheat price to rise to 71 percent highest in January, which has decreased to 63 percent in February. The non-food inflation rate had slightly decreased to 9.82 percent¹. The next most reported shocks were health expenditures and loss of income or employment. High fuel prices were reported by vehicle users, farmers, and business owners.



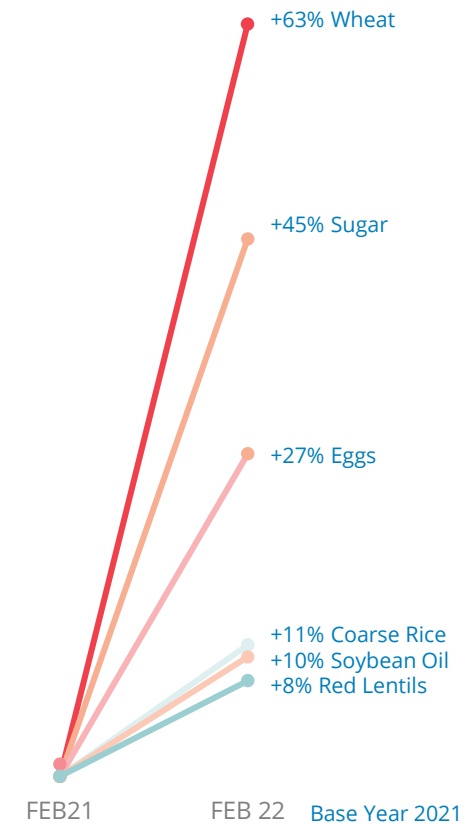
High food prices stand out as the biggest shock

% HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY SHOCKS



Prices of commodities continued to increase

% PRICE INCREASE YEAR-ON-YEAR*



¹ Consumer Price Index, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics February 2023. A CPI is an index to measure the monthly change in prices paid by consumers.

Rising expenditure has been a common phenomenon reported by households.

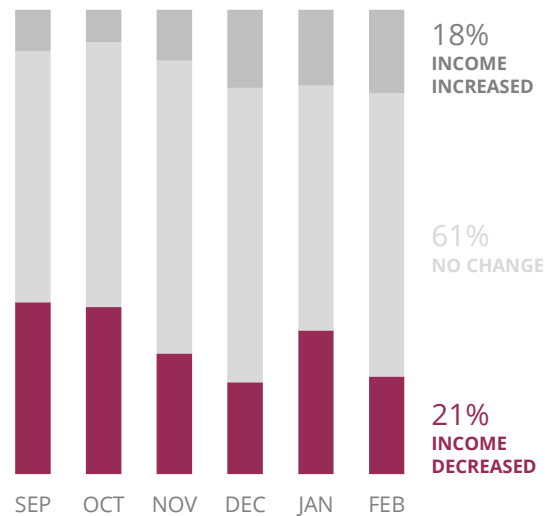
More than seven in ten households reported an expenditure increase. Most households reported expenditure increases in most divisions, especially for food, health, and education. On average, 21 percent of households struggled with health issues, with higher medical expenditures, loss of income due to death and sickness of the earning members, and debts to recover the expenditures.

Households reporting income loss remained high. A 21 percent of households reported decreased income in February, which was 24 percent in January. Households in the Barishal division reported the highest loss of income ranging from more than 50 percent and between 20 to 50 percent. While expenditure increase was a common concern for all income groups households, the low-income group largely reported a loss of income. More importantly, the global food crisis created price volatility in most food groups, which continued to rise and worsened buying capacity of all households. High prices and cost increase highly impacted all the employment sectors negatively and the hardest hit was the low-income group.

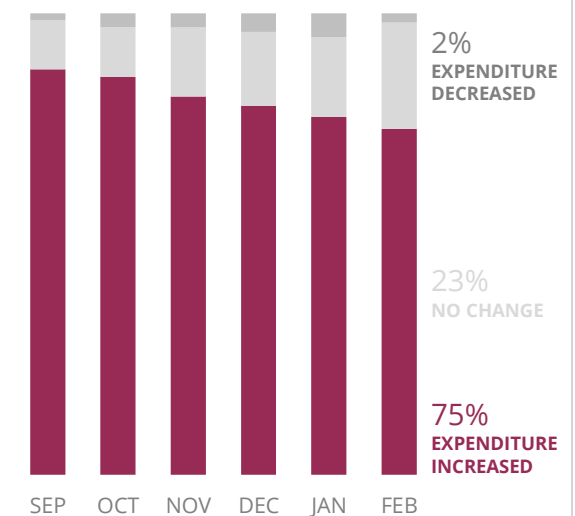
On the contrary, an 18 percent high-income group, including wealthy farmers, reported increased income amidst food, fuel, and fertilizer cost rise.



% HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHANGE IN INCOME



% HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHANGE IN EXPENDITURE





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 cold waves.

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, **More than 900,000 people worldwide are fighting to survive in famine-like conditions** in 2023. Learn more [here](#).

Other Resources



Q1 MARKET MONITOR 2023

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



COUNTRY BRIEFS 2023

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



Acknowledgments:

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World Food Programme

Bangladesh

Annex: Tables

Overall

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	FEBRUARY (%)
Food Secure	5.36
Marginally Food Insecure	83.82
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	11.36

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies	
None	48.97
Stress	24.76
Crisis	24.92
Emergency	1.34

Food-based Coping Strategies	
No/Low	74.21
Medium	25.16
High	0.63

Food Consumption Group	
Acceptable Food Consumption	69.4
Borderline Food Consumption	28.55
Poor Food Consumption	2.05

Annex: Tables

	Income Group (%)			Sex of Head of Household (%)		Disability (%)	
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	FEMALE	MALE	YES	NO
Food Insecurity (rCARI)							
Food Secure	0.6	11.7	4.2	2.82	5.51	3.23	5.53
Marginally Food Insecure	76.7	82.7	95.1	78.87	83.54	72.04	84.17
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	22.7	5.6	0.7	17.22	10.94	24.73	10.3
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies							
None	32.36	53.6	70.13	45.1	49.2	26.9	50.7
Stress	32.95	23.42	12.99	22.5	24.9	26.9	24.6
Crisis	31.78	22.52	16.88	22.5	25.1	39.8	23.7
Emergency	2.91	0.45	0	9.9	0.8	6.45	0.94
Food-based Coping Strategies							
No/Low	57.4	78.2	96.8	57.8	75.2	53.8	75.8
Medium	41.5	21.4	3.3	40.9	24.2	45.5	23.0
High	1.2	0.5	0.0	1.4	0.6	0.7	0.0
Food Consumption Group							
Acceptable Food Consumption	57.56	69.14	89.61	56.3	70.2	57.0	70.4
Borderline Food Consumption	38.37	29.73	10.39	33.8	28.2	37.6	27.8
Poor Food Consumption	4.07	1.13	0	9.9	1.6	5.4	1.8

World Food Programme

Bangladesh