



Bangladesh

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

March 2023

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



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



Bangladesh: IN NUMBERS



More than one in ten households are currently food insecure



15%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)¹



Food security situation worsened on average, due to lean season.



51%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES
Livelihood-based coping strategies²



30% purchased food on credit



56% had debts



15% spent their savings



16% received assistance

Food security varies across the divisions and population



31%

Low-income households were moderately food insecure, and only 8% had regular iron-rich food intake.



72%

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 worsened.

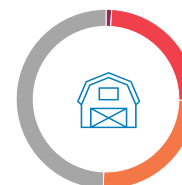
Almost two in ten households (15%) was moderately food insecure, a worsening trend compared to the last month. Approximately 51 percent reported resorting to livelihood-based copings, like in February. This lean season prevails between harvesting and planting time between mid-February to mid-April. The impact was visible as it is one of the most challenging times of the year when no agricultural activities are in the field. On top of everything, the global 5 F (Food, feed, fuel, fertilizer, and finance) crises and inflation continued to impact households' food security and well-being.

Food security varied in divisions, with some slow recovery. The Barishal division remained the highest in consecutive survey rows, having the most food-insecure population. There were variations in divisional food insecurity, with some observations of slow recovery in some divisions. Dhaka was the lowest in food insecure households since July. 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 31 percent were food insecure in low-income households, compared to 7 percent in medium-income households and less than 2 percent in high-income households. Compared to February, the scenario has worsened in all income groups; the poor are the hardest hit. **High food prices remained to be the biggest shock.** Some 72 percent of households said the rise in food prices was their deepest concern and significantly affected their well-being. In comparison, 25 percent of households worried about health expenditure increases, and 19 percent mentioned the burden of debt or loans to cope with food insecurity.

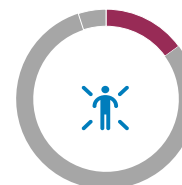
Relying on coping strategies to keep food on the table was common in rows. More than half of the households applied livelihood-based coping strategies such as borrowing money, selling productive assets, or going into debt to buy food. On average, the percent households adopting stress and emergency was almost like the previous month. Households continued relying both on food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies.

More than half of the households are using coping strategies



51%

RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES*



15%

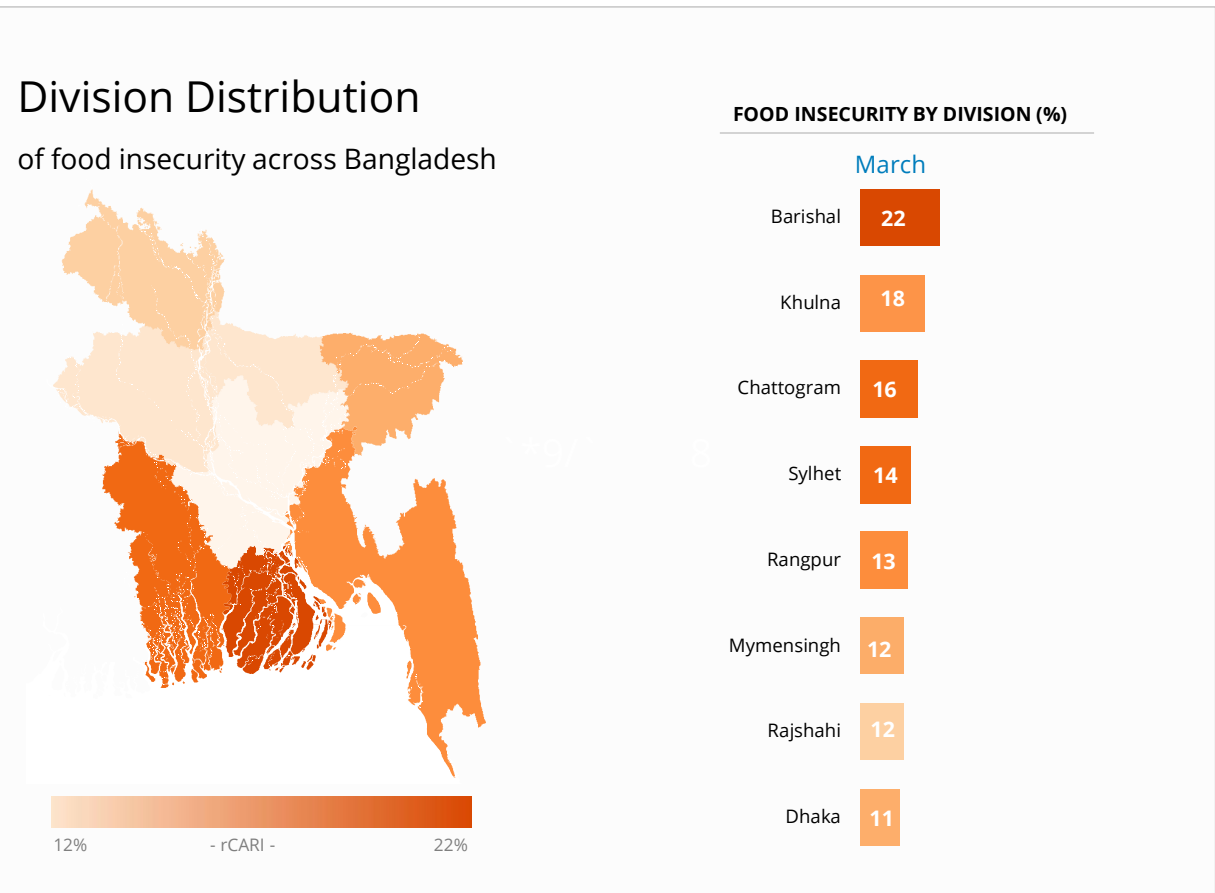
FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)

Findings

Food insecurity worsened to 4 percent (15%) compared to the previous month.

All these households were at moderate levels of food insecurity, and there were no severely food insecure households in March. **However, it has been a common observation that a minimum of 11 percent of households are moderate to severely food insecure all over the divisions since July.**

Compared to July 2022, Barishal and Khulna had the slowest recovery in eight months. Almost 22 percent of households in Barishal had food insecurity in March, which is higher than average. **Different households coped differently to put food on the table.** The low-income households in Barishal, primarily dependent on agricultural activities and fishing, suffered the most due to the seasonal fishing ban and labor market fall due to the lean season. Households in the Sylhet division faced challenges due to a lack of safe drinking water and the burden from the recovery of loan repayment. In the Rangpur division, Jute farmers reported receiving a low price for Jute and could not cover production costs. In Dhaka, daily and skilled labourers like bus drivers, conductors, van and rikshaw pullers, housemaids, and night guards complained about high food inflation and sky-high expenditures to manage food and well-being for families.

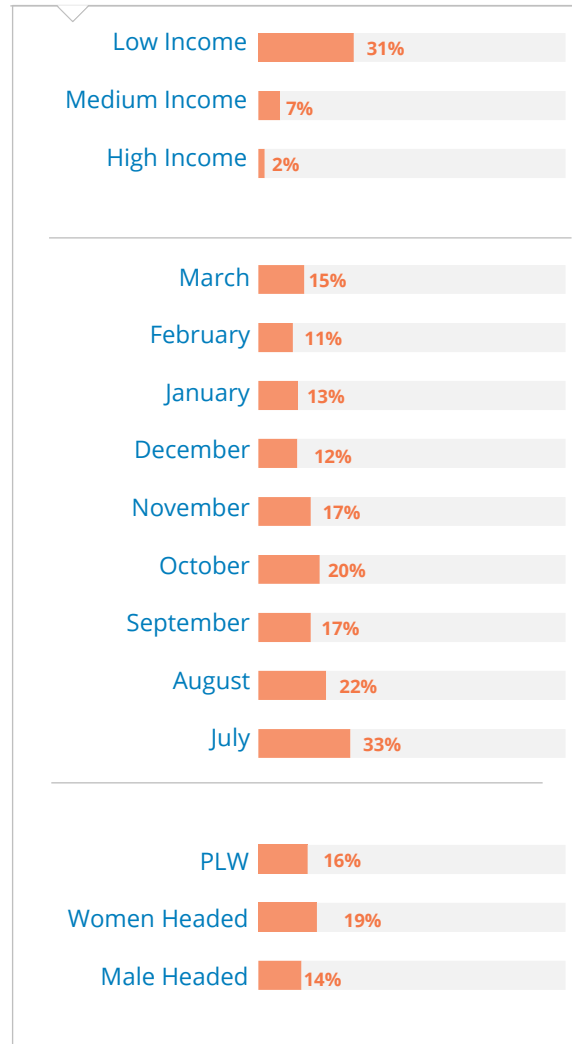




Low-income, female-headed and households with disabilities were the hardest hit.

There is a significant gap in different sections of the population. The situation for the low-income group has always been the same in the series of this monthly survey, 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. Many households reported borrowing money to feed the family. Debt has doubled up again as reported by the households in March. The lean season highly impacted the household's capacity to buy food as no agricultural activities are in the field. Food inflation was incredibly costly for these households. **Households with disability and Female-headed households were more food insecure than households without.** This has been a very common observation. 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. There had been only 16 percent of households reported having received assistance. The lean season impact is anticipated to worsen in the coming month.

FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



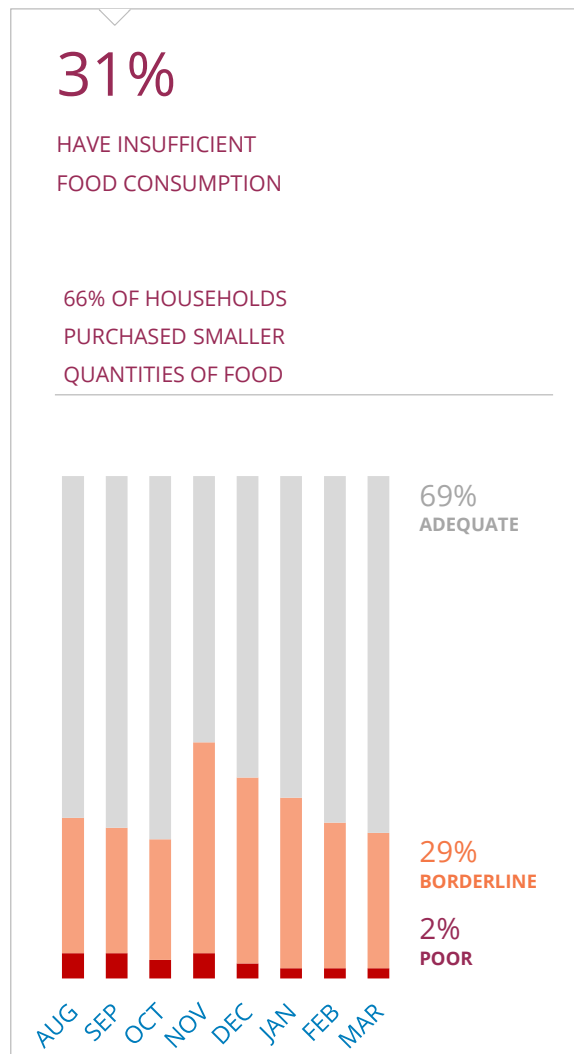


More than three in ten households could not afford adequate diets.

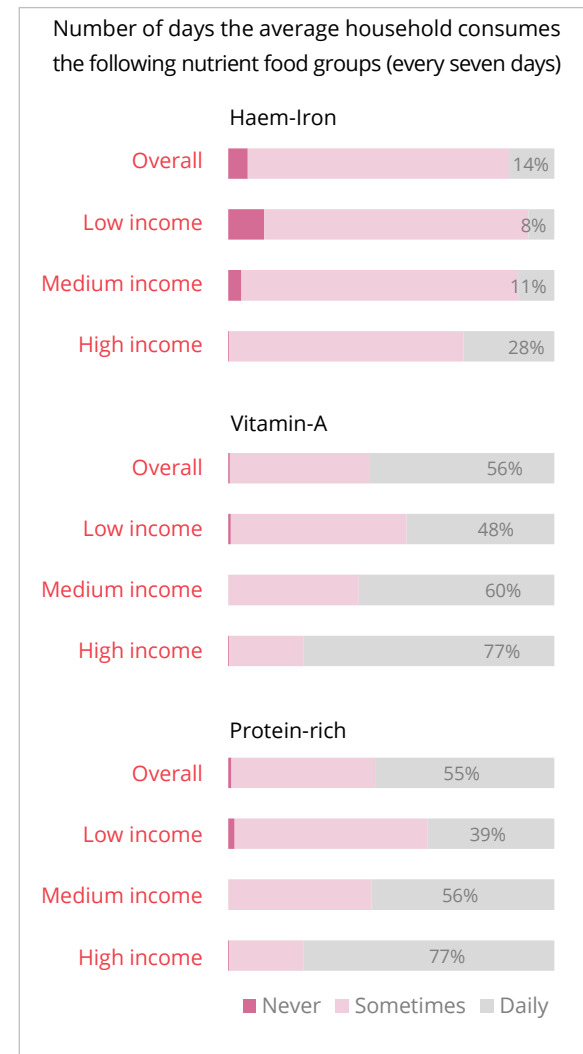
In March, an average of 71 percent of households in eight divisions reported having an acceptable diet. On the contrary, 70 percent of households reported having small quantities and less expensive food, which might have yet to be captured in the 71 percent having adequate diet. Only 20 percent reported having their source of food production, which primarily covers the cereal part of the diet. The rest (80%) entirely depended on buying food from the market.

The consumption of micronutrient-rich food remained low for all households. Only 14 percent of households had iron-rich food in their regular diet; 80 percent had it sometimes, and 6 percent had no iron-rich food on their plates, reported from their last seven days' recall. Low-income households had a poor diet with lower protein and vitamin-A. Most of their calorie intake came from rice. In low-income households, they were observed to consume protein and vegetables less than five days and fruits and dairy less than one day. The changes in the divisional-level consumption pattern could not have been captured. **Households with disability and low-income groups eating less diverse diets than average** –On average, 37 percent of households with disabilities were in the insufficient diet, which is 39 percent in women-headed households.

FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



FEBRUARY FOOD CONSUMPTION - NUTRITION



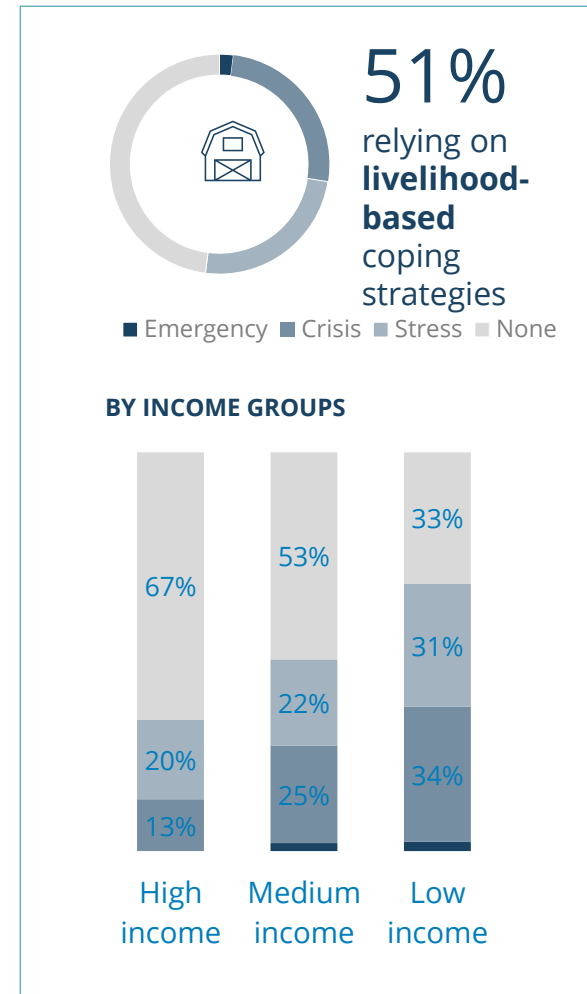
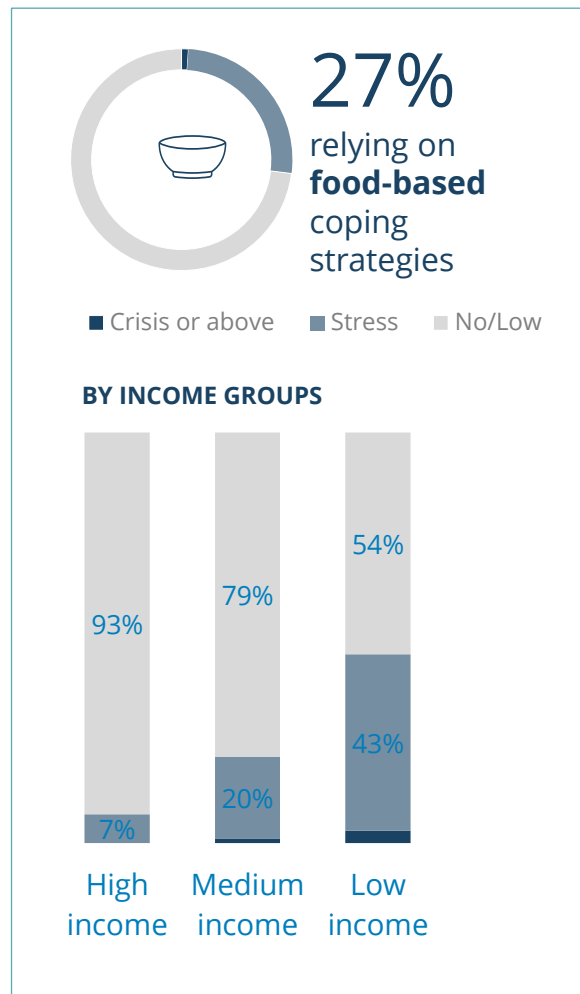
* The "Food consumption score" (FCS) is a score calculated using the frequency of consumption of different food groups consumed by a household during the 7 days before the survey. There are standard weights for each of the food groups that comprise the food consumption score.

Long-time reliance on coping strategies had remained the same, a risk to withstand future shocks.

Reliance on negative coping strategies had been the common observation on a national average, severe in the low-income group. It is alarming that 2 percent of households in low-income groups relied on emergency coping, which includes selling productive assets, lands, and begging. It has been observed for a long time, and this negative coping puts the most vulnerable at threat of future shocks. The impact of the lean season was evident in this month, which may sustain until mid-April.

Almost five in ten poor 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 skipping meals by adults. Reliance on negative coping strategies has different negative long-term impacts like anxiety, health hazard and non-resilience to shocks. It is alarming that many households are steadily on different food-based coping.

Income instability made a big difference in both food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies. Low-income households were turning to food-based (46%) and more to livelihood-based (77%) coping strategies to meet food and basic needs for their well-being, which is very high. In Barishal, the percentage is higher in the low-income group. Among many reasons, the fishing ban in March and April, on top of the lean season, decreased income significantly.



* 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.



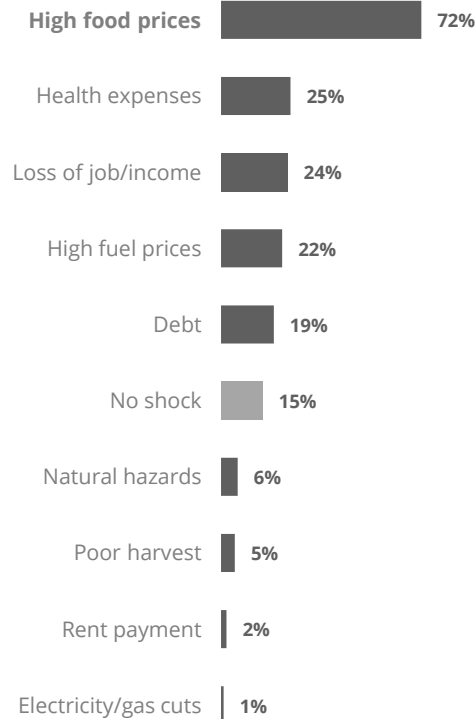
Food inflation turned to rise higher in March (9.09 %)

Food inflation has risen, and more than seven in ten households have been hit by high food prices in the last six months. Despite stabilization in the global food price index after April 2022, Bangladesh witnessed high inflation in ten years, and it continues. The primary food commodities are rice, wheat, soybean oil, sugar, chicken, eggs, potatoes, and red lentils, major food items of regular diet in the country at all income group levels. Broiler chicken is a widely consumed protein source, and the price exceeded poor households' purchasing capacity. The global export import crisis impact on the wheat price remains 62 percent higher yearly. The non-food inflation rate had slightly decreased to 9.72 percent¹. The most reported shocks after price hikes were health expenditures and loss of income or employment. High fuel prices were reported by vehicle users, farmers, and business owners. The cost of food baskets increased to 25 percent yearly on average.



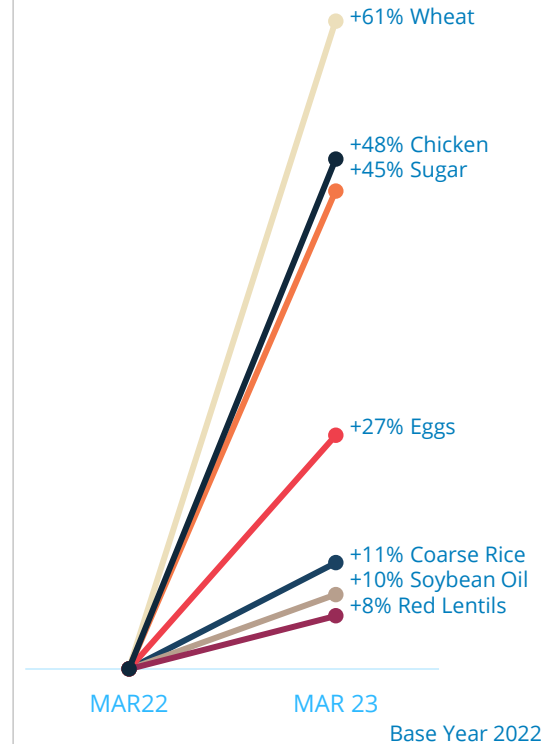
High food prices stand out as the biggest shock

% HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY SHOCKS



Prices of commodities continued to increase

% PRICE INCREASE YEAR-ON-YEAR*



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



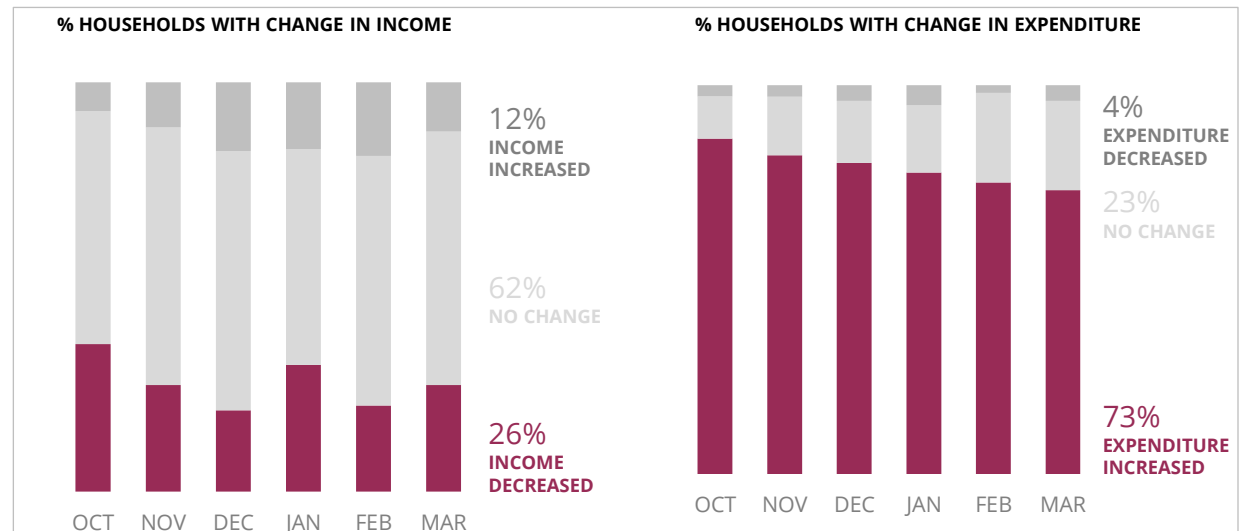
Higher inflation has been incredibly costly for poor households.

More than seven in ten households reported an expenditure increase.

The soaring price of food and non-food commodities made low-income households miserable. Most households reported expenditure increases in most divisions, especially for food, health, and education. On average, 25 percent of households struggled with higher medical expenditures; many reported increased transportation costs and increased loans to bear family expenditures with less purchasing capacity.

Households reporting income loss remained high.

While expenditure increase was a common concern for all income groups households, the low-income group largely reported a loss of income. Some 44 percent of low-income households reported decreased income in March. Households in the Barishal division reported higher average income loss, between 20 and 50 percent. 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 increases negatively impacted all employment sectors, and the low-income group was the hardest hit. The high and medium-income groups also complained about income loss and expenditure increase.





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	4.6
Marginally Food Insecure	80.8
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	14.66

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies

None	48.94
Stress	25.08
Crisis	24.51
Emergency	1.47

Food-based Coping Strategies

No/Low	73.4
Medium	25.3
High	1.3

Food Consumption Group

Acceptable Food Consumption	70.85
Borderline Food Consumption	27.04
Poor Food Consumption	2.12

Annex: Tables

	Income Group (%)			Sex of Head of Household (%)		Disability (%)	
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	FEMALE	MALE	YES	NO
Food Insecurity (rCARI)							
Food Secure	0.0	7.2	7.4	3.17	4.64	2.33	4.73
Marginally Food Insecure	68.7	86.2	90.7	77.78	80.94	81.4	80.74
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	31.3	6.6	1.9	19.05	14.42	1628	14.54
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies							
None	33.04	52.74	66.88	42.9	49.3	27.9	50.5
Stress	31.09	22.32	20.26	23.8	25.2	26.7	25.0
Crisis	33.7	23.41	12.54	27.0	24.4	41.9	23.2
Emergency	2.17	1.53	0.32	6.4	1.2	3.49	1.31
Food-based Coping Strategies							
No/Low	54.4	79.4	92.6	57.1	74.3	65.1	74.0
Medium	43.3	19.5	7.4	36.5	24.7	33.7	24.7
High	2.4	1.1	0.0	6.4	1.0	1.2	1.3
Food Consumption Group							
Acceptable Food Consumption	55.22	75.05	87.78	60.3	71.4	62.8	71.5
Borderline Food Consumption	39.57	24.51	12.22	34.9	26.6	30.2	26.8
Poor Food Consumption	5.22	0.44	0	4.8	2	7.0	1.8

World Food Programme

Bangladesh