



# Bangladesh

## FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

April 2023

Remote Household Food  
Security Survey Brief



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



# Bangladesh: IN NUMBERS



More than one in ten households are currently food insecure



## 23%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)<sup>1</sup>



Food security situation worsened further.



## 64%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES  
*Livelihood-based coping strategies*<sup>2</sup>



30% purchased food on credit



25% reduced expense on health



23% spent their savings



16% received assistance

## Food security varies across the divisions and population



## 43%

Low-income households were moderately food insecure, and female-headed households suffered more.



## 61%

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 worsened further.

**More than one** in five households (23%) was moderately food insecure, a worsening trend continuing since last month. **More** households reported resorting to livelihood-based coping, which increased from 51 percent to 63 percent in April. **Food security worsened nationwide in all the divisions due to increased expenditure and negative coping.** This was due to specific food consumption behaviour during Ramadan, regardless of income sources.

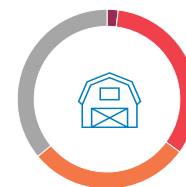
**Income source was a vital factor in combating seasonal food insecurity.** The Dhaka division continued to be in a better situation than the other divisions, primarily because of the nature of the household's primary occupations, mostly independent of agricultural activities. The number of professionals, salaried jobs, traders, and skilled labourers among the respondents was comparatively high in these divisions. Such as, in the Khulna division, the percentage of agricultural day labourers was double (16%) that of other divisions.

Households with female heads and with disability suffered the most during Ramadan to manage food for the family.

Compared to February and March, the situation has worsened in all income groups; the poor were the hardest hit. The survey revealed that 43 percent were food insecure in low-income households, compared to 11 percent in medium-income households and less than 3 percent in high-income households. It is alarming that 11 percent of households in the middle-income group were food insecure. **High food prices and loss of income remained to be the biggest shock.** Some 61 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 reduced health expenditure, and 15 percent mentioned the burden of debt or loans to cope with food insecurity.

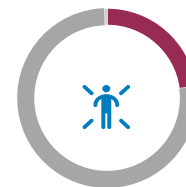
**More households relied on coping strategies to have some nutritious food during Ramadan.** More than six in ten households applied livelihood-based coping strategies such as borrowing money, selling productive assets, or going into debt to buy food. On average, the percent households adopting stress and emergency increased than the previous month. Households continued relying both on food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies.

High coping - more than six in ten households are using coping strategies



64%

RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES\*



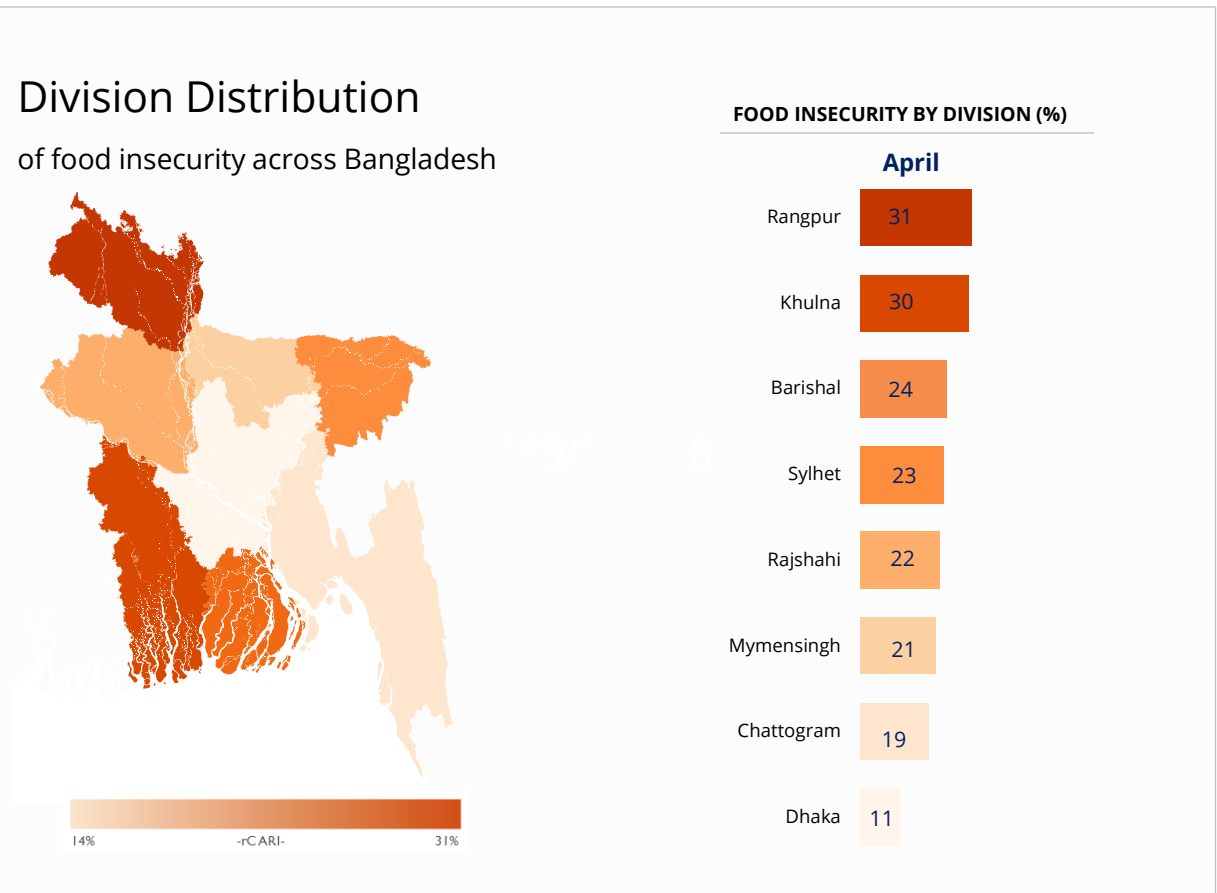
23%

FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)



## Findings

**On average, food insecurity worsened to 8 percent more (23%) compared to March.** Food insecurity is highly seasonal for vulnerable households, whose income depends on seasonal job opportunities. They are vulnerable to withstand any shocks. Ramadan is a month of limited job opportunities for many. On top of that, increased expenditure and negative coping to put nutritious food on the table had a ripple effect. There was quite a clear distinction between agriculture and non-agricultural income dependency. Due to Ramadan and the off-season, agricultural wage labourers, rikshaw pullers, petty traders, restaurant owners, garment workers, and construction labourers suffered the most. On the other hand, due to high fuel prices, CNG and motor drivers faced challenges. Fishing was banned in many rivers, and fishermen had less income than usual. Khulna Barishal, Rangpur divisions reported higher food insecurity due to fewer agricultural jobs. Heat waves in the northern region damaged vegetables in the field; the farmers had counted losses. 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. Garment workers lost overtime due to Ramadan and adopted more crisis coping.





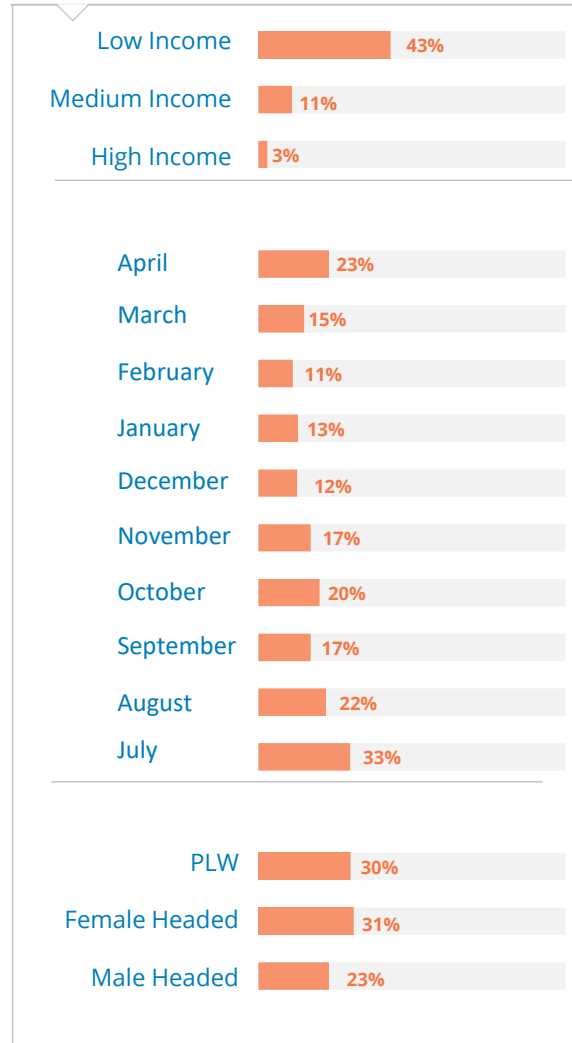
## The month of Ramadan was harsh on Low-income, female-headed and households with disabilities.

The situation for the low-income group has always been the same in the series of this monthly survey, especially for the female-headed. Many households reported borrowing money to feed the family as the income was comparatively much less. Food insecurity in the low-income group was double the average. The lean season and the month of Ramadan highly impacted the household's capacity to buy food. Reduced agricultural activities were reported in the field, including fishing banns, and many sectors suffered from the slow business. Food and fuel price shock significantly affected those households.

**Female-headed households were poorer than the poorest male-headed households.**

Households with disability were also more food insecure than households without. This has been a general 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 receiving assistance.

FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



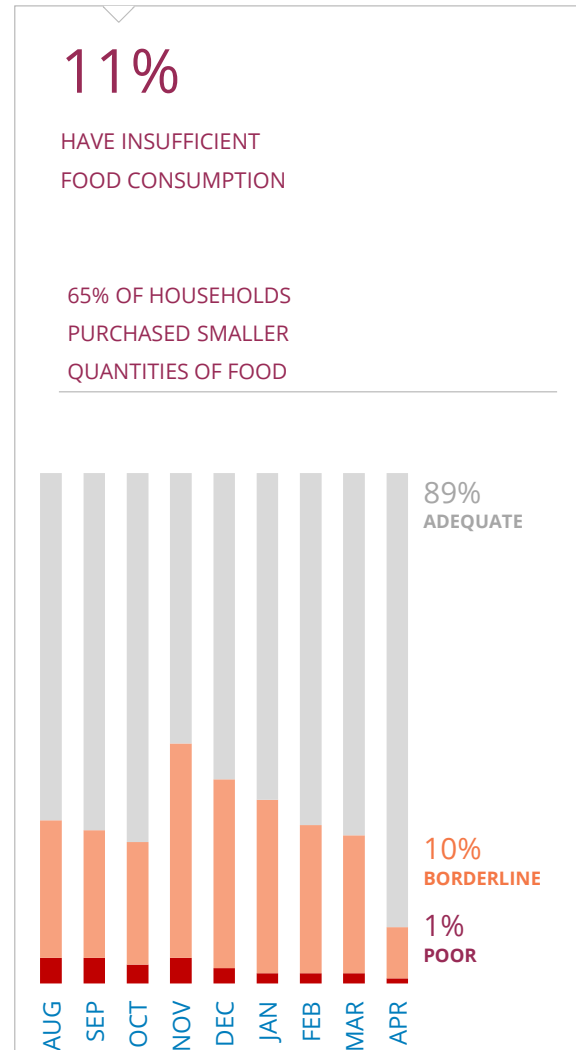


## Over one in ten households could not afford adequate diets; more households ate better to observe Ramadan.

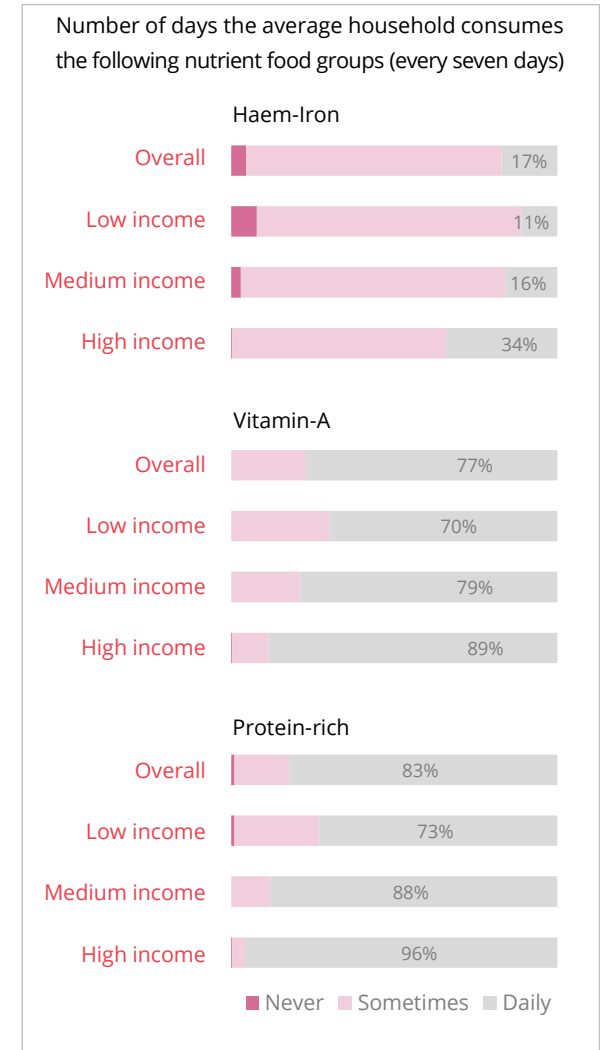
An average of 89 percent of households in eight divisions reported having an acceptable diet. At the same time, many households, 65 percent, reported having small quantities and less expensive food. Generally, during Ramadan, households eat more fruits, sugar, and protein, regardless of affordability, and rely on crisis coping like borrowing money from friends and families, buying on credit, etc. The high food consumption is purely a reflection of Ramadan's food intake nature. It is common in Ramadan that while people fast, they opt to accommodate at least two good meals by any coping strategy, mostly borrowing, buying on credit and spending savings.

**The consumption of micronutrient-rich food increased for all households, except for iron-rich food intake.** Only 17 percent of households had iron-rich food in their regular diet; 78 percent had it sometimes, and 5 percent had no iron-rich food on their plates, reported from their last seven days' recall. Prominently, all the income group households had consumed protein, fruits and vegetables and sugar.

### 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.

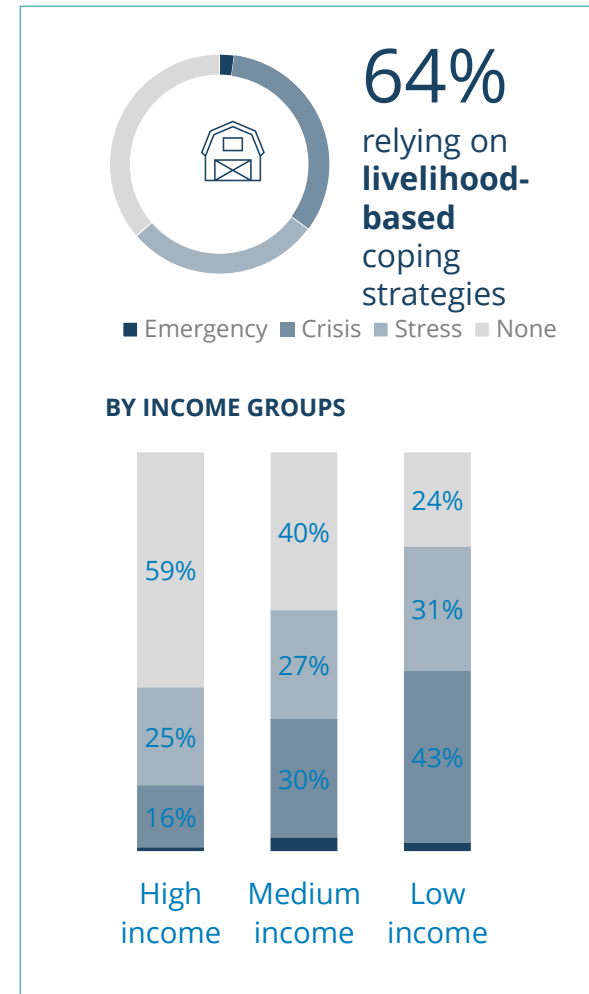
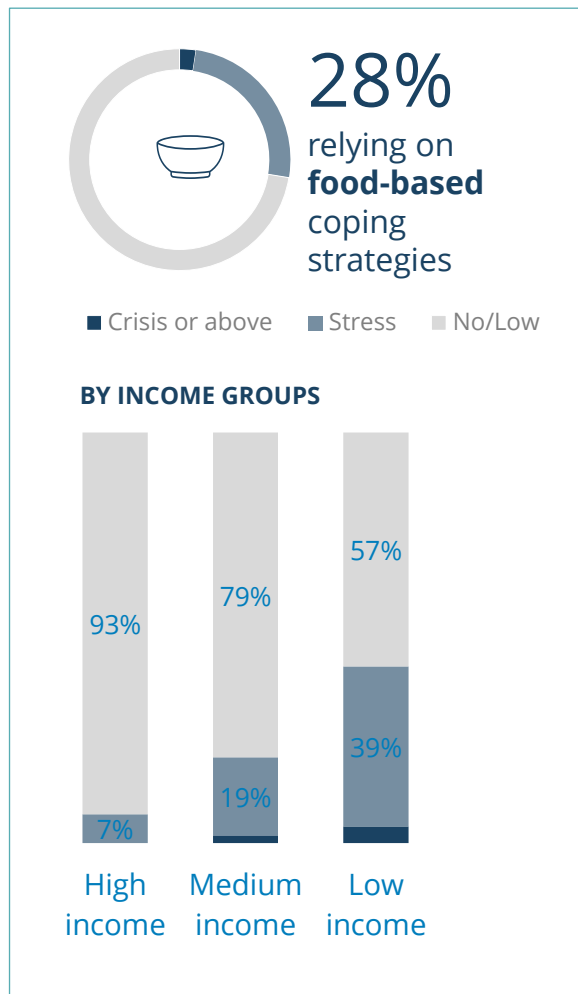


Higher reliance on coping strategies will bring risk to withstand future shocks.

**An alarmingly increased number of households relied on negative coping strategies to meet Ramadan food needs and adjust to income loss.** It is alarming that 4 percent of households in low-income groups relied on emergency coping, including selling productive assets, lands, and begging. Negative coping has been observed for a long time, which spiked in April, putting the most vulnerable at threat in future shocks. The impact of the lean season continued from March, and reliance on livelihood coping increased to 64 percent of households.

**Almost three in ten poor households relied on food-based coping strategies.** Despite reporting high consumption of acceptable diets, many households 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.** During the month of Ramadan, low-income households were turning to food-based (43%) and more to livelihood-based (76%) coping strategies to meet food needs to maintain fasting. In Khulna and Barishal, the percentage is higher in the low-income group. The fishing ban in March and April is a significant income loss and dietary gap for poor fishermen households.



\* 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 continues to be higher ( 8.84 %)

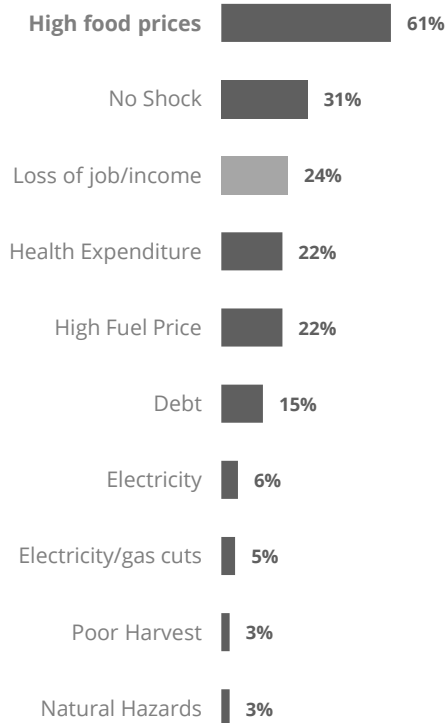
### Food inflation remained high, and high food prices have hit more than six in ten households in the last six months.

In the domestic retail markets, month-on-month prices of essential food commodities like cereals, lentils, poultry, egg, edible oil, green chili, and garlic were reduced officially. In contrast, prices of onions and potatoes increased. Unfortunately, households experience more price shocks. The global export import crisis impacted on the domestic wheat price remains 57 percent higher yearly. The non-food inflation rate was stable at 9.72 percent in March and April. The most reported shocks after price hikes were loss of income or employment and health expenditures. High fuel prices were reported by vehicle users, farmers, and business owners. These households reported high food and non-food prices and higher expenditure rises during the last six months.



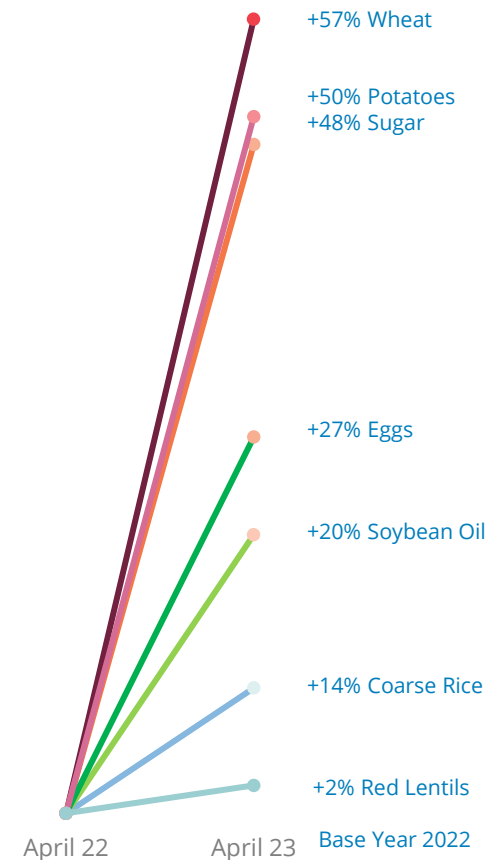
## High food prices stand out as the biggest shock

% HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY SHOCKS



## Prices of commodities continued to increase

% PRICE INCREASE YEAR-ON-YEAR\*



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

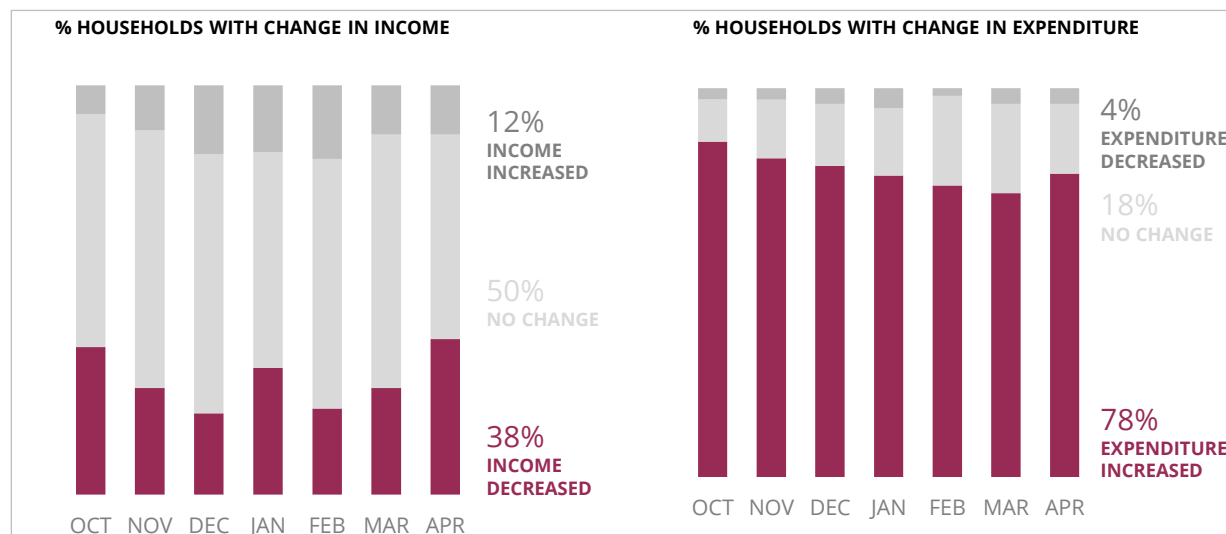
2 November inflation rate was compared as the survey took place in the first week of December, and the households recall period was seven days to thirty days.

Higher inflation and loss of income are incredibly costly for poor households.

**Close to eight in ten households reported an expenditure increase during Ramadan.** Most households reported expenditure increases in most divisions, especially for food, health, and education. On average, 22 percent of households struggled with higher medical expenditures; many reported increased fuel costs and increased debts to bear family expenditures during Ramadan.

**Households reporting income loss remained high since March.** While expenditure increase was a common concern for all income groups households, the low-income group reported a loss of income. More than five in ten low-income households reported decreased income in April, which is very high.

Almost all the divisions 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, primarily dependent on agricultural activity and petty traders 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



#### Q2 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:**

Arifeen Akter

**Photo Credits:**

© Sayed Asif Mohammed/WFP

**For further information:**

Domenico Scalpelli  
Country Director & Representative  
[domenico.scalpelli@wfp.org](mailto:domenico.scalpelli@wfp.org)

Takahiro UTSUMI  
Head of RAM (Research, Assessment and Monitoring)  
[takahiro.utsumi@wfp.org](mailto:takahiro.utsumi@wfp.org)

Din Ara Wahid  
VAM Officer (Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping)  
[dinara.wahid@wfp.org](mailto:dinara.wahid@wfp.org)

**World Food Programme**

Bangladesh

## Annex: Tables

Overall

<b>Food Insecurity (rCARI)</b>	<b>APRIL (%)</b>
Food Secure	0.5
Marginally Food Secure	76.5
<b>Moderately to Severely Food Insecure</b>	<b>23.1</b>

<b>Livelihood-based Coping Strategies</b>	
None	36.33
Stress	28.63
Crisis	32.88
Emergency	2.17

<b>Food-based Coping Strategies</b>	
No/Low	72.4
Medium	25.2
High	2.4

<b>Food Consumption Group</b>	
Acceptable Food Consumption	89.9
Borderline Food Consumption	9.46
Poor Food Consumption	0.64

## Annex: Tables

	Income Group (%)			Sex of Head of Household (%)		Disability (%)	
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	FEMALE	MALE	YES	NO
<b>Food Insecurity (rCARI)</b>							
Food Secure	0.0	0.2	1.8	0	0.43	0	0.43
Marginally Food Secure	57.3	88.8	95.1	68.35	77.05	69.74	76.94
<b>Moderately to Severely Food Insecure</b>	<b>42.8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>31.65</b>	<b>22.52</b>	<b>30.26</b>	<b>22.63</b>
<b>Livelihood-based Coping Strategies</b>							
None	23.73	39.63	58.93	40.5	36.0	36.8	36.3
Stress	31.45	27.44	24.55	22.8	29.0	17.1	29.4
Crisis	43.31	29.47	15.63	35.4	32.7	42.1	32.3
Emergency	1.51	3.46	0.89	1.3	2.2	3.95	2.05
<b>Food-based Coping Strategies</b>							
No/Low	57.4	79.5	92.4	60.8	73.2	56.6	73.4
Medium	38.8	18.7	7.1	32.9	24.7	38.2	24.3
High	3.8	1.8	0.5	6.3	2.1	5.3	2.2
<b>Food Consumption Group</b>							
Acceptable Food Consumption	82.86	93.9	97.77	76.0	90.8	86.8	90.1
Borderline Food Consumption	16.2	5.49	2.23	22.8	8.6	11.8	9.3
Poor Food Consumption	0.94	0.61	0	1.3	0.6	1.3	0.6

**World Food Programme**

Bangladesh