



# Bangladesh

## FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

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October - November 2023  
Disaster Impact

Remote Household Food  
Security Survey Brief



This brief was developed by WFP in December 2023, based on remote household food security surveys conducted in October and November 2023. During the post-monsoon and winter seasons, in addition to recurring disasters.



# Bangladesh: IN NUMBERS



Almost two in ten low-income households are currently food insecure.



## 18%

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



The food security situation has slightly improved due to the onset of the harvest season.



## 68%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES DUE TO INCOME LOSS AND RECURRENT SHOCKS

*Livelihood-based coping strategies*<sup>2</sup>



42% purchased food on credit



23% reduced expense on health



11% spent their savings



22% received assistance

### Food security varies across the divisions, population and climate hotspots.



## 36%

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



## 21%

households reported loss of employment



## 67%

of the households reported significant food prices increase.

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.





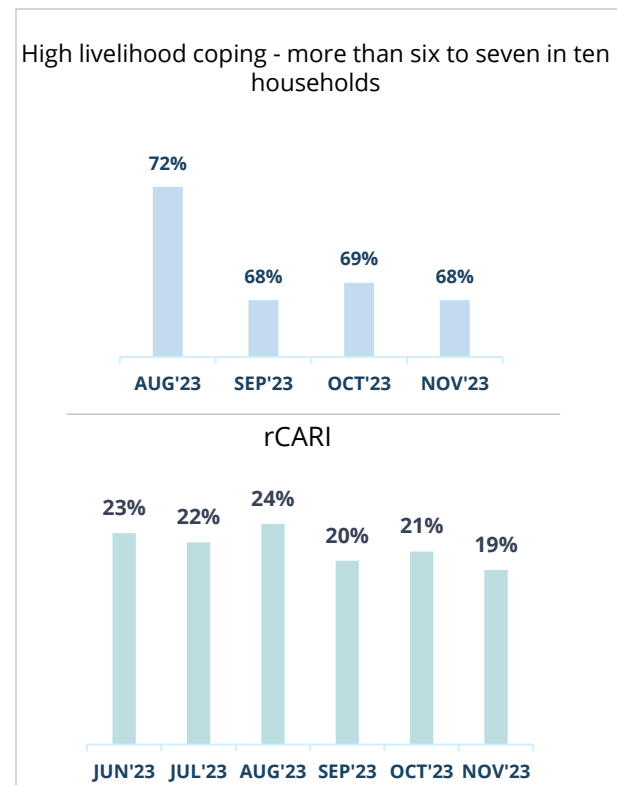
## In Brief

### Seasonality ( Lean and Harvest ) severely impacts household food security.

**Close to two** in ten households (18%) were food insecure on average in November, an improvement from the lean period in October (21%). In October, unexpected rainfall and cyclones impacted livelihood and food security in some climate hot spot areas in Bangladesh. The rCARI trend since July 2022 shows a similar seasonal pattern, having a peak towards the lean season and a plateau towards the harvesting season, interrupted by the climatic shock events on and off, apart from the disaggregated income level of the households.

**Food insecurity improved nationwide in all the divisions due to the return to work for the new harvest season in November.** The households with losses and damages due to heavy rainfall started recovering their income losses due to the employment opportunities for the rice and vegetable harvest. On the contrary, households with female heads and disabilities continued to suffer despite seasonal changes in income opportunities.

The survey revealed that 35 percent of low-income households were food insecure, compared to 9 percent in medium-income households and 1 percent in high-income households. **Multiple shocks, including high health expenditure and loss of income, remained the driving factors of food insecurity, hardest for the poor.** Concerns over high food prices remained elevated and some 93 percent of households said the rise was their deepest concern and significantly affected their well-being, regardless of their income levels. **Households relied on negative coping strategies to put food on the table, and it did not change much despite the overall improved food security situation.** 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 percentage of households adopting stress and emergency increased over the season. Households continued relying both on food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies.



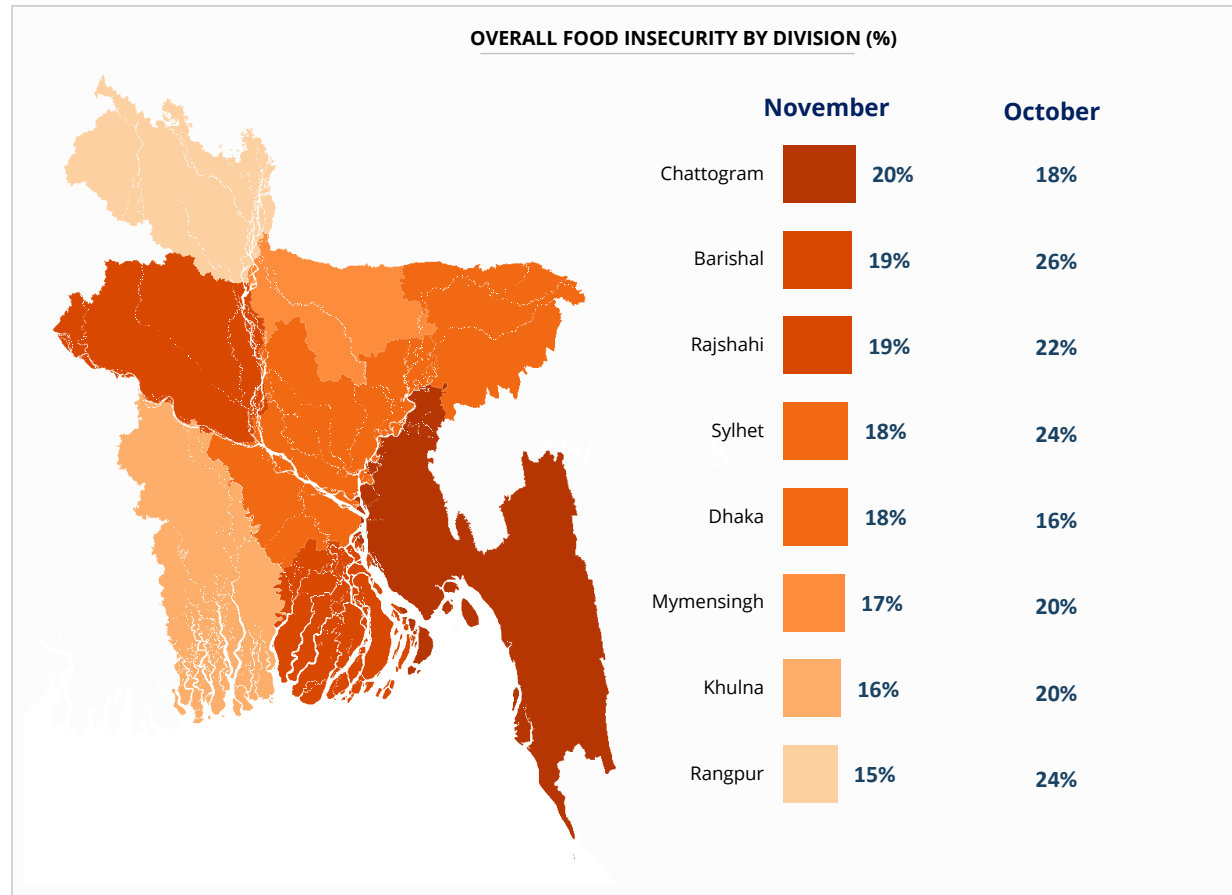
## Findings

**On average, food insecurity decreased from 21 percent to still high nationwide 18 percent.**

The overall distribution of food insecurity among the divisions was almost similar in November, except for Rangpur, as farm households reported increased income due to vegetable harvest. Due to the cyclone Midhili, households in Barishal experienced loss and damage to agricultural yield and shelter. In Dhaka and Chattogram, garment workers faced challenges for a long time due to their strike, and some garment industries shut down. Overall, because of political hartal/blockades and natural calamities, the daily labourers struggled to ensure food security for their families.

The recovery from loss of income, in general, largely depends on seasonal employment opportunities, especially for the low-income group. It also differs from non-agricultural to agriculture-dependent households, rural and urban, where economic shocks are much more relevant to different poverty dynamics. The high price of food and non-food commodities reduced the sale volume, hence impacting the entire market functionality.

On average, it was a common observation that many households reported living on credit, reflecting their reliance on livelihood coping tools. Purchasing food or other essential items on credit remained similar, 45 percent in October and November. The low-income group had the highest food insecurity and highest in the Barishal division. The households with moderate to severe food insecurity highly depended on both livelihood and food-based coping, with an inadequate diet.



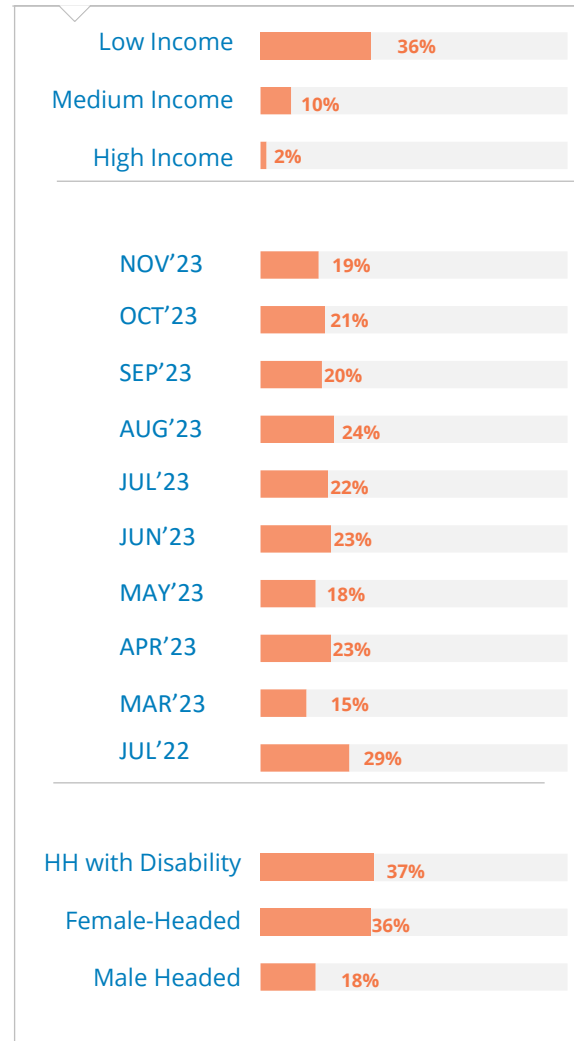
## Slow recovery from early harvesting employment, the low-income, female-headed and households with disabilities continues to suffers.

Female-headed households primarily relied on skipping meals for children, depending on low-quality food, and being unable to meet medical expenses. Female-headed households and households with disabilities have always been observed to be poorer than the poorest male-headed households in all situations.

Overall, the situation for low-income groups has always been the most vulnerable in the series of these monthly surveys; food insecurity has been twice higher than the average for this group. Despite the income opportunity of the agricultural labourer in the country, many households reported borrowing money, including debt to reimbursement, to feed the family as the coping with the high inflation was the hardest ever in the last several years. Some low-income households reported receiving aid from the government and low-price rice in the open market sale. Some 22 percent of households reported receiving assistance from government and non-government sources.

Households with disabilities were also more food insecure than households without. During these tiring times of recovery from recurrent shocks, households with disabled people reported being most vulnerable, and very few received assistance.

### FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS in NOVEMBER(%)



Women at work as daily wage labourer

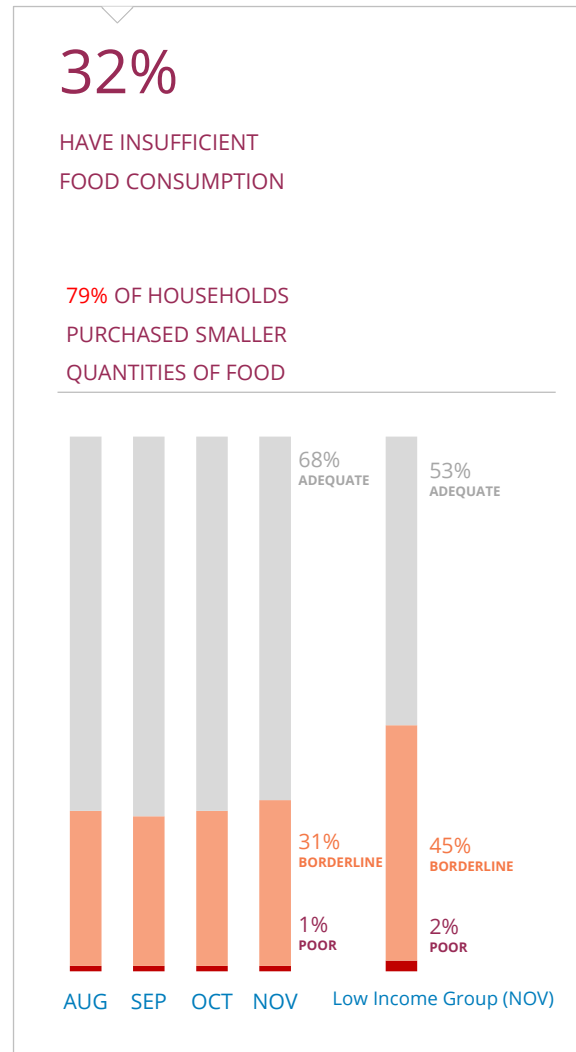


## On average, more than three in ten households could not afford adequate diets.

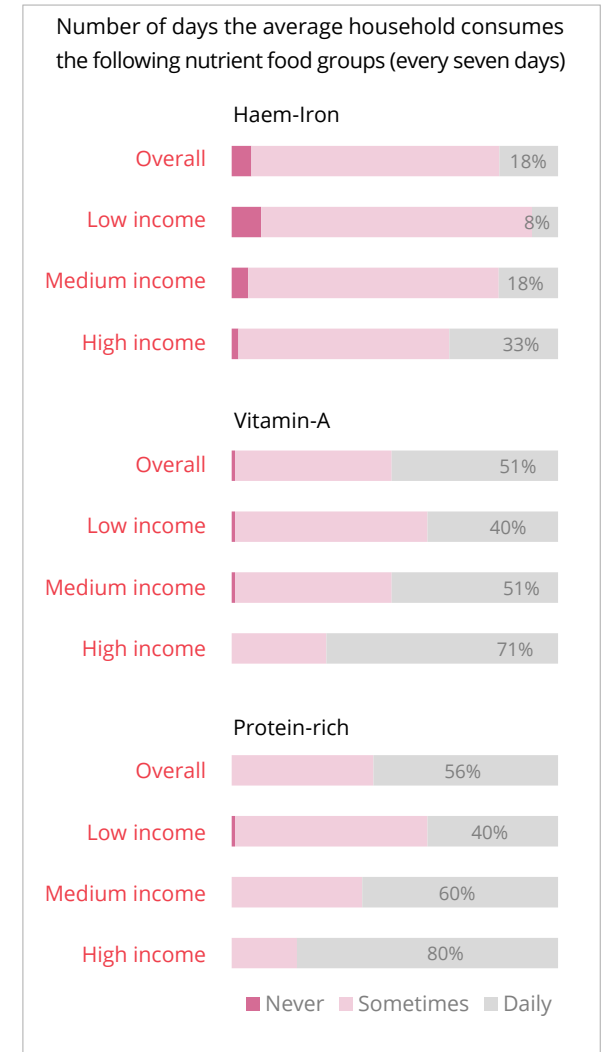
Households reported price increases of regular food commodities, especially protein sources like eggs, fish, and meat. Not all divisions have adequate vegetable farming; households in many areas reported not having enough vegetables in their regular diet. An average of 68 percent of households in eight divisions reported having an acceptable diet. At the same time, 79 percent of households reported buying small quantities of less expensive and low-quality food from the market. The food consumption score provides an average picture and does not represent the household's quality food intake. Some 45 percent of households reported buying food on credit. Division-wise, 52 percent of households in low-income groups in the Barishal division had inadequate diets, the highest among divisions.

**The consumption of micronutrient-rich food increased slightly for all households compared to October.** Still, only 18 percent of households had iron-rich food in their regular diet. In contrast, only 8 percent of low-income households reported consuming foods from this group. There is a clear cascaded consumption trend in different food groups as per the income group. All income groups had a massive protein and vitamin A-rich food consumption gap due to high prices and affordability.

### FOOD CONSUMPTION (NOVEMBER)



### FOOD CONSUMPTION - NUTRITION (NOVEMBER)



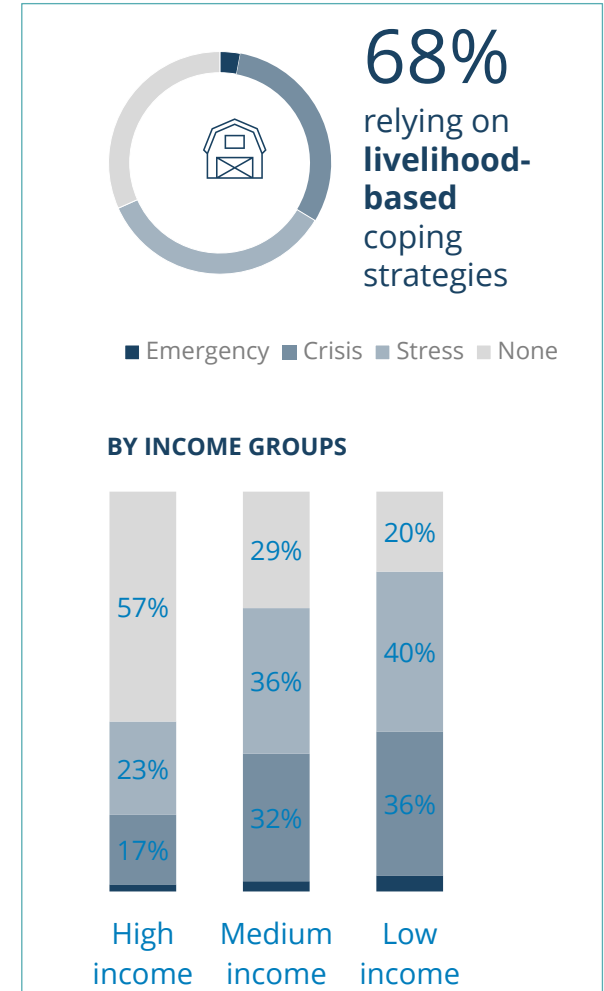
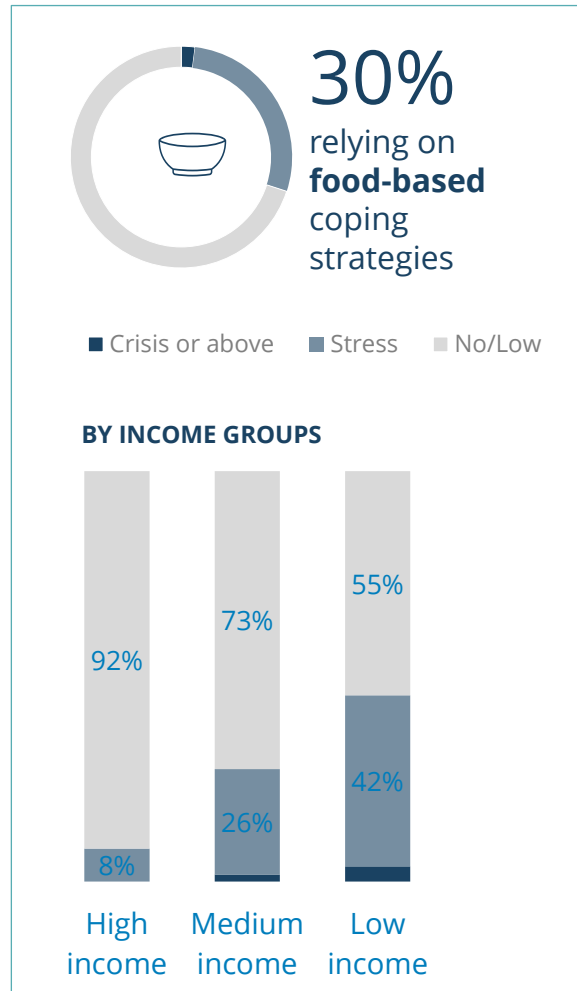
\* The "Food consumption score" (FCS) is a score calculated using the frequency of consumption of different food groups consumed by a household during the 7 days before the survey. There are standard weights for each of the food groups that comprise the food consumption score.

Higher reliance on coping strategies of vulnerable households follows a trend.

**An alarmingly increased number of households continued to rely on negative livelihood coping strategies, and it follows the seasonal trend, including natural disasters.** It is alarming that a significant percentage of households from high and middle-income groups households relied on emergency coping, including purchasing food on credit, selling productive assets lands, and spending savings. The beginning of the harvest season has not yet been supportive regarding income opportunities and debt recovery.

**A significantly high percentage of households in low-income groups relied on emergency coping.** Many households (4%) struggled to meet the required diets and compromised by limiting portions or skipping meals by adults. It is alarming that many households have been steadily using different food-based coping mechanisms for a long time. It is a threat to human capital.

**Income instability made a big difference in both food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies.** Due to recurrent and multiple shocks during May-August, many households continued relying on different coping mechanisms, which followed a similar trend in the last year.



\* 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 (10.76%)

**Despite a decrease from October, food inflation is steadily above the danger level, and high food prices have hit more than six in ten households in the last six months.**

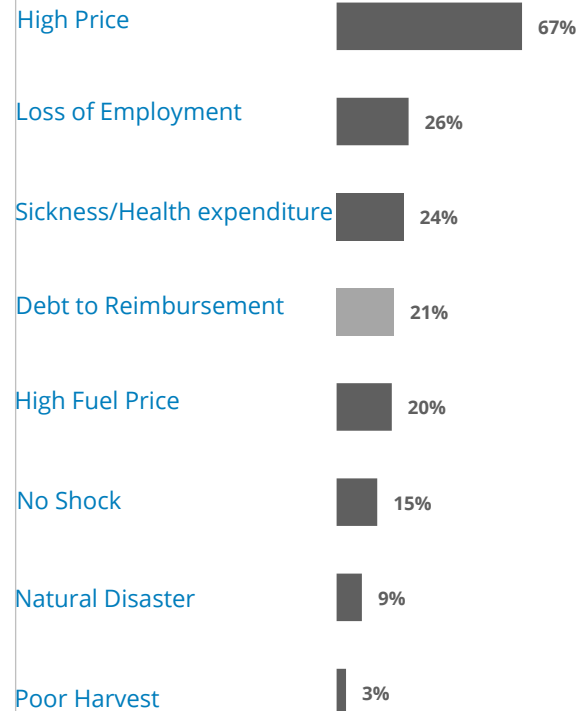
In the domestic retail markets, month-on-month prices of essential food commodities like rice, wheat, lentils, etc. increased highly. On the other hand, the prices of poultry, eggs, green chili, sugar, and garlic, except for onion, were reduced as per the government source but were still beyond the reach of most households revealed from the survey. Unfortunately, households experience more price shocks as for the overall food and non-food price hikes. The non-food inflation rate decreased from 8.30 percent to 8.16 percent in October and November, still the highest in decades <sup>1</sup>. The most reported shocks after price hikes were loss of income or employment and health expenditures. Households struggle to cope with health hazards as the rise in health expenditures were keeping them away from the health services.



Locally produced vegetable

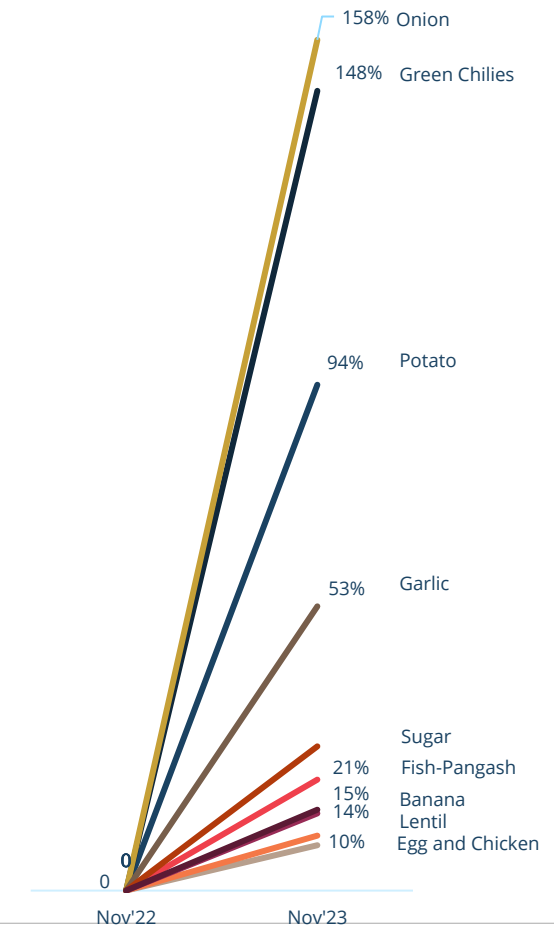
## High food prices stand out as the biggest shock (November)

% HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY SHOCKS



## Prices of commodities continued to increase (November)

% PRICE INCREASE YEAR-ON-YEAR\*



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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

Income recovery is prolonged, and high inflation is incredibly costly for poor households.

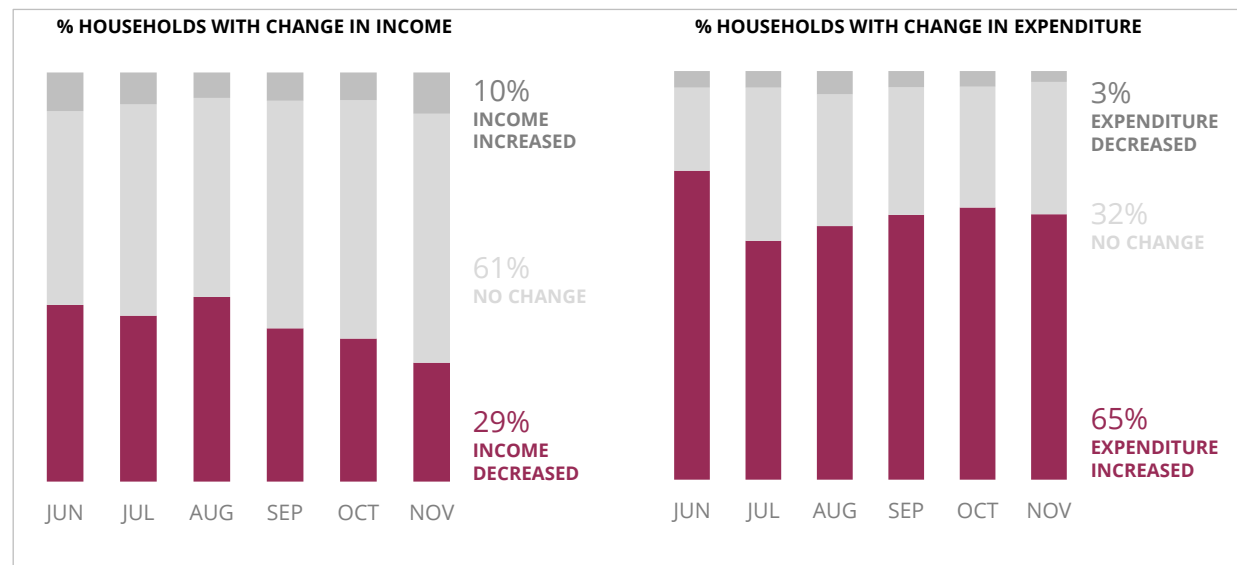
**Close to seven in ten poor households reported an expenditure increase during October and November.** Most households reported expenditure increases in most divisions, especially for food, health, and education. On average, 63 percent of households reported an expenditure increase in November.

**Households reporting income loss remained high for the low-income households.** Four in ten low-income households reported decreased income, which is very high compared to the average.

Households in all the divisions reported higher average income loss; 30 to 40 percent of households complained of an income decrease between 20 and 50 percent. **In the Chattogram, Barishal and Dhaka division, 10 - 13 percent of households reported a drastic 50 percent decrease, despite a slow recovery from losses.** High prices and cost increases negatively impacted all employment sectors, and the low-income group, primarily dependent on agricultural activity and the petty traders, was the most brutal hit. The high and medium-income groups also suffered from income loss and increased expenditures.



Women at local street vegetable sellers to buy cheaper vegetables for household meal.





## 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](#).



An old disabled man sitting in distress and anxious for livelihood.

### Other Resources



#### Q4 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](#)

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**World Food Programme**

Bangladesh

## Annex: Tables

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	OCTOBER (%)
Food Secure	1
Marginally Food Secure	78
<b>Moderately to Severely Food Insecure</b>	21

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies	
None	31.46
Stress	31.21
Crisis	35.32
Emergency	2.01

Food-based Coping Strategies	
No/Low	66.2
Medium	31.0
High	2.8

Food Consumption Group	
Acceptable Food Consumption	70.07
Borderline Food Consumption	28.56
Poor Food Consumption	1.37

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	NOVEMBER (%)
Food Secure	2
Marginally Food Secure	79
<b>Moderately to Severely Food Insecure</b>	19

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies	
None	32.05
Stress	34.72
Crisis	30.55
Emergency	2.68

Food-based Coping Strategies	
No/Low	69.7
Medium	28.2
High	2.1

Food Consumption Group	
Acceptable Food Consumption	67.64
Borderline Food Consumption	30.94
Poor Food Consumption	1.42

## Annex: Tables

### NOVEMBER

	Income Group (%)			Sex of Head of Household (%)		Disability (%)	
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	FEMALE	MALE	YES	NO
<b>Food Insecurity (rCARI)</b>							
Food Secure	0.0	4.1	4.2	0	2.55	2.41	2.44
Marginally Food secure	63.8	85.7	93.4	64.29	79.16	60.24	79.78
<b>Moderately to Severely Food Insecure</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>35.71</b>	<b>18.29</b>	<b>37.35</b>	<b>17.78</b>
<b>Livelihood-based Coping Strategies</b>							
None	20.54	29.12	57.49	19.6	32.6	22.9	32.7
Stress	39.53	36.4	23.34	35.7	34.7	31.3	35.0
Crisis	36.63	31.91	17.42	41.1	30.1	42.2	29.7
Emergency	3.29	2.57	1.74	3.6	2.6	3.61	2.61
<b>Food-based Coping Strategies</b>							
No/Low	54.7	72.6	92.0	48.2	70.7	49.4	71.1
Medium (Stress)	41.7	25.7	8.0	51.8	27.1	44.6	27.0
High (Crisis)	3.7	1.7	0.0	0	2.2	6.0	1.9
<b>Food Consumption Group</b>							
Acceptable Food Consumption	53.1	71.95	86.76	50.0	68.5	51.81	68.7
Borderline Food Consumption	44.77	26.98	12.54	42.9	30.4	40.96	30.2
Poor Food Consumption	2.13	1.07	0.7	7.1	1.2	7.23	1.0

**World Food Programme**

Bangladesh