



Bangladesh

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

December 2023

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



This brief was developed by WFP in January 2024, based on remote household food security surveys conducted in December 2023. During the harvest time of rice and vegetables.



Bangladesh: IN NUMBERS



More than one in ten households is currently food insecure.



15%

OF PEOPLE ON AVERAGE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)¹



The food security situation has improved, centering the harvest season.



66%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES DUE TO INCOME LOSS AND RECURRENT SHOCKS

*Livelihood-based coping strategies*²



40% purchased food on credit



23% reduced expense on health



12% spent their savings



24% received assistance

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



30%

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



52%

Low-income households have members with disability



70%

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

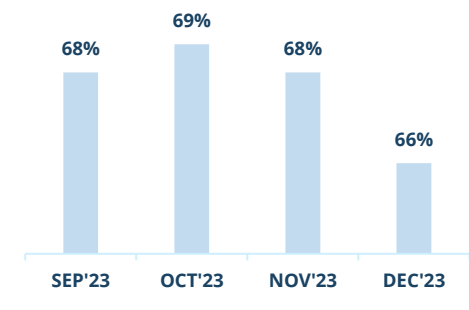
Employment opportunities during the harvest month impacted the overall food security situation.

The food security situation improved by 3 percent compared to the previous month. There had been some income increase and stability in purchasing power due to harvest-time agricultural income. The impact differed on livelihood groups, especially daily labourers who depended on short-time agricultural income sources. Small and marginal farm households also reported income increases in this month. **Food insecurity continued to improve nationwide in all the divisions, although some hard times were reported in a few areas due to political hartal and blockades.**

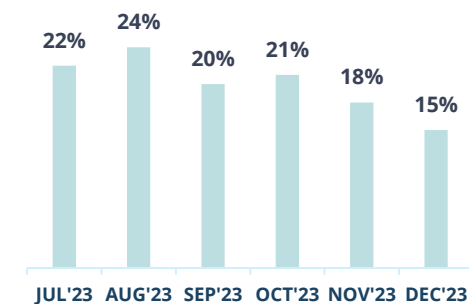
The households with losses and damages due to heavy rainfall in the last months started recovering their income losses due to the employment opportunities for the rice and vegetable harvest. The construction workers also reported income increases due to the start of the new construction work after the rainy season. On the contrary, garment workers and some petty traders reported high-income losses due to nationwide blockades and the closing of garment factories due to the global crisis.

Households with female heads and disabilities continued to suffer and did not see any improvement in their struggle for food security and well-being. The survey revealed that 30 percent of low-income households were food insecure, compared to 8 percent in medium-income households and 3 percent in high-income households. Despite improvement, **high food prices, high health expenditures, and debt remained the driving factors of food insecurity.** Concerns over high food prices stayed the same, and some 90 percent of households said the rise was their deepest concern and significantly affected their well-being, regardless of their increased income levels. The percentage of households that relied on negative coping strategies was slightly reduced due to income increases. Still, 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.

High livelihood coping - more than six to seven in ten households



rCARI

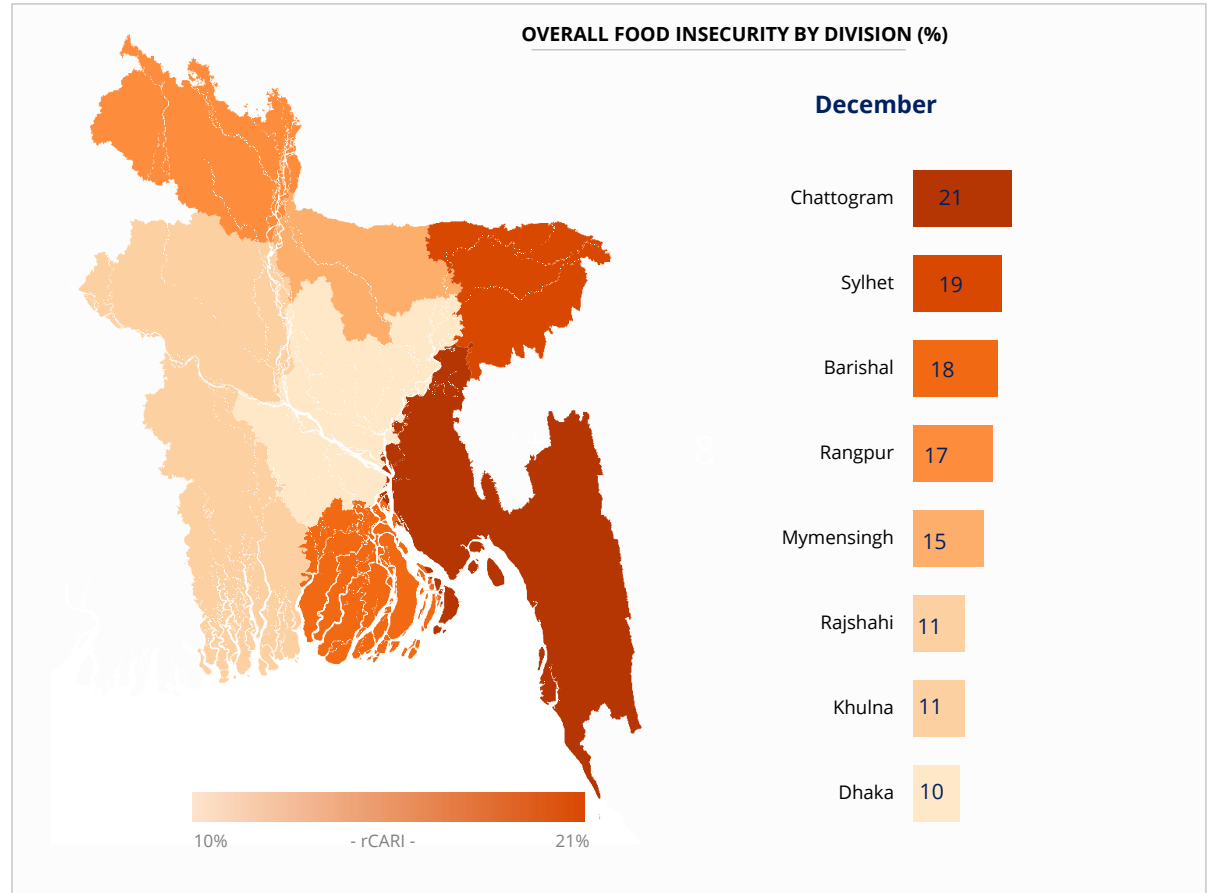


Findings

On average, 15 percent of households are moderate to severely food insecure.

The overall distribution of food insecurity among the divisions varied from 10 to 20 percent, where households in Chattogram, Sylhet, and Barishal reported the highest percentage of food insecurity. Households in the Dhaka division remained less reported in December. The cyclone Midhili inundated many crop fields in Chattogram, Sylhet, and Barishal and damaged harvests, clearly reflected in the overall divisional food insecurity.

The households with short-term and temporary employment, such as those relevant to agricultural activities, daily wage labourers, petty traders, etc., suffered the most as the wage rate was insufficient to cover the previous month's debts and high expenditures of the family to put nutritious food on the table, let alone other non-food expenses. Rikshaw pullers, small business holders, construction workers, garment workers, etc., suffered due to political turmoil like hartal and blockades in all divisions. Such low-income groups had the highest food insecurity in the country, especially in the Barishal division. The households with moderate to severe food insecurity were highly dependent on livelihood and food-based coping, with a gap in food consumption. On average, it was a common observation, regardless of the seasonality, that many households reported living on credit, reflecting their reliance on livelihood coping tools.



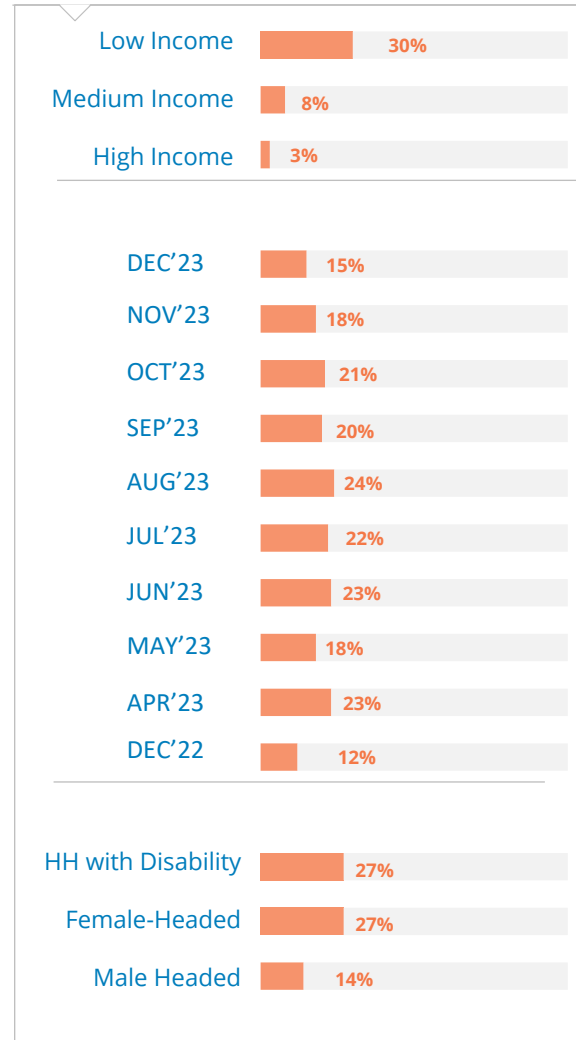
There is a large gap among the different segments of the population.

Regardless of the seasonal opportunities for different income sources, the situation for low-income groups has been reported as the most vulnerable in these monthly surveys, food insecurity had always been twice higher than the average. Many households reported negative coping with borrowing money and buying food on credit, including the burden of previous debts. A very small percentage of households had been receiving assistance from different sources. Some 24 percent of households reported receiving assistance from government and non-government sources.

There was no significant change in the food-insecure Female-headed households and households with disability. The percentage of food insecurity in female-headed households was double that of male-headed households, a common picture in the monthly surveys since July 2022. Female-headed households experienced more difficulties providing food for the families due to less skill and readiness to work, unavailability of time after caregiving the kids, employment-related social stigma, safety concerns, etc.

The percentage of households with disabilities was higher in low-income households; 52 percent of low-income households reported having disabled people in the family. Malnutrition, inability to bear medical expenses, less access to health services, poor hygiene, etc., put them at risk for disability over a lifetime.

FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS in DECEMBER(%)



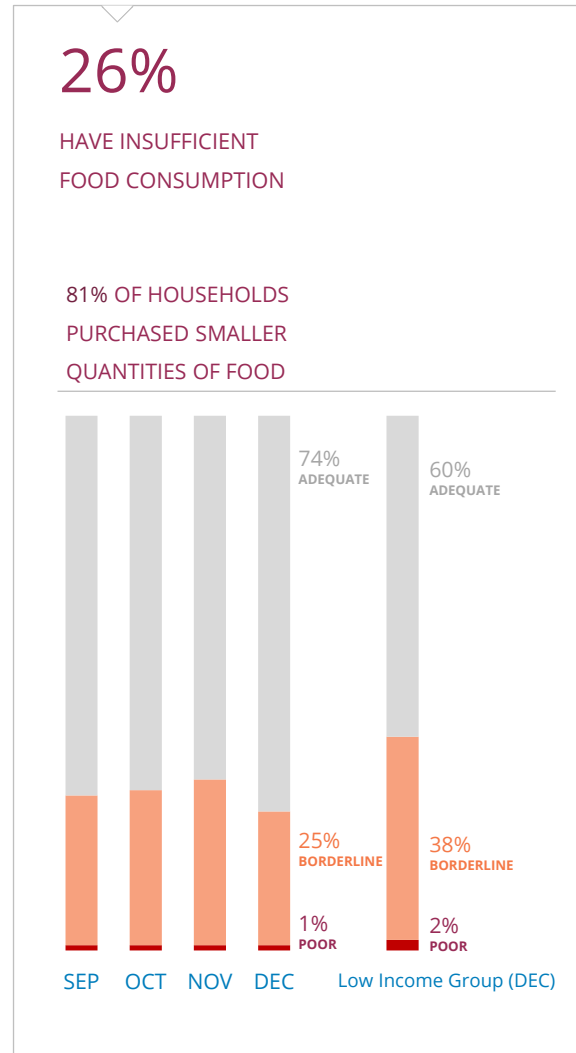
A woman taking care of her poultry - a household productive asset.



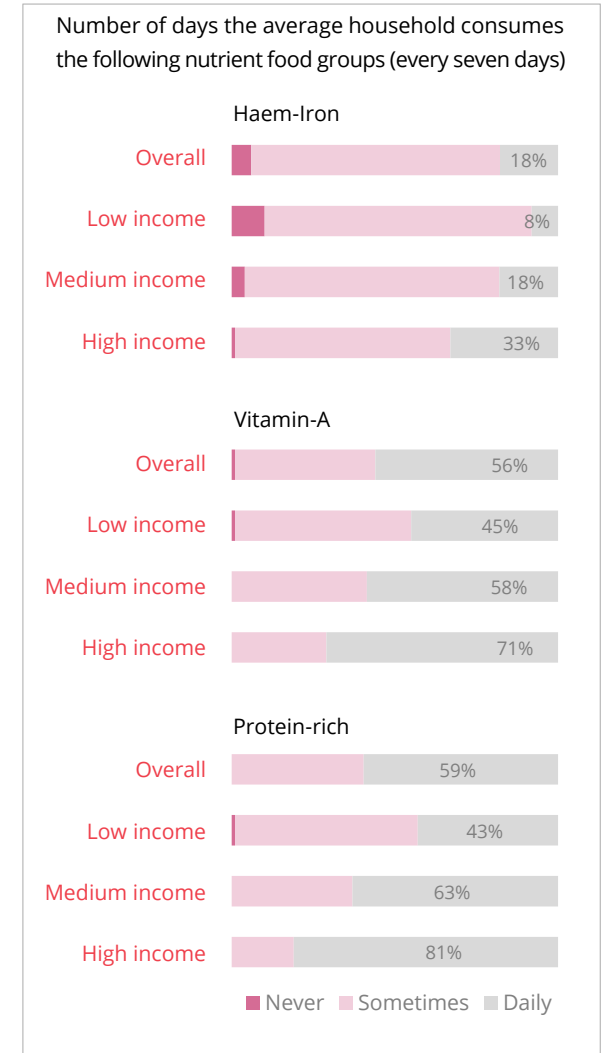
On average, nearly three in ten households could not afford adequate diets.

High food prices had a crippling impact on the household's food consumption as the majority (81%) of the households depended on buying their food from the market; only 19 percent reported having their own sources of food production. In December, an average of 74 percent of households in eight divisions had an acceptable diet, 14 percent higher than in November. The percentage of households having poor diets increased by one percent, primarily low-income households. In the seven-day recall, average households ate protein and vegetables for less than five days and reported having fruits and dairy for less than two days. Most households reported buying smaller quantities and low-quality food. Due to the fresh harvest of winter vegetables, many households reported eating vegetables in the winter season. **The consumption of micronutrient-rich food, especially iron-rich food, was also alarmingly low in low-income households.** Only 8 percent of households had iron-rich food in their regular diet; 83 percent had it sometimes, and 5 percent had no iron-rich food on their plates in the last seven days. Low-income households could barely afford to put nutritious food on their plate. Approximately four in ten households in this group had a poor diet, compromising the quality and quantity of food and skipping meals.

FOOD CONSUMPTION (DECEMBER)



FOOD CONSUMPTION - NUTRITION (DECEMBER)



* 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.

Vulnerable households continued higher reliance on coping strategies.

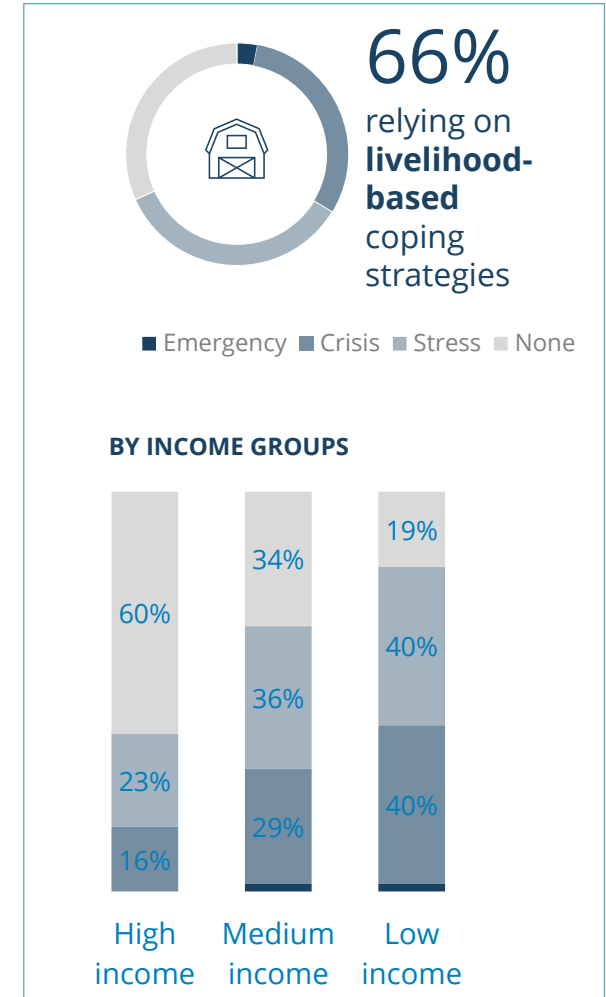
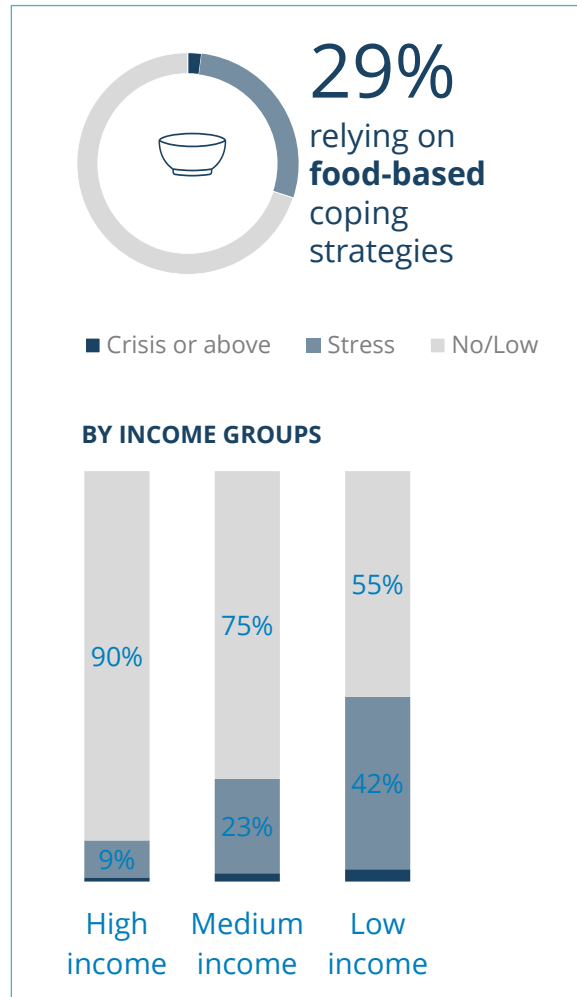
Households continued to rely on negative food-based coping strategies despite increased income.

The disaggregated scenario is different than the average picture. More than four in ten low-income households relied on stress and above-crisis food-based coping strategies, indicating compromised by limiting portions or eating low-quality food and skipping meals by adults.

Repeated food-based coping forced the low-income households to employ resilience erasive livelihood coping. Many households struggled to meet the required diets and depended on different negative coping tools. It is alarming that more than eight in ten households reported using different livelihood-based coping for a long time. More than six in ten low-income households bought food on credit and more than three in ten households reduced health expenses. It is a vicious cycle which threatens future capacity to withstand any shock.

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

Due to seasonal climatic shocks, variation in employment opportunities, and slow recovery capacity from debts, many households continued both food and livelihood-based coping that made them more vulnerable in the long run.



* 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 reduced (9.58%), with an increase in Non-food inflation (8.52%)

Despite a decrease from November 2023, food inflation remains high, and food commodity prices were beyond the reach of low and middle-income households. In the domestic retail markets, month-on-month prices of essential food commodities like potatoes, lentils, onions, etc., increased highly. On the other hand, the prices of some food commodities were reduced as per the government source but were still beyond the reach of most households, revealed by the survey. Unfortunately, households experienced more price shocks as for the overall food and non-food price hikes. The non-food inflation rate decreased from 8.16 percent to 8.52 percent in December, still the highest in decades¹. The most reported shocks after price hikes were loss of income or employment and health expenditures. Households struggle to cope with winter health hazards as the rise in health expenditures kept them away from health services.



Eggs are beyond the reach of low-income households

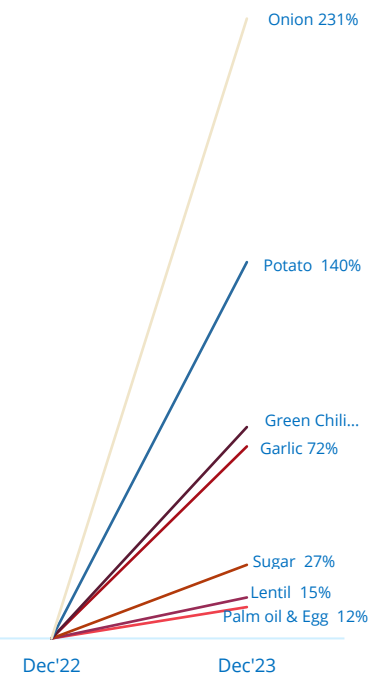
High food prices stand out as the biggest shock (December)

% HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY SHOCKS



Prices of commodities continued to increase (December)

% PRICE INCREASE YEAR-ON-YEAR*



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

² December 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.

Household expenditure was on the rise and incredibly costly for poor households.

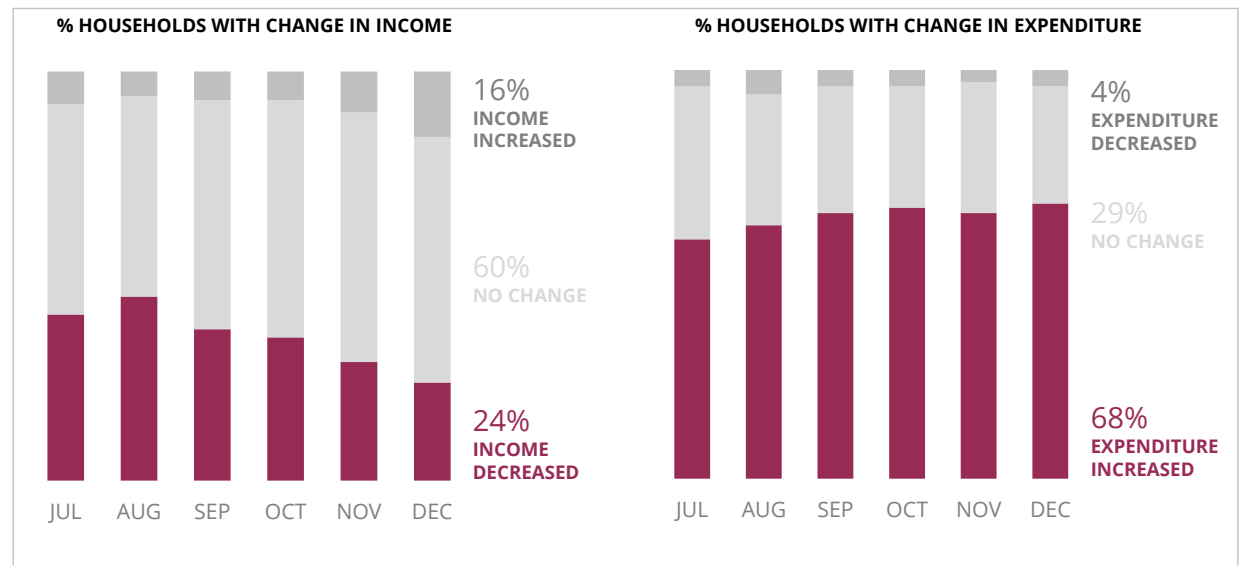
Close to seven in ten households reported an expenditure increase in December. Most households reported expenditure increases in most divisions, especially for food, health, and education. On average, 68 percent of households reported an expenditure increase in December.

Households reporting income loss remained high for the low-income households. Four in ten low-income households reported decreased income, which was very high compared to the average. Seasonal employment opportunities influenced a 6 percent income increase this month. On average, only 18 percent of households reported an income increase.

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 divisions, 10 percent of households reported a drastic 50 percent decrease despite a seasonal income opportunity.** The high and medium-income groups also suffered from income loss and increased expenditures. Seasonal winter sickness restricted many from going outside home for work, and access to health services was beyond reach for the poor household.



Women at the local street vegetable market to buy cheaper vegetables.





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](#).



A happy mother-daughter moment.

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

Acknowledgments:

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World Food Programme

Bangladesh



Annex: Tables

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	DECEMBER (%)
Food Secure	2
Marginally Food Secure	83
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	15

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies	
None	34.21
Stress	34.21
Crisis	30.27
Emergency	1.31

Food-based Coping Strategies	
No/Low	71
Medium	27
High	2

Food Consumption Group	
Acceptable Food Consumption	74
Borderline Food Consumption	25
Poor Food Consumption	1

Annex: Tables

DECEMBER

	Income Group (%)			Sex of Head of Household (%)		Disability (%)	
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	FEMALE	MALE	YES	NO
Food Insecurity (rCARI)							
Food Secure	0.2	3	3.2	0	2.08	0.0	2.11
Marginally Food secure	69.8	89.4	94.0	72.58	83.48	73.42	83.51
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	30.0	8.0	3	27.42	14.45	26.58	14.39
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies							
None	18.82	33.84	60.35	33.9	34.3	17.7	35.4
Stress	39.53	35.57	23.16	27.4	34.6	40.5	33.8
Crisis	39.75	29.07	16.49	38.7	29.8	35.4	29.9
Emergency	1.90	1.52	0.0	0.0	1.4	6.33	0.96
Food-based Coping Strategies							
No/Low	54.97	75.05	89.82	54.8	71.5	46.8	72.4
Medium (Stress)	41.86	22.78	9.47	45.2	26.1	44.3	25.9
High (Crisis)	3.17	2.17	0.70	0	2.3	8.9	1.8
Food Consumption Group							
Acceptable Food Consumption	61	77.87	91.93	72.6	74.6	67.09	75
Borderline Food Consumption	38	21.69	8.07	24.2	24.7	31.65	24.2
Poor Food Consumption	2	0.43	0.0	3.2	0.7	1.27	0.8

World Food Programme

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