



Bangladesh

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

January 2024

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



This brief was developed by WFP in February 2024, based on remote household food security surveys conducted in January 2024. During the onset of another lean season.



Bangladesh: IN NUMBERS



Close to two in ten households is currently food insecure.



17%

OF PEOPLE ON AVERAGE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)¹



The food security situation deteriorated.



68%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES DUE TO INCOME LOSS AND RECURRENT SHOCKS

*Livelihood-based coping strategies*²



43% purchased food on credit



22% reduced expense on health



13% spent their savings



21% received assistance

Extreme cold weather impacted household food security situation.



31%

Low-income households were food insecure, and female-headed households suffered more (36 %).



50%

Low-income households have members with disability



71%

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.



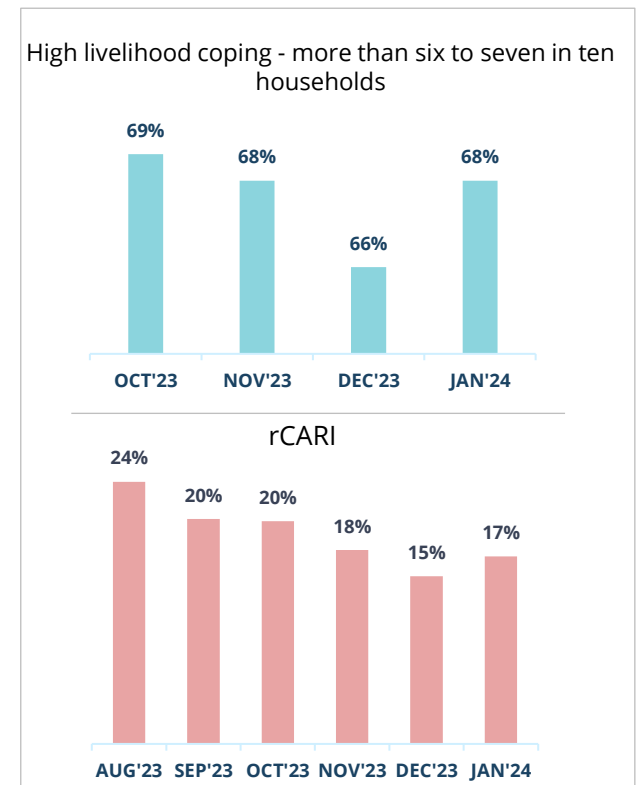


In Brief

Food insecurity and reliance on coping increased.

The food security situation was 17 percent in January, slightly deteriorated compared to 15 percent in Dec, but improved compared to a half year ago. Overall, reliance on coping strategies continued to increase. It is alarming that the seasonality of income opportunity and multiple shocks severely affected households' ability to put food on the table, weakening their resilience. Short-term income increases did not help poor households to withstand economic shocks. Reliance on erosive coping threatened households' economic stability and put them into a vicious cycle of poverty. **The food insecurity trend was also not similar in divisions and remained constantly bad in some divisions.** Cold waves impacted the income of daily casual labourers, rickshaw pullers/van drivers, and street hawkers as they had to skip work for many days. Households with female heads and disabilities continued to suffer and did not see any improvement in their struggle for food and well-being for a long time. Women labourers were also paid low compared to male labourers. Some households reported begging and living on assistance from relatives as their major source of support.

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. In 19 surveys since July 2022, **high food prices, high expenditures, seasonal shocks, and negative coping remained the driving factors of food insecurity.** Concerns over high food prices stayed the same for all income groups, and some 90 percent of households said the rise was their deepest concern and significantly affected their well-being, regardless of some households' increased income levels in harvest seasons. There were wage issues as the availability of daily labourers in this time decreased the wage rate to half of what they usually earn. The percentage of households that relied on negative coping strategies increased. Close to seven 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. Households continued relying both on food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies.



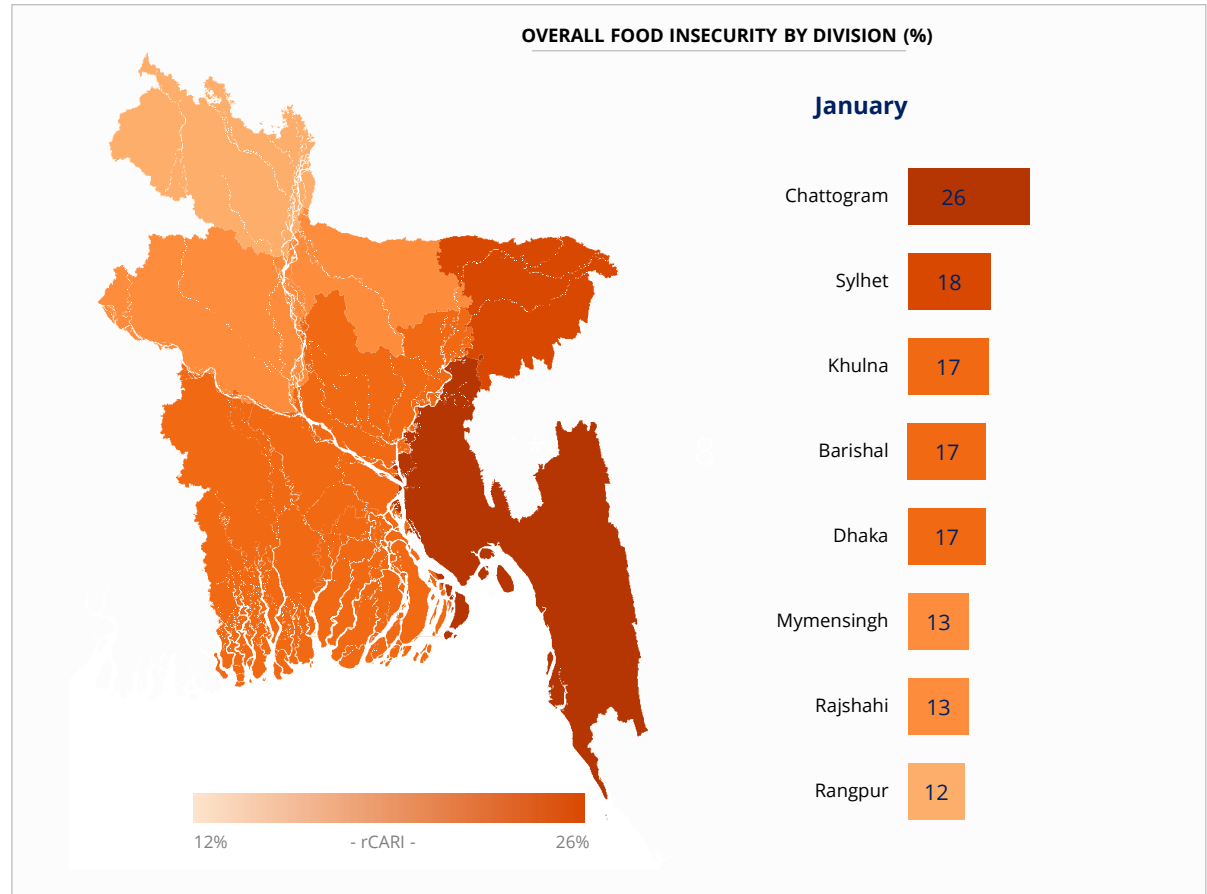


Findings

Cold waves disrupted livelihood in most of the divisions, and households reported a struggle for food and well-being.

The overall distribution of food insecurity among the divisions varied from 12 to 26 percent, where households in Chattogram, Sylhet, Khulna, Barishal, and Dhaka reported the highest percentage of food insecurity. The unexpected cold wave in January, lasting more than 10 to 15 days, distressed many households, especially low-income groups that depend on daily labour. There had been reports of crop damage due to extreme cold weather.

However, most divisions showed an increased trend in food-insecure households. Chattogram, Sylhet, Khulna, Barishal, and Dhaka had the highest increase in food insecurity compared to last month (increased by 5 to 6 percent). The harvest season was almost over, and there were fewer jobs in the agricultural fields. Fishermen, tailors, petty traders, garment workers, masons, etc., all suffered to earn bread for the family. Poverty dynamics are geographical, and a few common seasonal business opportunities, such as winter jaggery and demand for new furniture in the wedding season, created some income venues in most of the divisions. In Sylhet, the farming households had only one crop a year, and vegetable production was lower due to the Haor area features. The average education level was also low compared to other divisions. In Barishal, the percentage of households in low-income groups had always been reported highest. A detailed disaggregated survey will be significant in investigating the root causes of food insecurity in different geographic locations.





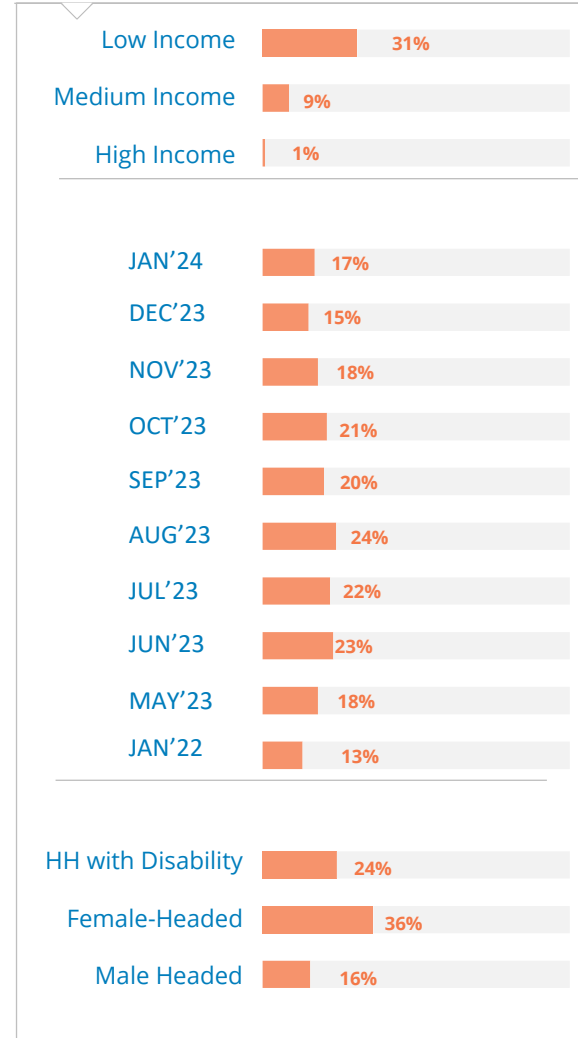
Different segments of the population suffer differently.

Female-headed households experienced the highest difficulties putting food on the table for families due to lack of earning opportunities, less skill and readiness to work, lower wage rates, unavailability of time after caregiving the kids, social stigma, and safety concerns. Most female-headed households feared debts as they did not have repayment capacity; instead, they relied on food-based coping. Many relied on emergency livelihood coping, such as begging, sending kids to small jobs, and seeking support from relatives and friends.

In general, the situation for the low-income group had always been the same, as revealed by these monthly surveys. Food insecurity in the low-income group was double the average and many households reported buying food on credit. The lean season after harvest and the cold wave lasting for a long time highly impacted the household's income capacity. Similarly, the small and petty traders suffered from low sales, which was an impact of severe price hikes. Food and fuel price shocks were incredibly costly for all these low-income households.

Households with disabilities were also more food insecure than households without. In general, 50 percent of low-income households had a disabled member who had less income ability, coupled with potential earning members needing to stay home for caregiving, reduced income opportunities, and coping with high health expenditures.

FOOD INSECURITY BY MONTHS AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS in JANUARY(%)



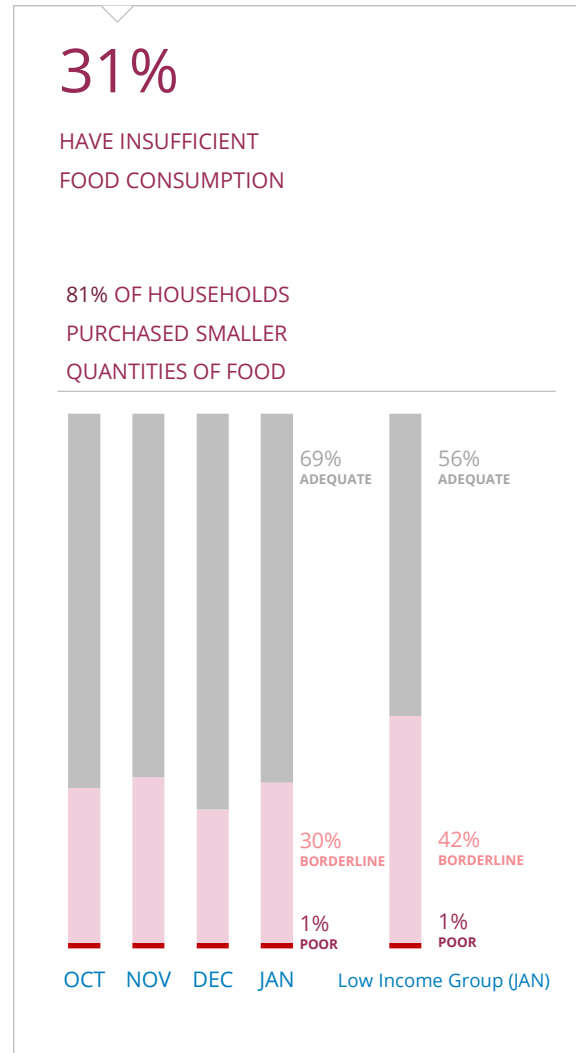
A woman taking care of her poultry – a productive asset of a poor female-headed household.



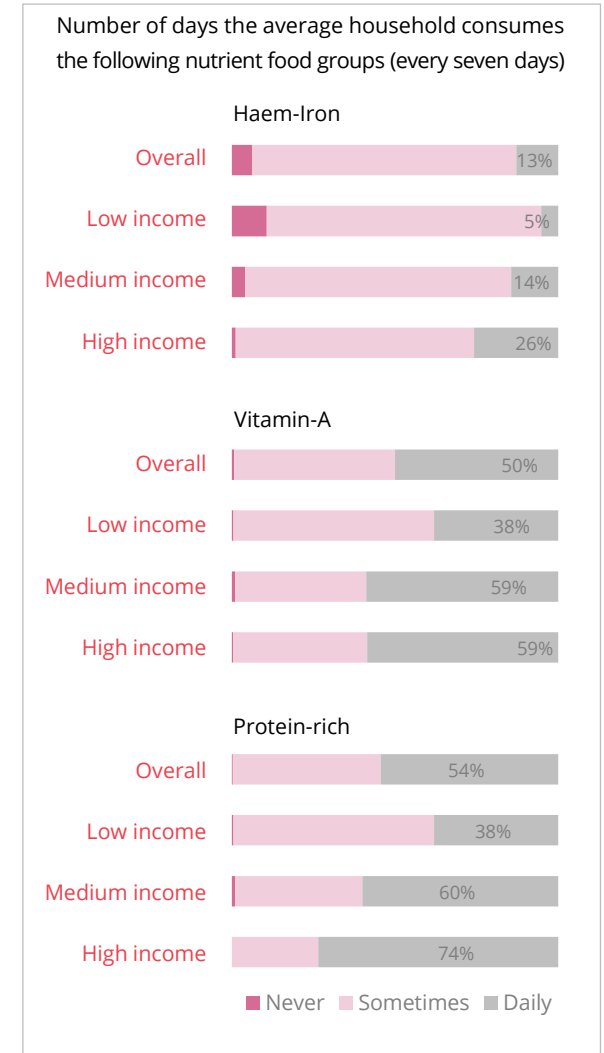
On average, more than three in ten households could not afford adequate diets.

A significant focus of the food insecurity analysis is the food consumption score of the households, as nutrition plays a vital role in building resilience. A strong negative correlation existed between increased food insecurity and the percentage of households having adequate diets over the last six months. An average of 31 percent of households in eight divisions reported having an inadequate diet, which was alarmingly picture over a long time. At the same time, the disaggregated analysis showed that more than 40 percent of households in the low-income groups had a poor diet. **The consumption of micronutrient-rich food did not improve over the last six months.** Only 13 percent of households had iron-rich food in their regular diet; 81 percent had it sometimes, and the rest, 6 percent, had no iron-rich food in the last seven days. Low-income households could barely afford to put nutritious food on their plate. More than four in ten households had an insufficient diet with lower protein, Iron, and vitamin A, compromising the quality and quantity of food. A cascaded trend was observable in high to low-income households' protein and vitamin A-rich food intake, which was also common in this series of surveys. Most of the poor and middle-income household's calorie intake came from rice. Most households lived on winter vegetables and local fruits as protein prices were way beyond their reach. Higher food prices destabilized the purchasing power of all income groups, especially those female-headed households and with disabilities.

FOOD CONSUMPTION (JANUARY)



FOOD CONSUMPTION - NUTRITION (JANUARY)



* 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.

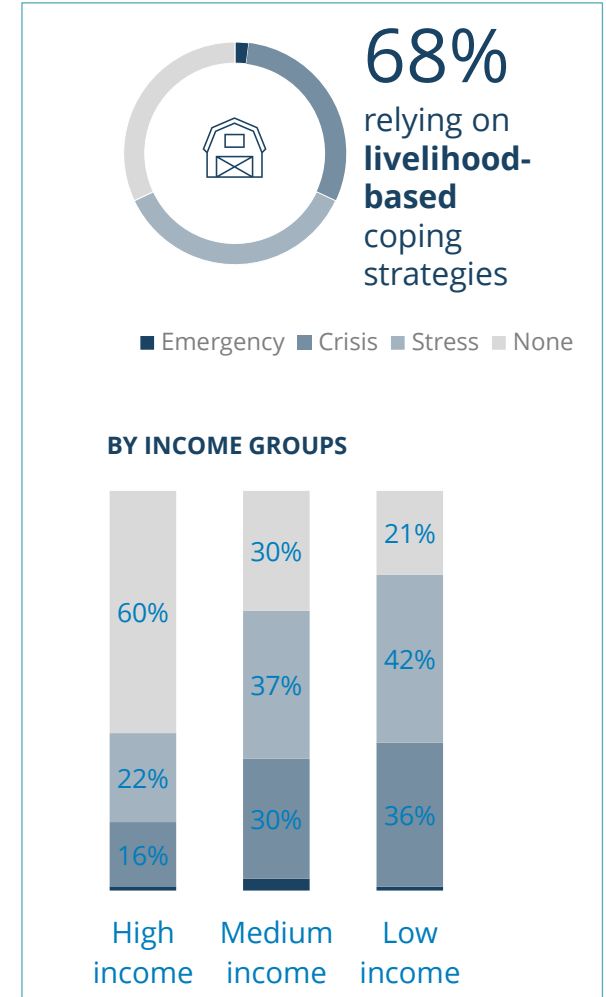
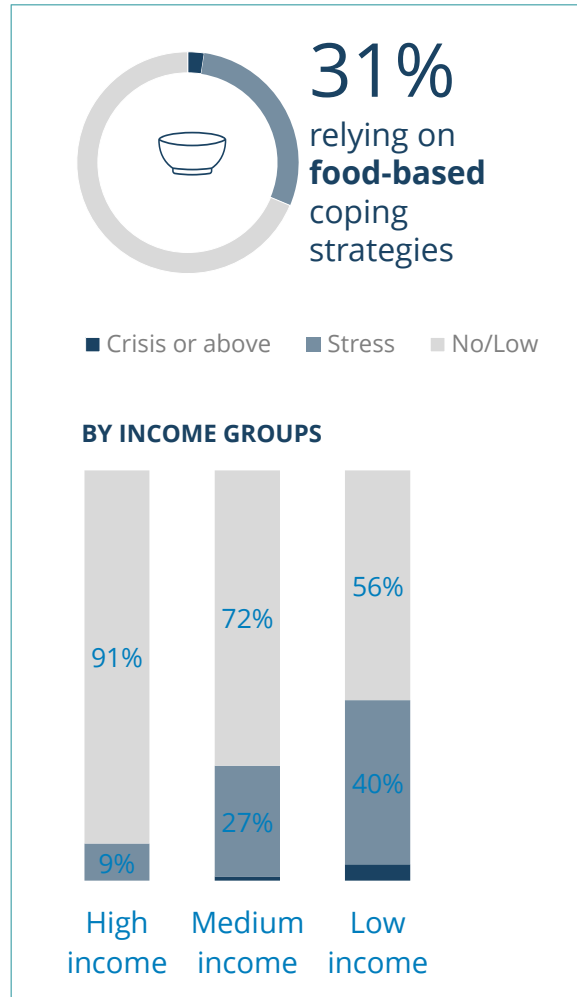


Vulnerable households continued higher reliance on coping strategies.

Households continued to rely more on negative food-based coping strategies due to the cold wave and manifold challenges. The disaggregated scenario was 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 low-income households to employ resilient erosive livelihood coping. Many households struggled to meet the required diets and depended on different negative coping tools; poor households were the hardest hit. It was alarming that nearly eight in ten households reported using different livelihood-based coping for a long time. More than six in ten households bought food on credit and more than three in ten households reduced health expenses. It is a vicious cycle threatening the future capacity to withstand any shock.

Income instability made a big difference in both food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies. Due to recurrent seasonal climatic shocks, a cold wave in January, variation in employment opportunities, and slow recovery capacity from debts, many households continued food and livelihood-based coping, making them more vulnerable in the long run. January was the month of the new educational year, and it imposed pressure on the household head to bear educational expenses, again forcing them to rely on erosive coping.



* 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%)

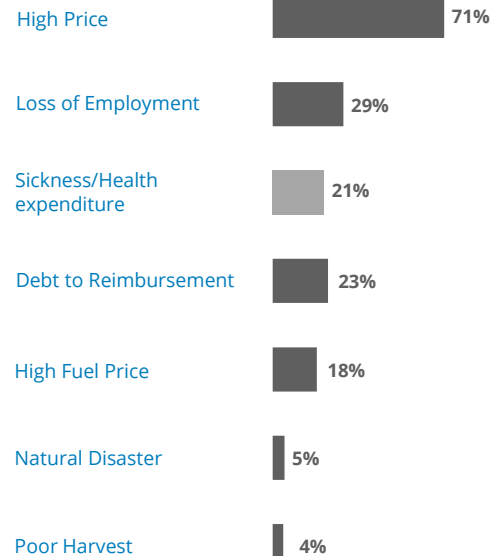
Despite a decrease from November 2023, food inflation remains high, and food commodity prices were beyond the reach of low and middle-income households. In the domestic retail markets, month-on-month prices of essential food commodities like potatoes, lentils, onions, etc., increased highly. On the other 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 for the overall food and non-food price hikes. More than seven in ten households reported price hikes as their major shocks. The non-food inflation rate decreased from 8.16 percent to 8.52 percent in December, still the highest in decades ¹. 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. It had a major impact on their income too.



Poor households consumed rice in the highest proportion compared to other dietary needs.

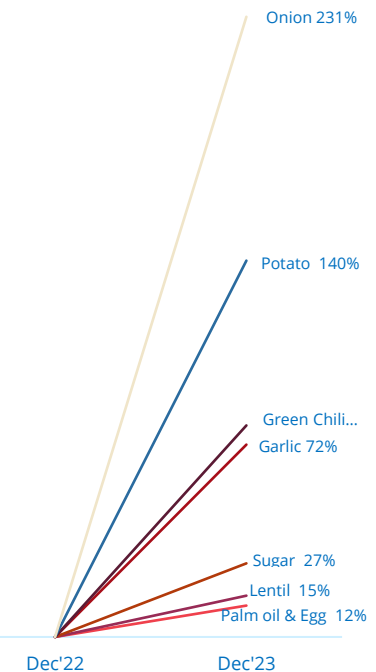
High food prices stand out as the biggest shock (Jan)

% HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY SHOCKS



Prices of commodities continued to increase (Dec)

% 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.

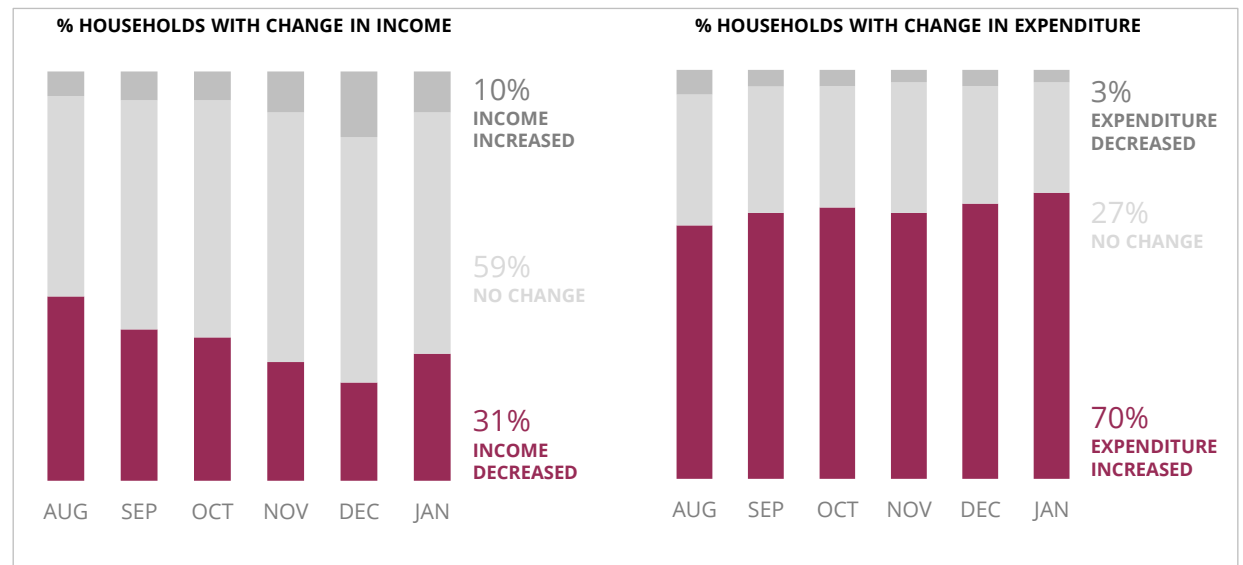
Higher inflation has been incredibly costly for poor households.

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 31 percent of households reported decreased income in January. Households in the Barishal, Chattogram, and Dhaka 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 the buying capacity of all households. High prices and cost increases negatively impacted all employment sectors. The high and medium-income groups also complained about income loss and expenditure increases.

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 increased family expenditures. Middle-income households reported abstaining from savings and spending savings. High-income households reported resizing their shopping list due to the price volatility.



Household members buying cheaper and low quality vegetables from street vendors





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



MARKET MONITOR 2023

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



COUNTRY BRIEFS 2024

A monthly [overview](#) of WFP's activities in Bangladesh, including situational and operational updates



A fisherman going for fishing with his wife.

Acknowledgments:

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World Food Programme

Bangladesh



Annex: Tables

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	JANUARY (%)
Food Secure	2
Marginally Food Secure	82
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	17

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies	
None	32
Stress	36
Crisis	30
Emergency	2

Food-based Coping Strategies	
No/Low	69
Medium	29
High	2

Food Consumption Group	
Acceptable Food Consumption	69
Borderline Food Consumption	30
Poor Food Consumption	1

Annex: Tables

JANUARY

	Income Group (%)			Sex of Head of Household (%)		Disability (%)	
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	FEMALE	MALE	YES	NO
Food Insecurity (rCARI)							
Food Secure	0.0	1.9	4.7	1.64	1.64	1.15	1.68
Marginally Food secure	69.1	89.5	94.5	62.3	82.81	74.71	82.37
Moderately to Severely Food Insecure	30.9	8.7	0.8	36.07	15.54	24.14	15.95
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies							
None	20.56	30.31	60.47	26.2	32.5	18.4	33.2
Stress	42.04	36.7	22.13	29.5	36.4	41.4	35.7
Crisis	36.3	29.9	16.21	39.3	29.4	40.2	29.1
Emergency	1.11	3.09	1.19	4.9	1.7	0	2.02
Food-based Coping Strategies							
No/Low	55.9	71.6	90.5	47.5	69.7	54.0	69.8
Medium (Stress)	39.6	27.0	9.5	45.9	28.0	40.2	28.0
High (Crisis)	4.4	1.4	0	6.6	2.2	5.8	2.2
Food Consumption Group							
Acceptable Food Consumption	56.11	75.05	86.17	55.7	69.9	64.37	69.6
Borderline Food Consumption	42.41	24.54	13.83	39.3	29.5	35.63	29.6
Poor Food Consumption	1.48	0.41	0.0	4.9	0.6	0	0.8

World Food Programme

Bangladesh