

TONGA

mVAM Bulletin

The data presented here was collected via the World Food Programme’s mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) survey through telephone interviews conducted across 5 divisions using random-digit dialing between February and March 2023.

HOUSEHOLD FOOD CONSUMPTION

In March 2023, food consumption patterns of **93%** of Tongan households were at **acceptable** levels, indicating a significant yearly trend improvement. In March 2022, **77%** of the interviewed households had an adequate level of food intake. Households with a “borderline” frequency and diversity of main food groups decreased from 21% in March 2022 to 6% in March 2023. Seven percent of these households reside in **rural** and 5% in **urban** areas.

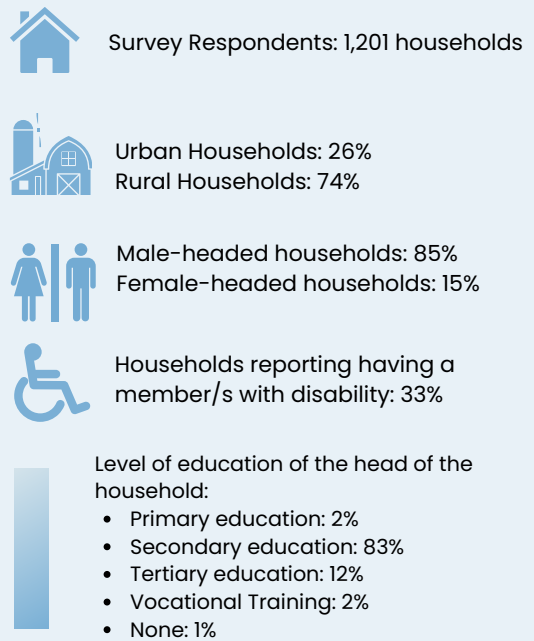


Household diet in March 2023, were **less diverse** compared to July 2022. Consumption of staples and protein-rich food increased (over 6.5 days in a week) and the frequency of fats and sugar intake also remained high. **Fruits, dairy products** and **pulses**, all essential for a balanced and healthy diet, were less consumed by households (1.5 days in a week). Lower vegetable consumption was reported by the respondents as well. Households in Tongatapu and Vava’u consume vegetables and dairy more often – 4 days and 2.6 days respectively in a week, while in Niuas households reported a higher quantity intake of pulses – 2.2 days in last 7 days.

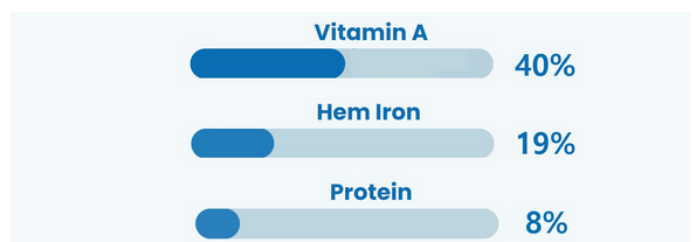
Diet quality has **declined** compared to July 2022. In seven days, the average Tongan household in March 2023 consumed:

STAPLES	PROTEINS	FATS	SUGARS
6.8 days up from 6.0	6.6 days up from 5.9	3.9 days up from 2.9	4.5 days up from 3.0
FRUITS	VEGETABLES	DIARY	PULSES
1.3 days down from 1.9	3.1 days down from 4.1	1.4 days down from 3.1	0.8 days up from 0.6

Sample Population at a glance :



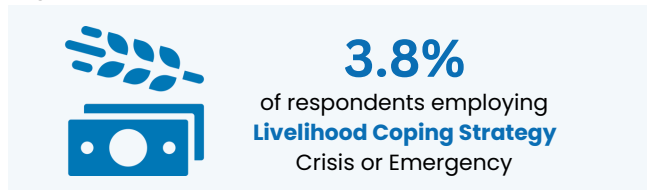
Percentage of interviewed households with low or no intake of nutrient rich food



In March 2023, low or no intake of **Hem Iron** was reported by 19% of the respondents – 18% less than in July 2022, indicating an improvement. A Hem Iron is a crucial macronutrient required for the prevention of anemia. Insufficient intake of **Protein** was reported by 8% of respondents, lower by 7% compared to the previous round in July 2022. Adequate daily intake of **Vitamin A** declined by 15%, indicating a deterioration in consumption of Vitamin A rich food by the interviewed households. Proportion of households with low or no intake of these nutrient-rich food remains higher among **female-headed households**, indicating additional challenges faced in terms of food accessibility.

LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES (LCS)

Since July 2022, there has been a significant increase— by 17%, in the number of households **not resorting** to any negative coping strategies to meet their essential needs. Households not employing strategies made up 76% of the total respondents in March 2023, indicating an improvement in livelihoods and capacities, if negatively impacted by shocks or disasters.



The proportion of households engaged in crisis, emergency and stress livelihood based coping strategies decreased from previous rounds. Nearly 4% of households in Tonga employed crisis and emergency strategies in March 2023, less than 5%, compared to July 2022, thus explaining improved households susceptibility to shocks.

Percentage of households resorting to coping strategies



Stress strategies, such as borrowing money or spending savings, decreased from 32% in July 2022 to 20% in March 2023, indicating an improvement in the ability of households to deal with future shocks given an increase in resources or reduction in debt.

Crisis strategies were adopted by 1% of households in March 2023, 4% less compared to July 2022. This points to a reduction of the practice of selling productive assets, a positive trend for the future coping capacities.

Emergency strategies saw a slight decrease: from 4% in July 2022 to 3% in March 2023. Use of these strategies with selling-off major productive assets may negatively affect future productivity, thus keeping the food security conditions of the households more susceptible to shocks and crisis.

Generally, use of these strategies unfold fragile mid- to long-term capacity of a household to sustain livelihoods and meet essential needs when negatively impacted by shocks or disasters.

Top **three negative coping strategies** employed by households were selling household assets (10%), spending savings (5%), and borrow money/food (3%).



In comparison with the previous round of data collection in July 2022, less households (-3%) sold households assets and spent personal savings (-7%). The other negative strategy on the respondents top list - selling more animals - was replaced with households resorting to borrowing money or food.

The primary concern of 6% of the interviewed households was the increase in food prices, followed by disruptions of livelihoods and lack of work - both reported by 1% of the respondents.



In March 2023, 2% of the respondents mentioned the household having borrowed money within the last 30 days. Another 5% of interviewed households reported reduced income. These trends show significant improvement compared to the last round in July 2022, when the proportions were 7% and 31% respectively.

There was a considerable **increase of 17%** in **remittances** in Tonga compared to the previous data collection period in July 2022. In March 2023, **69%** of interviewed households reported receiving external transfers within the last 30 days. This important source of income may have played a **notable** role in maintaining consumption patterns by many households, ensuring a positive trend in use of strategies.

Remittances also greatly contributed to households' capacities to sustain their productive assets and livelihoods, following a smooth recovery from the affects of Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai **volcano eruption** and **tsunami** in Tongatapu in 2021.

Methodology:

This mVAM Bulletin reflects data collected from February to March 2023 via remote data collection facilitated through telephone calls in participants preferred language, either Tongan or English. The telephone numbers were generated using random-digit dialing, yielding 1,201 households. The questionnaire contained questions on households, livelihoods, food consumption - nutritional quality, livelihood based coping strategies, multi-dimensional deprivation index, remittances, and debt. A final open ended question gives respondents the chance to share any additional concerns regarding disruptions about food security in their community. The information collected through mobile interviews may be biased towards gender and households subscribed to the phone provider.

Other Resources: [Tonga mVAM Dashboard](#)



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