

# Food Security Assessment of the Colombian Population 2024



## Executive Summary Colombia - February 2024

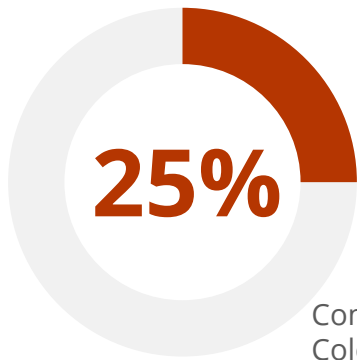
This summary presents the main results of the food security assessment for the Colombian population conducted by the World Food Programme (WFP) between November and December 2023. The objectives of this assessment were to update the food security figures of the 2022 food security assessment and to deepen the analysis of the factors affecting food insecurity at the national and departmental levels. In total, 6,791 surveys were collected in 29 departments and 133 municipalities<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>The results obtained are representative at the departmental and national level with a confidence level of 95% and an estimated error of 1.33%. The capital district of Bogotá is treated independently and the departments of Amazonas, Guainía, Guaviare, Vichada and Vaupés are grouped as a single department. This assessment is representative for reporting results at the urban and rural levels as well as for the cities of Bogotá D.C., Medellín, Cali, and Cartagena. Food security was measured using the WFP - Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI) methodology.





# 1. How many people are food insecure?



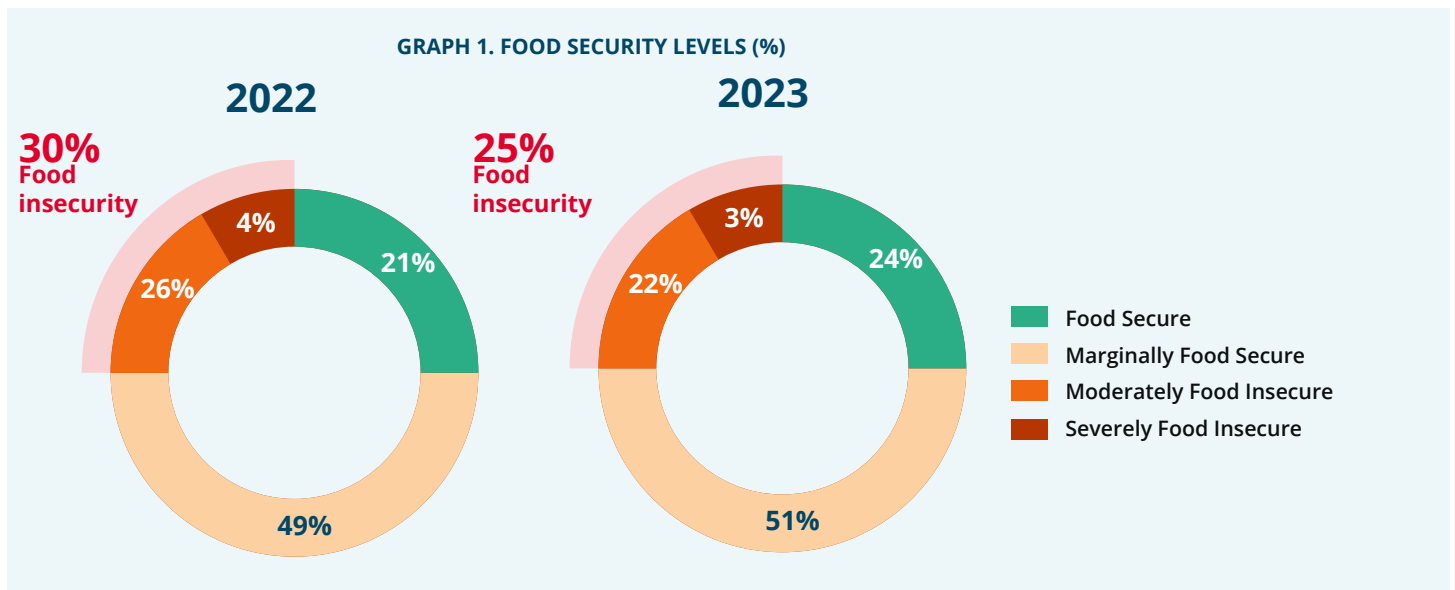
**13 million**

**of Colombian households are in a situation of moderate or severe food insecurity, which is equivalent to 13 million Colombians.**

Of this group, 1.6 million are severely food insecure, which means that they have extreme gaps in food consumption, high economic vulnerability and, in many cases, must resort to irreversible survival strategies that put their integrity at risk.

Compared to the results presented in 2023<sup>2</sup>, the food security of the Colombian population improved from 30% to 25% of households in moderate and severe food insecurity, which translates into a reduction of 2.5 million people in this situation.

The improvement in food security can be explained by a significant reduction in the general inflation rate and in the food inflation rate in particular, which closed 2023 at 9.28% and 5% respectively <sup>3</sup>, as well as a fall in the unemployment rate returning to single digits (9% as of November 2023)<sup>4</sup> similar to the records of the pre-pandemic years, and a decrease in monetary poverty, which fell from 39.7% in 2021 to 36.6% in 2022<sup>5</sup>.



However, it is important to note that **half of the households (51%) remain in a situation of marginal food security, and are susceptible to food insecurity due to shocks** such as: events associated with climatic affectation, for example the El Niño phenomenon, which can trigger a reduction in food supply with a subsequent inflation; economic slowdown that can be accentuated in the first months of 2024; and international tensions on account of the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts, among other factors.

<sup>2</sup>Evaluación de seguridad alimentaria para población colombiana, Colombia - Mayo 2023

<sup>3</sup>DANE - Índice de Precios al Consumidor (IPC)

<sup>4</sup>DANE - Mercado laboral

<sup>5</sup>DANE - Pobreza y condiciones de vida



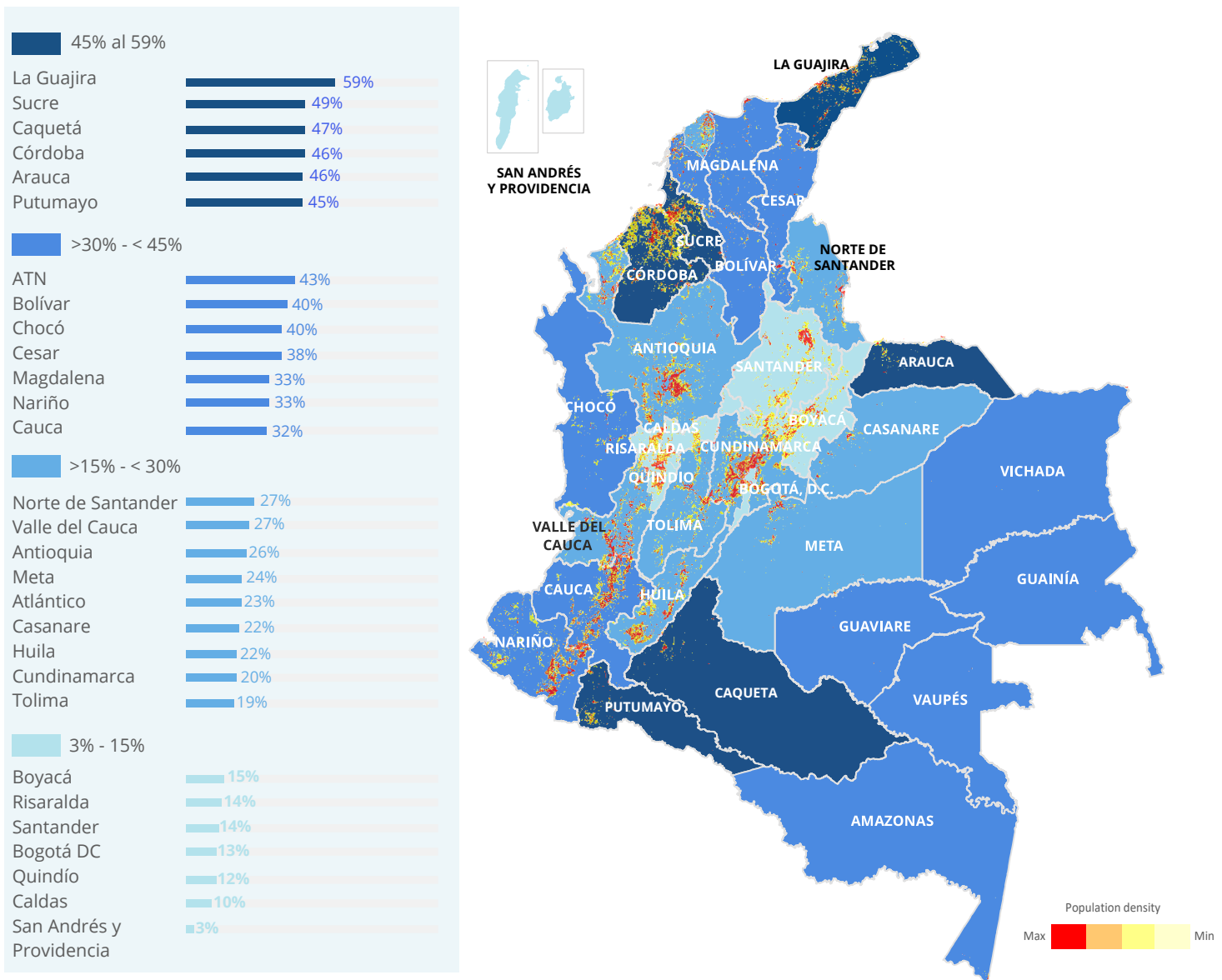
## 2. Where are the populations affected by food insecurity?

Although most departments show slight reductions in food insecurity in relation to the 2022 results, **high levels of food insecurity persist in La Guajira (59%), Sucre (49%), Caquetá (47%), Arauca and Córdoba (46%), Putumayo (45%) and the Former National Territories (ATN)<sup>6</sup> (43%).**

**In rural and urban areas, the percentage of food insecure households is 31% in rural areas and 24% in urban areas.** Rural areas show higher levels of vulnerability according to the indicators analyzed compared to urban areas. However, **the number of food insecure people is still higher in urban areas, due to the high concentration of the population in cities.**

In the case of the capital district of Bogota, 1.1 million people are food insecure, which corresponds to 13% of the population. In Cali, this figure is 447 thousand people; in Cartagena, 326 thousand people; and in Medellin, 357 thousand people.

**MAP 1. PREVALENCE OF MODERATE AND SEVERE FOOD INSECURITY BY DEPARTMENT**



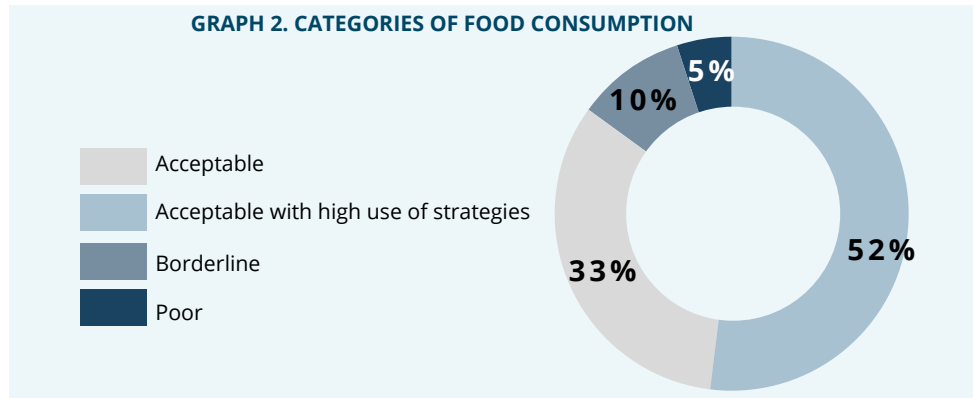
<sup>6</sup>Includes the departments of Amazonas, Guainía, Guaviare, Vichada y Vaupés



## 3. Dimensions of food security

### 3.1 Food consumption

With regard to food consumption, there were no significant changes at the national level with respect to 2023. A total of **15% of households experience significant gaps in food consumption - borderline or poor consumption** - which means that they do not manage to ensure an acceptable consumption of the different food groups. Additionally, half of the population manages to have acceptable consumption but is using various coping strategies such as consuming less preferred foods, reducing portion sizes and reducing the number of meals per day.

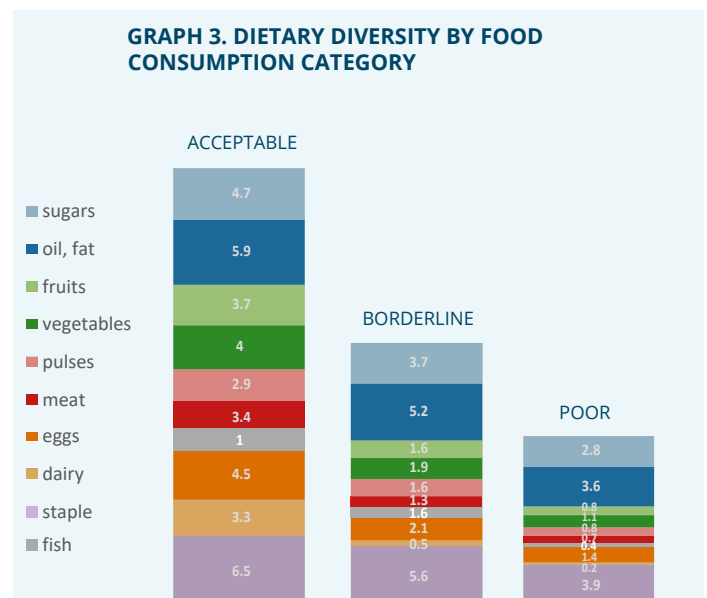


Although consumption patterns did not change substantially in relation to the previous evaluation, it is important to note that **43% of the households surveyed reported having had problems to access food in the last 6 months**. The main difficulties were associated with economic factors such as: **Lack of money to buy food (53%), increase in the cost of food (25%) and reduction in income (23%)**.

**43% of households reported problems of access to food in the last six months**

In terms of number of meals, **4% of households, corresponding to 2 million people, stated that they consumed only one meal per day** during the day prior to the survey.

According to the frequency of consumption of the different food groups, it was found that **the dietary diversity of households with acceptable consumption continues to show gaps in some food groups (Graph 3)**. This situation is exacerbated for those households that have been classified with borderline and poor food consumption, as the frequency of consumption of all food groups is considerably lower compared to households classified with acceptable consumption. The lack of dietary diversity can negatively impact other dimensions of human development such as health, education and labor productivity.



### 3.2 Economic vulnerability

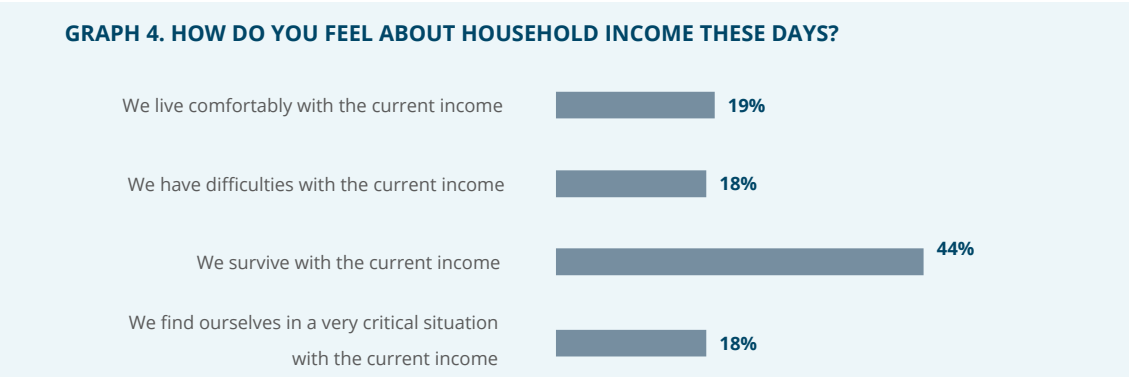
#### Income

In terms of income, **59% of households reported that they depend on a single source of income**, while 33% depend on two sources and 8% reported up to three sources of income. These results show the high vulnerability in which households find themselves as they depend mostly on a single source of income. In addition, a significant percentage of households reported a **partial (36%) or total (14%) loss of income**, while only 4% reported that their income had improved in the last six months.

The main sources reported were: self-employment (18%), employment in private companies (14%) and non-agricultural day labor (14%).

**50 of households report a partial or total loss of their income**

When asked about how they feel about household income these days, **44% said they are only just surviving on their current income** while only 19% said they live comfortably on their current income.



#### Expenditure

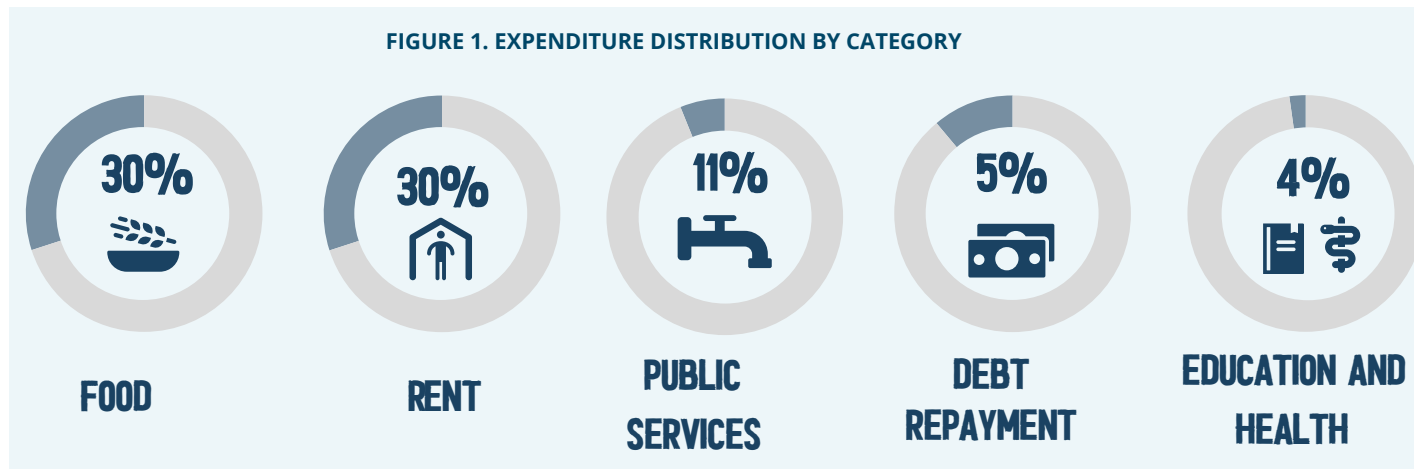
The median total expenditure per household in this assessment was 1,310,333 COP (332 USD) and there continues to be a close relationship between food security and the level of household expenditure, as can be seen in Table 1. Households in a situation of food insecurity have expenditures more than **five times lower than expenditures of households in a situation of food security**:

**TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENDITURES BY LEVEL OF FOOD SECURITY**

Food security levels	Severe food insecurity	Moderate food insecurity	Marginal food security	Food security
% of households by level	3%	22%	51%	24%
Median monthly expenditure per capita	COP 179.000 USD 45	COP 267.274 USD 68	COP 529.111 USD 134	COP 958.750 USD 243
Median monthly expenditure per household	COP 688.667 USD 177	COP 1'060.000 USD 280	COP 1'718.333 USD 455	COP 2'752.500 USD 729

The analysis of expenditures in relation to the national poverty line shows that **34% of households are below the monetary poverty line**. This result is in line with the national poverty figure reported by DANE for 2022 (36.6%).

Looking at the expenditure distribution, household spending is mainly concentrated in food and rent, which account for 60% of the total budget while other expenses such as debt payment corresponds to 5% and health and education 2% each. The high share of food expenditure highlights the vulnerability of households to shocks such as the high inflation rates experienced in the last 2 years, which makes households having to adopt various coping strategies and reducing the amount allocated to cover other basic needs.



## Debt

Considering the low level of income and its volatility, as well as the high cost of living, **taking on debt continues to be a basic coping strategy to cover the needs of an important part of households' expenditure (42%)**, a percentage similar to that obtained in the 2022 assessment (44%).

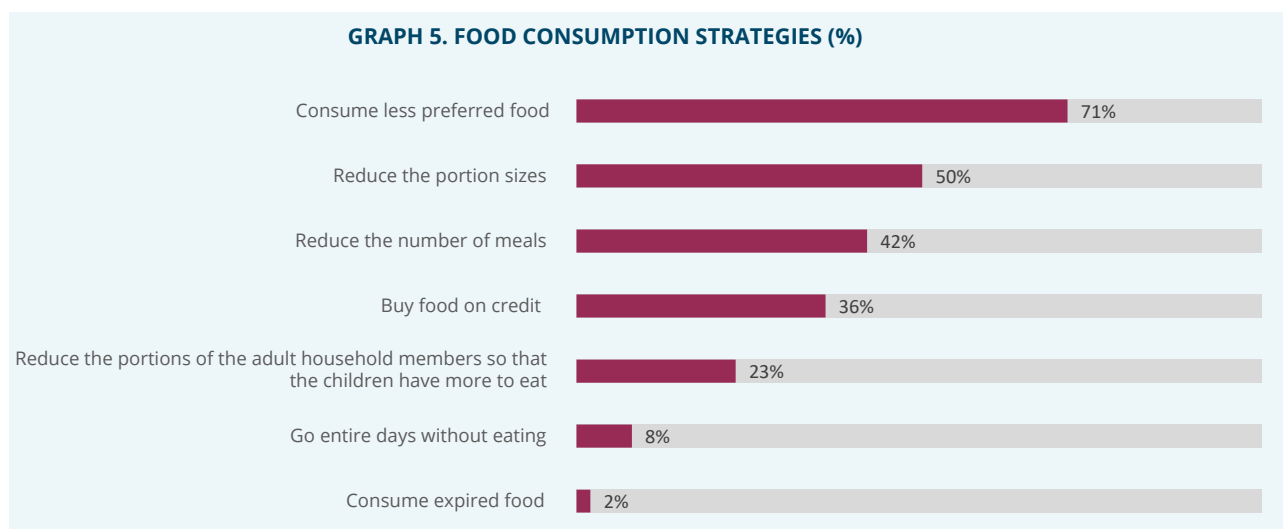
When comparing the debt prevalence of households in food insecurity with those in food security, similar percentages were found (41% and 42%), however, the reasons for the debt change from one group to the other. In the case of **food insecure households, the median debt accumulated at the time of the survey is 1'600,000 COP (423 USD) and is mainly directed to: purchasing food (34%), payment of basic services (19%) and purchase of assets (19%)**. Meanwhile, for households in food security, the median accumulated debt at the time of the survey is 5'000,000 COP (1,323 USD) and is mainly directed to: purchasing assets (33%), purchasing food (16%) and payment of basic services (12%).

**“ 4 out of 10 households had to take on debt to meet their basic needs ”**

### 3.3 Consumption based coping strategies

As a result of the economic vulnerability of households, they often have to employ coping strategies that allow them to maintain an acceptable food consumption. In this regard, **79% of households have employed at least one food consumption strategy** in the last 7 days prior to the survey. Of the households that have employed some consumption strategy, **six out of 10 households have used at least one related to reducing food consumption**, such as reducing portion sizes, reducing the number of meals, reducing the portions of the adult household members so that children can eat or going days without eating.

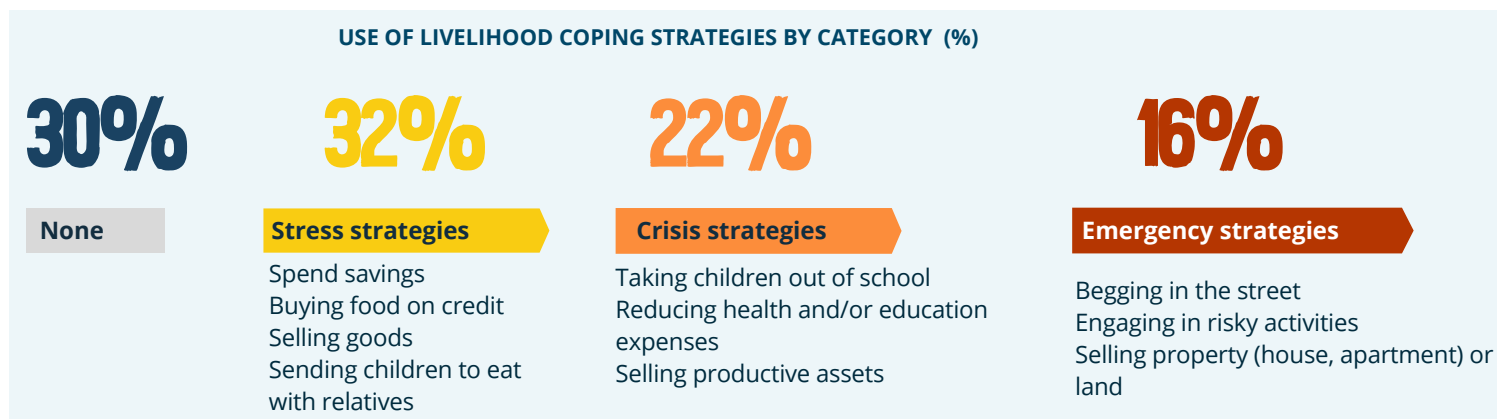
The following are the consumption strategies in order of importance:



### 3.4 Livelihood coping strategies

In addition to consumption strategies, **7 out of 10 households had to use livelihood coping strategies**, which shows the high levels of vulnerability of these households and that, although the percentage of food insecure households decreased compared to the previous year, the living conditions of many households are still precarious. The most commonly used livelihood coping strategies are **spending savings (57%), buying food on credit (30%) and reducing education or health expenses (29%)**.

**7 out of 10 households have had to use livelihood coping strategies**





One of the coping strategies used by households is migration. Of the households surveyed, **16% reported emigration of at least one member in the last two years**, mainly due to **lack of employment (62%)**, followed by **high cost of living (6%)**, reflection of persistent economic vulnerability, and **insecurity/violence (6%)**.

In addition, households were asked about their future migration intentions, revealing that **17% of households consider migrating within the next 12 months**. The data indicate that the main destinations of households intending to migrate are the **United States (34%)**, **Spain (25%)** and **Canada (13%)**. These households tend to be headed by individuals with secondary education, reside in urban areas, and belong to the lower socioeconomic strata (1 and 2). These households also expressed dissatisfaction with their quality of life, perceive a deterioration in their situation, lack of trust with national institutions and feel affected by adverse weather events.







## 4. The impact of conflict, violence and climate events on food security

### 4.1 Conflict and Violence

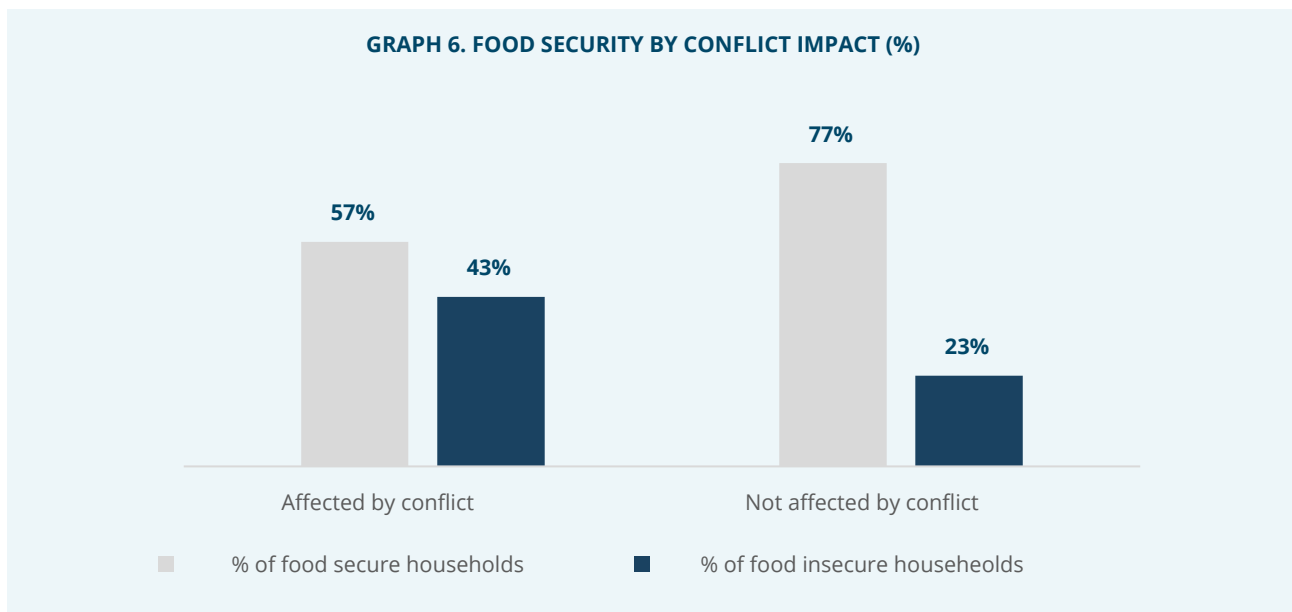
Armed conflict continues to be one of the factors that most affects vulnerability, impacting the quality of life and in particular the food security of the affected populations. According to this assessment, **11%<sup>7</sup> of households reported having been victims of some violent event in the last six months, with displacement and personal violence being the most reported events.**

It was also found that **there is a significant difference in terms of food insecurity between households that have been victims of some violent event and those that have not been affected. In the first case, food insecurity reaches 43%, while in the second case it is 23%**, which shows the serious impact that the conflict in its different manifestations has on household food security.

### 4.2 Events associated with climatic conditions and disasters of natural origin

According to this food security assessment, **almost half of the households (48%) reported having been affected by some extreme weather event and/or natural disaster in the last six months.** The two main effects have been changes in rainfall patterns (57%) and droughts (46%). **These effects are more visible in rural contexts, as reported by 61% of households, compared to 45% in urban areas.**

When analyzing the relationship between events associated with climatic affectation and disasters of natural origin and food insecurity, it was found that **28% of households impacted by this type of event suffer from food insecurity, while for unaffected households this percentage is 22%**, which confirms that extreme climatic shocks make households more prone to suffer from food insecurity.



<sup>7</sup>This estimate could underestimate the number of people affected by violent events due to the impossibility of accessing highly insecure territories.

# CONCLUSIONS



A quarter of the Colombian population, equivalent to 13 million people, faces food insecurity. Although there are improvements compared to 2022, half of the population remains in a situation of marginal food security, at risk of falling into a situation of food insecurity.



Despite the improvement in terms of food security at the national level, some departments such as La Guajira and the south of the country, including the Antiguos Territorios Nacionales (ATN), experienced a deterioration. Rural areas show greater food insecurity due to precarious incomes and greater impact of climatic events. However, the number of food insecure people continues to be higher in urban areas, due to the high concentration of the population in cities.



Lack of dietary diversity remains a priority area for attention. Despite the fact that some households have acceptable consumption and are in a situation of food security, gaps in the consumption of some food groups persist. This situation can generate negative effects in the medium and long term on other dimensions of human development, such as health, education and labor productivity.



Although the economic situation has improved since 2022, high vulnerability persists, with households resorting to coping strategies related to food consumption and livelihoods. In the long term, households may exhaust the possibility of implementing them, exposing them to the risk of food insecurity.



It is important to ensure access to opportunities through comprehensive medium- and long-term interventions that strengthen productive systems and household livelihoods in order to reduce vulnerability to food insecurity.



A beneficiary family from Carmen de Bolívar with sweet potatoes produced in their garden. WFP / Daniel Torres

This report has been possible thanks to the invaluable support of local and national authorities who made it possible to reach rural and urban areas in 133 municipalities. WFP is immensely grateful for the participation of the 6,791 families who talked to the enumerators, shared their experiences and welcomed them into their homes. This study could not have been possible without them and the contribution of ECHO.

