The Gambia National Food Security Survey Report

December 2023

THE GAMBIA BUREAU OF STATISTICS

WFP World Food Programme

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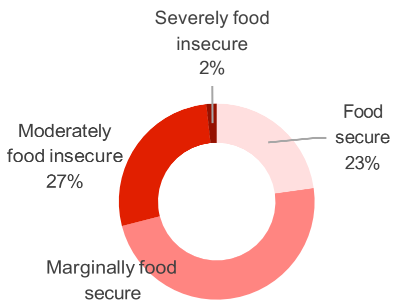
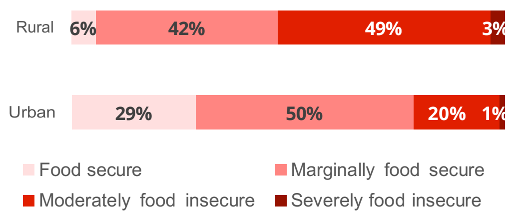
HIGHLIGHTS

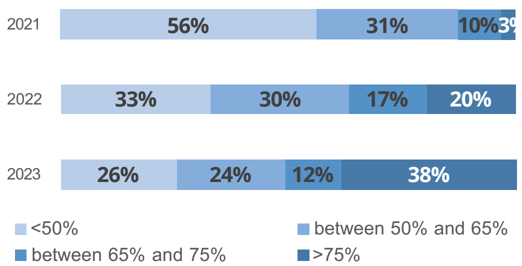


Three households out of ten (29 percent) are food insecure, representing a 3 percent increase from 2022. Basse, Janjanbureh and Kuntaur LGAs have the highest prevalence of food insecure households, (41 percent, 44 percent, and 61 percent, respectively). The LGAs with lower prevalence of food insecurity are Kanifing (18 percent), Brikama (25 percent), and Banjul (27 percent).

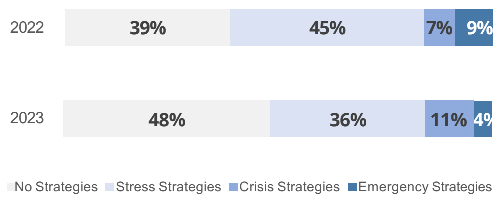


Food insecurity is significantly higher in rural areas (52 percent) compared to urban ones (21 percent).

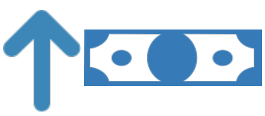
One in four households continues to face challenges in meeting their food needs, a situation that has persisted since 2022.



Since 2021, more households are spending over 65 percent of their monthly budget on food, driven by the country's rising food costs. As a result, households have become more economically vulnerable. This underscores the added difficulties households encounter in accessing food.



Compared to 2022, households in all LGAs have less frequently employed strategies to access food.



High food prices and job loss affect urban households more frequently than rural ones.

Rural areas are more prone to climate-related shocks and their effect on housing than urban households.

CONTEXT

Despite a projected economic growth of 4,8 percent in 2023[1], the people of The Gambia are facing a challenging economic situation characterised by rising food prices, exacerbated by global factors like Russia's suspension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative[2] and India's ban on non-Basmati white rice exports[3].

Domestically, structural rigidities, coupled with a significant inflation increase (+18 percent from August 2022 to August 2023-the highest in decades according to the World Bank- WB[4]) and an unstable global geopolitical environment, are imposing additional burdens to the households' economy and their food security. Households' vulnerability to global commodity price fluctuations is compounded by their dependence on imports for essential food items, as the country is a net importer of oil and food commodities.

Recent adjustments in utilities, particularly electricity and water tariffs, have increased the costs of living of the Gambians, further impacting their access to food and to other essential needs.

Moreover, rural households struggle with climate-related issues and limited access to modern techniques, affecting their livelihoods, in particular their productivity.

In this context, the World Food Programme (WFP), in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Gambia Bureau of Statistic of the Gambia has carried out a study to assess the food security of the population and compare the situation with that of 2022.

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[1] World Bank country overview: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/gambia/overview

[2] UN Secretary General statement: https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2023-07-17/secretary-generals-press-encounter-the-black-sea-initiative

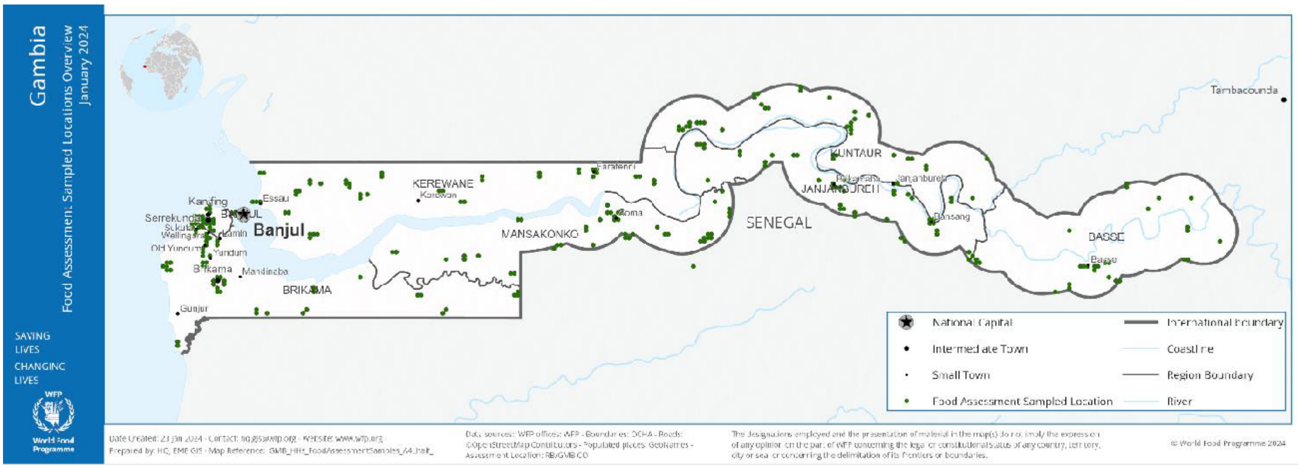
[3] India Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution press release: https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1941139

[4] World Bank country overview: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/gambia/overview

METHODOLOGY OF THE SURVEY

The survey methodology consisted in collecting primary quantitative data at the household level in the eight Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the country. Seventeen teams, each consisting of 17 supervisors and 68 enumerators, previously trained by WFP staff, were deployed from November 1 to November 10, 2023.

Map 1: Surveyed households



Sampling approach: The survey sample was chosen using a two-stage stratified cluster sampling method, as follows:

1. **Enumeration Areas (EAs)**. In the first stage, EAs were randomly selected within each LGA, with the selection probability proportional to the size of the EA, using the prevalence of stunting in children aged 6-59 months as the primary characteristic of interest for the assessment. The eight LGAs were then divided into urban and rural areas, resulting in 14 sampling strata (excluding Banjul and Kanifing, which have no rural areas). Samples were independently selected in each stratum, with a set number of EAs to be chosen. A total of 175 clusters were selected.
2. **Households**. Twenty households were selected in each sample cluster using a random selection based on equal probability strategy.

Weights: Because the sample is structured as a two-stage stratified cluster sample, weights were calculated for each sampling stage and cluster, based on their respective chances of being selected.

Sample size: 3,500 households in 8 LGAs. Out of the 175 selected clusters, 101 are rural. The final EAs and the number of households interviewed in each EA can be found in Annex 1.

Representativeness: Data are representative at LGA level, statistically comparable with those collected in 2021 and 2022.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Most of the household heads (93 percent) are married; only a few are widows (3 percent), divorced (2 percent), in union (2 percent) or separated (less than 1 percent), emphasizing the traditional importance placed on marriage and family life in The Gambia.

FOOD SECURITY | Overview

The food security is analysed through the *Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security* (CARI), the WFP's approach that combines the current status of the household and its coping capacity[5]. Food Security Classification is determined by calculating a simple average of their current status score and their coping capacity score.

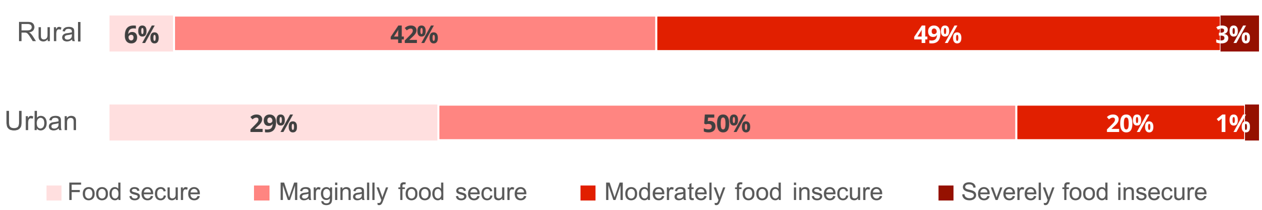
The prevalence of food insecurity in The Gambia is 29 percent, which translates into more than 729,800 food insecure people. Food insecurity is predominantly moderate, with only 2 percent of the population classified as severely food insecure (translating into about 42,800 people).

Table 1: CARI console 2023

		Indicators	Food Secure	Marginally Food Secure	Moderately Food Insecure	Severely Food Insecure
Current Status	*Food consumption*	FCS and rCSI	**Acceptable** 50%	**Acceptable and rCSI>=4** 25%	**Borderline** 20%	**Poor** 4%
Coping Capacity	*Economic Vulnerability*	Food Expenditure Share	**<50%** 26%	**50-65%** 24%	**65-75%** 12%	**>75%** 38%
Coping Capacity	*Livelihood Coping Strategies*	Livelihood coping strategies	**No coping** 48%	**Stress** 36%	**Crisis** 11%	**Emergency** 4%
CARI			**23%**	**48%**	**27%**	**2%**
PREVALENCE OF FOOD INSECURE HOUSEHOLDS					**29%**	

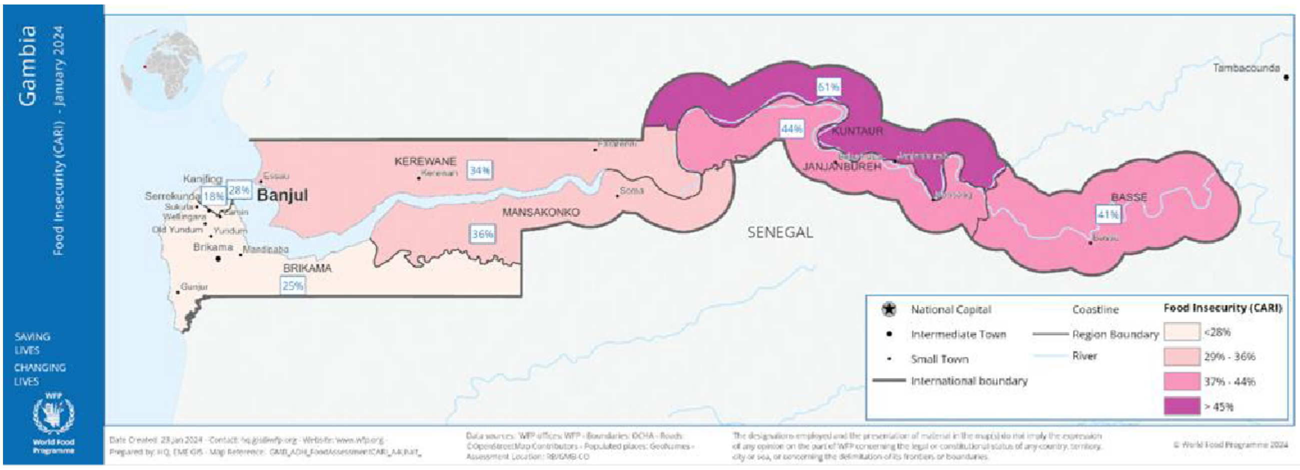
Food insecurity is higher in rural areas, with over half of the population (52 percent) categorised as food insecure, in contrast to urban areas where the rate is 21 percent.

Figure 1: Food Security prevalence in rural and urban areas



[5] For more information about CARI please refer to the WFP guidelines available at the following link: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000134704/download/

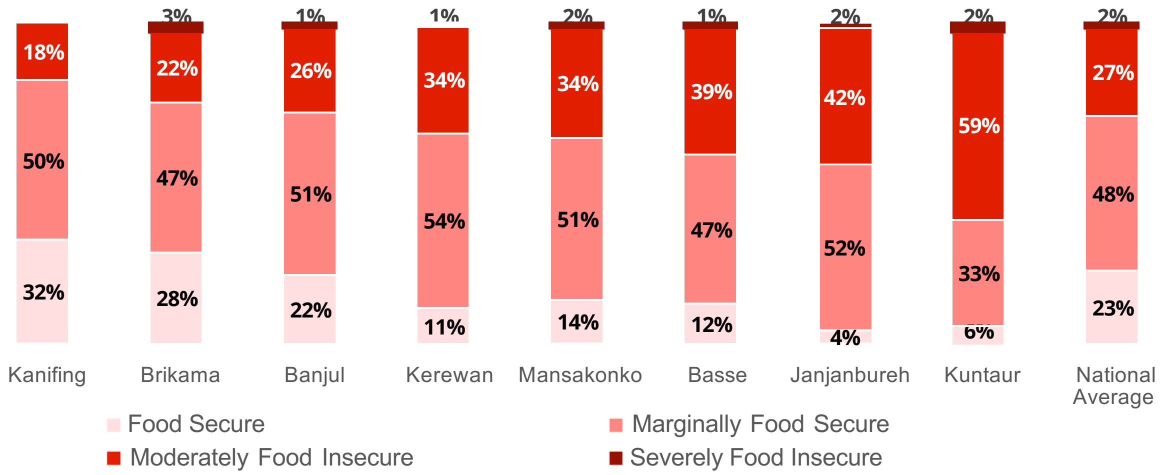
Map 2: Prevalence of food insecure households by LGA



Among the LGAs, Basse, Janjanbureh and Kuntaur have the highest prevalence of food insecure households, with rates of 41 percent, 44 percent, and 61 percent, respectively.

Conversely, the LGAs with lower prevalence of food insecurity are Kanifing (18 percent), Brikama (25 percent), and Banjul (27 percent).

Figure 2: Food Security prevalence by LGA

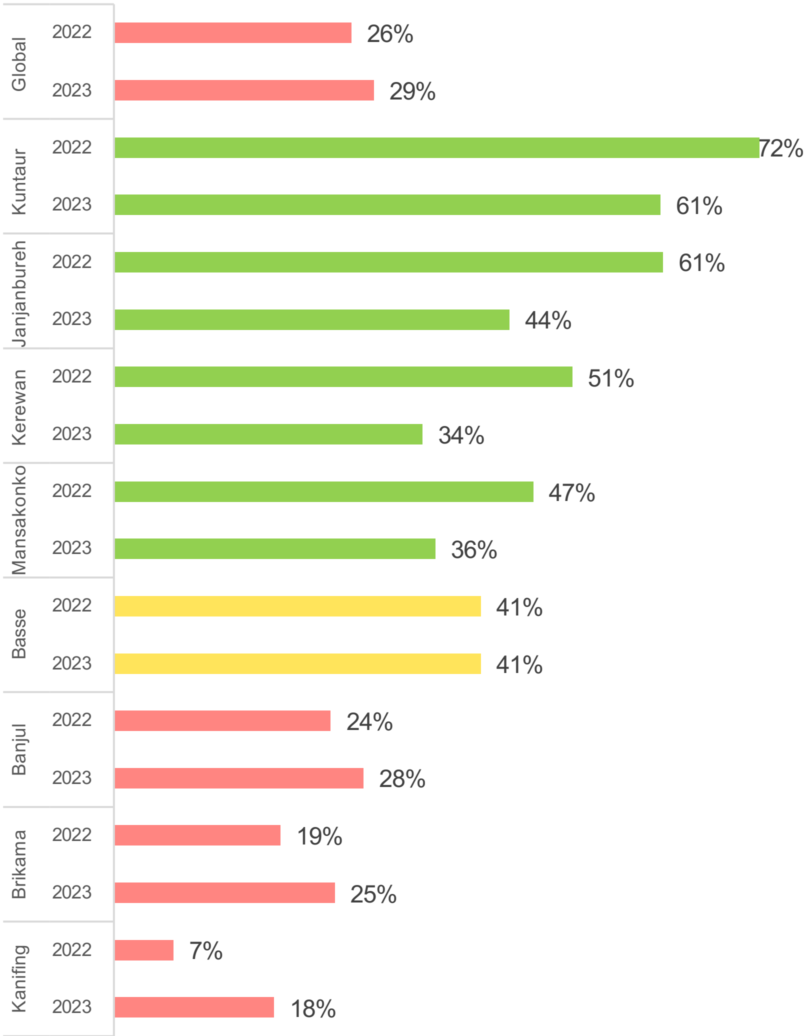


Over the course of one year, the food security situation in The Gambia has experienced a slight global deterioration. While the overall prevalence of food insecurity (moderate and severe) has remained stable at 23 percent, a small proportion of households (2 percent) has shifted from the marginally food insecurity category to the moderately food security category.

At LGA level, the situation has improved in the Mansakonko, Kuntaur, Kerewan and Janjanbureh LGAs, has remained stable in the Basse LGA but it has worsened in the Kanifing, Brikama LGAs and in Banjul.

It is important to note that due to the high number of EAs in the Brikama LGA, the increase in food insecurity in this area significantly contributes to the national average.

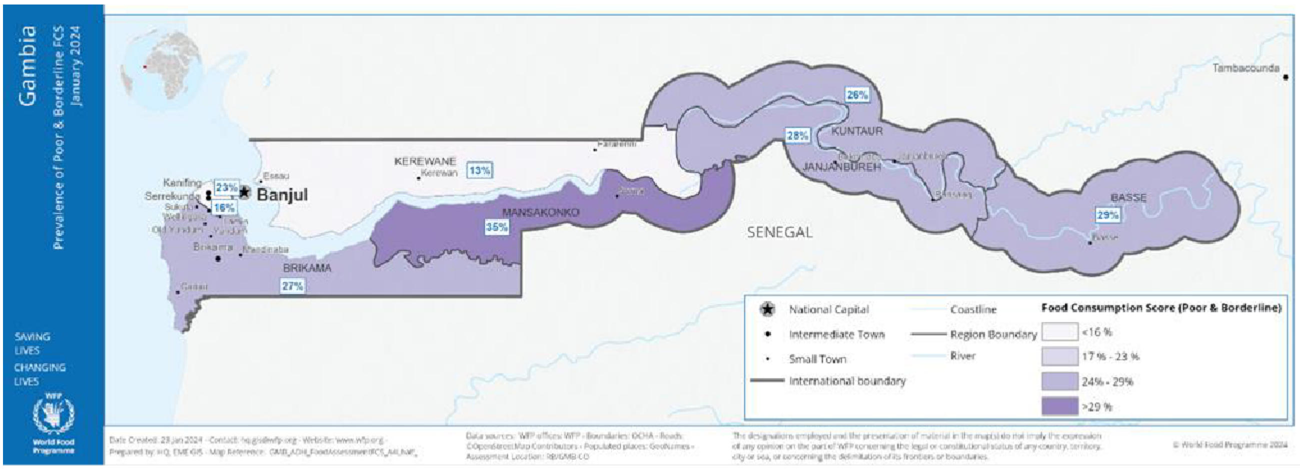
Figure 3: Trend of food insecurity (moderate and severe) between 2022 and 2023



FOOD SECURITY | Food Consumption

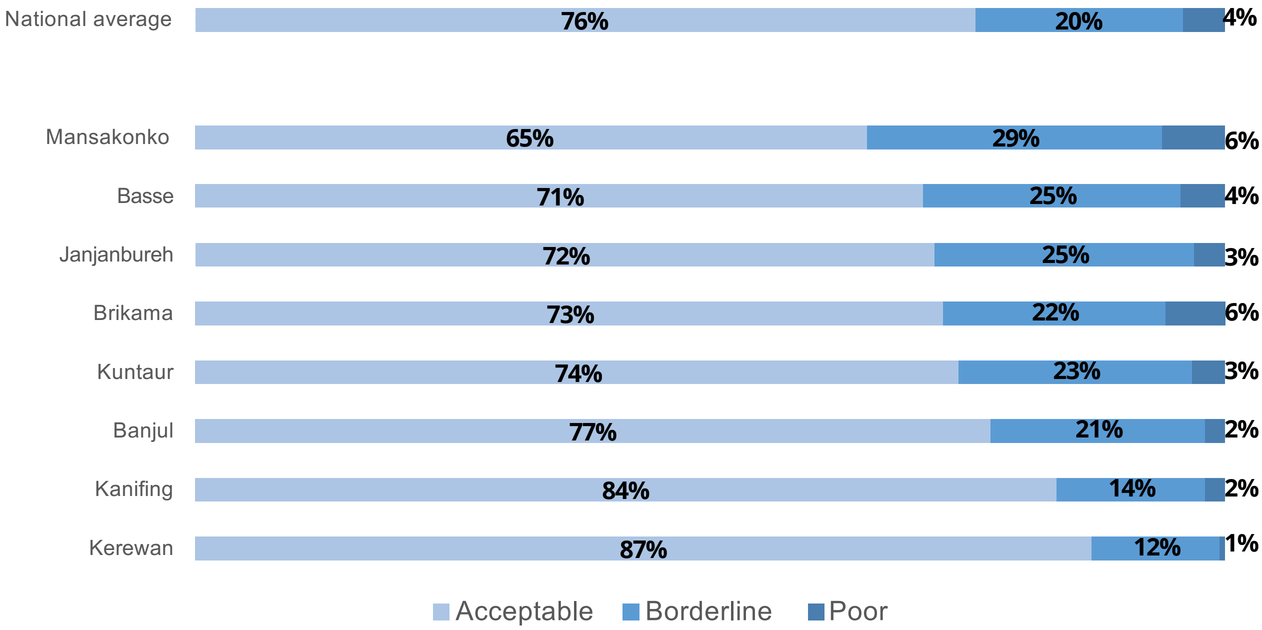
The households' food consumption is analysed through the Food Consumption Score (FCS), a proxy for households' food access and a WFP indicator assessing the adequacy of food consumption at the time of the survey. Households are classified into three groups based on the adequacy of the foods consumed in the seven days preceding the survey.

Map 3: Prevalence of Poor and Borderline FCS



Results show that 24 percent of households in The Gambia experience inadequate food consumption, with 4 percent facing poor food consumption. The largest proportion of households experiencing inadequate food consumption is observed in Mansakonko, accounting for 35 percent, followed by Basse with percent. Overall, the food consumption is stable compared to 2022, despite a tendency to deterioration.

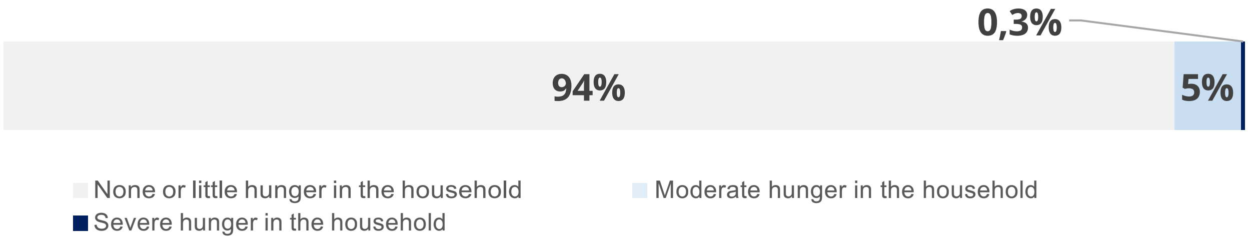
Figure 4: Food Consumption Score categories by LGA



FOOD SECURITY | Hunger Scale

When asked if they experienced hunger in the 30 days prior the survey, the majority of the households (94 percent) reported none or little hunger.
Only 5 percent of the interviewed households declared having experienced a moderate form of hunger and a less than 1 percent (0.3 percent) reported a severe degree of hunger.

Figure 5: Proportion of households having experienced hunger



FOOD SECURITY | Coping Capacity

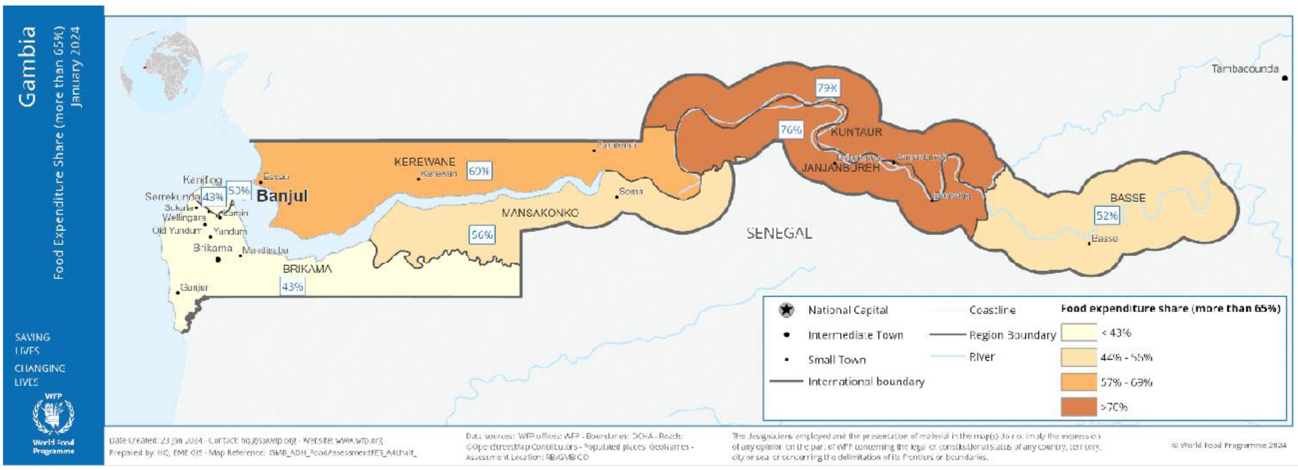
The coping capacity of a household assesses its resilience to challenges and shocks. The CARI considers two dimensions of household coping capacity:

1. The economic vulnerability, expressed by the Food Expense Share (FES); and
2. The livelihood coping strategies adopted during the 30 days prior to the survey.

Share of household expenditures spent on food

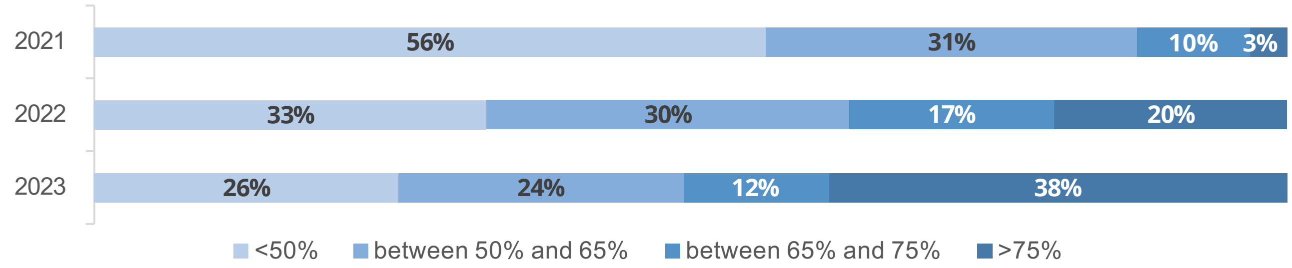
In The Gambia households, on average, allocate a significant portion of their budget to food, compared to other items and services. The expenditures on food represents over 75 percent of the total monthly expenses for nearly four out of ten households (38 percent). Half of the households allocate more than half of their budget to food expenses. For only one out of every four households (26 percent), the food share represents less than half of their monthly expenditures.

Map 4: Food expenditure share per LGA



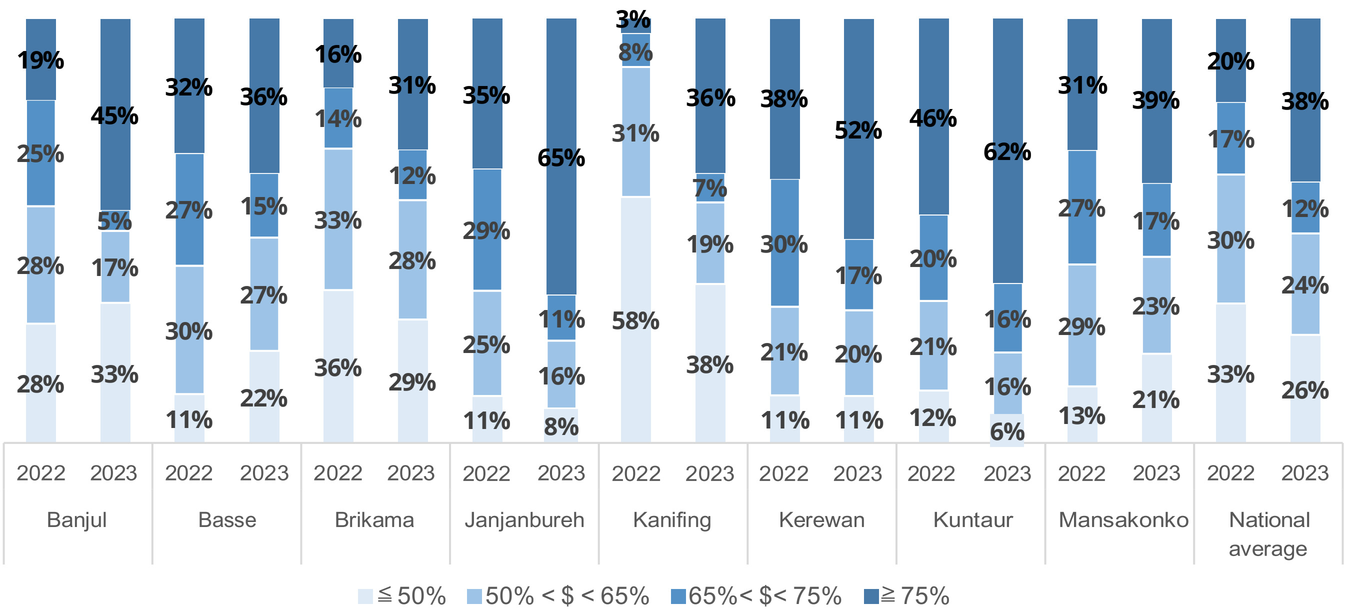
Since 2021, the economic vulnerability of households has increased, as a larger proportion of households now allocate a higher share of their expenditures to food.

Figure 6: Trend of the household FES categories



With no exception, in all the LGAs the proportion of households characterized by FES above 75 percent has increased since 2021, highlighting a greater household's vulnerability. While a correlation analysis with the rising food inflation has not been conducted in this study, the findings suggest that the higher FES is likely attributed to the increased cost of food that consumers in the country have to contend with.

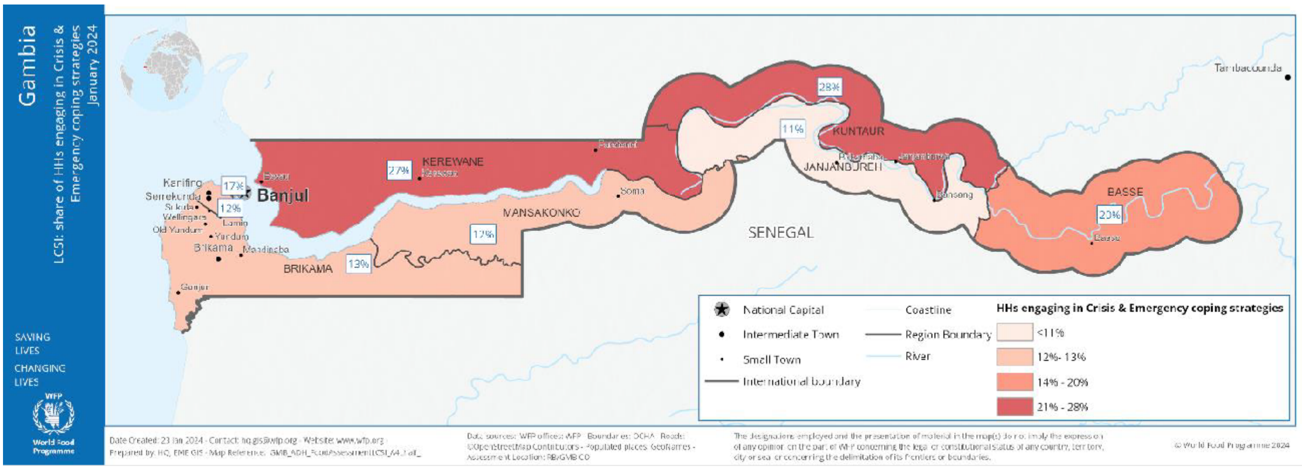
Figure 7: Comparison of the 2022 and 2023 household FES categories by LGA



Strategies

The mechanisms employed by households to cope with internal and external shocks offer insights into their medium and long-term capacity to produce and maintain food security. The strategies adopted are classified into three categories: stress, crisis, and emergency, based on their severity.

Map 5: LCSI share of households engaging in Crisis & emergency coping strategies per LGA



Compared to 2022, households in all LGAs have less frequently employed strategies to access food in the 30 days preceding the survey. The exception to this trend is observed in Basse, where 29 percent of households did not resort to strategies, a slight decrease from 37 percent in 2022, and in Mansakonko, where 40 percent of households did not resort to strategies, compared to 36 percent in 2022.

The use of emergency strategies has also decreased in all the LGAs compared to 2022.

Figure 8: Categories of Livelihood-Based Coping Strategies adopted in 2022 and 2023

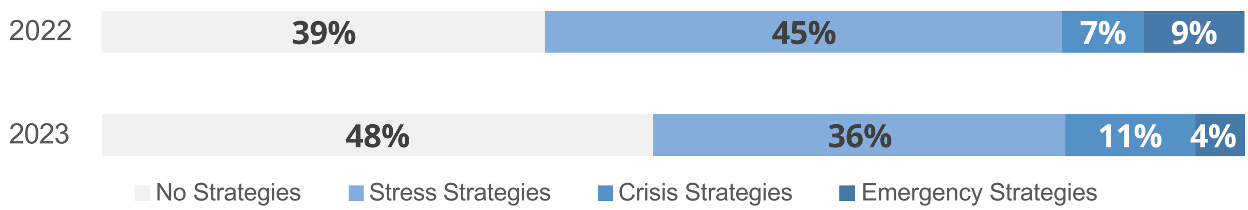
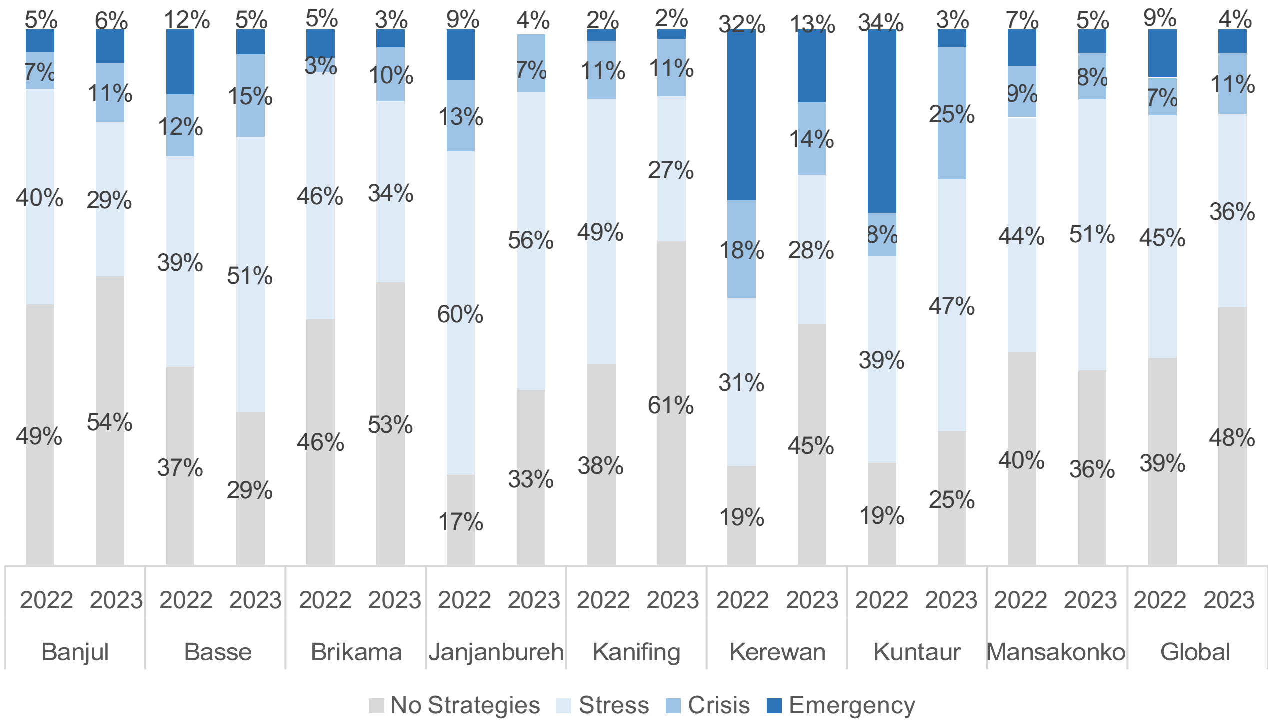


Figure 9: Categories of Livelihood-Based Coping Strategies adopted in 2022 and 2023 by LGA



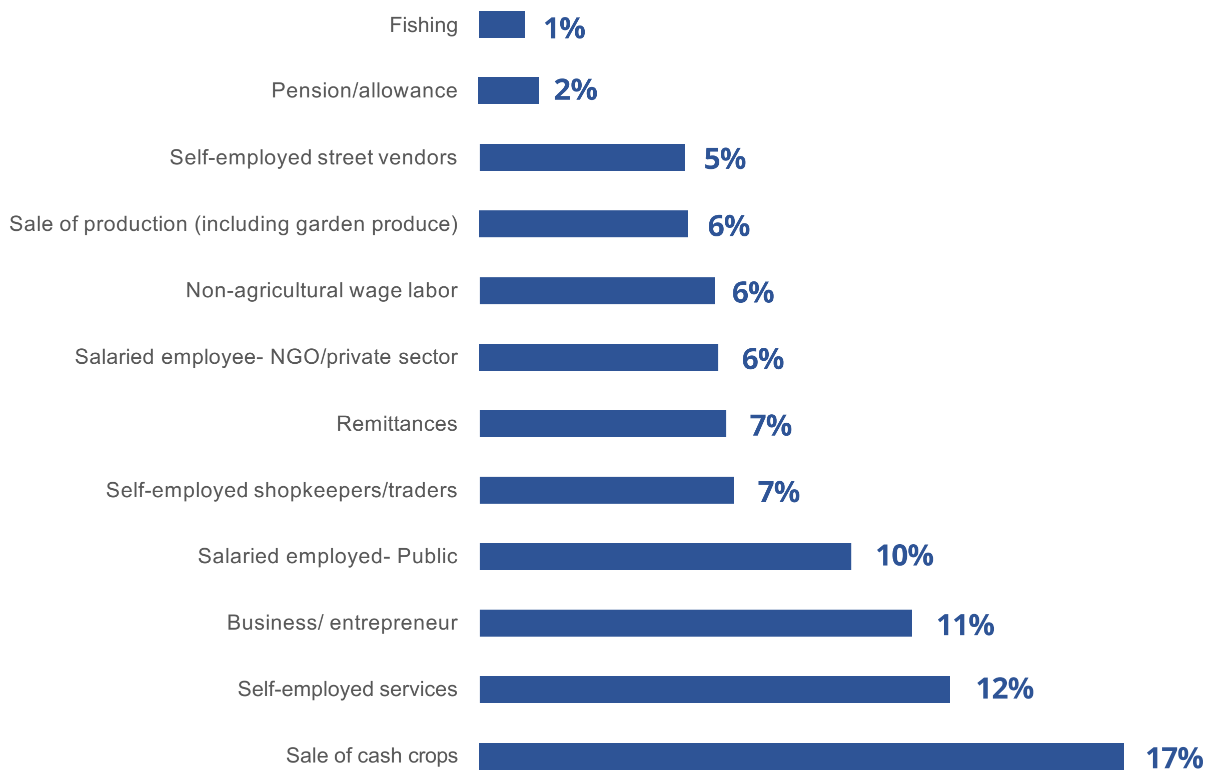
LIVELIHOOD | Sources of Income

The main source of income for households is the sale of cash crops, particularly groundnuts, cashew and sesame, accounting for 17 percent of the households.

Self-employment in various occupations, such as driving, carpentry, hairdressing, handicraft, constitutes the main source of income for 12 percent of the households, followed by entrepreneurship (11 percent) and employment in the public sector (11 percent).

These results are overall similar to those in 2022. However, back then, the sale of cash crops constituted the main source of income for 12 percent of the households, whereas now this accounts for 17 percent of the households. This may suggest that investments in the agricultural sector have produced positive results, alongside potential challenges in self-employed and entrepreneurship occupations, which have respectively decreased from 15 to 12 percent and from 13 to 11 percent.

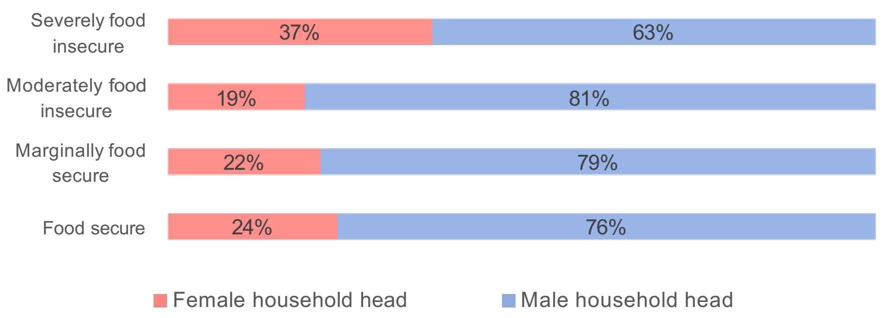
Figure 10: Main source of income



FOOD SECURITY | Characteristics of food insecure households

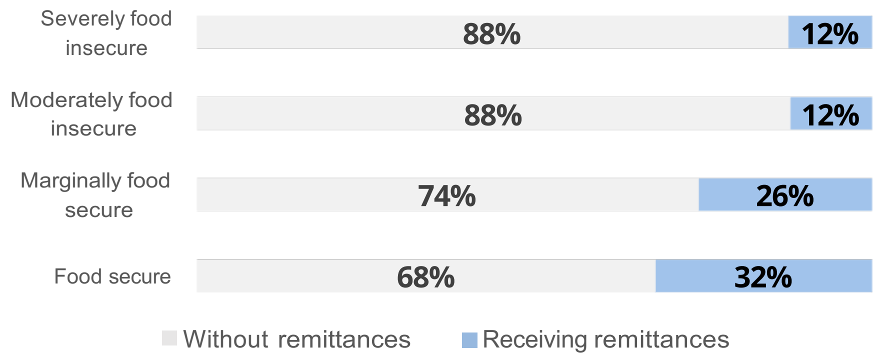
Figure 11: Sex of household head by food security categories

Gender of household head. Among the households experiencing moderate food insecurity, 19 percent are headed by females, and among those facing severe food insecurity, 37 percent are headed by females.



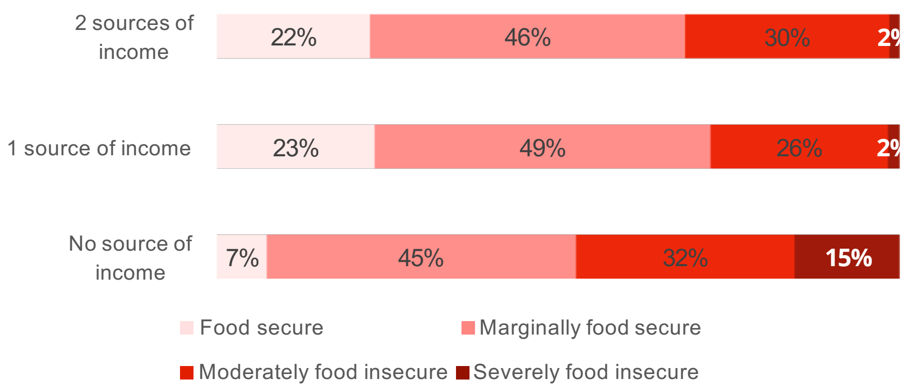
Remittances. The remittances sent by family members working abroad play an important role in contributing to the family income and thus to their food security. Results show that 12 percent of households experiencing food insecurity receive remittances, compared to 26 percent of marginally food insecure households and 32 percent of food secure households, suggesting a positive correlation between remittances and food security.

Figure 12: Remittance status by food security categories



Sources of income. As anticipated, lacking a source of income and relying on the assistance of humanitarian organizations and/or support from the community jeopardizes the food security of households and increases the risk of food insecurity, especially in the severe form. Fifteen percent of households with no source of income are severely food insecure, compared to 2 percent of those who can rely on one or two sources.

Figure 13: Food security categories by number of sources of income

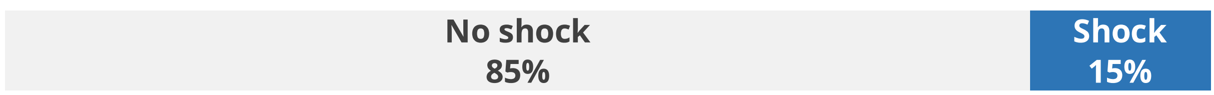


CAUSES OF FOOD INSECURITY | Shocks

Overall, 15 percent of households report having experienced a shock in the six months prior to the survey.

Among the households that declared experiencing a shock, 55 percent reside in urban areas, while 45 percent in rural areas.

Figure 14: Proportion of households having experienced shocks in the past 6 months



The frequency of shocks experienced varies depending on the context.

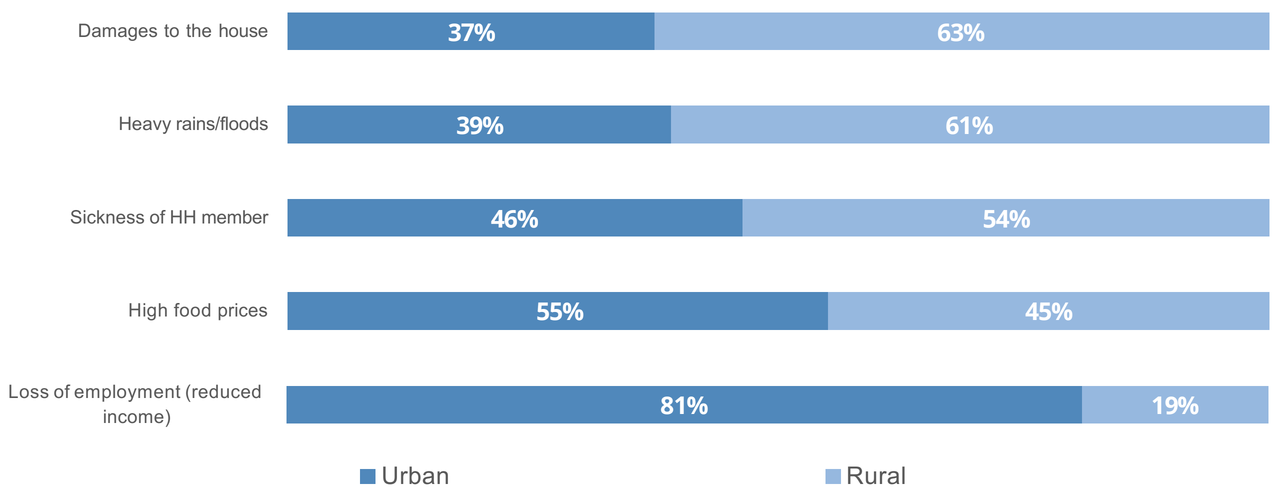
The **loss of employment**, with consequent reduced income, has been more frequent for households in urban areas (81 percent) compared to those in rural areas (19 percent), who typically rely on the farming system than on occasional or stable employment opportunities.

High food prices, reflecting dependency on markets to access food and other essential needs, are also more frequently experienced in urban areas (55 percent) than in rural areas (45 percent).

On the contrary, **climate-related shocks** such as heavy rains, floods, and subsequent **damages to houses** are more frequently experienced in rural areas (61 percent and 63 percent, respectively) than in urban areas (39 percent and 37 percent, respectively), underscoring the higher vulnerability of rural areas to climate-related shocks.

Health-related issues affecting a household member occur with a similar frequency in both sites: 46 percent in urban areas and 54 percent in rural ones.

Figure 15: Main shocks experienced by type of area



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The country is facing the impacts of rising global food prices, coupled with domestic economic challenges, leading to a high level of inflation[6] and subsequent difficulties in accessing food and other essential needs for the population.

This study, which entailed quantitative data collection from 3,500 households across all eight LGAs, aimed to assess the food security of Gambian households in this challenging economic context and to compare the situation with 2022, as well as to draw trends since 2021.

The survey results indicate a slight deterioration in the food security situation since 2022, increasing from 27 percent to 29 percent. The deterioration of food security since 2022 occurred in Banjul (+4 percent), Brikama (+6 percent), and Kanifing (+11 percent). Given the high number of EAs in the Kuntaur LGA, the increase in food insecurity in this area has significantly contributed to the national average.

Food insecurity prevalence is more than double in rural areas (53 percent) compared to urban areas (21 percent), and it is more pronounced in the LGAs of Kuntaur (61 percent), Janjanbureh (44 percent), and Basse (41 percent), although the situation has improved in both Kuntaur (-11 percent) and Janjanbureh (-17 percent) and remained stable in Basse compared to 2022.

The primary driver of food insecurity has been the increased **cost of living**, evident in the higher proportion of food expenses in the monthly budget. Across all LGAs, the percentage of households spending more than 75 percent of their budget on food has indeed risen. This has led to an **increased economic vulnerability t**hat aligns with the economic challenges facing the country. Even though food consumption and the adoption of livelihood strategies have not deteriorated in the past 12 months, households have become more economically vulnerable due to the economic challenges that the country is facing. If the costs of living continue to rise and no appropriate interventions are made, it is expected that households will increase both the frequency and severity of the livelihood strategies they will adopt.

Urban households are more prone to high-food prices, **market fluctuation** and employment loss, whereas rural households are more frequently impacted by **climate-related events** such as floods, heavy rains, and the resulting damages on the housing. Without increased interventions to strengthen the resilience of rural households, these climate shocks have the potential to trigger a rural exodus, at the detriment of the urban infrastructures, education and health systems and the overall liveability of the cities.

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[6] CENTRAL BANK OF THE GAMBIA_MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE_PRESS RELEASE_29_08_2023

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the survey results, the following recommendations are formulated.

Short Term

1. **To Implementing partners and Government**: Expansion of the social safety net programme, including increased values of cash transfers, and nutritional support programmes to vulnerable households particularly exposed to shocks. This is especially crucial in the LGAs of Kuntaur, Janjanbureh and Banjul, having the higher prevalence of food insecurity.
2. **To the Government**: Enhance price regulation through effective mechanisms, such as the reduction of taxes on imported commodities.
3. **To WFP**: Continue monitoring the food and nutritional situation, along with commodity prices across various markets.

Long Term

1. **To Implementing partners and Government:** Promote programmes aiming at reinforcing the resilience and adaptation of the rural population to enhance their capacity to cope with climate-related shocks.
2. **To Implementing partners and Government:** Support the rural households through interventions aiming at enhancing agricultural productivity using sustainable approaches that respect the natural soil cycle and align agricultural practices with local ecosystems. Sustainable techniques will bolster agricultural productivity but also contribute to long-term ecological resilience.
3. **To Implementing partners and Government**: Enhance market access by improving the flow of food and other essential products from rural areas to broader markets, and vice versa. This can be achieved through upgrades to local infrastructure, implementation of price control measures, capacity building for local producers, and the optimization of the value chain.

ACRONYMS

CARI	Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security
DoP	Department of Planning
EA	Enumeration Area
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FES	Food Expenditure Share
GBoS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
LGA	Local Government Area
LCS	Livelihood Coping Strategy
r-CSI	reduced-Coping Strategy Index
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

ANNEXES

ANNEXE 1: SAMPLING- DISTRIBUTION OF EAs AND HOUSEHOLDS

				Census frame 2013 (adjusted in 2015/16)			Survey Sample	
LGA	Estimated prevalence of stunting	Number of clusters	Number of households per EA/Cluster	Urban EAs	Rural EAs	Total	Urban EAs	Rural EAs
Banjul	10.3	18	20	74	-	74	18	-
Kanifing	11.7	11	20	773	-	773	11	-
Brikama	17.0	28	20	1,338	128	1,466	24	4
Mansakonko	17.8	35	20	32	172	204	5	30
Kerewan	23.1	16	20	106	387	493	3	13
Kuntaur	25.0	22	20	16	221	237	4	18
Janjanbureh	20.7	29	20	43	254	297	4	25
Basse	21.5	16	20	158	396	554	5	11
The Gambia		**175**		**2,540**	**1,558**	**4,098**	**74**	**101**

THE NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY SURVEY 2023 TEAM

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