

3.3. Food security

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According to analysis by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classifications (IPC),[864] 27 % of the Afghan population experienced high levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and 4) in March–April 2025 and were in 'urgent need of humanitarian food assistance'.[865]

Figure 6. IPC figures on the prevalence of acute food insecurity among the total population

IPC Phase	October 2023	March-April 2024	Sept-Oct 2024	March-April 2025
1: No or minimal	31 % (13.8 million)	31 % (14.1 million)	31 % (14.1 million)	32 % (14.7 million)
2: Stressed	40 % (17.7 million)	36 % (16.2 million)	44 % (20.2 million)	41 % (18.7 million)
3: Crisis	24 % (10.6 million)	25 % (11.3 million)	21 % (9.8 million)	23 % (10.6 million)
4: Acute	5 % (2.4 million)	7 % (2.9 million)	4 % (1.8 million)	4 % (1.95 million)
5: Famine	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

Source: IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for March - April 2024 and Projection for May – October 2024, 27 May 2024, url; IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for October 2023 and Projection for November 2023 – March 2024, 14 December 2023, url; IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for September - October 2024 and Projection for November 2024 - March 2025, 7 January 2025, url; IPC, Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for March - April 2025 and Projection for May - October 2025, 4 June 2025, url

It should be noted that Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) partners have warned that the IPC projections may severely underestimate food insecurity, since returnees are not systematically captured in the data.[866] Moreover, although large parts of the population have an acceptable calorie-intake, their diets mainly consists of less nutritious food such as staples,[867] while the consumption of meat, dairy and vegetables is more rare,[868] which might have long-term health implications.[869] WFP reported on 78 % of Afghans being unable to afford nutritious food[870] and stressed that Afghanistan is experiencing an unprecedented hunger crisis in 2025,[871] constituting one of the worst nutrition crises in the world.[872] The WoAA from 2022 demonstrated how the percentage of households with 'acceptable' food consumption never exceeded 30 % in 2021–2023.[873] Meanwhile, aid cuts have impacted the health and nutrition system that was funded with 80 % of donors, which has led to the closure of 298 WFP/UNICEF sites.[874] Households have coped with food insecurity by adjusting their diets to avoid expensive food,[875] and adults have been skipping meals so that their children can eat.[876] Some families only consume bread and tea.[877]

Urban and rural areas face different challenges in terms of food security. While food insecurity is more prevalent in rural areas on a relative level,878 food is generally cheaper there879 and many households rely on their own food production880 and livestock.881 For example, as outlined in a report by REACH from July 2025, Kandahar Province had the largest gap in terms of food affordability, but despite income constraints, this province as well as the 'wider southern region' did not report the highest levels of food insecurity.882 However, as mentioned above, rural communities are vulnerable to climate shocks,883 and some lack resources to engage in farming884 or to access food at the markets.885 For example, some households under pressure resort to eating seed stocks intended for farming, or to selling of vital livestock.886 Urban households generally do not have land assets887 or livestock, but rely on wage labour, which is volatile888 given the lack of job opportunities.889 While there is a greater availability of food products in urban areas, food is generally more expensive,890 and many households struggle to afford basic food items.891 Urban households relying on different forms of wage labour are moreover vulnerable to price shocks at the markets.892 According to a 2025 study investigating rural and urban food insecurity in Afghanistan, the large food expenditure shares, prevalence of coping strategies, and lack of savings among households suggest that both urban and rural households are vulnerable to shocks and trapped in a 'vicious cycle' of chronic food insecurity.893 In October 2025, REACH reported that the value of their Minimum Expenditure Basket reference894 was at least twice as high as the average household income.895

According to IPC, the food security situation was worst in Badakhshan in March–April 2025, with 40 % of the population classified in IPC Phase 3 and above, followed by Balkh, Bamyan, Daykundi, Ghor, Jawzjan, Nimroz, and Sar-e-Pul (35 % of the respective populations were classified in IPC Phase 3 and above).896 REACH emphasised the vulnerability of populations without access to their own food production in areas with particularly high food prices, and in particular female-headed households and returnee households. Provinces with particularly high food prices in contrast to the average household income included the provinces of Kandahar, Baghlan, Kunar, Badakhshan, Faryab and Paktya. Kabul Province had the lowest price of Minimum Expenditure Basket in relation to the income ratio, although it should be noted that this still exceeded the average income by 71 %.897

Food insecurity has particularly impacted households headed by women,898 persons with lower education,899 persons with disabilities900 as well as returnee households.901 Women's access to food has been negatively impacted by restrictions on their mobility and access to work.902 Meanwhile, since 2023, WFP has significantly scaled down its emergency assistance and has in parallel noted a record high increase in malnutrition in Afghanistan. In 2025 (as of June), 500 000 malnourished women and children had been left without support from WFP.903 IPC projections suggested that acute malnutrition would affect 1.16 million pregnant or breastfeeding women and 3.5 million children.904 UNICEF reported that about 12 % of children under 2 years received the right variety and quantity of food needed for their age.905

Child malnutrition reportedly increased after the Taliban takeover906 and has continued to increase amid dwindling aid.907 Children suffering from severe acute malnutrition commonly die.908 The most recent child malnutrition estimate and the national Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) survey,909 both from 2022, indicated that stunting (an indicator of long-term malnutrition signified by low-height-for-age) among children under five ranged from 32.7 %910 to 44.6 %.911 In August 2025, UNICEF and WFP launched a

joint emergency appeal to address child malnutrition in Afghanistan. They noted that the country had seen the sharpest surge in child malnutrition ever recorded, and that 3.5 million children under five were affected by the nutrition crisis, with 10.3 % of them being severely malnourished.912 Media reports from local hospitals across Afghanistan also suggested a significant increase in malnourishment among children under five in recent years, with some families losing several or all their children due to lack of food and poverty.913

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