



World Food Programme

GAZA FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT

WFP PALESTINE | DECEMBER 2023



IN BRIEF

**NORTHERN GOVERNORATES
(Gaza and North Gaza)**



97% of households have inadequate food consumption



95% of households are adopting extreme consumption strategies to cope with food shortage



48% suffers severe levels of hunger



9 out of 10 reported spending at least one full day and night without food, among them **18%** experienced this more than 10 days in the past month



A quarter of the households reported burning waste as their main source of cooking fuel, the rest uses firewood or wood rubbish



1.8 liter of clean water per person/per day



1 in 3 of the households relies on humanitarian assistance as the source of food

**IDPS IN SOUTHERN GOVERNORATES
(Deir Al Balah, Khan Younis and Rafah)**



83% of households have inadequate food consumption



82% of households are adopting extreme consumption strategies to cope with food shortage



38% suffers from severe levels of hunger



2 out of 3 reported spending at least one full day and night without food, among them **13%** experienced this more than 10 days in the last month



7% has no access to any source of fuel to cook food while **11%** burn waste as fuel and the remaining use firewood or waste wood



1.5 liter of clean water per person/per day



1 in 2 of the households relies on humanitarian assistance as the source of food

BACKGROUND

The ongoing conflict in Gaza is entering its second month has resulted in unprecedented humanitarian crisis, widespread destruction and displacement, limited access to food, water, electricity, cooking gas and other essential needs and services. Up to 1.8 million people in Gaza, or nearly 80 percent of the population, are estimated to be internally displaced (IDPs). Nearly 1.1 million are registered in 156 UNRWA facilities, of whom about 958,000 are registered in 99 UNRWA shelters in the Southern governorates. OCHA also reported that due to the overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions at UNRWA shelters, there have been significant increases in some communicable diseases.¹ The health system across the Gaza Strip continues to be overstretched amid severe shortage of medical supplies and damaged sustained by hospitals during the bombardments and military operations.

Since the conflict began, the Gaza Strip has remained under siege with only one border crossing open for humanitarian aid. On 24th November, a humanitarian pause came into effect in all areas of Gaza strip, leading largely to a cessation of airstrikes and ground clashes. The humanitarian pause enabled a major increase in the delivery of basic supplies into and across Gaza, including areas to the Northern governorates, which prior to the pause had been completely cut-off aid delivery. However, the pause ended on 1st December. During the Pause WFP was able to conduct rapid food security assessment using remote survey.

HOUSEHOLD FOOD CONSUMPTION

The remote survey collected three different food security outcome indicators to measure food consumption, namely the Food Consumption Score (FCS), the Household Hunger Scale (HHS) and the reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI).

1. Food consumption score

Food consumption gaps are extremely alarming and differ between the Northern and southern governorates of the Gaza strip. Most of the interviewed households in the Northern governorates (82 percent) had poor food consumption levels, whereas 15 percent of households had borderline consumption. In the southern governorates, however, where the majority of the Gaza population has been displaced to and where access to food assistance is relatively better, the share of households reporting poor food consumption remains still high (38 percent) but significantly lower than in the Northern governorates, while 46 percent are reporting borderline food consumption. Findings also indicate that displaced households in the Southern governorates are more likely to have poor food consumption (39 percent) compared to the households who have not been displaced (33 percent).

¹ OCHA: Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #55; 30 November 2023

Figure 1: Food consumption groups by Subregion and displacement

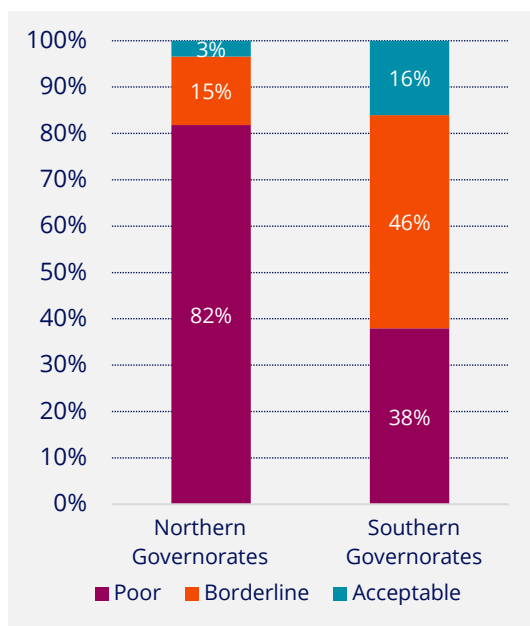
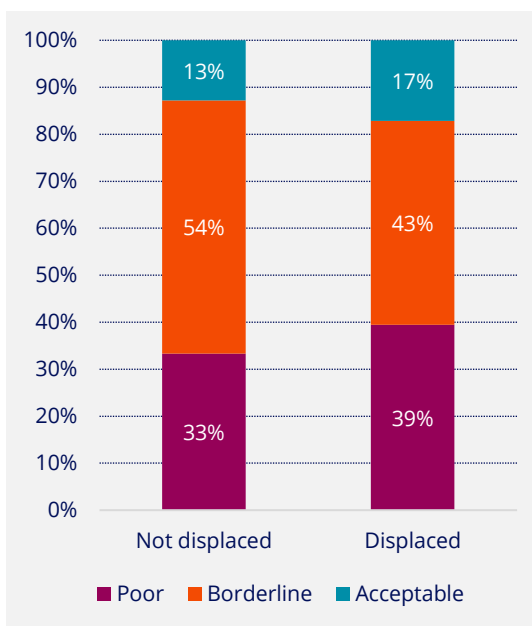


Figure 2: Food consumption in the Southern governorates by displacement



During the week of the pause, respondents from the Northern governorates reported to mostly consuming cereals and tubers, yet less than 5 days a week, accompanied by oil, condiments, and spices. Protein-rich food like meat and dairy products, on average, were not even consumed once a week. In the Southern governorates, households reported similar consumption patterns with better access to vegetables and oil.

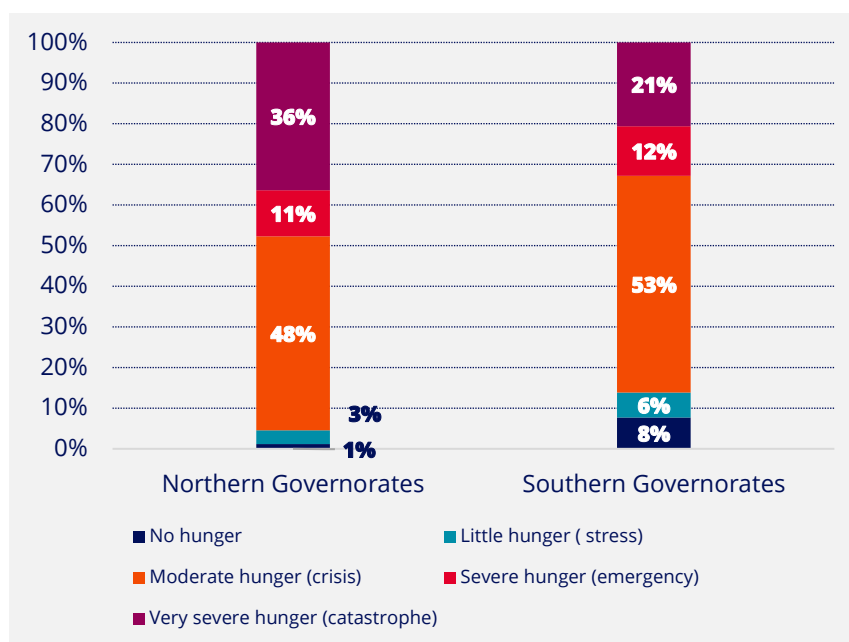
In addition, 42 percent of the households in the Northern governorates and 35 percent of households in the Southern governorates reported knowing of people who were compelled to consume wild or raw food to cope with hunger. The reporting is higher (42 percent) among IPDs in the southern governorates.

2. Household hunger scale

The household hunger scale (HHS) measures household food deprivation based on a 30-day recall. The Northern governorates are experiencing alarming levels of hunger: almost half of the households experienced severe or very severe hunger; around 48 percent experienced moderate hunger and only four percent experienced little or no hunger. In the southern governorates, a third of the households reported high levels of severe or very severe hunger, 53 percent moderate hunger and 14 percent little or no hunger. IDPs in the southern governorate experienced more hunger than the residents, where 46 percent suffered from severe or very severe hunger compared to 15 percent of residents.

Around 88 percent of the households in the Northern governorates and around 54 percent in the Southern governorates reported spending at least one full day and night without eating in the past four weeks, because there was not enough food. Among them, almost 20 percent in the Northern governorates and 14 percent in the Southern governorates had to do this more than 10 times in the past month.

Figure 3: Household Hunger Scale by Subregion



3. Reduced coping strategy index

The reduced coping strategy index (rCSI) looks at the frequency and severity of five standard food consumption-related strategies² and acts as a proxy indicator for food access. Results showed that almost 95 percent the households interviewed in the Northern governorates are employing extreme consumption coping strategies on daily basis to cope with the lack of food or money to buy food. In the Southern governorates, households are showing similar behaviors with 78 percent registering extreme levels of coping strategies. IDPs are showing higher level of reliance on extreme consumption based coping strategies compared to non-displaced households.

FOOD AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS

Beyond the direct disruption and destruction of food systems due to the conflict, the limited flow of humanitarian aid and the complete halt of the commercial goods have severely affected the movement and households’ access to food and nutritious supplies. The shutdown of communication services and the lack of fuel have been an additional barrier to the delivery of key food commodities. Wholesalers and traders in the Gaza Strip are grappling with shortages of essential food commodities. As per 30th November, out of the 202 WFP-contracted shops, 82 still facilitate beneficiaries’ redemption of vouchers (21 in the Northern governorates and 61 in the Southern governorates).³ The remaining shops are either closed due to the lack of stocks, security reasons, or damages incurred to the shop’s infrastructure.

According to WFP shop monitoring survey, only limited quantities of essential food items, mainly rice and vegetable oil are available. The limited items in the Gaza Strip are being sold at

² The five consumption-based coping strategies Coping Strategies are: 1) Rely on less preferred and less expensive food; 2) Borrow food or rely on help from relative(s) or friend(s); 3) Limit portion size at meals 4) Restrict consumption by adults for small children to eat and 5) Reduce number of meals eaten in a day.

³ WFP Palestine M&E redemption information

unprecedented, inflated prices. For instance, compared to September 2023, wheat flour prices have surged by approximately 50 percent, vegetables by 200 percent, rice by 45 percent, and fuel by over 500 percent.

Bakeries in the Northern governorates remain non-operational, and only a few in the southern governorates are operating intermittently. As of November 27th, the five mills operating in the Gaza Strip are still not functioning due to a shortage of fuel.⁴

Since the beginning of the crisis, 3,099 trucks, of which 1,249 carrying food assistance have reached Gaza.⁵ However, to provide food assistance to the affected population of Gaza, 100 trucks with food would be required to pass every day. Under the current circumstances, the Rafah border crossing does not have the capacity for a sufficient number of trucks to pass to meet the needs in Gaza.

During the 7-day pause, WFP reached an estimated 250,000 vulnerable people with in-kind and cash-based general food assistance across Gaza. Around 142,000 IDPs in designated shelters received daily canned fava beans, high-energy biscuits, date bars and fresh bread sourced from one WFP-contracted bakery. An additional 40,000 IDPs in host communities received food parcels to support their food needs for 15 days. WFP began distributing community-cooked hot meals to IDPs reaching more than 8,500 people with one hot meal over 2 days. Around 57,000 people redeemed their e-vouchers cash assistance.

Reliance on food assistance as the household's primary food source has been more prevalent in the Southern governorates and reported by 46 percent of the households while another 21 percent reported depending on friends and relatives. In the Northern governorates, where humanitarian actors face extraordinary operational challenges with regards to access, a lower percentage of households reported relying on humanitarian assistance (32 percent) showing a higher dependency on the network of relatives and friends as their main source of food. It is worth noting that despite the very limited food stocks and availability reported by WFP contracted shops across the Gaza Strip, around 27 percent of households in the Southern governorates and 20 percent of households in the Northern governorates mentioned markets as their main source of food.

The comparison between IDPs and residents further demonstrates a higher level of reliance on humanitarian assistance among IDPs (52 percent), compared to residents (27 percent). IDPs are mainly staying in UNRWA shelters and public schools and are the primary recipients of humanitarian assistance in the Southern governorates.

Overall, the high reliance on food assistance is also largely in line with the increase in assistance that partners were able to distribute during the humanitarian pause, when data was collected. However, the high level of inadequate food consumption shows that assistance received is not enough to cover the households' food needs.

⁴ Key informant: The head of bakeries association in Gaza Strip

⁵ Logistic cluster convoys dashboard (22 November 2023) and ERC manifest analysis (29 November 2023)

Figure 4: The main three sources of food by Subregion

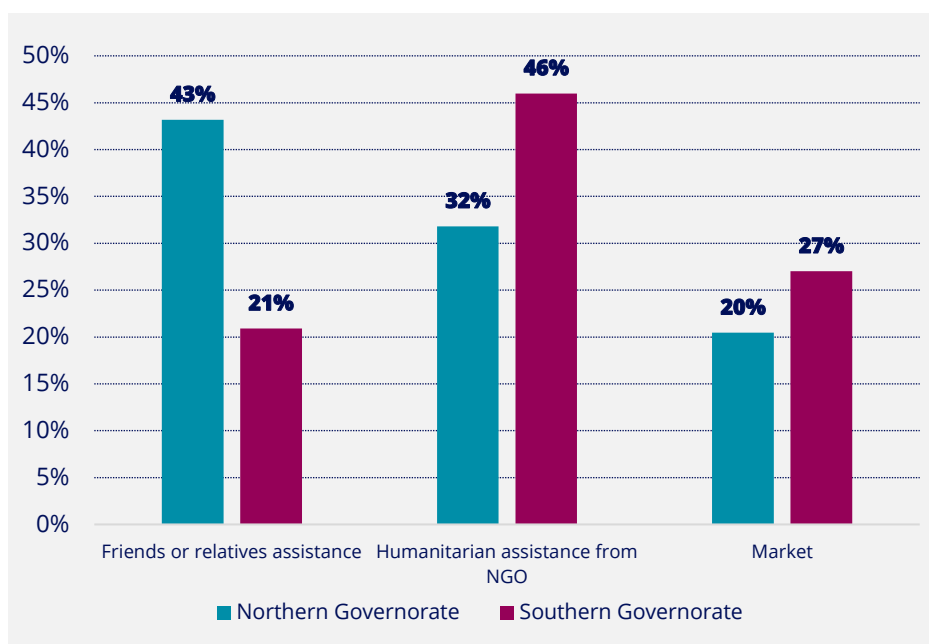
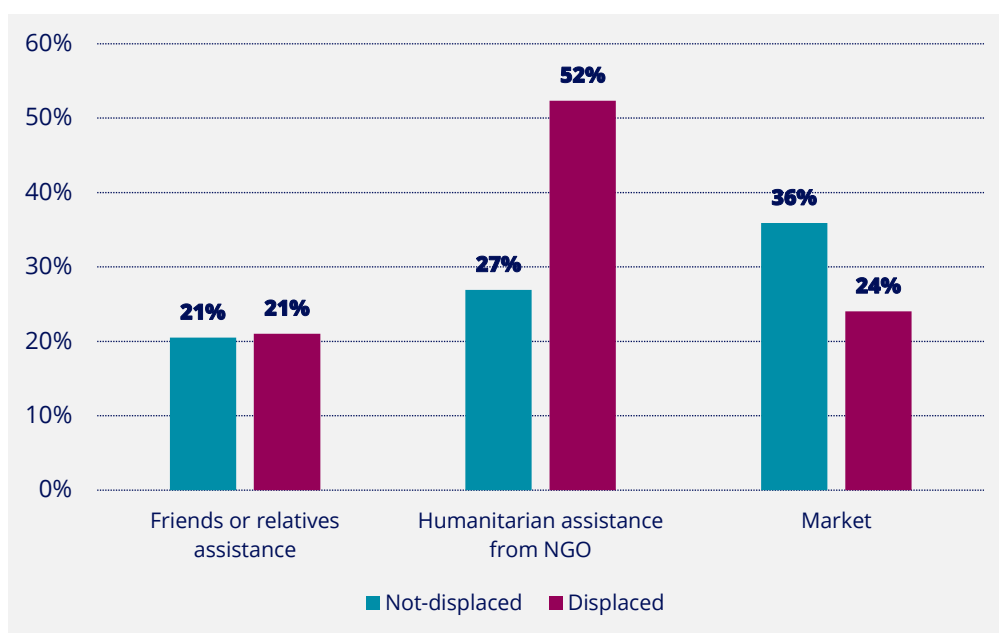


Figure 5: The main three sources of food in the Southern governorates by displacement status



FOOD UTILIZATION

Food utilization has also been severely compromised by the conflict. The lack of cooking gas, which was the main source of cooking fuel before the conflict, has led to a high reliance on firewood, wood residues and waste burning as a primary source of cooking fuel which is considered a dirty fuel because its consumption adversely affects human health exposing people to heightened risks of respiratory diseases. In the Northern governorates, a quarter of the households reported burning waste as their main source of cooking fuel, the rest uses firewood or wood rubbish. In the Southern governorates, 7 percent has no access to any source of fuel to cook food while 11 percent burn waste as fuel and the remaining use firewood or waste wood.

Lack of safe water is also affecting food utilization. While according to the Sphere water supply standard, the minimum average volume of water used for drinking and domestic hygiene should not be less than 15 liters per person per day, on average interviewed households are reporting having access to 1.8 liter in the Northern governorates and 2 liters in the Southern governorates of safe water per person per day. Only 7 percent in the Northern governorates as well as 16 percent in Southern governorates reported having access to more than 2.5 liter of safe water per person per day.

METHODOLOGY

WFP Palestine rolled out household food security surveys through mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping (mVAM). These remote surveys use a phone-based (CATI) methodology to understand the food security situation following the 8 weeks of conflict across the Gaza Strip. WFP Palestine interviewed 399 households across the 5 governorates (88 respondents in the Northern governorates and 311 in the Southern governorates) between 27th November and 30th November during the humanitarian pause. Households were randomly selected from the list of WFP beneficiaries master phone lists. WFP phone lists represent 75% percent of households in Gaza. Analysis results are presented for the two main subregions Northern governorates (Gaza and north Gaza) and Southern governorates (Khan Younis, Deir El Balah and Rafah) and for the displaced and non-displaced population in the Southern governorates.

This comes as part of WFP's efforts to better understand the impact of the conflict on household food security situation, to assess the current state of food security in the Gaza Strip and to inform WFP response.

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