AFGHANISTAN
FOOD SECURITY & AGRICULTURE
CLUSTER

# Seasonal Food Security Assessment (SFSA) 2019

# Report

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# Executive Summary

The 2019 Seasonal Food Security Assessment (SFSA) surveyed over 22,000 households across Afghanistan's 34 provinces, helping to estimate the number, location and characteristics of food insecure households and provide key information to inform humanitarian planning. This is the sixth assessment of this kind since the Food Security Cluster began the annual survey in Afghanistan in 2014. The below points summarise the key findings from the SFSA analysis.

**Food security has improved over the past year**

Good precipitation and favourable pasture conditions during the 2018-19 winter season has contributed to an overall improvement in food security. The IPC workshop in September 2019, which primarily used SFSA data, found the percentage of people in IPC Phases 3 and 4 had fallen by 10.6 percentage points (from 43.6% to 33%), as compared to the previous analysis for the same period last year (2018). Between 2018 and 2019 Afghanistan saw a 6 percent increase in the total area of cultivated land.

**Afghanistan still faces a crisis**

In 2018 Afghanistan experienced a major food security and livelihood crisis as a result of widespread drought - which drastically lowered food production and depleted agricultural assets and livelihood - prompting a large-scale humanitarian response that covered 22 drought-affected provinces. Many households have not recovered and are relying on damaging coping mechanisms that hinder their ability to recover from the crisis. According to the SFSA data, around two thirds of households said they had borrowed money in the past 3 months, most of whom said their primary reason for borrowing money was to pay for food (65 percent). The IPC estimates that 7.8 million people are in Crisis (Phase 3) and 2.44 million are in Emergency (Phase 4); these people require urgent action to reduce food consumption gaps, protect livelihoods and address acute malnutrition.

**Food insecurity is still rising in many parts of the country**

The prevalence of food insecurity rose in 7 provinces between 2018 and 2019, and in 6 provinces food insecurity levels remained unchanged. The provinces with the highest levels of food insecurity are also the provinces that were most affected by the 2018 drought, which include Nuristan, Uruzgan, Ghor, Daykundi, Badakhshan, and Nimroz. Provinces in the central and south-east regions - which were the least-affected by the 2018 drought - generally have lower levels of food insecurity, particularly Kapisa, Panjsheer and Ghazni.

**Households have been hit hard by economic shocks**

The SFSA found that economic shocks, rather than natural hazards, have been the primary concern for many households. The Afghanistan economy grew by just 1% in 2018 – its slowest pace since 2001 – which is outpaced by population growth, resulting in a decline in per capita GDP over the past year[1]. Nearly half (47%) of households interviewed as part of this SFSA reported that their income had decreased compared to last year, of which around 60 percent reported reduced employment opportunities as the main reason for their income reduction, followed by conflict (25%). Economic slowdown in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran[2] has meant household earnings from remittances have fallen over the past year, with dramatic

1 World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update, April 2019

2 World Bank, Iran Economic Update, April 2019

reductions seen in provinces in the north and north-east of the country since 2018. Households in these areas rely heavily on rainfed agriculture during the harvest months and seasonal migratory work during the winter months.

**Farmers have been depleted of agricultural assets**

Agriculture is the main livelihood source for nearly half (44 percent) of households in Afghanistan, much of which is rainfed agriculture which is particularly vulnerable to climate shocks. The SFSA found declining levels of livestock ownership due in part to livestock deaths; nearly half (49 percent) of Afghans currently own animals, down from 69 percent observed in 2017. Wheat seed access is a major problem for farmers this year - 42 percent of households said they did not have enough wheat seed for this season and 74 percent said they do not have enough for next season.

**Food insecurity is high in urban areas**

This assessment placed a special focus on urban food insecurity. According to the IPC, nearly a quarter of Afghanistan's food insecure population lives in urban areas, some of which hold particularly severe levels of food insecurity with households consuming very poor diets. This may be due to rising displacement of food insecure households to urban areas, and a lack of available coping mechanisms to deal with shocks. Overall, urban food insecurity is just as bad, or worse, than in rural areas.

**Vulnerable groups are the most affected**

The SFSA 2019 analysis found that certain households are particularly prone to food insecurity, including: households that are displaced; households that lack access to irrigated land; and households where the head-of-household is a woman, a child, someone with a disability, or someone with low education. Households living in hard-to-reach areas, where accessibility constraints may limit access to certain goods and services, also tend to have pockets of greater food insecurity. In general, deprived households with poorer living conditions tend to have higher levels of food insecurity.

**Recommendations**

In order to address Afghanistan's critical food security situation, this report finds the following recommendations:

1. Respond to immediate humanitarian needs and livelihood support for the 10.2 million people in IPC Phase 3 and 4;
2. Target the most vulnerable households, such as IDPs, female-headed households, and those without land access;
3. Prioritise isolated communities who may have limited access to critical goods and services;
4. Engage in long-term resilience building to reduce vulnerability to shocks, including safety net systems;
5. Improve water systems and develop more irrigation systems;
6. Increase support to urban households, such as conditional cash programmes and seasonal assistance.

# Section 1: Introduction

## Context

Despite significant advancements in key areas such as school enrolment and life expectancy over the past 15 years, Afghanistan continuously suffers from high levels of poverty and recurrent food insecurity. A complex and protracted conflict, the effects of climate change, demographic shifts, limited employment opportunities, pervasive gender inequalities and slow progress on inclusive and transparent institutions have constrained and slowed down development efforts in the country. As a result, Afghanistan ranks 168th out of 189 countries in the human development index and has witnessed an increase in the percentage of the population living under the poverty line from 34 percent to 55 percent between 2008 and 2017[3].

Alongside the rise in poverty, Afghanistan also witnessed a rise in food insecurity over the last years, affecting much of the country's population and leading to continuously alarming rates of acute (9.5 percent) and chronic (41 percent) malnutrition among children under 5 years. The drought of 2018 – which was the worst the country has seen in over a decade - reduced the overall harvest to under 50 percent of the normal levels. This prompted widespread adoption of crisis and emergency coping strategies and led to large-scale displacements from rural areas to provincial centers in the west of the country. According to the IPC analysis in 2018, 44 percent of the rural population were estimated to be acutely food insecure (in IPC phases 3 and 4), which translated into 10 million people in need of urgent food assistance.

Since the start of the drought, the food security cluster has been able to support almost 3.3 million of the most vulnerable people in the drought-affected areas with food and livelihood assistance. The assistance was well-received by the beneficiaries and has prevented a further deterioration of the food security situation. However, due to the discrepancy in the number of food insecure and the number of people assisted by the humanitarian community, it can be assumed that the Afghan people have not yet fully recovered from the impact of the drought. Despite good precipitation and a good harvest in 2019, it is very likely that a large share of the population still suffers from depleted livelihoods, a high debt burden and the vulnerabilities that arise from the use of severe coping mechanisms, such as the sale of land or female animals.

With the above situation in mind and therefore the high likelihood of a significant share of the population with persistent humanitarian needs, the food security and agriculture cluster had advocated for conducting a new seasonal food security assessment (SFSA) during this year's harvesting period. This assessment has been carried out in all 34 provinces of the country and has provided a robust dataset for this year's IPC analysis, which took place in September 2019.

This report builds on the findings of the IPC analysis to estimate the number of food insecure people and their geographical distribution (section 1). In the subsequent section, the report uses SFSA data *who* the food insecure households are and what distinguishes them from the food secure, which will help humanitarian agencies with household-level targeting. The final section explains *why* these households have become food insecure, focusing on the livelihoods and income-generating activities. The report

[3] See: Afghanistan Living Conditions Surveys

concludes with recommendations for programmatic interventions in the upcoming lean season. A comprehensive data table is provided in the annex.

## Purpose

The key objectives of the seasonal food security assessment (SFSA) 2019 are to:

I. Assess the food security situation across Afghanistan's 34 provinces and estimate the number, location and characteristics of food insecure households during the post-harvest season.

II. Identify the nature of food insecurity (acute vs. chronic), its underlying causes including shocks, and consequences in terms of household coping mechanisms; and

III. Provide key data to inform Afghanistan's Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), and FSAC response plan (SRP) for 2019 and 2020. The results of the SFSA 2019 will be used for planning purposes by a range of Government ministries (e.g. MAIL), donors, UN agencies and FSAC partners.

# Section 2: How many are food insecure and where are they?

## Overview

Although overall food security in Afghanistan has improved over the past year, many households have not been able to recover from the 2018 drought. This is a consistent finding across all food security indicators as shown in Table 1. About one in five households (21%) are still relying on emergency coping strategies – down from 33 percent in 2018 but much higher than the average of 12 percent observed in 2017.

Nearly a fifth (19%) of households have poor levels of food consumption - that is, a diet primarily of bread, oil and sugar – and 34 percent experienced some levels of hunger in the previous month (see Table One).

*Table One: Trends in Afghanistan food security 2017-19*

| Theme | Indicator | | 2019 | 2018 (rural) | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Household food consumption and dietary diversity** | Food consumption (FCS) | Poor | 19% | 27% | 7% |
| | | Borderline | 40% | 36% | 25% |
| | | Acceptable | 41% | 36% | 69% |
| | Household dietary diversity (HDDS) | 5-12 Food Groups | 83% | 76% | - |
| | | 3-4 Food Groups | 14% | 18% | - |
| | | 0-2 Food Groups | 3% | 6% | - |
| **Coping strategies** | Application of food-based coping strategies (rCSI) | No or Low | 33% | 28% | 59% |
| | | Medium | 59% | 34% | 27% |
| | | High Coping | 8% | 39% | 14% |
| **Hunger and food stress** | Application of livelihood-based coping strategies (LCS) | Emergency strategies | 21% | 33% | 12% |
| | | Crisis strategies | 27% | 33% | 11% |
| | | Stress strategies | 30% | 12% | 13% |
| | | Sustainable or no strategies | 22% | 22% | 64% |
| | Levels of hunger over the previous 30 days (HHS) | None | 66% | 52% | - |
| | | Slight | 10% | 17% | - |
| | | Moderate | 22% | 29% | - |
| | | Severe | 2% | 2% | - |
| | | Very severe | 0% | 0% | - |

## Population of food insecure

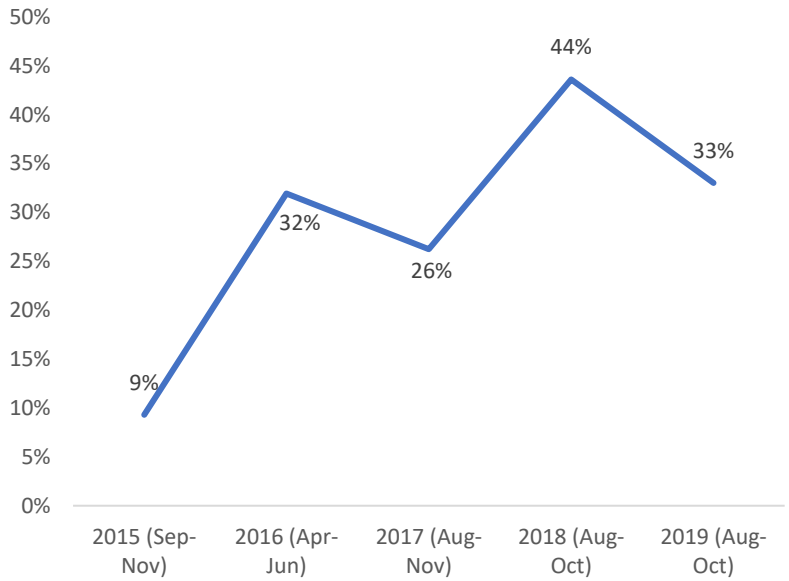
The **Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)** is a set of tools and procedures to classify the severity of acute food insecurity at national and sub-national levels. The IPC uses international standards that allow comparability of food security situations across countries and over time. The main data source of the Afghanistan IPC conducted in September 2019 was the SFSA, which collected all key food security indicators and covered all 34 of Afghanistan's provinces. The final figures are based on consensus through a joint process between key stakeholders.

The IPC estimates that, between a reference period of August and October 2019, a total of 10.2 million people (33 percent of the total population) are in severe acute food insecurity and require urgent humanitarian action. These include around 7.8 million people in a crisis situation (IPC Phase 3) and 2.5 million people in an emergency situation (IPC Phase 4).

This represents an improvement in food security over the past year, with the share of food insecure falling by 11 percentage points from 44 percent seen at the onset of the drought during the same reference period in 2018 (Chart 1)[4]. However, this is still substantially higher than the prevalence of 26 percent seen in 2017 and substantially higher than 9 percent seen in 2015.

The 2016 SFSA and IPC was conducted during the pre-harvest season (April-June), which would lead to a higher estimate of food insecurity compared to IPC conducted during the post-harvest season (Aug-Oct), as was done in the other years.

*Chart 1: Share of Afghanistan's population in IPC Phase 3 and 4 (2015 - 2019)*




[4] It should be noted that the 2018 analysis only took into account rural population of the country, whereas the 2019 analysis includes the total population of Afghanistan.

## Food insecurity by province

Food insecurity is not spread evenly across Afghanistan. Map One below highlights that two provinces - Uruzgan and Nuristan - are classified in IPC Phase 4, signalling a high prevalence of households facing severe food insecurity. Looking at Chart Two, other highly food insecure provinces include Ghor, Badghis, Badakhshan, Daykundi, and Nimroz (all with the share of population in IPC phase 3 or 4 above 50 percent).

*Map 1: IPC classifications by province*

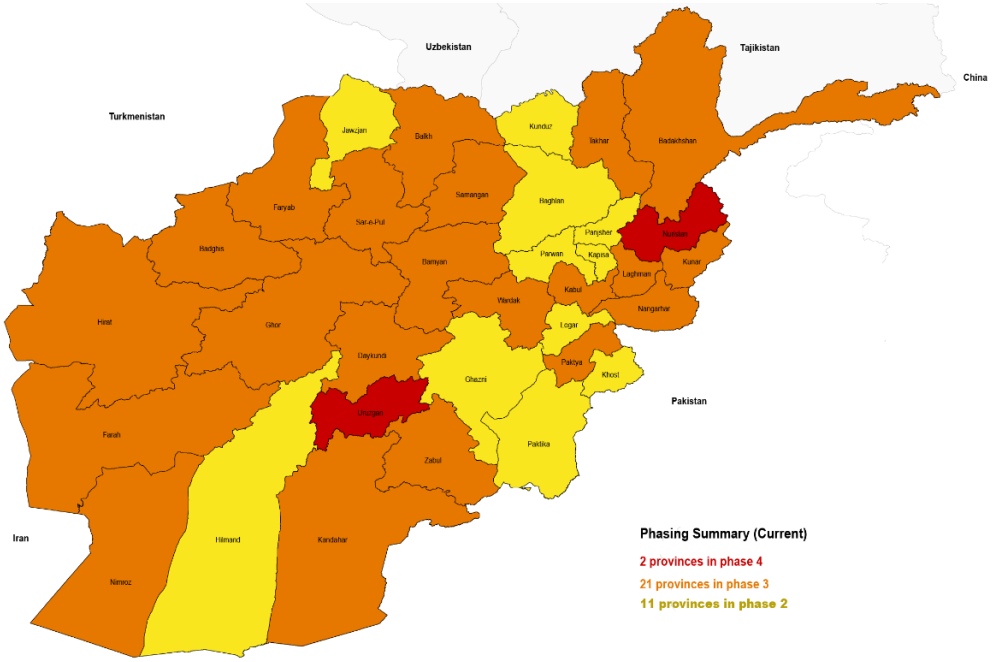
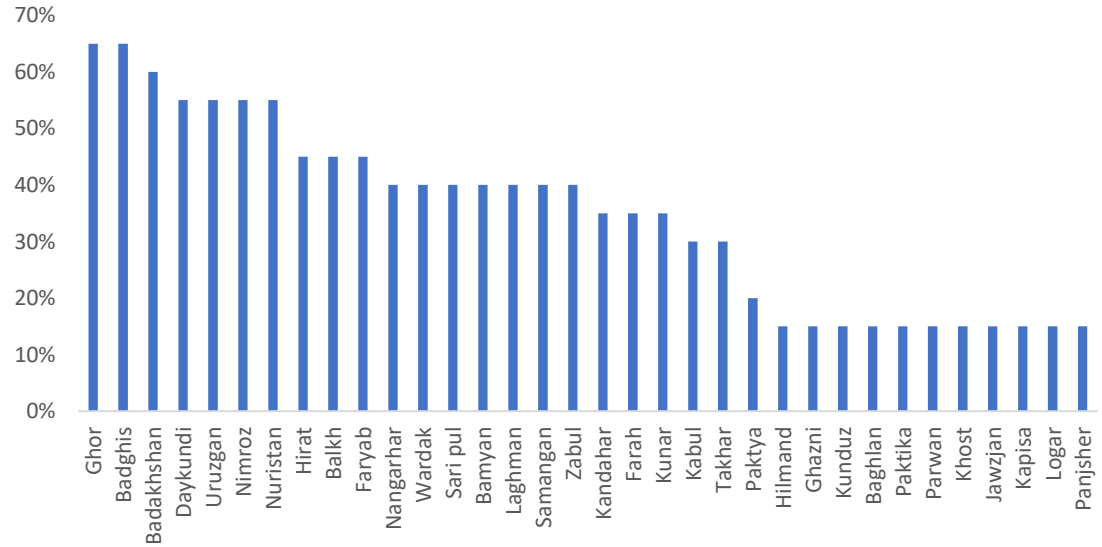
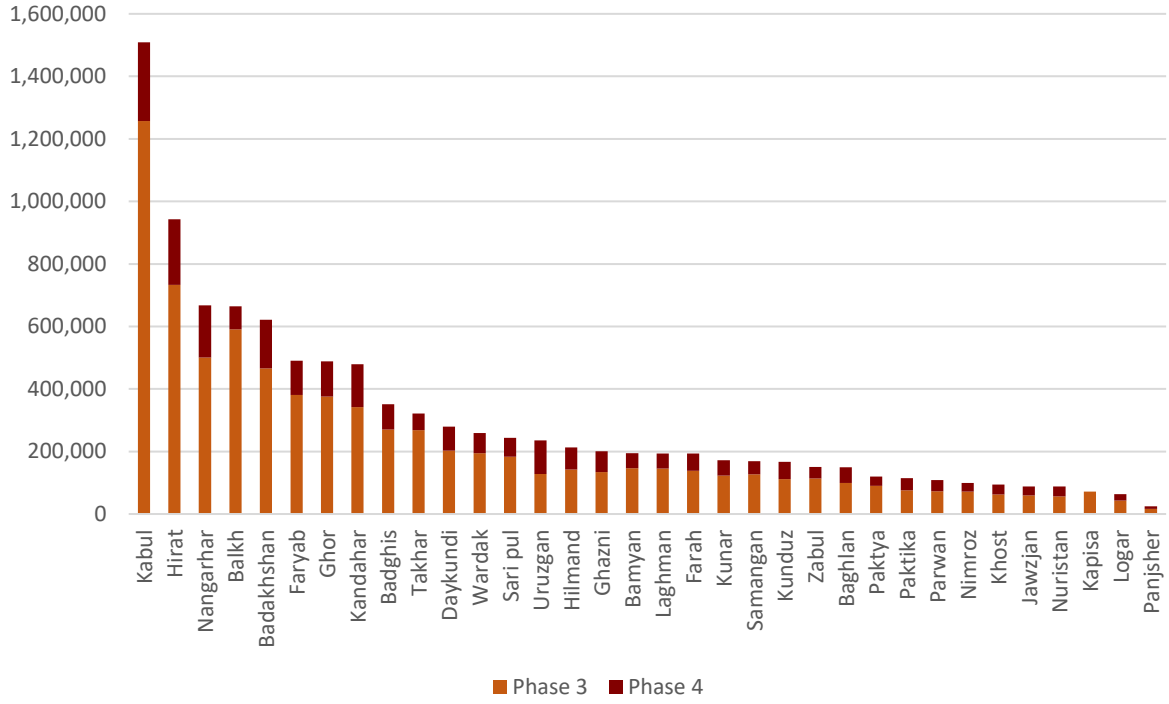



*Chart 2: Share of food insecure population by province (IPC phase 3 + 4)*



However, Chart 3 below provides a clearer overview of *where* Afghanistan's food insecure population is. It shows that Kabul province alone accounts for 15 percent of the food insecure population in the country. Other provinces with high absolute numbers of food insecure include Herat (9%), Nangarhar (7%), Balkh (6%) and Badakhshan (6%).

*Chart 3: Population of food insecure by province (IPC phase 3 + 4)*




## Dimensions of food security

The SFSA surveyed five key indicators related to household food security: Food consumption score (FCS), livelihood coping strategies (LHC), reduced coping strategy index (rCSI), household hunger scale (HHS) and household dietary diversity score (HDDS). Analysis of these indicators are given in the sections below, while Table Two gives an overview of indicators by province.

Table two indicates that provinces in the central and south-east regions - which were the least-affected by the 2018 drought - generally have better levels of food security, particularly Kapisa, Panjsheer and Ghazni.

Many provinces throughout the rest of the country show alarmingly high figures across the five food security indicators measured by SFSA, particularly in the most drought-affected areas of the west (Ghor, Badghis), south-west (Nimroz, Urozgan), central highlands (Daykundi) and north-east (Badakhshan, Nooristan).

*Table 2: Indicators of household food security by province*

| Region | Province | Households with **poor** food consumption (%) | Households engaging in **emergency** coping strategies (%) | Households engaging in **high** consumption-based coping strategies (%) | Households experiencing **severe** hunger (%) | Households with **low** dietary diversity (4 food groups or less) (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Central | Kabul | 14% | 9% | 28% | 2% | 4% |
| | Kapisa | 2% | 3% | 13% | 0.2% | 1% |
| | Parwan | 5% | 17% | 24% | 0.2% | 0% |
| | Maidan Wardak | 30% | 41% | 41% | 0.4% | 4% |
| | Logar | 1% | 25% | 18% | 1% | 2% |
| | Panjsher | 2% | 3% | 7% | 0.0% | 0% |
| | Ghazni | 3% | 14% | 5% | 0.0% | 0% |
| Central Highland | Bamyan | 39% | 18% | 24% | 0.2% | 2% |
| | Daykundi | 33% | 32% | 69% | 2% | 16% |
| South-East | Paktika | 8% | 20% | 17% | 0.0% | 1% |
| | Paktya | 4% | 28% | 43% | 5% | 5% |
| | Khost | 3% | 35% | 43% | 1% | 1% |
| South-West | Urozgan | 35% | 37% | 57% | 13% | 14% |
| | Zabul | 5% | 35% | 52% | 0.0% | 0% |
| | Kandahar | 15% | 34% | 50% | 12% | 15% |
| | Helmand | 15% | 39% | 66% | 0.4% | 4% |
| | Nimroz | 34% | 48% | 65% | 19% | 37% |
| West | Ghor | 44% | 40% | 51% | 5% | 10% |
| | Badghis | 45% | 44% | 63% | 4% | 8% |
| | Herat | 12% | 28% | 28% | 1% | 3% |
| | Farah | 21% | 29% | 37% | 2% | 3% |
| North | Samangan | 30% | 11% | 43% | 2% | 4% |
| | Balkh | 26% | 14% | 27% | 3% | 7% |
| | Sar-e-Pul | 48% | 23% | 41% | 4% | 11% |
| | Jawzjan | 13% | 13% | 36% | 2% | 3% |
| | Faryab | 15% | 28% | 44% | 5% | 8% |
| North-East | Baghlan | 13% | 13% | 17% | 0.3% | 1% |
| | Badakhshan | 50% | 18% | 56% | 2% | 8% |
| | Takhar | 29% | 13% | 20% | 1% | 6% |
| | Kunduz | 15% | 26% | 25% | 1% | 5% |
| East | Nangarhar | 19% | 16% | 50% | 1% | 3% |
| | Kunarha | 4% | 14% | 49% | 1% | 7% |
| | Nooristan | 38% | 47% | 58% | 15% | 18% |

*Note: The cell shading indicates the lowest 5 (green) and and highest 10 (red) figures for each indicator.*

## Food consumption and dietary diversity

The **Food Consumption Score (FCS)** is a composite indicator based on dietary diversity, food frequency, and the relative nutritional importance of the different food groups consumed over a seven-day recall period. Higher FCS is associated with higher energy intake and nutritional adequacy[5]. **Household Diet Diversity Score (HDDS)** is a proxy indicator for household nutrient intake based on a 24-hour recall period across 12 food groups[6].

Many households in Afghanistan are struggling to meet their basic food needs. One in five households (19 percent) consume a poor diet of low nutrient and caloric value, up from 7 percent seen during the pre-drought levels in 2017. The share of households with poor food consumption reaches more than 40 percent in Badakhshan, Sar-e-Pul, Badghis and Ghor.

*Map 2: Share of households with poor food consumption, by province*

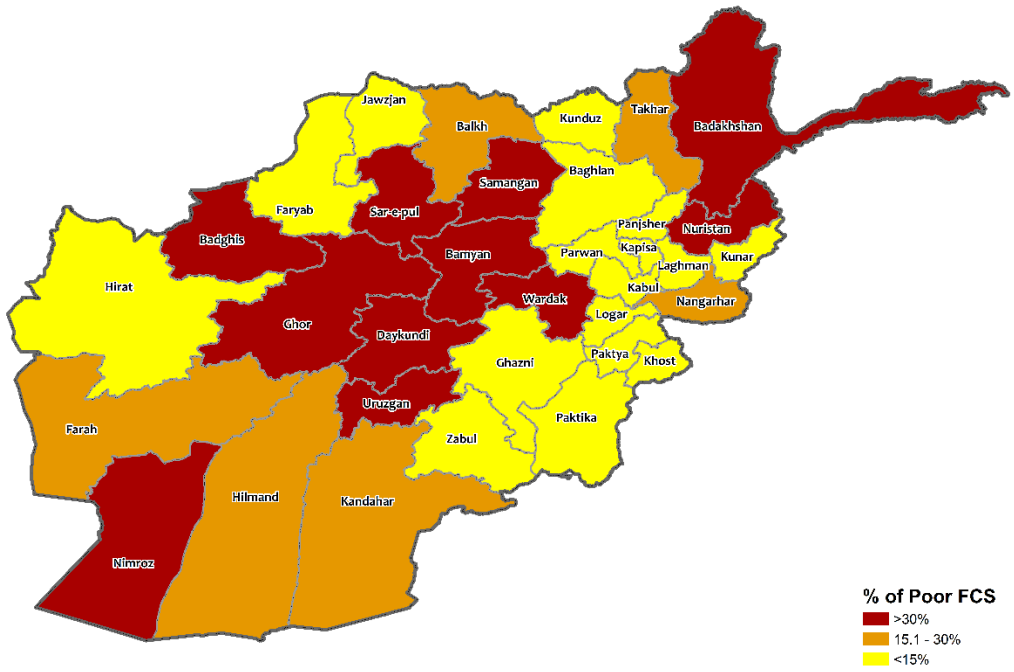
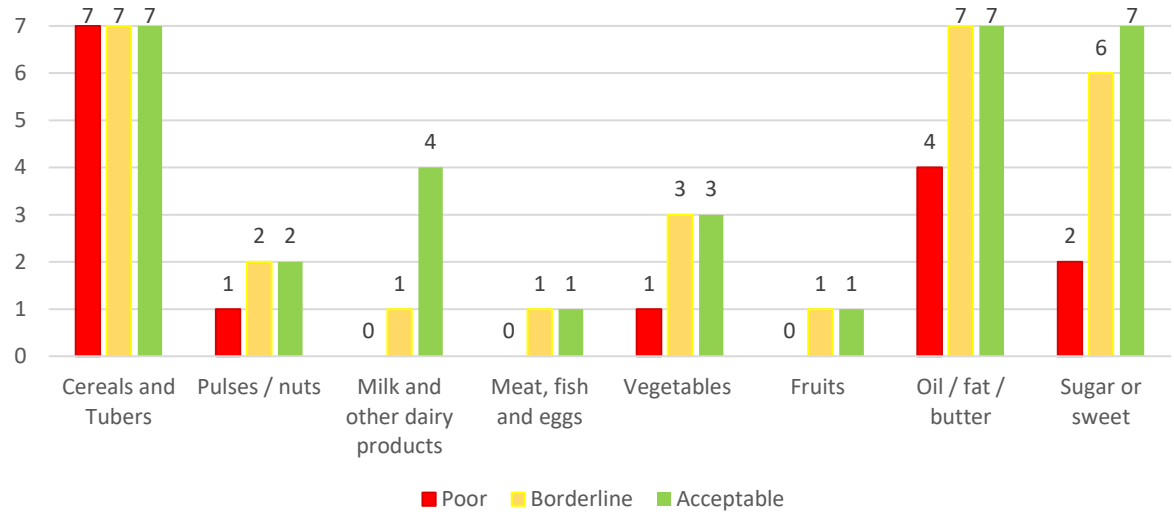



Chart 4 shows that households in Afghanistan with poor food consumption typically eat a low-varied diet of cereals every day of the week, oil 4 days a week, sugar twice a week, and pulses and vegetables each once a week. Even households with "acceptable" diets have low consumption of foods like fruits, eggs and flesh foods, which are consumed an average of just once per week.

5 Reference FCS validation here

6 Cite FAO 2010 guidelines

*Chart 4: Median days of consumption per week*




## Livelihood Coping Strategies

Households in Afghanistan are still struggling to cope with poor food access, even as agricultural conditions improve. Nearly half of Afghan households are relying on either crisis or emergency livelihood coping strategies in order to meet their basic food needs. This is lower than the levels seen during the previous drought of 2018, but still much higher than 2017 or 2016 (see Table One above).

Table 3 below gives an overview of the different coping strategies adopted by households in order to meet their basic food needs. One out of every two households said they had to borrow food during the previous 30 days, and a fifth of households said they were forced to decrease expenditure on investments like health, education and agricultural inputs. In provinces like Badghis, Kandahar and Khost, over a quarter of households said they had resorted to begging.

Some households have already exhausted even their most extreme coping strategies. In Nimroz, for example, nearly a third of households said they had already sold their house or land over the past year in order to buy food and therefore have nothing left to sell. Nimroz also has the highest levels of severe hunger across the country (19 percent), meaning household members are regularly not eating meals and going hungry because there is not enough food (*see next section on food stress*).

Such desperation in fragile contexts can have disastrous consequences. In highly food insecure provinces like Badghis and Nooristan, for example, over a fifth of households said they had worked for armed factions during the past month because of lack of food, and a quarter said they were forced to marry off their daughter at a young age. In provinces like Helmand and Badghis, more than 10 percent of households said they engaged in criminal activities in order to buy food.

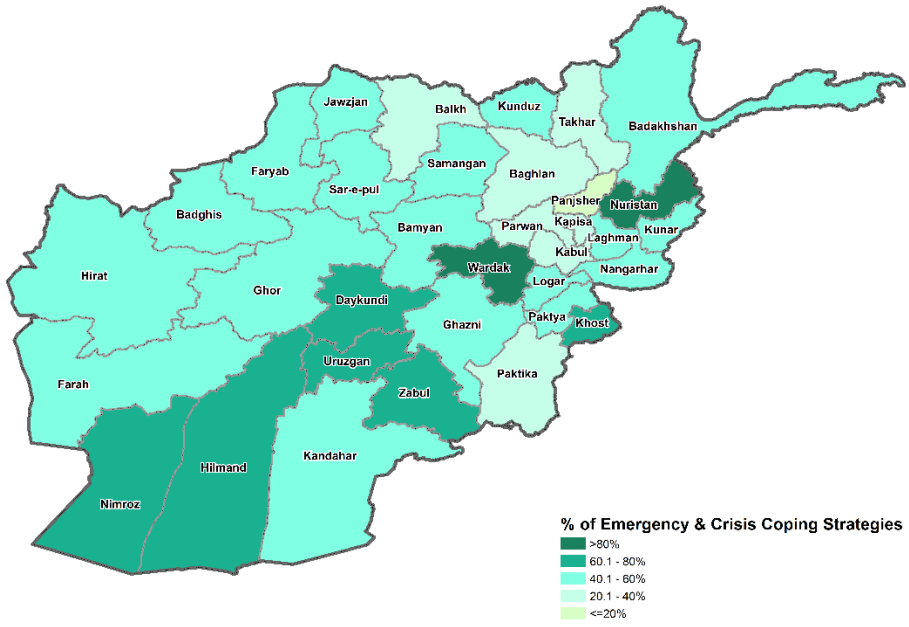
Food shortages are also driving Afghan households into debt. Around two thirds of households said they had borrowed money in the past 3 months, most of whom said their primary reason for borrowing money was to pay for food (65 percent), or to cover other needs like health costs (19 percent), ceremonies (5 percent) or rent (1.5 percent). These households generally have poorer food consumption, higher levels of coping strategies and higher food stress.

A small number of respondents (about 6 percent) said their primary purpose was to invest in agricultural inputs or business. These households generally have much better food security across all indicators.

*Table 3: Livelihood coping strategies adopted in the previous 30 days*

| Severity | Coping strategy | Prevalence |
|---|---|---|
| Neutral | Increased daily labour (increase number of days, increase number of working hours) | 48% |
| | Migrated to look for work | 23% |
| | Increased collection and sale of natural resources | 18% |
| Stress | Borrow food or money for food | 51% |
| | Spent savings | 43% |
| | Sold more animals than usual or earlier than usual | 19% |
| | Sold household assets (appliances, furniture, doors, windows, roof beams) | 11% |
| Crisis | Decreased expenditures on health, education, etc. | 22% |
| | Decreased expenditure on fertilizer, pesticide, fodder, animal feed, veterinary care, etc. | 19% |
| | Sold income generating equipment | 12% |
| Emergency | Begging/Rely on Charity | 7% |
| | Sold Last female animals | 6% |
| | Sold house or land | 4% |

*Map 3: Share of households resorting to emergency or crisis coping strategies*

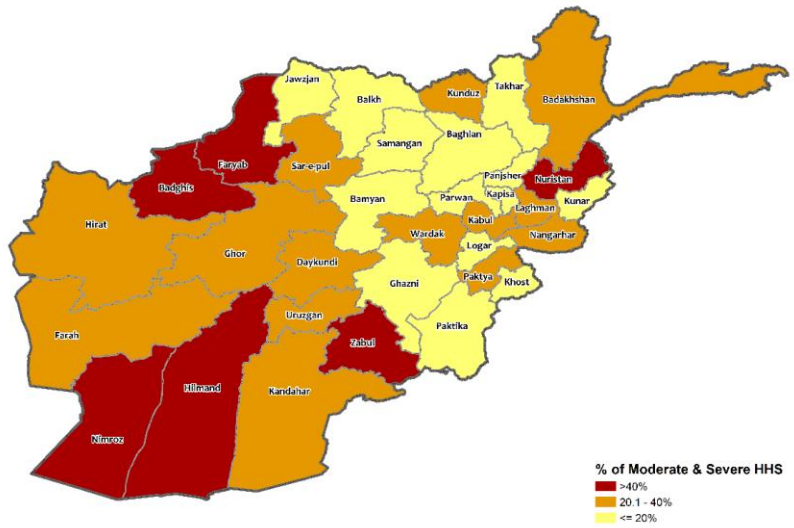


## Household hunger and food stress

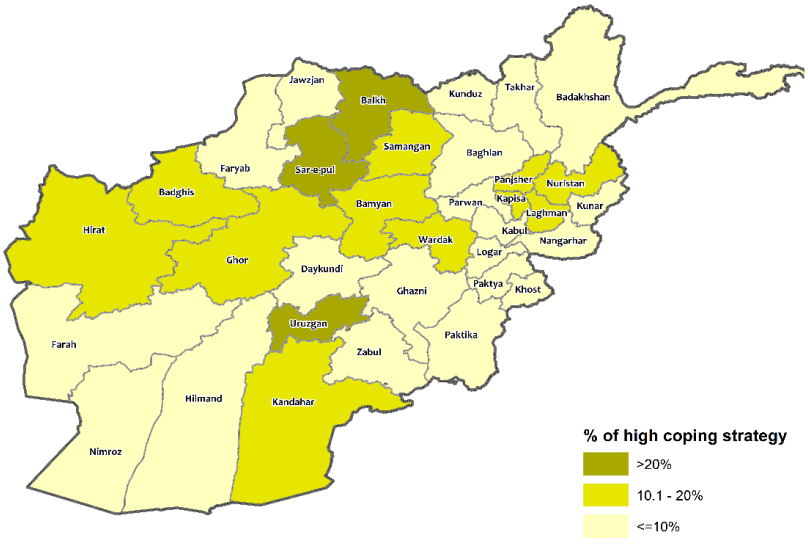
The **Household Hunger Scale (HHS)** is a perception-based method of assessing food insecurity. It is a household level indicator and involves three occurrence questions over a 4-week recall period that focus on the food quantity dimension of food access and does not measure dietary quality. The **Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)** is a proxy indicator for household food stress. Households are asked if they applied any of five food-based coping strategies when they did not have enough food or money to buy food.

Overall, 34 percent of the households in Afghanistan had experienced some sort of hunger in the 30 days prior to the survey, and of them 2 percent experienced severe hunger. Levels of severe hunger were particularly high in Nimroz (19 percent), Nooristan (15 percent), Uruzgan (12 percent) and Kandahar (12 percent). The maps below indicate the provinces where households are faced with immediate food stress.

*Map 4: Share of households experiencing moderate or severe hunger, by province*




*Map 5: Share of households engaging in high consumption-based coping strategies, by province*

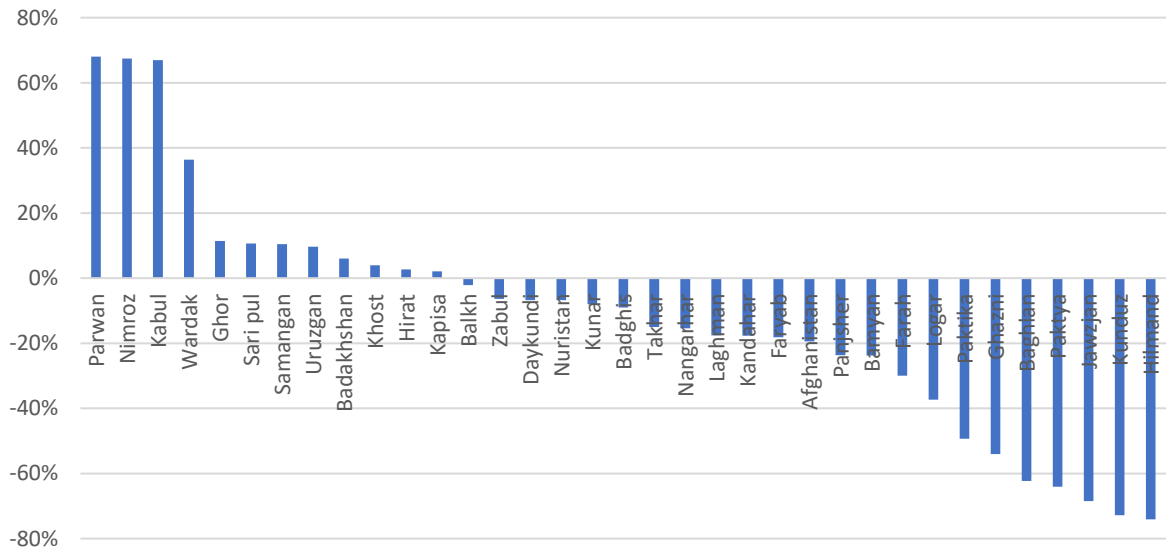


## How has Afghanistan recovered since the 2018-19 drought?

Although overall food security has improved in Afghanistan compared to 2018, this has not been felt across the whole country. The prevalence of food insecurity actually rose in 7 provinces between 2018 and 2019, and in 6 provinces food insecurity levels remained unchanged. As a result, 12 out of Afghanistan's 34 provinces have experienced an increase in the total number of food insecure since 2018 (chart 5). These include some of the worst-hit provinces from the 2018 drought, such as Badakhshan and Ghor, which are still experiencing rising food insecurity. Other highly drought-affected provinces, like Badghis, Nooristan and Daykundi, have only improved modestly, with the number of food insecure falling by less than 10 percent over the past year.

Parwan, Wardak and Kabul - provinces which are historically relatively food secure - have seen particularly large increases in the number of food insecure. Nimroz has also seen a particularly large increase in food insecurity over the past year (+60 percent), with nearly half of households resorting to emergency coping strategies - the highest level in the country - and a third consuming a poor diet.

*Chart 5: 2018-2019 percent change in population of food insecure Afghans (IPC phase 3+), by province (rural only)*

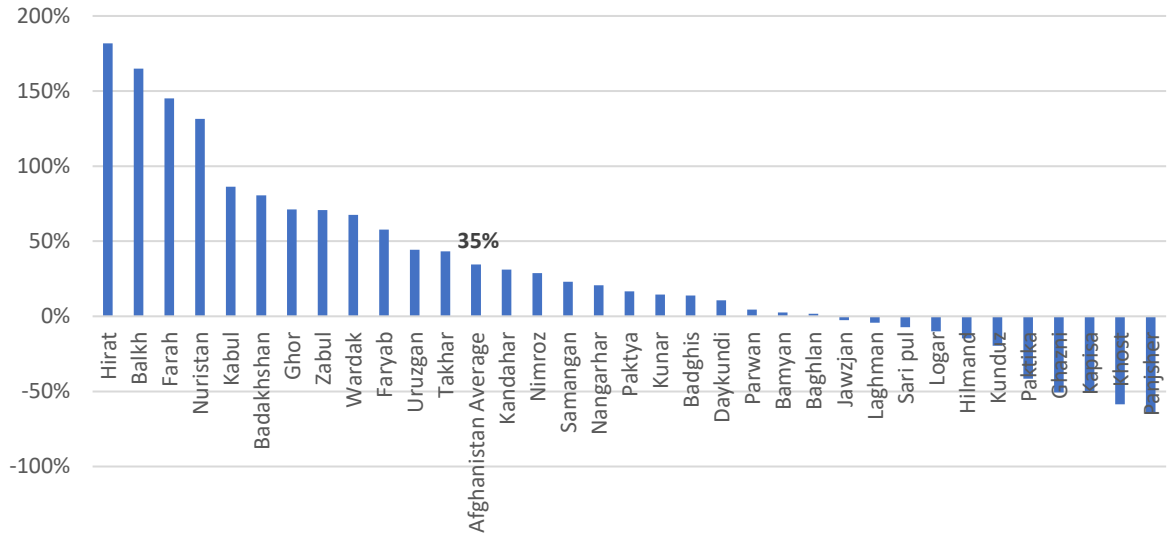



## How does the current situation compare to pre-drought levels?

Afghanistan's food security situation has not returned to pre-drought levels. Compared to 2017, there are an additional 2.6 million food insecure people living in Afghanistan, an increase of 35 percent. In provinces like Herat, Balkh, Farah and Nuristan, the number of food insecure people has more than doubled since 2017 (Chart 6), indicating the severe and persistent impact of the drought and the fact that the population has not yet returned to pre-drought levels of food insecurity.

However, some of the central and south-eastern provinces, which were the least affected by the 2018 drought, have seen a large reduction in food insecurity since 2017. For example, the number of food insecure people have fallen by more than half in Panjsher, Khost, Kapisa and Ghazni, which are all provinces that have not been affected by the drought, again indicating that it is mostly the drought-affected parts of the country have not yet recovered.

*Chart 6: 2017-2019 percentage change in total number of food insecure Afghans (IPC phase 3+)*




# Section 3: Who are the food insecure?

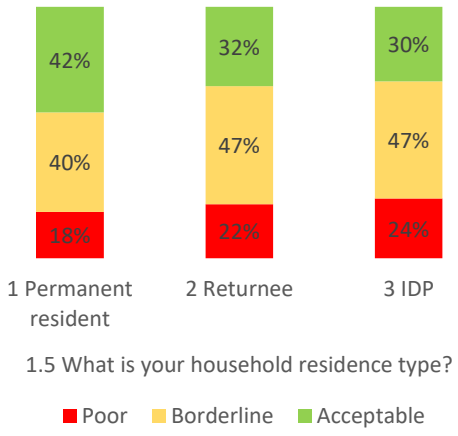
## Resident status: Residents, IDPs and returnees

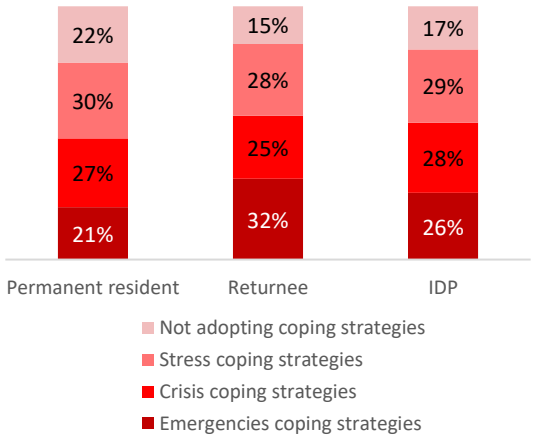
The results of the SFSA show 2.6 percent of households are returnees and 4.8 percent are IDPs. Compared to permanent residents, IDPs and returnees are more likely to live in cities, less likely to own their own property, and more likely to live in temporary shelter.

Returnees have the highest levels of emergency coping strategies (32 percent), compared to IDPs (26 percent) and residents (21 percent). IDPs and returnees are also twice as likely to have experienced severe hunger in the past 30 day (both 4.5 percent) compared to residents (2 percent).

IDPs are even worse off in rural areas - 38 percent of rural IDP families are resorting to emergency coping strategies, compared to 27 percent in urban areas.

*Chart 7: Food consumption score and coping strategies by residency type*

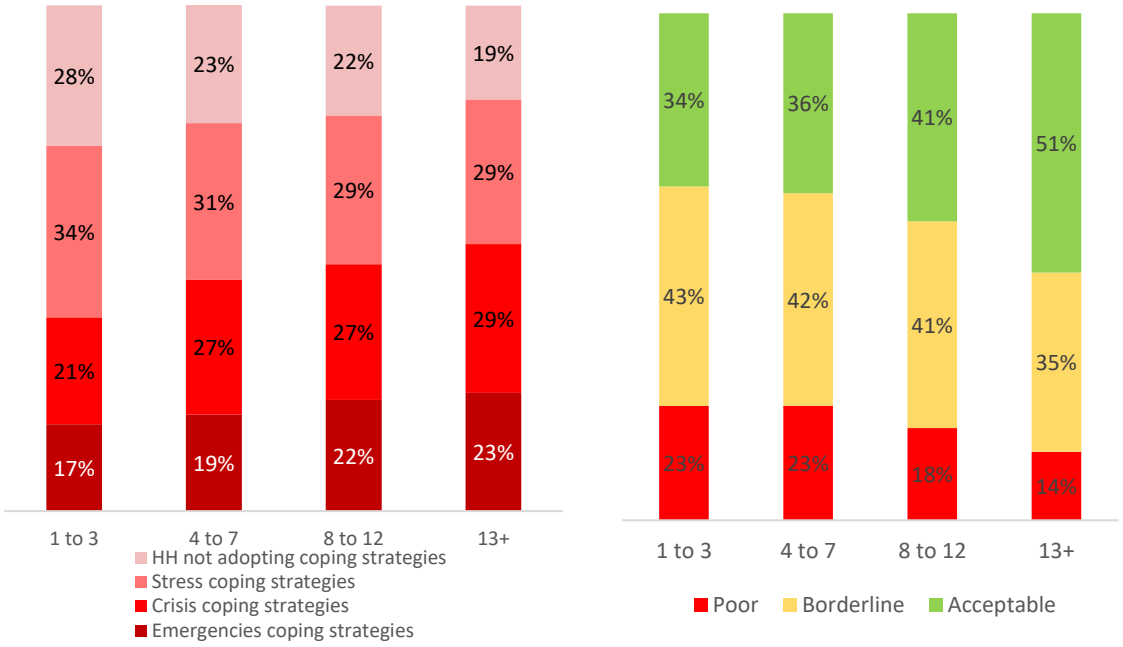


## Household composition

Larger households are progressively associated with better levels of food consumption (chart 8). However, larger households also report higher levels of coping strategies – both livelihood-based and consumption-based. While coping and consumption are very well associated in general, this finding is counterintuitive and merits further analysis in future. The result may be due to larger household having a greater capacity to engage in coping strategies (such as sending a household member to go begging or taking children out of school) and other means of ensuring a consistently better level of food consumption.

*Chart 8: Food security and household size*




## Characteristics of household members

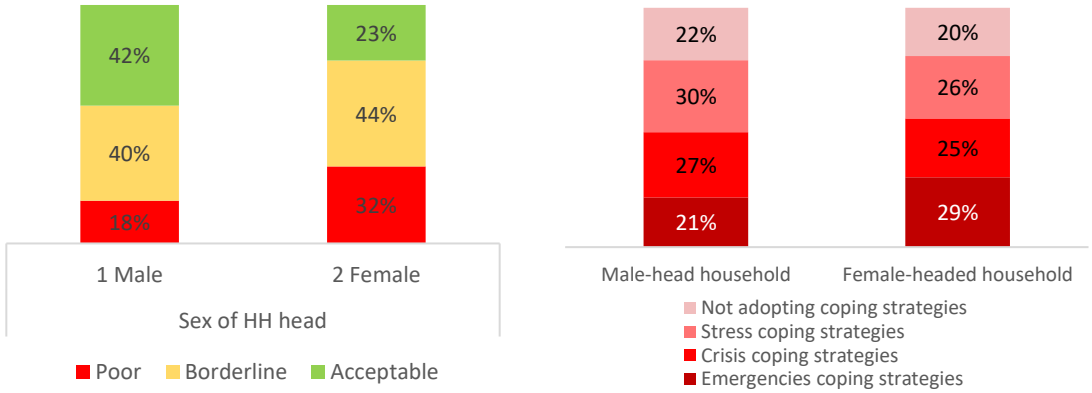
### Sex of household head

According to the SFSA, six percent of households are headed by women, which tend to have poorer food security than male-headed households - 32 percent of female-headed households have poor food consumption, compared to 18 percent for male-headed households.

Female-headed households are also more likely to rely on emergency coping strategies (34 percent) compared to male-headed households (25 percent). For example, female-headed households are twice as likely to beg/rely on charity (18 percent compared to 7 percent for male-headed households). Female-headed households are also more likely to have experienced a shock in the previous six months (65 percent) compared to male-headed households (60 percent).

This can be compounded by other factors. For instance, female-headed households in urban area actually have a worse FCS than in rural (*see urban section*).

*Chart 9: Food consumption score and coping strategies by sex of household head*




## Disability

Households that are headed by someone who is disabled generally have poorer food consumption and higher levels of emergency coping strategies. Households with at least one member who has a disability also rely more on emergency coping strategies.

*Chart 10: Disability and livelihood coping strategies*

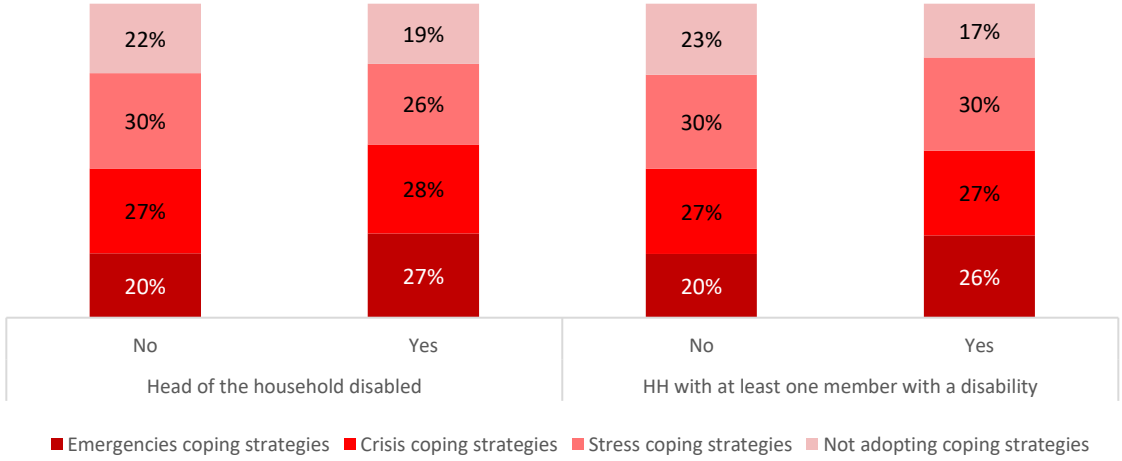
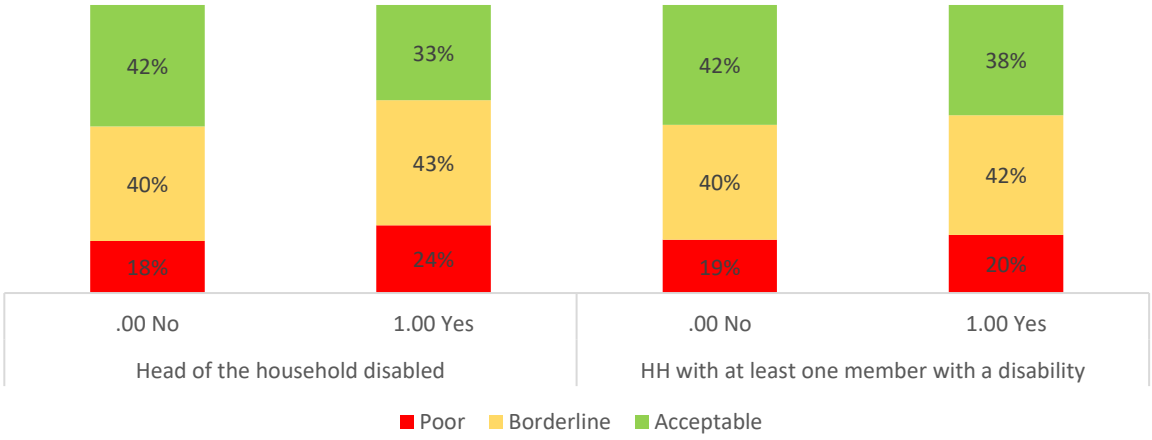


*Chart 11: Disability and food consumption*

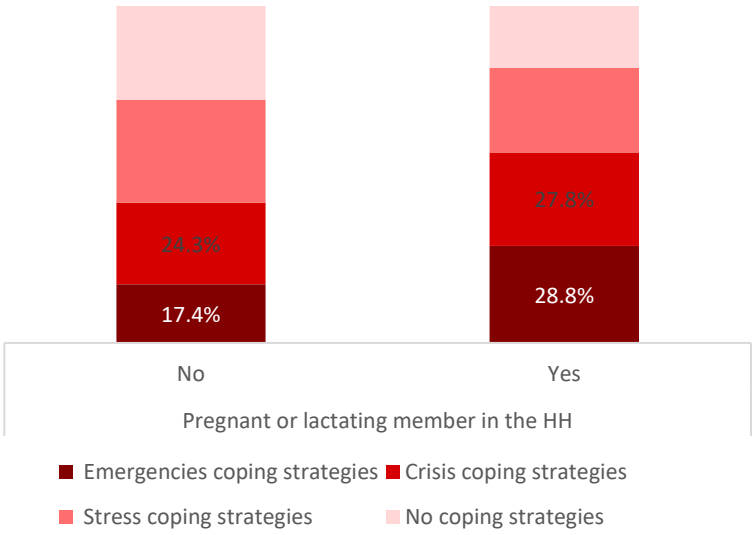



## Pregnant and lactating women

The food consumption of households that had pregnant or lactating women was similar to the ones without this vulnerable population nevertheless their dietary needs would have expected to be higher access to nutritious food to the whole household. Which means that their dietary needs might not have been met or it was met at individual level consumption.

SFSA data showed also that the presence of pregnant or lactating women in the household was associated with higher use of emergency and crisis coping strategies in order to meet the dietary needs. These households also used reduced coping strategies at higher rates than the households without pregnant or lactating women, indicating heightened needs and levels of vulnerability.

*Chart 12: PLW and household coping strategies*



## Education

Higher levels of education progressively associate with lower exposure to shocks, lower reliance on negative coping strategies, and better food consumption. However, there is an exception - those educated at Islamic schools have the highest reported shocks (72%) as well as very high coping and poor consumption (chart 13).

*Chart 13: Food consumption by household head education*

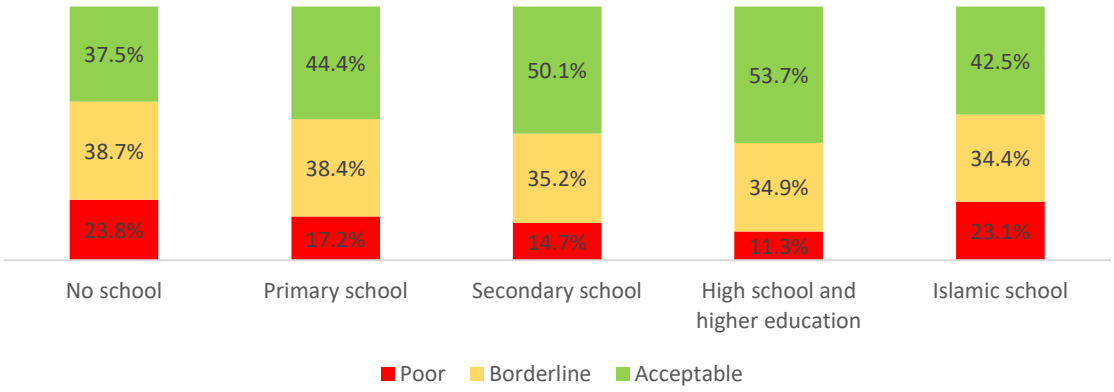
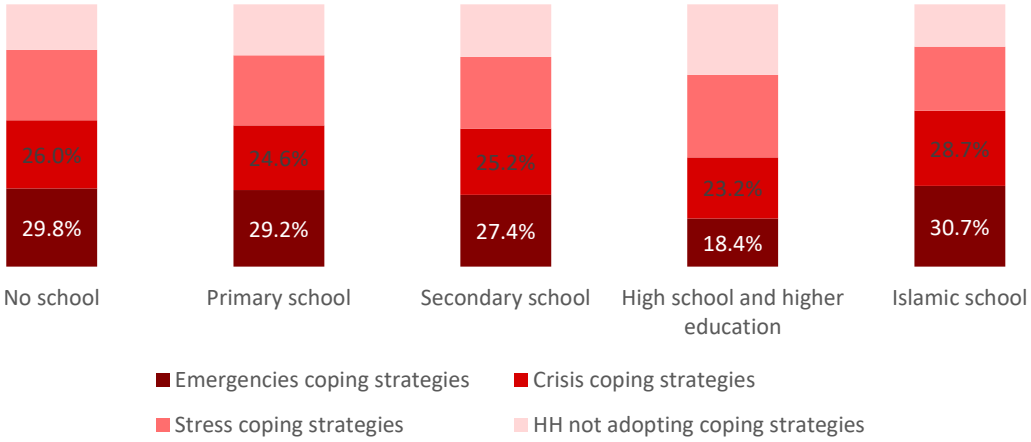



*Chart 14: Livelihood coping strategy by education of household head*




## Land Ownership

In rural Afghanistan, 38 percent of households do not own or have access to agriculture land. These households generally have poor diets and higher levels of food stress - 67 percent have medium or high levels of consumption-based coping strategies and 24 percent have poor food consumption, compared to 46 percent and 17 percent for those who have access to agricultural land, respectively. However, they have similar levels of livelihood coping strategies - around 40 percent are using crisis or emergency coping strategies in both cases.

While landowners generally earn their income through the sale of agricultural outputs, those who do not have access to land support themselves through wage labour and small trade (chart 16).

In rural areas, 82 percent of households with access to agricultural land also own animals, compared to 34 percent who do not have access.

*Chart 15: Agricultural land ownership or access of respondent or his/her household and food consumption score*

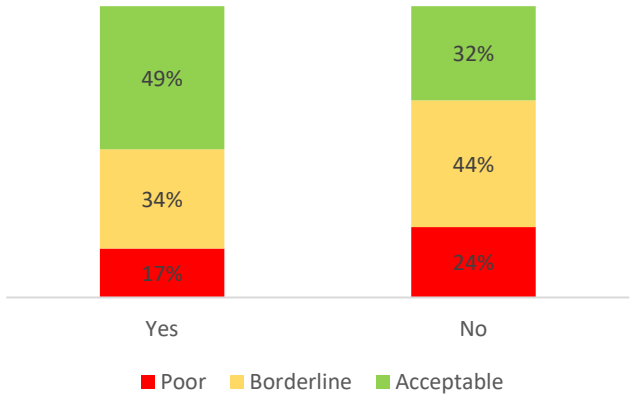
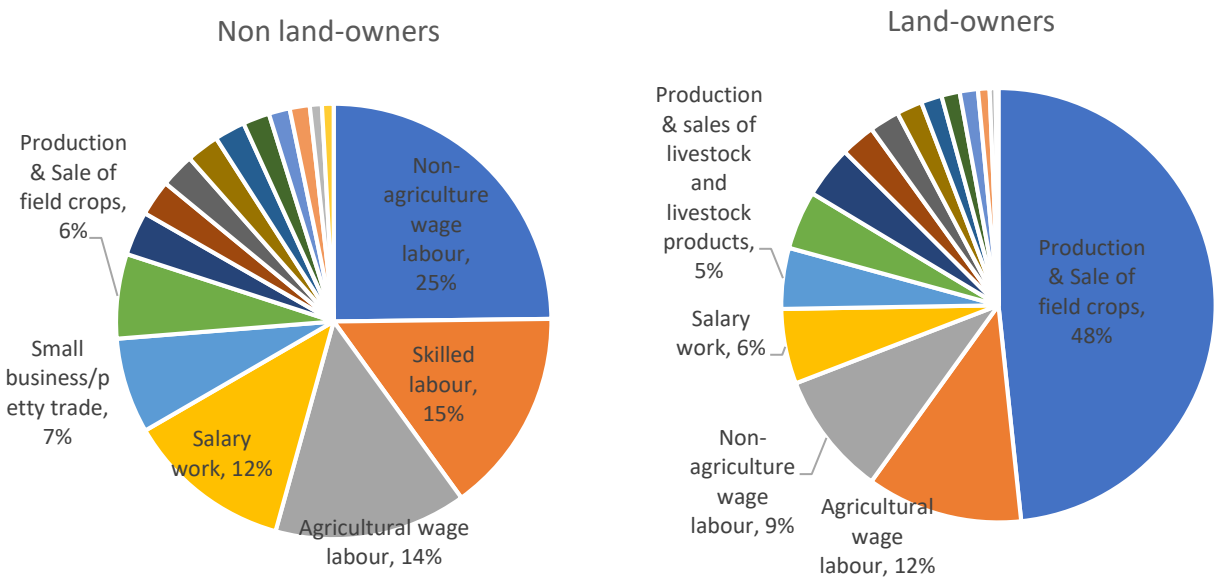



*Chart 16: Primary income source for owner's vs non-owners of agricultural land in rural Afghanistan*



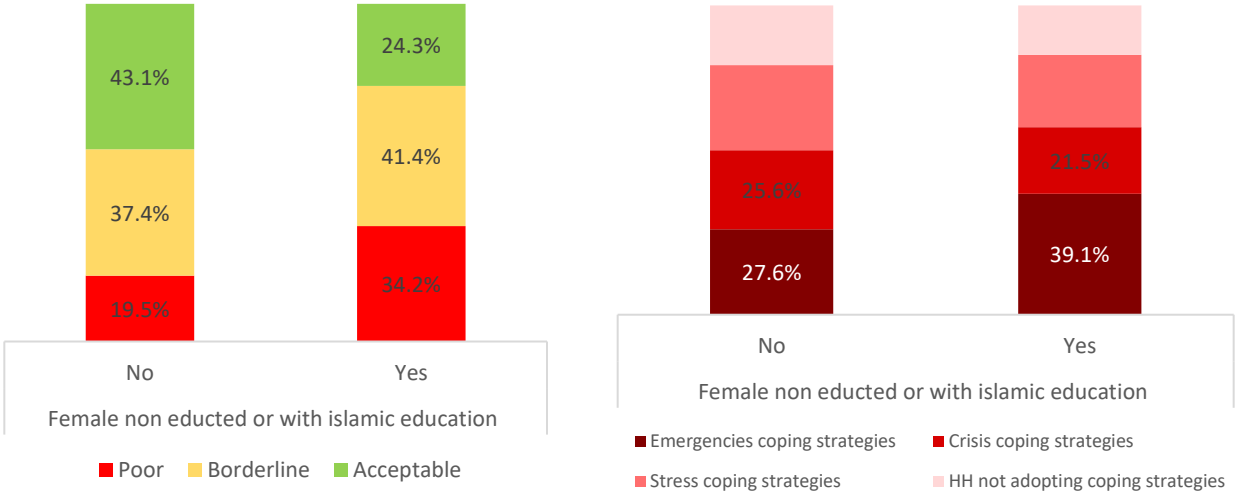

## Conclusions and implications for targeting

From the correlation analysis of the food security indicators and above-mentioned characteristics, all the reported correlations were significantly associated with one or more food security indicators. However, the above analysis was not enough to highlight what are the key combination or overlap of characteristics

that could identify the most food insecure households. To identify these characteristics a regression analysis was conducted.

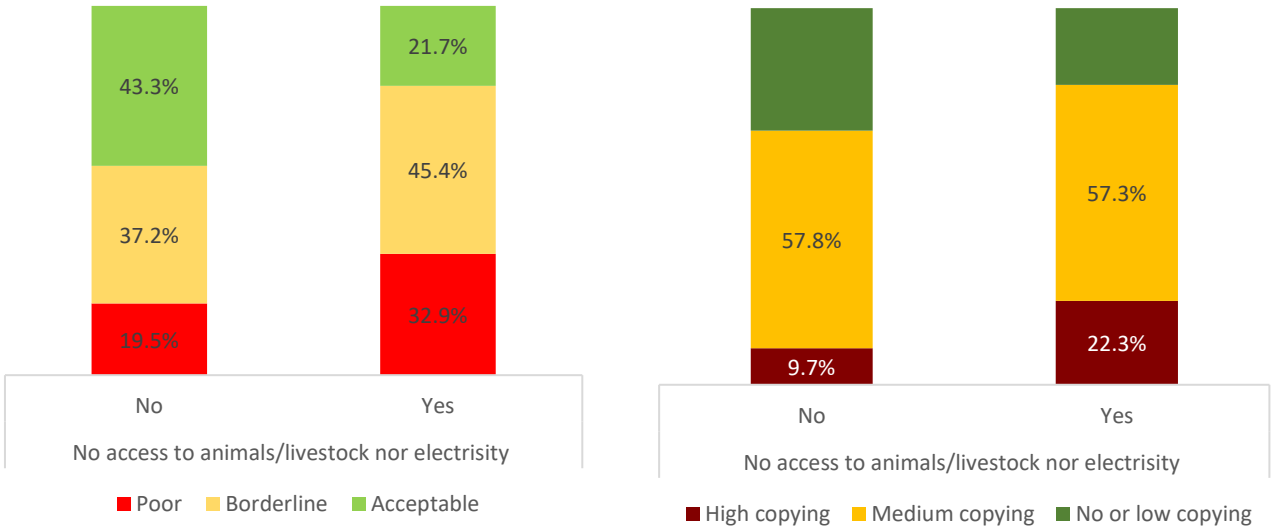
The regression analysis showed that regardless of the geographical location of the household or its wealth level the sex of the household head and the education level have the highest correlation with food insecurity.

*Chart 17: Education and sex of household head*




Living conditions especially access of the household to electricity and ownership of land were also found to highly associated with food insecurity regardless of the geographical location no the wealth status of the household.

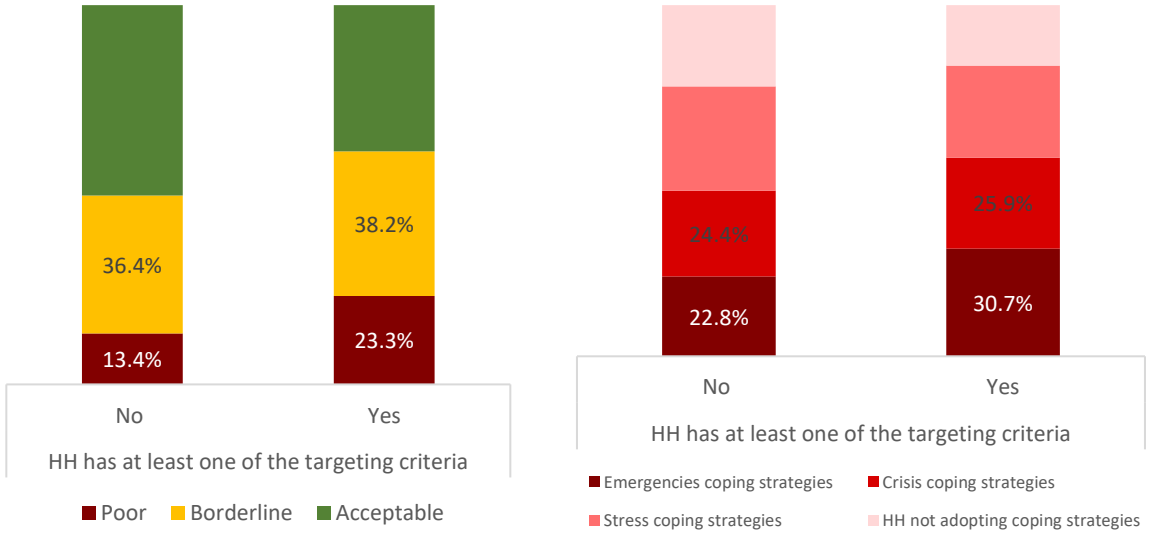
*Chart 18: Animal ownership and living conditions*



The regression analysis also showed that having any of these characteristics in the household is associated with low food consumption and high coping strategies regardless of the geographical location and the wealth status of the household.

Testing the targeting criteria together showed that having any of the targeting criteria that include (Resident status IDP or returnee, female HH head, child-headed HHs, household head disabled, Living in temporary shelter or camps, no or Islamic education of HH head) showed that having any of these criteria is associated with lower food consumption score and higher use of coping strategies.

*Chart 19: Multiple targeting criteria*




## Special focus: Urban food insecurity

**Key findings:**

Nearly **one in four** food insecure Afghans are living in **urban areas**

Households living in **cities are generally no better off** than household living in rural areas in terms of indicators related to food security

There is **considerable regional variation**, whereby there is a clear urban advantage in some provinces but a clear urban disadvantage in others.

Out of the 10.2 million food insecure people in Afghanistan, 2.3 million live in urban areas[7]. This indicates that urban dwellers are not more food secure than those in rural areas – people living in urban areas represent 21 percent of the country, and 23 percent of the country's food insecure population.

Charts 20 and 21 below show that there is a high level of variation between cities in terms of food security. For example, the share of urban households with poor food consumption ranges from as high as 50

7 The SFSA surveyed households in urban areas across 11 provinces. These provinces were Baghlan, Balkh, Faryab, Helmand, Herat, Jawzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Takhar. Together, these provinces hold 93 percent of Afghanistan's total urban population.

percent in Maymana to just 5 percent in Herat. Similarly, the share of households engaged in emergency coping strategies is 40 percent in Pul-i-Khumri compared to 6 percent in Nangahar.

*Chart 20: Food consumption score across 11 largest urban centres in Afghanistan*

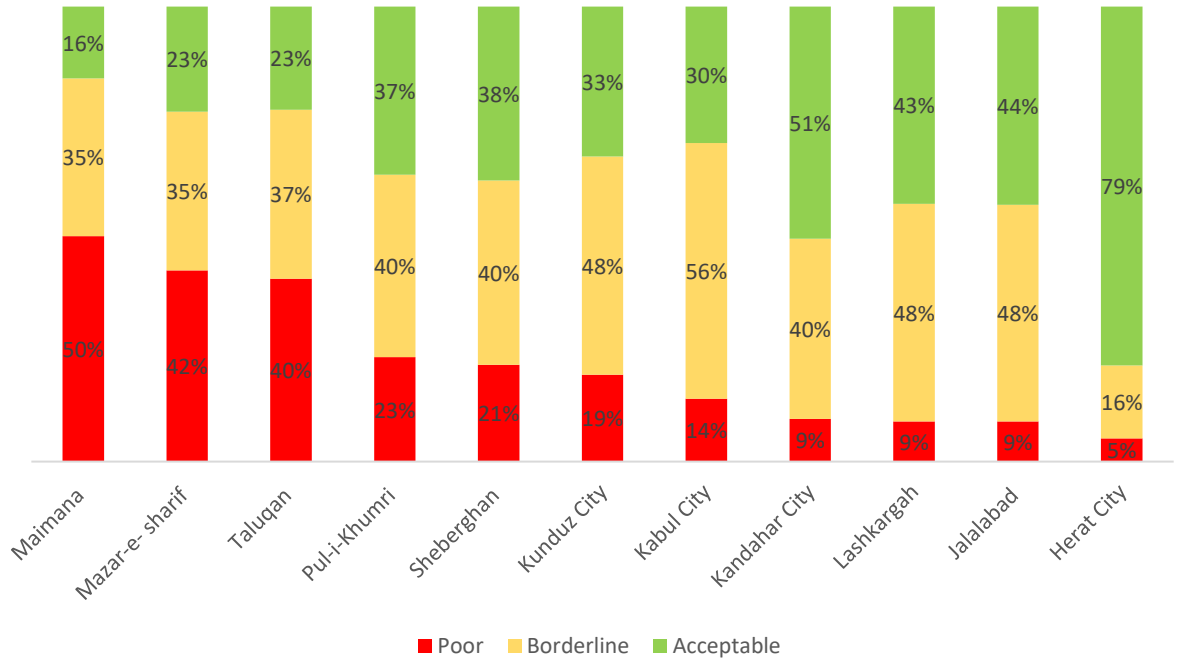
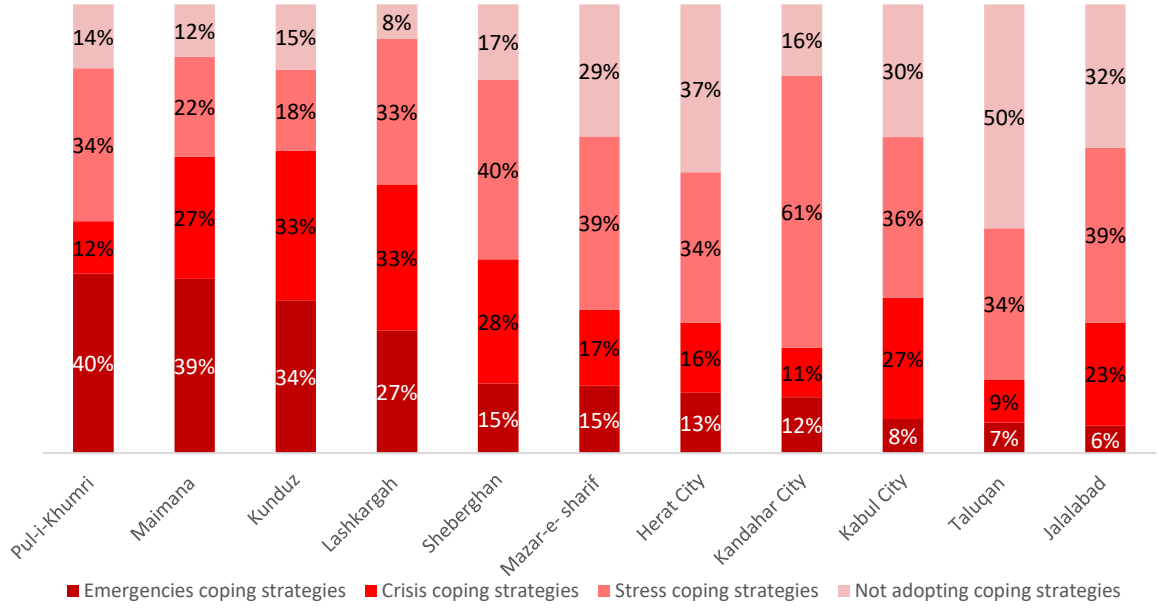



*Chart 21: Livelihood coping strategies across 11 largest urban centres in Afghanistan*



At a national level, table 4 below shows that urban and rural households have similar levels of food consumption and food stress, although rural household rely more on livelihood coping strategies. However, looking at the national level masks significant provincial-level variation, whereby some provinces do exhibit large differences.

For example, out of the 11 provinces in which both rural and urban households were surveyed, both Nangarhar and Herat showed rural households generally have worse food security than urban households; but in Takhar, Kunduz and Faryab the opposite is true, whereby urban areas fared worse in terms of food security outcomes.

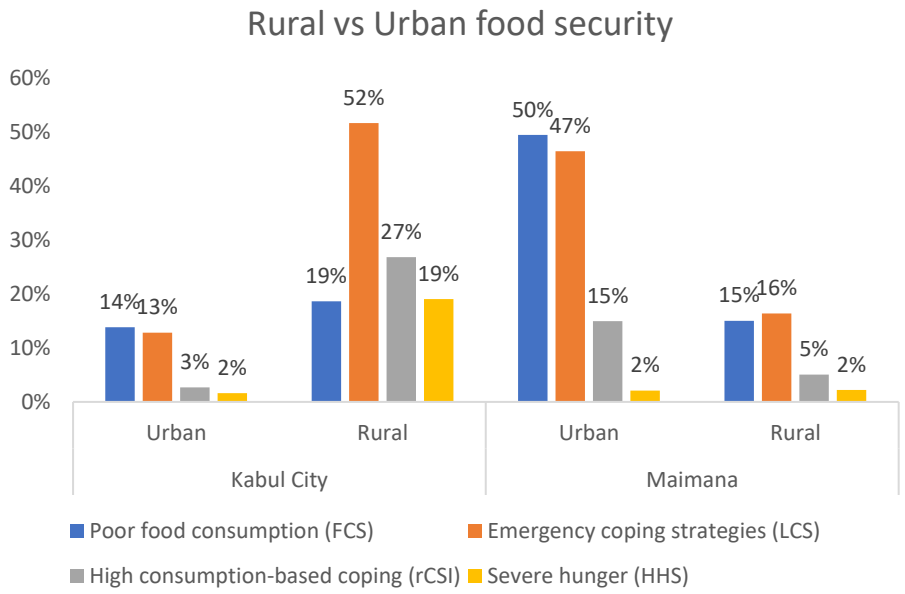
This is illustrated in Chart 22 below, which compares rural and urban food insecurity in Kabul and Maimana. One possible explanation for high levels of food insecurity in Maimana are the high numbers of returnees (17 percent) and IDPs (10 percent). The sites of the dwellings of urban poor in Maymana are also likely to be included in the urban sample, while the rural sample for Kabul may be considered peri-urban locations, that are easier for poor urban migrants to settle in rather than in the expensive centre of the capital.

In general, urban areas tend to have more transient populations - 12 percent of urban households are either IDPs or returnees, which is twice that of rural areas (6 percent) and are much more likely to live in rented accommodation (36 percent versus 7 percent).

*Table 4: Indicators of urban and rural food security*

| Indicator | | Urban | Rural |
|---|---|---|---|
| Food consumption (FCS) | Poor | 16% | 20% |
| | Borderline | 47% | 38% |
| | Acceptable | 36% | 43% |
| Application of food-based coping strategies (rCSI) | No or Low | 34% | 32% |
| | Medium | 60% | 58% |
| | High Coping | 5% | 9% |
| Application of livelihood-based coping strategies (LCS) | Emergency strategies | 16% | 28% |
| | Crisis strategies | 24% | 28% |
| | Stress strategies | 32% | 25% |
| | Sustainable strategies | 28% | 19% |
| Levels of hunger over the previous 30 days (HHS) | None | 64% | 66% |
| | Slight | 13% | 10% |
| | Moderate | 22% | 22% |
| | Severe | 2% | 3% |

*Chart 22: Example of rural versus urban food security - Kabul and Maimana (Faryab)*



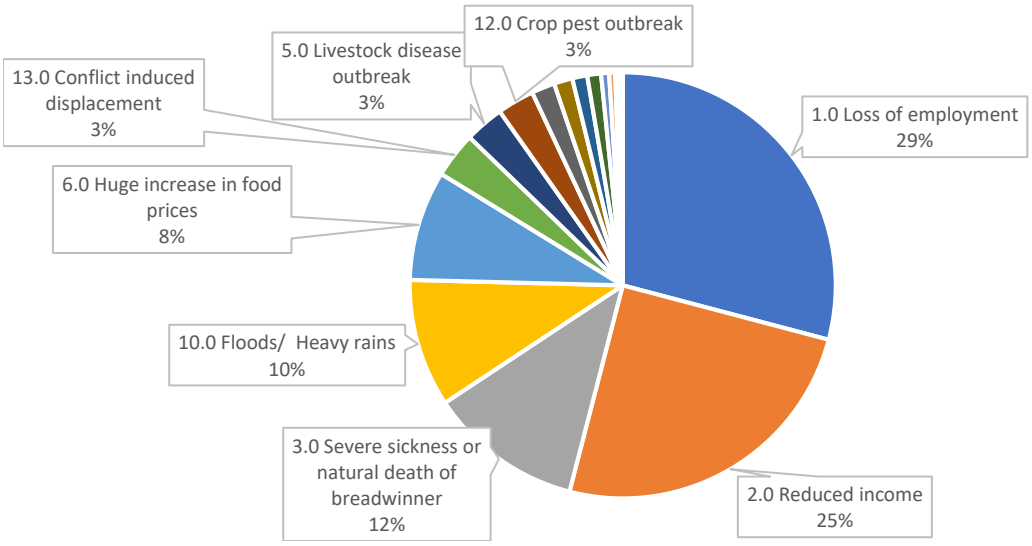
# Section 4: What are the underlying factors of food insecurity?

## Exposure to shocks

Three out of five households (60%) said they had experienced some kind of shock in the past six months, up from 46 percent seen in 2017. The most common primary shocks are loss of employment (29 percent), reduced income (25 percent), sickness or death of breadwinner (12 percent), and floods (10 percent) – see chart 23.

In total, nearly half (47%) of the households reported that their income has decreased compared to last year, of which around 60 percent reported reduced employment opportunities as the main reason for their income reduction followed by conflict (25%).

*Chart 23: Primary household shocks*




When faced with a shock, households generally respond by increasing their reliance on negative coping strategies, and often consume poorer diets (Chart 24). Table 5 shows that this relationship is true across almost all shock types. In particular, conflict-affected families who had lost a breadwinner, as well as households experiencing drought, had the highest level of emergency coping strategies (43 percent). Drought-affected households also had the greatest share of households with poor food consumption (38 percent).

At a provincial level, map 6 below shows that Wardak, Nuristan, Bamyan, Farah, Helmand, Faryab and Ghor faced highest level of shocks, respectively, where more than 80 percent of household are affected. Chart 24 shows that the most shock-exposed provinces also have the highest levels of crisis and emergency coping strategies.

*Chart 24: Food consumption and coping strategies, by shock exposure*

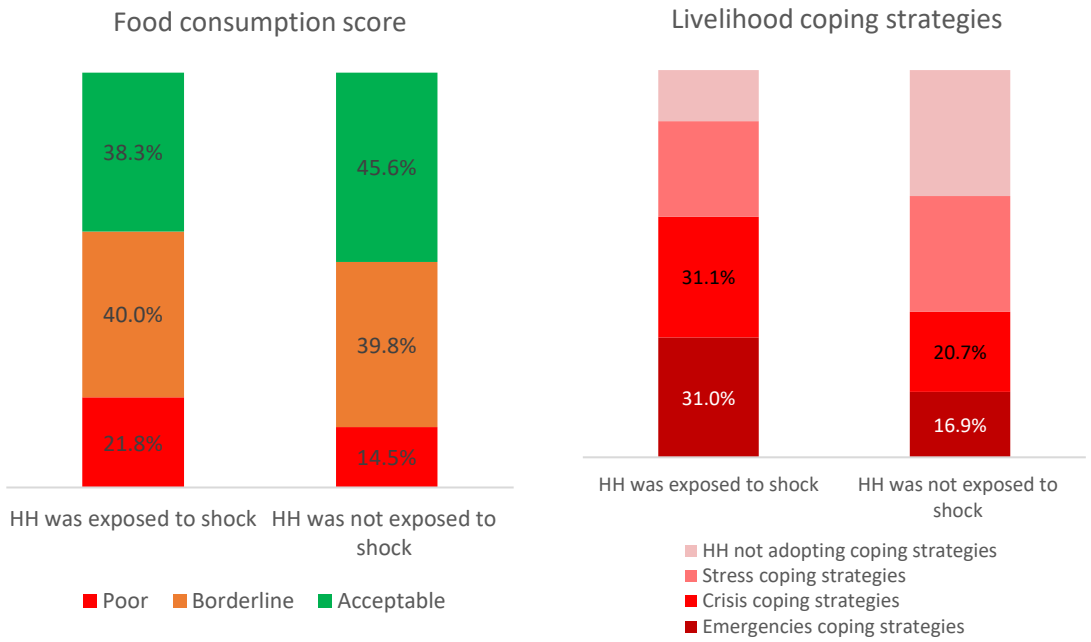



*Table 5: Primary shock experienced in the previous 6 months*

| Category | Shock type | Share of population affected (as primary shock) (%) | Households engaging in emergency coping strategies (%) | Households with poor food consumption (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Economic | Loss of employment | 17% | 25% | 22% |
| | Reduced income | 15% | 27% | 19% |
| | Severe sickness or natural death of breadwinner | 7% | 26% | 25% |
| | Huge increase in food prices | 5% | 26% | 21% |
| Natural hazard | Floods/ Heavy rains | 6% | 28% | 23% |
| | Livestock disease outbreak | 2% | 27% | 20% |
| | Crop pest outbreak | 2% | 24% | 21% |
| | drought / dry spell | 1% | 43% | 38% |
| | Snow / late frost | 1% | 20% | 33% |
| | Earthquake | 0.1% | 15% | 21% |
| | Avalanche / landslide | 0.1% | 24% | 16% |
| Conflict and crime | Conflict induced displacement | 2% | 26% | 18% |
| | Death or permanent impairment of breadwinner due to conflict | 1% | 43% | 26% |
| | Road Blocks from armed factions | 0.4% | 25% | 17% |
| | Theft/looting | 0.3% | 11% | 19% |
| Other | Other (specify) | 1% | 13% | 36% |
| | Return from Pakistan, Iran, etc. | 0.1% | 27% | 24% |
| **No shock experienced in past 6 months** | | **40%** | **14%** | **15%** |

*Map 6: Share of households experiencing a shock in the previous 6 months, by province*

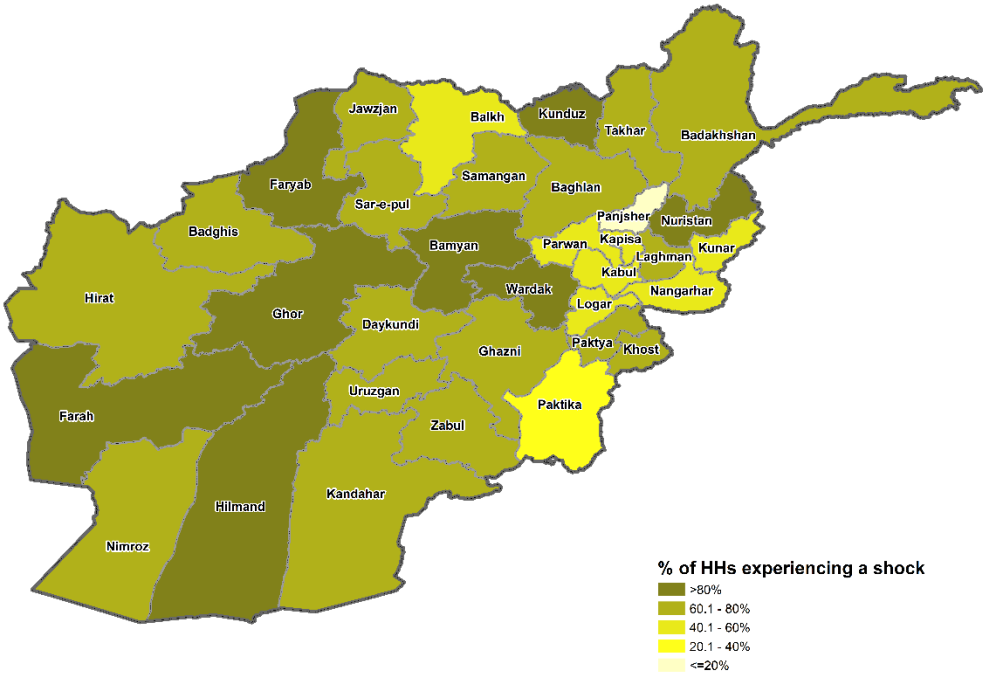



*Chart 25: Household shocks and coping strategies, by province*

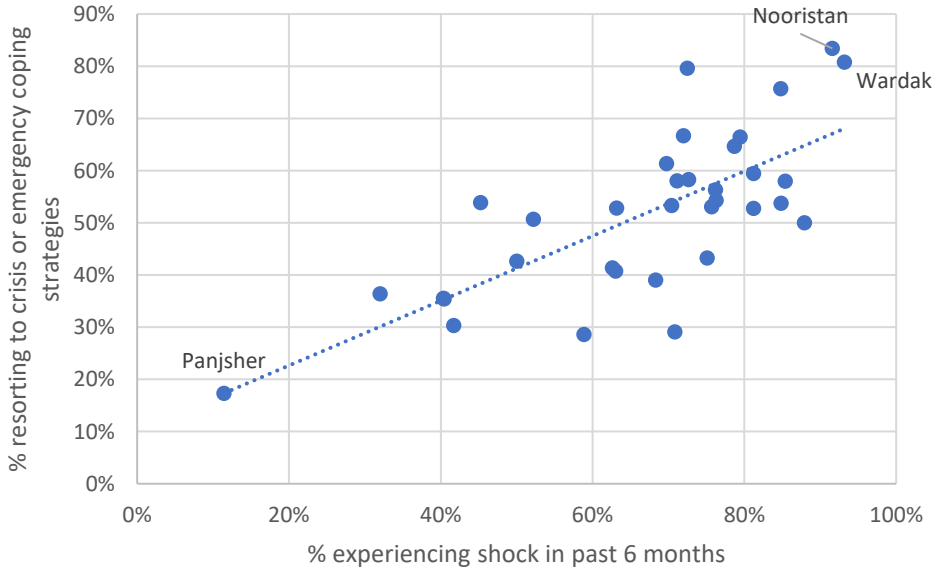
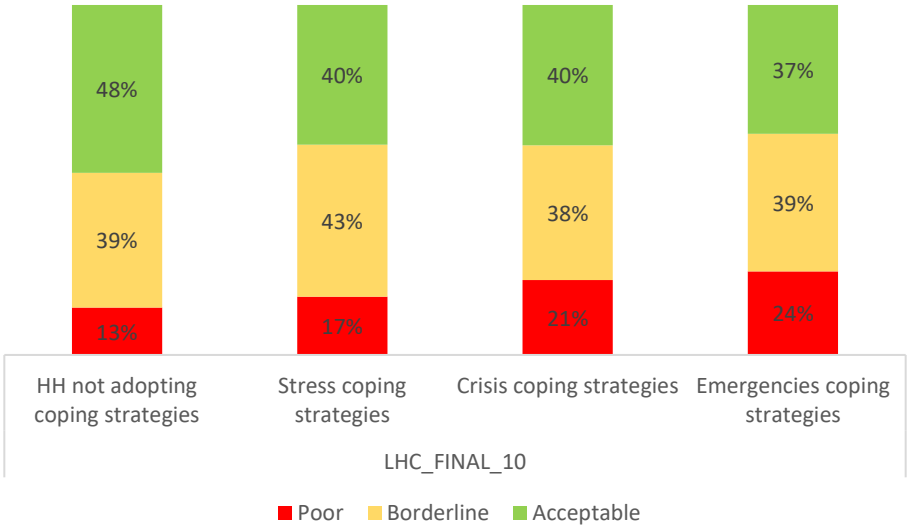


*Chart 26: Coping strategies and food consumption*




## How do households respond? Urban and rural shocks and coping

Urban households are less exposed to shocks than rural households – 37 percent experienced a shock in the previous 6 months, compared to 68 percent for rural households. This trend is consistent across all shock types.

When rural households face shocks they have specific agriculture-related livelihood coping strategies to rely on, such as increased livestock sales, decreased inputs and, in very severe cases, the sale of land. Urban households, however, rely more on borrowing food.

However, shocks have a much greater direct negative impact on food consumption for urban households, compared to rural. The share of urban households with acceptable food consumption falls to just 26 percent when they are faced with a shock, compared to 40 percent for shock-affected rural households. This shows that the urban poor are very vulnerable to sudden losses of income sources and quickly have to resort to low-quality diets.

Essentially, rural households respond to shocks with more emergency strategies, and a slight worsening of diets. Urban households respond with more crisis and stress strategies, and much worse diets. This is consistent across income sources and wealth quintiles.

*Table 6: Coping strategies adopted by households who had experienced a shock in the previous 6 months, rural and urban*

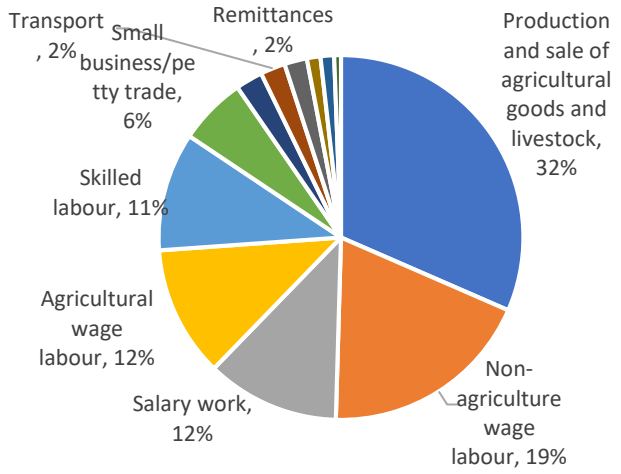
| Severity | Coping strategy | Urban | Rural |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stress | Borrow food or money for food? | 59% | 62% |
| | Spent savings | 50% | 47% |
| | Sold household assets (appliances, furniture, doors, roof beams) | 15% | 13% |
| | Sold more animals than usual or earlier than usual | 8% | 27% |
| Crisis | Decreased expenditures on health, education, etc. | 24% | 30% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Decreased expenditure on fertilizer, pesticide, fodder, animal feed, etc. | 6% | 29% |
| | Sold income generating equipment | 9% | 15% |
| Emergency | Begging/Rely on Charity | 6% | 10% |
| | Sold Last female animals | 1% | 9% |
| | Sold house or land | 2% | 6% |

## Livelihoods and income sources

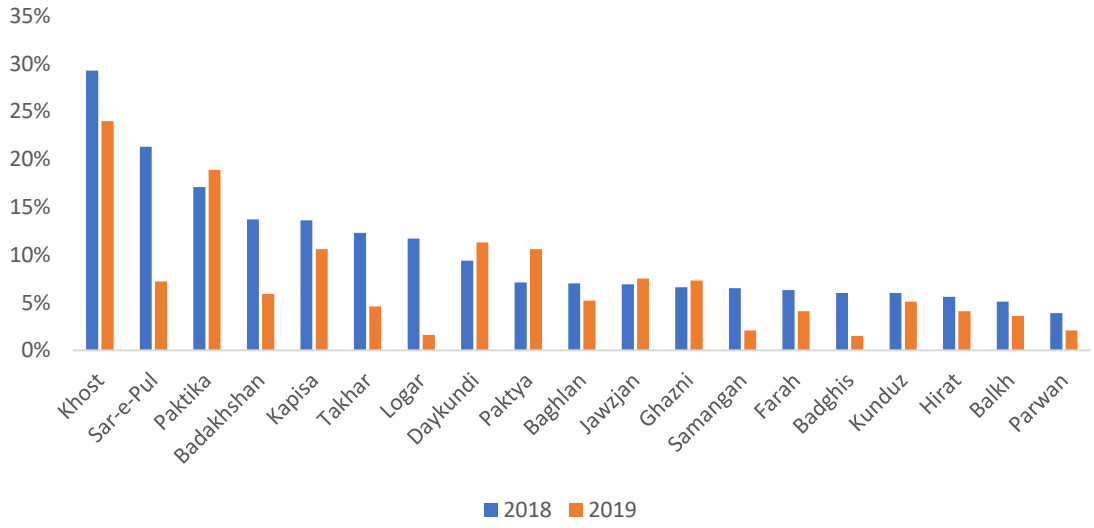
Agriculture is the main livelihood source for nearly half (44 percent) of households in Afghanistan, a lot of which is still subsistence farming. Only one in four households are depending on salary (11.8%), skilled labour (10%) and remittances (2%) as first sources of income, regarded as sustainable sources of income.

*Chart 27: Primary income source for households, national level*




Rural households relying on seasonal agriculture often send household members to find work elsewhere during the winter months. Economic slowdown in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan has meant remittances have fallen since 2018, with dramatic reductions seen in provinces like Sar-e-Pul, Badakhshan, Takhar, and Samangan (Chart 28). These are areas in the north and north-east of the country, which rely heavily on rainfed agriculture.

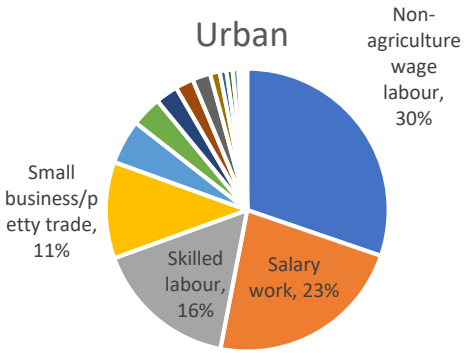
*Chart 28: Share of households relying on remittances as primary or secondary income source, by province**

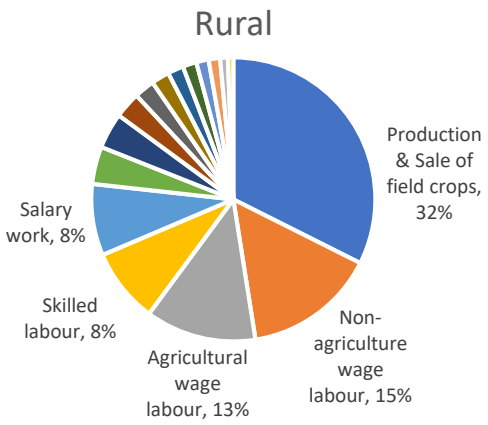



**Selected provinces shown in Chart 28 had at least 4 percent of primary/secondary income from remittances in 2018*

## Urban and rural livelihoods

As expected, people living in urban areas generally have little livelihood connection with agricultural activity. As per the SFSA results, only 3.6 percent of households in urban areas have access to or own agricultural land, and 5 percent own animals. Therefore, urban food security is a matter of access to food, rather than availability. Most of the food consumed needs to be sourced from markets and therefore, food security is closely linked to one's ability to earn money.




## Livelihoods and shock exposure

At a national level, certain income sources are associated with greater exposure to shocks and higher levels of food insecurity. Those working in agriculture tend to be the most shock-exposed and rely most on emergency coping strategies, while those earning from salary work or small business tend to have lower shock-exposure and better food security (table 7). These income sources also generally correlate with higher household expenditure (chart 29).

Although accounting for less than 1 percent of primary income sources, those relying on manufacturing/production have experienced very high shocks, high coping strategies (30 percent are begging), poor food consumption, and low median expenditure.

Livelihoods more common in urban areas are also associated with a lower exposure to shocks – salary work, skilled labour, small trade and non-agricultural wage labour all have relatively low shock exposure.

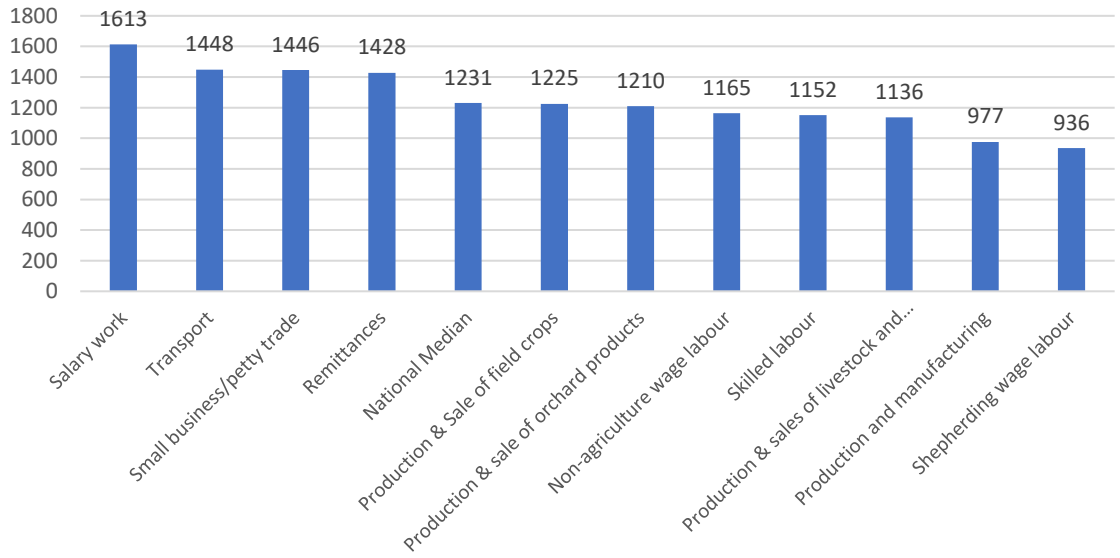
*Table 7: Shock exposure and food security by livelihood*

| **Livelihood** | Households experiencing a shock in the past 6 months (%) | Households engaging in emergency coping strategies (%) | Households with poor food consumption (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Production and manufacturing | 79% | 33% | 25% |
| Agricultural wage labour | 74% | 31% | 28% |
| Production of agricultural goods/livestock | 72% | 25% | 17% |
| Remittances | 61% | 21% | 15% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Non-agriculture wage labour | 59% | 18% | 25% |
| Transport | 55% | 14% | 9% |
| Skilled labour | 47% | 18% | 17% |
| Small business/petty trade | 45% | 15% | 11% |
| Salary work | 38% | 13% | 10% |

Chart 29 below displays the main livelihood categories and their approximate wealth-generating potential, using the median per-capita monthly expenditure in Afghani. Salaried workers and people relying on transport, trade and remittances have over-average earning potentials, while non-agricultural and agricultural daily wage laborers are most affected by low incomes.

*Chart 29: Median per capita monthly expenditure (Afs), by primary income source*




## Livelihoods and coping strategies

Table 8 shows that certain livelihoods are associated with different coping strategies. For example, those involved in the production and sale of agriculture are generally also land-owners and are able to respond to food shortages by selling income-generating equipment or animals. 72 percent of non-agricultural wage labourers increased their daily labour in order to meet food needs.

*Table 8: Livelihoods and coping strategies*

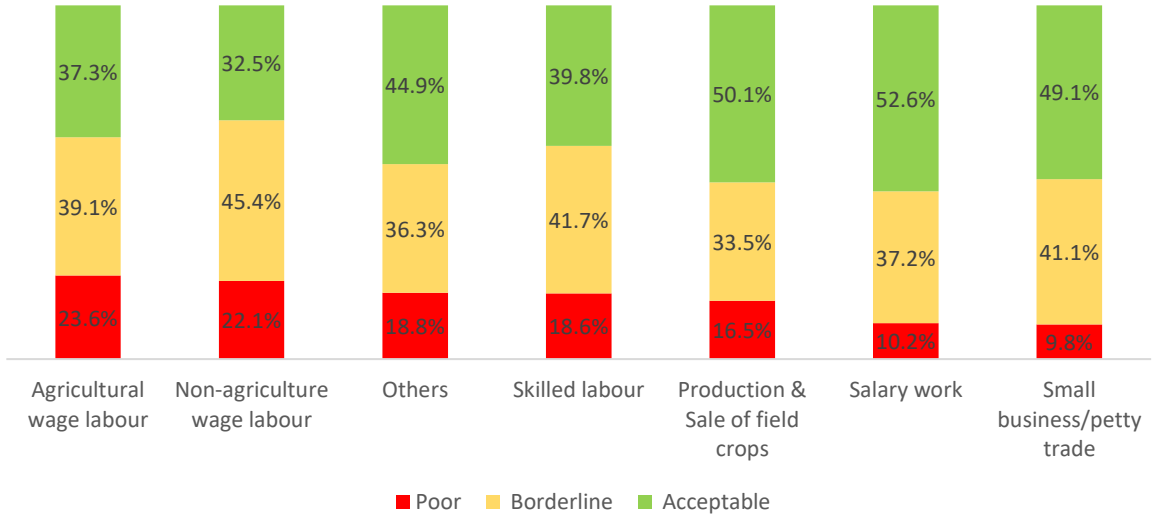
| Severity | Coping Strategy | Production & Sale of Agr/livestock | Agricultural Wage Labor | Non-agriculture wage labour | Skilled labour | Salary work | Small business/petty trade |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Neutral | Increased daily labour (increase number of days or working hours) | 56% | 53% | 72% | 63% | 59% | 51% |
| | Migrated to look for work | 25% | 46% | 13% | 20% | 15% | 19% |
| | Increased collection and sale of natural resources | 21% | 26% | 13% | 12% | 11% | 14% |
| Stress | Borrow food or money for food? | 61% | 64% | 66% | 54% | 63% | 48% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spent savings | 57% | 35% | 50% | 54% | 57% | 49% |
| | Sold more animals than usual or earlier than usual | 19% | 23% | 9% | 7% | 3% | 4% |
| | Sold household assets (appliances, furniture, doors, etc) | 16% | 18% | 14% | 18% | 15% | 12% |
| Crisis | Decreased expenditures on health, education, etc. | 26% | 17% | 21% | 30% | 25% | 36% |
| Crisis | Sold income generating equipment | 19% | 5% | 8% | 8% | 9% | 10% |
| Crisis | Decreased expenditure on fertilizer, animal feed, veterinary care, etc. | 13% | 12% | 8% | 3% | 4% | 2% |
| Emergency | Begging/Rely on Charity | 9% | 8% | 4% | 8% | 1% | 4% |
| Emergency | Sold house or land | 4% | 2% | 1% | 2% | 1% | 6% |
| Emergency | Sold Last female animals | 2% | 3% | 2% | 1% | 0% | 1% |

## Livelihoods and household consumption

In direct correlation with the levels of shock exposure, households relying on daily wage labour have poorer diets, while those relying on more predictable incomes like salary work or small business tend to have better food consumption.

*Chart 30: Food consumption by income sources at national level*




# Community 'remoteness'

Communities that are more remote or difficult to access also have higher levels of food insecurity. Table 9 below illustrates that across a range of indicators related to 'remoteness', households tend to have poorer food consumption and higher levels of emergency coping strategies if they live in a community that is more isolated. Households living in communities where road access had been blocked due to armed factions have particularly high shock exposure (81%) and high emergency coping strategies (32%).

*Table 9: Indicators of community 'remoteness' and food security*

| | | Households experiencing a shock in the past 6 months (%) | Households engaging in emergency coping strategies (%) | Households with poor food consumption (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Type of path from the main road to the community | Paved (asphalt/concrete) road or path | 43% | 12% | 17% |
| | Unpaved road or path | 67% | 24% | 19% |
| Was the community physically accessible by road in the past season (spring)? | Yes, No difficulty | 58% | 19% | 17% |
| | Difficult to access because of bad road conditions (Natural causes) | 63% | 23% | 22% |
| | Difficult to access because of road blockades by armed factions | 81% | 32% | 16% |
| Main source of electricity in the community | State electricity | 48% | 15% | 17% |
| | Community private electricity | 68% | 21% | 21% |
| | Private generators or solar panels | 67% | 26% | 13% |
| | No Electricity | 72% | 29% | 27% |
| How long (minutes) does it take to reach the main source of drinking water, collect water and come back by walking? | 0-15 minutes | 57% | 18% | 17% |
| | 15-30 minutes | 67% | 27% | 20% |
| | 30+ minutes | 72% | 27% | 24% |

## Land cultivation

Good precipitation and favourable pasture conditions this year has meant that between 2018 and 2019 Afghanistan saw a 6 percent increase in the total area of cultivated land. However, the recent drought also severely degraded a lot of the agricultural land.

About 41 percent of Afghanistan's cultivated land is rain-fed, slightly lower than the reported level seen in 2018 (43 percent). Households that rely more heavily on rain-fed agriculture also have poorer food consumption and greater reliance on emergency coping strategies (Chart 31), and are more likely to have experienced a shock in the past six months.

Provinces where households are heavily reliant on rainfed agriculture are also more food insecure. Badghis, Ghor and Badakhshan - where more than 60 percent of cultivated land is rain-fed – are also the provinces with the highest levels of food insecurity in the country (60%+ in IPC phase 3+) (Map 7).

*Map 7: Share of cultivated land that is rainfed, by province*

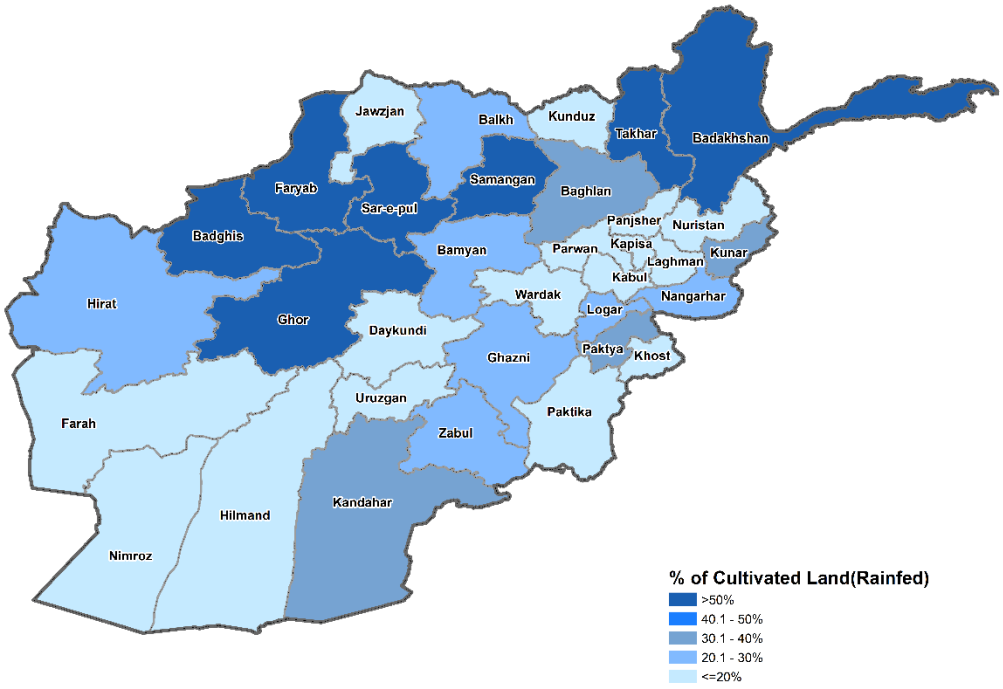
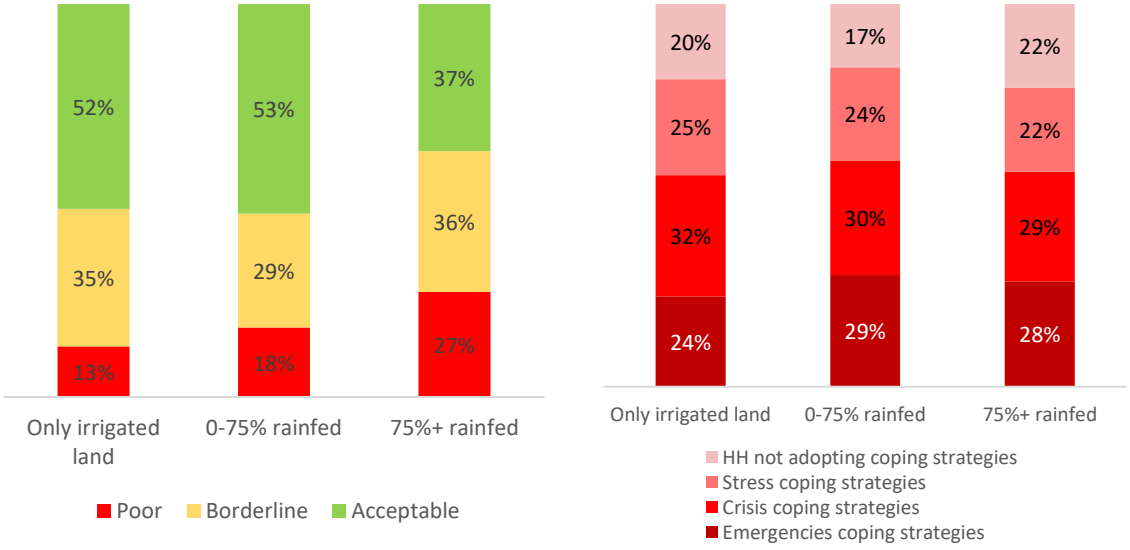



*Chart 31: Share of household agricultural land that is rainfed versus irrigated, food security indicators*

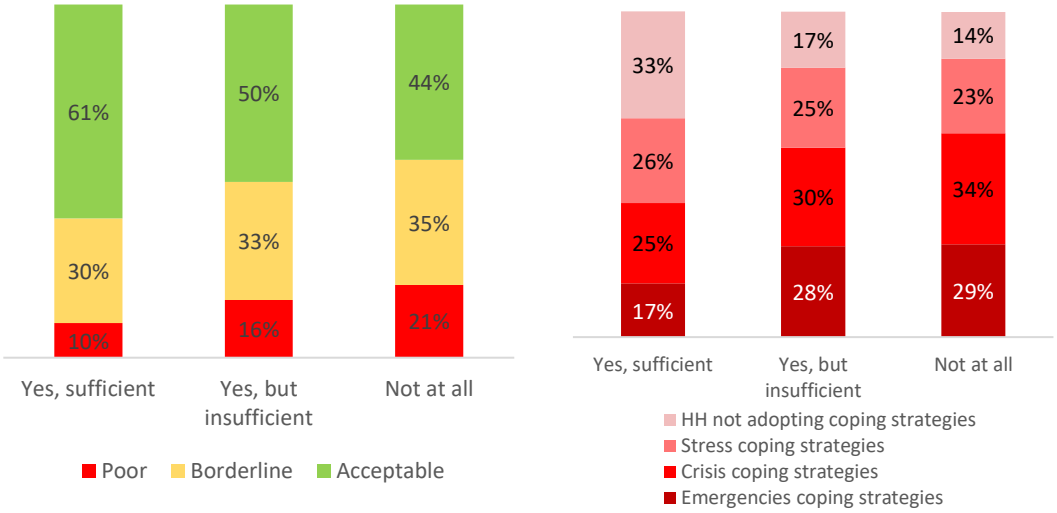


## Agricultural inputs

Wheat seed access is a major problem for farmers this year. 42 percent of households said they did not have enough wheat seed for this season ("not at all"), and 74 percent said they do not have enough for next season. 52 percent also said they have no way of accessing wheat seeds from elsewhere.

67 percent of those who say they do not have enough wheat seed for the next season are adopting crisis or emergency coping strategies, compared to 48 percent who do have enough.

*Chart 32: Did you have enough wheat seeds or access to it for this season?*




## Livestock

Nearly half (49 percent) of Afghans own animals - a notable decline from 69 percent observed in 2017. Livestock owners were hit badly by the 2018 drought; there was a 15 percent decrease in average number of sheep and goats compared to last year and 38 percent of households said they experienced livestock deaths in the previous 6 months. Provinces of Balkh, Jawzjan, Nimroz and Badghis faced highest average decrease in number of sheep and goats.

Around 40 percent of households who experienced livestock deaths are resorting to emergency coping strategies, compared to 25 percent who didn't experience livestock deaths. They also have poorer diets (20% poor, compared to 13%) and higher levels of hunger/food stress. Most households who lost livestock said the lack of veterinary services was the most common problem with raising animals (84%), as well as a lack of money (77%) and lack of pasture/fodder (74%). However, good pasture conditions this year have meant 28 percent of households reported an increase livestock productivity this year.

# Section 5: Conclusions and recommendations

In order to address Afghanistan's critical food security situation, this report makes the following recommendations:

The 2019 seasonal food security assessment has shown that overall food security has slightly improved since the drought year of 2018. However, this year's assessment also clearly shows that the levels of food insecurity in Afghanistan remain high in vast parts of the country, including in urban centres, and are still higher than in 2017. The IPC workshop, based on the data of this assessment, predicts that Nuristan, Badakhshan, Ghor, Daykundi, Uruzgan, and Nimroz will be in phase 4 (emergency) and 21 provinces will be in phase 3 (crisis) between November 2019 and March 2020. Countrywide, 11.2 million Afghans are projected to suffer from crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity in that period.

This assessment has shown that the vulnerability in Afghanistan runs deep. First and foremost, the population has not fully recovered from last year's drought. The drought has caused a spike in the use of negative coping strategies and has negatively affected people's long-term ability to cope with seasonal hardship. Land that has been sold or assets that have been sold off cannot easily be reacquired in one good agricultural season. Many people are mired in debts that they can only slowly repay. This assessment also confirms findings from post-distribution monitoring during the drought response that show that the humanitarian assistance during the drought has been too thinly spread, too scattered and too unpredictable, not least due to humanitarian access constraints. FSAC had the resources to support over three million of the most vulnerable as part of the drought response, for which an estimated 13.3 million people were identified to require food assistance.

This assessment further points to a continuous rise in chronic food insecurity and poverty in the country. This year's analysis of shocks confirms that no large-scale external shock such as a drought has taken place this year which would directly threaten people's food security. Instead, people mention the high food prices, the loss of precarious employment opportunities, and the lack of business opportunities as major sources of their desperate situation. While these shocks are no less severe, they are felt individually by each household and are difficult to communicate. The absence of safety nets, particularly in urban areas, leads to widespread continuous coping, simple diets, and high rates of acute and chronic malnutrition, as per the continued admission of malnourished children and mothers in health centres throughout the country.

The findings presented in this report are a clear call for increased humanitarian action. The current assessment shows that Afghanistan is among the countries that consistently have the highest recurrent levels of food insecurity. This current absolute number of food insecure, as per the IPC, is higher than, for example, Ethiopia's or Sudan's. In order to address Afghanistan's critical food security situation, this report finds the following recommendations:

**Respond to immediate needs:** The humanitarian community needs to provide urgent food assistance to the 10.2 million people in IPC phase 3 and 4. Nearly half (49 percent) of community leaders said their biggest immediate need was food, followed by drinking water (20 percent). In addition, immediate livelihood support should be provided to farmers and others who lack critical agricultural inputs. The majority of Afghan farmers do not have enough seeds of their own wheat for next season and most of the farmers are not able to obtain seeds or inputs for raising livestock from any sources in sufficient quantity.

**Target the most vulnerable:** This SFSA has shown the profiles of households with higher likelihoods of being vulnerable. Female-headed households, heads of households with disabilities, lack of education, lack of access to irrigated land, displaced households and child-headed households are most closely associated with bad consumption or high levels of livelihood-based coping.

**Prioritise isolated communities:** Afghanistan's rugged terrain, exposure to climate hazards, and rising insecurity pose particular challenges for those in hard-to-reach places. Households living in remote areas and/or facing access constraints are more vulnerable to shocks and have high food insecurity. This needs to be taken into account when developing strategies for food and livelihood security programming.

**Engage in long-term resilience building:** The SFSA has shown that many Afghan households struggle to recover from shocks and resort to adverse coping strategies. Considering the regular occurrence of shocks, stakeholders should also focus their attention and funding on programs to build resilience to disasters as well as climate shocks. Safety nets should be established for households facing income and employment shocks.

**Prioritize humanitarian and development programmes centred on water supply.** An important finding is that water infrastructure is by far the top priority of households and communities and solutions for a better supply of drinking water and irrigation systems are highly appreciated. The SFSA has shown that households reliant on rain-fed agriculture are more prone to shocks and have higher levels of food insecurity. 41 percent of all cultivated land in Afghanistan is rainfed. Action needs to be taken to strengthen water irrigation systems. 11 percent of community leaders said their top long-term priority was rehabilitating irrigation systems.

**Increase support to urban households:** Nearly a quarter of Afghanistan's food insecure population lives in urban areas and food insecurity is higher than in rural areas. The humanitarian sector needs to increase its focus on supporting the urban poor, ideally with cash transfers. In addition, an urban livelihood and labour market analysis should be conducted so that humanitarian actors can design conditional cash transfer programmes that are connected to developing human capital.

# Annex 1: Methodology

## Sampling

The Sampling design of the SFSA 2019 was developed to produce results that are statistically reliable at national, provincial level, the sample was also representative for rural level of all provinces and urban level for 11 provinces (Kabul, Nangarhar, Baghlan, Takhar, Kunduz, Balkh, Jawzjan, Kandahar, Herat, Faryab and Helmand). The design developed for the SFSA was a Stratified, two-stage cluster approach.

NSIA latest updated sampling frame was used as the sampling frame.

### Sample Size

Based on standard parameters a sample size of 22,050 households with a cluster size of ten households would produce sufficiently reliable estimates, five percent reserve sample was also considered.

### Stratification

The Sample was stratified into 45 analytical domains with equal allocation, as the sample was designed to produce results that are also statistically reliable for all provinces at rural level and 11 provinces at urban level, 11 provinces were stratified into rural and urban, the rural of the remaining provinces received a representative sample size from their total Sample size.

### Cluster Size and number of clusters

The cluster size in SFSA was maintained at ten households, the cluster size of ten, in combination with 45 strata and total sample size of 22,050 households, implies 49 clusters per domain.

### Sampling Stages and Selection process

Within each of the 34 provinces, EAs were selected as primary sampling units (PSUs) in the first sampling stag, based on the probability proportional to size (PPS) of the EA. In the second stage a cluster of ten households was selected from the updated household listing based on a systematic random sampling. Non-response within a cluster was addressed by drawing required number of additional households from the household listing in the EA, which could replace households not present or refusing or not able to accommodate an interview. Thus, the EAs selected were 2,205 which included more than one village in most of the provinces and the sample size was set at 22,050 HHs. However, security and access challenges in some areas impeded the attainment of the desired sample size as the number of interviewed HHs at the end of survey was 21,593 which indicates a mere 497 gap which was later adjusted by assigning household weights to the data to further strengthen rigorous data analysis.

## Assessment tools

SFSA 2019 survey included 3 questionnaires-household, community and trader (see annex 2). The questionnaire design was led by FSAC's Afghanistan Food Security Assessment Technical Working Team (AFSTT), using EFSA 2019 questionnaire as the base and keeping comparability and built on that. All relevant stakeholders involved in the design including nutrition cluster this time MUAC was included in the questionnaire. The final version of the questionnaire reflects the suggestions of all relevant stakeholders.

The household questionnaire consisted of 13 sections-mainly shelter and Wash, asset ownership, sources of income, household expenditure, debts, agriculture, livestock, food consumption, coping strategies, household shocks, nutrition status etc.

## Training and field work

MAIL's provincial and district extension and MIS staff and FSAC's I/NNGOs partners carried out the data collection of the SFSA 2019. Prior to data collection, a 3-days training was arranged to the enumerators in 6 regions. The training sessions included trainings regarding questionnaires, MUAC calculation using tapes, mobile-based data collection and usage of GPS devices. Approximately, 400 plus enumerators (male and female) of MAIL and NGOs participated in the training sessions across the country.

In each enumeration area, 10 household questionnaires and one community questionnaire were used while across the whole district, only one trader questionnaire was filled in rural areas, while in urban cities more than one trader questionnaire was administrated.

The modalities used for data collection were paper and smartphones. Approximately, 10 percent of the data was collected via smartphones using Kobo Collect application. An XLS-form was designed and uploaded to the Kobo Server and downloaded to the Kobo Collect Application. The relevant enumerators were provided with 32 smartphones and a special training session regarding *how to collect data via smartphones.* In order to ensure transparency and avoid field errors, GPS coordinates were captured using GPS devices provided by NSIA. Unlike EFSA 2019, this year's SFSA 2019 household questionnaire included a separate section pertaining to calculation of Medium Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC). Thus, MUAC tapes were shared with the enumerators during the training. In addition to this, in order to simplify positioning of the enumeration areas, NSIA produced maps which were also distributed among the enumerators.

Enumerators were sent to the fields in a group of two people while expecting the data collection to finish in less than 3 weeks.

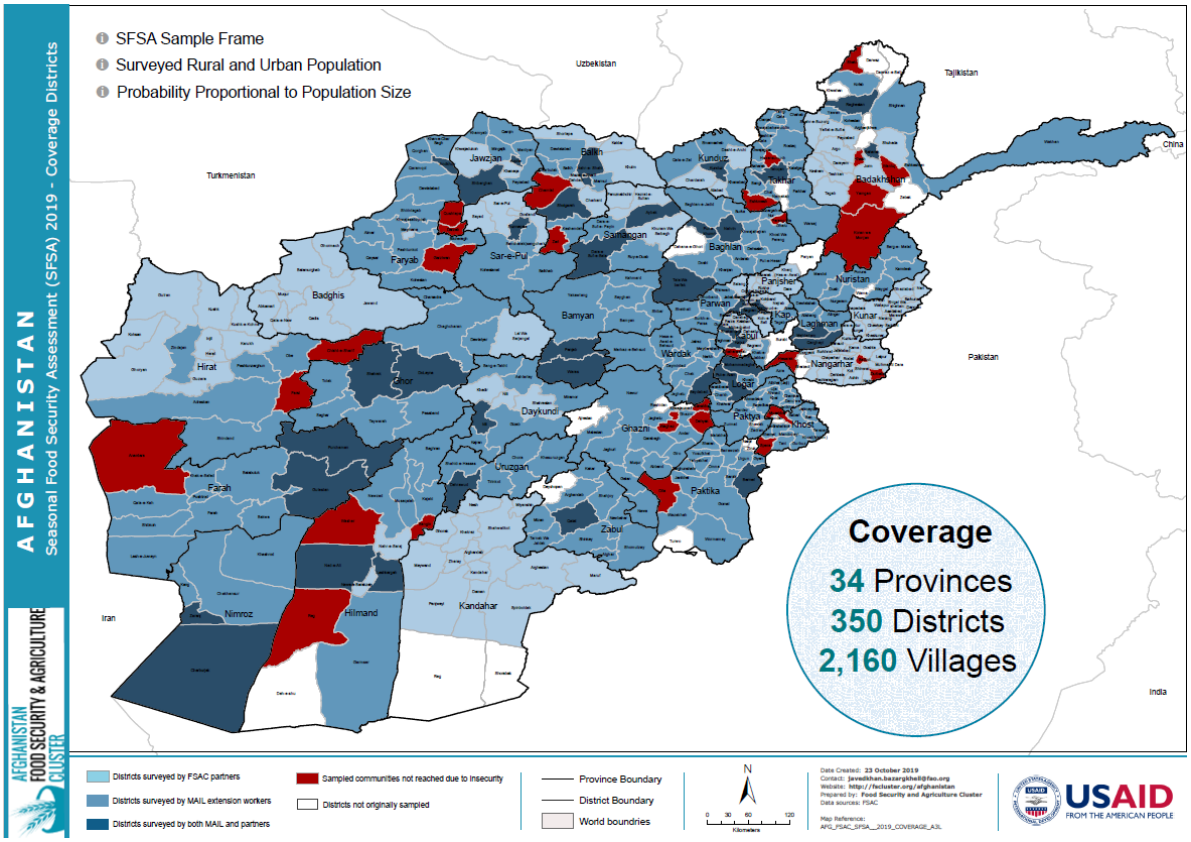
MAIL's provincial MIS officers oversaw the assessment administration in their provinces and they also had some supervisory role. Meanwhile NSIA staff were independently conducting supervision of the assessment. The enumerators collected the data in 3-4 weeks and 99 percent of the data collection completed prior to Eid-ul-Adha as normally the consumption pattern changes. The remaining one percent where the data collection was not completed before Eid al-Adha, it resumed after Eid. As the impact of Eid on changing the consumption last longer, so enumerators trained to collect the food-consumption related questions covered the period before Eid days in order to avoid bias in the food-consumption related indicators. The data, which was constantly uploaded to the Kobo server in the field, was consistently checked and prompt feedbacks were provided to the enumerators so that the data quality is ensured, and subsequently rigours analysis is performed. For the paper data collection, first the supervisor of each team checks the data and the second level check was carried out by provincial MISs.

## Data Punching

The data collected via smartphones did not require any punching as they were already uploaded directly to the server by enumerators in the field. The filled paper forms were mostly sent through UNHAS while some others were sent using land transports. A Microsoft Access based database was designed by iMMAP to conduct the data entry once the forms were received from the fields. The data punching was led by 3 supervisors and 40 data-entry clerks. The process was completed in 3 weeks that included one week of Eid holidays. After completion of the data punching, the two datasets were merged, and weights were assigned as per the guidance of NSIA.

## Limitations

Due to ongoing conflicts and access issues, some EAs (clusters) were not interviewed which represented a minor percentage of the total households interviewed in a province. Moreover, in most part of the country, usage of GPS devices was a big challenge and was deemed as a potential threat to the lives of the enumerators. Therefore, the GPS coordinates were not captured in those areas.

Most of the sampled EAs across the country includes more than one village and even few EAs contained up to 25 communities. In very few EAs with a very high number of communities where it was difficult to collect communities shura members and conduct the assessment, field staff selected few communities out of all and conduct the assessment there. Unmatching of maps with the actual field location in few locations of western region caused deviation from original sampled communities.

*Map 8: District coverage*