

**ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY** | Impacts of El Niño drove rural food insecurity while lack of work opportunities and high poverty levels constrained migrants and refugees' economic access to food.

## Residents

PEAK 2023 (NOVEMBER–DECEMBER)

 **1.6M** people or 3% of the analysed resident population faced severe levels of acute food insecurity based on the WFP CARI.


The severity of food insecurity was higher in rural areas and particularly in the departments of La Guajira, Sucre, Caquetá, Córdoba, Arauca and Putumayo, mostly due to low incomes and high vulnerability to weather extremes. Meanwhile, the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity is higher in urban areas reflecting population density.

Source: WFP, February 2024.

**History of the food crisis** The resident population of Colombia was first identified as facing a food crisis in GRFC 2023 but only in GRFC 2024 have available data met the technical requirements of the GRFC partnership. An upper-middle-income country, Colombia has a high government capacity to assist its population and ranks highly on the Human Development Index. Furthermore, the country's economy has recovered remarkably well from the COVID-19 crisis. This exposes the resident population to vulnerability to acute and chronic food insecurity.

## Migrants and refugees

PEAK 2023 (JUNE–AUGUST 2022)

 **2.9M** people or 62% of the analysed population faced high levels of acute food insecurity. Of them, 14% faced severe acute food insecurity.


Colombia hosts a large number of migrants and refugees from neighbouring countries. Around 73 percent of pendular and in-transit migrants faced high levels of acute food insecurity compared with about 52 percent of migrants with intention to settle (WFP, May 2023).

Source: WFP, May 2023.

**History of the food crisis** Colombia (migrants and refugees) has been included in all editions since the GRFC 2019, but data did not meet GRFC requirements in the 2021 and 2022 editions.


The acute food insecurity crisis has deteriorated for migrant and refugee populations since the previous analysis conducted by WFP in 2019, when 55 percent of the total population of 1.6 million refugees and migrants with intention to settle faced high levels of acute food insecurity (WFP, November 2022). The size of the analysed population has also surged, with over four times more migrants and refugees analysed in Colombia in 2023 than in 2018.

### DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS 2023–2024

 **Weather extremes** were the primary driver of acute food insecurity for **resident populations**. Colombia is prone to both localized drought and heavy rainfall during El Niño events and the Caribbean and Andean regions saw reduced rainfall from August onwards as a result. In general, the 2023/24 El Niño event represents a risk for around 9.3 million people in half of the country's municipalities, with 2.9 million highly likely to be affected by the effects of drought and losses of crops and livestock (HRP 2024).

Flooding and landslides damaged transportation and shelter infrastructure, limiting livelihoods and hindering access to WASH

facilities and public services (ACAPS, January 2024). However, production of staple paddy crop was above average in 2023, with the supply situation likely to be adequate for consumption requirements (DANE, 2023).

 **Conflict/insecurity** Despite current peacebuilding efforts, Colombia is classified as Extreme on the ACLED Conflict Index (ACLED, January 2024). Armed groups increasingly targeted civilians in 2023 in Colombia's border departments of Arauca, La Guajira, Cesar, Norte de Santander and Nariño. **Residents and migrants and refugees** both experienced displacement and disruption of

social services, with marginalized indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities often the most affected (ACLED, August 2023). Many migrants and refugees, in transit to other destinations or engaged in pendular movements, are likely to be in dangerous and inaccessible border areas such as Darien and experience personal security threats from traffickers (RMNA, September 2023).

 **Economic shocks** The acute food insecurity of **migrants and refugees** is intrinsically linked to lack of economic opportunities. Years of economic hardship in their country of origin had already depleted their economic resilience. The unemployment rate for migrants

and refugees was almost double that of residents at 18 percent while 37 percent reported discrimination when seeking employment opportunities. Around 70 percent of of migrant or refugee households have earnings below the national poverty line (which was USD 347 for a family of four in 2021) and cannot cover their basic needs. Elevated food and rent prices led to an erosion of purchasing power, jeopardizing their consumption of nutritious food, and leading to negative coping mechanisms (RMNA, September 2023).

**Resident populations** were better positioned to benefit from a general improvement in the macroeconomic

picture in 2023, with a slight improvement in the employment rate and a decrease in the headline inflation rate to 9 percent at the end of 2023. Food inflation decreased throughout the year from 26 percent in January 2023 to 5 percent by December (WFP, December 2023).

Larger areas being planted drove above-average domestic rice and maize production in 2023, which was expected to bolster food supplies in a country that is highly reliant on food imports to meet national consumption requirements (FAO-GIEWS, November 2023). However, low income levels of a large share of the resident population, particularly in rural areas, impeded

an adequate diet diversity for many households, driving acute food insecurity levels (WFP, February 2024).

### DISPLACEMENT

 **9.4M** forcibly displaced people by 2023

 **6.9M** IDPs

Source: Government of Colombia, November 2023.

 **2.5M** migrants and refugees

Source: Mid-Year Trends 2023, June 2023; UNHCR Nowcasted estimate, December 2023.