
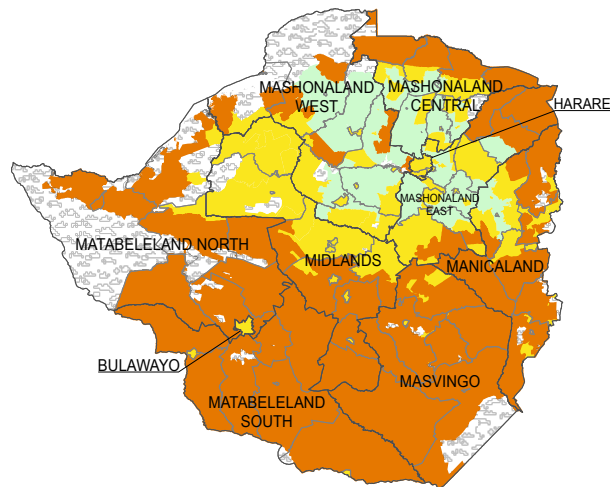


ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY | A deteriorating situation as exceptionally high food prices eroded household purchasing power.

PEAK 2023 (JANUARY–MARCH)

 **3.5M** people or **23%** of the total country population faced high levels of acute food insecurity.

The increase of around 0.5 million people since the 2022 peak in October–December mostly reflects the continued economic downturn, coupled with localized production shortfalls in southern and western areas.



Source: FEWS NET, January 2023.

PROJECTION 2024 (MARCH)


 Up to **3.5M** people or **23%** of the total country population were projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity.

Anticipated El Niño-induced below-normal rainfall in January–March is expected to lower seasonal agricultural labour opportunities, particularly in semi-arid areas, and negatively impact cereal production in 2024. The cost of living is expected to continue to increase as an upturn in demand for grains, reflecting anticipated poor harvests in 2024, is likely to trigger stronger-than-normal price increases through to the next harvest (FEWS NET, December 2023).

Source: FEWS NET, September 2023.

■ 1 - None/Minimal
 ■ 2 - Stressed
 ■ 3 - Crisis
 ■ 4 - Emergency
 ■ 5 - Catastrophe/Famine
 ■ 1+2 - None/Minimal and Stressed
 ■ 3+ - Crisis or worse
 ■ Total population

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS 2023–2024

 **Economic shocks**
 Exceptionally high food prices – the food inflation rate throughout 2023 has consistently been in double-digit figures peaking at 71.9 percent in January and falling to 29.2 percent by December (WFP, December 2023) – significantly eroded household purchasing power. Prices of maize meal, the key national food staple, were more than four times higher in September 2023 than 2022. They fell in October but were significantly higher year-on-year (FAO, November 2023).
 Maize grain prices were expected to rise throughout the lean season in early 2024 especially in deficit-

producing and remote areas due to limited or erratic maize supplies, poor road conditions and high transportation costs. Subdued remittance income and increased competition for petty trading work were expected to diminish household income (FEWS NET, November 2023).
 Persistent currency weakness, high prices and low incomes severely diminished the capacity of farmers to purchase sufficient agricultural inputs, curbing yield potentials in 2023, while the continued high costs are also expected to affect crop performance in 2024 (FAO-GIEWS, October 2023).

 **Weather extremes** While national cereal production was estimated to be above average in 2023, reflecting overall conducive weather conditions in key producing northern provinces, southern and western areas faced localized shortfalls due to inadequate rains (FAO-GIEWS, October 2023).
 Poor and erratic rainfall linked to El Niño conditions were expected to reduce the area planted for 2024 crops (in late 2023), limiting seasonal agricultural labour opportunities and wage rates, and reducing household income. Inadequate rainfall and heat stress due to above-average temperatures

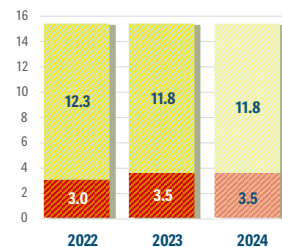
through May 2024 were expected to bring a below-average 2023/24 harvest, depleting household food stocks early (FEWS NET, November 2023). Poor pasture and water conditions from early 2024 were already leading to an atypically high number of livestock deaths in western Zimbabwe, ahead of the July–September 2024 dry season (OCHA, February 2024).

DISPLACEMENT

 **0.02M** refugees and asylum-seekers by 2023

Source: UNHCR Nowcasted estimate, December 2023.

Peak numbers of people (in millions) by phase of acute food insecurity, 2022–2024



Source: FEWS NET.

A protracted major food crisis A lower-middle-income country, Zimbabwe has been identified as a major food crisis since the first edition of the GRFC due to weather extremes and, increasingly, economic shocks. The number of acutely food-insecure people are not comparable over the years given differences in methodology. IPC analyses available for 2019 and 2020 estimated that over 1 million people faced Emergency (IPC Phase 4) each year, corresponding to 12 percent and 11 percent of the analysed population respectively.

ACUTE MALNUTRITION

0.01M children under 5 years old with severe acute malnutrition in 2023

2.9% of children under 5 years old with acute malnutrition in 2023 – Manicaland had the highest prevalence at 6.6%


Source: ZimVAC, 2023.

 The national prevalence of wasting among young children has reduced from 7.2 percent in 2022 despite rising levels of acute food insecurity (ZimVAC, August 2022 and 2023).

DRIVERS OF ACUTE MALNUTRITION 2023–2024

 **Inadequate practices** Only 1.3 percent of children aged 6–23 months consumed a Minimum Acceptable Diet. This is considered Extremely Critical by IFE Core Group thresholds. About 78 percent of children were exclusively breastfed (an increase from 49 percent in 2020) (ZimVAC, August 2023).

 **Lack of food** Only 19 percent of women of reproductive age were consuming a Minimum Dietary Diversity (ZimVAC, August 2023).

 **Inadequate services** While around 85 percent of households were connected to water, only 25 percent received water seven days a week. Around 64 percent of households (nationally) had no access to handwashing services and 53 percent no access to improved sanitation facilities (ZimVAC, August 2023). Between February 2023 and the end of the year, there were more than 13 000 suspected cases of cholera (WHO, December 2023).