

Food security needs analysis among urban populations

IDPs and host communities

July 2025 & January 2026 | Somalia

KEY MESSAGES

- Negative trends across food consumption and livelihood coping indicators between July 2025 and January 2026 suggested increasing pressure on household food security in surveyed urban areas. After months of drought, dietary diversity declined among assessed IDP and host community populations, while moderate and severe hunger became more prevalent; to cope with food shortages, households increasingly resorted to negative or unsustainable strategies, from lowering adult food intake to selling productive assets or land.
- Factors contributing to food insecurity also became more severe over the same period. More households experienced water insecurity, with an increasing share reporting insufficient access to drinking water and longer travel times to their main water source. At the same time, a greater proportion of households reported recent income disruptions, while access to essential goods declined as more households found them unaffordable.
- Despite increasing needs, household reporting did not indicate a corresponding increase in humanitarian assistance. Amid economic and climate-related pressures, urban IDP and host community households identified food assistance and cash support as priority needs. Continued price increases underscore the need to scale up assistance to mitigate declining purchasing power and further deterioration in food security.

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Somalia's protracted humanitarian crisis continues to be shaped by ongoing conflict and escalating climate shocks. Household coping capacity has been eroded by successive failed rainy seasons,¹ and the food insecure population grew from 3.4 million people in August 2025 to 4.8 million people in January 2026, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

Against this backdrop, REACH conducted two rounds of primary data collection to generate timely, comparable evidence on food security outcomes among urban host communities and urban IDPs, informing IPC analysis and supporting coordinated response planning. This assessment took place in the context of several key factors affecting food insecurity.

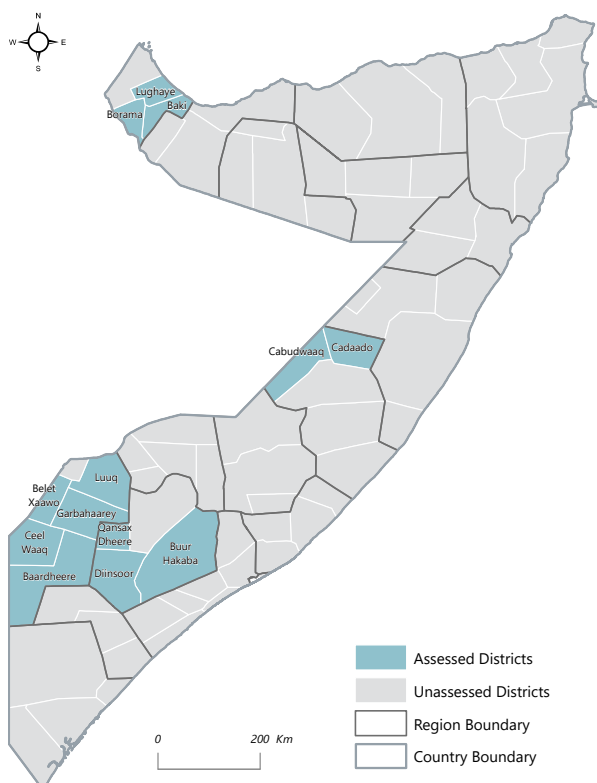
Drought. Following persistent concerns over poor rainfall throughout 2025,² a drought emergency was declared in November 2025.³ Failed Deyr rains (October to December) led to a near-total failure of the Deyr crop; typically accounting for 40% of Somalia's annual cereal harvest, this season produced its lowest output since records began in 1995.⁴ The result was a decrease in the supply of locally-produced food as the Jilaal dry season (January to March) began. Over 345,000 people fled drought conditions in 2025, a trend which continued into early 2026, counting an additional 501,000 drought-induced displacements as of April.⁵

Rising prices. Reduced harvests coupled with depleted stocks from previous seasons contributed to rising food prices.⁶ From July 2025 to January 2026, the cost of the minimum expenditure basket increased in almost all markets under this assessment's coverage.⁷ Moreover, with food imports accounting for 60-70% of domestic consumption,⁸ households are vulnerable to supply chain disruptions and global price fluctuations, and the cost of essential goods continues to climb in Somalia due to an international oil supply shock.⁹

Armed conflict. High levels of conflict persisted throughout 2025,¹⁰ with conflict over resources like water and livestock increasing during the drought.¹¹ Alongside being a key driver of food insecurity,¹² conflict led to displacement and limited the ability of humanitarian actors to reach people in need.¹³ Since data collection ended, violence and insecurity have continued to impact the situation, with clashes in Bay region – already experiencing severe food insecurity – displacing over 50,000 people in March.¹⁴

Humanitarian funding. Humanitarian actors have cited funding shortfalls as hampering the drought response and fuelling the emergency in Somalia.¹⁵ Whereas the response reached US\$2.4 billion during the drought in 2022, funding for 2026 sits at US\$142 million as of April.¹⁶ With fewer available resources, the number of people targeted for humanitarian assistance has declined.¹⁷ Though needs are increasing, food aid covered 800,000 people in January 2026, down from 1.3 million in August 2025.¹⁸

ASSESSMENT COVERAGE



ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Two rounds of data collection were conducted to provide up-to-date data for the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis workshops in August 2025 and January 2026. Both rounds of the assessment focused on two population groups, urban host communities and urban IDPs living in sites, across several regions of Somalia. Together, these groups and areas form the assessment’s units of analysis, referring to a defined population group (e.g., urban host communities) within a specified geographic area (e.g., Gedo region); these geographic-demographic units were used as the primary strata for data collection, cohering with IPC analysis and reporting practices. This factsheet considers data collected in eight units of analysis, among urban host communities and urban IDPs in Awdal, Bay, Galgaduud, and Gedo regions.

Face-to-face household-level surveys were conducted during 13-28 July 2025 for the first round (1,134 surveys collected) and 21 December 2025 – 06 January 2026 for the second round (1,169 surveys collected); data collection took place respectively at the tail end of the Gu and Deyr rains, in both cases when the lean season typically transitions into the harvesting period.¹⁹ While both rainy seasons are associated with increased agricultural labour opportunities and improved pasture and water availability, the Gu season typically brings higher rainfall totals than the Deyr season and generally produces comparatively larger harvests.²⁰ These regular agroclimatic and seasonal variations may have contributed to some of the observed changes across indicators and sectors presented in this factsheet.

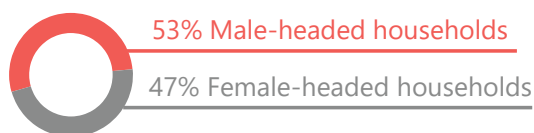
Two-stage stratified cluster sampling ensured unit of analysis-level representativeness for accessible areas at a 90% confidence level with 10% margin of error, with at least eight households interviewed per cluster. Access restrictions limited the sampling frame in a few cases, affecting comparability between the two rounds of surveys in units of analysis where this occurred. For more information on methodology, see page 9.

DEMOGRAPHICS

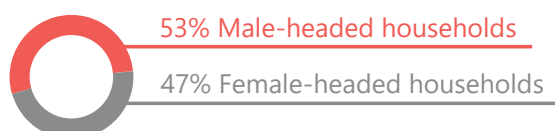
Household Information

% of households by head of household sex:

Round 1



Round 2



Average number of people living in one household (including respondent):

Round 1

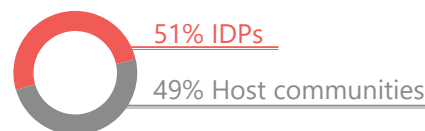
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Round 2

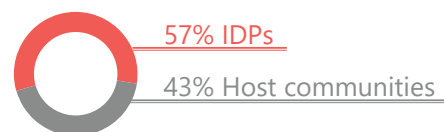
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% of households by displacement status:

Round 1

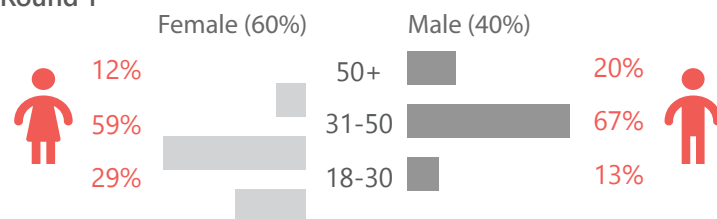


Round 2

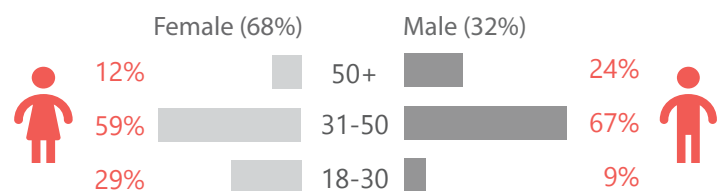


Age and gender distribution of respondents:

Round 1



Round 2



FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS

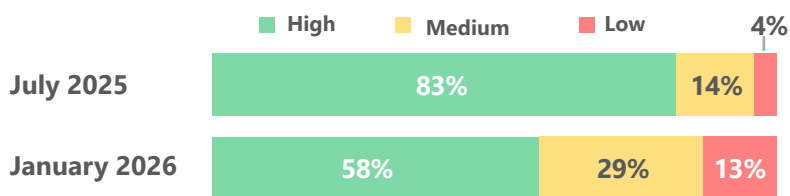
Household dietary diversity scale (HDDS)

HDDS measures the range of food groups consumed by a household over the 24 hours prior to data collection, intended to reflect access to a variety of foods.²¹ Between the two rounds of data collection, household dietary diversity declined in surveyed urban areas.

This deterioration was observed among both populations covered in this assessment: the share of urban IDPs with high dietary diversity dropped from 62% to 35% and with low dietary diversity rose from 9% to 24%, while the share of urban host community members with high dietary diversity dropped from 90% to 61% and with low dietary diversity rose from 2% to 11%.

For the following food security indicators, a comparison (where applicable) between the July 2025 and January 2026 rounds of data collection is provided for the overall sample, followed by tables detailing the breakdown by population group for the latter round.

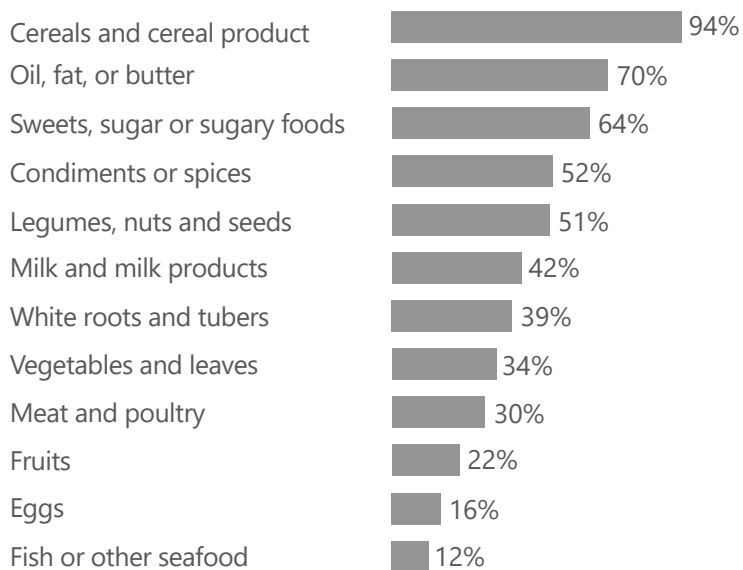
% of households by HDDS categorisation:



A higher HDDS score/categorisation (e.g., 'High') indicates greater dietary diversity and generally reflects better economic access to food.

January 2026	High	Medium	Low
Urban IDPs	35%	41%	24%
Urban host community	61%	28%	11%
Female-headed households	48%	33%	19%
Male-headed households	64%	27%	8%

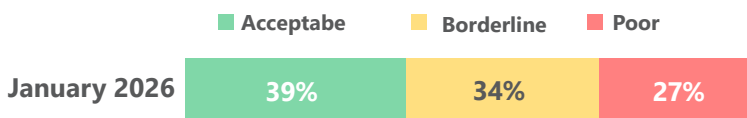
% of households having consumed a given food group in the 24 hours prior to data collection (January 2026):*



Food Consumption Score (FCS)

FCS is a composite proxy indicator for food consumption, measuring the diversity and frequency of food consumption across 8 food groups (weighted according to relative nutrition value) over the 7 days prior to data collection.²³ Overall, more than half of surveyed households (61%) fell below acceptable food consumption at the time of data collection in January 2026.** A greater proportion of households had poor food consumption among urban IDPs (53%) than urban host communities (23%), while poor food consumption was also more commonly observed among female-headed households (31%) than male-headed households (24%).

% of households by FCS categorisation:



A higher FCS score/categorisation (e.g., 'Acceptable') indicates better household food consumption over the preceding week.

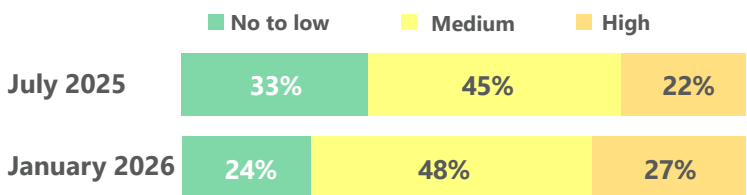
January 2026	Acceptable	Borderline	Poor
Urban IDPs	21%	26%	53%
Urban host community	42%	35%	23%
Female-headed households	33%	36%	31%
Male-headed households	44%	32%	24%

Reduced coping strategy index (rCSI)

rCSI represents how households have dealt with food shortages in the seven days prior to data collection, measuring the frequency of consumption-based coping strategies adopted when households cannot access enough food (e.g., eating fewer meals or smaller portions).²² Between the two rounds of data collection, households in surveyed urban areas increased the frequency of consumption-based behaviours to mitigate against food shortages.

On one or more days in the seven days prior to data collection, most households were eating less preferred or less expensive foods, reducing their portion sizes and number of meals, and borrowing from relatives or friends to cope with a lack of food or money to buy food. While IDPs used these coping strategies more often than host communities, the latter experienced greater deterioration between rounds: the share of urban IDP households with medium or high reliance on consumption-based coping strategies increased from 90% to 91%, whereas the share of urban host community households at the same level of reliance increased from 59% to 73%.

% of households by rCSI categorisation:



A lower rCSI score/categorisation (e.g., 'No to low') indicates less reliance on consumption-based coping strategies to address food shortages.

*Responses could be more than 100% as it was a select multiple question.
 ** FCS results from the July 2025 round of data collection are not presented as the survey tool included a different set of food groups from the January 2026 round of data collection.

January 2026	No to Low	Medium	High
Urban IDPs	9%	56%	36%
Urban host community	27%	47%	26%
Female-headed households	34%	38%	28%
Male-headed households	18%	55%	27%

% of households by usage of food consumption-related coping strategies in the week prior to data collection, with average number of days per week households used coping strategy (January 2026):*

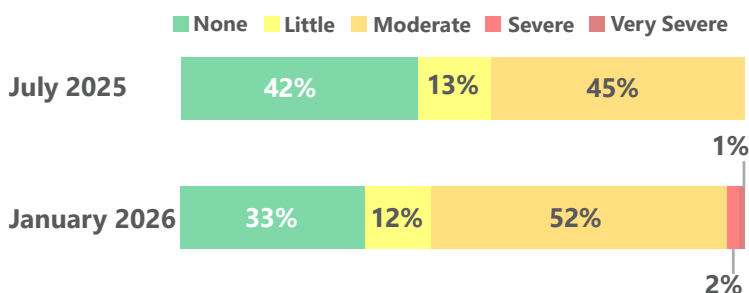
Relied on less preferred, less expensive food	78%	2.2
Reduced portion size of meals	75%	1.9
Reduced the number of meals eaten per day	74%	1.8
Borrowed from friends or relatives	73%	1.9
Reduced quantity of food consumed by adults	64%	1.5
Consumed spoilt or left-over foods	45%	1.0

Household hunger score (HHS)

HHS is a food deprivation scale, measuring the severity of household hunger in food insecure areas in the four weeks prior to data collection.²⁴ Between the two rounds of data collection, the experience of hunger became more prevalent among households in surveyed urban areas, including moderate and severe hunger.

More than half of households reported household members going to sleep hungry (53%) or entirely lacking food in the house (59%) at some point in the four weeks prior to data collection, in some cases several or many times. The experience of hunger increased in both types of assessed urban populations: the share of households reporting moderate or severe hunger increased from 65% to 73% among IDPs and from 37% to 53% among host communities.

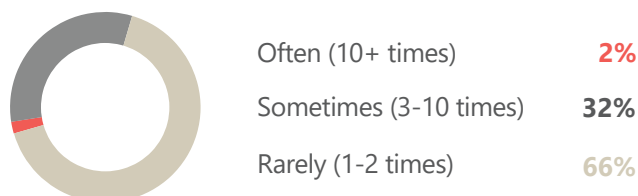
% of households by HHS categorisation:



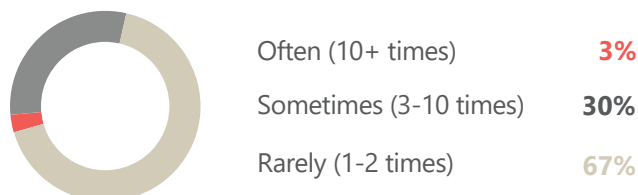
A less severe HHS score/categorisation (e.g., 'None') indicates a less severe experience of hunger among household members.

January 2026	None	Little	Moderate	Severe	Very Severe
Urban IDPs	12%	64%	15%	4%	5%
Urban host community	12%	51%	36%	1%	0%
Female-headed households	12%	44%	42%	2%	0%
Male-headed households	12%	59%	27%	1%	1%

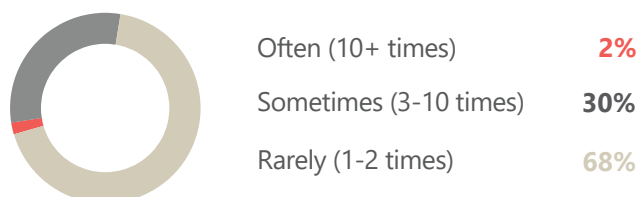
59% of households reportedly had no food to eat of any kind in their house at some point in the four weeks prior to data collection (January 2026), among whom this occurred:



53% of households reported at least one household member going to sleep hungry due to lack of food at some point in the four weeks prior to data collection (January 2026), among whom this occurred:



45% of households reported at least one household member going a whole day or night without eating anything at all at some point in the four weeks prior to data collection (January 2026), among whom this occurred:



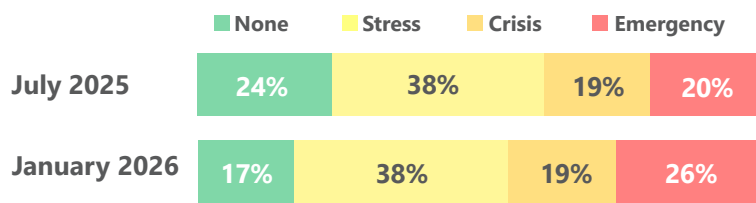
* Responses could be more than 100% as it was a select multiple question.

Livelihood coping strategies – food security (LCS-FS)

LCS-FS is an index capturing the livelihood-based responses households adopted in the 30 days prior to data collection to cope with food shortages; these stress-, crisis-, and emergency-level strategies may have medium- to long-term impacts on households and their ability to deal with future shocks.²⁵ Between the two rounds of data collection, households' usage or exhaustion of livelihood-based coping strategies to deal with food shortages increased in surveyed areas, particularly emergency strategies.

In the month prior to data collection, households engaged in, or had already exhausted, a variety of activities due to a lack of food or money to buy it: more than half of households purchased food on credit (66%) or borrowed money for food (58%), over a quarter withdrew their children from school or had done so in previous months (30%), and smaller numbers had resorted more extreme strategies such as selling productive assets (17%), selling their house or land (16%), and begging for food (12%). The application of crisis- and emergency-level livelihood strategies increased among both urban IDPs (from 44% to 58%) and urban host communities (from 37% to 43%).

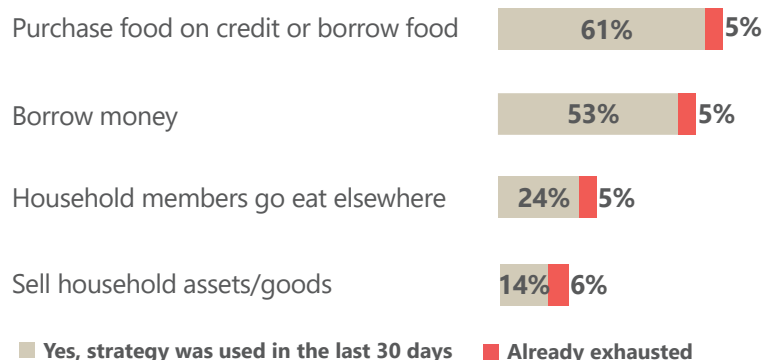
% of households by LCS-FS categorisation:



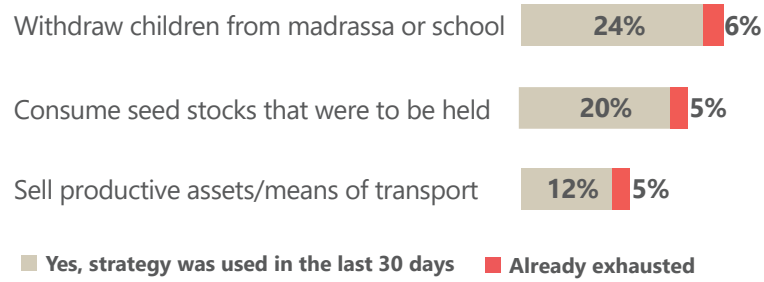
A lower LCS-FS score/categorisation (e.g., 'None') indicates less reliance on livelihood-based coping strategies used to manage food shortages and other shocks.

January 2026	None	Stress	Crisis	Emergency
Urban IDPs	14%	28%	18%	39%
Urban host community	17%	40%	19%	24%
Female-headed households	19%	42%	21%	19%
Male-headed households	16%	36%	18%	30%

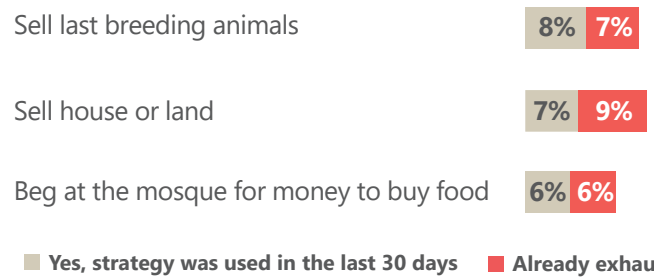
% of households by most commonly used **stress-level** livelihood strategies to cope with food shortages (January 2026):*



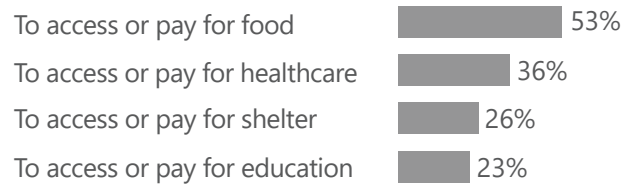
% of households by most commonly used **crisis-level** livelihood strategies to cope with food shortages (January 2026):*



% of households by most commonly used **emergency-level** livelihood strategies to cope with food shortages (January 2026):*

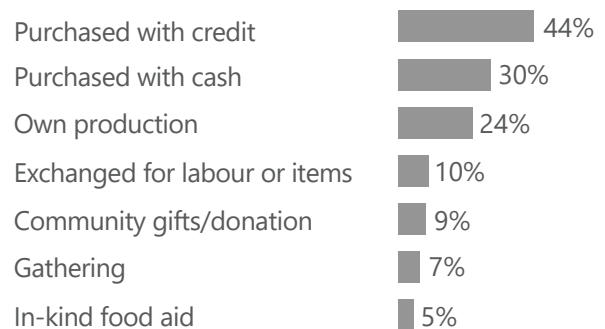


% of households by most common reasons for using these livelihood-based coping strategies (January 2026):**



Between July 2025 and January 2026, patterns of food acquisition shifted: the proportion of households acquiring food from their own production declined from 39% to 24%, while there was an increase in purchasing food via credit (from 33% to 44%) and cash (from 23% to 30%).

% of households by most common ways of acquiring foods consumed in the three months prior to data collection (January 2026):**



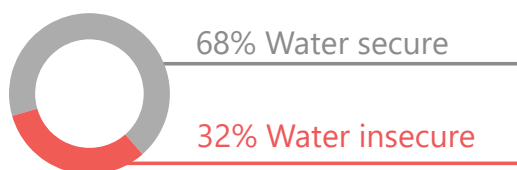
* The total (%) falls short of 100% because of the chosen top or main reported issues/items

WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE

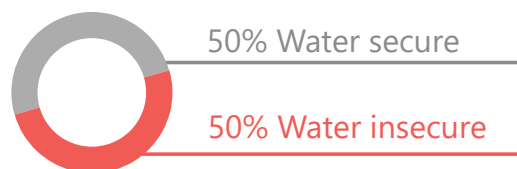
In January 2026, after several months of drought, more than half of households (56%) reported insufficient drinking water availability at least once in the month prior to data collection, and half of households (50%) were deemed water-insecure according to the household water insecurity experiences scale (HWISE-4).²⁶ On average, it took households 37 minutes to collect water from their main water source* (compared to 27 minutes from the previous round), though for 12% of households it took more than one hour.

% of households according to HWISE-4 categories:

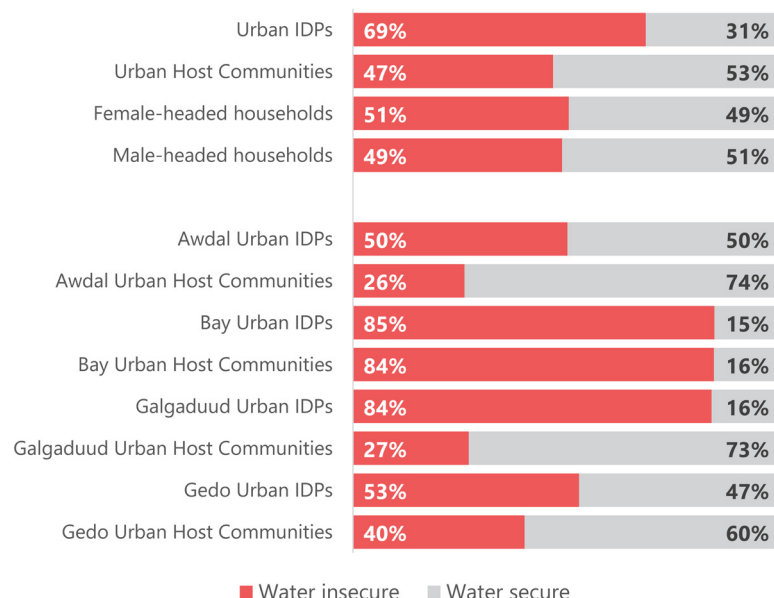
July 2025



January 2026



% of households according to HWISE-4 categories, by population group and region (January 2026):**



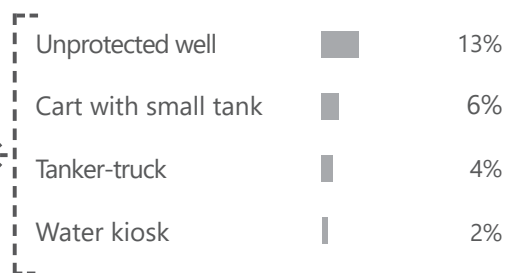
Regarding hygiene, most households (74%) did not have a hand-washing facility in their dwelling or yard or on their plot of land, which was even more prevalent among IDPs (85%) compared to host communities (72%). At the time of data collection, more than half of respondents (55%) did not have water available at the place where household members most often washed their hands, and a similar number (57%) reported that they did not have soap or detergent for washing hands in their household.

*This applies to all households except for those who have water piped into their dwelling or who did not answer the question.

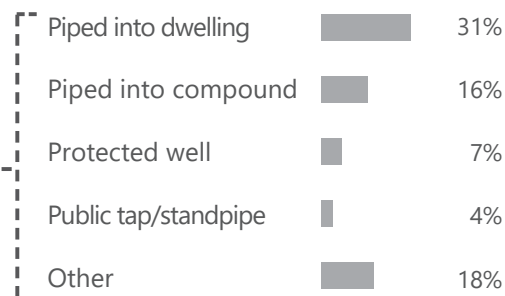
** Responses could be more than 100% as it was a select multiple question.

% of households found to be using unimproved and improved water sources (January 2026):

24% UNIMPROVED



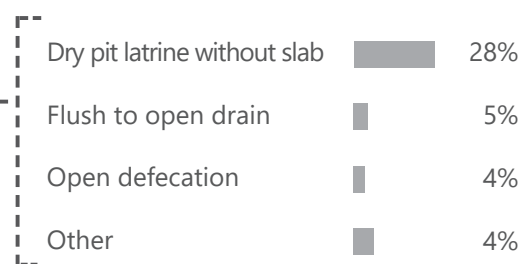
76% IMPROVED



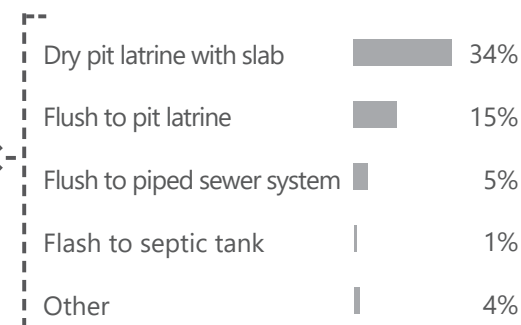
Over one third of households (35%) did not have access to improved sanitation facilities and often used facilities that may fall below minimum sanitary standards. A majority of IDP households (74%) shared their toilet facilities with others who are not members of their household (compared to 26% among host communities); among the surveyed population sharing their facilities, an average of four households shared the same toilet.

% of households found to be using unimproved and improved sanitation facilities (January 2026):

41% UNIMPROVED



59% IMPROVED



CASH & MARKETS

In the 30 days prior to data collection in January 2026, households most commonly received income from casual or daily labour, salaried work, and income from their own production. Over the same period, households most frequently spent their money on food (77%) and water (54%), followed by utilities like electricity and gas (21%), as well as rent for their shelter or land (20%).

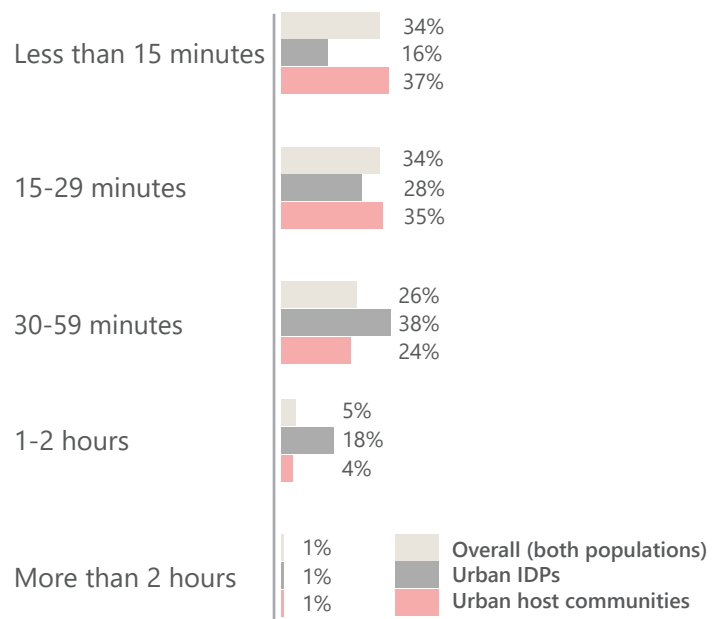
Households reported a marked increase in income disruptions between July 2025 and January 2026, during which the average number of adults per household experiencing a loss of a job or major source of income rose from 0.21 to 0.38. When adjusted for the average number of adults per household in each sample, this corresponds to an increase from 8% to 14% of adult household members, representing a notable increase in income disruption. Most reported losses were permanent rather than temporary, which may suggest not only a deterioration in livelihood stability but also reduced capacity for recovery.

% of households by most common income sources over the past 30 days prior to data collection (January 2026):**

	Overall	Urban IDPs	Urban host communities
Casual or daily labour	56%	57%	56%
Salaried work	22%	5%	24%
Humanitarian assistance	8%	11%	7%
Loans or support from family and friends	6%	4%	7%
Income from own business or regular trade	6%	1%	7%
Income from own production	6%	2%	6%
Did not receive any monetary income over the last 30 days	5%	21%	3%
Remittances	4%	2%	5%

In terms of market accessibility, most households (75%) reportedly did not face barriers to access marketplaces, though a notable minority felt that they were too far away to access regularly (17%) or that transportation to reach them is too expensive (15%). Few households considered insecurity or damage as a barrier: 2% of respondents reported damage to marketplaces and only 1% reported danger while travelling to and from the marketplace. However, many households found it difficult to purchase the items they needed, with 42% reporting that some items are too expensive and 21% reporting that some items were not available (compared to 32% and 17%, respectively, from the previous round in July 2025).

% of households by time on foot to reach the nearest operational marketplace (January 2026):*



Average household expenditure in USD in the 30 days prior to data collection (January 2026):

	Overall	Urban IDPs	Urban host communities
Food items	49	35	50
Rent for shelter and/or land	35	34	35
Utilities, i.e. electricity and gas	17	15	17
Water	14	10	15
Fuel (for cooking, for vehicles, etc.)	14	10	15

* The total (%) falls short of 100% because of the chosen top or main reported issues/items

ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

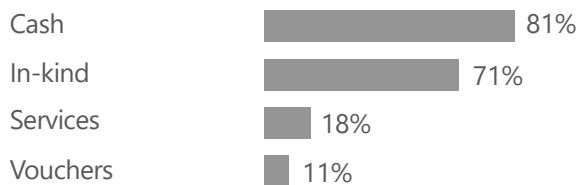
During the January 2026 round of data collection, almost one third of households (32%) reportedly received humanitarian assistance in the 12 months prior to data collection, while the remainder (68%) reported having not received any assistance during the same period. Receipt of aid was similar among urban IDPs (33%) and urban host communities (32%), while male-headed households reported higher aid receipt (35%) than female-headed households (27%).

% of households who received aid in the 12 months prior to data collection, by population group (January 2026):*

	Overall	Urban IDPs	Urban host communities
In the past 30 days	30%	26%	30%
1 to 3 months ago	12%	24%	10%
4 to 6 months ago	24%	18%	25%
7 to 12 months ago	33%	32%	34%

Surveyed households most frequently responded that their preferred modality of assistance was in-kind food aid (71%), with 67% among urban host communities and 80% among urban IDPs. However, aggregating the different modalities into general categories, cash assistance was the most common preference among the surveyed population.

% of households having reported priority needs by most commonly reported preferred modalities*** of assistance (January 2026):**



Regarding specific types of support households would like to receive from humanitarian actors to help manage the issues they faced, food was by far the most frequent response, mentioned by 78% of households overall. Other priorities included healthcare, shelter, livelihood support, and drinking water.

% of households by most commonly reported preferred type of support (January 2026):**

	Overall	Urban IDPs	Urban host communities
Food	78%	93%	76%
Healthcare	39%	38%	39%
Shelter / housing	28%	42%	26%
Livelihoods support / employment	24%	13%	25%
Drinking water	18%	26%	17%

OUTLOOK

Food insecurity is projected to remain at worryingly high levels over the second quarter of 2026, according to an IPC update analysis conducted in April 2026.²⁷ With coping capacities under strain or exhausted among many populations, the drought's impact is expected to extend into the middle of the year.²⁸ Moreover, the El Niño phenomenon is forecasted to intensify throughout the year, driving extreme weather events and creating significant flood risks.²⁹ The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimates that these factors, along with conflict, will displace over 300,000 people between April and June 2026.³⁰ Meanwhile, conflict in the Middle East continues to drive elevated prices in Somalia,³¹ putting additional pressure on households already facing several overlapping shocks.

* The total (%) falls short of 100% because of the chosen top or main reported issues/items
 ** Responses could be more than 100% as it was a select multiple question.
 *** Response options for this indicator were consolidated into four general modalities: cash assistance (including physical cash, mobile money, bank transfers, and cash via prepaid cards), in-kind assistance (food and essential hygiene/personal items), services (e.g., healthcare, education, and infrastructure construction or rehabilitation), and vouchers.

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

This assessment's research design and survey tool aligned, as closely as possible, with IPC information requirements. Following a coordination process with partners, REACH collected data among host communities and IDPs in select urban areas of Somalia. Surveys for the first round were conducted 13-28 July 2025 to inform the IPC post-Gu analysis workshop in August 2025, while surveys for the second round were conducted 21 December 2025 – 06 January 2026 to inform the IPC post-Deyr analysis workshop in January 2026.

Data was collected through face-to-face interviews conducted by trained enumerators using KOBO Collect, a digital data collection software; regular monitoring and daily data quality checks took place throughout the data collection period. Teams used GPS-guided movement plans to reach sampled locations, and inaccessible sites were replaced in accordance with predefined protocols.

The sampling strategy was based on 'units of analysis' (e.g., Gedo urban host communities), which refer to a defined population group (e.g., urban host communities) within a specified geographic area (e.g., Gedo region). Geographic areas were delineated at the administrative level through a collection of districts selected to align with livelihood zones,³² under the assumption that the population living there is exposed to similar contextual shocks and exhibit similar livelihood patterns. These standardised geographic-demographic units were used as the primary stratum for data collection, enabling comparable, population-representative analysis of humanitarian conditions across distinct population groups within defined boundaries. This assessment's units of analysis follow those IPC uses for analysis and reporting, though in some cases surveys could not be conducted in certain districts due to inaccessibility at the time of data collection.

To ensure representativeness across units of analysis, a probability-based sampling approach was implemented wherever feasible. Sample sizes were calculated to achieve the desired level of statistical precision (90% confidence level and 10% margin of error, with a 10% buffer applied). A two-stage stratified cluster design was applied across all accessible areas within the selected units of analysis. In the first stage, one-square-kilometre hexagons of urban areas served as primary sampling units (PSUs) and were selected using probability

proportional to population size (PPS), giving more populous areas a higher likelihood of selection; PSUs could be selected more than once. In the second stage, eight households were randomly selected within each PSU.

The sampling frame was informed by using WorldPop data to identify urban areas,³³ defined by (1) population density of over 300 people per square kilometre, and (2) a population of over 5,000 people in the settlement; meanwhile, population data on IDP sites was sourced from the updated CCCM master list. Following data collection, weights were applied to adjust for differences in population size and sampling probability across strata, ensuring that results more accurately reflect the distribution of the target population. The final dataset met desired precision levels, and findings are representative of the accessible areas and population groups included in the assessment.

For further explanation of the assessment's methodology, see the Terms of Reference for [Round 1](#) and [Round 2](#). Additionally, to explore findings in greater detail, data is available online ([Round 1 clean dataset, results table](#); [Round 2 clean dataset, results table](#)).

Limitations

The assessment sought to account for seasonality by collecting data at the end of Somalia's two rainy seasons. However, as the surveys were conducted at different times of the year, regular agro-climatic variation cannot be ruled out as a contributing factor to the observed deterioration across many indicators, alongside the effects of drought.

The assessment collected data for the same units of analysis across both rounds, but due to the fluid security environment in target areas and resulting access issues, certain districts that were surveyed in one round could not be included in the other (see table on page 2), impacting comparability between units of analysis where this occurred.

Finally, the design of the household dietary diversity score (HDDS) changed from including 16 distinct food groups in Round 1 to 12 in Round 2; while calculations accounted for this by aggregating similar food groups from the first round to align with the second round, this change should be noted when comparing findings with this indicator.

ENDNOTES:

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14. UNHCR, [Protection and Solutions Monitoring Flash Alert #12](#) (April 2026).
15. Somali NGO Consortium, [NGOs' Open Letter to Donors](#) (March 2026); MSF, [Failed rains and donor neglect fueling health emergency in Somalia](#) (January 2026); WFP, [WFP Warns of Catastrophic Funding Shortfalls in Somalia With Millions at Risk of Deepening Hunger Crisis](#) (February 2026); OCHA, [Somalia: 2025-2026 Drought Emergency - Situation Report No. 4](#) (March 2026); OCHA, [Somalia: The Cost of Inaction, July 2025](#) (July 2025); OCHA, [Somalia: 2025-2026 Drought Emergency - Situation Report No. 5](#) (April 2026).
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ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, Acted and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).

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