



10 Toughest Places to Feed a Family

In the wake of Putin’s unprovoked attack on [Ukraine](#), food prices are skyrocketing. This is compounding a crisis that already existed. In March, the UN’s Food Price Index reached its highest level ever, up 30% on a year before. Climate change impacts, including droughts in North and East Africa and a heatwave in India, are impacting food prices. And COVID-related supply chain challenges, poor harvests, and conflicts in Ethiopia, Yemen, and Somalia also played a role in making 2022 a bad year for food. While advanced countries respond with social protection programs, vulnerable countries have limited fiscal reserves to respond.

Combining data on the undernourished population, chronic hunger, and inflation with the scope of the country to respond, new analysis from the ONE Campaign presents the toughest places to feed a family.

	Real time data		Chronic food insecurity	Government capacity to respond		Food security 2021
	Insufficient food consumption (% of population)	Headline inflation	Prevalence of wasting (% population)	Fiscal reserves per capita (excluding gold)	2022 debt service (% government spending)	Economist global food security index ranking
Syria	53%	134%	12%	\$1,112	2%	106
Sudan	26%	263%	16%	\$4	16%	110
Burkina Faso	50%	15%	8%	<i>Data imputed</i>	6%	85
Sri Lanka	18%	30%	15%	\$240	30%	77
Haiti	43%	25%	6%	\$201	7%	106
Guinea	33%	12%	9%	\$95	9%	96
Yemen	48%	<i>Data imputed</i>	12%	\$177	20%	112
Mali	55%	8%	9%	<i>Data imputed</i>	8%	76
Somalia	71%	6%	12%	\$1	10%	<i>No data</i>
Mauritania	53%	7%	12%	\$321	33%	<i>No data</i>

1 in 10 people in the world do not have enough food

Hunger is, for many countries, a long-term problem. And while the current hunger crisis will be felt in all countries, this index highlights the extremely more acute challenges facing some. The 10 countries in this index have average rates of wasting at almost 11% and 45% of people do not have [sufficient food](#).



Soaring import costs triggered by the invasion of Ukraine are driving dramatic food cost increases - [vegetable oil costs could more than double and the import cost for wheat and maize could surpass debt repayments in some countries](#). Inflation is at record highs in many countries. In the 10 countries in this index, median headline inflation is over 15%. To put that in context, inflation in the [US reached 8% in May this year](#), a 40-year high. This means the cost of many basic food goods is rising at a rapid rate which passes on to consumers, making the weekly grocery bill more and more unaffordable. As families struggle to afford food, they're also more likely to sell off critical assets to weather the crisis.

A global problem hitting hardest in the countries least able to respond

Countries are facing acute food security challenges but their governments' capacity to respond and invest in sustainable long-term solutions is highly constrained. Economic challenges undercut governments' capacity and space to respond. For example, when debt consumes large proportions of government budgets, it limits funding available for social protection.

For the 10 countries in this index, debt service comprised on average 14% of government spending. By comparison, total government spending in low income countries on [health and education combined is less than 5% of GDP](#). Fiscal space was already severely constrained for many countries, due in part to the shock of the pandemic. But some countries faced more severe constraints, leaving little room to maneuver in response to another shock. Median reserves per capita in G7 economies were \$1,509, with Japan alone holding over \$10,000 per capita. For the 10 countries in this paper, it was \$269.

The world needs solutions to stop the humanitarian crisis and invest in sustainable food systems

The last time the G7 met in Germany they promised to lift 500 million people out of hunger. In the seven years since, [G7 funding for the issue flatlined](#) and, even before the invasion of Ukraine, an additional 153 million are undernourished. They are further from the target than when they started. But action and political will can change that.

1. Countries should avoid making things worse.
 - Resist export bans on key commodities, avoid panic buying and support access to fertiliser.
 - Fully fund emergency humanitarian appeals.
 - Create a 'humanitarian corridor' in the Black Sea to facilitate grain exports from Ukraine.
2. Countries should target subsidies and social protection to the most vulnerable and support countries with the fiscal space to do so.
 - Rapidly fulfill the G7 and G20 commitment to recycle US\$100 billion IMF Special Drawing Rights.
 - Provide an effective solution to debt sustainability through fixing the G20's Common Framework.
 - Build shock-response social protection systems to meet to mass-scale, multi-dimensional shocks.
3. Countries should make investments to scale up food production
 - Commit to medium-term investments to boost production.

For more insights on the food security crisis see [ONE's latest data dive](#) and sign up to [ONE's Aftershocks newsletter](#).



Annex: Methodology

The data, together with python scripts to replicate the analysis, are available on this [GitHub Repository](#). The repository includes a more detailed explanation of the methodology.

Indicators

- Insufficient Food Consumption: An indicator using data from the WFP HungerMapLive which tracks the number of people who report having insufficient food consumption, presented as the share of population.
- Headline inflation: Changes in the consumer price index.
- Wasting: This refers to "Prevalence of wasting, weight for height (% of children under 5)."

How the index is produced

- The index considers only low-income and lower-middle-income countries. Additionally, it considers upper-middle-income countries with good data coverage. A total of 102 countries are included in the analysis.
- The latest available data (up to end of May 2022) is used for all indicators.
- Since the data is on different scales, it is rescaled using a Quantile Transformer with a uniform distribution.
- Missing data is imputed using K-Nearest Neighbours, using 10 neighbours and all the index indicators as features.
- Finally, for simplicity, the resulting index is a simple arithmetic mean (equal weights) of the indicators.

Limitations

- The index assumes that the toughest places can only be found in lower income countries.
- Only the inflation and hunger indicators reflect countries' current/recent situation.
- Equal weights are used for simplicity, but the relative importance of each indicator could be different.
- Due to data limitations, the index does not consider the propensity of the government to respond to its citizens' needs if it has the resources.