The ten crises with the highest number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) or equivalent in 2021

In ten food crises, around 134 million people were in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) or equivalent in 2021 – nearly 70 percent of the global population in these three phases.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan and Ethiopia had the largest populations in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above). These three conflict-affected countries, plus Yemen, accounted for 43 percent of the global population in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above), or some 83 million people. The ten largest food crises had around 33 million people in Emergency or worse (IPC/CH Phase 4 or above), representing 83 percent of the global number in Emergency and Catastrophe (IPC/CH Phases 4 and 5).

The majority of the global population in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in 2021 were in three of these food crisis contexts – 401 000 people in Ethiopia; 108 000 in South Sudan; and 47 000 in Yemen. South Sudan faced ‘Famine Likely’ (IPC Phase 5) in localized areas, and both Ethiopia and South Sudan had areas at Risk of Famine in 2021.

In four countries – Afghanistan, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen – more than half of the analysed populations were in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) or equivalent.

* These consolidated estimates combine two IPC analyses – the October 2020 analysis of Belg and Meher-dependent areas (covering January–June 2021) and the May 2021 update of conflict-affected areas of Tigray, Afar and Amhara (covering May–June 2021). The Government of Ethiopia has not endorsed the May 2021 analysis.

Source: FSIN, using IPC, CH and WFP data; GRFC 2022.
Between 2020 and 2021, the number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) or equivalent in the world’s ten largest food crises increased by some 30 million. This is partly due to worsening acute food insecurity as well as expanded analysis coverage in some countries and updated population figures for Afghanistan.

Nine of these ten food crises were the same as in 2020 – the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Yemen, Nigeria, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, South Sudan, and Haiti. Zimbabwe, which was among the ten largest food crises in 2020, was replaced by Pakistan in 2021.

Since 2016, the number of people in the ten largest food crises increased by 61 million. Seven of these food crises – Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen – have been among the ten largest food crises every year since 2016, due to a combination of conflict and insecurity, economic shocks and weather extremes. The Sudan has also been among the ten largest crises each year, with the exception of 2017.

Yemen held the largest number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) each year from 2016–2019, but since then the Democratic Republic of the Congo has had the highest numbers of people in these phases, partly due to expanded geographical coverage. In 2019, the IPC analysis covered 69 percent of the national population of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while in 2021 the IPC analysis covered 91 percent of the national population.

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) was the fourth biggest crisis in 2019 – the only year for which data has been available. Since 2019, Haiti has been the world’s tenth biggest food crisis each year. In the early years of the GRFC, Malawi had the sixth highest number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) in 2016, the eighth largest in 2017 and ninth largest in 2018. Just a few countries – the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (2016), Zimbabwe (2017 and 2020), South Africa (2017), Somalia (2018), and Pakistan (2021) – have featured only once. In 2021, Pakistan became the ninth largest food crisis globally, largely due to the expansion of geographical coverage to include three provinces.

The total population analysed in the ten largest food crises increased from 398 million (excluding Pakistan) in 2016 to 515 million in 2021.
population in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) was expected to increase to 3.5 million, an increase of 1.1 million people since the 2021 peak. This includes 758,000 people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) (IPC, October 2021).

In Somalia, over 6 million people were expected to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) through June 2022, a 74 percent increase compared to the 2021 peak. In the most likely scenario, 81,000 people across the most-affected areas will face Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) during April–June 2022, accounting for 5–10 percent of the population in most of these areas. In a less likely scenario, a Risk of Famine could occur in three livelihood zones and IDP settlements in Mogadishu, Baidoa and Dhusamareb through June 2022 if the April–June Gu season rains fail, if conflict intensifies, if drought increases displacement and if food prices continue to rise. A further risk is if humanitarian assistance is not scaled up and does not reach the country’s most vulnerable populations (IPC, April 2022).

Other countries expected to face large increases in the number of people facing Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) through mid-2022 relative to the 2021 peak period include Benin, with an additional 944,000 people, as well as Burkina Faso (an additional
586,000 people), South Sudan (555,000 more people), Guinea (536,000 more people), and Mali (534,000 more people). Mauritania, Senegal, Chad, Cameroon and the Gambia were also expected to face increased acute food insecurity, with an increase of at least 250,000 people facing Crisis or worse (CH Phase 3 or above), representing an increase of 50 percent.

**Modest improvements in a few food-crisis contexts**

A few countries/territories were expected to see a modest improvement in food security in 2022, as their economies start to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic or good harvests bolster household food supplies in the early part of the year. However, these projections were largely conducted prior to the war in Ukraine and do not account for the potential impacts on food security in these countries.

In the Sudan, 3.8 million fewer people were expected to face Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) during the main harvest season compared with the 2021 peak – but this projection was made prior to the October 2021 coup and the situation has likely worsened due to tight cereal supplies, above-average food prices, conflict and displacement.

Significant decreases in the number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) between 2021 and 2022 were projected in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1.4 million fewer), Guatemala (1.2 million fewer people), Malawi (989,000 fewer), Honduras (650,000 fewer), Burundi (554,000 fewer), Côte d’Ivoire (285,000 fewer) and Lesotho (245,000 fewer).