

THE TOLL OF DROUGHT ON DISPLACED AND VULNERABLE PERSONS IN SOMALIA



*A man stands by carcasses of livestock in Dinsoor district, southern Somalia where drought has wiped out thousands of livestock and left pastoralist families desolate. ©UNHCR 2022**

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** This brief builds on a high-frequency phone-based survey (HFPS) led by the World Bank (WB) in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in Somalia and the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC).*

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KEY FINDINGS

- **Nine out of ten displaced and host community households reported that they were affected by the drought.**
- **Food insecurity was dire. 50 percent of households experienced moderate and severe hunger. This was particularly serious among refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living in camps.**
- **The most widespread impact of the drought is the loss of livestock. 40 percent of those who had lost livestock reported severe or complete destruction of their herds.**
- **64 percent of hosts have abandoned farming, which could increase the internal displacement crisis.**
- **Less than 40 percent of affected households received any drought-related assistance.**

Introduction

Since October 2021, Somalia has been hit by drought of an unprecedented scale. In February 2023, the country was still experiencing the longest and most severe drought in its history. It is estimated that more than 1.4 million people have been displaced and at least 3.5 million livestock have died¹.

Humanitarian assistance is far from sufficient². According to the latest Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) report, 8.3 million people across Somalia are expected to face crisis (IPC Phase 3) or acute food insecurity between April and June 2023. FSNAU also predicted that the situation will be worse among agropastoral populations in Baidoa and Burhakaha districts of Bay region, where famine (IPC Phase 5) is projected between April and June 2023.³ Moreover, the effects of the recent war in Ukraine led to price hikes of essential food commodities in Somalia and across Africa. This is expected to further squeeze household welfare and raise food insecurity in the country.

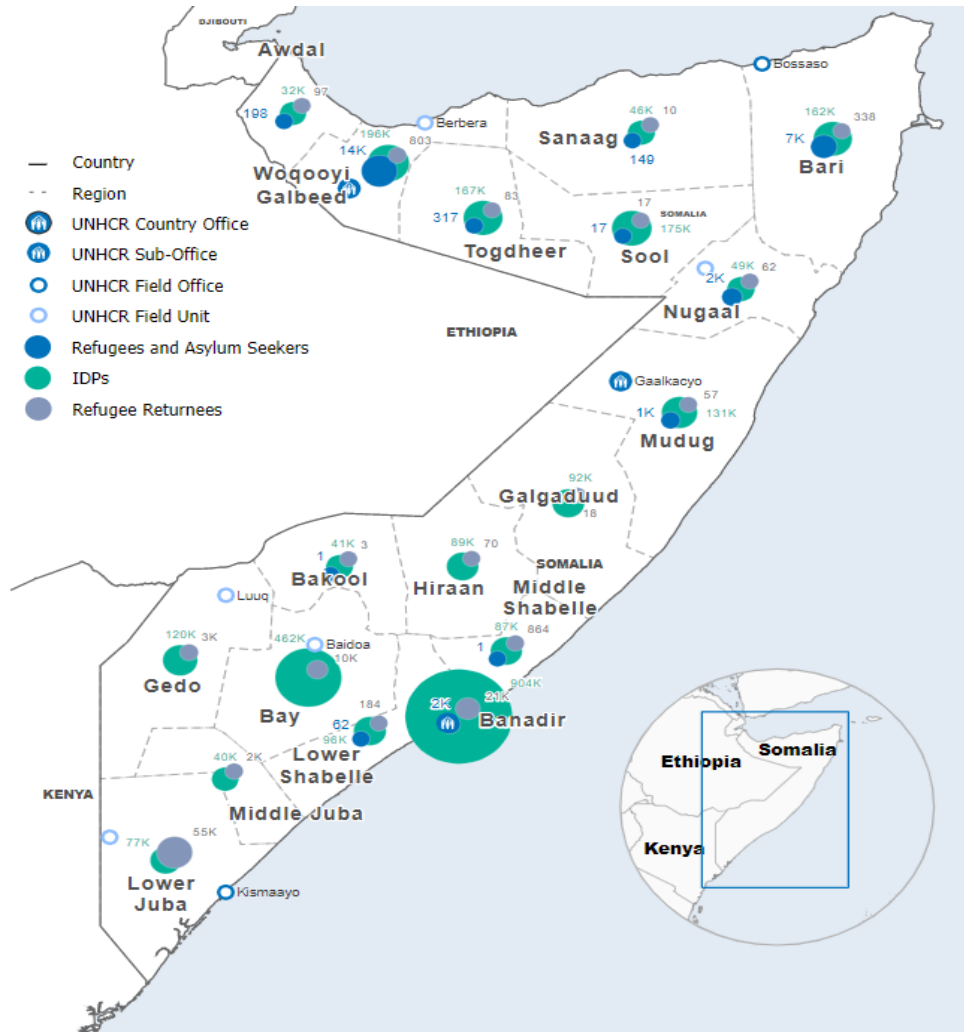
The drought has devastated a population that is largely dependent on agriculture by destroying livestock and crops. The drought also triggered a food price increase. Rampant food shortages were exacerbated by volatility in international markets, leading to food insecurity, particularly among the vulnerable groups. Though households have received assistance in the form of cash or food, not all the affected populations had been reached when the survey was conducted. By July 2022, less than 40 percent of households reported having received any drought-related assistance.

¹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133272>

² <https://fsnau.org/in-focus/multi-partner-technical-release-updated-ipc-analysis-somalia-october-2022-june-2023-english>

³ <https://fsnau.org/in-focus/multi-partner-technical-release-updated-ipc-analysis-somalia-october-2022-june-2023-english>

Figure 1: Geographic distribution of displaced persons in Somalia⁴



⁴ Persons of Concern (PoC) for UNHCR. Population figures as of June 30, 2022, provided by UNHCR. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/som>

Drought and its impact

The recent, unprecedented crisis in Somalia has been driven by consecutive seasons of poor rainfall since 2015. For instance, rainfall between 1st April and 30th June 2022 was 40 – 70 percent below average across most parts of Somalia (Figure 2)⁵. The situation was further aggravated by conflict and insecurity, disease outbreaks, the impact of COVID 19 and rapidly increasing food prices.

In the data collection activity in August 2022, households were asked if they experienced any drought since September 2021, and if so, how it affected them. Apart from refugee households, over 90 percent of households reported that they were affected by the drought (Figure 3). The number was the highest among IDPs residing in and out of camps (95 - 97 percent). A lower, but still considerable, number of refugee households reported to have been affected by the drought (57 percent).

Figure 2: Average Precipitation in Somalia April – June

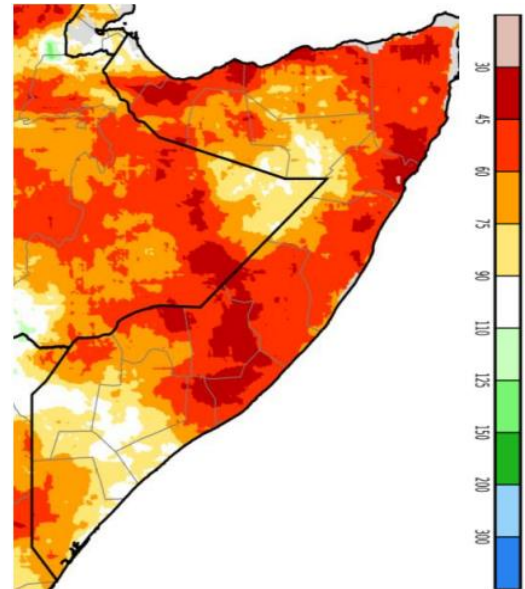
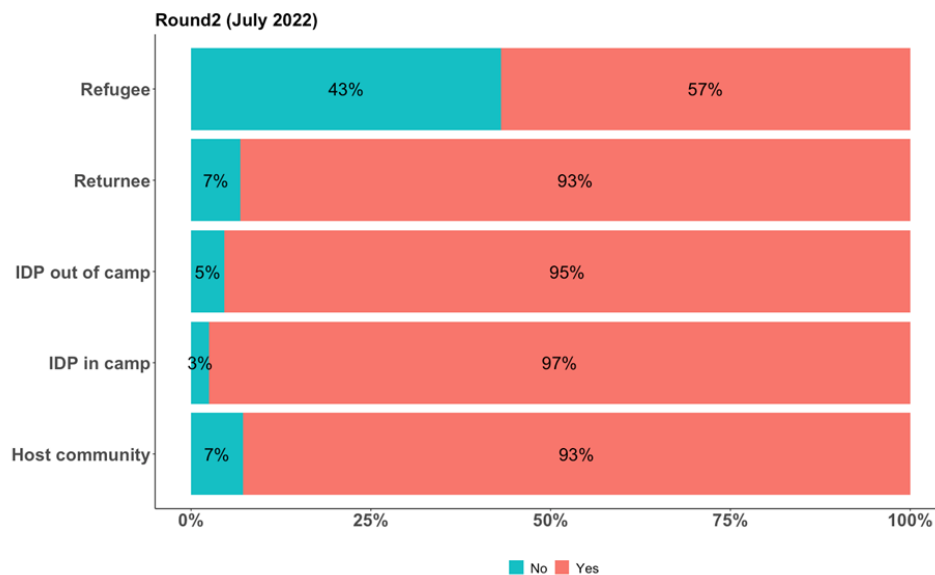


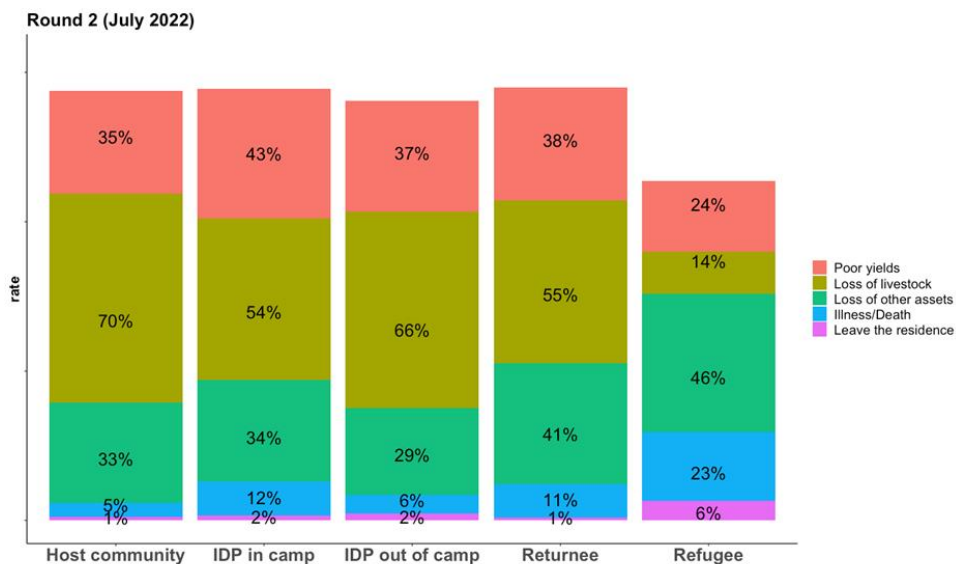
Figure 3: Households experienced drought (since September 2021)



⁵ <https://fsnau.org/downloads/Somalia-2022-Post-Gu-Seasonal-Assessment-Key-Findings-Final-12-Sep-2022.pdf>

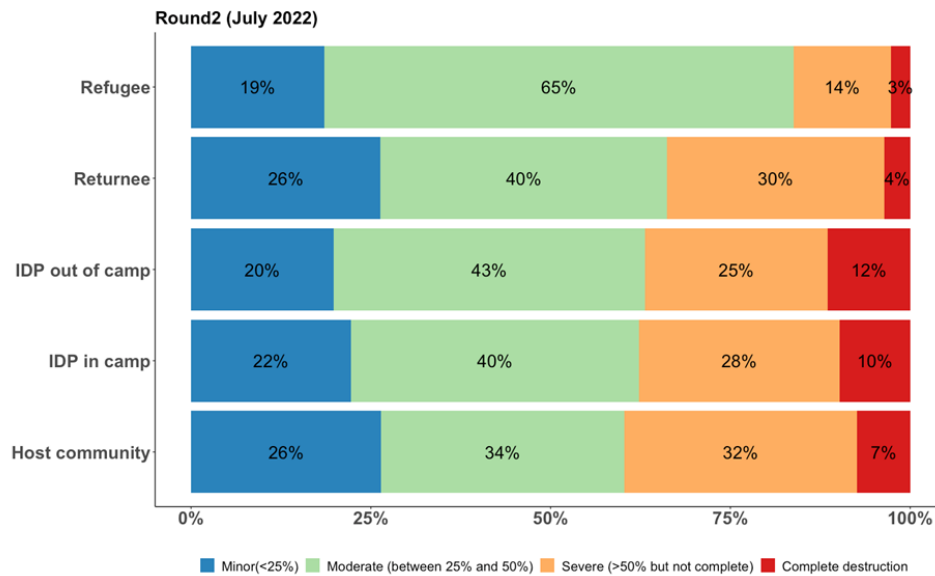
Poor yields, loss of livestock, loss of other assets and death/illness were among the losses suffered by households due to the drought (Figure 4). Almost half of refugee households experienced losses of other assets while one in four reported poor yields. Refugee households also experienced higher rates of illness or death (23%), compared to an average of eight percent among Somali households. 40 percent of those who reported loss of livestock experienced either severe or complete destruction of the livestock (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Losses suffered by households due to drought



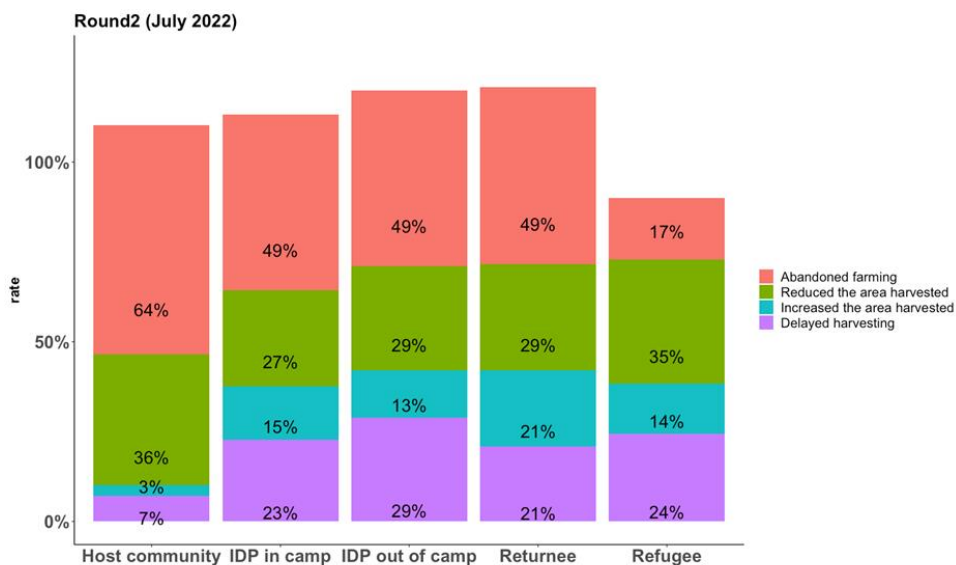
Most of the households who had experienced drought lost livestock (Figure 5). This loss was reported by all the groups, with host community households reporting the highest (70 percent). Most of the displaced households also reported the loss of livestock (66 percent of IDPs out of camps; 54 percent of IDPs in camps, and 55 percent among refugee returnees).

Figure 5: Extent of the loss to livestock due to drought



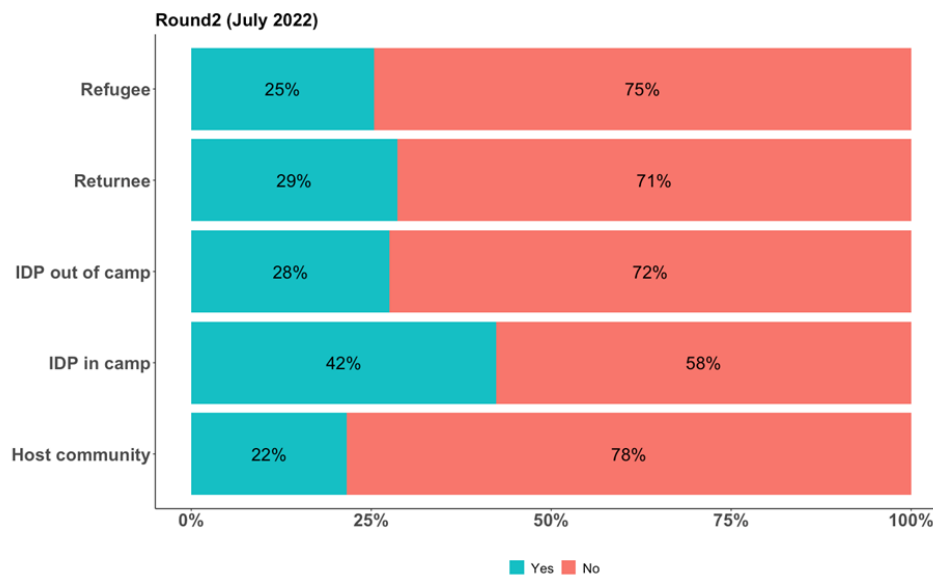
The impact on crop farming was especially severe among the host community and IDPs. Around 80 percent of those who were engaged in farming in the last six months reported that they had to change their farming activities due to drought (36 percent of hosts, 49 percent of IDPs in camps, 44 percent of IDPs outside camps, 20 percent of refugees and 44 percent of refugee returnees). Among them, 64 percent of host community households, and nearly 50 percent of IDPs and refugee returnees reported to have abandoned crop farming due to the drought (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Impact of drought on crop farming



Despite the scale and impact of the drought, the assistance is still far from sufficient. Only a third of host, refugee, returnee and IDP out of camp households affected by the drought had received any assistance in July 2022. IDPs in camps are slightly better off compared to other groups, but almost 60 percent had still not received any assistance (*Figure 7*). Among households who received assistance, food aid was the most common type. One third of IDP and returnee households received cash transfers, while 62 percent of host community households reported receiving cash transfers for the drought.

Figure 7: Assistance received by households to respond to the drought



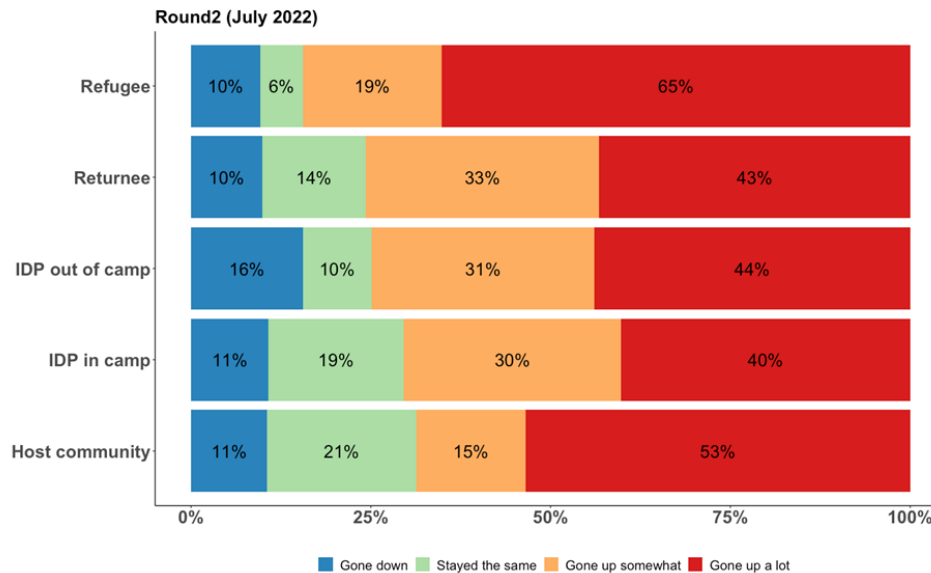
Exposure to increasing food prices

The effect of the drought and the global economy were compounded by increasing food prices. According to FSNAU for Somalia, compared to the five-year average, prices of most imported foods were higher in most regions of Somalia in August 2022, mainly due to speculation on international markets⁶. At the same time, local cereal and livestock prices were substantially higher (40-112% for cereal, 11-49% for livestock) due to reduced cereal supply, deterioration of livestock body conditions and declining herd sizes caused by prolonged drought.

To better understand the impact of prices, households were asked about their perceptions and the magnitude of food prices – whether they felt they had gone up a lot, gone up somewhat, stayed the same or gone down over the last 12 months (*Figure 8*). All households perceived significant increases in prices. Refugee households appeared especially vulnerable to price increases, with 65 percent experiencing significant increases in price and 19 percent suggesting they had gone up somewhat. Host community populations also had high levels of exposure to price changes, with 53 percent and 15 percent saying prices had gone up a lot or somewhat, respectively.

⁶ <https://fsnau.org/downloads/Market-Update-August-2022.pdf>

Figure 8: Household perceptions of changes in food prices



Food insecurity

The combined effects of drought and higher food prices has increased food insecurity in Somalia, particularly for the most vulnerable people in the country. To understand the degree that it has affected each population, the Household Hunger Scale (HHS) score was calculated (*Box 1*). The situation remained dire for most of the groups and deteriorated for IDP households (*Figure 9*). The hunger situation also worsened around the same time as the lack of rainfall, indicating that drought may have exacerbated the already fragile conditions of households. Among the IDP households living out of camps, 32 percent suffered moderate hunger in November 2021. This increased significantly in July 2022 to 45 percent. The majority of IDP households living in camps also suffered from moderate hunger, yet refugee households reported to have suffered severe and moderate hunger in both periods of data collection (72 percent in November 2021, 67 percent in July 2022). The socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, difficulties in finding employment (due to legal status and language barrier), and rapid increases in the price of food in urban areas where they reside, were all factors that contributed to the food insecurity situation of refugee households.

Box 1: Household Hunger Scale (HHS)

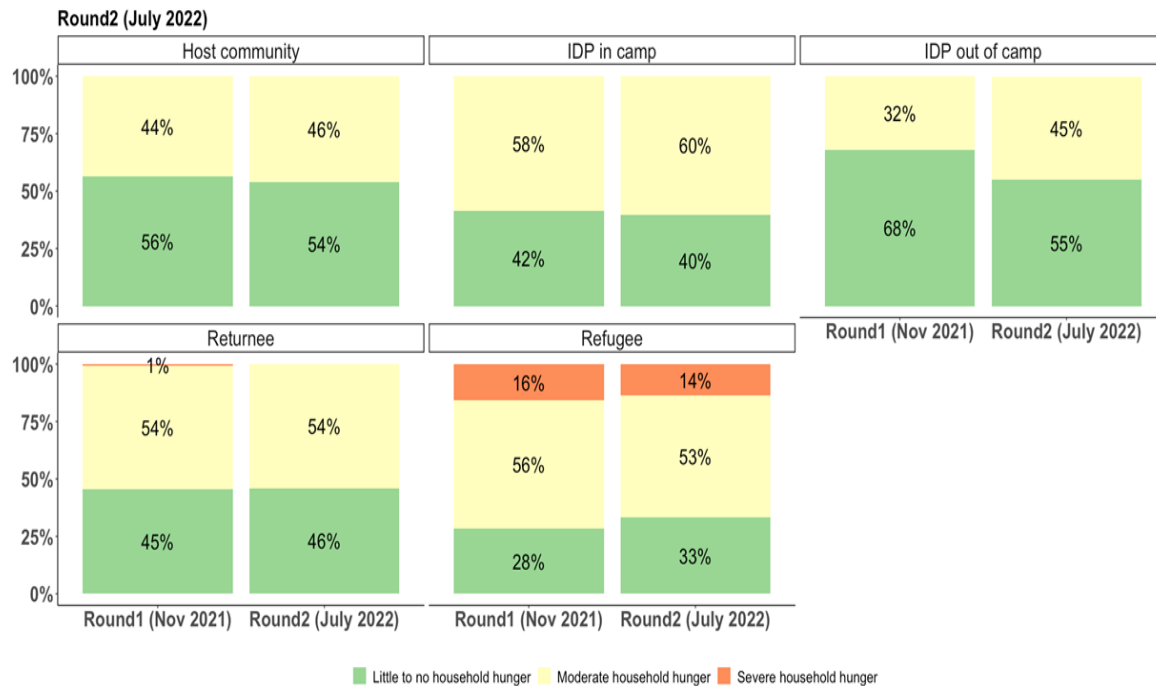
The HHS is based on three different questions over the last 30 days.

- 1) Has the household experienced complete absence of food in the house?
- 2) Has any household member gone to bed hungry?
- 3) Has a household member not eaten for a whole day due to lack of money or other resources?

The answers are aggregated on a scale.

- 0–1 little to no hunger
- 2–3 moderate hunger
- 4–6 severe hunger

Figure 9: Food Insecurity and the household hunger score



Annex: Data and Methodology

The environment surrounding displaced populations in Somalia in terms of welfare, food insecurity, and employment is changing rapidly. It is difficult to monitor the situation frequently due to insecurity in many parts of the country. There is therefore need for innovative, cost-effective, and time-saving data collection methods and techniques. Socioeconomic data on IDPs was last collected nationally in 2017 through the Somali High Frequency Survey (SHFS). The Somali Health and Demographic Survey (SHDS) 2018-19—another large-scale household survey—did not include displaced populations.

The World Bank (WB) in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in Somalia and the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC) conducted a high-frequency phone-based survey (HFPS). The first round of the survey was conducted between November 2021 and March 2022 and second round was conducted in July-August 2022. The sample consists of about 500 households from host communities, IDPs living in camps, IDPs living outside camps, refugees, and refugee returnees.

The survey was conducted through phone interviews, thus working phone numbers were needed for the target populations. Phone numbers for refugees and refugee returnees were provided from the UNHCR databases⁷. The phone numbers for the host communities and IDPs living outside camps were available from the previous national phone survey. Host community households were selected based on frequency of interaction with IDP populations i.e., households that reported to have interacted with the displaced populations at least once a month. For IDPs living in the camps, refugees and refugee returnees were obtained from the UNHCR database.

Most refugees in Somalia are from Ethiopia (54 percent) and Yemen (41 percent) and live outside camps in the urban and peri urban areas of the north and northeast. The survey therefore focused on these two refugee groups. In the case of refugee returnees, about 11,606 households were registered in the UNHCR database at the time of sample selection, most having returned from Kenya (97 percent) and Yemen (2 percent). Many of them live alongside IDPs in camps. As for IDPs living in camp, the focus was on two main regions—Banadir and Bay—which hosts almost 50 percent of the in camp IDPs in Somalia.

Box 1: Reweighting to correct phone survey bias

One shortcoming of phone surveys is its lack of national representativeness in key statistics. People who respond to phone interviews may have systematically different characteristics from those who do not respond to phone interviews. Moreover, there are populations that are completely excluded from phone surveys because they do not own or use phones or may not have connectivity despite mobile phone ownership or may not have access to reliable sources of energy. For example, in rural Somalia, many households do not own phones while telephone ownership and use in urban areas is close to 90 percent. Since phone ownership or use is essential for phone interviews, such an unbalanced distribution makes the collection of nationally representative data challenging. Nevertheless, there are ways to partially address these issues through reweighting exercises. In this survey, we adjusted sampling weights so that weighted averages of key statistics become as representative of the target group of Somalia as possible.

The survey questionnaire was designed to cover important and relevant topics for displaced populations, including household- and individual-level sociodemographic characteristics, knowledge of COVID-19 and adoption of preventive behavior, access to basic goods and services, access to social assistance, impacts of COVID-19 on economic activity and income sources, households' exposure to shocks including ongoing drought and coping mechanisms as well as displacement-specific topics such as interaction between the displaced and host communities.

⁷ The final data consists of 469 host communities, 551 IDPs in camps, 503 IDPs living outside the camps, 467 refugees and 550 refugee returnees.