

Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024-25

Food Insecurity & Inequality



PRESS RELEASE

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Nearly One in Four Pakistani Households Experiences Food Insecurity, With the Poorest Quintile Facing Almost Five Times the Risk of the Richest

Islamabad, April 24th, 2026

Food insecurity remains one of Pakistan's most persistent and unequal social challenges. Findings from the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM)–Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024–25 reveal that while national food access has shown modest improvement over time, a substantial share of households continues to experience moderate or severe food insecurity. These risks are not evenly distributed. Instead, they are sharply shaped by income, geography, and provincial context, reflecting deeper structural inequalities in livelihoods, purchasing power, and resilience to economic shocks. The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) module provides a critical lens into how households experience food stress—not just in terms of hunger, but anxiety, compromise on food quality, and reduced intake—offering an essential evidence base for targeted policy action.

What is the Big Data Analysis Series by Gallup?

Gallup Pakistan's Big Data series was initiated by Bilal I. Gilani, Executive Director of Gallup Pakistan. As he explains: *"Pakistan does not suffer from a lack of data, but from limited accessibility and weak translation of numbers into understanding. Gallup Pakistan bridges this gap by analyzing large, often under-used datasets — from PSLM and Labour Force Surveys to Economic Surveys and National Census data — so these statistics can meaningfully inform policy and public discourse."*

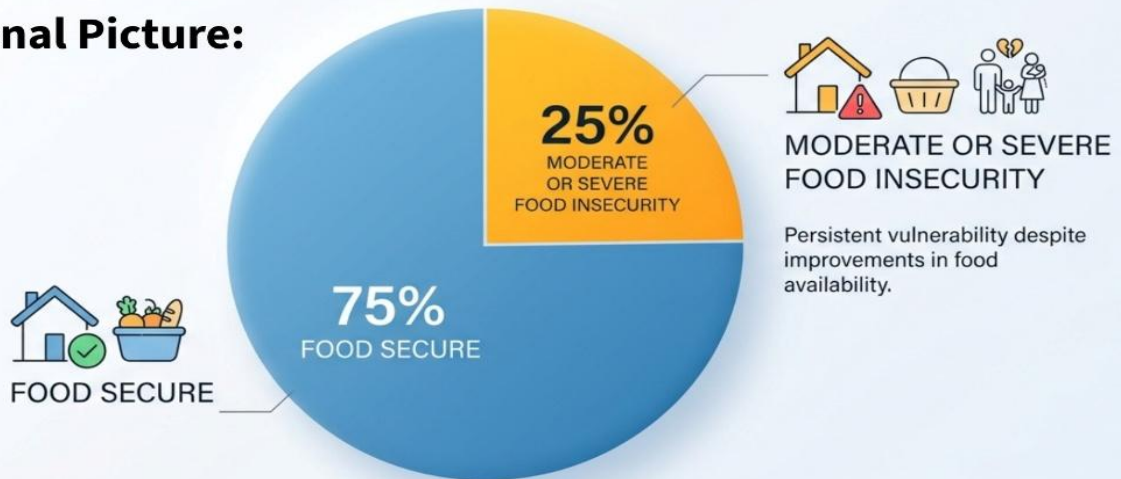
What data points this current edition covers:

This analysis is based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) module of the PSLM–HIES 2024–25 Social Report, covering 32,814 households nationwide across all provinces and rural–urban areas. The FIES framework measures the share of households experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity, aligned with SDG Indicator 2.1.2. Results are analyzed at the national level, by province, and by consumption quintile, enabling a detailed assessment of inequality in food access and vulnerability.

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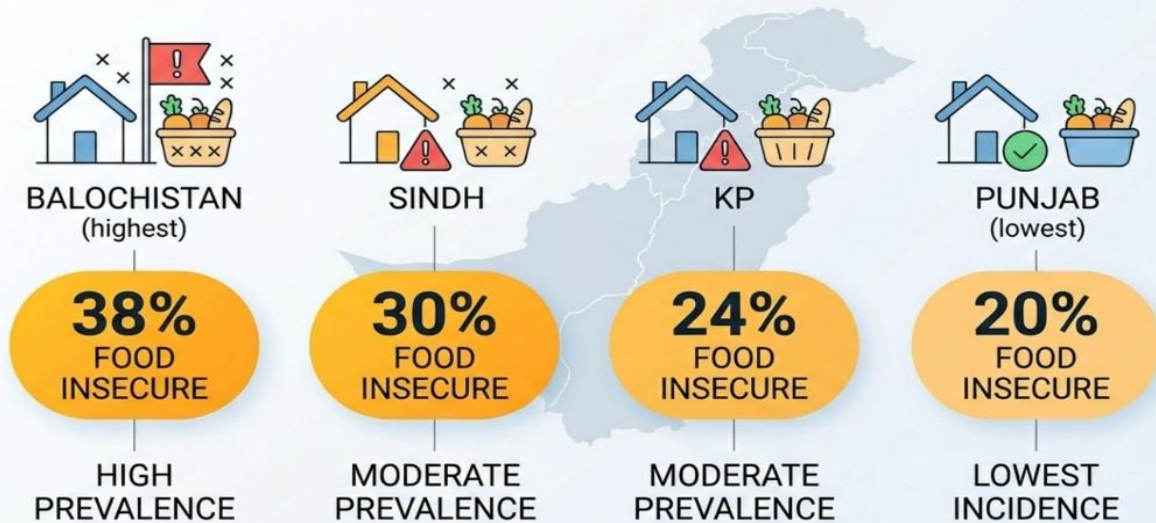
The National Picture:



Around **24–26%** of households in Pakistan experience moderate or severe food insecurity, indicating persistent vulnerability despite improvements in food availability.

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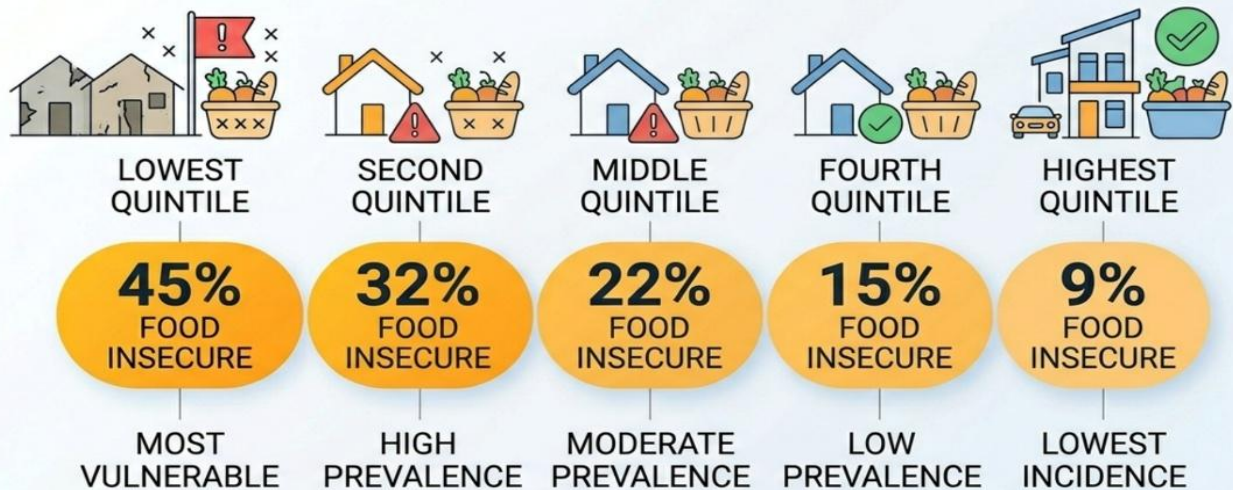
PROVINCIAL FOOD INSECURITY IN PAKISTAN



Balochistan records the highest prevalence of food insecurity, followed by Sindh, while Punjab consistently shows the lowest incidence.

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HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY BY INCOME QUINTILE IN PAKISTAN



Food insecurity in Pakistan is increasingly driven by affordability and income instability, rather than national food supply shortages.

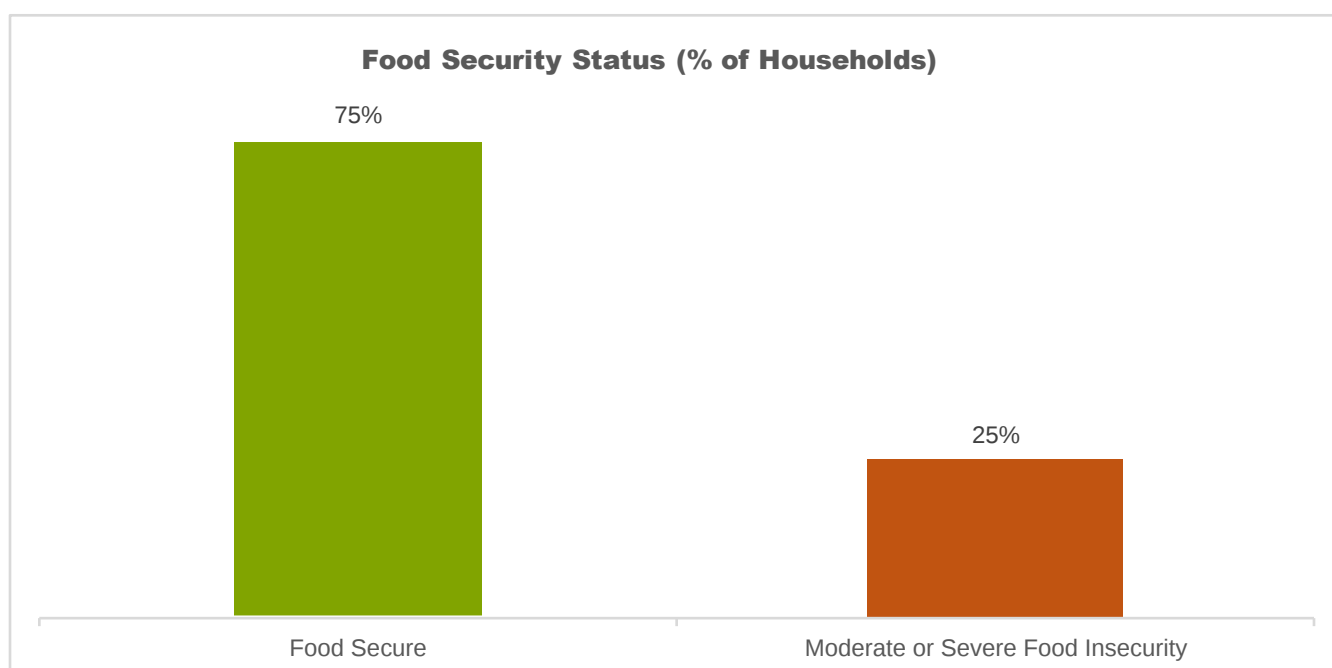
Key Findings:

1. Around 24–26% of households in Pakistan experience moderate or severe food insecurity, indicating persistent vulnerability despite improvements in food availability.
2. Balochistan records the highest prevalence of food insecurity, followed by Sindh, while Punjab consistently shows the lowest incidence.
3. Households in the lowest income quintile face food insecurity at nearly five times the rate of households in the highest quintile, highlighting deep economic inequality.
4. Food insecurity in Pakistan is increasingly driven by affordability and income instability, rather than national food supply shortages.
5. The data point to a strong need for income-targeted and region-specific food security interventions, particularly in poorer provinces.

1. Moderate or Severe Food Insecurity — The National Picture

At the national level, the PSLM–HIES 2024–25 shows that roughly one-quarter of Pakistani households (around 24–26%) experience moderate or severe food insecurity, meaning they are unable to consistently access sufficient, nutritious food throughout the year. This level of food insecurity is significant in scale: it represents millions of households reporting experiences such as worrying about running out of food, compromising diet quality, skipping meals, or eating less than needed due to financial constraints. While Pakistan is not facing a generalized food supply shortage, the persistence of food insecurity at this magnitude indicates that economic access—not availability—is the binding constraint for a large share of the population.

The data also suggest that food insecurity has become a structural condition rather than a temporary shock for many households. Even as inflation eased relative to earlier crisis periods, food insecurity remains widespread, implying that income growth and purchasing power recovery have lagged behind price pressures for essential food items. This disconnect highlights the vulnerability of household consumption in Pakistan, where food expenditure accounts for a large share of total spending, especially among poorer households. National averages therefore mask a deeper reality: while some households experience stability, a substantial proportion remain trapped in ongoing food stress, with limited resilience against future economic or climate-related shocks.



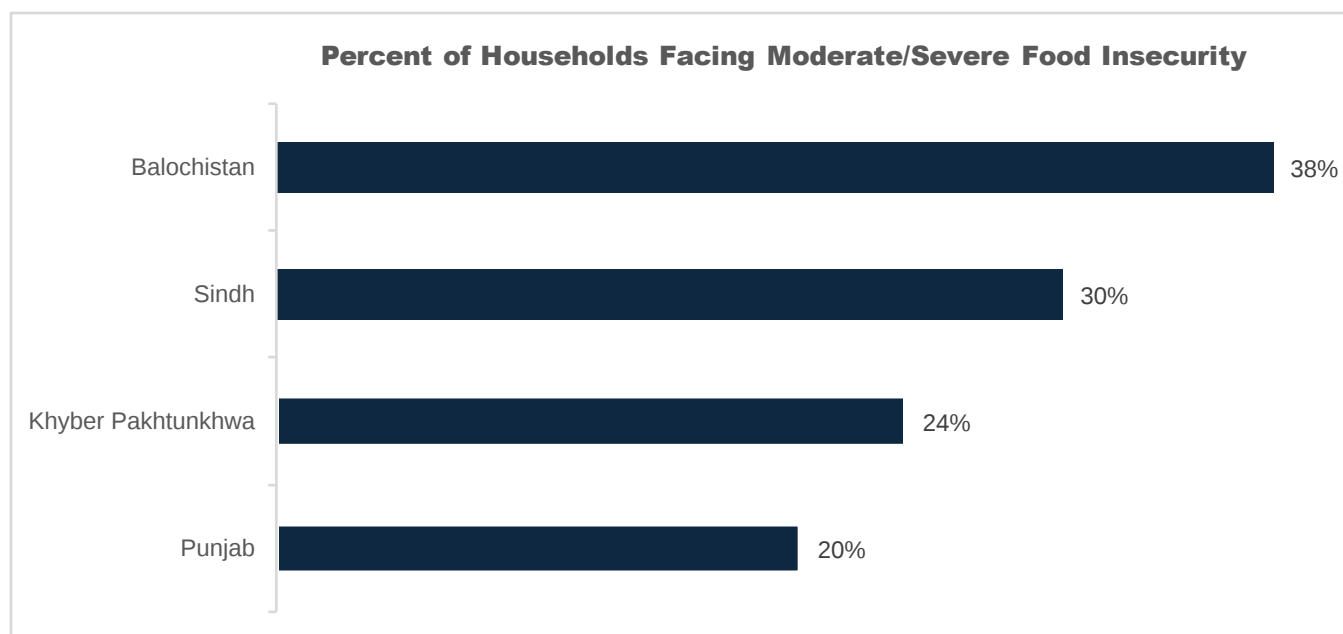
Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) / Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024–25; Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

2. Food Insecurity by Province — A Geography of Unequal Exposure

Provincial patterns reveal that food insecurity in Pakistan is deeply spatialized, reflecting long-standing regional inequalities. Balochistan emerges as the most food-insecure province, with well over one-third of households experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity. This exceptionally high prevalence reflects a combination of structural poverty, limited market integration, climate vulnerability, and weaker social protection coverage. In many districts, food insecurity is not episodic but chronic, driven by low and unstable incomes rather than short-term disruptions.

Sindh records the second-highest levels of food insecurity, with approximately one-quarter to one-third of households affected. Rural Sindh, in particular, shows elevated vulnerability, shaped by landlessness, agricultural seasonality, and exposure to floods and environmental stress. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa occupies an intermediate position, where food insecurity remains widespread but less severe than in Balochistan and Sindh. Punjab consistently reports the lowest prevalence, with food insecurity affecting closer to one in five households, reflecting stronger agricultural productivity, denser markets, and broader income opportunities.

These provincial disparities underline that food insecurity is not evenly distributed across the country. Instead, it mirrors Pakistan's broader development map, where historically marginalized regions face compounded disadvantages. Importantly, provincial averages still conceal within-province inequalities, meaning that even in relatively better-performing provinces, pockets of extreme food insecurity persist. The findings emphasize the need for geographically targeted food security and income support strategies, rather than uniform national approaches.



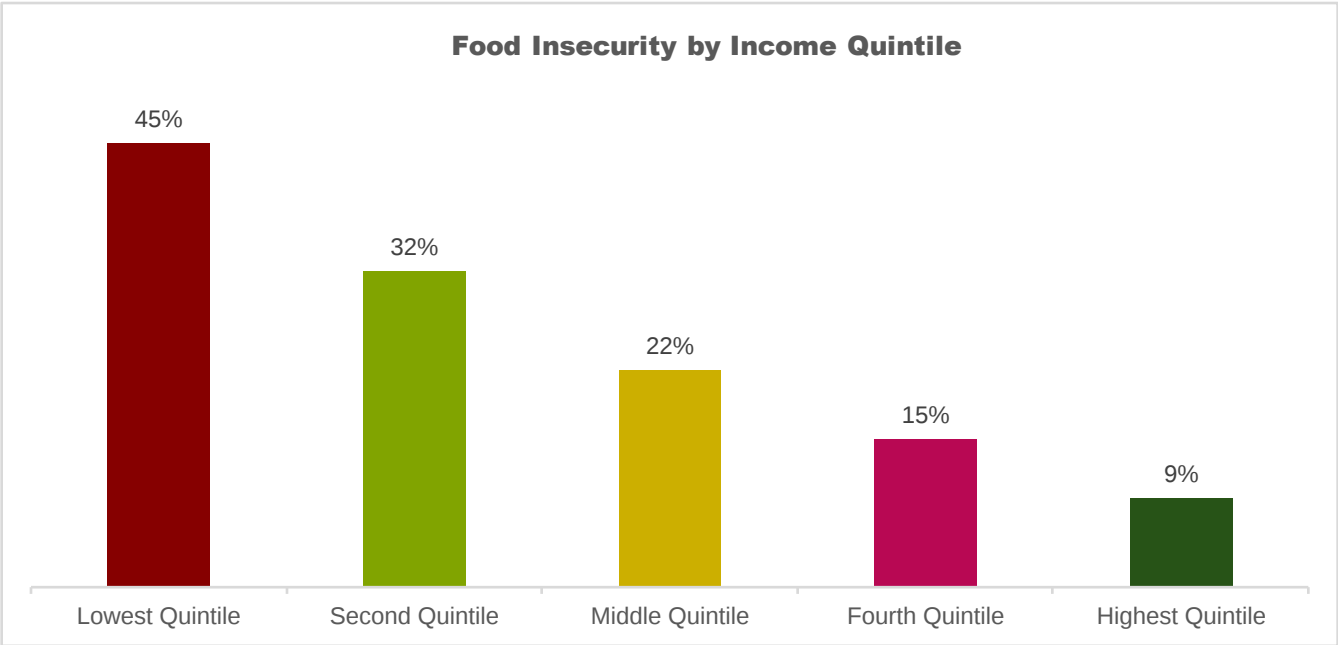
Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) / Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024–25; Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

3. Food Insecurity by Income Quintile — Inequality at the Core

Income-based disaggregation reveals the sharpest and most consequential divide in food insecurity outcomes. According to PSLM–HIES 2024–25, households in the lowest consumption quintile experience moderate or severe food insecurity at rates approaching 40–45%, meaning nearly one in every two poorest households struggles to meet basic food needs. In contrast, households in the highest quintile report food insecurity rates below 10%, indicating that food stress is relatively rare and largely transient among the better-off.

This translates into a stark inequality: the poorest households are nearly five times more likely to experience food insecurity than the richest. The gradient is steep and continuous, underscoring that food insecurity in Pakistan is fundamentally an issue of economic exclusion. For low-income households, food insecurity reflects persistent structural constraints—irregular employment, low wages, exposure to price volatility, and minimal savings to absorb shocks. Rising food prices disproportionately affect these households because food accounts for a much larger share of their total expenditure.

Crucially, this pattern confirms that improvements in national food production or supply chains alone are insufficient to eliminate hunger. As long as income inequality remains high, food insecurity will persist among the poorest, even in periods of overall economic stabilization. The FIES results therefore reposition food insecurity as a poverty and inequality problem, not merely a nutrition or agriculture issue. Effective responses must prioritize income protection, targeted subsidies, and social safety nets that directly improve the purchasing power of households at the bottom of the distribution.



Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) / Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024–25; Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.



Wish to Contribute to Gallup Big Data Analysis?

Gallup Pakistan is looking for collaboration with researchers to expand the Big Data Analysis project. If you have any ideas, please write to Bilal I Gilani, Project Director, Big Data Analysis at Gallup Pakistan.

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