



# **The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Insecurity in Burkina Faso**

*Pouirkèta Rita Nikiema and  
F. Antoine Dedewanou*

November 2023 / AHCV-PB-003

## **The context**

The COVID-19 pandemic began in China in December 2019, and quickly spread to all countries in the world. Burkina Faso officially recorded its first infected case on March 9, 2020. To limit the spread of the virus, Burkina Faso like many countries worldwide followed the physical distancing, handwashing and face covering measures and has taken additional preventive measures including: the closure of schools, universities, public markets, restaurants and bars, places of worship, closure of borders (air, land and rail), etc.

The restrictive measures impacted the living conditions of populations in different ways. For example, the closure of markets affected access to food in cities and among the poor due to the increase in prices: 25% of households in Burkina Faso were unable to access staple foods (INSD, 2020).

This policy brief summarizes the findings from a study that assessed the persistence of households' food insecurity in Burkina Faso during the Covid-19 pandemic, 2019-2022.

## The problem

In Burkina Faso, agriculture is an important pillar of the national economy and is fundamental to food security. The sector generates one third of the country's GDP and employs 80% of the active population but supports mainly subsistence livelihoods. However, agricultural production and food security are highly dependent on weather shocks. Rainfall variability reduced agricultural production between 6% and 15% in 2019 (Food Crisis Prevention Network, 2020) and this in turn might have tipped 10.1% of population into food insecurity.

In addition, over the past five years, the country has been affected by violent terrorist attacks and regional unrest. The combination of insecurity and violence led to the closure of schools, internally displaced people (around 1.7 million people) and shutdown of health centres. These recurrent and violent adversely affected households' livelihoods in several regions within the country.

Food insecurity is a common social issue affecting several African households. COVID-19 reduced people's ability to meet their food needs, which could continue to exacerbate food and nutrition insecurity in the country.

## Research summary

We used descriptive and empirical dynamic model to analyze effects of Covid-19 on food insecurity. Primary data were drawn from the Burkina Faso High Frequency Phone Survey (HFPS) collected during the period June 2020 and June 2021 by the World Bank in collaboration with the Burkina Faso National Institute of Statistics (INSD).

## Research results

- ***Food insecurity experience***

Food Insecurity indicators show that 14.9% of households skipped a meal; 8% ran out of food, and 5 percent went out without eating for a whole day during the pandemic. Although between 10% and 28% of people experienced food insecurity

during the beginning of the pandemic, the trend over this time shows that less than 10% of respondents experienced food insecurity in the second quarter of 2021.

- **Food insecurity as social issue**

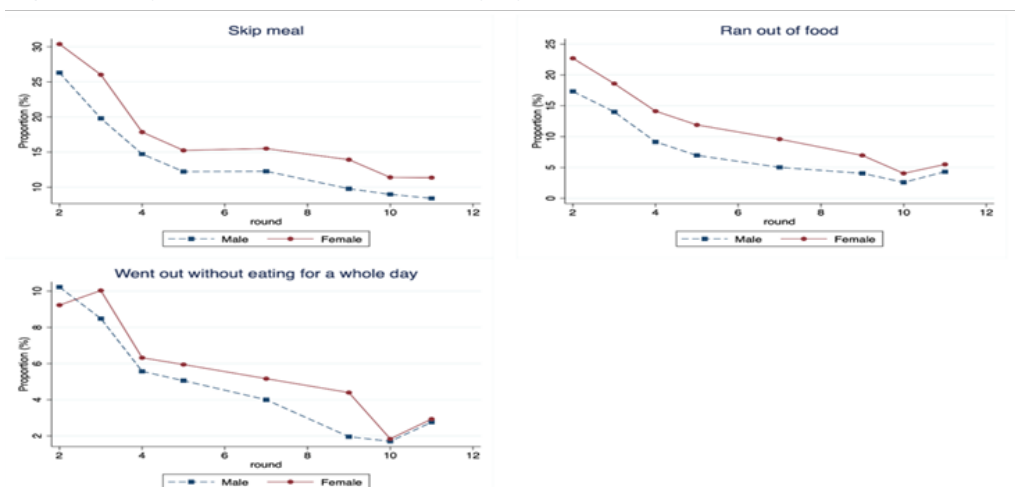
We observe that women have a higher prevalence of food insecurity than men (see Figure 1). Young people (18-24) are particularly more affected, followed by people over 45 years old. There is a substantial difference in food insecurity depending on the household size, the place of residence and the type of activities performed by household members. All these patterns confirm that food insecurity remains a growing social issue in Burkina Faso.

- **The persistence of food insecurity and food insecurity profile**

The proportion of people becoming food insecure, and the proportion of those moving out of food insecurity reveal a high persistence in food insecurity throughout the pandemic. The evidence indicates that being food insecure in a given month increases the probability of experiencing food insecurity in the next month, or in several consecutive months. Indeed, between 40% and 50% of individuals who reported having skipped meals in the previous months still skipped meals in subsequent months. Between 18% and 40% of households starting with running out of food during the pandemic stays in that state even a year after the pandemic. In addition, between 5% and 25% of households who went without eating remains in that state.

Our findings provide strong evidence that women are more likely to go without food, followed by people aged 45-64. It appears that a large household is significantly associated with persistence of food insecurity over several months. It seems that a large household translates into a dilution of wealth and that of per capita income, which is suggestive of lack of scale economies in Burkinabe households.

**Figure 1: Dynamics of Food Insecurity by Gender**



## Implications for policy makers

- There is a need to enable access to food for vulnerable households. Considering gender, area of residence and type of activities, government interventions must target the most disadvantaged groups through assistance programmes.
- Also, given that women and elderly members are more food insecure, policies to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and similar shocks must be gender sensitive.
- Further, in the context of a terrorism, it is critical to design policies to reduce inequalities and household vulnerability to poverty, to promote social protection, and to build resilience during pandemics and crises.

## References

- Food Crisis Prevention Network. (2020). *Burkina Faso*. <https://www.food-security.net/en/datas/burkina-faso/>.
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African Economic Research Consortium  
Consortium pour la Recherche Economique en Afrique  
Middle East Bank Towers,  
3rd Floor, Jakaya Kikwete Road  
Nairobi 00200, Kenya  
Tel: +254 (0) 20 273 4150  
[communications@ercafrica.org](mailto:communications@ercafrica.org)