



Hunger Watch Survey-II

December 2021-January 2022

Interim Findings

Photo credit: RTF WB



Photo credit: RTF West Bengal

Hunger Watch -I, 2020

- In October-December 2020, we conducted a survey to understand the situation of hunger and food security among marginalised households
- The Hunger Watch-I survey was conducted by the Right to Food Campaign and Centre for Equity Studies along with other partners
- About 4000 households across 11 states were covered
- Even six months after the national lockdown, food consumption and incomes had not recovered
- Over two-thirds of the respondents reported a decline in quality and quantity of food consumed

The COVID-19 second wave

- Second wave began in April-May 2021 even before recovery from the 1st wave was complete
- 2nd wave was worse in terms of the spread and severity of infections
- Although there was no national lockdown, most states had curfews and various restrictions on economic activity
- Once again, jobs were lost, and incomes affected
- People faced catastrophic health expenditures and indebtedness rose

Hunger Watch-II, 2021-22

- We conducted another survey in December 2021-January 2022 to assess the situation of food (in)security after the second wave
 - The third wave and associated economic restrictions were just beginning as the survey was ending
 - This survey therefore addresses the period before the third wave
- We spoke to more than 6,500 respondents across 14 states
- Similar questions were asked as in Hunger Watch-I
- As before, the survey purposively sampled marginalised and excluded communities

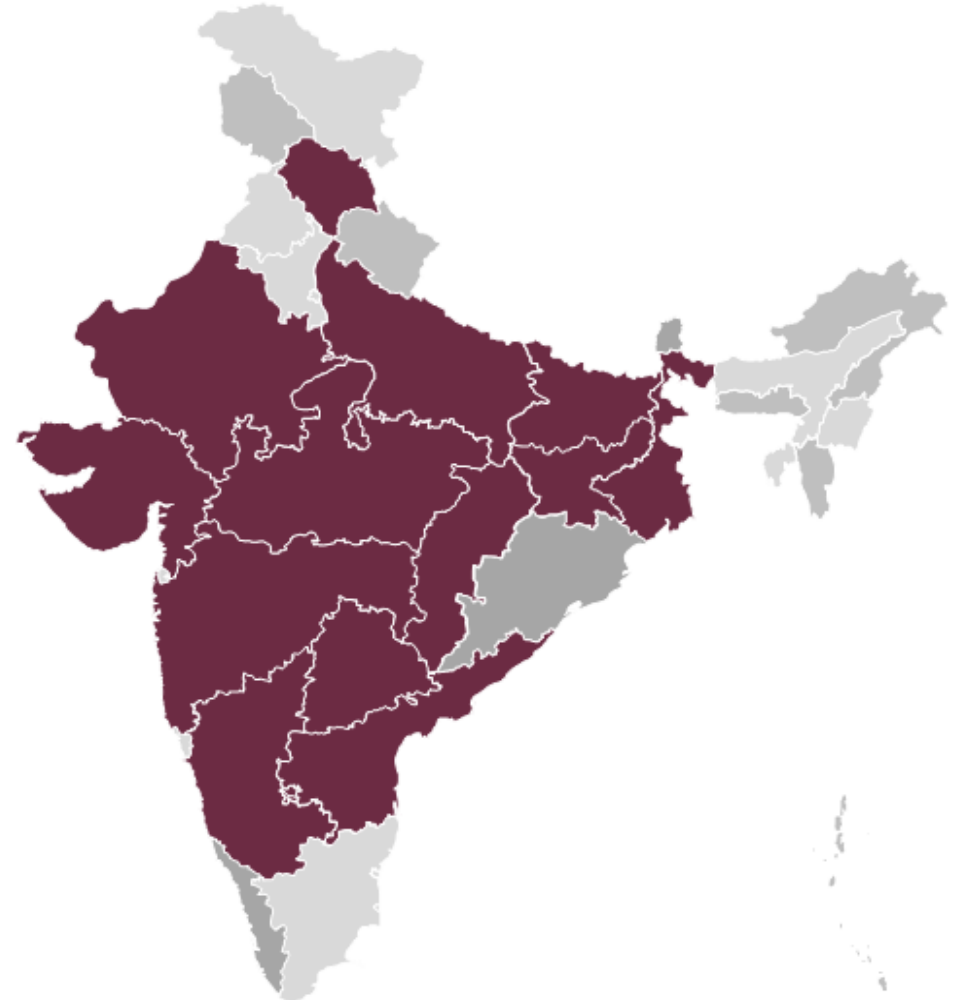


Photo credit: Meet Kakadiya

Where are our respondents located?

73% (N=4886) of our respondents were based in rural areas, 27% (N=1816) in urban

State	Number of respondents
Andhra Pradesh	150
Bihar	178
Chhattisgarh	254
Delhi	280
Gujarat	549
Himachal Pradesh	260
Jharkhand	166
Karnataka	154
Madhya Pradesh	821
Maharashtra	1,182
Rajasthan	105
Telangana	98
Uttar Pradesh	508
West Bengal	1,992
Total	6,697



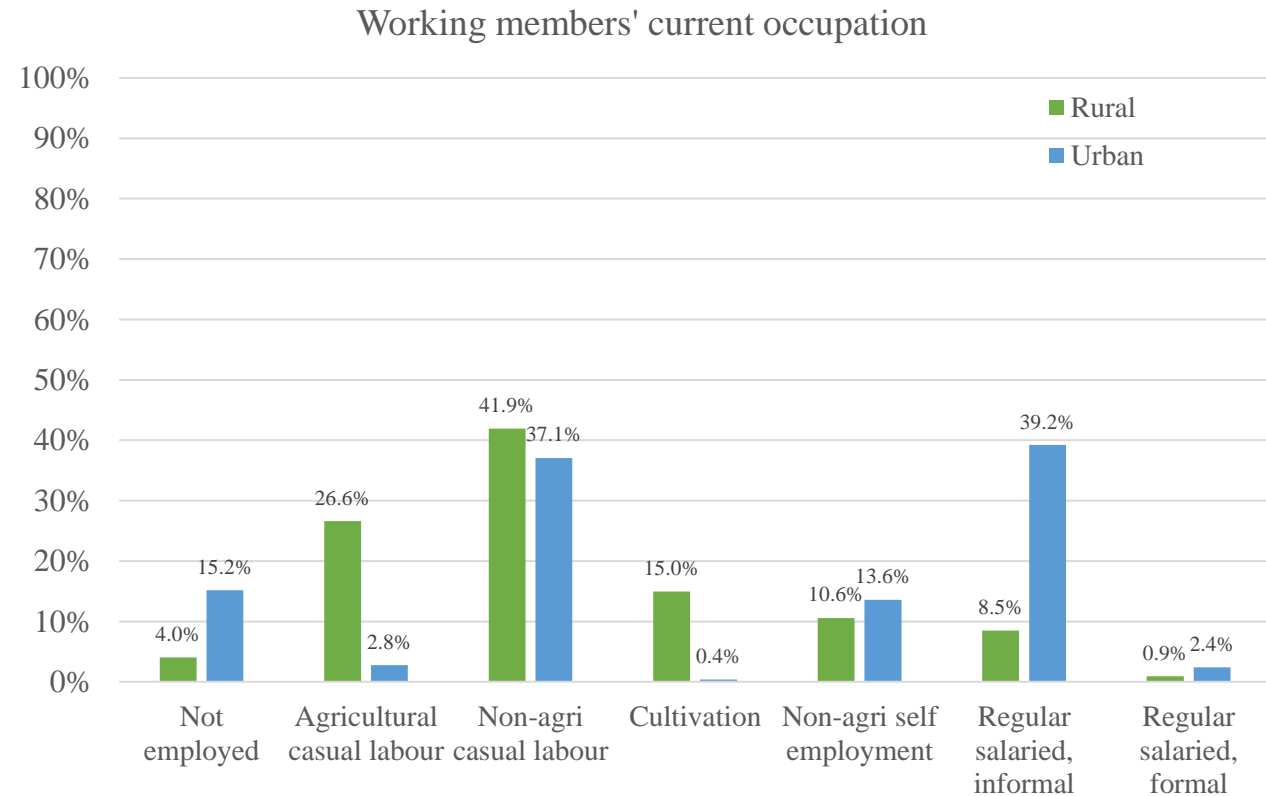
Note: The sample sizes vary substantially across states, making comparisons difficult. All results presented here are simple averages and are not weighted by population. All state-wise disaggregations should be treated as suggestive only.

Who is our typical respondent?

- 64% of the respondents were Hindu, 18.3% were Muslim.
- 71% of the respondents were women, 29% were men, 15 (<0.2%) were transgender or did not want to disclose their gender.
- The average respondent was almost 44 years old.
- The caste division was as follows: 31% ST, 25% SC, 19% General caste*, 15% OBC and 6% PVTG
 - *More than half the General caste category are Muslims
- The average household had close to 4 members, roughly evenly distributed between male and female
- 31% of the households had at least one member above the age of 60 years

Where do members of a typical household work?

- 80% of the households had working members, on average 1.4 working members per household
- Both male and female working members reported spending approximately 18 days working in the month prior to the survey
- Non-agricultural casual labour is a prominent source of employment in rural and urban areas.
- In urban areas, about 39% work in informal but regular and salaried work. In rural areas, 26.6% work in agricultural casual labour and 15% in cultivation.



Note: These are from among those 5354 households (3727 rural, 1627 urban) that reported having working members. The current occupation relates to the month prior to the survey. These are composite responses from a multiple response question, i.e., if one member reports being employed in cultivation and another in regular salaried employment, the household is counted in both categories.



Photo credit: RTF West Bengal

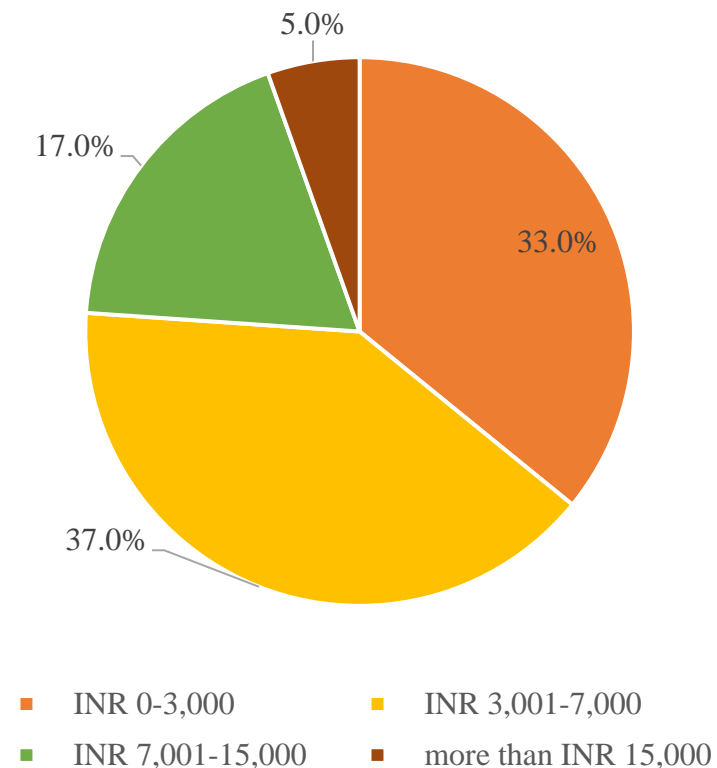
What's happening to children?

- 32% of households had at least one child under the age of 5 years
- 18% of all households reported that a child that was in school before the pandemic had dropped out
- 6% of all households reported that a child under the age of 14 years was working for pay either in family fields or business or outside the household
- Not all households had children of school-going age or under the age of 14, so these proportions are likely to be an underestimate of impact on children

Household income

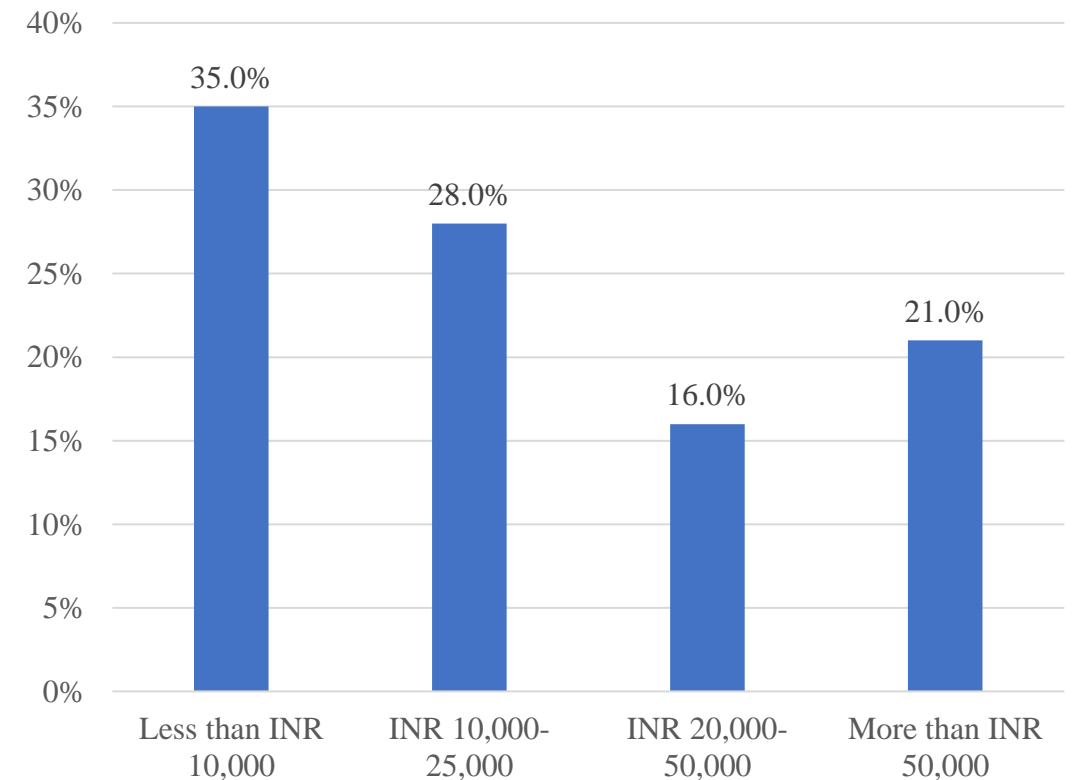
Only 5% households earn more than INR 15,000 per month from all sources. 70% households earn less than INR 7,000 per month. Fortunately, few households had experienced shocks at the household-level (e.g., loss of crop, livestock) or region-level (e.g., slum demolition, floods, landslides).

Household monthly income over last 3 months, all sources



Note: This question was asked only to households who reported having some earning members. N=5354. Of those, 320 households did not disclose their income.

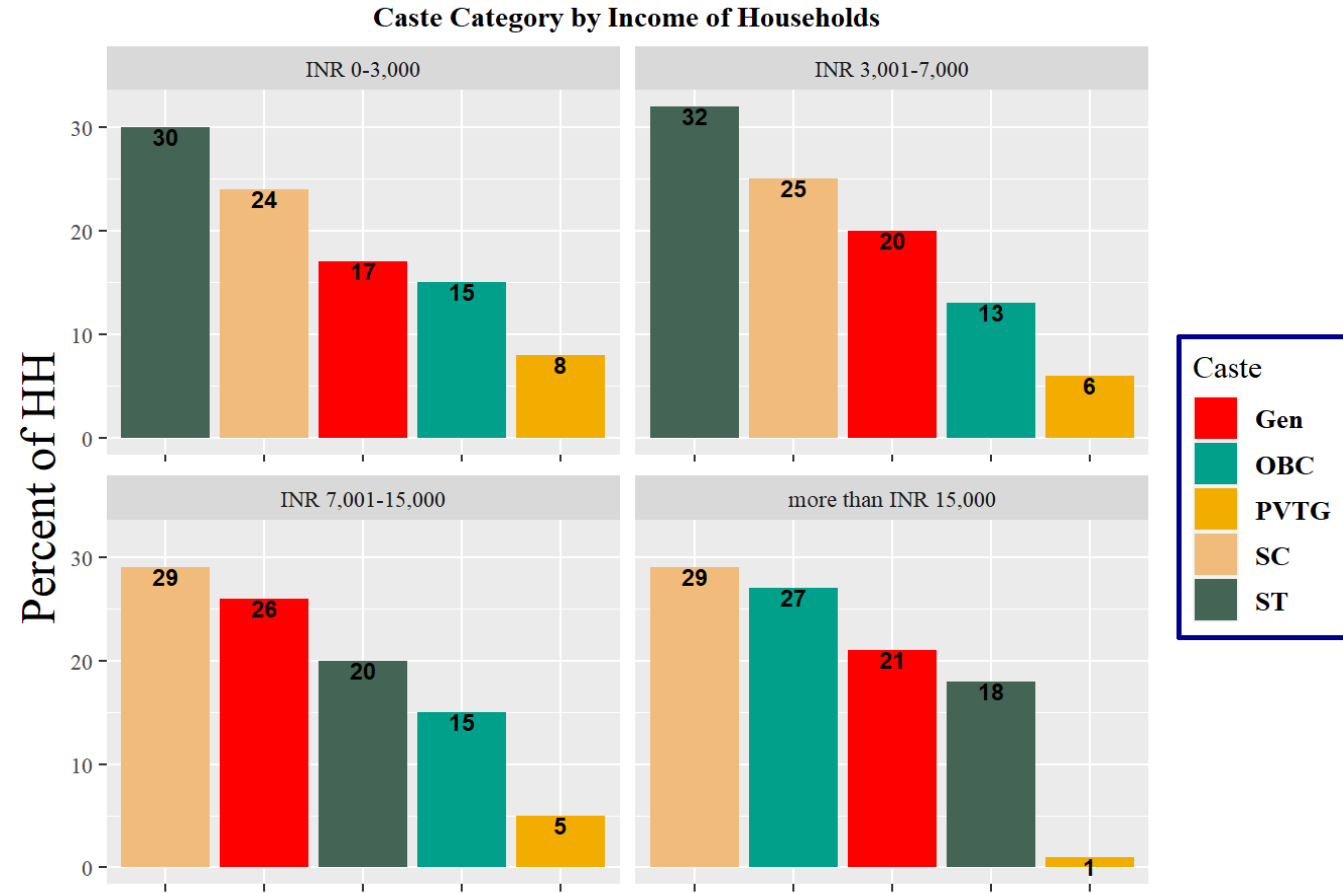
Among those with outstanding debt, how much was the total amount of debt?



Note: N=3029. Other households did not have any outstanding debt to report.

Household incomes by caste category

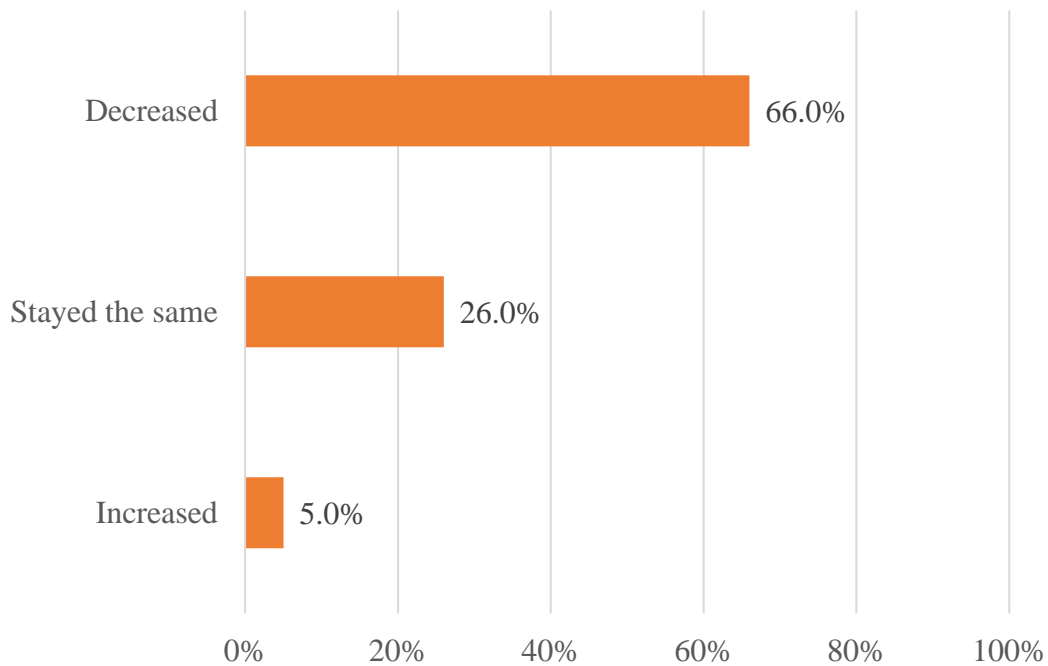
- The lower end of the income spectrum (INR 0-3000 per month) is 30% ST and 24% SC.
- As total monthly income buckets increase, the proportion of household that are General or OBC category increases
- In the top income bracket of more than INR 15,000, 29% of the households are SC, 27% OBC and 21% General category



What happened to household income over the pandemic?

66% reported that income fell during the pandemic, of these, close to 60% said it was now less than half pre-pandemic levels.

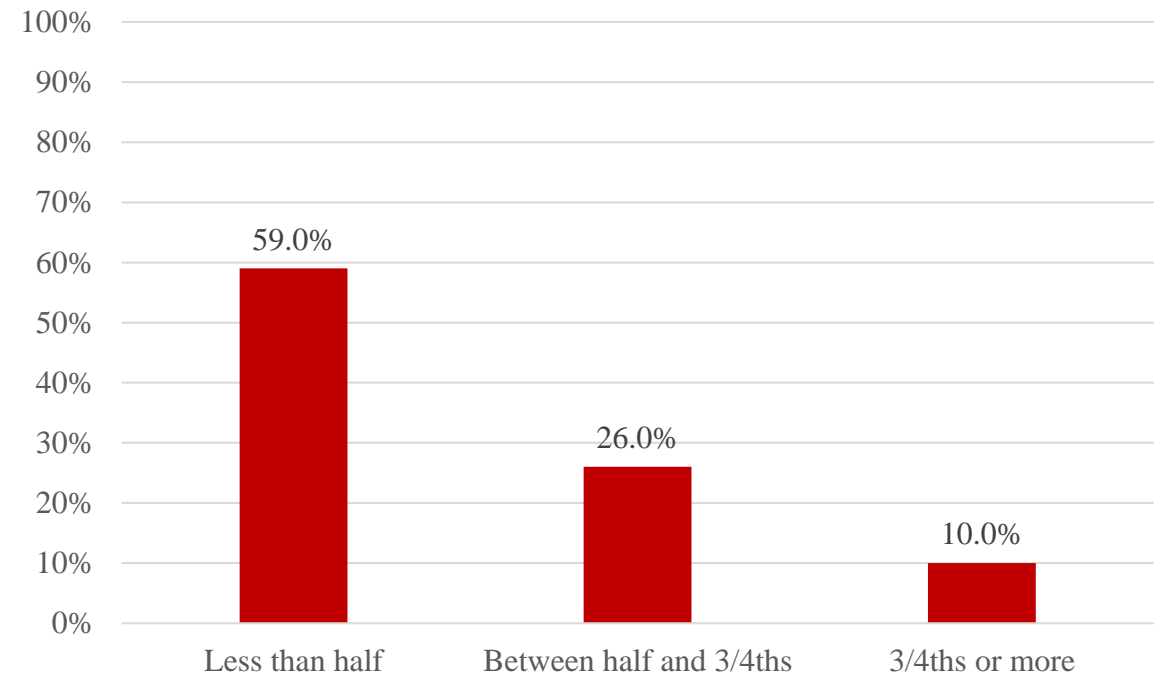
How has current monthly income changed relative to pre-pandemic levels?



Note: N=5354. 155 respondents said they did not know.

Note: These questions were asked only to households who reported having some earning members.

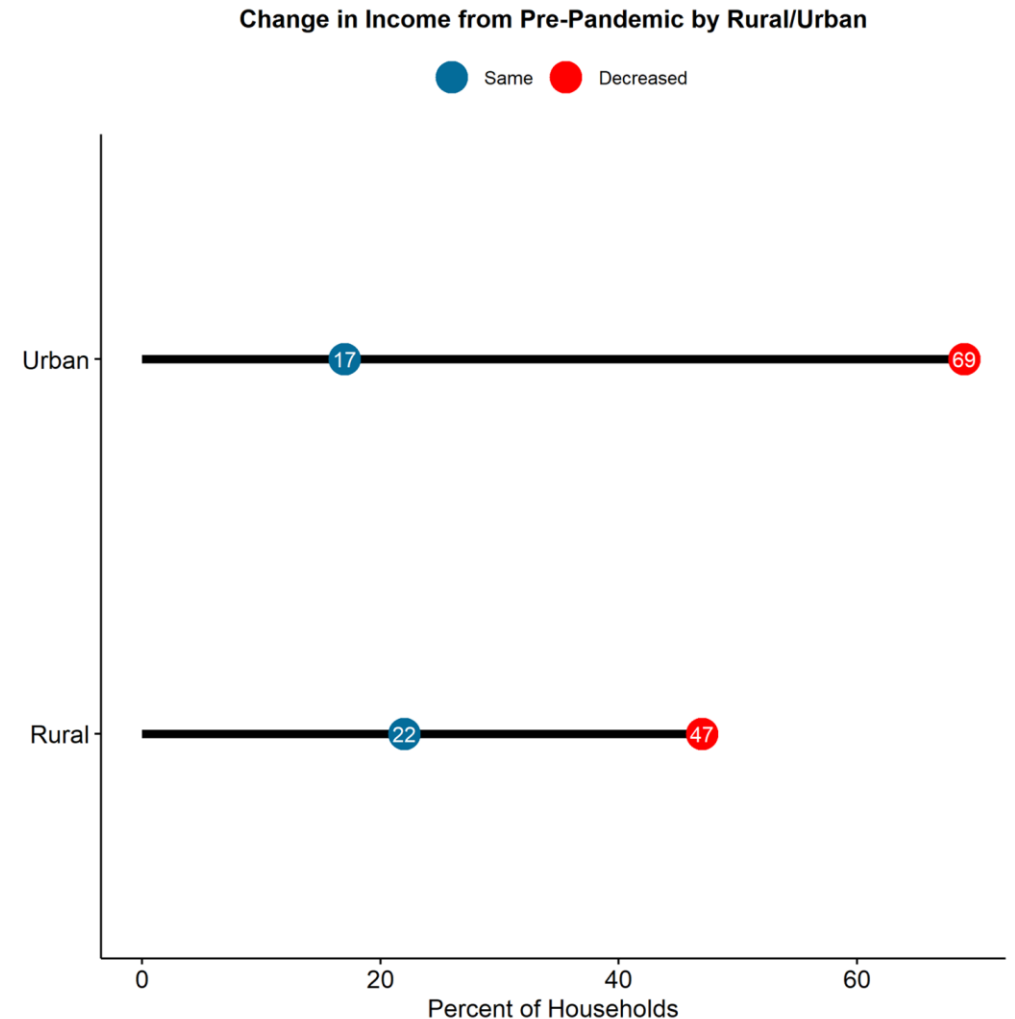
If income fell, how does current income compare to pre-pandemic income?



Note: Asked only to those who reported income decreased over the pandemic. N=3548. 172 respondents said they did not know.

Change in household income among rural and urban households

- A greater proportion of urban households (69%) than rural households (47%) report that their total monthly income at the time of the survey had declined compared to what it was pre-pandemic
- In rural areas, 95% of the households lived in their own homes.
- In urban areas, 40% lived in rented accommodation, and of those, 56% had unpaid rent at time of survey

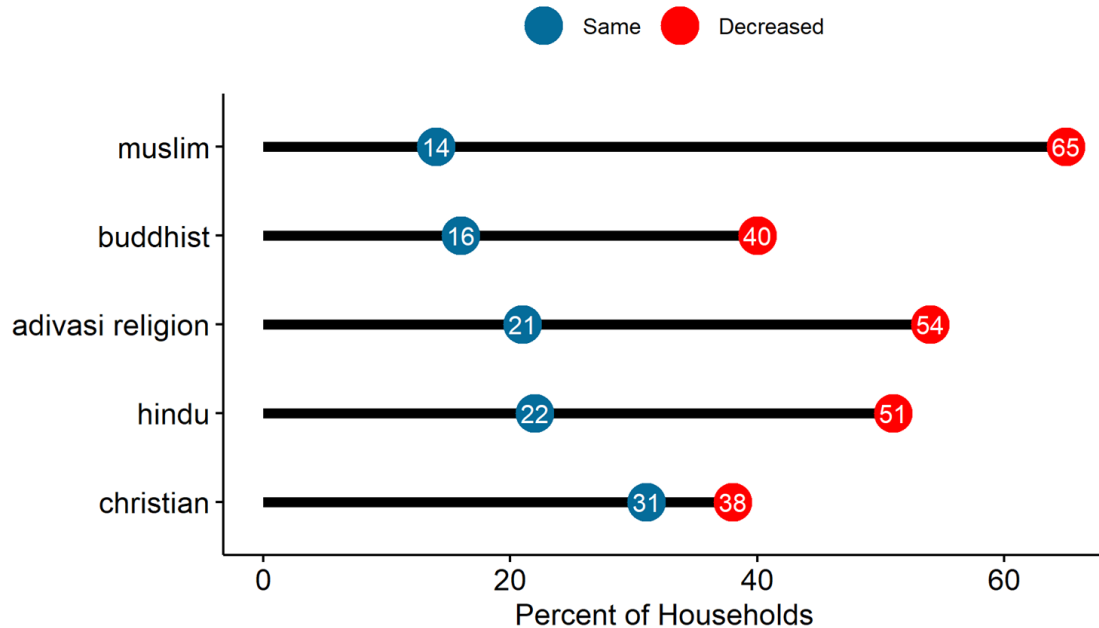


Note: N=5354. These questions were asked only to households who reported having some earning members.

Change in household income by religion and caste status

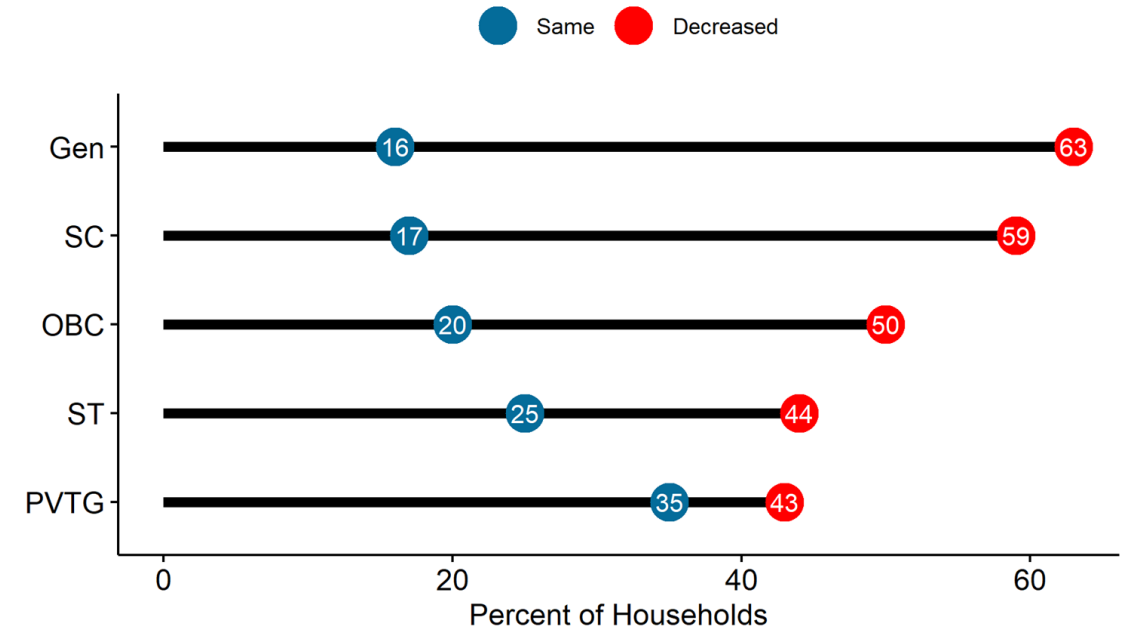
65% of Muslim households reported incomes had fallen compared to pre-pandemic, compared to 51% of Hindu households. The largest proportion reporting a fall in income was among General castes at 63%, compared to 50% among OBCs and 44% among STs.

Change in Income from Pre-Pandemic by Religion



Note: N=5294

Change in Income from Pre-Pandemic by Caste



Note: N=5105

[Additional slides](#)



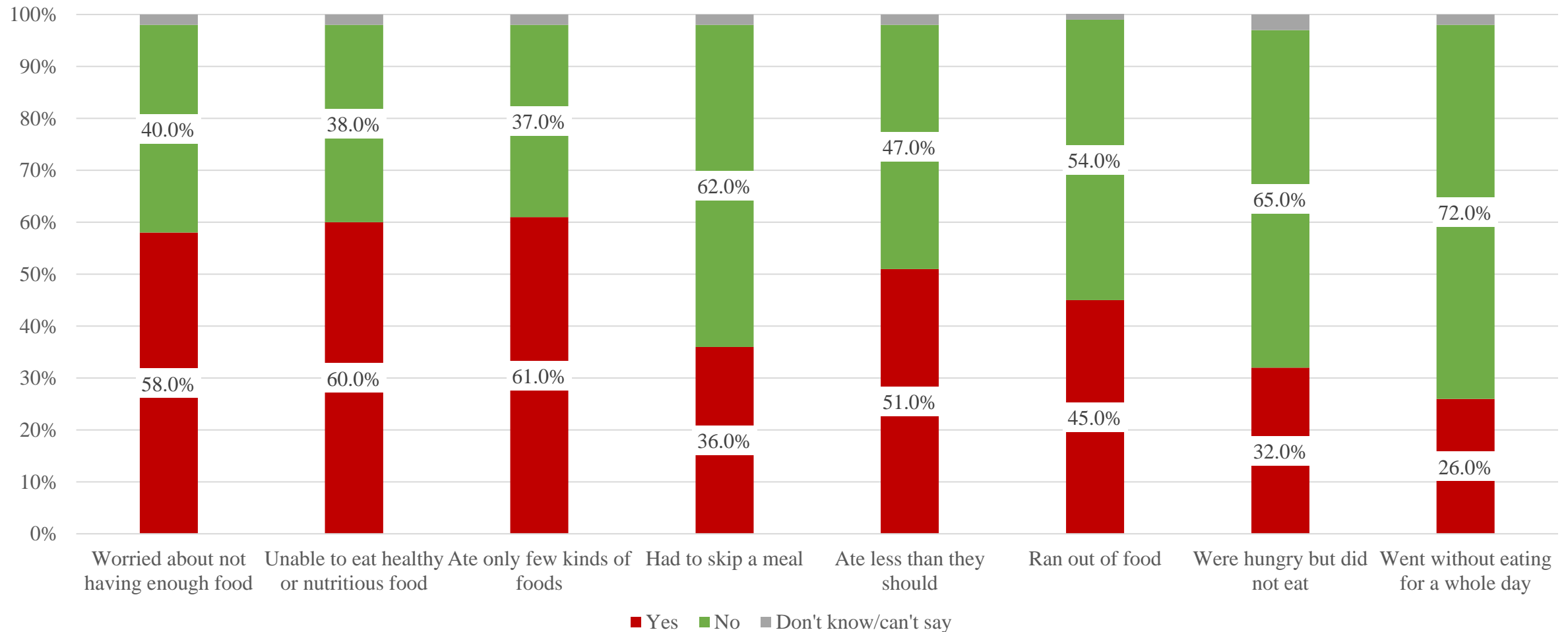
Photo credit: RTF WB

Household food insecurity and diet quality

Household food insecurity: the Global Food Insecurity Experience Scale (GFIES)

Food insecurity was common. 60% of the households worried about food, were unable to eat healthy food, or were unable to eat as much or what types of foods they would have wanted to in the month preceding the survey. 67 % could not afford cooking gas in the month preceding the survey.

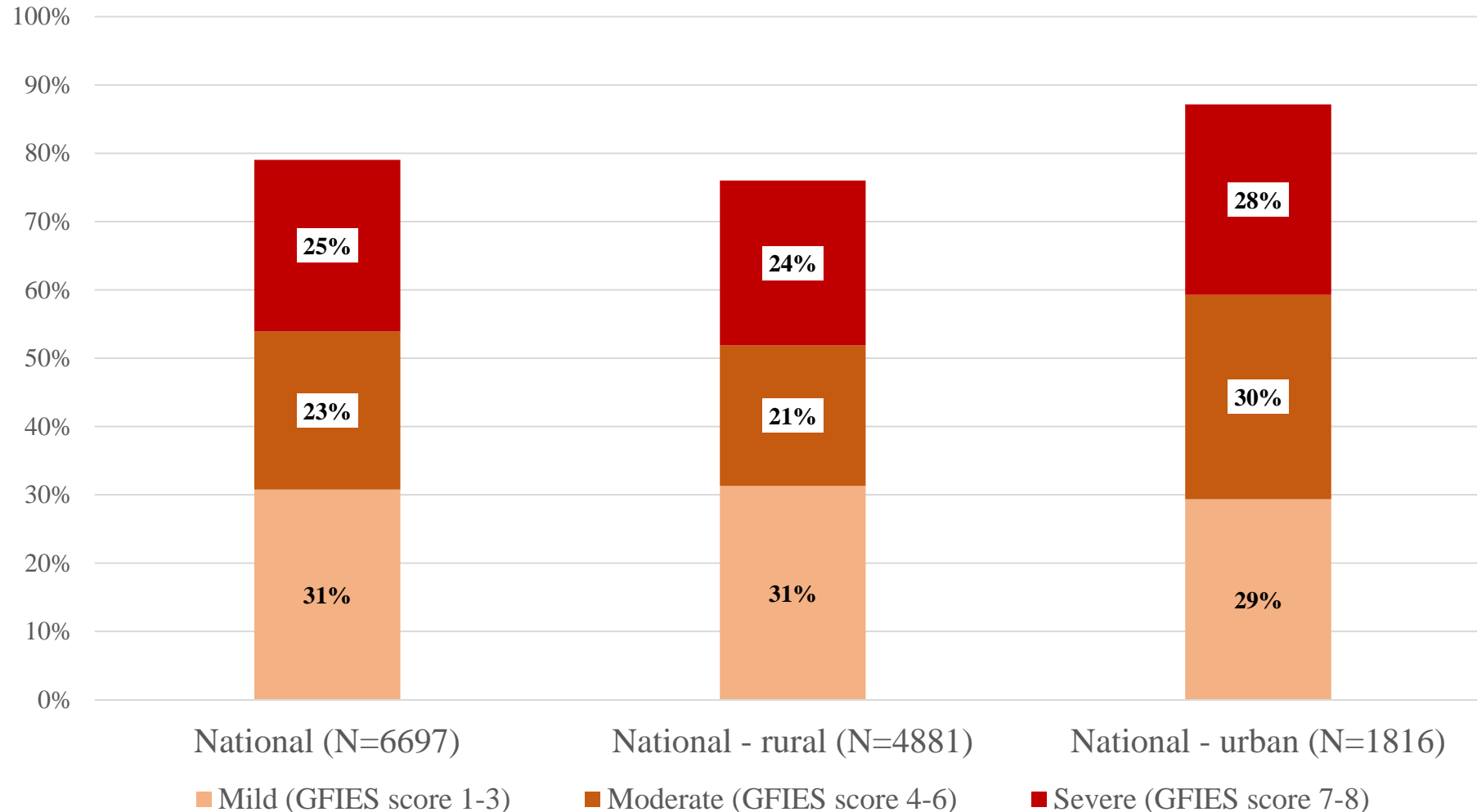
During the last 30 days, was there a time when you or others in your household



Note: N=6697

GFIES: Incidence of mild, moderate and severe food insecurity

Nationally, close to 80% of our sample reported **at least one** form of food insecurity, i.e., a yes on at least one of the 8 GFIES items. Food insecurity was higher in urban areas than in rural areas, as was incidence of severe food insecurity.

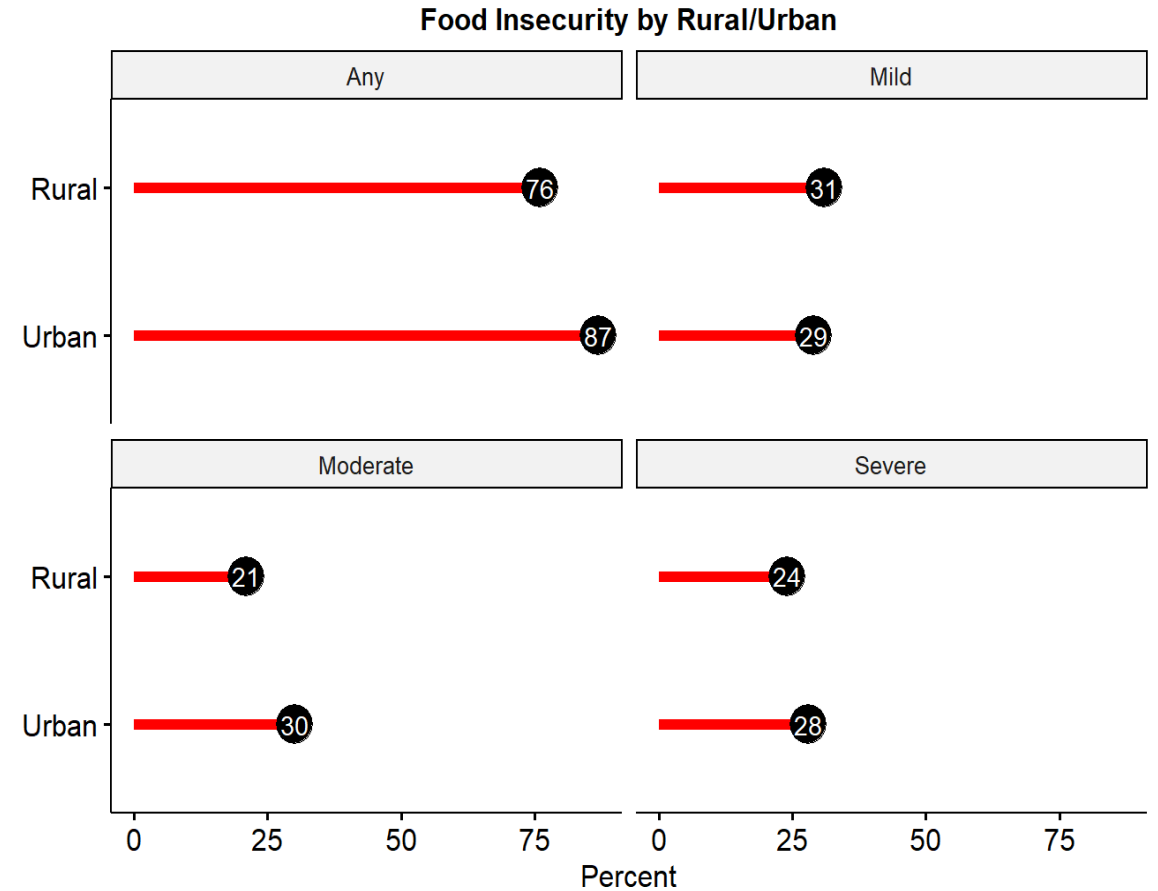


The height of the bar indicates the proportion of households who report *any* form of food insecurity

State-wise results

Food insecurity by rural/urban status

- A smaller proportion of rural households reported any form of food insecurity as compared to urban households
- Among those that did report, rural households reported lower levels of moderate and severe insecurity compared to urban households
- It appears that urban households were more harshly affected by food shortages

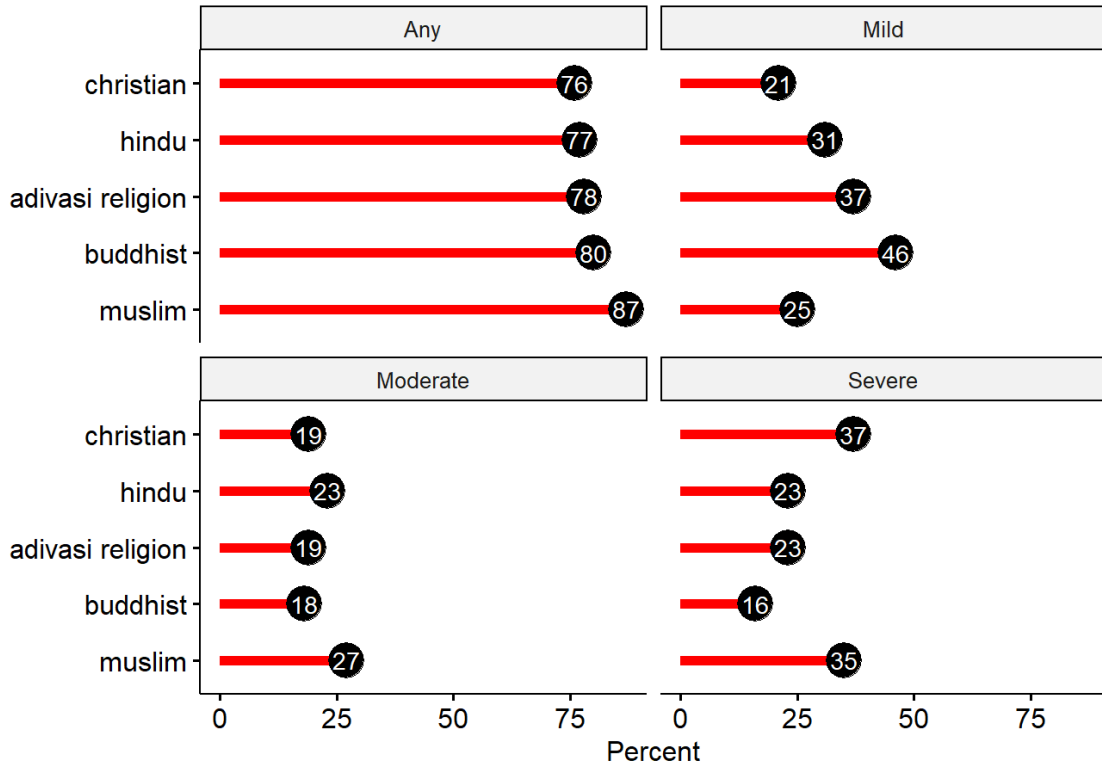


Note: N=6697

Food insecurity by religion and caste status

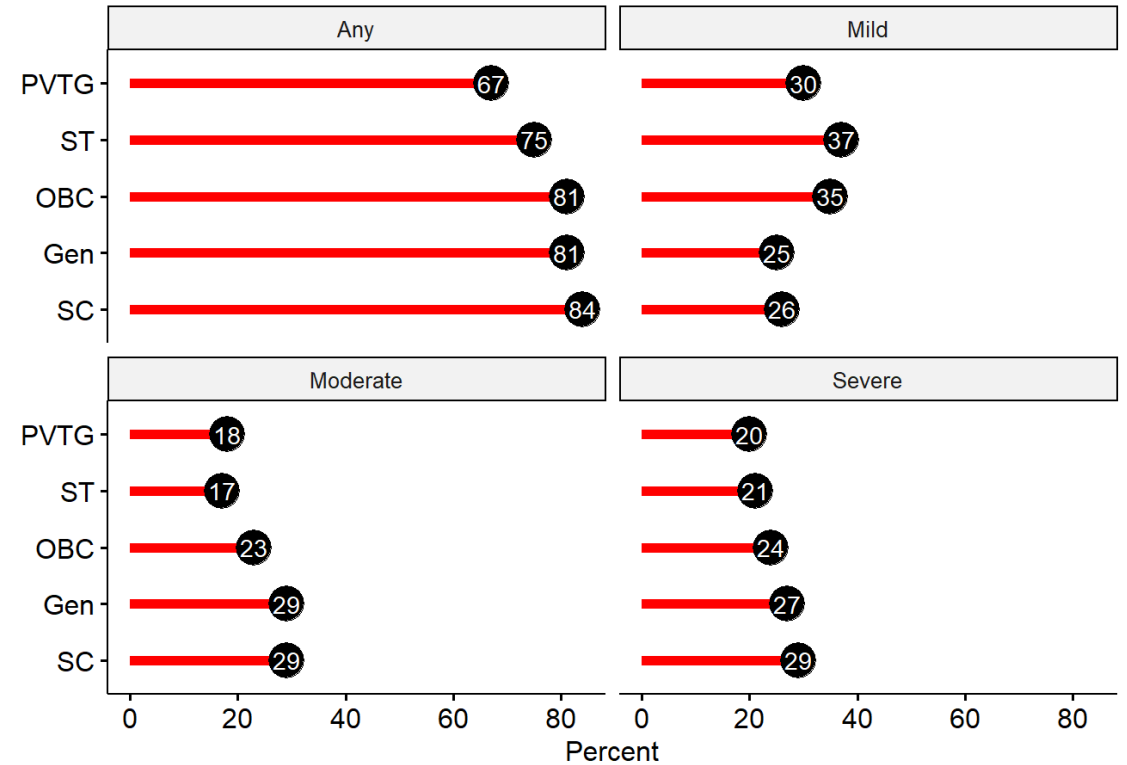
Prevalence of any food insecurity was highest among Muslim households at 87%. 77% of Hindu households reported any food insecurity, and 23% reported severe food insecurity. 81% of General caste households experienced some form of food insecurity as well.

Food Insecurity by Religion



Note: N=6625.

Food Insecurity by Caste Category



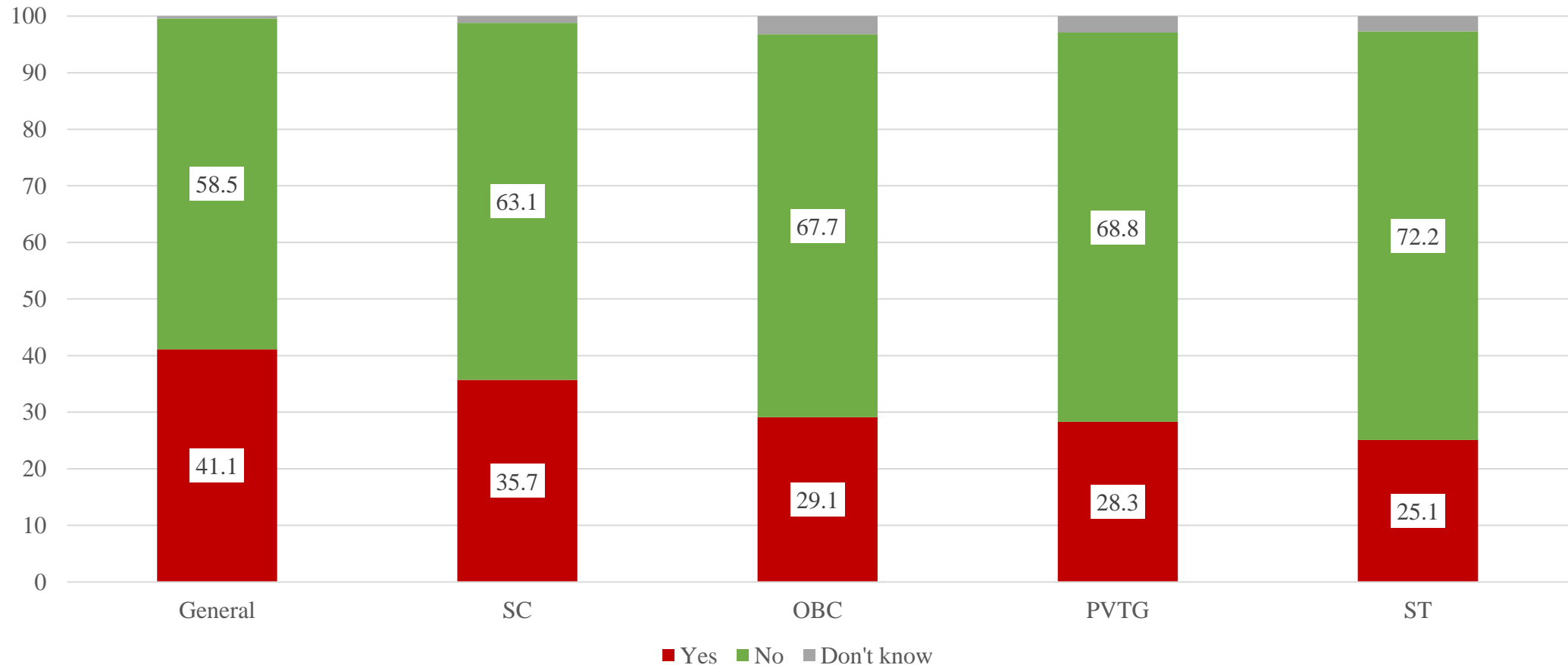
Note: N=6416.

[Additional slides](#)

Many households slept without eating

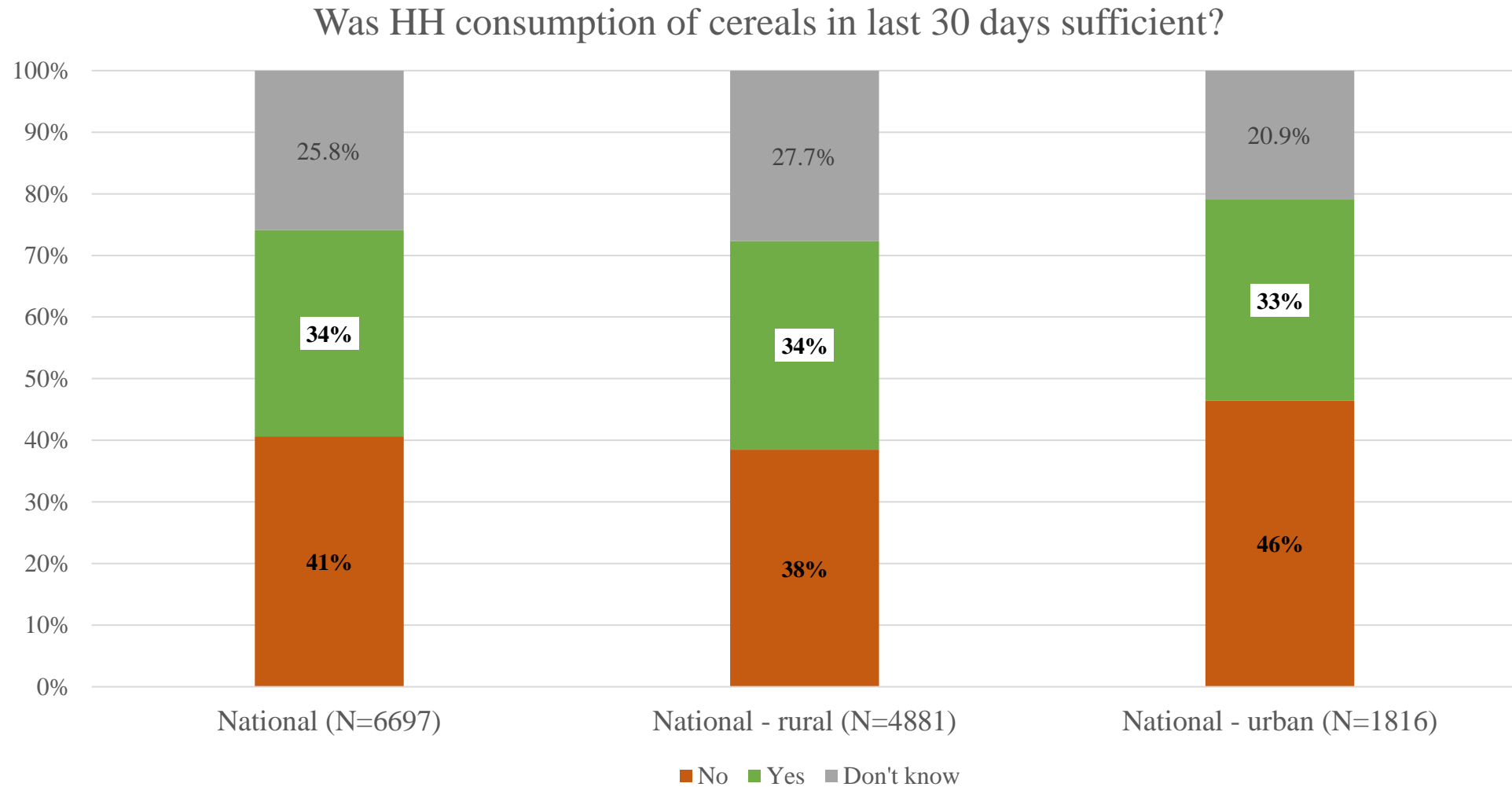
Somewhat surprisingly, the proportion of General caste households who reported that they had to sleep without eating in the month preceding the survey was highest, at an alarmingly high 41%. It was lowest at 25% among STs, which is still very high.

In the last 30 days, was there a time when you or someone in your HH had to go to sleep without eating?



Cereal sufficiency

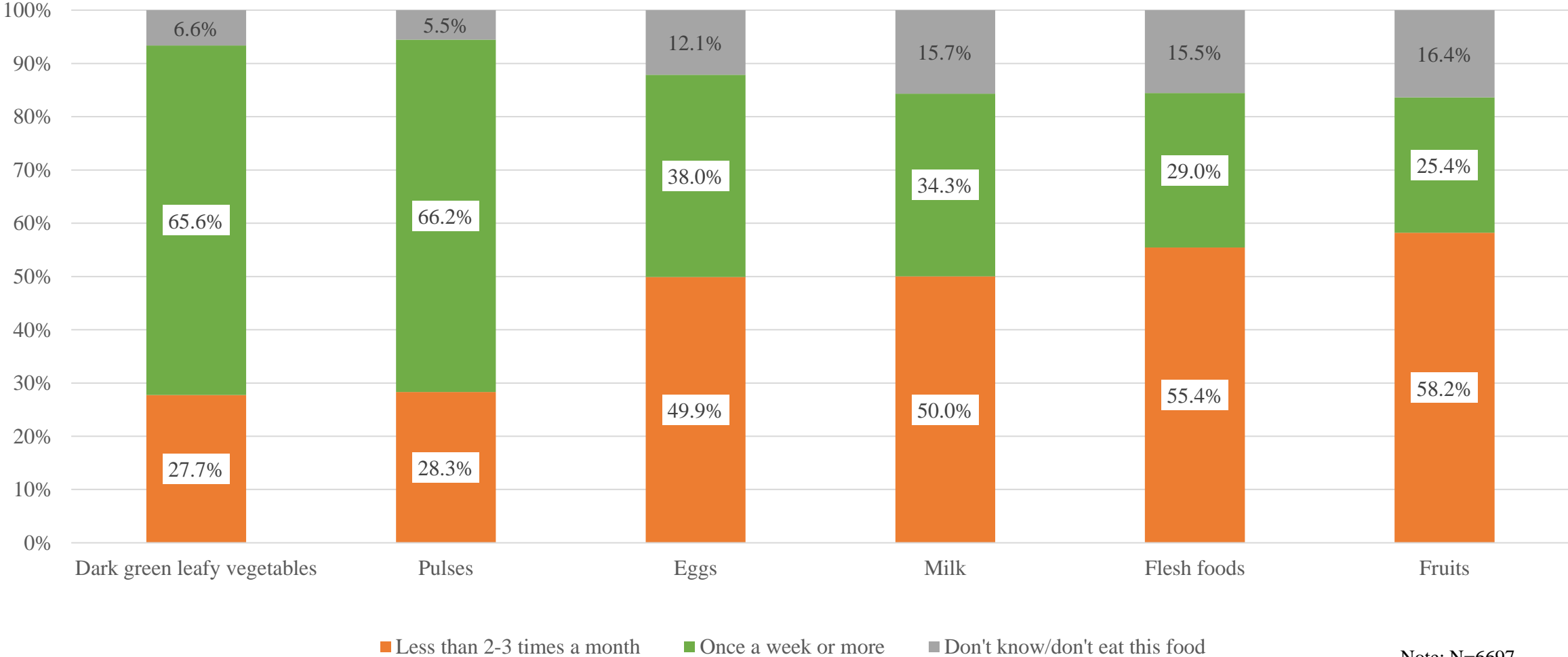
Nationally, 41% of households reported that their household consumption of cereals in the month preceding the survey was not sufficient. Cereal insufficiency was higher in urban areas (46%) than in rural areas (38%).



Household diet quality

Consumption of nutrient rich foods was poor. Half the sample ate eggs, milk, flesh foods and fruits fewer than 2-3 times a month. More than a quarter reported eating even dark green leafy vegetables and pulses fewer than 2-3 times a month.

Over the last one month, how often have you eaten ...



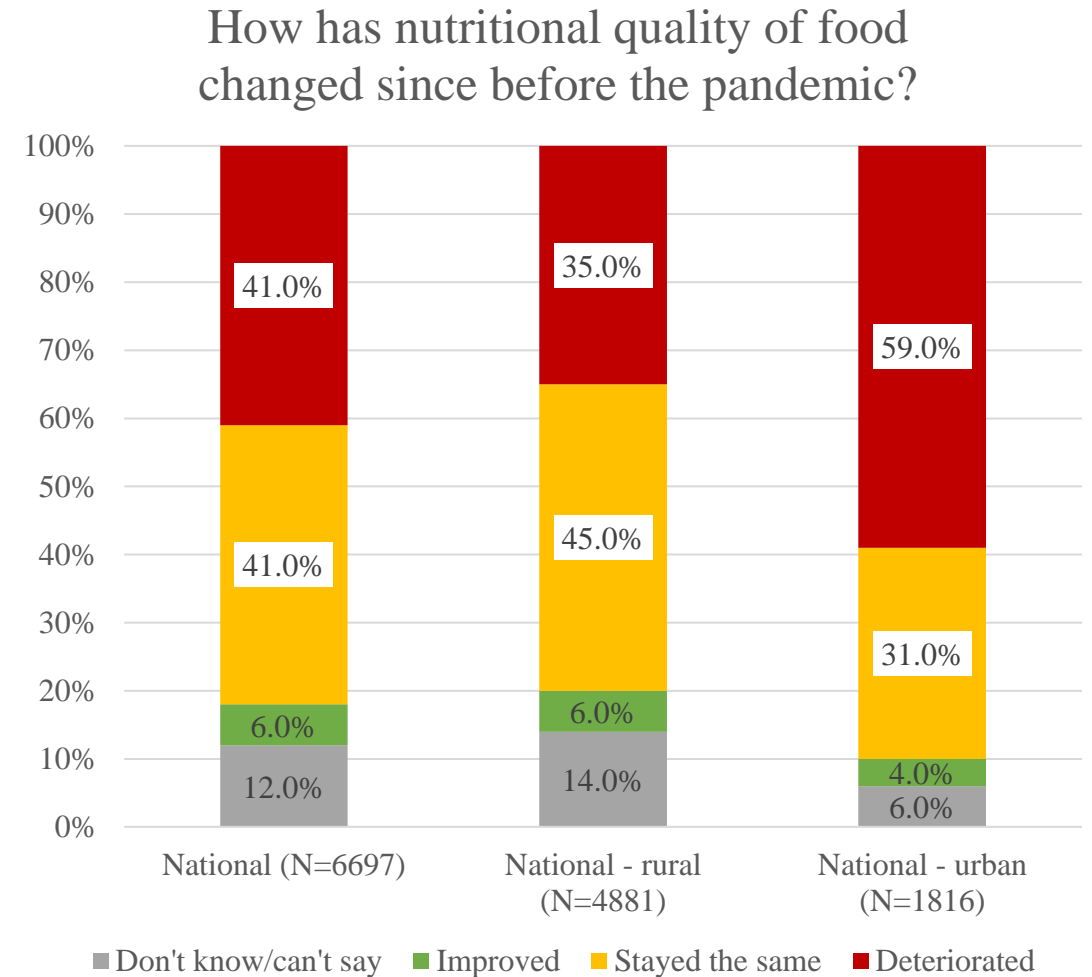
Note: N=6697

“ What should I cook? We did not have any gas. So, I gathered stone and sticks and survived on khichdi for 2 months. Our condition has not changed much from that time. Sometimes there is food and other times there is no food. My husband does any work that is made available- sometimes he works in the marble factory, sometimes construction and other times sells scrap. He does any work that is available. Bhaji (vegetables) has become a privilege. We have it once every 5-7 days, that too without onion. We just mix it in khichdi and eat. ”

-R, a resident of Shivaji Nagar in Delhi, whose husband has had no work since the first lockdown*

Changes in food and nutrition security since the pandemic began

- Compared to before the pandemic, 2 in 5 respondents said that the nutritional quality or quantity of food the household eats has deteriorated.
- This was higher among urban households (59%) than among rural (35%)
- The outlook was pessimistic overall: Only 16% respondents felt that the food situation in the next three months would get better



S*, a homebased worker is the sole breadwinner of the family. She used to earn INR 3000-4000 a month, however her income has halved since the lockdown. S and her family do not have ration cards and their main source of ration is from nearby kirana shops, which is often unaffordable for the family.

“ Over the last few months, the food consumption of the family has fallen to a great extent. There have been days when the whole family had to sleep without eating in the night due to lack of all ration in the household and the family was unable to afford. We have not consumed eggs, non-veg or fruits in the last one and half months. ”

Health impacts of COVID-19

- 23% of the households (N=1560) reported incurring a major health expenditure
- Of those: the health expenditure was INR 10-20,000 for 24% HHs, INR 20-50,000 for 11% HHs, and more than NR 50,000 for 13% HHs
- 3% of households (N=183) reported that someone in the HH died of COVID-19; of these, 45% reported not receiving any death compensation
- 32 % HHs reported that a member had stopped working or had lost wages due to COVID-19

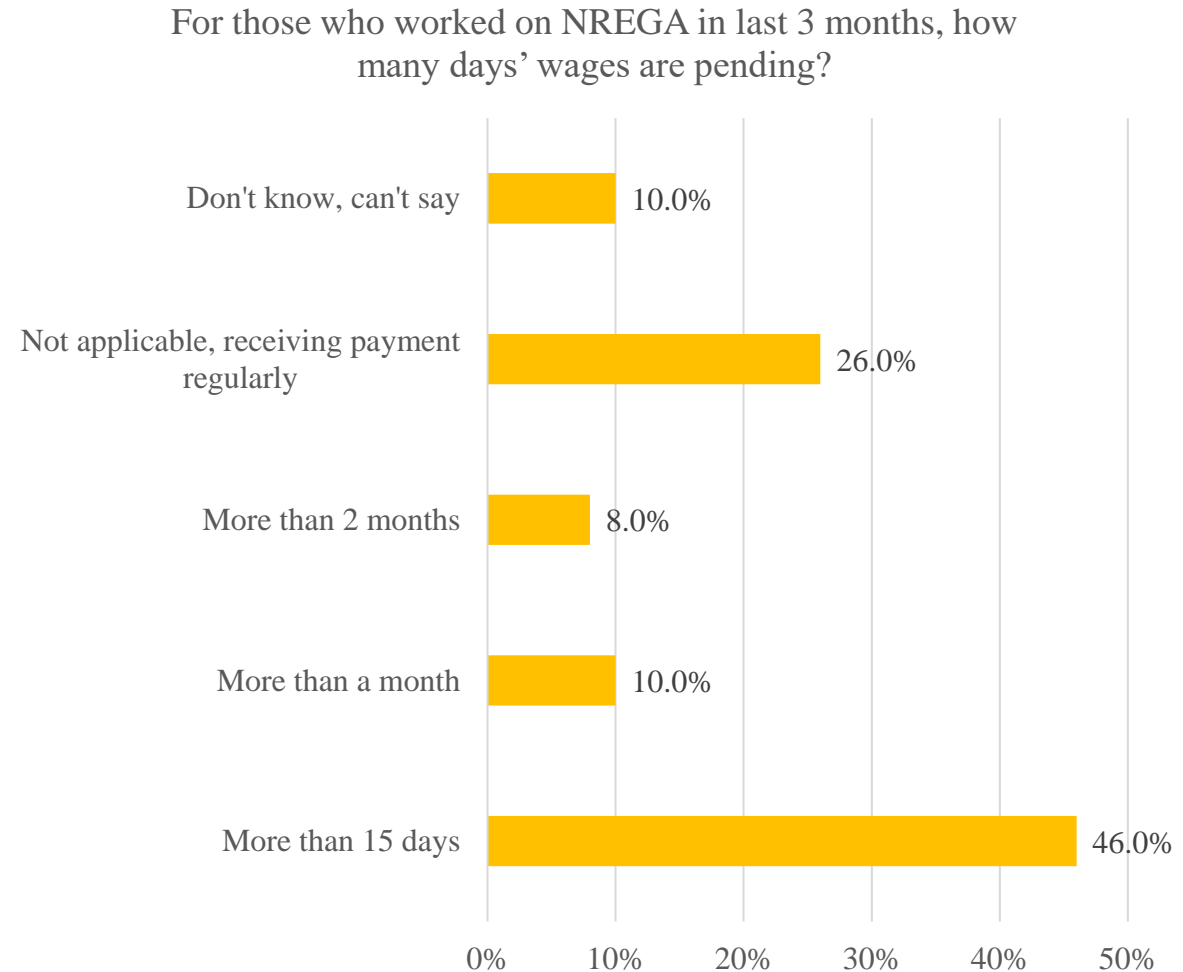


Use of social safety nets

Photo credit: Sudha Devi

Households' use of e-shram portal and NREGA

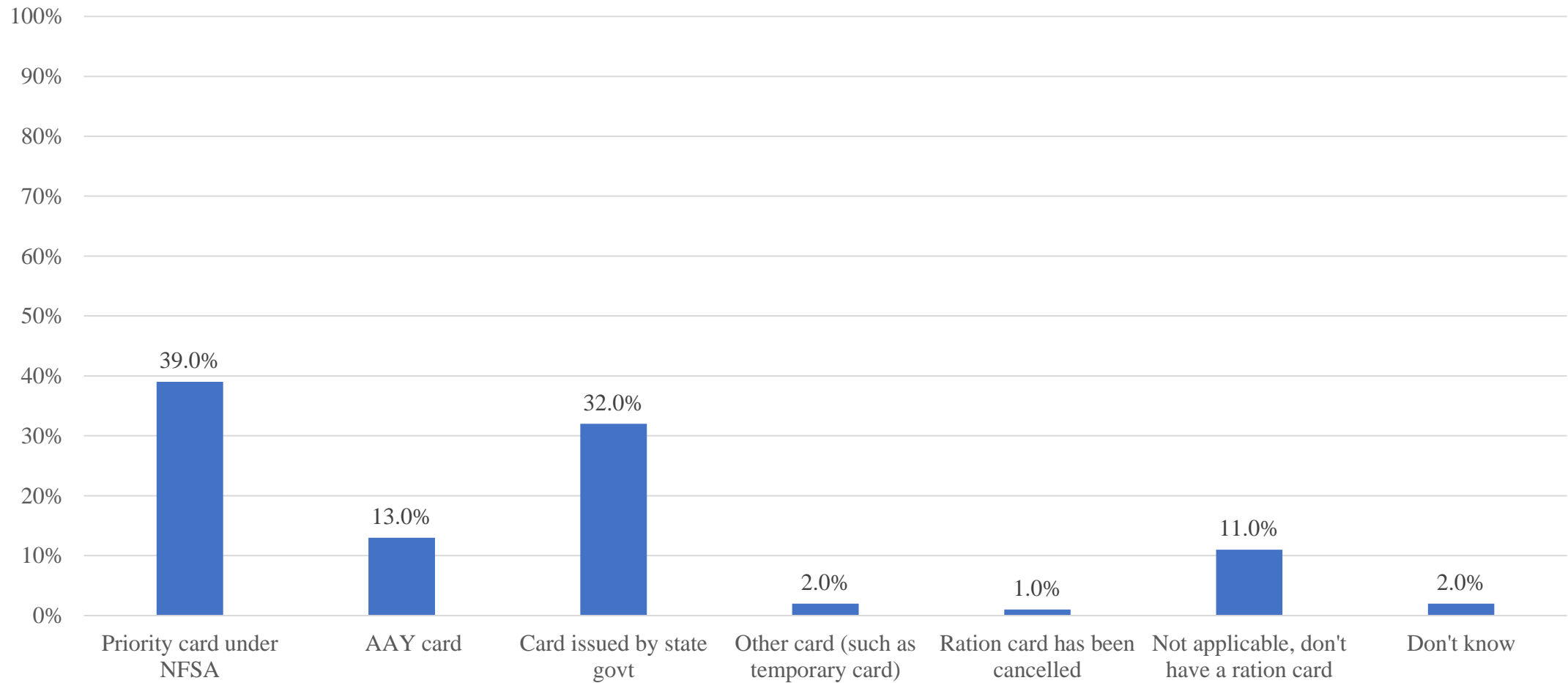
- 26% of households had an earning member who registered themselves on the e-shram portal
- Only 18% households had any household member who worked on a NREGA worksite in the preceding 3 months
- Of households who used the NREGA at all, only 28% said that they had applied for work but not received it in the last 3 months



Use of government schemes: ration cards

84% of the respondents had a ration card

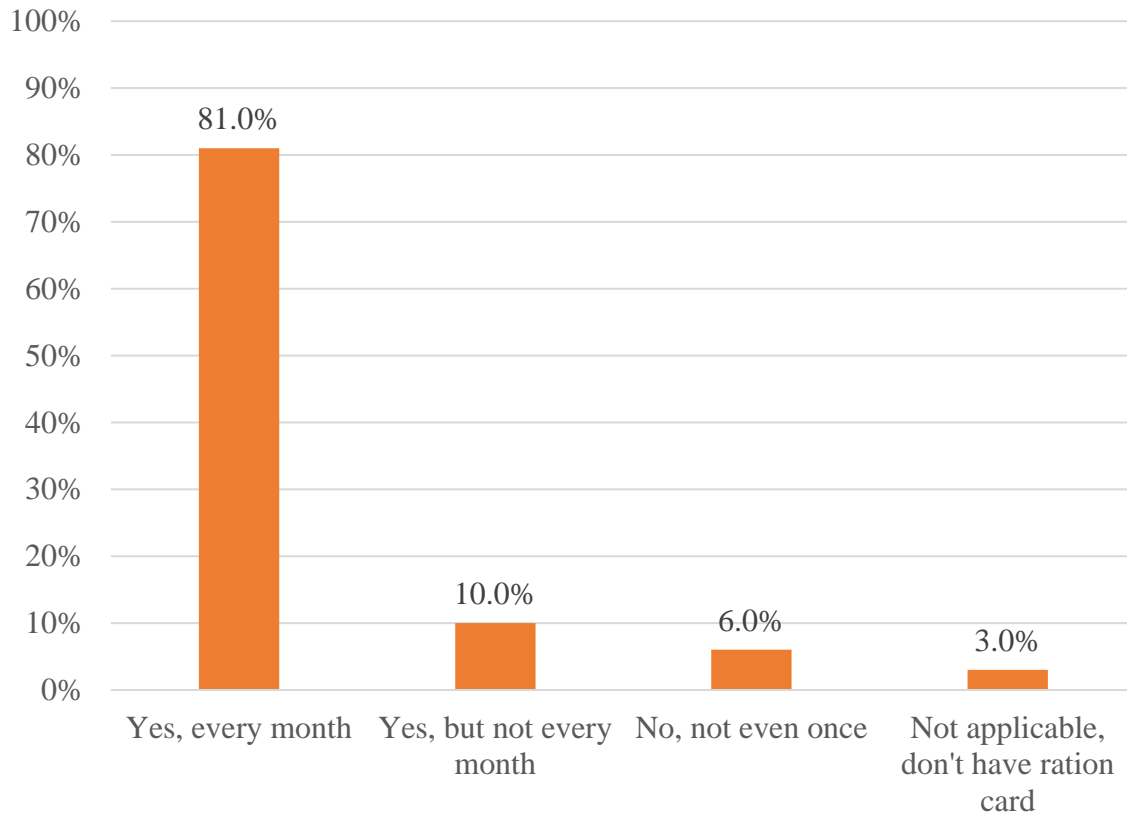
What type of ration card does the household have?



Household received PDS, or ration under PMGKAY

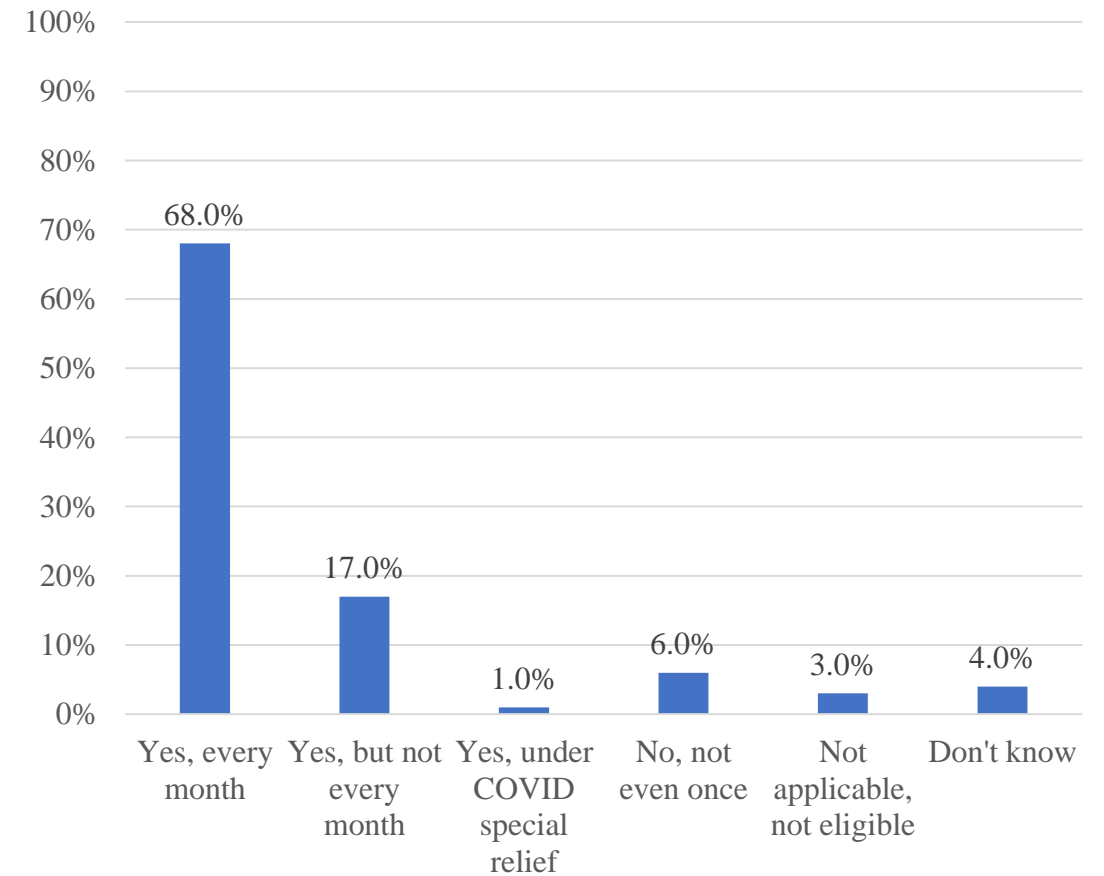
Of those who had a ration card, over 90% received some food grains from the PDS, including the free grains under PMGKAY

During the last six months, have you received your usual entitlement of food grains from the ration shop/PDS?



Note: N=5936

During the last six months, have you received free additional food grains under PMGKAY?



Note: N=5936

We spoke to M*, aged 20, from Vijayanagar district, Karnataka.

M's family relies on the PDS ration for their food needs, cooking dal frequently. They are unable to eat vegetables or non-vegetarian food often. Through the Anganwadi Centre, M's sister receives some ration. M's grandfather is aged but is forced to do hamali work because of his daughters and grandchildren. He earns a maximum of INR 8000 a month. Only two members' names are mentioned in the PDS card. They have applied for more names to be added, but this has not happened yet.

K*, from Jharkhand's Palamu district, currently lives in Delhi. She used to work as a domestic worker but is currently unemployed. Her husband is a daily wage labourer, but due to suspension of construction in Delhi-NCR, his earnings have declined to about half of what he was earning pre-pandemic. He currently earns INR 2500 a month.

“ My husband is a daily wage labourer and I am a domestic worker. After the lockdown, I lost my work, and my husband earns a mere Rs 2500/month. The rice and wheat given in PDS shop is the main source of food for my family. Despite my leg injury, I have to go to the PDS shop to get the ration as my husband's biometrics are not recognisable. ”

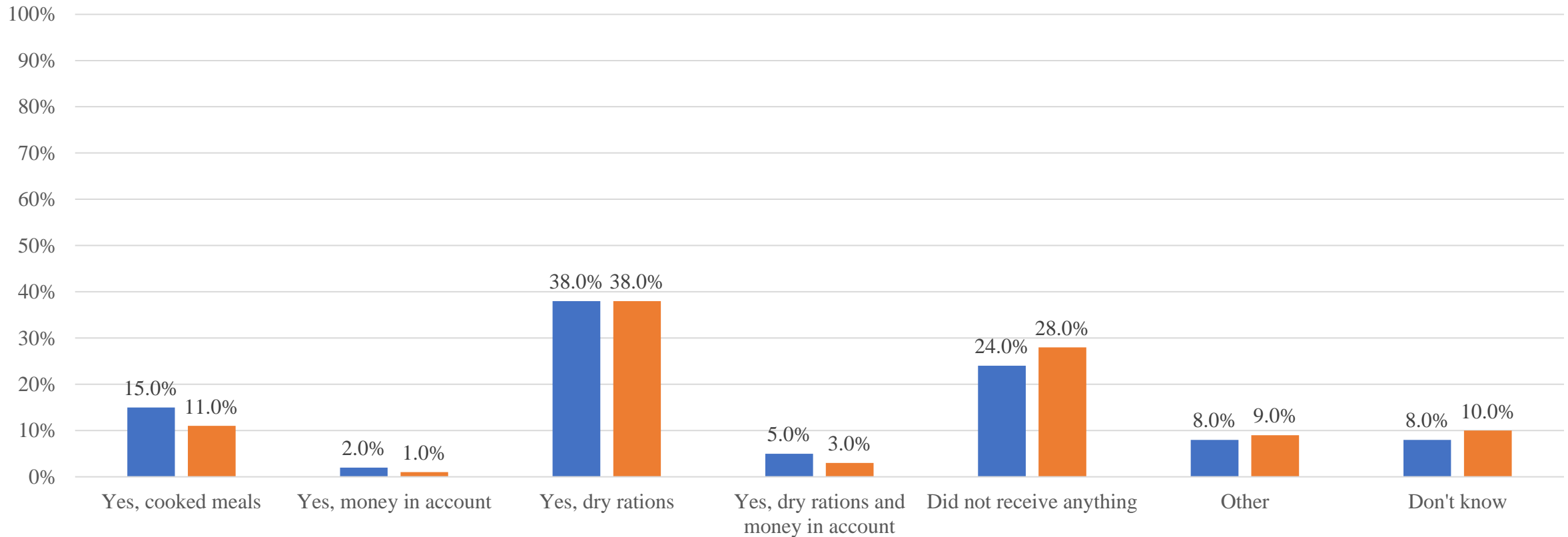
H*, a girl from the SC Madiga community is studying in B.Com 3rd year. H's mother is a construction worker, and her elder sister was denoted as devadasi.

“ PDS is the sole source of ration for my family. My brother lost his job during the lockdown, and I had to drop out of college and start working. Due to thumb print issue, we did not get ration properly. The ration we get is not enough to feed a household of 14 people! We are not buying any vegetables and are living on dal and rice. ”

Among those eligible, what proportion of households received MDM or ICDS?

About a quarter of households with eligible members said they did not receive MDM or ICDS benefits

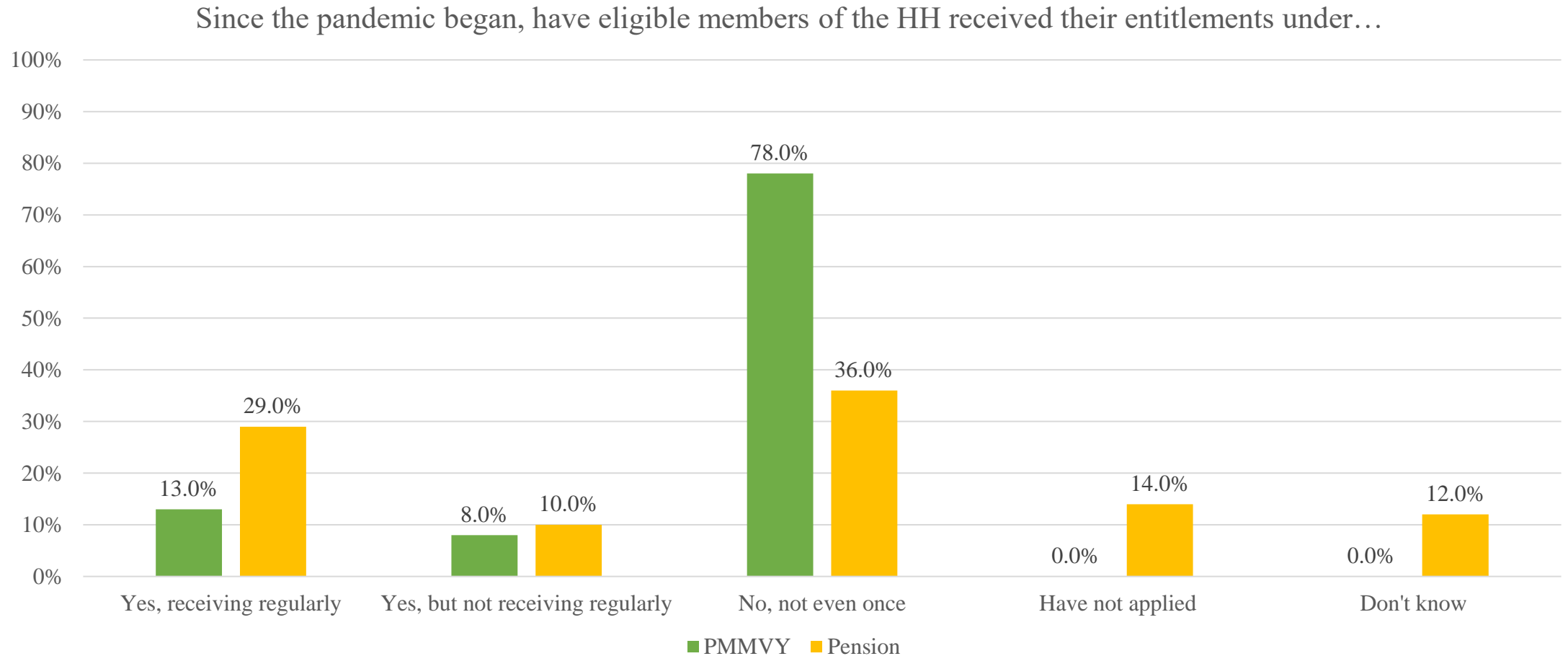
Since the pandemic began, have eligible household members received benefits from ...



Note: The number of households with eligible members was N=4138 for MDM and N=3377 for ICDS.

Among those eligible, what proportion of households received PMMVY and pension?

78% of HHs eligible for maternity benefits and 36% of HHs eligible for pensions did not receive any transfers from these programs



Note: Number of eligible HHs was 2451 for PMMVY and 3780 for pension scheme.

Headline findings from Hunger Watch-II

I. Incomes remain low

- 66% of the respondents said that their income decreased as compared to pre-pandemic period.
- This proportion was larger among urban households, among poorer households (earning INR 0-3000 per month) and among Muslim households

II. There is widespread food insecurity

- Only 34% of the overall sample reported that their household's cereal consumption in the month preceding the survey was sufficient.
- 79% of the households surveyed reported some form of food insecurity (raw score on GFIES \geq 1), 25% reported severe food insecurity (raw score on GFIES \geq 7).
- Food insecurity is worse among urban households. 87% of Muslim households report some form of food insecurity compared to 77% Hindu households
- As household income increases, the prevalence of any food insecurity declines

Headline findings from Hunger Watch-II (contd.)

III. Diets are of poor quality

- Only half the sample ate eggs, milk, flesh foods and fruits less than 2-3 times a month. >25% ate dark green leafy vegetables and pulses less than 2-3 times a month.
- 41% reported that the nutritional quality of their diet had deteriorated compared to pre-pandemic levels. This proportion was higher among urban than rural households.

IV. Access to government programmes is uneven

- The PDS is providing relief: 84% of the households had a ration card and over 90% of those who were eligible said they received some food grains.
- However, other schemes are not: a quarter of households with eligible members said that they did not receive MDMS or ICDS provisions. Many are left out of the food security net, calling for urgent strengthening and expansion of these schemes.

What are our demands?

- Universalise **PDS** and include pulses, millets and oil
- Extend **PMGKAY** until pandemic continues
- Revive **mid-day meals** and **ICDS**: Provide nutritious hot cooked meals, including eggs.
- Implement universal and unconditional **maternity entitlements** and availability of **child-care services**
- Expand **NREGA** to 200 days of employment per household at minimum wages and ensure timely payment
- Initiate **urban employment guarantee** programmes
- Provide Social Security **Pensions** of at least ₹2000 per month to old, disabled, single women
- Provide better wages and recognition for all **frontline workers** (anganwadi workers, anganwadi helpers, ASHAs, mid day meal cooks and helpers)

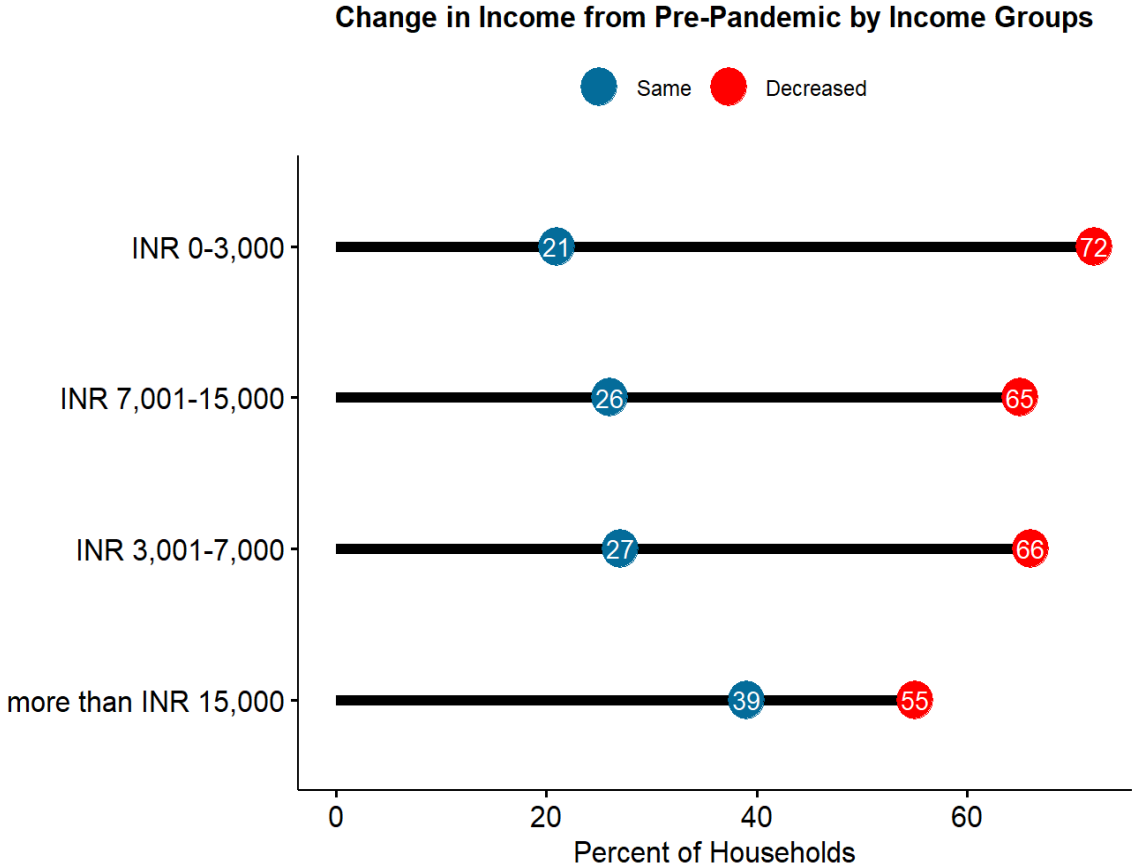


Photo credit: RTF Gujarat

Appendix

Change in household income by income bracket

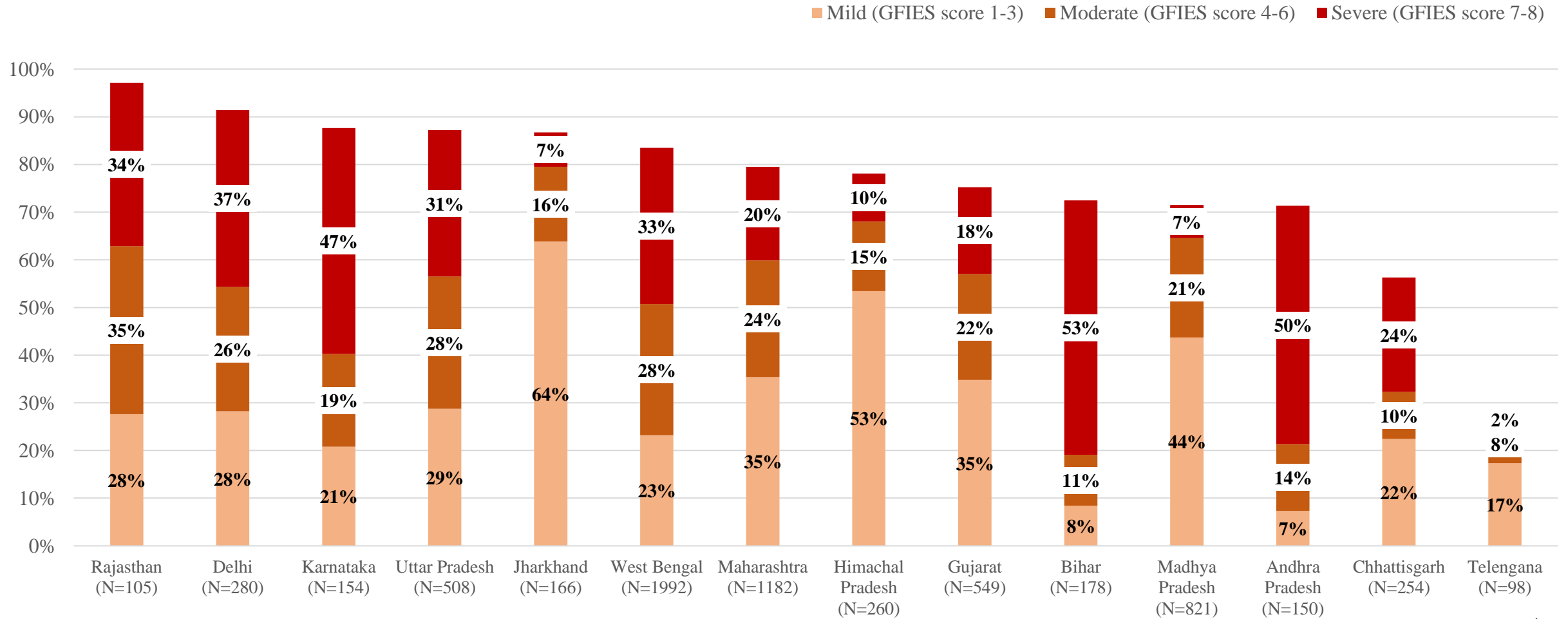
- The proportion of households that reported their income had fallen compared to pre-pandemic levels was highest among those who earned the least
- 72% of those earning INR 0-3000 said incomes had fallen, compared to ‘only’ 55% among those who earned more than INR 15,000 per month



Note: N=4930. These questions were asked only to households who reported having some earning members, some of them did not respond.

GFIES: Incidence of mild, moderate and severe food insecurity

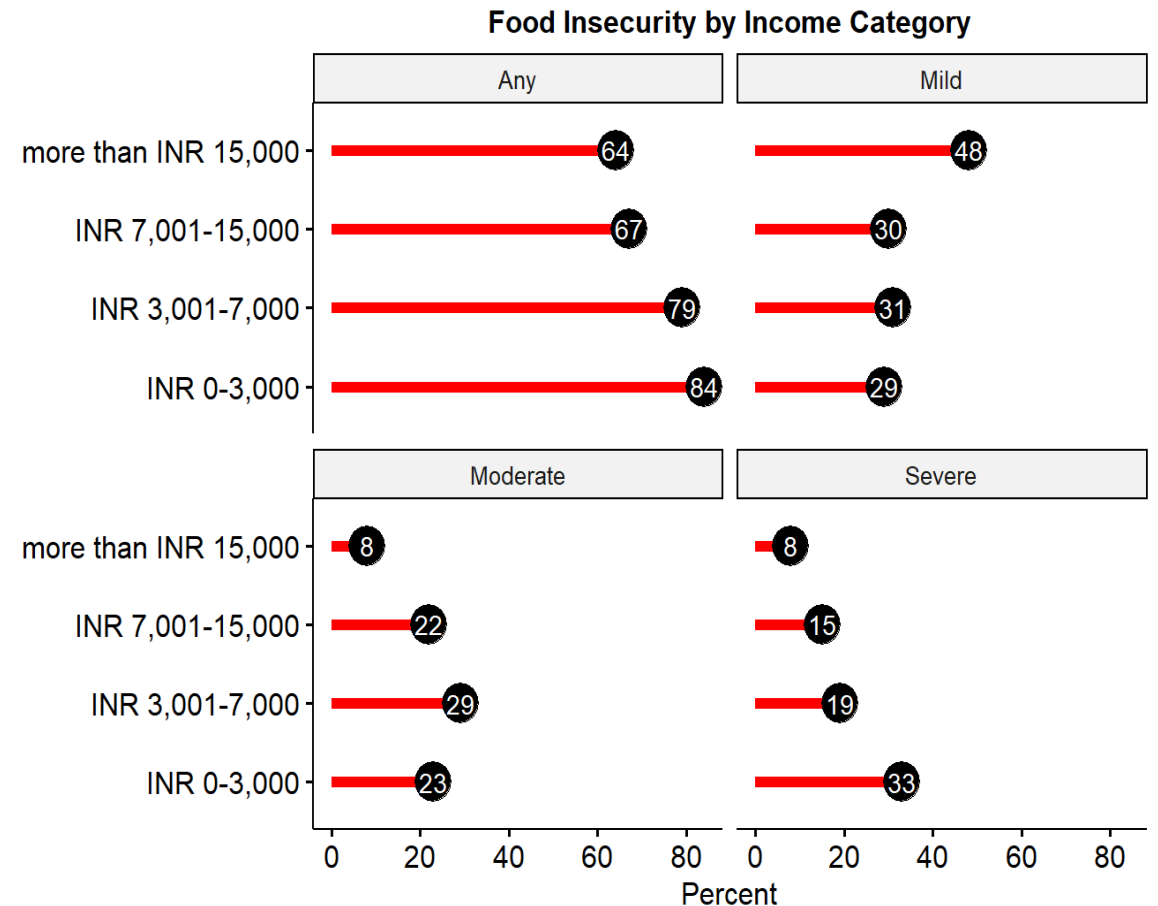
Rajasthan, Delhi, Karnataka and UP had high incidence of overall food insecurity, close to 90%. More than half the Bihar and AP samples reported severe food insecurity.



States arranged in decreasing order of incidence of any food insecurity (GFIES raw score ≥ 1 , represented by height of the bar)

Food insecurity by income category

- As household income increases, the prevalence of any food insecurity declines, from 84% among those who earned INR 0-3000 to ‘only’ 64% among those who reported earning more than INR 15,000
- The same patterns are seen for severe food insecurity
- 29% of the households who earn INR 3001-7000 and 22% of those who earn INR 7001-15,000 reported experiencing moderate levels of food insecurity



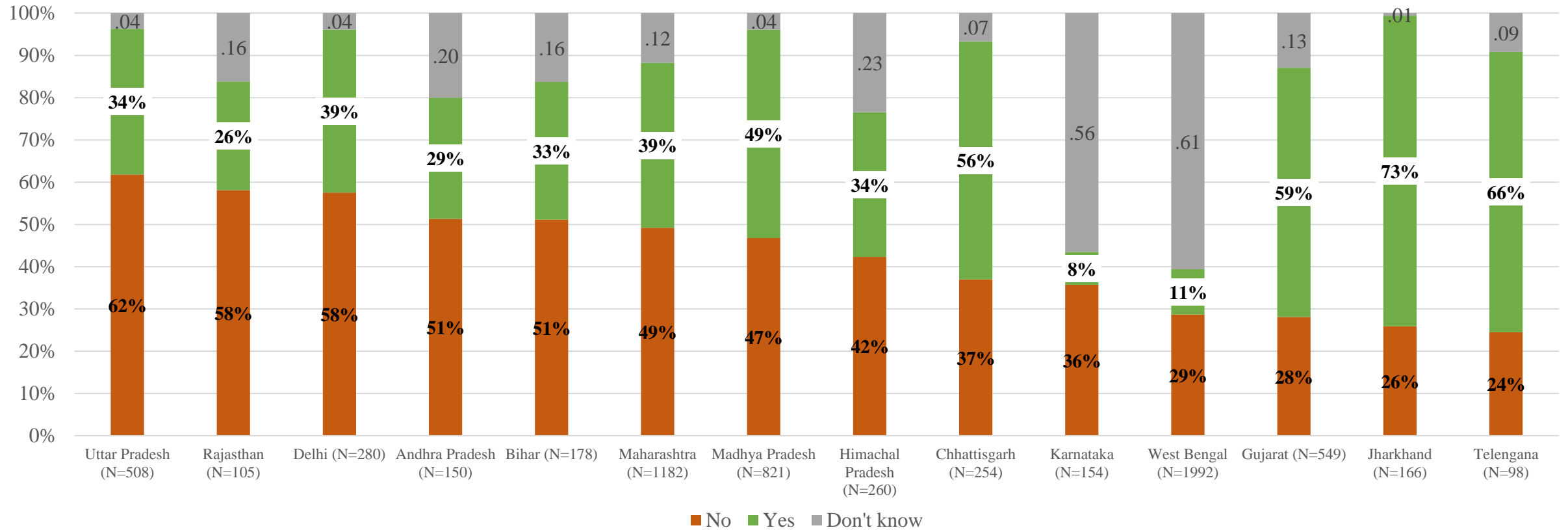
Note: N=4930.

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Cereal sufficiency

UP, Rajasthan, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh reported the highest rates of cereal insufficiency. Cereal sufficiency was highest in Telangana, Jharkhand, Gujarat.

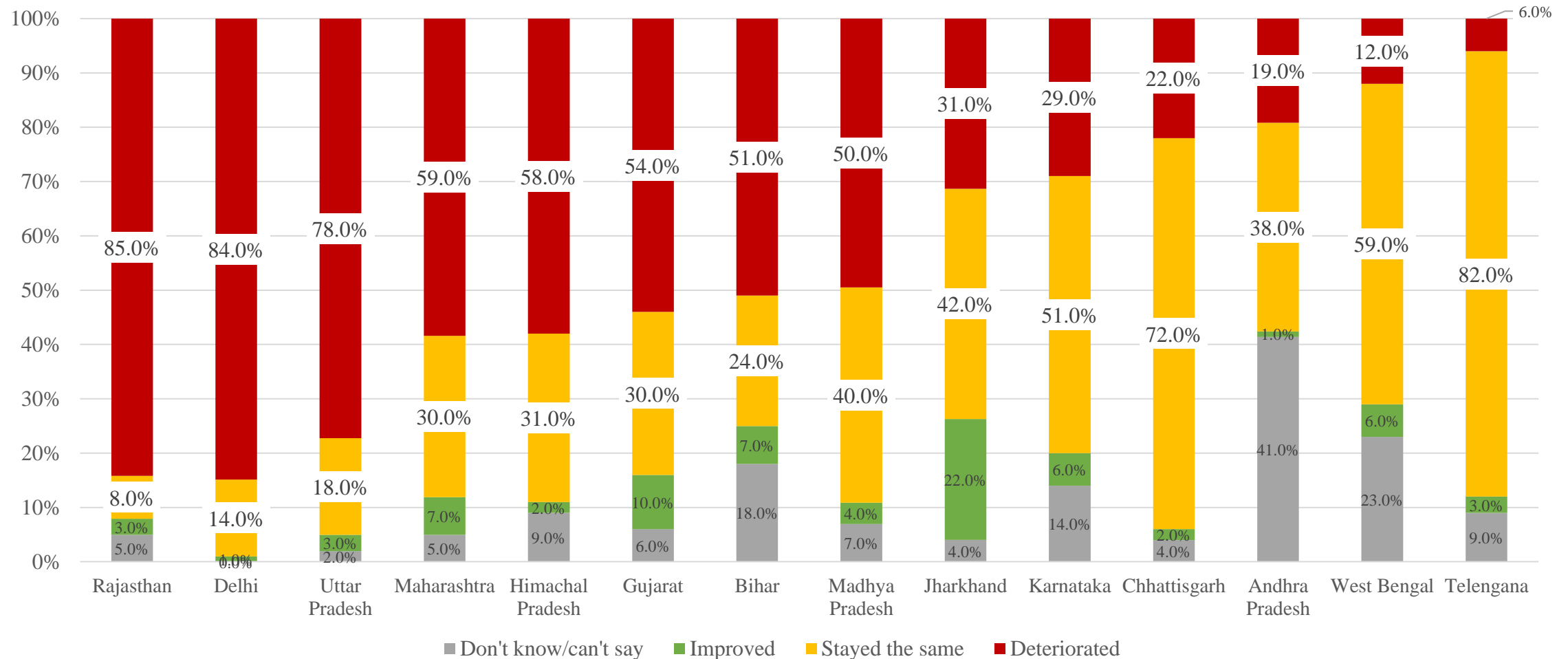
Was HH consumption of cereals in last 30 days sufficient?



States arranged in decreasing order of incidence of cereal insufficiency

How has nutritional quality of food changed since pre-pandemic?

Change in nutritional quality of diet was worst in Rajasthan, Delhi and UP, where more than 80% reported a fall in diet quality. Telangana, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and AP did better than other states on this front.



States arranged in decreasing order of incidence of a deterioration in nutritional quality of food