

## FEWS NET's Population in Need Estimates

### What is the Population in Need (PIN)?

The Population in Need (PIN) is the total number of people requiring urgent humanitarian food assistance. This number reflects the total population estimated to face [Crisis \(IPC Phase 3\) or worse acute food insecurity outcomes](#), including those who are receiving humanitarian food assistance and those who are not. The [IPC follows a different approach](#) to estimating the PIN.

### FEWS NET's reporting on PIN estimates

#### Annual peak PIN estimates:

The projected 'peak PIN' identifies the highest number of people in a country requiring urgent food assistance during the year (or any 12-month projection period). The peak PIN is often – but not always – observed over a two-to-three-month period during the country's lean season when food availability and access are typically at their lowest.

**Reporting Schedule:** At least twice a year, FEWS NET analyzes annual peak humanitarian food assistance needs in each of its [regularly monitored countries](#). Previously, this analysis occurred in January and October. Starting in 2024, these estimates will be issued in March and July to support USAID's budget planning processes. Annual peak PIN estimates can be found in [FEWS NET's Annual Peak Needs Outlook](#) and on the website's [homepage map](#) (select "annual peak" from the map's dropdown menu).

#### Monthly PIN estimates:

Monthly humanitarian food assistance needs correspond to (1) the estimated PIN in the current month and (2) the projected PIN approximately seven months into the future.

**Reporting Schedule:** FEWS NET analyzes the PIN in the current month and projects humanitarian food assistance needs seven months into the future for each of its regularly monitored countries. The projected PIN is compared to the same period of the previous year and the recent five-year average. Monthly and projected PIN estimates can be found in [FEWS NET's Food Assistance Outlook Brief \(FAOB\)](#).

#### Food Security Outlook/Update (FSO/U) and Remote Monitoring Report/Update (RM/U) PIN estimates:

The monthly FAOB PIN estimates also inform the peak PIN estimates for FEWS NET's FSO/U and RM/U reports. The PIN estimates in these reports reflect the anticipated peak (the highest number of people in a country requiring urgent food assistance) during the projection period.

**Reporting Schedule:** FSO and RM reports are issued in February, June, and October and provide FEWS NET's analysis of the current and anticipated severity of acute food insecurity for the next eight months. FSOU and RMU reports are issued in April, August, and December and provide FEWS NET's analysis of the current level of acute food insecurity and incorporate any changes to the anticipated severity of acute food insecurity for the next six months. All reports include maps depicting FEWS NET's assessment of area-level IPC Phase classifications during each four-month period of analysis. FEWS NET's maps visualize the most likely food security outcomes, including ongoing or planned food assistance.

## FEWS NET's methodology for estimating the PIN

The FEWS NET Early Warning Team (EWT) uses the [Scenario Development](#) process, incorporating various methods, to project future acute food insecurity and estimate the number of people needing urgent humanitarian food assistance in each regularly monitored country. Just as there is no single gold standard method for projecting future acute food insecurity outcomes, the availability and quality of data and information required to estimate assistance needs also varies significantly throughout the year and across geographies. As such, rather than relying on a single method, the EWT utilizes a *convergence of evidence approach* to estimate the PIN. This involves drawing on analysts' expertise to integrate available evidence, based in part on evaluating the strengths and limitations of different methods and data sources. FEWS NET communicates its PIN estimates using a range rather than point estimates given data availability and quality limitations and reliance on expert judgment to assess the PIN.

### Convergence of evidence explained

The *convergence of evidence approach* is integral to FEWS NET's methodology for estimating the PIN. This approach may sometimes be additive or comparative, but most frequently, requires a combination of both.

Additive:	Comparative:
Different information sources are available for different areas of a country at specific times of the year, requiring multiple methods to estimate the PIN for different areas.	Multiple information sources exist for the same area, and the outputs of different methods for estimating the PIN are compared.

Below is a summary of the most common methods used by the EWT as part of the *convergence of evidence approach*, which feeds into the Scenario Development process.

### Subnational PIN estimates

One method, when possible, is to **develop subnational PIN estimates to aggregate into national estimates**. This can range from analysts roughly calculating PIN estimates for each FEWS NET mapping unit in a country (by multiplying the base population by the likely proportion of the population in that area in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse) to simpler calculations for a handful of units (without requiring advanced tools or complex calculations). Regardless of complexity, analysts use the *convergence of evidence approach* at the subnational level to derive the national-level PIN estimate.

### Population groups vulnerable to hazards

In line with the Scenario Development process, another common method involves **identifying population groups** whose **vulnerability** to recent or expected hazards has likely led or will likely lead to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes. While knowledge base products (e.g., livelihoods resources detailed [here](#)) are ideal for assessing household vulnerability, analysts may use a variety of information sources to assess household exposure to shocks. In addition to EWT field assessments and monitoring networks, these additional sources include partner reports on displacement, natural disasters, seasonal assessments, and national vulnerability assessments. This method requires analysts to understand the hazards and assess their impact on acute food insecurity of various population groups to assess the likely PIN.

### Household Economy Analysis (HEA) Outcome Analysis

When the requisite livelihood products are available, **HEA Outcome Analysis** is another possible method with which the EWT may develop input for the final PIN. Analysts develop problem specifications (assumptions) about the likely evolution of relevant food and cash income sources, which are used in the Outcome Analysis model. PIN estimates are provided at FEWS NET's unit of analysis. In some cases, Outcome Analysis may extend to a national or near-national level to facilitate broader assessments of the size of the acutely food-insecure population. Often, a modified outcome analysis is used due

to outdated or incomplete livelihood knowledge base products, necessitating analysts to infer the severity of acute food insecurity among affected wealth groups.

### Survey data

PIN estimates can be calculated using outcome indicator data from household surveys, which often capture most dimensions of food security. Ideally, EWT analysts converge relevant food security outcome indicators from surveys at the household level, then summarize findings at the analysis unit, a process outlined in FEWS NET's guidance document titled [\*Matrix Analysis: Integrated Analysis of Survey-Based Indicators for Classification of Acute Food Insecurity\*](#). These results, when possible, are compared with other statistical data from the current and past household surveys to ensure reasonable conclusions and convergence with other evidence. However, direct access to household survey datasets produced by partners is often limited, requiring a convergence of evidence of individual indicators at the area level. Household food security surveys are also conducted infrequently, typically just once a year, which means conclusions from household surveys must sometimes be extrapolated to estimate the PIN.

### Partner assessments

External assessments of populations in need represent another method used to help calculate PIN estimates. Often, the EWT participates in these assessments, enabling analysts to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the assessments and ultimately align the assessment estimates with FEWS NET's final analysis of acute food insecurity. Analysts may also use results from partner assessments to support FEWS NET's assessment of acute food insecurity, even if not directly involved, provided they understand the data collection methods used.

### Qualitative comparisons between past and present

While FEWS NET regularly faces the challenge of analyzing new hazards and dynamics impacting food security, many situations resemble past crises. Analysts compare current/expected conditions to previous crises to infer potential outcomes. Analysts rely on historical trends (e.g., the FAOB archive), as well as historical estimates from other agencies, to help infer the potential size of the PIN based on similar historical years. Additionally, analysts examine past trends of food assistance needs to understand how needs might evolve during the scenario period.

### Conclusion

The methods summarized above are frequently used by the EWT to estimate the PIN. All viable information and methods are considered during the Scenario Development process. Given that FEWS NET produces PIN estimates on a monthly basis, analysts may need to prioritize areas during the Scenario Development process that are most likely to have populations in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse and will contribute to the evolution of the PIN, so as to streamline time and effort amid the need for rapid decision making. Consequently, analysts may need to infer outcomes in some areas based on similarities with and differences from the areas where they conducted more in-depth analysis. In all cases, FEWS NET uses the Scenario Development process and all credible information available to estimate the PIN. Finally, analysts must aggregate multiple lines of evidence to determine how humanitarian food assistance impacts food security and how much larger the PIN may be without that assistance.