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# Food Security Profiling of Nablus Governorate

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Working Paper  
Series No. 3 - 2009

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## Socio-Economic and Food Security (SEFSec) Monitoring System in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

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Based on data produced by the  
Palestinian Central Bureau of  
Statistics

Disclaimer

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## Methodology

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. In the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), food security is a direct consequence of access to income and employment. While food is available in the oPt, trade restrictions makes the oPt a net food importer of goods that are not locally produced. The Palestinian population are thus faced with a food system with which they have no sovereignty over and is currently fragile due to the political dimensions of the conflict. As such, the Socio-economic and Food Security survey was developed in order to capture, reliable and updated information on the living conditions of Palestinian households in a rapidly changing political context.

The Socio-Economic and Food Security survey, conducted in January/February 2009 in the West Bank, was designed to meet following objectives:

1. Provide an overview of the socio-economic characteristics of households residing in the West Bank;
2. Differentiate among the socio-economic conditions of Palestinian households according to the criteria of geographic location, locality type, sex, refugee status, and livelihood group;
3. Assess the overall trends in income and expenditure of households in the West Bank over the past 6 months;
4. Assess the changes in food acquisition<sup>1</sup> patterns and coping mechanisms (including the assistance);
5. Measure the assistance received by households and household's evaluation of this assistance; and
6. Provide evidence-based recommendations for food security policy and programming purposes.

The methodology used for this survey is largely consistent with the methodology used in the May 2008 *Joint Rapid Food Security Survey in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* conducted by the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA). Considering that the dataset is cross-sectional, the analysis is static as it uses income and consumption. A third variable reflecting the changing socio-economic impact of Israeli measures was added to make the model more dynamic. These variables were used to cluster the data into three clusters of households that are homogeneous with respect to how they were impacted during the past 6 months by the Israeli measures. The households within the clusters were then classified according to their consumption and income levels (3 way crosstabs) based on which the food insecurity levels were determined (for detailed procedures and methodology please see Annex I of the Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey of the West Bank, August 2009).

The following report is a part of the broader socio-economic and food security monitoring system conducted jointly by the World Food Programme and FAO in collaboration with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. The Governorate Food Security Profiling provides a profile of the characteristics of food insecure households within a specific governorate. For further examination on specific issues, users are encouraged to contact the Palestinian Central Bureau for Statistics.

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<sup>1</sup> Food acquisition: from purchase, self-production and gifts (both formal and informal assistance). In the oPt food acquisition mainly depends on household purchasing power, which in turn mainly depends on income (hence employment) and price levels. However, assistance plays a major role in food security and should be regularly monitored to infer impact on household socio-economic status.

**Working Paper Series 3**  
**Governorate Food Security Profiling WBGS**

**II. Nablus Governorate**

**A. Population and Demography**

**Table 1: Percentage of Registered Refugee Out of Total Population**

Nablus is the third largest governorate in the West Bank. Nablus represents 13 percent of the total West Bank population or a total of 315,956 people. The average household size is 5.4 members so that an estimated 58,510 households reside in Nablus.

	Registered Refugees	Other	Total
Population	82,149	233,807	315,956
Percentage	26%	74%	100%

Source: PCBS Population Census 2007

Approximately 26 percent of registered refugees are living in Nablus and out of those 35 percent of them live in urban areas, 14 percent live in refugee camps and 14 percent live in rural areas. Out of the total population of Nablus, 55 percent live in urban areas, 35 percent in rural areas and 10 percent live in refugee camps.

**Table 2: Distribution of Population By Locality**

	Urban	Rural	Refugee Camps	Total
Number of Communities	8%	53%	3%	64%
Population	174,403	111,197	30,356	315,956
Percent	55%	35%	10%	100

Source: PCBS Population Census 2007

**B. Labour Force**

Approximately 59 per cent of the Nablus population is aged 15 years and above. The table below shows that between the first half of 2008 and the second half of 2009, labour force participation has decreased in correlation with unemployment levels. In the third quarter of 2008, the percentage of those aged 15 years and above participating in the labour force stood at 43.4 percent while unemployment levels were at 15.3 percent. By the second quarter of 2009, labour force participation decreased by 2.1 percent although unemployment decreased by 3.7 percent. Labour force participation appears to decrease at the same time as the unemployment rate.

**Table 3: Labour Force Participation and Unemployment Rate**

	Q3 08	Q4 08	Q1 09	Q2 09
Labour Force Participation %	43.4%	42.2%	41.3%	41.3%
Unemployment %	15.3%	14.9%	13.2%	11.6%

Source: PCBS Labour Force Surveys, 2<sup>nd</sup> Half 2008 to 1<sup>st</sup> Half of 2009

Upon closer examination of the absolute figures, the population increased between the second half of 2008 and the first half of 2009. In the second half of 2008, an increase in labour force participants of 1,797 individuals coincides with a drop in unemployment figures with the creation of 2,978 jobs in which the 1,797 individuals were absorbed. This leaves 1,181 labour force participants unemployed. By the

end of the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2009, the population grew at relatively the same rate while unemployment levels appeared to drop with the creation of 2,236 jobs, which would have absorbed the previous unemployed leaving 1,055 labour force participants unemployed. Labour force participation decreased by 542 individuals during the first half of 2009 indicating those unemployed who have been discouraged from looking for employment. Table 4 shows that the employment rate has not increased in parallel with the population growth in which to absorb the new labour force participants.

**Table 4: Change in Population, Labour Force Participation, Employment and Unemployment**

	Q2 08	Q3 08	Q4 08	Q1 09	Q2 09	Change 2nd half 08	Change 1st half 09
Population	320,510	322,913	325,335	327,775	330,234	4,826	4,898
above 15	192,091	193,531	194,983	196,445	197,919	2,892	2,936
Labour Force Participation #	80,486	83,993	82,283	81,132	81,740	1,797	-542
Unemployed	13,441	12,851	12,260	10,709	9,482	-1,181	-2,778
Employed	67,045	71,142	70,023	70,423	72,259	2,978	2,236

Source: PCBS Population Census 2007 and Labour Force Survey Rounds

### C. Wages and Prices

No significant price changes appeared to occur as shown in Table 5. Between the third quarter and fourth quarter of 2008, nominal daily wages rose from 81.80 NIS to 84.20 NIS. By the first quarter of 2009, the average nominal daily wage decreased to 82.80 NIS but rose again to 84.10 NIS. From the third quarter of 2008 to the second quarter of 2009, average real daily wages increased from 72.70 NIS to 76.70 NIS. By the second quarter of 2009, average real daily wages representing actual household purchasing power was 9 percent lower than the average nominal daily wage.

**Table 5: Average Nominal Daily Wage vs. Average Real Daily Wage**

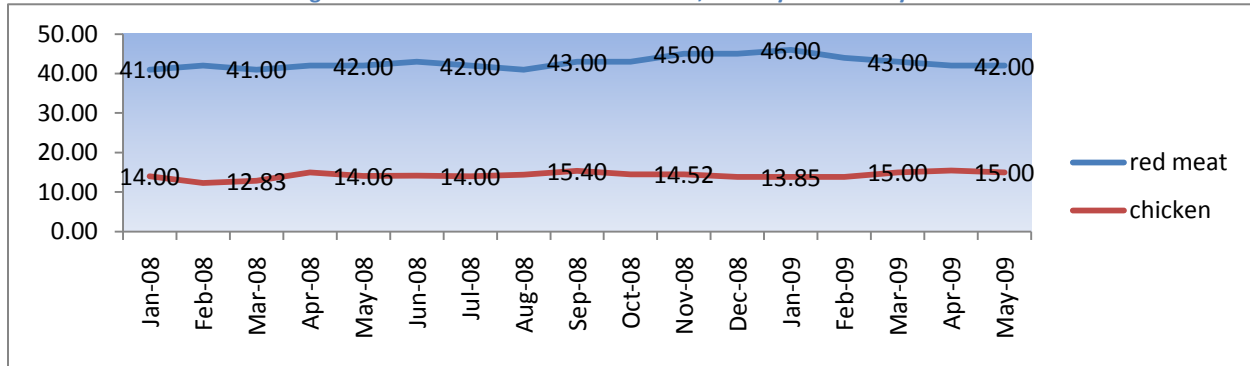
	Q3 08	Q4 08	Q1 09	Q2 09
Average nominal daily wage NIS	81.8	84.2	82.8	84.1
Average real daily wage NIS	72.7	75.5	75.9	76.7

Source: PCBS Data

Since no data on the consumer price index was collected at the governorate level, the prices of basic consumer commodities was selected to serve as a basis to gauge the socio-economic conditions of households in relation to the average real wages.

From January to December 2008, the price of red meat rose from 41 NIS per kilo to 45 NIS per kilo. The price continued to rise until January 2009 when it peaked at 46 NIS per kilo. From January to May 2009, the price of red meat declined to 42 NIS per kilo, just slightly below the long term average. During the same observed period, the price of chicken also fluctuated. In January 2008, the price of chicken was 14 NIS per kilo and by September 2008, the price of chicken reached a peak of 15.40 NIS per kilo decreasing again in January 2009 to 13.85 NIS per kilo. The price of chicken stabilised between March 2009 and May 2009 to 15 NIS per kilo, slightly above the long term average of 14.25 NIS per kilo.

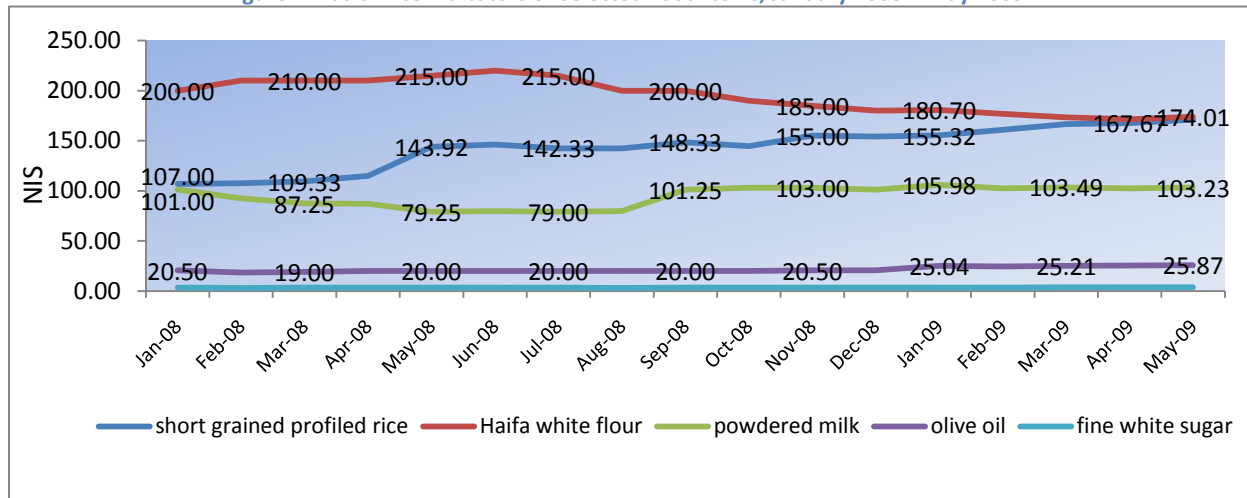
Figure 1: Prices of Red Meat and Chicken, January 2008 – May 2009



Source: PCBS Data

The prices of white profiled rice, Haifa white flour, powdered milk, olive oil and fine white sugar was selected to indicate price changes between the first half of 2008 and the first half of 2009. The price of short grained rice soared from 107 NIS to 143.92 NIS between January 2008 and June 2008 and continued to rise to 167.67 NIS by May 2009. The price for Haifa white flour also soared during the first half of 2008 but slowly declined again by May 2009. In contrast, the price of powdered milk decreased slowly during the first half of 2008 but increased again in October and stabilised by the first half of 2009. The price of olive oil remained stable throughout 2008 but increased slightly in the first half of 2009. Fine white sugar prices remained stable throughout 2008 and the first half of 2009.

Figure 2: Basic Price Indicators of Selected Food Items, January 2008 – May 2009

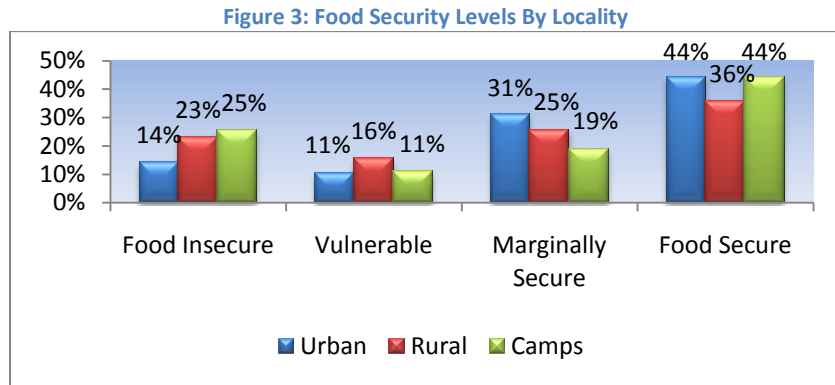


Source: PCBS Data

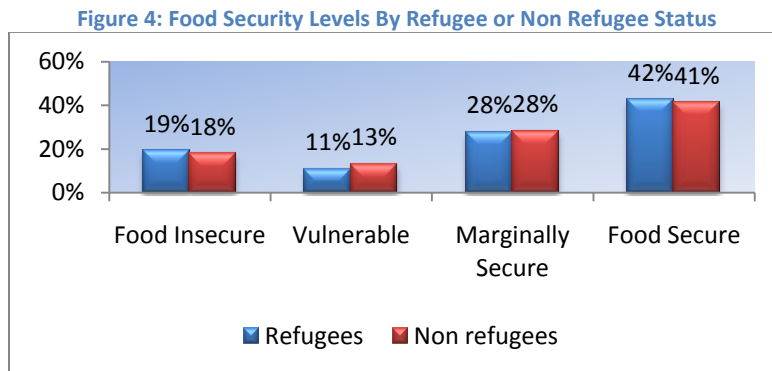
**D. Food Insecurity Levels**

Findings of the survey show that households living in refugee camps have a higher level of food insecurity than rural areas; 25 percent of households in refugee camps compared to 23 percent in rural areas are food insecure. The urban areas show lower levels of food insecurity at 14 percent and have higher levels of those who are marginally secure and food secure, at 31 percent and 44 percent respectively. In December 2008, the Government of Israel relaxed restrictions on the movement of

vehicles and pedestrians across 5 of the 6 checkpoint surrounding Nablus city by extending the opening hours. Furthermore, requirements for special permit for Palestinian plated vehicles to leave Nablus city was removed and trucks were allowed in and out of Nablus through Awarta check point easing commercial access in and out of the city.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the easing of restrictions has likely affected the food security levels of the Nablus population.



Refugees and non refugees show only small variations in differences across the food security levels. A total of 18 percent of non refugees and 19 percent of refugee households are food insecure. Alternatively, 41 percent of non refugees and 42 percent of refugee households are food secure.



**E. Gender of Head of Households**

The percentage of male and female headed households out of the total number of heads of households in Nablus is proportionate to the West Bank Average.

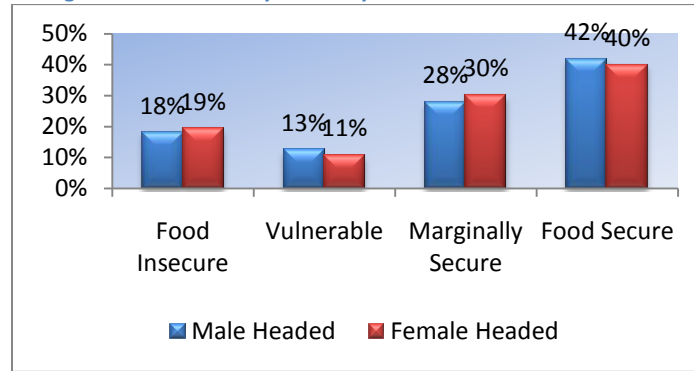
**Table 6: Percentage of Male and Female Headed Households vs. Remaining West Bank**

	Nablus	West Bank
Male Headed Households	88%	88%
Female Headed Households	12%	12%

<sup>2</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, The Humanitarian Monitor, December 2008

While in absolute terms male headed households compose the vast majority of households, female headed households show slightly a higher level prevalence of food insecurity than male headed households with 19 percent of female headed households compared to 18 percent of male headed households who appear to be food insecure. Male headed households also show a higher prevalence of food security at 42 percent compared to 40 percent of female headed households.

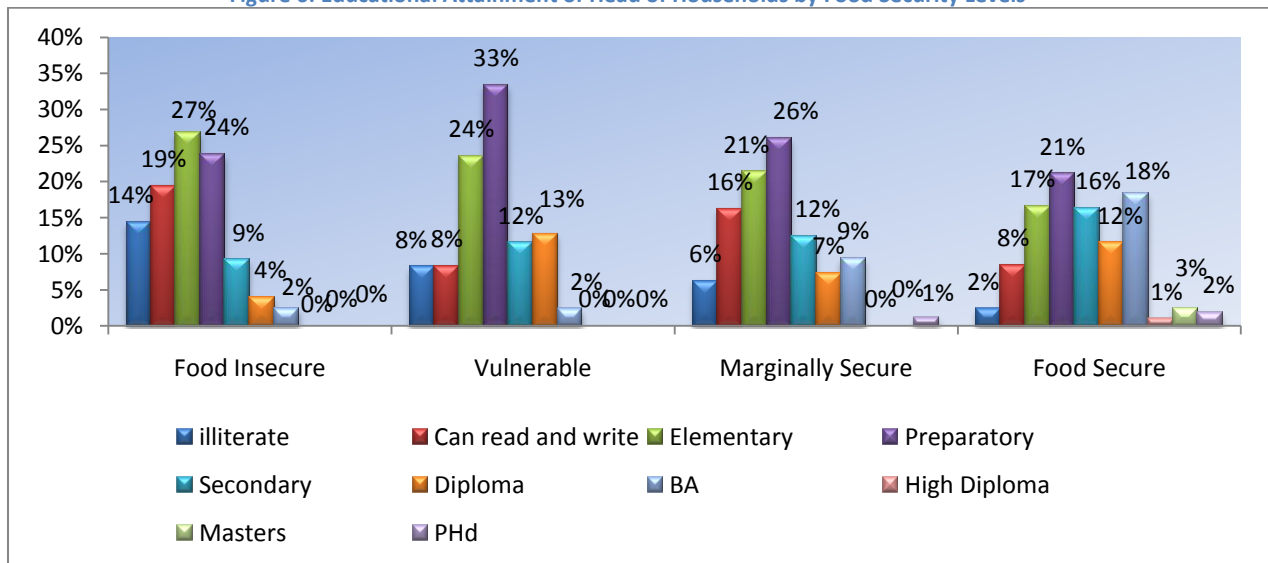
Figure 5: Food Security Levels By Gender of Head of Household



**F. Education of Head of Household and Food Security Levels**

The survey findings show that the distribution of households by education level in Nablus is similar to the Remaining West Bank Average; the food insecure heads of households have lower educational levels than food secure. Postgraduate education level achievements are low amongst the population; only 2 percent of the food secure heads of households have achieved their PHd, 3 percent their Master’s degree, 1 percent diploma level and 18 percent with Bachelor’s degree. Food insecure household heads show lower levels of educational attainment than other food security levels. Only 2 percent of food insecure heads of households have completed their BA degree and a higher prevalence of illiteracy and at most the ability to read and write (14 percent and 19 percent respectively) exist amongst the food insecure.

Figure 6: Educational Attainment of Head of Households by Food Security Levels



### G. Food Consumption and Income Level

The level of food consumption out of the total consumption of the marginally secure, the vulnerable and the food insecure are higher than the PCBS threshold of 44 percent. Food insecure households in Nablus spend 57 cents out of every dollar on food, a 20 percent gap from the PCBS threshold. In comparison, food secure households spend 43 cents of every dollar on food, only 1 percent from the PCBS threshold. The assumption is that households whose food expenditure is above the PCBS threshold of 44 percent will have less disposable income spent of non food items such as education, health care and utility bills which may influence household food security levels.

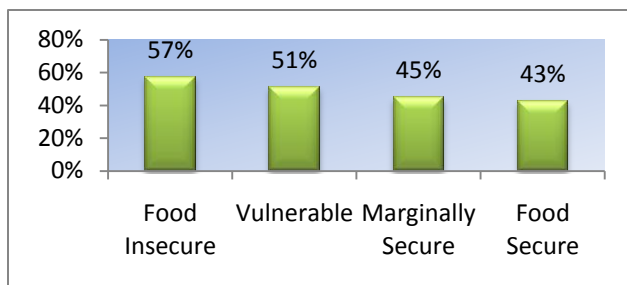


Figure 7: Food Expenditure out of Total Expenditure by Food Security Levels

Food secure households tend to report higher levels of income compared to their consumption levels. In contrast, food insecure households report lower levels of income compared to consumption. Since there is a tendency to underreport income levels, the consumption levels of households provide a more accurate comparison between food insecure and food secure households. As shown, the average consumption per adult of food insecure households is 439 NIS per month. The average consumption per adult of food secure households is 1246 NIS per month. Thus, the monthly gap in consumption per adult between the food insecure and the food secure households is 65 percent.

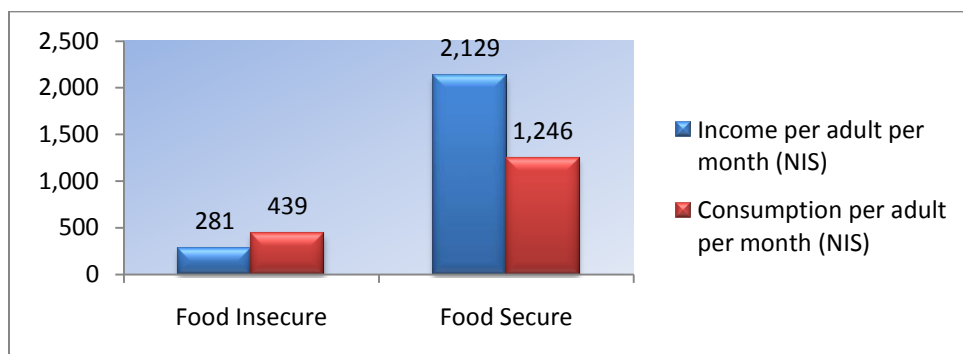


Figure 1: Income/Adult/Month vs. Consumption/Adult/Month

### H. Employment, Occupation and Sector of Employment of Head of Household

The following figure shows the relationship between unemployment and food insecurity. The unemployment rate among the food insecure headed of households are similar to the Remaining West Bank average<sup>3</sup>. The unemployment rate amongst food insecure heads of households is higher than those of food secure households (20 percent of food insecure heads of households compared to 5 percent of heads of food secure households).

<sup>3</sup> See Working Paper Series 1, Household Food Security Profiling in the West Bank, October 2009

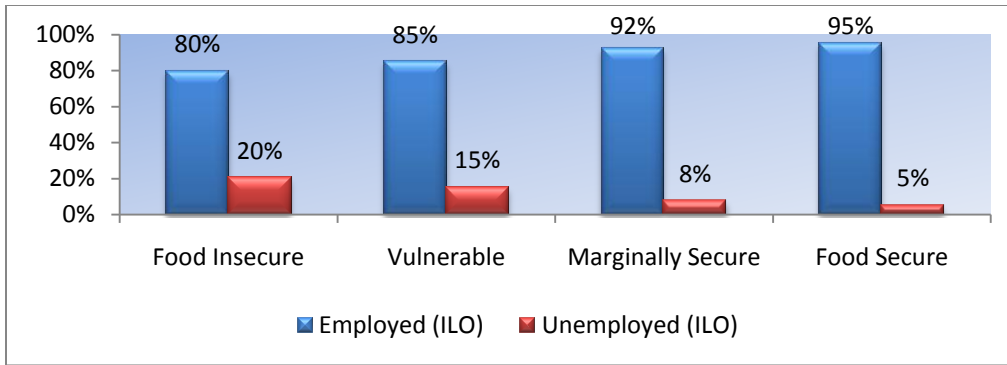


Figure 2: Employment and Unemployment Rate by Food Security Levels

Similar to the Remaining West Bank average, food insecure households are generally distributed among low skill employment activities such as elementary occupation (35%) and crafts/related trade work (22%). A total of 24 percent of food insecure households are employed in services and sales, compared to 9 percent of food secure households. Food insecure heads of households occupy a very small percentage of those employed as specialists, professionals and clerks. Higher percentages of food secure heads of households compared to food insecure households are employed as specialists (18%), professionals (12%) and legislative/senior managers (7%). However food secure households are also seen distributed in elementary occupation (12%), crafts/related trade work (17%) and services/sales (9%) although at lower levels than the food insecure.

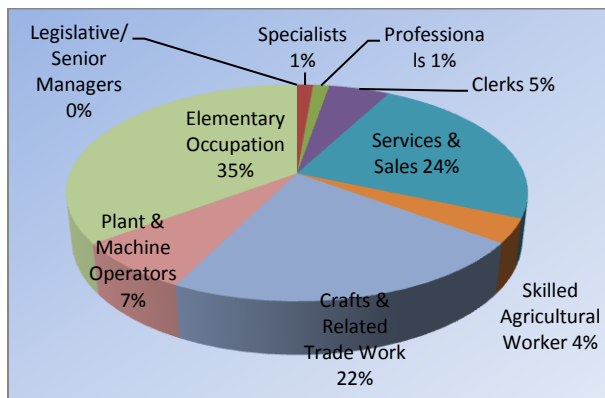


Figure 3: Occupation of Food Insecure Households

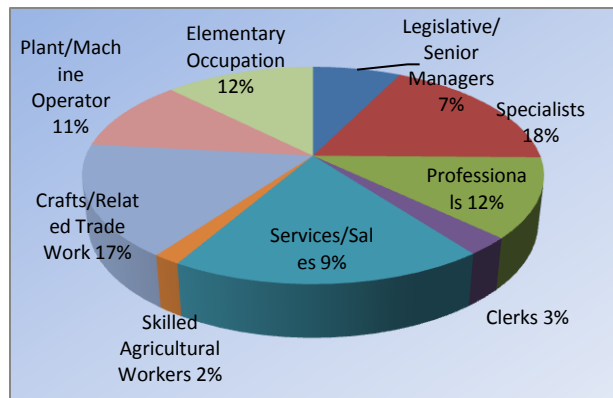


Figure 11: Occupation of Food Insecure Households

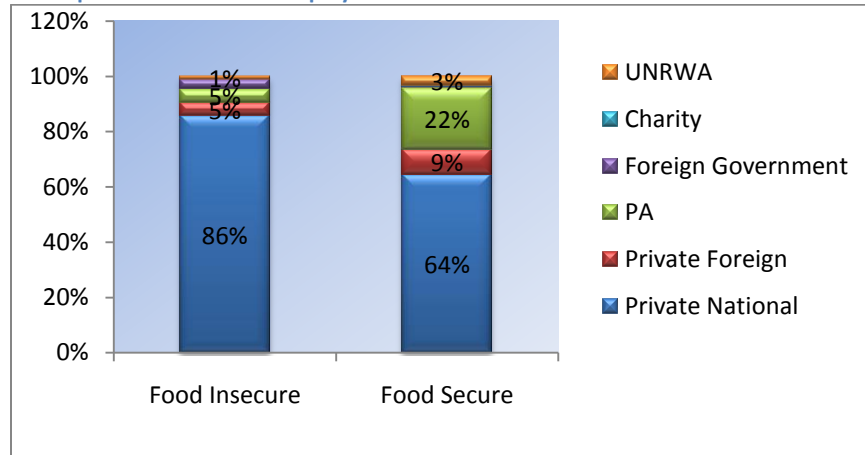
The table below provides a closer examination of the employment activities of food insecure and food secure heads of households. The highest majority of food insecure heads of households are employed in construction at 30 percent. This is followed by the wholesale retail trade and mining/manufacturing, at 29 percent and 10 percent respectively. Food secure households are predominantly employed in the wholesale retail trade at 20 percent followed by public administration and defense at 17 percent of food secure households. While to a lesser degree than food insecure heads of household, food secure households can be found in construction and the whole sale retail trade and most likely represents households with higher pay scales.

**Table 1: Area of Occupation of Food Insecure and Food Secure Heads of Households**

	Food Insecure	Food Secure
Agriculture and fishing	6%	2%
Mining manufacturing	10%	12%
Construction	30%	15%
Wholesale retail trade	29%	20%
Restaurants and hotels	0%	1%
Transport storage communication	9%	10%
Finance insurance and mediation	1%	2%
Properties, rents and commercial businesses	3%	3%
Public administration and defense	5%	17%
Education	1%	8%
Health and social work	2%	4%
Other social and personal care	2%	3%
International organizations	1%	2%
Total	100%	100%

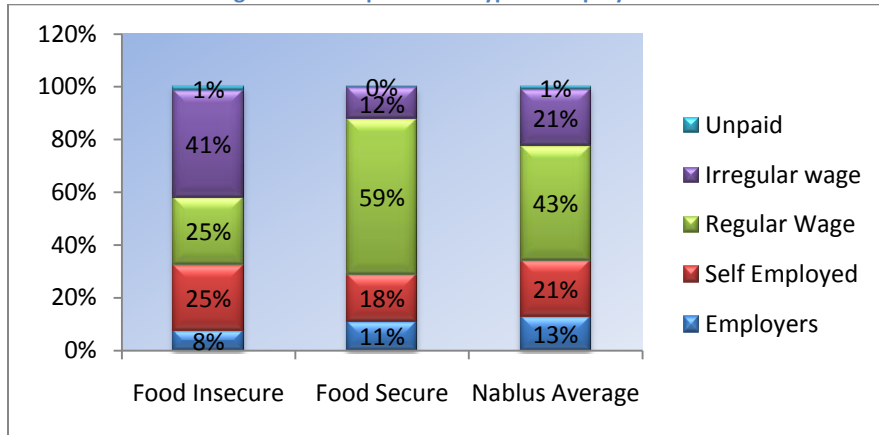
The private national sector appears to employ a greater percentage of food insecure households compared to food secure heads of households; 86 percent compared to 64 percent. This suggests that the private national sector offers a greater opportunity of employment but also increases the likelihood of households to be food insecure.

**Figure 12: Comparison of Sector of Employment of Food Insecure and Food Secure Heads of Households**



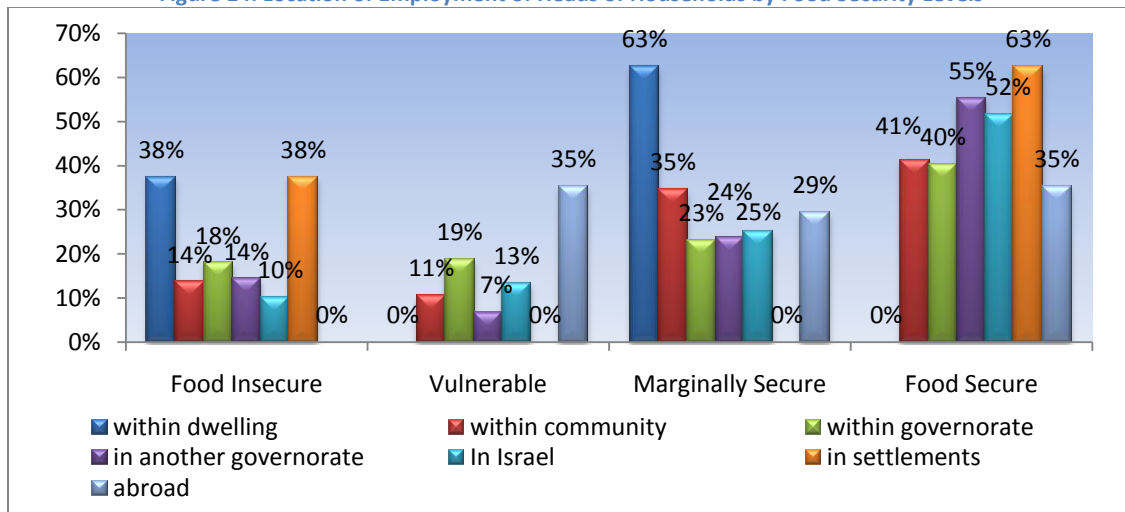
The figure below shows that 59 percent of food secure heads of households are employed in regular wage work compared to 25 percent of food insecure heads of households. Regular wage work provides a higher likelihood of food security for households compared to irregular wage work which consists of 41 percent of the food insecure heads of households compared with 12 percent of the food secure heads of households. Depending on the pay scale, regular wage work also provides a greater likelihood for household food security.

Figure 13: Comparison of Type of Employment



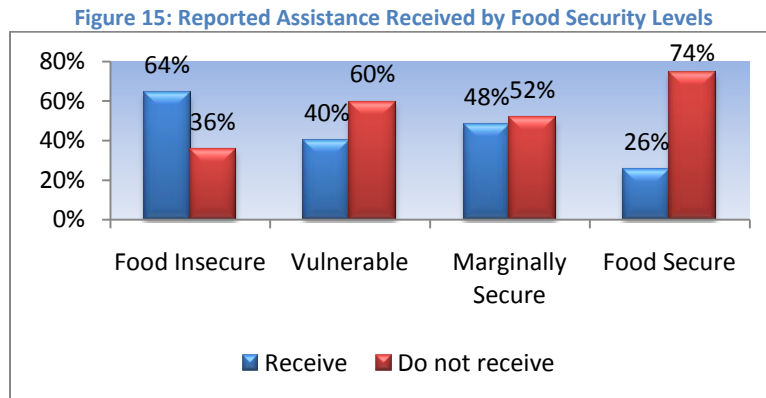
The following figure shows the distribution of households and their food security levels according to their place of employment. The figure indicates that households derive greater food security through working in settlements with 63 percent who reported working in settlement registering as food secure and 38 percent registering as food insecure. Households have a greater chance for marginal security when working within their own dwelling with 63 percent who are marginally secure compared to 38 percent who are food insecure. Similar to previous trends, employment outside of one’s own governorate provides a higher likelihood of being food secure. For example, a total of 55 percent of those employed outside of their own governorate are food secure compared to 14 percent who are food insecure. Employment within Israel also provides a higher level of food security with 52 percent who are food secure, 25 percent who are marginally secure compared to only 13 percent and 10 percent who are vulnerable and food insecure.

Figure 14: Location of Employment of Heads of Households by Food Security Levels

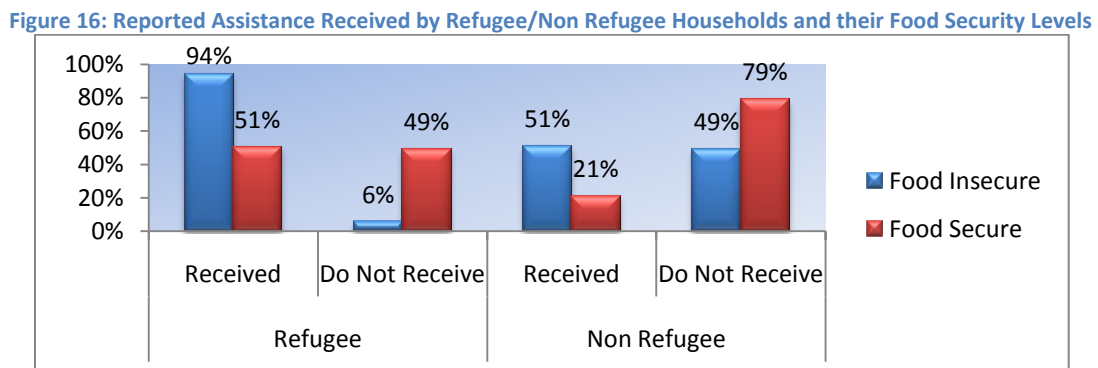


### I. Assistance<sup>4</sup> and Targeting

The figure below indicates a higher level of targeting amongst the food insecure households compared to all the other food security groups. While the food insecure appears to be well targeted, a higher level of marginally secure households reported receiving assistance compared to households vulnerable to food insecurity; 48 percent compared to 40 percent. A further 26 percent of food secure households deemed ineligible have reported receiving assistance.



As aforementioned, the prevalence of food insecurity amongst refugees and non refugees are almost on par with each other. However, the distribution of assistance received by refugee or non refugee status shows that food insecure refugee households are well targeted compared to non refugee households. Ninety-four percent of food insecure refugee households compared to 51 percent of non refugee households reported receiving assistance.



Households living in refugee camps are also reported higher levels of assistance received compared to households living in urban or rural areas. Ninety-four percent of households in refugee camps reported receiving assistance. Households living in urban areas are also better targeted compared to those living in rural areas. Sixty-one percent of food insecure urban households compared to 56 percent of rural households reported receiving assistance.

<sup>4</sup> Assistance refers to direct cash transfers, social hardship case allowance, training, unemployment allowance, food assistance (food for work/training), health assistance, furniture, clothes/sheets, jobs (cash for work), inputs for income generating activities, school stationary and other forms of assistance as explicated.

Figure 17: Reported Assistance Received By Locality and Food Security Levels

