




# Sri Lanka

**FOOD SECURITY MONITORING**

**AUGUST 2022**

Remote Household Food  
Security Survey Brief



This brief was developed by WFP in September 2022, comparing the previous three months of household food security data. This complements the results of the [Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission](#), which refers to data collected for June 2022.



# Sri Lanka: IN NUMBERS



Food security has deteriorated to concerning levels in recent months



**37%**

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)\*

People are relying on coping strategies to put food on the table



**79%**

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES

\*Food-based coping strategies



78% are relying on less preferred food



49% are limiting portion sizes



39% are reducing the number of meals

Vulnerable households are bearing the brunt of the food crisis



**51%**

of households in estate areas are food insecure, compared with 43 and 34 percent for urban and rural areas.



**46%**

of female-headed households are food insecure, compared with 35 percent of male headed households



\*Remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Insecurity (CARI).



## In Brief

**More than one-third of Sri Lanka's population is food insecure**, amid the country's worst economic crisis since its independence in 1948. For a country in which food insecurity was at 9.1 percent in 2019,<sup>1</sup> the shock of the current crisis is reverberating across all facets of life.

**People are being forced to rely on coping strategies to keep food on the table.** Around eight in ten households are regularly turning to food-based coping strategies such as sacrificing meals, borrowing food, and reducing the number of meals eaten.

**July was a particularly harsh month.** Nearly half of the population (49 percent) faced food insecurity in July, in what was a drastic hike from 28 percent in June.<sup>2</sup> This came at the peak of political instability, high month-to-month food inflation, and intense fuel shortages.

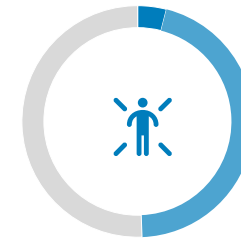
**Diets are in a precarious state.** Nearly four in ten households are facing insufficient food consumption, with many consuming far less diverse diets as food prices remain high across the country.

**The instability comes amid escalating anxieties about prices.** Almost all families (92 percent) are worried about food prices. Meanwhile, four in ten families are worried about fuel prices. There has been little to allay these concerns, which have been creeping higher and higher in recent months.

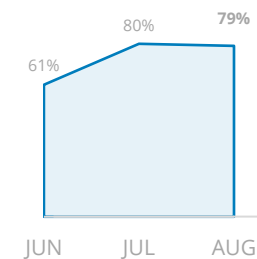
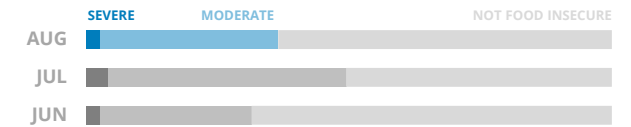
**The crisis is wreaking disproportionate impacts across different segments of society.** This was seen across a range of divides – female-headed households are faring worse than male-headed households, while those in estate and urban areas are also faring worse than those in rural areas. Similar disparities can be found across education levels and income sources.

**In the face of inaction, the situation could deteriorate even further.** The upcoming months could see a combination of factors continue to exert pressure on food insecurity, including poor harvest forecasts of staple foods, import restrictions, and the ongoing economic crisis.

### Food security is at threat.



37%  
FOOD INSECURE  
(rCARI)



79%  
RELYING ON FOOD-  
BASED COPING  
STRATEGIES

<sup>1</sup> Food and Income Expenditure Survey, 2019

<sup>2</sup> This June figure is based on a face-to-face Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI), while July and August are based on a remote CARI. More detail on the CARI is available [here](#).

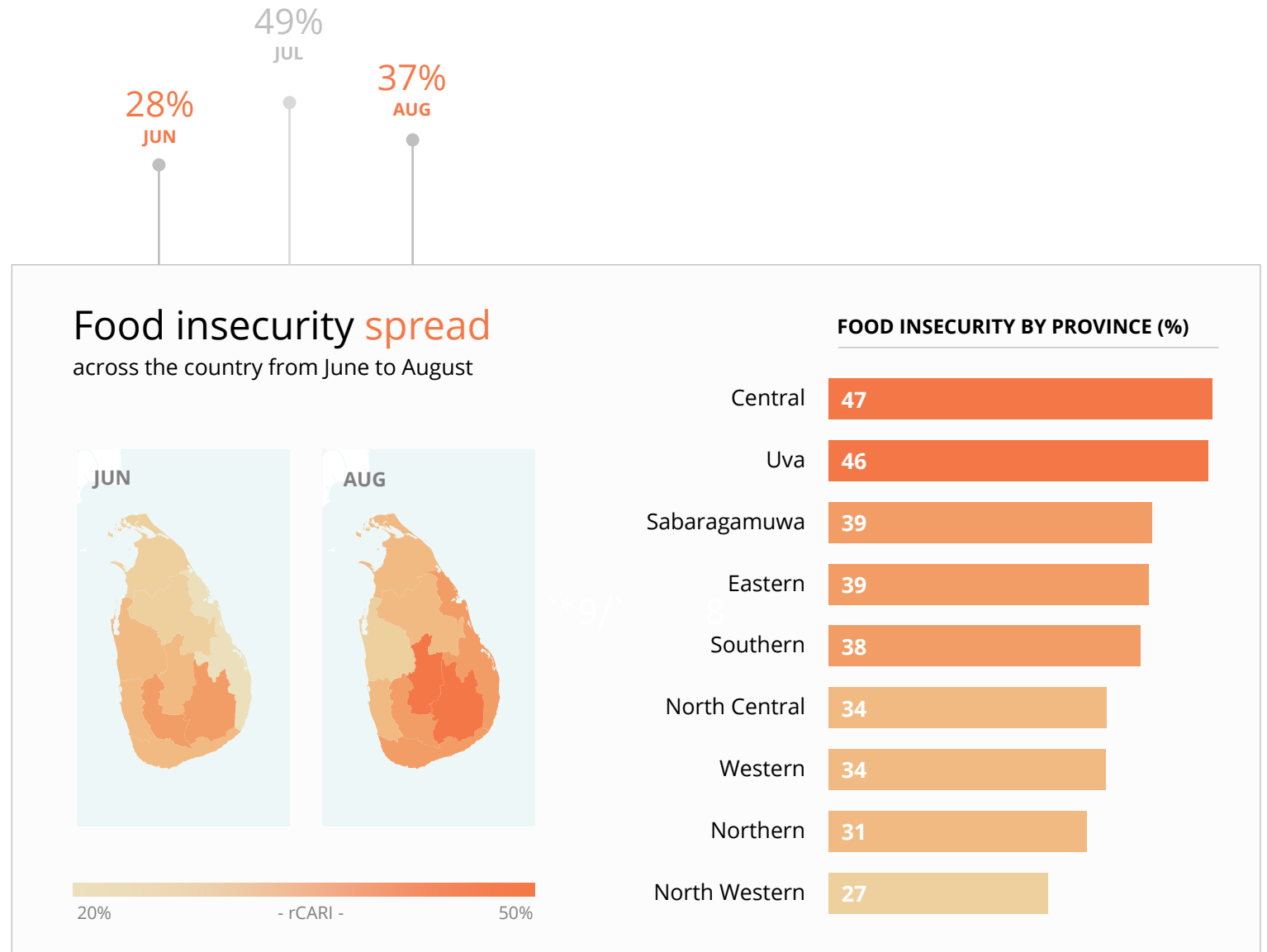
## Findings

**Overall acute food insecurity remains a concern**, with 37 percent of the population now facing acute food insecurity (up from 28 percent in June).<sup>3</sup>

**Seven out of nine provinces saw food insecurity worsen between June and August.** In Uva and Central provinces in particular, nearly half of the population (47 and 46 percent respectively) is now facing food insecurity, with both provinces seeing a deterioration compared with June.

**Food insecurity was especially high in July**, coinciding with uncertainty during the peak of political instability, high month-to-month food inflation, and intense fuel shortages.

While food consumption and diets have mostly reverted back to June levels, reliance on coping strategies increased, and remained at concerning levels. The high reliance on coping strategies is a key reason for the persistence of high food insecurity.



<sup>3</sup> This June figure is based on a face-to-face Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI), while July and August are based on a remote CARI. More detail on the CARI is available [here](#).

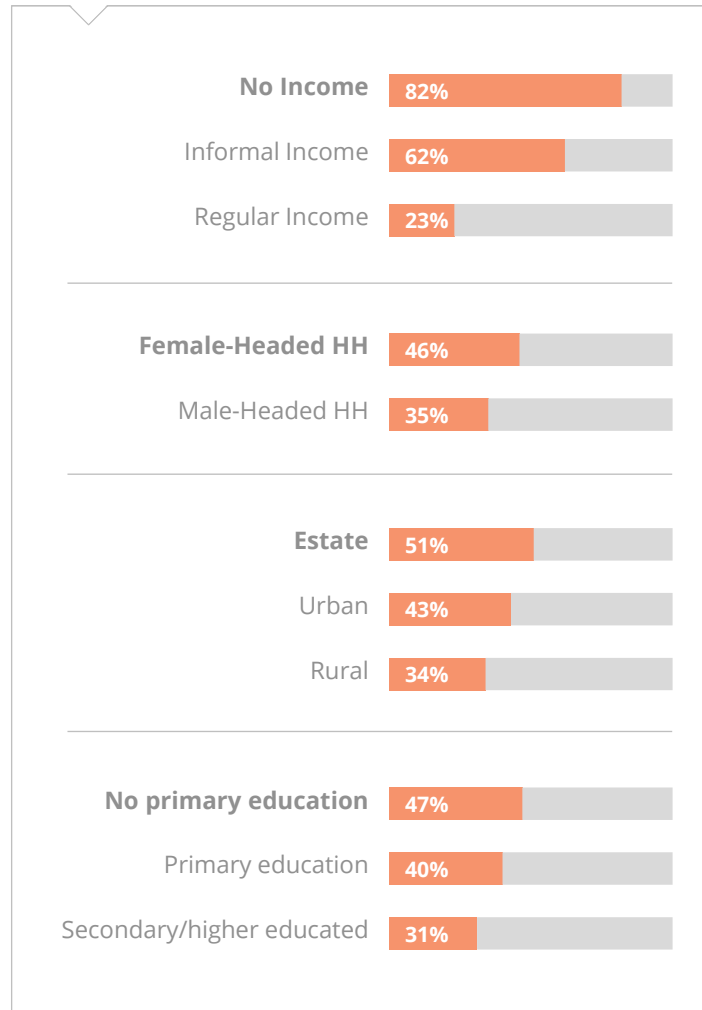
## Certain segments of the population are bearing the brunt of the crisis.

**The sharpest dividing line is between those with and without regular incomes.** An alarmingly large proportion of households without incomes (eight in ten) and with informal incomes (six in ten) are facing food insecurity. This is a sharp disparity compared to those which have regular incomes to rely on (23 percent).

**The gap widened between female-headed households and male-headed households** between July and August, by 5 percentage points. Overall, female-headed households are more food insecure – largely due to their higher reliance on food-based coping strategies to get by.

**Estate households and urban households are also faring worse than rural households,** with the gap also widening between these groups between July and August. A potential reason is the ability of rural households to fall back on agricultural produce; indeed, households that reported having produced crops and/or livestock for household consumption had slightly better food security than those without.

AUGUST FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



## Four in ten households are not consuming adequate diets.

In seven days, the average household consumes animal protein less than three days a week. The rate for fruit and dairy products is even lower, and have been gradually dropping each month since June.

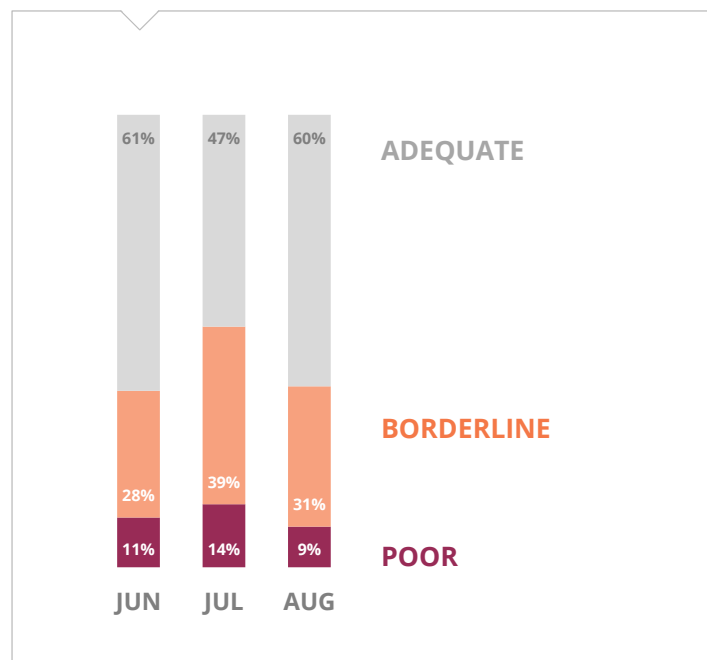
**The improvement in food consumption** is the main driver for the easing of overall food insecurity figures from July to August. Improvements in the consumption of several food groups were responsible for this change, including vegetables, fat, pulses and animal proteins.

**In July, the number of people with insufficient food consumption was especially high** (at 53 percent). This increase in July coincided with rapid food inflation, and the consequences on the ability of households to purchase these food items.

**In particular, there was a decline in the consumption of animal proteins and vegetables** in July. While this has since reverted to June levels, it remains high for Sri Lanka.

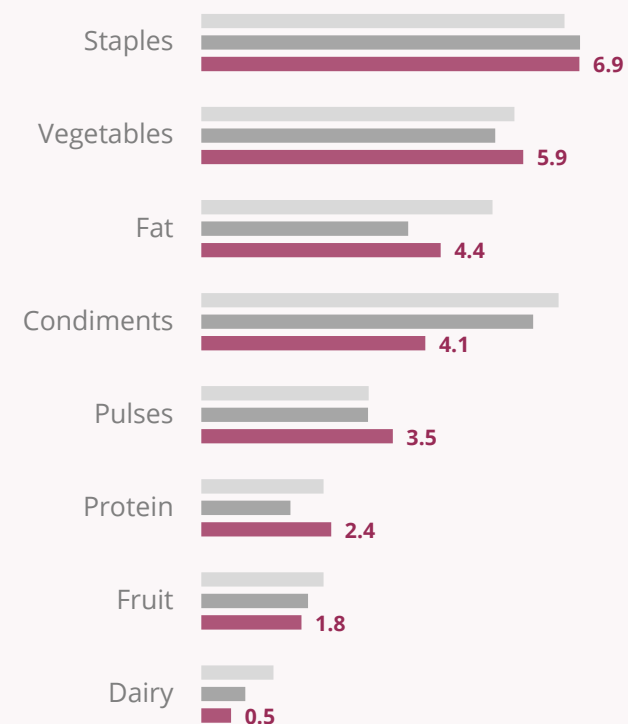


### FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



### FOOD CONSUMPTION

Number of days the average household consumes the following food items (every seven days)



■ JUN ■ JUL ■ AUG

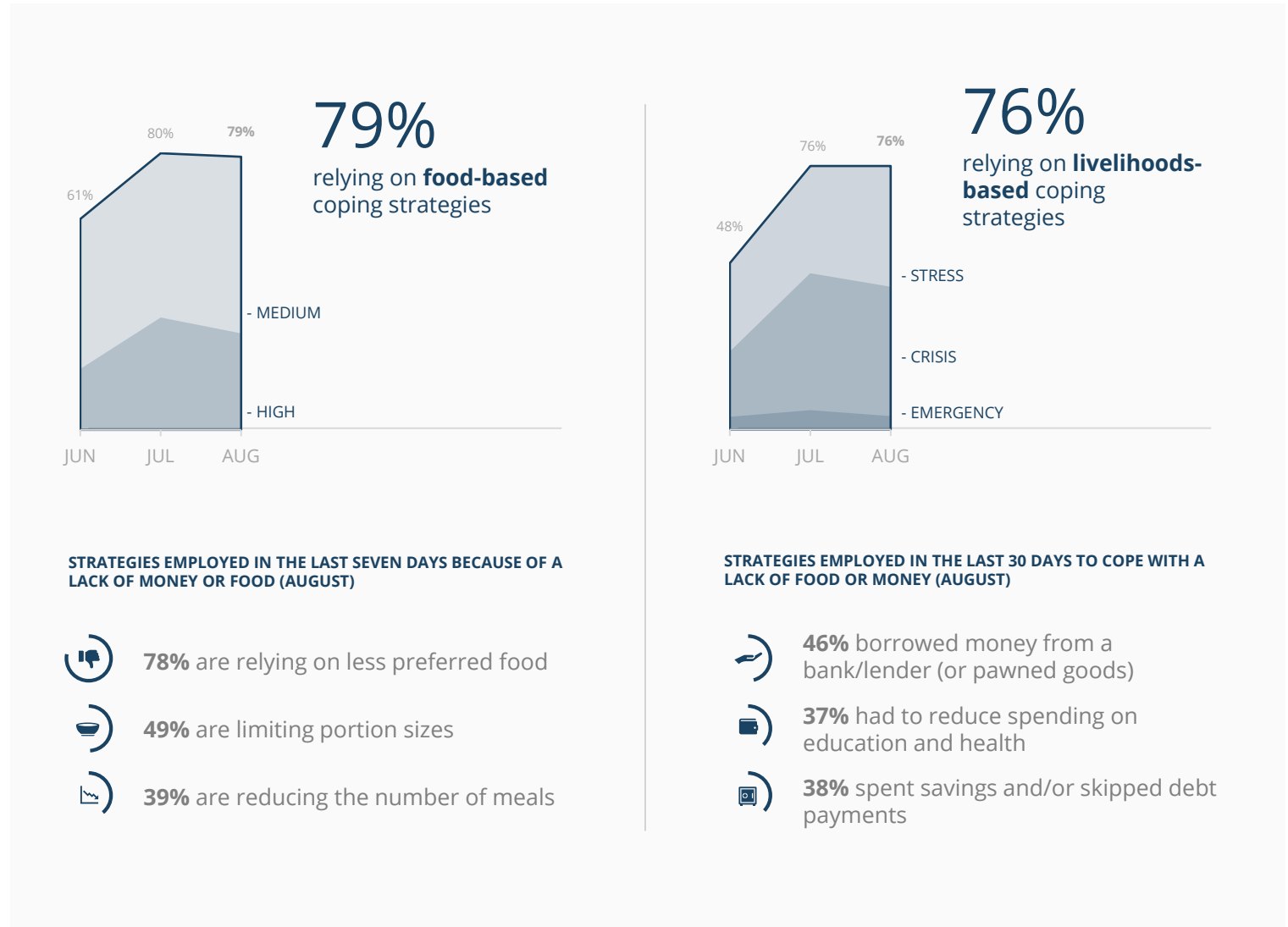
The majority of people are regularly adopting coping strategies.

**July saw a steep spike in reliance on coping strategies** across a wide range of groups – this coincided with the peak of political instability, high prices, and the shock of particularly intense fuel shortages.

**This high reliance on coping strategies persisted even into August**, even while food consumption improved. This suggests that people continue turning to drastic measures in their efforts to keep food on the table.

**Reliance on food-based coping strategies cuts across multiple divides.** Unlike food consumption, there is only a marginal disparity between female-headed and male-headed households, or between households of varying education levels and urban/rural/estate areas, with roughly eight in ten households affected for each group (88 to 92 percent).

**People are increasingly turning to specific livelihoods-based coping strategies** like borrowing money or going into debt to cope with the lack of food or money – these proportions increased from 13 and 23 percent in June, to 46 and 45 percent in August, respectively.







## Everyday anxieties about food and fuel prices have spiked.

**The most pressing concern is around food prices**, with almost all (93 percent) of the population citing this as a worry. Fuel prices were also a large concern, though not quite as high (41 percent). Compared with July, the proportion of people worrying about food and fuel prices increased, in line with the increasing year-on-year inflation rates. This aligns with findings from WFP’s Market Functionality Index [report](#) for August, which found that almost all markets are reporting concerns around rising and/or unstable prices.

**At the same time, nearly half of the population is concerned about disruptions to their jobs and livelihoods** (43 percent). With reliance on coping strategies persisting, stable incomes have become even more indispensable – food price concerns are slightly higher yet for those with no income sources (95 percent).

**Overall, the steepest jump in concerns was around access to medicine** – particularly to do with shortages and increased prices of medicine. The proportion of people citing this concern rose from 42 to 56 percent.

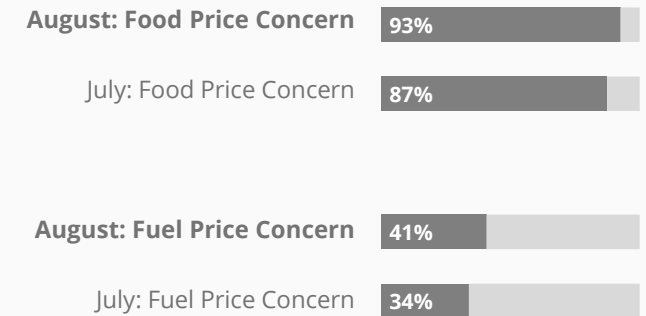
## Most people are facing trouble **accessing** markets and food.

**Seven in ten households are reporting poorer access to regular food items.** While many traders are still reporting an adequate assortment of food items, incomes are likely playing a role in this poorer access. Households reporting more substantial income losses are reporting issues in accessing regular food items more than those with lower income losses. The location of households also matters – with over eight in ten (83 percent) households in estate areas reporting this concern, compared with 74 and 72 percent for those in urban and rural areas, respectively.

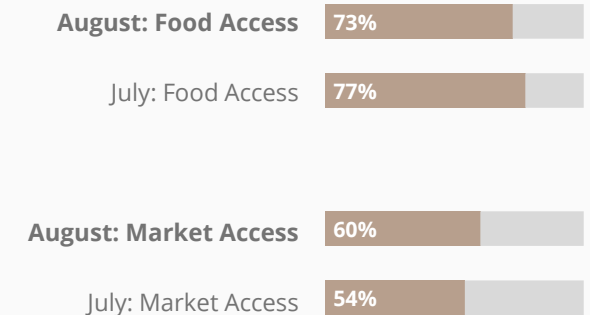
**There is an increase in households reporting restrictions in accessing markets**, from 54 percent in July to 60 percent in August. This comes amid rising fuel costs, fuel shortages, and the consequences on transportation to markets. As with access to food, there are some clear divides based on location. Households in estate areas are at the largest disadvantage (68 percent), followed by rural (61 percent) and urban (54 percent) areas.

### CONCERNS AND ACCESS

#### % WITH CONCERN



#### % WITH ACCESS ISSUES (LAST 14 DAYS)





## Background and Methodology

**Sri Lanka is facing a severe macroeconomic crisis** that has caused acute shortages and spikes in the prices of essential products. The combination of major disruptions to agricultural production, unfavourable harvests, high prices, and many halted economic activities, have collided to unleash a substantial impact on food security.

**This situation in Sri Lanka comes in the midst of a global food crisis** which has generated a wave of upheaval in the markets and exacerbated the situation even further. Globally, conflict, COVID, the climate crisis and rising costs have combined in 2022 to create jeopardy for up to 828 million hungry people across the world. Learn more about the global food crisis and WFP's response [here](#).

**Amid this context, WFP is rolling out monthly household food security surveys** through mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping (mVAM). These remote surveys use a phone-based (CATI) methodology to understand the changes in the food security situation and underlying factors across the country. The August round consisted of 1,845 surveys across all nine provinces. The final results are weighted to ensure that results for provinces and sectors (estate, rural, and urban) are statistically representative.

**This comes as part of WFP's efforts to expand its evidence generation initiatives** to inform the response among government and humanitarian/development partners in Sri Lanka.







## Annex: Tables

### Overall

<b>Food Insecurity (rCARI)</b>	<b>JUN</b>	<b>JUL</b>	<b>AUG</b>
Food Secure	20.1	10.9	16.0
Marginally Food Secure	48.4	39.7	47.5
<b>Moderately Food Insecure</b>	<b>28.8</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>33.8</b>
<b>Severely Food Insecure</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>2.7</b>

#### **Livelihood-based Coping Strategies**

None	52.3	23.8	23.7
Stress	25.1	31.1	35.1
Crisis	18.8	39.5	37.2
Emergency	3.7	5.6	3.9

#### **Food-based Coping Strategies**

No/Low	38.9	20.5	21.0
Medium	43.5	47.1	51.1
High	17.6	32.5	27.9

#### **Food Consumption Group**

Acceptable Food Consumption	60.9	46.9	60.4
Borderline Food Consumption	28.4	39.4	30.8
Poor Food Consumption	10.7	13.7	8.8

June values in these tables have been recalculated to ensure comparability on a remote CARI for comparability with July and August results. The difference with previous references in this document, and with the CFSAM. More detail on the CARI is available [here](#).



## By Sector

	Estate			Rural			Urban		
	JUN	JUL	AUG	JUN	JUL	AUG	JUN	JUL	AUG
<b>Food Insecurity (rCARI)</b>									
Food Secure	7.5	3.3	8.5	21.0	10.7	16.7	18.9	14.0	14.8
Marginally Food Secure	47.3	43.1	40.8	48.3	40.1	49.1	49.4	37.3	42.2
<b>Moderately Food Insecure</b>	<b>43.3</b>	<b>50.0</b>	<b>46.1</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>44.9</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>40.0</b>
<b>Severely Food Insecure</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Livelihood-based Coping Strategies</b>									
None	26.8	8.1	13.7	55.7	23.6	23.1	41.1	28.6	28.9
Stress	30.7	48.9	53.2	23.2	32.7	35.3	34.5	19.5	29.8
Crisis	36.7	40.5	25.0	17.7	38.3	38.7	19.2	44.4	34.0
Emergency	5.8	2.6	8.1	3.4	5.4	2.9	5.2	7.5	7.3
<b>Food-based Coping Strategies</b>									
No/Low	20.9	14.9	17.6	38.8	21.0	21.9	45.6	19.3	17.8
Medium	43.6	42.0	42.7	45.0	47.2	53.8	34.4	47.7	41.1
High	35.4	43.1	39.7	16.2	31.7	24.3	20.0	33.0	41.1
<b>Food Consumption Group</b>									
Acceptable Food Consumption	62.4	49.2	43.6	59.6	46.1	62.0	67.7	49.7	57.0
Borderline Food Consumption	28.4	41.3	45.9	30.1	39.9	29.1	18.6	37.0	34.8
Poor Food Consumption	9.3	9.5	10.5	10.3	14.0	8.9	13.7	13.3	8.2



## By Sex of Head of Household

	Female-Headed HH			Male-Headed HH		
<b>Food Insecurity (rCARI)</b>	<b>JUN</b>	<b>JUL</b>	<b>AUG</b>	<b>JUN</b>	<b>JUL</b>	<b>AUG</b>
Food Secure	13.0	7.2	12.6	21.6	11.7	16.7
Marginally Food Secure	42.6	39.4	41.7	49.6	39.8	48.7
<b>Moderately Food Insecure</b>	<b>38.0</b>	<b>49.7</b>	<b>40.7</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>32.3</b>
<b>Severely Food Insecure</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>Livelihood-based Coping Strategies</b>						
None	46.9	26.7	28.8	53.4	23.2	22.7
Stress	23.2	29.4	28.3	25.5	31.4	36.5
Crisis	23.1	39.0	36.8	17.9	39.6	37.3
Emergency	6.8	4.9	6.1	3.1	5.8	3.5
<b>Food-based Coping Strategies</b>						
No/Low	31.7	15.2	18.0	40.4	21.6	21.7
Medium	43.8	46.5	40.3	43.4	47.2	53.4
High	24.5	38.3	41.6	16.2	31.2	25.0
<b>Food Consumption Group</b>						
Acceptable Food Consumption	51.7	45.4	51.3	62.8	47.2	62.3
Borderline Food Consumption	32.6	35.9	36.6	27.5	40.2	29.5
Poor Food Consumption	15.7	18.7	12.1	9.7	12.6	8.1



## By Income Source

	None		Informal		Regular	
	JUL	AUG	JUL	AUG	JUL	AUG
<b>Food Insecurity (rCARI)</b>						
Food Secure	0.0	0.0	1.8	3.7	15.7	22.1
Marginally Food Secure	13.5	17.6	26.3	34.8	47.4	54.7
<b>Moderately Food Insecure</b>	<b>67.1</b>	<b>65.6</b>	<b>62.0</b>	<b>55.9</b>	<b>36.4</b>	<b>22.6</b>
<b>Severely Food Insecure</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.6</b>
<b>Livelihood-based Coping Strategies</b>						
None	31.3	47.0	16.4	18.3	26.6	24.4
Stress	31.6	20.1	28.6	36.8	32.1	35.4
Crisis	28.5	22.0	47.2	41.3	36.8	36.6
Emergency	8.6	10.9	7.8	3.6	4.5	3.6
<b>Food-based Coping Strategies</b>						
No/Low	7.7	8.4	10.6	16.1	25.7	23.9
Medium	41.9	36.6	48.9	48.0	46.6	53.3
High	50.4	54.9	40.5	35.9	27.7	22.8
<b>Food Consumption Group</b>						
Acceptable Food Consumption	30.9	30.3	36.9	48.2	52.3	67.4
Borderline Food Consumption	48.3	55.9	44.6	35.5	36.6	27.2
Poor Food Consumption	20.9	13.8	18.5	16.2	11.1	5.5

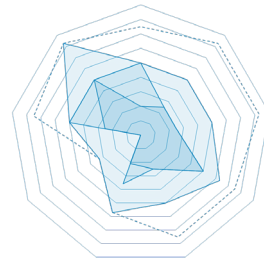
## Annex: Resources

Additional WFP products related to the crisis in Sri Lanka:



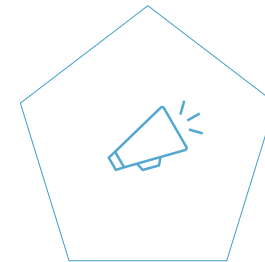
### **MARKET MONITOR**

A regular summary of changes in the market, with a focus on changes in prices for food and fuel.



### **MARKET FUNCTIONALITY INDEX**

An assessment of the functionality of selected markets for cash-based assistance



### **SITUATION REPORTS**

A regular update on the situation and WFP's response to the crisis.





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**World Food Programme**

SRI LANKA

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