




Sri Lanka

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

SEPTEMBER 2022

Face-to-face Food Security
Survey Brief



This brief was developed by WFP in October 2022, comparing the previous four 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 remains at concerning levels



32%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)*

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



68%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES
**Food-based coping strategies*



77% are relying on less preferred food



47% are limiting portion sizes



30% are reducing the number of meals

Vulnerable households are bearing the brunt of the food crisis



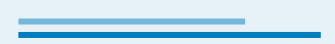
36%

of households in estate areas are food insecure, compared 23 percent for urban areas



40%

of female-headed households are food insecure, compared with 30 percent of male headed households



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



In Brief

In the face of a deteriorating economic crisis, one-third of Sri Lanka's households (31.6 percent) are food insecure. In 2019,¹ food insecurity levels in the country stood at 9.1 percent, and the shock of the current crisis reverberates across all facets of life.

Fluctuations in food insecurity over the past months continue to be seen across all areas of the country.

The slight improvement of the food insecurity situation in September is likely driven by the availability of the Yala harvest in local markets, the recent price reduction of staple foods and the release of food stocks into local markets as reported by wholesale traders.

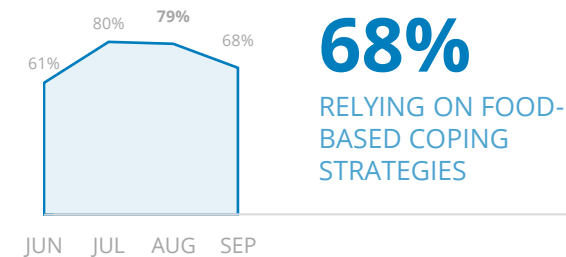
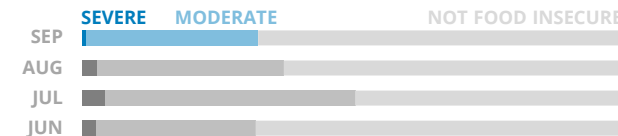
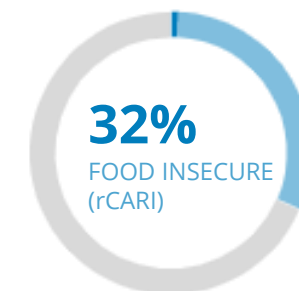
Nearly seven in ten households are regularly turning to food-based coping strategies to keep food on the table such as limiting portions, eating less preferred food, and reducing the number of meals eaten.

Diets have improved since June but remain in a precarious state. Three in ten households are facing insufficient food consumption, with many consuming far less diverse diets as food prices remain high across the country.

The crisis continues to wreak 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 rural areas are also worse off than those in urban areas. Similar disparities can be found across education levels and income sources.

Without immediate action, the situation could deteriorate even further. A combination of factors could affect food insecurity in the upcoming months, including the lean season during the upcoming Maha cultivation, import restrictions, and the ongoing economic crisis.

Food security continues to be at threat.



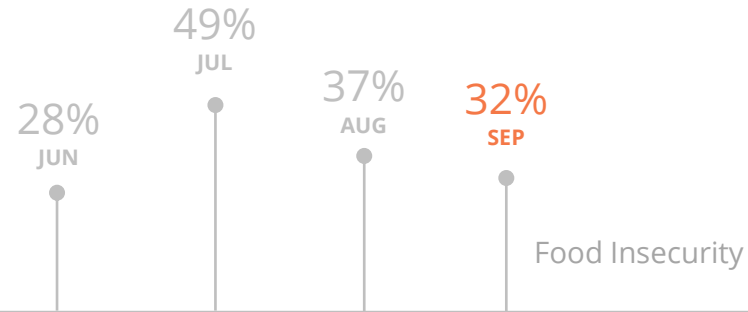
¹ Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), 2019

Findings

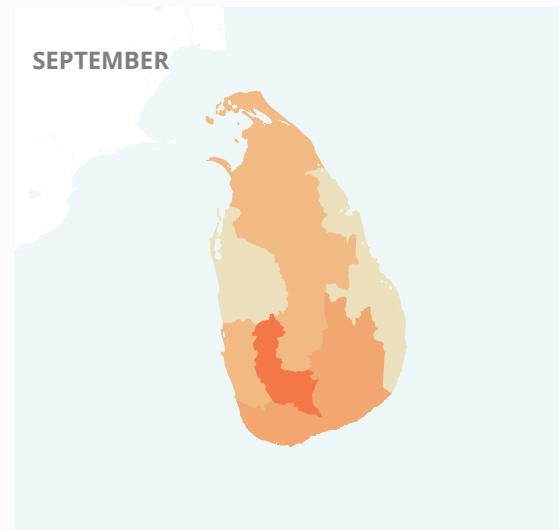
Thirty two percent of households are facing acute food insecurity, which remains a concern. Food insecurity saw a slight decrease of 5 percentage points in September compared to August, however food insecurity levels remained comparable with June.²

Two out of nine provinces (Sabaragamuwa and Northern) saw food insecurity worsen between August and September. In Sabaragamuwa, nearly half of the households (47 percent) are facing acute food insecurity. Five provinces saw a reduction in food insecurity levels, particularly Eastern and Central provinces, which saw a drop of 26 and 14 percentage points respectively.

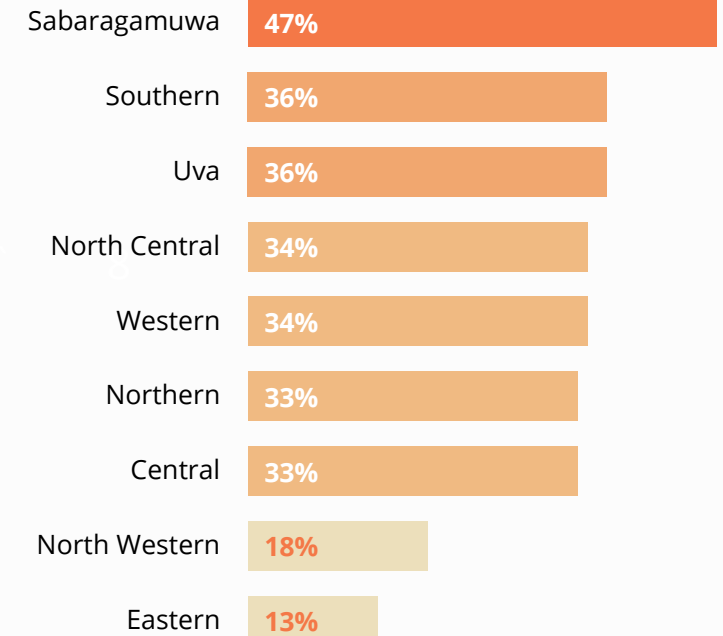
Reliance on coping strategies³ has decreased but remains at concerning levels. Lower reliance on coping strategies coupled with improved household food consumption are key reasons for the slight improvement in food insecurity levels over the past month.



Food insecurity stretches wide across the country



FOOD INSECURITY BY PROVINCE (%)



²Acute food insecurity as measured by the rCARI reflect similar levels of the F-2-F survey in June however with a reduction in the severely food insecure category. More detail on the CARL is available [here](#)

³Food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies

Fragments of the population continue to bear the brunt of the crisis.

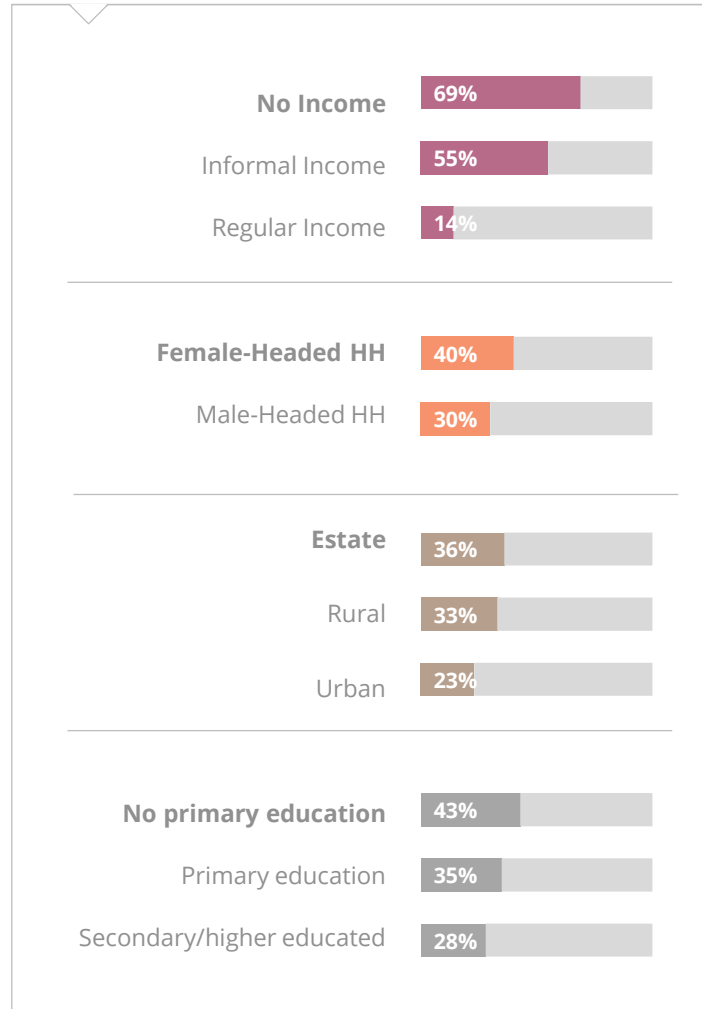
The sharp divide between those with and without regular incomes is apparent. A large proportion of households without incomes (nearly seven in ten) and with informal incomes (five in ten) are facing food insecurity. This is a sharp disparity compared to those who have regular incomes (14 percent).

Female-headed households are more food insecure. September saw a ten percentage point gap between female-headed and male-headed households.

Estate and rural households are faring worse than urban households. Households that reported having produced crops and/or livestock for household consumption had better food security (79 percent) than those without (66 percent).

Households of varying education levels had striking divides in food security levels. Forty three percent of households with no primary education were food insecure, as opposed to 28 percent of households that are educated to secondary or higher levels.

FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



31% are not consuming adequate diets.

In seven days, the average household consumes animal protein less than three days a week. The consumption of fruits have been gradually dropping each month since June. Dairy continues to be the lowest consumed food group, less than a day in a week.

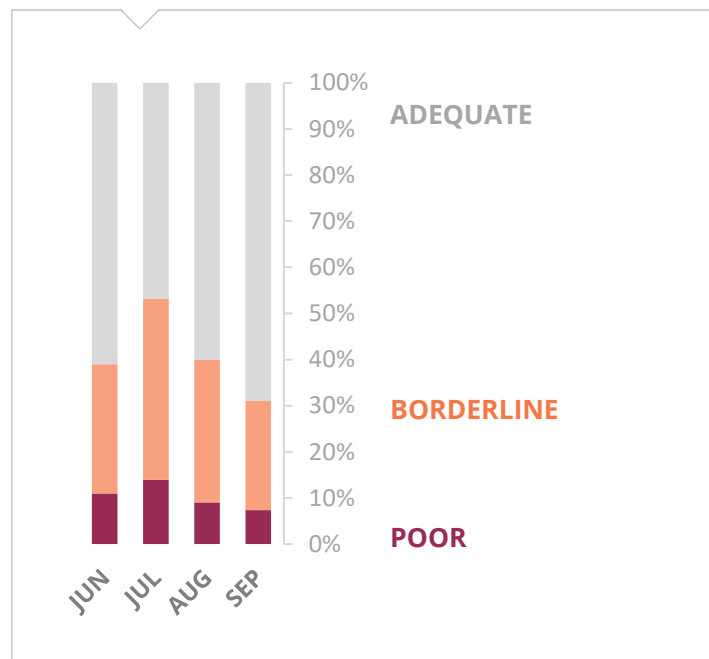
Food consumption saw a considerable improvement in September, which is the main factor contributing to the easing of overall food insecurity figures from August. Availability of the Yala harvest in markets and household levels was instrumental in better food consumption across households.

In September, the number of people with inadequate diet consumption fell to 31 percent, from 40 percent in August and 53 percent in July. The high percentage 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 fruits (less than two days a week) in September. Import restrictions and price hikes are likely the main drivers for this decrease.

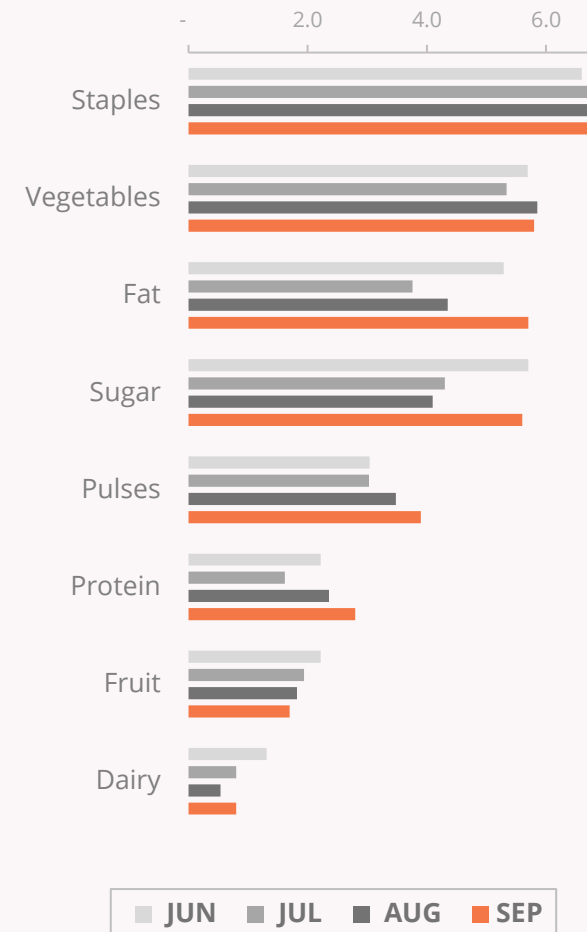


FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



FOOD CONSUMPTION

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



A large number of households continue to adopt coping strategies.

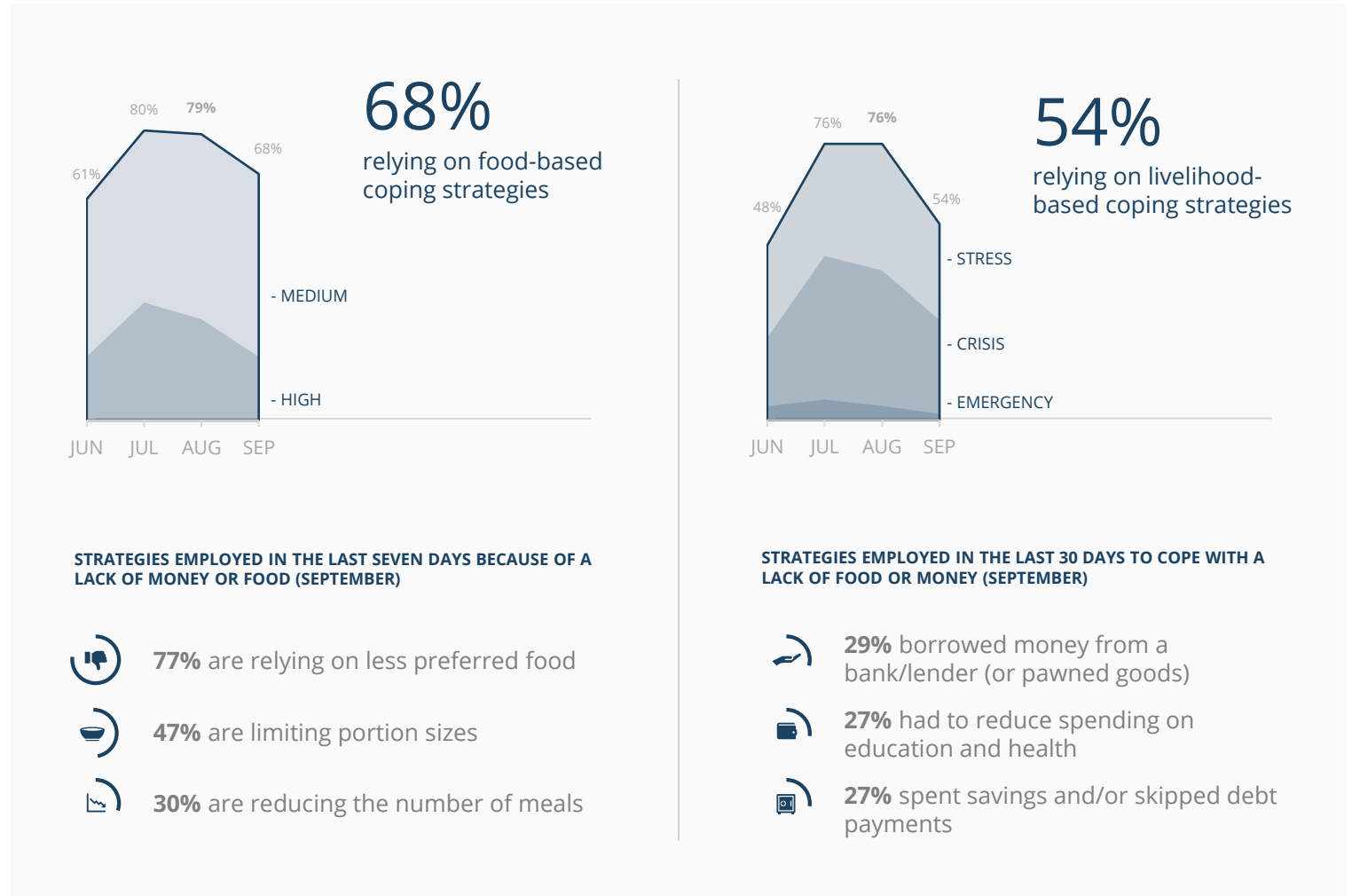
Reliance on food-based coping strategies transcends multiple divides.

There exists a minor disparity between female-headed and male-headed households, between households of different education levels, and in urban/rural/estate areas. Adoption of food-based coping strategies reduced from August by 11 percentage points but overall remains higher than June.

There has been an overall reduction in the proportion of households turning to specific livelihood-based coping strategies

like purchasing food on credit, borrowing money, or falling into debt to cope with the lack of food or money. In September, Northern province experienced an increase in the application of livelihood coping strategies which further impacts their ability to cope with shocks.

While reliance on coping strategies has reduced, households continue to compromise the quality of their diets.



64 percent of household expenditure goes towards food.

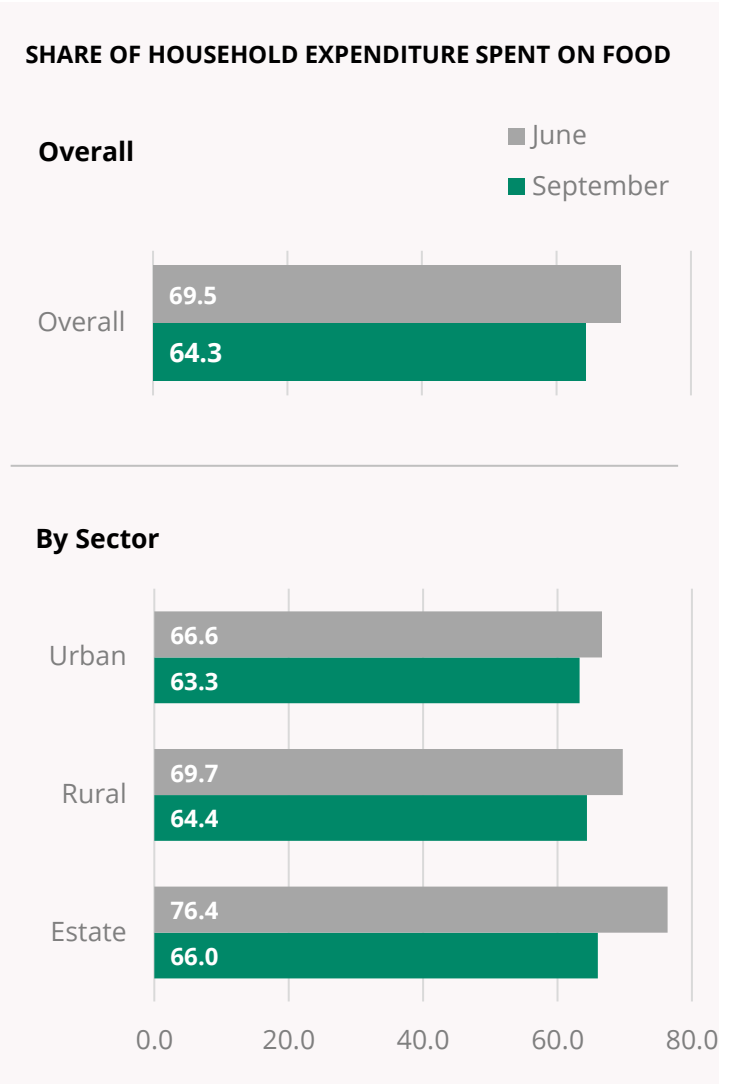
The ratio of food expenditure to total household monthly spending in September was 64.3 percent. Compared to June, this is a reduction of 5.2 percentage points, when expenditure was at 69.5 percent.

Nearly three in ten households (29 percent) reported using more than 75 percent of their total monthly expenses on food, compromising their capacity to cover other essential needs.

The estate sector spent the highest proportion of their income on food in June (76.4 percent) and September (66 percent), however the gap between all sectors has decreased in September.

In the Northern province, people on average spend nearly 75 percent of their income on food, followed by Eastern province (71 percent). Central province saw the biggest reduction in food expenditure of 12.7 percentage points from June, followed by Uva province, which decreased by 9.8 percentage points.

The reduction in food expenditure coincided with more people turning to food-based and livelihood-based coping strategies in September, compared to the month of June. Buying less food, limiting portions, and reducing the number of meals may have kept the food expenditure levels in September down. Decreasing food prices of key commodities over the last few months is likely to have helped ease household food expenditure.



Background and Methodology

Sri Lanka is facing an unprecedented macroeconomic crisis that has caused acute shortages and spikes in the prices of essential products. The combination of major disruptions to agricultural production, depleted treasury, 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.

Amid this context, WFP is rolling out monthly household food security surveys through mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping (mVAM) and face-to-face primary data collection. A high-frequency data collection food security surveillance system is used to understand the changes in the food security situation and underlying factors across the country.

The September round consisted of 2,982 surveys across all nine provinces through a face-to-face data collection approach. Households were randomly selected following a 2-stage cluster sampling method. In each province, 30 clusters (GN) were randomly sampled with probability proportion to population size.⁴ Results are statistically representative at the provincial level and final results are weighted to account for survey deviations from provincial as well as urban/rural/estate population distributions based on the 2012 census.

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.



⁴The sample size was set to allow provincial-level estimates with a precision of 7% and confidence intervals equal to: estimate \pm 1.96 * SE (standard error).

Annex: Tables

Overall

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
Food Secure	20.1	10.9	16.0	20.5
Marginally Food Secure	48.4	39.7	47.5	47.9
Moderately Food Insecure	28.8	45.3	33.8	30.8
Severely Food Insecure	2.6	4.1	2.7	0.8

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies

None	52.3	23.8	23.7	45.9
Stress	25.1	31.1	35.1	24.9
Crisis	18.8	39.5	37.2	27.5
Emergency	3.7	5.6	3.9	1.7

Food-based Coping Strategies

No/Low	38.9	20.5	21.0	32.2
Medium	43.5	47.1	51.1	50.3
High	17.6	32.5	27.9	17.5

Food Consumption Group

Acceptable Food Consumption	60.9	46.9	60.4	68.9
Borderline Food Consumption	28.4	39.4	30.8	23.6
Poor Food Consumption	10.7	13.7	8.8	7.4

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	SEP	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
Food Insecurity (rCARI)												
Food Secure	7.5	3.3	8.5	10.9	21.0	10.7	16.7	18.2	18.9	14.0	14.8	32.9
Marginally Food Secure	47.3	43.1	40.8	52.8	48.3	40.1	49.1	48.5	49.4	37.3	42.2	44.0
Moderately Food Insecure	43.3	50.0	46.1	35.3	28.3	44.9	31.7	32.5	27.1	45.8	40.0	22.2
Severely Food Insecure	2.0	3.7	4.5	0.9	2.3	4.4	2.6	0.8	4.6	2.9	3.0	0.9
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies												
None	26.8	8.1	13.7	39.3	55.7	23.6	23.1	45.1	41.1	28.6	28.9	51.8
Stress	30.7	48.9	53.2	25.7	23.2	32.7	35.3	23.7	34.5	19.5	29.8	29.5
Crisis	36.7	40.5	25.0	28.9	17.7	38.3	38.7	30.1	19.2	44.4	34.0	16.1
Emergency	5.8	2.6	8.1	6.1	3.4	5.4	2.9	1.1	5.2	7.5	7.3	2.6
Food-based Coping Strategies												
No/Low	20.9	14.9	17.6	37.7	38.8	21.0	21.9	30.9	45.6	19.3	17.8	35.3
Medium	43.6	42.0	42.7	41.9	45.0	47.2	53.8	52.6	34.4	47.7	41.1	43.9
High	35.4	43.1	39.7	20.4	16.2	31.7	24.3	16.4	20.0	33.0	41.1	20.8
Food Consumption Group												
Acceptable Food Consumption	62.4	49.2	43.6	61.0	59.6	46.1	62.0	67.4	67.7	49.7	57.0	77.8
Borderline Food Consumption	28.4	41.3	45.9	32.6	30.1	39.9	29.1	24.9	18.6	37.0	34.8	15.5
Poor Food Consumption	9.3	9.5	10.5	6.4	10.3	14.0	8.9	7.7	13.7	13.3	8.2	6.7



By Sex of Head of Household

	Female-Headed HH				Male-Headed HH			
Food Insecurity (rCARI)	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
Food Secure	13.0	7.2	12.6	16.3	21.6	11.7	16.7	21.4
Marginally Food Secure	42.6	39.4	41.7	43.8	49.6	39.8	48.7	48.9
Moderately Food Insecure	38.0	49.7	40.7	38.3	27.0	44.3	32.3	29.1
Severely Food Insecure	6.4	3.8	5.0	1.5	1.9	4.2	2.3	0.7
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies								
None	46.9	26.7	28.8	49.6	53.4	23.2	22.7	45.1
Stress	23.2	29.4	28.3	19.6	25.5	31.4	36.5	26.1
Crisis	23.1	39.0	36.8	28.4	17.9	39.6	37.3	27.2
Emergency	6.8	4.9	6.1	2.5	3.1	5.8	3.5	1.6
Food-based Coping Strategies								
No/Low	31.7	15.2	18.0	26.3	40.4	21.6	21.7	33.5
Medium	43.8	46.5	40.3	53.9	43.4	47.2	53.4	49.5
High	24.5	38.3	41.6	19.8	16.2	31.2	25.0	17.0
Food Consumption Group								
Acceptable Food Consumption	51.7	45.4	51.3	62.9	62.8	47.2	62.3	70.3
Borderline Food Consumption	32.6	35.9	36.6	26.4	27.5	40.2	29.5	23.0
Poor Food Consumption	15.7	18.7	12.1	10.8	9.7	12.6	8.1	6.7

By Income Source

	None			Informal			Regular		
	JUL	AUG	SEP	JUL	AUG	SEP	JUL	AUG	SEP
Food Insecurity (rCARI)									
Food Secure	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	3.7	3.8	15.7	22.1	32.3
Marginally Food Secure	13.5	17.6	31.2	26.3	34.8	41.5	47.4	54.7	53.2
Moderately Food Insecure	67.1	65.6	59.3	62.0	55.9	53.7	36.4	22.6	14.4
Severely Food Insecure	19.4	16.8	9.5	9.8	5.7	0.9	0.6	0.6	0.1
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies									
None	31.3	47.0	49.2	16.4	18.3	43.5	26.6	24.4	47.2
Stress	31.6	20.1	17.6	28.6	36.8	24.7	32.1	35.4	25.6
Crisis	28.5	22.0	29.6	47.2	41.3	29.1	36.8	36.6	26.3
Emergency	8.6	10.9	3.7	7.8	3.6	2.7	4.5	3.6	1.0
Food-based Coping Strategies									
No/Low	7.7	8.4	20.5	10.6	16.1	24.1	25.7	23.9	38.1
Medium	41.9	36.6	49.3	48.9	48.0	52.9	46.6	53.3	48.9
High	50.4	54.9	30.2	40.5	35.9	23.0	27.7	22.8	13.1
Food Consumption Group									
Acceptable Food Consumption	30.9	30.3	54.0	36.9	48.2	58.4	52.3	67.4	76.6
Borderline Food Consumption	48.3	55.9	28.4	44.6	35.5	30.9	36.6	27.2	18.8
Poor Food Consumption	20.9	13.8	17.6	18.5	16.2	10.7	11.1	5.5	4.6

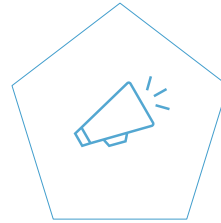
Annex: Resources

Additional WFP products related to the crisis in Sri Lanka:



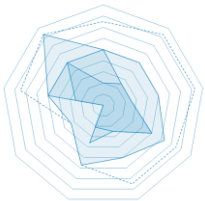
MARKET MONITOR

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



SITUATION REPORTS

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



MARKET FUNCTIONALITY INDEX

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



HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY SURVEYS

A monthly survey providing regular insight into household food security.



Acknowledgements

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Contact: wfp.colombo@wfp.org



World Food Programme

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wfp.colombo@wfp.org