



LAO PDR

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

JANUARY/FEBRUARY
2023

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



Lao PDR: IN NUMBERS



One in seven households are currently food-insecure



13.5%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)¹

People are relying on coping strategies mostly to buy food



59%

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



38% spent savings



12% reduced expenses on health



18% borrowed money

Food security varies across different parts of society



17%

of households in rural areas are food-insecure, compared with 7 percent of those in urban areas.



18%

of households headed by people with no education are food-insecure, compared with 9 percent of those headed by people with secondary education

¹ Remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Insecurity (CARI).





In Brief

One in seven households in Lao PDR are food insecure (13.5 percent).¹ The trajectory of the food security situation remains uncertain, as monthly prices of key commodities remain turbulent amid the lean season and low household food stock levels. Inflation has steadily risen each month for the past year – reaching 40 percent in January 2023, up from 39 percent in December 2022.² Additional monitoring of the situation in the coming months will remain crucial to informing action.

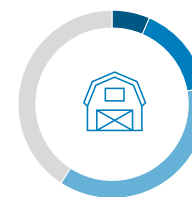
Food insecurity is unequally affecting different parts across the country. The food security situation ranges from 4 percent to 33 percent in some locations with Sekong province having the highest prevalence and Champasak with the lowest prevalence. Food insecurity slightly rose in urban areas, especially in Vientiane Capital. Rural areas are more food-insecure (17 percent) than those in urban areas (7 percent). The difference is particularly evident when comparing against Vientiane Capital (8 percent).

Households with dropping incomes are essentially affected. Those facing a substantial reduction in income (>50 percent) are more likely to be food-insecure (29 percent) than those with incomes that remained the same or increased (9 percent).

More than half of the population is relying on coping strategies to meet their food needs and other essential needs. There is a minor change in households employing coping strategies in January 2023 compared to December 2022. Households resorting to livelihood-based coping strategies slightly decreased to 59 percent from 61 percent. The majority of these, around 37 percent, employed stress coping strategies, followed by 16 percent engaging in crisis coping strategies, and 7 percent on emergency coping strategies. Notably, there is a decrease in the proportion of households adopting emergency coping strategies and crisis coping strategies compared to the previous months. This may generally indicate an improvement in food security among households. However, households living in rural areas are more likely to face difficulties in coping with food crisis than those in urban areas.

Compared to December 2022, people are more worried about food price increases (20 percent). Households that expressed no concerns remained high (34 percent), however, when compared to the previous month, there is a slight decrease in the proportion (36 percent). Food price concerns found high in urban areas (25 percent) since markets are the main source of food.

More than half of the population is using coping strategies



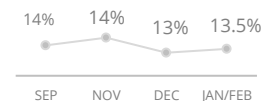
59%

RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES



13.5%

FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)



1. This January/February 2023 figure is based on a remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (rCARI). More detail on the CARI is available [here](#).

2. [Laos Inflation Rate - December 2022 Data - 1989-2021 Historical - January Forecast \(tradingeconomics.com\)](#)

3. https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Digital_ASEAN_FNSR_Volume-1_21-4-2022_FINAL.pdf

Findings

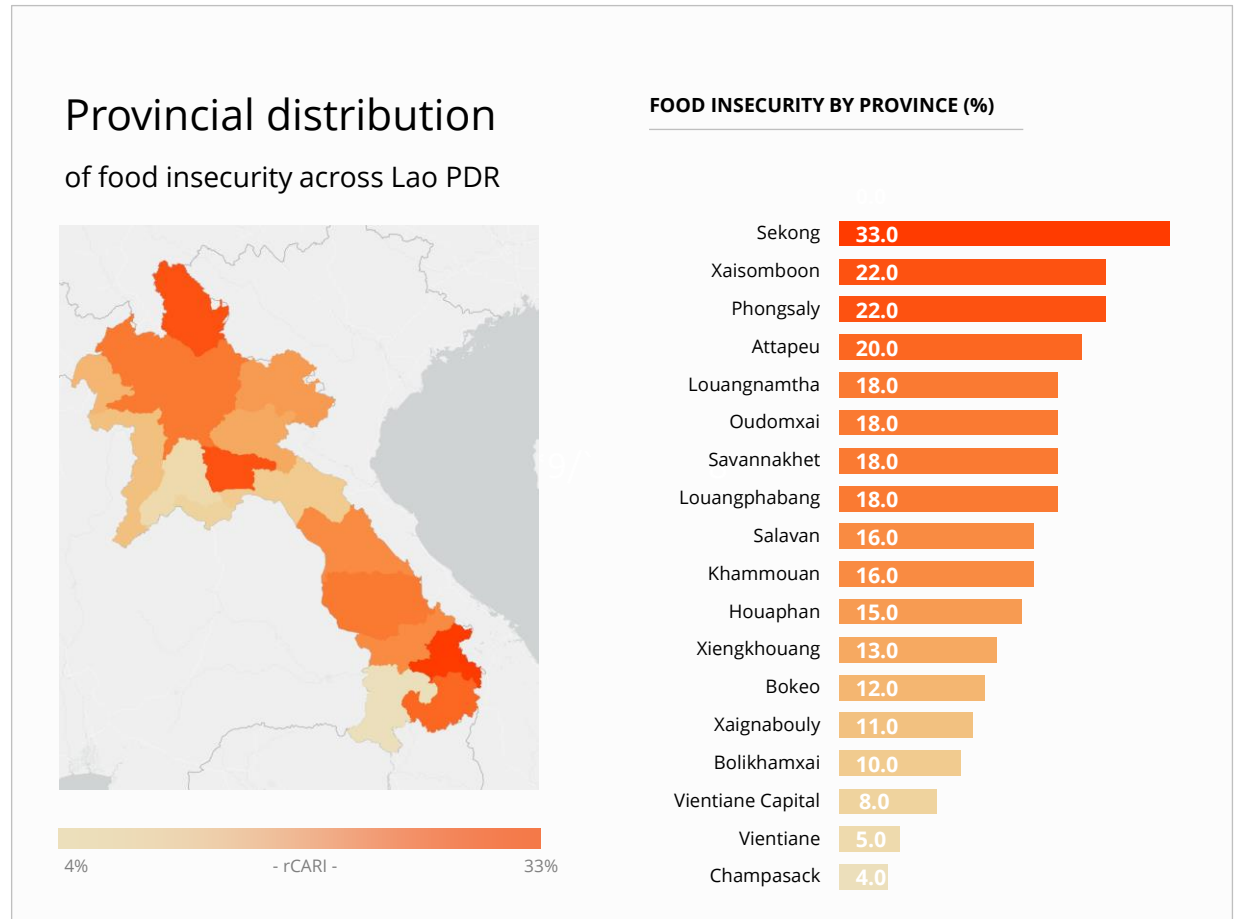
Like previous months, one-seventh of the population (13.5 percent) is encountering acute food insecurity. The predominance of food insecure households was at moderate levels, with a very small proportion facing severe levels (1 percent).

Food insecurity varies greatly across provinces.

Sekong has the highest prevalence of food insecurity, with an increase from 25 percent to 33 percent. Following Sekong, the provinces with the next highest prevalence are Xaisomboon, Phongsaly, with rates ranging between 20 and 22 percent. Compared to December 2022, more provinces (seven) are well below the national average (13.5 percent). The lowest levels of food insecurity are reported in Champasack (4 percent), and Vientiane provinces (5 percent), while Vientiane Capital has a double increase in the population in the food insecurity (from 4 percent to 8 percent).

Food insecurity situations in rural and urban areas have a substantial difference.

A higher percentage of food-insecure households are observed in rural areas (17 percent), compared to households in urban areas (7 percent). In general, there is a slight increase in the proportion of households experiencing food insecurity in both rural and urban areas compared to last month.



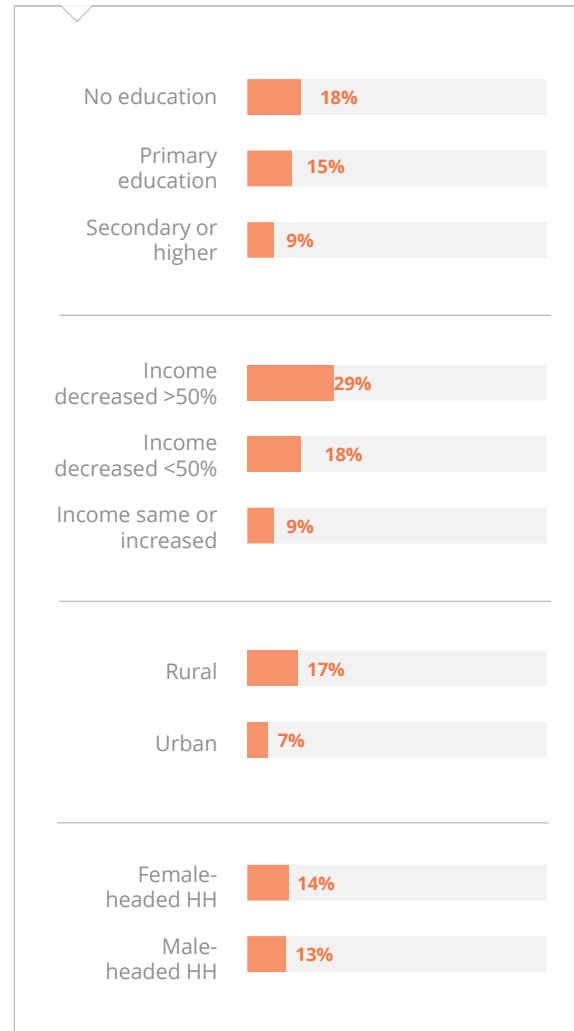
Food insecurity varies among different parts of society.

Household with deteriorating incomes are particularly affected. Just like the previous months, households with a significant income reduction (>50 percent) were more likely to face food insecurity than those whose income stayed the same or increased.

Education plays an essential role in determining food security outcomes. Households headed by individuals with no education (18 percent) are more vulnerable to food insecurity than households headed by individuals with secondary or higher education (9 percent).

Households with high (13 percent) and medium dependency ratio⁴ (15 percent) were likely to be more food-insecure than those with low dependency ratio (4 percent). Those with high and medium dependency ratios have also seen fluctuations in food insecurity from month to month, while those with low dependency ratios have had more stable levels of food security.

JAN/FEB FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



4. Dependency ratio is calculated as the ratio of non-working-age members (i.e., children, elderly) to working-age members in a household.



Nearly one in five households are not consuming adequate diets.

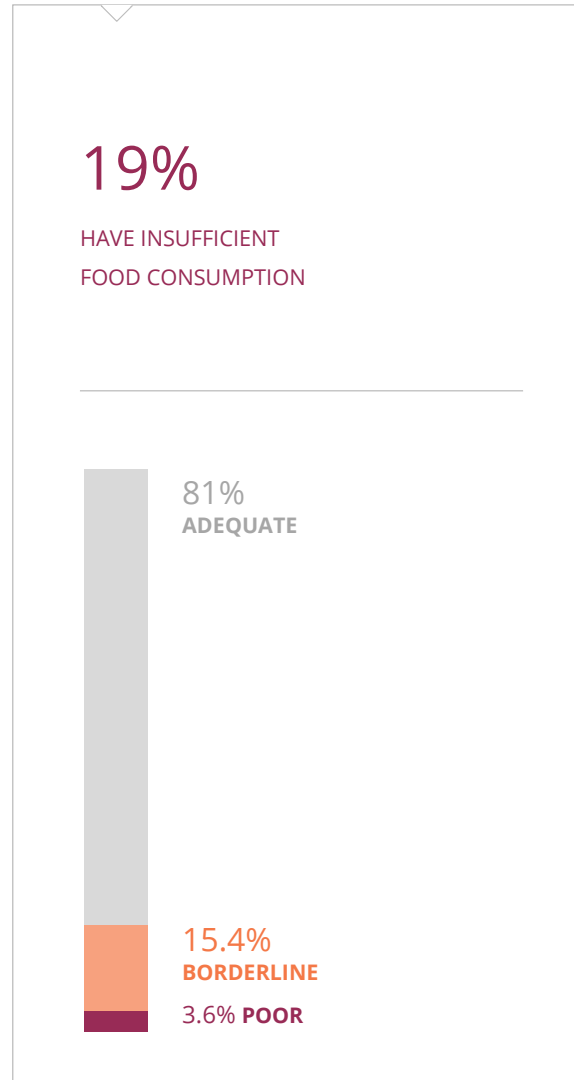
Overall, insufficient food consumption has increased in percentage compared to December 2022 (16 percent), with 19 percent of households having poor and borderline consumption levels.

In seven days, the average household recalled eating staples daily, and vegetables and animal proteins six times a week. The high consumption of vegetables and animal proteins could be attributed to a high consumption of wild vegetables and a high prevalence of hunting in some part of the country.

Rural dwellers are consuming less diverse diets (24 percent) compared to urban dwellers (9 percent).⁵ In general, the consumption of dairy and pulse is reported relatively low in both urban and rural areas, with the average of households consuming each food type less than twice a week.

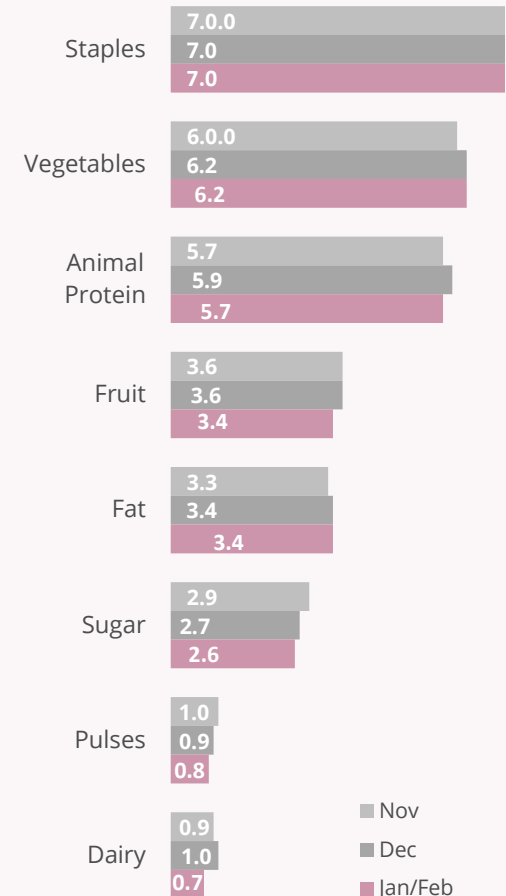


FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



FOOD CONSUMPTION

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



5. The household food consumption score is calculated according to the types of foods consumed during the previous seven days, the frequencies with which they are consumed and the relative nutritional weight of the different food groups.

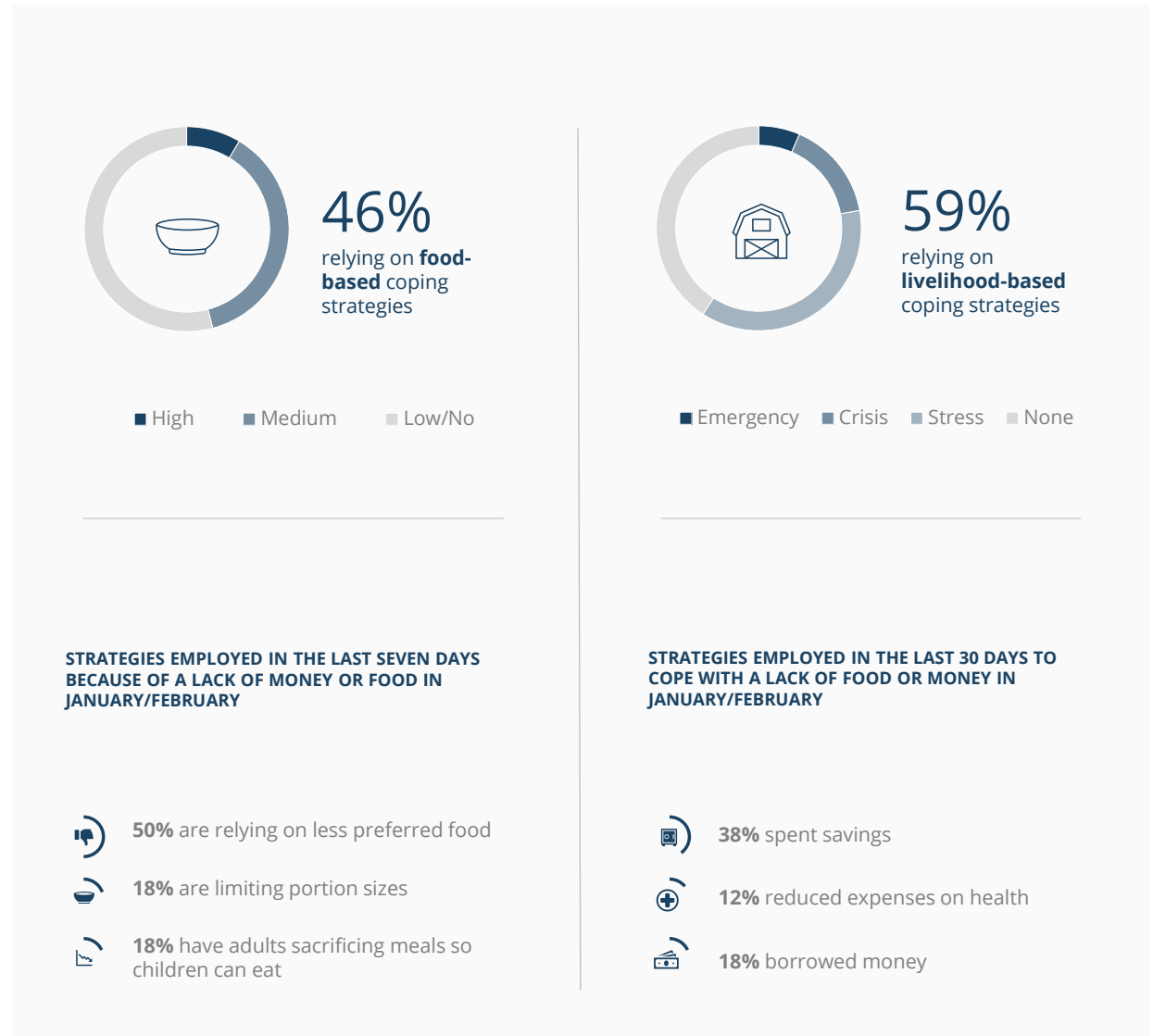
Large portions of the population are still adopting coping strategies.

There is not much difference in the proportion of households applying coping strategies compared to December 2022. Households turning to livelihood-based coping strategies decreased slightly to 59 percent in January/February 2023 from 61 percent in December 2022. Likewise, the number of households applying emergency coping strategies also decreased from 9 percent to 6.5 percent.

Almost six in ten households are relying on livelihood-based coping strategies such as spending savings, cutting health expenditure, or borrowing to buy food or to meet other essential needs. This was mostly pronounced in Sekong and Phongsaly provinces.

Households in rural areas are more likely to employ livelihood-based coping strategies (62 percent) than those in urban areas (53 percent). Households headed by individuals with no education and secondary or higher education (61 and 58 percent) have not much difference in their adoption of livelihood-based coping strategies. In addition, a high use of livelihood coping strategies is prevalent among some provinces with high food insecurity.

There was a slight increase in the proportion of households relying on food-based coping strategies (46 percent) compared to last month. These included consuming less preferred food, limiting portion sizes, or sacrificing adult meals so that children can eat.





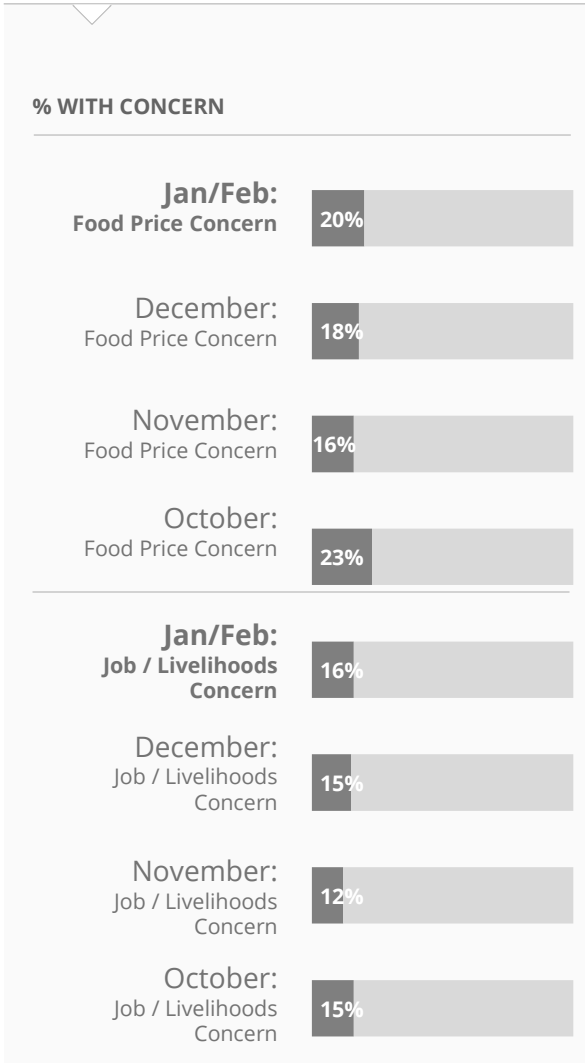
People remain most concerned about food prices and disruption of livelihood sources and jobs.

The increase in food prices remains a top concern. One in five households (20 percent) cited this as their top concern. This was an increase in the proportion compared to December 2022 (18 percent). The loss of jobs/livelihoods was another concern after food prices standing at 16 percent which is an increase from 15 percent in the previous round.

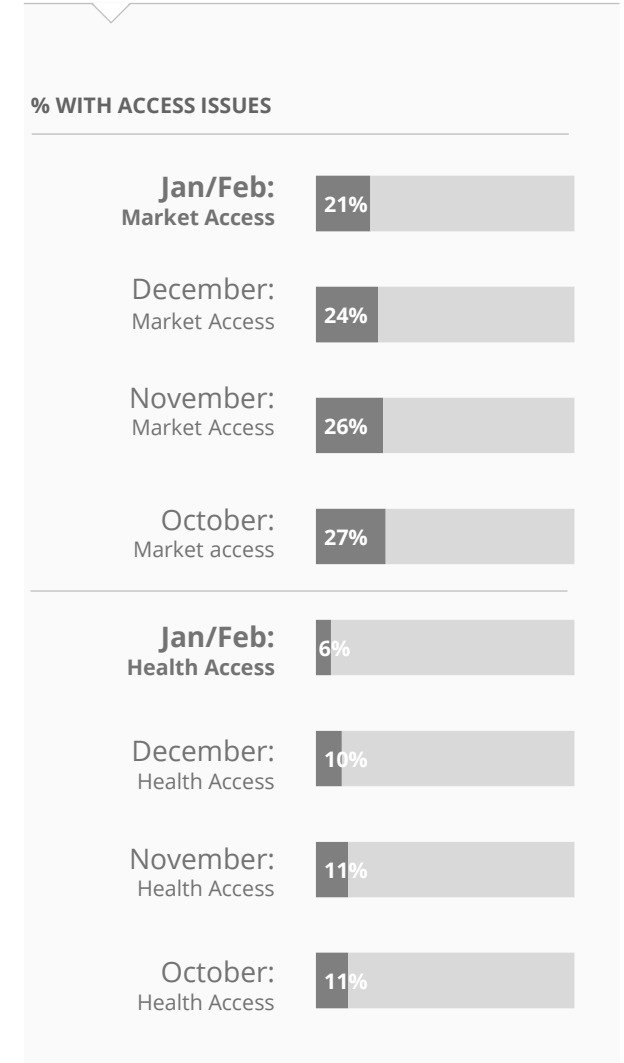
Like the previous months, concerns about food prices remain higher in urban areas than rural areas by 7 percentage points. Vientiane Capital and Vientiane province rank the highest in concerns about food prices (30 and 31 percent, respectively).

Overall, households have trouble accessing markets. However, compared to December 2022, the proportion of the population with trouble accessing markets decreased to 21 percent from 23 percent. Those without a formal education are more likely to have poorer access to markets and health services compared to households headed by individuals with secondary or higher education. Similarly, households in rural areas are facing more challenges in accessing market and health services than those in urban areas.

CONCERNS



ACCESS





Background and Methodology

Lao PDR's inflation rate is now the highest in Southeast Asia.^{7,8} The cumulative effects from COVID-19's socio-economic impacts and the global food crisis have exposed Lao PDR to macroeconomic instability, heightened financial risks, and negative trends in state expenditure.

The price hikes are likely to have an outsized impact on households that mostly depend on markets as a source of food. These rising fuel and food prices are undermining household purchasing power – impacting the quality and quantity of households' diets, and threatening the country's food and nutrition security.

Amid this context, WFP is rolling out 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 January/February 2023 round consisted of 1,679 surveys across all 18 provinces. The final results are weighted to ensure that results for provinces are statistically representative.

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



Other Resources



ECONOMIC EXPLORER

An overview of prices across different markets (Select Lao PDR)



COUNTRY BRIEFS

A monthly overview of WFP's activities in Lao PDR, including situational and operational updates

7. Trading economics

8. Consumer Price Index, Lao PDR General Directorate of Statistics

Annex: Tables

Overall

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	OVERALL
Food Secure	46
Marginally Food Secure	41
Moderately Food Insecure	13
Severely Food Insecure	1

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies

None	41
Stress	37
Crisis	16
Emergency	6

Food-based Coping Strategies

No/Low	54
Medium	37
High	9

Food Consumption Group

Acceptable Food Consumption	81
Borderline Food Consumption	15
Poor Food Consumption	4

Annex: Tables

	Education			Residence	
	NONE	PRIMARY	HIGHER	RURAL	URBAN
Food Insecurity (rCARI)					
Food Secure	36	42	55	39	59
Marginally Food Secure	46	43	36	44	33
Moderately Food Insecure	17	15	9	16	7
Severely Food Insecure	1	0.5	0.4	1	-
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies					
None	39	41	42	38	47
Stress	37	36	38	37	37
Crisis	19	15	15	18	11
Emergency	6	8	6	7	6
Food-based Coping Strategies					
No/Low	41	53	61	48	67
Medium	48	37	32	42	27
High	10	10	7	10	6
Food Consumption Group					
Acceptable Food Consumption	71	78	89	76	91
Borderline Food Consumption	22	18	10	19	8
Poor Food Consumption	7	4	1	5	2

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