



LAO PDR

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

OCTOBER 2022

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



Lao PDR: IN NUMBERS



One in seven households are currently food-insecure



14%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)¹

People are relying on coping strategies mostly to buy food



63%

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



43% spent savings



19% reduced expenses on health



19% borrowed money

Food security varies across different parts of society



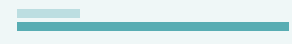
17%

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



26%

of households headed by people with no education are food-insecure, compared with 6 percent of those headed by people with secondary education



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





In Brief

One in seven households in Lao PDR are food insecure (14 percent).¹ The trajectory of the food security situation remains uncertain, with a continuous monthly increase in prices for key commodities. Inflation rose to 37 percent in October² from 34 percent in September. Additional monitoring of the situation in the coming months will remain crucial to informing action.

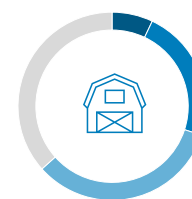
Food insecurity is affecting different parts of the country unequally. In some districts, around 28 percent of households are food-insecure, while in others, 3 percent of households are food-insecure. Food insecurity decreased in urban areas, especially in Vientiane Capital. Notably, rural areas are more food-insecure (17 percent) than those in urban areas (7 percent). The difference is particularly evident in Vientiane Capital (3 percent).

Households with dropping incomes are especially affected. Those facing a significant reduction in income (>50 percent) are more than twice as likely to be food-insecure (22 percent) than households with incomes that stayed the same or increased (10 percent).

More than half of the population is relying on coping strategies to put food on the table and meet other essential needs. Compared to September, households resorting to livelihood-based coping strategies increased to 63 percent from 57 percent, while the number of households employing emergency coping strategies also increased. This indicates an increase in vulnerability among households. The most common strategies are spending savings (43 percent), cutting down on health expenditure (19 percent), and borrowing to buy food (19 percent). The heavy reliance on coping strategies by households in Lao PDR is alarming, which indicates households' diminishing ability to respond to different shocks in the future.

Compared to September, people are less worried about food price increases. Some 23 percent of households remain concerned about the rise in food prices, while 30 percent indicated that they did not have any concerns. The increase in food prices is high in urban areas given the heavy reliance on markets as the main source of food.

More than half of the population is using coping strategies



63%

RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES



14%

FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)

14% 14%

SEP

OCT

1. This October 2022 figure is based on a remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (rCARI). More detail on the CARI is available [here](#).

2. Year-on-year inflation spiked to 34 percent in October 2022

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

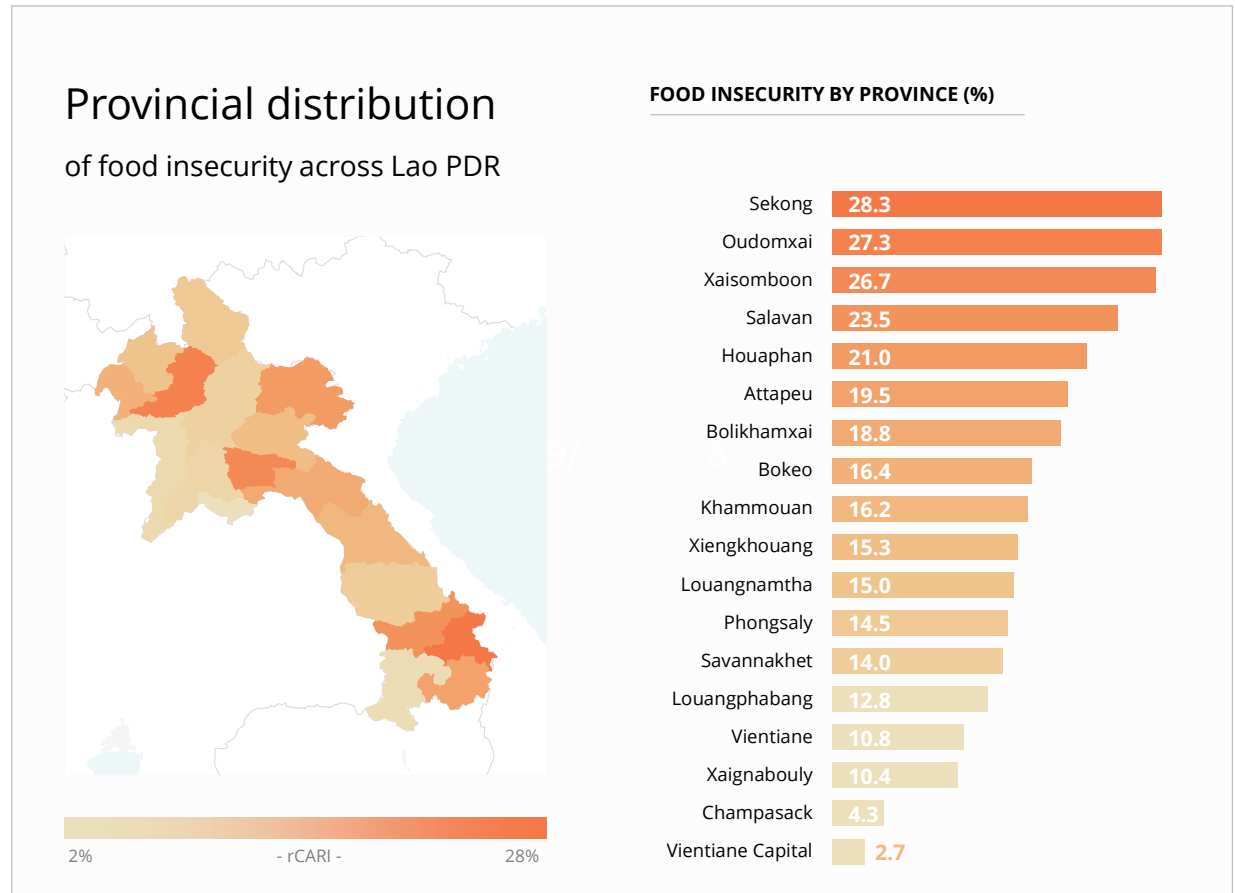


Findings

Similar to September, one-seventh of the population (14 percent) is currently facing acute food insecurity. Almost all of these food-insecure households are at moderate levels of food insecurity, with a very small proportion facing severe levels (1 percent).

Food insecurity varies greatly across provinces. Sekong, Oudomxai, and Xaisomboon provinces have the highest prevalence of food insecurity (between 27 to 28 percent). Compared to September, more provinces (five) are well below the national average (14 percent). The lowest levels of food insecurity are reported in Champasack and Vientiane Capital, where only 4.3 percent and 2.7 percent of the population is food-insecure, respectively.

Clear differences remain between urban and rural areas. One in six households (17 percent) in rural areas are food-insecure compared to one in thirteen households (7 percent) in urban areas. A stark difference is observed in Vientiane Capital (3 percent).



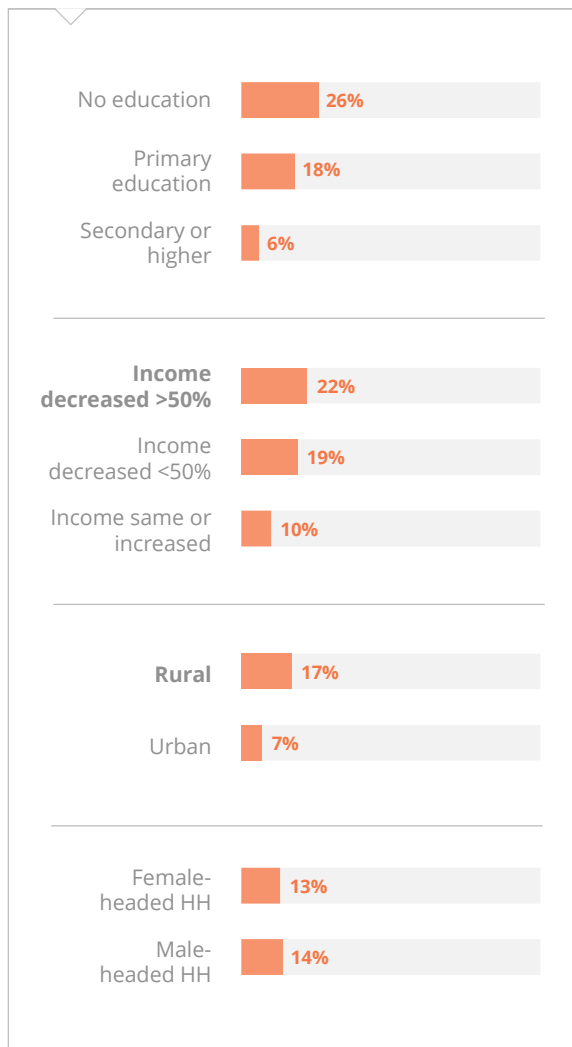
Food insecurity varies among different parts of society.

Households with deteriorating incomes are particularly affected. However, the gap slightly closed between September and October. Food-insecure households, faced a significant reduction in income (>50 percent) compared to food-secure households.

Education is also making a substantial difference on food security outcomes. The gap widened by 6 percent for those of varying education levels compared to September. Households headed by individuals without formal education (26 percent) are more susceptible to food insecurity than households headed by individuals with secondary or higher education (6 percent).

Households in rural areas are more vulnerable to food insecurity compared to their urban counterparts. A higher percentage of households in rural areas are food-insecure (17 percent) compared to those in urban areas (7 percent). The gap widened slightly by 2 percent compared to September.

OCTOBER FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



Nearly one in five households are not consuming adequate diets.

Overall, the food consumption levels

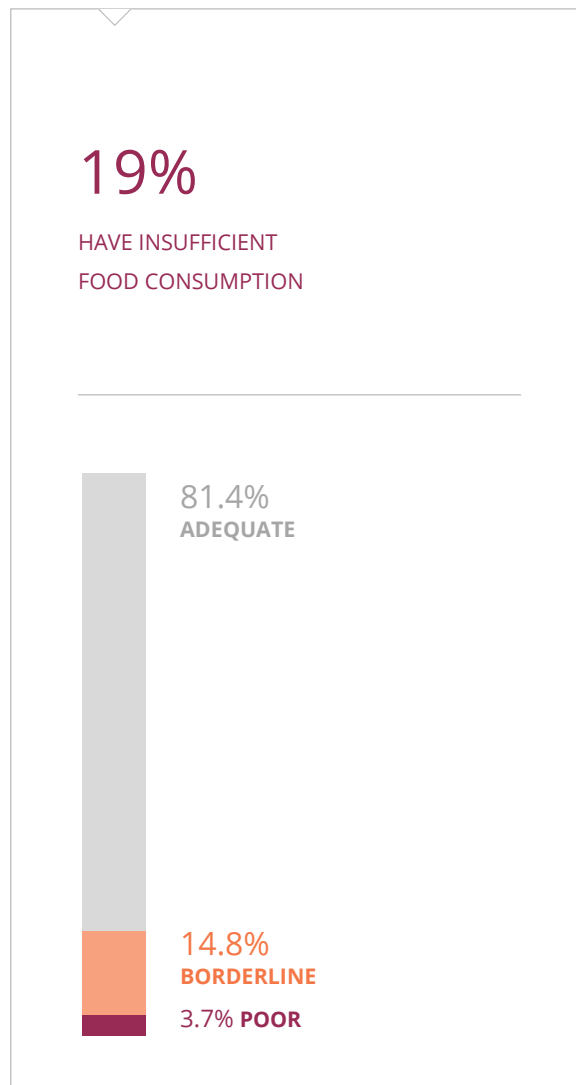
deteriorated in October, with an increase in poor and borderline consumption scores from 15 percent in September to 19 percent in October.

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 protein could be attributed to a high consumption of wild vegetables and a high prevalence of hunting in some parts of the country.

Rural dwellers are consuming less diverse diets (23 percent) compared to urban dwellers (9 percent).⁵ In general, the consumption of dairy and pulses is very low, with the average household consuming each food type less than twice a week.

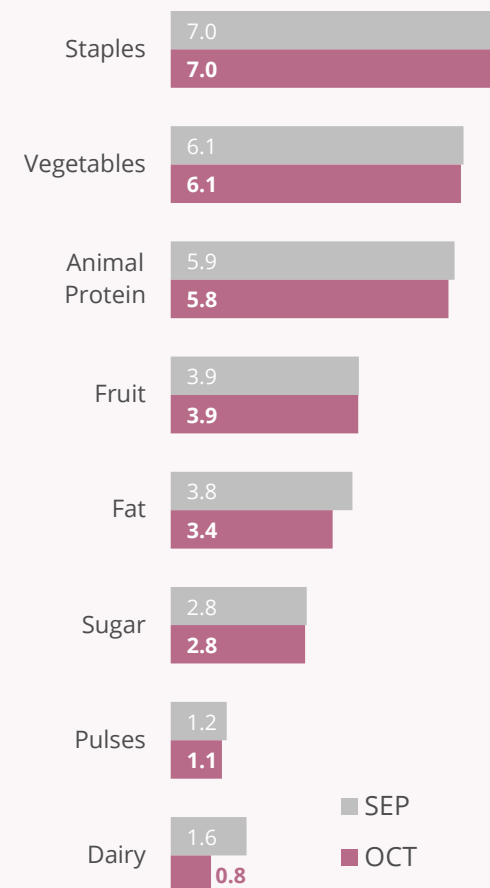


FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



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.



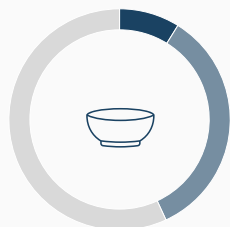
Large portions of the population are adopting coping strategies.

More households are adopting coping strategies compared to September, indicating an increase in vulnerability. Households turning to livelihood-based coping strategies increased from 58 percent in September to 63 percent in October. A slight increase in the number of households applying emergency coping strategies was also reported.

More than six in ten households are relying on livelihood-based coping strategies such as spending savings, cutting health expenditure or borrowing in order to buy food or meet other essential needs. This was most pronounced in Sekong, Salavan, Louangnamtha, Oudmxai and Louangphabang provinces.

Households in rural areas are more likely to adopt livelihood-based coping strategies (65 percent) than those in urban areas (59 percent). Households with medium to high dependency ratios were likely (64 and 63 percent) to use livelihood coping strategies compared to households with low dependency ratios (51 percent). In addition, high use of livelihood coping strategies is prevalent among some provinces with high food insecurity.

Some 43 percent of households are relying on food-based coping strategies, which is a slight increase compared to September (35 percent). The strategies included consuming less preferred food, limiting portion sizes, or sacrificing adult meals so that children can eat.






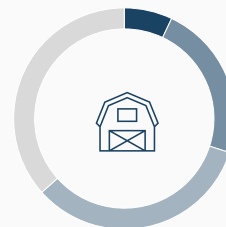
43%

relying on **food-based** coping strategies

■ High ■ Medium ■ Low/No

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS BECAUSE OF A LACK OF MONEY OR FOOD IN OCTOBER

-  48% are relying on less preferred food
-  25% are limiting portion sizes
-  19% have adults sacrificing meals so children can eat






63%

relying on **livelihood-based** coping strategies

■ Emergency ■ Crisis ■ Stress ■ None

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE LAST 30 DAYS TO COPE WITH A LACK OF FOOD OR MONEY IN OCTOBER

-  43% spent savings
-  19% reduced expenses on health
-  19% borrowed money



People remain most concerned about food prices. However, there is a notable increase in the number of people concerned about loss of jobs and livelihoods.

Increase in food prices remains a top concern.

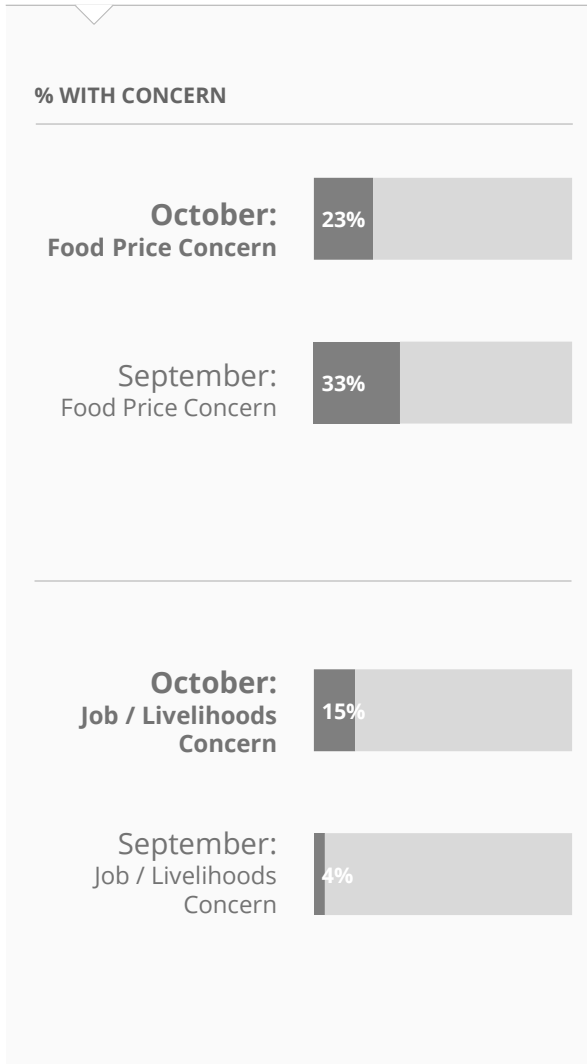
While more than one in five households (23 percent) cited this as their top concern, the overall proportion decreased compared to September (33 percent). In October, concerns towards loss of jobs/livelihoods have notably increased to 15 percent. These concerns come amid particularly high inflation rates, and rising prices for key commodities.

Concerns about food prices are higher in urban areas than rural areas by more than 15 percent.

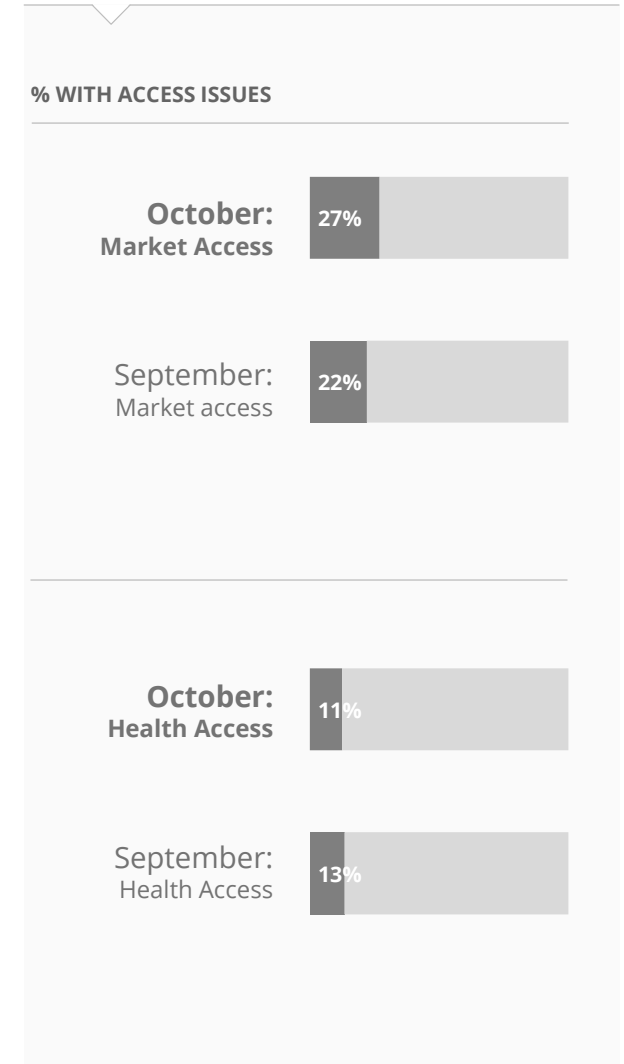
While Vientiane Capital has the lowest food insecurity levels, it ranks the highest in concerns about food prices (34 percent) despite a drop from September (47 percent). This is followed by Champasack (26 percent), Bokeo (26 percent) and Xiengkhouang (25 percent).

Overall, 27 percent of households have trouble accessing markets, which is a slight increase from September (22 percent). Those without formal education as well as rural households 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 trouble with access than those in urban areas.

CONCERNS



ACCESS





Background and Methodology

Lao PDR's inflation rate is one of the highest within 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 October round consisted of 1,627 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	37
Marginally Food Secure	49
Moderately Food Insecure	13
Severely Food Insecure	1

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies

None	37
Stress	33
Crisis	23
Emergency	7

Food-based Coping Strategies

No/Low	57
Medium	34
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	22	33	48	32	51
Marginally Food Secure	52	50	46	51	43
Moderately Food Insecure	23	17	6	16	6
Severely Food Insecure	3	1	-	1	-
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies					
None	34	38	38	35	41
Stress	26	32	37	33	35
Crisis	28	24	20	24	20
Emergency	12	6	5	8	5
Food-based Coping Strategies					
No/Low	45	55	65	53	65
Medium	42	36	30	36	29
High	13	9	5	10	6
Food Consumption Group					
Acceptable Food Consumption	68	77	91	77	91
Borderline Food Consumption	23	19	8	18	7
Poor Food Consumption	10	5	1	5	2

Acknowledgements:

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Contact: wfplao@wfp.org

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