



LAO PDR

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

NOVEMBER 2022

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



Lao PDR: IN NUMBERS



One in seven households are currently food-insecure



15%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)¹

People are relying on coping strategies mostly to buy food



60%

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



38% spent savings



16% 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 9 percent of those in urban areas.



32%

of households headed by people with no education are food-insecure, compared with 11 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 (15 percent).¹ The trajectory of the food security situation remains uncertain, with a continuous monthly increase in prices for key commodities. Inflation surged to 39 percent in November² from 37 percent in October, a record high in the past two decades. Additional monitoring of the situation in the coming months will remain crucial to informing action.

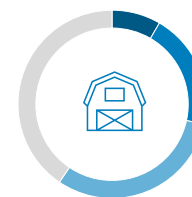
Food insecurity is affecting different parts of the country unequally. In some districts, around 30 percent of households are food-insecure, while in others, 4 percent of households are food-insecure. Food insecurity increased slightly in urban areas, especially in Vientiane Capital. Notably, rural areas are more food-insecure (17 percent) than those in urban areas (9 percent). The difference is particularly evident in Vientiane Capital (4 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 (23 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 October, households resorting to livelihood-based coping strategies decreased slightly to 60 percent from 63 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 (38 percent), cutting down on health expenditure (16 percent), and borrowing to buy food (18 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 and October, people are less worried about food price increases. Some 17 percent of households remain concerned about the rise in food prices, while 37 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



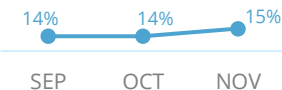
60%

RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES



15%

FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)



1. This November 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. [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

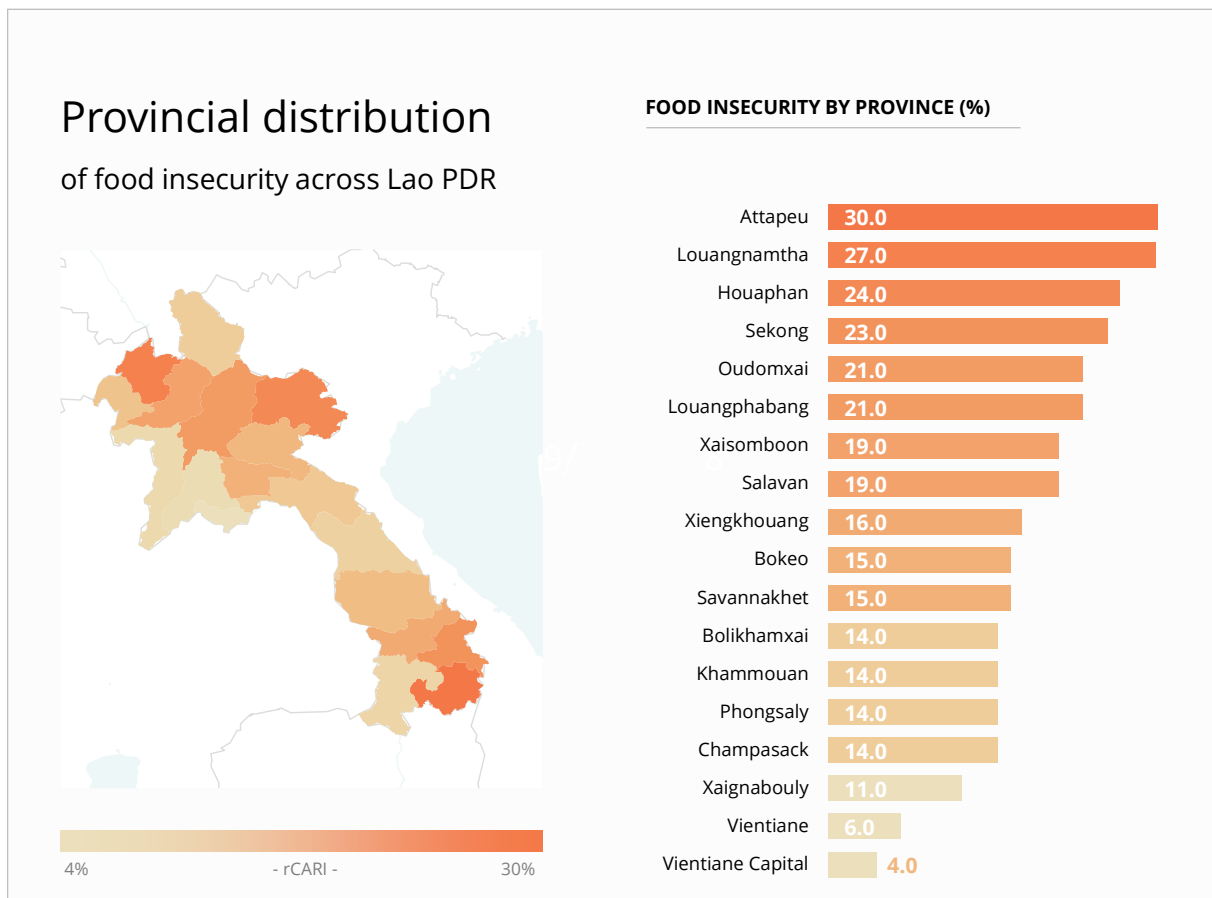


Findings

Similar to September and October, one-seventh of the population (15 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. Attapeu, Louangnamtha, and Houaphan provinces have the highest prevalence of food insecurity (between 24 and 30 percent). Compared to October, more provinces (seven) are well below the national average (15 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 ten households (9 percent) in urban areas. A stark difference is observed in Vientiane Capital (4 percent).





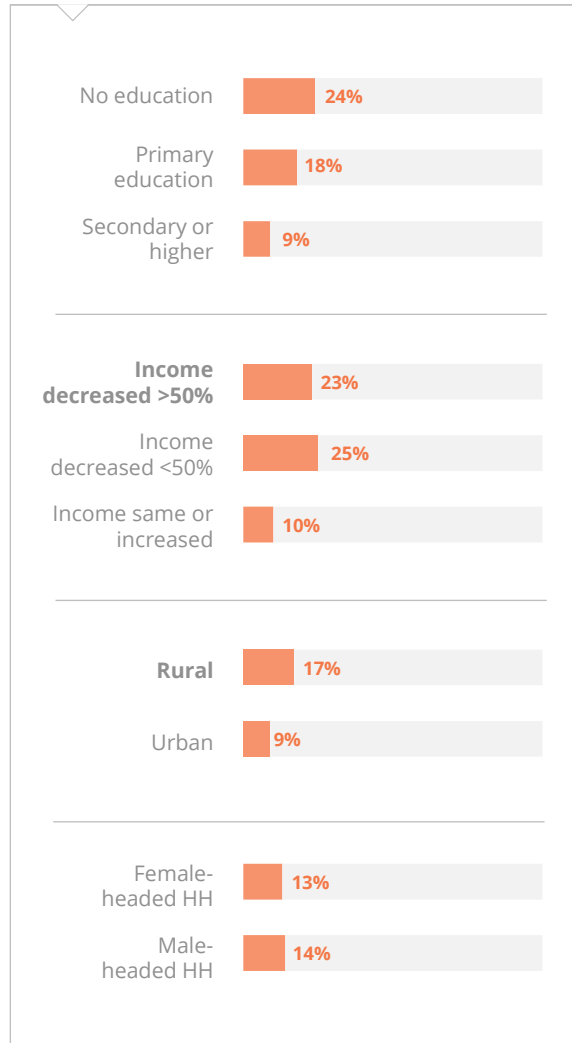
Food insecurity varies among different parts of society.

Households with deteriorating incomes are particularly affected. However, the gap slightly closed in November. 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 closed slightly for those of varying education levels compared to October. Households headed by individuals without formal education (24 percent) are more susceptible to food insecurity than households headed by individuals with secondary or higher education (9 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 (9 percent). The gap closed slightly by 2 percent compared to October.

NOVEMBER 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.

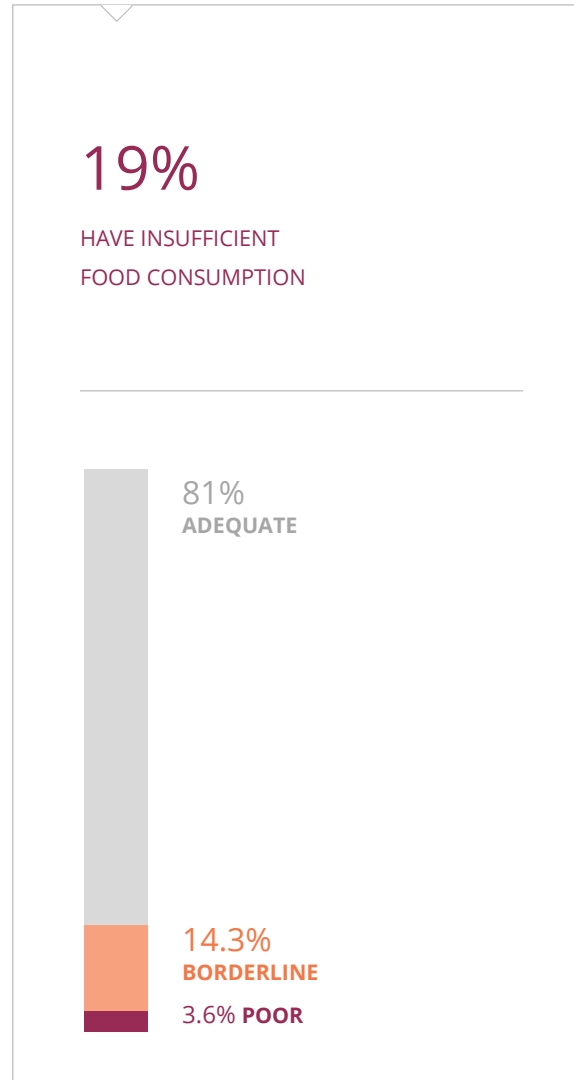
Overall, the food consumption levels remain similar to October, with 19 percent of households having poor and borderline consumption levels.

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 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 (10 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.

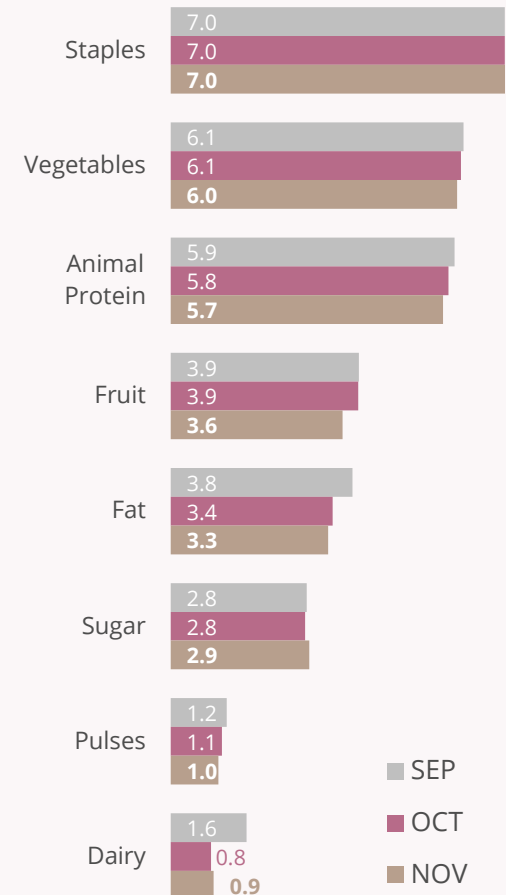


FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



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.

Less households are adopting coping strategies compared to October. Households turning to livelihood-based coping strategies decreased slightly to 60 percent in November from 63 percent in October. However, a slight increase in the number of households applying emergency coping strategies was reported.

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 Attapeu, Louangphabang, Oudomxay, and Sekong provinces.

Households in rural areas are more likely to adopt livelihood-based coping strategies (62 percent) than those in urban areas (53 percent). Households with medium to high dependency ratios were likely (65 and 58 percent) to use livelihood coping strategies compared to households with low dependency ratios (46 percent). In addition, high use of livelihood coping strategies is prevalent among some provinces with high food insecurity.

One in four households (44 percent) are relying on food-based coping strategies. 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. 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.

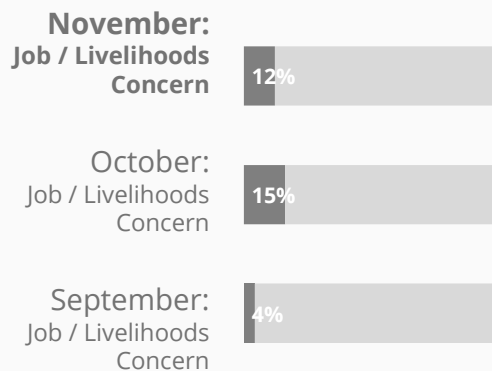
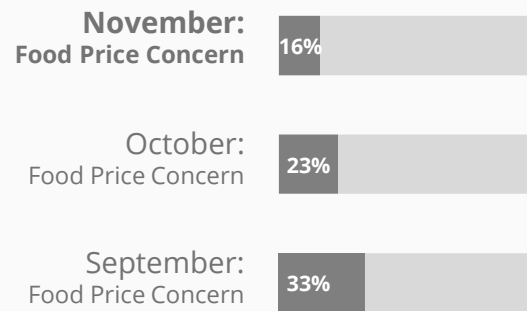
While close to one in five households (16 percent) cited this as their top concern, the overall proportion decreased compared to October (23 percent). Meanwhile, concerns towards loss of jobs/livelihoods stood at 12 percent. These concerns come amid particularly high inflation rates, and rising prices for key commodities.

Concerns about food prices are higher in urban areas than rural areas by 8 percent. Xaisomboon and Sekong rank the highest in concerns about food prices (31 percent).

Overall, 26 percent of households have trouble accessing markets, which remains stable compared to October (27 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.

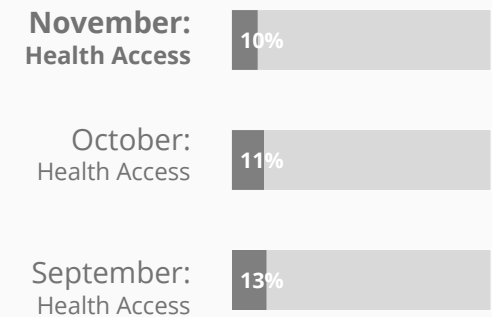
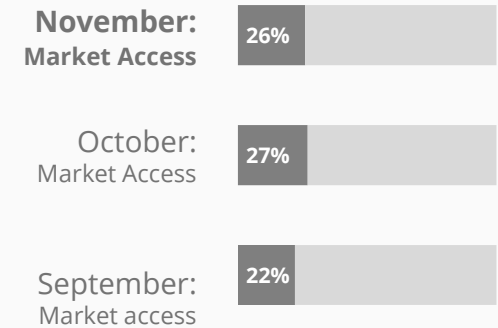
CONCERNS

% WITH CONCERN



ACCESS

% WITH ACCESS ISSUES





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 November round consisted of 1,766 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	40
Marginally Food Secure	46
Moderately Food Insecure	14
Severely Food Insecure	1
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies	
None	40
Stress	31
Crisis	20
Emergency	8
Food-based Coping Strategies	
No/Low	56
Medium	37
High	7
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	27	37	50	35	52
Marginally Food Secure	48	48	41	48	39
Moderately Food Insecure	21	15	9	16	8
Severely Food Insecure	3	-	-	1	-
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies					
None	33	39	46	38	47
Stress	30	30	32	31	30
Crisis	23	22	17	21	17
Emergency	14	9	5	9	6
Food-based Coping Strategies					
No/Low	46	55	64	53	66
Medium	42	39	31	40	29
High	12	6	5	8	5
Food Consumption Group					
Acceptable Food Consumption	68	81	89	77	90
Borderline Food Consumption	23	17	9	18	8
Poor Food Consumption	8	2	3	4	2

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World Food Programme

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