



# LAO PDR

## FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

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MARCH/APRIL 2023

Remote Household Food  
Security Survey Brief





# Lao PDR: IN NUMBERS



Almost one in seven households are currently food-insecure



# 13.5%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)<sup>1</sup>

People are relying on coping strategies to buy food



# 60%

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



40% spent savings



12% reduced expenses on health



19% borrowed money

Food security varies across different parts of society



# 16%

of households in rural areas are food-insecure, compared with 8 percent of those in urban areas.



# 23%

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



<sup>1</sup> Remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Insecurity (CARI).





## In Brief

**About one in seven households in Lao PDR are food insecure (13.5 percent).**<sup>1</sup> The food insecurity situation is unpredictable, with the inflation rate still observed to be high,<sup>2</sup> and prices of most key commodities remaining unstable. Additional monitoring of the situation will be necessary to inform prompt action in the coming lean season.

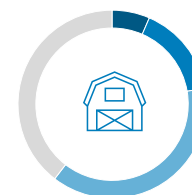
**Food insecurity varies across different parts of the country.** Some provinces of the country have 33 percent of households observed to be food-insecure, while other areas have reported around five percent. As with previous surveys, rural areas have higher numbers of food-insecure households (16 percent – a two percentage point rise) compared to those in urban areas (8 percent).

**Deteriorated income households, and those without formal education are especially affected.** Similar to the previous months, those facing reductions in income (<50 percent or >50 percent), and those with no education are more likely to be exposed to food insecurity when compared with households where incomes have remained stable or increased and have secondary or higher education.

**More than half of the population are adopting coping strategies to acquire their dietary needs.** There is an increase in the proportion of households using livelihood-based coping strategies compared to last month (from 57 percent to 60 percent). The predominant methods include stress coping strategies (38 percent), crisis coping strategies (16 percent), and emergency coping strategies (7 percent). A resurgence in the proportion of households resorting to these coping strategies indicates their potential diminished ability to respond to food insecurity in the future.

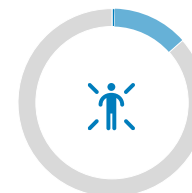
**People express more worries about food price increases, and job disruption compared to the period of February/March.** While 35 percent of households did not have any concerns, around one in five cited the rise of food prices as their main concern. This could also speak to the fluctuation of prices of key commodities. Concerns about loss of job and livelihood also ranked as another concern (16 percent). Just as in previous rounds, concerns about the increase in food prices was highest among urban residents (25 percent) compared to those in rural areas (20 percent).

A vast number of the population is turning to coping strategies



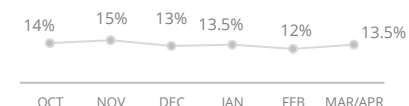
60%

RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES



13.5%

FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)



1. This March/April 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 - March 2023 Data - 1989-2022 Historical - April Forecast \(tradingeconomics.com\)](#)

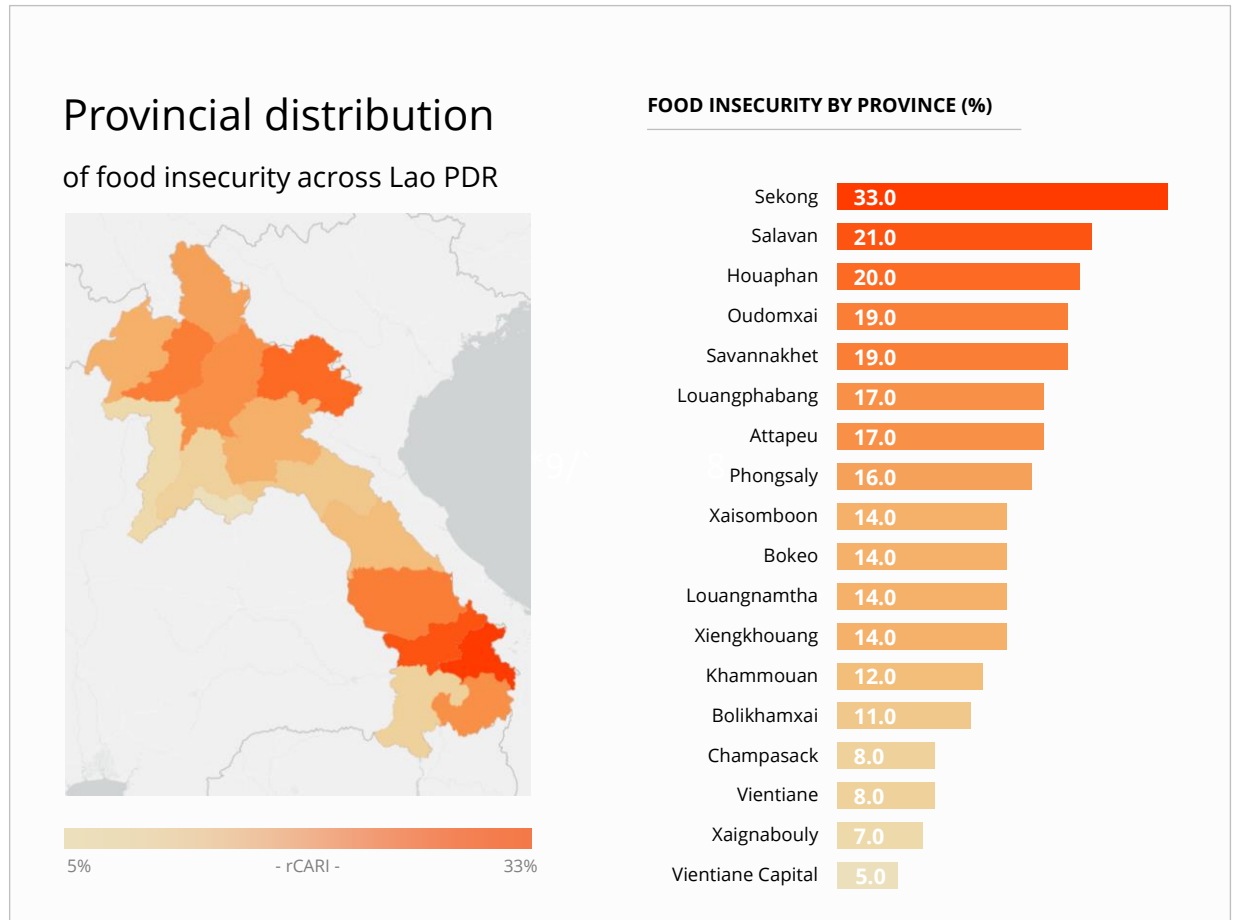
3. [https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Digital\\_ASEAN\\_FNSR\\_Volume-1\\_21-4-2022\\_FINAL.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Digital_ASEAN_FNSR_Volume-1_21-4-2022_FINAL.pdf)

## Findings

**Nearly one in seven households** (13.5 percent) is encountering food insecurity. Most of them are at moderate levels of food insecurity although there is a small proportion facing severe levels (1 percent).

**Food insecurity remains unstable across provinces.** Just as in previous months, Sekong appears to have the highest prevalence (33 percent) of food insecurity, followed by Salavan (21 percent), and Houaphan (20 percent). Vientiane Capital is reported as having the lowest level of food insecurity with five percent of the population food-insecure. Overall, compared to February/March, food insecurity improvements in all provinces have been made, but it is relatively slow progress.

**Rural households are more vulnerable to food insecurity compared to urban households.** A high percentage of the food-insecure population is reported in rural areas (16 percent), compared to urban areas (8 percent). When compared to last month, rural residents are likely to be more at risk of food insecurity than those in urban areas, with an increase of two percentage points (from 14 percent to 16 percent).





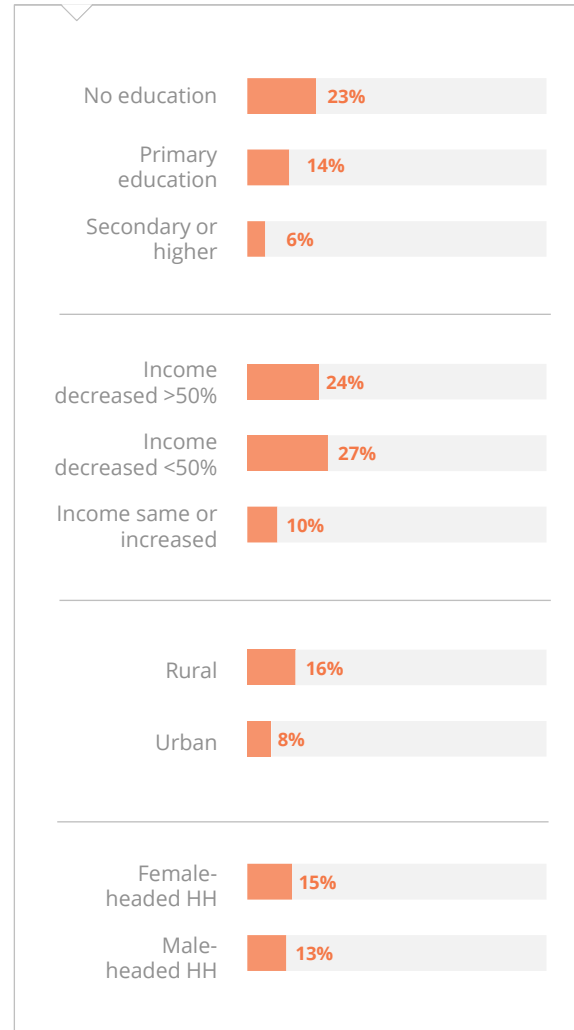
## Food insecurity varies among different parts of society.

**Households with declining income are more likely to be affected.** Households with stable or increased incomes are less likely to face food insecurity than those with a decrease in incomes (reduction of <50 percent or >50 percent).

**Education is a key element determining food security outcomes.** There is a widened food security gap between households depending on the head of household's level of education. Households headed by someone without formal education (23 percent) are more at risk of being food insecure than those headed by someone with secondary or higher education (6 percent).

**Households with medium to high dependency ratios are more food insecure.** The more people in a household, especially those in non-working age group (elderly and young) the higher the dependency ratio. Households with medium (14 percent) to high (17 percent) dependency ratios reported struggling with food insecurity compared to those with low (10 percent) dependency ratio.

MAR/APR 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.



## One-fifth of households are currently consuming an imbalanced diet.

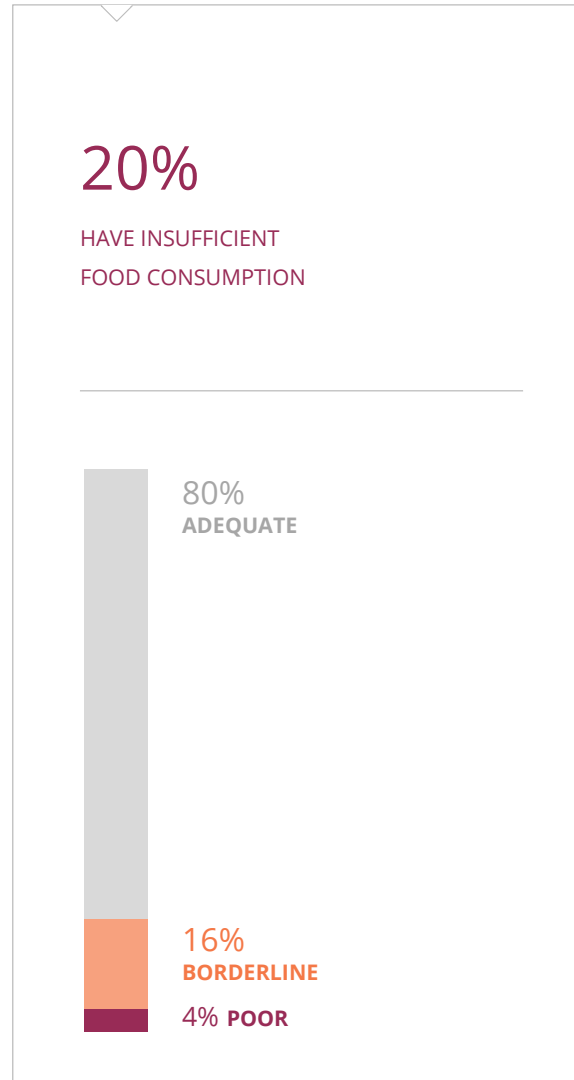
**Insufficient food consumption among the population has slightly increased** (from 18 percent to 20 percent) compared to the February/March report, with the majority of these at borderline or poor levels of consumption.

**Food staples comprise households' main daily intake**, while vegetables and protein from animals are consumed six times a week. The high consumption of these items is attributed to the availability of food sources such as access to wild vegetables and hunting in some parts of the country.

**Rural inhabitants consume less variety of food<sup>5</sup>** (24 percent) compared to urban inhabitants (12 percent). Dairy and pulses intake is low with an average household consuming each type less than twice a week.

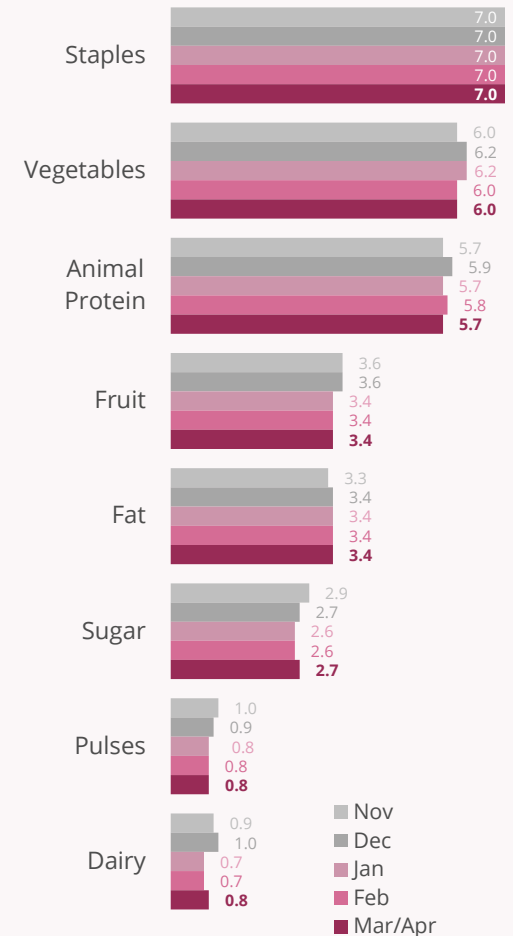


### FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



### 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.

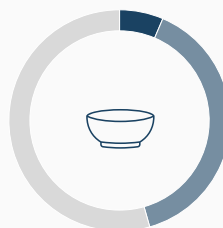
## Households are heavily relying on coping strategies compared to February/March.

**Households applying livelihood-based coping strategies** increased from 57 percent to 60 percent. The deployment of emergency and crisis coping strategies has also risen by one percentage point.

**A majority of the population** are resorting to livelihood-based coping strategies such as spending their savings (40 percent), reducing health expenditure (12 percent), and borrowing to buy food and necessary items (19 percent). As in the previous round, Sekong and Attapeu provinces have the highest numbers of those utilizing these strategies.

**The percentage of households employing livelihood-based coping strategies has dramatically increased in both rural** (from 57 percent to 62 percent), **and urban areas** (from 55 percent to 57 percent). Unfortunately, the steady rise in urban households turning to these strategies since January 2023, indicates possible future limitations responding to food shortages in the future.




**Food-based coping strategies used by households have remained unchanged in percentage** (46 percent). These involve eating less preferred foods, limiting portion size, or adults forgoing meals in favour of children.

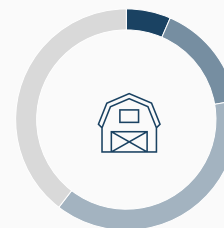


**46%**  
relying on **food-based** coping strategies

■ High ■ Medium ■ Low/No

### STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS BECAUSE OF A LACK OF MONEY OR FOOD IN FEBRUARY/MARCH




-  **50%** are relying on less preferred food
-  **19%** are limiting portion sizes
-  **14%** have adults sacrificing meals so children can eat



**60%**  
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 FEBRUARY/MARCH

-  **40%** spent savings
-  **12%** reduced expenses on health
-  **19%** borrowed money





People are more concerned about rising food prices compared to February/March.

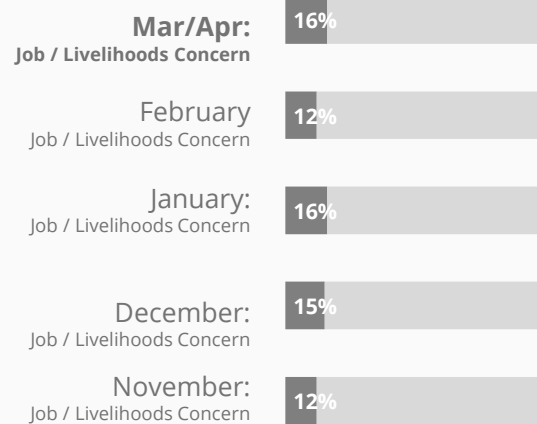
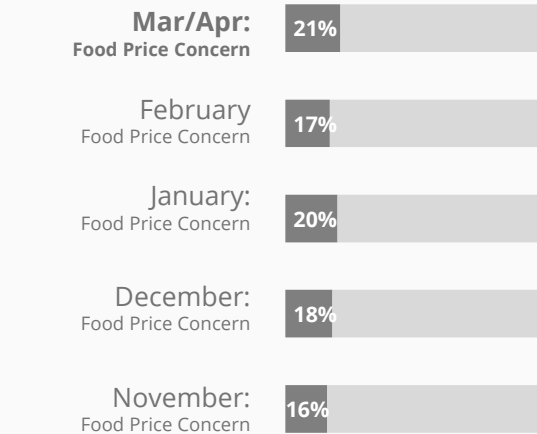
**The proportion of households citing food prices as their top concern has increased** (from 17 percent to 21 percent). Concerns about job losses and livelihood disruption has also shown an increase (from 12 percent to 16 percent) compared to February/March.

**Concern about food price increase remains high among urban households** (25 percent) compared to rural households (19 percent). Individuals in low-income households are more concerned about the rise in food prices than those households where incomes have stayed the same or increased.

**Generally, the number of households having difficulty accessing markets (22 percent) and health services (9 percent) has decreased** compared to February/March. Specifically, when comparing urban and rural areas, urban residents have less trouble accessing markets (13 percent) and health services (5 percent) than rural residents (26 percent, and 11 percent respectively).

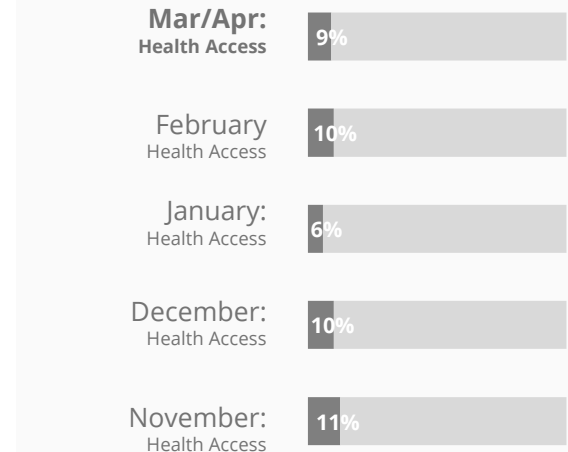
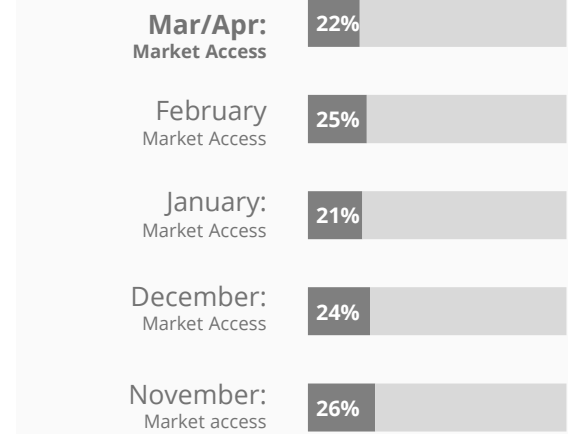
### CONCERNS

#### % WITH CONCERN



### ACCESS

#### % WITH ACCESS ISSUES





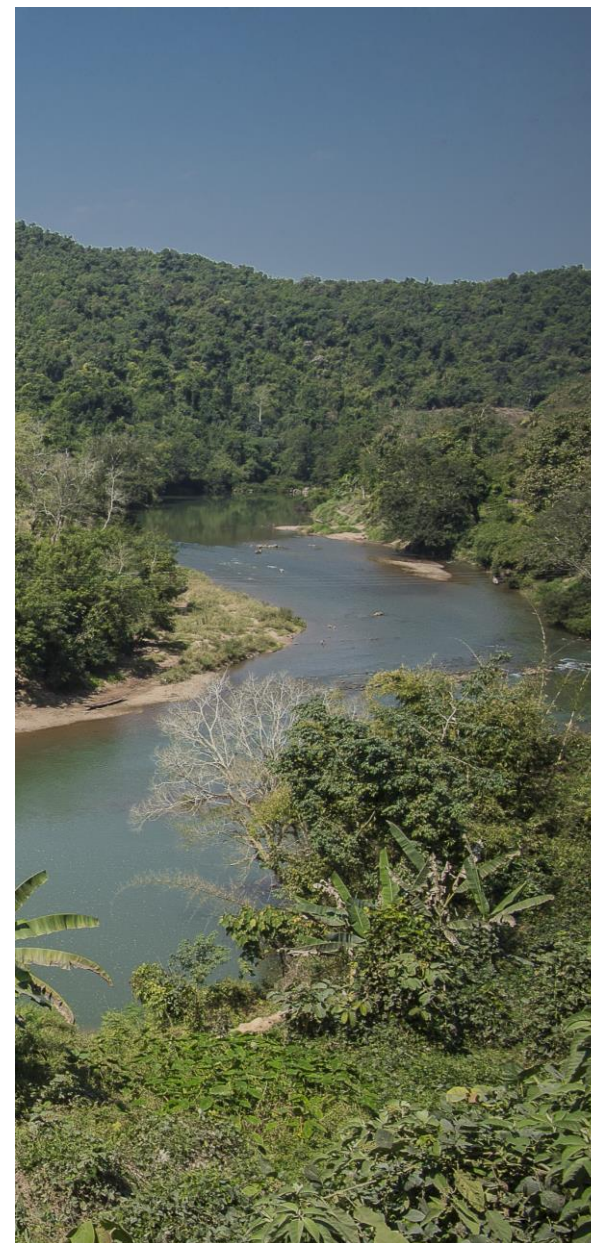
## Background and Methodology

**Lao PDR's inflation rate is now the highest in Southeast Asia.**<sup>7, 8</sup> 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.

**In 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 March/April 2023 round consisted of 1,925 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

<b>Food Insecurity (rCARI)</b>	<b>OVERALL</b>
Food Secure	45
Marginally Food Secure	42
<b>Moderately Food Insecure</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Severely Food Insecure</b>	<b>0.5</b>

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

None	40
Stress	38
Crisis	15.8
Emergency	6.5

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

No/Low	54
Medium	39.2
High	6.4

#### **Food Consumption Group**

Acceptable Food Consumption	80
Borderline Food Consumption	16
Poor Food Consumption	4

## Annex: Tables

	Education			Residence	
	NONE	PRIMARY	HIGHER	RURAL	URBAN
<b>Food Insecurity (rCARI)</b>					
Food Secure	32	43	56	40	55
Marginally Food Secure	43.5	43	38	44	37
<b>Moderately Food Insecure</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Severely Food Insecure</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.1</b>
<b>Livelihood-based Coping Strategies</b>					
None	37	39	42	38	43
Stress	34	40	40	38	39
Crisis	20	15	13	17	13,5
Emergency	10	6	4	7	5
<b>Food-based Coping Strategies</b>					
No/Low	45	53	63	49	65
Medium	45	42	32	43	31
High	10	5	5	8	4
<b>Food Consumption Group</b>					
Acceptable Food Consumption	68	79	89	76	88
Borderline Food Consumption	24	18	9	19	10
Poor Food Consumption	8,5	3	2	5	2

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