



LAO PDR

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

APRIL/MAY 2023

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



Lao PDR: IN NUMBERS



Nearly one in seven households are currently food-insecure



13.3%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)¹

People are relying on coping strategies to buy food



61%

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



43% spent savings



9% reduced expenses on health



19% borrowed money

Food security varies across different parts of the country



16%

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



19%

of households headed by people with no education are food-insecure, compared with 8 percent of those headed by people with secondary education

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



In Brief

Nearly one in seven households are food-insecure (13.3 percent).¹ Food security situation remains constant despite the increase in inflation (Consumer Price Index increased 2.42 percent in May of 2023).² Some of the key commodity prices have been unstable. As a result, additional monitoring of the situation is essential to ensure a prompt response in view of the upcoming lean season.

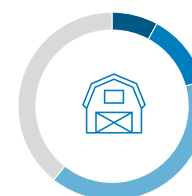
Food insecurity remains unstable in different parts of the country. Some areas of the country have experienced a high prevalence of food insecurity ranging from 6 to 37 percent. Rural households remain at high risk of food insecurity (16 percent), compared to urban households (7 percent). This difference is even greater when compared with Vientiane Capital (6 percent).

Households with high (12 percent), and medium (15 percent) dependency ratios are more food-insecure, than those with a low (11 percent) dependency ratio. Households with depreciated income (33 percent with income reduced >50 percent, and 18 percent with income reduced <50 percent) are more likely to struggle with food insecurity compared to those whose incomes remained stable (9 percent).

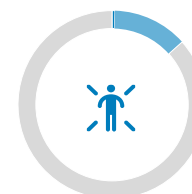
A large number of households are practicing coping strategies to get by. About three in five households are involved in livelihood-based coping strategies with an increase of one percentage point compared to the previous month (from 60 to 61 percent). The number of households using emergency coping strategies has also increased by 8 percent (a one percentage point rise). This rise indicates households' limited capabilities in dealing with potential coming food shocks, especially in the lean season.

Compared to March/April, the proportion of people concerned with high food prices and job stability has slightly declined. One-third of the population cited no concerns, whereas some expressed their worries regarding food price increases (18 percent), as well as job stability (15 percent). As with the previous round, there is still a disparity between rural and urban inhabitants' concerns about rising food prices. The highest percentage of concern is reported in urban areas (24 percent), and the lowest is in rural areas (16 percent).

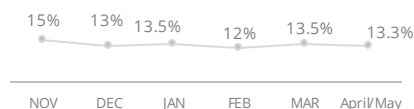
A majority of the population is adopting coping strategies



61%
RESORTING TO
LIVELIHOOD-BASED
COPING STRATEGIES



13.3%
FOOD-INSECURE
(rCARI)



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

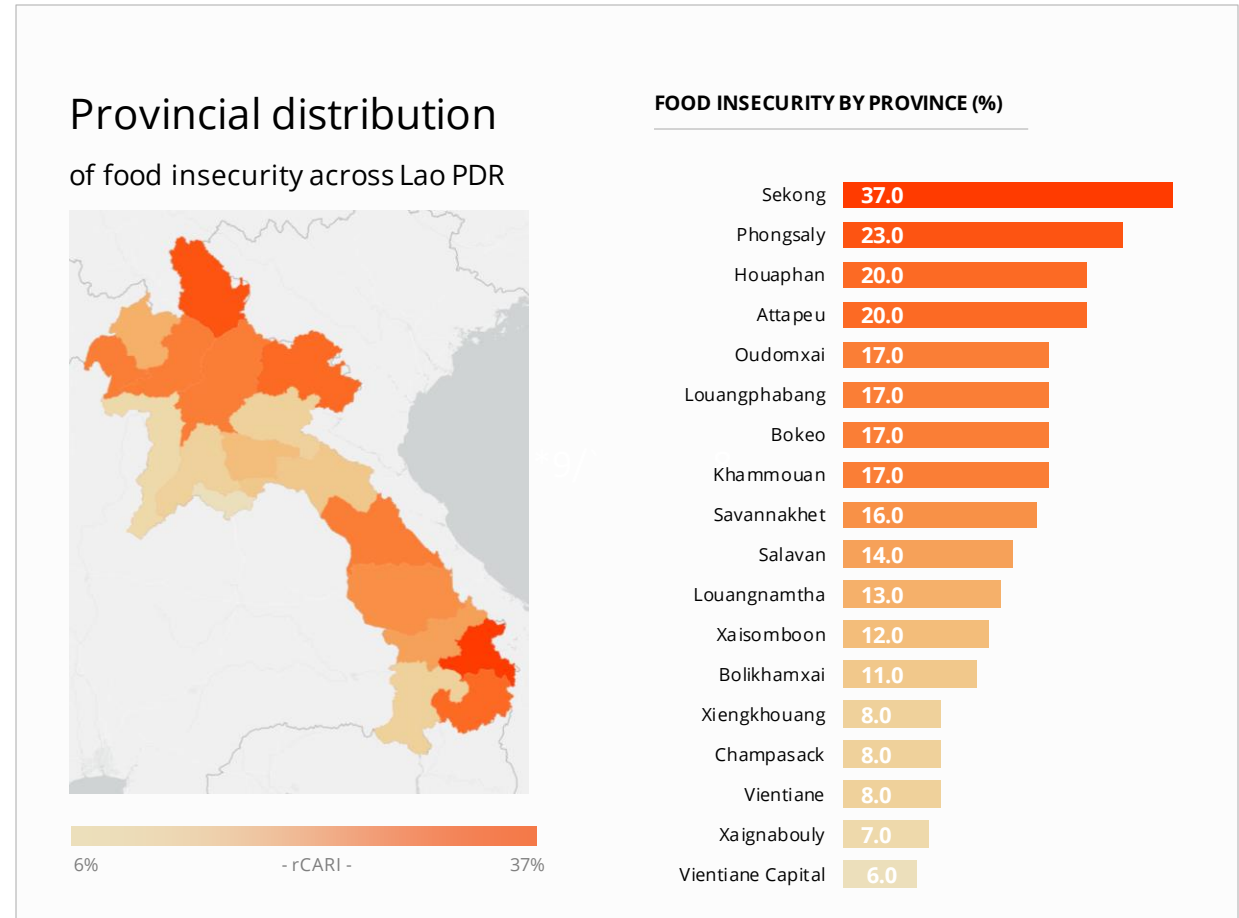
2. [Laos Inflation Rate - April 2023 Data - 1989-2022 Historical - May Forecast \(tradingeconomics.com\)](#)

Findings

Nearly one in seven households (13.3 percent) is experiencing 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 continues to affect provinces across the country. Compared with the previous month, most locations experienced hardships in dealing with the food crisis. Sekong still has the highest prevalence of food insecurity (37 percent – a four percentage point rise – the highest point since the start of the mVAM), followed by Phongsaly (23 percent), Attapeu (20 percent), and Houaphan (20 percent). This suggests urgent action needs to be taken.

Households' vulnerability to food insecurity is predominant in rural areas. A high percentage of the food-insecure population is reported in rural areas (16 percent), compared to urban areas (7 percent). When compared to the previous month, the percentage of food-insecure households in rural areas remains unchanged, while those in urban areas has dropped by one percentage point.



All parts of the country experience food insecurity in a wide range.

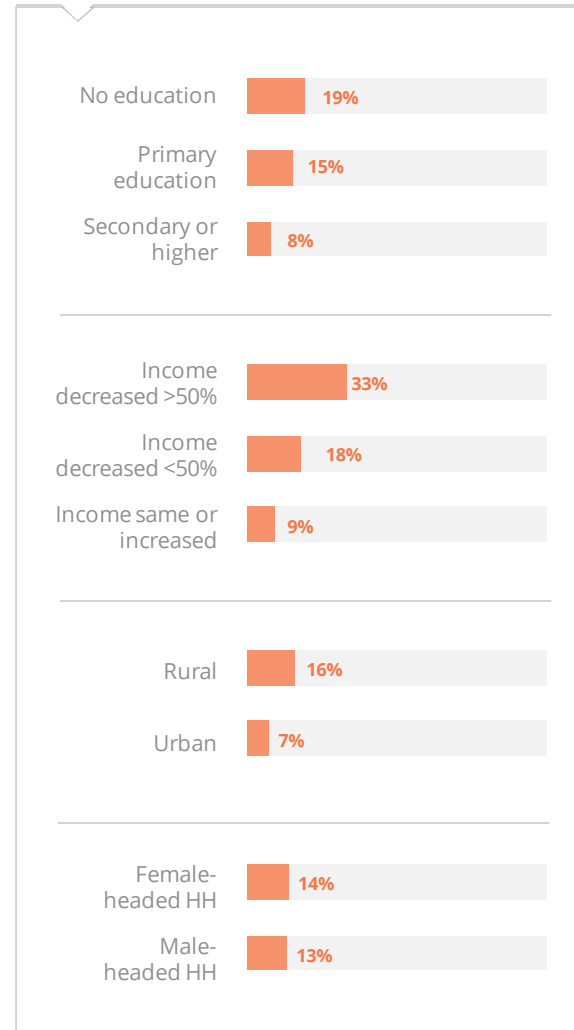
Education is a key element determining food security outcomes. Individuals with secondary or higher education are less likely to be food-insecure (8 percent) than those without a minimum education (19 percent).

Sustainable income helps prevent individuals from experiencing food insecurity. As in previous rounds, households with income reductions (regardless of the amount it is reduced by) are at a higher risk of being food-insecure compared to those with steady or rising incomes.

As in previous rounds, food insecurity is more prevalent among rural inhabitants compared to those in urban areas. A higher percentage of food-insecure residents has been reported in rural areas (16 percent) compared to those in urban areas (7 percent).

There is a small difference in food insecurity depending on whether the household head is male or female. Female-headed households (14 percent) comprise a slightly higher proportion of those being food-insecure compared to male-headed households (13 percent).

APR/MAY FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



About one in six households have inadequate food consumption.

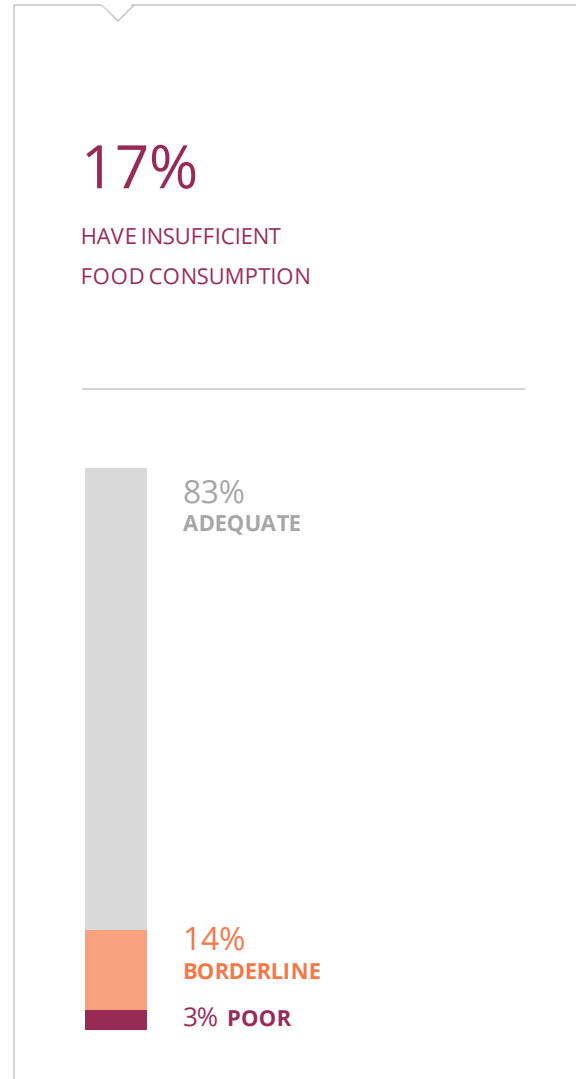
Compared to the previous month, food consumption among households is slightly improved (from 20 to 17 percent), with 14 percent of households being at the borderline level and 3 percent of them being at a poor level.

Individuals eat staples as their main dish every day. Vegetables and proteins from animals are regularly eaten by individuals six times a week, while pulse and dairy are rarely consumed (on average about once per week).

Rural and urban households have different food consumption patterns. Rural residents are likely to consume a less diversified range of food (21 percent), than urban households (10 percent).³ Protein from animals are less consumed among rural inhabitants (five times a week) compared to those in urban areas (six times a week). However, staples and vegetables are the main food types consumed by both urban and rural households.

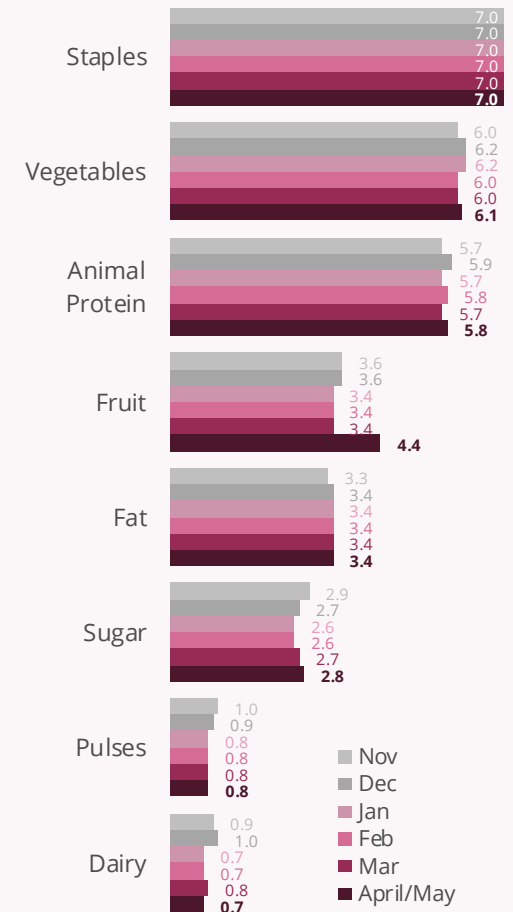


FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



FOOD CONSUMPTION

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



3. 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.

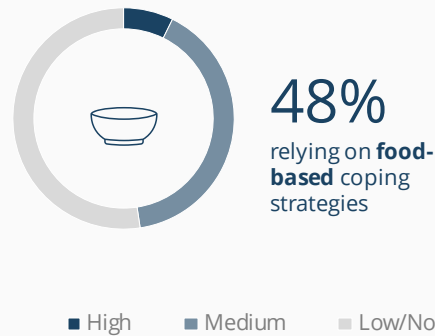
Coping strategies are relied upon by households.

Livelihood-based coping strategies have been increasingly utilized by the population compared to March/April, with a one percentage point rise (from 60 to 61 percent).




As with previous surveys, common methods used among households include: spending savings (43 percent), reducing expenditure on health (9 percent), and borrowing to buy essentials (19 percent). The proportion of those applying these strategies remains high in Sekong Province, followed by Oudomxai Province.

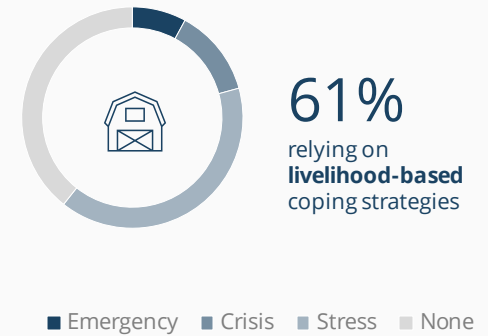
Large proportion of households turning to livelihood-based coping strategies is reported in rural areas (63 percent), compared to those in urban areas (56 percent). Notably, these strategies are used by those who have experienced income reduction (73 percent for income reduced >50 percent, 67 percent for income reduced <50 percent) rather than those with income which has stayed the same or increased (57 percent).

Households engaging in food-based coping strategies have increased as a proportion (from 46 to 48 percent). Strategies commonly practiced by households dealing with food insecurity include eating less preferred foods, limiting portion sizes, and sacrificing adult meals for children.






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
-  **15%** have adults sacrificing meals so children can eat



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

-  **43%** spent savings
-  **9%** reduced expenses on health
-  **19%** borrowed money



Compared to March/April, households have less worries about food price increases and job stability.

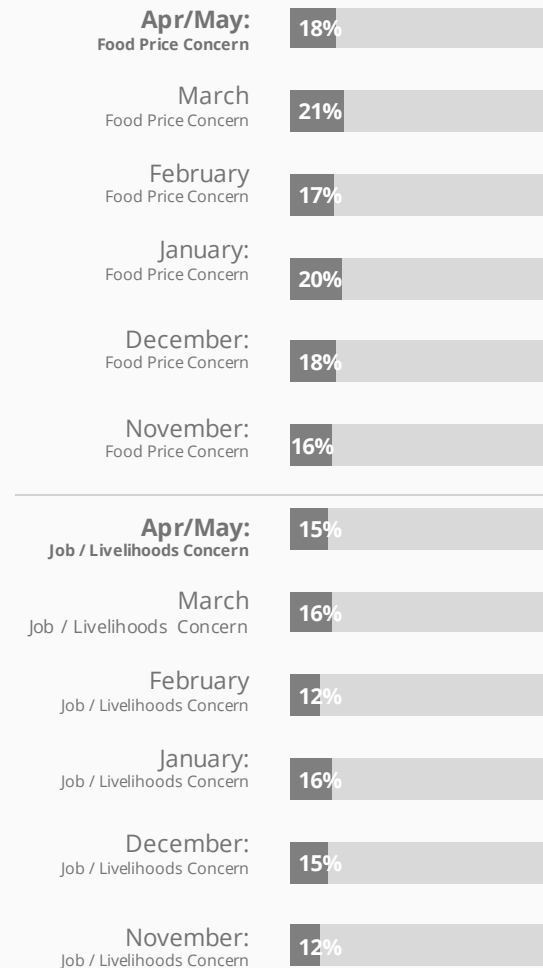
Around one-third of the population has shown no concerns about any issues. For those who do, rising food prices (18 percent), and job stability (15 percent) remain their top concerns. However, compared to last month, the number of people expressing concerns about these issues has declined (three percentage points regarding food prices, and one percentage point regarding job stability).

Rising food prices are considered the top concern among urban residents (24 percent), compared with rural residents (16 percent). Households with low income are especially affected by an increase in food prices, compared to households with stable or increased incomes.

Households have less difficulties in accessing markets (17 percent), **and health services** (8 percent), compared to the previous survey. The proportion has dropped by five percentage points for market access, and one percentage point for health service access. As in previous surveys, concerns about reaching markets (21 percent) and health services (9 percent) are more prevalent for rural households compared with those in urban areas (8 percent, and 6 percent respectively).

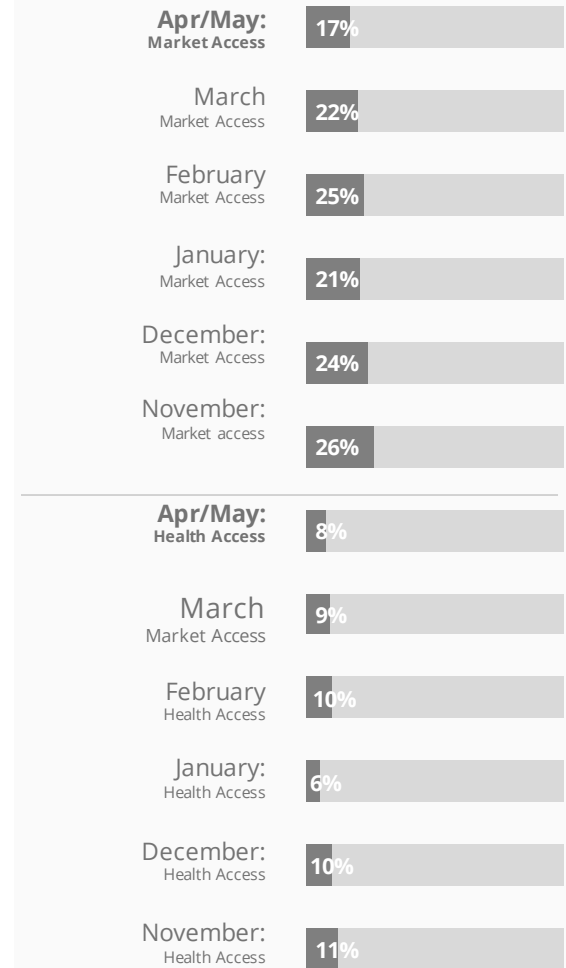
CONCERNS

% WITH CONCERN



ACCESS

% WITH ACCESS ISSUES





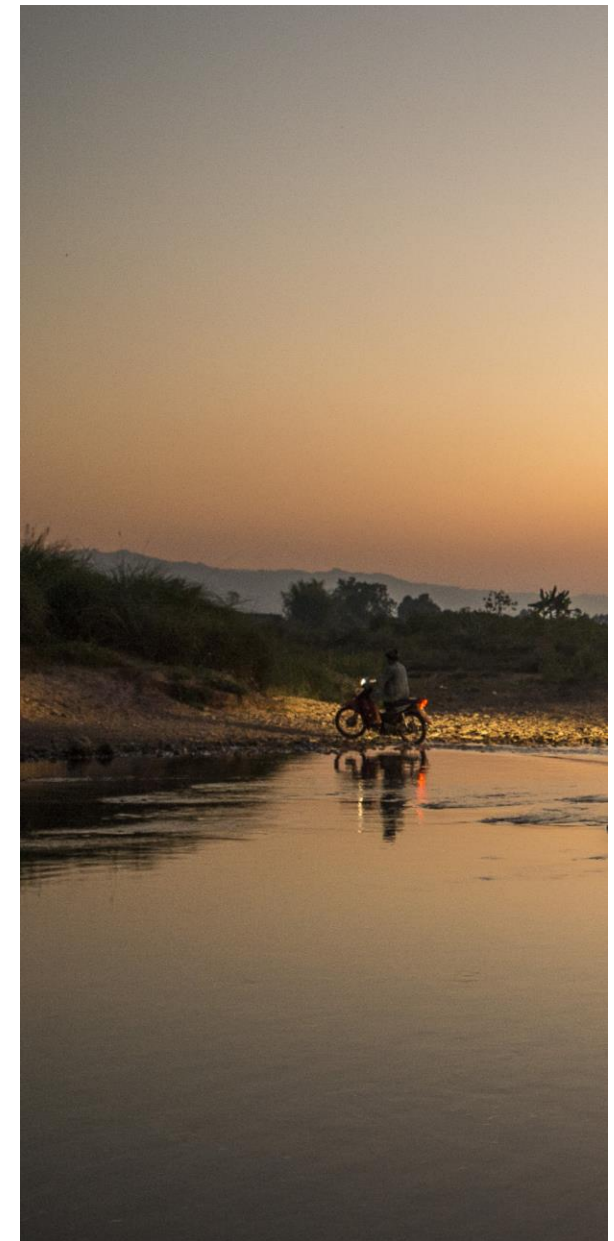
Background and Methodology

Lao PDR's inflation rate is now the highest in Southeast Asia.^{4,5} The cumulative effects from COVID-19's socioeconomic 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. These remote surveys use a phone-based methodology to understand the changes in the food security situation and underlying factors across the country. The April/May 2023 round consisted of 2,015 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

4. *Trading economics*

5. *Consumer Price Index, Lao PDR General Directorate of Statistics*

Annex: Tables

Overall

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	OVERALL
Food Secure	47
Marginally Food Secure	40
Moderately Food Insecure	12.9
Severely Food Insecure	0.5

Livelihood-based Coping Strategies

None	39
Stress	40
Crisis	12.8
Emergency	7.9

Food-based Coping Strategies

No/Low	52
Medium	40.3
High	7.3

Food Consumption Group

Acceptable Food Consumption	82.5
Borderline Food Consumption	14.3
Poor Food Consumption	3.3

Annex: Tables

	Education			Residence	
	NONE	PRIMARY	HIGHER	RURAL	URBAN
Food Insecurity (rCARI)					
Food Secure	38	43	56.6	42.5	55
Marginally Food Secure	43.3	42.5	35	41	37.5
Moderately Food Insecure	18.3	14.2	8	15.6	7.3
Severely Food Insecure	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.1
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies					
None	40	37	42	37	44
Stress	38	40	39.6	39.6	41
Crisis	10	14	12.6	14	10
Emergency	12	8.6	5.5	9	5.5
Food-based Coping Strategies					
No/Low	42.5	49	62	48.5	60
Medium	48	42.6	33	43	35
High	10	8	5.4	8.6	4.7
Food Consumption Group					
Acceptable Food Consumption	75	81	88	79	90
Borderline Food Consumption	20	15	10.4	17	9
Poor Food Consumption	5	4	1.4	4.4	1

Acknowledgements:

Rumbidzayi Machiridza, Manithaphone Mahaxay, Palamy Changleuxai, Anthea Piong, Clinton Tedja, and Beryl Lo under the leadership of Jacqueline de Groot.

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