



FOOD SECURITY MONITORING UPDATE

The Kyrgyz Republic

JUNE 2023

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief

This brief was developed by WFP in June 2023,
comparing the previous four months of
household food security data.



KEY NUMBERS

From the households surveyed, weighted to the total population



One in ten households are currently food-insecure



10 %

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)¹

More than half of population is only marginally food secure



51 %

OF PEOPLE ARE MARGINALLY FOOD-SECURE (rCARI)¹

People are relying on coping strategies mostly to buy food



71 %

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



42 % spent savings



29 % borrowed money



21 % reduced expenses on agriculture, livestock and seeds



21 % reduced expenses for health

Food security varies across different groups



16% vs 9%

of female-households are food-insecure, compared to only 9 percent among male-headed households



11% vs 7%

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

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





Summary

The negative consequences of the global cost-of-living crisis are manifesting in the Kyrgyz Republic with rising food prices and inflation, which paired with decreasing net remittances **erode the resilience of households** most vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic had reverted a decade of development gains in just two years. **Poverty** had sky-rocketed from 20.1 % in 2019 to 33.3 % in 2021¹, with an additional 10 % of the population at **risk of falling** into poverty. Moreover, **extreme poverty** increased to 6 percent in 2021 from 0.5 % in 2019.

WFP has rolled out quarterly remote surveys to monitor the changes in the food security situation and underlying factors across the country. According to the June survey, **10% of households, or 674,732 people, were acutely food insecure**. Despite the positive dynamics, the food security situation remains unstable as inflation is forecasted to remain high. The food inflation in June 2023 was 12.4 %, compared to 16 percent in June 2022², the second highest in the Eurasian region. The prices for key commodities remain high compared to past years.

For both **food and non-food items**, the key hindering factor to their purchase was the **economic accessibility** (lack of money) and **affordability** (high food prices).

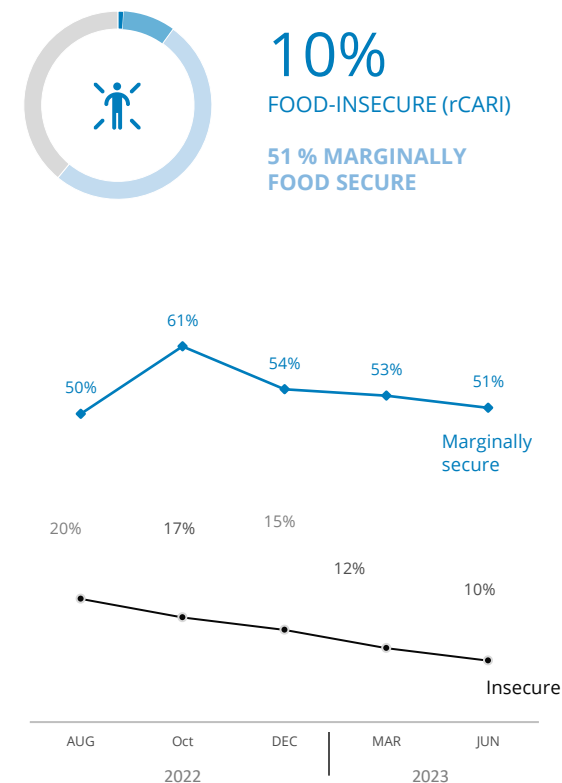
Eight percent of households reported that their **income had decreased** since January 2023, **with an average decrease of 33 %**. The highest prevalence is among households living in Chui (11 %), Talas (11 %), Issyk-Kul (10 %) provinces and Bishkek city (10 %).

Food insecurity is unequally affecting different areas across the country. Rural areas remain more vulnerable to food insecurity (11 %) compared to urban areas (7 %). The highest share of food insecure population is concentrated in Talas, Osh and Naryn provinces, with higher prevalence among female-headed households.

Around seven in ten (7/10) households are relying on coping strategies to meet their food and other essential needs. Similar to the previous issue (March 2023), a significant proportion of households employ livelihood-based coping strategies (71 %). However, the number of households engaging in emergency and crisis coping strategies decreased (to 38 % and 43 % respectively), except for stress coping strategies (35 %). This slight decrease may indicate a positive change in food security in line with the agricultural season. Some of these coping strategies economically/nutritionally unsustainable and their application high for rural residents (77 %) compared to urban areas (62 %) calls for further investment in food systems transformation and nutrition education.

Nearly half of the population (44 %) continued to use negative food coping strategies such as eating less desirable/less expensive foods (37 %) and 5 % skipped meals or ate less than usual.

One-tenth of the population is food insecure



¹ National Statistical Committee, <http://www.stat.kg/ru/publications/uroven-bednosti-v-kyrgyzskoj-respublike/>; last year's poverty data expected to be published in September

² National Statistical Committee: <http://www.stat.kg/en/statistics/ceny-i-tarifny/>

Findings

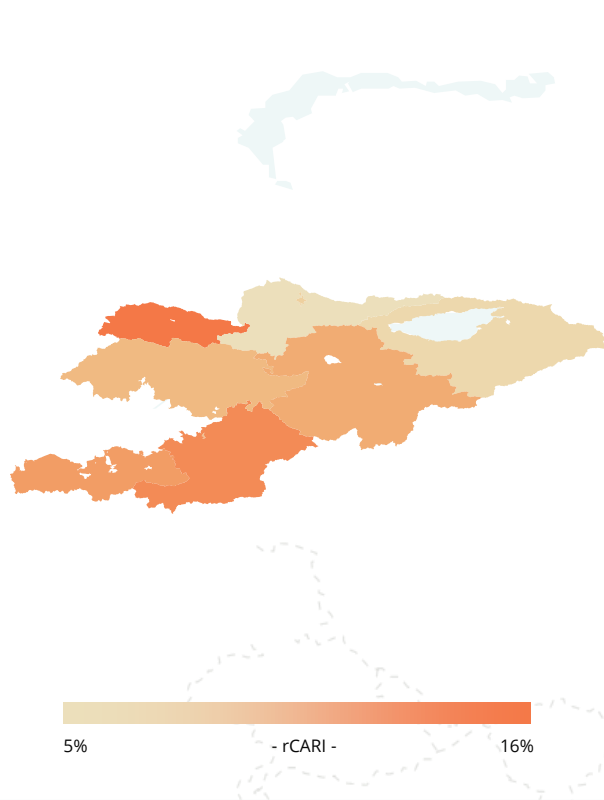
According to the June 2023 survey, **10 % of households were food insecure (9 % moderately and 1% severely food insecure) compared to 12 % in March 2023**. The largest improvements in food security were observed in Talas (-19 %) and Batken (-6 %) regions. **More than half of the population (51 %) remains only marginally food secure**, applying stress negative coping strategies and experiencing an income decline.

Food insecurity varies across provinces. The food insecurity ranges from 5 % to 16 %. Talas province remain the most food insecure despite the decrease from 34 % in March to 16 %. Osh and Naryn provinces follow Talas with 15 % and 14 %, respectively. Food insecurity was driven by insufficient food consumption, decrease of income, dependency on assistance and application of depletion coping strategies.

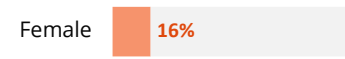
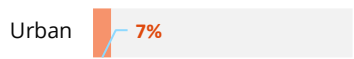
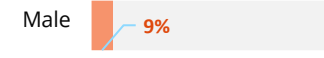
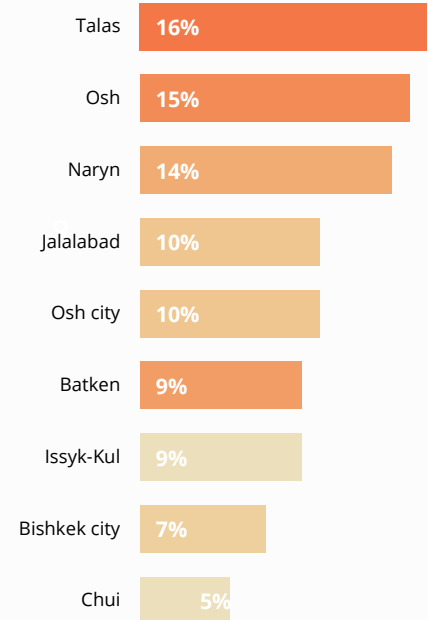
Household characteristics strongly correlated with higher food insecurity include **female-headed** (16 %) vs male-headed (9 %); **having primary-school-aged children** (6-11 years of age) and **presence of people with disabilities/ chronically ill members**.

Due to higher population density, **Jalal-Abad and Osh provinces account for 50 % of all food insecure population** in the country.

Food insecurity by Province



FOOD INSECURITY BY PROVINCE (%)



Household diets are not sufficient in general

Adequate food consumption slightly improved compared to March 2023. **Nonetheless, 8 % of households fall under poor or borderline consumption.** Naryn province (12 %), Talas province (11 %), Osh city (10 %) have the highest levels of poor food consumption.

Almost half of households (43 %) had some difficulties eating enough food over the past 7 days: 36 % ate less expensive or less preferred food, 6 % skipped meals or ate less than usual and 1 % went at least one whole day and night without eating.

Rural households are facing more difficulties in consuming enough food (42 %) compared to urban households (24 %).⁵

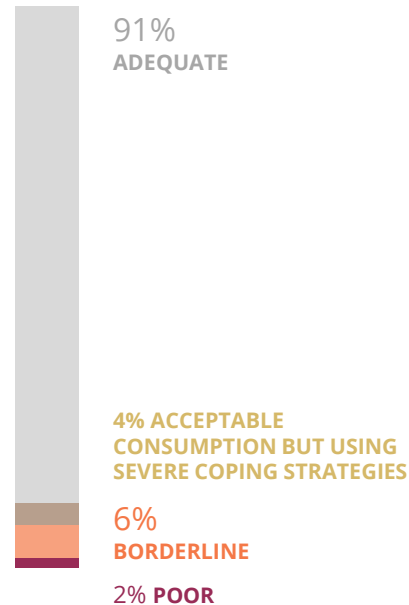
38% of households were worried of not having enough food, a decrease of 2 % compared to March 2023. With the seasonal increase for staple food commodities in spring (when products are usually more expensive) households are reducing their consumption of dairy products, vegetables and fruits.

FOOD CONSUMPTION

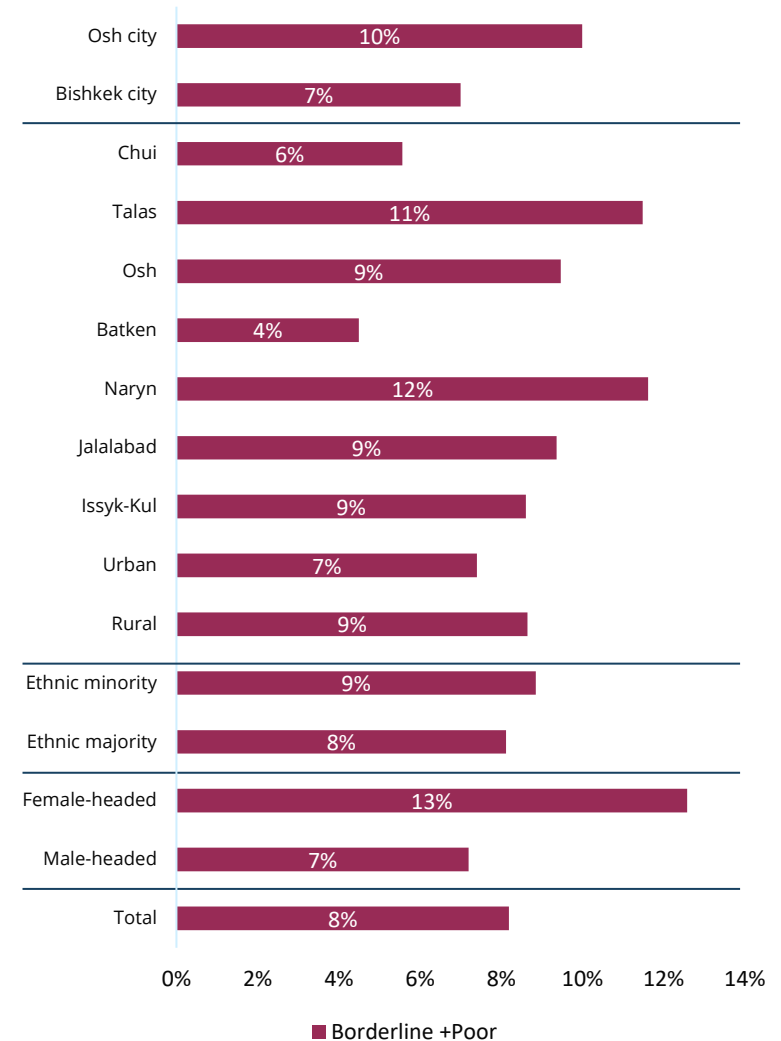


8%

HAVE INSUFFICIENT FOOD CONSUMPTION



Poor and borderline food consumption, by groups (% of HHs)



Coping strategies are still being applied

The percentage of households using livelihood-based coping strategies in the surveyed 7 days slightly decreased from 78 % in March 2023 to 71 %: 34 % of households used 'stress' coping strategies, 28 % - 'crisis' coping strategies and 9 percent - 'emergency' coping strategies. Application of emergency coping strategies also decreased from 12 % to 9 %, and application of crises coping strategies decreased from 31 % to 28 %.

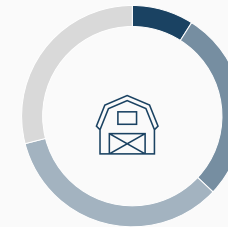
More than one third (34 %) are using stress livelihood-based coping strategies. Among them, 42 % spend their savings, 29 % - borrow to buy essential food, 21 % - reduce expenses for agriculture needs, livestock and seeds, and 11 percent - resort to labour migration. The highest use of these strategies was found in Naryn province (41 percent).

Nearly half of the population (44 %) continued to use negative food coping strategies such as eating less desirable/less expensive foods (37 %) and 5 % skipped meals or ate less than usual.

The use of negative coping strategies has a direct negative impact on the nutritional, health and productivity status, which is difficult to reverse in the future, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and vulnerability.






44%
relying on **food-based** coping strategies







71%
relying on **livelihood-based** coping strategies

■ Emergency ■ Crisis ■ Stress ■ None

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE LAST SEVEN DAYS BECAUSE OF LIMITED ACCESS TO USUAL DIET

-  **37%** are eating less desirable/less expensive food
-  **5%** skipped meals or ate less than usual
-  **2%** went at least one whole day and night without eating

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

-  **42%** spent savings
-  **29%** borrowed money
-  **21%** reduced expenses on agriculture, livestock and seeds
-  **21%** reduced expenses on health



High food prices and lack of money remain to be the top concerns

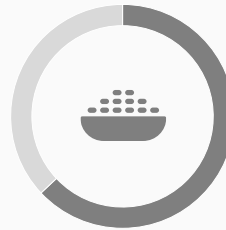
Notwithstanding positive macro-economic trends, economic vulnerability remains for the food insecure. **Only eight percent of households reported that their income had decreased** since January 2023, a two percent improvement compared to March 2023. For those who experienced a loss of income, the decrease was significant (33 % on average). Income losses were particularly prevalent in households living in Chuy (11 percent), Talas (11 %), Issyk-Kul (10 %) provinces and Bishkek city (10 %), while the highest decrease in income amount has been recorded in the Issyk-Kul province (47 %) and Osh city (40 %).

Severely food insecure households, who suffer from a decrease of income, **are not particularly relying on assistance or support**. This demonstrates the lack of responsiveness of safety nets to stressors, shocks and general exclusion errors in targeting the most vulnerable.

Around half of all households reported experiencing difficulties in buying vegetable oil (36 %), **sugar** (35 %), and **wheat flour** (34 %). The main reason were the high commodity prices (84%) and lack of money (12 %). These are three commodities for which the country heavily relies on import to satisfy the internal demand.



Physical access to the market and the availability of both food and non-food items in stores was not an issue.

FOOD ITEMS

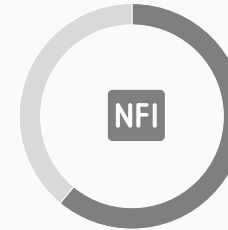


37%
cannot easily access all food items

Reasons for experiencing difficulties:



-  **51%** due to significantly increased food prices
-  **44%** due to lack of money

NON-FOOD ITEMS



39%
Cannot easily access all non-food items

Reasons for experiencing difficulties:

-  **44%** due to significantly increased food prices
-  **51%** due to lack of money



Background and Methodology

The Kyrgyz Republic's inflation rate is now the second highest in Eurasian region. The cumulative effects from COVID-19's socio-economic impacts and the global food crisis continue to negatively impact the vulnerable population with an appreciated exchange rate, reduced remittances and heightened financial risks. Rising 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 regard, WFP is conducting household food security surveys through the **Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators** of food security using remote data collection (**remote-CARI**). These remote surveys use a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview technique (CATI) to understand changes in the food security situation and underlying factors across the country.

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

The June 2023 food security survey was conducted between 29 May – 9 June. It covered 9 strata: all 7 provinces and 2 large cities (Bishkek and Osh).

A two-stage cluster sampling was applied to select 1) communities/sites in each strata and 2) households in each site.

- Confidence interval = 95 %
- Margin of Error = 7 %
- Estimated prevalence = 50 %

A minimum sample of 200 households were interviewed in each stratum, resulting in a total sample of 1,800 households.

Response rate: 19 % (9,162 calls) out of the total number of randomly generated telephone numbers. The other 81 %: 23 % - refused to participate, 22 % - out of service, 22 % - no answer, which may have affected impartiality to some extent. The results were weighted to account for population size and share of rural/urban population.

Other Resources



PRICE MONITORING DASHBOARD

An overview of prices across different markets ([link](#))



COUNTRY BRIEFS

A monthly overview of WFP's activities in Kyrgyz Republic ([link1](#), [link2](#))



Annex: Tables

Overall

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	March 2023	June 2023
Food Secure	35	39
Marginally Food Secure	53	51
Moderately Food Insecure	10	9
Severely Food Insecure	2	1
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies		
None	22	28
Stress	35	34
Crisis	31	28
Emergency	12	9
Food Consumption Group		
Acceptable Food Consumption	90	88
Acceptable Food Consumption but using severe coping	0	4
Borderline Food Consumption	6	6
Poor Food Consumption	4	2

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