



FOOD SECURITY MONITORING UPDATE

The Kyrgyz Republic

September 2023

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief

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



KEY NUMBERS



One in ten households are currently food-insecure



10 %

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)¹

More than half of the population is only marginally food secure



56 %

OF PEOPLE ARE MARGINALLY FOOD-SECURE (rCARI)¹

People are relying on coping strategies mostly to buy food



74 %

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



41 % spent savings



30 % borrowed money



25 % reduced expenses on agriculture, livestock and seeds



28 % reduced expenses for health

Food security varies across different groups



18% vs 8%

of female-households are food-insecure, compared to only 8 % among male-headed households



10% vs 9%

of households in rural areas are food-insecure, compared to 9 % in urban areas

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





Summary

The Kyrgyz Republic's economic growth has been volatile during the last decade due to its reliance on remittances and food imports. High import prices for food and fuel, as well as changes in utility tariffs, have kept inflation in the country for the last four years, impacting the poor population. According to the National Statistics Committee, **33 percent of the population is still poor, with an additional 10 percent at risk of becoming poor**¹. Drought circumstances in 2023 have resulted in shortages of key grain and fodder for about 30 percent of the country², posing further risk to the country's food security. WFP is conducting remote surveys on a bi-monthly basis from August 2022 and quarterly basis in 2023 to monitor developments in the country's food security situation and underlying concerns.

According to the September survey, **10 percent of households, or 674,732 people, were food insecure**, similar to June 2023 (Fig 1). At the same time, **more than half of the population (56 %) remains only marginally food secure**. Despite the positive dynamics, the food security situation remains precarious, as inflation is projected to remain high and there is a significant reduction in the production of cereals and fodder crops in 2023. The food inflation in January - September 2023 was 12 percent, compared to 14 percent in January-September 2022³, the second highest in the Eurasian region. Prices of wheat (+55 %), wheat flour (+60 %), vegetable oil (+60 %) and sugar (+111 %) commodities remain high compared to February 2020 (pre-pandemic time) and are likely to rise as a result of crop failures in neighbouring countries⁴.

The main barrier to purchasing **both food and non-food** products was **economic accessibility** (lack of money) and **affordability** (high food prices).

Ten percent of households reported their **income had decreased** since January 2023, **with an average** decrease of **52 percent**. The highest prevalence is among households living in Chui province (15 %) and Bishkek city (15 %).

Food insecurity is almost equally affecting different areas across the country. Rural areas remain slightly more vulnerable to food insecurity (10 %) compared to urban areas (9 %). The highest share of food insecure population is concentrated in Jalal-Abad, Naryn and Batken provinces, with higher prevalence among female-headed households.

A significant proportion of households (74 %) **rely on livelihood-based coping strategies to meet their food and other basic needs**, which is slightly higher than in the previous issue (June 2023). However, the use of emergency and crisis coping strategies is 42 % and is strongly associated with food insecurity. Some of these strategies are economically and nutritionally unsustainable. At the same time, 32 % of the population continues to utilize coping strategies. Overall, the use of these strategies remains more prevalent among rural residents (78 %) compared to urban residents (67 %).

Nearly half of the population (41 %) continued to use negative food coping strategies such as eating less desirable/less expensive foods (34 %), skipping meals (5 %) or went at least one whole day and night without eating (2 %). The use of those strategies continues to reduce the population's capacity to cope with malnutrition.

One-tenth of the population is food insecure

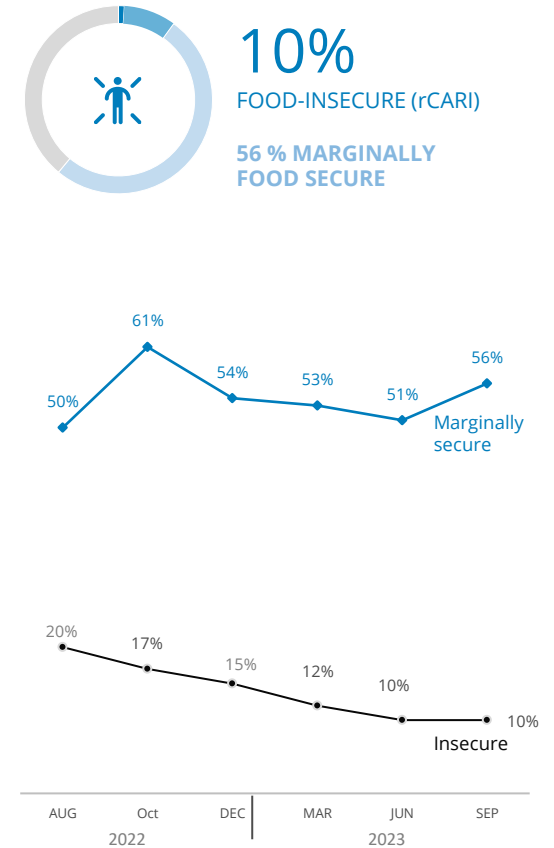


Figure 1. Food insecurity (rCARI) in September 2023 by status and geography (%)

1 National Statistical Committee, <http://www.stat.kg/ru/publications/uroven-bednosti-v-kyrgyzskoj-respublike/>

2 Ministry of Agriculture of the Kyrgyz Republic

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

4 The food price situation in Central Asia: https://studies.hu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/2549_Serova.pdf

Findings

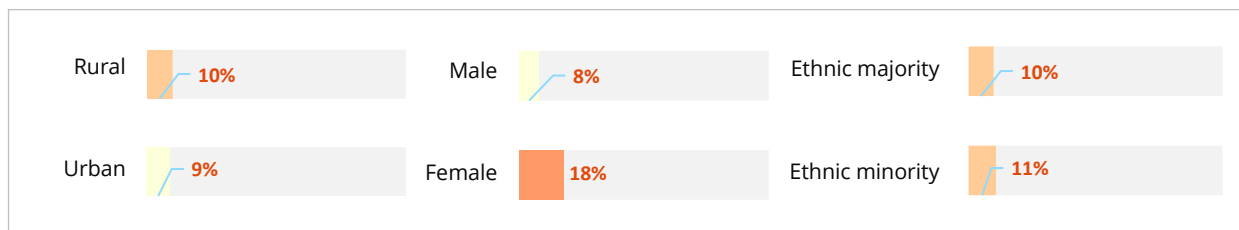
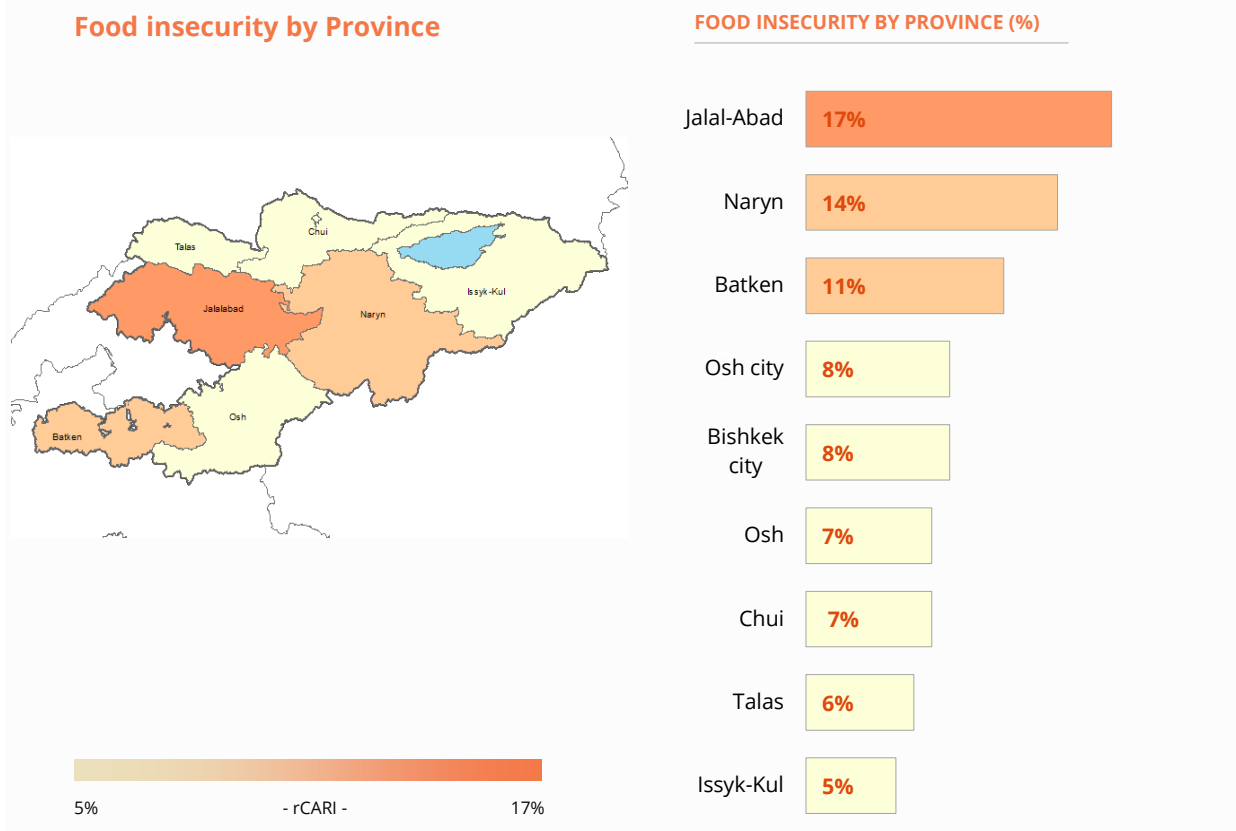
Countrywide food insecurity remained the same compared to June 2023, at 10 percent. According to the September 2023 survey, **9 percent of households were moderately food insecure, and 1 percent of households were severely food insecure.** The largest decrease in food security were observed in Jalal-Abad (17 %) and Batken (11 %) regions. **More than half of the population (56 %) remains only marginally food secure,** with the highest in Osh (62 %), Jalal-Abad (61 %), Talas (61 %) and Issyk-Kul (60 %) regions. These families are applying negative coping strategies, experiencing an income decline and have limited access to usual diets.

Food insecurity varies across provinces, ranging from 5 percent in Issyk-Kul to 17 percent in Jalal-Abad province. Naryn and Batken provinces with 14 percent and 11 percent respectively (Fig 2).

Household characteristics strongly correlated with higher food insecurity include **female-headed** (18 %) vs male-headed (8 %); **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 49 percent (or 317,000 people) of all food insecure population** in the country.

Figure 2. Food insecurity (rCARI) in September 2023 by status and geography (%)



The diet of every tenth family is generally insufficient

Since March 2023, the adequate food consumption has improved following the seasonal availability of food (Fig 3a). Yet, **8 percent of households fall under poor or borderline consumption in June and September 2023**. Female-headed households (16 %), Jalal-Abad province (11 %), Osh province (10 %), Bishkek city (10 %) have the highest levels of poor food consumption (Fig 4).

Nearly half of the population (41 %), employed food consumption coping strategies, a 2 percent decrease from June 2023: one in three households ate less expensive or less preferred foods, 5 percent skipped meals or ate less than usual, and 2 percent did not eat for at least one day and night (Fig 3). In conditions of food scarcity and economic hardship, families use consumption coping strategies. However, with the arrival of the fresh harvest and seasonally low prices for vegetables and fruits, these mechanisms are slightly reduced.

Meanwhile, **37 percent of households were worried of not having enough food**, a decrease of 1 percent compared to June and March 2023 (Fig 5). The population remains exposed to higher prices for food (especially imported one), non-food products and increased prices for services.

In comparison to other regions, **Issyk-Kul** (51 %, of which 47 % ate less expensive food), **Jalal-Abad** (43 %), **Naryn** (43 %), and **female-headed** (50 %) households **use consumption coping strategies more frequently**. At the same time, these provinces had the highest living wage (except for Issyk-Kul) due to high prices for food and non-food products in July – September 2023⁴.

Figure 3. Food-based coping strategies in September 2023



- 34%** 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

Figure 5. Food-based coping strategies and percentage of population feel worried not to have enough food

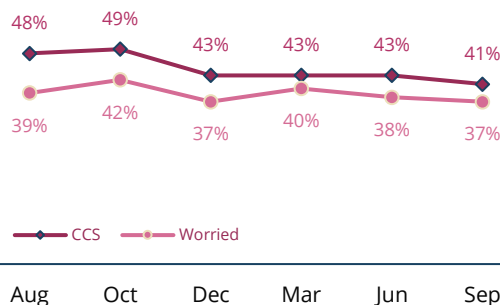


Figure 4. Poor and borderline food consumption, by groups (% of HHs) in September 2023

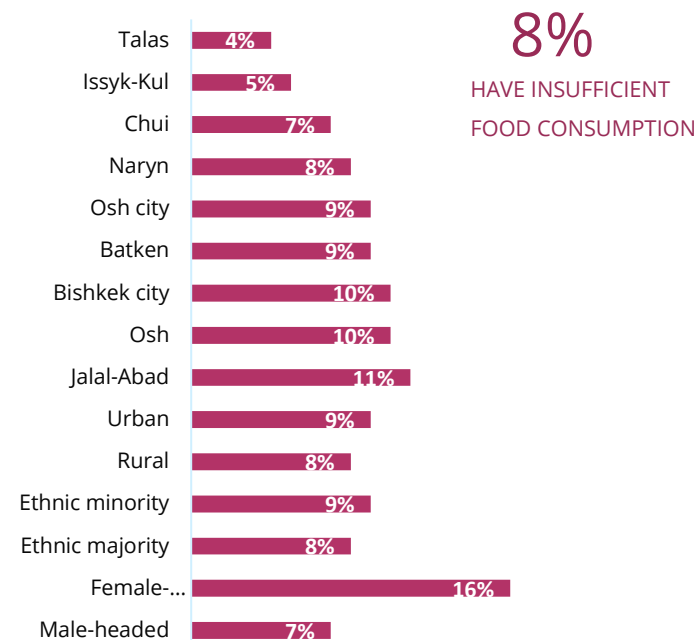
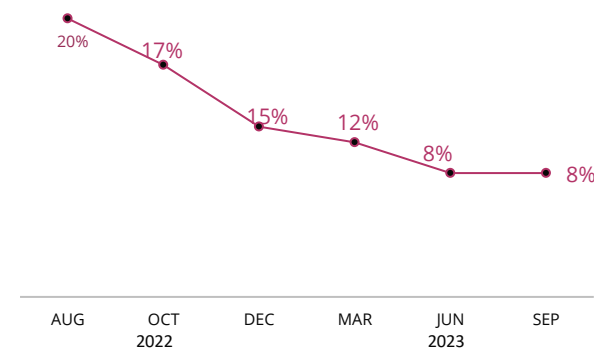


Figure 6. Poor and borderline food consumption



⁴ Living wage 3rd quarter 2023, <https://stat.kg/media/files/64fc9a93-ae7b-42ba-aca5-d5366e78f974.pdf>

High reliance on coping strategies and vulnerability to cope with future shocks

A growing number of households are relying on negative livelihood coping strategies: 74 percent compared to 71 percent in June 2023 (Fig 8). 32 percent of households used 'stress' coping strategies, 33 percent - 'crisis' coping strategies and 9 percent - 'emergency' coping strategies (Fig 7). Application of crisis coping strategies increased from 28 percent in June 2023 to 33 percent in September, while stress coping strategies slightly decreased from 33 percent to 32 percent, respectively.

Naryn (53 %) and Jalal-Abad (50 %) regions and female-headed families (47 %) has the highest scores of emergency and crisis strategies that are associated with food insecurity (Fig 7).

Some of these strategies have long-term negative consequences, not only for household wellbeing, but also for the long-term development. The crisis strategies are mainly applied by 28 percent of population for reducing health and education costs, by 7 percent for selling productive assets, by 14 percent for selling livestock more than usual.

Coping strategies reduce future labour productivity, which includes the building of human capital, and the capacity to withstand shocks such as severe droughts, high inflation, natural disasters, etc.

Figure 7. Livelihood-based coping strategies in September 2023

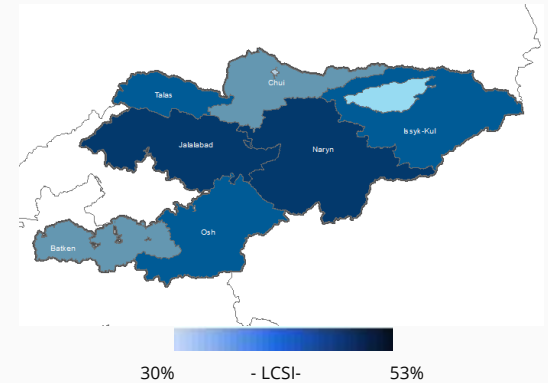
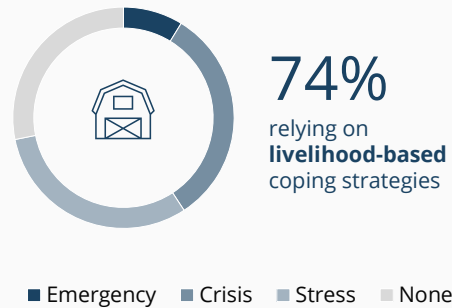
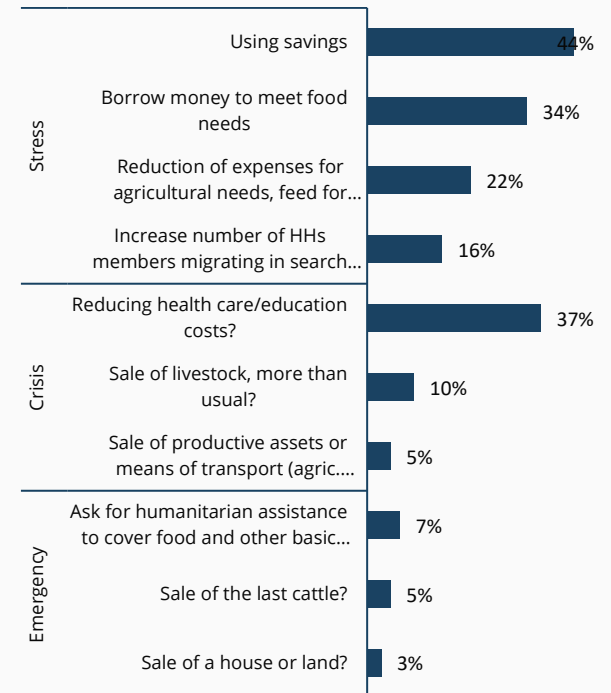
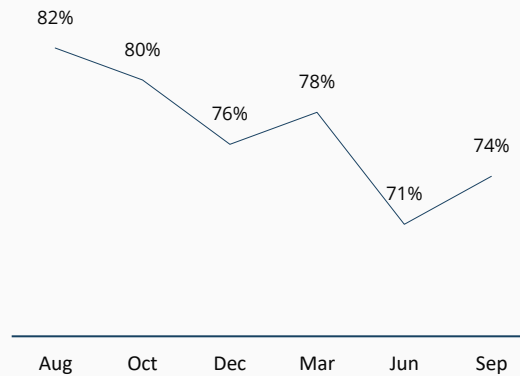


Figure 8. Livelihood-based coping strategies





Loss of purchasing power and high inflation remain to be the top concerns

As in the previous publication, economic vulnerability persists. Ten percent of the population reported that their income had decreased since January 2023, a two percent lower compared to June 2023. However, the **income decline, with an average of 52 %, was significant.** Income losses were particularly prevalent in households living in Chui province (15 %) and Bishkek city (15 %), while the highest income size decrease has been recorded in Naryn (7 %), Batken (57 %) and Jalal-Abad regions (56 %).

Severely food insecure households, who are suffering from decrease of income, do not necessarily access assistance or support. This demonstrates the **need to revise the targeting and coverage 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 (38 %), sugar (38 %), and wheat flour (42 %). The main reason was the high commodity price (86 %) and lack of money (12 %) (Fig 10). Country heavily relies on import to satisfy the internal demand for wheat and vegetable oils. In September 2023, export prices for wheat flour in Kazakhstan increased by 21% compared to August 2023 due to the drought, which contributed to an increase in national retail prices.

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

Figure 9. Access to essential food and non-food items

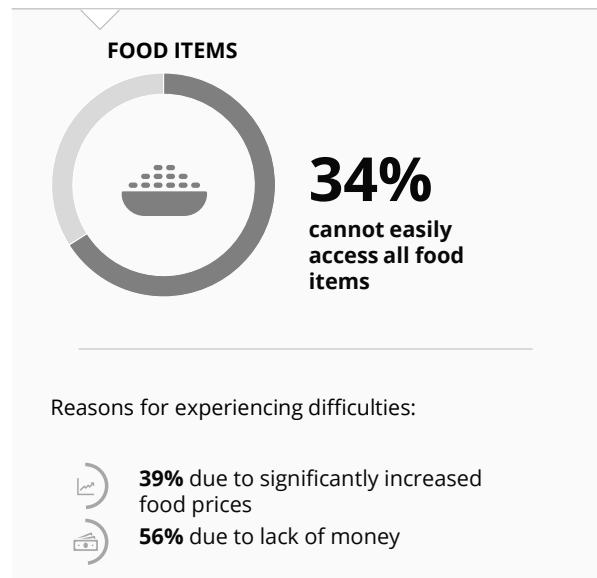


Figure 10. Households experiencing difficulties or unable to purchase essential food items

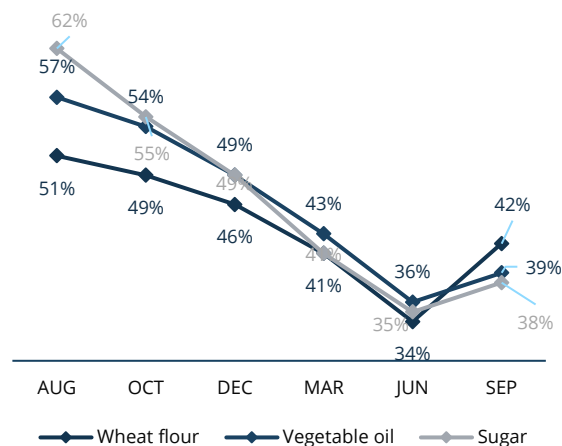
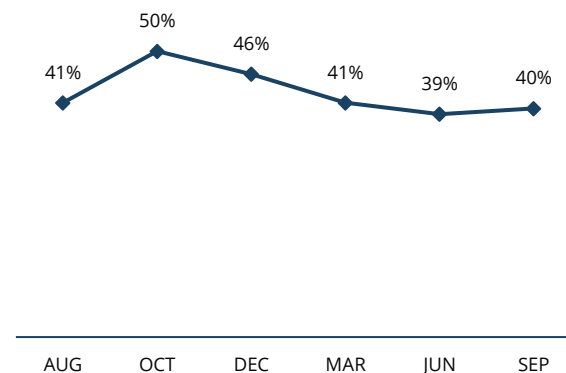


Figure 11. Households experiencing difficulties or unable to purchase essential non-food items





Background and Methodology

The Kyrgyz Republic's food inflation rate is January-September 2023 was the second highest in Eurasian region. The cumulative effects from socio-economic impacts, reduction in agriculture productivity and the global risks have further negatively impacted the vulnerable population, 4 percent appreciation of exchange rates, 28 percent of decrease of remittances and heightened financial risks In January – September 2023. These 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 on a quarterly bases in 2023 through 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 its evidence generation initiatives and inform the response among government and humanitarian/development partners in the Kyrgyz Republic.

The September 2023 food security survey was conducted between 27 September – 11 October 2023. 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% (9,451 calls) out of the total number of randomly generated telephone numbers. The other: refused to participate, was out of service, or 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	September 2023
Food Secure	35	39	34
Marginally Food Secure	53	51	56
Moderately Food Insecure	10	9	9
Severely Food Insecure	2	1	1
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies			
None	22	28	26
Stress	35	34	32
Crisis	31	28	33
Emergency	12	9	9
Food Consumption Group			
Acceptable Food Consumption	90	88	87
Acceptable Food Consumption but using severe coping	0	4	5
Borderline Food Consumption	6	6	6
Poor Food Consumption	4	2	2

For more information:

Research, Assessment and Monitoring unit
World Food Programme in Kyrgyz Republic
CO.KYR.RAM@wfp.org

Website: wfp.org/countries/kyrgyz-republic

Other: hungermap.wfp.org/

Photo Credits:

© WFP

World Food Programme

Kyrgyz Republic