



FOOD SECURITY MONITORING UPDATE

The Kyrgyz Republic

December 2023

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief

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



KEY NUMBERS



One in ten households are currently food-insecure



10 %

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD-INSECURE (rCARI)¹

Half of the population is marginally food secure



50 %

OF PEOPLE ARE MARGINALLY FOOD-SECURE (rCARI)¹

People are relying on coping strategies mostly to buy food



72 %

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



41 % spent savings



30 % borrowed money



21 % reduced expenses on agriculture inputs, livestock and seeds



23 % reduced expenses for health/education

Food security varies across different groups



13% vs 10%

of female-households are food-insecure, compared to only 10 % among male-headed households



12% vs 8%

of households in rural areas are food-insecure, compared to 8 % in urban areas

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





Summary

As a land-locked, mountainous country, the food system of the Kyrgyz Republic remains exposed to multiple risks: dependency on import of staple food commodities and fuel, labour migration and climate related hazards (floods, mudflow, dry conditions), which are impacting the most vulnerable people of the country. According to the National Statistics Committee, in 2022 33 percent of the population still lived in poverty and another 6 percent are at risk of becoming poor¹. Given high inflation, poverty is expected to remain at the same level in 2023². Drought circumstances in 2023 have resulted in shortages of key grain and fodder by about 30 percent, posing further risk to the country's food security³. WFP has been 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 December survey in 2023, **10 percent of households, or 674,732 people, were food insecure**, which is the same level as in June and September 2023 (Fig 1). **Half of the population (50%) remains marginally food secure**. The highest share of food insecure population is concentrated in the Naryn province. Despite the positive dynamics, the food security situation remains exposed to climate related hazards and external risks. Inflation declined from 14.7 percent in December 2022 to 7.3 percent in December 2023, driven by a marked decline in food and fuel inflation.

Prices of wheat (+56%), wheat flour (+57%), vegetable oil (+59 percent) and sugar (+98 %) commodities remain high compared to February 2020 (pre-pandemic time) and are likely to rise as a result of crop failures in the key exporting countries to Kyrgyz Republic such as Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, India⁵.

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

The **prevalence of food insecurity** increased in **rural areas** (12%) compared to urban areas (8%). Food insecurity is more prevalent between **female-headed families** (13%) compared to male-headed families (10%).

A significant proportion of households or 72 percent **rely on livelihood-based coping strategies to meet their food and other basic needs**. Two out of five household's (40 %) rely on emergency and crisis coping strategies, such as reducing expenses on education and health, selling livestock more than usual or relying on humanitarian assistance etc. It is strongly associated with food insecurity and some of these strategies are economically and nutritionally unsustainable. Overall, the use of these strategies remains more prevalent among rural residents (77%) compared to urban residents (64%).

One third of the population (36%) continued to use negative food coping strategies such as eating less desirable/less expensive foods (30%), skipping meals (5%) or went at least one whole day and night without eating (1%). The use of those strategies continues to limit the population's capacity to reduce malnutrition.

One-tenth of the population remains food insecure

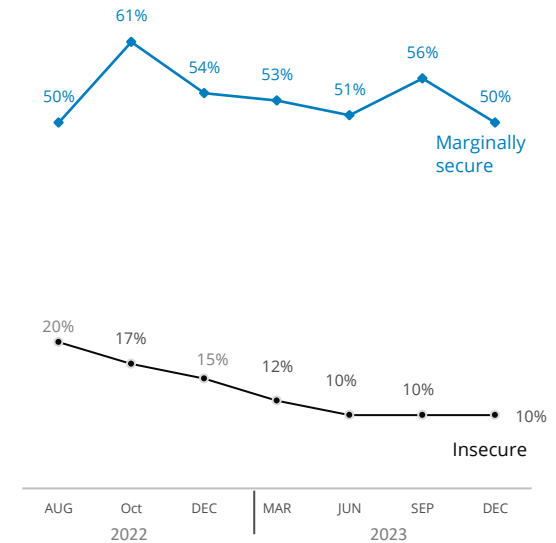


Figure 1. Food insecurity (rCARI) 2022-2023 by status (%)

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

2 IMF Country Report No. 24/64, 2023 ARTICLE IV CONSULTATION

3 Ministry of Water Resources, Agriculture and Processing Industry of the Kyrgyz Republic

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

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

Food insecurity

In December 2023, **9 percent of households experienced moderate food insecurity and 1 percent experienced severe food insecurity**. Food insecurity varies across provinces, ranging from 5 percent in Osh city to 17 percent in Naryn province (Fig 2).

Food insecurity trends coincide with the lean season from December to March, when income declines are attributed to a variety of factors such as seasonal employment, agricultural cycles, or holiday-related spending⁶.

Household characteristics strongly correlated with higher food insecurity include female-headed (13%) vs male-headed (10%); having primary-school-aged children (6-11 years of age) and presence of people with disabilities/chronically ill members.

Half of the population or 3,518,795 people remains marginally food secure. Due to higher population density, Jalal-Abad and Osh provinces account for 42 percent (305,000 people) of all food insecure population in the country.

Addressing food insecurity in the Kyrgyz Republic requires comprehensive strategies that follow a food systems approach beyond enhancing agricultural productivity: with attention to **access**, i.e. by offering nutrition-sensitive social safety nets as well as on- and off-farm income-generating activities that promote resilience to economic shocks and other stressors and disasters, including the effects of climate change. The **consumption** patterns that influenced through nutrition and food systems education can create demand for more planet-friendly and affordable diets sourced at local markets.

Map 1. Food insecurity (rCARI) in December 2023 (%)

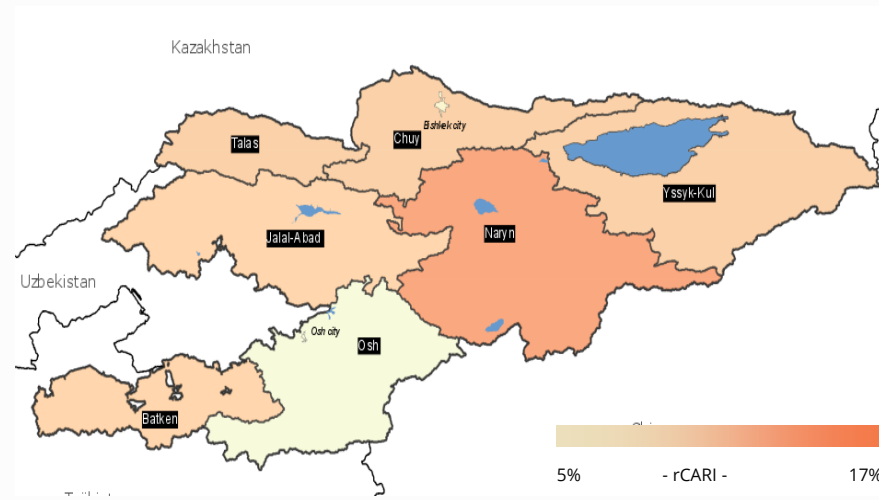
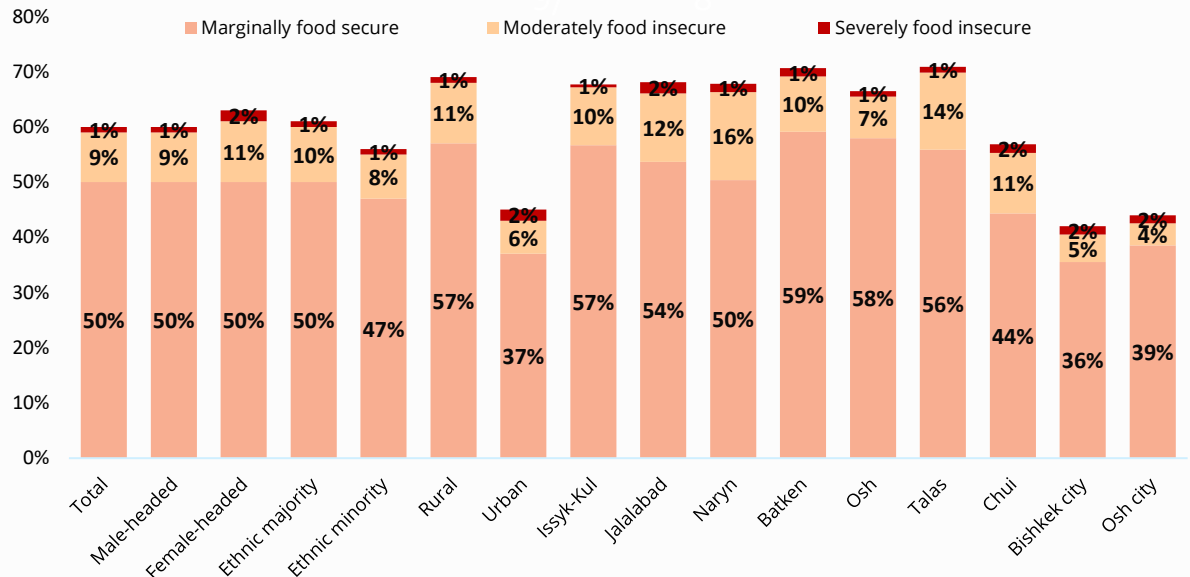


Figure 2. Food insecurity (rCARI) in December 2023 by status and geography (%)



⁶ National Statistical Committee, <https://stat.kg/ru/statistics/uroven-zhizni-naseleniya/>

An increase in inadequate food intake

Throughout 2023, there was a slight fluctuation in poor or borderline consumption. Consumption appears to increase in December compared to previous surveys results in 2023 (12 %, Fig 6). The diet is prevailed by high consumption of bread products, vegetable oil, vegetables, and sugar. Talas province (16%), Chui province (15%), Jalal-Abad province (14%), Naryn province (14%) and female-headed families have the highest levels of inadequate food consumption (Fig 4).

One third of the population (36%), employed food consumption coping strategies, a 7 percent decrease from September 2023: thirty percent of households ate less desirable/less expensive or less preferred foods, 5 percent skipped meals or ate less than usual, and 1 percent did not eat for at least one day and night (Fig 3).

Female-headed households (50%) more often use consumption coping strategies compared to male-headed households (31 %).

Meanwhile, **32 percent of households were worried of not having enough food**, a decrease of 5 percent compared to September 2023 (Fig 5). The population remains exposed to higher prices for food (especially imported ones), non-food products and increased prices for services.

In comparison to other regions, Issyk-Kul (51%), Jalal-Abad (43%), Naryn (43%), **employ consumption coping strategies more frequently**. These regions experienced the highest cost of living in 2023, attributed to elevated prices of both food and non-food items, except for Issyk-Kul province⁷.

Figure 3. Food-based coping strategies in December 2023



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

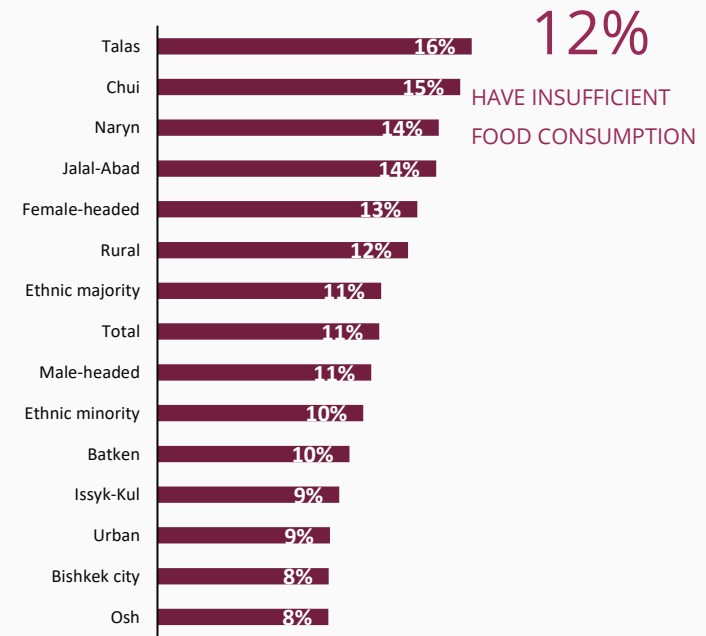


Figure 5. Food-based coping strategies and percentage of population feel worried not to have enough food (Aug 2022 – Dec 2023)

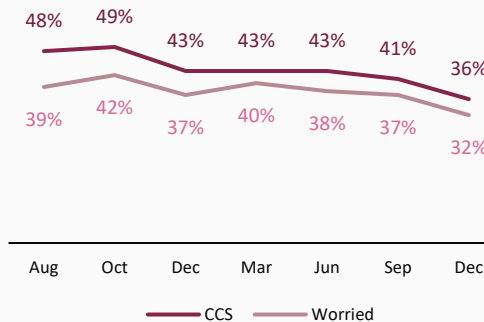
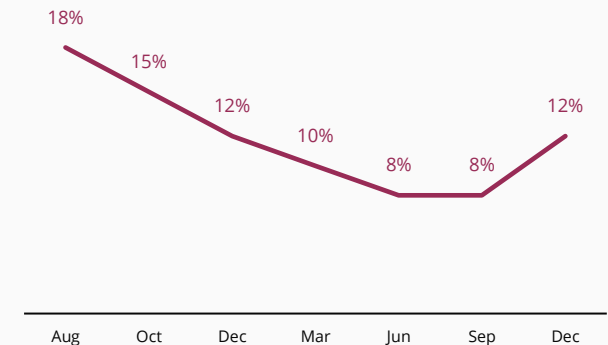


Figure 6. Poor and borderline food consumption (Aug 2022 – Dec 2023)



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

Livelihood Coping Strategy indicators assess households' behaviour during shocks and stress situations to overcome food shortages and/or meet basic needs. These correlate with other measures of food security and vulnerability. The percentage of households adopting coping strategies shows a decline except slightly higher values in March and September compared to June and December in 2023 indicate that households still face challenges in sustaining their livelihoods, albeit with some variation by month.

In December 2023, 72 percent of households were relying on negative livelihood coping strategies: 32 percent of households used 'stress' coping strategies, 33 percent 'crisis' coping strategies and 9 percent 'emergency' coping strategies (Fig 7). Application of **crisis and emergency coping strategies** decreased from 42 percent in September 2023 to **40 percent** in December, while stress coping strategies increased from 32 percent to 38 percent, respectively.

Naryn (53 %) and **Jalal-Abad** (50 %) regions and **female-headed** families (47 %) have the **highest percentage of emergency and crisis strategies** (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 23 percent of population for reducing health and education costs, by 12 percent for selling livestock more than usual, by 6 percent for selling productive assets.

Coping strategies diminish future labour productivity, affecting human capital development and resilience against economic uncertainties, droughts and hazards.

Figure 7. Livelihood-based coping strategies in December 2023

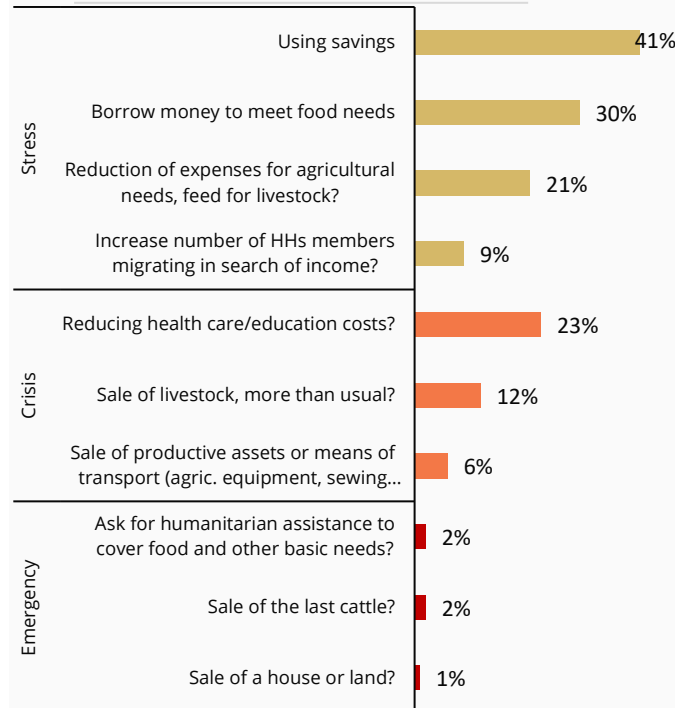
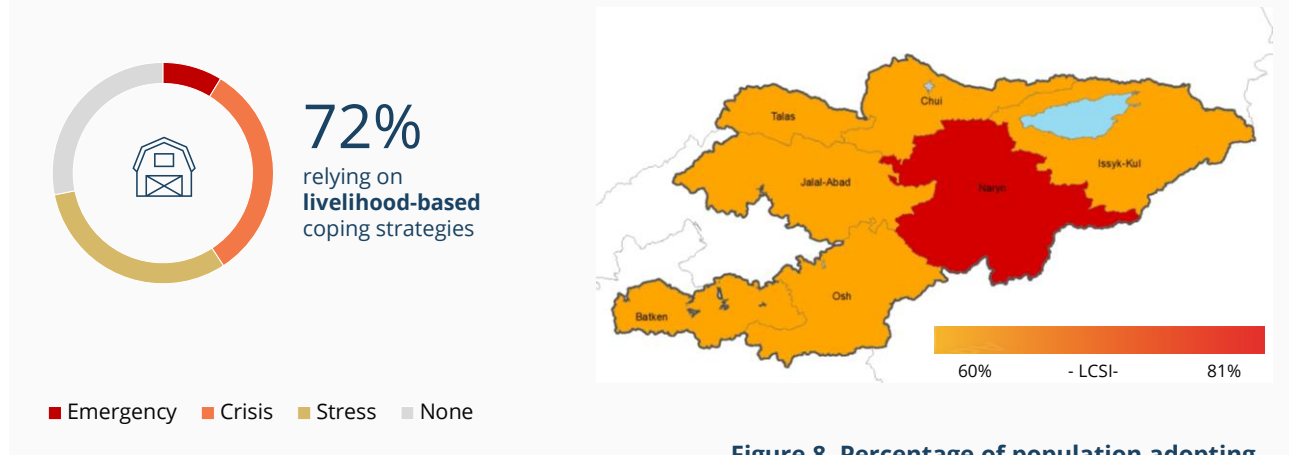
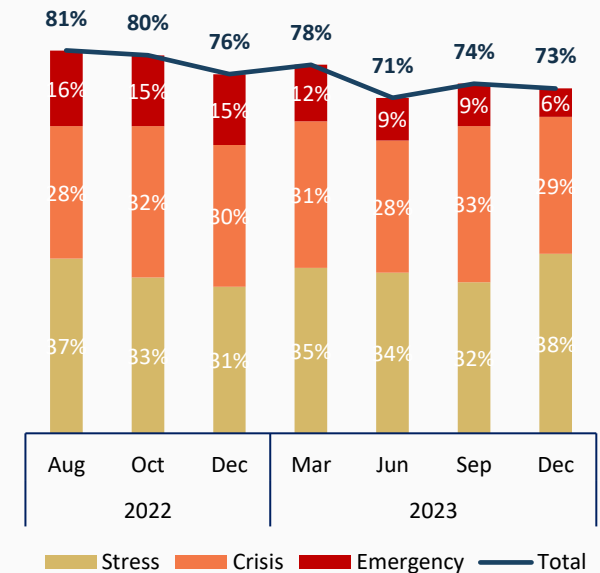


Figure 8. Percentage of population adopting livelihood-based coping strategies (Aug 2022 – Dec 2023)





Seasonal access and targeting challenges

In December 2023, 10 percent of households indicated that their income had decreased since January 2023. **The same level of income decline was reported throughout the year in 2023 across all seasons.** The lowest average incomes are generally observed in the winter months (January-March), which could be attributed to various factors such as seasonal employment patterns, agricultural cycles. Severely food insecure households, who are suffering from decrease of income, are not particularly relying on assistance or support. Only 43 percent of severe food insecure population rely on assistance or support. This demonstrates the **need to revise the targeting and coverage of safety nets** to stressors to ensure the most vulnerable are not excluded.

The magnitude of the decline in income was significant, averaging 52 percent. Income losses were particularly prevalent for families that are 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%).

Seasonal fluctuations in access to wheat flour, vegetable oil and sugar are observed, influenced by prices and the economic situation of households. Two out of five households reported experiencing **difficulties** in buying **vegetable oil** (37%), **sugar** (33%), and **wheat flour** (33%). The main reason was the high commodity price (86%) and lack of money (12%) (Fig.10). The country heavily relies on imports to satisfy the internal demand for wheat, sugar and vegetable oils. Physical access to market and the availability of both food and non-food items in stores was not an issue. The **seasonality** of access to wheat flour, vegetable oil, and sugar highlights the need for **holistic approaches** to address the underlying economic and structural factors contributing to fluctuations in food access.

Figure 9. Access to essential food and non-food items in December 2023



Figure 10. Households experiencing difficulties or unable to purchase essential food items (Aug 2022 - Dec 2023)

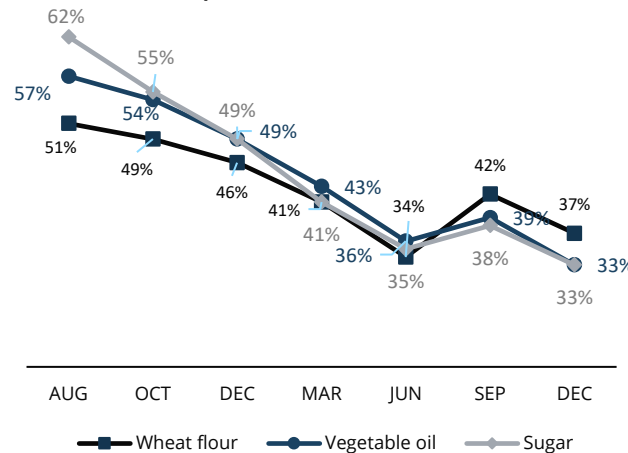
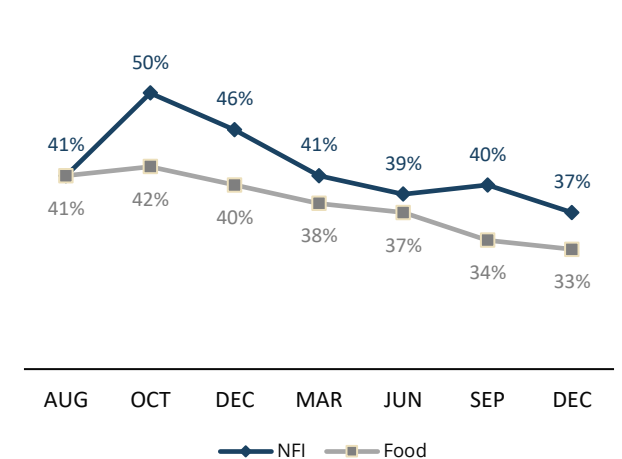


Figure 11. Households experiencing difficulties or unable to purchase essential food and non-food items (Aug 2022 - Dec 2023)





Background and Methodology

Despite the positive economic growth in 2023, the economy is susceptible to external shocks, including fluctuations in global commodity prices, currency exchange rates, and geopolitical events. Changes in global food prices, especially for imported staples, can affect food affordability and access for population, particularly those in rural areas. Kyrgyz Republic is vulnerable to climate change impacts, including changes in temperature, precipitation patterns, and extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and landslides. Climate-related disruptions can damage agricultural infrastructure, reduce crop yields, and affect livestock productivity, threatening food production and food security. Water scarcity is a significant concern in the country, particularly in agricultural regions dependent on irrigation for crop production.

With the aim of monitoring the food security situation and identifying its main drivers, WFP has conducted remote household food security surveys on a quarterly bases since 2022 through Computer Assisted Telephone Interview technique (CATI). Food security is estimated based on the Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of food security adapted for remote data collection (rCARI).

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 December 2023 food security survey was conducted between 11 and 22 December 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: 23% (9,570 calls) out of the total number of randomly selected 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 ([link 1](#), [link 2](#))

Annex: Tables

Overall

Food Insecurity (rCARI)	March 2023	June 2023	September 2023	December 2023
Food Secure	35 %	39 %	34 %	40 %
Marginally Food Secure	53 %	51 %	56 %	50 %
Moderately Food Insecure	10 %	9 %	9 %	9 %
Severely Food Insecure	2 %	1 %	1 %	1 %
Livelihood-based Coping Strategies				
None	22 %	29 %	26 %	28 %
Stress	35 %	34 %	32 %	38 %
Crisis	31 %	28 %	33 %	28 %
Emergency	12 %	9 %	9 %	6 %
Food Consumption Group				
Acceptable Food Consumption	90 %	88 %	87 %	84 %
Acceptable Food Consumption but using severe coping	0 %	4 %	5 %	4 %
Borderline Food Consumption	6 %	6 %	6 %	9 %
Poor Food Consumption	4 %	2 %	2 %	3 %

For more information:

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