Kyrgyz Republic

Food Security Monitoring Update   March 2023

The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed a decade of development gains in just two years. **Poverty** has sky-rocketed from 20.1% in 2019 to **33.3% in 2021**, with an additional 10% being at risk of falling in poverty. **Extreme poverty reached 6%** in 2021 from 0.5% in 2019.[1]

Situation Update

- According to the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic, headline inflation in March 2023 was 12.7%[2,] lower compared to the 15.4% recorded in October 2022, among the highest in the region. **Food inflation for key staples is at 16.3%** in March 2023.[3]

- **Remittances has decreased by 34 percent** in January-February 2023, compared to the same period in 2022 (NBKR).

- WFP has established a food security monitoring system, conducting quarterly household surveys to track food security trends.

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1 National Statistical Committee, http://www.stat.kg/ru/publications/uroven-bednosti-v-kyrgyzskoj-respublike/
2 NBKR: https://www.nbkr.kg/index.jsp?lang=ENG
3 National Statistical Committee: http://www.stat.kg/en/statistics/ceny-i-tarify/

Survey Highlights

- The March 2023 food security assessment found that **12%** of households, or 815,089 people, were **acutely food insecure**, a decrease of 2 percentage points compared to previous issue.

- Prevalence of food insecurity was **higher in rural areas** (13%) compared to urban areas (11%). Food insecurity was highest in **Talas, Osh and Batken** regions and more prevalent among **female-headed households**.

- On average, about 1 in 10 households were consuming an inadequate diet (10%). The Talas region, following a negative trend, is as an outlier (36%).

- **78%** of households were using some type of **asset depleting coping strategies** (relying on savings and money borrowing), while out of them **35%** are using "**stress**" **coping strategies** such as labor migration (+13%), reducing spending on agriculture, livestock and seeds (20%), and using savings (44%), borrowing money for needed food (37%).

- **10%** of households reported that their income had decreased since January 2022, with an average decrease of **40%.**

- 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).

Figure 1. Map of food insecurity

Kyrgyz Republic
Rapid Household Food Security Assessment – Food Insecurity

Total	Rural **13%**	**12%**	**13%**	headed households
12%	Urban **11%**	Ethnic minority	Ethnic majority	**11%** **20%**
food insecure				

Kazakhstan

Talas

Chuy

Bishkek city

Yssyk-Kul

Jalal-Abad

Naryn

Uzbekistan

Osh city

Osh

China

Batken

Tajikistan

Osh city

Location	Number of food insecure population
Osh	269 386
Chuy	158 041
Jalal-Abad	154 346
Bishkek city	142 798
Talas	93 247
Batken	85 485
Yssyk-Kul	40 695
Naryn	39 497
Osh city	30 330
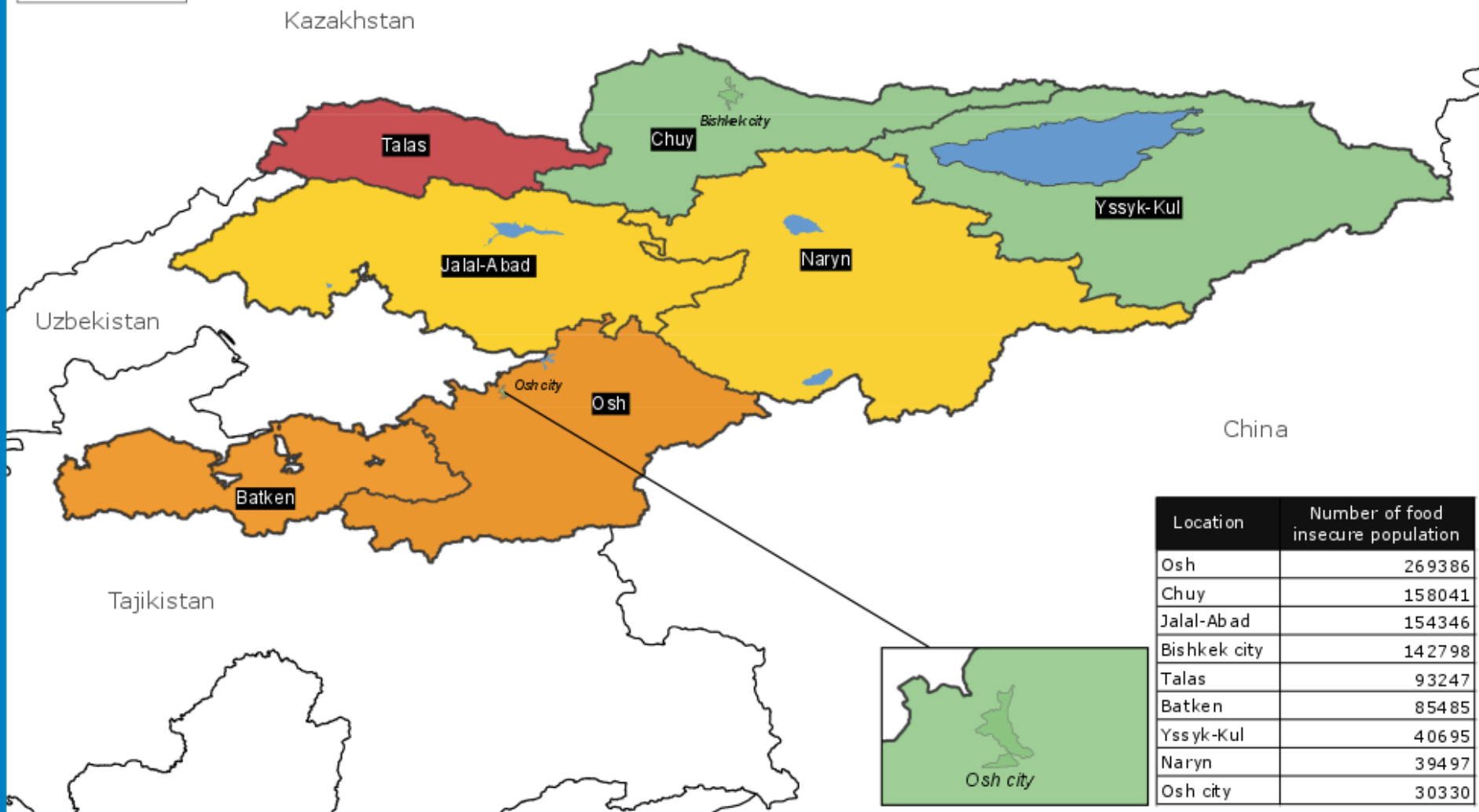
Due to higher population density, **Jalal-Abad region** and **Osh region** account for **50% of all food insecure population**
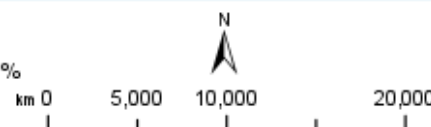
SAVING LIVES

CHANGING LIVES

WFP

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Prepared by: **WFP KGZ CO**

Map Reference:
KGZ_WFPmVAM1R2023REng_A4L

Legend

Country boundaries

Province

Food Insecurity

< 10 %

10% - 15%

15 % - 25%

> 25%

km 0   5,000   10,000   20,000

Data sources: Boundaries: WFP
Data: WFP, mVAM data collection

The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map(s) do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory, city or sea, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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Food Insecurity

- According to the March 2023 survey, **12%** of households were food insecure (10% moderately and 2% severely food insecure)[5] compared to 15% in December 2022. The largest improvements in food insecurity were observed in Naryn (-12%) and Chuy regions (-12%). More than half of the population (53%) remains only marginally food secure, applying stress coping strategies and experiencing a decline in income.

- Talas (**34%),** Osh (**19%**) and Batken (**15%**) regions, show the highest levels of food insecurity. Food insecurity was driven by insufficient food consumption, high dependency on assistance and use of negative coping strategies.

- Household characteristics strongly correlated with food insecurity include female-headed (20%); having primary-school-aged children (6-11 years of age) and presence of people with disabilities/ chronically ills members.

Figure 2. Comparison of food insecurity (rCARI) between October, December 2022 and March 2023
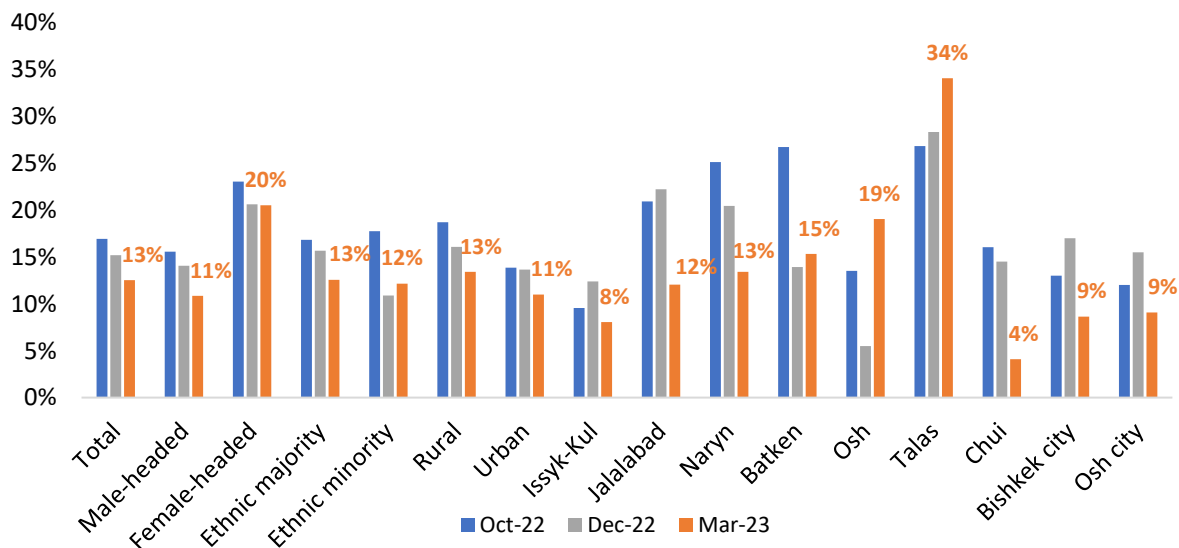
**Figure 3. Food insecurity (rCARI) in December 2022 by status and geography (%)**
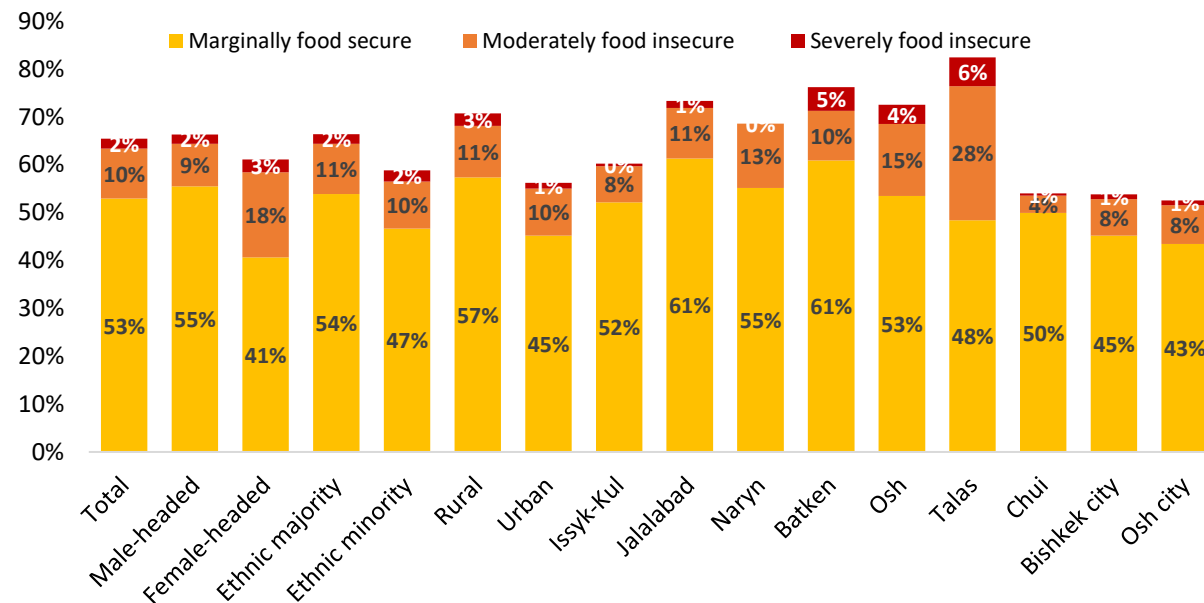
5 The rCARI is a composite indicator which reflects both current status (food consumption) and coping capacity (economic vulnerability & livelihood coping). For more details, see: Technical Guidance for WFP Consolidated Approach For Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI), Third Edition, December 2021.

Food consumption

- **One-tenth of all household had insufficient food consumption levels (10%** - a decrease of 2% compared to last survey).

- Talas region (**36%**), Osh region (**18%**), and Chui region (**14%**) were the three areas with the worst food consumption results.

- In the past 7 days, **40%** of all households were worried of not having enough food, an increase of 3% compared to the previous issue. With the seasonal increase in spring for staple food commodities, when products are usually more expensive, households are reducing their consumption of dairy products, vegetables and fruits.

- 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.

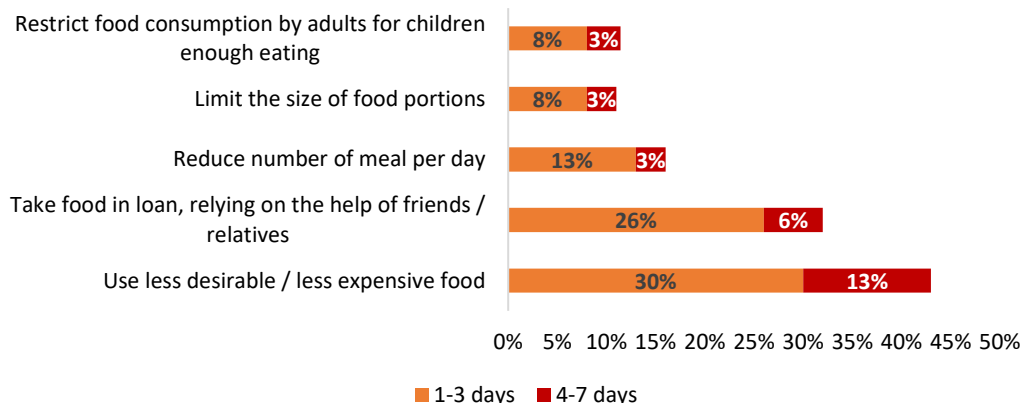Figure 4. Levels of food consumption by geography (% of HHs)
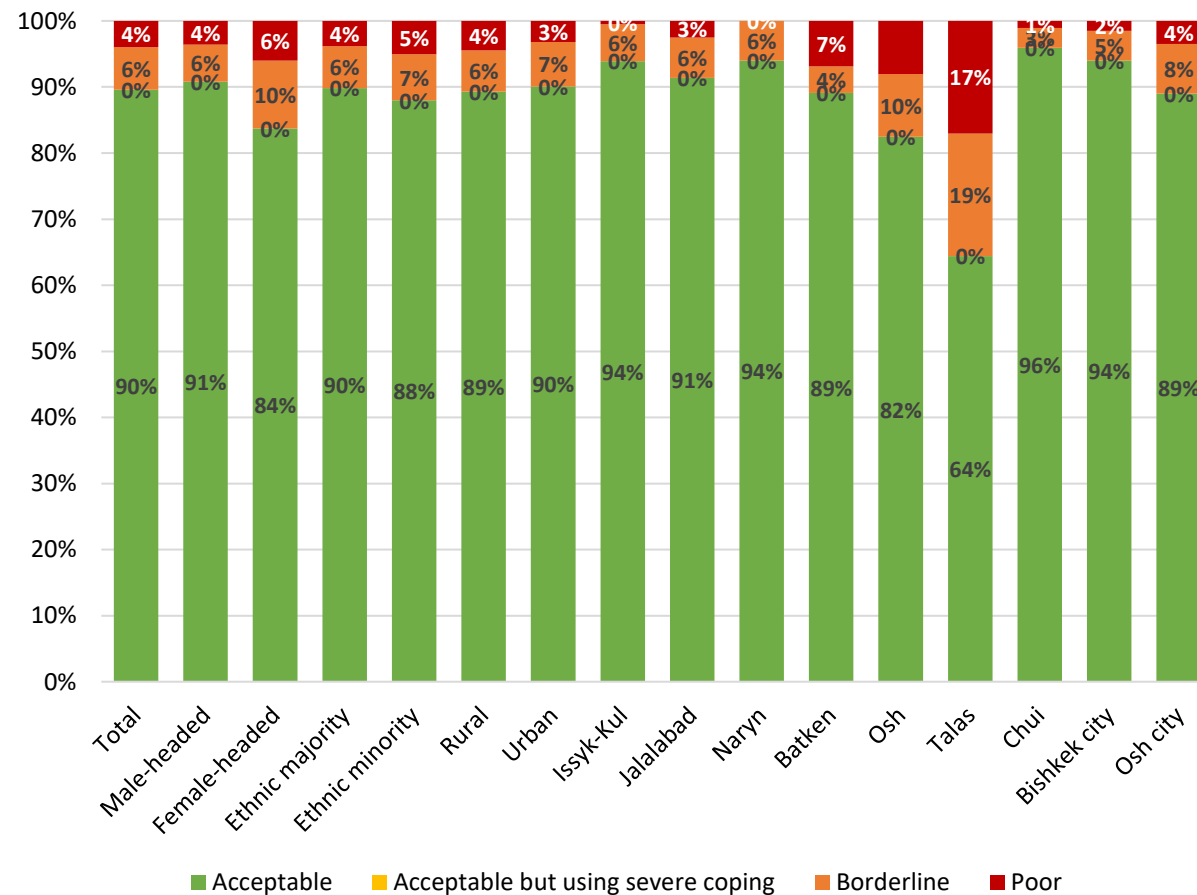
6 This estimate is based on the Food Consumption Score (FCS) indicator which measures dietary diversity and food frequency. A household food consumption score is calculated according to the types of foods consumed during the previous seven days, the frequencies with which they are consumed, and the relative nutritional weight of the different food groups.
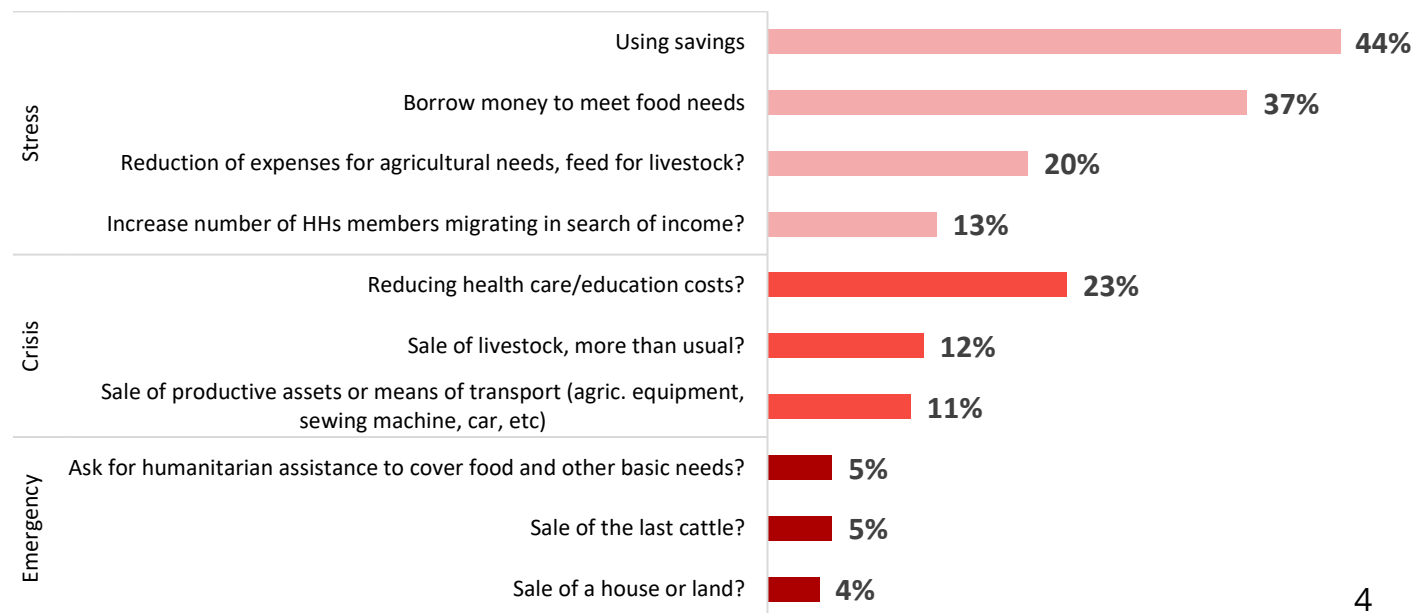
Coping strategies and Support

- Households were using negative food-based coping strategies in the past 7 days, such as less desirable/less expensive food (38%), including 20% doing so regularly[7] or other strategies as shown in Figure 5.

- **78%** of households were using some asset depleting coping strategies: 35% of households used 'stress' coping strategies (+4 percent compared to previous issue), 31% of them used 'crisis' coping strategies (+ 1 percent) and 12% used 'emergency' coping strategies (- 3 percent) (Figure 6).

- Although "emergency" coping strategies are used less frequently, an increased number of households (35%) use 'stress' coping strategies such as labour migration (+13 %), reduction of expenses for agriculture needs, livestock and seeds (20%), and using savings (44 %), borrow money for essential food (37%).

Figure 5. Food-based coping strategies

Strategy	1-3 days	4-7 days
Restrict food consumption by adults for children enough eating	8%	3%
Limit the size of food portions	8%	3%
Reduce number of meal per day	13%	3%
Take food in loan, relying on the help of friends / relatives	26%	6%
Use less desirable / less expensive food	30%	13%

■ 1-3 days ■ 4-7 days

Figure 6. Livelihood-based coping strategy use (% HHs)

Stress
- Using savings — 44%
- Borrow money to meet food needs — 37%
- Reduction of expenses for agricultural needs, feed for livestock? — 20%
- Increase number of HHs members migrating in search of income? — 13%

Crisis
- Reducing health care/education costs? — 23%
- Sale of livestock, more than usual? — 12%
- Sale of productive assets or means of transport (agric. equipment, sewing machine, car, etc) — 11%

Emergency
- Ask for humanitarian assistance to cover food and other basic needs? — 5%
- Sale of the last cattle? — 5%
- Sale of a house or land? — 4%

> The use of negative coping strategies has direct negative consequences to the nutritional, health and productivity status, which are difficult to reverse in the future, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and vulnerability.
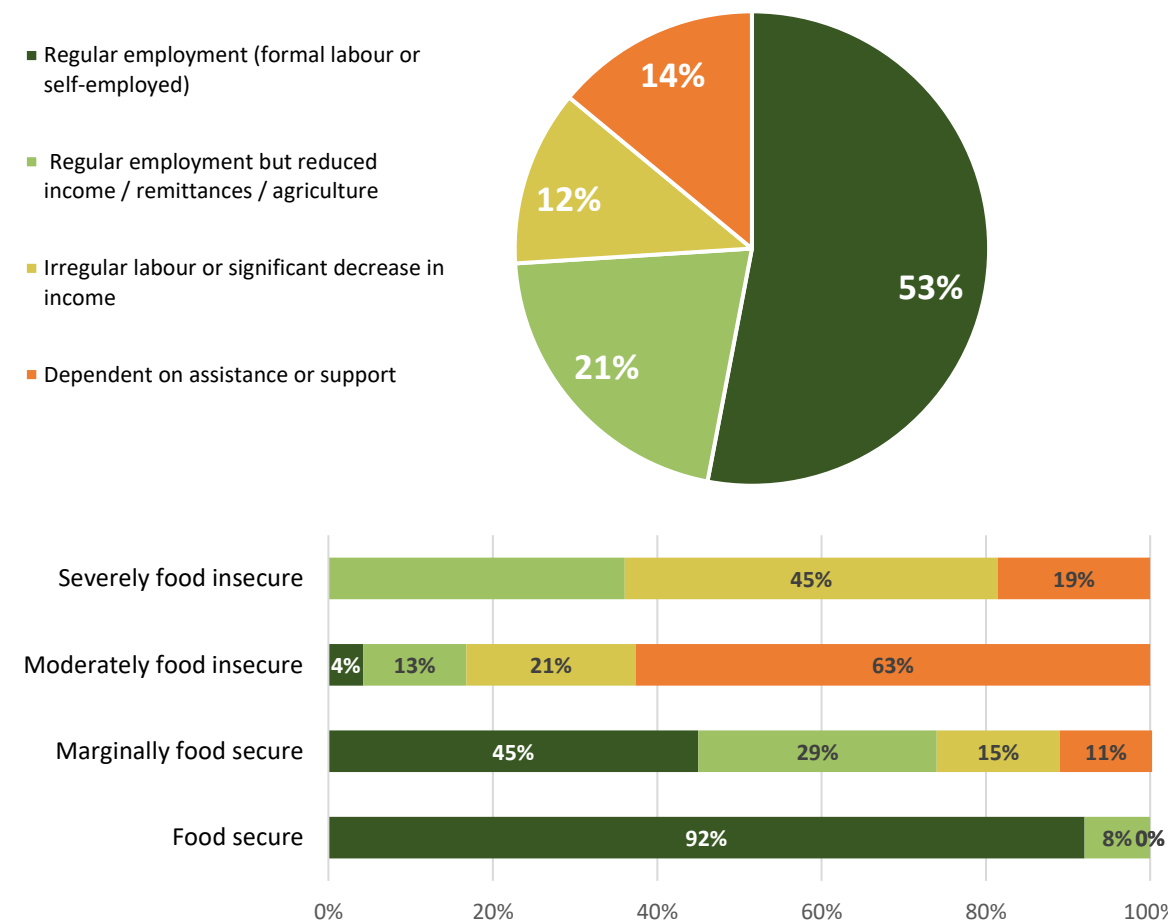
7 "Regularly" defined as using the food-based coping strategy at least 4 times in the past 7 days.

Income Sources and Economic Situation

- Only **10%** of households reported that their income had decreased since January 2022; however, the decrease was significant (an average of 40%).

- Income losses were particularly concentrated within households living in Yssyk-Kul (18%), Talas (16%) and Batken (15%) regions.

- Severely food insecure households, who are struggling from 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.

Figure 7. Sources of income (% HHs) and in relation to food security and demographic characteristics

- Regular employment (formal labour or self-employed)
- Regular employment but reduced income / remittances / agriculture
- Irregular labour or significant decrease in income
- Dependent on assistance or support

Urban	67%	13%	12%	8%
Rural	44%	26%	12%	18%
Households headed by ethnic minority	57%	21%	14%	8%
Households headed by ethnic majority	57%	21%	14%	8%
Female-headed	53%	17%	12%	18%
Male-headed	53%	22%	12%	14%
Total	53%	21%	12%	14%

Severely food insecure		45%	19%	
Moderately food insecure	4%	13%	21%	63%
Marginally food secure	45%	29%	15%	11%
Food secure	92%	8%	0%	

Access to Market

Households who could acess all food items with no problems 62%	Households who could not access any food item that are usually part of their diet by this time of the year 38%	**Reasons:** Prices of food items significantly increased (54%) Lack of money (42%)
Households who could access all essential non-food items with no problems 59%	Households who could not access any essential non-food item that are usually buying during this time of the year 41%	**Reasons:** Lack of money (50%) Prices of food items significantly increased (47%)

- Around half of all households reported experiencing difficulties in buying **sugar** (**41%**), **vegetable oil** (**43%**) and **wheat flour** (**41%**). The main reason was the **high price** of commodity (**89%**) and **lack of money** (**8%**).

- 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.

Methodology

- The March 2023 food security survey was conducted between 13 – 24 March and covered 9 stratas: all 7 provinces and 2 large cities (Bishkek and Osh).

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

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

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

- The survey used a phone-based (CATI) methodology. Response rate: 21% (8,656 calls) mainly due refuse to participate (22%) out of service phones (21%), and no answer (21%), which may have affected impartiality to some extent.

- The results were weighted to account for population size and share of rural/urban population.

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