




Sri Lanka

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

AUGUST 2022

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief





This brief was developed by WFP in September 2022, comparing the previous three months of household food security data. This complements the results of the [Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission](#), which refers to data collected for June 2022.



Sri Lanka: IN NUMBERS



Food security has deteriorated
to concerning levels in recent months



37%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)*

People are relying on coping
strategies to put food on the table



79%

RESORTING TO COPING STRATEGIES

**Food-based coping strategies*



78% are relying on less preferred food



49% are limiting portion sizes



39% are reducing the number of meals

Vulnerable households are bearing
the brunt of the food crisis



51%

of households in estate areas are food insecure, compared with 43 and 34 percent for urban and rural areas.



46%

of female-headed households are food insecure, compared with 35 percent of male headed households



In Brief

More than one-third of Sri Lanka's population is food insecure, amid the country's worst economic crisis since its independence in 1948. For a country in which food insecurity was at 9.1 percent in 2019,¹ the shock of the current crisis is reverberating across all facets of life.

People are being forced to rely on coping strategies to keep food on the table. Around eight in ten households are regularly turning to food-based coping strategies such as sacrificing meals, borrowing food, and reducing the number of meals eaten.

July was a particularly harsh month. Nearly half of the population (49 percent) faced food insecurity in July, in what was a drastic hike from 28 percent in June.¹ This came at the peak of political instability, high month-to-month food inflation, and intense fuel shortages.

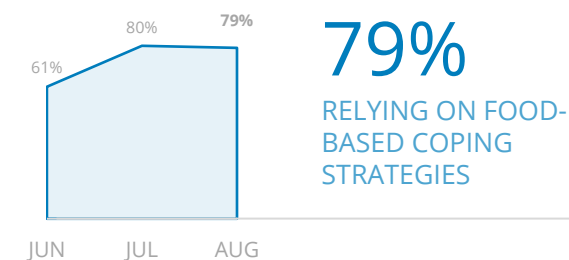
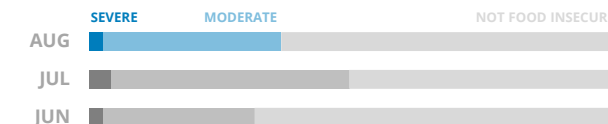
Diets are in a precarious state. Nearly four in ten households are facing insufficient food consumption, with many consuming far less diverse diets as food prices remain high across the country.

The instability comes amid escalating anxieties about prices. Almost all families (92 percent) are worried about food prices. Meanwhile, four in ten families are worried about fuel prices. There has been little to allay these concerns, which have been creeping higher and higher in recent months.

The crisis is wreaking disproportionate impacts across different segments of society. This was seen across a range of divides – female-headed households are faring worse than male-headed households, while those in estate and urban areas are also faring worse than those in rural areas. Similar disparities can be found across education levels and income sources.

In the face of inaction, the situation could deteriorate even further. The upcoming months could see a combination of factors continue to exert pressure on food insecurity, including poor harvest forecasts of staple foods, import restrictions, and the ongoing economic crisis.

Food security is at threat.



¹ This June figure is based on a face-to-face Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI), while July and August are based on a remote CARI. More detail on the CARI is available [here](#).

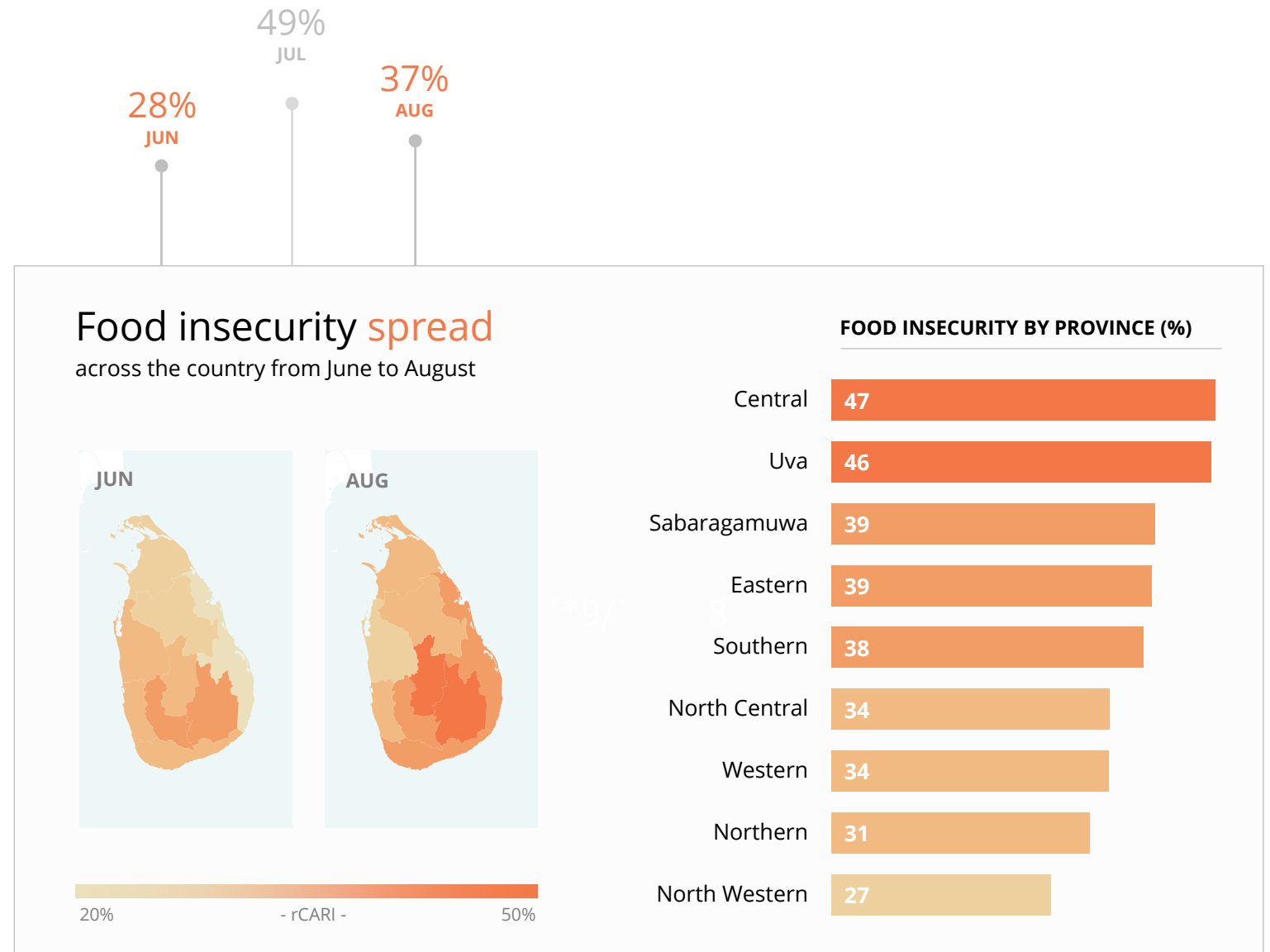
Findings

Overall acute food insecurity remains a concern, with 37 percent of the population now facing acute food insecurity (up from 28 percent in June).²

Seven out of nine provinces saw food insecurity worsen between June and August. In Uva and Central provinces in particular, nearly half of the population (47 and 46 percent respectively) is now facing food insecurity, with both provinces seeing a deterioration compared with June.

Food insecurity was especially high in July, coinciding with uncertainty during the peak of political instability, high month-to-month food inflation, and intense fuel shortages.

While food consumption and diets have mostly reverted back to June levels, reliance on coping strategies increased, and remained at concerning levels. The high reliance on coping strategies is a key reason for the persistence of high food insecurity.



² This June figure is based on a face-to-face Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI), while July and August are based on a remote CARI. More detail on the CARI is available [here](#).

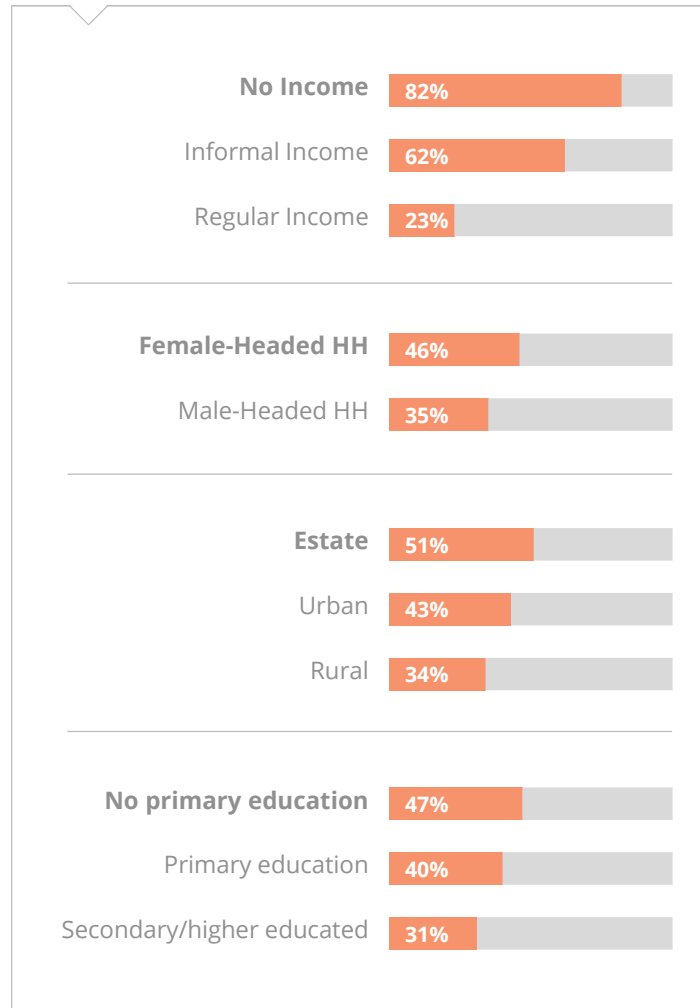
Certain segments of the population are bearing the brunt of the crisis.

The sharpest dividing line is between those with and without regular incomes. An alarmingly large proportion of households without incomes (eight in ten) and with informal incomes (six in ten) are facing food insecurity. This is a sharp disparity compared to those which have regular incomes to rely on (23 percent).

The gap widened between female-headed households and male-headed households between July and August, by 5 percentage points. Overall, female-headed households are more food insecure – largely due to their higher reliance on food-based coping strategies to get by.

Estate households and urban households are also faring worse than rural households, with the gap also widening between these groups between July and August. A potential reason is the ability of rural households to fall back on agricultural produce; indeed, households that reported having produced crops and/or livestock for household consumption had slightly better food security than those without.

AUGUST FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



Four in ten households are not consuming adequate diets.

In seven days, the average household consumes animal protein less than three days a week. The rate for fruit and dairy products is even lower, and have been gradually dropping each month since June.

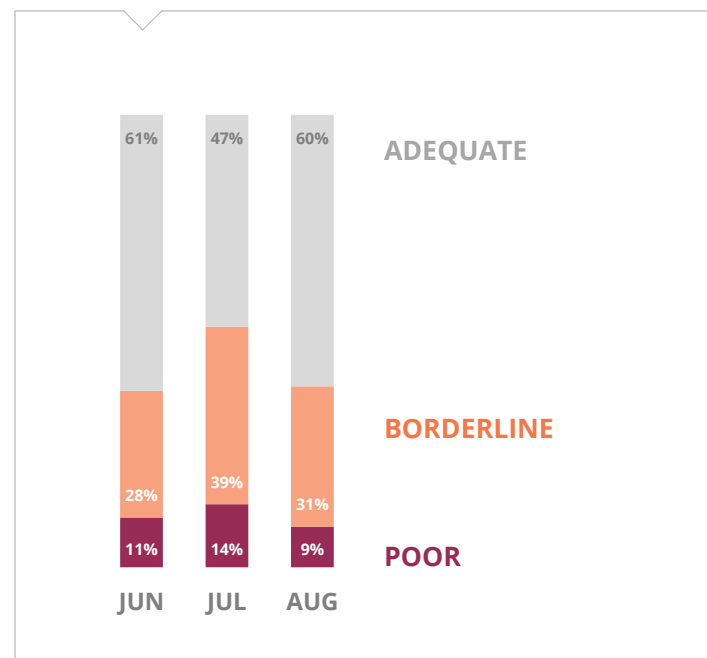
The improvement in food consumption is the main driver for the easing of overall food insecurity figures from July to August. Improvements in the consumption of several food groups were responsible for this change, including vegetables, fat, pulses and animal proteins.

In July, the number of people with insufficient food consumption was especially high (at 53 percent). This increase in July coincided with rapid food inflation, and the consequences on the ability of households to purchase these food items.

In particular, there was a decline in the consumption of animal proteins and vegetables in July. While this has since reverted to June levels, it remains high for Sri Lanka.

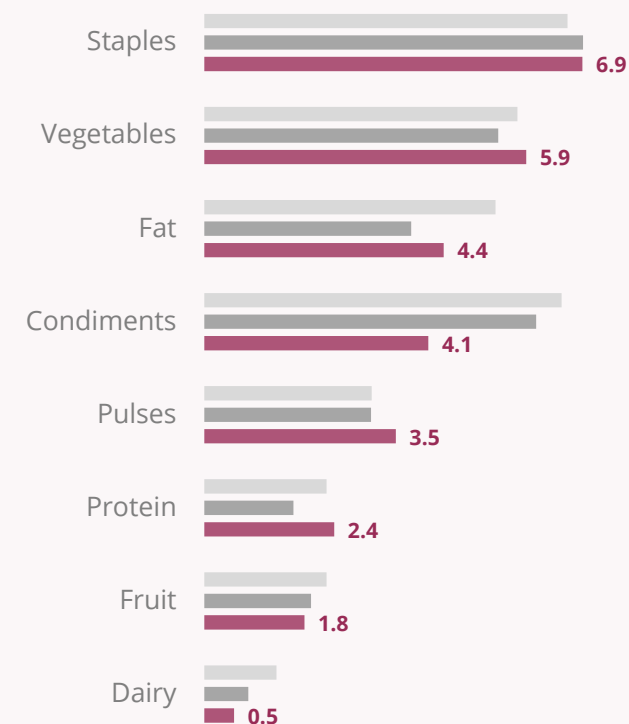


FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



FOOD CONSUMPTION

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



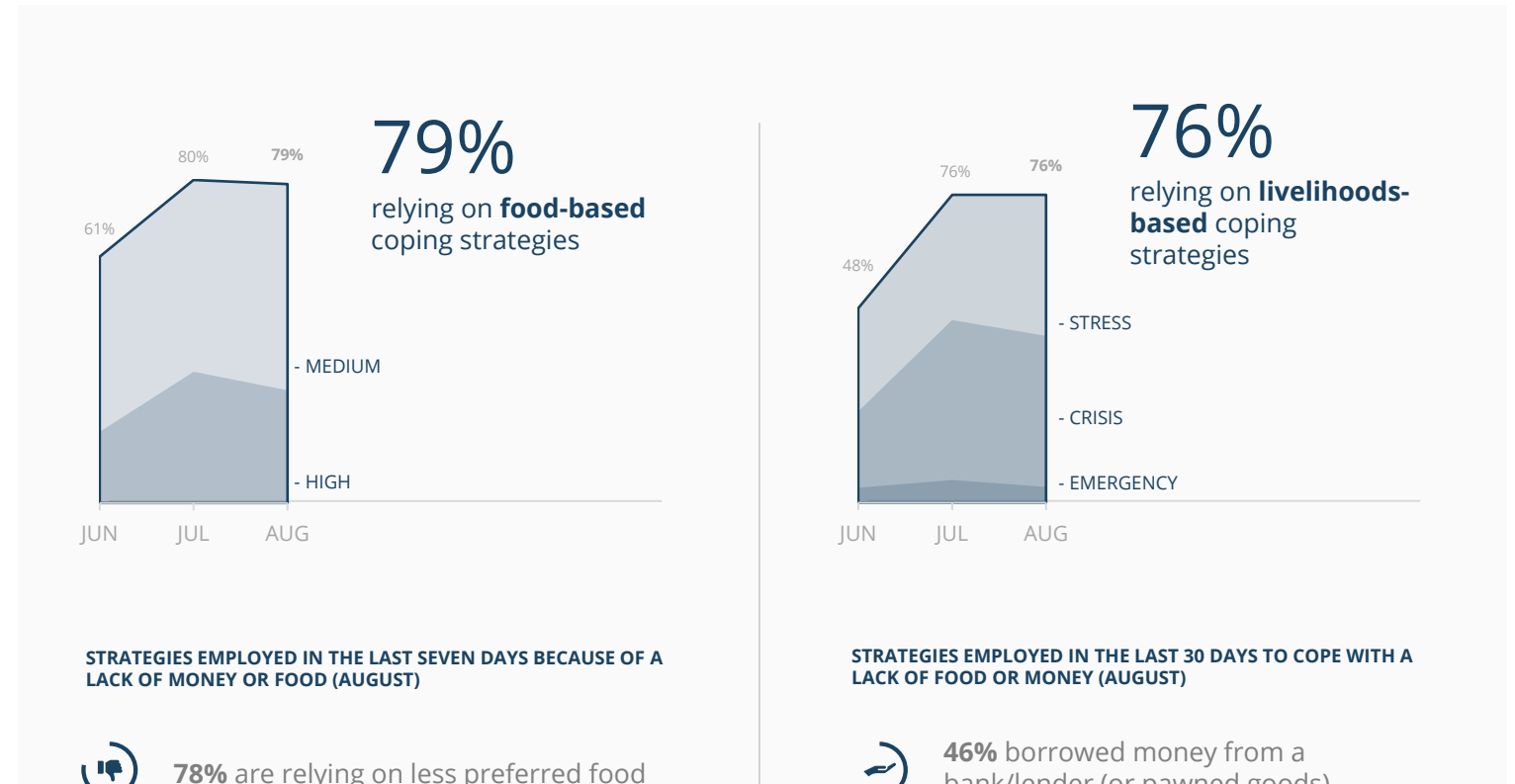
■ JUN ■ JUL ■ AUG

The majority of people are regularly adopting coping strategies.

July saw a steep spike in reliance on coping strategies across a wide range of groups – this coincided with the peak of political instability, high prices, and the shock of particularly intense fuel shortages.

This high reliance on coping strategies persisted even into August, even while food consumption improved. This suggests that people continue turning to drastic measures in their efforts to keep food on the table.

Reliance on food-based coping strategies cuts across multiple divides. Unlike food consumption, there is only a marginal disparity between female-headed and male-headed households, or between households of varying education levels and urban/rural/estate areas, with



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