



Lao PDR

FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

SEPTEMBER 2022

Remote Household Food
Security Survey Brief



Lao PDR: IN NUMBERS



One in seven households are currently food insecure



14%

OF PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)¹

People are relying on coping strategies mostly to buy food



58%

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



41% spent savings



21% reduced expenses on health



18% borrowed money

Food security varies across different parts of society



17%

of households in rural areas are food insecure, compared with 9 percent of those in urban areas.



20%

of female-headed households are food insecure, compared with 13 percent of male headed households

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





In Brief

One in seven households in Lao PDR are food insecure (14 percent).¹ The trajectory of the food security situation remains uncertain, with inflation rising to 34 percent in September,² and prices for key commodities creeping higher with each month. Additional monitoring of the situation in the coming months will remain crucial to informing action.

Food insecurity is affecting different parts of the country unequally. In some districts, around 25 percent of households are food insecure, while in others, 5 percent of households are food insecure. Notably, rural areas are more food insecure (17 percent) than those in urban areas (9 percent). The difference is particularly evident when considering the better food security situation in Vientiane Capital (5 percent).

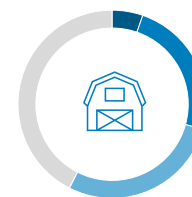
Households with dropping incomes are especially affected. Those facing a significant reduction in income (>50 percent) are more than twice as likely to be food insecure (25 percent) than households with incomes that stayed the same or increased (10 percent).

Large parts of the population are relying on coping strategies to keep food on the table and meet other essential needs. More than half of households are turning to livelihood-based coping strategies such as spending, savings, cutting down on health expenditure, and borrowing money in order to buy food or meet other essential needs.

People are most worried about food price increases. Some 33 percent of households indicated that the rise in food prices is their top concern. This concern was more than three times higher than any other singular concern.

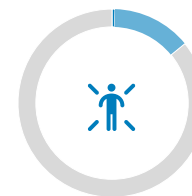
This comes as nearly a quarter of the population is reporting trouble in accessing markets (23 percent). The combination of rising prices, difficulty in accessing markets, and high reliance on coping strategies could lead to a worsening of the food security situation. Despite the demonstrable economic and social progress of the past few years,³ the impacts of COVID-19 coupled with the current global food crisis are threatening to reverse development gains in Lao PDR.

More than half of the population is using coping strategies



58%

RESORTING TO LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES



14%

FOOD INSECURE (rCARI)

1. This September 2022 figure is based on a remote Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (rCARI). More detail on the CARI is available [here](#).

2. Year-on-year inflation spiked to 34 percent in September 2022

3. https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Digital_ASEAN_FNSR_Volume-1_21-4-2022_FINAL.pdf

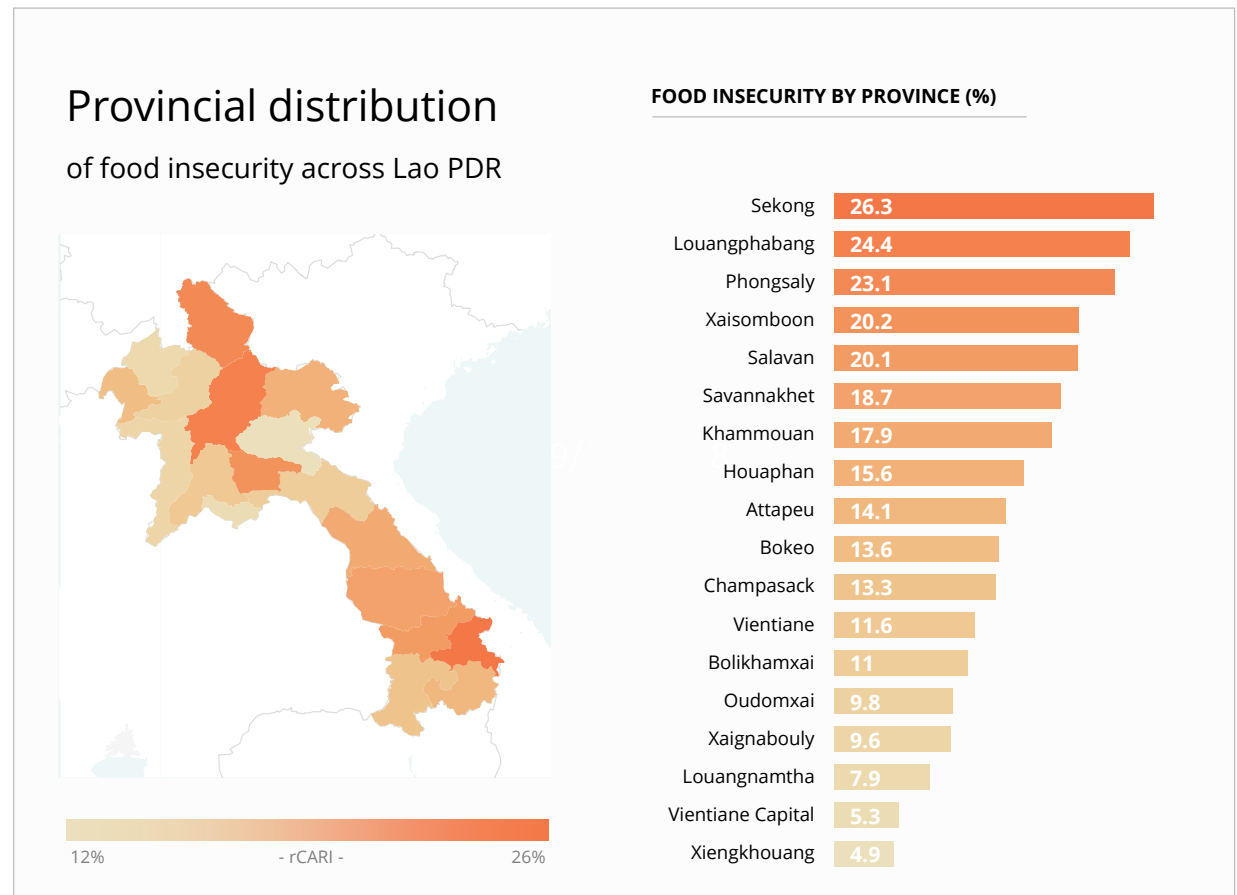
Findings

One-seventh of the population (14 percent) is currently facing acute food insecurity. Almost all of these food insecure households are at moderate levels of food insecurity, with a very small proportion facing severe levels (0.5 percent of the population).

Food insecurity varies greatly across provinces. Sekong, Louangphabang, and Phongsaly provinces have the highest prevalence of food insecurity (between 23 to 26 percent). Meanwhile, several provinces are well below the national average; in Xiengkhouang and Vientiane Capital, only 5 percent of the population is food insecure.

There are clear differences between urban and rural areas. A higher percentage of households in rural areas are food insecure (17 percent) compared to those in urban areas (9 percent). The difference is even more stark when considering the far lower proportion in Vientiane Capital (5 percent).

Only a very small proportion is facing the most severe level of food insecurity. Across all provinces, this proportion did not exceed 3 percent. None of the five provinces with the highest prevalence of food insecurity had households facing the most severe levels.



Food insecurity varies among different parts of society.

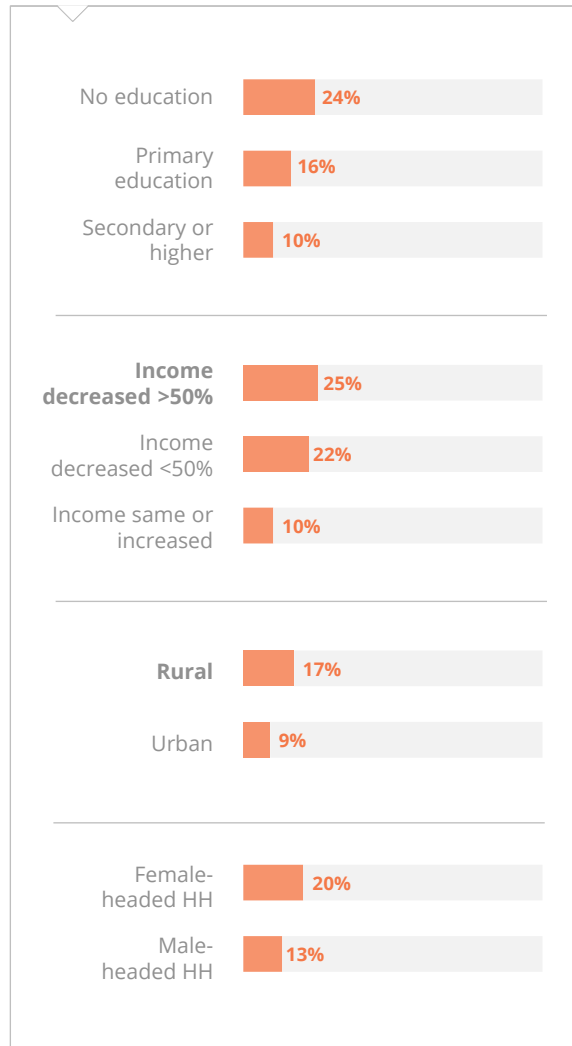
Households with deteriorating incomes are particularly affected. Those facing a significant reduction in income (>50 percent) are more than twice as likely to be food insecure (25 percent) than households with incomes that stayed the same or increased (10 percent).

Education is also making a substantial difference on food security outcomes. Households headed by individuals without formal education (24 percent) are more susceptible to food insecurity than households headed by individuals with secondary or higher education (10 percent).

Female-headed households are more food insecure than male-headed households. Food insecurity was lower among male-headed households (13 percent) compared to their female-headed counterparts (20 percent)

Larger households are more food insecure, and those with higher dependency ratios are also faring worse (households with more non-working-age members).⁴ Households with medium and high dependency ratios had worse food insecurity (20 and 13 percent, respectively), than households with low dependency ratios (7 percent).

AUGUST FOOD INSECURITY BY HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)



⁴ Dependency ratio is calculated as the ratio of non-working-age members (i.e., children, elderly) to working-age members in a household.

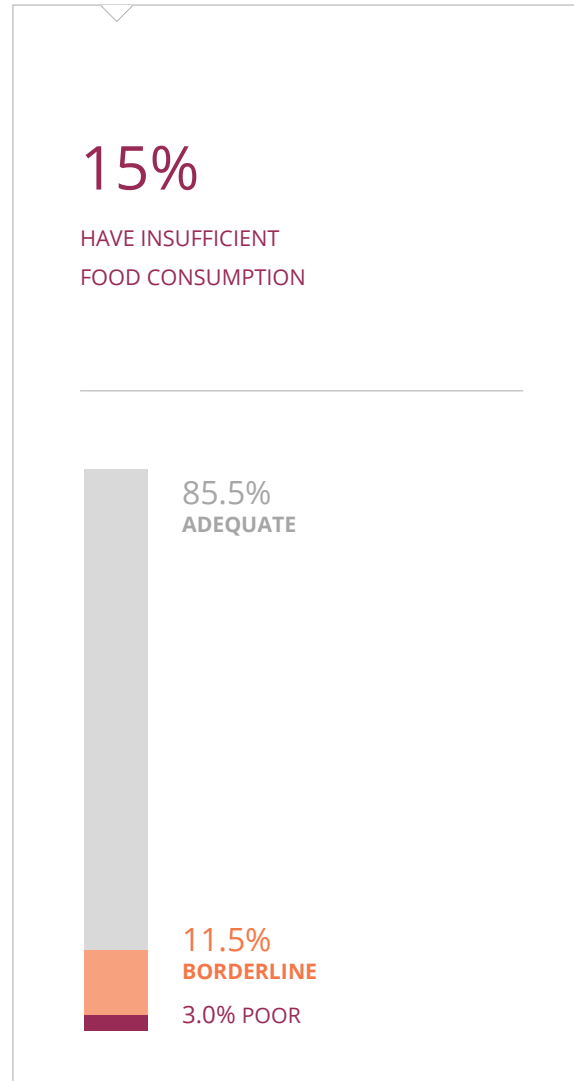
One-seventh of households are not consuming adequate diets.

In seven days, the average household recalled eating staples daily, and vegetables and animal proteins six times a week. The high consumption of vegetables and animal protein could be attributed to a high consumption of wild vegetables and a high prevalence of hunting in some parts of the country. Nevertheless, quality and quantity of food remain large impediments to many households.

Female-headed households and rural dwellers are eating less diverse diets – with one in five female-headed households (21 percent) consuming insufficient diets,⁵ compared to male-headed households (14 percent). On average, 17 percent of rural households consume an insufficient diet, compared to 8 percent of urban dwellers. In general, the consumption of dairy and pulses is very low, with the average household consuming each food type less than twice a week.

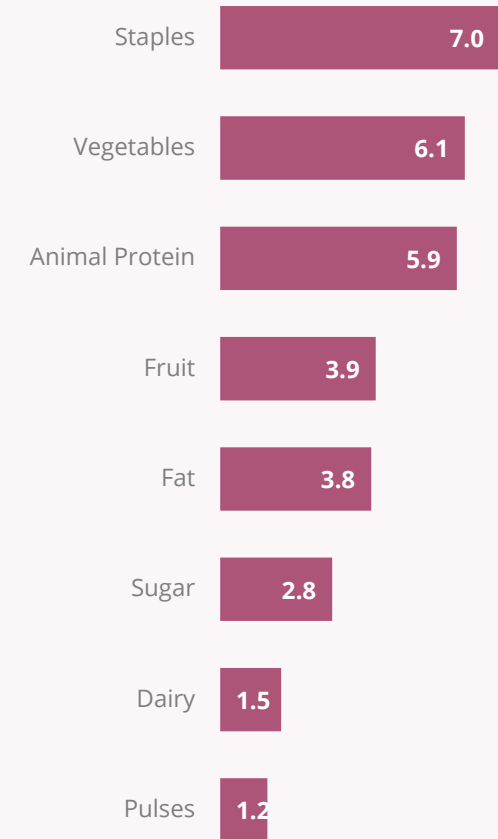


FOOD CONSUMPTION GROUP



FOOD CONSUMPTION

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



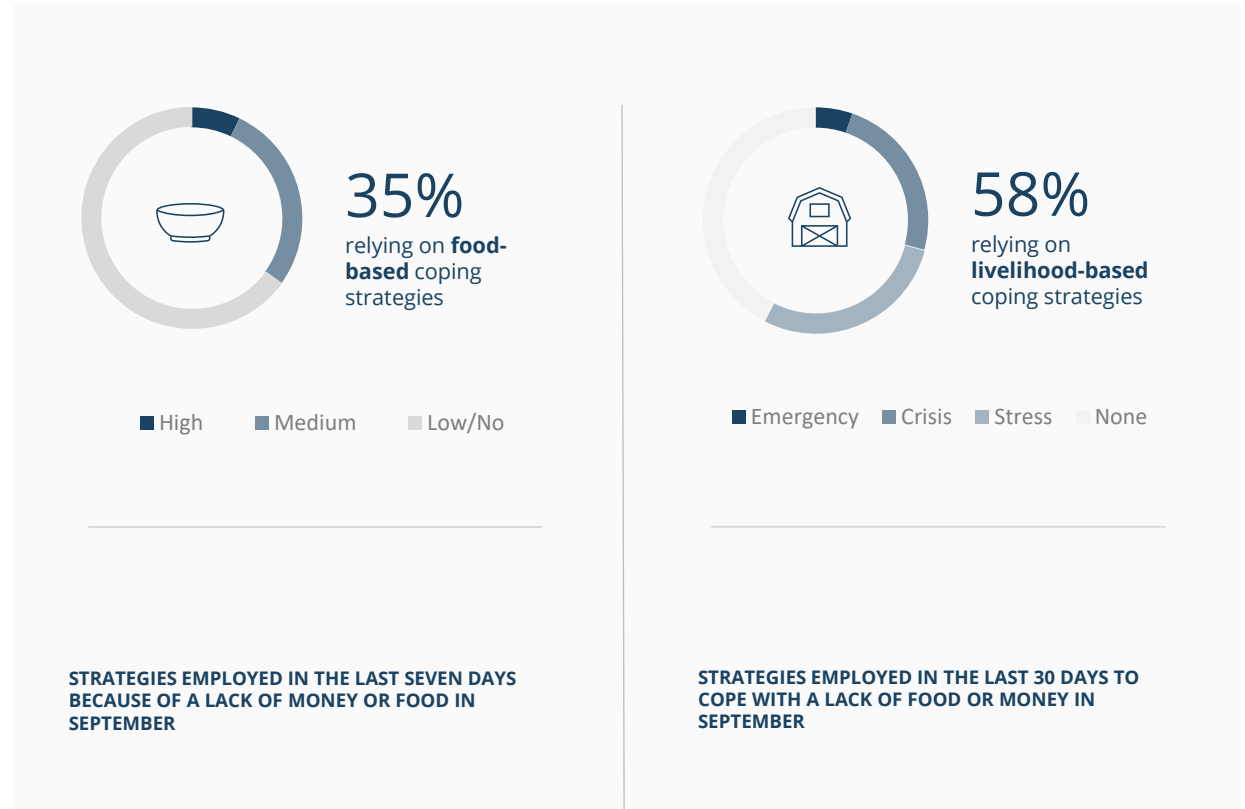
5. The household food consumption score is calculated according to the types of foods consumed during the previous seven days, the frequencies with which they are consumed and the relative nutritional weight of the different food groups.

Large portions of the population are adopting coping strategies.

Nearly six in ten households are relying on livelihood-based coping strategies such as spending savings, cutting health expenditure or borrowing in order to buy food or meet other essential needs. This was most pronounced in Sekong, Xaisomboon and Attapeu provinces, where seven in ten households or more are using these strategies.

Households in rural areas are more likely to engage in livelihood coping strategies (60 percent) compared to households in urban areas (53 percent). In addition, households with medium to high dependency ratios were around twice as likely (66 and 53 percent) to use livelihood coping strategies compared to households with low dependency ratios (30 percent).

Some 35 percent of households are relying on food-based coping strategies such as relying on



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