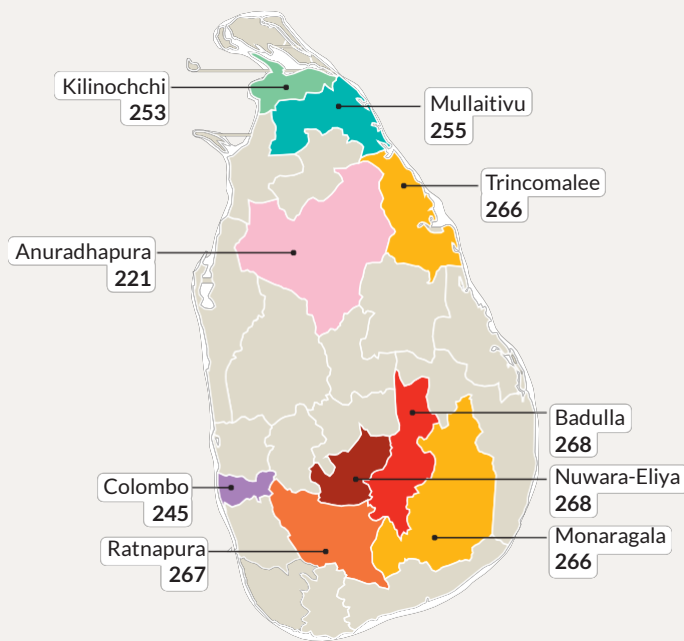**Save the Children**

SRI LANKA CRISIS:
RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT
JUNE 2022

Rapid Needs Assessment

This Rapid Needs Assessment was carried out to understand the impacts of the economic crisis on families, and their children's ability to survive, learn and be protected in Sri Lanka.

No. of Surveys Per District

Kilinochchi
253

Mullaitivu
255

Trincomalee
266

Anuradhapura
221

Badulla
268

Nuwara-Eliya
268

Colombo
245

Monaragala
266

Ratnapura
267

Save the Children

Project Details

Project locations: Sri Lanka (9 Districts)
Period of Data Collection: May to June 2022
Survey coverage: 2,309 Households
Thematic Areas: Humanitarian needs, Household economy, Food Security & Livelihoods, Education and child protection, Health, Nutrition, WaSH, MHPSS

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In partnership between Save the Children Sri Lanka and Save the Children International Asia Regional Office

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CONTEXT

Sri Lanka is experiencing complex and multidimensional economic collapse since COVID-19 in early 2020. The crisis in the macro-economic sphere is turning into a humanitarian emergency at micro-level as millions of people are experiencing acute shortages of food, fuel, cooking gas and medicine. More importantly, children's rights and protection are massively affected by the household economic stresses.

By the end of 2020, the debt to GDP ratio was 101% along with trade deficit, budget deficit, and double debt – a perfect recipe for the disaster (EPRS, 2022). Sri Lanka has no money, no food, no essential medicines, or fuel. The island country is on the verge of bankruptcy. The rapid rupee depreciation coupled with high oil prices in the global market put the Sri Lankan economy into a more stressful situation. According to the World Bank (WB) estimates, 500,000 people in Sri Lanka have fallen below the poverty line since the pandemic struck, which is described as a considerable setback equivalent to five years worth of progress (World Bank, 2021). WB also estimates 11.7% of population in Sri Lanka earns less than US$3.20/day. Since the current crisis accelerated, the poverty rate is undoubtedly much worse. The cost of living is such that children cannot even think of having a balanced meal. Families say they can no longer afford to purchase meat, vegetables, kerosene, or gas.

Save the Children's (SCI) humanitarian response aims to provide immediate food and nutrition needs of the most vulnerable populations and to protect and diversify livelihoods. It will provide support to the children most impacted by inequality and discrimination in small, resource-poor schools in rural and urban areas to ensure their uninterrupted access to education and learning. It will promote the well-being of children by providing mental and psychosocial support and emergency case management for children at risk of violence, abuse, and exploitation. Save the Children Sri Lanka aims to reach 1 million people in vulnerable communities through the humanitarian response in the coming 18 months.

Save the Children has conducted a sample survey among households who take part in the government's School Meal Programme that targets 25% of school-aged children, focusing on children in grades 1-5 in the most marginalized schools across the country. The data of this survey presents compelling evidence of the critical need for continuing of development assistance. Humanitarian support is essential for the survival of Sri Lanka's most vulnerable poorest households, particularly for women and children.

Save the Children Sri Lanka is implementing School Meal Programmes across 887 schools in 7 districts in the country reaching over 100,000 children. The project complements the government's feeding programme to improve children's nutrition and reduce school dropout rates. The economic crisis that forced the government to cut down the funding for the School Meal Programme will impact over 1 million children and is expected to severely impact the nutritional status of children especially the vulnerable households in the country.

This Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) aims to help the organization and the wider humanitarian actors in the country to be informed on and program to scale, the prioritized needs across the sectors, and ensure best practices in emergency humanitarian responses to help the targeted populations in Sri Lanka. Most importantly, it will also be used to inform the donors/development partners and encourage them to strategically channel funding to key priority areas to build the household's capacity to overcome the economic shocks.

METHODOLOGY

Save the Children Sri Lanka has carried out this survey by phone with trained volunteers and staff of Sri Lanka Unites (SLU), Foundation for innovative social development (FISD), both whom are strategic partners, and the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA), the government partner. To understand the wider context, the study uses mixed methods comprising of both a quantitative sample survey and a qualitative in-depth assessment to follow in the future. This factsheet presents the summary findings of the quantitative sample survey data collected from a total of 2,309 households, with a minimum sample size of 245 households in each district, providing a 90% confidence interval and 5% margin of error for the target population. The survey follows a systematic random sampling in nine districts. These districts include the seven districts in which Save the Children Sri Lanka School Meal Programme's are situated, plus Save the Children Sri Lanka's target location for COVID-19 support in 2021 (Colombo-Urban), and where FISD operates.

The household is the primary sampling unit and unit of analysis. The data is collected from the head of the households, primary income earners, and from eligible adults (caregivers of children). All the households have school going children who are participants of the School Meal Programme of Save the Children Sri Lanka. As such, any findings within this study are only representative of Save the Children's programme participants. To ensure representativeness of the survey of the project areas, and to cover all the geographical variations, the survey collects data across nine districts of Anuradhapura, Nuwara Eliya, Monaragala, Badulla, Ratnapura, Trincomalee, Mullaitivu, Killinochchi and Colombo. Authorization from Save the Children's Ethics Review Committee, local administration and from Save the Children's field offices were obtained prior to data collection.

The survey was conducted from May to June 2022 and the questionnaire was administered either in Sinhala or in Tamil. Participants were recruited by text messages and phone. Enumerators facilitated the survey and entered participant responses directly into the data collection instrument, KOBO Toolbox, on the respondents' behalf. Strict ethical considerations and safeguarding approaches have been employed throughout the study to maintain the safety of all involved.

The findings below are descriptive in nature, presented in frequency and proportion charts and tables. Pearson's Chi-Square ($p<0.05$) has been used to analyse associations between selected covariates or predictors and sector-thematic based outcomes. All such findings are statistically significant. The reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) was used to assess the frequency and severity of food coping strategies used. More detail description of measures used to identify disability status, poverty and food insecurity are described in the Appendix.

Limitations

Phone interviews limited the ability for the study team to observe the real-life situation. Indicators of poverty is determined in this report using four out of ten of the MPI indicators for Sri Lanka due to phone data collection limitations. While the Washington Group Short Set was used to determine any household head or members with disabilities, there was a limited sample size for representative analysis of household members with disabilities. Additionally, 65% of the randomly selected contacts were not reachable and 10% refused to talk as they were looking to obtain essential services (fuel, gas, commodities) or were with their children on the road. Thus, the sample size had to be increased and most of the interviews were conducted in the evening once families were back at home.

Assessment Sample

2,309
Households

A total of 2,309 adult respondents were interviewed from 2,309 households across 9 districts

49.8%
Women

49.6%
Men

0.6%
Preferred not to reveal their gender

The respondents comprised 1,149 women (49.8%), 1,145 men (49.6%), and 15 (0.6%) who preferred not to reveal their gender

68.8%
Household head and/or the primary income earner

7 out of 10 (68.8%) of the interviewees were the household head and/or the primary income earner

66.6% Respondents are the household head

29.4% Spouse of the household head

Two-thirds (66.6%) of respondents are the household head and 29.4% the spouse of the household head

The distribution of the samples across the districts is shown as below:

District	Primary Income Earner's sex				Head of household's sex				Respondent's sex			
	Female	Male	Prefer not to say	Total	Female	Male	Prefer not to say	Total	Female	Male	Prefer not to say	Total
Anuradhapura	28	192	1	221	87	133	1	221	165	53	3	221
Badulla	45	223	-	268	68	200	-	268	130	138	-	268
Colombo	77	167	1	245	105	139	1	245	174	70	1	245
Kilinochchi	83	168	2	253	92	159	2	253	124	127	2	253
Monaragala	36	228	2	266	51	214	1	266	114	151	1	266
Mullaitivu	97	157	1	255	112	142	1	255	151	102	2	255
Nuwara-Eliya	33	233	2	268	49	218	1	268	102	164	2	268
Ratnapura	30	232	5	267	50	214	3	267	111	152	4	267
Trincomalee	59	207	-	266	67	199	-	266	78	188	-	266
Total	**488**	**1,807**	**14**	**2,309**	**681**	**1,618**	**10**	**2,309**	**1,149**	**1,145**	**15**	**2,309**

Household Demographic Information ›

- The average household size is 5.1 members.
- Majority of head of households (70.1%) and primary income earners (78%) are men. 23% of head of households are female and 0.4% of head of households preferred not to reveal their gender. 21% of primary income earners are female and 0.6% of primary income earners preferred not to reveal their gender.
- Using the Washington Group Short set, 4% (93) of household heads and/or primary income earners were identified to have a disability.

Education

- The highest proportion of households had members who had attained the Ordinary Level (43.7%) as their highest level of education, followed by Advanced Level (27.5%).
- Many households had members whose highest level of education was Grade 10 (9.2%) or below (11.3%)
- Less than one in 10 households (6.5%) had a member who had completed higher education (postgraduate degree, bachelor's degree or other external degree).
- 1.17% of respondents completed external courses as their highest level of education
- Only 0.7% (15) of households were in a situation where all household members had never attended school or an educational institution

Highest level of education in household

Pie chart segments	
7%	Bachelor, (Post) Graduate Degree, External Degree
27%	Advanced Level (AL)
11%	Below Grade 10
1%	External courses
1%	Never attended school
44%	Ordinary Level (OL)
9%	Passed Grade 10
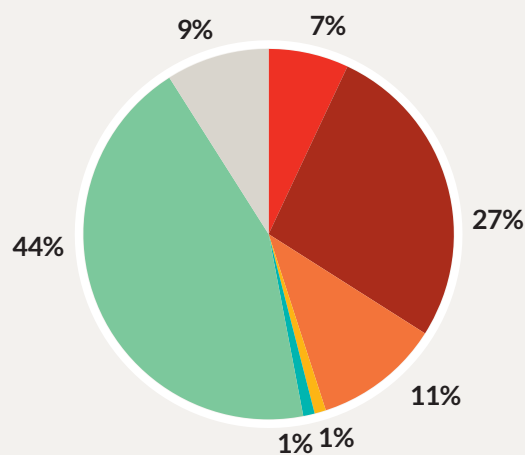
Legend:
- Bachelor, (Post) Graduate Degree, External Degree
- Advanced Level(AL)
- Below Grade 10
- External courses
- Never attended school
- Ordinary Level(OL)
- Passed Grade 10

Indicators of Being Economically Poor ⟩

Four out of ten of the MPI indicators[1] of poverty for Sri Lanka were used to classify households as poor or nonw-poor, including those who have a maximum of:

1. Cement/concrete, sand/mud/wood/grass/tarpaulin floor being used for the floors of the house.
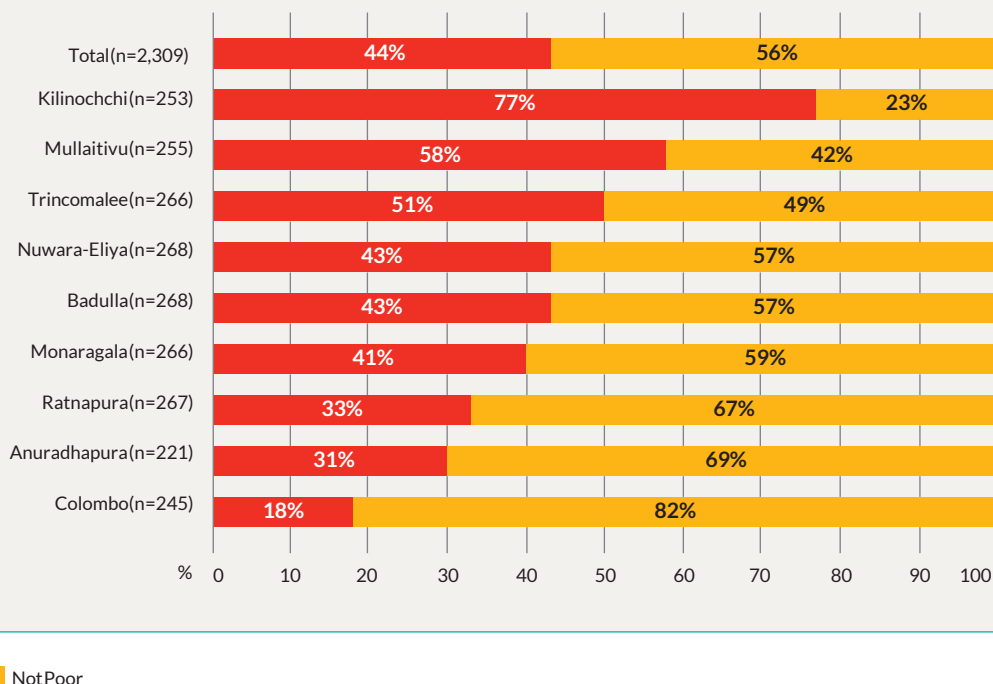
2. Not owning any transport or only owning a motorcycle or bicycle to support mobility.

3. Having only a television and/or radio as their major stationary assets, or not having any major stationary assets at all.

4. Using firewood, coal, animal waste, or grass for cooking as their major energy source.

- Using this index, **44% of the target population are economically poor** while 56% are non-poor.

- **Female-headed households are more likely to be economically poor (48%) than male-headed households (42.6%, p<0.05).**

- Respondents from **Kilinochchi** have a significantly higher proportion of poor households (77%) as compared to all other districts (p<0.01), while Colombo had a significantly lower proportion of poor households (18%) as compared to all other districts (p<0.01).

Accommodation

- The vast majority of respondents (91%) reported living in permanent accommodation/house, with 79.6% being home owners and 11.4% renting the permanent accommodation/house.

    - Slightly lower proportions of households in Colombo (70%), Badulla (76%) and Kilinochchi (77%) are home owners

    - Higher proportions of households in Nuwara Eliya (25%) and Colombo (23%) are in rentals

- About **1 in 10 respondents (9%) reported not living in permanent house/accommodation,** with 5.7% living in a half brick/semi structure, 0.9% in clay/wood wall house, 0.8% in tin-sheet wall house, 0.3% in tents, and 1.3% in "other".

- A vast majority (87.8%) of homes are constructed with cement/concrete floors, while remaining household floors are made of ceramic (5.1%), sand/mud/wood (3.3%), or other materials (3.9%).

Proportion of economically poor households by district (%)

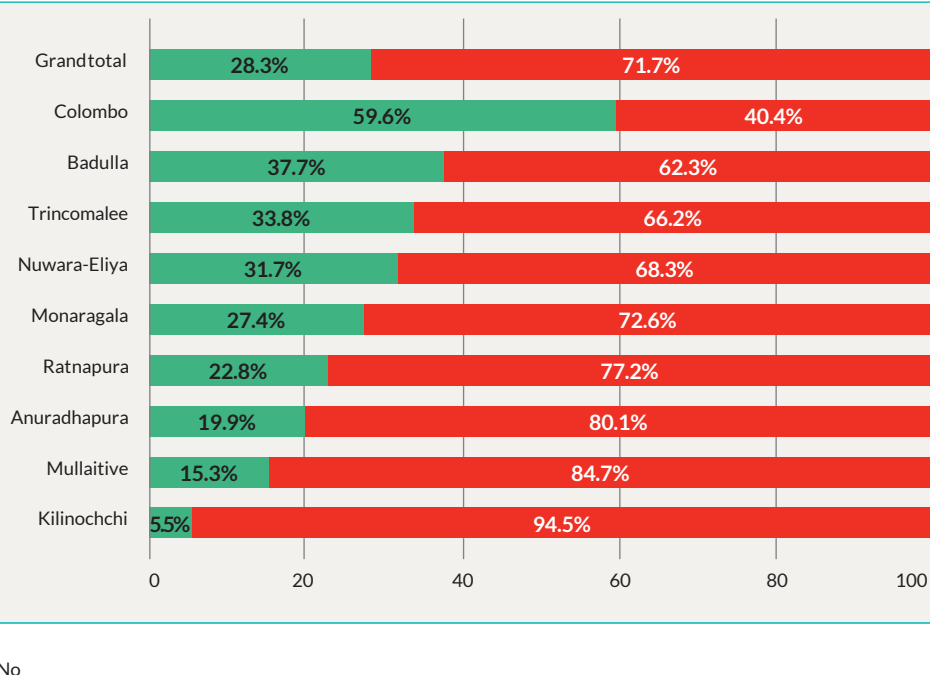| District	Poor	Not Poor
Total (n=2,309)	44%	56%
Kilinochchi (n=253)	77%	23%
Mullaitivu (n=255)	58%	42%
Trincomalee (n=266)	51%	49%
Nuwara-Eliya (n=268)	43%	57%
Badulla (n=268)	43%	57%
Monaragala (n=266)	41%	59%
Ratnapura (n=267)	33%	67%
Anuradhapura (n=221)	31%	69%
Colombo (n=245)	18%	82%

Legend: Poor / Not Poor

Assets Owned

- Nearly half of all households (42.1%) reported owning at least one essential asset (refrigerator, telephone line, mobile phone, television, video player) plus one form of transport (motorcycle, three-wheeler, car/van, or tractor)

- Only 1.8% of respondents reported not owning a single essential asset (refrigerator, telephone line, mobile phone, television, video player, motorcycle, three-wheeler, car/van, or tractor)

- The majority (87%) of households reported owning some form of communication device: mobile phones (85%), telephone lines (5.8%), or both (4%)

- Some reported owning a form of transportation: motorcycles (44%), three-wheelers (13%), car/vans (3%), and 2 or 4 wheel tractor (2%)

- For other home assets, three-quarters reported owning televisions (75%) and about one-third reporting having refrigerators (35%).

Energy Sources

- **Nearly three quarters (72%) of the households do not use electric or gas cooking energy.**
  - Significantly less households in Kilinochchi (94.5%) do not use electric or gas cooking energy as compared to all other districts (p<0.01).
  - Significantly more households in Colombo (60%) use electric or gas as cooking energy than all other districts where the average is 24% without Colombo (p<0.01).

- Aside from gas or electricity: 69% use firewood, 5% use fuel (kerosene, petrol, etc.), less than 1% use coal, grass, or none.
  - Significantly less households in Colombo (31%) use firewood as compared to all other districts (p<0.01) where the average use of firewood among other districts is 97% of households.

Households who use gas or electric cooking energy

District	Yes	No
Grand total	28.3%	71.7%
Colombo	59.6%	40.4%
Badulla	37.7%	62.3%
Trincomalee	33.8%	66.2%
Nuwara-Eliya	31.7%	68.3%
Monaragala	27.4%	72.6%
Ratnapura	22.8%	77.2%
Anuradhapura	19.9%	80.1%
Mullaitive	15.3%	84.7%
Kilinochchi	5.5%	94.5%

Legend: Yes, No

Household Income Information ⊙

Head of household employment (n=2,233, 97% of total)

Income source	Percentage
Income from temporary job (seasonal employment)	48.9%
Income from salary/permanent job	23.8%
Crop or agriculture production and sales	10.7%
Business/trading/services	6.7%
Do not work	2.6%
Pension (from Government or others)	2.1%
Other	2.1%
Remittances (from family member working/migrating outside the areas)	1.2%
Livestock production and sales	0.8%
Samurdhi assistance	0.7%
Household work	0.4%
Cash assistance/Government support	0.1%
Other benefit (elderly payment, etc.)	0.0%

- In 9 out of 10 households, the household head is involved in income generation
- The average monthly income per household as of May/June 2022 is Rs. 28,755
- **Almost half (49%) of the household heads earn their income from temporary jobs (seasonal employment),** while close to another quarter (23%) gain income from salary/permanent jobs.
- Other main sources of income obtained by the household head/primary income earner include crop and agriculture sales (10.7%) and business/trading services (6.7%).

- Only 2.6% of household heads do not work, and the remaining 7.3% receives remittances, livestock sales, pensions or other forms of government assistance, benefits or payments.
  - **Very few (2.5%, 16) of the households have** social safety net support (Samurdhi and elderly payment). Most of these households were from Trincomalee (11).
- Aside from the household head, most of the remaining household members do not work, aside from 65% of the spouse of the household heads who do work. Similar to the head of household, temporary/seasonal jobs (13.8%) and from salary/permanent jobs (11.2%) made up the highest proportions of employment aside from household work (18.6%).

Average Monthly Expenditure

- Households reported spending an average of 71% of their average monthly income on food
- The average monthly expenditure (Rs.) in the last month is shown in the table below. The average of total household expenditure is Rs.50,000, which is 75% more than the current average monthly income (Rs. 29,000).

Key items	Average monthly expenditure in the last month (Rs)	Priority expenditure
Food	20,286	1
Loan/credit and interest payment	6,324	2
Education/learning materials	5,129	3
Transport costs	3,373	4
Fuel and gas	3,098	5
Clothes	2,971	6
Medicines	2,867	7
Utilities	2,171	8
Hygiene items	1,695	9
Other	1,571	10
Shelter/accommodation rental/mortgage	780	11
Total	50,265	

Income Lost Since the Economic Crisis ⊙

The vast majority of households (85.1%) reported losing income since the economic crisis

- Nearly **3 out of 5 households (58.1%) have lost more than half of their income:**
    - **1 in 10 households (10.9%) reported losing *all* of their income**
    - **Almost half (47.2%) of the households reported losing *more than half (but not all)* of their income since the economic crisis.**
- More than one quarter (27.3%) of households reported losing less than half of their income, while only 14.9% did not report losing any income.
- Compared to the same month last year,
    - **More than 1 out of 3 households (35.3%) have indicated that they no longer have income**
        - More than 2 in 5 households (43%) say this is due to retrenchment or a job change
    - 15% of households indicated having about the same level of income because more family members have become involved in household income generation.

Income Loss by Economic Condition

Income loss has been more severe for economically poor households.

- Significantly more poor households (65.7%) than non-poor households (52.1%) have lost more than half of their income since the crisis (p<0.01).
- Twice as many poor households (15.5%) than non-poor households (7.2%) lost all of their income (p<0.01).

Income Loss by Head of Household Main Income Source

Significantly more households whose head of households gain their income from salary/permanent jobs reported no loss of income since the economic crisis (36%) as compared to other sources of income where the average is 11% indicating no loss (p<0.01).

Income loss since the economic crisis

11%

15%

27%

47%
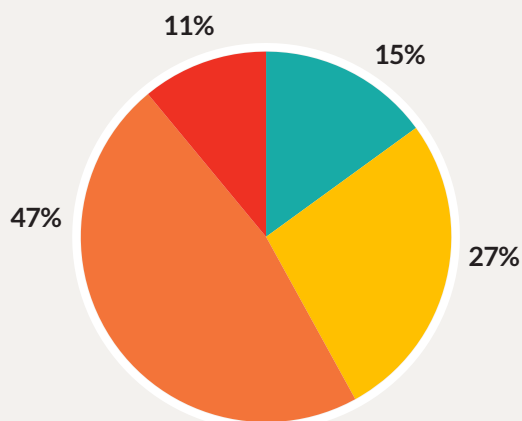
- ■ No
- ■ Yes, loss less than half (<50%)
- ■ Yes, loss most of it or more than half (>50%)
- ■ Yes, loss all of it (100%)

- Significantly more households with head of households in agriculture production and sales reported losing more than half or all of their income (72%) as compared to those with seasonal employment (62%) or permanent salaries (43%, p<0.01). A significantly higher proportion of those with seasonal employment also reported this as compared to those with permanent jobs (p<0.01).

Income Loss by District

- Significantly more households in Mullaitivu (23.5%) and Monaragala (18.8%) reported losing *all* of their income as compared to other districts (p<0.05).
- Significantly more households in Nuwara Eliya (65.7%), Kilinochchi (63.2%), and Anuradhapura (61.5%) reported losing more than half *(but not all)* of their income as compared to other districts (p<0.01).

Income Loss by Gender

- 29.5% of the sample households have female head of households, while 70.1% are male and 0.4% of head of households preferred not to reveal their gender. Overall, similar proportions of female-headed (57%) and male-headed households (59%) lost more than half of their income. This was similar too to those who preferred not to reveal their gender (50%). However,
  - **Significantly more female-headed households (14%) lost *all* of their income** than male-headed households (10%, p<0.01).
  - **Significantly more male-headed households (49%) lost *more than half, but not all,*** of their income than female-headed households (43%, p<0.01).

Income loss by gender of head of household

	Female (n=681)	Male (n=1618)	I prefer not to say (n=10)	Total (n=2309)
Yes, lost all of it (100%)	14%	10%		11%
Yes, lost most of it or more than half (>50%)	43%	49%	50%	47%
Yes, lost less than half (<50%)	25%	28%	20%	27%
No	18%	13%	30%	15%

Legend:
- No (teal)
- Yes, lost most of it or more than half (>50%) (orange)
- Yes, lost less than half (<50%) (yellow)
- Yes, lost all of it (100%) (red)
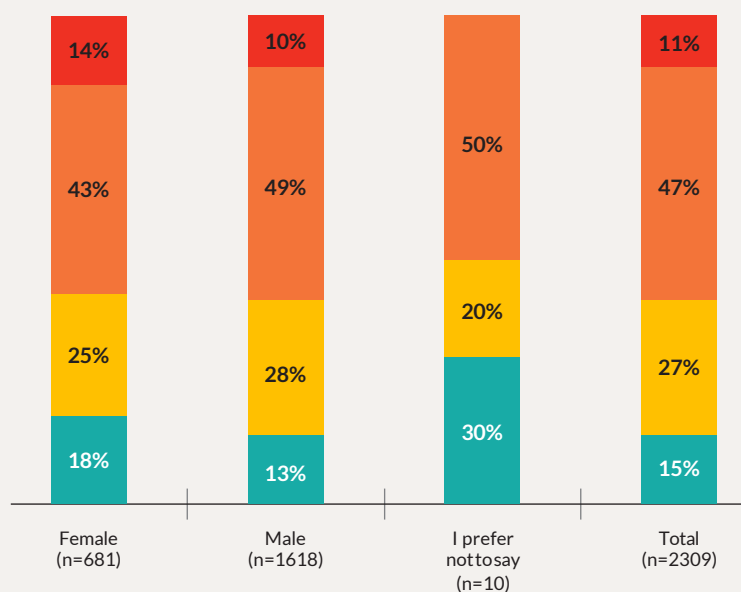
Ability To Meet Basic Needs ⟩

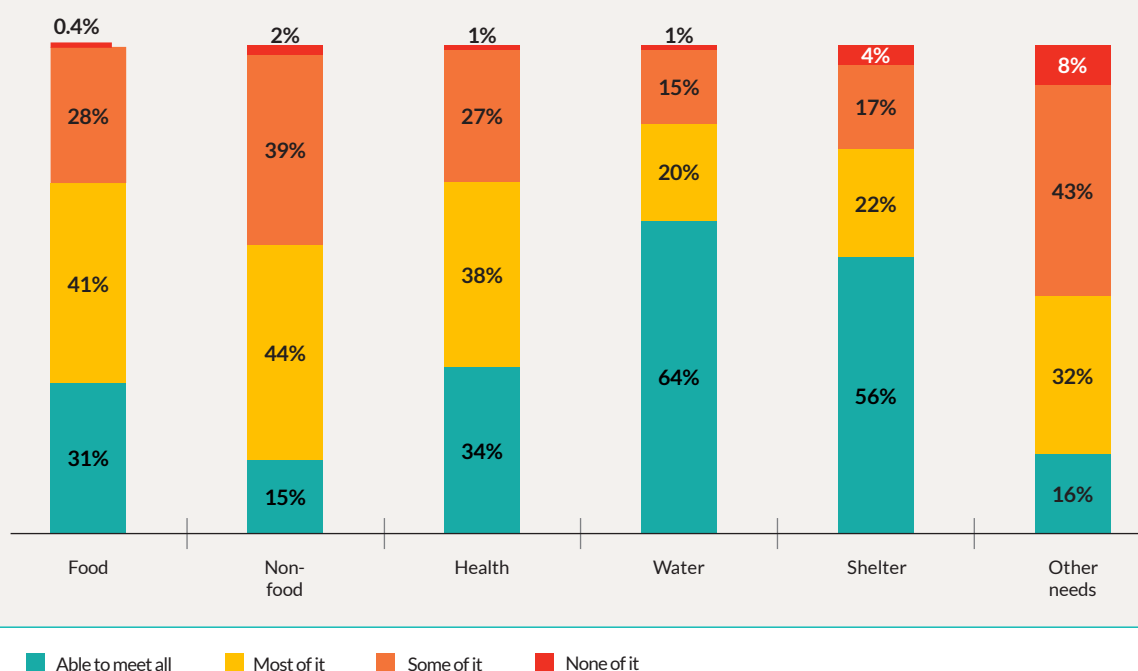About half (49%) were able to meet all or most of their basic needs (food, non-food, water, shelter, health; excluding 'other') - however, the other half were only able to meet some or none for at least one of the basic needs. Aside from 'other' needs, inability to meet all or most was lowest for non-food items (15% could meet all, 44% could meet most).

The top two priority needs highlighted by 80% of the households included Education for Children and Food.

Food Needs

- Regarding the ability to meet their food needs,
  - Less than one third (31%) noted being able to *fully* meet all their needs
  - Two in five (41%) could meet *most* of their needs
  - More than one quarter (28%) could meet *some* of it
  - Less than one percent (0.4%) could meet *none* of their needs

Ability to meet basic needs

	Food	Non-food	Health	Water	Shelter	Other needs
None of it	0.4%	2%	1%	1%	4%	8%
Some of it	28%	39%	27%	15%	17%	43%
Most of it	41%	44%	38%	20%	22%	32%
Able to meet all	31%	15%	34%	64%	56%	16%

Legend: ■ Able to meet all ■ Most of it ■ Some of it ■ None of it

Changes in Eating Habits During the Crisis

- **Around three-quarters of households (74%) had to adjust their food practices in 7 days prior to interviewing:**

Changes in eating habits during the crisis

Practice	Percentage
Rely on less expensive/preferred foods	65.9%
Limited the portion size of meals	40.2%
Borrowed food from friends or relatives	35.8%
Reduced adult food consumption to feed children	31.0%
Reduce number of meals eaten in a day	30.1%
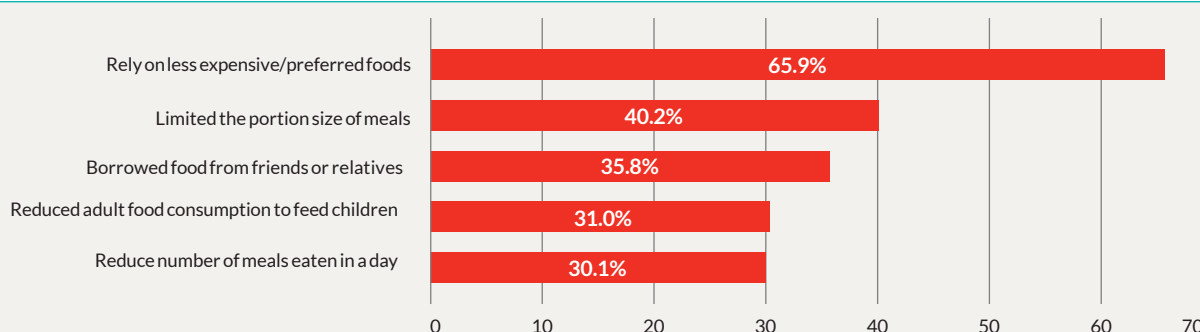
- **2 in 3 (66%) respondents noted their households having to rely on less preferred or less expensive foods at least once in the week prior to the survey, where over one quarter (28%) of them had to use this coping strategy every day of the week prior.**
- **2 in 3 households (66.3%) also had to adjust their children's eating habits in the 14 days prior to the interview:**
  - Over half of all children (54%) had to eat less preferred food
  - Over one third (35%) of children had to reduce their child's quantity of food intake
  - About one in ten (12%) of children had reduced frequency of food intake (twice or less)

Households' Capacity to Manage Food Requirements

Access to Land

- Around half of the households (47.7%) do not have access to "a plot of land in which they make decisions about what will be grown, OR how it will be grown, OR how to dispose of/store/sell the harvest".
- Almost half (46.1%) have their own land and 3.8% have leased land, while the remaining work for others or sharecrops.

Farming – Produce and Livestock

- 53% (1220) of households responded to what they grow – of these who responded,
  - Three-quarters (75%) produce food crops
  - 17% produce non-food or cash crops, 14% agro-forestry products, 3% aquaculture or fishery and 3% natural resource-based products.
- **More than two-thirds (68.5%) do not have any livestock.** Under one-third (31.5%) do have livestock:
  - More than 1 out of 5 have poultry (23.0%)
  - Nearly 1 out of 10 have cows (9.1%)
  - 5.9% have goats

Utilization of the Agricultural Production

- Three quarters (75%) of the 1220 households who responded indicated they use their agricultural products for their own household consumption or to give to their friends/relatives for free.
- Nearly 2 in 5 (37%) of those who responded noted they sell their agricultural yield in the local market, while 18% sell to private traders, and 7% sell to relatives or friends.

Access to land

3.77%   1.5%   1%

47.68%

46.12%
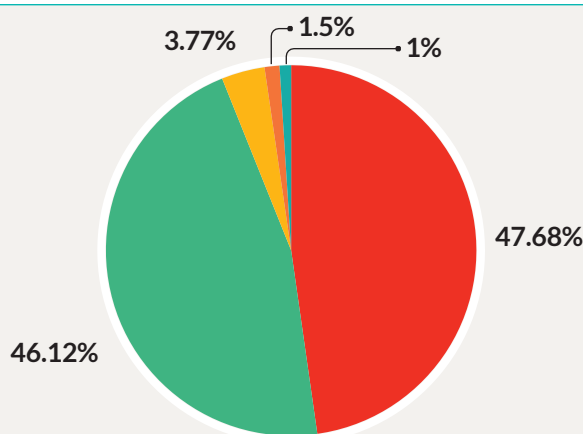
■ Don't have   ■ Own   ■ Rent   ■ Work for other (labour)   ■ Share crop

Non-food Items

- Specific to non-food items, only 15% of the respondents reported being able to meet all their household needs. 44% were able to meet "most of it", while 39% could only meet "some of it", and 2% indicated meeting "none at all".

Water Needs

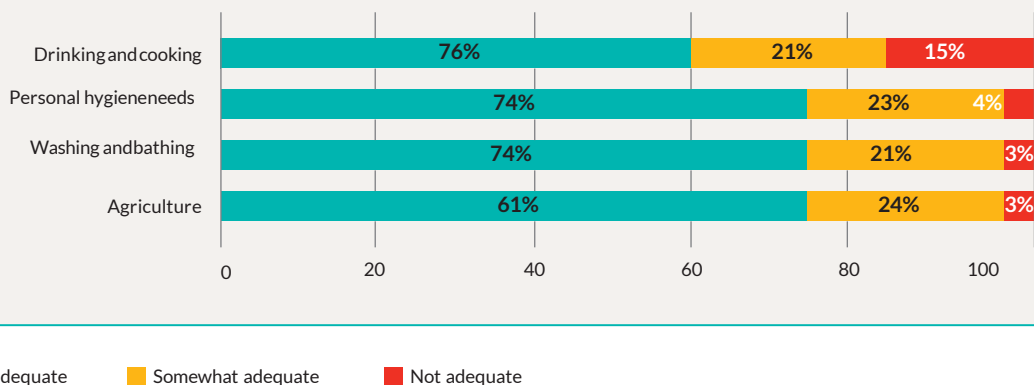- Regarding water needs, under two-thirds (64%) were able to fully meet all their needs, while 20% could meet most of it, 15% some of it, and 1.3% none at all.
- Around three-quarters of households reported having fully adequate water supply for:
  - Drinking and cooking (74%)
  - Personal hygiene needs (74%)
  - Washing and bathing (76%)
- 3-4% did not have adequate supply for these activities and 21-23% had somewhat adequate supply:
  - **Significantly more households in Kilinochchi (17%) and Mullaitivu (11%) reported having inadequate supply of water for drinking and cooking** as compared to all other districts (p<0.01)

- Significantly less households reported having fully adequate water supply for agricultural needs with about 3 in 5 (61%) respondents indicating as such. 15% said they did not have adequate supply and 24% had somewhat adequate supply.
  - Significantly less (33%) households in Monaragala reported having *fully* adequate supply and significantly more (36%) reported *not* having adequate supply of water for agricultural needs as compared to all other districts (p<0.01).
- In the two weeks prior to the survey,
  - Around two-thirds of the households (67%) reported not needing to purchase water to meet their basic water, sanitation, and hygiene needs.
  - 21% of the households purchased the usual amount of water.
  - 7% of the households reported purchasing more water and 5.6% purchased less water.

Health Needs

- Regarding health needs, about one third (34%) noted being able to fully meet all their needs, while 38% could meet most of their needs, 27% some, and 1.1% none at all.

Water needs

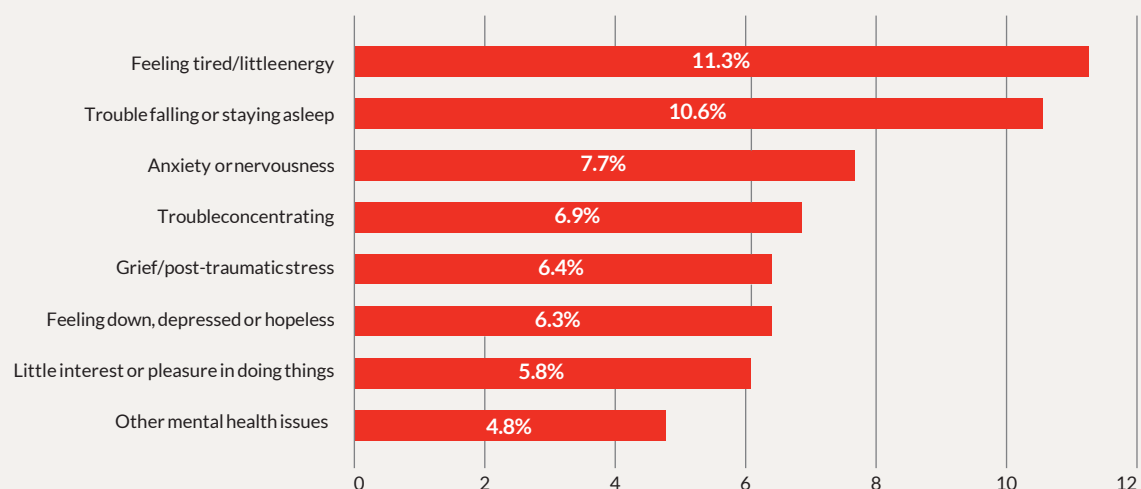|	Fully adequate	Somewhat adequate	Not adequate
Drinking and cooking	76%	21%	15%
Personal hygiene needs	74%	23%	4%
Washing and bathing	74%	21%	3%
Agriculture	61%	24%	3%

Adult Wellbeing

- Just over one quarter (26%) of respondents reported household members stated someone in their household was experiencing distress, with signs of reduced mental health and psycho-social well-being due since the economic crisis
    - 226 households have less than 3 children and 2,349 have 3 or more children. A significantly higher proportion of households with 3 or more children (32%) indicated someone in their household was showing signs of distress as compared to households with less than 3 children (22%, p<0.01)
    - 11.3% have reported someone in their household feeling tired/having little energy, 10.6% having trouble falling/staying asleep, 6.3% have been feeling down/depressed/hopeless, where 6.4% feeling grief/post-traumatic stress, 6.9% with trouble concentrating on things and 7.7% feeling increased of anxiety.

Access to the Healthcare Services

- Among the one third (32%, 746) of households who reported needing medical assistance in the three months prior to the survey, 1 in 10 (10%) were not able to receive that assistance.

- Difficulty accessing healthcare was slightly higher in Monaragala (24%) as compared to other districts, however no significant differences were found for the reasons shared across districts or gender.

- 29% (672) of total households who required healthcare assistance were able to access healthcare:
    - Over 2 in 5 (45%) for consultation for non-infectious disease
    - Over 1 in 3 (38%) for in-patient hospitalization
    - Over 1 in 4 (27%) for child health services
    - Less than 1 in 10 (6-8%) for injuries, infectious diseases, childhood immunizations, etc.

Psychological/mental health problems faced by household members (n=2,309)

Problem	Percentage
Feeling tired/little energy	11.3%
Trouble falling or staying asleep	10.6%
Anxiety or nervousness	7.7%
Trouble concentrating	6.9%
Grief/post-traumatic stress	6.4%
Feeling down, depressed or hopeless	6.3%
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	5.8%
Other mental health issues	4.8%

Reasons for accessing health facilities (n=672)

Reason	Percentage
Consultation for non-infectious disease (e.g. hypertension, asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular disease etc.	44.5%
In-patient hospitalization	38.5%
Child health service	27.4%
Childhood immunization/vaccination	7.9%
Consultation for infectious disease (COVID-19, diarrhea, acute respiratory infection/pneumonia, malaria, etc.)	7.1%
Injuries (bum, fall, traffic accidents, injuries)	6.4%
Basic emergency obstetrics (Child birth/delivery, ante-natal, post-natal care and new born care	2.8%
Treatment and screening of malnutrition	1.9%

- Only 3.2% (74) of the total households shared reasons for being unable to access medical assistance and healthcare where needed:
  - More than half (54%) of them noted this was due to cost – inability to afford the expensive medical costs. One quarter (25%, 10) of the respondents were from NuwaraEliya.

- More than 2 in 5 (43.2%) due to lack of transportation to health facilities and transport costs
- About 1 in 3 (31.1%) due to lack or unavailability of health services/facilities nearby. This was similarly reported across all districts though no households in Anuradhapura, Colombo, or Ratnapura reported this issue.

Barriers to access healthcare/medical assistance (n=74)

Barrier	Percentage
Cost	54.1%
Lack of transportation to health facilities/transport cost issue	43.2%
Lack of health services/facilities nearby	31.1%
Lack of essential medicine/nutritional supplement	13.5%
Other	9.5%
Lack of healthcare workers	4.1%
Limited access to COVID-19 vaccinations	2.7%
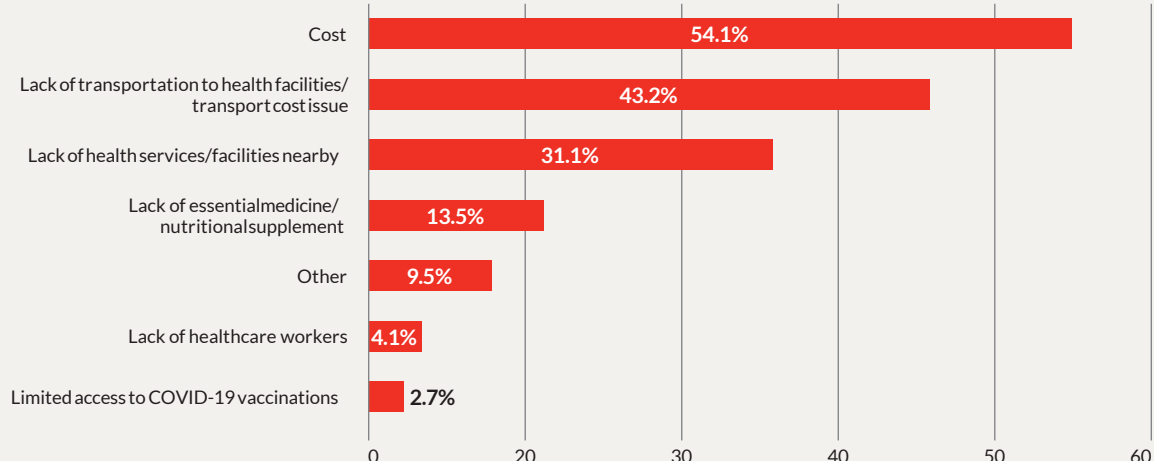
Shelter Needs
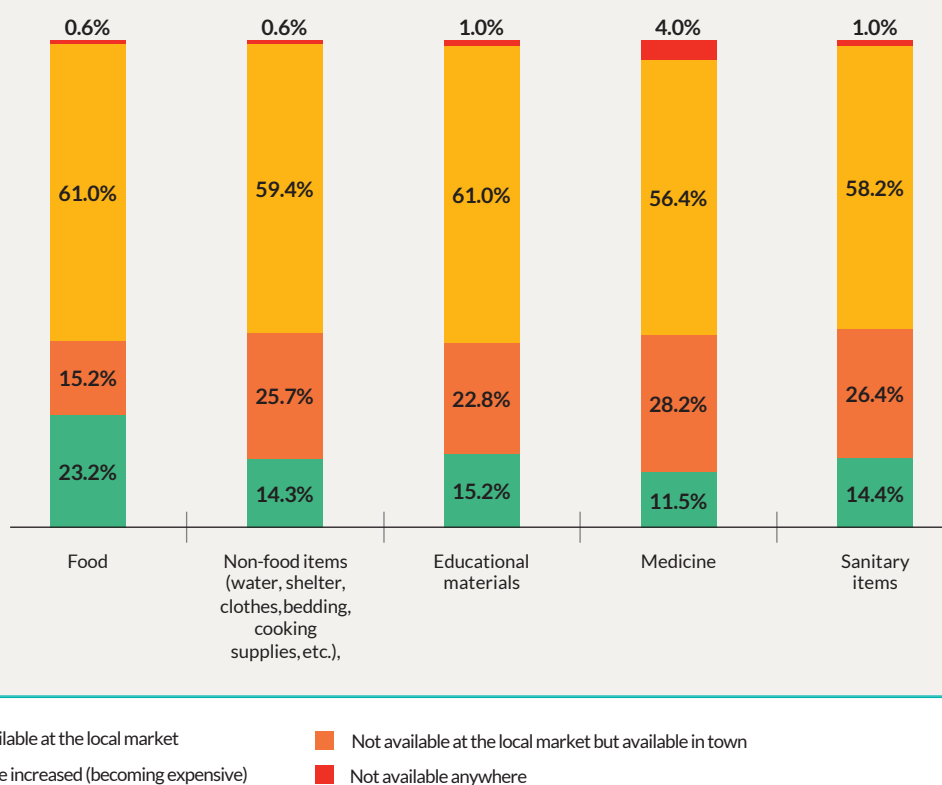
- Regarding shelter needs (including repairing), while over half (56%) of respondents were able to fully meet all their needs, 22% indicated the ability to meet most of it, 17% some of it, and 4% none at all.

Other Needs

- Regarding 'other' needs, only 16% indicated being able to meet all of it, while about one third (32%) noted meeting most of their other needs, 43% some, and 8% none at all.

Availability of the Key Items in the Market

Availability of the key items in the market

Legend:
- Available at the local market
- Price increased (becoming expensive)
- Not available at the local market but available in town
- Not available anywhere

- 6 in 10 households (60%) have reported that key items are available, but their prices have increased, becoming expensive.
- For instance, 61% reported that prices of the educational materials have increased. 61% have also reported increases in food prices, 56% reported increases in medicine prices, 59% in non-food item (NFI) prices, and 59% in price of sanitary items.
- Only a few households have reported the availability of key items in the local market. e.g., educational materials 15%, Food 23%, medicine 11%, Non-

Food Items 14%, and sanitary items 14%. However, while unavailable in the local market, most goods were reported to be available in town: educational materials 23%, food 15%, medicine 28%, NFI 26%, and sanitary items 26%.
- More than half (55.9%) of the households have reported to purchase food from the market for cash, while 21.6% purchased on credit and 17.7% produced the food by themselves.

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Negative Coping Strategies ⊙

Based on Save the Children's Rapid Needs Assessment Livelihoods Coping Strategy Index – *see Appendix for more details.*

Percent of Households by Save the Children's Livelihoods Coping Strategy Index Categorization[2]
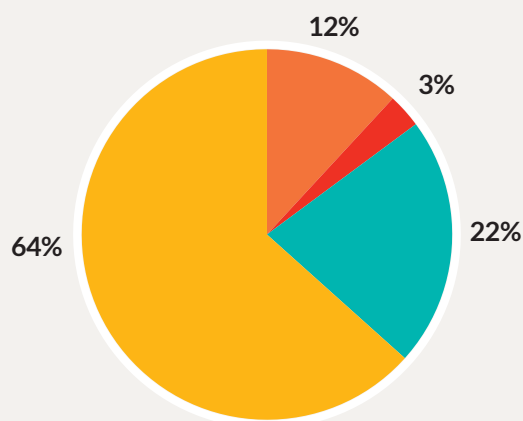
Legend: ■ Emergency ■ Crisis ■ Stress ■ Safe

12% of households are adopting "crisis-level" coping strategies, 3% adopting 'emergency' level coping strategies.

- 64% of the total households have started adopting 'stress-level' coping strategies
- Only 17% of households did not resort to any coping strategies to cover household expenditures/basic needs. **Majority (83%) of households resorted to using at least one coping strategy:**
  - About 2 in 5 households reported spending their savings (39%) or borrowing money (38%)

- About 1 in 5 households (21.5%) have purchased food on credits or borrowed from friends
- 17% reported selling household assets or goods (e.g. television, radio, jewellery, etc.) to meet their needs
- 6.1% have reported to reduce expenditure on healthcare services including medicines.

Coping strategies during difficult times to cover expenditures/foods

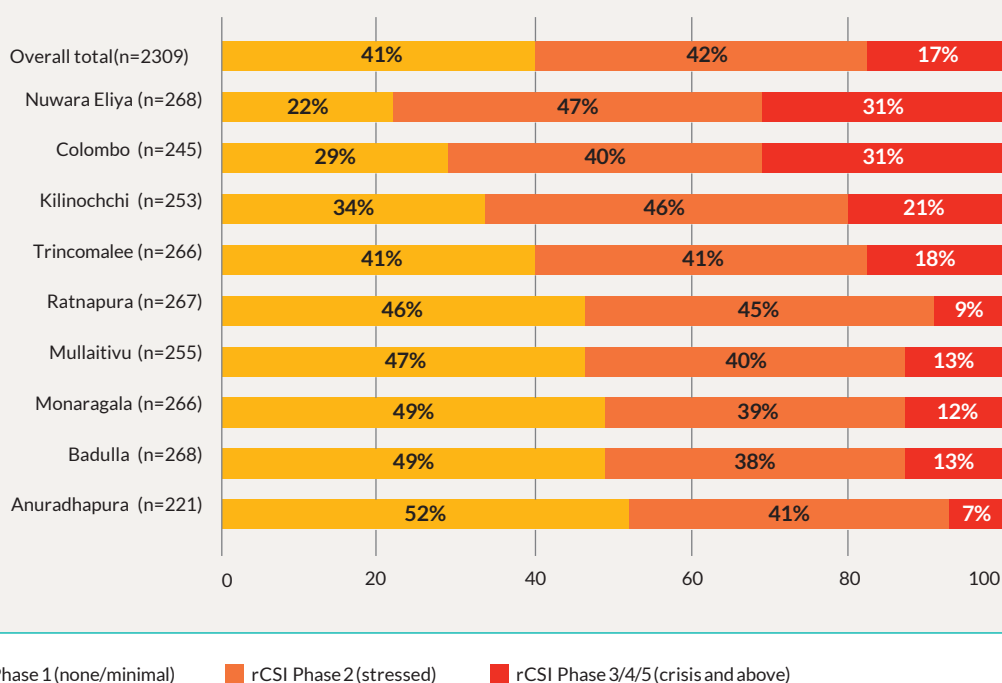| Coping strategy	Percentage
Spent savings	39.0%
Borrowed money	38.2%
Purchased food on credit or borrowed food	21.3%
Sold household assets/goods (radio, furniture, television, jewelry etc)	17.8%
Able to manage the household food demand (No coping strategies adopted)	17.3%
Reduced expenses on health (including drugs) and education	6.1%
Sold more animals (non-productive) than usual	2.3%
Consumed seed stocks to be saved for the next season	2.0%
Decreased expenditures on fertilizer, pesticide, fodder, animal feed, veterinary care, etc.	1.9%
Begged/rely on charity	1.7%
Harvested immature crops (e.g. green maize)	1.6%
Sold productive assets or means of transport (sewing machine,....)	1.5%
Let the children stay elsewhere/ with other relatives	1.0%
Sold last female animals	0.8%
Moved children to a less expensive school/ withdraw the children from school	0.7%
Let the children engage in paid work/labour	0.4%
Sold house or land	0.3%
Let the children migrate for work (engage in labour migration)	0.2%
Arrange/left the children have early marriage	0.1%
Engaged in illegal income activities (theft, prostitution)	0.0%

Borrowing Money to Cover Household Expenses

- Over half of the households (56.2%) have borrowed money to cover household expenses in the past six months. Out of all the households,
  - Over one third (36%) borrowed or took loans from banks/micro-finance institutions.
    - A significantly higher proportion of households in Badulla (57%) took loans from banks/micro-finance institutions as compared to all other districts (p<0.01)
  - One quarter (25%) borrowed from family or friends – this was significantly higher in Trincomalee as compared to all other districts (p<0.01)
  - 5% borrowed or took loans from informal brokers or moneylenders

Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI)

Reduced coping strategies index (r-CSI) data (i.e. relying on less preferred or expensive foods, borrowing foods, relying on help from friends or family, reduced number of meals eaten per day or portion size of meals by adults to feed children) was collected from the household respondents. Analysis of the r-CSI refers to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table cut-off points, as r-CSI is one of the food security first level outcomes of the IPC – see Appendix for more details (IPC,2021). The study concluded that:

- Nearly 1 in 5 (17.3%) households are already in rCSI phase 3 (crisis) or above, indicating that they have food consumption gaps or are marginally able to meet minimum food needs only by depleting essential livelihood assets or crisis-coping strategies

Reduced Coping Strategies Index Classification, by district

District	rCSI Phase 1 (none/minimal)	rCSI Phase 2 (stressed)	rCSI Phase 3/4/5 (crisis and above)
Overall total (n=2309)	41%	42%	17%
Nuwara Eliya (n=268)	22%	47%	31%
Colombo (n=245)	29%	40%	31%
Kilinochchi (n=253)	34%	46%	21%
Trincomalee (n=266)	41%	41%	18%
Ratnapura (n=267)	46%	45%	9%
Mullaitivu (n=255)	47%	40%	13%
Monaragala (n=266)	49%	39%	12%
Badulla (n=268)	49%	38%	13%
Anuradhapura (n=221)	52%	41%	7%

- Over 2 in 5 (42%) households are in rCSI phase 2 (stressed), which means that HHs have minimally adequate food consumption, but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress coping strategies.

- About 2 in 5 (40%) households are in rCSI phase 1 (no/minimal).

- Significantly more poor households (66%) are in the stressed or crisis & above rCSI phases than households that are not poor (54%, p<0.01).

- Colombo (p<0.05) and Nuwara Eliya (p<0.01) have a significantly higher proportion of households at the crisis and above phase with almost one third (31%) of their households in rCSI phase 3 and above.

rCSI Classification, by poor and non poor

Category	rCSI Phase 1 (none/minimal)	rCSI Phase 2 (stressed)	rCSI Phase 3/4/5 (crisis and above)
Poor	34%	46%	20%
Not poor	47%	39%	15%

Legend: rCSI Phase 1 (none/minimal) · rCSI Phase 2 (stressed) · rCSI Phase 3/4/5 (crisis and above)
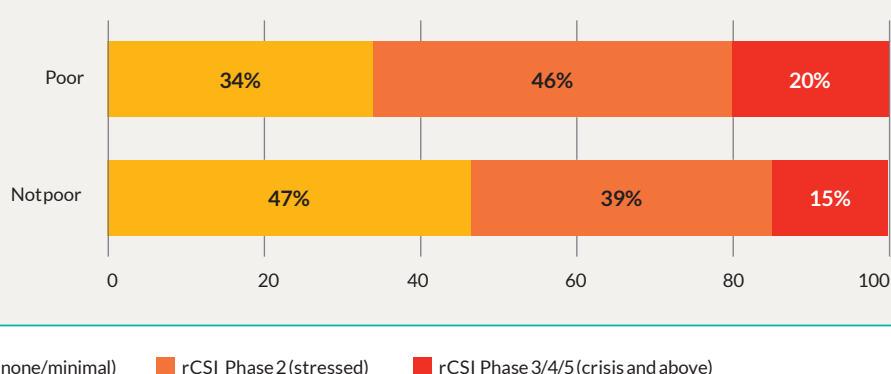
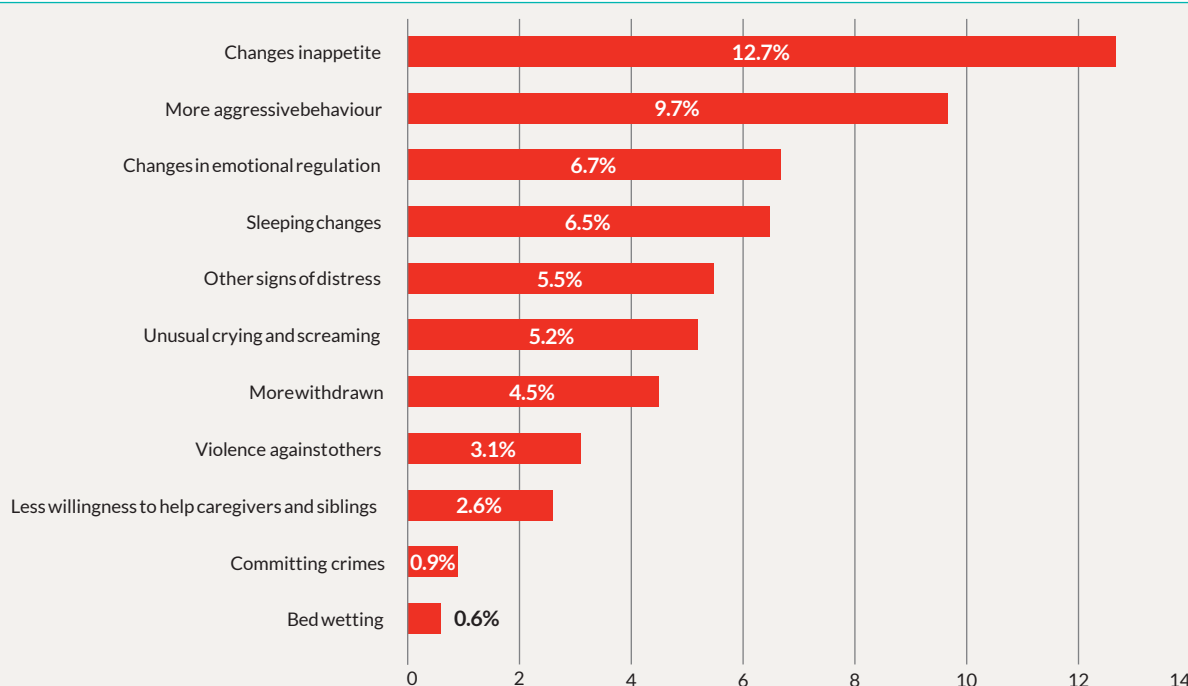# Impact on Children's Education, Protection and Welfare ⟩

Respondents were asked which group of children in their community they thought were most vulnerable to the key child protection risks; related to harassment, sexual harassment, abuse, abduction, and assault etc.

- When given a list of children in different age groups, about half of the respondents identified boys (53%) and girls (51%) generally as the groups most vulnerable to child protection risks during the current economic crisis.

- Around one-third highlighted children without caregivers (34%) to be most at risk, while nearly one-third identified children with disabilities (29%), and around a quarter mentioned adolescent boys (27%) and adolescent girls (29%), young girls (27%) and young boys (25%) aged 6-12, and infants/children under 5 years (25% boys, 27% girls).

Impact on Childcare

- Over 2 out of 5 (42%) households have changed their existing childcare practices due to the crisis
  - Significantly more households have changed their childcare practices in:
    - Badulla than all other districts (58%, $p<0.05$)
    - Mullaitivu than all other districts aside from Badulla (56%, $p<0.05$)
- In 1 out of 4 (25%) households, children spend less time with parents and their primary caregivers.
  - Significantly more children in Badulla (33%, $p<0.05$), Monaragala (36%) and Mullaitivu (37%, $p<0.01$) are spending less time with their parents and primary caregivers than other districts.

Child behavioural changes observed by caregivers

Behaviour	%
Changes in appetite	12.7%
More aggressive behaviour	9.7%
Changes in emotional regulation	6.7%
Sleeping changes	6.5%
Other signs of distress	5.5%
Unusual crying and screaming	5.2%
More withdrawn	4.5%
Violence against others	3.1%
Less willingness to help caregivers and siblings	2.6%
Committing crimes	0.9%
Bed wetting	0.6%

Children's Wellbeing

Parents and caregivers were asked about whether they noticed any changes in their children's behaviour since the economic crisis began. In difficult and unsettling situations, children may externalise their feelings by showing signs of distress, including higher levels of unusual crying and screaming, more aggressive behaviour or violence, bed-wetting as well as changes in emotional regulation.
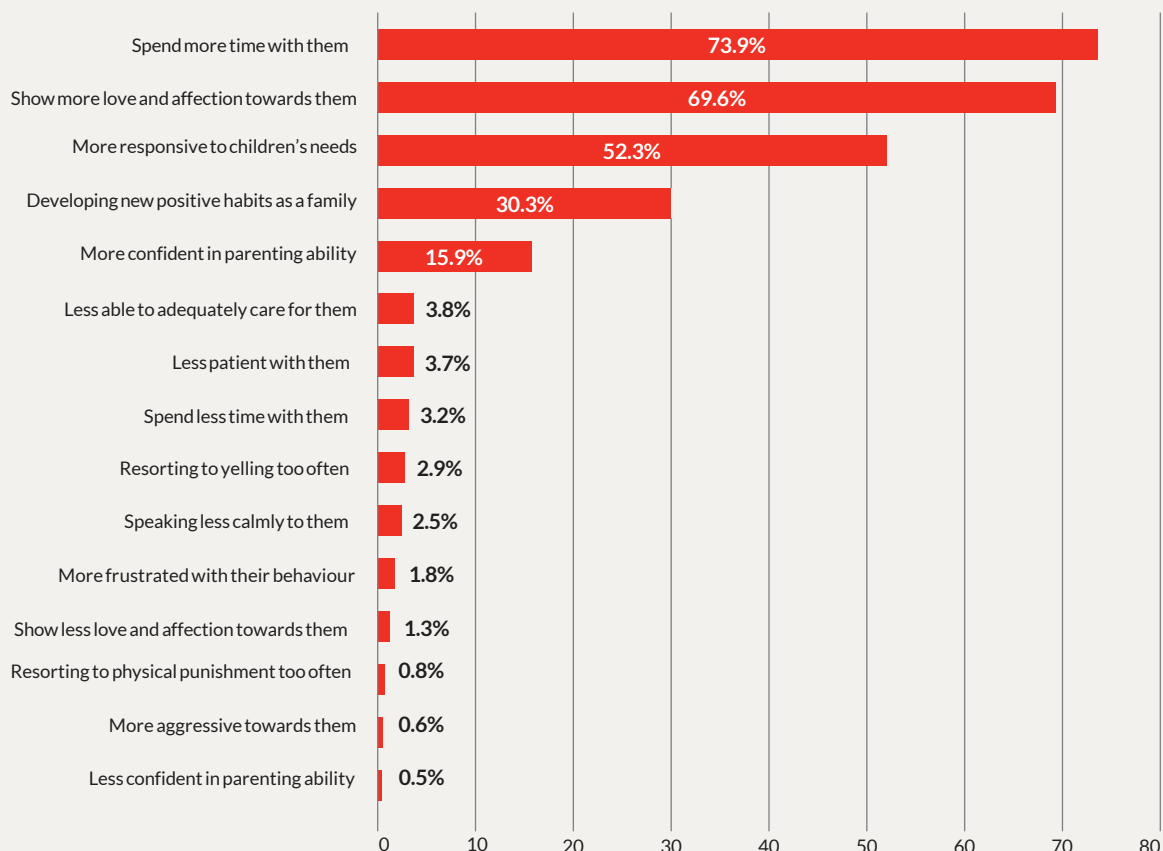
- Just under one third of the parents/ caregivers (31%) reported observing changes in their children's behaviour during the economic crisis. Changes in children's behaviour are significantly higher in Budulla (43%, p<0.05) as compared to all other districts aside from Nuwara Eliya (39%).

- Just over 1 in 10 parents/caregivers reporting changes in appetite (12.7%) and just under 1 in 10 reporting changes in more aggressive behaviours (9.7%), difficulty focusing on tasks at home and in school (9.6%).

  - Significantly more households in Badulla (20.9%), Monaragala (19.9%), and Anuradhapura (16.3%) observed more aggressive behaviour in children than other districts.

- 6.7% reported changes in emotional regulation in their children, 6.5% reported sleeping changes, 5.2% reported unusual crying or screaming, and 5.5% reported seeing other signs of distress.

Family Relationships

- In relation to protective factors, 86% of respondents reported using at least one positive parenting method, including:

  - Three-quarters (74%) spending more time with their children
  - Seven in ten caregivers (70%) showing more love and affection
  - Over half (52.3%) being more responsive to children's needs
  - Close to one third of respondents (30.3%) noted developing new positive habits as a family.

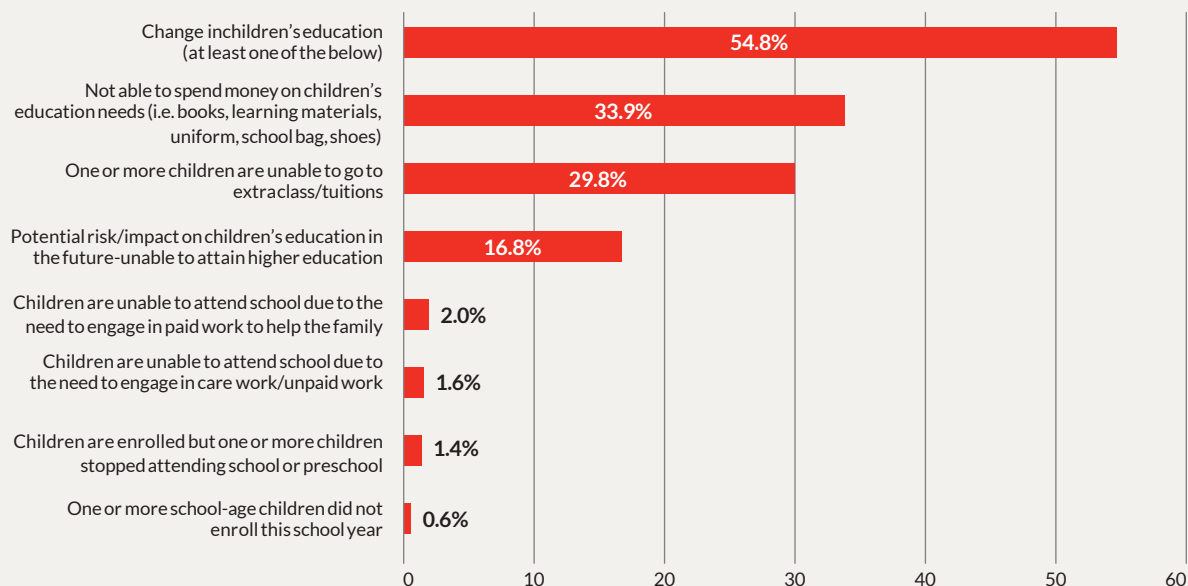- 7% of respondents indicated not using any positive parenting methods.

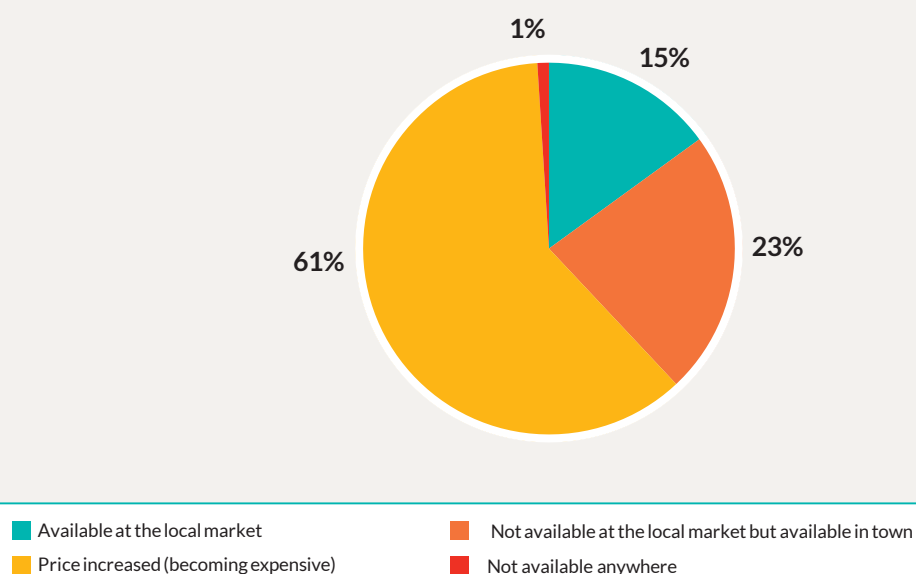### Caregiver coping strategies - Responding child's behavioural changes

Strategy	Percentage
Spend more time with them	73.9%
Show more love and affection towards them	69.6%
More responsive to children's needs	52.3%
Developing new positive habits as a family	30.3%
More confident in parenting ability	15.9%
Less able to adequately care for them	3.8%
Less patient with them	3.7%
Spend less time with them	3.2%
Resorting to yelling too often	2.9%
Speaking less calmly to them	2.5%
More frustrated with their behaviour	1.8%
Show less love and affection towards them	1.3%
Resorting to physical punishment too often	0.8%
More aggressive towards them	0.6%
Less confident in parenting ability	0.5%

Children's Education

Impact of economic crisis on children's education

Category	Percentage
Change in children's education (at least one of the below)	54.8%
Not able to spend money on children's education needs (i.e. books, learning materials, uniform, school bag, shoes)	33.9%
One or more children are unable to go to extra class/tuitions	29.8%
Potential risk/impact on children's education in the future-unable to attain higher education	16.8%
Children are unable to attend school due to the need to engage in paid work to help the family	2.0%
Children are unable to attend school due to the need to engage in care work/unpaid work	1.6%
Children are enrolled but one or more children stopped attending school or preschool	1.4%
One or more school-age children did not enroll this school year	0.6%

- More than half (55%) of the households reported some impact to their children's education due to the current economic crisis.
  - Significant impact was reported in Badulla (67%), Colombo, Mullaitivu, and Trincomalee (60%), Anuradhapura (56%), and Ratnapura (51%) as compared to the remaining two districts, Monaragala (41%), Kilinochchi (40%, p<0.05).
- Two in five (40.6%) of households reported they do not have internet access at home – either by computer or mobile – and thus these children are unable to take part in online learning. A higher proportion of households in Kilinochchi (49%) indicated this.
- One-third (33.9%) of the households have not been able to spend money on children's education needs (i.e., books, learning materials, uniform, school bag, shoes).
- 1 in 3 (29.8%) households reported that one or more children are unable to go to extra classes/tuition

- 16.8% of respondents were concerned for the potential risk/impact on children's education in the future, being unable to attain higher education
- 1.4% of households reported at least one child stopped attending school, 2% of households reported children are engaged in paid work, 1.6% of households reported children are engaged in unpaid/household work.
  - A higher proportion of households in Mullaitivu reported that at least one of their children stopped attending school (4.3%, 11), were unable to attend school due to the need to engage in paid (5.1%, 13), or unpaid (4.7, 12) work. A higher proportion of households in Trincomalee also reported drop-outs due to paid (5.3%, 14) or unpaid (3.8%, 10) work.
- Almost all (99%) households indicated having access to educational materials either at the local market or in town. However, 3 out of 5 of these households (61%) indicated that educational materials are available but are becoming expensive.
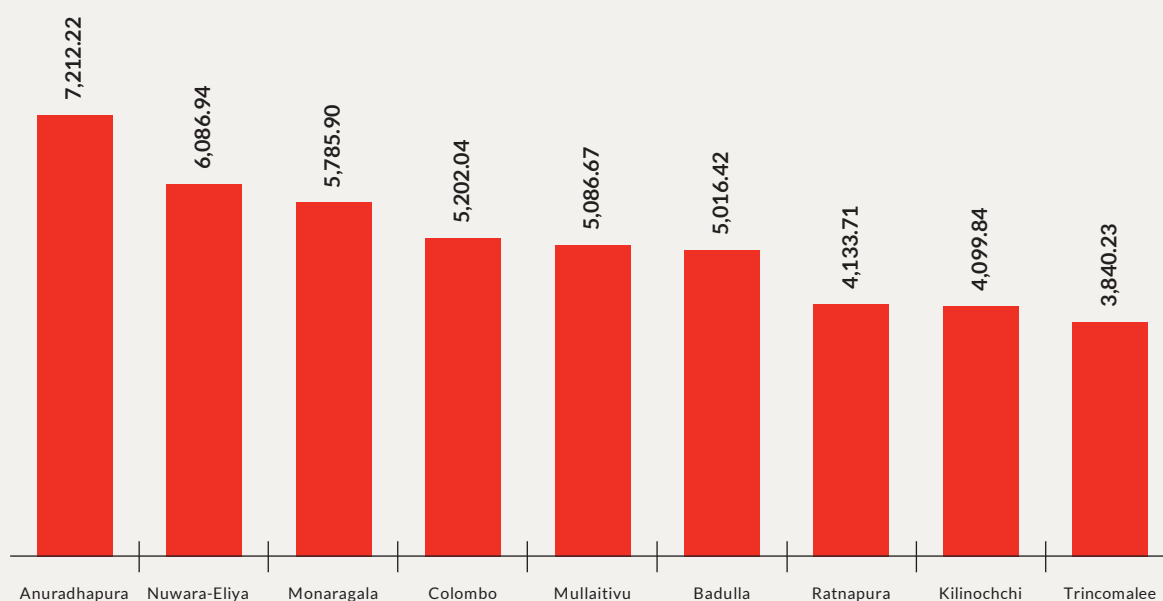
Availability of educational materials

- Available at the local market
- Price increased (becoming expensive)
- Not available at the local market but available in town
- Not available anywhere

1%
15%
23%
61%

- A significantly higher proportion of households in Anuradhapura (83%) reported an increased price of educational materials as compared to all other districts (p<0.01), which correlates with this district having the highest average monthly expenditure on education/learning materials.

- Significantly more households in Monaragala (72%), Colombo and Badulla (69%), and Nuwara Eliya (68%) districts also reported educational materials becoming expensive compared to the remaining districts.

Monthly average of education and learning materials expenses per household by district(Rs.)

Overall average(Rs): 5218.93

District	Amount (Rs.)
Anuradhapura	7,212.22
Nuwara-Eliya	6,086.94
Monaragala	5,785.90
Colombo	5,202.04
Mullaitivu	5,086.67
Badulla	5,016.42
Ratnapura	4,133.71
Kilinochchi	4,099.84
Trincomalee	3,840.23

Community Feedback on Support ⟩

Cash Support Since the Economic Crisis

- **The majority of households (80%) have not received any cash support in the past 6 months, this includes 42% of the poor households.**
- 13.2% received cash support from the government, 3.4% from their community/family/friends, 2.4% from humanitarian organisations (NGOs), and 1% from other sources.
- Of these households that received cash support from the government, 53% are poor and 47% are non-poor.

Effective Modality to Support

- 40.5% of the households cited in-kind support as the most effective modality to support families, followed by 34% for multipurpose cash assistance, and 16.9% for subsidy-capital/cash for work.
- Service support which included psychosocial support, counselling referral service, complementary services, information to access to support, etc. (4.2%), voucher support (2.4%), other (2.2%).
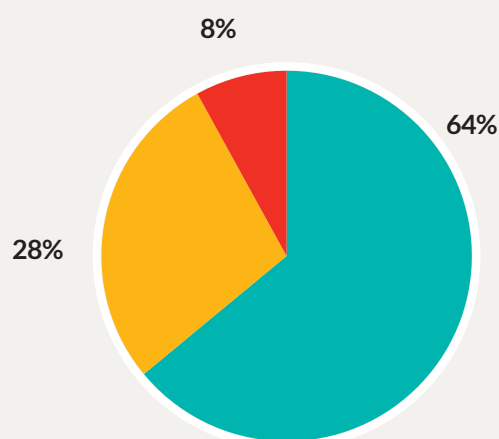
Access to Banking Facilities ⟩

Status of Banking

- 8% of the respondents do not have a bank account or ATM card
  - Significantly more households in Monaragala (16.2%) and Colombo (14.3%) reported they do not have a bank account or ATM card as compared to all other districts (p<0.05)
- 64% have an active bank account with an ATM card
- 28% participants have an active bank account with no ATM card

Preferred Method of Receiving Cash

- About two thirds (68%) of the households prefer to receive cash assistance through bank transfer, followed by one-third of the households for cash in hand (29%) and a few (3%) prefer cash vouchers.
- Less than 1% cited mobile cash or money order as their preferred method.

Access to banking facilities

8%

64%

28%

- ■ Active bank accounts with ATM card
- ■ Active bank accounts without ATM card
- ■ Do not have a bank account or ATM card

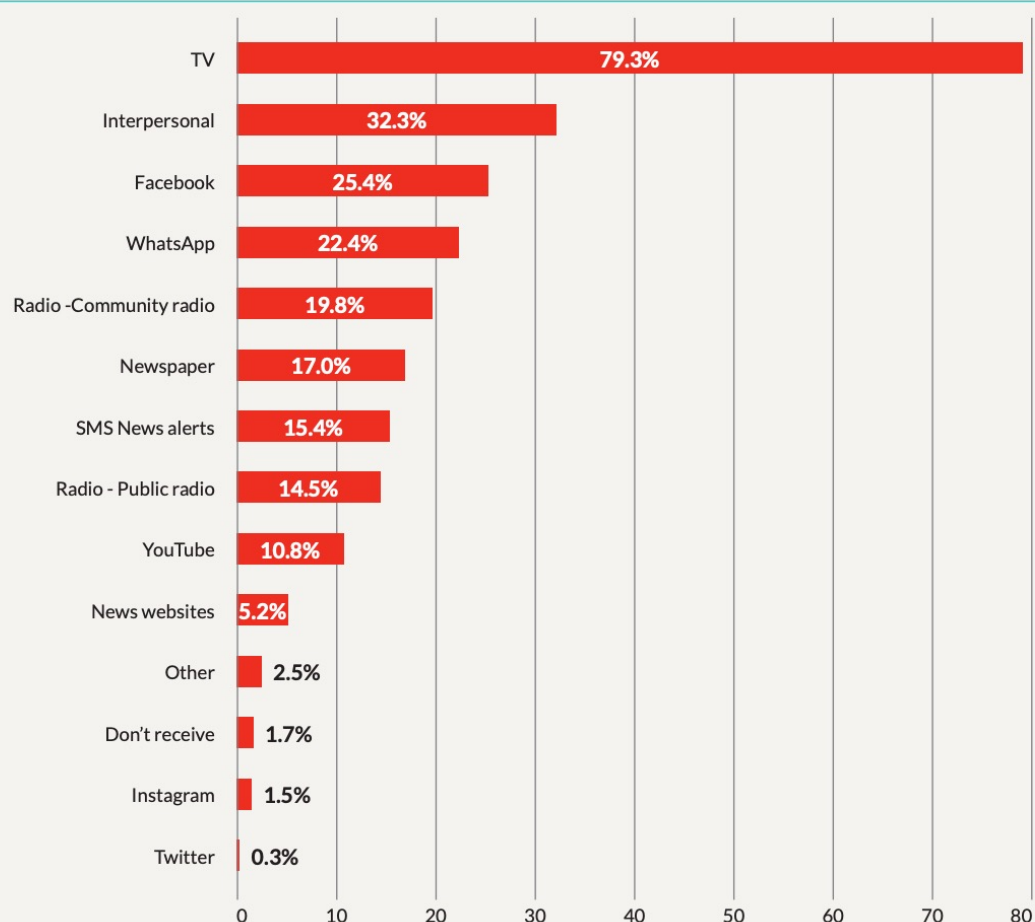## Type of Bank for Financial Transactions

- 93.8% of the households have access to banking facilities. Among them, 49.3% manages their financial transactions in commercial banks, and 46.4% manages through state banks. The percentage of the households use the following local banking such as Islamic Banks (0.7%), Rural (6.7%), and Samurdhi (12%).
- 6.2% indicated they do not have access to any banking facilities.

Risks Associated with Cash Assistance

- The majority (79%) of the respondents thought that cash assistance will not increase any safety or security risk either to the recipients or to the programme staff members.
- Among the 21.3% of respondents who think cash assistance might increase their risk;
  - 50% of them think it would spend more for transport and other expenditure to collect the cash.
  - 35% showed concern of risks of robbery while traveling to and from the cash collection points
  - 14% were concerned about violence towards them or towards program staff (2%)

Access to Information ⊙

Household's method for receiving news updates

Method	Percentage
TV	79.3%
Interpersonal	32.3%
Facebook	25.4%
WhatsApp	22.4%
Radio -Community radio	19.8%
Newspaper	17.0%
SMS News alerts	15.4%
Radio - Public radio	14.5%
YouTube	10.8%
News websites	5.2%
Other	2.5%
Don't receive	1.7%
Instagram	1.5%
Twitter	0.3%

- The most commonly stated method to receive news is TV (79%), followed by interpersonal communication (32%), Facebook (25%), WhatsApp (22%)
- **Respondents reported receiving** news and updates about the current situation though a variety of media including:
  - **Electronic media:** TV (79%), Community Radio (19.8%), Public Radio (16%) and News websites (5%)
  - **Print media:** Newspaper(17%)
  - **Interpersonal communication** (32%) - including face to face, meetings, peer-peer communication (neighbours, friends, family)
  - **Social media** such as Facebook (25%), WhatsApp (22%), YouTube (10%), Instagram (1.5%), Twitter (0.3%) and through SMS (Short Message Service) alerts of mobile(15%)

- 1.7% reported not receiving news/updates and 2.5% access it in other forms.
- One-third of the household s have reported poor mobile network connection as challenge to receive emergency updates, followed by weak signal of TV news channel in the area (10.7%).
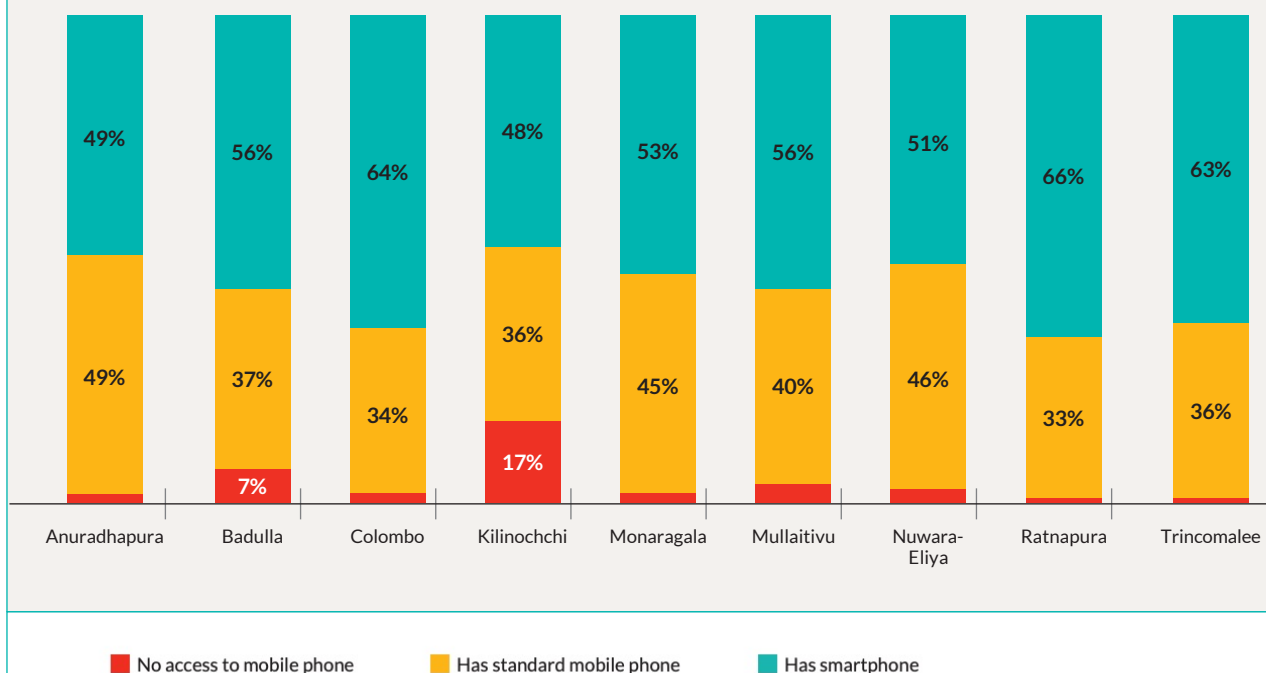
Access to Mobile Devices

- **96% of households** have access to mobile devices at home. However, only **56% have smartphones.**
- **6 out of 10 households in Colombo, Ratnapura, and Trincomalee** have access to smartphones.
- Nearly **1 out of 5 households** do not have access to mobile devices in Kilinochchi. The highest percentage of households who do not have access to mobile phones compared to other districts.
- **6 out of 10 households** among poor households do not have smartphones as compared to 3 in 10 households who are not poor.

Household's access to mobile devices
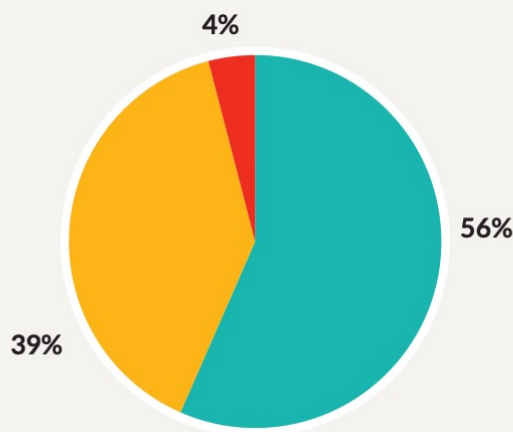
- ■ Yes, I have smart phone   ■ Yes, I have a standard mobile phone   ■ No, I don't have a mobile phone

Pie chart values: 56%, 39%, 4%

Household's access to mobile devices per district

District	Has smartphone	Has standard mobile phone	No access to mobile phone
Anuradhapura	49%	49%	
Badulla	56%	37%	7%
Colombo	64%	34%	
Kilinochchi	48%	36%	17%
Monaragala	53%	45%	
Mullaitivu	56%	40%	
Nuwara-Eliya	51%	46%	
Ratnapura	66%	33%	
Trincomalee	63%	36%	

■ No access to mobile phone   ■ Has standard mobile phone   ■ Has smartphone

By poor and non-poor households

	No access to mobile phone	Has standard mobile phone	Has smartphone
Not poor		29%	68%
Poor	7%	52%	41%

Scale: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100
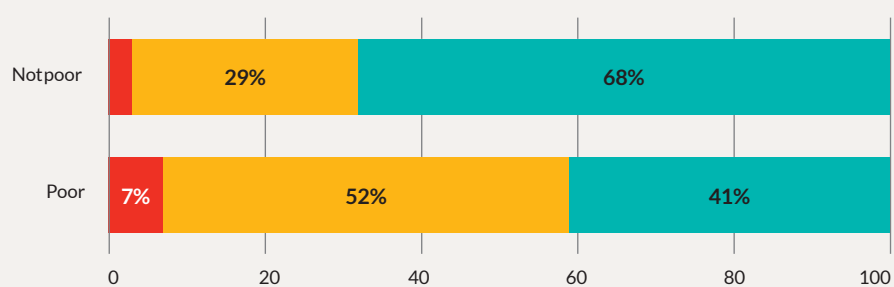
Legend:
- No access to mobile phone
- Has standard mobile phone
- Has smartphone

REFERENCE

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APPENDIX

A. Measures of Specific Variables

Disability Status

The Washington Group Short Set (WG-SS) of Questions on Disability was used in the household tool to identify disability of the household head (Washington Group, 2020). The WG-SS provides information on difficulties a person may have in undertaking basic activities. This information is widely accepted and used methodology for identifying disability as defined by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which defines "persons with disabilities" as "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (UNGA, 2006). The WG-SS looks at six functional domains, i.e., seeing, hearing, mobility, remembering or concentrating, self-care and communication. It does not capture all types of disability, particularly psychosocial disabilities. A disability is present if a respondent answered "a lot of difficulties" or cannot do at all" in at least one of the six domains. On the other hand, a person without disabilities is defined as anyone who do not respond "a lot of difficulties" or cannot do at all" in all domains.

Poverty/Economically poor scoring

The Multidimensional Poverty Index for Sri Lanka (https://mppn.org/mpi-sri-lanka/) was used as a basis for this categorisation. Due to data collection limitations, only four out of ten of the MPI indicators of poverty for Sri Lanka were used to classify households as poor or non-poor, including those who have a maximum of the following:

- Cement/concrete, sand/mud/wood/grass/tarpaulin floor being used for the floors of the house.
- Not owning any transport or only owning a motorcycle or bicycle to support mobility.
- Having only a television and/or radio as their major stationary assets, or not having any major stationary assets at all.
- Using firewood, coal, animal waste, or grass for cooking as their major energy source.

Save the Children's Rapid Needs Assessment Livelihoods Coping Strategy Index

Save the Children's Rapid Needs Assessment Menu of Questions April 2020

#	Master list of livelihoods coping strategies Strategy	Category
1	Sold household assets/goods (radio, furniture, television, jewellery etc.)	Stress
2	Spent savings	Stress
3	Sold more animals (non-productive) than usual	Stress
4	Sent household members to eat elsewhere	Stress
5	Purchased food on credit or borrowed food	Stress
6	Borrowed money	Stress
7	Moved children to less expensive school	Stress
8	Sold productive assets or means of transport (sewing machine,	Crisis
9	Withdrew children from school	Crisis
10	Reduced expenses on health (including drugs) and education	Crisis
11	Harvested immature crops (e.g. green maize)	Crisis
12	Consumed seed stocks that were to be saved for the next season	Crisis
13	Decreased expenditures on fertilizer, pesticide, fodder, animal feed, veterinary care, etc	Crisis
14	Sold house or land	Emergency
15	Begged	Emergency
16	Engaged in illegal income activities (theft, prostitution)	Emergency
17	Sold last female animals	Emergency
18	Entire household migrated	Emergency

rCSI

The Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) was used to reflect both the frequency of each strategy or behaviour and the severity of the strategies used. The rCSI was based on a list of five food-related coping strategies the household used seven days before the survey. The rCSI raw scores were then calculated by multiplying the frequency with universally used severity weight, then summing the weighted scores for each coping strategy. The maximum score for rCSI was 56, which would indicate that a household has used all five strategies every day for the last 7 days. We categorized rCSI into IPC Phase 1 – none/minimal - if the rCSI score was 3 or lesser; IPC Phase 2 – stressed – if the rCSI score was between 4 to 18; and IPC Phase 3, 4 or 5- crisis, emergencies/famine - if the rCSI score was above 18.

Mental Health and Psycho-Social Well-being

Given the time-sensitive nature and scope of the study it was not feasible to carry out detailed assessments of child and adult mental health and psycho-social well-being using comprehensive psychometric measures, thus limiting the findings to the particular aspects researched in the study and not providing exact indications of children's and adults' well-being. Aspects of mental health and psycho-social well-being in children and adults were measured through self-assessment and observational rating scales, covering a number of positive and negative feelings as well as changes in children's behaviour.

rCSI Questions and Weightage

In the past 7 days, if there have been times when you did not have enough food or money to buy food, how often has your households had to:	Universal severity Weight
a. Rely on less preferred and less expensive foods?	1
b. Borrow food, or rely on help from a friend or relative?	2
c. Limit portion size at mealtimes?	1
d. Restrict consumption by adults in order for small children to eat?	3
e. Reduce the number of meals eaten in a day?	1

Save the Children