

COPING STRATEGY INDEX

Impact indicator, Outcome indicator, Cluster indicator, ECHO indicator, DEVCO indicator

Indicator Phrasing

English: % of households in the highest Coping Strategy Index score category

French: % de ménages dans la catégorie la plus élevée de l'Indice de Stratégie de Survie

Portuguese: % de agregados familiares classificados na categoria mais alta do Índice de Estratégias de Sobrevivência

Czech: % domácností v nejvyšší kategorii Coping Strategy Indexu

What is its purpose?

The Coping Strategy Index (CSI) is an indicator of a household's food security assessing the extent to which households use harmful coping strategies when they do not have enough food or enough money to buy food. The result is reported by a numeric score.

How to Collect and Analyse the Required Data

Determine the indicator's value by using the following methodology:

1) **Identify the most frequent coping strategies which the target households use when they do not have enough food** and do not have enough money to buy food. While you can take advantage of a list of the most common strategies included in WFP's guidance (see below) or those identified by the Food Security Cluster (if available), **you might need to adjust the list to make it more context-specific**, so that only strategies that are locally used during food insecure times are included in the assessment. There is no point in asking people about strategies they do not use or strategies that are common even in food secure periods, such as collecting wild food in the river.

2) **Identify how "severe" each of these individual coping strategies is** considered to be. Such information needs to be collected from community-level focus group discussions, **providing a "weight"** for the perceived severity of each strategy (1 - low, 2 - medium, 3 - severe).

3) Conduct individual interviews with the representatives of a [representative sample](#) of the target households to **assess how frequently people had to use these strategies** in the assessed recall period (e.g. twice in the past 7 days).

4) During the data analysis, for each coping strategy, **multiply the assigned "weight" by its frequency**, receiving the "score" per each strategy. Do this individually per each respondent.

5) By **summing up the scores of all assessed strategies** you will receive the total Coping Strategy Index score. A high score means extensive use of negative coping strategies and hence increased food insecurity.

6) The scores are usually divided into three **categories**: low CSI score (0-50), medium (51-100) and high (over 100). However, these **thresholds often need to be modified** based on the context and the number of coping strategies you assess (e.g. 0-40; 41-80; and over 80). If you use the indicator for your baseline/ endline, you will be **aiming to reduce the percentage of households in the highest CSI category**.

7) To **determine the indicator's value**, divide the number of respondents in the highest CSI category by the total number of respondents. Multiply the result by 100 to convert it to a percentage.

Disaggregate by

[Disaggregate](#) the data by [wealth](#) and other vulnerability criteria.

Important Comments

1) CSI is one of **ECHO's Key Outcome Indicators**. However, ECHO's guidance on its indicators (see below) as well as **European Commission DEVCO's** guidance on the use CSI indicator requires you to **report on the average CSI score** – not on the % of households in the highest Coping Strategy Index score category.

2) During emergencies, some agencies use a **modified version of the CSI indicator**: "average negative coping strategy index does not increase over the course of the intervention".

3) **Do not assess a high number of coping strategies** - respondents as well as enumerators get tired of being asked/ asking similar questions and are more likely to provide less precise answers. If possible, limit the number to no more than 10 strategies.

4) CSI is prone to significant seasonal differences. Do your best to **collect baseline and endline data at the same time of a year**; otherwise it is very likely that they will not be comparable (i.e. providing largely useless data).

5) Invest enough effort into **carefully identifying and selecting the most common coping strategies** you want to assess. Furthermore, make sure that all data collectors understand the difference between these strategies, as some of them might seem quite similar.

Access Additional Guidance

- WFP (2008) [The Coping Strategies Index - Field Methods Manual](#)
- ECHO (2016) [List of Key Outcome Indicators \(KOI\)](#)