



KEY FINDINGS FROM THE BASELINE STUDY ON THE UGANDA SELF-RELIANCE INDEX (UG-SRI) FOR REFUGEES AND HOST-COMMUNITIES

NOVEMBER 2025



Photo: WFP Uganda

Introduction and key highlights

Self-reliance and resilience have become priority outcomes of refugee support worldwide. Self-reliance is defined as the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet its essential needs in a sustainable manner and with dignity (UNHCR, 2005). It is a core commitment of the Government of Uganda (GoU) and is the third pillar of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in Uganda.

The Uganda Self-Reliance Index (UG-SRI) provides an overall measure of a household's capacity to meet its needs without external assistance. It is a weighted average over seven domains: (1) economic capacity; (2) food security and nutrition, (3) health; (4) education; (5) shelter; (6) water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and (7) social cohesion. In each domain, households are scored and categorized as either low, moderate, or high level of self-reliance.

The measurement tool was rolled out for the first time in December 2024 during a baseline study that sets the foundation for the UG-SRI. Key findings of this baseline study are summarized in this document. The Government of Uganda will annually collect the data for the Index. The index may also be included in annual assessments like the Food Security and Nutritional Assessment (FSNA).

All organizations involved in livelihood programmes that promote self-reliance should monitor progress using the same tools and methods, at least twice annually, to assess contributions toward self-reliance.

The Self-reliance Reference Group will review the index every two years from its launch, ensuring it is based on evidence. Updates to the index may include breaking down information by settlement and population type using a step-by-step approach.

Key highlights – across all 7 domains of self-reliance

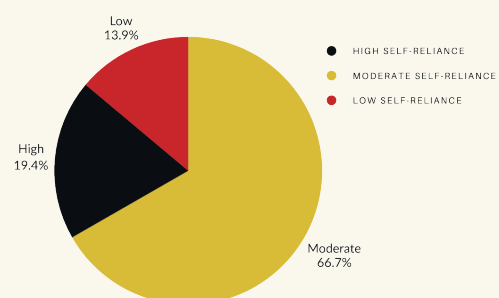
The UG-SRI 2024 results show that the majority of households (70%) have moderate self-reliance status. An additional 14 percent of households have low self-reliance and only 16 percent have high self-reliance.

Overall, the findings suggest that while most households experience moderate self-reliance, there is lower self-reliance among refugee, female-headed, and Northern households, as well as recent arrivals.

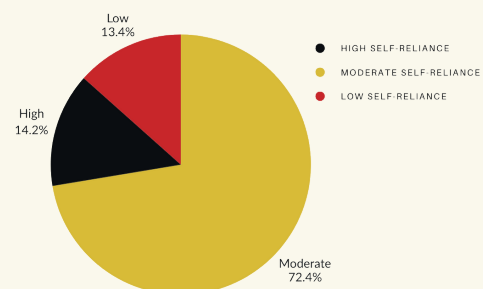
- Host households had a larger proportion of households with high self-reliance (19%) compared to refugee households (14%). Few refugee households residing Uganda for less than five years (5%) achieved high self-reliance compared to those with five or more years (16%).
- In both refugee and host communities, **self-reliance is highest in the education and health domains and lowest in WASH and food security and nutrition.**
- The factors that show the greatest disparities are between regions, household size, and length of stay. The Northern region has more households with low self-reliance (17%) than the Western region (6%). More single-headed households (47%) experience low self-reliance compared to medium-sized houses (22%) and large households (12%).
- Female-headed households have slightly lower self-reliance. Only 10% of female-headed households achieve high self-reliance compared to 16% of male-headed households.



Household Self-Reliance Levels
Host Community
UG-SRI 2024



Household Self-Reliance Levels
Refugee Community
UG-SRI 2024



Objectives and methodology of the baseline Study

The objective of the study is to enhance the understanding, coordination, measurement, and tracking of self-reliance among refugee and host community households in Uganda. Specifically, it aims to (1) develop a standardized self-reliance measurement tool to track the progress, (2) identify key barriers and enablers of self-reliance, and (3) establish the standards for a unified monitoring and reporting.

The baseline study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to assess the initial self-reliance status of households, against which future progress can be measured. The study was conducted in all the 12 refugee-hosting districts in Uganda, targeting both host communities and refugee households residing in designated settlements. Urban refugee households in districts like Kampala were not covered in the study.

A total of 2,920 households were sampled, comprising 1,560 refugee households and 1,360 host-community households. A stratified multi-stage sampling approach was used. The districts were grouped into two strata (Western and Northern). In total, 2,679 households were successfully interviewed with a response rate of 91.7%.

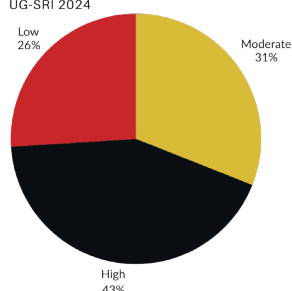
Data was collected through face-to-face household interviews and disaggregated by type of population (refugee/host), gender, region, household size, age of the head of household, and presence of a person with a disability. Data from refugee households were further analyzed based on the length of presence in the country. The baseline collected data on all indicators needed to compute the UG-SRI.

Limitations of the study includes potential recall bias by respondents, regional variations in the interpretation of questions, challenges accessing hard-to-reach areas, and time and budget constraints. The data collection was conducted before the funding reduction from the government of United States, and the analysis is not reflective of the changes and potential impact in the households to cover essential needs. When implementing the UG SRI, it should be paired with a context analysis—covering barriers, enablers, gender, protection, and inclusion gaps—to inform the design of new programmes or to guide mid-term and end-of-project reviews for ongoing programmes



FINDINGS ON ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE

ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE LEVELS
UG-SRI 2024



There is a wide range of economic self-reliance between households.

Of all the households, 43% scored high, 31% scored moderate, and 26% scored low level of self-reliance.

23% of households had expenditure equal to or above the Minimum Expenditure Basket for essential items.

- **Economic self-reliance was higher among host communities.** A higher proportion of households in host communities (49%) demonstrate high self-reliance compared to in refugee settlements (39%). Host community households consistently demonstrate greater economic stability, with higher employment, more stable and diversified income sources, better access

to credit, and higher savings rates. However, 20% of host-community household depended on remittances compared to only two percent of refugee households.

- **Economic self-reliance was higher in the Western region.** High self-reliance was more common among households in the Western region (59%) compared to the Northern region (36%). A third of households (33%) in the Northern region experienced low economic self-reliance, which is three times higher than in the Northern region (10%).
- **Self-reliance was higher among male-headed households.** A higher proportion of male-headed households (46%) achieved high self-reliance compared to female-headed households (39%). Female-headed households have less stable employment, diversified income sources, credit, and savings.
- **There were no significant differences** in economic self-reliance between households with and without members with a disability.

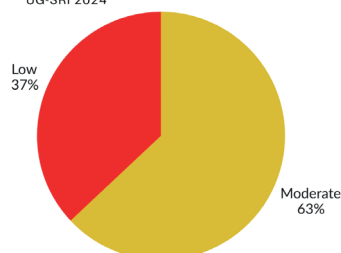


FINDINGS ON SELF-RELIANCE IN FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

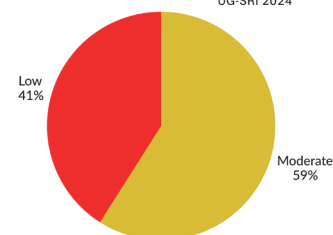
The assessment found that no group attained a high level of self-reliance in food security and nutrition.

- **Self-reliance was lower among refugee households.** Refugee households scored low (41%) or moderate (59%) levels of self-reliance. In host communities, fewer households (37%) had low self-reliance. Refugees with a longer stay (>5 years) had a better rate of moderate food security and nutrition (60%) compared to those with less than five years' stay (52%).
- **In the Northern region 42% of households fall into the low self-reliance category, compared to 32% of households in the Western region.**
- **Male-headed households had lower self-reliance.** Among male-headed households, 59% have moderate level and 41% experience low level of self-reliance. For female-headed households, 71% have moderate level and 29% have a low level of self-reliance.

FOOD SECURITY SELF-RELIANCE LEVELS
HOST COMMUNITY
UG-SRI 2024



FOOD SECURITY SELF-RELIANCE LEVELS
REFUGEE COMMUNITY
UG-SRI 2024



- **Disability and age did not have significant differences.** Fewer households with a person with a disability had low self-reliance (36%) compared to those without a disabled member (39%). Both child-headed and elderly-headed households display similar levels of low self-reliance (39%) and moderate self-reliance (61%) in food security and nutrition.





FINDINGS ON HEALTH SELF-RELIANCE

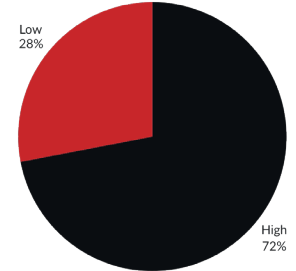
The majority of households (72%) demonstrate a high level of self-reliance in the domain of health, and the remaining 28% experienced low self-reliance.

- **Refugee households show greater health self-reliance.** The rate of high self-reliance was 75% among refugee households, compared to 66% in host communities.
- **Female-headed households are more self-reliant in health.** A higher proportion of female-headed households (73%) experienced high self-reliance compared to male-headed households (60%).
- **There is greater self-reliance in the Western region.** There is a higher proportion of households with high self-reliance

(79%) in the Western region, in contrast to 67% of households in the Northern region.

- **Age is not a significant factor in health self-reliance.** Among both child-headed households and those headed by older adults, 27% experienced low self-reliance, whereas 31% of households with heads aged 18 to 64 years had low self-reliance.

HEALTH SELF-RELIANCE LEVELS
UG-SRI 2024

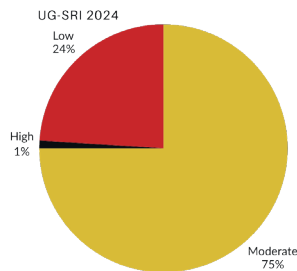


FINDINGS ON SELF-RELIANCE IN SHELTER

The majority of households (75%) experienced moderate self-reliance in shelter, while very few (1%) attained a high level of self-reliance in shelter.

- **Self-reliance was highest in the Western region,** where 2% of households attained high self-reliance and 78% attained moderate self-reliance. In the Northern region, only 0.3% had attained high self-reliance and 77% had moderate self-reliance.
- **Self-reliance was similar between types of population.** The majority of host community (79%) and refugee households (76%) had moderate self-reliance,

SHELTER SELF-RELIANCE LEVELS
UG-SRI 2024



and another 20% and 22%, respectively, had low self-reliance.

- **The length of stay and household size were influential factors.** Low self-reliance in shelter was more common among refugee households with a short duration (38%) compared to households residing 5 years or more in the country (20%) who have more access to permanent structures. Low self-reliance was more common in large households (23%), compared to 15% of medium-sized houses, and only 1% of single-member households.
- **Female-headed and child-headed households have lower shelter self-reliance.** More female-headed households (21%) experienced low self-reliance than male-headed households (15%). More child-headed households experienced low self-reliance (25%), compared to households headed by adults (18%) or older persons (12%).



FINDINGS FOR SELF-RELIANCE IN WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH)

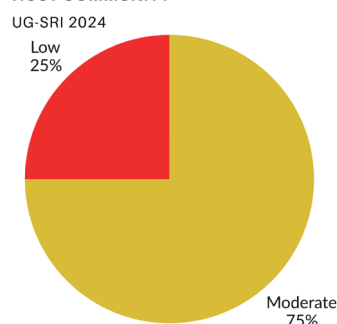
Self-reliance related to WASH is moderate and low across all groups. No households attained a high self-reliance rating in WASH.

- **Host communities show lower WASH self-reliance.** A quarter of households in host communities (25%) report low self-reliance, compared to 15% of refugee households. Refugee households residing in Uganda for less than five years were more likely to have low self-reliance (22%) than those residing more than 5 years (14%).
- **WASH self-reliance is lower in the Western region.** In the Western region, 31% of households report low self-reliance, while in the Northern region 15% of households have low self-reliance.
- **WASH self-reliance is lower among male-headed households.** A higher proportion of male-headed households (21%) experienced low self-reliance, compared to female-headed households (15%). The majority (85%) of female-headed households report moderate WASH self-reliance.
- **Larger households have lower WASH self-reliance.** A higher proportion of large households (20%) have low self-reliance,

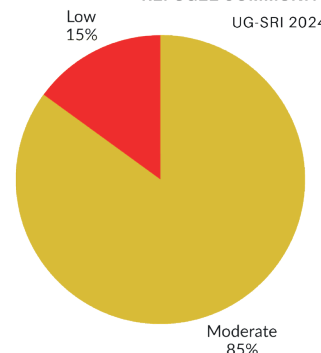
compared to 19% of medium-sized households and 15% of single-member households.

- **There are modest differences between disability status and age.** Households with a member with a disability have lower WASH self-reliance (23%) than those without a disabled member (19%). More households led by children (20%) had low self-reliance, compared to those headed by adults (19%) and those headed by elderly (16%).

WASH SELF-RELIANCE LEVELS
HOST COMMUNITY
UG-SRI 2024



WASH SELF-RELIANCE LEVELS
REFUGEE COMMUNITY
UG-SRI 2024



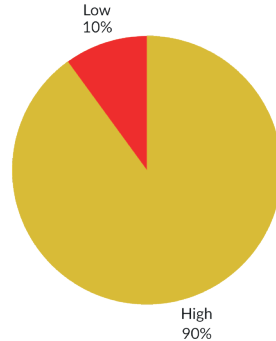


FINDINGS ON EDUCATIONAL SELF-RELIANCE

There is overall a high level of self-reliance in education among the population (90%).

- **Educational self-reliance is higher among refugee households.** More refugee households (92%) than host community households (88%) attained a high level of self-reliance. The majority of the remaining households attained moderate self-reliance. Only 1% of households in host communities have low self-reliance.

EDUCATION SELF-RELIANCE LEVELS
UG-SRI 2024



- **Educational self-reliance is higher among female-headed households.** More female-headed households (81%) attained high self-reliance than male-headed households (77%). Low self-reliance was only found among male-headed households (0.2%).
- **Self-reliance is higher in the Western region.** A higher proportion of households (92%) in the Western region attained a high level of self-reliance, compared to 89% in the Northern region.
- **Disability status is not an influential factor.** The proportion of households attaining high self-reliance was similar between households without a person with a disability (90%) and those that did have a member with a disability (88%).



FINDINGS FOR SELF-RELIANCE IN THE DOMAIN OF SOCIAL COHESION

There are **varying levels of social cohesion** among population groups. Overall 61% households report belonging to a community group (savings, farmers, etc) and 69% have a support network they can rely on in times of need. Belonging to groups and having a support network was more common in the Western region rather than Northern region and among host communities rather than refugees.

- **Refugee households have lower social cohesion.** Among refugees, 38% of households report low self-reliance and 49% report high self-reliance. In contrast, only 22% host community households have low self-reliance and 65% have high self-reliance.
- **There is lower social cohesion in the Northern region.** Low

self-reliance was found among 36% of households in the Northern region, compared to 19% in the Western region. Two-thirds of households (66%) in the Western region had high levels of social cohesion versus 52% of households in the Northern region.

- **Social cohesion is lower among female-headed households.** Low social cohesion ratings were more common among female-headed households (36%) than male headed households (26%). Fewer female-headed households (50%) than male-headed households (60%) experienced high levels of social cohesion.
- **Disability status yields minimal difference.** Low reliance rates are similar between households with a person with a disability (33%) and those without (31%).

