# Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security & Livelihoods Impact Survey

## GUYANA Summary Report | September 2020

**176** Respondents

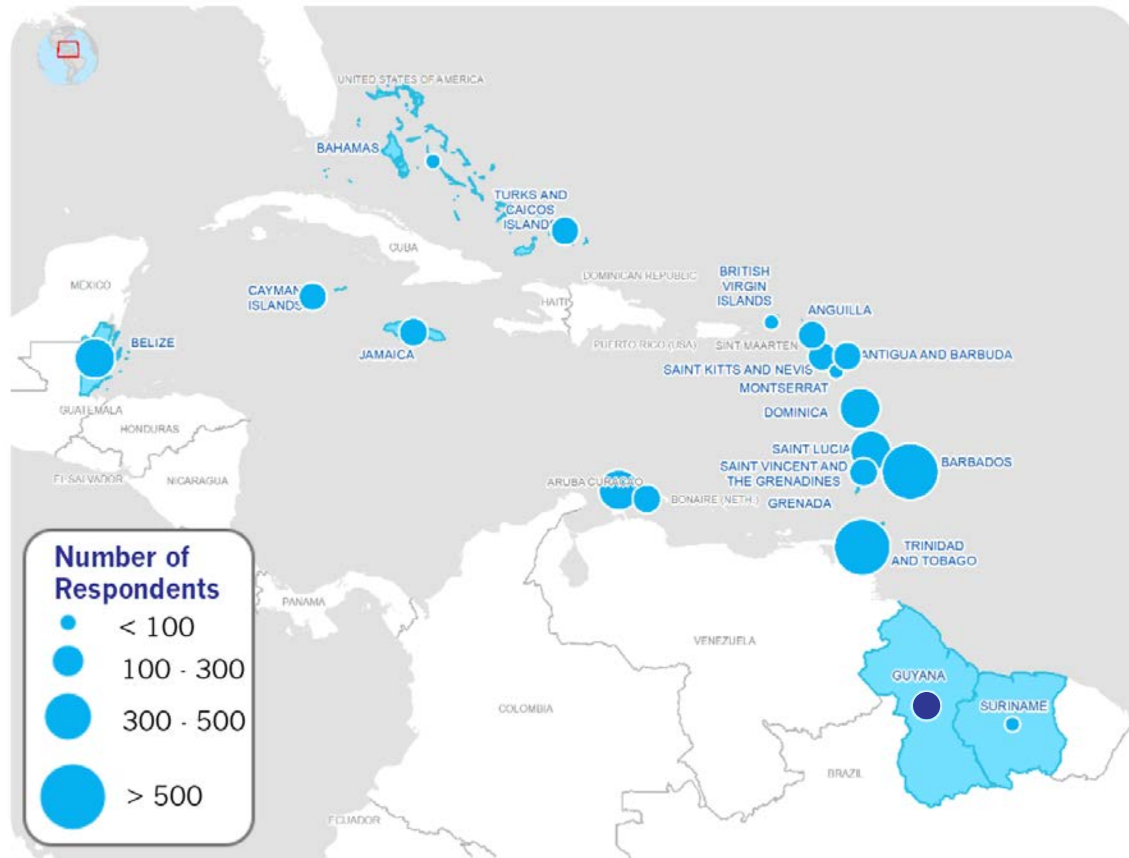
**64** Female | **36 %** Male

**36** Average age

**4** Average household size

**The COVID-19 pandemic is having far-reaching impacts on how people earn a living and meet critical needs. The Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods Impact Survey was launched by CARICOM to rapidly gather data on impacts to livelihoods, food security and access to markets.**

Two rounds of the survey have been carried out, implemented by the World Food Programme on behalf of the CARICOM Secretariat. This summary analyses data collected in the second round, carried out over the last two weeks of June 2020, which received 5,707 responses from 23 countries and territories in the Caribbean. It builds on findings from the first survey implemented in April 2020, which received 4,537 responses from 19 countries and territories. The survey was conducted using online methods and the survey link was shared via social media, e-mail and text messages. In Guyana, only 40% of the population uses the internet, and it is assumed that the poorest, most vulnerable and rural households are underrepresented in the survey results.




**Round 1** April 2020 — **4,537** Responses

**Round 2** June 2020 — **5,707** Responses

# Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security & Livelihoods Impact Survey

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**176** Respondents

**64** Female | **36 %** Male

**36** Average age

**4** Average household size

- COVID-19 and measures to contain it have impacted market access. Compared to the April survey, there is evidence that market access has worsened. One-third of respondents reported that they could not access stores and markets at some point in the week prior to the survey, compared to 20% in the April 2020 survey. The main reasons were concerns about leaving the home due to the outbreak, the closure of grocery stores and markets, and movement restrictions.

- The pandemic appears to be taking an increasing toll on incomes. Six out of ten respondents have experienced job loss or a decline in salaries in their households, significantly higher than in April (35%). At the same time, the proportion of people whose income relies on salaried work (65%) and own business/trade (12%) is dropping while more people rely on informal/casual labour (19%) and support from family and friends (12%).

- Disruptions to livelihoods are widespread. Nearly two in three respondents reported that their ability to carry out livelihoods was impacted, mainly owing to concerns about leaving the home and movement restrictions. The vast majority of respondents (90%) predict that their livelihoods will be impacted in the future.

- The availability of foods and hygiene items items in stores appears to be improving, but medicines are still not consistently fully available.

- The vast majority of respondents (93%) have changed their shopping behaviour since the pandemic began, mainly by buying larger quantities than usual, going to different stores or choosing cheaper or less preferred brands. Since April 2020, more respondents have shifted to purchasing cheaper and less preferred brands.

- The food security situation is deteriorating. Compared to April, the percentage of respondents reporting no difficulties eating enough dropped to 40% from 60%. Those reporting that they skipped meals, ate less, or went a day without eating increased from 16% to 34%. Simultaneously, food stocks have decreased, with 55% of respondents reporting having over one week's worth of food (down from 79% in April).

- Most respondents (69%) worry about illness, followed by worries about job loss (45%) and concerns about meeting food needs (37%) and other essential needs (28%).

- Comparing respondents' comments between April and June, "work" is still one of the most commonly cited topics and concerns about income are gaining prominence among survey respondents.

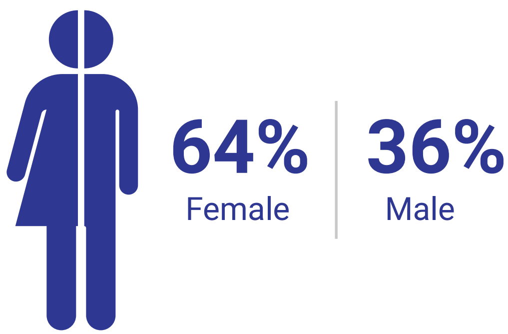
- While the use of web-based questionnaires makes this study possible, the survey's representativeness is affected in unknown ways by people's access to the internet and their incentives to respond.

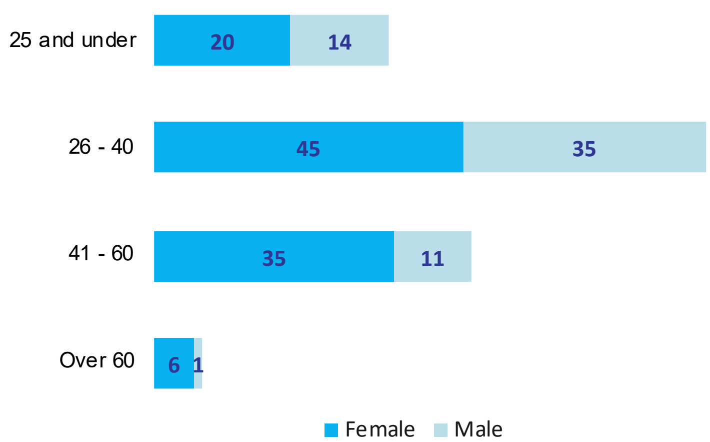
# DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

## Age and sex breakdown of respondents

Respondents are generally more likely to be female than male, and they tend to be concentrated in the 26-40 age group.

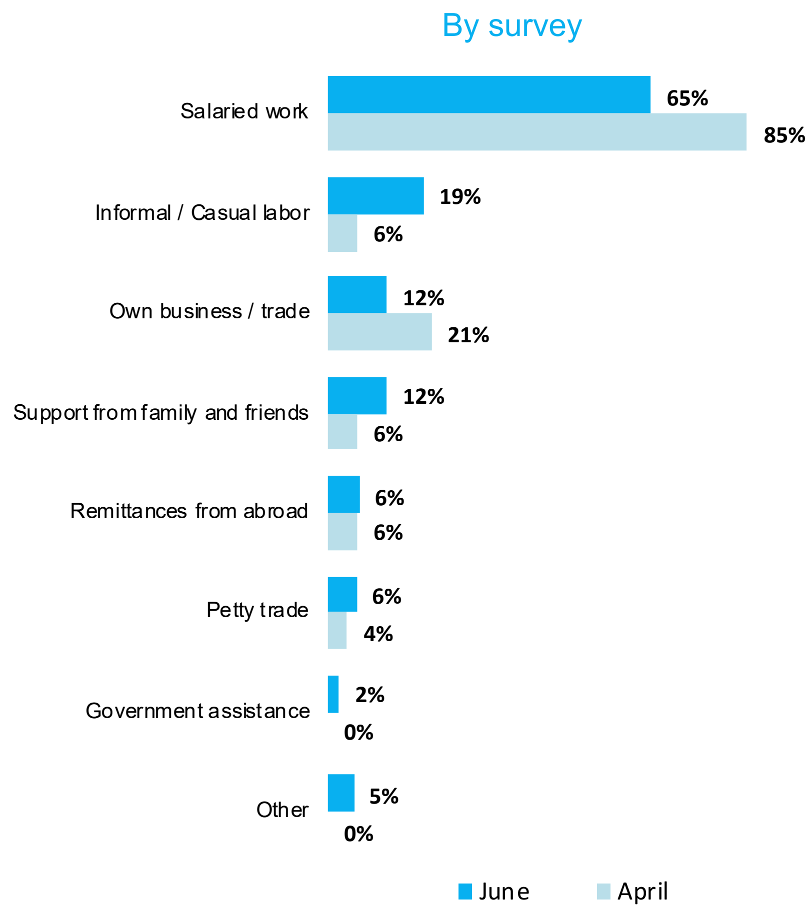
### Age and sex of respondents



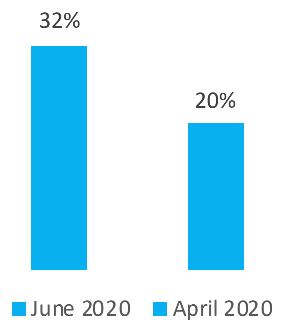

## Main household income sources

Respondents were asked to indicate the main income source/s for their household in both the April and June survey.

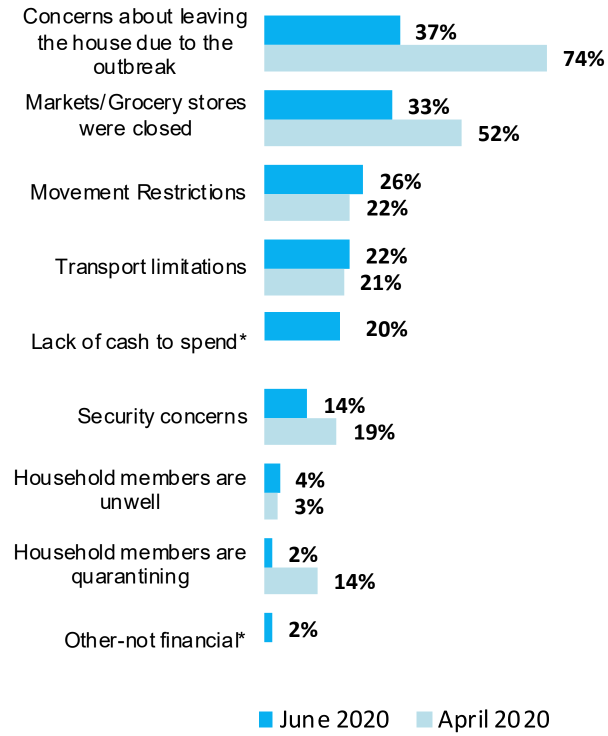


# IMPACT ON MARKET ACCESS

% of respondents reporting a time when they could not access markets in the past 7 days




For those who faced a time when they could not access markets in the past 7 days, the main reasons were…




*This option was not provided for the April 2020 survey.

COVID-19 and measures to contain it have impacted market access, with 32% of respondents reporting that they could not access stores and markets at some point 7 days prior to responding to the June survey. This percentage is higher than in the first round of the survey (20%). In June 2020, the main reasons for limited market access were concerns over leaving the house due to the outbreak and closure of grocery shops. These were still the leading reasons in the April 2020 survey, albeit to a lesser extent.

The availability of goods seems to have improved since April but for a quarter of respondents the availability of basic food and hygiene items is still limited. In June, only a third of respondents are able to fully access essential medicines in pharmacies.

***A third of households reported not being able to access markets in the past week.***

*“Not being able to get enough food supplies and medicine” – female, age 46*

*“I’m just worried about being able to feed my family” – female, age 32*

# IMPACT ON MARKET ACCESS

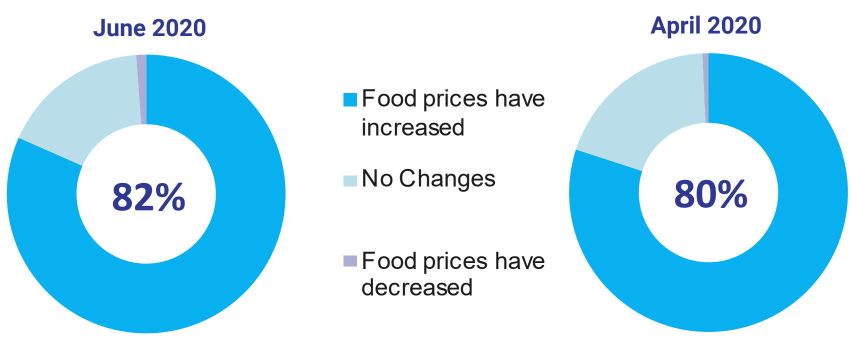
## Availability of items in stores

Respondents reported on the availability of key items in stores.

| How Available? | Fresh food items | | Basic food items | | Hygiene items | | Essential medicines | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **June 2020** | April 2020 | **June 2020** | April 2020 | **June 2020** | April 2020 | **June 2020** | April 2020 |
| Always Available | ↑ **63%** | 55% | ↑ **77%** | 68% | ↑ **73%** | 48% | ↑ **34%** | 23% |
| Partially/ sometimes available | ↓ **33%** | 38% | ↓ **24%** | 29% | ↓ **25%** | 47% | ↓ **49%** | 53% |
| Not available | = **1%** | 1% | ↑ **1%** | 0% | ↓ **1%** | 4% | ↓ **4%** | 9% |
| Don't know | ↓ **3%** | 5% | ↓ **1%** | 2% | ↓ **1%** | 2% | ↓ **14%** | 14% |

## Food prices

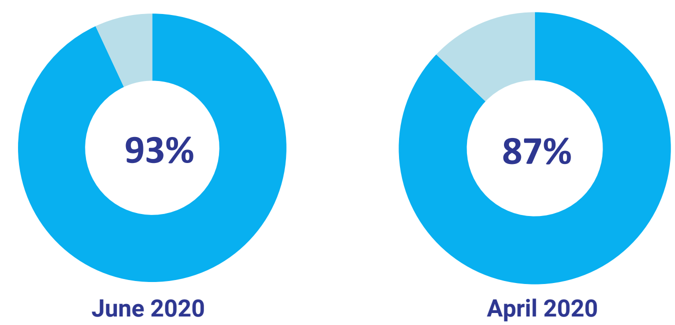
The vast majority of respondents reported on an increase in food prices.



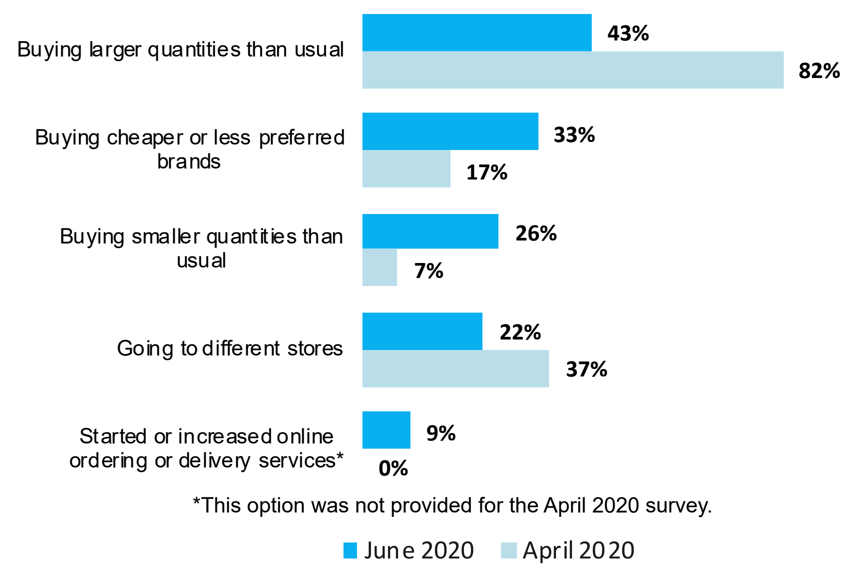

## Shopping behaviour

The vast majority of respondents changed their shopping behavior after the pandemic, which is similar to findings in April. While the main change is purchasing larger quantities, fewer respondents (45%) were doing so compared to April (82%). At the same time, the share of those purchasing cheaper or less preferred brands (33%) and buying smaller quantities (26%) increased, which may be a reflection of decreasing incomes and purchasing power.

Changed their shopping behavior




How respondents changed their shopping behavior | By survey round



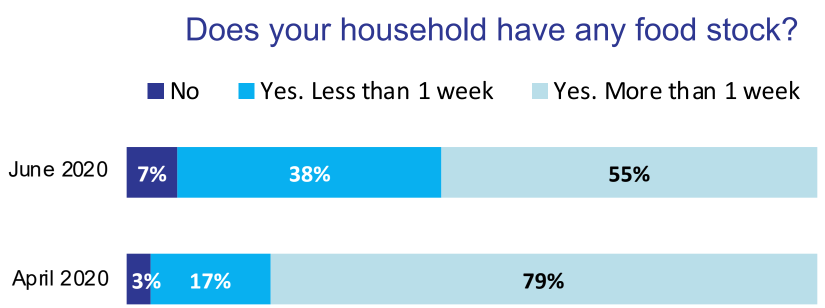

*This option was not provided for the April 2020 survey.

# IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY

The COVID-19 pandemic and measures to stop its spread are impacting food stocks and food consumption. Respondents were asked regarding the state of their food stocks. Compared to April, food stocks have deteriorated: only 55% responded that they have over 1 week's of food supply stored up, down from 79% in April. While 60% of respondents reported no difficulty consuming enough food during the week prior to the April survey, that number has fallen to under half of all respondents (40%) in June. At the same time, those reporting they ate less preferred foods, skipped meals, ate less than usual or went one day without eating increased from 34% in April to 58% in June.

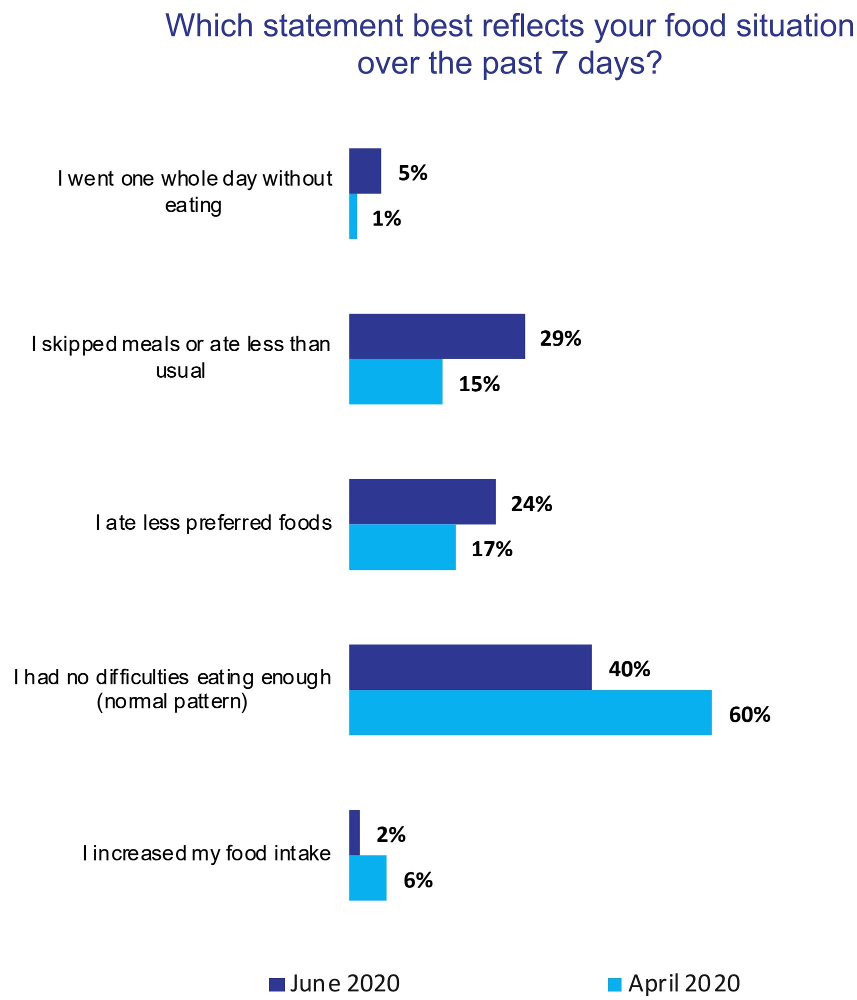
## Food Stocks

Respondents were asked to indicate the amount of available food stock for their household.




## Food consumption

Respondents were asked to reflect on their food situation



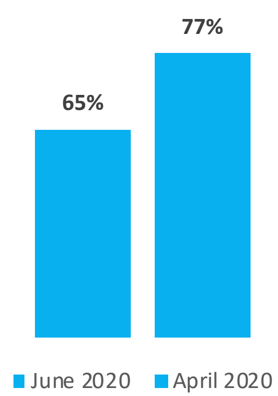
## IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

Two out of three respondents reported that their livelihoods were disrupted in the two weeks prior to the survey. The proportion of people whose livelihoods have been disrupted by the pandemic and lockdown measures has slightly reduced compared to April. However, among those who were affected in June, a growing share of respondents cites movement restrictions, concerns about leaving the house, too expensive or unavailable livelihood inputs and reduced demand for goods and services as key reasons for livelihood disruptions.

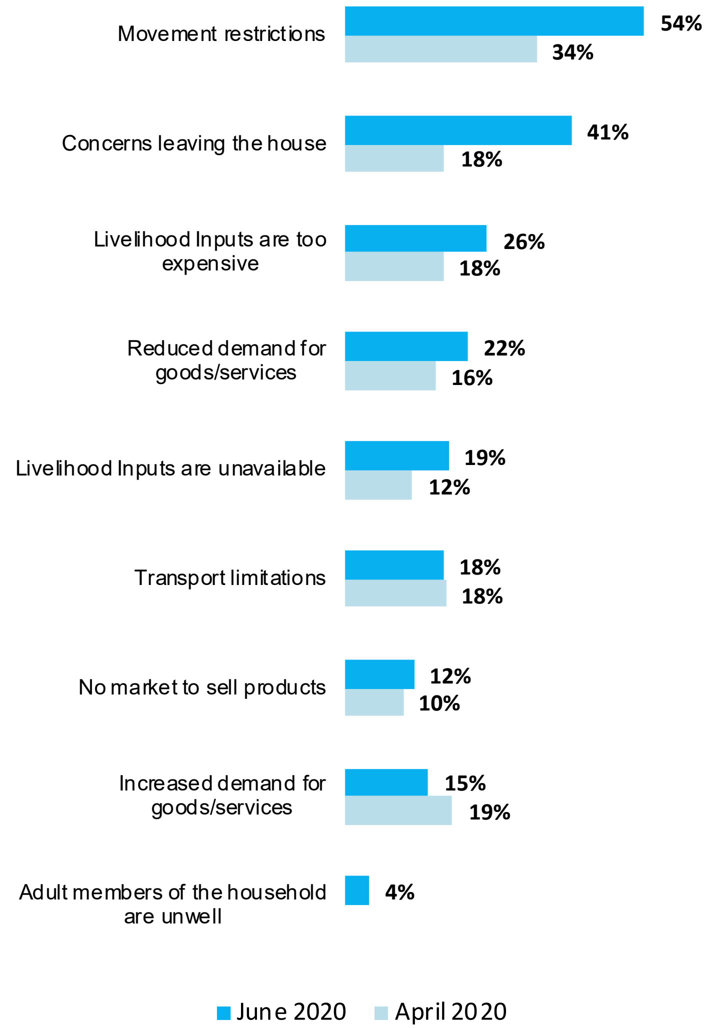
### Disruptions to livelihoods

Respondents were asked if their ability to carry out their livelihoods was affected in the last two weeks.

% of respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected




For those that reported livelihood disruptions, the main reasons were…
Multiple choices could be selected

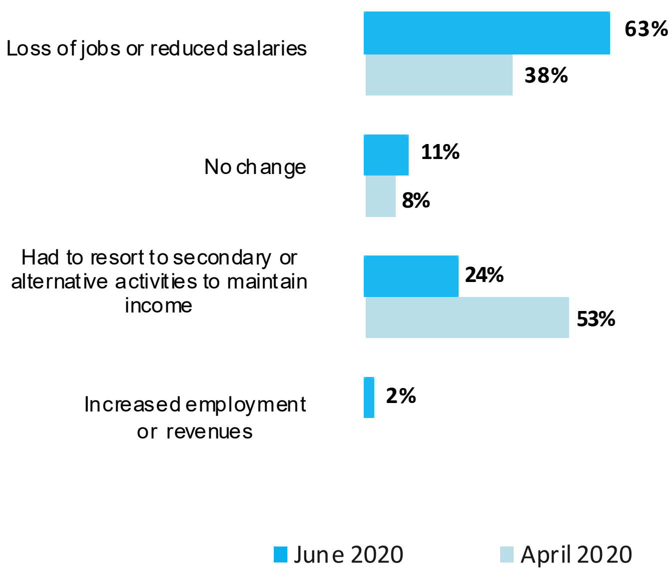


# IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

## Income changes

Most respondents' households have lost employment or salaries since the COVID-19 outbreak and the situation has worsened for a significantly higher proportion of households since April. Close to two-thirds (63%) of respondents report to have lost their job or received reduced salaries, a notable increase from April (38%).

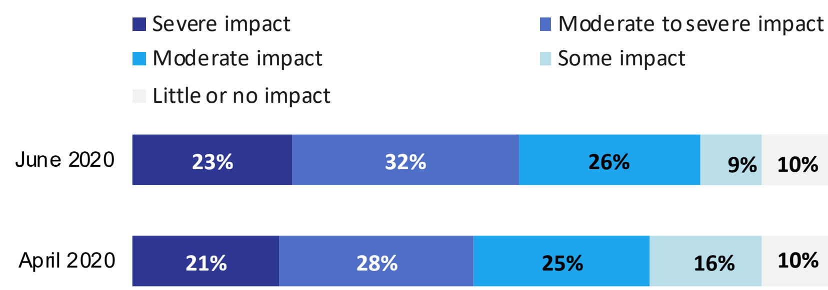
### Has your household income changed since the COVID-19 outbreak?




## Future livelihood impacts

Respondents were asked to look ahead and predict the level of impact to their livelihoods as a result of disruptions from COVID-19. Ninety percent of respondents believed that their livelihoods would be impacted to some degree, and this proportion has not substantially changed since April. However, for a greater proportion of respondents the severity of disruptions is believed to increase in the future: 55% of respondents now believe their livelihoods will be more than moderately impacted, up from 49% in April.

### How do you expect your livelihood will be impacted as a result of disruptions from COVID-19? | By survey round




*"Nothing to eat, farming" – Male, age 34*

*"Family have nothing to eat, no help from government! Get by by doing more gardening" – Male, age 30*

*"Affected my income and I adapting by reducing all consumption of food and service" – female, age 45*

# IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

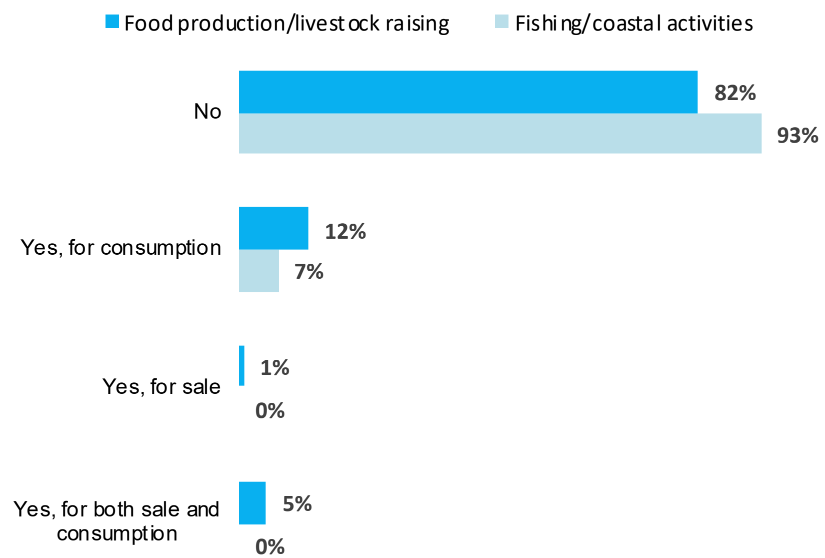
## Households engaged in farming/fishing

Agriculture, including fishing, is a key economic sector in Guyana, contributing over 13.9% of its GDP. In this survey, 18% percent of households reported to be engaged in farming and 7% in fishing activities, both predominantly for own consumption purposes.

At the regional level, metrics of wellbeing for farming households do not differ much from the average respondents but households engaged in fishing seem to have been more adversely affected by disruptions related to COVID-19 as they report above average values for loss of jobs/reduced salary, difficulties in eating enough food, worrying about food needs and expecting their livelihood to be severely affected.

A disaggregated analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on households engaged in farming or fishing in Guyana cannot be conducted given the insufficient number of responses received from these subgroups. More analysis on how the pandemic has impacted their livelihoods will be crucial in gauging the effects of COVID on this particular population.

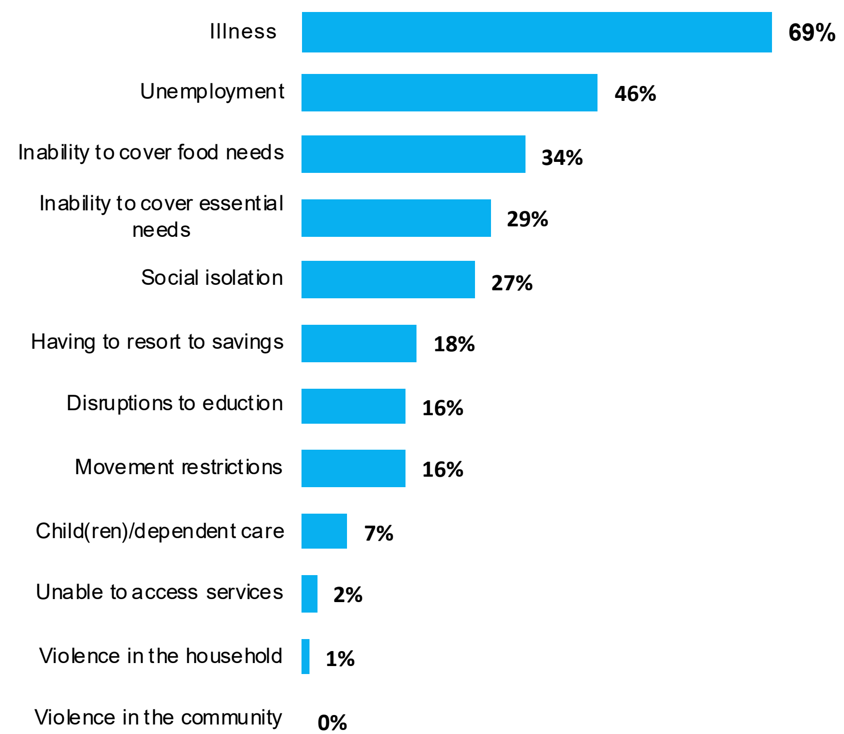
Households engaging in farming/fishing




## Worries

The survey asked respondents to report on what their primary worries were. Illness was the primary concern for over two in three respondents, and almost half of all respondents are mainly worried about unemployment at the moment. Closely connected to unemployment, the next most common worries were the inability to cover food (34%) or other essential needs (29%). One in four respondents also cited social isolation as a worry.

What are you mainly worried or concerned about at the moment...



## WIDER IMPACTS

### Unpaid care and work

The COVID-19 pandemic and the related lockdown has impacted the amount of time people are spending on unpaid activities. Most respondents reported an increase in time spent on domestic work (60%), childcare (52%) and subsistence activities (46%), while decreasing time devoted to shopping (67%).

| Female | Domestic | Childcare | Shopping | Subsistence | Community |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Decreased | 9% | 10% | 67% | 10% | 22% |
| No change | 27% | 31% | 14% | 28% | 36% |
| Increased | 60% | 52% | 20% | 46% | 12% |
| Not applicable | 4% | 7% | 0% | 16% | 30% |

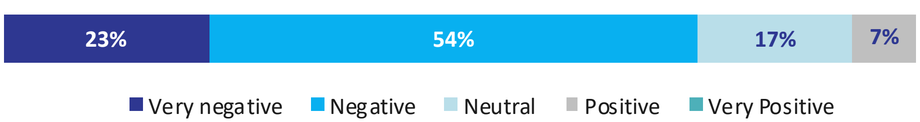
## How people are coping and adapting

Both survey rounds gave respondents space to give fuller and more nuanced insights on how they are coping and adapting to the disruptions caused by COVID-19. In June, out of the 5,707 respondents to the survey in the region, 2,343 or 41% responded to the open-ended question, resulting in a total count of 34,370 words. Text analysis was used to categorise and interpret the degree of positive and negative emotions within the responses using machine learning. Sentiments seem to have significantly deteriorated compared to April with very negative comments increasing.

In the April survey for the region as a whole, 81% of responses were classified as “negative” but only 3% as “very negative.” In June, the share of “very negative” responses jumped to 35%, whereas the share of “negative” ones dropped from 63% to 46%.

Similar trends can be observed in Guyana, where over three out of four respondents (77%) expressed negative sentiment in relation to effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The proportion of '"very negative" responses jumped from 7% in April to 23% in June 2020. Concerns regarding employment and growing financial strain on households have likely driven this increase in negative sentiments as evidenced by the increasing percentage of households expressing concerns regarding their future livelihoods and worsening income situation.

Guyana, June 2020




Guyana, April 2020


### Very negative (23%)

*“There is an increase in violent crime which is not being addressed by authorities. Every single day there is someone being robbbed and hurt, i had to see my partner being grabbed and robbed and there was nothing I could do. The trauma is real.” – Female, age 38*

### Negative (54%)

*“I’m just worried about being able to feed my family” – Female, age 32*

### Neutral (17%)

*“Not being able to get enough food supplies n medicine” – Female, age 46*

### Positive (7%)

*“Working from home had been very eye opening ... it is hoped that the positive lessons learned can be translated when the restrictions are lifted” – Female, age 47*

# HOW PEOPLE ARE COPING AND ADAPTING

## Key themes

The word clouds represent key themes on how people in Guyana are being impacted and are adapting to disruptions from COVID-19.

In June, the primary worry over “work” remains still relevant, but respondents’ concerns have become more differentiated and touch many social aspects, as evidenced by the increasing prominence of words such as “income”, “home”, “family”, “people” and “help”.


June 2020


April 2020

# CONCLUSION

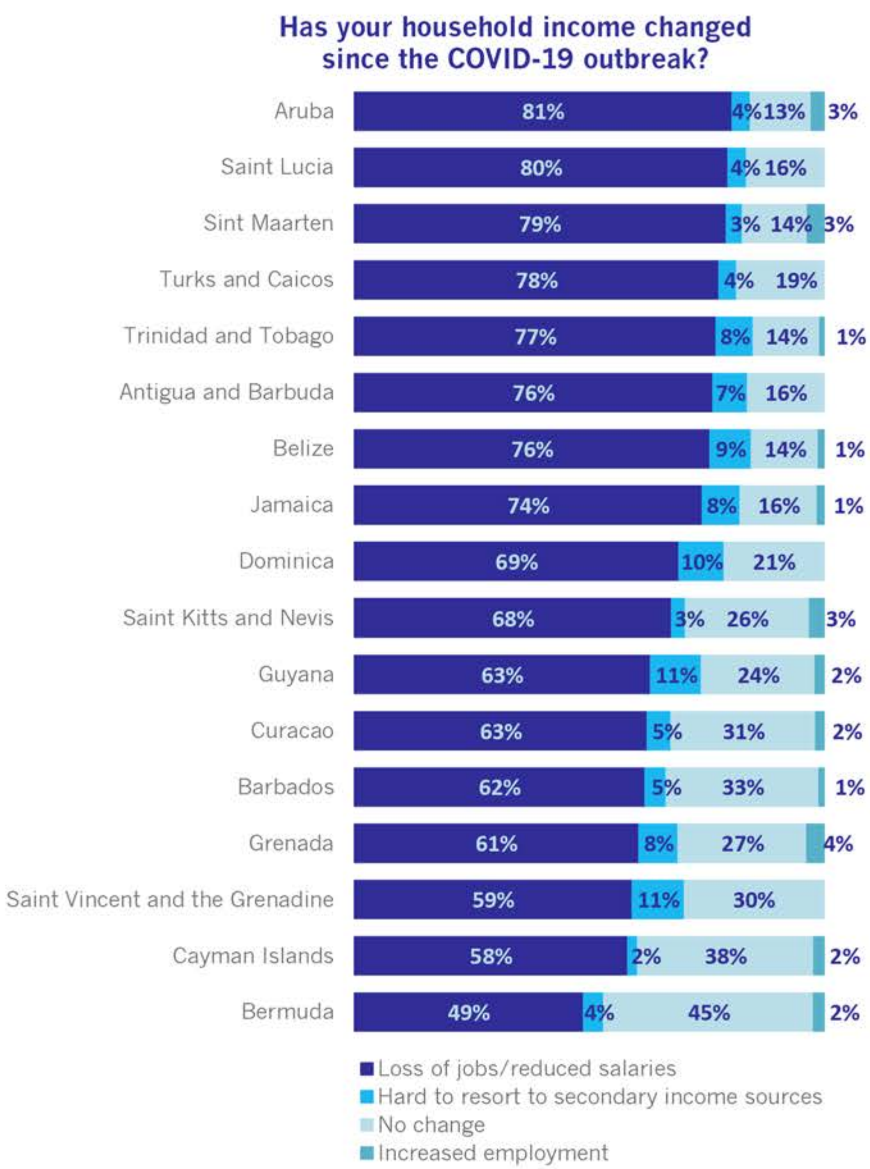
In June 2020, strict measures were put in place by the government of Guyana to contain the spread of the coronavirus. The closure of borders and airports greatly limited the movement of people. The closure of non-essential businesses and post offices, combined with a curfew, severely curtailed economic activities. Restrictions on public transport further challenged the ability of people to access to markets. While availability of most essential goods has improved, medicines are still not fully available for the majority of surveyed people.

Compared to survey responses in April, these results suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic is having an increasing impact on livelihoods and food security in Guyana. Reported instances of unemployment and reduced income have increased significantly, while food consumption, expectations regarding future livelihoods and overall sentiment are worsening.

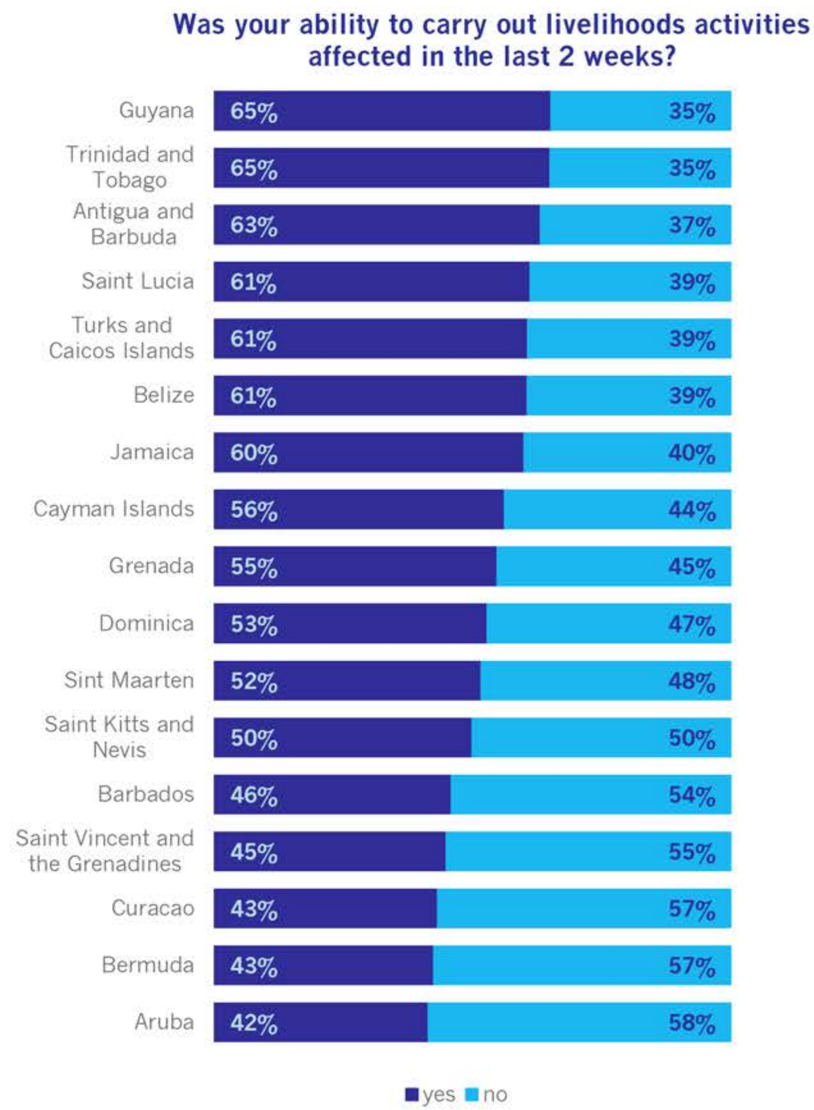
The government and its partners must redouble their efforts to mitigate these impacts through medium- and longer-term strategies and interventions. Opportunities include the permanent expansion of social programmes, livelihood support in the agricultural and fisheries sectors, and training for professionals in other sectors. Considering the protracted nature and unforeseeable end of the crisis, it is essential to continue monitoring its impacts, particularly on the most vulnerable groups.

Given the low internet access in Guyana, the results of this web-based survey should be read with a degree of caution given potential bias towards households who can afford internet access or smartphone devices. Continued and specific assessments of vulnerable populations and people living in rural areas to better gauge the impact of COVID-19 on them is highly recommended.

## Income changes




## Livelihood disruptions



# METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

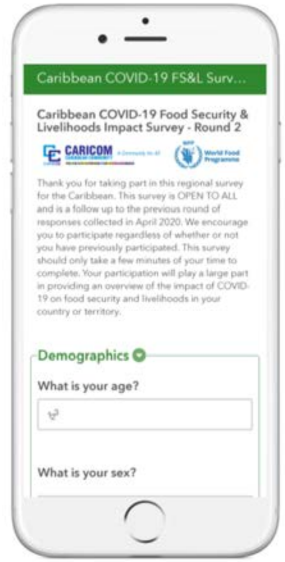
The second round of the CARICOM Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods impact survey was launched via a webform, which was accessible on mobile/smartphone and PC/desktop. The data collection period was inclusive of 14 June to 1 July 2020. The survey was circulated via email, social media, SMS, media and other communication channels.

The World Food Programme (WFP) performed the data collection, monitoring and analysis. Responses were visualised live on an interactive dashboard and monitored to ensure their legitimacy based on cross referencing with prior knowledge and secondary data. Data validation methods were designed into the survey form to mitigate against intentional or unintentional outliers.

The qualitative analysis was performed in collaboration with Joseph Xu from Google's AI unit using Natural Language Processing (NLP). NLP, a branch of AI which analyses and interprets human languages, provided: (a) a sentiment analysis to determine the number of positive versus negative responses and (b) auto-categorisation of responses. To moderate the non-representative nature of the data, the analysis team further refined the classifications presented by the algorithms.

WFP expresses warm appreciation to Flow and Digicel for distributing the survey link by SMS. Special thanks to the International Telecommunication Union for their support in facilitating the SMS distribution. Thanks to UNHCR for their support with the Spanish translation of the survey.

This report was prepared for WFP Caribbean by Kagin's Consulting - Edward J. Taylor, Justin Kagin, Momir Blazek, Julian Fletcher-Taylor, Rebbeca Morton, Sebastian Fletcher-Taylor and Heng Zhu.




Link to survey


Link to dashboard (mobile version)


Link to dashboard (desktop version)

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