Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security & Livelihoods Impact Survey

JAMAICA Summary Report | September 2020

242 Respondents

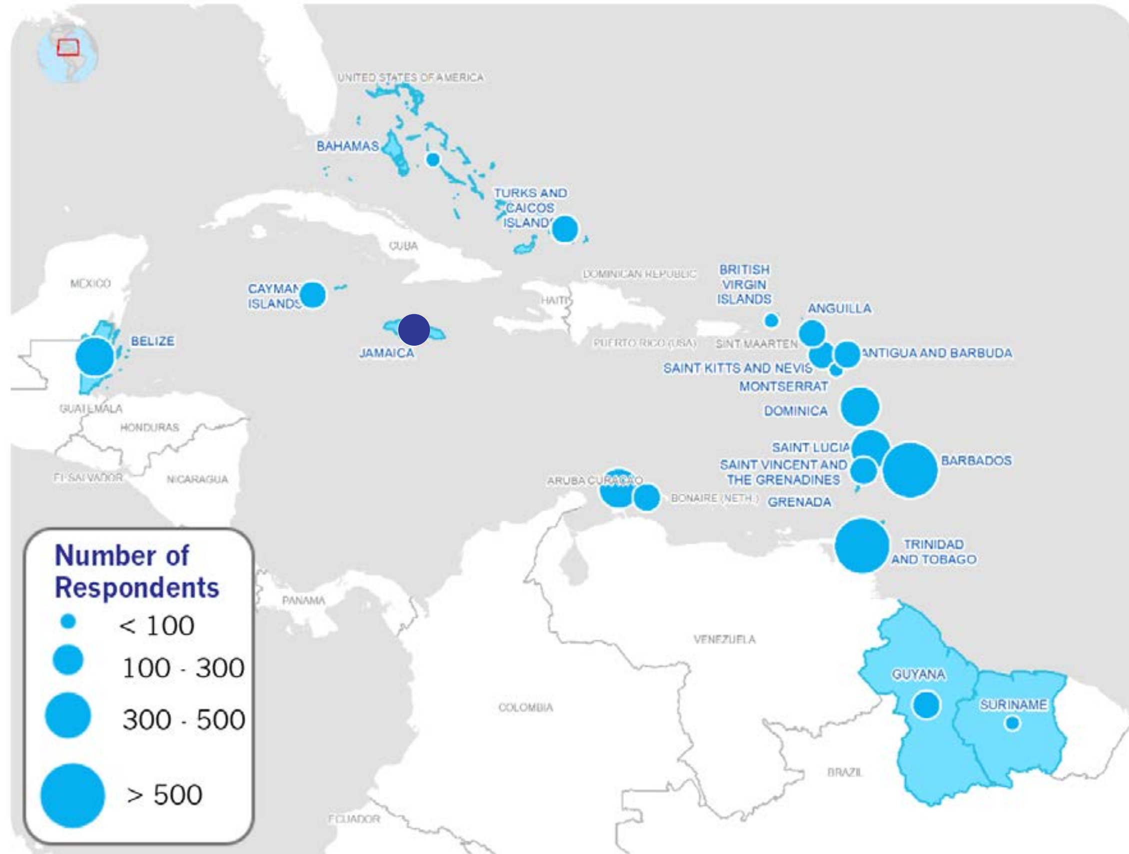
76 Female | **24%** Male

38 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 distributed and collected using online methods, and the survey link was shared via social media, e-mail and text messages. In Jamaica, nearly half of the population does not use 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

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- COVID-19 and measures to contain it have impacted market access. Compared to April 2020, the proportion of respondents who experienced difficulties accessing markets more than tripled to 38% in June. The main reasons were lack of cash for purchases and concerns about leaving the house due to the outbreak.

- Nearly nine out of ten respondents observed an increase in food prices and have changed their shopping behaviour since the pandemic began, an increase from seven out of ten in April. More respondents have shifted away from buying larger quantities than usual and going to different stores towards purchasing cheaper/less preferred brands or smaller quantities than usual.

- Essential items such as food and medicines are not consistently fully available in stores, but very few respondents indicated that these items were unavailable.

- COVID-19 and measures to contain it have resulted in a widespread disruption to livelihoods. Six out of ten respondents reported that their ability to carry out livelihoods was impacted, mainly owing to concerns about leaving the house due to the pandemic, movement restrictions, the high price of livelihood inputs and reduced demand for their goods/services.

- The pandemic appears to be taking an increasing toll on households' economic wellbeing: 74% of respondents have experienced job loss or a decline in salaries in their households, significantly higher than during the April survey (29%).

- The proportion of respondents that rely on salaried work (60%) or business/trade (17%) as a source of income is still highest but has decreased compared to April survey. A larger share of respondents had income from informal/casual labour, support from family and friends, government assistance and petty trade.

- The food security situation is deteriorating. In June, only 30% of respondents indicated that they had no difficulties in eating enough, compared to 71% in April. One in three respondents reported skipping meals or eating less, and one in ten went a full day without food in the week prior to the survey. Household food stocks have also decreased, with every fifth respondent reporting no food stocks in the house, up from 3% in April.

- The vast majority of respondents (92%) predict that their livelihoods will be impacted in the future. Outlooks appear to be worsening, with 33% of respondents in June believing they will be severely impacted as opposed to 11% in April, and negative sentiment about the pandemic and the disruption it caused has increased.

- Most respondents worry about illness and unemployment, followed by their inability to purchase essential goods and cover their food needs .

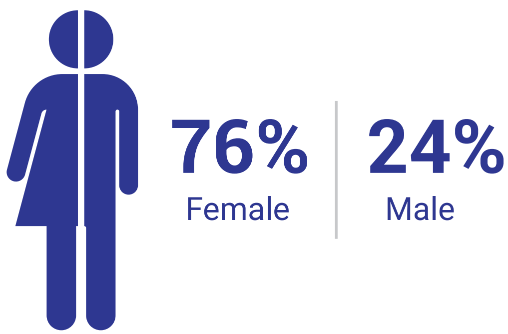
- While the use of web-based questionnaires makes this study possible, the survey's representativeness is affected in unknown ways by people's access to the internet and their incentives to respond. The number of respondents also was not sufficient for disaggregated analysis between men and women and among age groups.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

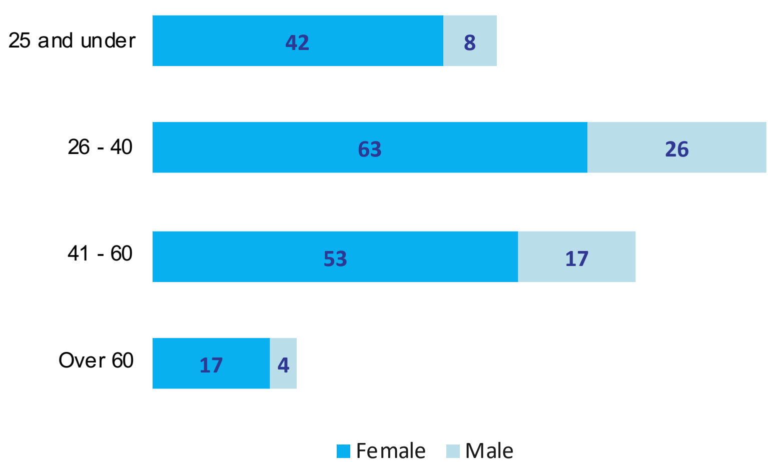
Main household income sources

Respondents were asked to indicate the main income source/s for their household. Multiple choices could be selected. In June, the main income source remained salaried work among 60% of respondents but is lower compared to 78% in April. The second most common income source is business/trade at 17% of respondents, down from 30% in April. Against that, an increasing proportion of respondents had income from family and friends, remittances from abroad, informal/casual labor, petty trade or government assistance.

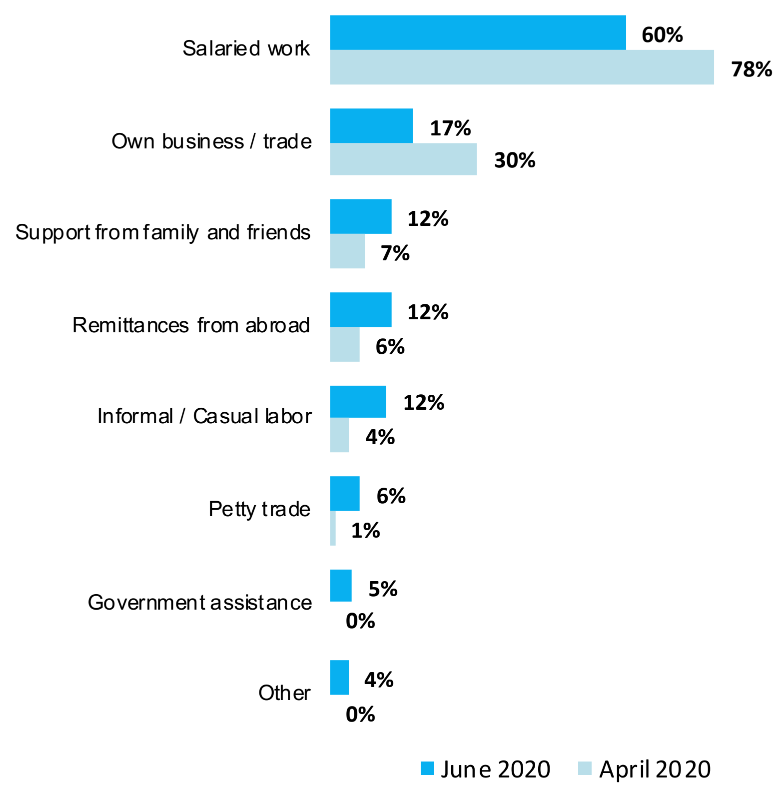
Sex of respondents



Age and sex of respondents

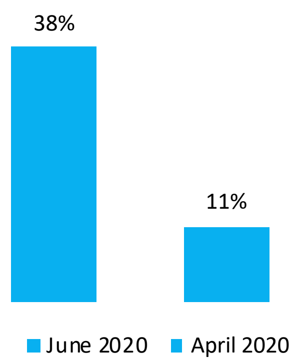


By survey



IMPACT ON MARKET ACCESS

In the past 7 days, was there a time when your household could not access the markets?



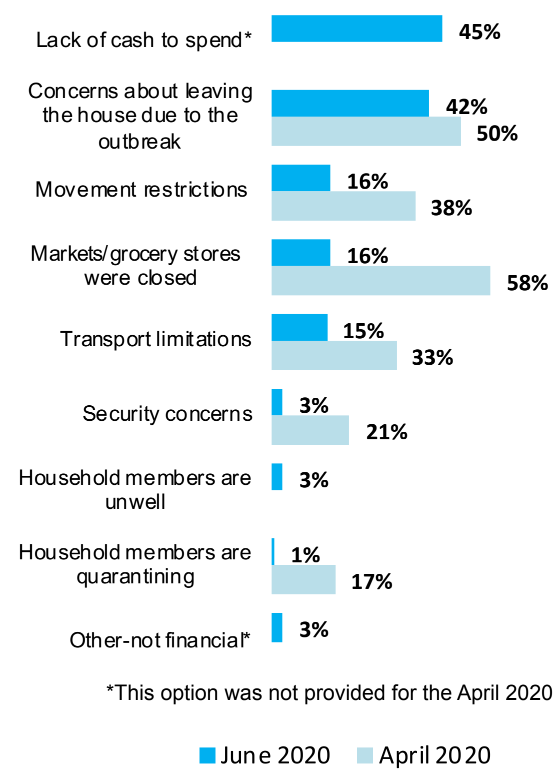
38% of households reported not being able to access markets in the past week.

COVID-19 has impacted people's access to markets. In June, 38% of respondents indicated they had problems accessing stores and markets in the previous week, up from 11% in April. Lack of money to spend and concerns about leaving the house due to the outbreak were the primary reasons. Respondents also reported movement restrictions, closure of shops and transport limitations as reasons, though much less so compared to April.

Most respondents reported that food and hygiene items were always available in stores, and the availability of hygiene items seems to have improved since April. However, a lower proportion of respondents reported that fresh food items were continuously available in shops. Only 45% indicated that medicines were always available, with a quarter not knowing either way. Nearly nine out of ten respondents reported increases in food prices, up from 71% in April.

The vast majority of respondents have changed how they shop since the pandemic began. Those changing their shopping approach are increasingly resorting to purchasing cheaper or less preferred brands (53%) or buying smaller quantities that usual (34%). The proportion buying larger quantities than usual decreased significantly from 80% in April to 29% in June.

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.

IMPACT ON MARKET ACCESS

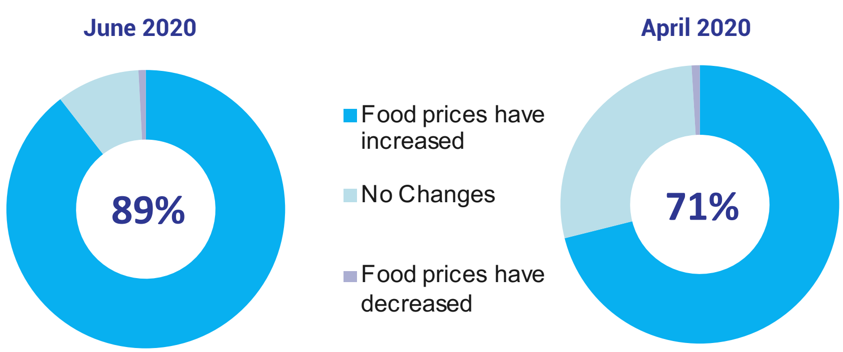
Availability of items in stores

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	↓ **56%**	69%	↓ **74%**	79%	↑ **80%**	64%	↑ **45%**	44%
Partially/ sometimes available	↑ **35%**	26%	↑ **23%**	18%	↓ **15%**	31%	↓ **30%**	33%
Not available	= **0%**	0%	= **0%**	0%	↓ **1%**	3%	↓ **1%**	2%
Don't know	↑ **9%**	4%	↑ **4%**	3%	↑ **4%**	1%	↑ **24%**	21%

Food prices

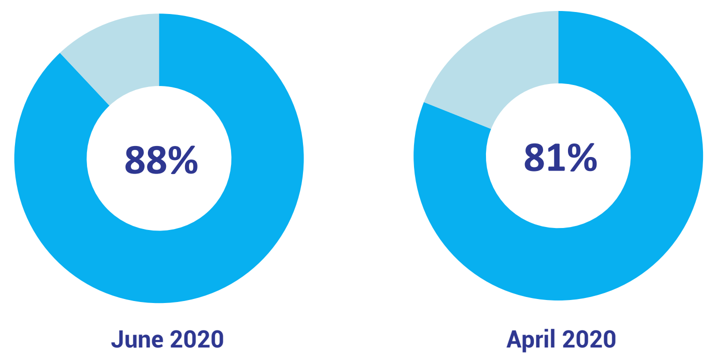
The vast majority of respondents has reported an increase in food prices.



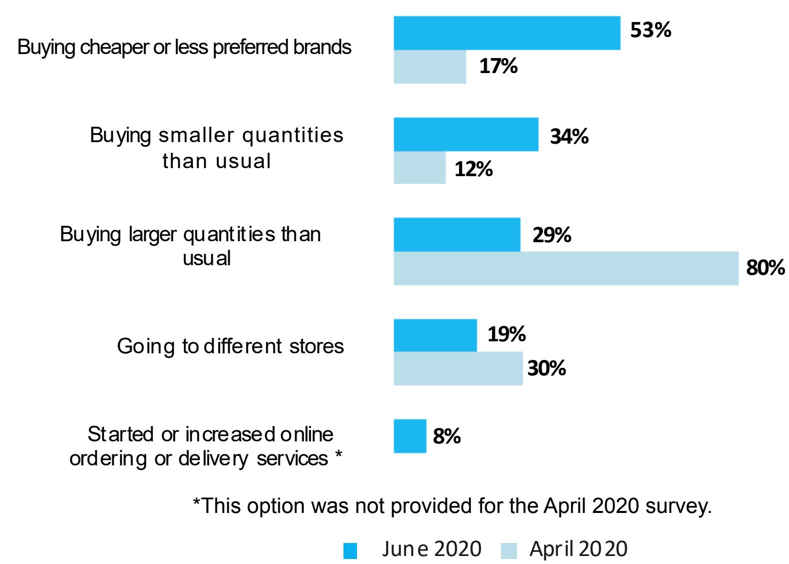
Shopping behaviour

Respondents were asked if they have had to, and if so, how they altered their shopping behaviour.

Changed their shopping behavior



How respondents changed their shopping behavior | By survey round



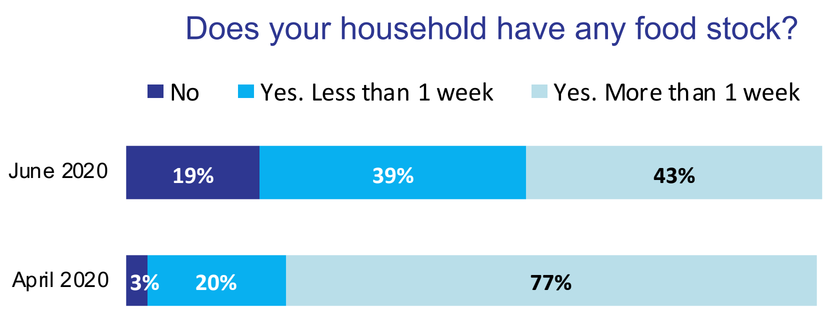
IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY

The pandemic and measures to stop its spread are impacting household food stocks and food consumption, and the situation appears to have deteriorated further. In June, 43% of respondents had over one week of food supply, down from 77% in April. Worryingly, one-fifth of all respondents had no food stocks at all.

There was a significant increase of respondents who skipped meals or ate less (36% in June compared to 11% in April) or did not have food for an entire day in the past week (9% in June compared to 0% in April). A third of respondents had no difficulty consuming enough food during the week prior to the survey, which is a sharp decrease from 71% in April.

Food Stocks

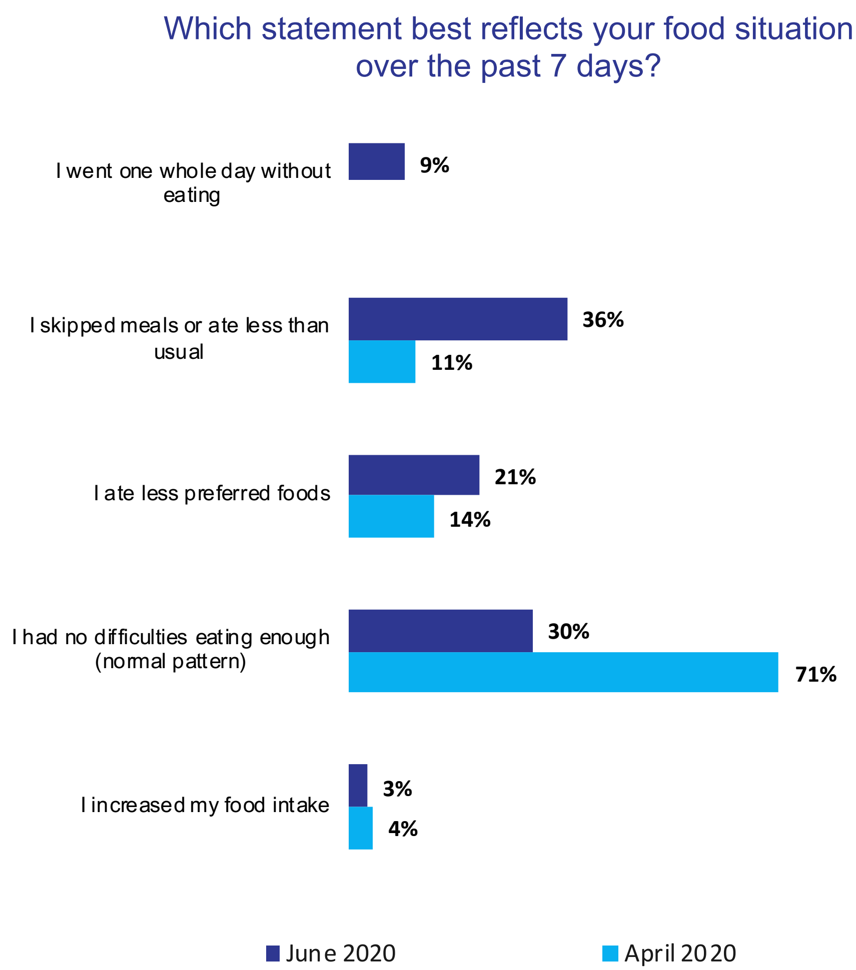
Respondents were asked to indicate the amount of available food stock for their household.



Almost one in ten respondents went a whole day without eating in the past week in June

Food consumption

Respondents were asked to reflect on their food situation.



IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

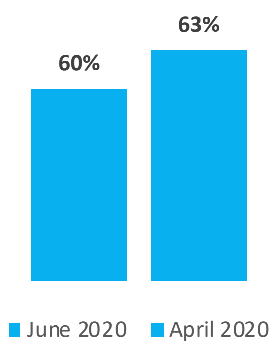
Livelihoods remain widely disrupted by the pandemic, with six out of ten respondents indicating that their ability to carry out their livelihoods was impacted in the two weeks prior to responding the survey. The impacts on incomes are growing at a concerning pace. Almost three out of four respondents reported job loss or reduction in salaries within their household in June, up from 29% in April. The percentage experiencing no change in income dropped significantly from 64% to 16%.

The main reasons for livelihood disruptions have shifted. Movement restrictions and transport limitations have reduced significantly in importance compared to April. Concerns about leaving the house due to the pandemic increased from 18% to 38% among those who faced disruptions. The price of livelihood inputs also became a greater concern in June.

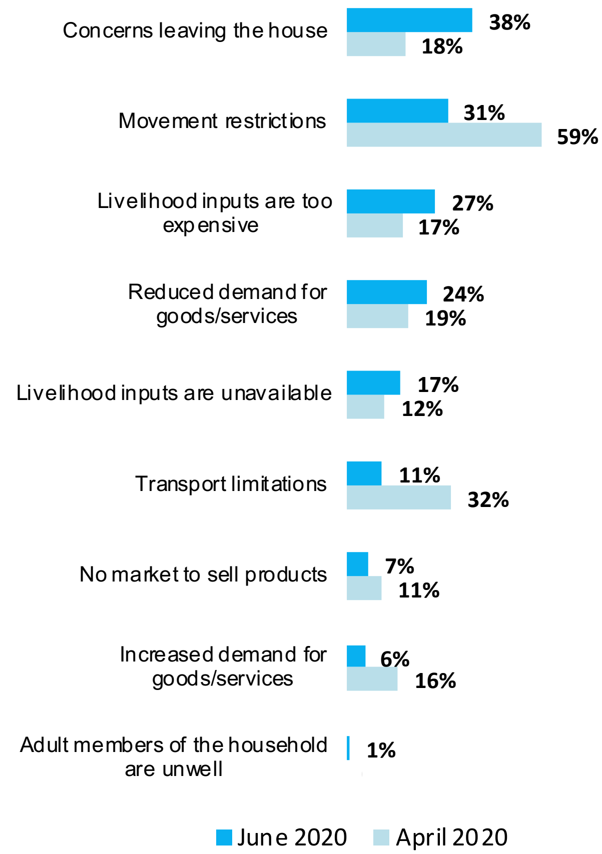
Disruptions to livelihoods

Respondents reported on any disruptions to their livelihoods.

% 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



I lost my job and it has been really hard to get by, worse I am pregnant and being able to maintain everything has been a strain. - female, age 24

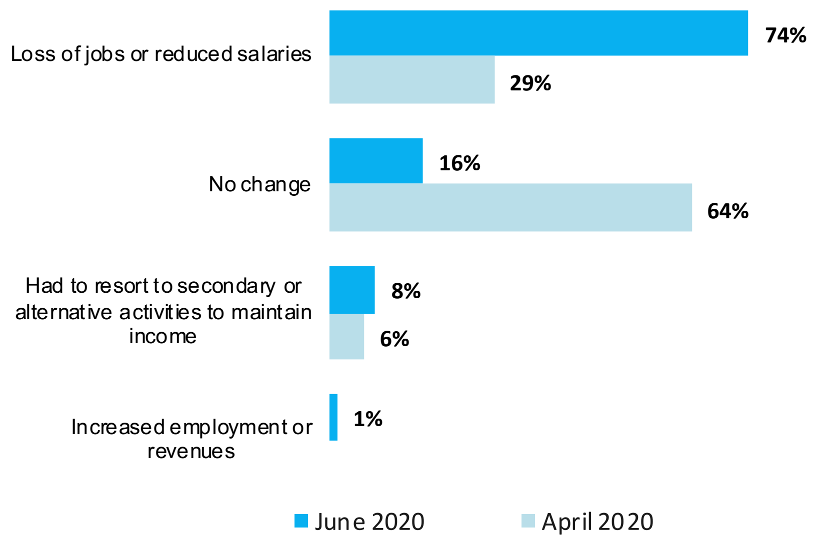
We are living on savings which will soon run out and no work where we all depend on the tourism sector thanks covid 19 - female, age 27

IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

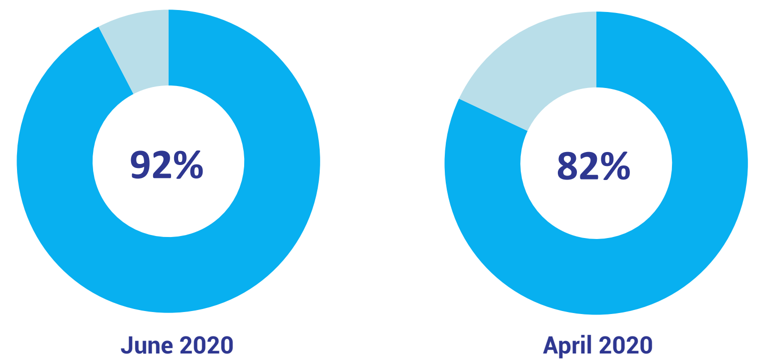
Income changes

Respondents communicated changes to their household's income. The impact on households' economic well-being has worsened. In June, 74% of respondents reported job loss or reduced salaries in their households, compared to 29% in April.

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



Expect their livelihood will be impacted as a result of disruptions from COVID-19

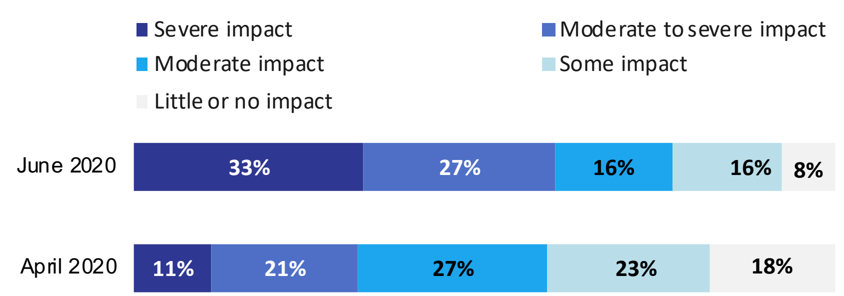


Future livelihood impacts

Respondents were asked to look ahead and predict the level of impact to their livelihoods as a result of disruptions from COVID-19, and 92% of respondents believed that their livelihoods would be impacted to some degree, a slight increase from April.

At the same time, the severity of expected disruptions has increased. Three-quarters of respondents now believe their livelihoods will be at least moderately impacted, up from 59% in April. The percentage of respondents who predict their livelihoods will be severely impacted rose from 11% to 33%, which is higher than the regional average (24%).

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



IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

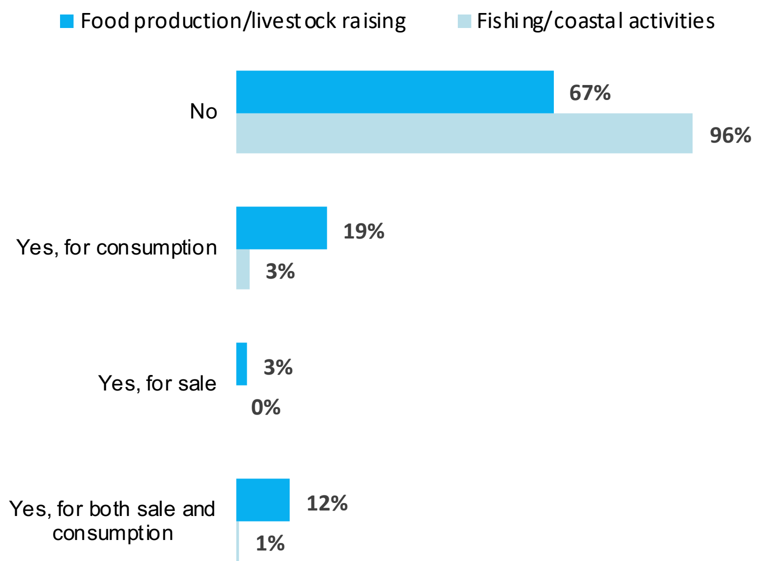
Households engaged in farming/fishing

Agricultural and fishing activity accounts for about 7% of national GDP and 16% of employment in Jamaica. In this survey, 34% of respondents reported being involved in food production activities, with 19% being for own consumption and 12% for both sales and consumption. Only 4% of respondents were engaged in fishing activities.

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 Jamaica cannot be conducted given the insufficient number of responses received from these subgroups.

Households engaging in farming/fishing

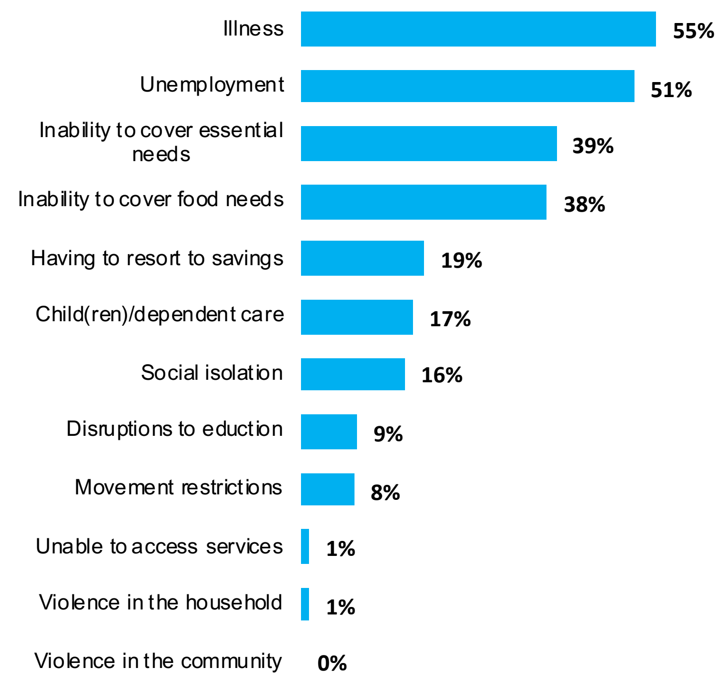


More information about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Caribbean small-scale fisheries and what solutions and adaptation methods are being used to ensure the continuity of livelihoods has been shared through other resources and a regional webinar.

Main worries

Most respondents are mainly worried about the spread of the illness (55%) and unemployment (51%), followed by the inability to cover food needs (38%) and other essential needs (39%).

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



Unpaid care and work

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the amount of time people are spending on unpaid activities. More than half of respondents (54%) reduced time spent for shopping, though for one-third the time spent shopping increased. Most increased time devoted to domestic work (52%) and childcare (53%). In the regional survey, these increases were particularly notable for women. Over one-third of respondents noted an increase in time spent on subsistence activities, which could be due to more people gardening and planting food.

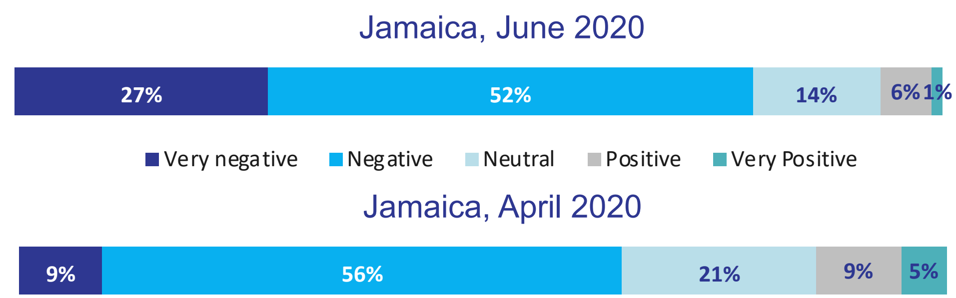
	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Subsistence	Community
Decreased	12%	7%	54%	13%	26%
No change	34%	22%	13%	40%	44%
Increased	52%	53%	32%	34%	9%
Not applicable	3%	19%	2%	13%	21%

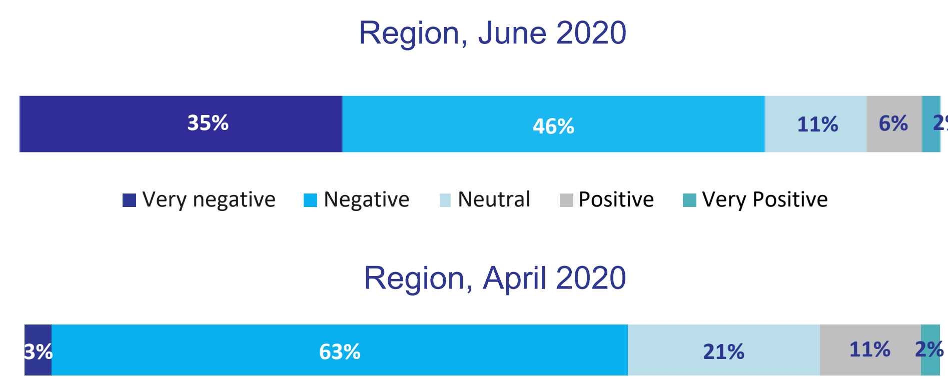
How people are coping and adapting

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 (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.

In the April survey for the region as a whole, 63% of responses were classified as "negative" and 3% as "very negative." In June, the "very negative" percentage jumped to 35%, whereas the "negative" percentage dropped to 46% from 63%.

Similar trends can be observed in Jamaica. Over three out of four respondents expressed negative or very negative sentiments on how their lives are changing and how they are adapting. This is a larger share compared to responses from April (65%). The proportion of respondents with "very negative" sentiment increased threefold from 9% in April to 27% in June 2020.





Concerns regarding employment and growing financial strain on households has likely driven the increase in negative sentiments.

HOW PEOPLE ARE COPING AND ADAPTING

Key themes

The word clouds represent key themes on how people in Jamaica are being impacted and are adapting to disruptions from COVID-19. In June, the primary worry over “work” and “income” remain relevant, underlining respondents‘ concerns about job loss and sustaining livelihoods. Concerns and changes also appear to have become more differentiated and touch many social aspects, as evidenced by the increasing prominence of words such as “family”, “food” and “bills”.

June 2020

April 2020

CONCLUSION

Results from this survey suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic and measures to contain the spread of the virus are having a negative impact on livelihoods, income and food security on a growing number of people in Jamaica.

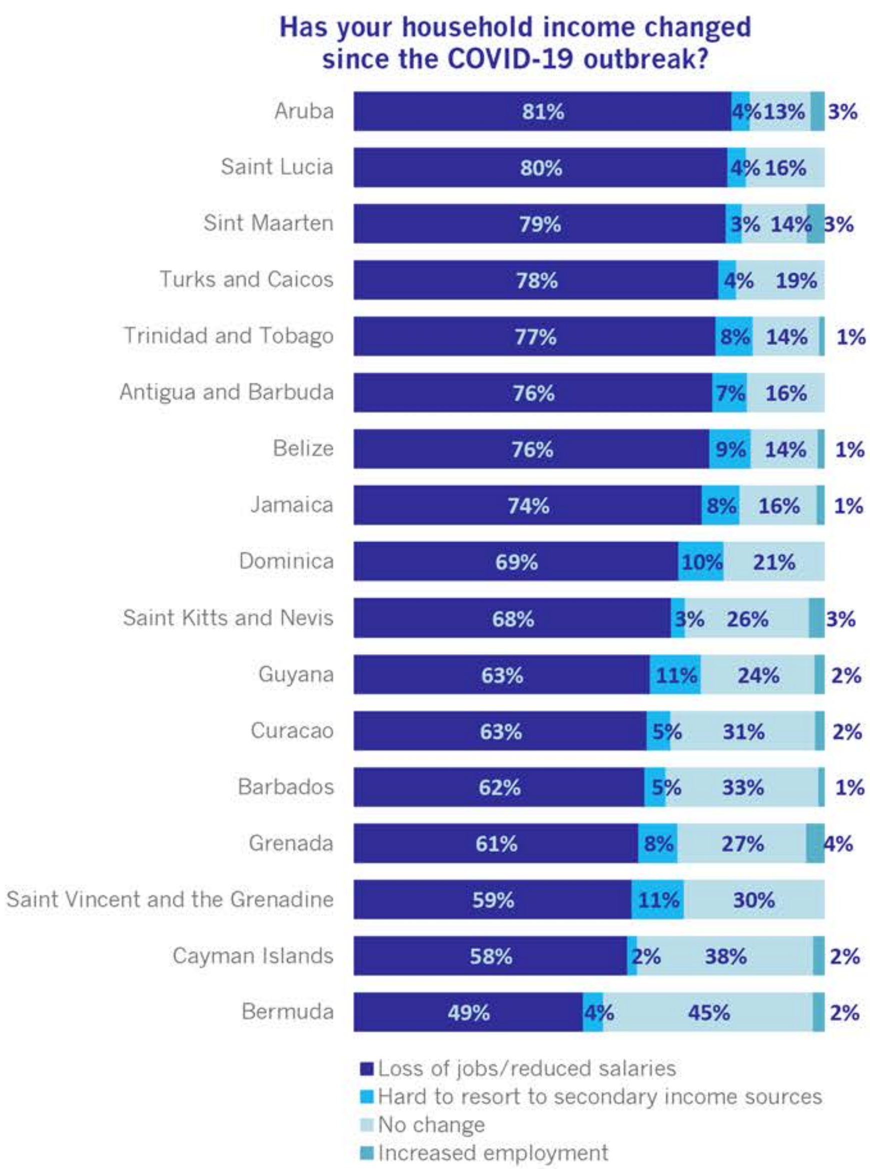
Reported instances of unemployment, reduced income and rising food prices have increased significantly, while market access and food consumption worsened. Compared to April, a larger share of respondents in this survey round had income from family/friends, remittances, informal labor and petty trade, painting the picture of families facing more precarious economic situations. The pandemic is shifting life at home, with more time being spent on domestic work, childcare and subsistence activities.

Trends on income, food consumption and market access in Jamaica are largely worse compared to findings at the regional level, and respondents' perspectives on how the pandemic is impacting their lives and livelihoods are increasingly negative.

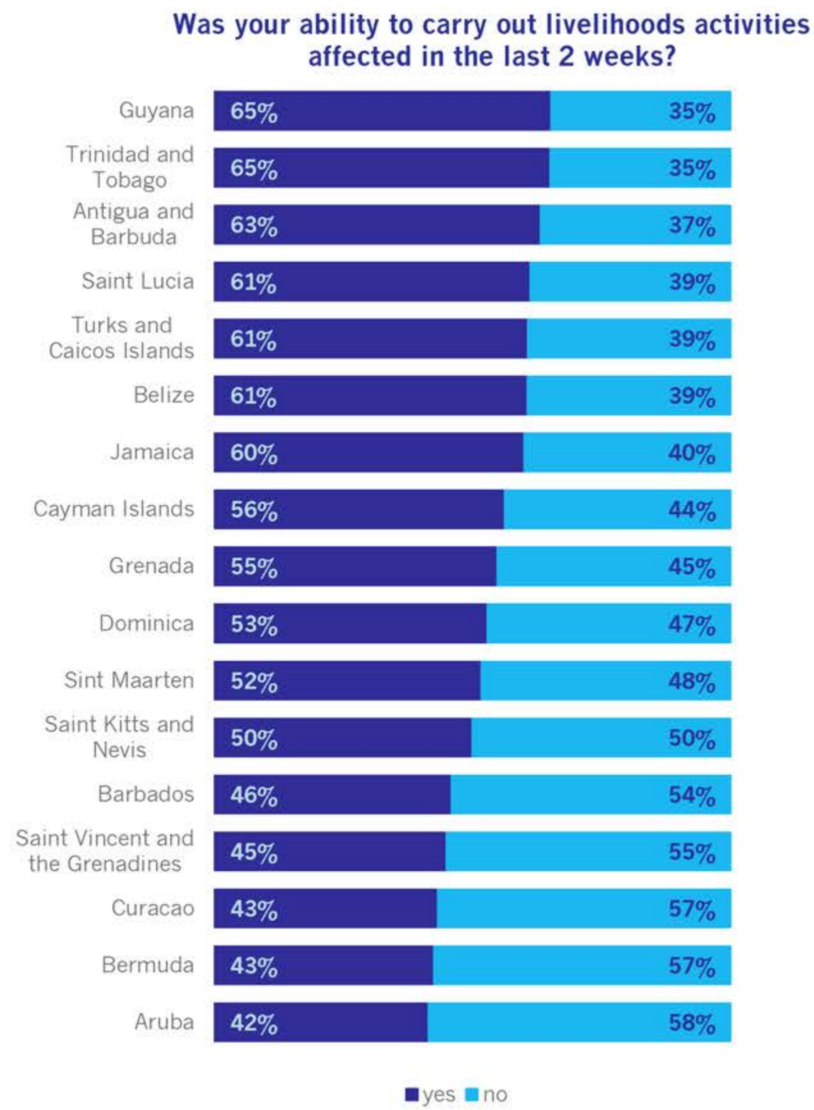
The government and its partners must redouble their efforts to mitigate these impacts through medium- and longer-term strategies and interventions. Opportunities include the permanent expansion of social programmes, livelihood support in the agricultural sector and continued support to small businesses. 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 use in Jamaica, 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. The number of respondents also was not sufficient for disaggregated analysis between men and women and among age groups. Continued assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations, including the different impacts on women and men, is highly recommended.

Income changes



Livelihood disruptions



METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

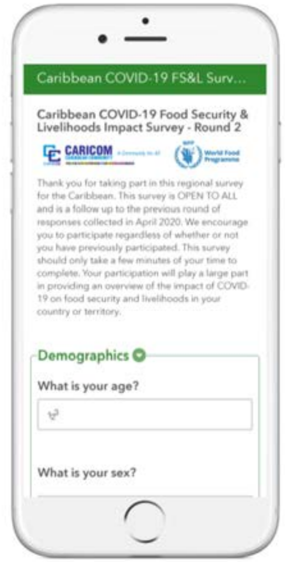
The second round of the CARICOM Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods impact survey was launched via a webform, which was accessible on mobile/smartphone and PC/desktop. The data collection period was inclusive of 14 June to 1 July 2020. The survey was circulated via email, social media, SMS,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