

Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security & Livelihoods Impact Survey

SINT MAARTEN Summary Report | November 2020

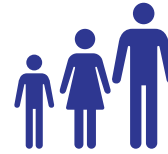


166
Respondents



75
Female

25 %
Male



45
Average age

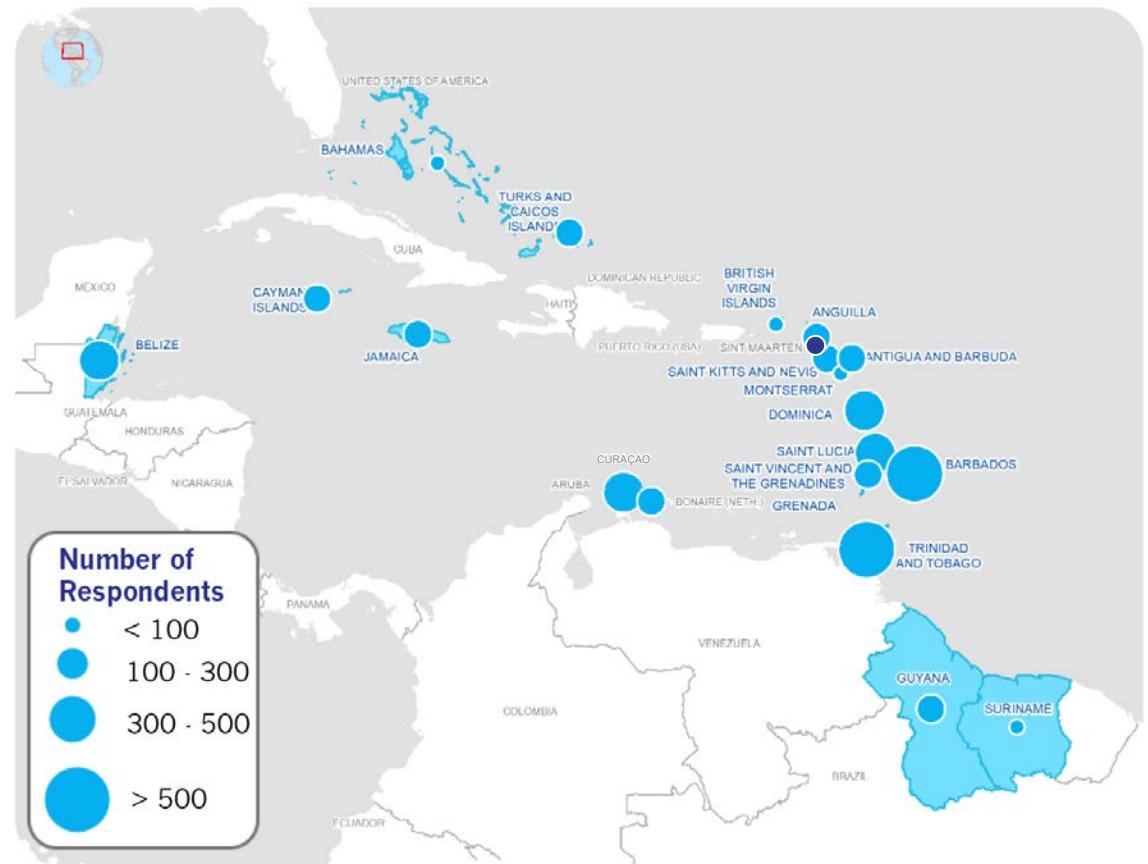


3
Average household size

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 Sint Maarten, almost a quarter of the population is not using the internet, and it is assumed that the poorest, most vulnerable are underrepresented in the survey results.



Round 1
April 2020



4,537
Responses

Round 2
June 2020



5,707
Responses

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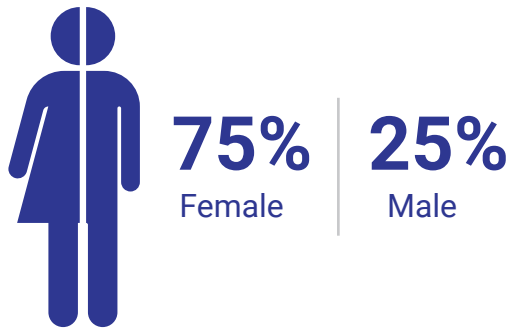
3
Average
household size

- COVID-19 and measures to contain it have resulted in widespread disruptions to livelihoods. Half of respondents reported that their ability to carry out livelihoods was impacted, mainly owing to concerns about leaving the house, movement restrictions, and the high price of livelihood inputs.
- Nearly all respondents (96%) predict that their livelihoods will be impacted in the future, and 36% expect this impact to be severe. Over half of respondents expressed very negative sentiment concerning the pandemic and the disruption it caused, a much more pessimistic view than overall in the region.
- The pandemic appears to affect the economic wellbeing of the vast majority of households in Sint Maarten. Eighty percent of respondents have experienced job loss or a reduced incomes in their households, higher than the regional average (69%). This is likely linked to a steep decline in tourism, which accounts for about 45% of GDP, with most other industries tied in some way to the tourism sector.
- Nearly six out of ten respondents are primarily worried about job loss, followed by worries about illness (50%) and the inability to cover essential needs (47%) and food needs (33%).
- Access to markets has been impacted, in line with regional trends. Twenty-eight percent of respondents experienced difficulties in accessing markets, mainly due to a lack of cash to spend. While food and essential goods are generally available in stores and markets, medicines and fresh foods appear to be less available.
- Nine out of ten respondents observed an increase in food prices and changed their shopping behaviour since the pandemic began. Of those who changed their shopping patterns, half resorted to buying cheaper or less preferred goods and 36% to buying smaller quantities than usual.
- Food insecurity is affecting a sizable proportion of the population, similar to regional trends. One-third of respondents reported skipping meals or eating less than usual, and sixteen percent reported having no food stocks in the house at the time of the survey.
- The number of respondents was not sufficient for disaggregated analysis between men and women and among age groups. Further assessments are needed to better understand the different impacts.

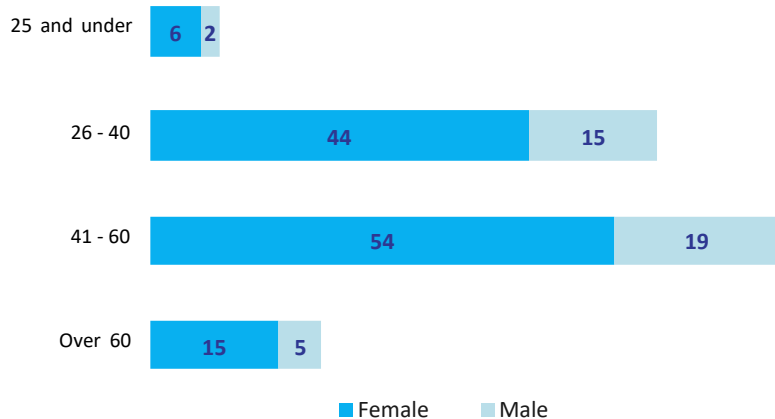
DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

Age and gender breakdown reveals that respondents are much more likely to be female than male, and the majority is in the 41-60 age category. The overall number of respondents is insufficient to enable a disaggregated analysis by age, sex or income.

Sex of respondents

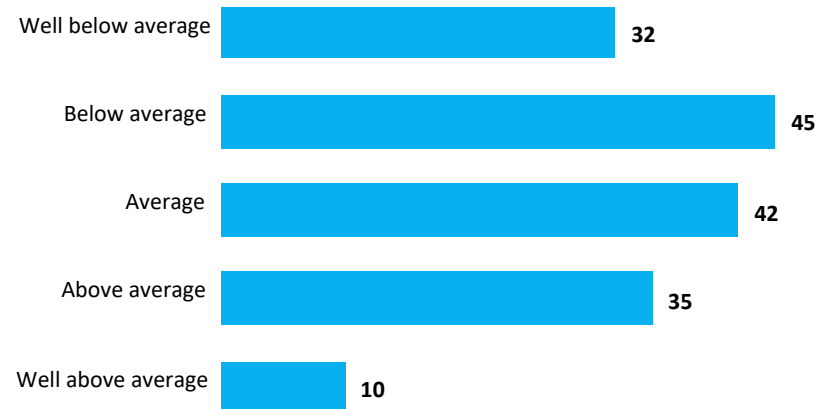


Age of respondents



Perceived income level

Respondents were asked how they feel their household's income compares to the rest of the country. Of all respondents, 26% assessed their income as average, while 47% perceived it as below or well below average. At the other end of the spectrum, 26% assessed their household income as above or well above average.



"I'm unemployed with 4 kids to feed and rent to pay, I'm stressed because I can't get another job" - Female, Age 31

"Having just one income is hard on a household. One needs to prioritize what to get and what to do without. Those out of work with no income might think of doing something that is not good to be able to live/survive." - Female, Age 49



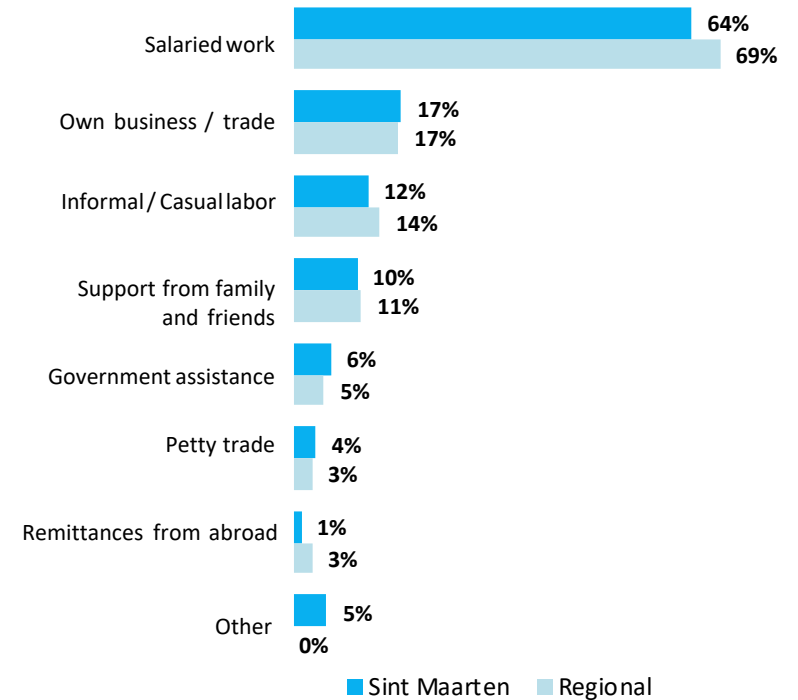
DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

Main household income sources

Respondents were asked to indicate the main income source/s for their household. Multiple choices could be selected. The main income source is salaried work, with 64% of respondents, followed by business/trade (17%) and informal/casual labor (12%). The distribution of primary income sources for households in Sint Maarten is very similar to the regional average.

In the Caribbean-wide survey, the main sources of household income have shifted compared to April, which reflects the negative impact of COVID-19 on the labour markets in the region. This is represented by a loss of salaried work and increased reliance on external support such as remittances from abroad, family and friends, or government assistance, as respondents try to find other means of covering expenditure shortfalls.

Main household income sources



"Estar lejos de mi familia" - Female, Age 40

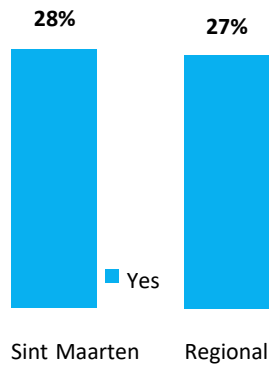
"Haven't been paid the last three months, neither has my wife" - Male, Age 56



IMPACT ON MARKETS

Disruptions resulting from COVID-19 have had a negative effect on market access. In June, 28% of respondents indicated they had problems accessing markets in the past week, similar to the region. A lack of cash to spend was the primary reason for half of respondents experiencing lack of access to markets. Movement restrictions and concerns over leaving the house are the next most common reasons, reported by 26% of affected respondents. While these trends are overall in line with the region, lack of cash to spend was much more prevalent among respondents from Sint Maarten.

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



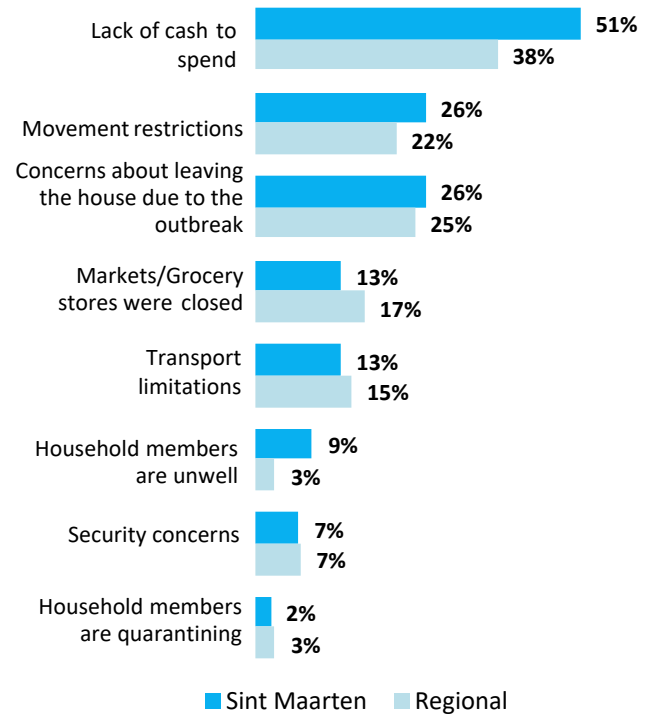
"I lost my job, I am unemployed right now, don't have any income." - Female, Age 30

"Separated from my family." - Male, Age 45

"Thank God for 2 money donations (from a friend and a relative), as we did not qualify for a replacement salary by the stimulus program." - Female, Age 51



For those who faced a time when they could not access markets in the past 7 days, the main reasons were... Multiple responses could be selected



28% of all surveyed households reported not being able to access markets in the past week, mainly due to lack of cash

IMPACT ON MARKETS

Availability of items in stores

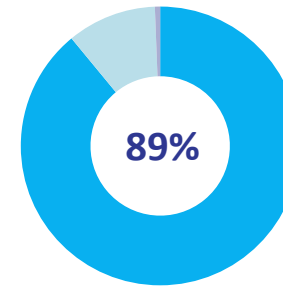
Respondents reported on the availability of key items in stores.

How Available?	Fresh food items		Basic food items		Hygiene items		Essential medicines	
	Sint Maarten	Regional	Sint Maarten	Regional	Sint Maarten	Regional	Sint Maarten	Regional
Always Available	71%	71%	85%	83%	88%	85%	66%	55%
Partially/sometimes available	25%	25%	12%	15%	10%	13%	17%	30%
Not available	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Don't know	4%	4%	3%	2%	1%	2%	16%	15%

Availability of goods has been impacted, mostly in line with trends in the Caribbean-wide findings. The availability of basic food and hygiene items was fairly high, reported to be always available by at least 85% of respondents. However, essential medicines were only sometimes or partially available for 17% of respondents and fresh foods for 25% of respondents.

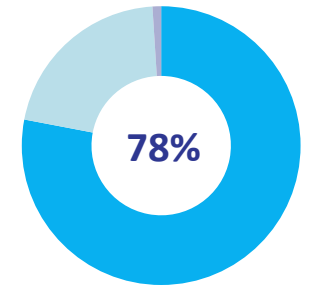
Food prices

Respondents reported on any observed changes in food prices. The vast majority (89%) reported an increase, which is higher compared to the regional average.



Sint Maarten

- Food prices have increased
- No changes
- Food prices have decreased



Regional

"My bills increased and can't pay my rent and utilities I'm almost homeless with my kids." - Female, Age 31

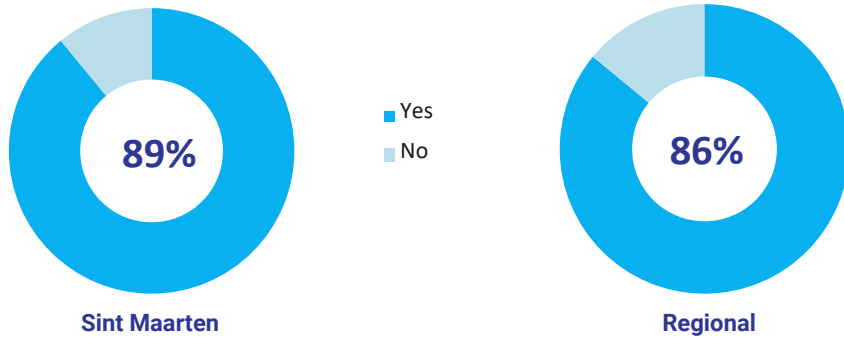
"Don't have enough to cover bill's and food." - Female, Age 48



IMPACT ON MARKETS

Shopping behavior

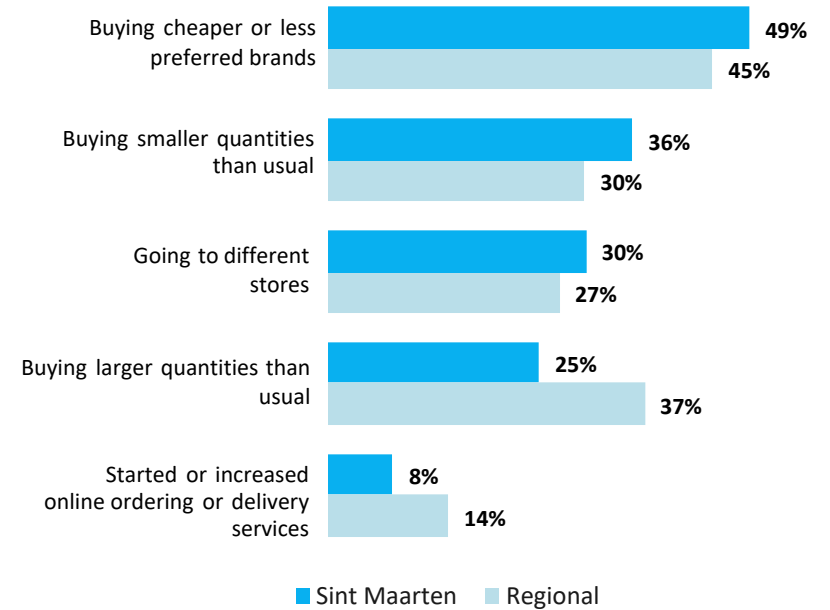
Respondents were asked if they altered their shopping behavior and if so how.



The vast majority of respondents changed their shopping behavior since the pandemic (89%). Those who changed their shopping behavior predominantly resorted to purchasing cheaper or less preferred brands (49%), buying smaller quantities than usual (36%) or buying from different stores (30%). Compared to the region, respondents in Sint Maarten are less likely to buy larger quantities than usual.

How respondents changed their shopping behaviour

Multiple responses could be selected



"I have learn't to budget better and spend on essential items. I hardly splurge anymore." - Female, Age 55

"Cleaning everything from supermarket or anything before bring it to the house." - Female, Age 26



IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY

The pandemic and measures to stop its spread have impacted household food security. Fifty-six percent of respondents said that they had over one week food supply stored up, similar to the regional average. Worryingly, 16% of respondents had no food stocks at all in their house.

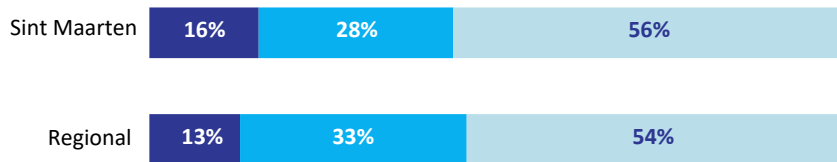
Food consumption has worsened. One-third of respondents reported skipping meals or eating less than usual, and a fifth ate less preferred foods.

Food stocks

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

Does your household have any food stock?

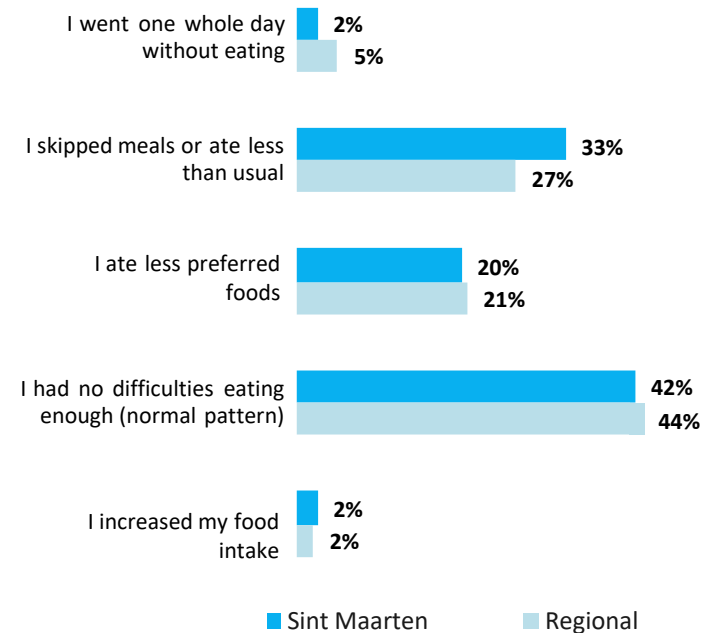
■ No ■ Yes. Less than 1 week ■ Yes. More than 1 week



Food consumption

Respondents were asked to reflect on their food consumption during the week prior to the survey.

Which statement best reflects your food situation over the past 7 days?



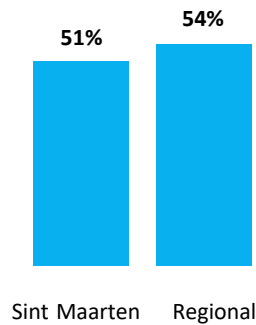
IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

COVID-19 and measures to contain the virus have had a widespread impact on livelihoods. In Sint Maarten, half of respondents reported disruptions to their livelihoods, similar to the regional average. Concerns over leaving the house (36%), movement restrictions (35%) and expensive livelihood inputs (25%) were the main reasons reported by respondents whose livelihoods were disrupted, similar to regional trends.

Disruptions to livelihoods

Respondents reported on any disruptions to their livelihoods in the past two weeks.

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



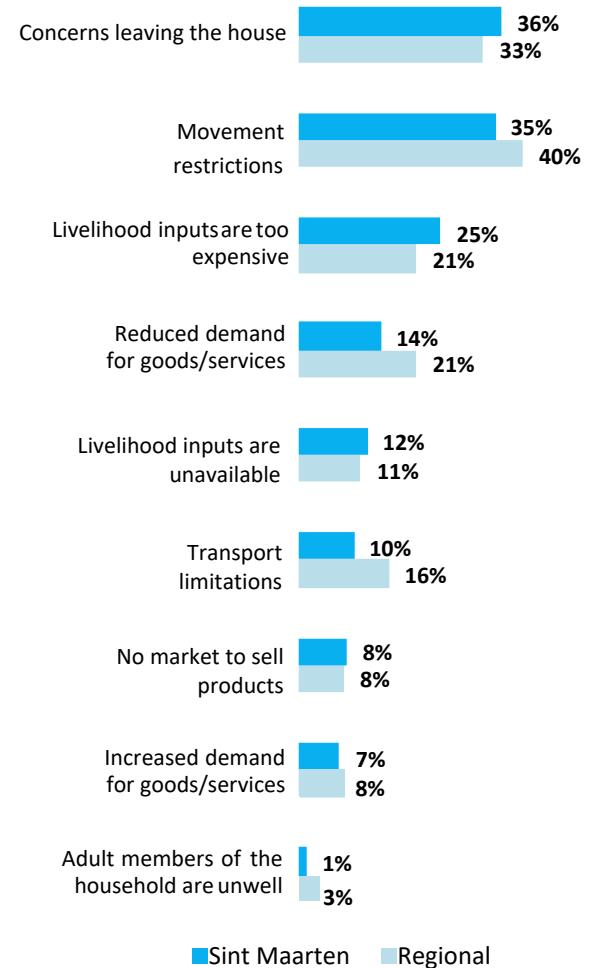
"What can I do to generate revenues to continue to feed my family?" - Female, Age 46

"I am business owner with 30 employees whose business has been closed for 3 months. I am worried how I am going to be able to continue to pay their salaries in full." - Female, Age 52



For those that reported livelihood disruptions, the main reasons were...

Multiple choices could be selected

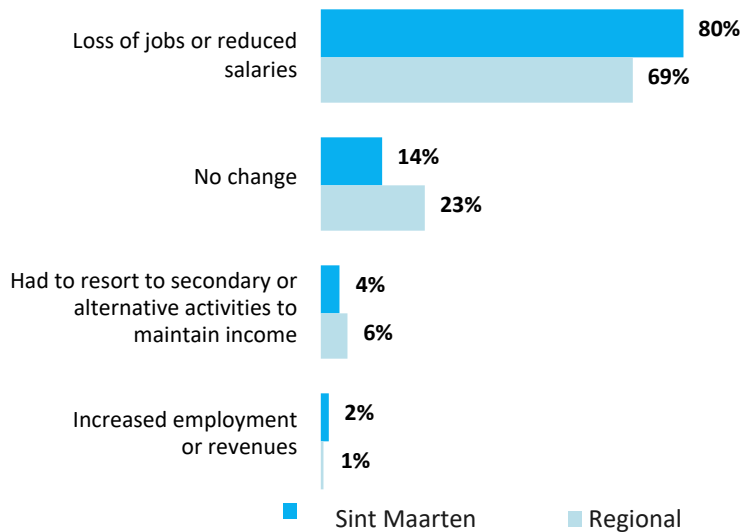


IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

Income changes

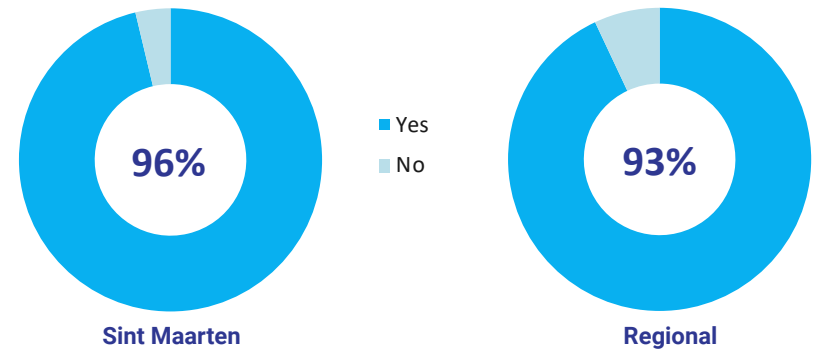
Respondents communicated changes to their income since the COVID-19 outbreak. The pandemic appears to be taking a widespread toll on households' economic wellbeing. Four out of five respondents have experienced job loss or a reduced incomes in their households, higher than the regional average.

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

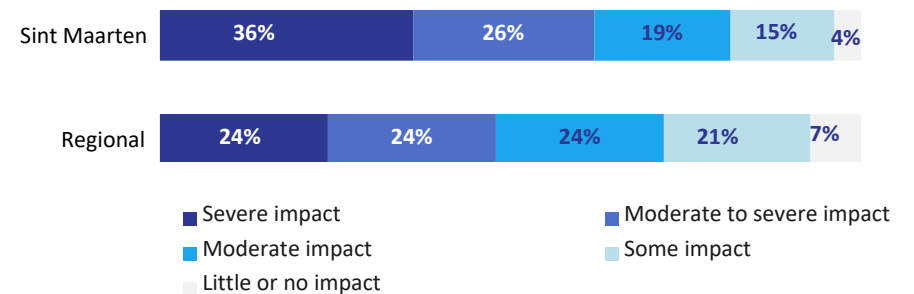


Future livelihood impacts

Respondents were asked to look ahead and predict the level of impact to their livelihoods. Almost all respondents believe that their livelihoods will be impacted to some degree. However, compared to the region, respondents in Sint Maarten seem to be more pessimistic, with 36% anticipating severe impacts to their livelihoods, compared to 24% in the region overall.



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



IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

Worries

The survey asked what people were mainly concerned about. Nearly six out of ten respondents are mainly concerned about unemployment, followed by worries about illness (50%) and the inability to cover essential and food needs (47% and 33%). The trends are similar to the region as a whole.

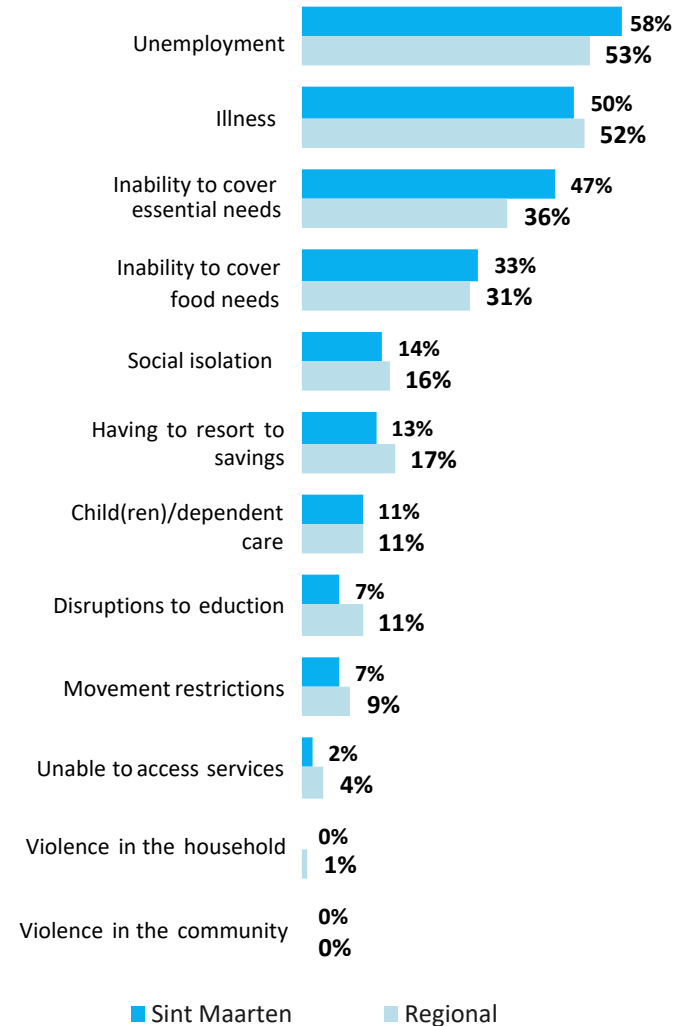
"The covid19 putting us to worry to much in how we going to buy food and continue living with our children." - Female, Age 40

"Lack of tourism will affect all levels of the economy. If tourists return they will most likely bring the virus with them. The medical resources here are inadequate to deal with an outbreak." - Female, Age 62

"I have been using all of my pension to help put food, etc in the house. I cannot get to save for me to get my own place to live." - Female, Age 63



What are you mainly worried or concerned about at the moment... Multiple responses could be selected



IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

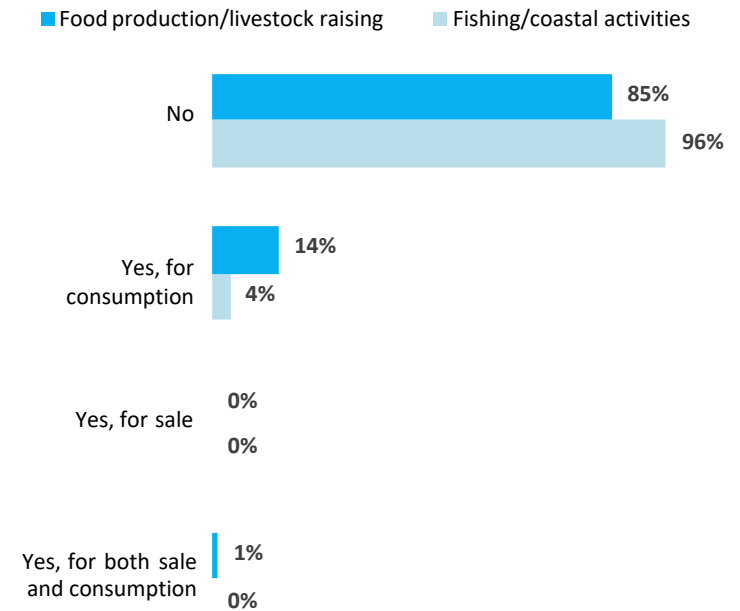
Households engaged in farming/fishing

Agriculture (including fishing) accounts for only 0.1% of national GDP in Sint Maarten. In this survey, 15% of respondents reported being involved in food/livestock production and 4% in fishing, mainly for their own consumption.

A disaggregated analysis of the impact of COVID on households engaged in farming or fishing in Sint Maarten cannot be conducted given the insufficient number of responses received from these subgroups.

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 have been shared through other [resources](#) and a [regional webinar](#).

Households engaging in farming/fishing



WIDER IMPACTS

Unpaid care and work

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the amount of time people are spending on unpaid activities.

	Domestic work	Childcare	Shopping	Subsistence production	Community work
Decreased	10%	6%	59%	7%	10%
No change	34%	28%	16%	28%	49%
Increased	50%	42%	24%	46%	16%
Not applicable	6%	24%	1%	19%	25%

The majority of respondents (59%) reduced time spent on shopping, while time devoted to domestic work has increased for half of respondents and time spent on childcare and subsistence activities for nearly half of respondents.



"Feeling distraught because of the unknown." - Male, Age 31

*"I lost my job, since March I'm not working and I've run out of money"
- Female, Age 45*



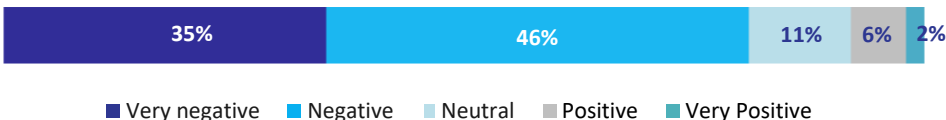
WIDER IMPACTS

How people are coping and adapting

Both survey rounds gave respondents space to provide fuller and more nuanced insights on how they are coping and adapting to the disruptions caused by COVID-19. In June, 37% of the respondents from Sint Maarten answered the open-ended question. Text analysis was used to categorize and interpret the degree of positive and negative emotions within the responses using machine learning.

At the regional level, sentiments seem to have significantly deteriorated compared to April with very negative comments increasing. At the same time, respondents in Sint Maarten are significantly more pessimistic compared to the region. The share of respondents expressing very negative sentiment was also much higher (56% compared to 35%). This finding suggests widespread concern among the population in Sint Maarten with the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects.

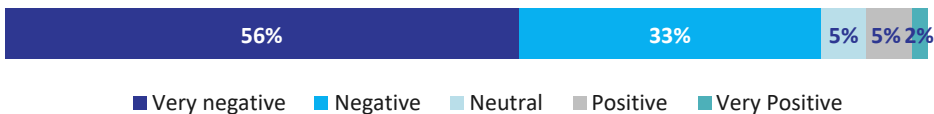
Region, June 2020



Region, April 2020



Sint Maarten, June 2020



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

"It's been really bad, I have to move into a 1bedroom with my 3 kids!" - Female, Age 47

"I lost my job, and now have to depend on my savings" - Male, Age 43

"Due to covid19 I am not working and it very hard because there are people who depend on me." - Female, age 35

"Es algo muy difícil porque no puedo salir bien a la calle y no tengo recursos" - Female, Age 31

"Electricity and water company is going to shut off services if you can't pay. Will lose whatever I have in fridge and freezer and security will be compromised if living in the dark." - Female, Age 51



CONCLUSION

In March 2020, strict measures were put in place to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. The closure of borders, air and seaports halted international tourism, heavily impacting the livelihoods of people in Sint Maarten. As of June 2020, some restrictions on local movements and activities had been reduced. However, the continued lack of tourism has meant that livelihoods have not been able to recover.

Results from this survey suggest that many people in Sint Maarten have experienced a deterioration of their employment and income situation, an increase in food prices and concerns about the future of their livelihoods. A third of respondents expect their livelihood to be severely affected and worries about unemployment are widespread, in particular among those depending on the tourism sector.

While most consumer goods are widely available, partial availability of essential medicines for almost a fifth of the population is concerning. Over a quarter of respondents reported difficulties accessing markets, and those who experienced such constraints mainly cited lack of cash for purchases. Every third respondent is worried about being unable to cover basic food needs and the same proportion reported skipping meals or eating less than usual.

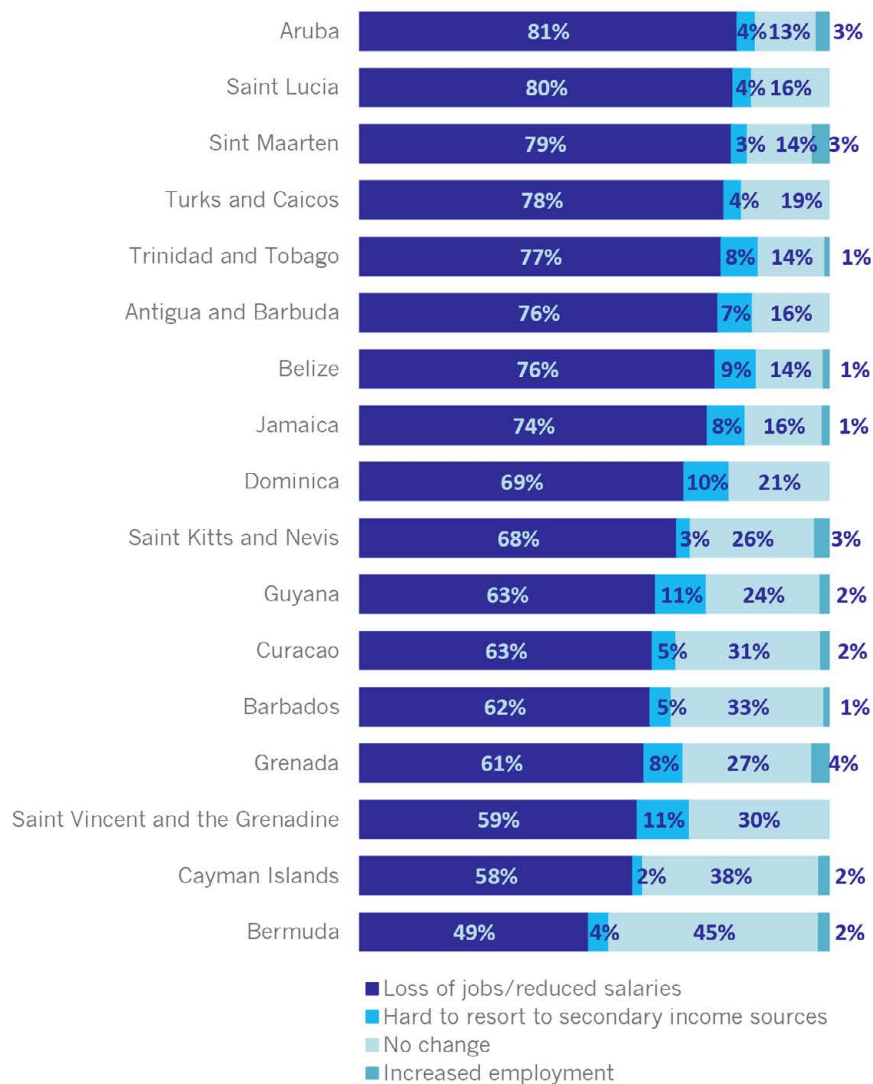
The government of Sint Maarten and its partners must redouble their efforts to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts through medium and longer term programmes and interventions. Opportunities include the permanent expansion of social programmes, livelihood support, and vocational training for people in affected economic sectors.

With almost a quarter of the population of Sint Maarten not using the internet, 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. Considering the protracted nature and unforeseeable end of the crisis, it is essential to continue monitoring its impacts, particularly on the most vulnerable groups.

ANNEX. REGIONAL OVERVIEWS

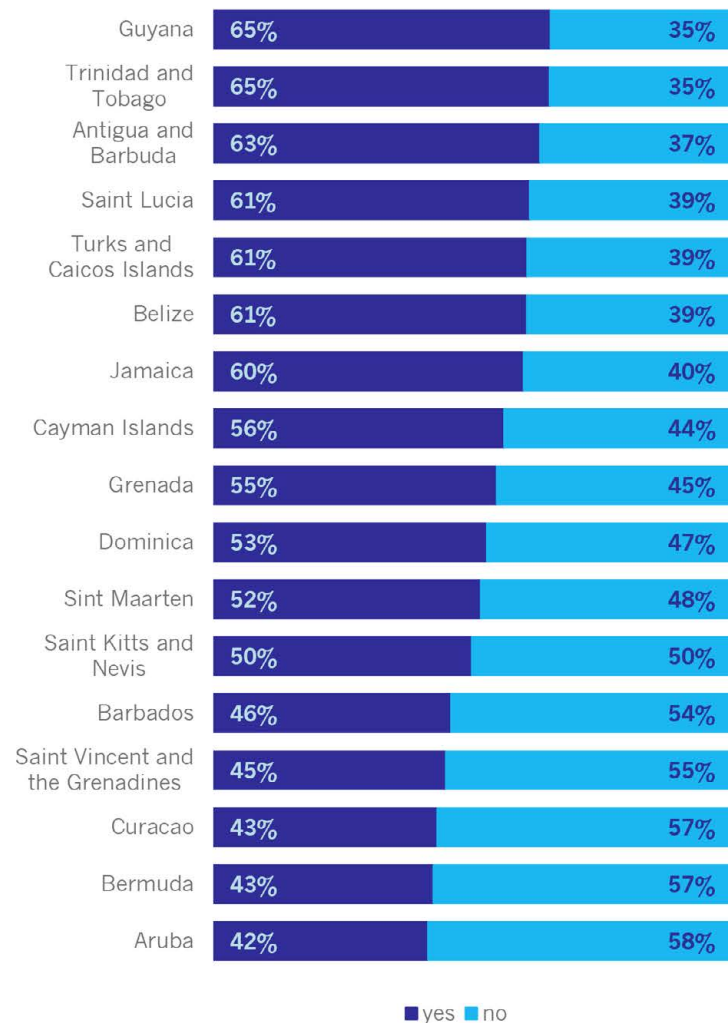
Income changes

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



Livelihood disruptions

Was your ability to carry out livelihoods activities affected in the last 2 weeks?



METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

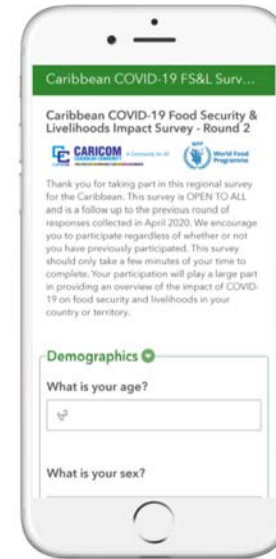
The second round of the CARICOM Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods impact survey was launched via a webform, which was accessible on mobile/smartphone and PC/desktop. The data collection period was inclusive of 14 June to 1 July 2020. The survey was circulated via email, social media, SMS,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



[Link to survey](#)



[Link to dashboard \(mobile version\)](#)



[Link to dashboard \(desktop version\)](#)

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