Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security & Livelihoods Impact Survey

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES Summary Report | November 2020

114 Respondents

78 Female | **22 %** Male

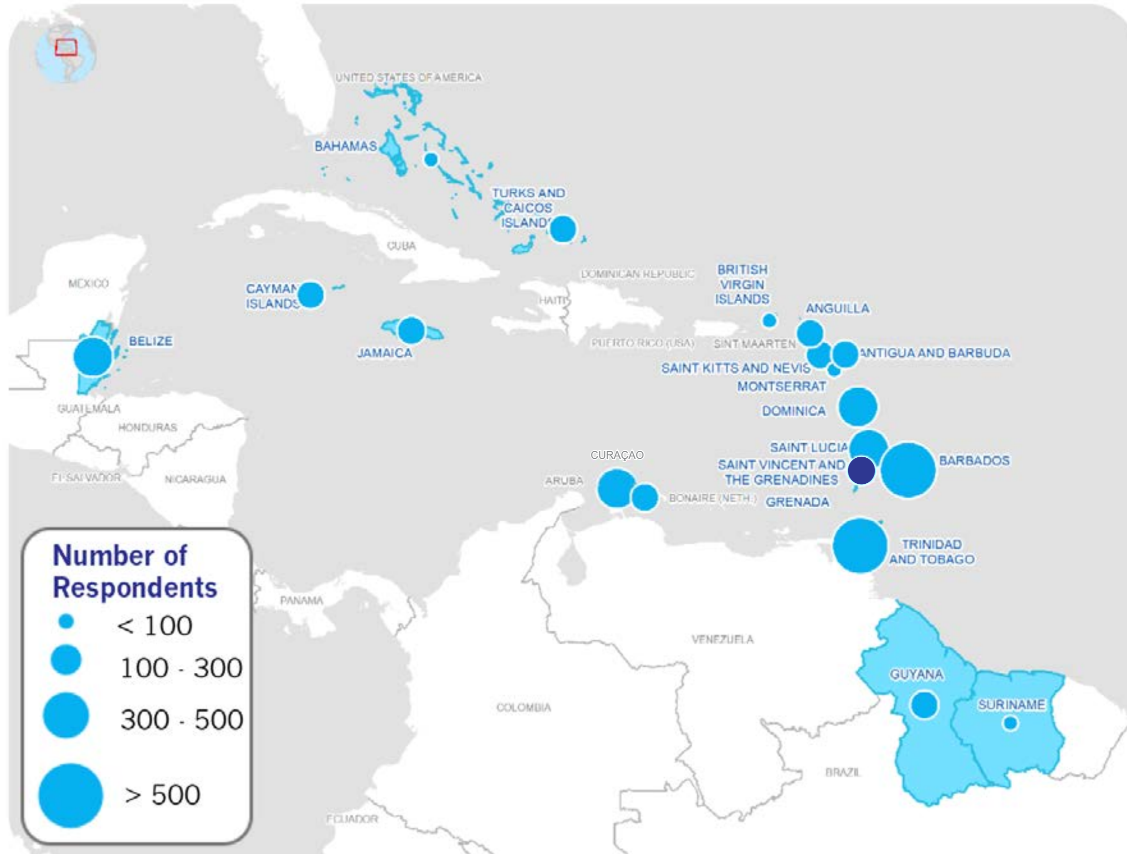
38 Average age

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 conducted using online methods and the survey link was shared via social media, e-mail, and text messages. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the mobile phone penetration rate is nearly one device per person. It is assumed that the poorest, most vulnerable households are under-represented 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

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES Summary Report | November 2020

114 Respondents

78 Female | **22 %** Male

38 Average age

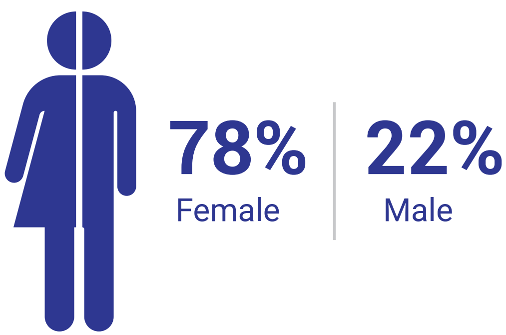
4 Average household size

- COVID-19 and measures to contain it have resulted in widespread disruptions to livelihoods. Almost half of respondents reported that their ability to carry out livelihoods was impacted, mainly owing to concerns about leaving the house, transport limitations and the high price of livelihood inputs.
- Nearly all respondents predict that their livelihoods will be impacted in the future, and a fifth expects this impact to be severe. Two out of five respondents who responded to the survey's open-ended question expressed very negative sentiments concerning the pandemic and the disruption it caused.
- The pandemic appears to have impacted the economic wellbeing of most households. Fifty-nine percent of respondents have experienced job loss or reduced incomes in their households. For half of respondents, unemployment is their main worry. Job loss in the tourism sector is also a dominant theme in responses to the open-ended question.
- COVID-19 has impacted the availability of goods and market access, in line with broader regional trends. Twenty-two percent of respondents experienced difficulties in accessing markets, mainly due to a lack of cash to spend. While staple foods are consistently available in stores, essential medicines were only sometimes or partially available for half of respondents and fresh foods for 28% of respondents.
- Sixty-eight percent of respondents observed an increase in food prices, and 77% changed their shopping behaviour since the pandemic began. Half of the respondents resorted to purchasing cheaper and less preferred brands, one-third to buying larger quantities than usual and another third to buying smaller quantities than usual.
- The pandemic is impacting food security, with 38% of respondents reporting skipping meals or eating less than usual and 8% going one whole day without eating. Nineteen percent of households had no food stocks and 37% of respondents were mainly worried about not being able to cover their food needs.
- The amount of time people are spending on unpaid activities is changing. Almost half of respondents increased the time spent on domestic work, childcare and gardening/subsistence production, and a similar proportion reduced time spent shopping.
- The number of respondents was not sufficient for disaggregated analysis between men and women and among income and age groups. However, the regional results found that detrimental impacts on income and food consumption were more widespread among low-income families.

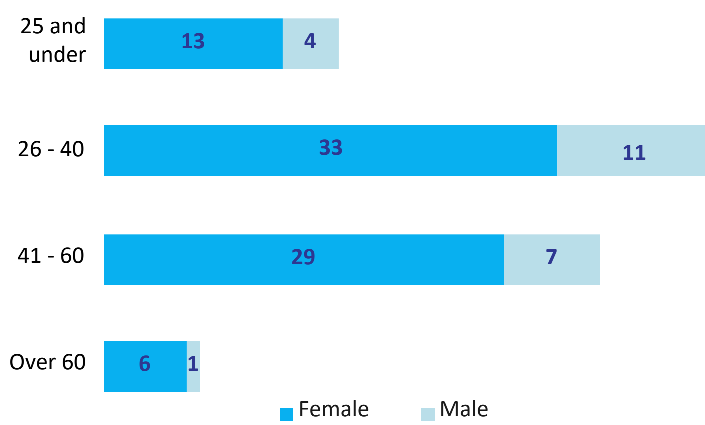
DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

Age and gender breakdown shows that the majority of respondents are female and in the 26-40 age category. Due to an insufficient number of respondents, a disaggregated analysis of results by sex, age and perceived income level could not be provided in this report.

Sex of respondents

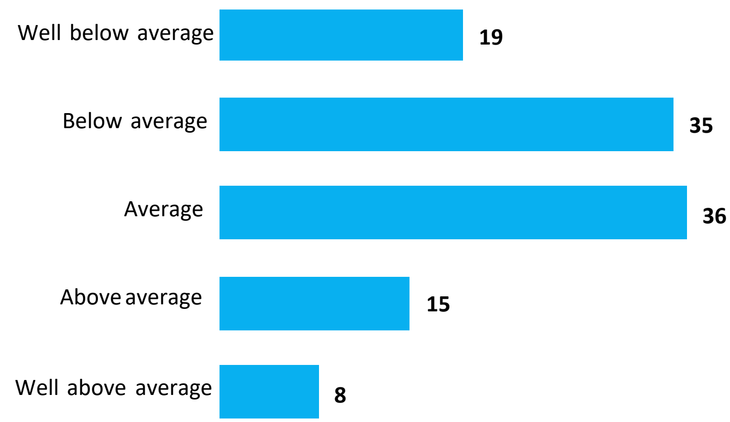


Age of respondents



Perceived income level of respondents

Respondents were asked how they feel their household's income compares to the rest of the country. Of all respondents, 32% assessed their income as average while 48% assessed it as below or well below average. A smaller share of respondents (20%) assessed their income as above or well above average.



"Not working .. its hard to provide for my kids" - Male, Age 71

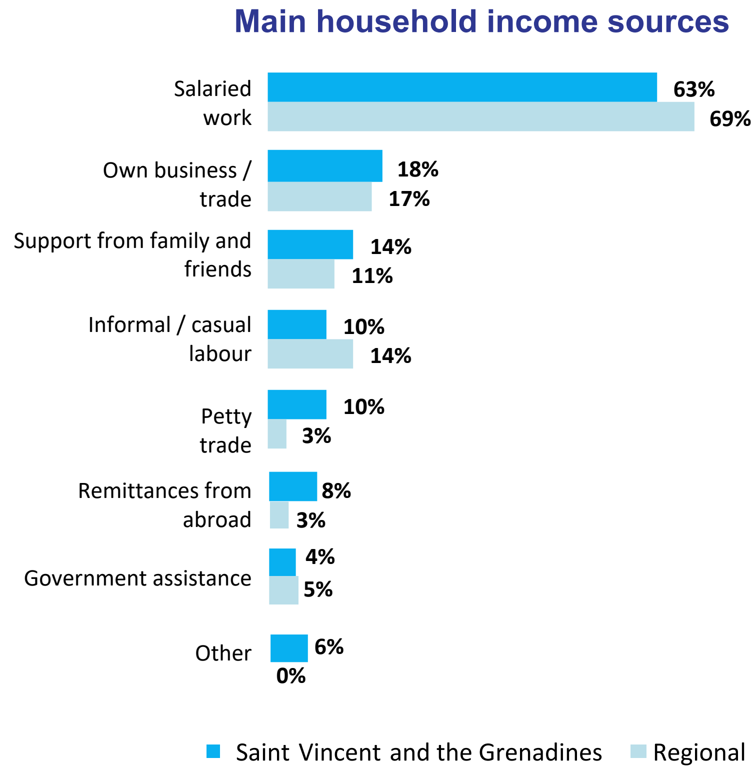
"Loss of income due to the tourism industry at a standstill" - Male, Age 50

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 by far is salaried work (63% of respondents), followed by business/trade (18%) and support from family and friends (14%).

The Caribbean-wide survey found that the main sources of household income have shifted since April, with a reduction in those reporting salaried income and increased reliance on external support such as remittances from abroad, family and friends, or government assistance. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, survey results do not reveal a similarly strong trend, with the share of salaried work not having changed much from April to June.



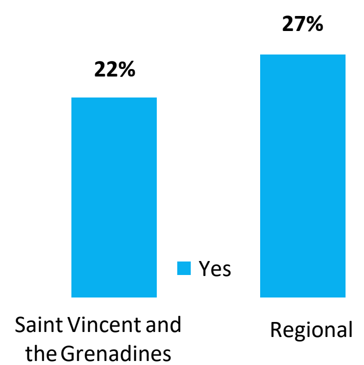
"Food shortage and loss of remittances." - Male, Age 19

"Having to study online while homeschooling 3 children. I have started to feel the impact on my mental health." - Female, Age 43

IMPACT ON MARKETS

Disruptions resulting from COVID-19 have had a negative effect on market access. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 22% of respondents indicated they had problems accessing markets in the week prior to the survey, similar to the region. Lack of money to spend was the primary reason, reported by half of respondents experiencing lack of access to markets. Transport limitations, cited by 24% of affected respondents, and concerns over leaving the house, cited by 20%, are the next most common reasons. Movement restrictions and the closure of markets/stores were much less commonly cited compared to the regional results.

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



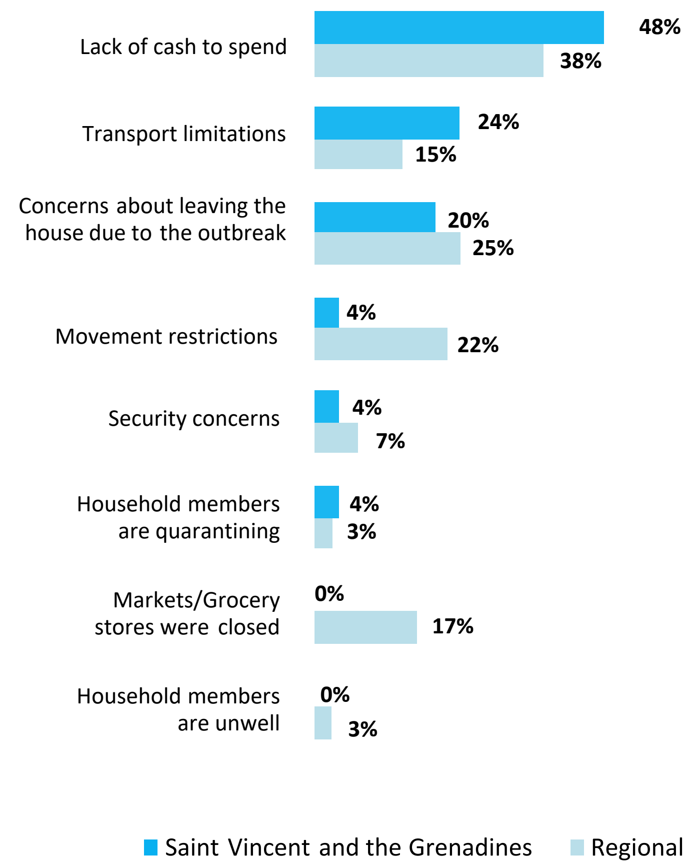
"I am now teaching online and when entering the public I can't be social with anyone...I am not leaving home as often as before, only for necessary items." - Female, Age 23

"[I] Thought of increasing vegetable production." - Female, Age 49

"[I'm] Very concerned about the health of everyone in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the economic impact." - Male, Age 31

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



22% of households reported a lack of market access, mainly due to lack of cash

Availability of items in stores

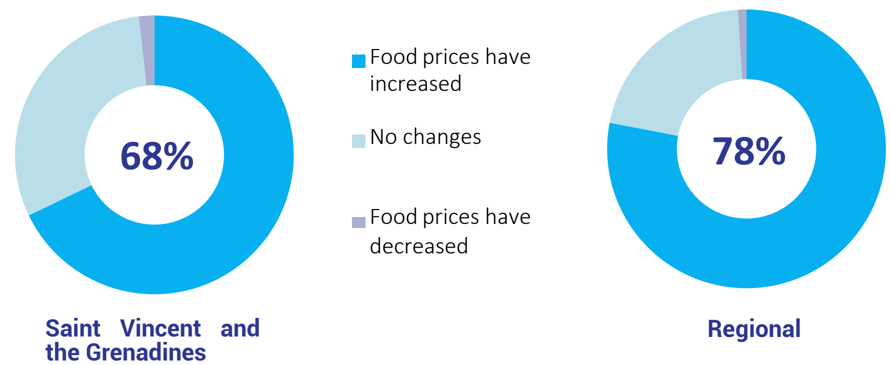
Respondents reported on the availability of key items in stores.

How Available?	Fresh food items		Basic food items		Hygiene items		Essential medicines	
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Regional	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Regional	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Regional	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Regional
Always Available	**67%**	71%	**84%**	83%	**82%**	85%	**37%**	55%
Partially/ sometimes available	**28%**	25%	**15%**	15%	**15%**	13%	**48%**	30%
Not available	**3%**	1%	**0%**	1%	**1%**	1%	**3%**	2%
Don't know	**3%**	4%	**1%**	2%	**2%**	2%	**12%**	15%

The availability of goods has also been impacted, similar to trends in the Caribbean-wide findings. The availability of basic food and hygiene items was fairly high, reported to be always available by over 80% of respondents. However, essential medicines were only sometimes or partially available for 48% of respondents and fresh foods for 28% of respondents.

Food prices

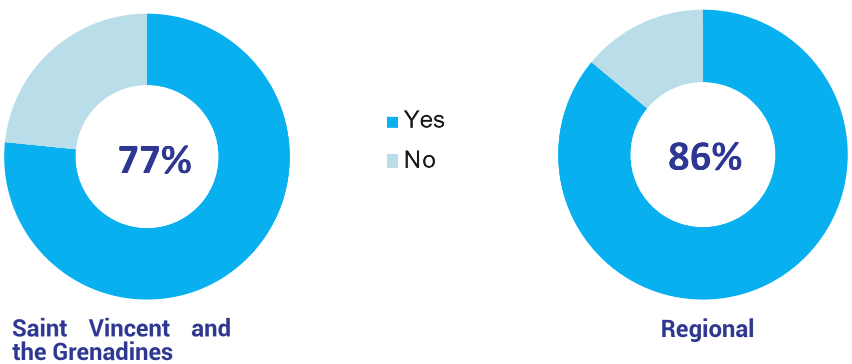
More than two-thirds of respondents (68%) observed an increase in food prices. Although high, this is less than the regional average (78%).



IMPACT ON MARKETS

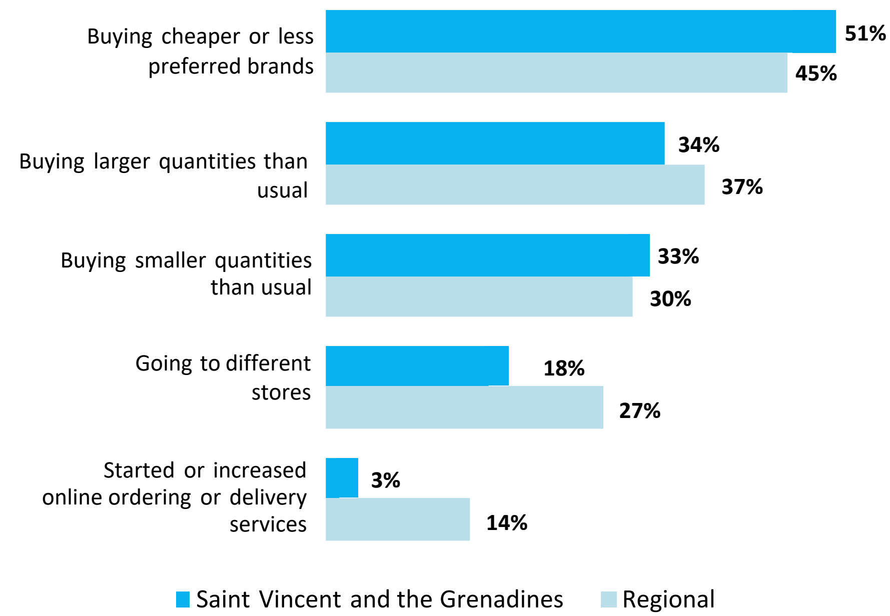
Shopping behavior

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



More than three-quarters of respondents have changed their shopping behaviour since the pandemic began. Those who changed how they shop predominantly resorted to purchasing cheaper or less preferred brands (51%), buying larger quantities than usual (34%) or smaller quantities than usual (33%), which is in line with regional trends. The use of online delivery services appears to be lower than the regional average.

How respondents changed their shopping behavior



"COVID-19 has drastically affected my studies...in addition to mental health concerns, studying from home has been a challenge. My family...got a moratorium both on their mortgage and our student loans, and having 2 university students returning home to continue studies in a high anxiety situation is hard." - Female, Age 23

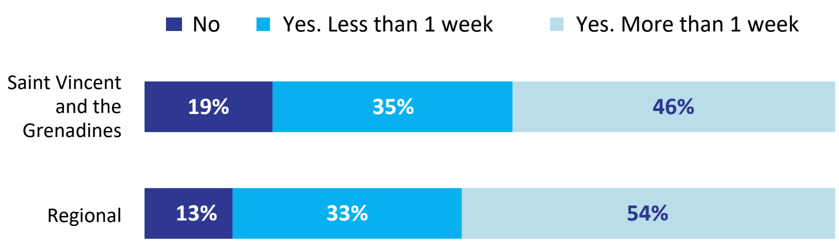
IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY

The pandemic and measures to stop its spread have impacted household food security. In line with regional trends, food consumption has been negatively affected. Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported skipping meals or eating less than usual and 16% resorted to eating less preferred foods. Another 8% went one whole day without eating. Less than half of respondents (46%) said that they had at least one week's food supply while 19% of respondents had no food stocks at all.

Food stocks

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

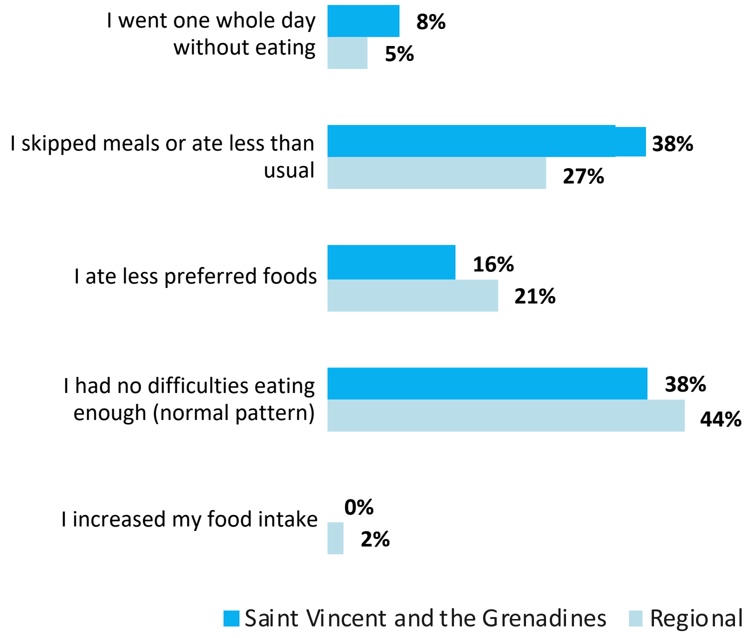
Does your household have any food stock?



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?



38% of respondents skipped meals or ate less than usual, and 8% went one whole day without eating

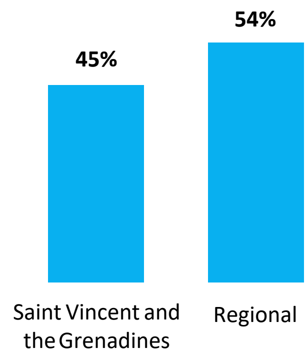
IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

Disruptions resulting from COVID-19 have had a widespread impact on livelihoods. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 45% of respondents reported disruptions to their livelihoods. Concerns over leaving the house (36%), transport limitations (24%) and expensive livelihood inputs (22%) were cited as the main reasons for those facing livelihood disruptions. Compared to the regional survey results, respondents from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were much less likely to cite movement restrictions as limiting factors for carrying out their livelihoods (14% compared to the regional average of 40%).

Disruptions to livelihoods

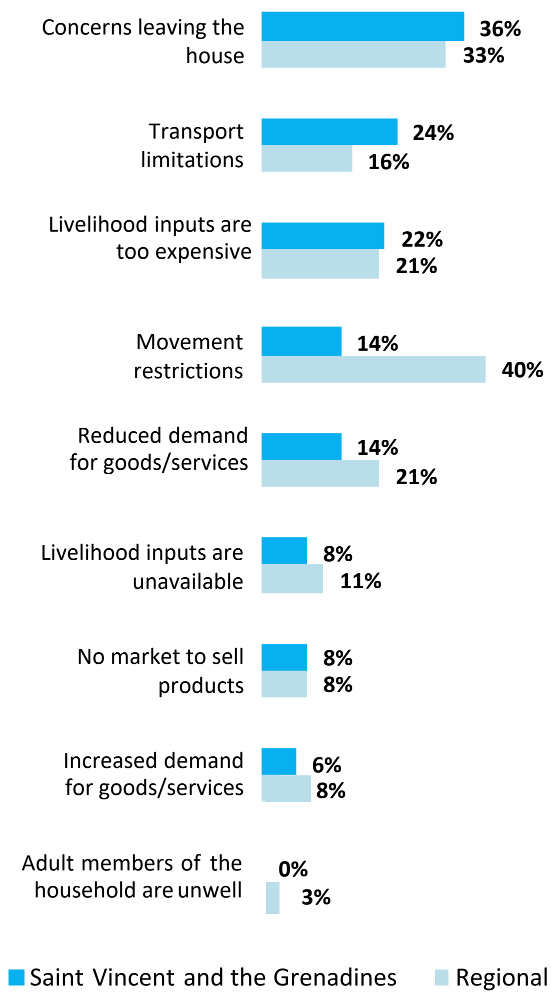
Respondents reported on any disruptions to their livelihoods in the last two weeks.

% 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

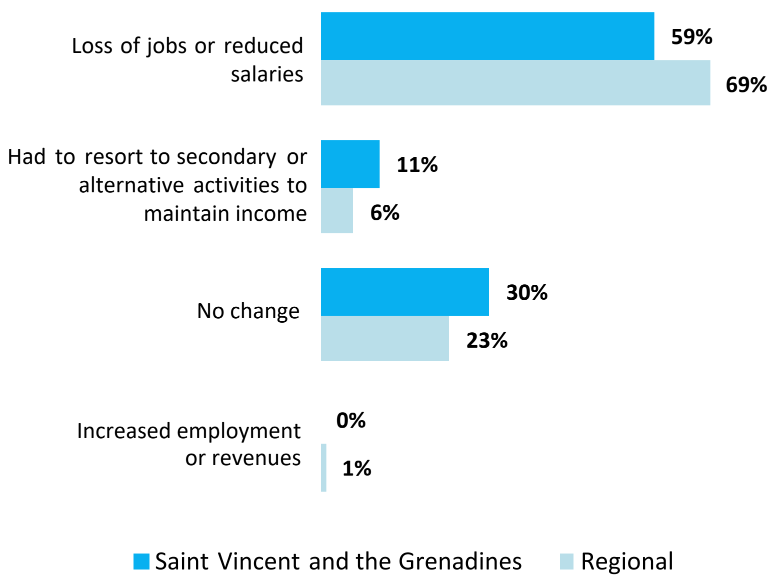


IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

Income changes

Respondents communicated changes to their income since the COVID-19 outbreak began. The pandemic appears to be taking a widespread toll on households' economic wellbeing. Fifty-nine percent of respondents have experienced job loss or reduced incomes in their households. At the same time, 11% of respondents had to resort to secondary or alternative activities to maintain their income.

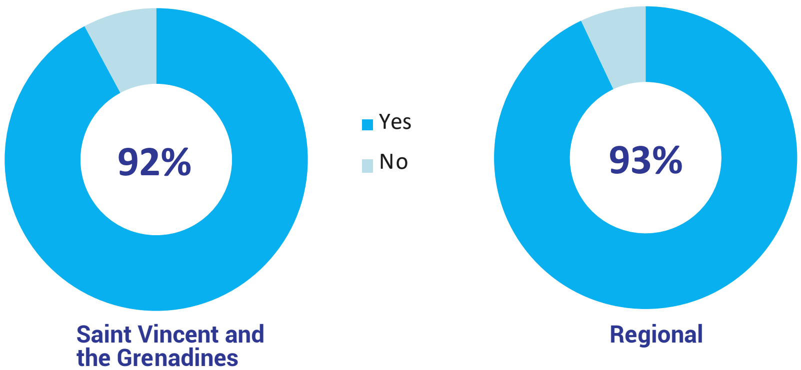
Has your household income changed since the COVID-19 outbreak?



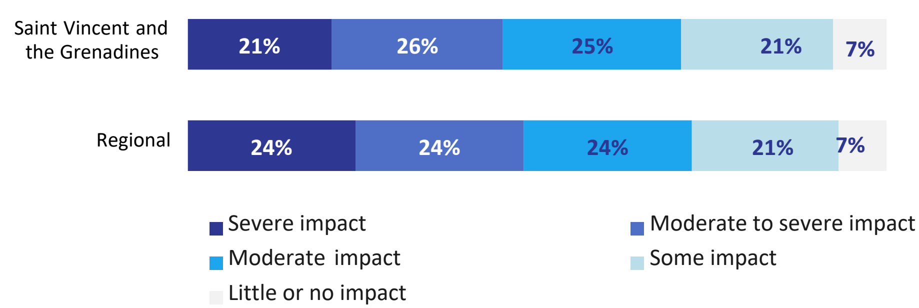
59% of respondents reported a loss in employment or reduction in salaries in June.

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. Almost all respondents (92%) believed that their livelihoods would be impacted to some degree and 21% of respondents anticipate severe impacts, which is similar to trends at the regional level. Tourism is critical to the economy of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and a continued loss of tourist business could have impacts even on those who do not directly work in the industry given links to other sectors.



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. Half of all respondents are mainly worried about unemployment, followed by illness (39%) and the inability to cover food (37%) and other essential needs (33%). While the trends are similar to the region, concerns about illness are less prevalent in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

"My husband lost his job, we had to resort to savings which wasn't much and the savings got exhausted. Our utilities are past due dates and close to being disconnected. Lack of finance to take care of family needs." – Female, Age 34

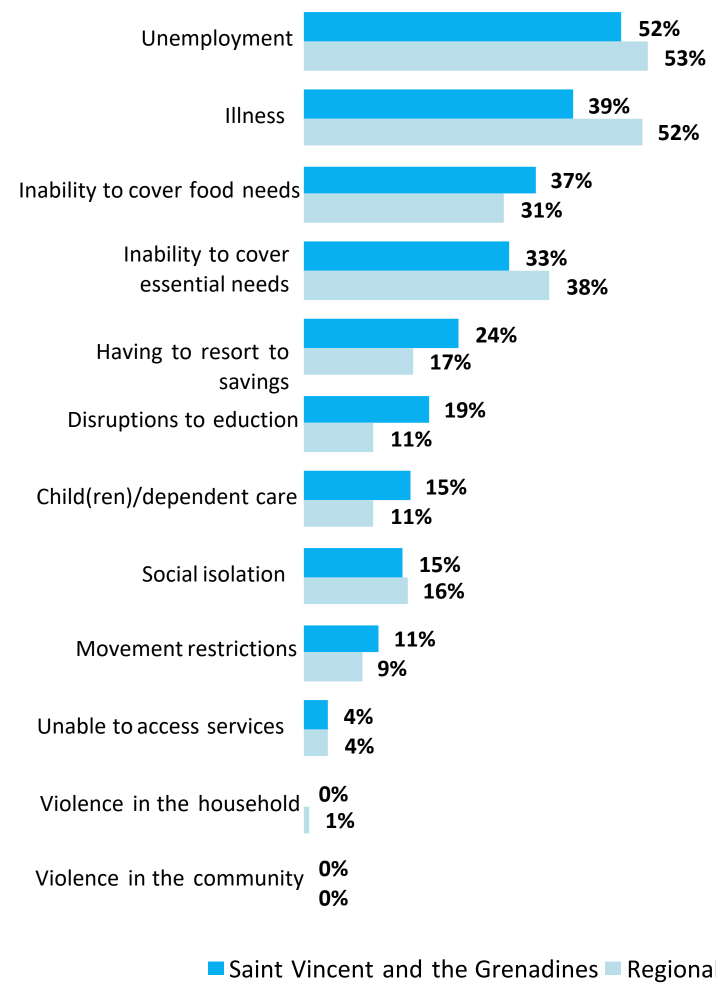
"I have to be asking for help." - Female, Age 38

"Since covid we have been consuming less food and have been focused on pinching every penny so we can make it through this pandemic" – Female, Age 24

"It's been difficult to get employed." - Female, Age 25

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

Multiple responses could be selected



Households engaged in farming/fishing

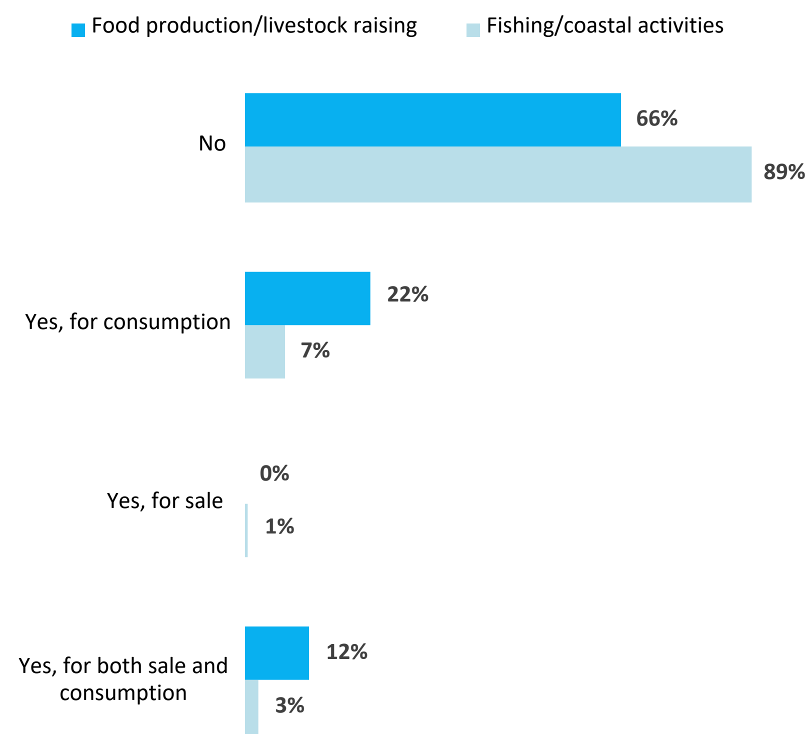
Agriculture is an important economic sector in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and accounts for almost 7% of Gross Domestic Product. One third of respondents reported being involved in food/livestock production and 11% in fishing, mainly for their own consumption.

At the regional level, metrics of wellbeing for households engaged in food production did 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 reported 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 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines cannot be conducted given the insufficient number of responses received from these subgroups. CARICOM and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are conducting a more in-depth assessment and analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 on agricultural livelihoods, production and food systems in the Caribbean.

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 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	5%	8%	47%	4%	19%
No change	43%	33%	29%	43%	49%
Increased	50%	47%	25%	46%	7%
Not applicable	2%	12%	0%	7%	24%

Almost half of respondents (47%) reduced time spent on shopping, while time devoted to domestic work, childcare and subsistence production increased for about half of respondents.

“It is not easy not working and having income as normal.” - Female, Age 54

“Loss of work, eviction notice.” - Male, Age 43

“Making do with what I have.” - Female, Age 58

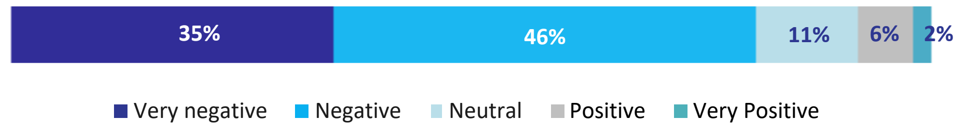
“I’m worried all the time. I’m not working. I have less than $300 in my name. What and how I’m going to take care of family. God forbid if someone gets sick.” - Female, Age 43

How people are coping and adapting

The survey 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, 33% of the 114 respondents from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 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.

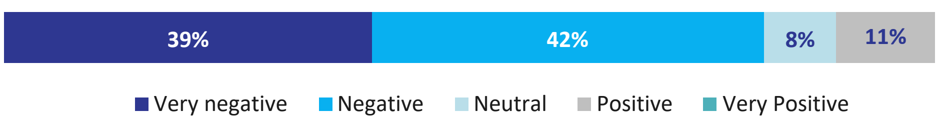
At the regional level, sentiments seem to have significantly deteriorated compared to April with the share of very negative comments increasing significantly from 3% to 35%. Trends in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are similarly pessimistic when compared to the region. Eighty-one percent of respondents expressed overall negative sentiment while 39% expressed "very negative" sentiment.

Region, June 2020



Region, April 2020

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, June 2020



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

"Schools close, my children's father isn't getting work like before, bills climbing, not enough money for food and healthcare...I am a single mother with 5 children and 2 grandchildren. The most thing that I do is give thanks to King Selassie I and the Ancient of Ancients to see us through!" - Female, Age 42

"I think am more anxious about the slow down of the economy as my partner is an entrepreneur and livelihood depends on other people buying" - Female, Age 40

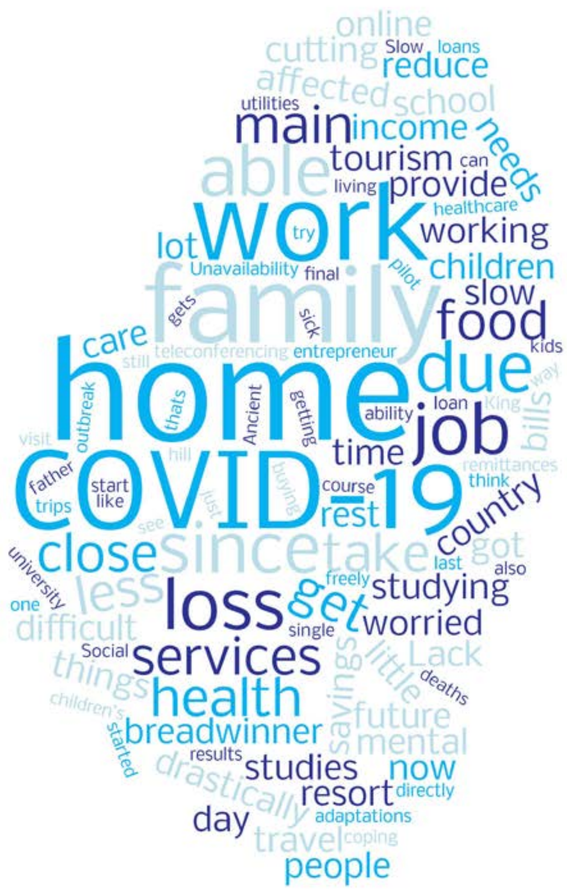
"The future for our lil Island is very worrying and concerning, as our main source of income is tourism based. And the likelihood of there being any kind upcoming season is very scary. We are afraid of what people might resort to to be able to provide." - Female, Age 36

"I did a course and was supposed to go on attachment to start a job and was not able to do so due to the outbreak of Covid-19." - Female, Age 40

HOW PEOPLE ARE COPING AND ADAPTING

Key themes

The word clouds represent key themes on how people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are being impacted and are adapting to disruptions from COVID-19. The most commonly mentioned phrases are "home", followed by "COVID-19", "work" and "family", which indicates that a large focus of respondents are concerns about the virus and their ability to sustain livelihoods and provide for their family.



June 2020

CONCLUSION

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, unlike most countries in the region, has not introduced movement restrictions and lockdowns and never officially closed its borders. However, the halt in international tourism and general economic disruption related to COVID-19 have had a widespread impact on the well-being of people.

Results from this survey suggest that most people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have experienced a deterioration of their employment and income situation, an increase in food prices and concerns about the future of their livelihoods. Impacts on food security appear more widespread than in the region as a whole, with nearly half of respondents skipping meals, eating less than usual or going a whole day without eating. Worries about unemployment and illness are even more widespread, and respondents expect their livelihoods will continue to be impacted .

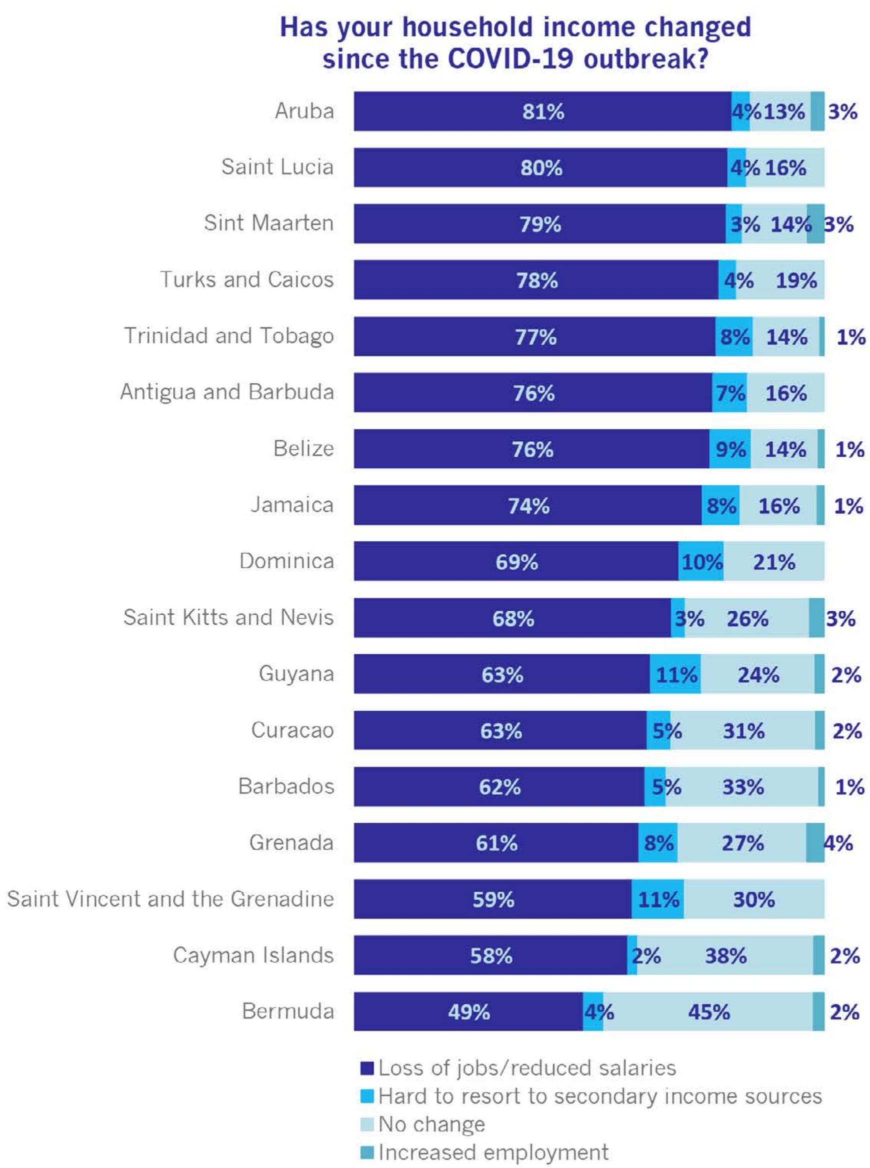
The pandemic is shifting life at home, with time spent on domestic work, childcare and subsistence activities increasing, and shopping patterns changing towards cheaper or bulk purchases. While most consumer goods are widely available, the partial availability of essential medicines reported by nearly half of the respondents is concerning. A fifth of respondents reported difficulties accessing markets, mainly due to lack of cash for purchases.

In the face of the ongoing crisis, the government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 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 protection programmes, livelihood support, and vocational training for people from affected economic sectors.

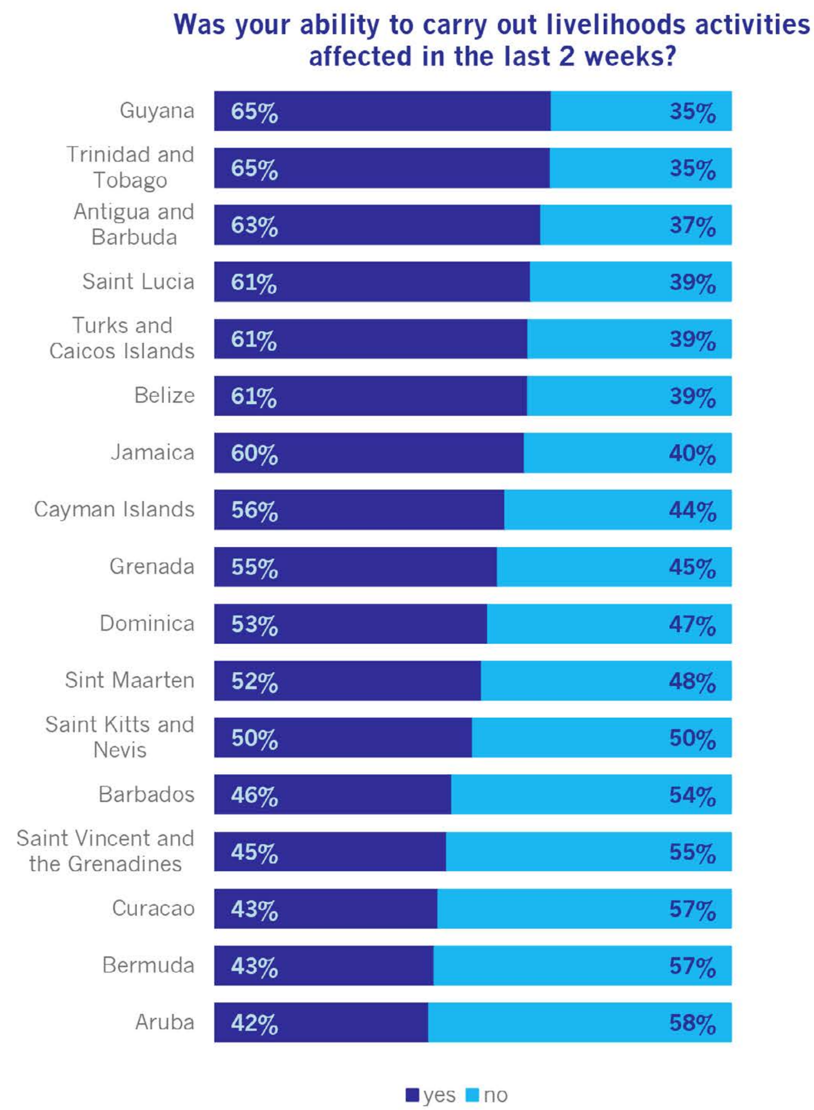
The results of this web-based survey should be read with a degree of caution given potential bias towards households who can afford internet access or smartphone devices. Considering the protracted nature and unforeseeable end of the crisis, it is essential to continue monitoring its impacts, particularly on the most vulnerable groups.

ANNEX. REGIONAL OVERVIEWS

Income changes



Livelihood disruptions



METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

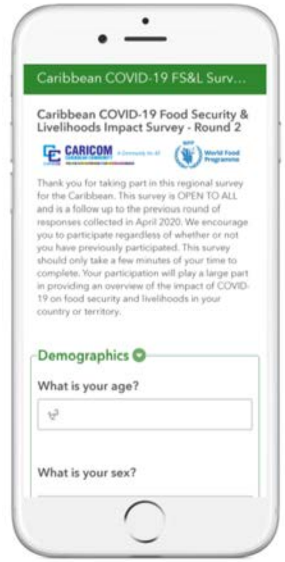
The second round of the CARICOM Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods impact survey was launched via a webform, which was accessible on mobile/smartphone and PC/desktop. The data collection period was inclusive of 14 June to 1 July 2020. The survey was circulated via email, social media, SMS,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

This page is intentionally left blank.

UNITED NATIONS WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME
Office for Emergency Preparedness and Response in the Caribbean
UN House, Marine Gardens
Christ Church
Barbados
Regis Chapman | Head of Office
Tel: +1 246 467 6085
Email: wfp.barbados@wfp.org
Website: https://www.wfp.org/countries/caribbean

CARICOM
Caribbean Community Secretariat
Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown
PO Box 10827
Guyana
Shaun Baugh | Programme Manager, Agricultural & Agro-Industrial Development
Tel: +592 222 0134
Email: shaun.baugh@caricom.org
Website: https://www.caricom.org

Funded by
Funded by European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid