# Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security & Livelihoods Impact Survey

## BELIZE Summary Report | June 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic is dramatically altering how people earn a living and meet their critical needs. The Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods Impact Survey was launched by CARICOM to gather data on livelihoods, access to markets and food security and provide snapshots of these impacts over time. This report analyses data collected from 25 January to 12 February 2021 and complements the findings from the previous survey rounds conducted in April and June 2020. Implemented by the World Food Programme, the short online survey was circulated in Belize via social media, traditional media outlets, and emails.

### February 2021

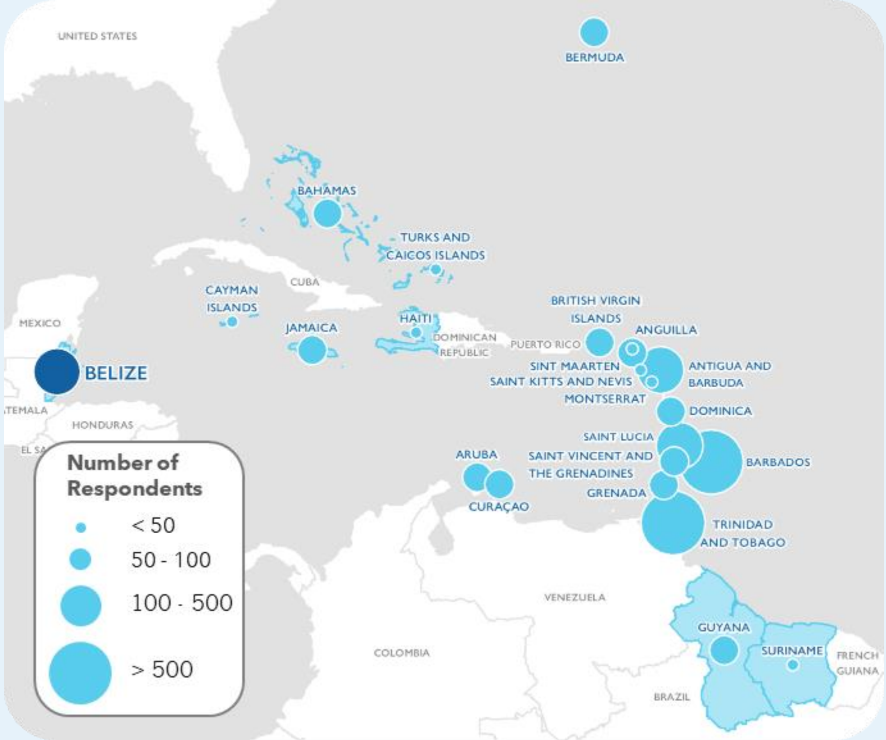
**255** Respondents | **53** Female | **47%** Male | **43** Average age | **4** Average household size

### June 2020

**370** Respondents | **55** Female | **45%** Male | **37** Average age | **4** Average household size

### April 2020

**643** Respondents | **65** Female | **35%** Male | **35** Average age | **5** Average household size

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WFP World Food Programme

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

# BELIZE Summary | June 2021

- The impacts of COVID-19 continue to evolve ten months after the initial declaration of the pandemic. Countries in the Caribbean have endured multiple lockdowns and changes in travel protocols during this time and introduced various programmes to assist households that are most heavily impacted. In Belize, over one out of six respondents received some form of government assistance, but only a marginal portion of these continued to receive it at the time of the survey.
- Livelihoods continue to be disrupted, affecting two out of three households, mainly due to concerns about the outbreak and movement restrictions, and increasingly due to the price and inaccessibility of livelihood inputs. Impacts to incomes are similarly widespread, with over two thirds reporting job loss or reduced salaries since the COVID-19 outbreak. Every third respondent expects a very severe impact on their livelihood in the future.
- Four out of ten respondents still experience difficulties in accessing markets, primarily due to the lack of financial means and increasing food prices. This influenced shopping behaviour, with people increasingly buying cheaper foods and smaller quantities.
- Food insecurity is a growing concern, with four out of ten respondents having no food stocks and cutting down food consumption in the week leading up to the survey and worrying about meeting food needs, all much above the regional average. Food needs are mostly met at the expense of productive assets and investments in education and health.
- In the wider region, some signs of recovery are emerging, primarily among economically better off households, business owners and people relying on salaried work, while the poorest respondents continue to struggle and seem to rely more on external support, suggesting widening inequalities. In Belize, available data suggests a more protracted situation with critical indicators of well being pointing towards a further deterioration.

| | | Feb-21 | Jun-20 | Apr-20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LIVELIHOODS | Disrupted livelihoods | 68% | 61% | 81% |
| | Reduction/loss of income | 70% | 76% | 68% |
| | Moderate to severe or severe future livelihoods impacts | 59% | 57% | 59% |
| MARKETS | Lack of market access | 39% | 38% | 35% |
| | Change in shopping behaviour | 93% | 92% | 91% |
| | Increase in food prices | 88% | 81% | 68% |
| FOOD SECURITY | Reduced food consumption | 41% | 32% | 25% |
| | Lack of food stock | 37% | 18% | 4% |

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# COVID-19 | Situation and response

## COVID-19 cases and government responses

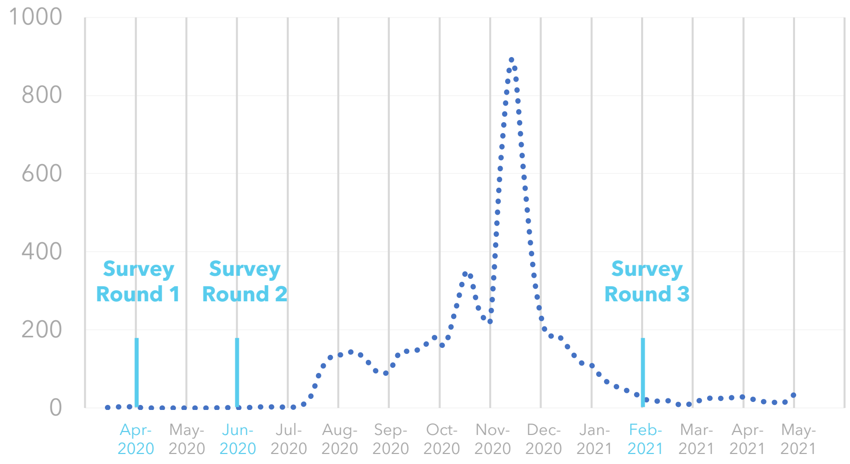
Following the first recorded case of COVID-19 in Belize in late March 2020, the government closed its borders to air traffic and imposed a nationwide state of emergency with a nightly curfew. Additional measures included the closure of schools and restrictions to commercial activities.

The first Caribbean COVID-19 Survey was launched in early April 2020 at the time when these measures were first implemented in Belize. By the time of the second survey in late June 2020, the government had begun to relax some of the restrictions, but a night curfew was still in place.

In late November 2020, following the reopening of the airport and amid an unprecedented uptick in cases in the country, the government reintroduced a nightly curfew along with restrictions on public gatherings.

**New COVID-19 cases in Belize**

**Average 14-day notification rate per 100 000 population**




Source: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2021

The current round of surveys was conducted in February when the number of new cases reached an all-time low for 2021. Beginning in February 2021, authorities in Belize eased the nationwide night curfew along with other domestic measures including inter-district travel, the opening of gyms and churches, and the operation of food vendors.

## Social protection measures

Faced with the widespread economic repercussions of the pandemic, all governments in the English- and Dutch speaking Caribbean have turned to social protection to support people, through existing programmes or ones introduced in the wake of COVID-19.

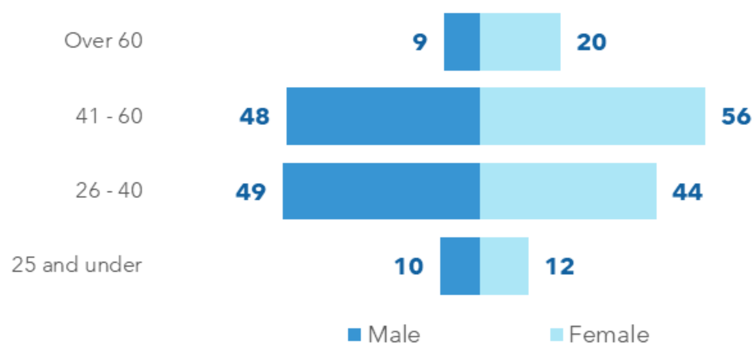
In Belize, the government established a new Unemployment Relief Programme providing financial assistance over a 12-week period to assist persons working in the tourism sector who have lost their jobs or income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as persons who were already unemployed prior to the pandemic and who have been impacted by it.

The government also implemented a new temporary cash transfer programme, the Belize COVID-19 Cash Transfer programme (BCCAT) to assist approximately 10,500 poor and vulnerable households that are not receiving support from any other social assistance programmes. In addition, existing beneficiaries of the country's flagship social assistance programme 'Building Opportunities for Our Social Transformation' (BOOST) received an increase to their monthly financial benefits over a 6-months period.

The government also invested BZD 10 million in the introduction of a new COVID-19 food assistance programme that provides baskets of basic goods to impacted households not already receiving benefits under other social assistance programmes. Furthermore, children on the national school meal programme received take-home hampers during the school closure.

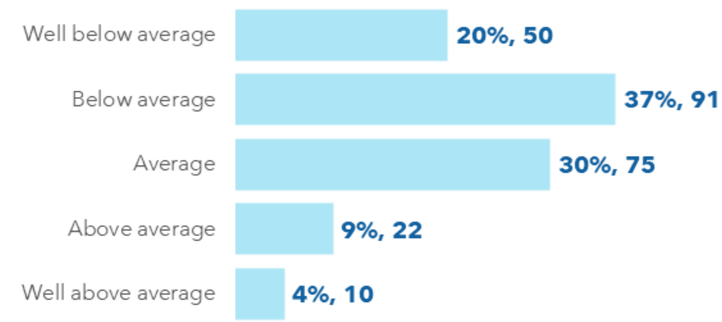
# RESPONDENTS | Demographics

### Age and sex

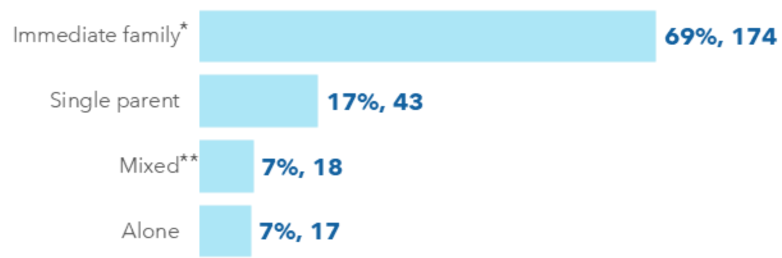



### Perceived income levels

Respondents were asked to compare their household's income with the rest of their country.



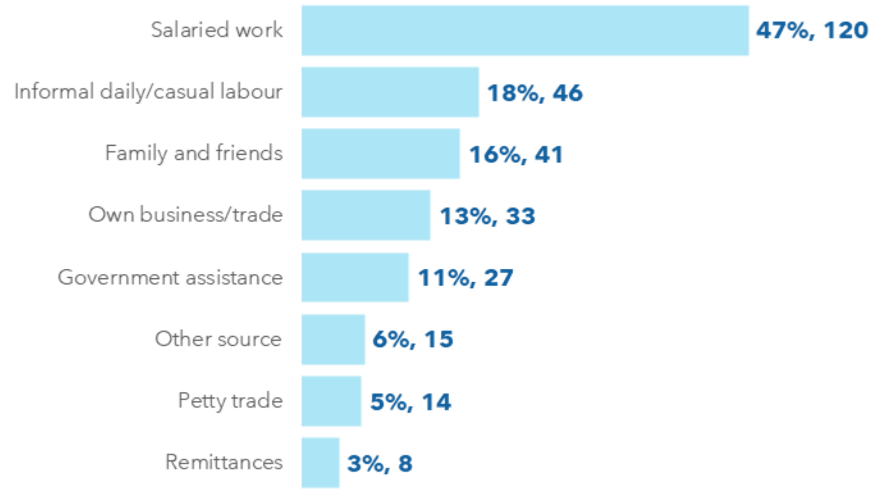

### Household composition




* Immediate family includes partner, children and grandparents.
** Mixed households are composed of immediate family members, other relatives as well as non-family members.

### Main income sources

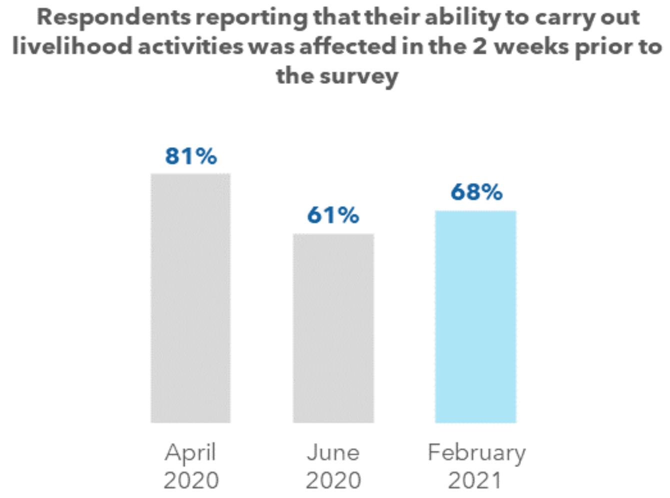
Respondents were asked to indicate the main income source(s) for their household. Multiple choices could be selected.

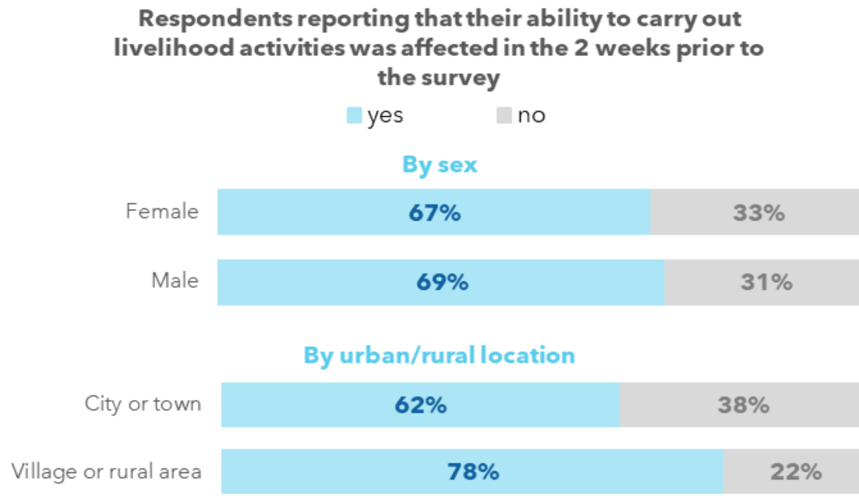



### Urban/rural location

# LIVELIHOODS | Disruptions to livelihoods

► Impacts to livelihoods remain widespread, with two thirds of respondents reporting disruptions.



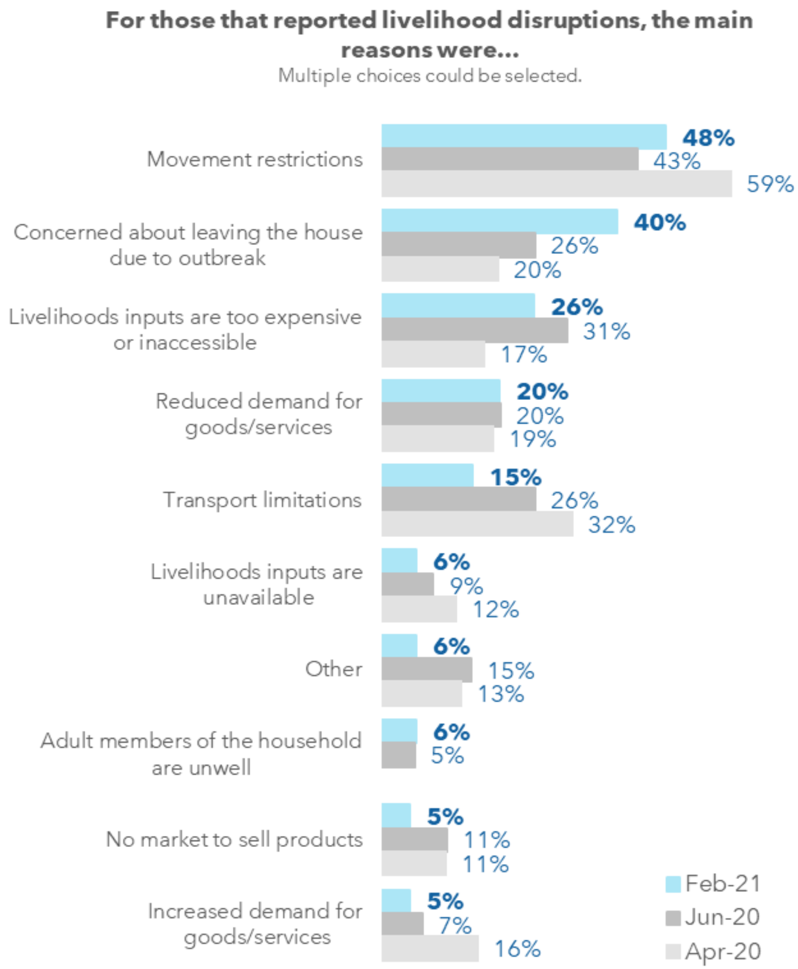

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt livelihoods. For over two thirds of respondents the ability to pursue their livelihood was affected in the two weeks preceding the survey. This proportion has decreased from April 2020 (81%) but is slightly higher compared to survey results from June 2020. The extent of livelihood disruptions is higher in villages compared to cities or towns and it seems to be similar among women compared to men.

Other respondent characteristics (such as age, source and perceived level of income or household composition) could not be considered in the livelihood analysis due to a low number of respondents during the third round of data collection.

Livelihood disruptions are more widespread in Belize compared to the overall region (51%). At the regional level, the most marked differences are also found related to people's sources and level of income. Regionally, respondents who describe their income as well below average and those with informal sources of income (petty trade, family and friends, casual labour) were the most frequent to report livelihood disruptions.

# LIVELIHOODS | Reasons for livelihood disruptions

▶ Movement restrictions and concerns about the outbreak are still the main drivers behind disruptions to livelihoods.



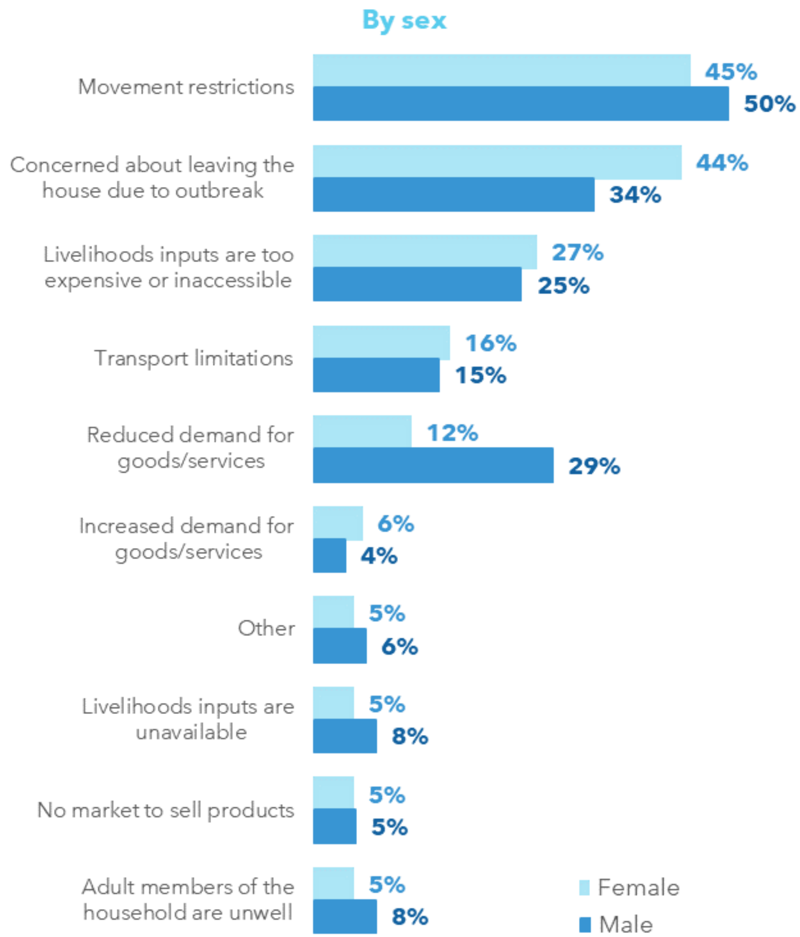

Movement restrictions and concerns about leaving the house due to the outbreak remain the main reasons behind disruptions to livelihoods. However, movement restrictions appear to be less of a driver compared to the early stages of the pandemic and the introduction of initial measures to contain it. Reported by every second respondent in Belize, movement restrictions are still more pronounced reasons for livelihood disruptions compared to the regional average (34%).

Limited access to livelihood inputs is also among the key reasons for livelihood disruptions, cited by a quarter of respondents, while reduced demand for goods/services continues to affect almost one out of five respondents facing livelihood disruptions.

Men are twice as likely to quote reduced demand for goods and services as a reason for livelihood disruptions, compared to women. At the same time, female respondents were more concerned about leaving the house due to the outbreak which may suggest differential perceptions and impact of the pandemic on women and men due to gendered roles in the household.

# LIVELIHOODS | Reasons for livelihood disruptions

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




*"All the people are with less money, so it affect my food sales." - Male, 39 years*

*"I used to make hand made jewelry and crafts. We would go sell on street to tourist but that stopped." - Female, 46 years*

*"Transport to work hard because reduced bus runs." - Male, 59 years*

*"I'm a taxi driver and lost my income due to the pandemic from March 2020 up to now. Haven't get back to work due to the closed borders and schools too so its hard at this time for me." - Female, 41 years*

*"I feel I will lose my small business very soon, as the banks are beginning to ask for payments and I don't have much income to pay them. I might lose everything that I've worked so hard for."- Male, 38 years*

*"Lost my part time job, am depending on someone to eat." – Female, 41 years*

*"Lost job, living day to day on a $200 a month budget." – Female, 41 years*

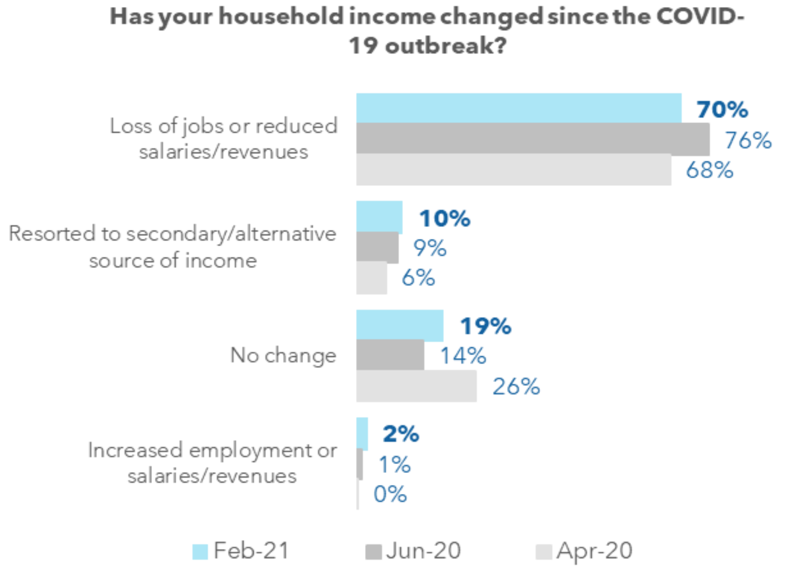
*"Tourism, the loss in number of visitors affects my sales." – Male, 40 years*

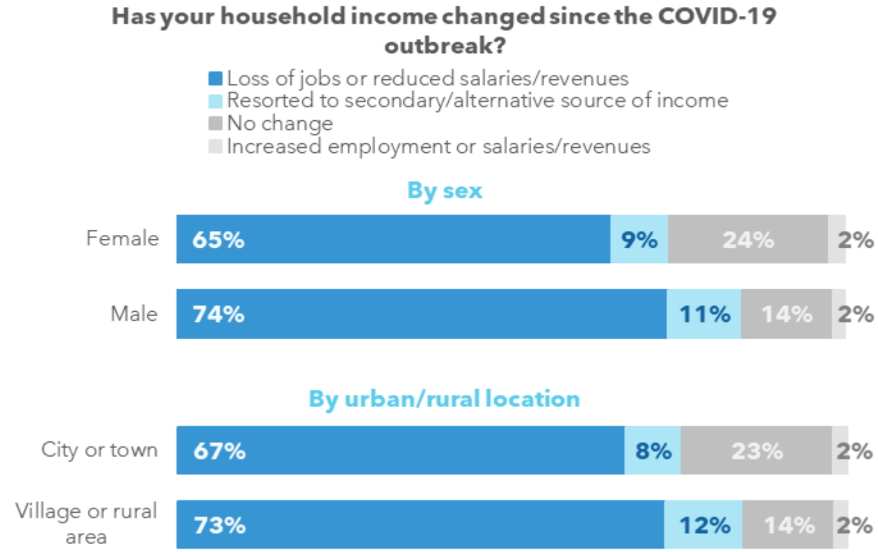
*"We are some of the most fortunate in our hometown and yet our living conditions are stressful. Imagine the less fortunate. some are getting electricity and water cut out cause they can't afford to pay bills." – Female, 20 years*

*"Lost my job. Single mom. Life got hard." – Female, 43 years*

# LIVELIHOODS | Impacts on income

▶ Over two-thirds of respondents have faced job loss or income reductions in their households.




Impacts to income continue to be widespread, with 70% of respondents reporting that their household has experienced job loss or reduced salaries since the COVID-19 outbreak, slightly lower compared to June 2020 (76%). The figure is similar compared to April 2020 (68%) and suggests the continuation of economic impacts with many people facing decreased income.

In Belize, loss of jobs or reduced income seems to be more widespread among men compared to women, and in the village or rural areas compared to cities and towns.

In the Caribbean region, income and job losses are similarly widespread (63%) as in Belize, and most frequent among low-income households, those with informal income sources as well as among younger respondents.

# LIVELIHOODS | Farming and fishing

▶ In the region, respondents engaged in fishing activities seem to be among the hardest hit, but more detailed country assessments are needed.

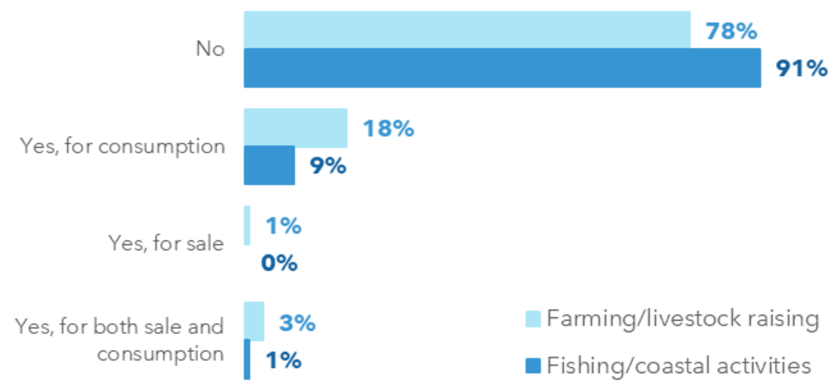
One fifth of respondents reported engaging in farming, gardening or livestock raising and one tenth in fisheries/coastal activities. In both cases these activities are primarily for their own consumption, with vegetable production being by far the main farming activity (74%), a trend similar to the regional average.

The pandemic led to an overall increase in gardening and household production activities, with 28% of respondents indicating that they have increased the amount of time spent on these activities. However, this figure is somewhat lower compared to the survey in June 2020 (33%).

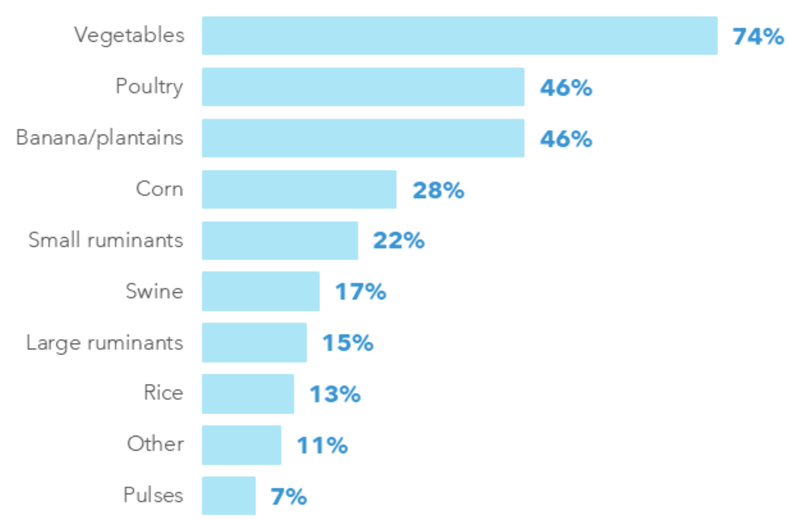
At the regional level, those engaged in farming primarily for sale and fishing appear to be facing more food consumption challenges. Among respondents engaged in fishing, 36% reported to have skipped meals or ate less than usual in the week prior to the survey, compared to 27% of respondents on average. Among fishing-based livelihoods in the region, job or revenue loss was more widespread compared to farming or average households.

More information on how governments in Latin America and the Caribbean have supported small-scale fisheries facing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring the continuity of livelihoods is available through additional resources.

**Is your households engaged in farming/fishing?**

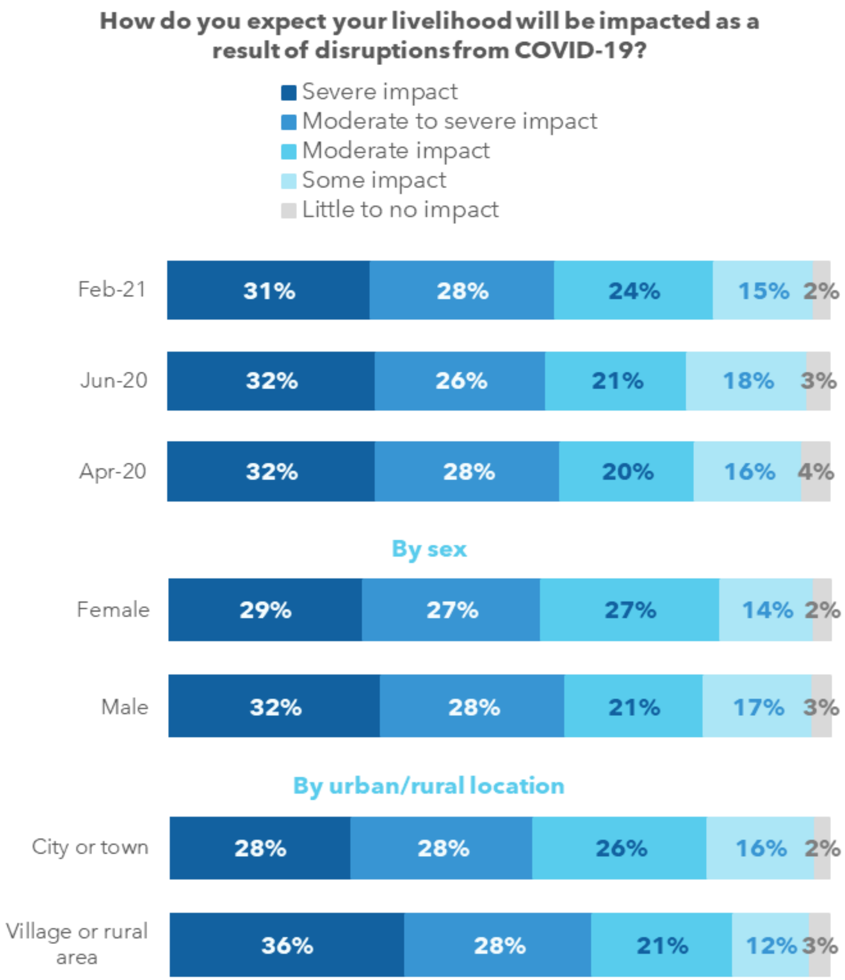



**For those that engage in agriculture/livestock raising, the products are...**
Multiple choices could be selected.



# LIVELIHOODS | Future livelihood impacts

▶ Eight out of ten respondents expect at least a moderate impact on their livelihoods.




Respondents continue to expect that the COVID-19 pandemic will impact their livelihoods in the future, and mostly in ways that are severe. Looking ahead, 59% anticipate "moderate to severe" or "severe" impacts to their livelihoods, which is identical to the first two survey rounds. Only 2% expect little or no impact.

Findings in Belize are slightly more pessimistic compared to the overall region where 25% of respondents expect a severe impact, 23% a moderate impact and only 8% no impact.

At the regional level, respondents who perceived their incomes as well below average were five to six times more likely to predict severe livelihood impacts (63%), compared to those with an average or above average income (10-12%).

In Belize, respondents from rural areas were more pessimistic in their outlooks compared to those living in cities or towns while differences in expectations between men and women were minor.

*"As a frontline worker fear of catching the virus and putting family and friends at risk." – Female, 54 years*

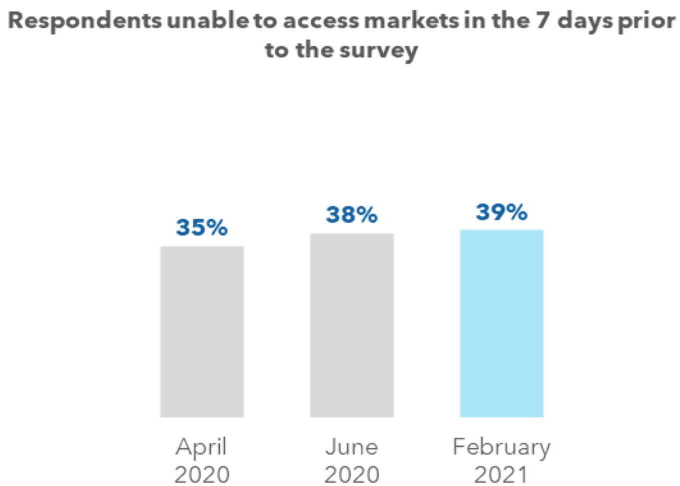
*"Had to move away from family due to lockdowns in order to work. " - Male, 47 years*

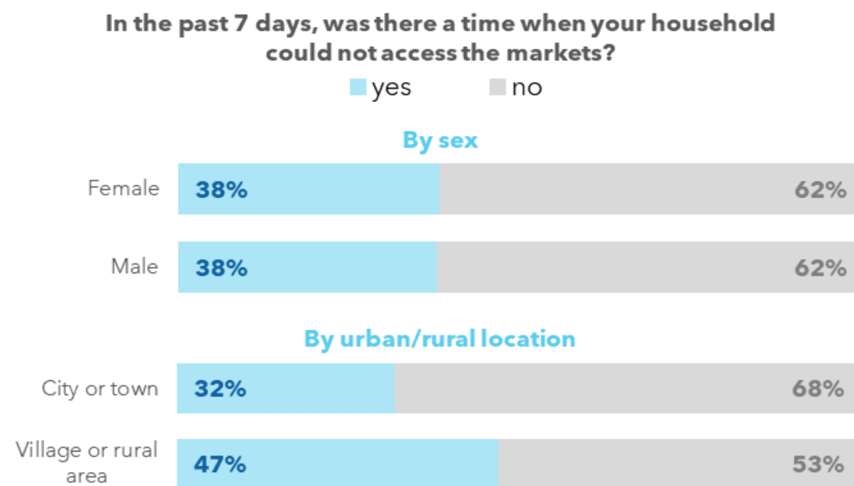
*"Been unemployed for 10 months now. Getting hard to keep up with household expenses."- Male, 48 years*

*"We have been affected hard because we are poor, we are from village, we used to work in tourism section, used to be a prep in the kitchen but now we cannot because of Covid-19. No job, no money, sometimes we cannot eat. What we have to do now is to stretch all the little amount we have, sometimes we have to eat one time for the day but now we are starting to grow some food but it takes time to grow. That's how we tried to survive now." – Unknown, 21 years*

# MARKETS | Access

▶ Four out of ten households are still experiencing difficulties in accessing markets due to COVID-19.




COVID-19 and measures to contain the virus are still impacting market access, with 39% of respondents reporting that they could not access stores and markets at some point in the seven days prior to the February survey. This is slightly higher when compared to the levels reported during the June and April 2020 surveys (38% and 35% respectively).

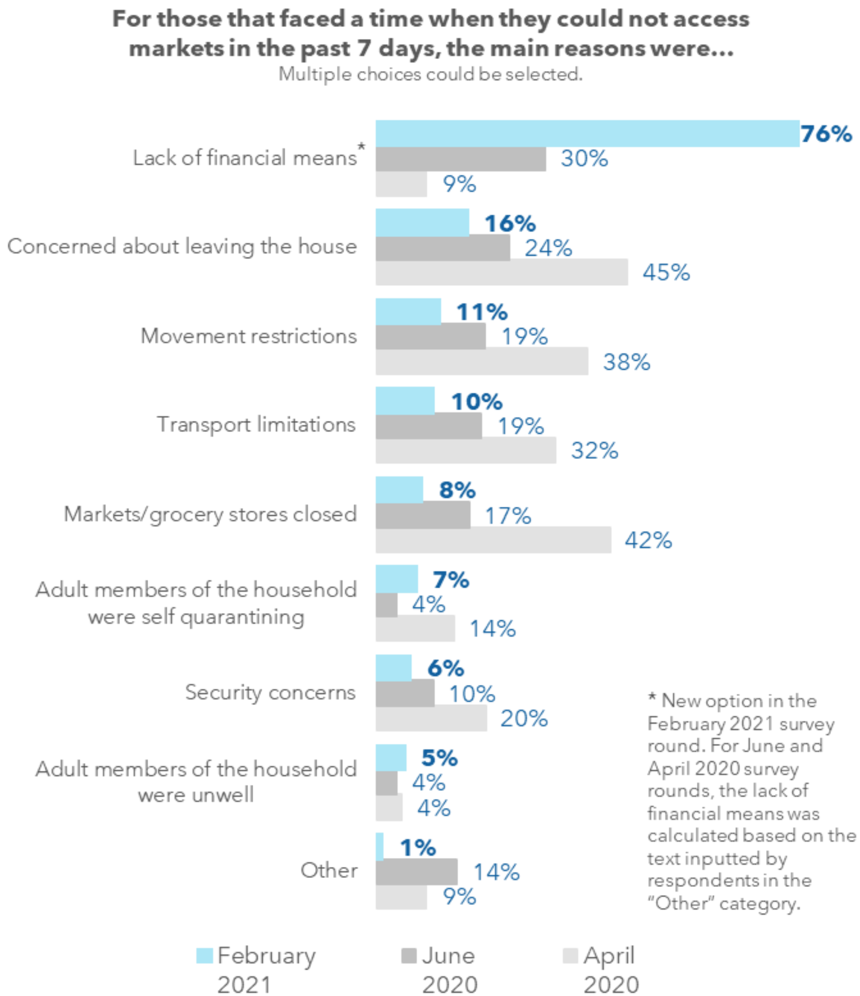
In comparison with other countries in the Caribbean, the extent of limited market access in Belize is above the regional average of 30%.

Clear differences were found between respondents in rural and urban locations. Respondents living in villages or rural areas faced a time when they were unable to access markets more often than those living in cities or towns.

There were no significant differences found between women and men in accessing markets.

# MARKETS | Reasons for limited market access

▶ Lack of financial means is currently the main limiting factor to market access in Belize.




* New option in the February 2021 survey round. For June and April 2020 survey rounds, the lack of financial means was calculated based on the text inputted by respondents in the "Other" category.

In April 2020, concerns about leaving the house, store closures and movement restrictions were the main factors influencing market access. Over time, these concerns have become less widespread.

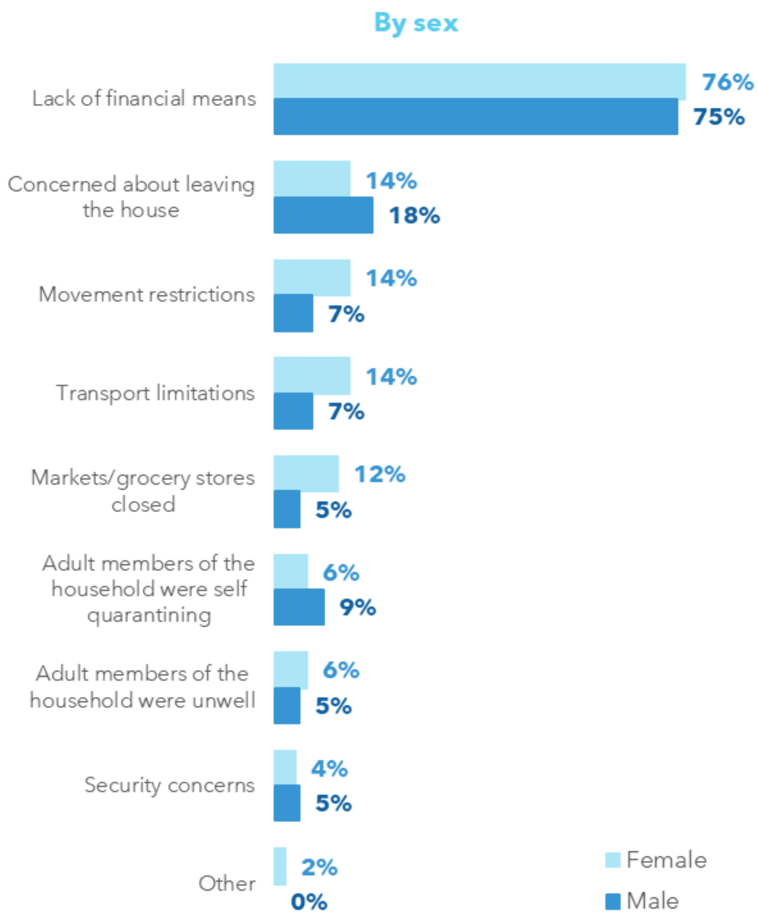
Lack of financial means is overwhelmingly reported as the main reason for limited market access, cited by 76% of those who faced a time when they could not access markets in the week prior to the survey. This is a significant increase since April and June 2020 when respectively 9% and 30% of the respondents cited lack of money as the main issue in market access. Financial constrains in Belize are affecting slightly smaller proportion of those unable to access markets than in the whole Caribbean region where on average 84% of respondents cited lack of financial means as the main issue limiting market access.

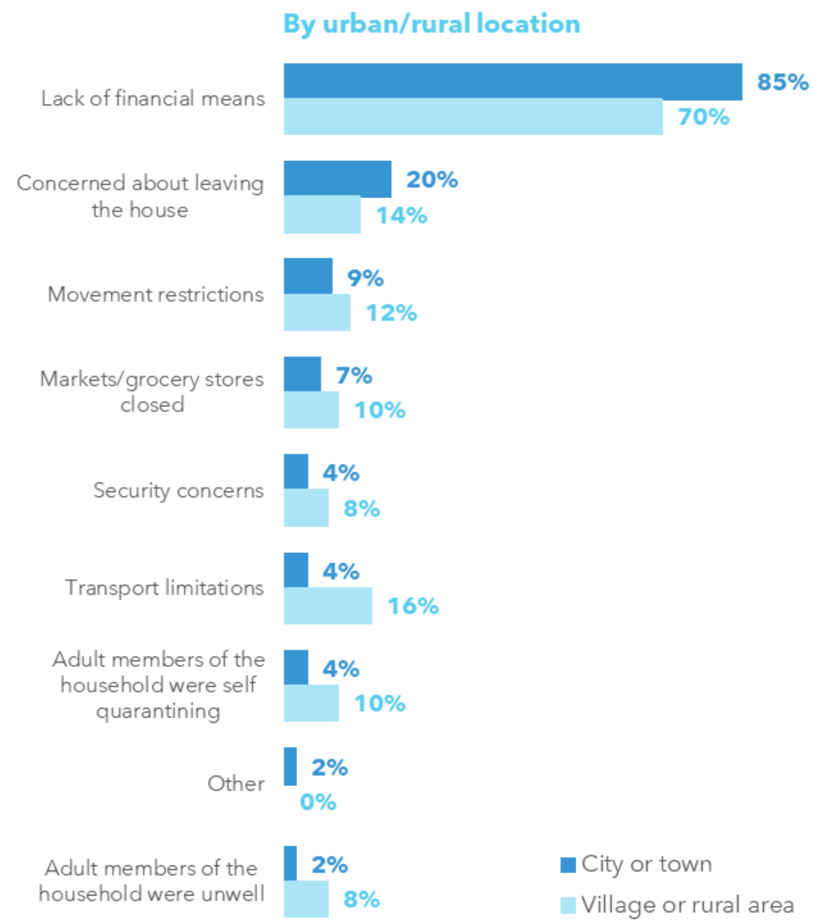
Notable differences were observed across geographical location of respondents. Respondents living in cities or towns more frequently cited lack of financial means as a key challenge (85%) compared to those living in villages or rural areas (70%). On the other hand, a larger proportion of respondents living in rural areas reported transport limitations as a challenge in market access (16%) compared to those living in urban areas (4%).

The differences between men and women were not significant. However, slightly larger proportion of women cited movement restrictions (14%), transport limitations (14%) and store closures (12%) as a limitation for market access compared to men (7%, 7% and 5% respectively).

# MARKETS | Reasons for limited market access

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

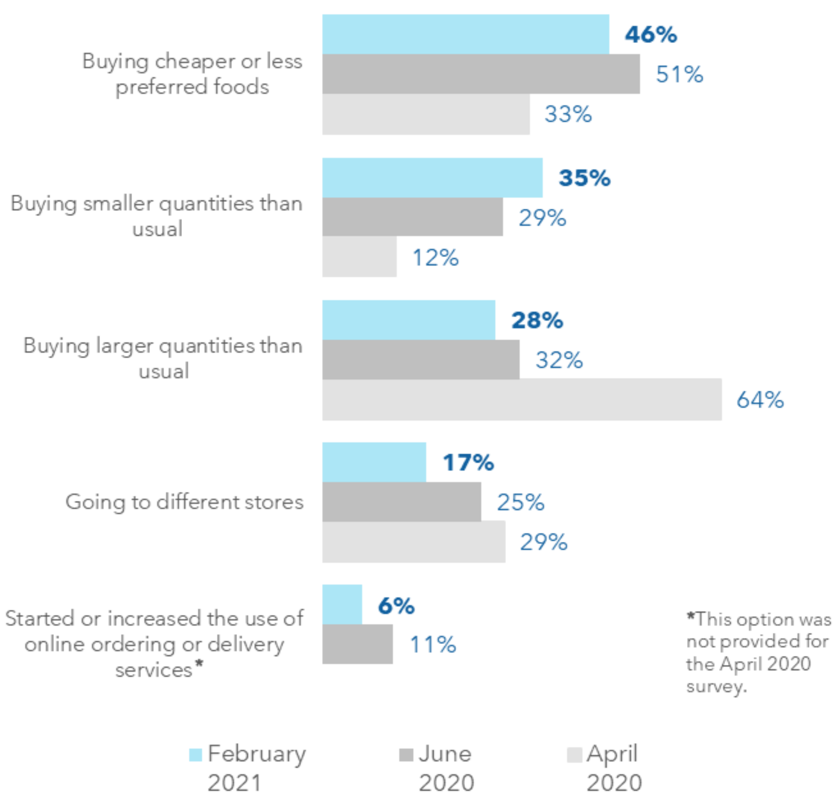


# MARKETS | Shopping behaviour

► Respondents are buying cheaper foods and smaller quantities more frequently than at the beginning of the pandemic in April 2020.

**Respondents who reported a change in shopping behaviour are...**
Multiple choices could be selected.




The pandemic has changed how people shop, but these changes have evolved over time. The vast majority of respondents in Belize (93%) have changed their shopping behaviour compared to before the pandemic, which is similar to levels in June and April 2020 (92% and 91% respectively), and higher than in the Caribbean region as a whole (84%).

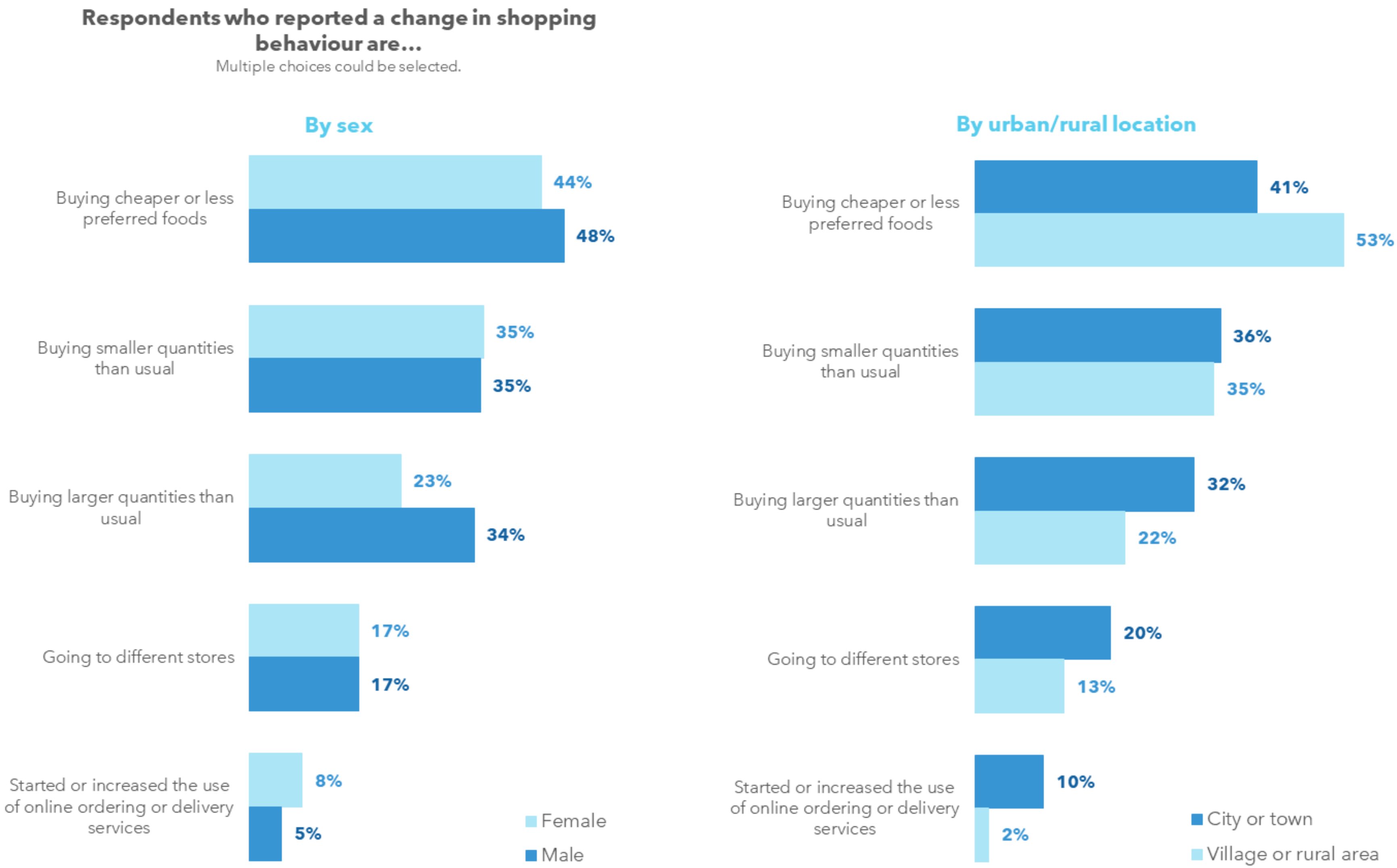
How people are changing their shopping appears to be following the June 2020 pattern, with 46% buying cheaper or less preferred foods, 35% buying smaller quantities, and 28% buying larger quantities compared to before the pandemic. This is in contrast with April 2020, when by far the most cited change was buying larger quantities (64%) – possibly to deal with curfews and to reduce the need to shop frequently. In addition, over half of the respondents in Belize are spending less time shopping than before the pandemic (59%).

The most notable differences in shopping behaviour were found across geographical location. Respondents living in villages and rural areas more often resorted to buying cheaper foods (53%) than those living in cities and towns (41%). On the other hand, respondent living in urban areas more frequently reported buying larger quantities (32%), going to different stores (20%) and increasingly relying on online delivery services (10%) compared to those living in rural areas (22%, 13% and 2% respectively).

While most of the changes in shopping behaviour between male and female respondents are very similar, female respondents less frequently reported buying larger quantities (23%) when compared to male respondents (34%).

Changes in shopping behaviour in Belize are very similar to those in the Caribbean region, where the most common changes in shopping behavior are buying cheaper foods (46%), smaller quantities (32%), and larger quantities (30%).

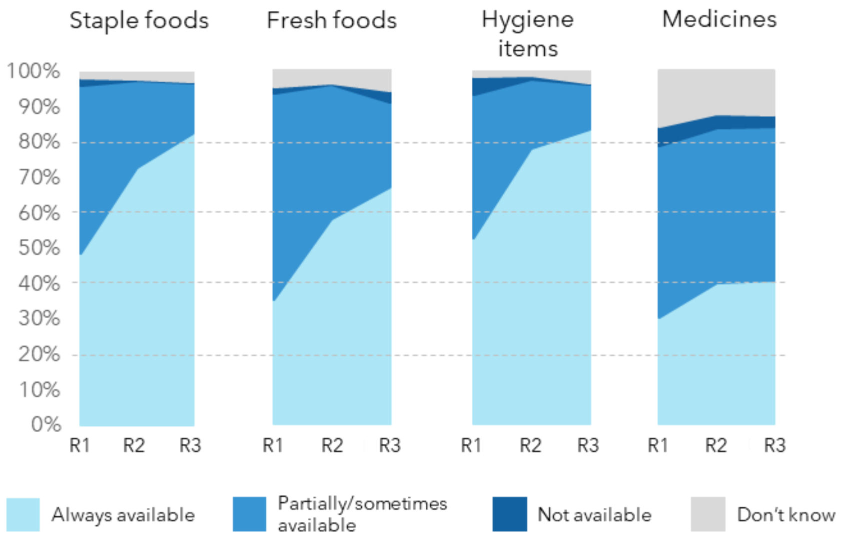
# MARKETS | Shopping behaviour



# MARKETS | Availability

▶ Availability of key products – such as staple foods and hygiene items - has steadily increased since the pandemic began, but fresh foods and medicines are still not fully accessible.

**Availability of product in market**




**R1** April 2020 survey round **R2** June 2020 survey round **R3** February 2021 survey round

*"Some people have stopped taking key meds because they can't afford them and are afraid to go to the public hospitals for fear of contracting COVID." - Female, 49 years*

*"Unable to get medication or if able to get it is very expensive." – Female, 50 years*

The availability of key products has improved consistently since the beginning of the pandemic. While in April 2020 46-60% of respondents indicated that food, hygiene items and medicines were only sometimes available or unavailable, that number has decreased in February 2021 – but some items are still not always available in stores and markets. When compared to the Caribbean region, the availability of all items is lower in Belize, especially the availability of fresh foods and even more so of medicines.

The reported availability of staple foods and hygiene items has increased substantially between April and June 2020. Their availability continues to increase, with 83% of respondents in February 2021 indicating that both staple foods and hygiene items are always available in their markets. However, 14% of respondents continue to report partial availability of staple foods and 13% report partial availability of hygiene items. Less than 1% of respondents highlighted that the two items are unavailable in markets.

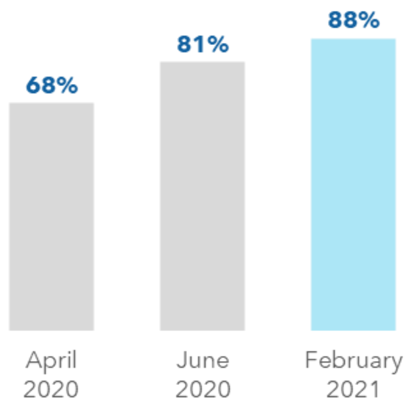
As in previous surveys, fresh foods are less available than staple foods, but their availability appears to be increasing with 67% of respondents reporting that fresh foods are always available. However, 24% of respondents continue to indicate that fresh foods are only sometimes available and 4% of respondents reported that fresh foods were unavailable.

Although availability of medicines improved since April 2020 with 41% of respondents reporting that medicines are always available in February 2021, 43% of respondents still indicate that medicines are not always available and 4% report that medicines are fully unavailable.

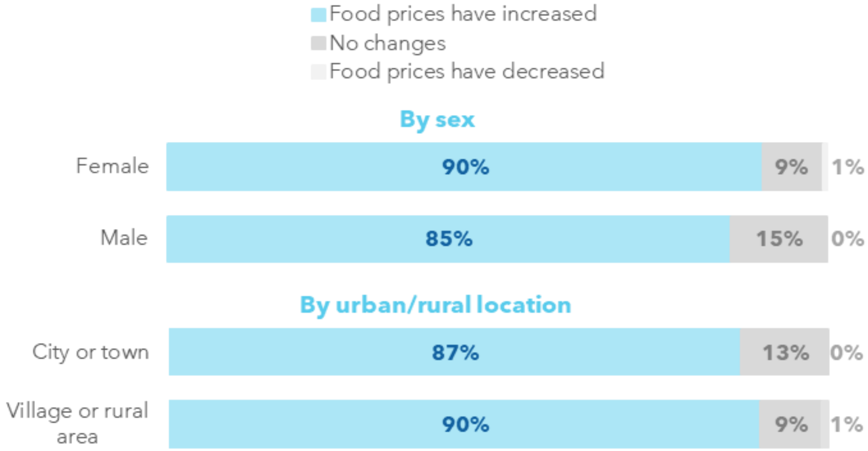
# MARKETS | Food prices

▶ Majority of respondents (88%) continue to report increases in food prices.

**Respondents who reported an increase in food prices over the 2 weeks prior to the survey**




**Respondents who reported an increase in food prices over the 2 weeks prior to the survey**




Food prices continue to be higher than usual, with a large majority of the respondents (88%) indicating an increase in the cost of food over the two weeks prior to the survey. This is slightly higher than in the June 2020 survey when 81% of respondents observed an increase in food prices and much higher than in April 2020 when 68% indicated the increase.

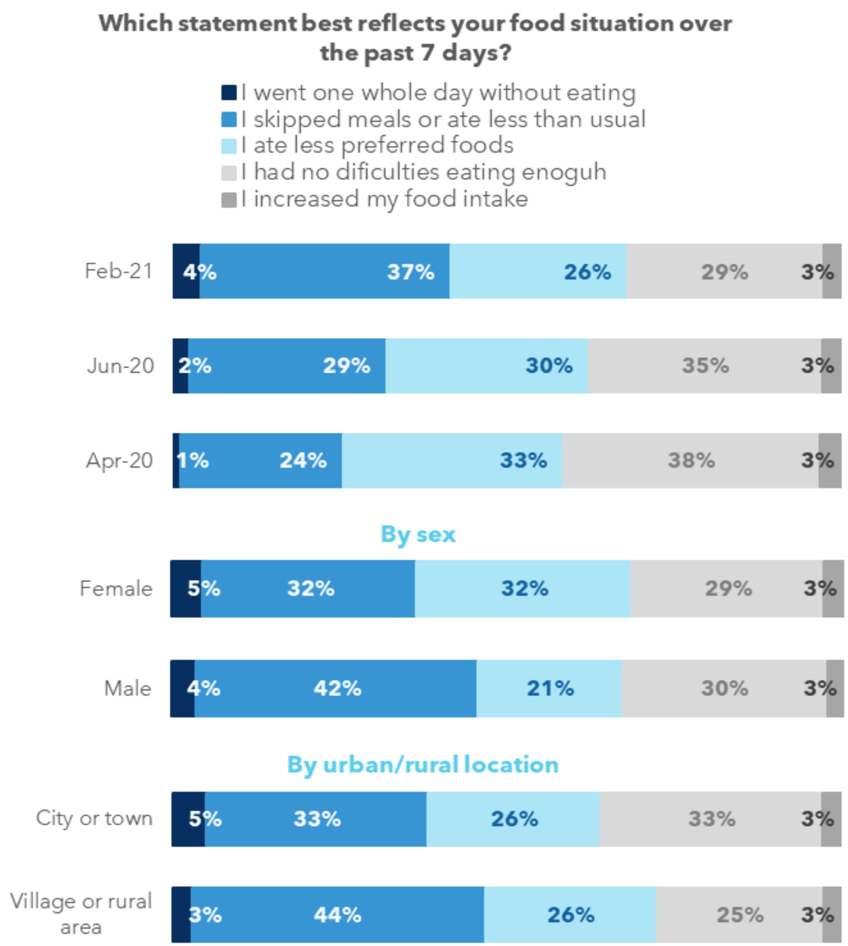
The percentage of respondents who identified an increase in food prices in Belize is substantially higher than in the Caribbean region where on average 71% of respondents reported an increase in the cost of food. This may be an indication of both the increase of prices as well as a more widespread sensitivity to price fluctuations in Belize due to limited purchasing power.

There are no stark differences between those reporting food price increases who live in urban areas (87%) or rural areas (90%).

Similarly, no significant differences can be observed between men and women. However, female respondents slightly more often reported increases in food prices (90%) compared to male respondents (85%).

# FOOD SECURITY | Food consumption

▶ Food insecurity remains a major concern, with growing impacts on household food consumption.




COVID-19 continues to have a negative impact on people's food consumption, with 37% of respondents skipping meals or eating less than usual during the week leading up to the February survey, and 4% going a whole day without eating. Another 26% of respondents reported eating less preferred foods. These results show a significant deterioration of food consumption since the beginning of the pandemic (April 2020) when 24% of respondents skipped meals or ate less than usual and 1% went a whole day without eating.

While overall food consumption trends appear similar for female and male respondents, women are more likely to resort to eating less preferred foods while men more often resorted to skipping meals or eating less than usual. Differences also appear across geographical locations of the respondents. Those living in urban areas more often reported that they went a whole day without eating, while respondents living in rural areas much more frequently resorted to skipping meals and eating less than usual.

When compared to the Caribbean region, respondents from Belize were more frequently resorting to skipping meals or eating less than usual (37%) than the regional average (27%). At the regional level, respondents with perceived household incomes well below average were the most frequent to skip meals or eat less than usual when compared to respondents with higher incomes.

*"Decreased income has significantly affected food choices." – Female, 42 years*

*"Lost employment, I have to go out and beg to feed my family." – Male, 31 years*

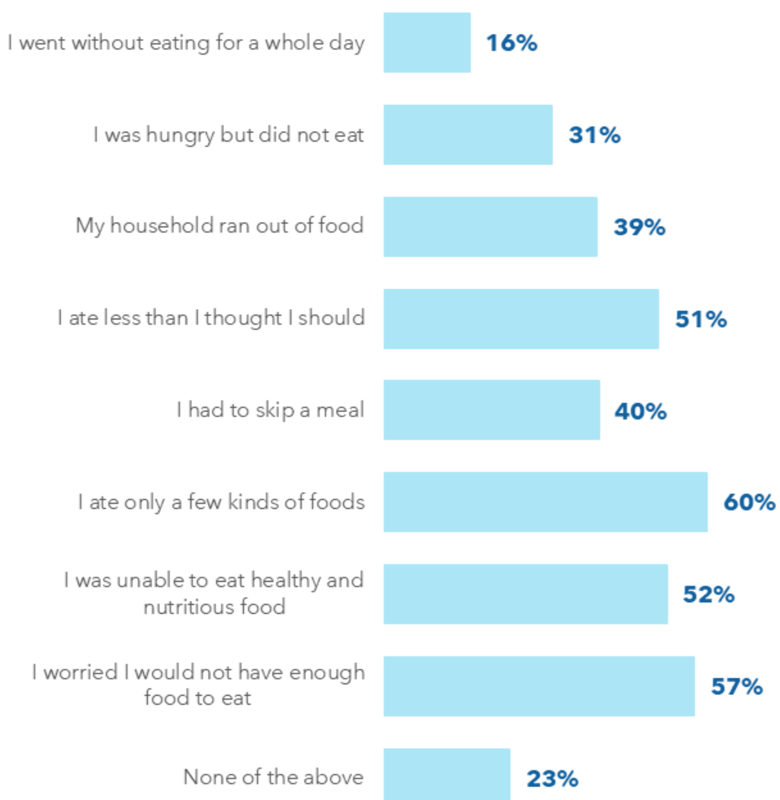
*"I have lost my job as a single mom and really hard to provide for my kids and also hard to get a job." – Female, 35 years*

# FOOD SECURITY | Food insecurity experience

▶ A significant proportion of respondents is struggling to meet their food and nutritional needs on a monthly basis.

**Was there a time in the past 30 days when you experienced the following?**

Respondents were asked to select "yes" or "no" for each statement. Numbers shown are the percentage of respondents selecting "yes" for each of the statements.




The survey provided a detailed picture of food insecurity experienced by respondents during the 30 days preceding the survey, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES). The FIES, which is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, is a metric of severity of food insecurity at the household or individual level that relies on people's direct yes/no responses to eight brief questions regarding their access to adequate food during a specified recall period.

When asked about the 30 days leading up to the February survey, 16% of respondents from Belize experienced a time when they went a whole day without eating, 31% of respondents experienced a time when they were hungry but did not eat, and 39% reported a time when their household ran out of food. Additionally, half of respondents said they had experienced a time when they ate less than they thought they should, and 40% skipped a meal. Worries about not having enough to eat were reported by over half of the respondents. Nutrition and variety of foods consumed are also concerning, with 60% experiencing a time when they ate only a few kinds of foods and 52% when they were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food.

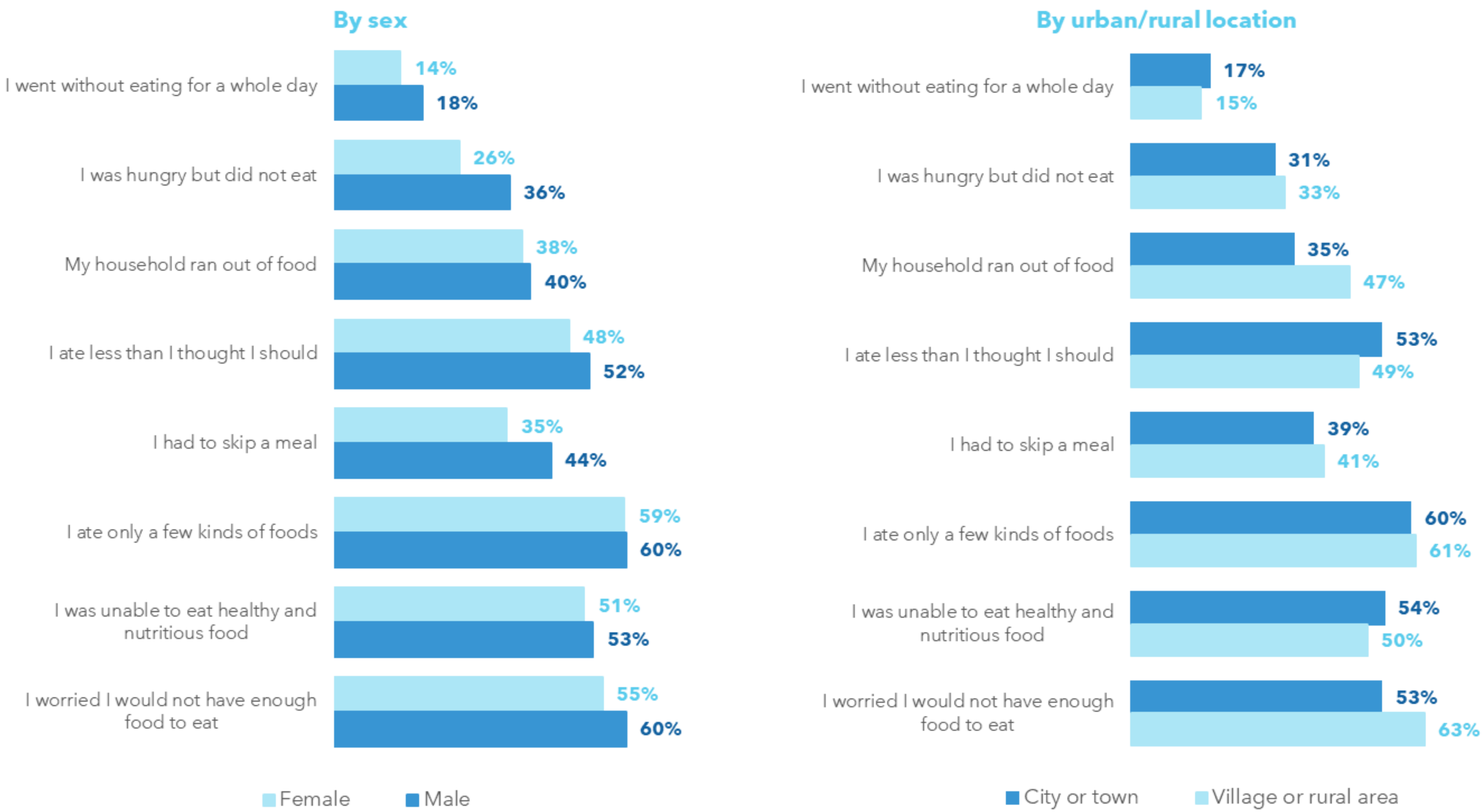
Based on the FIES methodology, it is estimated that 32% of respondents in Belize are moderately food insecure and additional 16% severely food insecure. For more information on the FIES methodology, see page 33.

**Prevalence rates of food insecurity**

Based on FIES methodology

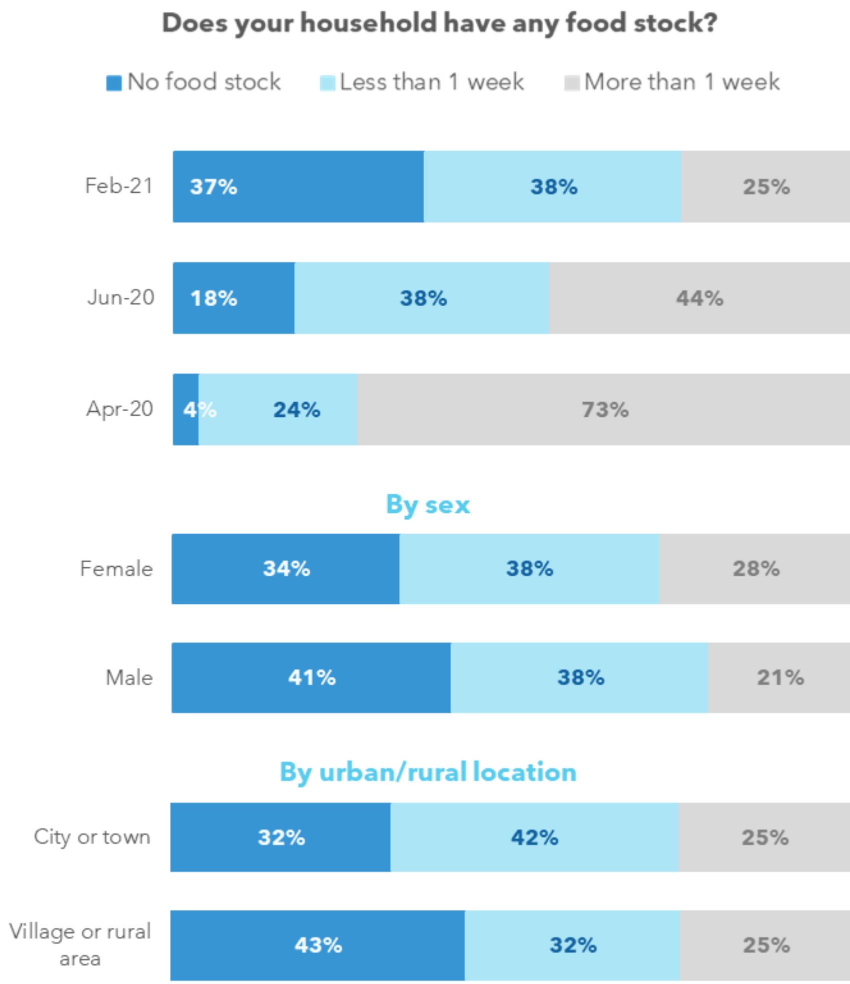
# FOOD SECURITY | Food insecurity experience

**Was there a time in the past 30 days when you experienced the following?**
Multiple choices could be selected.



# FOOD SECURITY | Food stocks

▶ A growing number of households has no food supplies at home.




While the majority of households (63%) have food supplies at home, 37% of respondents do not have any food stocks at all. This is significantly higher than in June and April 2020, when 16% and 4% of respondents respectively had no food supplies in their household. Of all respondents, 25% reported having more than a week's worth of food supplies in their household, which is a decrease from 44% in June 2020 and 73% in April 2020. The higher share in April 2020 may be due to respondents stocking up on food supplies in the face of movement restrictions and shop closures that were implemented during that period.

Differences in food stocks can be observed across sex and geographical location of respondents. Male respondents or those living in rural areas more frequently reported lack of food stocks than female respondents or those living in urban areas.

Trends in the Caribbean region are similar as in Belize, with availability and size of household food stocks having decreased compared to April 2020. However, respondents in Belize much more frequently reported a lack of food stocks (37%) when compared to the regional average (17%). At the regional level, differences in food stocks seem to primarily reflect disparities in household income, with low-income households appearing to have less food stock than higher income households.

*"We purchase only essential items and basic food supplies." – Female, 33 years*

*"My social is just enough to pay my bills not enough to go to the market for food." – Female, 71 years*

*"The price of basic food items has increased dramatically e.g., beans were 1.25 per lb now cost 3.00 per lb." – Male, 42 years*

*"Need food assistance and need a job." – Male, 22 years*

# FOOD SECURITY | Coping strategies

▶ People are finding ways to meet food needs, but many are doing so at the expense of investing in health, education or long-term income generation.

In the February survey round, respondent were asked if in the 30 days prior to the survey they reduced essential non-food expenditures, spent savings or sold productive assets to meet their food needs. Of all respondents, 78% resorted to spending savings, and 63% reduced essential non-food expenditures, such as on education and health. Furthermore, 45% of respondents sold productive assets to meet food or other needs, potentially undermining their long-term income generation.

Differences in the adoption of coping strategies can be observed across sex and geographical location of respondents. Male respondents or those living in rural areas more frequently resorted to the three coping strategies than female respondents or those living in urban areas.

Respondents in Belize were more likely to engage in the three coping strategies compared to the regional average, where 67% of respondents spent savings, 45% reduced non-food expenditure and 32% sold productive assets in order to meet their food needs.

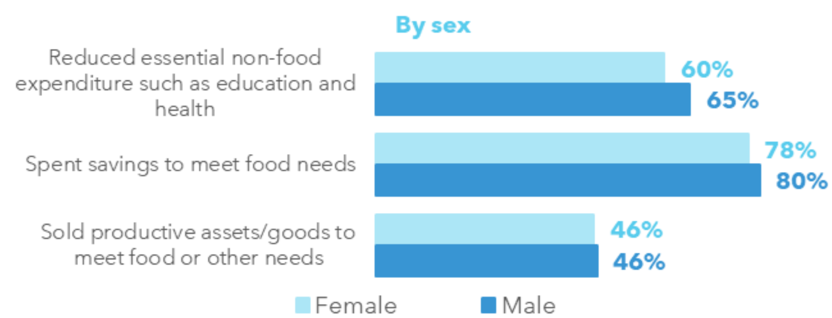
*"No job, had to sell my assets." – Male, 39 years*

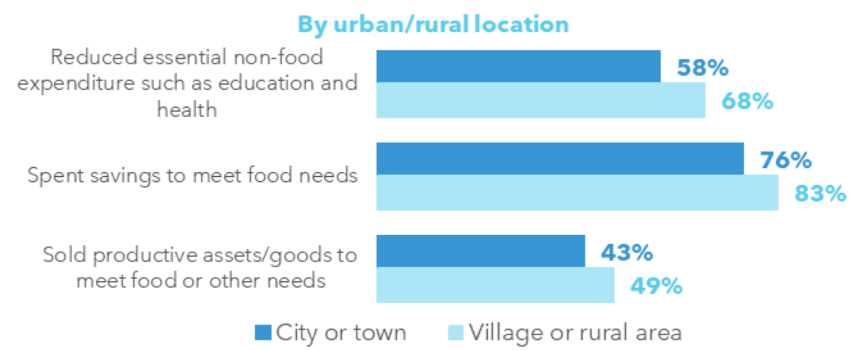
*"Limited funds to cover health cost if myself or a family member gets seriously ill as saving are being absorbed without replenishment." – Female, 38 years*

*"Main concern was the increase of resources such as electricity, water and food. Luckily because of my job the increase has affected me but I manage due to my long term savings." – Female, 42 years*

**Households' coping strategies in the 30 days prior to the survey**

Multiple choices could be selected.

# WIDER IMPACTS | COVID-19 assistance

## ▶ Food baskets and income support or cash transfers were the most commonly received forms of government assistance.

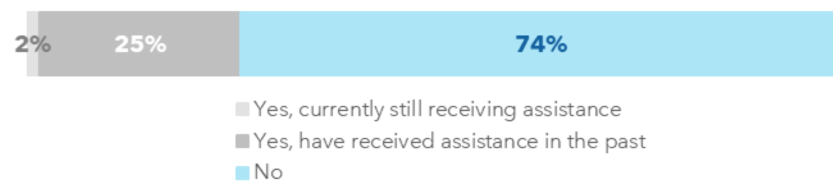
Out of the 26% of respondents who reported receiving government assistance in response to COVID-19 pandemic, only 2% were still receiving assistance when the survey was implemented.

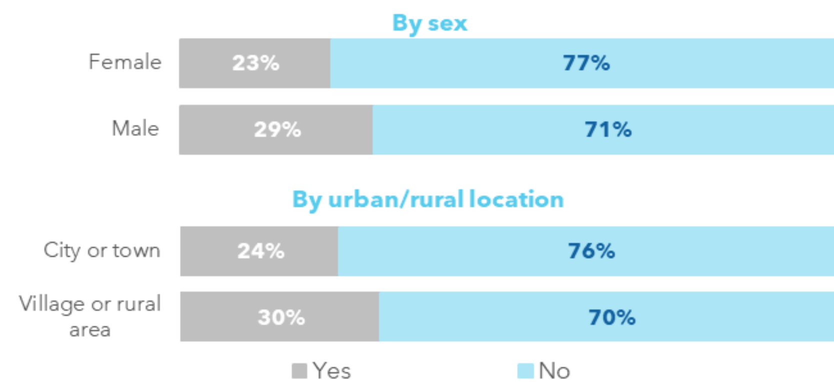
The 26% of respondents who reported receiving assistance claim to be supported mainly through food basket/hamper (58%) and income support or cash transfer (35%). See page 4 for more information on government social protection responses in Belize.

The percentage of respondents who received assistance in Belize is slightly higher than in the Caribbean region where 15% of respondents reported receiving some form of government assistance in response to COVID-19 and 3% were still receiving assistance when the survey was implemented. The most common forms of support reported in the region were food baskets/hampers (32% of those who received assistance), income support or cash transfers (31%), social security (26%) and vouchers (25%).

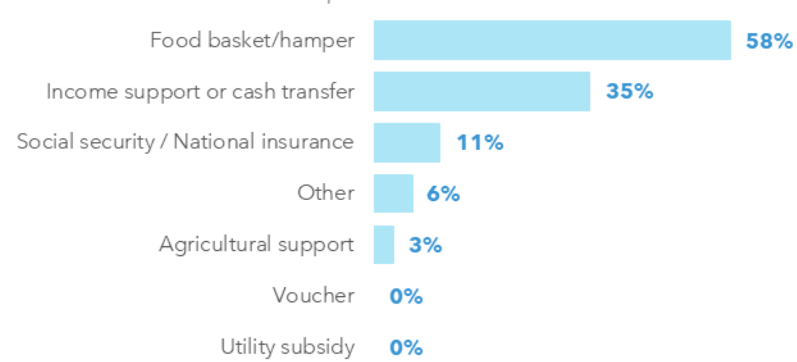
There were no major differences observed between sex and location of respondents. However, slightly more male respondents (29%) and those living in rural areas (30%) reported receiving the assistance compared to female respondents (23%) or those living in urban areas (24%).

**Have you received any assistance from the government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?**



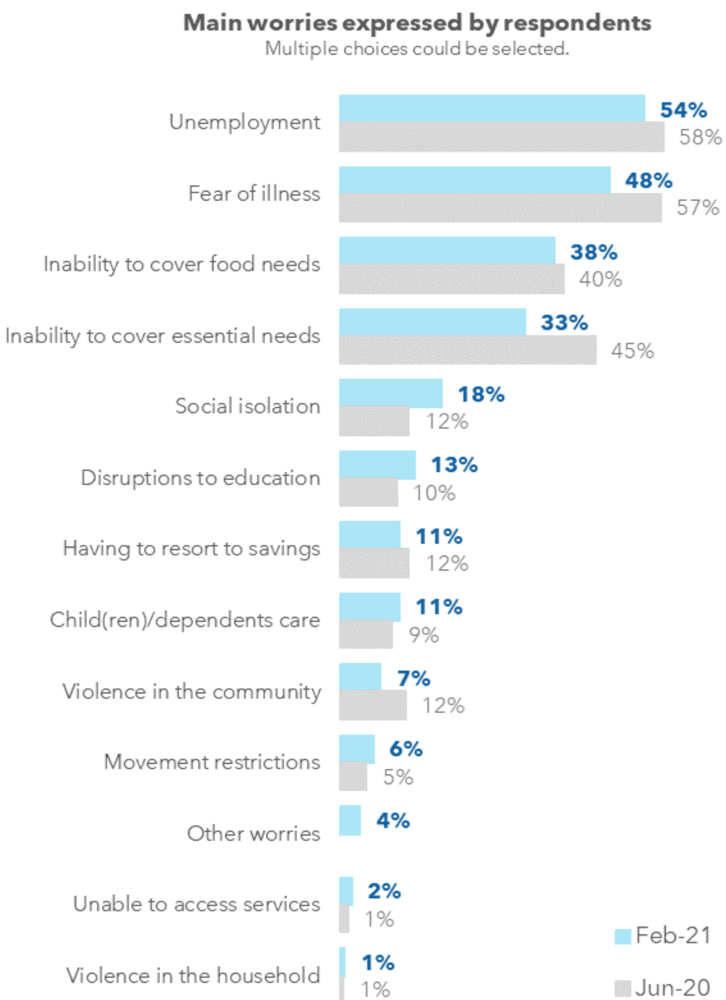




**Respondents who received assistance from the government, have received the following...**
Multiple choices could be selected.



# WIDER IMPACTS | Main worries

▶ Fear of illness and unemployment were the leading worries expressed by respondents.




Unemployment and fear of illness remain the main worries for most respondents in Belize since June 2020. By February 2021, approximately half of the respondents cited unemployment and fear of illness as their main worries which is consistent with a spike of the number of active COVID-19 cases in December 2021 (see page 4). While most of the worries show a small decrease since June 2020, slightly more respondents are worrying about social isolation, disruptions to education and child(ren)/dependent(s) care.

Trends in Belize are similar to the Caribbean where fear of illness (57%) and unemployment (44%) remain the main worries in February 2021, followed by worries about the inability to meet essential needs (37%) and food needs (32%).

While no major differences are observed between men and women across most of the worry categories, male respondents more frequently reported worries about unemployment (64%) than female respondents (46%).

Similarly, there are no significant differences across most of the worries between respondents living in rural areas and those living in urban areas with the exception of fear of illness and worries over violence in the community. Respondents living in towns and cities more frequently reported fear of illness (53%) and worries about violence in the community (11%) compared to respondents living in rural areas (41% and 2% respectively).

# WIDER IMPACTS | Main worries

**Main worries expressed by respondents**
Multiple choices could be selected.

### By sex

| Main worries | Female | Male |
|---|---|---|
| Fear of illness | 50% | 45% |
| Unemployment | 46% | 64% |
| Inability to cover essential needs | 35% | 30% |
| Inability to cover food needs | 37% | 38% |
| Social isolation | 20% | 16% |
| Having to resort to savings | 12% | 9% |
| Movement restrictions | 5% | 6% |
| Disruptions to education | 14% | 14% |
| Child(ren)/dependents care | 12% | 9% |
| Unable to access services | 3% | 1% |
| Violence in the community | 8% | 7% |
| Violence in the household | 2% | 0% |
| Other worries | 4% | 3% |

### By age group

| Main worries | City or town | Village or rural area |
|---|---|---|
| Fear of illness | 53% | 41% |
| Unemployment | 56% | 53% |
| Inability to cover essential needs | 36% | 30% |
| Inability to cover food needs | 38% | 40% |
| Social isolation | 21% | 15% |
| Having to resort to savings | 12% | 9% |
| Movement restrictions | 6% | 6% |
| Disruptions to education | 12% | 15% |
| Child(ren)/dependents care | 10% | 12% |
| Unable to access services | 1% | 4% |
| Violence in the community | 11% | 2% |
| Violence in the household | 1% | 1% |
| Other worries | 3% | 4% |

*"Limited travel, limited access to healthcare - dentists & medical check-up, limited social interaction with family, friends, and community, impacted working lifestyle and increased utility consumption as we work from home." – Female, 41 years*

*"No job, no cash flow, soon no food and no assistance from our Govt. at this time. Soon not able to send my child to school, can't pay school fee. Will lose my home, can't pay rent, electricity, water, internet, nor buy food. I need HELP." – Male, 59 years*

*"Not spending time with a loved one that was dying due to travel constrains." – Female, 41 years*

*"I get sad and worried about our future. I worry about lack of interaction for the little ones." – Female, 68 years*

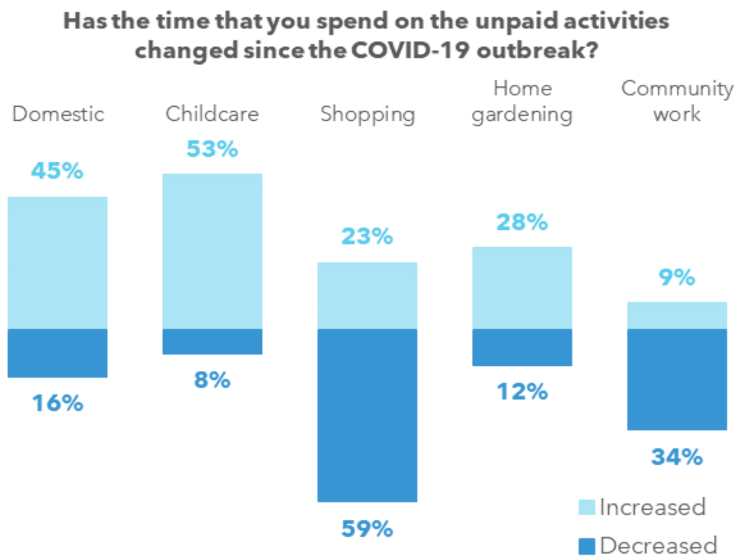
*"I work far from my family. I have not been coming home regularly because of fear of bringing the infection home due to my movement." – Male, 53 years*

*"Want to travel to visit my children and grand children outside of country but fear of catching the virus." – Female, 68 years*

*"Unable to cover education expenses." – Female, 24 years*

# WIDER IMPACTS | Unpaid care and work

► Most households increased time for childcare and domestic work, while time spent on shopping and community work decreased.




*"Unable to go out and do basic stuff like shopping since I am a person who is considered high risk." – Female, 61 years*

*"Loss of income and child had to drop out of school." - Male, 54 years*

*"I have to take care of my grandchildren, feed them and homeschool." – Female, 61 years*

The COVID-19 restrictions and worries significantly reduced shopping activity for over half of respondents (59%). On the other hand, the pandemic has increased the amount of unpaid work at home, placing an additional burden on some household members. Approximately half of households reported to have increased time devoted to childcare (53%) and domestic work (45%). Home gardening also saw an increase in 28% of households.

Most of the trends in Belize are similar to those in the Caribbean where 44% of respondents reported an increase in time spent on domestic work, 39% reported an increase in childcare, 27% reported an increase in time spent on gardening, and 57% reported a decrease in shopping activity. However, an increase in childcare appears to be more significant in Belize than in the region.

The amount of time spent on domestic work, childcare and gardening increased particularly for respondents living in villages or rural areas. At the same time, these respondents reported a greater decrease in shopping activity than those living in towns or cities.

Men and women reported no major differences in the time spent on domestic work, childcare and community work. However, male respondents more frequently reported an increase in home gardening (35%) than female respondents (20%), while the latter more frequently reported a decrease in shopping activity (67%) than men (50%).

# WIDER IMPACTS | Unpaid care and work

**Has the time that you spend on the unpaid activities changed since the COVID-19 outbreak?**

| | Domestic | Childcare | Shopping | Home gardening | Community work |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased | 45% | 53% | 23% | 28% | 9% |
| No change | 34% | 22% | 15% | 41% | 36% |
| Decreased | 16% | 8% | 59% | 12% | 34% |
| Not applicable | 5% | 17% | 4% | 19% | 21% |

*"My husband is a frontline worker and my fear is that he brings this disease home and infect our daughter." – Female, 28 years*

*"I have been teleworking but it has been more stressful than being in the office." - Male, 61 years*

*"It is difficult on children mental health and mine meeting utility bills." – Female, 32 years*

*"Things have been more stressful and irritating with what is going on. I just take a step back and assess my mental state and do anything I possibly can to be in the right state of mind." – Female, 21 years*

## By sex

| Female | Domestic | Childcare | Shopping | Home gardening | Community work |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased | 46% | 53% | 20% | 20% | 8% |
| No change | 31% | 20% | 10% | 48% | 35% |
| Decreased | 17% | 9% | 67% | 10% | 36% |
| Not applicable | 6% | 17% | 3% | 21% | 20% |

| Male | Domestic | Childcare | Shopping | Home gardening | Community work |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased | 44% | 52% | 25% | 35% | 11% |
| No change | 39% | 25% | 21% | 34% | 37% |
| Decreased | 15% | 6% | 50% | 14% | 32% |
| Not applicable | 2% | 17% | 4% | 17% | 21% |

## By urban/rural location

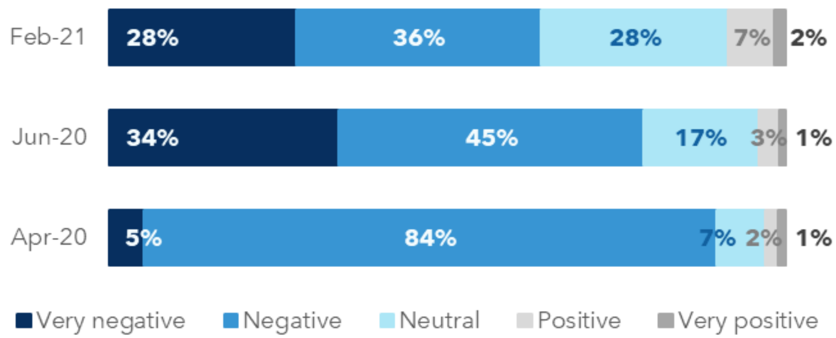
| City or town | Domestic | Childcare | Shopping | Home gardening | Community work |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased | 39% | 50% | 24% | 25% | 7% |
| No change | 37% | 27% | 19% | 42% | 41% |
| Decreased | 17% | 7% | 54% | 11% | 28% |
| Not applicable | 6% | 17% | 4% | 21% | 23% |

| Village or rural area | Domestic | Childcare | Shopping | Home gardening | Community work |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increased | 54% | 58% | 21% | 32% | 12% |
| No change | 31% | 15% | 9% | 38% | 29% |
| Decreased | 12% | 9% | 66% | 12% | 42% |
| Not applicable | 2% | 18% | 3% | 17% | 17% |

# WIDER IMPACTS | Coping and adapting

► Feelings of anxiety and stress remain widespread but contrast with some positive experiences, due to the varying impacts and lived realities of COVID-19.

**Distribution of sentiments across open-ended survey responses**




Respondents were given the space to provide more insights on how they are adjusting to the impacts of the pandemic ten months following its declaration. Work, income and family are the most common themes. Concerns about illness and changing protocols are a source of anxiety among respondents as their livelihoods continue to be impacted. Those experiencing loss of income are feeling anxious about how to meet bills, payments, and provide food for their family. The inability to see and interact with friends and family continue to be a source of stress and anxiety among respondents. Many also expressed concerns about limited access to and high costs of health services, resulting in disruption and inability to treat existing illnesses and non-COVID related health care. Sentiment analysis revealed that there were overall slightly less negative but more polarizing comments compared to June 2020. Some respondents are starting to normalize technology for work, shopping, education, and to connect with family and friends.

**Some sample responses:**

**Very negative (28%)**

*"I have lost my job and am unable to get employment. I am not coping well because I hardly can purchase my basic needs."*

*"My main concern is with regard to closure of the borders which would restrict my ability to travel to the USA to undergo medical treatment for a pre-existing condition."*

*"I have developed anxiety due to loss of income and I still have to honor my commitments such as mortgage and bills."*

**Negative (36%)**

*"Depressed due to inability to have human touch with loved ones because locked out from country of origin; communicate by video."*

*"The grocery stores has increased the price so I can not buy much with my income."*

*"Because I have to stay home and not being able to go to the park and exercise my health is not the same. I'm diabetic and 1-hour daily walk in the park used to help."*

**Neutral (28%)**

*"I have not experienced any major disruptions from COVID-19 as I am able to work from home and carry out all my required responsibilities. "*

*"I just go with the flow. Do what the authorities advise."*

**Positive (7%)**

*"Increased workload. Being diligent about exercising and taking mindfulness breaks. Reading, self-care."*

**Very positive (2%)**

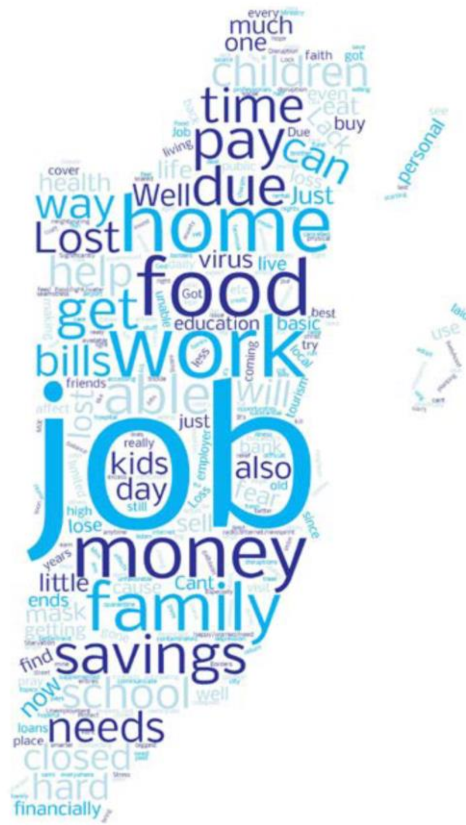
*"My adaptations are fairly simple. By there being more time at home due to lack of work, I apply most of my time to online learning and study."*

*The analysis of the responses was performed in collaboration with Google's AI unit.*

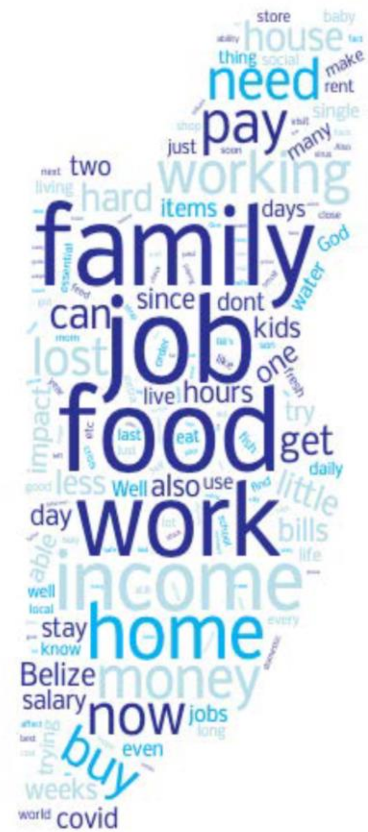
# WIDER IMPACTS | Coping and adapting

## Common themes on how respondents are adapting and coping


**FEBRUARY 2021**




**JUNE 2020**




**APRIL 2020**

# CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt livelihoods, affecting two out of three households, primarily due to concerns about the outbreak and movement restrictions, and increasingly due to the price and inaccessibility of livelihood inputs.

Market access slightly improved since April 2020, but four out of ten respondents are still unable to access markets primarily due to the lack of financial means and increasing food prices. Households are having to curb their shopping habits due to lack of finances and movement restrictions and increasingly resort to buying smaller quantities and/or cheaper or less preferred foods.

Food insecurity remains a major and growing concern, with a worrying number of respondents having no food stocks and reducing the amount they eat. Most people appear to meet their food needs only at the expense of productive assets or investments in health and education, which risks undermining their long-term income generation capacity and human capital.

Nearly one in three respondents expect severe disruptions to their livelihoods and express very negative attitudes. Worries about unemployment, contracting the illness, or the inability to meet food or other essential needs remain widespread.

Containment measures have also caused domestic and childcare activities to increase for both women and men. Although data for this round shows a slight levelling out in the share of activities between sexes, the gender disparity which was already prevalent before the pandemic cannot be ignored, and further studies should aim to address and mitigate against it.

Survey results indicate that despite governments' efforts to mitigate the crisis by introducing policies and programmes to support incomes and food security, disruptions to livelihoods and incomes remain widespread. On most metrics of well being, available data suggests a more protracted situation in Belize compared to the average in the Caribbean, with critical indicators pointing towards a further deterioration of outcomes over time. In the region, lowest-income households are particularly struggling to make a living and meet their basic needs.

In the face of these impacts, it is crucial that continued investments are made into social protection, vulnerability analysis and sector specific research (e.g., impact on small-scale fisheries, casual labourers, tourism and retail trade) to provide ongoing and tailored support to the most vulnerable and to mitigate further widening of existing inequalities.

# METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The third round of the CARICOM Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihoods impact survey was launched via a webform, which was accessible on mobile/smartphones and PC/desktops. The data collection period was inclusive of 25 January to 12 February 2021. 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 and monitored live on an interactive dashboard. Data validation methods were designed into the survey form to mitigate against data entry errors and/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 distribution of very negative to very positive 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 algorithm.

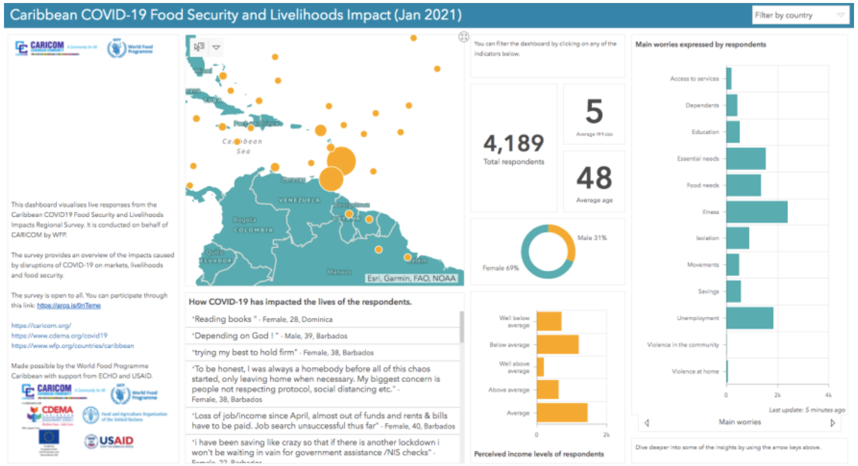
WFP expresses warm appreciation to Flow and Digicel for distributing the survey link by SMS in Barbados, Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago. Special thanks to the International Telecommunication Union for their support in facilitating the SMS distribution.

While the survey contributes to a better overview of impacts, the data are not representative, and the use of a web-based questionnaire limits inputs from those without connectivity. In Belize, less than half of the population are internet users. Responses were heavily skewed towards two countries, with 36% of responses coming from Barbados and another 26% from Trinidad and Tobago. While this report refers to the results of previous survey rounds, the varying demographics of respondents limit comparability across survey rounds.

This report was prepared by WFP Caribbean – Amy Chong, Irina Bird Reddiar, Elisaveta Gouretskaia, Darko Petrovic, Sarah Bailey and Regis Chapman.


Survey form


Dashboard for Smartphones




Dashboard for PCs/Laptops

# CALCULATION OF FOOD INSECURITY ESTIMATES

The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) was used for calculating food insecurity estimates presented in this report (see page 20).

The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) is an experience-based metric of food insecurity severity at the household or individual level, which is used for global food security monitoring and aligned with food security targets outlined in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. It relies on people's direct responses to questions regarding their access to adequate food during a given recall period. The eight questions focus on self-reported food-related behaviours and experiences during 30 days prior to the survey. They reflect increasing difficulties in accessing food due to resource constraints. A concept essential to the FIES is that the eight items and respondents are positioned on the same underlying scale of severity of food insecurity. Therefore, the probability of a respondent answering "yes" to a FIES item depends on the distance along the scale between the food severity experienced by the respondent and the severity of the item. A respondent's raw score (an integer number ranging from zero to eight) is the sum of affirmative responses given to the eight FIES questions. It is the basis for estimating the respondent parameter, which provides an interval measure of the severity of food insecurity and makes it possible to produce comparable measures of food insecurity. For this report, prevalence rates of moderate and severe food insecurity were calculated based on survey data using the FIES online App (page 20).

For more information on the FIES, see FAO's 'The Food Insecurity Experience Scale: Measuring food insecurity through people's experiences'.

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