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## Rebuilding human capital amidst the pandemic

The impacts of COVID-19 on school-aged  
children and youth in Haiti

October 2022



# Contents

<b>Highlights .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Background .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Methodology and sample description .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Access to and quality of education .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Livelihood activities and income.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Food security and livelihood coping.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Access to medical services .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Main challenges faced.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Safety concerns .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Aspirations for the future.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Concluding remarks.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Photocredits .....</b>	<b>30</b>

# Table of Figures

## Figures

<b>Figure 1:</b>	Sex of respondents unweighted and weighted .....	9
<b>Figure 2:</b>	Age of respondents (after weighting).....	9
<b>Figure 3:</b>	Education of respondents unweighted and weighted .....	10
<b>Figure 4:</b>	Where are enrolled youth learning/studying? .....	12
<b>Figure 5:</b>	What is your household’s main income source?.....	13
<b>Figure 6:</b>	Has your household’s income level undergone any changes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic? .....	14
<b>Figure 7:</b>	Concerns over food and impacts on income.....	14
<b>Figure 8:</b>	Main sectors where youth were working before COVID-19 and in May/July 2021.....	15
<b>Figure 9:</b>	Has your ability to earn an income change since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic? .....	16
<b>Figure 10:</b>	Over the past year, have you been living in a place away from your home for work purposes?.....	16
<b>Figure 11:</b>	What was the main reason you returned home?.....	16
<b>Figure 12:</b>	How many meals did your child(ren) eat yesterday?.....	17
<b>Figure 13:</b>	Which statement best reflects your child(ren) food situation over the past 30 days? .....	17
<b>Figure 14:</b>	Main livelihood-based coping strategies adopted by households with schoolchildren .....	18
<b>Figure 15:</b>	Impacts on income and food consumption .....	19
<b>Figure 16:</b>	Which statement best reflects your food situation over the past 30 days? .....	20
<b>Figure 17:</b>	Main livelihood coping strategies employed by youth and their households (multiple response) .....	20
<b>Figure 18:</b>	Challenges in accessing medical services for children and concern over food .....	21
<b>Figure 19:</b>	Main challenges schoolchildren are currently facing by sex (multiple response).....	22
<b>Figure 20:</b>	Main challenges faced by youth by age groups (multiple response).....	24
<b>Figure 21:</b>	Main types of tensions and violence perceived by parents in their communities (multiple response).....	25
<b>Figure 22:</b>	How has the increase in tensions and violence over the past year impacted your child(ren)? .....	25
<b>Figure 23:</b>	Tensions/violence perceived by parents of schoolchildren and concerns over food.....	26
<b>Figure 24:</b>	Main reasons for feeling unsafe by sex of respondents .....	26
<b>Figure 25:</b>	What is the most important for you to be successful in the future?.....	27

## Tables

<b>Table 1:</b>	Overview of sample and distribution per country.....	8
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# Highlights

- › In Haiti, 1,714 youth aged 15-24 years old and 629 parents of schoolchildren were randomly surveyed online in May–July 2021. Parents reported on behalf of 803 young boys and girls aged 6–14 years of age.
- › This study found that the deteriorating economic and security conditions posed **additional education access challenges** for children and youth in a country that already suffered from low school enrolment. Young girls were particularly affected by insecurity and violence, which was the main reason for not enrolling them in school.
- › During the 2021 school year, both youth and children enrolled in school were attending in person, at least partially. However, COVID-19 appears to have negatively influenced the **quality of learning** for both examined groups.
- › While COVID-19 did not significantly affect **school enrolment** among young children, 6 percent of youth reported leaving school during the pandemic.
- › The pandemic had a severe impact on the **income** of parents. Almost 70 percent of parents reported that their household was relying on an unstable source of income, such as owning a business or petty trade. One in two parents reported seeing their income reduced in 2021, which is likely to have serious implications on their ability to meet both their own and their children’s needs. Similarly, half of youth respondents reported losing their job during the pandemic, with an additional 24 percent reporting seeing their income reduced.
- › The **food security** of Haitian children was found to be alarmingly compromised, with around half of children having eaten only one meal the day before the survey and being forced to adopt the most severe food-based coping strategies in the month preceding the survey. Additionally, most parents (83 percent) had to adopt livelihood-based coping strategies, such as borrowing money, asking friends and family for help, or spending less on food to make ends meet. Around seven percent of surveyed parents reported not having any capacity to cope at all.
- › About one third of youth reported eating fewer than two meals per day, with 20–24 year olds, and women, most affected. Some 70 percent of youth also reported being forced to adopt food-based and/or livelihood-based **coping strategies** to survive, which confirms the very precarious food security state among schoolchildren.
- › One in two parents reported facing challenges in **accessing medical services** for their children, primarily due to unaffordable healthcare costs and fees.
- › Parents perceived that their children faced many **challenges**, the main one being the lack of education/learning materials, followed by inadequate access to nutritious or sufficient food, clothing and shoes, medical services, and sanitation facilities.
- › Understandably, youth reported dealing with a different set of challenges. About a third of youth overall reported insecurity and violence as the main problem they faced in 2021, followed by socioeconomic challenges, such as unemployment and the high costs of living.
- › It is not surprising in a country with such a volatile security situation that over 60 percent of parents reported perceiving **tensions** in their community and that in many cases this affected children as well. Similarly, four in ten youths did not feel safe in their own environment due to high crime rates, armed conflict, and tensions within the community.
- › When asked what would help them overcome the current crises, youth responded that job opportunities, specialized training and higher education are key elements required for them to have a bright future. Resolving the deep social, economic and political problems that affect the country also emerged as major factors in the qualitative portion of the survey.

# Background

Haiti is a low-income country with deep structural weaknesses and extremely volatile economic, social and political contexts. The security situation is very precarious, chronic poverty is widespread and the country is significantly vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change. As a result, Haiti has one of the highest levels of food insecurity in the world with more than half of its total population chronically undernourished.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in 2020, Haiti was one of eight food crises worldwide with than one million people experiencing Emergency levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 4), in addition to 4.1 million facing Crisis levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3).<sup>2</sup>

Historically, Haiti has never had a solid public education system and most schools have been privately run by NGOs, church groups and international missions. In Haiti, two out of ten children do not attend primary school. Almost 40 percent of the population over 10 years of age is illiterate.<sup>3</sup> This has worrying consequences for the country's human capital. According to the Human Capital Index, a child born today in Haiti will grow up to be only 45 percent as productive as they could be if he or she had enjoyed full education and health. By 2030, the Government aims to have a strong public school system together with a nationally owned, funded, and managed school-feeding programme linked to local agriculture.<sup>4</sup> According to the statistics published by the National School Canteen Program (PNCS) under the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training, in the year 2020-2021, there were approximately 2.8 million Haitian girls and boys attending primary school, of whom 857,359 (30 percent) benefitted from

the school feeding programme with the support of six key stakeholders including the World Food Programme (11 percent).<sup>5</sup>

When COVID-19 hit the country, the Government imposed some initial measures to limit the impact of the virus, including curfews and school closures during March–June 2020. School closures continued to affect the following school year when schools were closed from the beginning of July to the end of August 2021. During this period, around 4 million Haitian children lost approximately 70 days of classes. School activities resumed between August and October 2020 for students to catch up on at least 50 days of school before the end of the school year. Although Haiti was the country with the lowest number of missed school days in Latin America, it is estimated that six out of ten children lost around 80 days of classes in 2020.<sup>6</sup> A report from UNICEF also found that insecurity and violence is often the leading factor for abandoning education altogether, affecting many children living in the most disadvantaged areas of the country.<sup>7</sup>

Haiti is a young country with 60 percent of its population under 30 years old.<sup>8</sup> Even before the pandemic, youth unemployment was very high, at almost 30 percent. The pandemic has exacerbated the employment challenges of the country, negatively impacting youth of working age. In addition, only 13 percent of the working age population have formal jobs, while most people rely on the informal economy to survive.<sup>9</sup>

Haiti is one of seven countries part of a global study conducted by WFP's Research, Assessment and Monitoring (RAM) Division and the School-based Programmes (SBP) service, which aimed to

1 WFP, "Annual Country Report 2020 - Haiti" (World Food Programme (WFP), 2021), [https://www.wfp.org/operations/annual-country-report/?operation\\_id=HT02&year=2020#/20827](https://www.wfp.org/operations/annual-country-report/?operation_id=HT02&year=2020#/20827).

2 FSIN. 2021. [Global Report on Food Crises 2021](#).

3 UNICEF. 2021. "3 Enfants Sur 5 Qui Ont Perdu Une Année Scolaire Entière Dans Le Monde Habitent En Amérique Latine et Caraïbes,"

4 WFP. 2021. [Annual Country Report 2020 - Haiti](#).

5 Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle. 2021. PNCS annual report 2020-2021

6 UNICEF. 2021. "Increasing Number of Schools in Haiti Targeted by Gangs - UNICEF," accessed December 16, 2021,

7 UNICEF. 2021. COVID-19 and School Closures: One Year of Education Disruption.

8 UNFPA. 2022. [World Population Dashboard - Haiti](#).

9 International Labour Organization, [ILOSTAT database](#).

better understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on schoolchildren aged 6–14 years old and youth between 15–24 years of age to help increase their resilience, build back their education and livelihoods, and avoid long-term impacts on human capital. Human capital is defined by the World Bank as “the knowledge, skills, and health that people invest in and accumulate throughout their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society”.<sup>10</sup> Other countries covered in this study **include Cambodia, Colombia, Ghana, Iraq, Kenya and Zimbabwe**. These countries were selected to represent each of WFP’s regions as well as all three school-based programme contexts.<sup>11</sup> An additional selection criterion was the relatively good internet coverage in each of these countries which ensured a good representation of the target groups covered.<sup>12</sup> A global report and seven separate case studies were produced in the context of this initiative. This case study provides an overview of context-specific findings of the survey among parents of schoolchildren and youth in Haiti.

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10 World Bank. 2022. [The Human Capital Project: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

11 School-based programme contexts include Context 1: Providing operational support (Haiti); Context 2: Transitioning to national programmes (Cambodia and Kenya); Context 3: Consolidating and strengthening national programmes (Colombia, Ghana and Zimbabwe).

12 A minimum threshold of 30% of internet users within the total population. Data on internet users for 2020 was retrieved from: <https://datareportal.com/>.

# Methodology and sample description

This study used innovative web surveys to collect information from random and anonymous respondents in near-real time. In practical terms, these surveys appear when internet users click on a broken link or make a mistake in their URL – instead of receiving a broken link notification, they receive a survey form.<sup>13</sup> The analysis builds upon data from parents of schoolchildren between 6–14 years old and youth aged 15–24 years who were identified using specific filter questions and channelled to the appropriate survey form. Indeed, two custom but thematically similar surveys were designed for these two groups. The survey in Haiti was translated and administered in French and Haitian Creole to meet the linguistic requirements of the country.

The overall target sample size for the country was 960 completed surveys with the following disaggregation (Table 1) to ensure representativity of schoolchildren and youth from different age groups. Moreover, the national sample was distributed proportionally to population size by admin 1 level.

Data collection was conducted in Haiti between 26 May and 26 July 2021. Overall, **2,343 surveys** were completed, more than doubling the national target. All disaggregated targets were also met. A total of **1,714 youth** and **629 parents of schoolchildren** completed the survey. The parent survey included a child roster where respondents were invited to provide information for each of their children (up to 5 children). Parents reported on behalf of **803 children** aged 6–14 years old, which allowed for sex- and age- disaggregated

analysis on questions related to this group.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through the surveys. Questions covered access to and quality of education, livelihoods and income sources, food security situation and livelihood coping, access to healthcare (children), main challenges faced, and safety concerns as well as aspirations for the future (youth). As the web survey presents a certain bias because it only reaches literate populations connected to the internet,<sup>15</sup> a three-variable weighting system was introduced during the analysis phase to ensure that both sexes, urban and rural geography (population at admin 1 level) and people with different education backgrounds were represented according to the prevailing national statistics. Moreover, where possible, data was triangulated with secondary sources to complement key findings.

## PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Surveys across all seven countries targeted parents who had children aged 6-14 years old as well as youth aged 15–24 years. In both samples before weighting was introduced, male respondents were overrepresented which is most likely due to their greater presence on the internet. Nonetheless, a considerable number of women responded to the survey. Figure 1 illustrates the sex of respondents before and after weighting.

With regards to the age of the respondents, parents of schoolchildren were mostly in the 25-34 years age

**TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF SAMPLE AND DISTRIBUTION PER COUNTRY<sup>14</sup>**

<b>480 x Parents of school-aged children (6–14 years)</b>	240 x school-aged children (6–9 years)
	240 x school-aged children (10–14 years)
<b>480 x youth (15–24 years)</b>	240 x youth (15–19 years)
	240 x youth (20–24 years)

13 WFP contracted RIWI Corporation to implement web-based surveys using its patented Random Domain Intercept Technology (RDIT™). Detailed information regarding RDIT can be found on the service provider's website: <https://riwi.com/>.

14 The overall sample of 480 completed surveys per target group is based on a confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of 5 percent.

15 One of the selection criteria for the countries selected for the case studies was the relatively good internet coverage in each of these countries which ensured a good representation of the target groups covered. Nevertheless, this remains a bias which is corrected for with weighting of the sample.

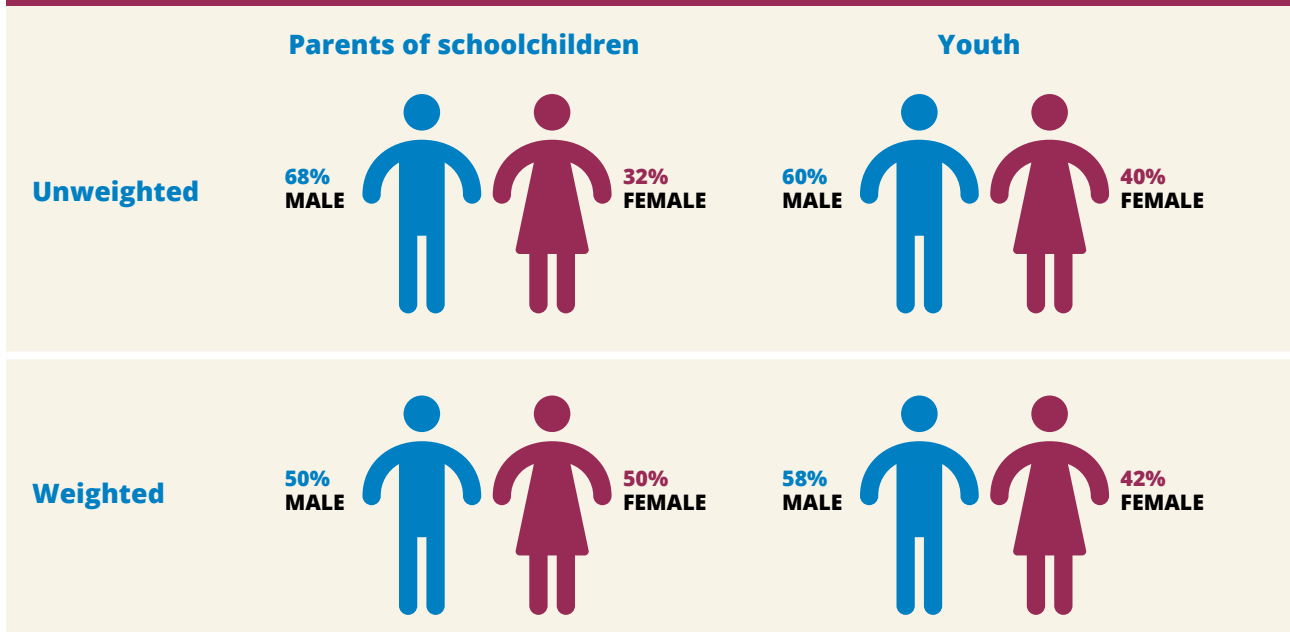


bracket. For youth, these are aligned with the 50/50 targets that were set out for the two age groups (240 for 15–19 years and 240 for 20–24 years). Indeed, the overall sample after weighting was relatively well distributed by group of interest with 54 percent youth aged 15–19 years and 46 percent aged 20–24 years.

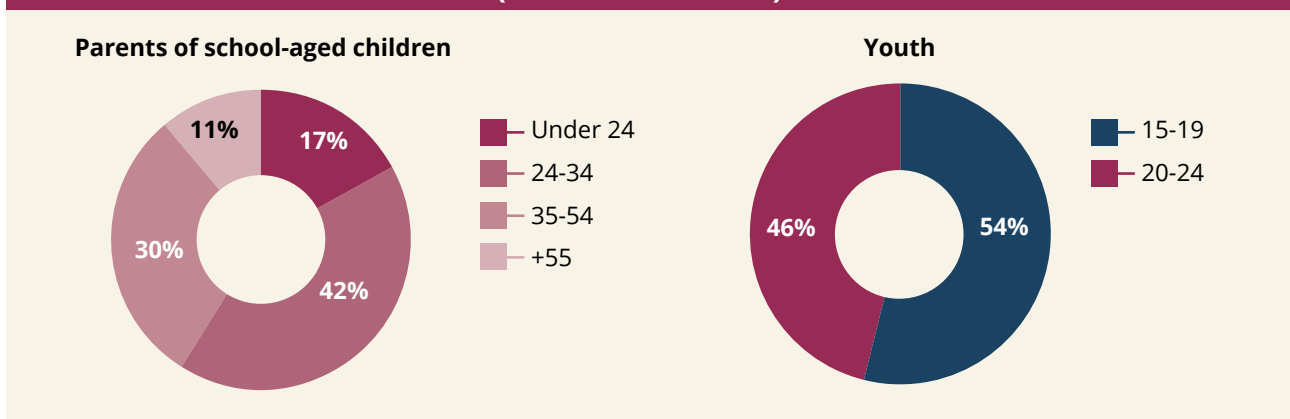
In terms of education, the sample for both parents and youth shows an underrepresentation of less-

educated respondents, which is to be expected with the use of the web survey. However, the weighting system helped correct this bias by recalibrating the sample based on education statistics for Haiti. This provides a greater voice in the sample to those with lower education levels, which is often a proxy of lower socioeconomic status, and allowed light to be shed on the specific challenges and needs the Haitian population is facing.

**FIGURE 1: SEX OF RESPONDENTS UNWEIGHTED AND WEIGHTED**

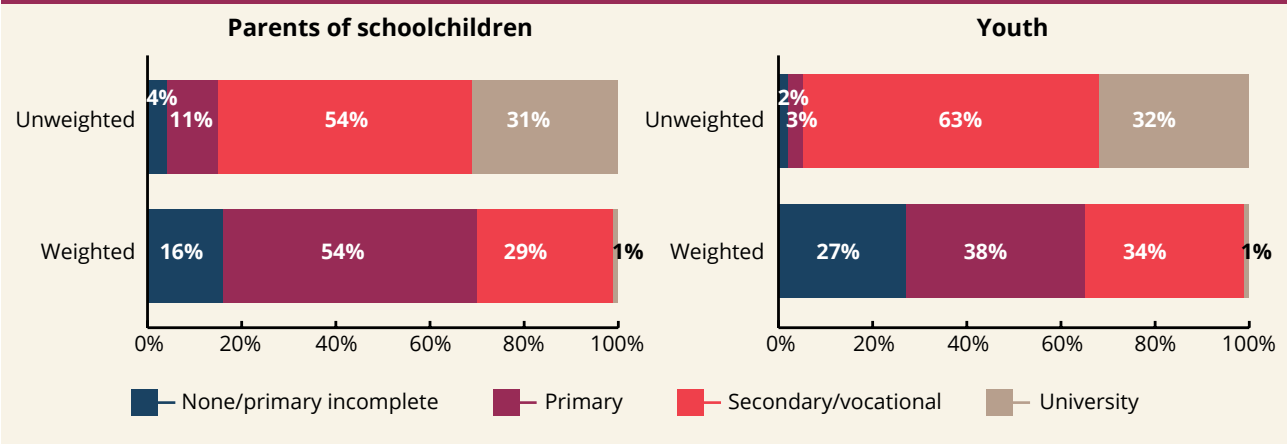


**FIGURE 2: AGE OF RESPONDENTS (AFTER WEIGHTING)**





**FIGURE 3: EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS UNWEIGHTED AND WEIGHTED**



# Access to and quality of education

School closures in Haiti had devastating consequences on the well-being and education of schoolchildren. One of the objectives of this study was to assess the impact of the pandemic on the education of schoolchildren (6–14 years) and youth (15–24 years). It seeks to understand their ability to attend school before the pandemic and during the 2021 school year and their perception of the quality of education, which are two core components of human capital.

## SCHOOLCHILDREN

The survey asked parents about the enrolment status of their children before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was found that 15 percent of schoolchildren were not in school before the pandemic. A higher proportion of young girls (17 percent) were not enrolled in school than young boys (13 percent). Further disaggregation by age also shows that a higher percentage of children aged 6–9 years (20 percent) were not enrolled than 10–14 year-olds (10 percent). Overall, the main reason for not sending children to school before the pandemic were concerns over insecurity and violence (36 percent), the need to have the children take care of family members or complete household chores (19 percent) and the inability to pay for school fees/costs (16 percent).

During the pandemic, the situation did not change drastically, with around 12 percent of children reported not to be enrolled at school during the 2021 school year. However, not being able to pay school fees and other education-related costs (39 percent) ranked first in the reasons for not enrolling children in school. While public schools are free in the country, research found that even when education is free, it can have hidden costs, such as school supplies, transportation and earnings lost when the child is in school, which can make education prohibitively expensive.<sup>16</sup>

This finding is also consistent with a deterioration of the economic conditions due to the pandemic. Insecurity and violence were also reported by nearly one in four parents and were found to be a more important reason for not sending young girls to school (30 percent) compared to young boys (15 percent). “Children cannot get a good education due to insecurity. Violence is everywhere and children cannot attend school without a good internet connection” reported one of the surveyed fathers. The need to help with household chores (13 percent) and marriage and pregnancy (six percent) were also more likely to prevent young girls from enrolling in school than young boys (9 percent and 0 percent respectively).

At the time of the survey, out of the 85 percent of children enrolled in school, a majority were attending school in person, at least partially. Another 19 percent of children were learning from home, often without the support of schoolteachers. About 10 percent of enrolled children were not receiving any schooling due to COVID-19 or other reasons.

School enrolment and attendance were not the only compromised components of education. The shift in the ways children were learning and studying during the pandemic undoubtedly impacted the quality of learning of pupils. In fact, for 73 percent of parents, COVID-19 negatively impacted the quality of education their children were receiving mainly due to lack of academic support (23 percent), lack of equipment/internet (19 percent), distraction and loss of focus (16 percent) and less interaction with teachers and peers (15 percent).

**“It would help to create a communication network between parents and schools to support the academic plan, so that parents can receive their children’s homework and help them in their schoolwork”** said one father from Cap-Haïtien.

16 World Bank. 2019. [World Development Report 2019: The Changing Nature of Work](#). World Development Report

## YOUTH

Overall, the survey found that 63 percent of youth were attending an educational institution before the pandemic. Another six percent reported to have already graduated and 31 percent were not enrolled. A higher proportion of young men (34 percent) and youth aged 15–19-years (33 percent) were not in school than young women (28 percent) and youth aged 10–14 years (30 percent). The main reasons youth were not going to school before COVID-19 included the inability to cover costs (22 percent), followed by the necessity to earn an income (17 percent) and insecurity/violence (16 percent).

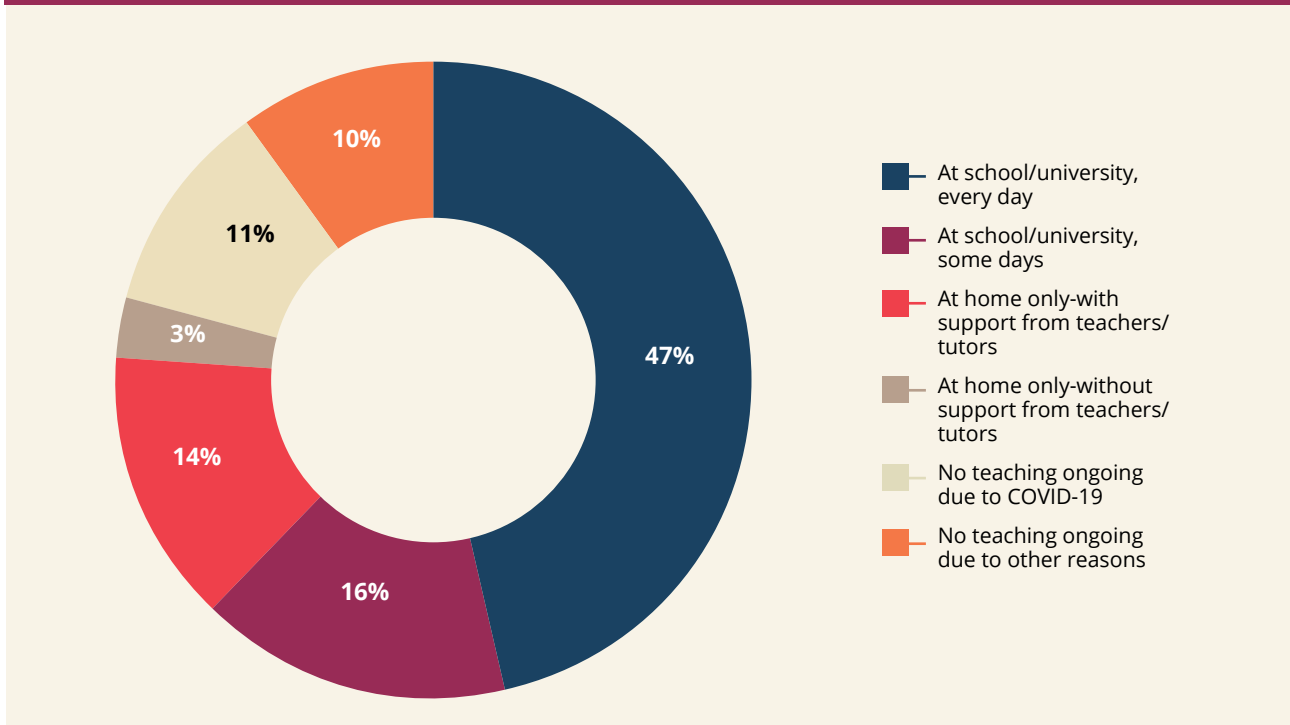
The survey revealed that around 6 percent of youth left school during the pandemic. While there were no significant differences between young men and young women, unsurprisingly, older youth aged

20–24 years old (11 percent) were more likely to have left school than youth aged 15–19 years-old (1 percent). School closures (38 percent) were found to be the main reason why youth dropped out of school in 2021.

Similar to the findings for children, most youth reported attending school or university in person (63 percent), while 17 percent reported studying at home. A high percentage (21 percent) reported not having any teaching ongoing, due to either COVID or other reasons.

For 67 percent of youth, the quality of their learning decreased due to COVID-19. The main reasons reported were the lack of internet and equipment (18 percent), the need to earn an income (16 percent) and distraction and loss of focus (16 percent).

**FIGURE 4: MAIN PLACES WHERE YOUTH ENROLLED IN SCHOOL/UNIVERSITY IN 2021 LEARNED AND/OR STUDIED**



# Livelihood activities and income

Haiti is the poorest country in the northern hemisphere, with over 58 percent of the population living under the national poverty line and 24 percent of the population living on less than two dollars a day.<sup>17</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic was yet another negative shock to the very fragile Haitian economy. As a result of these multiple crises, Haiti's economy contracted by an estimated 1.2 percent in 2020/21 and is projected to shrink by another 1 percent in 2021/2022.<sup>18</sup>

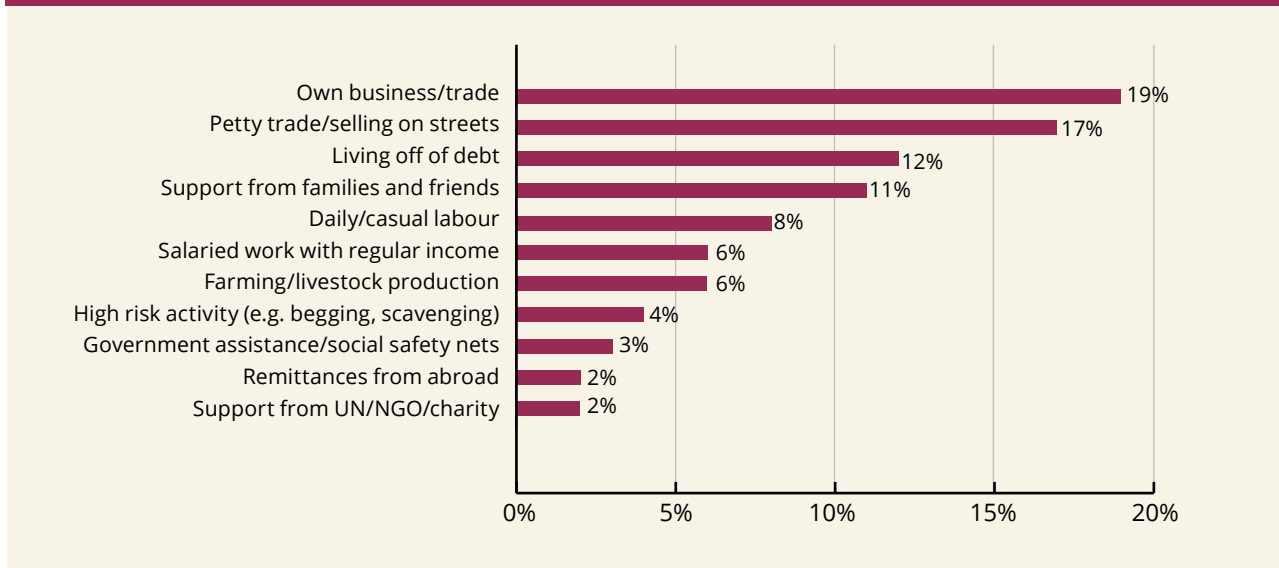
Pandemic-related measures negatively affected businesses of all sizes and informal employment alike.<sup>19</sup> In its Labour Report 2021 on Latin America and the Caribbean, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) noted that during this crisis both formal and informal employment contracted sharply in the region, disproportionately affecting women and youth in the labour force.<sup>20</sup> However, in Haiti it is difficult to separate the detrimental impact of the pandemic from the other damaging factors, such as the prolonged political instability and volatile

security situation, which are equally relevant in accounting for the very fragile economy and hard social conditions.<sup>21</sup>

## SCHOOLCHILDREN

Almost seven in ten parents of schoolchildren who participated in the survey reported that their household was relying on an unstable source of income. As illustrated in Figure 5, the top five reported sources of income are owning a business/trade, selling on the streets, living off debt, relying on support from families and friends, and casual labour. These livelihood activities are quite widespread in Haiti and are particularly susceptible to shocks. In fact, 53 percent of parents reported seeing their income reduced since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is likely to have serious implications on their ability to meet their most essential needs and directly impact their children.

**FIGURE 5: WHAT IS YOUR HOUSEHOLD'S MAIN INCOME SOURCE?**



17 UNDP. 2021. [Human Development Report - Haiti](#)

18 Economist Intelligence Unit. 2021. [Haiti Country Report](#) (retrieved on 24th November 2021)

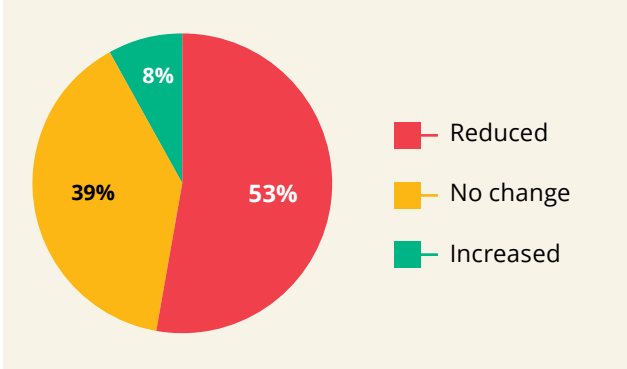
19 Inter - American Development Bank. 2020. [LAC Post COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities for Central America, Haiti, Mexico, Panama and the Dominican Republic](#)

20 ILO. 2021. [Labour Overview Series Latin America and the Caribbean 2021: The employment crisis in the pandemic: Towards a human-centred job recovery](#)

21 IFPRI. 2021. [Haiti: The impact of COVID-19 and preliminary policy implications: Interim report](#)

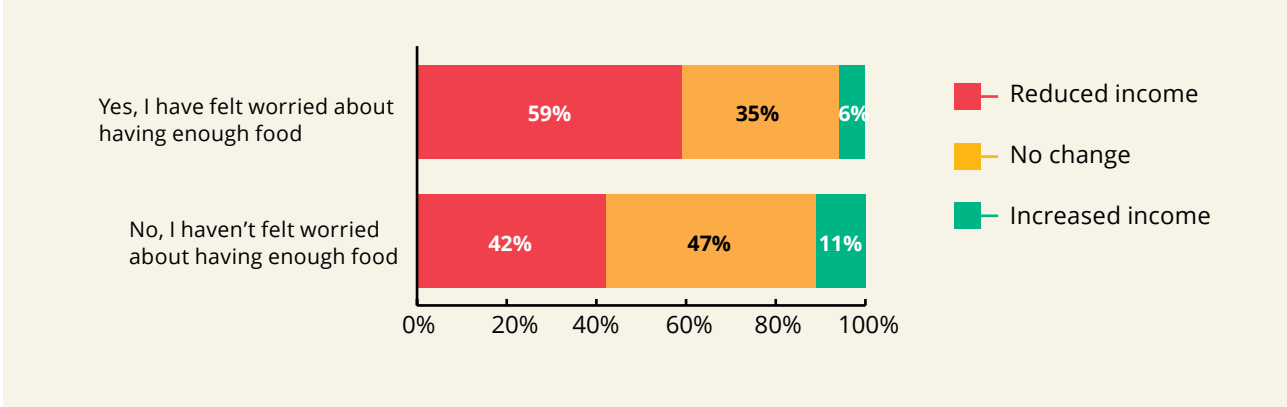


**FIGURE 6: HAS YOUR HOUSEHOLD'S INCOME LEVEL UNDERGONE ANY CHANGES SINCE THE START OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?**



The relationship between food insecurity and reduced income is closely intertwined. Further analysis showed that 59 percent of parent respondents who reported feeling worried about not having enough food to eat also reported a reduced income since the start of the pandemic.

**FIGURE 7: IMPACTS ON HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND CONCERNS OVER FOOD**



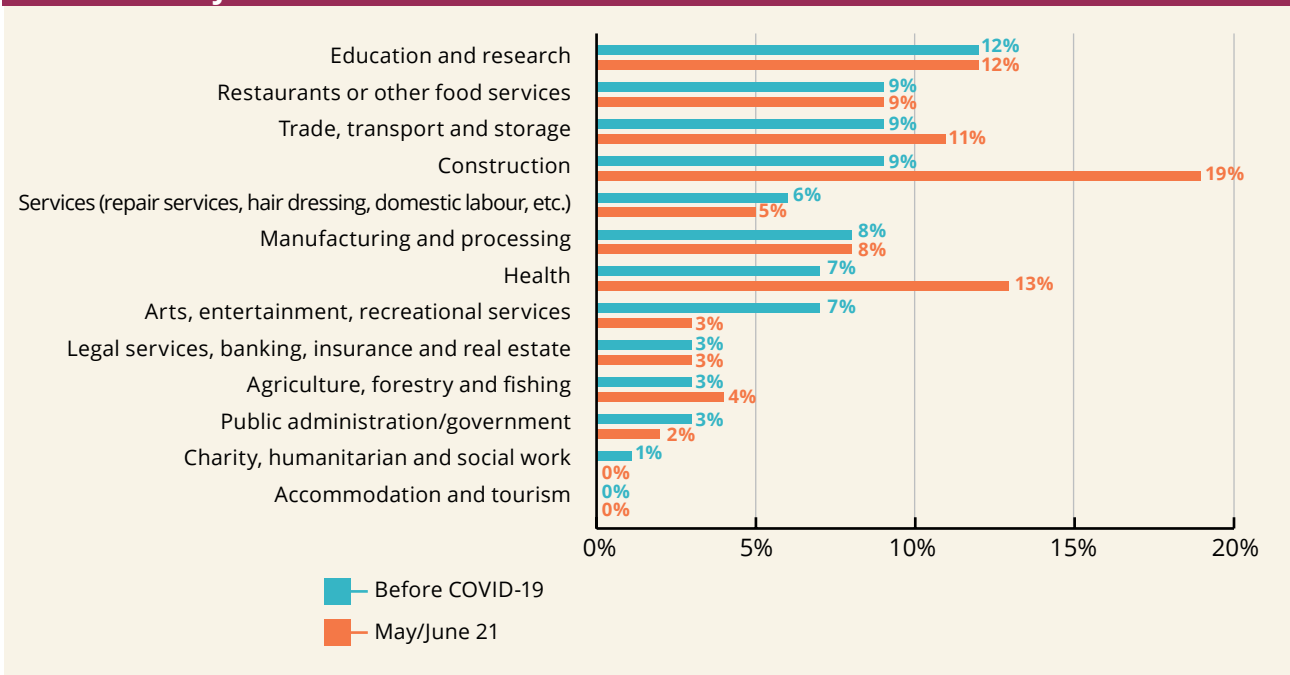
## YOUTH

Overall, 46 percent of youth reported working in a variety of sectors before the pandemic. Already before the pandemic, the percentage of women who were not working (60 percent) was higher than that of men (49 percent). Unsurprisingly, a higher percentage of 15–19 year-old youths (57 percent) were not working than 20–24 year-olds (51 percent). This is most likely because younger youth are still in education, while older youth are more likely to be transitioning to or already in the labour market.

The survey found that around 17 percent of youth stopped working in 2021. Young women, who were already underrepresented in the labour market before the pandemic, reported to be leaving the labour market at a higher rate than young men (18 percent reduction for women versus 16 percent reduction for men in labour market participation). Sectors where youth were working before the pandemic and at the time of the survey, have also shifted. Figure 8 illustrates a reduction of youth working in the service sector in 2021, while there was a significant increase in youth working in the construction and health sector. The latter finding reflects the increased need for healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.



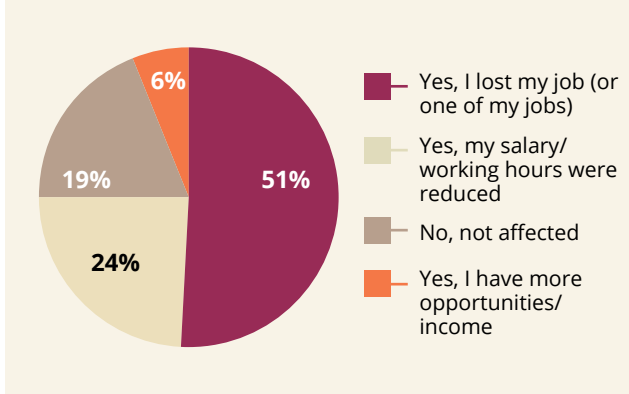
**FIGURE 8: MAIN SECTORS WHERE YOUTH WERE WORKING BEFORE COVID-19 AND IN MAY/JUNE 2021**



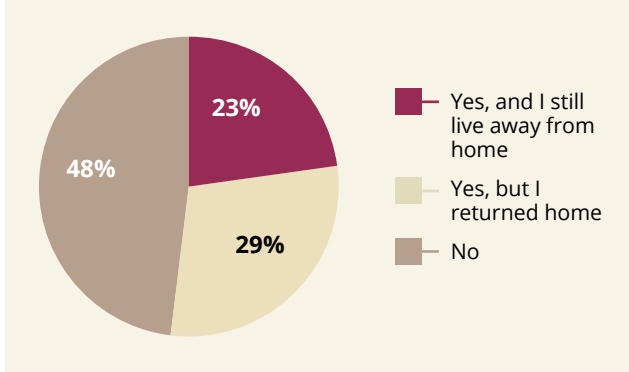
As work can be dynamic with periods of employment followed by unemployment, another economic indicator was used to assess how youth income has changed since the start of the pandemic. The overall picture of the impacts on youth's livelihoods is much more alarming from this perspective. Figure 9 shows that just over half of youth reported losing their jobs (or one of their jobs) since the start of the pandemic, and another 24 percent reported reduced salary/working hours. Young women were most affected, with 61 percent reporting losing their jobs compared to 45 percent of young men.

This survey also covered the mobility of youth for work purposes. Youth were asked if over the past year they had been living away from home for work purposes. At the time of the survey, more than half of respondents reported that they were indeed living away from home, including 23 percent who were still living away from home and 29 percent who reported having returned home. Among these, losing their job (36 percent) was the top reason for moving home followed by personal reasons (33 percent). Also noticeable is the high percentage of youth who were forced to leave the area where they were living to return home, likely due to the measures put in place to contain the virus.

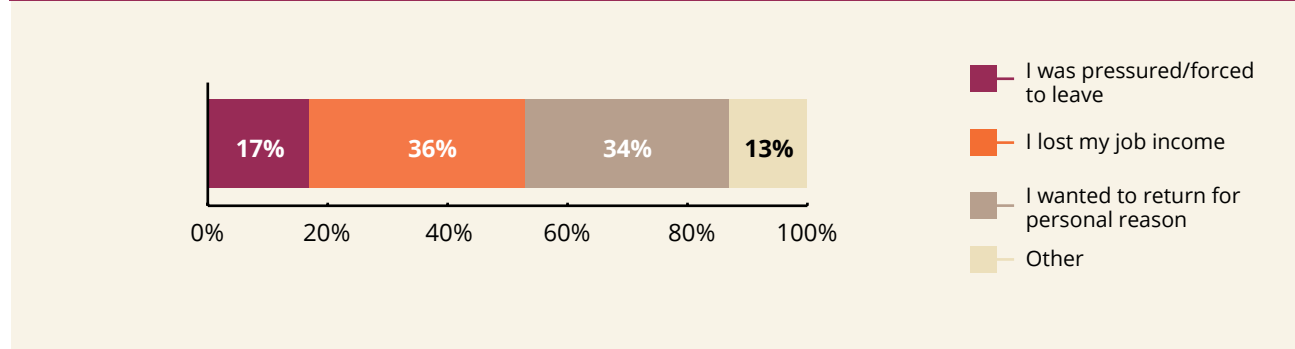
**FIGURE 9: HAS YOUR ABILITY TO EARN AN INCOME CHANGED SINCE THE START OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?**



**FIGURE 10: OVER THE PAST YEAR, HAVE YOU BEEN LIVING IN A PLACE AWAY FROM YOUR HOME FOR WORK PURPOSES?**



**FIGURE 11: WHAT WAS THE MAIN REASON YOU RETURNED HOME?**





# Food security and livelihood coping

Food insecurity impacts the current and future health and development of children. It can have long-lasting negative effects on educational attainment and, eventually, job opportunities.<sup>22</sup> The survey included three indicators to approximate food security – food consumption the previous day and over the past 30 days, concern over accessing food, and the use of food-based coping strategies. Youth and parents of school-aged children were also asked about the livelihood coping strategies that they adopted.

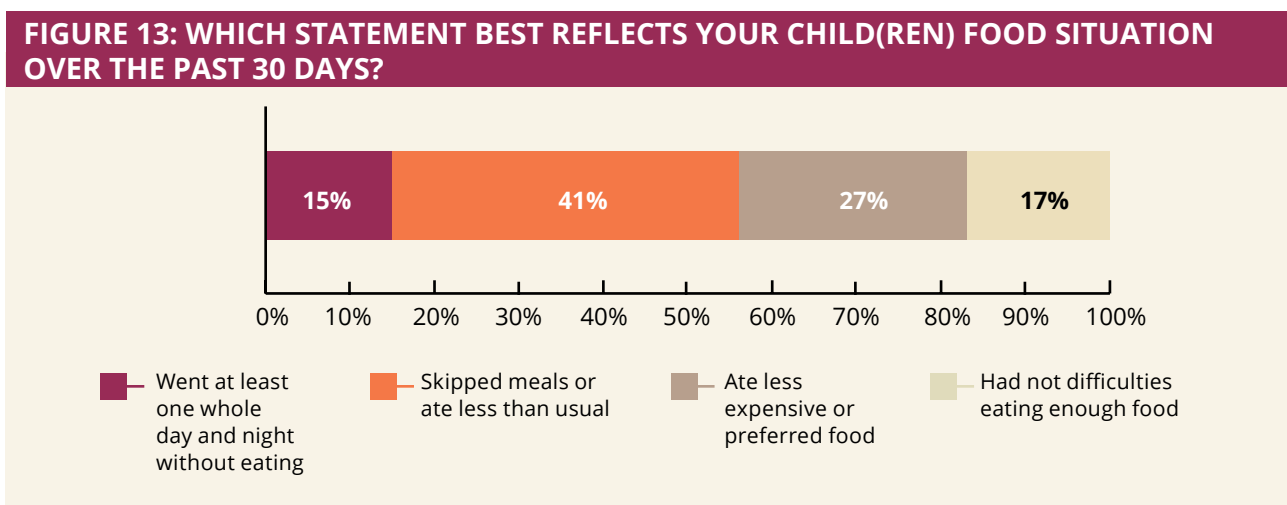
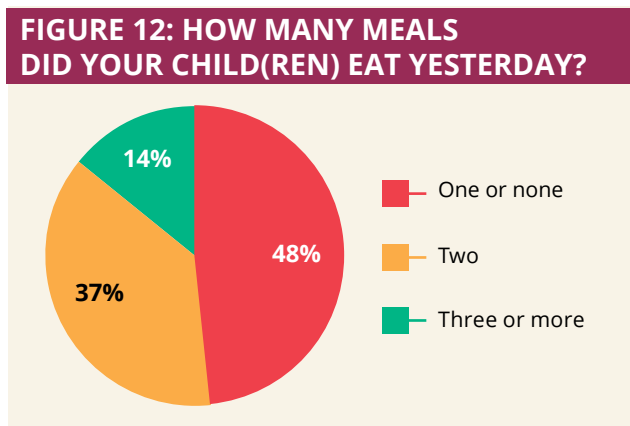
## SCHOOLCHILDREN

With increased poverty due to income losses and high food prices, it is not surprising that 66

percent of families with schoolchildren reported feeling worried about not having enough food to eat in the month prior to taking the survey.

The food consumption of Haitian children was also found to be alarmingly compromised, with nearly half of children reported to have eaten one or no meals the day before the survey.<sup>23</sup> Although no significant differences were found between boys and girls, children aged 6–9-years old (51 percent) were found to compromise their food consumption to a greater extent than older children aged 10–14 years (45 percent).

Parents were also asked to describe their children’s food situation in the last 30 days by selecting the main food-based coping activities that best described their situation. Worryingly, 15 percent of children were reported to have gone at least a whole day without eating, while two in five had skipped meals. More boys (17 percent) went to bed hungry than young girls (12 percent); however, more young girls (46 percent) were reported to have skipped meals than young boys (36 percent). In terms of age groups, more older children aged 10–14 years old (17 percent) were reported to have gone a whole day without eating than younger children aged 6–9 years old (13 percent).



22 Children’s Healthwatch. [Feeding Our Human Capital: Food Insecurity and Tomorrow’s.](#)

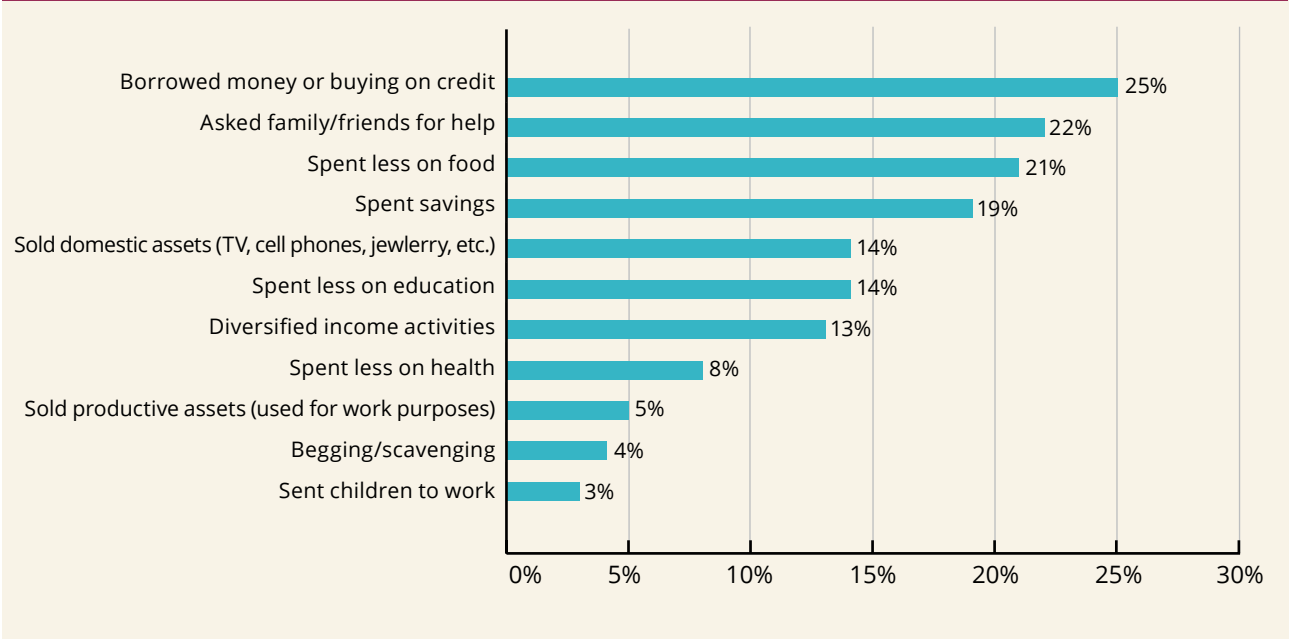
23 The survey was conducted between 26 May and 26 July 2021 which overlapped with a period of school closures that took place in July. According to ministry results and data, round 30 percent of children benefited from the school feeding program which was halted during school closures. Source: PNCS annual report 2020-2021.



In order to cover their most essential needs, including food, education, health and rent, 80 percent of families reported using one or more livelihood coping strategies in the last 30 days, while 7 percent reported not having the capacity to do so and 12 percent reporting no need to cope. Figure 14 illustrates the main coping strategies used by families with schoolchildren.

Borrowing money or buying on credit, asking families and friends for help and spending less on food were among the top coping strategies adopted. The latter strategy, reported by one in five households, may result in members of the household, including children, eating less or consuming less nutritious meals.

**FIGURE 14: MAIN LIVELIHOOD-BASED COPING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY HOUSEHOLDS WITH SCHOOLCHILDREN**



## YOUTH

Similar to children, the food security situation of youth was found to be highly compromised. Around 61 percent of youth respondents reported feeling worried about where their next meal would come from. More young women (66 percent) reported feeling concerned over food than young men (58 percent) and more youth aged 20–24 years old (63 percent) were concerned than youth aged 15–19 years old (60 percent).

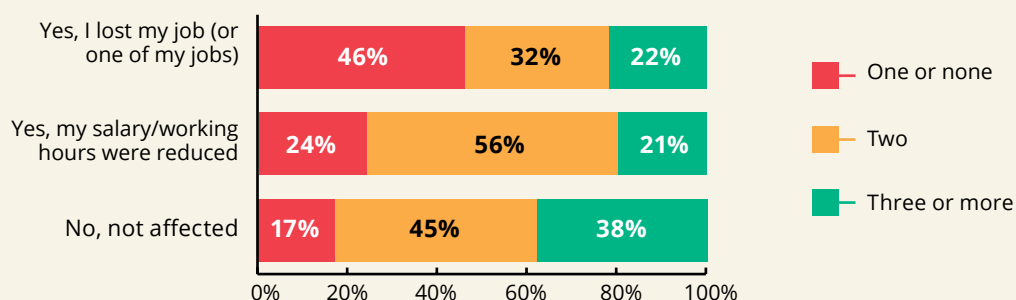
When asked how many meals they had eaten the day before the survey, one in three youth reported eating one or no meals, while 49 percent reporting eating two meals and only 19 percent ate three or more meals. A higher percentage of young women (35 percent) and youth aged 20–24 years (44 percent) reported eating one or fewer meals than young men (31 percent) and youth aged 15–19 years (23 percent), which is consistent with findings related to concerns over food. Furthermore, youth who had lost their job or one of their jobs since the start of the pandemic were found to eat fewer daily meals than those who reported that their income had not been affected, highlighting the close link between reduced income and increased food insecurity.

Adopting a food-based coping strategy due to the lack of food or means to buy food over the past month was reported by 71 percent of youth respondents. Figure 16 illustrates the food security situation as reported by youth. It highlights a worrying number of young people

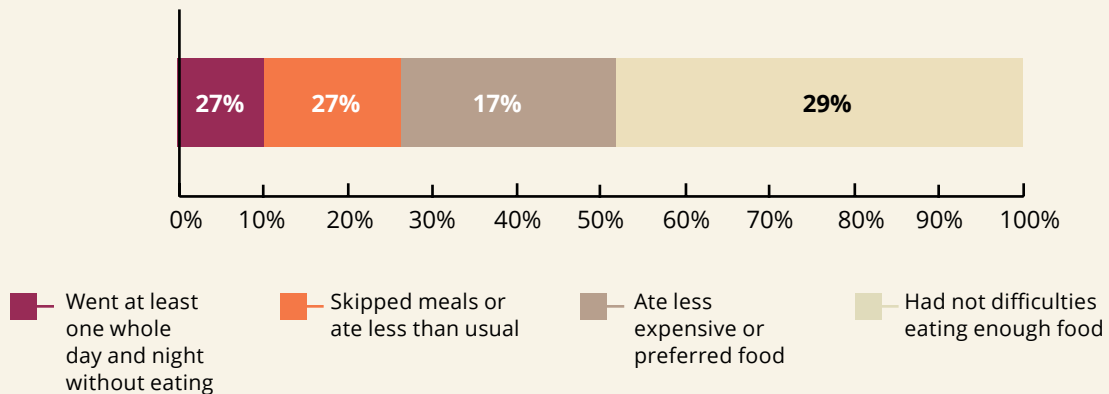


who were going a whole day without eating and were skipping meals or eating less than needed. While no large differences were found between age groups, a higher percentage of young women (31 percent) reported having gone a whole day without eating in the month prior to the survey than young men (24 percent).

**FIGURE 15: IMPACTS ON INCOME AND FOOD CONSUMPTION**



**FIGURE 16: WHICH STATEMENT BEST REFLECTS YOUR FOOD SITUATION OVER THE PAST 30 DAYS?**

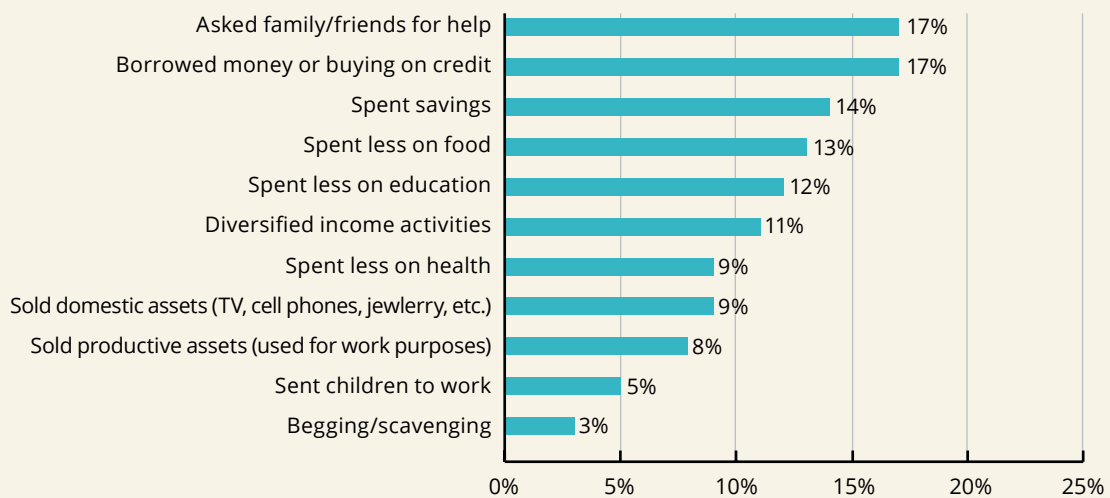


Furthermore, about 72 percent of youth respondents reported using at least one livelihood coping strategy to meet their most essential needs over the past month, while 9 percent reported not having the capacity to do so and 19 percent had no need to cope. Figure 17 illustrates the main coping strategies adopted by youth and/or their households. Asking friends and family for help, borrowing money or buying on credit, spending savings and spending less on on credit, spending savings and spending less on

food were among the top strategies adopted. This quote from a young nursing student summarizes what many young Haitians have encountered and how they are coping:

*“I don’t have a lot of economic means and when my parents send me some money, I use it to repay my debts. I would like to earn my living, but the political, social, economic and especially health conditions of the country prevent me from doing so. It is painful”.*

**FIGURE 17: MAIN LIVELIHOOD COPING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY YOUTH HOUSEHOLDS (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)**



# Access to medical services for children

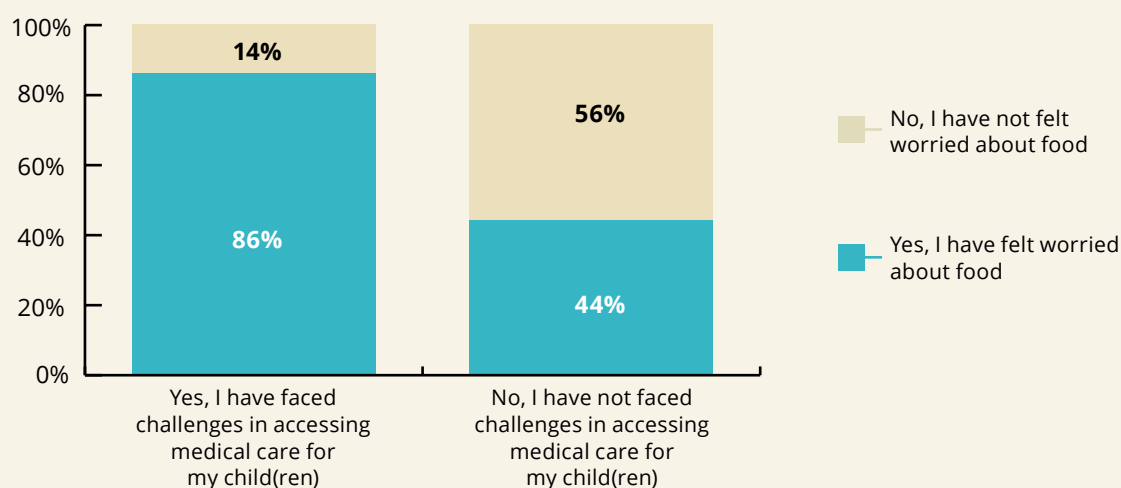
Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Haiti's healthcare system faced many challenges. Haiti has a very weak healthcare system with limited resources to handle a health crisis. In the Global Health Security Index, a composite index that assesses countries' capabilities to prevent and mitigate epidemics and pandemics, Haiti ranks 100th out of 195 countries.<sup>24</sup> In a 2019 study it was estimated that, in the entire country, there were only 124 Intensive Care Unit beds and 64 beds for a population of over 11 million.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the healthcare system is extremely reliant on foreign assistance and NGOs, and in many parts of the country, access to medical services is only provided through non-state actors.<sup>26</sup>

Access to medical services is crucial for children to reach their full potential. However, more

than half of parents (53 percent) reported facing difficulties accessing medical services for their children over the past year. Out of those who reported difficulties, lack of money was by far the most common reason, with 60 percent of parents stating this as the main challenge they faced, which reflects the economic difficulties faced by many parents during this pandemic.

Challenges accessing healthcare and concerns over food were found to be closely intertwined. Indeed, 86 percent of parents who reported facing challenges accessing medical services for their children also reported feeling concerned about where their next meal would come from. Lack of money is likely to be the central driver of these unmet needs.

**FIGURE 18: CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING MEDICAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND CONCERN OVER FOOD**



24 Inter - American Development Bank. 2020. [LAC Post COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities for Central America, Haiti, Mexico, Panama and the Dominican Republic](#)

25 REACH. 2019. [Critical care capacity in Haiti: A nationwide cross-sectional survey](#)

26 CEPR. 2020. [COVID-19 in Haiti — The Current Response and Challenges](#)

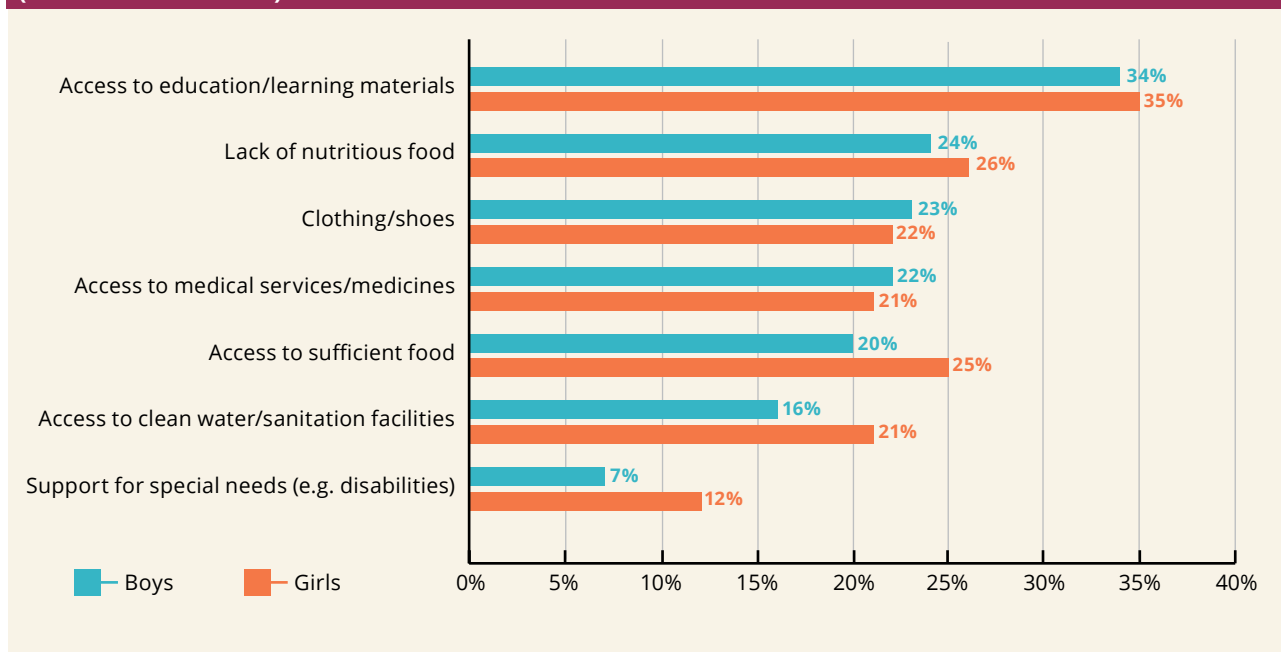
# Main challenges faced

## SCHOOLCHILDREN

Overall, the top five main challenges faced by children include access to education (34 percent), lack of nutritious food (25 percent), lack of clothing/shoes (23 percent), lack of access to sufficient food (22 percent) and lack of access to medical services (22 percent). These findings confirm that food security is a critical challenge for children aged 6–14 years, which raises important concerns and will require careful

monitoring over time. Figure 19 illustrates the differences in challenges faced as determined by the sex of the child. This graph demonstrates that access to education as well as access to sufficient and nutritious food was found to be a greater challenge for girls. Further disaggregation by age reveals that access to education/learning materials is a greater challenge for children aged 6–9-years old (43 percent) than children aged 10–14 years (25 percent).

**FIGURE 19: MAIN CHALLENGES SCHOOLCHILDREN ARE CURRENTLY FACING BY SEX (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)**



## IN THE WORDS OF RESPONDENTS -PARENTS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN

Parents of school children were asked to express what worried them the most when it came to the future of their children.

Many parents expressed their hopes and concerns for their children:

“What worries me most is the future of my children and the uncertainty of this country. I’d like them to have a good education and to grow up in a healthy environment, far from violence in all its forms”

said a 32 year-old father.



Another father expressed the desperate situations many households are in:

“I worry for the future of my child and my family. It is hard for my child to go to school every day because we do not have money. We have no access to medical care. We have problems with insecurity. I am renting a small apartment that I cannot afford. The situation is very critical, and my family is almost on the street.”

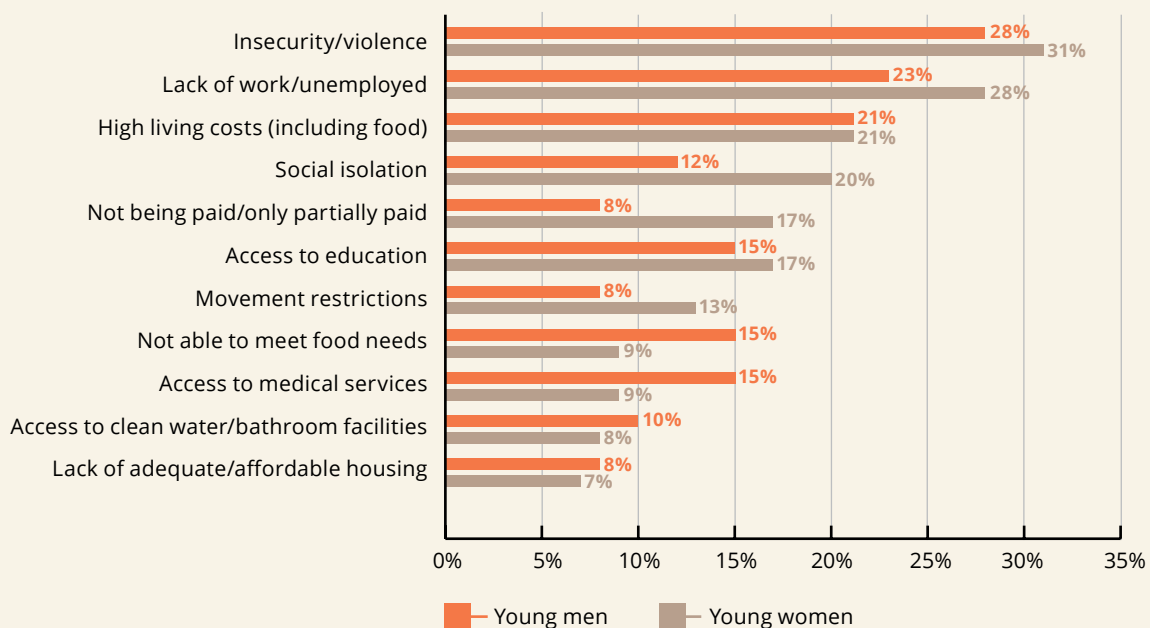


## YOUTH

The top three challenges reported by Haitian youth were insecurity and violence (29 percent), unemployment (25 percent) and high living costs (21 percent), which is consistent with the deteriorating security and economic situation in the country. Figure 20 illustrates the differences in challenges faced by young women and men. Disaggregation by age groups also shows that lack of work/unemployment (32 percent) and high living costs (including food) (25 percent) are greater challenges for youth aged 10–14 years compared to youth ages 15–19 years (21 percent and 17 percent, respectively). On the other hand, the biggest challenges for youth aged 15–19 years were social isolation (23 percent) and lack of access to education (19 percent) compared to older youth (6 percent and 11 percent, respectively).



**FIGURE 20: MAIN CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUTH BY SEX OF RESPONDENTS (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)**





# Safety concerns

Haiti has had a very unstable political situation and volatile security conditions for several decades. Recent years have been characterized by violent protests, political assassinations, and increases in gang-related killings, kidnappings and violence, with Haitian police unable to establish order in parts of different regions and cities.<sup>27</sup>

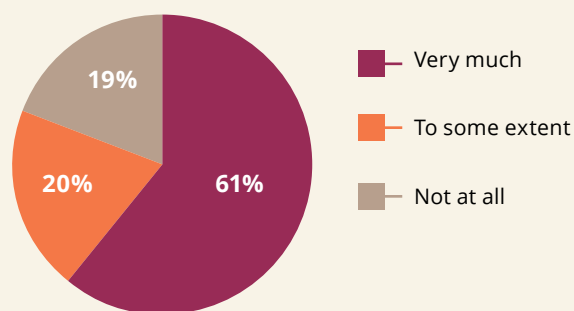
Since the assassination of the president, Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, the political and security situation in Haiti has deteriorated even more than during his time in power (2017–2021). The president’s assassination has created a power vacuum that many armed groups have filled, leading to a sharp increase in assassinations, kidnappings and other violent incidents across the country.<sup>28</sup>

## SCHOOLCHILDREN

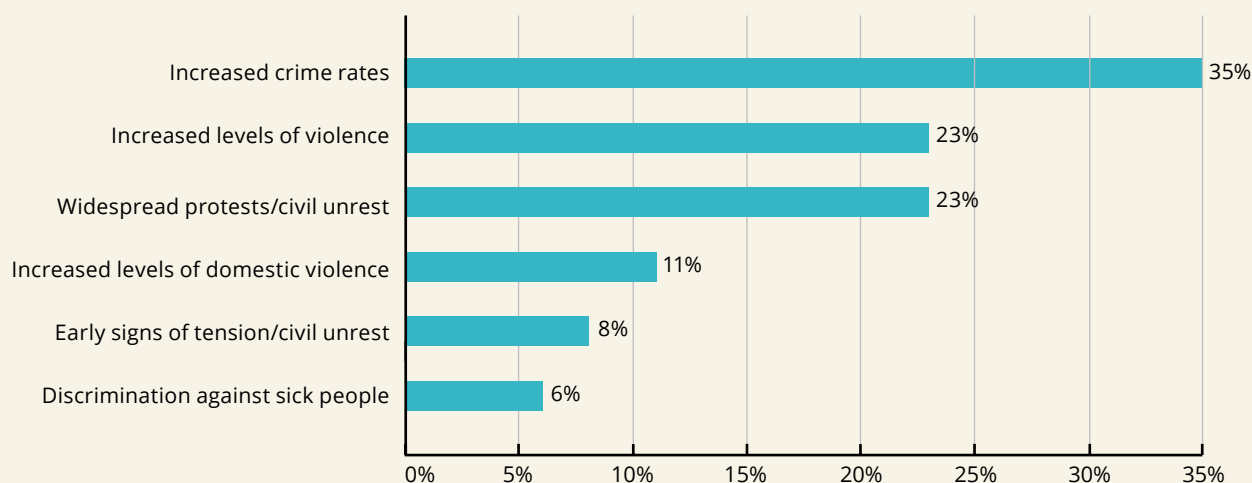
Overall, 63 percent of parents of schoolchildren perceived an increase in tensions and violence in their community over the past year. Figure 21 illustrates the main types of tensions and violence perceived, with increased crime rates reported,

increased levels of violence and widespread protests/civil unrest reported by most parents to be on the rise. Out of those who reported an increase, more than 80 percent said that these tensions have affected their children, including 61 percent who reported their children were very much affected and 20 percent who reported their children were affected to some extent. This raises very high human security and protection concerns for children and should be further investigated to understand how children are impacted by insecurity in the country.

**FIGURE 22: HOW HAS THE INCREASE IN TENSIONS AND VIOLENCE OVER THE PAST YEAR IMPACTED YOUR CHILD(REN)?**



**FIGURE 21: MAIN TYPES OF TENSIONS AND VIOLENCE PERCEIVED BY PARENTS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)**



27 IFPRI. 2021. [Haiti: The impact of COVID-19 and preliminary policy implications: Interim report](#)

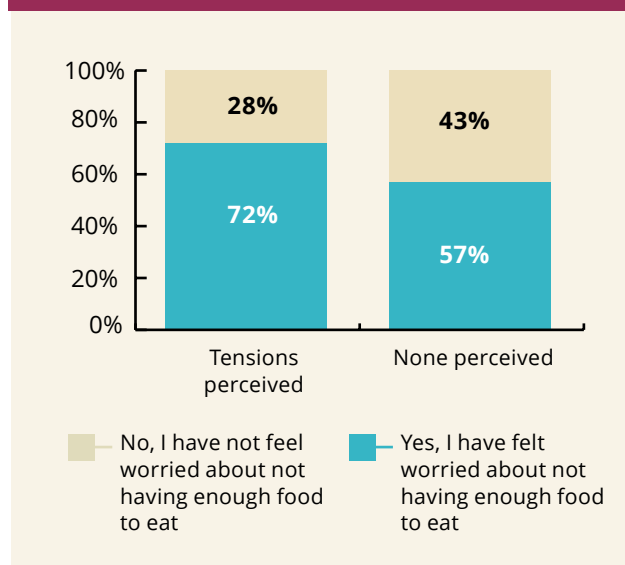
28 Economist Intelligence Unit. 2021. [Violence by armed groups continues to plague Haiti](#)

Furthermore, safety concerns and food security concerns were found to be closely intertwined. The higher the feeling of unsafety, the more likely households with schoolchildren and youth were to feel worried about having enough food to eat. Figure 23 shows that 72 percent of parents who perceived increased tensions and violence in the past year also reported feeling worried about having enough food to eat. These findings call for renewed efforts to ensure peace outcomes throughout all operational responses.

## YOUTH

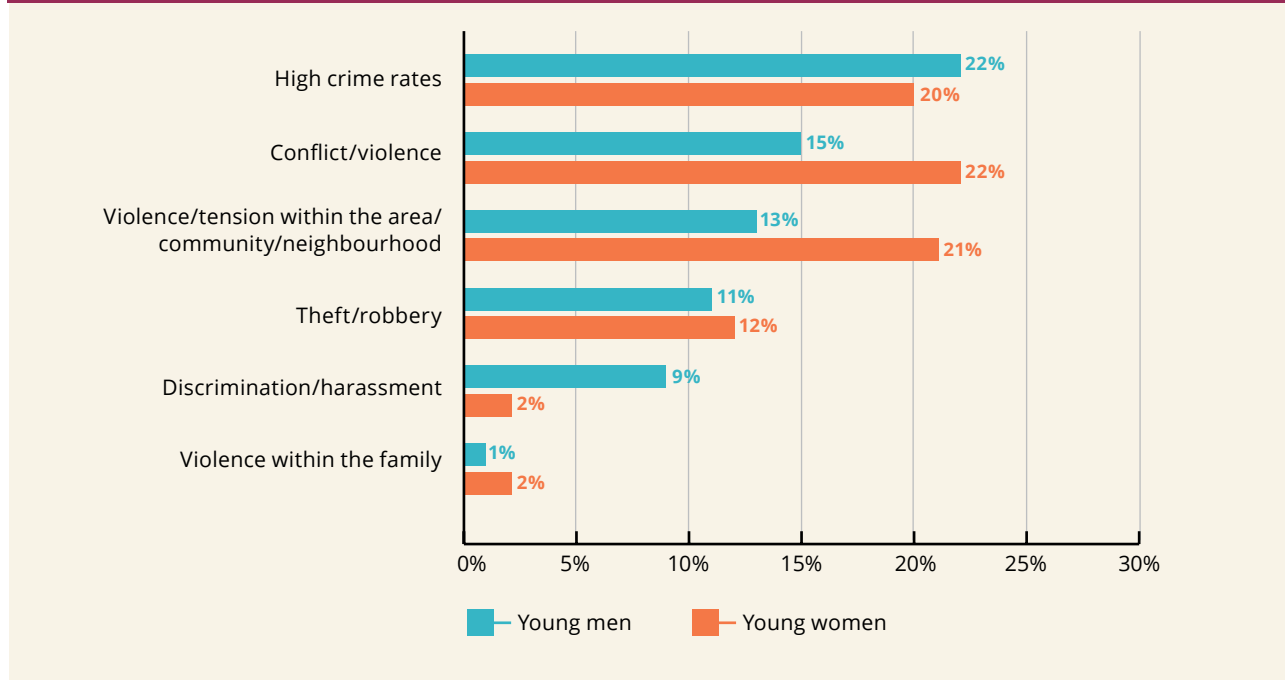
Among youth, 41 percent reported not feeling safe in their environment, which is a finding consistent with the main challenges reported by youth. More young women (47 percent) and youth aged 20–24 years old (45 percent) reported feeling unsafe than young men (37 percent) and youth aged 15–19 years old (38 percent). High crime rates (21 percent), armed conflict (18 percent) and tensions within their community (17 percent) were reported as the main reasons for not feeling safe. Figure 24 illustrates the main reasons youth reported feeling unsafe by the sex of respondents. Notably, more young women

**FIGURE 23: TENSIONS/VIOLENCE PERCEIVED BY PARENTS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN AND CONCERNS OVER FOOD**



reported feeling unsafe due to conflict/violence and violence within their community, while high crime rates and discrimination/harassment appeared to be a greater preoccupation for young men.

**FIGURE 24: MAIN REASONS FOR FEELING UNSAFE, BY SEX OF RESPONDENTS**



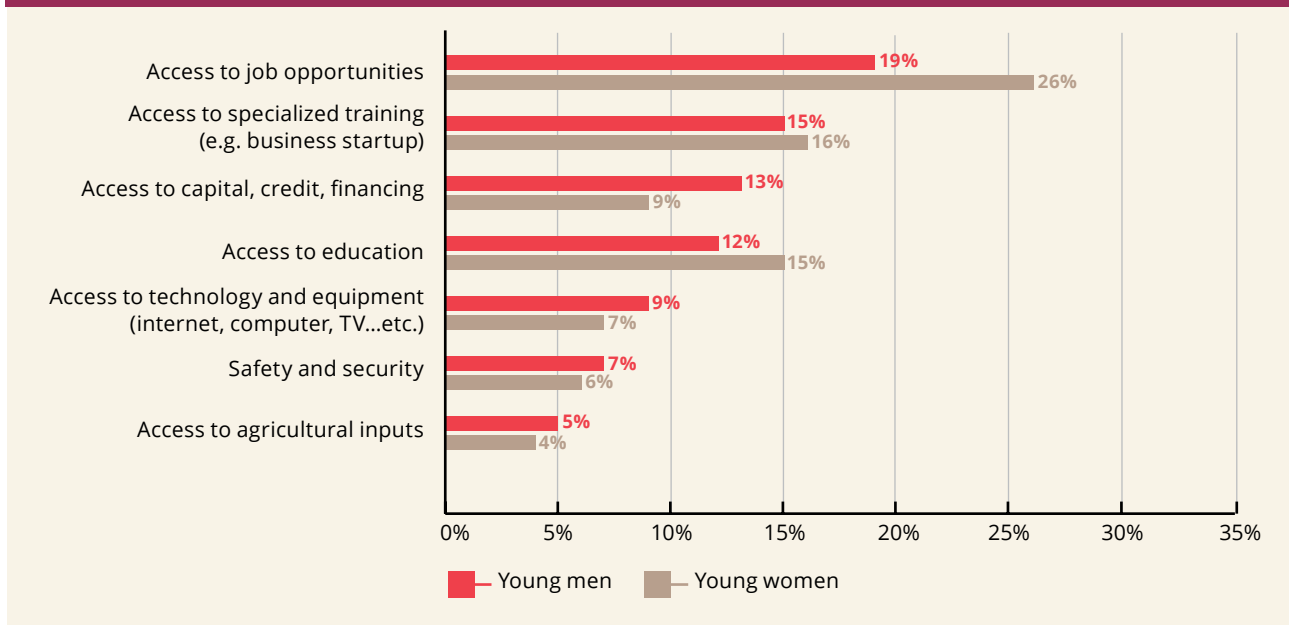


## Aspirations for the future

Youth were asked in the survey what would help their generation have a prosperous future. Overall, the top responses were access to job opportunities (22 percent), specialized training (15 percent) and higher education (14 percent). As illustrated in Figure 25, young women reported access to job opportunities and access to education to a greater extent than young men.

When disaggregating data by age groups, youth aged 20-24 years old were more likely to identify job opportunities as their most important need (26 percent), while youth aged 15-19 years were more likely to prefer access to specialized training (17 percent).

**FIGURE 25: WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE FUTURE?**



## IN THE WORDS OF RESPONDENTS – PARENTS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN AND YOUTH

When asked what factors would empower Haitian youth and children to overcome the current challenges triggered by this crisis, many expressed the need for humanitarian relief and financial support:

“I think that the youth is in need of humanitarian assistance. We do not have a future here, no quality education, no food security, no safety, no job opportunities - we're on our own”

said a 23-year-old man from Port-au-Prince.

Others focused on long-term solutions, arguing that solving the deep political and socioeconomic problems that affect the country is crucial to guarantee a future for the younger generations.

As a 21-year-old woman from Port-au-Prince said:

We must begin by resolving social, economic and political problems such as criminality and insecurity, and creating job opportunities for the youth”.



# Concluding remarks

In conclusion, it was found that COVID worked as an amplifier for Haiti's deep political, economic and social instability, and it severely affected the education, income and job opportunities of Haitian youth, children and their families. As one of the surveyed fathers said:

"The situation was already grave before, but COVID has worsened the crisis".

The pandemic had a serious impact on the food security of youth and schoolchildren. Around half of children and a third of youth reported their food security was compromised and reported often skipping meals or not eating for days at a time. Parents reported their children struggled with inadequate access to education as well as nutritious and sufficient food. Half of the surveyed parents also reported not being able to access medical services for their children during this health crisis, often because they could not afford the cost of healthcare. Security was a major concern for both youth and parents of schoolchildren, which had worrying consequences on school enrolment and work opportunities for all surveyed groups.

Given the very difficult socioeconomic and political landscape of Haiti, many youths were not very hopeful about their future and that of their country. However, many stated that providing more job opportunities, access to specialized training and higher education in addition to stabilizing the country would help them overcome the current crisis and have a future free from fear of violence and insecurity.

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