

Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

Impacts of COVID-19 and the Cost of Living Crisis

BELIZE Summary Report | February 2023



Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

BELIZE Summary Report | February 2023

Inflation trends driving the current cost of living crisis are compounding the negative impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. People in Belize are confronted with the local impacts of this global crisis as they continue to face challenges to earn a living and meet their critical needs. Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP) launched the Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods Survey to gather data on people's livelihoods, access to markets and food security, and provide snapshots of these impacts over time. This report analyses data from the fifth round of data collection, which took place from 19 July to 12 August 2022, and compares findings with survey rounds conducted in April 2020, June 2020, and February 2021. The online survey was circulated via social media, media outlets, SMS and emails. While the survey contributes to a better overview of impacts of the compound crisis, the data is not representative, and the use of an online questionnaire limits inputs from people without internet connectivity. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted with the support of Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprises (MAFSE) and Ministry of Human Development (MHD) to augment the survey findings with deeper insights on the impacts of the cost of living crisis through the lens of persons with disabilities and indigenous groups. The survey was conducted thanks to the support of WFP's donors and the Joint SDG Fund.

August 2022



February 2022*

*Comparison with the February 2022 survey round is not included because of the low number of responses from Belize.

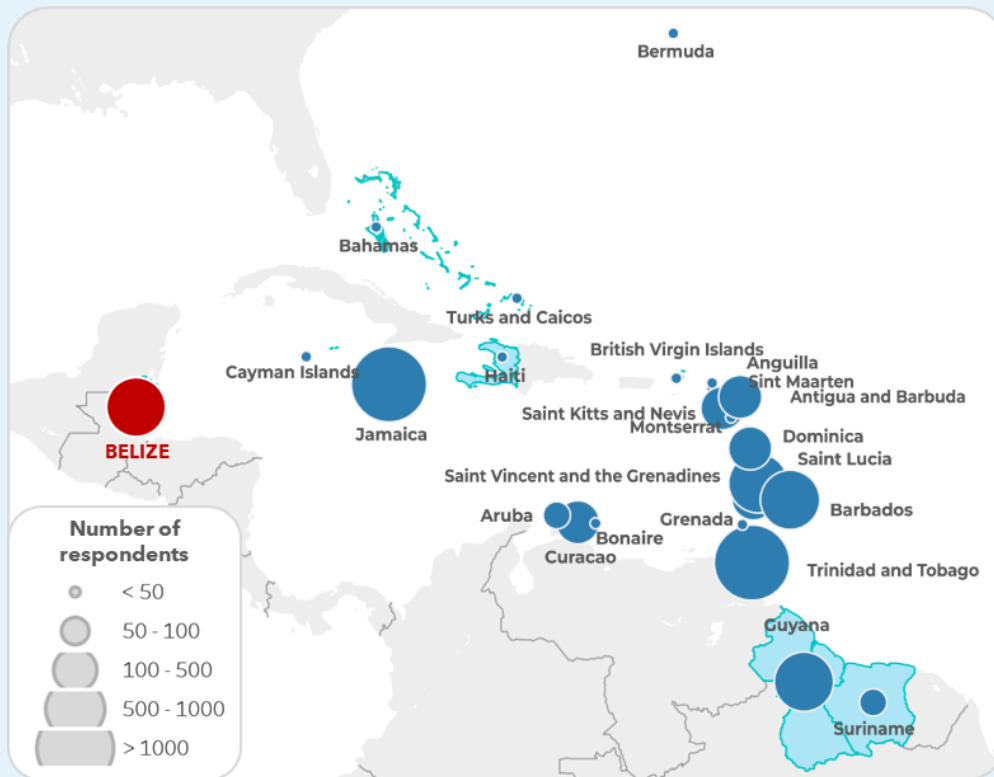
February 2021



June 2020



April 2020



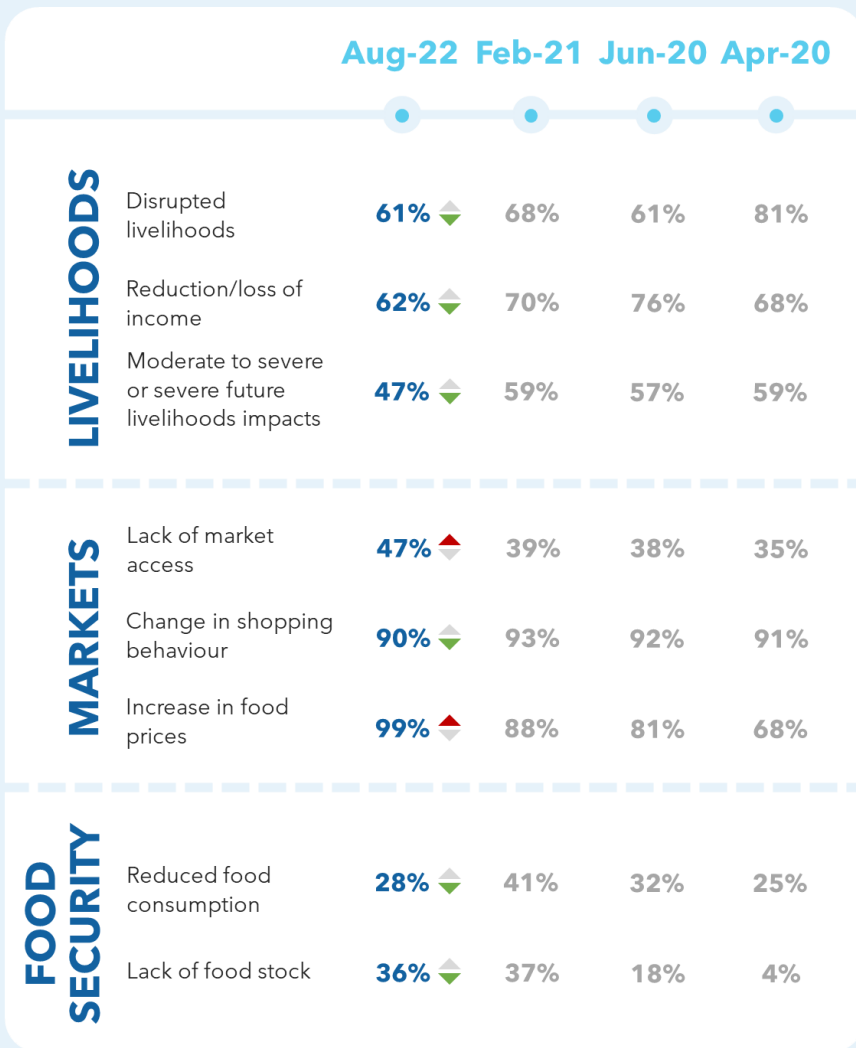
BELIZE Summary | February 2023

- **Global food prices have increased sharply since the start of the Ukraine conflict, driving up local food prices.** The increase in food prices has destabilised and impacted access, availability and utilisation of food. Food prices are on the rise in Belize with over 9% food inflation in November 2022 and rising. High energy prices are further exacerbating the food price crisis.
- Based on the survey results, **it is estimated that almost 190,000 people out of 370,000 (51%)** in Belize are food insecure.
- **Food consumption and diets have deteriorated**, with 65% of respondents skipping meals/eating less, eating less preferred foods, or going an entire day without eating in the week leading up to the survey, similar trends in February 2021. Among the most impacted groups are the poorest households, younger respondents and those relying on informal income sources. People are increasingly buying less healthy and diversified foods. Over a third of respondents reported having no food stocks at home.
- **More respondents than ever (99%) are reporting higher than usual food prices.** Respondents also observed significant changes in the costs of gas (72%), other fuels (66%), transport (52%) and housing (44%).
- **The COVID-19 pandemic, now coupled with the cost of living crisis, continues to impact people's livelihoods in Belize.** Two thirds of respondents reported job loss or reduced income in their household, which is slightly lower compared to previous survey rounds. However, more respondents are resorting to alternative or secondary incomes. In addition, two thirds of respondents faced disruption to their livelihoods in the two weeks prior to the survey, mainly due to the unaffordability of livelihood inputs.
- **Respondents are compromising their future livelihoods by selling productive assets (48%), spending savings (80%) or reducing expenditures on health and education (55%) to meet their immediate food needs.** Inability to meet food (41%) and other essential (44%) needs are the top concerns among respondents, followed by unemployment and fear of illness (both 35%). Compared to previous survey rounds, fear of illness and unemployment are now less of a concern.
- **Almost half of respondents reported challenges accessing markets** in the week prior to the survey, which also represents the greatest deterioration since April 2020. Lack of financial means continues to be overwhelmingly reported as the main reason for limited market access, cited by 82% of those unable to access markets. Respondents are increasingly buying cheaper and less preferred foods and in smaller quantities than usual.
- **One in five respondents have received some form of government support in the past.** Cash transfers, income support and social security were most common support received. However, no respondents were still receiving assistance at the time of the survey.
- **Differences in impacts are most pronounced when comparing income groups.** Households with reported below and well below average incomes show the poorest results on all key metrics of well-being and are at risk of further falling behind economically.
- **Persons with disability and indigenous people are facing additional unique challenges because of the cost of living crisis.** Both groups have highlighted that their mobility has decreased due to higher transport costs, severely restricting their access to health and other essential services when needed. High costs of livelihood inputs and recent weather events have also put additional stress on the indigenous farming communities.

BELIZE Summary | February 2023

All respondents

Comparison with the February 2022 survey round is not included because of the low number of responses from Belize.



Respondents with below and well below average perceived income

Comparison with the February 2022 survey round is not included because of the low number of responses from Belize. Information on income level was not collected in April 2020.

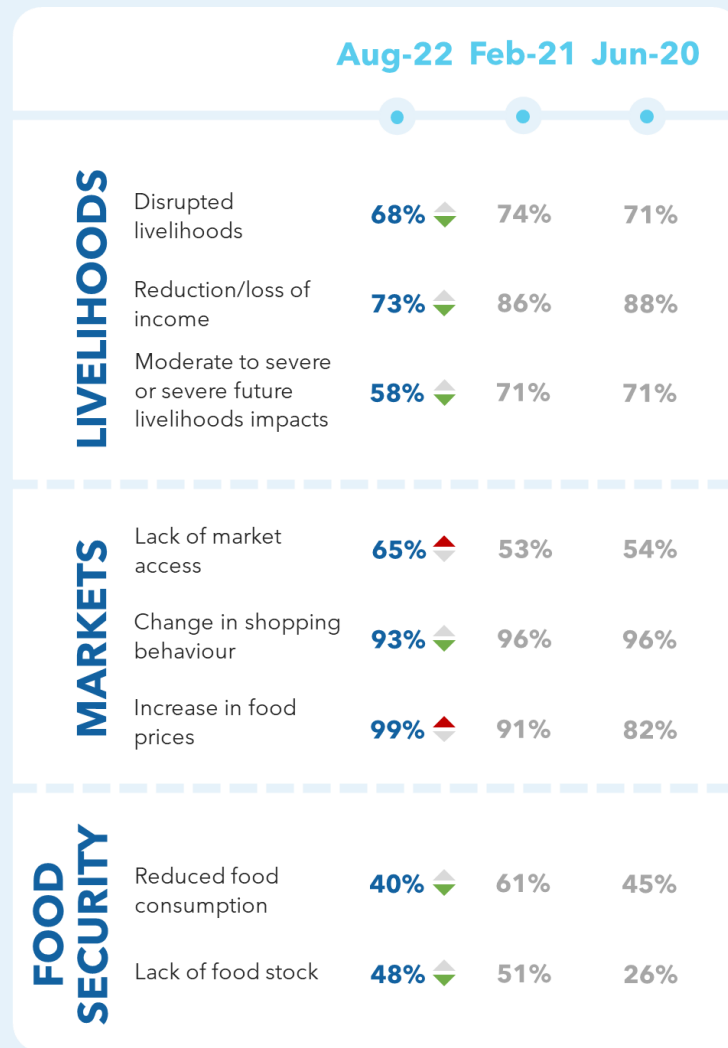


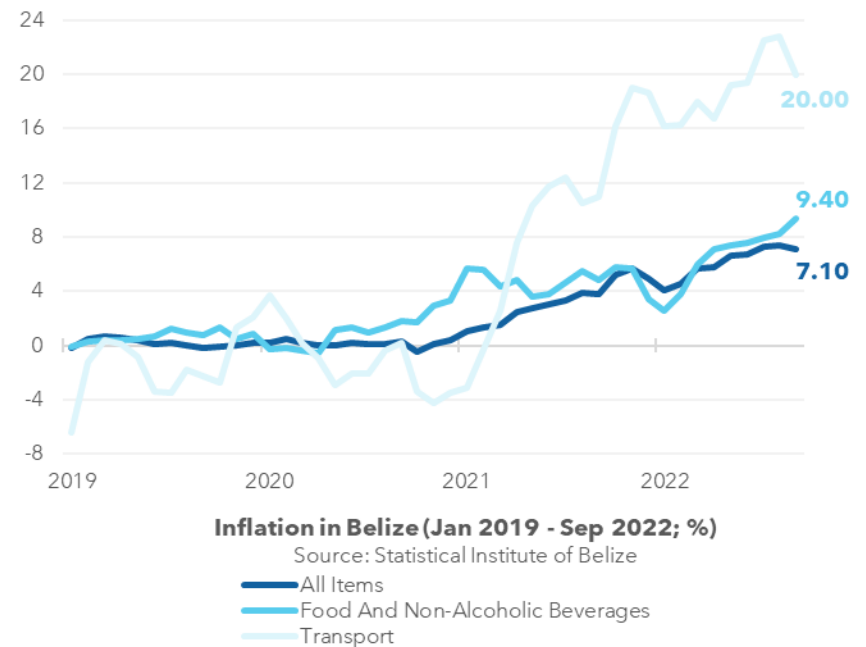
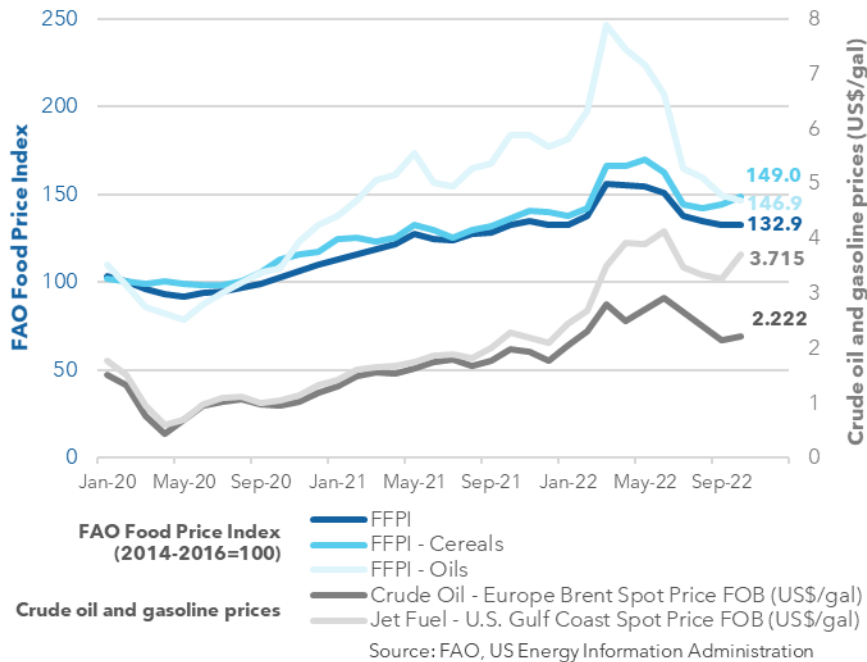
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. <u>Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey</u>	1
2. <u>Summary</u>	2
3. <u>Context: Cost of living crisis</u>	6
4. <u>Findings</u>	12
a. <u>Demographics of respondents</u>	12
b. <u>Insights on labour force</u>	14
c. <u>Impacts on livelihoods</u>	15
d. <u>Impacts on markets</u>	31
e. <u>Impacts on food security</u>	44
f. <u>Wider impacts</u>	55
g. <u>Special focus: Impacts on persons with disability</u>	65
h. <u>Special focus: Impacts on indigenous groups</u>	67
5. <u>Conclusion and recommendations</u>	69
6. <u>Methodology and acknowledgements</u>	71
7. <u>Calculation of food insecurity estimates</u>	73

Context | Cost of living crisis

According to FAO's Food Price Index, global food prices have increased sharply since the onset of the conflict, reaching a new all-time high in February 2022, and taking another giant leap in March 2022. This has affected local food prices which has negatively impacted access to food. On average, food inflation in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean has risen by 10.2% across 20 countries in March 2022. Belize's negative balance of trade makes it vulnerable to price fluctuations and supply chain shocks in international markets, which may translate to inflationary pressure domestically. In Belize, food inflation has sharply increased, reaching 9.4% in September 2022, even though FAO's Food Price Index indicated a slight decrease in global food prices in May 2022. Due to this, essential food purchases are becoming unaffordable for many in Belize (see [page 42](#)).

Similarly, crude oil prices have steadily increased since 2020 globally, reaching an all-time high in June 2022. By fuelling local inflation, increasing costs of imported energy reduce purchasing power and poorer household's access to food. Energy price dynamics affect food prices through various channels. Fuel is an important input for agricultural production and food processing, meaning increasing fuel prices impact the cost of produce and food. Higher fuel prices also increase transport costs, which can further add to the upward pressure on the cost of importing food or of local food that needs to be transported to markets. The Statistical Institute of Belize reported a 20% inflation rate in transportation costs in September 2022, which translates to higher imported as well as local food prices. The majority of respondents in Belize have all reported significant increases in food, gas, transportation, and other fuel prices (see [page 42](#)).



Context | Cost of living crisis

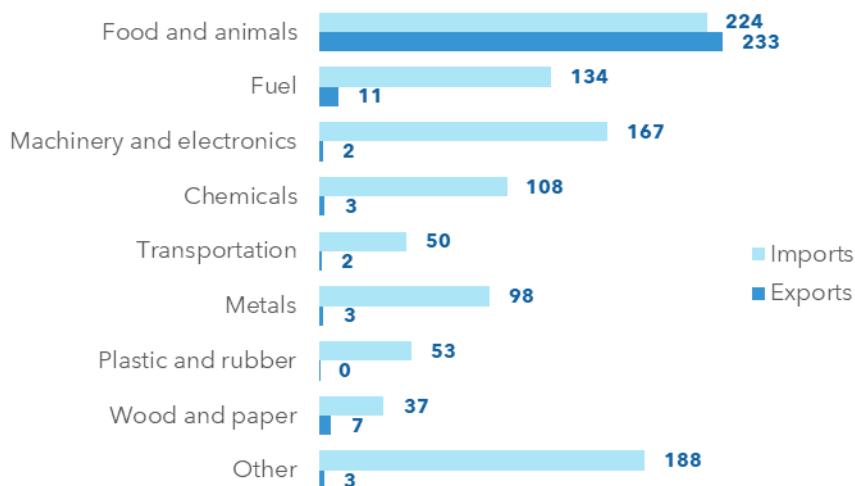
Belize, like most economies of the Caribbean, is a net importer of commodities. In 2021, overall imports were valued US\$ 1.06 billion and were four times the value of exports, which amounted to US\$ 0.26 billion. Compared to most other countries in the Caribbean, Belize is a net exporter of food, however this is largely due to the sugar exports (29% of all exports are sugar-related goods). Sugar and fruits are the most important export goods and contributed to 47% of overall export value and 53% of all food and animal exports in 2021. This corresponds to the top three agriculture products in Belize for 2020 that were sugar cane, oranges and bananas. The main export partners of Belize are the United Kingdom (23% of all exports) and the United States (22%).

Belize relies heavily on imports for foods, fuel, machinery and electronics, chemicals and metals. The United States, China, Mexico and Guatemala remain the primary source markets for the importation of commodities in Belize.

Mineral fuels are the most significant import product in Belize (followed by machinery and electronics) which contributed to 13% of the overall import value. More than half of the fuel was imported from the United States (57%) and another third from Guatemala (30%). Direct imports from Russia or Ukraine in Belize were almost non-existent or insignificant - however, Belize imported some of its fertilizer from Russia in 2021 (less than 1% of all fertilizer imports).

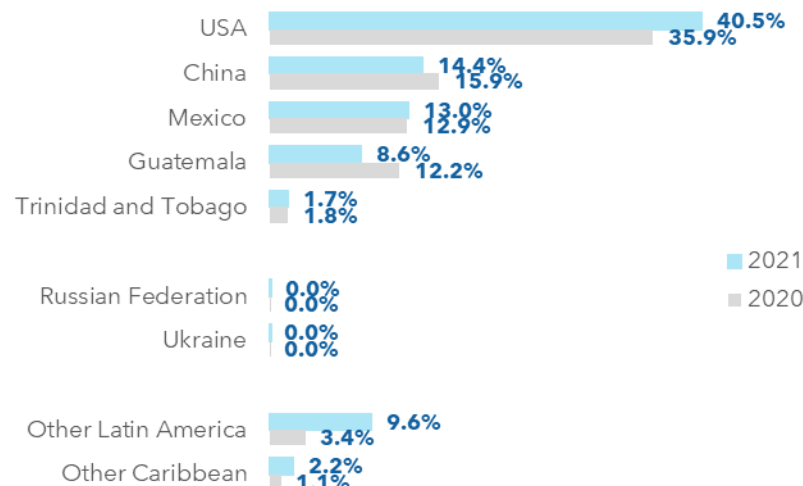
The COVID-19 pandemic with its restrictions challenged the access to markets and food, and the socio-economic fallout from the pandemic made it harder for people to have enough purchasing power to cope with the cost of living crisis, which is now forcing many to resort to negative food-related coping mechanisms (see [page 46](#)). Belize has announced increases in its overall spending in the new fiscal year to cope with these challenges. However, financing for public services such as health, education or social protection may be at risk from cuts as a consequence of the cost of living crisis.

Share of Belize commodity trade in million US\$ (2021), by product group



Data source: UN Comtrade Database

Top 5 import partners for Belize based on US\$ value (all commodities)



Data source: UN Comtrade Database

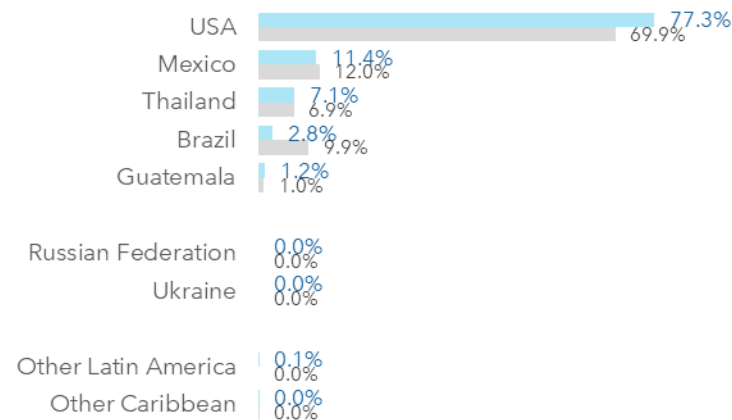
Context | Cost of living crisis

Top 5 import sources for Belize in 2021 and 2020 based on US\$ value, by import share and selected commodities (HS classification standard)

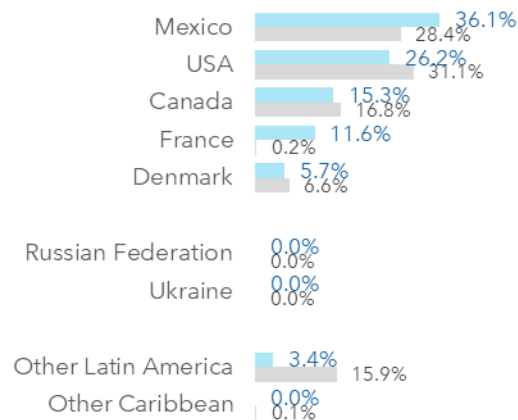
Data source: UN Comtrade Database

■ 2021
■ 2020

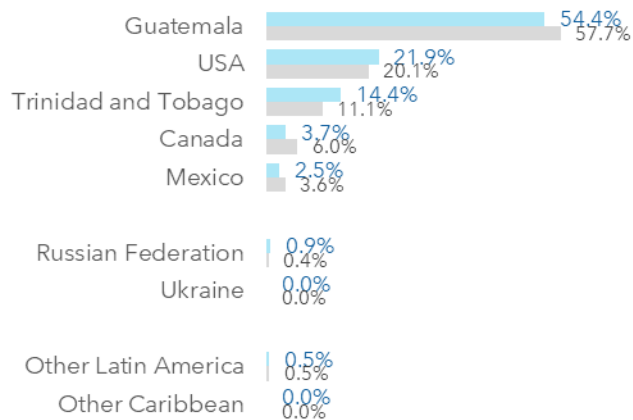
Cereals - HS10



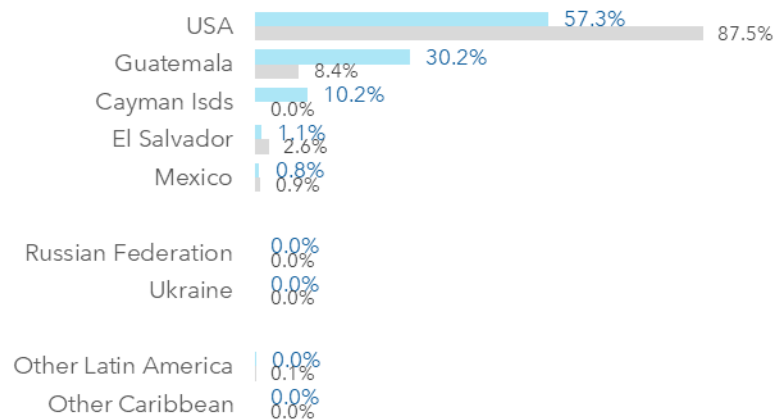
Milled products - HS11



Fertilizer - HS31



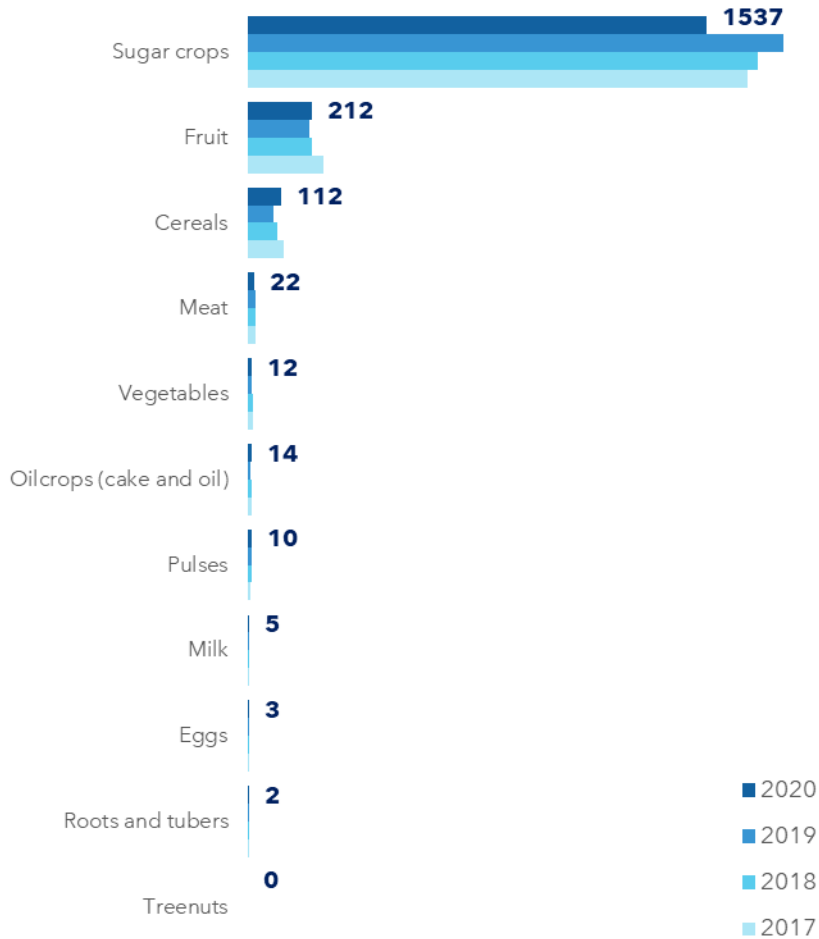
Fuels - HS27



Context | Cost of living crisis

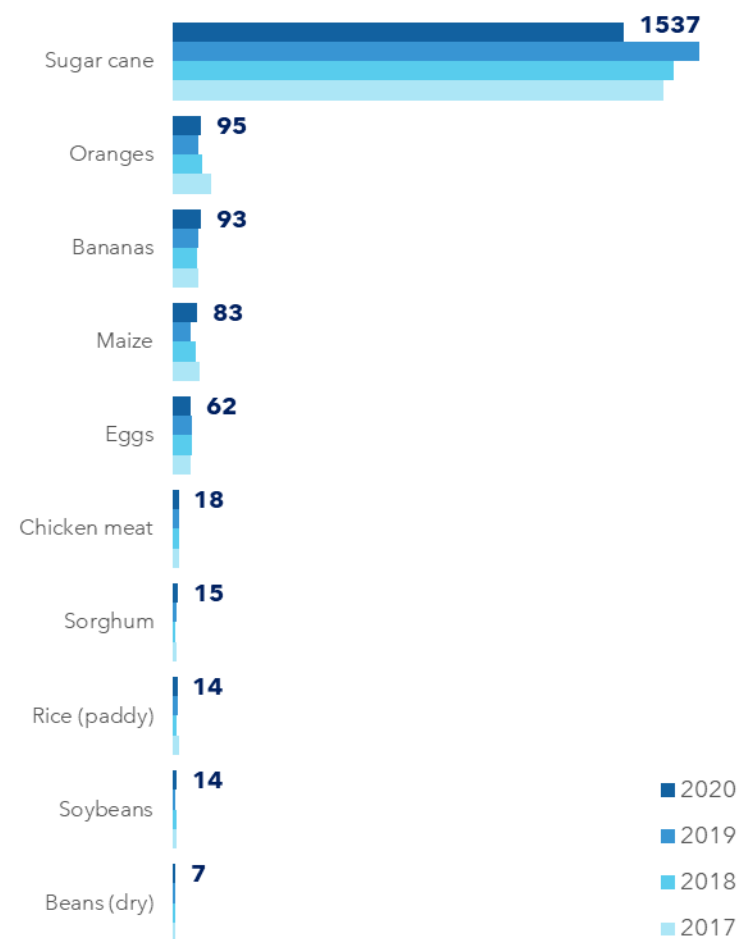
Primary agriculture production (1000 tonnes) in Belize displayed for 2020, by commodity group

Source: FAOSTAT



Top 10 primary agriculture products (1000 tonnes) in Belize displayed for 2020

Source: FAOSTAT



Context | Trade system in Belize

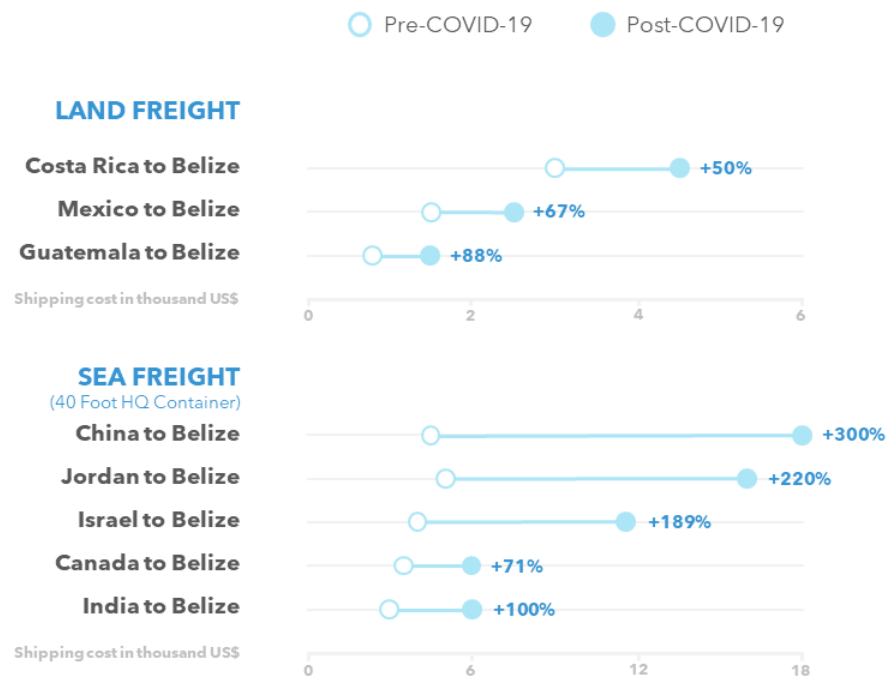
- ▶ The rising cost of imports relative to exports is a major reason of declining gross domestic product (GDP) per capita by purchasing power parity (PPP).

Approximately 21% of all food is imported amounting to US\$ 220 million in 2020. The second largest import is fuel, amounting to US\$ 135 million in 2021. Domestic production accounts for approximately 13% of GDP and a whopping 80% of exports, primarily sugar, molasses, and citrus ([see also page 9](#)). Since 1984, various forms of price controls have been instituted on many imported and essential goods. Sugar, bread, flour, red beans, rice, and fuels (transport and cooking) are all strictly price-controlled at the retail level. Another 200 or so primarily imported goods have maximum wholesale and retailer markups. These controls are strictly enforced by the Belize Bureau of Standards.

For imported goods, Belize Customs and Exercise (BCED) closely regulates imports into the country using an UNCTAD-developed system known as ASCYUDA. Nonetheless, significant uncontrolled trade does occur with Guatemala. Tariffs collected by BCED comprise over 50% of government revenue. The cost of land and sea freight has increased dramatically since COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis, which adds to the overall costs of imported goods.

Supply chains in Belize are generally quite short and contained, with usually just a single aggregator or wholesaler between importers and producers and retail vendors. The country's largest importer and wholesaler for agri-food commodities is the *Belize Marketing Development Corporation* (BMDC). BMDC is also a government-sponsored enterprise under MAFSE, working closely to ensure food availability and de-facto minimum support prices for farmers in the face of seasonal swings in production.

Pre- and post-COVID-19 pricing of selected items and services

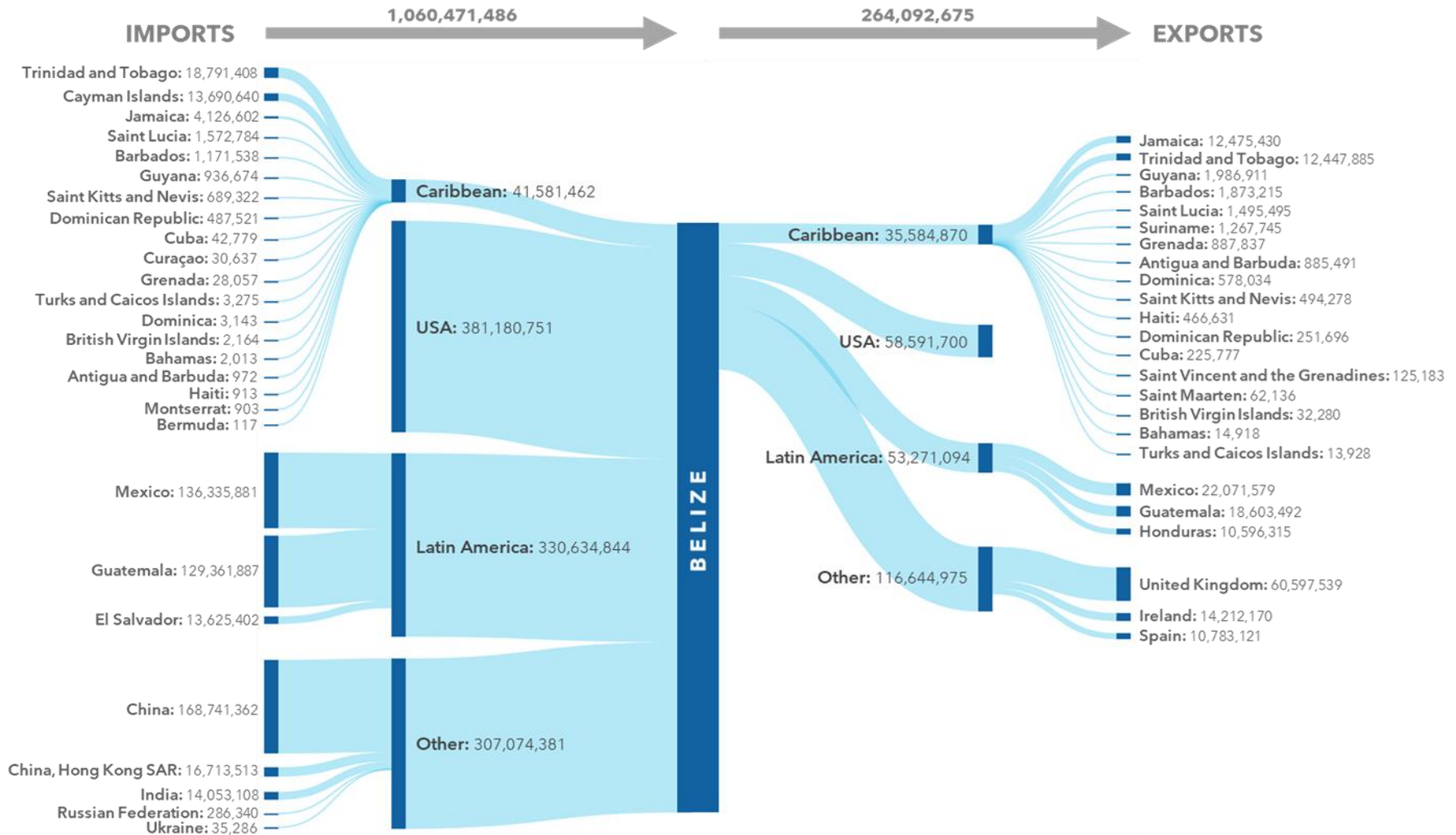


Source: Unpublished data from Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise (MAFSE, 2022).

Context | Belize trade flows

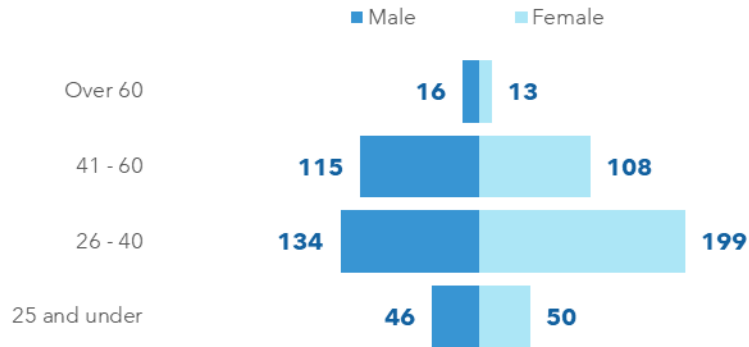
Import and export of all commodities in Belize in 2021, based on US\$ value

All values are in USD. Source: UN Comtrade



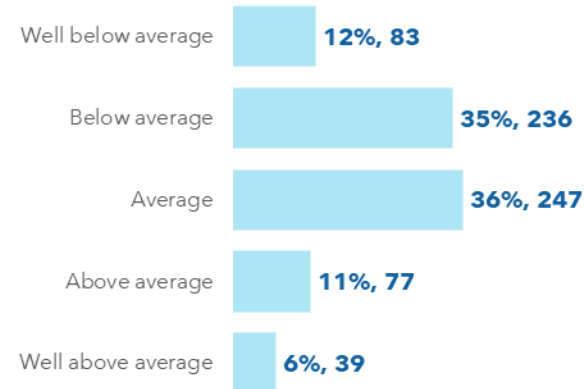
RESPONDENTS | Demographics

Age and sex

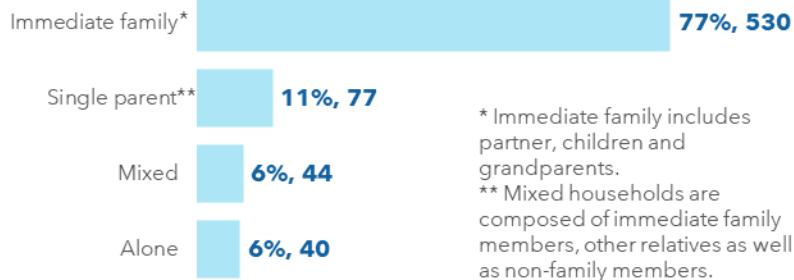


Perceived income levels

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



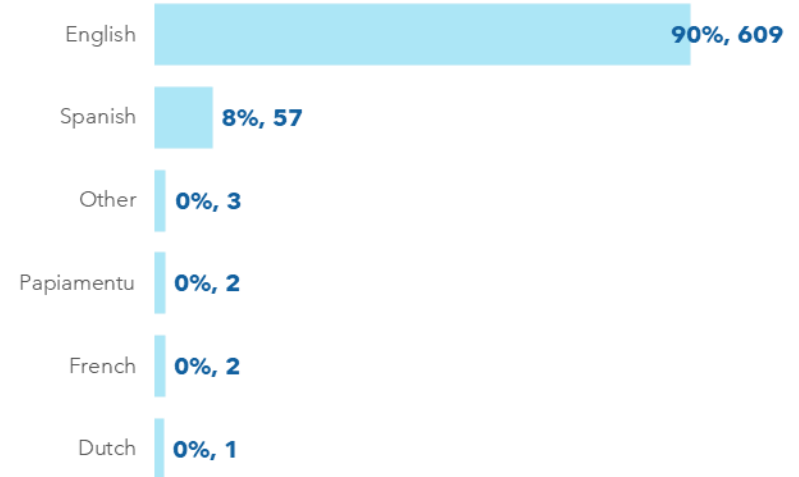
Household composition



Urban/rural location



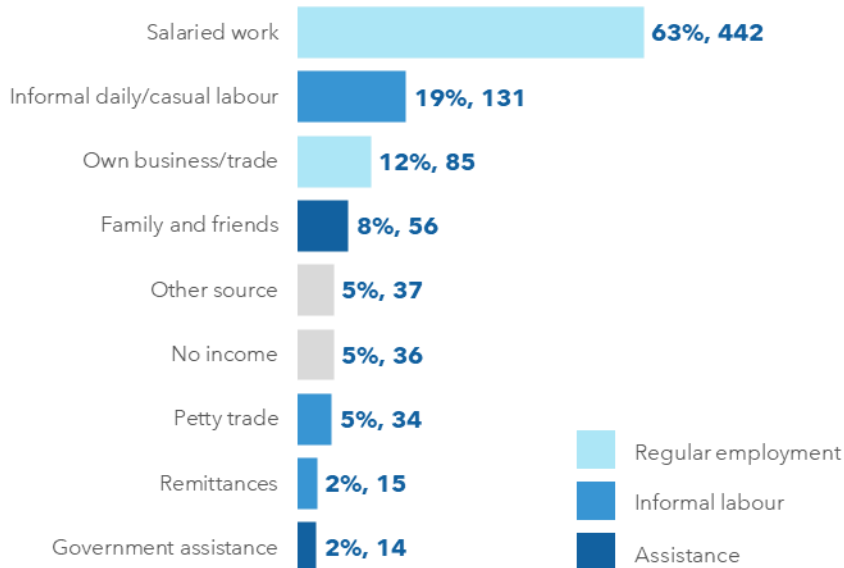
Language



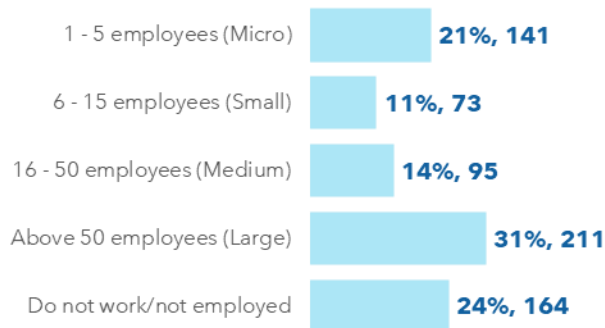
RESPONDENTS | Demographics

Main income sources

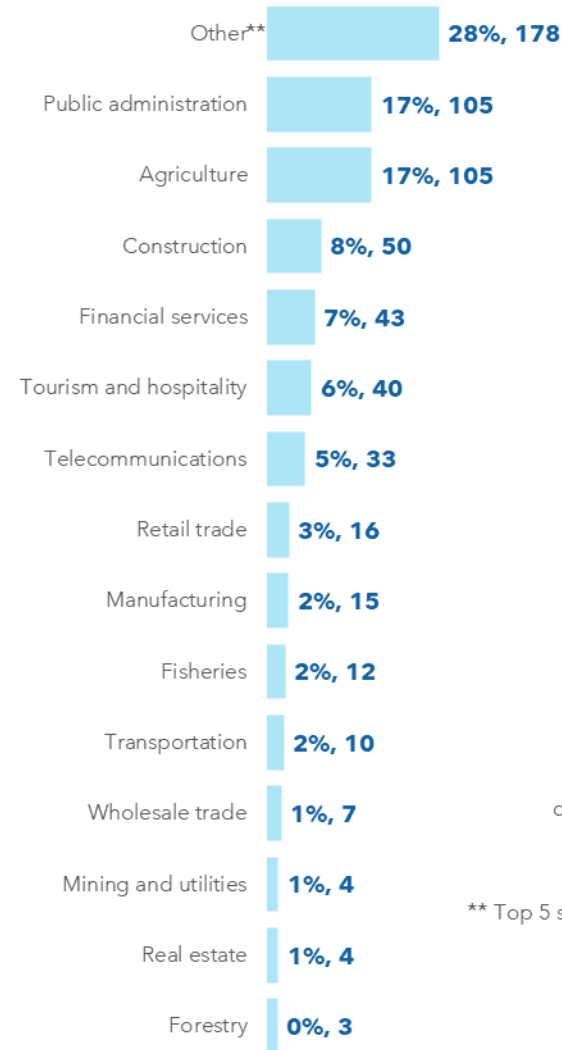
Respondents were asked to indicate the main income source(s) for their household. Multiple choices could be selected.



Size of employment business or organisation



Main income sector*



* The percentages were calculated for the respondents that indicated having an income.

** Top 5 sectors chosen under "Other":
Education, teaching
Government, ministry
Health, medicine
Pension, retired
Security, enforcement

INSIGHTS | Labour force

According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) published in November 2021, the labour force, which consists of employed and unemployed persons, was estimated at 191,881, representing a net increase of 13.8% or 23,251 persons since September 2020. Almost two-thirds (62.4%) of the new entrants to the labour force were from the Belize and Cayo districts, and the majority (60%) were males. The number of persons in informal employment was estimated at 72,433 in September 2021. Preliminary results from the Statistical Institute of Belize's September 2021 Labour Force Survey showed that the national unemployment rate declined from 13.7% in September 2020 to 9.2% in September 2021, as major industries such as 'Tourism' gradually recover from the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Youth (14 to 24 years) continued to experience the highest rate of unemployment at 18.6%, although this was down from the 23.0% seen a year ago.

The September 2021 Labour Force Survey also estimated that 11,834 persons had been without a job since March 2020 due to layoffs or businesses closing down as a result of COVID-19. This number was down considerably from the 34,381 persons reported in September 2020. The 'Tourism' industry continued to be the most affected, with a third of those persons who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic stating that they previously worked in this industry.

In September 2021, an estimated 118,161 persons or 38.1% of the working-age population were classified as being outside the labour force. About 18% of this subgroup, or 21,737 persons, formed the potential labour force. These were persons who were either (a) looking for a job but not available or were (b) available but not looking for a job. About 95% of persons in the potential labour force reported that they were available to work but were not actively looking for a job.

**Main Labour Force Indicators
(September 2021)**

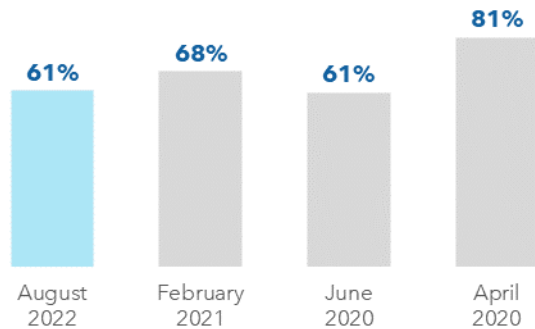
	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Total population	432,516	216,257	216,259
Working age population	310,042	151,853	158,188
Employed	56%	71%	42%
Unemployed	6%	5%	6%
Persons not in labour force	38%	24%	52%
Unemployment rate	9%	7%	13%
Labour force participation rate	62%	76%	48%

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, Labour Force Survey, September 2021.

LIVELIHOODS | Disruptions to livelihoods

- ▶ Impacts to livelihoods remain widespread, with over half of respondents reporting disruptions.

Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 2 weeks prior to the survey



"It's has impact me of losing my job. And sometimes i don't have money to buy want i needed. But I'm glad if things change it would be grateful. And thank God." - Female, 24, Belize

"Mother lost her job and I became the sole breadwinner of the household." - Female, 22, Belize

"I lost my business and had to go get a regular job." - Male, 39, Belize

"Less income to pay no one has a full time job" - Female, 36, Belize

The combined impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis are disrupting livelihoods. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (61%) reported that their ability to pursue their livelihood was compromised in the two weeks prior to the survey. This proportion has decreased slightly from February 2021 (68%) but remains very similar to June 2020 (61%). Compared to the regional survey average (55%), livelihood disruptions appear more widespread in Belize.

Most impacted by livelihood constraints in Belize were households with below or well below average income levels (68%), compared to the higher income households (55% of average and 53% of above or well above average income households). Correspondingly, those relying on assistance (67%) or informal labour (65%) were also more widely affected compared to respondents deriving their income from regular employment (58%). In addition, there are differences in livelihood disruptions between respondents living in rural and urban areas, with those living in villages (65%) and engaging in agriculture (64%) being more affected by livelihood disruptions compared to those living in cities (58%) and working in public administration (51%).

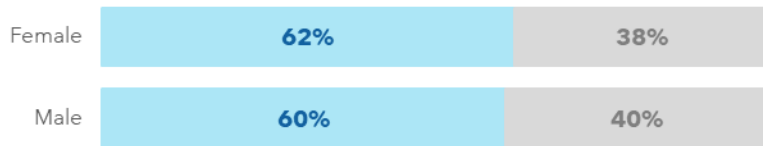
Less stark differences were observed among age and sex groups, with both female and male respondents indicated similarly often the disruptions to their livelihoods (62% of women and 60% of men).

LIVELIHOODS | Disruptions to livelihoods

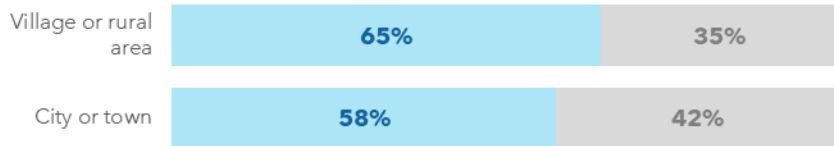
Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 2 weeks prior to the survey

■ yes ■ no

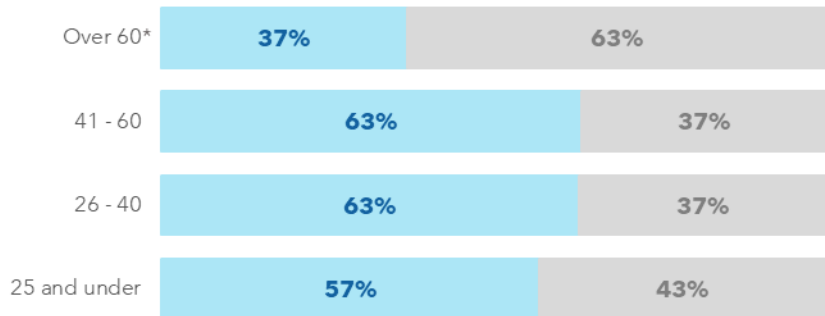
By sex



By urban/rural location

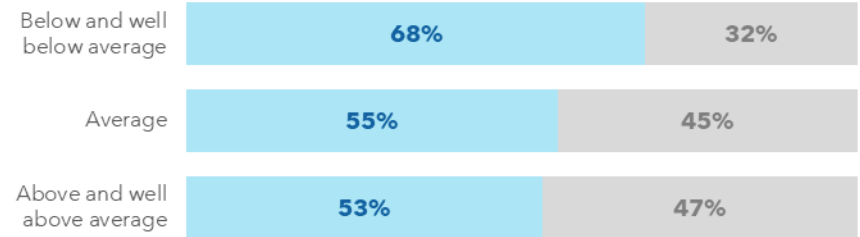


By age group

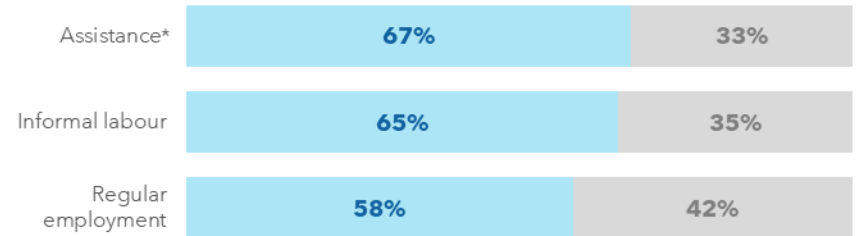


* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By perceived income level



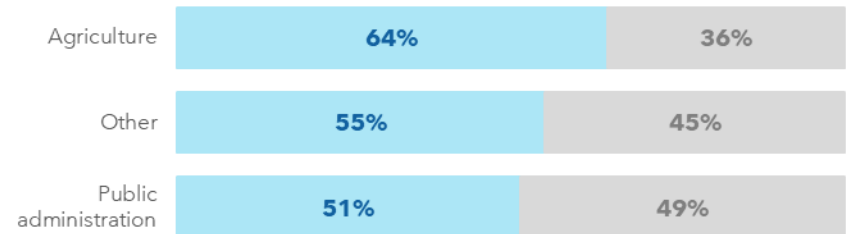
By income sources



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By income sector

Results are presented only for income sectors that received at least 100 responses.



LIVELIHOODS | Reasons for livelihood disruptions

- ▶ The unaffordability of livelihood inputs became the main factor behind livelihood disruptions, affecting mainly lower-income households.

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

	Aug-22	Feb-21	Jun-20	Apr-20
Livelihoods inputs are too expensive	63%	26%	31%	17%
Transport limitations	24%	15%	26%	32%
Increased demand for goods/services	21%	5%	7%	16%
Reduced demand for goods/services	16%	20%	20%	19%
Concerned about leaving the house due to outbreak	11%	40%	26%	20%
Movement restrictions	9%	48%	43%	59%
Other	6%	6%	15%	13%
Adult members of the household are unwell	6%	6%	5%	0%
Livelihoods inputs are unavailable	6%	6%	9%	12%
No market to sell products	5%	5%	11%	11%

Higher prices are posing a real obstacle to people's livelihoods. The main driver behind livelihood disruptions in Belize in the two weeks prior to the August 2022 survey was the unaffordability or inaccessibility of livelihood inputs (reported by 63% of those that experienced livelihood disruptions). This factor has grown in importance compared to the previous survey rounds and is linked to wider trends related to supply chain disruptions and price rises in the Caribbean. A similar trend was observed in the regional level survey results.

Most impacted by unaffordability of livelihood inputs in Belize are households with average and below or well below average income levels (63% and 66% of those facing disruptions) and those relying primarily on assistance (72%) or engaging in informal/casual sources of income (68%). However, no significant differences in this impact was observed across sex and location of respondents.

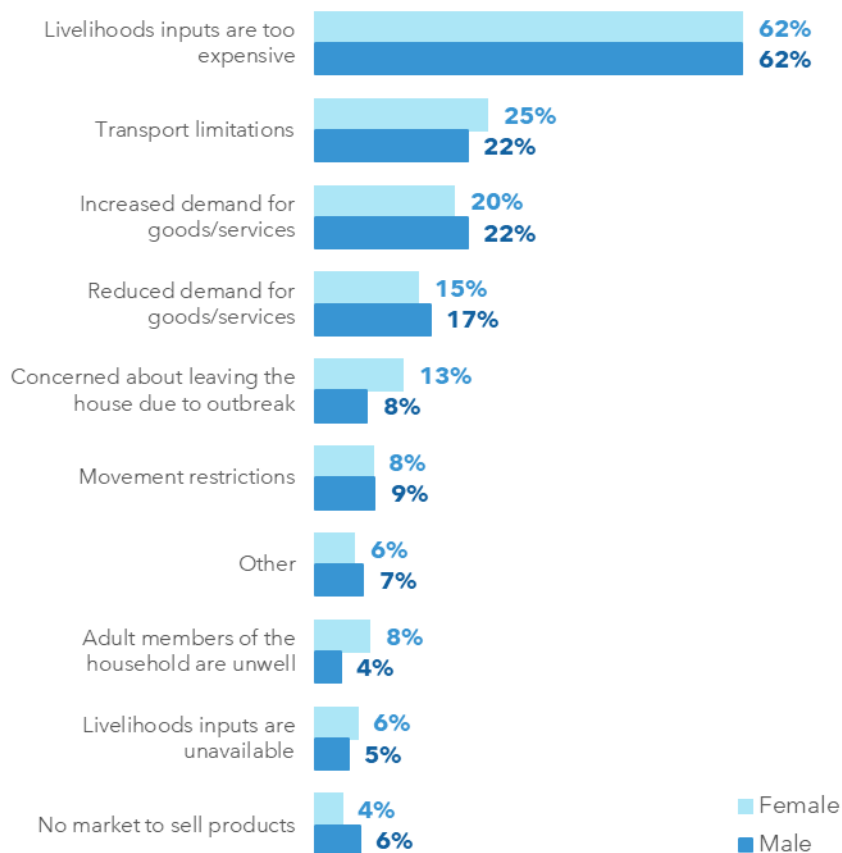
Concerns about leaving the house due to the outbreak and movement restrictions are declining in importance as disruptive factors, and are impacting significantly fewer respondents compared to the earlier phases of the pandemic. At the same time, transport limitations and reduced demand for goods and services continue to affect around one fifth of those who reported disruptions. However, increased demand for goods and services has notably grown as a reason for disruptions, particularly among those relying on assistance (33%) and those aged 25 and under (38%).

LIVELIHOODS | Reasons for livelihood disruptions

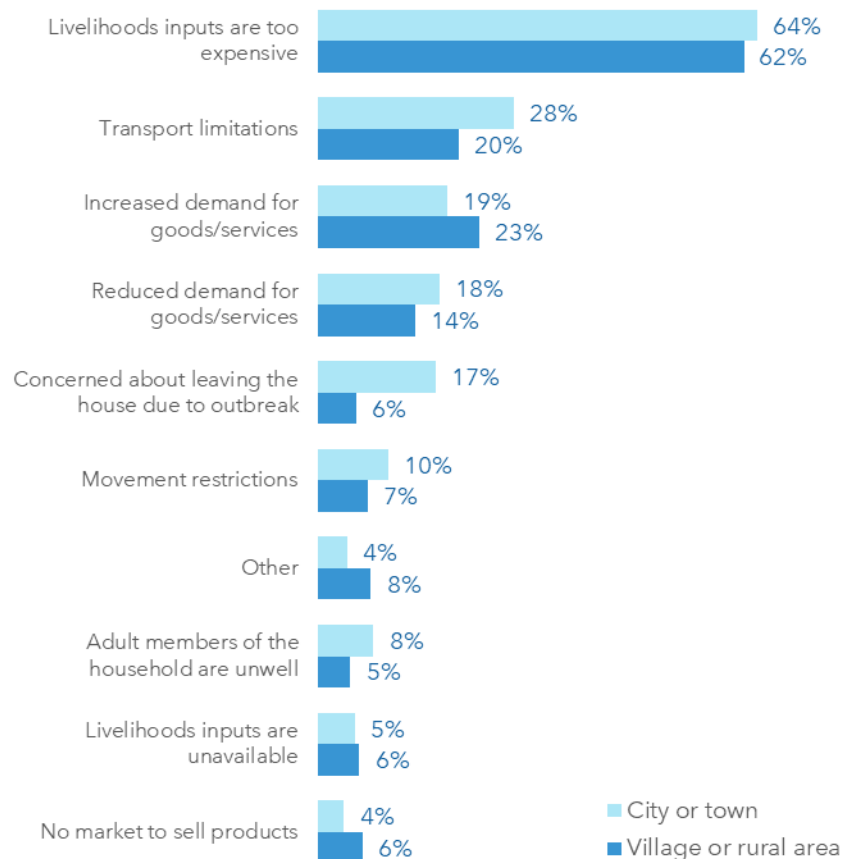
For those that reported livelihood disruptions, the main reasons were...

Multiple choices could be selected.

By sex



By urban/rural location

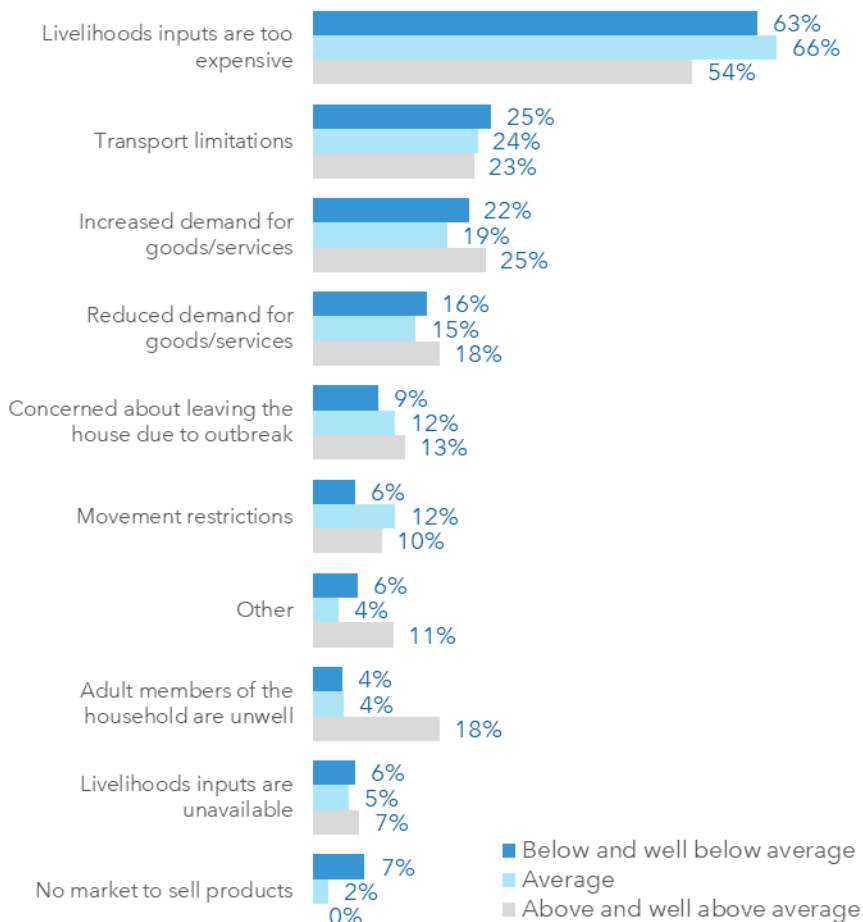


LIVELIHOODS | Reasons for livelihood disruptions

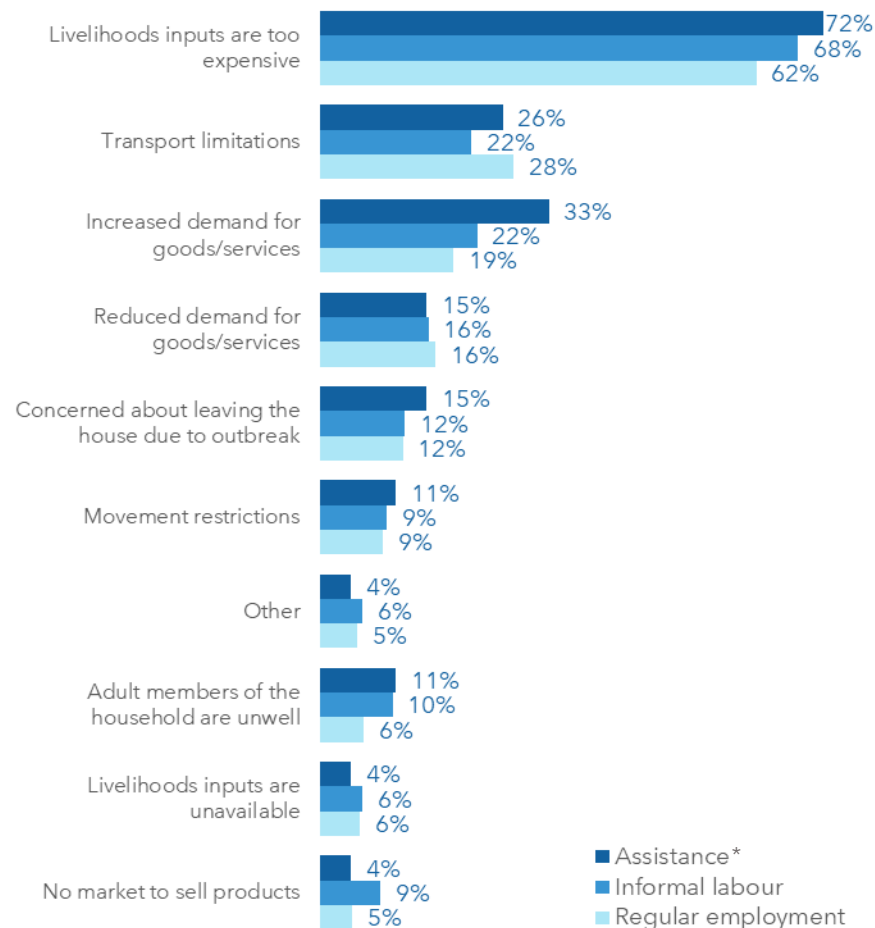
For those that reported livelihood disruptions, the main reasons were...

Multiple choices could be selected.

By perceived income level



By main income source

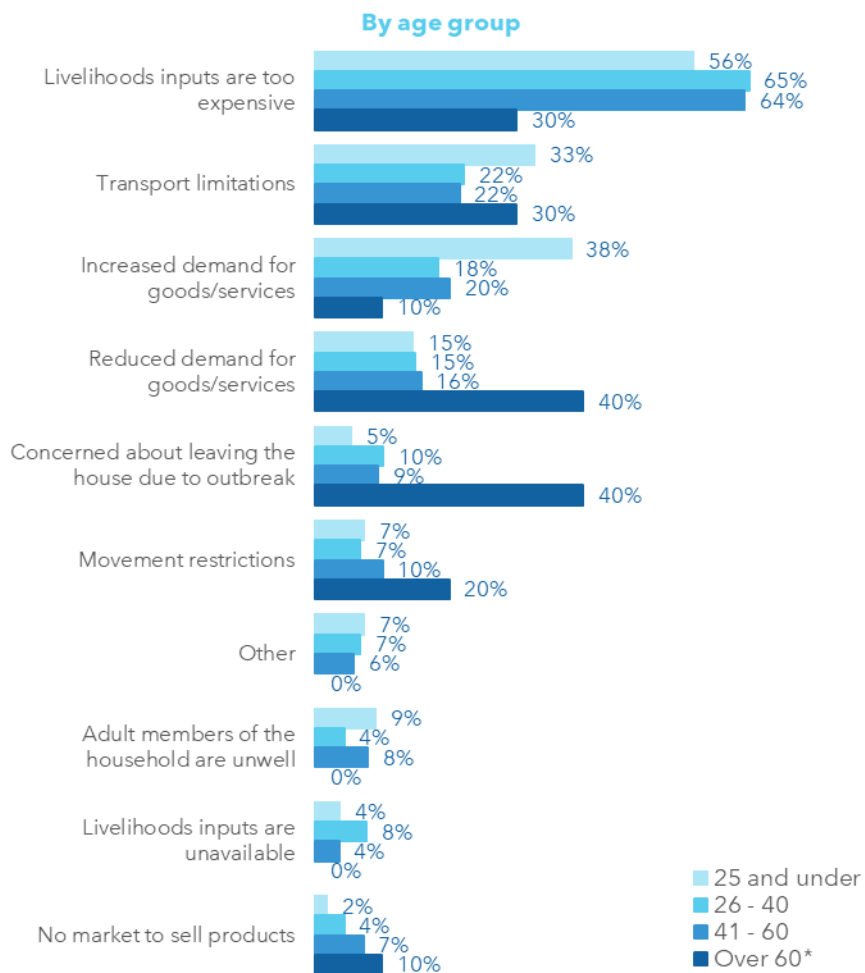


* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

LIVELIHOODS | Reasons for livelihood disruptions

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

Multiple choices could be selected.



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

"Construction work is hard to find in these days. I haven't gotten enough job opportunities to provide for my family.. 2 male and 2 female and my partner." - Female, 25, Belize

"My biggest challenge was coping with loss in salary and managing finances." - Female, 33, Belize

"It's been hard since everything started going up and harder to find a steady job as well" - Female, 24, Belize

"Loose the job that I love to do. Later find the only job I can for far cheaper wage that did not adequately address my need to buy food and pay bills." - Male, 56, Belize

"I had lost my job due to covid 19 and had provide less food to my family..i would really need a assistance to help my family" - Male, 25, Belize

"Loss my job, loss my health, no savings . but I plant some agriculture like corn, beans ,and vegetables and I am just getting over the impact that COVID-19 cause me." - Male, 48, Belize

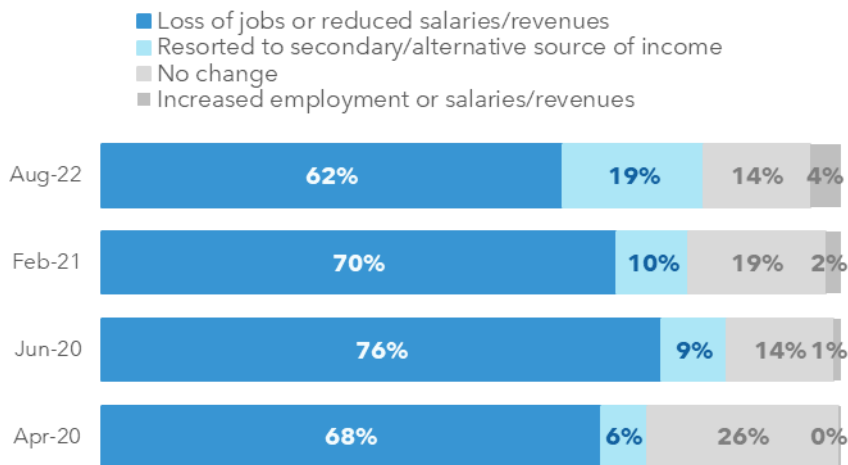
"Lost my job and health issues" - Female, 38, Belize

"It's not an easy journey for me and my family for I have 4 kids my husband plus myself, my husband lost his job the only means of income is from me which is not much but I try my best to do the most important things with it" - Female, 40, Belize

LIVELIHOODS | Impacts on income

- ▶ Almost two thirds of respondents have faced job loss or income reduction in their households. Additionally, respondents are also increasingly resorting to secondary sources of income.

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



"I live in an island and the most source of income is tourism. Due to COVID-19 tourists are not coming as much and investing in the Island and job have become less." - Male, 32, Belize

"COVID19 has affected as a fisherman and lobster diver, the cooperative who buys lobster from us claims that the demand for lobster has fallen due to the pandemic hence the reason they had to pay us less per lb of lobster . The rise in price for gas and equipment so we spend more and earn less" - Male, 26, Belize

Impacts on income continue to be widespread in Belize, with 62% of respondents reporting that their household has experienced job loss or reduced salaries in the last year. While this proportion has been declining since June 2020, the percentage of respondents resorting to secondary or alternative source of income has been increasing, suggesting the continuation of economic hardship. While the overall trends are similar to those in the region, more respondents in Belize experienced job loss or reduced salaries than the regional average (54%).

The starkest differences in responses were observed across perceived income levels. Job loss or reduced income was reported by the vast majority of respondents describing their household income as below or well below average (73%), compared to half of those with average (55%) and above or well above average (50%) income levels.

Important differences were also observed across income sectors and by sex. Job and income loss in households was widely reported by female respondents (67%) compared to males (58%). Households deriving their income mainly from the employment in the public administration also more often reported job and income loss in their household (73%) compared to those deriving their income from agriculture (63%) or other sectors (56%). However, those deriving their main income from agriculture were more likely to resort to secondary or alternative income sources (23%) compared to public administration sector (13%).

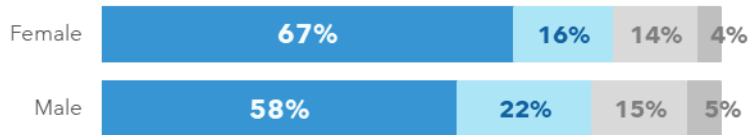
Less significant differences were observed across urban/rural location or income sources.

LIVELIHOODS | Impacts on income

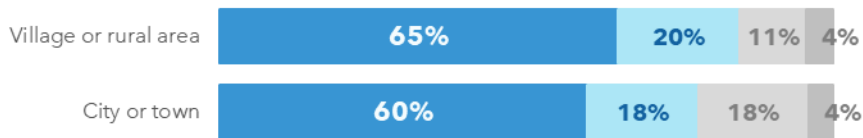
Has your household income changed since the COVID-19 outbreak?

- Loss of jobs or reduced salaries/revenues
- Resorted to secondary/alternative source of income
- No change
- Increased employment or salaries/revenues

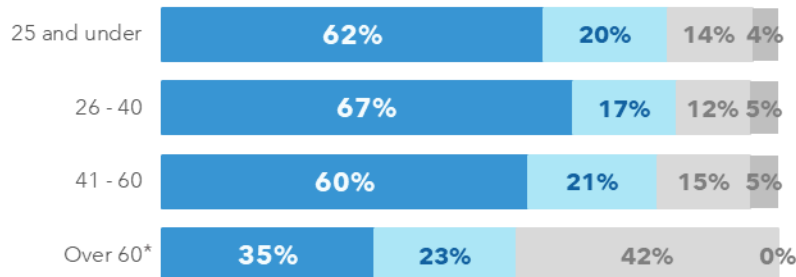
By sex



By urban/rural location

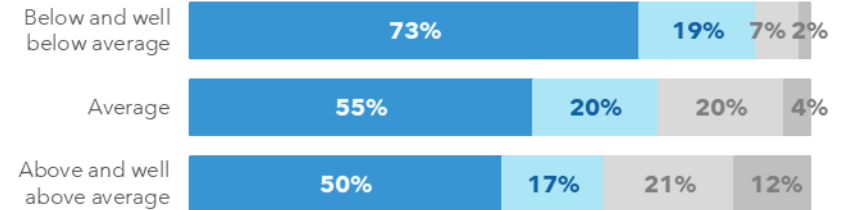


By age group

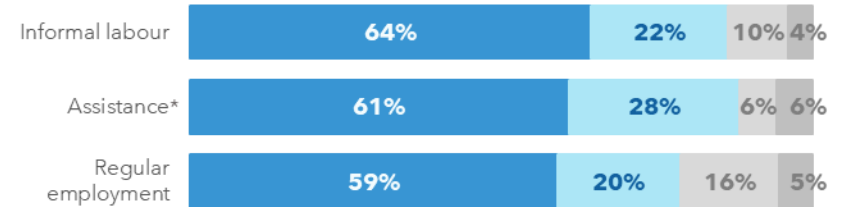


* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By perceived income level



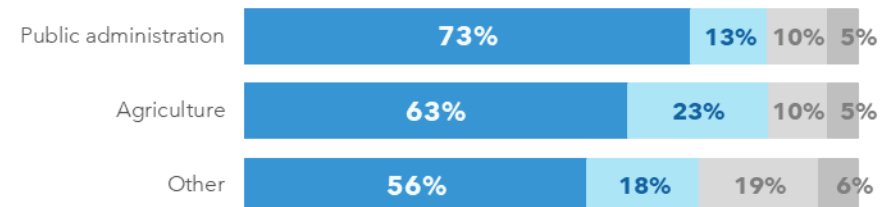
By income sources



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By income sector

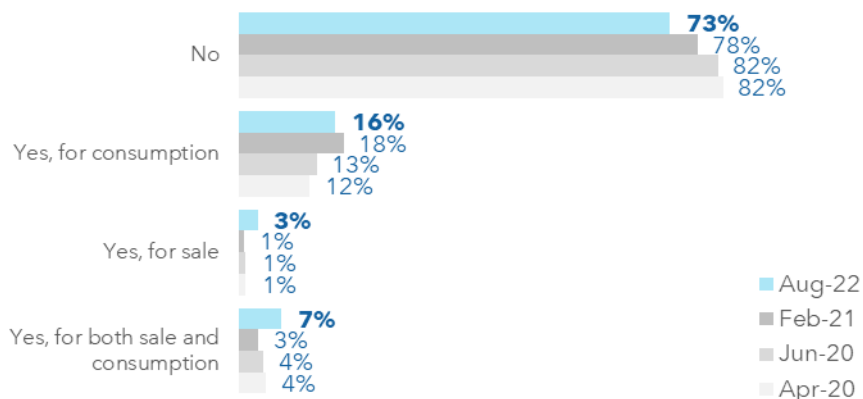
Results are presented only for income sectors that received at least 100 responses.



LIVELIHOODS | Farming

- ▶ Over one in four respondents are engaged in farming or livestock raising, with a large majority reporting price increases in livelihood inputs.

Is your households engaged in farming/livestock raising?



For those engaging in agriculture/ livestock raising, the activities are...
Multiple choices could be selected.

	Aug-22	Feb-21	Jun-20	Apr-20
Poultry	59%	46%	51%	57%
Banana/plantains	54%	46%	45%	42%
Vegetables	53%	74%	69%	56%
Corn	47%	28%	37%	34%
Rice	21%	13%	18%	23%
Large ruminants	21%	15%	16%	16%
Small ruminants	19%	22%	12%	15%
Swine	15%	17%	10%	7%
Other	15%	11%	18%	12%
Pulses	7%	7%	6%	3%

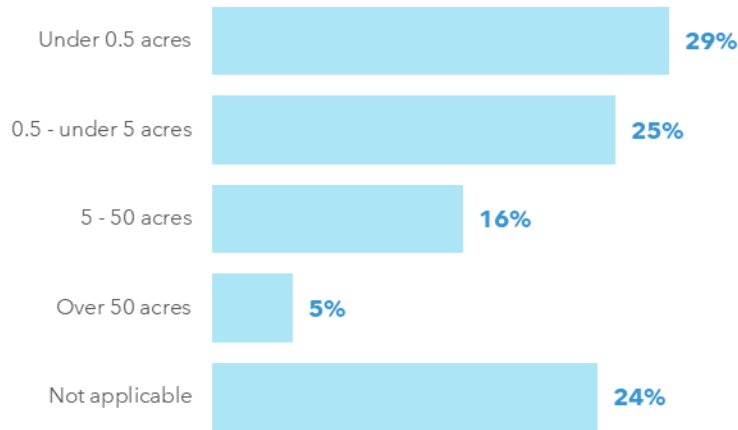
Over a quarter of respondents reported being engaged in farming, gardening or livestock raising. These activities are primarily for household consumption, with poultry farming and banana/plantains, vegetables and corn production being the main farming and livestock raising activities. Almost a third of respondents engaged in farming cultivate their crops on small plots of land (under 0.5 acres). More than two thirds of respondents engaging in farming or livestock raising derive their household income mainly from regular employment (69%), 29% derive their income from informal labour and 10% from assistance.

Female respondents more often reported that their households engaged in farming or livestock raising for their own consumptions (72%) than male respondents (55%). On the other hand, male respondent more often reported coming from household that engaged in these activities for sale or a combination of sale (16%) and own consumption (29%) compared to female respondents (6% and 22%). Respondents from wealthier households also more often engaged in farming and livestock raising for the purpose of sale (27%) than less wealthy groups (9%).

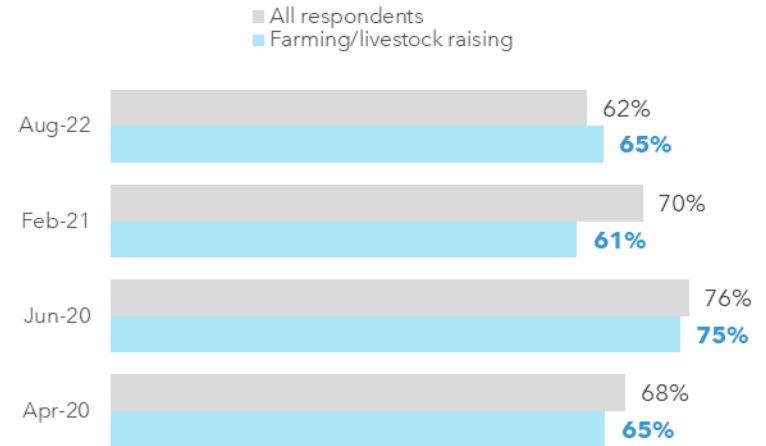
The majority of respondents engaged in farming and livestock raising noted increases or significant increases in the prices across all livelihood inputs. Over half of these respondents reported significant increases in fertilizer (65%) and animal feed (54%) prices in the six months prior to the survey. Nearly half of respondents also observed significant increases in the price of seeds (48%) and tools or machinery (45%). As a response to increasing prices, 13% of respondents that engaged in farming or livestock raising reported a decrease in the amount of fertilizer being used, 12% reduced the number of workers employed and 9% reduced the amount of animal feed used in the 6 months prior to the survey.

LIVELIHOODS | Farming

What is the size of land on which you cultivate crops?
For those that engage in agriculture/livestock raising



Loss of jobs or reduced salaries/revenues among respondents engaged in farming/livestock raising



"Honestly, growing your own produce are better now since covid has began. Food storage is the key." - Male, 21, Belize

"Food and fuel prices have increases thus the switch to farm grown foods have been made" - Female, 43, Belize

"Not being able to travel to my farm due to lock down at times and also the high cost of fuel does not allow you to travel as often as you would like." - Female, 41, Belize

"My small business depends on tourism so I started farming more when sales dropped off. I am now switching my business to be more about the resources I can produce on my farm" - Female, 49, Belize

Food situation among respondents engaged in farming/livestock raising

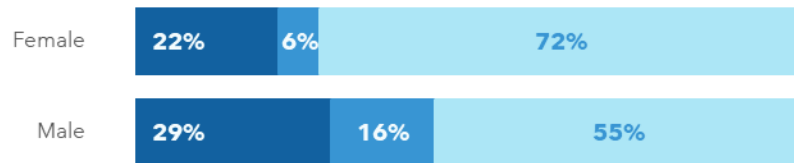


LIVELIHOODS | Farming

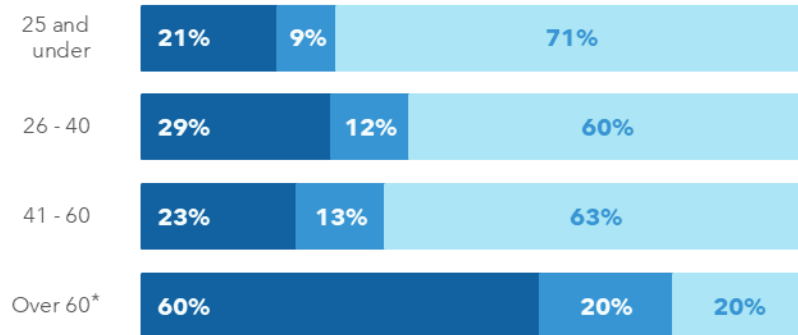
Households engaged in farming/livestock raising

- Yes, for both sale and consumption
- Yes, for sale
- Yes, for consumption

By sex

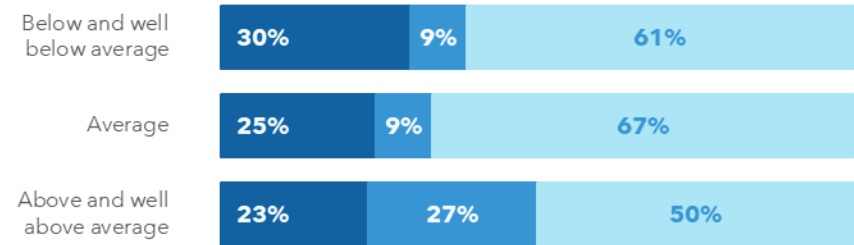


By age group



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By perceived income level



"Have to do my own farming to survive" - Male, 33, Belize

"Unable to do things that i love; i had to adapt to farming and hunting."
- Male, 23, Belize

"Covid did affect the livelihood as i am dependability of the tourism.
Spending less on unnecessary materials. Sustainable farming ." - Male,
37, Belize

"Farm labourers not available" - Male, 46, Belize

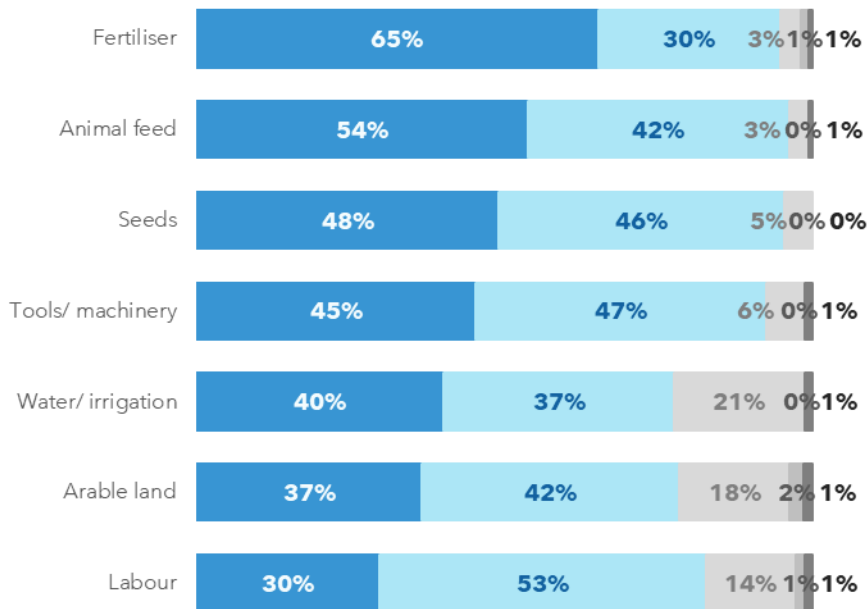
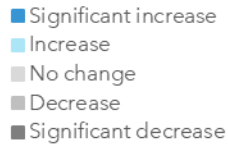
"Supply chain disruption. Need to buy goods, parts, fertilizers, etc,
couple months in advance." - Male, 29, Belize

LIVELIHOODS | Farming

Have you observed any change in the costs of the following agriculture inputs in the last 6 months?

For those that engage in agriculture/livestock raising

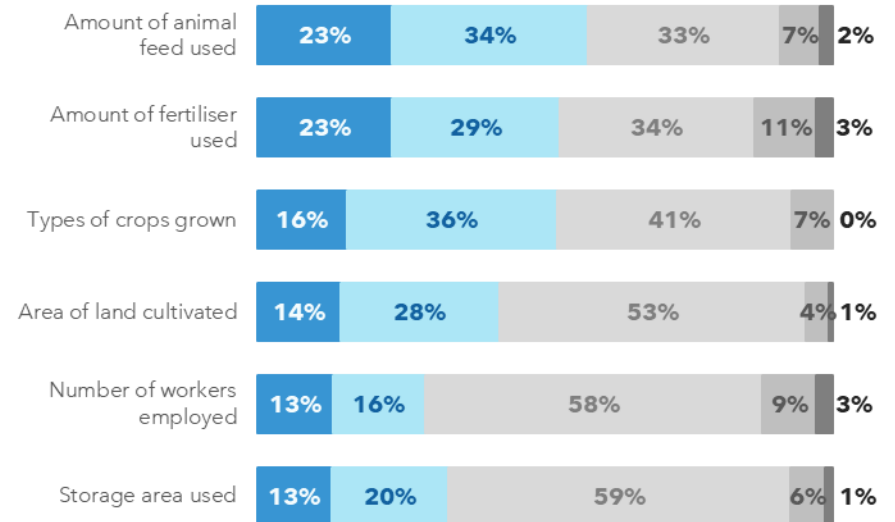
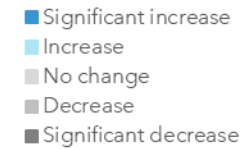
Percentages were calculated only for those respondents engaged in farming that responded to this question and did not select the "Not applicable" option.



Has any of the following aspects of farming/livestock raising changed for you in the last 6 months?

For those that engage in agriculture/livestock raising

Percentages were calculated only for those respondents engaged in farming that responded to this question and did not select the "Not applicable" option.



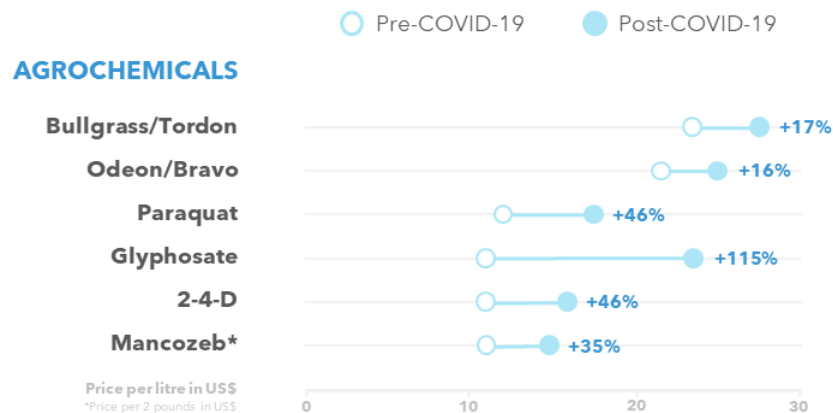
INSIGHTS | Impacts on agricultural systems

Agricultural systems are diversified in Belize with various farming practices across the country resulting in the use of different inputs, boding various risks and connections to markets. The impacts of the cost increases in livelihood inputs, transportation and energy is evident throughout the various crop and livestock phases from pre-planting, planting, harvesting, and bringing to market.

Pre-planting and preparation | Interviewees reported an increase in the cost of seeds due to a seed shortage in country during the pandemic. Many seeds need to be imported to Belize. For example, certified potato seeds for are mainly imported from Idaho, USA. Imported seeds also tend to require cold storage which increases energy costs in procuring private cold storage facilities. In addition, preparation of land results in extra fuel costs, especially for communities in Belize which practice semi mechanised farming. In contrast, those practicing more traditional methods, such as slash and burn, have been less affected by increasing fuel prices.

Planting and growing | During the growing season, maintenance of crops require chemicals for weed and pest control beside sustainable and organic farming methods practiced. The costs of agrochemicals has increased dramatically since COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis. Bio fertilizer is a recent substitution to curb the increasing costs of inputs for farmers. For example, subsistent farmers in Toledo already produce their own fertilizer from waste products and manure, which has tempered the impacts of the rising fertilizer costs. There have been numerous efforts to leverage technology in order to increase yield. For larger scale productions, methods such as fertigation (a combination of fertilizer and irrigation) are being deployed. Irrigation has higher energy demands as gas is required in order to pump water. Many systems risk being unoptimized, resulting in wastage along the chain and contributing to extra energy costs.

Pre- and post-COVID-19 pricing of selected items and services

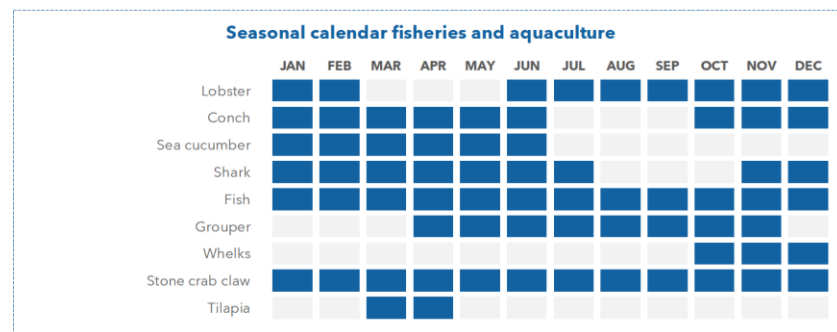
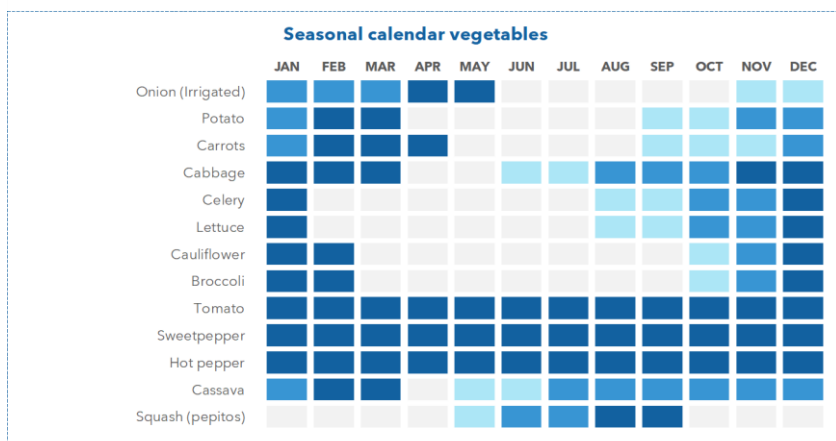
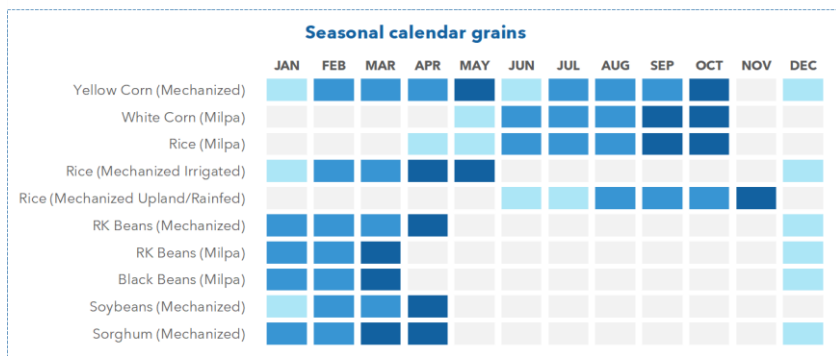


Source: Unpublished data from Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise (MAFSE, 2022)

Other costs incurred include trade and labour to maintain equipment which have all increased due to the cost of living crisis. Farmers are also reporting having to dig deeper to access ground water.

Harvesting and transportation | Grain harvesting in communities that practice semi mechanised farming requires less human resources but more energy demands due to mechanisation. In contrast, milpa farming deployed by many subsistent farmers located in the Toledo district, which mainstays include corn and beans, practice traditional methods where the mountainous topography of the land limits transportation options to horses. These farmers in particular have faced little disturbances caused by the energy crisis. For livestock farmers such as the Mnenite communities in Orange Walk, Spanish Lookout, their registered cattle is reliant on transport via trucks. Vegetable growers also require specific energy demands for storage of commodities and delivery to the market.

INSIGHTS | Crop seasonal calendar



LEGEND

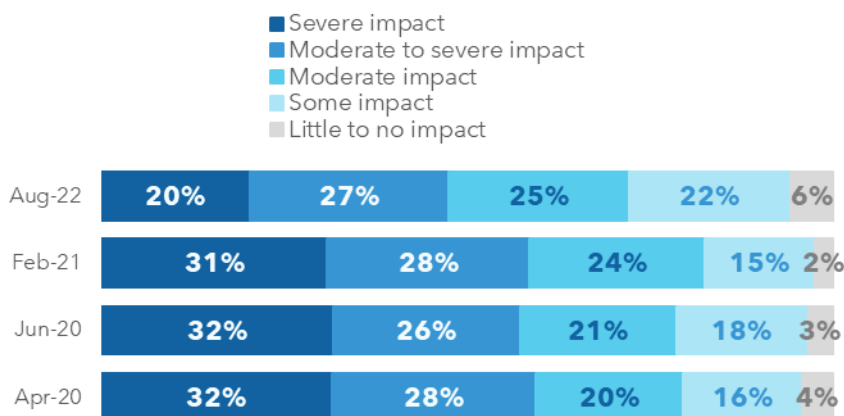
- Harvesting/fishing
- Growing
- Planting

Source: Unpublished data from Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise (MAFSE, 2022)

LIVELIHOODS | Future livelihood impacts

- ▶ Almost half of respondents anticipate severe or moderate to severe impacts on their livelihoods, with the lowest income households expecting the most severe impacts.

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



"My education had to be postponed because I got a pay cut that has lasted up to today." - Female, 26, Belize

"The biggest impact has been the increased cost of food items, and fuel which has increased the cost of living. This tied in with salary cuts has had major impacts on our lifestyle. We get less for our money. Working from home has helped with cost savings but this will end soon so it will become necessary to account for the savings we were making." - Female, 47, Belize

Respondents continue to expect that the COVID-19 pandemic will negatively impact their livelihoods in the future. Looking ahead, 47% anticipate "moderate to severe" or "severe" impacts to their livelihoods, which is lower compared to the prior three survey rounds but very similar to the regional average (50%). Only 6% expect little or no impact.

Differences in perspectives were the most significant across income levels with 58% of those with below or well below average income expecting "severe" or "moderate to severe" impacts in the future compared to 40% of those with average and 34% with above or well above average income.

The perspective of respondents deriving their main income from different sectors and sources also varied substantially. Households relying on agriculture, informal labour or assistance and those residing in rural areas were noticeably more pessimistic in terms of future livelihood impacts. Of those whose main income source is agriculture, 27% expect their livelihoods to be severely impacted in the future, which is higher compared to households deriving their main income from public administration (16%) or other sectors (13%).

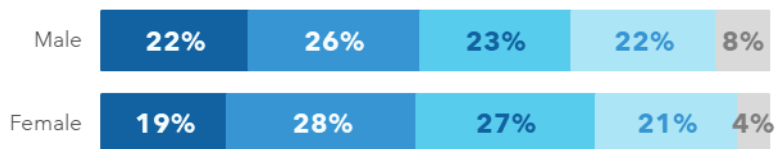
Respondents aged 40 and below expect more severe impacts than other age groups, while only 4% of those over 60 expect to have severe impacts on future livelihoods. This is likely due to fewer of these respondents being in the labour force compared to other age groups. Less significant differences were observed between male and female respondents and among age groups.

LIVELIHOODS | Future livelihood impacts

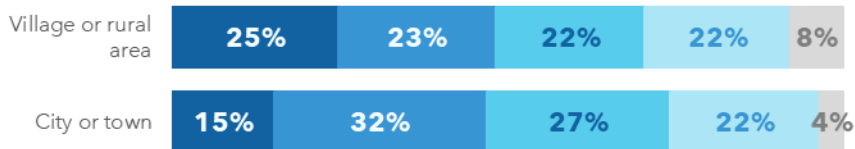
How do you expect your livelihood will be impacted as a result of disruptions from COVID-19?

- Severe impact
- Moderate to severe impact
- Moderate impact
- Some impact
- Little to no impact

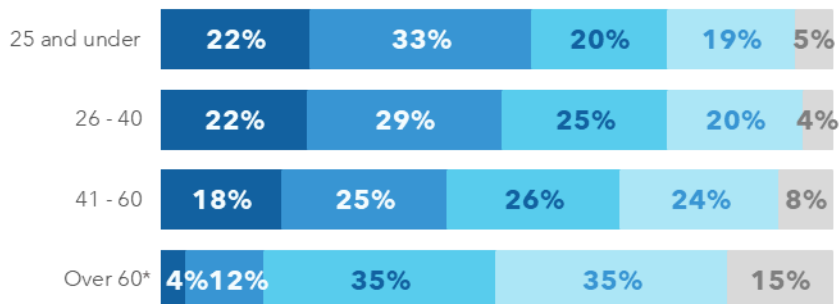
By sex



By urban/rural location

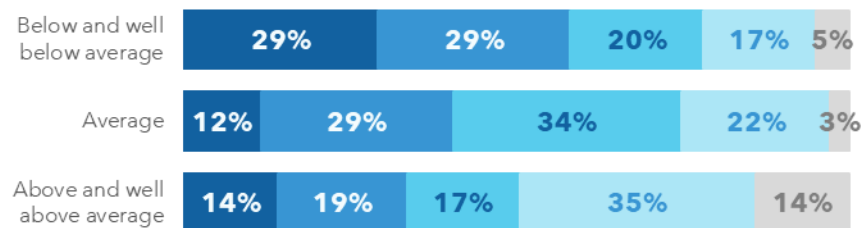


By age group

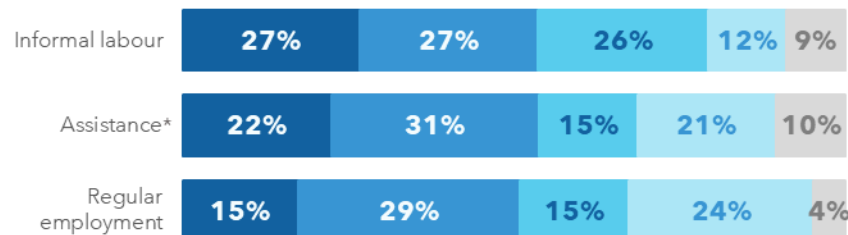


* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By perceived income level



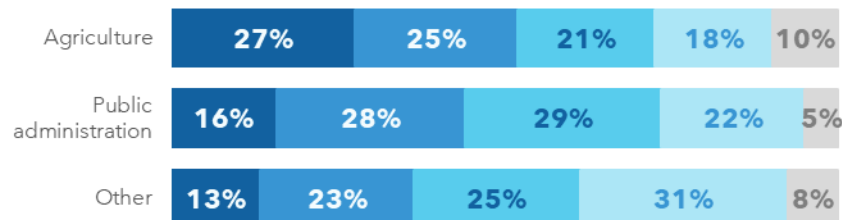
By income sources



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By income sector

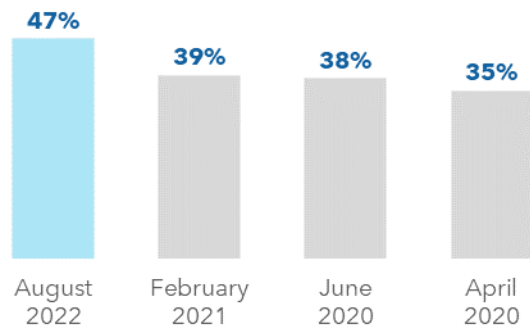
Results are presented only for income sectors that received at least 100 responses.



MARKETS | Access

- ▶ Market access has worsened and is now a challenge for nearly half of respondents from Belize.

Respondents unable to access markets in the 7 days prior to the survey



"Not being able to go buy needs because the family was infected with Covid ." - Female, 18, Belize

"its very hard especially in the groceries products . there is not enough money to buy all necessities" - Female, 28, Belize

"The main additional insights is by moving around to buy medication" - Female, 33, Belize

Over two years since the declaration of the pandemic, people's access to markets continues to be impacted in Belize, with 47% of respondents stating that they were unable to access markets in the seven days prior to the August 2022 survey. People's access to markets has gotten worse compared to the previous survey rounds. As described in the next section in more detail, the challenges to accessing markets are clearly tied to limited financial means and failing incomes. Disruptions to market access affect a similar proportion of respondents in Belize compared to the regional average (49%).

Clear differences in market access in Belize can be seen across income levels, income sources and sectors, location and age groups. Respondents reporting the lowest income levels were experiencing the greatest challenges in accessing markets, with two thirds of those with below or well below income levels indicating difficulties compared to less than one fourth of those with above or well above average income. Correspondingly, those relying on assistance (57%) or on less stable income sources (55%) more frequently indicated that they experienced a time when they were unable to access markets compared to respondents with regular employment (38%).

Respondents living in rural areas (58%) and those engaged in agriculture (57%) also more frequently reported problems in accessing markets compared to those living in urban areas (34%) or working in public administration (27%).

Difficulties in accessing markets also appear to be more widespread among younger respondents, with 55% of those under 26 years old reporting problems compared to 43% of those between 41 and 60 years.

There were no significant differences in market access between male and female respondents.

MARKETS | Access

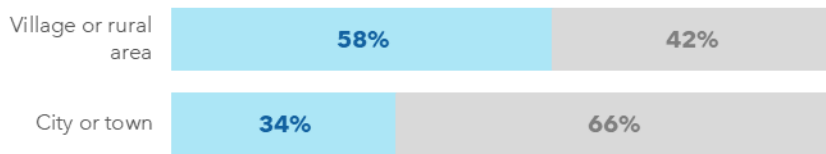
In the past 7 days, was there a time when your household could not access the markets?

■ yes ■ no

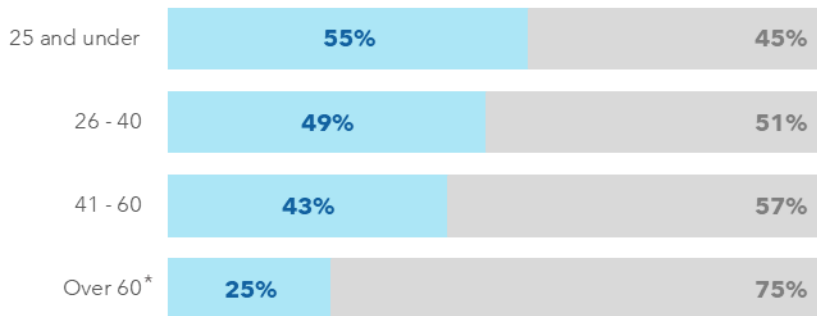
By sex



By urban/rural location

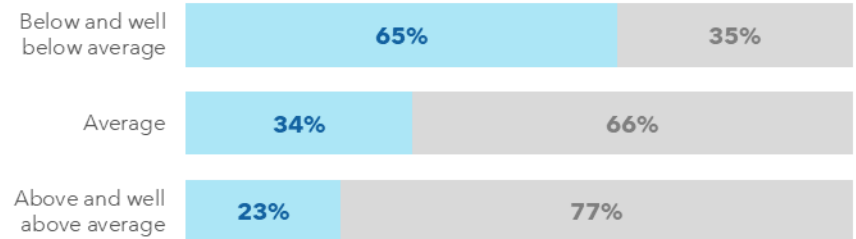


By age group

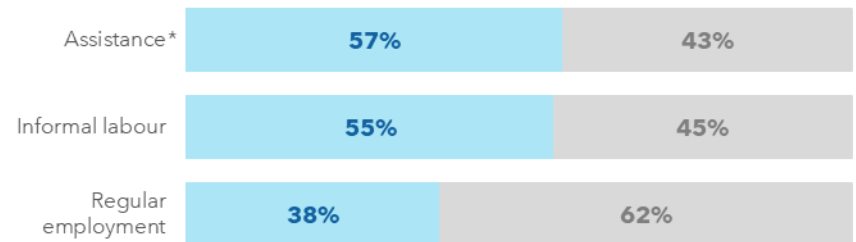


* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By perceived income level



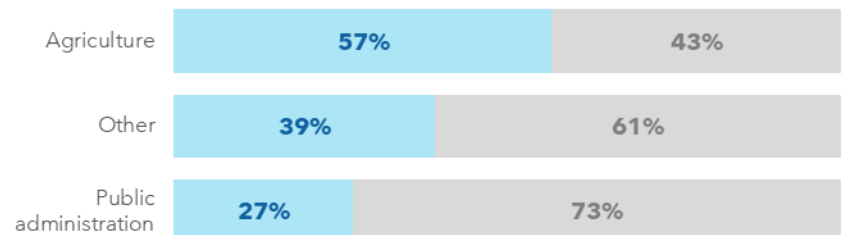
By main income source



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By income sector

Results are presented only for income sectors that received at least 100 responses.



MARKETS | Reasons for limited market access

- ▶ Lack of financial resources is the main barrier to accessing markets.

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.

	Aug-22	Feb-21	Jun-20	Apr-20
Lack of financial means*	82%	76%	30%	9%
Transport limitations	17%	10%	19%	32%
Other	7%	4%	17%	11%
Concerned about leaving the house	6%	16%	24%	45%
Markets/grocery stores closed	5%	8%	17%	42%
Adult members of the household were unwell	4%	5%	4%	4%
Movement restrictions	4%	11%	19%	38%
Adult members of the household were self quarantining	3%	7%	4%	14%
Security concerns	2%	6%	10%	19%

* 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.

Lack of financial means continues to be overwhelmingly reported as the main reason for limited market access in Belize, cited by 82% of those who faced a time when they could not access markets in the week prior to the survey. This is an increase since February 2021 (76%), but it is slightly below the regional average (91%). The reasons for market access problems have changed since the early months of the pandemic in Belize, from concerns about the disease and restrictions to limit the pandemic to the lack of financial resources as the greatest barrier to market access. More people are also reporting transportation limitations in August 2022 compared to February 2021, which might be explained with the global surge of fuel prices.

The most notable differences in challenges that people face when accessing markets can be observed across income levels. Respondents who described their income level as below or well below average (87%) reported the lack financial means more frequently than respondents with average (77%) and above or well above average (67%) income.

Significant differences in problems with market access also appear across age groups. Respondents under 60 years old cited lack of financial means as a key challenge more frequently (82% to 87%) compared to respondents over 60 years old (57%). In return, those over 60 were more affected by the disease and concerns around the disease than younger respondents. However, this finding should be treated with caution due to the low number of respondents over 60 years old.

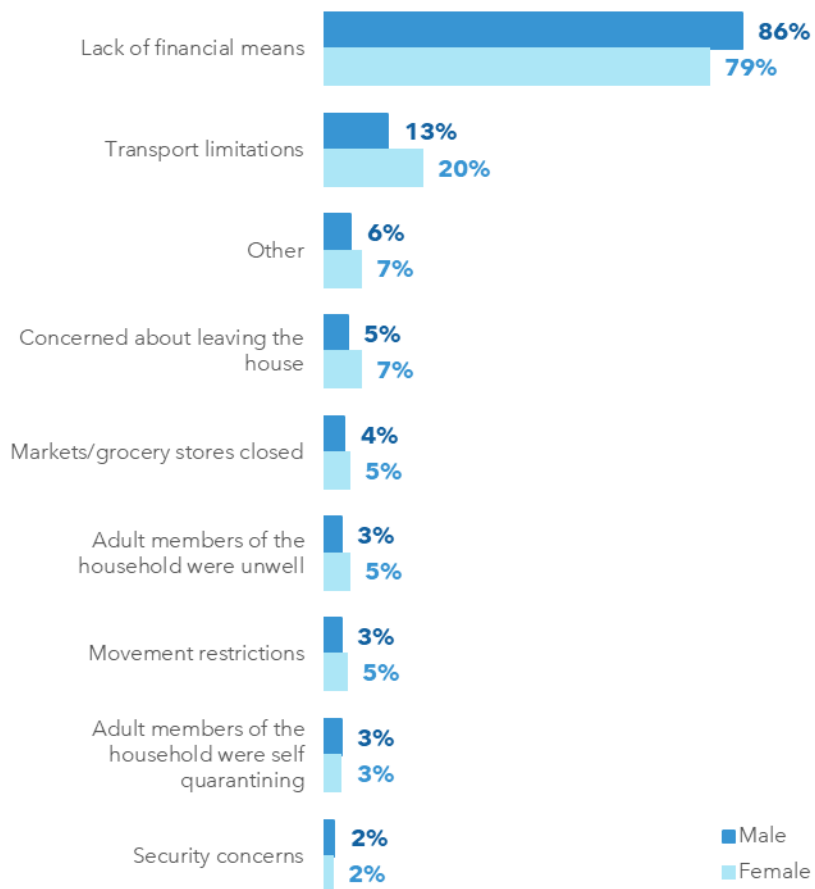
While barriers to market access did not differ significantly between sexes, transport limitations were a slightly greater concern for female respondents (20%) compared to male respondents (13%).

MARKETS | Reasons for limited market access

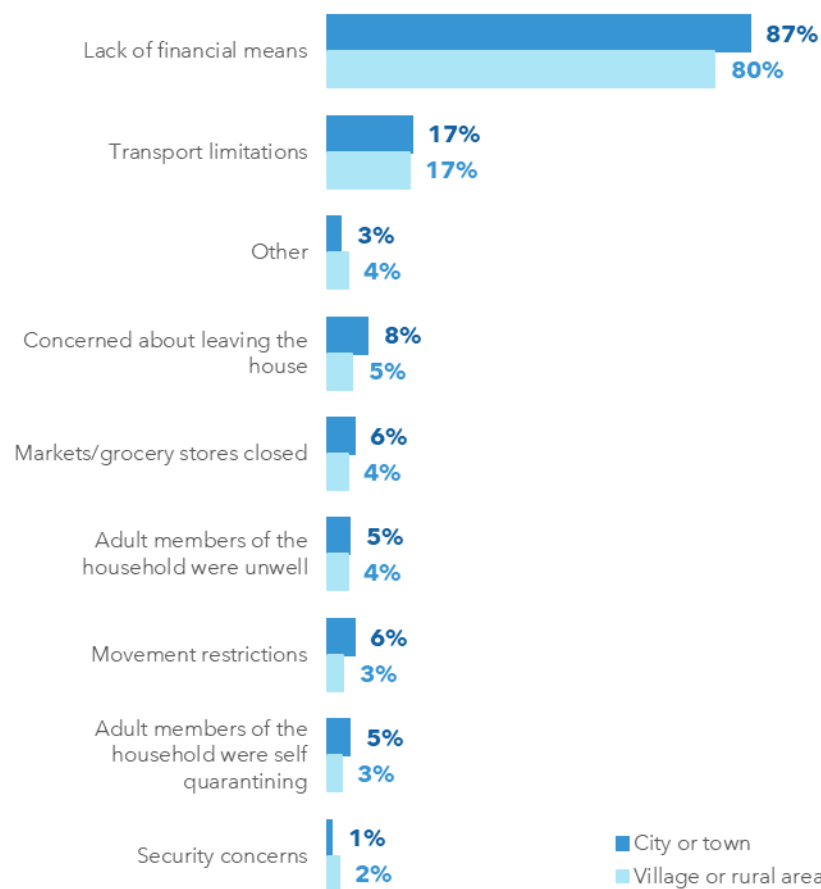
For those that faced a time when they could not access markets in the past 7 days, the main reasons were...

Multiple choices could be selected.

By sex



By urban/rural location

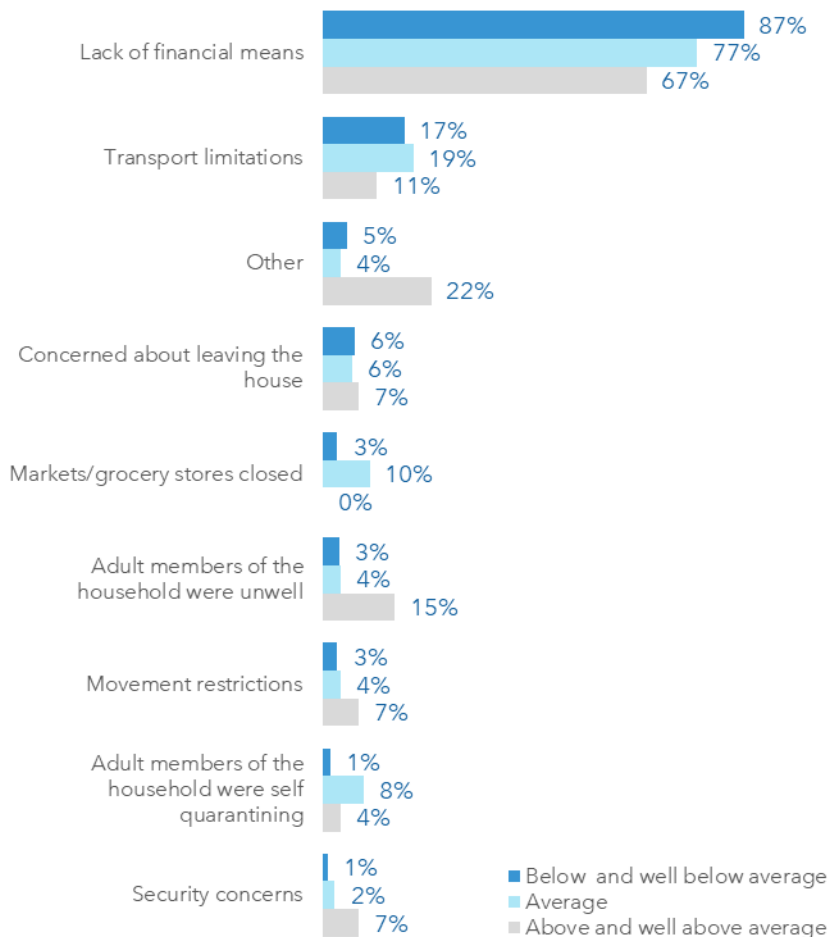


MARKETS | Reasons for limited market access

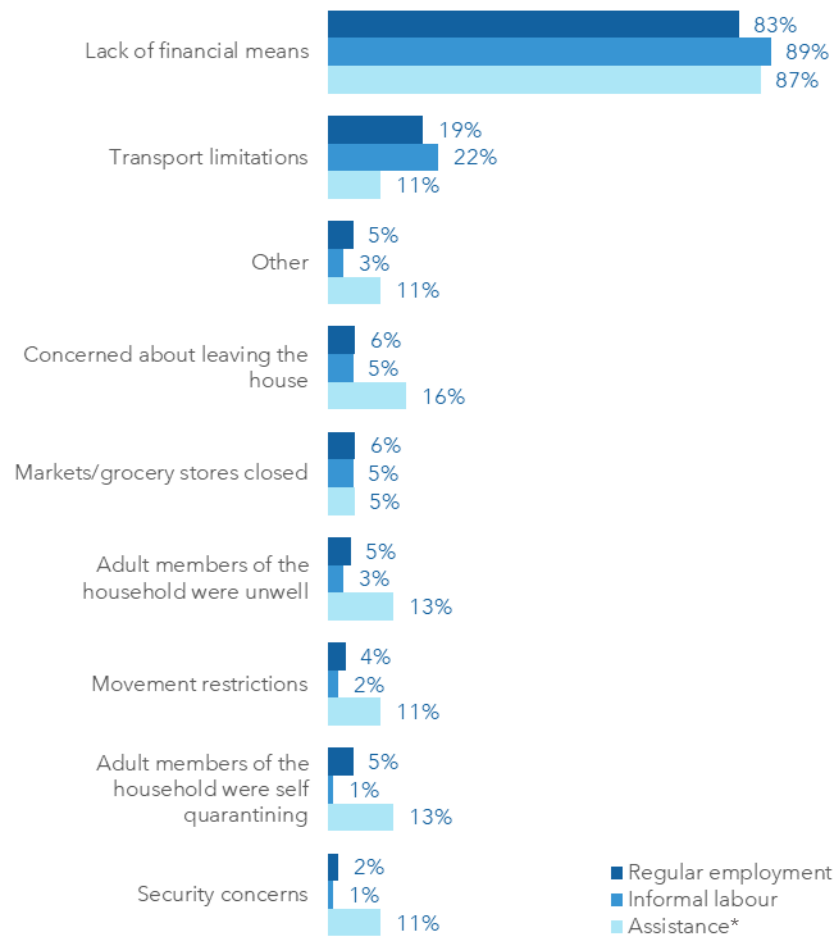
For those that faced a time when they could not access markets in the past 7 days, the main reasons were...

Multiple choices could be selected.

By perceived income level



By main income source



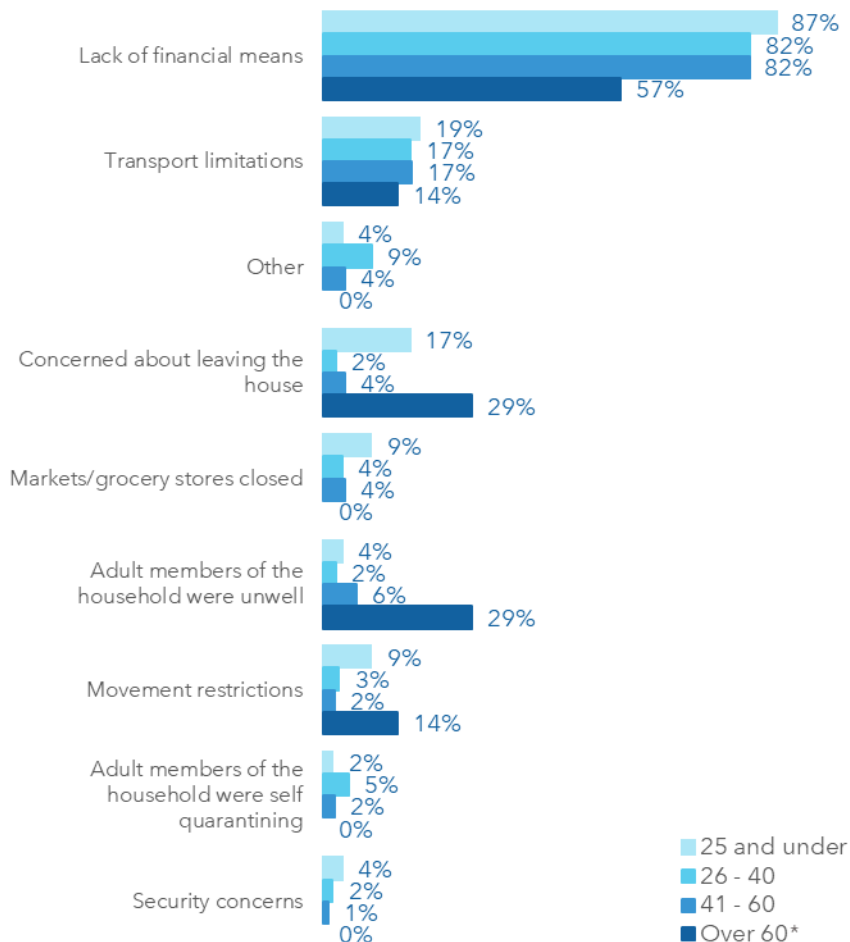
* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

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.

By age group



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

"Buy necessities only to stretch salary." - Female, 60, Belize

"Food. Salary cut and the rise of social security contribution and tax causing me to be making less money. So i cant afford to buy what i use to. I buy in less portion." - Male, 46, Belize

"It affect wad cant come out to buy what is needed the cost of transportation also have to always use the mask" - Male, 60, Belize

"Ability to get affordable groceries had to use from savings" - Female, 24, Belize

"Increase of groceries," - Unknown , 21, Belize

"Buy less, and save little more." - Female, 47, Belize

"Well i always buy by goods on time tb now i cannot because cost of living gone up and transportation too and i use to work hard before covid 19 and now i cannot get my job where i used to work." - Male, 33, Belize

"Less work, less money less food." - Female, 23, Belize

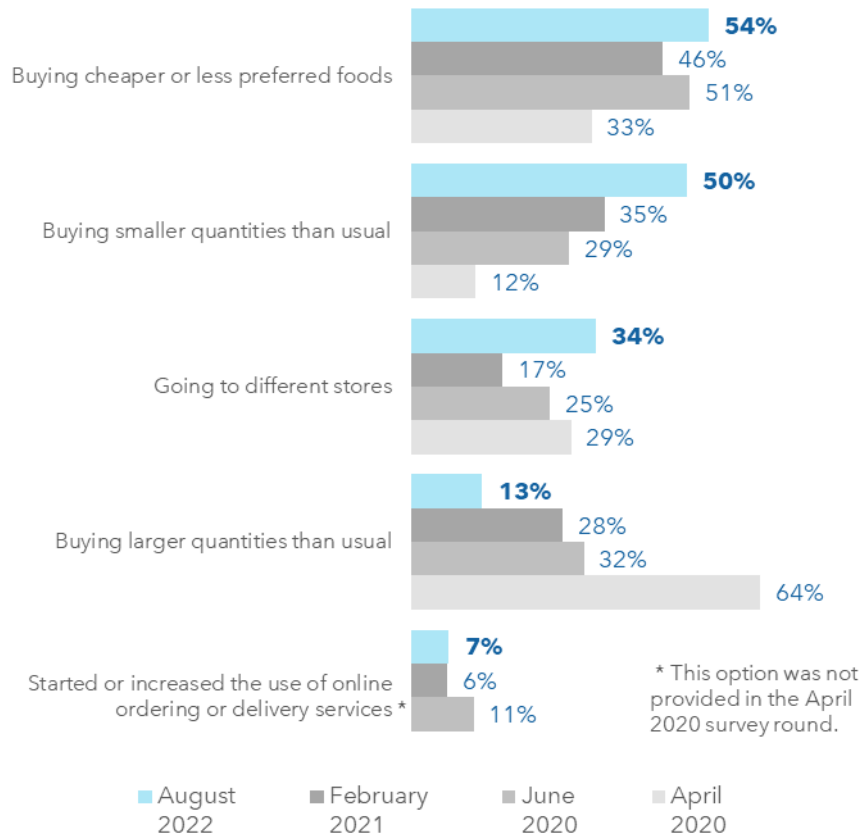
"Had a small business had to use the money i had for food and we got infected with covid also and my little son suffers from asthma so he had to get treatment." - Female, 30, Belize

MARKETS | Shopping behaviour

- ▶ Respondents continue to adapt by buying cheaper foods and smaller quantities than usual.

Respondents who reported a change in shopping behaviour are...

Multiple choices could be selected.



The cost of living crisis and the pandemic continue to affect how people shop, however, the exact changes they are making have shifted since the onset of the pandemic. The majority of respondents from Belize (90%) reported a change in their shopping behaviour in August 2022, which is similar to February 2021 (93%) and to the regional average (91%).

Shopping behaviour of respondents in Belize has shifted from stocking up at the start of the pandemic to making more compromises as the economic impacts deepen for most households. Respondents who changed their shopping behaviour indicated that the main changes they were making are buying cheaper or less preferred foods (54%) and increasingly buying smaller quantities (50%). More respondents are also going to different stores (34%) compared to February 2021 (17%). At the same time respondents are less likely to buy larger quantities (13%) compared to the previous survey rounds.

How people have modified their shopping appears to be closely linked to respondents' income levels. Among respondents who changed how they shop, those describing their household income as average (62%) or below and well below average (55%) were more likely to resort to buying cheaper or less preferred foods compared to those describing their income as above or well above average (40%). On the other hand, wealthier households were more often going to different stores or buying larger quantities than usual compared to households with lower income levels.

Significant differences in how people shop can be also seen between respondents living in rural and urban areas. Those in urban areas more often resorted to going to different stores or buying online, while those residing in rural areas had more limited coping options.

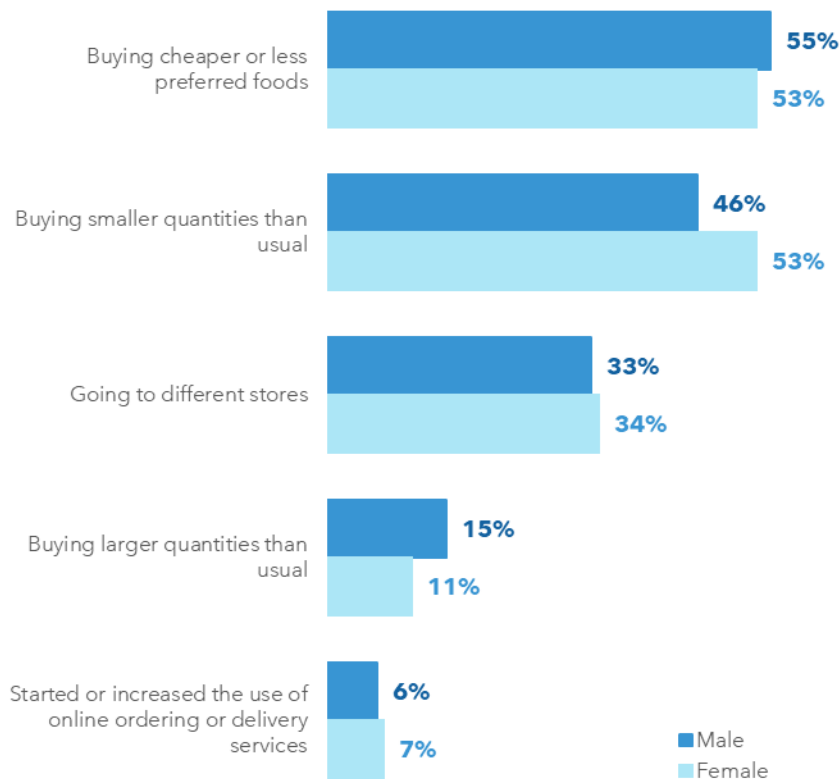
While no significant differences can be observed across sexes, women appear to resort to buying smaller quantities more often (53%) than men (46%).

MARKETS | Shopping behaviour

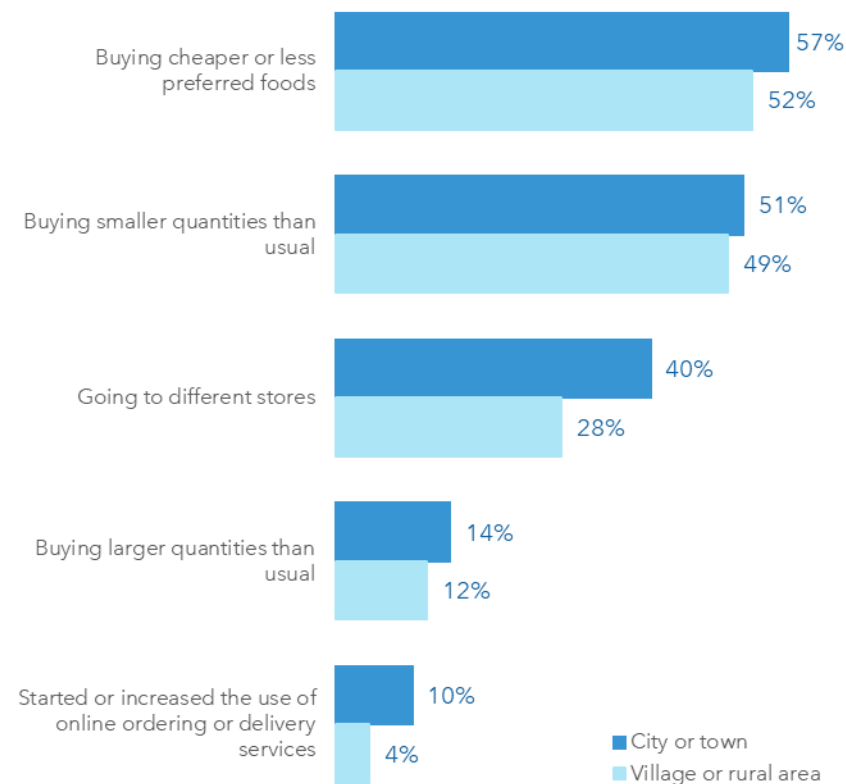
Respondents who reported a change in shopping behaviour are...

Multiple choices could be selected.

By sex



By urban/rural location

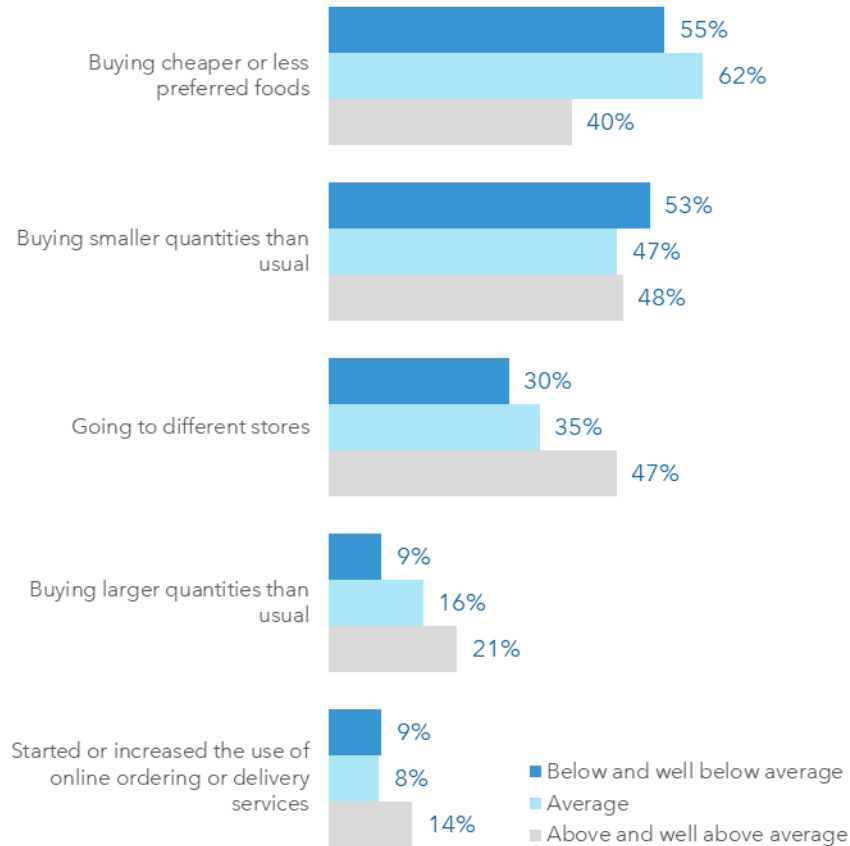


MARKETS | Shopping behaviour

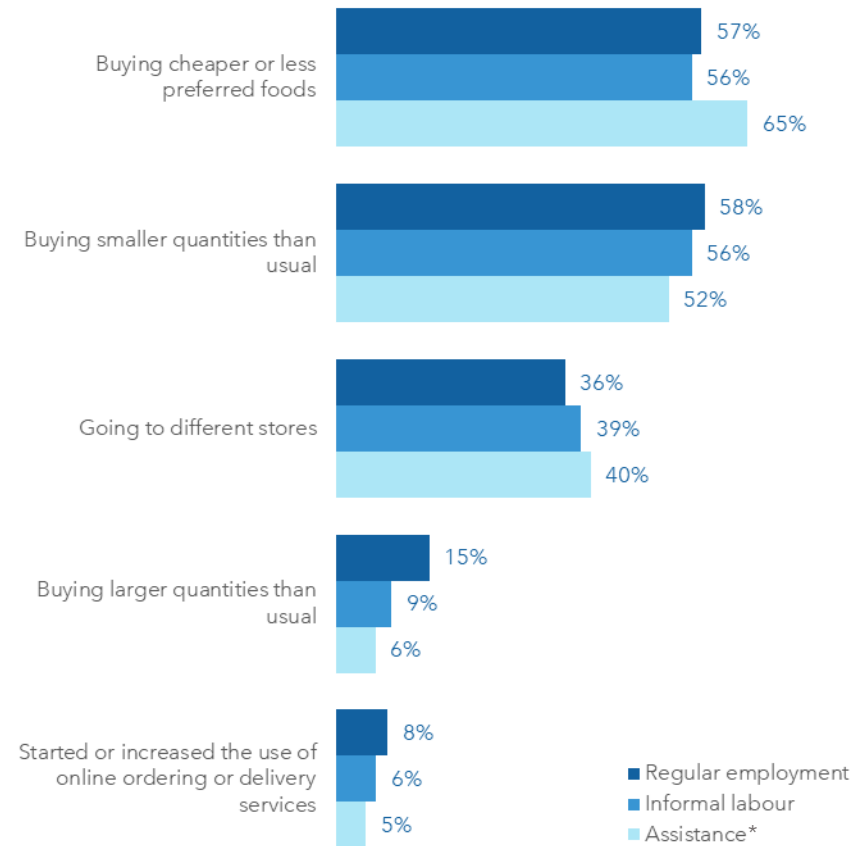
Respondents who reported a change in shopping behaviour are...

Multiple choices could be selected.

By perceived income level



By main income source

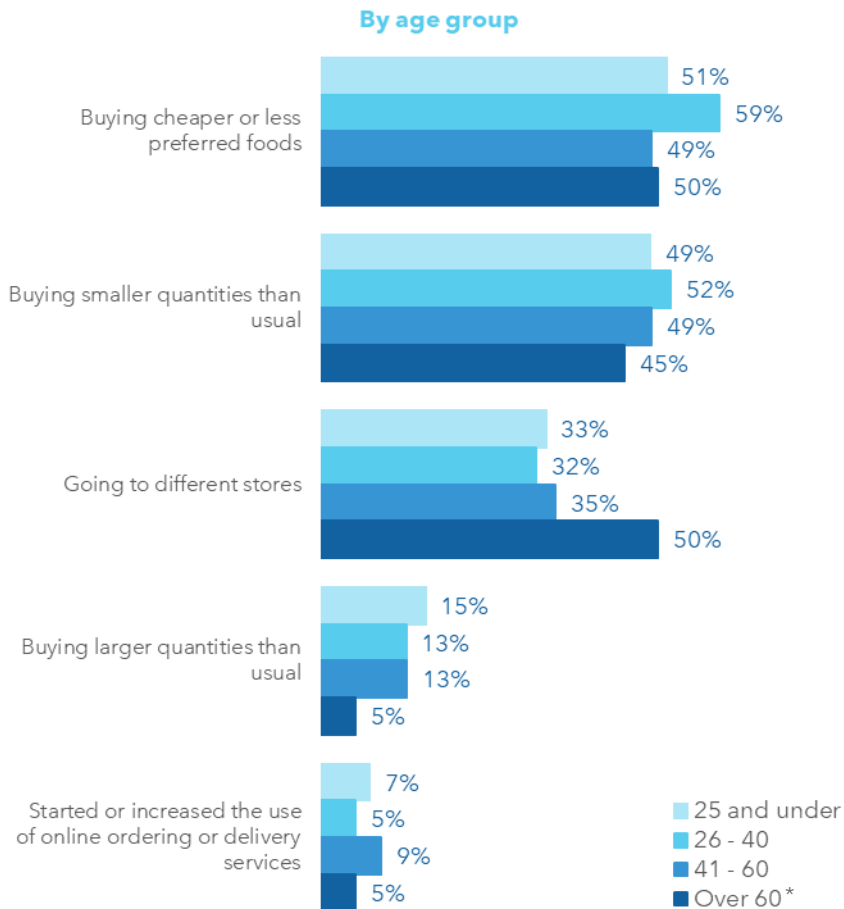


* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

MARKETS | Shopping behaviour

Respondents who reported a change in shopping behaviour are...

Multiple choices could be selected.



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

"I have depleted my savings to pay bills and buy food. I have learned to eat less in amount and health wise" - Male, 22, Belize

"Cost of living too high for the whole family" - Male, 39, Belize

"Have not gone shopping for anything. No clothes, shoes nothing." - Male, 18, Belize

"I am not able to do proper shopping due to covid and because I have a baby and transportation are not very clean ." - Female, 66, Belize

"The cost price of food , try to extend money to purchase food." - Female, 22, Belize

"Less work, less money less food." - Female, 23, Belize

"Cost of living raising so bad in our country. income is hardly enough to make ends meat" - Female, 25, Belize

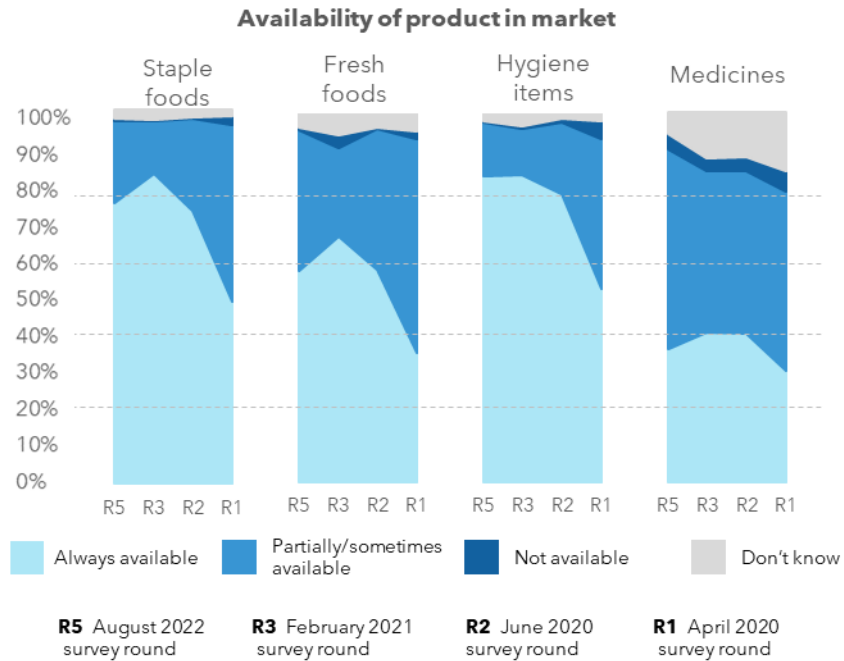
"Minimum wage and high price of living" - Male, 30, Belize

"Increase of food and gas prices has affected my income to provide the need of my child education" - Female, 30, Belize

"Price increase on basic items and food supplies as well as sanitary supplies. Gas steady increases weekly." - Male, 31, Belize

MARKETS | Availability

- ▶ The availability of medicines, fresh and staple foods decreased since February 2021.



Market disruptions have been a concern since the start of the pandemic, due to movement restrictions and global supply chain issues, as well as Belize's dependence on imported goods. However, markets have been steadily recovering until February 2021 when the global supply chains were affected again by global surge in fuel prices due to war in Ukraine.

Very few respondents (4% for medicines and 1% for all other key commodities) indicated that essential goods were unavailable, which is consistent with the previous survey round. However, the availability of key commodities (medicines, fresh and staple foods) in Belize decreased since February 2021.

The level of availability of key commodities in August 2022 varied by items. Medicines were only partially available to 54% of respondents compared to 43% in February 2021. Similarly, fresh foods were only partially available to 38% of respondents compared to 24% in February 2021. While the availability of staple foods continues to be high, it is still worrying that 22% of respondents could not always access these products compared to 14% in February 2021. On the other hand, the availability of hygiene items appears to be constant with only 14% of respondents finding these products only partially available compared to 13% in February 2021.

MARKETS | Prices

► Prices of food and non-food items are on the rise in Belize.

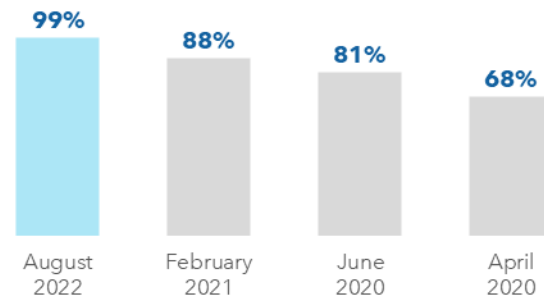
Increasing food prices are being observed by respondents in Belize across all demographics with nearly all respondents (99%) reporting an increase in the two weeks prior to the survey. This is the highest level reported across all survey rounds. Respondents across all income levels consistently noted increases in food prices.

Over the past six months, respondents in Belize also observed increases in prices of non-food commodities. The most significant price increases have been observed for gas and other fuels (72% of respondents observed significant increases in gas prices and 66% of respondents observed significant increase in other fuels prices).

The rising costs of gas and other fuels have had a knock-on effects also on other commodities. Over half of respondents observed a significant increases in the cost of transport, while over two fifths reported significant increases in the costs of housing and health. Around a third of respondents also reported increases in the costs for education and electricity, while the significant increases in water prices were reported the least often (17%).

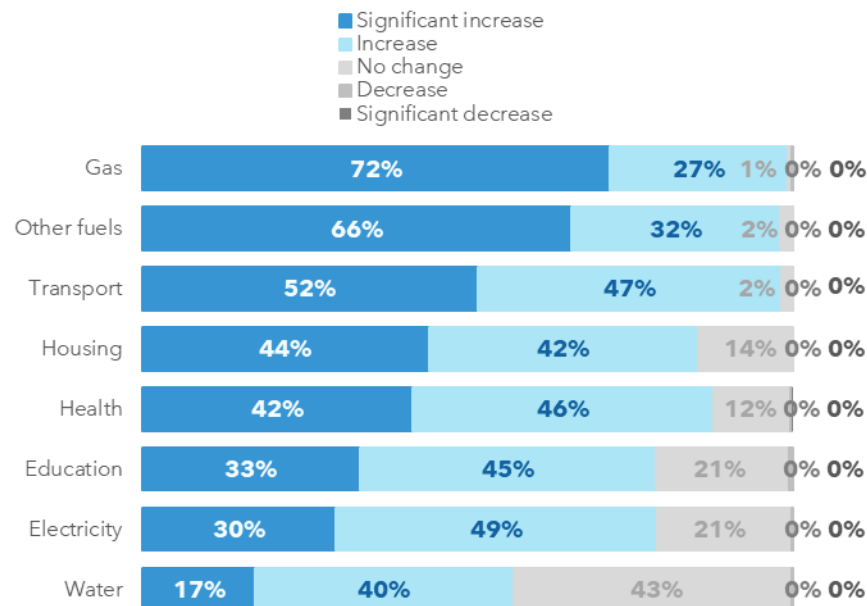
While the overall trends in the rising costs of non-food commodities are consistent with the regional survey findings, respondents in Belize more frequently reported significant price increases in gas (72%), other fuels (66%), and transport (52%) compared to the regional average where 65% noted price increases in gas, 55% in other fuels, and 43% in transport.

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



Have you observed any change in the costs of the following commodities/services in the past 6 months?

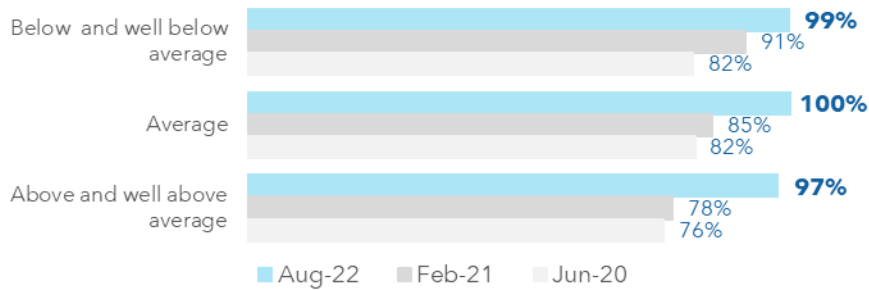
Percentages were calculated only for those respondents that responded to this question and did not select the "Not applicable" option.



MARKETS | Prices

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

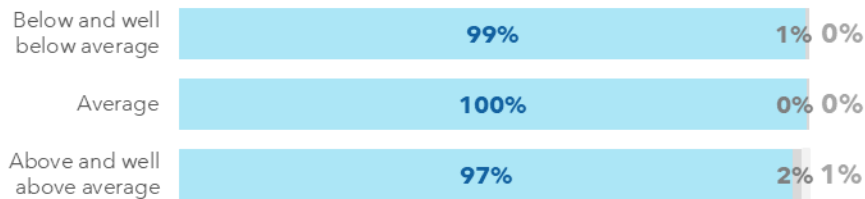
By perceived income level and survey round



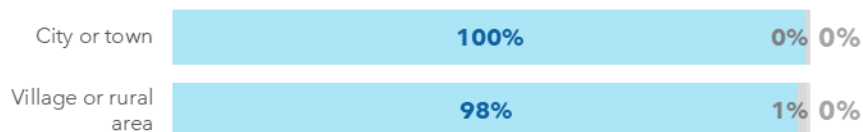
Respondents who reported an increase in food prices over the 2 weeks prior to the survey

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

By perceived income level



By urban/rural location



"Fuel prices up" - Female, 48, Belize

"Everything is going up price so have bought less healthy foods for eg. veggies" - Female, 21, Belize

"Food and fuel price increased has been the biggest impact" - Female, 36, Belize

"High price in goods and services" - Male, 42, Belize

"Inflation of hygiene prices" - Female, 20, Belize

"Have to work extra time because everything increase in price." - Male, 52, Belize

"Every food item has increase to double the price." - Female, 41, Belize

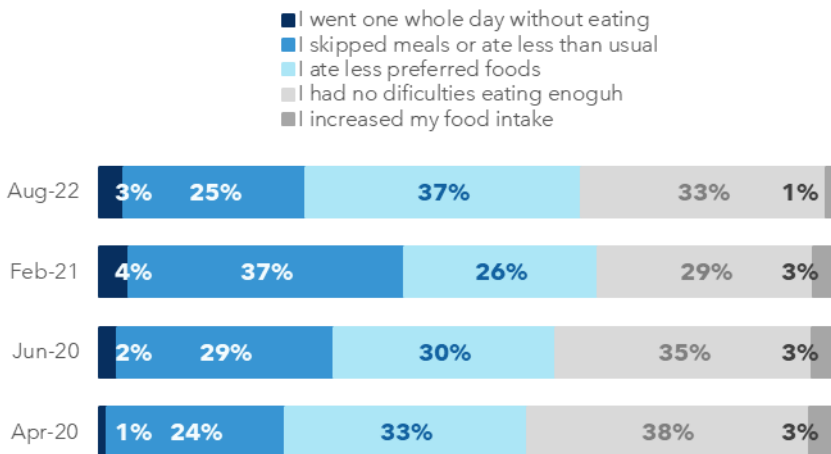
"Raise in food price. Eating less preferred food." - Male, 50, Belize

"Food prices going up. Salaries are the same." - Female, 44, Belize

FOOD SECURITY | Food consumption

- ▶ Food consumption patterns are alarming, especially among lower income households and younger respondents.

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



"increase in essential needs like food, water and gas" - Female, 20, Belize

"Eat more unhealthy foods." - Female, 34, Belize

"We have less food for my family, having a family of 7." - Male, 29, Belize

"Loss of ability to buy basic food" - Male, 36, Belize

*Source:FAO, European Union and CIRAD. 2022. Food Systems Profile - Belize. Catalysing the sustainable and inclusive transformation of food systems. Link: <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0072en/cc0072en.pdf>

Food consumption trends showed slight improvements since February 2021 but remained worrying with 25% of respondents skipping meals or eating less than usual and 3% going an entire day without eating in the week leading up to the survey. These findings are slightly more positive than the regional trends but remain very concerning.

The survey findings show that younger respondents appear to be more affected by negative food consumption than older respondents. Over a third of those under 26 years old reported not eating for a whole day, skipping meals or eating less than usual compared to 14% of those over 60 years old.

Female respondents also reported to skipping meals or eating less than usual more frequently (28%) compared to male respondents (20%). Similar proportions of women (4%) and men (3%) went an entire day without eating.

Respondents with below or well below average income are the most affected, with 41% going a whole day without eating or skipping meals in the week preceding the survey (compared to 17% of those with average or above average income). Only 19% of the lowest income respondents had no difficulty eating enough compared to 42-55% of households classifying their income level as average or above average.

Correspondingly, those relying on less stable income sources (informal labour or assistance) face starker challenges, with 37-42% going an entire day without eating or skipping meals compared to 24% of those with more stable income sources.

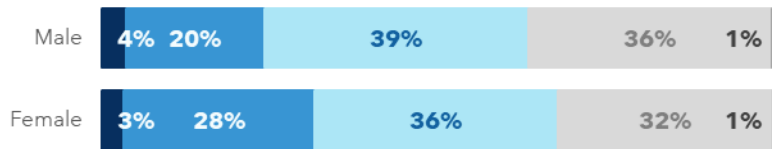
These trends are occurring within the context of broader food systems dynamics. According to the Food Systems Profile for Belize*, one of the key challenges is ensuring access of healthy foods to the entire population. Lack of good quality food results in malnutrition which exacerbates the prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Women and youth are especially vulnerable.

FOOD SECURITY | Food consumption

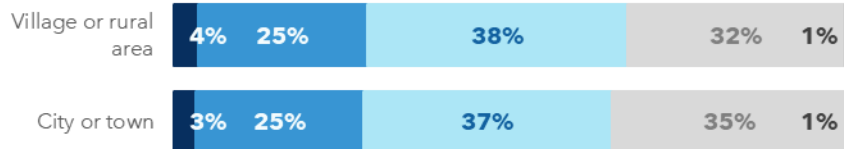
Which statement best reflects your food situation over the past 7 days?

- I went one whole day without eating
- I skipped meals or ate less than usual
- I ate less preferred foods
- I had no difficulties eating enough
- I increased my food intake

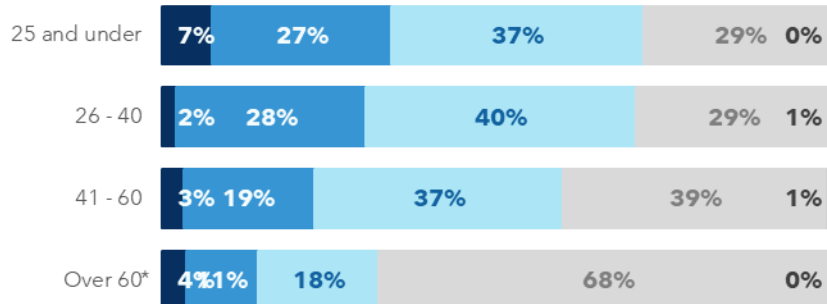
By sex



By urban/rural location

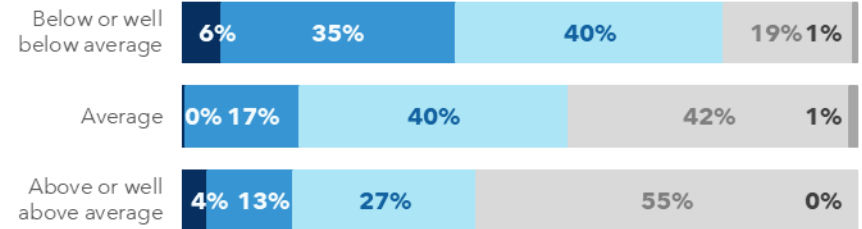


By age group

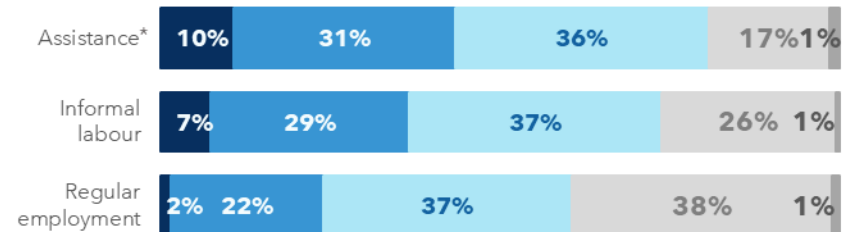


* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By perceived income level



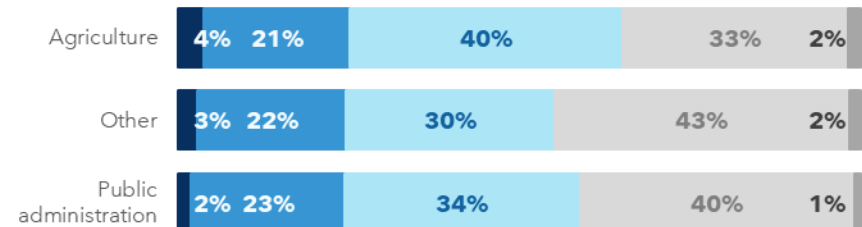
By income sources



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By income sector

Results are presented only for income sectors that received at least 100 responses.



FOOD SECURITY | Coping strategies

- ▶ Respondents are adopting negative coping strategies to meet their immediate food needs, compromising other priorities and future income generation.

Survey respondents were asked whether in the 30 days prior to the survey they had reduced essential non-food expenditures, spent savings or sold productive assets to meet their food needs.

Eight in ten respondents resorted to spending savings, and 55% reduced essential non-food expenditures, such as on education and health. Furthermore, 48% of respondents sold productive assets and goods to meet food or other needs. The trends in Belize are largely consistent with those of the regional average, with slightly more households selling productive assets in Belize, which could severely compromise future well-being, resources and resilience.

Households whose main income comes from agriculture are resorting to all three negative coping strategies much more frequently than others, as are people living in rural areas compared to those in urban areas.

The adoption of negative coping strategies was also dependent on income level and age. Respondents with well below or below average income levels and younger respondents more often resorted to negative coping strategies to meet their essential needs. This risks further widening income and social gaps in the future.

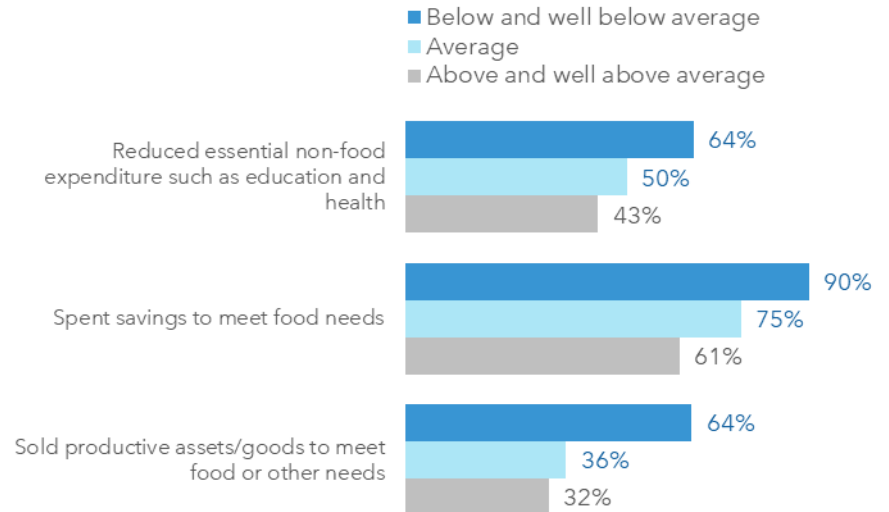
There was no major difference by gender, although male respondents appeared slightly more likely to have reduced essential non-food expenditures and sold productive assets while female respondents marginally more often reported spending savings to meet their food needs.

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

Multiple choices could be selected.



By perceived income level

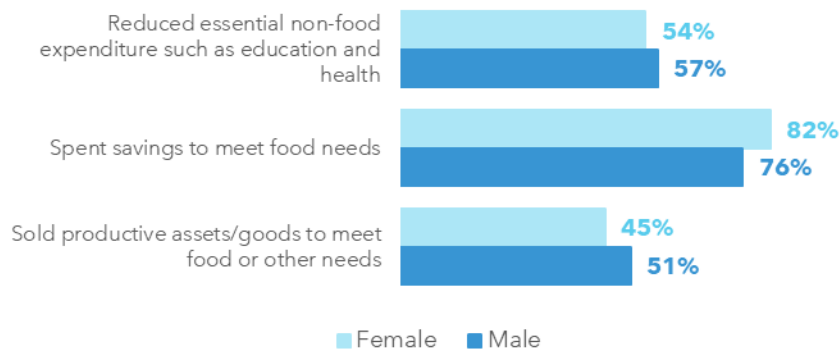


FOOD SECURITY | Coping strategies

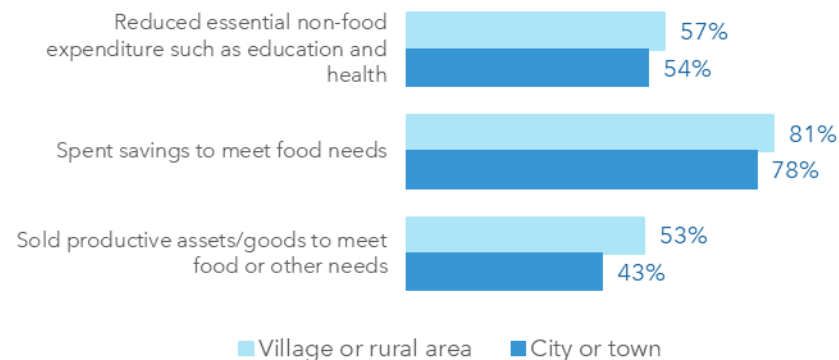
Households' coping strategies in the 30 days prior to the survey

Multiple choices could be selected.

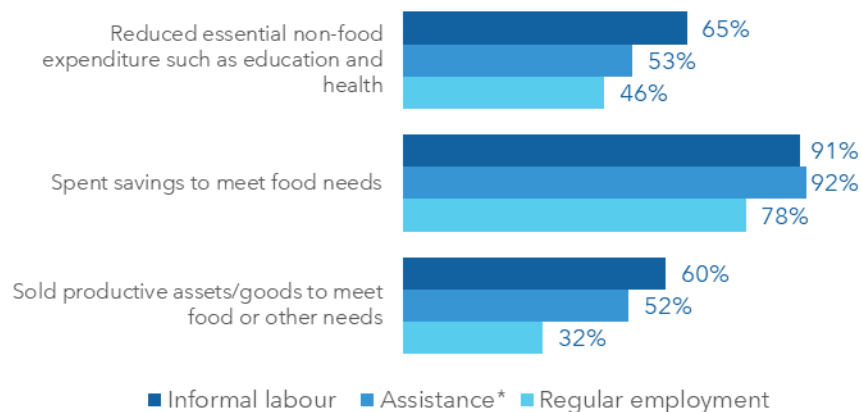
By sex



By urban/rural location

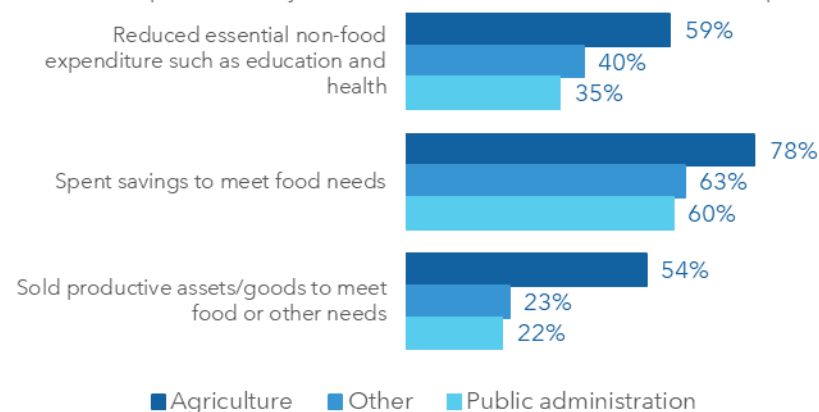


By income source



By income sector

Results are presented only for income sectors that received at least 100 responses.



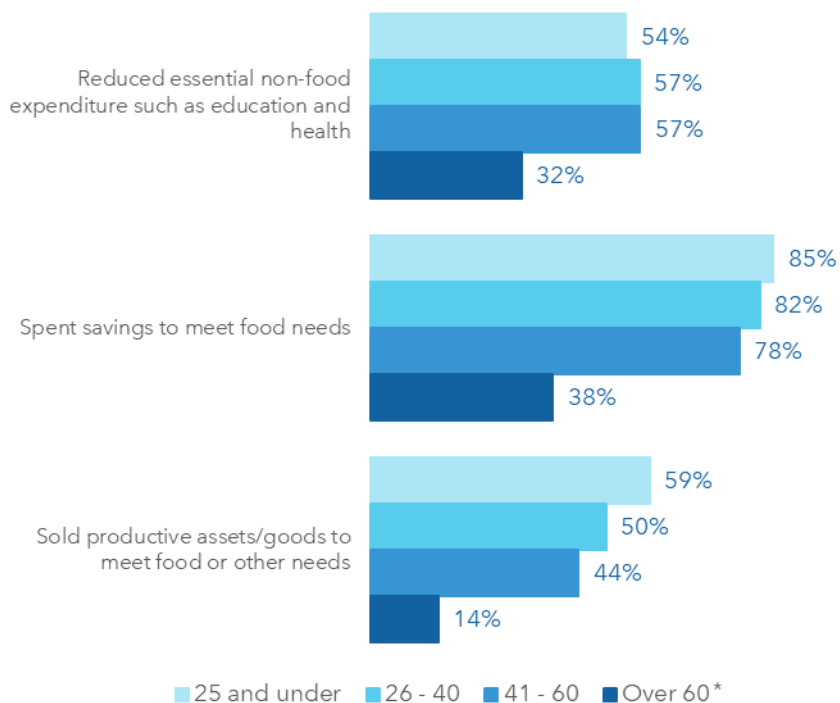
* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

FOOD SECURITY | Coping strategies

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

Multiple choices could be selected.

By age group



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

"Lost 2 businesses, had to sell a vehicle" - Female, 55, Belize

"I have tried selling food/beverages I make but the community prefers to spend less in supporting the cheaper Chinese grocer (\$1 juice and fried chicken) My location is a bit further in walking distance to the surrounding neighbourhood." - Female, 37, Belize

"Stop eating out. Only eat home cook food, sewing my own cloths" - Female, 46, Belize

"Learning about online selling it wasn't an option before but it's the option that can work in our current situation" - Male, 20, Belize

"I have had to touch my savings and had to seek other means of employment." - Female, 43, Belize

"We depleted all our savings, we now eat what we plant and plant what we eat." - Male, 43, Belize

"Spending less so i can cover utility bills like light water etc." - Male, 37, Belize

"Eat less buy only the essentials" - Male, 48, Belize

"Life has become harder. My family and I have had to get by on less; but, we trust in God that life will get better.." - Male, 45, Belize

"Income loss, spend less" - Male, 34, Belize

FOOD SECURITY | Food insecurity experience

- ▶ A significant proportion of people in Belize is struggling to access food and meet their food and nutritional needs on a monthly basis.

The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) was used to provide a picture of food insecurity experienced by respondents during the 30 days preceding the survey. The FIES, which is an indicator used for the Sustainable Development Goal of Zero hunger (SDG 2), is a metric of severity of food insecurity at the household or individual level. It relies on people's self-reported food-related behaviours and experiences associated with increasing difficulties in accessing food due to resource constraints ([see page 73](#) for an explanation of the methodology).

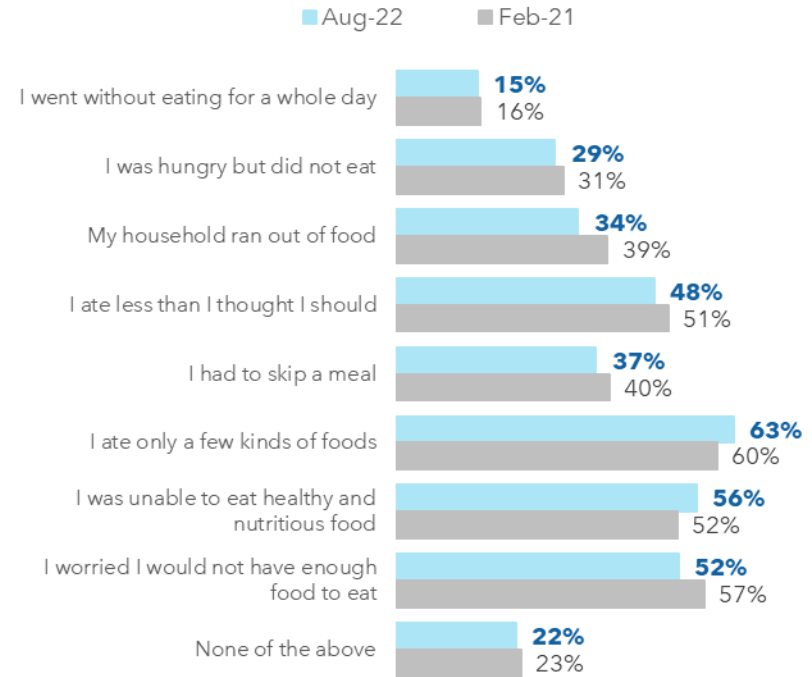
Using the FIES methodology and survey data to calculate food insecurity prevalence rates, results from this survey show that 51% of respondents are either moderately (36%) or severely (15%) food insecure across Belize. When compared to the February 2021 survey round, the prevalence of severe and moderate food insecurity was very similar.

The behaviour most reported by respondents over the past 30 days prior to the August 2022 survey round is eating only a few kinds of foods (63%), followed by being unable to eat healthy and nutritious food (56%).

The reporting of the individual FIES categories varies across respondents. The most striking differences emerge across income levels. Respondents who describe their household income as below or well below average were the most affected across all individual negative food-related behaviours while those with above or well above average income were the least likely to engage in any of such behaviours. In addition, younger respondents also appear to be more severely affected than older respondents.

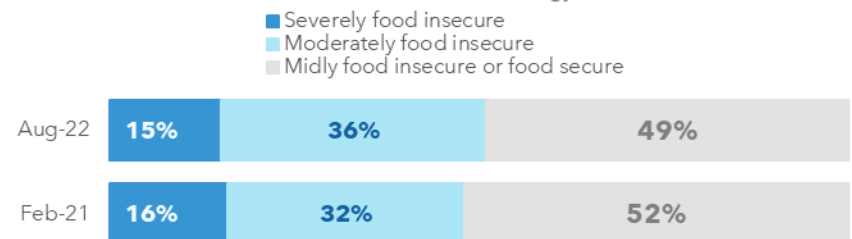
Was there a time in the past 30 days when you experienced the following?

Multiple choices could be selected.



Prevalence rates of food insecurity in Belize

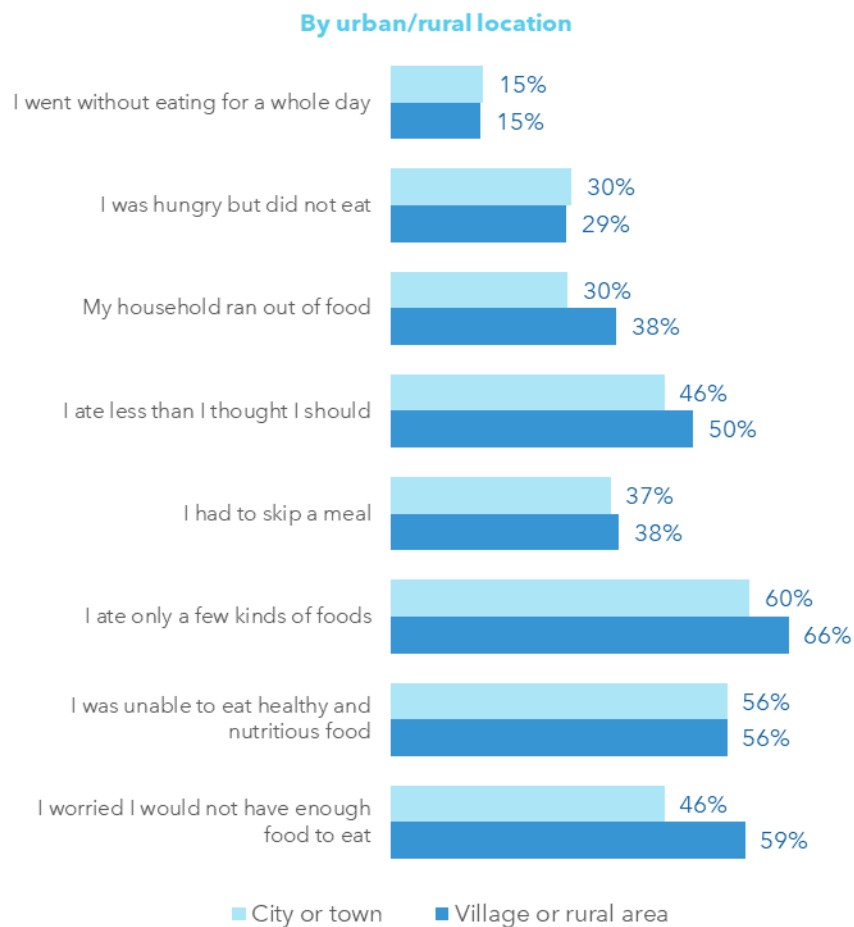
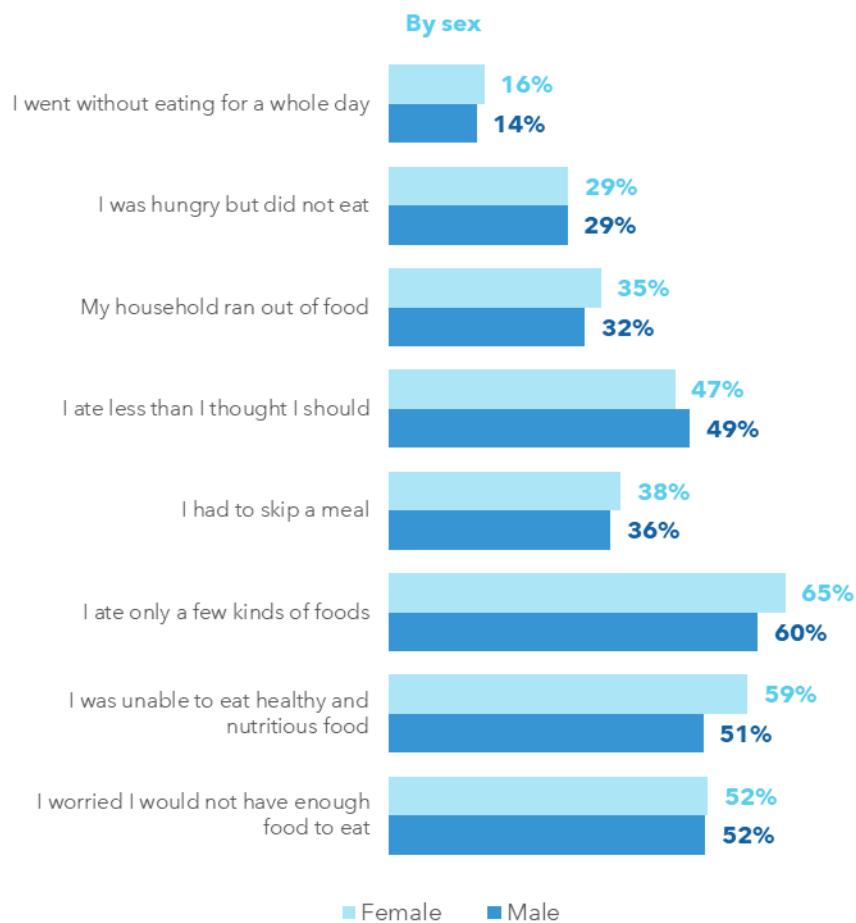
Based on FIES methodology.



FOOD SECURITY | Food insecurity experience

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

Multiple choices could be selected.

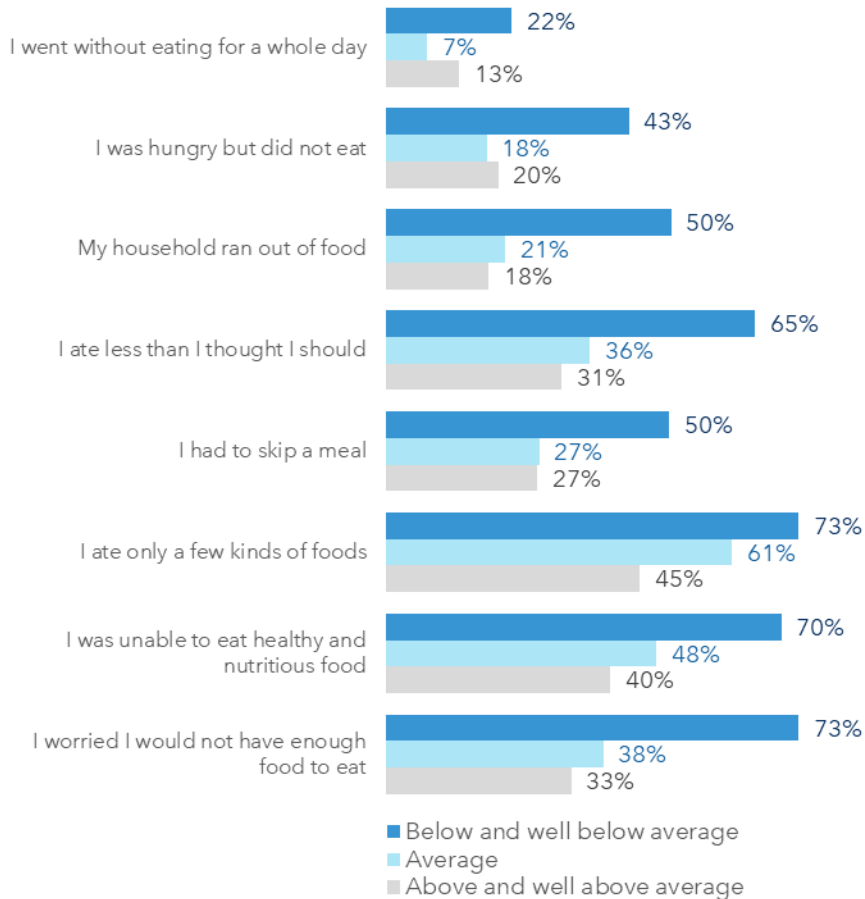


FOOD SECURITY | Food insecurity experience

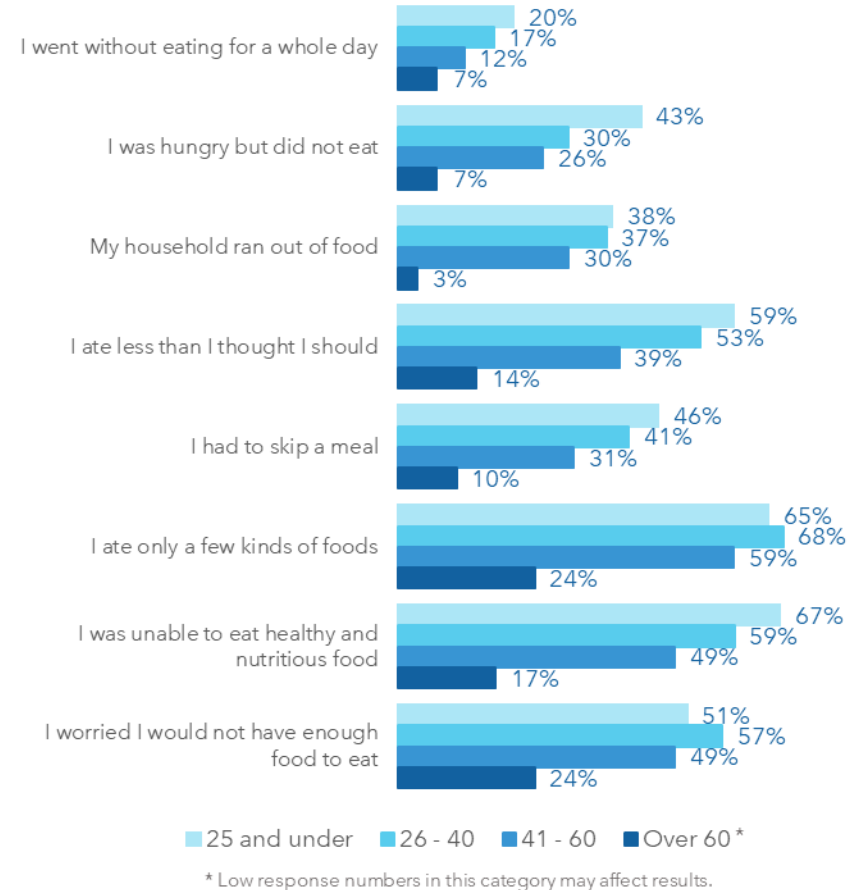
Was there a time in the past 30 days when you experienced the following?

Multiple choices could be selected.

By perceived income level



By age group



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

FOOD SECURITY | Food insecurity experience

The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) is a food security indicator for Sustainable Goal 2 addressing the goal of zero hunger. The Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB), with the support from the FAO, collected the FIES data in its first quarter 2021 Labor Force Survey (LFS). The report that followed presents the estimated prevalence of food insecurity in the national population of Belize*. The estimates were collected in April 2021 with a recall period of 12 months. The survey found that 5.9% of population was severely food insecure and another 39.6% was moderately food insecure. The Mayan population recorded a higher rate of food insecurity, showing 57.1% assessed to be moderate and severely food insecure when compared to the national average.

	Moderate or severe (FI _{mod+sev})	Severe (FI _{sev})
	2020/2021	2020/2021
World	30.4	11.9
Latin America and the Caribbean	40.9	14.2
Belize	45.5	5.9

Notes: The estimates for the World and Latin America and the Caribbean are from FAO (2021) and the estimates for Belize are from the SIB.

Source: FAO and SIB

Different methodologies were used for the FIES in the LFS and the present Food Security and Livelihoods survey. The LFS conducted by SIB used a 12 month recall period and a selected sample of 3000 households (see the full report for more information). This Food Security and Livelihoods survey used a 30 day recall period and data collected is not nationally representative. It is necessary to keep this in mind when making comparisons, however it does appear that there is a negative trend towards increasing severity of food insecurity.

*FAO, 2021. *Prevalence of Food Insecurity in Belize - 2021*.

Link: http://sib.org.bz/wp-content/uploads/FIES_AnalysisReportBelize.pdf

THE ESTIMATED PREVALENCE OF FOOD INSECURITY BY DISTRICT*		
	Moderate + Severe	Severe only
Total sample	41.4	5.4
Corozal	51.1	4.6
Orange walk	46.4	4.7
Belize	29.4	5.3
Cayo	48.6	4.7
Stann Creek	40.5	7.7
Toledo	52.1	7.1

THE ESTIMATED PREVALENCE OF FOOD INSECURITY BY ETHNIC GROUP*		
	Moderate + Severe	Severe only
Total sample	41.4	5.4
Creole	35.6	7.2
Garifuna	31.6	6.6
Maya	57.1	8.7
Mestizo/Hispanic	45.6	4.4
Mennonite	21.1	1.6

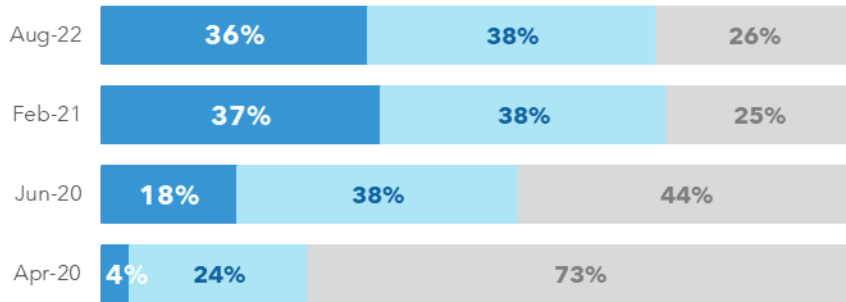
Source: Computed by FAO using SIB LFS data, November 2021 (see report).

FOOD SECURITY | Food stocks

- ▶ A considerable proportion of households still reports having no food stocks at all or having food stocks for less than a week.

Does your household have any food stock?

■ No food stock ■ Less than 1 week ■ More than 1 week



"I've basically had to cut back on spending habits, not just because cost of living is high but because jobs are not available and I have family members that are dependent on me for survival." - Male, 26, Belize

"High cost inflation and long term unemployment ."- Male, 32, Belize

"Having to raise my own protein source to meat a healthy diet needs." - Female, 46, Belize

"My focus is to purchase only necessities, and live a simple life. Stay within my means of living." - Female, 44, Belize

In August 2022, 36% of respondents reported that their household had no food stock while 26% of respondents reported having more than a week's worth of food supplies in their households. These results are consistent with the findings from February 2021. While some of these changes are likely driven by people not needing to "stock up" related to lockdowns, people's eroding financial means are also an influencing factor.

Overall, the lack of food stock in Belize (36%) appears to be reported slightly more often than the average for the Caribbean region (30%).

Of respondents reporting below or well below average income, 48% had no food stocks at the time of the survey and only 14% had more than a week's worth of food stock, compared to 32% of respondents with average income or 48% with above or well above average income levels. Households that derive their income primarily from regular employment also have larger food stocks than households relying mainly on informal income sources or assistance.

Households in urban areas seem to stock up on food more than those living in rural locations. Those relying on agriculture as their main income source also tend to have less food stocks or for shorter periods of time (less than a week) compared to respondents who derive their income primarily from public administration or other sectors.

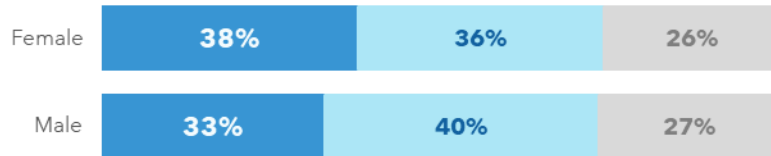
Respondents under 60 years old also appear to have less food stocks in their households compared to those over 60 years old, however this finding should be treated with caution due to low number of responses in the over 60 years old age group.

FOOD SECURITY | Food stocks

Does your household have any food stock?

■ No food stock ■ Less than 1 week ■ More than 1 week

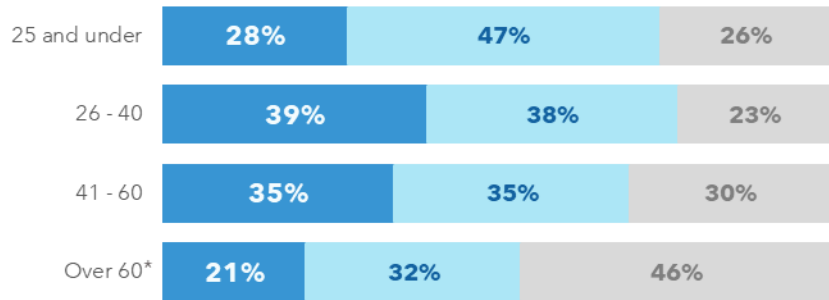
By sex



By urban/rural location

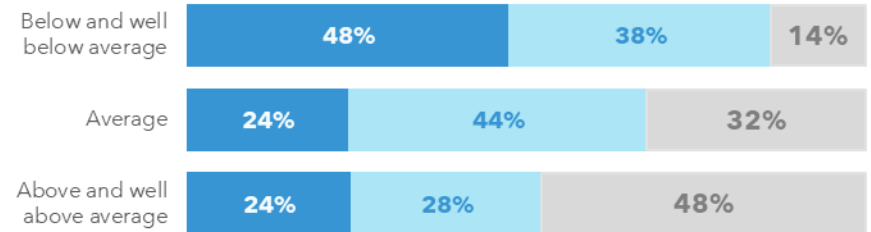


By age group

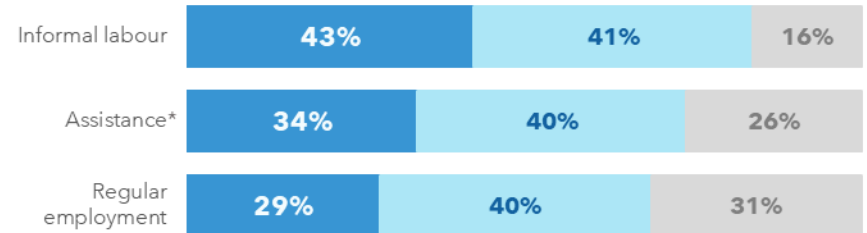


* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By perceived income level



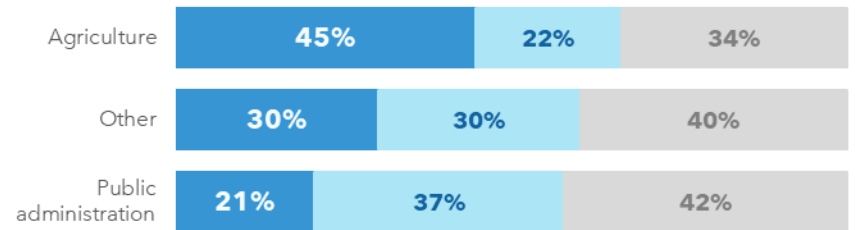
By income sources



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By income sector

Results are presented only for income sectors that received at least 100 responses.



WIDER IMPACTS | Main worries

- ▶ Worries about the inability to cover food and other essential needs are rapidly growing among the respondents in Belize.

Main worries expressed by respondents

Multiple choices could be selected.

	Aug-22	Feb-21	Jun-20
Inability to cover essential needs	44%	33%	45%
Inability to cover food needs	41%	38%	40%
Unemployment	35%	54%	58%
Fear of illness	35%	48%	57%
Having to resort to savings	19%	11%	12%
Disruptions to education	11%	13%	10%
Social isolation	11%	18%	12%
Child(ren)/dependents care	9%	11%	9%
Movement restrictions	4%	6%	5%
Unable to access services	2%	2%	1%
Violence in the household	0%	1%	1%
Violence in the community	0%	0%	0%
Other worries	0%	0%	0%

In light of the cost of living crisis, the inability to cover food and other essential needs were the main worries expressed by the respondents. This has superseded the fear of illness and unemployment when compared with results from February 2021. Representing a notable increase compared to the past rounds, 44% of respondents expressed concerns over their inability to cover essential needs while 41% expressed inability to cover food needs as their main worries. These worries were followed by unemployment and fear of illness both expressed by 35% of respondents.

Households who perceive to be from below and well below income groups continue to experience different impacts and therefore have differing worries when compared to households from above or well above average income groups. Well below and below income households mainly worried about inability to cover food needs (54%), followed by inability to cover essential needs (50%) and unemployment (41%). In contrast, more than half of those (51%) from above and well below income group were mainly concerned with fear of illness.

While both male and female respondents cited inability to cover food and other essential needs as their main worries, a slightly higher percentage of women cited inability to cover essential needs when compared with men. Inability to cover essential needs are the leading worry for all age groups, with the exception of the over 60 who are more concerned with falling ill. Inability to cover food needs is the second most common worry for all age groups besides those aged 25 and below, for whom unemployment is the main concern.

Differences can be also observed between localities. Respondents from rural areas are more worried about inability to cover essential needs (49%), cover food needs (32%) and unemployment (30%). In contrast, fear of illness was cited as the main worry of urban dwellers (42%) when compared to rural dwellers (30%).

WIDER IMPACTS | Main worries

Main worries expressed by respondents

Multiple choices could be selected.

By sex

	Female	Male
Inability to cover essential needs	48%	40%
Inability to cover food needs	40%	41%
Unemployment	33%	37%
Fear of illness	37%	33%
Having to resort to savings	19%	19%
Disruptions to education	12%	10%
Social isolation	10%	12%
Child(ren)/dependents care	11%	7%
Movement restrictions	3%	5%
Unable to access services	1%	2%
Violence in the household	0%	1%
Violence in the community	0%	0%
Other worries	0%	0%

By perceived income level

	Below or well below average	Average	Above or well above average
Inability to cover essential needs	50%	48%	23%
Inability to cover food needs	54%	35%	20%
Unemployment	41%	35%	23%
Fear of illness	29%	38%	51%
Having to resort to savings	15%	23%	22%
Disruptions to education	13%	9%	12%
Social isolation	8%	12%	17%
Child(ren)/dependents care	13%	7%	3%
Movement restrictions	3%	4%	9%
Unable to access services	1%	2%	12%
Violence in the household	1%	0%	1%
Violence in the community	0%	0%	0%
Other worries	0%	0%	0%

By urban/rural location

	City or town	Village or rural area
Inability to cover essential needs	49%	41%
Inability to cover food needs	32%	48%
Unemployment	30%	40%
Fear of illness	42%	30%
Having to resort to savings	23%	16%
Disruptions to education	11%	12%
Social isolation	12%	10%
Child(ren)/dependents care	10%	8%
Movement restrictions	2%	5%
Unable to access services	2%	1%
Violence in the household	0%	1%
Violence in the community	0%	0%
Other worries	0%	0%

By age group

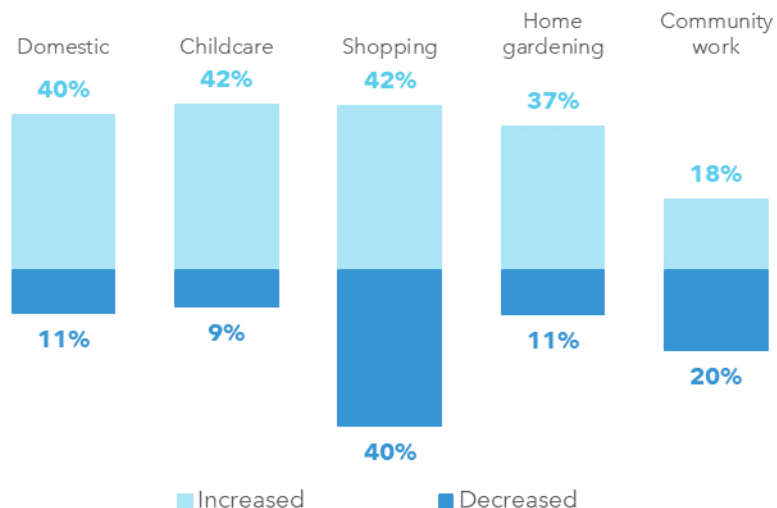
	25 and under	26 - 40	41 - 60	Over 60*
Inability to cover essential needs	52%	47%	41%	14%
Inability to cover food needs	41%	45%	36%	21%
Unemployment	48%	38%	29%	14%
Fear of illness	38%	35%	34%	45%
Having to resort to savings	19%	18%	20%	28%
Disruptions to education	6%	14%	12%	3%
Social isolation	13%	9%	13%	14%
Child(ren)/dependents care	8%	12%	5%	3%
Movement restrictions	2%	3%	5%	10%
Unable to access services	2%	1%	3%	0%
Violence in the household	1%	0%	0%	0%
Violence in the community	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other worries	0%	0%	0%	0%

* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

WIDER IMPACTS | Unpaid care and work

- ▶ Respondents continue to spend more time on domestic work and childcare, while shopping activities are also starting to increase.

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



"Decrease of Salary by 10% for both myself and my wife has put a strain on our finances." - Male, 38, Belize

"affected by high prices on products and service, by the covid itself. Worked on additional activities that could help the family secure food, and also to see how we can assist farmers." - Male, 43, Belize

"Be self sufficient and introducing backyard gardening to neighbors and family members." - Male, 20, Belize

"Total social life change" - Male, 36, Belize

Previous surveys revealed that COVID-19 resulted in people decreasing time spent shopping and increasing time spent on domestic work and childcare. While these trends continued to be reported, they have shifted compared to the February 2022 results. Shopping activities increased for 42% of respondents in August 2022 when compared with 23% in February. The number of respondents reporting increased time spent on childcare (42%) has also decreased since February (53%).

Changes in the time spent on unpaid activities differ across households with different income levels. Average and below income households (42%) reported an increase in childcare when compared with higher income households (33%). Households with below and well below average income mostly reported no change in the level of domestic care when compared with 6 months ago, whereby nearly half of higher income households (47%) reported an increase.

The changes were relatively consistent across sexes, although a slightly higher percentage of men (47%) cited an increase in shopping activities when compared to women (39%).

Focus group discussions carried out in communities of Toledo and Stann Creek revealed insights on gender roles on unpaid work and care. In Stann Creek, Garifuna women from this community tend to be the ones who are managing the finances of their households. Women are generally also the ones who are managing utility bills and food shopping. This is also reported by some of the Mayan Ketchi households where female members of the household support with managing the vegetable gardens. For those that travel to markets to sell their crops, the women are also the ones managing the food shopping.

WIDER IMPACTS | Unpaid care and work

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

By survey round

Aug-22	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
Increased	40%	42%	42%	37%	18%
No change	44%	31%	16%	38%	43%
Decreased	11%	9%	40%	11%	20%
Not applicable	5%	17%	2%	14%	19%

Feb-21	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
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%

Jun-20	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
Increased	46%	43%	22%	33%	13%
No change	37%	31%	17%	39%	38%
Decreased	13%	11%	59%	11%	30%
Not applicable	4%	16%	3%	17%	19%

By sex

Female	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
Increased	39%	44%	39%	35%	15%
No change	44%	28%	14%	35%	41%
Decreased	9%	7%	45%	11%	21%
Not applicable	8%	21%	2%	19%	23%

Male	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
Increased	40%	40%	46%	38%	22%
No change	44%	35%	18%	41%	45%
Decreased	13%	12%	35%	11%	20%
Not applicable	3%	13%	1%	10%	13%

By perceived income level

Below or well below average	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
Increased	36%	42%	43%	34%	17%
No change	42%	29%	12%	31%	37%
Decreased	15%	13%	42%	16%	25%
Not applicable	7%	16%	2%	18%	21%

Average	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
Increased	40%	47%	39%	40%	18%
No change	47%	31%	18%	40%	50%
Decreased	7%	7%	42%	6%	15%
Not applicable	5%	15%	1%	13%	17%

Above or well above average	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
Increased	47%	33%	47%	35%	21%
No change	45%	38%	23%	49%	43%
Decreased	7%	4%	29%	8%	20%
Not applicable	1%	26%	1%	8%	16%

"More virtual work and less coming to office" - Male, 55, Belize

"Getting a decrease in salary and still having to meet payments, and not being able to help other family members." - Female, 36, Belize

"My like style change in many ways eg food, hygiene and communication." - Female, 54, Belize

WIDER IMPACTS | Unpaid care and work

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

By age group

25 and under

	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
Increased	39%	43%	49%	41%	22%
No change	48%	30%	19%	38%	47%
Decreased	10%	10%	32%	9%	16%
Not applicable	3%	17%	0%	12%	16%

26-40

	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
Increased	40%	46%	45%	38%	17%
No change	43%	29%	11%	35%	42%
Decreased	11%	10%	41%	11%	21%
Not applicable	7%	16%	3%	17%	20%

41-60

	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
Increased	41%	41%	37%	35%	17%
No change	44%	35%	20%	41%	43%
Decreased	13%	7%	43%	12%	23%
Not applicable	3%	17%	1%	12%	16%

Over 60*

	Domestic	Childcare	Shopping	Home gardening	Community
Increased	18%	11%	17%	10%	16%
No change	68%	39%	43%	60%	42%
Decreased	0%	0%	39%	15%	5%
Not applicable	14%	50%	0%	15%	37%

* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

"Spend less money on leisure activities and only on essential ones." - Male, 36, Belize

"spent slightly more for slightly less home and house supplies" - Male, 37, Belize

"Made the decision to find a more stable job." - Female, 32, Belize

"Work over time, spend less time with family." - Female, 28, Belize

"We had to gone on half pay" - Female, 45, Belize

"No extracurricular activities with the family, everything is too expensive" - Female, 40, Belize

"Purchasing only essential things" - Female, 30, Belize

"my traveling has been cut back and I am by myself more often" - Female, 65, Belize

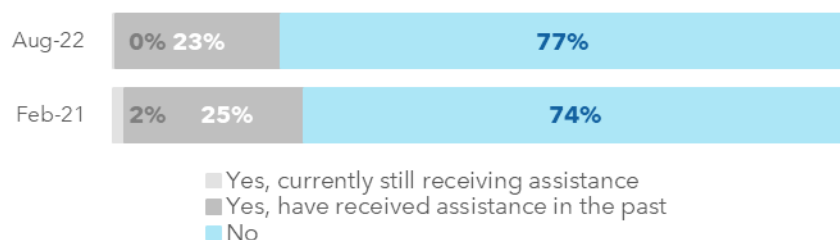
"Being very careful when going into public, homeschooling." - Female, 34, Belize

"Trying to maintain a small back yard garden for self and bartering for other essentials." - Male, 75, Belize

WIDER IMPACTS | Assistance

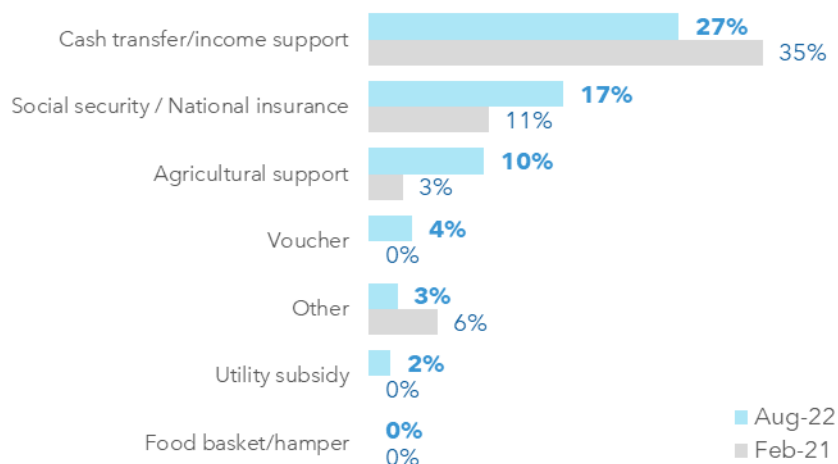
- Cash transfer and income support continue to be the leading form of assistance in response to COVID-19 in Belize.

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.



Nearly a quarter of respondents reported to have received government assistance. This is consistent with the regional average. However, none of the respondents from Belize were still receiving assistance at the time of the survey.

To address the cost of living crisis, the government of Belize has taken several measures. Food assistance was distributed to over 30,000 households. Fuel subsidies for bus operators were provided by the Ministry of Transport, and water subsidies were provided by Belize Water Services. The Belize Water Services company contributed \$430,000 via a 25% discount to residential customers for usage under 3,000 gallons. An amnesty programme for all residential customers was rolled out to alleviate customer financial constraints in the form of cash assistance on social protection and agricultural support. The government had also put in place measures to address the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. Selected vulnerable households received unemployment relief (38,000 persons), food assistance and cash assistance through the BBCAT and BOOST programmes (almost 25,000 households).

Respondents most commonly reported receiving assistance in the form of cash transfers or income support (27%), followed by social security/national insurance (17%) and agricultural support (10%). Respondents reporting below and well below average (28%), and average (20%) income were more likely to receive assistance. A higher proportion living in rural areas (27%) reported receiving some form of assistance compared to urban dwellers (18%).

Recipients of assistance largely consisted of households who already rely on government assistance (37%) as primary income source, followed by those engaging in informal labour (31%). Respondents from the agricultural sector were also likely to receive assistance when compared to other known categories included in the survey.

WIDER IMPACTS | COVID-19 assistance

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

■ Yes ■ No

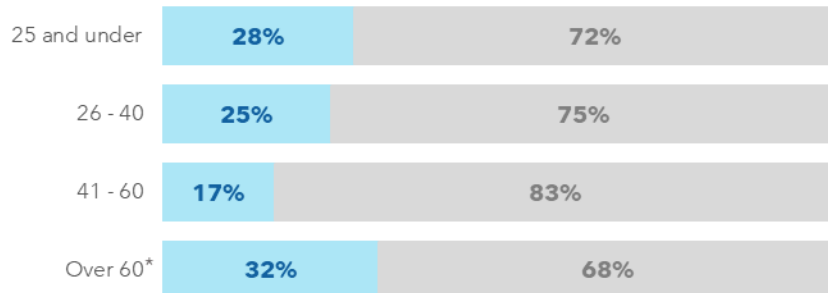
By sex



By urban/rural location

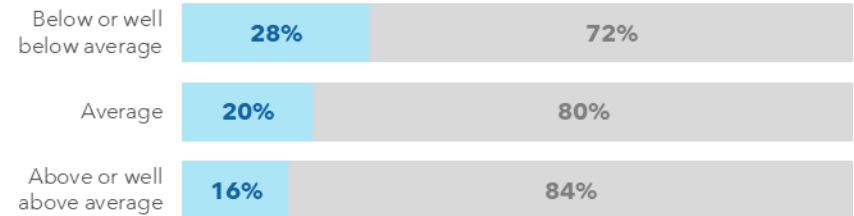


By age group

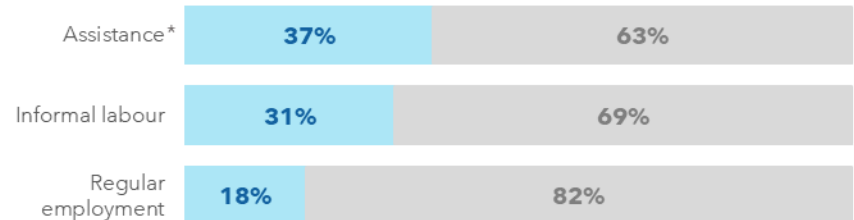


* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By perceived income level



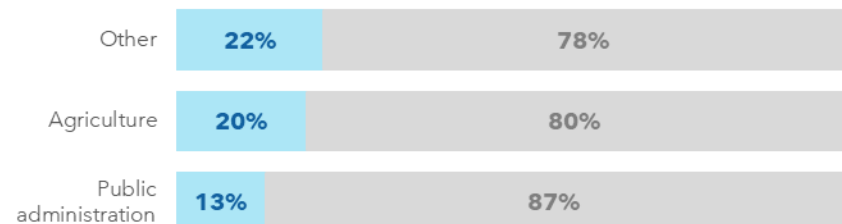
By main income source



* Low response numbers in this category may affect results.

By income sector

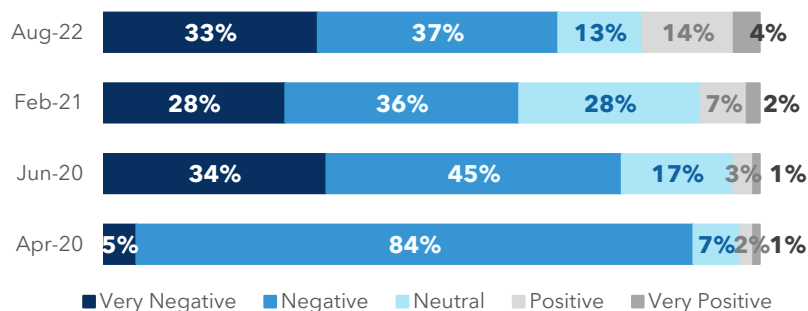
Results are presented only for income sectors that received at least 100 responses.



WIDER IMPACTS | Coping and adapting

- ▶ The cost of living crisis has taken an increasingly negative toll as respondents worry about increasing prices and expenditures.

Distribution of sentiments across open-ended survey responses (English speaking respondents)



Respondents were given the space to provide more nuanced insights on how they are coping with and adapting to the evolving impacts of the pandemic. Out of the 703 respondents, 307 responded to the open-ended question in Belize. Their responses were analysed by machine learning algorithms to categorize and determine the degree of positive and negative emotions. This sentiment analysis classifies the overall feeling expressed within each response and how negative or positive it is.

In August 2022, respondents were expressing negative (37%) and very negative (33%) sentiments, a slight deterioration compared to February 2021 (36% and 28% respectively). At the same time, slightly more respondents expressed positive or very positive sentiments in August 2022 (18%) than in June 2020 (9%).

The distribution of sentiments in Belize is largely following the trends reported in the Caribbean region as a whole.

Some sample responses:

Very negative (33%)

"I have been suffering to food crisis." - Male, 22, Belize

Negative (37%)

"My biggest challenge was coping with loss in salary and managing finances." - Female, 33

Neutral (13%)

"Spend on essential things only." - Female, 28

Positive (14%)

"Be self sufficient and introducing backyard gardening to neighbours and family members." - Male, 20

Very positive (4%)

"Honestly, growing your own produce are better now since covid has began. Food storage is the key." - Male, 21

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

WIDER IMPACTS | Coping and adapting

As with previous surveys, respondents described how they have adjusted to many facets of the COVID-19 pandemic. Added to this they commented on the burdens and challenges of the cost of living crisis. Many voiced feelings of anxiety, stress and uncertainty and impacts to their economic stability and health.

Concerns about increasing prices and financial burdens stand out; this sentiment was echoed throughout the region and across all groups of respondents. New and increasing financial demands related to education, food, utilities, childcare, healthcare and petrol prices have diminished their resources and purchasing power. Many reported depleting their savings to keep up with their bills or essential needs expenditures. Respondents with children raised major concerns about disruptions to the education system and their children's schooling.

Amid these struggles, some highlighted positive elements, including related to faith, opportunities to grow their own food independently and time spent with family.

"I have to be more careful how I spend my income." - Male, 55, Belize

"The education system changed to being significantly online, hence additional money was spent to acquire the necessary resources." - Female, 33, Belize

"Increased domestic work and coping with a full time job. My husband being retired." - Female, 54, Belize

"Live apart of your family and lost most of them, and afraid to be infected especially the children and also paying more net and school fees and electricity, and also medication and fuel for transportation for emergencies. And also my child intime of covid 19 , when GOV change was take away his scholarship and had a biggest impact for my child and family." - Female, 50, Belize

"Its has impacted me financially. personally little by little I adapted to the changes in the high prices of fuel and grocery since COVID19 started" - Female, 35, Belize

"Planting of beans and corn to have at least for every meal" - Male, 30, Belize

"I walk more frequently from point a to point b when running errands" - Female, 40, Belize

"Had to adjust to a salary cut" - Female, 33, Belize

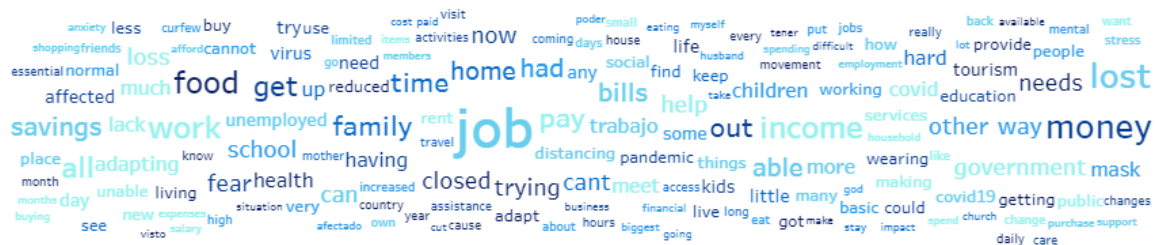
WIDER IMPACTS | Sentiments

Common themes on how respondents are adapting and coping

APRIL
2020



JUNE
2020



FEBRUARY
2021



AUGUST
2021



SPECIAL FOCUS | Impacts on persons with disability

Key informant interviews were conducted along an additional special focus survey to obtain deeper understanding about the impacts of the cost of living crisis on persons with disability. The findings from key informant interviews are presented on this page, while the survey results can be seen on page 67.

Persons with disabilities face specific challenges for earning an income, while shouldering higher living costs in order to manage their conditions. The cost of living crisis further stresses their capacity to meet food, health and other essential needs.

It is estimated that 15-20% persons in Belize have a form of disability*. The official numbers of persons with special needs and disabilities are currently being gathered through a registration drive conducted by the National Emergency Management Organisation to inform a transport emergency evacuation plan. The data gathered will contribute to a national registry for persons with disability.

Key informant interviews provided insights on the biggest challenges persons with disabilities are facing as a result of the cost of living crisis. Transport challenges and their cascading impacts emerged as crucial issue. Access to health services, especially for persons in rural areas, are a challenge even in normal times, and the increase in transport costs further impedes their access to health services. For those with mobility issues, access to health services from rural areas in Toledo is especially challenging as public transport in Belize does not cater for wheelchair access. Private transport through taxis is limited to urban areas and results in increased costs for the passenger. With their mobility hampered, many are staying home which results in less social interactions. Key informants described that this is affecting the mental health of persons with disabilities.

Those who were interviewed in areas such as Stann Creek and Toledo also report that medication has increased in price, citing a lack of price control across the country. This was described as particularly prevalent in rural areas and especially in tourist areas such as Stann Creek where cost of living is already considerably higher.

Increasing energy costs at home are also impacting persons with disabilities who are dependent on assistive technology to treat their conditions. For those with mobility issues, they face more limited options for self sufficient food production such as farming, as wheelchairs don't function offroad and they have minimal mobility to grow and harvest their own food. For those who have had to adjust their diet and reduce the variety or amount of food they consume, this risks exacerbating existing health conditions.

Persons with disabilities are mostly relying on family to support them through their needs, who themselves may be suffering from reduction of income or job loss. Caretakers are not receiving any special support. They are often reported to suffer a reduction of income or job loss as they prioritise the care of their family members over earning a living.

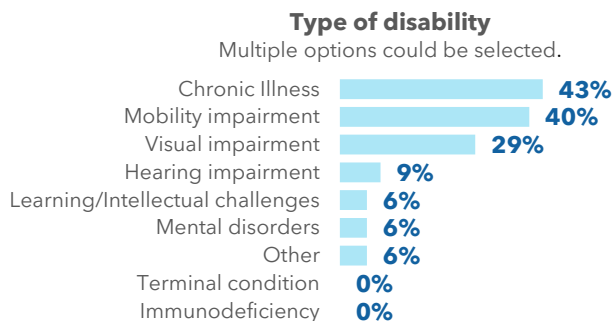
*Chanona, J. 2011. *The Rights of Disabled Persons*. 7 News Belize.
Link: <http://7newsbelize.com/sstory.php?nid=19297>

*"My health condition limits where or what kind of job I can do"
- Female, 48, Cayo district*

"Caring for an adult with mobility issues is severely taxing. I need more help to be able to afford what I need to make care easier e.g. better wheelchair, back braces etc. " - Female, 55, Belize district

SPECIAL FOCUS | Impacts on persons with disability

Survey with persons with disabilities



An additional over-the-phone questionnaire was launched in October 2022 with the support from BAPDA to obtain more information on impacts on persons with disabilities. This survey obtained 35 responses from people with different types of disabilities. Most of them suffer from chronic illness or mobility impairment, and 80% of them require medication for their health condition(s). While three fourths live with their families, almost one fourth lives alone or are single parents. Majority lives in the Belize district (57%), and 14% live in each of the Cayo, Orange Walk and Stann Creek districts. The results from this survey were compared with the average results obtained for the whole of Belize in August 2022 to identify similarities and differences. The findings are indicative only and not representative of the group.

Impacts on livelihoods

Persons with disabilities cited livelihood problems (43%) less often compared to the Belize average (61%). However, movement restrictions were more often seen as a reason for these problems. They reported job loss or reduced income (34%) and having to

resort to secondary income (9%) less often than the Belize average (62% reported job loss or reduced income). This could be due to the rapidly changing economic situation in Belize between August and October, or because these persons more often rely on support from families or government (e.g., pension, remittances, assistance).

Impacts on markets

Persons with disabilities cited problems with market access (26%) and changes in their shopping behaviour (74%) less often compared to the Belize average (47% and 90% respectively). Respondents marked better availability of fresh foods, hygiene items and medicines than the Belize average, however they noted that staple foods were not so readily available. Persons with disabilities noticed similar food price increases (97%) compared to the Belize average (99%). However, they much more often cited significant price increases in transport (74%) compared to the Belize average (51%).

Impacts on food security

The food security among persons with disabilities is concerning. On the food consumption and the FIES scale, persons with disabilities more often reported that they went a whole day without eating or were hungry but did not eat compared to the Belize average. A third did not have any food stock at the time of the survey which is similar to the Belize average.

Wider impacts

Persons with disabilities worry more about their ability to cover non-food essential needs (60%) and violence in their communities (23%) compared to the Belize average (44% and 0% respectively). On the other hand, they are worrying less about the unemployment (17% compared to 35% for the Belize average). Their time spent on community work has increased (29%) more than the Belize average (18%), but at the same time their shopping activities haven't increased (31%) as much as for the Belize average (42%).

SPECIAL FOCUS | Impacts on indigenous groups

Key informant interviews and focus group discussions were conducted along an additional special focus survey to obtain deeper understanding about the impacts of the cost of living crisis on indigenous groups. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions, conducted alongside MAFSE staff and community leaders in the Mayan Ketchi communities in Toledo and Garifuna communities in Stann Creek, found some stark differences relating to their capacity to cope and adapt to the crisis (see page 68-69).

Common challenges related to transport, availability and affordability of items in markets were expressed by all groups interviewed. Some food items such as flour, rice, oil (with an increase in price from \$65 to \$100) and beans, were widely reported as being scarce in the communities. In addition, considerable price increases were observed for these items. This resulted in extra costs incurred for additional travel as communities had to travel to further locations to purchase these items from other stores. Access to health and essential services was also a concern raised by all groups. Many in Toledo and Stann Creek observed prices increasing, citing a lack of price control, especially for medicine. Access to services is limited as they have to travel to Dandriga to pay bills, incurring additional inflated travel costs. Respondents reported large differences in costs between urban and rural areas, and wholesale and retail prices.

Almost all groups interviewed were the most concerned about their youth population as they face major disruptions to their education. They describe youth being pulled out of school to support running the family farm, resulting in less opportunities later on in their adult lives as their education is impeded. People expressed that elderly, persons with disability and those who are unemployed are receiving minimal services or support. They are widely seen as the groups most vulnerable and impacted by this crisis.

Households with no income sources are usually relying on remittances from families living abroad that are already stressed themselves, and a short-term support from the government which has now largely halted.

While different indigenous groups identified the above common challenges, they have been also experiencing the impacts of the cost of living crisis in varying ways depending on their farming practices, reliance on supply chains and localities.

Mayan Ketchi communities in Toledo as a model for resilience in the face of the current cost of living crisis

Mayan Ketchi communities in Toledo have a farming heritage, and many were able to revert back to subsistence farming when the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis disrupted their livelihoods. They practise various sustainable farming activities such as inga cropping, mucuna (mulch), and beekeeping.

Nearly all of the Mayan Ketchi communities in Toledo who participated in the interviews practise organic farming and do not use fertiliser. Due to this, they have largely escaped the impacts of the rise in fertiliser costs. Many are cacao farmers and the sale of cacao is heavily certified by buyers such as Maya Mountain Cacao and Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA), which are restricting the use of fertiliser. In addition, Mayan Ketchi communities are generally extremely resilient as they generate their own animal feed and avoid potential wastage from unused corn.

Mayan Ketchi communities interviewed in Toledo have not been reliant on electricity from the grid. Prior to the pandemic, they have lived with no connectivity to the grid, and many have been utilising solar panels. As a result they are not majorly impacted by the increases in electricity and utility costs due to the current cost of living crisis.

SPECIAL FOCUS | Impacts on indigenous groups

Another challenge expressed by Ketchi communities was connectivity. The lack of connectivity impacted the ability of their youth to connect to online classes when the pandemic hit. Instead, they received education packages which had to be picked up and returned to school, which incurred in extra transportation costs.

With their strong reliance on subsistence farming, the largest expenses reported were on livelihood inputs, and particularly labour. For example, one household replied the following when asked about their main worries: *"We have no worries, we can get everything here"*. Although the census data shows that the poverty rates among the Mayan communities are very high (77% in 2018, SIB), the Ketchi communities in Toledo do not appear to be food poor. However, they face challenges with transport, access to health and essential services, and climate changes.

Garifuna communities in Stann Creek are resorting to entrepreneurship as they grapple with already high living costs

Garifuna communities in Hopkins and Placencia were already shouldering much higher living costs prior to the cost of living crisis as these areas are attractive for tourists and foreign expatriates. The already high costs were further exacerbated by the cost of living crisis. Communities rely mostly on tourism (60%), small businesses (30%) and fishing and farming (10%) for their income. With Belize's border restrictions fully lifted only recently in July 2022, tourism has been slow to recover as the world grappled with the cost of living crisis. To adapt, many Garifuna small business owners created local products catering more to local markets and less to foreign expats who reside in these areas. Communities interviewed here had to muster entrepreneurial spirit to adapt to the lockdown caused by the pandemic.

"We need to go back to farming!", one community member expressed. The land in Stann Creek is arable and fertile, but unlike the Mayan Ketchi in Toledo, many communities here do not have the institutional knowledge and heritage to revert seamlessly back to growing their own food. *"Many of life's essentials have increase and in some cases doubled in price"*, causing many Garifuna community members to *"use less to cut costs"* and reduce the variety of foods they are consuming. They are often relying on mobile vegetable trucks that have upped their produce prices since the increase in gas prices.

As with farmers in Toledo, weather and climate have played a crucial role in farming also for these areas. Farming coops reported drainage issue as their land became waterlogged due to excess rain. In contrast to the farming practices undertaken by the Mayan Ketchi, farmers in Toledo were used to applying fertiliser. However, due to high prices they are starting only now to produce their own compost. Pesticides are used in these communities which contributes to higher input costs. As the cost of animal feed is increasing, the cattle and swine farming is becoming an expensive venture and many are abandoning the practice. Some are trying to adapt and use cassava to feed the animals.

Salaries are not increasing, and many government workers, including teachers, have only been receiving partial salaries. For farming communities here, livelihood inputs followed by food are their largest expenses. Many farmers were forced to reduce their livelihood inputs in order to afford food: *"Labour had gotten too expensive, so can only clean the farm once a month"*. In contrast, non-farming communities are citing spending more on their utility bills (the utility costs have risen from BZD 300 to BZD 700 per month since COVID-19), forcing many to reduce their spending on food. Water bill used to be a flat rate but it is now metered.

CONCLUSION

The food security and livelihoods of people in Belize have undergone significant changes over the past two years. The survey shows that while the effects of COVID-19 had a profound impact on how people in Belize meet their most pressing needs and earn a living, its impact has been significantly aggravated by the cost of living crisis. Belize has still not recovered from the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving it ill-equipped to cope with yet another crisis. Incomes remain depressed, labour markets continue to struggle to recover, and the prices of food, fuel and fertilizers are at record levels. Government's limited fiscal space and further indebtedness continues to impact its abilities to fully address the compound crisis, with financing for public services such as health, education or social protection being at risk from cuts.

The cost of living crisis is undermining food security in Belize. Food prices have steeply increased in Belize due to the heavy reliance on food imports for general consumption and record-high inflation in transport costs. In addition, the socio-economic fallout from the pandemic made it harder for people to have enough purchasing power to cope with the current price increases, which led to a staggeringly high number of food insecure people in August 2022. Based on the survey results, it is estimated that approximately half of people living in Belize are food insecure. People continue to buy cheaper, less healthy or fewer kinds of food, eat less than they should, draw on savings, sell productive assets and reduce other critical expenditures on health and education to get by. The inability to cover food and other essential needs is a growing concern as people experience first-hand the effects of increasing prices.

Belize also relies heavily on imports for fuel, fertilizer, machinery and electronics, chemicals and metals. The steadily growing price of livelihood inputs and transportation costs are the main reasons causing disruptions to people's livelihoods, and the impact on incomes and well being remains pervasive. Particularly affected by these price increases in Belize are people living in rural areas and engaging in agriculture.

The significant reduction of COVID-19 related restrictions in Belize brings cause for optimism on economic recovery, as shown by the slightly reduced number of persons who reported job loss or reduced income. However, the picture in August 2022 is an extremely worrying one for the future, as a greater proportion of respondents resorted to secondary/alternative sources of income, which will affect their future livelihoods. Time spent on childcare and domestic work are still greater than before the pandemic, and these activities often are disproportionately shouldered by women.

The compound impacts are hitting hardest those who can least afford it, in particular families with the lowest incomes, women, younger people, and those relying on less formal income sources or assistance. It will take substantial effort and directed investment to make sure that those already in difficulty are not left even further behind as Belize seeks to turn the corner on the crisis.

While the government in Belize has implemented targeted measures to support consumers and the most vulnerable households dealing with the consequences of the cost of living crisis, the situation points to greater needs to buffer economy. Social protection has played a critical role in response to limiting the socioeconomic effects of COVID-19. While many of the measures deployed have ended, people's incomes and lives continue to be challenged by the cost of living crisis. Further investments into people's resilience in food systems by government and development partners in Belize are critical.

The new challenges unleashed by the cost of living crisis will mirror much of those encountered in the aftermath of the pandemic. Now is a critical window to avoid shock fatigue, reinvigorate efforts and engage in new solutions to support those living on the edge and to create more resilient systems. Food systems, social protection, agricultural support, financial inclusion and emergency preparedness are all critical entry points for developing sustainable solutions to curb the impacts of the cost of living crisis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Expand social protection coverage through both temporary and long term programmes to tailor for specific needs of vulnerable groups. There is an urgent need to implement and expand social protection programmes to provide immediate and longer-term relief to the most vulnerable populations in Belize. Social protection programmes should be tailored for specific vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities who are impacted disproportionately. Interventions should be aligned to the national disability policy act which is currently in preparation, and profile and define vulnerable groups accordingly. Guided by the policies, social protection programmes should meet urgent needs and provide mechanisms to strengthen livelihoods and economic recovery at the household level, as well as psychosocial support for individuals.

Strengthen food systems by considering energy sensitive practices to boost local/regional production, transformation and consumption. Resilient and sustainable farming practices by indigenous groups can provide an alternative mode to food production amongst other groups in Belize to reduce reliance on fertiliser and pesticides, and create their own feed and mulch to cushion any further shocks in the increase of inputs. There is a need to encourage demand for local markets and local consumptions in order to balance healthy diets and nutritional intake while supporting local food production. The use of technology is often attributed to increasing yield and efficiency for larger scale production, technological solutions should factor in for the impacts of the cost of living crisis on increased costs in energy to focus on green and climate smart technologies, especially inclusive of farmers who do not already have access to electricity.

Strengthen market monitoring systems to inform policy interventions. Monitoring of price fluctuations over time will support informing the implementation of any market intervention schemes, in order to balance the complex and dynamic supply chains in Belize between various levels of food agricultural systems and border trade in and out of Belize. Data collection should expand to include monitoring of agricultural inputs, producer and wholesale prices, and other intermediate inputs such as storage, transport, and packaging. Price alerts can trigger relevant targeted interventions through subsidies and schemes to protect vulnerable households already struggling to put food on the table and provide some level of stabilisation of livelihood inputs for food production.

Invest in data for improved management and delivery of social protection programmes. Gender sensitive, inclusive and nationally representative data is pivotal in identifying potential needs that may arise for different shocks on the most vulnerable households and target groups. Data can support to define and characterise the vulnerability of a household, quantify those in need, and ensure assistance targets the most vulnerable. Investment in data analysis and management systems should ensure that data is accessible and actionable to enable tailored solutions to strengthen national social protection mechanisms.

Invest in emergency preparedness and response, including coordination. Paired with natural disasters, shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the cost of living crisis have the propensity to hamper economic progress in Belize. Investments in disaster preparedness are critical to make sure future shocks do not set back progress. Opportunities include strengthening coordination between government and non-government stakeholders, developing or expanding digital approaches to assessment and supply chain management, and deepening disaster risk financing options tailored to the hazard profile of Belize.

METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The fifth round of the CARICOM Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods survey was launched via a webform, which was accessible on mobile/smartphones and PC/desktops. The data collection period was inclusive of 19 July to 12 August 2022. The survey was circulated via email, social media, SMS, media and other communication channels. WFP performed the data collection 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.

While the survey contributes to a better overview of impacts, the data is not representative, and the use of a web-based questionnaire limits inputs from those without connectivity. While this report refers to the results of previous survey rounds, the varying demographics of respondents limit comparability across survey rounds.

Additional focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted to provide deeper insights on the impacts faced by persons with disabilities and indigenous group. These FGDs and KIIs were conducted in partnership with MAFSE counterparts in Toledo and Stann Creek. Additional survey was also deployed with the support from members of Belize Assembly for Persons with Diverse Abilities (BAPDA).

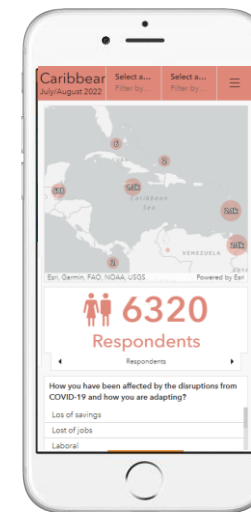
WFP expresses warm appreciation to the Government of Belize for contributing to this report. Ministries who contributed include Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise (MAFSE), Statistics Institute of Belize (SIB), and Ministry of Human Development (MHD).

The qualitative analysis performed builds on earlier collaboration with Joseph Xu from Google's AI unit using Natural Language Processing (NLP). This sentiment analysis was used to determine the distribution of very negative to very positive responses. To moderate the non-representative nature of the data, the analysis team further refined the classifications presented by the algorithm.

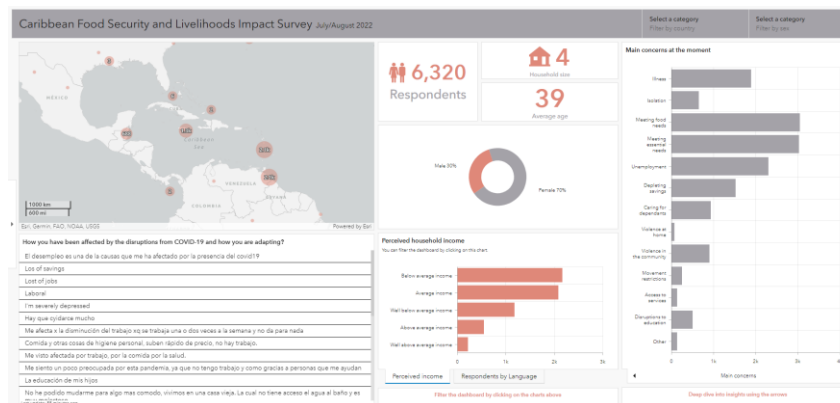
This report was prepared by WFP Caribbean - Irina Bird Reddiar, Amy Chong, Trisandhi Gosine and Camilla Spallino with the support and coordination of Rashiel Velarde and the Government of Belize.



Survey form



[Dashboard](#) for Smartphones



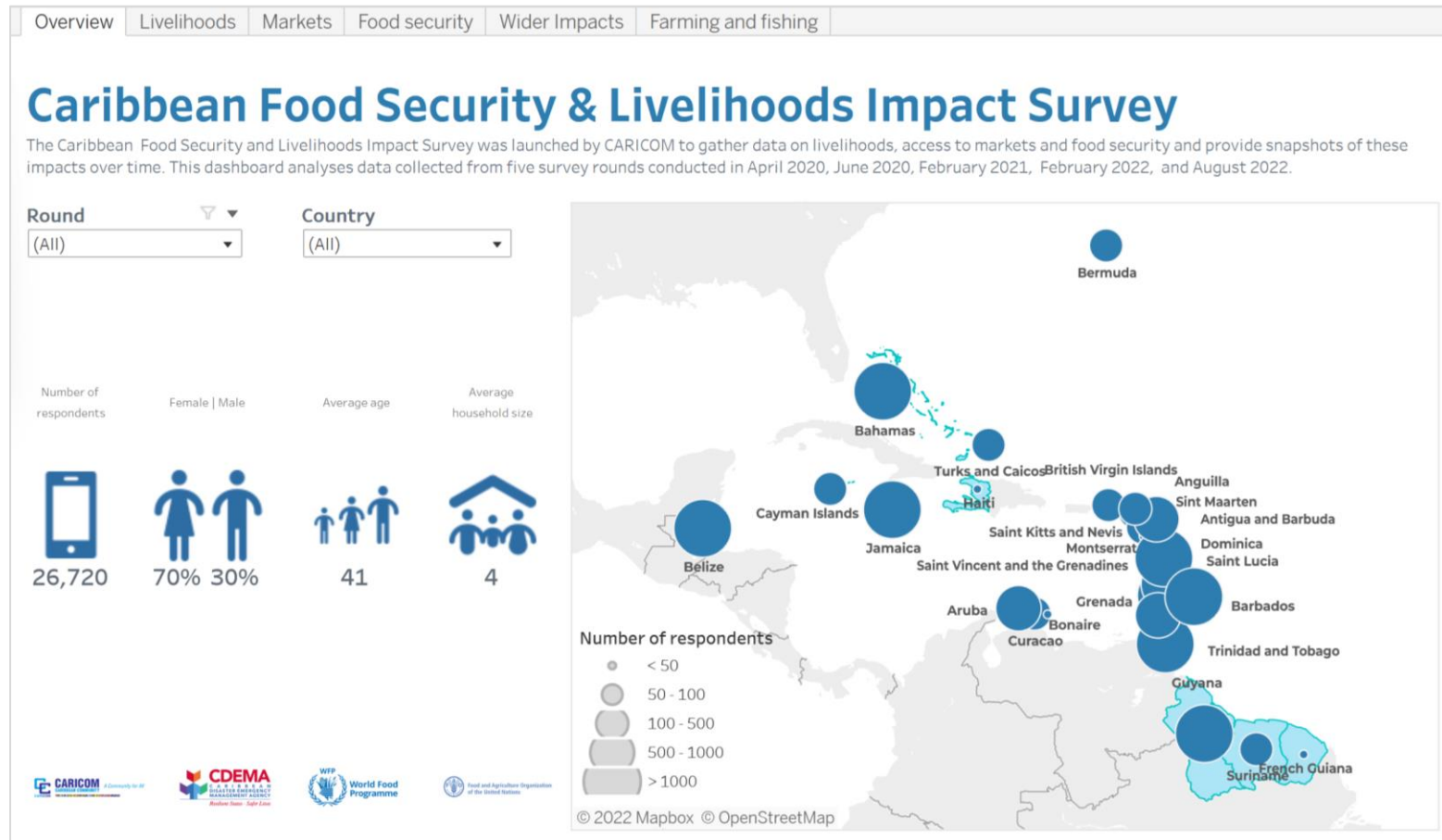
[Dashboard](#) for PCs/Laptops

METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A feature introduced in the fourth survey round is the development of a Tableau dashboard which analyses data collected from five rounds of the Caribbean COVID-19 Food Security & Livelihoods Survey conducted in April 2020 (Round 1), June 2020 (Round 2), February 2021 (Round 3), February 2022 (Round 4) and August 2022 (Round 5). The dashboard can be accessed through the link or the QR code to the right.



SCAN the QR code to see the Food Security & Livelihoods Survey dashboard online. It may take a second to load. Alternatively, follow this link: <https://analytics.wfp.org/t/Public/Views/CaribbeanFoodSecurityLivelihoodsImpactSurvey/Overview>



CALCULATION OF FOOD INSECURITY ESTIMATES

Two methodologies were used for calculating the food insecurity estimates presented in this report: the rCARI, which is an adapted remote version of the Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI), and the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES).

The Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI) was developed by the World Food Programme as a standardised approach to assessing and reporting the level of food insecurity within a population. Under the CARI approach, each surveyed household is classified into one of four food security categories: food secure, marginally food secure, moderately food insecure, and severely food insecure. This classification is based on the household's current status of food security - using food consumption indicators - and its coping capacity - using indicators measuring economic vulnerability and asset depletion. The CARI combines the indicators into a summary indicator - called the Food Security Index (FSI) - which represents the population's overall food security status. This FSI is a simple average of the summary measures of a household's current food security status and its coping capacity, ranging from 1 (food secure) to 4 (severely food insecure). For this report, current food security status was assessed based on responses to the question "Which statement best reflects your food situation over the past 7 days?". The coping capacity dimension was calculated based on responses to the questions "Has your household income changed since the COVID-19 outbreak?" and "What are your household's main income sources over the past year?". The percentages of moderately and severely food insecure obtained through this approach were applied to the overall regional population to obtain regional estimates of food insecurity.

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 eight questions during a 12 months or 30 days recall period: while the 12 months recall period is typically used for SDG monitoring, reference to the past 30 days is in order to assess recent food insecurity and its risk factors or consequences. 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 FAO's methodology and [FIES online App](#).

For more information on the CARI, see WFP's ['Technical Guidance Notes Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security \(CARI\)'](#) (2015).

For more information on the FIES, see FAO's ['The Food Insecurity Experience Scale: Measuring food insecurity through people's experiences'](#) and FAO's ["Implementing the FIES in surveys"](#)

UNITED NATIONS WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

WFP Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean

UN House, Marine Gardens
Christ Church
Barbados

Website: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/caribbean>

Email: barbados.communications@wfp.org

CARICOM

Caribbean Community Secretariat

Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown
PO Box 10827
Guyana

Website: <https://www.caricom.org>



SCAN the QR code to see all the Food Security & Livelihoods reports online. Alternatively, follow this link:

<https://www.wfp.org/publications/caribbean-covid-19-food-security-and-livelihoods-impact-survey>



With kind support from

