

# Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

## Natural Hazards and the Cost of Living Crisis

### SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES | August 2023

Successive shocks and crises over the last few years continue to reverberate on the food security and livelihoods of people in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. The pandemic and the cost of living crisis have severely affected peoples' purchasing power where more people are forced to make difficult compromises to meet their food and other essential needs. These trends are exacerbated by the ever-present threat of natural hazards in the region, which could be devastating for those already living in poverty and a tipping point for those on the margins.

To inform decision-making in the Caribbean, CARICOM and the World Food Programme launched the Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods Survey to highlight the impact of the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the effect of natural hazards on food security and livelihoods over time.

This report analyses data for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from the sixth round of data collection, which took place from 10 to 28 May 2023. It compares findings with previous survey rounds conducted between June 2020 and August 2022.

#### Main results from the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines surveys

\*Comparison with the April 2020 and February 2021 survey rounds is not included because of the low number of responses from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

	May 2023	Aug 2022	Feb 2022	Jun 2020	
<b>LIVELIHOODS</b>	Disrupted livelihoods	58% ▲	48%	55%	45%
	Reduction/loss of income	39% ▼	48%	55%	59%
<b>MARKETS</b>	Lack of market access	56% ▲	48%	46%	22%
	Change in shopping behaviour	87% ▼	89%	87%	77%
	Increase in food prices	96% ▼	99%	91%	68%
<b>FOOD SECURITY</b>	Reduced food consumption	48% ▲	45%	40%	46%
	Lack of food stock	41% ▲	36%	28%	19%



**May 2023**

**386**

Respondents

73% | 27%  
Female | Male

**Aug 2022**

**293**

Respondents

74% | 26%  
Female | Male

**Feb 2022**

**506**

Respondents

75% | 25%  
Female | Male

**Feb 2021**

\*Not included because of the low number of responses from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

**Jun 2020**

**114**

Respondents

78% | 22%  
Female | Male

**Apr 2020**

\*Not included because of the low number of responses from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.



## Cost of living crisis

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines rely heavily on food imports, which make up 87 percent of all food trade (excluding fish; FAOSTAT, 2021). This means that local food prices are highly vulnerable to fluctuations in regional and global food markets. According to FAO's Food Price Index, global food prices have decreased by 23.5 percent as of May 2023 since the all-time high in March 2022. However, food inflation remains high in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (food prices increased by over 10 percent in May 2023 compared to 2022). Due to this, essential food purchases are increasingly challenging for many.

The majority of respondents from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines report significant price increases in food, electricity, housing and health. However, compared to August 2022 a smaller proportion noted significant increases in gas and other fuels.



## Natural hazards

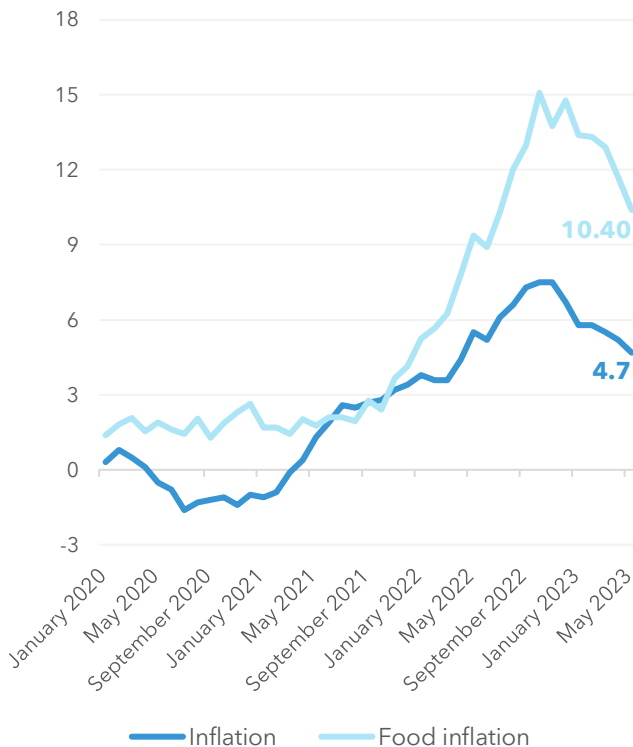
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is exposed to a wide range of natural hazards that pose a significant threat for climate sensitive livelihood activities and people's lives. Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) shows that there were 17 reported natural hazards in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines between 1980 - 2022. The most recent events were the eruption of La Soufrière volcano, which displaced about 23,000 people, and Hurricane Elsa in 2021. Other natural hazards that occurred in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were storms (8), followed by floods (6) and drought (1).

Recorded events between 1980-2022 affected almost 86,000 people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and resulted in total adjusted damages of USD 638 million. The eruption of La Soufrière caused the largest natural disaster-related damages, resulting in 55 percent of all reported damages between 1980-2022.

### Inflation in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (Jan 2020 - May 2023; %)

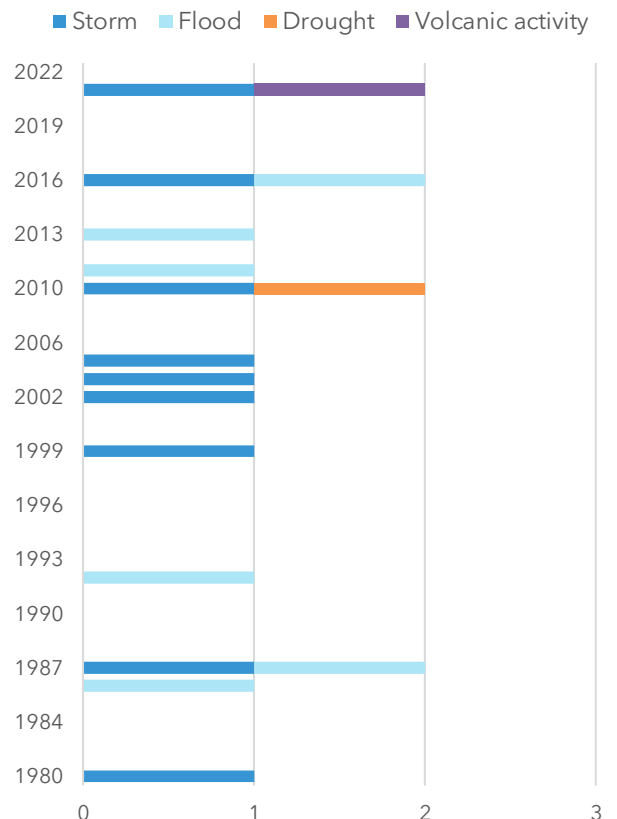
Point-to-point inflation rates.

Source: Statistical Office of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and FAOSTAT



### Reported natural hazards in Jamaica (1980-2022)

Source: EM-DAT





## Livelihoods

**The cost of living crisis continues to impact people's livelihoods.** Disruptions continue to affect livelihoods with 58 percent of respondents facing disruptions in the 30 days prior to the survey. As with the previous survey round, unaffordability of livelihood inputs is the main driver, cited by 56 percent of those affected by disruptions. Respondents involved in agriculture continue to report high costs of inputs, especially for animal feed, fertilizer and tools.

**Loss of income and jobs has been decreasing since all-time high in June 2020,** with 39 percent of respondents reporting that their household has experienced job loss or reduced salaries in 6 months prior to the survey. However, the proportion of those having to resort to secondary or alternative sources of income has been steadily increasing since June 2020, suggesting the continuation of economic hardship.



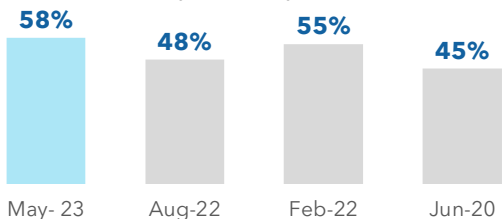
## Markets

**More than half of respondents reported challenges accessing markets** in the week prior to the survey, which represents the greatest deterioration since June 2020. Lack of financial means continues to be the overwhelming reason for limited market access, cited by 97 percent of those unable to access markets. Respondents are increasingly buying cheaper and less preferred foods and in smaller quantities than usual (69 percent of those that had made changes their shopping habits).

**People are widely reporting higher prices of food and non-food items.** Changes in food prices are being observed by respondents with 96 percent reporting an increase in the 3 months prior to the survey. The most significant price increases in non-food items have been observed for electricity (65 percent) and housing (48 percent reported a significant increase).

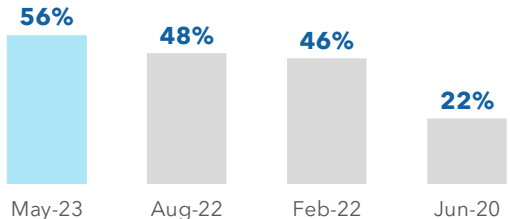
### Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 30 days prior to the survey

Recall period was changed from 2 weeks to 30 days in the May 2023 survey round.



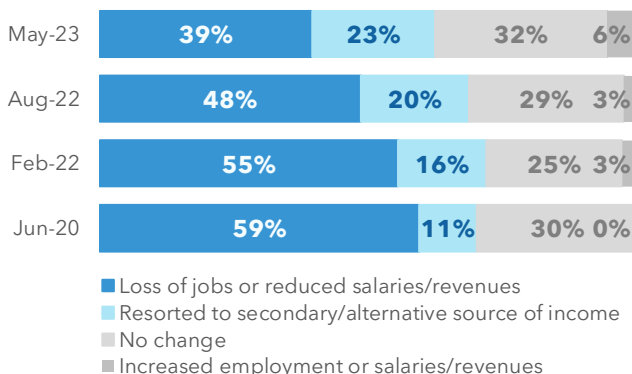
### Respondents unable to access markets in the 30 days prior to the survey

Recall period was changed from 7 to 30 days in May 2023.

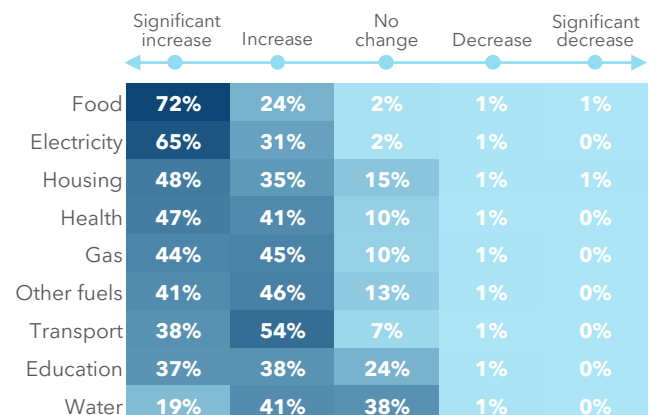


### Has your household income changed in the 6 months prior to the survey?

Recall period changed from "since COVID-19" to "in the 6 months prior to the survey" in May 2023 survey round.



### Respondents reporting a change in the costs of the commodities in the 3 months prior to the survey





## Food consumption

**Food consumption patterns are very concerning**, with 74 percent of respondents skipping meals, eating less preferred foods, or going an entire day without eating in the week leading up to the survey. These results are very similar to August 2022.

**Respondents are trying to meet their immediate food needs by employing negative coping strategies.** Respondents are selling productive assets (28 percent), spending savings (78 percent) or reducing expenditures on health and education (56 percent). These measures may compromise their well being and future livelihoods.

**In May 2023, 41 percent of respondents reported that their household had no food stock**, while 35 percent reported having less than a week's worth of food supplies. This is slightly worse compared to the results from August 2022.

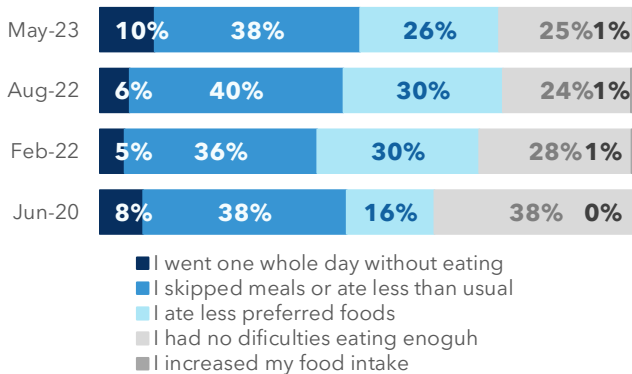


## Food insecurity

**Using the FIES methodology it is estimated that 68 percent of the respondents in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are food insecure.** Out of these, 30 percent are estimated to be severely food insecure while 38 percent are moderately food insecure. When compared to the previous survey rounds, the food security in the country is deteriorating. The prevalence of severe food insecurity is higher in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines compared to the Caribbean average.

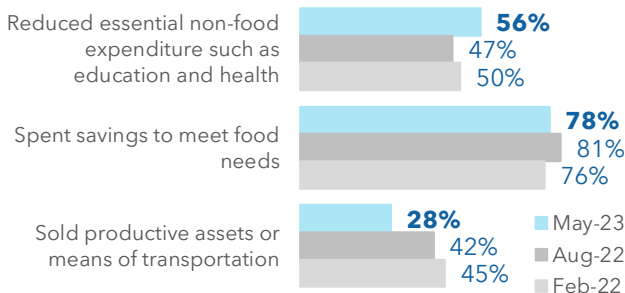
The negative experiences most often reported by respondents were "eating only a few kinds of food" and "unable to eat healthy and nutritious food" (both 68 percent). Alarming, 26 percent of respondents went a whole day without eating in the 30 days prior to the survey. All individual negative food related experiences were more widespread among the poorer respondents, women and younger respondents.

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



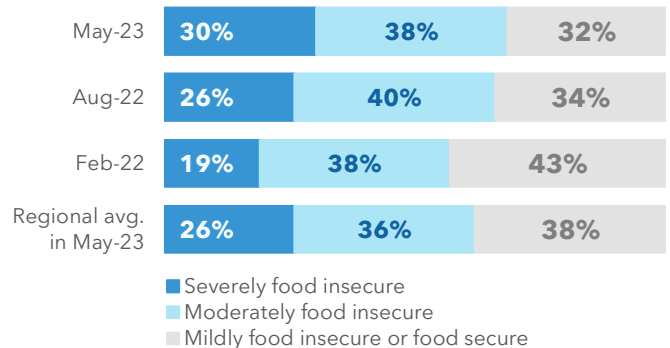
### Households' coping strategies

Multiple choices could be selected. New answer option added in May 2023 - "already carried out and cannot continue to do so" in addition to "yes", both are interpreted as if the strategy has been carried out.



### Prevalence rates of food insecurity in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Based on FIES methodology.



"It's mainly hard for us to get food most times because I'm unemployed and my kids don't have nice clean clothes or foot wear or get medicine when they are sick but I've learned to just hold the faith and be strong and hope for one day things will get better." - Female, 30

"Besides cutting down on food I pay my bill late in order to send my daughter to school." - Female, 40

"Low income...to adapt we started reducing the budget for food by buying cheaper products and even unhealthy foods." - Male, 20



## Resilience capacity

**The occurrence of a wide range of natural hazards in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has significant impacts on people and their livelihoods**, with 45 percent of respondents reporting that their household was affected by natural hazard(s) in the 12 months prior to the survey. The main reported hazards were volcanic activity (26 percent), drought (18 percent) and heatwave (17 percent). Of respondents affected by natural hazards over the last year, 33 percent reported severe impacts on their livelihoods or income.

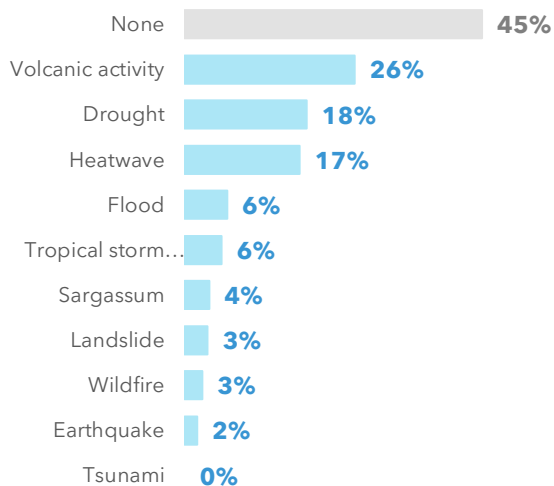
**The Resilience Capacity Score (RCS) indicator was used to measure respondents' perception of their resilience to natural hazards.** The method uses nine statements and respondents rate their level of agreement with each, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These generate a score that acts as a marker of overall subjective resilience.

**Looking at the RCS, 29 percent of respondents have low capacity to cope with, recover from and adapt to natural hazards.** Only 7 percent of respondents are highly resilient, while 64 percent of the respondents have medium resilience capacity. Lower income groups had the lowest overall resilience capacity.

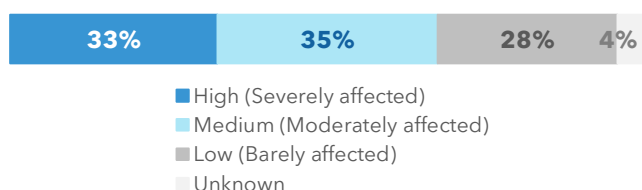
**Out of the nine resilience characteristics, respondents scored the worst on the financial (i.e. access to financial support) and anticipatory capacity (i.e. preparedness for future hazard occurrence).** On the other hand, respondents in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines feel that they are better equipped with human capital, in that they learned lessons from past hardships, and information capital by having access to early warning information to deal with natural disasters.

### Natural hazards that affected respondents in the 12 months prior to the survey

Multiple choices could be selected.



### Level of impact on livelihoods or income for respondents that were affected by natural hazards



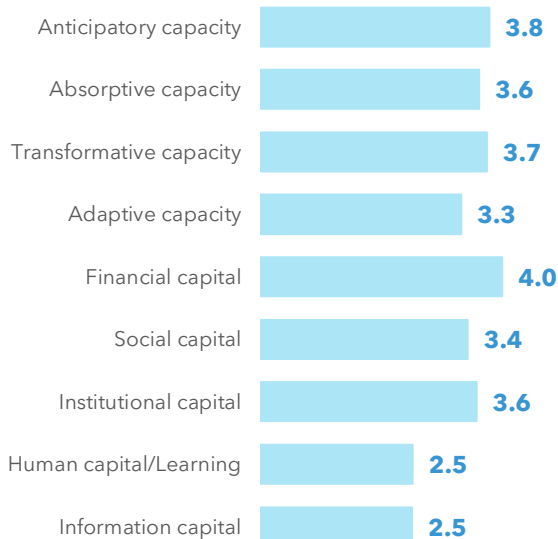
### Overall resilience capacity

Resilience capacity score (RCS)



### Average score for the nine resilience capacity characteristics

Scores range from 1 (high resilience capacity) to 5 (low resilience capacity). Higher score means lower resilience capacity.





## Worries and sentiments

**Inability to meet essential needs (48 percent) and food needs (41 percent) are the top concerns among respondents in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, followed by fear of illness (33 percent), unemployment (30 percent) and concerns over decreasing savings (28 percent).

**Eleven percent of respondents have received assistance from the government** in the past year compared to the August 2022 survey.

**Two thirds of respondents expressed negative or very negative sentiments.** Respondents were given the space to provide additional insights on how they are coping and adapting. Out of the 386 respondents in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 143 responded to the open-ended question. Responses were analyzed with Chat GPT to categorize and determine the degree of positive and negative emotions.



## Main differences

**Differences were most pronounced when comparing income levels.** Households that reported below or well below average incomes in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines show the poorest results on all key metrics of well-being and are at risk of further falling behind economically. Correspondingly, those with lower level of education and those relying on informal labour also performed worse across all key metrics.

The results also suggest that female respondents in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines face greater challenges compared to male respondents on all key metrics of well-being. In addition, younger respondents appear more severely affected than older respondents across majority of metrics.

Figures showing the most severe differences are included below.

### Main worries expressed by respondents

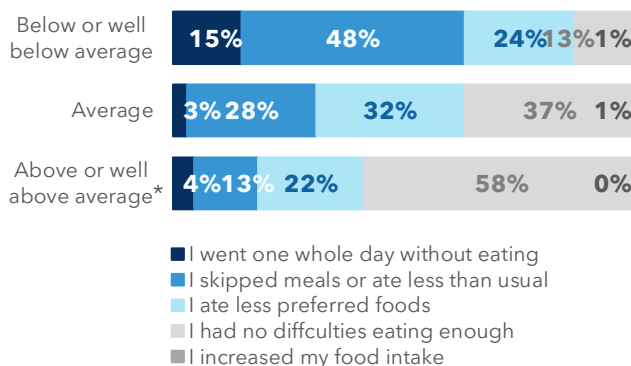
Multiple choices could be selected. Answer options were adjusted in May 2023, adding new options and removing Covid-19 related options that are now displayed as "Other worries".

	May-23	Aug-22	Feb-22	Jun-20
Inability to cover essential needs	48%	46%	33%	33%
Inability to cover food needs	41%	55%	37%	37%
Illness	33%	25%	48%	39%
Unemployment / Income loss	30%	33%	42%	52%
Decreasing savings	28%	30%	18%	24%
Child/dependent care	14%	19%	19%	15%
Natural hazards	13%			
Violence/crime in the community	12%	7%	4%	5%
Inability to receive or repay loans	12%			
Inadequate infrastructure	8%			
Inadequate housing	5%			
Violence/abuse in the household	1%	1%	1%	0%
No access to services due to migration status	1%	1%	1%	4%
Disruption of public services (edu., health)	1%	8%	25%	19%
Other worries	1%	15%	21%	0%

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

#### By perceived income level

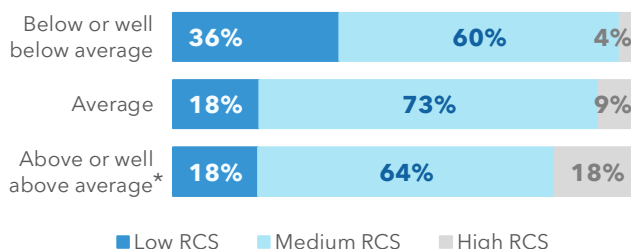
\*Low response numbers in this category may affect results.



### Overall resilience capacity

#### By perceived income level

\*Low response numbers in this category may affect results.







#### INTERACTIVE DASHBOARD

The dashboard contains additional country-level data and analysis beyond the present report on the Food Security and Livelihoods Survey. It may take a second to load. Scan the QR code to access it or follow this link:

<https://analytics.wfp.org/t/Public/views/CaribbeanFoodSecurityLivelihoodsSurvey/Overview>

#### CARICOM

##### Caribbean Community Secretariat

Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown

PO Box 10827, Guyana

Website: [www.caricom.org](http://www.caricom.org)

#### World Food Programme

##### Caribbean Multi-Country Office

UN House, Marine Gardens

Christ Church, Barbados

Website: [www.wfp.org/countries/caribbean](http://www.wfp.org/countries/caribbean)

Email: [wfp.caribbean@wfp.org](mailto:wfp.caribbean@wfp.org)



#### REPORTS

The website contains links to all current and past regional and country reports on the Food Security and Livelihoods Survey. Scan the QR code to access it or follow this link:

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