

Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

Natural Hazards and the Cost of Living Crisis

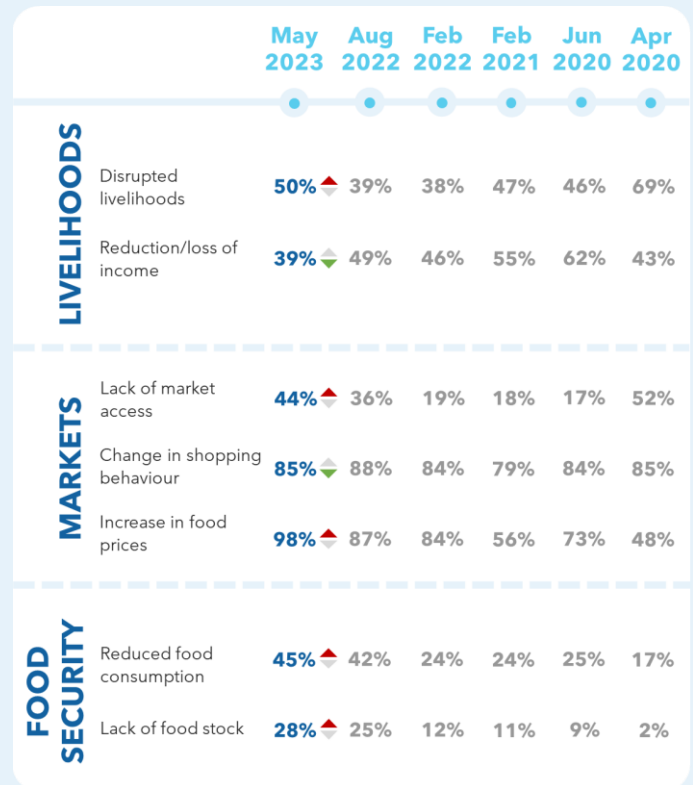
BARBADOS | August 2023

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, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP) 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 Barbados from the sixth round of data collection, which took place from 10 to 28 May 2023. It compares findings with five previous survey rounds conducted between April 2020 and August 2022.

Main results from the Barbados surveys



May 2023

1113

Respondents

75% | 25%
Female | Male

Aug 2022

562

Respondents

72% | 28%
Female | Male

Feb 2022

995

Respondents

72% | 28%
Female | Male

Feb 2021

1507

Respondents

74% | 26%
Female | Male

Jun 2020

1198

Respondents

71% | 29%
Female | Male

Apr 2020

537

Respondents

72% | 28%
Female | Male



Cost of living crisis

Barbados relies heavily on food imports, which make up 78 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. Food inflation in Barbados reached an all-time high in December 2022 but decreased significantly since. However, in April 2023 food prices still increased by almost 5 percent compared to 2022, continuing to affect the purchasing power of many.

Most respondents from Barbados continue to report significant price increases in food, housing, gas, other fuels and electricity. Compared to August 2022 a slightly smaller proportion noted significant increases in gas and electricity, but more respondents are reporting increases in housing prices.



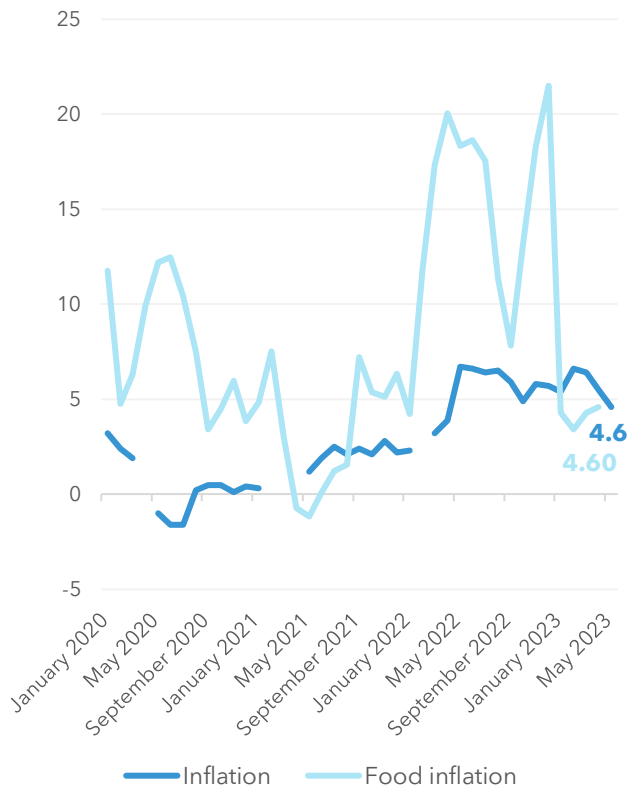
Natural hazards

Barbados is exposed to a wide range of natural hazards which pose a significant threat for climate sensitive livelihood activities and people's lives. Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) shows that there were 11 reported natural hazards in Barbados between 1980 - 2022. A large portion of these were storms (eight out of 11), followed by drought, flood and earthquake (one each).

Recorded events between 1980-2022 affected over 14,000 people in Barbados and resulted in total adjusted damages of USD 271 million. Tropical storms caused the largest natural disaster-related damages in Barbados resulting in 100 percent of reported total adjusted damages. These storm events have the propensity to cause widespread impact potentially leading to loss of life, displacement of households, and destruction to critical infrastructure.

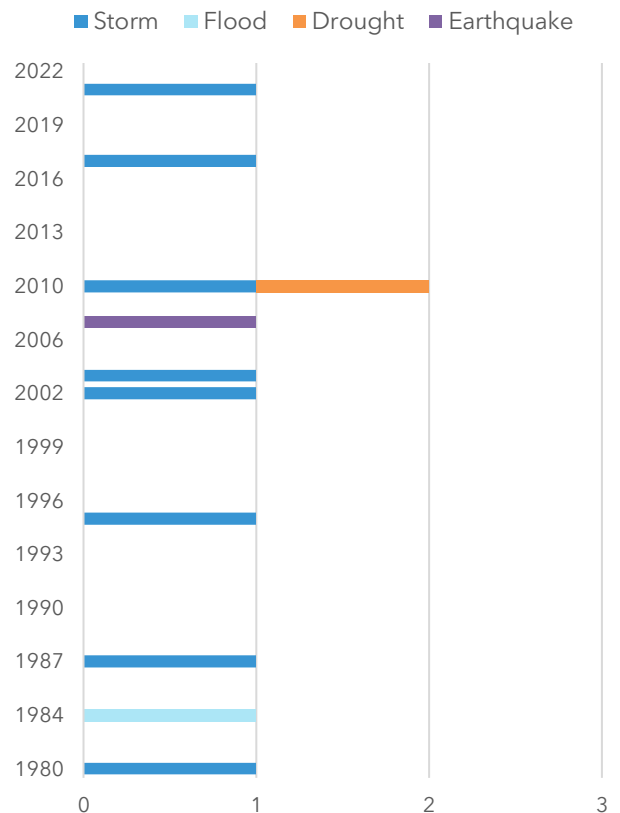
Inflation in Barbados (Jan 2020 - May 2023; %)

Source: Barbados Statistical Service, FAOSTAT and Trading Economics



Reported natural hazards in Barbados (1980-2022)

Source: EM-DAT





Livelihoods

The cost of living crisis continues to impact people's livelihoods in Barbados. Half of respondents faced disruptions to their livelihoods in the 30 days prior to the survey. As with the previous survey round, the unaffordability of livelihood inputs remains the main driver, cited by 58 percent of those affected by disruptions. Respondents involved in agriculture continue to report high costs of inputs, especially for animal feed, water and fertilizers.

One in four respondents experienced job loss or reduced salaries in their households in the 6 months prior to the survey. While lower than previous survey rounds, 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 and people turning to new ways of earning a living.



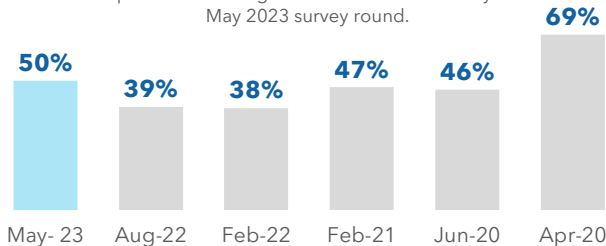
Markets

Almost half of respondents reported challenges accessing markets in the week prior to the survey (44 percent), which represents the greatest deterioration since April 2020. Lack of money to spend continues to be overwhelmingly reported as the main reason for limited market access, cited by 95 percent of those unable to access markets. Respondents have adapted how they shop, increasingly buying cheaper and less preferred foods (67 percent) and purchasing smaller quantities than usual (65 percent).

Respondents continue to report increased prices in commodities, especially food. Majority of respondents (98 percent) reported an increase in food prices over the 3 months prior to the survey. The most significant price increases in non-food items have been observed for gas (55 percent) and housing (49 percent reported a significant increase).

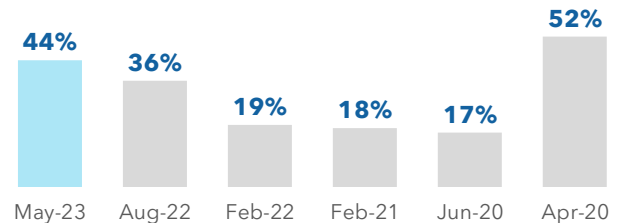
Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 30 days prior to the survey

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



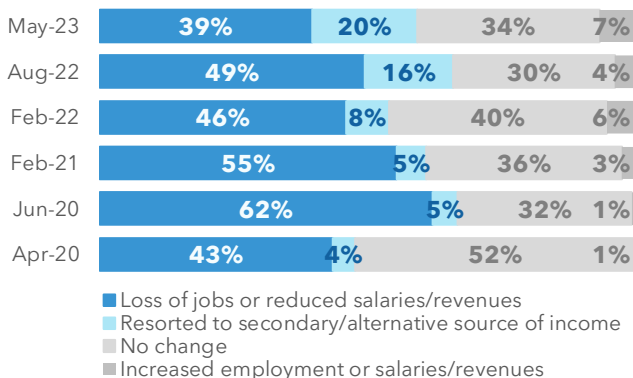
Respondents unable to access markets in the 30 days prior to the survey

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

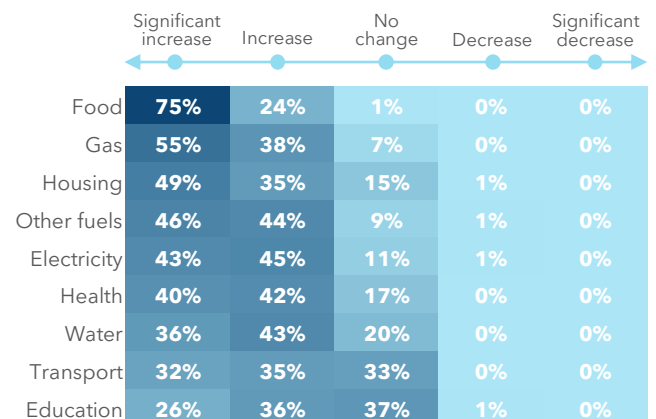


Has your household income changed in the 6 months prior to the survey?

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 continue to be alarming, with 68 percent of respondents skipping meals, eating less preferred foods, or going an entire day without eating in seven days before the survey. These results are similar to August 2022 (67 percent).

Respondents are meeting their immediate food needs by employing negative coping strategies.

Respondents may be compromising their well-being or future livelihoods by selling productive assets (26 percent), spending savings (72 percent) or reducing expenditures on health and education (51 percent).

In May 2023, 28 percent of respondents reported that their household had no food stock at home, while 36 percent reported having less than a week's worth of food supplies. This is very similar to the results from August 2022.

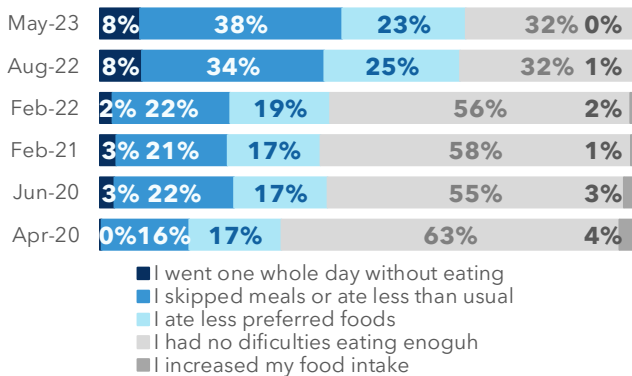


Food insecurity

Using the FIES methodology it is estimated that 57 percent of the respondents in Barbados are food insecure. Out of these, 25 percent are estimated to be severely and 32 percent moderately food insecure. When compared to the previous survey rounds, food security is deteriorating in Barbados. The prevalence of severe food insecurity in Barbados is similar to the regional survey average.

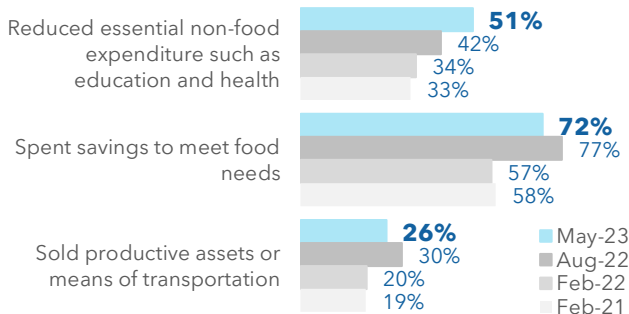
The negative experience most often reported by respondents in Barbados was "eating only a few kinds of food" (66 percent), followed by being "unable to eat healthy and nutritious food" (59 percent). Alarming, 27 percent of respondents went a whole day without eating in the 30 days prior to the survey. Respondents describing their household income as well below average had the most widespread of all individual negative food-related experiences.

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



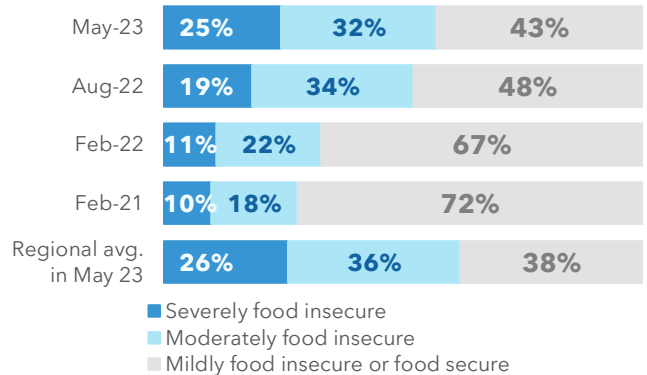
Households' coping strategies

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

Based on FIES methodology.



"I am simply living in a very bad state right now and most days I do not eat because I cannot eat. I am unable to work because of an illness I have for the rest of my life and I have no help." - Male, 41

"It's hard not knowing if you're going to have enough money for food and still pay bills, hoping that you don't get sick cause you can't afford to pay a doctor." - Female, 48

"Due to the high cost of living I have had to buy goods of lesser quality and nutritional value. Unable to save to invest or prepare for retirement." - Male, 49



Resilience capacity

A range of natural hazards have affected nearly a third of respondents in Barbados over the 12 months prior to the survey. The main reported hazards were drought (12 percent) and heatwave (12 percent). Of respondents affected by natural hazards over the last year, 43 percent reported moderate and 13 percent reported severe impacts on their livelihoods or income.

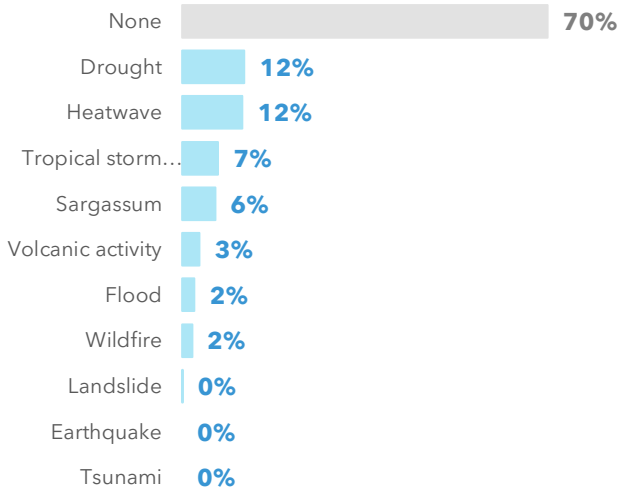
The Resilience Capacity Score (RCS) indicator was used to measure respondents' perception of their resilience to natural hazards. The method uses nine statements and respondents rate their level of agreement with each, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These generate a score that acts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

Based on the RCS, 30 percent of respondents have low capacity to cope with, recover from and adapt to natural hazards. Only 6 percent of respondents are highly resilient, while 63 percent of respondents have medium resilience capacity. Women and below or well below average income groups have the lowest overall resilience capacity.

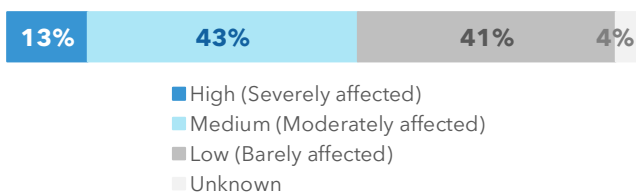
Out of the nine resilience characteristics, respondents scored the worst on the financial capital (i.e. access to financial support) and transformative capacity (i.e. adapting primary income source). On the other hand, respondents feel that they are better equipped with information capital by having access to early warning information to deal with natural disasters, and human capital, in that they learned lessons from past hardships.

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

Multiple choices could be selected.

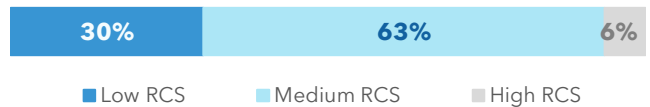


Level of impact on livelihoods or income for respondents that were affected by natural hazard(s)



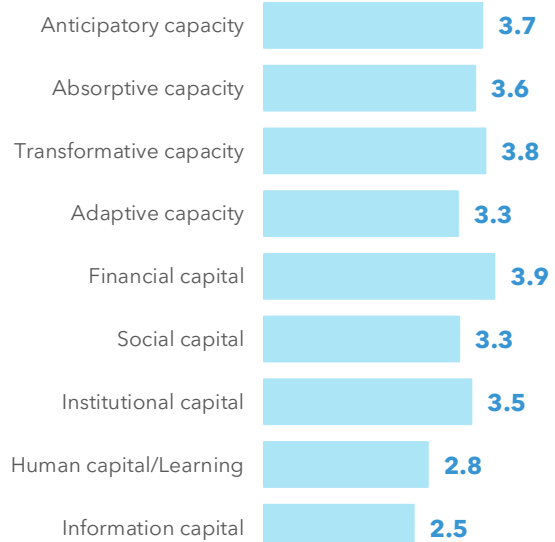
Overall resilience capacity

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 (43 percent) and unemployment (38 percent) are the top concerns among respondents in Barbados, followed by concerns over decreasing savings (36 percent) and inability to meet food needs (32 percent).

Fourteen percent of respondents reported receiving government assistance in the year prior to the May 2023 survey. This is lower than in August 2022 when 33 percent stated that they had received support during COVID-19.

Nearly two thirds of respondents expressed negative or very negative sentiments. Respondents were given the space to provide additional insights. Out of the 1,113 respondents, 230 responded to the open-ended question. The anonymous responses were analyzed with Chat GPT to categorize and determine the degree of positive and negative emotions.



Main differences

Differences in results among respondents were most pronounced when comparing income levels.

Households that 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. Correspondingly, those with lower levels of education and those relying on informal labour or assistance also performed worse.

The results suggest that women face greater challenges compared to men. Furthermore, respondents that are single parents or are living in mixed households were also performing worse across all well-being metrics. Finally, younger respondents reported experiencing greater challenges across majority of metrics compared to older respondents.

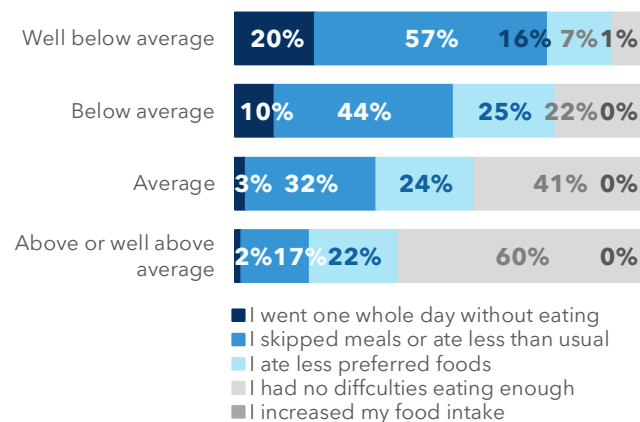
Figures showing the most notable differences are included below.

Main worries expressed by respondents

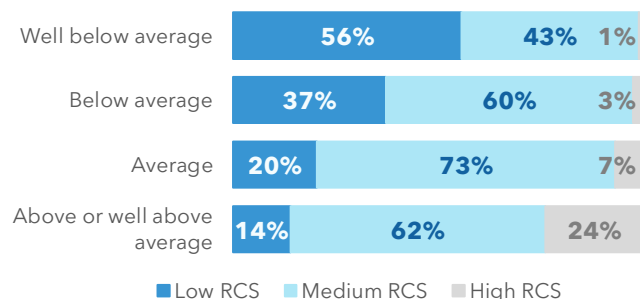
Multiple choices could be selected. Answer options were adjusted in May 2023, adding new options and removing Covid-19 related options that are now displayed as "Other worries".

	May-23	Aug-22	Feb-22	Feb-21	Jun-20
Inability to cover essential needs	43%	47%	26%	26%	28%
Unemployment / Income loss	38%	39%	34%	44%	55%
Decreasing savings	36%	27%	19%	16%	20%
Inability to cover food needs	32%	43%	19%	20%	19%
Illness	28%	31%	56%	67%	51%
Inability to receive or repay loans	16%				
Child/dependent care	14%	17%	15%	14%	15%
Natural hazards	13%				
Violence/crime in the community	7%	18%	5%	7%	7%
Inadequate housing	6%				
Inadequate infrastructure	4%				
Disruption of public services (edu., health)	2%	7%	22%	16%	14%
Other worries	1%	18%	45%	37%	0%
Violence/abuse in the household	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
No access to services due to migration status	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%

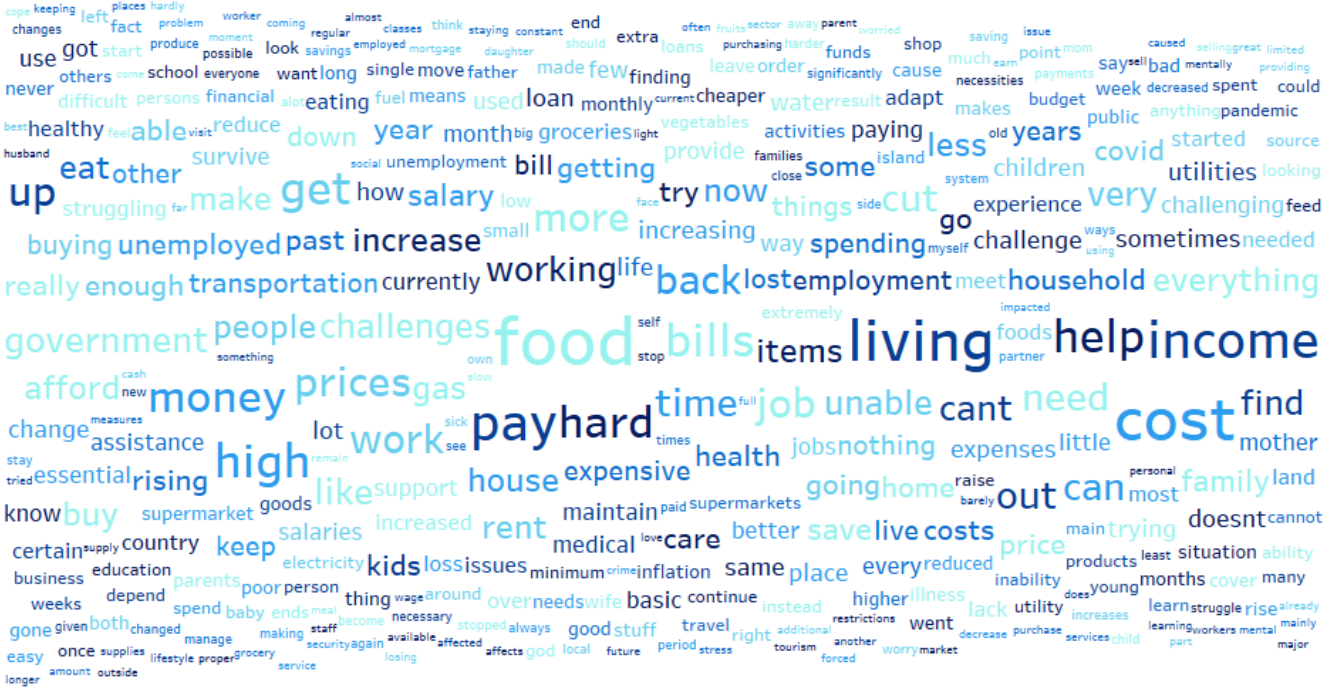
Which statement best reflects your food situation over the past 7 days? By perceived income level



Overall resilience capacity By perceived income level



COMMON THEMES ON HOW RESPONDENTS IN BARBADOS ARE COPING AND ADAPTING



"Cost of living is constantly increasing and salaries are not moving. Disposable income is becoming less and as such the ability to afford essentials. I have adjusted by relooking budget monthly to amend accordingly." - Female, 38

"I've been unemployed for the past 5 months and it's very challenging to find a job. I have been sending out CVs daily but I never get a call back. Unemployment makes it very hard for me to pay basic stuff like keep up with my rent, bills, food expenses etc." - Female, 29

"I had to cut back and budget on stuff I really need, tried to save but had to dive into savings for necessities, buy cheaper options which causes me to put back the healthier options as they are costly." - Female, 28

"Over the past year I have realized that cost of living has risen immensely, housing/land is hard to acquire. Hard to get a mortgage with my salary. I've reached out to government agencies for help. Thought about moving abroad." - Female, 39

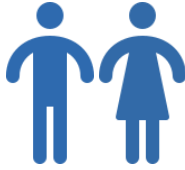
"Everything going up. Have to work multiple jobs just to maintain current lifestyle. Can't even afford to invest in my dream home." - Female, 39

"My family and I have lost our home, we're currently staying with a lady who offered to take us in however with low income we cannot afford to rent or purchase a home. Most of our funds are spent on food and when our funds decrease we have to wait a couple days without eating." - Female, 18

"If you find a job anywhere it is slavery money but you are grateful because it is better than nothing. There is no steady work unless you know someone who can hook you up. Education and experience doesn't matter anymore. Makes you feel like your life was a waste of time." - Female, 45

"I had to adjust to the whole situation pertaining to the covid restrictions and disease within my country of Barbados and also within my home. I witnessed my wife and my son both unemployed that placed me in a position where I had to prepare myself to be strong more mentally than ever." - Male, 56

"It is too hard to find a job for both me and my mother, we've been looking for over 2 years at this point and nothing." - Male, 27





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>

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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>