

# Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

## Natural Hazards and the Cost of Living Crisis

### GUYANA | 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 Guyana from the sixth round of data collection, which took place from 10 to 28 May 2023. It compares findings with four previous survey rounds conducted between April 2020 and August 2022.

#### Main results from the Guyana surveys

\*Comparison with the February 2021 survey round is not included because of the low number of responses from Guyana.

	May 2023	Aug 2022	Feb 2022	Jun 2020	Apr 2020	
<b>LIVELIHOODS</b>	Disrupted livelihoods	64%	68%	65%	65%	77%
	Reduction/loss of income	37%	51%	56%	63%	38%
<b>MARKETS</b>	Lack of market access	57%	61%	44%	32%	20%
	Change in shopping behaviour	91%	92%	94%	93%	87%
	Increase in food prices	95%	99%	98%	82%	80%
<b>FOOD SECURITY</b>	Reduced food consumption	42%	45%	36%	34%	16%
	Lack of food stock	28%	27%	24%	7%	3%



**May 2023**

**1151**

Respondents

74% | 26%  
Female | Male

**Aug 2022**

**675**

Respondents

65% | 35%  
Female | Male

**Feb 2022**

**391**

Respondents

88% | 12%  
Female | Male

**Feb 2021**

\*Not included because of the low number of responses from Guyana.

**Jun 2020**

**176**

Respondents

64% | 36%  
Female | Male

**Apr 2020**

**288**

Respondents

72% | 28%  
Female | Male



## Cost of living crisis

Food imports make up 54 percent of all food trade in Guyana (excluding fish; FAOSTAT, 2021). Fluctuations in regional and global food prices impact the price of imported commodities and exports such as rice.

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 Guyana reached a high in July/August 2021, with peaks also in April and December 2022. In May 2023, food prices had increased 6.4 percent in the previous 12 months.

Most respondents to the survey reported significant price increases in food, housing, gas, health and fuels. Compared to the August 2022 survey round, a slightly smaller proportion noted significant increases in gas and other fuels, but more respondents are reporting increases in housing prices and health costs.



## Natural hazards

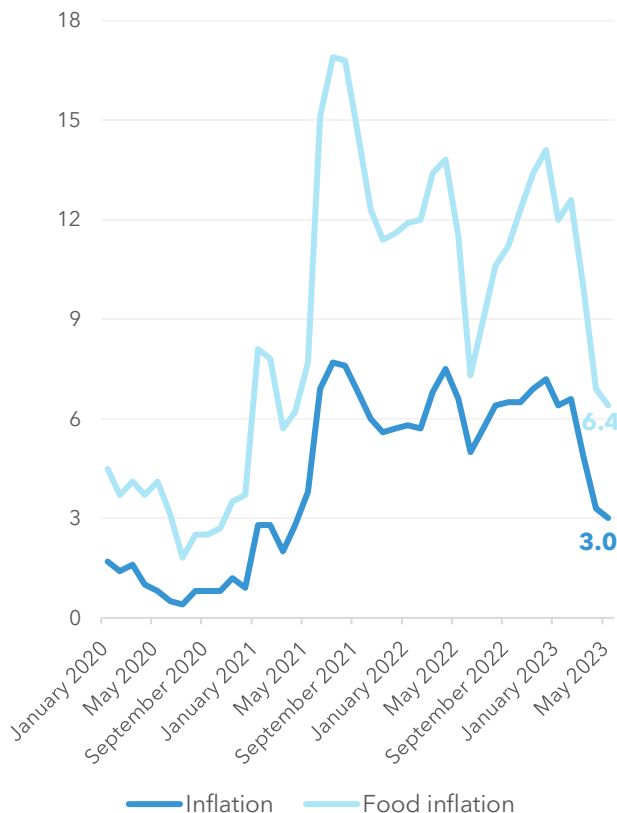
Guyana is exposed to natural hazards, which pose a threat for climate-sensitive livelihood activities and people's well-being. The Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) recorded 12 events in Guyana between 1980 - 2022. These were mainly floods (nine out of 12), and droughts (three out of 12).

These events in total affected almost 1.3 million people and resulted in total adjusted damages of over US\$1 billion. Floods resulted in 93 percent of reported total adjusted damages.

Guyana faced floods in May 2022 and May 2021 following heavy rainfall, which impacted homes, farms and businesses that were flooded. In general flooding can cause widespread impacts leading to loss of life, displacement of households, crop damages and destruction of critical infrastructure.

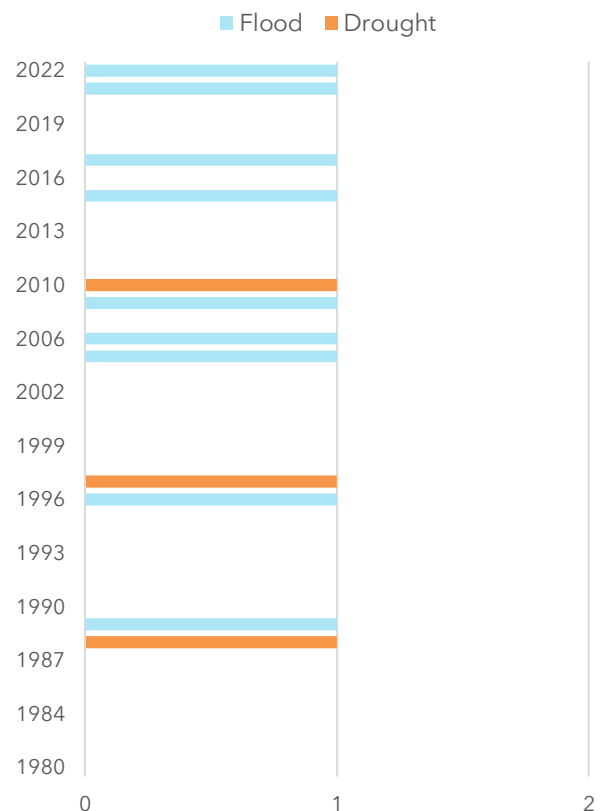
**Inflation in Guyana (Jan 2020 - May 2023; %)**

Source: Guyana Bureau of Statistics



**Reported natural hazards in Guyana (1980-2022)**

Source: EM-DAT





## Livelihoods

**People continue to experience challenges to their livelihoods** with almost two-thirds of respondents facing disruptions in the 30 days prior to the survey. The unaffordability of livelihood inputs remains the main driver, cited by 67 percent of those who experienced livelihood disruptions. Respondents involved in agriculture continue to report high costs of inputs, especially for animal feed and fertilizer.

**37 percent of respondents experienced job loss or reduced income in their household in the six months prior to the survey.** The proportion of respondents turning to secondary or alternative sources of income has been steadily increasing since June 2020, suggesting that people are turning to new income streams to cope with economic challenges.



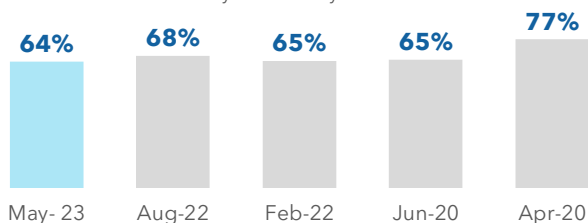
## Markets

**Over half of respondents reported challenges accessing markets** in the week prior to the survey (57 percent), which represents a slight improvement since August 2022. Lack of money to spend continues to be overwhelmingly reported as the main reason for limited market access, cited by 97 percent of those unable to access markets. Respondents have modified how they shop by increasingly purchasing smaller quantities than usual (67 percent) and buying cheaper and less preferred foods (61 percent).

**Respondents continue to report increased prices in commodities, especially food.** The vast majority of respondents (95 percent) reported an increase in food prices over the three months prior to the survey. Increases were also widely reported for housing, gas, health, transport and other fuels.

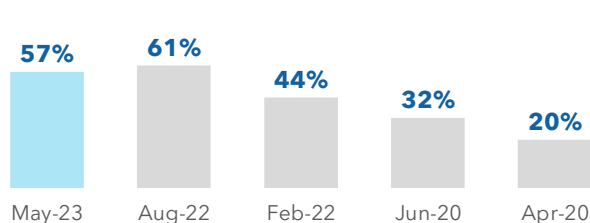
### Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 30 days prior to the survey

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



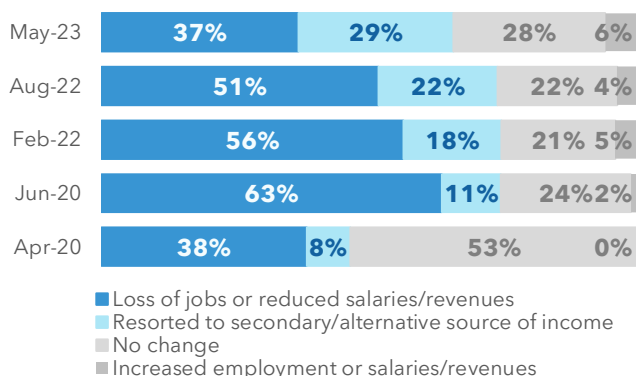
### Respondents unable to access markets in the 30 days prior to the survey

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

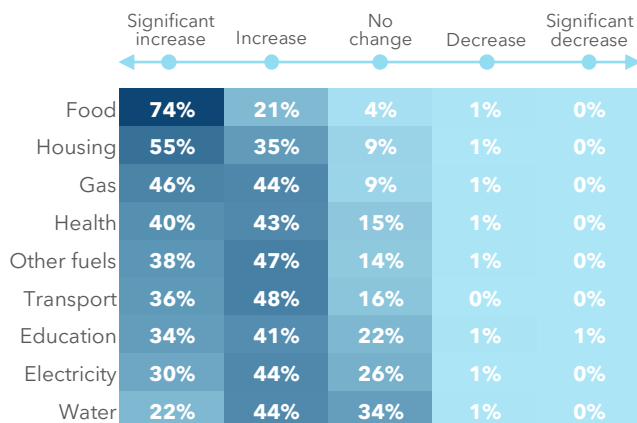


### Has your household income changed in the 6 months prior to the survey?

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 show challenges with food security**, with 72 percent of respondents skipping meals, eating less preferred foods, or going an entire day without eating in the seven days prior to the survey. These results are similar to August 2022 (76 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 (33 percent), spending savings (80 percent) or reducing expenditures on health and education (59 percent).

**In May 2023, 28 percent of respondents reported that their household had no food stock at home**, while 44 percent reported having less than a week's worth of food supplies. This is very similar to the results from August 2022.

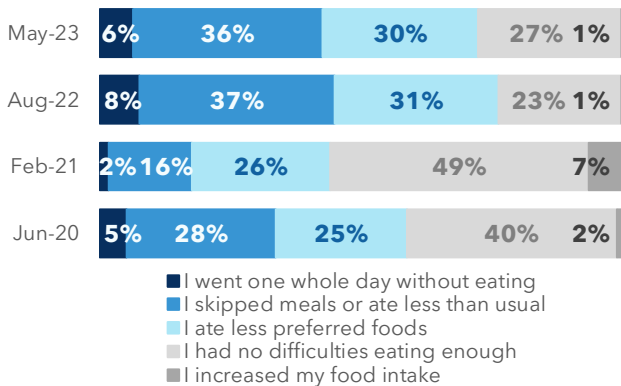


## Food insecurity

**Using the FIES methodology it is estimated that 65 percent of the respondents in Guyana are food insecure.** Out of these, 27 percent are estimated to be severely and 38 percent moderately food insecure. When compared to the previous survey rounds, the food security situation has remained consistent and the results are similar to the regional survey average.

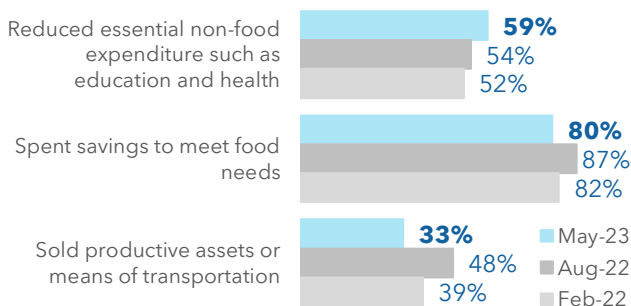
The negative experience most often reported by respondents in Guyana was "eating only a few kinds of food" (71 percent), followed by being "unable to eat healthy and nutritious food" (62 percent). Alarming, 27 percent of respondents went a whole day without eating in the 30 days prior to the survey. Respondents describing their household income as well below average were the most affected across all individual negative food-related experiences.

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



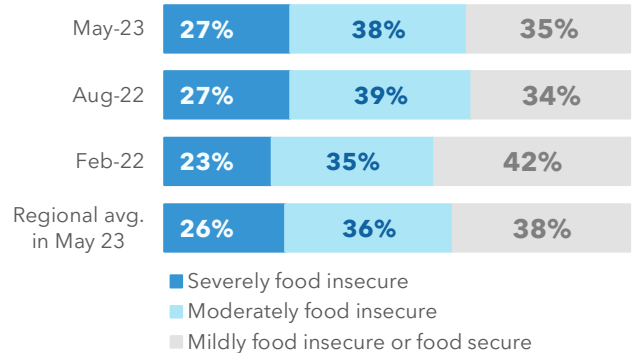
### Households' coping strategies

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 in Guyana

Based on FIES methodology.



"The constant rise in cost of living. When you visit the market you can barely buy a few items because every day the prices for food is going up and no one is doing anything to address or remedy the situation that we are faced with." - Male, 46

"Since the past few years the cost of living has become very expensive and we would like to see a change. I adapt to it by buying cheaper and smaller quantity of groceries." - Female, 56

"I'm doing everything to get money for my family to survive eating a meal everyday is something I can't promise them" - Male, 32



## Resilience capacity

**Natural hazards have affected 44 percent of respondents in Guyana in the 12 months prior to the survey.** The main reported hazards were flooding (37 percent) and heatwave (10 percent). Of those affected by natural hazards over the last year, 49 percent reported moderate and 22 percent reported severe impacts on their livelihoods or income.

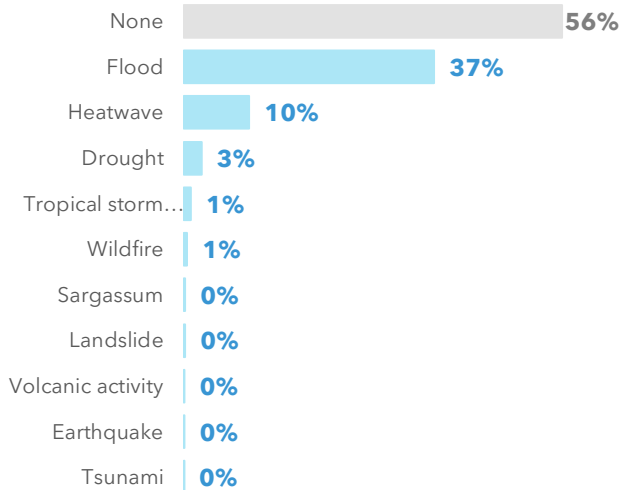
**The Resilience Capacity Score (RCS) indicator was used to measure respondents' perceptions of their resilience to natural hazards.** The method uses nine statements and respondents rate their level of agreement with each, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These generate a score that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

**Based on the RCS, 44 percent of respondents have low capacity to cope with, recover from and adapt to natural hazards.** Only 5 percent of respondents are highly resilient, while 51 percent have medium resilience capacity. Women and lower income groups have the lowest overall resilience capacity.

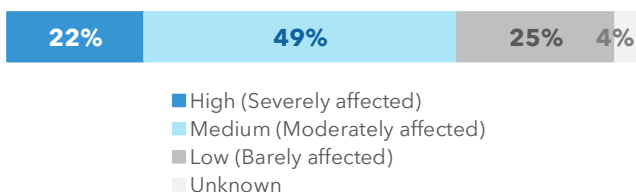
**Out of the nine resilience characteristics, respondents were least resilient when it came to financial capital (i.e. access to financial support) and anticipatory capacity (i.e. preparedness for future hazards).** On the other hand, respondents feel that they are better equipped with human capital, in that they learned lessons from past hardships, information capital by having access to early warning information, and adaptive capacity, in that they would find a way to get by if more or more intense hazards occur.

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

Multiple choices could be selected.

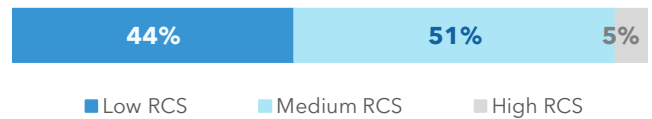


### Level of impact on livelihoods or income for respondents that were affected by natural hazard(s)



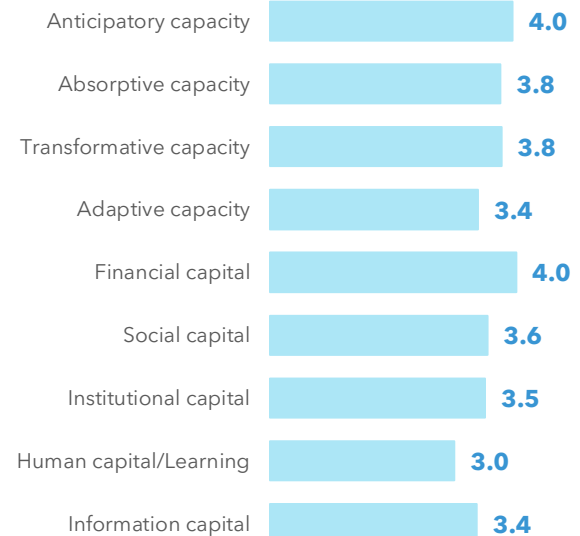
### Overall resilience capacity

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 (49 percent) and food needs (38 percent) continue to be the top concerns among respondents in Guyana**, followed by concerns over unemployment (31 percent) and decreasing savings (30 percent).

**Seven percent of respondents reported receiving government assistance** in the year prior to the May 2023 survey. This is lower than in August 2022 when 39 percent stated that they had received support.

**Respondents provided insights on how they are coping and adapting to challenges.** Out of the 1,151 respondents in Guyana, 383 responded to the open-ended question. Responses were analyzed with Chat GPT to categorize and determine the degree of positive and negative emotions. Almost two-thirds of respondents expressed negative or very negative sentiments.



## Main differences

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

Respondents indicating that their household has below or well below-average incomes show the poorest results on all key metrics of well-being.

Correspondingly, those with lower levels of education and those relying on informal labour or assistance also had similar trends.

The results suggest that women may be facing greater challenges compared to men, though more nuanced analysis is needed on this issue. Also, a greater proportion of younger respondents and those living in rural areas reported experiencing challenges across the majority of metrics. Finally, respondents who are single parents or are living in mixed households (with relatives as well as non-family members) also appear to be more commonly facing difficulties.

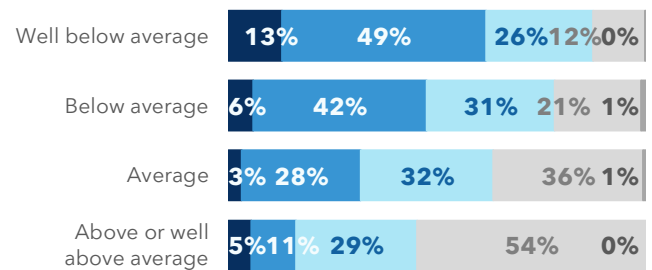
### Main worries expressed by respondents

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	49%	46%	35%	28%
Inability to cover food needs	38%	54%	35%	35%
Unemployment / Income loss	31%	27%	34%	45%
Decreasing savings	30%	21%	18%	18%
Illness	28%	30%	58%	69%
Inability to receive or repay loans	12%			
Child/dependent care	12%	11%	11%	7%
Inadequate infrastructure	9%			
Natural hazards	8%			
Inadequate housing	7%			
Violence/crime in the community	6%	8%	5%	10%
Disruption of public services (edu., health)	2%	6%	18%	17%
Other worries	1%	15%	28%	0%
Violence/abuse in the household	1%	1%	1%	1%
No access to services due to migration status	0%	4%	1%	2%

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

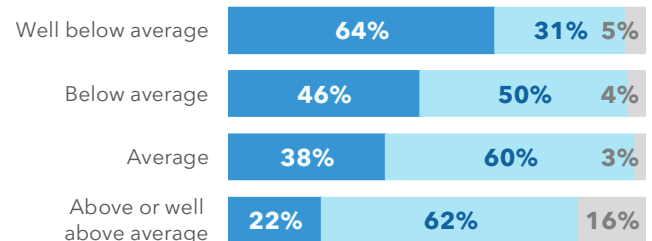
#### By perceived income level



- 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

#### Overall resilience capacity

##### By perceived income level



■ Low RCS ■ Medium RCS ■ High RCS





#### 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>