

# Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

## Natural Hazards and the Cost of Living Crisis

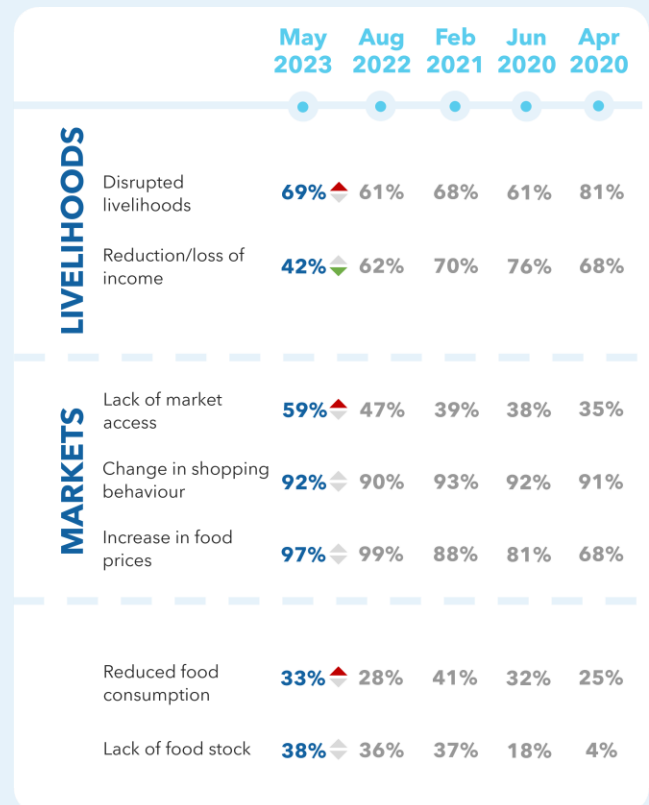
### BELIZE | August 2023

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 Belize 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 Belize surveys



**May 2023**

**769**

Respondents

58% | 42%  
Female | Male

**Aug 2022**

**703**

Respondents

54% | 46%  
Female | Male

**Feb 2022**

\*Not included because of the low number of responses from Belize

**Feb 2021**

**255**

Respondents

53% | 47%  
Female | Male

**Jun 2020**

**370**

Respondents

55% | 45%  
Female | Male

**Apr 2020**

**644**

Respondents

64% | 36%  
Female | Male



## Cost of living crisis

Belize relies on food imports, which make up 46.3 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 Belize reached an all-time high in January 2023 but has been decreasing since. In May 2023, food prices still were 12 percent higher compared to 2022, continuing to affect purchasing power of many.

The majority of respondents from Belize continue to report significant price increases in food, other fuels and gas (see page 3). Compared to August 2022, a greater proportion noted significant increases in housing, health and water in May 2023.



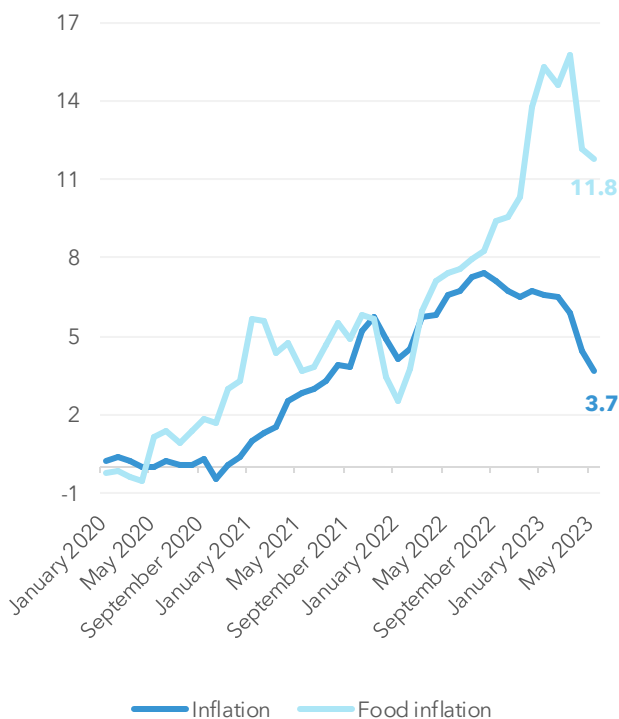
## Natural hazards

Belize is exposed to a range of natural hazards which pose a significant threat for climate sensitive livelihood activities and people's lives. The Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) shows that there were 17 reported natural hazards in Belize between 1980-2022, which were mainly storms and floods. Belize has also faced droughts that have impacted farmers and the agricultural sector.

According to EM-DAT, events between 1980-2022 affected 475,000 people in Belize and resulted in total adjusted damages over USD 1 billion. Hurricane Keith in 2000 caused the largest natural hazard-related damages. Hurricane Lisa in 2022 affected 172,000 people.

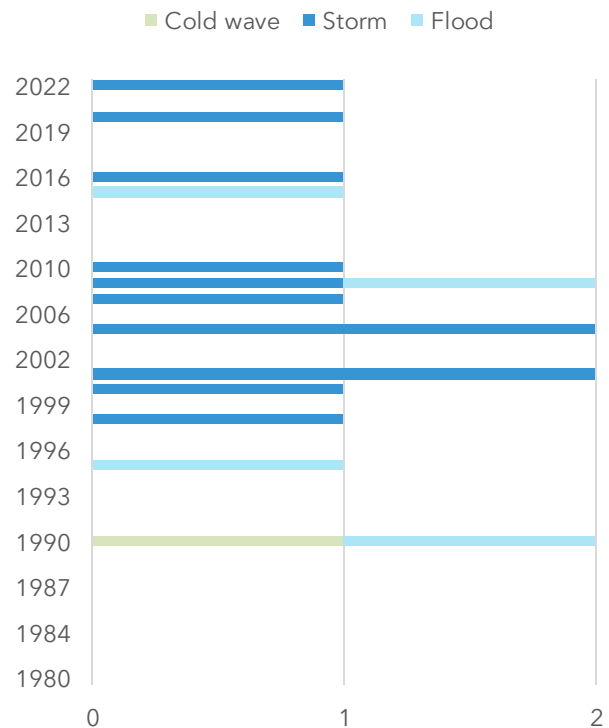
### Inflation in Belize (Jan 2020 - May 2023; %)

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, FAOSTAT and Trading Economics



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

Source: EM-DAT





## Livelihoods

**The cost of living crisis continues to impact people's livelihoods in Belize.** People continue to experience challenges to their livelihoods with 69 percent of respondents facing disruptions in the 30 days prior to the survey. The unaffordability of livelihood inputs remains the main reason, cited by 63 percent of those whose livelihoods were disrupted. Those involved in agriculture reported high costs of inputs, especially for fertilizer, animal feed and seeds.

**Loss of income and jobs has been decreasing since the all-time high in June 2020,** with 42 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 April 2020, suggesting the continuation of economic hardship and people turning to new solutions for income.



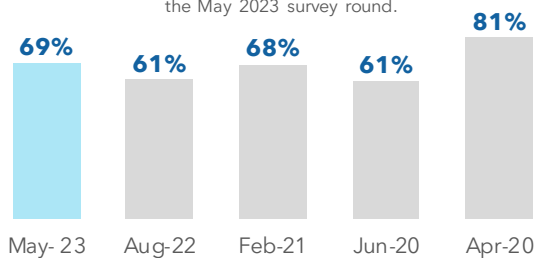
## Markets

**Over half of respondents reported that they faced a time when they could not access markets** in the month prior to the survey. Lack of money to spend continues to be overwhelmingly the main reason, cited by 82 percent of those facing challenges accessing markets. Respondents have changed how they shop by increasingly buying cheaper and less preferred foods (67 percent of those who altered how they shop) and purchasing smaller quantities than usual (61 percent).

**Respondents continue to report increased prices in commodities, especially food.** Nearly all respondents (97 percent) reported an increase in food prices over the 3 months prior to the survey. This is on par with survey results in February and August 2022. Increases were also cited for gas and other fuels, with 57-58 percent of respondents reporting a significant increase.

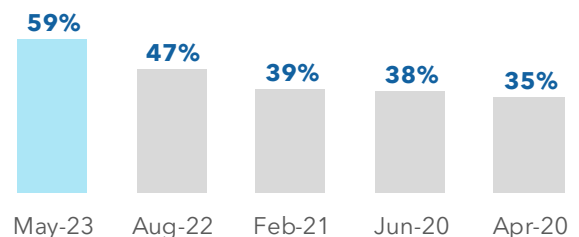
### Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 30 days prior to the survey

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



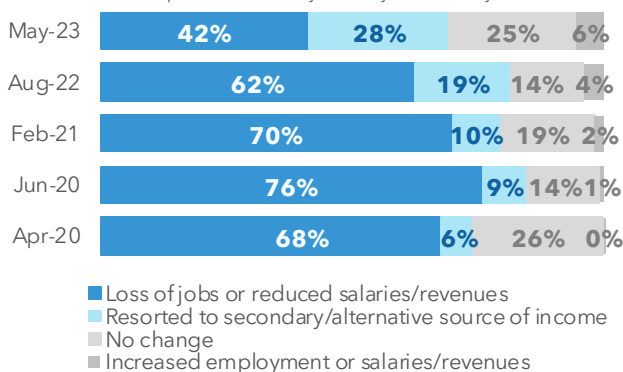
### Respondents unable to access markets in the 30 days prior to the survey

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

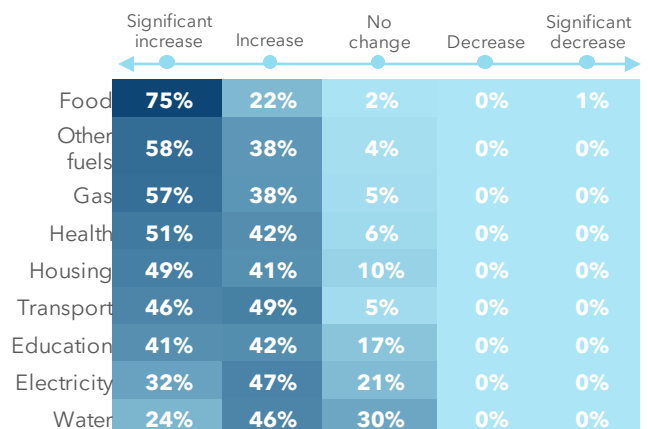


### Has your household income changed in the 6 months prior to the survey?

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 75 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 patterns have increased when compared to August 2022 (65 percent).

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

Respondents in Belize may be compromising their well-being and future livelihoods by selling productive assets (44 percent), spending savings (77 percent) or reducing expenditures on health and education (64 percent).

**One in three respondents have no food stocks at home**, while 44 percent reported having less than a week's worth of food supplies. This is similar to the results from August 2022.

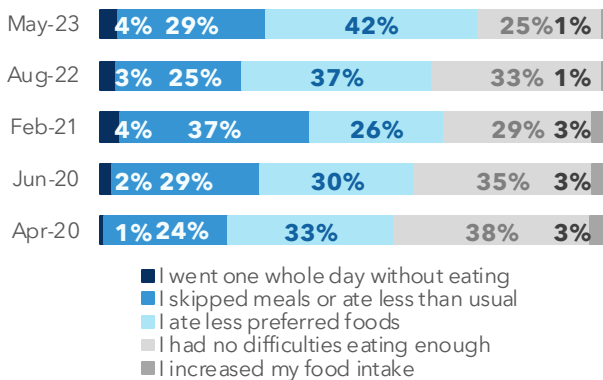


## Food insecurity

**Using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) methodology, it is estimated that 60 percent of the respondents in Belize are food insecure.** Out of these, 18 percent are estimated to be severely and 42 percent moderately food insecure. Food security has been worsening since 2021.

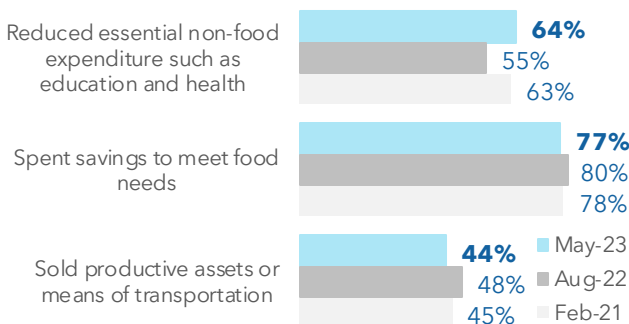
The negative food insecurity experiences most often reported by respondents in Belize were "eating only a few kinds of food" (67 percent) and "worried not having enough food to eat" (60 percent). Alarming, 29 percent of respondents skipped meals or ate less than usual in the 30 days prior to the survey. All negative food-related experiences were more widespread among poorer and younger respondents.

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



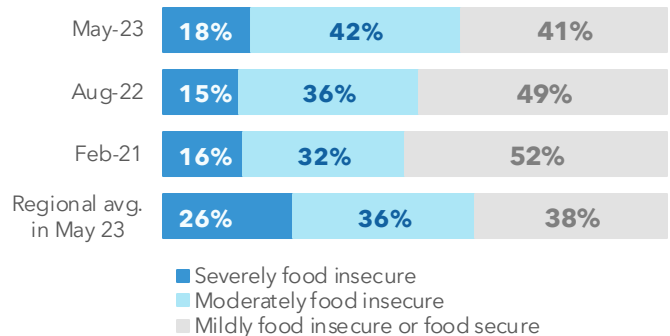
### Households' coping strategies

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 Belize

Based on FIES methodology.



"The alarming inflation of goods/services meant I had to do without certain products/service or substitute with something more affordable." Female, 34

"Cost of food going up every day. I have to eat less and give my kids less healthy foods since it's a bit cheaper." - Male, 39

"Because of price food gauging and inflation of our basic utilities, I am unable to save for the future for my children education and health. I am a single mother of 3 minors and caregiver of my mom. I have learned to budget and cut cost on food and buy things that are less healthy." - Female, 37



## Resilience capacity

**Natural hazards have affected over half of respondents in Belize over the 12 months prior to the survey.** The main reported hazards were tropical storms (33 percent), heatwaves (19 percent), flooding (13 percent) and drought (10 percent). Of respondents affected by natural hazards over the last year, 50 percent reported moderate and 15 percent reported severe impacts on their livelihoods or income.

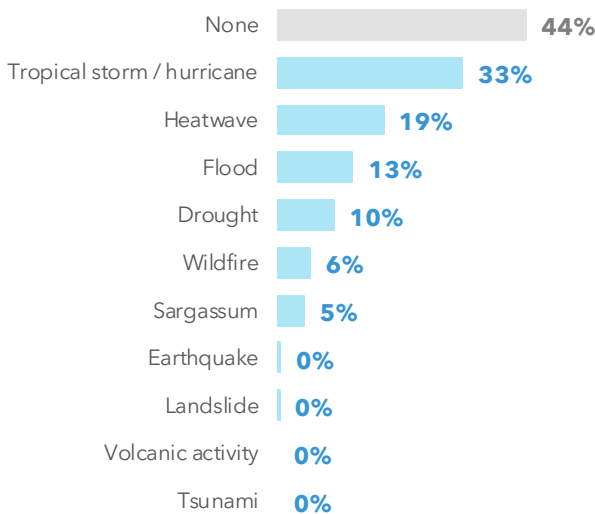
**The Resilience Capacity Score (RCS) indicator was used to measure respondents' perception of their resilience to natural hazards.** The method uses nine statements and respondents rate their level of agreement with each, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These generate a score that 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 7 percent of respondents are highly resilient, while 63 percent of the respondents have medium resilience capacity. Lower income groups and younger respondents have the lowest overall resilience capacity.

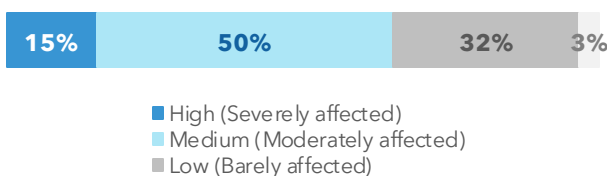
**Out of the nine resilience characteristics, respondents scored the worst on the financial (i.e. access to financial support) and institutional capital (i.e. support from government or other institutions).** On the other hand, respondents feel that they are better equipped with information capital by having access to early warning information, 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

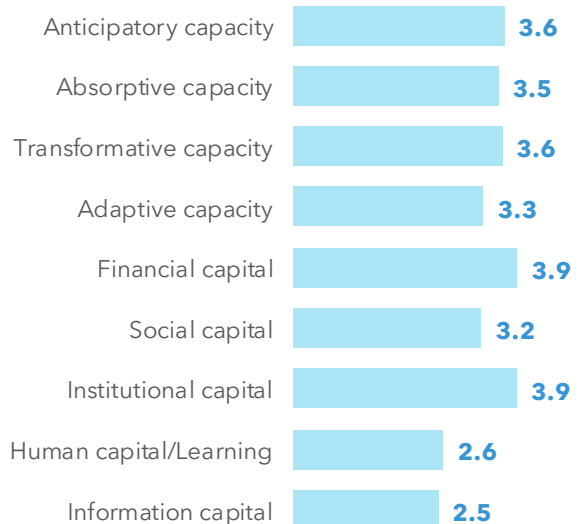
Resilience capacity score (RCS)



■ Low RCS ■ Medium RCS ■ High 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 (47 percent) and illness (35 percent) are the top concerns among respondents in Belize**, followed by inability to cover food needs (34 percent), unemployment (32 percent), and concerns over decreasing savings (23 percent).

**Six percent of respondents received assistance from the government** in the year prior to the survey, compared to 23 percent in August 2022.

Respondents were given the space to provide more nuanced insights on how they are coping and adapting. Out of the 769 respondents in Belize, 325 responded to the open-ended question. Responses were analysed with Chat GPT to categorize and determine the degree of positive and negative emotions. **Two thirds of respondents expressed negative or very negative sentiments.**



## 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 level of education and those relying on informal labour or assistance also performed worse.

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

Figures showing the most severe differences are included below.

### Main worries expressed by respondents

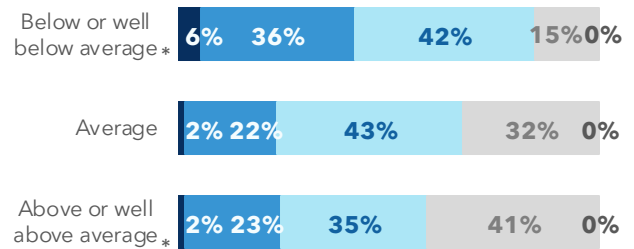
Multiple choices could be selected. Answer options were adjusted in May 2023, adding new options and removing Covid-19 related options that are now displayed as "Other worries".

	May-23	Aug-22	Feb-21	Jun-20
Inability to cover essential needs	47%	44%	33%	45%
Illness	35%	35%	48%	57%
Unemployment/Income loss	32%	35%	54%	58%
Decreasing savings	23%	19%	11%	12%
Inability to cover food needs	34%	41%	38%	40%
Inability to receive or repay loans	18%			
Violence/crime in the community	9%	13%	7%	12%
Child/dependent care	11%	9%	11%	9%
Natural hazards	13%			
Inadequate infrastructure	5%			
Inadequate housing	5%			
Disruption of public services (edu., health)	2%	11%	13%	10%
Other worries	1%	16%	25%	0%
Violence/abuse in the household	1%	0%	1%	1%
No access to services due to migration status	1%	2%	2%	1%

### 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

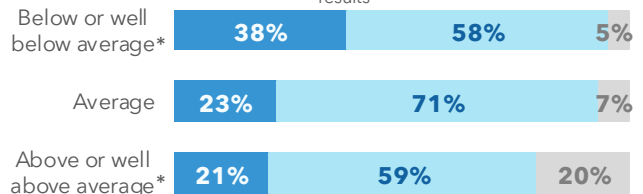


- I went one whole day without eating
- I skipped meals or ate less than usual
- I ate less preferred foods
- I had no difficulties eating enough
- I increased my food intake

### Overall resilience capacity

#### By perceived income level

\*Low response numbers in this category may affect results



■ 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>

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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>