

Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

Natural Hazards and the Cost of Living Crisis

SURINAME | 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 whereby many people have been 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 Suriname from the sixth round of data collection, which took place from 10 to 28 May 2023. However, it does not compare the findings with any of the previous survey rounds due to low number of responses from Suriname.

Main results from the Suriname survey

*Comparison with the previous survey rounds (Aug-22, Feb-22, Feb-21, Jun-20, Apr-20) is not included because of the low number of responses from Suriname.

		May 2023
LIVELIHOODS	Disrupted livelihoods	77%
	Reduction/loss of income	38%
MARKETS	Lack of market access	37%
	Change in shopping behaviour	90%
	Increase in food prices	96%
FOOD SECURITY	Reduced food consumption	28%
	Lack of food stock	30%



May 2023

129

Respondents

69% | 31%
Female | Male



Cost of living crisis

Food imports make up 75 percent of all food trade in Suriname (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. Suriname began experiencing high inflation since the beginning of 2020. Food inflation in Suriname reached an all-time high in May 2023, with high peaks also in February 2022 and 2021. In May 2023, food prices had increased by 69.3 percent compared to May 2022.

Respondents to the survey reported significant price increases across all commodities and services. The largest majority reported significant price increases in food, other fuels, transport, housing and health (see page 3).



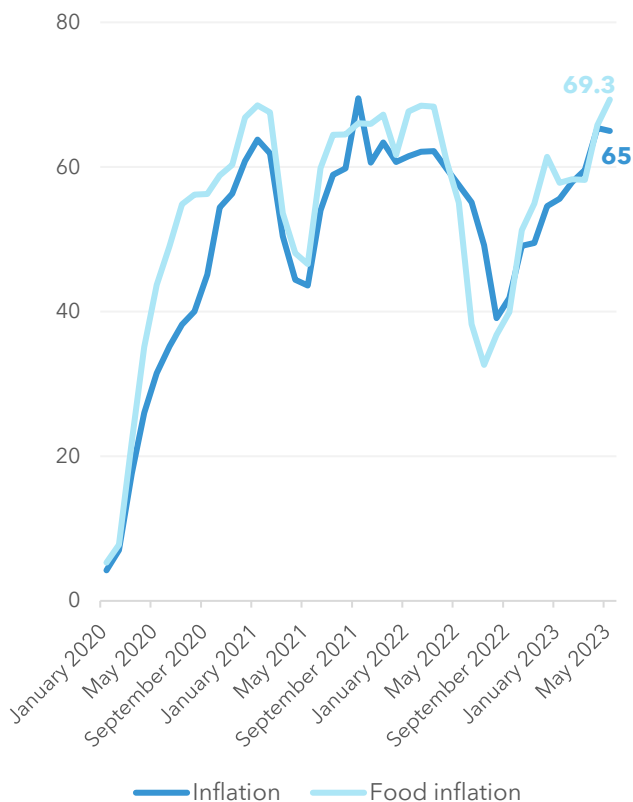
Natural hazards

Suriname is exposed to natural hazards, which pose a threat for climate-sensitive livelihood activities and people's well-being. Flooding is a particularly notable risk, which has impacted thousands of people and caused millions of dollars in damages. Low-lying areas are particularly susceptible to flooding, with risks expected to become even worse with the impacts of climate change.

In recent years, Suriname faced floods in March 2022 and April 2021 that lasted for weeks and impacted homes, farms, schools and businesses. In general flooding can cause widespread impacts leading to disrupted livelihoods, displacement, crop damages, destruction of homes and critical infrastructure and loss of life.

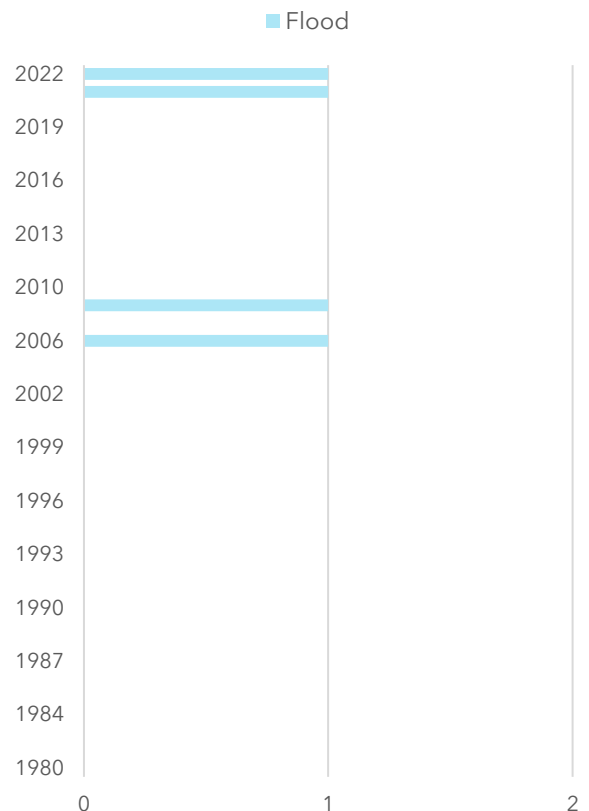
Inflation in Suriname (Jan 2020 - May 2023; %)

Source: General Bureau of Statistics in Suriname, FAOSTAT, Trading Economics



Reported natural hazards in Suriname (1980-2022)

Source: EM-DAT





Livelihoods

People are experiencing challenges to their livelihoods with over three-fourths of respondents facing disruptions in the 30 days prior to the survey. The unaffordability of livelihood inputs is the main driver, cited by 75 percent of those who experienced livelihood disruptions. Respondents involved in agriculture report high costs of inputs, especially for animal feed.

Over a third (38 percent) of respondents experienced job loss or reduced income in their household in the six months prior to the survey. In addition, almost a third of respondents are turning to secondary or alternative sources of income, suggesting that people are trying to find new ways to cope with economic challenges.



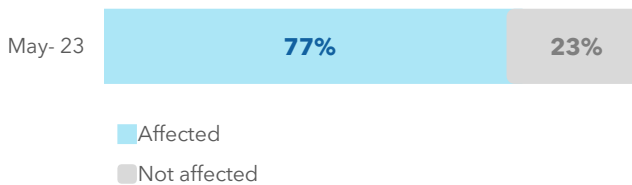
Markets

Over a third of respondents reported challenges accessing markets in the month prior to the survey (37 percent). Lack of money to spend was overwhelmingly reported as the main reason for limited market access, cited by 92 percent of those unable to access markets. Respondents have modified how they shop by buying cheaper and less preferred foods (74 percent) and by purchasing smaller quantities than usual (63 percent).

Respondents report increased prices in commodities, especially food. The vast majority of respondents (96 percent) reported an increase in food prices over the three months prior to the survey. Significant price increases were also widely reported for fuel, transport, housing and health.

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.



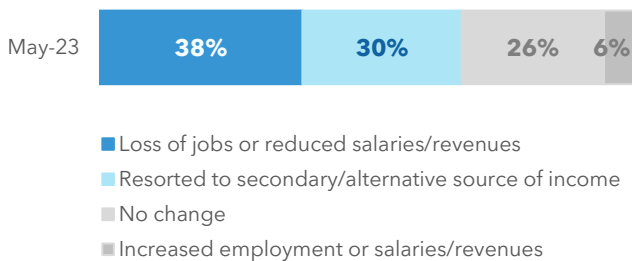
Respondents unable to access markets in the 30 days prior to the survey

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

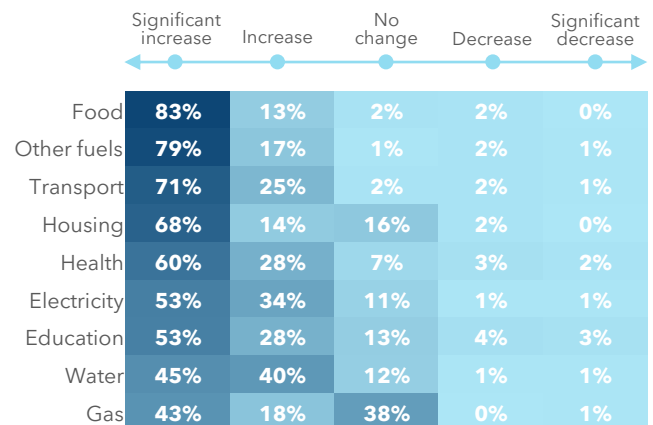


Has your household income changed in the 6 months prior to the survey?

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 concerning, with 53 percent of respondents skipping meals (27 percent) or eating less preferred foods (26 percent). One percent reported going an entire day without eating in the week prior to the survey, and 44 percent indicated that they faced no difficulty eating enough (compared to the regional average of 27 percent).

Some respondents are meeting immediate food needs by employing negative coping strategies.

Respondents may be compromising their wellbeing or future livelihoods by selling productive assets (28 percent), spending savings (78 percent) or reducing expenditures on health and education (47 percent).

In May 2023, 30 percent of respondents reported that their household had no food stock at home, while 38 percent reported having less than a week's worth of food supplies.



Food insecurity

Using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) methodology, it is estimated that 46 percent of the respondents in Suriname are food insecure.

Out of these, 15 percent are estimated to be severely and 31 percent moderately food insecure. The results are similar to the regional survey average.

The negative food experience most often reported by respondents in Suriname was "eating only a few kinds of food" (57 percent), followed by being "unable to eat healthy and nutritious food" (53 percent). Alarming, 15 percent of respondents went a whole day without eating in the 30 days prior to the survey. The poorest respondents, female respondents, younger respondents and single parents appear to be the most affected across all individual negative food-related experiences.

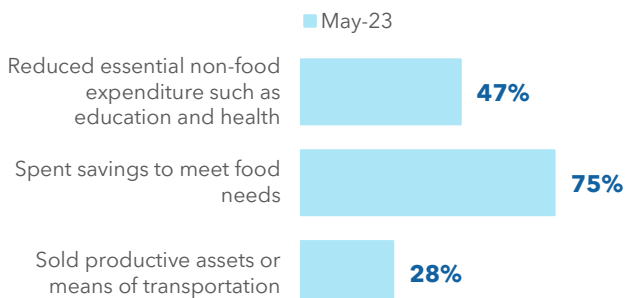
Which statement best reflects your food situation over the past 7 days?



- 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

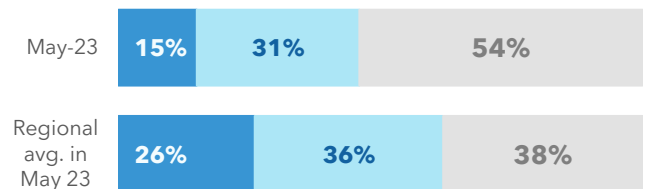
Households' coping strategies

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.



- Severely food insecure
- Moderately food insecure
- Mildly food insecure or food secure

"I have 3 kids and it's very hard to send them to school because of our income source. And I have to buy less food so that I have some money to send them to school. My husband cannot really work because he is seeing a psychiatrist." - Female, 30

"Challenge was to look for alternatives on healthy food. Had to make some changes in what to eat and buy some cheaper essentials to get by." - Female, 41

"The strong dependance on import goods caused food and other products to double or even quadruple in price due to international inflation and local devaluation." - Female, 34



Resilience capacity

Natural hazards affected 42 percent of respondents in Suriname in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The main reported hazard was flooding (39 percent). Of those affected by natural hazards over the last year, 49 percent reported moderate and 14 percent reported severe impacts on their livelihoods or income.

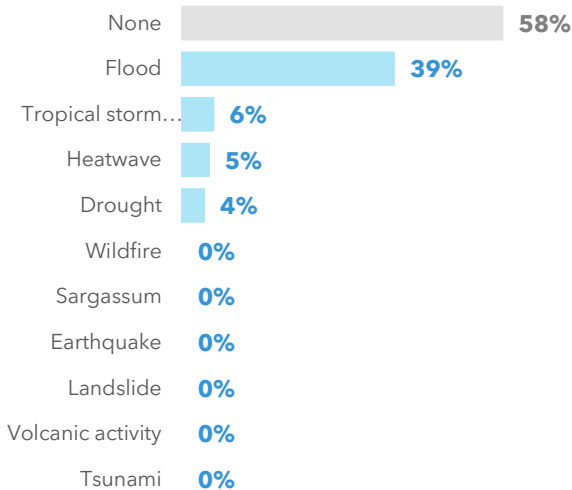
The Resilience Capacity Score (RCS) indicator was used to measure respondents' perceptions of their resilience to natural hazards. The method uses nine statements and respondents rate their level of agreement with each, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These generate a score that acts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

Based on the RCS, 53 percent of respondents have low capacity to cope with, recover from and adapt to natural hazards. Only 3 percent of respondents are highly resilient, while 44 percent have medium resilience capacity. Women and lower income groups appear to have lower overall resilience capacity.

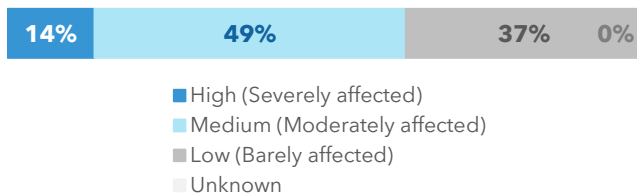
Out of the nine resilience characteristics, respondents were least resilient when it came to institutional capital (i.e. support from government or other institutions), financial capital (i.e. access to financial support) and anticipatory capacity (i.e. preparedness for future hazards). On the other hand, respondents feel that they are better equipped with human capital, in that they learned lessons from past hardships, and social capital by being able to rely on support from family and friends.

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)



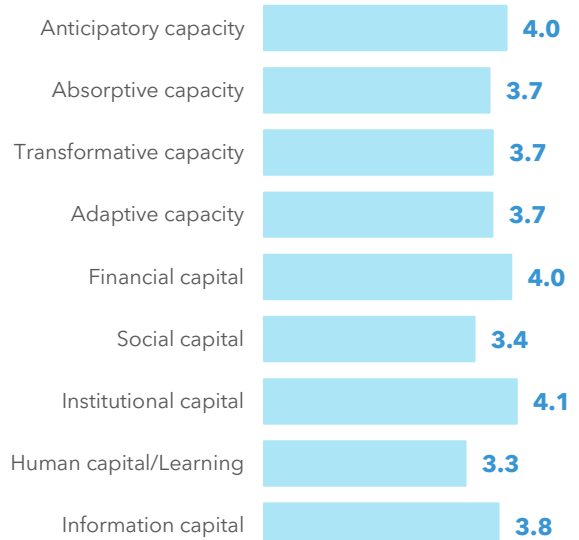
Overall resilience capacity

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 food needs (43 percent) and essential needs (40 percent) are the top concerns among respondents in Suriname, followed by concerns over illness (33 percent), decreasing savings (32 percent) and unemployment (30%).

Seven percent of respondents reported receiving government assistance in the year prior to the May 2023 survey.

Respondents provided insights on how they are coping and adapting to challenges. Out of the 129 respondents in Suriname, 64 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

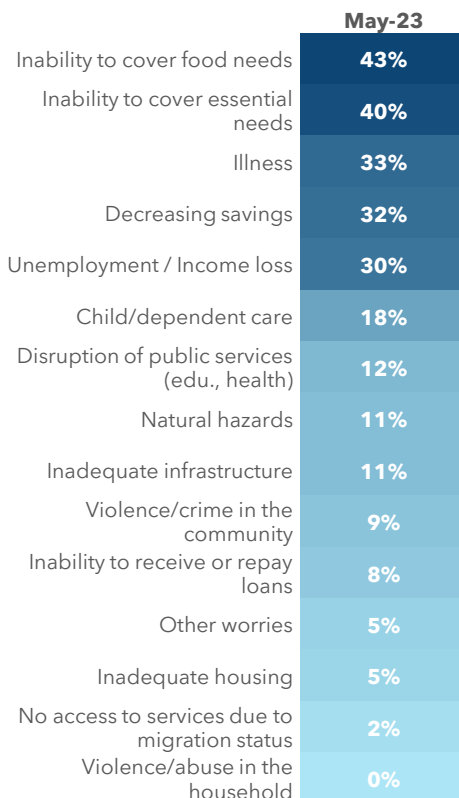
Based on regional survey findings, differences in results among respondents appear to be most pronounced when comparing income levels.

Households that reported below or well below average incomes indicate the poorest results on all key metrics of well-being and are at risk of further falling behind economically. Correspondingly, those relying on informal labour or assistance also appeared to perform worse.

While disaggregated findings should be treated with caution due to the low number of respondents from Suriname, the findings appear in line with regional survey trends. The results suggest that women may be facing greater challenges compared to men. Younger respondents also appear to be experiencing greater challenges across the majority of metrics.

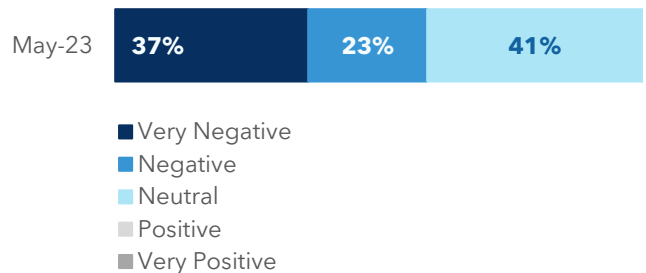
Main worries expressed by respondents

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".

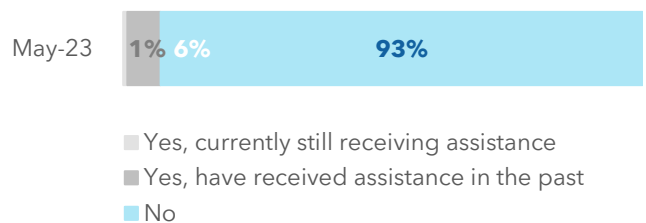


Distribution of sentiments across open-ended survey responses

Low response numbers in this category may affect results.



Have you received any assistance from the government in 12 months prior to the survey?



COMMON THEMES ON HOW RESPONDENTS IN SURINAME ARE COPING AND ADAPTING



"The exchange rate of the USD - SRD is getting worse every day and as my salary is stagnant it means I make less money than I did 2 years ago. The prices for gas, food, utilities and other commodities are increasing. The rainy season was so bad 3 weeks ago that my house was flooded for 5 days. My house has been stripped bare. I couldn't use bathroom or toilet as they were flooded as well. At this point I am not living but surviving." - Female, 40

"I can't afford a nanny, so I can't work. My husband covers for everything. And all the prices go up every week. It is really difficult in this period of time. I just wish I could work to help my husband provide for our kids." - Female, 23

"The lack of certain medicine needed for my child or restrictions which makes it difficult to get made me try harder to find natural products for cure. Also the high costs of fuel which affects all other services." - Female, 36



"Continue trend of inflation that put stress on purchasing power. Savings are eaten by the effects of inflation. One way to cope is to hedge against risk by saving in USD instead. But that is not the solution, because it affect the exchange rate." - Male, 36

"In Suriname the exchange rate is having an effect on everyone. The higher it gets, the more the prices, oil and everything is increasing. Salary has stayed the same and everything around increases." - Female, 38

"As the costs of living have increased, I find myself working harder (longer hours) to maintain somewhat the same standard of living/care for my kids, to the detriment of my health, well-being, and relationships." - Female, 44

"As a single parent, I don't always have enough food in the house for me and the kids. Especially young kids under 4 years. I sometimes struggle to provide food, diapers and fuel for my car so I can take them to daycare in order for me to go to work. Our apartment rent is also high and I struggle to pay it also. I let my son pee in bed I order to save diapers for my youngest son. I eat less so my kids can eat more from my plate." - Female, 31

"After the devaluation of our country currency (Surinamese dollar) life became very difficult for me and my family we had to eat less, spend less and not even being able to do something for fun. And even after the covid it became more difficult because we can't provide what we want to eat, so we have to choose the cheapest meals and even skip breakfast and dinner or else we wouldn't be able to provide food for the other days to come." - Male, 23



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>