

# Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO | April 2024

Climate change threatens food security and livelihoods in the Caribbean by disrupting food production, access, and availability. This increased climate variability, combined with high living costs, provides additional challenges for already vulnerable households, particularly those dependent on climate-sensitive livelihoods like farming and fishing, to cope with, and rebound from shocks.

The CARICOM Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods Survey provides snapshots over time of people's livelihoods, access to markets and food security. The survey aims to inform the decision-making of governments and development partners in the region, building on the data collected in the previous six rounds, highlighting the state of food security and livelihoods amid the continued high cost of living and risks related to climate change.

This report analyses data for Trinidad and Tobago from the seventh round of data collection, which took place from 19 March to 24 April 2024. It compares findings with six previous survey rounds conducted between April 2020 and May 2023. National level findings may vary from regional trends, nuancing local context and challenges.

While the survey contributes to a better overview of current state of food security and livelihoods, the data is not representative, and the use of an online questionnaire limits inputs from people without internet connectivity.

### Main results from the Trinidad and Tobago surveys

	Apr 2024	May 2023	Aug 2022	Feb 2022	Feb 2021	Jun 2020	Apr 2020	
<b>LIVELIHOODS</b>	Disrupted livelihoods	40%	60%	57%	60%	61%	65%	72%
	Reduction/loss of income	32%	45%	60%	68%	75%	77%	40%
<b>MARKETS</b>	Lack of market access	35%	50%	49%	41%	55%	42%	15%
	Change in shopping behaviour	86%	94%	94%	93%	90%	87%	82%
	Increase in food prices	97%	98%	99%	98%	84%	76%	65%
<b>FOOD SECURITY</b>	Reduced food consumption	32%	42%	43%	44%	53%	53%	12%
	Lack of food stock	20%	25%	26%	24%	22%	17%	2%



**Apr 2024**

**703**

Respondents

71% Female | 29% Male

**May 2023**

**1100**

Respondents

73% Female | 27% Male

**Aug 2022**

**1459**

Respondents

73% Female | 27% Male

**Feb 2022**

**1576**

Respondents

72% Female | 28% Male

**Feb 2021**

**1103**

Respondents

64% Female | 36% Male

**Jun 2020**

**899**

Respondents

67% Female | 33% Male

**Apr 2020**

**535**

Respondents

67% Female | 33% Male



## Natural hazards

Trinidad and Tobago is exposed to a wide range of natural hazards that pose a significant threat for climate sensitive livelihood activities and people's lives.

The major recorded events in the (EM-DAT) between 2000 and 2021 were storms, which came in the form of hurricanes and floods affecting estimated 150,000 people during the 2018 floods.

While EMDAT recorded damages of US\$4.7M, this is an underestimate given that an ECLAC study covering only three years found US\$12.6M in losses, while also highlighting the importance of non-monetary costs (Fontes de Meira and Phillips, 2019).



## Macro-Economic Dynamics

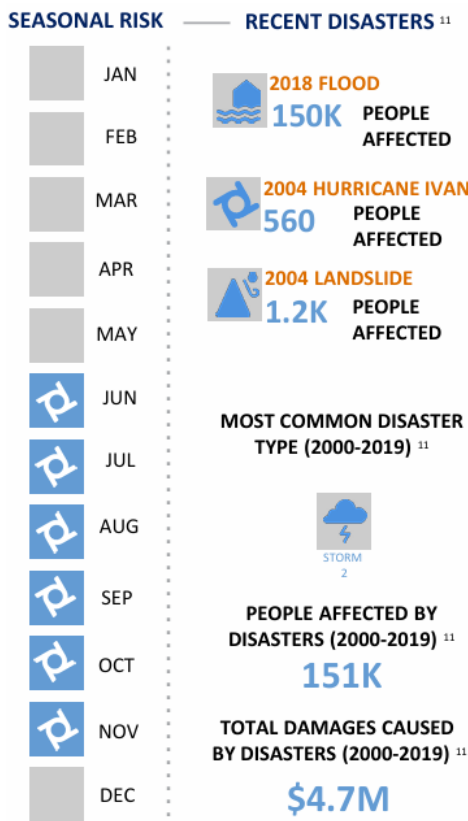
Trinidad and Tobago relies heavily on food imports, which make up 72 percent of all food trade (excluding fish; FAOSTAT, 2022). This means that local food prices are highly vulnerable to fluctuations in regional and global food markets.

According to FAO's Food Price Index, global food prices decreased by 12 percent in January 2024 compared to January 2023, and 29 percent since peaking in March 2022. Despite a gradual decline in food inflation since 2022, the country's high import dependency continues to affect the stability of local food prices.

Most survey respondents from Trinidad and Tobago continue to report significant price increases in food and housing with price increases also observed across a wide variety of essential goods and services (see page 3).

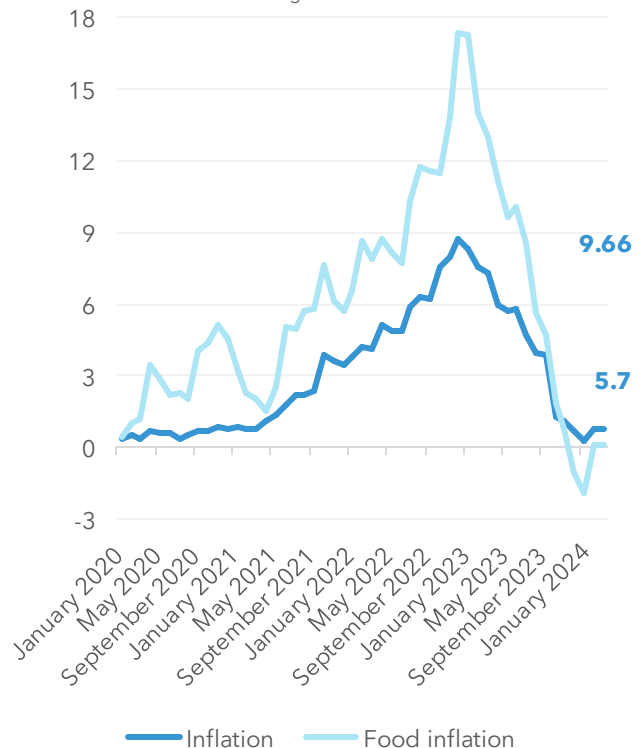
### Seasonal Risk and Recent Hazards in Trinidad and Tobago (2000-2021)

Source: OCHA - Trinidad and Tobago Country Profiles - EMDAT



### Inflation in Trinidad and Tobago (Jan 2020 - May 2023; %)

Source: Central Bank of Trinidad & Tobago, FAOSTAT and Trading Economics





## Markets

### Challenges accessing markets in the month before the survey were reported by one third of respondents.

While this is an improvement from all previous survey rounds, it remains concerning that people still face obstacles to accessing markets.

**Respondents continue to report increased prices in commodities, especially food.** Almost all (98 percent) of respondents reported an increase in food prices over the three months prior to the survey.

Apart from food, most significant price increases were observed for housing (47 percent), health (40 percent), transport (40 percent) and gas (39 percent).

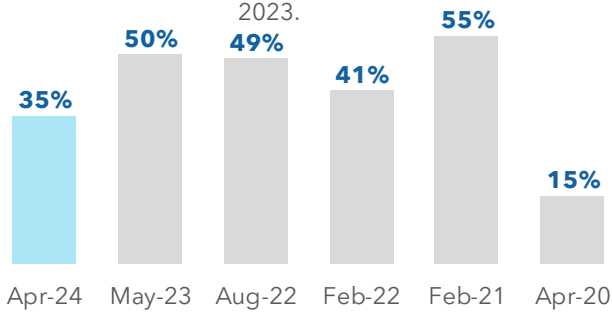
### Lack of funds continue to be the overwhelming factor with nearly all (96 percent) respondents citing it as the main barrier to accessing markets.

Overall, the reasons were largely similar when considering the sex of respondents, sex of head of households, locality or households with disability.

**Over the three months preceding the survey, 81 percent of respondents indicated having made some changes in their shopping habits.** Two thirds of respondents are buying smaller quantities than usual and purchasing cheaper or less preferred foods. Half of respondents are going to different stores. These behaviours are similar to what was reported in May 2023.

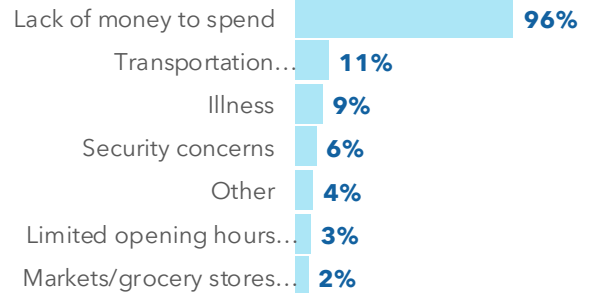
### Respondents unable to access markets in the 30 days prior to the survey

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

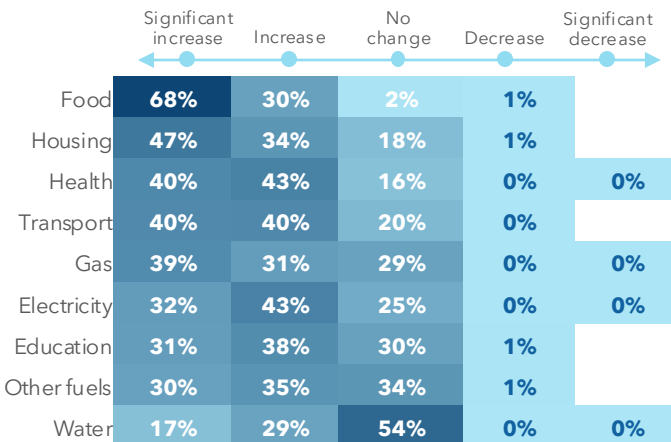


### For those that faced a time when they could not access markets in the past 30 days, the main reasons were...

Multiple choices could be selected.

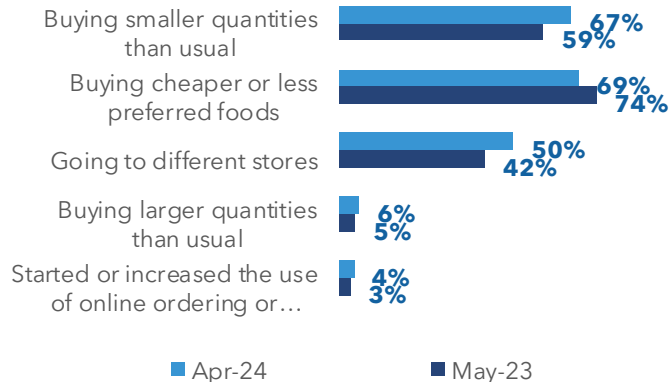


### Respondents reporting a change in the costs of the commodities in the 3 months prior to the survey



### Respondents who reported a change in their shopping habits in the past 3 months are...

Multiple choices could be selected.





## Livelihoods

### In Trinidad and Tobago, four out of ten respondents experienced disruptions to their livelihood activities in the 30 days prior to the survey.

Respondents describing their income as well below average (47 percent) more widely faced disruptions compared to those with above average income (8 percent). Households relying on remittances and with no formal education were also more likely to be affected. There were no major differences based on sex, locality or disability/ chronic illness in the household.

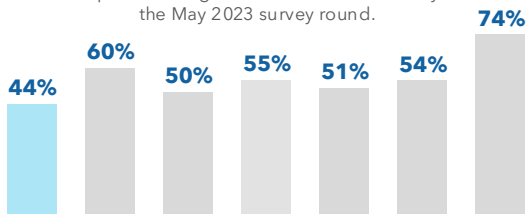
**Unaffordability of livelihood inputs remains the main driver across most respondents**, cited by 62 percent of those facing disruptions. Respondents involved in agriculture and fishing reported high costs of inputs, especially for animal feed and tools.

**A third of respondents experienced job loss or reduced salaries in their households** in the six months prior to the survey, slightly less than what was reported in May 2023 (45 percent). The proportion of those resorting to secondary or alternative sources of income has remained almost constant since May 2023 (**one out of five respondents**) suggesting the continuation of economic hardships.

**There were some marked differences in household income changes and income levels of the respondents..** Households from below and well below average income levels were more likely to face losses, when compared with their counterparts in the above and well above average incomes..

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

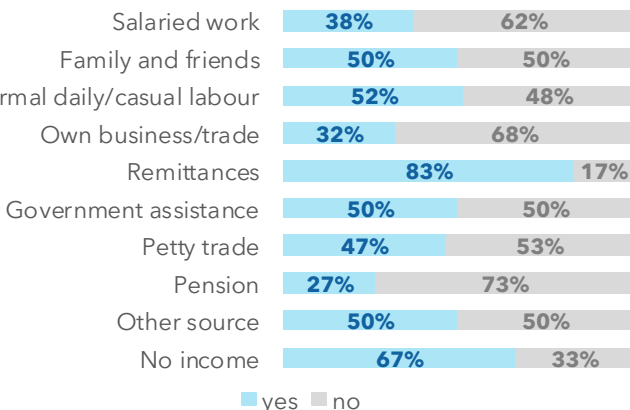
Recall period changed from 2 weeks to 30 days in the May 2023 survey round.



Apr-24 May-23 Feb-22 Aug-22 Feb-21 Jun-20 Apr-20

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

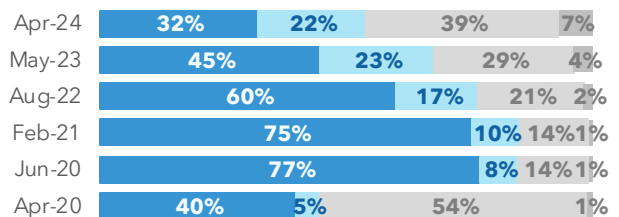
By main income sources



yes no

### How did your household income change in the 6 months prior to the survey?

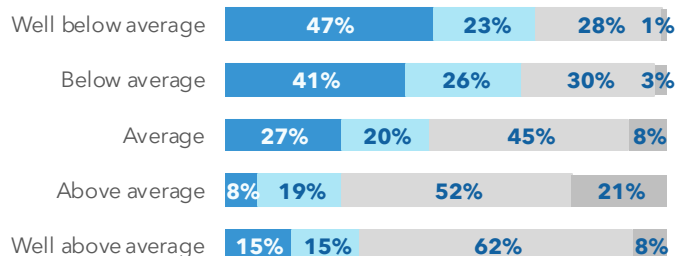
Recall period changed from "since COVID-19" to "in the 6 months prior to the survey" in May 2023 survey round.



- Loss of jobs or reduced salaries/revenues
- Resorted to secondary/alternative source of income
- No change
- Increased employment or salaries/revenues

### How did your household income change in the 6 months prior to the survey?

By perceived income level



- Loss of jobs or reduced salaries/revenues
- Resorted to secondary/alternative source of income
- No change
- Increased employment or salaries/revenues



## Coping Strategies

**Respondents from Trinidad and Tobago are resorting to applying a various coping strategies to address immediate needs.** Respondents are digging into their savings (57 percent), reducing expenditure on health and education (49 percent), and selling productive assets and/or means of transport (16 percent).

Households with persons with disabilities/chronic illnesses are more likely to spend their savings in order to make ends meet when compared with households without. Similarly, respondents with no formal education were more likely to spend savings to meet food needs at a higher frequency, when compared with those with formal education.

Overall, no significant differences were found in the application of coping strategies, when comparing between sex of respondent, sex of head of household, locality and income sources.



## Food consumption

**Food consumption and diets continue to be a concern,** with 29 percent of households skipping meals or eating less than usual, 27 percent eating less preferred foods and three percent going an entire day without eating in the week leading up to the survey.

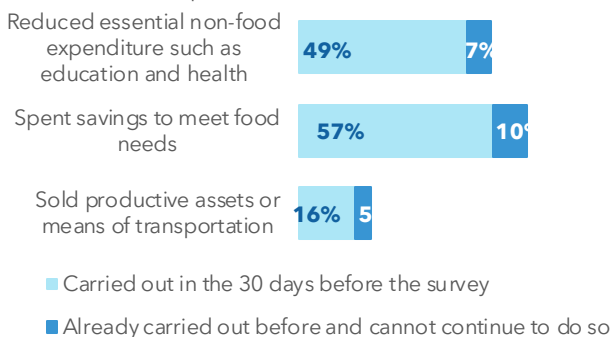
These findings represent a slight improvement in the food consumption of respondents compared to 2023, 2022, 2021, June 2020, but a deterioration when compared to April 2020.

Sixteen percent of respondents from well below average income levels indicated having no difficulties eating enough, when compared with 77 percent of respondents in the above and well above income levels.

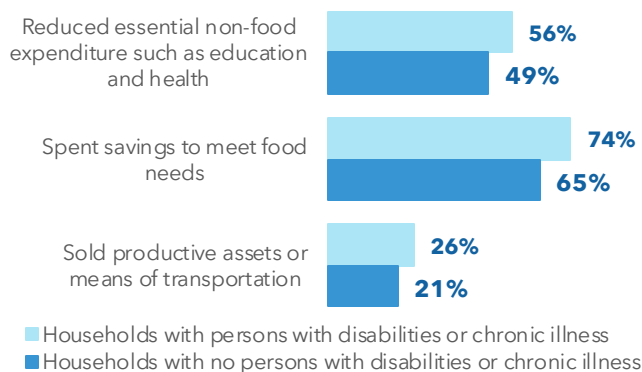
**One fifth of respondents have no food stocks at home,** while 38 percent reported having less than a week's worth of food stocks. Respondents with well below average income, and those with no formal education are more likely to report no food stocks.

### Households' coping strategies

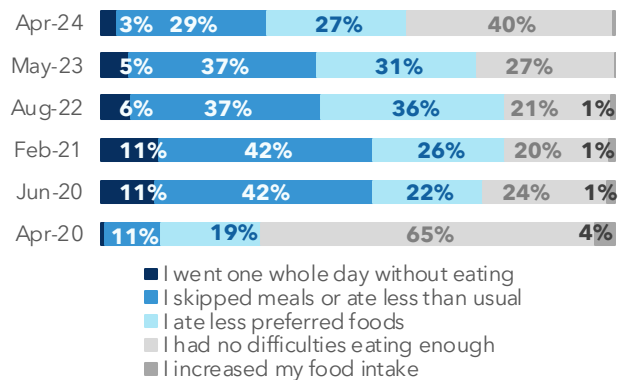
Multiple choices could be selected.



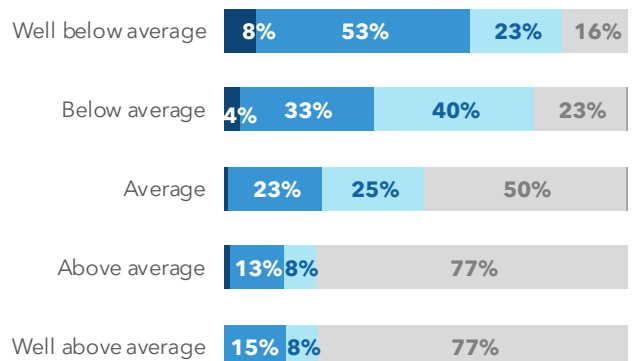
### By households with a disability or person with chronic illness



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



### By perceived income level





## Food Insecurity Prevalence

The rCARI, is an adapted remote version of the Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI). The CARI classifies individual households according to their level of food security. rCARI assesses two dimensions: (1) the current status of households' food consumption (based on food consumption patterns over the previous week), and (2) the current coping capacity of households to meet future needs (assessed based on economic vulnerability and the adoption of livelihood coping strategies). \*For more information on the CARI, see WFP's [Technical Guidance Notes Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security \(CARI\)](#).

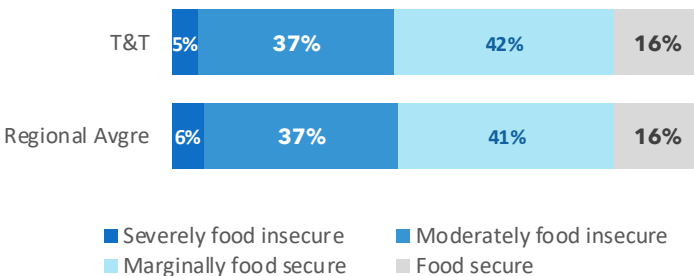
Using the rCARI methodology to determine the levels of food insecurity, in Trinidad and Tobago, it is estimated that **five percent are severely food insecure, while 37 percent are moderately food insecure**. On the other hand, forty two and sixteen percent of the households were marginally, and food secure respectively. This was consistent with the regional average.

**Income is a key factor linked to food insecurity, with households in the much below average (17 percent) and below average (five percent) income levels, with higher levels of severely food insecurity**, compared to two, one and zero percent of households in the average, above average and well above average incomes, respectively.

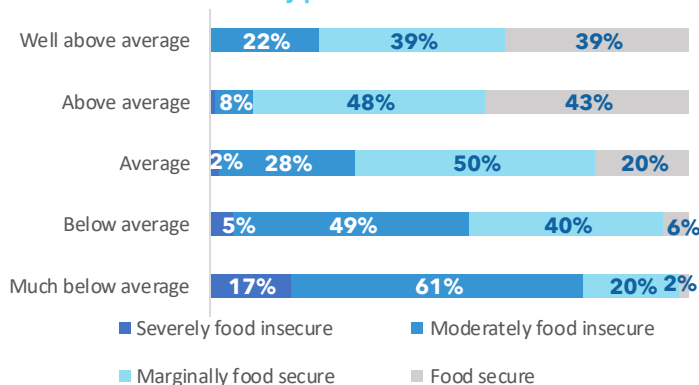
**A higher prevalence of food insecurity (severely plus moderately food insecure), was found among households with one or more members with a disability or suffering from chronic illness (48 percent)**, when compared with those without (34 percent).

Female headed households showed a slightly higher prevalence of food insecurity (42 percent), when compared with their male counterparts (36 percent).

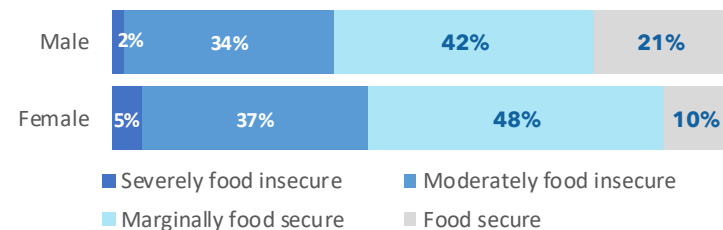
**Prevalence rates of food insecurity**  
based on the rCARI methodology - April 2024



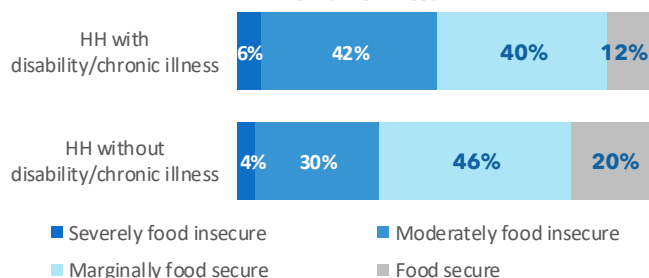
**Prevalence rates of food insecurity**  
based on the rCARI methodology  
**By perceived income level**



**Prevalence rates of food insecurity**  
based on the rCARI methodology  
**by sex**



**Prevalence rates of food insecurity**  
based on the rCARI methodology  
**by households with/without a disability or chronic illness**



*"We are challenged, because our income only covers the basics of light and water and some foods, we can't buy stuff like clothes and shoes." -Female, 45,*



## Food Insecurity Experience (FIES)

The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), is an indicator used for the Sustainable Development Goal of Zero hunger (SDG 2), is a metric of severity of food insecurity at the household or individual level. It relies on people's self-reported food related behaviors and experiences associated with increasing difficulties in accessing food due to resource constraints.

**Using the FIES methodology, it is estimated that 64 percent of the respondents in Trinidad and Tobago are experiencing food insecurity.** Out of these, 33 percent and 31 percent are estimated to be experiencing severely and moderately food insecure, respectively.

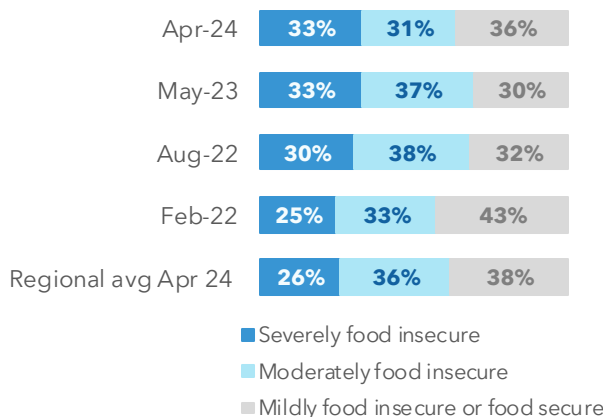
The prevalence of severe and moderate food insecurity is relatively consistent with the regional survey average.

The negative food experiences most often reported by respondents in Trinidad and Tobago were "eating only a few kinds of food" (69 percent), followed by being "unable to eat healthy and nutritious food" (60 percent). Nineteen percent of respondents went a whole day without eating in the 30 days prior to the survey. On the other hand, 89 percent were worried about not having enough food to eat.

While the indicators should be analysed collectively as a scale and individual statements should only be looked at as reference, there were some differences between sex of respondents, whereby female respondents were more likely to eat only a few kinds of foods more frequently and more worried about not having enough food to eat.

### Prevalence rates of food insecurity

Based on FIES methodology.



\*For more information on the FIES, see FAO's ['The Food Insecurity Experience Scale: Measuring food insecurity through people's experiences'](#).

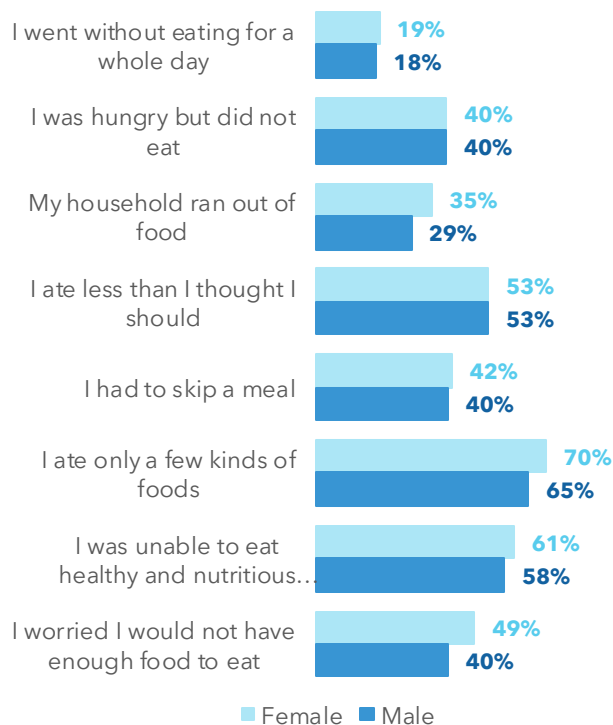
"Hardly getting work, food prices are almost doubled its cost, utilities are doubled, all savings gone to make up for groceries due to less work"-Male, 40,

"Being unable to make ends meet by paying bills and providing essentials for my family is very worrying and seems to be affecting my health."-Female, 57,

### Was there a time in the past 30 days when you experienced the following?

Multiple choices could be selected.

By sex





## Resilience capacity

**Respondents from Trinidad and Tobago continue to be affected by a wide range of natural hazards, in the 12 months prior to the survey.** Eighteen percent reported heatwaves, followed by drought (eight percent), floods (seven percent) and wildfires (five percent). Of respondents who reported to have been affected, 44 percent reported moderate impacts on their livelihoods, while 12 percent anticipate a severe level of impact.

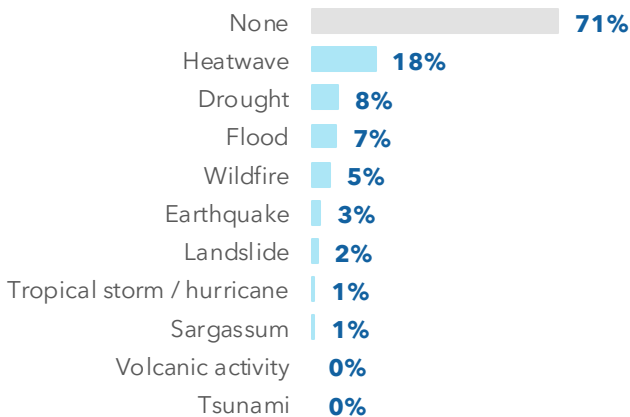
**The Resilience Capacity Score (RCS) indicator was used to measure respondents' perception of their resilience to natural hazards.** The method uses nine statements and respondents rate their level of agreement with each, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These generate a score that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

**Based on the RCS, 35 percent of respondents have low capacity to cope with, recover from and adapt to natural hazards.** Only six percent of respondents are highly resilient, while 60 percent have medium resilience capacity. Youth and those below or well below average income groups appear to 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), **transformative capacity** (i.e. ability to change or adapt the household's primary income source if needed) **and anticipatory capacity** (i.e. ability to minimize risk). On the other hand, **respondents feel that they are better equipped with information** (i.e.. through early warning information) and **human/ learning capital** (i.e., in that they learned lessons from past hardships).

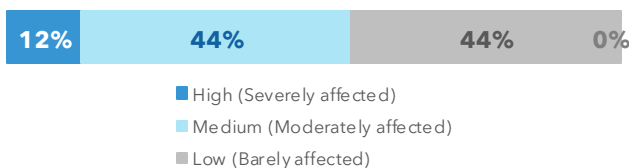
### Natural hazards that affected respondents in the 12 months prior to the survey

Multiple choices could be selected.



### Level of impact on livelihoods or income

For respondents that were affected by natural hazards in the 12 months prior to the survey



### Overall resilience capacity

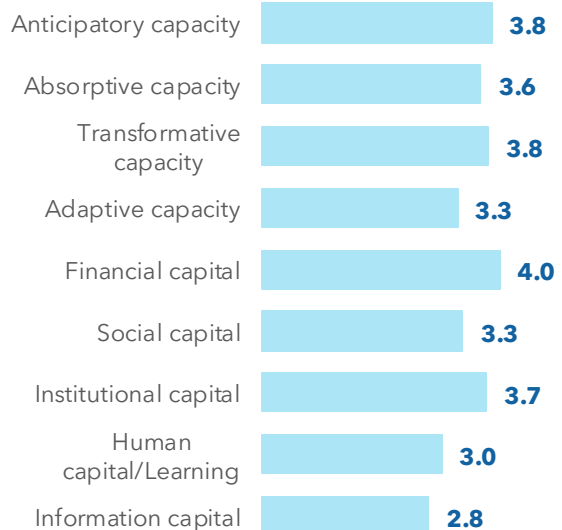
Resilience capacity score (RCS)



■ 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 (45 percent) and unemployment (34 percent) are the top concerns among respondents in Trinidad and Tobago**, followed by decreasing savings (35 percent) and concerns over illness (34 percent) then violence or crime in the community (27 percent).

**Less than five percent of respondents reported receiving assistance from the government** in the year prior to the April 2024 survey. The most common forms of assistance received were social security/national insurance, vouchers and income support.

**More than two thirds of respondents expressed negative or very negative sentiments.** Respondents were given the space to provide more nuanced insights on how they are coping and adapting. Out of the 703 respondents in Trinidad and Tobago, 86 responded to the open-ended question.



## Main differences

**Differences in results among respondents were 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. 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. Respondents with no formal education, those relying on informal labour and younger respondents also appear to be experiencing greater challenges across the majority of metrics.

While disaggregated findings should be treated with caution due to the number of respondents from the country, the findings appear mostly in line with regional survey trends.

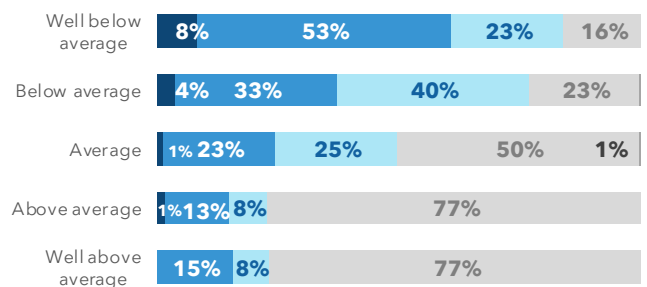
### Main worries expressed by respondents

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".

	Apr-24	May-23	Feb-22	Feb-21	Jun-20
Inability to cover essential needs	45%	46%	43%	59%	57%
Illness	34%	26%	47%	41%	47%
Unemployment / Income loss	36%	34%	41%	41%	43%
Decreasing savings	35%	29%	12%	6%	10%
Inability to cover food needs	26%	36%	45%	61%	57%
Inability to receive or repay loans	16%	15%			
Violence/crime in the community	27%	27%	7%	5%	5%
Child/dependent care	11%	11%	12%	6%	5%
Natural hazards	9%	8%			
Inadequate infrastructure	10%	10%			
Inadequate housing	6%	5%			
Disruption of public services (education, health)	2%	2%	10%	5%	7%
Other worries	2%	1%	24%	18%	0%
Violence/abuse in the household	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
No access to services due to migration status	1%	2%	5%	12%	11%

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

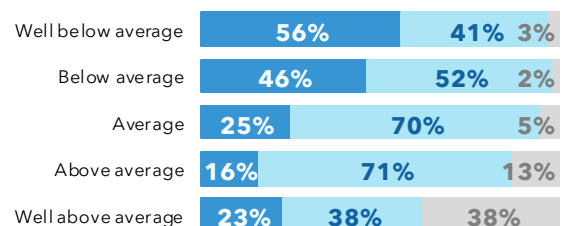
#### By perceived income level



- 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

#### Overall resilience capacity

##### By perceived income level



■ Low RCS ■ Medium RCS ■ High RCS



## Conclusion

Tackling food insecurity and the factors driving it remains as high a priority as ever. Despite some improvements, this survey shows that many people still struggle to put food on the table, pursue their livelihoods and manage the ever-present threat of natural hazards. A concerning number of people are using savings to buy food, resorting to secondary sources of income, eating less, substituting less preferred foods, buying smaller quantities, spending less on health and education and even selling assets. While the number of respondents per country limits disaggregating data at this level, the regional data trends are very clear that people with lower incomes are faring much worse across the board on food security, livelihoods and access to markets.

Tackling food insecurity requires a mix of measures to strengthen food systems, boost production and facilitate trade. Key entry points are highlighted in ongoing policy efforts and national and regional initiatives, such as the CARICOM drive to reduce extra-regional imports 25% by 2025. These include reducing barriers to agri-food trade, improving transportation and logistics for agri-food products, investing in research and climate-smart adaptation, tailoring agricultural insurance and finance instruments, enhancing digitalization of the agricultural sector, and promoting the consumption of local nutritious foods – an objective all the more crucial amid the high rate of non-communicable diseases.

It is critical to protect people's access to food especially when shocks occur, including measures to strengthen early warning systems, invest in preparedness, make social protection systems more shock-responsive, and expand anticipatory actions that target the most vulnerable so that they can take measures before hazards turn into disasters. With climate change predicted to result in more frequent severe hazards, these investments must be expanded. Another important entry point for food security is school feeding programmes, investments which are documented globally to have exponential returns related to health/nutrition, education and agriculture sectors.

These interconnected issues require collaborative approaches coupled with much-needed tailored financing for SIDS. With both food security and financing high on the agenda in the Caribbean, and the Fourth Annual International Conference on Small Island Development States raising the global profile of SIDS, there is a window of opportunity to take existing efforts to the next level to promote sustainable food systems, climate change adaptation and resilience.

## Recommendations\*

**Strengthen the productive capacities of smallholder farmers and fishers** through access to technologies, climate information services, promotion of climate-smart agriculture access to institutional markets and other tailored measures.

Continue to develop programmes, policies and strategies that promote **greater involvement of youth and women in agriculture**, as well as **data and evidence generation** to inform evidence-based investments.

Invest in priorities identified in the CARICOM 25 by 25 initiative, such as improving **transport and logistics for agri-food products**, enhancing access to tailored **agricultural insurance and finance** and promoting **digitalization** in the agricultural sector.

Expand initiatives to **increase demand for local foods** to encourage healthy diets and combat noncommunicable diseases and obesity, while supporting local and sustainable agricultural production

**Expand and strengthen national school feeding programmes** to reach more children with nutritious meals and support food systems through increased procurement of local nutritious products. Aim for universal coverage given the high return on investment.

Continue to invest in **preparing social protection systems to respond to shocks** and expand efforts to promote **economic inclusion and resilience**, including through stronger linkages between **social protection and agriculture**.

Strengthen **multi-hazard early warning systems** to enhance hazard monitoring and early warning services to inform early actions when hazards unfold. **Expand anticipatory action measures**, especially those enabling vulnerable people to take necessary measures.

Reinforce institutional capacities to **translate disaster risk management policies into actionable measures** that protect and enable continued access to food and essential needs when disasters strike and strengthen resilience against hazards.

**Promote risk-layered disaster risk financing** to protect investments and assets and ensure that resources reach those who need them the most in a timely manner. Build on and expand recent and ongoing experiences **linking disaster risk financing to social protection** to enable rapid support to vulnerable persons when hazards strike.

**Continue to advocate for improved access to climate finance** to promote sustainable and resilient agri-food systems, adaptive social protection and climate change adaptation measures that will enhance food security and livelihoods.

\*Recommendations are adapted from regional survey report



#### 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>