

Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

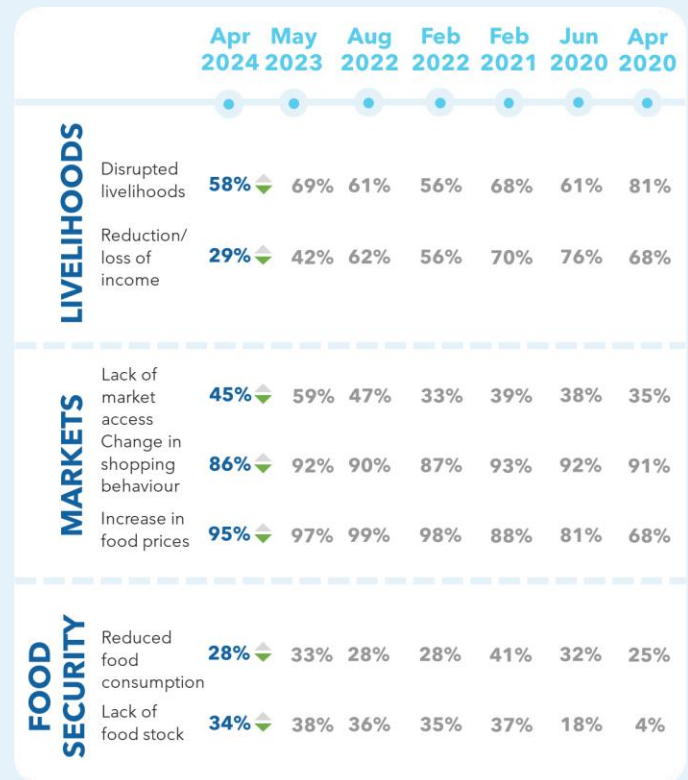
BELIZE | April 2024

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 has providing 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 Belize 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 Belize surveys



Apr 2024

316

Respondents

56% Female | 44% Male

May 2023

1113

Respondents

75% Female | 25% Male

Aug 2022

562

Respondents

72% Female | 28% Male

Feb 2022

995

Respondents

72% Female | 28% Male

Feb 2021

1507

Respondents

74% Female | 26% Male

Jun 2020

1198

Respondents

71% Female | 29% Male

Apr 2020

537

Respondents

72% Female | 28% Male



Natural hazards

Belize's geography and location on the eastern coast of Central America exposes it to a wide range of natural disasters. Its coastal areas are susceptible to flood generating hurricanes and tropical storms, as shown by the impacts of Hurricane Lisa in 2022, while northern areas such as Corozal and Orange Walk can suffer from drought, such as the series experienced between March – May 2023 (unreported in the International Disaster Database EMDAT) which compromised crops and livestock in the country.

Recorded extreme weather events in EMDAT between 2000-2021 affected over 240,000 people in Belize and resulted in total adjusted damages of USD 552 million. Disasters most frequently reported were meteorological, followed by hydrological. The most recent Hurricane Lisa in 2022, impacted approximately 172,000 people, with estimated BZ\$193 million in damages and losses (Post Disaster Needs Assessment Report, March 2023).



Macro-Economics Dynamics

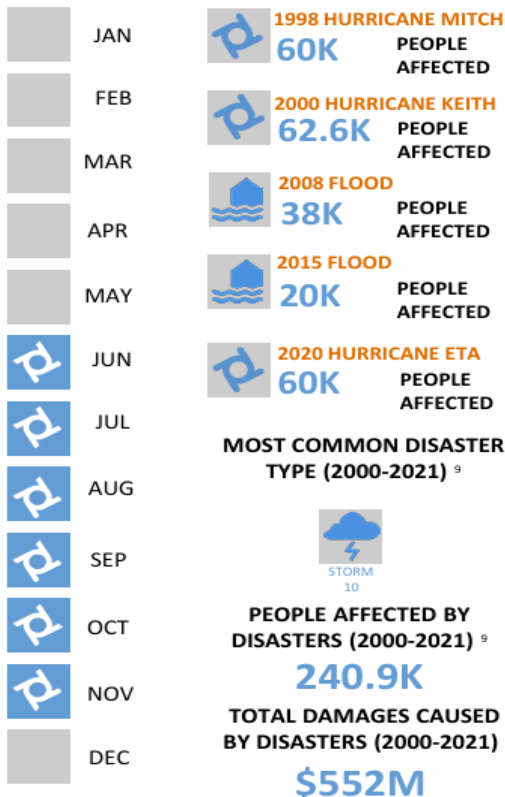
The Ministry of Food Systems and Enterprises report published in 2022 ([Food Systems report](#)) indicates that Belize produces 60 percent of its food supply, relying on imports on the remaining 40 percent of total food consumed. Trade dynamics differ from other small island states categorised under CARICOM with cross land border imports often influencing supply and prices in Belize. Local food prices are vulnerable to international varieties and supplies that make their way across borders. According to FAO's Food Price Index, headline and food inflation have been on downward trend since 2023, both dipping to under five percent in January 2024. Food inflation in particular is exhibiting a significant drop after peaking at 15.8 in March 2023.

Most survey respondents from Belize continue to report price increases in food, gas, housing and across a wide variety of livelihood inputs (see page 3).

Seasonal Risk and Recent Hazards in Belize (2000-2021)

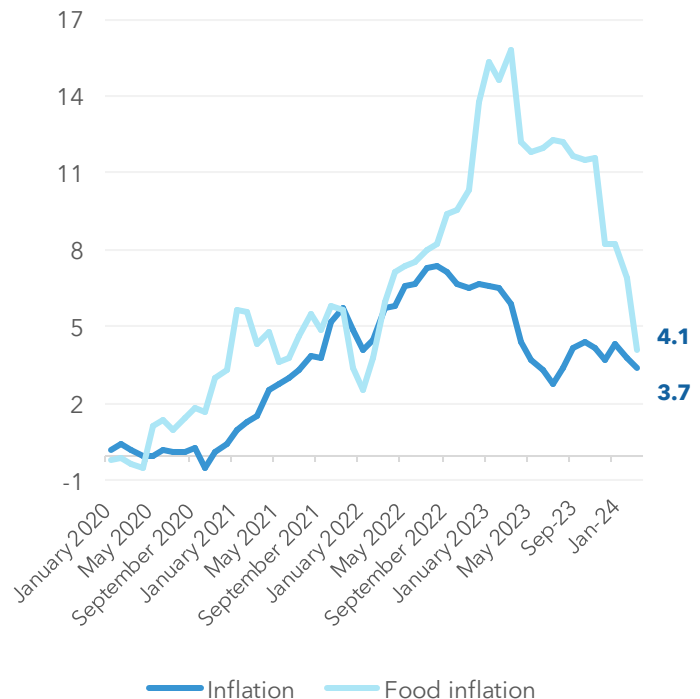
Source: OCHA - Belize Country Profile - EMDAT

SEASONAL RISK — SIGNIFICANT DISASTERS⁹



Inflation in Belize (Jan 2020 - Jan 2024;%)

Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, FAOSTAT and Trading Economics





Markets

Nearly half of respondents reported challenges accessing markets in the month prior to the survey.

This exhibits a decrease from the previous survey round. The majority of respondents (86 percent) have also changed how they shop, with half of respondents purchasing smaller quantities than usual and over half increasingly buying cheaper and less preferred foods.

Respondents continue to report increased prices in commodities, especially food.

Nearly three quarters (71 percent) of respondents reported an increase in food prices over the 3 months prior to the survey. Apart from food, the most significant price increases have been observed for gas (54 percent), other fuels (53 percent) and housing (52 percent).

Lack of funds continue to be the overwhelming factor with 90 percent of the respondents citing it as the main barrier.

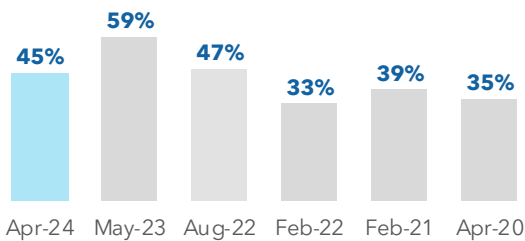
Respondents from rural areas more often reported transportation challenges and stores being far way. Overall, the limitations were largely similar between all sex of respondents, sex of head of households, locality or households with disability.

In order to adapt to these disruptions, the majority of respondents (86 percent) have changed how they shop.

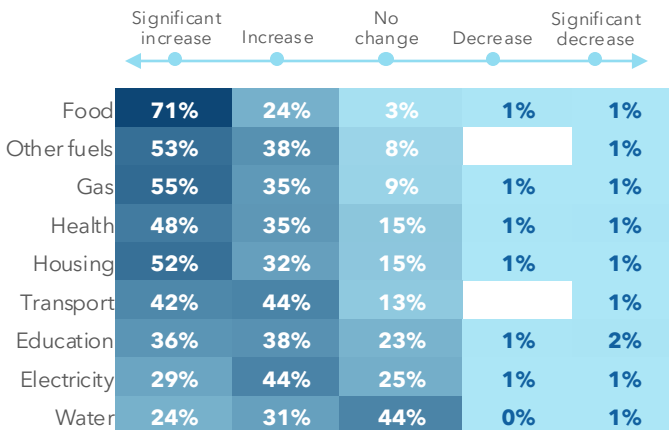
Nearly two thirds of respondents are buying smaller quantities than usual and purchasing cheaper or less preferred foods. Nearly a quarter of respondents are going to different stores. Those without income or relying on petty trade labour are more likely to adapt and compromise their shopping behaviour when compared to those with more stable income sources.

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.

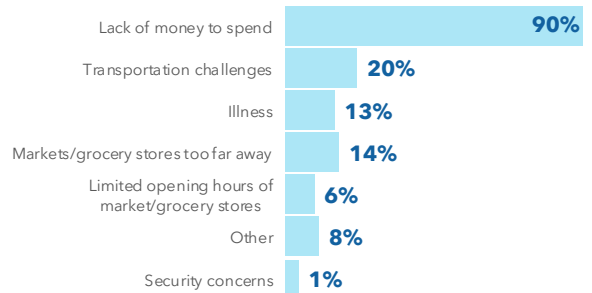


Respondents reporting a change in the costs of the commodities in the 3 months prior to the survey



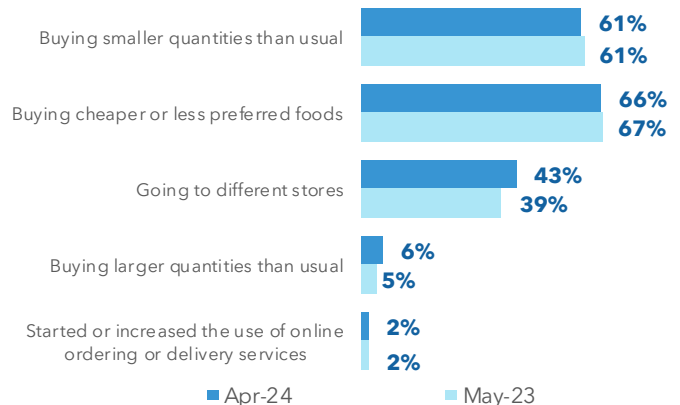
For those that faced a time when they could not access markets in the past 30 days, the main reasons were...

Multiple choices could be selected.



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

Multiple choices could be selected.





Livelihoods

Over half of respondents from Belize continue to experience disruptions from carrying out their livelihood activities in the 30 days prior to the survey. A greater proportion of households in the well below average income (80 percent) report to face disruptions when compared to those who well above average income (31 percent). Unaffordability of livelihood inputs remains the main driver, cited by 71 percent of those affected by disruptions. Respondents involved in agriculture and fishing report high costs of inputs, especially for fuel, fertilizer, tools/machinery, and seeds.

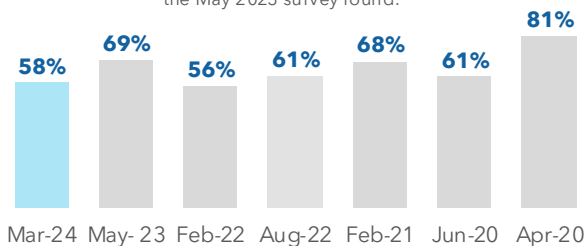
Under one third of respondents experienced job losses or reduced salaries in their households in the in six months prior to the survey, reflecting a reduction of 13 percent compared to May 2023. The proportion of those reporting no change has increased by that 13 percent.

Nearly three out of ten respondents experienced job losses or reduced salaries in their households in the in six months prior to the survey, which is a 13% reduction to what was reported in May 2023.

There were some marked differences in household income changes when compared with household incomes. Households from "below" and "well below average" income levels were more likely to suffer job and revenue losses, whereby those from average level or above seem to have more capacity to resort to secondary income sources.

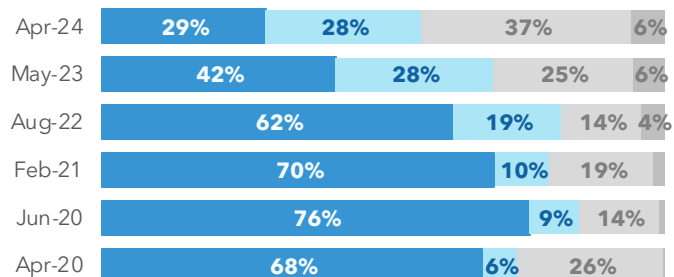
Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 30 days prior to the survey

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



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

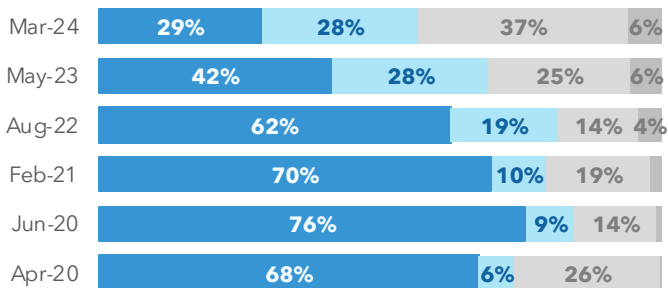
Recall period changed from "since Covid-19" to "in the 6 months prior to the survey" in May 2023 survey round



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

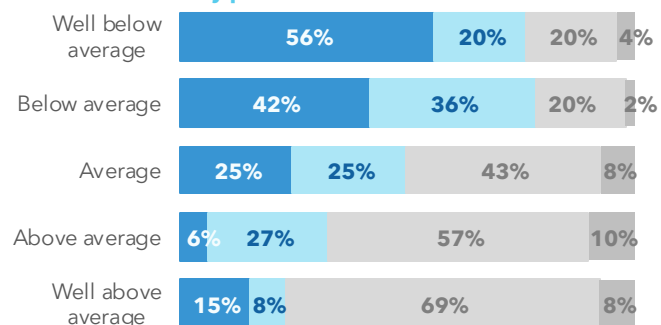
Has your household income changed in the 6 months prior to the survey?

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



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

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





Coping Strategies

Respondents from Belize are resorting to the use of various coping strategies to address immediate needs. Respondents are having to dig into their savings (72 percent), reducing expenditure on health and education (59 percent), and selling productive assets and means of transport (40 percent).

Respondents from the 25 and younger age-group, well below average and below average, those with primary education or no formal education, and those relying on informal labour or government assistance were more likely to report on spending their savings to meet food needs when compared with other groups.

Overall, coping strategies deployed are largely similar when comparing between sex of respondent, sex of head of household, households with/out disabilities, and locality.



Food consumption

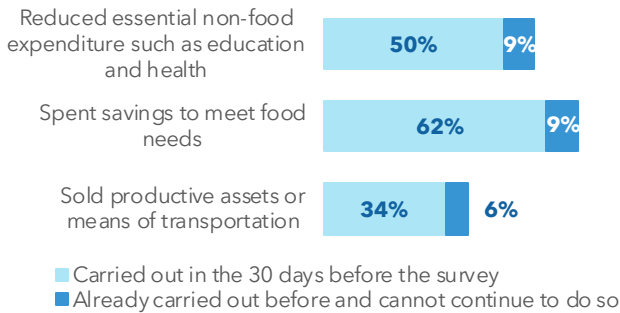
Approximately three out of ten respondents are resorting to eating less preferred foods, in meeting their food needs. This was slightly lower when compared to the previous rounds in May 2023 (42 percent). This was followed by going an entire day without eating, in the week leading up to the survey (27 percent).

On the other hand, 37 percent indicated having no difficulties eating enough, which was slightly higher than in the previous round in May 2023 (25 percent), but similar to pre-covid levels.

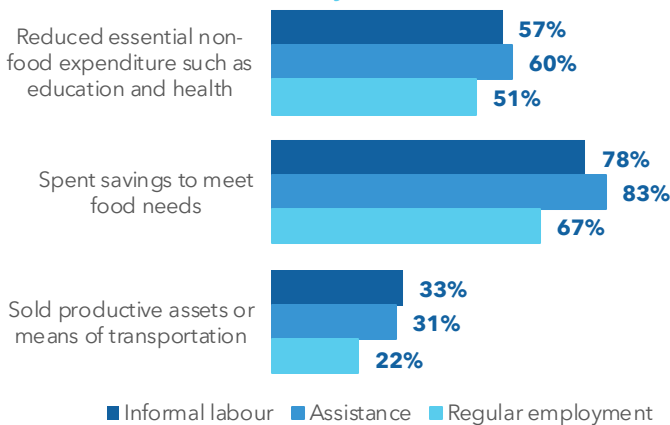
One third of respondents have no food stocks at home. Respondents relying on family and friends and petty trade as income are more likely to report inability to stock food to buffer against shocks.

Households' coping strategies

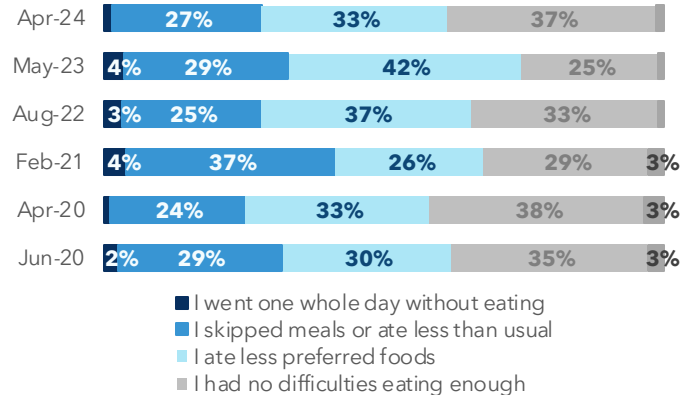
Multiple choices could be selected.



Households' coping strategies By income source

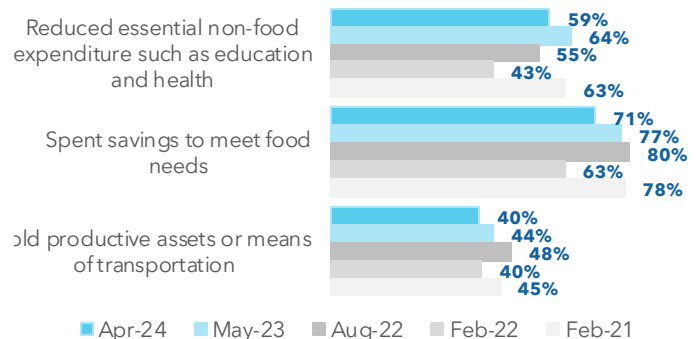


Which statement best reflects your food situation over the past 7 days?



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.





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 \(CARI\)'](#).

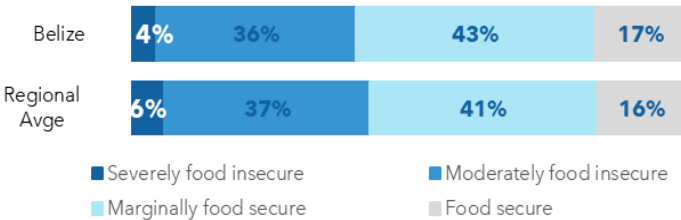
Using the rCARI methodology to determine the levels of food insecurity, in Belize, it is estimated that four percent are severely food insecure, while 36 percent are moderately food insecure, consistent with the regional average.

Income is a key factor linked to food insecurity, with households in the much below average (72 percent) and below average (60 percent) income levels, with higher levels of food insecurity (severely plus moderately food insecure), compared to 39 percent, 31 percent and 12 percent of in the well above, average and above average incomes, respectively.

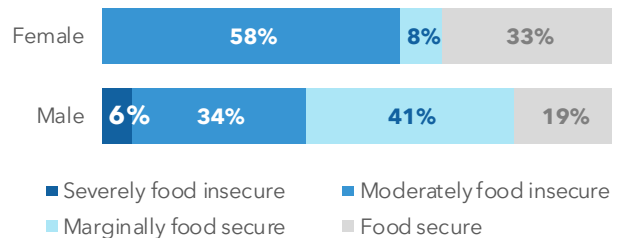
Similarly, food insecurity levels varied significantly between households with at least one member having a disability or chronic illness compared to those without. Overall, 47 percent of households where at least one member has a disability or chronic illness are estimated to be food insecure compared to 33 percent among households with no disability or chronic illness.

On the other hand, female headed households were more likely to food insecure when compared with their Male counterparts at 58 and 40 percent, respectively.

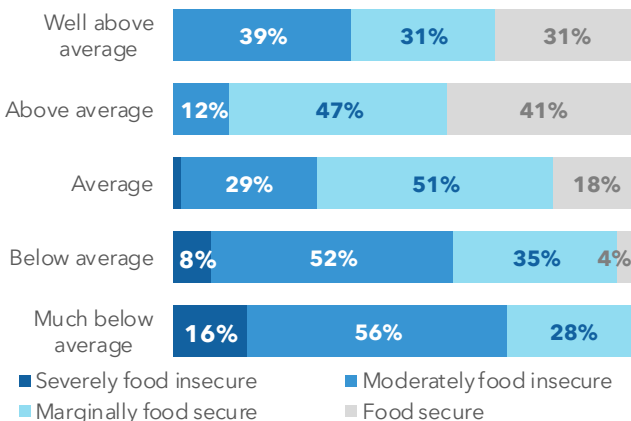
Prevalence rates of food insecurity based on the rCARI methodology - April 2024



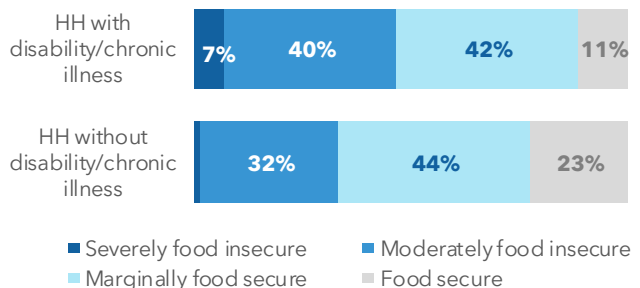
Prevalence rates of food insecurity based on the rCARI methodology by sex



Prevalence rates of food insecurity based on the rCARI methodology by income levels



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





Food Insecurity Experience

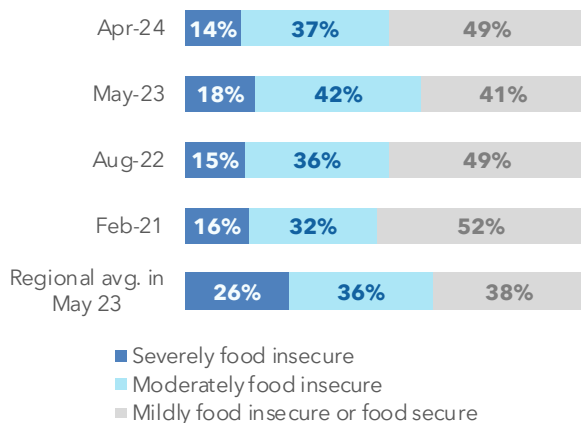
The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) is an indicator used for the Sustainable Development Goal of Zero hunger (SDG 2), is a metric of severity of food insecurity at the household or individual level. It relies on people's self-reported food related behaviors and experiences associated with increasing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

Using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) methodology, it is estimated that 51 percent of the respondents in Belize are food insecure. Out of these, 14 percent are estimated to be severely and 37 percent moderately food insecure. The prevalence of severe and moderate food insecurity in Belize is slightly lower when compared to the regional survey average.

The negative food experiences most often reported by respondents in Belize was "eating only a few kinds of food" (69 percent), followed by being "unable to eat healthy and nutritious food" (59 percent). Alarming, 18 percent of respondents went a whole day without eating in the 30 days prior to the survey.

While the indicators should be analysed collectively as a scale and individual statements should only be looked at as reference, some differences were observed when comparing the responses between households of different perceived income levels. Those from well below average income levels more frequently reported on each of the negative food experience statements. Differentials were a bit less when comparing between sex of respondents in Belize which goes slightly against regional trends when looking at this metric.

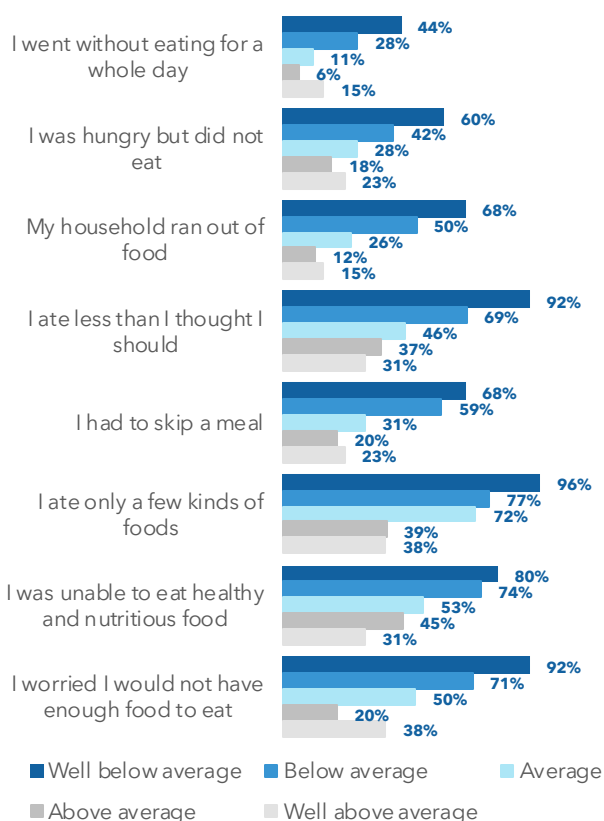
Prevalence rates of food insecurity
Based on FIES methodology.



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

"The changes I faced in this year was that I had to budget my money for me to have financial stability and one of my most challenges are that I have to pay for rent, utilities and groceries and that's something that my salary can't cover most of the times."-male, 23, Belize

Was there a time in the past 30 days when you experienced the following?
Multiple choices could be selected.
By perceived income level





Resilience capacity

Livelihoods in Belize continue to be affected by a wide range of natural hazards with 41 percent reporting having experienced a hazard.

Heat waves was the most reported hazard experienced, by 22 percent of the respondents. This was followed by tropical storms (11 percent) and drought (10 percent).

Of respondents who were affected, 13 percent reported to have severe level of impact on their livelihoods, while 57% anticipate a medium level of impact.

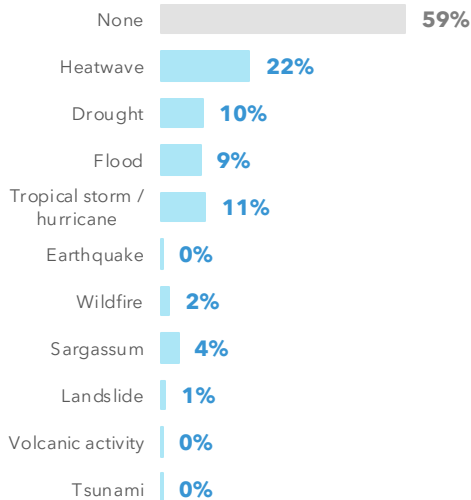
The Resilience Capacity Score (RCS) indicator was used to measure respondents' perception of their resilience to natural hazards. The method uses nine statements and respondents rate their level of agreement with each, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These generate a score that acts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

Based on the RCS, 28 percent of respondents have low capacity to cope with, recover from and adapt to natural hazards. Only 11 percent of respondents are highly resilient, while 61 percent of the respondents have medium resilience capacity.

Out of the nine resilience characteristics, respondents scored the worst on the financial and institutional capital. This implies that they do not have access of funds or are able to rely on government safety nets to buffer themselves from shocks. On the other hand, **respondents feel they are better equipped with information** (i.e., by having access to early warning information to deal with natural disasters) and **human/learning capacity** (i.e., in that they learned lessons from past hardships.).

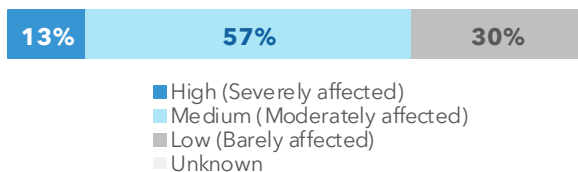
Natural hazards that affected respondents in the 12 months prior to the survey

Multiple choices could be selected.

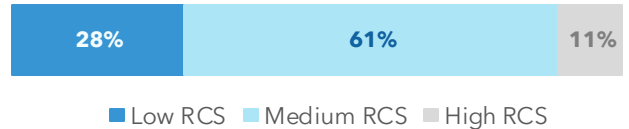


Level of impact on livelihoods or income

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



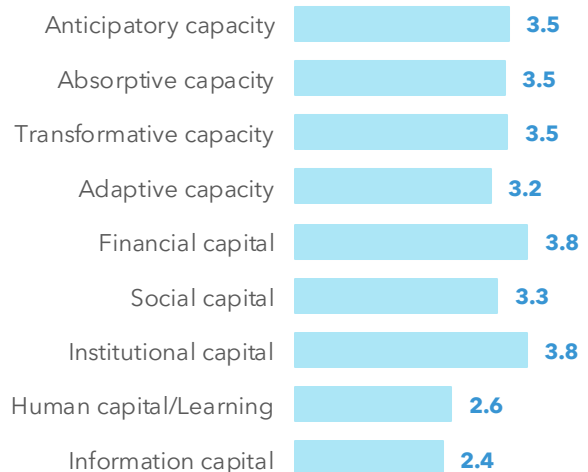
Overall resilience capacity



**The RCS is based on the Subjectively Evaluated Resilience Score (SERS) designed by L. Jones (2019) and WFP's Climate Resilience Capacity Score. For more information, see [Resilience Capacity Score](#) guidance.*

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 cover essential needs (48 percent) and illness (43 percent) were the top concerns among respondents in Belize, followed by inability to cover food needs (33 percent) and decreasing savings (29 percent).

In the year prior to the April 2024 survey, only six percent of respondents reported receiving assistance from the government. Social security/national insurance was the most frequently reported form of support from the government.

A large majority of respondents (87 percent) 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 316 respondents in Belize, 127 responded to the open-ended question.



Main differences

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

Households that reported below or well below average incomes, and generally respondents with no formal education indicate the poorest results on key metrics of well-being and are at risk of further falling behind economically. Younger respondents also appear to be experiencing greater challenges across the majority of metrics.

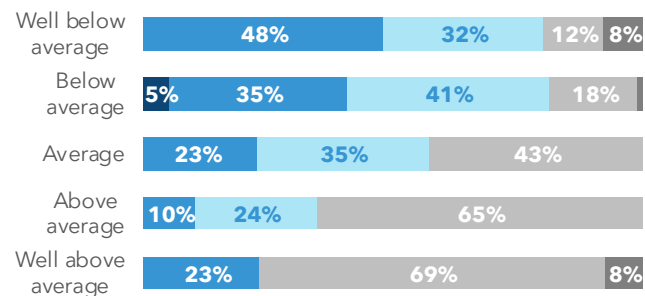
While disaggregated findings should be treated with caution due to the number of respondents from the country, the findings appear in line with regional survey trends.

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".

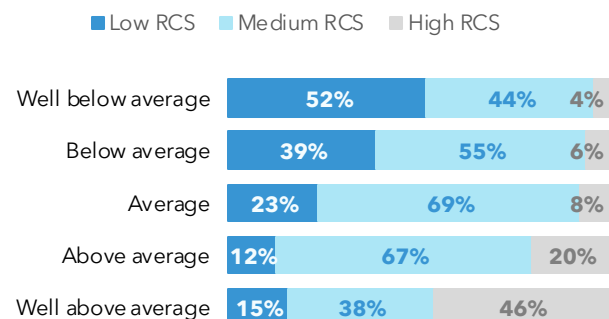
	Apr-24	May-23	Feb-22	Feb-21	Jun-20
Inability to cover essential needs	48%	47%	29%	33%	45%
Illness	43%	35%	56%	48%	57%
Unemployment / Income loss	26%	32%	31%	54%	58%
Decreasing savings	29%	23%	15%	11%	12%
Inability to cover food needs	33%	34%	35%	38%	40%
Inability to receive or repay loans	15%	18%			
Violence/crime in the community	9%	9%	13%	7%	12%
Child/dependent care	12%	11%	10%	11%	9%
Natural hazards	16%	13%			
Inadequate infrastructure	6%	5%			
Inadequate housing	6%	5%			
Disruption of public services (education, health)	3%	2%	13%	13%	10%
Other worries	2%	1%	40%	25%	0%
Violence/abuse in the household	1%	1%	4%	1%	1%
No access to services due to migration status	2%	1%	0%	2%	1%

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



COMMON THEMES ON HOW RESPONDENTS IN Barbados ARE COPING AND ADAPTING

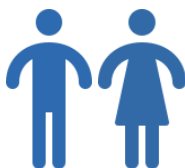


"I have experienced a huge change in the cost of living because the price on every goods here in my country is so high and I don't have enough money to purchase enough food for my family and pay my utilities and education for my children it is a mad struggle for my households. I sure wish and hope that I can get some kind of assistance from somewhere and I also had my mom that I take care of too and I need clear her medical cost and I don't have enough income to do so."-female, 41, Belize

"Decent paying employment in the districts is hard to come by so one needs to travel mainly to Belize City, but the bus system is really messed up. There are no sufficient buses on the road to accommodate commuters and to make things worse old buses always breaking down, putting extra cost to the commuter."-male, 48, Belize

"Insecurities concerning my livestock/ I have loss 5 sheep sure to predators. My breeding stock is only at half of what I had."-female, 48, Belize

"Its hard to get by now a days, working just to pay off loan is hard. Cant even do a small house for my self as material id beyond what i get paid at work."-female, 26, Belize



"Loss of employment and had to live the day to day esp. with payments for my children's education."-female, 50, Belize

"Everything is up in d sky education and livestock and pay is not enough if I buy one thing, I cant buy d other."-female, 34, Belize

"Well to be honest the cost of living is increasing more and more everyday ..Not everyone has that financial support to go out and buy everyday things are so expensive now a days."-female, 24, Belize

"This year I experienced economic shortfalls and some food insecurity. I adapted by focusing on a more plant-based diet, eating at home, fasting and porttvontro. For economic instability, I tried to rely on alternative income in tourism. Due to intense competition, I was not productive."-female, 55, Belize

"With the rise in grocery prices I've cooked less food ensuring that none is left over to waste. The prices have really sky rocketed and therefore lots of what we could afford to eat we can no longer do so."-female, 41, Belize

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>

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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>

World Food Programme

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