

Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

JAMAICA | April 2024

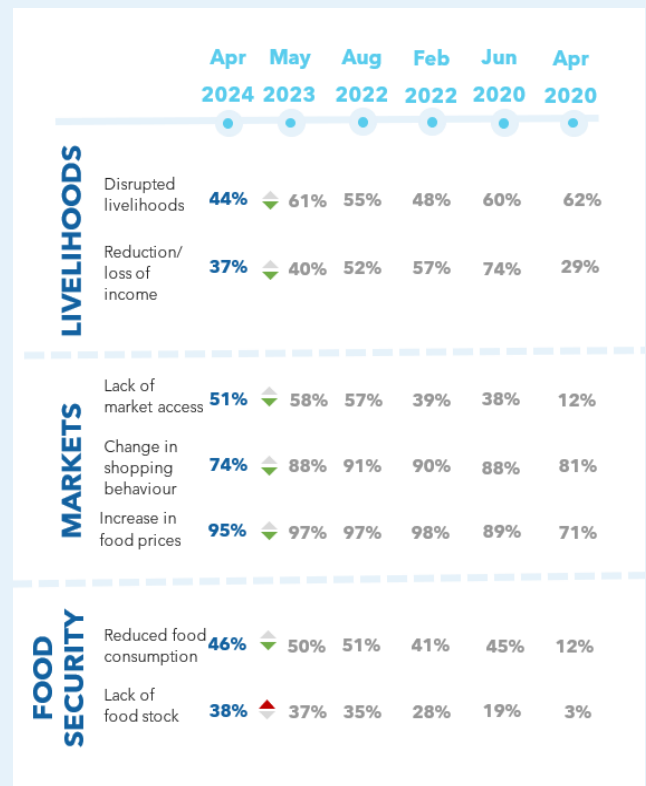
Climate change presents a clear and continuing threat to food security and livelihoods in the Caribbean. Increased climate variability destabilizes food systems by disrupting production, access and availability. This instability, coupled with the high cost of living, exacerbates vulnerable households' inability to absorb shocks, especially those reliant on climate dependent livelihoods such as farming and fishing.

The CARICOM Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods Survey has been 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 Jamaica 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. 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 Jamaica surveys

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



April 2024

833

Respondents

78% Female | 22% Male

May 2023

1607

Respondents

79% Female | 21% Male

Aug 2022

1192

Respondents

74% Female | 26% Male

Feb 2022

930

Respondents

72% Female | 28% Male

Feb 2021

*Not included because of the low number of responses from Jamaica.

Jun 2020

242

Respondents

76% Female | 24% Male

Apr 2020

216

Respondents

75% Female | 25% Male



Natural hazards

Like most countries in the Caribbean, Jamaica is exposed to a myriad of natural hazards. The country's high exposure to natural hazards, especially tropical cyclones/storms, is partly due to its geographical location within the Atlantic Hurricane Belt and its mountainous terrain.

Data from the International Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) recorded 20 natural hazards in Jamaica between 2000 and 2021, the majority of which were tropical cyclones/storms, with the most recent being Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

Between 2000 -2021 in Jamaica, natural hazards have disrupted the lives of almost 870,000 people and resulted in total estimated adjusted damages of over US\$1.5 billion.

Data from the current survey revealed that nearly half of the respondents from Jamaica had been affected by a natural hazards in the 12 months preceding the survey (see page 8).



Macro-Economic Dynamics

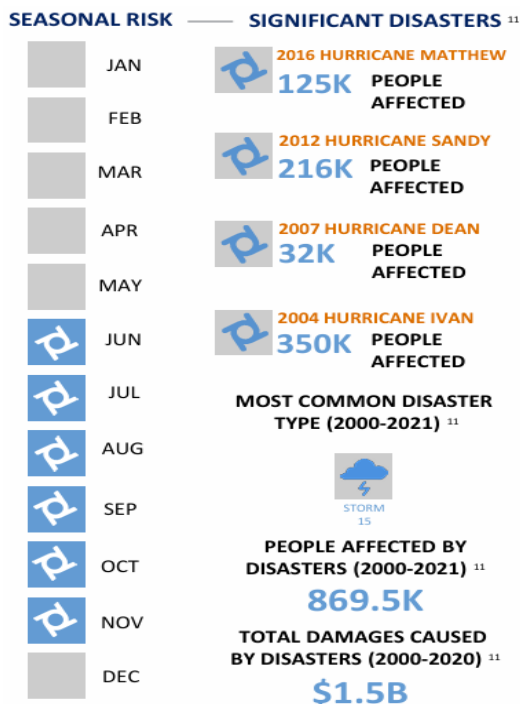
Data from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), revealed that the cost of goods and services rose by 5.6 percent in March 2023 to March 2024 period. This was approximately 0.6 percentage points lower than the 6.2 percent point-to-point inflation rate recorded for February 2023 to February 2024.

The average cost of food increased by 4.8 percent for March 2023 to March 2024, compared to 7.7 percent for February 2023 to February 2024. STATIN reported a 0.5 percent decline in inflation in March 2024 (alone), which was the third consecutive month in which the All-Jamaica Consumer Price Index had declined.

Despite the recorded decline in inflation (particularly in quarter one of 2024), these reductions did not seem to have transcended to the consumer level, since more than half of the respondents in Jamaica perceived significant increases in the cost of food (such as "fruits and vegetables"), housing (e.g. "rent") and transportation (e.g. "bus fares"). Respondents highlighted challenges they currently face in coping with the perceived high cost of food and the overall cost of living (see page 3).

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

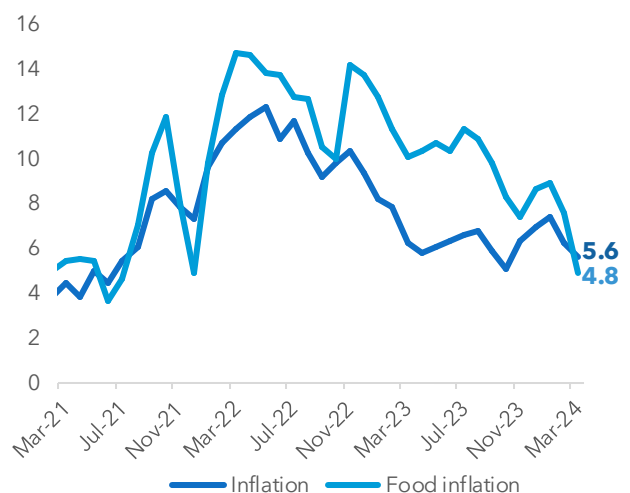
Source: OCHA - Jamaica Country Profiles - EMDAT



Inflation in Jamaica (March 2021-March 2024; %)

Point-to-point inflation rates.

Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica, FAOSTAT and Trading



"Well, cost of living is expensive... food, Transportation, electricity and Rent has gone up..... had to buy cheaper and less food and also consume less."-Male, 32



Markets

Inaccessibility of markets was a challenge for 51 percent of respondents, which was slightly lower than the results for May 2023 (58 percent). Respondents describing their income as below or well below average were more inclined to report issues in accessing markets, compared to respondents with above or well above average household incomes.

Limited financial resources (97 percent), followed by transportation challenges (13 percent) were the two major reasons that hindered respondents from accessing markets in the month before the survey.

Despite a slight decline in inflation in the first quarter of 2024, **58 percent of respondents perceived that food prices had increased significantly, three months prior to the survey.**

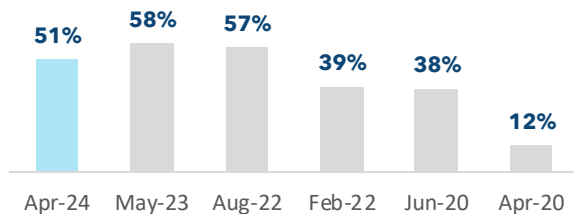
A significant increase in the cost of housing, electricity, health, was also noted, cited by 49, 43 and 40 percent of respondents, respectively.

Similar to the results of the May 2023 survey, **respondents mostly adjusted their shopping habits by purchasing cheaper foods (65 percent) and less food than usual (66 percent), in the three months preceding the survey.**

There were no significant differences between men and women and other socio-demographic variables of interest such as age, household income, household composition, highest level of education and disabilities within the household, in changes in shopping behaviour.

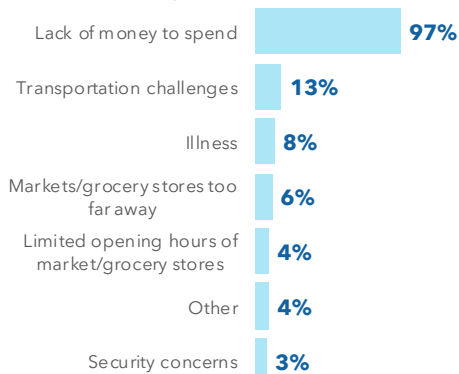
Respondents unable to access markets in the 30 days prior to the survey

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

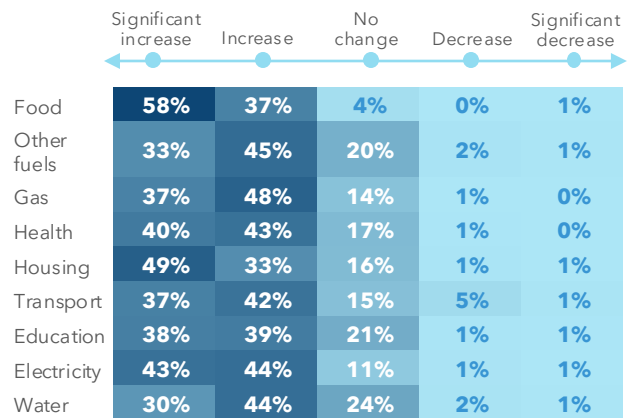


For those that faced a time when they could not access markets in the past 30 days, the main reasons were...

Multiple choices could be selected.

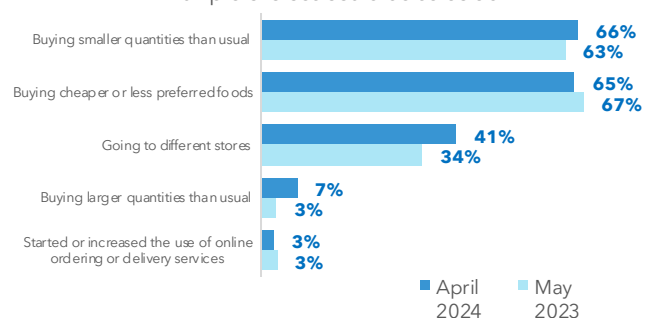


Respondents reporting a change in the costs of the commodities in the 3 months prior to the survey



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

Multiple choices could be selected.





Livelihoods

Overall, 44 percent of respondents in Jamaica noted disruptions to their livelihood in the 30 days preceding the survey. Despite a slight reduction over the May 2023 to April 2024 period (from 61 to 44 percent), the high cost of livelihood-related inputs remains an area of concern, cited by 61 percent of respondents.

Respondents involved in agriculture and livestock rearing also perceived a significant increase in the cost of agricultural inputs such as animal feed (79 percent), fertilizer (66 percent), labour (62 percent), tools/machinery (61 percent) and seeds (61 percent) in the six months preceding the survey.

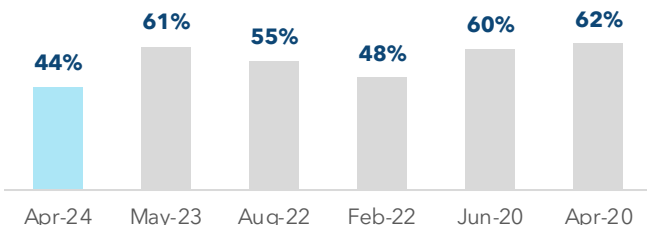
In terms of changes to household income, 37 percent of respondents mentioned job losses/reduced salaries, whereas eight percent noted increased job opportunities/salaries in the six months prior to the survey.

The proportion of those resorting to secondary or alternative sources of income has remained almost constant since May 2023 (**one out of four respondents**) suggesting the continuation of economic hardships.

There were some marked differences observed by the level of the income. Respondents in the well below average and below incomes were more likely to report job losses/reduced salaries, compared to their counterparts in the well above average and above average income levels.

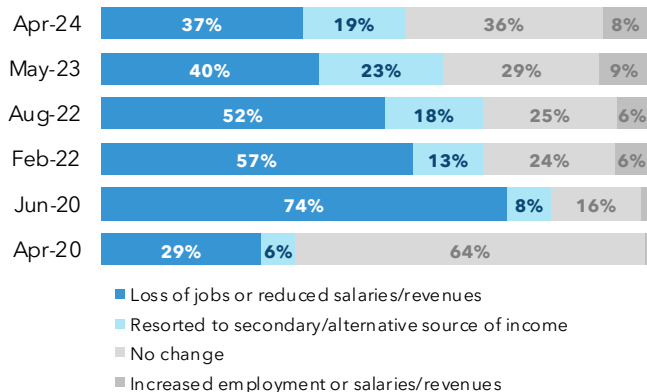
Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 30 days prior to the survey

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



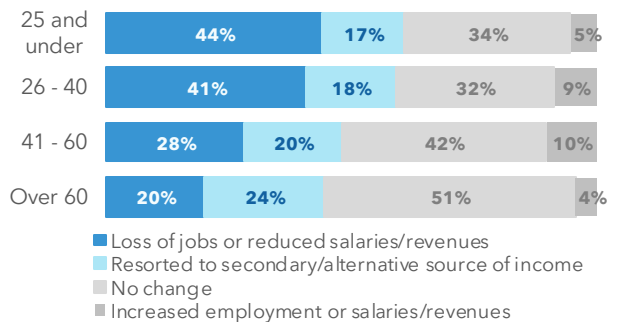
Has your household income changed in the 6 months prior to the survey?

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



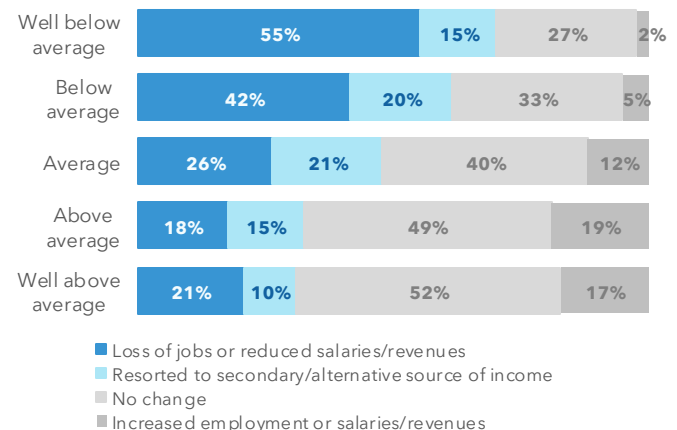
Has your household income changed in the 6 months prior to the survey?

By age group



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

By perceived income level





Coping Strategies

Respondents from Jamaica are resorting to various coping strategies to address immediate needs. Approximately three quarters of the respondents indicated spending their savings to meet their food needs, 53 percent reduced expenditure on health and education, while 24 percent sold productive assets or their means of transportation.

For respondents who spent their savings, 67 percent noted that they had done so in the 30 days preceding the survey, whereas eight percent of these respondents had implemented this coping strategy previously but could not continue to do so.

Variations were observed by household income groups.

For instance, 85 percent of respondents from households with below/well below average income spent their savings to meet food needs, compared to 49 percent from the above and well above average income groups.



Food consumption

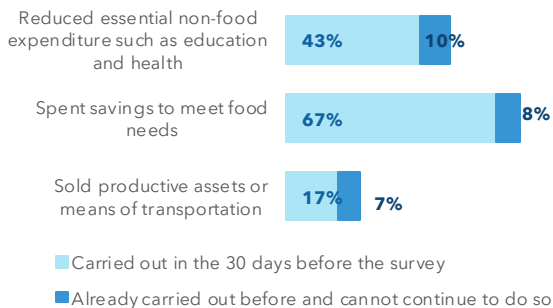
Food consumption and diets continue to be a concern, with 37 percent of households skipping meals or eating less than usual, 23 percent eating less preferred foods and nine percent going an entire day without eating in the week leading up to the survey.

Respondents from well above and above average incomes were more likely to report increased food intake, whereas respondents in the well below and below average income group more frequently skipped meals or ate less than usual, in the week prior to the survey.

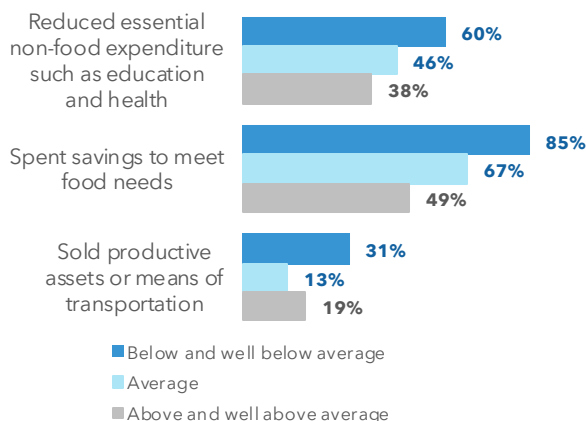
Respondents with no food stocks or less than a week's worth accounted for 77 percent, which was relatively similar with results for May 2023 (80 percent).

Households' coping strategies in the 30 days prior to the survey

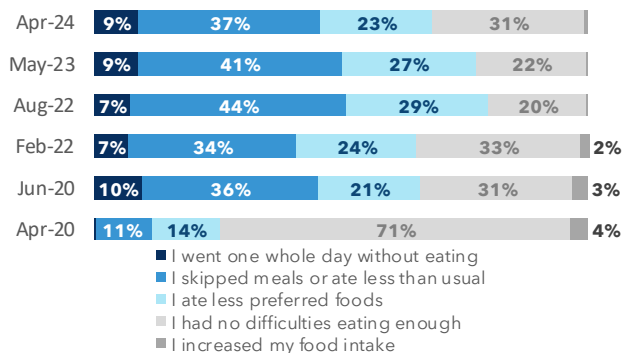
Multiple choices could be selected.



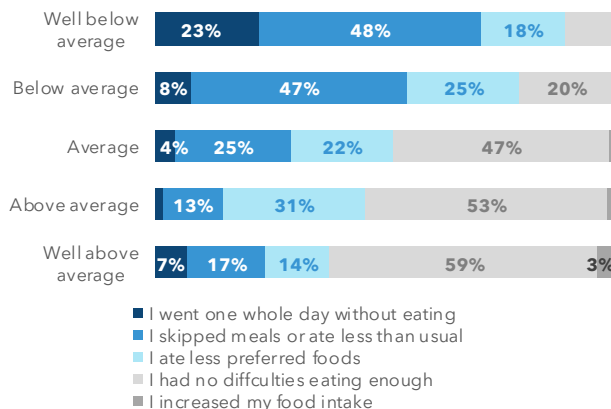
Households' coping strategies By perceived income level



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



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, ten percent of respondents in Jamaica were estimated to be severely food insecure, and 45 percent moderately food insecure. The overall prevalence of food insecurity in Jamaica was slightly higher than the regional average.

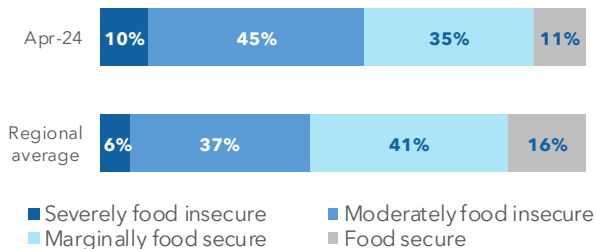
Income is a key factor linked to food insecurity, with households in the much below average (86 percent) and below average (62 percent) income levels, with higher levels of food insecurity (severely plus moderate), compared to 37, 31 and 22 percent of households in the much above average, average and above average incomes, respectively.

Similarly, higher prevalence of food insecurity was found among households with one or more members with a disability or suffering from chronic illness (61 percent), when compared with those without (42 percent).

Female headed households also registered a slightly higher prevalence of food insecurity at 59 percent when compared their male counterparts (50 percent).

Prevalence rates of food insecurity

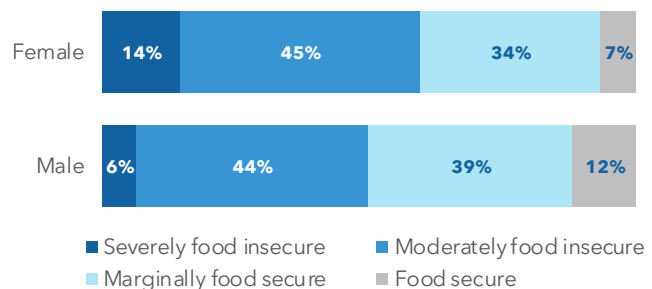
Based on rCARI methodology.



Prevalence rates of food insecurity

Based on rCARI methodology.

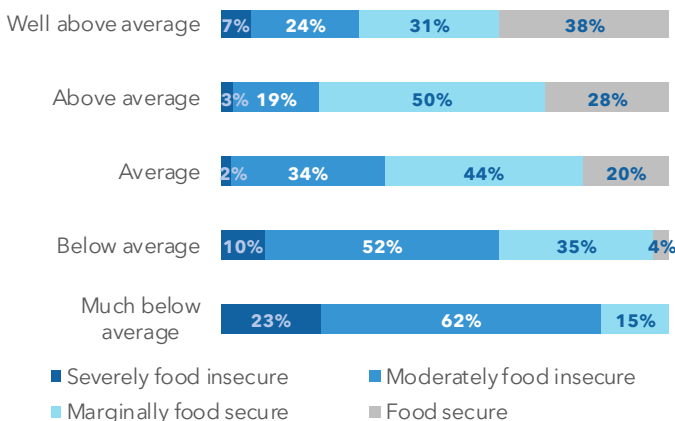
By sex



Prevalence rates of food insecurity

based on the rCARI methodology

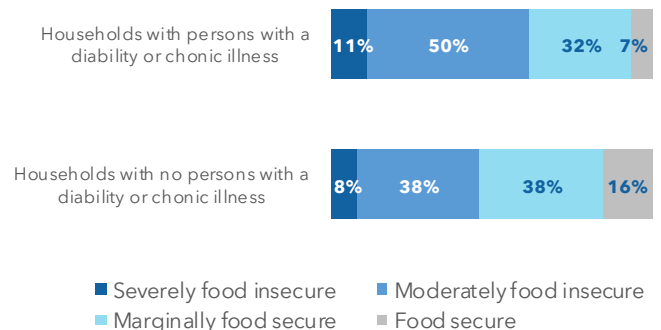
by income levels



Prevalence rates of food insecurity

Based on rCARI methodology

By households with a disability or chronic illness





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.

Based on the FIES methodology, two thirds (64 percent) of respondents in Jamaica are food insecure. Out of these respondents, one third (33 percent) were estimated to be severely food insecure while 31 percent were moderately food insecure. These figures are largely consistent with results from May 2023.

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

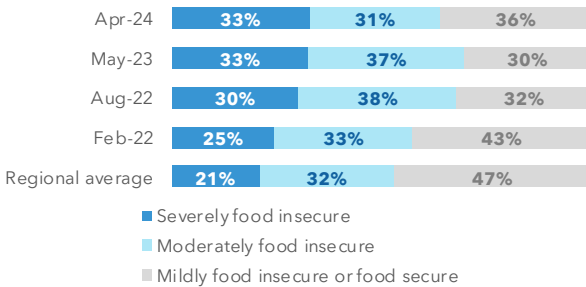
The inability to consume healthy/nutritious food was cited by 68 percent of respondents in Jamaica. In addition, 64 percent of respondents experienced worry about the limited amount of food they had to eat in the 30 days preceding the survey.

The food insecurity experiences most frequently cited were being able to consume only a few types of foods, worrying about not having enough food to eat, skipping meals or eating less food in general. These experiences were more prevalent among respondents describing their household income as being "well below" or "below" average, compared to respondents from households with higher perceived household incomes.

There were no major differences observed when comparing between age groups and sex of respondents.

Prevalence rates of food insecurity in Jamaica

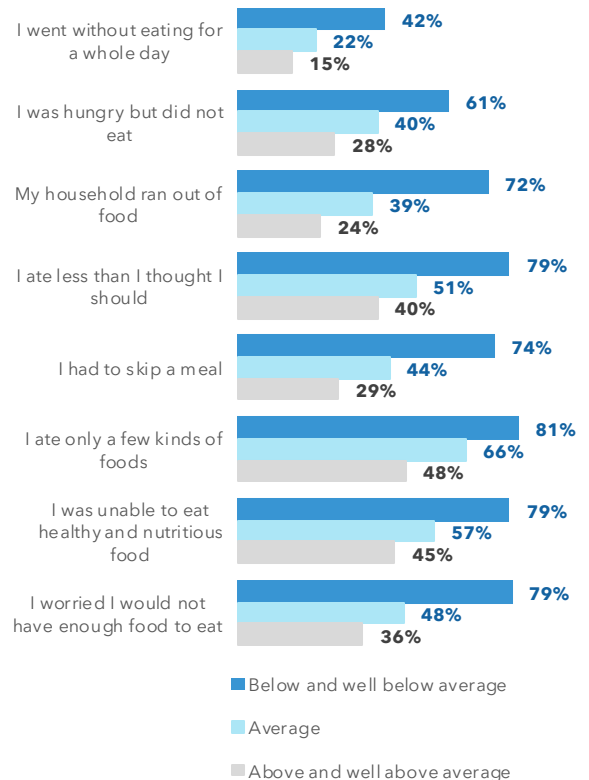
Based on FIES methodology.



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

Multiple choices could be selected.

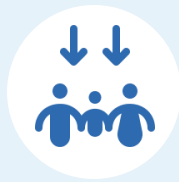
By perceived income level



"Ever since the price of food skyrocketed, my household has been severely impacted. I spent all my savings on food which has finished, I eat only enough to get by and I've made peace with eating once or 0 times per day."-Female, 19

"It has been a rough year with prices of food, cost of living overall has increased on a higher scale means of living is very difficult but we try to adapt me and my family... that is we try to adapt so that we can at least have a meal or two a day"-Male, 27

"I have been getting sick very often and have to be visiting the hospital more than usual. Still unable to find enough and healthy food to prevent me from getting a relapse. To adapt I had to start going to work less days than usual, but it affects my salary."-Female, 43



Resilience capacity

Nearly a half of the respondents in Jamaica reported that their household was affected by a natural hazard(s) in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Drought (25 percent), heatwave (23 percent), and earthquake (18 percent) were the main hazards cited by respondents. Overall, 63 percent of respondents who were affected by a natural hazard(s) experienced moderate to severe impacts to their livelihood/income, which is relatively consistent when compared to 66 percent of respondents in the previous survey round (May 2023).

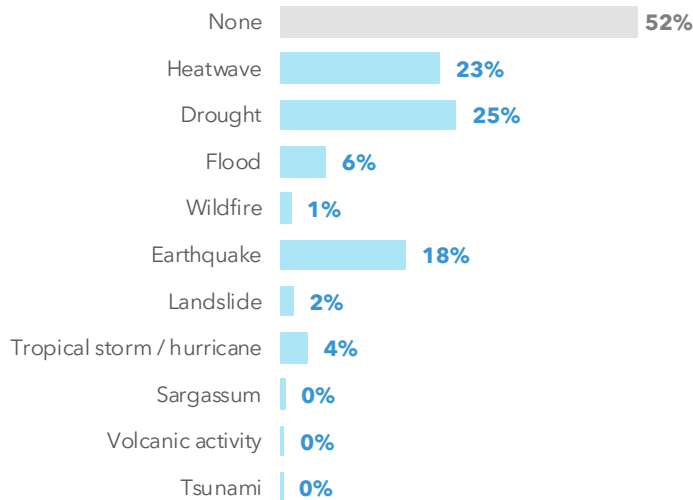
The Resilience Capacity Score (RCS) indicator was used to measure respondents' perception of their resilience to natural hazards. For the calculation of the RCS, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement (strongly disagree to strongly agree) with nine statements, from which a score was generated and used as a marker of overall subjective resilience.

Based on the RCS, 33 percent of respondents in Jamaica were categorized as having a low capacity to cope with, recover from and adapt to natural hazards, which was at similar levels to the 37 percent recorded for the May 2023 survey. When disaggregated by level of income, 58 percent of respondents in the well below average income, had a low RCS, compared to 17 percent of respondents in the well above average household income group.

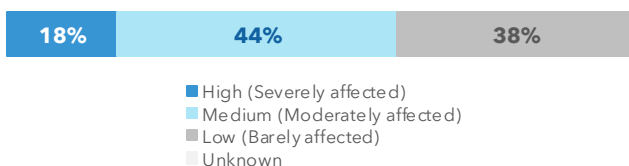
Respondents scored the highest (or had a lower capacity to respond to future shocks) in the areas of institutional capacity (support from government and/or other institutions), and financial capital (access to financial support). The lower scores for information and human capital, would suggest that respondents' ability to respond to future natural disasters would mostly be based on their skills/knowledge, past experiences and access to information.

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

Multiple choices could be selected.

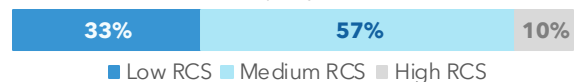


Level of impact on livelihoods or income for respondents that were affected by natural hazards in the 12 months prior to the survey



Overall resilience capacity

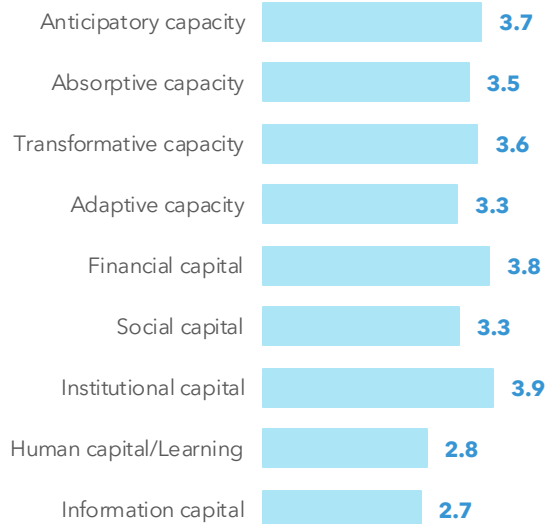
Resilience capacity score (RCS)



**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

Respondents in Jamaica were mostly worried about their inability to cover essential needs (47 percent), food needs (40 percent) and challenges related to unemployment/loss in income (40 percent). As with previous survey rounds, respondents were given the opportunity to further express their thoughts about issues raised in the survey. A total of 314 of the 833 respondents in Jamaica provided additional insights. Responses were analyzed using Microsoft Azure Machine Learning to categorize and determine the degree of positive and negative emotions.

Overall, respondents had very few positive sentiments, with 82 percent of the 314 persons who responded to the open-ended question having negative/very negative sentiments. Sentiments were mostly related to the high "cost of living", "unemployment", stagnant wages, "not having enough money to buy food" and to a lesser extent, "crime and violence".



Main differences

The results revealed very few differences between men and women across most of the metrics analysed within the current survey. However, women were slightly more concerned/worried about challenges related to childcare and their inability to meet their and their family's food needs, whereas men were more worried about illness and crime and violence than women. Younger respondents appeared to have slightly more challenges than older respondents especially as it relates to market accessibility and the loss of jobs.

Differences were most pronounced across the different levels of the household incomes (as depicted in the charts below and throughout this report), with respondents with household incomes in the "below" or "well below" average categories generally faring worse than respondents in the "above" or "well above" average household incomes.

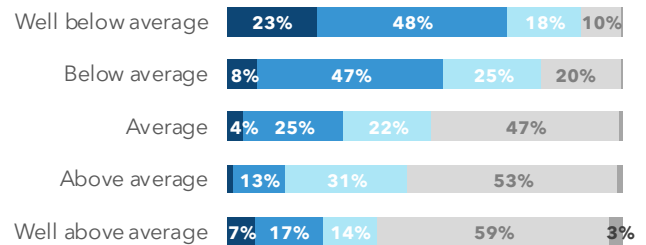
Main worries expressed by respondents

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	Aug-22	Feb-22
Inability to cover essential needs	47%	52%	51%	37%
Illness	37%	31%	28%	42%
Unemployment/Income loss	40%	31%	34%	36%
Decreasing savings	25%	29%	24%	14%
Inability to cover food needs	40%	35%	48%	31%
Inability to receive or repay loans	11%	12%		
Violence/crime in the community	9%	14%	17%	16%
Child/dependent care	17%	16%	15%	14%
Natural hazards	10%	7%		
Inadequate infrastructure	6%	6%		
Inadequate housing	6%	5%		
Disruption of public services (education, health)	3%	2%	9%	16%
Other worries	2%	1%	14%	26%
Violence/abuse in the household	1%	1%	1%	1%
No access to services due to migration status	1%	1%	1%	1%

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

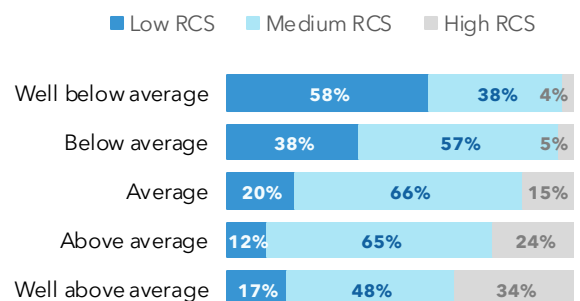
By perceived income level



- 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



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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World Food Programme

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Website: www.wfp.org/countries/caribbean

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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>