

# Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

## SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES | April 2024

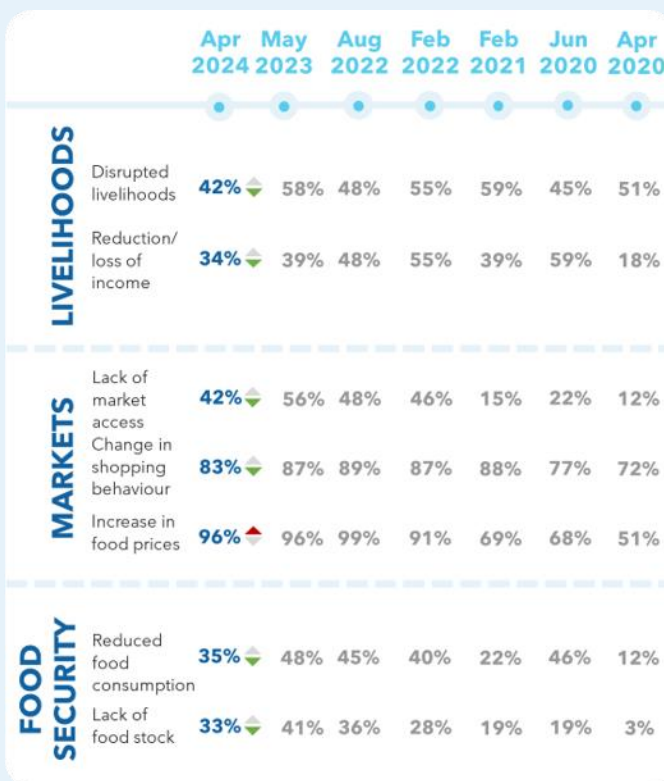
Climate change threatens food security and livelihoods in the Caribbean by disrupting food production, access, and availability. This increased climate variability, along with high living costs, poses additional challenges for already vulnerable households, particularly those reliant on climate-sensitive livelihoods such as farming and fishing, to manage and recover 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 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 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 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines surveys



**Apr 2024**

**220**

Respondents

69% | 31%  
Female | Male

**May 2023**

**1113**

Respondents

75% | 25%  
Female | Male

**Aug 2022**

**562**

Respondents

72% | 28%  
Female | Male

**Feb 2022**

**995**

Respondents

72% | 28%  
Female | Male

**Feb 2021**

**1507**

Respondents

74% | 26%  
Female | Male

**Jun 2020**

**1198**

Respondents

71% | 29%  
Female | Male

**Apr 2020**

**537**

Respondents

72% | 28%  
Female | Male



## Natural hazards

Situated in the Lesser Antilles island arc, Saint Vincent and its the chain of smaller islands of the Grenadines makes it susceptible to a wide range of hazards. Being within the zone of the Atlantic Hurricane Belt, tropical storms during the storm season poses additional risk of coastal and riverine flooding. Volcanic activity from the active La Soufriere Volcano also presents a threat to the population and infrastructure.

There were 19 major recorded events in the Emergency Events Database (EMDAT) between 1980-2024 in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which affected over 87,830 people and resulted in total adjusted damages of USD 638 million. Disasters most frequently reported were meteorological, followed by hydrological. The eruption of La Soufriere Volcano caused the most adjusted damages of USD 351 million with some households still displaced since the eruption in 2021.



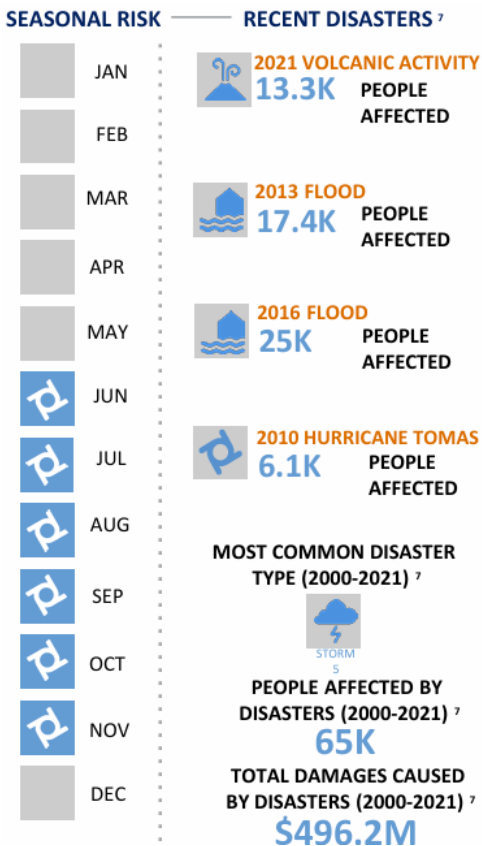
## Macro-Economic Dynamics

The Monthly Consumer Price Index Statistical Bulletin for March 2024 released by the Statistical Office under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, point to point inflation rate for 2024 has been hovering around 4.7 to 4.9 percent. While this is a reduction from the same time a year ago, it is rising from a dip to the lowest point at 3.0 in September. Food inflation is following a similar trend but at a higher percentage, recorded at 10.4 percent in January 2024.

There was an increase mainly due to a 6.5 percent rise in "furnishings, household equipment and household maintenance" which was attributed to raising of the minimum wage for domestic workers, child caregivers and gardening services. Cost of electricity has also surged by 5.8 percent due to higher fuel surcharge introduced in October 2023.

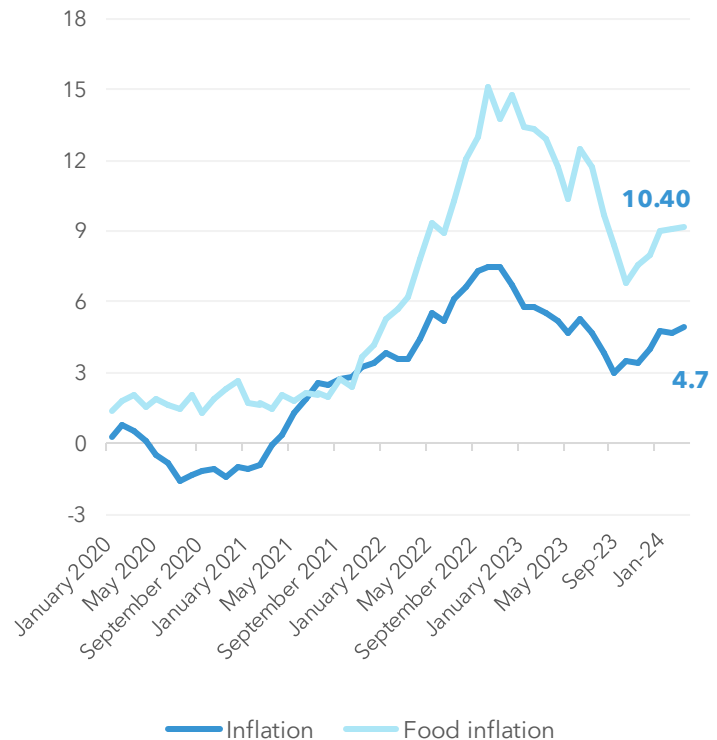
### Seasonal Risk and Recent Hazards in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (2000-2021)

Source: OCHA - Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Country Profile - EMDAT



### Inflation in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (Jan 2020 - Jan 2024; %)

Source: Statistical Office of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and FAOSTAT





## Markets

**Challenges to access markets were reported by over four out of ten respondents** in the month prior to the survey, an improvement by 14 percentage points from the previous survey round.

**Respondents continue to report increased prices in commodities, especially food.** Nearly three quarters (74 percent) of respondents reported a significant increase in food prices over the three months prior to the survey.

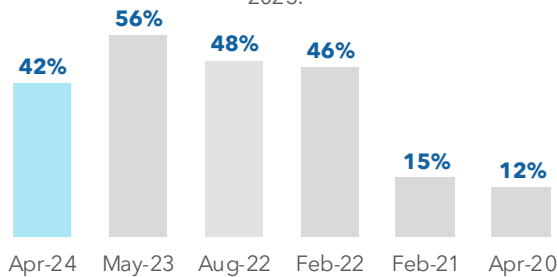
Apart from food, most significant price increases have been observed for electricity (60 percent), housing (47 percent), health (44 percent) and gas (43 percent).

**Lack of funds continues to be the overwhelming factor with nearly all (98 percent) of those facing access challenges, citing it as the main barrier.** This was followed by transportation challenges, mentioned by 19 percent of the respondents.

**The majority of respondents (83 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. These behaviours are largely similar to what was reported in May 2023.

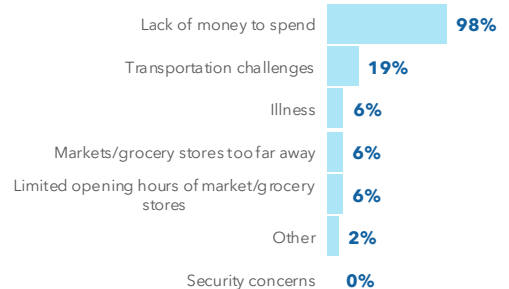
### Respondents unable to access markets in the 30 days prior to the survey

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

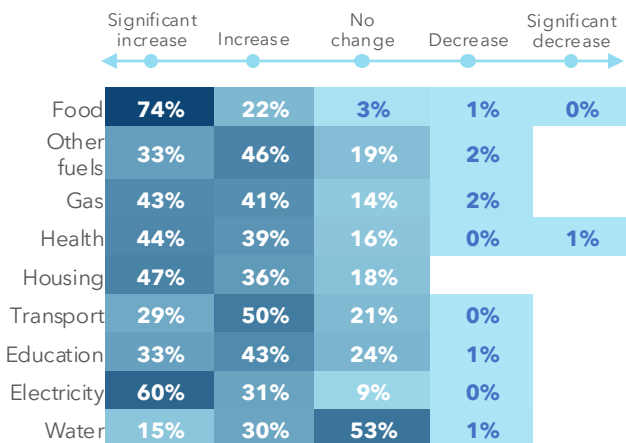


### For those that faced a time when they could not access markets in the past 30 days, the main reasons were...

Multiple choices could be selected.

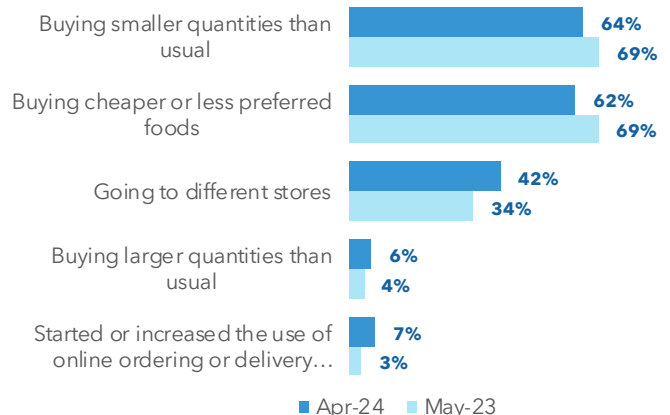


### Respondents reporting a change in the costs of the commodities in the 3 months prior to the survey



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

Multiple choices could be selected.





## Livelihoods

**Approximately four out of ten respondents from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continue to experience disruptions to their livelihood activities in the 30 days prior to the survey.** Households with incomes well below average (60 percent) report to face more disruptions when compared to those who perceive well above average income (25 percent). Households relying on informal/casual labour and petty trade, with no formal education, with disabilities and with single parents were also more likely to be affected. There were no major differences between sex or locality of the respondents on disruptions.

**Unaffordability of livelihood inputs remains the main driver across most respondents,** cited by 68 percent of those affected by disruptions. Respondents involved in agriculture and fishing report high costs of inputs, especially for fuel, fertilizer, and tools/machinery.

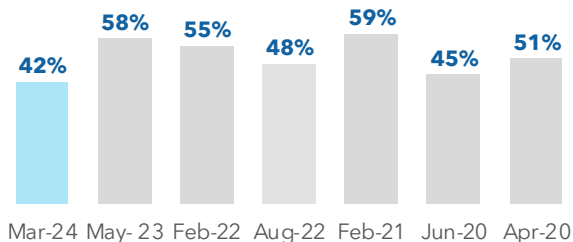
**Over one third of respondents experienced job loss or reduced salaries in their households in the six months prior to the survey,** which is slightly less to what was reported in May 2023.

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

Households in the average and above average seemed to have more capacity to resort to secondary income sources, when compared with the rest of the income groups.

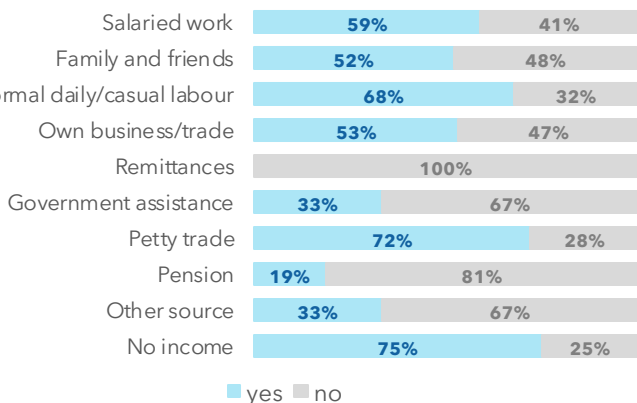
### Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 30 days prior to the survey

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



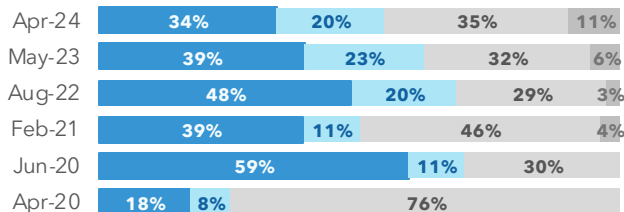
### Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 30 days prior to the survey

#### By main income sources



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

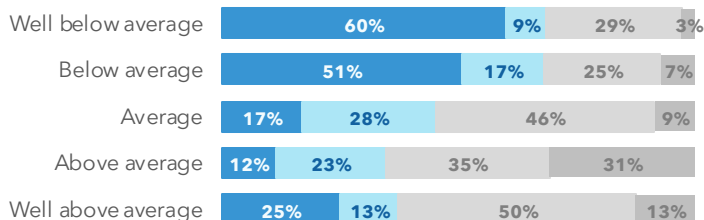
Recall period changed from "since Covid-19" to "in the 6 months prior to the survey" in May 2023 survey round



- 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



- 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 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are resorting to various coping strategies to address immediate needs.** Respondents are having to dig into their savings (67 percent), reducing expenditure on health and education (51 percent), and sell productive assets and means of transport (19 percent).

Households with persons with disabilities/chronic illnesses are reporting slightly higher frequencies of having to spend their savings in order to make ends meet when compared with other households. Respondents with no formal education are also at the raw end of the spectrum as all are having to reduce non-essential expenditure and spending savings.

Overall, coping strategies deployed are largely similar when comparing between sex of head of household, locality and income sources.



## Food consumption

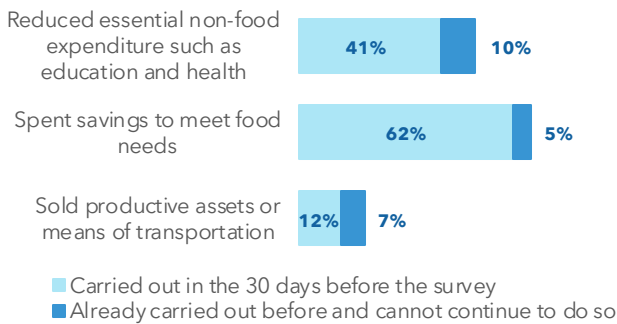
**Food consumption patterns remain similar as in the past rounds.** Nearly two thirds of respondents are skipping meals, eating less preferred foods, or going an entire day without eating in the week leading up to the survey.

These results show a slight improvement from May 2023 (74 percent). Over two thirds of respondents from well below average income households are resorting to applying the food consumption patterns described above at a higher frequency when compared with households with average and above income levels.

**One third of respondents have no food stocks at home.** Respondents with well below average income, and those with no formal education are more likely to report no food stocks.

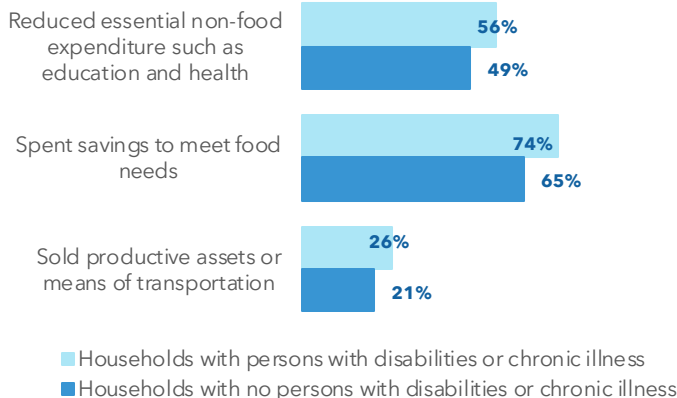
### Households' coping strategies

Multiple choices could be selected.

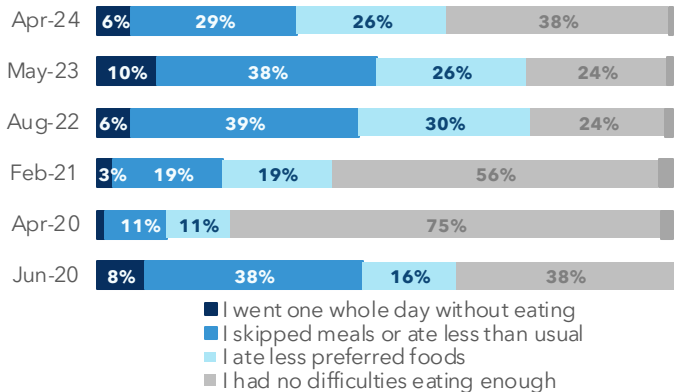


### Households' coping strategies

By households with a disability or person with chronic illness

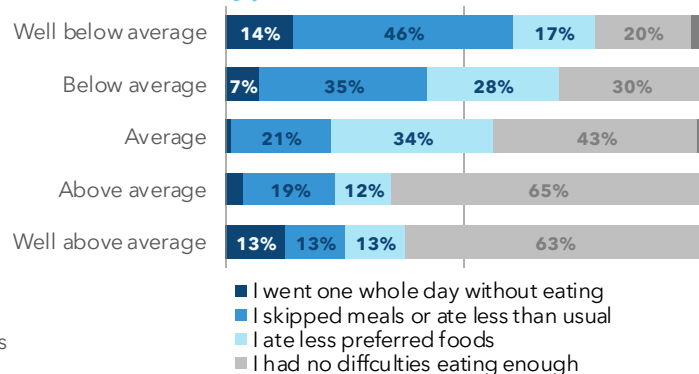


### Which statement best reflects your food situation over the past 7 days?



### 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 \(CARI\)](#).

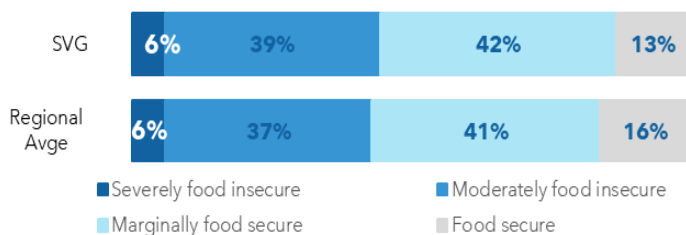
Using the rCARI methodology, it is estimated that **six percent are severely food insecure, while 39 percent are moderately food insecure** in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. On the other hand, forty two percent and thirteen percent of the households were marginally, and food secure respectively. These results are consistent with the regional average.

Income is a key factor linked to food insecurity, with households in the much below average (14 percent) and below average (six percent), with a higher proportion of household's with severely food insecurity, when compared with four percent, one percent and zero percent in the average, above average and well above average incomes, respectively.

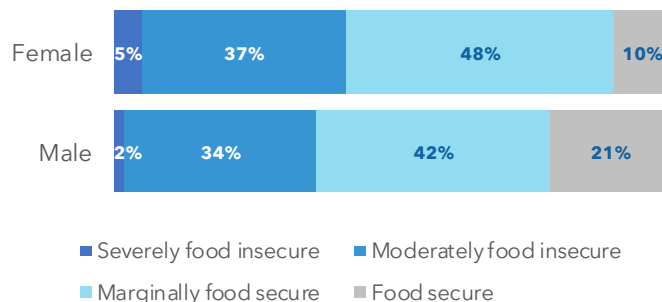
A higher prevalence of food insecurity (severely plus moderately), was also found among households with one or more members with a disability or suffering from chronic illness (54 percent), when compared with those without (33 percent).

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

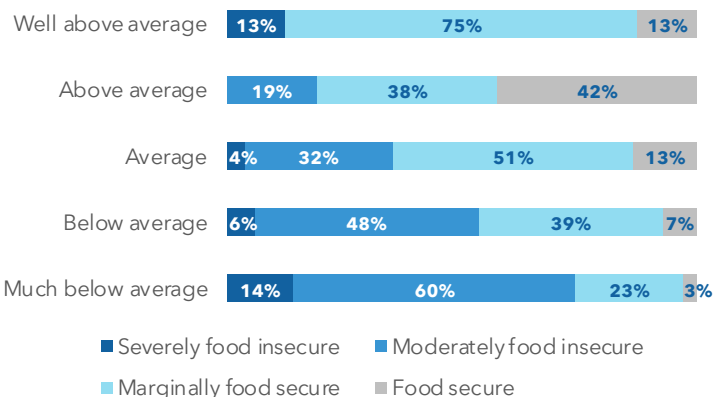
Prevalence rates of food insecurity based on the rCARI methodology - April 2024



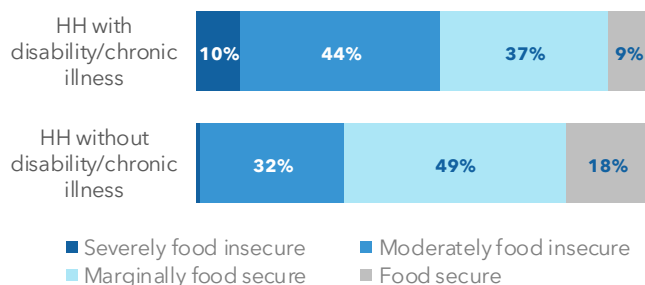
Prevalence rates of food insecurity based on the rCARI methodology by households with/without disability or chronic illness



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), provides an additional picture of food insecurity experienced by respondents during the 30 days preceding the survey.

The FIES also measures food insecurity and is an indicator for the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 2) Zero hunger. It relies on people's self-reported food related behaviors and experiences associated with increasing difficulties in accessing food due to resource constraints.

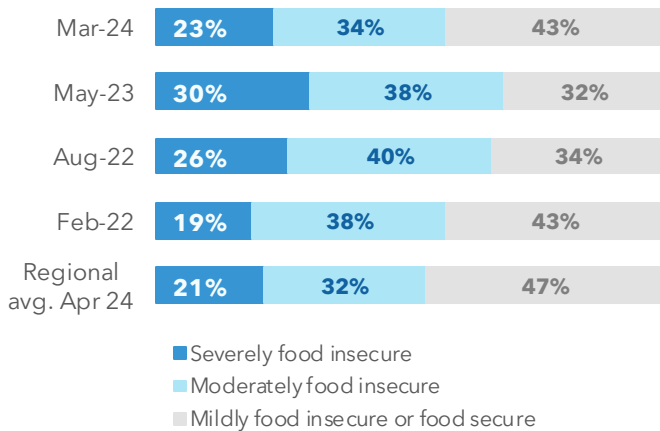
**Using the FIES methodology, it is estimated that 57 percent of the respondents in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are experiencing food insecurity.** Out of these, 23 percent are estimated to be severely and 34 percent moderately food insecure. The prevalence of severe and moderate food insecurity in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is relatively consistent with the regional survey average.

The negative food experience most often reported by respondents in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was "eating only a few kinds of food" (73 percent), followed by being "unable to eat healthy and nutritious food" (67 percent) and "eating less than they should" (57 percent). Alarming, over a quarter (26%) 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, there were some differences between sex of respondents, whereby female respondents were more likely to reduce the kinds of foods consumed, more frequently reported to inability to eat healthy and nutritious foods 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](#).

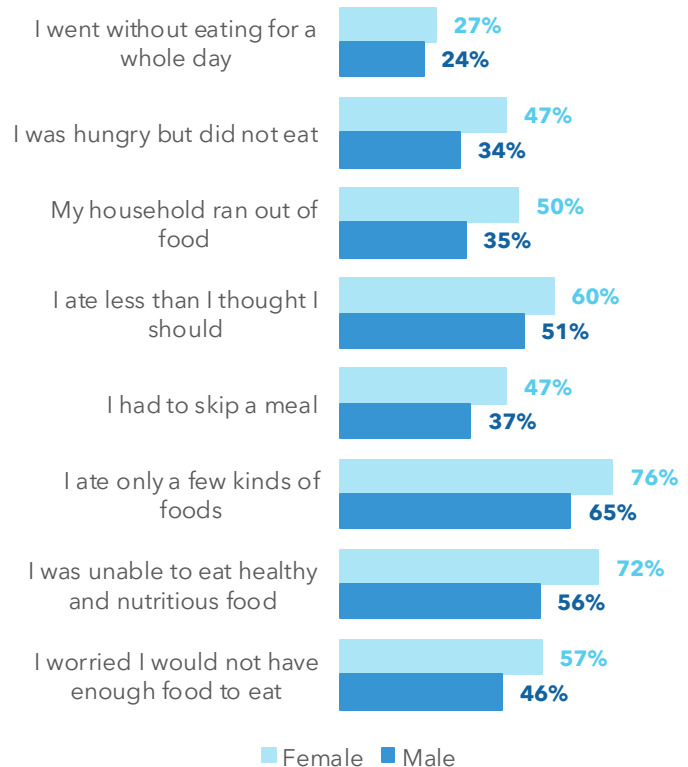
*"Unable to afford groceries because of bills. Cannot do anything to change it unless I get an increase in pay."-female, 36, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*

*"High prices on local foods. Plant a backyard garden"-female, 60, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*

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

Multiple choices could be selected.

By sex







## Resilience capacity

**Livelihoods in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continue to be affected by a wide range of natural hazards with nearly a half reporting having experienced a hazard.** Heat waves was the most reported hazard experienced, by 23 percent of the respondents. This was followed by drought (14 percent) and tropical storms (ten percent). Of respondents who were affected, 13 percent reported to have severe level of impact on their livelihoods, while 55 percent 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.

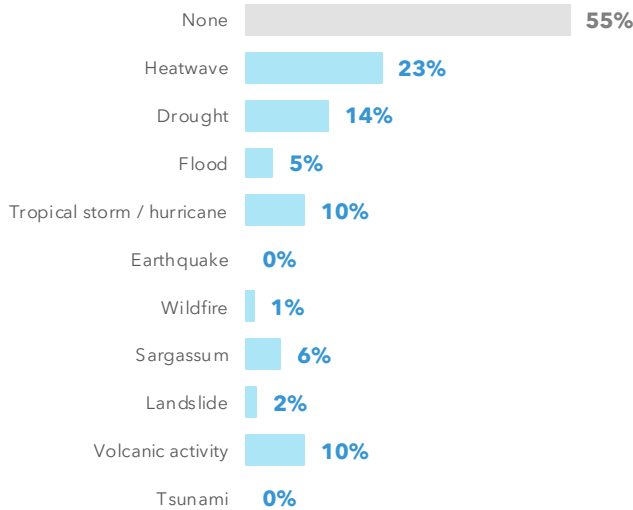
**Based on the RCS, 24 percent of respondents have low capacity to cope with, recover from and adapt to natural hazards.** Only six percent of respondents are highly resilient, while 70 percent of the respondents have medium resilience capacity.

**Out of the nine resilience characteristics, respondents scored the worst on the financial capital, followed equally by institutional, anticipatory and transformative capital.** This implies respondents are less readily able to access of funds or rely on government safety nets to buffer themselves from shocks.

On the other hand, **respondents feel they are better equipped with information** (i.e., through early warning information) and **human/learning capacity** (i.e. in that they learned lessons from past hardships.).

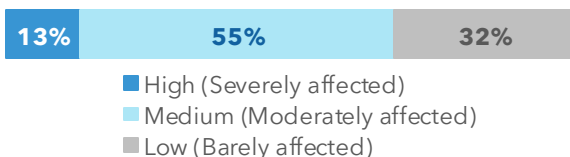
### Natural hazards that affected respondents in the 12 months prior to the survey

Multiple choices could be selected.

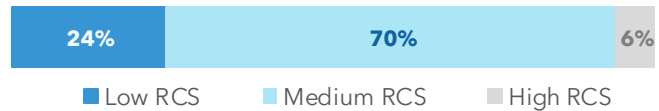


### Level of impact on livelihoods or income

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



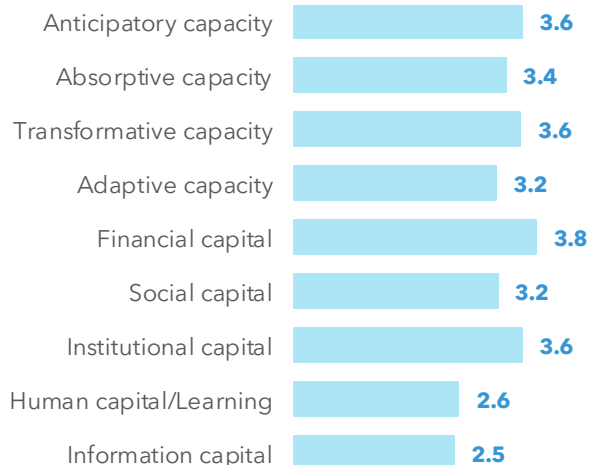
### Overall resilience capacity



\*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

**Decreasing savings (40 percent), inability to cover essential needs (39 percent) and illness (36 percent)** were the top concerns among respondents in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

**In the year prior to the 2024 survey, only three percent of respondents reported receiving assistance from the government. This is a reduction when compared to March 2023 (12 percent).** Social security, vouchers and cash transfers were the most common form of support received.

**A large majority of respondents (76 percent) expressed negative or very negative sentiments.** Out of the 220 respondents, 86 responded to the open-ended question. The responses highlighted widespread economic hardship with many individuals struggling to afford basic necessities due to rising costs, lack of employment and insufficient wages.

### 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".

Main worries	Apr-24	May-23	Feb-22	Feb-21	Jun-20
Inability to cover essential needs	39%	48%	33%	23%	33%
Illness	36%	33%	48%	69%	39%
Unemployment / Income loss	31%	30%	42%	44%	52%
Decreasing savings	40%	28%	18%	19%	24%
Inability to cover food needs	29%	41%	37%	17%	37%
Inability to receive or repay loans	13%	12%			
Violence/crime in the community	15%	12%	4%	4%	5%
Child/dependent care	17%	14%	19%	7%	15%
Natural hazards	20%	13%			
Inadequate infrastructure	15%	8%			
Inadequate housing	4%	5%			
Disruption of public services (education, health)	2%	1%	25%	21%	19%
Other worries	2%	1%	21%	29%	0%
Violence/abuse in the household	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%
No access to services due to migration status	1%	1%	1%	1%	4%



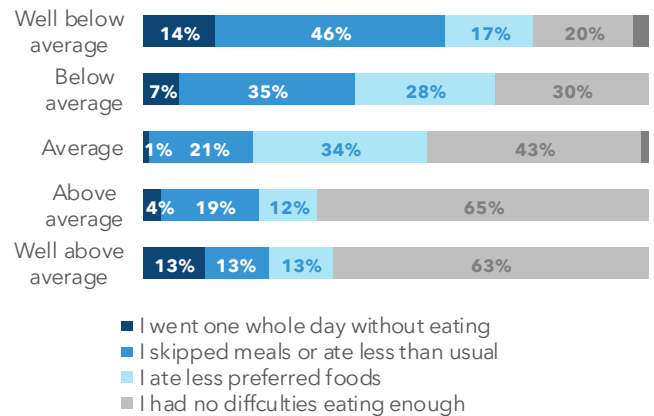
## Main differences

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

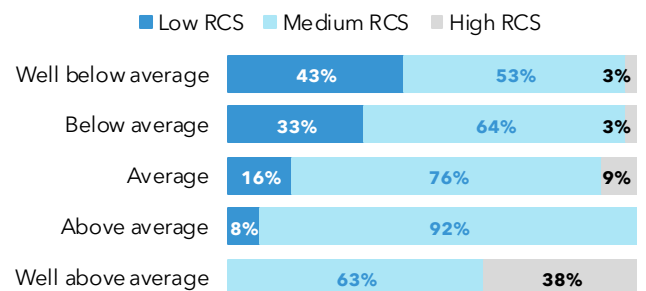
Households that reported below or well below average incomes indicate the poorest results on all key metrics of well-being and are at risk of further falling behind economically. Respondents with no formal education, those relying on informal labour and younger respondents also appear to be experiencing 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.

### Which statement best reflects your food situation over the past 7 days? By perceived income level



### Overall resilience capacity By perceived income level



## COMMON THEMES ON HOW RESPONDENTS ARE COPING AND ADAPTING



"My experience is that how things get so expensive. I had to cut down on the amount of times we eat or amount for example if am going to buy 4 bread and I don't have enough \$ to last I will see what I have and buy flour and bake bread of I don't have enough gas I'll buy flour and fry a bit until we run out. Once I have a bit I buy wings and stuff fry so I can make a bit to keep us until I have to pay bills then the money disappear so its on and off very difficult to keep up Especially when you have kids to send to school."-female, 43, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

"I have a health issue and my income is too small for me to maintain it. My working environment is very unhealthy and uncomfortable I'm working under too much stress and pressure and it's affecting my health."-female, 37, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

"Well, the wars all over the world seems to affect the living circumstances....price went up....everything from gasoline to food items etc. now have to help out my neighbors....that's how rough it is..."-male, 65, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines



"The rise in cost of community College...Difficulty in finding jobs for my young adult...Poor roads and spending excessive money on vehicle parts "-female, 38, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

"Increase of prices on utilities, thus I had to decrease my spending on groceries." - female, 26, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

"My main challenge is getting my micro business up and running properly. If I can get a grant to boost my business that's will be fine.. And I've started eating more healthy foods which means I spent less money on meat."-female, 41, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

"Heatwave- got fans but they soon gave out. Rise in food prices - try to buy in bulk to buy something different the next time we shop."-female, 27, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

"Increase of prices on utilities, thus I had to decrease my spending on groceries." -female, 26, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

"Challenges- buying food especially vegetables due to increases in prices. Adaption strategy - wash out and dry tomato seeds etc. and replant."-female, 48, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

## 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)

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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>