

Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

Natural Hazards and the Cost of Living Crisis

JAMAICA | July 2023

Successive shocks and crises over the last few years continue to reverberate on the food security and livelihoods of people in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. The pandemic and the cost of living crisis have severely affected peoples' purchasing power where more people are forced to make difficult compromises to meet their food and other essential needs. These trends are exacerbated by the ever-present threat of natural hazards in the region, which could be devastating for those already living in poverty and a tipping point for those on the margins.

To inform decision-making in the Caribbean, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the World Food Programme (WFP) launched the Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods Survey to highlight the impact of the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the effect of natural hazards on food security and livelihoods over time.

This report analyses data for Jamaica from the sixth round of data collection, which took place from 10 to 28 May 2023. It compares findings with five previous survey rounds conducted between April 2020 and August 2022.

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.

	May 2023	Aug 2022	Feb 2022	Jun 2020	Apr 2020	
LIVELIHOODS	Disrupted livelihoods	61% ▲	55%	48%	60%	62%
	Reduction/loss of income	40% ▼	52%	57%	74%	29%
MARKETS	Lack of market access	58% ▼	57%	39%	38%	12%
	Change in shopping behaviour	88% ▼	91%	90%	88%	81%
	Increase in food prices	97% ▼	97%	98%	89%	71%
FOOD SECURITY	Reduced food consumption	50% ▼	51%	41%	45%	12%
	Lack of food stock	37% ▲	35%	28%	19%	3%



May 2023

1607

Respondents

79% | 21%
Female | Male

Aug 2022

1192

Respondents

74% | 26%
Female | Male

Feb 2022

930

Respondents

72% | 28%
Female | Male

Feb 2021

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

Jun 2020

242

Respondents

76% | 24%
Female | Male

Apr 2020

216

Respondents

75% | 25%
Female | Male



Cost of living crisis

Jamaica relies heavily on food imports, which make up 74 percent of all food trade (excluding fish; FAOSTAT, 2021). This means that local food prices are highly vulnerable to fluctuations in regional and global food markets. According to FAO's Food Price Index, global food prices have decreased by 23.5 percent as of May 2023 since the all-time high in March 2022. However, food inflation remains high in Jamaica (food prices increased by almost 11 percent in May 2023 compared to 2022). Due to this, essential food purchases are becoming unaffordable for many in Jamaica.

The majority of respondents from Jamaica continue to report significant price increases in food, housing, electricity and gas. However, compared to August 2022 a slightly smaller proportion noted significant increases in gas and other fuels.



Natural hazards

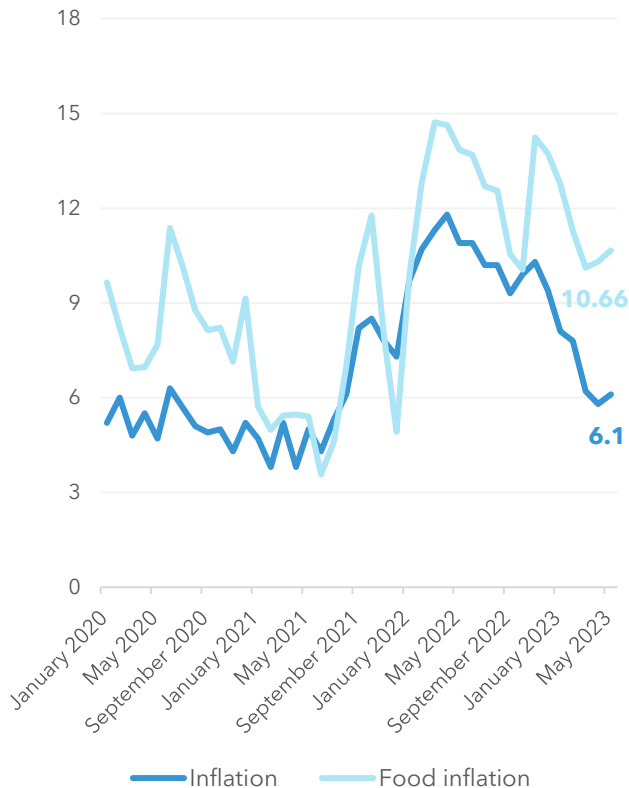
Jamaica is exposed to a wide range of natural hazards which pose a significant threat for climate sensitive livelihood activities and people's lives. Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) shows that there were 31 reported natural hazards in Jamaica between 1980 - 2022. A large portion of these were storms (21 out of 31), followed by floods (7) and droughts (3).

Recorded events between 1980-2022 affected over 2 million people in Jamaica and resulted in total adjusted damages of USD 5.4 billion. Tropical storms continue to cause the largest natural disaster-related damages in Jamaica resulting in 92 percent of reported total adjusted damages. These storm events have the propensity to cause widespread impact potentially leading to loss of life, displacement of households, and destruction to critical infrastructure.

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

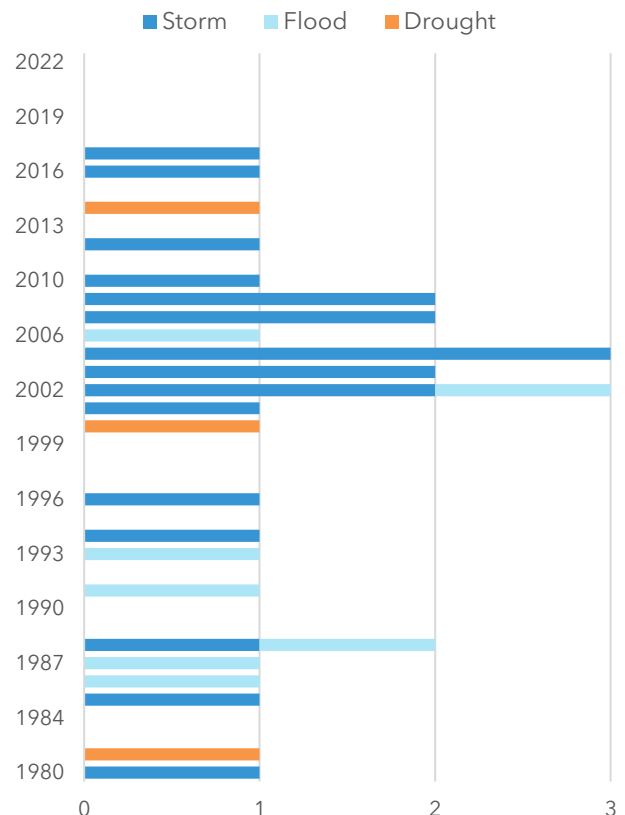
Point-to-point inflation rates.

Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica, FAOSTAT and Trading Economics



Reported natural hazards in Jamaica (1980-2022)

Source: EM-DAT





Livelihoods

The cost of living crisis continues to impact people's livelihoods in Jamaica. Disruptions continue to affect livelihoods in Jamaica with 61 percent of respondents facing disruptions in the 30 days prior to the survey. Unaffordability of livelihood inputs remains to be the main driver cited by 66 percent of those affected by disruptions. Respondents involved in agriculture continue to report high costs of inputs, especially for animal feed and fertilizers.

Loss of income and jobs has been decreasing since all-time high in June 2020, with 40 percent of respondents reporting that their household has experienced job loss or reduced salaries in 6 months prior to the survey. However, the proportion of those having to resort to secondary or alternative source of income has been steadily increasing since June 2020, suggesting the continuation of economic hardship.



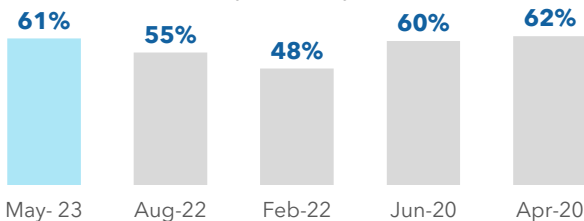
Markets

More than half of respondents reported challenges accessing markets in the week prior to the survey (58 percent), which represents the greatest deterioration since April 2020. Lack of financial means continues to be overwhelmingly reported as the main reason for limited market access, cited by 97 percent of those unable to access markets. Respondents are changing their shopping behaviour by increasingly buying cheaper and less preferred foods (67 percent) and purchasing smaller quantities than usual (63 percent).

Prices of food and non-food items are on the rise. Changes in food prices are being observed by respondents with 97 percent reporting an increase in the 3 months prior to the survey. The most significant price increases in non-food items have been observed for housing (62 percent reported a significant increase) and electricity (61 percent reported a significant increase).

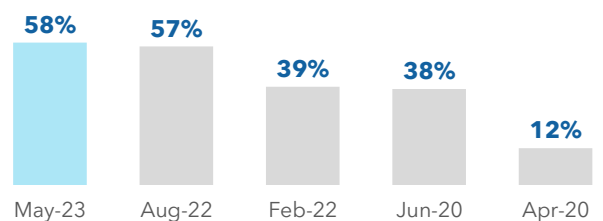
Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 30 days prior to the survey

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



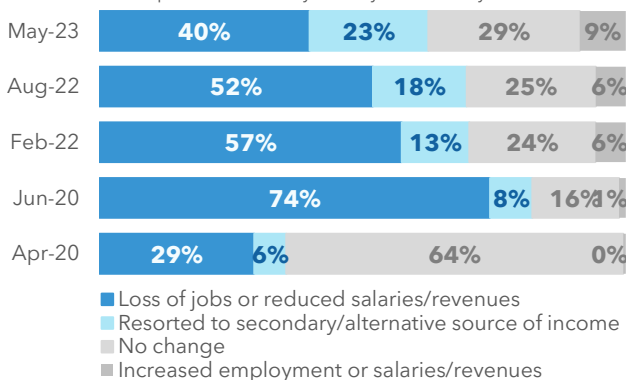
Respondents unable to access markets in the 30 days prior to the survey

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

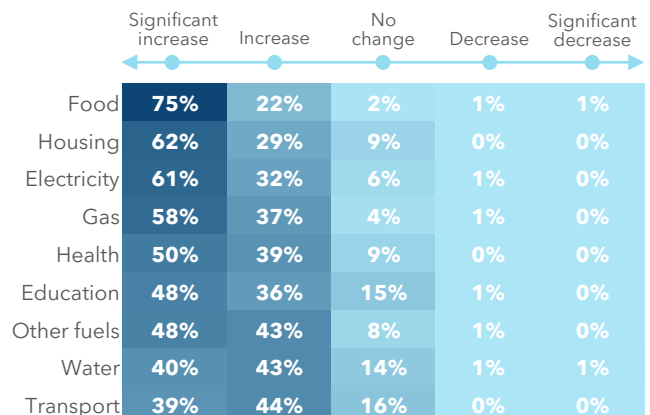


Has your household income changed in the 6 months prior to the survey?

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



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





Food consumption

Food consumption patterns continue to be alarming, with 77 percent of respondents skipping meals, eating less preferred foods, or going an entire day without eating in the week leading up to the survey. These results are similar to August 2022 (80 percent).

Respondents are trying to meet their immediate food needs by employing negative coping strategies. Respondents in Jamaica are compromising their future livelihoods by selling productive assets (28 percent), spending savings (77 percent) or reducing expenditures on health and education (57 percent).

Over a third of respondents have no food stocks at home. In May 2023, 37 percent of respondents reported that their household had no food stock while 43 percent reported having less than a week's worth of food supplies. This is very similar to the results from August 2022.

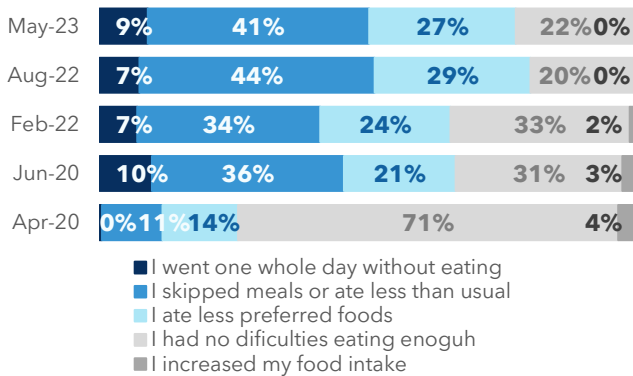


Food insecurity

Using the FIES methodology it is estimated that one third of the respondents in Jamaica are severely food insecure. Additionally, 37 percent of respondents are moderately food insecure. When compared to the previous survey rounds, the food security is deteriorating in Jamaica. Furthermore, the prevalence of severe food insecurity is higher in Jamaica compared to the Caribbean average.

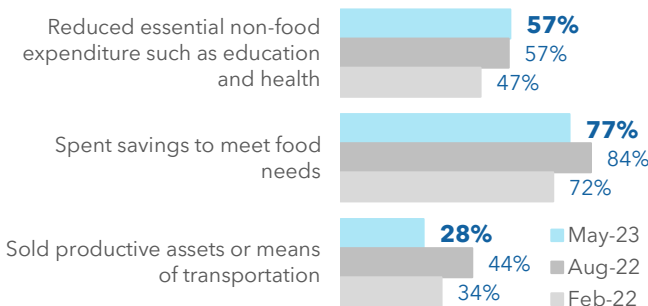
The negative experience most often reported by respondents in Jamaica was "eating only a few kinds of food" (70 percent), followed by being "unable to eat healthy and nutritious food" (65 percent). Alarming, 29 percent of respondents went a whole day without eating in the 30 days prior to the survey. Respondents describing their household income as well below average were the most affected across all individual negative food related experiences.

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



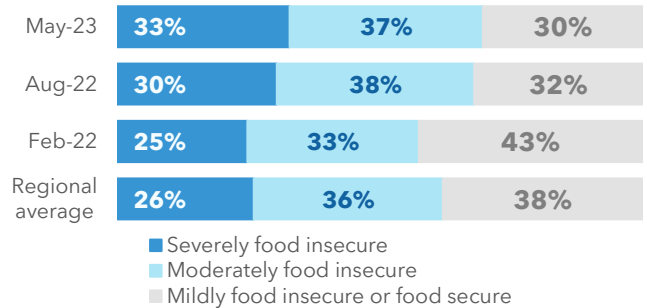
Households' coping strategies

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.



Prevalence rates of food insecurity in Jamaica

Based on FIES methodology.



"We were unable to provide adequate food and eventually ran out, therefore, I sometimes skip a meal to allow it to stretch." - Male, 33

"Every attempt to buy food, the same money cannot do the said purchases. Therefore, I have to be constantly cutting back in order to have adequate to eat." - Female, 40

"I've had to change my entire eating habit to accommodate the rapid increase in basic food prices at grocery stores. This means eating less nutritious foods, and juices." - Male, 60



Resilience capacity

The occurrence of a wide range of natural hazards in Jamaica has significant impacts on people and their livelihoods, with 42 percent of respondents reporting that their household was affected by natural hazard(s) in the 12 months prior to the survey. The main reported hazards were heatwaves (31 percent) and droughts (30 percent). Of respondents affected by natural hazards over the last year, 49 percent reported moderate and 17 percent reported severe impacts on their livelihoods or income.

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.

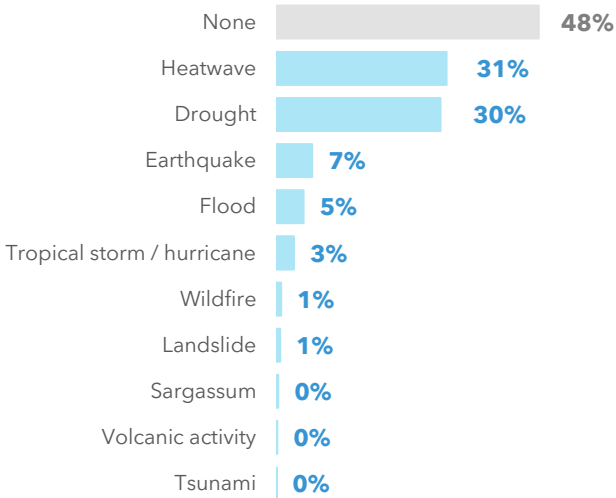
Looking at the Resilience Capacity Score (RCS), 37 percent of respondents have low capacity to cope with, recover from and adapt to natural hazards.

Only 6 percent of respondents are highly resilient, while 57 percent of the respondents have medium resilience capacity. Women, lower income groups and younger respondents have the lowest overall resilience capacity.

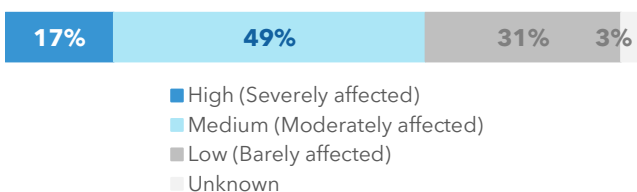
Out of the nine resilience characteristics, respondents scored the worst on the financial (i.e. access to financial support) and institutional capital (i.e. support from government or other institutions). On the other hand, respondents feel that they are better equipped with human capital, in that they learned lessons from past hardships, and information capital by having access to early warning information to deal with natural disasters.

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

Multiple choices could be selected.

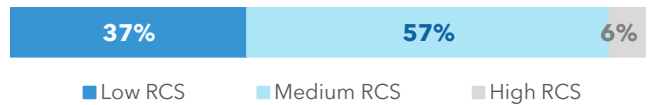


Level of impact on livelihoods or income for respondents that were affected by natural hazard(s)



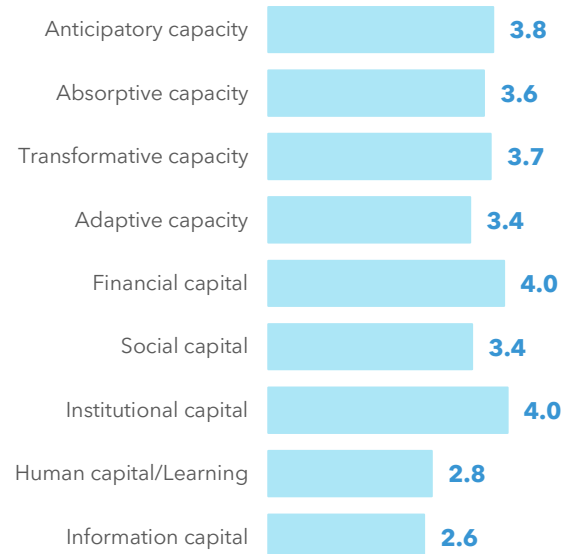
Overall resilience capacity

Resilience capacity score (RCS)



Average score for the nine resilience capacity characteristics

Scores range from 1 (high resilience capacity) to 5 (low resilience capacity). Higher score means lower resilience capacity.





Worries and sentiments

Inability to meet essential needs (52 percent) and food needs (35 percent) are the top concerns among respondents in Jamaica, followed by unemployment, fear of illness (both 31 percent) and concerns over decreasing savings (29 percent).

Fewer respondents have received assistance from the government in the year prior to the survey compared to the results from the previous rounds.

Nearly two thirds of respondents expressed negative or very negative sentiments. Respondents were given the space to provide more nuanced insights on how they are coping and adapting. Out of the 1,607 respondents in Jamaica, 586 responded to the open-ended question. Responses were analysed with Chat GPT to categorize and determine the degree of positive and negative emotions.



Main differences

Differences were most pronounced when comparing income levels. Households that reported below and well below average incomes show the poorest results on all key metrics of well-being and are at risk of further falling behind economically. Correspondingly, those with lower level of education and those relying on informal labour also performed worse across all key metrics.

The results suggest that younger respondents face greater challenges compared to older respondents, Single parent and mixed households were also more severely affected than other households. Differences between male and female respondents are less stark across most of the metrics, however women are on average less resilient and worry more about being able to cover household's food needs compared to men. Key figures showing differences are included below.

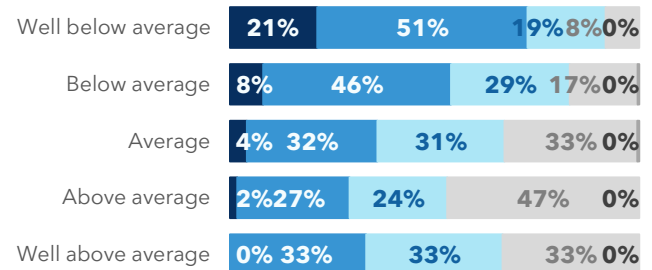
Main worries expressed by respondents

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".

	May-23	Aug-22	Feb-22	Jun-20
Inability to cover essential needs	52%	51%	37%	39%
Inability to cover food needs	35%	48%	31%	38%
Unemployment / Income loss	31%	34%	36%	51%
Illness	31%	28%	42%	55%
Decreasing savings	29%	24%	14%	18%
Child/dependent care	16%	15%	14%	17%
Violence/crime in the community	14%	17%	16%	6%
Inability to receive or repay loans	12%			
Natural hazards	7%			
Inadequate infrastructure	6%			
Inadequate housing	5%			
Disruption of public services (edu., health)	2%	9%	16%	8%
Other worries	1%	14%	26%	0%
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?

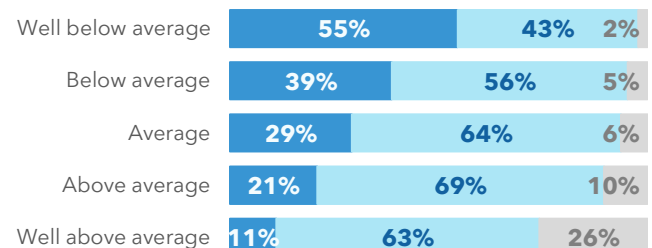
By perceived income level



- 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
- I increased my food intake

Overall resilience capacity

By perceived income level



- Low RCS
- Medium RCS
- High RCS



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>