

Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey

Natural Hazards and the Cost of Living Crisis

DOMINICA | September 2023

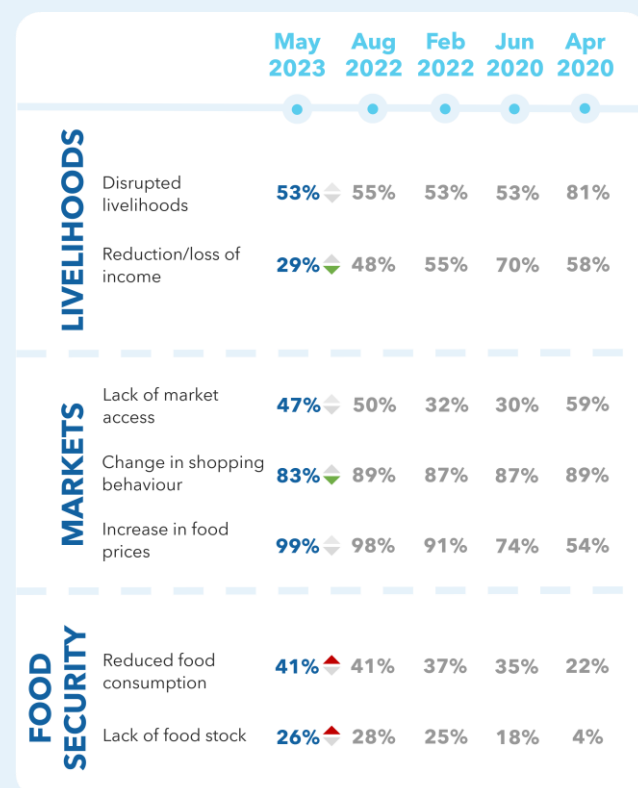
Successive shocks and crises over the last few years continue to reverberate on the food security and livelihoods of people in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. The pandemic and the cost of living crisis have severely affected peoples' purchasing power where more people are forced to make difficult 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 Dominica 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 Dominica surveys

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



May 2023

178

Respondents

76% | 24%
Female | Male

Aug 2022

167

Respondents

73% | 27%
Female | Male

Feb 2022

145

Respondents

69% | 31%
Female | Male

Feb 2021

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

Jun 2020

474

Respondents

74% | 26%
Female | Male

Apr 2020

545

Respondents

75% | 25%
Female | Male



Cost of living crisis

Dominica relies heavily on food imports, which make up 94 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 Dominica (food prices increased by almost 11 percent in December 2022 compared to 2021), impacting the affordability of food.

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



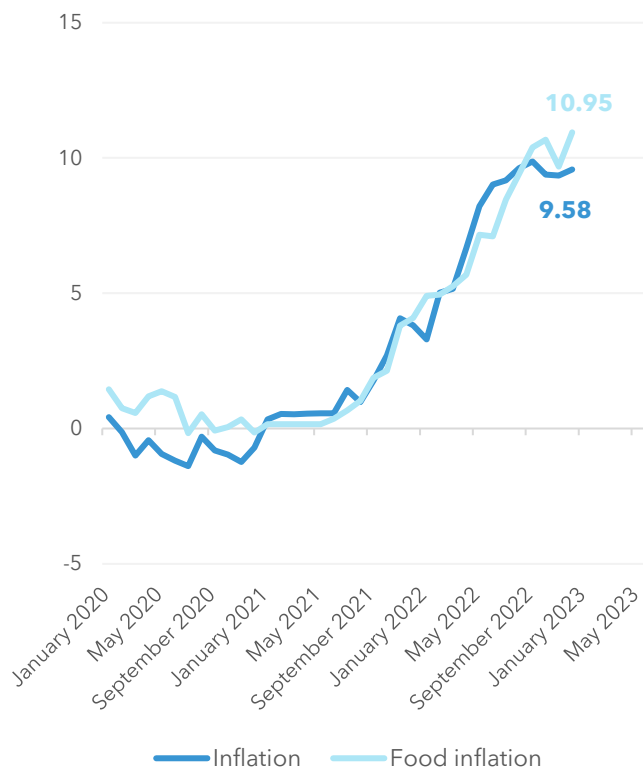
Natural hazards

Dominica is exposed to natural hazards that pose a significant threat for climate sensitive livelihood activities and people's lives. The Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) shows that there were 11 reported natural hazards in Dominica between 1980 - 2022, most of which were storms. Dominica is also vulnerable to flooding and landslides caused by heavy rains.

Tropical storms and hurricanes have caused the largest natural disaster-related damages in Dominica. Notably Hurricane Maria in 2017 caused damages equivalent to 226 percent of GDP. Storm events even of less severity still have the potential to cause widespread impacts potentially leading to loss of life, disruptions to livelihoods and displacement of people, as well as cause the destruction of homes, assets and critical infrastructure.

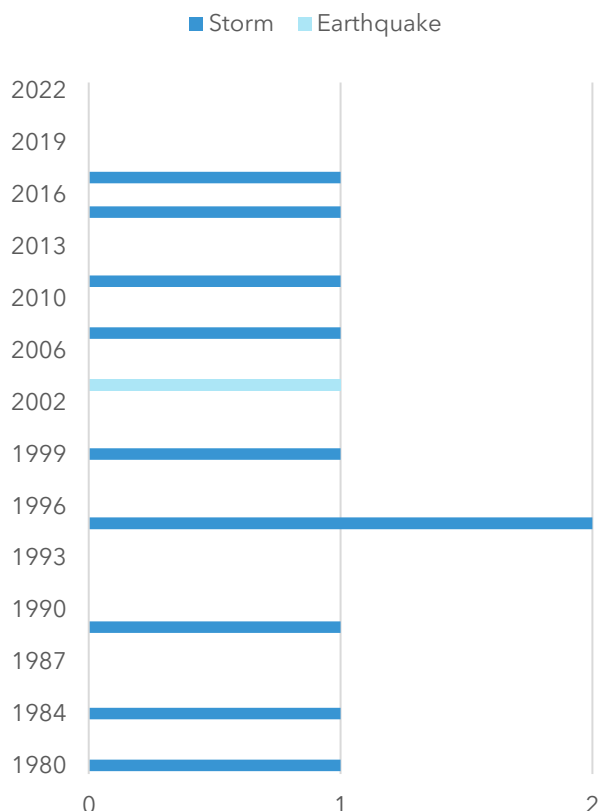
Inflation in Dominica (Jan 2020 - Dec 2022; %)

Point-to-point inflation rates.
Source: FAOSTAT



Reported natural hazards in Dominica (1980-2022)

Source: EM-DAT





Livelihoods

People continue to feel the impacts of recent shocks on their livelihoods in Dominica. Half of respondents faced disruptions to their livelihoods in the 30 days prior to the survey. As with the previous survey round, the unaffordability of livelihood inputs was the main driver, cited by 67 percent of those affected by disruptions.

Almost a third respondents experienced job loss or reduced salaries in their households in the 6 months prior to the survey. The proportion of those having to resort to secondary or alternative sources of income has doubled since the previous survey round, and has been steadily increasing since April 2020, suggesting the continuation of economic hardship and people turning to new ways of earning a living.



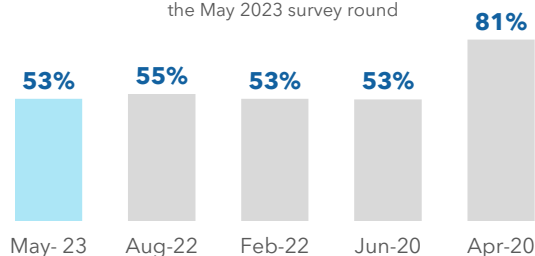
Markets

Almost half of respondents reported challenges accessing markets in the month prior to the survey (47 percent), which is similar to the previous survey round. Lack of money to spend continues to be overwhelmingly reported as the main reason for limited market access, cited by 96 percent of those unable to access markets. Respondents have adapted how they shop, increasingly buying cheaper and less preferred foods (74 percent) and purchasing smaller quantities than usual (69 percent).

Respondents continue to report increased prices in commodities, especially food. Nearly all respondents (99 percent) reported an increase in food prices over the 3 months prior to the survey. Aside from food, the most significant price increases have been observed for gas, transport, health, other fuels, electricity and housing.

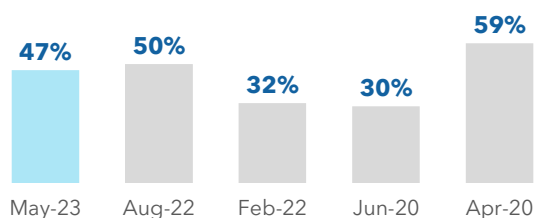
Respondents reporting that their ability to carry out livelihood activities was affected in the 30 days prior to the survey

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



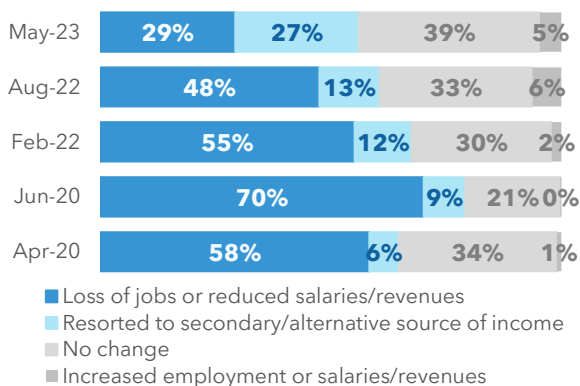
Respondents unable to access markets in the 30 days prior to the survey

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

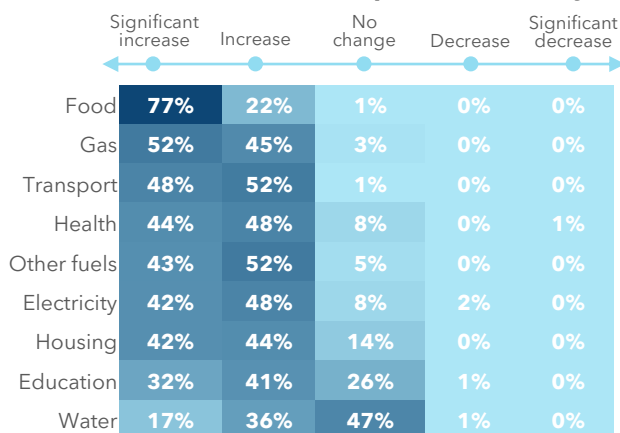


Has your household income changed in the 6 months prior to the survey?

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 raise cause for concern, with 74 percent of respondents skipping meals, eating less preferred foods, or going an entire day without eating in seven days before the survey. These results are similar to August 2022 (70 percent) and marked worse compared to April 2020.

Many respondents are employing negative coping strategies to meet immediate needs. Respondents may be compromising their wellbeing or future livelihoods by selling productive assets (34 percent), spending savings (77 percent) or reducing expenditures on health and education (57 percent).

In May 2023, 26 percent of respondents reported that their household had no food stock at home, while 46 percent reported having less than a week's worth of food supplies. This is similar to the results from August 2022.

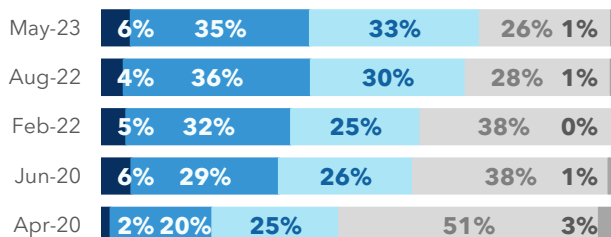


Food insecurity

Using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) methodology, it is estimated that 63 percent of the respondents in Dominica are food insecure. Out of these, 20 percent are estimated to be severely and 43 percent moderately food insecure. When compared to February 2022, food insecurity is more widespread.

The negative food experience most often reported by respondents in Dominica was "eating only a few kinds of food" (70 percent), followed by being "unable to eat healthy and nutritious food" (63 percent). Alarming, 22 percent of respondents went a whole day without eating in the 30 days prior to the survey. Lower income respondents appear to be performing the worst across all individual negative food-related experiences.

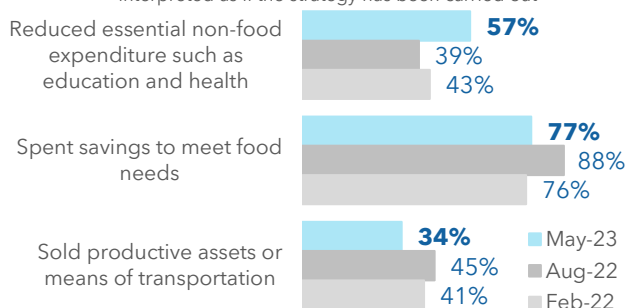
Which statement best reflects your food situation over the past 7 days?



- 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

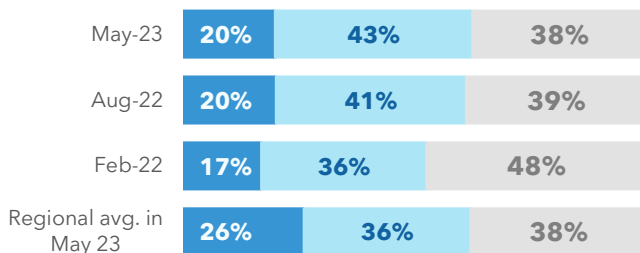
Households' coping strategies

Multiple choices could be selected. New answer options 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

Based on FIES methodology.



- Severely food insecure
- Moderately food insecure
- Mildly food insecure or food secure

"The cost of living is way too high! Literally eating from hand to mouth. After bills can't even make a decent groceries shopping. The government needs to intervene to give people peace of mind." - Female, 35

"Increase in food prices and no increase in income leads to cheaper food choices. Uncertain economy leads to insecurity issues about employment." - Female, 40

"Constant increase in cost of food in the supermarket every time I go shopping as well as increased costs in utilities with no change in salary. I have reduced on how much groceries I buy and try to reduce consumption of utilities at home as much as possible." Female, 38



Resilience capacity

Natural hazards have affected nearly a third of respondents in Dominica over the 12 months prior to the survey. The main reported hazards were heatwave (31 percent) and drought (14 percent). Of respondents affected by natural hazards over the last year, 41 percent reported moderate and 18 percent reported severe impacts on their livelihoods or income.

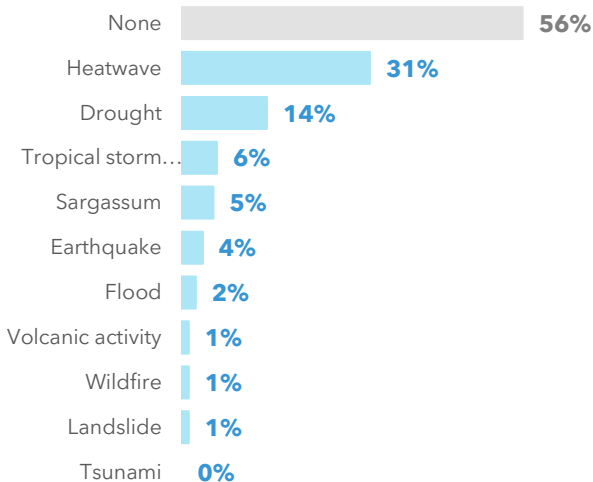
The Resilience Capacity Score (RCS) indicator was used to measure respondents' perception of their resilience to natural hazards. The method uses nine statements and respondents rate their level of agreement with each, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These generate a score that acts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

Based on the RCS, 29 percent of respondents have low capacity to cope with, recover from and adapt to natural hazards. Only 7 percent of respondents are highly resilient, while 64 percent of respondents have medium resilience capacity. Women and below or well below average income groups appear to have the lowest overall resilience capacity.

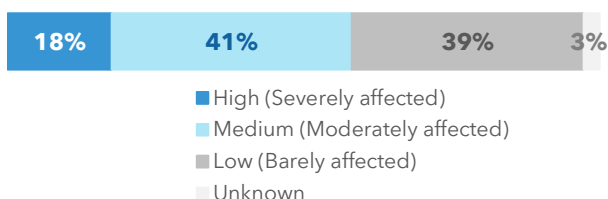
Out of the nine resilience characteristics, respondents scored the worst on the financial capital (i.e., access to financial support), institutional capital (i.e., support from government or other institutions) and anticipatory capacity (i.e., ability to take action in advance of crisis). However, respondents feel that they are better equipped with information capital by having access to early warning information for natural disasters, and human capital where 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 hazard(s)



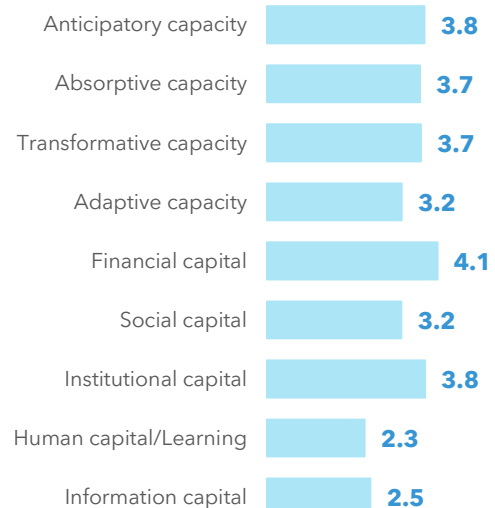
Overall resilience capacity

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

Decreasing savings (52 percent) and inability to meet essential needs (49 percent) are the top concerns among respondents in Dominica, followed by the inability to cover food needs (31 percent) and unemployment or income loss (27 percent).

Four percent of respondents reported receiving government assistance in the year prior to the May 2023 survey. This is lower than in August 2022 when nine percent stated that they had received support during COVID-19.

Over two thirds of respondents expressed negative or very negative sentiments. Respondents were given the space to provide additional insights. Out of the 178 respondents, 67 responded to the open-ended question. The anonymous responses were analyzed with Chat GPT to categorize and determine the degree of positive and negative emotions.



Main differences

Based on regional survey findings, differences in results among respondents appear to be most pronounced when comparing income levels.

Households that reported below or well below average incomes indicate the poorest results on all key metrics of well-being and are at risk of further falling behind economically. Correspondingly, those relying on informal labour or assistance also appeared to perform worse.

While disaggregated findings should be treated with caution due to the number of respondents from Dominica, the findings appear in line with regional survey trends. The results suggest that women may be facing greater challenges compared to men. Younger respondents also appear to be experiencing greater challenges across the majority of metrics.

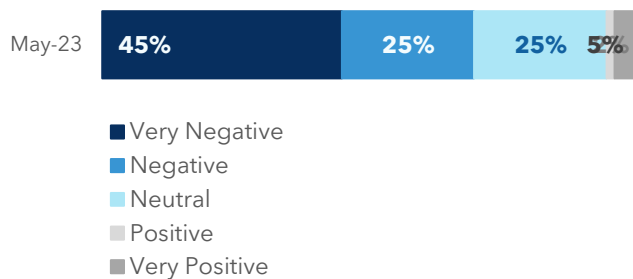
Main worries expressed by respondents

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".

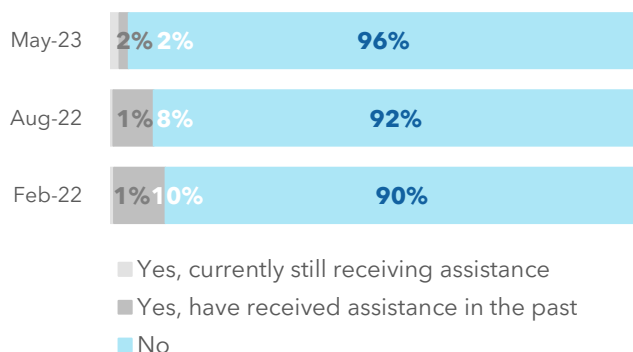
| | May-23 | Aug-22 | Feb-22 | Jun-20 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Decreasing savings | 52% | 33% | 20% | 23% |
| Inability to cover essential needs | 49% | 50% | 37% | 37% |
| Inability to cover food needs | 31% | 50% | 25% | 35% |
| Unemployment / Income loss | 27% | 40% | 43% | 53% |
| Illness | 23% | 29% | 52% | 47% |
| Natural hazards | 22% | | | |
| Inability to receive or repay loans | 21% | | | |
| Child/dependent care | 10% | 21% | 11% | 15% |
| Inadequate housing | 5% | | | |
| Violence/crime in the community | 3% | 4% | 6% | 4% |
| Inadequate infrastructure | 3% | | | |
| Other worries | 2% | 13% | 33% | 0% |
| Disruption of public services (edu, health) | 1% | 9% | 14% | 15% |
| No access to services due to migration status | 1% | 1% | 3% | 2% |
| Violence/abuse in the household | 0% | 1% | 1% | 1% |

Distribution of sentiments across open-ended survey responses

Low response numbers in this category may affect results.



Have you received any assistance from the government in 12 months prior to the survey?





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

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PO Box 10827, Guyana

Website: www.caricom.org



REPORTS

The website contains links to all current and past regional and country reports on the Food Security and Livelihoods Survey. Scan the QR code to access it or follow this link:

<https://www.wfp.org/publications/caribbean-covid-19-food-security-and-livelihoods-impact-survey>

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