



## Learning from our communities: COVID-19 in the Caribbean

Results from a Perception and Impact Survey



## **INTRODUCTION**

The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies launched a COVID-19 Perception and Impact Survey in the Caribbean to understand how people are feeling about the pandemic and how it is affecting their lives and their communities.

The survey ran in the month of April and we had feedback from 1,400 people in 13 countries: Belize, Dominica, Trinidad, Saint Lucia, Barbados, Grenada, Bahamas, St. Vincent and Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Jamaica, Guyana and Suriname, as well as overseas territories including British Virgin Islands.

Of the respondents 73 per cent were people who identified as female and 25 per cent were people who identified as male.

Respondents were from a good cross-section of ages: 45.2 per cent of responses were from people 18-to-39-years old, 40 per cent of responses were from people 40-to-59-years old, and 13.6 per cent of responses were from people older than 60 years old.

Results were analyzed across the region.

## PERCEPTIONS ON COVID-19

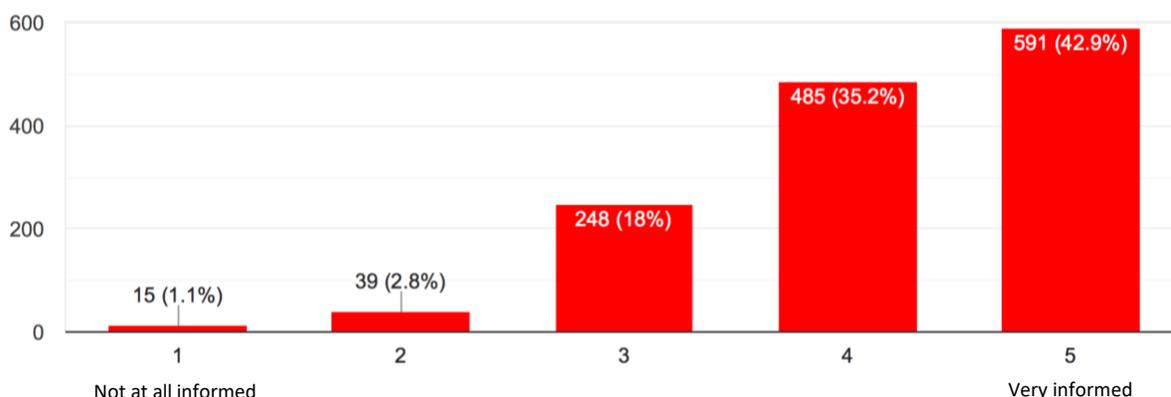
Based on findings, respondents feel they are getting accurate information and staying informed about COVID-19, despite rumors and myths circulating about the virus.

### Information gathering

Popular information sources on COVID-19 were:

- Social Media (74 per cent of respondents),
- Government Websites (69 per cent of respondents),
- International Organization Websites (65 per cent of respondents),
- TV (64 per cent of respondents),
- Radio (53 per cent of respondents),
- Family and Friends (42 per cent of respondents)
- Digital and Printed Press (40 per cent of respondents)

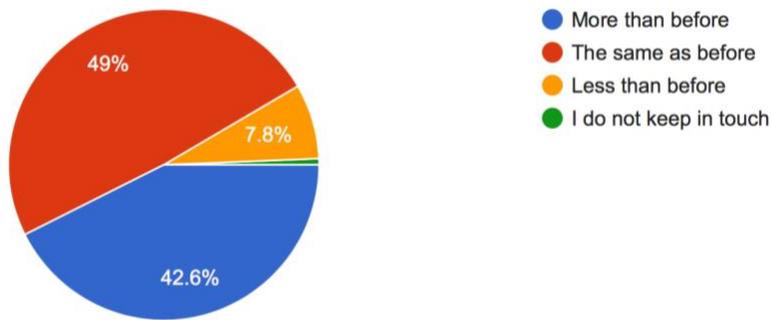
**Graph 1:** A majority of people selected they feel very informed on a scale that asked them to rate between one and five with one feeling not at all informed and five that they feel very informed about COVID-19



### Staying in touch with family and friends

When it comes to keeping in touch with family and friends, WhatsApp is the most popular way to connect with 96.6 per cent of respondents selecting the messaging app. Other popular ways of connecting includes: calling (with 82 per cent of respondents picking up the phone), messaging through Facebook (57 per cent), and email and other social media (24 per cent and 22 percent respectively).

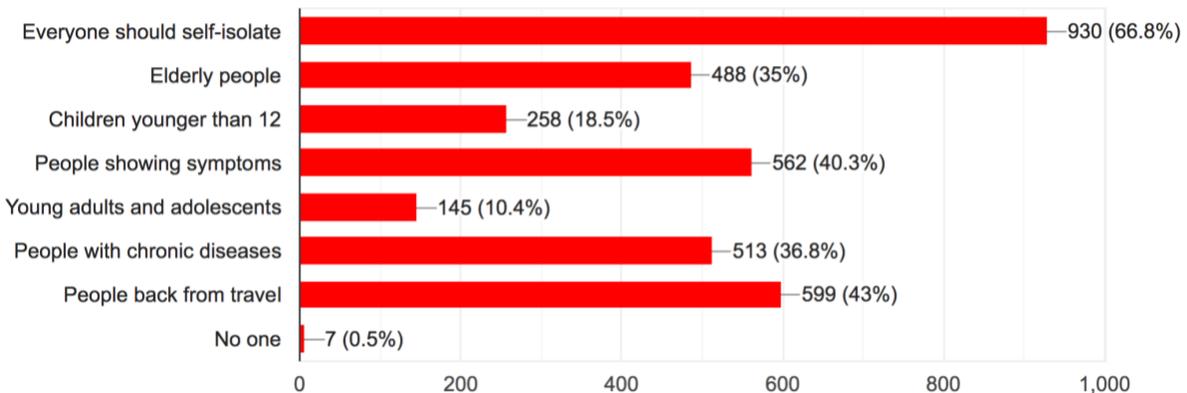
**Graph 2:** People are continuing to keep in touch with their friends and families throughout COVID-19 with 42.6 per cent of respondents are reaching out to family more frequently than before COVID-19 started



### Isolation

There is a mixture of feelings about who should self-isolate in a country with COVID-19 transmission.

**Graph 3:** When asked about self isolation, a majority of people think everyone should be isolating, but there are some people who think no one should isolate. (People could pick several options)



## FOOD SECURITY DURING COVID-19

When it comes to food security, 47.6 per cent of respondents said there has been a time in the past two weeks where they, or the people they are living with could not access markets or grocery stores.

### Grocery store access

Reasons given from people who had trouble accessing markets included

- Movement restrictions (52 per cent of respondents),
- Store closures (46 per cent of respondents),
- Concerns about leaving home due to COVID (43 per cent of respondents),
- A lack of transportation (23 per cent of respondents),
- Long lines/overcrowding (6 per cent of respondents),
- A lack of money/finances (5 per cent of respondents),
- Under self-quarantine (4 per cent of respondents),
- Someone in the house was unwell (3 per cent of respondents).

**Graph 4:** Just more than 73 per cent of respondents have access to basic food items (like rice and peas) and fresh foods (like vegetables and eggs) in the place where they purchase their food – some respondents had only one available and some have the situation change with visits.

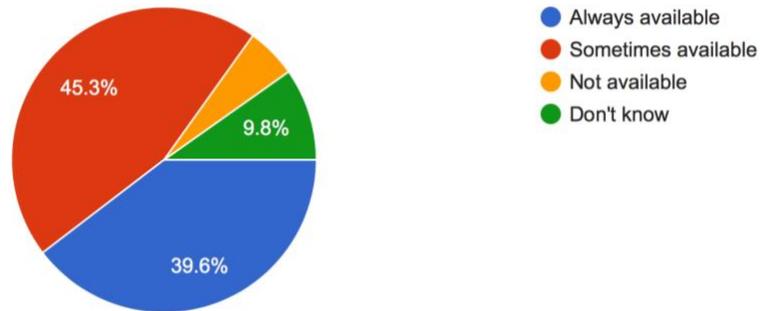


### Food situation

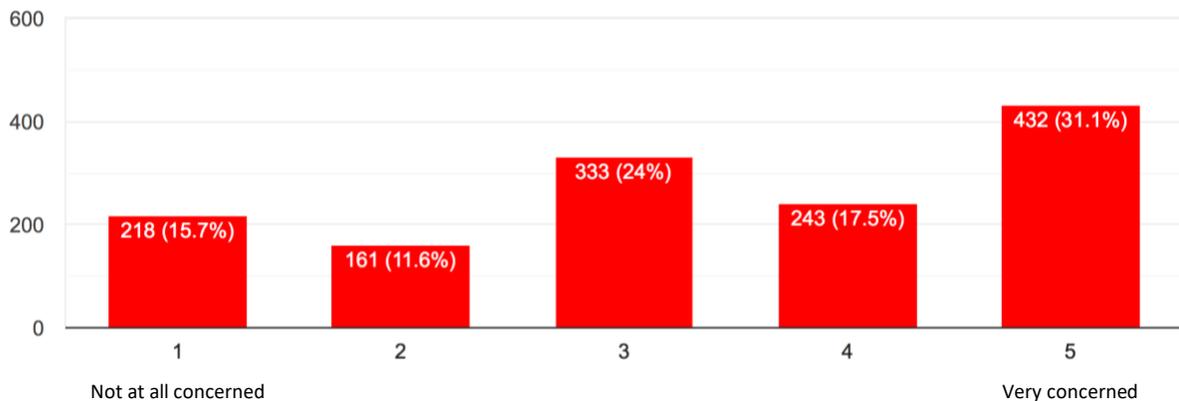
Of the respondents, 44.7 per cent have had no change to their regular food situation, 22.5 per cent are eating less of their preferred foods, 18.2 per cent skipped meals or ate less than usual and about one per cent went an entire day without eating. On the other hand, 10.9 per cent of respondents have increased their food intake.

### Medicines and Hygiene supplies

**Graph 5:** The largest percentage of respondents say hygiene items, like cleaners and hand sanitizer, is available to purchase where they shop, where nearly 40 per cent say it's always available.



**Graph 6:** According to the survey, respondents have varying levels of concern about access to medicines during this time. With some having no concern about access and some being very concerned



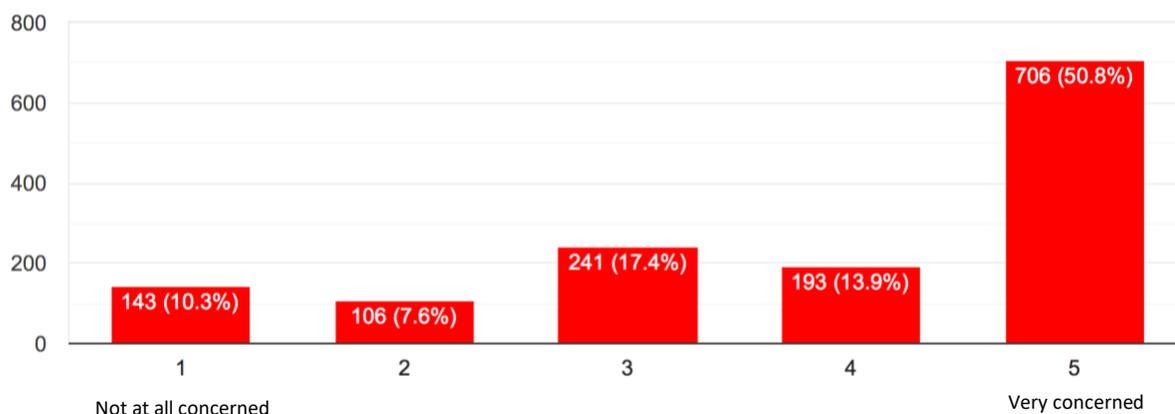
### LIVELIHOODS DURING COVID-19

About 58 per cent of respondents said that their ability to continue to earn money has been affected by COVID-19, with 43 per cent expecting a significant impact on their income.

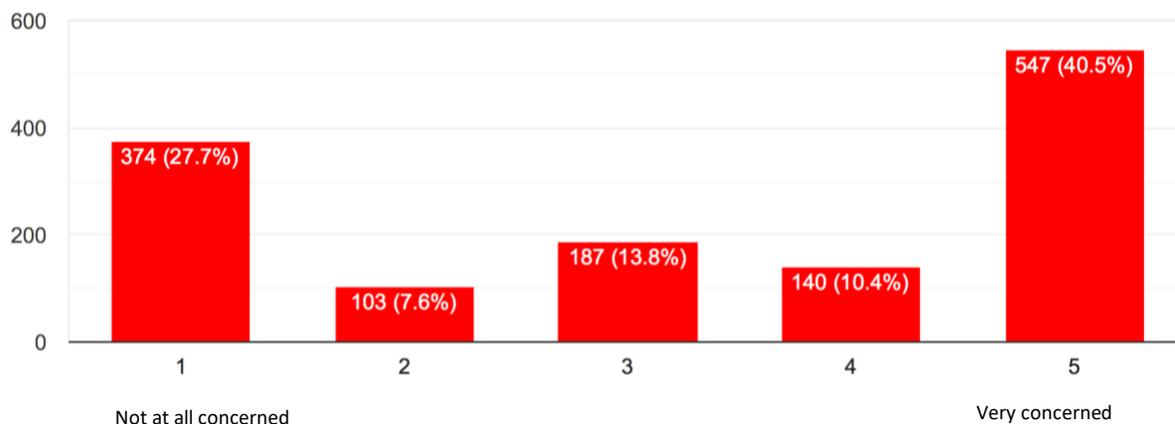
There were a variety of reasons respondents said their income was impacted since the arrival of COVID-19 in their communities. These include, losing their jobs because their place of work closing down, a loss of income because there is no tourism, reductions in hours, reductions in wages, a taxi driver said he and colleagues are seeing fewer passengers, and business owners say that clients are cautious about spending so spending less. People also gave answers about cancelled orders, stay at home mandates, a lack of transportation, not being an essential service, and having to lay off staff as they closed their own business.

Despite concerns about jobs, income, and access to food, 93.5 per cent of respondents approve of the compulsory social isolation measures.

**Graph 7:** Responses to the question, how concerned are you about your ability to pay bills?



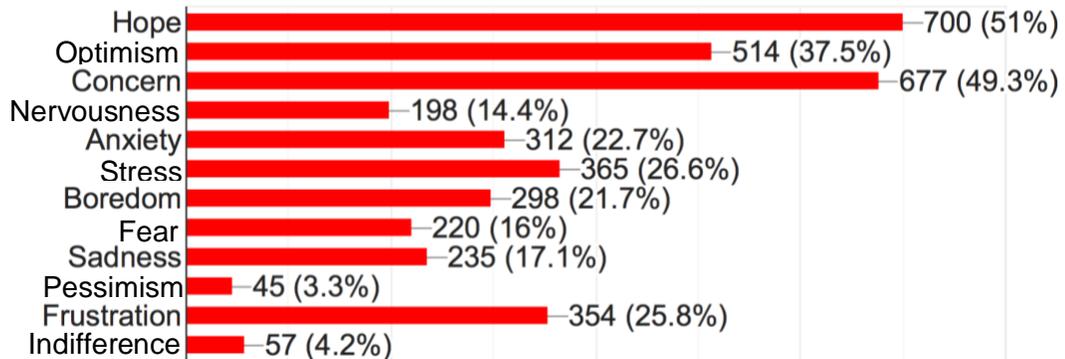
**Graph 8:** Responses to the question, how concerned are you about your ability to pay for rent or housing?



### FEELINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE

In the comments, people used words such as hungry, worried, concerned, but there were also many comments on preserving, and having hope that they would survive the economic impacts of the situation.

**Graph 9:** Responses to how people were feeling overall (*they could choose from a list or write their own – main responses from 1,372 respondents shown*)



### **SAMPLE COMMENTS ABOUT COVID-19**

“The impact on myself and my family may not be as bad as the more disadvantaged persons and families in my country as I am a teacher, still receiving my salary while schools are closed. There are persons who are employed or self-employed who are out of work as most businesses on the island have shut down or reduced hours of operation, some working remotely. So, some of these employees may be receiving less pay or none. This impacts their ability to buy what they need,” – Female, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

“I wish I knew when a sense of normalcy will begin. When we move from this normal to the new normal,” – Female, Jamaica

“As an entrepreneur I think there should be some kind of stimulus package especially for small businesses at least between \$1000-\$3000 to curb the impact of late fees, loans, bills,”  
– Female, Dominica

“Some neighbors don't have much to eat, need more food and hygiene items in community shops.” – Female, Trinidad and Tobago

“I don't believe that COVID-19 is the real threat to our society ... but its job loss and uncertainty. This will increase the number of stress related illnesses, heart attack” – Male, Trinidad and Tobago

“There is a huge financial aspect that needs addressing. If I don't make money I can't afford to pay bills. Then if they charge interest or late payments it will put me in a downward financial situation,” – Male, St. Kitts and Nevis

### **CONCLUSIONS**

People have an understanding of COVID-19, but there is also a lot of misinformation circulating in the Caribbean. Many concerns now are less about coming in contact with or getting sick with COVID-19, and more about the economic impact of the physical distancing measures and the closures that have taken place. Across the Caribbean islands a lack of tourism is being felt.