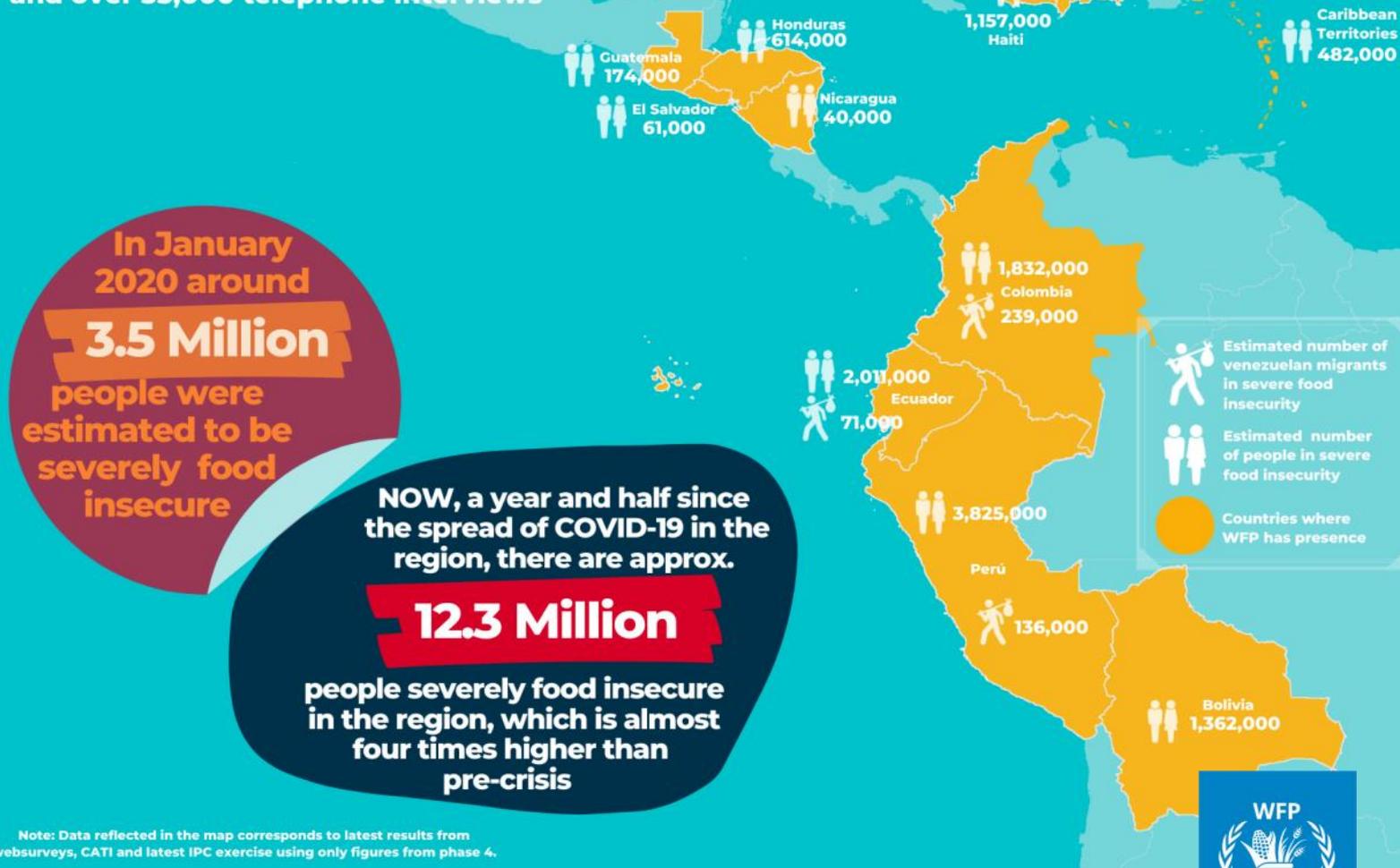


# Projections of severe food insecurity August 2021

Based on 20,000 remote surveys and over 35,000 telephone interviews



## FOOD SECURITY UPDATE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

AUGUST 2021

### CONTEXT

The Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is having widespread economic, social, and political effects in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). COVID-19 hit the LAC region in a context of consecutive drought years and extreme weather events, growing poverty and inequality, and the world's second largest migration crisis. As the number of confirmed cases continues to climb, the region has become one of the most impacted by the global health emergency. As of August 2021, the region had almost 41.1 million confirmed cases (21% of cases worldwide) and almost 1.38 million deaths (32% of deaths worldwide)<sup>1</sup>.

The LAC region lost 26 million jobs as a result of the pandemic, and it started 2021 with a complex employment landscape aggravated by new waves of contagion and slow vaccination processes that make the prospects for recovery in labour markets more uncertain<sup>2</sup>.

Indeed, the rollout of vaccines has varied considerably, and there is concern that widespread vaccine access in some countries could be delayed

until mid-2022, making populations vulnerable to new waves of the virus and to more transmittable variants. As of August 4, 2021, just 18% of people in LAC had been fully vaccinated. With Chile, Uruguay and Dominican Republic as leaders in the region, with between 65% and 40% of people fully vaccinated. In contrast, there are countries with reported vaccination rates of less than 5%, including Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

In addition to the impacts of the pandemic, hurricane risk in the region is high over the next 3 months. Above-average number and intensity of hurricanes are expected, especially in the northern Caribbean Sea (including Haiti, Dominican Republic and Cuba).

On 14 August, Haiti experienced a 7.2 magnitude earthquake devastating South, Nippes and Grande-Anse regions, which exacerbated food insecurity in the country. Over 2,200 people died, 12,300 were injured and thousands lost their homes as a result of the earthquake.



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SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

1 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF11581.pdf>

2 [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_779223/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_779223/lang-en/index.htm)

## HIGHLIGHTS

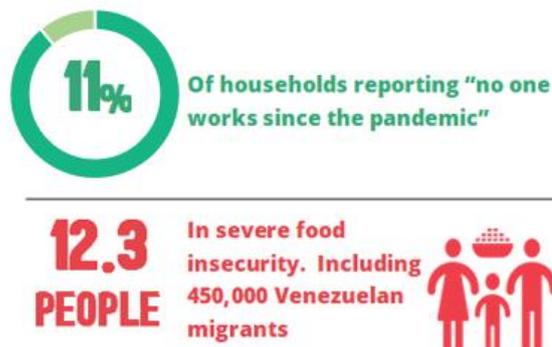
In countries with WFP presence in [Latin American and the Caribbean region](#), the latest IPC and WFP survey estimate 81.8 million people in food insecurity in August 2021, of which 12.3 are estimated suffering hunger and not eating enough, due to lack of money and other resources (severely food insecure). The 12.3 million severely food insecure people includes almost 450,000 Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

Access to income-generating opportunities in the region seems to increase slightly but still 11% reports no source of income in August 2021. Despite the food security situation showing some improvement compared to the peak observed in August 2020, [one out of 6 respondents did not eat or consume only one meal](#) the day before the interview.

Latest WFP surveys highlight also that one third of people in the region reports not having enough money to cover their essential needs, depicting a critical situation in many countries. Remittances flows have also been reduced drastically in many countries. Overall respondents receiving regularly money from people abroad have reduced to less than half compared to figures registered before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recent [hurricane forecasts](#) on the Caribbean side of Central America are not as alarming as on the northern part, with an average number of tropical systems, but a new event could have exponential impact on livelihoods and food access, as many areas in Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala are still recovering from the two hurricanes (ETA and IOTA) that hit them last year.

In [Haiti](#), 480,000 additional food insecure people are estimated due to the recent earthquake, exacerbating vulnerability of the 4.3 million people already in acute food insecurity (IPC phase 3 and above).



## LAC REGION

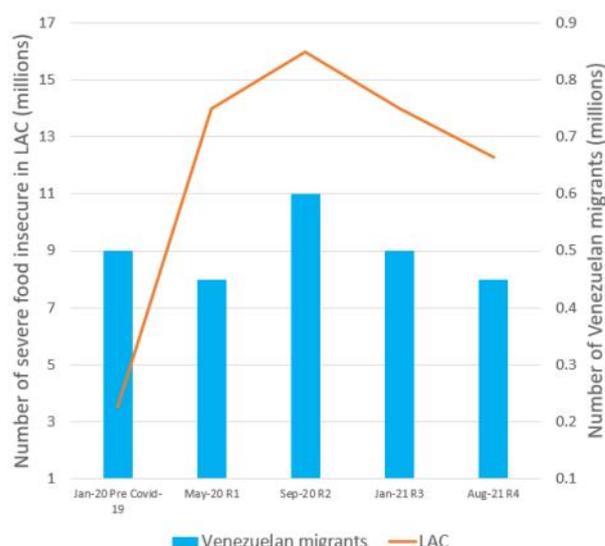
Acute food insecurity is on the rise among the urban and rural poor in the region: the number of [hungry people](#) (severely food insecure) in the region decreased only slightly, from the 14 million registered in February 2021 to [12.3 million in August](#), but the figure is still 4 times higher than pre-COVID-19 crisis.

Some improvement in the overall perception of food security was registered after the partial reopening of economic activities, but movement restriction in many countries are still having severe consequences on people's access to income, especially on those with informal jobs. Around 16% of respondents across the region have stated that [no one in the household had worked since the pandemic](#) and over 60% also reported a reduction in income.

Information collected during last WFP surveys in August shows high levels of food consumption related coping strategies being adopted, with at least [one in three people reporting they had to skip meals or restrict consumption by adults so children could eat](#).

Livelihood coping strategies are also used extensively across the region. If current conditions prevail, it will be harder for people to recover to pre-crisis levels as many have obtained debt, sold their assets, and used up their savings.

Figure 1. Number of severely food insecure people in LAC region



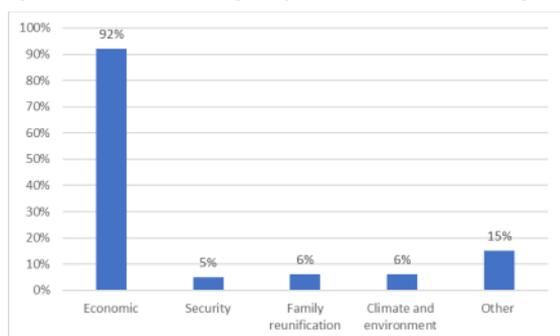
## CENTRAL AMERICA

In **Central America** food security remains difficult; the estimated number of **food insecure people** in the four countries reached **9.4 million** people as of August 2021 — 3.5 million people in Guatemala, 3.3 million in Honduras, 829,000 in El Salvador and 1.8 million in Nicaragua (in total 1.1 million more than the reported in Jan 2021). This is mainly due to a big portion of households reporting decreased incomes in the four countries, with higher percentages in El Salvador (84%) and Honduras (77%).

Preliminary results from a **migration study** conducted recently in **Central America** highlight very **high poverty level**. The household's average expenditure per month is 303USD (56USD per capita) meaning that half of the population lives with less than 2\$ per day.

This fragile situation resonates with the huge impact on wages registered in the area, with over 60% interviewed people reporting had lost/reduced income due to the pandemic.

Figure 2. Factors Leading Respondents to Want to Migrate



Data from the migration study also shows high intention to migrate among food insecure (43% desire to migrate), almost the double compared with the food secure population. The vast majority of the respondents cited economic reasons as the main motivating factor for desiring to migrate (Fig.2), including the need to find better jobs, unemployment and lack of money to cover essential needs.

Crop prospects are quite positive in Central America with average yields expected, unless adverse climatic events affect the harvest.

## VENEZUELAN MIGRANTS

As of July 2021, there are over **4.6 million** refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the **LAC region**. Their food security situation continues to be critical, with over 2 million Venezuelan migrants being food insecure (63%).

Perú is of particular concern, with 7,000 more severely food insecure migrants compared to January 2021.

N. FOOD INSECURE	Colombia	Ecuador	Peru
Moderate	873,000 (50%)	214,000 (49%)	460,000 (44%)
Severe	239,000 (14%)	70,000 (16%)	136,000 (13%)

Despite a slight improvement in income levels, still one out of four migrants reported no meals consumed the day before the interview.

In a scenario of an acute and prolonged socio-economic crisis, migrants are resorting to a variety of coping mechanisms affecting their livelihoods and ability to meet their food and other essential needs. During the previous month, **2 out of 3 migrants adopted at least one coping strategy**, which range from **selling assets** (51%), **borrowing money** (60%) and **accepting informal, low-paid and high-risk jobs** (44%).



This is probably one of the reasons why one in two interviewed Venezuelan migrants expressed the intention to leave the current location, 19% intends to move to another country, 17% to return to Venezuela.

## COLOMBIA

Food access and availability have deteriorated in Colombia with an increase of 2.5 million people in food insecurity, of which **150,000 more people are severely food insecure** compared to January 2021.

The main reason of this increase can be found in the worsening of the economic vulnerability in the country. In fact, 78% of the respondents reported an increase in unpaid domestic work and 68% of them a decrease in their household income since the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus.

Food consumption levels are concerning with 20% of the population reporting not adequate quantities and diversity of food intake.

An estimated 8 out of 10 residents in Colombia are also reporting extensive use of negative coping strategies to sustain their essential needs.



**18%** adopting all coping strategies  
**82%** at least one coping strategy

## HAITI

Political instability, unrest and gang-related violence, amidst tense security situation, is deepening economic crisis. Recent effects of the August 2021 earthquake and the upcoming hurricane season are likely to affect agricultural production, disruptions to economic activities and probably to worsen the food insecurity in the country in remaining months of 2021.

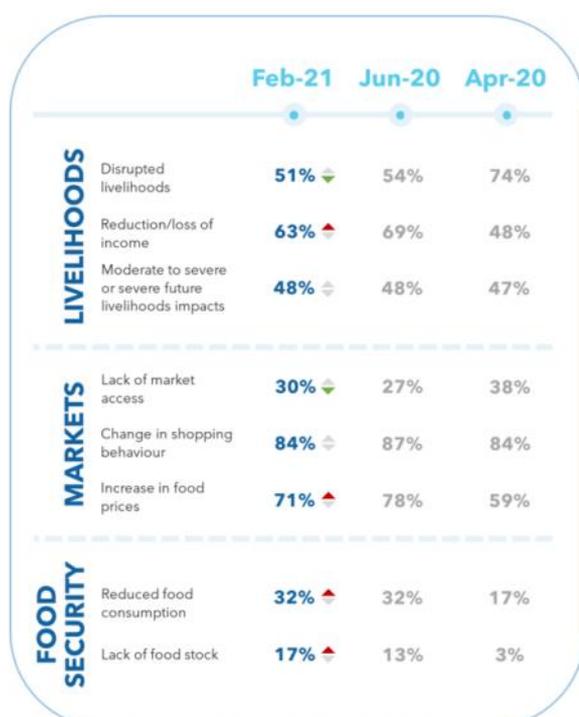
In August **1.2 million people are severely food insecure**, with 43% of respondents reporting no eating or having only one meal the day before the assessment.

Approx. 684,400 people are in need of assistance in the areas most impacted by the earthquake and additional 480,000 people may protract their severe food insecure status if their livelihoods are not secured or re-established soon. Markets and face-to-face food security assessments are being carried out in the areas to improve estimates and recommend urgent actions.

## OTHER CARIBBEAN & DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Food insecurity remains a concern in other **Caribbean**. According to the last round of the COVID-19 Food Security and Livelihood Impact Survey launched by CARICOM in February (Fig. 3), the number of people estimated to be moderately food insecure is 2.2 million and severely food insecure 482,000 in Caribbean countries where

Figure 3. Results of the CARICOM Covid-19 Impact assessment in the caribbean



WFP is present, excluding Haiti, Dominican Republic and Cuba.

A third of respondents cut down food consumption in the week leading up to the survey, and average household food stocks continued to decrease. Job loss and income reductions are still common, affecting 63% of overall respondents and 90% of those from lowest income groups. Disproportionally affected are households whose primary income sources are petty trade, informal/casual labour or external assistance and younger age groups.

The availability of key products in markets on the other hand has improved consistently since the beginning of the pandemic, particularly for staple foods and hygiene items which are reported as almost universally available. Most respondents (71%), however, observe higher than usual food prices and access to markets remains difficult for one third of respondents. The lack of financial means has influenced shopping behaviour, with preference increasing towards cheaper foods or smaller quantities.

In the case of **Dominican Republic**, data reported in Oct 2020 shows that 4.1 million people estimated to be food insecure, of which 300,000 are in urgent need of assistance (severely food insecure). This resonates with the fact that four out of the five households had to use coping strategies both food and livelihoods based to fulfil their needs.

The **hurricane season** forecast for 2021 projects an above-average season in the north Atlantic basin, including the Caribbean Sea, with above-average number and above-average intensity of tropical storms. The most likely number of tropical storms expected will be in the range of 13-20. This includes a likely 6-10 hurricanes of which 3-5 are of category 3 or higher.

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REGIONAL BUREAU FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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