



**THE JAMAICA RED CROSS
COVID 19 PERCEPTION SURVEY
CHARLES TOWN MAROONS
PORTLAND**



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Date : January 24, 2022.

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1.0 Background

A Covid 19 Perception Survey among the Charles Town Maroons in Portland, an indigenous community in Jamaica was conducted as part of pillar 3 on Community Engagement and Accountability, and Community Feedback Mechanisms of the National Response Plan. The survey formed part of a Geneva Commissioned global survey by the International Red Cross/Crescent Movement to ascertain perceptions regarding COVID 19, especially among migrants, refugees and indigenous populations around the world to aid in policy and planning.

This report presents the findings of the survey in one of the four (4) remaining maroon communities in Jamaica. Box 1 below provides an overview of the community and description of the survey sample.

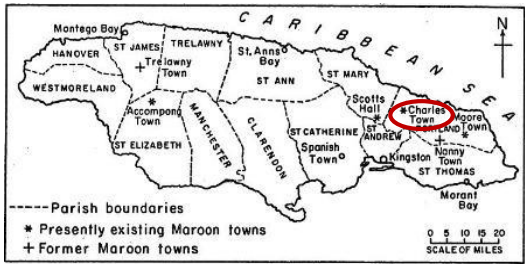
Context	Description of Community & Sample
<p data-bbox="193 745 311 784">Jamaica</p>  <p data-bbox="311 1137 630 1164"><small>Figure 1. Map of Jamaica showing Parish boundaries and locations of the major Maroon settlements.</small></p> <p data-bbox="193 1205 735 1236">Source: https://abengcentral.wordpress.com/jamaica/</p>	<p data-bbox="735 745 1497 1019">The target group was the Charles Town Maroons, one of four (4) maroon remaining maroon towns in Jamaica. With an estimated population of 2500 persons, Charles Town is located near the town of Buff Bay by the Buff Bay River in Portland (Refer to Map 1). The community is governed by their own elected leader who is referred to as colonel.</p> <p data-bbox="735 1019 1497 1137">Three major attractions in the community are the museum, the library and the Asafu Ground. Tourism is a main source of income for the community.</p> <p data-bbox="735 1176 1497 1294">The random sampling method was used with a sample size of 334. This was calculated with a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of +/- 5%.</p> <p data-bbox="735 1332 1497 1568">A total of three hundred and fifty-six (356) surveys were administered with the main objective to gain insights on the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic, awareness and perceptions about Covid vaccine and access to health related information among the indigenous population of the Charles Town Maroons.</p>

Figure 1: Description of Community and Survey Sample

1.1 Legal and Policy Framework

The two treaties signed by the Maroons and the British Government in 1738 and 1739 gave legal recognition to Maroons. Those treaties brought to an end some 80 years of war and

provide the legal foundation for their special status under the law¹. However, the country's constitution of 1962 did not address the question of the political and legal status of the Maroon communities in post-independence Jamaica². In other words, the Maroon's peace treaties of 1738/39 were never officially recognized by any post-colonial government.

Notwithstanding, as a signatory to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Jamaica recognizes the need for the protection of indigenous people whose unique cultures and traditions strengthen the diverse nature of humanity. The question of land rights has been an on-going discussion between the Government and the Maroons. Jamaica recognizes the right of the Maroon communities to use land in accordance with their system of communal property. According to Golding, 2014, it may be necessary to establish mechanisms to give domestic legal effect to such right in the national legal system.

A publication by Bates (n.d.), noted that "*the maroon today is a Jamaican in the eyes of the Law*". With that said, there are no known "special" regulations in place regarding access to basic services for the indigenous groups in Jamaica, the maroons like other citizens generally benefit from national development projects/programmes and has access to social services provided by the government.

1.2 Measures adopted by States/Governments in the context of COVID-19

The nature of the pandemic has caused the Government of Jamaica (GoJ) to respond in multiple ways. A summary of the measures taken by the GoJ include, inter alia:

- the declaration of the entire island as a "disaster area" in accordance with Section 6 of the 2015 Disaster Risk Management Act on March 13, 2020
- Travel restrictions, travel bans and health screening testing and quarantine requirements for passengers arriving in Jamaica
- Mandatory curfew for all citizens (excluding essential workers) and no movement days. Movement is only allowed for essential workers, which are classified as members of the police/military, health workers, among others.
- Limits to the number of people allowed to gather to attempt to reduce the transmission of the virus.

In recent times, the roll out of the national vaccination programme to have 65% of the population inoculated by March 2022.

¹ <https://moj.gov.jm/sites/default/files/minister-speeches/6th%20Annual%20International%20Maroon%20Conference.pdf>

² <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/maroon-autonomy-jamaica#:~:text=The%20two%20treaties%20signed%20by,rest%20of%20the%20Jamaican%20population.>

The Covid-19 measures and policies instituted by the GoJ was for the whole of Jamaica of which the Maroons are perceived to be part of the wider society and citizens of the country. In general, the Covid-19 measures negatively impacted livelihoods and economic earning potential of several sectors in the country, particularly tourism.

Tourism is one of the main income generators for the Charles Town Maroons through offering of tours - museum, library, Asafu Ground and sale of coffee. The measures implemented both internationally and locally to stem the spread of the virus saw a significant fall out of earnings from tourism dependent countries like Jamaica. Box 2 summaries the impact of Covid-19 on the Charles Town Maroon Village.

Box 2: Interview with Charles Town Maroon Colonel

Heavily dependent on tourism, the Chief of the Charles Town Maroon Village noted that ***“Life before Covid at the Charles Town Museum was somewhat close to perfect”***.

...She noted that before Covid-19, on Thursdays they would have 3 tours, for example but since the pandemic they have had to find alternatives because of no visitors.

2.0 Methodology / Limitations

The methodological approach employed to undertake the survey is summarized in table xxx below. The primary method of data collection was the administering of the survey instruments face to face in the community in two (2) phases – the first July 27-30, 2021 and the second August 9-13, 2021.

Table 1: Summary of Methodology

Methodology	Yes/No	Comments
Face to face survey	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A total of 356 surveys were administered over the 2 weeks’ period. Of this number, 259 were deemed viable for analysis which is included in this report. ▪ The survey was conducted by thirteen (13) JRC volunteers and community facilitators combined along with 2 team members from JRC NHQ. The ODK application with the survey uploaded on smart tablet devices was used to collect the information. ▪ Sensitization for the interviewers was conducted ▪ The team organized themselves into two groups to cover the community and minimize overlaps based on zones created. Each team was accompanied by a community facilitator to make the data collection process easier.

Methodology	Yes/No	Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A target of 12 completed instruments was established per day for the team to reach the established quota based on sample size. ▪ In addition to the survey, a one and one interview was done with the Colonel/ Chief to gauge her perception about the Covid 19 virus and vaccination.

Limitations

- Some of the survey questions could have had follow up questions which would have deepening the understanding of the maroon's perceptions. For example, questions such as levels of trust in vaccine, Government and media, could have had a follow up question to ascertain what experience led to trust or mistrust since the Covid 19 pandemic.
- The use of Focus groups could also have given more additional information on the perceptions of the Charles Town Maroons. However, budgetary constraints could not facilitate this activity.

3.0 Analysis of Findings

3.1 Demographics

Demographic information is important to present the characteristics of the sampled population in terms of their age, gender, education and employment status.

Most of the population (47.3%) were between the ages of 18-29 and 40-49 years old, combined. Persons 30 to 39 years old accounted for 20.2 per cent of the population, while those 50 to 59 years old accounted for 15 per cent. The elderly, those 60 years and older accounted for 15 per cent of the population.

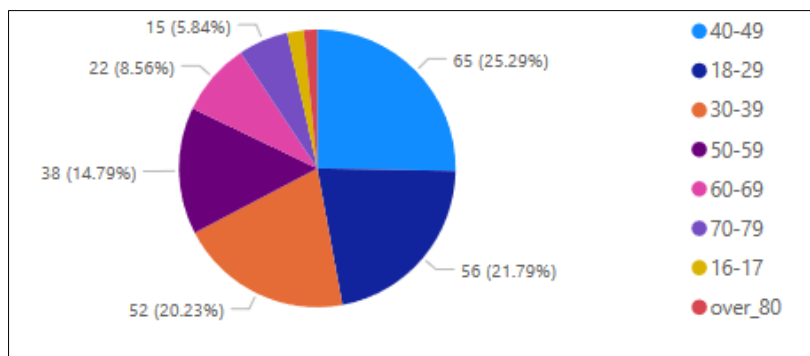


Figure 2: Demographics of Participants

The gender breakdown in Figure xxx below shows that 4 per cent more females participated in the survey than their male counterpart.

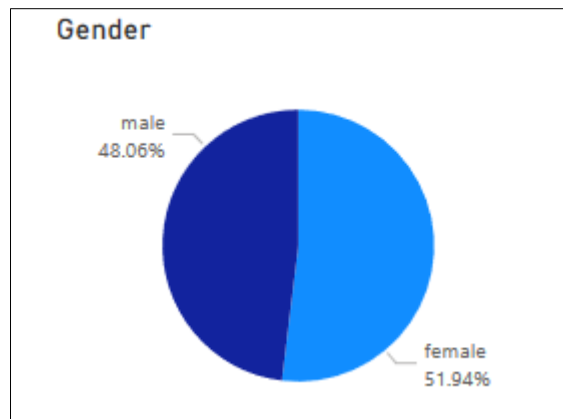


Figure 3: Gender Breakdown

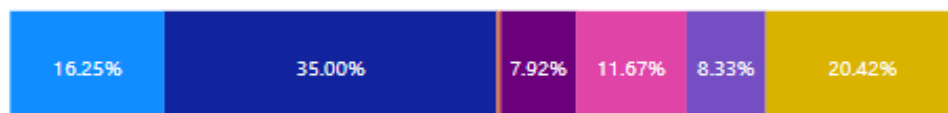
During the perception survey, respondents were asked to describe their work situation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The data shows that before the pandemic one third of the population fell under the category of employee while 16% were business owners. The category of unemployed represented 20% of respondents, 12 retired and 8% were engaged in irregular/informal employment. The final category of students also accounted for 8%.

Comparatively, two major changes were noted in the categories of employee and unemployed. During the pandemic, the data shows a 12.6% reduction in the percentage of persons employed and an increase of similar percent of those unemployed. Other noticeable changes were evident in the categories of health care workers showing an increase and a slight reduction of those categorized as students.

Employment situation

Before the pandemic

● business_o... ● employee ● health_wor... ● irregular_i... ● retired ● student ● unemployed



During the pandemic

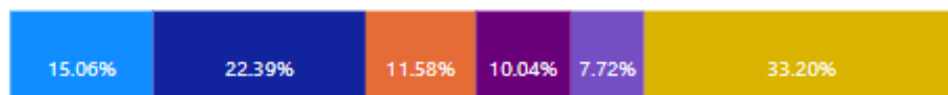


Figure 4: Employment Situation Before and During the Pandemic

3.1 Access to health messages and the impact of health messages

Access to health messages and information for the Charles Town Maroons is primarily from trusted sources namely the Ministry of Health and traditional local media such as radio and television. The most trusted and preferred channels of reliable information about Covid-19 are from Government officials, Health care workers who are located at their health clinic in the parish and the Chief/Colonel of the Village. In some instances, however, the respondents noted that information from international traditional media namely CNN is a trusted alternate source of information.

It is understood that there is lack of trust in social media as a source of information. The majority of the respondents stated that social media is disregarded as a form of reliable news. These include Instagram, Tic Tok, Facebook and Whatsapp messages.

In terms of the appropriateness and relevance of health information, 56.98% of respondents found the information about the Covid-19 useful, while 35.6% found the information somewhat useful. A small percentage of 4.65 % did not find the messages useful.

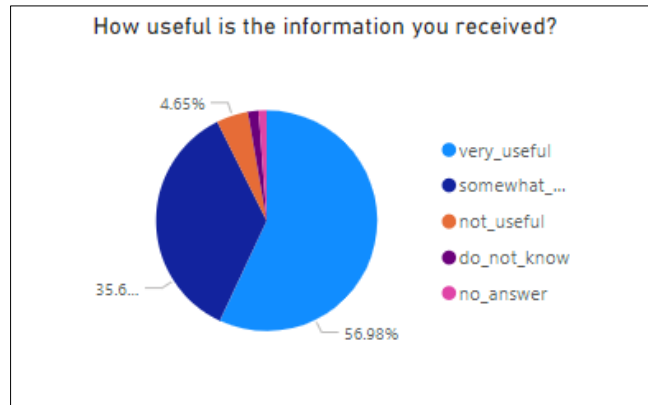


Figure 5: Perception of usefulness of information received

3.2 COVID-19 Vaccines: Overview on Vaccine Awareness and Perceptions of Migrants and Indigenous Populations

Respondents were asked if a vaccine would be available for you, would you receive it. Half or 50 percent said that they would not receive the vaccine. Two out ten persons (22%) noted that they were unsure and 19.3 % indicated interest in taking the vaccine if made available. Only a small percentage (8.5%) of the Charles Town Maroon population has been vaccinated.

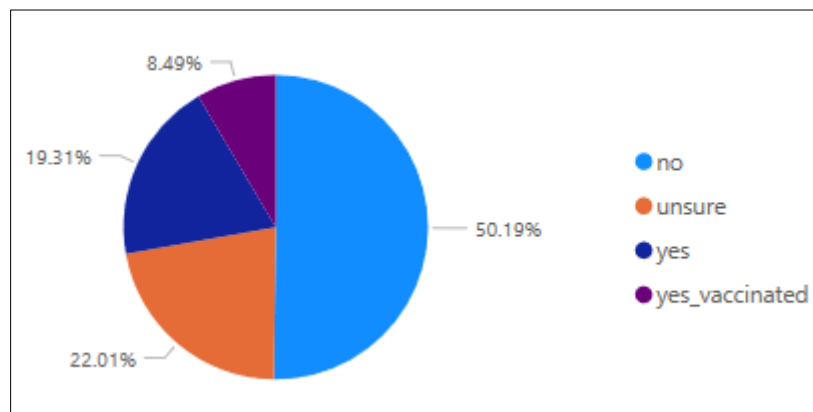


Figure 6: Perception of receiving vaccine if made available

The respondents were probed further to get a better understanding of the reason (s) for hesitancy with receiving the Covid-19 vaccine. The general consensus is that more research is needed to understand the virus in order to develop an effective vaccine that provides immunity against the virus. It is felt that the vaccines were developed too quickly.

The survey was wanted to assess past actions as it relates to taking vaccines. About two-thirds (65.6 %) of the respondents noted that they have not received a vaccine as an adult. About a quarter (25.9%) received vaccines as an adult and 8.5% were unsure on whether or not they received a vaccine as an adult.

In order to gauge how the respondents perceived others about taking the vaccine, they were asked do you think most adults you know will get a COVID-19 vaccine, if it is available and recommended to them. Four out of ten said no (41%), a little over a quarter (29%) were unsure and one third (31%) stated that they believe others would choose to take the vaccine.

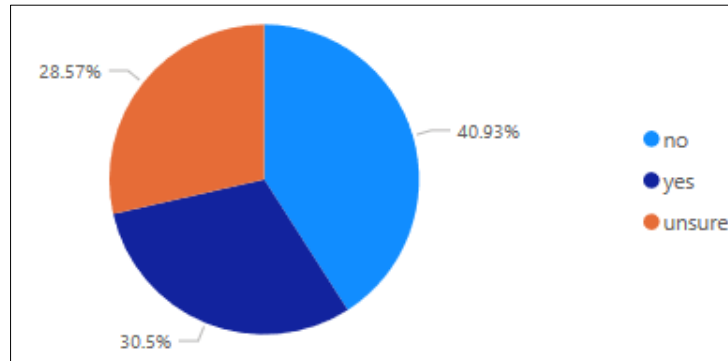


Figure 7: Perception of others taking the vaccine

In terms of access to vaccines, the survey wanted to find out if persons knew where to go to get vaccinated. Two-thirds (68.7%) of the residents of the Charles Town Maroon Village stated that they know where to go to access vaccines. The remaining one-third (31.3%) indicated that they did not know where as shown in Figure 8.

Do you know where to go to get vaccinated?

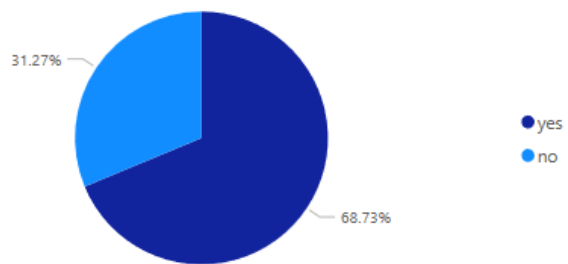


Figure 8: Knowledge of where to access vaccines

The Government of Jamaica in ensuring equity to access vaccines, named permanent vaccination sites³ in all 14 parishes which are supplemented with vaccination blitz at various locations on specific dates across the island. Notwithstanding, the vaccination rate nationally has been slow with only 20.13% of the population fully vaccinated as at January 17, 2022⁴.

In addition to finding out if people know where to get the vaccine, the survey wanted to find out how easy it is to get vaccination services. Of the 259 respondents, 18% stated that it was not at all easy to access vaccination services. The majority (120 persons) found it moderately and very easy to access vaccine services, combined and 35% (91 persons) of the respondents found it a little easy.

³ <https://vaccination.moh.gov.jm/vaccination-sites/#permanent>

⁴ <https://vaccination.moh.gov.jm/#vaccine-tracker>

For those who found it a little or not at all easy at all to access vaccines, the survey wanted to find out the reasons or barriers to access vaccines. Key among the barriers identified by the respondents were physical limitation, long waiting times, distance to vaccination site (s) and personal safety in terms of fear attending vaccination site.

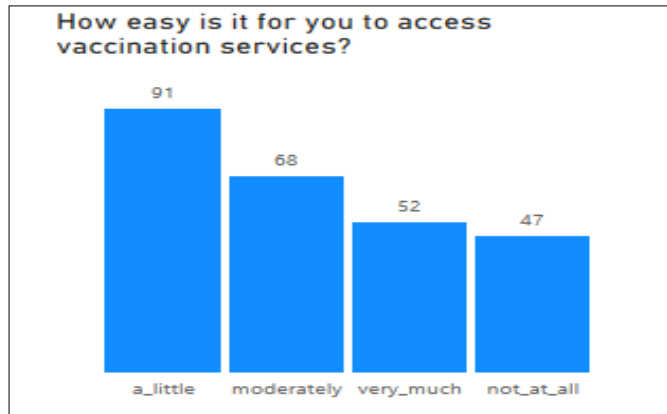


Figure 9: Perception of ease of access to vaccination services

3.3 Trust in COVID-19 Vaccines by Migrants and Indigenous Populations

Respondents were asked would you trust the vaccine against Covid-19 if it would be available for you now. One third (37.6 %) of the of the respondents said they do not trust the vaccine. Approximately 28% has little trust in the vaccine while another 26% has moderate levels of trust. Only 7 % of the respondents indicated high levels of trust for the vaccine against Covid-19.

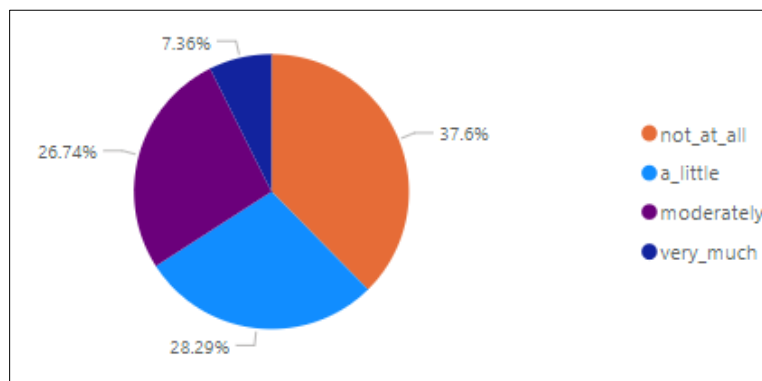


Figure 10: Trust in Covid-19 Vaccine

This finding of vaccine hesitancy among the Charles Town Maroons is in keeping with a recent study conducted by the Northern Caribbean University in Jamaica. According to their findings, of the 1,071 people surveyed nationally, 80.3 per cent indicated that they did not trust or were ambivalent towards the Government’s COVID-19 vaccination campaign⁵.

The follow up question sought to find out the level of trust in health care providers in administering the Covid-19 vaccine. The majority of respondents representing 30.5 percent expressed little confidence while 25 per cent has no trust at all in health workers that would administer the vaccine. In addition, approximately 29 per cent has moderate levels of trust and

⁵ <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20211228/ncu-survey-shows-public-distrust-govt-covid-19-vax-campaign>

the remainder of 15% has high levels of trust in health workers that would give the vaccine against Covid-19.

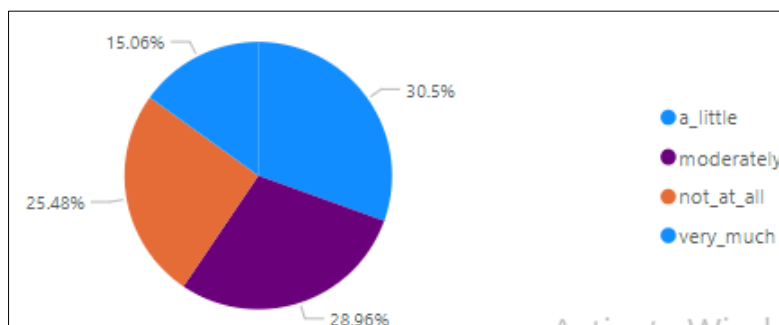


Figure 11: Perception of Trust in Healthcare Providers

The main reason cited by the respondents regarding the lack of trust in health care workers is because of the perception that some of the nurses and doctors in the country have not been inoculated by the same vaccine the public is being encouraged to take.

3.4 COVID-19 Impacts on Migrants and Indigenous Populations

This section seeks to assess the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic as well as mental health and emotional well-being on the Charles Town Maroons.

The first question sought to find out if anything worries you in relation to the coronavirus? A little more than 50% of the respondents stated yes while 46% stated that nothing worries. For those who answered yes, the follow-up question was what worries you the most.

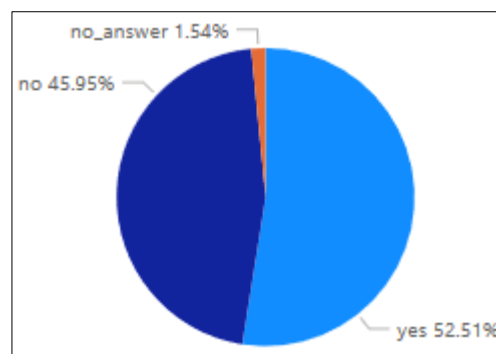


Figure 12: Proportion of the population worried about Covid-19

Figure 12 below shows the list of concerns identified by the respondents. It should be noted that this was a multiple response question as persons may have more than one concerns relating to the virus. The top five worries or concerns include losing a loved one to the virus, overload of the healthcare system, closure of schools, losing job/business and unable to meet the basic needs for food.

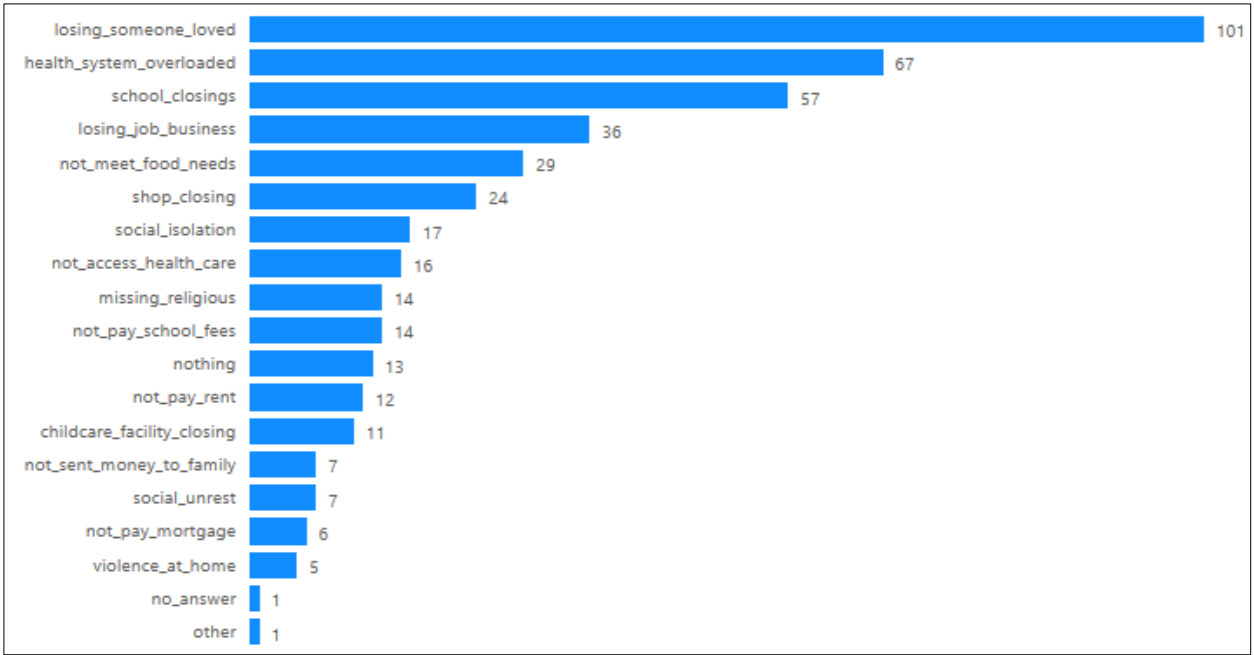


Figure 13: Concerns and worries about to the Coronavirus

The survey also assessed the pre and post economic impact of Covid-19. Comparatively, Figure 13 below shows the perception of respondents relating to the changes in their economic situation. 46% of respondents stated that their economic situation was good before covid-19, one third considered their economic situation to have been fair and 20% stated excellent.

When asked if their economic situation changed during the pandemic, almost 60% of the respondents noted that their economic situation changed, 19 % indicated no and 21% of respondents were not sure.

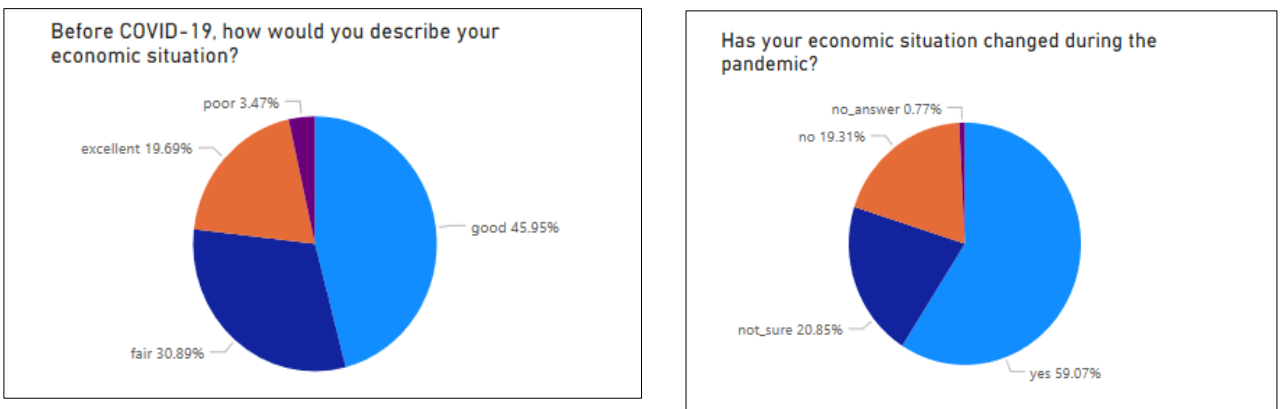


Figure 14: Perception of changes in economic situation before and during the pandemic

For those who stated that their economic situation has changed, the survey probed deeper to find out how has it changed. It should be noted that this was a multiple response question as persons could be impacted in several ways.

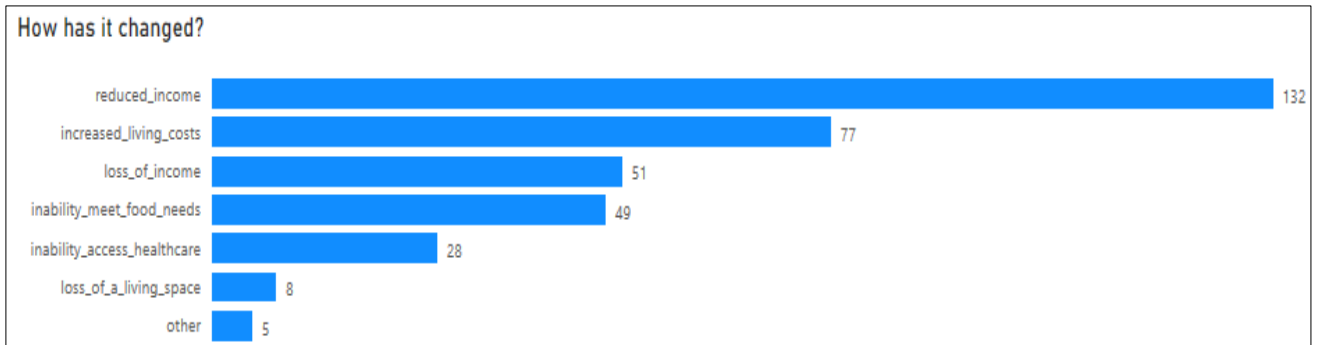


Figure 15: Perception of economic changes

The data shows that the majority of persons (74%) experienced reduced or loss of income and increased living costs. It should be noted that 14% of respondents indicated their inability to meet their food needs and 8% the inability to access healthcare service. A small number of persons (8) representing 2% indicated loss of living space.

Recommendations

- Convene a special information sharing community session in collaboration with the MOHW and Jamaica Red Cross with aim to address hesitancy and build community trust for a COVID-19 vaccine. The session could strategically target different age cohorts in breakout groups such as children, high risk groups etc.
- Conduct a special mental health and psycho-social session done in collaboration with the Maroon Chief.
- Work with partners in Portland to arrange to provide more direct access to vaccination sites/centres by providing transportation of interested persons to be inoculated.
- Undertake further surveys to document how knowledge and attitude evolve to better understand the impact of the virus on households, food security, education of children and challenges persons faced accessing non-COVID-19 related health care.

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<https://vaccination.moh.gov.jm/#vaccine-tracker>

Annex 1



Jamaica Red Cross Volunteer administering Covid-19 Perception Survey with resident of the Charles Town Maroon Town, Portland – August 2021



Covid-19 Perception Survey – Special Interview with Charles Town Maroon Village Chief, Portland

Source: JRC, July 26, 2021.



Community Facilitators