THE STATE OF SOCIAL RIGHTS IN CUBA

IX REPORT / 2026

OBSERVATORIO DE DERECHOS SOCIALES CUBA

Observatorio Cubano de Derechos Humanos

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION / 3

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION / 4

Technical specifications / 4

Distribution by gender, age and racial group / 5

01. HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC SITUATION / 7

Housing and state of repair / 7

Economic situation and food / 9

Monthly household income / 11

Bank Loan / 13

02. ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE / 15

03. MAIN PROBLEMS TO BE ADDRESSED / 17

04. ASSESSMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S MANAGEMENT / 19

Confidence in economic measures / 20

Expectations of change / 21

Type of change desired / 22

Health and Education / 23

INTRODUCTION

Cuba is slowly going dark

According to this new Report on the State of Social Rights (2026), 94% of Cubans live in extreme poverty; **8 out of 10 have had to go without some or all of their daily meals**, and the main local infrastructures are in severe crisis. It is hard to find a sector of national life that escapes the collapse the country is living through, at an incalculable human cost.

Since 2019, with data in hand, we have warned of the growing impoverishment of Cuban families, the headlong deterioration of public services and the risk that it would all end in a severe humanitarian crisis. More than a few interlocutors reacted with disbelief to our reports; there was even no shortage of reproach from those who clung to the idea of the "communist paradise of the Caribbean", the inspiration for the so-called socialism of the 21st century.

The sad reality has prevailed, and the human and social cost of not having acted in time has risen, proving our reports right — but above all the more than 11,000 Cuban men and women, representative of the general population, surveyed on the street, even in a climate of repression, over these nine editions.

But this ninth report also gathers several findings that reflect the current political moment, which appears to correspond to the end of a historical cycle. It is marked by a record negative assessment of the Government's economic and social management, deep distrust of its recent economic measures and, at the same time, a restrained hope that something positive is coming for the country, as well as striking clarity about where change should lead.

Reading our reports, you will find explanations of today's political and social dynamics: why 11J happened and why Cubans keep protesting in the streets today, despite the repression. You will even find answers as to why the population, also according to official figures, has fallen at an accelerating rate, or why in 2025 the number of deaths was double the number of births. But, above all, you will find reasons enough to sustain the political, economic and social change Cuba urgently needs.

94% of Cubans live in extreme poverty

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION

The methodology used has been the same as in our previous surveys: in-person interviews assisted by digital means. A representative sample was designed, with provincial quotas by age bracket, and by sex and racial group for the population as a whole, weighted to demographic size according to the latest official data (Estudios y Datos sobre la Población Cubana, ONEI 2024, May 2025 edition).

The interviews were carried out in every province of the country, across a total of 79 municipalities (including the special municipality of Isla de la Juventud)

- Open Data Kit (ODK) technology was used for the fieldwork; SPSS v28.0.0.1 was used for data processing and statistical analysis

- In the analyses presented, the decimals obtained in the percentages were rounded to whole numbers.

SURVEY TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Universe: Population resident in Cuba aged 18 and over, both sexes.

Sample: 1,318 interviews.

Sampling method: Simple random. Sample stratification by clusters: type of locality, sex, age and racial group.

Allocation: Proportional.

Margin of error: +/- 2.8 for overall data.

Confidence level: 95% with probability p/q=50%.

Fieldwork methodology: in-person survey with data entry assisted by mobile phones and tablets.

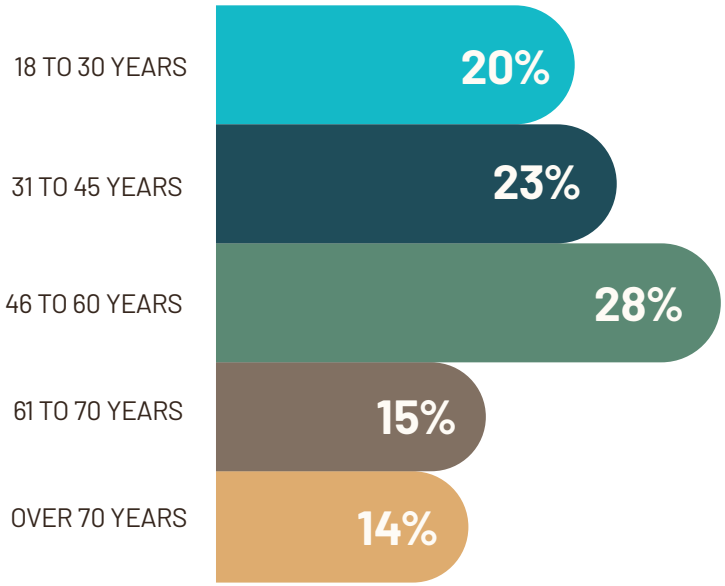
Fieldwork dates: 27 June to 29 July 2026.

Responsible body: Cuban Observatory for Human Rights (OCDH).

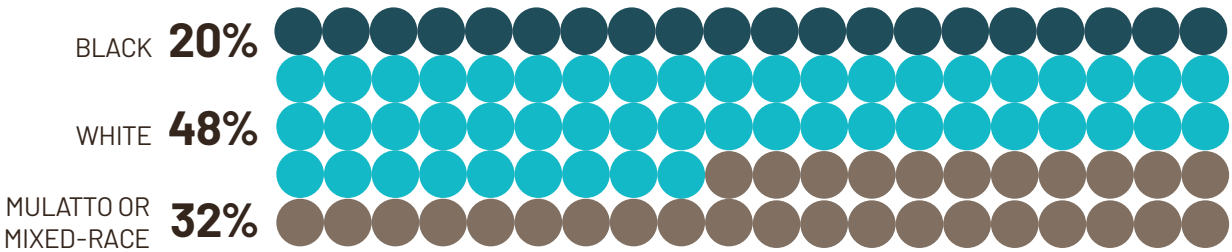
DISTRIBUTION BY GENDER, AGE AND RACIAL GROUP

GENDER GROUPS

AGE GROUPS



RACIAL GROUPS



RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

1.
HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC SITUATION

• HOUSING AND STATE OF REPAIR

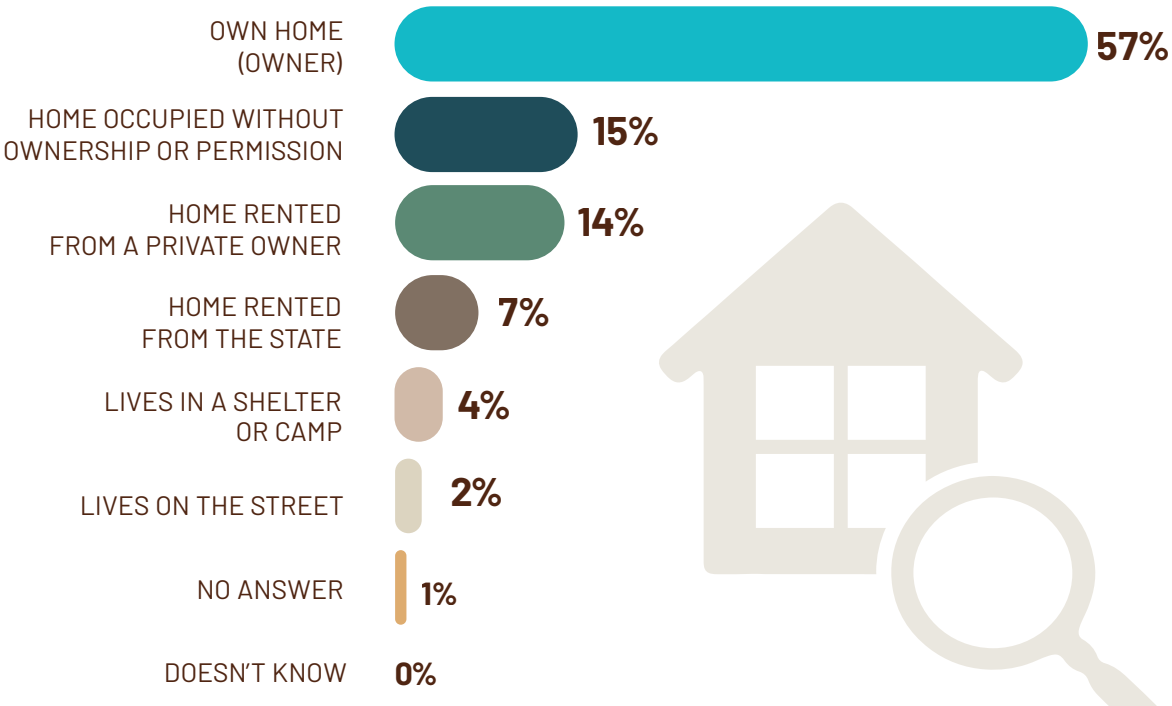
57% of respondents say they live in their own home (62% in 2019, OCDH), while 21% live in conditions of clear housing insecurity (occupying homes without ownership or permission, in shelters or camps, or on the street). These results contrast with official figures, which put the share of "owner" households at around 85%.

Among those who said they live on the street,

57%
say they live in their own home (2026)

(62%
according to our 2019 data)

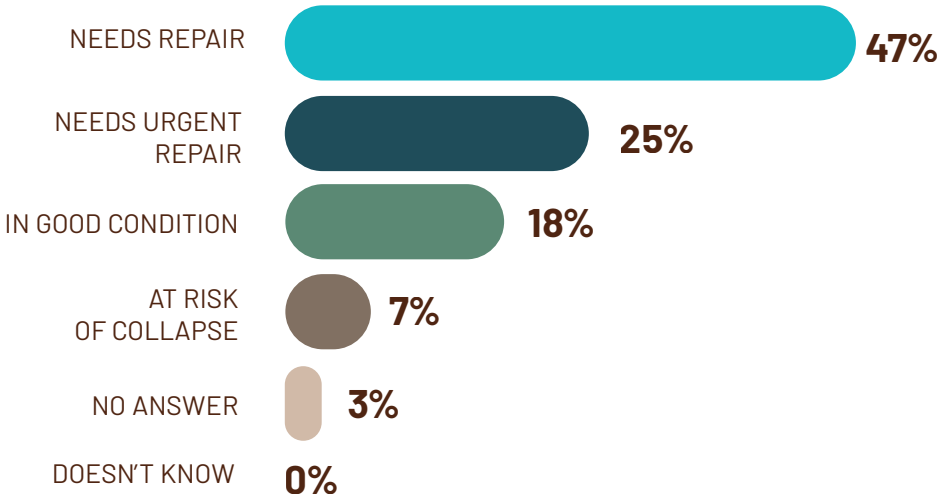
HOUSING SITUATION AND TENURE



people over 61, and especially those over 70, account for the highest percentages (22% and 44% respectively). The same is true among those who reported living in shelters or camps (25% and 20%), revealing the extreme housing vulnerability of Cuba's older population.

Extreme vulnerability of the older adult population in housing in Cuba

STATE OF REPAIR OF THE HOME



Almost half of homes (47%) need repair and 25% require urgent repairs, plus a further 7% that are at outright risk of collapse. Together, more than three quarters of the homes in the sample are in poor condition, evidence of a massive violation of the right to adequate housing in Cuba.

Among those who say their home is in good condition, people over 70 account for barely 8%; while this same group makes up 26% of those who say their home is at risk of collapse.

Only 18% of homes are in good condition, while the vast majority show some level of deterioration.

• ECONOMIC SITUATION AND FOOD

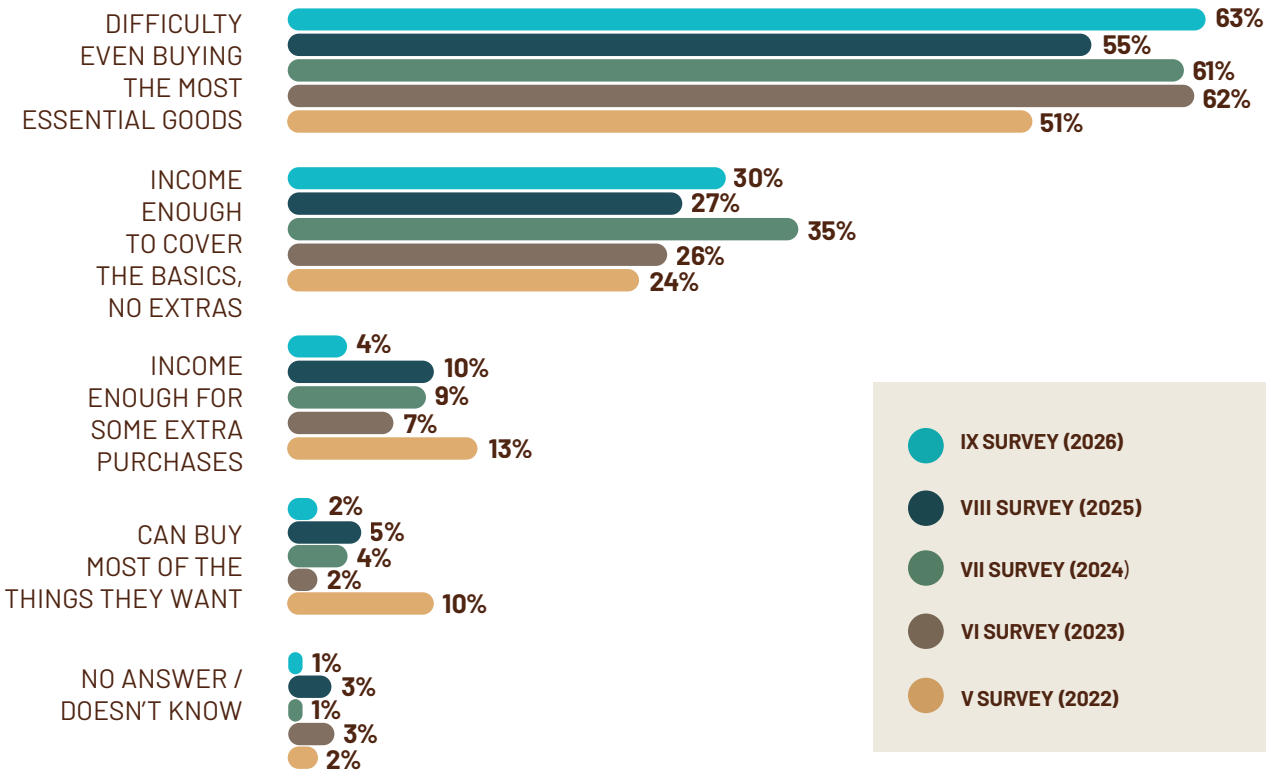
The situation of Cuban households is unsustainable

9 out of 10
on the margins of survival.

The economic situation of households is marked by high precariousness.
63% report difficulty even buying the most essential goods, and 30% have income that only covers basic needs. In total, only 6% can make purchases beyond the basics.

People aged 61 and over make up 38% of those who struggle even to buy essentials, compared with 13% of those who can cover the basics without extra spending.

HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC SITUATION (COMPARISON)

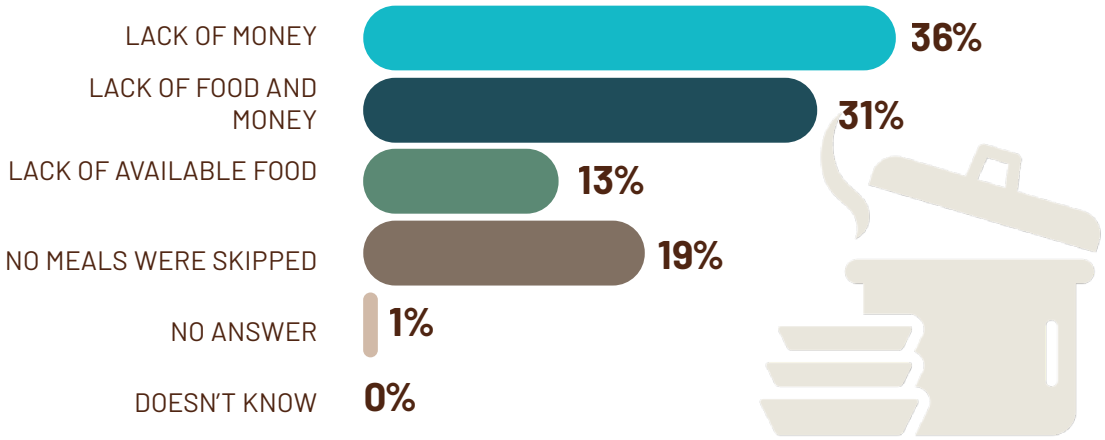


8 out of 10

of Cubans have skipped breakfast, lunch or dinner because of a lack of money or food shortages

A year ago it was 7 out of ten

MEALS SKIPPED IN THE HOME OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS



Among adults over 61 it rises to

9 out of 10

the number of those who could not have three meals a day.

• MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

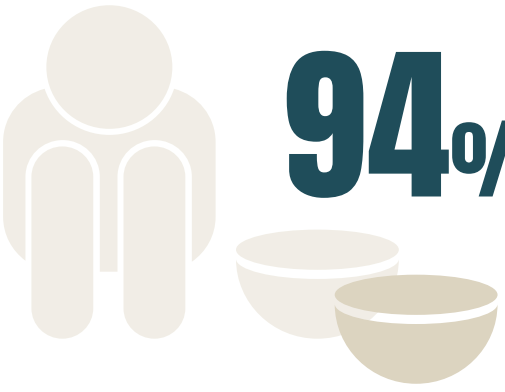
The Cuban peso's growing loss of value has hit the vast majority of households hard. While, as we have seen in earlier studies, family remittances have a positive influence for those who receive them, their frequency, amount and form, as well as the scarcity and rising cost of basic goods and services, also limit their impact on these families.

Moreover, the current state of collapse has cancelled the positive impact that subsidised goods and services could have on households, a trend that had already been observed for years. Added to this are the severe crisis in public services and the lack of transparency about their real cost.

Since December 2025, the Cuban peso (CUP) on the non-state market —the usual reference for Cubans— has continued to depreciate against the US dollar (USD). In this context, to calculate the extreme poverty threshold, we took as the exchange rate the median of the monthly figures recorded in the 9 months before the survey was carried out, from October 2025 to June 2026 (Source: elTOQUE); in this period 1 dollar equalled 510 CUP (median).

The international extreme poverty line was set by the World Bank in 2015 at 1.90 USD. We have kept this indicator "frozen", even though it has since been revised upwards. A three-person household would need to earn the equivalent of 171 USD a month not to be in extreme poverty. The poverty line would therefore stand at around 87,210 CUP per household per month.

Taking the above into account, and considering total household income, we can conclude that:



94% of Cubans remain in extreme poverty

* The Food Monitor Program estimated the basic food basket for two people in Havana at 41,735 CUP in August 2025.

MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME

MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME BRACKET	% OF THE TOTAL
UP TO 20,000 CUP	68%
20,001 TO 40,000 CUP	15%
40,001 TO 60,000 CUP	8%
60,001 TO 75,000 CUP	3%
75,001 TO 87,000 CUP	1%
87,001 TO 95,000 CUP	1%
OVER 95,000 CUP	1%
NO ANSWER	2%
DOESN'T KNOW	1%

68%

of Cuban households report monthly income of less than 20,001 CUP a month

8 out of 10

of these households struggle even to buy what is essential to survive

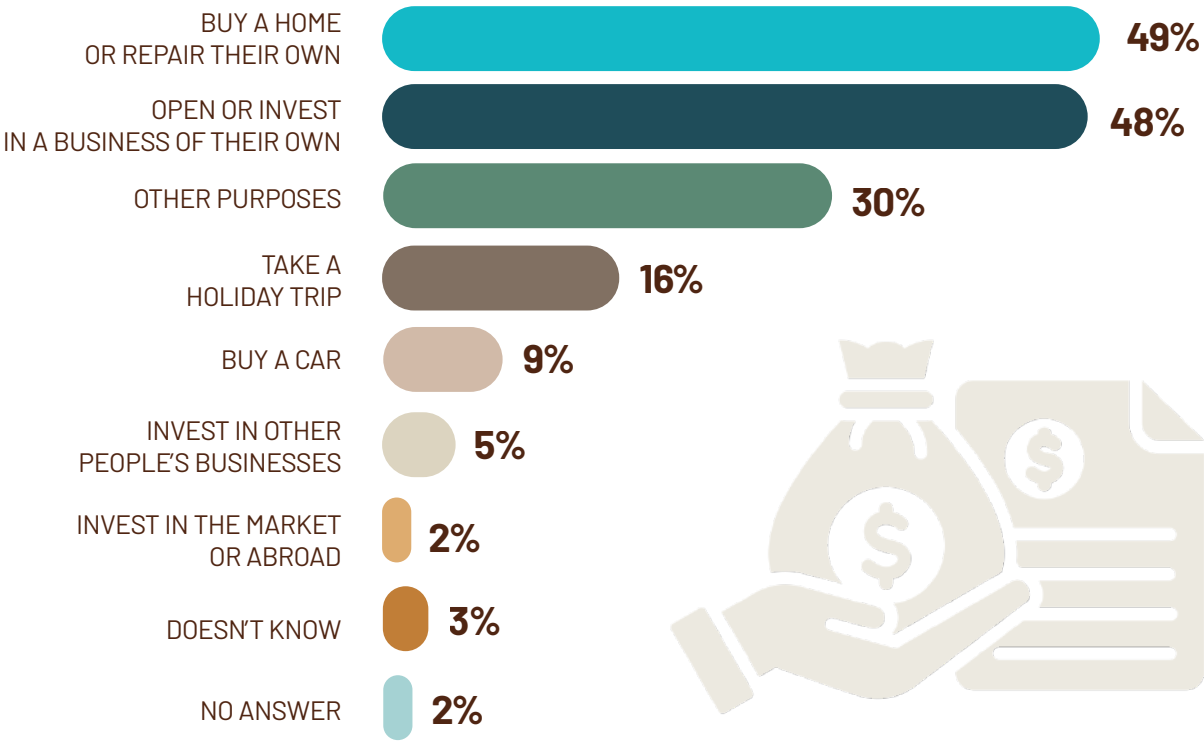
47% of people over 60 report household income below 3,056 CUP (the official minimum pension). Almost all of these (99%) attribute skipped meals to a lack of money or food.

• BANK LOAN

The main uses for a hypothetical bank loan are clearly concentrated in housing (49%) and entrepreneurship — opening or investing in a business of their own (48%).

5% would put those resources into investing in someone else's business, confirming the interest in devoting resources and effort to investment and business.

INTENDED USE OF A POSSIBLE BANK LOAN



Multiple-response question. The percentage of respondents who selected each option is shown, and these may add up to more than 100%.

Interest in opening or investing in a business of their own reaches 60% among those under 30 and 62% among those aged 46 to 60. Among those over 70, 61% would prioritise buying or repairing a home.

2.
ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Electricity infrastructure is the worst rated

95%
consider its condition to be bad

Respondents were asked about municipal infrastructure, for a local assessment across more than 70 municipalities in every province of the country. The overall balance is predominantly negative.

Electricity infrastructure is the worst rated: 95% consider it to be in bad condition. In almost every province negative ratings reach or exceed 90%, reflecting a perceived deterioration that is virtually universal.

Sharing the podium of worst-rated infrastructure are rubbish collection and landfill management (87%), as well as internet and telephone services, with almost universal dissatisfaction: 86% rate them bad.

Close behind come water supply and sewerage (84%), hospitals and health centres (82%), and roads, which also receive a predominantly negative rating in every province (80%). Nationally, 74% also consider the condition of homes and buildings bad. And markets and industrial areas are rated negatively in 64% of cases, with marked territorial differences.

Schools receive a less negative rating than the rest of the services and infrastructure, although 56% of respondents also consider them to be in bad condition.

Rubbish collection and landfill management:

87%
rate it bad

Dissatisfaction with internet and telephone services:

86%

rate them bad

Equally negative ratings for water supply and sewerage, hospitals, health centres and roads

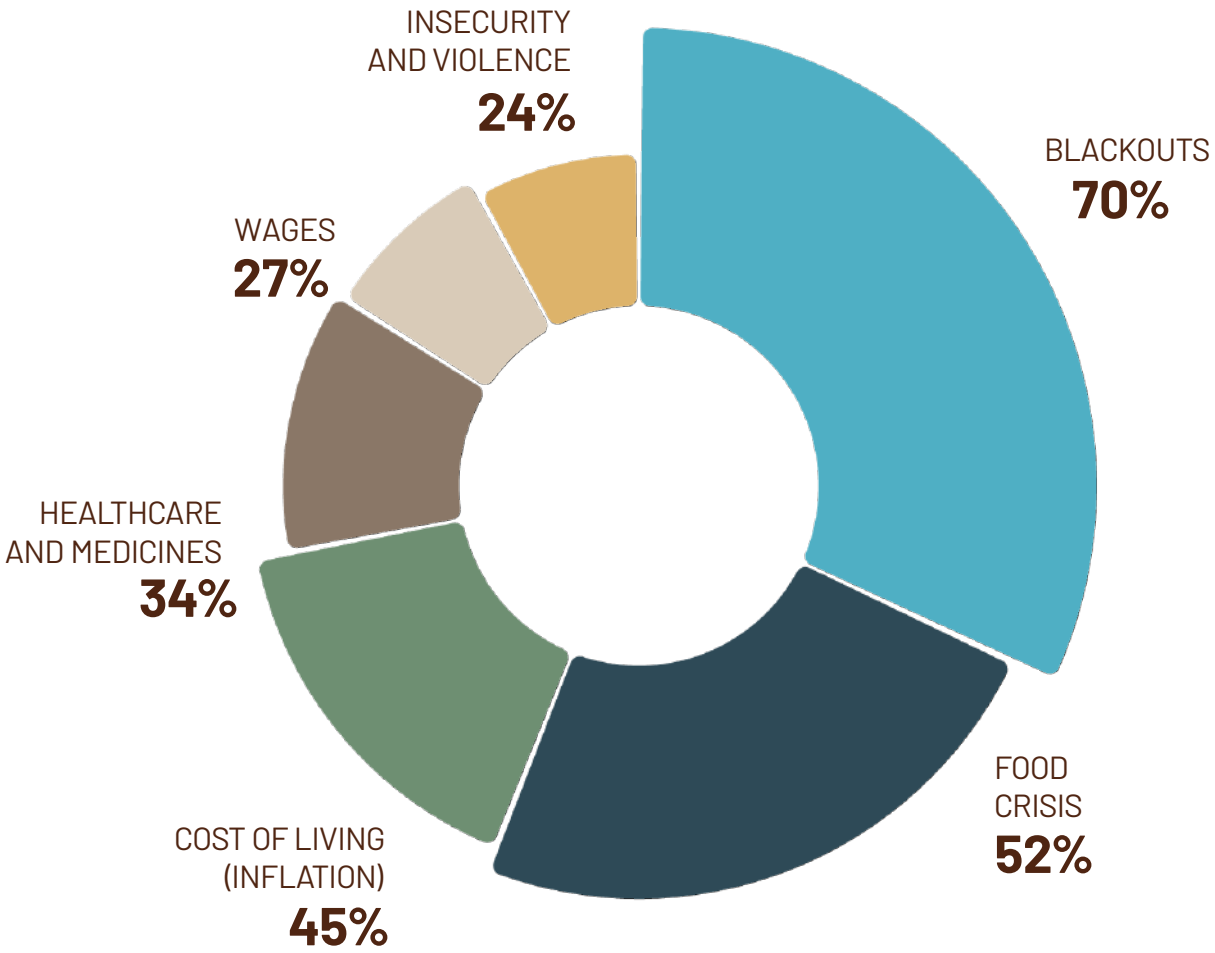
RATING OF SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

	GOOD	FAIR	BAD	DOESN'T KNOW / NO ANSWER
ELECTRICITY	1%	2%	95%	2%
RUBBISH COLLECTION AND LANDFILLS	1%	10%	87%	2%
INTERNET AND TELEPHONY	0%	8%	86%	6%
WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE	1%	13%	84%	2%
HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CENTRES	2%	13%	82%	3%
ROADS	1%	17%	80%	2%
HOMES AND BUILDINGS	1%	23%	74%	2%
MARKETS AND INDUSTRIAL AREAS	4%	27%	64%	5%
SCHOOLS	7%	32%	56%	5%

If we try to assess the infrastructure as a whole, grouping the ratings for each item, 95% consider it to be in fair or bad condition; only 2% consider it good overall.

3.
MAIN PROBLEMS TO BE ADDRESSED

What are the country's main problems that should be addressed over the next 6 months?



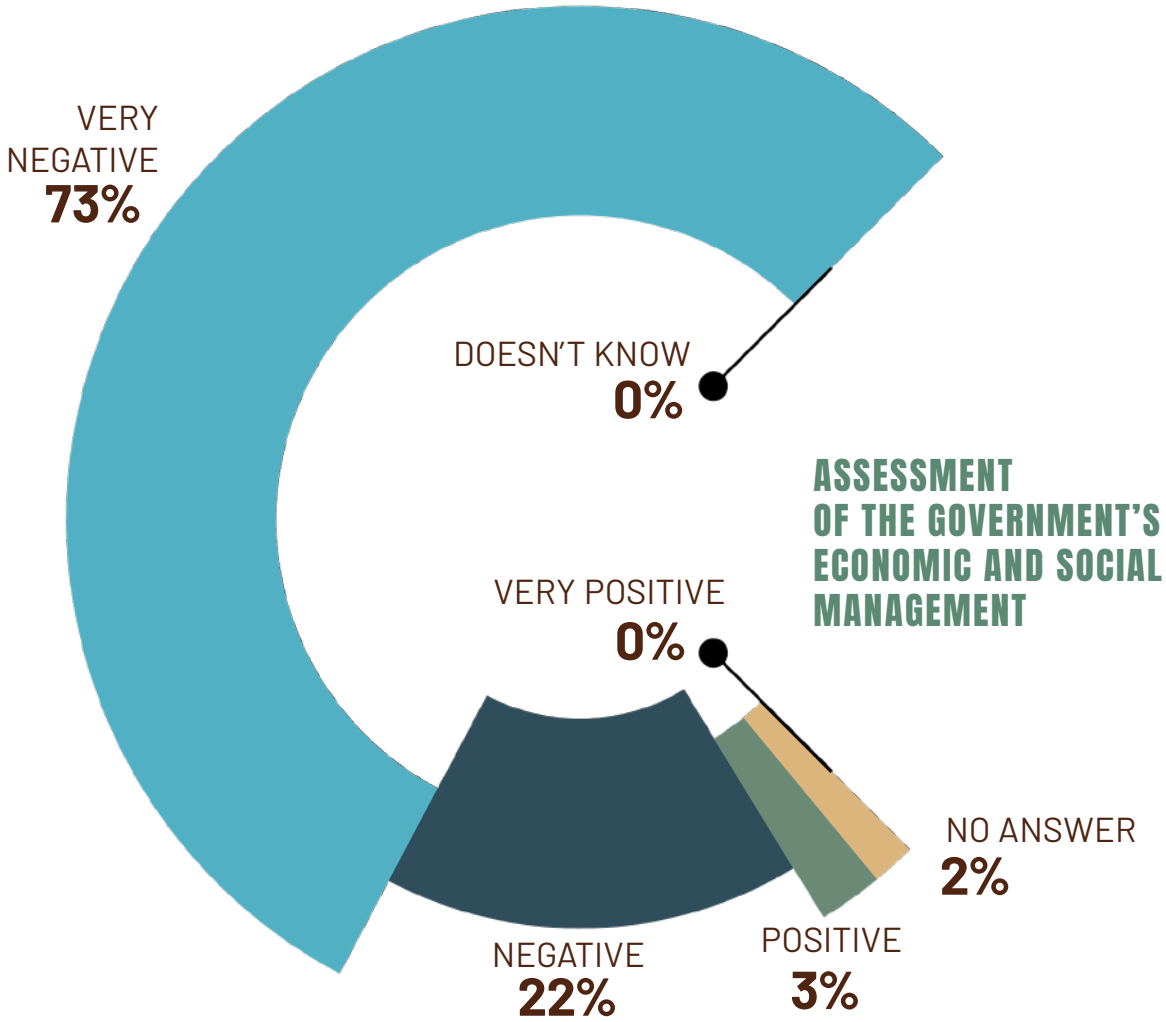
Multiple-response question.
Each person could name up to three problems.

4.
ASSESSMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S MANAGEMENT

The performance of the Miguel Díaz-Canel and Manuel Marrero Cruz duo draws a positive assessment from only 3% of citizens.

The predominance of negative assessments holds evenly across all age groups, ranging between 92% and 96%. Positive opinions do not exceed 2% in any age bracket, confirming how generational the unfavourable verdict is.

95%
of Cubans disapprove of the government's management



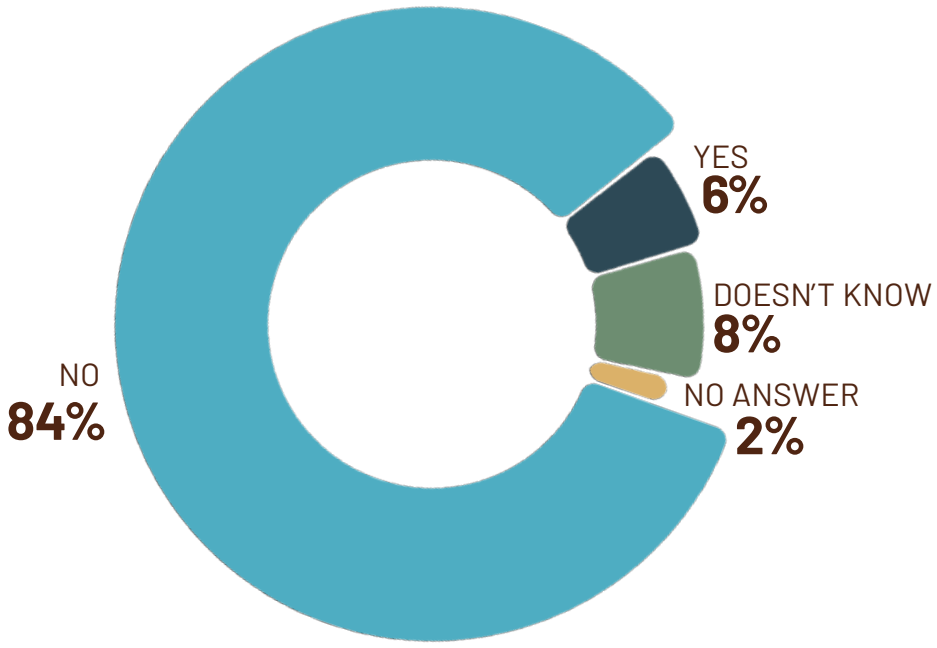
• CONFIDENCE IN ECONOMIC MEASURES

84%

do not believe that the recent economic measures taken by the government will improve the country's situation, against 6% who expect a favourable effect. 7% don't know and 3% give no answer.

Confidence that the announced economic reforms will improve the country's situation is very low

CONFIDENCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC REFORMS WILL IMPROVE THE SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY



Distrust is the majority view in every age bracket; notably, it is highest among people aged 18 to 30 (88%), while the positive response peaks among those aged 61 to 70 (9%). **Among people over 70, uncertainty rises especially.**

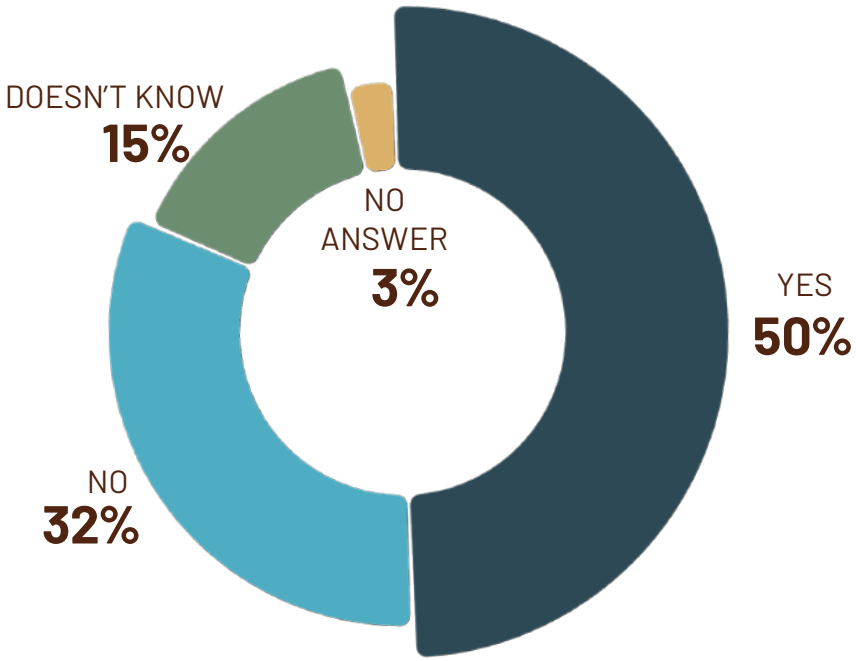
• EXPECTATIONS OF CHANGE

Half of Cubans expect a change favourable to ordinary people over the next six months which, apparently, does not look likely to come from the government's measures.

1 in 3

(32%) are not optimistic about it. 15% don't know and 3% give no answer.

EXPECTATIONS OF FAVOURABLE CHANGE OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS

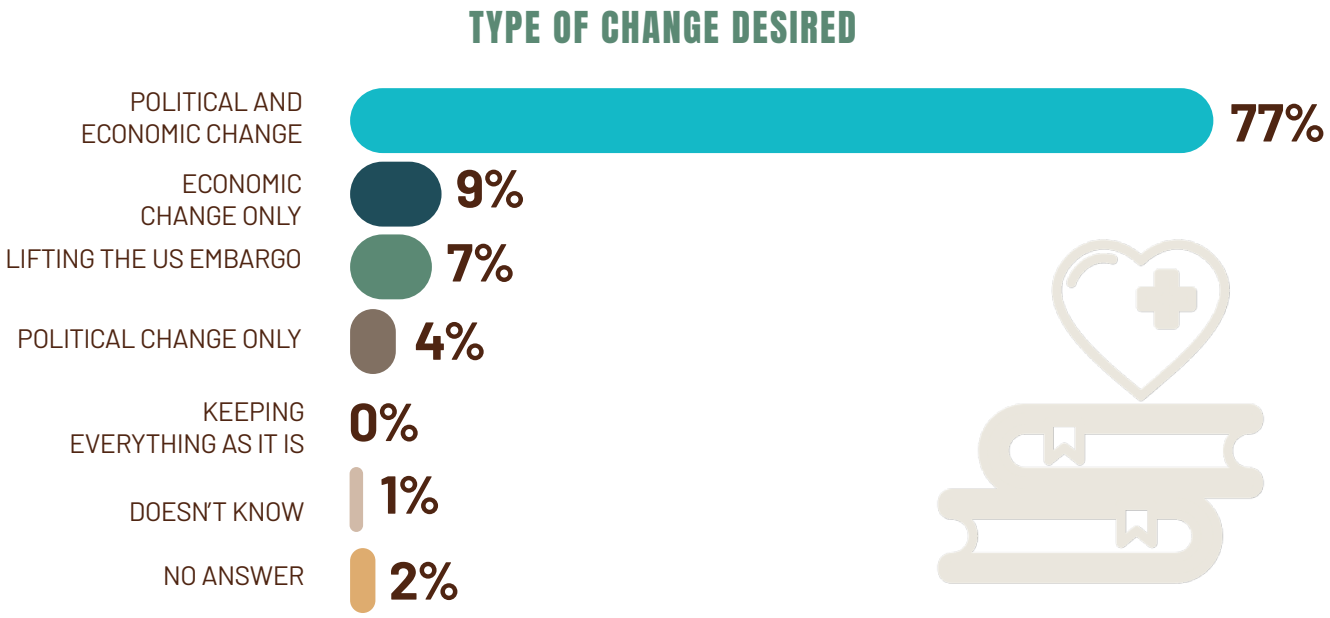


Favourable expectations are higher among people aged 18 to 30 (56%) and 46 to 60 (56%). They fall to 38% among those over 70, the group in which negative responses (40%) and uncertainty (20%) reach their highest levels.

Expectation of favourable change is higher among people identified as mulatto or mixed-race (54%) and white (51%) than among Black people (41%). This last group also has the largest share of those who say they do not know whether any change will happen (21%).

• TYPE OF CHANGE DESIRED

More than three quarters of the sample (77%) want political and economic change



Only 9% lean towards exclusively economic change, 7% call for an end to the US embargo and 4% want change to be political only.

Preference for keeping the current situation is practically nil.

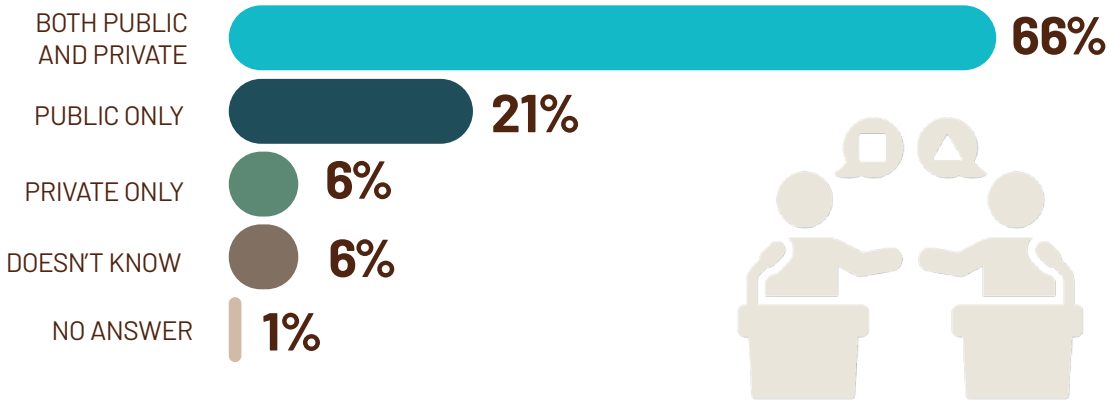
• HEALTH AND EDUCATION

The majority option is a mixed model

21% prefer them to be exclusively public and 6% exclusively private

66% believe education and healthcare should be both public and private

PREFERENCE ON PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROVISION OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH



Preference for that mixed model falls with age: from 78% among people aged 18 to 30 to 53% among those over 70. Conversely, support for exclusively public provision rises from 12% among the youngest to 35% among those over 70.

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