REPORT NO. 2
29 / December / 2020

Monitoring COVID-19 Impact on Households in Zimbabwe

Results from a High-Frequency Telephone Survey of Households

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic created an urgent need for timely information to help monitor and mitigate the social and economic impacts of the crisis. This information is essential to inform policy measures for protecting the welfare of Zimbabweans. Responding to this need, the Zimbabwe Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT), together with the World Bank and UNICEF, designed a high-frequency telephone survey of households to measure the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe. The survey builds on the Poverty, Income, Consumption and Expenditure Surveys (PICES) of 2017 and 2019 and used a sample of 1747 households in round 1 and 1639 households in round 2 from all ten provinces of Zimbabwe. The sample is representative of urban as well as rural areas. This survey is referred to as the Rapid PICES Monitoring Telephone Survey and is jointly funded by the Zimbabwe Reconstruction Fund (ZIMREF) and UNICEF, and implemented by ZIMSTAT with technical support from the World Bank and UNICEF.

This brief report summarizes the results of the second round of the Rapid PICES, conducted from August 24th to September 23rd, 2020, and compares them to the findings of the first round conducted between July 6th and 24th, 2020. Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) was used for data collection. An overview of the findings of the key indicators for both rounds is provided at the end of this note.

HIGHLIGHTS – ROUND 2

! The proportion of people who avoided social gatherings fell by 25 percentage points since the first round. Nevertheless, the vast majority of people continued to practice preventive measures such as wearing a mask in public or washing hands after being in public.

! There was a steep decline in the share of children engaged in distance learning between July and August and September 2020. The decline could have occurred because schools had reopened only for some grades or because some of the interviews were conducted before schools reopened on the 14th of September 2020.

! The proportion of employed urban households rose by 3 percentage points from round 1. However, households continue to report a drop in income. About two-thirds of non-farm business owners and 31% of wage earners had a lower income since the July interview.

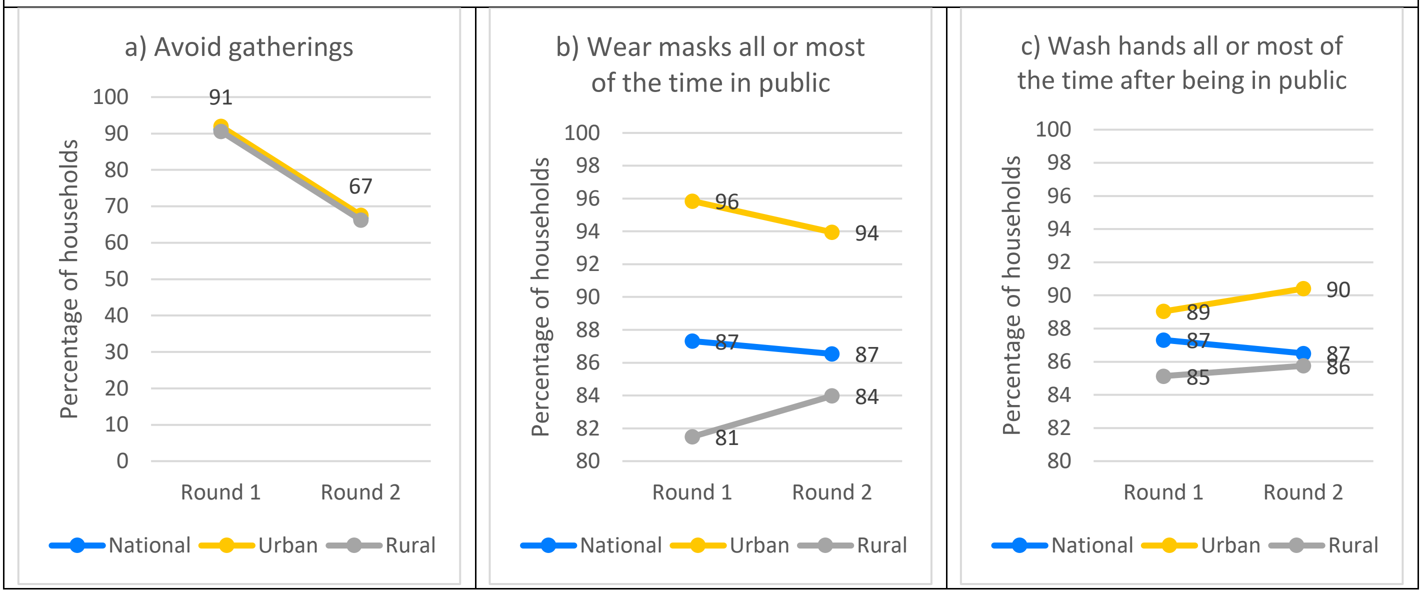
! Further analysis of data from Round 1 using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale revealed that food insecurity in the country had worsened since 2019. About 31 percent of rural and 18 percent of urban households faced severe food insecurity, while 75 percent of rural households and 65 percent of urban households faced moderate food insecurity in July.

! The coverage of COVID-19 cash transfer increased in the second round in urban areas compared to July 2020. Additionally, a significantly smaller proportion of households in rural areas reported that they had received free food in August-September compared to July.

KNOWLEDGE AND BEHAVIOR IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

To stop the spread of COVID-19, people must adopt preventive health measures. Results from the second survey round revealed that the proportion of people that avoided social gatherings dropped to 67 percent, down from 91 percent in July 2020. This decline was seen in both urban and rural areas (Figure 1a). The proportion of respondents wearing a mask in public remained largely unchanged, with about 94 percent wearing them in urban areas and 81 percent in rural areas (Figure 1b). The proportion of people that washed their hands after being in public also remained unchanged constituting 85 percent in rural areas and 89 percent in urban areas (Figure 1c).

Figure 1: Proportion of respondents who employed Covid-19 preventive measures



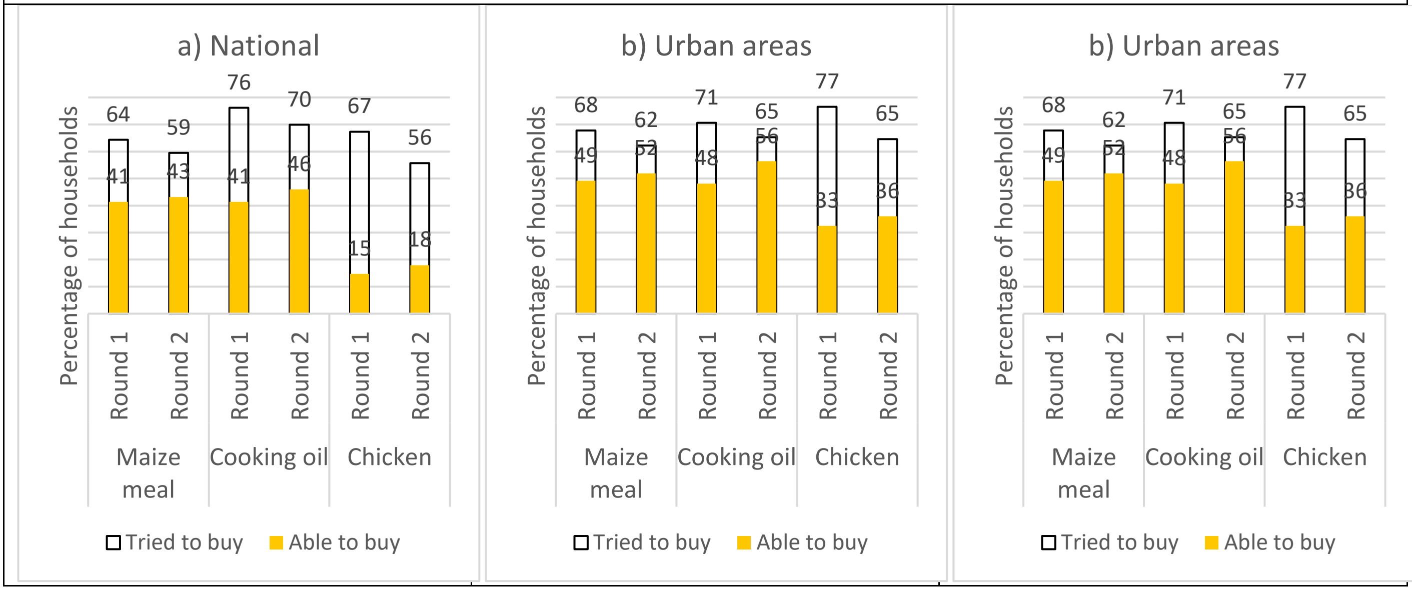
ACCESS TO BASIC FOOD NECESSITIES

The share of households that was able to buy basic food items increased slightly between rounds 1 and 2. The proportion of households that was able to buy maize meal rose from 41 to 43 percent, that for cooking oil rose from 41 to 46 percent, while that for chicken rose from 15 to 18 percent (coloured bars Figure 2a).[1] However, a *smaller* share of households tried to buy these basic goods in the second round compared to the first round. The share trying to buy maize meal fell from 64 to 59 percent, cooking oil from 76 to 70 percent, and chicken from 67 to 56 percent (full bars Figure 2a).

As expected, in both rounds, the proportion of households able to buy basic food items was significantly higher in urban than rural areas (Figure 2b and Figure 2c).

[1] Only the difference in cooking oil was statistically significant at 5 percent level of significance.

Figure 2: Access to basic food necessities (Percentage of households that attempted to buy basic items and that was able to buy them)



ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Of households that needed medical treatment, a slightly higher fraction was able to access treatment (86 percent in the second round in August-September 2020 vs. 79 percent in the first survey round in July 2020). Lack of money was the main reason for not being able to access medical treatment. It was mentioned by 91 percent of those households unable to access treatment.

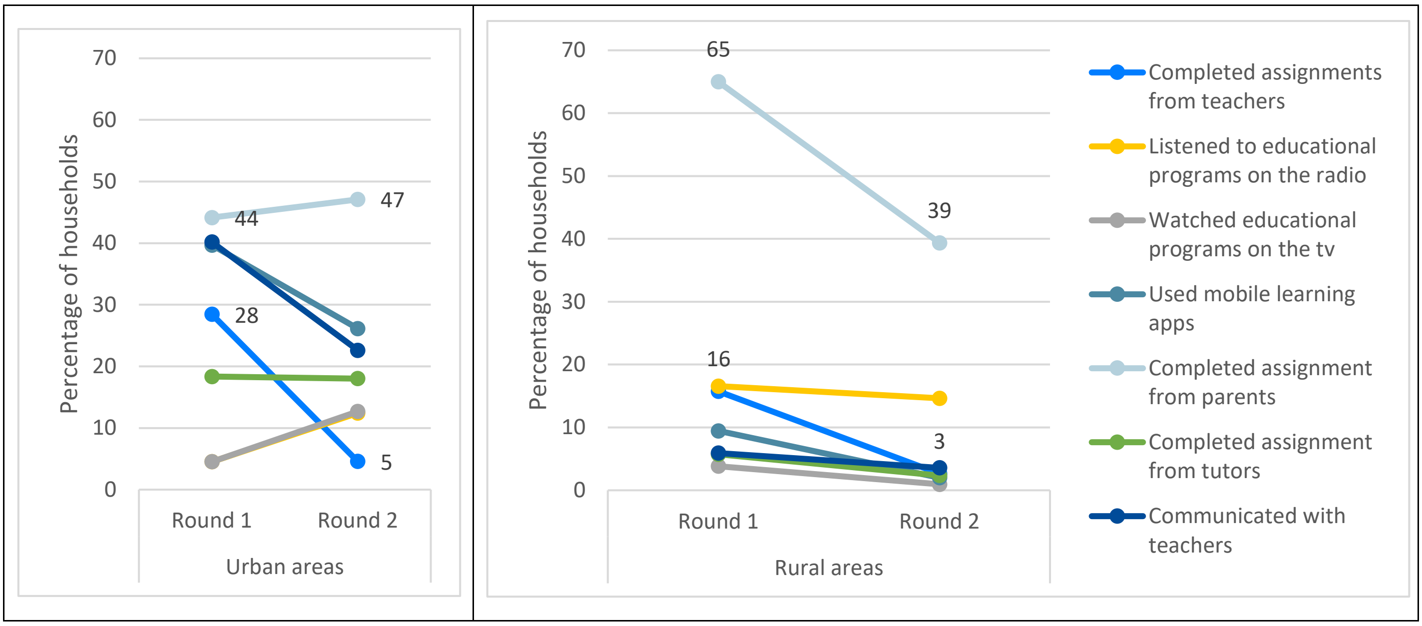
ACCESS TO SCHOOLS AND LEARNING

Re-opening of schools since the lockdown in March 2020 happened in phases. Schools were opened from 14 September 2020 for examination writing classes namely, grade 7, form 4, and form 6. Primary and secondary schools were reopened six months after they were closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Universities were also opened for students writing end-of-semester examinations.

Differences in the practice of remote learning were observed between the period end August-September and July 2020. Consequently, the proportion of households with children completing assignments from parents dropped from 65 to 39 percent in rural areas, while increasing moderately from 44 to 47 percent in urban areas. The decline in the proportion of households with children who completed assignments from school teachers was particularly steep. The proportion of households with children completing assignments from teachers fell from 28 to 5 percent in urban areas and 16 to 3 percent in rural areas (

Figure 3). The decline could have occurred because schools had reopened only for some grades, or because the interviews for some households were conducted before schools reopened, so some children were not actively engaging in remote learning during the second round of the survey.

Figure 3: Percentage of households with school children who engaged in an educational activity during the school lockdown period (% of those that continued learning)



MIGRATION

Since mid-March 2020, 3 percent of households had moved from one location to another. Of households that moved, most of them (62 percent) moved from one urban area to another urban area and 26 percent moved from one rural area to another rural area. Only 12 percent migrated from urban areas to rural areas while no household moved from rural to urban areas. This means that the Covid-19 lockdown had an impact on migration trends.

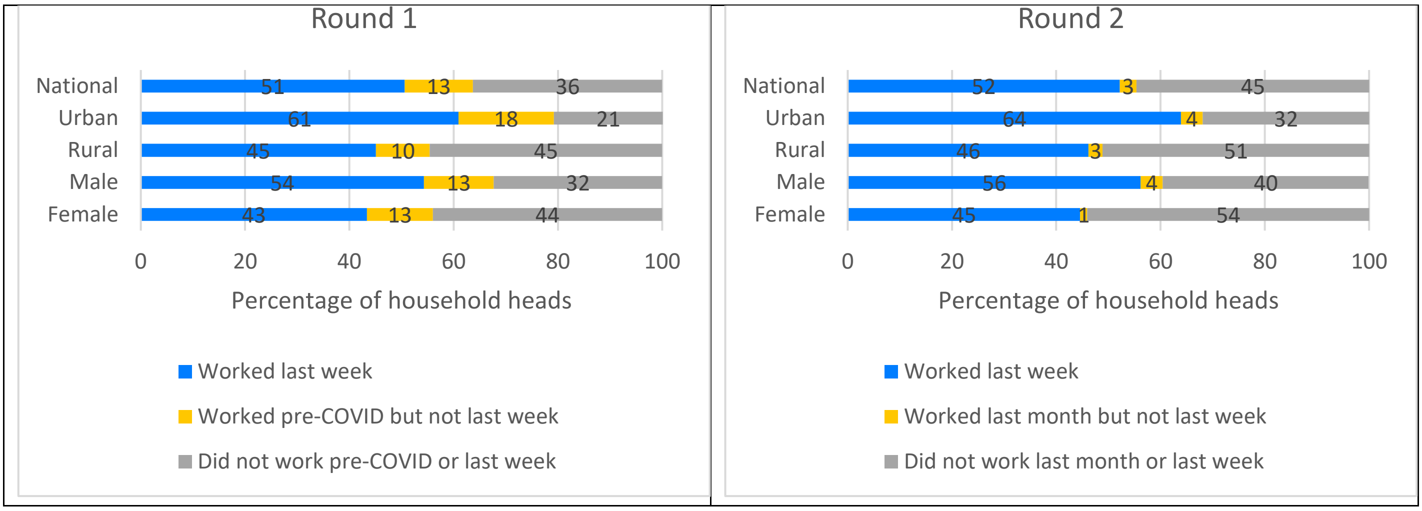
EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

The share of respondents with a job rose marginally from 51 to 52 percent between the first and the second survey rounds (Figure 4).[2] In urban areas, the employment rate increased from 61 to 64 percent compared to rural areas where it marginally went up from 45 to 46 percent.[3] The employment rate of male workers rose from 54 in round 1 to 56 percent in round 2 while that for female workers rose from 43 to 45 percent in the same period respectively (Figure 4).

[2] Having a job is defined as doing any work for pay, operating any kind of business, farming, or engaging in other activity to generate income, even if only for one hour in the last week.

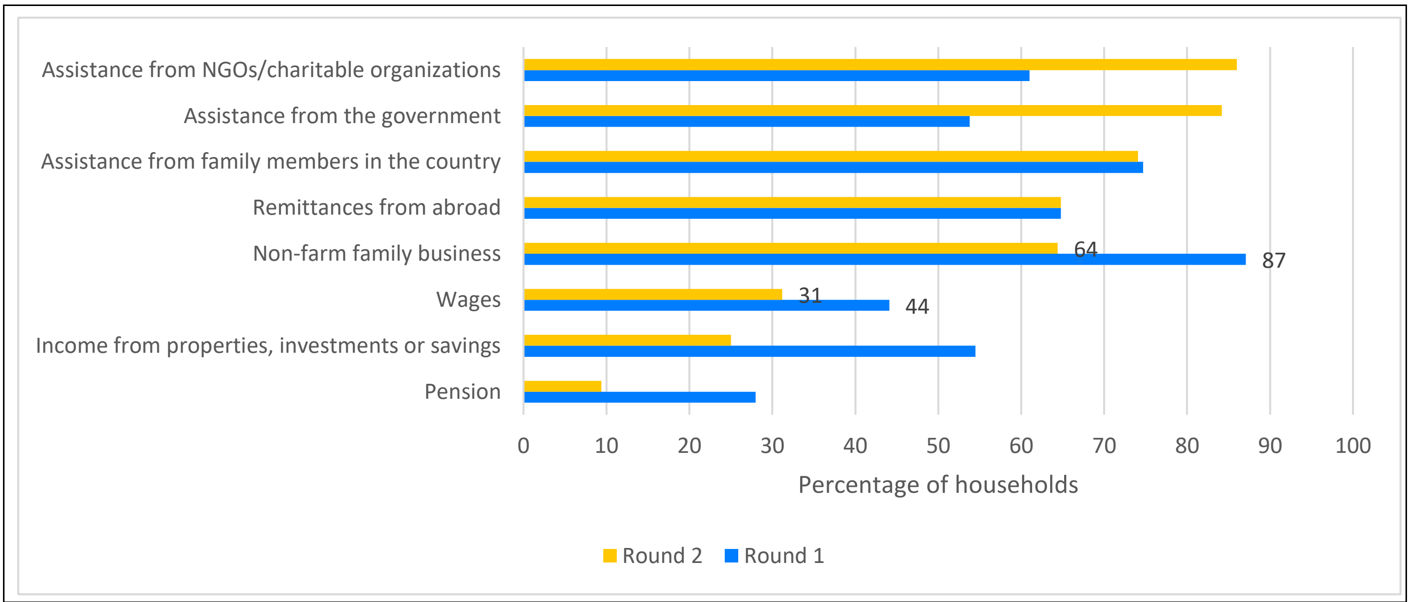
[3] However, these differences are not statistically significant at 5 percent level of significance and should thus be interpreted with caution.

Figure 4: Employment status during the first and second survey rounds



Households reported a further reduction in income from wages and non-farm businesses since the Round 1 interviews, although the proportion reporting this was smaller than when this question was asked in round 1 (Figure 5). Among those with a non-farm household business, almost two-thirds stated their incomes dropped since the last interview, and incomes also dropped for 31 % of wage earners. The drop in income partly reflects a fall in purchasing power due to the depreciation of the Zimbabwe dollar in which most incomes are received. At the same time, the proportion reporting a reduction in assistance from Government or NGOs and charitable organizations increased since the last survey round (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Proportion of households saying their income was reduced or stopped since last interview (asked in round 2) and since the onset of covid19 (asked in round 1) (as a percentage of households reporting this kind of income) (for round 1 and 2)



Note 1: Respondents were asked about the change in household income "since March 2020" in the first round of the survey and "since the last interview" in the second round.

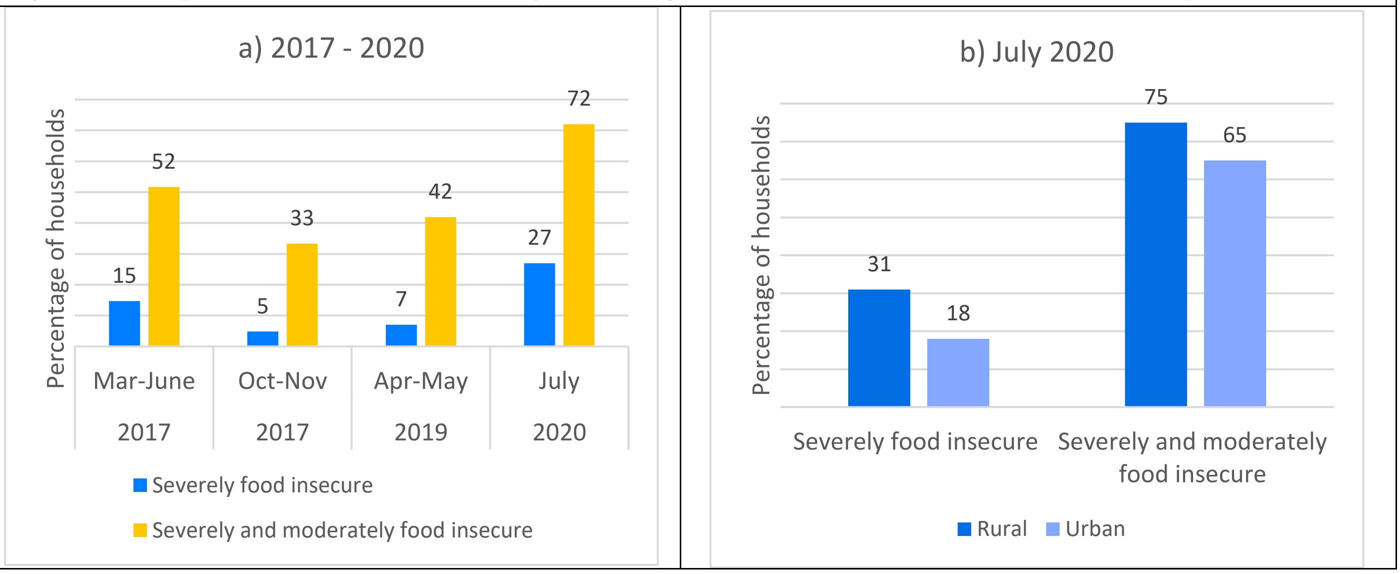
Note 2: In round 2, the proportion of households stating they received income in the last 12 months from each source is as follows: non-farm family business 17 percent; wages 28 percent; remittances from abroad 12 percent; assistance from the family within the country 16 percent; income from properties, investments, or savings 4 percent; pension 6 percent; assistance from the government 15 percent; assistance from NGOs/charitable organizations 10 percent.

The share of wage workers among the employed fell from 42 to 38 percent between the two survey rounds, and the share of respondents operating their own business or working in a household farm increased (see Annex 2 at end of the report). A substantially higher proportion of wage earners reported receiving their wages for work done in the week before the survey. This share was 92 percent in round 2 compared to 64 percent in the first round (Annex 2).

FOOD SECURITY

According to Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Further analysis of the data from Round 1 using the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) shows that the proportion of households facing severe food insecurity has risen over the past years. It was 27 percent in July 2020, up from 7 percent in April-May 2019. Likewise, the proportion of households facing moderate insecurity increased from 42 to 72 percent during this period (Figure 6a). Rural households were more food insecure than urban households for both food security measures (Figure 6b). The FIES module comprises 8 questions on people's access to adequate food. More details on the methodology are presented in Annex 1.

Figure 6: Proportion of households experiencing severe and moderate food insecurity

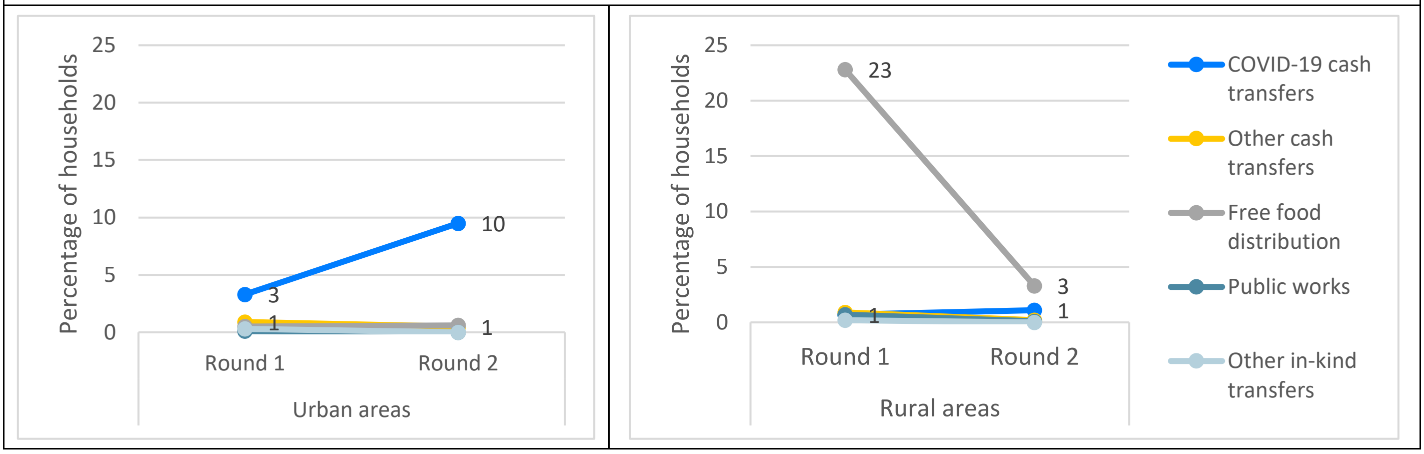


ASSISTANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT

The proportion of households receiving COVID-19 cash transfers increased between survey rounds 1 and 2. In urban areas, the proportion that received COVID-19 cash transfers rose from 3 to 10 percent in rounds 1 and 2 respectively. Only 1 percent of rural households received them (Figure 7).

The proportion of households that received food aid dropped to 2 percent in the second round from 15 percent in the first round (Figure 7). This was caused by a large reduction in the share of *rural* households receiving food aid which fell from 23 to 3 percent. Only one percent of *urban* households received food aid in both survey rounds.

Figure 7: Coverage of safety net programs (proportion of households receiving assistance)



UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

The third round of the telephone survey was implemented from the 1st of December 2020. The questionnaire was adapted to better understand the pattern of school attendance and dropout and access to the Pfumvudza agricultural support program. Stakeholders are welcome to suggest themes to be investigated in future rounds.

Annex

Annex 1: Methodology for calculating the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)

The FIES (Food Insecurity Experience Scale) is a metric of severity of food insecurity at the household or individual level. The fundamental assumption behind the FIES and similar food security scales is that the severity of the food insecurity condition of a household or an individual can be analyzed as a latent trait.

The FIES Survey Module is composed of eight questions with simple dichotomous responses (“yes”/”no”). Respondents are asked whether anytime during a certain reference period they have worried about their ability to obtain enough food, their household has run out of food, or if they have been forced to compromise the quality or quantity of the food they ate due to limited availability of money or other resources to obtain food.

The analysis of FIES data involves the following steps:

- **Parameter estimation**: The severity of food insecurity associated with each survey item and each respondent was calculated.

- **Statistical validation:** The assessment of whether, depending on the quality of the data collected, the measure is valid, i.e. is reliable enough for the intended policy and research uses.

- **Calculation of measures of food insecurity**:
  - Individual probabilities: For each sampled individual or household (each case in the data), the probability of the individual/household experiencing food insecurity above a given level of severity is calculated, based on their responses to the FIES items.
  - Population prevalence estimates: The probabilities are used to estimate the prevalence of food insecurity at moderate and severe levels in the population.

Annex 2: Table of indicators (Percent of households or individuals)

Indicator	Round 1					Round 2				
	National	Urban	Rural	Male head	Female Head	National	Urban	Rural	Male head	Female head
Knowledge										
Satisfied with the government's response to the coronavirus	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	86	80	89	85	87
Behavior										
Avoided groups of 10 or more people	91	92	91	90	93	67	68	66	66	69
Wears mask most or all the time in public	87	96	81	86	88	87	94	84	86	90
Washed hand most or all the time after being in public	87	89	85	87	86	87	90	86	88	87
Access to basic food necessities										
Tried to buy maize meal	64	68	62	65	64	59	62	58	59	60
Tried to buy cooking oil	76	71	79	78	72	70	65	72	72	67
Tried to buy chicken	67	77	62	69	63	56	65	51	55	57
Able to buy maize meal (of those who tried to buy)	64	72	59	70	52	69	83	61	73	62
Able to buy cooking oil (of those who tried to buy)	53	68	46	58	44	63	86	53	67	55
Able to buy chicken (of those who tried to buy)	24	42	11	26	18	33	56	18	37	25
Access to health										
Able to buy medicine (of those who needed to buy medicine)	75	75	74	75	74	76	83	71	78	71
Able to access medical treatment (of those who needed medical treatment)	79	77	81	77	83	86	83	87	88	81
Access to education (of those with a school-age child)										
Completed assignments from teachers	23	28	16	22	25	3	5	3	4	3
Listened to educational radio programs	10	5	17	11	8	14	12	15	16	10
Watched educational tv programs	4	5	4	5	2	4	13	1	5	3
Used mobile learning applications	26	40	9	25	28	9	26	2	8	12

Indicator	Round 1					Round 2				
	National	Urban	Rural	Male head	Female Head	National	Urban	Rural	Male head	Female head
Other	2	1	4	3	0	36	14	45	32	43
Completed assignment from parents	53	44	65	55	50	42	47	39	45	36
Completed assignment from tutors	13	18	6	14	10	7	18	2	8	6
Access to housing										
Moved since mid-March						3	6	2	4	3
Can afford next month's rent (of those renting)	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	65	66	42	66	61
Employment										
Currently working	51	61	45	54	43	52	64	46	56	45
Stopped working since pre-COVID (round 1)/ since the month preceding the interview (round 2)	13	18	10	13	13	3	4	3	4	1
Not currently working and did not work pre-Covid (round 1)/Not currently working and did not work in the month preceding the interview (round 2)	36	21	45	32	44	45	32	51	40	54
Operated a non-farm business (of those who worked)	26	41	17	26	25	29	43	20	29	28
Worked on household farm (of those who worked)	32	1	50	29	42	34	7	49	30	45
Worked for a wage (of those who worked)	42	58	33	46	33	38	50	31	41	28
Wage employment (of those who worked for a wage)										
Able to work as usual	85	81	90	89	74	88	86	90	86	93
Received full wage	64	60	73	67	61	92	92	92	89	100
Received partial wage	30	40	8	25	36	7	8	6	9	0
Received no wage	6	0	19	8	3	1	1	3	2	0
Weekly hours of work	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	44	38	49	44	43
Non-farm business (of those operating a non-farm business)										

Indicator	Round 1					Round 2				
	National	Urban	Rural	Male head	Female Head	National	Urban	Rural	Male head	Female head
Household business open	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	84	81	88	83	85
Household business temporarily closed	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	16	18	12	17	15
Household business permanently closed	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	0	0	0	0	0
Revenue from business sales higher	6	8	2	5	7	9	13	1	2	22
Revenue from business sales the same	6	5	8	7	3	34	37	27	35	31
Revenue from business sales lower	60	65	52	66	49	55	48	68	60	45
No revenue from business sales	28	23	38	22	41	3	2	4	3	2
Agriculture										
Worked on the household farm	55	14	77	54	57	51	7	74	53	48
Could perform normal farm/harvest activities (of households that worked on household farm)	84	69	86	84	84	93	91	93	93	92
Able to sell farm products (of households that had a product to sell)	40	60	37	41	38	72	92	70	75	59
Income source (of households deriving income in the last 12 months from this source)										
Non-farm family business	19	30	14	20	18	17	34	8	18	15
Wages	31	49	22	34	25	28	45	20	31	23
Remittances from abroad	16	28	9	11	25	11	21	7	8	18
Assistance from family within the country	19	20	18	14	28	16	15	16	12	24
Income from properties, investments, or savings	3	9	1	2	7	4	8	1	4	4
Pension	8	16	3	6	12	6	15	2	5	9
Assistance from the government	18	3	25	15	22	15	3	21	14	17
Assistance from NGOs/charitable organizations	12	2	17	11	13	10	9	12	9	12
Income source (of households with income from this source reporting decreased or no income since the										

Indicator	Round 1					Round 2				
	National	Urban	Rural	Male head	Female Head	National	Urban	Rural	Male head	Female head
previous survey (for round 2) or since the onset of Covid19 (for Round 2)										
Non-farm household business	87	90	84	86	89	64	60	74	67	58
Wages	44	41	48	44	45	31	32	31	33	27
Remittances from abroad	65	57	79	70	60	65	55	80	71	60
Assistance from family members in the country	75	64	81	77	72	74	49	86	88	62
Pension	28	27	30	14	42	9	5	26	9	10
Assistance from the government	54	50	54	57	49	84	93	83	83	86
Assistance from NGOs/charitable organizations	61	49	62	59	65	86	47	88	88	83
Income from properties, investments or savings	54	54	63	37	64	25	18	54	28	19
Concerns										
Coronavirus poses substantial or moderate threat to household finances	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	92	91	93	92	93
Shocks since the previous survey (for round 2) or since the onset of Covid19 (for Round 2) (of households)										
Job Loss	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	6	11	3	6	5
Nonfarm business closure	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	4	7	3	3	5
Theft/looting of cash and other property	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	3	2	3	2	4
Disruption of farming, livestock, fishing activities	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	4	0	5	3	5
Increase in price of farming/business inputs	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	24	8	33	25	23
Fall in the price of farming/business output	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	7	3	8	7	6
Lack of availability of farming/business inputs	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	8	5	9	8	7
Reduction of farming/business output	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	7	5	8	7	7

Indicator	Round 1					Round 2				
	National	Urban	Rural	Male head	Female Head	National	Urban	Rural	Male head	Female head
Increase in price of major food items consumed	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	66	51	75	67	67
Illness, injury, or death of an income-earning member of the household	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	6	6	6	6	7
Other	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	0	0	1	0	0
Natural disasters	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	1	0	1	1	1
War and conflict	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	0	0	0	0	0
Food security (of households)										
Severely insecure	27	31	18	Na	Na	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Severely or moderately insecure	72	75	65	Na	Na	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
Safety nets (of households)										
Received COVID-19 cash transfers	2	3	1	2	1	4	10	1	3	6
Received other cash transfers	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Received food assistance	15	1	23	14	18	2	1	3	2	3
Participated in a public works program	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Received other in-kind transfers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

N/a: Indicator not available in the round.

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