



BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has socio-economic impacts on Malawians and there is need for timely data to monitor these impacts and support response efforts to the pandemic. In May 2020, the National Statistical Office (NSO), with support from the World Bank, launched the HFPS COVID-19; a monthly survey of a nationally representative sample of households previously interviewed as part of the Malawi Integrated Household Panel Survey to monitor the economic impact of the pandemic and other shocks. This brief presents the findings from the sixth round of the Malawi High-Frequency Phone Survey on COVID-19 (HFPS COVID-19) conducted between December 10 and December 24, 2020.

KNOWLEDGE, BEHAVIOR AND CONCERNS OF COVID-19 TRANSMISSION

In December, about 79 percent of the respondents were **very worried** or **somewhat worried** about themselves or any member of the family becoming ill from COVID-19 which is a slight increase by 2% points compared to November. About 86% consider the crisis as a **substantial or moderate threat** to their **household's finance** which represents a drop in comparison to the previous survey rounds.

The level of worry regarding either becoming seriously ill or having household finances affected has been much lower in the last three rounds than it was when the survey was first rolled out in May.

Figure 1. Degree of worry about self/immediate family becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 (% of respondents)

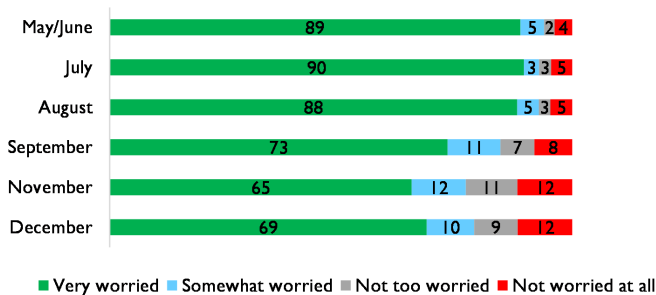
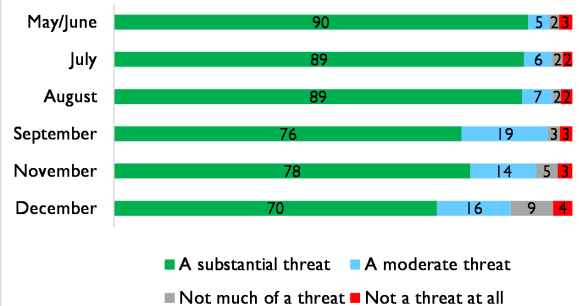


Figure 2. Degree of perception of threat to household finances caused by COVID-19 (% of respondents)



There was a significant increase in the share of respondents wearing masks in public at all times between July (19 percent) and August (56 percent). However, over the last few months there is evidence that people have not been as diligent in wearing their masks whenever they are in public. In September, 47% of respondents reported that they wore a mask

whenever they were in public. This reduced to 27% and 24% respectively in November and December.

In December, 29 percent of the respondents reported to have always washed their hands after being in public. This was a drop from 31 percent in November.

Figure 3. Prevalence of Wearing a Mask Last 7 Days (% of respondents)

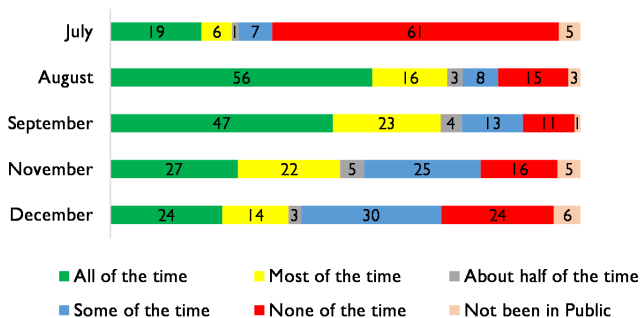
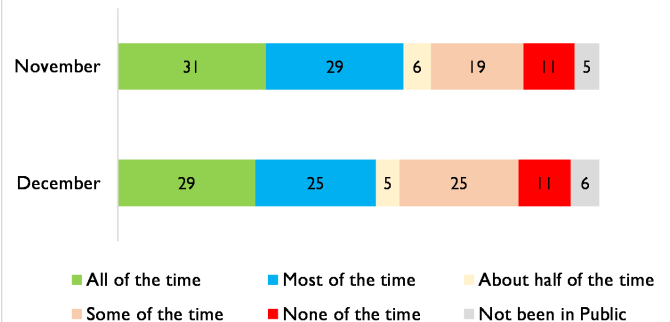


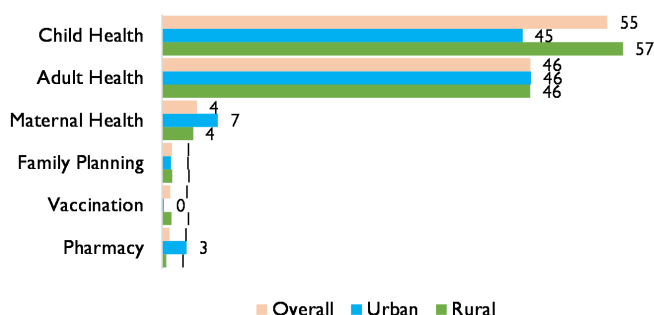
Figure 4. Hand Washing with Soap after being in Public (% of respondents)





ACCESS TO SERVICES

Figure 5. Health Services (% of Respondents that Needed Health Services)



In December, 40% of households needed to access medical services, and 5% of those that needed these services could not access them—mainly due to lack of funds. Of the services sought by the respondents, child health services was the most prevalent (55%), followed by adult health services (46%)

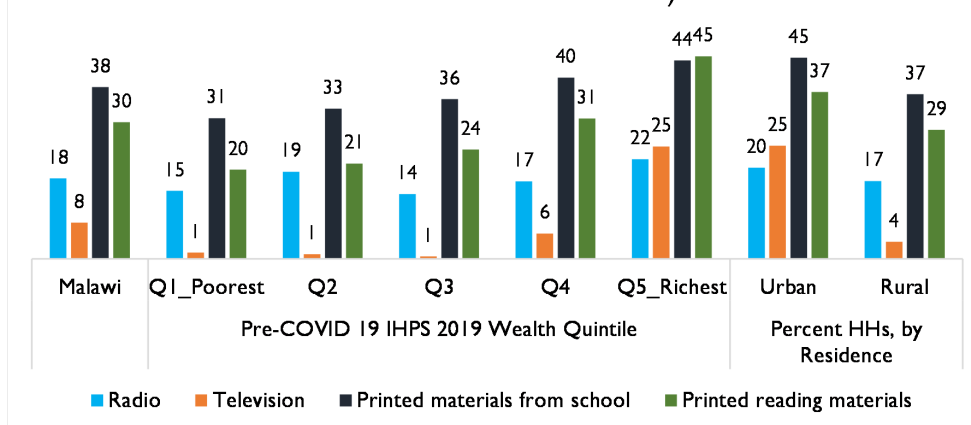
The Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP) was introduced in Malawi to alleviate poverty and ensure food security for Malawians. In December, Respondents were asked if they registered for the AIP and 53 percent of the households reported to have registered for the program. The share of households that registered for the program but did not purchase inputs were slightly higher in urban areas (39%) than in rural areas (34%).

EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The first years of a child's life are very important for all future development in all aspects of life. Many children in Malawi face challenges in their formative years possibly due to their primary caregivers not having proper knowledge on how to nurture child development. In December, the survey asked households with children aged 2 to 10 years several questions relating to early child development for a randomly selected child; such as ownership of selected household items, engagement with educational content, support to children at home, child behavior and types of child discipline used at home.

The share of households whose children engaged with educational content is lower among poor households than rich households. With the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic preventive measures like closure of schools; these findings could suggest that many children are not receiving the necessary attention they need to foster their proper development.

Figure 6. Engagement with Educational Content (% of Respondents with a child between 2-10 Years)

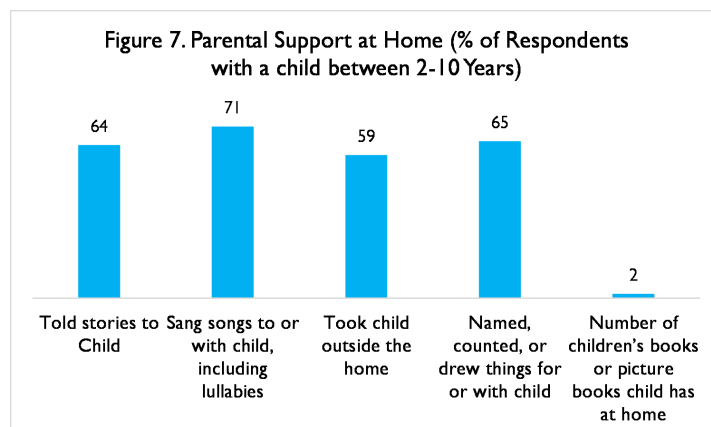


- ◆ 21% respondents believe that in order to bring up, raise, or educate a child properly, the child needs to be physically punished. The incidence among urban households was higher (25%) than in rural households (20%).
- ◆ 22% reported that the selected child was defiant more than usual. The incidence among urban households was higher (27%) than in rural households (21%).
- ◆ 20% reported that the child was withdrawn or very quiet more than usual.





- ◆ 31% reported that the child spoke less well than they used to.
- ◆ Overall, bad behavior portrayed by children is higher amongst poor households than richer households.
- ◆ Caregivers were fairly involved in supporting their children; 64% told stories to the child, 71% sang songs to the child, 59% took stories to the child, 65% sang songs to the child, 2% told stories to the child.

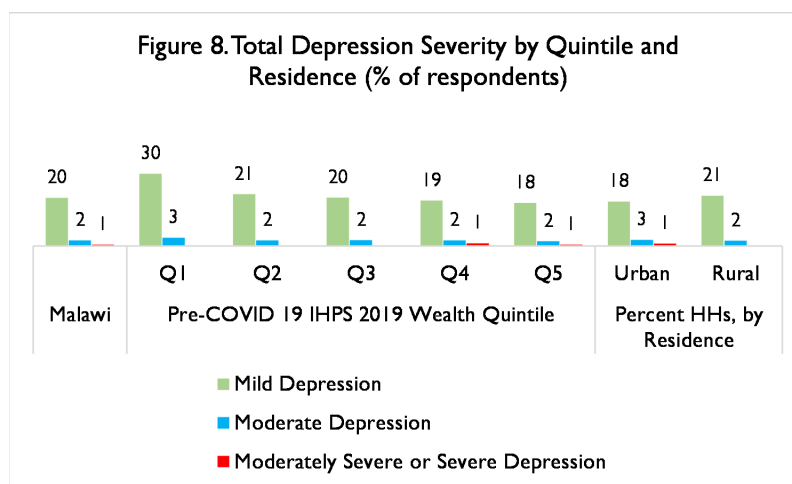


MENTAL HEALTH

Around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the well being of people. There have been some interventions to curb the spread of the pandemic and while they are necessary, actions such as social distancing, closure of schools among other measures have made people feel isolated, some have had their sources of income affected which can lead to increase in stress and potentially depression. In December, the survey fielded the Patient Health Questionnaire - a widely validated 8-question scale for depression diagnosis, classifying respondents into following

categories: Not depressed; mildly depressed; moderately depressed; moderately severe depressed; and severely depressed.

23% of respondents experienced varying levels of depression over the last two weeks from the interview date. Overall, depression is higher amongst the poorer households (33%) than richer households (20%).



Data Notes: Malawi High-Frequency Phone Survey COVID-19 (HFPS COVID-19) is implemented by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on a monthly basis during the period of May 2020 and June 2021. The survey is part of a World Bank-supported global effort to support countries in their data collection efforts to monitor the impacts of COVID-19. The financing for data collection and technical assistance in support of the Malawi HFPS COVID-19 is provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank. The technical assistance to the Malawi HFPS COVID-19 is provided by a World Bank team composed of staff from the Development Data Group—Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) program and the Poverty and Equity Global Practice. In Round 1, 2,337 households that had been previously interviewed during the 2019 round of the Integrated Household Panel Survey (IHPS) were contacted, and 1,729 households were successfully interviewed, with the goal of re-interviewing them in the subsequent monthly HFPS COVID-19 rounds. 1,646 of these households were successfully interviewed in Round 2, 1,624 in Round 3, 1,618 in Round 4, 1,589 in Round 5 and 1,592 in Round 6. The 2019 IHPS data are representative at the national- and urban/rural-levels and phone survey weights were calculated (i) to counteract selection bias associated with not being able to call IHPS households without phone numbers, and (ii) to mitigate against non-response bias associated with not being able to interview all target IHPS households with phone numbers. For further details on the data, please visit <https://www.worldbank.org/lsmc-covid19> and email enquiries@statistics.gov.mw.