COVID-19 IMPACT MONITORING

ROUND 7

MAR 2021

MALAWI

BACKGROUND

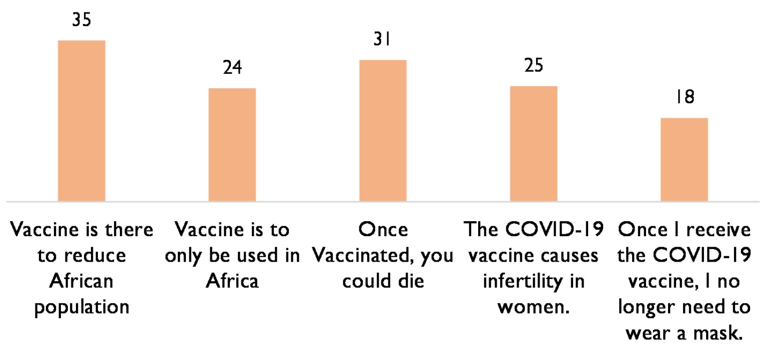
The COVID-19 pandemic has socio-economic impacts on Malawians and there is need for timely data to monitor these impacts and support response efforts to the pandemic. In May 2020, the National Statistical Office (NSO), with support from the World Bank, launched the HFPS COVID-19; a monthly survey of 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 seventh round of the Malawi High-Frequency Phone Survey on COVID-19 (HFPS COVID-19) conducted between January 20 and February 6, 2021.

PERCEPTIONS OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE

In Round 7 (January/February), the survey asked respondents if they had heard about the COVID-19 vaccine and 85% of respondents indicated that they had heard about it.

The respondents that reported having heard about the COVID-19 vaccine were further asked questions surrounding the misconceptions associated with the vaccine and of these; 53% reported at least one false belief about the COVID-19 vaccine and this was consistent across urban and rural areas. 35% reported that the vaccine was developed to reduce the African population and 31% believe that once vaccinated, one would die.

Figure 1. Respondent Misconceptions about the COVID-19 Vaccine (% of Respondents who have heard about the Vaccine)



The survey also asked the respondents about their perceptions of the spread of COVID-19 regardless of if a test was done or not. Around 13% of respondents indicated that they knew a friend or relative or neighbour who had been infected with COVID-19. 12% of respondents indicated that they have or have had COVID-19 regardless of having done a test or not.

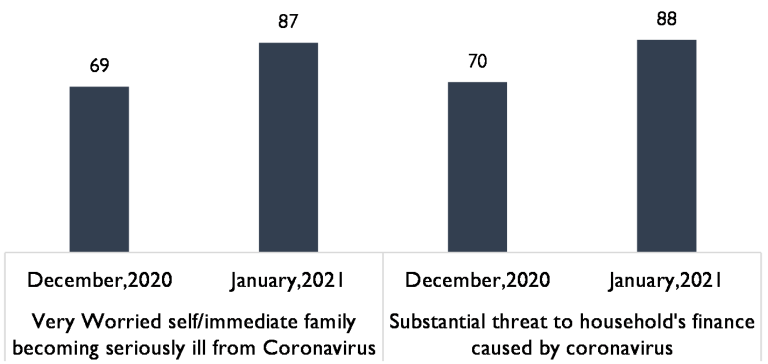
BEHAVIOR AND CONCERNS OF COVID-19 TRANSMISSION

Overtime, the behavioral trends suggest that Malawians are increasingly adopting the set guidelines to fight COVID-19 and this could be attributed to the increasing levels of worry about the dangers of COVID-19.

Between December 2020 and January 2021, there was an increase in the proportion of respondents who felt threatened by COVID-19 in relation to either them or relatives falling seriously ill due to COVID-19; 69% to 87% respectively.

The respondents who felt the pandemic would substantially affect household finances increased from 70% to 80% in December 2020 and January 2021 respectively.

Figure 2. Perception of threat to self/immediate family becoming ill and threat to household finances caused by COVID-19 (% of respondents)



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The proportion of individuals that avoided handshakes/physical greetings increased from 64% in November 2020 to 84% in January 2021 while the proportion of respondents that avoided groups of more than 10 people increased from 51% in November 2020 to 66% in January 2021.

There was an increase in number of respondents that frequently wash hands with soap from 26% in December 2020 to 67% in January 2021.

Figure 3. Prevalence of Safe Practices Across Survey Rounds (% of respondents)

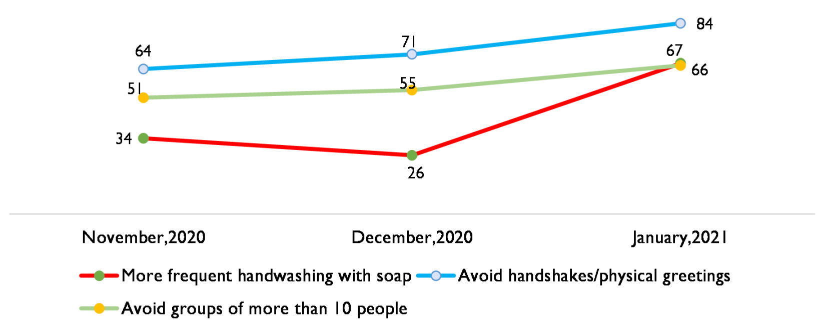
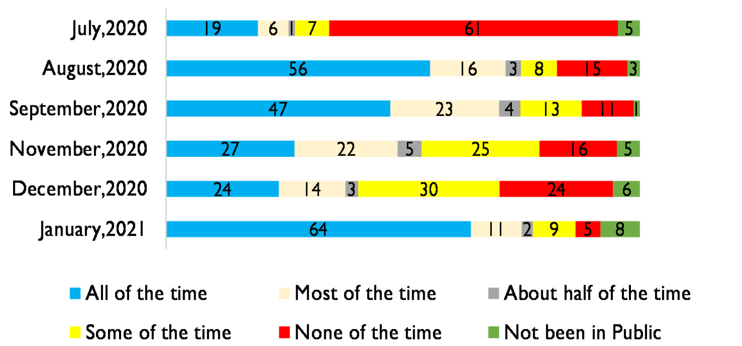


Figure 4. Prevalence of Wearing a Mask Last 7 Days (% of respondents)



There was an increase in proportion of individuals that wear masks in public all the time from 24% in December 2020 to 64% in January 2021.

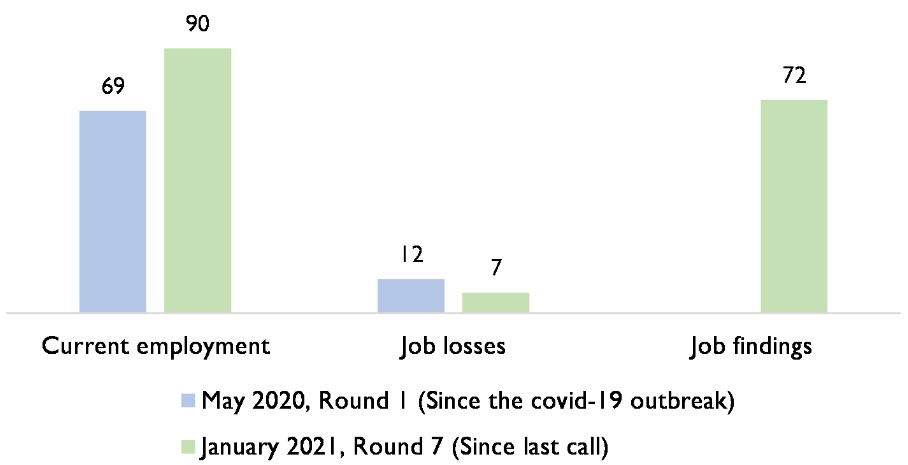
Of the 35% of respondents who accessed shops in the last 7 days preceding the interview, 85% were asked to wear a mask and 84% were asked to wash their hands.

EMPLOYMENT DYNAMICS

The employment figures found seven months after the start of the COVID-19 outbreak reflect an important recovery in economic activity in the country. By round 7(January/February), 90 percent of people reported that they worked in the past week preceding the interview, a proportion that is 20 percentage points higher than the one observed at the start of the pandemic. Similarly, job losses with respect to the previous month have affected 7 percent of people, a proportion that is below the 12 percent observed at the start of the outbreak. Finally, more than 70 percent of people who were not working in the previous month found a job in the last month.

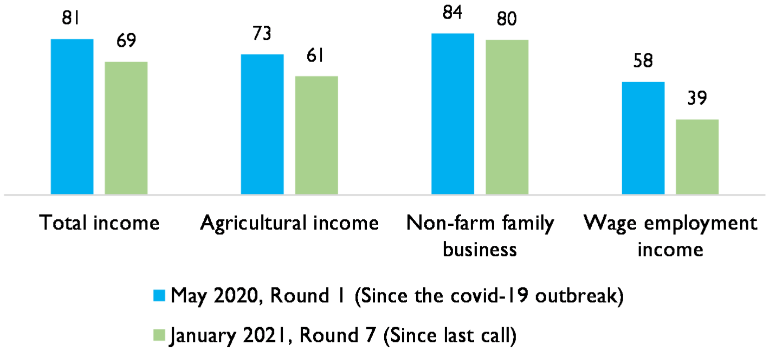
The improvement in the employment dynamics could be attributed to the crop farming activities currently ongoing and this accounts for 57% of the working population.

Figure 5. Work Status (% of Respondents)



INCOME CHANGES

Figure 6. Changes in income (% of households with income from source)



At the start of the outbreak about 80 percent of people experienced a decrease in total income, and this was especially the case for non-farm family income and agricultural income. By round 7, fewer people reported reductions in income. In contrast to the start of the outbreak, agricultural income and income from wage employment have recovered for some households. Yet, non-farm family business income continues decreasing for 80 percent of the people.

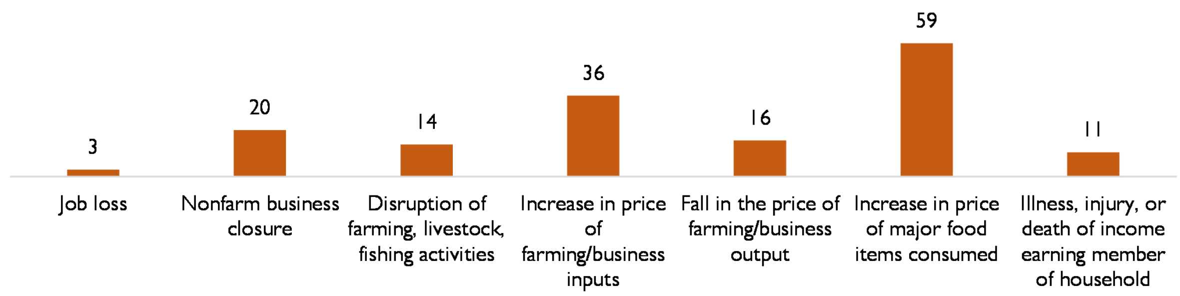
SHOCKS AND COPING MECHANISMS

The number of households experiencing shocks has remained high. Between August 2020 and January 2021, 80% of households experienced at least one shock. This is a slight increase from 76% of households that experienced a shock between July and August 2020. Between August 2020 and January 2021; 31% experienced one shock while 39% experienced 2 to 3 shocks and 10% experienced 4 or more shocks.

Poorer households have experienced more shocks in comparison to richer households, 85% and 72% respectively between August 2020 and January 2021.

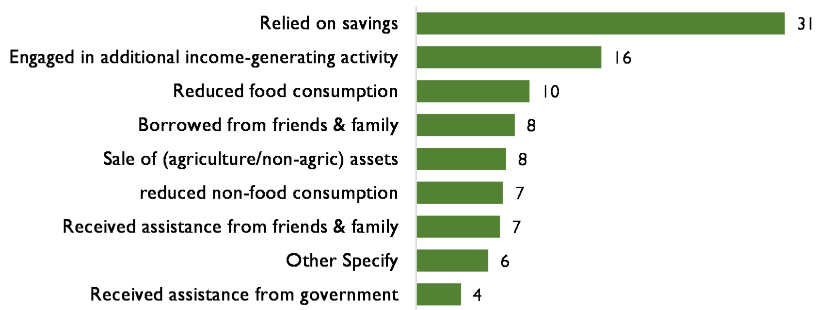
The most common reported shock experienced between August 2021 and January 2021 was increase in price of major food items consumed (59%) followed by an increase in the price of farming/business inputs (36%) and nonfarm business closure (20%).

Figure 7. Experience of Shocks (% of Respondents)



Between August 2020 and January 2021, the most common coping mechanism for households that experienced shocks was; reliance of savings at 31%, engaging in additional income generating activities at 16% and reduction of food consumption at 10%.

Figure 8. Coping mechanisms for shocks between August 2020 and January 2021 (% of households that experienced shocks)



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, 1,592 in Round 6 and 1,560 in Round 7. 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/lsms-covid19** and email **enquiries@statistics.gov.mw**.