



BACKGROUND

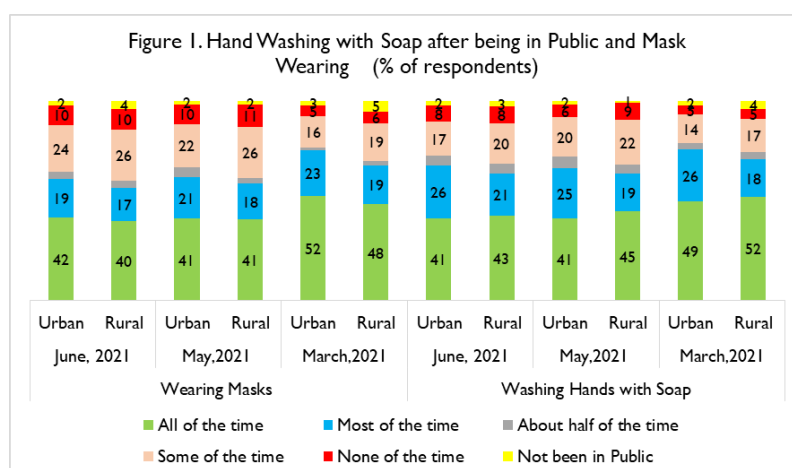
The COVID-19 pandemic has socio-economic impacts on Malawians and there is need for timely data to monitor these impacts and support response efforts to the pandemic. In May 2020, the National Statistical Office (NSO), with support from the World Bank, launched the HFPS COVID-19; a monthly survey of 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 twelfth round of the Malawi High-Frequency Phone Survey on COVID-19 (HFPS COVID-19) conducted between the 14th June and 30th June 2021.

SUMMARY

- There was an increase in the proportion of individuals who perceived COVID-19 as a threat to their health from 79% in May 2021 to 83% in June 2021.
- There was a slight increase in number of individuals who perceived COVID-19 as a threat to their finances from 81% in May, 2021 to 82% in June 2021.
- More than one year after the outbreak, employment levels in rural areas are above their pre-COVID 19 levels (80%). In contrast, employment levels were slightly below the pre-COVID 19 period (72%) in urban areas by the end of June 2021.

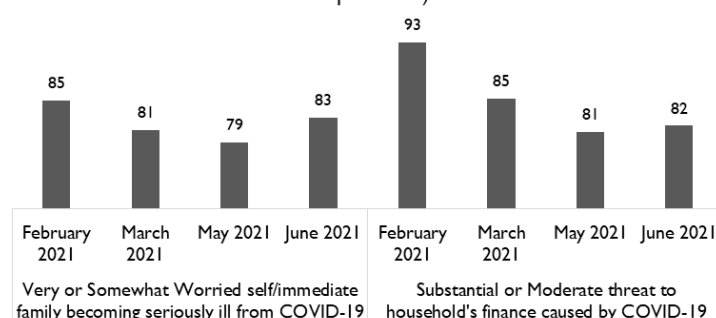
BEHAVIOR AND CONCERNS ASSOCIATED WITH COVID-19

There was a decline in the proportion of individuals washing hands and wearing masks at all times between March 2021 and May 2021. However, between May and June 2021, the proportion of individuals washing hands after being in public stayed almost consistent; similarly the individuals wearing masks at all times in public did not change much for the same time period.



Despite a decline in the number of individuals wearing masks in public at all times and washing hands after being in public, survey results have also shown that a large proportion of respondents consider COVID-19 as a threat to either their health or finances. There was an increase in the proportion of individuals who perceived COVID-19 as a threat to their health from 79% in May 2021 to 83% in June 2021. Similarly, there was a slight increase in number of individuals who perceived COVID-19 as a threat to their finances from 81% in May 2021 to 82% in June 2021. This increase corresponds to the increase in reported COVID-19 cases in the country during this time period.

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





EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESSES

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted employment levels in Malawi especially at the start of the outbreak. Employment in both rural and urban areas reduced by 10 percentage points passing from 78% of people employed before March 2020 to 69% of employed people in June 2020. Over time the recovery was faster in rural areas with the proportion of employed people above 90% at the end of 2020. More than one year after the outbreak, employment levels in rural areas are above their pre-COVID 19 levels (80%). In contrast, employment levels were slightly below the pre-COVID 19 period (72%) in urban areas by the end of June 2021. By income quintiles, people at the bottom of the income distribution have recovered faster in terms of employment than people from richer households. This might be related to the fact that more people at the bottom of the distribution belong to rural areas or work in agriculture, an activity that has shown to be more resilient during the crisis.

Figure 3. Employment Levels (% of Respondents)

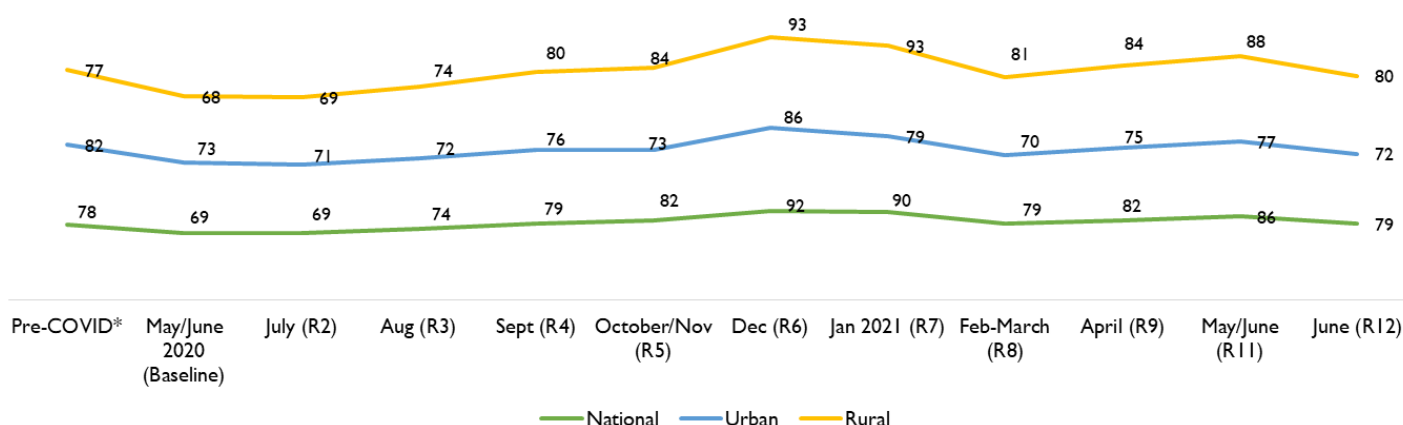
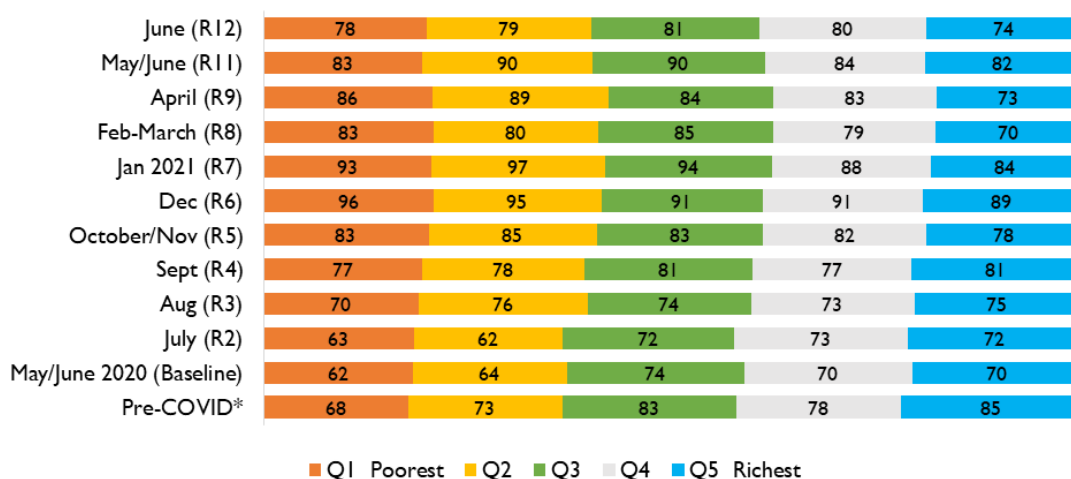


Figure 4. Employment Levels by Wealth Quintiles (% of Respondents)



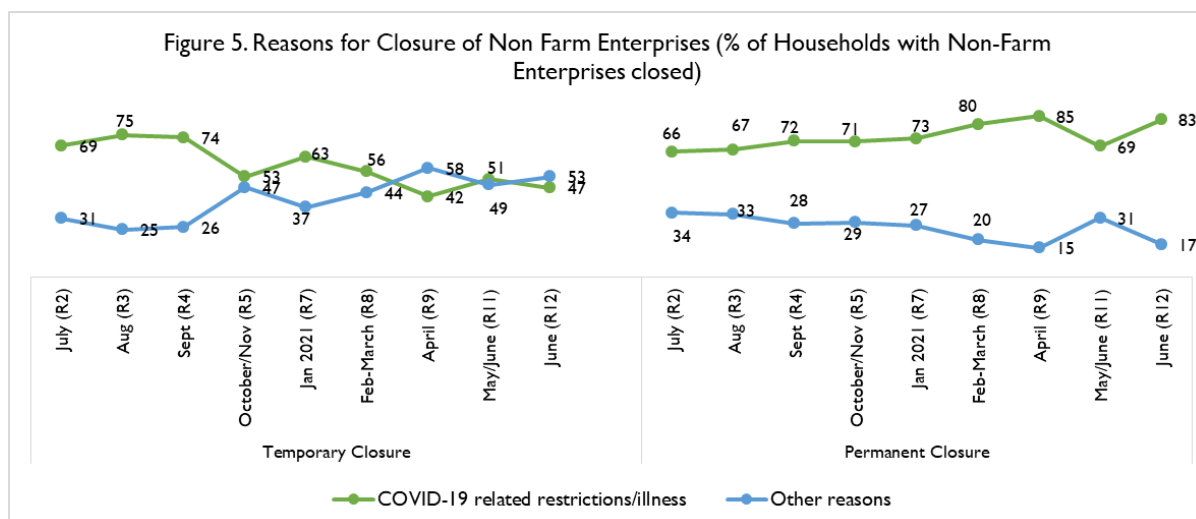
*As reported prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in Malawi (During the IHPS2019)

Over time the reasons for work stoppages have evolved. From being mainly related to COVID-19 (closures, quarantines, movement restrictions, furlough, lack of inputs, etc.) in June 2020, they changed to be unrelated to COVID-19, one year later in June 2021. A similar pattern was observed for reasons to temporarily close non-farm business. While 69% reported COVID-19 related reasons in July 2020, one year later, 53% of the temporary closures are not related to COVID-19. In contrast, business that have permanently closed are mainly due to the pandemic.





Figure 5. Reasons for Closure of Non Farm Enterprises (% of Households with Non-Farm Enterprises closed)

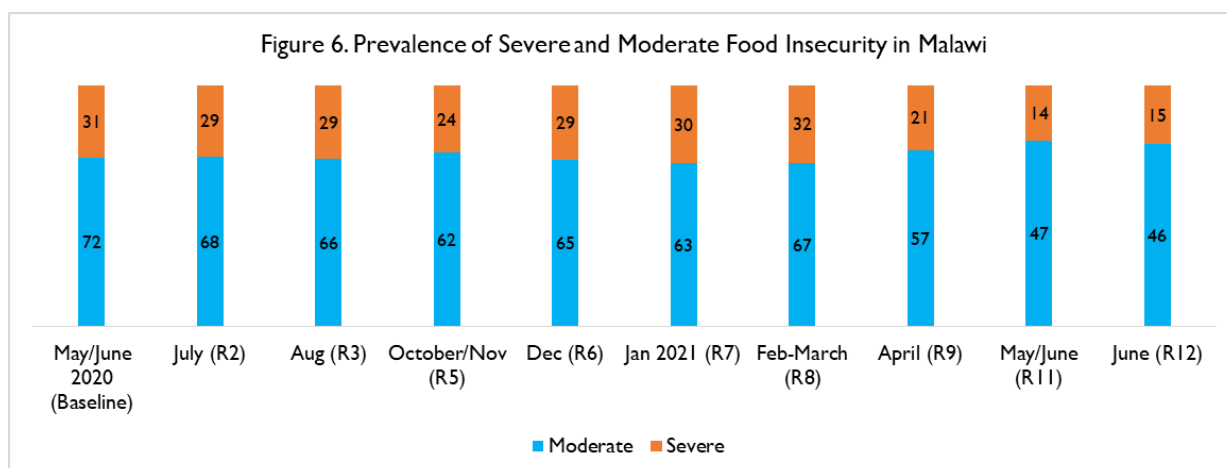


FOOD SECURITY

The prevalence of (i) severe and (ii) moderate food insecurity, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale, among the households remained high throughout Malawi from May/June 2020 until February/March 2021 but declined from April to June 2021.

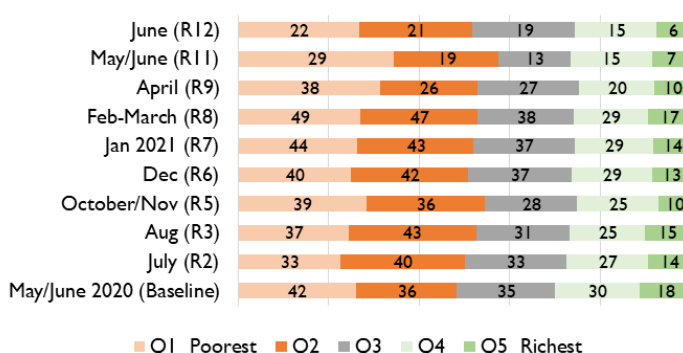
The prevalence of households that experienced severe food insecurity almost dropped by half from April 2020 to June 2021.

Figure 6. Prevalence of Severe and Moderate Food Insecurity in Malawi



Poorest households are the most food insecure during lean periods of the year. From August 2020 up to February/March 2021, the prevalence of households in the poorest quintile experiencing severe food insecurity has been increasing with the highest prevalence rate being in February/March 2021 which is a period just before households start harvesting their farm produce.

Figure 7. Prevalence of Severe Food Insecurity by Wealth Quintile



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. This survey is the twelfth of a planned 12 rounds of the survey. 1,698 households from the baseline were contacted and 1,533 households were fully interviewed in the twelfth round. 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/lms-covid19> and email enquiries@statistics.gov.mw.