

COVID-19: Monitoring the impact on households' Wellbeing

From November 17- December 16th. 2021 **The Gambia**

Newsletter No 10. –December 2021



KEY MESSAGES

Disregard for COVID-19 preventive measures continues to increase- from 3% in August to 17% in December 2021. Vaccination rates on the other hand experienced a modest increase of 1 percentage point between November and December 2021. The largest increase in vaccination rates during this period was observed among the elderly and the poorest households.

The labor market continues to be sensitive to seasonality. Job losses remain at 17.3% in December 2021 (compared to 17.1% in November 2021). Furthermore, more than half of households (57%) reported a decline in their total income. The reason for income loss is largely attributed to seasonality of agriculture, and less to COVID-19.

The prevalence of food insecurity has declined by 25 percentage points from its October 2020 levels. In December 2021, 22% of households are moderately or severely food insecure- compared to 27% in November 2021. Rural and poor households continue to be most food insecure.

More than half of households (59%) consider themselves poor; and 7% consider themselves very poor; largely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. For most households the resulting high prices of basic commodities and lock downs and closure of places of business resulted in adverse negative effects on their wellbeing and hence poverty.

METHODOLOGY



The results in this note were prepared using data from the wave 10 of the High Frequency Survey on the COVID-19 Impacts on Households in The Gambia. A sub-sample of 888 households of the Labor Force Survey (LFS) were interviewed by phone between November 17th and December 16th. 2021. These same households have already been interviewed during the previous 9 waves. The results are representative at the national level and at strata level (Banjul/Kanifing area- i.e in and around the capital city; other urban areas, and rural areas).

Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases

7-day rolling average. Due to limited testing, the number of confirmed cases is lower than the true number of infections.

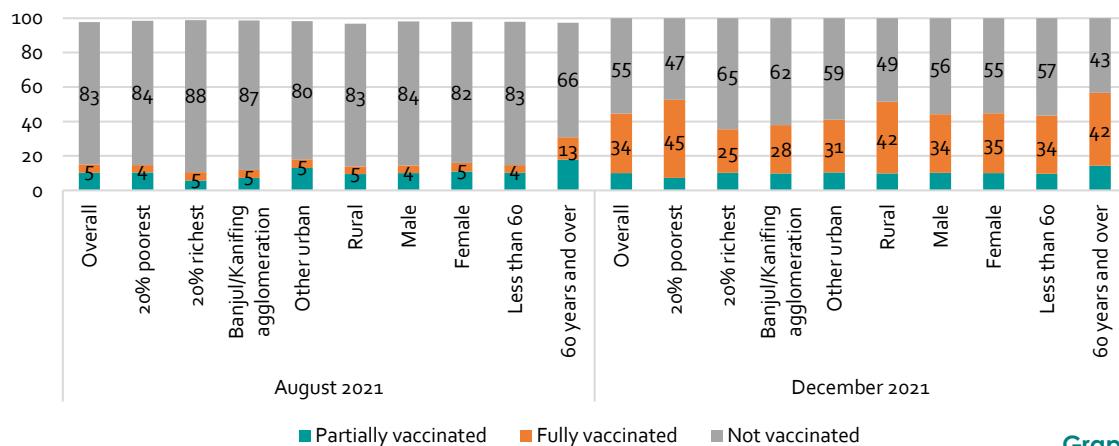


Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data CC BY

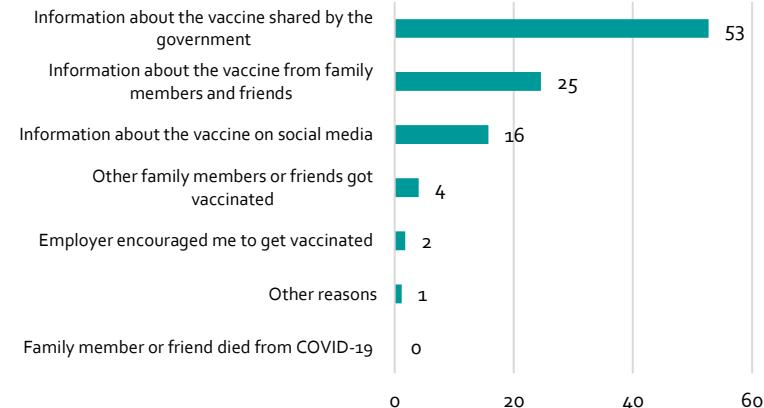


COVID-19 & VACCINATION UPDATE

- Disregard for the COVID-19 preventive measures to increase in The Gambia in December 2021. Between August and December 2021, the share of Gambian households not taking any preventive measures against the COVID-19 virus has increased from 3.1% to 16.6%. During this period, significant declines have been observed in households' adherence to: Limiting gatherings (from 29% to 9%); washing hands (from 74% to 68%), and especially wearing masks (from 93% to 75%). Low adherence to the preventive measures is relatively uniform across all segments of the population, regardless of area of residence and standard of living.
- Vaccination rates experienced a modest increase between November and December 2021. Overall, estimates derived from this survey show an increase of 1 percentage point of people who received at least one dose of vaccine during this period. The largest increase in vaccine uptake is observed among the elderly and the poorest households where people having received at least one dose of vaccine increased by 6 and 3 percentage points respectively between November and December 2021. To boost vaccine uptake, the Government should leverage mass media, since 94% of households use it as their usual source of information about the COVID-19 vaccine. Additionally, for more than half of households (53%), their decision to be vaccinated is influenced by information from the Government. However, social networks play a significant role (30% of households use them as a usual source of information about the vaccine), and could be a channel of misinformation, thwarting government efforts.



Graph 1: Individuals' vaccination status as of August and December 2021 (%)

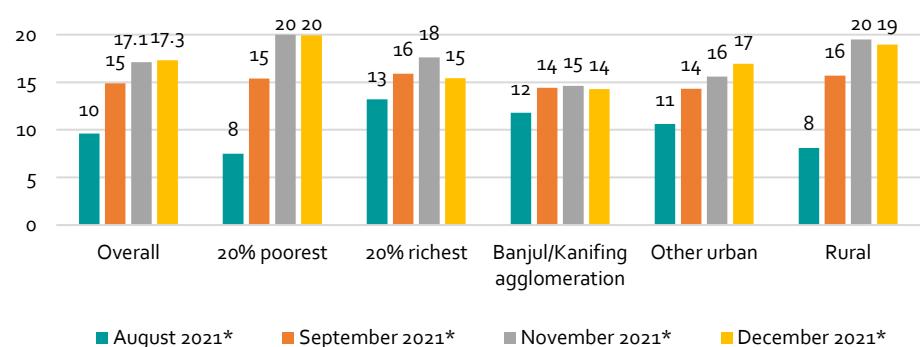


Graph 2: Factors influencing household's decision the most to take or not take the COVID-19 vaccine (%HH)



EMPLOYMENT & INCOME LOSS

- Job losses continued to increase in December 2021 reaching 17.3% compared to 17.1% in November 2021 and 10% in August 2021. Volatility in the labor market appears to be driven by employment patterns in poor and rural households where the share of individuals off work is higher than the national average (20% and 19%, respectively, of people stopped working). Given that agriculture is the main source of livelihood for these households, the end of the agricultural season (marked by completion of harvesting) may in part explain the increase in job losses. Additionally, the proportion of people working on agricultural tasks has been declining from 47% in August 2021 to 37% in December 2021. Similarly, the share of poor and rural households earning income from agricultural activities has also been declining since September 2021. While in September 77% and 55% of these households respectively earned income from agricultural activities, in December 2021 only 65% and 50% did so.

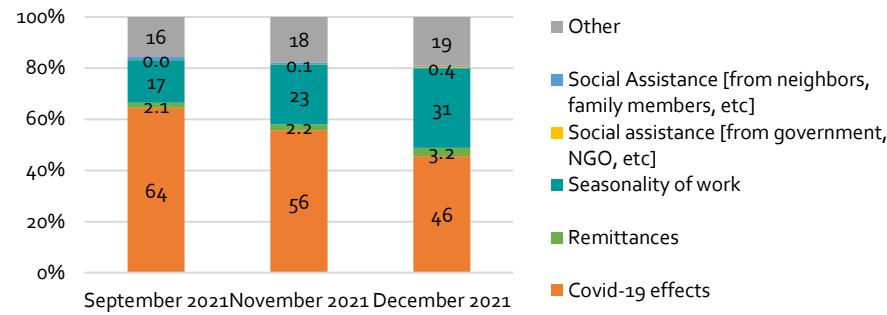


Employment section was administered to all members over 7 years instead of only heads.

Graph 3: People working before March 2020 but not working from August to December 2021 (%)

1 Information about vaccination was asked about all eligible household members (18 years and over)

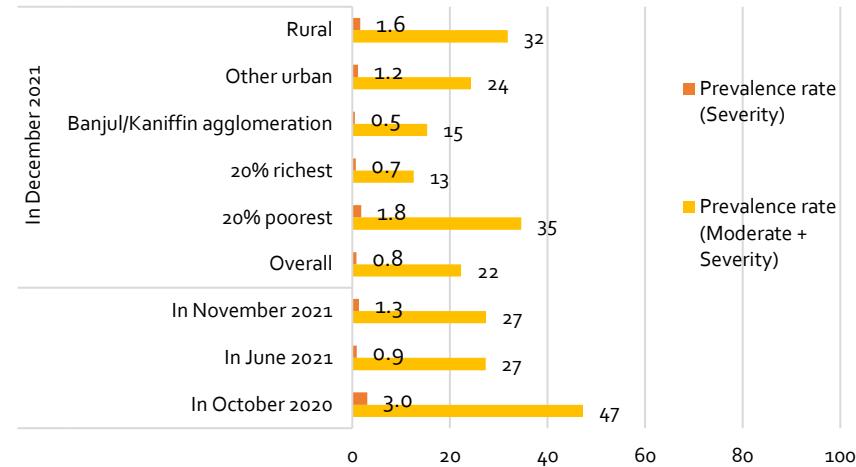
- Overall, for more than half of households (57%), employment income has declined from last month. Agricultural income, and income from non-farm family businesses seem particularly affected (60% and 64% of households with income from these sources respectively reported a decline). Although the negative effect of COVID-19 on labor market activities and household income is still large, the effect of the seasonal nature of the labor market appears to be increasing. Between September and December 2021, the share of households attributing the decline in household income to COVID-19 declined from 64% to 46%; while those attributing it to seasonality of work increased from 17% to 31%.



Graph 4: Major cause of the change in Household income in September, November and December 2021 (%)

FOOD SECURITY

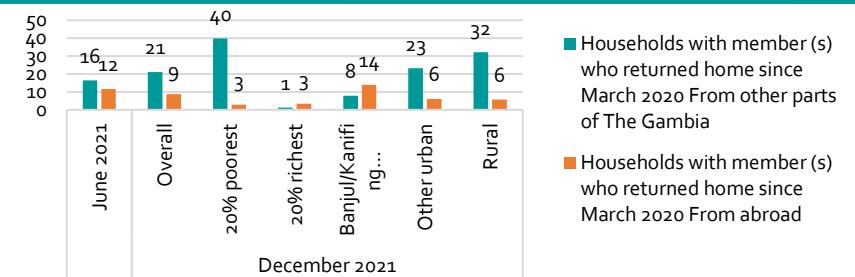
- Significant progress has been registered in reducing the incidence of food insecurity among households overtime. The initial effect of the pandemic on households' food security was large- in October 2020, 47% of households were moderately or severely food insecure. As of December 2021, the prevalence of food insecurity has declined by nearly 25 percentage points. However, more than one in five households (22%) remain moderately or severely food insecure. The 20% poorest households are three times more exposed to food insecurity than their counterparts in the richest 20%. As these poor households are often rural, the same trend is observed, with the incidence of moderate or severe food insecurity being twice as high than in the Banjul and Kanifing area.
- Although the incidence of food insecurity stagnated at 27% between June and November 2021, it has declined slightly to 22% in December 2021. This change is largely driven by large declines in the incidence of food insecurity in rural and among poor households (by 9 and 11 percentage points respectively). Improvements in food security among these households may in part be due to ongoing harvesting season of agricultural produce season.



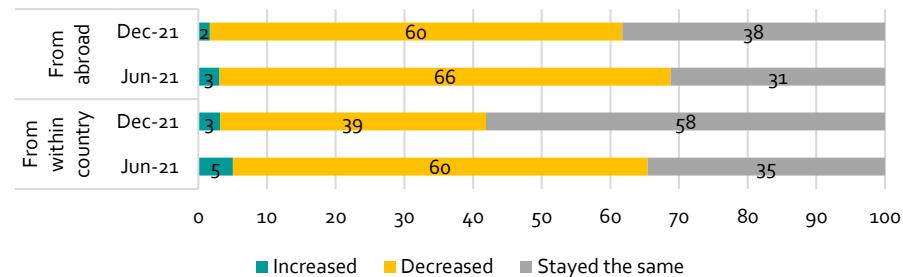
Graph 5: Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)

MIGRATION & REMITTANCES

- The share of returnee internal migrants has increased while returnee international migrants has declined. In December 2021, 21% of households with migrants reported an internal migrant returnee (from 16% in June 2021); and 9% reported returnee international migrant (from 12% in June 2021).
- Internal migrants who returned home are predominantly from poor and rural households; whereas international migrants who returned home are mostly from the Banjul/Kanifing area. More returns are for temporal visits- nearly 95% of households mention the reason for return of their migrant is to visit.
- From the point of view of remittances received, domestic remittances have improved since August in 2021 (60% of households reported a decrease in August 2021 compared to 39% in December 2021). However, remittances from international migrants remained largely unchanged during this period. The share of households who reported a decline in their volume of remittances received from international migrants declined marginally- from 66% in August 2021 to 60% in December 2021).



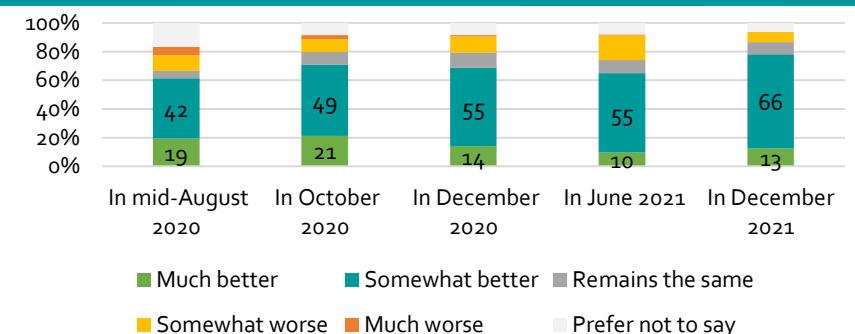
Graph 6: Return domestic and abroad migrants since March 2020 (%HH)



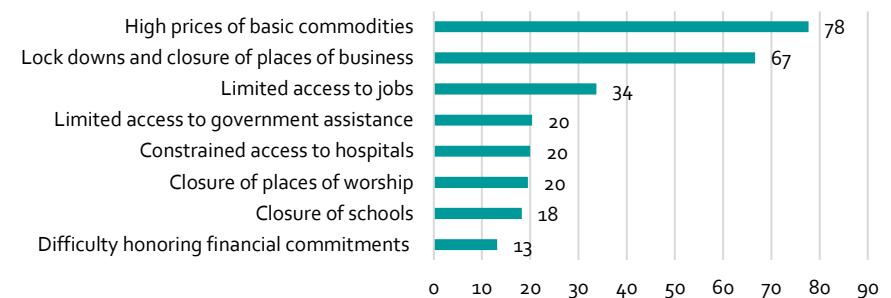
Graph 7: Change in amount/volume of transfer since March 2020 (%HH)

WELL-BEING & COVID RECOVERY

- There appears to be little change in households' perception of their well-being from levels observed at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In December 2021, most households (59%) consider themselves poor; and 7% consider themselves very poor. The perception of being poor is particularly strong among the poorest (based on a wealth index) households (67% poor and 11% very poor), those in urban areas other than the Banjul and Kanifing (67% poor and 5% very poor) and those in rural areas (61% poor and 10% very poor).
- High perception of poverty is largely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. For most households the resulting high prices of basic commodities (reported by 78% of households) and lock downs and closure of places of business (reported by 67% of households) resulted in adverse negative effects on their wellbeing and hence poverty. However, households are optimistic that their well-being will improve. The share of households with a positive outlook on well-being increased from 61% in August 2020 to 78% in December 2021.
- Households' opinions about policies needed for a strong and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic are mixed. However, social protection programs and Rapid assessment of impact of pandemic were the most cited- by 49% and 37% of households respectively.



Graph 8: Perception of the evolution of household welfare in 12 months (%HH)



Graph 9: Challenges experienced by households during pandemic (%HH)

The bottom 20% or poorest households; and top 20% or richest households; are identified based on an asset index type of wealth distribution.

