

COVID-19: Monitoring Impact on Households' Wellbeing.

From October 22nd- November 6th, 2021 **The Gambia**

Newsletter No 9. –November 2021



KEY MESSAGES

Adherence to preventive measures against the COVID-19 virus is decreasing (households not complying with any of the measures increased from 3% in August to 13% in November 2021). However, vaccination rates increased by 30-percentage point in the fully vaccinated population between August and November 2021

The labor market continues to be volatile indicating its high sensitivity to seasonality. Between August and November 2021, job losses increased from 9.6% to 17%. Despite a slight decrease in the share of households who experienced a decline in income, income from agricultural activities, and from non-farm business experienced a decline.

Between June and November 2021, food security conditions of households have largely remained the same. The share of households who are moderately food insecure remained at 27% whereas the prevalence of severe food insecurity increased slightly from 0.9% to 1.3%. Rural and poor households remain particularly vulnerable to food insecurity

Households' perception of the government's actions since the pandemic is generally mixed. While most households are satisfied with government's action to contain the spread of COVID-19 and vaccine awareness and acquisition, opinions about economic and social actions related to job creation and improving living conditions are less favorable.

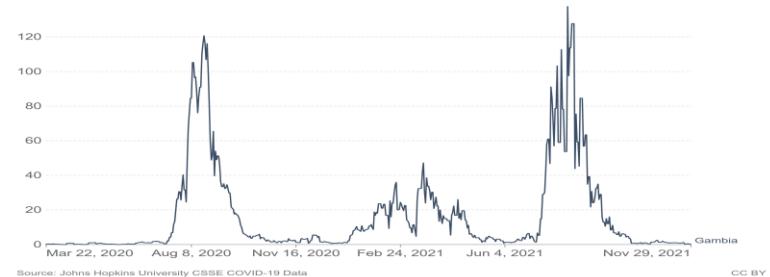
METHODOLOGY



The results in this note were prepared using data from the wave 9 of the High Frequency Survey on the COVID-19 Impacts on Households in The Gambia. A sub-sample of 1032 households of the Labor Force Survey (LFS) were interviewed by phone between October 22nd and November 6th, 2021. The same households interviewed in this wave were interviewed in the previous 8 waves. The results are representative at the national level and at strata level (Banjul/Kanifing - the capital city area; other urban; and rural areas).

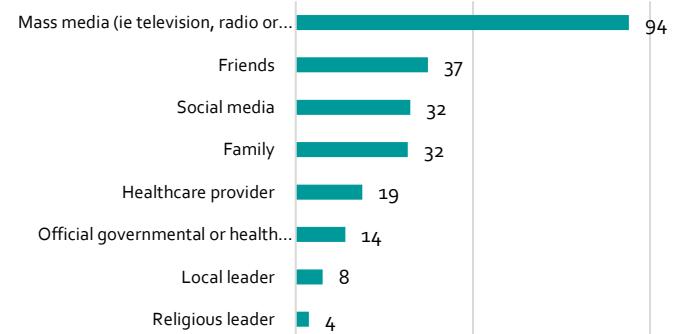
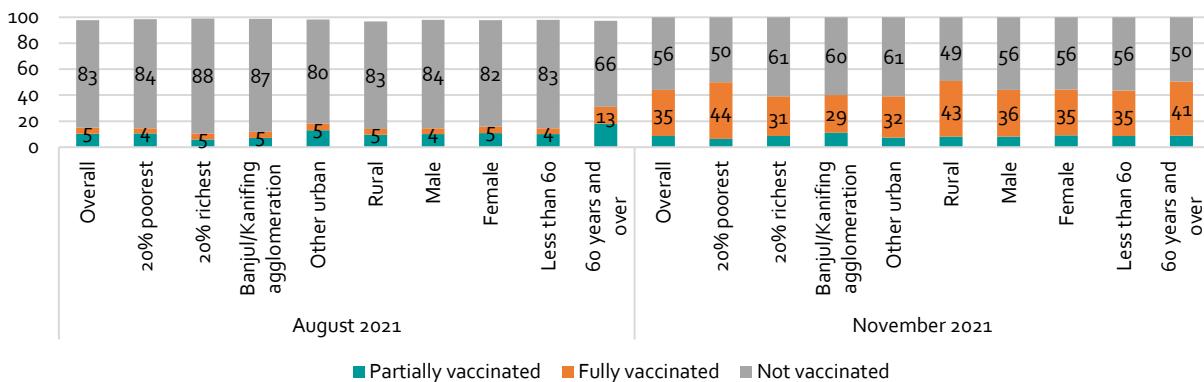
Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases

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



COVID-19 & VACCINATION UPDATE

- With the decline in the rate of COVID-19 infections, skepticism about the presence of the virus in the country is increasing. In September 2021, 95% of households agreed with the statement that COVID-19 was present in the country compared to 91% in November 2021. The increasing skepticism is further reflected in declining adherence to measures which limit the spread of the virus. For instance, in August 2021 (during the peak of the third wave of infections), only 3% of households did not take any preventive measures; increasing to over 13% in November 2021. Wearing masks and avoiding crowds are particularly less adhered to (declining from 93.4% to 74.6%; and from 29.2% to 10.4% between August and November 2021 respectively). Adherence to hand washing seems to persist overtime-declining only slightly from 74.4% to 67.7% between August and November 2021.
- Vaccination rates have improved between August and November. The vaccination rate among the eligible population¹ increased by 30-percentage point between August and November 2021. Progress in vaccination is most notable among the rural and poorest households; and among the older population. Further analysis shows that access to social media (which are a potential source of fake news and unverified information on vaccines) appears to be lower in these areas- (13% of the poorest 20% vs. 46% of the richest 20%; 37% in the Banjul/Kanifing area vs. 26% in rural areas). However, from an overall perspective, information from the mass media, particularly television, radio and newspapers, is the usual source of information about vaccination for 94% of households. In addition, most households (48%) say that information from government sources influences their decision to be vaccinated or not. Information from social networks and from the household's family and friends also play a crucial role in the households' decision to vaccinate (23% and 21% of households influenced by these channels, respectively).



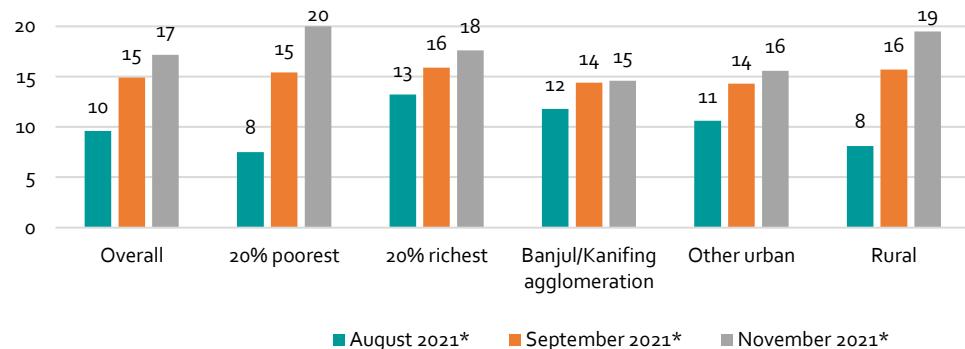
Graph 1: Individuals' vaccination status as of August and September 2021 (%)

Graph 2: Usual source of information about the COVID-19 vaccine (%HH)



EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME LOSS

- Job losses (defined as individuals who were working before the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, but subsequently stopped working) has increased slightly. In August 2021 which would correspond to the peak of the agricultural season, job losses were only 10%, increasing slightly in September to 15% and further to 17% in November 2021. The recent increase in job losses seems to be related to the decline in agricultural activities. Indeed, while in August 46% of employed persons were engaged in agricultural activities, in November this figure dropped to 36%, a decline of almost 10 percentage points. In addition, job losses due to seasonality increased from 8% in September 2021 to 23% in November 2021.
- Furthermore, job losses continue to be higher among the poor and rural households. The common practice of seasonal agricultural among these households explains in part the high job losses.

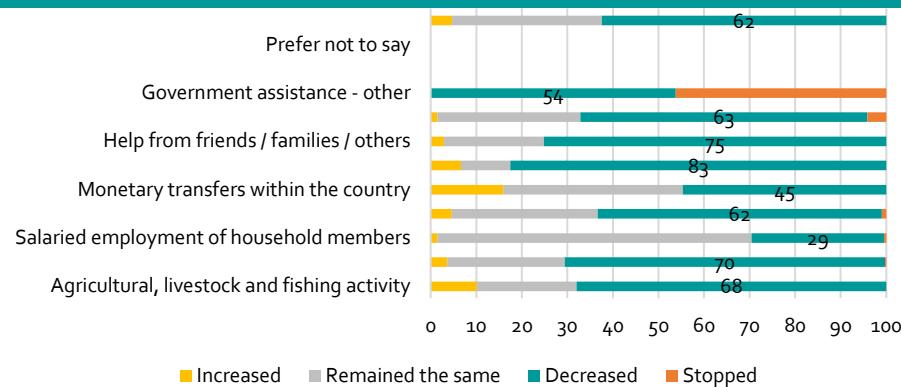


Employment section was administered to all members over 7 years instead of only heads.

Graph 3: People working before March 2020 but not working in August and September 2021 (%)

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

- The increase in job losses is further reflected in household income. Despite a slight decrease in the share of households that experienced a decrease in income - from 67% in September to 62% in November; income from agricultural activities, and from non-farm business seem particularly affected, with 68% and 71% of households reporting a decline in income from these sources respectively. However, as shown in previous rounds of data, the decline in household income seems less and less attributable to the effects of COVID-19 and more to the seasonality of work. In fact, between September and November 2021, the share of households attributing the drop in income to COVID-19 declined from 64% to 56%, while the share of those attributing the drop to seasonality increased from 17% to 23% over the same period.

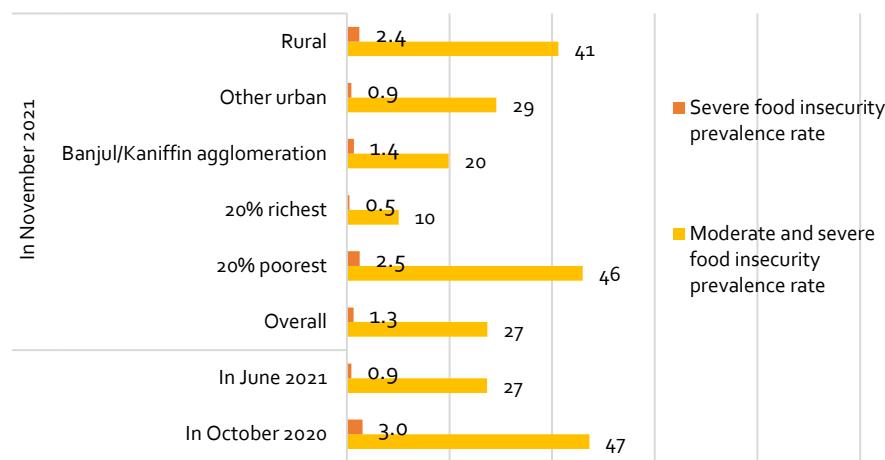


Only sources of income available to at least 10% of households are reported
Graph 4: Households experiencing decline in income in November 2021



FOOD SECURITY

- Between June and November 2021, food security conditions of households have largely remained the same. Compared to June 2021, the share of households who are moderately food insecure remained at 27% in November 2021. However, the prevalence of severe food insecurity has increased slightly from 0.9% in June 2021 to 1.3% in November 2021.
- Compared to October 2020, food security conditions in November 2021 have improved greatly. Estimates of households facing moderate or severe difficulties in accessing indicate that the share of households who are moderately food insecure declined by almost 20 percentage points between October 2020 and November 2021- from 47% to 27% respectively. Similarly, severe food insecurity also declined during this period from 3% in October 2020 to 1.3% in November 2021. This improvement in food security conditions show that while the effect of the pandemic on household wellbeing was initially large, it has declined overtime- albeit at a slower pace.
- However, compared to others, the poorest populations and those living in rural areas remain largely vulnerable to difficulties in accessing sufficient, healthy and nutritious food.



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

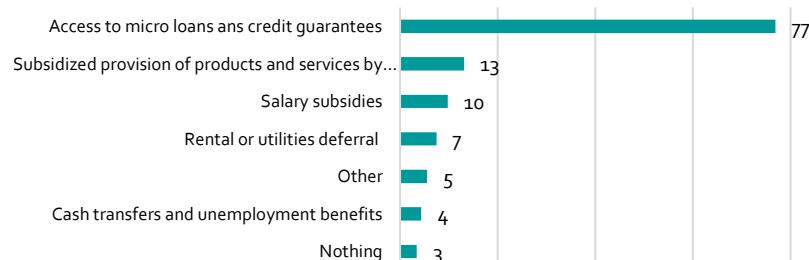


PRIVATE SECTOR

- The share of households in which members operate a family business has fallen drastically between 2020 and 2021, from 13% in November 2020 to 4% in November 2021. These businesses mostly operate in services sector (93%), especially trade (64%) - which were adversely affected by the pandemic. Thus the decline in family-owned businesses may in part reflect business closures due to the pandemic.
- Of those family businesses that remain open, 30% report an increase in revenue compared to the pre-pandemic period, 25% report stable revenue, and 45% report a decrease in revenue. These figures are a significant improvement over the estimates of 2020, where almost two thirds (67%) of family businesses recorded a regression in their income compared to before March 2020.
- The main difficulties identified by family businesses relate mainly to buying and receiving supplies and inputs (64%), raising capital through business loans or investment (61%) and selling products and services to customers (54%).
- Additionally, access to business skills training and advisory services remains low and declined slightly during the pandemic. Overall, 90% of family owned businesses reported no access to such services before the pandemic, increasing to 91% during the pandemic and in November 2021. Business in agricultural sector and in other urban and rural areas reported lowest access levels.
- For most family businesses (77%), access to micro loans and credit guarantees is the most solicited government/external support. Only 13% of these businesses cited the need for subsidies.



Graph 6: Difficulties faced by family businesses since in 2021 (%)

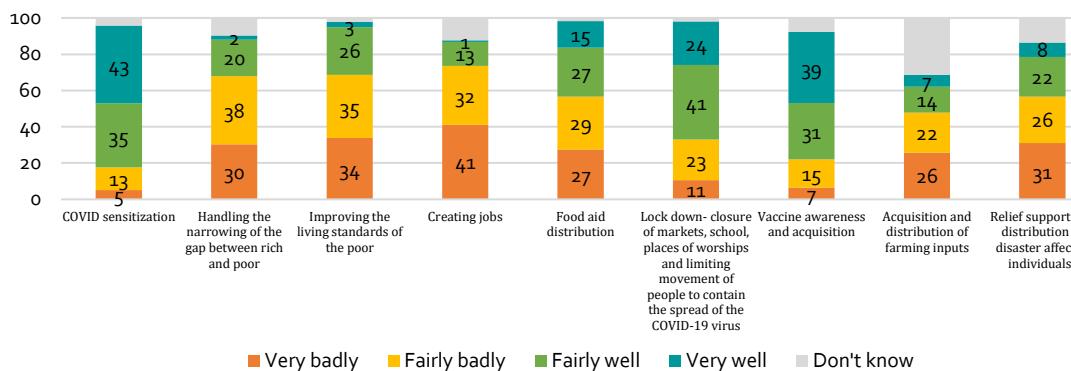


Graph 7: Government or external assistance that could benefit family business during covid-19 crisis (%)



SOCIAL COHESION

- Households' perception of the government's actions since the pandemic is generally mixed. Households are dissatisfied, particularly with economic and social actions related to job creation (41% very unfavorable), improving living conditions (34% very unfavorable), and reducing the gap between rich and poor (30% very unfavorable). However, household opinions are more favorable towards government's action in controlling the spread of COVID-19 - 78% and 71% of households are satisfied with the measures taken by the government to contain the spread of COVID-19; and vaccine awareness and acquisition, respectively.



Graph 8: Perception on government actions during the 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.

For further details, visit <https://www.gbosdata.org>



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