



Monitoring COVID-19 Impacts on Households in Vietnam

Rounds 6 data snapshot

INTRODUCTION



To monitor the social and economic effects on households during the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Bank is conducting High-Frequency Phone Surveys of Households in Vietnam. These monitoring data help generate insights on household well-being amidst this dynamic period, and highlight the effects on the most vulnerable members of Vietnamese society. The COVID-19 context in Vietnam completely changed in mid-2021. While Vietnam successfully contained COVID-19 in 2020, the Delta variant was much harder to contain in 2021 and has led to more severe COVID-19 impacts. The arrival of the Delta variant in April 2021 coincided with low vaccination rates; at the time only 0.01 percent of the population had received at least one dose. Despite some delay in vaccine procurement, the government vaccinated the population rapidly starting in August. By the end of November 2021, over 70 million people had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. By Q4 of 2021, cases started to gradually decline, but the emergence of Omicron further stalled a timely return to normalcy.

The sixth round of COVID-19 monitoring surveys were collected between mid-December 2021 and early January 2022. New questions were added to the survey regarding lockdown measures, coping, and public opinion on mitigation measures put into place by the government. However, shortly after Round 6 data collection, widespread travel during Tet holidays coupled with a more transmissible Omicron strain led to an even larger and ongoing wave in cases.

HIGHLIGHTS – ROUND 6

- ! The COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 is much more widespread than in 2020 due to the emergence of more transmissible variants and easing restrictions.
- ! Households across the board reported worsening income trends at the end of 2021 compared to the beginning of the year.
- ! Adverse impacts on the labor market continue in the forms of sharp increases in unemployment, underemployment and overall underutilization. Moreover, women experienced larger income declines than men.
- ! Since the beginning of the pandemic, approximately 70 percent of school days have been affected by required school closures, and learning losses are expected. Even though rural areas had less school closures, continuity of education was more limited.
- ! More people received cash support in 2021 than in 2020, but non-cash support was still more commonplace.
- ! Public perceptions on government response in regard to household cash support remains lower than perceptions on general COVID-19 management and vaccinations.

MAJOR
ECONOMIC
IMPACTS



A NEW CONTEXT AMID HIGHER COVID-19 CASES IN 2021

The arrival of the Delta variant in mid-2021 slowed expectations of a timely recovery and return to pre-COVID normalcy. Early on, Vietnam was the only country in the East Asia region other than China projected to enjoy a “V-shaped” economic recovery, with GDP expected to bounce back to pre-COVID-19 levels by the third quarter of 2021. However, due to the wider spread of the Delta variant and the government’s strong response with strict lockdowns, GDP in Q3 of 2021 contracted by 6.17 percent compared to the same quarter the previous year. By Q4, there were some encouraging signs of recovery, with GDP growing by 5.22 percent compared to Q4 of 2020.

The large number of COVID-19 infections in mid and late 2021 led to significant and negative impacts on the labor market, resulting from severe restrictions in economic activities (GSO, 2021a, 2021b). In Q3 of 2021, coinciding with strict lockdowns, there were significant contractions in the labor force and employment, and sharp increases in unemployment, underemployment and underutilization. 60 percent of the labor force reported experiencing negative labor market impacts, which ranged between loss of jobs, reduced hours, temporary business closures, and reduced pay. Unemployment rose to the highest levels seen in recent years, at nearly 4 percent in Q3 of 2021. At the same time, average earnings reduced by 10 percent in Q3 of 2021 compared to the same period last year, with inequality in earnings between males and females widening. In Q3 of 2021, the average monthly income was VND 5.2 million (US\$ 229), a reduction of nearly 15 percent compared to the previous quarter. In Q3, female workers experienced a 1.5 times larger reduction in average earnings compared to that of male workers. By Q4, the decrease in income for female workers was twice that of male workers.

In Q4 of 2021 (when this survey round was collected), restrictions had eased in many areas, and cases stabilized due to higher vaccination rates leading to some signs of recovery in the labor market. The official labor force participation rate reported by the GSO increased slightly to 65.6 percent but remains 3.9 percentage points lower than the same period in the previous year. Labor force participation in the Southeast and Mekong Delta regions contracted most severely in Q3 but recovered the quickest in Q4. Employment levels stood at 49 million people in Q4, an increase from 47.2 million in the previous quarter. The unemployment rate dropped slightly to 3.56 percent but remains nearly a percentage point higher compared to the same period last year. Other indicators on underutilization have improved slightly in Q4 but had yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. Labor market indicators reflect the resumption of economic activities in major hubs such as Ho Chi Minh City, while Hanoi lags behind as restrictions remained in place to curb infection. In Q4, average earnings started to increase across all sectors, relative to the previous quarter. The disparity in earnings by males and females however widened over Q4 of 2021. In this quarter, the decrease in income year-on-year for female workers was twice that of male workers (14.6 percent and 7.5 percent reduction respectively).

LOCKDOWN
EXPERIENCE

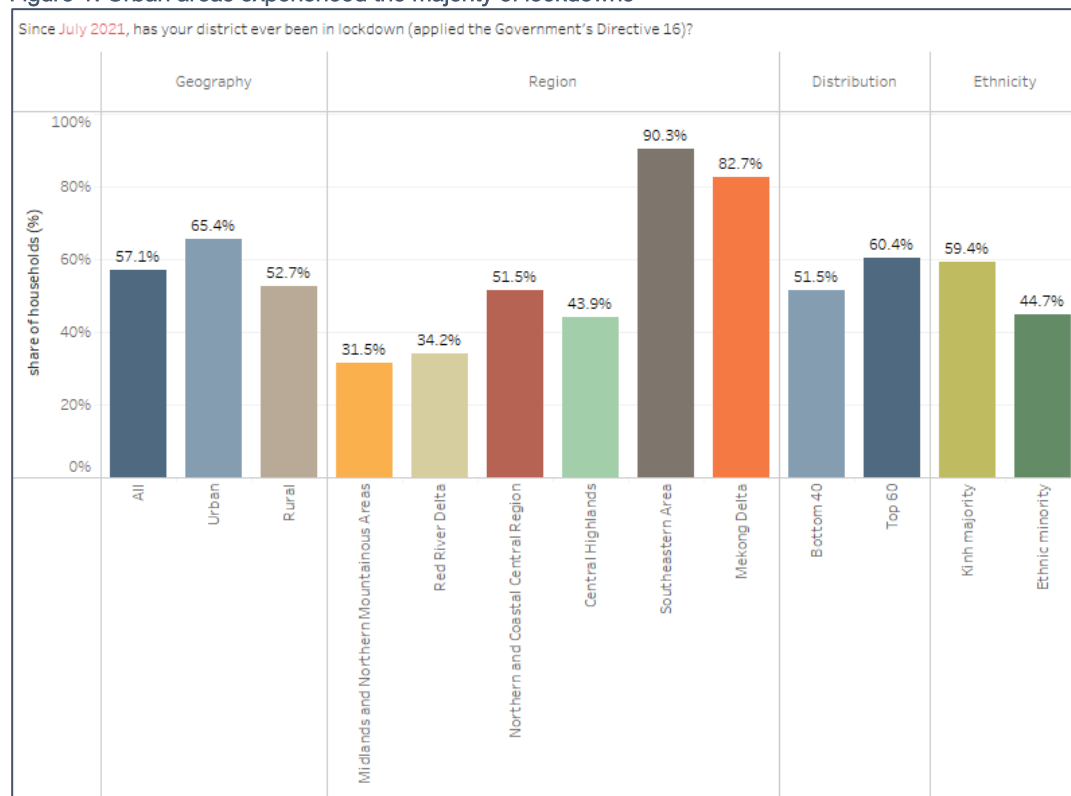


LOCKDOWNS WERE MOSTLY CONCENTRATED IN URBAN AREAS

Between July 2021 and January 2022, over half of households experienced a lockdown in their district averaging a duration of 6.4 weeks (Figure 1). The government directive on social distancing included a stay-at-home mandate, closure of many businesses with travel between different areas severely restricted. As expected, lockdown periods were longer in urban areas,

and concentrated around major urban agglomerations. Households in the Southeastern region (inclusive of Ho Chi Minh City) experienced an average of 8.9 weeks of lockdown, compared to less than four weeks in the Central Highlands and Midlands and Northern Mountain regions.

Figure 1. Urban areas experienced the majority of lockdowns



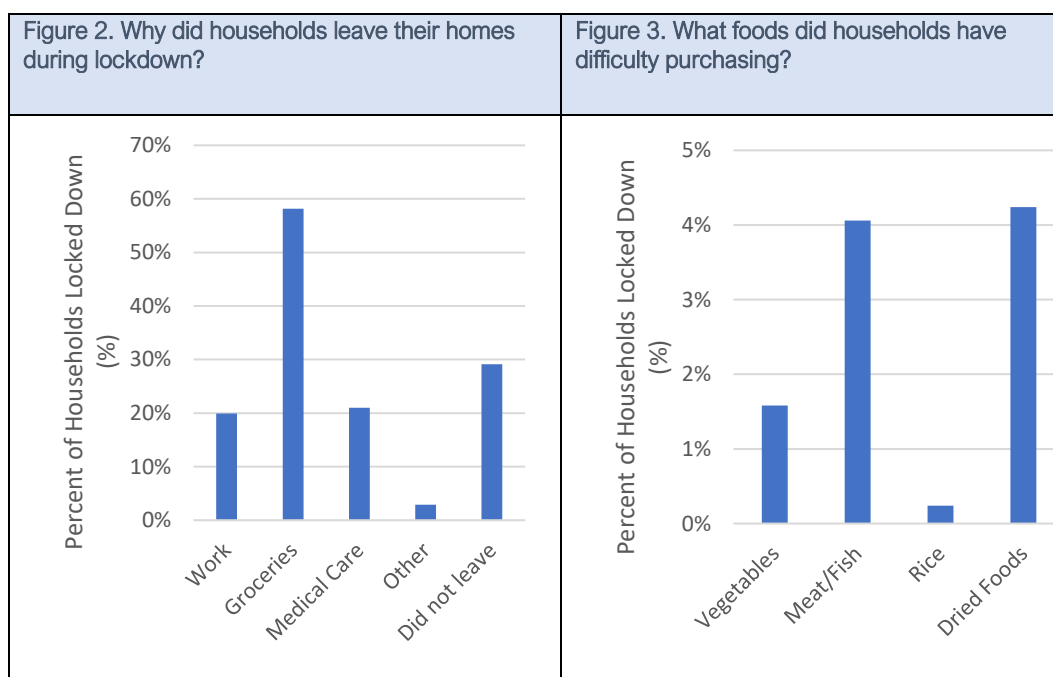
Source: Vietnam COVID-19 High-Frequency Survey of Households, Round 6.

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) experienced the highest number of COVID-19 cases and deaths during Q2 and Q3 of 2021, as well as some of the strictest lockdown policies. By August, lockdown restrictions in HCMC were tightened further to limit people from leaving their homes, even for some essential tasks such as grocery shopping. During this time, migrant workers in HCMC faced difficult living conditions, particularly as many had lost employment and were away from family. Prior to the pandemic, there was an estimated 3.5 million migrants in HCMC and the surrounding areas of Binh Duong, Dong Nai and Long An (VNExpress, 2021). Due to strict travel restrictions, migrant workers were unable to return home at the height of the fourth wave. By October 2021, as restrictions eased, HCMC saw an exodus of migrant laborers out of the city in the tens of thousands. According to State Media, via Reuters, 90,000 people left HCMC between October 1st and 4th alone (Reuters, 2021). Other estimates by the General Statistics Office of Vietnam cite 450,000 workers left HCMC and other southern localities between July and September 2021 (VNExpress, 2021). This is likely to have led to short-term labor shortages and supply chain disruptions across many industries, but more up-to date data is needed to verify this.

Lockdown policies included setting up intra-city checkpoints, between different districts and wards, as well as inter-city/province checkpoints. Survey respondents were asked (a) whether they left their residence during the lockdown period for any reason, (b) whether for said activities

they needed to obtain a permit, and (c) whether they faced any difficulties. 70 percent of respondents reported leaving their residence during lockdowns. The most common reason cited for leaving the home was grocery shopping at 58 percent of respondents, followed by seeking medical care and going to work at 21 and 20 percent of respondents respectively (Figure 2). Permits were required in the majority of cases but were for the most part easy to obtain; only 5 percent of households reported facing difficulties in acquiring permits. Government facilities remained well functioning, and this is also reflected in the accessibility of healthcare facilities, with 97 percent of individuals needing care being able to access health services.

Households that reported experiencing lockdowns under Directive 16 were asked about their continued ability to purchase certain classes of goods, and 89 percent of households reported not having difficulty at all. Of those facing difficulty, the most common types of goods that were difficult to purchase included dried foods and meat/fish, at 4.2 and 4 percent of households respectively (Figure 3). This reflects increased demand for less perishable foods during extended periods of confinement, and tightened purse strings leading to forgoing more expensive animal proteins.



Source: Vietnam COVID-19 High-Frequency Survey of Households, Round 6.

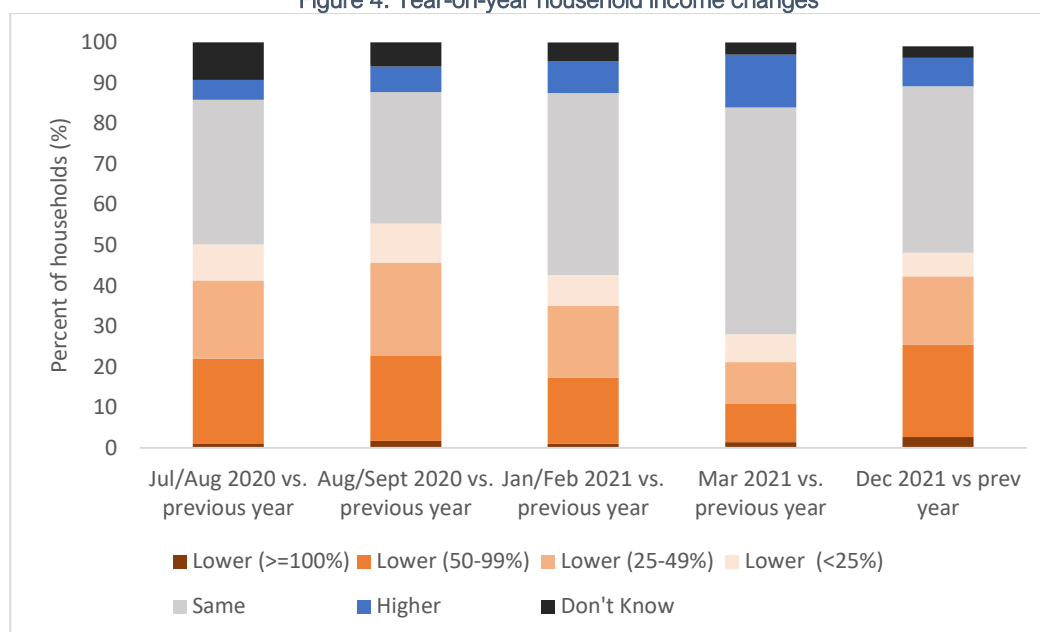
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



REDUCTIONS IN HOUSEHOLD INCOME CONTINUE

Examining year-on-year changes in household income, earnings in mid-2021 worsened after the arrival of the Delta variant. In March 2021, households were beginning to experience income recovery, with fewer households reporting that their household incomes were lower compared to the previous year (Figure 4). However, this trend reversed in the latter half of the year as nearly half of households reported lower household incomes in December 2021 compared to the previous year.

Figure 4. Year-on-year household income changes



Source: Vietnam COVID-19 High-Frequency Survey of Households, Rounds 2- 6.

By December 2021, lockdowns were eased or completely lifted. While cases in HCMC subsided, they were still spreading and increasing in the rest of the country. Thus, when examining month-on-month changes in household income, the Southeast region has a lower proportion of households reporting a decline. The Mekong Delta had the highest shares of households with lower household income both compared to the last month or the last year. Worsening conditions of households in this region highlights parallel challenges from ongoing climate change.

Table 1 - How has your household's income changed in December 2021 compared to...

Share of households (%)	Compared to Last Month			Compared to Last Year		
	Higher	Same	Lower	Higher	Same	Lower
All	8.1	69.3	21.9	7.4	41.1	50.5
Urban	8.9	70.5	20.0	7.4	42.5	49.6
Rural	7.7	68.7	22.9	7.3	40.3	50.9
Top 60	8.8	70.1	20.5	7.8	40.6	51.0
Bottom 40	6.8	68.0	24.3	6.7	41.8	49.6
Kinh majority	8.5	69.4	21.6	7.0	40.6	51.5
Ethnic minority	6.2	69.0	23.8	9.3	43.4	45.0
Red River Delta	6.7	71.7	21.3	9.6	45.9	43.6
Midlands and Northern Mtns Areas	6.6	68.9	24.2	8.3	49.0	41.9
Northern and Coastal Central Region	4.7	71.2	23.9	5.0	39.2	54.5
Central Highlands	13.6	71.1	13.0	11.6	44.3	40.1
Southeastern Area	10.9	70.2	18.3	5.9	38.3	55.3
Mekong Delta	10.4	62.1	26.3	6.6	32.6	59.6

Source: Vietnam COVID-19 High-Frequency Survey of Households, Round 6.

25 PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS CAN SURVIVE LESS THAN A MONTH ON SAVINGS ONLY

If household incomes ceased, over half of households reported that they can survive for less than three months on savings (Table 2). Poor households (Bottom 40) are more likely to report shorter periods of survival on savings than richer households. A similar gap is seen between the Kinh majority and ethnic minority groups, where the Kinh report longer average survival periods. Households in urban areas also indicated shorter periods of survival corresponding to higher living costs in urban areas. Responses may also reflect that certain households such as those in urban areas have been depleting savings over the last two years since the start of the pandemic.

Table 2 - If your household stopped earning income today, how long could you survive on savings?

Share of households (%)	Less than 1 month	1-3 months	3-6 months	More than 6 months
All	24.7	30.8	16.7	27.8
Urban	26.2	31.7	13.6	28.5
Rural	23.9	30.3	18.3	27.5
Top 60	22.2	28.9	17.5	31.5
Bottom 40	28.9	34.1	15.3	21.7
Kinh majority	24.5	29.9	16.8	28.8
Ethnic minority	25.9	35.9	16.0	22.3
Red River Delta	25.3	28.2	15.5	30.9
Midlands and Northern Mountainous Areas	19.5	34.7	19.8	26.0
Northern and Coastal Central Region	23.2	32.8	16.7	27.2
Central Highlands	23.2	31.7	18.0	27.0
Southeastern Area	25.9	32.8	12.4	28.9
Mekong Delta	28.6	26.7	20.4	24.3

Source: Vietnam COVID-19 High-Frequency Survey of Households, Round 6.

A picture of disparity also emerges when examining survival across regions. 31 percent of households in the Red River Delta are able to survive for more than 6 months, while only 24 percent of households in the Mekong Delta are able to do the same. Another observation of note is that similar proportions of households in the Southeast and Red River Delta regions report both short and long periods of survival on savings if household incomes ceased. These patterns reflect populations comprised of a sizeable middle-class as well as groups of economically insecure that are still moving up the economic ladder.

EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES



LABOR MARKET IMPACTS WERE EXPERIENCED ACROSS HOUSEHOLDS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE

COVID-19 monitoring survey data show that around half of respondents know someone who lost their job between September and December 2021, a substantial increase from the one-third of respondents who reported the same over a much longer period between February 2020 and March 2021. These responses about labor market outcomes across personal networks corroborates broader trends of adverse impacts shown by the Labor Force Survey. Looking across urban-rural, income distribution, and ethnic dimensions, similar increases can be seen,

but differential trends emerge across regions. The northern regions showed the lowest rates of job loss between September-December 2021, coinciding with the severest outbreak and lockdowns occurring during that time were located in the south. Unsurprisingly, job switching also increased. Lower levels of job switching are observed in groups where jobs are more concentrated in agriculture, such as among ethnic minorities or the Midlands and Northern Mountain region. Nationally, a smaller proportion of households know someone who is currently unable to find a job compared to someone who lost or switched jobs. However, households in the Northern and Coastal Central region were the most likely to report knowing someone who could not find a job both at the beginning and end of 2021. The worse job conditions in this region could be related to the lower presence of manufacturing and higher reliance on tourism.

Table 3 - Labor market trends among household networks

Share of households (%)	Do you know someone who lost their job?		Do you know someone who switched job?		Do you know someone who is looking for a job now and has not found one? (% of respondents)	
	Feb 2020 - March 2021	Sept - Dec 2021	Feb 2020 - March 2021	Sept - Dec 2021	March 2021	December 2021/ January 2022
All	33.9	49.6	29.3	34.3	29.3	32.6
Urban	34.2	51.4	30.4	38.1	31.2	36.0
Rural	33.8	48.7	28.7	32.4	28.2	30.8
Top 60	34.0	49.0	31.3	36.8	28.8	33.1
Bottom 40	33.7	50.6	25.8	30.3	30.1	31.8
Kinh	35.1	50.6	30.6	36.0	29.7	32.5
Ethnic minorities	27.0	44.5	21.6	25.4	27.1	33.0
Red River Delta	37.7	39.5	33.3	36.4	29.6	28.9
Midlands and Northern Mtns areas	27.1	39.2	23.4	25.0	29.2	34.5
Northern and Coastal Central	40.7	55.0	32.0	35.3	37.2	39.8
Central Highlands	28.1	53.3	24.1	41.7	30.2	35.1
Southeastern Area	30.4	52.5	27.4	34.3	25.2	26.9
Mekong Delta	30.7	60.6	28.0	34.0	23.4	33.4

Source: Vietnam COVID-19 High-Frequency Survey of Households, Round 5 & 6.

20 PERCENT OF FAMILY BUSINESSES ARE TEMPORARILY OR PERMANENTLY CLOSED

Most family businesses reporting being closed in December 2021/January 2022 are in wholesale and retail sectors (41.5 percent), followed by accommodations (23 percent), and manufacturing (10 percent). Across regions, family business closures ranged from 25 percent in the Mekong Delta to 15 percent in the Southeast region, however family businesses in the Red River Delta reported the highest rate of *permanent* closures (9.4 percent).

EDUCATION



SCHOOL CLOSURES IN VIETNAM IMPACTED CHILDREN ACROSS THE BOARD

Since the beginning of the pandemic, about 70 percent of school days in Vietnam were affected by required school closures (Our World In Data, 2022). School closures were especially widespread following intensifying COVID-19 outbreaks at the start of the fourth wave in April 2021. COVID-19 monitoring survey show 83 percent of households with children have been impacted

by school closures between September and December 2021 (Table 4). Households in urban areas were more likely to experience closures than in rural areas, at 87 and 81 percent respectively. However, there is a larger gap between the top 60 and bottom 40 percent of the income distribution, and most significantly between the Kinh majority and ethnic minorities – differences of 10 and 20 percentage points respectively. There is also variation across regions, with only 62 percent of households in the Midlands and Northern Highlands experiencing closures, while 96 percent of households in the Southeast experienced closures.

Table 4 - Distance learning modalities experienced by households

	Experienced School closures (% of households with children aged 6-18)	Distance Learning Modalities (% households exposed to school closures)		
		None	Online live classes	Other
All	82.9	4.6	90.9	30.6
Urban	86.9	1.7	97.4	28.9
Rural	81.1	6.0	87.7	31.5
Top 60	87.4	1.7	95.6	31.4
Bottom 40	76.8	9.1	83.7	29.5
Kinh majority	86.8	2.6	94.9	29.1
Ethnic minority	66.8	15.3	69.0	38.6
Red River Delta	83.0	2.3	96.2	22.0
Midlands and Northern Mtns Areas	62.2	13.5	72.3	36.2
Northern and Coastal Central Region	77.6	6.4	88.1	33.7
Central Highlands	83.1	6.1	88.8	27.5
Southeastern Area	96.0	0.3	98.7	37.3
Mekong Delta	92.6	5.0	89.6	29.8

Note: Households may report more than one modality if distance learning was available.

Source: Vietnam COVID-19 High-Frequency Survey of Households, Round 6.

DISTANCE LEARNING MODALITIES WERE UNEVENLY AVAILABLE ACROSS REGIONS AND ETHNIC GROUPS

Households with children aged 6-18 that experienced school closures were asked which distance-learning modalities their children have been exposed to. While 91 percent of households nationally report having received online live classes, considered the gold standard of distance learning, disparities exist across ethnicity groups and regions. While 95 percent of the Kinh majority have experienced live classes, by comparison only 69 percent of ethnic minority households have experienced the same. Across regions, upwards of 88 percent of respondents in every region have experienced distance learning, except for the Midlands and Northern Highlands where this rate is only 72 percent. Similar disparities are visible when looking at the proportion of households that did not experience distance learning despite school closures – while nationally this number is at 4.6 percent, it is only 2.6 percent for the Kinh majority but alarmingly 15.3 percent for the ethnic minorities, and ranges between 0.3 and 6.4 percent for other regions but sits at 13.5 percent for the Midlands and Northern Highlands. It is also important to note that the question elicits the extensive margin, not the intensive margin nor the quality of the distance learning experience.

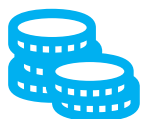
Similarly, based on early school closures in 2020, a UNICEF & UNESCO study reported wide disparity in remote learning conditions, varying by socioeconomic and geographical factors in

Vietnam (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2021). For some learners, there are issues with accessing digital devices, reliable internet connection and appropriate assistive technologies. Teachers in disadvantaged areas also have limited experience in using technology for teaching.

LEARNING LOSSES ARE LIKELY WIDESPREAD, WITH LONG LASTING REPERCUSSIONS

Disruptions in education due to school closures, when not adequately substituted by other forms of remote learning, lead to learning losses and a reduction in human capital across an entire generation. A joint study by the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF estimates that the learning loss from COVID-19 school closures could amount to \$17 trillion in lifetime earnings among affected children (World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, 2021). The impact of learning loss disproportionately affects some groups, widening existing inequalities and reversing gains made in achieving universal education completion. Recent studies have shown that even the best of distance learning can face shortcomings compared to in-person learning (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2021). For example, challenges include difficulty in concentration particularly among younger children, lack of accessible materials for children with disabilities, lack of motivation and engagement from limited interaction with teachers and peers, and living in environments that not conducive for study. The study also shows that children from low-income households, children with disabilities and girls are more likely to have difficulties with accessing remote learning. Girls are more likely to take on care responsibilities.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE



A SECOND RELIEF PACKAGE WAS ROLLED OUT

Since the onset of COVID-19, there have been 2 major support packages implemented at the national level. The first one was during Q2 2020 at the emergence of COVID-19, and the second in Q3 2021. In addition, provincial governments provided their own support as needed in between periods of active national support. While the first package included benefits to all existing beneficiaries of government social assistance programs, there were notable additions and removals in the second package. For example, beneficiaries of existing social assistance programs and national devotees were removed from the second package allocation, and additional allocations were made for pregnant contract employees affected by layoffs or furloughs, as well as COVID-positive or quarantined individuals.

MORE HOUSEHOLDS APPLIED FOR CASH RELIEF IN 2021 AMID HARSHER COVID-19 IMPACTS

More households reported applying for COVID-19 related cash relief in 2021 than in 2020, rising from 13.3 to 30.8 percent based on the WB COVID-19 monitoring surveys (Table 5). While nationally, 2.3 times as many households applied for cash support in 2021 than in 2020, the increase was much higher in the Southeast and Mekong Delta regions (6.5 and 3.5 times more respectively). Among households that applied to both rounds of cash relief programs, processes were judged to be similar in complexity, but the latter round of cash support in 2021 was slower. Households who applied and received cash support were more likely to have experienced negative employment and wage shocks. Among those who did not apply for cash relief in 2021,

50 percent of responses included not knowing about cash relief, not knowing how to apply, finding the process too complicated, or a combination of these three responses.

Table 5 - Share of households that applied and received COVID-19 related cash support since July 2021

Percent of households (%)	Applied	Received
All	30.8%	27.5%
Urban	42.9%	44.7%
Rural	24.4%	18.4%
Top 60	36.0%	34.3%
Bottom 40	22.2%	16.1%
Kinh majority	33.4%	29.8%
Ethnic minority	17.3%	15.0%
Red River Delta	17.1%	20.0%
Midlands and Northern Mountainous Areas	10.5%	7.6%
Northern and Coastal Central Region	21.6%	14.3%
Central Highlands	16.3%	10.8%
Southeastern Area	63.3%	67.0%
Mekong Delta	45.1%	29.9%

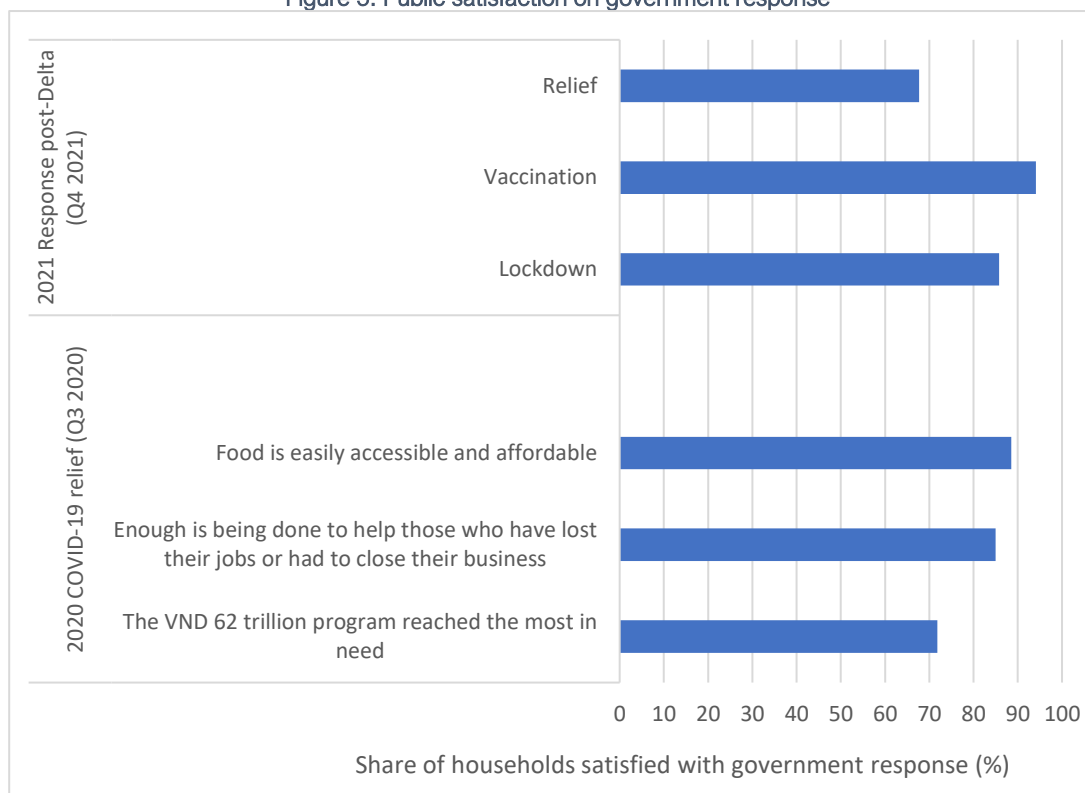
Source: Vietnam COVID-19 High-Frequency Survey of Households, Round 6.

The majority of households who applied for cash relief in the second round also received support averaging about 2.4 million VND per household. Interestingly, in urban areas, more households received cash support than those that applied, indicating more proactive relief responses in hard hit urban areas. Despite cash support being more widespread, more households (35 percent) reported receiving non-cash forms of aid from the government. The most prevalent were electricity subsidies and food at 66 and 42 percent of in-kind recipients respectively. Meanwhile, 11 percent of households also received aid from NGOs, almost all of which in the form of food materials.

SATISFACTION ON GOVERNMENT RELIEF RESPONSE REMAINS LOWER COMPARED TO OTHER POLICIES

Throughout the pandemic, the public has been supportive of government policies and responses, but perceptions on policies related to COVID-19 relief to households have typically been worse than perceptions related to general pandemic management or vaccination (Figure 5). For example, in 2021, 94 percent of households were satisfied with the vaccination response compared to 68 percent being satisfied with the relief response.

Figure 5. Public satisfaction on government response



Source: Vietnam COVID-19 High-Frequency Survey of Households, Rounds 3 & 6.

REFERENCES

- Our World In Data. (2022). School closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Retrieved from <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/school-closures-covid>
- Reuters. (2021, October 4). 'We are tired': Workers flee Vietnam's largest city as long lockdown eases. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/world/the-great-reboot/we-are-tired-workers-flee-vietnams-largest-city-long-lockdown-eases-2021-10-04/>
- UNESCO & UNICEF. (2021). Viet Nam Case Study: Situation Analysis on the Effects of and Responses to COVID-19 on the Education Sector in Asia.
- Vietnam GSO. (2021a). Report on the COVID-19 Impacts on Labour and Employment Situation in the Third Quarter of 2021. Hanoi.
- Vietnam GSO. (2021b). Report on the COVID-19 Impacts on Labour and Employment Situation in the Fourth Quarter of 2021. Hanoi.
- VNExpress. (2021, October 12). 1.3 mln migrants return home during pandemic. Retrieved from <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/1-3-mln-migrants-return-home-during-pandemic-4370813.html>
- VNExpress. (2021, October 5). HCMC industrial workforce shrinks by half after Covid lockdown goes. Retrieved from <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/hcmc-industrial-workforce-shrinks-by-half-after-covid-lockdown-goes-4367289.html>
- World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF. (2021). The State of the Global Education Crisis : A Path to Recovery. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

WEBSITE

Please refer to the following website for additional information:
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/brief/monitoring-households-and-firms-in-vietnam-during-covid-19>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This note was prepared by Judy Yang, England Rhys Can, and Anh Thi Bao Tran. The team receives guidance and is under the supervision of Rinku Murgai (Practice Manager, Poverty & Equity Global Practice, East Asia and Pacific region). Field work was conducted by the Mekong Development Research Institute.