

The Socioeconomic Impacts of COVID-19 on Households in Cambodia

Results from a High-Frequency Phone Survey of Households
Round 3

14 October–6 November 2020
(LSMS+ and IDPoor sample)



17 February, 2021

High-Frequency Phone Survey of Households in Cambodia

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Survey period	11–26 May 2020 (LSMS+) 11–28 June 2020 (IDPoor)	17 August–7 September 2020	14 October–6 November 2020
Sample size	1,684 respondents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 700 (LSMS+) • 984 (IDPoor) 	1,667 respondents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 612 (LSMS+) • 1,055 (IDPoor) 	1,665 respondents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 481 (LSMS+) • 1,184 (IDPoor)
Coverage	LSMS+: National, Urban and Rural IDPoor: National	LSMS+: National, Urban and Rural IDPoor: National	LSMS+: National, Urban and Rural IDPoor: National
Partnerships	World Bank; Ministry of Planning (MoP, the National Institute of Statistic (NIS)); Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY). Coordinated with other Development Partners (DPs), shared instruments and received feedback	World Bank; MoP, NIS; MoSVY; National Social Protection Council (NSPC)	World Bank; MoP, NIS; MoSVY; NSPC

Key Findings (I)

COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination

- Cambodians demonstrate a **high willingness to get tested for and vaccinated against COVID-19** when it is at no cost.
 - More than **8 in 10** respondents are willing to get tested for free.
 - Around **9 in 10** are willing to receive an approved vaccine for free.
 - Fewer are willing to get vaccinated at a cost (around **6 in 10** respondents).

Access to Food Staples, Health & Education Services

- Close to **100 percent** of households can access food staples as markets continue to function well.
- Close to **100 percent** of households can access medicine and health services when needed.
- As schools reopened, children's engagement in education has returned to pre-pandemic levels.
 - **Around 92 percent of households with school-age children (6–17 years)** reported their children are engaged in education or learning activities.
 - Learning continued to shift from remote towards face-to-face activities.

Key Findings (II)

Employment and Income

- After an initial shock due to COVID-19, employment remained relatively stable, but has **yet to return to pre-pandemic levels** when **82 percent** of respondents were working.
 - About **65 percent** of the respondents were **working** in October. Nearly all remained in the same jobs since the last round.
- The negative impact of the pandemic on non-farm family businesses remains substantial but is diminishing. Weak consumer demand continues to constrain business revenues.
 - In October, **54 percent** of households engaged in a non-farm family business reported having made “less” or “no revenues” relative to the previous month, compared to **64 percent** in August and **81 percent** in May. About **84 percent** of family businesses with reduced or no sales mention having fewer or no customers relative to the previous month.
- Fewer households report a decline in household income, but substantial income losses remain.
 - In October, **51 percent** of households reported a decline in household income relative to the previous round, compared to 63 percent in August and 83 percent in May.
 - Households reported an average reduction in total household income of **around 40 percent** in October and in August.
 - Not all households experiencing income losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic are currently covered under the IDPool program, which can result in increased poverty.

Key Findings (III)

Social Assistance

- Marked increase in the proportion of poor and vulnerable households receiving social assistance (SA) from the government since the launch of the [COVID-19 relief cash transfer program](#) in June 2020.
- By October, [92 percent](#) of surveyed IDPoor households had received SA and [92 percent](#) the relief cash transfers.
- Only [8 percent](#) of IDPoor households had yet to receive these relief transfers, but registration—required to receive the transfers—had been increasing.
- Amount and frequency of cash transfers provided to households are as expected: Most beneficiaries have received 4 to 5 installments of the cash transfers, averaging a total of [US\\$182](#) since the program launch in June 2020.

Food Security

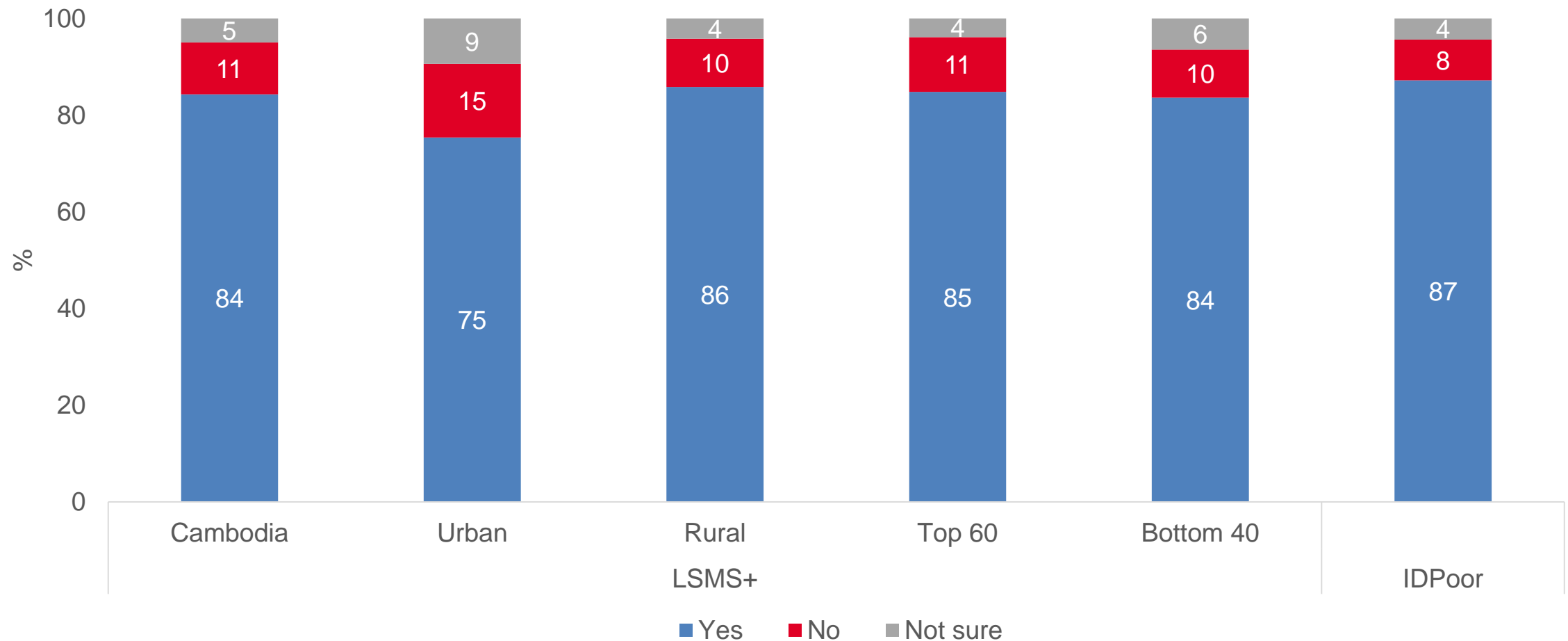
- Food security improved between August and October.
- Among the LSMS+ households, the prevalence of moderate-or-severe food insecurity in October was [17 percent](#), down from 48 percent in August.
- Among IDPoor households, the prevalence declined from 67 percent in August to [38 percent](#) in October.

Payment Methods

- Cash is still the predominant payment method in Cambodia, and many are not interested in any other payment devices.

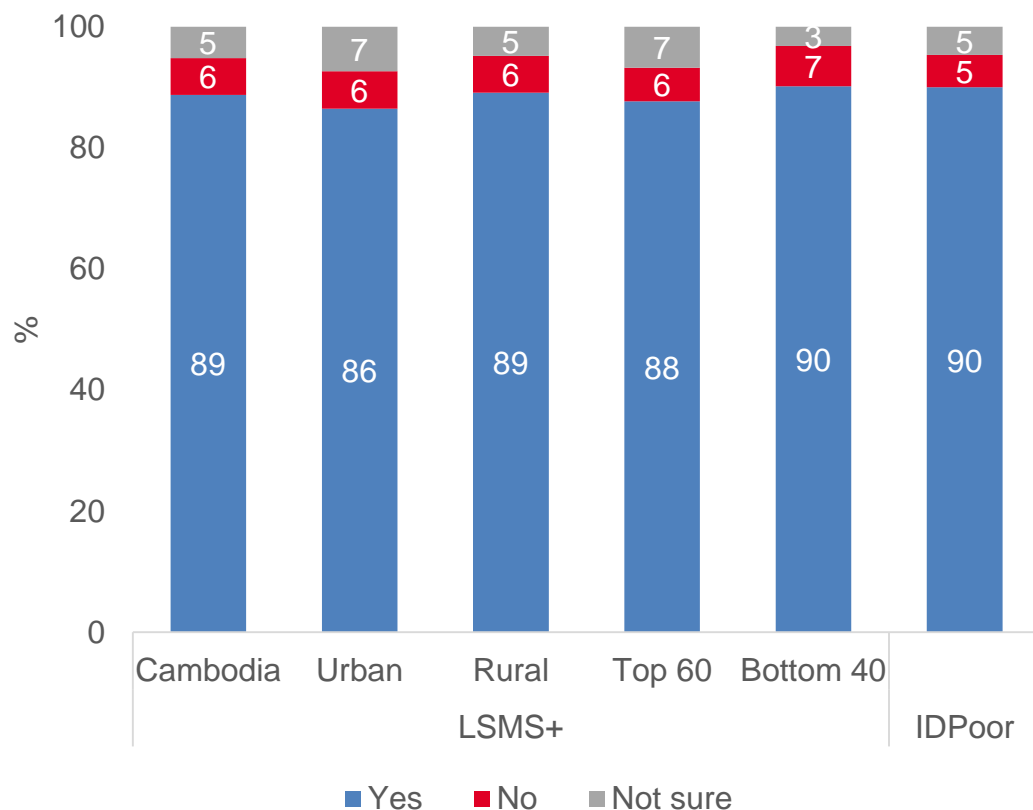
Cambodians demonstrate a high willingness to get tested for COVID-19 at no cost

If you could get tested for free for COVID-19, would you get tested?

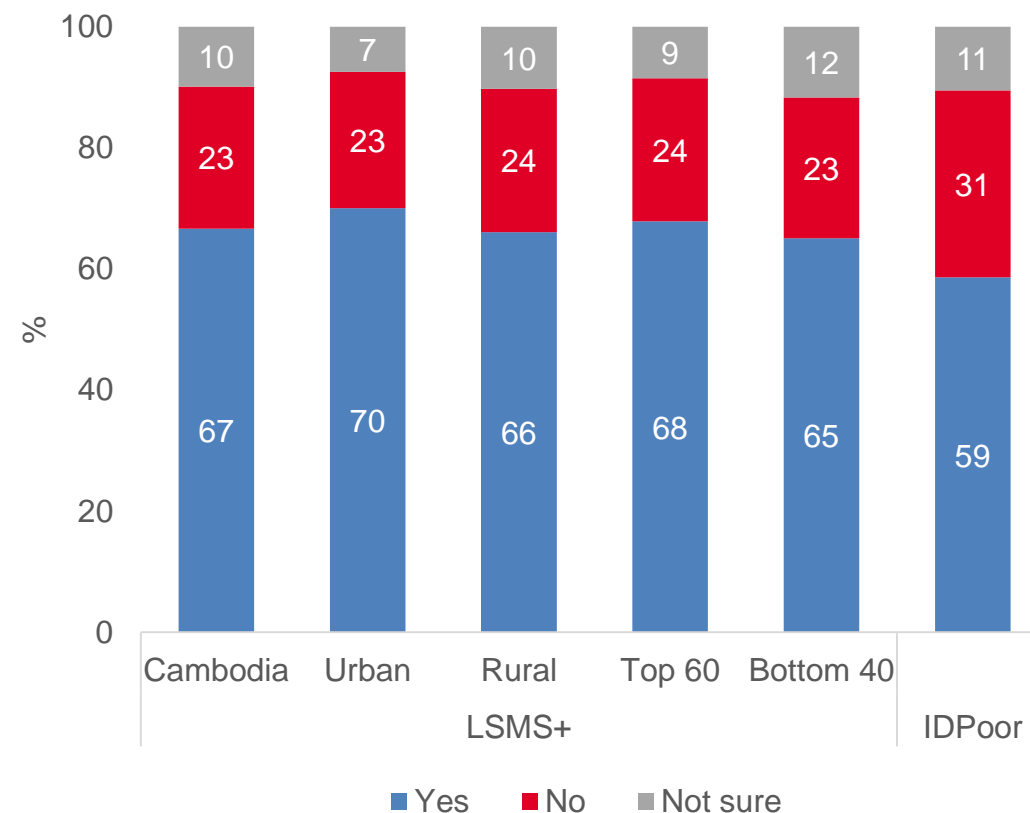


Cambodians also show a high willingness to receive an approved vaccine against COVID-19

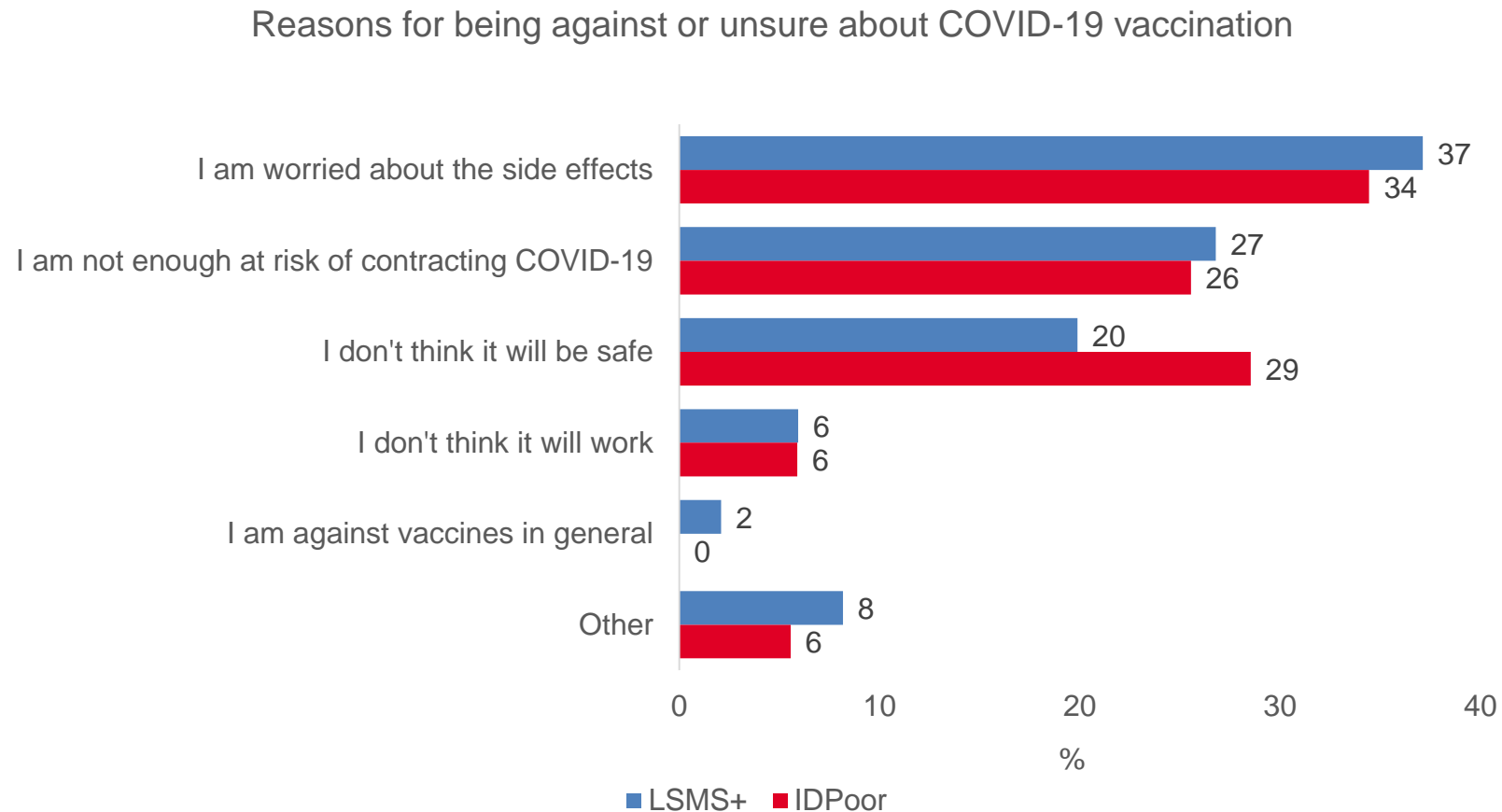
If an approved vaccine to prevent COVID-19 was available at no cost, would you agree to be vaccinated?



If an approved vaccine to prevent COVID-19 was available at cost, would you agree to be vaccinated?

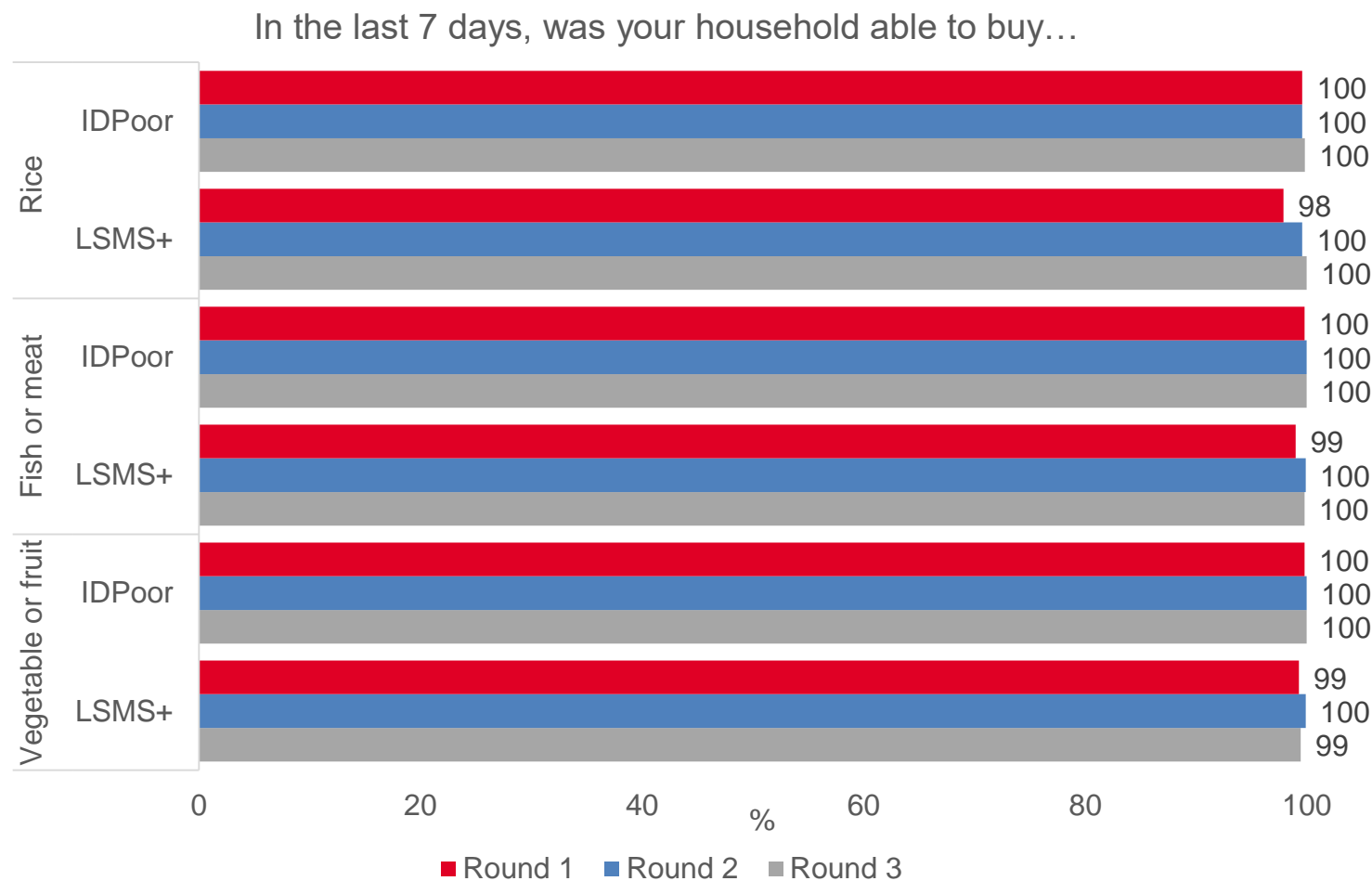


Vaccine side effects and safety, and low perceived risk of COVID-19 infection are reasons respondents are hesitant about COVID-19 vaccine



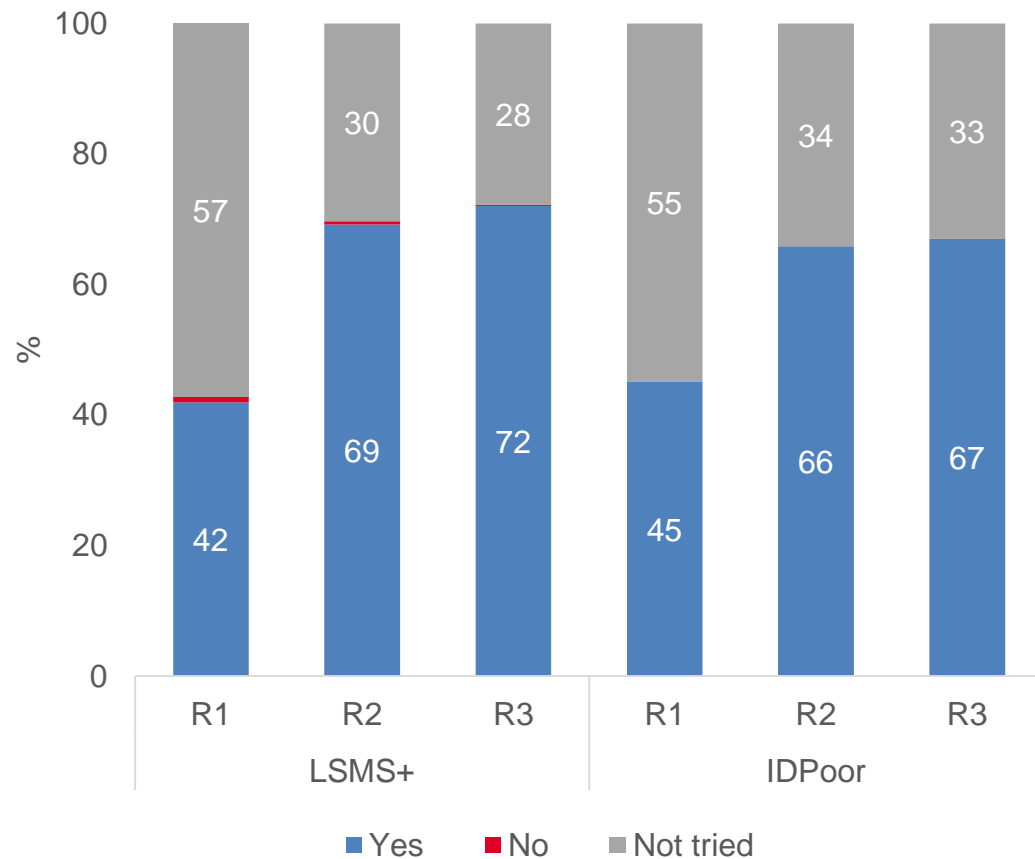
Sample of respondents who are not willing or are unsure about receiving a COVID-19 vaccination at no cost.

Access to food staples remained robust as markets continued to function well since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic

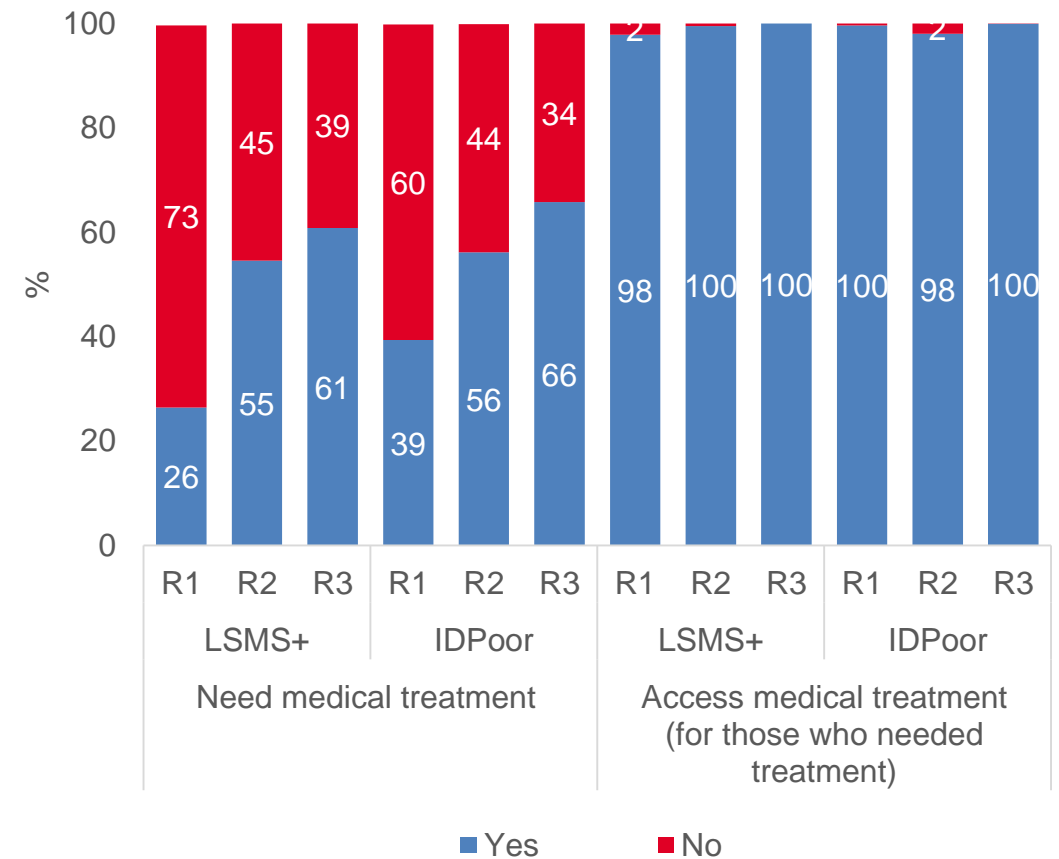


Nearly all households have been able to access medicine and health services when needed throughout the pandemic, even as demand rose

In the last 7 days, was your household able to buy medicine?



Since the last interview, did you or any household member ...?





School closures nationwide



Phase I: Partial reopening of schools



Phase II: Partial reopening of schools



Phase III: Reopening of schools nationwide

Mar. 2020

May 2020

Aug. 2020

Aug.–Sep. 2020

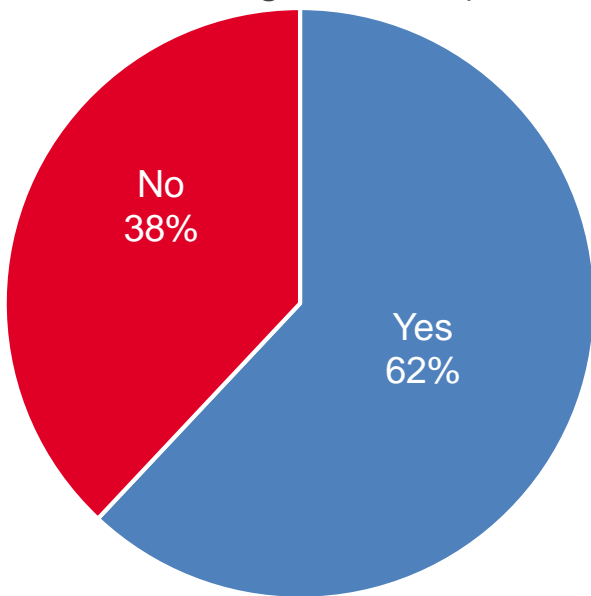
Sep. 2020

Oct.–Nov. 2020

Nov. 2020

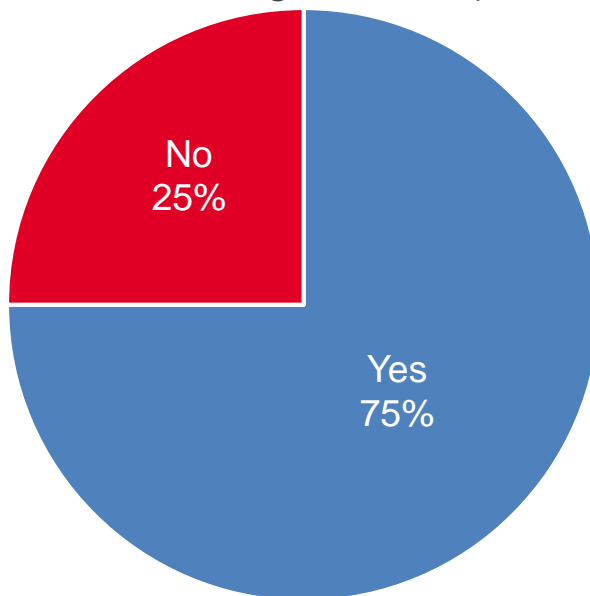
HFPS Round 1

Children engaged in education/learning activities
(% households with school-age children)



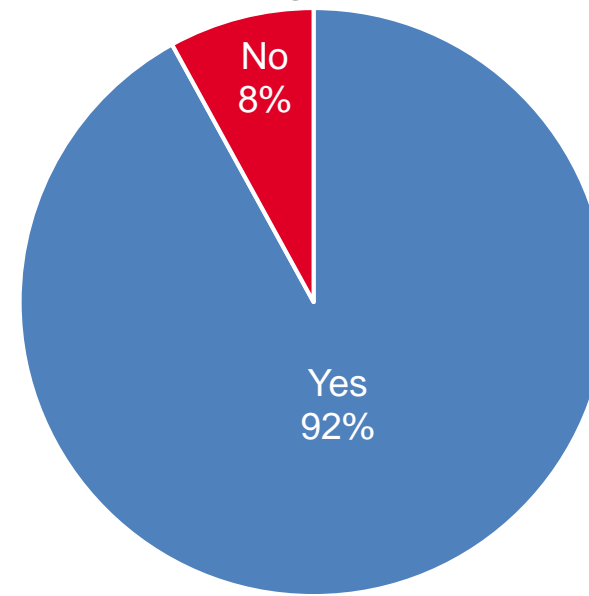
HFPS Round 2

Children engaged in education/learning activities
(% households with school-age children)



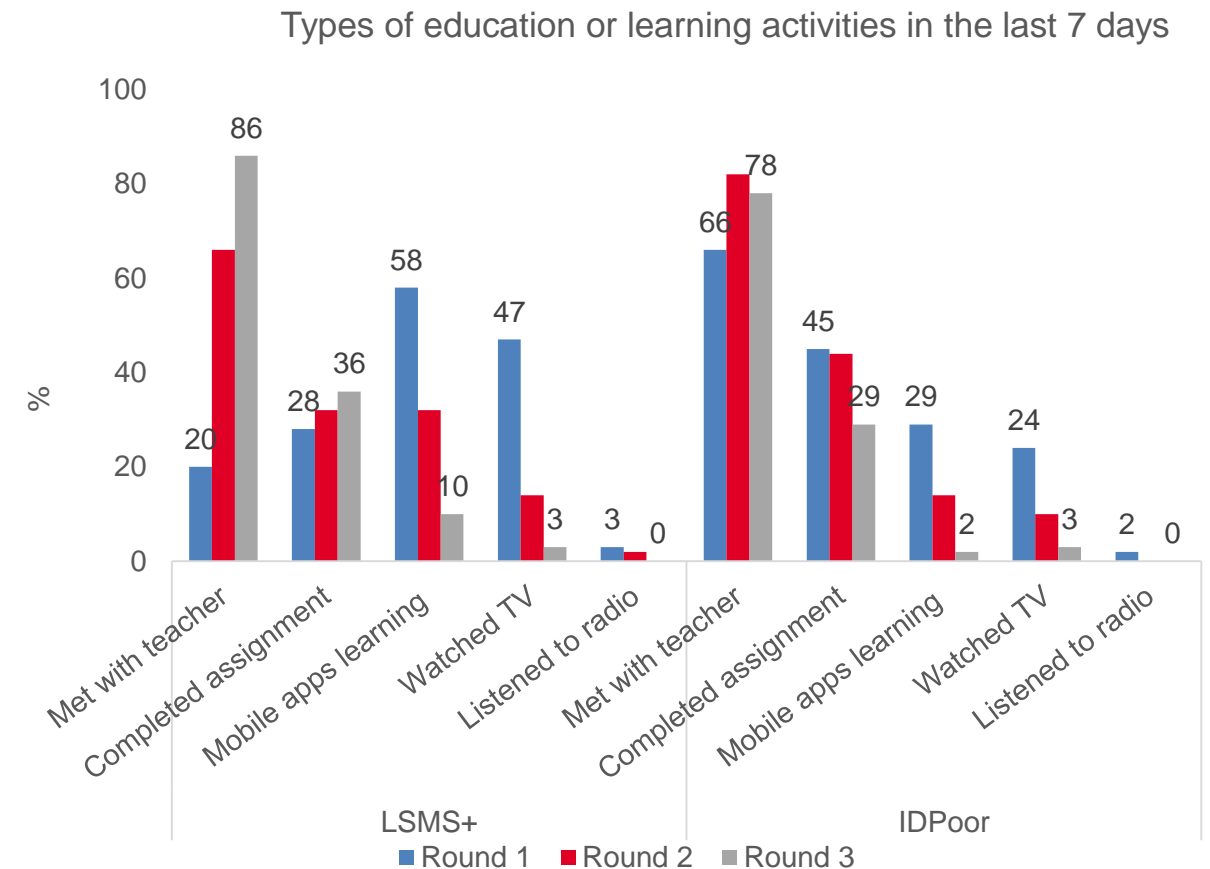
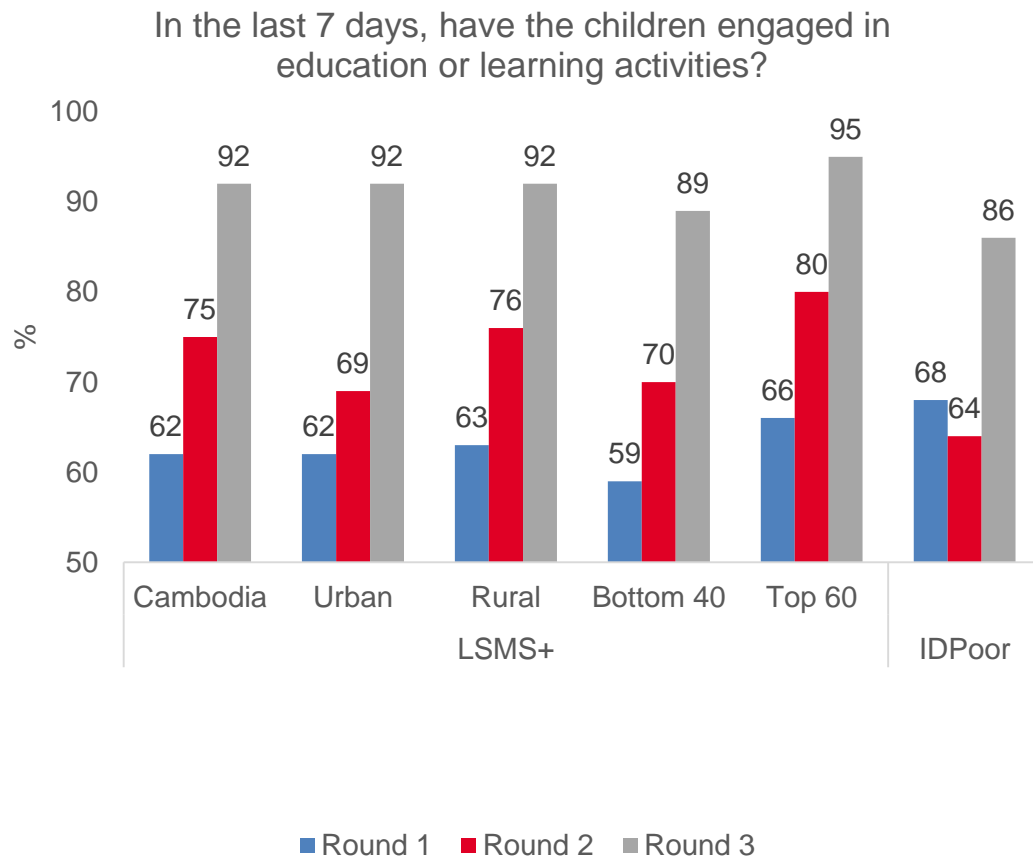
HFPS Round 3

Children engaged in education/learning activities
(% households with school-age children)



Source: LSMS+ sample. "In the last 7 days" is the reference period.

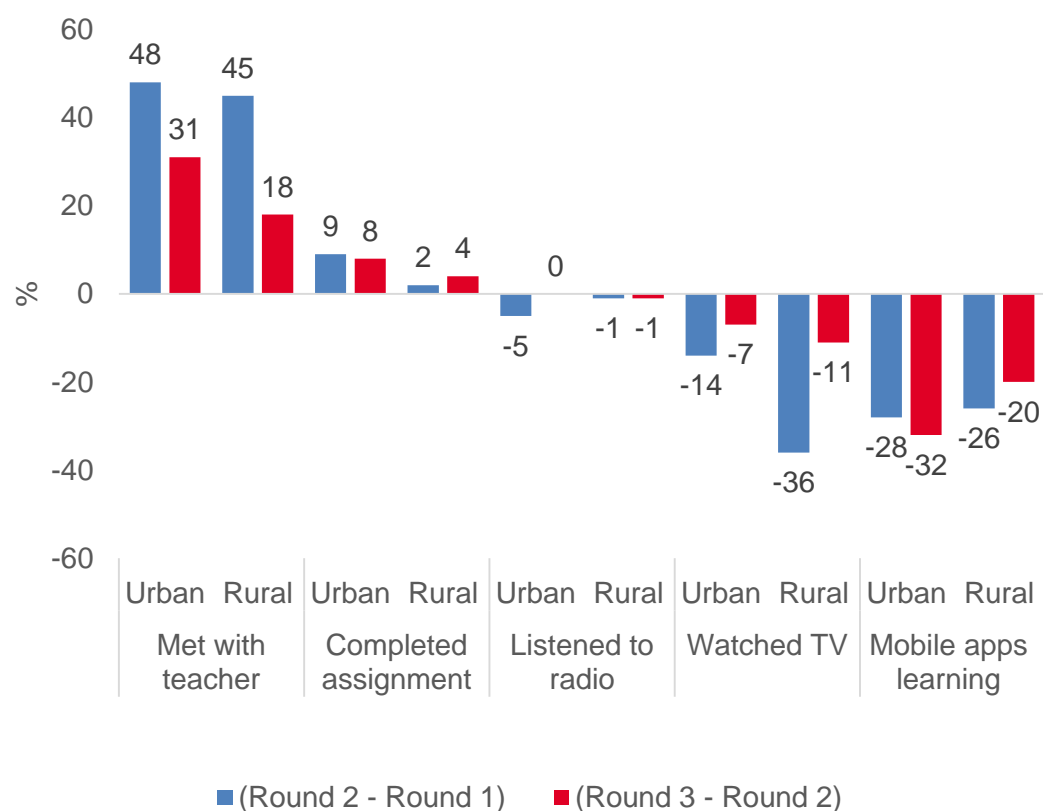
As schools reopened, children's engagement in education/learning activities returned to their pre-pandemic levels and transitioned to face-to-face learning



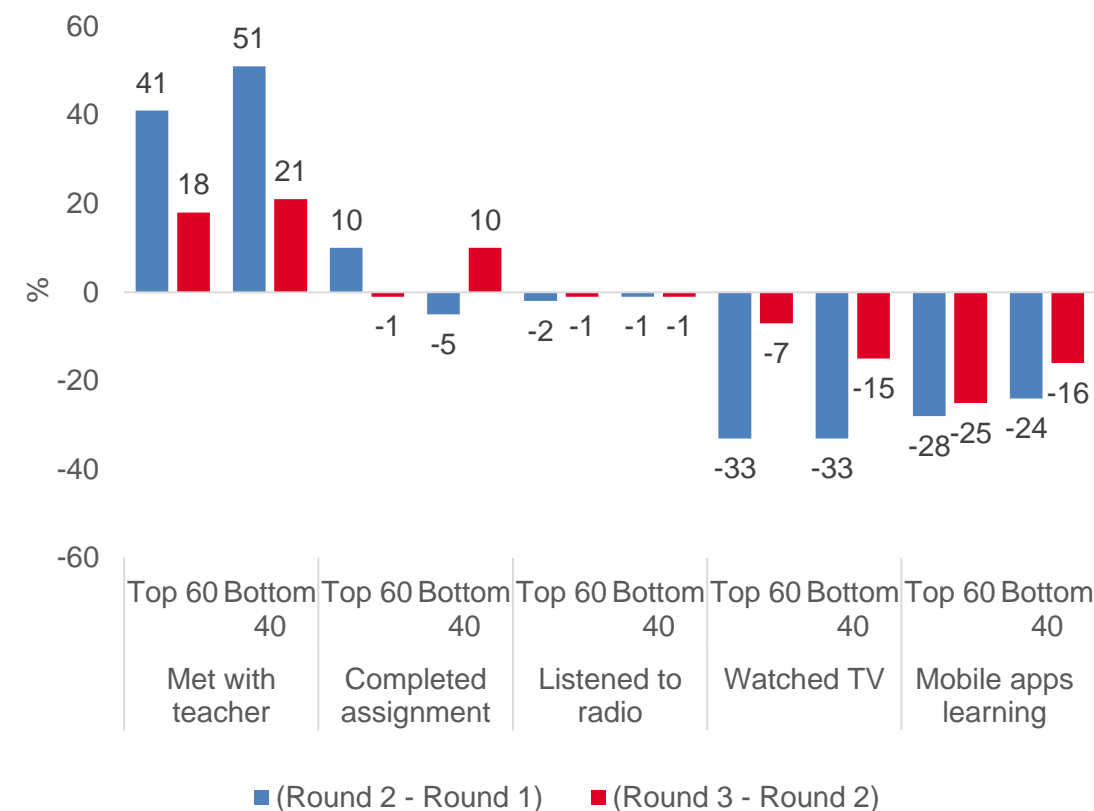
Note: Schools were closed in mid-March and partially reopened in August 2020 and on 7 September 2020. On November 2, 2020, all schools reopened.

Education/learning activities shifted from remote learning activities to in-person meetings with teachers across the country and population groups

Types of education or learning activities in last 7 days
by urban and rural



Types of education or learning activities in last 7 days
by top 60 and bottom 40

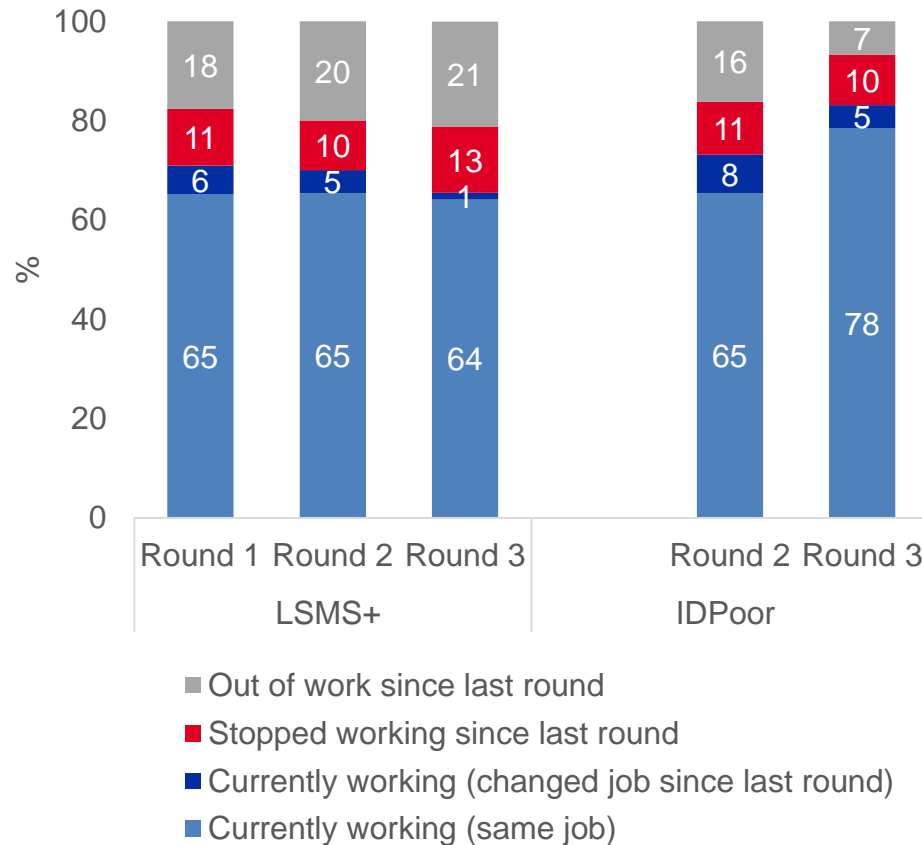


Source: LSMS+ sample. Changes in the proportion between rounds.

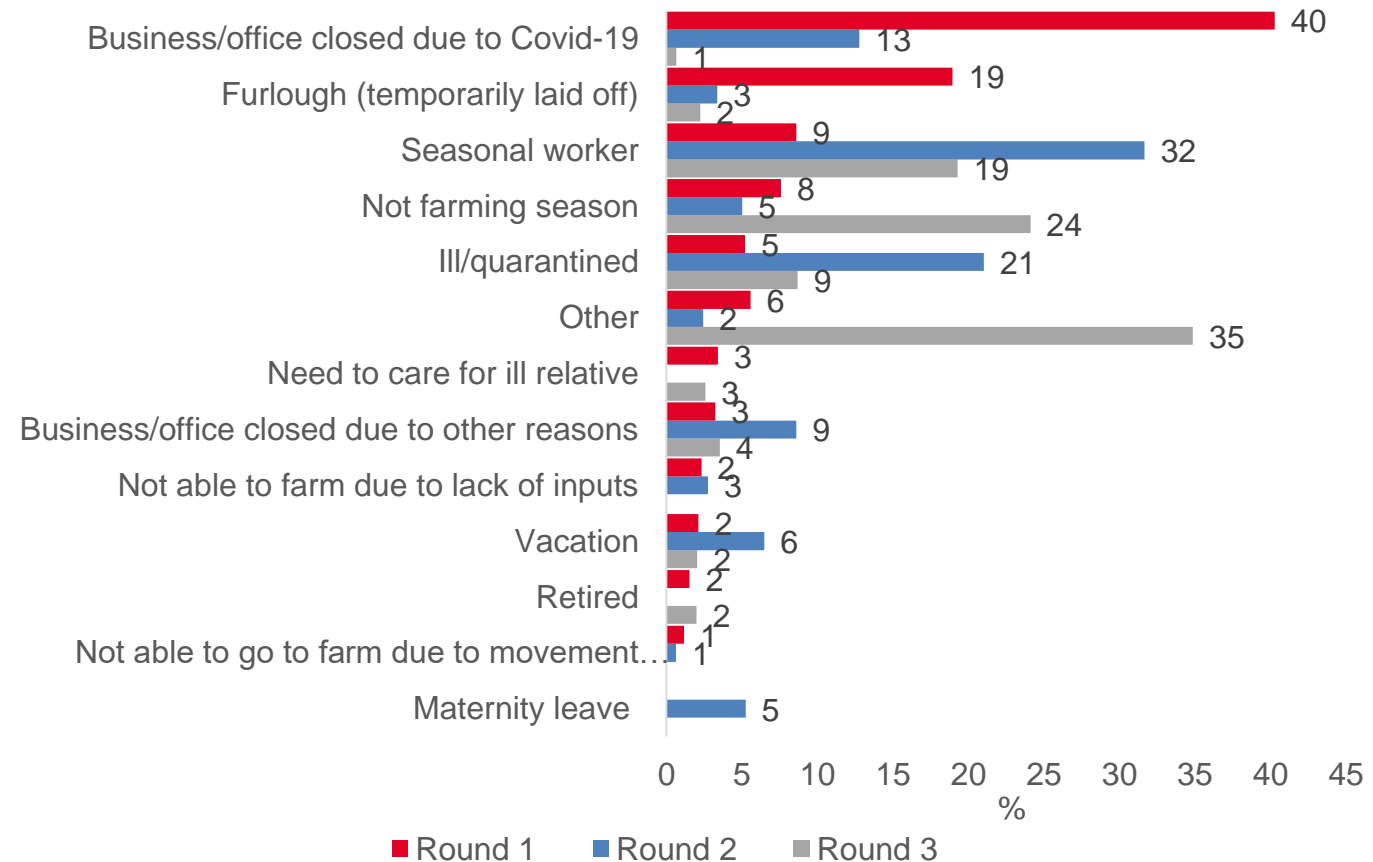
Note: Schools were closed in mid-March and partially reopened in August 2020 and on 7 September 2020. On November 2, 2020, all schools reopened.

Employment has mostly remained steady since May 2020, but has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels when 8 in 10 respondents were working

In the last 7 days, did you do any work?



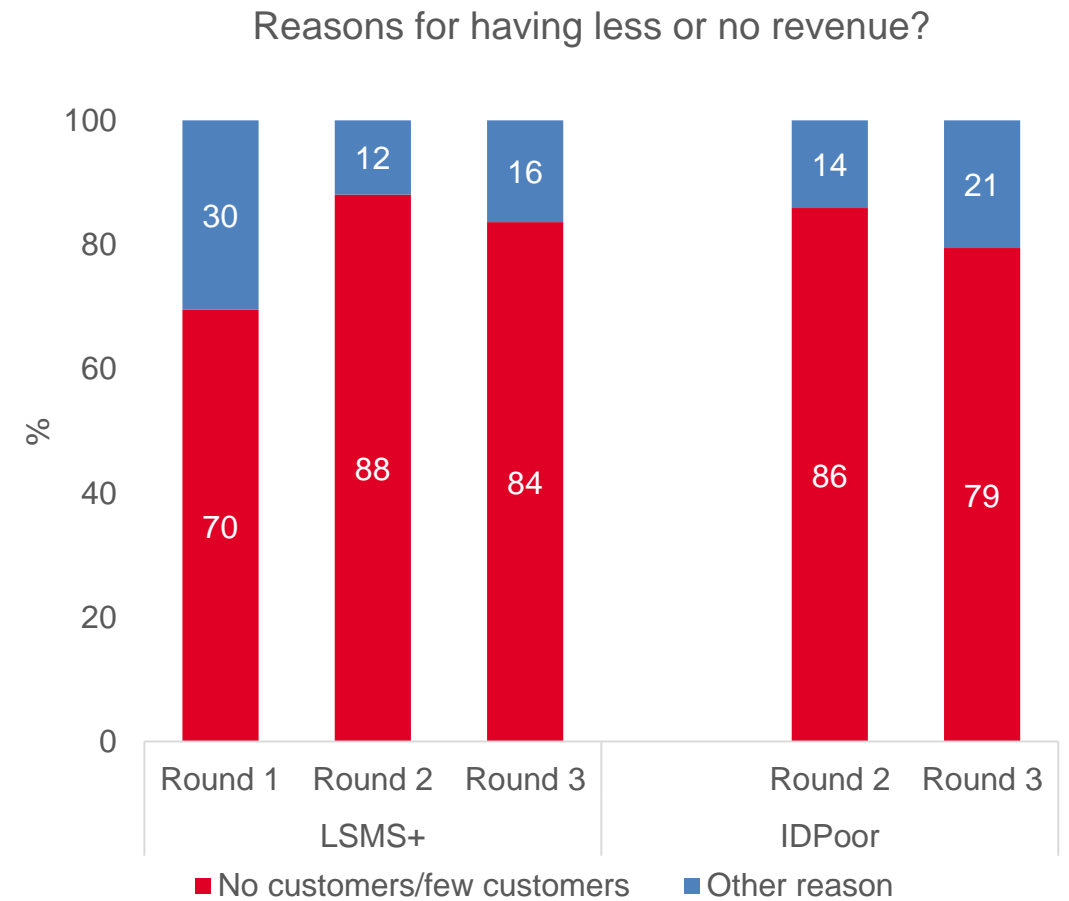
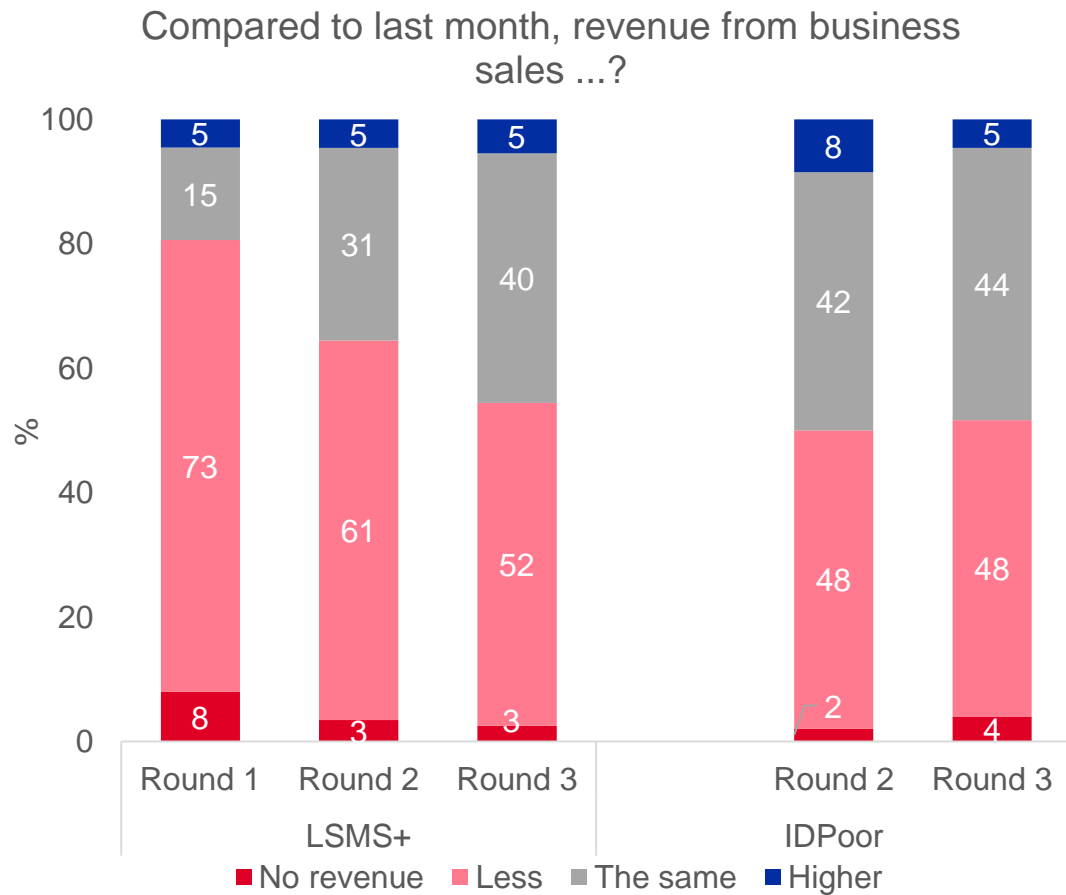
Why did you stop working?



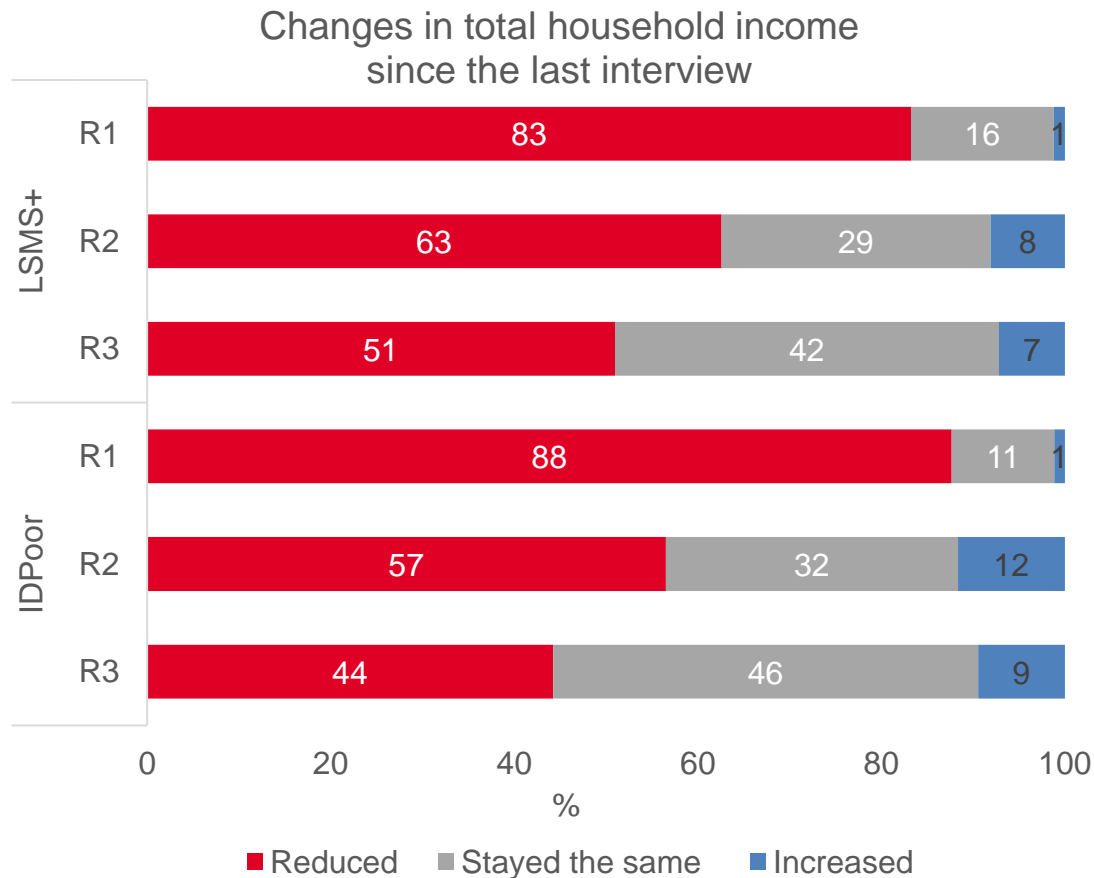
“Before the COVID-19 outbreak” is the reference period in round 1.

Source: LSMS+ sample. “Other” reasons in round 3 mostly are related to flooding.

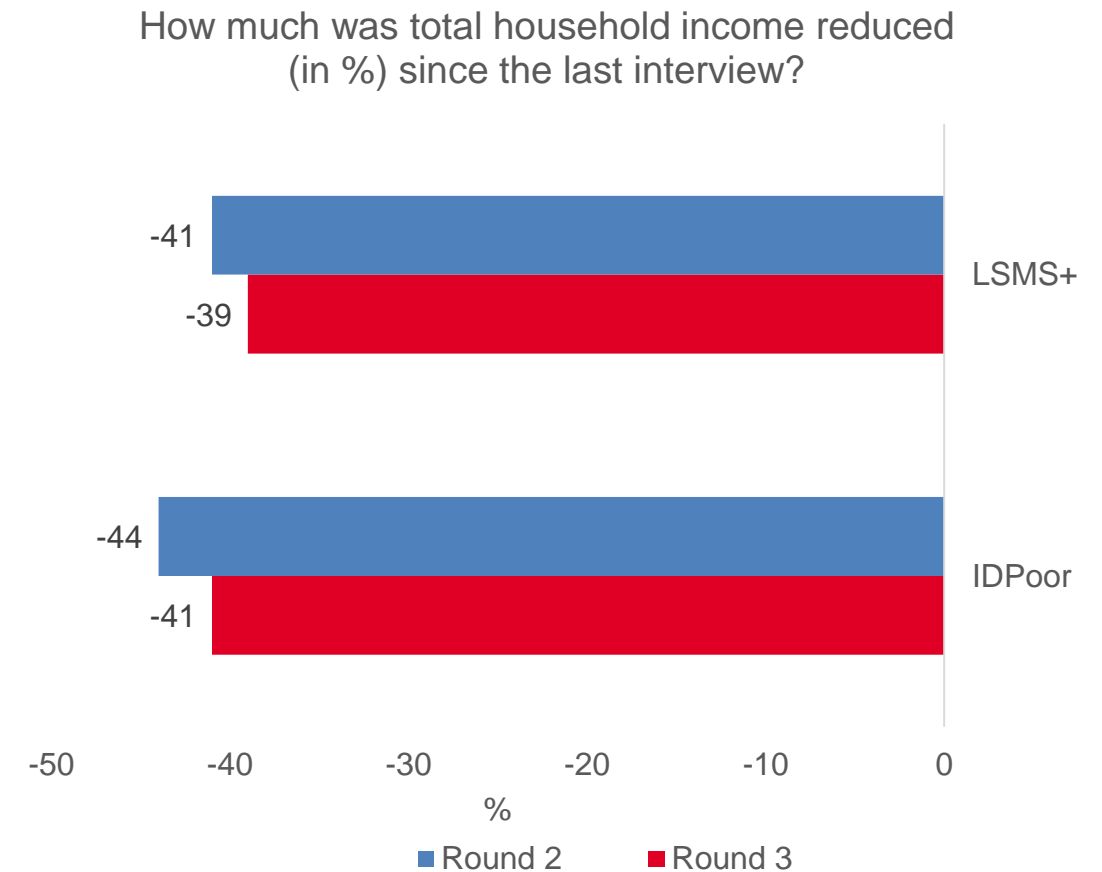
The negative impact of the pandemic on non-farm family businesses remains substantial but is diminishing. Weak consumer demand continues to drive revenue losses.



Fewer households reported a decline in household income, but substantial income losses remain

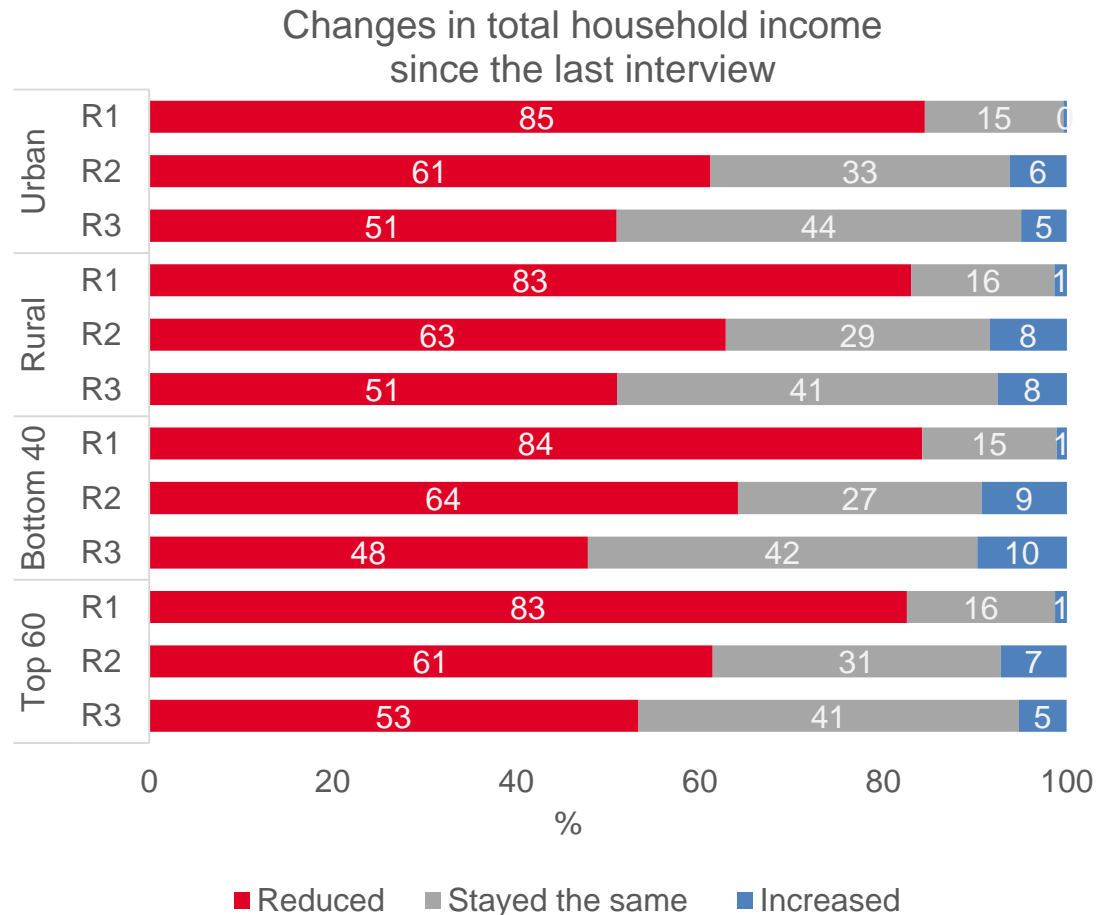


“Before the COVID-19 outbreak” is the reference period for R1.

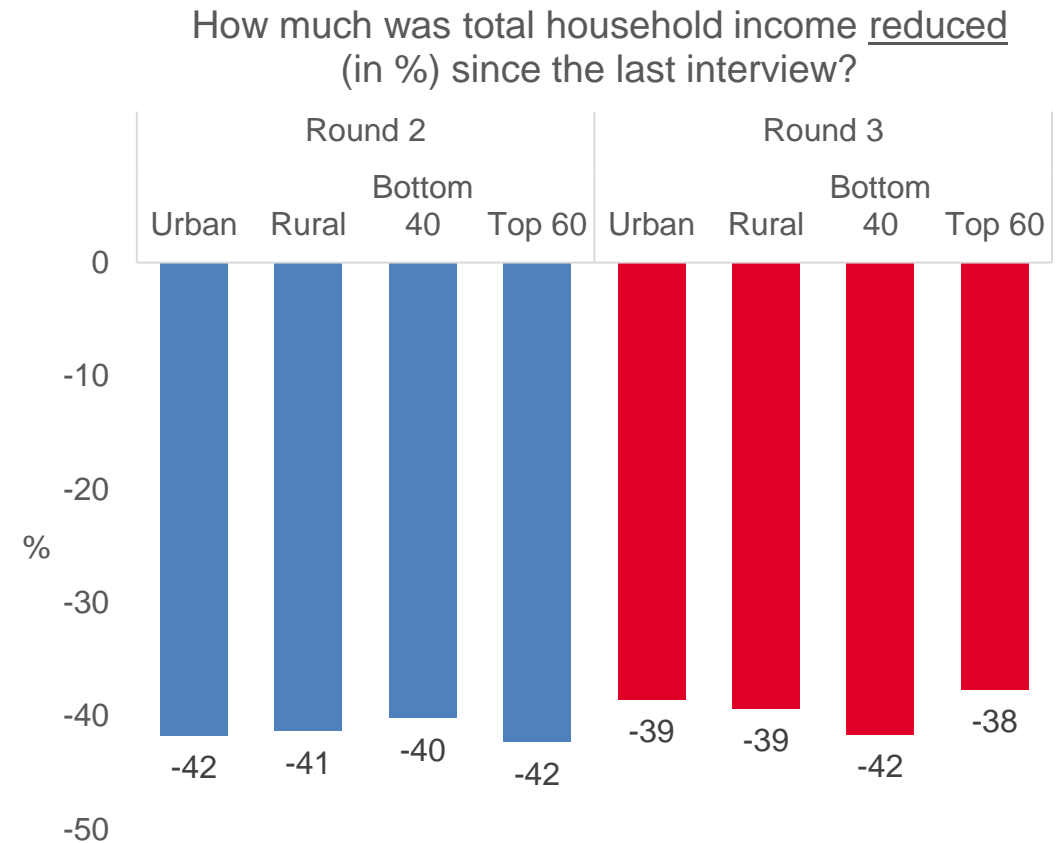


Average % reduction in total household income for sample of households reporting a reduction in total household income since the last round.

Losses in income slowed across population groups and area of residence in Cambodia, but many families still suffered losses



Source: LSMS+ sample.

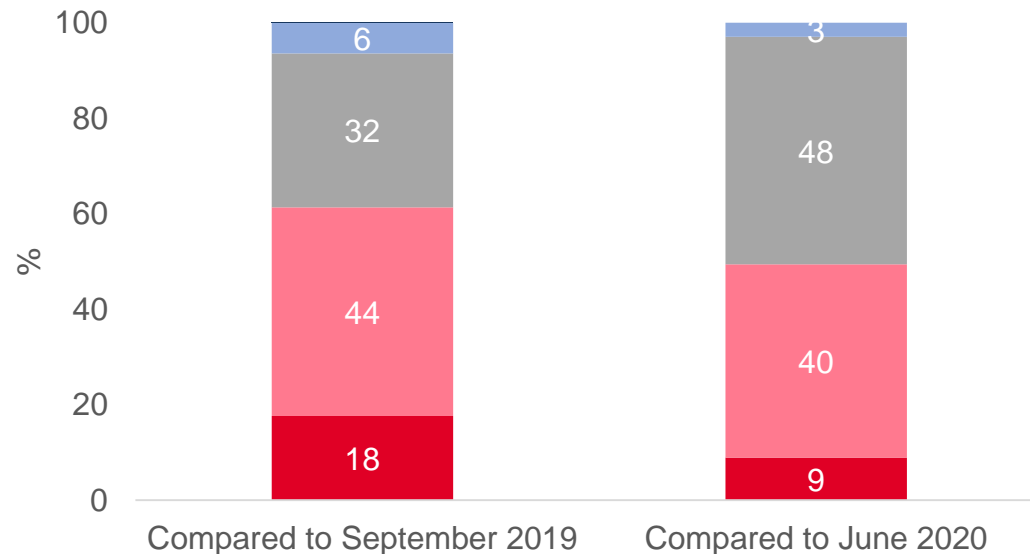


Average % reduction in total household income for sample of households reporting a reduction in total household income since the last round.

Households perceive their well-being and economic status to have deteriorated since the previous year

How has your household wellbeing and economic status changed?

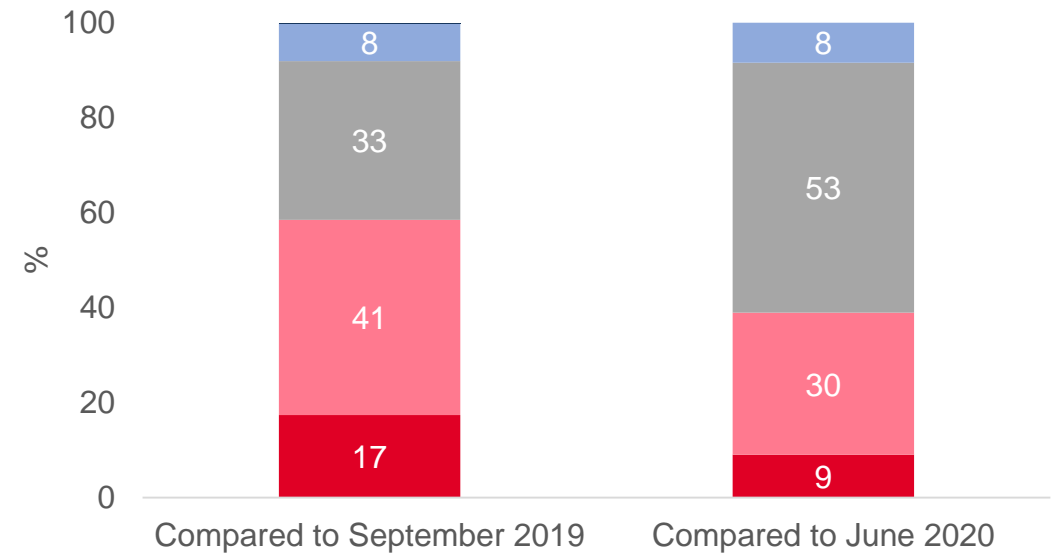
LSMS+



- Increased by a lot
- Increased by a little bit
- Stayed about the same
- Reduced by a little bit
- Reduced by a lot

How has your household wellbeing and economic status changed?

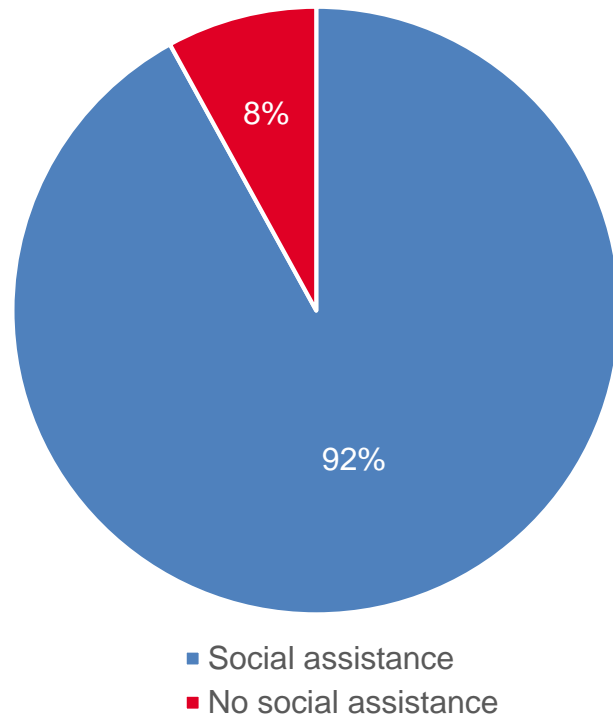
IDPoor



- Increased by a lot
- Increased by a little bit
- Stayed about the same
- Reduced by a little bit
- Reduced by a lot

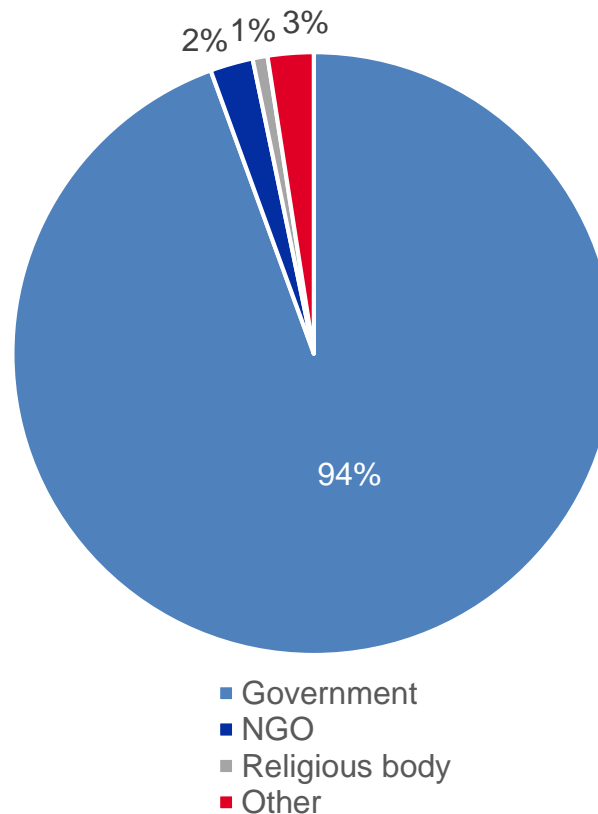
High coverage of social assistance (SA) among IDPoor: 9 in 10 IDPoor households receive some form of SA, mostly via cash transfers from the government

Share of social assistance beneficiaries since last interview



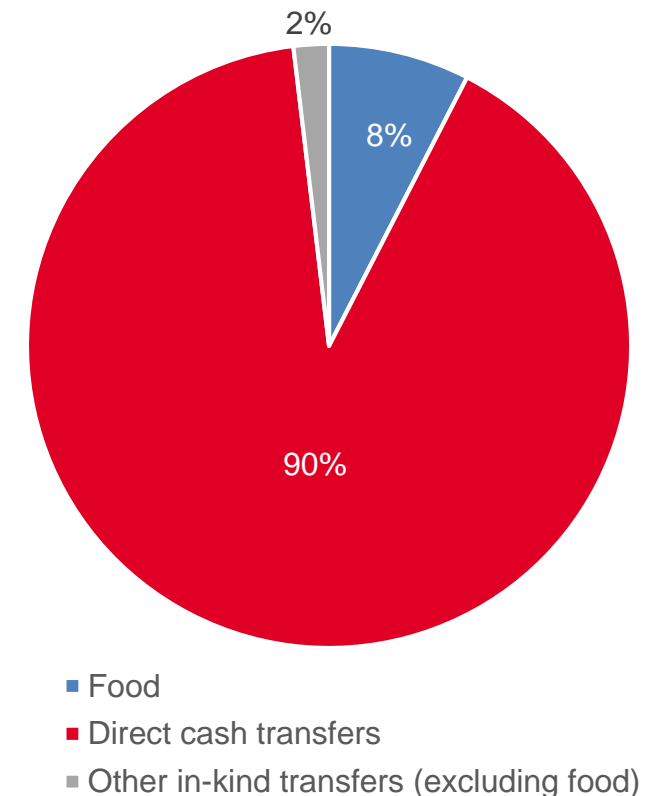
Source: IDPoor sample. Round 3.

Main source of social assistance



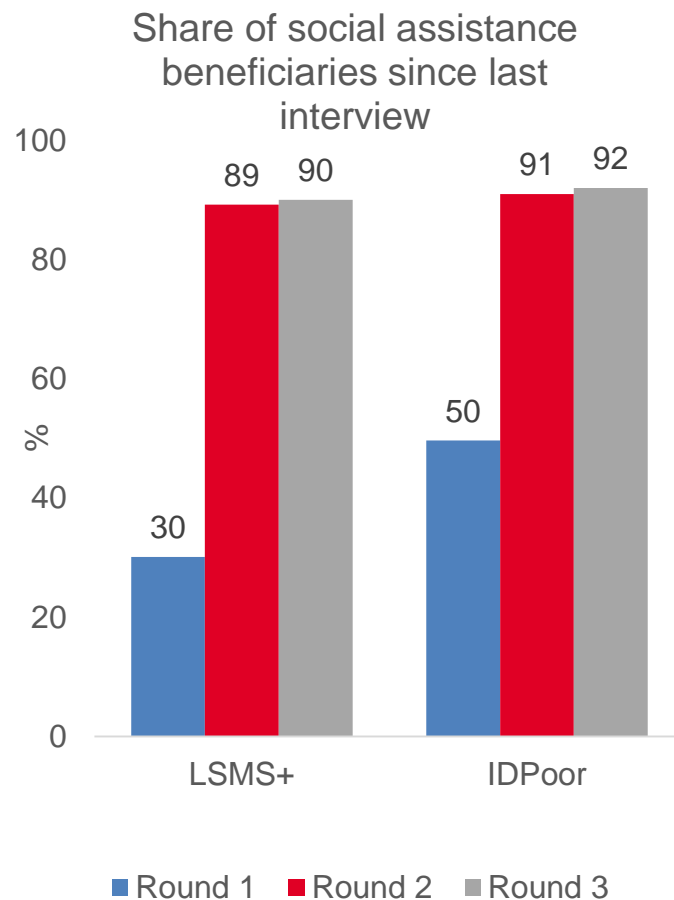
Source: IDPoor sample. Round 3.

Types of social assistance

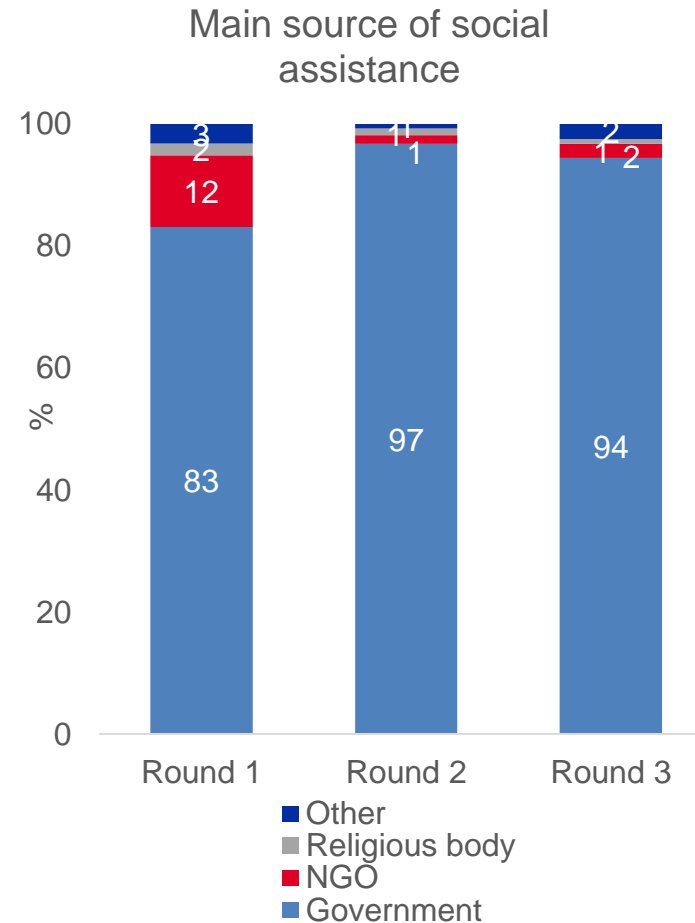


Source: IDPoor sample. Round 3.

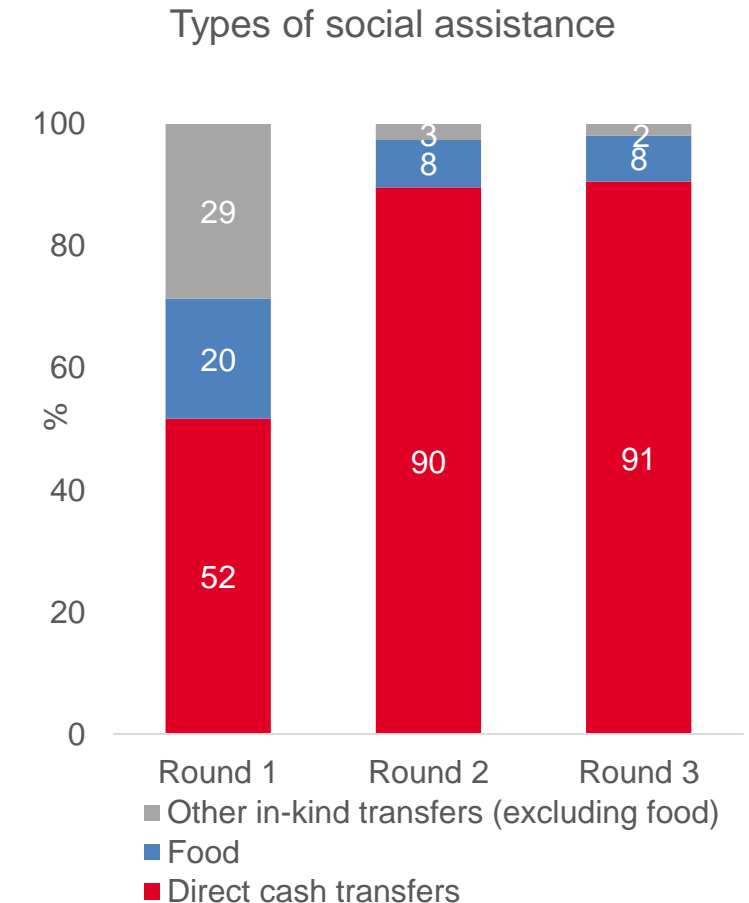
Coverage of social assistance among IDPoor increased since June 2020 following the launch of the government's relief cash transfer program



Source: Eligible sample (IDPoor households with registered equity card).

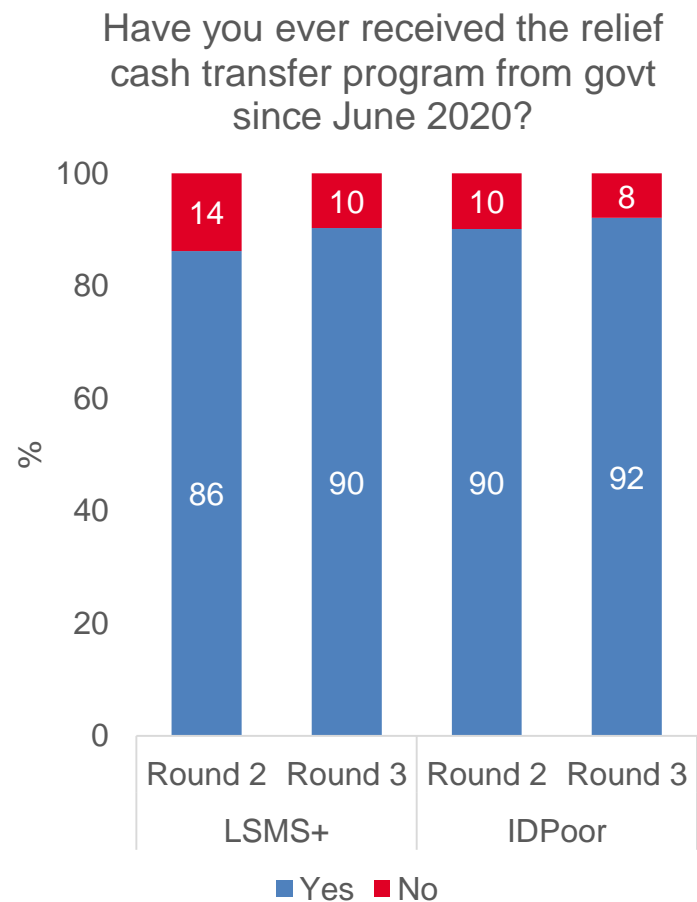


Source: IDPoor sample.

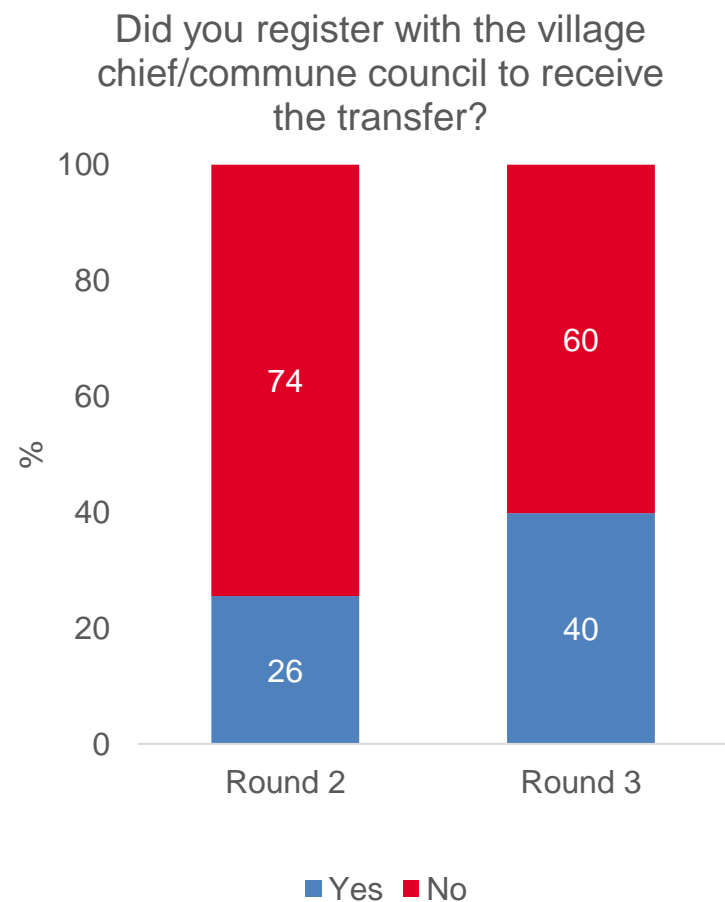


Source: IDPoor sample.

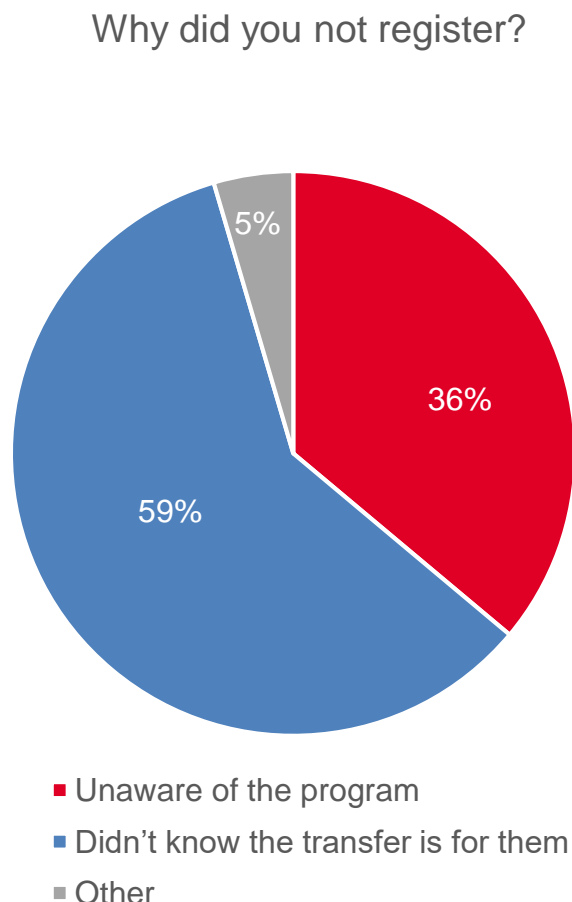
Relief cash transfers have reached many IDPoor households. A small proportion remains uncovered, but registration has increased among those who did not receive these transfers.



Source: Eligible sample (IDPoor households with registered equity card).

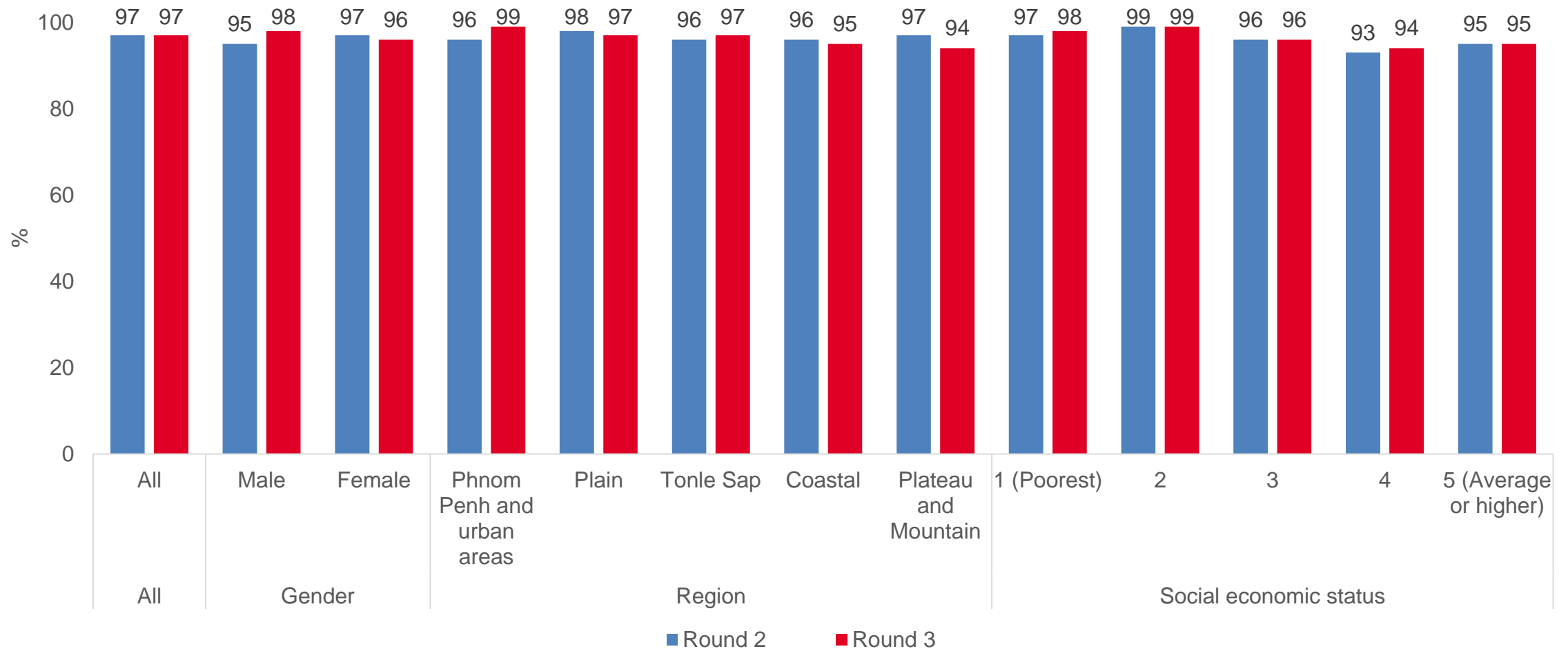


Source: IDPoor sample that have not yet received relief transfers.



Source: IDPoor sample. Round 3.

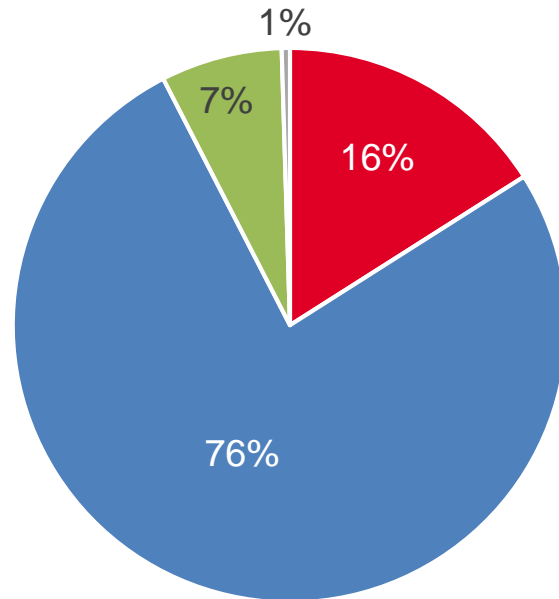
Take-up is high among IDPoor households that registered for the relief cash transfer program



Source: IDPoor sample.

Over 9 in 10 IDPoor households perceive the registration and payment process for the relief transfers as easy

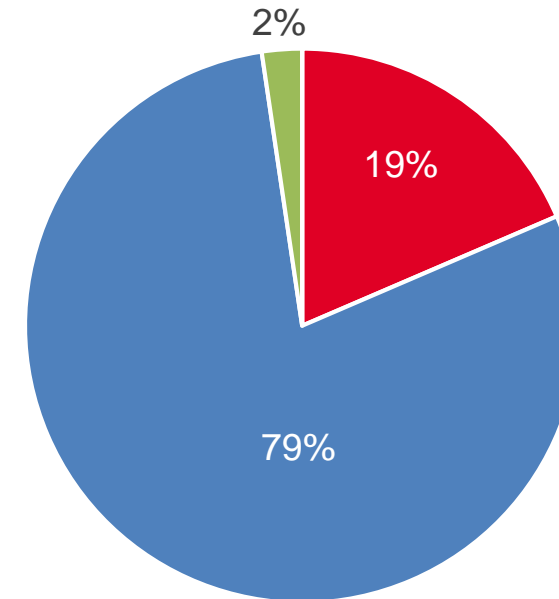
How easy did you find the registration process for the relief transfer program?



■ Very easy ■ Easy ■ Difficult ■ Very difficult

Source: IDPoor sample. Round 3.

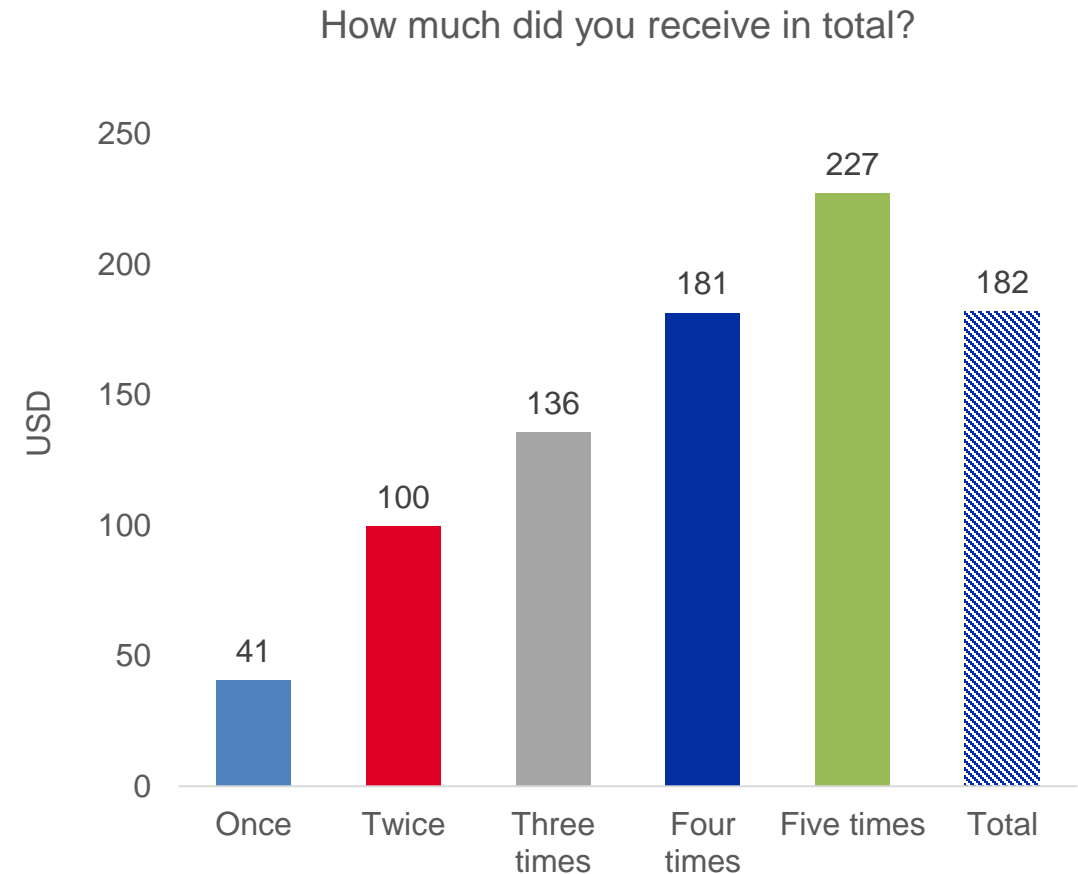
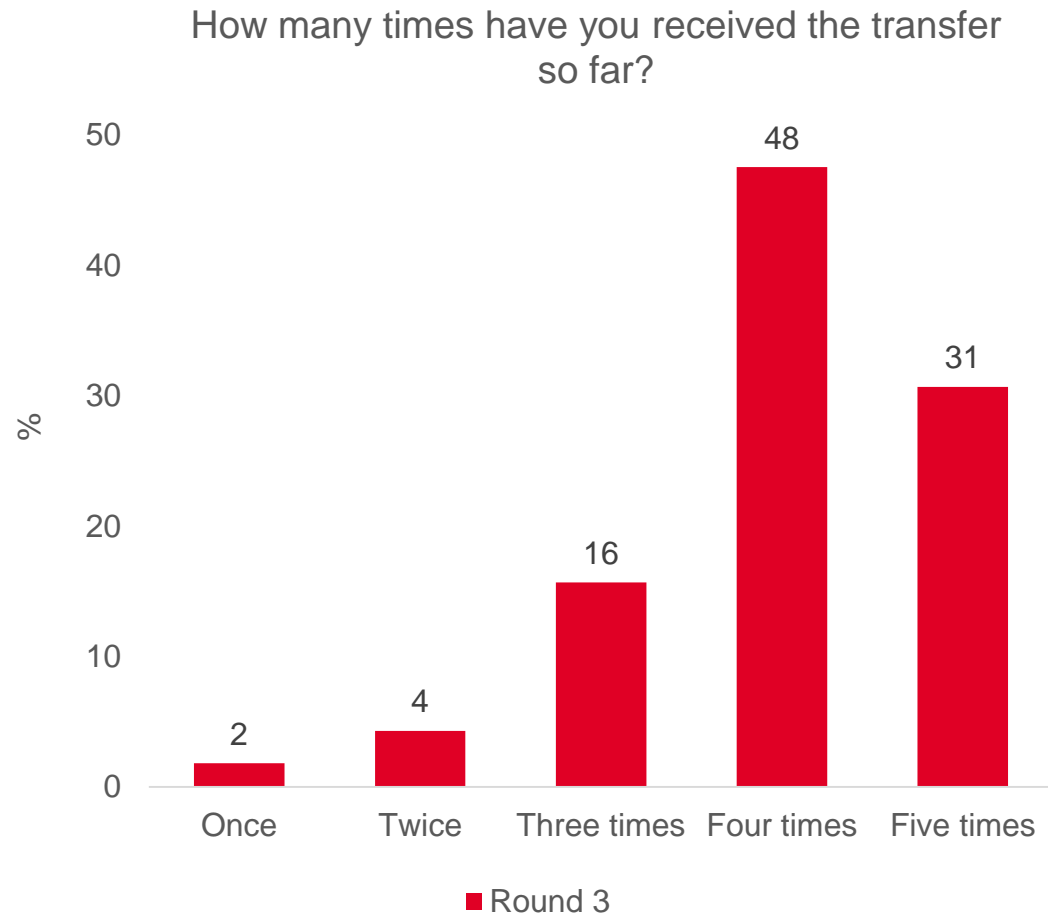
How easy did you find the process for receiving payments from the relief transfer program?



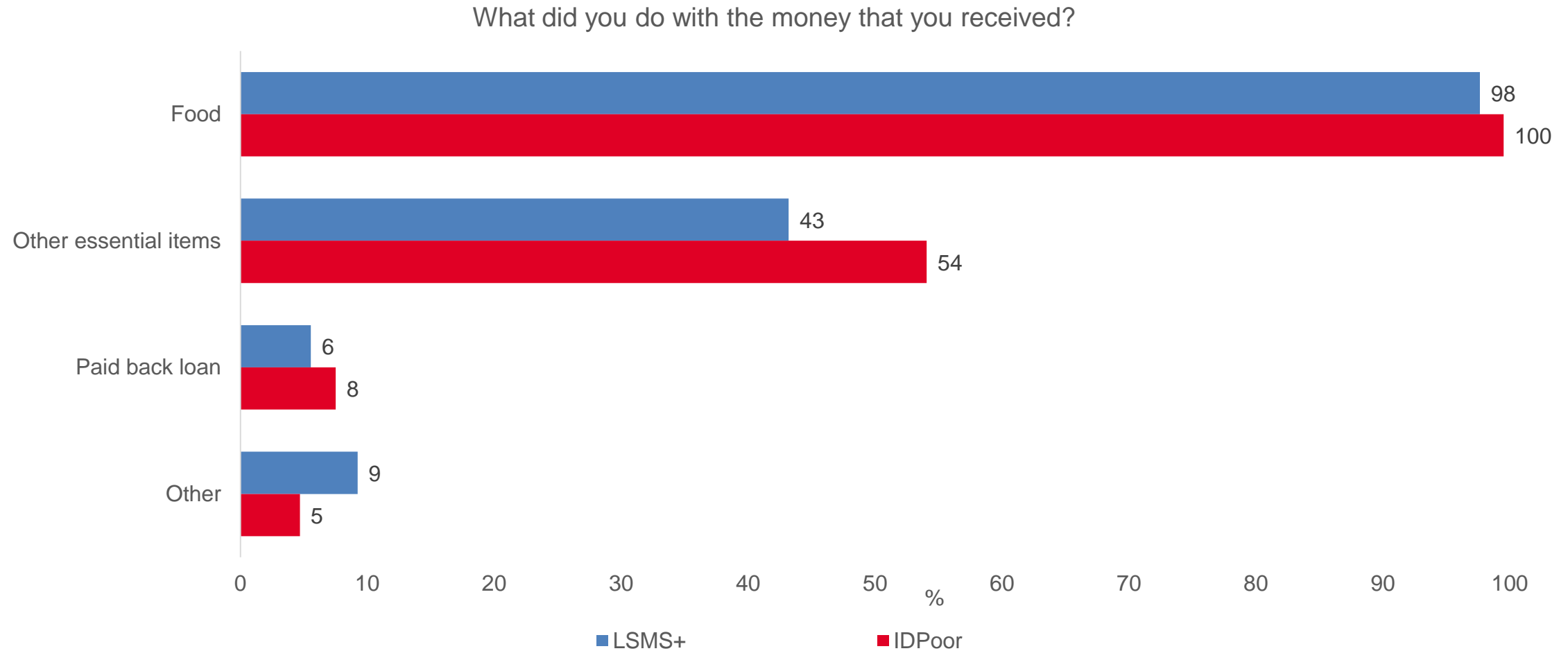
■ Very easy ■ Easy ■ Difficult ■ Very difficult

Source: IDPoor sample. Round 3.

Frequency and amounts of cash transfers are as expected: Most beneficiaries have received 4 to 5 cash payments, averaging US\$182 in total

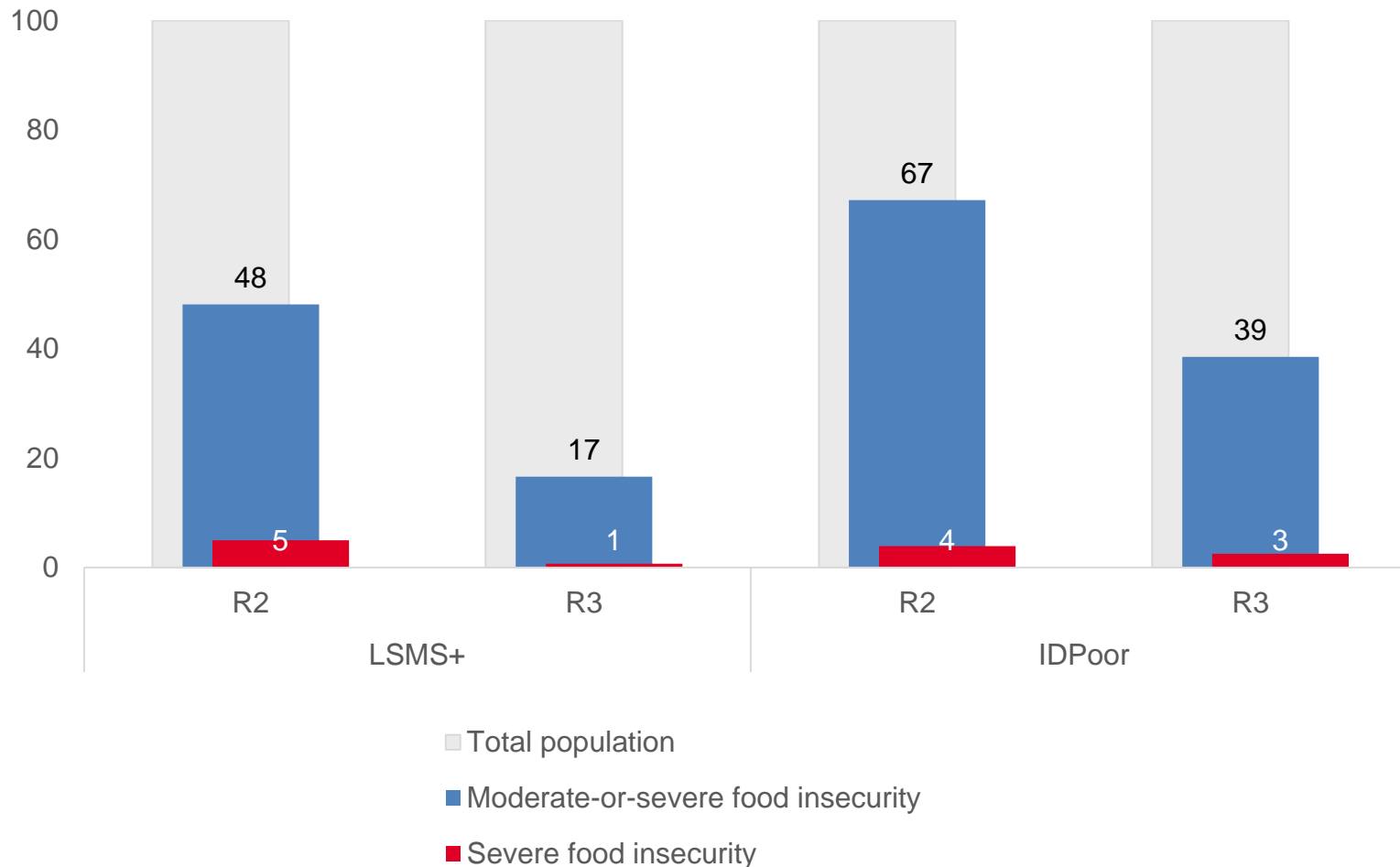


Most households spent their cash transfers on food, a significant portion also spend it on essential items



Data from round 3 only.

Food insecurity improved between August and October



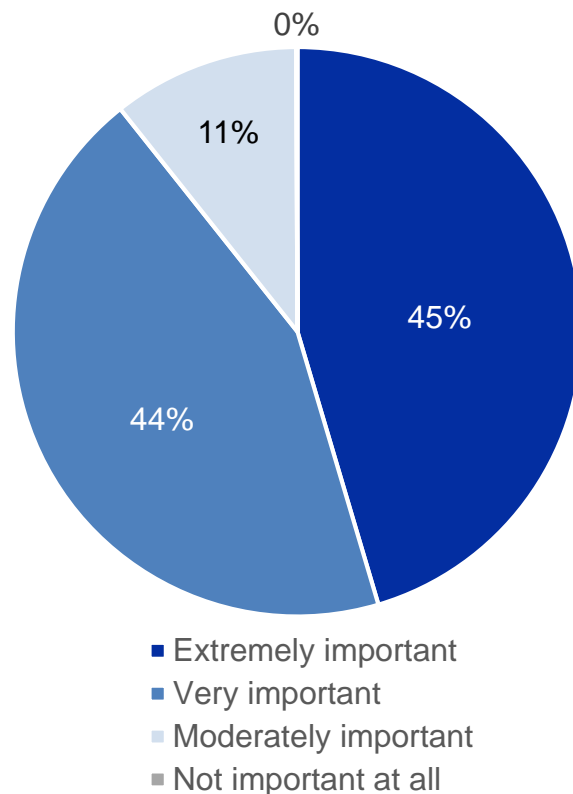
“In the last 30 days” is the reference period.

People experiencing moderate levels of food insecurity will typically eat low quality diets and might have been forced, at times during the year, to also reduce the quantity of food they would normally eat, while those experiencing severe levels would have gone for entire days without eating, due to lack of money or other resources to obtain food.

Prevalence of food insecurity, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), was estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

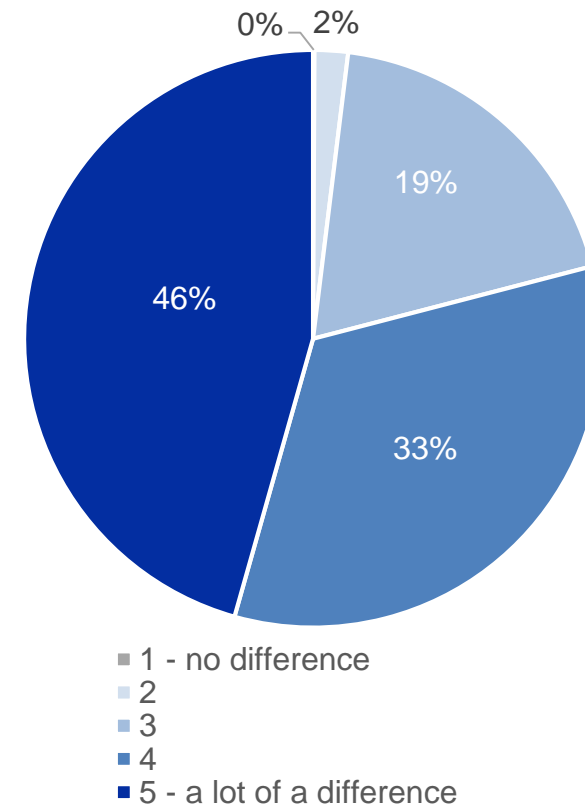
Relief cash transfers are important for IDPoor households and are perceived to have had a positive impact on household economic well-being

How important was the relief transfer for your household's (economic) well-being?



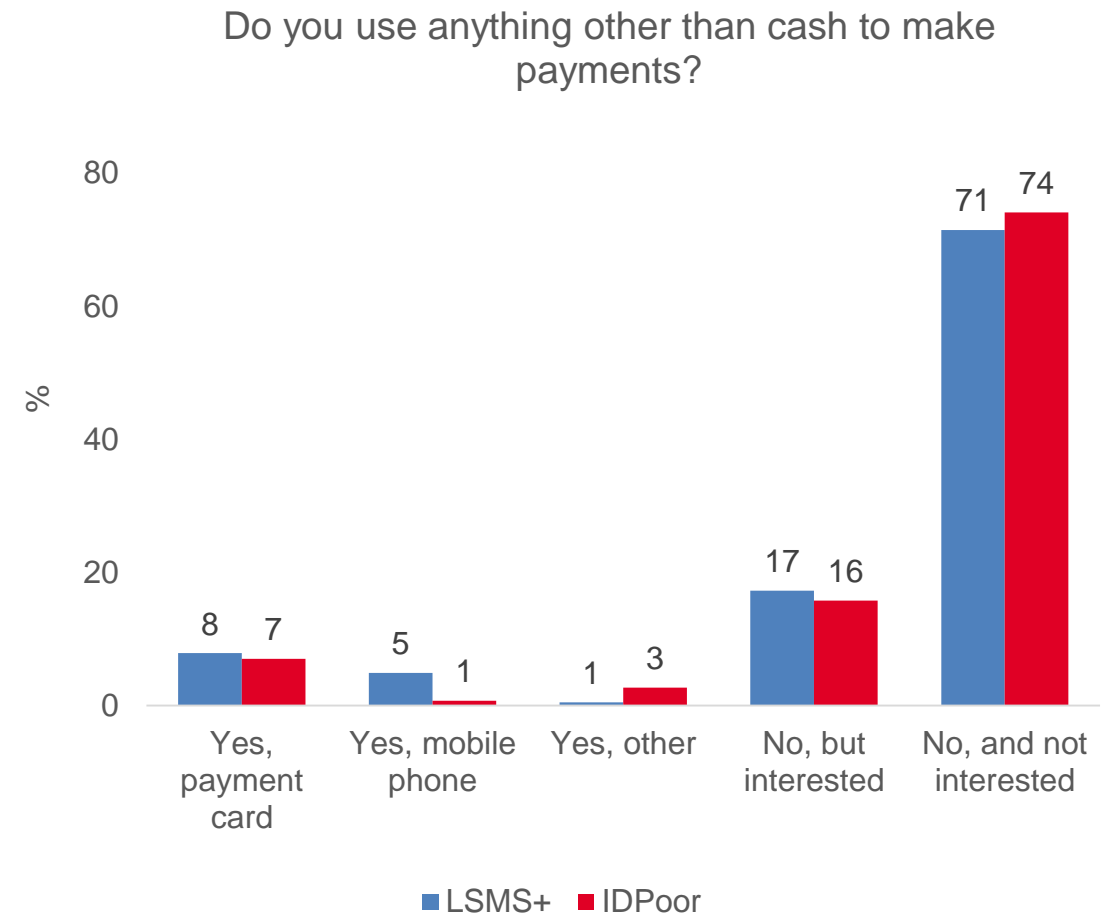
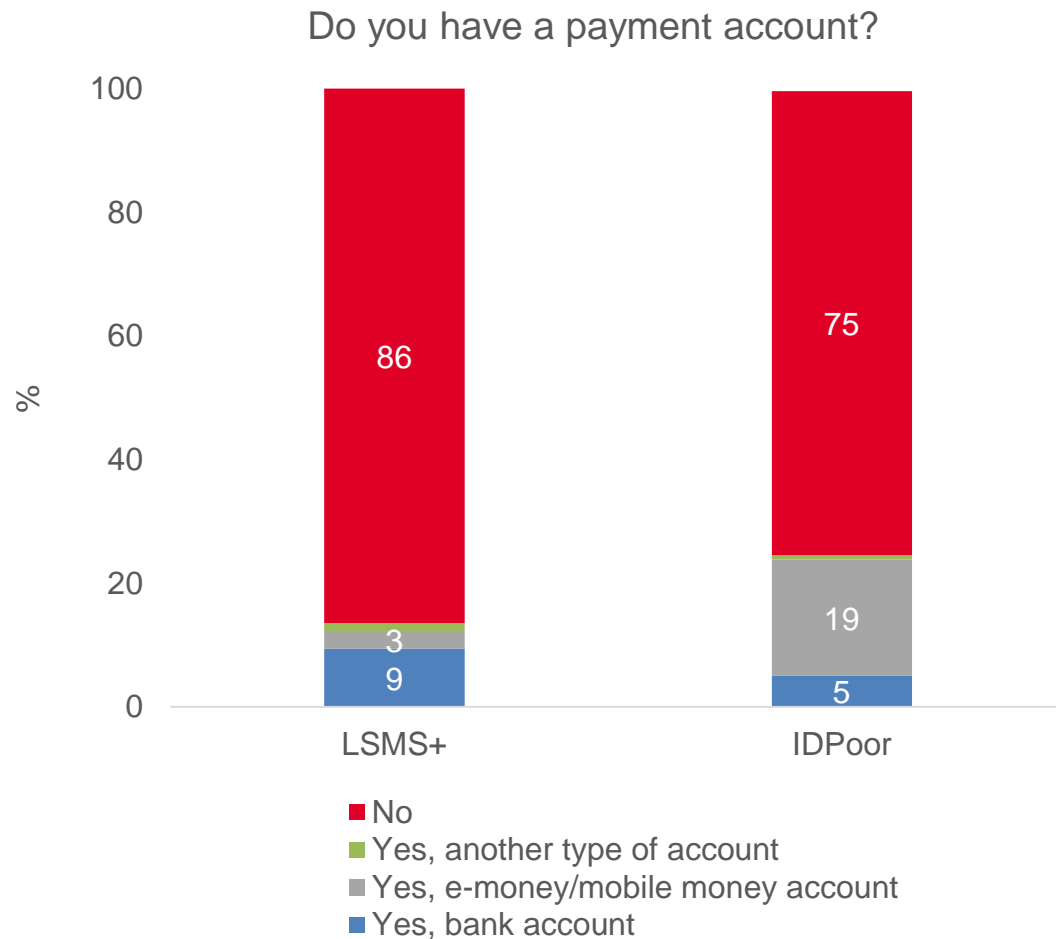
Source: IDPoor sample. Round 3.

How much of a difference did the relief transfer make to your household's (economic) wellbeing?

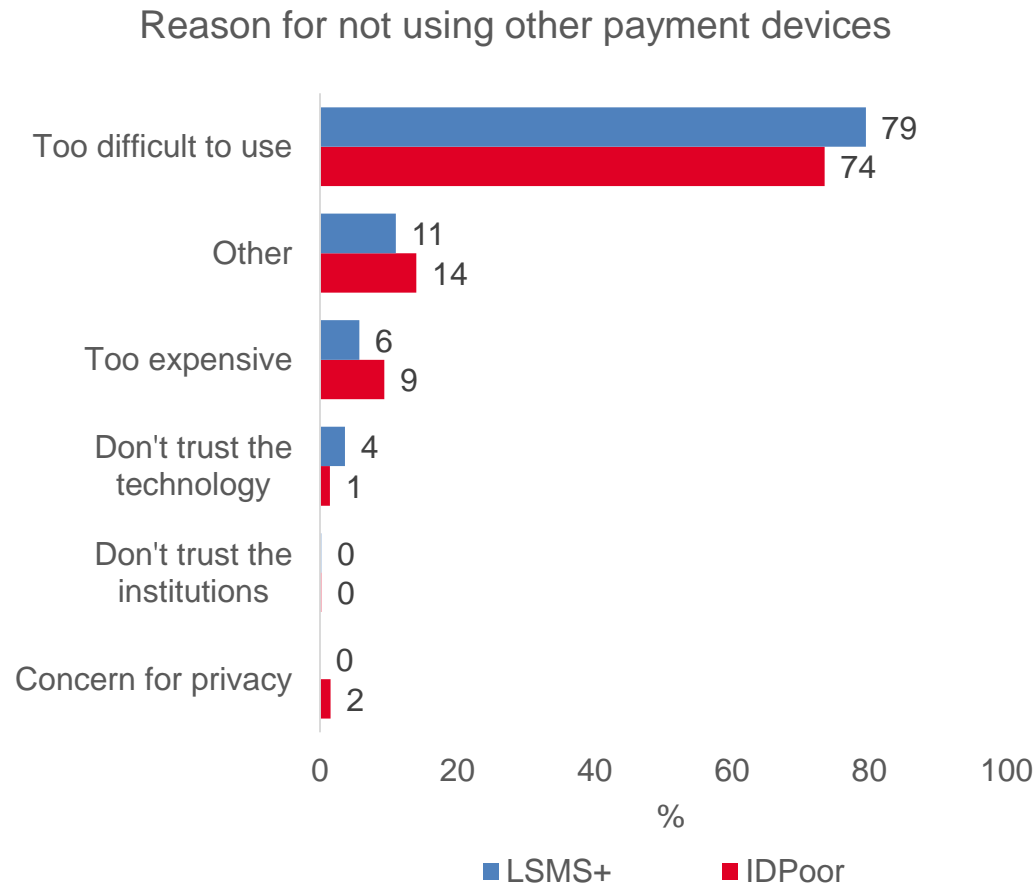


Source: IDPoor sample. Round 3.

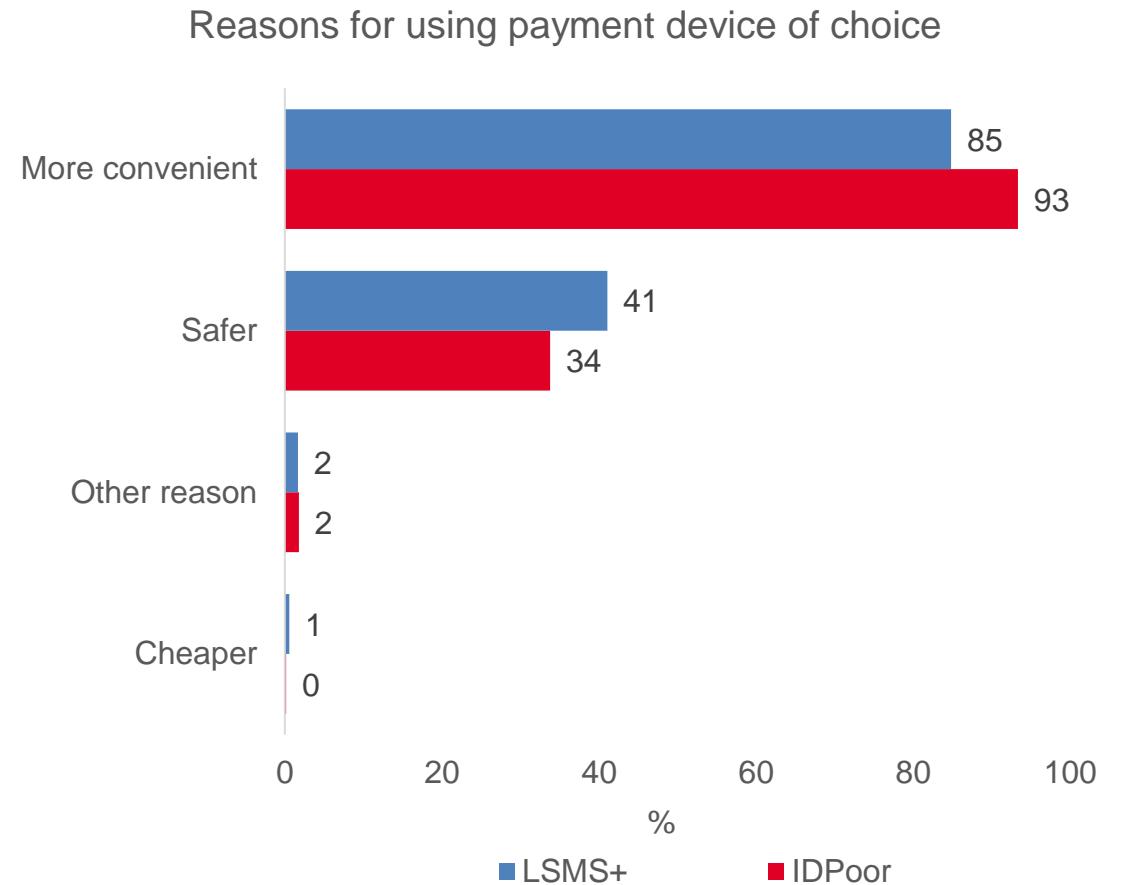
Many Cambodians are still unbanked and prefer to make payments in cash instead of using other payment devices



Difficulty of use is the main reason for using cash only, while convenience is the primary reason for using payment methods other than cash



Sample of respondents using payment methods other than cash and respondents who are using cash but would be interested in other devices.



Sample of respondents only using cash to make payments who are not interested in other payment devices.

Concluding remarks

- The [Cambodian economy](#) continues to suffer from the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, although there are signs that economic activity is picking up.
- The pandemic has had negative impacts on [jobs and incomes](#); these impacts appear to be less severe compared to the onset of the pandemic, but a substantial share of households continues to face challenges.
- Prolonged economic hardships linked to the lingering global pandemic however risk increasing poverty.
- The government has temporarily expanded the existing social assistance program to provide cash transfers to impoverished families during the COVID-19 pandemic and has provided unemployment benefits for suspended workers in tourism and garment workers for a brief period.
 - Cambodia had [very low](#) levels of social assistance spending pre-COVID.
 - Relief cash transfer program has drastically increased social assistance to the poor and vulnerable in Cambodia in a short timeframe.
 - This has provided [much-needed support](#) during difficult times.
- While the relief transfers have [high demand](#) and some [positive impact](#), not all households that have been adversely impacted by the pandemic are covered under the government's assistance program.
 - Only around [15 to 20 percent of the HHs covered](#) (much less than those negatively affected by the COVID-19 crisis: newly poor, the vulnerable).
- The evolving COVID-19 pandemic implies that the full impact of the crisis on households is yet to be known. To mitigate the social and economic impacts, instituting broad-based social assistance and boosting pro-poor and growth enhancing public investments can help.

Implementation plan

Baseline (Round 1)

May–June 2020

Knowledge, Behavior,
Access, Employment,
Income Loss, Food
Insecurity, Coping
Mechanism, Safety Net

Follow-up (Round 3)

October–November 2020

Knowledge, Access,
Employment, Income
Loss, Food Insecurity,
Safety Net, Vaccination,
Socioeconomic Status,
Payment Methods

Follow-up (Round 2)

August–September 2020

Access, Employment,
Income Loss, Food
Insecurity, Safety Net,
Migration

Follow-up (Round 4)

December 2020–January 2021

Knowledge, Access,
Employment, Income Loss,
Food Insecurity, Coping
Mechanism, Safety Net,
Socioeconomic Status,
Payment Methods



Annex: Types of social assistance programs

	Eligibility criteria	Transfer amount
COVID-19 related Social Assistance Programs		
Relief cash transfer program for poor and vulnerable households	IDPoor households	(See next slide)
Unemployment benefits for suspended workers in garment and tourism sector	Garment and tourism workers in the formal sector	US\$70 per month for two months (US\$40 paid by the government, and US\$30 paid by the factory)
Non-COVID-19 related Social Assistance Programs		
Conditional cash transfer for pregnant women and child under 2	IDPoor households	US\$190 for 1000 days
Home grown school feeding program	All household with children in the targeted schools	
Scholarship program	Performance based (school) IDPoor households (government)	

Annex: Relief cash transfer program for poor and vulnerable households during COVID-19

	Phnom Penh		Other urban		Other rural	
	IDPoor 1	IDPoor 2	IDPoor 1	IDPoor 2	IDPoor 1	IDPoor 2
Household	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$20	\$20
Each member	\$13	\$9	\$10	\$7	\$6	\$4
Vulnerable member						
Child aged 0-5	\$10	\$7	\$10	\$7	\$6	\$4
Disability	\$10	\$7	\$10	\$7	\$6	\$4
Adult aged 60+	\$10	\$7	\$10	\$7	\$6	\$4
HIV/AIDS	\$10	\$7	\$10	\$7	\$6	\$4

IDPoor1 households (very poor) are estimated to receive on average \$67 per month, while IDPoor2 (poor) are estimated to receive \$52

Thank you

Wendy Karamba and Kimsun Tong led the Cambodia High-Frequency Phone Survey (HFPS) team that comprised of Maheshwor Shrestha, Sokbunthoeun So and Isabelle Salcher. Nuppun Research Consulting implemented the survey with technical and financial support from the World Bank. Additional financial contributions for the HFPS were received from the Public Financial Management and Service Delivery Trust Fund contributed by Australia and the European Union. The team is grateful to the National Institute of Statistics of the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation for their collaboration, as well as the Food and Agriculture Organization for their analytical support on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES).

Website: [Monitoring the Impact of COVID-19 on Households in Cambodia](#)

Contact:

Wendy Karamba

Kimsun Tong

