IMPACTS AND PERCEPTIONS OF COVID-19

GEORGIA HIGH FREQUENCY SURVEY
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MONITORING THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 IN GEORGIA

Survey Methods
Context of COVID-19 in Georgia

- Over **254 thousand people** have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in Georgia, by January 2020. Over 3 thousand people have died due to COVID-19.

- Georgia responded swiftly to the outbreak of COVID-19, declaring national state of emergency on March 21st, 2020. However, the number of active cases accelerated and increased 10-fold by September 2020.

- **Localized restrictions** based on the epidemiological situation remained in force until February 2021. The measures include partial closures of intercity passenger transport, restaurants and food outlets. Additional restrictions apply in Tbilisi and other large cities to retail outlets, educational facilities, etc.

- The pandemic has contributed to economic slowdowns in key sectors of the economy, including tourism (8% of GDP).

- The economic shocks derived from the pandemic are expected to **contract the economy by -5.8% in 2020**, a sharp contrast to initial forecasts of **4.6% GDP growth** held before the pandemic.
**COVID-19 Outbreak**

Jan 30. WHO declares outbreak a Public Health Emergency.


Feb 26. Georgian citizen returning from Iran diagnosed w/ COVID-19.


Mar 23. First strict quarantine restrictions.

Feb 29. Georgia closes schools.


Mar 23. First strict quarantine restrictions.

Feb 29. Georgia closes schools.


**Georgia ES 2019.** 701 interviews (581 SMEs and large + 120 micro firms) conducted between Mar-2019 & Jan-2020.

**COVID-19 Monitor survey.** Six rounds collected between Apr-June 2020, by random digit dialing. Information collected on individual attitudes, behaviors, wellbeing and expectations.

**Georgia COVID-19 Follow-up Round 1.** Same 701 firms (ES 2019) interviewed June 2-10 by CATI.*

**Georgia COVID-19 Follow-up Round 2.** Same 701 firms re-contacted. 575 successful interviews completed in Oct-Nov 2020 by CATI.*

**Georgia High-Frequency Survey.**

Round 1 collected in Dec 2020, by random digit dialing. Information collected on COVID-19 shocks on jobs, incomes, schooling, etc; government assistance; individual attitudes and expectations.

**Georgia High-Frequency Survey.**

Round 2 collected in Feb 2020.

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*CATI: Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI)

**Collected by the Caucasus Research Resource Center, with funding from the Government of the Netherlands and technical collaboration from the World Bank.

Source: WHO (2020); IMF (2020); Government of Georgia.
Coverage of COVID-19 Monitoring

COVID-19 Follow-Up Enterprise Surveys
Collected firm-level data on the effects of COVID-19 on the private sector in 44 countries.* Similar indicators are available across countries.


COVID-19 High-Frequency Surveys
Collected data on the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on households and individuals in 45 countries. Cross-country harmonized indicators are available.**


GEORGIA’S HIGH FREQUENCY PHONE SURVEY

Round 1: Key Findings
# Methodology and Implementation

## Georgia High Frequency Survey: Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Structure</th>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Sampling frame</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Response rate</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pooled cross-sectional data</td>
<td>COVID-19 Monitoring: Round 1</td>
<td>• Random dialing of cellphone numbers. • Post-stratification weights based on Census.</td>
<td>• Representative of the national population; Tbilisi, Other Urban, Rural locations.</td>
<td>CATI†</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Dec 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; – 24&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;, 2020</td>
<td>• 1,986 interviews completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COVID-19 Monitoring: Round 2*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CATI†</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>Jan 27&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; – Feb 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;, 2021</td>
<td>• 2,039 interviews completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Bank. † Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews. * Data analysis ongoing as of early February 2021, results not included as part of this document.
Methodology and Implementation

Georgia High Frequency Survey: Topics

- Socio-demographic background
- COVID-19 Prevalence
- Remote learning
- Employment
- Household incomes
- Food security
- Coping strategies
- Government assistance
- Public opinion on COVID-19 vaccines
- Perceptions going forwards

Key Findings: Households & Individuals

COVID-19 Prevalence

• 16% of respondents has had a family member sick with coronavirus. The perceived incidence is highest in Tbilisi, with 21% of respondents reporting positive cases of COVID-19 in their families. Only 11% of rural respondents reported a family COVID-19 case.

Remote Learning

• Several obstacles to distance learning were identified. Although 75% of households has internet access at home and 76% has access to a smartphone at home, children face limitations in ICTs to learn remotely. Around 22% of household with school-aged children report that unstable internet connect is a barrier to online learning (this share is close to 29% for rural households).

• The most common concern for learning is that children’s struggles to focus during online classes (31% of households), followed by the lack of physical activity (29%). Most respondents are aware of online resources and materials, and they can find enough time to help children’s learning. Few interviewees dismiss teachers’ preparedness to teach online.

Employment

• 42% of workers in Georgia may have lost their job since the coronavirus outbreak; they reported employment before March 2020, but they were not employed in December 2020. At least 300 thousand (almost 50%) of those workers attributed this change to job or business losses to COVID-19. An additional 4% of workers who were no longer employed in Dec-2020 stopped working to avoid exposure to the virus.

• Child and elderly care responsibilities are more common reasons for females (than males) losing their job since March 2020. Nonetheless, their shares remain low.

• Over 55% of workers in restaurants and hospitality reported unemployment due to the economic consequences of COVID-19. Over 40% of workers in wholesale and retail also lost their job or business to COVID-19. Accounting for sectoral size, the largest increases of unemployment attributed to COVID-19 come from wholesale and retail (20%), followed by construction (13%). Restaurants and hotels shows a large drop in employment (8%).

Household Incomes

• One third of households observed their household incomes decreased since February 2020. Only 6% observed higher household incomes, while the rest remained unchanged. On average, households with available information earned 207 fewer GEL in December than February 2020. Income shocks due to losses in labor incomes affected 33% of households.

• A proxy analysis based on self-reported household incomes suggests that up to 12% of respondents may have become impoverished between February 2020 and November 2020.
Key Findings: Households & Individuals

Food Security
• Food insecurity is a main concern. 54% of households have struggled with insufficient money to buy food over the past month. Among them, 30% face food insecurity at least once per week.

Coping Strategies
• The most common strategies to cope with the negative economic effects of the pandemic are reliance on assistance from friends & family (11% of households) and reliance on savings (11%). However, households have also borrowed from friends & family (8%) or used credit purchases (8%), while only 4% have taken loans from a financial institution.
• Concerningly, some households have reduced consumption of non-food items (7%) and even reduced food consumption (7%). Less than 1% of respondents reported engaging in alternative activities to generate income.

Government Support
• Most Georgian households (84%) have received some form of government assistance to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. Utility subsidies have been most common, reaching three quarters of households. Around 35% of households received assistance for school supplies or children, and 12% of households had relief on loan payments.
• The two unemployment benefits considered have reached 6% of households (GEL 200 allowance for formal workers) and 10% (one-time payment the self-employed).

COVID-19 Vaccines
• Respondents were divided on their willingness to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. 37% of respondents would receive the vaccine, 34% would not receive the vaccine, and 30% did not know.
• The most common concern regarding vaccines is safety. Close to 40% of respondents who would not take the vaccine believe that the vaccine will not be thoroughly enough tested six months from now.

Perceptions
• Georgians’ perception of the current situation and expectations for the future are not optimistic. Almost 50% of households currently face a “bad” financial situation in their household. An additional quarter of households live in a “very bad” financial state.
• Going forward, almost one quarter of households expect that the financial situation will worsen in the next 12 months; 30% expect no changes and 30% are uncertain. Only 16% expect improvements in their financial situation.
1) Prevalence of COVID-19

- 16% of respondents reported knowledge of at least one case of COVID-19 among family members (including themselves). Most reported cases had been confirmed by a lab test.*
- The reported prevalence was much lower among rural respondents (11%) and higher in Tbilisi (21%).

Notes: * The Armenia High Frequency Survey found that 5% of households had a family members who tested positive for the coronavirus. A potential explanation is that round 1 of the Armenia HFS was collected between July and September 2020, during a period of relatively low incidence of new COVID-19 cases in the country. In contrast, the data collection period for the Georgia HFS corresponded with a period relatively rapid spread of new COVID-19 cases.
2) Household assets and internet access

- **Access to internet and communication technologies (ICTs) is relatively widespread** in Georgia. Three quarters of households have access to internet connection at home. And, nationally, internet and computer coverage are around 90% among households with school-aged children.

- Nonetheless, there are **significant spatial disparities** in access to ICTs. In Tbilisi, home internet coverage is almost 90%, and close to 90% of households use smart phones. But only 62% of rural households have internet connection at home. **Female-headed households** have more restricted access to ICTs and other assets.

- Limited and unequal access to ICTs could widen inequality; affect the ability of children to learn remotely; reduce connectivity and labor opportunities for workers; and threaten family businesses during the pandemic.
3) Distance learning

- The most common barrier for remote learning is **children’s trouble to stay focused during online classes**. Almost one third of households with school-aged children face this barrier.

- 29% of households with school-aged children also report the **lack of physical activity** as barrier.

- The assessment of teachers’ preparedness seems generally positive. And few households with school-aged children lack time, willingness or access to online learning material.

**Reported barriers to online learning** (% Households with school-aged children)

- Do not have internet access
- Internet access is irregular
- Didn’t know online classes & learning materials were provided
- Teachers are unprepared to teach online
- Child has trouble staying focused during online classes
- Child is not familiar with how to use a computer
- I do not have the time to help them access the materials
- Unwilling to use the available materials
- Not enough computers/devices w/ internet connection
- Lack of physical activity

Source: Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020. Note: Bars do not add up to 100%, as multiple choices were allowed per household.
3) Distance learning

- **Beyond coverage, the quality of ICTs is a potential concern.** Few households lack internet access, though poor quality connections are common. Rural households are most affected. Only 8% of rural households with school-aged children lack internet connection for online learning; but almost 30% are affected by irregular internet access.

- **Similarly, most children are familiar with computers.** However, up to one tenth of households report **insufficient number of computers or devices (with internet connection) at home.** This points at the possibility that some children may be left behind within households.

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**Reported barriers to online learning (% Households with school-aged children)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
<th>Tbilisi</th>
<th>Other Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not have internet access</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet access is irregular</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t know online classes &amp; learning materials were provided</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are unprepared to teach online</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has trouble staying focused during online classes</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child is not familiar with how to use a computer</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have the time to help them access the materials</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwilling to use the available materials</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough computers/devices w/ internet connection</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of physical activity</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020. Note: Bars do not add up to 100%, as multiple choices were allowed per household.*
4) Employment

- **42% of workers** (employed in March 2020) lost their job after the COVID-19 outbreak (they did not have a job by December 2020).
- There are relevant **gender disparities** in job losses. **50% of female workers** lost their job after the pandemic, compared to 37% of male workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job loss estimates in the population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Employed in March 2020, not employed in December 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Adult population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The estimated total job losses affected **630 thousand workers**. Additionally, around 65 workers switched employment between March and December 2020.
4) Employment

- Expressed as share of all adults, one fifth of Georgians (22%) lost their job between March and December 2020.
- The “loss of job or business because of COVID-19” was the main reason, accounting for 48% of employment losses. The fear of exposure to the virus was responsible for 4% of jobs lost.
- Other reasons cited included: temporary absence (12% of job losses); illness (7%); “unrelated” to COVID-19 (7%); lack of transport to access workplace (6%); and loss of casual work (5%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Respondent’s gender</th>
<th>Respondent’s educational attainment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Lower secondary or lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>BA or equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Urban</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Master, 5-year diploma, Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost Job/business because of COVID-19</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t want to be exposed to the virus</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care for ill family, child or elderly (includes home-schooling)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed in December 2020</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Employment

- 120 thousand jobs were lost in wholesale and retail between March and December 2020; 85 thousand jobs were lost in construction; and 55 thousand jobs were lost in the tourism and restaurant industry.
- Overall, 55% of workers in restaurants and hospitality reported unemployment due to the economic consequences of COVID-19. Over 40% of workers in wholesale and retail lost their job or business to COVID-19.

**Diagram:**
- **Absolute number of job losses Mar-Dec 2020, by sector**
- **Share of job losses between Mar-Dec 2020, by sector**
  - Job loss by December 2020
  - Job loss explicitly attributed to COVID-19*

*Source: Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020. Notes: * Includes reasons “Lost job/No business because of COVID-19” and “Don’t want to be exposed to the virus”.*
5) Income shocks

- 34% of households in Georgia reported **lower incomes after the COVID-19 outbreak** (November 2020 vs. February 2020), shifting the income distribution.
- Specifically, 33% of households reported decreased incomes due to **job losses or closures of businesses** related to the COVID-19 shock.

6) Poverty transitions

- **12% of households** became *imperished* ("new poor") after the outbreak of COVID-19, according to a measure of poverty based on self-reported household incomes in the GHFS.

- The rate of **imperishment was highest in Tbilisi (15% of households)** and lowest in rural areas. Though poverty continues to be higher among rural households.

- Only **2% of households** increased their incomes to *escape poverty*. Almost one third of households remained poor before and after the pandemic outbreak ("always poor").

![Poverty transitions between March 2020 & December 2020](chart.png)

*Source: Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020. Notes: Poverty is measured based on household per capita incomes (self-reported monthly household incomes and household size). Poor households are defined as those with incomes per capita per day lower than the international upper-middle-income poverty line of $5.50 (2011 PPP). Household incomes are unadjusted for changes in price levels across regions and within the year 2020.*
7) Food security

- **55% of Georgian households faced some degree of food insecurity** over the past month.*
- Food insecurity was more common among rural households and those losing a job since the start of COVID-19. **5% of rural households** faced insufficient money to feed their families everyday, 6% of households losing a job faced similar food insecurity.
- **80% of poor households (identified by household income) faced food insecurity.**

\[
\text{Food insecurity} \quad (\text{Not enough money to buy the food you or your family needed})
\]

- Every day: 44%, 53%, 43%, 38%, 42%, 42%, 33%, 19%
- Several times a week: 24%, 21%, 27%, 23%, 27%, 24%, 21%, 26%
- Once a week: 12%, 13%, 10%, 14%, 14%, 14%, 19%, 22%
- Less often: 14%, 12%, 12%, 18%, 14%, 19%, 19%, 23%
- Never: 4%, 4%, 4%, 5%, 4%, 6%, 4%, 8%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>% Households</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
<th>Tbilisi</th>
<th>Other Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household adults are female only</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household has school-aged children</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent lost job (March to December 2020)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor household (December 2020)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020. Notes: * Question: “Speaking about the last month, how often did you not have enough money to buy the food you or your family needed? Was it...” ** Poverty is proxied by an indicator of per capita income.
8) Household coping strategies

- Over 10% of households affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic had to rely on **assistance from friends and family**. Additionally, 11% of households relied on their **own savings**.

- 7% of households affected had to reduce food consumption. Only 1% of households had access to additional sources of income to cope with the shocks.*

- Households that became impoverished or lost a job between March and December 2020 had to rely on coping strategies more often. One in four impoverished households relied on assistance from friends and family; one in four reduced food consumption.

*Not shown. Answers with less than 2% of households are excluded. Poverty and impoverishment are proxied by an indicator of per capita income.

*Source: Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020.*
9) Government assistance

- Most Georgian households (84%) have received some form of government assistance to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. Coverage has been similar across Tbilisi, urban, and rural areas.
- Utility subsidies have been the most widespread measure (74% of households), followed by assistance (GEL 200 payment) for school supplies or children (35%), and relief on loan payments (12% of households).
- Coverage of two unemployment benefits considered has been lower: 6% of households for the monthly (GEL 200) allowance for formal workers losing their job, and 10% for the one-time payment the self-employed).
10) COVID-19 Vaccine

- 37% of Georgian adults declared willingness to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, if it became available in 6 months.*

- One third would not receive the vaccine. An additional 30% remained undecided, as of December 2020.

*Question: “If a Coronavirus vaccine becomes available in 6 months, would you want to receive it?”

Source: Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020. * Question: “If a Coronavirus vaccine becomes available in 6 months, would you want to receive it?”
10) COVID-19 Vaccine

- Males are slightly more likely than females to take the COVID-19 vaccine.

- Acceptance of the vaccine seems correlated with higher educational attainment.

- Large shares of the population across all sociodemographic groups—between 20 and 30%—remain undecided in December 2020.

10) COVID-19 Vaccine

- The main concern among people refusing the COVID-19 vaccine is the lack of thorough testing in six months.
- One forth of respondents are concerned over the potential detrimental health effects caused by the vaccine.
- Further research should investigate other reasons; one fourth of respondents had a different reason to distrust the vaccine.

Source: Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020. Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% as multiple choices were allowed.
10) COVID-19 Vaccine

- The concern over **insufficient testing** of the vaccine is high across locations and population groups.
- 4% of adults who would not receive the vaccine believe that the virus does not exist. This belief is more common among males, rural populations, and individuals with lower educational attainment.

[Diagram showing reasons for unwillingness to receive the COVID-19 vaccine by demographic group]

**Source:** Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020.
11) Perceptions and expectations

- **Half of Georgian households reported facing a “bad” financial situation** in December 2020. Almost one quarter of households faced a “very bad” financial situation. Bad and very bad financial situations are more commonly reported among rural households, female respondents, and respondents with lower educational attainment.

- Almost **one quarter of households expect a worsening financial situation** over the next year. Only 16% of households expect financial improvements. 60% of households expect the same financial situation or are uncertain. Men are slightly more optimistic than women (22% of male adults expect improvements for their households, vs. 15% of females).

**Source:** Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020.
THANK YOU!

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