

IMPACTS AND PERCEPTIONS OF COVID-19

GEORGIA HIGH FREQUENCY SURVEY



WORLD BANK GROUP
Poverty & Equity

MAIN FINDINGS
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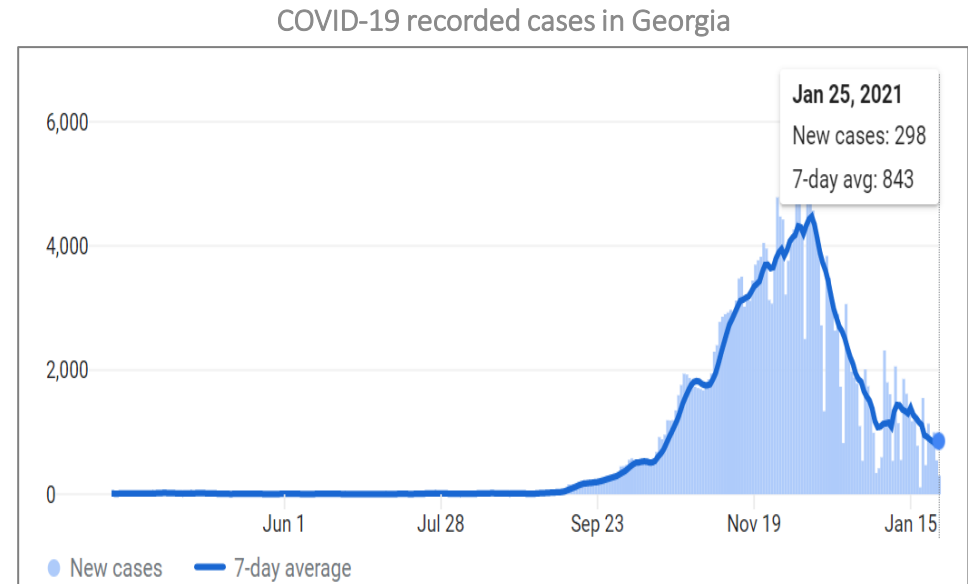
MONITORING THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 IN GEORGIA

Survey Methods

Context of COVID-19 in Georgia

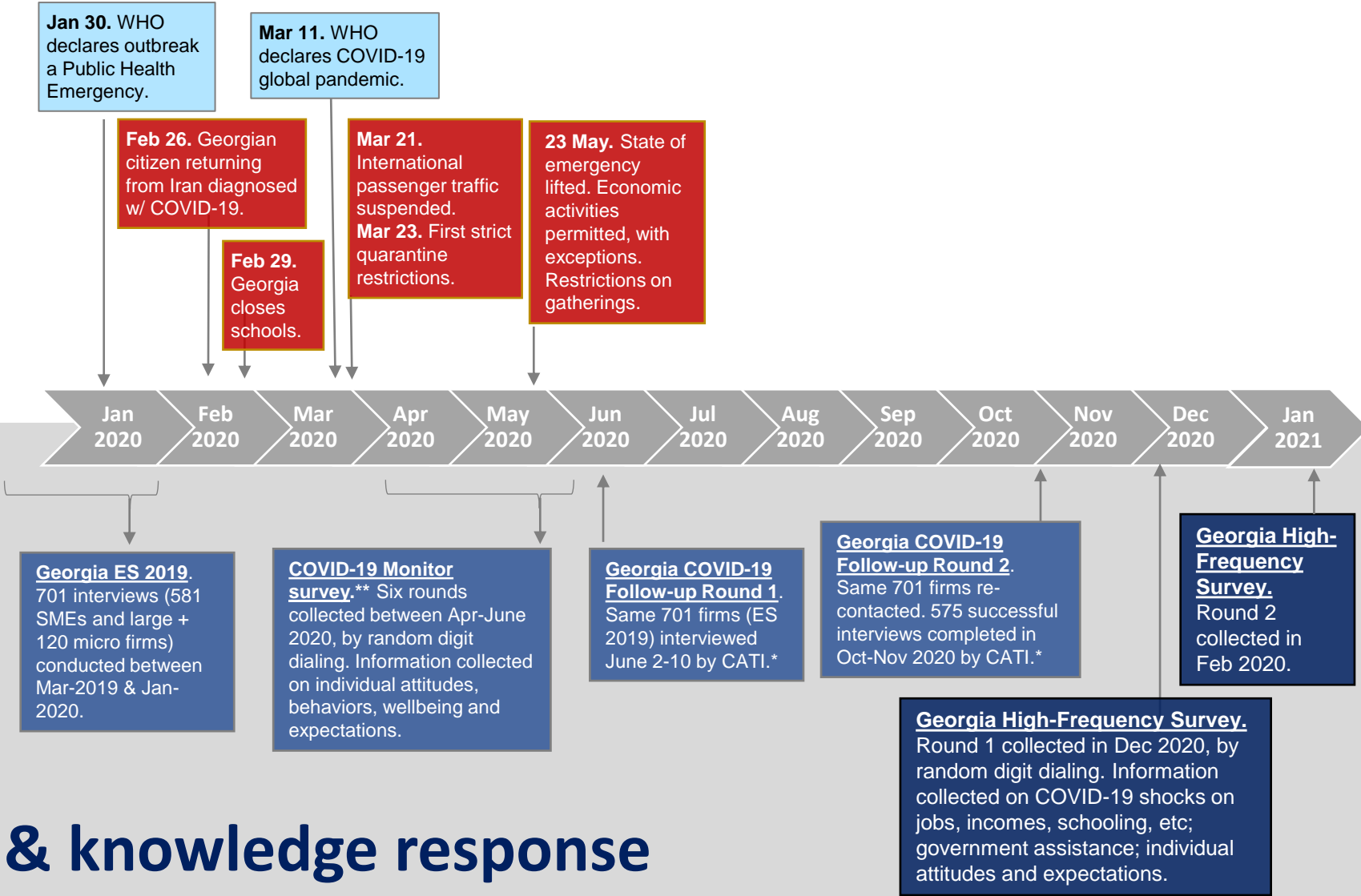


- Over **254 thousand people** have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in Georgia, by January 2021. Over 3 thousand people have died due to COVID-19.
- Georgia responded swiftly to the outbreak of COVID-19, declaring national state of emergency on March 21st, 2020. However, the number of active cases accelerated 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.
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Google, with data from Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Monitoring Tool. Accessed: Jan 26th, 2021.

COVID-19 Outbreak



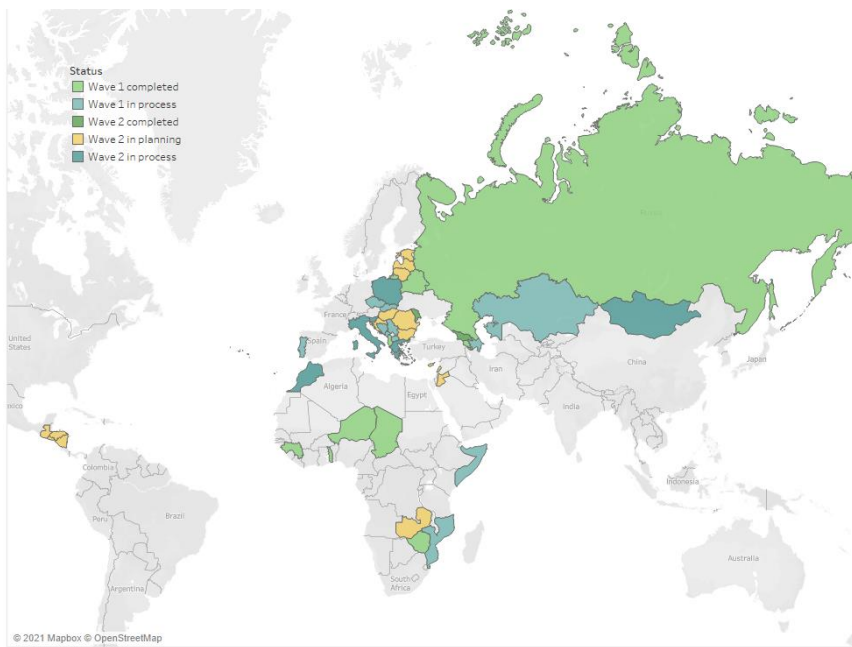
Data & knowledge response

* 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

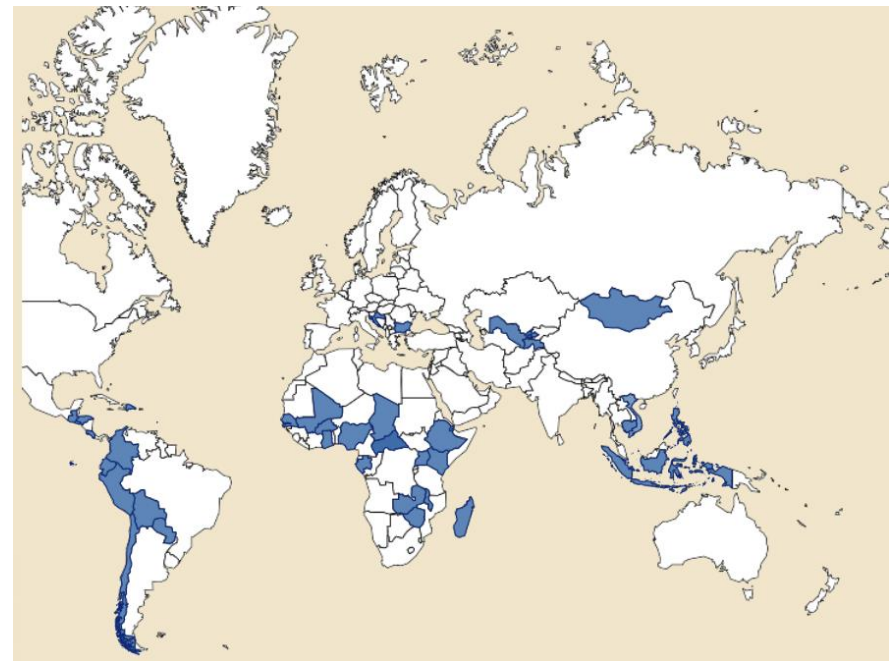
Collected firm-level data on the effects of COVID-19 on the **private sector** in 44 countries.* Similar indicators are available across countries.



<https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/en/covid-19>

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.**



<https://www.worldbank.org/en/data/interactive/2020/11/11/covid-19-high-frequency-monitoring-dashboard>

GEORGIA'S HIGH FREQUENCY PHONE SURVEY

Round 1: Key Findings

Methodology and Implementation




Georgia High Frequency Survey: Design

| Survey Structure | Round | Sampling frame | Coverage | Method | Response rate | Dates | Sample |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|-------------------|---------------|---|--|
| Pooled cross-sectional data | COVID-19 Monitoring : Round 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random dialing of cellphone numbers. • Post-stratification weights based on Census. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of the national population; Tbilisi, Other Urban, Rural locations. | CATI [†] | 40% | Dec 18 th – 24 th , 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,986 interviews completed |
| | COVID-19 Monitoring: Round 2* | | | CATI [†] | 39% | Jan 27 th – Feb 1 st , 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,039 interviews completed |


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.

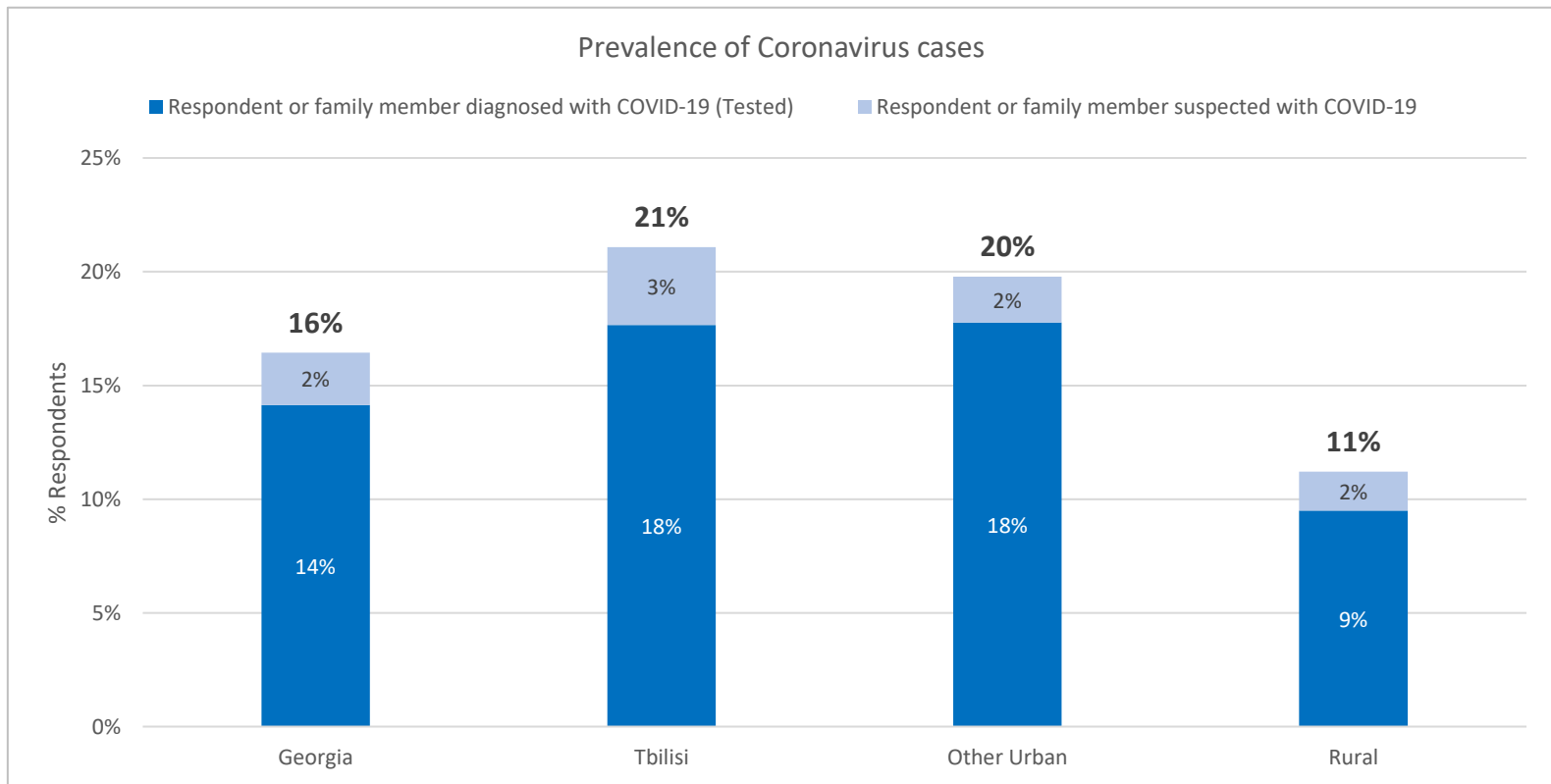
Perceptions



- 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

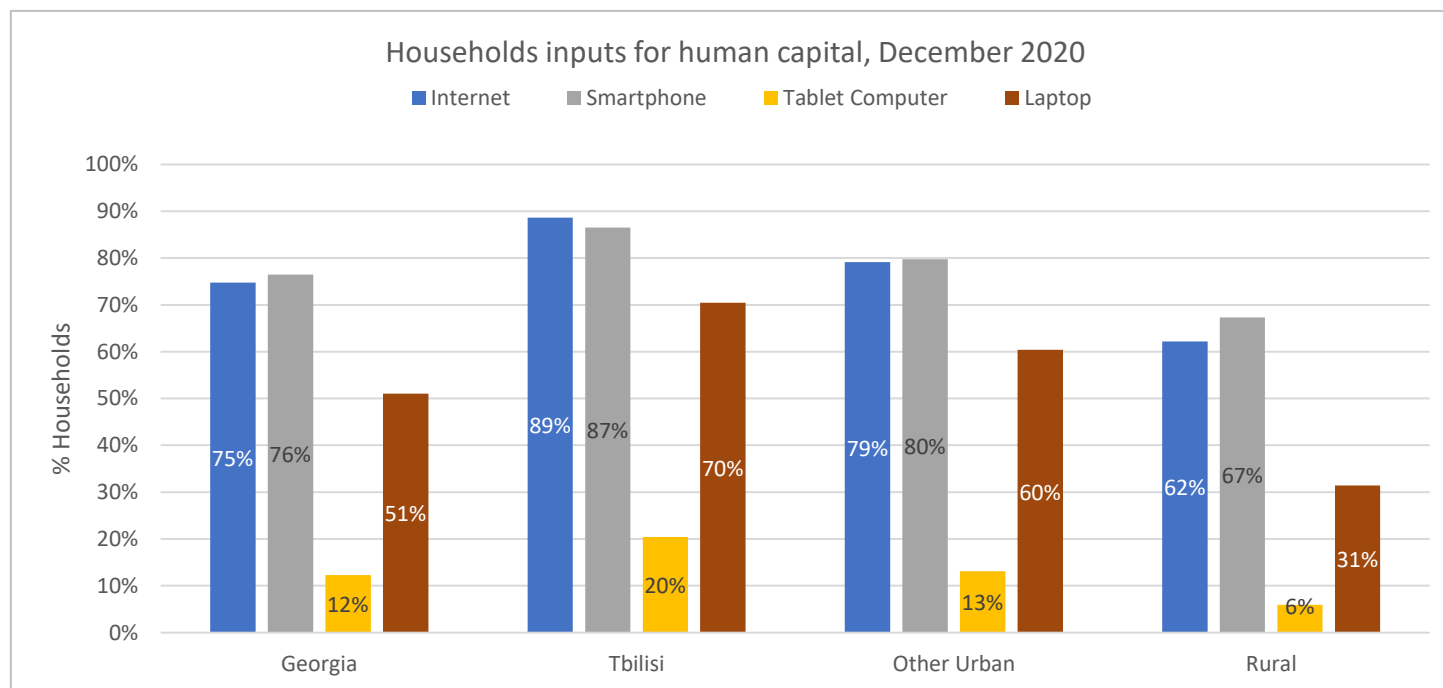
- **16% of respondents reported knowledge of at least one case of COVID-19 among family members** (including themselves). Most reported cases had been confirmed by a lab test.*
- The reported prevalence was much lower among **rural respondents** (11%) and higher in **Tbilisi** (21%).



Source: Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020. Notes: Respondents weighted by post-stratification weights for the national adult population. 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.

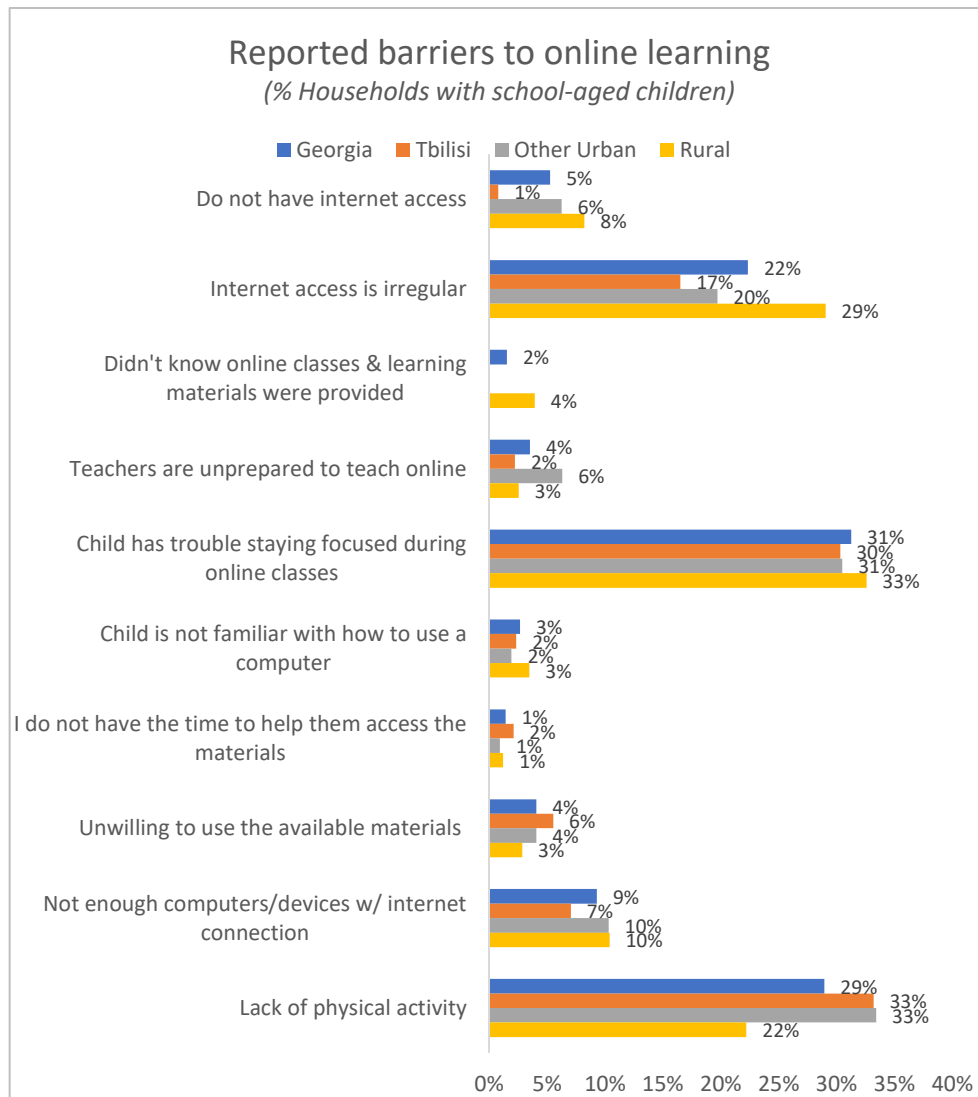
2) Household assets and internet access

- **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.



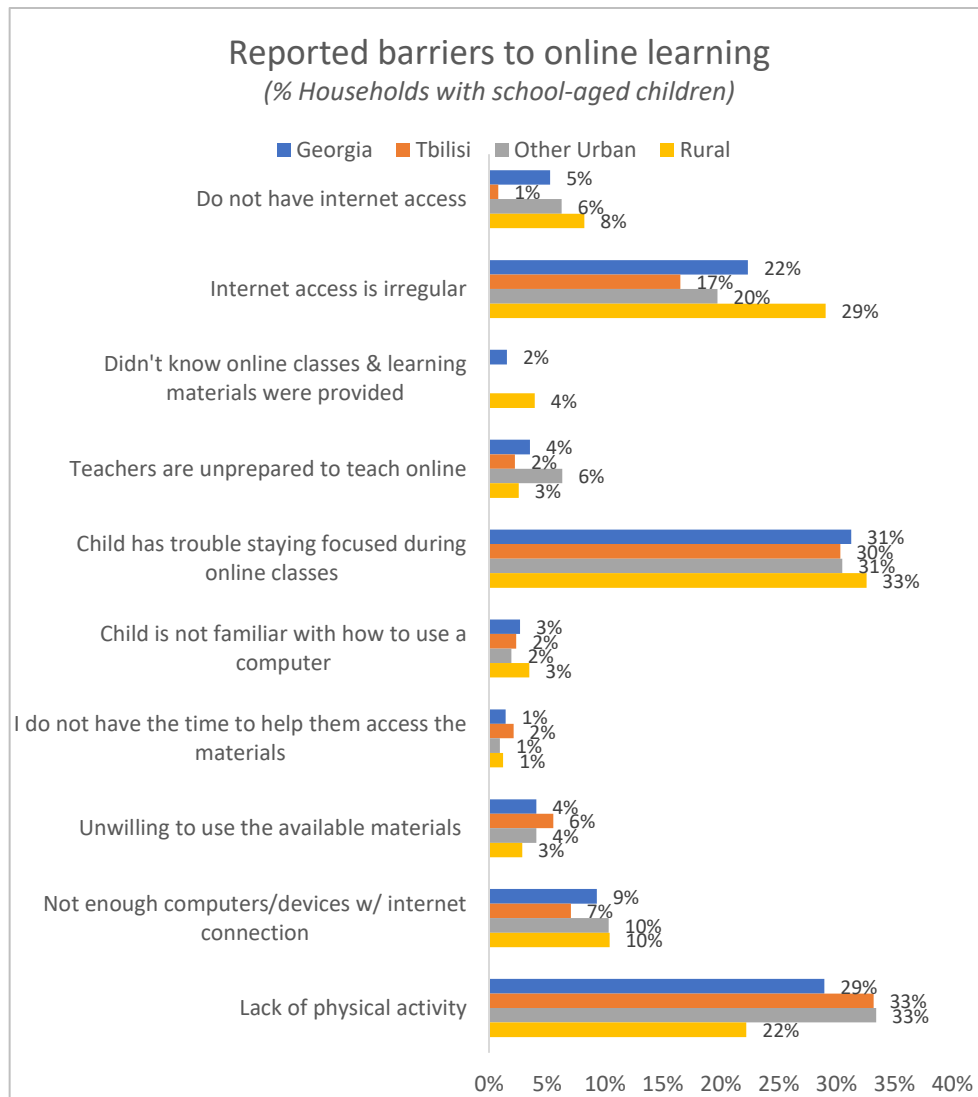
3) Distance learning

- 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.



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.



4) Employment

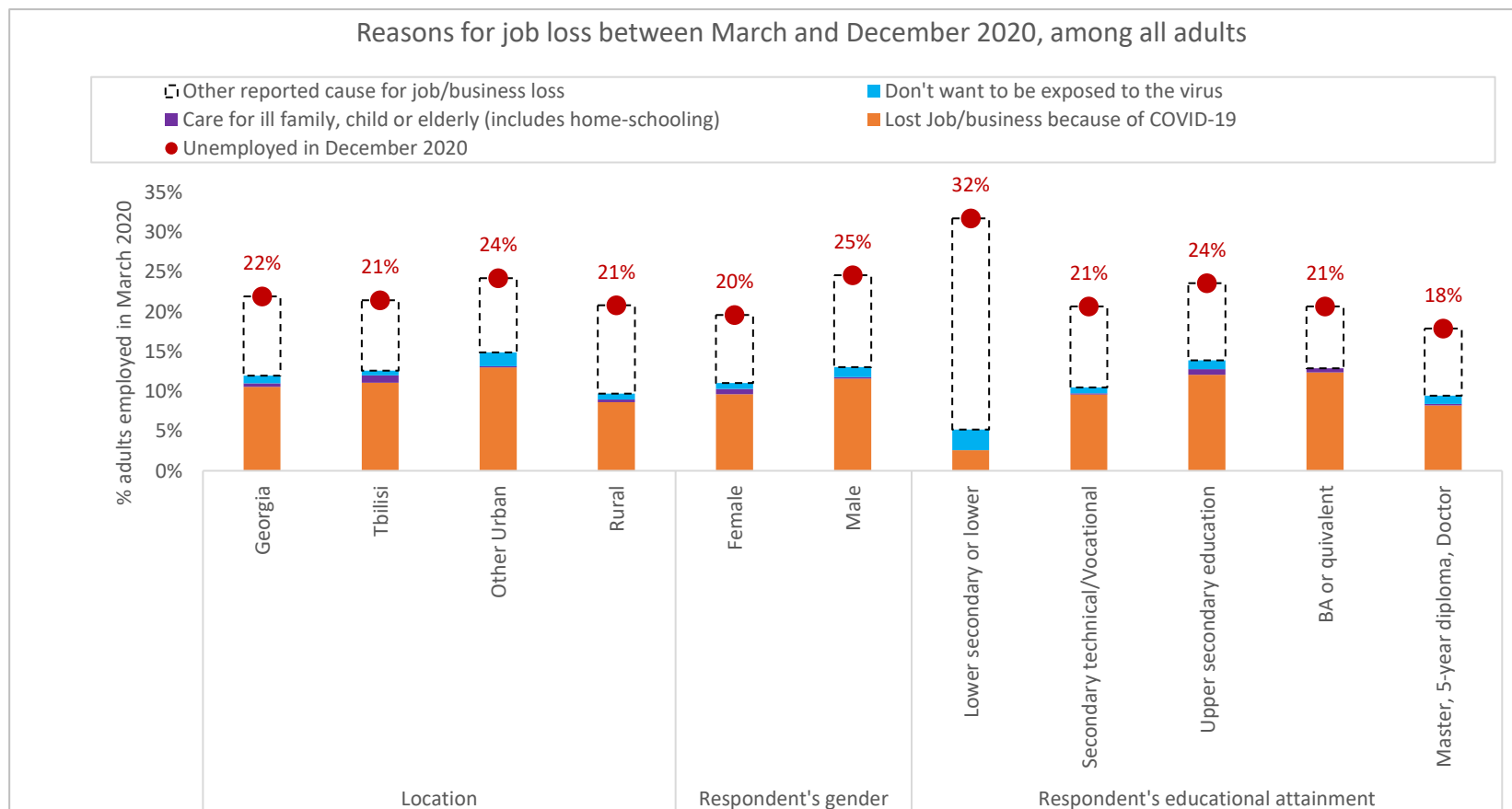
- **42% of workers** (employed in March 2020) **lost their job after the COVID-19 outbreak** (they did not have a job by December 2020).
- There are relevant **gender disparities** in job losses. **50% of female workers** lost their job after the pandemic, compared to 37% of male workers.

| | Job loss estimates in the population | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|-----------|---------|-------------|---------|---------|
| | <i>(Employed in March 2020, not employed in December 2020)</i> | | | | | |
| | All | By gender | | By location | | |
| Females | | Males | Tbilisi | Other Urban | Rural | |
| Number of workers | 630,296 | 302,286 | 328,010 | 184,176 | 186,213 | 259,906 |
| % Adult population | 22% | 20% | 25% | 21% | 24% | 21% |
| % Workers | 42% | 50% | 37% | 35% | 45% | 47% |

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

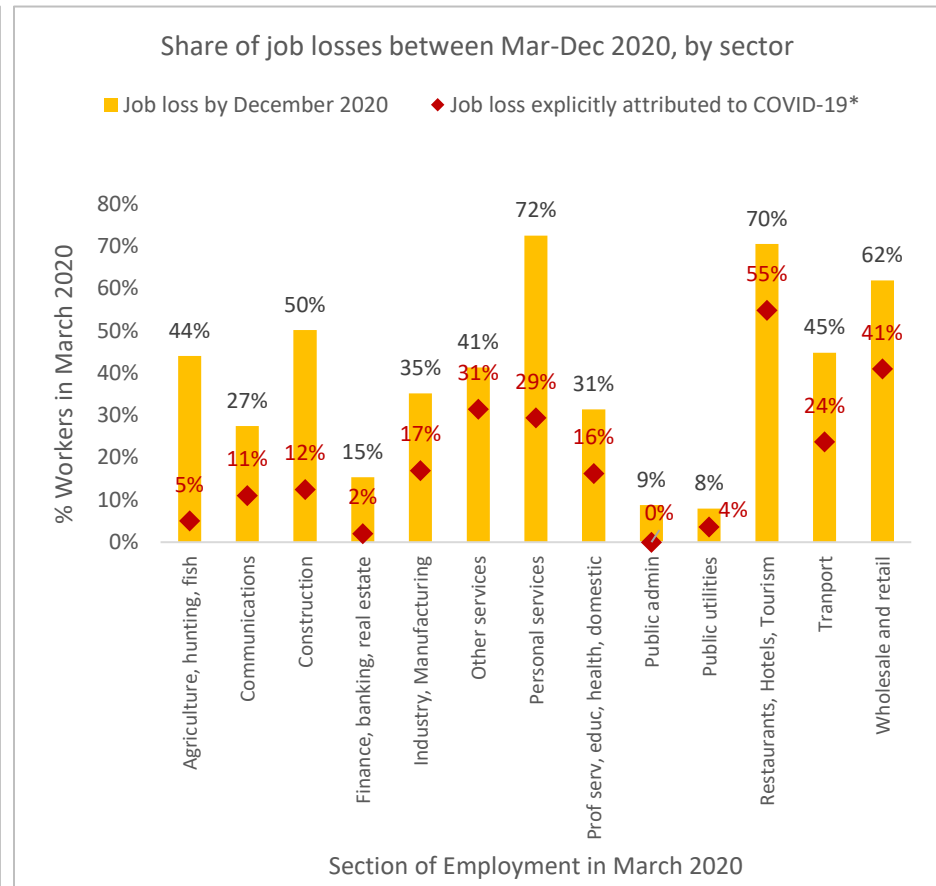
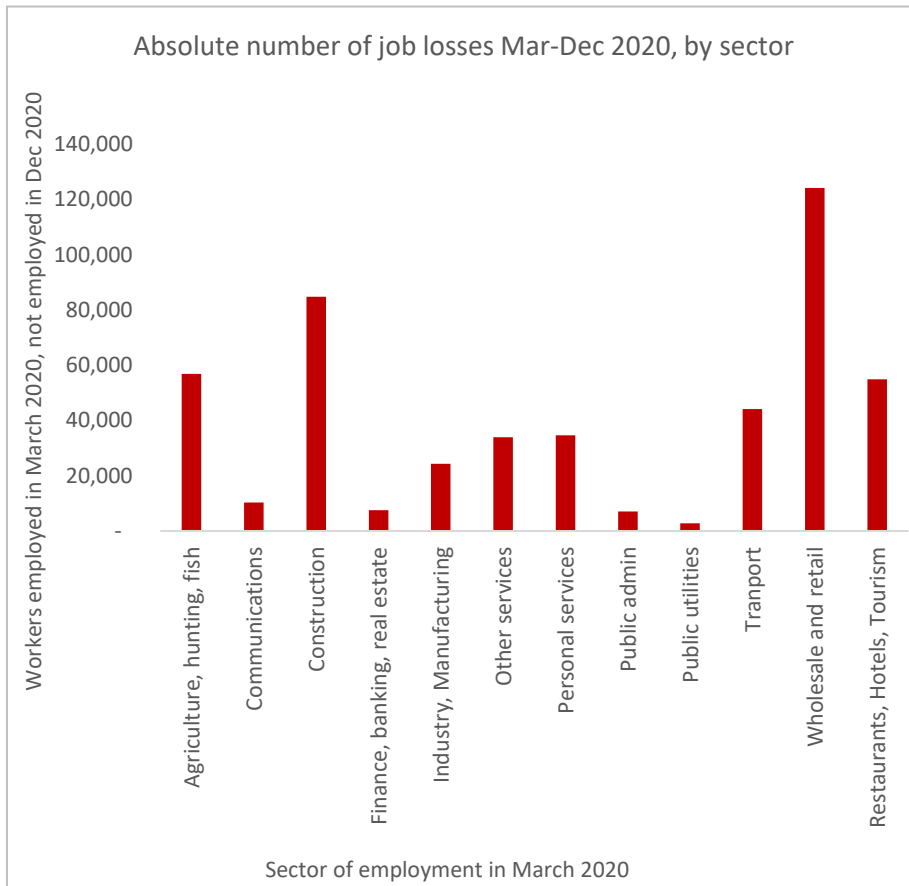
4) Employment

- 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%).



4) Employment

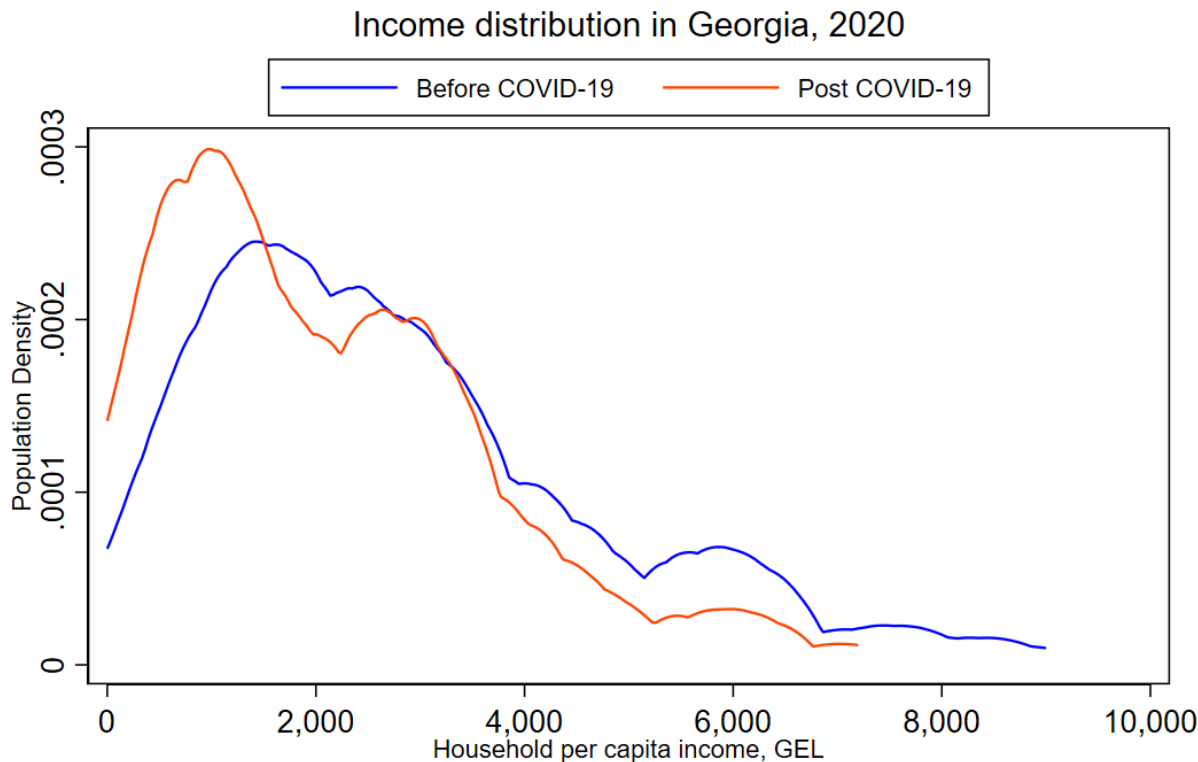
- 120 thousand jobs were lost in **wholesale and retail** between March and December 2020; 85 thousand jobs were lost in **construction**; and 55 thousand jobs were lost in the **tourism and restaurant industry**.
- Overall, 55% of workers in **restaurants and hospitality** reported unemployment due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



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

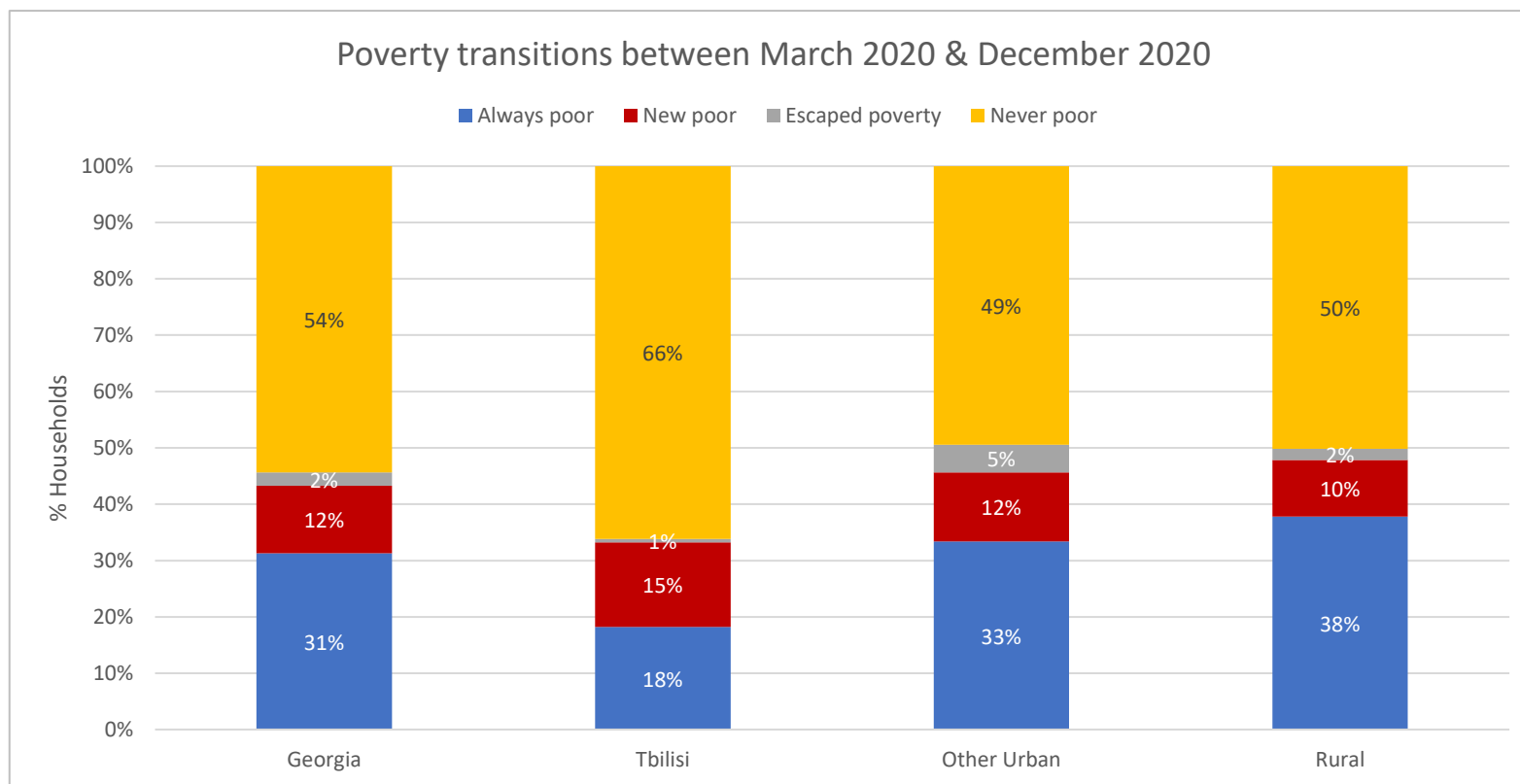
- **34%** of households in Georgia reported **lower incomes after the COVID-19 outbreak** (November 2020 vs. February 2020), shifting the income distribution.
- Specifically, 33% of households reported decreased incomes due to **job losses or closures of businesses** related to the COVID-19 shock.



Source: GHFS Round 1.
Notes: National population weights applied. Incomes above percentile 95 excluded.
Amounts in GEL not adjusted by regional or within year variations in price levels.

6) Poverty transitions

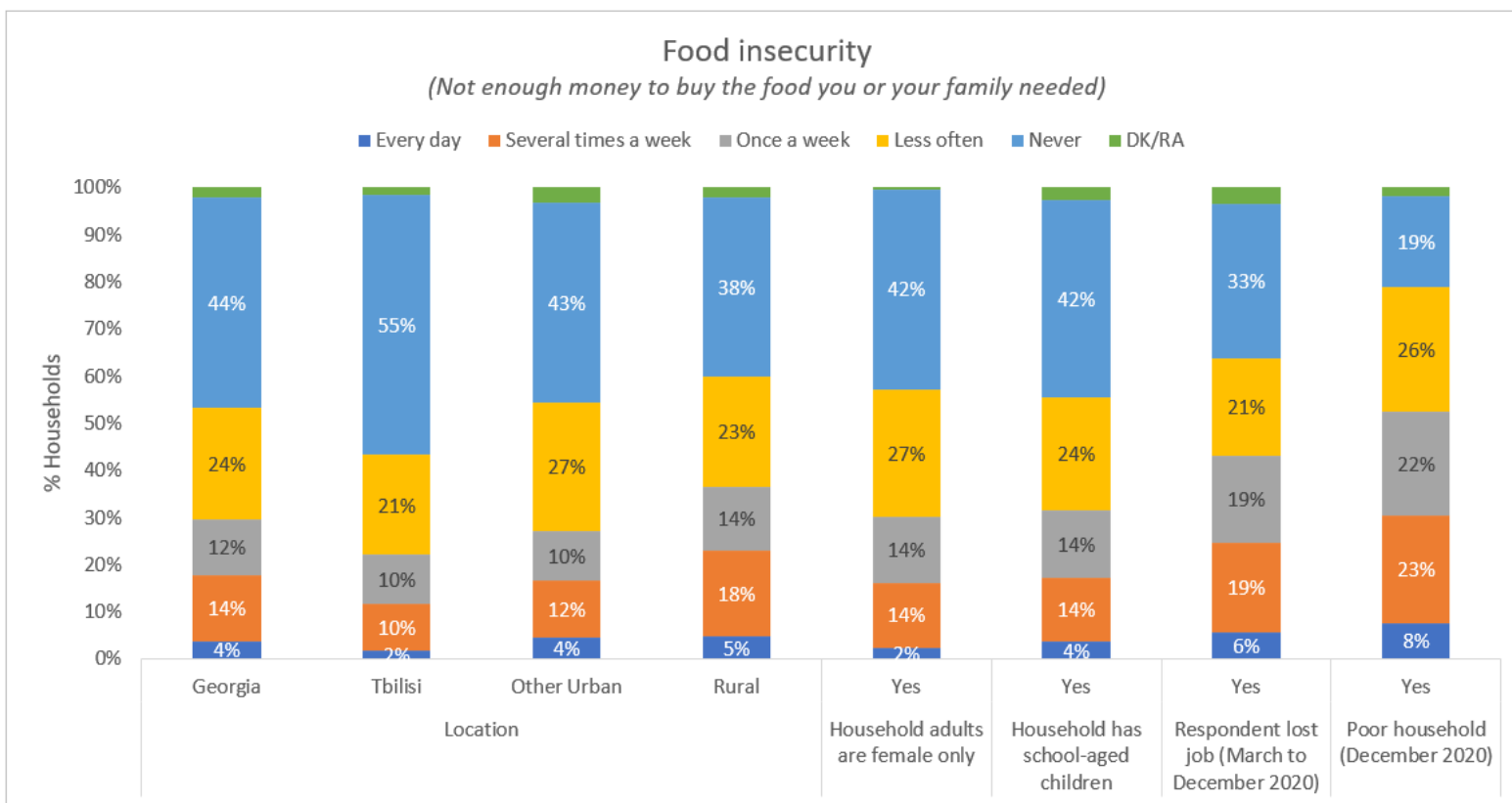
- **12% of households** became **impoverished (“new poor”)** after the outbreak of COVID-19, according to a measure of poverty based on self-reported household incomes in the GHFS.
- The rate of **impoverishment was highest in Tbilisi (15% of households)** and lowest in rural areas. Though poverty continues 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”**).



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

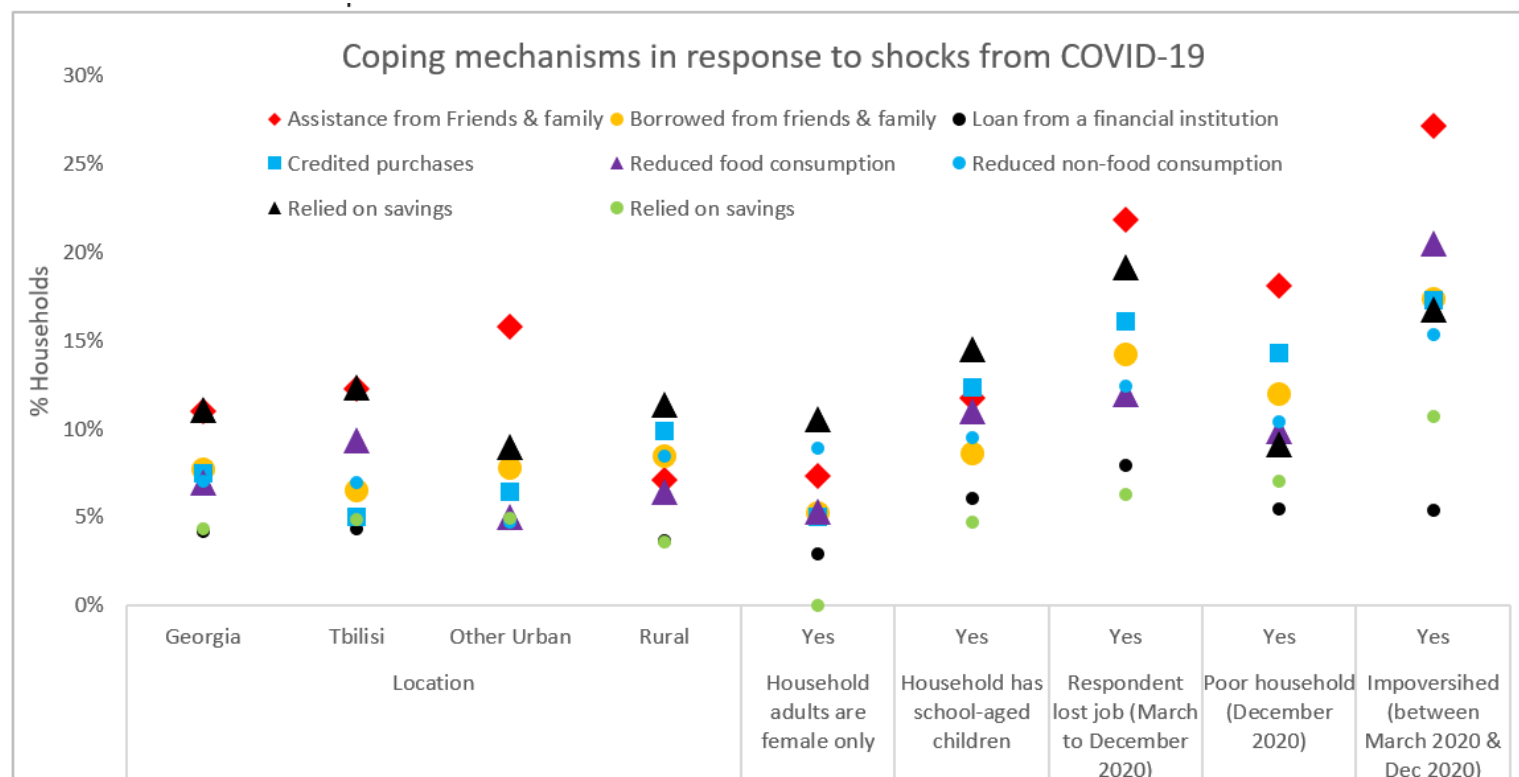
- **55% of Georgian households faced some degree of food insecurity** over the past month.*
- Food insecurity was more common among rural households and those losing a job since the start of COVID-19. **5% of rural households** faced insufficient money to feed their families everyday, 6% of households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



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.

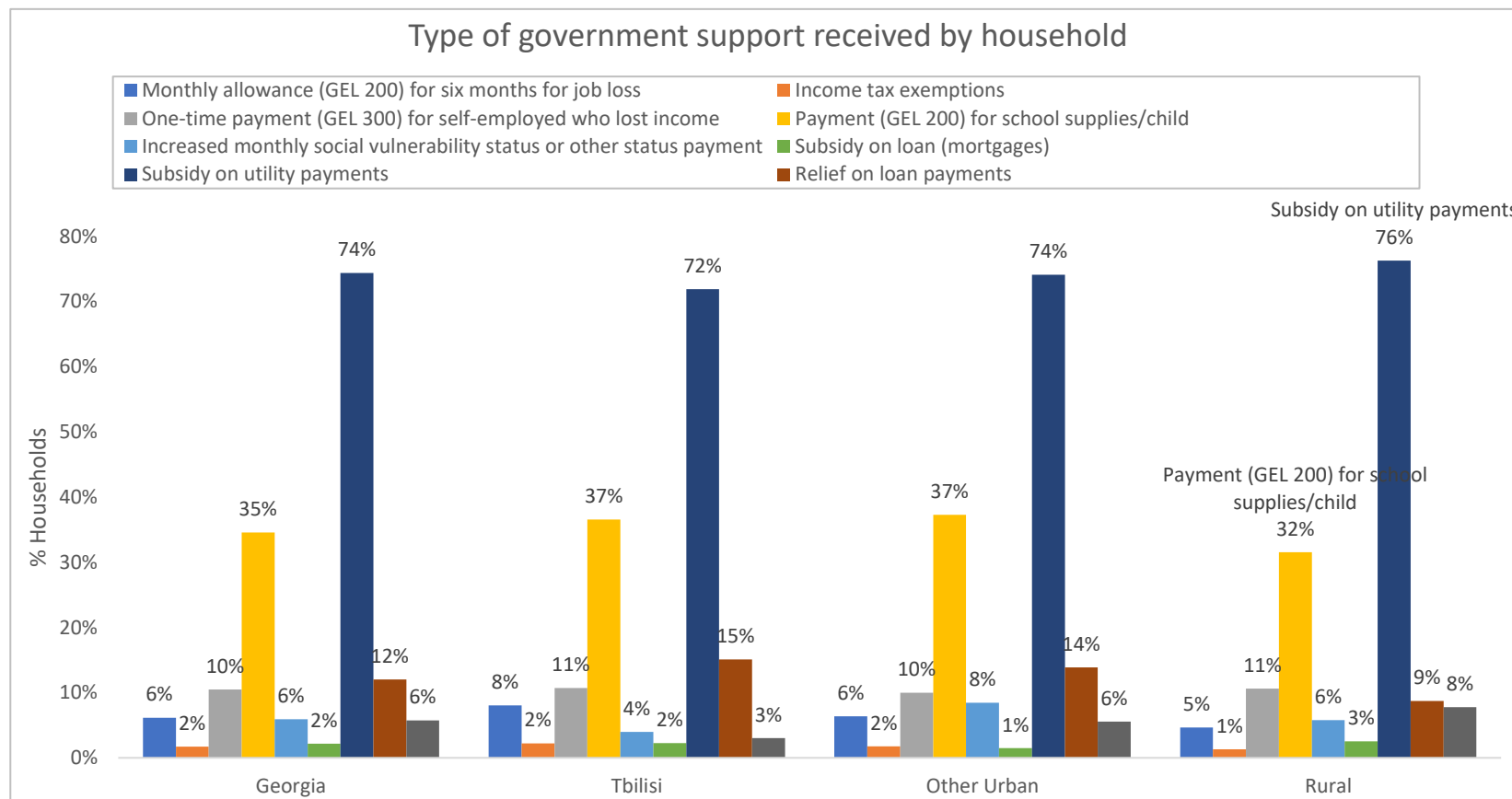


Source: Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020.

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

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).



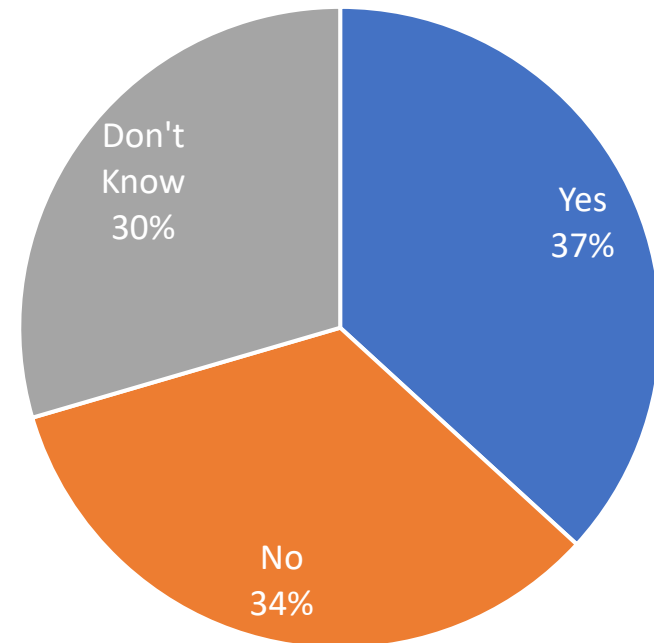
Source: Georgia High-Frequency Survey (GHFS). Round 1. 2020.

Notes: Calculated as the share of households that explicitly reported receiving each type assistance, among those that received any assistance.

10) COVID-19 Vaccine

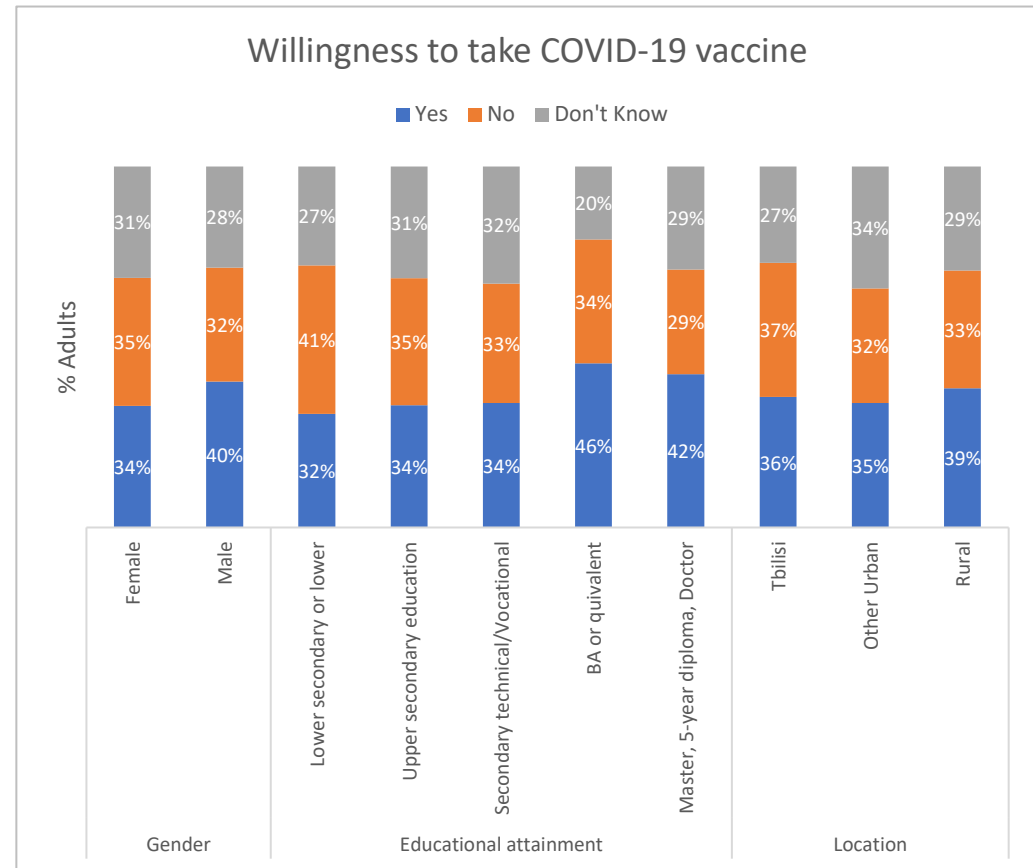
- **37%** of Georgian adults declared willingness to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, if it became available in 6 months.*
- One third would not receive the vaccine. An additional 30% remained undecided, as of December 2020.

Willingness to receive COVID-19 vaccine



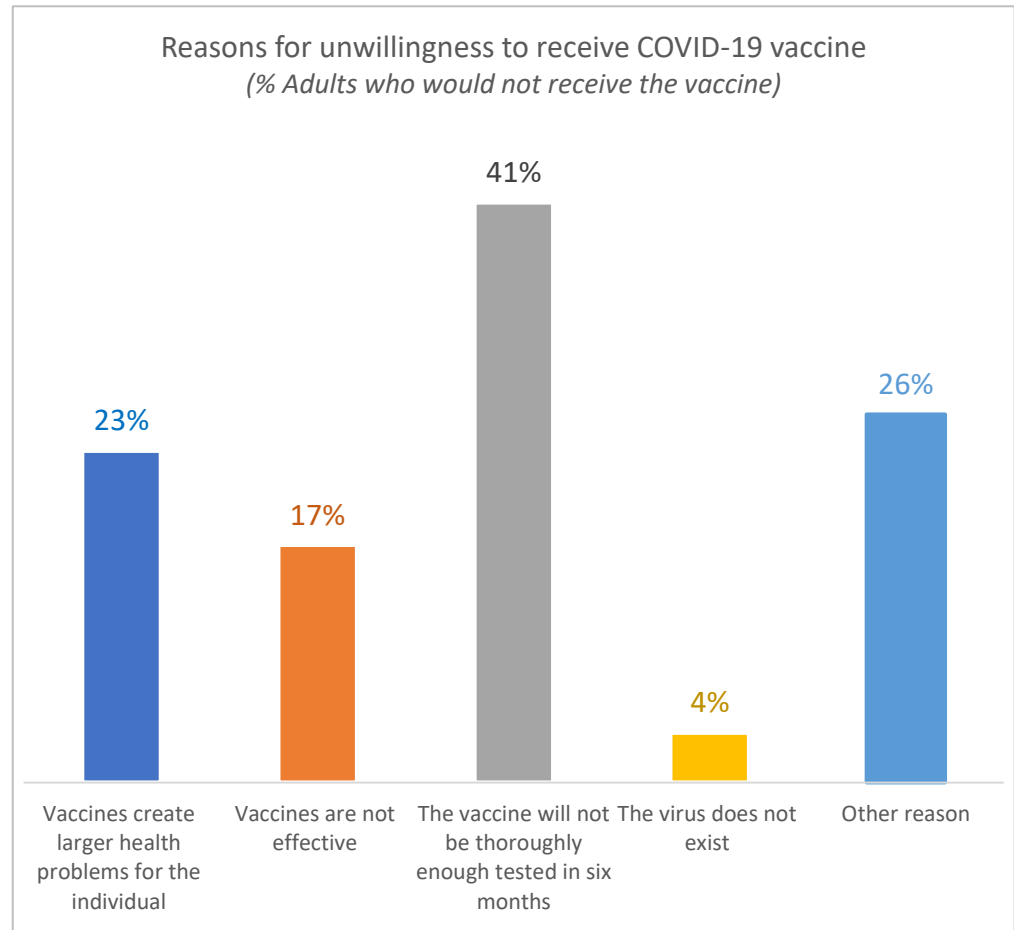
10) COVID-19 Vaccine

- 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.



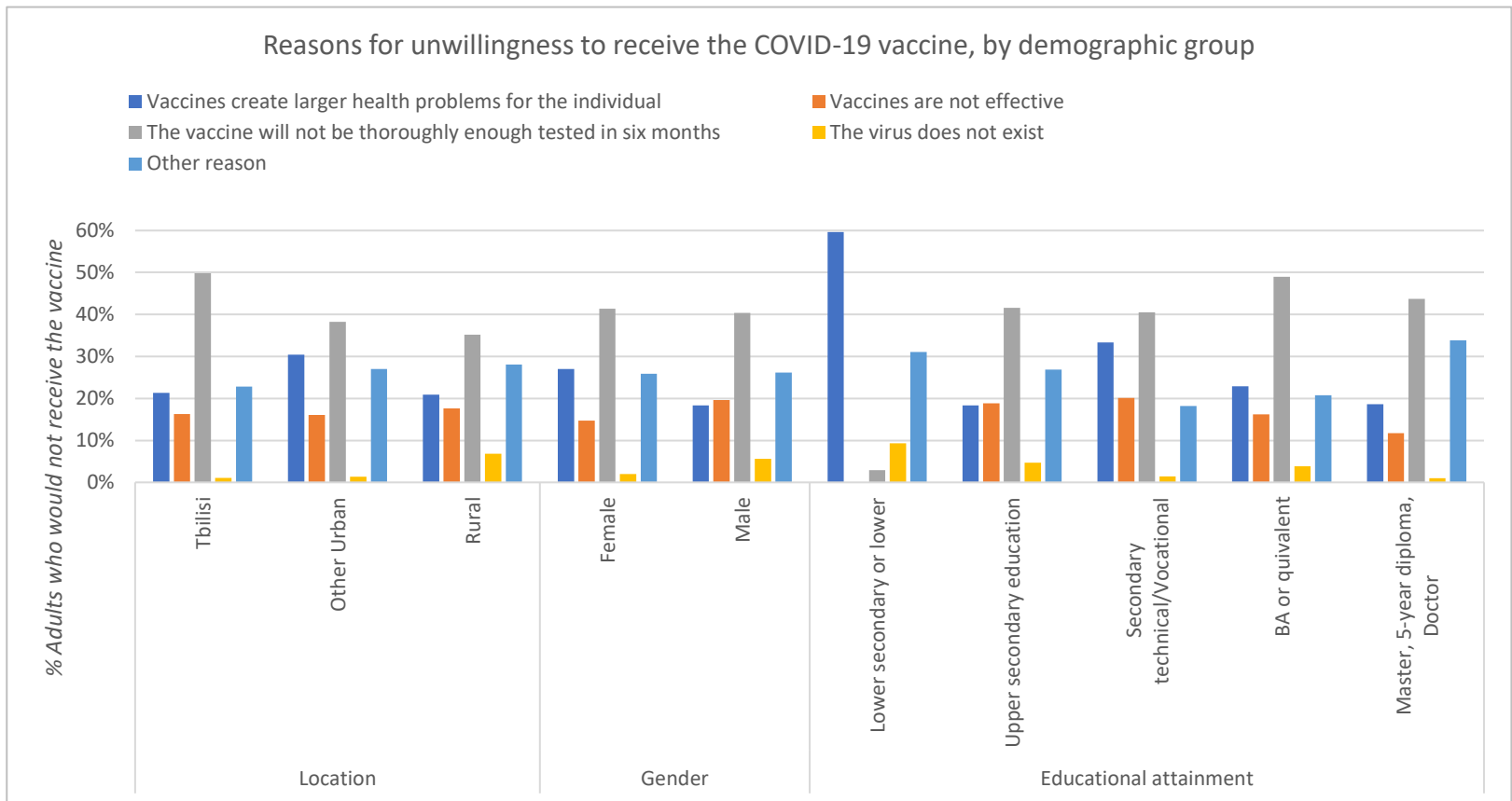
10) COVID-19 Vaccine

- The main concern among people refusing the COVID-19 vaccine is the lack of thorough testing in six months.
- One fourth 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.



10) COVID-19 Vaccine

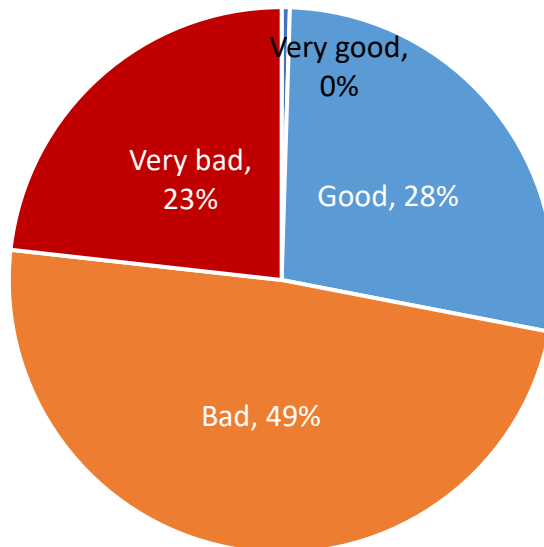
- The concern over **insufficient testing** of the vaccine is high across locations and population groups.
- 4% of adults who would not receive the vaccine believe that **the virus does not exist**. This belief is more common among males, rural populations, and individuals with lower educational attainment.



11) Perceptions and expectations

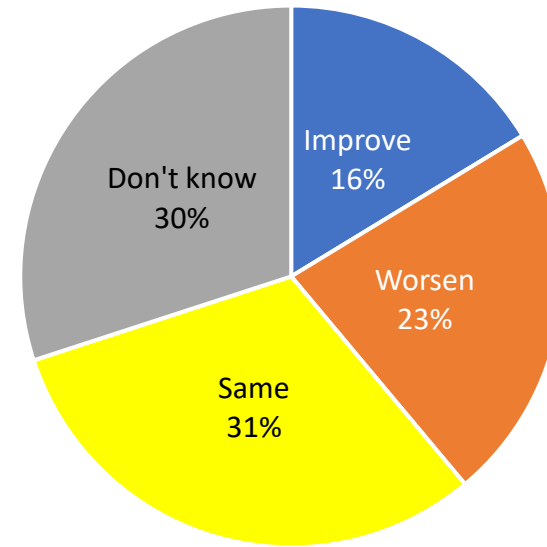
- **Half of Georgian households reported facing a “bad” financial situation** in December 2020. Almost one quarter of households faced a **“very bad”** financial situation. Bad and very bad financial situations are more commonly reported among rural households, female respondents, and respondents with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

Self-assessment of the current financial state of your household



% Households

Expected financial state of your family in the next 12 months



% Households

THANK YOU!

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