

CROATIA

Where are we since the
COVID-19 outbreak?

June 2021



COVID-19 Rapid Response Household Surveys

Survey representing Croatian households

Timing

- Round 1: June 2020 (completed)
- Round 2: December 2020 (completed)
- Round 3: March 2021 (completed)
- Round 4: June 2021 (completed)
- Round 5: September 2021 (planned)

Sample size

- 1500 households
- containing 4,288 individuals (3,614 adults and 674 children)

Geographic coverage

- Representative of rural and urban areas

Survey content

- Demographic indicators
- Pre- and during- COVID-19 (employment, income, savings, opinions, children's education and health)

Similar surveys in other countries

- Bulgaria, Romania, Poland
 - The survey design is also linked to the World Bank global rapid assessment monitoring framework
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KEY FINDINGS

Employment and financial outlook



June 2021 shows early signs of recovery of employment, but low-wage workers and women still fall behind.

- By June, 18% of pre-crisis workers were still out of work, down from 30% during the first wave of the pandemic.
- But the level of work stoppage among low-wage workers is double the one among top-income earners, at 22% and 12% respectively.
- Similarly, 20% of pre-crisis female workers have not been back to the labor market, compared to 15% of men.
- Both low-wage workers and women were also more concerned with the economic conditions and the job market.

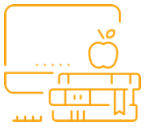
Work disruption continues to lead to households' deteriorating financial wellbeing. Financial outlook of 2021 is not good.



- 19% of Croatian households reported a decline in income.
- 73% of Croatian households have no or insufficient savings to weather the prolonged crisis.
- Looking ahead, nearly 70% of the population believed their financial situation in 2021 would not be better than 2020.
- Similar trend is observed when looking at consumer confidence.

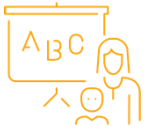
KEY FINDINGS

Government's policies and vaccine hesitancy



Despite hardship, more Croatians agree with the government's policies as the crisis progresses.

- 65% of respondents agreed with the government's reopening plan in June 2021 – a significant increase from December 2020.
- There is also an uptick in citizen's approval of government's policies on supporting households and businesses.
- 67% of respondents approved the government's implementation of COVID-19 vaccination program, a surge from March 2021.
- Richer people are more likely to agree with the government's economic plans.

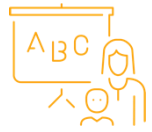


Croatia is on track of COVID-19 vaccines rollout. To further increase uptake, vaccination campaigns can focus on information of long-term risks and integrity of pharmaceutical companies.

- 54% of Croatian adults have had at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccines. Among the remaining, 40% indicated they would take the vaccines.
- But the uptake is lower among people in rural areas, in low-income group, and people who are not working.
- The main reasons behind vaccine hesitancy are concerns about vaccines-associated long-term risks and lack of trust of pharmaceutical companies.

KEY FINDINGS

Education



Most schools enforced sanitation measures against COVID-19. But quality of teaching deteriorated and many student suffered.

- Over 80% of Croatian students reported that their schools applied sanitation measures such as hand washing, daily temperature measurement, and rescheduling classes to avoid mixing too many students.
- But 40% of students, especially high school students, students in rural areas, and students from top-income families, perceived teaching quality this year was worse than the level in a normal school year.
- 24% of students struggled to keep up with schoolwork. High school students, students in rural areas, and students from low-income families, faced more challenges.

COVID-19 impacts as of June 2021:

1 Employment

2 Income, financial wellbeing and financial outlook

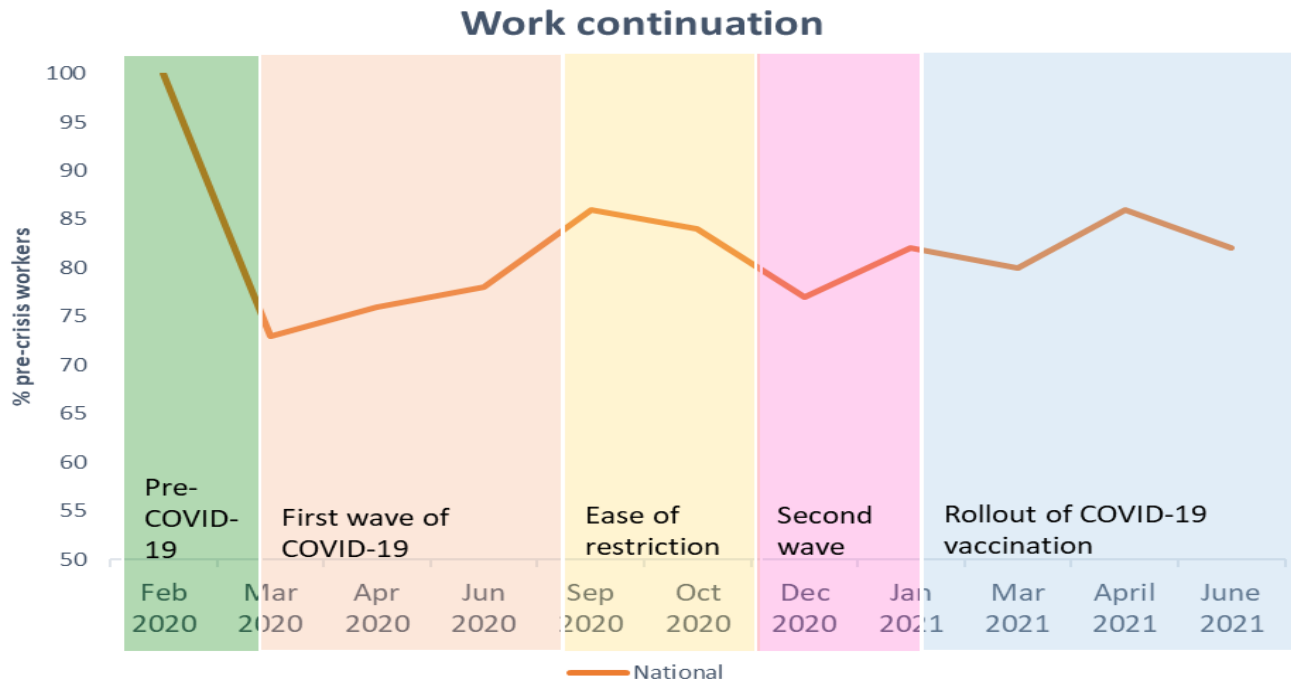
3 Opinions on government's responses

4 COVID-19 vaccination

5 Education

The 2nd quarter of 2021 shows some early signs of the recovery of employment reflecting the adaptation of firm and employment modalities to less severe COVID-19 restrictions.

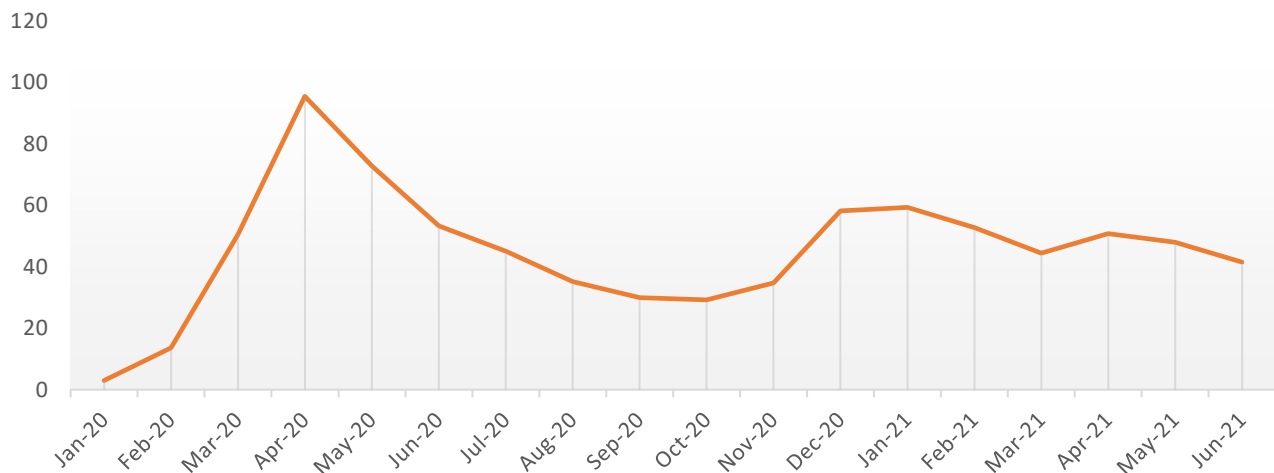
In June 2021, 18 percent of pre-crisis workers were out of jobs, down from nearly 30 percent during the first wave of the pandemic.



Source: Croatia COVID-19 Rapid Response Survey (2021)

COVID-19 restrictions have been relaxed over time

Croatia - COVID-19 Stringency index by month

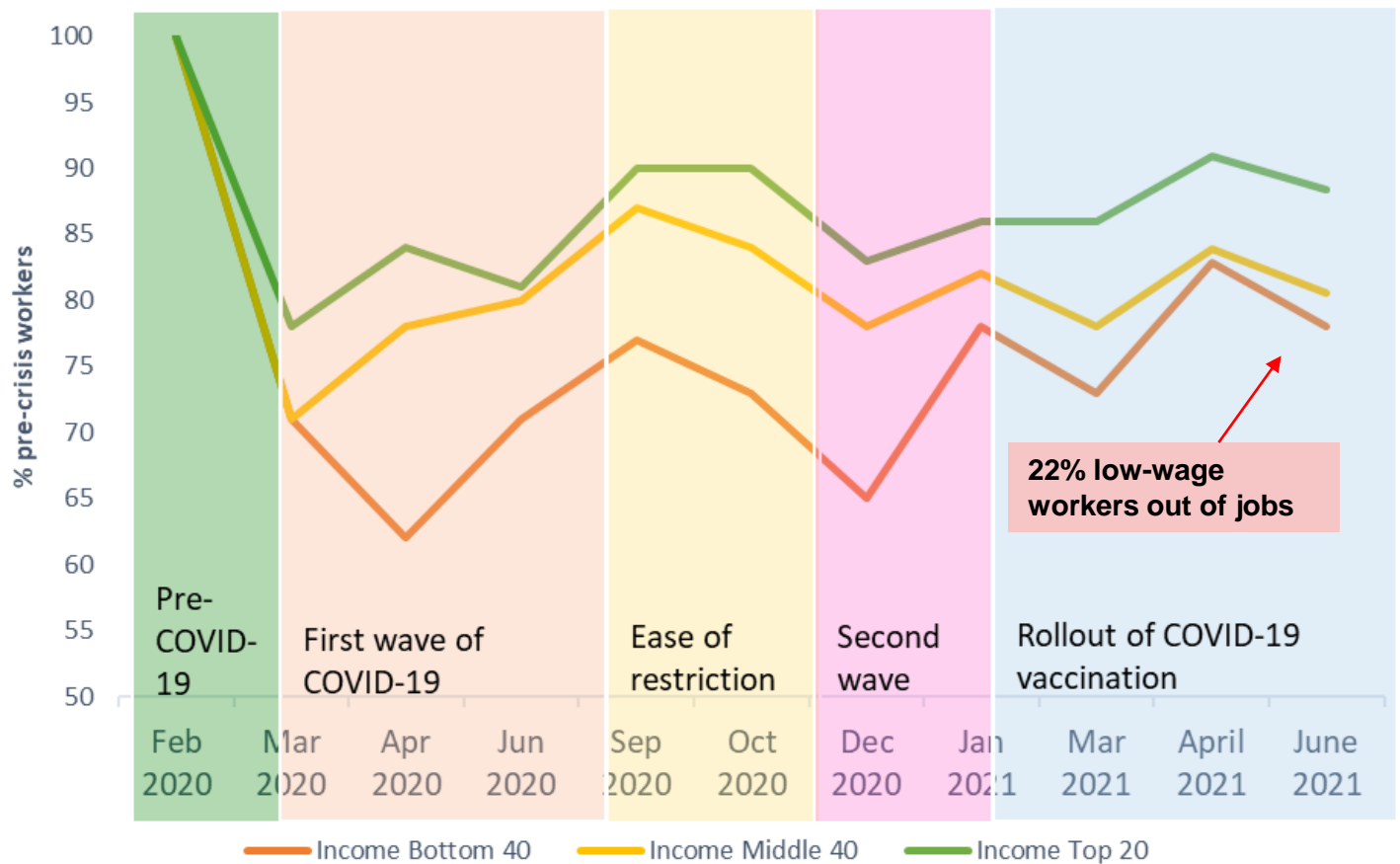


Source: Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker

But low-wage workers still bear the brunt of the crisis.

By June 2021, the level of work-stoppage among low-wage workers is still almost double the level among top-income earners, at 22 percent and 12 percent respectively.

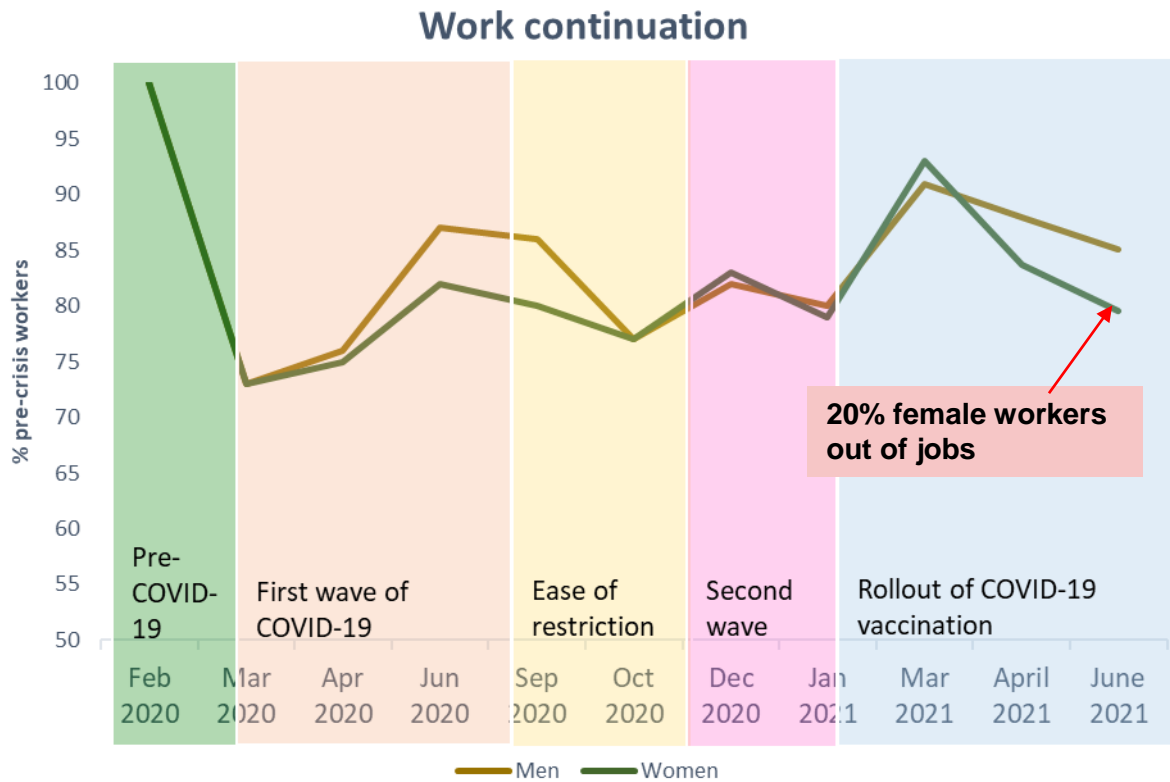
Work continuation



Source: Croatia COVID-19 Rapid Response Survey (2021)

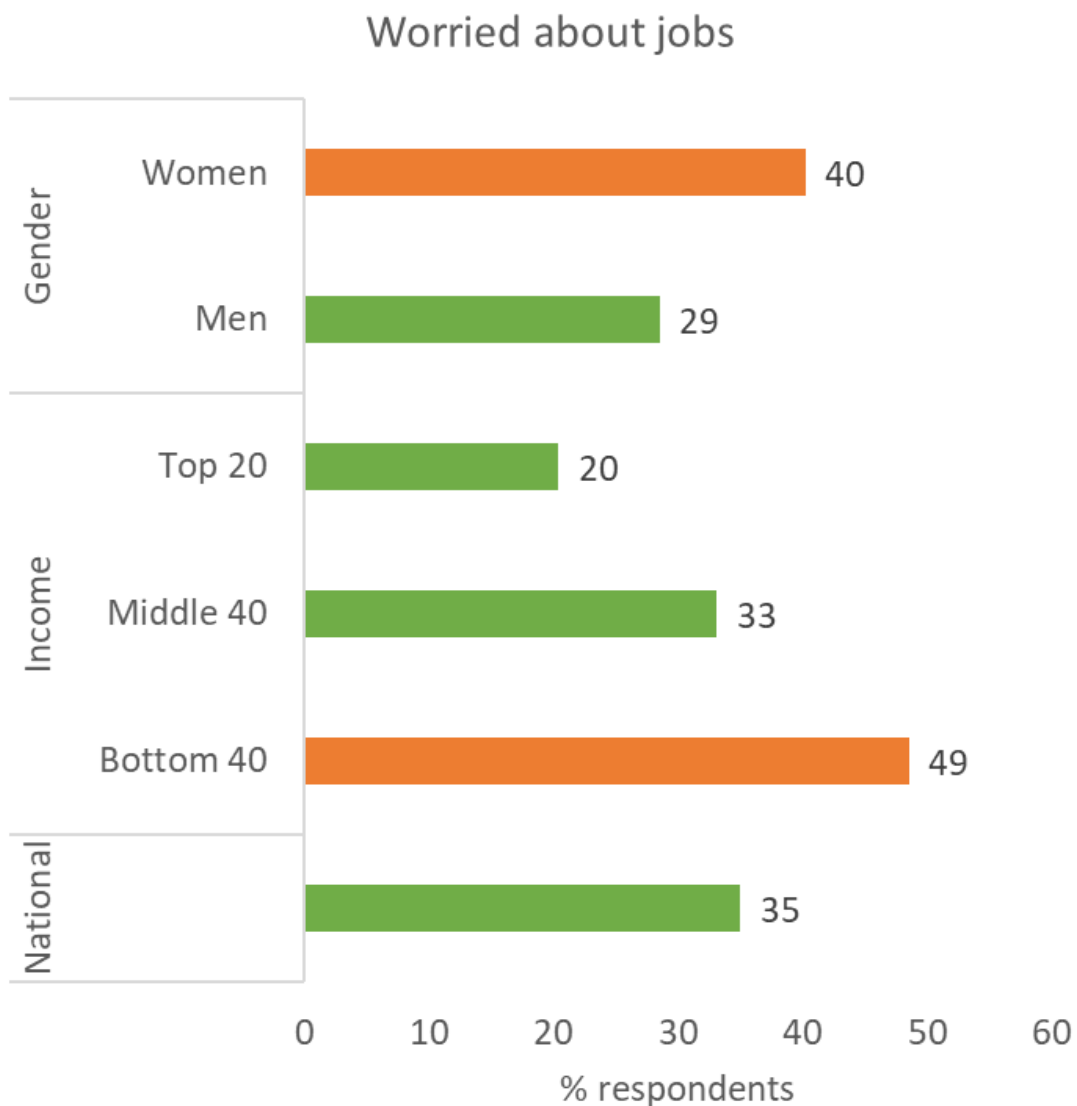
Women start to fall behind in employment recovery since the 2nd quarter of 2021.

Although gender gaps in employment disappeared during the second wave of the pandemic (Oct 2020 – March 2021), women were not doing as well as men during the recovery period: in June 2021, 20 percent of pre-crisis female workers were out of jobs compared to 15 percent of men.



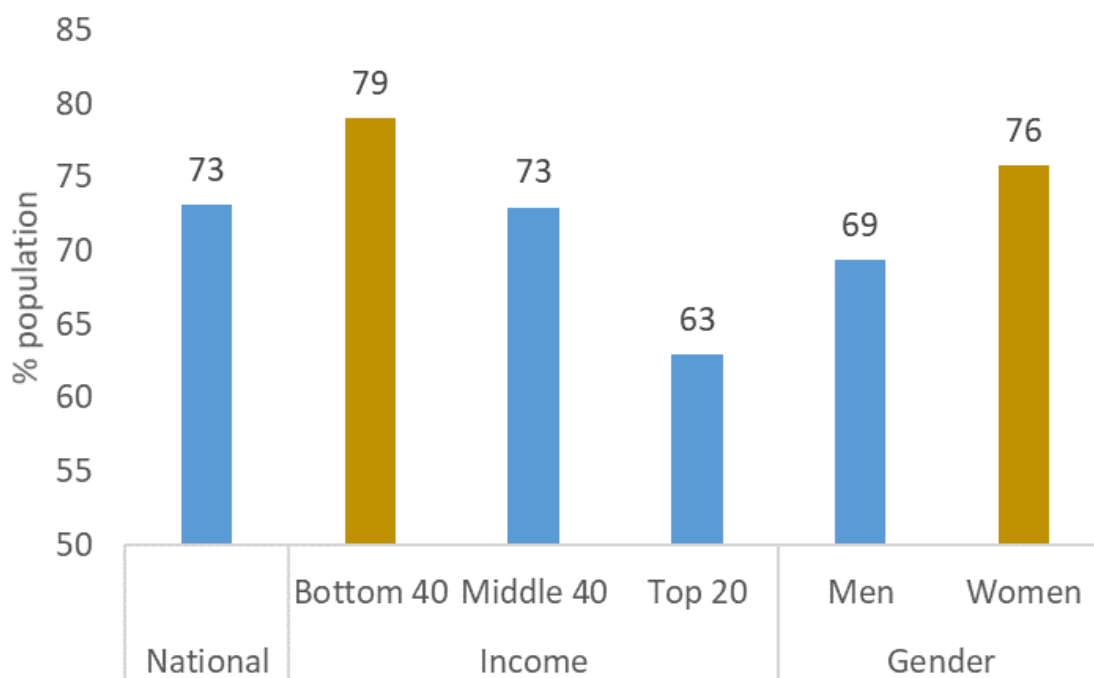
Moreover, both low-wage workers and women are more worried about losing their jobs or not finding a new one.

In June 2021, 40 percent of women were still worried about jobs compared to 29 percent of men. Nearly half of low-wage workers reported the same concern, more than double the level of top-income workers.



Low-wage workers and women are also more concerned about the impacts of the crisis on the overall economy.

In June 2021, 79 percent of low-wage workers were worried about the current conditions of the economy compared to 63 percent of top-income workers. Similarly, 76 percent of women expressed this anxiety compared to 69 percent of men.



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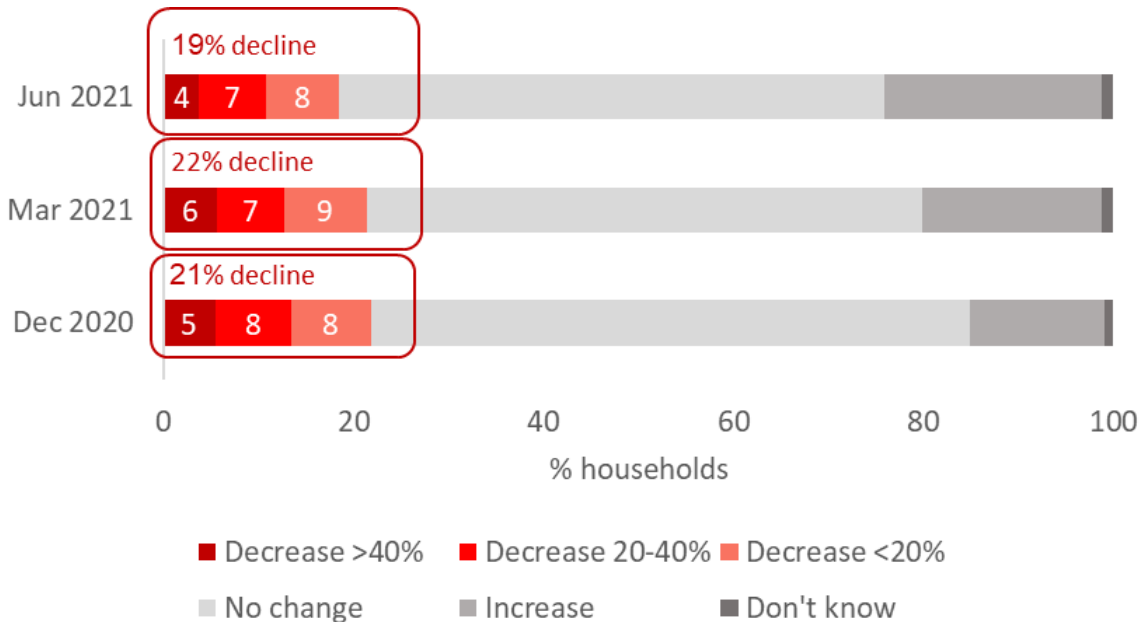
3 Opinions on government's responses

4 COVID-19 vaccination

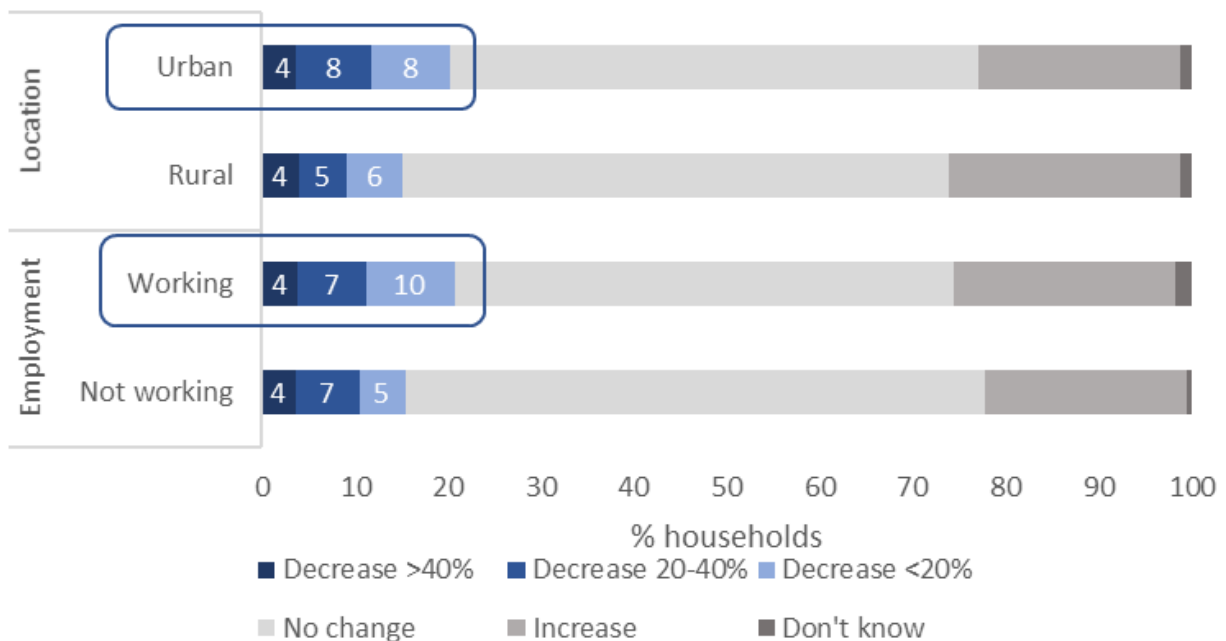
5 Education

Work disruption continues to lead to a decline in household income, but the 2nd quarter signals a slight improvement.

19 percent of households reported income drops in June 2021 compared to pre-crisis level

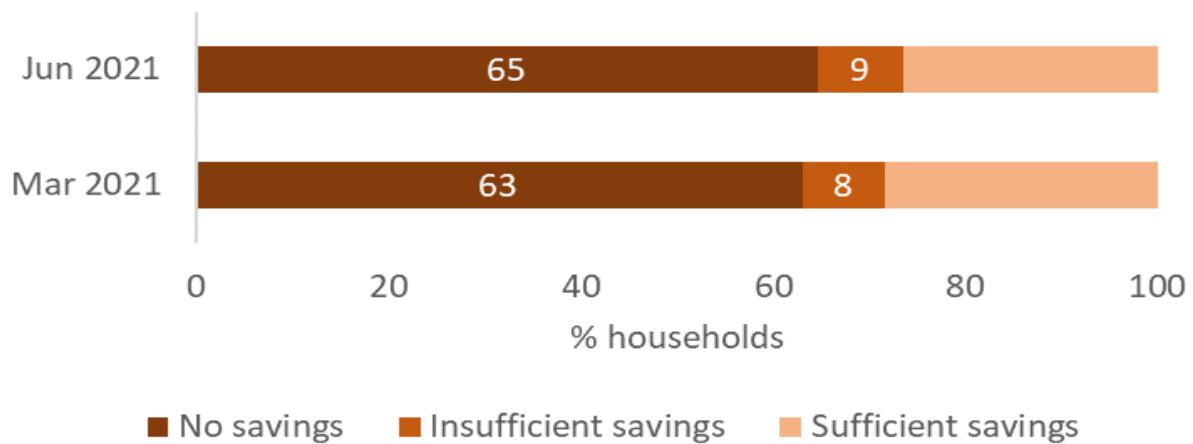


Working families and urban households suffered more.

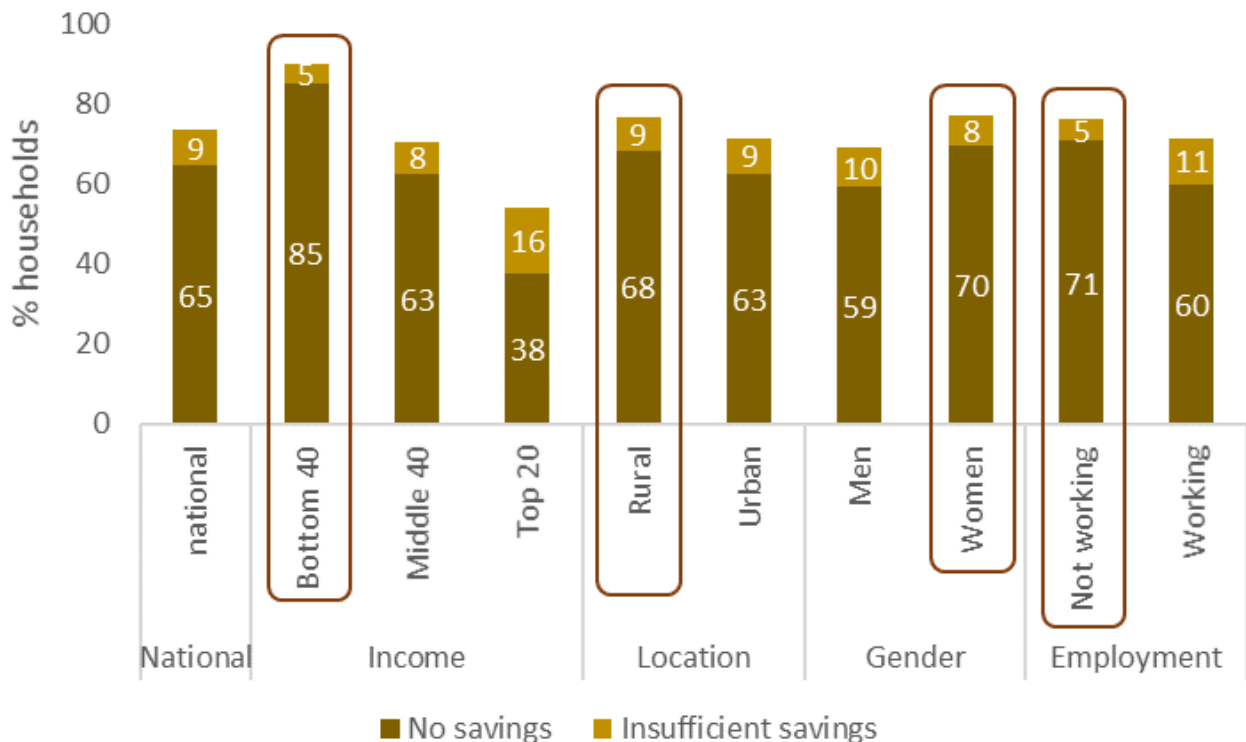


With income declining steadily over the past months, households deplete their savings. The situation is getting more difficult as the crisis prolongs more than anyone would have expected.

73 percent of households reported no savings or insufficient savings in June 2021 compared to 71 percent in March.

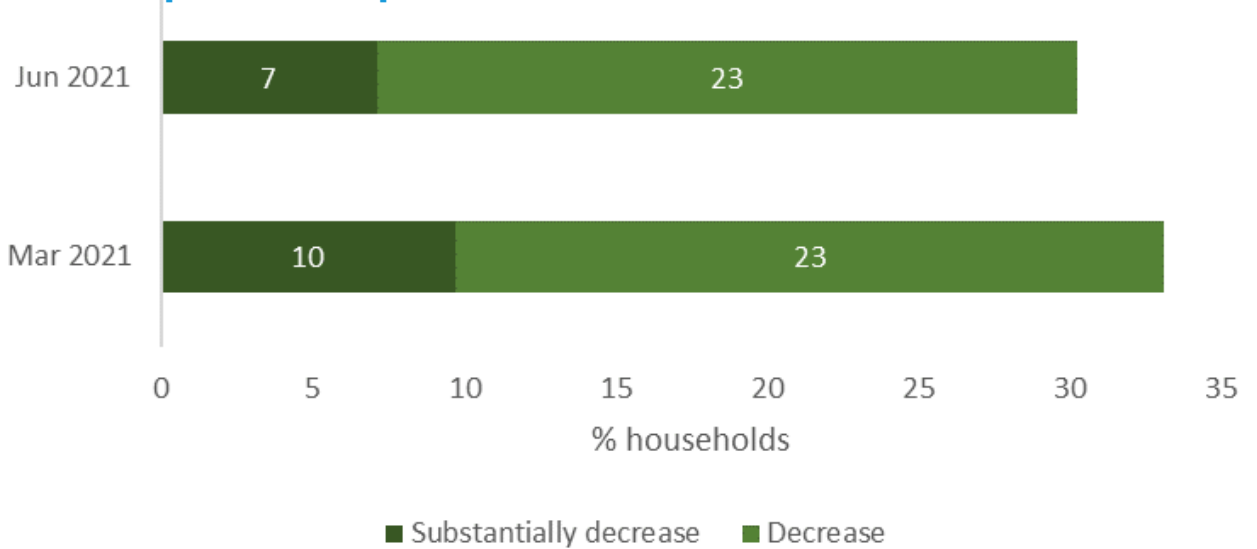


The lack of financial means to weather the crisis is particularly severe for low-income households, women, households in rural areas, and households with no working member.

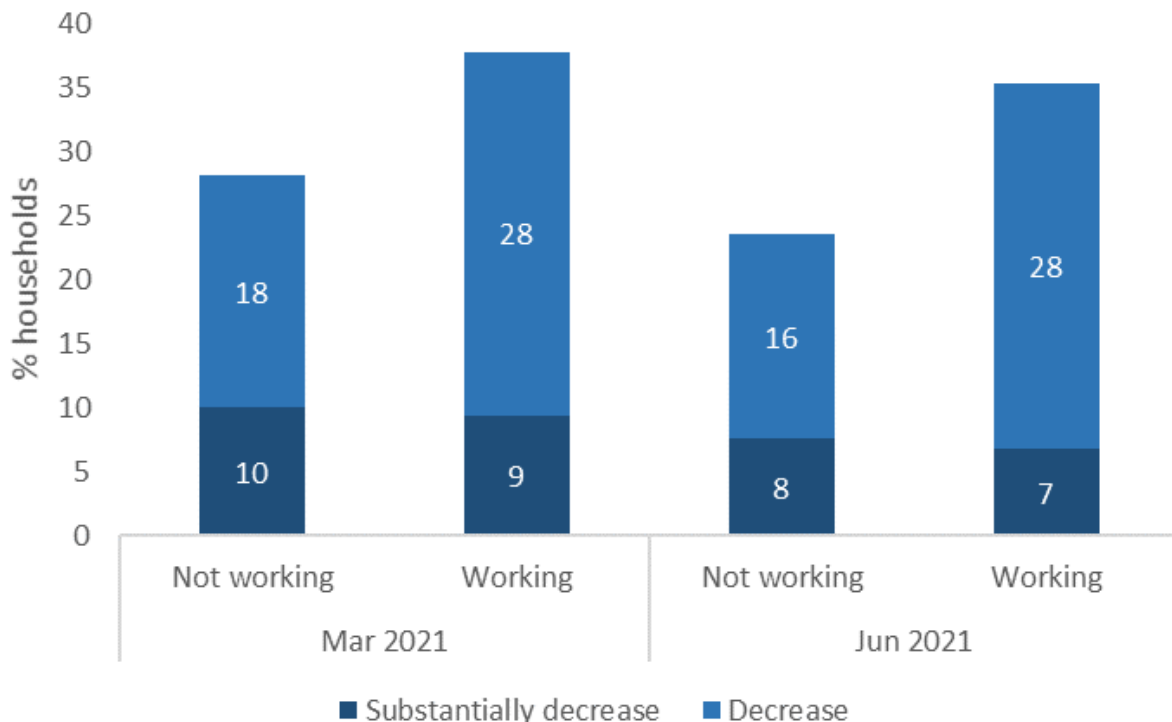


By June 2021, about 30 percent of Croatian households cut back overall spending because of reasons directly related to the crisis, a small decline from the level in March.

30 percent of households cut back spending in June 2021 compared to 33 percent in March.

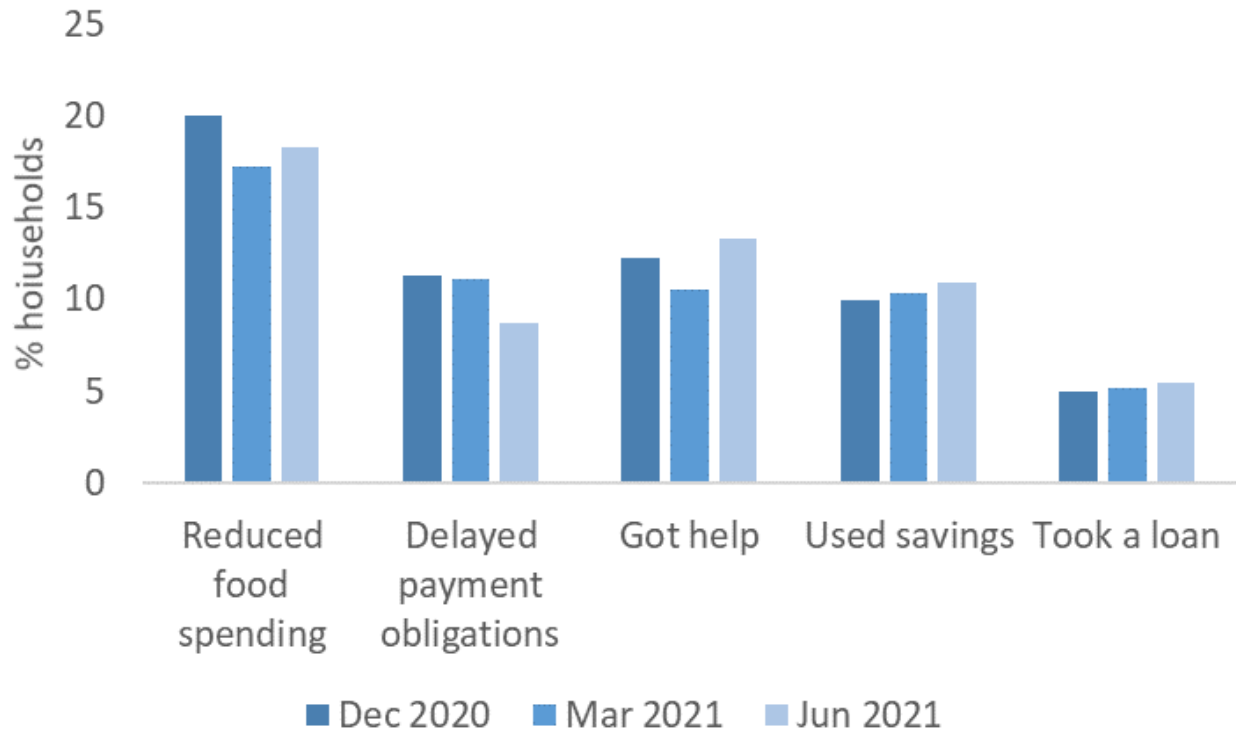


The employment channel is clear: working households are more likely to scale back spending than non-working households

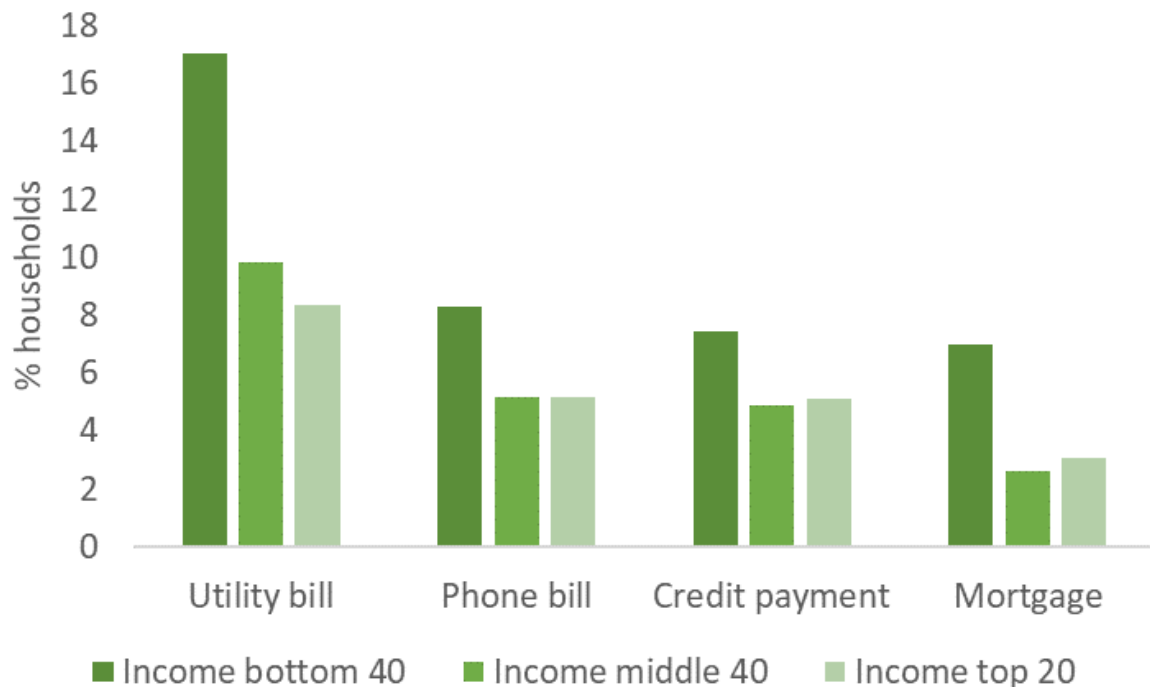


Alarminglly, there has been little improvement in the extent to which families coped with the effects of the crisis.

By now, as many Croatian families relied on savings and reduced food spending as in March 2021 and December 2020.

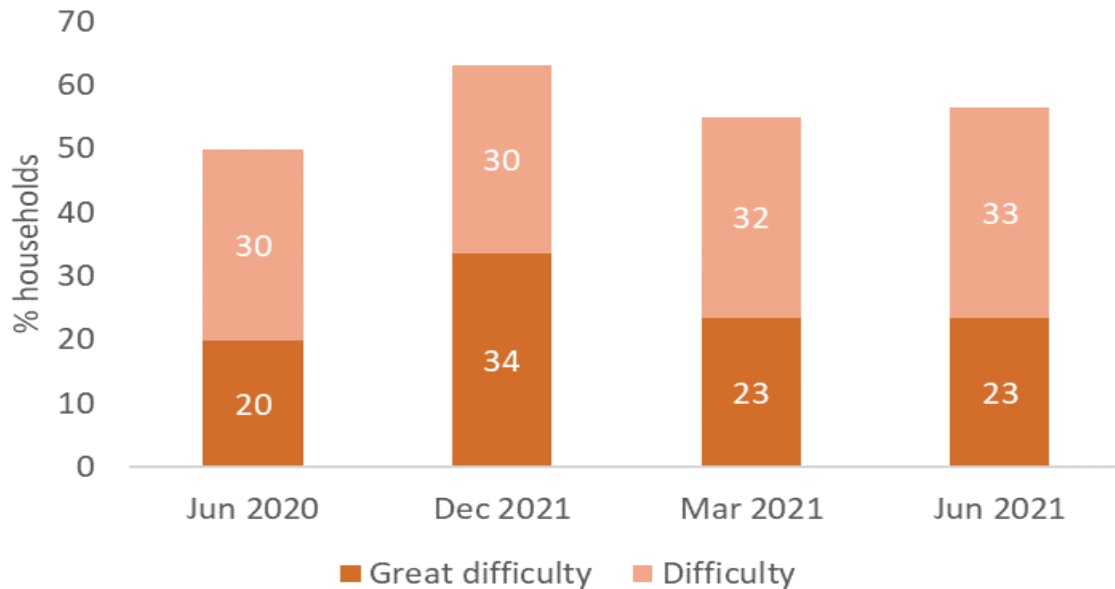


Low-income families continued to experience arrears of utility, phone bills, credit payments, and mortgages.



By now, as many Croatian families reported difficulties meeting their expenses as in earlier periods.

56 percent of Croatian households reported difficulties meeting their expenses in June 2021.



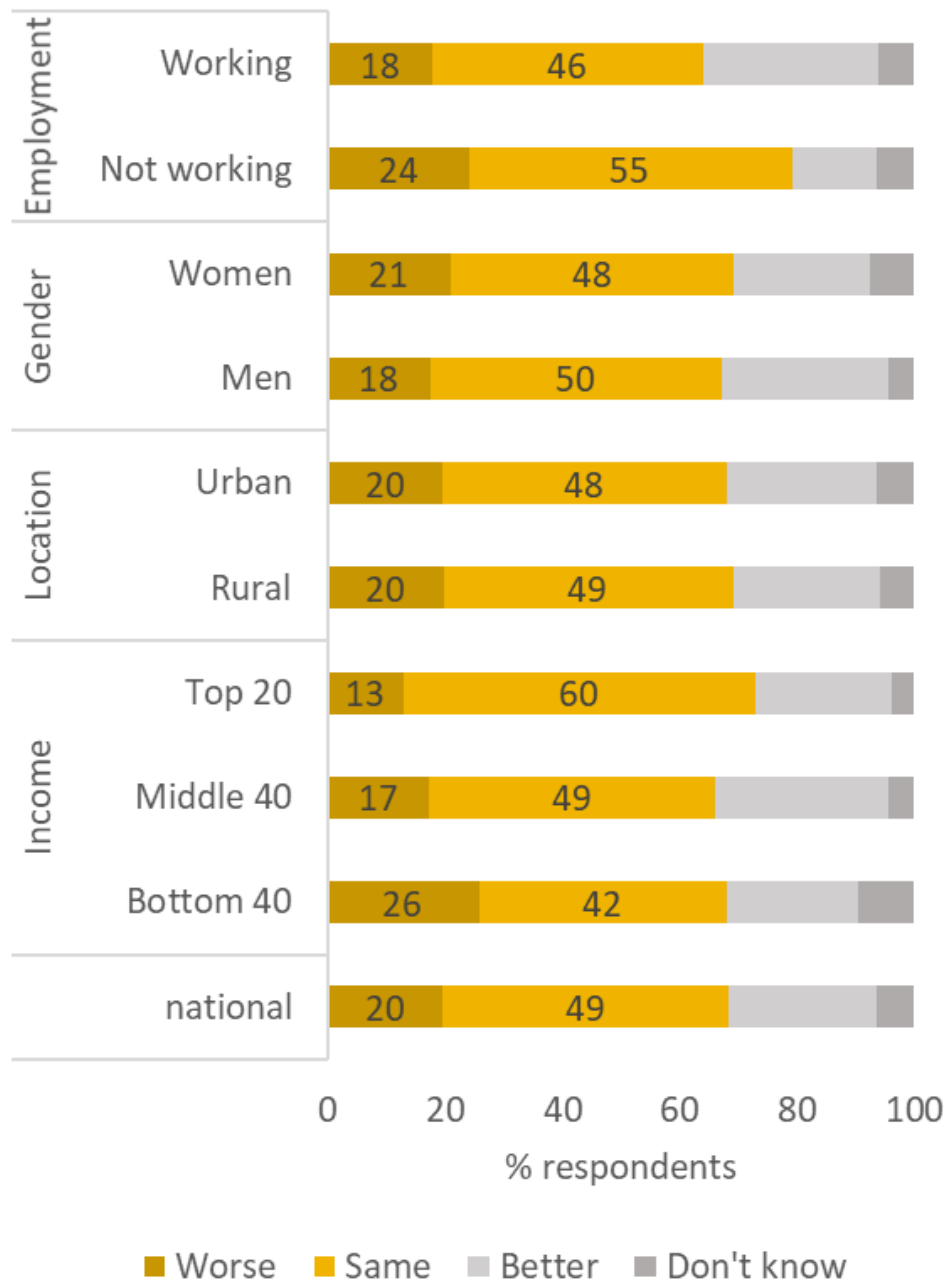
The challenge is more noticeable for women, low-income families, rural residents, and families with no working members.



Source: Croatia COVID-19 Rapid Response Survey (2021)

Looking ahead, Croatians are quite pessimistic about their financial situation in 2021. Nearly 70 percent of respondents believed 2021 would not be better than 2020.

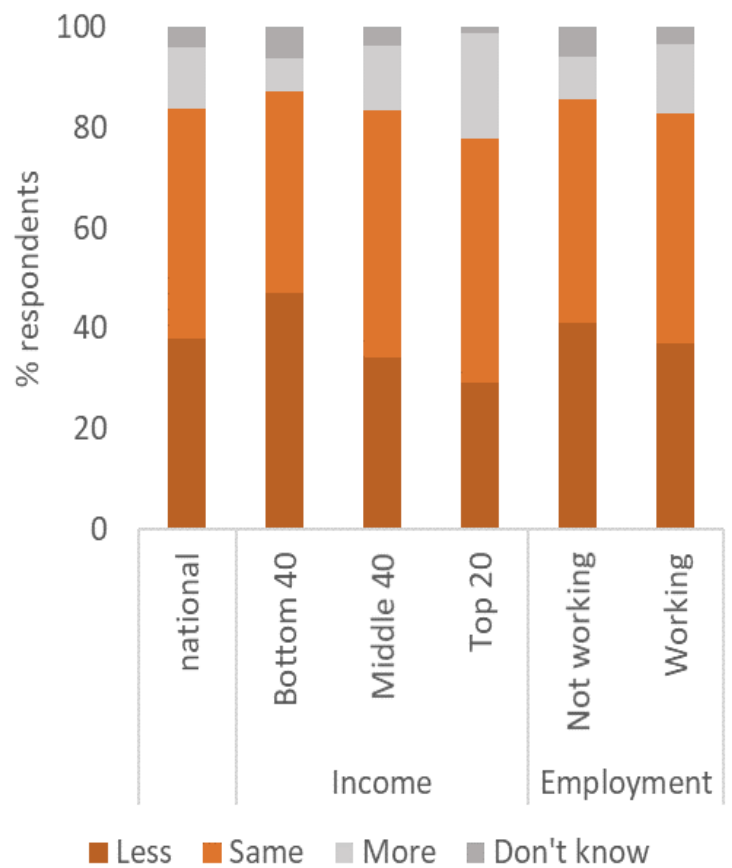
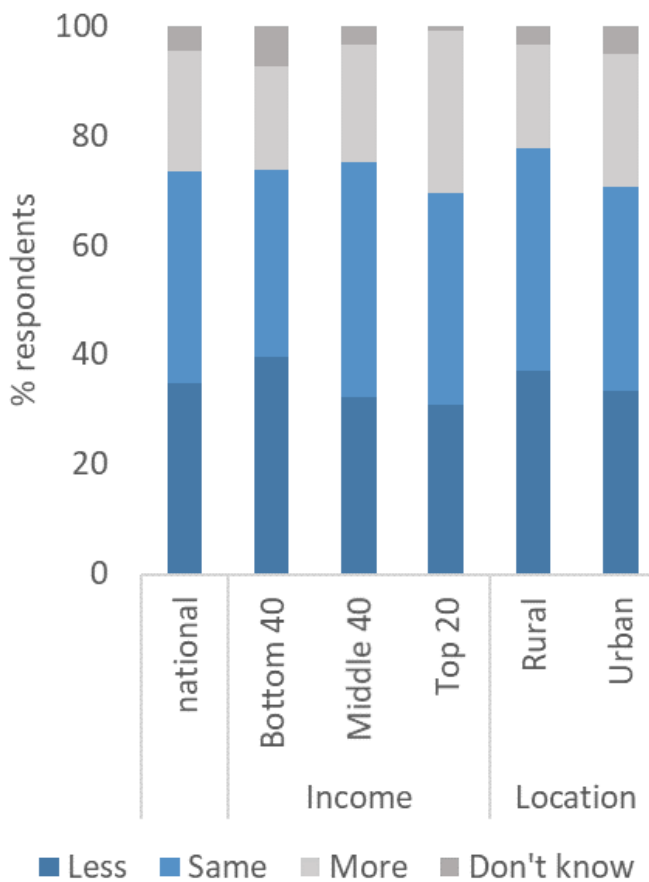
Richer people and people not working are more pessimistic



The outlook for Croatian consumer confidence is still *not* good: 73 percent of respondents reported they would not spend more on durable goods in 2021 than in 2020. Another 84 percent indicated the same message regarding spending on restaurants.

Low-income and rural residents are more likely not to spend more on durable goods in 2021.

Similarly, low-income and not-working people are more likely not to spend more on restaurants in 2021.



COVID-19 impacts as of June 2021:

1

Employment

2

Income, financial wellbeing
and financial outlook

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Opinions on government's responses

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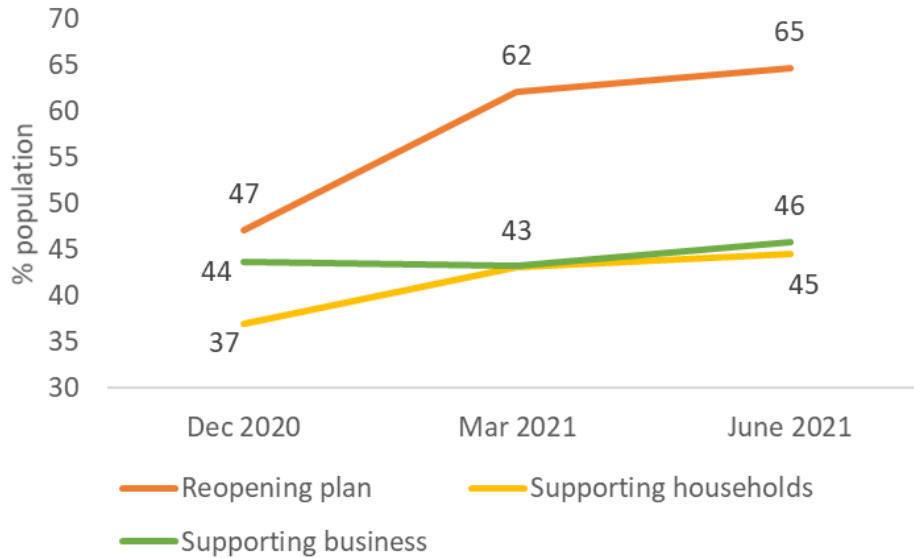
COVID-19 vaccination

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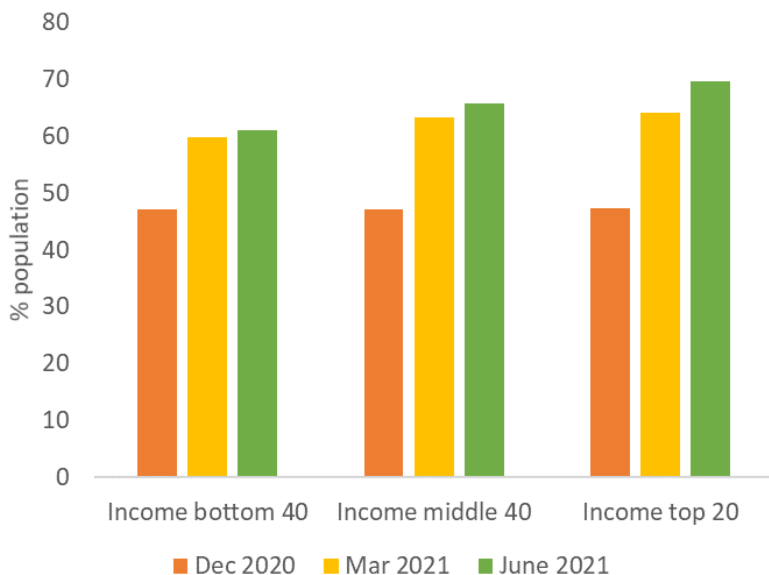
Education

As the crisis progresses, more Croats agree with the government’s policies.

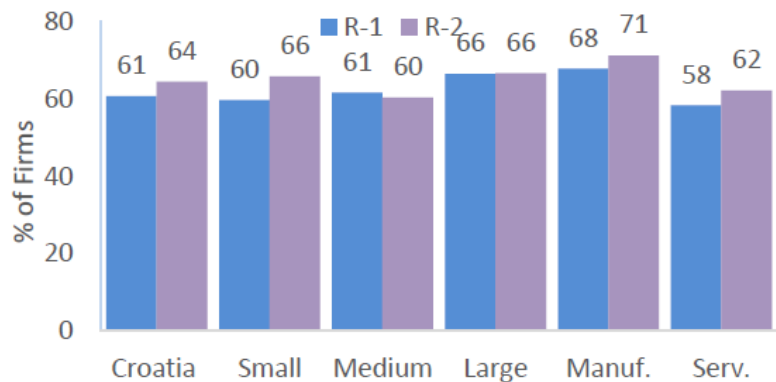
65 percent of respondents agreed with reopening economy plan in June 2021 – a significant increase from December 2020. There is also an uptick in citizens’ approval of government’s policies on supporting households and businesses.



Top-income earners are more likely to approve the government’s reopening plan, reflecting the fast recovery in employment in this group relatively to their lower-income peers.



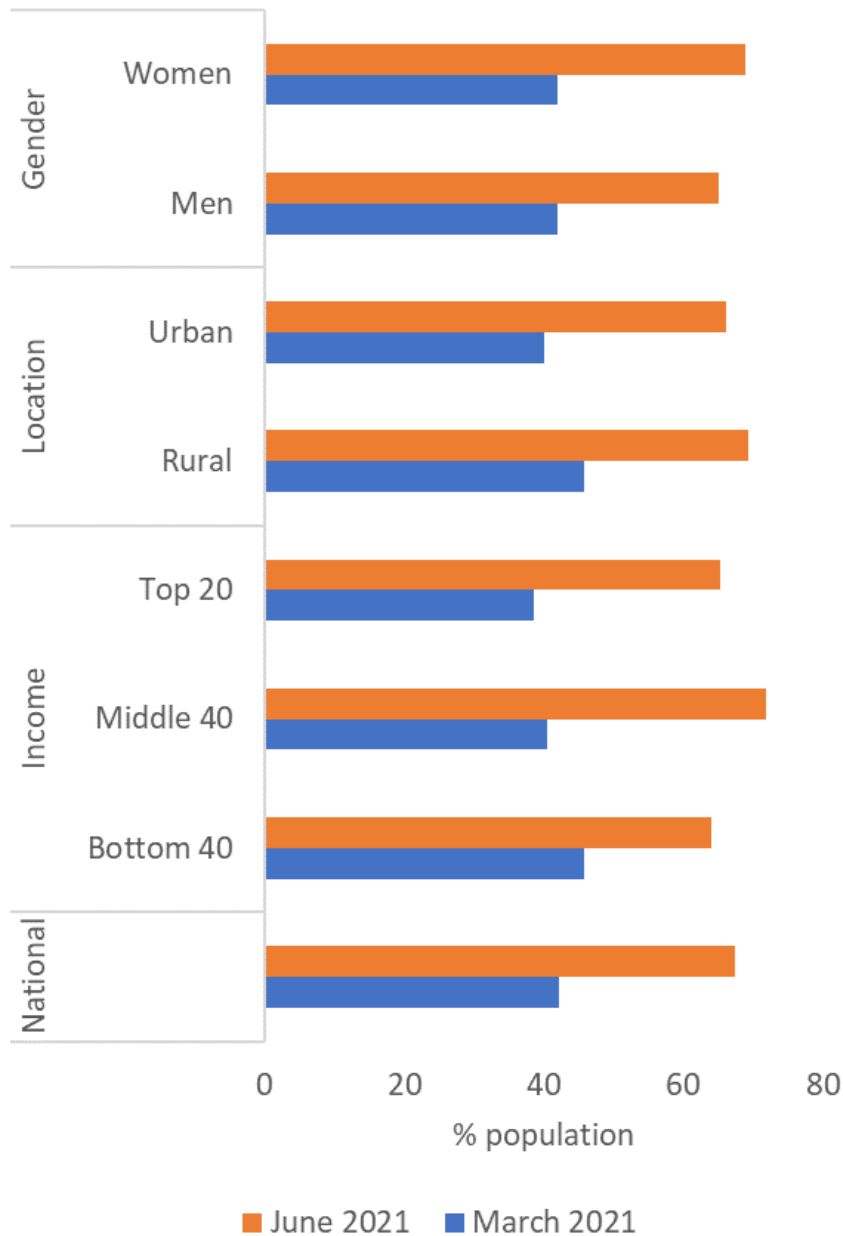
More firms reported to receive or expect COVID-19 pandemic-related government support



Source: Croatia Enterprise Surveys Follow-Up on COVID-19 (2021)

Between March and June 2021, there has been a surge of citizens’ approval of the government’s implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination program.

In June 2021, 67 percent of respondents believed the government did a good job in the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination program compared to 42 percent in March. The increase in approval rating is observed across all demographic groups.



Source: Croatia COVID-19 Rapid Response Survey (2021)

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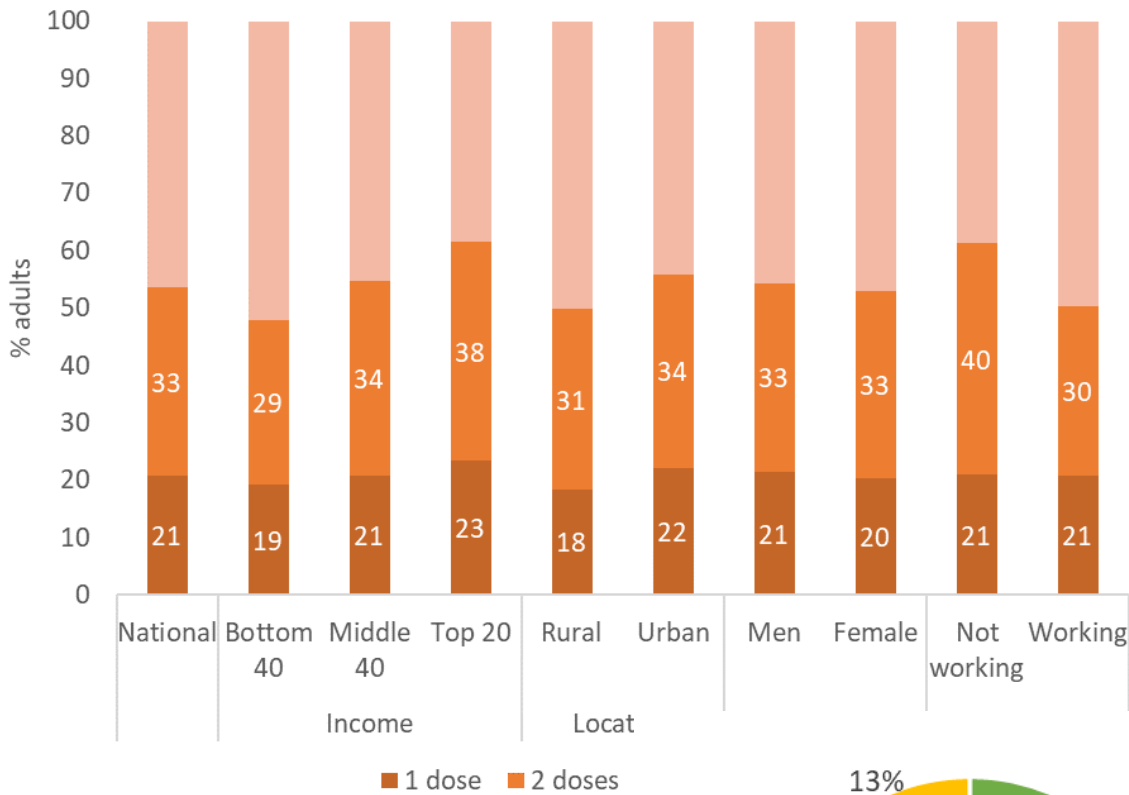
COVID-19 vaccination

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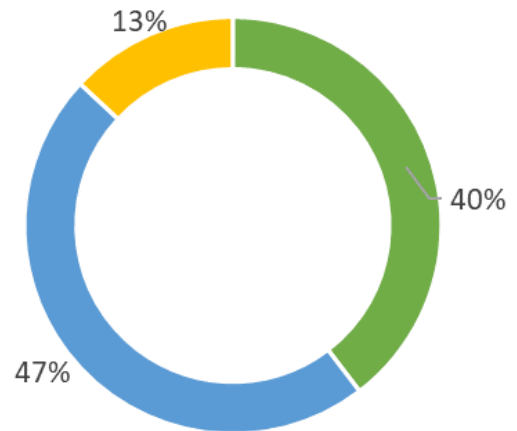
Education

By June 2021, Croatia is in a good track of COVID-19 vaccines uptake: 54 percent of Croatian adult population have received at least one dose of the vaccines. Among the remaining, 40 percent would take the vaccines.

But the take-up rate is lower among people in low-income bracket, people in rural areas, and people who are not working, suggesting the vaccination campaign can target better these demographic groups.



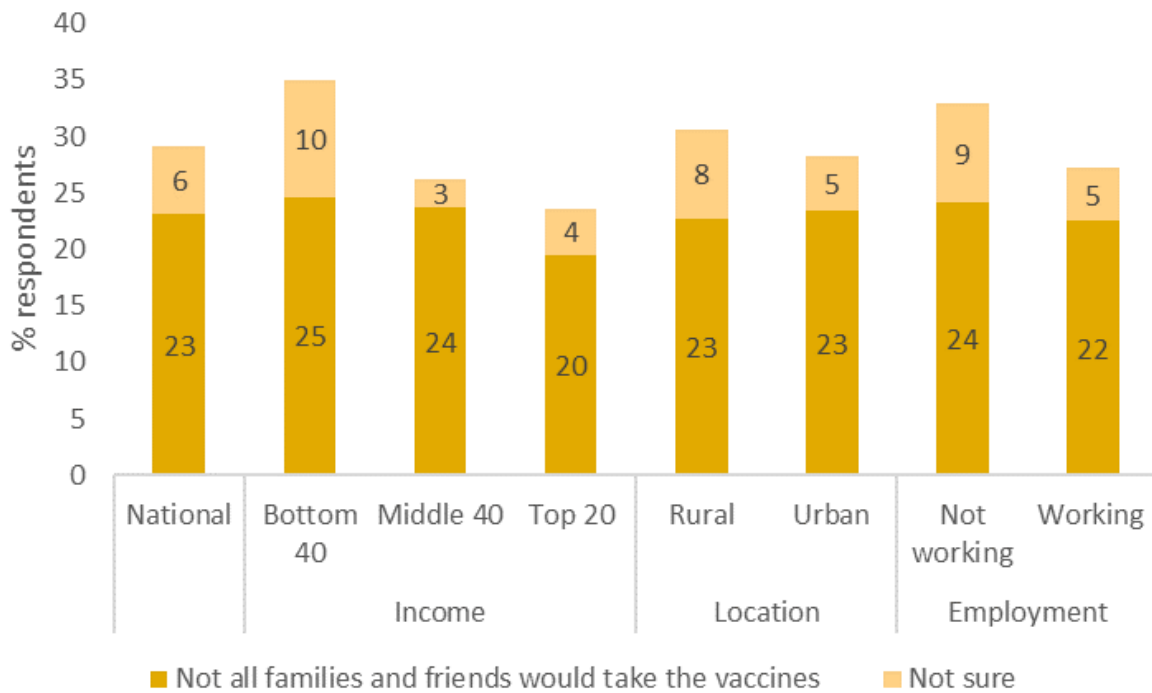
Among those not yet vaccinated, 47 percent indicated they would not take the vaccines. Another 13 percent have not decided.



Will take Will not Don't know yet

Nearly 30 percent of Croatian adults do not believe or are not sure that most of their families and friends would take the vaccines.

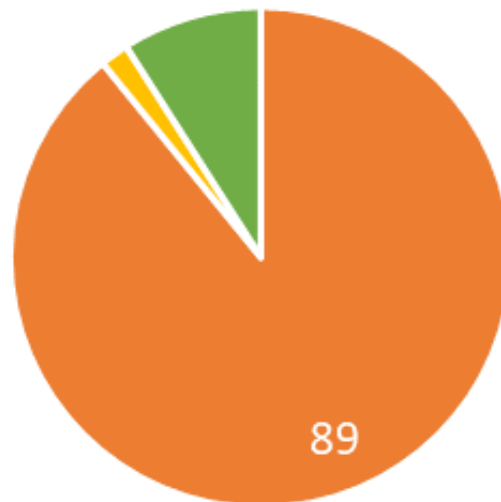
People residing in rural areas, in low-income brackets, and people who were not working were more likely to share this view



Source: Croatia COVID-19 Rapid Response Survey (2021)

The constraint to vaccines uptake is not on the supply side. Among people stating either they would not take the vaccines or have not decided, nearly 90 percent knew that the COVID-19 vaccines were available where they lived.

89 percent of people who would not take the vaccines or have not yet decided knew that COVID-19 vaccines were available where they lived. The level is high across all population groups.

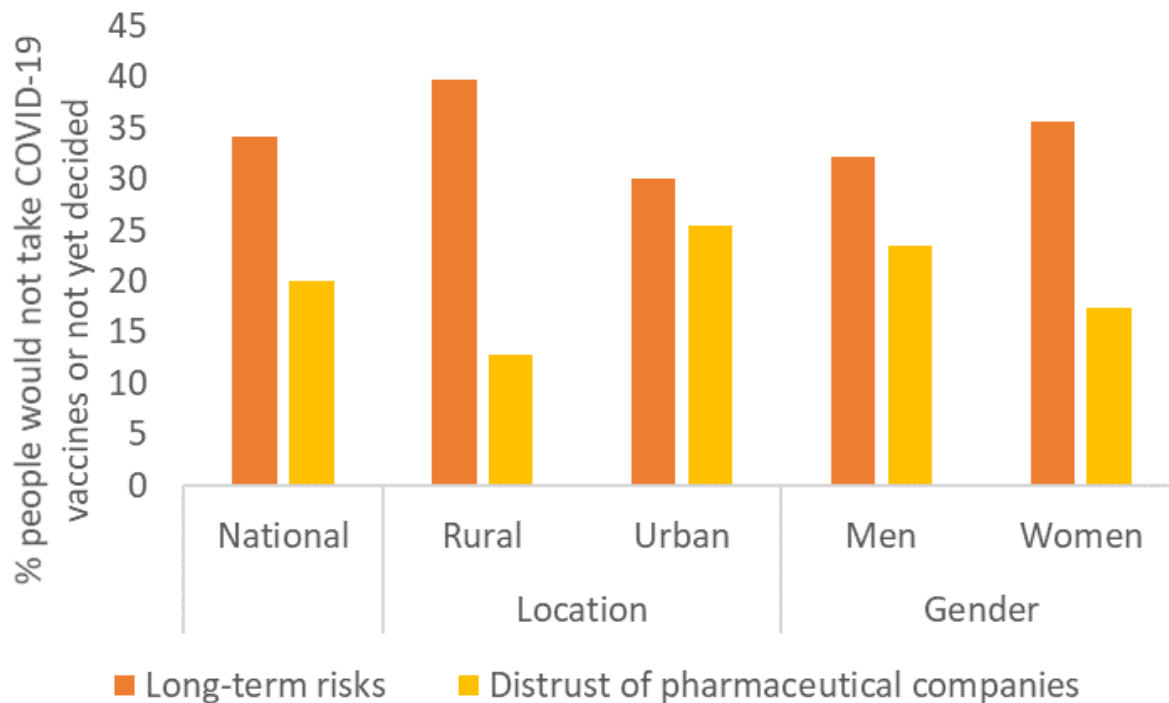


- Vaccines are available
- Vaccines are not available
- Don't know

Source: Croatia COVID-19 Rapid Response Survey (2021)

The main reasons behind COVID-19 vaccines hesitancy are concerns about vaccines-associated long-term risks and lack of trust of pharmaceutical companies.

34 percent of people indicating they either would not take the vaccines or have not decided were concerned about the long-term effects of the vaccines. Another 20 percent expressed the lack of trust to pharmaceutical companies.



Source: Croatia COVID-19 Rapid Response Survey (2021)

Women and people in rural areas were more worried about vaccines-associated health risks while men and urban residents showed more distrust of pharmaceutical companies.

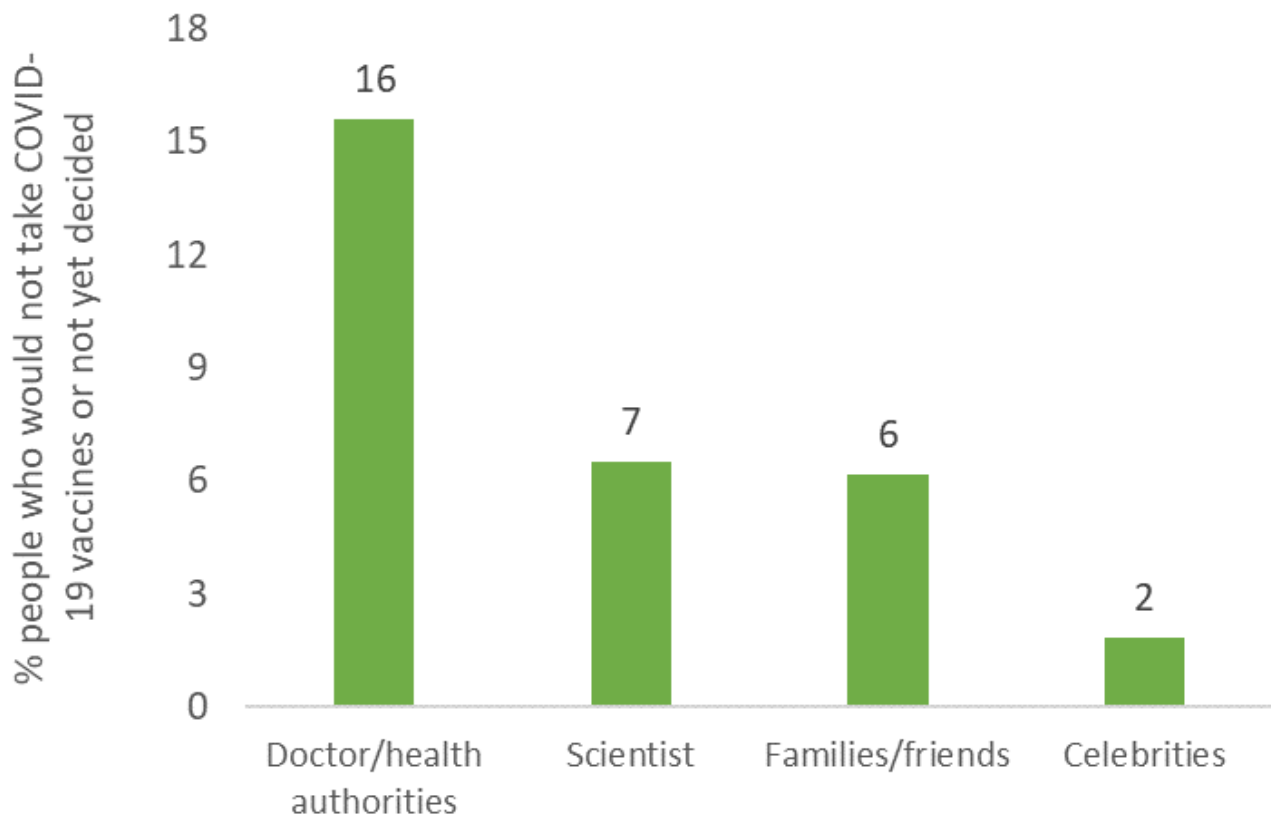
This signals that vaccination campaign could formulate campaign messages on the safety of the vaccines and the rigorous and integrity of COVID-19 vaccines producers. The campaigns can also target different population groups by geographical location and gender.

To boost vaccines uptake, the campaign can bring in doctors, health authorities, and scientists to spread the messages, as well as promoting people to display their vaccination status.

16 percent of people who would not take COVID-19 vaccines or have not yet decided said they would consider the vaccines if doctors and health authorities received the vaccines themselves or recommended the vaccines.

Another 7 percent would consider to get vaccinated if scientists spread the messages.

Another 6 percent would do if people they know (such as families and friends) already got the vaccines and recommended it.



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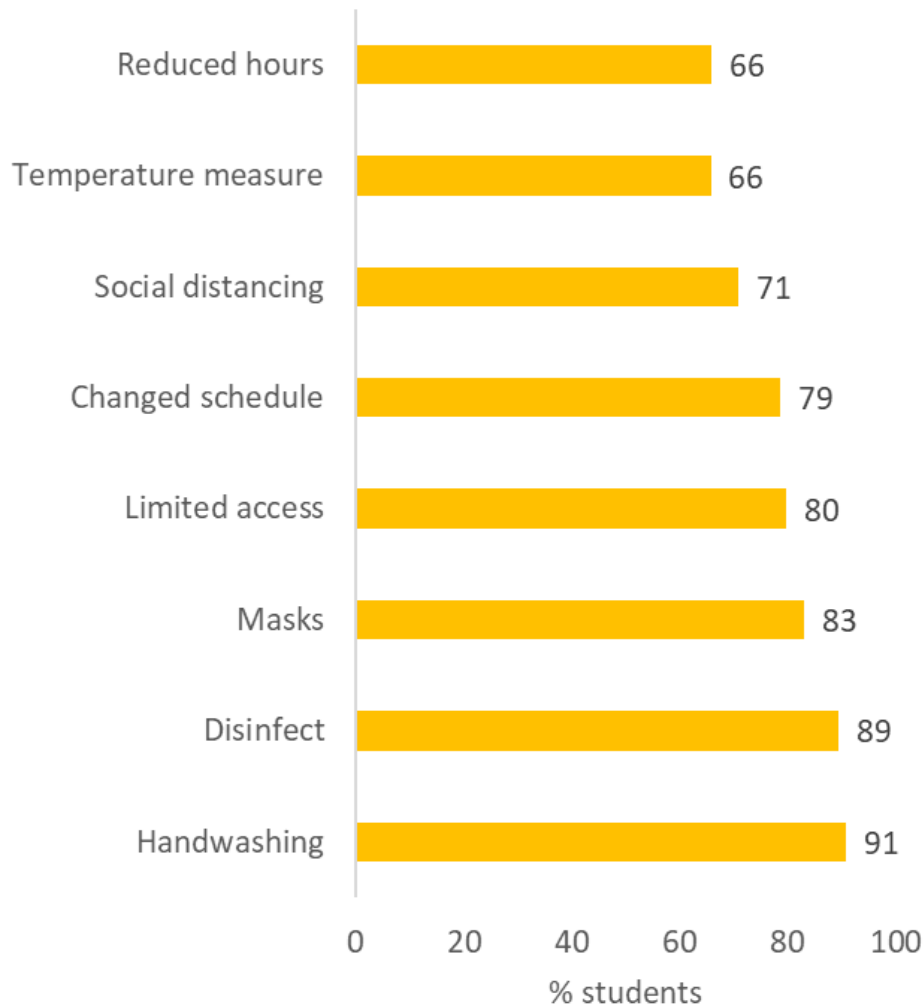
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COVID-19 vaccination

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Education

By June 2021, most schools in Croatia implemented strong sanitation measures, such as hand-washing, disinfecting, masks requirements, etc.

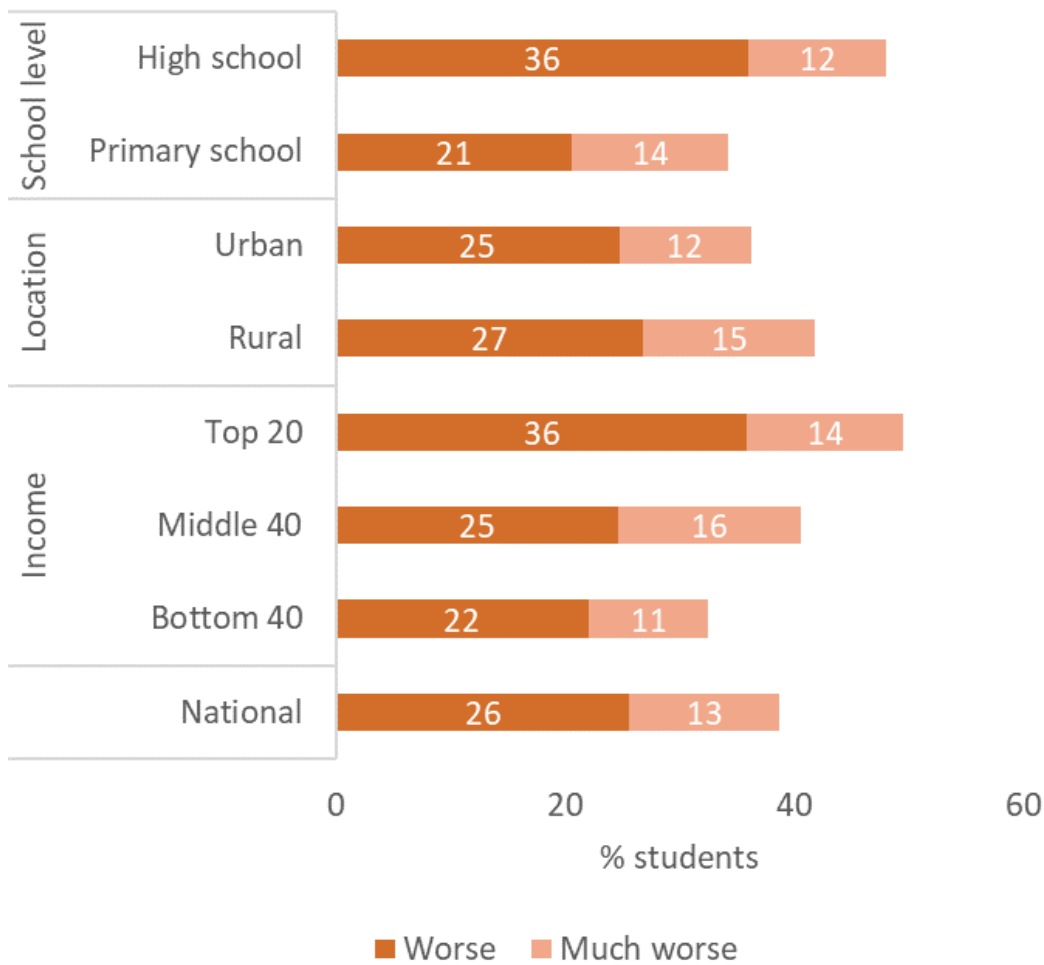


Primary schools were more likely to enforce handwashing, daily temperature measurement and access prohibition to outsiders.

Meanwhile, high schools were more likely to schedule classes to avoid mixing different classes, and enforce mask wearing.

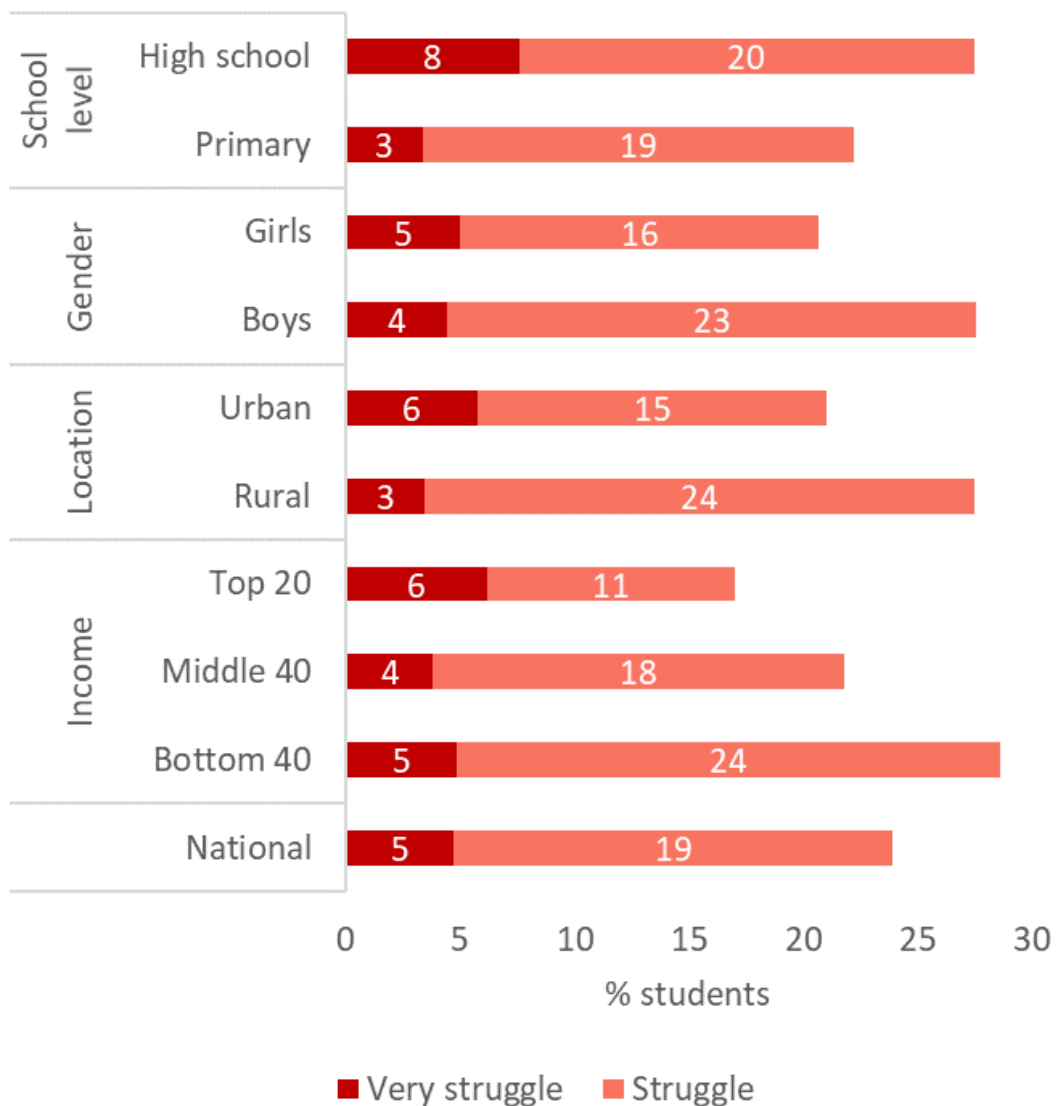
With this unprecedented year of schooling, nearly 40 percent of students perceived teaching quality this year was worse than the level in a normal school year.

The dissatisfaction level in teaching quality was higher among high school students, students in rural areas, and students from top-income families.



Nearly a quarter of Croatian students struggled to keep up with schoolwork this year.

High school students, boys, students in rural areas and students from low-income families faced more challenges.



Policy recommendations

Jobs and social protection



Provide unemployment benefits and create jobs, especially for low-wage workers and women

- Continue to provide unemployment benefits to pre-crisis workers who have not found new jobs.
- Create incentives for firms to hire low-wage workers and women (e.g., tax exemption, wage subsidies, waiver of certain employer contributions, etc.)

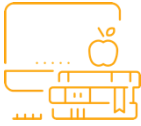
Enhance social assistance program for people who are not working



- Continue cash support to people who are not working (elderly, women, disabled people, children, etc.)
- Consider a one-time increase of benefit amounts of programs targeting poor families (e.g., guaranteed minimum income), to ensure vulnerable families can weather the prolonged crisis.
- Assist poor families who fall behind payments to key services (e.g., utility bills) by extending the deadlines to bill payment, and/or providing discounts.

KEY FINDINGS

COVID-19 vaccines and education



Boost COVID-19 vaccines uptake

- Focus the campaign messages on long-term risks associated with the vaccines, and integrity of vaccines producers.
- Target the messages to low-income group, women, and people in rural areas.
- Bring in doctors, health authorities, and scientist to spread the messages.
- Promote people to display their vaccination status (stickers, arm bands, etc.) to encourage their families and friends to take the vaccines.



Help students to catch up with lost learnings

- Provide additional learning opportunities such as free summer school, enhanced learning after-school, helps with homework.
- Target high school students, students in rural areas, and students from low-income families.
- Provide training and incentives (cash, bonuses, recognition, etc.) to teacher so they can spend more time and effort with students.

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