



## RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

### COVID-19: Costs, Consequences, and Urgent Choices | July 2021

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#### FEATURED RESEARCH

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COVID-19 continues to devastate lives and livelihoods. This month's newsletter features research on the costs of the pandemic, the efficacy of government responses, and the promise of vaccines to slow and eventually halt the pandemic. [Ferreira et al. \(2021\)](#) tally the brutal costs in higher mortality and poverty: by December 2020 almost 20 million life-years were lost to COVID-19 and more than 120 million additional years were spent in poverty. Long-term health consequences will add to these immediate costs, as [Shapira et al. \(2021\)](#) show in an analysis of disruptions to maternal and child health services in eight Sub-Saharan African countries.

The debate over lockdowns as a response to the crisis has been contentious, but as with most complex questions the context of a policy can make a vast difference to its efficacy. Modeling by [Ma et al. \(2021\)](#) suggest that the economic contractions associated with lockdowns in the lowest-income settings can lead to more children's lives lost than COVID-19 fatalities averted—but this shifts markedly for middle and higher-income countries.

While governments have had to resort to lockdowns and other non-pharmaceutical interventions to limit the damage from the pandemic, vaccines offer a more durable resolution to the crisis. [Agarwal and Reed \(2021\)](#) take up the question of what would be required to bring the global pandemic to an end and find that sufficient donor country commitments of cash and in-kind donations could achieve this by 2022. [Buera et al. \(2021\)](#) also offer some cause for cautious optimism—their analysis of labor- and financial-market frictions suggests that economies could potentially recover swiftly once COVID-19 is brought under control.

To access all of the Development Research Group's research on COVID-19, please visit our [website](#).

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#### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

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##### WORKING PAPERS

##### ✓ [The Intergenerational Mortality Tradeoff of COVID-19 Lockdown Policies](#)

*Lin Ma, Gil Shapira, Damien de Walque, Quy-Toan Do, Jed Friedman, Andrei A. Levchenko, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 9677, May 2021 | [Cited in The Economist](#)*

In poorer countries, mortality reductions achieved by lockdowns to contain the spread of COVID-19 can be negatively offset by an increase in child mortality caused by the economic contractions accompanying the lockdowns. A model calibrated with data from 85 countries across income levels quantifies this tradeoff and suggests that lockdowns in low-income countries might lead to more children's lives lost than COVID-19 fatalities averted.

## ✓ [Death and Destitution: The Global Distribution of Welfare Losses from the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

*Francisco H. G. Ferreira, Olivier Sterck, Daniel Mahler, [Benôit Decerf](#), World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 9673, May 2021 | [Blog](#)*

Using years of human life as a common metric, this paper estimates the overall welfare burden of COVID-19 on mortality and poverty around the world. By December 2020 almost 20 million life-years were lost to COVID-19 and more than 120 million additional years were spent in poverty. While COVID mortality is higher in rich countries, poverty worsened more markedly in poor countries.

## ✓ [How Has COVID-19 Affected the Intention to Migrate via the Backway to Europe and to a Neighboring African Country? Survey Evidence and a Salience Experiment in The Gambia](#)

*Tijan L. Bah, Catia Batista, Flore Gubert, [David McKenzie](#), World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 9658, May 2021*

This study looks at how the pandemic changed intentions to migrate from The Gambia, a country with high pre-pandemic per capita irregular migration. The intention to migrate to Europe and Senegal fell for one-third of young males. The largest reductions in migration intentions were among individuals unsure of their intent pre-pandemic and those unable to afford the costs of migrating.

## ✓ [Organizational Resources, Country Institutions, and National Culture behind Firm Survival and Growth during COVID-19](#)

*Yu Liu, Mike W. Peng, Zuobao Wei, Jian Xu, [Lixin Colin Xu](#), World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 9633, April 2021*

This study provides insights into the survival and growth of private firms during the COVID-19 pandemic using data from the [World Bank Enterprise Surveys](#) for 18,770 firms in 36 countries. Firms survive and grow better in countries with a higher per capita income, lower COVID-19 spread, and a less stringent COVID-19 control policy. Domestic firms with state ownership and affiliation with parent companies are more likely to survive and grow. Finally, cultural tendencies toward a long-term orientation, individualism, and avoidance of uncertainty may benefit firm survival or growth.

## ✓ [How to End the COVID-19 Pandemic by March 2022](#)

*Ruchir Agarwal, [Tristan Reed](#), World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 9632, April 2021 | [Blog](#)*

This analysis of vaccine demand and supply suggests that vaccinating 60 percent of the population in each country by 2022 is feasible, conditional on an additional donor commitment of \$4 billion in cash and in-kind donations of vaccines to COVAX. This research formed the basis for a joint World Bank, IMF, WHO, and WTO proposal (published as a [joint op-ed](#)) to end the pandemic. Donor countries have provided the requested \$4 billion in cash and about 800 million doses of vaccines. Although supply challenges remain that may delay the pace of delivery, enough vaccines for 91 of the lowest-income countries have been paid for.

## ✓ [The Economic Ripple Effects of COVID-19](#)

*Francisco J. Buera, [Roberto N. Fattal Jaef](#), P. Andrés Neumeyer, Hugo Hopenhayn, Yongseok Shin, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 9631, April 2021*

The paper studies the role of labor- and financial-market frictions in propagating the pandemic-induced recession. Its main finding is the prediction of swift recoveries in GDP and unemployment. At the micro level, however, substantial exit and severe

employment contractions affect young non-essential firms. A more protracted recession can arise in response to longer lockdowns and policies that force non-essential firms to confront wage bill payments.

## JOURNAL ARTICLES

### ✓ [Disruptions in maternal and child health service utilization during COVID-19: Analysis from eight sub-Saharan African countries](#)

*Gil Shapira, Tashrik Ahmed, Salomé Henriette Paulette Drouard, Pablo Amor Fernandez, Eeshani Kandpal, Charles Nzelu, Chea Sanford Wesseh, Nur Ali Mohamud, Francis Smart, Charles Mwansambo, Martina L Baye, Mamatou Diabate, Sylvain Yuma, Munirat Ogunlayi, Rwema Jean De Dieu Rusatira, Tawab Hashemi, Petra Vergeer, [Jed Friedman](#), Health Policy and Planning, czab064, June 19, 2021*

This paper quantifies disruptions to essential health services during COVID-19 by comparing reported utilization levels to those predicted for pre-pandemic levels and trends. The analysis uses data from 63,954 facilities in eight Sub-Saharan countries and finds all countries experienced some service disruption, although the magnitude and duration of the disruptions vary across countries and services.

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## EVENTS

- **September 9–11:** [14th International Conference on Migration and Development](#)
- **March 21–25, 2022:** [21st Annual Conference on Land and Poverty: Institutions for Equity and Resilience](#)

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## FOCUS ON IMPACT EVALUATION

### Development Research in Practice: The DIME Analytics Data Handbook

This [publication](#) provides a step-by-step guide to high-quality, reproducible data work over the full life cycle of an empirical research project. It shares the lessons, tools, and processes developed within the World Bank's Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) department, and compiles them into a single narrative of best practices for data work. The Handbook is directed to development researchers all over the world, to be read cover to cover or as a desk reference as needs arise. The central premise is that standardizing and simplifying data tasks improves research quality and enables more effective collaboration.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

### Tips for collecting surveys of hard-to-reach populations

[Sandra V. Rozo](#) | *Development Impact* | July 14, 2021

Recently, in joint work with Ana María Ibáñez, Andrés Moya, María Ortega, Marisol Rodríguez, and field support from IPA Colombia, I have been working on a research project that examines the effects of a large amnesty on migrants' lives. The context of the study is the opportunity of regularization of approximately half a million Venezuelan refugees in Colombia, known as the

PEP program (Permiso Especial de Permanencia). To execute the project, we collected phone surveys of regular and irregular migrants. Irregular migrants represent those individuals who are living in Colombia without the proper migratory documentation. In the data collection process, we learned important lessons that may help other researchers and practitioners collect data for vulnerable populations with trust issues. Here is a list of the main lessons.

[Read the blog](#)

### **Learning from previous research: the quest for a better future of dignity and equal opportunities**

[Kerina Wang](#), [Emiko Naomasa](#), [KCP Program Management Unit](#) | *Let's Talk Development* | July 14, 2021

July 18 is the Nelson Mandela Day, which celebrates Mandela's deep commitment to promoting justice, human rights, and fundamental freedom. Today, we highlight research that examines ways to build an inclusive society through the lens of social identities. Identities derived from caste, religion, gender, ethnic background, and social orientations may considerably affect one's ability to realize one's full potential.

[Read the blog](#)

### **Curated miscellanea: Interviews, advice, policy debates, and commonly referred to posts**

[David McKenzie](#) | *Development Impact* | July 12, 2021

This set of links collects together some of the other various series we have done over the years which are not included in our curated [links on technical topics and methodology](#), or in our curated [posts on survey methods](#). It serves to collate some of the other material we find ourselves going back to look for, or that our readers request links to frequently. *Last update July 12, 2021.*

[Read the blog](#)

### **COVID-19 and women-led businesses: More innovation but greater financial risk**

[Leonardo Iacovone](#), [Denis Medvedev](#), [Jessica Torres](#), [Franklin Maduko](#), [Isis Gaddis](#), [Kathleen Beegle](#) | *Private Sector Development* | July 12, 2021

Over a year into the pandemic, we have witnessed how a sweeping infectious disease and lockdown measures quickly deepened inequalities, hindering the progress that many have fought for years to achieve. One of the most striking examples is the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women.

[Read the blog](#)

### **How dowry influences household decisions in rural India**

[S Anukriti](#), [Nishith Prakash](#), [Sungoh Kwon](#) | *Let's Talk Development* | June 30, 2021

*This is the second blog of a two-part series on dowry in rural India. The first part is available here: [The evolution of dowry in rural India: 1960-2008](#)*

Bride-to-groom transfers at the time of marriage is an ancient custom that remains widely prevalent in contemporary developing societies, such as India. Although the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 prohibits the giving or taking of dowry in India, according to the 2006 Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS), dowry was paid in 95% of marriages during 1960-2008. Dowry imposes a substantial burden on girls' families as it can often amount to several years of household income.

[Read the blog](#)

### **The evolution of dowry in rural India: 1960-2008**

[S Anukriti](#), [Nishith Prakash](#), [Sungoh Kwon](#) | *Let's Talk Development* | June 30, 2021

The ancient custom of dowry, that is, bride-to-groom transfers at the time of marriage, remains ubiquitous in several countries. In this article we focus on rural India, where dowry remains a widespread phenomenon despite being illegal since 1961—according to the 2006 Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS), dowry was paid in 95 percent of marriages during 1960-2008. Dowry per marriage often amounts to several years of household income and imposes a substantial burden on girls' families. However, little is known about the evolution of dowry in recent decades that have witnessed remarkable economic and social change.

[Read the blog](#)

## How to assess the costs and benefits of lockdowns

*The Economist* | June 29, 2021

"Lockdowns both damage the economy and save lives, and governments have had to strike a balance between the two...in poor countries, where the population is relatively young, a lockdown can potentially lead to 1.76 children's lives lost due to the economic contraction per covid-19 fatality averted, probably because wellbeing suffers as incomes decline."

[Read the article](#) | Working Paper: [The Intergenerational Mortality Tradeoff of COVID-19 Lockdown Policies](#)

## Six questions with Andrew Foster

[David McKenzie](#) | *Development Impact* | Jun 28, 2021

[Andrew Foster](#) is the George and Nancy Parker Professor of Economics at Brown University and the Editor in Chief of the *Journal of Development Economics*. He has worked on a wide range of empirical micro-development topics including health, population, agricultural productivity and technology adoption, household structure, and the environment, with much of this work focused on South Asia.

*We were interested to see you recently note [on twitter](#) that your interest in development came about because, as a 13-year old, you were living in Bangladesh with your family during the time of the terrible 1974-75 famine, and while your family was doing fine, you wondered about the impact on others and decided to collect data. We would love to hear more about this experience. How long did you live in Bangladesh for? How did you go about collecting data as a 13-year old, and what did you find?*

[Read the blog](#)

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