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REPORT

COVID-19 MONITOR: WAVE 6

Tbilisi, Georgia

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ABOUT CRRC GEORGIA

CRRC-Georgia is a non-governmental, non-profit research organization, which collects, analyzes and publishes policy relevant data on social, economic and political trends to strengthen social science research and public policy analysis in the South Caucasus.

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KEY FINDINGS

INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE

- The strongly positive attitudes towards public institutions observed in past waves of the study remain. However, the data indicate that the degree of positivity has declined for many institutions. The Church is an exception to this trend, with a slight uptick in degree of approval.

POLICY APPROVAL

- As in past waves of the survey, most people approve of the government's policies. In the current wave, subsidizing mortgages is the least approved of, with a quarter of the public uncertain about the policy.

THE FUTURE OF THE VIRUS

- Only 27% of the public anticipate a second wave of the virus, though 28% are uncertain. The data indicates that the public would be less supportive of implementing a number of policies that have been important to the prevention of the spread of the virus in Georgia than they were in the first outbreak.

THE ECONOMY

- The data show employment is starting to recover, with half of those that had previously lost starting work again, up from 27% two weeks ago. Yet, household incomes showed only small signs of recovery in May.
- People in urban areas and those with lower levels of education (and thus likely poorer people) have been hardest hit.

PRACTICES

- The majority (58%) of the public left the home to socialize in the week prior to the survey, up from 15% in late April/early May.

GENDER

- The data indicate that at a minimum, 1% of women experienced some form of domestic violence during the crisis.

SOCIAL NORMING

- The results of an experiment suggest that the practice of social norming, showing people that most are engaged in pro-social behavior, can have adverse effects in the current crisis.

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 has led to wide ranging changes in societies around the world. The response in Georgia has been particularly effective to date. In order to provide the Government of Georgia and the international community with an evidence base to support decision making, CRRC Georgia is conducting the Covid-19 Monitoring Project. The project is supported by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Tbilisi. Within the project CRRC will carry out six nationally representative telephone surveys focused on knowledge, attitudes, and practices surrounding the crisis. This document provides the results of the second wave of the survey.

The survey was conducted over cell phone between June 4 and 6. The results are nationally representative, with a margin of error of 3.0%. Overall 1,095 individuals responded to the survey. The response rate was 37%. Respondents were selected using random digit dialing to ensure that a representative sample was taken. The data was then weighted to population characteristics using census data. The details of the survey methodology are provided in Annex 1 of this report.

The data analysis below uses frequencies and cross tabulations. Cross tabulations provide differences between different groups and a chi-square test or t-test is used to test for statistical significance of apparent differences. Tests for differences between the following groups were conducted within the study:

- Settlement types (Tbilisi, other urban, rural);
- Age groups (18-34, 35-54, 55+);
- Education levels (Secondary or vocational, tertiary);
- Sex (Male versus female);

In some cases, the sum of percentages presented does not equal 100%. This stems from rounding error.

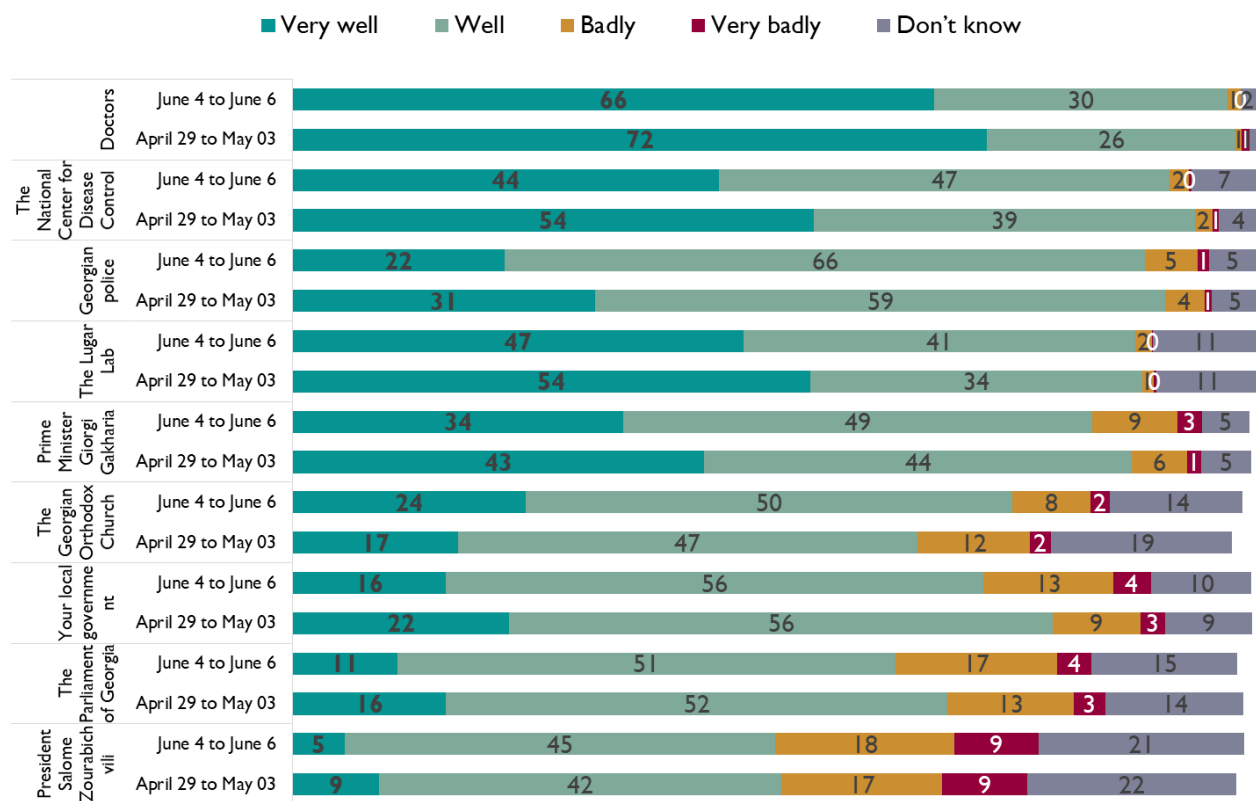
This document proceeds as follows. In the next section, the results of the survey are presented, first discussing institutional performance assessments. The subsequent section provides approval of several policies real and potential. Thereafter, data on attitudes and expectations about the future of the virus are discussed. Thereafter, economic data is provided. The following section looks at socializing and hoarding behavior. The next section of the report provides data on the division of labor in the household and domestic violence. The final findings section provides data on a social norming experiment. The report finishes with conclusions based on the data. In Annex to the report, the study methodology is provided.

INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE

The previous waves of this study have demonstrated that there has been a large increase in performance assessments compared with prior to the crisis. Corona-virus specific performance assessments are similarly high. This week the survey measured Corona virus specific institutional performance, with a general, albeit substantively small, decline in the degree of positive performance assessments between the first and last wave of the study.

The data suggest that the share of the population reporting a positive performance assessment (well or very well) has remained similar for most institutions and high generally. The degree of positive assessment, however, has generally declined from 4-10 percentage points. The exception is the Georgian Orthodox Church, whose share of very well assessments have increased by seven percentage points.

Institutional performance (%)

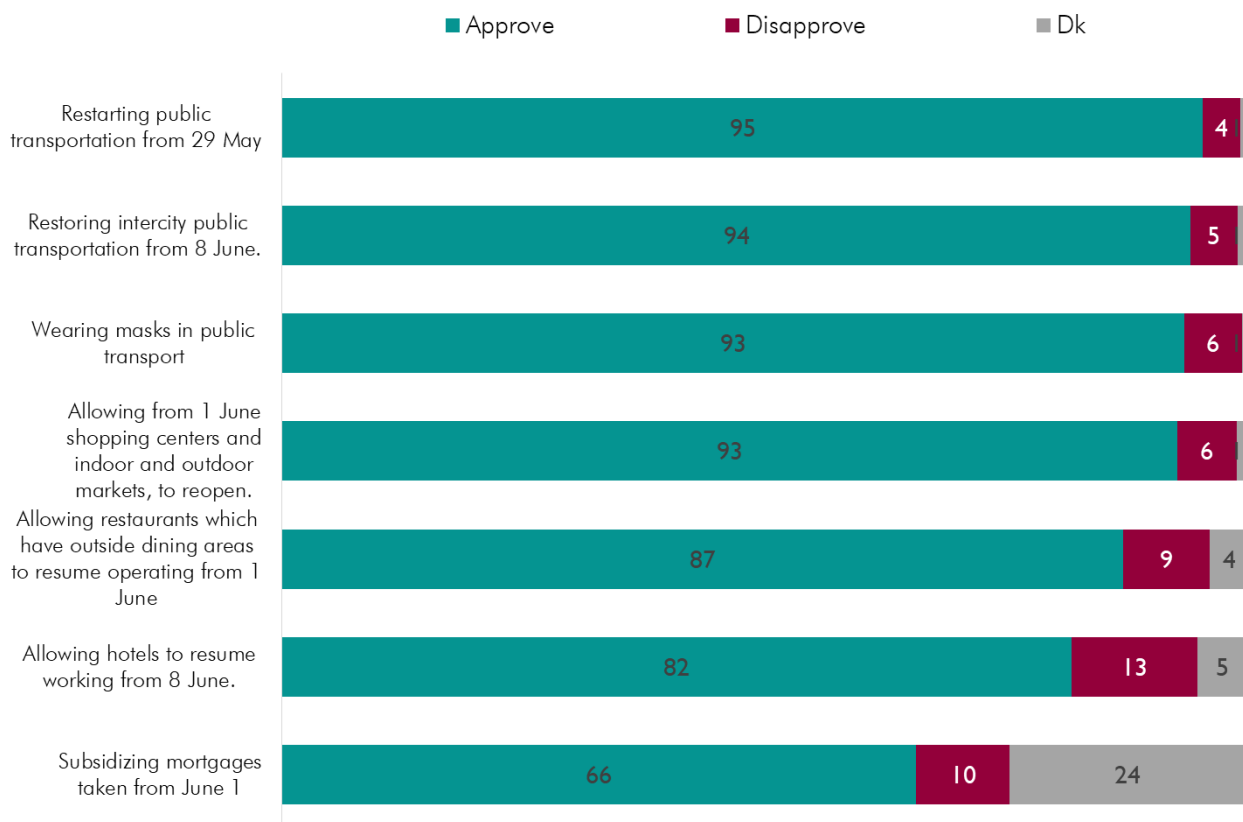


POLICY APPROVAL

As in the past waves of the survey, there have been numerous policies implemented and discussed during the past weeks. Most of these have centered around the lifting of restrictions rather than their implementation. As with past waves, the public is also generally approving of policy measures.

The vast majority of policies are approved of, with over 90% approval for restarting public transport, restoring intercity public transportation, wearing masks in public transport, and allowing shopping centers to re-open. Over 90% of the public approve of allowing restaurants that are outside to open and allowing hotels to open from June 8. Approval of subsidizing mortgages is quite low at 66%. Rather than outright disapproval, the public expresses a relatively high level of uncertainty on this question (24%). Young people (18-34: 74%) are 20 percentage points more likely to approve of this policy than people over the age of 54 (54%).

Approval of different policies (%)



THE FUTURE OF THE VIRUS

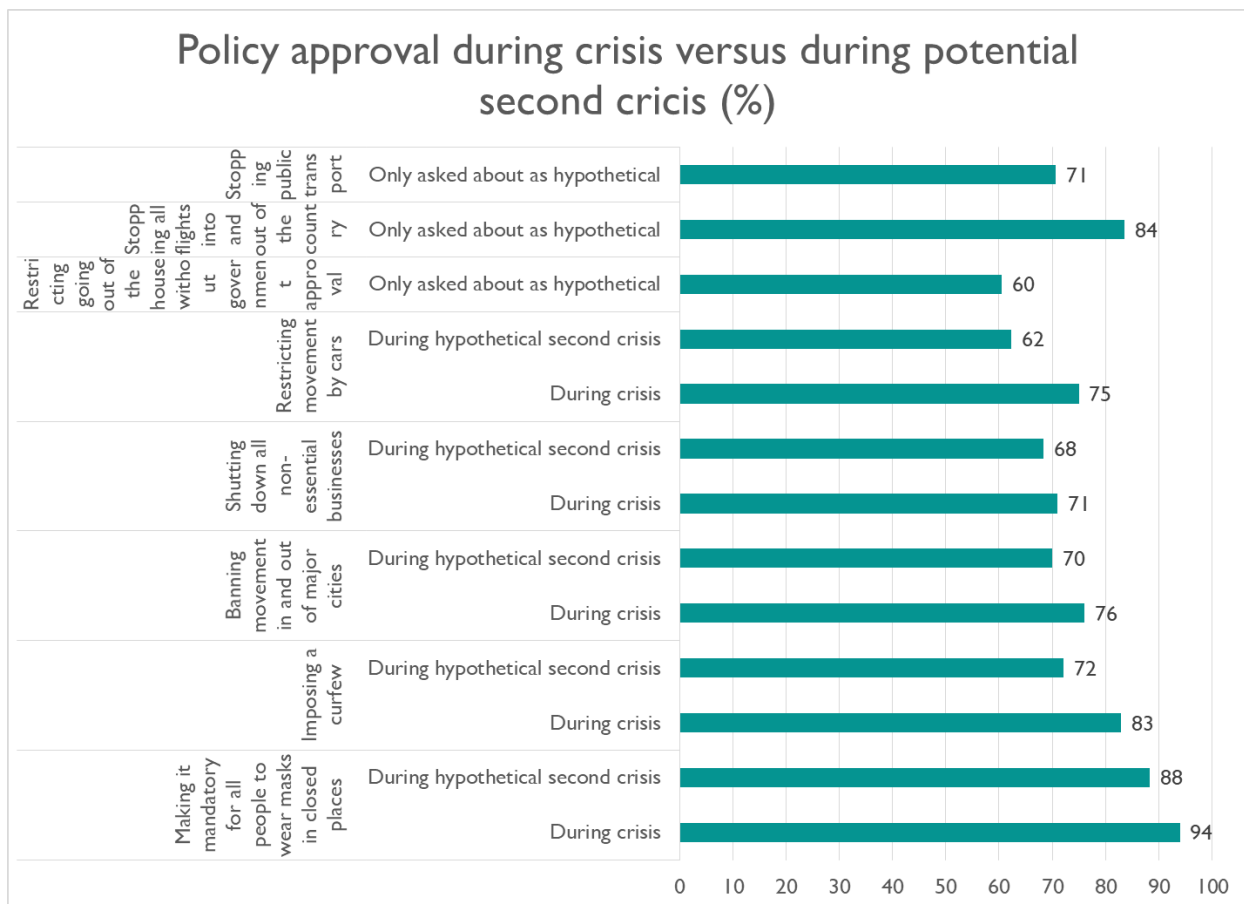
At present, Georgia has largely opened up and the virus has subsided (though remains an ever present threat) in the country. Many experts are concerned that a second wave of the virus will emerge in the fall. If this were to happen, it would likely result in the return of various restrictions on activity.¹ Aside from asking about views of restrictions on activity, the study also asked about whether or not people intended to do various activities more, less, or about the same as prior to the crisis. The results suggest that

¹ See <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/10/who-says-theres-real-risk-of-second-coronavirus-wave-as-economies-reopen.html>

implementing a second lockdown is likely to be more difficult and that the economy is likely to suffer from reduced consumption in the long term.

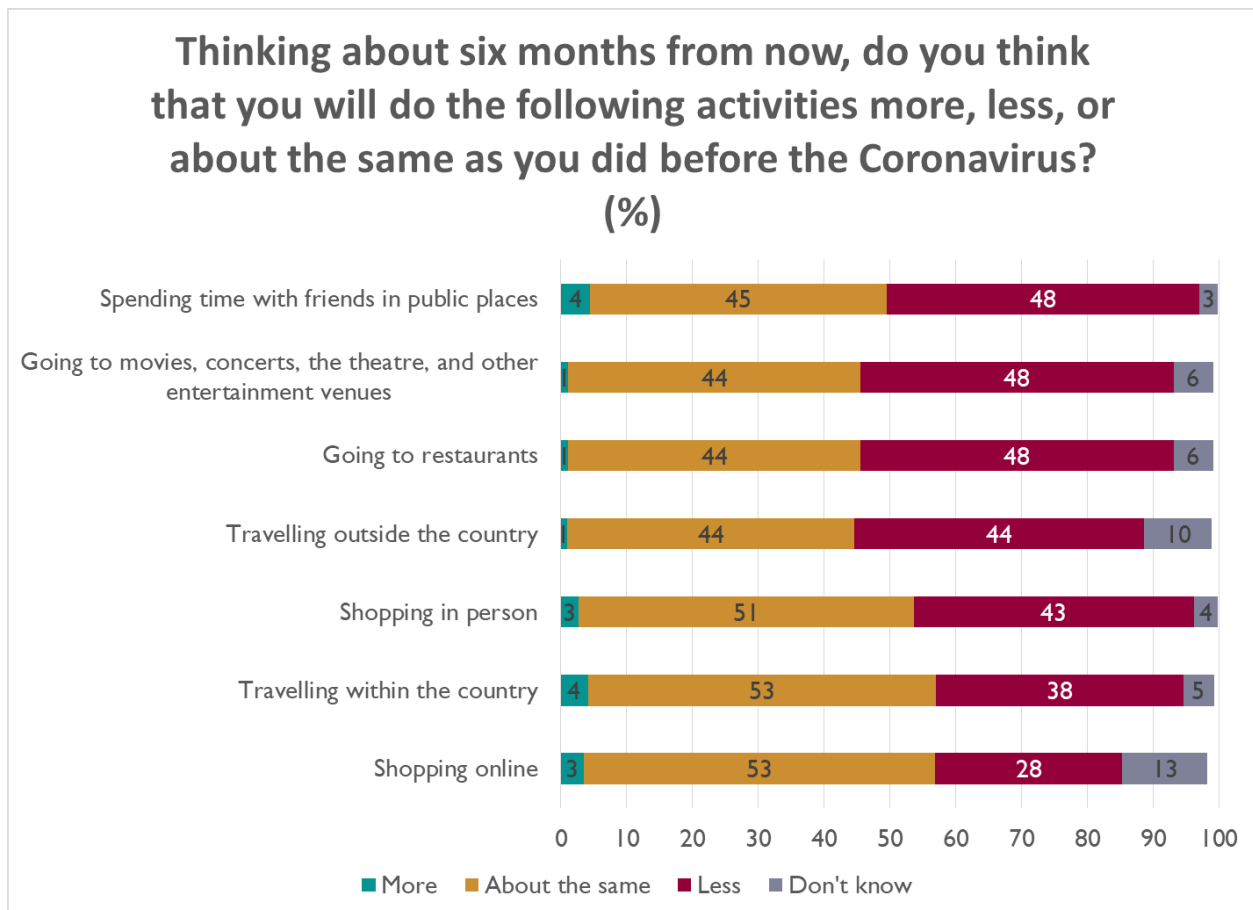
Respondents were asked whether they thought that there would be a second wave of the virus. Only 27% of the public anticipate a second wave of the virus, though 29% are uncertain. The remaining 44% think there will not be a second outbreak.

The survey asked respondents whether or not they would approve of a number of measures that were implemented during the current crisis if a second outbreak were to occur in the fall. The results suggest that most people would be supportive of these policies. However, the levels of support are lower relative to the policy support during the current crisis. Compared to the 94% that reported they support wearing mask in closed spaces in the first wave of this survey, 88% said they would in the case of a second outbreak. Similarly, while 83% supported implementing a curfew during the crisis, 72% said they would in the case of another outbreak.



A simple additive index of the above questions was created to see who would be more and less supportive of taking the above measures in the case of a second outbreak and broken down by demographic group. The average score on the above index is 5.8 out of 8. The data suggest that there are no meaningful differences between groups.

Respondents were also asked whether they would engage in a number of activities more or less frequently in the coming six months, compared with prior to the crisis. The data to indicate a lower or the same level of activity compared with prior to the crisis.



The above questions were made into a simple additive index, with respondents receiving 1 point for each activity they report they would do less often and then broken down by demographic characteristics. The only significant difference is between women and men, with women reporting they would engage in 0.6 less activities on average than men.

THE ECONOMY

The key secondary impact of the Covid-19 crisis have been economic, with the world having entered recession. Georgia’s economy was hard hit, with large shares of the population losing income and jobs. While there was and remains clear economic pain, the data from this wave of the survey do provide some positive signs.

Respondents were asked whether they had lost a job at any time during the Covid-19 Crisis and whether they started working again. The data suggest that to date 27% of individuals lost a job (statistically similar to the 29% which reported losing a job at any point during the crisis during the past wave). Of those that lost a job, half report that they have started working again and half that they have not. This is clear

progress in that the last time this set of questions was asked, only a quarter of respondents that had lost a job reported they had started working again. At the same time, it shows how far the economic recovery has to go.

The survey also asked about income prior to the crisis and in May. The data suggest that 45% of households had lower incomes in May compared with prior to the crisis (among the 65% of respondents that responded to questions about their income before the crisis and in May). The mean reported income for households after taxes was GEL 1080 (median GEL 700) in the current wave of the survey prior to the outbreak. In May, the average reported income was GEL 654 (median 440). This is slightly higher than reported in past waves of the survey. In this wave, 1% of households reported having no income prior to the crisis, and 13% did in May. This is statistically similar to in past waves of the survey which have asked these questions.

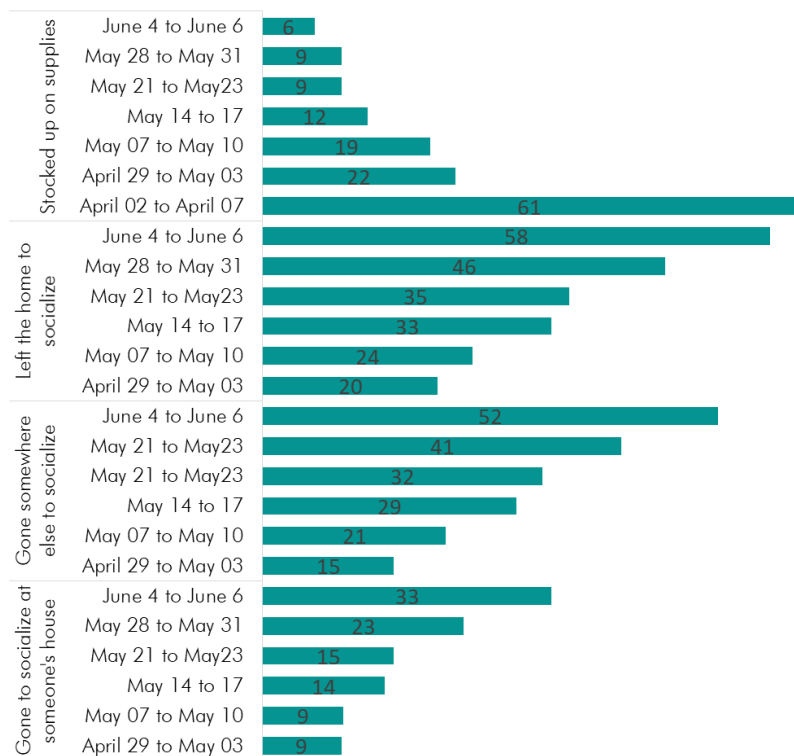
To understand which groups were more or less likely to have lost incomes as a result of the crisis, respondents were coded into two groups – lower income now compared to before the crisis and not lower. The results suggest that people in urban areas and those with lower levels of education (and thus likely poorer households) are more likely to have lower incomes as a result of the crisis.

PRACTICES

The study has also looked at a number of behaviors over the course of the survey, including socializing and hoarding. The data suggest a clear increase in the level of socializing and decline in hoarding since the survey first started collecting data on these issues.

In total, 33% of people have gone to someone's house to socialize and 52% have gone somewhere else to socialize. In the last wave of the survey, the same figures stood at 23% and 41%. The overall share of people leaving the home to socialize has increased from 46% to 58%.

In the last week have you? (%)



The study also asked about whether people were purchasing more food and supplies than normal. Overall, 6% report they have. This is down from past waves of the survey.

GENDER

Gender has been one of the crosscutting issues of the crisis. To explore this issue, the study asked questions about two key issues: the division of labor within the household and domestic violence. The data indicate that there has likely been an uptick in the rate of domestic violence in Georgia since the start of the crisis.

With regard to the gendered division of labor, the study asked the same questions as had been asked on the UN Women and CRRC survey on women’s economic (in)activity and engagement in the informal sector in Georgia about the division of labor in the household. This enables a comparison of the results prior to the crisis (in 2018, when the data was collected) and towards the tail end of the crisis. The data suggest no significant changes between who is primarily responsible for engaging in different household activities.

The survey also asked whether men and women are engaged in more, less, or about the same level of work at home since the start of the crisis. The data do indicate that 28% of people think that there has been an increase in the amount of work in the home for women and 17% for men.

With regard to domestic violence, respondents were asked whether or not a family member or intimate partner had hit them, called them names, prevented them from talking with other on the phone or online,

touched them in a way that made them feel uncomfortable, or prevented them from leaving home. The results suggest approximately 1% of women were willing to admit experiencing at least one of these during the crisis. This estimate should be taken as a floor rather than a ceiling to the rates of domestic violence during the crisis. Admitting to being a survivor of domestic violence is difficult enough for many, and admitting that this recently happened, over the phone, to a stranger calling is clearly not going to result in a fully accurate estimate. Still, the data is in line with past estimates from UN Women for the annual rate of domestic violence.²

SOCIAL NORMING

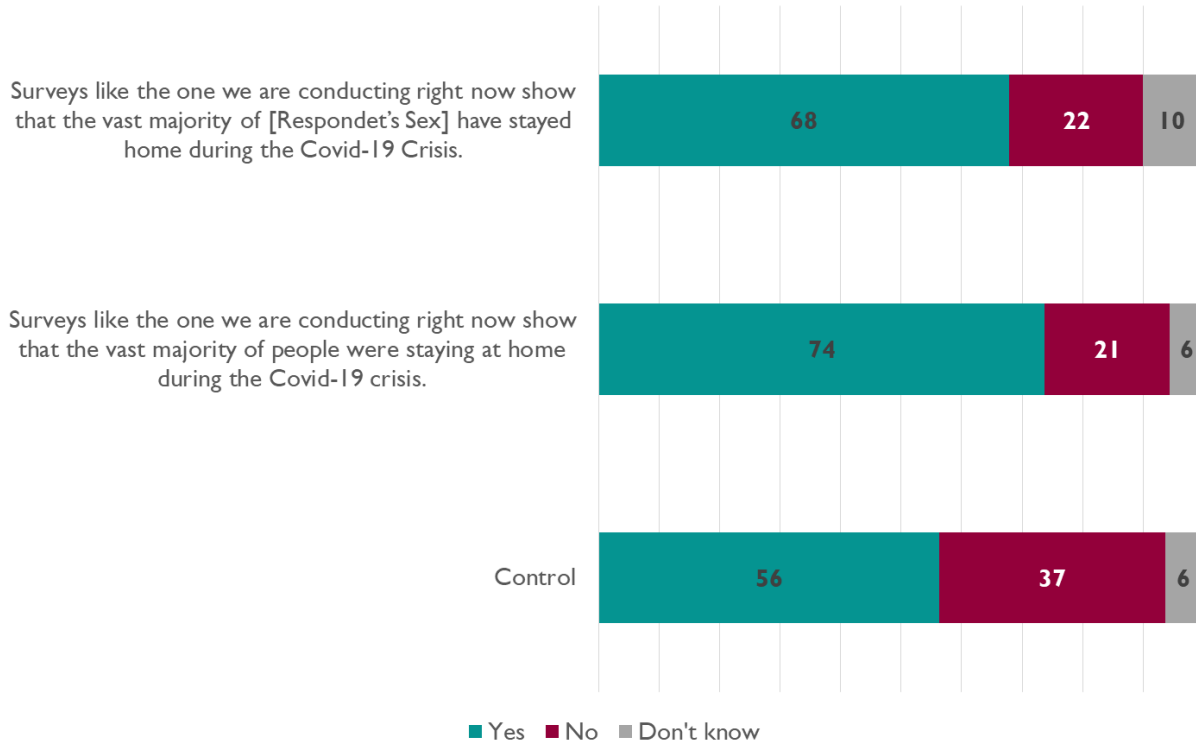
The final section of the survey tested whether or not social norming encourages people to stay at home. Social norming is providing people with information about what the majority of other people are engaged in. This has been widely shown to promote a variety of pro-social behaviors from paying taxes to increasing interest in domestic violence prevention training. In contrast to what is often found, the data indicate that social norming encourages people to leave home to socialize rather than to stay home.

For this specific study, respondents were told that either the majority of people stayed home during the crisis or that the majority of people of their gender stayed home during the crisis (both of which are true, according to past waves of the survey). A third group was not told anything. Respondents were then asked whether or not they planned on going outside the home to socialize next week and how often they would go out to socialize if the same restrictions as were implemented in April and May were implemented again this fall.

The data indicate that social norming is not effective on average at decreasing intention to socialize next week or with a decline in socializing in the hypothetical situation. Instead, social norming actually appears to have the opposite effect: people who were told either piece of information about people staying home had statistically significant and substantively large impacts on people's intentions to socialize next week. People who received the social norming treatment were 17 percentage points more likely to report they planned on socializing next week, and people who received the gendered social norming treatment were 12 percentage points more likely to report they would go out to socialize next week. The treatment was not statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level for the second question on the hypothetical situation. The treatment did not have any statistically significant effects on different social or demographic groups separately from the overall effect.

² See UN Women, 2018: <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/03/the-national-study-on-violence-against-women-in-georgia>

Do you plan on going outside the home to socialize next week? (%)



CONCLUSIONS

The above data leads to a number of conclusions.

As in past waves of the survey, the public has generally positive attitudes towards the government's response to the Covid-19 crisis. However, the degree of positivity is decreasing, with many institutions experiencing declines in the shares reporting very positive versus positive performance assessments compared with late April/ early May when the survey started. Approval of public policy also remains high as relates the Corona virus. Most people approve of most policies. One exception is the subsidizing of mortgages, which a quarter of the public is uncertain about.

While policy has been viewed positively during the crisis, the data indicate that in the case of a future outbreak, authorities may have more difficulty with compliance. People tend towards being less supportive of implementing many policies in the case of a second outbreak than they were during the first wave of the crisis.

When it comes to the economy, the data indicate that as in past waves, the country has experienced significant economic downturn. At the same time, there are clear positive signs. The share of people reporting that they have started working again after having lost a job is up from approximately a quarter to 50%. At the same time, the data still indicate that incomes have made a limited recovery.

The study also measured how many people were engaged in socializing. At present, a majority of the country is leaving home to socialize, up 12 percentage points from the week prior. The study tested whether a behavioral intervention aimed at curtailing people from leaving the home to socialize would in fact do this. Instead, it found that social norming in the current context increases the share of people intending to leave the house to socialize. This suggests that social norming should not be used in the current context.

The data also collected information about gender-related issues in this wave of the study. It suggests that there has been no change in the relative distribution of household labor, as perceived by the men and women interviewed, since 2018. However, there is a clear increase in the amount of work done at home for a fifth of the public. The data also provide a floor for the amount of domestic violence which occurred during the crisis of 1% of women.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

The survey was a nationally-representative cell phone survey covering the adult population of Georgia (except the areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia). Respondents are selected using the random-digit-dial (RDD) method and were interviewed through live interviewing.

The present wave of the survey was conducted between June 4 and 6, 2020. Overall, 1,095 completed interviews were collected, with a minimum response rate of 37%.³ Respondents were interviewed in Georgian, Armenian, Russian, or Azerbaijani.

Results are weighted. CRRG-Georgia used demographic information from the 2014 Georgian National Census for adjusting results based on respondents' gender, age, ethnic identity, education, and residence. This helps balance the proportions of those groups which might be underrepresented in the raw data. Overall, the theoretical margin of error for proportions does not exceed 3.0%.

³ According to the standards of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) minimum response rate is the ratio of the number of complete interviews and all interview attempts. This excludes non-existing phone numbers dialed as a part of the RDD process.