

# Covid-19 and Community Resilience



Juliana Tanis 57, with the help of one of her grandchildren washes her hands using the water bucket she received as part of WASH kit, under the Covid-19 Response in Haiti. Photo: Dieu Nalio Chery / Concern Worldwide.

## Overview

This survey was undertaken in Cite Soleil, Port au Prince in October 2020 as part of a multi-country piece of research implemented by Alliance2015 to look at the impact COVID-19 was having on people's resilience. The results show a widespread knowledge of COVID-19 and what needs to be done to prevent infection, even though people face many challenges in following this guidance in terms of availability of materials and their ability to afford them when they are available. Four out of five people interviewed said their incomes have been badly affected by the pandemic with 37.3% of these saying it had got a lot worse. This has particularly affected those who were involved in small scale petty trading - the biggest challenges they have faced has been that customers no longer have any money to spend and they are no longer coming to the market because of COVID restriction. Amongst all respondents, 73.3% were worried that COVID-19 will (further) affect the financial situation of their household over the next six months, with a particular worry being the potential impact on the price of basic commodities. Overall, 69.6% of those interviewed said they were eating less now compared to the period before COVID-19. Almost one quarter said they, or another person in their household had delayed, skipped or been unable to complete needed health care visits since the start of the pandemic, while 34.5% said if anybody in their household fell sick this week they would not feel comfortable taking them to the health facility. To deal with the impact of the pandemic 49.9% said they had to borrow money and 56.0% said they had to sell household items – of those who borrowed, less than half feel they will be able to repay this, while amongst those who sold off household items 92% felt they did not get a fair price for what they sold. Almost half of those interviewed felt people in their community were arguing more than before, with 37.7% saying people were arguing more within their families.



Fridna's new business can stay open safely even with the COVID-19 restrictions, Haiti.  
Photo: Dieu Nalio Chery / Concern Worldwide.

## Introduction

On the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 the Haitian Government released an official statement announcing that the first two confirmed cases of COVID-19 had been identified in Haiti and declared a State of Health Emergency throughout the nation. Within this statement, the government announced specific measures to avoid the spread of the virus, including: limiting gatherings to 10 people, the principle of social distancing, closure of the airport, land and sea entry points, the introduction of a curfew across the country, and the closure of schools and places of worship. Despite these measures, by October 2020 (the time of the survey) there were 9,054 cases of COVID-19 and 232 deaths from the virus officially recorded. This had increased to 12,857 cases and 252 deaths by the end of April 2021 (the time of writing the report).<sup>1</sup>

The urban areas of Haiti, in and around the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince, are marked by economic deprivation and loss of livelihoods, food and nutrition insecurity and overpopulation with densities reaching 13,375 people per km<sup>2</sup>. This high population concentration in less than 5% of the territory causes environmental degradation, increased slums, unemployment, and pressure on social infrastructure and basic services which are already limited. The consequences of which have been the degradation of living conditions of the population, problems of social integration, delinquency and insecurity - particularly social, food and economic. Cite Soleil in particular, and its vulnerable population are very much marginalized and stigmatized as a violent and dangerous community. This often leaves households with little to no options towards formal employment and little means to generate income.

There is widespread acceptance that COVID-19 has been a compounding factor for the myriad of other issues in Haiti, and has exacerbated protection risks and vulnerabilities and tensions around the next presidential elections. The purchasing power of the most vulnerable has greatly decreased, with the decline in remittances by the diaspora, and increases in unemployment. Similar to other countries, Haiti has recorded an increase in GBV reported cases in 2020. Over the past year, there has been a marked increase in insecurity in areas such as Cite Soleil.

As part of an effort by the Alliance2015 to help shape an evidence-based response to COVID-19, Concern Worldwide in Haiti undertook a data collection exercise in Cite Soleil to look at the impact of the pandemic and the ensuing economic shock on some of the poorest people in this area – the following provides an overview of the main findings.

## Methodology

Data was collected using a closed ended questionnaire on Digital Data Gathering devices on the iFormbuilder platform. Respondents were selected from participants of Concern Worldwide's *Manje Byen Lasante (Eat Well, Good Health)* Food Security project funded by the Food for Peace of USAID and implemented in both urban and peri-urban neighbourhoods in Cite Soleil. The urban locations included Project Drouillard, Ti Ayiti, Bois Neuf, Cité Gérard, Cité Lumière, Brooklin, Belekou and Boston while Truitier, Larousse, Blanchard, Terre Noire, Rapatrier, and Duvivier are considered peri-urban locations. The data collection was completed from 27<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2020 and the interviews were conducted in person with an emphasis put on the preventive barriers to the spread of the COVID-19 including for the enumerators to wear masks and maintaining a physical distance from the respondent. The exercise was undertaken as part of a multi-country research by Alliance2015 members in 25 countries, covering over 16,000 women, men and trans/non-binary people over a two-month period (from mid-October to mid-December 2020).

<sup>1</sup>. Unless otherwise stated, all figures relating to COVID-19 caseloads and deaths are taken from the 'Our World in Data' dashboard at <https://github.com/owid/covid-19-data/tree/master/public/data>

Concern collected data from 633 individuals, the majority of whom were female (70.8% against 29.2% male); the mean age of the respondents was 39 years (median 36) – for analysis purpose these have been divided into three groups – 30 years and below, those aged between 31 and 49 years, and those aged 50 and above.

## Knowledge of COVID

Virtually all of the respondents interviewed said they had heard about COVID-19 (99.4%), with knowledge of the main means of avoiding catching COVID also quite high. Amongst all respondents 94.0% identified frequent hand washing with soap as one of the main precautions to take, a further 74.4% identified the importance of wearing a mask, even though a relatively low 30.8% identified the need to maintain a physical distance.

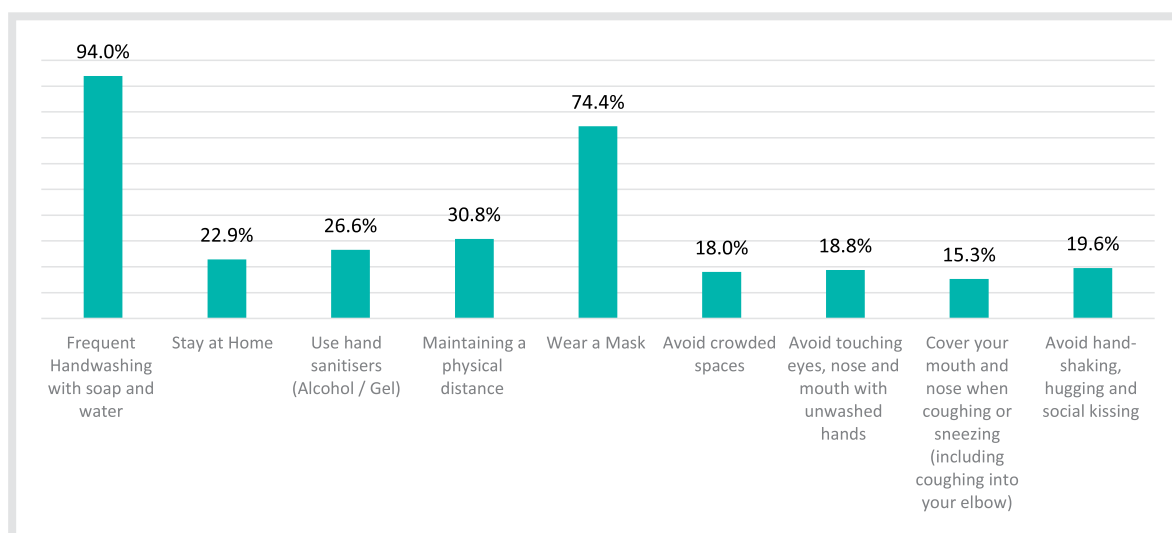


Figure 1 % of respondents identifying the main precaution to avoid COVID-19

However, of more relevance may be the challenges that people face in terms of following the guidelines on preventing the spread of COVID-19. The most frequently mentioned was affordability of soap (by 18.4% of respondents), followed by affordability of water (by 17.3%). This was followed by water not being generally available in the area (given by 15.7% of respondents).

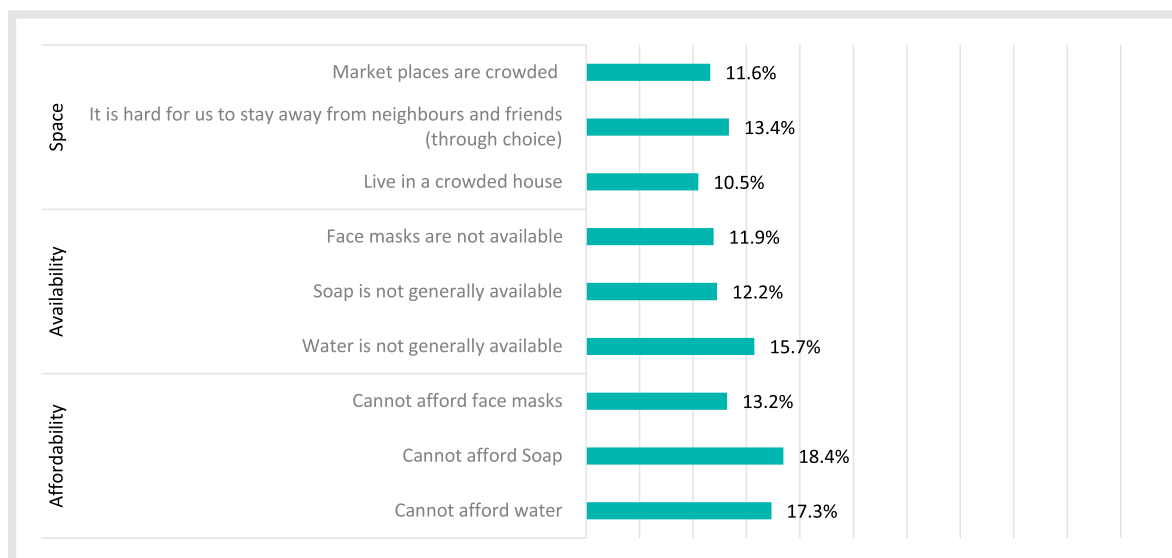


Figure 2 Why people cannot follow COVID-19 prevention measures

While just over one third of respondents (36.7%) did not identify any challenges, over 40% identified two or more challenges in terms of following the guidelines. As the figure below shows, male respondents and respondents in the younger age category were more likely to face challenges in being able to afford water, soap or masks.

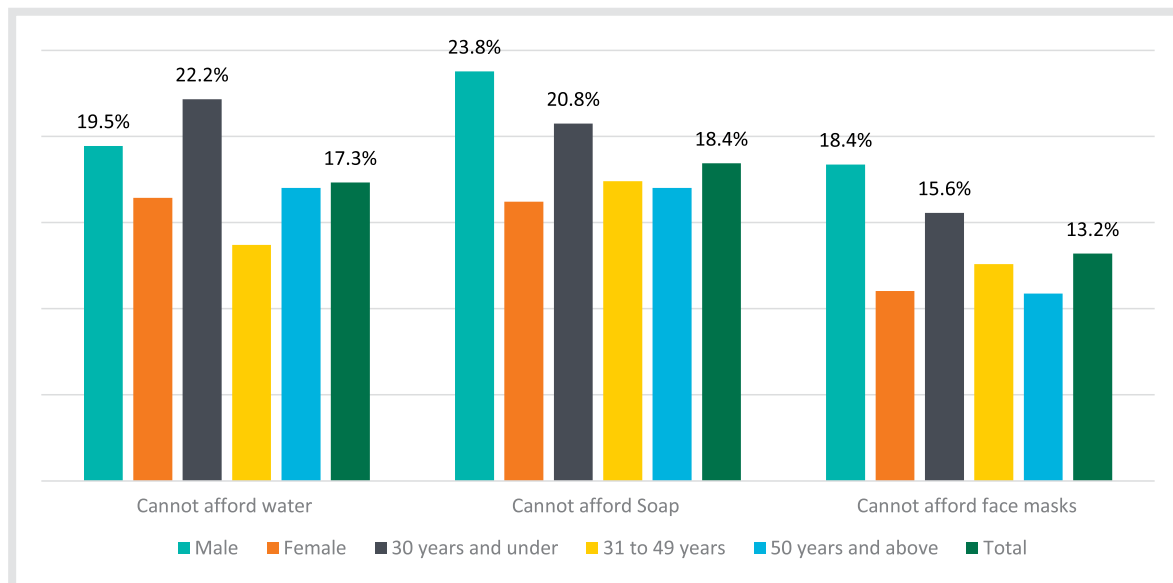


Figure 3 Why people cannot follow COVID-19 prevention measures, by age and sex

## Income

Respondents were asked to identify their household’s usual primary source of income (before COVID-19). As the data was collected in urban and peri-urban areas it is unsurprising to see the two most frequent sources being petty trading (given by 60.6% of respondents) and Casual Labour (given by 18.8%), just 2.9% said their primary income source was from formal labour, and 2.1% said it was from remittances from family members. There is a very clear difference between men and women in terms of the primary source of income, with women more dependent on small scale (petty) trade and men on casual labour

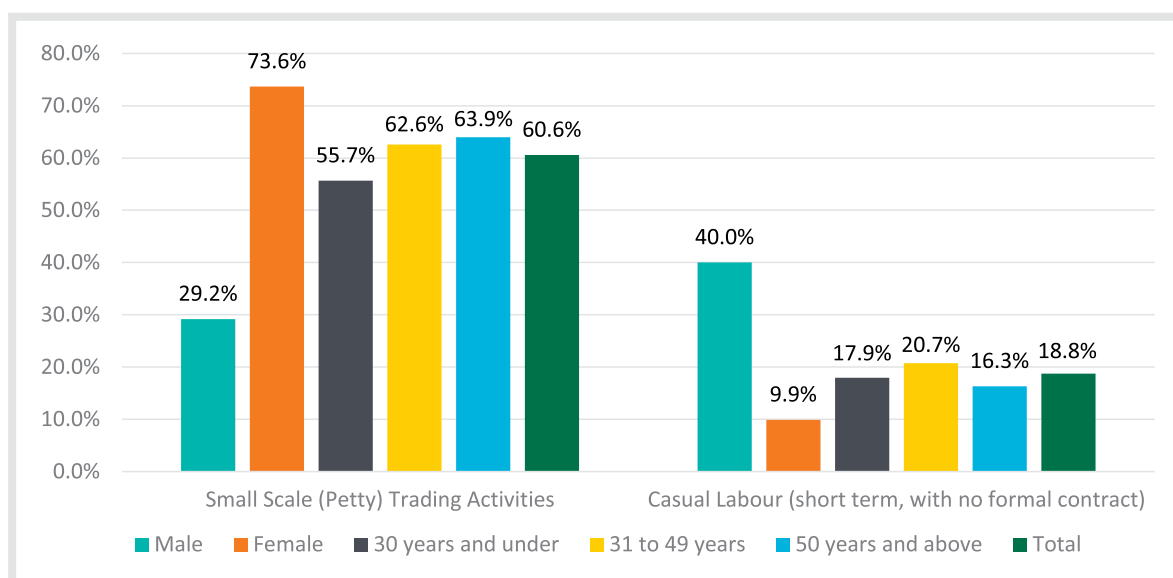


Figure 4 Respondent’s Primary Source of Income, by age and sex

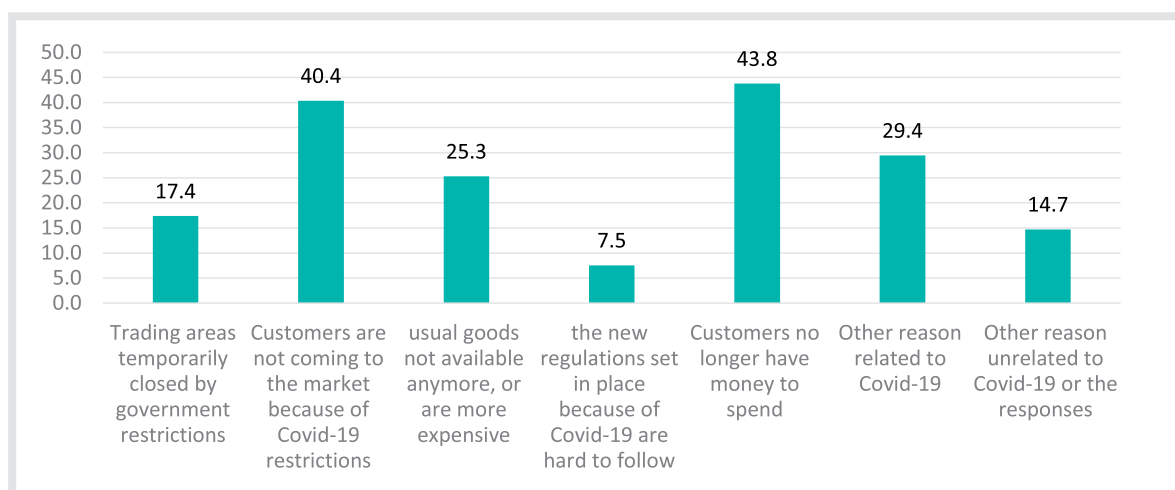
When asked whether their ability to earn an income had been affected due to COVID-19, 80.9% of those interviewed said this had been the case – this was slightly higher amongst male respondents (82.7%) than females (80.2%), and was slightly higher amongst those in the 31 to 49 year age category (83.3%). Amongst those who depend on small scale trading 83.2% said their ability to earn an income had been affected, this was even higher amongst those dependent on casual labour (at 87.3%).

Overall, amongst these respondents, 48.7% said their ability to earn an income had got a little worse, with 37.3% saying it had got a lot worse – somewhat surprisingly, 14.1% of respondents had identified that the change in their ability to earn an income had been positive. Men were slightly more likely to give this response than women, as were those working in small scale trading activities. Women, and those dependent on casual labour were most likely to say it had got a lot worse.

**Table 1** How has income been affected by COVID-19

	Got better	Got a little worse	Got a lot worse
Small Scale (Petty) Trading Activities	15.5%	47.9%	35.6%
Casual Labour	14.6%	42.7%	42.7%
Formal Employment	7.1%	64.3%	28.6%
Remittances (from family members)	11.1%	55.6%	33.3%
Male	15.7%	50.3%	32.7%
Female	13.5%	46.6%	39.3%
30 years and under	14.5%	47.6%	37.3%
31 to 49 years	13.3%	45.8%	40.4%
50 years and above	15.3%	51.7%	31.4%
Total	14.1%	47.7%	37.3%

The impact on income has been particularly bad for those who were involved in small scale petty trading, where 83.5% of those who identified their income had been affected said it had got worse. The biggest challenge they have faced has been that customers no longer have any money to spend (a response given by 43.8% of respondents) and that customers were no longer coming to the market because of COVID restriction (given by 40.4% of respondents).



**Figure 5** Main reasons for income declining for Petty Traders

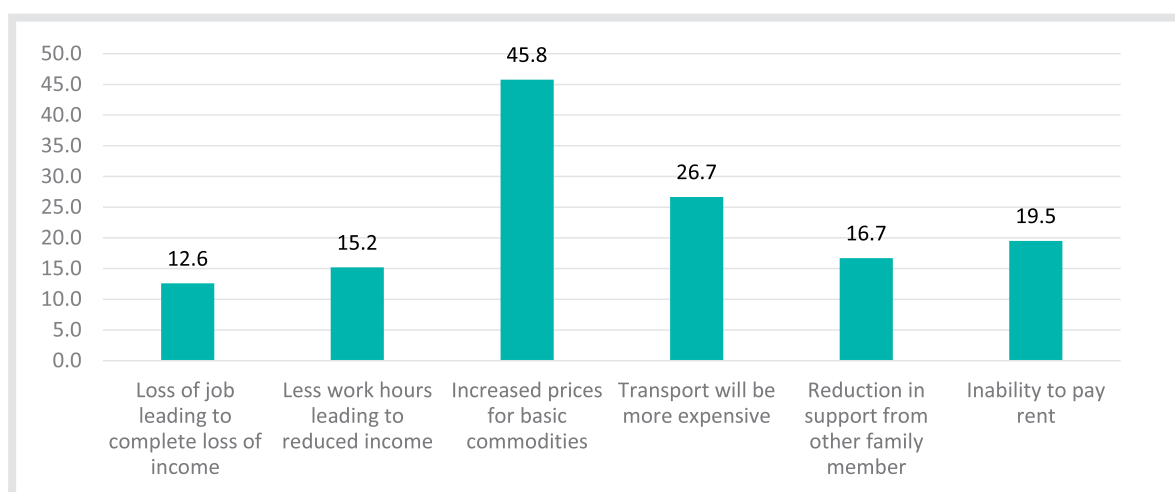
For those depending on casual labour, 85.4% of those who considered it had affected their income said this had been a negative impact. Amongst these respondents 65.9% said this was due to a loss of opportunities and that people were not recruiting; with 21.6% highlighting that the amount they were being offered for their labour had declined.

We asked respondents, overall, since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, how would you describe the change in the financial situation of your household? In response, 29.4% said there had been a slight negative change with 46.4% saying there had been a significant negative change –this was more pronounced amongst the male respondents and those in the 31 to 49 age group in the survey.

**Table 2** How would you describe changes in the financial situation of your household since the start of the pandemic

	Significant positive change	Slightly positive change	About the same	Slight negative change	Significant negative change	Did not Know
Male	0.5%	3.8%	13.5%	28.6%	48.6%	4.3%
Female	0.5%	5.4%	13.1%	29.7%	45.5%	3.8%
30 years and under	0.0%	7.5%	14.6%	30.2%	41.5%	4.7%
31 to 49 years	0.7%	3.0%	11.9%	29.6%	50.4%	2.2%
50 years and above	0.7%	4.8%	13.6%	27.9%	46.3%	6.1%
Total	0.5%	4.9%	13.2%	29.4%	46.4%	4.0%

We also asked respondents whether they were worried that COVID-19 will (further) affect the financial situation of their household over the next six months. Amongst all respondents, 73.3% said they expect this to be the case. Men were slightly more likely to give this response than women (74.6% compared to 72.7%) with younger respondents more likely to give this answer than older (74.1% in the 30 years and under age group compared to 70.1% in the 50 year and above age group). Those engaged in casual labour (at 75.4%) were slightly more likely to give this response than those involved in petty trade (at 72.7%). Respondents were then asked to identify what their main fears would be, with increases in the prices of basic commodities being the one most frequently identified, followed by increases in the cost of transport and an inability to pay their rent.



**Figure 6** What are the main financial fears for the future

## Food

We also asked respondents to compare the situation at the time of the interviews to the period before COVID-19 in terms of the quantity and quality of food. Overall, 69.6% of those interviewed said they were eating less now, with 20.8% saying it had remained the same and 8.1% saying they were eating more. In terms of the quality of the food they were consuming, 45.8% said it got worse, with 47.5% saying it was the same, and 4.3% saying it had improved. Male respondents were more likely to say their household was eating less, though female respondents were more likely to say the quality of the food had got worse. Younger respondents were more likely to say there had been a decline in both the quantity and quality.

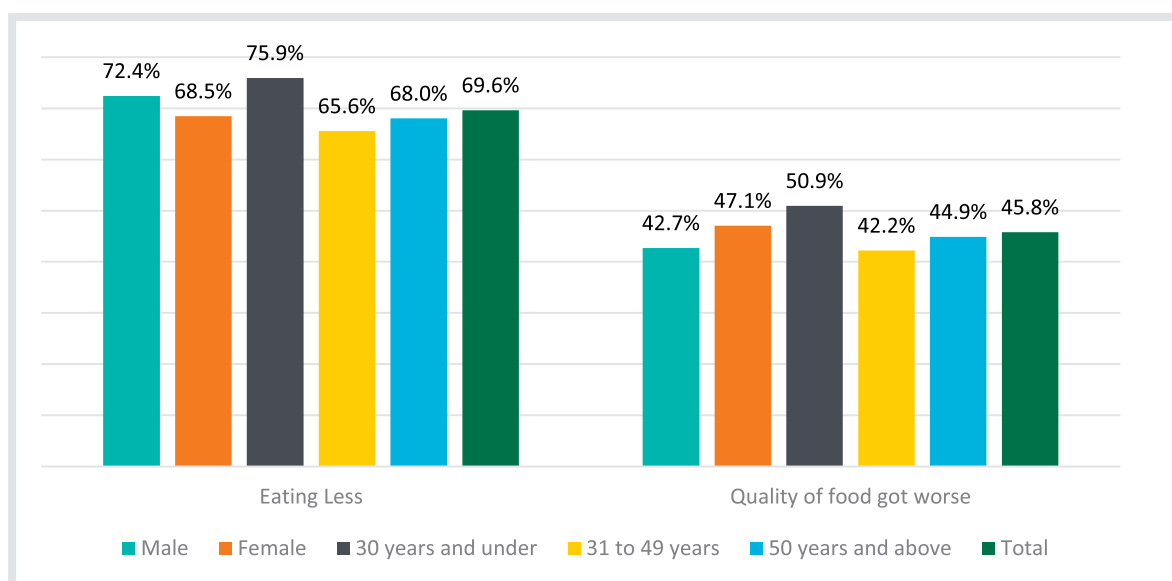


Figure 7 % of respondents saying they were eating less and the quality of the food was worse

## Health

Respondents were asked, to describe the health and well-being of their family members compared to the period before COVID-19, with the majority (61.7%) saying it had remained the same, and 23.8% saying that it had got worse. Slightly more male respondents than female respondents said it had got worse (25.4% compared to 23.2%) and the under 30 age group were more likely to give this response as well (26.9% compared to 20.4% for the 31 to 49 age group).

We further asked whether they, or any other person in their household delayed, skipped or been unable to complete needed health care visits since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 34.8% of respondents saying this had been the case, amongst female respondents this was 24.5% and amongst males 35.7%. For those who had foregone assistance, the two main reasons given for this were a fear of contracting COVID-19 at the facility (given by 55.3% of respondents) and cost (given by 39.7% of respondents). As the following shows, fear of contracting COVID-19 at the facility was higher amongst male respondents and those in the youngest age group, while cost as a constraint was more equally given across groups.



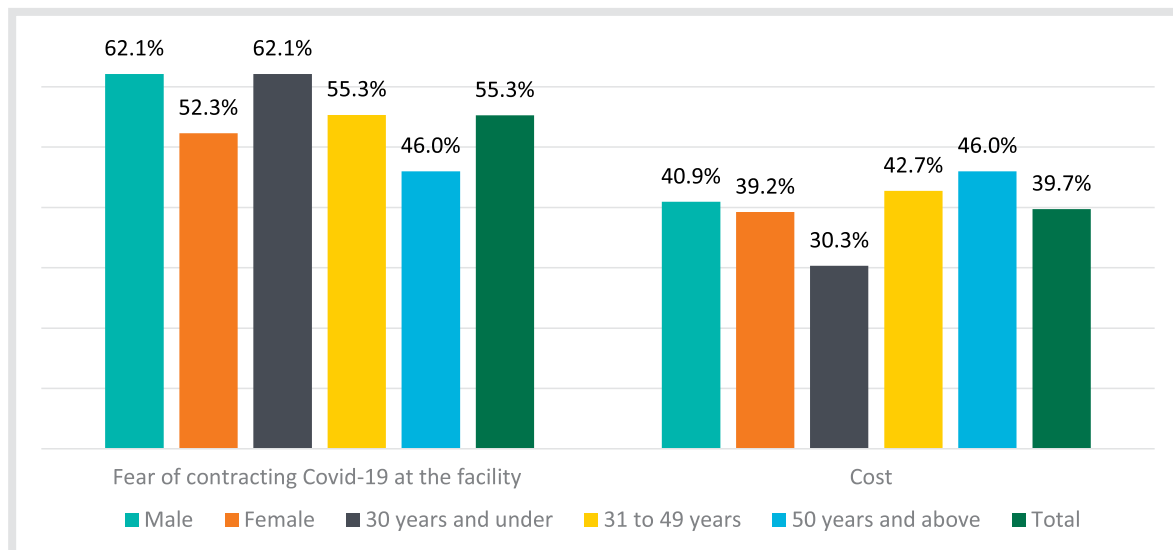


Figure 8 Main reason for not attending at health facility

Respondents were also asked if anybody in your household fell sick this week would you feel comfortable taking them to the health facility, with slightly over one third (34.5%) saying they would not be comfortable doing so – again this was slightly higher amongst male respondents when compared to females (35.7% against 34.0%) and amongst the youngest age group (37.3%). The most frequently given reason for this was cost, cited by 53.0% of respondents, followed by a fear of contracting COVID-19 (given by 37.8% and the fear of contracting another disease, given by 8.8%.

## Well Being

We also asked people if, during the pandemic period, they had experienced a selection of feelings more than usual. A large proportion of respondents (83.9%) said that they had felt worried more than usual over the previous months, with a very high proportion (85.7%) saying they had felt sad. Just over half (55.5%) report having sudden mood swings (such as anger or crying easily), while 70.0% said that they had experienced trouble sleeping. Interestingly, female respondents were more to say they had experienced trouble sleeping or mood swings, while male respondents were more likely to say they had felt sad or worried. Younger people were more likely to say they had experienced each of the feelings in recent months.

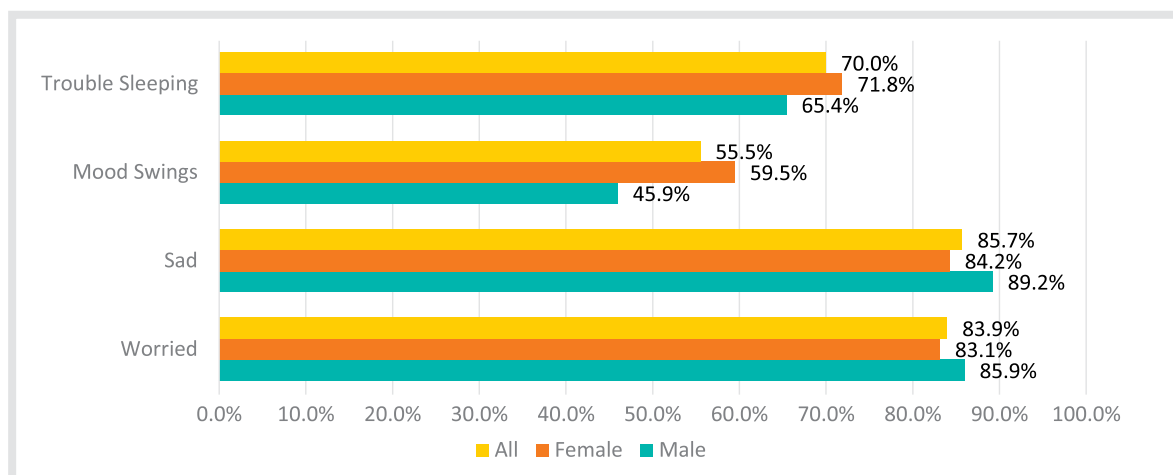


Figure 9 % of respondents saying that they had experienced a selection of (negative) feelings in the previous months

## Education

Respondents were asked, *compared to the period before COVID-19 how would you describe the access to school for the children in your household* – in response 46.1% said it had got worse, with 37.5% saying it had remained the same and 9.2% saying it had actually improved.

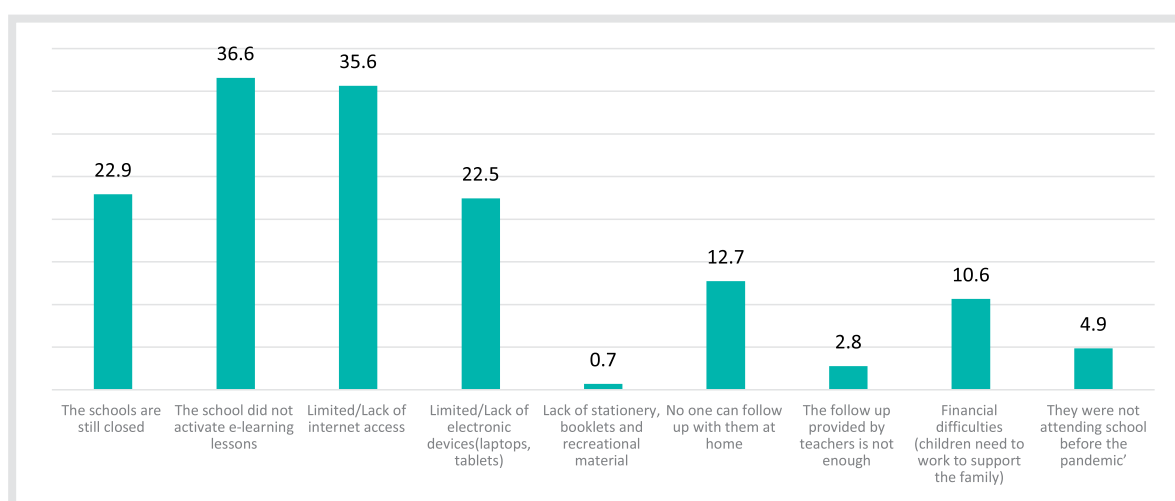
We refined this further by asking whether there were children between the age of 4 and 16 in the household. In total 77.6% of those interviewed said this was the case. A large proportion (93.2%) of these respondents said that the schools had been closed at some stage but that all or most of them were now reopened (57.4% and 35.4% respectively).

They were further asked if the children between the ages of 4 and 16 in their household were accessing some form of education. In response, 59.8% said no, none of them were, 24.2% said some of them were, 4.5% said most of them were with only 5.7% saying all of them were.

**Table 3** Proportion of respondents identifying that children between the ages of 4 and 16 were accessing some form of education

	No, none of them	Yes, some of them	Yes, most of them	Yes, all of them
Male	61.2%	20.9%	5.4%	4.7%
Female	59.3%	25.3%	4.2%	6.1%
30 years and under	61.0%	24.0%	4.5%	5.8%
31 to 49 years	56.1%	26.5%	5.2%	6.1%
50 years and above	66.3%	19.2%	2.9%	4.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59.8%</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>

Amongst respondents who did not say all of the children in the household were now attending school, the main reason given for children not having access to education was there were no e-learning activities, or if there were the household did not have access to the internet.



**Figure 10** Why are children currently not accessing education

We also asked all respondents whether they thought girls or boys had been affected more by school closures – overall 18.7% said girls suffered more, with 10.1% saying boys had, the remainder considered that neither had suffered or they had suffered around the same. The proportion of female respondents giving this answer was higher than the proportion of males (19.3% compared to 16.9%), even though the biggest difference can be seen in terms of the age of the respondent, with the youngest group having a substantially higher proportion feeling that girls had been affected more by school closures than the other age groups.

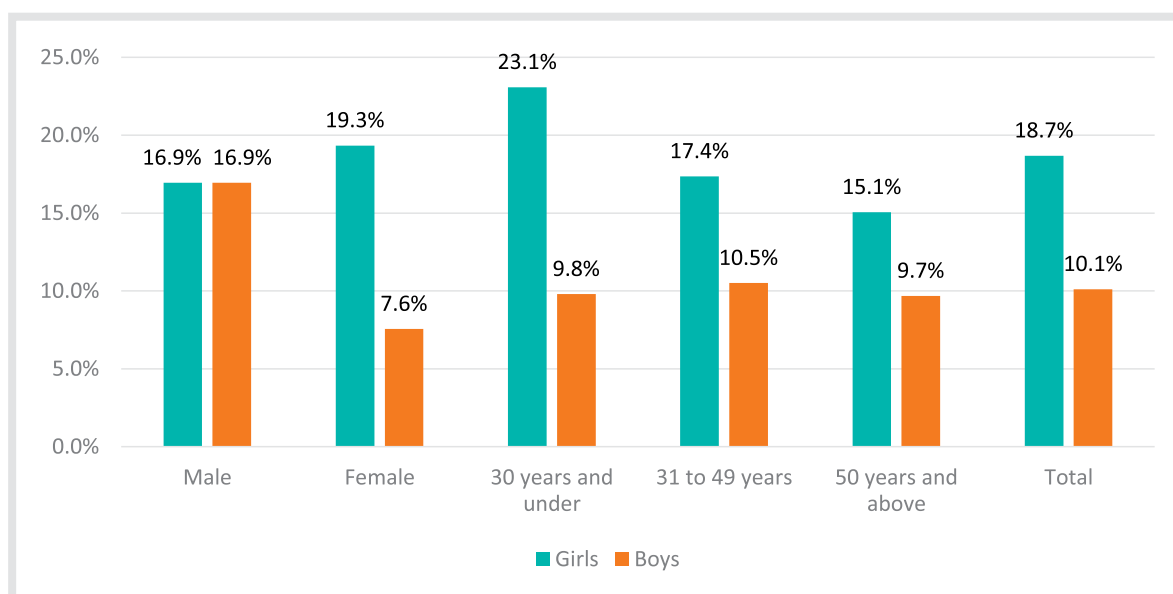


Figure 11 Did girls or boys suffer more due to school closures

## Coping

Respondents were asked to identify which of a series of strategies they had used to cope with the situation since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic; 49.9% said they had to borrow money (much more prevalent amongst the younger age group); 56.0% said they had to sell household items (more prevalent as a response amongst male respondents than females), 56.1% said they took goods on credit in the local store, again more prevalent amongst men than women as well as amongst the youngest age group, and 46.7% said they had asked for help from neighbours.

Table 4 Most frequently used Coping Strategies

	Borrow Money	Sell Household items	Take goods on credit in the local store	Ask for help from neighbours
Male	44.3%	56.8%	57.8%	53.5%
Female	52.3%	55.6%	55.4%	43.9%
30 years and under	60.8%	50.9%	62.3%	56.1%
31 to 49 years	48.5%	58.9%	53.7%	44.4%
50 years and above	36.7%	57.8%	51.7%	37.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49.9%</b>	<b>56.0%</b>	<b>56.1%</b>	<b>46.7%</b>

Those who borrowed money predominantly did this from neighbours or friends (84.1%) or extended family (10.8%). Almost one in ten (9.6%) borrowed from moneylenders or loan sharks with a very small number accessing MFIs or Banks or other financial intuitions (1.6% and 0.6% respectively). Respondents were also asked whether they felt they would be able to repay this loan in the agreed time frame. Only 43.0% answered yes to this question, 47.5% said no and 9.2% said they did not know, suggesting households will become further indebted as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

In terms of selling off household assets, overwhelming the items sold were material goods, such as televisions or radios (identified by 64.2% of respondents), with 12.2% also saying they had sold items of clothing – a response more common amongst female respondents (13.0%) than males (10.5%), with 92% of those who sold goods feeling they did not get a fair price for what they sold.

People were also asked whether they or anyone in their household received a cash or goods transfer from any government, international organisation, or NGO assistance programme since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic with 37.0% saying this had been the case. Of these, 97.0% said that this assistance had been helpful in increasing their ability to deal with the effects on COVID-19.

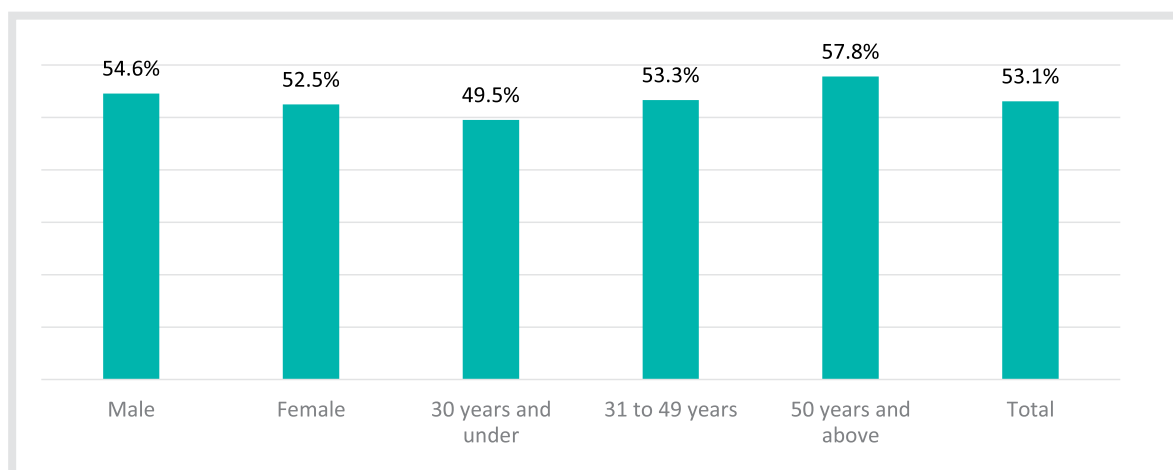


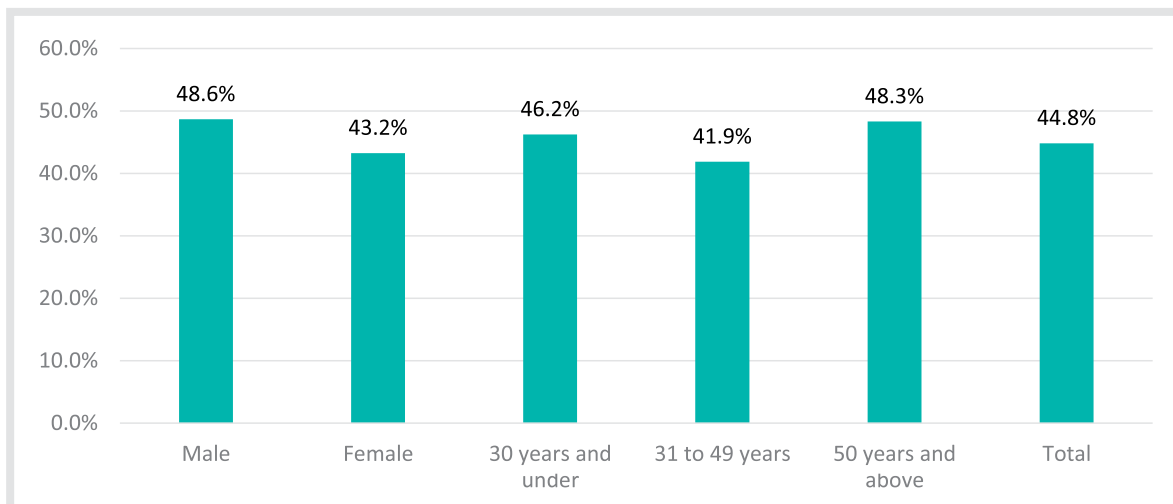
Figure 12 % of respondents saying they were able to cope

A further question was asked in terms of whether the respondent knew if anyone in the community received any food, cash or other support from government, international organization, or NGO assistance in the past three months that was related to the COVID-19 pandemic with 50.9% saying they were aware of this. These respondents were further asked if they thought the assistance had been given to the ones who needed it the most, with 63.8% saying they thought this was the case, 16.9% said this was partly the case and 9.1% categorically said no it had not gone to those who needed it most.

Finally, respondents were asked whether, compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, they felt that they and their family could manage and adapt successfully. Slightly over half (53.1%) said this was the case, with more men and older people giving this response.

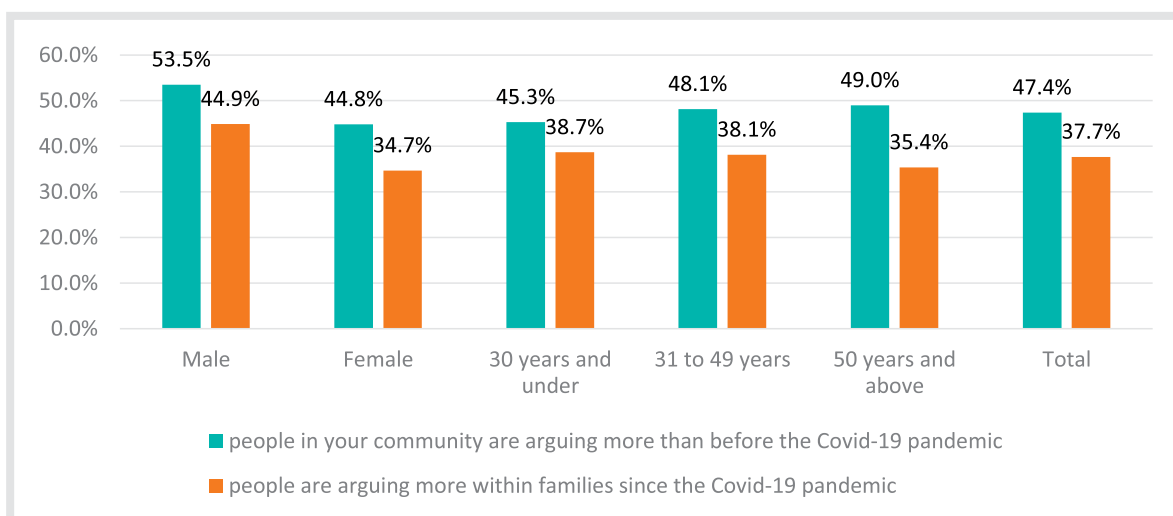
## Community

Almost half of the respondents (44.8%) said they felt people in their community were helping each other more since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was slightly higher amongst male respondents, when compared to female respondents (48.6% against 43.2%) and was higher among the older age group.



**Figure 13** % respondents saying people in the community are helping each other more since the start of the pandemic

Respondents were also asked if they thought people in their community were arguing more than before the COVID-19 pandemic – which 47.4% said they thought was the case. The proportion giving this response was higher amongst male respondents than females, and amongst the older age groups. We also asked if those interviewed felt that people were arguing more within families since the COVID-19 pandemic with 37.7% saying this was the case. Again more men than women gave this answer and younger respondents were more likely to give the response.



**Figure 14** % respondents saying arguments had increased in the community and at home

We also asked did the respondent think that some people in the community have suffered more during the pandemic than others, with 61.1% saying this was the case. Amongst all respondents, 57.5% said the elderly had been most affected, followed by people living with disabilities (41.1%), women headed households (47.7%), women (47.6%) and children (46.4%).

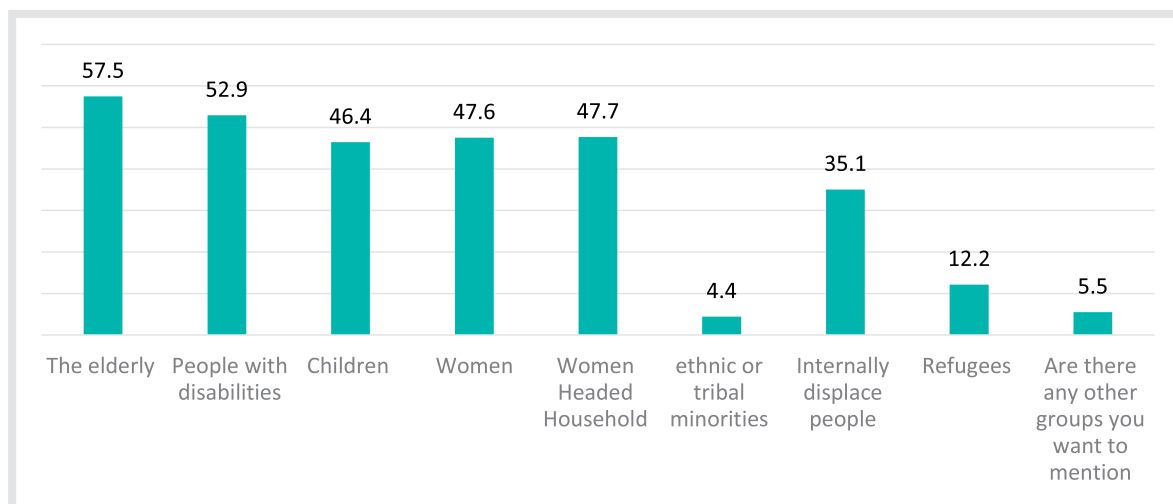


Figure 15 % identifying specific groups as suffering the most since the start of the pandemic

## Recommendations

The livelihoods, income and food security of extremely poor people in Cite Soleil have been severely impacted by COVID-19. Uncertainty about the future and the stresses that brings compounds the burden of debt being carried. In order to help individuals in Cite Soleil escape from this burden, there is a need to: (i) provide **cash transfer** support amongst the poorest households, which will help them overcome some of the financial challenges related to food and nutrition security; (ii) **adopt and expand graduation programming<sup>2</sup>** in order to build the resilience of communities and individuals to future shocks and stresses; (iii) provide **financial assistance** as part of a wider package of support which enables the creation/restoration of livelihood opportunities and graduation out of poverty in the longer term. This will be essential if we are to achieve the intent of the SDGs in reaching the furthest behind.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.concern.net/insights/graduation-programming>

## Alliance 2015

Alliance2015 is a strategic network of eight European non-governmental organisations engaged in joint humanitarian and development action to achieve greater scale and quality of impact. Originally constituted to strengthen its contribution to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Alliance2015 joins forces to achieve greater impact on poverty reduction and disaster preparedness and response in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Based on this work on the ground, Alliance2015 also strives to influence development and humanitarian policies in Europe, and globally. Alliance2015 is a unique partnership that relies on its members’ inputs and shared interests. While focusing on joint impact, the partnership is designed to enable its members to retain their own identity, brand and philosophy.

Alliance2015 members have identified Community Resilience as their common shared vision. The pandemic is testing the resilience of communities globally, across all regions and socio-economic groups. It is also having very differentiated impacts on people across regions of the world and within countries, exacerbating existing inequities and inequalities and creating new ones. Alliance2015 members have adapted their programmes and have initiated new activities to address the crisis. We have been collecting qualitative and quantitative data to inform and shape our interventions right from the start of the pandemic.

