



BACKGROUND

In June 2020, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), with the support from the World Bank, officially launched the High Frequency Phone Survey (HFPS) to track the impacts of the pandemic monthly for a period of 12 months. The survey aimed to recontact the entire sample of households that had been interviewed during the Uganda National Panel Survey (UNPS) 2019/20 round and that had phone numbers for at least one household member or a reference individual. The first round (baseline) of the survey was conducted in June 2020, the second round was conducted in July/August 2020, the third round was conducted in September/October, the fourth round was conducted in October/November 2020, the fifth round was conducted in February 2021 and the last six round was conducted in March/April 2021. Of the 2,421 households targeted, 2,227 households were interviewed in round 1, and 2,199 among them were interviewed in round 2, 2,147 households were interviewed in round 3, 2,136 households were interviewed in round 4, 2,122 households were interviewed in round 5 and 2,100 households were interviewed in round 6 representing a 94 percent response rate between rounds 6 and 1. This brief presents findings from the six round of the HFPS.

BEHAVIORS, KNOWLEDGE AND CONCERNS RELATED TO COVID-19

Gradual decline in safe practices since June 2020 stopped in March/April 2021. Fewer respondents were following preventive COVID-19 measures during June 2020-February 2021, but this tendency has stopped by March/April 2021. The only preventive measure that has continued to decline in March /April 2021 was frequent handwashing with soap with 54 percent of respondents following it in March/April compared to 61 percent in February 2021 (Figure 1). There was a regional variation in following preventing measures as well. Thus, respondents in the Central region were more likely to continue following preventive measures compared to other regions. The most striking decline was observed in the Northern region. Thus, for example, the share of respondents who avoided large groups of people dropped from 78 percent in June 2020 to 11 percent in March/April 2021. No significant differences were observed with regards to attendance of religious or social gatherings during last 7 days. About 27 percent of respondents attended none of religious or social gatherings during last 7 days in March/April compared to 25 percent in February 2021.

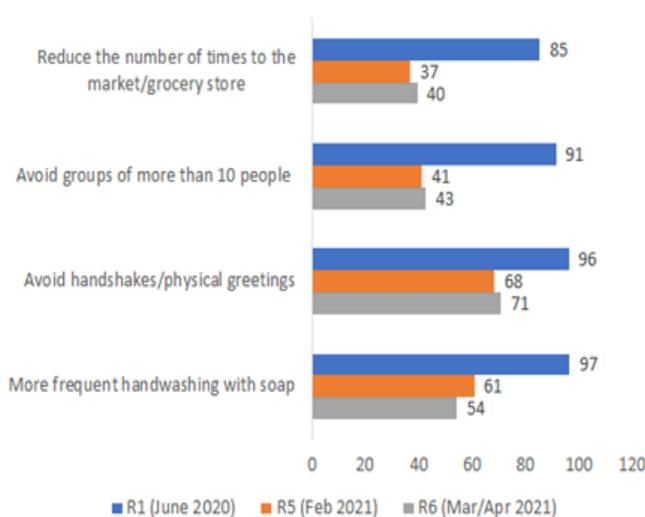


Figure 1: Prevalence of safe practices in the last week across rounds, (% of respondents)

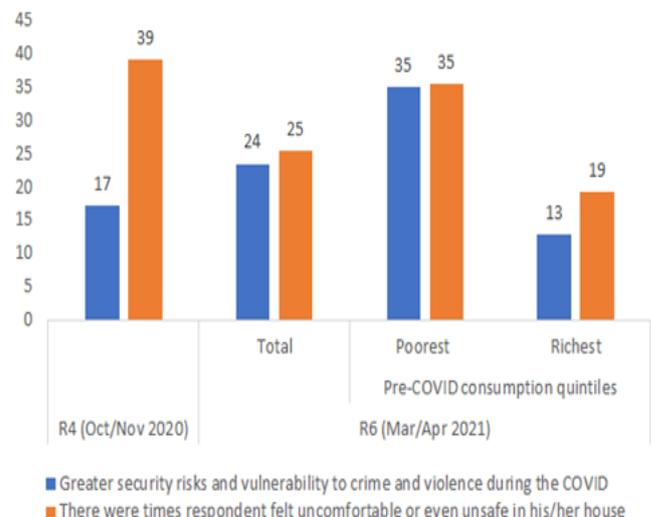


Figure 2: Share of respondents who experienced more vulnerability to crime and violence and felt less safe at home, (%)*

Respondents felt more vulnerable to crime and violence but safer at home in March/April 2021 compared to October/November 2020. More respondents agreed that they had experienced greater security risks and vulnerability to crime and violence during the COVID crisis in spring 2021 vis-à-vis fall 2020. Respondents in rural areas were more likely to experience greater security risks compared to urban areas in March/April 2021¹. At the same time, fewer respondents felt unsafe at home (Figure 2). Higher safety at home may be associated with less home violence as people return to work. Respondents from the poorest pre-COVID-19 consumption quintiles felt less safe and experienced more crime and violence compared to those from the richest quintile.

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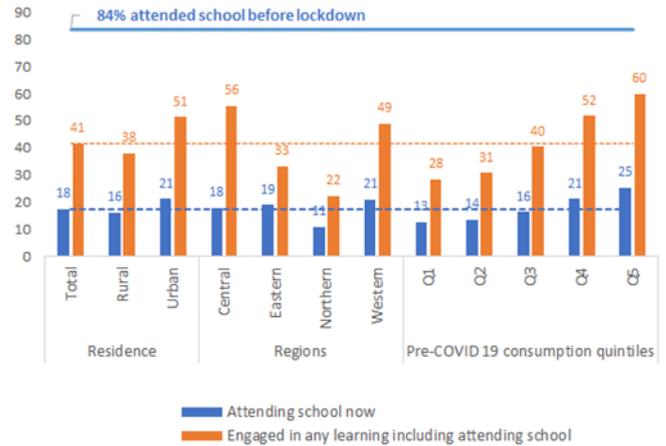


ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND BASIC NEEDS

Despite gradual opening of schools, participation in education/learning activities was very far from the pre-lockdown numbers with substantial inequalities.

About 84 percent of children aged 3-18 attended school on average before the lockdown and schools' closure in March 2020. Schools were gradually re-opening in Uganda for some grades. Children from other grades were supposed to study from home. Overall, only 41 percent of children either returned to school or were engaged in any learning/education activities from home in March/April 2021 (Figure 3). This was twice lower than school attendance before the lockdown. Moreover, participation in education and learning activities was very unequal with children in urban areas and from the wealthiest pre-COVID consumption quintiles having much higher chances to study compared to children in rural areas and from the poorest quintiles.

Figure 3: Share of children attending school before the lockdown, and attending school and participating in any learning/education activities in round 6, (% of children age 3-18)



Re-opened schools introduced safety precautions which varied across the schools depending on the region and rural and urban areas. Respondents from households where children returned to in-person learning were asked about safety precautions available at schools. Face masks (92%) and handwashing points (98%) were almost universally available for all children at the national level. However, children from the Western region were significantly less likely to report having masks in schools (83%). Several precaution measures had very unequal distribution across regions, areas, and pre-COVID consumption quintiles (Figure 4). Thus, running water, sick bays, ambulance, and school buses were not mentioned as precaution measures in the Northern region and were mentioned much less among the poorest children. Temperature checks were most widespread in the Central region (76%) and least likely to be reported in the Eastern region (40%). Still, most respondents were somewhat or fully satisfied with the precaution measures, but full satisfaction was much higher in the Central region and urban areas.

Access to medicine, medical treatment and soap remained high at the national level in March/April 2021, but every fifth household from the bottom pre-COVID consumption quintile reported being unable to access soap to wash hands. Share of households who were not able to access medicine dropped from 18 percent in February to 14 percent March/April 2021. Access to medical services was also quite high when needed. Share of households without access to soap declined as well from 11 to 8 percent in the same period, but access to soap remained to be unequally distributed. Thus, about 18 percent of households from the poorest pre-COVID consumption quintile were unable to access soap compared to only one percent among the richest top quintile.

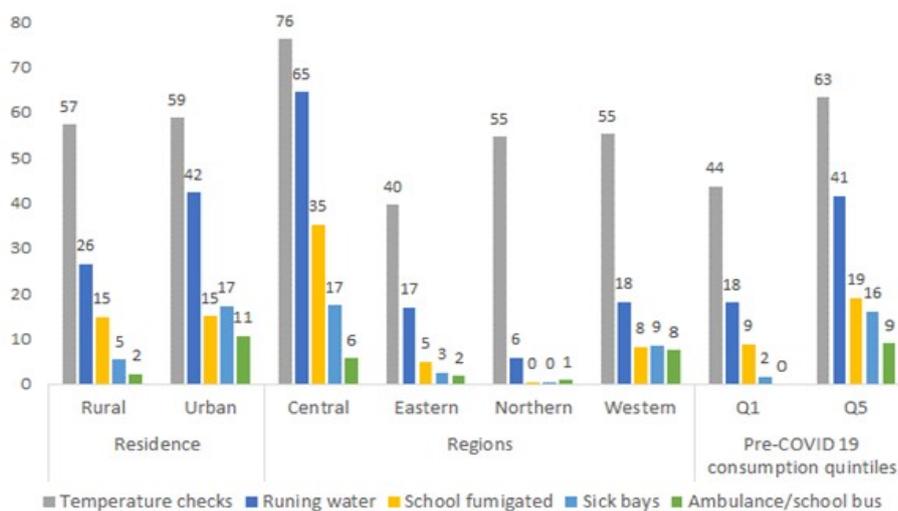


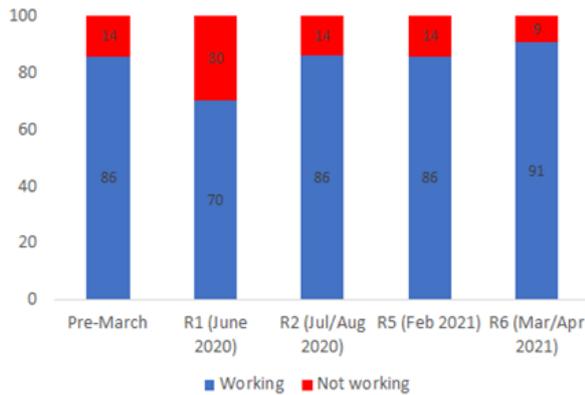
Figure 4: Selected safety precautions put in place in schools in round 6, (% of children age 3-18 who returned to schools)

¹ This was different in July/August 2020 when first more respondents felt experienced security risks and second rural respondents did not experience more security risks compared to urban ones. It can be potentially linked to increased food insecurity in rural areas as shown further in the text. 2



EMPLOYMENT & INCOME

Employment rate increased in March/April 2021 to very high 91 percent mainly due to return of workers to the agriculture sector. As shown in Figure 5, employment has returned to pre-March level by July/August 2020 and remained at the same level in February 2021. In March/April employment increased even further from 86 percent to 91 percent. This mainly happened because of agriculture as this sector accounted for 75 percent of all returns to work during this period. The structure of employment though has not returned to the pre-lockdown numbers (Figure 6). The share of agriculture remained higher in March/April 2021 than it was before the lockdown.



Note: Based on the same households and the same respondents across rounds.

Figure 5: Respondents reporting working activities across rounds, (%)

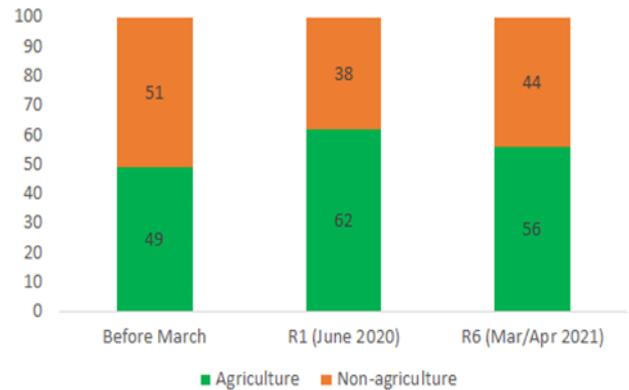


Figure 6: Structure of employment by economic sectors, (%)

Slight improvement was observed in the ownership of family businesses, but no positive changes were observed with business revenues. The share of households with open family businesses increased in March/April compared to February 2021 from 41 to 43 percent accordingly (Figure 7). At the same time, the share of households where business revenues were the same or above the average prior to school closure declined from 49 to 44 percent in the same

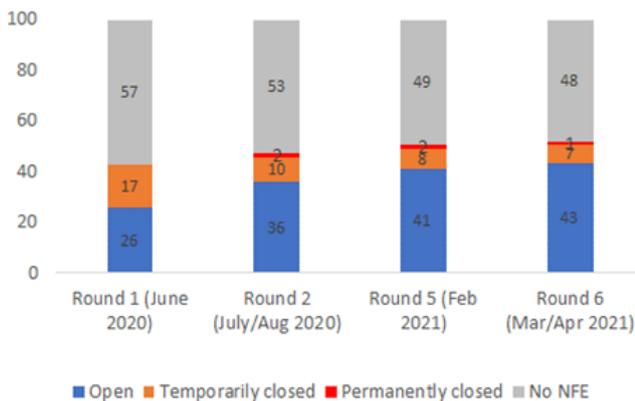


Figure 7: Family business status across rounds (% of households)



Figure 8: Share of households in round 6 with business revenues the same or above average monthly revenues prior to the school closure (% of households with business)

In terms of household income, only slight improvement was observed in income from wage employment in round 6. Respondents were asked how the current income compared to the average monthly income during the 12 months period prior to the school closure in March 2020. Figure 9 shows shares of households with income above or equal the average income prior the lockdown for key income sources. There was a slight increase in the share of households with wage income above or equal to pre-lockdown value. It increased from 62 percent in February 2021 to 66 percent in March/April 2021. There were not any significant changes in other sources of income though.



Figure 9: Share of households with household income in round 6 above or the same compared to the average monthly income prior to the lockdown, (% of households receiving income)



Households experienced fewer and less severe shocks since June 2020 compared to the first round, from March to June 2020. Respondents were asked about shocks and coping strategies in rounds 1 and 6. Recall time in the first round covered the strictest lockdown period from March to June 2020, while recall time in round six covered much longer period from June 2020 to March/April 2021 when lockdown measures were eased. Two important differences were found. First, during March-June 2020 households were more likely to report facing the shocks in general and multiple shocks compared to June 2020-March/April 2021 (Figure 10). Thus, for example, 42 households did not experience any shock in round 1 compared to 61 percent in round 6. Second, during March-June 2020 households experienced more severe shocks (Figure 11). Thus, 53 percent of all shocks during March-June 2020 were categorized by respondents as the most severe compared to 49 percent of all shocks during June 2020-March/April 2021.

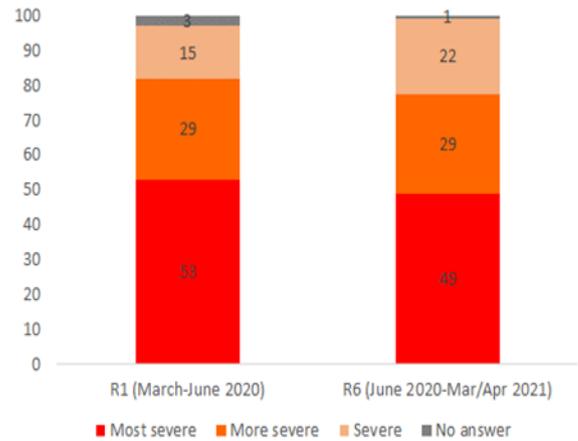
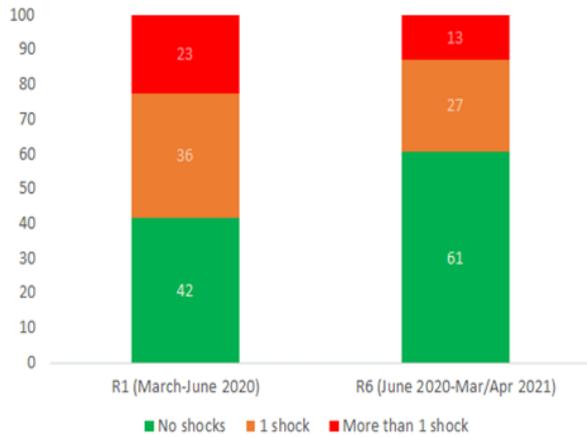


Figure 10: Respondents reporting experiencing shocks in given period in rounds 1 and 6, (% of households)

Figure 11: Respondents reporting severity of shocks in given period

Strategies to cope with shocks have changed across rounds as well, with households stopped using reduction of food and non-food consumption and doing nothing in response to the shocks. While the most popular coping strategies during March-June 2020 included usage of saving (43%) and reduction of food consumption (28%), since June households almost fully stopped reduction of consumption and were more likely to do nothing (40%) to cope with

SAFETY NETS & FOOD SECURITY

Only four percent of households received any type of social assistance in March/April 2021 – the lowest incidence across six rounds of the phone survey. Figure 12 shows incidence of different social assistance programs across six rounds. Clearly, households were least likely to get any social support in March/April 2021 compared to any other rounds as only 4 percent of them received any type of social assistance. In-kind non-food assistance (soap, mosquito nets and masks) remained the main source of social aid in all rounds except the first one when cash transfers were distributed in Kampala and neighboring areas to mitigate the negative socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

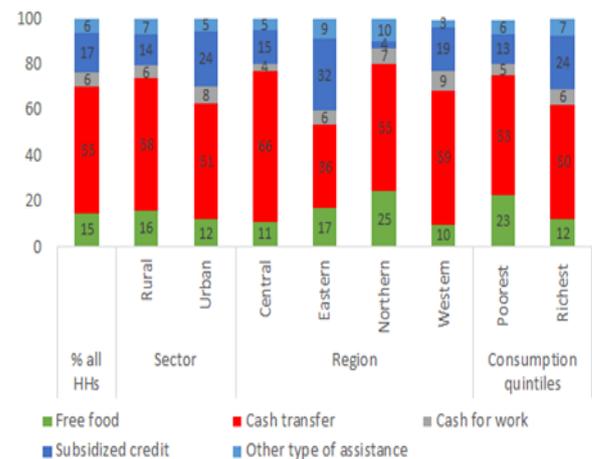
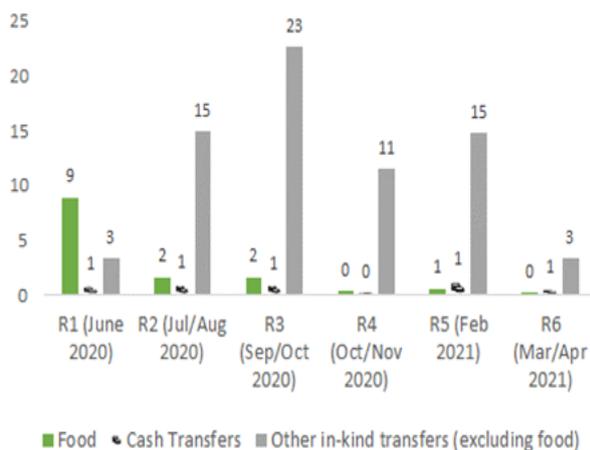


Figure 12: Incidence of social assistance programs across round, (% of households)

Figure 13: Preferred types of COVID-19 response support, (% of respondent)



Cash transfers, free food and subsidized credit are preferred types of social assistance with substantial variation across rural/urban areas, regions and consumption quintiles. Respondents were asked about preferred type of COVID-19 response support in round 6. Majority of respondents preferred cash transfers (55%) followed by subsidized credit (17%), free food (15%) and other types of assistance including cash for work (Figure 13). Urban residents, those from the Eastern region and from the richest pre-COVID consumption quintile had more preference towards subsidized credit. The poorest respondents based on pre-COVID consumption and residents from the Northern region had stronger preference towards free food.

There was a significant increase in households experienced moderate food insecurity in the Northern region and among the households from the poorest pre-COVID-19 consumption quintiles. The survey asks eight food security questions. This allows construction of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale. In round six only two percent of households experienced severe food insecurity and 24 percent experienced moderate food insecurity (Figure 14). However, there was a significant increase in the number of households experienced moderate food insecurity in the Northern region in March/April compared to February 2021 (37 versus 24 percent accordingly). Since many poor households (based on pre-COVID consumption) were in the Northern region, the share of moderate food insecure households increased as well among the poorest quintile from 26 to 37 percent in the same period.

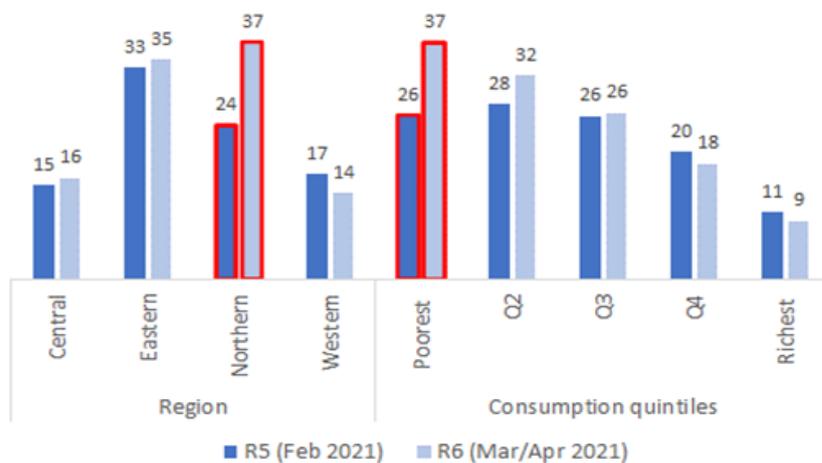


Figure 14. Share of severe and moderate food insecure households in round 5 and 6, (%)

AGRICULTURE & LIVESTOCK

Households became more pessimistic about revenues from farm sales in round 6 vis-à-vis round 5. Households were asked about expected revenues from farm sales at the end of the current agricultural season compared to what they normally sell (Figure 15). Despite progressing agricultural season, more households felt that revenues would be not good or very bad in March/April compared to February 2021 – 35 versus 28 percent accordingly. This is probably because the country has experienced increase in production with limited markets and lower prices. Increase in pessimistic expectations was observed in the Central, Northern and Western regions.

There was a slight decline in the need to sell farm products in round 6 and households in the Eastern region were more likely to have difficulties selling their produce. There was more than 10 percentage points reduction in the share of households who needed to sell farm products in March/April compared to February 2021 (Figure 16). The decline was most pronounced among households in the Northern region where the share of households who needed to sell farm produce fell from 74 to 30 percent accordingly. The decline could be linked to seasonality as March/April is time when people are planting, weeding or completed weeding and therefore have less to sell. At the same time, there was not significant change at the national level in the share of households who were not able to sell products when needed – it remained around 7-8 percent across rounds 5 and 6. However, there were notable differences across regions. Thus, households in the Central and Eastern regions were more likely to face difficulties to sell farm products in March/April, but the opposite was observed in the Northern and Western regions.

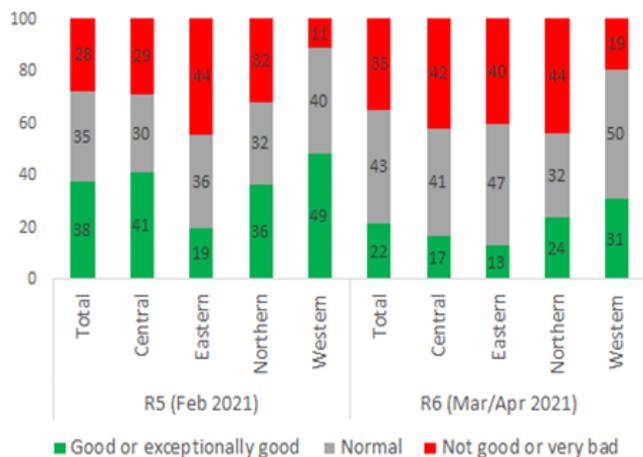


Figure 15: Expectations on the revenues from farm sales at the end of this agricultural season in rounds 5 and 6, (% of households who normally sell agricultural products)

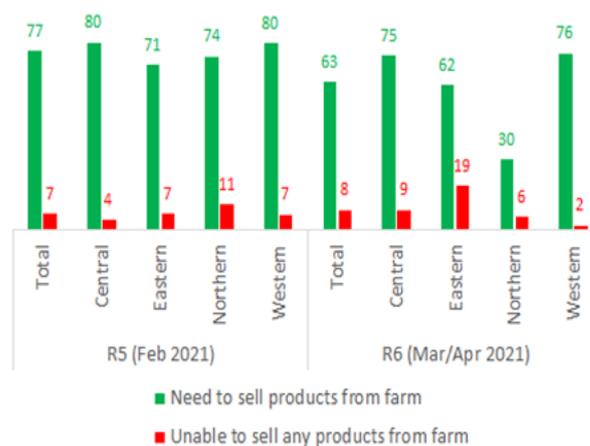


Figure 16: Share of households who needed to sell farm products and who was not able to sell in rounds 5 and 6, (% of households who normally sell agricultural products)

More households did not sell livestock products in round 6 and used them for home consumption. Households engaged in production of livestock products (milk, eggs, meat) were asked about sales of livestock products. About 48 percent of them did not sell milk, 49 percent did not sell meat and about 90 percent did not sell eggs (Figure 17). For absolute majority of households, the main reason for not selling livestock products was home consumption. Share of households who did not sell livestock products increased slightly in March/April vis-à-vis February 2021.

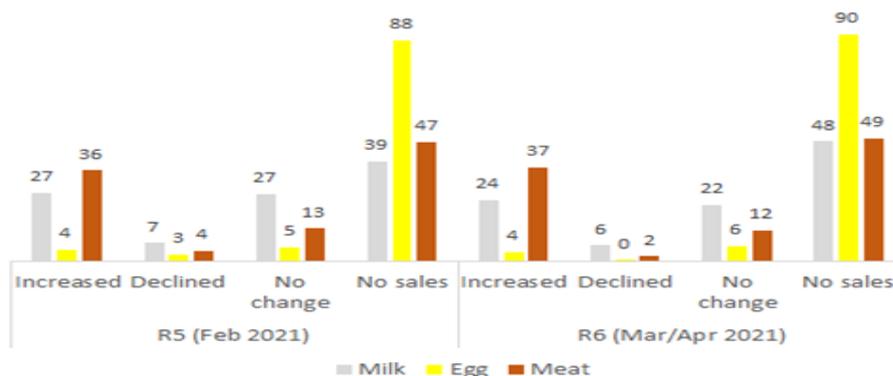


Figure 17: Sales of livestock products in round 5 and 6, (%)

Data Notes: the UGANDA COVID-19 High Frequency Phone Survey Sixth Round was implemented by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) in March-April 2021. This survey is part of a World Bank global effort to support countries in their data collection efforts to monitor the impact of COVID-19. A World Bank team from the Development Data Group and the Poverty and Equity Global Practice provided technical support. This survey is the sixth of a planned 12 waves of the COVID-19 High Frequency Phone Survey of households in Uganda. 2,421 successfully interview households from the 2019/20 Uganda National Panel Survey were contacted and 2,100 households in the Sixth Round were fully interviewed. These same households were and will be contacted in all subsequent waves of the COVID-19 High Frequency Phone Survey. The data are representative at the regional and national level and survey weights were calculated to adjust for non-response and undercoverage.

