RECOVR Survey: Key Takeaways

Health/COVID-19: One in four respondents reported developing mental health symptoms, more than double the proportion from May

Employment: Total employment increased slightly compared to May, but was still 15pp less in October than in February of 2020

Financial Security: For 48% of respondents, it would be impossible or very difficult to come up with 200,000 Leones within the next 30 days

Food Security: There was a 20pp increase between rounds in respondents reporting needing to limit their meal portions

Education: One in five respondents below the poverty line is concerned about their school-age children having enough to eat versus one in ten respondents above the poverty line

Family Relationships: One fifth of respondents is concerned about physical violence towards minor children or between romantic partners
Sierra Leone Survey Information

**Dates of survey:** May (Round 1) and October (Round 2), 2020

**Sampling method:** Random Digit Dialing of a nationally representative sample of phone numbers, limited to respondents age 18+ (panel survey- follow ups with original respondents)

**Sample size:** 1,070 respondents (Round 2) 1,304 respondents (Round 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average respondent demographics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% women</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>% that completed more than secondary school</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
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Survey Definitions

- **Poor vs. non-poor**
  - Is this household likely to be below the national poverty line?
  - Estimated using the PPI, which uses a simple machine-learning algorithm to build a proxy means test estimating poverty rates using a set of household characteristics.
  - Based on the SLIHS-2018 dataset produced by GoSL and the World Bank.

- **School-age children**
  - “How many children who had been enrolled in primary/secondary school before the national quarantine live in your household?”

- **Employment Sectors**
  - 20+ occupations across agriculture, manufacturing, services, transport, mining, retail, etc.

- **Error Bars** in each graph represent the 95% confidence interval.
  - If error bars do not overlap, the difference between groups is statistically significant (p<0.05).
Survey Information and Distribution

Average respondent demographics

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Sierra Leone RECOVR: Survey and Policy Timeline

- **Closure of Land Borders**: Mar 24-Jun 24
- **National Lockdown 1**: Apr 5-7
- **National Lockdown 2**: May 3-5
- **Use of Facemasks required in public**: Jun 1
- **Closure of Educational Institutions**: Mar 31
- **RECOVR Round 1**: May 26- Jun 15
- **World Bank Announces $7.5 million grant for health response**: Apr 2
- **Government issues one-time targeted cash transfers before second lockdown**: May 2
- **School Reopenings**: Oct 5
- **12-month State of Emergency (National Curfew through Oct 27)**
- **RECOVR Round 2**: Oct 1-16

**Legend**
- Public Health Measures
- Economic Measures
- IPA RECOVR
1 Health & COVID-19 Mitigation
Health & COVID-19 Mitigation: Key Topics

- Continuity of medical appointments
- Continuity of child vaccinations
- Prevalence of mental health symptoms
- Reported non-adherence to some COVID-19 protective measures
94% of adult respondents are keeping up with medical appointments

- Delayed or skipped needed healthcare: 5% in Round 1, 6% in Round 2
- Could not afford care: 16% in Round 1, 60% in Round 2
- Clinic had a long wait time / was understaffed: 4% in Round 1, 33% in Round 2
- Could not afford transport: 5% in Round 1, 13% in Round 2
- Appointment forgotten: 0% in Round 1, 9% in Round 2
- Concerned about COVID-19 infection: 5% in Round 1, 47% in Round 2
1/4 respondents reported of developed mental health symptoms in the household

![Bar chart showing developed mental health symptoms between Round 1 (N=1063) and Round 2 (N=1063).]
Vaccination visits and reasons for not going to CHCs during the pandemic

- Still making CHC/vaccination visits? 85% (Round 1) 79% (Round 2)
- Never go to CHC 19% (Round 1) 29% (Round 2)
- Scared of COVID-19 12% (Round 1) 56% (Round 2)
- Don't have time 6% (Round 1) 19% (Round 2)
- Do not want baby to get vaccines 2% (Round 1) 6% (Round 2)
COVID-19 Risk Perception and Information Sources

- **At risk of contracting COVID-19:**
  - Round 1: 20% (N=1065)
  - Round 2: 33% (N=1067)

- **If not at risk, why not?**...
  - Round 1: 94% (N=1065)
  - Round 2: 99% (N=1067)

- **Follow preventive measures:**
  - Round 1: 28% (N=1065)
  - Round 2: 24% (N=1067)

- **Government is protecting us:**
  - Round 1: 18% (N=1065)
  - Round 2: 17% (N=1067)

- **Belief in God:**
  - Round 1: 28% (N=1065)
  - Round 2: 24% (N=1067)

- **Does not exist where I live:**
  - Round 1: 1% (N=1065)
  - Round 2: 1% (N=1067)

Information Sources:

- Radio: Non-Poor (N=404) 78%, Poor (N=666) 83%
- Social media: Non-Poor (N=404) 50%, Poor (N=666) 56%
- TV: Non-Poor (N=404) 45%, Poor (N=666) 55%
- Friends: Non-Poor (N=404) 18%, Poor (N=666) 17%
- Community mobilizers: Non-Poor (N=404) 11%, Poor (N=666) 14%
- Family: Non-Poor (N=404) 10%, Poor (N=666) 11%
- Health workers: Non-Poor (N=404) 8%, Poor (N=666) 9%
- Government: Non-Poor (N=404) 4%, Poor (N=666) 5%
- Religious leader: Non-Poor (N=404) 3%, Poor (N=666) 5%
- UN/NGO: Non-Poor (N=404) 2%, Poor (N=666) 3%
- CHW: Non-Poor (N=404) 13%, Poor (N=666) 15%
Vaccination potential, perception, and (non-) acceptance

Would take the vaccine: 78%
If so, why?...
Protection: self (general): 94%
Protection: family: 37%
Recommendation: Ministry of Health: 23%
Protection: community: 21%
Recommendation: clinic/health center: 12%
Protection: self, chronic condition: 4%

Would NOT take the vaccine: 22%
If so, why?...
Side effects from the vaccine: 54%
Concerned will get Covid-18 from the vaccine: 38%
Conspiracy theory: 20%
Not concerned about getting seriously ill: 15%
Doesn't think vaccines work very well: 8%
Coronavirus not as serious as people say: 4%

Total (N=1070)
Respondents’ concern is mostly lacking money due to COVID-19 with poor and non-poor respondents being similarly concerned
Education
Education: Key Topics

- Concerns with **learning losses**
- Preference for returns to **in-person schooling**
- Concerns with **exam completions**
- Popularity of the **National Life Skills** Program
Parents’ concerns for their children during the pandemic

- Children falling behind in education: 51% (Round 1 N=1012) vs. 61% (Round 2 N=1016)
- Children loitering: 9% (Round 1) vs. 28% (Round 2)
- Children getting into trouble: 5% (Round 1) vs. 23% (Round 2)
- Children having enough to eat: 1% (Round 1) vs. 17% (Round 2)
- Children being safe: 1% (Round 1) vs. 10% (Round 2)
- Children being disobedient: 2% (Round 1) vs. 4% (Round 2)
- Children not being able to take their exams: 4% (Round 1) vs. 12% (Round 2)
- Children getting sick: 1% (Round 1) vs. 3% (Round 2)
- Not concerned: 2% (Round 1) vs. 5% (Round 2)

- Non-Poor (N=361)
  - Children falling behind in education: 46% (Round 1) vs. 54% (Round 2)
  - Children loitering: 28% (Round 1) vs. 28% (Round 2)
  - Children getting into trouble: 22% (Round 1) vs. 24% (Round 2)
  - Children having enough to eat: 11% (Round 1) vs. 21% (Round 2)
  - Children being safe: 12% (Round 1) vs. 9% (Round 2)
  - Children being disobedient: 4% (Round 1) vs. 4% (Round 2)
  - Children not being able to take their exams: 4% (Round 1) vs. 4% (Round 2)
  - Children getting sick: 2% (Round 1) vs. 2% (Round 2)
  - Not concerned: 4% (Round 1) vs. 5% (Round 2)
Schooling resources and access to information

- Their own school books: 97%
- Books we have in the household: 87%
- I/Others in my household are teaching: 76%
- Books provided by school: 71%
- Radio (National Life Skills Programme): 63%
- Official educational TV (AYV - SLBC): 33%
- Other educational content on the internet: 23%

Total (N=608)

Non-Poor (N=152)
Poor (N=512)
Engagement with the National Life Skills Program

- Every day: 26%
- Several times a week: 36%
- A few times: 43%

Listen and learn from it at home: 50%
Listen and learn from it at school: 26%
Will not listen to it once regular school resumes: 16%

Total (N=510)
3
Economic Activity & Employment
Economic Activity & Employment: Key Topics

- Uneven employment continuity and recovery
- Perception of appropriate COVID-19 precautions at the workplace
- Differences in experiences based on informality of labor
Compared to June, employment increased slightly by October, and those working were working more, but not yet at pre-Covid-19 level.
Three in four informally employed households worked fewer hours in the last 7 days than in February.
Reasons for unemployment & reduced hours

- **Wage/Salary Work**: 32% (Men, N=711) vs. 38% (Women, N=359)
- **Self Employment**: 16% (Men, N=711) vs. 45% (Women, N=359)
- **Farm & Agriculture**: 13% (Men, N=711) vs. 16% (Women, N=359)
- **Not Working**: 35% (Men, N=711) vs. 58% (Women, N=359)

**Total (N=1070)**
- **Labor supply fell since February**: 66%
- **For what reason?**
  - Business is no longer operating: 29%
  - Employer retrenched some staff: 9%
  - My work is not as busy this time of year: 28%
  - Turnover in the office/work place: 17%
Strategies to respond to job losses

- Labor supply fell since February: 66%
- How are you coping?: 60%
- Nothing/ There's nothing I can do: 42%
- Looked for a new job: 24%
- Started a new business: 17%
- Taken on more domestic chores/ childcare: 11%
- Looked for or began new employment training: 7%
- Helped others in family in their business or farm: 5%
- Helped more in a family business: 4%

Men (N=711)
- Labor supply fell since February: 68%
- How are you coping?: 44%
- Nothing/ There's nothing I can do: 38%
- Looked for a new job: 26%
- Started a new business: 25%
- Taken on more domestic chores/ childcare: 22%

Women (N=359)
While the formal sector has greater stability, formal sector workers who have lost their jobs see less recourse.

- Labor supply fell since February: 61% Unemployed, 69% Informal Employment, 63% Formal Employment
- How are you coping?
  - Nothing/ There's nothing I can do: 33% Unemployed, 41% Informal Employment, 51% Formal Employment
- Looked for a new job: 21% Unemployed, 18% Informal Employment, 40% Formal Employment
- Started a new business: 16% Unemployed, 19% Informal Employment, 11% Formal Employment
- Taken on more domestic chores/ childcare: 9% Unemployed, 10% Informal Employment, 15% Formal Employment
Just less than half of formally employed households (46%) were able to earn more or the same as a year before.
Social Protection, Financial Resilience, and Food Security
Social Protection, Financial Resilience, and Food Security: Key Topics

- Increases in measures of **food insecurity**
- Perceived increases in **cash assistance** from the government
- Prevalence of **market shortages** and household income drops
- Difficulties in obtaining **emergency funds**
Reported changes in assistance between May and October 2020

Assistance received from the government

- None: 71% (Round 1), 77% (Round 2)
- Community Received Food: 10% (Round 1), 10% (Round 2)
- Community Received Cash: 6% (Round 1), 18% (Round 2)

Assistance received from non-governmental sources

- None: 83% (Round 1), 84% (Round 2)
- Relatives in country: 5% (Round 1), 8% (Round 2)
- Relatives outside the country: 6% (Round 1), 3% (Round 2)
- Church/mosque: 2% (Round 1), 3% (Round 2)
Family assistance - changes during pandemic

Have friends/family who help in times of need? 33%

Received more/less since March?

- More: 9%
- Same: 15%
- Less: 61%
- None: 15%

Total (N=1070)
Food insecurity measures: insights between May and October

- Limit portions at meals: 43% (Round 1) vs. 63% (Round 2)
- Reduce number of meals: 42% (Round 1) vs. 49% (Round 2)
- Reduced portions (Adult): 57% (Non-Poor) vs. 67% (Poor)
- Reduced portions (Children): 50% (Non-Poor) vs. 58% (Poor)
- Skipped 1 or more meals (Adult): 50% (Non-Poor) vs. 57% (Poor)
- Skipped 1 or more meals (Children): 50% (Non-Poor) vs. 57% (Poor)
Purchase difficulties of needed food basket

Unable to buy the usual amount of food?
- Round 1 (N=1037) 83%
- Round 2 (N=1042) 86%

If so, why?...

- Of shortages in the markets? 56%
  - Round 1 64%
  - Round 2 64%

- The price of food was too high? 78%
  - Round 1 79%
  - Round 2 79%

- The household income has dropped? 71%
  - Round 1 79%
  - Round 2 79%
Nearly half of respondents face severe difficulties in obtaining emergency funds (200,000 Leones) within 30 days.
Respondents would primarily rely on family and friends to come up with emergency funds
Responses and strategies for covering expenses and obtaining emergency funds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Men (N=711)</th>
<th>Women (N=359)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family &amp; friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Money from working</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrow (bank, employer, private lender)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could not come up w/ the money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Round 1 (N=1070)</th>
<th>Round 2 (N=1070)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HH incurred significant expenses</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depleted savings</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowed money though uncertain could pay back on time</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped making a required payment on a loan</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell off assets (including livestock)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
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Family Relationships
A larger proportion of poor respondents (15%) report increased conflict and arguments between siblings than non-poor respondents (5%).
One fifth of respondents are concerned about physical violence towards minor children or between romantic partners
Conclusions and Policy Takeaways
Conclusion, discussion points and policy takeaways

- **Meeting students at their learning level when they return to school:** Rigorous research has shown that targeted instruction improved learning in Ghana, Kenya, India, and elsewhere.

- Research in Cote d’Ivoire and Brazil found that engaging parents in children’s education using SMS messages can improve learning even while schools are in session.

- “Graduation programs” that provide livestock and training can promote a source of livelihood that requires limited external contact, and have shown potential to reduce poverty in different contexts.

- **Impact on girls:** Crises/school closures may increase women’s chances of school dropout, sexual exploitation, early marriage/pregnancy, and increased household responsibilities, which can cut into learning time (e.g. evidence from Sierra Leone and Liberia during Ebola).
Conclusion, discussion points and policy takeaways

- **Mobile money**: Research shows that growing reliance on mobile money has already reduced poverty rates and strengthened women’s agency under ordinary circumstances.

- **Cash transfers**: Delivery and targeting? Governments consider big data to identify recipients. Safe targeting during a pandemic through self-enrollment, geographic targeting, or building on existing administrative data.

- **Food ration programs** focused on families with young children or the reinstatement of school feeding programs could help mitigate potential adverse impacts.

- Poorer respondents are more likely than wealthier respondents to report having to sell off their assets to pay for food, healthcare, or other expenses since February 2020. Are we adequately providing support to those most left behind?
Thank you

https://www.poverty-action.org/recovr