

Myanmar COVID-19 Monitoring Platform

Results from the October 2020
high-frequency phone survey of
households



August rebound did not withstand the 2nd wave: food security is deteriorating and uncertainty around incomes is high.



Employment & income losses

Households have stopped working and have lower earnings than in August. The small gains in income observed in August have disappeared.



Food & financial security

Food security is degrading quickly. More households experience multiple challenges linked to food insecurity.



Coping mechanisms

Households have depleted their coping mechanisms and are again cutting down on food and non-food expenditures. Cash assistance has reached more than a third of the population since March.

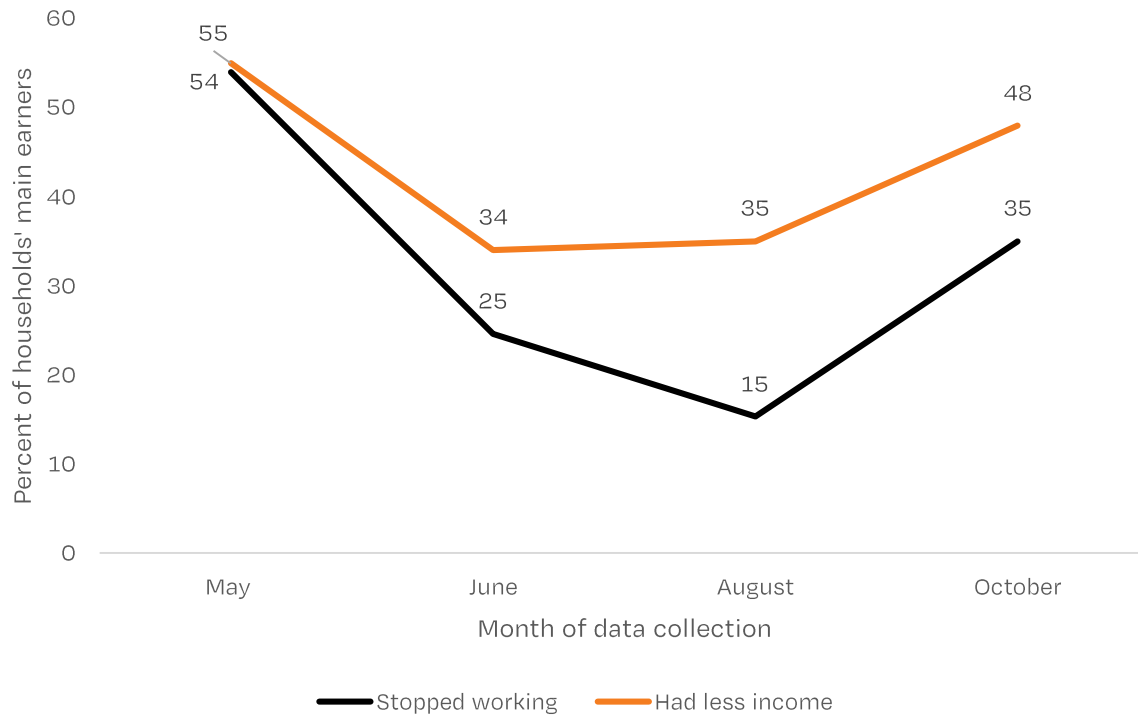


Health & Education

Households do not report any issues in access to health services. Children are mostly left without resources to continue their education while schools are closed.

The current wave has been hitting workers hard, with job and income losses on the rise since August

Share of households' main workers who stopped working or has less income

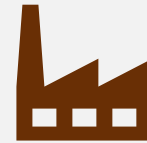


Note: Share of households' main workers is measured considering the ones working pre-March. Share of households' main workers with less income is measured on the ones working pre-March who are working in the last seven days.

In October, more than **one out of three** households' main workers were not working at the time of the survey as stay-at-home orders were put in place in Yangon, Rakhine State and additional townships across the country.



Households' main workers engaged in agriculture were more resilient in October. About **21%** of these workers are not working in October compared to **60%** in May.



Four in ten of households' main workers engaged in construction or manufacturing were not working.



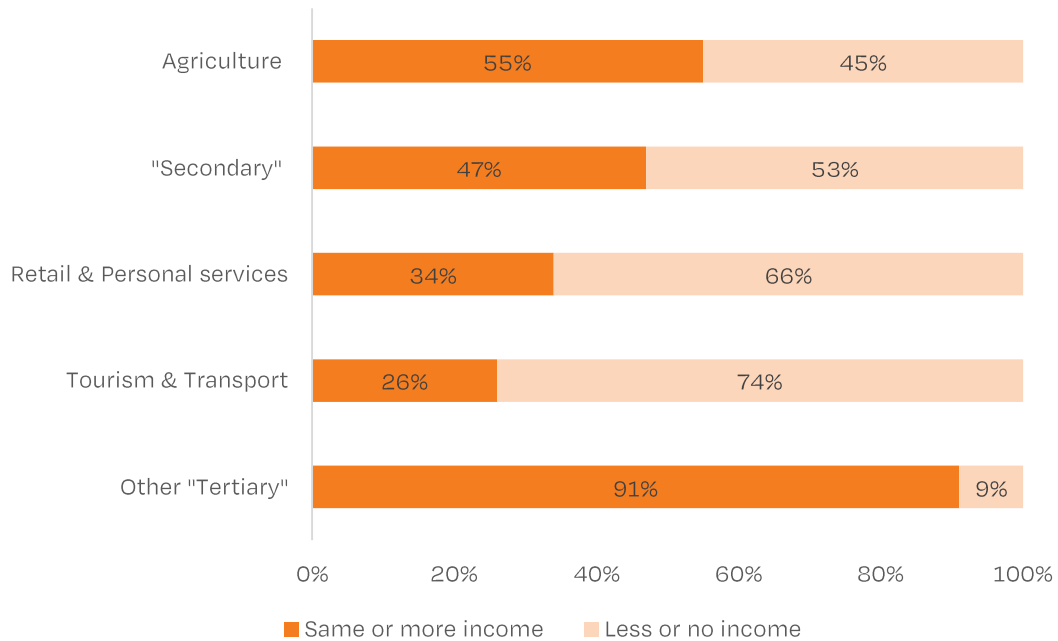
About **34%** of households' main workers in the retail sector were not working in October.



About **60%** of the households' main workers engaged in transport and tourism activities were not working.

Overall, 54 % of main workers had lower incomes than in August. Retail was hit hardest.

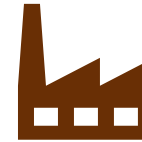
Percent of households' main workers' income changes in October, by activities



Note: Secondary includes manufacturing, construction and other type of secondary activities. Tertiary includes public and private administration and other types of activities.



While 40% of households' main workers were engaged in agriculture in October, **45%** had lower income compared to August.



14% of households' main workers engaged in secondary activities in October. **53%** had higher or the same level of income in October as they had in August.



17% of households' main workers were engaged in retail-type activities in October. These workers (**66%**) were the most likely to have lower income



9% of households' main workers were engaged in tourism and transport in October and **74%** had lower income.

Besides lower labor income, while one out of ten households had received remittances in the last 12 months, **68%** reported that these remittances were lower in October than in August.

The majority of household businesses was still operating, but faced lower earnings.



19% of households owned a business in the last 12 months. In October, about **21%** of households had to stop operating their business.

More than 60% of households who stopped operating their businesses did it because of COVID.

Other challenges pushing households to close their businesses: seasonal closure (**13%**), no customers (**13%**), and unable to travel to sell products (**8%**).



74% of households' businesses have lower or no earnings in October.

About 41% of households have had farming activities in last 12 months. About **one out of ten** of these households had to stop farming and 7% were still farming but facing constraints.



Issues preventing farmers to farm as usual are farmers' inability to sell (15%) and inability to purchase inputs (7%).

Percent of farmers who stopped farming

October 2020 – 11%



Households who **stopped farming** all together did so because of the weather (33%), personal reasons (death or unavailability of main farmer, sickness for 36%) and stay-at-home orders (12%)



Food and nutrition security has deteriorated rapidly

In October, more than **25%** of households had experienced moderate to severe food insecurity compared to **12%** in August.

Percent of households with food issues

60% in October



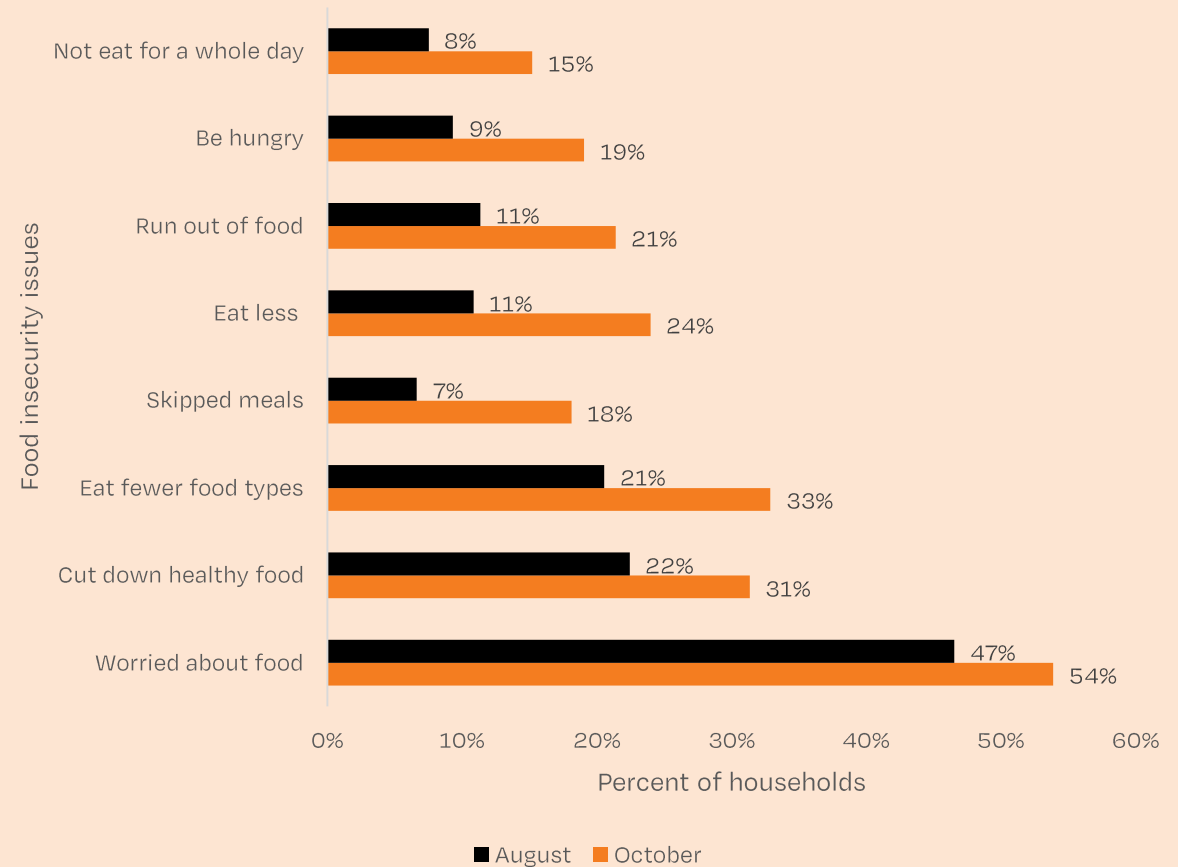
There is a worrying increase in share of households reporting eating less healthy food (**31%**) which could increase the risk of stunting.

In October, more than **6%** of households had 7 or 8 issues, which doubled since August.



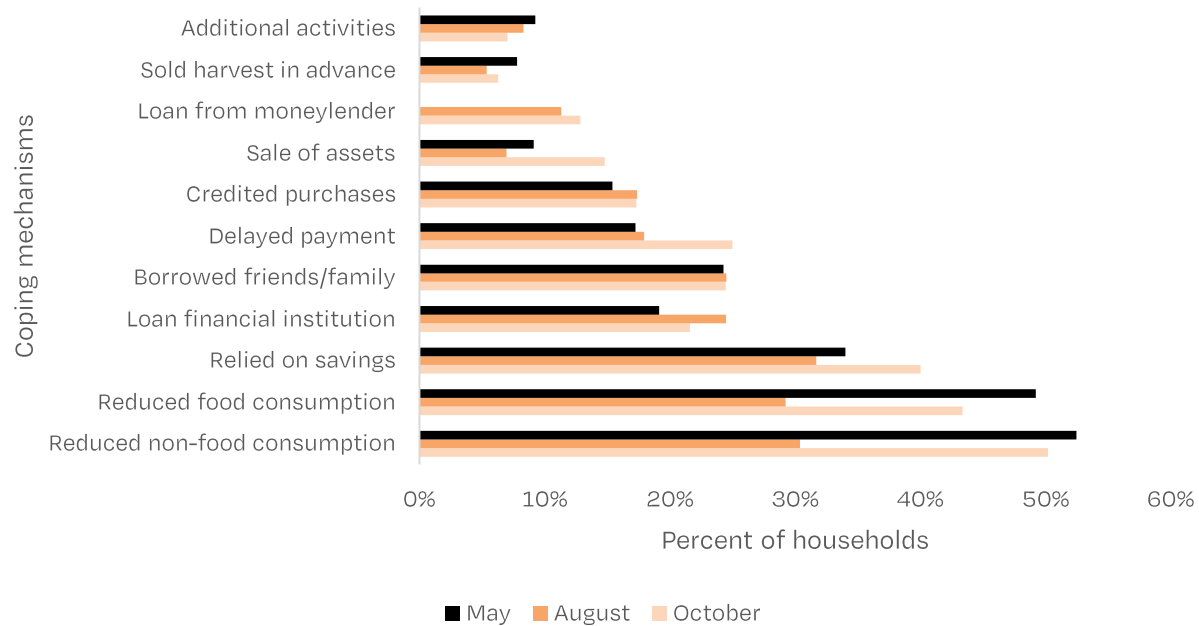
Households did not report any issues to access staple food products although a fair share didn't try to access these staples (**46%** didn't try to get ngapi).

Percent of households who experienced the following issues in fulfilling food requirements



Fragile households have been using similar coping mechanisms as in May, with slightly higher reliance on savings and delayed payments

Percent of households by coping mechanisms in May, August and October

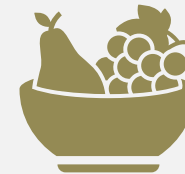


These coping mechanisms being used could have long term negative impacts on households' capacity to fulfil their basic needs and on households' financial solvency.

More households have benefitted from Government support in October compared to previous months



37% of households received utility subsidy in October compared to 32% in August.



As of October, **23%** of households received food assistance from the Government at any point in time.



About **41%** of households report receiving cash assistance from the Government since August.

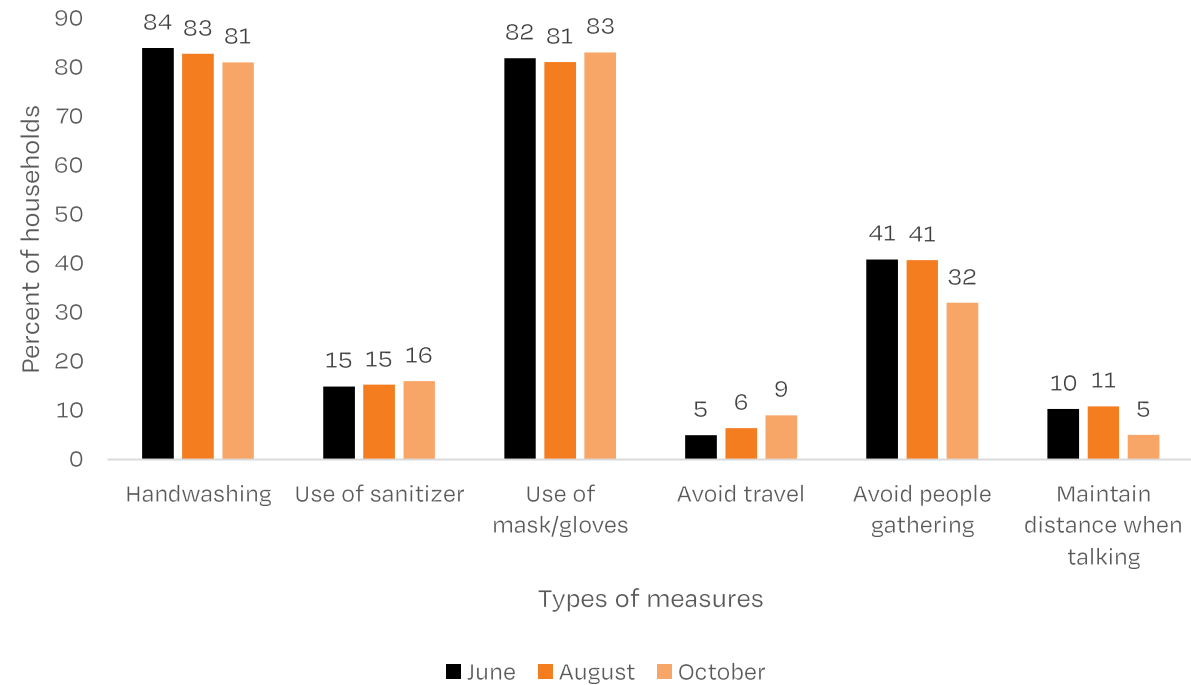
Knowledge and adoption of measures could help contain the spread of the virus



Nearly **87%** of households were familiar with and had adopted behaviors to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, with handwashing (**81%**) and use of masks and gloves (**83%**) being among the most common measures.

But households were less likely to adopt social distancing measures in October compared to previous periods: **32%** of households avoided gathering (compared to 41% in August) and **5%** maintained distance when talking (compared to 11% in August).

Most commonly adopted behaviours to contain spread of COVID-19, by month



As of now households did not report any issues to access health services because of COVID-19.



About **60%** of households said they needed health services in October.

Most needed services were related to pharmacy (**90%** of all needed health services) and to adult health (**23%**). Access to other types of services was very limited (less than 2%).



Households didn't report any issues to go to the health services if they needed to.

One third of households didn't know or weren't sure what to do if feeling sick with COVID-19.



Uncertainty about the future has been an increasing source of stress, as households worried about not having resources to fulfil their food or financial needs

49% of households in October said they were very or somewhat worried about not having enough food in the next week.



64% of households in October said they were very or somewhat worried about their finances, which was higher than in August



Education is particularly worrying, with a potential decrease in enrolment when school reopens.

Less than **37%** of children who were in school in February have been engaged in any learning activities since beginning of school closure. This was mostly done through **tutoring** by parents or relatives.

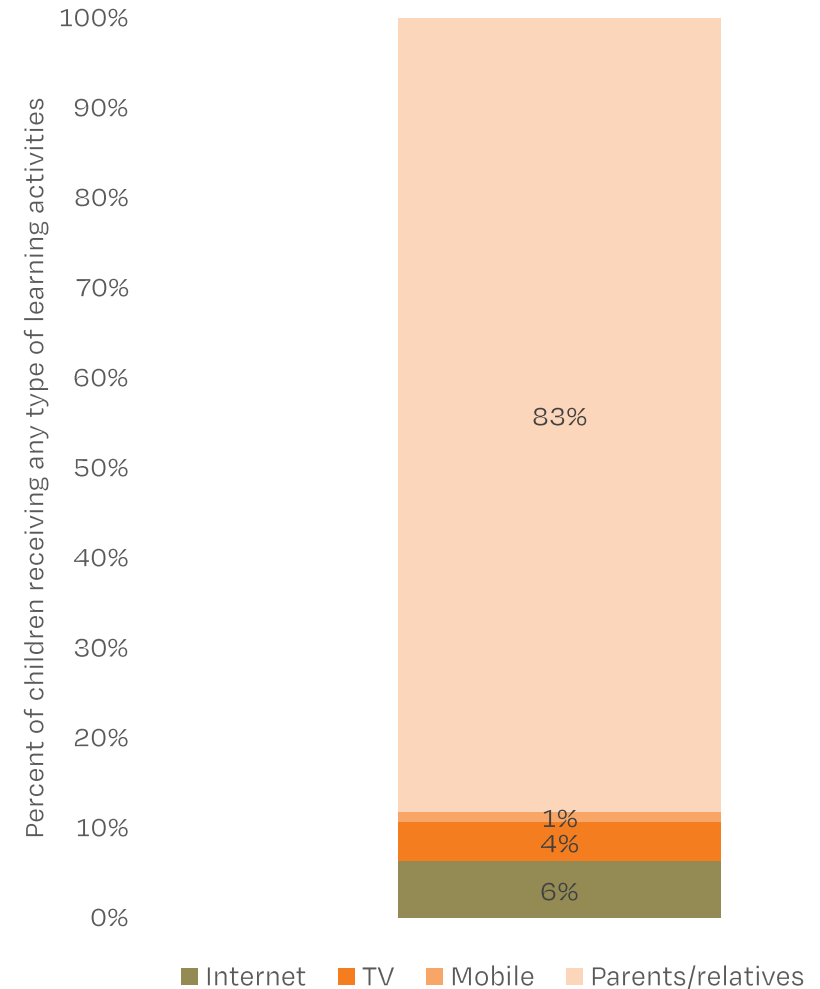


About **6%** of households reported using the internet to provide learning activities to their children.

One out of five households with children in school in February report being in contact with teachers, mostly through meeting the teachers (**61%**) or through phone (**38%**).



Most important types of learning activities



Two important questions to explore

- How did households at the bottom of the welfare distribution fare?
- How successful has social assistance been to support these households?

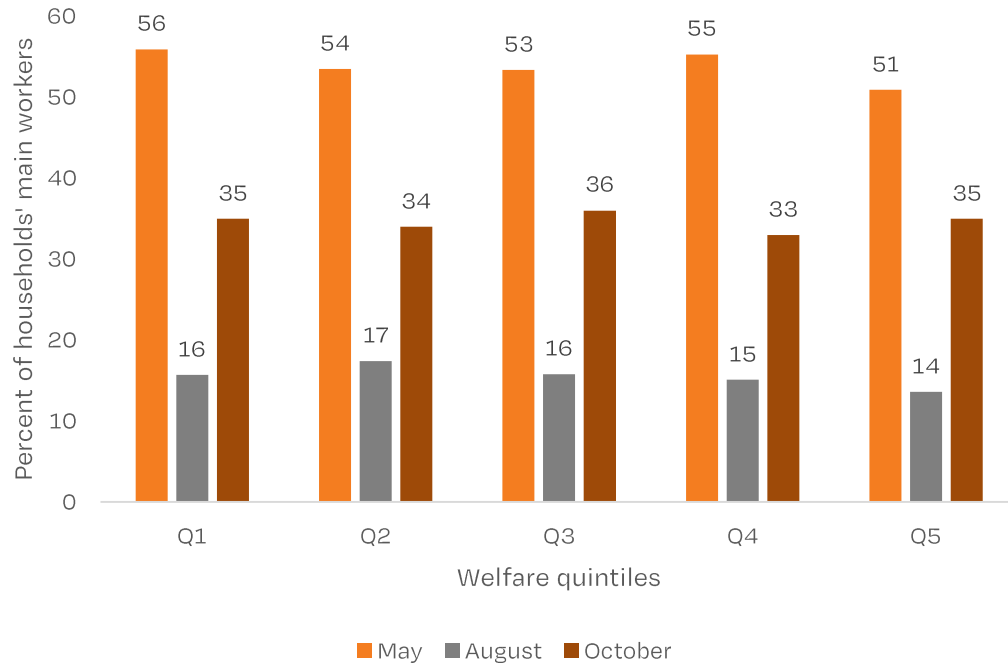
How did households at the bottom of the welfare distribution fare?

- Between August and October, while households at the bottom of the welfare distribution did not suffer more than households when looking at employment, poorer households faced greater vulnerability in other welfare dimensions:
 - They were more likely to experience food and nutrition insecurity;
 - They were less likely to have offered educational activities to their children
 - They relied on insecure coping strategies

Poorer households were as able to go back to work as richer ones...

... and as likely to have lower income

Households' main workers not working in each round, by welfare quintile



Households' main workers with lower labor and non-labor incomes in October, by welfare quintiles



But 21% of poorer households have closed their businesses compared to 18% of richer households

Note: overall income is measured at the level of households' main workers. Income from businesses and remittances are measured at household level.

Households in the bottom of the welfare distribution were as likely to be able to farm as households at the top of the welfare distribution

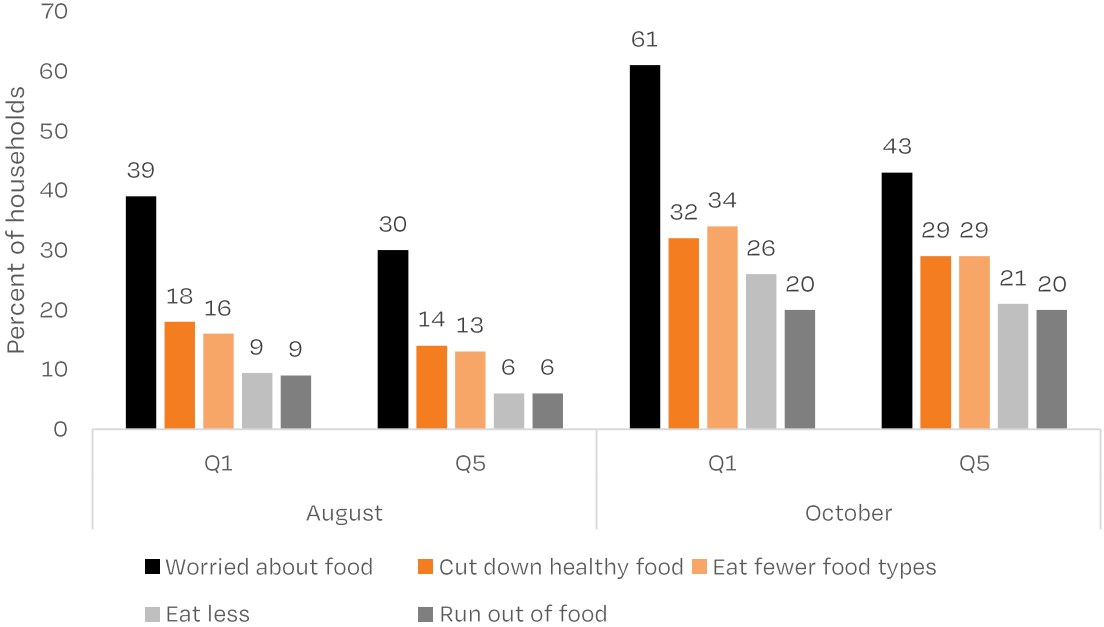
At the same time, households at the bottom of the welfare distribution were slightly more likely to have lost marketing channels (10%) than households at the top of the welfare distribution (8%).

Households' ability to farm in October, by welfare quintiles



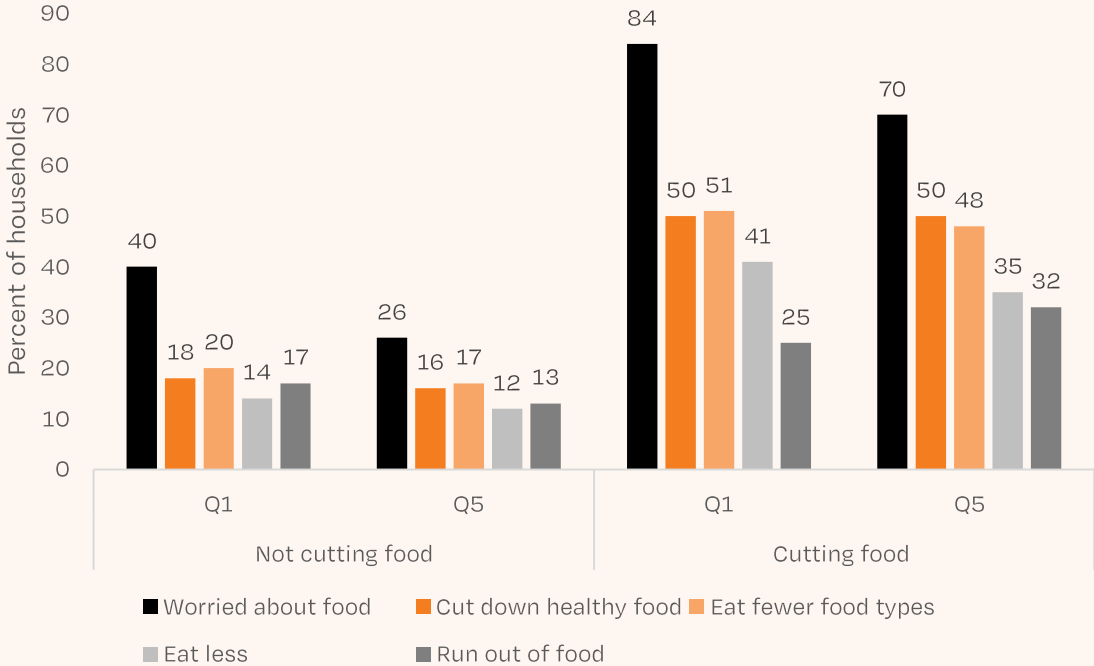
Food and nutrition security has been degrading more rapidly for households at the bottom of the welfare distribution

Changes in food security dimensions between August and October, by welfare quintiles



And more importantly for the ones cutting down on food to cope with COVID-19 impacts

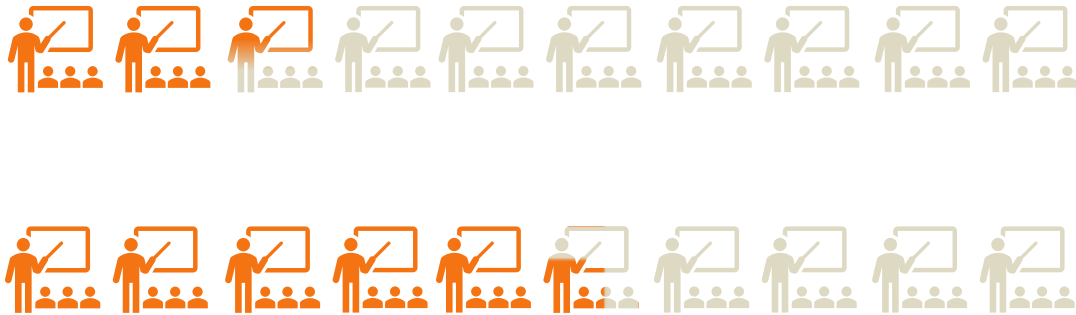
Differences in food security if households cut food consumption, by welfare quintiles



Note: here are only reported 5 out of 8 issues used to compute the food insecurity experience scale Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2020. <http://www.fao.org/in-action/voices-of-the-hungry/using-fies/en/>

The gap in access to educational activity is quite wide between bottom and top of the welfare distribution

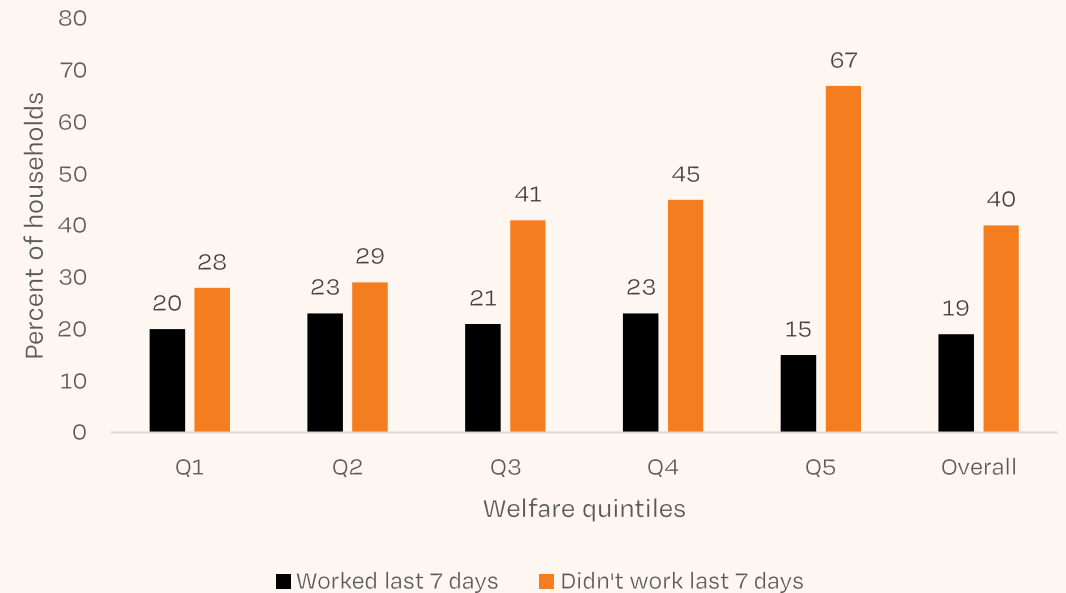
26% of households at the bottom of welfare distribution have provided learning activities



Compared to 54% of households at the top of the welfare distribution

However, there isn't a clear correlation with household main workers' employment or income status.

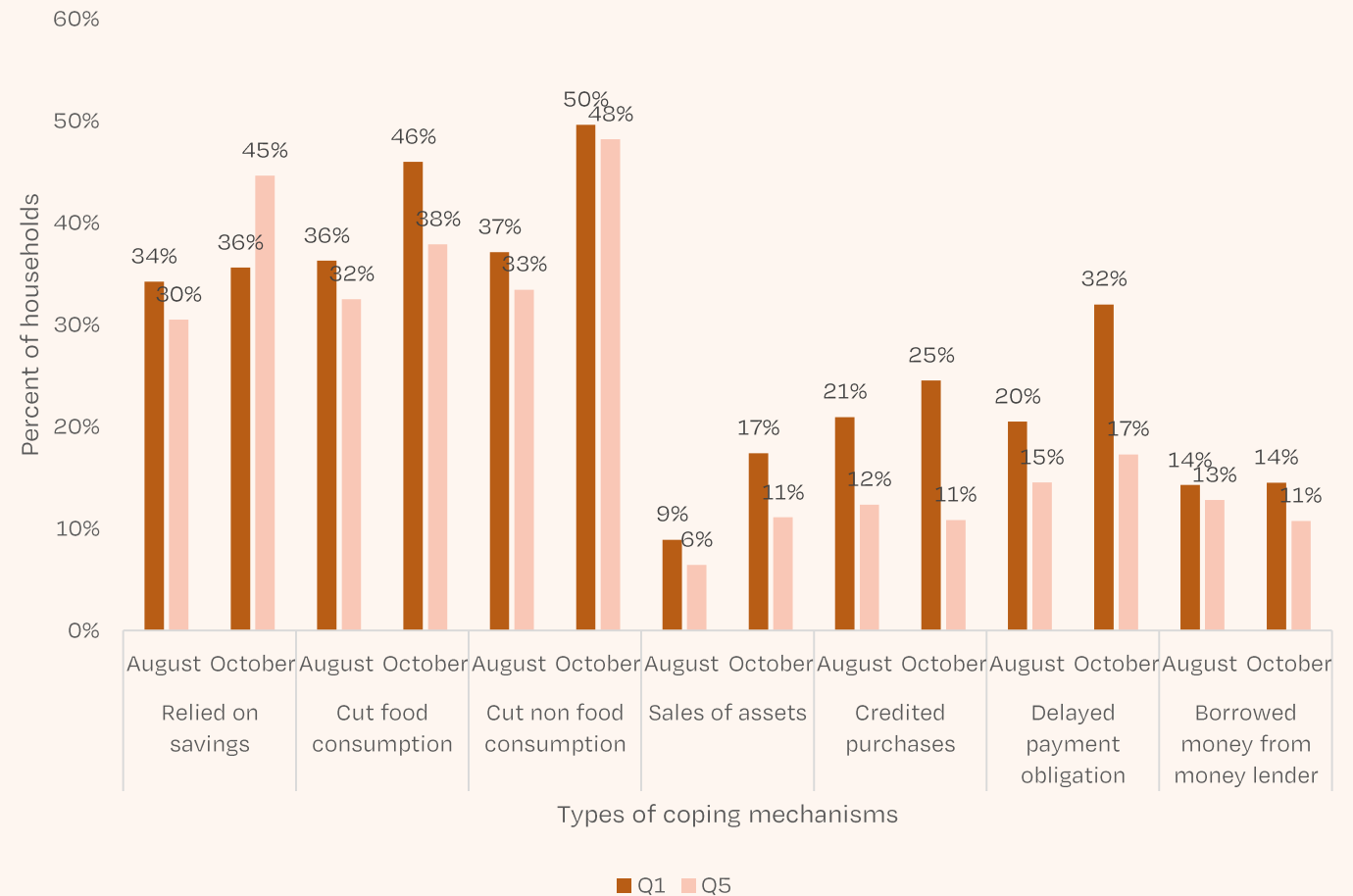
Access to learning activities if main worker was working in last 7 days, by welfare quintiles



Households at the bottom of welfare distribution relied more on coping activities worsening food security and increasing debt

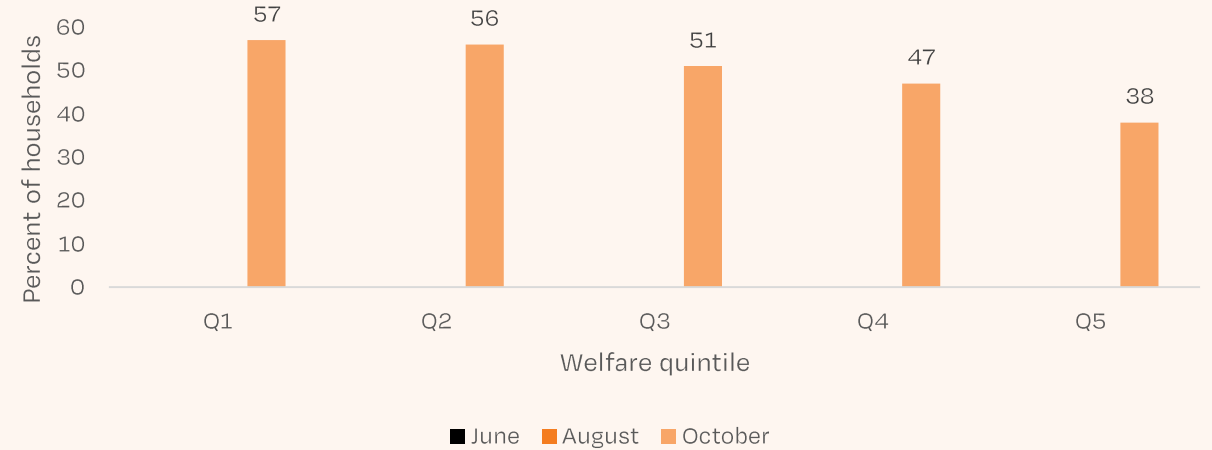
Households at the bottom of the welfare distribution were also selling assets which could potentially lower their future productivity.

Types of coping mechanisms in August and October, by welfare quintiles

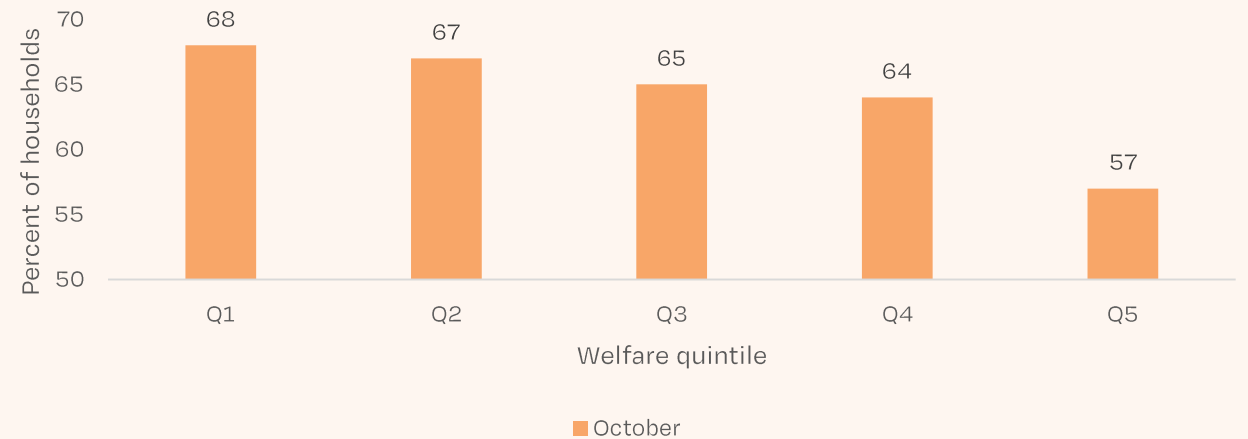


Households at the bottom of welfare distribution had become more worried about being able to fulfil their food needs and having enough financial resources

Households worrying about not having enough to eat in next 7 days, by welfare quintile



Households worrying about not having enough financial resources, by welfare quintile



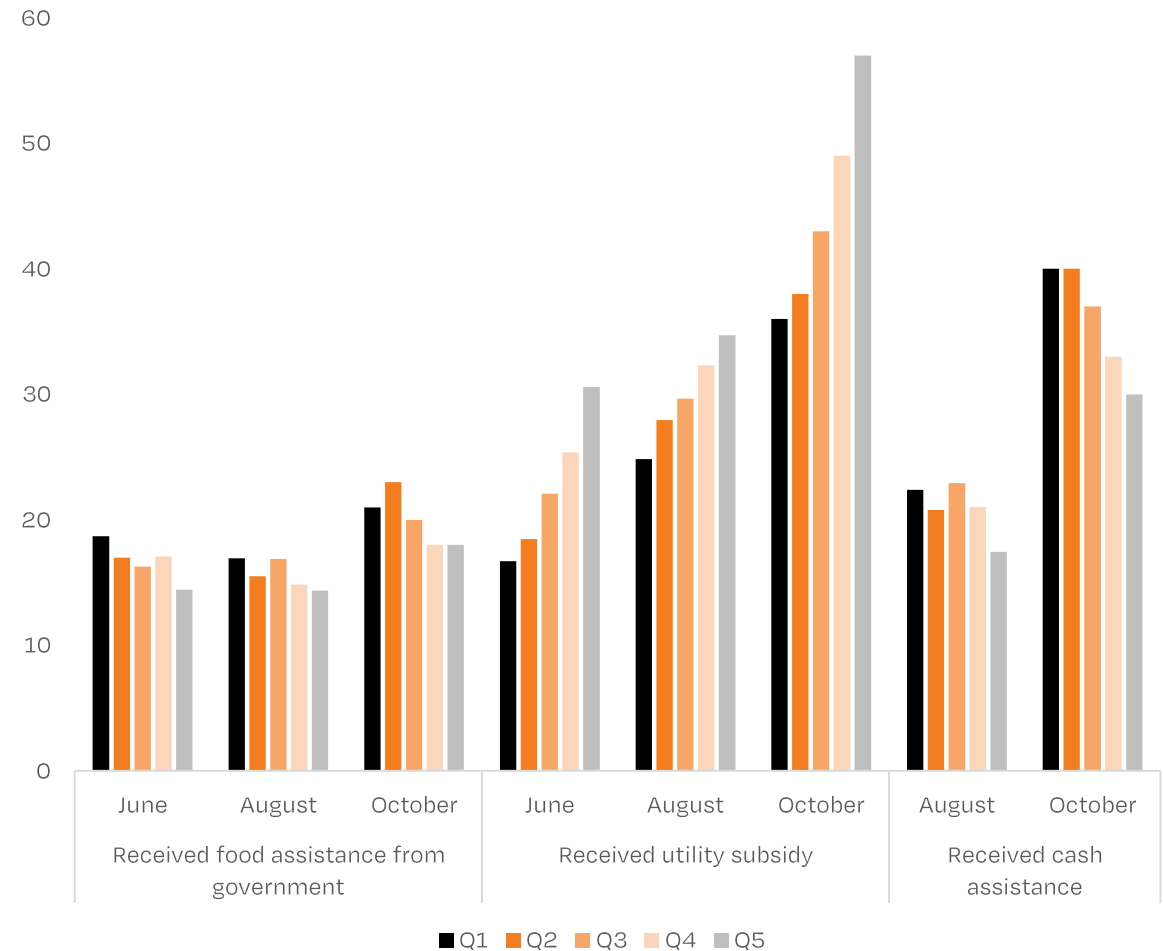
How successful has social assistance been to support these households?

- Between August and October, more households reported having received government support through food and cash.
 - Cash and food support went mostly to households at the bottom of the welfare distribution.
 - However, the evidence on whether assistance reaches those most impacted is unclear: households' whose main workers had lower *income* were no more likely to receive assistance, while more households receiving support reported having their main workers who became *unemployed*.
 - Food assistance appeared to be successful at reaching those facing several food insecurity issues
 - More households receiving food assistance lived in urban areas while more households receiving cash assistance lived in rural areas.

Social assistance from government had been more successful at benefitting households at the bottom of the welfare distribution

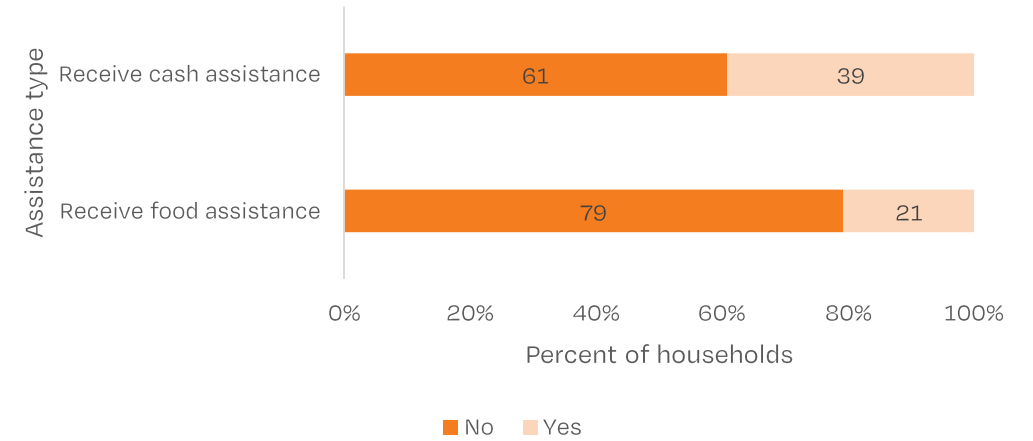
While the utility subsidy (free electricity) was not pro-poor in any of the survey months, more households in the bottom of the welfare distribution received this type of support in October than before. Cash transfer was decreasing with welfare in October.

Government assistance received in June, August and October, by welfare quintiles

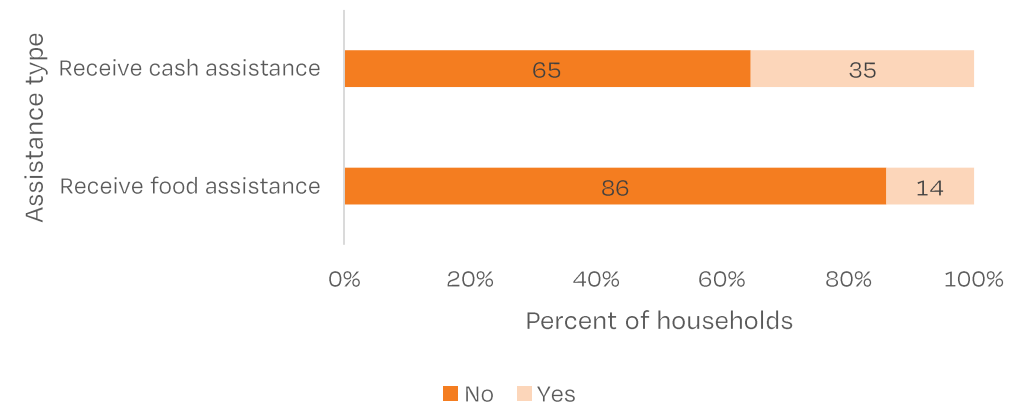


At the same time, cash and food support from the government were not always, or disproportionately, reaching households whose main worker was unemployed or had lower income in October

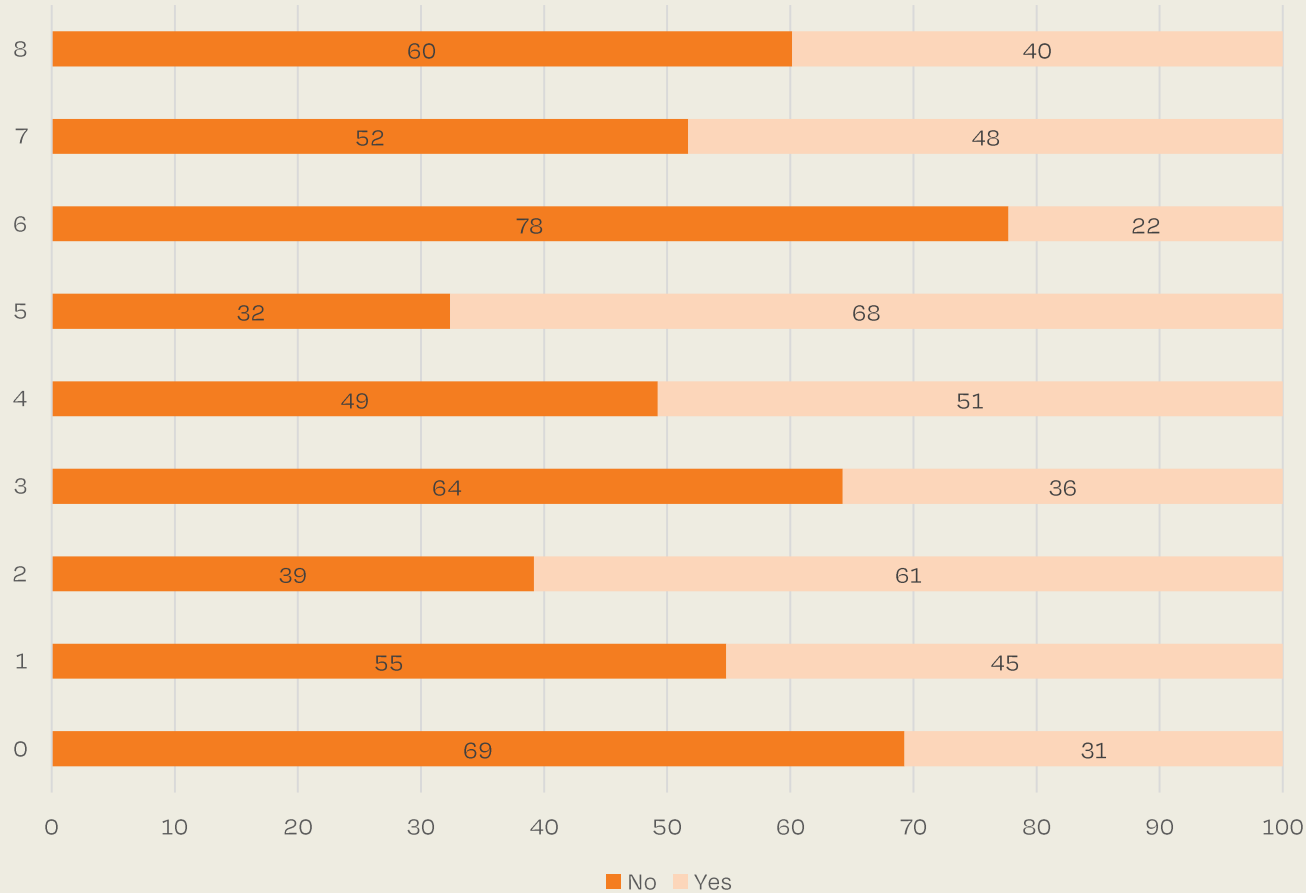
Households receiving food or cash assistance depending if main worker not working in October



Households receiving food or cash assistance if main worker earned less income in October

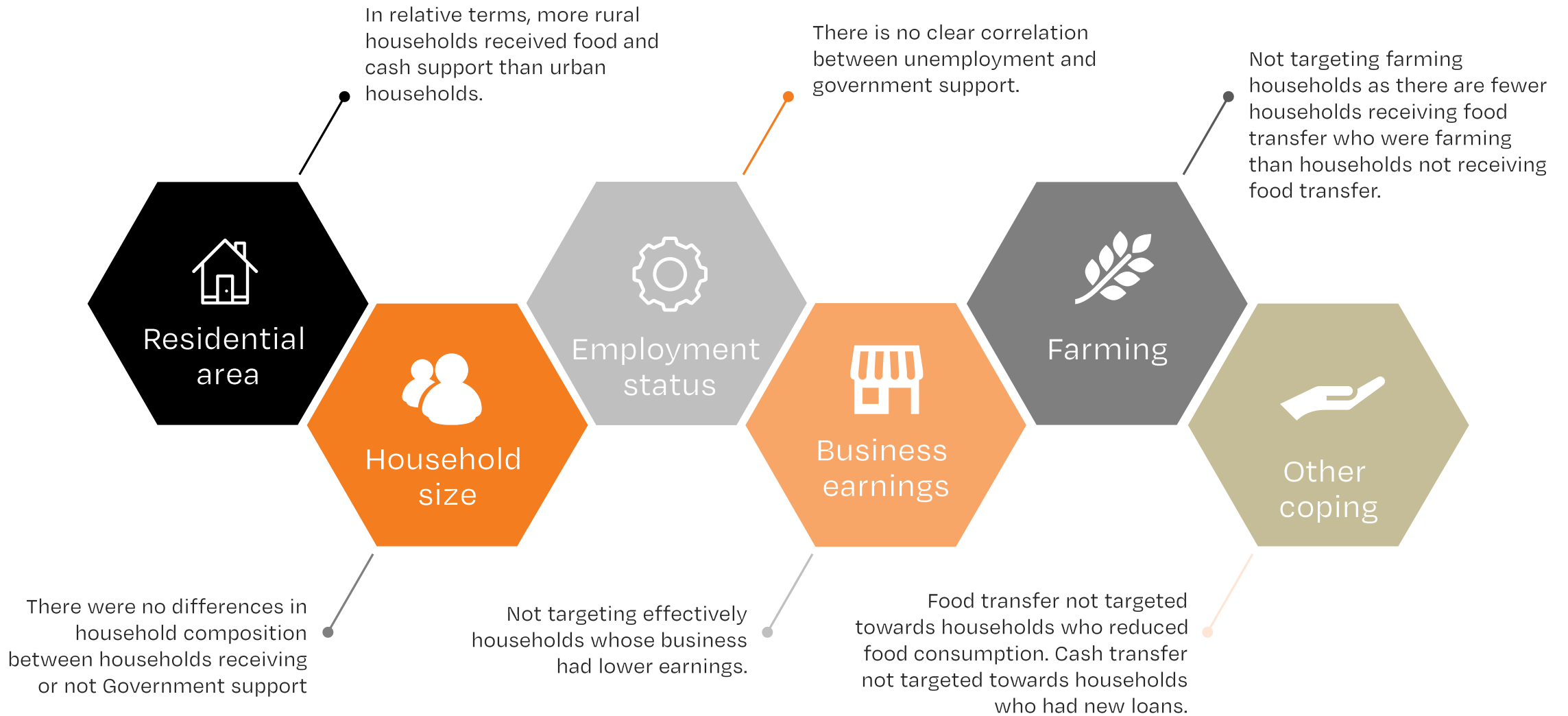


Households receiving food assistance depending on the number of food insecurity issues they are experiencing in October



Food assistance was slightly increasing with the number of food security issues experienced by households.

Characteristics of households receiving cash or food government support



Thank you

The background of the slide features a stylized, semi-transparent illustration of a diverse crowd of people. The figures are rendered in various shades of orange, brown, and grey, and all are wearing white face masks. The crowd is dense and fills the entire background area.

More information is available on

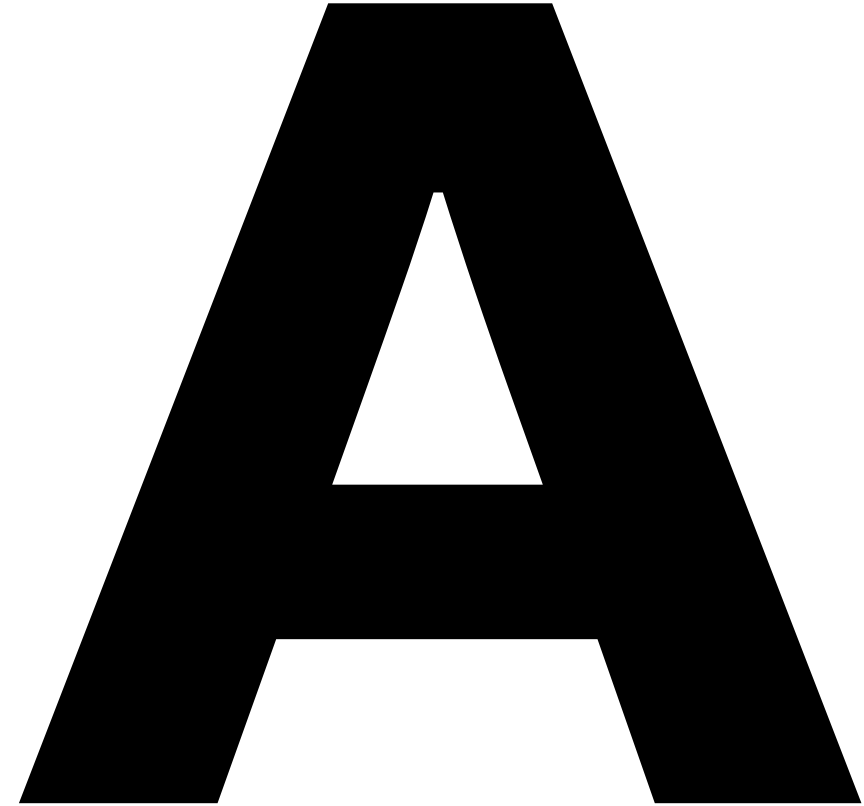
Myanmar COVID-19 Monitoring Platform

And upon request

myanmar@worldbank.org

ANNEXES

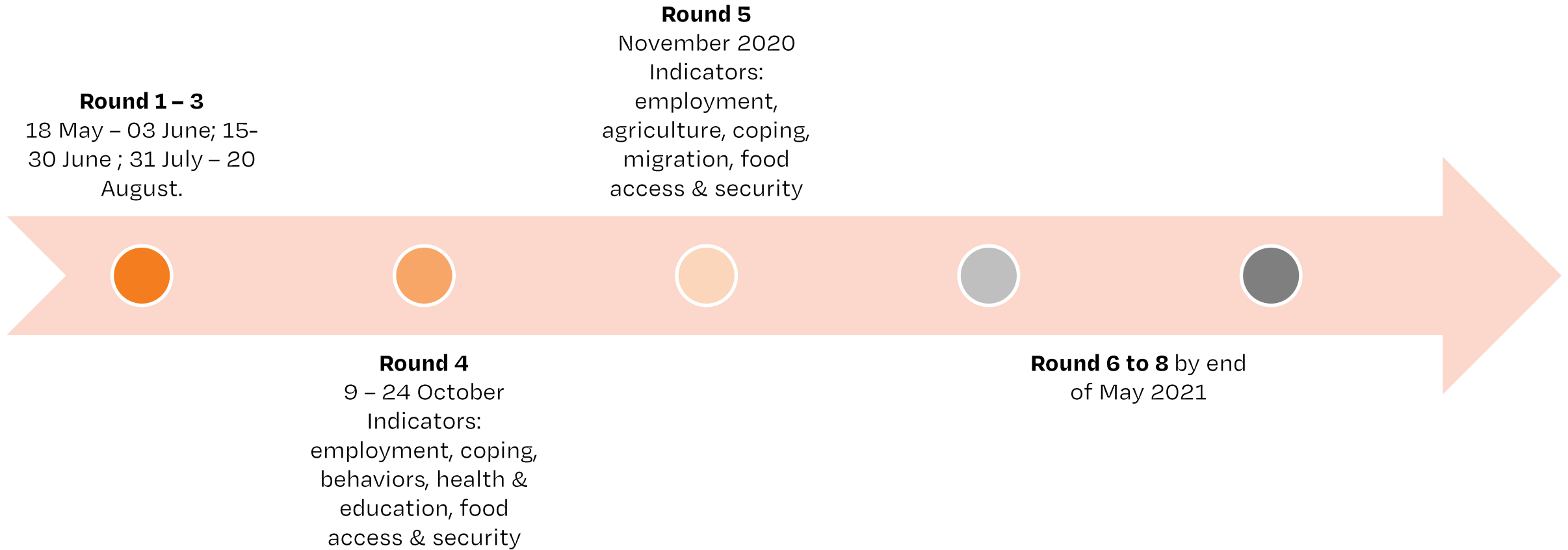
Survey design and sampling



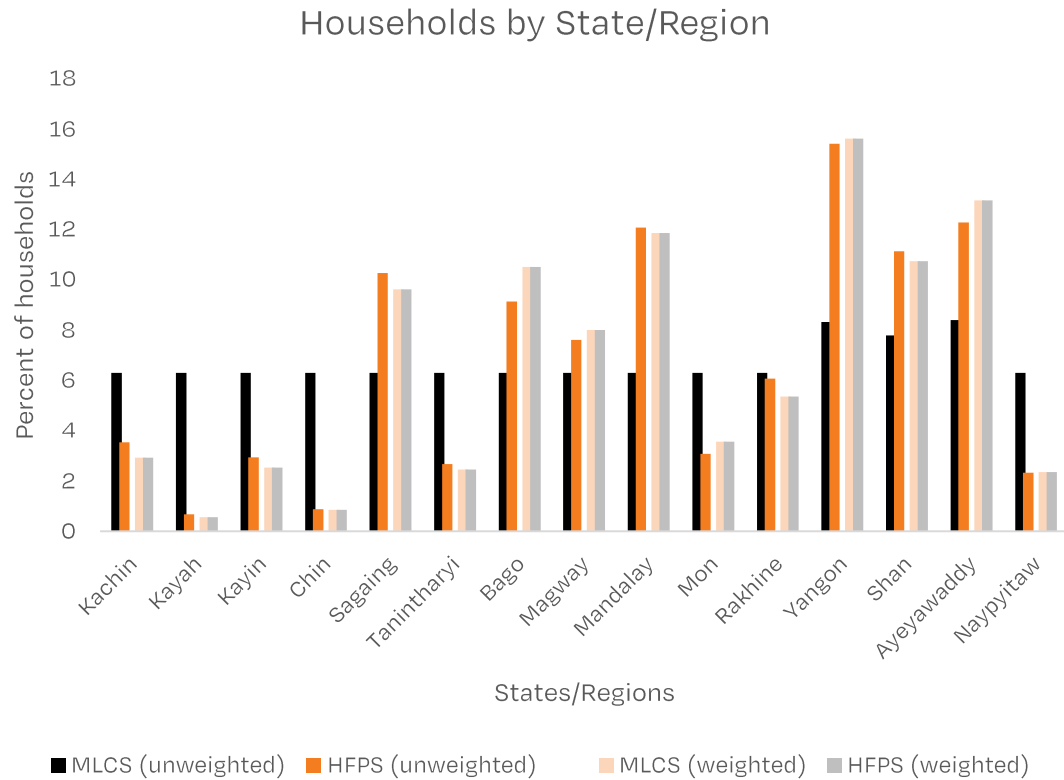
Design

- **Method:** Panel surveys were conducted monthly through a **20-25 minute** phone interview on **1,500** households starting May 2020. The Central Statistical Organization provided technical and implementation support.
- **Tracked indicators:** Labor market and livelihood strategies, food security and poverty and households' coping strategies are recorded in **all survey rounds**. Questions relating to behavioral changes, access to health and to education, and migratory trends will be asked in **subsequent survey rounds** as the pandemic situation unfolds.
- Respondents were sampled from an existing and consenting pool of respondents sourced from a private firm. Respondents were adult women and men, irrespective of their household responsibility status.
- Estimates were representative at the **Union level**.

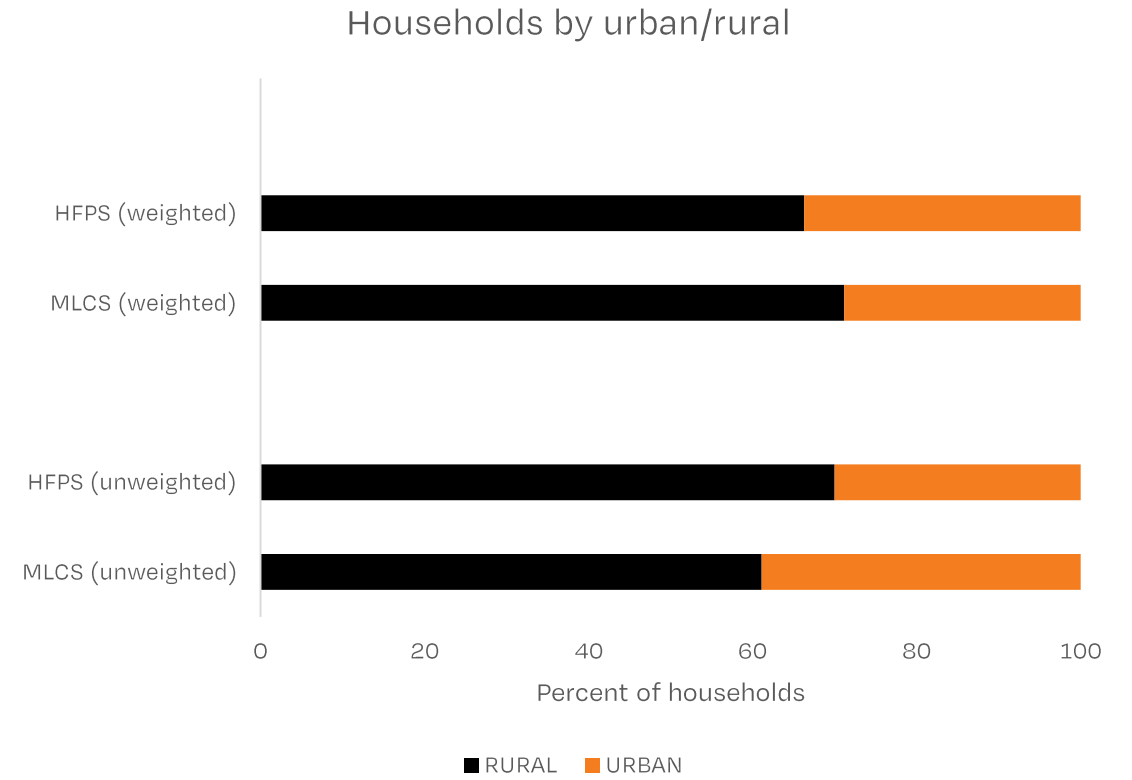
Implementation plan



Similarity of sample distribution of MLCS 2017 and HFPS 2020...

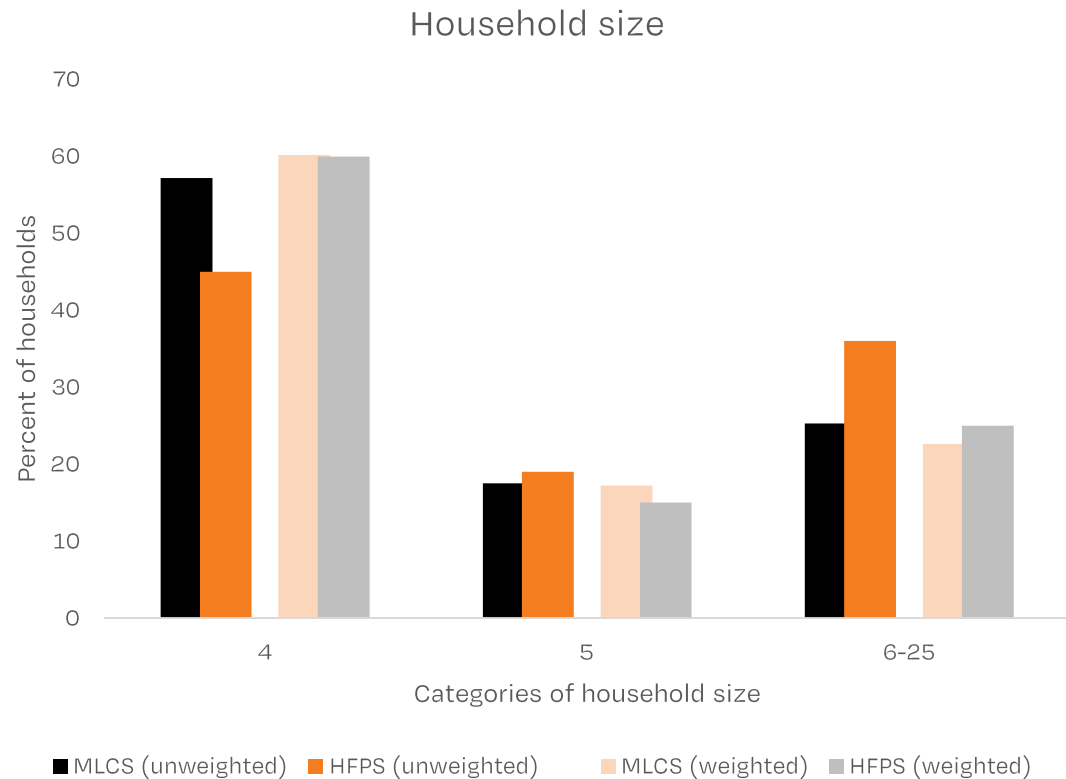


MLCS: Myanmar living conditions survey (2017)
 HFPS: High-frequency phone survey (2020)

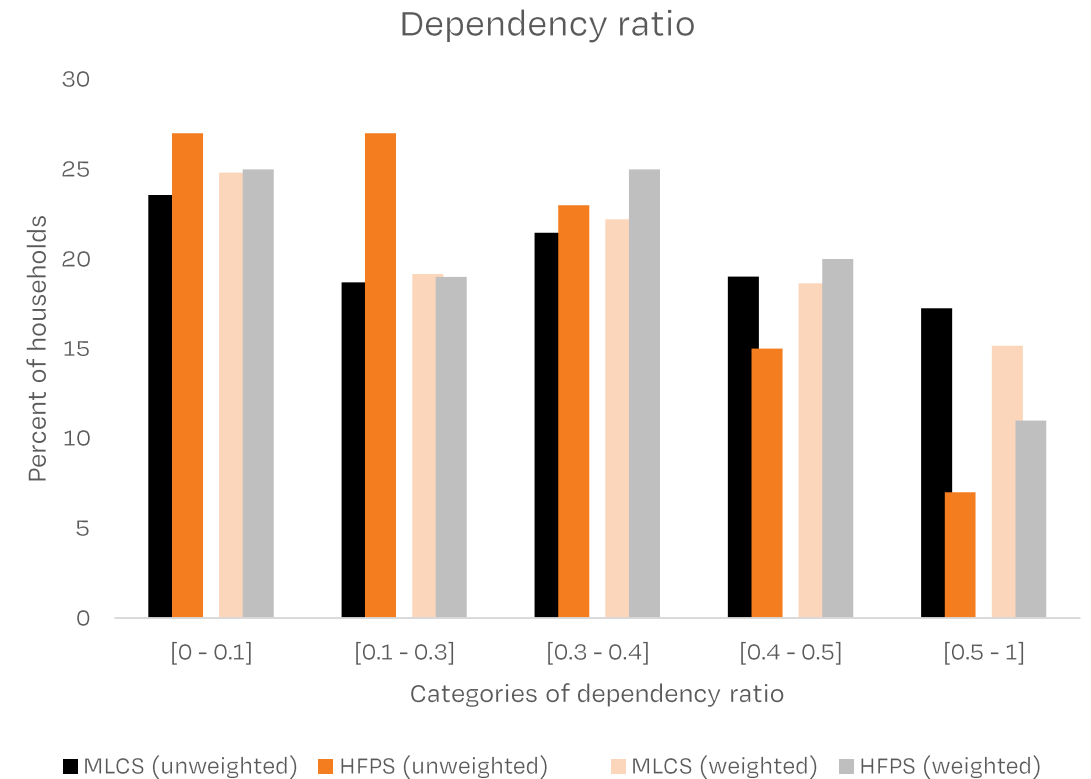


MLCS: Myanmar living conditions survey (2017)
 HFPS: High-frequency phone survey (2020)

... strengthening confidence of representativeness of the HFPS



MLCS: Myanmar living conditions survey (2017)
 HFPS: High-frequency phone survey (2020)



Dependency ratio: share of children (0-14 years old) and elderly (65 years old and over) over adults

Characteristics of surveyed population

B

The HFPS drew from a representative and diverse sample of respondents and households

