



SYNTHESIS REPORT

TIMOR-LESTE COVID-19 SURVEY

MAY 2020 - MAY 2021

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	V
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
Government Policy Responses	2
Key Findings	3
National Level Findings	3
Dili vs Outside Dili	4
INTRODUCTION	5
Background to this Research	5
Other Research	7
CONTEXT	8
Timor Leste COVID-19 Timeline	9
Existing Vulnerabilities	10
The Easter 2021 Floods	10
Government Support	10
Budgetary Measures	11
Vaccinations and Testing	12
RESULTS	13
Biggest Concerns	13
Social and Economic Impacts	15
Prevention Measures and Healthcare Behaviour	17
Vaccination	18
Government Trust	19
Use of and Satisfaction with Government Programs/Government Support	21
Safety and Security	22
Personal and Community Resilience	23
Infrastructure and Services	24
Governance and Participation	24
Flood and Cyclone	25
News and Information	26
CONCLUSIONS AND KEY MESSAGES FOR GoTL	28
ANNEXES	30
Annex A: Detailed Methodology	31
Annex B: Bibliography	35

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GfD	Governance for Development [DFAT investment]
GMN TV	Grupo Média Nacional TV
GoTL	Government of Timor-Leste
MDF	Market Development Facility [DFAT investment]
MDI	Mata Dalan Institute
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
RTTL	Radio e Televisão de Timor-Leste
SoE	State of Emergency
TAF	The Asia Foundation
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNTL	National University of Timor-Leste
WFP	World Food Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19, or coronavirus global pandemic has required huge responses from governments all over the world; and Timor-Leste has its own unique requirements when addressing an evolving event of this magnitude. This report synthesises the findings of six survey rounds undertaken by The Asia Foundation (the Foundation) in Timor-Leste, from May 2020 to May 2021.¹ This work was supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), through the Governance for Development (GfD) program. In partnership with local partner MDI (Mata Dalan Institute), six phone surveys were conducted at bi-monthly intervals. With support from ORIMA Research, the findings of each survey round were made available through reports and fact sheets in both English and Tetum.

The data from these survey rounds was shared with key stakeholders in government and other development partners; and enabled the Foundation to better understand the concerns of the people of Timor-Leste; how well they are adopting prevention measures and taking care of their health; the level of trust in Government; the use of, and satisfaction with, government programs; the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated control measures; the resilience of individuals and communities; and the sources of news and information the people of Timor-Leste are relying on to stay informed about the pandemic. By synthesising the information available across the survey rounds in this report, we are able to see how people's perceptions, understandings and practices changed over time. This in turn will hopefully, inform a more strategic and responsive policy response from government.

¹ The survey was initially expected to run at a 2-month interval until June 2021 to see changes for the community over time. Given the utility of the surveys, the process will now continue for a number of additional months. The [data visualization](#) platform is updated each survey round to reflect this data.



Through disaggregating data by gender and location we were able to discern if, and how, the pandemic affects different groups differently; and allowed us to conduct better informed advocacy with the Timor-Leste Government and donors on issues relating to COVID-19. Except where noted there were not significant, sustained differences in responses by gender. However, the difference in perceptions and experience of people residing inside and outside Dili was sometimes quite marked.

Timor-Leste's first confirmed case of COVID-19 occurred on 21 March 2020. Due in part to the government's swift action declaring the first State of Emergency (SoE) less than a week after the first case, on 28 March 2020, Timor-Leste initially avoided the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic with only a handful of cases and no deaths in 2020. Although by 13 July 2021, total cases had increased to nearly 9,906 and 25 deaths, a continuing focus on border, quarantine, lockdown and sanitary fence measures; together with the vaccination rollout means that the number of active cases (901) is once again in decline. With one break (27 June-5 August 2020) the SoE has been in place since 28 March 2020 and continues to the present day.

Despite significant progress since independence, Timor-Leste remains the poorest country in South-East Asia, with around 80% of the population either living in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty and like other low-income countries, there was a high level of apprehension about how the country's limited medical facilities would cope with an outbreak. Management of the already escalating number of COVID-19 cases in Timor-Leste was considerably complicated by severe flooding on 4 April 2021 that affected much of the country.

GOVERNMENT POLICY RESPONSES

In June 2020, Timor-Leste joined 157 other countries that provided conditional and unconditional cash transfers to their populace as a way of responding to the economic shocks of COVID-19. In Timor-Leste, this payment (the *Uma Kain* payment) took the form of a single cash transfer of US\$200 distributed to approximately 300,000 households in all 452 villages at a cost of close to US\$60 million. This process commenced in June 2020.

In September 2020, the government announced the *Cesta Basica* (basic food basket) program, which would provide \$25 worth of food or a voucher for every Timorese person for two months. The distribution of food baskets/vouchers began in early December 2020. Other support programs included an electricity subsidy of \$15 per month for two months, temporary suspension on employer contributions for social security payments, a 60% wage subsidy, and a \$36 monthly payment for self-employed and informal workers provided they register for Social Security.

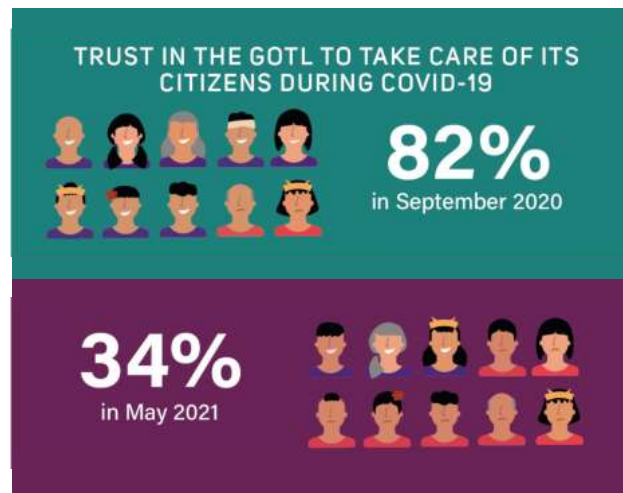
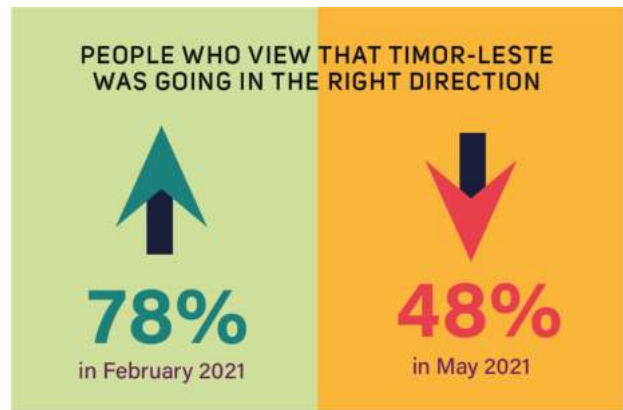
KEY FINDINGS

National level findings

At a national level for the first five rounds of the survey, respondents were increasingly of the view that Timor-Leste was going in the right direction, rising from a low of 40% (May 2020) up to a high of 78% (February 2021). However, this upward trend reversed in the final round (May 2021), when less than half (48%) of respondents felt this way. This sense of going in the right direction was generally much higher in Dili than outside Dili, with the greatest discrepancy in May 2021 when 68% of Dili residents thought Timor-Leste was going in the right direction, compared with 41% outside Dili.

Trust in the GoTL to take care of its citizens during COVID-19 rose from May 2020 (49%) to its highest point in September 2020 (82%) and then declined to its lowest rating across all survey rounds in May 2021 (34%). Distrust in the government was also the highest recorded in May 2021 (55%), and lowest in September 2020 (9%).

In rounds 4 to 6, respondents were asked how well the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) was performing. Overall perceptions of the GoTL were positive but have been slightly less positive in each survey round since December 2020. Sixty-one percent felt the government was doing a 'very' or 'somewhat' good job carrying out its responsibilities



in May 2021, in line with 63% in February 2021 but down from 75% in December 2020. Eleven percent also felt the government was doing a 'somewhat' or 'very' bad job in May 2021, up from 2% in February 2021 and 4% in December 2020.

Across all survey rounds, COVID-19 (including its impact on health) remained the biggest perceived challenge facing Timor-Leste - ranging from a low of 53% (July 2020) to a high of 87% (February & May 2021), most likely explainable by the timing of an increase in COVID-19 cases and occurrence of community transmission.

By May 2021, around three quarters (74%) of respondents indicated they had been forced to skip or cut the size of a meal at least once in the past month because of a lack of money. This proportion has increased each survey round since September 2020 (53%) but was similar to the proportion observed in May 2020 (76%).

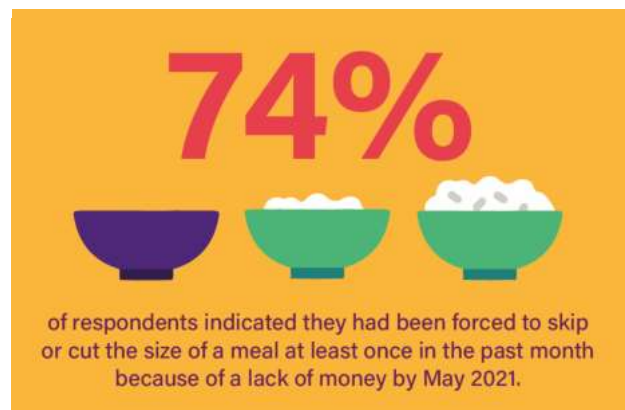
The proportion of COVID-19 prevention behaviors reported by respondents as being followed 'very much' in the last week was highest for three key behaviors in the first survey round in May 2020, then steadily declined through to a low in December 2020. All behaviors then increased again, but as of May 2021 had not reached the levels of a year earlier.

Most respondents were aware that vaccines against COVID-19 now existed, rising from February 2021 (78%) to May 2021 (89%). In February 2021, of the 78% of respondents who were aware of the vaccine, 91% said they would be willing to receive a vaccination once it was approved by the GoTL. In May 2021, once the vaccine had already been approved, 43% of respondents indicated they would try to get the vaccine as soon as possible. Only 9% reported they did not intend to get it.

COVID-19 was the most common perceived threat to security in respondents' local area, reaching a high in May 2021 (91%). This was a significant increase in February 2021 (77%) and December 2020 (70%).

In rounds 4 and 5, respondents were asked questions about the extent to which schools were open and functioning normally. This was reported to occur 'always' or 'very frequently' by 83% in December 2020, but this had fallen to 73% by February 2021. Over the same period there was a halving of respondents who thought it was safe to send kids to school (60-29%); and an increase in those who said it was not safe due to COVID-19 (25-56%).

Television was the most frequently used (73%-90%) and trusted (76%-90%) source of news and information. When asked which television channels respondents watch, RTTL (76-97%) and GMN (63-86%) were by far the most commonly watched channels.



Dili vs outside Dili

For quite a few measures there were significant differences between those living in Dili and those living outside Dili. People living outside Dili were far less likely to think Timor-Leste was going in the right direction, less likely to think that the GoTL was performing well; and were less likely to be positive about the way that the GoTL was carrying out its responsibilities. Satisfaction with the Uma Kain payment, the food basket/voucher system, and the electricity subsidy were all lower among those living outside Dili. Respondents outside Dili always had less net positive perceptions of the safety and security in their community. The impact of the pandemic was also felt differently with it being less common for markets to be open all or most of the time outside Dili and less common for people living outside Dili to receive remittances from friends or family working overseas. For the first five rounds of the survey more people outside Dili were forced to skip or cut the size of a meal at least once in the

past month because of a lack of money, although this underwent a significant reversal in the final survey round.

Not altogether surprisingly, concern about COVID-19 was consistently higher in Dili than outside Dili, and it was more common in Dili than outside Dili to avoid social gatherings, avoid public places, and wear a mask as a protection against COVID-19. Notably, by May 2021 the highest priority for people in Dili was to receive more information on how to access government support programs with the highest priority outside Dili being to end sanitary fences.

Dili residents were more likely than people outside Dili to get their information from TV or radio and much less likely to rely on Xefe/community leaders. Respondents living outside Dili were more likely to watch RTTL. Using social media at least a few times a week was consistently higher in Dili than outside Dili and while Facebook was the most popular app both inside and outside Dili, it was consistently more often nominated as most popular app in Dili than outside Dili.

Noting Timor-Leste's pre-existing vulnerabilities, the GoTL is to be commended for acting to ameliorate the socio-economic effects of the pandemic through budgetary measures and a variety of support programs, including the highly effective *Uma Kain* household payment.

To make the continuing response to the pandemic more effective, key messages include that:

- ◇ Measures such as household cash payments and food baskets were appreciated by the majority of the population. Similar and ongoing support throughout successive lockdowns should be considered by government to offset negative socio-economic impacts and instill trust in people.²

- ◇ Ensuring that policy measures addressing COVID-19 and its impacts serve people both inside and outside Dili is key to an effective response and higher levels of satisfaction.
- ◇ Good communication about support programs is central to their effectiveness. Support programs need to be communicated to the public in a timely manner, with clear instructions on who is eligible, where and how to apply, and noting that the way people access information inside and outside Dili differs.
- ◇ Together with development partners and all stakeholders, factual information on COVID-19 vaccines and their safety needs to be provided in time to pre-emptively address any potential vaccine hesitancy.

² It is important that administrative systems for distribution of any future cash payments, vouchers or food baskets are inclusive, see *The Asia Foundation (2020), the Household cash transfer (Uma-Kain payment) and its initial Socio-Economic impacts and effects on gender dynamics* <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/timor-leste-covid-19-household-cash-transfer/>

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THIS RESEARCH

The COVID-19, or coronavirus global pandemic has required huge responses from governments all over the world; and Timor-Leste has its own unique requirements when addressing an evolving event of this magnitude. This report synthesises the findings of six survey rounds undertaken by The Asia Foundation (the Foundation) in Timor-Leste, from May 2020 to May 2021.³

The data from these survey rounds supported us to understand the concerns of the people of Timor-Leste; how well they are adopting prevention measures and taking care of their health; the level of trust in Government; the use of, and satisfaction with, government programs; the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated control measures; the resilience of individuals and communities; and the sources of news and information the people of Timor-Leste are relying on to stay informed about the pandemic. A core of key questions was maintained throughout each survey round, but adjustments were made either to cover specific programs implemented by the government to mitigate the impact, or in response to the evolving context. By way of example, additional questions were added in the last two rounds related to COVID-19 vaccination. By synthesising the information available across the survey rounds in this report, we are able to see how people's perceptions, understandings and practices changed over time.

³ The survey was initially expected to run at a 2-month interval until June 2021 to see changes for the community over time. Given the utility of the surveys, the process will now continue for a number of additional months. The [data visualization](#) platform is updated each survey round to reflect this data.



Through disaggregating data by gender and location we were able to discern if, and how, the pandemic affects different groups differently; and allows us to conduct better informed advocacy with the Timor-Leste Government and donors on issues relating to COVID-19. Except where noted there were not significant, sustained differences in responses by gender. However, the difference in perceptions and experience of people residing inside and outside Dili was sometimes quite marked.

This work was supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), through the Governance for Development (GfD) program. In partnership with local partner MDI (Mata Dalan Institute), six phone surveys were conducted at bi-monthly intervals. With support from ORIMA Research, the findings of each survey round were made available through reports and fact sheets in both English and Tetum. Detailed methodology is available at Annex A.

OTHER RESEARCH

Over this period the Foundation undertook two other complementary research projects. A report on the household cash transfer (*Uma-Kain* payment) and the socio-economic impacts and effects on gender dynamics was published in September 2020;⁴ and a report on the economic impact of COVID-19 on Timor-Leste's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) and tourism sector was published in May 2021.⁵

A wealth of other COVID-19 relevant research took place over this period that addressed the economic effects of the pandemic and ensuing States of Emergency (SoE), the implementation and effects of the household cash transfer, food security, the informal sector, women in agriculture, and monitoring of human rights considerations in implementing the SoEs that was available to inform policy development and program implementation. When Tropical Cyclone Seroja and resultant catastrophic flooding compounded the effect of the pandemic, monitoring and research continued. This included research by GoTL, the Provedor for Human Rights and Justice, the National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL), United Nations in Timor-Leste, World Food Program (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), Partnership for Human Development (PHD), Catalpa International, Market Development Facility (MDF), Oxfam, and The Lowy Institute. Please see the Bibliography at Annex B.

⁴ The Asia Foundation (2020), *the Household cash transfer (Uma-Kain payment) and its initial Socio-Economic impacts and effects on gender dynamics* <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/timor-leste-covid-19-household-cash-transfer/>

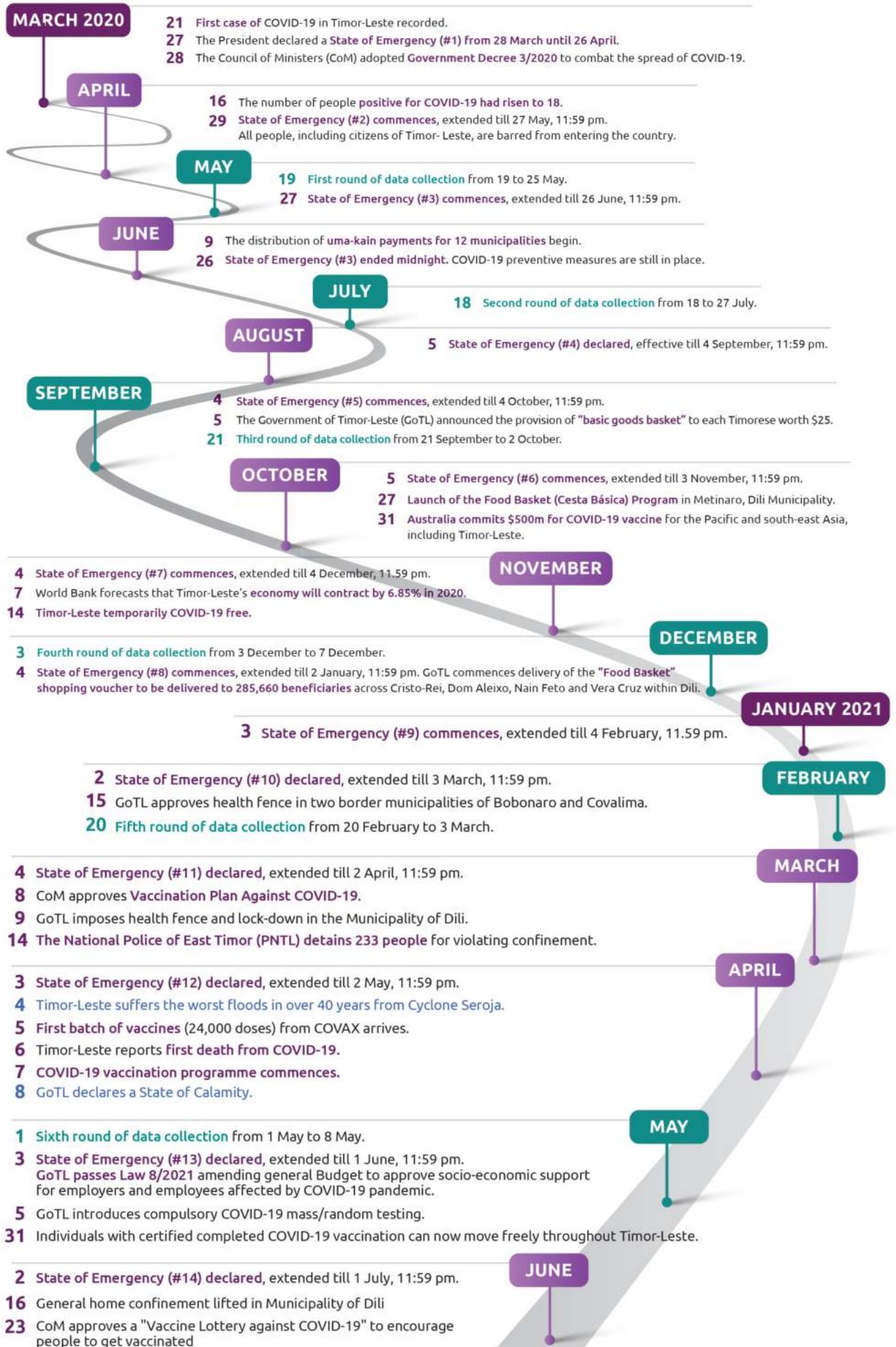
⁵ The Asia Foundation (2021), *2020 Economic Impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs and Timor-Leste's Tourism Sector* <https://www.timorleste.tl/documents/2020-economic-impact-of-covid-19-on-msmes-and-timor-lestes-tourism-sector/>

CONTEXT

Timor-Leste's first confirmed case of COVID-19 occurred on 21 March 2020. While initially Timor-Leste was seen as having avoided the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to many other countries, it was always known that the country remained vulnerable due to high levels of poverty, very limited health facilities, and sharing a porous land border with Indonesia. By late December 2020, there were increasing levels of concern about the worsening COVID-19 situation across the border in West Timor, the global emergence of more infectious COVID-19 variants, and the increasing numbers of cases arriving in Timor-Leste. By the time of the fifth survey round in February 2021, Timor-Leste was experiencing community cases of COVID-19 for the first time, something that had worsened considerably by the time Round 6 was undertaken between 1-8 May 2021, when there were 1,315 active cases of COVID-19 in Timor-Leste. By 13 July 2021, this had decreased again to 901 active cases; but 25 people had died. Updates can be found at [COVID-19 Timor-Leste Dashboard](#).

Less than a week after the first case, on 28 March 2020, the first SoE was declared by President Francisco Guterres (Lu-Olo). The SoE provided the constitutional basis for the Government to implement some restrictive measures, including the suspension of nonessential public activities, school activities, public gathering, and public transport, and close its borders.⁶ With one break (27 June-5 August 2020) the SoE have been renewed and continue to the present day. The Timorese Government (GoTL) imposed a variety of measures including lockdowns and sanitary fences (*cerca sanitária*), commencing on 9 March 2021 in Dili, and this was also applied at various times to other municipalities.

⁶ Neves, G. (2020). *Timor-Leste's COVID-19 Response*. *The Diplomat*, 3 June 2020



EXISTING VULNERABILITIES

Despite significant progress since independence, Timor-Leste remains the poorest country in South-East Asia, with around 80% of the population either living in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty, and experiencing economic recessions in 2017, 2018, and 2020. Prior to the pandemic and the state of emergency, Timor-Leste already had multiple vulnerabilities including topography, climate vulnerability, poor infrastructure, serious hunger and malnutrition, and very few formal and secure jobs. Like other low-income countries, there was a high level of apprehension about how the country's limited medical facilities would cope with an outbreak.⁷

States of emergency and lockdowns have resulted in significant household economic strain. In some municipalities, the lockdown and disruption to supply chains have triggered increases in the price of food and other essential items. Many families have taken action that increases their vulnerability and reduces their ability to cope with further shocks, such as consuming livestock, seed stock or garden produce, borrowing money or selling productive assets.⁸

THE EASTER 2021 FLOODS

Management of the already escalating number of COVID-19 cases in Timor-Leste was considerably complicated by heavy rain from 28 March-4 April 2021 accompanying Tropical Cyclone Seroja, resulting in the worst flooding in over 40 years. This led to 48 deaths, 30,367 households affected, and a total of 2,660 ha of agricultural area adversely affected. Although all municipalities experienced flooding, 81% of people affected were in Dili.⁹

Following the flooding, Timor-Leste experienced a further escalation in community transmission of COVID-19.

By the time of the round 6 interviews, 3,125 people remained displaced in 17 evacuation centres across Dili municipality; though by 18 June 2021 this had decreased to 813 people across six centres, or 6 % of the total number of people during the peak (8 April). The majority of the temporarily displaced have returned home, and the Government and humanitarian partners are supporting their safe return to communities.¹⁰

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

In June 2020, Timor-Leste joined 157 other countries that provided conditional and unconditional cash transfers to their populace as a way of responding to the economic shocks of COVID-19 control measures. Global evidence suggests that cash transfer programs have consistent positive impacts on food security and are recognised as a particularly effective way of providing social assistance due to reduced administrative and operational costs, the increased speed and flexibility of response, the multiplier effect on local markets and jobs, and the choice and control it provides to people to buy what they really need.

In Timor-Leste this payment (the *Uma Kain* payment) took the form of a single cash transfer of US\$200 distributed to approximately 300,000 low-income households in all 452 villages at a cost of close to US\$60 million. This process commenced in June 2020. The payment was unconditional, meaning there were no restrictions on how the money could be spent, but eligibility requirements applied. The GoTL mandated the use of an existing system of household registration (*Ficha da Familia*),

⁷ DFAT, (2021). *Pacific COVID-19 Response Package – Timor-Leste, May 2021*; DFAT, (2020). *Timor-Leste COVID-19 Development Response Plan, October 2020*; Neves, G., (2021). *Timor-Leste: Natural Disasters and COVID-19 Take Their Toll, The Diplomat, 19 April 2021*; DFAT, (2021). *Pacific COVID-19 Response Package- Timor-Leste, May 2021*; Neves, G. (2020). *Timor-Leste's COVID-19 Response. The Diplomat, 3 June 2020*

⁸ Neves, G., (2021). *Timor-Leste: Natural Disasters and COVID-19 Take Their Toll, The Diplomat, 19 April 2021*; DFAT, (2021). *Pacific COVID-19 Response Package- Timor-Leste, May 2021.*

⁹ UNICEF *Timor-Leste Humanitarian Situation Report (Floods): 18 June 2021*; UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Timor-Leste, *Timor-Leste Floods - Situation Report No. 10 (As of 18 June 2021)*

¹⁰ UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Timor-Leste, *Timor-Leste Floods - Situation Report No. 10 (As of 18 June 2021)* UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Timor-Leste, *Timor-Leste Floods - Situation Report No. 8 (As of 6 May 2021)*

and the payment was distributed in person to heads of households at collection sites in each village by Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion staff and village chiefs. Other research conducted by the Foundation indicated that single people or those not living with their family, for example students, women in crisis shelters and LGBTQI people, generally did not receive the *Uma Kain* payment.¹¹

Following on the success of the *Uma Kain* payment, in September 2020, the Government announced the *Cesta Basica* (basic food basket) program. The new program would provide \$25 worth of food or a voucher for every Timorese person for a period of two months. This was a shift from the *Uma Kain* payment which was targeted at the household and not adjusted based on the size of the household. While the *Cesta Basica* program was announced in September, distribution of food baskets/vouchers did not begin until early December 2020 and did not conclude until the end of May 2021.

Other support programs included an electricity subsidy of \$15 per month for two months, a 60% wage subsidy, temporary suspension on employer contributions for social security payments, and a \$36 monthly payment for self-employed and informal workers provided they register for Social Security.

BUDGETARY MEASURES

On 6 April 2020, the President approved a parliamentary decree that established the COVID-19 Fund and authorised \$US150 million for that purpose from the Petroleum Fund. This decree law was amended on 30 June 2020 with a budget increase to about \$220 million.¹² This fund was intended to be used to cover expenses including purchasing medicine and medical equipment and supplies, as well as to support the setting up and maintenance of isolation and quarantine facilities, capacity-building and operationalisation



of professionals involved in the prevention efforts and fight against COVID-19, and social protection of infected people. The COVID-19 Fund is administered by the Government and operated by the Management Board which consists of government members from the areas of finance, health and foreign affairs. An additional US\$100 million was allocated to Treasury at the same time to ensure the proper functioning of public administration and guarantee a minimum of social protection, such as the payment of pensions and grants, namely to former National Liberation combatants, the elderly, and beneficiaries of the Bolsa da Mãe programme.¹³

The 2020 Budget was only approved on 19 October 2020 after ten months of duodecimal budget allocations but allocated \$322 million for COVID-19 relief and \$109 million for *Cesta Basica* in November and December 2020.¹⁴

On 23 April 2021, the National Parliament approved an amendment to the 2021 General State Budget to respond to the impact of COVID-19 and the flooding, which the President subsequently promulgated on 4 May. The allocation to the COVID-19 Fund increased to USD 287.6 million, while the Contingency Fund allocation increased to USD 65.2 million. These changes would enable the GoTL to allocate USD 34.5 million to purchase sufficient COVID-19 vaccines to immunise the entire population,

¹¹ The Asia Foundation (2020), *the Household cash transfer (Uma-Kain payment) and its initial Socio-Economic impacts and effects on gender dynamics*.

¹² World Bank (2020) *Timor-Leste Economic Report: Towards a Sustained Recovery*, October 2020.

¹³ President of the Republic (2020), *Press release: President Of The Republic Enacts Decree On The Extraordinary Withdrawal Of 250 Million Dollars From The Petroleum Fund*, 7 April 2020.

¹⁴ <https://www.laohamutuk.org/Justice/2020/20Emergency.html>



purchase personal protective materials and equipment and material for testing and treatment for inpatient COVID-19 patients, the construction and rental of isolation and quarantine spaces, and the improvement of isolation sites throughout the territory. It is also allocated for socio-economic measures including employment support, credit moratoria, tuition fee exemption for higher education students, internet subsidy for higher education students, the purchase of food products from local producers, the subsidy for electricity, the financing of the operation of the Integrated Centre for Crisis Management, salary supplement for front line workers, and the extension of the Basic Food Basket programme.¹⁵

To respond to the 4 April 2021 flood, on 1 June 2021, together with humanitarian partners, GoTL launched a Joint Appeal to address residual humanitarian needs for the most vulnerable affected people and assist with early-recovery efforts in Timor-Leste.¹⁶

VACCINATIONS AND TESTING

Timor-Leste commenced COVID-19 vaccinations on 7 April 2021, and by 3 July 2021, a total of 238,909 COVID-19 vaccine doses comprising of 212,751 first doses (28.2%) and 26,158 second doses (3.5%) had been administered, predominantly in Dili. With a total of 295,800 doses available through the COVAX facility and vaccine donations from the Australian and Chinese Governments, the GoTL expects this amount to cover 70% of people in Dili and 34% of people nationwide with at least one dose.¹⁷ By 13 July, 144,024 COVID-19 tests had been carried out, with Australian Government-funded support from the Menzies Institute.¹⁸

¹⁵ GoTL (2021). *President of the Republic promulgates State Budget Amending*, 4 May 2021. <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=27960&lang=en&n=>

¹⁶ GoTL and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Timor-Leste (2021), *Press Release: Government of Timor-Leste and partners appeal for US\$32 million to assist flood victims and early recovery*, 1 June 2021.

¹⁷ WHO COVID-19 Situation Report 105 Timor-Leste, 23 June 2021.

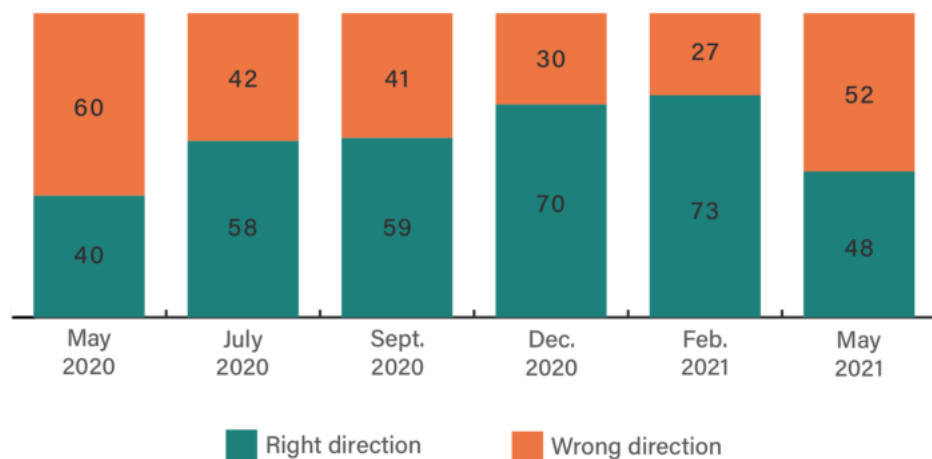
¹⁸ <https://covid19.gov.tl/en/dashboard/>

RESULTS

BIGGEST CONCERNS

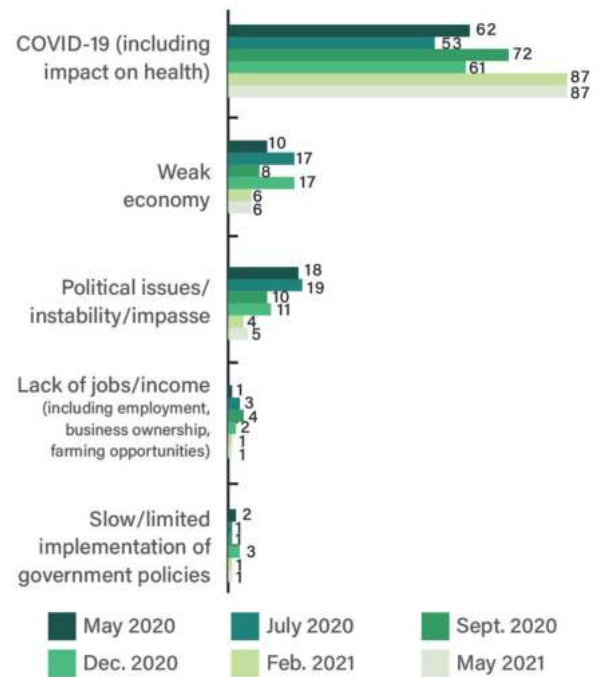
For the first five rounds of the survey, respondents at a national level were increasingly of the view that Timor-Leste was going in the right direction, rising from a low of 40% (May 2020) up to a high of 78% (February 2021). However, this fell sharply in the final round (May 2021), when less than half (48%) of respondents nationally felt this way. For five out of six survey rounds people living in Dili were more likely to feel that Timor-Leste was going in the right direction compared with those living outside Dili. This discrepancy was most pronounced in May 2021 when people living in Dili (68%) were far more likely to think Timor-Leste was going in the right direction, than those living outside Dili (41%).

GENERALLY SPEAKING, TIMOR-LESTE IS GOING IN THE...



Across all survey rounds COVID-19 (including its impact on health) remained the biggest perceived challenge facing Timor-Leste ranging from a low of 53% (July 2020) to a high of 87% (February & May 2021), most likely explainable by the timing of an increase in COVID-19 cases and occurrence of community transmission. Only a minority of respondents considered a weak economy to be the biggest challenge, falling from a high of 17% (July and December 2020) to a low of 6% (February and May 2021). Similarly, only a minority considered political issues to be the biggest challenge, falling from a high of 17% (July 2020) to a low of 4-5% by February-May 2021). These differences on political issues across survey rounds may correspond to the initial failure to pass the 2020 budget due to a political impasse; the subsequent formation of a restructured coalition government and ensuing promulgation of the 2020 budget in October 2020; and the timelier promulgation of the 2021 budget in December 2020.

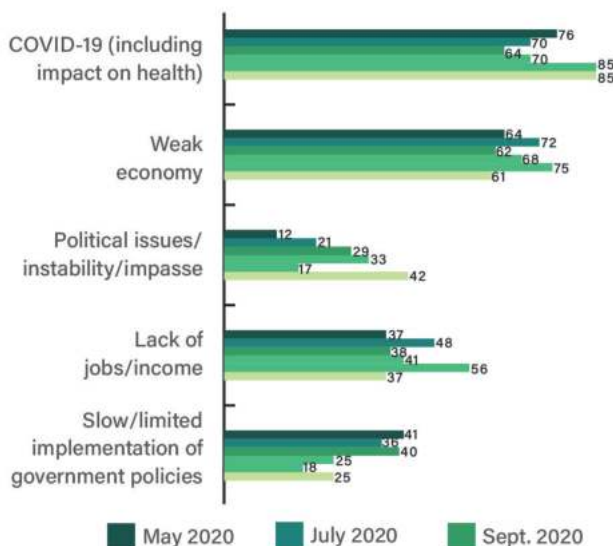
THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING TIMOR-LESTE:



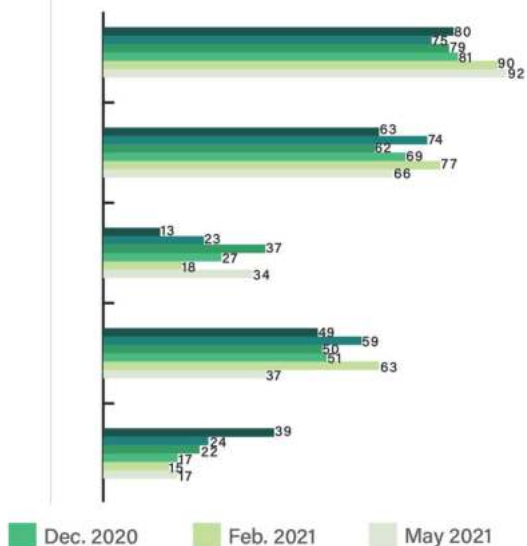
Respondents were also asked to name the three biggest challenges, for them as individuals and for their community. Once again, COVID-19 was also the biggest concern for individuals and the community, ranging from 75% (July 2020) to 92% (May 2021) for individuals; and from 64% (September 2020) to 85% (February and May 2021) for the community. Concern about COVID-19 was consistently higher in Dili than outside Dili. In

general, a weak economy was the second biggest concern for individuals and the community, ranging from 61-75% for individuals, and 62-77% for the community. For the community, concern about a lack of jobs reached a high of 42% by May 2021, compared with a low of 12% in May 2020. For individuals, concern about a lack of jobs was at a high of 34% in May 2021, compared with a low of 13% in May 2020.

TOP 3 PROBLEMS AS A COMMUNITY:



AS AN INDIVIDUAL:

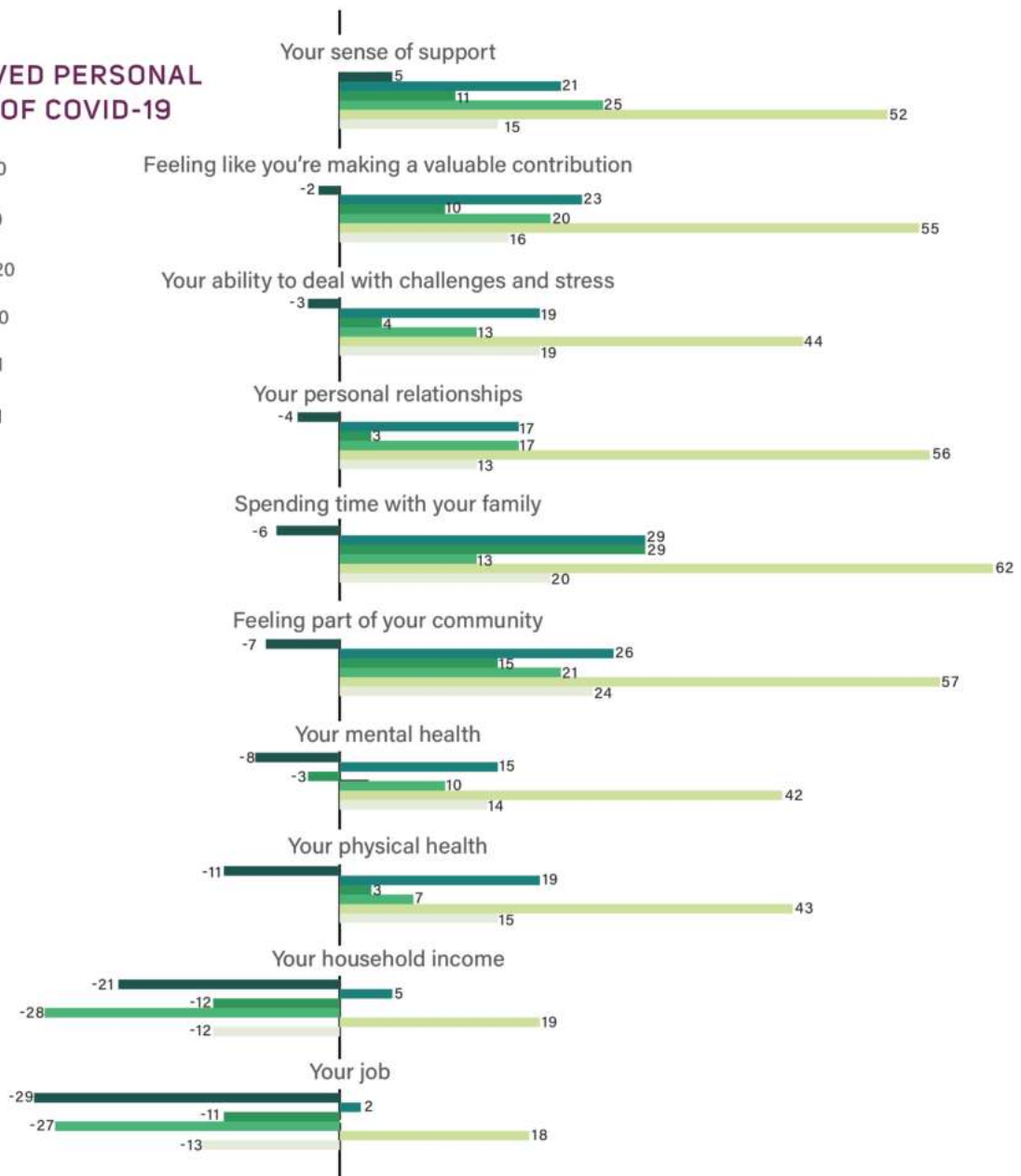


SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Respondents were asked to identify how COVID-19 had impacted them personally across a range of aspects of their life—whether they had been impacted positively, negatively, or not really affected at all. Between 35% and 53% of respondents said they had been negatively impacted by COVID-19 on each aspect, while between 24% and 40% felt each aspect had a positive impact.

By May 2021, net balance scores (positive sentiment minus negative sentiment) for all aspects were the lowest recorded across all previous survey rounds, except for household income. This contrasted with the pattern observed in previous survey rounds, where respondents tended to report generally more positive impacts from COVID-19. The only net positive impact in May 2021 was for respondents' sense of support (5%), which was lower than in previous rounds. Impacts on jobs (-29%) and household income (-21%) had the lowest net scores, lower than in February 2021 and December 2020, but more closely in line with September 2020.

PERCEIVED PERSONAL IMPACT OF COVID-19



In rounds 4 (December 2020) and 5 (February 2021) respondents were asked about the financial aspects of their life. Most respondents indicated that financial aspects of their life were the same or better than before the pandemic. The greatest improvement compared to before the pandemic was in relation to their family's ability to get a job close to where they live. In December this provided a net positive score of 38% (compared with 30% in February). In contrast, the smallest positive impact in both round 4 and round 5 was in relation to borrowing money if they need it (net positive score of 15-17%). The net positive score for all these aspects declined by 2-8% between December 2020 and February 2021.

For those who were employed, the majority of respondents in rounds 2-6 reported that their employer had reduced their hours ranging from a low of 81% (September 2020) to a high of 94% (February 2021).

Fewer reported that that they had been asked to take paid leave (8-25%), unpaid leave (0-13%), asked to work for reduced pay (5-13%), been made casual/on-call (1-5%), or had their contract terminated (1-4%).

Questions were asked in rounds 1 to 3, and again in round 6 about the extent to which local markets were open or closed. Markets being open 'all' or 'most' of the time increased between May (23%) and September 2020 (61%), and this held reasonably steady when tested again in May 2021 (57%). Correspondingly, the proportion of respondents saying that markets were closed all the time was highest in May 2020 (14%), fell in July and September 2020 (3-4%), and had increased again somewhat by May 2021 (9%). It was more common for markets to be open all or most of the time in Dili (73-74%) compared with outside Dili (52-56%) in both September 2020 and May 2021.

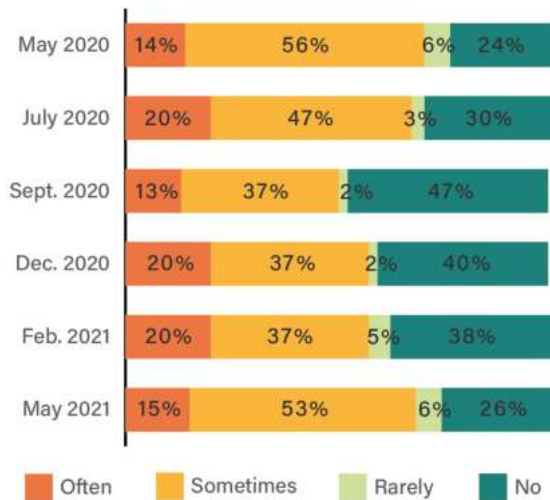


Due to some concerns that the *Uma Kain* payment may inflate the price of basic goods such as rice and cooking oil, in survey rounds 3-5 respondents were asked if these costs had increased, decreased, or stayed the same. In Round 5 (February 2021) a higher than usual proportion of respondents indicated that the cost of basic goods had increased in the past month, 54% compared to 31% in September and 24% in December.

By May 2021, around three quarters (74%) of respondents nationally indicated they had been forced to skip or cut the size of a meal at least once in the past month because of a lack of money. In the May 2021 survey round there was a significant discrepancy between those reporting this in Dili (87%) and outside Dili (69%), reversing findings in previous rounds where it was more common outside Dili.

Nationally, the proportion skipping or cutting the size of a meal has increased each survey round since September 2020 (53%); but was similar to the proportion observed in May 2020 (76%). A similar proportion (75%) said that someone else in the household had also skipped or cut the size of a meal in that time due to lack of money, up from 62% in February 2021.

IN THE PAST 30 DAYS, HAD TO CUT THE SIZE OF A MEAL OR SKIP A MEAL BECAUSE THERE WASN'T ENOUGH MONEY FOR FOOD?

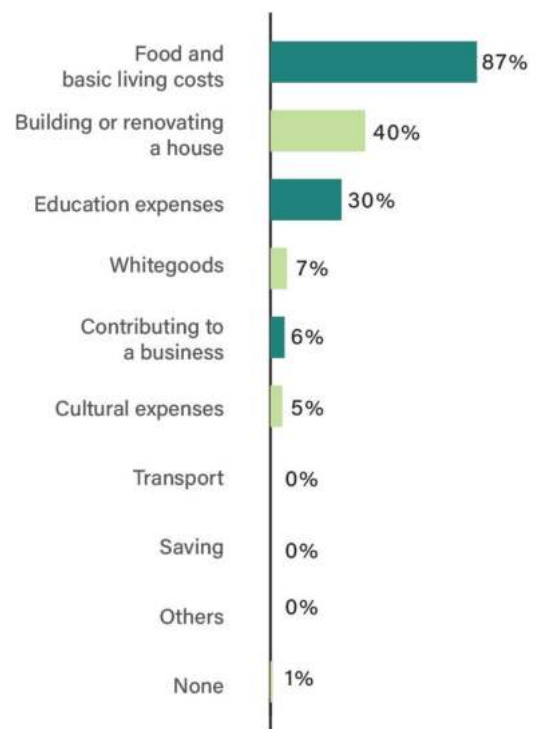


Since the start of the SoE in March 2020, 20% of respondents had received money from a friend or family overseas. Those living in Dili (33%, compared to 15% of those outside Dili), younger respondents aged 17-24 (25%, compared to 15-22% of older age groups) and females (25%, compared to 14% of males) were more likely to have received money. Most (93%) of those who had received money had received less than USD 1,000. Money received from friends or family overseas was most used for food and basic living costs (87%), building or renovating a house (40%) or for education expenses (30%).

PREVENTION MEASURES AND HEALTHCARE BEHAVIOUR

The proportion of COVID-19 prevention behaviors reported by respondents as being followed 'very much' in the last week was highest for three key behaviors in the first survey round in May 2020, then steadily declined through to a low in December 2020 for wearing a face mask when out and washing hands; and declined through to a low in February 2020 for keeping a distance of at least 1.5 metres. All behaviors then increased again, but as of May 2021 had not reached the levels of a year earlier. In May 2021, around six-in-ten respondents

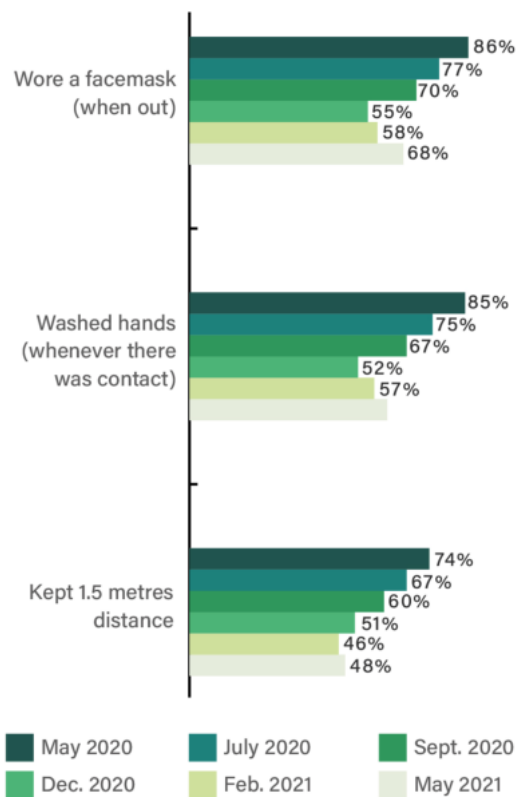
WHAT HAVE YOU USED MONEY RECEIVED FROM OVERSEAS FOR?



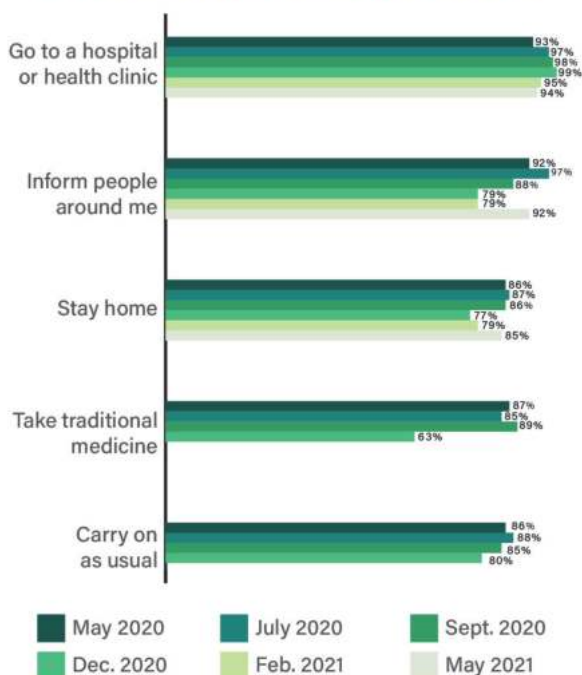
were 'very much' wearing a facemask (66%) and washing their hands after contact (61%), while around half kept 1.5 metres distance from others (48%). In May 2021, those living in Dili were more likely to have worn a facemask 'very much' (74%, compared to 64% of those outside Dili), but were less likely to have kept a distance of at least 1.5 meters to other people (35%, compared to 52%).

In February 2021, additional prevention behaviour questions were added to the survey. As at May 2021, 54% said they did not attend social gatherings, 55% avoided public places, and 57% worked from home. In both the February and May 2021 survey rounds, it was more common in Dili than outside Dili to avoid social gatherings (61-63% Dili, 47-51% outside Dili) and avoid public places (Dili 57-63%, outside Dili 38-57%).

COVID-19 SAFE BEHAVIORS (APPLIES VERY MUCH) IN PAST WEEK



IF YOU HAD SYMPTOMS, WOULD YOU:



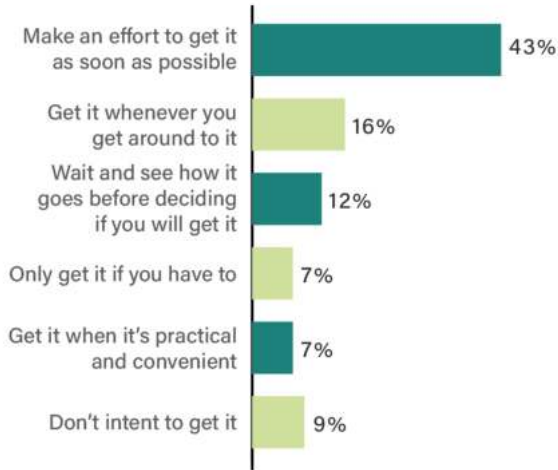
Across all survey rounds, most respondents (93-99%) reported they would go to a hospital or health clinic, inform people around them (79-97%), and stay home (77-87%) if they had symptoms of sickness. Two additional questions were added in September 2020. For the final four survey rounds most respondents indicated they would take traditional medicine (63-87%) if they had symptoms of sickness. Notably, 80-88% of respondents said they would 'carry on as usual if they were sick', a response which appears to be in conflict with the responses provided to the other questions related to behaviors in the instance of symptoms.

VACCINATION

In survey rounds 5 (February 2021) and 6 (May 2021) new questions were introduced to track awareness of, and attitudes to, COVID-19 vaccination. Future survey rounds will track the uptake of vaccination. The COVID-19 vaccination program commenced on 7 April 2021, in between these two survey rounds.

Most respondents were aware that vaccines against COVID-19 now existed, rising from February 2021 (78%) to May 2021 (89%). Initially, in February 2021, there was a higher awareness of the vaccine in Dili (86%) than outside Dili (75%); but this had evened up by May 2021. The Council of Ministers approved the Vaccination Plan against COVID-19 on 8 March and by the May 2021 survey round, most respondents (90%) were aware that the vaccine had been approved for use in Timor-Leste. However, respondents were less likely to be aware of when a vaccine would be available to them personally (72%). By May 2021, awareness of the vaccine itself was similar among all demographic groups, but awareness of when it would be available to them personally was higher among those living in Dili (78%, compared to 70% of those outside Dili). Those who had heard of the vaccine were most likely to have heard about it through TV or radio (57-58%), a government website (14-18%), or social media (7-12%). Interestingly, people in Dili (48%) were less likely to have heard about it on TV or radio, than those outside Dili (61%).

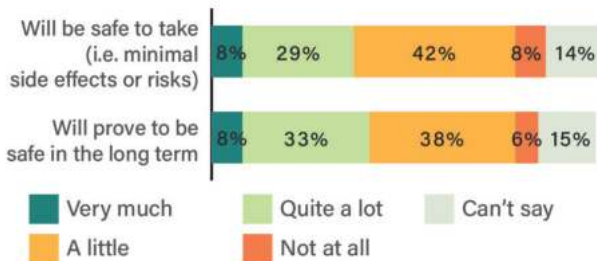
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT GETTING THE COVID VACCINE?



In February 2021, of the 78% of respondents who were aware of the vaccine, 91% said they would be willing to receive a vaccination once it was approved by the GOTL. In May 2021, once the vaccine had already been approved, 43% of respondents indicated they would try to get the vaccine as soon as possible. Only 9% reported they did not intend to get it. Those aged 45 or over (47%) were slightly more likely to try to get it as soon as possible, while those aged 35-44 were least likely (37%).

However, in May 2021, there were still concerns about the safety of the vaccine, with less than half of respondents expecting the vaccine would be safe to take (37% 'very much' or 'quite a lot') and would prove to be safe in the long term (41%).

HOW MUCH DO YOU EXPECT A VACCINE:

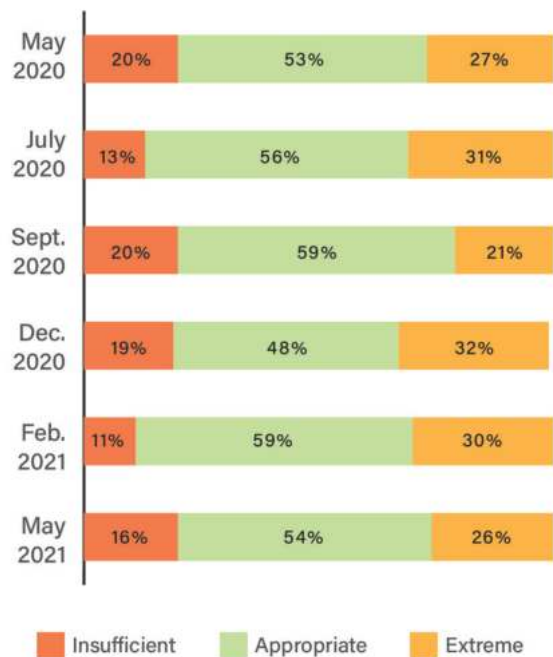


GOVERNMENT TRUST

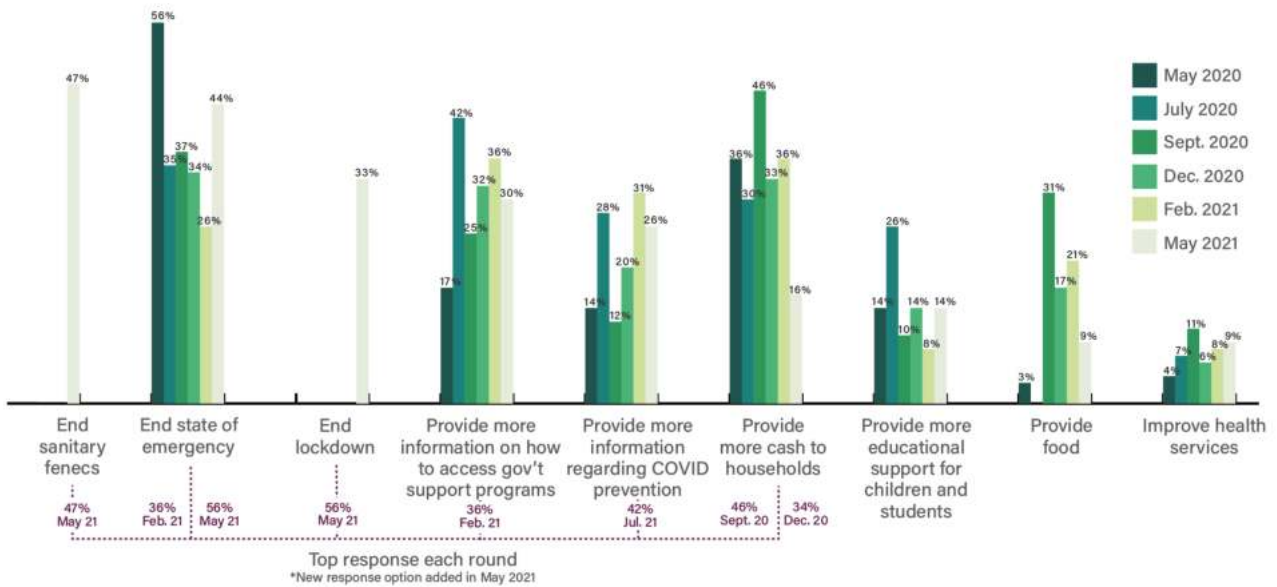
Trust in the GoTL to take care of its citizens during COVID-19 rose from May 2020 (49%) to its highest point in September 2020 (82%) and then declined to its lowest rating across all survey rounds in May 2021 (34%). Distrust in the government was also the highest recorded in May 2021 (55%), and lowest in September 2020 (9%).

Despite fluctuating levels of trust in the GoTL to take care of its citizens over the six survey rounds, around half of respondents consistently thought the government's response to the COVID-19 outbreak remained appropriate, ranging from 48% (December 2020) to 59% (September 2020 and February 2021). The proportion of respondents thinking the government response was insufficient fluctuated between 11-20% over the period; and those respondents thinking that the response was extreme ranged between 21-32%. In May 2021 for the first time, younger respondents aged 17-24 were more likely to consider the government reaction to be appropriate (60%, compared to 51-54% among older age groups).

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE CURRENT REACTION OF THE GOVERNMENT TO COVID-19?



DURING THIS TIME, WHAT COULD THE GOVERNMENT DO MORE TO SUPPORT ITS CITIZENS? (MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED)

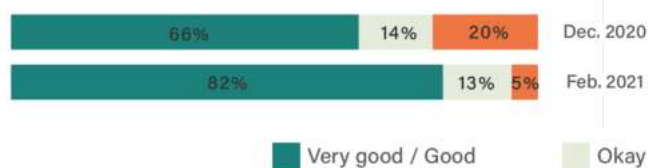


TRUST IN THE GOTL TO TAKE CARE OF ITS CITIZENS DURING COVID-19

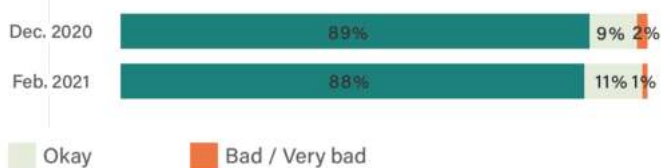


In all rounds, respondents were asked what more the government could do to support its citizens, with multiple responses allowed. One option was for the Government to end the SoE, first declared on 28 March 2020. With one break (27 June-5 August 2020) the SoE has been renewed and continues to the present day. The greatest number of respondents who thought the GoTL should end the SoE was in the first round in May 2020 (57%). For the next four rounds, this fell to between 26-37%, rising again to 44% in the final round in May 2021. In this final round, two new options were identified by respondents as a result of changes in government policies; 47% of respondents thought the government should end the sanitary fences and 33% said the government should end the lockdown. Other priorities for more government support identified by respondents included providing more information on how to access government support programs, more information on COVID-19 prevention, and more cash for households, as shown below. Providing more information on how to access government support programs was identified by 42% of respondents in July 2020, shortly after commencement of the Uma Kain household payment, and in succeeding months ranged from 25-36%. Notably, by May 2021 the highest priority

SATISFACTION WITH FOOD BASKET / VOUCHER



SATISFACTION WITH UMA KAIN CASH PAYMENT



for people in Dili was to receive more information on how to access government support programs (56% compared to 21% outside Dili); compared with the highest priority outside Dili being to end sanitary fences (55% compared with 26% in Dili).

On 9 March 2021, the government implemented sanitary fences in Dili; and has since implemented them in nine municipalities as a way of responding to COVID-19. A question on this action was asked in the May 2021 survey, with the majority (67%) of respondents indicated they 'very much agree' or 'agree somewhat' with this response. Those living in Dili (78%) and respondents aged between 25 and 44 (72%) were more likely to be supportive of the use of sanitary fences.

In both the December 2020 and February 2021 survey rounds, respondents were asked whether the government should continue to restrict people from coming into Timor-Leste from other countries and require mandatory quarantine for people entering the country. On both occasions, there was a very high level of support for this action rising from 87% to 92% over the two surveys, with this high proportion quite consistent across locations, gender and age groups (between 83-95% for all groups).

USE OF AND SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS/ GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Distribution of the *Uma Kain* household payment, (Apoiun Monetáriu ba COVID-19) took the form of a one-off payment to low-income households of \$US 200. Distribution commenced on 9 June 2020, prior to the second survey. By the time of the fifth survey (February 2021) 98% of households had received the payment.

At the time of the third survey (September 2020) the government was considering distributing food vouchers or baskets as a means to provide basic needs to the population and stimulate the local economy. At that point around two-thirds of respondents indicated they would be satisfied with either option. By the time of the fourth survey (December 2020) only around one third (31%) of respondents were equally satisfied with either option, 22% preferred the *Uma Kain* cash payment, and most respondents preferred \$25 cash payments (42%) over vouchers (4%) or food baskets (0%). In February 2021 again 31% indicated they were happy with either option, 39% preferred the *Uma Kain* cash payment, 9% preferred a food basket, 7% preferred \$25 cash instead of a voucher, and just 4% preferred food vouchers.

Just over one-third (36%) had received a food basket/voucher at the time of the December 2020 survey, with that figure increasing to 75% by the time of the May 2021 survey. This was lowest amongst those aged 25–34-year-olds (70%), and highest amongst 35–44-year-olds (85%). Eighty-two percent of respondents in Dili had received the food voucher or basket, compared to 73% outside of Dili.

In February 2021, respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the *Uma Kain* and food basket/voucher support payments. Most (88%) of those who had received the *Uma Kain* payment felt it was 'good' or 'very good', similar to December 2020. Satisfaction was higher among those living in Dili (96%, compared to 83% of those living outside Dili). Satisfaction with the food basket/voucher was up to 82% from 66% in December, and the proportion of those who had received it who thought it was 'bad' or 'very bad' dropped from 20% to just 5% in February 2021. Satisfaction with the food basket/voucher was also slightly higher among

those living in Dili (87%, compared to 80% of those living outside Dili).

Between May and September 2020 (rounds 1 to 3), questions were asked about whether anyone in the household receives any other support as part of the government’s social-economic package/stimulus/ recovery program, and their levels of satisfaction with the payments. Over this time, around three-quarters (74-79%) of respondents indicated their household had either received or were waiting for money from the \$15 electricity subsidy, as part of the government’s support program (excluding respondents who could not recall or for whom the subsidy did not apply). Smaller numbers of respondents had received or were waiting on a worker wage subsidy (rising from 18% in May to 41% in September), or a microbusiness loan (17% May, 38% July, 31% September).

Over rounds 1 to 3, respondents were asked to rate each subsidy they received. Around nine in ten recipients were satisfied with each subsidy. Satisfaction with the \$15 electricity subsidy has declined slightly over time (from 93% providing a positive rating in May 2020, down to 87% in September 2020), while satisfaction with the other two subsidies were at their highest recorded levels in September 2020 (91% for the worker wage subsidy, 87% for microbusiness loans). Satisfaction with subsidies was in general marginally higher in Dili than elsewhere, with the biggest difference relating to the electricity subsidy. In September 2020 95% rated this positively in Dili, 83% outside Dili.

Over rounds 1-3, television or radio remained the most common source of information about government support, although its prevalence declined over time (60% found information about government support this way in September 2020, down from 72% in July and 78% in May). The importance of Xefe/community leaders as a source of information has correspondingly increased (16% in September 2020, up from 5% in May and July), as have government websites (13% in September 2020, up from 7% in July and 5% in May). Dili residents were more likely than people outside Dili to get their information from TV or radio (68%, compared

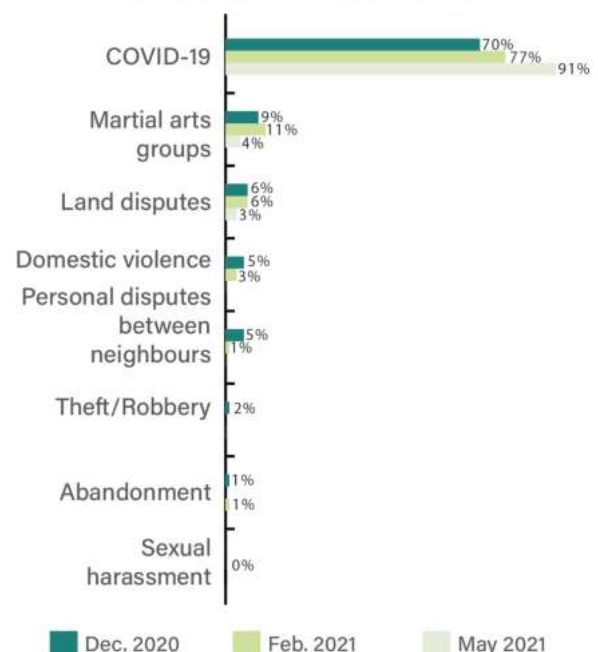
to 54%) or a government website (18%, compared to 10%), but less likely to rely on Xefe/community leaders (6%, compared to 22%). Respondents aged under 35 were more likely to get information online from a government website (16-20%, compared to 9% of those older).

Information on support received in response to the Easter 2021 floods is covered in Section 4.10 below.

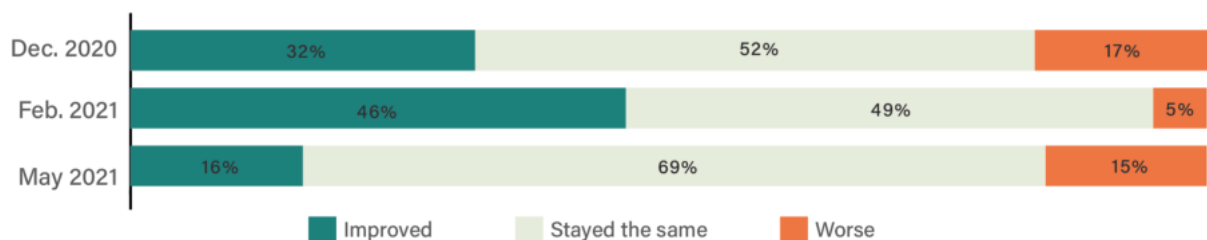
SAFETY AND SECURITY

From December 2020 additional questions were asked about safety and security issues. In each of the three survey rounds COVID-19 was the most common perceived threat to security in respondents’ local area, reaching a high in May 2021 (91%), a significant increase on February 2021 (77%) and December 2020 (70%). To varying degrees the perceived threat to security of COVID-19 was always greater amongst Dili respondents than those outside Dili; and tended to be greater in the 17-24 age group. Martial arts groups, which occupied the second most common perceived threat in December 2020 (9%) reached 11% in February 2021 but had declined to 4% by May 2021.

SINCE MARCH, WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST COMMON THREAT TO SECURITY IN YOUR AREA?



HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE SAFETY AND SECURITY SITUATION IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY COMPARED TO BEFORE THE FIRST SOE AND START OF COVID IN MARCH LAST YEAR?



In each of the survey rounds (December 2020-May 2021), more respondents felt safety and security had stayed the same since the beginning of COVID-19 in March 2020 than had got better or worse. In December 2020, the proportion who felt that safety and security had improved (32%) minus the proportion who thought it had got worse (17%) provided a net score of +15%. This net score greatly improved in February 2021 (46-5=+41%), and then went down to its lowest level in May 2021(16-15=+1%).

Respondents in Dili always had more net positive perceptions of the safety and security in their community. Dili residents were most positive in February 2021 (+44%), similar to people outside Dili (+40%). Notably, when Dili residents were least positive in May 2021(+22%), residents outside Dili were even less positive (-7%).

The majority (63%) of respondents in all three survey rounds felt there was at least one cause of conflict in their area. The most common perceived cause of conflict in May 2021 was abandonment¹⁹ (15%, up from 3% in February 2021), and was more often identified in Dili (27%) than outside Dili (10%). It was the most common perceived cause for both women (18%) and men (12%). However, in February 2021 (21%) and December 2020 (29%) the most common perceived cause of conflict was physical attack resulting in injury (compared with 9% in May 2021). This was also the most common perceived cause for both women and men in these two months.

PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

A series of questions were asked in rounds 1 to 3 to gauge personal and community resilience over time while dealing with the pandemic. Over this period there was general agreement among respondents that all people of Timor-Leste can live together in peace (94-97% agreed) and that most people in their aldeia are ready to help each other if needed (94-95% agreed).

There was an increase from 80% (May 2020) to 93% (September 2020) in agreement among respondents that resources are commonly pooled for the benefit of all. However, a substantial majority also agreed that in their aldeia, people will only help one another if they are blood relatives (83% in September 2020, down from 89% in July but still above 76% in May). In addition, in September 2020, 42% of respondents agreed that people in their aldeia don't trust one another, with 51% disagreeing. These proportions were marginally more positive than in July but remained less positive than in May (27% agreed, 62% disagreed).

Respondents indicated they at least sometimes turned to friends or neighbors for advice (68-71%), receive help from friends or neighbors (52-66%), or provide help to friends or neighbors (58-69%). Overall, 58-74% of respondents indicated that people at least sometimes work together on projects in their aldeia. In September 2020, these 'cooperation' measures were all most positive in

¹⁹ Abandonment in the Timor-Leste context often refers to men leaving their wife/partner and/or children without material support. It includes paternity cases where a pregnant woman is seeking material support from someone who promised to marry her; as well as in sexual assault cases resulting in pregnancy where the perpetrator refuses to pay maintenance.

the 35-44 age group (with an average level of 80% indicating they take place at least 'sometimes') and least positive in the 17-24 age group (average rating of 53%).

As the pandemic initially progressed, resilience appeared to fall between May and September 2020, with declines in the proportions of respondents who indicated they could 'often' bounce back after illness or hardship (8% in September, down from 17% in May), and adapt to change (9% in September, down from 18% in May). Over three quarters said they could at least sometimes bounce back although this fell from 85% in round 1 to 77% in round 2 and 3.

In September 2020, respondents had positive views ('good' or 'very good') about their relationships with their family (99%), neighbors (97%), and people in the community generally (90%). Positive ratings of all three kinds of relationships had gradually improved since May, particularly community relationships (when 80% rated these positively). Across all three survey rounds, no more than 1% of respondents rated any kind of relationship negatively ('bad' or 'very bad').

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

In rounds 4 -5 respondents were asked questions about the extent to which schools were open and functioning normally. This was reported to occur 'always' or 'very frequently' by 83% in December 2020, but this had fallen to 73% by February 2021. Over the same period, falls were seen in 'always' or 'very frequently' having access to water at school (from 72% to 63%), teachers attending class (from 81% to 72%), and the option of receiving a daily meal at school ('merenda escolar') (from 51% to 39%). Over the same period there was a halving of respondents who thought it was safe to send kids to school (from 60% to 29%); and an increase in those who said it was not safe due to COVID-19 (from 25% to 56%).

In February 2021, 57% of respondents reported that water pumps at their water station 'always' or very frequently work well. Between December 2020 and

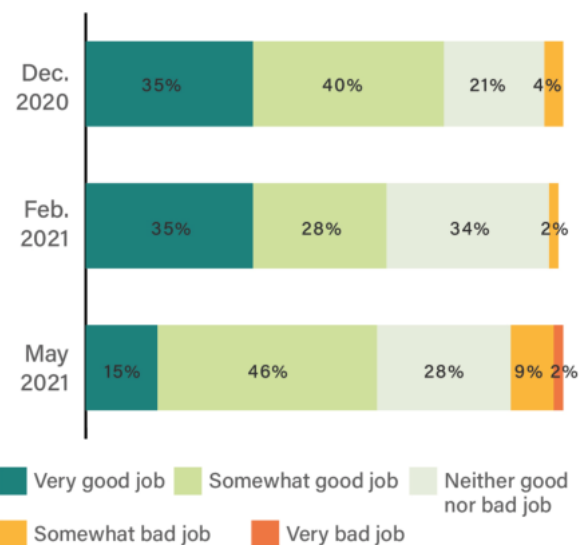
February 2021, there was a decline in respondents reporting that 'always' or 'very frequently' water systems are fixed when they break (from 57% down to 52%), the road between sub-districts is in good condition (from 61% down to 56%), and they can access buses and microlets (from 67% down to 54%).

GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

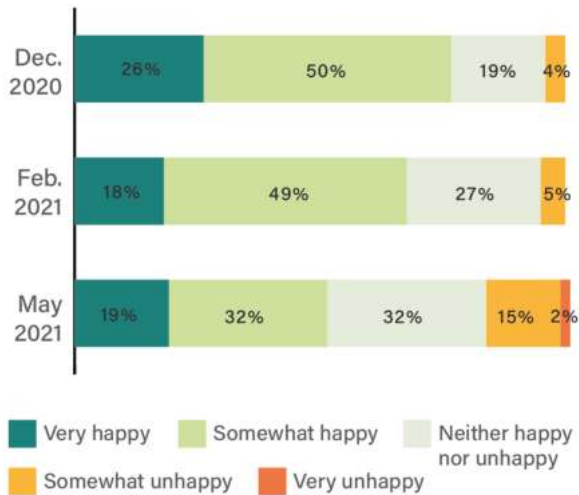
In rounds 4-6 respondents were asked how well the GoTL was performing. Overall, perceptions of the GoTL were positive but decreased in each survey round from December 2020. While in December 2020, 75% felt the government was doing a 'very' or 'somewhat' good job carrying out its responsibilities, this had fallen by February (63%) and May 2021 (61%). Respondents living in Dili consistently thought the GoTL was performing better than those living outside Dili, with the discrepancy greatest in May 2021 (73% in Dili compared with 57% outside Dili).

Similarly the percentage of respondents who felt that the government was doing a 'somewhat' or 'very' bad job increased between December 2020 (4%) and February 2021 (2%) to May 2021 (11%).

OVERALL, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE WAY THE GOVERNMENT OF TIMOR-LESTE IS CARRYING OUT ITS RESPONSIBILITIES?



WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ABOUT THE CURRENT LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION WITH THE CITIZENS TO ADDRESS IMPORTANT PROBLEMS FACING THE COUNTRY?



In all three survey rounds, perceptions of the way the government was carrying out its responsibilities were more positive among those living in Dili, compared to those living outside Dili, with the discrepancy largest in May 2021 (73% Dili, 57% outside Dili) and smallest in February 2021 (66% Dili, 60% outside Dili).

Nearly all respondents in May 2021 (91%) agreed the National Parliament represents the people, however this was slightly lower than in February 2021 and December 2020 (96%).

There was a drop in the number of people who were 'happy' or 'very happy' with the current level of government consultation with citizens to address important issues facing the country between December 2020 (76%) and May 2021 (51%).

FLOOD AND CYCLONE

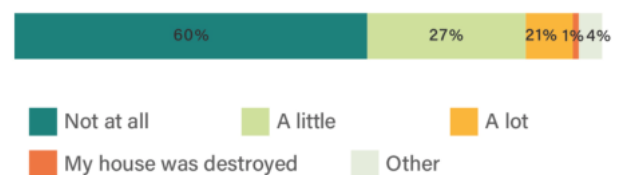
On Easter Sunday, 4 April 2021, Timor-Leste experienced its worst floods in over 40 years, with the biggest impacts in Dili. This occurred during a lockdown in response to COVID-19, significantly complicating attempts to contain the virus. The majority (60%) of respondents indicated the house

they normally live in was not affected by the cyclone and/ or flooding, while around one quarter (27%) indicated their house was 'a little' affected. Nine percent reported their house was affected 'a lot' or was destroyed. Those living outside Dili were less likely to be affected at all (66% 'not at all', compared to 42% of those living in Dili).

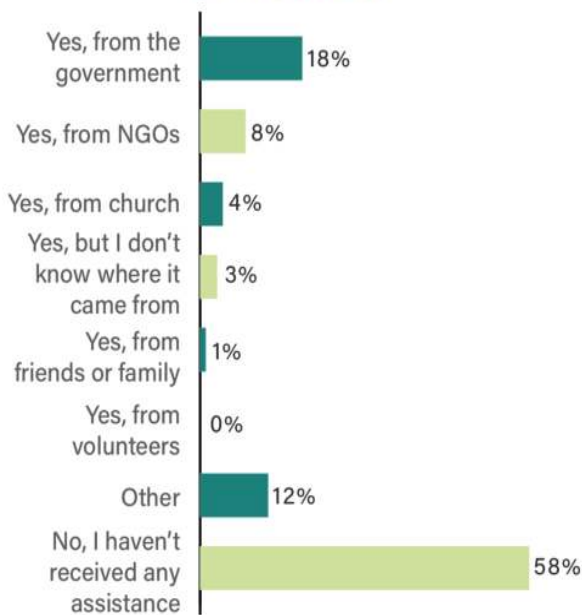
Nationally, following the cyclone, nearly all (96%) respondents were still living in their own house, while three percent were living in a family member's house. However, those living in their own house was higher outside Dili (98%) than in Dili (88%), and correspondingly those having to live in a family members house was higher in Dili (10%) than outside Dili (1%). Nationally, 16% indicated there had been more people living in their household since the cyclone and flooding, and in most cases (95%) these additional people were still in their household at the time of the survey. As would be expected, occurrences of an increase in people in the household was greater in Dili (24%) than outside Dili (13%).

Nationally, the majority (58%) of respondents reported their ability to earn their livelihood was 'not at all' affected by the cyclone and flooding, while around one-third (32%) reported it was 'somewhat' affected. Ten percent were affected 'a lot' or could not carry out their livelihood now. Those living outside Dili were less likely to be affected (64% 'not at all', compared to 38% of those living in Dili). Younger respondents aged 17-24 were also less likely to be affected (72% 'not at all', compared to 50-54% of older age groups).

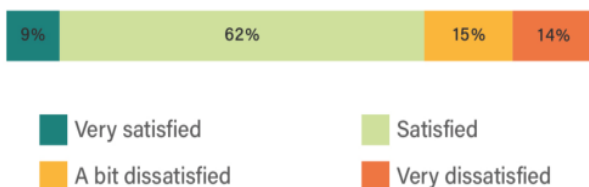
WAS THE HOUSE YOU NORMALLY LIVE IN AFFECTED BY THE CYCLONE AND/OR FLOODING?



HAVE YOU RECEIVED ANY ASSISTANCE DIRECTLY AS A RESULT OF THE CYCLONE OR FLOODING?



HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO THE CYCLONE AND FLOODING?



To ascertain how people's livelihoods had been affected, respondents were asked whether they usually buy or grow more of their household's food. Most respondents bought more of their household's food (58%), while forty percent grew more food. Sixty six percent of women reported buying more food, compared with 51% of men. Correspondingly 32% of women reported growing more food, compared with 48% of men. Among those who usually grew more food, around half (54%) reported their crops had not been affected at all by the cyclone and flooding. Seventeen percent reported their crops had been affected 'a lot' or been

completely destroyed. Those living outside Dili were less likely to report their crops had been affected (56%, compared to 29%), which corresponds with the greater flood damage in Dili compared to other municipalities.

Forty-two percent of those affected by the cyclone or flooding had received some form of assistance. Most commonly, these respondents had received assistance from the government (18%) or NGOs (8%). Those living in Dili were more likely to have received assistance (55%, compared to 36% of those outside Dili), particularly government assistance (32%, compared to 13%) and from the church (13%, compared to 0%). Younger respondents aged 17-24 were also more likely to have received assistance (57%). The likelihood of receiving assistance declined with age, to 32% among those aged 45 years or over.

Most respondents (71%) were satisfied with the government's response to the cyclone and flooding. Satisfaction was higher among those living in Dili (81%, compared to 67%) and those aged 25-34 (76%, compared to 67-72%).

NEWS AND INFORMATION

Television was the most frequently used channel for media and entertainment across all survey rounds, used at least a few times a week, ranging from a low of 73% (December 2020) to a high of 90% (May 2021). This was followed in second place each round by social media/internet (54-74%), then radio (41-59%), then daily newspapers (22-40%). Television was also the most trusted source of news and information across all rounds rising from 76% in May 2020 to 90% in May 2021.²⁰ Using social media at least a few times a week was consistently higher in Dili (75-89%) than outside Dili (47-62%).

When asked which television channels respondents watch, RTTL (76-97%) and GMN (63-86%) were by far the most commonly watched channels. In May 2021, respondents living outside Dili were

²⁰ Please note that in Round 4 this question was asked about sources of news and information in general. In previous rounds, this question was asked in relation to COVID-19 and other news information separately.

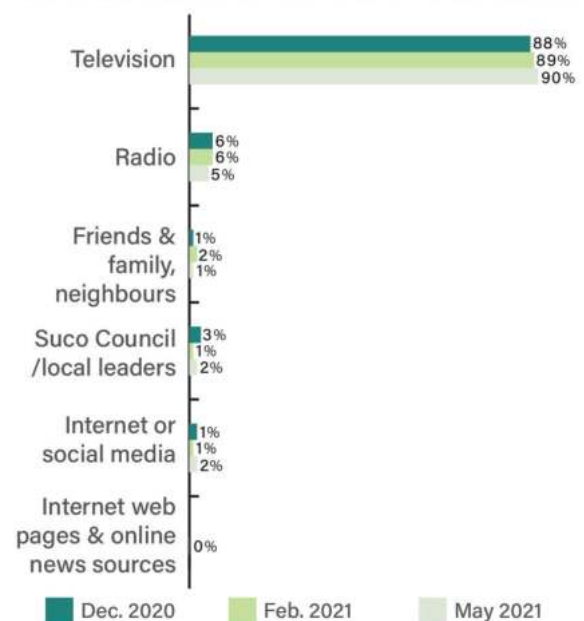
more likely to watch RTTL (90%, compared to 71% of those living in Dili). In the same month, younger respondents aged 17-24 (90%) were also more likely to watch GMN TV than older age groups, particularly those aged 45 or over (78%).

Respondents were also asked what radio stations they listened to. Between May 2020 (42%) and February 2021 (57%) RTTL was the most popular radio station, but by May 2021 (32%) it had dropped into third place.²¹ Community Radio went from a low in May 2020 (12%) to a high, and in first place by May 2021 (41%). Radio Maubere occupied third place between May 2020 and February 2021, but then assumed second place in May 2021 (40%), only just behind Community Radio.

Between 78-83% of respondents reported owning their own phone, and between 77-90% use their phone to access internet and apps on their phone. The most popular app is Facebook (65-83%), followed by WhatsApp (21-42%), then YouTube (14-32%). In all but one survey round there were more women (72-82%) than men (59-77%) nominating Facebook as their most popular app. Although Facebook was the most popular app both inside and outside Dili, it was consistently more often nominated as most popular app in Dili (86-91%) than outside Dili (57-74%).

The main challenges in accessing information were limited funds to pay for connection (41-45%), followed by limited time to devote to media and information and/or busy with work (10-13%).

WHAT SOURCE OF NEWS AND INFORMATION DO YOU TRUST THE MOST?



²¹ RTTL experienced some disruption to programming post-flooding, although it is unknown if this affected radio listening data for this round.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY MESSAGES FOR GOTL

Due to the GoTL's swift action to combat COVID-19 action including declaring a State of Emergency (SoE) less than a week after the first case, on 28 March 2020, Timor-Leste avoided the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic with initially only a handful of cases and no deaths. Although by 30 June 2021, total cases had increased to nearly 9,222 and 22 deaths, a continuing focus on border, quarantine, lockdown and sanitary fence measures; together with the vaccination rollout means that the number of active cases (940) is once again in decline. Noting Timor-Leste's pre-existing vulnerabilities, the GoTL is to be commended for acting to ameliorate the socio-economic effects of the pandemic through budgetary measures and a variety of support programs, including the highly effective *Uma Kain* household payment. The importance of continuing Government support cannot be underestimated, with the survey finding that by May 2021, around three quarters (74%) of respondents indicated they had been forced to skip or cut the size of a meal at least once in the past month because of a lack of money. This proportion has increased each survey round since September 2020 (53%) but was similar to the proportion observed in May 2020 (76%).

It is clear from the surveys that a high degree of positivity was initially sustained about responding to COVID-19 and living with rolling SoE. However, by May 2021 this was taking its toll. This is demonstrated at a national level by respondents for the first five survey rounds being of the view that Timor-Leste was going in the right direction, followed by a sharp fall in the final round (May 2021), when less than half of respondents felt this way. It is notable that not only were people living in Dili likely to be more positive about going in the right direction than those living outside, but that by May 2021 this discrepancy was at its largest between those living in Dili (68%) and those living outside Dili (41%).

Similarly, while trust in the GoTL to take care of its citizens during COVID-19 rose rapidly between May 2020 (49%) and September 2020 (82%), it subsequently declined to its lowest rating across all survey rounds in May 2021 (34%). While overall perceptions of how well the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) was performing were positive these have been slightly less positive in each survey round since December 2020. Although SoE restrictions have clearly been frustrating and had social and economic consequences, it is noted that around half of respondents consistently thought the government's response to the COVID-19 outbreak remained appropriate.

COVID-19, including its impact on health, has always been identified as the biggest challenge facing Timor-Leste. As COVID-19 cases escalated and community transmission took hold this increased dramatically. COVID-19 was also the most common perceived threat to security in respondents' local area, reaching a high in May 2021 (91%). Over a two-month period (December 2020-February 2021) this was reflected in a halving of respondents who thought it was safe to send kids to school (60-29%); and an increase in those who said it was not safe due to COVID-19 (25-56%).

Despite the concerns about COVID-19, it appears that sustaining prevention behaviors can be challenging. While initially high in May 2020, these steadily declined through to a low in December 2020. As the tangible threat of COVID-19 increased, protective behaviors followed, but never reached the levels of a year earlier. While it is very encouraging that there is a high, and increasing, level of awareness of COVID-19 vaccinations; there is still a degree of concern evident about the safety of vaccines.

The higher levels of satisfaction with government performance and support programs expressed by those living in Dili compared to those living outside Dili is notable. Coupled with some differences in priorities evident between those living inside and outside Dili, and some differences in the ways that people prefer to access information points to a continuing need to monitor the impact of the pandemic in a disaggregated way, and to calibrate the nuances of both support programs and restrictive measures.

To make the continuing response to the pandemic more effective, key messages include that:

- ◇ Measures such as household cash payments and food baskets were appreciated by the majority of the population. Similar and ongoing support throughout successive lockdowns should be considered by government to offset negative socio-economic impacts and instill trust in people.²²
- ◇ Ensuring that policy measures addressing COVID-19 and its impacts serve people both inside and outside Dili is key to an effective response and higher levels of satisfaction.
- ◇ Good communication about support programs is central to their effectiveness. Support programs need to be communicated to the public in a timely manner, with clear instructions on who is eligible, where and how to apply, and noting that the way people access information inside and outside Dili differs.
- ◇ Together with development partners and all stakeholders, factual information on COVID-19 vaccines and their safety needs to be provided in time to pre-emptively address any potential vaccine hesitancy.

²² It is important that administrative systems for distribution of any future cash payments, vouchers or food baskets are inclusive, see *The Asia Foundation (2020), the Household cash transfer (Uma-Kain payment) and its initial Socio-Economic impacts and effects on gender dynamics* <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/timor-leste-covid-19-household-cash-transfer/>.

ANNEXES

ANNEX A

DETAILED METHODOLOGY

How was the questionnaire developed?

The Asia Foundation led the development of the questionnaire, with ORIMA Research providing advice where appropriate. Questions were drawn from previous research The Asia Foundation had conducted, as well as the ORIMA Research COVID-19 Recovery Tracker survey, amongst other international COVID-19 surveys. The February survey included new sections on COVID-19 vaccination as well as a lot of common questions from previous rounds of the survey. The Asia Foundation oversaw the programming and translation of the questionnaire into Open Data Kit (ODK), an open-source survey software platform.

How was the sample frame developed and how effective was it?

The sample frame for this survey was drawn from past Tatoli and Community Policing surveys The Asia Foundation had conducted face-to-face. Cleaning of the sample involved the removal of blank / invalid / duplicate numbers (n=6,344).

When a number was dialed and a different person answered, this person was able to also complete the survey. Whilst steps have been taken to make this survey as representative as possible, the sample from this project is classified as non-probability.

How were the telephone interviews conducted?

	MAY 20	JUL 20	SEP 20	DEC 20	FEB 21	MAY 21
Sample list	2,307	1,192	534	681	442	414
Refusals	30	47	66	87	2	4
Non-working numbers	1,666	619	60	188	11	6
Final dataset	423	404	407	402	429	404
Response rate ²³	19.9%	32.6%	76.2%	59.0%	97.1%	97.6%
Fieldwork start	19 May 20	18 July 20	21 Sept 20	3 Dec 20	20 Feb 21	1 May 21

²³ The response rate is calculated by the number of final survey completes coming from the sample frame divided by the number of valid phone numbers used from the sample frame.

	MAY 20	JUL 20	SEP 20	DEC 20	FEB 21	MAY 21
Fieldwork end	25 May 20	17 July 20	2 Oct 20	8 Dec 20	2 Mar 21	8 May 21
Median length of interview ²⁴	47m25s	41m30s	43m23s	47m57s	42m12s	57m21s
Number of interviewers	14	19	11	17	13	11

To conduct the fieldwork, The Asia Foundation partnered with a Dili based NGO called Mata Dalan Institute (MDI). Most interviewers had previously worked on projects with The Asia Foundation, and many have now worked on multiple rounds of this survey. Staff from The Asia Foundation undertook callback recontact for validation purposes, with no major issues found. Monitoring was also conducted by staff from The Asia Foundation.

Nearly all surveys were conducted in Tetum, with only a handful conducted in Fataluku, Bahasa Indonesia or Baikenu. Respondents were sent a \$2 telephone credit for participating in the research.

What steps have been taken to ensure the data is representative of the Timor-Leste population?

The research was designed to be as representative as possible of the adult (17+) population of Timor-Leste as defined by the 2015 Census. Considerations in the sampling included the need to enable comparisons between Dili and other municipalities, as well as being practical within the relatively short timeframe and limited sample.

Minimum quotas (see above) were set to ensure appropriate gender and geographic coverage. One quota, in relation to females outside of Dili, has never been met. Additionally, individual municipalities outside of Dili had minimum quotas proportionate to their population. The minimum quota required for each municipality was 10. Municipalities with higher populations (such as Baucau and Ermera) had minimum quotas of 25.

	POPULATION (N=662,285)	MAY 20 (N=423)	JUL 20 (N=404)	SEP 20 (N=407)	DEC 20 (N=402)	FEB 21 (N=429)	MAY 21 (N=404)
AGE							
17-24	28%	14%	15%	11%	14%	8%	12%
25-44	41%	53%	58%	61%	53%	57%	50%
45-120	31%	33%	27%	28%	33%	35%	38%
GENDER							
Male	50%	59%	62%	62%	63%	61%	64%
Female	50%	41%	38%	38%	37%	39%	36%
LOCATION							
Dili	26%	30%	32%	31%	31%	30%	31%
Not Dili	74%	70%	68%	69%	69%	70%	69%

²⁴ Excludes 25/29/28/26/15 cases where length was over 4 hours, most likely due to not pressing the final "submit" button.

	PROPOSED MINIMUM	MAY 20	JUL 20	SEP 20	DEC 20	FEB 21	MAY 21
Males in Dili	38	70	78	80	73	72	70
Females in Dili	38	57	50	48	52	56	57
Males non-Dili	150	179	174	172	181	189	179
Females non-Dili	150	117	102	107	96	112	117

In each round, the sample was weighted to population benchmarks as defined in the 2015 census. This is to correct response bias from males and middle ages, as well as slight Dili over-sampling. Random Iterative Method (RIM) weighting using the *anesrake* package in R studio was chosen as the most appropriate weighting method with consideration to future comparability, simplicity and representation of the population. The variables used for weighting, the proportions within population and unweighted proportions are shown to the right.

What data processing steps were taken?

Once ORIMA received the data, the following data processing steps were conducted:

- ◇ A duplicate check and speeder check was conducted.
- ◇ String question responses in Tetun were translated by The Asia Foundation.
- ◇ "Don't know" answers in multiple-response question were made exclusive.
- ◇ Back-coding was conducted where appropriate.
- ◇ Variable labels and value labels were checked and modified for the purposes of reporting.
- ◇ Weighting was conducted as above.

Answers indicating a type of non-response (such as "Don't know", "Not applicable" and "Refused") have been removed from the base in this report, unless indicated otherwise.

How confident can I be in the results?

	MAY 20	JUL 20	SEP 20	DEC 20	FEB 21	MAY 21
Number of responses	423	404	407	402	429	404
Statistical margin of error	±4.8%	±4.9%	±4.9%	±4.9%	±4.8%	±4.9%

The statistical margin of error is calculated using a proportion percentage of 50% at the 95% confidence level. While margin of error does not technically apply to non-probability samples, this can still be used as a general guide when determining whether results are actually different or only different by chance. Other factors, such as the sampling method, non-response bias and measurement error should also be taken into consideration when interpreting results. Figures within text that are flagged as different amongst sub-groups were found as significant to at least one other category when using a Welch T-test at a 95% confidence interval with a Bonferroni correction within the cTables interface of SPSS. Analysis of differences amongst sub-groups are subject to higher margins of error and these tests take this into account. However, they must only be used as a general guide. Tests are not highlighted where no sub-group difference existed. For example, there were few differences by gender. Within this report, not all figures will add up to 100% due to rounding.

ANNEX B

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