



WAVE 5

National Income Dynamics
Study (NIDS) – Coronavirus
Rapid Mobile Survey (CRAM)

Synthesis Report

NIDS-CRAM Wave 5

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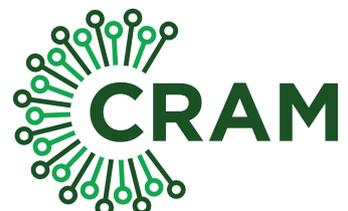
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N.i.D.S.
NATIONAL INCOME DYNAMICS STUDY



CORONAVIRUS RAPID MOBILE SURVEY 2020

Working Paper Series

NIDS CRAM Wave 5

Spaull, N., Daniels, R. C et al. (2021) NIDS-CRAM Wave 5 Synthesis Report.

Burger, R., Maughan-Brown, M., Kohler, T., English, R., & Tameris, M. (2021) Increased openness to accepting a COVID-19 vaccine is a shot in the arm for South Africa: Evidence from the NIDS-CRAM Wave 5 Survey

Casale, D., & Shepherd, D. (2021) The gendered effects of the Covid-19 crisis and ongoing lockdown in South Africa: Evidence from NIDS-CRAM Waves 1 - 5

Daniels, R C., Ingle, K., & Brophy, T. (2021) Labour market dynamics in the era of Covid-19: What we've learnt from NIDS-CRAM & the Quarterly Labour Force Surveys (QLFS)

Espi, G., Ranchhod, V. & Leibbrandt, M. (2021) Age, employment and labour force participation outcomes in COVID-era South Africa

Hunt, X., Breet, E., Stein, D., & Tomlinson, M. (2021) The COVID-19 Pandemic, Hunger, and Depressed Mood Among South Africans

Köhler, T & Hill, R. (2021). The distribution and dynamics of South Africa's TERS policy: Results from NIDS-CRAM Waves 1 to 5.

Kollamparambil, U., Oyenubi, A., & Nwosu, C. (2021). Mental health, COVID-19 vaccine distrust and vaccine hesitancy in South Africa.

Nwosu, C, Kollamparambil, U., Oyenubi, A. (2021) Socioeconomic inequalities in ability to work from home during the coronavirus pandemic: The case of South Africa

Oyenubi, A, Nwosu, C, Kollamparambil, U. (2021). Health indicators and poor health dynamics during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shepherd, D, & Mohohlwane, N. (2021). Changes in education: A reflection on COVID-19 effects over a year.

Turok, I. & Visagie, J. (2021) Driven apart? Contrasting impacts of COVID-19 on people and places.

Van der Berg, S., Patel, L, and Bridgman, G. (2021) Food insecurity in South Africa – Evidence from NIDS-CRAM Wave 5.

Wills, G & Kika-Mistry, J. (2021) Early Childhood Development in South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from NIDS-CRAM Waves 2-5

Wittenberg, M. & Branson, N. (2021). Creating household weights for NIDS-CRAM.

Ingle, K., Brophy, T., & Daniels, R. NIDS-CRAM Wave 5 Panel User Manual.

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The NIDS-CRAM Wave 5 data was collected between 6 April and 11 May 2021. There were 5862 successful Wave 5 interviews. This synthesis report is split into seven sections which each draw from the papers listed above: (1) **Schooling:** Shepherd & Mohohlwane, (2) **Employment:** Casale & Shepherd, Daniels et al., Espi et al., Kohler & Hill, Nwosu et al., (3) **Vaccines:** Burger et al., Kollamparambil et al., (4) **Hunger:** Van der Berg et al., Shepherd & Mohohlwane, (5) **Early Childhood Development:** Wills & Kika-Mistry, (6) **Shack Residents:** Turok & Visagie, and (7) **Mental Health:** Hunt et al., Oyenubi et al.

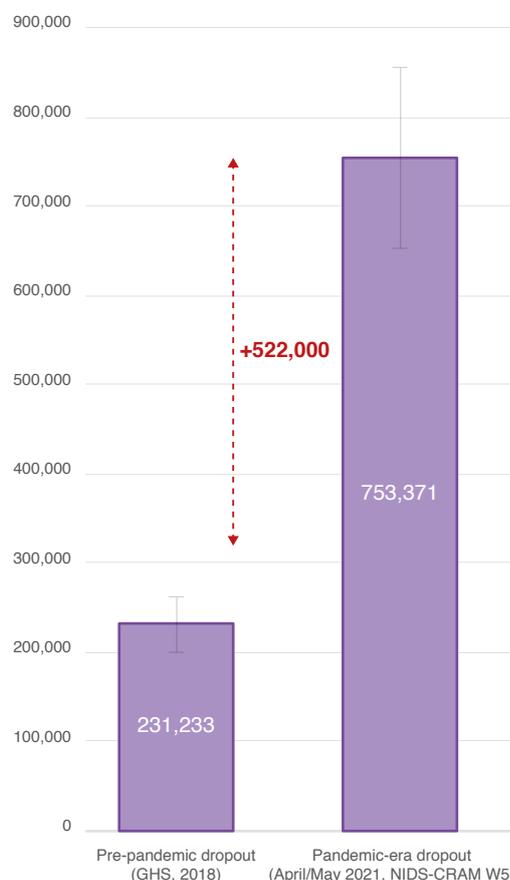
All papers are available for download at <https://cramsurvey.org/reports/> The NIDS-CRAM data is freely available for download at the Data First Open Data Portal: <https://www.datafirst.uct.ac.za/>

1. Schooling

An extra 500,000 children have dropped out of school during the pandemic. School dropout has tripled from 230,000 pre-pandemic to approximately 750,000 in May 2021. In NIDS-CRAM Wave 5, adult respondents were asked “Are there any learners in your household who have not yet returned to school this year?” 90% of respondents indicated that all learners in the household had returned to school, with 10% of respondents indicating that at least one learner in their household had not returned to school since the beginning of the year. Importantly, almost all households (99%) had some children attending, indicating that parents seem to be sending some children back but not others. The General Household Survey of 2018 found that approximately 230,000 learners aged 7-17 years were not attending school in 2018 (GHS, 2018). This can be considered the “pre-pandemic” or “normal” rate of dropout. Using the NIDS-CRAM Wave 5 data it is estimated that in May 2021 the total number of 7-17 year olds that had dropped out of school (have not attended school once during 2021) was between 650,342 and 753,371 depending on assumptions. This marks a threefold increase in learner dropout. Whether this is temporary or permanent dropout is, as yet, unknown, although previous research shows that the longer children remain out of school the higher the likelihood of permanent dropout.

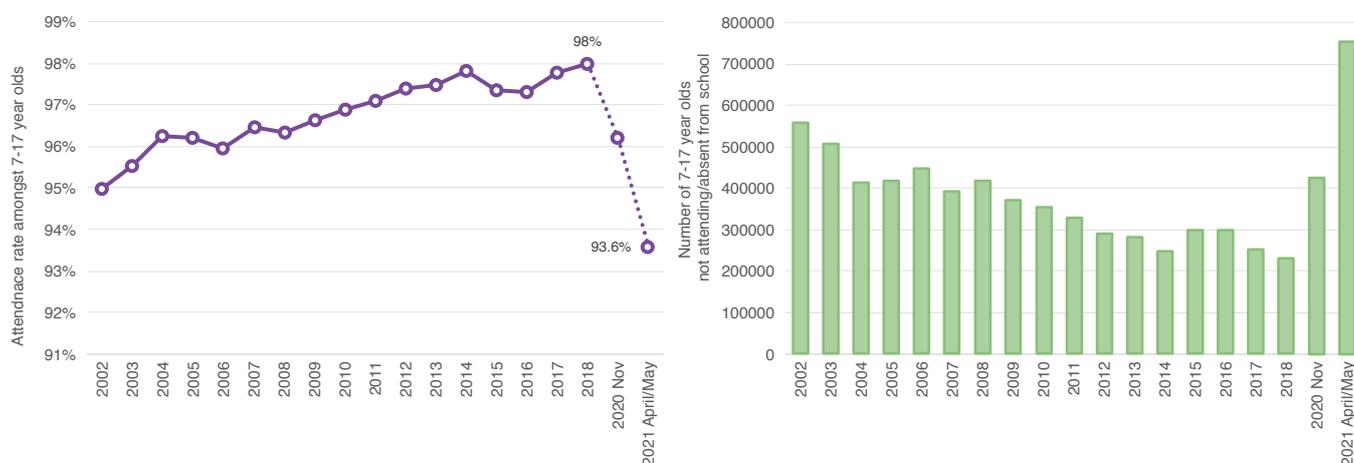
Learner dropout rates are now at the highest rates they have been in 20 years, i.e. since it started being monitored in household surveys in 2002. Reciprocally, school attendance is at the lowest level it has been in 20 years, Average school attendance rates have dropped from a high of 98% in GHS 2018, to 94% in April/May 2021. Estimates of school dropout show that the April/May 2021 levels (650,342 to 753,371) are the highest rates of dropout in 20 years, or as far back as the General Household Survey has been in operation (since 2002).

Figure 1: Number of learners 7-17 years who have not attended school since the start of the year, i.e. dropped out.



Source: Shepherd & Mohohlwane, 2021 using GHS and NIDS-CRAM data

Figure 2: Average attendance rate for 7-17 year olds (Panel A), and total numbers of learner dropout (7- 17 years) (Panel B) 2002-2021

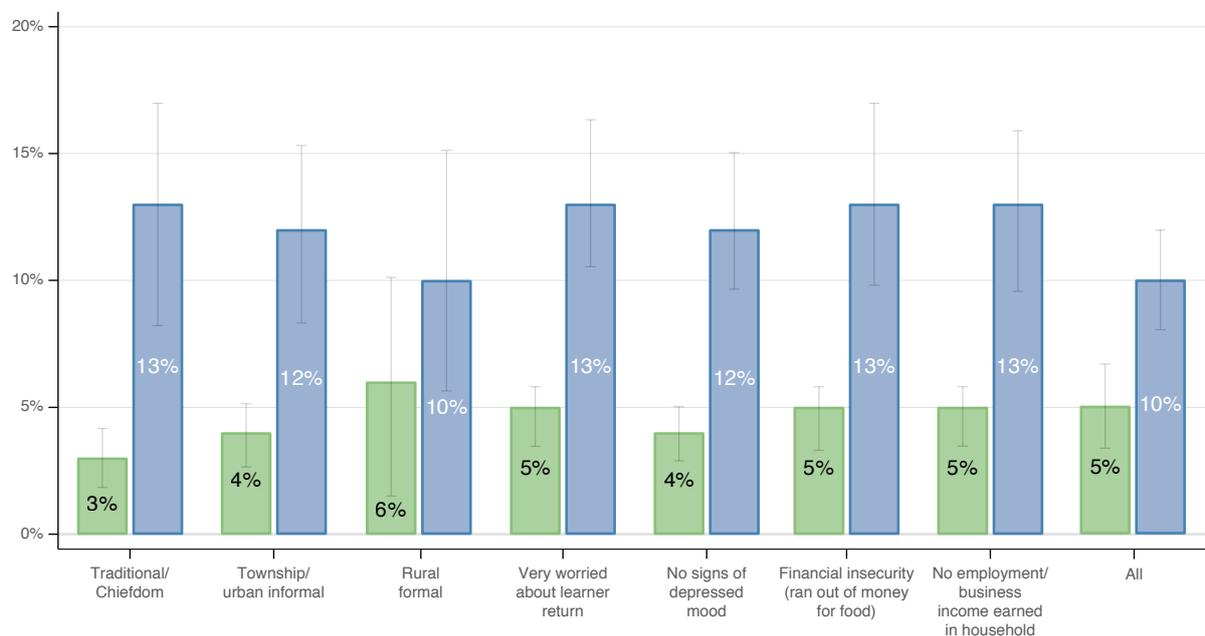


Source: Shepherd & Mohohlwane, 2021 using GHS and NIDS-CRAM data

The highest rates of dropout were found amongst the poorest households, those in rural areas and those with high caregiver worry about learners returning to school. NIDS-CRAM allows us to look at the household characteristics of those respondents who indicated that learners in their household had not returned to school since the start of 2021 compared to those where all learners had returned. Although it is true that overall rates of non-attendance (dropout) have increased for the country as a whole (from 5% in November

2020 to 10% in April/May 2021), the increase has been larger for some groups than others. It was found that the highest rates of dropout were found amongst those who live in rural and traditional areas, in township and informal settlements, and those who were experiencing economic hardship (i.e. had no employment income or ran out of money to buy food). There were also high rates of dropout reported by caregivers who were “very worried” about learners returning to school.

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents indicating at least one child had not returned to school by household characteristics in November 2020 (green) and April/May 2021 (blue)



Source: Shepherd & Mohohlwane, 2021 using GHS and NIDS-CRAM data

Projections indicate that between March 2020 and June 2021, most primary school learners in South Africa have lost 70%-100% (i.e. a full year) of learning relative to the 2019 cohort. We update previous estimates of learning losses by assuming that previous losses due to rotational timetables (reported in Shepherd et al, 2021), estimated to be 50-75% of a year of learning for 160 school days lost, are the same as the learning losses resulting from the ongoing rotational timetables in 2021 up to and including the time of writing (June 2021). In total, 93 days of schooling have occurred between 15 February 2021 and 30 June 2021. Assuming contact learning for 50% of this time, our best estimates suggest that most primary school children have lost between 70% to a full year of learning since March 2020. To put this in perspective, this is the same as saying that the average Grade 3 child in June 2021 would have the same learning outcomes as the average Grade 2 child in June 2019. However, the international evidence points towards additional effects of ‘forgetting’ or regression that could hinder current learning, particularly if teaching occurs as if the content of the previous year’s curriculum has been mastered, let alone learnt. Therefore, cumulative learning losses could exceed a full year of learning as learners move through the school system. It is also worth noting that according to the GHS 2019, only 9% of households nationally had access to the internet in their homes. This was concentrated in metros where only 15% of households had internet access in comparison to only 1% in rural areas.

According to the excess-death analysis of teacher payroll (PERSAL) data, a total of 171 excess teacher deaths were recorded in the 10-week period 15 February to 26 April 2021, representing the first term of the 2021 school year. This is compared to 1,123 excess teacher deaths recorded over the 8-week December/January holidays that coincided with the second wave of infections. The local and international evidence continues to show that the health risks posed by COVID-19 to children are much lower than the risks to adults. Using an excess deaths approach in conjunction with the teacher payroll data (PERSAL), it is estimated that of 401,327 teachers, 2,283 (0.57%) teachers have passed away due to COVID-19 between 27 March 2020 and 27 May 2021. It remains clear that the vast majority of these deaths occurred during the first and second waves of the pandemic in July 2020 and January 2021, and there is no apparent association between the timing of schools being open and increased spread of the virus (NICD, 2021). In light of this, and together with the evidence of substantial harm caused to children by the disruptions to schooling, we believe there is a strong case for proceeding with full-time, daily and traditional timetable attendance of primary school learners, as gazetted by Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga on 28 May 2021.

2. Employment

March 2021 employment levels were similar to February 2020 after a partial employment recovery in Adjusted Lockdown Level 1. The employment to population ratio (EPOP) for 18-64 year olds, excluding those workers who were furloughed shows a return to levels close to the pre-pandemic February baseline. This recovery mimics October 2020's partial recovery, and shows the immediate impact of lockdown levels on employment.

The recovery has been uneven by gender, however, women's employment in March 2021 remains 8% lower than pre-pandemic levels while men's employment seems to have fully recovered. Compared to February 2020, women's employment in March 2021 was still down approximately 8%, while men's employment was back to pre-Covid levels. Among the employed, hours worked per week for women were down 6% on average in March 2021 (or 2 hours per week) compared to February 2020, while for men this had returned to pre-Covid levels.

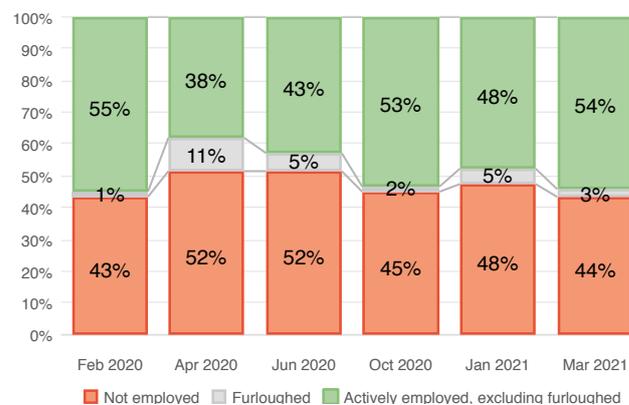
The average UIF-TERS recipient received a benefit of approximately R4 100 per month, but lower-wage workers benefited significantly more in relative terms. By making use of the TERS benefit formula and data on pre-pandemic wages, we approximate the average TERS benefit for workers who ever reported receipt to be just under R4 100 per worker per month. Given that the lower-bound benefit is "capped" at the national minimum wage, and the fact that many people earned below this while they were employed, this group benefited significantly more in relative terms. Furthermore, receipt of the UIF-TERS is shown to be associated with a significantly higher likelihood of job retention – that is, remaining employed in the same job – during the initial 'hard lockdown' in 2020, broadly suggesting that the policy may indeed have succeeded in its primary aim of minimizing job loss, but only when the lockdown regulations were most stringent.

Women have not benefited from either UIF-TERS or the COVID-19 SRD at the same rates as men, despite being worse affected in terms of job loss (women make up only about 35%-39% of the beneficiaries of these two grants). Even though women accounted for the majority of the unemployed (or those not working) throughout the period, as well as the majority of the net job losses recorded between any two time periods, they were under-represented in the Covid-specific government income support provided for unemployed and furloughed workers.

Youth (18-24) experienced the largest employment increase between February 2020 and March 2021 (33% to 35%). Older adults (55-64) experienced the largest decrease in the Employment to Population ratio (EPOP) from 45% to 41%. Between April 2020 (the peak of lockdown restrictions) and March 2021 there were decreases in the share of discouraged work seekers across age groups, and simultaneous increases in labour force participation for all groups except for older adults.

There is still significant churning in the labour market. About 23% of the February 2020 employed were no longer employed a year later, and 30% of those without employment in February 2020 found employment by March 2021. For the balanced panel of NIDS-CRAM, the average number of waves that members of the panel were employed in from April 2020 to March 2021 was 3.8 out of 5 for those who were employed in February 2020, compared to 1.2 out of 5 for those who were not employed in February.

Figure 4: Cross-sectional employment to population ratio for NIDS-CRAM Waves 1-5



Source: Daniels et al, 2021

3. Vaccines

It is important to note that only 2% of the South African population had been vaccinated at the time of the NIDS-CRAM Wave 5 (April-May 2021).

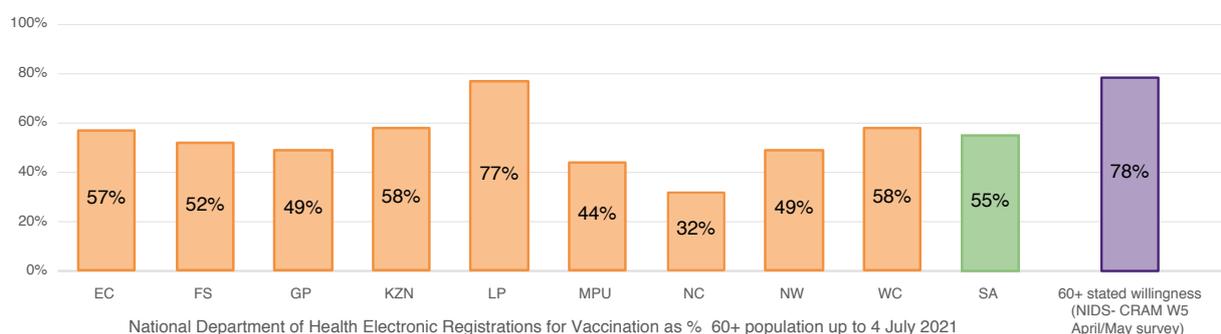
Vaccine acceptance has increased from 71% in February/March to 76% in April/May 2021: Furthermore, vaccine acceptance may be becoming a social norm with two two-thirds of respondents strongly agreeing with the statement *“If a vaccine for COVID-19 were available, I would get it”* up from 55% in February/March 2021. Campaigns to increase vaccine registration and uptake should promote the fact that vaccine acceptance is the norm. Telling people that most people say they will accept a vaccine has proven to increase COVID vaccination rates worldwide. Conversely, while it is clearly important to address myths and fake rumours, frequently repeating such rumours and giving prominence to the high share of vaccine scepticism can perversely give credence to such rumours by creating the impression that such sentiment is widespread and that there is a valid reason to be concerned about getting vaccinated.

Half of those who were vaccine hesitant in February/March 2021 had subsequently changed their mind and agreed to be vaccinated when asked in April/May 2021: There has been a discernible shift towards vaccine acceptance with 47% of those who ‘disagreed strongly’ ‘somewhat disagreed’ or ‘did not know’ subsequently changed their minds and now agreed to be vaccinated. This provides encouragement for interventions aiming to improve vaccine intentions.

However, many are not fully convinced yet: A quarter of participants in April/May 2021 reported that they strongly or somewhat disagreed that they would accept vaccinations if available to them, or did not know. A further 10% only somewhat agreed with the statement, thus indicating uncertainty compared to those who strongly agreed. A substantial proportion of South Africans still need to be convinced to accept vaccinations. A small share may not be convincible: One in 15 disagreed strongly in both periods in 2021 (February/March as well as April/May).

Stated good intentions often do not translate to action: We find that after more than two months, the actual registration shares of the elderly are much lower than their stated willingness to be vaccinated in surveys (see Figure below), which provides a signal that we need to consider the time costs and burden associated with registration. Getting people motivated is not enough, we need to make it as easy as possible for people to translate their intentions into action. Providing hassle-free access, and removing impediments, is likely to be even more important amongst the rest of the population, given that the survey shows that vaccination demand in the <60 year group is significantly lower, presumably because age is an important mortality risk factor.

Figure 5: Stated willingness to vaccinate vs NDoH vaccine registrations for those 60+



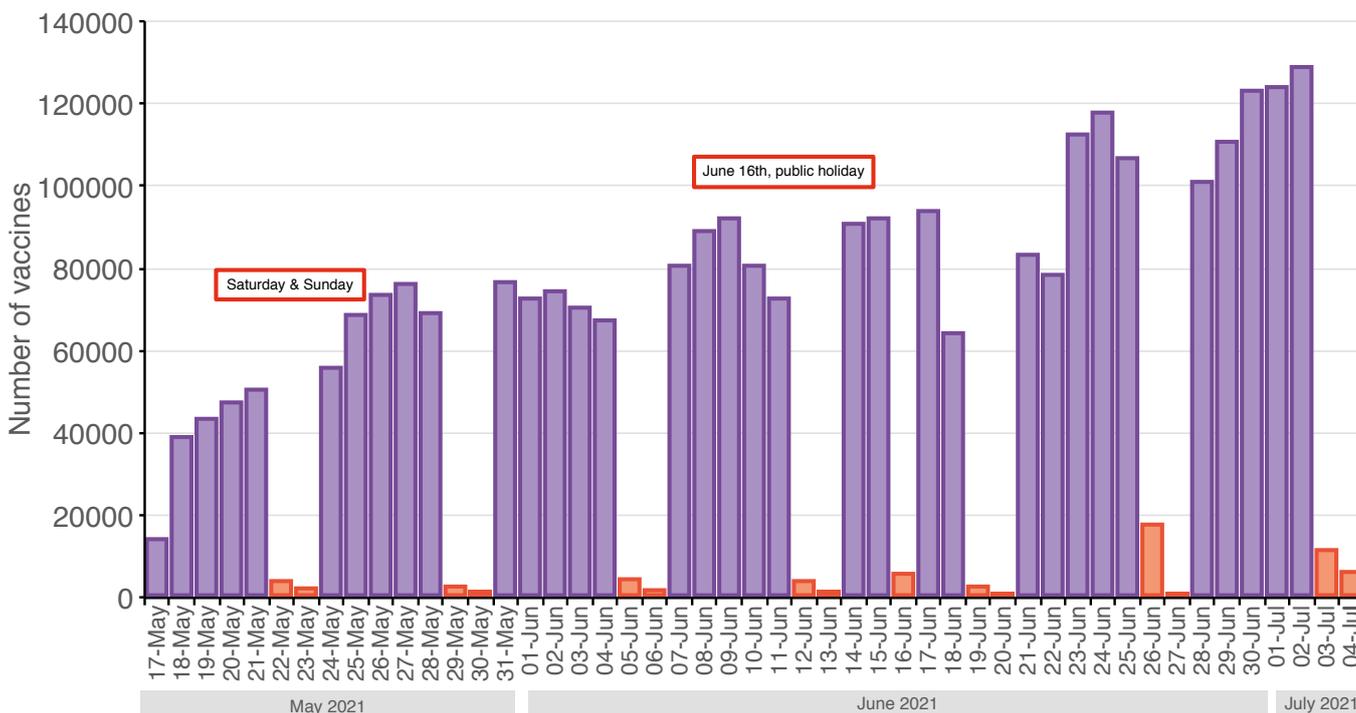
Source: Burger et al. 2021)

The lack of weekend vaccinations is the binding constraint to the South African vaccination programme.

Although vaccine supply was initially the major constraint to the roll out of vaccines in South Africa this is no longer the case. At the end of June 2021 South Africa had 7,4-million doses of vaccines but had only administered 3-million doses. Reviewing National Department of Health data on the number of vaccines administered per day shows that there are virtually no vaccinations on weekends. The most recent data shows that 163,000 doses were administered on Tuesday the 6th of July 2021. Yet on Sunday the 4th of July only 6,609 doses were administered. Thus, weekend vaccination rates are 4% of weekday vaccination rates. Given the convenience of weekend vaccinations for many workers, it is plausible that weekend vaccination rates may be higher than weekday vaccination rates. For example, as part of the rollout of the J&J vaccine to teachers, the DBE reports that on Wednesday the 23rd of June 48,000 teachers and administrative staff were vaccinated across seven provinces. Limpopo chose to administer vaccines on two successive weekends instead, and on the first weekend alone managed to achieve 30,000 vaccines - higher than any of the other provinces.

Approximately 1,3-million more vaccine doses could have been administered in May and June 2021 if vaccinations were available on weekends. Using the average vaccination rates of the Friday prior and the Monday after, it is estimated that between 17 May and 5 July this year, 1,3-million additional vaccines could have been administered if vaccinations were available on Saturdays and Sundays as well as on June 16th (public holiday). The Department of Health’s target for the end of June 2021 was to administer 5-million doses, of which it managed to achieve only 3-million (60% of the target). Had weekend vaccinations been planned for, the estimate is that approximately 4,3-million or 86% of the target would have been administered by end June 2021 (to ensure 40-million South Africans are vaccinated by the end of February 2022). Perhaps more importantly this would have gone a long way towards ensuring that the lion’s share of the 5,5-million target for the high-risk 60+ category could’ve been met. This is critical given the high infection and mortality risk that the elderly are facing during the winter months of June and July. Given this demographic group’s share of COVID-19 hospital cases, weekend vaccinations would also have had a substantial impact on lightening the burden that hospitals are now facing during wave 3.

Figure 6: Vaccines administered per day (17 May to 4 July 2021)



Source: Sugan Naidoo (@sugan2503) using National Department of Health data

4. Hunger

In April/May 2021 approximately 10-million people and 3-million children were in a household affected by hunger in the past seven days. The NIDS-CRAM survey asks “In the last 7 days has anyone in your household gone hungry because there wasn’t enough food?” If a respondent indicated yes then that household is deemed to have been affected by hunger. Using NIDS-CRAM Wave 5 estimates and scaling to StatsSA’s 2020 mid-year population estimates, it is estimated that approximately 2,8-million households (with 10,6-million residents) were affected by hunger in the last seven days in April/May 2021. And furthermore that 1,5-million households (with 3,1-million children living in them) were affected by child hunger in the last 7 days in April/May 2021.

Removal of grant top-ups in 2020 and of the COVID SRD grant of R350 at the end of April 2021 is likely to contribute to rising hunger in South Africa. The NIDS-CRAM Wave 5 data reported below was collected between 6 April and 11 May 2021. Given that the R350 SRD grant expired at the end of April 2021, approximately 70% of the Wave 5 data was collected while these grants were still being paid (i.e. in April). The reduced availability of money from grants and the tight economic situation are reasons why levels of hunger are likely to remain stubbornly high or perhaps even to increase, and stricter lockdown regulations may again further reduce employment and income from informal economic activities. Previous NIDS-CRAM research (Bassier et al 2020) showed that for 10% of South African households the only government grant received by the household was the R350 SRD grant. With the removal of the SRD grant, households largely dependent on this grant will now fall out of the social protection system, with consequences for household hunger and child hunger.

Household and child hunger seem to have stabilized at the new higher rate which is cause for concern. The first wave of the NIDS-CRAM survey, collected in May and June 2020, provided strong evidence of drastic increases in household and child hunger during the initial period of the coronavirus pandemic and hard lockdown. The second wave of NIDS-CRAM showed improvement in all three measures, although hunger and running out of money for food remained disturbingly high. Waves 3, 4 and 5, surveyed in November/December 2020, February/March 2021 and April/May 2021 respectively, showed a significant reduction in households running out of money for food after the first wave of data, but we have not seen any substantial further reduction in hunger levels. Overall, rates of hunger and food insecurity have remained stubbornly high, and do not appear to have changed substantially since June 2020.

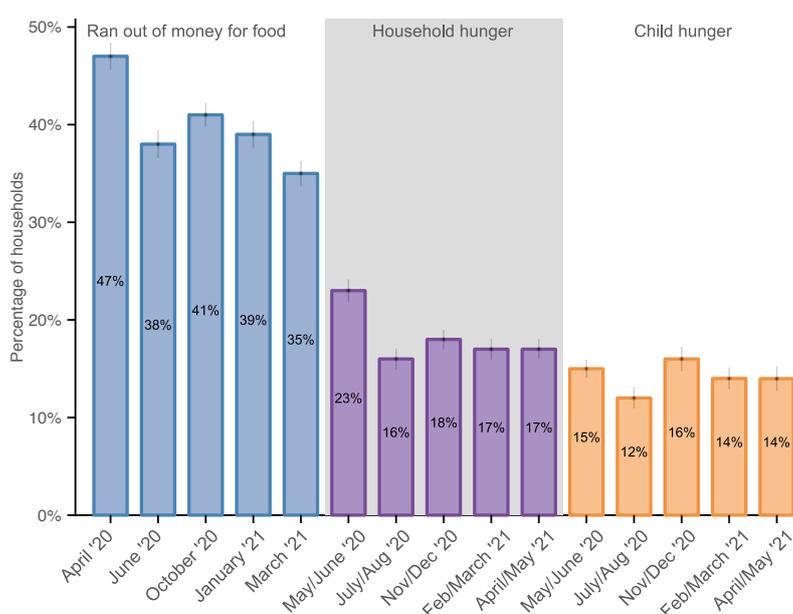
Child hunger has not declined and remains high at 14% with 1-in-7 respondents indicating a child in their household had gone hungry in the prior week. The proportion of respondents with children in their household who reported a child going hungry at least once in the past week saw a significant decline from 15% to 12% between Waves 1 and 2, before it rose to 16% in Wave 3 – a statistically significant increase and an alarming discovery. In Wave 4, this measure declined significantly to 14%, and remained at 14% in Wave 5.

Approximately 400 000 children went hungry in every wave of NIDS-CRAM between May 2020 and May 2021. NIDS-CRAM respondents have been surveyed five times between May 2020 and May 2021 and each time were asked if a child

went hungry in the week preceding the interview. Altogether 2% of households reported child hunger in every wave, which means that just over 400 000 children went hungry in every wave between May 2020 and May 2021.

In April/May 2021, approximately 400,000 children and 1,8-million household members lived in households affected by ‘perpetual hunger’ (hunger ‘every day’ or ‘almost every day’.) If respondents indicated that someone in the household had gone hungry in the last seven days they were asked a follow-up question about

Figure 7: Food insecurity and hunger in NIDS-CRAM Waves 1-4

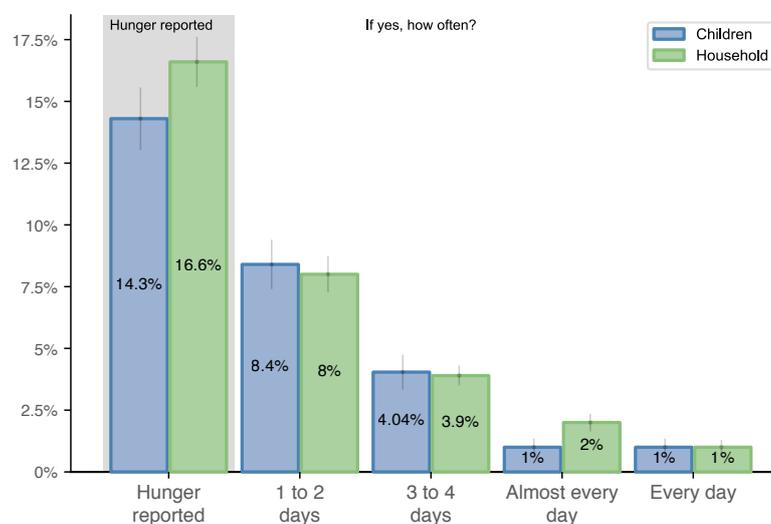


how often. Approximately 3% of all respondents in NIDS-CRAM Wave 5 said that someone in their household had gone hungry 'every day' or 'almost every day' in the last 7 days. Approximately 1,8-million people are estimated to live in these households.

Declines in the real value of the Child Support Grant (CSG) will further exacerbate food insecurity and child hunger in the coming months:

The CSG's value was increased from R445 in 2020/21 to R460 in 2021/22, an increase of only 3.4% (National Treasury, Budget Review 2021: 62), slightly below the Treasury estimate of 3.9% inflation in the new fiscal year, but considerably below the 5.2% year-on-year inflation actually experienced in May 2021, and even further below estimated urban food inflation of 6.7% for the same period (StatsSA 2021: 6). Below-inflation increases in the CSG will likely contribute to further child hunger going forward as the drivers of food price inflation - high global commodity prices and an increase in domestic manufacturing and distribution costs - are not projected to decline anytime soon.

Figure 8: Severity of hunger (Source: Van der Berg, Patel & Bridgman, 2021 using NIDS-CRAM Wave 5)



Women are much more likely to shield children from hunger than men: Shielding of children against hunger occurs where respondents in households that have run out of money for food in March indicated that someone in the household has gone hungry in the seven days before they were interviewed in April and May, but answered that no child in the household had gone hungry.

School feeding according to NIDS-CRAM: In April 2021, access to food at school increased significantly from 49% in November 2020 to 56% in April 2021 when looking at households that have school-aged children. Although part of the increase may be driven by a change in the reference period of the question between the two periods. Specifically, adults were asked about whether or not children received food at school at any time during the past two weeks. Earlier waves of NIDS-CRAM had asked about access over the past 7 days.

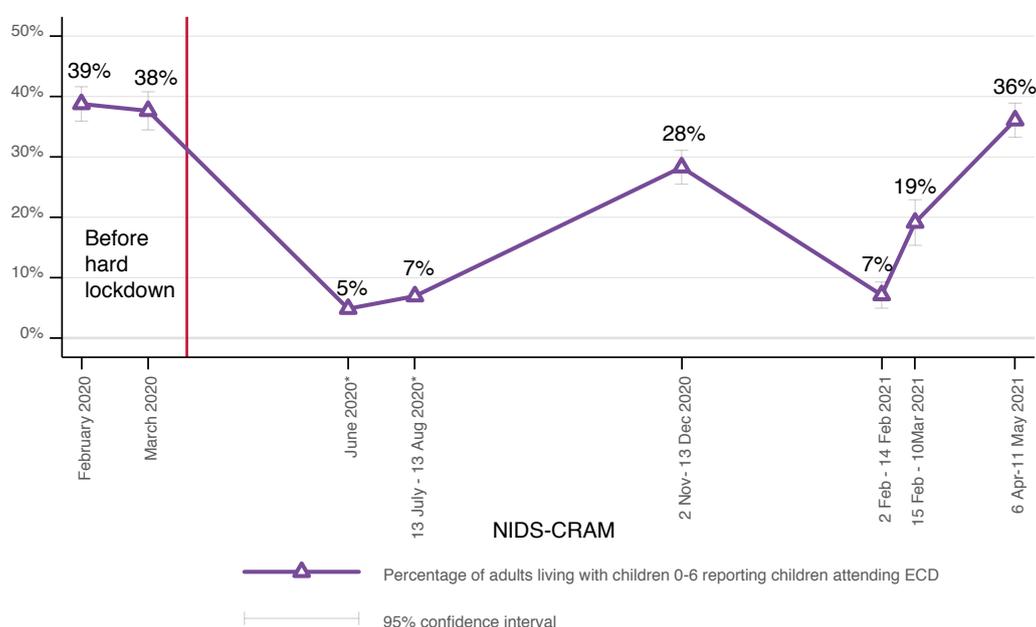
School feeding according to the DBE: Inspection of the DBE National School Nutrition Program (NSNP) progress reports to the High Court (based on self-reports by schools), indicates that between 78-87% of targeted 2021/22 learners had received meals over each of the report cycles between 12 April and 15 June 2021. However, much variation exists across provinces: Whilst the average proportion of targeted learners receiving school meals in Gauteng and Limpopo exceeded 95% over the four report cycles, the proportion of targeted learners fed in the Western Cape remained around 60%, whilst feeding in the Northern Cape declined from 80% to 34% over the two months (likely linked to increasing infections in the province over this period). Transport may be playing a significant role in access to school meals on days when learners are not scheduled to be attending. For example the GHS 2018 data show that at least a quarter of learners attending school in the Western Cape aged 7-17 years and receiving school meals reported making use of public or shuttle transport (i.e. school buses, minibus or other taxis, and group-hired vehicles) as their means of transport to school.

There is reason to expect differences in reporting rates between household surveys and official DBE accounts. According to the GHS 2018 approximately 65% of respondents with at least one school-aged child said a child had received a free school meal every day in the last week. At the same time the DBE reports that it targets approximately 80% of all learners.

5. Early Childhood Development

Levels of attendance at early childhood development (ECD) programmes had recovered remarkably by April/May 2021, edging towards pre-pandemic attendance levels. This is revealed in the final wave of the National Income Dynamics Study - Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM) conducted between 6 April and 11 May 2021. Of respondents living with children aged 0-6 at the time of the wave 5 interview, 36% reported that at least one child aged 0-6 was attending an ECD programme in the past 7 days. Pre-pandemic, about 39% of NIDS-CRAM wave 3 and 4 respondents living with children aged 0-6, indicated that at least one child had attended an ECD programme in February 2020. Similarly in the General Household Survey (GHS) 2019, about 40% of adults living with children aged 0-6, indicated that a child in their household was attending an ECD programme.

Figure 9: ECD attendance 2020-2021



Source: Wills & Kika-Mistry, 2021 using NIDS-CRAM Waves 2-5

It appears that the main reasons for the recovery in ECD attendance by April/May 2021 relate to the increased reopening of ECD programmes and improvements in households' ability to afford ECD fees. Relative to responses provided in November/December 2020 and February/March 2021, a larger percentage of NIDS-CRAM respondents interviewed in April/May 2021 living with children aged 0-6 indicate that an open and affordable ECD programmes exists within 5km of where they live. About two thirds (66%) of the respondent sample living with children aged 0-6 identify that they know of an affordable ECD programme that is currently open within 5km of where they live compared to 38% in February 2021 before schools reopened and 53% after schools reopened on the 15th of February 2021. Furthermore, 59% report that they or someone in their household can afford ECD programme fees in April/May 2021 - a rise from 24% in November/December 2020.

6. Shack Residents

According to the Community Survey of 2016 as many as 5.4 million people (or 9.5% of the population) live in shacks in South Africa. This includes both “backyard” shacks (i.e. linked to a formal residence) and “free-standing” shacks (i.e. located within an informal settlement). As people who are on the margins of society, this group is extremely disadvantaged and particularly vulnerable to economic shocks. Given their lack of access to basic amenities like within-household running water and sanitation, they also find it considerably more difficult to comply with preventative health measures like hand-washing. The five waves of NIDS-CRAM data show that this group of South Africans have been especially hard hit by the pandemic and the lockdowns, and have had one of the most muted recoveries. This group was also heavily reliant on government relief efforts (such as the R350 COVID-19 SRD grant) most of which have now been removed.

Among those in urban areas, shack-dwellers and those in peri-urban areas had the highest rates of reported hunger. Asked if anyone in their household had experienced hunger in the last seven days because there was not enough money for food, nearly one in four (23%) shack-dwellers said someone had gone hungry in April/May 2021. The rates were slightly lower for residents in peri-urban areas (21% experienced hunger) and townships (18%) and significantly lower for suburban residents (6%).

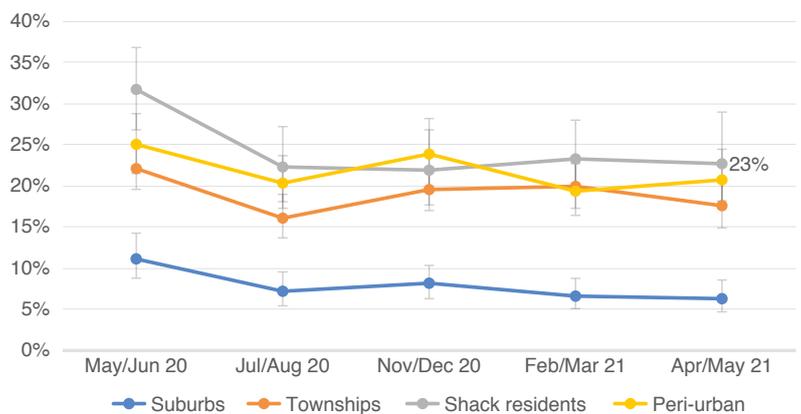
People living in shacks faced one of the biggest slumps in jobs for those living in urban areas, given the hard lockdown when informal trading was prohibited.

Their subsequent recovery has also been the most muted. Townships and peri-urban areas also faced a sharp drop in jobs during the lockdown, but they have had more robust bounce-backs. Meanwhile, the reduction in employment levels for suburban residents was the mildest and they had almost fully recovered by March 2021.

Shack communities were the most likely of all urban groups to experience intermittent spells of employment rather than sustained jobs. In contrast, adults living in the suburbs were almost twice as likely to be in steady employment in every period than adults in other settlement types. 42% of adults living in suburbs were employed throughout, compared with 27% in the townships, 28% of shack dwellers and only 19% in peri-urban areas.

Shack communities relied heavily on government relief efforts, notably the special Covid-19 SRD grant, and the removal of these grants is likely to be a significant setback for them. Approximately 1 in 3 shack residents said that someone in their household had received the SRD grant in March 2021. The government’s decision to terminate this funding will exacerbate their hardship and misery, particularly as level 4 restrictions are reimposed and people’s ability to earn a living and feed their families is curtailed. The residents of townships and other poor urban communities also relied heavily on the SRD grant.

Figure 10: Percentage of urban adult respondents indicating that someone in the household went hungry in past week



Source: Turok & Visagie, 2021 using NIDS-CRAM Waves 1-5

7. Mental health

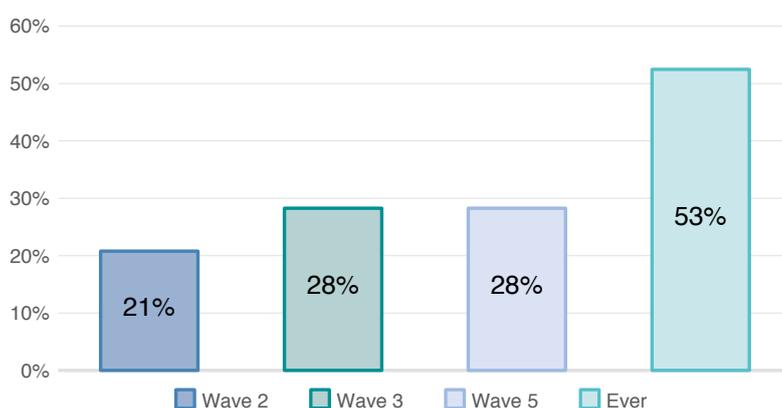
While nearly one third of respondents had depressed mood in either Waves 2, 3 or 5 of NIDS-CRAM, half of respondents screened positive for depressed mood in at least one of these three time periods.

Mental health questions have been asked in only three of the five waves of NIDS-CRAM (Waves 2, 3 and 5). Our analysis of these three waves show that, while the percentage of people with high levels of depressive symptoms at each cross-section of NIDS-CRAM are in the region of 24-28%, the percentage of people who have experienced significant levels of depressive symptoms ever since the start of the pandemic, is much higher, at 52% (see Figure). This indicates that it is not the same individuals who are experiencing depression across all time points, but, rather, different individuals, moving in and out of the depressed mood category.

Approximately 5-7% of respondents had 'severe depressed mood'.

While the percentage of people screening positive for depressive symptoms was approximately 28%, the rate of 'severe depressed mood' was 5-7% in November/December 2020 and April/May 2021. This group is of particular concern.

Figure 11: Population of people affected by depressed mood at single time points compared to population ever affected by depressed mood



Source: Hunt et al. (2021) using NIDS-CRAM Waves 2, 3 and 5 data

40% of adults living with children in food insecure households show signs of depressed mood in April 2021. This compared to 26% amongst those living with children in food secure households, not significantly different from 12 months prior. This proportion rises to 51% when we take a lack of child access to food at school into account.

Household food security, including children's access to school feeding, emerges as an important determinant of adult worry and depressed mood. Prior analysis using the balanced panel from NIDS-CRAM Waves 2, 3 and 4 indicated erratic access to school meals even across time points when schools were open. School feeding at the beginning of the 2021 academic year had neither deteriorated nor improved from the final quarter of 2020.

Although parent and caregiver worry has declined over time, it is also estimated to increase under conditions of greater socioeconomic precariousness and changes in individual-level perceptions of the risk of getting Covid-19. Adult worry has significantly declined from 74% in 2020, to 57% in the first quarter of 2021, and was now at its lowest level of 45% in April 2021. Dynamic modelling of the transition between states of worry about learner return to school indicates that parents and caregivers can deviate from prior levels of worry depending on the conditions of Covid-19 spread and infection and changes in socioeconomic conditions. Adults showing indications of higher-than-average levels of depressed mood and living in persistently large households were significantly more likely to be very worried, whilst those living in households with more consistent access to government grants over time were less likely to be very worried.

For further information please see cramsurvey.org and nids.uct.ac.za