



CRRC Georgia

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Report

# Covid-19 Monitor: Wave 1

Tbilisi, Georgia

May, 2020



## About CRRC Georgia

CRRC-Georgia is a non-governmental, non-profit research organization, which collects, analyzes and publishes policy relevant data on social, economic and political trends to strengthen social science research and public policy analysis in the South Caucasus.

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Kingdom of the Netherlands

CRRC – Georgia

1 Liziko Kavtaradze Street | Entrance III-IV, First Floor | 0179 Tbilisi | Georgia  
crrc-geo@crrccenters.org | +995 32 250 52 90  
crrc.ge | crrc-caucasus.blogspot.com | caucasusbarometer.org

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## Key Findings

### Institutional Performance

- Approval of medical and most governmental institutions is high;
- Approval of the church is relatively low compared to other institutions;
- Trust in most government institutions has increased following the crisis.
- Trust in the church has remained unchanged despite low approval of its performance in response to the crisis.

### Prevention measures

- The public generally supports the prevention measures the government has implemented to date;
- Restricting online sales and leaving churches open for Easter were the least approved of policies. Still, with the latter policy a majority approved.

### Economic Impacts

- Almost one fifth of the population reports losing a job as a result of the crisis;
- Prior to the crisis, 0.5% of households report having no income, in March 10% of households did, and in April 14%.
- Median household income has been cut in half following the crisis;
- Around half of all households have lost income during the crisis.

### Food security

- There is a growing risk of a food security crisis in the country, with women and those without higher education being most affected.

### Knowledge

- Misinformation is present in Georgia and some believe it. However, there is a high level of uncertainty in general over different pieces of misinformation, suggesting that the majority of the population does not yet believe in the different myths that have propagated globally;
- Still, one in ten believe 5G infrastructure spreads the virus and four in ten that the virus was created in a lab.

### Practices

- Hoarding behavior has significantly declined since the start of April;
- One in five Georgians had left the house to socialize in the week prior to the survey;
- Men are twice as likely as women to leave the house to socialize.

### Religion and the outbreak

- The data indicate that attendance at the Easter Liturgy was down from 44% of Orthodox Christians to 4%.
- More Orthodox Christians disapprove than approve of the Church's communal spoon use policy.

## Introduction

Covid-19 has led to wide ranging changes in societies around the world. The response in Georgia has been particularly effective to date. In order to provide the Government of Georgia and the international community with an evidence base to support decision making, CRRC Georgia is conducting the Covid-19 Monitoring Project. The project is supported by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Tbilisi. Within the project CRRC will carry out six nationally representative telephone surveys focused on knowledge, attitudes, and practices surrounding the crisis. This document provides the results of the first wave of the survey.

The survey was conducted over cell phone between April 29 and May 3. The results are nationally representative, with a margin of error of 3.1%. Overall 992 individuals responded to the survey with a response rate of 42.1%. Respondents were selected using random digit dialing to ensure that a representative sample was taken. The data was then weighted to population characteristics using census data. The details of the survey methodology are provided in Annex 1 of this report.

The data analysis below uses frequencies and cross tabulations. Cross tabulations provide differences between different groups and a chi-square test or t-test is used to test for statistical significance of apparent differences. Tests for differences between the following groups were conducted within the study:

- Settlement types (Tbilisi, other urban, rural);
- Age groups (18-34, 35-54, 55+);
- Education levels (Secondary or vocational, tertiary);
- Sex (Male versus female);

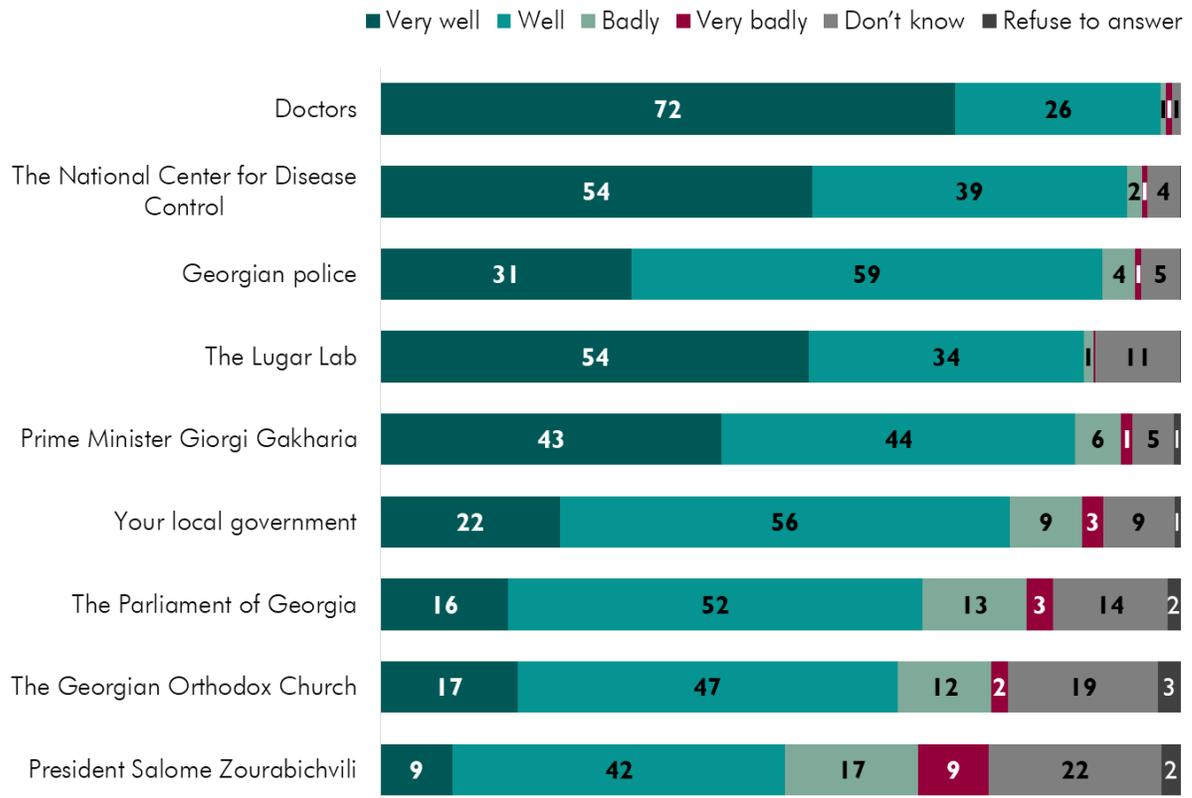
In some case, the sum of percentages presented does not equal 100%. This stems from rounding error.

This document proceeds as follows. In the next section, the results of the survey are presented, first discussing public opinion on institutional performance of different institutions in the crisis. In the subsequent section, attitudes towards institutional response is discussed. Thereafter, behavior is discussed. The next section discusses economic impacts. The report finishes with conclusions based on the data. In appendix to the report, the survey questionnaire, frequency tables, and cross-tabulation tables for gender, age, and settlement type are provided. In Annex to the report, the study methodology is provided.

## Institutional Performance

The country’s medical and political authorities have generally received significant praise for the current response to the current crisis. This generally shows up in the data, with the vast majority of the public approving of the institutional performance of governmental actors and medical professionals. At least 90% approve of the performance of doctors, the National Center for Disease Control, and the Georgian Police. At least half the public approve of all other institutions and individuals asked about.

### Coronavirus-related performance rating (%)



There are a number of different patterns of approval when broken down by different demographic groups. The results suggest that people in Tbilisi report slightly lower performance for the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Lugar Lab compared to people in other urban areas and rural areas.

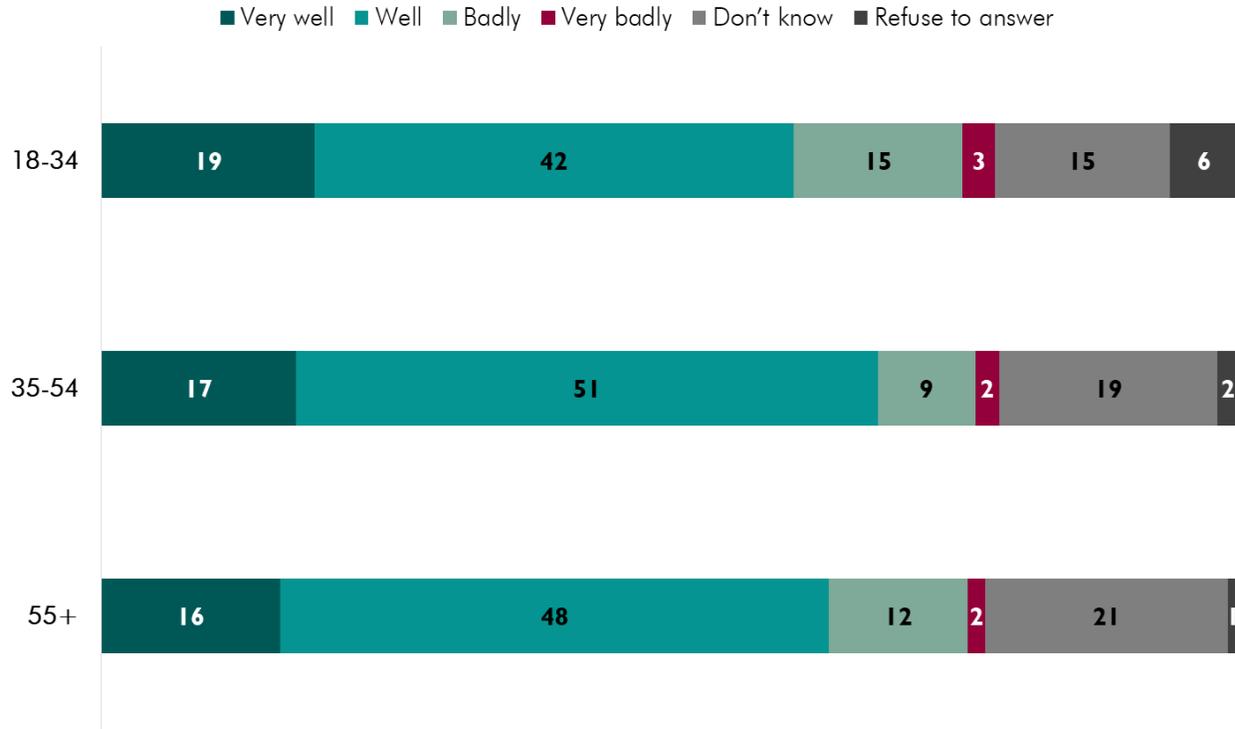
### Institutional performance by settlement type (%)

Very well Well Badly Very badly Don't know Refuse to answer



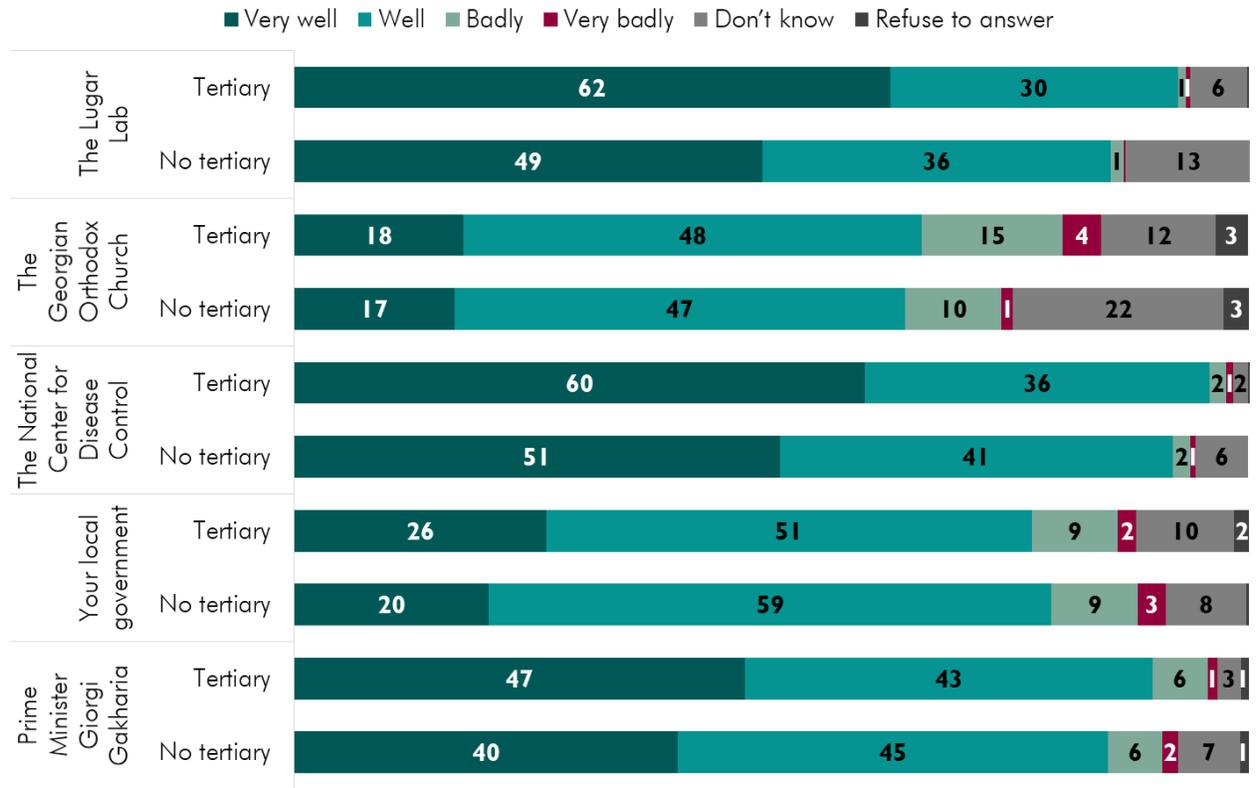
There are also a number of patterns when the data is broken down by age, the only significant difference is in attitudes towards the Church. Younger people are slightly less positive, and older people are slightly more uncertain.

## Performance of the Georgian Orthodox Church by age group(%)



When looking at the data by education levels, there is a general pattern of higher performance assessments for medical institutions among those with higher education. People with higher education are more negative about the Church’s performance, while people with lower levels of education are more uncertain. People with higher levels of education are also more positive in degree (i.e. they report very well more often) about the Prime Minister and local government.

### Institutional performance by education level(%)



With sex, the data show limited differences in assessments. Women rate the performance of medical institutions higher than men, while men are more negative about parliament. Aside from these differences, no other statistically significant differences were identified.

### Institutional performance by sex (%)

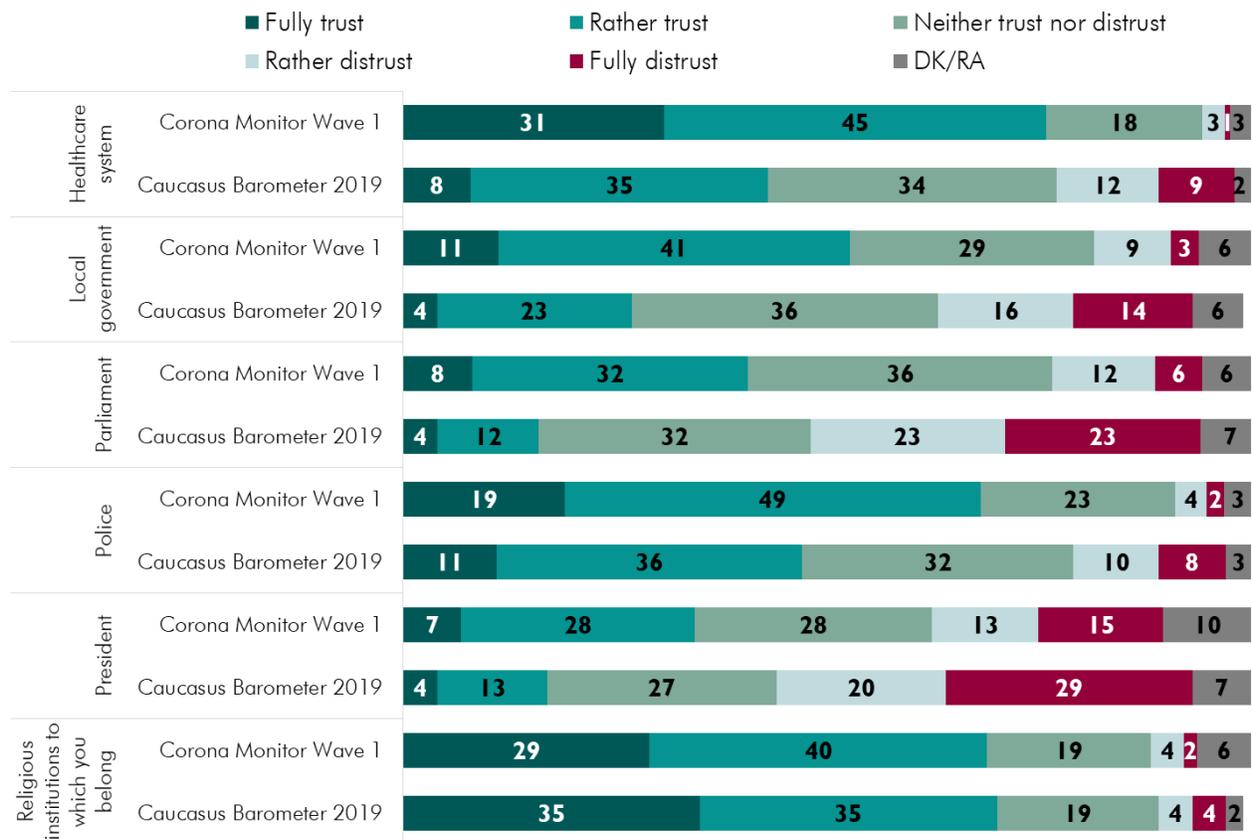
Very well Well Badly Very badly Don't know Refuse to answer



The survey also asked about trust in institutions, using a question from the 2019 Caucasus Barometer survey, slightly modified for use on a telephone survey. The data suggest that trust in the healthcare system, parliament, president, police, and local government have all increased by substantively large amounts. In contrast, trust in religious institutions has not changed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The 2019 Caucasus Barometer Survey was conducted using face to face interviewing, while the present survey was done using telephone interviewing. Both samples are nationally representative, but there is a degree of unmeasurable error in the comparison of the two modes, because of the difference in administration of the survey.

### Trust in institutions (Caucasus Barometer 2019 versus Corona Monitor)



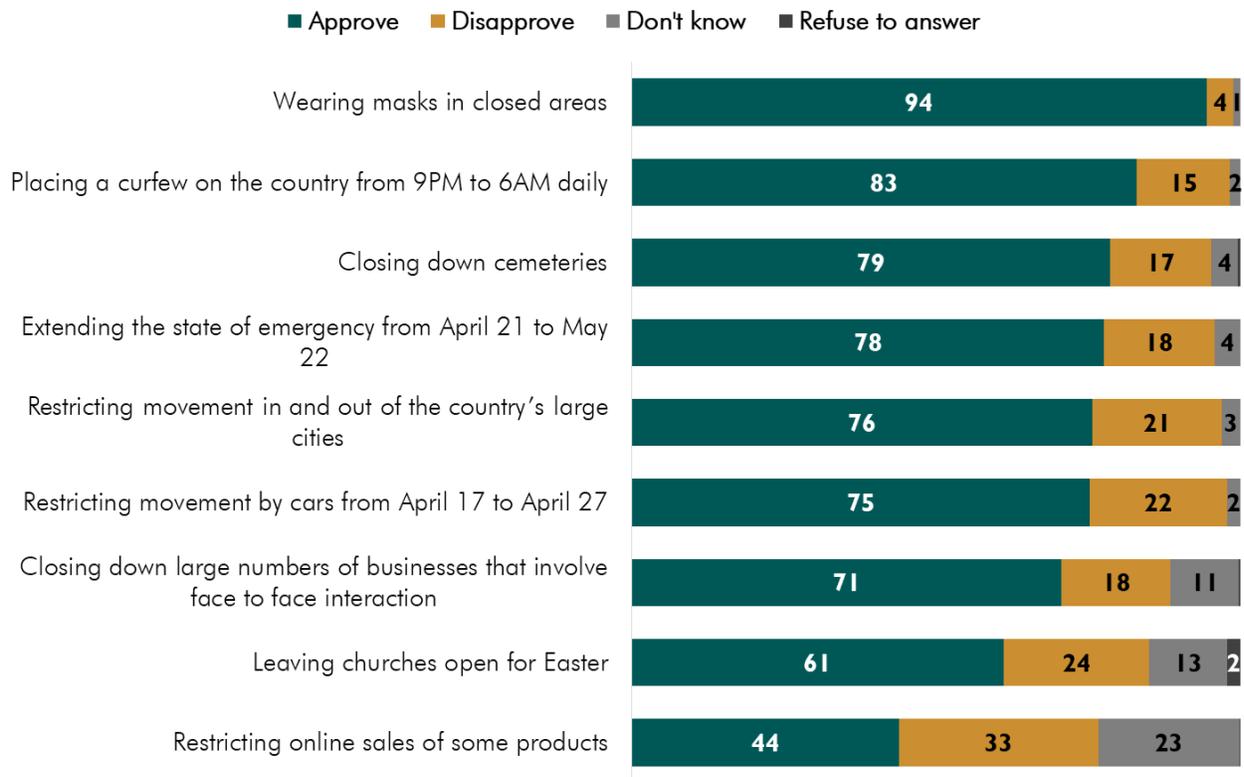
Notably, the numbers regarding trust and performance on the Coronavirus show a somewhat contrasting picture. Given the Church’s relatively low performance assessments, one might expect trust to be lower. However, performance assessments over a specific issue are not necessarily correlated with general institutional trust. Moreover, in the present case a similar share of people report trusting the church as report they are performing well or very well.

### Prevention measures

The Government of Georgia has taken numerous measures to contain the spread of the virus. However, for these measures to be effective, the public has to comply with them. In this regard, the survey asked respondents about their approval of different measures the government implemented as well as one potential policy that the government mentioned as a possibility (being required to gain government approval to leave the house).

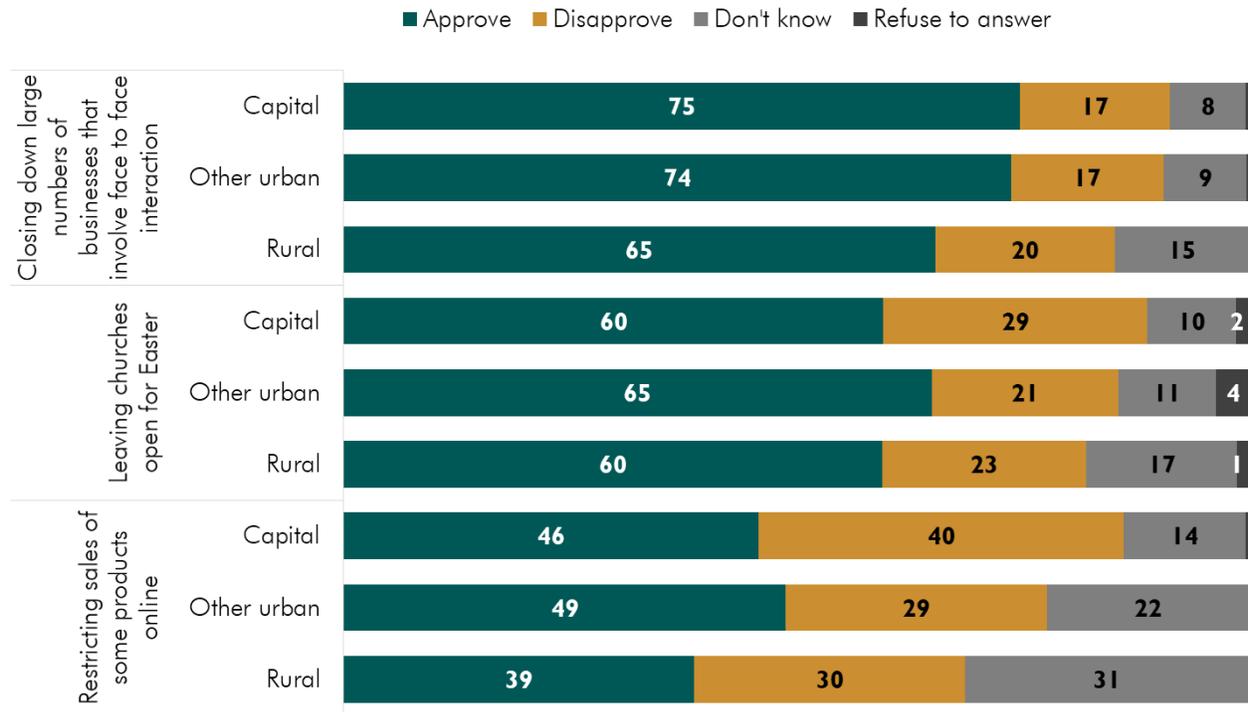
The data indicate varying degrees of support for the different policies. The policies that are most approved of include mandatory wearing of masks in closed areas, the curfew, and the closing of cemeteries. Leaving churches open and restricting online commerce have the lowest level of support.

### Do you approve or disapprove of the following policies? (%)



When the above are broken down by settlement type, a number of patterns emerge. In rural areas, there is a higher level of uncertainty when it comes to restricting online sales, leaving churches open, and closing down businesses. In contrast, in urban areas, attitudes are more positive about the closure of businesses. In Tbilisi, attitudes are more negative about restricting online sales and leaving churches open.

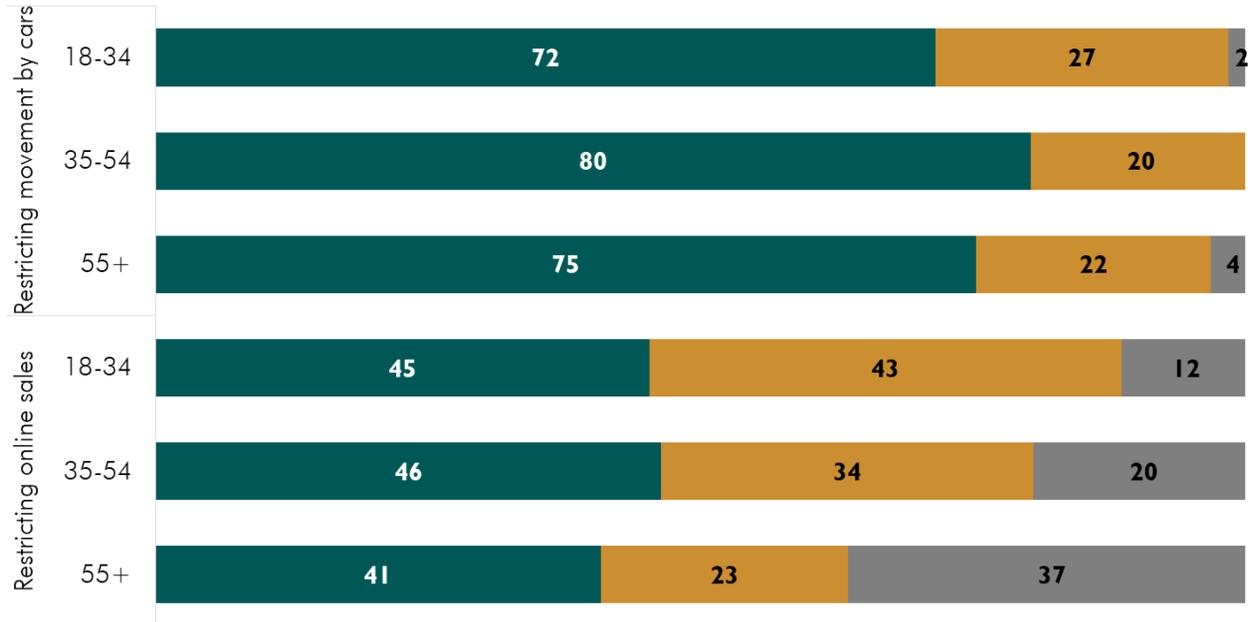
### Approval of different policies by settlement type (%)



Looking at age groups suggests that there is greater support for restricting movement by car among the 35-54 year old age group. There is also greater uncertainty among older people about restricting online sales and less approval among younger people for this policy.

## Approval of different policies by age group (%)

■ Approve ■ Disapprove ■ Don't know



In general, men and women support the policies the government is implementing equally. The one exception is related to closing cemeteries, which women are 6 percentage points more likely to approve of.

Policy support also varies by education level. People with at least some tertiary education are more likely to approve of closing down cemeteries, restricting car travel, closing down large numbers of businesses, and extending the state of emergency.

### Approval of different policies by education level (%)

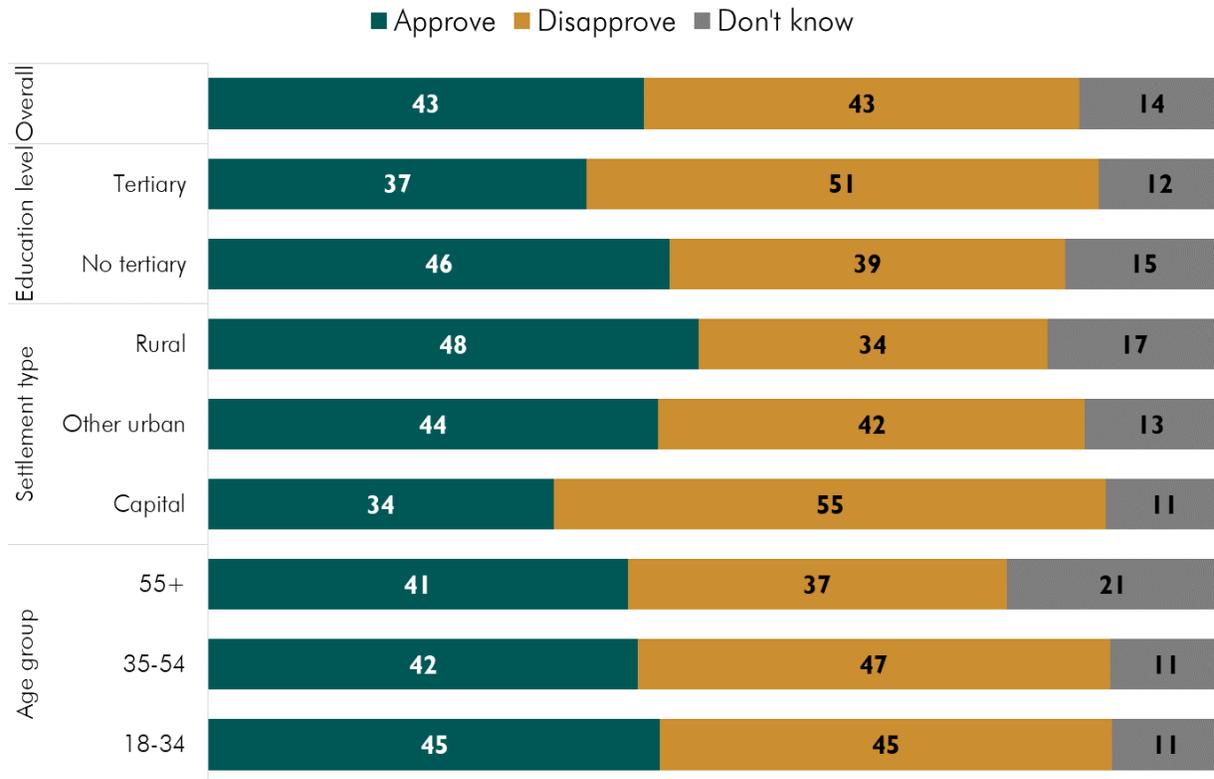
■ Approve ■ Disapprove ■ Don't know



In addition, the survey asked about a hypothetical policy under which citizens would have to tell the government in order to leave home. This policy was proposed if the country reached 2000 infected cases.<sup>2</sup> The data suggest that support for this policy would be moderate at 43% approving of its implementation, 43% against it, and 14% uncertain. To understand who would be more or less supportive of the implementation of this policy cross-tabulations were conducted. The data suggests older people are more uncertain, people in outside Tbilisi more supportive, and people with higher education less supportive.

<sup>2</sup> This policy was proposed by the Minister of Health on April 15<sup>th</sup>. For video of the announcement, see [here](#).

### Would you approve or disapprove of requiring citizens to tell the government before leaving the home? (%)

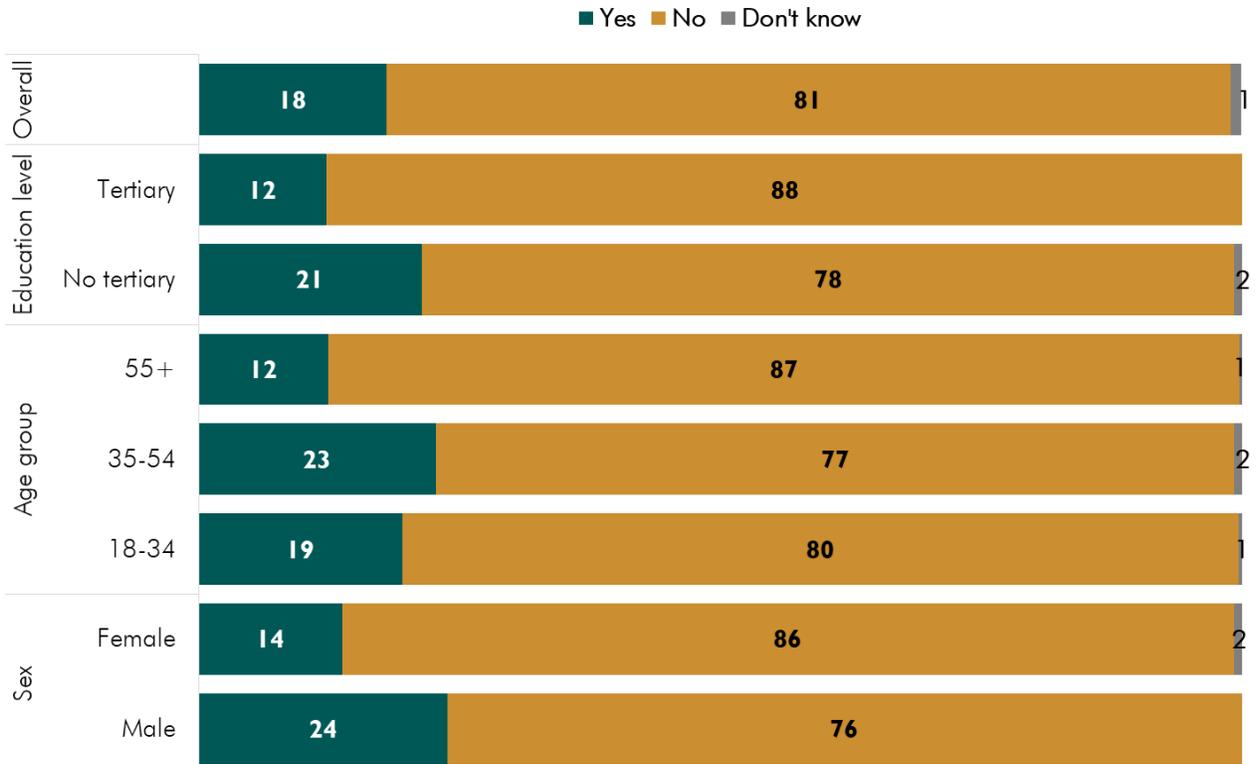


### Economic Impacts

The key secondary impact of the Covid-19 crisis have been economic, with the world having entered recession. Georgia has also experienced severe economic losses as a result of the crisis. This is reflected in the survey data which suggest that nearly a fifth of Georgians (18%) of the total population have lost their job as a result of the crisis. In contrast, less than 1% of the population report having started a new job as a result of the crisis. A further 18% of people report being able to work fewer hours and 7% report working more hours.

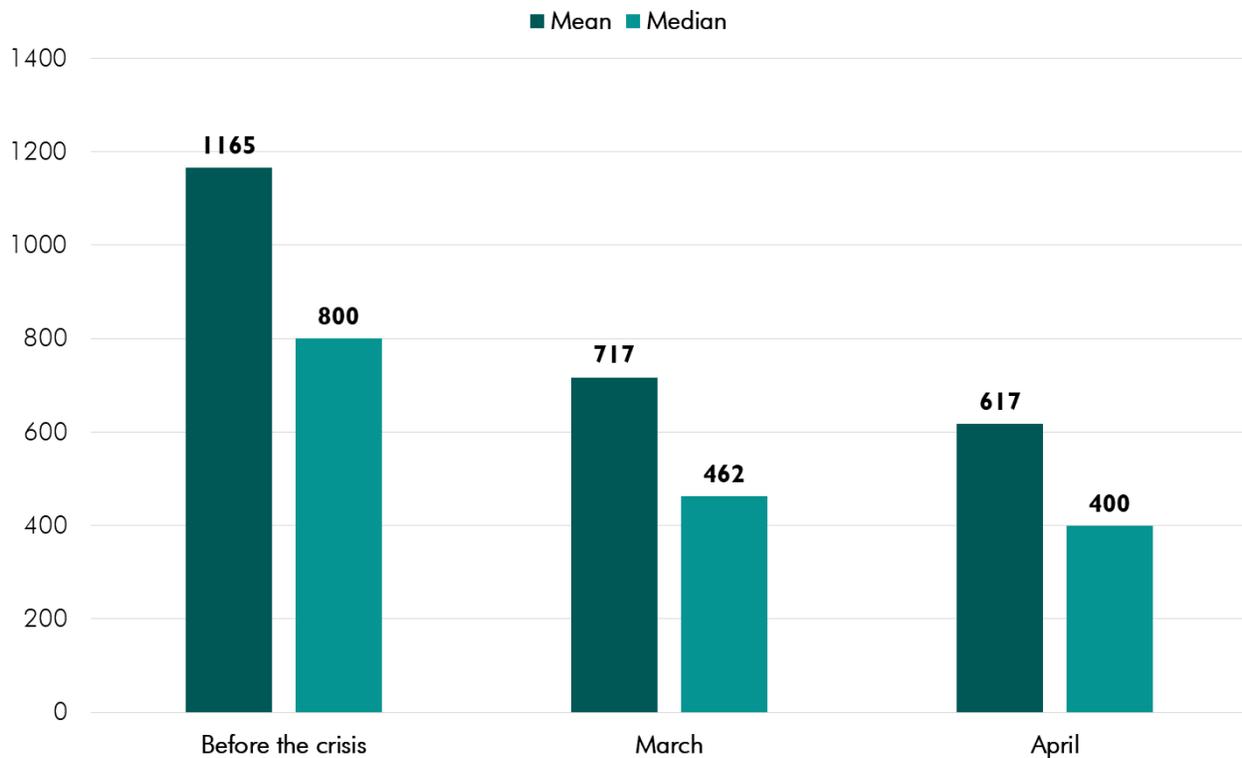
Although job losses are widespread, they have disproportionately impacted a number of groups. People with lower levels of education, men, and younger people report losing jobs more often. Part of this likely stems from women and older people being less likely to have jobs. However, the pattern among those without tertiary education is particularly important, because those without tertiary education are less likely to have jobs in Georgia and generally earn significantly less. This suggests that the crisis has likely hurt those who were worse off before the crisis.

## Have you lost your job as a result of the Coronavirus? By Demographic variables (%)



The survey also asked about lost income. While prior to the crisis, 0.5% of households report having no income, in March 10% of households did, and in April 14%. The mean reported income for households after taxes was GEL 1165 prior to the outbreak and the median was GEL 800. In March, the average reported income was GEL 717 and the median was GEL 462. In April, the average expected income was GEL 617 and the median was GEL 400. This is to say that household incomes have roughly halved.

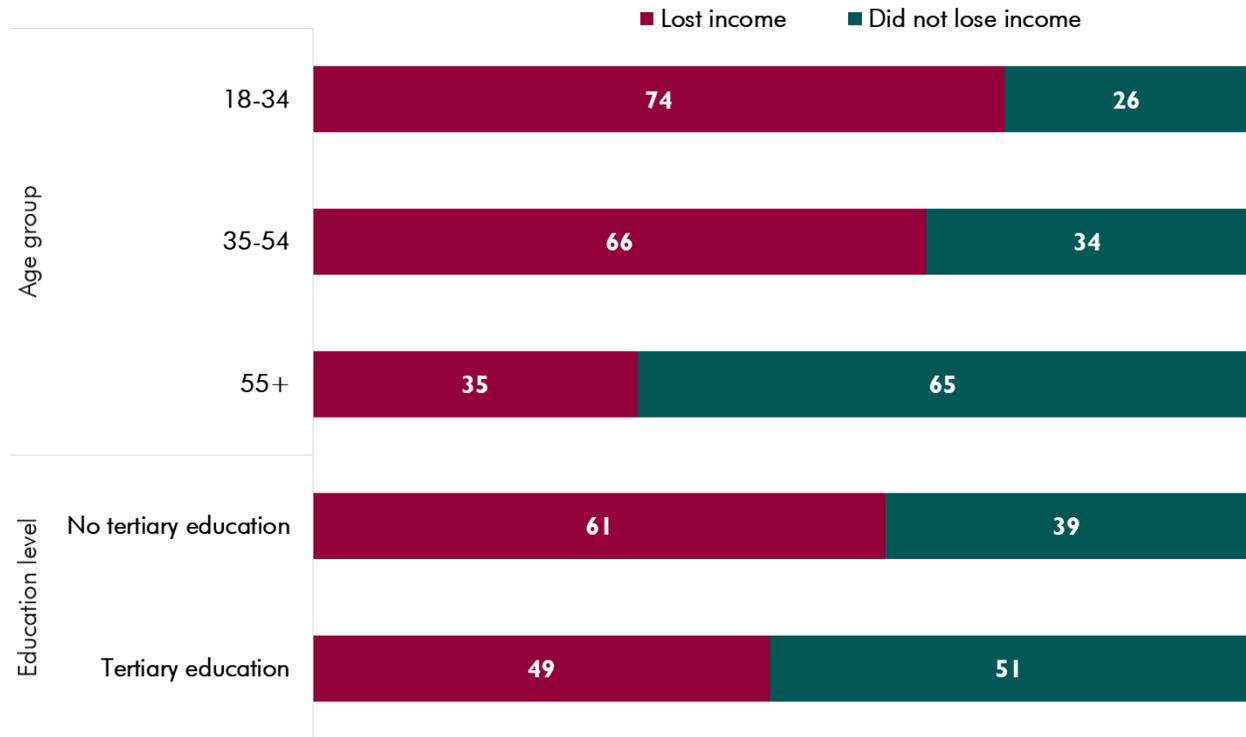
## Average monthly net household income before and during the crisis



The above calculations are based on the 77% that responded to the questions about March and prior to the crisis and the 73% that responded to the question about April. Among the group that responded – 57% of households lost income. To estimate the range of possible outcomes in terms of lost incomes, the study takes two scenarios – all of the people who did not respond to the question lost income and all of the people who did not respond to the question kept the same income or gained. Based on these two scenarios, between 44% and 80% of households lost income. This is a crude estimate, but it is telling in that it means that there are likely at least half of households in Georgia that have lost income as a result of the crisis.

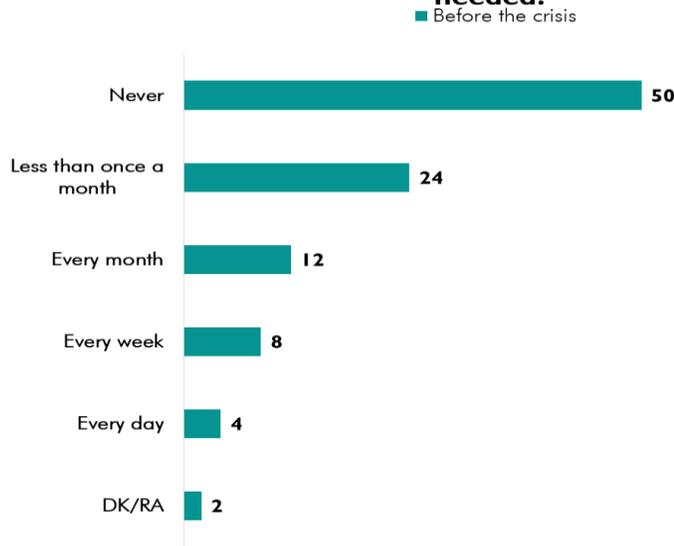
To understand which groups were more or less likely to have lost incomes as a result of the crisis, respondents who responded to the question were coded into two groups – lost income as a result of the crisis and have not lost income as a result of the crisis. Younger people and those with lower levels of education are more likely to report they have lost income as a result of the crisis.

### Reports losing income by education level and age group of respondent (%)



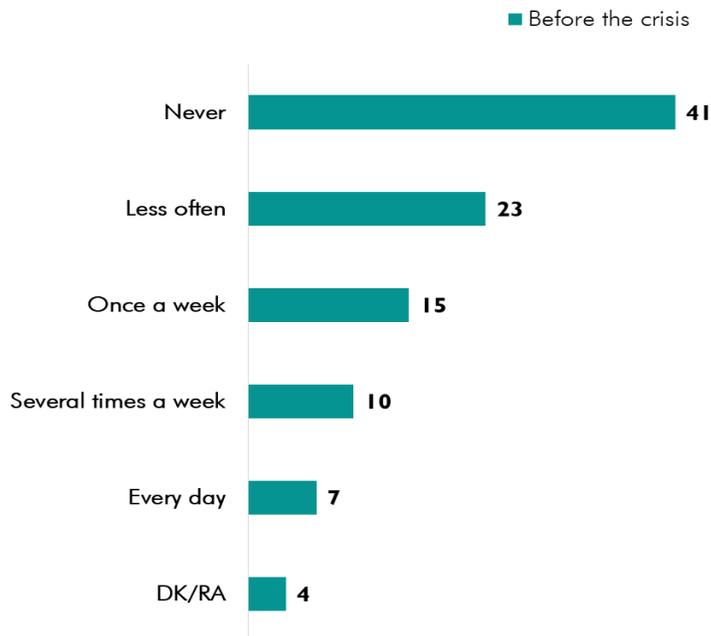
The study also looked at food security. The data suggest that there is an emerging food security problem in the country. Respondents were asked how often they had issues with food security prior to the crisis and in the last month. The data from the question prior to the crisis suggested that 50% of the country never lacked money to get enough food. Only 12% of families had problems weekly.

**Speaking about the year before March, how often did you not have enough money to buy the food you or your family needed?**



The second question asked about the month prior. The results suggest that 41% never experience challenges with food security, a nine percentage point decline. Similarly 32% experienced an issue at least once a week in the past month (weekly, several times a week, or every day) compared with 12% prior to the crisis reporting a similar response (every week and every day combined). The exact scope of the crisis is not possible to determine, because the questions were asked on a slightly different scale. However, what is clear is that large numbers of people are having increased food security challenges.

**Speaking about last month, how often did you not have enough money to buy the food you or your family needed?**



Women and people with lower levels of education report greater levels of food insecurity. While a 56% of people with higher education reported they never had an issue purchasing food last month, only 34% of those with lower levels of education reported the same. In total, 45% of men report never having a problem purchasing food last month, while only 38% of women report the same.

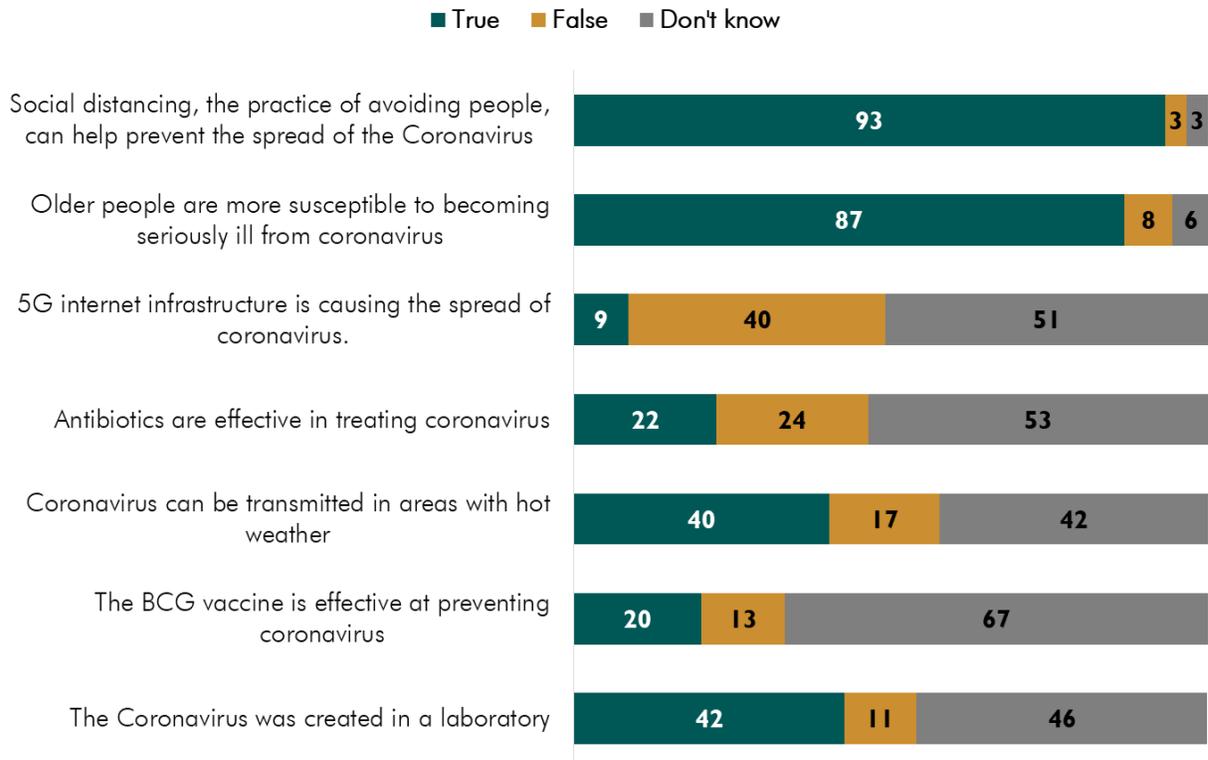
## Knowledge

The outbreak has resulted in numerous pieces of disinformation across the world, including in Georgia. The study asked respondents about seven different factual statements about the prevention and treatment of Coronavirus.

The data suggest a high level of uncertainty on several issues. Overall, 93% of people correctly stated that social distancing can help prevent the spread of the virus. The second most commonly, correctly answered question was that older people are more susceptible to becoming seriously ill from the virus (87% correct). On all statements asked about aside from these, around half of the public is uncertain.

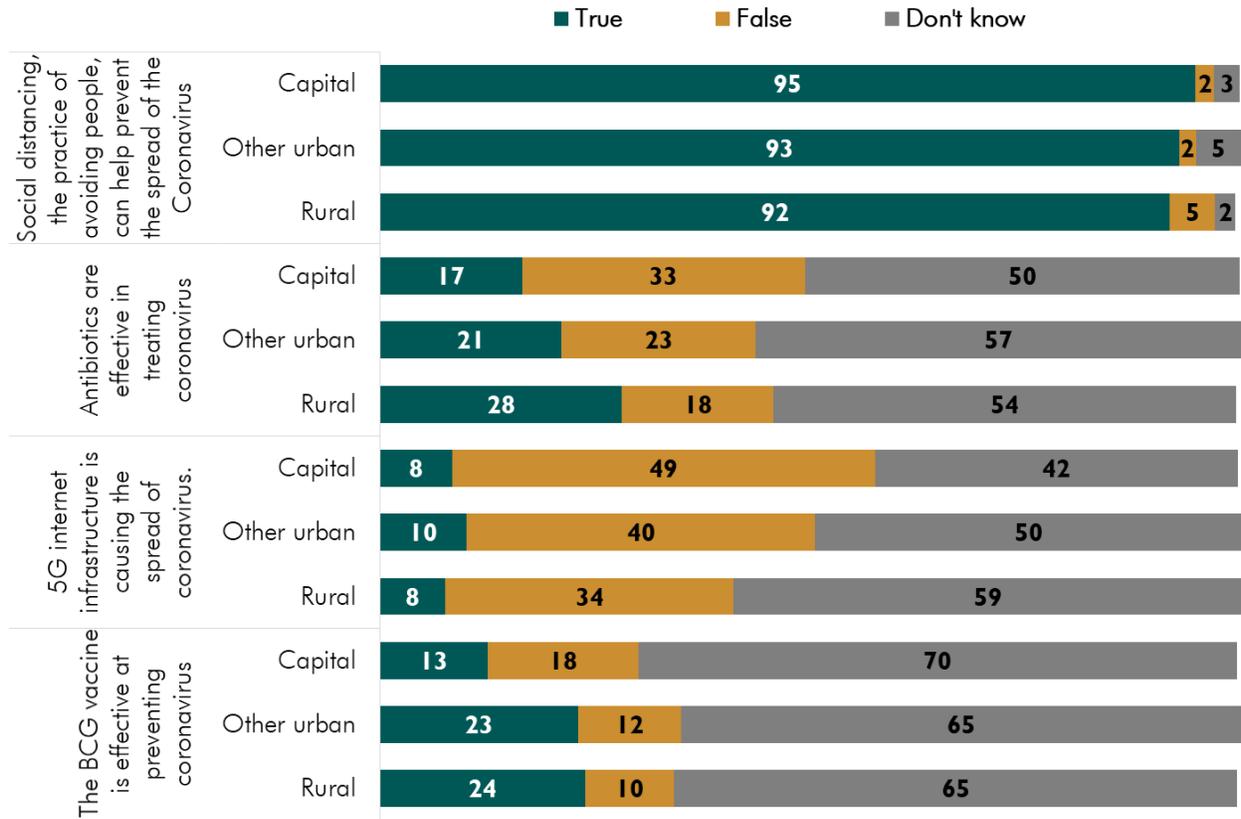
The data also indicate that a number of fallacies about the virus are prevalent. Almost half (42%) of people think that Coronavirus was created in a laboratory, 40% that the virus cannot be transmitted in areas with hot weather, 22% that antibiotics are effective at treating the virus, and 20% that the BCG vaccine is effective against the Coronavirus. Relatively few (9%) think that the 5G internet infrastructure is causing the spread of the virus, yet half (51%) of the public are uncertain.

**Please tell me whether you think [the following statements] are true or false. (%)**



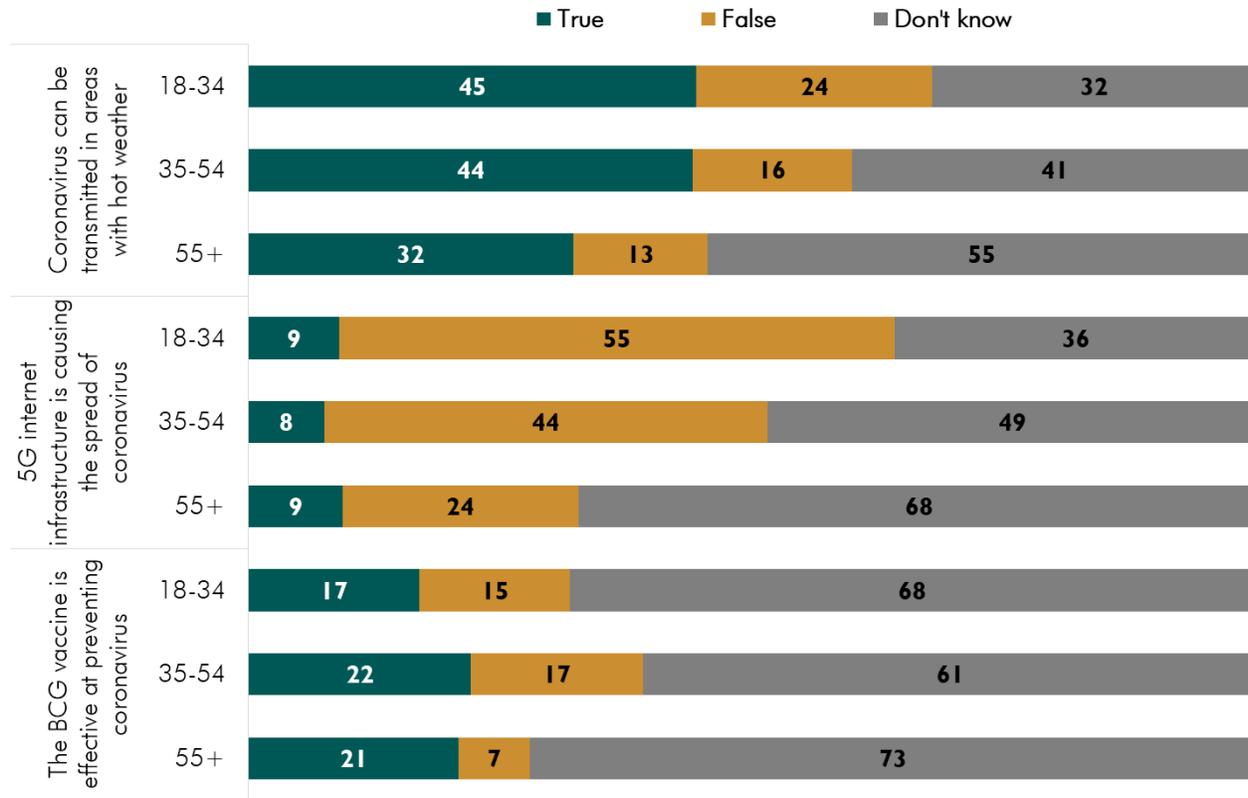
People outside Tbilisi are roughly twice as likely to think the BCG vaccine is effective against the virus. With 5G internet infrastructure causing the virus, the data indicate that uncertainty is higher outside Tbilisi. In rural areas people are more likely to think that anti-biotics are effective against the Coronavirus and uncertainty on this issue is higher in urban areas outside Tbilisi. Although a small difference, a statistically significant higher share of people in rural areas think social distancing is not effective at preventing the virus.

### Differences in knowledge by settlement type (%)



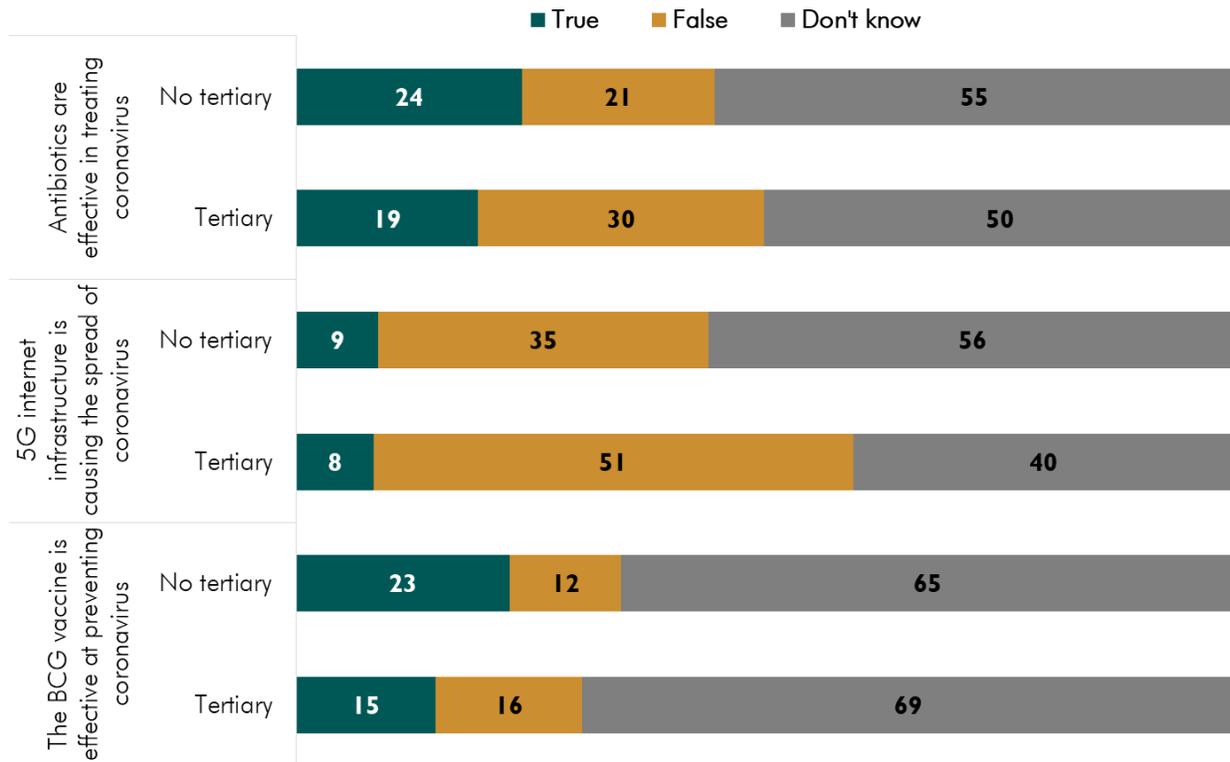
When it comes to different age groups, older people are more uncertain about the BCG vaccine, 5G internet infrastructure, and whether the virus can be transmitted in warm weather. Younger people are more certain and name the correct answers more often, with the exception of the statement on the BCG vaccine.

### Differences in knowledge by age group (%)



When it comes to education level, people with higher levels of education are more likely to have accurate information about the BCG vaccine, 5G, and antibiotics not being effective in treating Coronavirus.

### Differences in knowledge by education level (%)



The only statistically significant difference between men and women is that women are more certain in their views about the BCG vaccine preventing Coronavirus. They report 5% more often than men both the correct and incorrect responses to this question.

### Practices

The study also looked at a number of behaviors. The data suggest that 9% of people have gone to someone’s house to socialize and 15% have gone somewhere else to socialize. In total, 20% of people report moving somewhere to socialize. Men (27%) and younger people (29%) are significantly more likely to go out to socialize than women (13%) and people in older age groups (35-54: 18%, 55+: 13%).

Aside from socializing, the survey also asked about a number of other activities. The data suggest 6% of people sought medical care, and 13% were unable to access medical care. Women (9%) and people with higher levels of education (9%) were more likely to seek medical care than men (4%) and people with lower levels of education (5%). There were no significant differences between groups unable to access care.

The study also asked about whether people were purchasing more food and supplies than normal. Overall, 22% report they have. This is a significant decline from 61% of people reporting the same at the start of April on CRRC Georgia’s omnibus survey. Younger people (26%) were more likely than people in the oldest age bracket in the survey (55+: 16%) to report stocking up on goods.

About one in five people (18%) report leaving the house to go on a walk or exercise. This was more common among men (27% versus 10% of women) and people under the age of 55 (18-34: 21% 35-54: 22%, and 55+: 12%).

Aside from the direct economic indicators described above, the survey also asked about a number of behaviors surrounding the economy, including whether people have left home to work, engaged in agricultural work, and started working from a distance. The results suggest that 12% started working from home, and 42% have engaged in agricultural work.

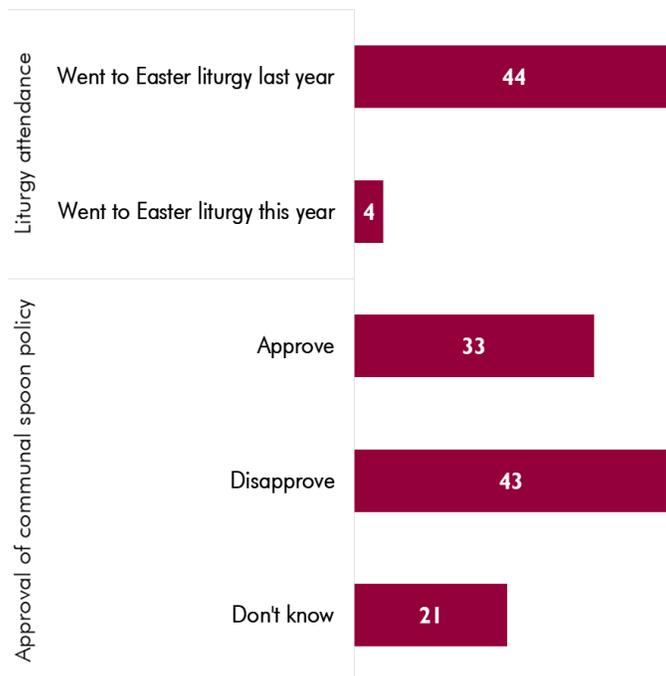
### Religion and the outbreak

Much of the conversation surrounding the Covid-19 outbreak in Georgia has focused on the role of the Georgian Orthodox Church. To understand public opinion on the issue, the study included questions on whether respondents attended Easter Ceremonies, and the use of the communion spoon in the church.

In terms of church attendance, only 4% of Orthodox Christians reported attending church on Easter this year. This compares to 44% who reported that they went to church on Easter last year. Further analysis of these questions suggests that younger people were a bit more likely to go to church (7% of 18-34 year olds) than older people (1% people over 55).

When it comes to approval of the use of a communal spoon, 33% of Orthodox Christians approve of the communal spoon policy, 43% disapprove, and 21% are uncertain. Older people (55+) are more disapproving of the policy (51%) than younger people (39%).

**Attitudes towards the communal spoon and Easter liturgy attendance(%)**



## Conclusions

The above data leads to a number of conclusions.

### Institutional Performance

- Approval of medical and most governmental institutions is high;
- Approval of the church is relatively low compared to other institutions;
- Trust in most government institutions has increased following the crisis.
- Trust in the church has remained unchanged despite low approval of its performance in response to the crisis.

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- The public generally supports the prevention measures the government has implemented to date;
- Restricting online sales and leaving churches open for Easter were the least approved of policies. Still, with the latter policy a majority approved.

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### Food security

- There is a growing risk of a food security crisis in the country, with women and those without higher education being most affected.

### Knowledge

- Misinformation is present in Georgia and some believe it. However, there is a high level of uncertainty in general over different pieces of misinformation, suggesting that the majority of the population does not yet believe in the different myths that have propagated globally;
- Still, one in ten believe 5G infrastructure spreads the virus and four in ten that the virus was created in a lab.

### Practices

- Hoarding behavior has significantly declined since the start of April;
- One in five Georgians had left the house to socialize in the week prior to the survey;
- Men are twice as likely as women to leave the house to socialize.

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- The data indicate that attendance at the Easter Liturgy was down from 44% of Orthodox Christians to 4%.
- More Orthodox Christians disapprove than approve of the Church's communal spoon use policy.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Methodology

The survey was a nationally-representative cell phone survey covering the adult population of Georgia (except the areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia). Respondents are selected using the random-digit-dial (RDD) method and were interviewed through live interviewing.

The present wave of the survey was conducted between April 29 and May 3, 2020. Overall, 992 completed interviews were collected, with a minimum response rate of 42.1%.<sup>3</sup> Respondents were interviewed in Georgian, Armenian, Russian, or Azerbaijani.

Results are weighted. CRRG-Georgia used demographic information from the 2014 Georgian National Census for adjusting results based on respondents' gender, age, ethnic identity, education, and residence. This helps balance the proportions of those groups which might be underrepresented in the raw data. Overall, the theoretical margin of error for proportions does not exceed 3.1%.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the standards of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) minimum response rate is the ratio of the number of complete interviews and all interview attempts. This excludes non-existing phone numbers dialed as a part of the RDD process.