



**A STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE HUMAN
SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL, ON BEHALF
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

COVID-19 AND YOUTH

**EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON
YOUTH BENEFICIARIES OF DSD PROGRAMMES IN
SOUTH AFRICA**

STUDY TEAM

DR. CANDICE GROENEWALD (HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL)

DR. ZAYNAB ESSACK (HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL)

DR. STEVEN GORDON (HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL)

PROF. ANN STRODE (UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL)

PROF. KHANGELANI ZUMA (HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL)

DR. NELOUFAR KHAN (DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, FUNDER LIAISON)

12 October 2021



science & innovation

Department:
Science and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



HSRC
Human Sciences
Research Council



social development

Department:
Social Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



STUDY BACKGROUND

OVERVIEW

Study rationale

- The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted lives.
- Youth particularly affected because educational attainment, job security, steady income, and overall wellbeing have been compromised.
- Recognising the various of the COVID-19 pandemic, and lockdown, on young people in South Africa, DSD funded a longitudinal study with a sample of 'known' youth to examine the multi-dimensional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people.
 - 'Known' youth are individuals (16-35 years old) who have received psychosocial and/or financial support from DSD or SASSA over the past 5 to 10 years

Study aims

1. Understand the socio-economic, health and gender impact of COVID-19 and related regulations and lockdown measures on South African youth (aged 16 to 35 years old)
2. To develop and propose further evidence-informed interventions and policy recommendations in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
3. Document the impact of relief measures and services implemented by DSD and SASSA in circumventing the impacts of COVID-19.

YOUTH AND COVID-19

LITERATURE SUMMARY

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

- Recent statistics show an increase in unemployment rates since the start of the pandemic which has significantly affected low-income earners and youth, resulting in job and income loss
- Quarterly Labour Force Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2021) reported that close to half of South African youth aged 15 to 34 years (46.3%) were officially unemployed during the first quarter of 2021, with 9.3% of this population being university graduates.



FOOD INSECURITY

- The pandemic contributed to youth unemployment, and without a steady income, access to food and proper nutrition is significantly compromised (Mudiriza & De Lannoy, 2020).
- Inevitably, less income equates to decreased ability to purchase food.
- Recent statistics show that in April to May 2021, approximately 10.6 million South Africans were affected by hunger (Spaul et al., 2021).



EDUCATION

- South Africa was among 191 countries that imposed a national closure of all educational institutions.
- The impact of the pandemic on education was disproportionate, as some institutions and scholars faced various challenges including
 - inability to access content from online portals,
 - insufficient funds to purchase data,
 - unequal access to smartphones or devices (Omodan & Ige, 2021; Motala & Menon, 2020).



Refer to reports for more detailed discussion

YOUTH AND COVID-19

LITERATURE SUMMARY

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND SUPPORT

- During pandemic we observed restricted clinic hours, or hospitals temporarily closed, and stockouts of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) medications reported (Lynch & Teagle, 2020).
- Almost one-quarter of South Africans could not access condoms (Bolarinwa, 2021).
- Rates of GBV during lockdown increased rapidly (Sekyere et al., 2020)- GBV command centre reported 120 000 cases of victims in the first 3 weeks of the lockdown.



SOCIAL RELIEF MEASURES AND SUPPORT

- South African government implemented social relief measures, including food parcels, food vouchers, and the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant (R350)
- Given the vast social and economic devastation caused by the pandemic, researchers expressed concerns that, should these grants be stopped, we may observe increases in hunger and deprivation (Spaull et al., 2021).



THE PAPER

We offer baseline data on 'known' youth's experiences of the pandemic (April 2020 to August 2021).

Specifically:

- Health profile, (COVID-19 symptoms, SRH, and access to services during the lockdown)
- Educational impact
- Economic impact (including food and water security)
- Uptake and perceptions of social relief initiatives (grants, food vouchers and parcels)



STUDY METHODOLOGY

MULTI-WAVE SURVEY



RECRUITMENT

DSD database
Social media
DSD partners



SURVEY 1

N = 335

Females N=190
Males N=140
LGBTIQ N= 5



SURVEY 2

N = 247

Females N=104
Males N=59
LGBTIQ N= 4



SURVEY 3

December 2020

STUDY METHODOLOGY

SURVEYS

SURVEY 1



**Demographic information
and background**



**Health profile (including
SRH and COVID-19)**



**Experiences and
perceptions of GBV**



**Access to social grants
and interventions**

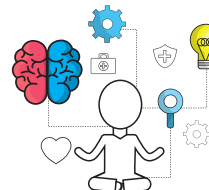
SURVEY 2



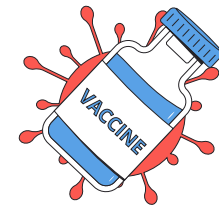
**Social behaviours
(adhering to NPIs)**



**COVID knowledge and
information seeking**



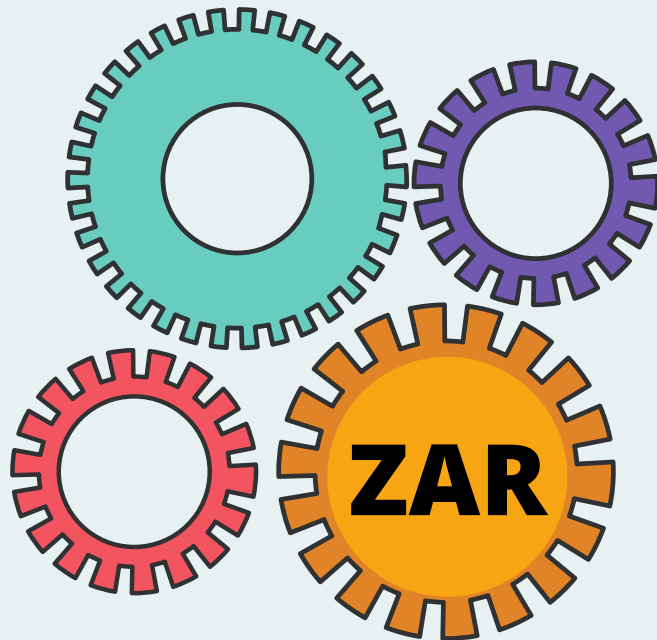
**Mental health and
coping**



**COVID-19 vaccines
uptake and acceptability**

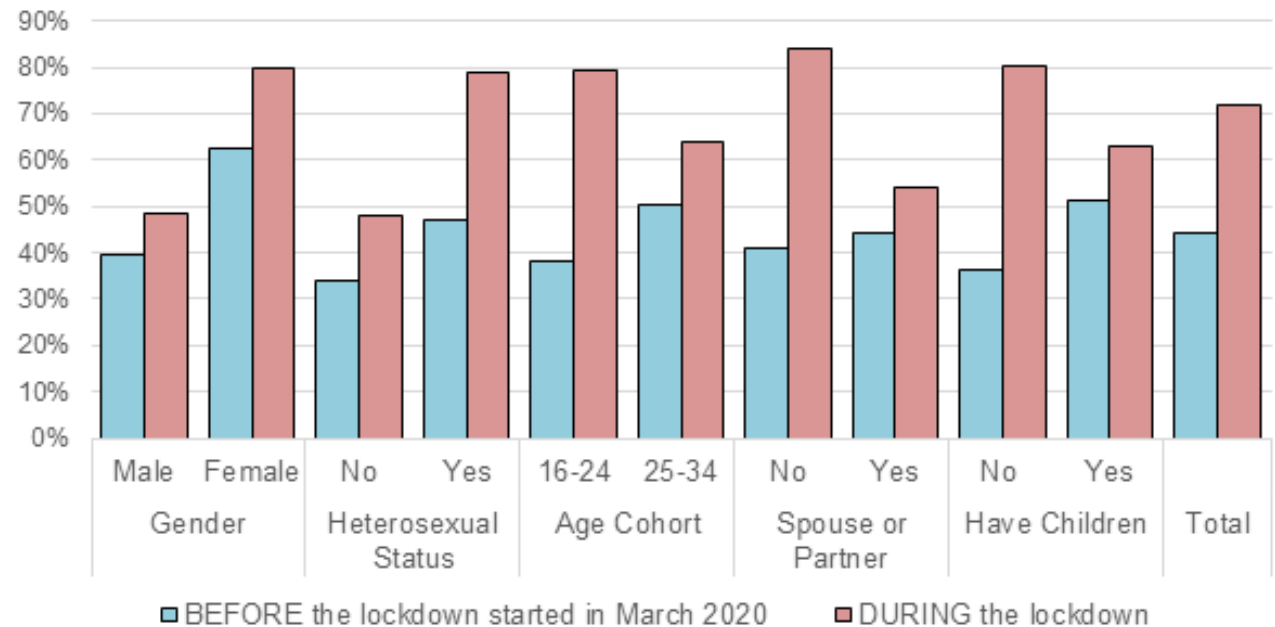
ECONOMIC IMPACT

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



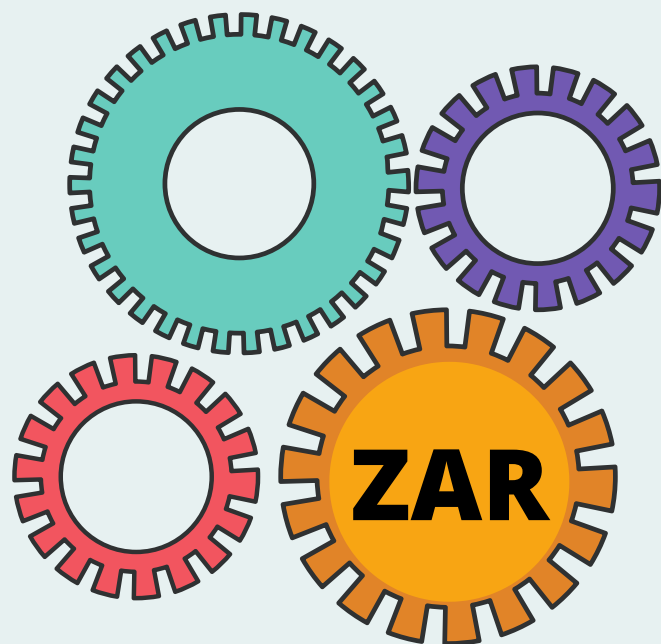
Employment status

- Before lockdown 44% reported that they were unemployed, while 23% were employed 31% were a student or in some kind of work.
- 91% of those who were unemployed were looking for work.
- During lockdown 72% indicated that they were unemployed- a substantial change between the two periods.
- The groups that were most likely to report becoming unemployed were those in the 16-24 age cohort, the single and those with no children.
- About three-fifths had no source of income during this time, further demonstrating that many youth in our sample were vulnerable to poverty.



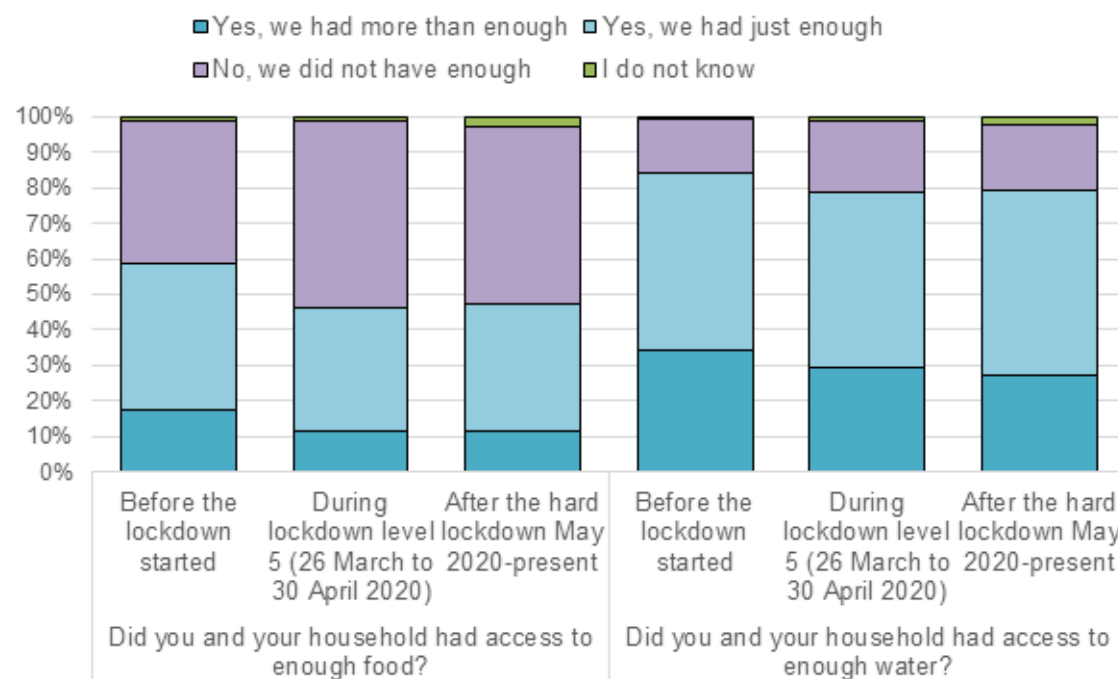
ECONOMIC IMPACT

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



Access to food and water

- Many respondents indicated that they did not have adequate access to food during the different phases of the lockdown.
- There was an increase in the proportion with inadequate access between the pre-lockdown period (40%) and the 'hard' lockdown (53%) and 'post-hard' lockdown (50%) phases.
- Majority of respondents, however, said that they had sufficient access to water during the various stages of the lockdown.
- There was only a slight rise in the percentage with unsatisfactory access during the pre-lockdown period (15%) and the 'hard' lockdown (20%) and 'post-hard' lockdown (19%) phases.



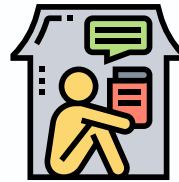
EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



Attendance

- One third of sample were attending some kind of educational institution (n=111)
- 19% were in secondary school, majority in grade 12
- 14% were in higher education institutions



Challenges with home schooling

- Learners and students experienced difficulties with forced home schooling during lockdown.
- Almost all these respondents, wanted more engagement with educators.
- Many reported that the space they have at home to study was filled with disruptions and interruptions.
- HE students were more likely to report this problem than secondary students.
- Most HE students said that they had difficulty accessing technology including a computer (57%), the internet (52%) and email (50%).
- Access to technology was particularly a problem amongst secondary school learners.
- Despite these difficulties, many were positive about their current academic progress and confident that they would be able to pass this year.

HEALTH PROFILE

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



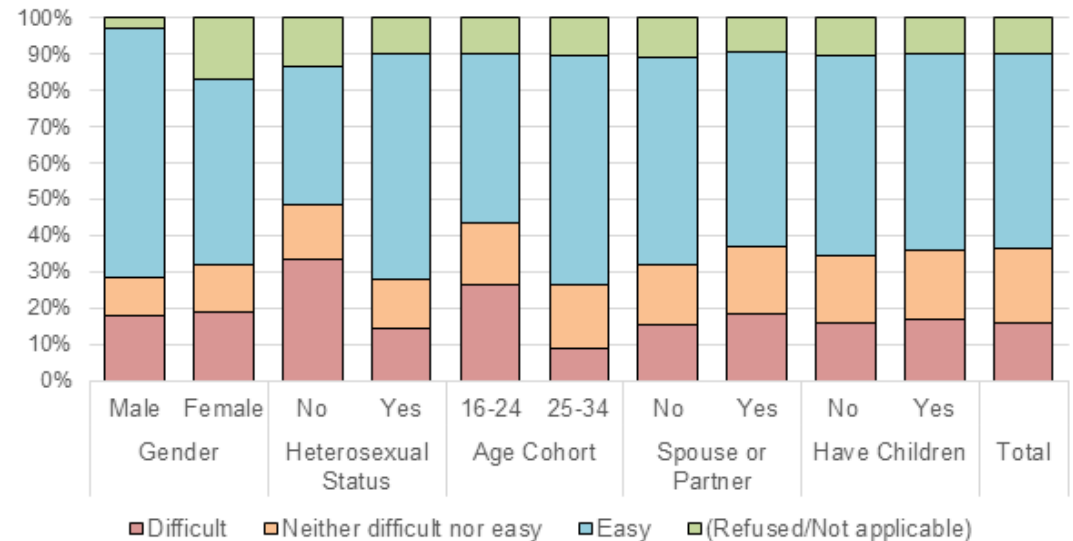
COVID-19 risk

- One in ten participants have been in contact with someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- Most contact occurred at work.
- Majority have not been tested for COVID.
- Only 5% of those tested, were positive.
- Males were more likely to test positive.



Sexual and reproductive health

- About half of the sample said it was easy to access male condoms- males more likely to report this
- Younger participants found it more difficult to access male condoms



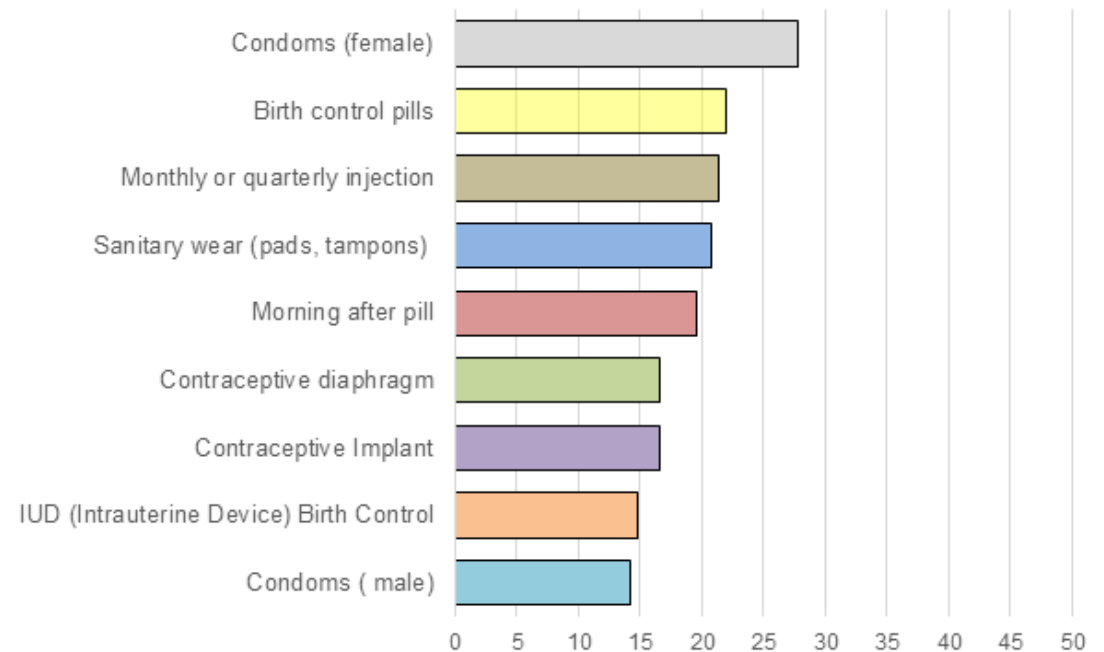
HEALTH PROFILE

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



Sexual and reproductive health- females

- 12% reported being pregnant between March 2020 and July 2021.
- Half of those who were pregnant said it was difficult to access proper medical care.
- Most did not have trouble accessing contraceptives.
- Male condoms were easiest to obtain.
- About one fifth struggled to access birth control pills or sanitary wear like pads or tampons respectively.



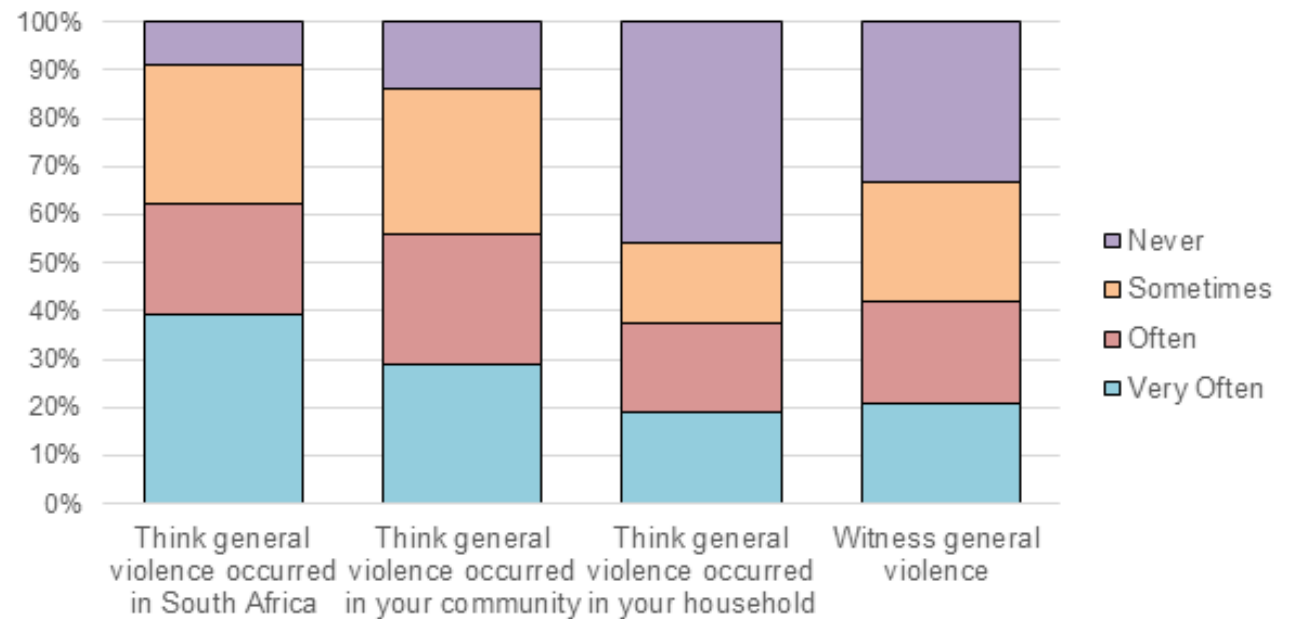
SOCIAL WELLBEING AND SAFETY

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



General violence

- General violence like fighting, stabbings or gunshots were perceived to be common.
- Majority thought that this kind of violence occurred often (23%) or very often (39%) in SA.
- 1 in 5 reported that this form of violence occurred in their household often (18%) or very often (19%).
- More than one third reported to have witnessed this form of violence often (21%) or very often (21%).



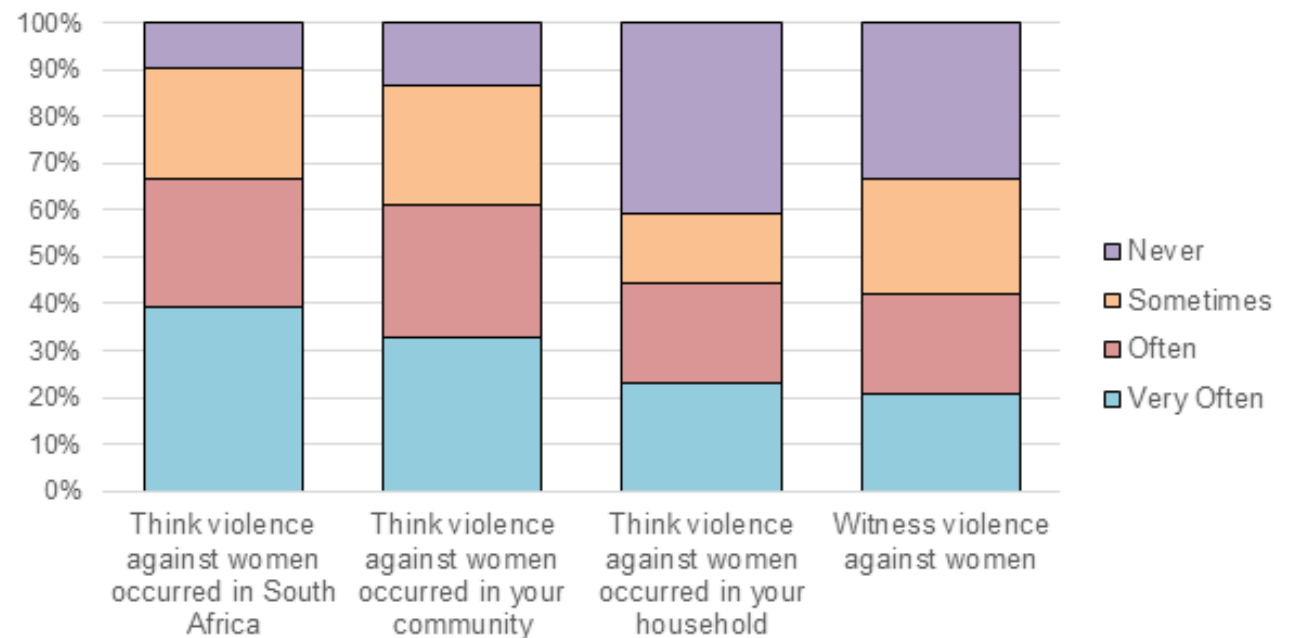
SOCIAL WELLBEING AND SAFETY

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



Violence against women

- Many thought that this violence is common in SA.
- Majority reported that VAW occurred in their households (sometimes (15%) often (21%) very often (23%)).
- Similarly, majority have witnessed VAW (sometimes (21%) often (21%) very often (24%)).
- Witnessing VAW was associated with an increased likelihood of thinking that violence against women is common in South Africa and their community.



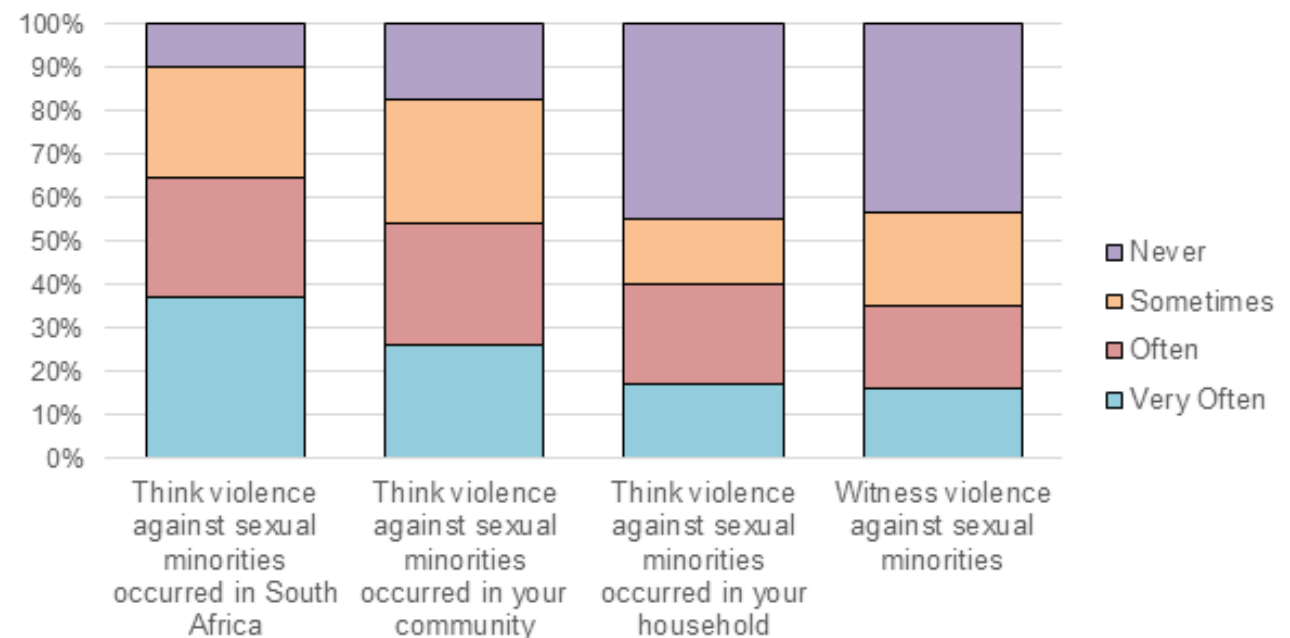
SOCIAL WELLBEING AND SAFETY

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



Violence against sexual minorities

- About two fifths thought this violence occurred very often.
- 45% indicated that this never occurred in their household.
- 23% indicated that this occurs often.
- More than half reported to have witnessed this form of violence.
- If an individual had witnessed violence against sexual minorities, they were more likely to perceive violence against this group as widespread.



SOCIAL WELLBEING AND SAFETY

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



Violence against children

- About two-fifths (37%) of the sample stated that this kind of violence transpired very often in South Africa and 32% said that it occurred often.
- About two-fifths (42%) of the sample reported that this type of violence had not taken place in their household. A fifth said that it happened very regularly, and a similar percentage indicated that it occurred often.
- Having a child did not increase the likelihood of believing that violence against children was common in South Africa.



Violence against older persons

- About a quarter stated that this kind of violence occurred very often in South Africa and 32% said that it occurred often.
- About half (47%) of the sample thought that this type of violence never occurred in their household.
- More than one third indicated that this occurs in their household (16% very often, 20% often, 18% sometimes).

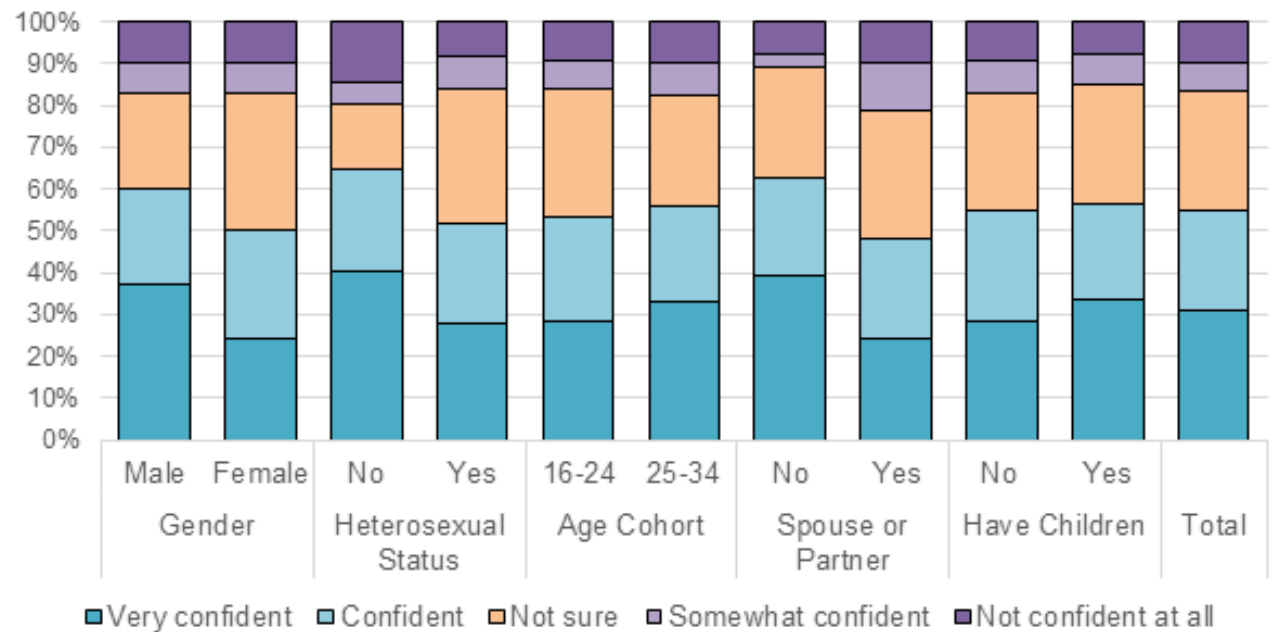
SOCIAL WELLBEING AND SAFETY

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



Accessing support if violence is experienced

- About half (31% very confident, 21% confident) of the sample stated that they were certain of their capacity to access support.
- The more violence an individual had witnessed, the less likely they were to be assured of their ability to obtain help.



UPTAKE OF GRANTS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant

- About a third of the sample said that their household did not receive any social support during this period.
- Female respondents were more likely to have received the Child Support Grant.
- About two-fifths of the sample had applied for the SRD Grant, and of these respondents only about half had been successful, indicating that many in our sample were failed SRD Grant applicants.
 - Females 22%, males 18%
- 29% males successful and 14% females

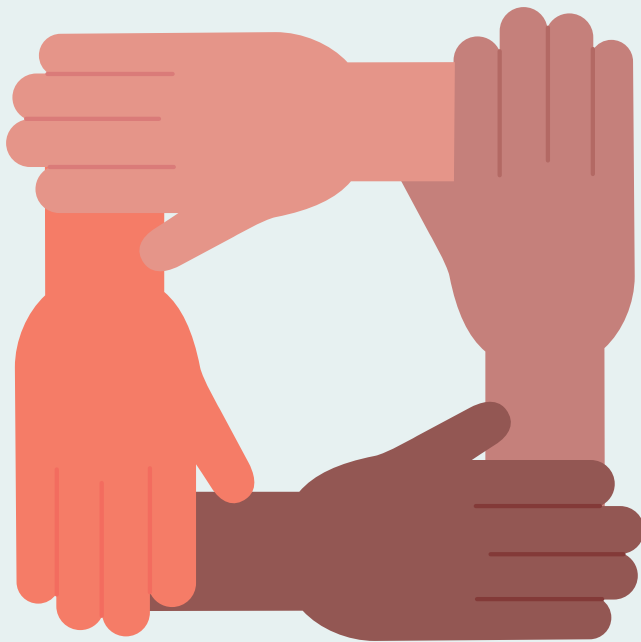


Food parcels and vouchers

- Food parcels were, generally more common than vouchers as 7% of the sample reported receiving vouchers compared to 19% who received parcels.
 - Sexual minority participants were more likely to report receiving food parcels and vouchers than other groups.
 - Those aged 25-34 yrs were the least likely to report being recipients of a food parcel or voucher.
 - Respondents without children and those in the 16-24 age cohort were far more likely to receive parcels than vouchers.
-
- Only 6% had made use of the psychosocial support services offered by DSD- this included counselling services from a local social worker and the GBV command centre

UPTAKE OF GRANTS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

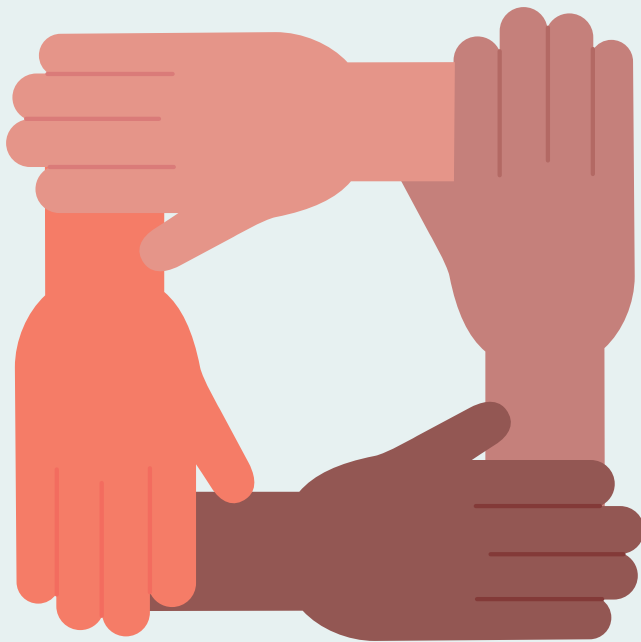


Satisfaction with support services

- Almost one third (31%) of the participants said that the services they previously received through DSD programmes helped them to secure better services during the pandemic, while 42% of the sample stated that it did not.
- Respondents were then asked to indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the programmes offered by DSD and SASSA for young people like themselves during lockdown.
- Only a minority (14%) said that they were dissatisfied with DSD and SASSA programmes offered to young people during lockdown
- Nearly two-fifths of the sample (38%) were satisfied.
- About a third (13% very satisfied, 23% satisfied) were pleased with the way the DSD and SASSA have catered to the needs of young people during the lockdown
- A minority (5% very dissatisfied, 15% dissatisfied) were displeased.

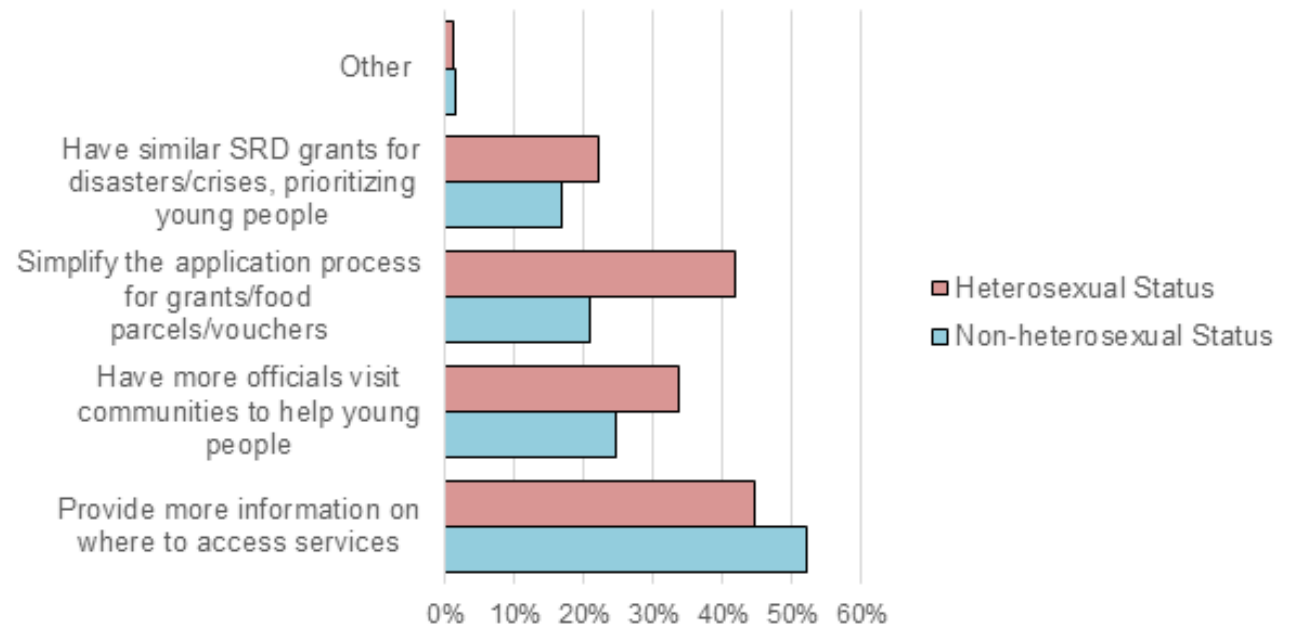
UPTAKE OF GRANTS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN



Recommendations to improve services

- Participants offered a variety of different suggestions for improvement.
 - The most popular was 'provide more information on where to access services'.
 - This was followed by 'simplify the application process for grants', 'have more officials visit communities and have similar SRD grants for other disasters'.
- Application simplification was especially popular amongst those who were dissatisfied with how the DSD and SASSA were helping young people during the pandemic.





SUMMARY

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED THUS FAR?

- Significant increase in youth unemployment
- Inadequate access to proper food and nutrition – link to unemployment
- Youth experienced significant challenges with the 'schooling-from-home' approach
 - Unequal access to online education and digital devices
 - Homes not conducive to full time education- disruptions
- Limited access to healthcare for pregnant women during the lockdown
 - Limited access to contraceptives like birth control
 - Limited access to basic sanitary necessities
- Different forms of violence were perceived to be common in SA during the lockdown
- Witnessing (or exposure to) different forms of violence was common
 - More than a third witnessed general violence, violence against women and violence against older persons
- Majority were confident that they would be able to access support if violence is experienced
 - Witnessing violence decreases likelihood
- While applications for the SRD grant was high, success rate was low
 - Males were more successful than females
- Access to food parcels also low
- General satisfaction with the services offered by DSD and SASSA for youth during the lockdown
 - However, more information on accessing support services needed
 - Simplified application processes for grants