Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 in Solomon Islands

Insights from High Frequency Phone Surveys, September 2022
The Pacific Observatory is a World Bank initiative to increase data availability and quality and to promote evidence-based policy decisions.

The development objective of the Pacific Observatory is...

To improve welfare for the poor and vulnerable in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Island Countries through expanding socio-economic information for better data-driven policymaking.

This presentation utilizes data from the Pacific Observatory’s high frequency phone surveys in Solomon Islands...

To detail socio-economic indicators related to:
- Employment and incomes
- Community trust, food insecurity and coping strategies
- Health care access and COVID-19
Reopening after COVID-19 waves

Context:
- A 2022 COVID-19 community outbreak and the lingering effects from the civil unrest in 2021 dampened economic activity early in 2022, with a 4.5 percent fall in real GDP in 2022.

- With the reopening of the borders and planned investment in infrastructure, a return to real GDP growth, of around 2.6 percent, is expected in 2023.

High Frequency Phone Surveys:
- The fourth round (February 2022) interviewed 2671 households and found that employment had deteriorated, largely because of COVID-19 restrictions.

- The fifth round (September 2022) interviewed 2,507 households at a time when restrictions had been lifted.
Employment and Incomes

Employment was impacted by COVID-19 restrictions but has fully recovered following the easing of covid-related restrictions. Household incomes remain under pressure.

Coping with the pandemic

Most households still needed to use strategies to fulfill basic needs, but there are signs of improvement.

Food insecurity remains an issue.

People had mixed views about whether public trust and security deteriorated around the time of the 2021 riots.

Health

Vaccine hesitancy remains strong, even though more people are now vaccinated.
Survey timing - before, during and after the COVID-19 outbreak

Note: "people vaccinated" is relative to the total population, not those 18 years and older as is reported in subsequent charts.
Note: the stringency index is a composite measure based on nine indicators including: school closures; workplace closures; and travel bans. The stringency index can take values between 0 and 100, with 100 signifying the most stringent restrictions.
Note: Round one and Round two are excluded as very few COVID-19 cases had been recorded in Solomon Islands at that time.
Source: Pacific Community's Pacific Data Hub; Solomon Islands Ministry of Health and Medical Services; and Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker.
Employment and incomes

- Employment recovered
- Household incomes remain under pressure
- Households more optimistic about the economy
Six in ten people said that COVID-19 restrictions were the reason they stopped working in February 2022.

Employment rates in September 2022 were similar in Honiara, other urban areas, and rural areas.

Note: The figures above represent cross-sectional data for adults (aged 18+). Note: Vertical lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals. Source: Round two (December 2020), three (July 2021), four (February 2022) and five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.
...because of informal work

Proportion of people that are working by formality

Proportion of people that are working by sector

Note: The figures above represent cross-sectional data for adults (aged 18+).
Note: Vertical lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals.
Source: Round two (December 2020), round three (July 2021), round four (February 2022), and round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.
Household incomes remain under pressure

More than a third of households said their income fell in the six months to September.

Incomes from non-farm businesses were more likely to fall than to rise.

Agricultural income fell for many households.

Change in total household income in the six months to August 2022:
- Increased: 12%
- Stayed the same: 45%
- Reduced / stopped: 43%

Change in expected agricultural income compared to last growing season:
- Increased: 15%
- Same as usual: 57%
- Less than usual / no income: 28%

Change in non-farm business income:
- Increased: 28%
- Stayed the same: 46%
- Reduced / stopped: 26%

Source: Round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.
Households are more optimistic about the economy

Proportion of population that is ‘very worried’ about their finances over the next month

- December 2020: 41%
- July 2021: 32%
- February 2022: 44%
- September 2022: 26%

Source: Round two (December 2020), round three (July 2021), round four (February 2022), and round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.

Households’ economic outlook for one year ahead

- December 2020: 71%
- July 2021: 61%
- February 2022: 76%
- September 2022: 51%

Note: The figures above represent cross-sectional data. Vertical lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

Source: Round two (December 2020), round three (July 2021), round four (February 2022), and round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.
Community trust, food security, and coping strategies

- Staple food access is high
- Fewer households needed to use coping strategies
- Food insecurity is an ongoing problem
Mixed opinions on community trust and security issues

Change in community trust compared to six months ago

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2020</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2021</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2022</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2022</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change in community security by issue, between July 2021 and February 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Worsened</th>
<th>Stayed the same</th>
<th>Improved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community trust &amp; relations</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage to property</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol &amp; drug abuse</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police intimidation</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land disputes</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic abuse</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The figures above represent data for adults (aged 18+).
Source: Round four (February 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.

Note: The figures above represent cross-sectional data for adults (aged 18+).
Source: Round two (December 2020), round three (July 2021), round four (February 2022), and round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.
Most households could buy staple foods when they needed to

Households attempting to purchase staple food items in September 2022

Of households attempting to buy staple food items, share that was able

Source: Round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.

Note: The figures above represent cross-sectional data.
Note: Vertical lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals.
Source: Round three (July 2021), round four (February 2022), and round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.
But food insecurity remains a common problem

Household food insecurity (September 2022)

- In the last 4 weeks: 11% (Severe food insecurity), 21% (Moderate food insecurity)
- In the last 12 months: 18% (Severe food insecurity), 37% (Moderate food insecurity)

Households food insecurity instances in the past 4 weeks and past 12 months, to September 2022

- Worried not have enough food
- Unable to eat healthy food
- Ate only a few kinds of food
- Skipped a meal
- Ate less than though you should
- Ran out of food
- Hungry but no eat
- Went without eating a whole day

Note: The Food Insecurity Experience Scale defines severe food insecurity as going "without eating for a whole day because of a lack of money or resources." The FIES defines moderate food insecurity as a time when a household/individual "ate less than they thought they should because of a lack of money or resources".

Source: Round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.
Fewer households used coping strategies to fulfill basic needs

**Sustainable coping strategies**
- Total sustainable coping strategies
- Found more work
- Reduced non-food consumption
- Aid from friends/family
- Sold harvest in advance

**Unsustainable coping strategies**
- Total unsustainable coping strategies
- Reduced food consumption
- Purchase on credit
- Borrowed from friends/family
- Spend from savings
- Sold assets
- Delayed payments
- Reduced food consumption
- Sold harvest in advance

Note: The figures above represent cross-sectional data.
Note: Horizontal lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals.
Source: Round three (July 2021) and round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.
Health care access and COVID-19

- Some health care access issues
- Vaccine hesitancy remains a problem
- No easy way to address vaccine hesitancy
Some households have had trouble accessing healthcare

The share of people that needed preventative care, but were unable to get it, was lower in September 2022 than in February 2022.

No statistical difference in percentages for “not accessed” for routine care.

Source: Round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.
COVID-19 vaccine side effects worry many unvaccinated people

Side effects have long been the most common reason for COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, both in rural and urban areas.

An estimated nine percent of adults were vaccine hesitant.

Source: Round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.
Notes: Vertical lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals. Vaccine hesitant respondents are those that are unvaccinated and not planning to get vaccinated, or unvaccinated and unsure if they will get vaccinated.
It may be hard to change the minds of unvaccinated people

People who were hesitant but more openminded are likely now vaccinated...

...but those who remain unvaccinated have firmly held views regarding vaccination.

Source: Round three (July 2021), Round four (February 2022) and Round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys. Note: Vertical lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals.
Few vaccine hesitant people would support vaccine incentives

Proportion of vaccine hesitant respondents who think that vaccine incentives are a good idea

- Yes: 29%
- No: 71%

Proportion of vaccine hesitant respondents that would be convinced to get vaccinated by different numbers of 10kg bags of rice

Note: The question underpinning this chart is “Last year, a group of businesses gave bags of rice to some people who had been vaccinated against COVID-19, to thank them for making the community safer. Do you think this sounds like a good idea?”. This question was asked of respondents who weren’t planning to get vaccinated or weren’t sure whether they’d get vaccinated.
Source: Round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.

Note: This was only asked of respondents who weren’t planning to get vaccinated or weren’t sure whether they’d get vaccinated, but who thought the vaccine incentives used by businesses was a good idea.
Source: Round five (September 2022) of the World Bank high frequency phone surveys.
Acknowledgments and further information

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**References**

Solomon Islands High Frequency Phone Survey On COVID-19, Results From Round 1

COVID-19 in Solomon Islands - Economic and Social Impacts: Insights from the January-February 2022 Round of High Frequency Phone Surveys
Annex: survey methods

High attrition was expected across rounds. To maintain an appropriate sample size, new households were added in each round to replace lost households.

Despite geographic quota targets, re-weighting was also necessary to compensate for areas (and groups) where targets were not reached.

Compensating factors for these differences were developed and included in the re-weighting calculations.

### Dates and sample sizes of rounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Date collected</th>
<th>Household sample size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round one</td>
<td>Jun/Jul 2020</td>
<td>2,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round two</td>
<td>Dec 2020/Jan 2021</td>
<td>2,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round three</td>
<td>Jun/Jul 2021</td>
<td>2,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round four</td>
<td>Jan/Feb 2022</td>
<td>2,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round five</td>
<td>August/September 2022</td>
<td>2,507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Bolded months are those when most data collection occurred, and are the months used as the shorthand to refer to each round in this presentation.

Note: The yellow bars reflect that, if phone survey respondents perfectly represented the wealth distribution, 10 percent of respondents would be from each wealth decile.