



# How is Corona reshaping Ugandan society?

## Ugandan citizens' experiences and opinions on the social impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic

### 1. Introduction and summary

The Coronavirus pandemic continues to affect the lives and livelihoods of people across the globe, and Uganda is no exception. While the number of confirmed cases and deaths associated with Covid-19 remains lower in Uganda than in some other countries, it is clear that the risk level remains high. A range of measures have been introduced in response, including the closure of schools for most students.

The health and economic impacts have dominated discussion of the pandemic, but it would be a mistake to ignore the wider social effects of both the virus and the lockdown measures including school closures.

This brief presents data on Ugandan citizens' experiences and views on the social impacts

of the pandemic. How has it affected citizens' family relationships? How has it affected a range of social problems at household and community level? Do citizens support school closures, and do they perceive any difference in the impact of closures on girls and boys?

Data for the brief comes from Twaweza's *Sauti za Wananchi* survey. *Sauti za Wananchi* is a nationally-representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. Information on the overall methodology is available at [www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti). For this brief, data were collected from 1,500 respondents in the eighteenth round of calls to the *Sauti za Wananchi* panel, conducted between 27 October and 1 December, 2020.

This brief was written and produced by  
Twaweza East Africa.

Katalima Bend Plot 6, Off Katalima Road,  
Next to Water for People.

t: +256 312 112815 | e: [info@twaweza.org](mailto:info@twaweza.org) |  
[www.twaweza.org/sauti](http://www.twaweza.org/sauti)



The key findings are:

- Half of citizens say their family relations are unchanged by Covid-19 and lockdown measures
- Across a range of social problems, citizens report the situation at home has neither improved nor deteriorated during the pandemic
- Citizens say violence, teen pregnancy and other social problems have increased in their community during the pandemic
- 8 out of 10 citizens support the closure of schools in order to slow the spread of the Coronavirus
- 2 out of 3 citizens say they now value school attendance more than before the school closures
- At the same time, most citizens think girls are more affected by school closures than boys



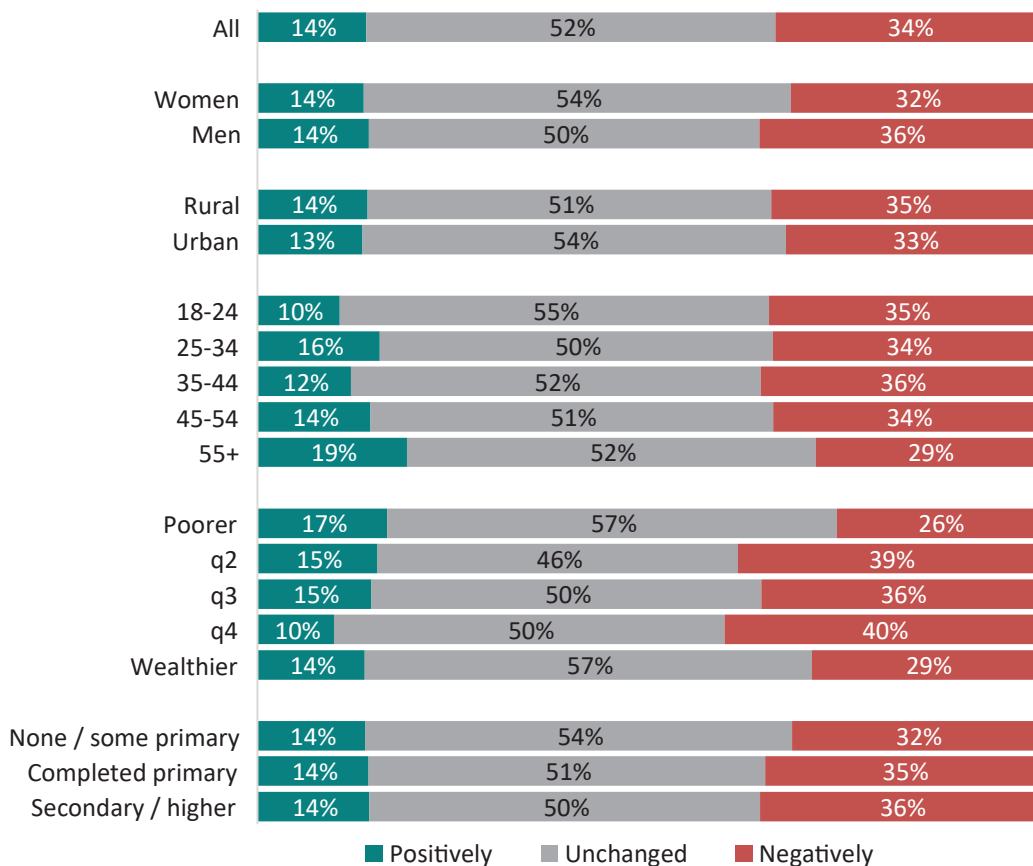
## 2. Seven insights about citizens' views and experiences on the social impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic

### **Insight 1: Half of citizens say their family relations are unchanged by Covid-19 and lockdown measures**

Half of citizens (52%) say their family relationships have not been changed either positively or negatively by the Coronavirus pandemic and lockdown measures introduced in response. But a significant one out of three citizens (34%) say their relationships have been negatively affected by the pandemic and lockdown, while a small number say their relationships have been improved by the pandemic.

Older citizens are more likely to say things have improved, but otherwise there are no clear demographic patterns.

**Figure 1: How has your relationship with other family members been affected by Covid-19, including the lockdown and other response measures?<sup>1</sup>**



**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, r18 (October 27 - December 1, 2020);

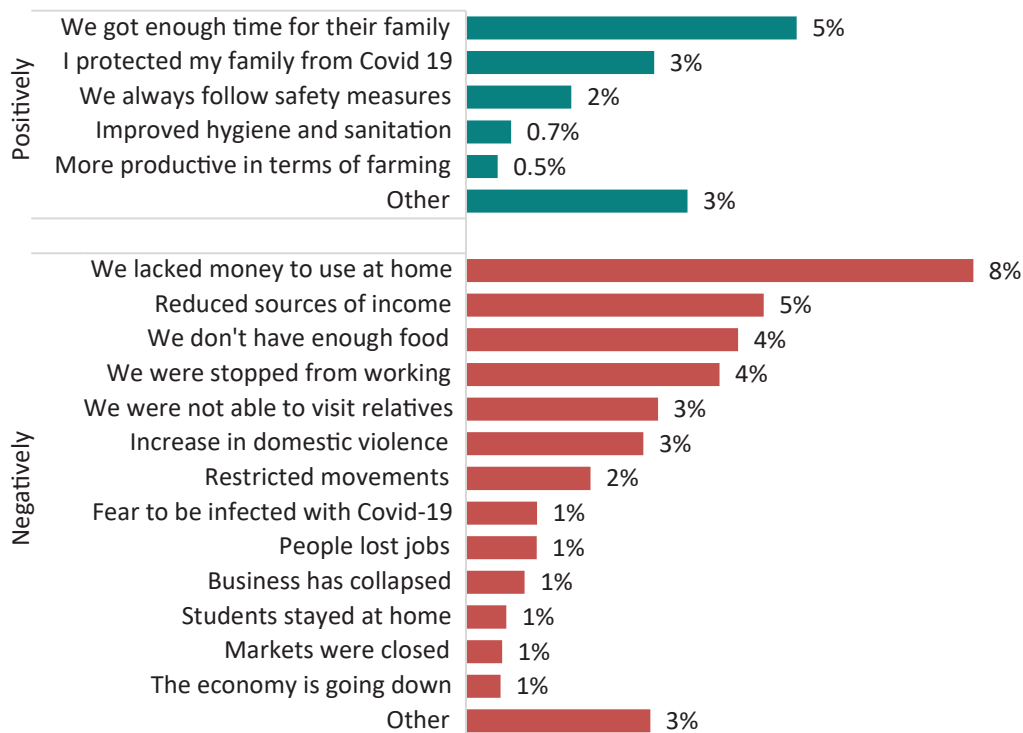
**Base:** all respondents; n=1,500

The main improvement that citizens report to their family relationships as a result of Coronavirus is being able to spend more time with their family (5%).

The main ways citizens report that their family relationships have been negatively affected are a lack of money to use at home (8%), reduced income (5%), lack of food (4%), being forced to stop work (4%), and being unable to visit relatives (3%).

1 Percentages in charts may not add up to 100 % due to rounding

**Figure 2: In what way were your family relationships affected?**  
(multiple responses permitted)



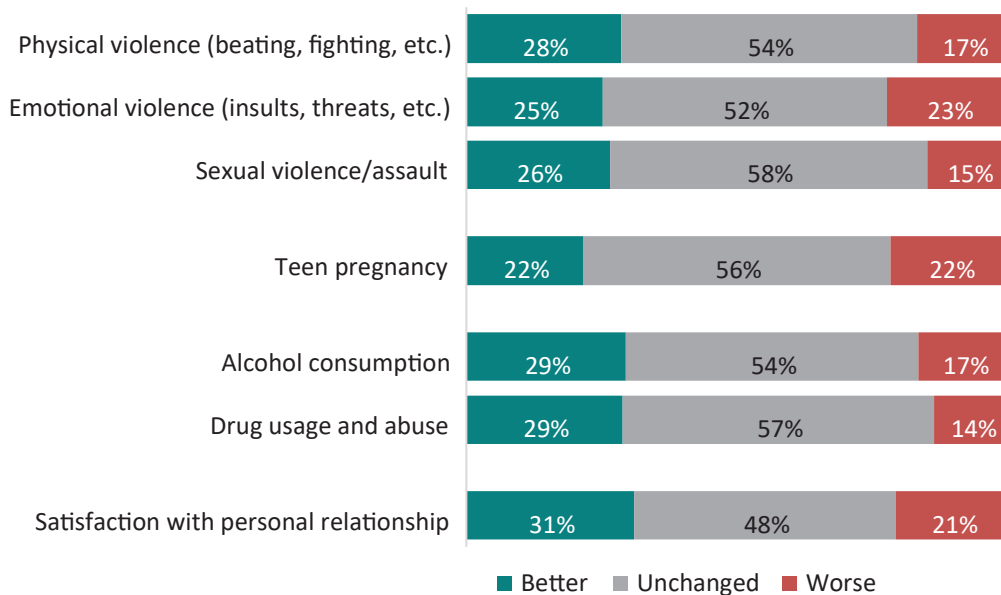
**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, r18 (October 27 - December 1, 2020);  
**Base:** all respondents; n=1,500

**Insight 2: Across a range of social problems, citizens report the situation at home has neither improved nor deteriorated during the pandemic**

Most citizens (52-58%) report that across a range of social problems, the situation remains essentially unchanged at their home during the pandemic. This includes physical, emotional and sexual violence, teen pregnancy, alcohol consumption and drug abuse. In most of these cases, slightly more citizens report that the situation at home has improved during the pandemic than say it has gotten worse. At the same time, a significant minority of 1 out of 5 citizens report increases in emotional violence (23%), teen pregnancy (22%) and lower satisfaction with their personal relationships (21%) in their home as a result of the pandemic.

Three out of ten (31%) say their satisfaction with their personal relationship has improved, compared to two out of ten (21%) who say this has deteriorated.

**Figure 3: At home, have the following things become better or worse during the Coronavirus pandemic?**

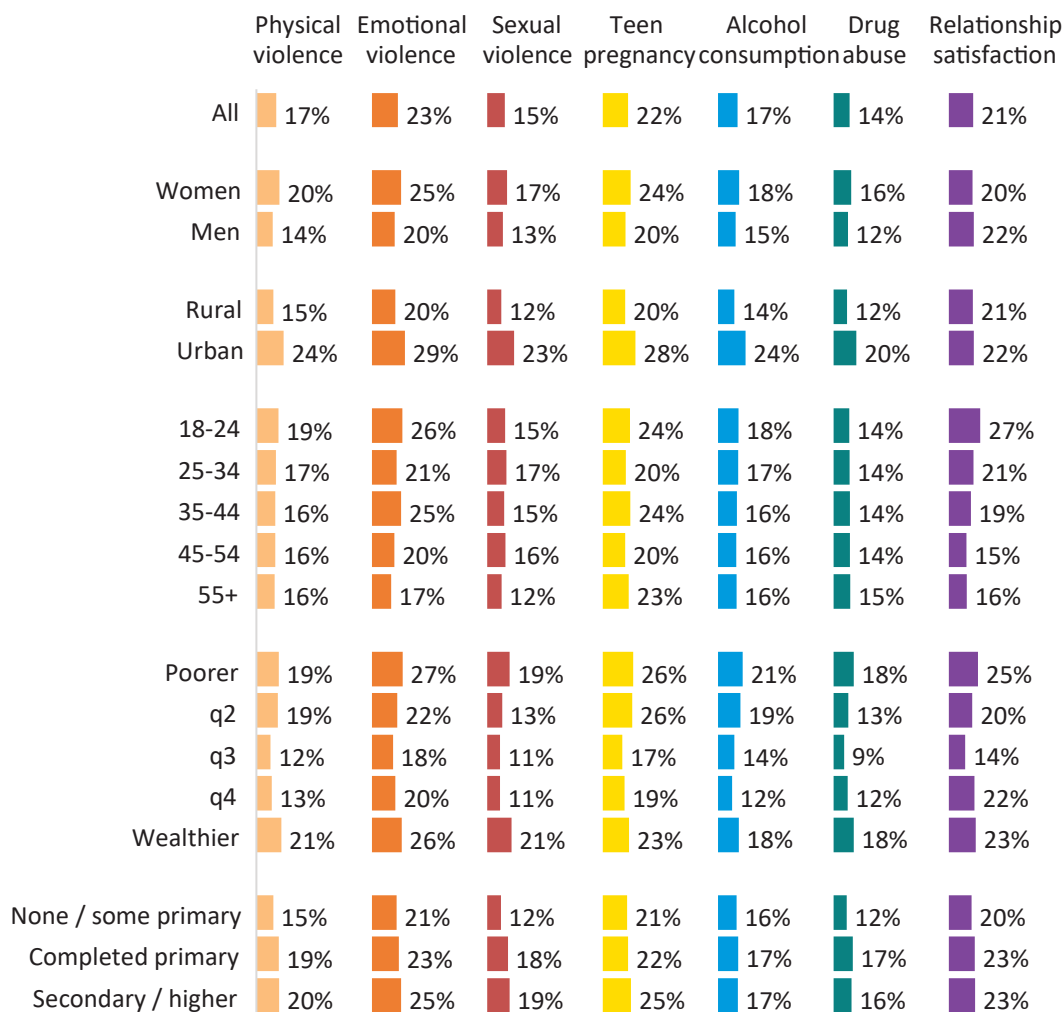


**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, r18 (October 27 - December 1, 2020);

**Base:** all respondents; n=1,500

Across these social issues, women are a little more likely than men to say the situation has become worse, and those in urban areas are more likely to say so than residents of rural areas. Young people are more likely than older people to say their personal relationship has suffered.

**Figure 4: Percent who say the following things have become worse at home during the pandemic?**



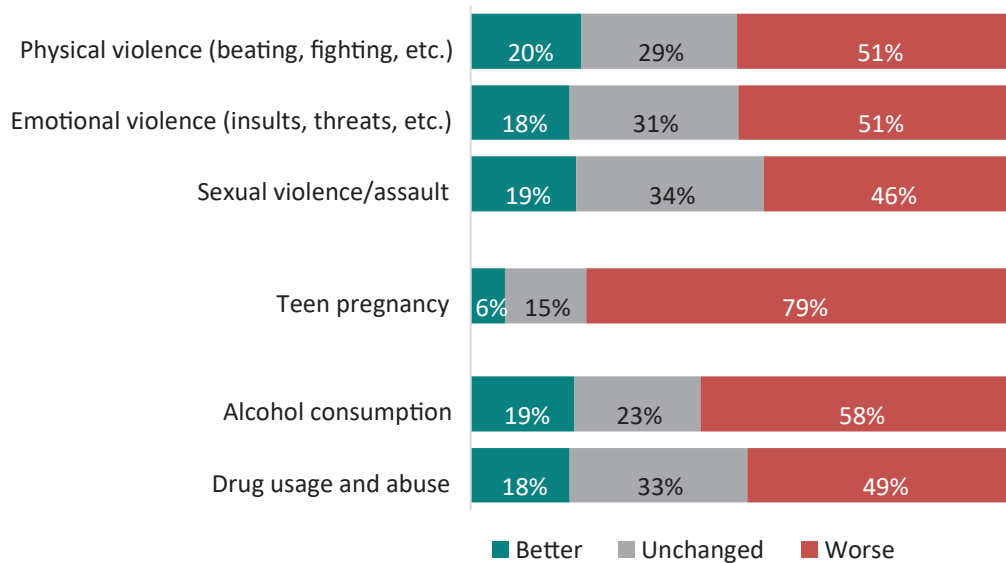
Source: *Sauti za Wananchi*, r18 (October 27 - December 1, 2020);

Base: all respondents; n=1,500

### Insight 3: Citizens say violence, teen pregnancy and other social problems have increased in their community during the pandemic

Eight out of ten citizens (79%) say teen pregnancy has become a bigger problem during the Coronavirus pandemic, and half say physical (51%), emotional (51%) and sexual (46%) violence have gotten worse. Citizens also report increases in problems related to alcohol consumption (58%) and drug abuse (49%).

**Figure 5: In your community, have the following things become better or worse during the pandemic?**



**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, r18 (October 27 - December 1, 2020);  
**Base:** all respondents; n=1,500

Citizens’ perception of changes in these social problems are largely consistent across key demographic groups. Women and residents of urban areas are a little more likely to say violence has grown as a problem, and older citizens are a little less likely to say so.



**Figure 6: Percent who say the following have become worse in their community during the Coronavirus?**

	Physical violence	Emotional violence	Sexual violence	Teen pregnancy	Alcohol consumption	Drug abuse	Relationship satisfaction
All	51%	51%	46%	79%	58%	49%	35%
Women	54%	53%	49%	78%	58%	49%	33%
Men	49%	49%	43%	79%	57%	49%	36%
Rural	51%	49%	44%	79%	57%	50%	35%
Urban	52%	56%	52%	79%	61%	46%	34%
18-24	53%	55%	48%	81%	60%	53%	38%
25-34	52%	51%	46%	78%	63%	48%	35%
35-44	49%	54%	47%	80%	49%	47%	37%
45-54	51%	48%	44%	82%	56%	45%	27%
55+	47%	40%	43%	69%	54%	50%	29%
Poorer	55%	57%	53%	82%	60%	54%	42%
q2	49%	47%	46%	79%	63%	50%	34%
q3	50%	47%	42%	77%	63%	53%	32%
q4	51%	52%	41%	84%	49%	45%	33%
Wealthier	51%	51%	48%	73%	56%	44%	34%
None / some primary	48%	49%	44%	80%	58%	49%	33%
Completed primary	53%	53%	49%	79%	58%	49%	36%
Secondary / higher	55%	51%	46%	76%	57%	50%	33%

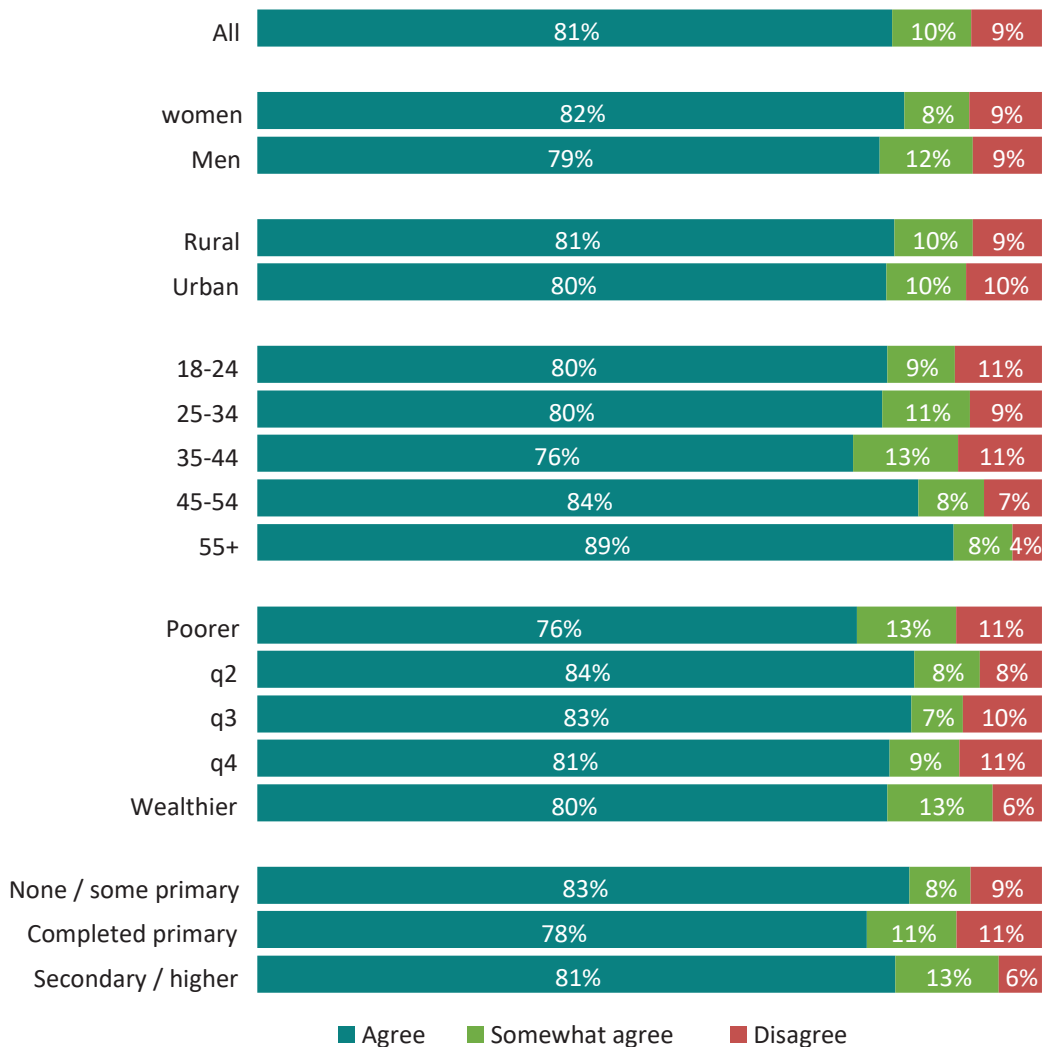
**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, r18 (October 27 - December 1, 2020);

**Base:** all respondents; n=1,500

### Insight 4: 8 out of 10 citizens support the closure of schools in order to slow the spread of the Coronavirus

A clear majority of citizens (81%) agree with the decision by government to close schools as a measure to stop the spread of the Coronavirus. This figure is broadly consistent across key demographic groups, though higher among older citizens (89%).

**Figure 7: How much do you agree with the decision by government to close schools as a measure to stop the spread of the Coronavirus?**

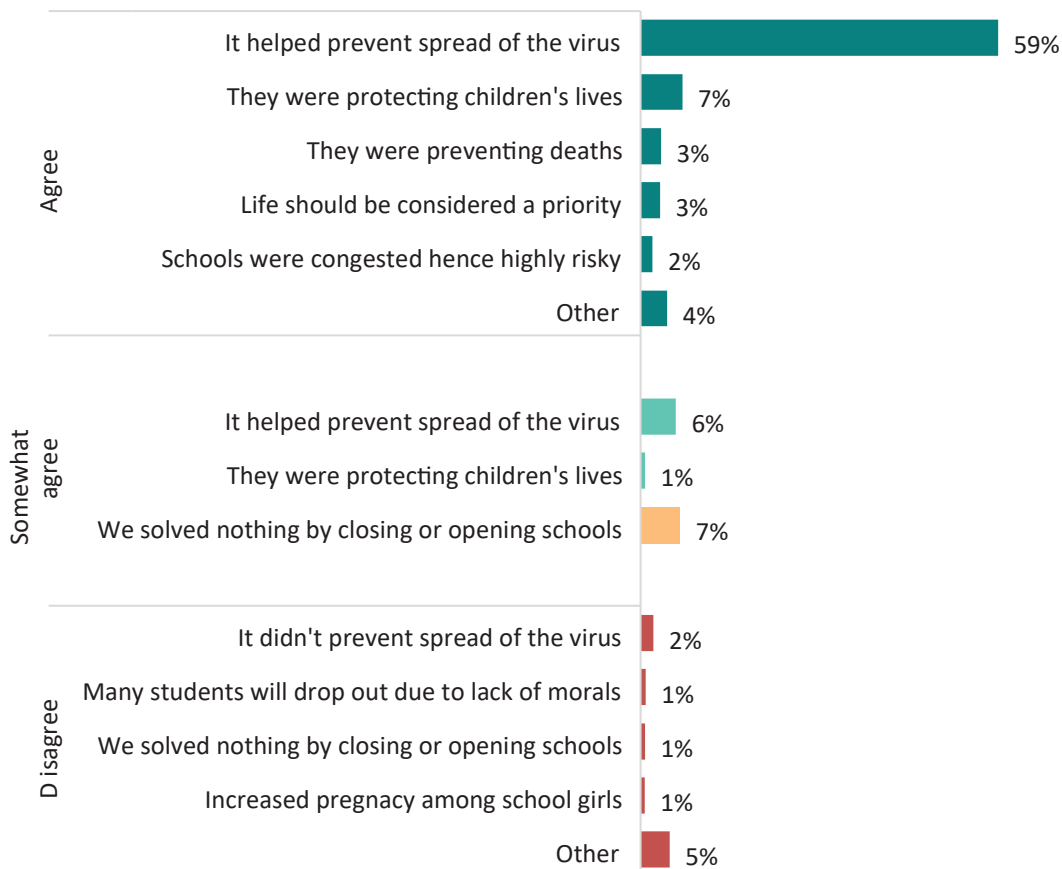


**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, r18 (October 27 - December 1, 2020);

**Base:** all respondents; n=1,500

Six out of ten (59%) say closing schools helped prevent the spread of the virus, giving this as the main reason for supporting the move, and others (7%) say it helped protect children’s lives.

**Figure 8: Why do you agree /disagree with the decision by government to close schools as a measure to stop the spread of the Coronavirus?**  
(multiple responses permitted)



**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, r18 (October 27 - December 1, 2020);

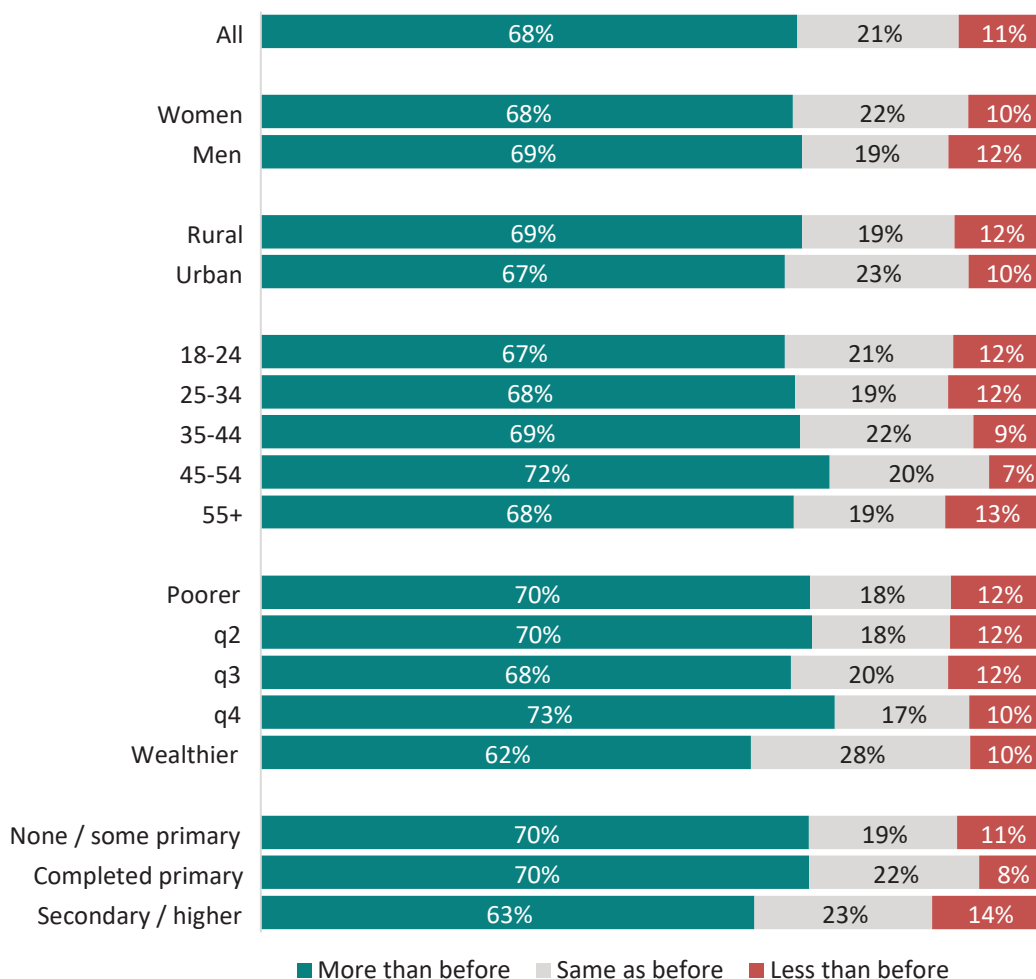
**Base:** all respondents; n=1,500

### **Insight 5: 2 out of 3 citizens say they now value school attendance more than before the school closures**

Two thirds of citizens (68%) say the closure of schools has led them to value school attendance in children's lives more than before.

This is largely consistent across different demographic groups, though wealthier citizens and those with higher levels of education are less likely to say they now value schooling more, and more likely to say this is unchanged.

**Figure 9: As a result of this school closure, how much do you value school attendance in children's lives?**



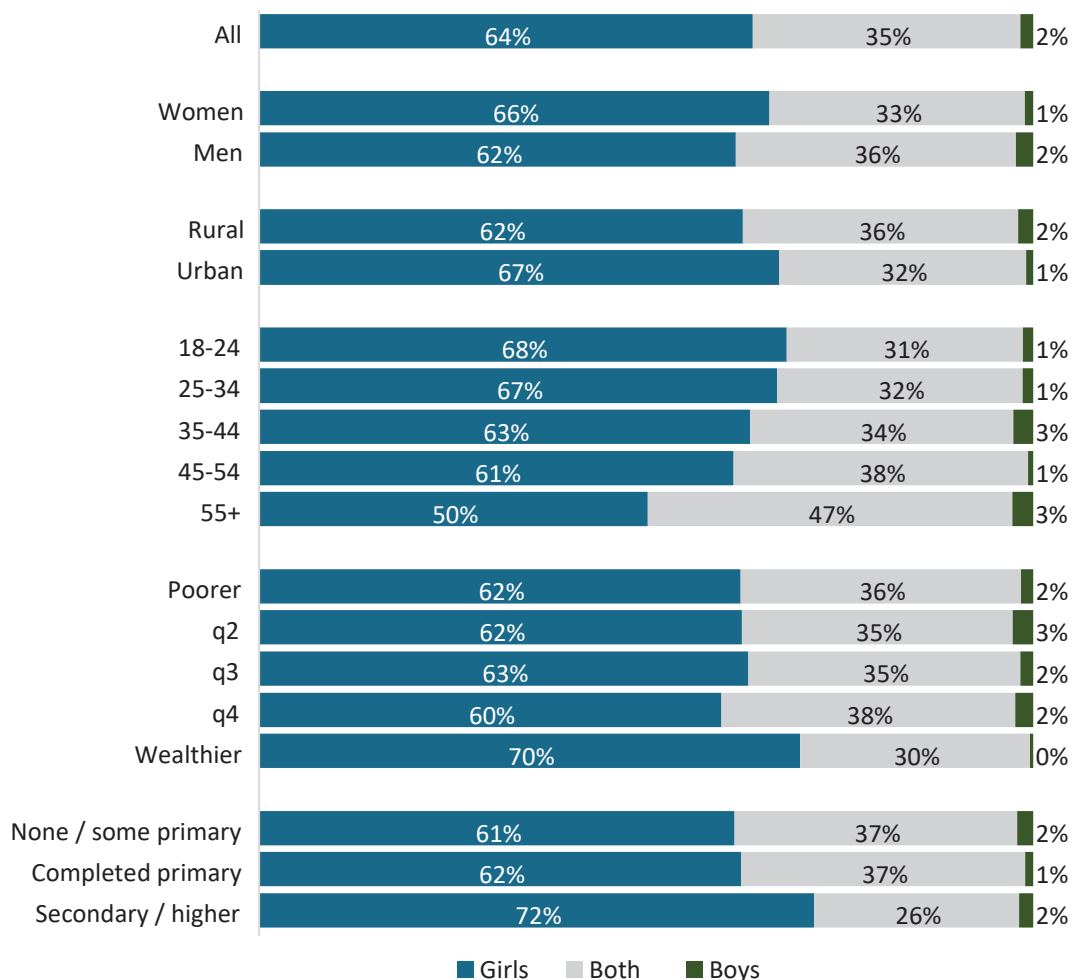
**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, r18 (October 27 - December 1, 2020);  
**Base:** all respondents; n=1,500

**Insight 6: Most citizens think girls are more affected by school closures than boys**

Six out of ten citizens (64%) think girls are more affected by school closures than boys. A very small number (2%) say the opposite: that boys are more affected than girls.

Women, residents of urban areas, younger citizens, wealthier and better-educated citizens are more likely than others to think girls are more affected by school closures than boys.

**Figure 11: Who do you think is more affected by school closure - boys or girls?**

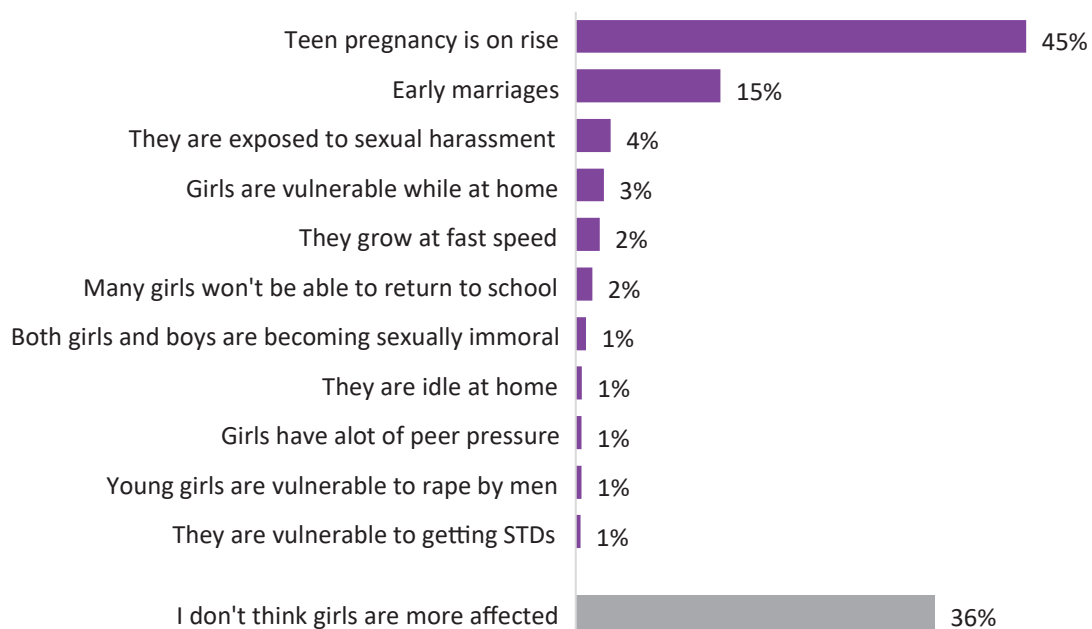


**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, r18 (October 27 - December 1, 2020);

**Base:** all respondents; n=1,500

The main reason citizens say girls are more affected than boys by school closures is that teenage pregnancy is increasing (45%), followed by early marriage (15%). Combining these reasons with others, almost all the reasons why citizens see girls as more affected by school closures relate to sexual behaviour.

**Figure 12: Why do you say girls are more affected by school closures?**  
(multiple responses permitted)



**Source:** *Sauti za Wananchi*, r18 (October 27 - December 1, 2020);

**Base:** all respondents; n=1,500

### 3. Conclusions

This brief presents data on some of the social impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic and the measures introduced to reduce its spread. The findings can be seen as falling under three headings: family relationships, social problems, and school closures.

In terms of family relationships, it is surely unsurprising that more citizens say their relationships have become worse during the pandemic than say they have become better. And yet, the biggest group say the quality of their family relationships has not changed. More significant, perhaps, is the finding that among those who say things have got worse, the reasons relate primarily to economic matters – lost jobs and income, difficulty getting food, etc. This is a sign that the economic consequences of lockdowns are having knock-on effects on family relationships.

In terms of wider social problems – violence, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse – there is a marked difference between what citizens report as happening in their community and what they say is happening in their own home.


At home level, most citizens say there has been no change, and more say that the situation has improved during lockdown than say it has deteriorated. Nonetheless, a significant proportion do admit that things have gotten worse in their own homes.

At community level, however, citizens tell a very different story. In terms of physical, emotional and sexual violence, alcohol consumption and drug abuse, citizens are 2-3 times more likely to say the situation has become worse during the pandemic than better. And a massive eight out of ten say teenage pregnancy has increased as a problem.

This discrepancy can probably be accounted for by a combination of two factors. Some citizens may be reluctant to admit that a problem exists in their own household, while one or two visible cases of violence, teenage pregnancy or drug abuse may attract widespread attention. In other words, the true situation in households may be a little worse than citizens claim, and the situation in their community may be a little better.

School closures have been one of the most high-profile and widespread measures taken in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This brief reports that the closures have broad public support, and most citizens believe they have helped prevent the spread of the virus. Most citizens also say they now value school attendance more highly than before.

There is also a widespread recognition that school closures have affected girls more than boys – largely because girls are seen as more vulnerable than boys to the consequences of sexual temptation while idle, and to sexual violence. Given the very high level of concern about the rise of teenage pregnancy during the pandemic, this belief may well be justified.



In all, this brief suggests that the government – and wider society – should turn their attention to the deeper social consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic and associated lockdown measures. And perhaps they would be wise to introduce measures to mitigate the impact of lockdowns. For example, can economic support be better targeted to ensure it reaches those who need it, to reduce strain on families? And if the reported rise in teenage pregnancy is confirmed by data from health providers, can something be done to reduce this risk as well as support the young girls who have already fallen victim?