

ISSN 2328-2134
DOI:10.17265/2328-2134

International Relations and Diplomacy

Volume 9, Number 7, July 2021



From Knowledge to Wisdom

David Publishing Company
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International Relations and Diplomacy

Volume 9, Number 7, July 2021 (Serial Number 94)



David Publishing Company
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Publication Information:

International Relations and Diplomacy is published monthly in print (ISSN 2328-2134) by David Publishing Company located at 3 Germay Dr., Unit 4 #4651, Wilmington DE 19804, USA.

Aims and Scope:

International Relations and Diplomacy, a professional scholarly peer reviewed academic journal, commits itself to promoting the academic communication about recent developments on Relations and Diplomacy, covers all sorts of research on international relations, international security studies, politics, international political economy, regional studies, local government, public law and policy, military study, foreign affairs and other relevant areas and tries to provide a platform for experts and scholars worldwide to exchange their latest findings.

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Abstracted/Indexed in:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ★CrossRef; | ★Index Copernicus International; |
| ★WorldCat; | ★Scientific Indexing Services; |
| ★Google Scholar; | ★Scholar Steer, USA; |
| ★J-Gate; | ★Polish Scholarly Bibliography (PBN); |
| ★CiteFactor, USA; | ★American Federal Computer Library Center (OCLC), USA; |
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| ★Chinese Database of CEPIS; | ★Wanfang Data; |
| ★China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI); | ★VIP Database (CQVIP); |

Subscription Information:

Print \$520 (per year)

For past issues, please contact: international@davidpublishing.com, shelly@davidpublishing.com

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The Editors wish to express their warm thanks to the people who have generously contributed to the process of the peer review of articles submitted to International Relations and Diplomacy.

International Relations and Diplomacy

Volume 9, Number 7, July 2021 (Serial Number 94)

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COVID-19 and the Tipping of Households Into Poverty in Senegal

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Based on household data from the "Jàngandoo" education quality barometer collected from March to July 2019 and on the "COVID-19 and family" survey conducted in December 2020, this article compares the vulnerabilities faced by households before the pandemic and in the post-pandemic period. It analysis variations in household living conditions and in their financial, food, health and educational vulnerabilities of Dakar, Diourbel, Tambacounda and Ziguinchor in Senegal. The benefit of social protection in the same regions was also studied. It appears that COVID-19 is a major shock that has led to a decline in household living conditions from several angles affecting human capital. The southern and eastern regions (Ziguinchor and Tambacounda) were more affected, while the regions of Dakar and Diourbel were less exposed to the consequences of the pandemic. Inequities among regions persist, and COVID-19 has accentuated them. In addition to health interventions, the actions that should be undertaken are in the area of developing autonomous territorial poles to break the dependence on other geographical areas.

Keywords: COVID-19, Vulnerabilities, Households, Living Arrangements, Senegal

Introduction

Since December 2019, the world has been shaken by a disease that has become a pandemic linked to a virus (SARS-CoV-2) called "COVID-19". This virus, which appeared in China in November 2019 in the city of Wuhan, quickly spread to almost every country in the world. A global state of emergency was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 30 January 2020. The first case in Africa was recorded in February 2020 in Egypt; and in Senegal, the first case, "imported", was detected on 2 February 2020; in the United States it was detected on 2 March 2020. Like other countries in the world, all sectors of life in Senegal are fully affected by the disease. The economy, social and cultural activities, political life, public administration, the private sector, education, health, etc., are drastically affected.

This pandemic comes at a time when Senegal, a developing country, is already facing many challenges (UNDP, 2019; World Bank, 2019; ANSD, 2018) such as structural poverty. Such massive poverty is the result of public policies that have been poorly oriented towards the development of natural, economic, and social potential for several decades (Fall, Antoine, & Cissé, 2011). Despite limited resources, the Senegalese government, supported by its development partners, very early on launched a household assistance plan to

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mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. It is true that the crisis has increased the vulnerability of households by reducing their purchasing power and their ability to secure the rights to education, health and healthy, quality food. These situations can be experienced as shocks that will increase risks to human capital development and weaken resilience and livelihoods.

It is in this context that this article examines changes in household living conditions during and after COVID-19. It focuses on two types of indicators: contextual indicators (household size, resource provider, and the availability of home-based tutors) and six forms of vulnerability (those related to living conditions, financial difficulties, difficulties in feeding oneself, paying for health care, paying school fees, and the coverage of households benefiting from social protection), more specifically changes in household size and in the standard of living of households.

Following this introduction, the next part is devoted to a literature review focusing on studies of the social effects of COVID-19 in Senegal and Africa. The second part deals with methodological issues and the data used. The last part of the article presents the results and their discussion, particularly the major changes in living conditions and vulnerabilities.

Literature Review: A Context of Deepening Vulnerabilities

The informal economy, which accounts for a large share of the economy in West Africa, combined with weak state budgets, makes it difficult to invest in long-term social plans. As a result, the global crisis generated by COVID-19 is detrimental and potentially disastrous for countries as fragile and vulnerable as those in West Africa (OECD, 2020).

In addition, government measures to mitigate the risks of the virus' spread have indirect effects on households and family structures and configurations. They have a major impact in terms of increasing domestic violence and gender-based violence in certain countries and socio-cultural contexts, as shown by a CARE survey in May 2020 in West and Central Africa.

Similarly, the World Bank has published a study on the socio-economic effects of the pandemic in International Development Association (IDA) countries, which showed effects on income, employment, and human capital that may further widen the gaps between different social categories.

For example, about two-thirds of all households in an IDA country report having experienced income declines; an average of 29% of respondents in IDA countries had stopped working as a result of COVID-19; an average of 51% of households report that an adult has skipped at least one meal due to lack of money in the last 30 days, compared to 34% in non-IDA countries. The crisis has affected education, with less than 30% of children continuing school since the outbreak of the pandemic.

In 2020, an evaluation of the impact of COVID-19 on the initiatives developed for the empowerment of women of the SWEDD Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend project was conducted in Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad.

The survey shows that in Côte d'Ivoire, 1,231 adolescents, young girls and women who benefited from support for income-generating activities stopped their activities during this period. In Mauritania, out of the 2,500 planned, only 233 adolescents, girls and women were actually able to benefit from vocational training during this period and the beneficiaries of income-generating activities had to stop working.

In Niger, 93% of respondents said that the COVID-19 crisis had an impact on project activities at that time (Fall, 2020).

According to another study entitled “Evaluation de l’impact socio-économique de la pandémie de coronavirus (Covid-19) en République Centrafricaine”, carried out by UNDP (2020b) in May 2020, the closure of 3,679 functional schools, representing 1,416,969 learners, entails high social and economic costs. Indeed, the disruption caused by the closure of schools and universities, together with the shrinking of the labor market, including temporary jobs, affects all communities, especially those living in conflict zones, and particularly refugees and internally displaced persons. They make the living conditions of young people, people with physical and moral disabilities, households and especially female-headed households even more difficult, and increase the risks of violation of the rights of women, girls, and children, especially with regard to the propensity to increase cases of rape, marital violence, early marriage, and other gender-based violence.

In addition to this, some households initiate practices that increase their vulnerability and make post-crisis difficult, as can be seen in Cameroon according to the findings of a study on the potential socio-economic effects of COVID-19—a UNDP (2020c) summary assessment in March 2020.

This shows that some households incur additional expenditure on health for protective measures or on education for children at home. Expenditure adjustments will be made to meet incompressible costs and expenses such as immediate consumption for survival at the expense of health and security for future investment in education. Some households may resort to negative strategies in the event of difficulties, including decapitalization, indebtedness, and dependence on better-off social categories.

More specifically in Senegal, a survey entitled “High Frequency Telephone Survey (HFS)” conducted by ANSD, the General Directorate of Planning and Economic Policies between June-July 2020, revealed that six out of 10 households tried to buy food without success. Similarly, a quarter of households that needed medical care did not have access to it, the main reason given being lack of money.

These findings echo the work of the Laboratoire de Recherche sur les Transformations Économiques et Sociales (LARTES-IFAN) at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, which has conducted several studies on the impacts of COVID-19 on Senegalese society. Firstly, the study on the socio-economic situation in Senegal before the COVID-19 pandemic was based on data from the LARTES-IFAN study as part of the Jàngandoo Barometer on 16,000 representative households at the departmental level and collected between April and July 2019 (Fall & Cissé, 2017; Fall, Cissé, Moussa & Lô, 2021). This study highlighted the significant social protection needs of households when it was noted that only 16.9% of households benefit from social protection coverage under any social protection program.

During the first phase of COVID-19, an increase in the hunger indicator was observed in two regions of Senegal (Kolda and Kaolack), which tripled in these two rural areas, as well as a drop in the emotional well-being of women, who felt more unhappy since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. This survey was conducted by LARTES-IFAN in collaboration with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) on the impact of COVID-19 on 3,003 rural women in 2020 (Fall, Sèye, Lô, Leport, Peterman & Hidrobo, 2021).

The depth of the crisis was such that 95.9% of the 441 cultural actors declared that they had suffered losses as a result of the pandemic (Lartes, Musée des Civilisations Noires & Théodore Monod, 2021) according to the study conducted with the “Musée des Civilisations Noires” and the “Musée Théodore Monod of IFAN” on the impact of COVID-19. At the same time, a new study was conducted on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in partnership with Lux Dev with the support of the European Union on 200 SMEs in the five southern and eastern regions (Fall, Lô & Ndiaye, 2021). Again, the data reveal that a very large proportion

of enterprises (92.7%) stress that the COVID-19 pandemic is a burden on business. As a result, 79% of businesses (195) report that they have experienced cash flow pressures related to the COVID-19 pandemic and difficulties that could lead to a complete cessation of activity (bankruptcy, liquidation, etc.).

The “Centre de recherche pour le développement économique et social” (CRDES) in collaboration with the Center for Global Development (CGD) also conducted a survey in April 2020 on the COVID-19 crisis in Senegal. This work revealed that 86.8% of households in all regions of the country report that their income over the past seven days has been lower than normal. This percentage does not vary significantly between Dakar (83.8%) and the rest of Senegal (87.8%). Faced with this situation, many households have adopted a strategy of reducing the number of meals. This reduction appears to be more significant in Dakar. The number of people who said they reduced the number of meals four to seven times a week rose sharply in Dakar and in the rest of Senegal.

This diversity of scientific production on the impacts of COVID-19 reveals the depth of the crisis and the major changes that households experienced between 2019 and 2020, the subject of this contribution.

Methodology and Data

The data used in this analysis come from the Barometer on the quality of learning in Senegal called “Jàngandoo” (“learning together” in French). It was designed and implemented by the “Laboratoire de Recherche sur les Transformations Économiques et Sociales” (LARTES) of the Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire (IFAN) within the Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (UCAD) since 2012. Although focused on education, the data collected by Jàngandoo, representative of the 45 departments of the country, are divided into three main components:

- socio-demographic and economic characteristics of households,
- children’s tests in reading, mathematics and general knowledge,
- school profiles and learning conditions.

For the 2019 edition, data collection was conducted electronically between March and June 2019. The data analyzed relate to household characteristics and more specifically to their levels of vulnerability. The latter is defined through four axes:

- households’ standard of living;
- the frequency of food-related difficulties encountered by the household over the past 12 months, which we call “nutritional vulnerability”;
- the frequency of difficulties in paying medical expenses for one or more members of the household over the past 12 months (“health vulnerability”);
- the frequency of difficulties in paying school fees for children in the household in the last 12 months (“children’s school vulnerability”).

Households in the “Family and COVID-19” survey sample were drawn from the Jàngandoo 2019 database. This database has several advantages, the main ones being (1) its representativeness at the level of the 45 departments of Senegal, (2) its recent date of completion, and (3) the fact that it contains the number of heads of households, which is very useful information for data collection by telephone. Given the time and budget available, unlike Jàngandoo, the “Family and COVID-19” survey did not cover all the country’s departments. The regions surveyed were selected by reasoned choice by combining the epidemiological situation (number of

cases) by region at the time of writing the collection protocol (August 2020) and a geographical distribution of regions. The survey targeted four regions (Dakar, Diourbel, Tambacounda, and Ziguinchor), three of which were defined as “heavily affected” at the time of collection. In each region, two departments were selected; except in Dakar where, given its economic and demographic weight, three departments were taken into account. In each department, the survey was conducted according to Census Districts (CDs) classified as urban and rural according to the weight of each area of residence within the department. In each RD, 10 households were surveyed and in each household two people were interviewed. The main respondent is the head of the household, followed by the second (or other) major provider of resources in the household. Where the household has more than one major income provider, priority was given to a woman where appropriate. However, the “collective” data on the household situation are collected only from the head of the household.

Based on this distribution, the theoretical sample size was 580 households and 1,160 respondents. To compensate for possible refusals, the number of households to be surveyed by department and area of residence was increased by 25% on the basis of the results observed in a previous similar study on the impact of the pandemic on women in rural areas (Fall, Sèye, Lô, Leport, Peterman & Hidrobo, 2021). Thus, with rounding up, the final sample size is 729 households (1,458 respondents). In the end, 639 households were surveyed (i.e., more than the expected theoretical size).

The data, analyzed by region, cover 6,938 households in 2019 and 639 households in 2020 as shown in Table 1. In both samples, a large majority of households reside in Dakar (55% in 2019 and 57.3% in 2020), followed by those in the Ziguinchor region (17% and 17.5%). Households in Diourbel represent 12.1% of households in the 2019 sample, compared with 11.3% in the 2020 sample. Conversely, households residing in Tambacounda make up 15.9% of households in 2019, whereas they make up 17.5% in 2020.

Note that in the remainder of this paper, by “2020” we mean the period of the first wave of the pandemic, which also coincided with the only period of semi-containment or major restrictions that the country experienced, and which refers to the period March to July 2020. Similarly, “2019” refers to the period from March to July 2019.

Table 1

Distribution of Households by Region

	2019 (before COVID-19)		2020 (during the 1st wave)	
	n	%	n	%
Dakar	3,817	55.0	366	57.3
Diourbel	840	12.1	89	13.9
Tambacounda	1,105	15.9	72	11.3
Ziguinchor	1,176	17.0	112	17.5
Total	6,938	100.0	639	100.0

Note. * % of households headed by women. Source: Our calculations based on data from Jàngandoo 2019 and COVID and Family Survey 2020.

In both samples, households are overwhelmingly headed by men regardless of the region (Figure 1). The proportion of female heads of household is relatively stable overall (31.4% in 2019 and 30.8% in 2020); and in Dakar (36.6% in 2019 and 33.6% in 2020), Diourbel (21.7% in 2019 and 24.7% in 2020) and Ziguinchor (32.7% in 2019 and 29.5% in 2020). In contrast, for the Tambacounda region, the 2020 sample includes proportionally more female heads of household than the 2019 sample (26.4% versus 14.6%).

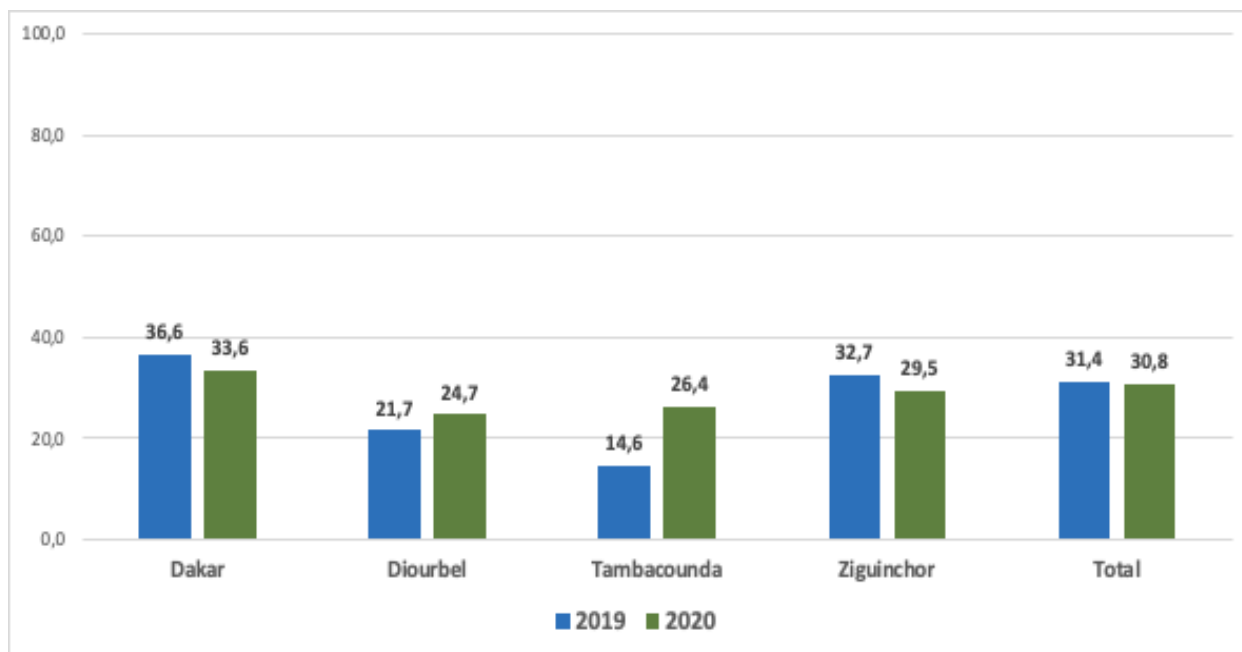


Figure 1. Proportion of female householders in 2019 and 2020 (%).

Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

By age of head of household, overall, the 2019 sample includes proportionally more young heads of household (under 30 years of age) than the 2020 sample (5.7% vs. 2.5%) as shown in Figure 2. The difference is reflected in an increase in heads of households between the ages of 30 and 49, who are more present in the 2020 sample (45.9%) than in the 2019 sample (42.1%). The two samples have more or less the same proportions of heads of household aged 50 years or more (52.2% in 2019 and 51.7% in 2020).

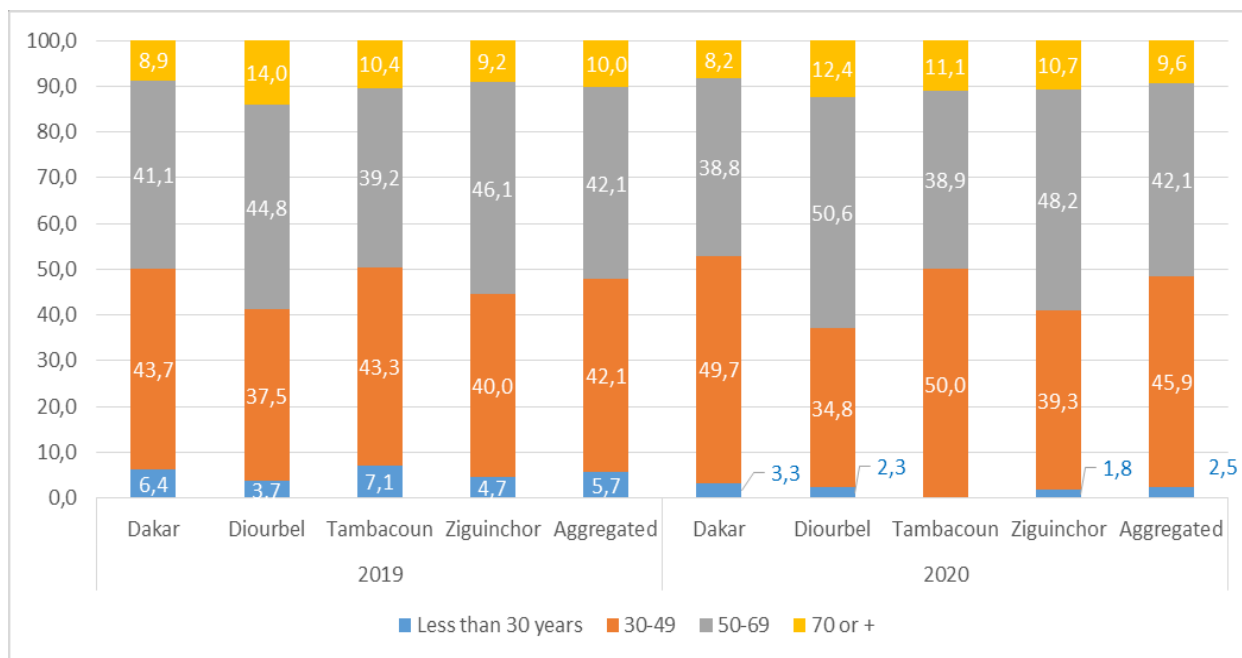


Figure 2. Age distribution of householders in 2019 and 2020 (%).

Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

Results and Discussion

Size of Households

In Dakar, the average household size in Dakar did not increase, but the proportion of households with five to nine members in the region increased sharply from 46% to 51.1% at the expense of households with one to four members (whose share dropped from 24.9% to 11.7%) as shown in Figure 3. In Diourbel, households with 10 or more members increased sharply from 46.9% in 2019 to 69.7% in 2020. The same trend is observed in Tambacounda, where the proportion of households with 10 or more members has increased from 58% to 73.6%. In Ziguinchor, as in Dakar, the proportion of households with one to four members has declined, but this time in favor of households with 15 or more members. Thus, if we consider the four regions, we see a clear drop in the share of small households from 20% in 2019 to 8.4% in 2020; this drop is mainly offset by the increase in large households (those with 10 or more members), whose proportion has risen from 35.7% to 48.4%. If we consider that the living areas have not changed significantly, this results in an increase in the phenomenon of regrouping in households during the semi-containment period of the pandemic. When COVID-19 intervenes, family members tighten their ties in the face of risk. Movements to villages of origin were observed due to the cessation of certain economic activities and inter-regional movement restrictions that were announced in anticipation of containment. Smaller households were absorbed by larger ones inhabited by an elder, an ascendant, or simply a more fortunate person likely to better resist the announced shortages. University campuses have closed in, orienting their world into households. Several distant groups have learned to cohabit, creating a renegotiation of the occupation of living spaces in households and neighborhoods.

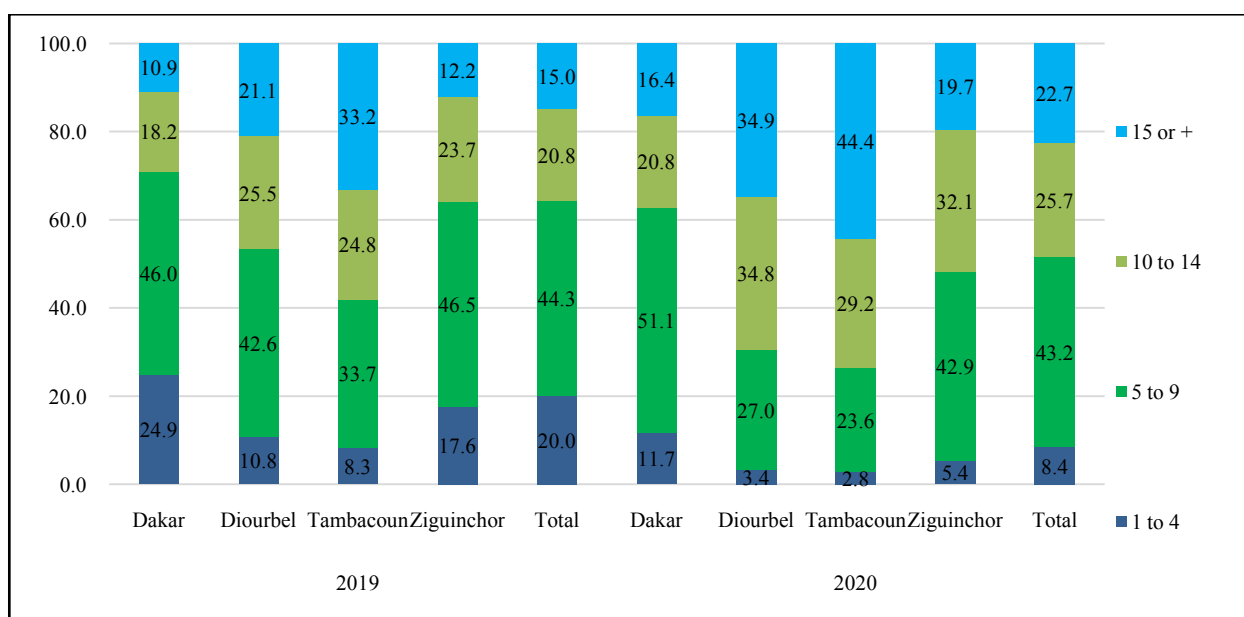


Figure 3. Distribution of household size ranges in 2019 and 2020.

Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

Household Standard of Living by Head of Household

Figure 4 shows major changes in the perception that heads of household have of their living conditions, with a clear deterioration in these conditions. Thus, overall, while only 1.9% of heads of household found their conditions “very bad” in 2019, 8.8% have the same perception in 2020. The region of Tambacounda has the

largest increase in the number of heads of household who consider their living conditions to be “bad” (6.5% in 2019 versus 30.6% in 2020). This is followed by the Ziguinchor region (2.9% in 2019 against 22.3% in 2020). Conversely, the regions of Dakar and Diourbel show no significant change in terms of the proportion of households with “very poor” living conditions. In Diourbel, the change has been more in the tipping of households with “average” living conditions to “poor”, also reflecting a deterioration in living conditions in the region. This dynamic is also noted in Dakar. Ultimately, this perceived deterioration in household living conditions is observed in all four regions taken together. Whereas in 2019, 70.6% of households had an “average” standard of living, in 2020, the figure will be only 34.3%. At the same time, the share of households with “poor” living conditions has worsened from 27.2% to 46%. This shows that COVID-19 has worked like a tsunami with devastating effects on all social strata that have been thrown down. It has also provoked with such brutality ruptures and threats on individuals and groups. It has increased vulnerabilities and demonstrated its destructuring effect on life in society.

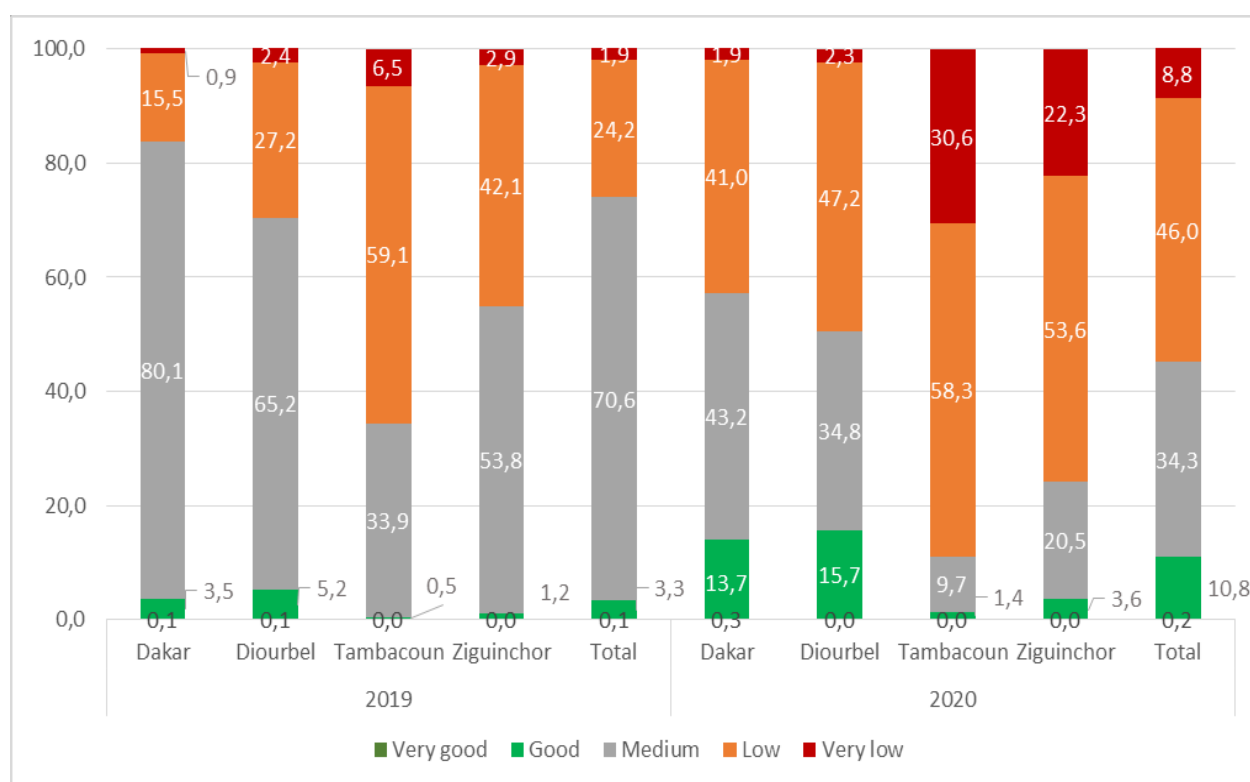


Figure 4. Perception of household standard of living by the head of household by region (%).

Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

Financial Difficulties¹

The data show that the occurrence of financial distress increased significantly in all regions between 2019 and the first phase of the pandemic in 2020 (Figure 5). The proportion of households experiencing financial difficulty, which was already very high in 2019, increased on average by 11.2% for all regions (from 69.4% to 80.6%) with a maximum of 21.2% observed in Diourbel (from 61.9% to 83.1%). The minimum increase (1.9%)

¹ The question addressed in 2019 asks about the occurrence of a financial hardship in the past 12 months prior to the survey; the question addressed in 2020 asks about the occurrence of a financial hardship during pandemic containment.

is observed in Tambacounda (from 89.8 to 91.7%); this small “increase” can be explained by the already almost generalized prevalence of household financial vulnerability in this region. The regional comparison shows that COVID-19 reduces the gaps between regions and homogenizes vulnerabilities. It should be noted that the economic organization did not leave room for regional autonomy, which would have ensured that the effects suffered in one region would not compromise life elsewhere.

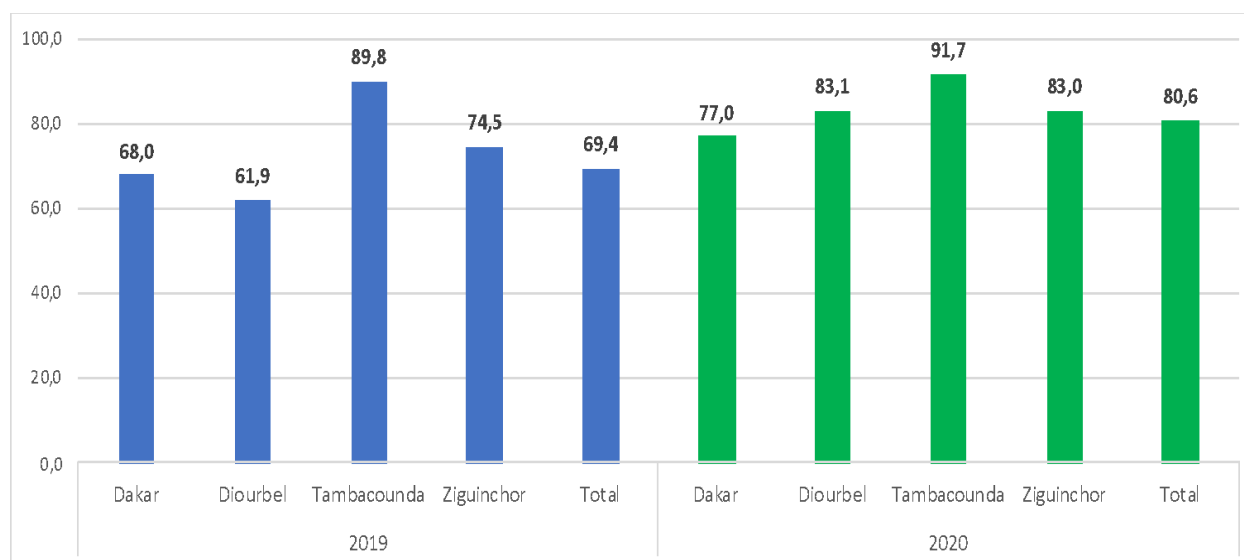


Figure 5. Proportion of households experiencing financial difficulty by region in 2019 and 2020 (%).

Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

Resorting to Debt to Cope With Financial Difficulties

Against all expectations, the use of debt (formal or informal) to cope with financial contingencies by households declined sharply between 2019 and 2020 (Figure 6). Overall, the rate of recourse to financial loans fell by -26.3% (from 74 to 47.8%) in the four regions. Diourbel shows the largest decline (-40.2%), while households in Ziguinchor made less use of it (-3.2%).

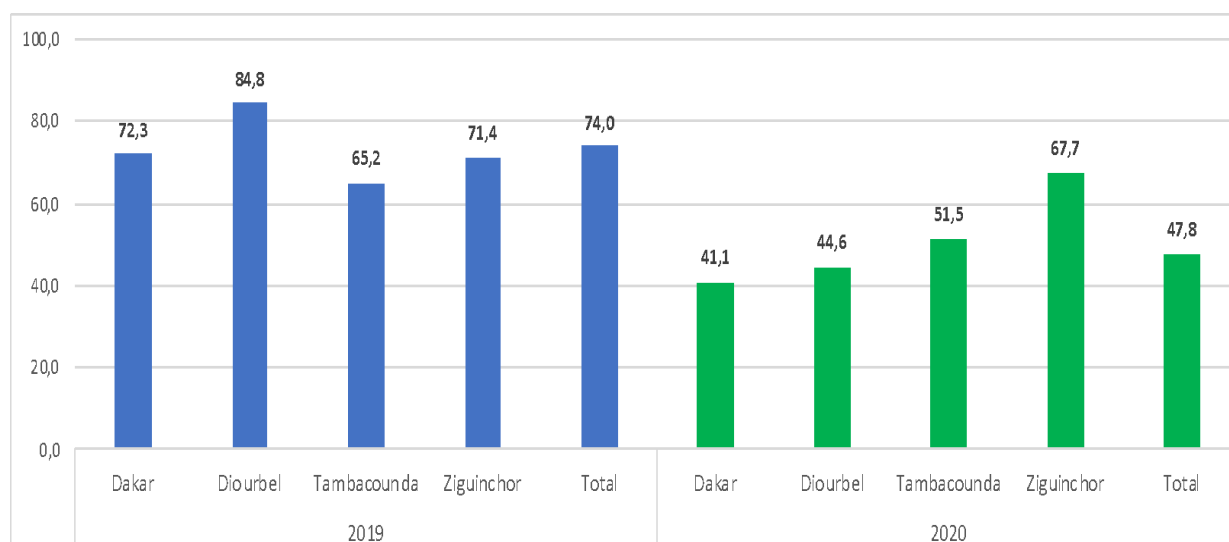


Figure 6. Proportion of households who borrowed to face financial difficulties in 2019 and 2020 (%).

Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

This decrease in borrowing is the result of a combination of three factors. First, households may have cut back on their spending and/or prioritized it (so that only the most important items are spent). Second, access to loans from relatives may have been reduced by the difficulties they face. Finally, households have had to sell off assets in order to accumulate as many resources as possible to meet their needs and cope with unforeseen events. The shock induced by COVID-19 seems to have annihilated the usual social reciprocities, whereas we know that it is horizontal solidarities that have been the management valve for previous crises (Fall & Cissé, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has the particularity of having introduced into the analysis of disasters and shocks a new structuring element that has global resonance. It is not only the large scale that it carries but also the intensity and severity of the effects caused at the local and national levels. The pandemic has succeeded in exposing households to increased risks regardless of their socio-economic conditions, position, or status. It suddenly triggered a survival reflex of circumscribing the spaces of household sociability.

Nutritional Vulnerabilities

In contrast to financial difficulties, overall nutritional vulnerability did not increase significantly among households between 2019 and the time of the first phase of the pandemic in 2020 (

). Across the four regions, there was a relatively modest increase in household food vulnerability (+3.2%). However, Ziguinchor, contrary to all expectations, is the region with the highest increase (+15.8%) in the number of households experiencing food insecurity (68.1% in 2019 versus 83.9% in 2020). It is followed by the Diourbel region (+5.1%). Households in the other two regions have seen their food vulnerability decrease; quite slightly in Tambacounda (-0.4%) and significantly in Dakar (-4.1%).

These results show that the narrowing of horizontal solidarity does not erase the fact that household members are clutching at the food resources still available. Expenditures are strongly prioritized around food; COVID-19 has marginalized expenditures considered to some extent futile (clothing, festivities, leisure, body maintenance, etc.). Remote regions such as Ziguinchor reveal their food dependence on manufactured goods that no longer reach the southern part of the country because of the limitation of regional trade.

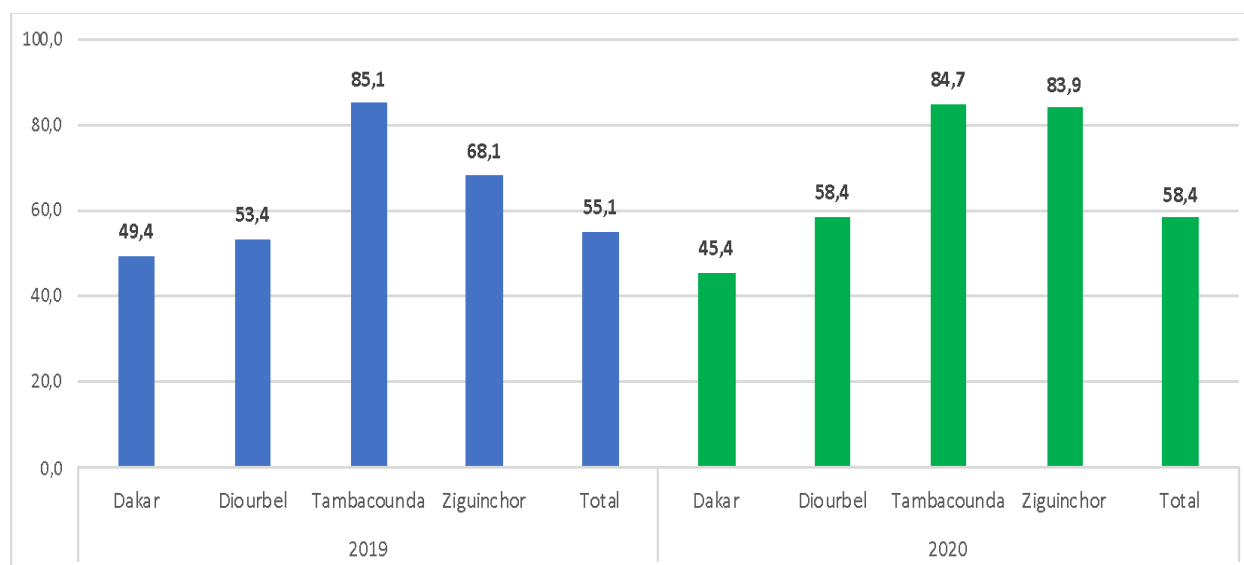


Figure 7. Proportion of households experiencing nutritional vulnerability by region in 2019 and 2020 (%).

Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

Difficulties in Accessing Care (Health Vulnerability)²

Household “health vulnerability” has decreased in all four regions combined, from 58.7% to 44.8%, a decrease of 13.9% (Figure 8). The largest decrease was observed in Diourbel (-23.2%), followed closely by Dakar (-21.2%). Ziguinchor is the only region where difficulties in accessing care have increased, affecting 66.9% of households in 2019 compared to 70.5% in 2020, i.e., an increase of 3.6%. This region is also marked by a very high level of problems accessing care regardless of the year.

In 2020, the fear of attending health care centers is inherent to the rapid spread of COVID-19, as households suspect higher contagiousness within health facilities. This refusal to visit health facilities explains the decline in the proportion of households that had difficulty accessing care.

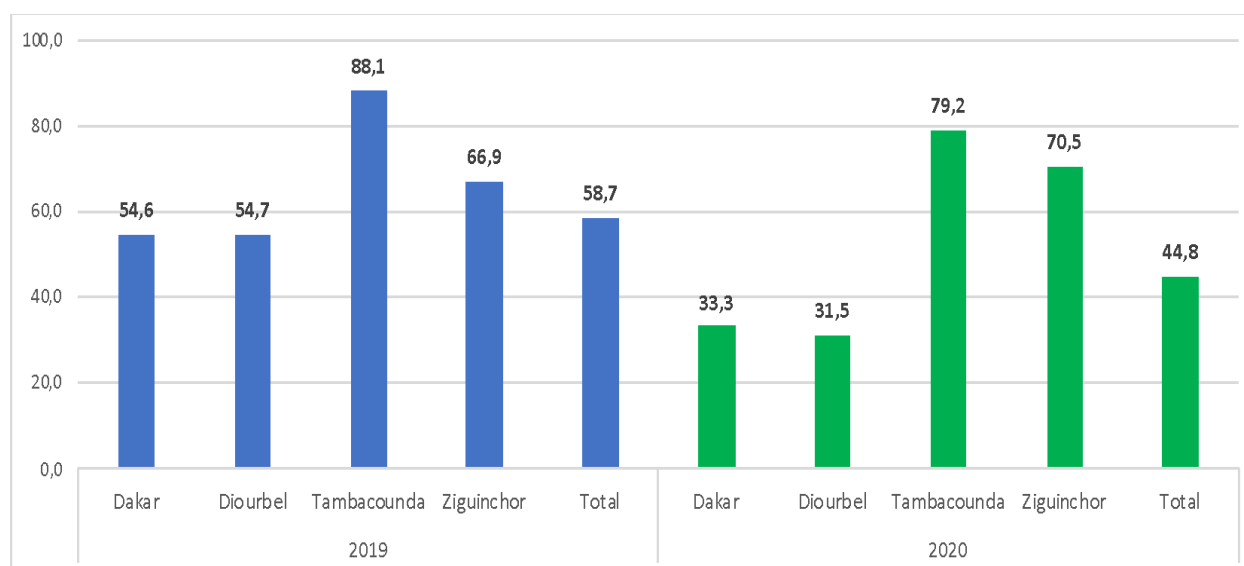


Figure 8. Proportion of households experiencing difficulties accessing care by region in 2019 and 2020 (%).

Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

Difficulties in Paying for Children’s School Fees

The evolution of the “school vulnerability” of children in households shows a pronounced duality between the four regions (Figure 9). On the one hand, we find households in Dakar and Diourbel, which have experienced fewer difficulties in paying school fees (declines of 3.7 and 4.1% respectively); and on the other hand, the regions of Tambacounda and especially Ziguinchor, where the opposite pattern is observed (increases of +0.2 and +15.2% respectively).

Finally, in the four regions, the “school vulnerability” of children increased only slightly (by 3.2%) between 2019 and the period of the first wave of the pandemic. This was due to the fact that schools were closed and most parents were no longer responsible for their children’s school fees.

Although schools were closed in Senegal during the first wave, private schools continued to require parents to pay school fees between March and June 2020. Some parents refused to continue making monthly payments during periods of lockdown because they felt that schools were not providing service. Later, the issue was widely debated in the public opinion to the extent that the ministry did not hesitate to suggest that parents

² In 2019, the question addresses difficulties in paying for care for at least one household member in the past 12 months; in 2020, difficulties in getting care due to COVID-19.

who wish to do so take the matter to court. The tug of war between the parents' associations, which also believe that the state has provided assistance to schools, and private schools (which believe that the state's support was very limited) has faded with the resumption of classes in November 2020 (SUD Quotidien, 2020).

Strategies adopted by private schools are plural, exposing households to act according to the demands of the service offer. Situations such as those in COVID-19 lead to imbroglios that reinforce the unpredictability of expenditures.

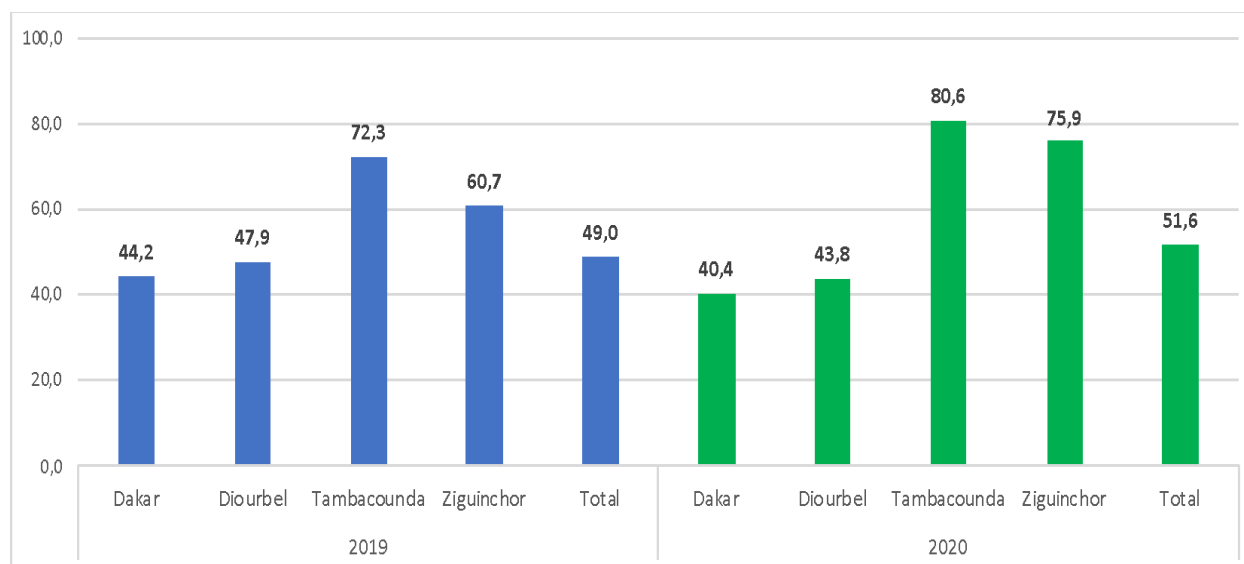


Figure 9. Proportion of households experiencing “school vulnerability” by region in 2019 and 2020 (%).

Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

Resource Provider

The pandemic led to some slight changes in the status of the main provider of household resources, with heads of household (HoH) continuing to play this role in the vast majority of households in all regions surveyed (Figure 10). More specifically, in Dakar, the economic role of the heads of household increased (from 81.8% to 90.2% of households) to the detriment of “other” family or non-family sources (whose share dropped from 18.2% to 9.8%). In Diourbel and Ziguinchor, the sons or daughters of the head of household emerged as the main providers of resources (8.2% to 14.6% in Diourbel; 5.4% to 11.6% in Ziguinchor). Internal mobility has been accentuated by the COVID-19, which acts as a call to return home in order to feel secure in the face of uncertainties and to share the costs of survival with the family of origin.

Among the 639 households surveyed in 2020, 49 (or 7.7%) stated that the change in the status of the main source of income was related to COVID-19 (Table 2). This pandemic-related change is particularly marked in Ziguinchor (14.3%) and Tambacounda (13.9%), where it affects more than one household in 10.

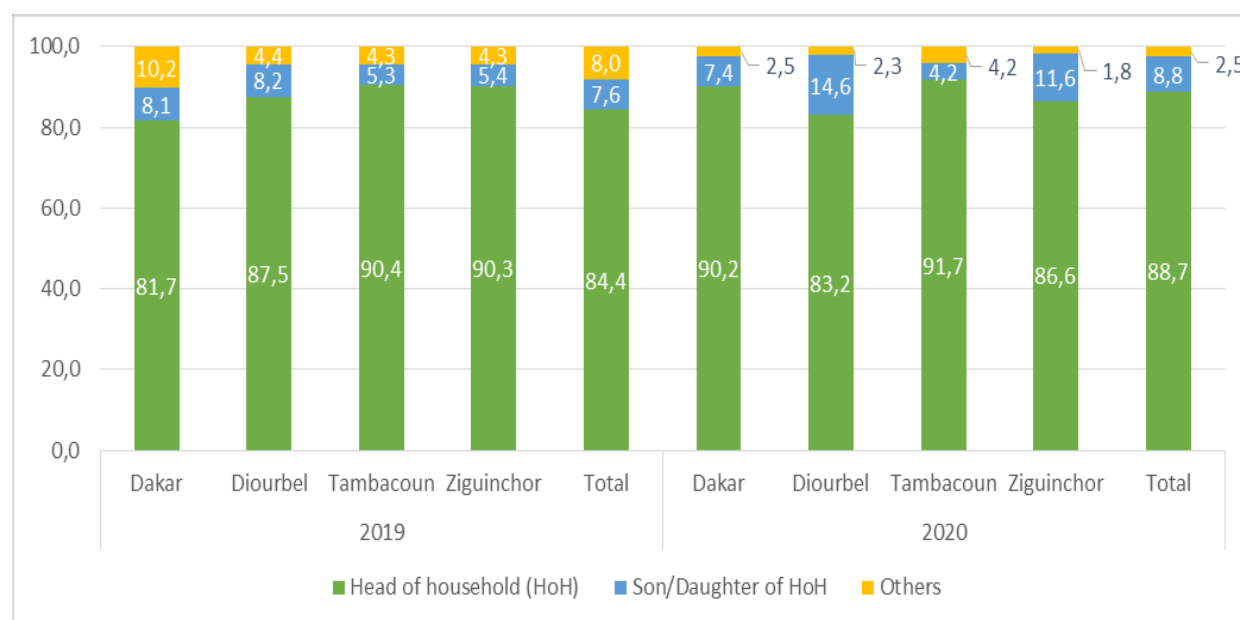


Figure 10. Main provider of resources in the household (%).

Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

Table 2

Number of Households Whose Primary Source of Income Changed as a Result of COVID-19

	n	%
Dakar	19	5.2
Diourbel	4	4.5
Tambacounda	10	13.9
Ziguinchor	16	14.3
Total	49	7.7

Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

Benefits of Social Protection/Receipt of Circumstantial Institutional Financial Assistance

The data show that the share of households benefiting from social protection is higher in 2019 than the share of households that received institutional financial assistance (state, NGO, religious association) during the semi-confinement phase (16.2% and 14.2%, i.e., a drop of 2%), as illustrated in Figure 11. Households in the Ziguinchor and Tambacounda regions receive relatively less institutional assistance (-22.8% and 6.5% respectively). Conversely, the share of households in Diourbel receiving institutional assistance in 2020 is higher than the share of households receiving social protection in 2019 (+2.4%). In Dakar, there was no major change (+0.7%).

Attempts to mobilize vertical solidarity (from the state to citizens) have not been sustainable in terms of successfully mitigating the shocks. The context of COVID-19 did not allow for the optimum functionality of the usual social protection services.

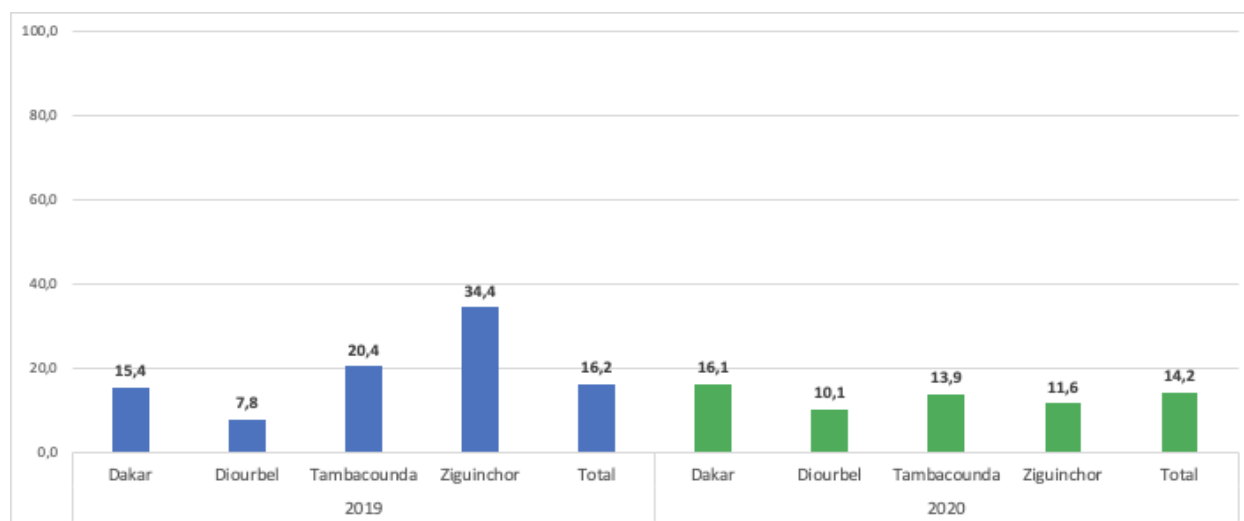


Figure 11. Proportion of households benefiting from social protection or receiving institutional assistance in 2019 and 2020 (%).
Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

Availability of Tutor for Children/Learning Support at Home³

The closure of schools during the first wave of the pandemic led to a significant increase in family learning support within households (Figure 12). Overall, 17.6% more households in 2020 than in 2019 are providing home learning support to their children (31.4% versus 49%). The need for home-based support remains considerable in light of children's low performance in mathematics (22.3%) and reading (20.5%) as shown in the Jàngandoo data (Fall et Cissé, 2017).

The highest increase was recorded in Ziguinchor (+32.7% from 27.2% in 2019 to 59.8% in 2020) and the lowest in Dakar (from 44.2% to 55.5% or 11.3%). The relatively small gap between 2019 and 2020 in the capital may be due to the fact that in 2019, the region recorded the highest level of households mobilizing a repeater for their children in school.

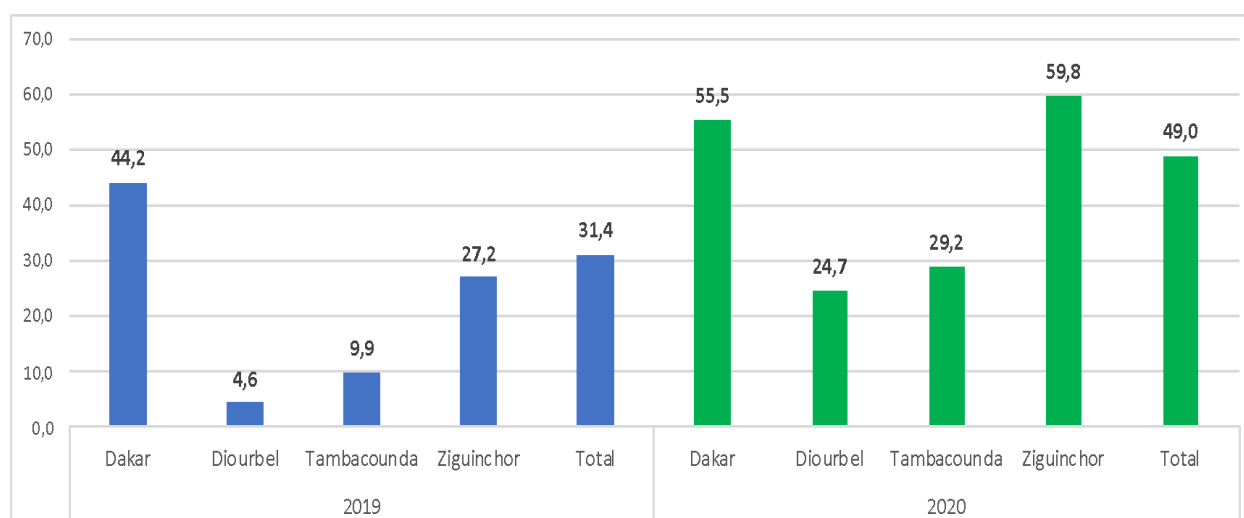


Figure 12. Proportion of households providing a tutor for school-going children or providing learning support for children at home (%). Source: Our findings from Jàngandoo 2019 and the COVID and Family 2020 survey.

³ In 2019, the question focused on the availability of a repeater for children; in 2020, the question focused on the ability of households to provide home or online instruction during school closures due to containment.

According to the cumulative results of the Jàngandoo citizen barometer from 2012 to 2019, the regions of Dakar and Ziguinchor maintain their tradition of high school enrollment and performance. It is not surprising that during the pandemic, households in these two regions remain the ones that invest the most in schooling at a time when the crisis is confining them to their homes.

The private education network remains dense in these two regions. The continuity of distance learning during COVID-19 was extended to the home, resulting in more systematic monitoring by parents.

Regional disparities persist in favor of the regions where investment in education is most permanent.

In the end, the results show a deterioration in household living conditions that is more pronounced in Tambacounda. The proportion of households experiencing financial difficulties is also widespread in all regions, indicating that living conditions have deteriorated significantly everywhere.

Difficulty feeding oneself is more acute in Ziguinchor and Diourbel, while vulnerability in paying school fees is more evident in Ziguinchor and Tambacounda. The latter two regions have another vulnerability, as the proportion of households that have received institutional support is lower than the usual level of social protection coverage.

Only the Ziguinchor region shows vulnerabilities related to the payment of health care costs.

Of all the regions, the Ziguinchor region is the one that combines all six vulnerabilities considered in this study. It is followed by the Tambacounda region, which gained two points and lost four.

The Diourbel region is at the medium level, accumulating three vulnerabilities and meeting three other indicators. Dakar is the region that is doing best, losing only two vulnerability points and showing four indicators of improvement.

Table 3

Overview of the Evolution of Vulnerabilities by Region

	Dakar	Diourbel	Tambacounda	Ziguinchor	Aggregated
Poor/very poor living conditions	-	-	-	-	-
Financial difficulties	-	-	-	-	-
Difficulties feeding themselves	+	-	+	-	-
Difficulties in paying for health care	+	+	+	-	+
Difficulties in paying tuition fees	+	+	-	-	-
Benefit from social protection/institutional support	+	+	-	-	-
Number of +	4	3	2	0	1
Number of -	2	3	4	6	5

Notes. +: an improvement; -: a deterioration.

Conclusion: COVID-19 and the Generalized Collapse of Households in Senegal

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Senegal in March 2020, the living conditions of the population have been profoundly disrupted. Restrictions on gathering and travel have directly impacted the economic activity of households, many of which rely on informal activities. At the same time, the government and its partners have launched aid programs, particularly for the most vulnerable (official document of the assessment of the Covid-19 force fund). This article sheds light on the vulnerabilities faced by households and their geographic distribution before the outbreak of the pandemic and during the first wave of COVID-19.

The government of Senegal provided support with partial or full coverage of water and electricity charges and other activities (e.g., food distribution, sale of grain at moderate prices). However, it is clear that this has

not been enough to counter the harmful effects of the pandemic on the various social strata, particularly the poorest.

The virus is “democratic and uncomplicated”, as indicated by Ndiaye, Guèye and Ba (2021) in that vulnerability is both universal and unequal. COVID-19 exposes all social categories but affects individuals more or less severely depending on age, comorbidities, and other contextual characteristics. From this point of view, the combined effects of structural vulnerabilities and shocks may lead to the tipping of bangs of society that were previously spared the phenomenon of poverty. This tipping of new social strata, including the middle classes, suggests a real risk of socio-economic collapse of an even larger group of populations on a national scale.

The nature and severity of the shocks, as well as the accumulation of deprivations during these episodes of crisis, can change the life trajectories of certain individuals or groups forever and install them permanently in chronic poverty (Cissé, 2014). The question remains as to whether the nature of the shock that is COVID-19 is so singular and destructuring as to cause irreversible effects and impacts. It seems to us that the field of legibility of its effects is sufficiently broad. Similarly, the experience of actors in their diversity of this pandemic is becoming so important at all levels (individual, household, locality, country, and world) that the lessons learned are likely to provide a strong basis for reflexivity. Finally, the resilience of actors seems to be a prerequisite for irreversibility. Indeed, when one has hit rock bottom, the springs of overcoming are almost inscribed in the art of acting and the surpassing of oneself. Because the shock has led everyone to return to the self and to the future, the way forward now seems to be marked out to make reversibility a rule of life as soon as a consensus on future actions is established.

Previously, the budgets of the ministries of health, social welfare, education, and culture were drastically cut in the name of the demands of economic authorities, tied to the productivist scheme. The resonance (in the sense of its amplifying and structuring effects) of COVID-19 has increased the obligation of means in favor of human capital. States now acquire their legitimacy through the accessibility and quality of health, education and social protection coverage.

In the same vein, the priority of decent and quality employment has been imposed with the impacts of COVID-19. For once, the world stood still because COVID-19 came as a resounding shock, merging sectors that had previously been organized in silos and preventing intersectorality. The centrality of social and community institutions in development strategies is now on the public agenda. The COVID-19 will have put back in the saddle multidimensional governance, which gives pride of place to dialogue between the social state and local actors (social and community institutions) on the monitoring of household living conditions.

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International Relations and Diplomacy

Volume 9, Number 7, July 2021

David Publishing Company

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ISSN 2328-2134



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