



SHARE Bulletin

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cyprus:
Results of the 1st and 2nd SHARE Corona Survey

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What is SHARE¹²

“SHARE – the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe, is a research infrastructure for studying the effects of health, social, economic and environmental policies over the life-course of European citizens and beyond. Since 2004, in biennial survey waves, people aged 50 or older from 28 European countries and Israel are interviewed. Overall, 530,000 interviews with approximately 140,000 individuals have been conducted.

SHARE is the largest pan-European social science panel study providing internationally comparable longitudinal micro data which allows insights in the fields of public health and socio-economic living conditions of European individuals, both for scientists and policy makers. SHARE has global impact since it not only covers all EU member countries in a strictly harmonized way but additionally is embedded in a network of sister studies all over the world, from the Americas to Eastern Asia.

In 2020, the collection of new COVID-19 data was initiated. SHARE is the ideal database to study the non-intended socio-economic and health consequences of the epidemiological containment decisions and the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic due to its life-course and multidisciplinary approach combining health with socio-economic data. The data offer the possibility to measure and interpret differences in a cross-country and a longitudinal dimension and are embedded in SHARE’s sister survey network”.

In Cyprus, responsible for conducting this study is the University of Cyprus in collaboration with the European Research Infrastructure Consortium “SHARE-ERIC”. The field research is carried out by the research agency RAI Consultants.

For any information about the bulletin and the SHARE project you can contact by phone or via email with the head of the SHARE team in Cyprus, Associate Professor, **Nikos Theodoropoulos** (tel: +357 22893715, email: n.theodoropoulos@ucy.ac.cy) and with the Special Scientist, **Georgios Voucharas** (tel: +357 22893669, email: voucharas.georgios@ucy.ac.cy).

¹The information of this section has been drawn from the official SHARE website (<http://www.share-project.org/>) and the updated SHARE flyer that can be downloaded here: http://www.share-project.org/fileadmin/pdf_documentation/SHARE_Flyer_Researcher_2021.pdf.

²See also Börsch-Supan, A., M. Brandt, C. Hunkler, T. Kneip, J. Korbmayer, F. Malter, B. Schaaf, S. Stuck, S. Zuber (2013). Data Resource Profile: The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE). *International Journal of Epidemiology*. DOI: 10.1093/ije/dyt088

1 Introduction

This bulletin provides information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cyprus in the areas of health, labour market and the economy by utilising data from the first and second SHARE Corona survey. Part of this bulletin is based on preliminary SHARE wave 9 COVID-19 Survey 2 release 0 data. Therefore, the analyses, conclusions and results are preliminary.³

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve all over the world, vigilance on epidemiological control measures is considered vital. Given the severity of the situation, governments and policy makers need to puzzle out the impact of the pandemic toward a more effective decision-making. Assessing the implications of the pandemic on health behaviours, healthcare systems, labour markets and the economy could make the society resilient to future crises in terms of prevention, management as well as treatment of vulnerable populations. At the same time, international comparisons among EU Member states and Israel could identify potential inequalities across countries, helping mitigating the consequences of the pandemic with collective actions.⁴

Overview - Cyprus

- 33.1% of the respondents lost their jobs, laid off or had to shut down their business due to the outbreak of the pandemic. This is the highest rate after France (37.6%) and Greece (36.3%), respectively.
- 5.7% of the respondents worked longer hours compared to prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, while 15% of them stated a reduction of their working hours.
- 54.4% of the respondents stated that their household meets its financial obligations with great or with some difficulty.
- 5.7% of the respondents received additional financial support due to the outbreak of the pandemic either from their employer, government, relatives, friends and/or others. The corresponding average rate of all countries in the survey is 12.3%.

³For the first wave, see: Börsch-Supan, A. (2020). Survey of Health, Aging and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) Wave 8. COVID-19 Survey 1. Release version: 1.0.0. SHARE-ERIC. Data set. DOI:10.6103/SHARE.w8ca.100. For the second wave, see: Börsch-Supan, A. (2021). Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) Wave 9. COVID-19 Survey 2. Release version: 0. SHARE-ERIC. Preliminary data set.

⁴For a more lengthy report for all countries participating in SHARE see: http://share-project.de/fileadmin/pdf_publications/EU_Report_SHARE-COVID19_Feb2021_web.pdf

- 10.6% of the respondents stated that their health has worsened, while only 1.4% stated that their health has improved after the outbreak of the pandemic.
- 18% of the respondents stated that in the first six months of the pandemic they had suffered from at least one or more of the following: falling down, fear of falling down, dizziness, faints or blackouts, fatigue.
- 73% of the respondents who felt depression, associated this feeling with the outbreak of the pandemic, while the corresponding average rate of all countries in the survey is 61.7%.
- 48.4% of the respondents who experienced loneliness, connected this feeling with the outbreak of the pandemic, while the corresponding European average rate is 39.2%.
- 9% of the respondents forwent medical care because they feared a possible coronavirus infection. The corresponding average rate for all countries in the survey is 9.9%.
- 11.1% of the respondents stated that the doctor or the medical unit decided to postpone scheduled medical appointments due to the coronavirus. The average rate of all countries in the survey is 18.5%.
- 2.7% of the respondents requested an appointment for medical care and received a negative answer.
- 95.9% of the respondents who were treated in a hospital in Cyprus, stated that were somewhat to very satisfied with the treatment.

2 The sample

In total, 1418 citizens of the Republic of Cyprus participated in two surveys. 58% of the respondents are female. The first wave of the COVID-19 survey (year 2020) includes 819 respondents and the second wave of the COVID-19 survey (year 2021) includes 599. The average age of the respondents is 72 years (age ranges from 50 to 99 years). The age and gender distribution of the respondents are depicted in Figures 1 and 2, respectively. In total, 28 countries, including Israel, are included in the study ($n = 101,244$). The respondents answered questions about health, work/labour market, and the economy related to the COVID-19 pandemic through telephone interviews. The descriptive statistics that follow in sections 3-5 include weights.

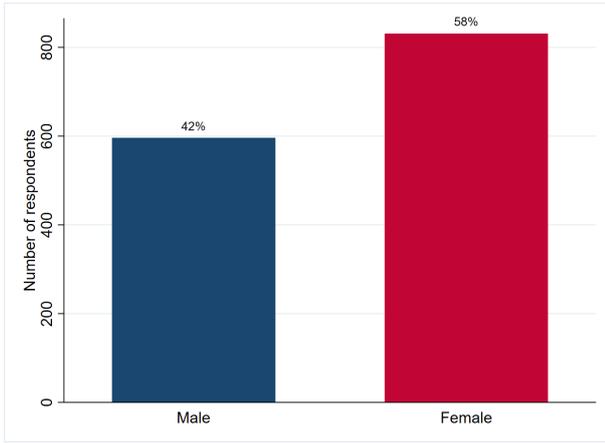


Figure 1: Gender (Cyprus)

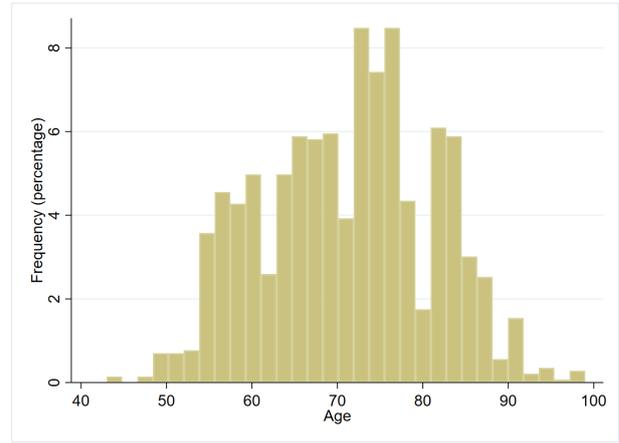


Figure 2: Age (Cyprus)

3 Health

Undoubtedly, the pandemic threatened public health and challenged the resilience of each country’s respective health system. In Cyprus, 10.6% of the respondents stated that their health has worsened, while only 1.4% stated that their health has improved after the pandemic outbreak (Figure 3). 18% of the respondents stated that in the first six months since the outbreak of the pandemic they have suffered from at least one or more of the following: falling down, fear of falling down, dizziness, faints or blackouts, fatigue (Figure 4).

The findings related to the mental health of the respondents are of great interest. More specifically, 29.7% of the respondents in Cyprus had been depressed over the last month before the interview. However, during the first wave of the COVID-19 survey, 73% of them attributed this feeling to the pandemic. At the same time, the corresponding average rate for all countries in the survey is 61.7 % (Figure 5). Similarly, 30.4 % of the Cypriot respondents stated that they have been feeling loneliness over the last month before the interview. During the first wave of the COVID-19 survey, 48.4% of them stated that they had experienced loneliness due to the pandemic, while the corresponding European average is 39.2% (Figure 6). The above findings should not be ignored, as 69.4% of the respondents belong to high-risk groups in terms of health.

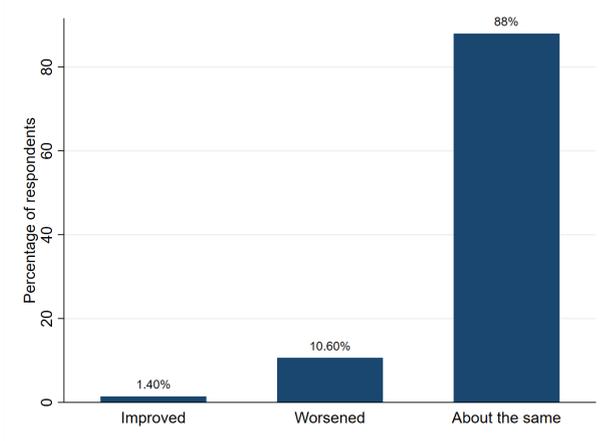


Figure 3: Health condition (Cyprus), n=1,416

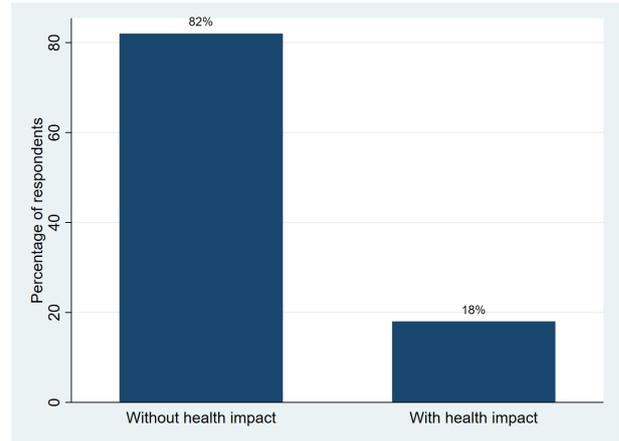


Figure 4: Health impact of COVID-19 (Cyprus), n=1,409

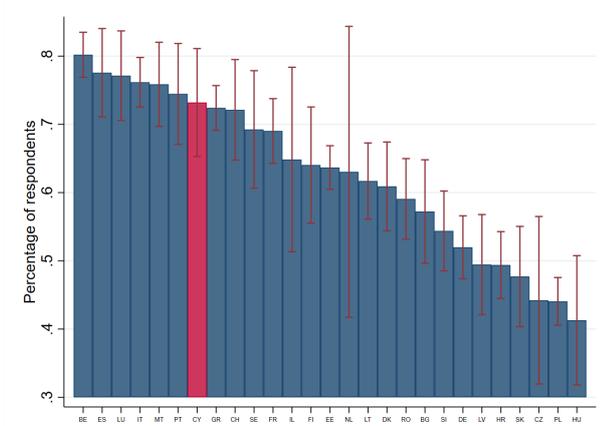


Figure 5: Mental Health: depression, n=14,070

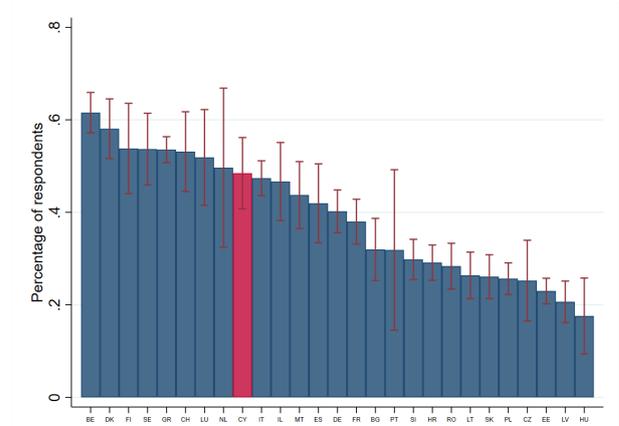


Figure 6: Mental Health: loneliness, n=15,460

The findings on the utilisation of the healthcare system by the citizens of Cyprus are quite interesting. More specifically, 9% of the respondents had forgone medical care due to the fear of coronavirus infection, a number that is very close to the corresponding average of all countries in the survey (9.9%). Regarding the scheduled medical appointments, which the doctor or the medical unit decided to postpone due to the coronavirus, Cyprus is in 6th place, with a rate of 11.1%, much lower than the European average (18.5%). At the same time, 2.7% of the respondents requested an appointment for medical care and received a negative answer. Regarding the citizens who were treated in a hospital in Cyprus, 95.9% stated that they were somewhat to very satisfied with the treatment. Figures 7 to 10 illustrate the relevant findings.

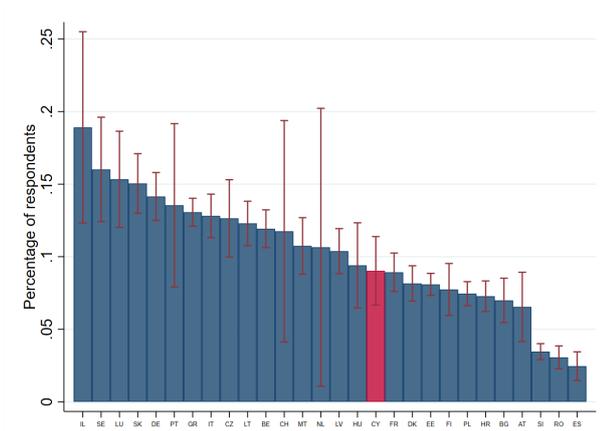


Figure 7: Forwent medical care, n=101,071

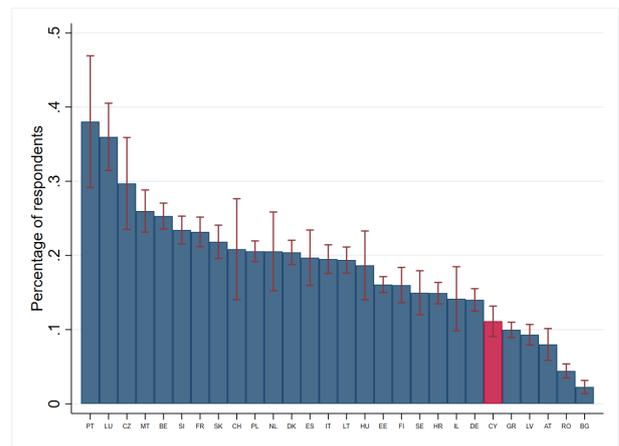


Figure 8: Postponed medical care, n=101,014

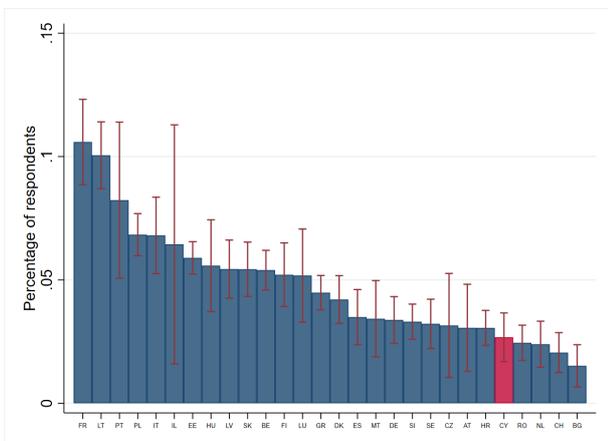


Figure 9: Denied medical care, n=101,060

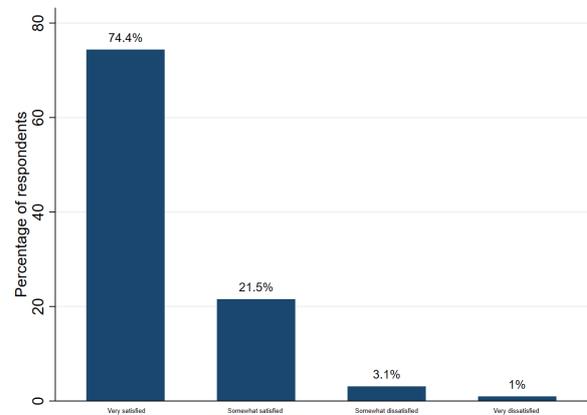


Figure 10: Satisfaction with health system (Cyprus), n=80

4 Labour market

The Coronavirus crisis also affected the labour market. According to the survey data, Cyprus ranks third in terms of the percentage of citizens who became unemployed, laid off or had to shut down their business due to the coronavirus crisis, (33.1%, Figure 11).⁵ The coronavirus outbreak had a significant impact on working hours. In most cases, respondents that were employed reported a reduction in working hours due to the pandemic. In Cyprus, 5.7% of the respondents worked longer hours than before the pandemic, while 15% stated a reduction in their working hours.

⁵Figure 11 refers to the data of the first wave of the COVID-19 survey.

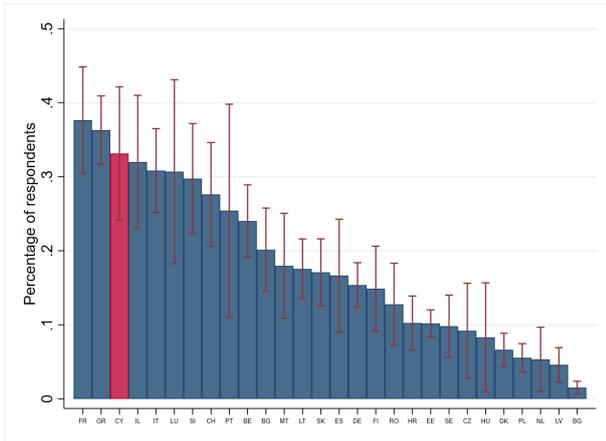


Figure 11: Job loss, n=25,239

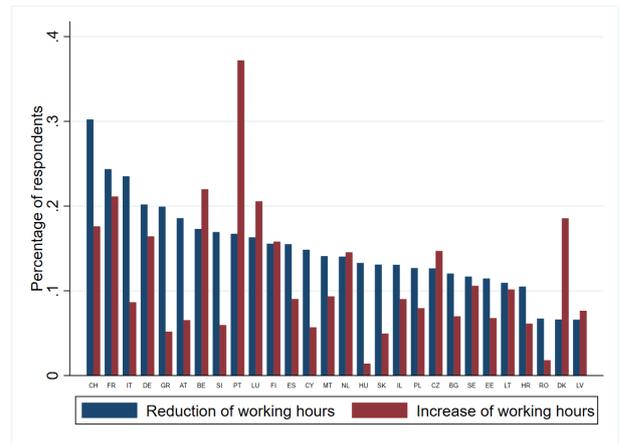


Figure 12: Working hours, n=17,366 (increase), n=17,381 (decrease)

5 Economy

The effects of the pandemic were also evident in the economy. As shown in Figure 13, more than half of the respondents were experiencing financial difficulties due to the pandemic. More specifically, 54.4% of the respondents stated that their household meets its financial obligations with great or with some difficulty. Despite the high rate mentioned above, the percentage of respondents who received additional financial support due to the pandemic either from their employer, the government, relatives, friends and/or others is surprisingly low. The percentage in Cyprus amounts to 5.7%, while the average of all countries reaches 12.3% (Figure 14).

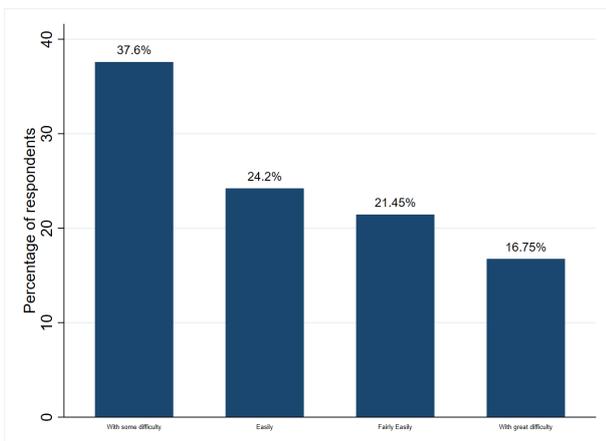


Figure 13: Economically vulnerable people (Cyprus), n=825

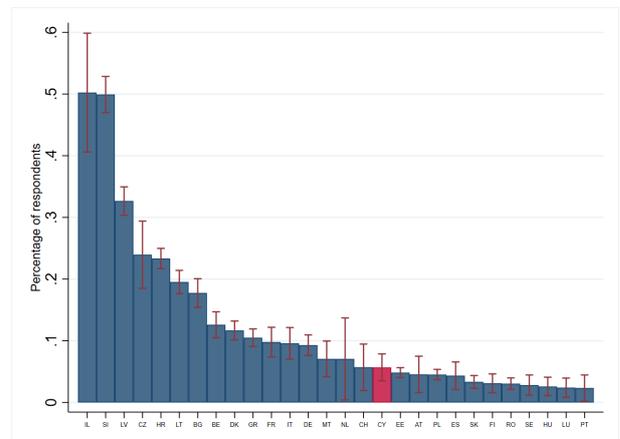


Figure 14: Financial support, n=83,131

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this bulletin are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Economics Research Center and the University of Cyprus.