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The impact of COVID-19 on National Statistical Offices

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The World Bank



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The Global COVID-19 survey of NSOs

- **Objective:** Provide information to the global statistical community, donors, development partners and the general public on the state of countries' statistical operations to effectively mobilize technical and financial support to priority areas.
- **Conveners:** United Nations Statistics Division and World Bank's Development Data Group, in coordination with UN Regional Commissions
- **Features:** Web-survey; 4 rounds (May 2020 >> June 2021); ~120 respondents per round

All reports available here:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/brief/survey-of-national-statistical-offices-nsos-during-covid-19>

<https://covid-19-response.unstatshub.org/posts/survey-of-national-statistical-offices-during-covid-19/>



What we wanted to learn ...

Thematic areas covered:

- Impact on face-to-face data collection
- Office closures, remote work
- Continuity of major statistical programs (surveys, censuses)
- Impact on short-term statistics, data dissemination (publications) and international reporting
- Response to new data demands
- Challenges in collecting data on population groups of special interest
- Use of new data solutions
- ICT readiness and resource constraints
- Emergency plans, field protocols
- Coordination, partnerships, and data stewardship



The pandemic & statistical operations: trying times that accelerated modernization



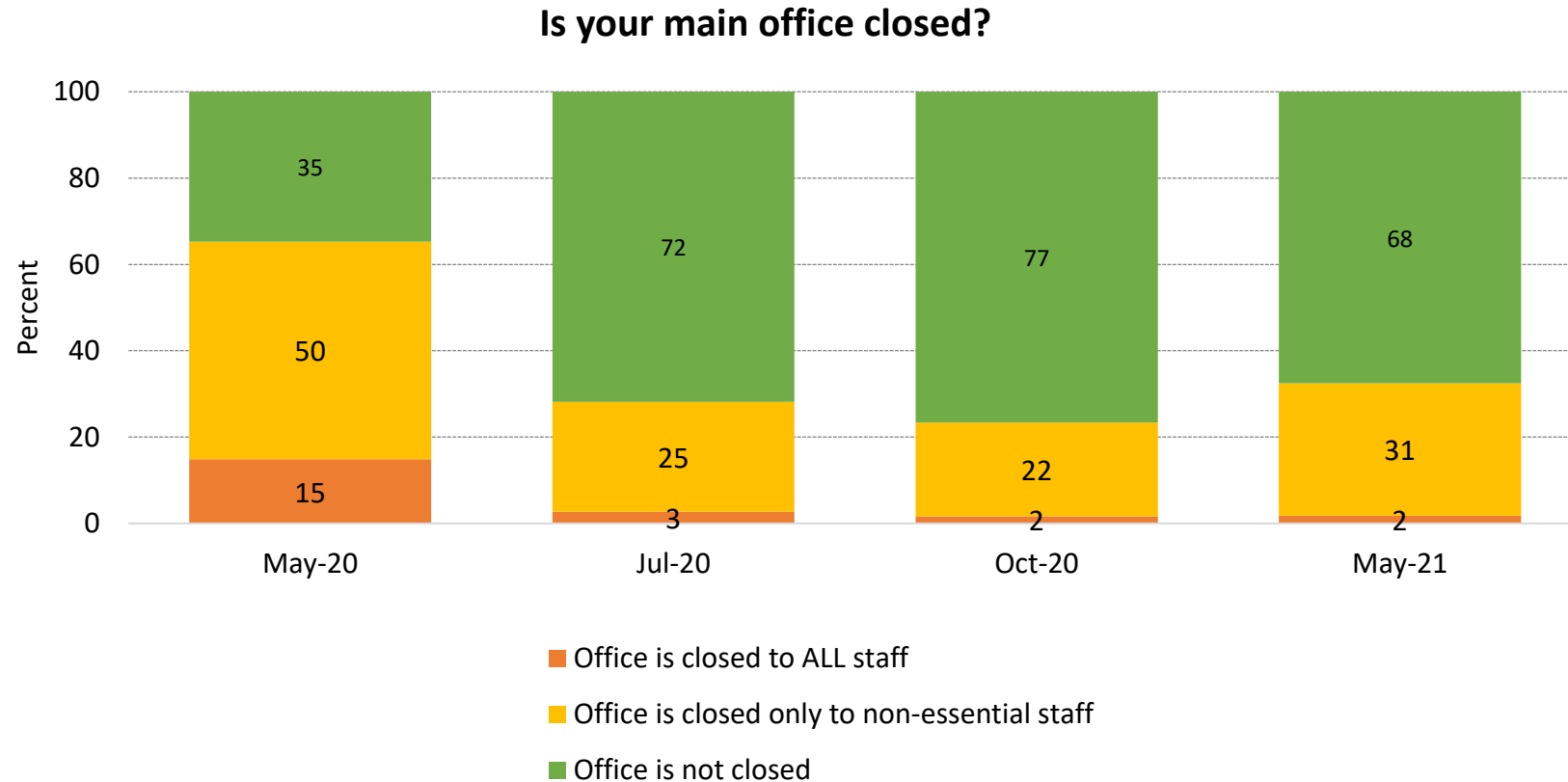
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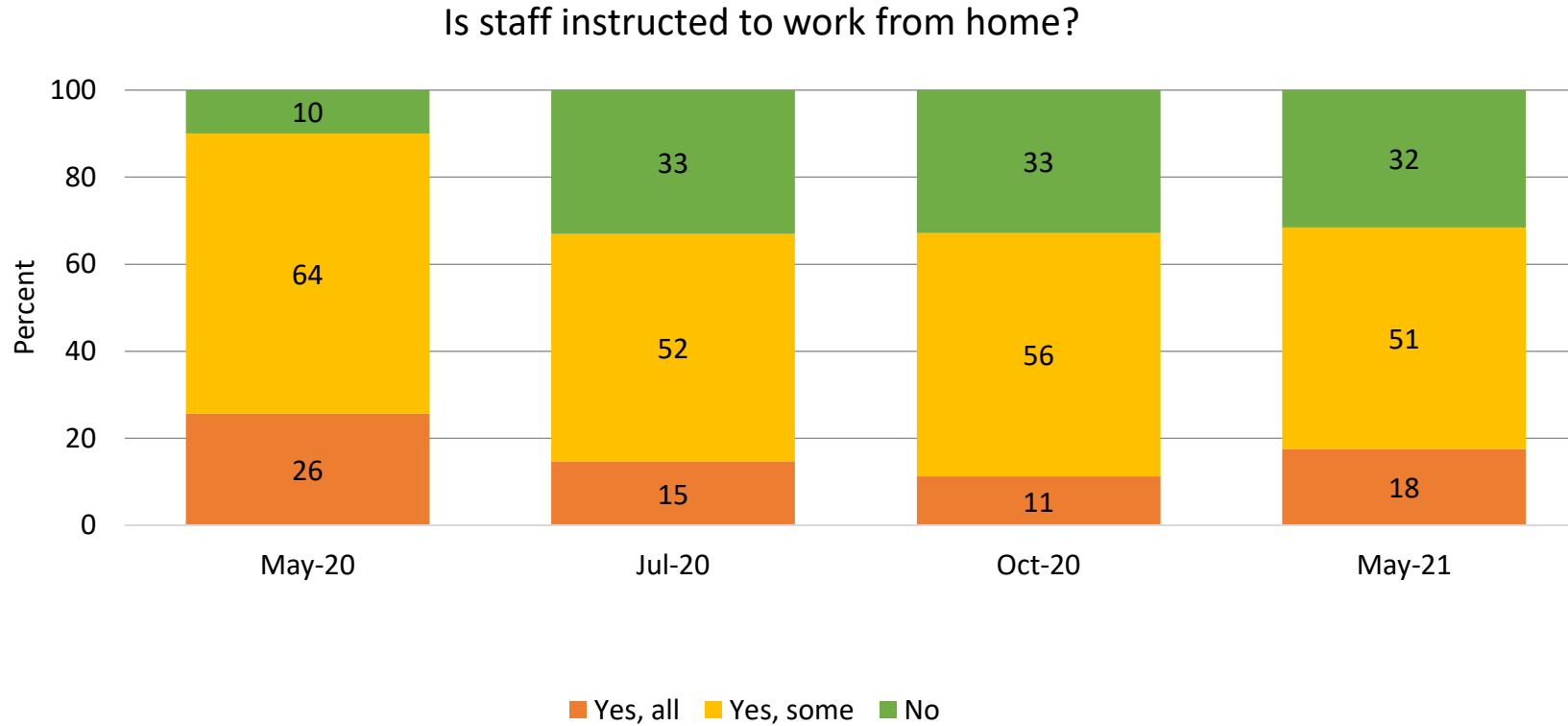


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While many NSOs had reopened after widespread initial closures the trend has reversed...

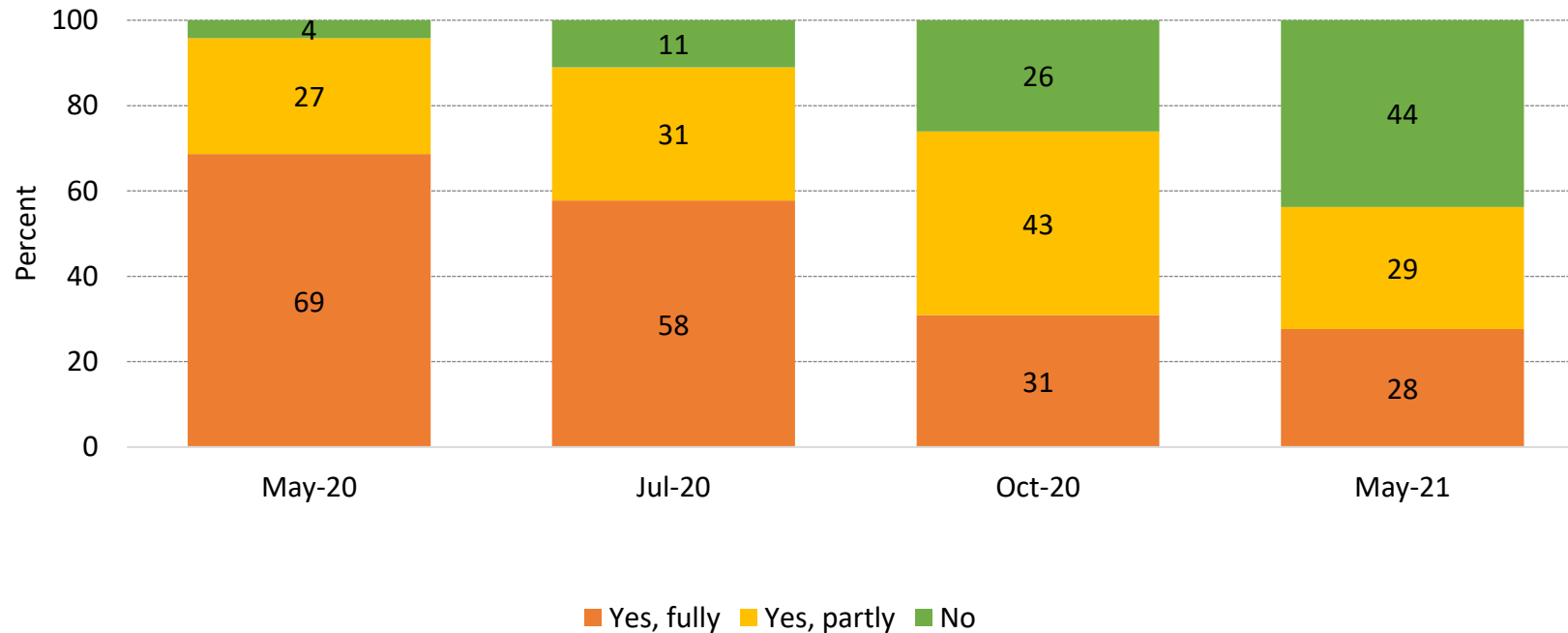


...remote work has been the solution in most cases



... and, after an almost universal suspension of face-to-face data collection, some in person data collection is resuming

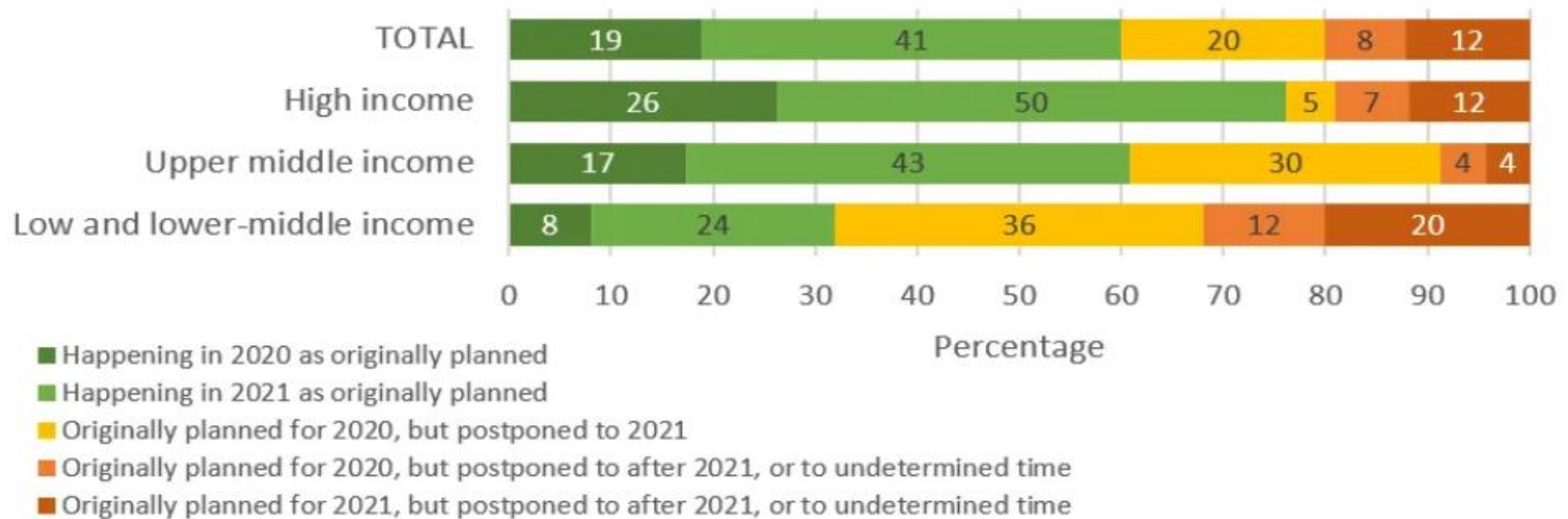
Stopped face-to-face data collection



Many NSOs in L/LMIC had to postpone their Population and Housing Census ...

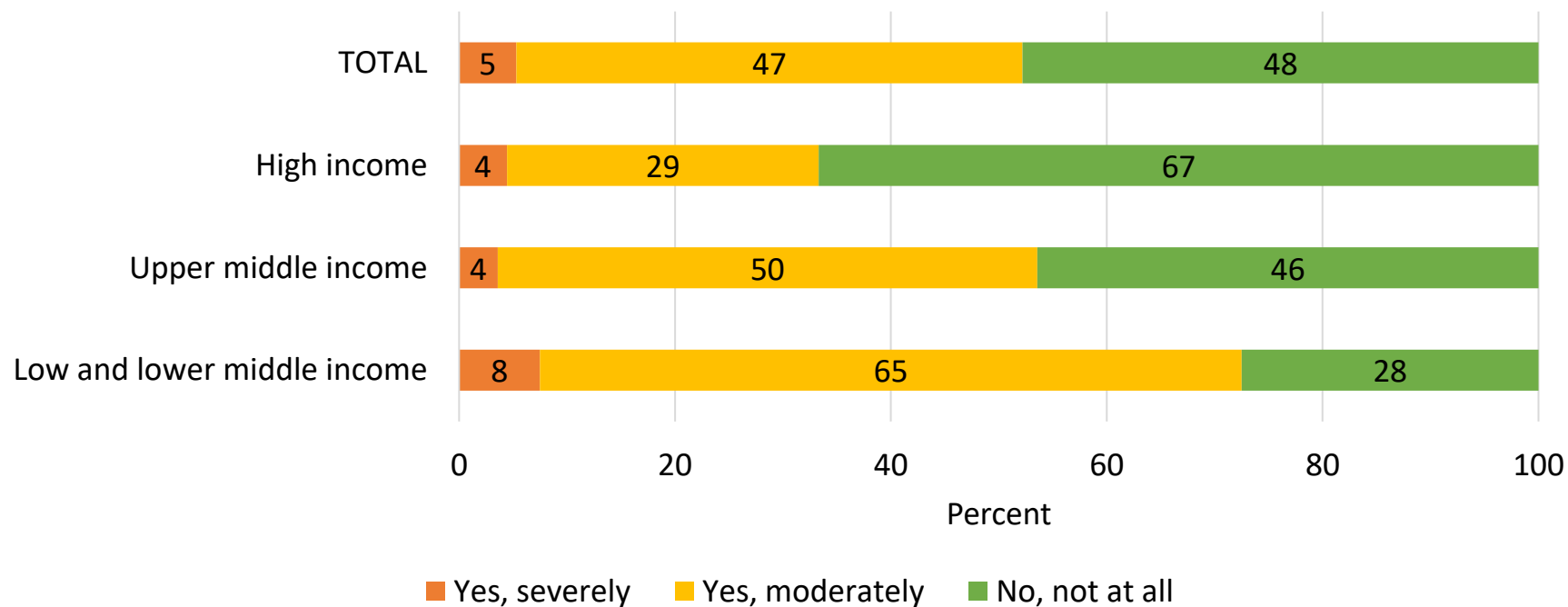
October 2020, Round 3

Situation of Population and Housing Census data collection among countries that had planned the census for 2020 or 2021



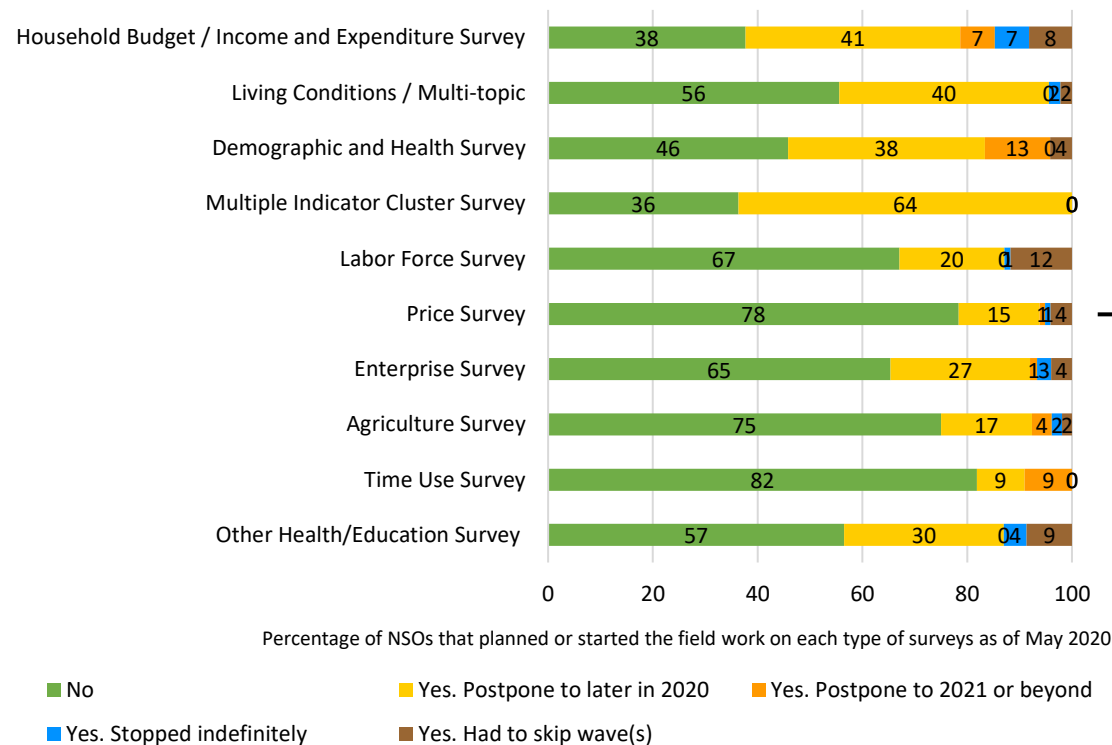
... and impacts on international reporting have been severe

Is the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affecting your current ability to meet international reporting requirements, and to what extent? – May 2021



As of May 2020, of the various types of planned surveys, time use, and price surveys were the least likely to be disrupted

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, did you have to stop or postpone the field work of planned survey? – May 2020

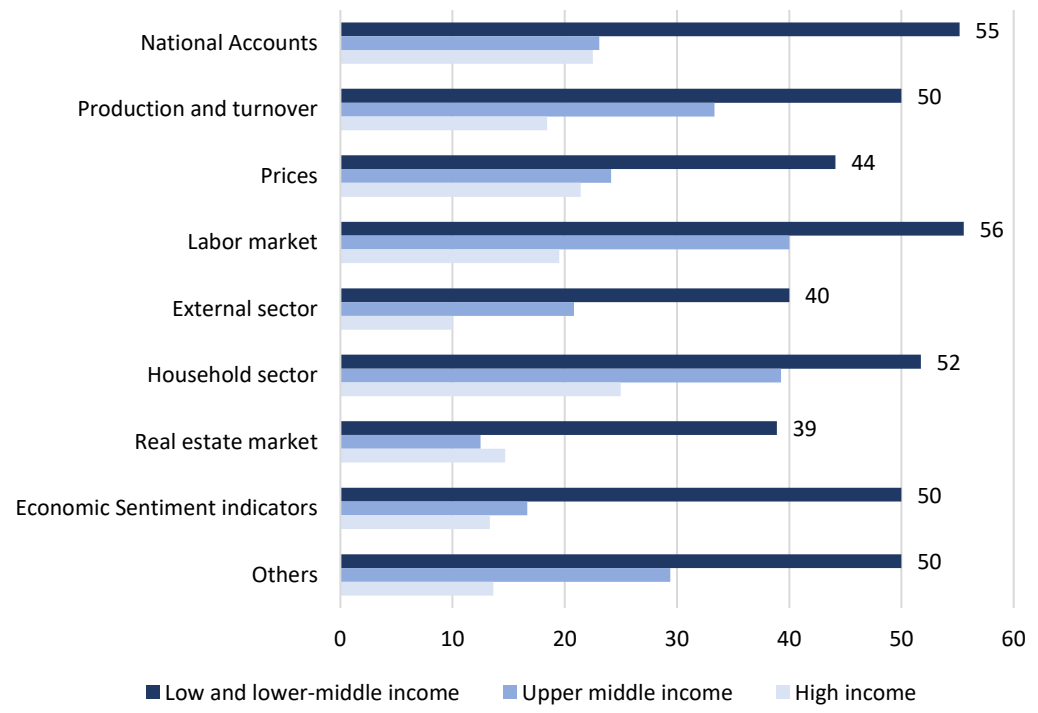


87% of the NSOs included in Round 1 (May 2020) had planned or already started the field work of a price survey.

Out of them, 78% reported that they did not stop or postpone data collection

... but short-term statistical production was severely affected, with low and lower-middle income countries impacted the most

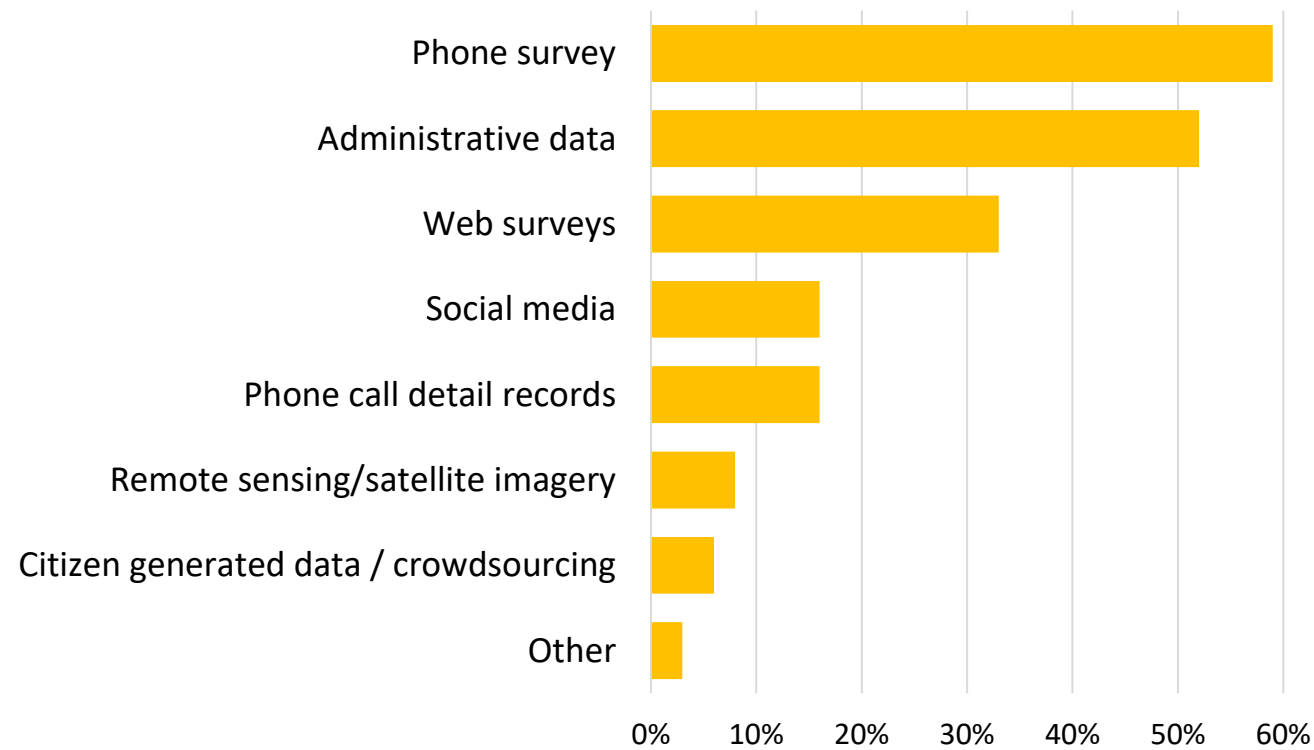
Proportion of countries where the current COVID-19 pandemic is affecting NSO's ability to produce essential monthly/quarterly statistics, by type of statistics as of July 2020



As of July 2020, more than half of the NSOs in low and lower-middle income countries reported that the pandemic affected their ability to produce various types of statistics.

NSO adapted quickly by mobilizing 'new' sources of data ...

Is your institution using alternative /nontraditional data sources/approaches to analyze or monitor aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic?



May 2020 – Round 1



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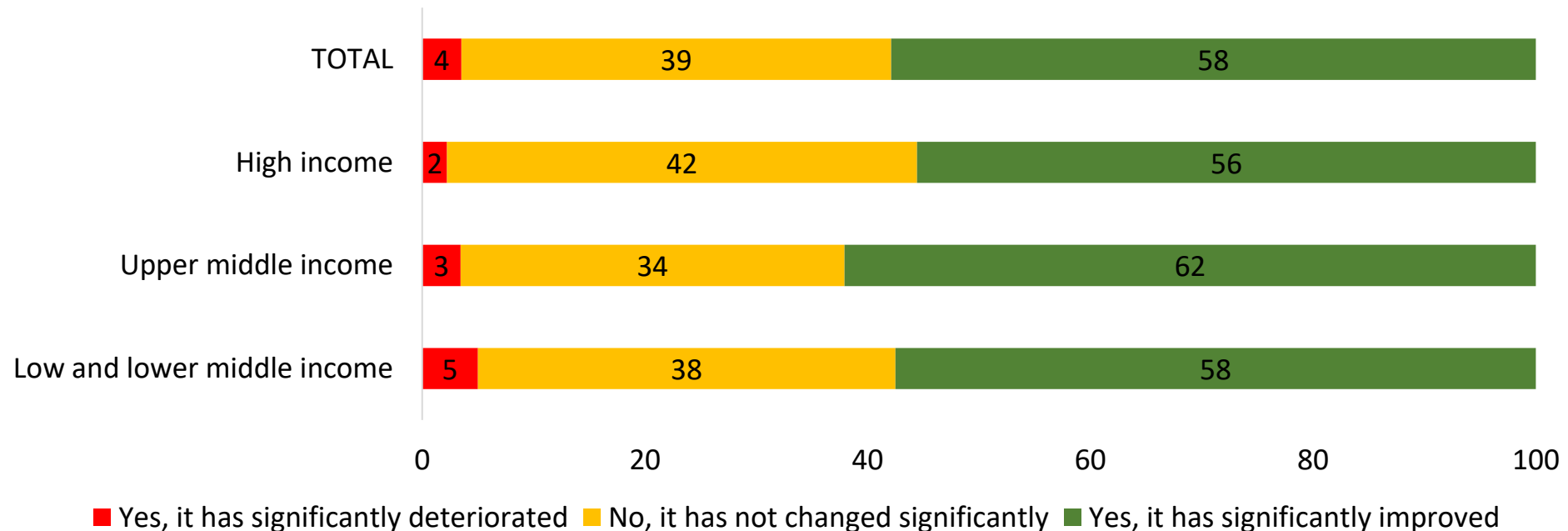
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... and turned the pandemic into an opportunity to accelerate modernization

Has the overall Information and Communication Technology (ICT) readiness of your office changed in the last 6 months?



May 2021 – Round 4



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Who is recovering, and what are the persisting challenges for the worst hit?



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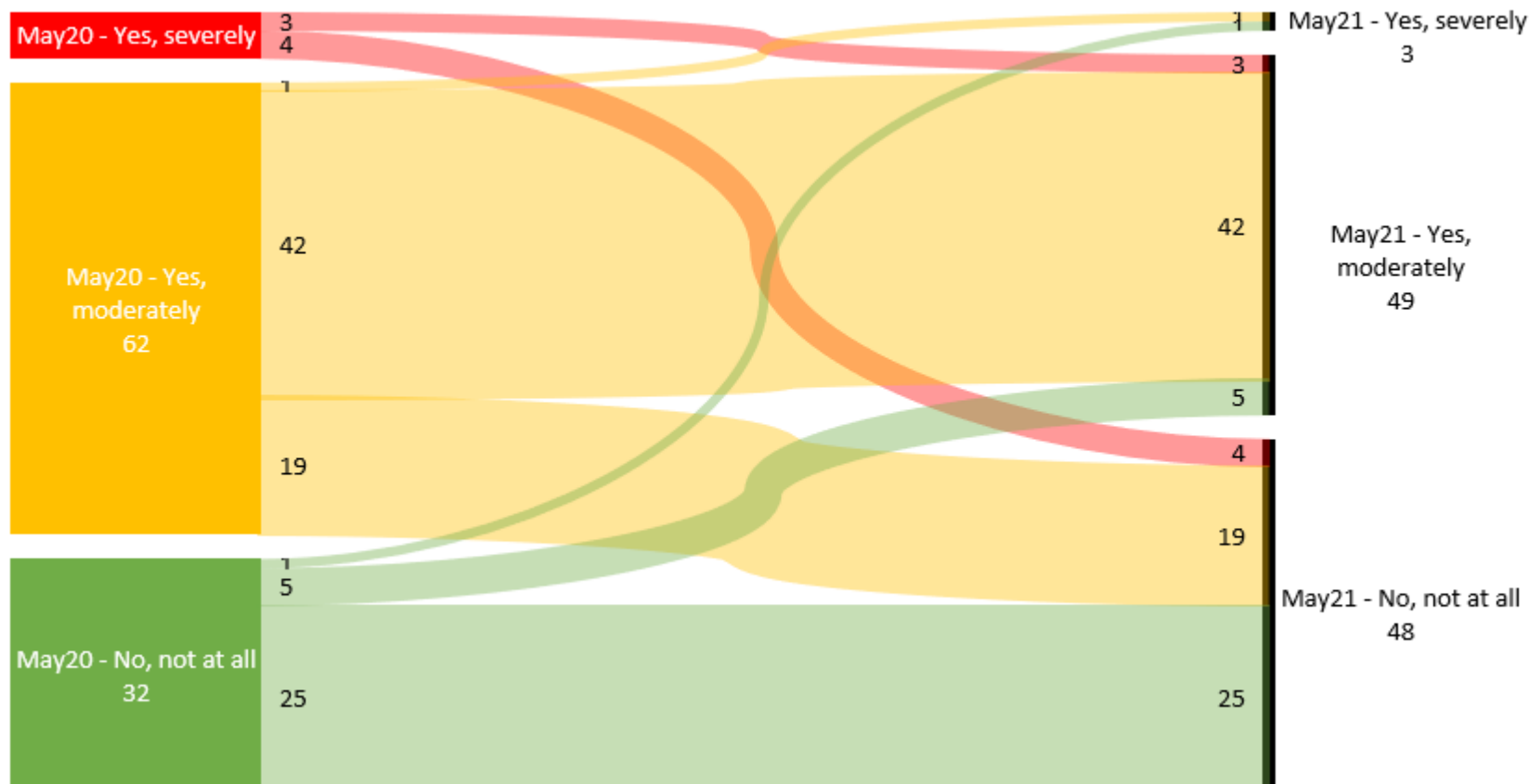
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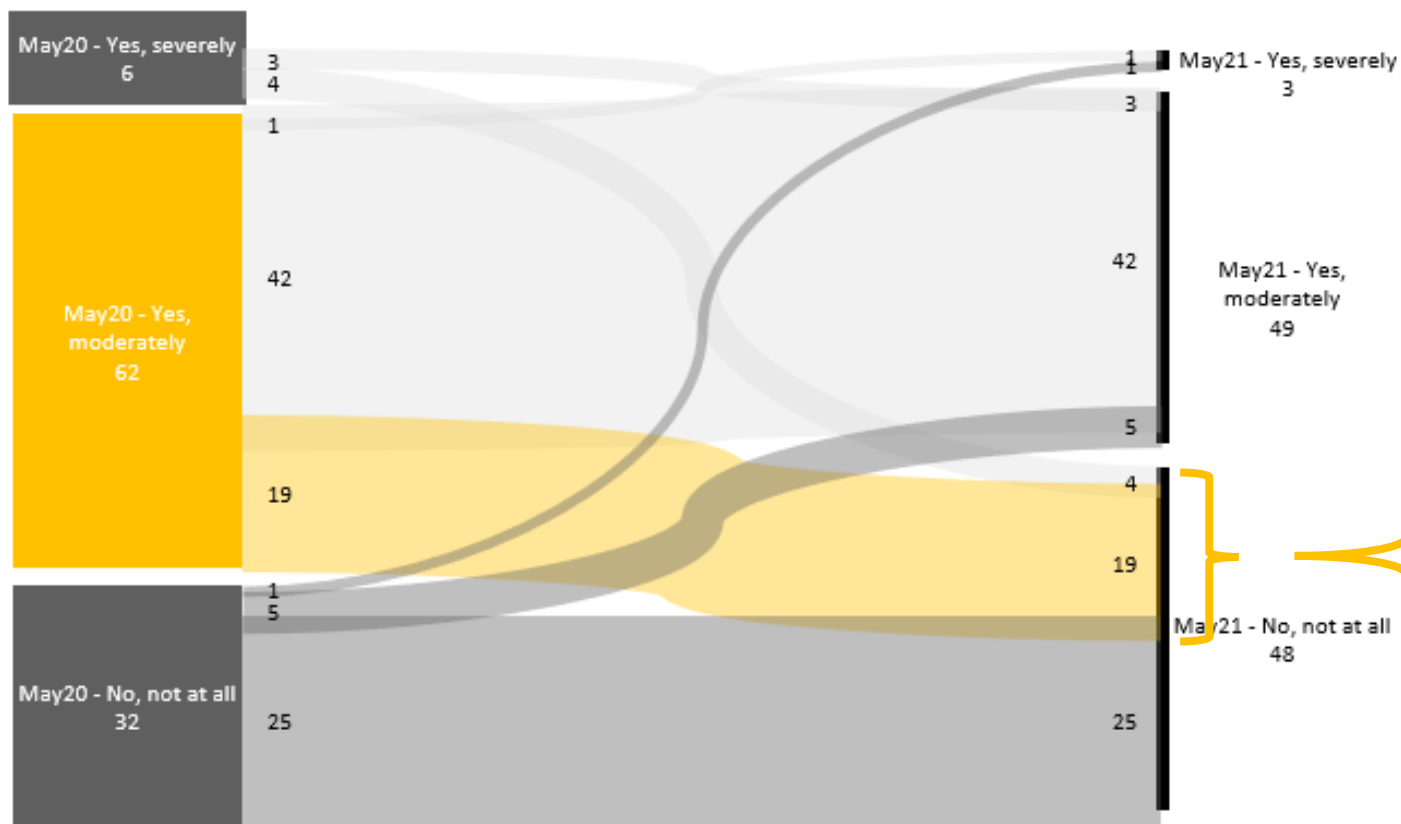
Is the pandemic affecting your ability to produce essential monthly/quarterly statistics and to what extent?

May 2020 and May 2021 (As % of NSOs answering in both rounds)

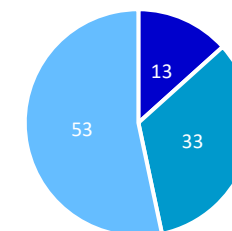


23% of the NSOs have recovered, many more still affected as of May/June 2021

The NSOs that recovered their ability to produce essential statistics are disproportionately in high income countries

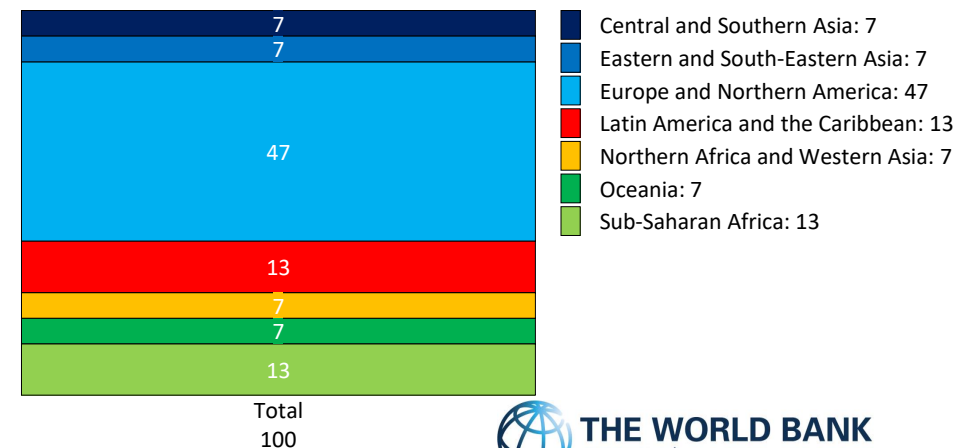


Distribution of NSOs that recovered their ability to produce essential statistics as of May 2021 (%)

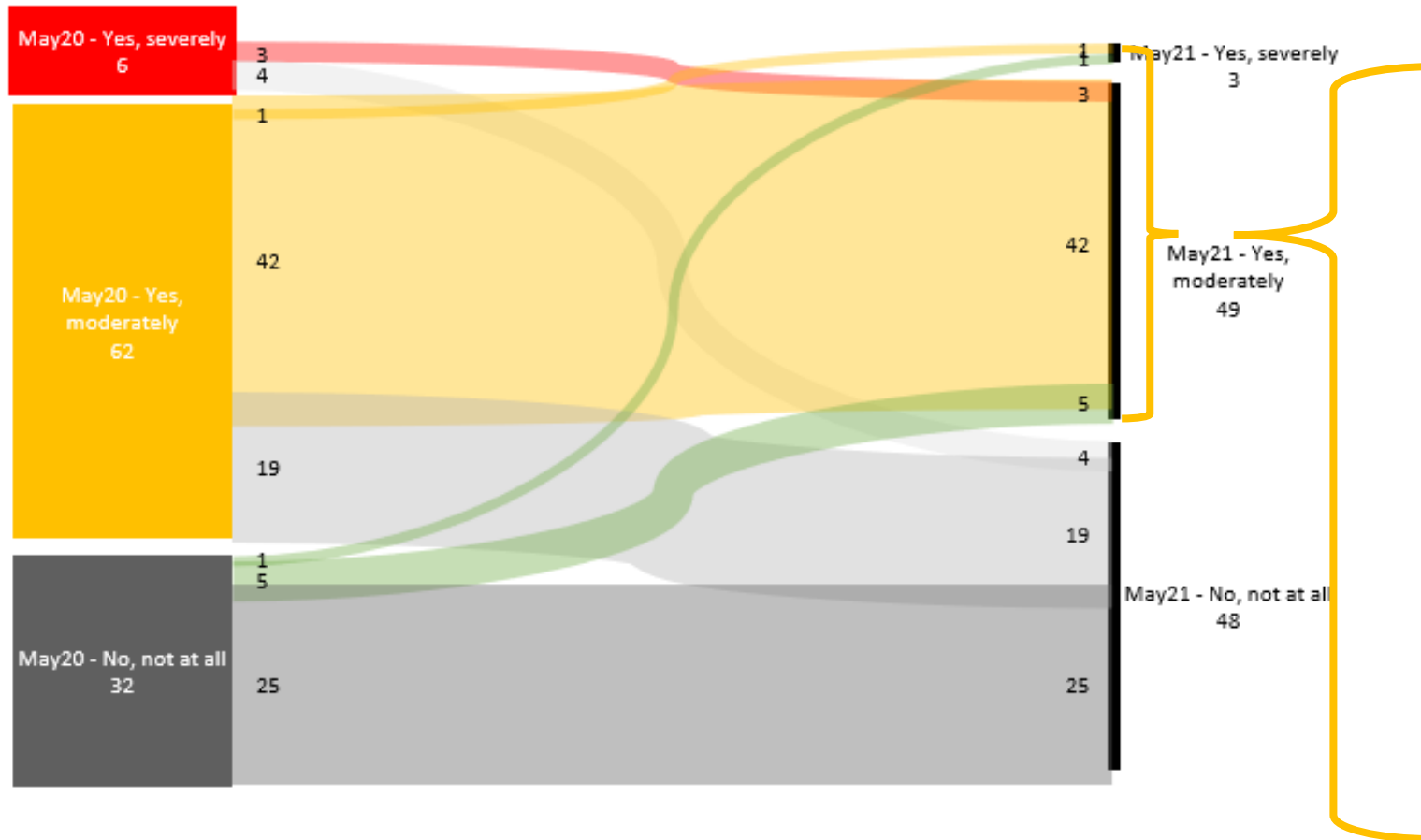


■ Low and lower-middle ■ Upper middle income ■ Higher income

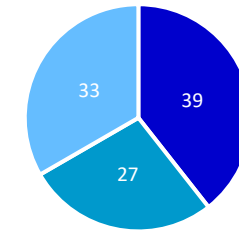
Distribution of NSOs that recovered their ability to produce essential statistics as of May 2021 (%)



...the ones whose ability to produce essential statistics is still affected are concentrated in LMICs, Africa

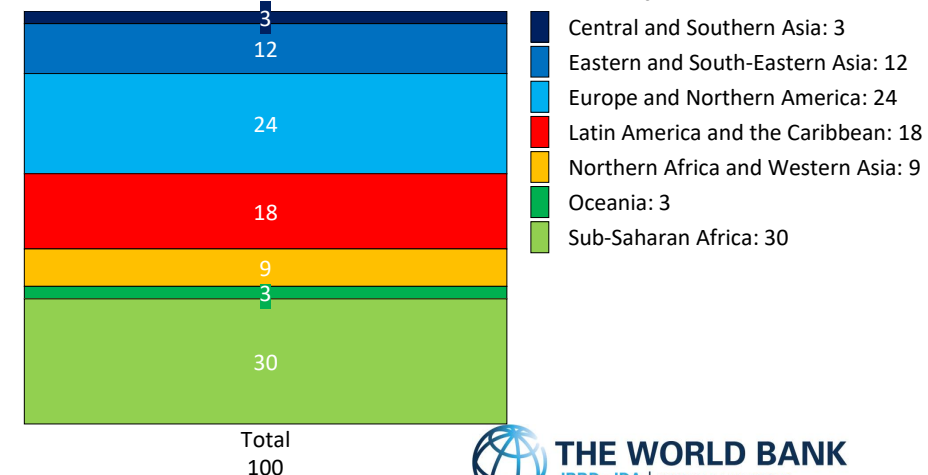


Distribution of NSOs whose ability to produce essential statistics is still affected as of May 2021 (%)

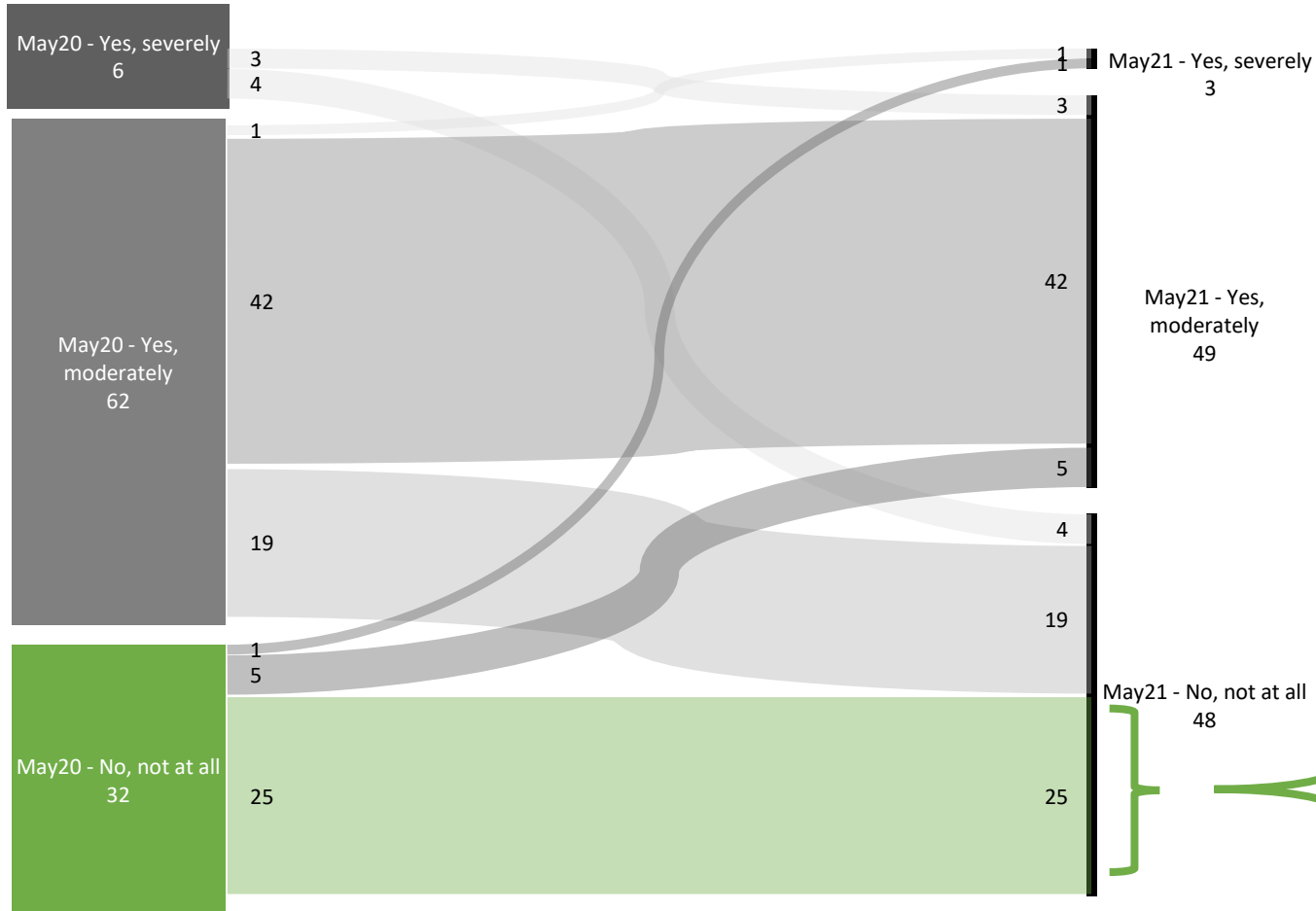


■ Low and lower-middle ■ Upper middle income ■ Higher income

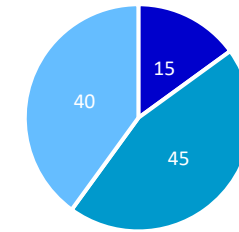
Distribution of NSOs whose ability to produce essential statistics is still affected as of May 2021 (%)



...and those who have been mostly spared are high and upper middle-income in East Asia, Europe and North America

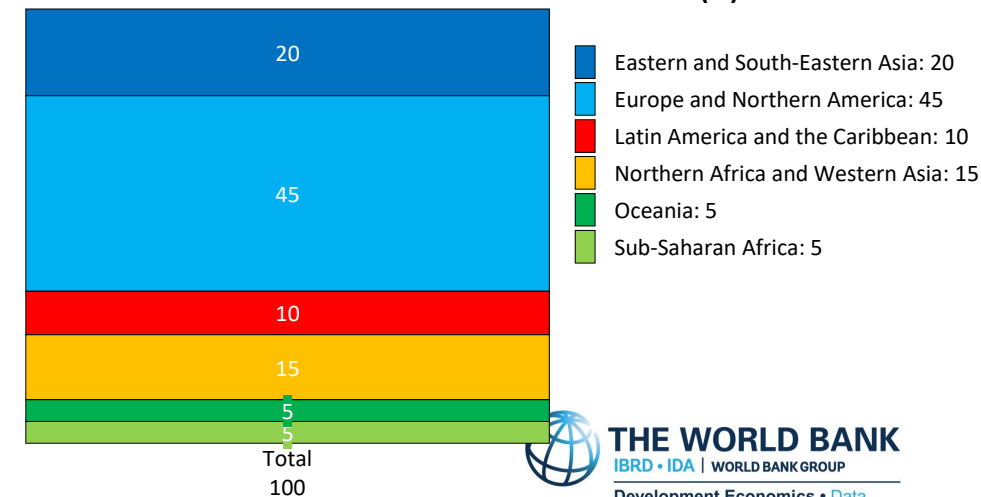


Distribution of NSOs that their ability to produce essential statistics was never affected (%)



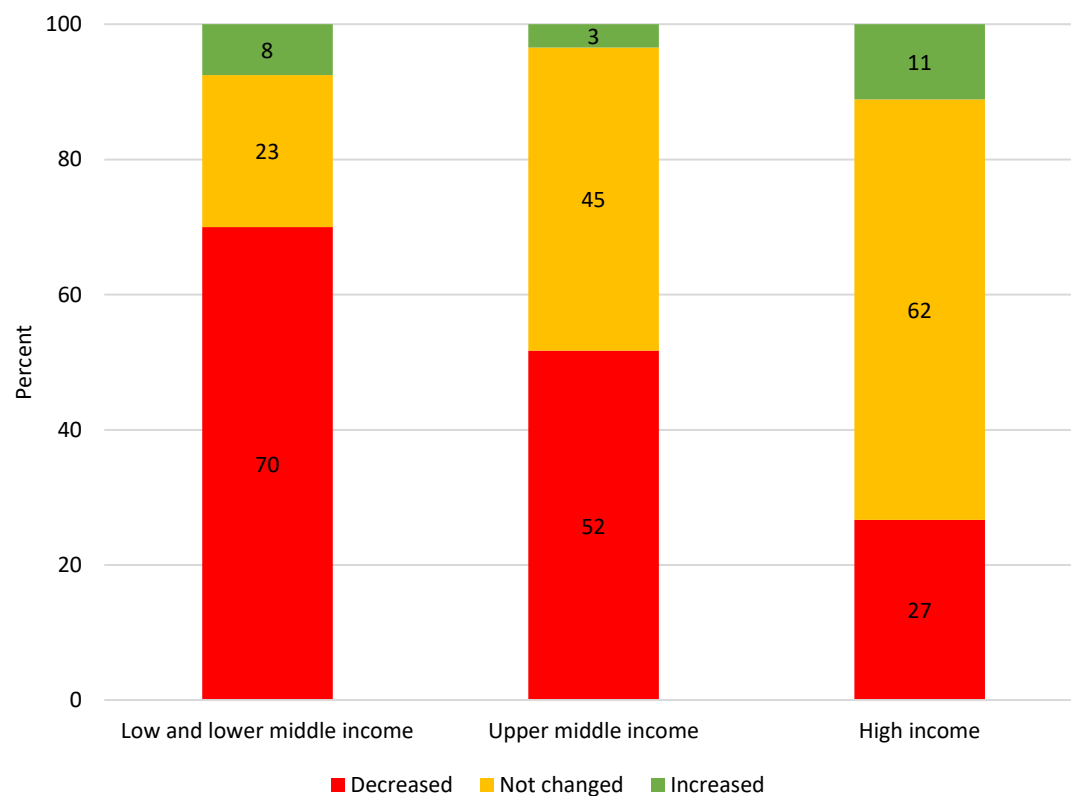
■ Low and lower-middle ■ Upper middle income ■ Higher income

Distribution of NSOs that their ability to produce essential statistics was never affected (%)

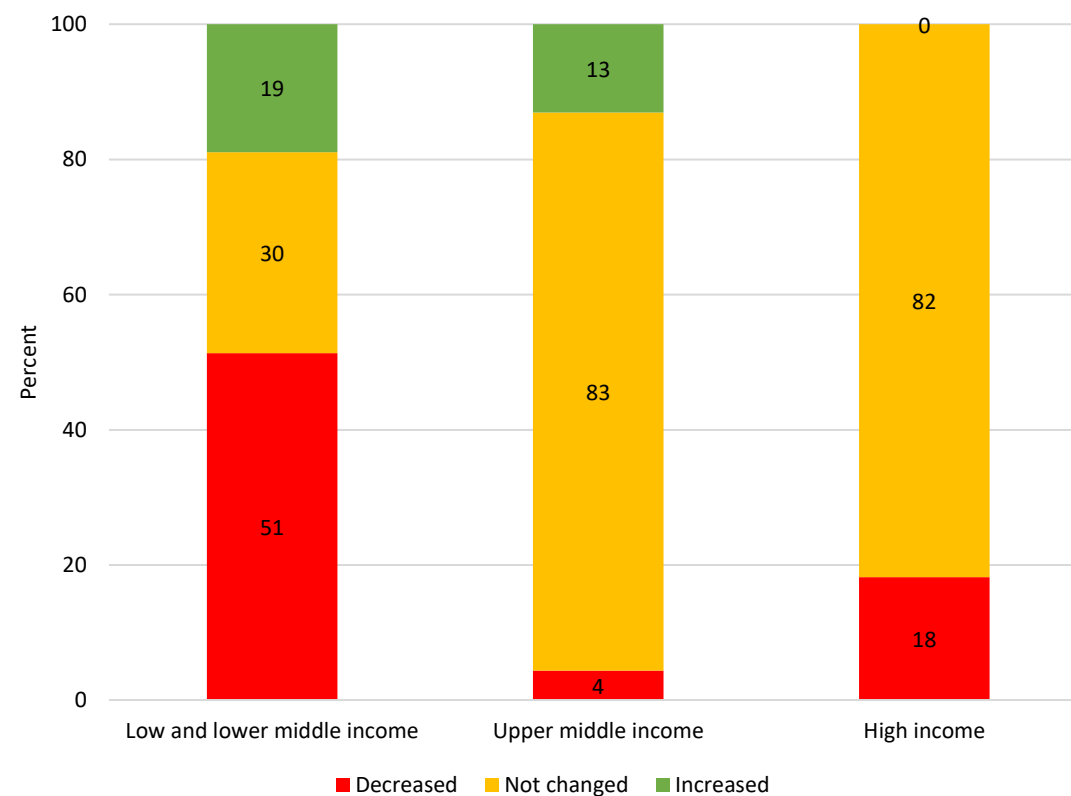


Low and lower-middle income NSOs have experienced a decrease in funding from both government and donors...

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, how has the funding in your organization from the **government** changed?

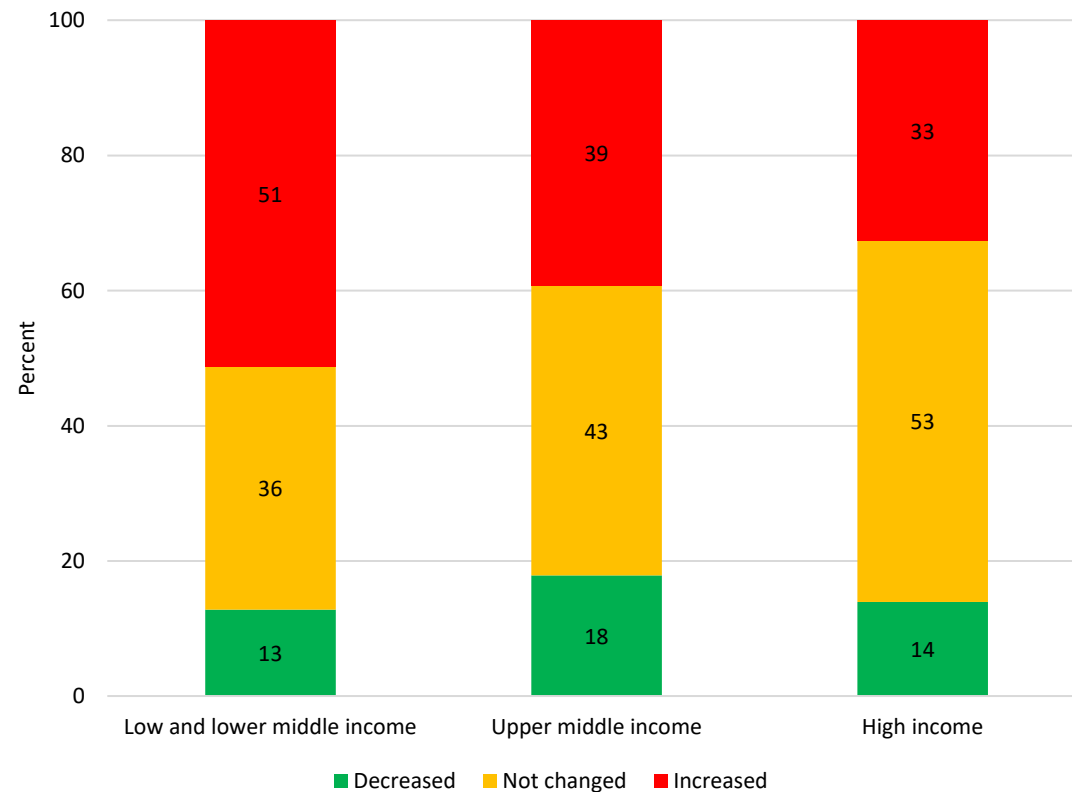


Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, how has the funding in your organization from **donors/other sources** changed?

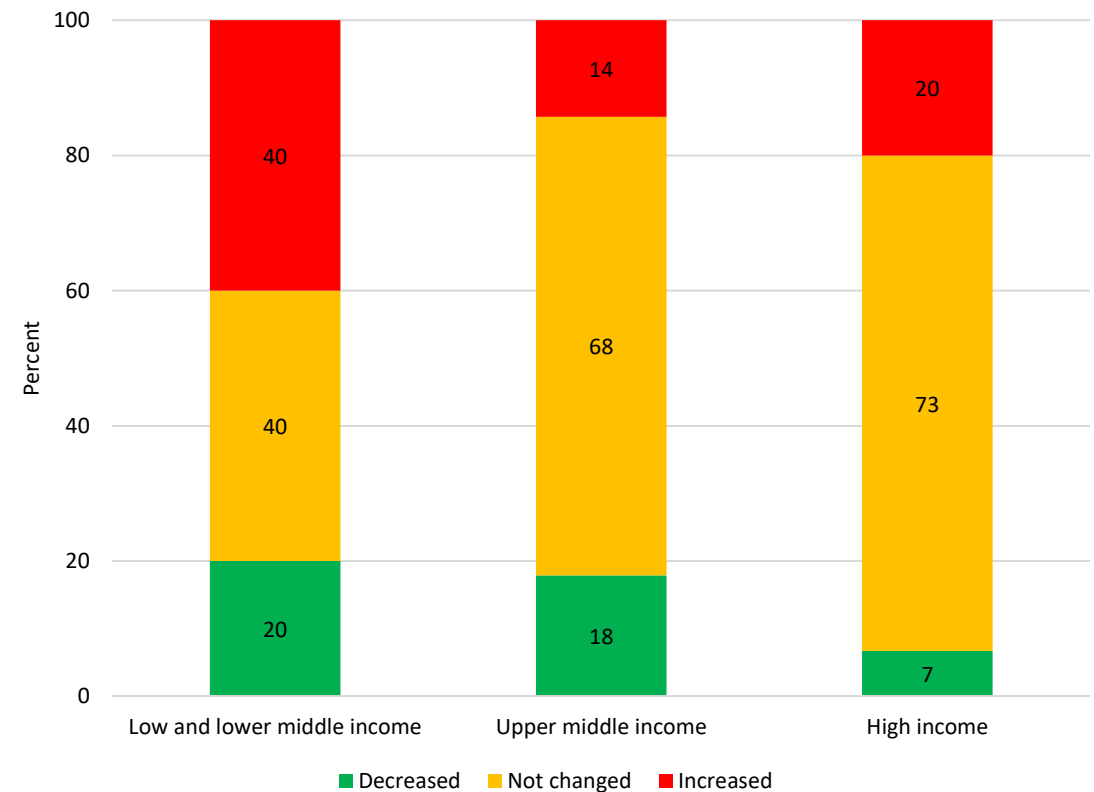


... and more LMICs reported an increase in costs

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the costs of data collection have...



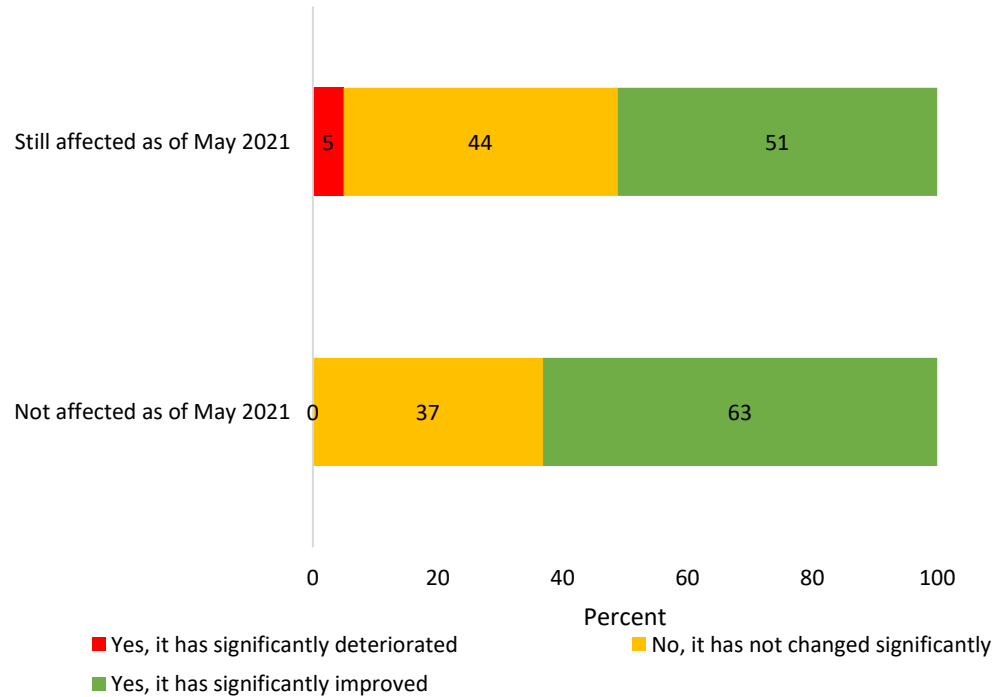
Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the costs of administration and management have...



NSOs that have 'recovered' have...

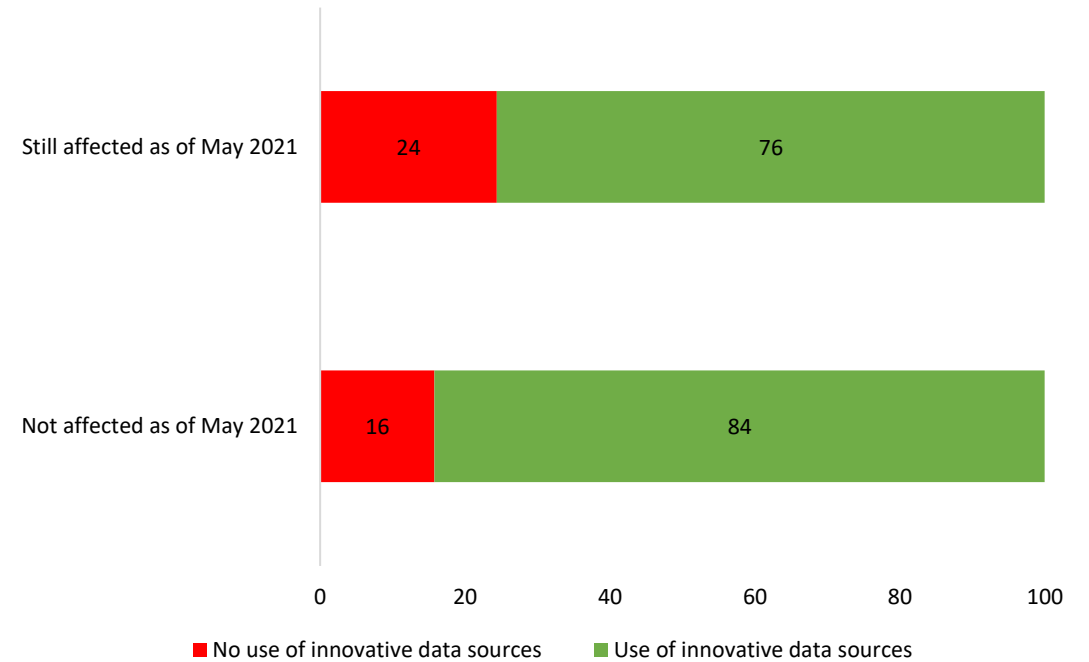
...modernized ICT more..

Overall Information and Communication Technology (ICT) readiness changes in the last 6 months as of May 2021 (%)



...and used 'new' data sources more

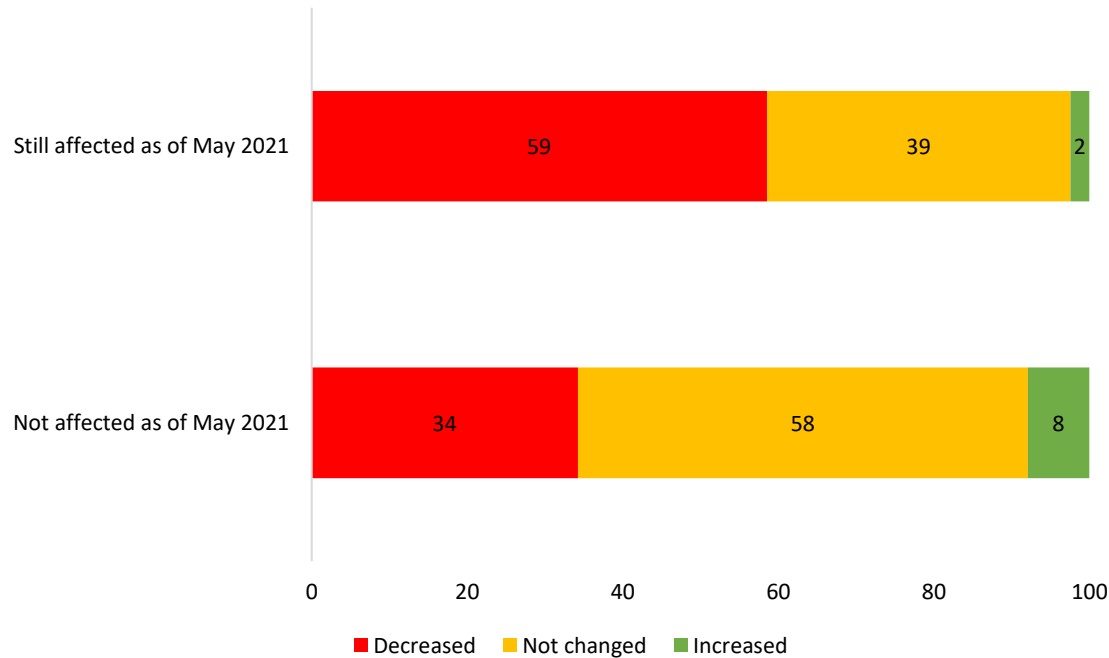
Use of innovative data sources as of May 2020 by NSOs status



NSOs that have 'recovered' have...

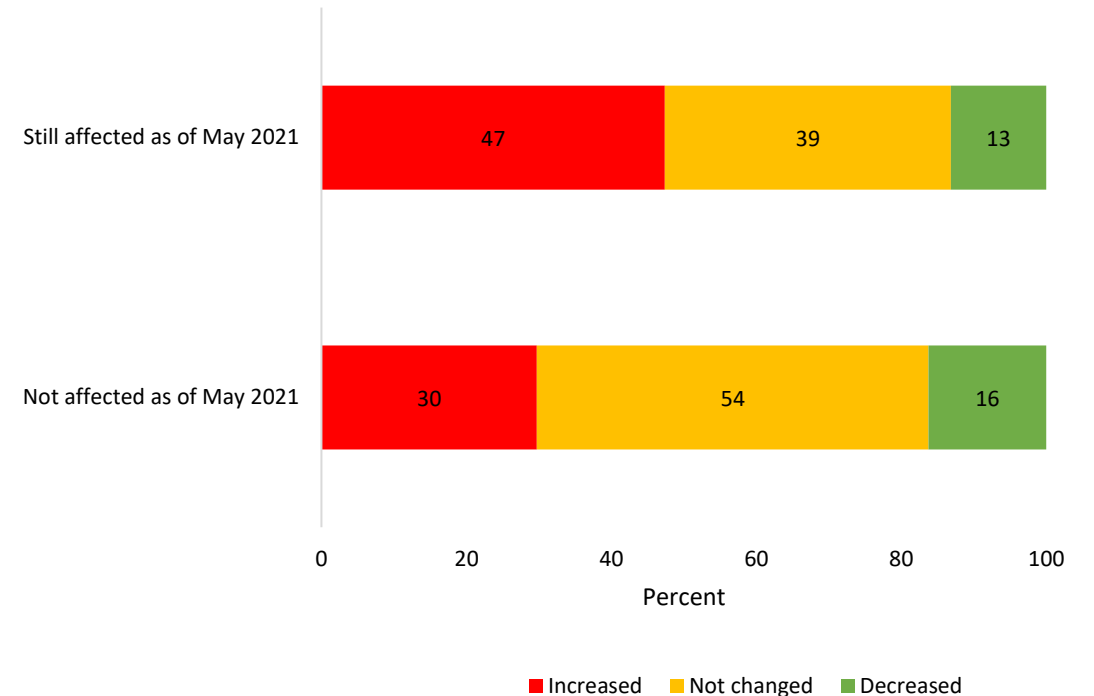
...faced fewer budget issues...

Changes in government funding since the beginning of the pandemic



...and fewer cost increases

Changes in data collection costs since the beginning of the pandemic (%)



Takeaway messages

- A revolution in the making has been accelerated by the pandemic
- But data production has been severely affected
- Perfect storm for those that faced increased data demands and costs, amid pandemic-induced restrictions and declining budgets/external support
- Danger of a growing divide, greater inequities
- Responsibility to step-up support, partnerships to (a) mitigate and reverse the negatives, (b) consolidate and expand innovation, with a focus on MICs and LMICs.





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Thank you!

<https://covid-19-response.unstatshub.org/statistical-programmes/covid19-nso-survey/>

<https://covid-19-response.unstatshub.org/statistical-programmes/priority-needs-of-national-statistical-offices>

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/brief/survey-of-national-statistical-offices-nsos-during-covid-19>

<http://datatopics.worldbank.org/universal-health-coverage/coronavirus/>



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