

Markets, Rawalpindi (Pakistan) 2020/21



The COVID-19 Vendor Survey Factsheet (VSF), developed by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) highlights the behaviours, perceptions, and decisions of vendors in 10 traditional markets in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The VSF provides a snapshot of vendor's challenges and needs as they cope with business and food security choices under COVID 19.

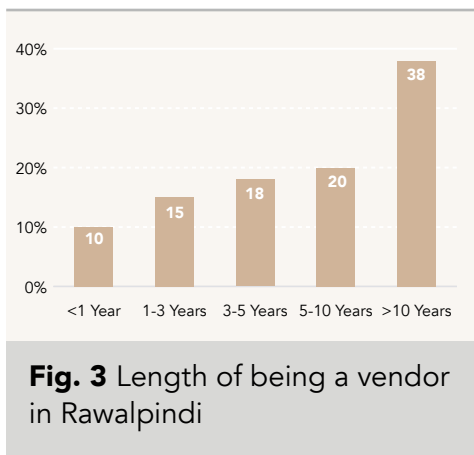
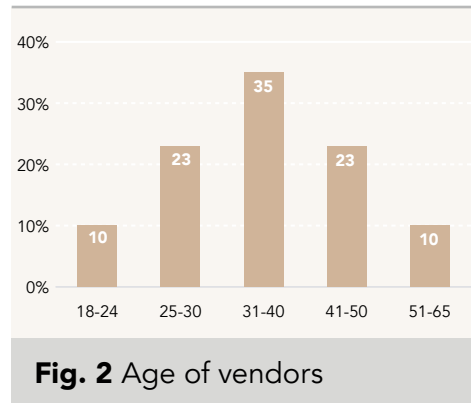
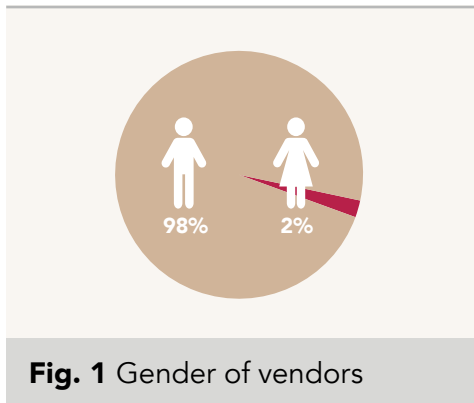
The assessment is based on face-to-face interviews with non-probabilistically sampled vendors (n=80) from 10 different informal markets in Rawalpindi, conducted between the end of December 2020 and early January 2021.

Summary:

- 80% of vendors regarded the mandate to wear face masks for vendors and customers (75%), the thorough cleaning of markets (73%), and the communication strategies (64%) as useful measures against COVID-19.
- All vendors have taken their own measures (wearing face mask, increased cleanliness of surfaces, reminding customers to maintain social distancing, wearing gloves); almost none offered mobile money options.
- 11% of vendors increased the sale of some foods (fish, poultry, eggs, and fruits) due to seasonal changes and increased demand during COVID-19.
- 96% of vendors stated that the number of customers substantially decreased during the pandemic.
- 40% of vendors used marketing strategies (additional discounts, advertisements and sales on credit) to increase the number of customers or sales under COVID-19.
- 50% of vendors reported a change in their suppliers (increase in supplier's prices, relying on fewer suppliers) since COVID-19 has been present in the area.

Vendors surveyed (n=104)

- As fresh food retailing businesses are mainly operated by male vendors in Pakistan, 98% of vendors interviewed were male (Fig. 1).
- 81% of vendors were between 25 and 50 years of age (Fig. 2).
- 91% of vendors identified as Punjabi and 9% as Pathan.
- 78% of vendors owned the business they were operating in, 16% were employed.
- 58% of respondents have been working as vendors in Rawalpindi for more than 5 years (Fig. 3).
- The vendors interviewed sold meat, fish, dairy, eggs, fruits and vegetables.



Market response to COVID-19

Almost all vendors (91%) noticed thorough cleaning of markets with disinfectant, the regular communication from markets about COVID-19 spread and self-protection measures (89%), the mandate to wear masks for vendors (85%) and social distancing rules (83%) in place in the market spaces to protect vendors and consumers. The measures perceived to be most useful, mentioned by almost 80% of vendors, were the mandate to wear face masks for vendors, followed by the mandate to wear face masks for customers (75%), the thorough cleaning of markets (73%), and the communication strategies (64%) to reduce an individual's risk of contracting COVID-19 in the markets (Fig. 4).

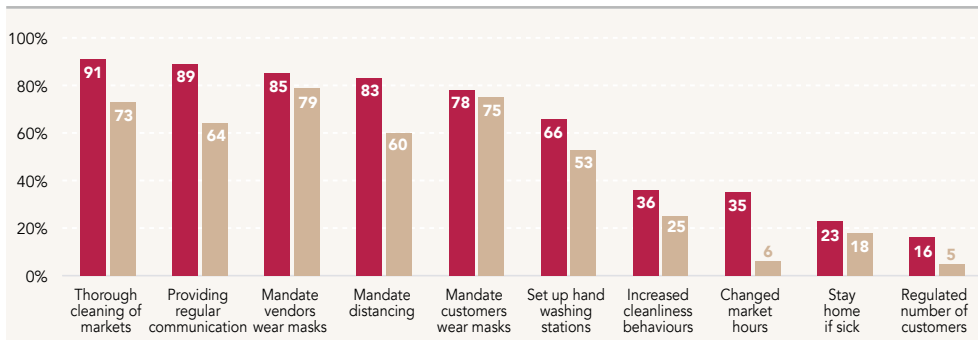


Fig. 4 Market responses to COVID-19 and usefulness of measures

■ Measures recognised ■ Usefulness of measures

Knowledge and implementation of protective measures against COVID-19

All vendors said that they had taken measures to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. All vendors reported wearing a face mask all the time, 84% increased the cleanliness of surfaces, 63% regularly reminded customers to maintain social distancing when possible and 50% of vendors always wore gloves. Almost none of the vendors offered mobile money options (Fig. 5).

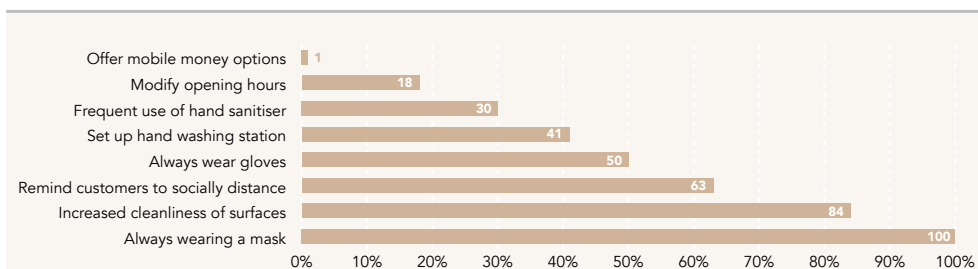


Fig. 5 Measures taken by vendors

Impacts of COVID-19

Only 11% of vendors changed the type of products or food groups they sell during COVID-19 in the last six months. Of those vendors that made changes, all reported increases in the sales of fish, poultry, eggs, and fruits. None of the vendors reported decreasing sales for certain food types or groups (Fig. 6). Reasons for changing the food products sold were seasonal changes (78%) and increased demand (33%).

Almost all vendors (99%) said that the number of customers on a typical day changed due to COVID-19. Most of those vendors noting a change in the number of customers reported a substantial (80%) or a slight (16%) decrease in the number of customers (Fig. 7).

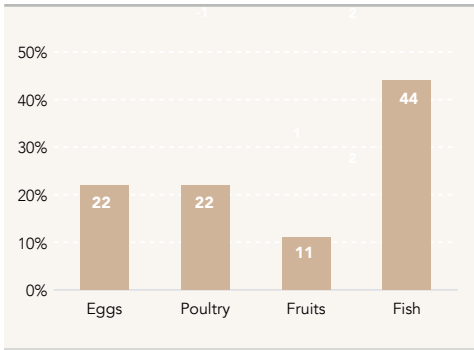


Fig. 6 Share of vendors increase in the food products sold during COVID-19, last 6 months (n=9)

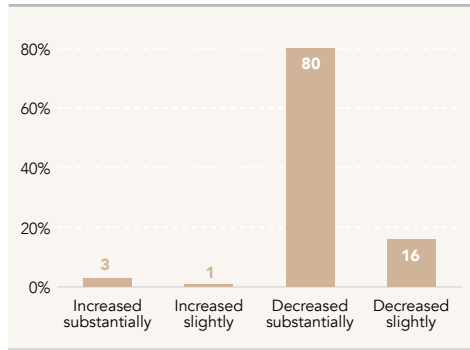


Fig. 7 Change in the number of customers due to COVID-19 (n=79)

Business strategies and vendor connectivity

Of the vendors surveyed, 40% used marketing strategies to increase the number of customers or sales under COVID-19. Almost all of those using marketing strategies provided additional discounts (94%), used advertisements such as leaflets, radio, tv or social media (25%), or provided the possibility to shop on credit (9%) (Fig. 8).

Half of the vendors surveyed reported experiencing a change in their suppliers since COVID-19 has been present in the area. Two thirds of those that recognised a change in suppliers reported an increase in supplier's prices (68%), mentioned that they had to rely on fewer suppliers (48%), or that suppliers had changed the credit policy (30%) in the last month. However, the changes in suppliers seem to be mixed: 20% of vendors reported relying on more suppliers and 10% of vendors who noticed changes reported a decrease in supplier's prices (Fig. 9).

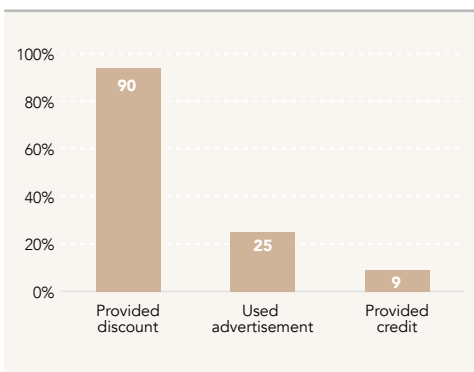
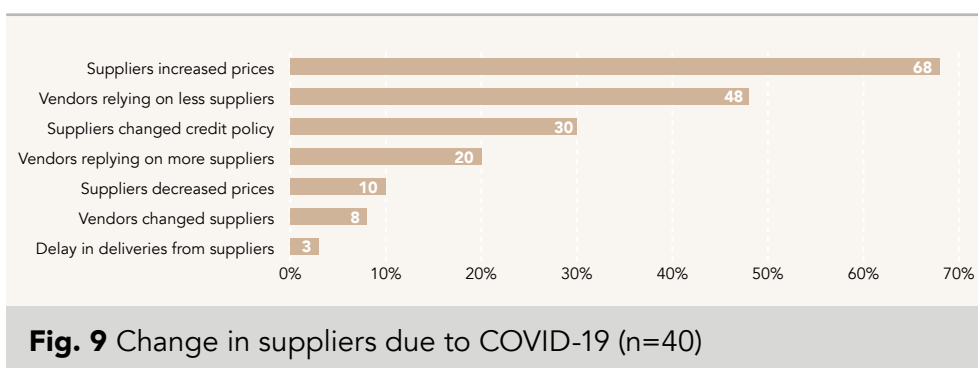


Fig. 8 Type of marketing strategies used (n=32)



Methods: Assessing vendor behaviours, perceptions and decisions under COVID-19

Insights into vendor behaviours, perceptions and decisions under COVID-19 have been based on interviews of 80 vendors from Nawaz Shareef Park Market, Weekly Market Aqsa Mosque Near Holy family, Committee Chock Market, Raja Bazar Market, Bani Market, Weekly Market 22 No near Tench Bhata, Weekly Market Korang Town, Bostan Khan road Market, Lalkurti Market and PWD Market in Rawalpindi. Non-probabilistic (quota) sampling techniques were used for a balanced representation of vendors dealing with eight different food items: seasonal fruits, vegetables, beef, mutton, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy items (primarily milk and yogurt). Furthermore, vendors were only selected if they were above 18 years of age and provided verbal consent to participate in the survey. The interviews were held in each of the 10 informal market settings in Rawalpindi between 30th December 2020 and 3rd January 2021 using a structured questionnaire. The interview tool has previously been translated into Urdu and tested in the field. Surveys are conducted with complete adherence to global guidelines on COVID-19 prevention and control. All data were collected via Open Data Kit collect and stored on KoBo Toolbox; data analysis was done using Stata version 15.1.

Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) COVID-19 Response

The necessary COVID-19 responses, such as lockdowns and/or curfews, have placed a spotlight on the weakness of food systems across the world. In the COVID-19 context, the single most important thing that can be done for the health and resilience of people and economies is to protect the nutritional status of current and future generations. GAIN has developed the *Keeping Food Markets Working (KFMW)* programme as an emergency response to the COVID-19 crisis, providing rapid support to food system workers, to small and medium enterprises supplying nutritious foods, and to keeping fresh food markets open. While disease control responses to the pandemic are essential, they also disrupt food systems, depress income, and put a strain on social protection programmes, which can threaten the nutritional status of the most vulnerable. The KFMW programme is focused on mitigating those risks and keeping affordable nutritious foods flowing in African and Asian markets to the people who most need it.

Supporting effective policymaking and coordination during the pandemic, is one of several initiatives under this KFMW programme. This initiative focuses on 6 cities, in 3 countries i.e., **Machakos and Kiambu (Kenya); Beira and Pemba (Mozambique); Rawalpindi and Peshawar (Pakistan)**, with the aim of better understanding city-context specific experiences of the urban food system during the pandemic – most especially traditional food markets which provide vital access to food for the most vulnerable. Valuably, the evidence reveals food system, everyday realities as experienced and practiced by urban residents. Together with key informant interviews and focus groups involving a range of urban food system stakeholders, including market committees and city government policy makers, as well as satellite imagery and desktop studies, this vendor survey helps better inform and align urban food system policy, coordination and resilience for all.

For more information please view our other factsheets on the qualitative findings of this rapid assessment and future co-designed policy toolkits:

- gainhealth.org/impact/our-response-covid-19#keeping-food-markets-working-programme
- gainhealth.org/impact/our-response-covid-19/effective-policymaking-and-coordination-during-pandemic

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