# Covid-19: Public Policies and Society's Responses

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## Quality information for refining public policies and saving lives

> **Policy Briefing Note 17**
> Hunger Persists in Vulnerable Communities Alongside New Dimensions of Violence. Distrust in the Decisions to Relax Social Distancing Hinders the Containment of the COVID-19 Pandemic

### New survey series with leaders in vulnerable communities reveals:

- The increase in domestic violence has become a conspicuous and increasingly serious issue in vulnerable communities.

- Food security continues to be the leading problem afflicting the most vulnerable population.

- There has been an increase in drug use and conflicts with the police.

- Eight in 10 respondents indicated that relaxing social distancing measures would cause negative impacts on their territories, with a recurrent perception that infection spread will increase and likely worsen the effects of the pandemic.

- The increased demand for food parcels[1] occurs concurrently with a decrease in distribution and donations.

- Financial hardships seriously impact small-scale business owners who did not benefit from the Emergency Basic Income program (EBI) nor from alternative protection policies.

- Perceptions about the negative impacts of relaxing social distancing measures suggest contradictory movements by the population: 27.6% of the negative mentions emphasized the population's fear of becoming infected, while 20% of these mentions underlined the population's denial of the severity of the pandemic.

- Almost half of the community leaders (47%) do not trust the capacity of local governments to ensure the safety of the population when implementing measures to relax social distancing.

## Introduction

This Bulletin presents the results of the third wave of data collection by the *Monitoring panel with community leaders about the impacts of the progress of the Covid-19 pandemic*, conducted by the Solidary Research Network. The consistent gathering of information regarding the main problems faced by the most vulnerable population amidst the pandemic allows for the anticipation of crises and risk management by the public authorities and the communities themselves.

Our study listened, identified, and systematized the critical problems reported by leaders from over 75 communities, neighborhoods, territories, and locations with high social vulnerability across different metropolitan regions in the country. For this Bulletin, we contacted the same leaders from the previous two monitoring waves published in Bulletin #7 and #12 in addition to new representatives from the same regions. This survey presents the results from 75 interviews with leaders in urban areas in the metropolitan regions of Manaus, Recife, Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Campinas, Salvador, Joinville, and Maringá.

The interviews for the third monitoring wave took place between July 06 and 16, 2020. We collected the results from the direct statements of 75 leaders (from a total of 117 contacted) who answered standardized questions through mobile applications.

Community leaders and representatives are strategic sources of information in our study, constantly engaged in the everyday life of the community as they tackle the most serious problems afflicting their locations. In constant dialogue with the population, they listen to demands, manage conflicts, and have a more integrated outlook of the territories in which they operate. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes the importance of community engagement for the effective communication of risks as well as for the control of the pandemic in local contexts, especially in highly vulnerable communities. Due to their familiarity with the territory, their experience, and the capillarity of their personal networks, community leaders play a strategic role in promoting measures to prevent the spread of the virus and in building alternative solutions to the economic and social damages of the pandemic.

This Bulletin presents the results from our analysis of two open-ended questions asked to these leaders. Our applied methodology did not incentive specific issues or problems since our objective was to grasp unexpected situations and events engendered by the current crisis.

The first question, replicated from the prior two waves of our study, addressed the leaders' perceptions regarding the problems and difficulties faced by communities on account of the pandemic. The second question, applied for the first time in this Panel, addressed the leaders' perception about the impacts of relaxing social distancing policies in different states[2].

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**1** Translator's note: A basic-needs grocery package. The *cesta básica* (or food parcel) is a Brazilian economic term referring to a food parcel to meet the minimum needs of a typical family. The parcel generally contains food items, personal hygiene products, and cleaning products. There is no consensus as to which products make up the *cesta básica* and the list of products included may vary according to the purpose for which it is defined, or according to the distributor that composes it.

**2** Our formulations were as follows: "The questions below refer to the potential problems, conflicts, and situations of hardship that emerged or were aggravated because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the policies for its containment, such as social distancing, for example. (i) In the past week, what type of problems and situations has the population experienced in the community/territory in which you operate? Please report the main reasons why people have been seeking you or the main problems that you have learned are occurring." (ii) "Considering that many Brazilian states have been implementing measures to reopen businesses and relax social distancing measures, what are the possible impacts of these measures in your community? Why?"

## Results

The Panel's new data collection indicates that the material hardships caused by the pandemic – such as hunger and limited access to income and employment – were once again the most cited problems among community leaders in ten metropolitan regions in the country. Circa 67% of the leaders mentioned hunger and food deprivation. Access to work and income continues to be the second most cited problem, as well as the ongoing difficulties when trying to access the federal government Emergency Aid, mentioned by circa 30% of the informants, now further aggravated due to the population's anxieties and uncertainties regarding the continuation of the benefit.

The perception that the number of deaths and infections has increased remains at the same levels as the previous survey, which reflects the prolonged persistence of the pandemic in the country.

However, new dimensions of violence were registered, further diversified and segmented in this third wave, with emphasis on the perception of increased domestic violence, violence resulting from an escalation in the use of narcotics, and conflicts with the police.

Problems associated with the relaxation of physical distancing measures gained prominence, particularly regarding public transportation (overcrowding) and the uncertainties in returning to in-person school classes.

The general perception by 80% of the community leaders in 8 metropolitan regions was that measures to relax social distancing had negative impacts on the population; a much smaller portion, 13.7%, mentioned positive impacts associated with a greater possibility of income generating activities; and 5.5% stated there would be no major impacts, especially since social distancing measures had not been applied or respected in their regions.
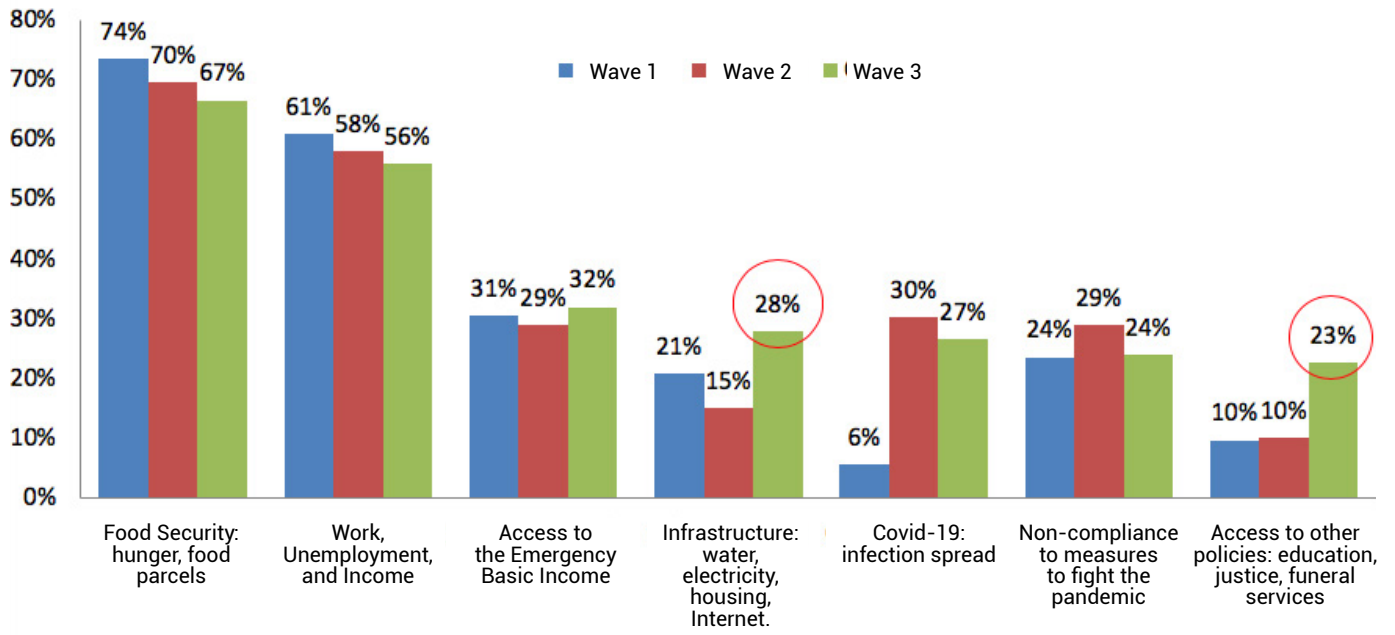
Among the negative impacts, we underline the perception that measures to ease social distancing would further aggravate the pandemic in their territories. At the same time, the relaxation of social distancing measures spawned contradictory answers: on the one hand, the perception of an increased fear of infection by the population, which accounted for circa 30% of the mentions regarding negative impacts; on the other hand, an increase in the denial of the severity of the pandemic, as expressed by almost 20% of the negative mentions.

Although not directly asked, the leaders spontaneously expressed their opinions on the particular measures for relaxing social distancing in their localities. 47% of the leaders criticized how relaxation measures were implemented and emphasized responsibility flaws in the actions by local authorities to ensure a safe reopening for the population.
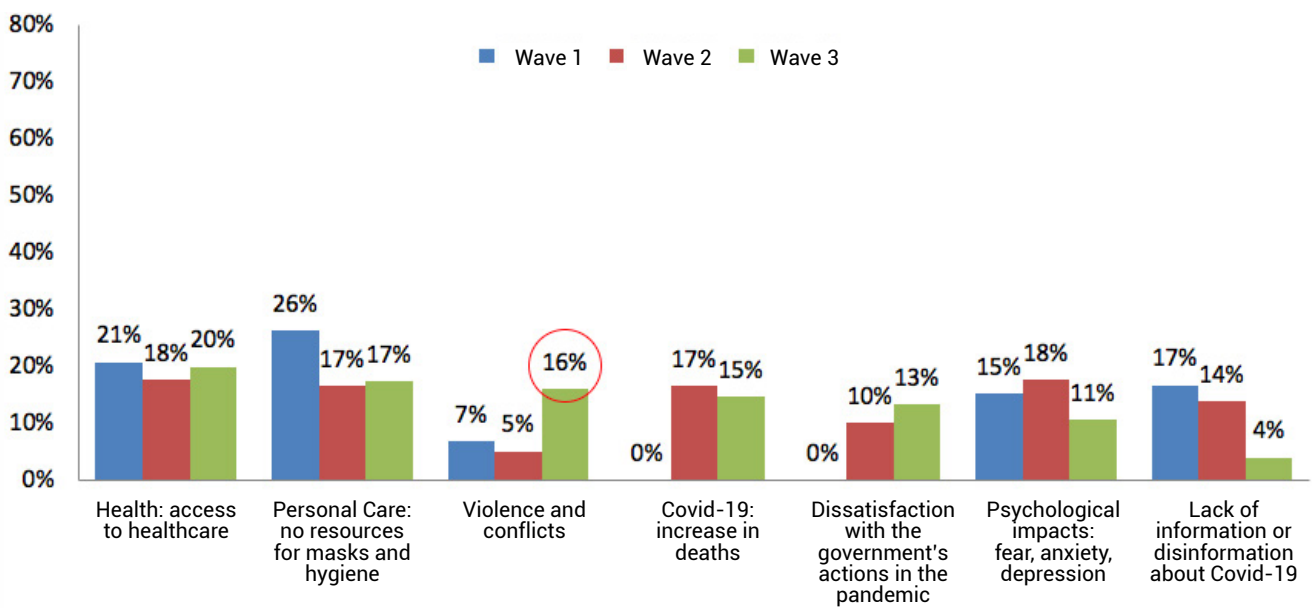
## Problems faced by the communities during the pandemic

The graphs below display the problems mentioned in the three waves of our study and help to illustrate the leaders' change of focus over time as well as the concerns of the most vulnerable population in the locations surveyed by the Network.

**Graph 1 (1/2).** Critical problems experienced by the communities during the pandemic (%)



**Graph 1 (2/2).** Critical problems experienced by the communities during the pandemic (%)



Source: Monitoring Panel with Community Leaders Amidst the Covid-19 Scenario. Multiple answers in %
Wave 1: May 5 to May 11. N=72
Wave 2: May 25 to June 6. N=79
Wave 3: July 6 to July 16. N=75

# Enduring problems

The third wave of our research reveals that addressing the material needs of the population amidst the pandemic continues to be the leading problem afflicting the communities. Issues related to food security (such as hunger) and access to work and income continue to be the most mentioned difficulties by the leaders comprising the Panel.

In the third wave, two in three leaders (67%) mentioned food security among the main problems, such as hunger or shortage of food parcels for the population. The endurance of these problems increasingly aggravates the social framework and worsens the conditions for tackling the pandemic.

Some leaders reported a drop in the amount of donations of food parcels alongside increased requests by families who were previously in better financial conditions and have since lost their reservations for accepting this type of aid.

*"The most common problems in our community in this pandemic is the lack of food and hunger in many families, the difficulty to buy cleaning and hygiene materials, medication, cooking gas, disposable diapers, and milk for infants..."*

**(Community leader at Gamboa de Baixo – Salvador, BA)**

*"Food parcels are no longer coming in."*

**(Community leader at Morro do Coroa – Rio de Janeiro, RJ)**

*"As early as the second month, that is, in April, end of April or beginning of May, the search for food began, which still endures, it still continues. Of course, in a different segment now, it has affected people that we never thought would need a [food] parcel. This means that class C, which was doing fine financially, steady, they are now suffering a lot with food, and so they continue to seek us out for help."*

**(Community leader at Jardim Ângela – São Paulo, SP)**

Access to work and income continues to be the second most mentioned problem by community leaders comprising the Panel. As in the two prior surveys, circa 60% of informants mentioned that the drastic reduction in income and unemployment continues to be a critical issue affecting the population. In the last wave, however, the reports mentioned another social group enduring financial hardships: small-scale business owners. The people in this group, ineligible for the emergency basic income program and not contemplated by compensatory policies for closing their businesses, no longer have minimum resources for survival nor do they find possible alternatives to resume their activities.

*"(...) People working in their own businesses, self-employed, and who had a decent monthly income to meet their family needs now face difficulties. Because their business has closed and their income is insufficient to meet the needs of their families. Even the actions by the government, the city, and NGOs are not reaching these people..."*

**(Community leader at Bairro de Pina – Recife, PE)**

*"The main problems persist: lack of jobs. Many people here are informal workers and they're now unable to work."*

**(Community leader at Distrito Floriano – Maringá, PR)**

In all three surveys, circa 30% of the leaders warned about the difficulties when trying to access the federal government's Emergency Income Assistance, with persisting problems regarding registration, cash withdrawal, or receiving the benefit. An issue which has now been further exacerbated due to doubts and insecurities regarding the possible discontinuity of the program.

> *"The main problems identified here continue to be the delay of the federal government in paying the emergency assistance. Many people have already been approved but haven't yet received the money..."*
>
> **(Community leader at Iputinga – Recife, PE)**

> *"Many people find themselves unable to receive the government assistance, they lack the proper documentation. Many people are not receiving it, and for many who do receive it, the amount is not enough. So the people are insecure, they're left in the dark..."*
>
> **(Community leader at Campo Limpo – São Paulo, SP)**

> *"(...) information about Bolsa Família, about the government's emergency benefit, and nobody knows what's going to happen. People have been asking me a lot about that."*
>
> **(Community leader at Morro do Coroa – Rio de Janeiro, RJ)**

Among the serious problems registered in the two previous surveys, the increase in infection spread and in the number of deaths as well as dissatisfaction with the government's actions remained at the same levels in this third wave.

The lack of compliance to guidelines for coping with the pandemic was yet another problem with a similar incidence to the previous surveys. Approximately 24% of the leaders mentioned this issue as one of the main difficulties observed in their territories. In previous surveys, the incidence for this category was 29% (wave 2) and 24% (wave 1). In this wave, however, these mentions were usually directed at non-compliance by young people, who believe these measures are arbitrary and unnecessary unlike other situations resulting from relaxed social distancing, such as the need to return to work. Nonetheless, regardless of the reasons, the lack of compliance worries leaders in terms of the consequences for the health of the population.

> *"In the past few weeks, more things have been allowed to reopen, even if partially. This has a great impact on our communities because young people are not respecting the guidelines: they're out there on the street. Bars are open and people are not wearing masks. We're still struggling."*
>
> **(Community leader at Capão Redondo – São Paulo, SP)**

> *"Furthermore, there's no such thing as fear, even around here where we had a very high death toll – and also because of the human basic needs – there was no such concern. This social distancing issue, there's a subculture that sees it as nonsense, that it doesn't work like that. No matter how much you see it on TV every day, people talking about the coronavirus, as much you see the news or even families and neighbors dying, their needs speak louder."*
>
> **(Community leader at San Martim – Recife, PE)**

Lastly, the lack of information and misinformation about the pandemic was the only type of reported problem with a significant decrease compared to the previous waves: only 4% of the interviewed leaders mentioned difficulties in this regard.

## New Problems

While the most critical problems such as hunger, unemployment, lack of income, and access to the emergency benefit remained stable, we found mentions to increased violence across different dimensions in the third wave.

Issues associated with an increase in violence were mentioned by 16% of the leaders against 5% in the previous wave. This perception identified at least three types of violence: domestic violence, violence resulting from the increased use of narcotics by the population, and conflicts with the police.

*"We've noticed how gender violence has become more pronounced amidst this situation of social isolation. Now things are reopening, right, but services to attend women are not yet fully functional. We went through such a situation a few weeks ago: a woman asked for help, if someone could take her in so she could spend a night away from home because she was being beaten by her partner. In conventional times we'd simply take the woman in, you know, but now in times of social distancing and risk of bringing an infection into your own home, we made use of the public institutions. And so we called the emergency hotline on 180, which nobody answered. Then we got in touch with territory service, the CDCM, but they're only doing remote care, and they explained that she could go to a shelter at night in downtown São Paulo. And in that shelter, she'd have to stay quarantined in a separate room for a period to avoid risk of infecting other women in confinement. So you see the sheer dimension and the perversity in gender violence, right."*

**(Community leadership at Cidade Tiradentes – São Paulo, SP)**

*"So, initially, the main thing people complained about in the neighborhood was security. This is a neighborhood with many elderly people, and now since most of them stay at home, the young people have since occupied the public squares, the schools and daycare spaces for several activities, which involve sex and the use of narcotics. So security has been the biggest complaint, even though people are at home, there have been night robberies... Anyway, this was a very peaceful neighborhood before..."*

**(Community leader at Jd. Quebec – Maringá, PR)**

*"We've been having many cases of police violence. Police officers are entering people's homes without authorization. No court order. They just go inside the houses saying they're after a young man, some teenager. They attack people verbally, physically. If people threaten to film, they threaten to attack people or to take their phones. In the past recent weeks, we've had many complaints, including by people living on the street and disabled people. We've always had cases of police violence in our territory, in the communities. But now, due to social distancing and the pandemic, they're appropriating the discourse that people need to stay in their homes and using their power to attack people, to hurt people."*

**(Community leader at Sapopemba – São Paulo, SP)**

Other problems have also intensified due to the current stage for managing social life during the pandemic. As some activities have gradually resumed, problems related to access to education and public transportation appeared more frequently in the reports. As for education, reports ranged from demands for facilities to accommodate children and teenagers since parents need to return to in-person work to doubts about the required measures for a safe return to school. Respondents also expressed concern about the increase in school dropout resulting from the long period without activities as well as difficulties in following through with remote education due to insufficient access to the internet and computers.

*"A third concern is the return to classes in public schools, which brings the risk of a second wave of infection as well as student dropout and the imminent return to classes."*

**(Community leader at Coqueiral – Recife, PE)**

*"Another worrying factor is education, as classes are still suspended with a vague forecast for August, which I believe won't come to fruition because of the culture in the peripheral communities and the greater difficulty in accessing the internet. There will be an inevitable educational impairment in the lives of many children and teenagers."*

**(Community leader at Morro do Meio – Joinville, SC)**

*"With many families returning to work, even if informally, I'm receiving a lot of requests for assistance to children. Very poor families can't afford to pay someone to look after them. There are children taking care of children, many which are getting hungry, spending all day eating junk food."*

**(Community leader at Itaim Paulista – São Paulo, SP)**

Access to public transportation was mentioned for the first time in the Panel as one of the leading problems in the communities, closely related with returning to work in inadequate mobility conditions, with reduced fleets and subsequent overcrowding, thus further increasing the fear of infection among the population.

*"(...) currently the biggest challenge faced by the population is the untimely return to work, public transportation, and undoubtedly the long queues at bank branches as people chase after yet another asininity from the government, the emergency benefit, or if you prefer, the funeral assistance."*

**(Community leader at A. E Carvalho – São Paulo, SP)**

*"Problems: Difficulties in social distancing, small houses for too many people, and crowded buses."*

**(Community leader at Morro do Papagaio – Belo Horizonte, MG)**

The enduring crisis, combined with scarce income, have amplified persistent infrastructure problems in this third survey, such as water supply, more expensive electricity bills, and lack of access to the Internet, all of which limit the alternatives for survival amidst the crisis.

*"Here in our territory people are undergoing a particular difficulty regarding water. We have a very serious problem in relation to water supplies. In a situation such as this pandemic, how can we ask people to stay at home, ask people to keep themselves clean, organized?"*

**(Community leader at Ibura – Recife, PE)**

*"(...)the complaints now are about the electricity bills, which have arrived with abusive prices and some people don't even have enough money for food..."*

**(Community leader at Capão Redondo – São Paulo, SP)**

*"How can they pay electricity and Internet bills so children can continue their online classes? Even though we received some assistance from NGOs, we're still in need of help because the power company doesn't care, they'll cut off your electricity."*
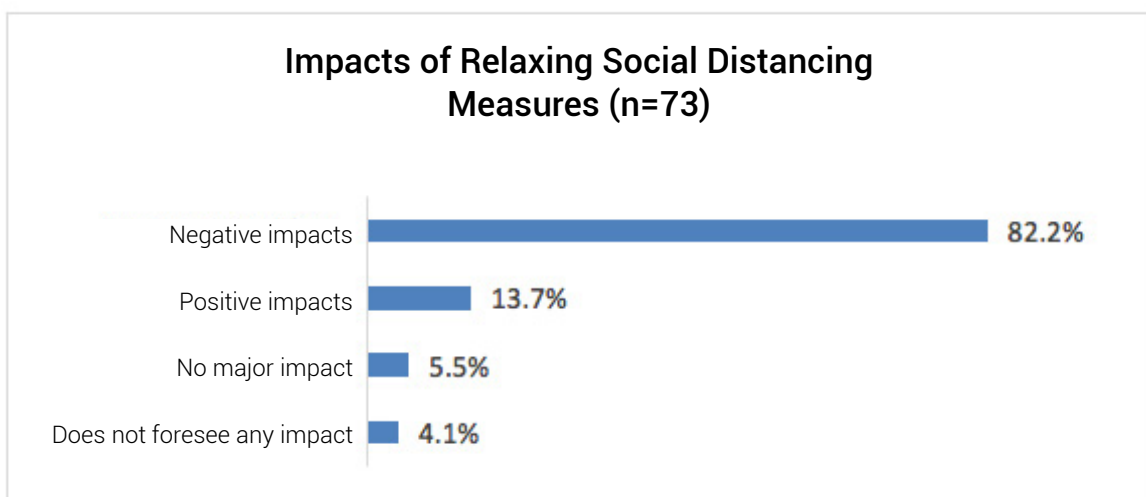
**(Community leader at Jardim Lucinda – São Paulo, SP)**

# The impacts of relaxing social distancing measures

In this third Panel, we asked the leaders in our study for the first time about the impacts of the strategies for relaxing social distancing measures in their communities[3]. Of the 73 community leaders from 8 metropolitan regions in the country who answered this question, 8 in 10 mentioned negative impacts, for the most part arguing that relaxing social distancing measures would further aggravate the pandemic in their territories. Furthermore, although not a direct target of the question, these leaders spontaneously expressed their own perceptions about the process for relaxing social distancing in their localities.

Regarding the effects of relaxing social distancing in the communities, most community leaders figured this would lead to negative consequences: 82.2% of the mentions emphasized negative impacts. On the other hand, 13.7% of the mentions alluded to positive impacts, 5.5% of the reports expressed the perception that reopening had not caused substantial impacts, and 4.1% did not know of any specific impacts resulting from relaxing social distancing measures[4].

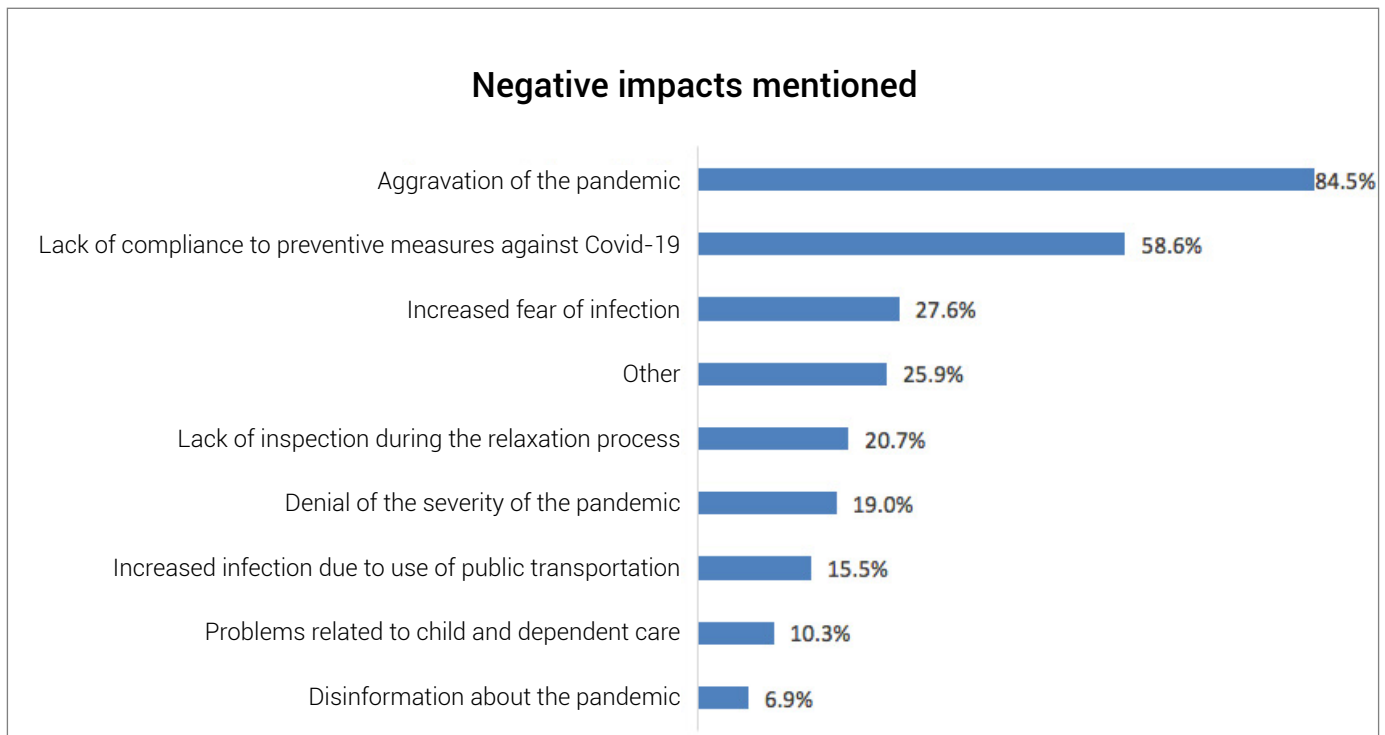**Graph 2:** Impacts of relaxing social distancing measures in Communities



Source: Monitoring Panel with Community Leaders Amidst the Covid-19 Scenario. Multiple answers in %.

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**3** The question asked to the leaders was: *"Considering that many Brazilian states have been implementing measures to reopen businesses and relax social distancing measures, what are the possible impacts of these measures in your community? Why?"*
**4** Each leader could express different types of impacts in a same answer. A same leader, for example, could express positive and negative impacts. For this reason, the sum of the graph does not total 100%.

# Negative impacts

**Graph 3:** Negative impacts of relaxing social distancing measures in communities

### Negative impacts mentioned

| Impact | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Aggravation of the pandemic | 84.5% |
| Lack of compliance to preventive measures against Covid-19 | 58.6% |
| Increased fear of infection | 27.6% |
| Other | 25.9% |
| Lack of inspection during the relaxation process | 20.7% |
| Denial of the severity of the pandemic | 19.0% |
| Increased infection due to use of public transportation | 15.5% |
| Problems related to child and dependent care | 10.3% |
| Disinformation about the pandemic | 6.9% |

Source: Monitoring Panel with Community Leaders Amidst the Covid-19 Scenario. Multiple answers in %.

Over 80% of the mentions in our survey expressed negative impacts from relaxing social distancing measures. Among them, the most cited consequence was the aggravation of the pandemic in these locations, with increased infection rates and deaths, and overcrowded hospitals in their communities: 84.5% of the references to negative effects from relaxing social distancing expressed this perception.

> *"The impact is an increase in deaths. We had 133 deaths in our territory, and now after relaxation we already have 500 deaths after a few days. This happened because people believed that everything was back to normal and forgot about preventive measures."*
>
> **(Community leader at Tucuruvi – São Paulo, SP)**

> *"The numbers are increasing and fast. Furthermore, winter is coming in the South. Soon we'll have no more room in hospitals."*
>
> **(Community leader at da Zona 2 – Maringá, PR)**

> *"This increase was [because] people continue to die, they're still contracting the virus, there is still no vaccine and hospitals still face difficulties. And they're reopening everything. It's a huge risk."*
>
> **(Community leader at Jardim Rodolfo Pirani – São Paulo, SP)**

The feeling that relaxation went hand in hand with a decreased compliance to preventive measures was expressed in 58.6% of the mentions of negative impacts. According to community leaders, people have since ignored health security measures, stopped wearing masks in public places, and have promoted gatherings and agglomerations, as exemplified by the increase in parties in the

community. They expressed the same situation in commercial establishments, with less inspection and compliance to measures such as wearing masks when entering stores, providing hand sanitizer, and maintaining a safe physical distance.

> *"Social distancing was not good enough and is even worse now. We even saw a significant drop in the amount of people wearing masks, which goes against mandatory requirements. (...) We fear a new outbreak will happen given the almost widespread trivialization of the virus by a significant share of the population in view of relaxation measures by the authorities."*
>
> **(Community leader at Sítio do Berardo – Recife, PE)**

> *"A lot of gatherings: bars, restaurants, everything's business as usual. Even though there's limited opening hours, it's eventually crowded at some point. (....) people are mingling and the streets are not being cleaned as they should, since the flow has returned... same thing with the bars and stores... you don't see any [actions] in that regard. And even prior preventive measures, such as hand sanitizer and averting people from entering stores, this is only happening in the major businesses. This has not happened here in the small businesses in the South Side."*
>
> **(Community leader at Jardim São Luís – São Paulo, SP)**

At the same time, 27.6% of the reports expressed the perception of an increased fear of infection among the population in the communities. Relaxation measures have caused the population to feel more exposed to the virus and led to a subsequent increase in feelings of apprehension and anxiety.

The negative impacts expressed by the respondents also encompass problems and difficulties emerging from the strategies for relaxing social distancing measures. Among the expressed negative impacts, circa 20% mentioned the lack of inspections over the use of masks and lack of compliance to safety measures for reopening commercial establishments in their communities. One in six mentions about negative impacts (15.5%) cited crowding in public transportation as putting the population at risk. Furthermore, 1 in 10 mentions about negative impacts cited the issue of child care in at least two directions. On the one hand, the increased risk of infection due to returning to school and doubts over the effectiveness of schools to properly apply preventive and protective measures for students; on the other hand, the difficulties faced by families to take care of their children with the reopening of commercial establishments, which has led to the use of informal services or children staying alone at home.

> *"Not everyone has the structure of a car to move around more safely, so reopening and relaxation leads to crowding in subways and trains, and with crowded subways and trains it'll be even more [likely] that we'll hear more news about infected people."*
>
> **(Community leader at Cidade Tirandentes – São Paulo, SP)**

> *"The population is worried because they don't have the same structure for relaxing social distancing that we see in large malls and major establishments. If you go to the periphery and reopen the shops, the people won't care, they'll walk inside without a mask. So we don't have this effective control around here, you see?*
>
> **(Community leader at Jardim Ângela – São Paulo, SP)**

> *"With relaxation measures and everything reopening, what may happen is many children will have no one to stay with. Fathers and mothers are returning to work, many children have no place to stay. Who can they stay with? Nurseries and schools are closed. Many of them end up staying with an older brother or even alone sometimes."*
>
> **(Community leader at São Remo – São Paulo, SP)**

Lastly, among the negative impacts, there were mentions of skepticism about the pandemic, a problem further aggravated with the relaxation of social distancing measures. Almost 20% of the mentions about negative impacts mentioned trivialization or denial of the severity of the pandemic as a result of relaxation measures, which appears to be connected to the reduced compliance to preventive measures. Denial comes accompanied by disinformation about the pandemic (6.9% of mentions), associated with inconsistent or mismatched information between government measures across different government levels.

> *"The inconsistent information, the government's campaign to disbelief science, and the opportunism of local politicians in spending funds led to agglomerations and disregard for the rules."*
>
> **(Community leader at Zona 2 – Maringá, PR)**

> *"The impact right now is the spread of the disease. Since many believe there is no more danger they're running to the malls and beaches to have fun."*
>
> **(Community leader at Brejo do Beberibe – Recife, PE)**

## Positive Impacts

Circa 12.3% of the mentions considered the reopening process as positive. The main positive aspect mentioned by the leaders was the resumption of economic and professional activities by people who were prevented from working during the social isolation period. This return would have a positive effect on employment and income generation for the population in these communities.

> *"In my opinion, it's better if we can chase after the money that we need to start paying bills that have accumulated during this pandemic. In fact, I see it as something positive for the population of the community, as a lot of families wanted to continue classes for their children, but how can they with their internet cut off due to overdue bills?"*
>
> **(Community leader at Jardim Lucinda – São Paulo, SP)**

> *"The community needs to live. We can't take any more unemployment, lack of food. We need to resume our activities and continue to take care of ourselves. That's the way to go."*
>
> **(Community leader at Capão Redondo – São Paulo, SP)**

## No substantial impacts

Approximately 5.5% of the reports expressed the perception that relaxation will not result in substantial consequences to the communities. The main argument was that these locations faced enormous obstacles to comply with social isolation measures since the beginning of the pandemic and that, therefore, reopening would not lead to greater impacts.

> *"Here in Alto Vera Cruz there was no lockdown of commercial establishments. Only in the first 15 days of the pandemic did we have a "half door". But at the moment everything is open and operating with due precautions."*
>
> **(Community leader at Alto Vera Cruz – Belo Horizonte, MG)**

> *"I believe that opening and relaxing social distancing will not have much of an impact, as even before these measures began the community had already organized itself to bring some money home."*
>
> **(Community leader at Jardim Lucinda – São Paulo, SP)**

## Spontaneous opinions on relaxation measures

In addition to their perceptions about the consequences and effects of relaxing social distancing measures, the respondents also expressed spontaneous opinions regarding the opening process.

Almost half (47%) of the reports expressed negative opinions about the government's actions and strategies for relaxing social distancing measures. These criticisms are directed at the flaws in the implementation process as they fail to ensure safety for the population. The lack of monitoring of preventive measures, insufficient public transportation and subsequent overcrowding, the interruption of awareness/education initiatives and sanitary measures such as the distribution of hygiene kits, street cleaning, and the closure of field hospitals were among the examples cited.

The criticism directed at the implementation of relaxation measures is often associated with negative opinions regarding an untimely reopening. Among those who perceive implementation problems, almost one third believe that this was not the proper time to relax social distancing measures. Of the total, this group represents 16% of community leaders who spontaneously expressed a negative opinion regarding the moment for reopening and argued that the pandemic is still at a critical stage.

*"We see that relaxing social distancing is nothing less than genocide disguised as a new normality! We, who live on the periphery, will ultimately pay the bill."*

**(Community leader at Paraisópolis – São Paulo, SP)**

*"We don't have a President and the state governments are making decisions thinking only about the upcoming elections. They're rushing to open the local commerce as well as shopping malls just to fulfill the wishes of businessmen on the eve of Valentine's Day."*

**(Community leader at Parada de Taipas – São Paulo, SP)**

*"Until today, neither the city government nor the state nor the federal government has distributed food parcels, hand sanitizers, or soaps in the favela da Coroa. From the beginning of the pandemic until now. Because the pandemic is not over yet. And that's how it will be until the end. We're waiting for this policy that never comes."*

**(Community leader at Morro do Coroa – Rio de Janeiro, RJ)**

## Recommendations

- There is an urgent need to regularize the supply of food parcels, as food security continues to be the leading problem for vulnerable communities, as well as the implementation of protection measures for small business owners.

- Decisions about relaxing social distancing measures need to be the target of an information campaign to ensure a safe return to work and the resumption of school classes.

- We must alleviate the critical situation of families who have no place to leave their children as they return to work.

- Drug use and police violence will only decrease with the expansion of social protection mechanisms coupled with an open and candid dialogue with communities and their leaders.

## ABOUT

We are over 70 researchers, actively engaged in the task of improving the quality of public policies within federal, state, and municipal governments as they seek to act amidst the Covid-19 crisis to save lives. We dedicate our energies towards rigorous data collection, devising substantial information, formulating indicators, and elaborating models and analyses to monitor and identify pathways for public policies and review the responses presented by the population.

The Solidary Research Network has researchers from all scientific fields (Humanities as well as Exact and Biological Sciences) in Brazil and overseas. For us, the combination of skills and techniques is vital as we face the current pandemic. The challenge ahead is enormous, but it is particularly invigorating. And it would never have come to fruition if it weren't for the generous contribution of private institutions and donors who swiftly answered our calls. We are profoundly grateful to all those who support us.

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