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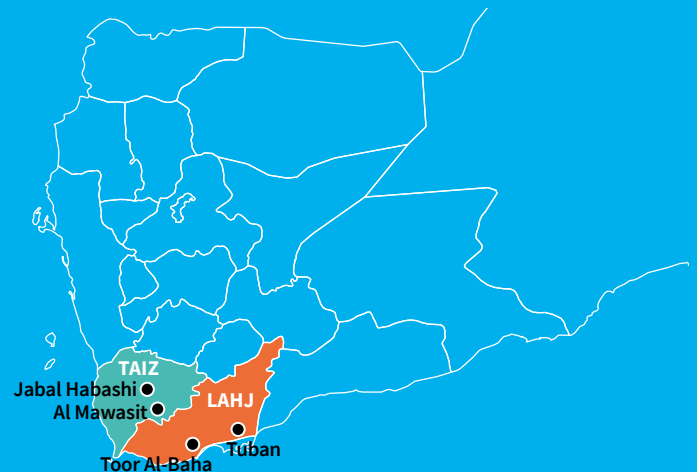
# COVID-19 SCAN in November 2021 Yemen Conflict

## Introduction

**Yemen** is characterised by different political, tribal, ethnic, and religious identities,<sup>1</sup> which play a role in shaping the history and dynamics of ongoing conflict as well as the prevailing socio-political context of the country. The ongoing conflict is complex and multi-layered, with the involvement of rival regional powers adding a geopolitical dimension to the ongoing war since 2015. As the national framework has disintegrated, local rivalries have intensified, leaving more room for foreign state interference in the country. Since March 2015, a dangerous combination of factors, driven by conflict and economic decline, and now exacerbated by COVID-19, have compounded the dire situation for over 24 million Yemenis, as reported by the UN, INGOs and local sources. Moreover, the country has been de facto split into different areas for several years: the de-facto authorities of Al-Houthi control the majority of northern and central governorates, the coalition forces under the internationally-recognised Hadi government (IRG) control part of the southern and eastern governorates, while the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) is gaining increasing control over key areas in the South (Aden, Al Dhale, Lahj, and Socotra).

## Data collection and analysis

Data for the third round of COVID-19 scan monitoring series in Yemen was gathered from 7 to 11 July 2021 in four target districts, controlled by the internationally-recognized Government (IRG). This report was prepared by an independent consultant team and the Search for Common Ground (Search) Yemen team, with support from Search's COVID-19 Response Programme Team and Institutional Learning Team. For more information on the data collection methodology and tools used by Search for Common Ground for this research, click [here](#).



This report is part of a series of regular COVID-19 scans aimed at providing quick and actionable answers to a set of specific questions. The previous reports for Yemen can be found [here](#) & [here](#).

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\* This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Search for Common Ground and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

1. ACAPS, "Yemen Conflict Crisis Overview," updated 12 January 2021.



## Update: COVID-19 Measures and Impact on Conflict

As of early August 2021, there were 7,081 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 1,378 deaths in Yemen. Compared to our previous report, the number of reported cases has increased by 31%. The first vaccinations started on 20 April 2021 in Southern Yemen, and a total of 311,483 vaccine doses have been administered as of 26 July 2021.<sup>2</sup>

During the reference period of this report (February 2021 to end June 2021), some COVID-19 prevention measures were applied at sub-national level:

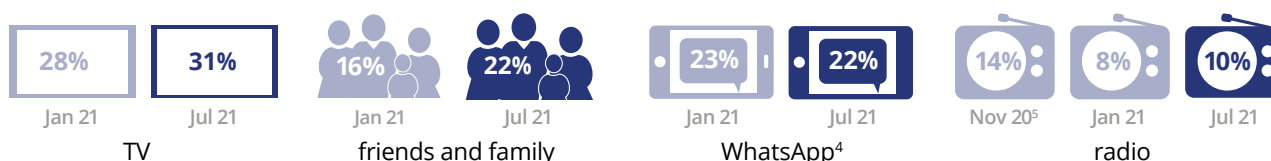
	<b>Schools partially closed</b>
	<b>Teleworking not mandatory</b>
	<b>Borders/airports open</b>
	<b>All services are open</b>
	<b>Mask wearing not mandatory</b>

In a war-torn country like Yemen, COVID-19 imposes an additional threat to people's lives. With the exacerbation of the pandemic and spread of new variants in the country, the government has imposed new COVID-19 prevention measures, obliging many people to stay at home. This has made people's access to food more difficult, especially as many people have lost their jobs, with little hope of getting a new source of income in the short run. Food insecurity and economic decline are accompanied by rising internal displacement as a result of the ongoing conflict, and limited access to resources and basic services, such as water, education, and health. Natural disasters such as torrential rains are becoming more frequent and have exacerbated the situation and led to loss of homes and income for many people. Moreover, as the state is weak and the humanitarian response is underfunded, the COVID-19 pandemic added more challenges as new movement restrictions were imposed and bureaucratic impediments crippled the humanitarian response.<sup>3</sup>

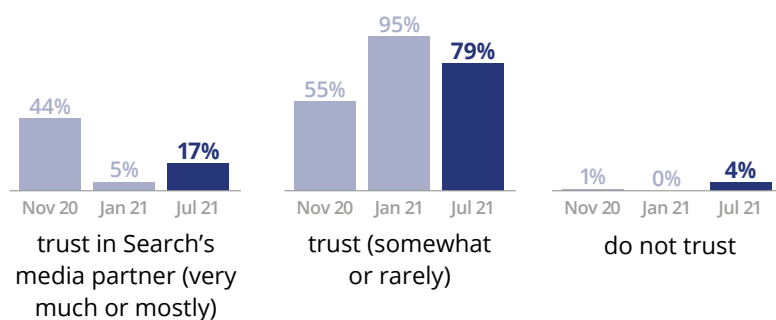
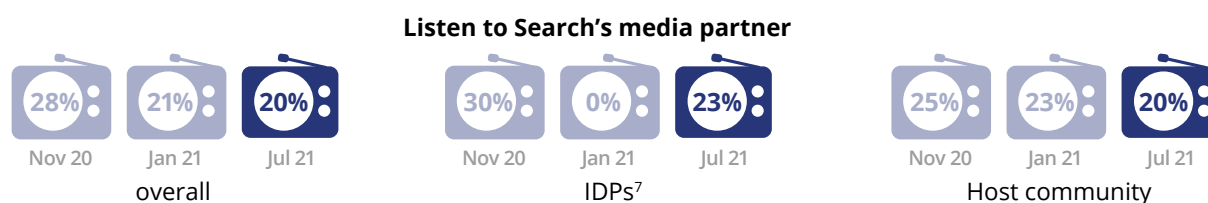
## COVID-19's Impact on Social Cohesion & Trust

**Informal information sharing on COVID-19 remains high, in an environment with low trust in the media, especially among women**

The top trusted sources among respondents for getting information about COVID-19 in our target districts in Yemen are:



Search has partnered with a local radio station<sup>6</sup> to disseminate reliable information on COVID-19:



This is already an increase from the previous round. But the group of people who have lower levels of trust (somewhat or rarely) in this radio outlet remains high.

2. WHO, [Online COVID-19 Portal](#), 3 August 2021.

3. UN OCHA, [Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan](#), March 2021.

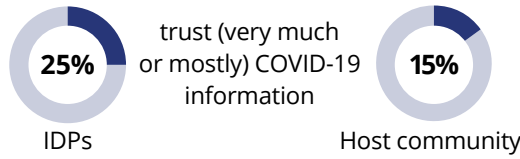
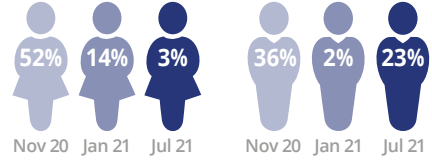
4. Other social media platforms are cited very rarely as reliable sources of information on COVID-19 by our respondents in the four target districts in Yemen (Facebook: 5%, Twitter: 1%).

5. In November 2020, we only asked how many people relied on radio as a reliable source of information on COVID-19.

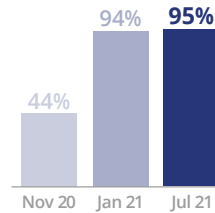
6. Our initial media partner on this project was Sawt Al-Tofola FM, a private radio station established in 2016. However, due to their low levels of listenership and trust that we found through this survey, we have opted to partner with other radio stations in Southern Yemen.

7. During this round of data collection, the sample was adjusted from round 2 to better represent the IDP communities. This has led to some variations in our reported data, compared to round 2.

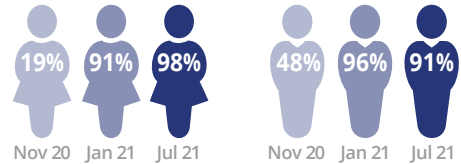
Only 3% of women respondents trust (very much or mostly) information disseminated by Search's media partner, a significant decline from the previous round. And for the first time, men have higher trust rates than women. The huge decline in trust among women, especially women IDPs, might be due to the fact that women are facing a lot of unmet needs and they perceive the media as not adequately addressing or reporting on their needs.



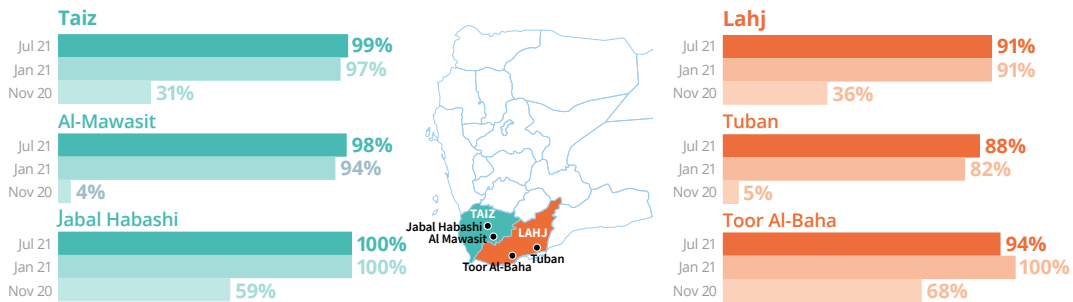
Overall, the majority of respondents share COVID-19 related information heard on trusted media sources with their friends and family members.



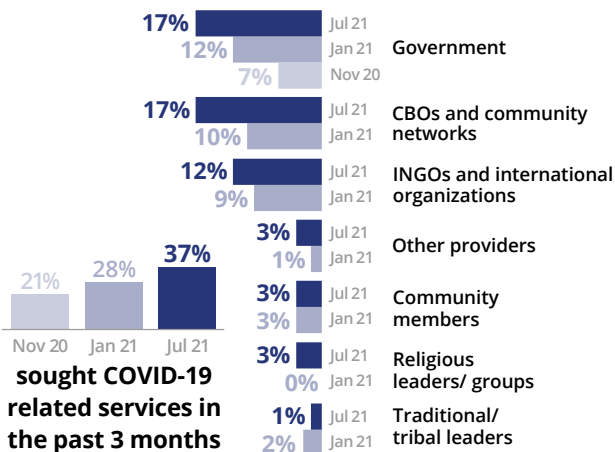
For the first time, **more women are sharing information than men**. When asking respondents about their top information sources about COVID-19, many women reported "other sources", mainly mentioning health centers. This could be contributing to higher rates of women sharing COVID-19 related information.



This round, **information sharing remains higher in Taiz governorate** compared to Lahj governorate.

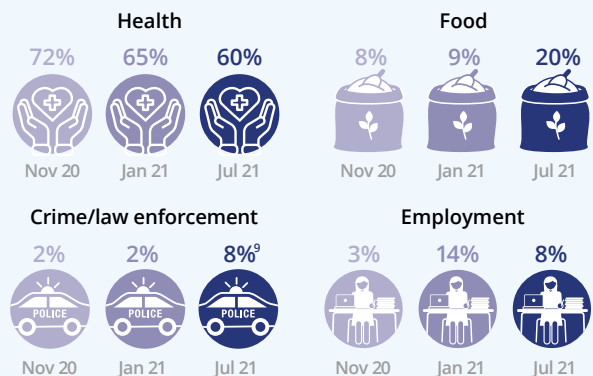


### Decreased trust and satisfaction indicate high levels of unaddressed needs among women and IDPs



This is a continued increase from rounds 1 and 2, which may be an indication of rising needs around the pandemic's direct and indirect consequences. For the first time, CBOs and community networks received significantly more requests than INGOs, at the same level as the government.

**Health and access to food are the top requested services from the government.** The recent instability of the economic context, a depreciation of the local currency, and cuts in humanitarian aid have all directly affected the food prices, particularly in the IRG-controlled areas.<sup>8</sup> It resulted in an increase in requests for food aid.

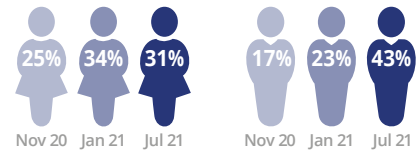


8. FEWS NET, "Yemen Key Message Update: Rising prices continue to make food increasingly unaffordable for many households", July 2021.

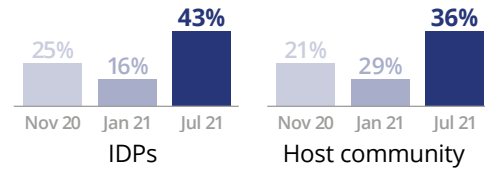
9. Due to the increasing deterioration of the security situation in the IRG-controlled areas, people are more in need of law enforcement and crime prevention. Recently, news agencies reported protests denouncing perceived criminal impunity and declining living conditions in the IRG's areas, with clashes occurring between protesters and security forces.

### Requesting services from all service providers combined

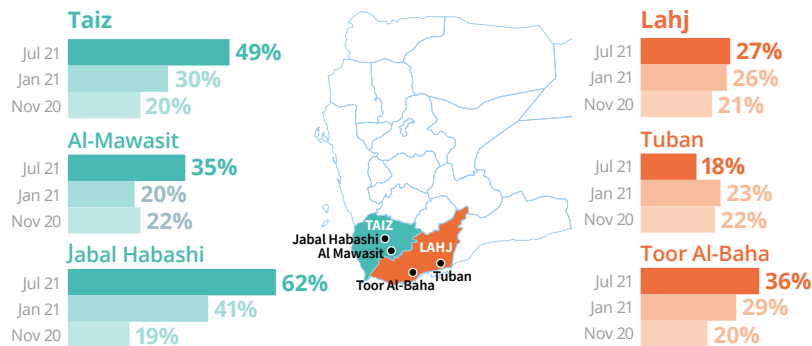
There has been a **dramatic increase in service requests by men** compared to previous rounds, and they are now requesting COVID-19 related services more than women. This may be because men, as the main breadwinner in most Yemeni households, are now feeling the indirect consequences of COVID-19 more than women. Another reason may be that men, because of their higher levels of mobility and interaction in Yemeni society, are more exposed to catching the virus.



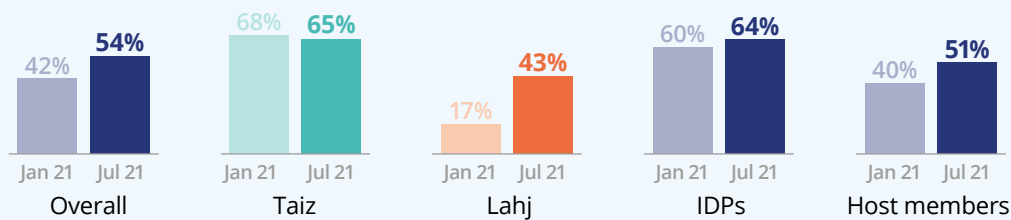
**Service requests have increased among both IDPs and host community members** since the last round, and **most significantly among IDPs**. The impact of a reduction in humanitarian support, coinciding with a decline in purchasing power and increases in food prices and other essential items resulted in more vulnerable groups requesting services, including IDPs.



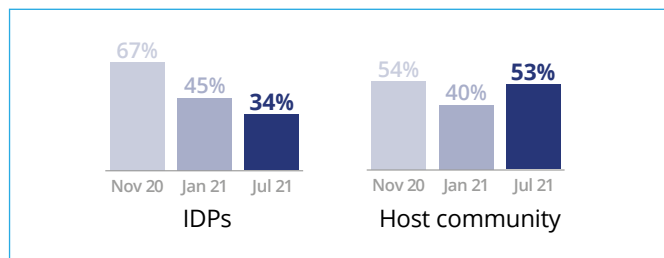
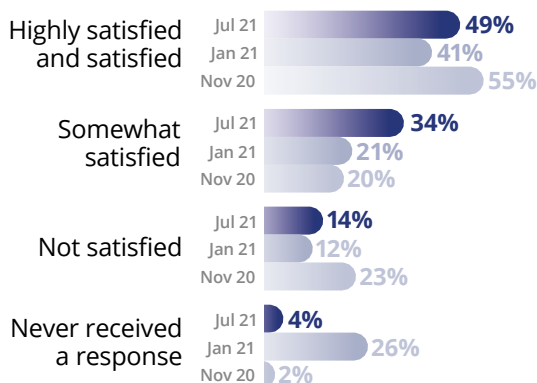
Similar to the first two rounds, **more respondents from Taiz than Lahj requested COVID-19 related support services**. The high number of service requests in Taiz is likely due to the high number of COVID-19 cases in that governorate, four times higher than in Lahj.<sup>10</sup> This is especially true for health services, where almost 70% of those who requested health services are from Taiz.



Our survey shows that **54% of respondents (or a member of their household) have fully or partially lost their main source of income during the pandemic**, which is a notable increase from the last round, in particular in Lahj governorate, and higher levels of loss of income are reported among IDPs compared to host communities.

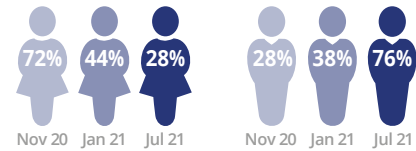


**Satisfaction levels with COVID-19 related service provision increased this round, for all service providers combined.**

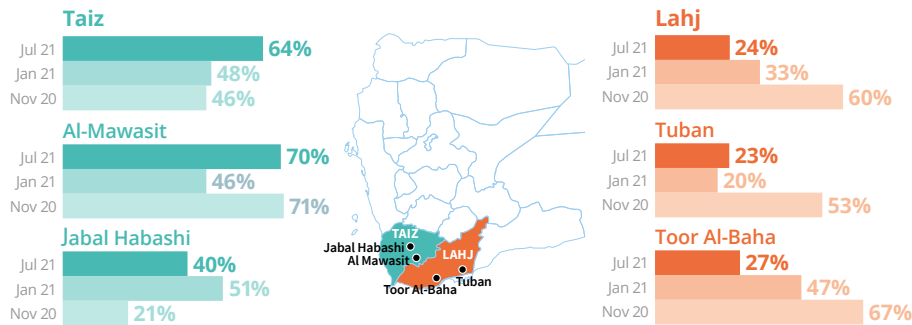


10. IOM, [COVID19\\_DTM Yemen Mobility Restrictions Dashboard](#), accessed on 5 September 2021.

Since November 2020, **women's satisfaction levels continue to significantly decrease, while they increased sharply for men**, and men now have higher satisfaction levels than women. Moreover, more women report not receiving a response to their requests (15% vs. 5% for men), again pointing to a high level of unmet needs among women.



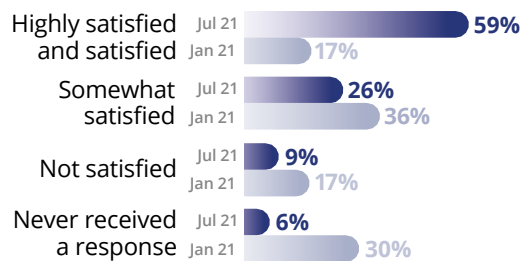
**Respondents in Taiz governorate are more satisfied than those in Lahj governorate**, a significant shift from the first round, and clearly satisfaction in Lahj continues to drop. The uneven availability of services might be contributing to varying satisfaction levels among districts. For instance, 12% of respondents in Lahj report never receiving a response compared to only 5% in Taiz.



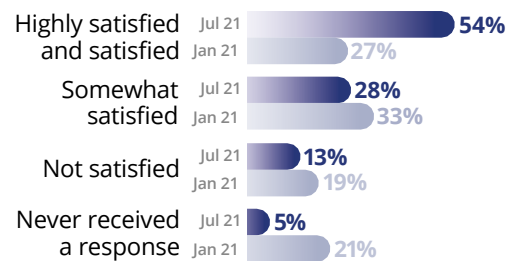
As seen above, in this round CBOs and community networks received the same percentage of service requests as the government (17%). In a positive development, **satisfaction levels with services delivered by the government and by CBOs/community networks have both significantly increased**, partially because the percentage of respondents who did not receive a response notably reduced between rounds.

Interestingly, respondents are slightly less satisfied with services provided by CBOs than by the government. This is a notable shift from previous rounds and is different from the situation found in most other countries where we conduct this research, where people tend to be less satisfied with services provided by the government than by non-governmental actors.<sup>11</sup>

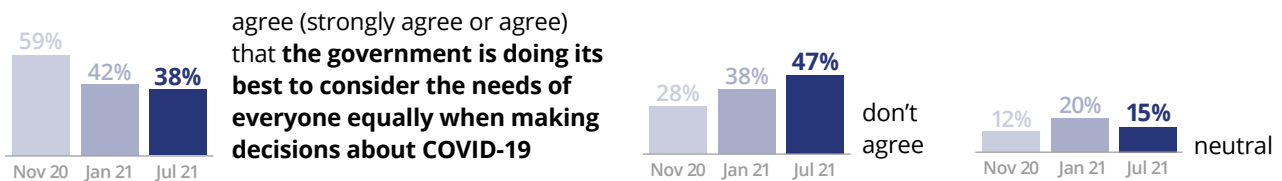
**Satisfaction with COVID-19 Services provided by the government**



**Satisfaction with COVID-19 services provided by CBOs and community networks**

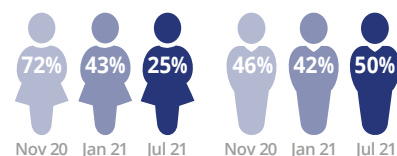


Despite increased satisfaction with governmental services, **trust in the government's pandemic response continues to decrease** since the first round. This decrease in trust levels may be partially explained by continuing other challenges in IRG-controlled areas, such as the deteriorating security situation, economic downturn and declining living conditions.



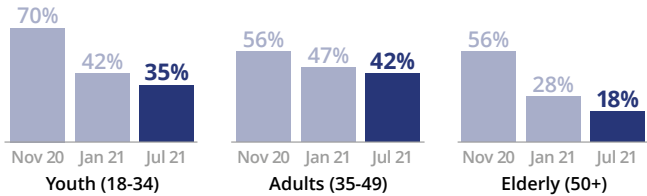
**Trust in the government continues to drop among women each round.**

In contrast, trust levels among men increased. This may be a reflection of women and men's different levels of satisfaction with governmental services, and again, may indicate a high level of unmet needs among women, and an overall gender-insensitive pandemic response.

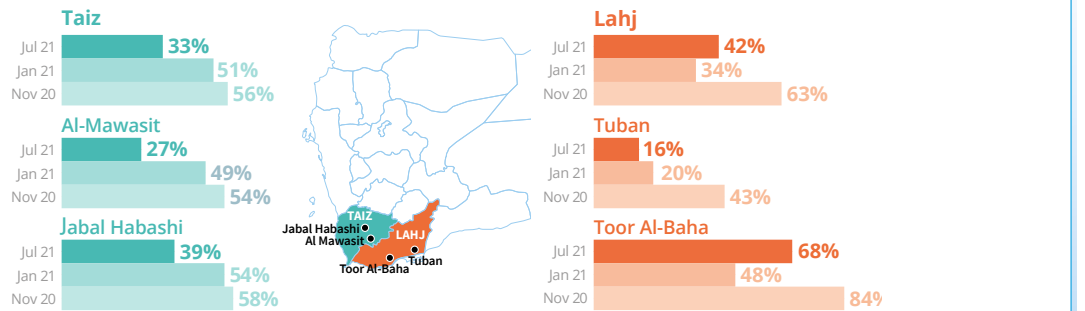


11. As a reminder, the other countries where we conduct this research are Kenya, Nigeria, Palestina, Tanzania, and Uganda. All country reports are accessible through our webpage [Working Together Against Corona](#).

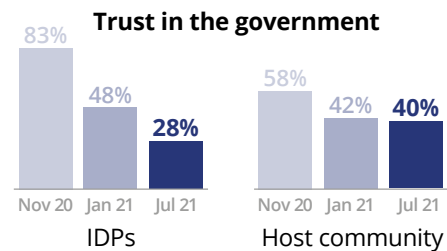
Levels of trust in the government's pandemic response has further decreased among all age groups, and most significantly among elderly respondents (+50 years). Trust remains highest among adults aged 35-49 years; followed by youth showing a drastic decline from the first round.



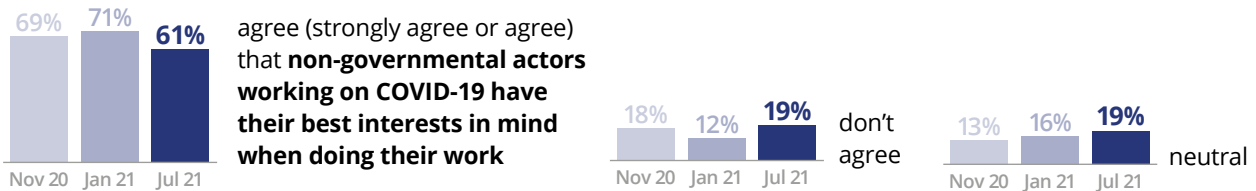
Trust in the government is higher in Lahj than in Taiz. Limited government capacity and presence across our target districts in Taiz, combined with lower levels of satisfaction with governmental services, might be a potential explanation for this, leaving the space for non-governmental actors to fill gaps. In Taiz, many more respondents now do not trust that the government is doing its best to respond to needs equally. Our data also shows that 65% of respondents from Taiz governorate report losing income source during the pandemic, creating a scenario where needs are high and government capacity is low and/or insufficient to meet rising needs.



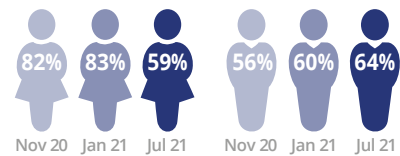
Distrust of the government has gone up among both IDPs and host community members, and is now highest among IDPs (55%) compared to 45% for host community members. Especially among IDPs there has been a sharp decline in their levels of trust in the government's pandemic response. Declining trust among both groups is likely driven by high rates in the loss of income, alongside limited government capacity to meet growing needs.



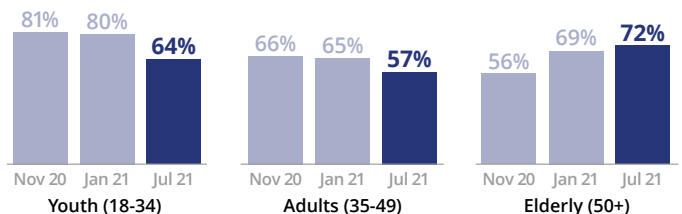
Although declining, trust in non-governmental COVID-19 responders remains relatively high.



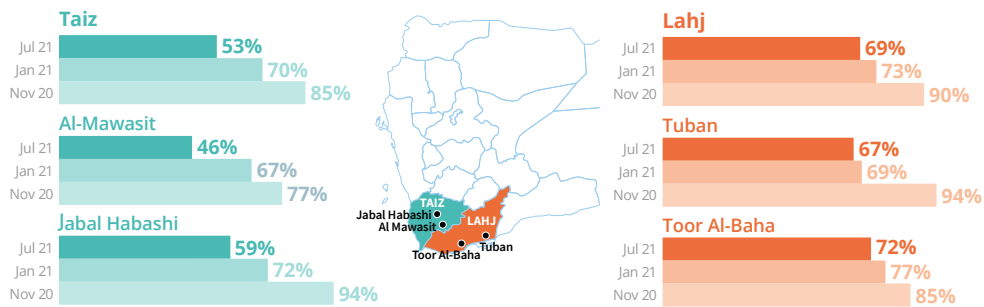
Also here, trust levels among women are now lower than for men, an important shift from previous rounds.



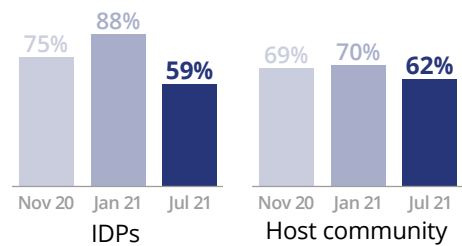
In this round, elderly respondents (50+ years) now trust non-governmental COVID-19 actors the most. Trust in non-governmental responders has notably decreased among youth compared to previous rounds.



Although decreasing in both locations, **levels of trust in non-governmental actors working on COVID-19 remain higher in Lahj** than in Taiz.

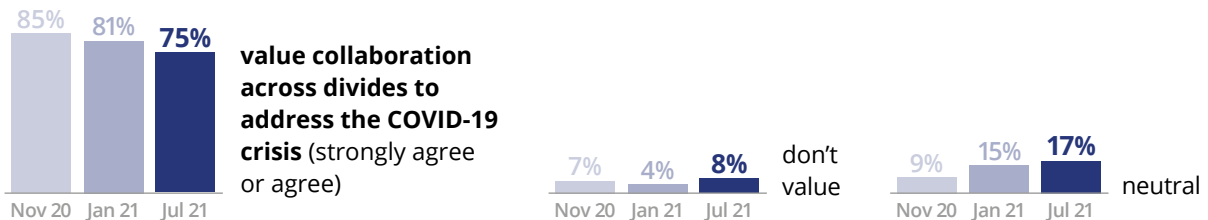


Like for trust in the government, **trust levels in non-governmental actors have most notably dropped among IDPs**. Unlike before, host community members now have higher levels of trust in non-governmental actors working on COVID-19 response than IDPs. It is clear that needs are increasing a lot among IDPs; service requests have increased significantly this round among IDPs and loss of income is very high, and at the same time, trust and satisfaction levels among IDPs are sinking. The reduction of humanitarian support due to the pandemic effects on the global economy, the recent huge deterioration of the local currency, and a significant rise in food prices are most likely the key reasons behind the drop in trust in general. Consequently, any failure from non-governmental actors in addressing the needs of IDPs contributes to a decline in trust.

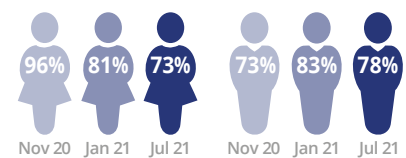


### Support for collaboration during a crisis is declining, while interaction across divides significantly increased

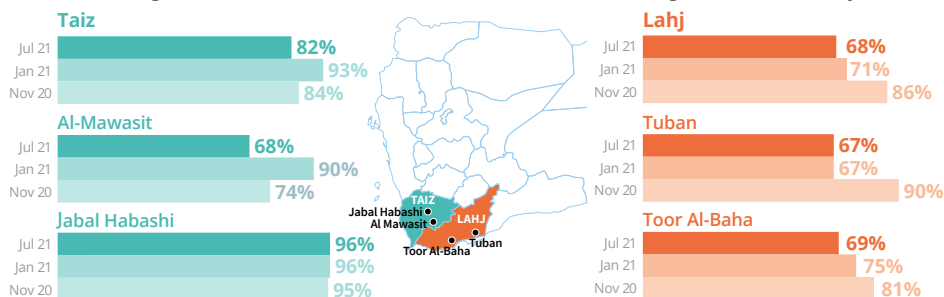
The value for collaboration across divides (i.e. from another district or between IDPs and host communities) to address a crisis like COVID-19 has decreased each round and notably between last round and this round.



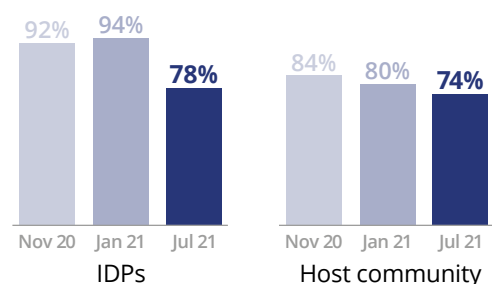
The value for collaboration across divides is declining among both men and women, but has **declined particularly sharply among women**. Increasing levels of unmet needs, aggravated by higher levels of GBV, and the continued strain that the pandemic is placing on women as primary caregivers (for elderly, children, and sick people), may all be negatively impacting women's support for inter-group solidarity, which was very high at the onset.



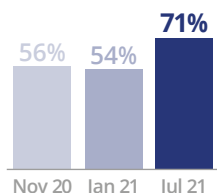
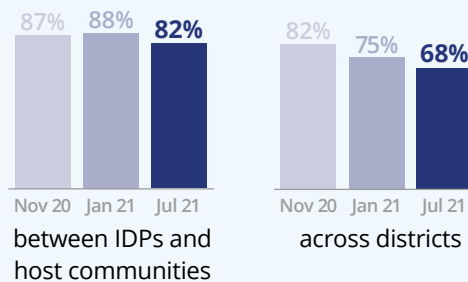
Though the level of valuing collaboration in Taiz decreased, it remains higher than in Lahj, similar to last round.



The **value for collaboration is declining among both IDPs and host communities**, again indicating increased needs and strains on inter-group solidarity. Like in previous rounds, it remains slightly higher among IDPs.



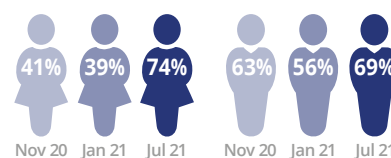
Like in previous rounds, **respondents value collaboration more between IDPs and host communities than collaboration across districts**, but also there we see declining values on both indicators.



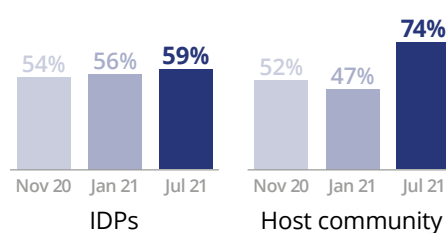
**report interacting** (remotely or in-person) with people from another group in the last 3 months (another district or between IDPs and host community members)

This is **a dramatic increase from last the round**. Interaction between IDPs and host communities remained relatively consistent between rounds, but there was a notable increase in interaction between people from different districts. Given the declining levels of value for collaboration, this mostly points to collaboration out of necessity. Interactions have also been made easier by the lifting of certain restrictions, after a period of COVID-19 measures.

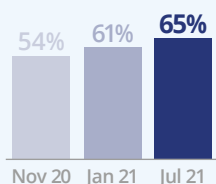
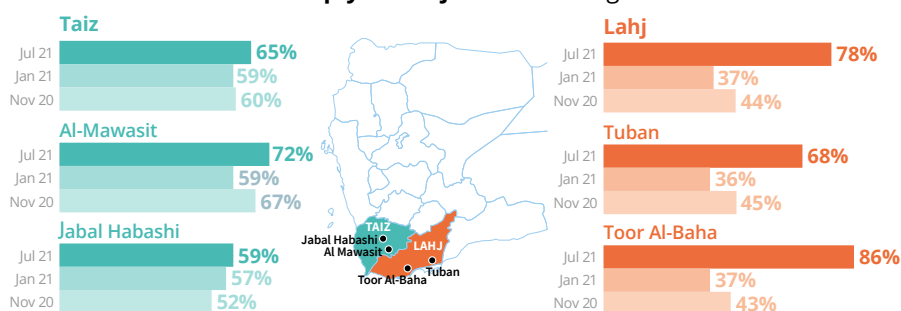
**Unlike the previous reports, more women report interacting with others than men.** Again, this may be an indicator of increased needs and deteriorating living conditions, where women are interacting increasingly with other groups to address their family's and their own needs.



**Host community members now have higher levels of interaction than IDPs**, a shift from the previous rounds. Perceptions that IDPs are prioritised for humanitarian assistance have subsided in the wake of the pandemic, as both groups now face similar difficulties accessing COVID-19 services and humanitarian assistance. But increased competition over limited resources may contribute to tensions and fuel higher levels of mistrust between both groups, which we may see reflected in the slight drop in valuing collaboration between IDPs and host communities above.

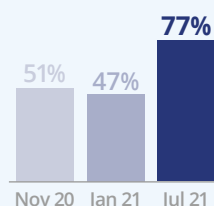


**Inter-group interactions increased sharply in Lahj and is now higher than in Taiz.**



between IDPs and host communities

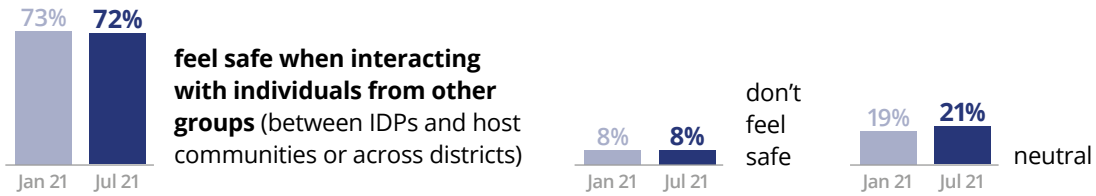
actual interaction (in-person or remotely)



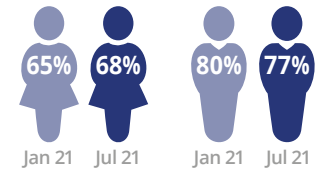
across districts

Especially respondents from Toor Al Baha report high levels of interaction across districts, due to its geographical location, as it sits at a strategic connection point between a large number of governorates with the sea port and airport of Aden, and controlling part of the Western coasts on the Red Sea. Interactions between people from other districts with people from Toor Al Baha happen either to secure the route for their commercial flights or to know the security situation before traveling and passing through the district. Most important is that the district has been the only open route for the under-siege city of Taiz for more than five years.

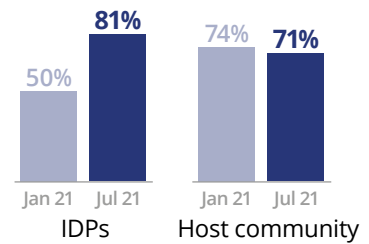




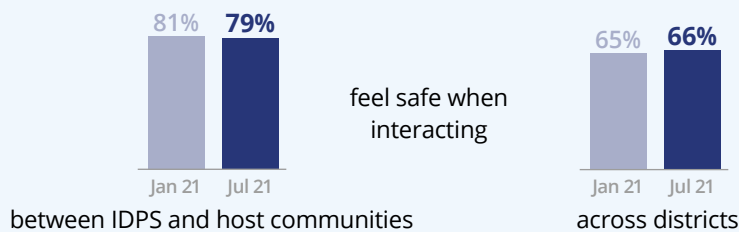
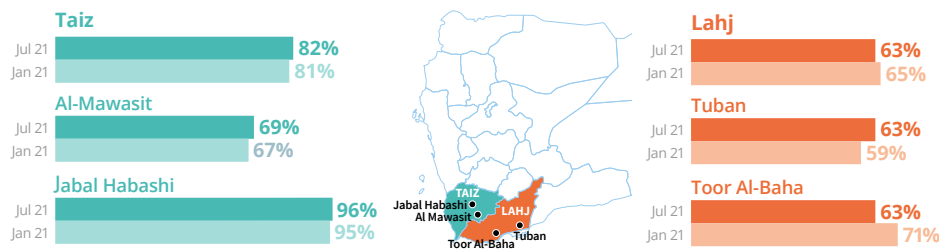
**Women continue to feel less safe than men** when interaction across divides, although feelings of safety slightly declined for men and increased for women.



Unlike the second round, a **lower percentage of host community members report feeling safe when interacting with individuals from other groups**, compared to IDP respondents. There was a notable increase in the percentage of IDP respondents who report feeling safe during this kind of interaction.



Consistent with the second round, **feelings of safety among respondents in Taiz governorate is higher** than in Lahj governorate.



## Next Steps For COVID-19 Response Efforts

### Expanding Media Reach on COVID-19 Response

- The data related to access to information shows that, on par with the first two snapshots, radio stations still have limited reach – only 10% of respondents obtain COVID-19 related information from radio stations. Therefore, a tailored and holistic media outreach approach is recommended to increase reach of COVID-19 related messaging and information, especially through TV and social media as these are among the top trusted platforms to receive information on COVID-19. This can be achieved by identifying and collaborating with trusted news outlets within the target areas, mainly community TV stations. Moreover, information campaigns and media programs can be replicated and shared via WhatsApp as low-cost methods to increase reach.

### Support coordination between non-governmental and governmental COVID-19 response efforts to increase overall trust and satisfaction

- Our data shows that while average reported satisfaction among respondents for all service providers has remained somewhat consistent between rounds, levels are still relatively low, averaging 45% for all three rounds. Moreover, trust in the government continues to decrease, from 59% in round one to 38% now. Similarly, trust levels have fluctuated for non-governmental actors, declining between last round and this (71% to 61%). These trends are likely a reflection of growing unmet needs among citizens, amid high levels of reported loss of income. To improve overall confidence and satisfaction in response efforts, governmental and non-governmental actors should increase coordination and find opportunities to collaborate for strengthened response. And these actors should integrate community leaders, members, and groups into response strategies to further build trust and ensure needs are being adequately met.

## **Tailor response efforts to increasing needs among vulnerable groups and target areas to strengthen trust and satisfaction in response measures**

- Needs are increasing, particularly among certain groups. Overall, 37% of respondents requested COVID-19 related services from all service providers – up from 28% in the previous round. When disaggregating the data, certain trends stand out. For instance, service requests increased significantly among IDPs (16% to 43%), men (23% to 43%), and in Taiz governorate (30% to 49%). Moreover, an average of 54% of respondents report a full or partial loss of income, which is as high as 65% among respondents in Taiz and 64% among IDP respondents. As needs increase, satisfaction and trust are particularly low for these groups. For instance, fewer IDPs report trusting governmental (48% to 28%) and non-governmental responders (88% to 59%) between rounds. Response providers should pay close attention to these trends and tailor their efforts to growing needs among groups, without fueling perceptions that certain groups are being prioritised over others. For instance, joint IDP-host community dialogues to inform service provision can ensure transparency and meet the needs of both groups equitably.
- Women’s needs are likely not being sufficiently considered and/or accounted for within response efforts. When looking at information needs, only 3% of women trust our media partner, which is a drastic decrease from 52% in the first round. Information sharing is also very high among women (98%), demonstrating that they are likely taking ownership to fill information gaps. Response providers should integrate women’s needs, voices, and leadership within media strategies to increase reach and trust of COVID-19 related information among women. Additionally, women’s overall satisfaction in service provision from all response providers sank from 72% in the first round to 26% this round, and 15% of women respondents report not receiving a response to their service requests this round compared to only 5% of men. Correspondingly, women’s trust levels in both governmental and non-governmental responders decreased significantly, dropping from 43% to 25% and 83% to 59%, respectively. Response providers should better integrate women’s needs into response measures by streamlining women’s leadership and participation as a primary feature of all response strategies.

## **Strengthen social cohesion across divides**

- Overall, the percentage of respondents who value collaboration across divides to respond to a crisis like COVID-19 continues to decrease overtime, declining from 85% in round one to 75% this round. In contrast, actual interaction across divides (in person or online) has significantly increased, from 56% in round one to 71% this round. When disaggregating the data, these trends persist. For instance, the percentage of women who value collaboration has drastically decreased (96% in round one to 73% this round). Yet, interaction across divides has increased among women (41% in round one to 74% this round). In Lahj, only 68% value collaboration this round, compared to 86% in round one. Yet, 78% of respondents in Lahj reported interaction across divides this round - a significant increase from 37% last round. Feelings of reported safety remained relatively consistent; however, there were some instances where those who report not feeling safe increased, e.g. more women report not feeling safe between rounds (6% to 13%). Response providers should ensure efforts to build horizontal cohesion within response interventions take these trends into account. For instance, increasing interaction across divides for women may be ineffective without integrating trust building and other measures to improve their safety. Moreover, ensuring interventions reflect the needs and ideas of women, might improve the way they value collaboration.
- The data shows that (1) the majority of respondents continue valuing collaboration across divides to respond to a crisis such as COVID-19 pandemic (78% of IDPs vs. 74% of hosts), although at declining rates (round 1: 92% of IDPs and 84% of host communities); and (2) interaction across divides dramatically increased, particularly for host communities (74% up from 47% in round two). Increased interaction may be mostly driven by increased needs, as both IDPs and host communities have experienced deteriorating living conditions, and all groups seem to be facing more difficulties in accessing COVID-19 services and other support. Increased competition over limited resources risks to further undermine people’s willingness to collaborate, hence there is a crucial need to strengthen cohesion between IDPs and host communities. COVID-19 response efforts should be designed in a way that rebuilds the social fabrics and enhances social cohesion across divides. For instance, media campaigns can elevate voices from different groups, districts and regions that disseminate messages of solidarity in a variety of local dialects. Providing support for community-based and/or youth-led initiatives that apply conflict-sensitive and inclusive approaches, basically engagement of IDPs and host communities, is another example.