A majority of Georgians supported opening up the economy during the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak

The public supported the vast majority of government policies during the crisis aimed at preventing the spread of the virus. Aside from the public health situation, Covid-19 led to [rising unemployment](https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cv2020w4/CVLSJOB/), [reduced incomes](https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cv2020w4/FINWORRY/), and [food insecurity](https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cv2020w4/CVFDACV/). In this context, data from CRRC Georgia’s [Covid-19 Monitor surveys](https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cv2020w3/codebook/) suggests people were eager for the economy to open, with a majority favoring opening up to caution.

CRRC asked the public about the relative importance of caution versus opening up the economy on two surveys, conducted between May 7-10 and May 14-17. Most people agreed with the idea that the economic impacts of Covid-19 were worse than the virus and disagreed with the idea that it was more important to wait for the virus to be under control than to open the economy. In addition, the share of Georgians thinking that economic consequences of the virus could be as severe as virus itself also rose from 51% during May 7 – May 10 period to 64% during the May 14-May 17.

The data from the May 14-May 17 survey was further analyzed to explore differences between socio-demographic groups. A logistic regression controlling for key socio-demographic variables, like age, gender, settlement type, education, employment, ethnicity, and household wealth shows that people in Tbilisi were less likely to think it was important to wait for COVID-19 to subside before opening up the economy. Older people were also less likely to support waiting for the epidemiological situation to get under control. When it comes to the economic costs of COVID-19, there were not statistical differences between key socio-demographic variables.

During the crisis, large shares were uncertain how long the COVID-19 crisis would last ([35%](https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cv2020w2/CVLLAST/) in May 7 and 10 period, [42%](https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cv2020w3/CVLLAST/) during May 14 and 17 period). Uncertainty on this questions was associated with idea that the economic costs of the virus could be worse than the virus itself. Controlling for demographic variables from the previous model, those uncertain about the possible period of the crisis were less supportive of the idea that the economic costs of the virus were worse than the virus itself. Still, a majority of those who were certain or uncertain about the length of the crisis thought that economic consequences were worse than COVID-19’s health implications.

The majority of Georgians were supportive of opening up the economy during the Covid-19 crisis, and this support was increasing during the period when the economy was effectively closed. The negative economic impacts of Covid-19 also gained more public attention during this time. In general, urban settlements were more supportive of re-starting normal economic activities. Older people were also more prone to agreeing with opening up. Besides socio-demographic variables, uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 timeline also shaped public opinions. Uncertain people generally tended to disagree with the idea that the economic costs were harsher than the virus itself.

The data presented in this blog post is available [here](https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cv2020w3/codebook/). Replication code for the above analysis is available [here](https://github.com/crrcgeorgia/covid_economy).