

GCRO's Quality of Life survey: Responding to COVID-19

Methods seminar series presentation

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Quality of Life survey: General background



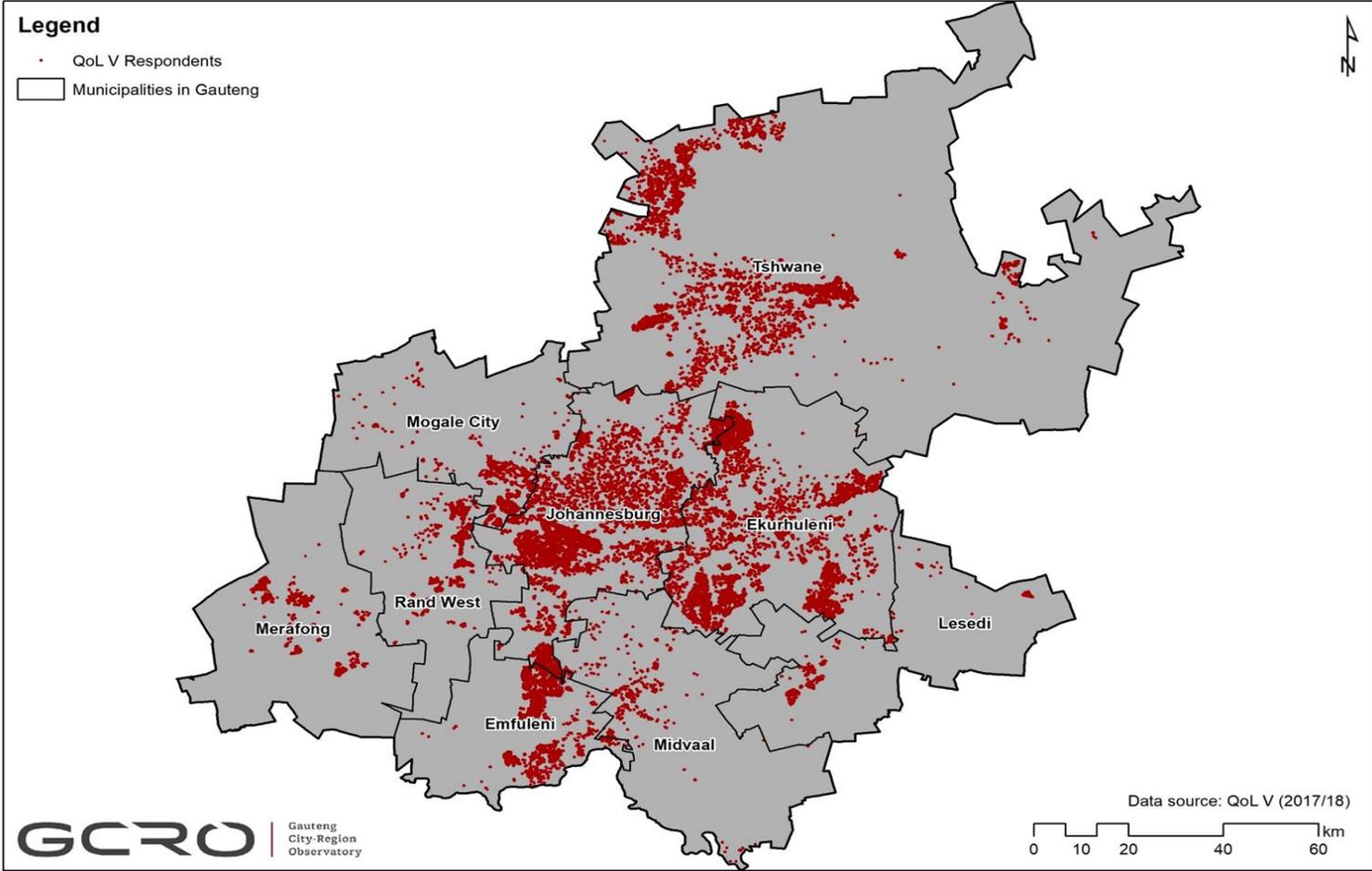
Overview of the Quality of Life Survey

What is the GCRO's Quality of Life survey?

- The GCRO runs a Quality of Life (QoL) survey every two years.
 - Started in 2009, making 2019 the 10-year anniversary of this project
 - 5th and most recent iteration completed in 2017/18 (n=24 889)
 - Randomly sampled household survey
- Measures the well-being of Gauteng's residents:
 - Socio-economic circumstances, living conditions, perceptions of service delivery, psychosocial attitudes, values, health and well-being, and much more
- Provides spatially fine-grained insights into the lives of residents of Gauteng
 - Data can be analysed at provincial, municipal, and even lower spatial levels.
 - Particularly valuable in a context of extremely high levels of inequality, and a diverse population.

Overview of the Quality of Life Survey

Geographical scope



Quality of Life VI (2020/21)



Shifting plans for QoL VI (2020/21)

- The GCRO completed an extensive ten-year review of the QoL survey in 2019
 - Planned to go into field with QoL VI in March/April 2020, with completion by end 2020
- Preparations were well on track...
- By early March 2020 it was clear that data collection would be delayed
 - But we somehow still thought that COVID would pass, and we'd eventually pick up data collection in a post-COVID world
- Project went into a 'holding pattern', with focus on preparatory activities and contingency planning
 - Considered alternative methodologies, but not viable due to need for longitudinal consistency, spatially distributed sample, and instrument length
 - Seemed likely data collection would only resume in 2021
- By July/August, clear that the peak was approaching – and that we'd probably be back in the field sooner than expected
 - But also increasingly clear that COVID would remain with us, and we'd have to accept some risk, and implement appropriate precautions
 - Reallocated some funds to cover additional costs
 - Required ongoing reduction in cases, clarity that work was legally permissible, and ethical approval

QoL VI (2020/21): Approach to training

- Training adjustments:
 - Phased training of smaller groups
 - COVID training module
 - PPE (masks, visors & sanitiser), and space & ventilation
- Final preparations to start training and piloting took longer than expected
 - Additional levels of approvals & re-approvals
 - Additional logistical preparations – identifying appropriate training venues; pinning down PPE needs and procuring
- Fieldworkers very eager to get back to work
 - But some heightened anxiety about asking personal questions during a difficult time
 - Compliance with COVID protocols is challenging – lockdown fatigue?
 - Participatory training much harder with masks and social distancing
 - Cold fronts and heat waves make maintaining ventilation hard!

Training



QoL VI (2020/21): piloting

Weeks of October 5 & 12, 2020

- COVID protocols
 - Teams operate independently with minimal interactions
 - Dedicated transport, with twice daily screening
 - PPE (masks, visors, sanitiser)
 - Outdoors interviews encouraged
 - Fieldworker safety paramount
- No really unusual challenges encountered. Most feedback related to typical technical teething trouble, safety and security, access negotiations, and a few questionnaire refinements

Piloting



Piloting



QoL VI (2020/21): piloting

Weeks of October 5 & 12, 2020

- **Hard to gauge whether COVID impacted response rates**
 - A few refusals due to COVID – especially elderly respondents
 - Interviews in retirement villages/old age homes no longer possible
 - Substantial population shifts in some areas – i.e. student areas
 - But, many people, especially more affluent, are working from home and more available
- **Practically, no major concerns about COVID protocols**
 - Visors are a challenge with working on a tablet outdoors
 - Participant preferences around COVID protocols vary substantially
 - Not all participants are keen to use sanitiser
 - Participants do not want to touch laminated materials that may have been touched by others, even if they are sanitised

QoL VI (2020/21): Longer term planning

- Currently finalising fieldworker training
- Anticipate full-scale data collection to be underway next week.
- Estimated completion in April 2021

- But, lots of unanswerable questions:
 - (When) will there be a second wave?
 - How do we make a call about if/when it is no longer 'safe' to work?
 - How do we weight the risks around COVID against other risks fieldworkers are exposed to?
 - What will be the impact of an infected fieldworker? Will our protocols be effective?

Managing risk:

Working across the province to minimise the impact of interruptions

Monitoring infection data closely, both at provincial and localised levels

Thank You

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