

# Policy Brief

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# Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately exacerbated the socioeconomic and health vulnerabilities of female bushmeat traders in Ghana. Despite their critical role in local economies, these women have faced significant challenges, including income loss, food insecurity, and increased health risks. The pandemic's disruption of supply chains, market closures, and restrictions on movement have further marginalized female bushmeat traders, who often lack access to formal social protection programs.

This research underscores the urgent need for gender-sensitive policies and interventions to support the recovery and resilience of female bushmeat traders. Recommendations include implementing targeted social protection measures, facilitating access to affordable healthcare, and providing alternative livelihood opportunities. By addressing these vulnerabilities, Ghana can promote equitable and sustainable development for all its citizens.





# Introduction

## Research Theme

Examining the Socioeconomic and Health Vulnerabilities of Female Bushmeat Trades in Ghana During and after the Covid-19 Pandemic.

## Bushmeat Trade and Its Significance in Ghana

Bushmeat, the meat of wild animals, is a crucial component of the Ghanaian food system, particularly in rural areas. It serves as a primary source of protein and income for many communities, especially women who engage in the trade. However, the bushmeat trade is often associated with various challenges, including unsustainable hunting practices, habitat destruction, and the risk of zoonotic diseases.

## Research Objectives

This research aims to:

1. **Assess the socioeconomic vulnerabilities** of female bushmeat traders in Ghana.
2. **Examine the health vulnerabilities** of female bushmeat traders, particularly in relation to COVID-19.
3. **Understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic** on the livelihoods and well-being of female bushmeat traders.

# Position Statement

## Directing Policy

The COVID-19 pandemic affected women's livelihoods, particularly those engaged in informal sectors such as the bushmeat trade.

This study aims to examine the interrelated factors that influenced the challenges and opportunities faced by women in the bushmeat trade during and after the pandemic in Ghana.

### Key Objectives

- **Assess the Extent of Dependency:**  
To determine the degree to which women in the bushmeat trade rely on this activity for their livelihoods.

- **Analyze the Impact of COVID-19:**  
To evaluate how the pandemic and its associated interventions have affected the livelihoods of women in the bushmeat trade.
- **Explore Health Implications:**  
To investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the mental and physical health of women engaged in the bushmeat trade.
- **Identify Institutional and Cultural Factors:**  
To identify the institutional and cultural factors that either foster or hinder women's ability to earn a living in the context of the pandemic.
- **Develop Policy Recommendations:**  
To propose practical, gender-responsive policy suggestions based on the research findings to improve the well-being of women in the bushmeat trade and promote gender equality in Ghana.

# Rationale

Despite the significant challenges faced by women in the bushmeat trade during the pandemic, there has been a notable lack of targeted governmental programs or interventions to address their specific needs.

This study seeks to fill this knowledge gap and provide evidence-based recommendations for policy makers to support the livelihoods and well-being of these women.





# Methodology

Three key cities in Ghana, [Accra](#), [Kumasi](#), and [Buipe](#), were selected as study sites. A total of 200 women engaged in various stages of the bushmeat trade chain, including smokers, wholesalers, retailers, and chop bar operators, were involved in the research.

Data was collected through a combination of research methods, including focus group discussions and direct observation of bushmeat trading activities.

# Key Findings from Research

The research revealed several significant findings:

1. **Decline in Bushmeat Trade:**

The bushmeat trade has experienced a general decline, beginning with the Ebola outbreak in 2014 and intensifying during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. **Shift in Hunting Activities:**

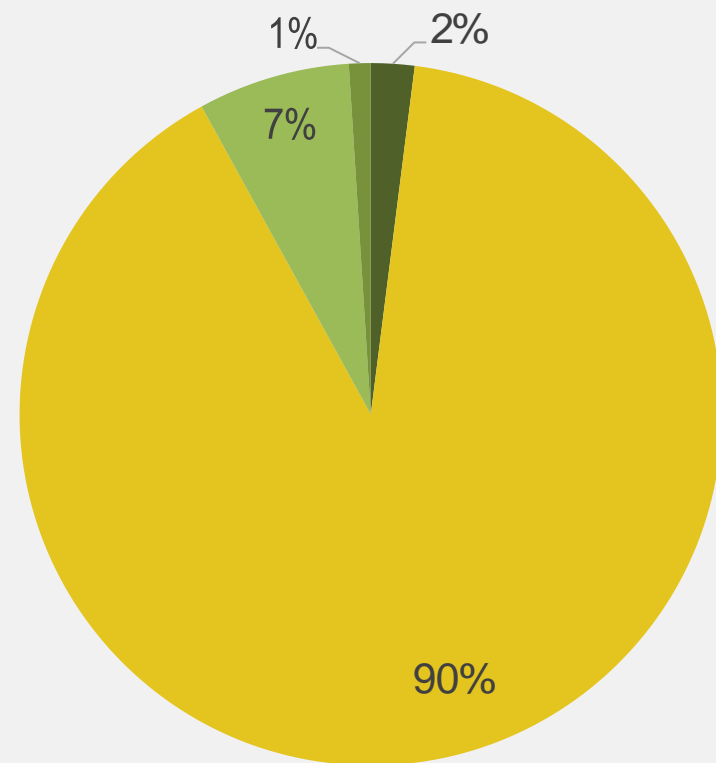
Many hunters have abandoned their traditional occupation and turned to illegal mining or the construction industry.

3. **Decreased Demand and Livelihoods:**

The increasing economic challenges have led to a decline in buyers due to high product costs, ultimately impacting the livelihoods of traders and reducing the quantity of bushmeat purchased.

# Impact Of COVID-19 on Bushmeat Business

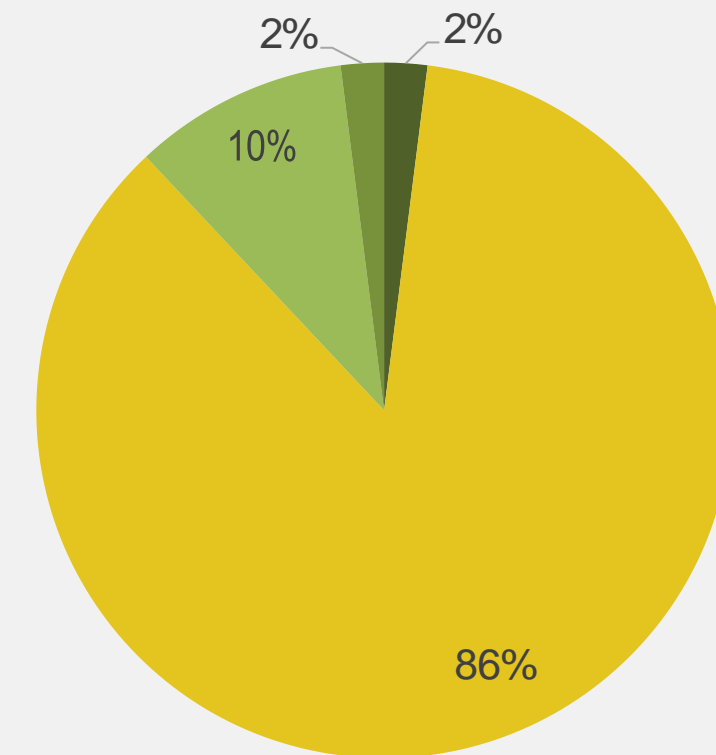
## COVID-19's Toll on the Bushmeat Industry



■ Positive Impact ■ Negative Impact ■ No Impact ■ No Response

*COVID-19 negatively affected most women's businesses and spending.*

## Effect of COVID-19 on Purchases



■ Increased ■ Decreased ■ No Change ■ No Response



# Undesirable Impacts of COVID-19 on Women in the Bushmeat Trade:

- 87% of women reported a decline in income, leading to decreased profit margins (91%), savings (79%), and investments.
- Women faced social stigma and discrimination associated with the bushmeat trade, further exacerbating their challenges.
- The financial downturn made it difficult for many women to repay their loans.
- A significant number of traders (majority) ceased selling bushmeat altogether due to the adverse economic conditions.



# Manifestations of Health Vulnerabilities:

The COVID-19 pandemic had a detrimental impact on the health of women in the bushmeat trade.

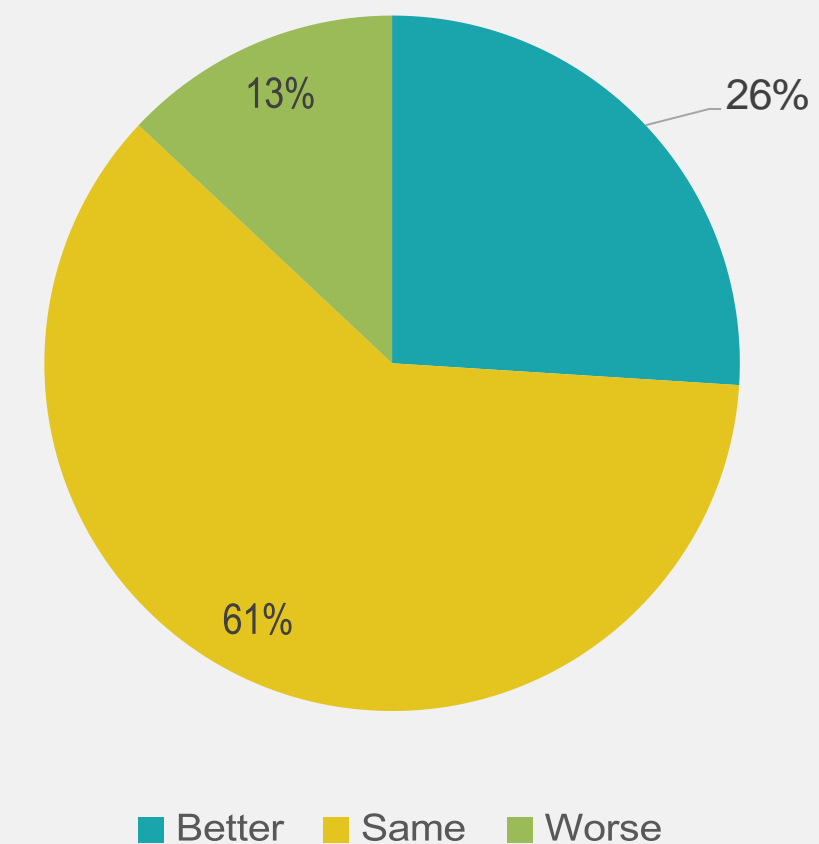
Notable health issues reported include:

- **Mental Health Challenges:**  
Psychological disorders and sleep disturbances were common among women.
- **Physical Health Concerns:**  
Newly diagnosed cases of high blood pressure were prevalent.

## Comparison of Overall Health Status Pre- and Post-COVID:

The research findings revealed a mixed picture regarding the overall health status of women in the bushmeat trade compared to pre-COVID-19 levels. While some women reported a decline in their overall health, others noted improvements. However, the majority indicated that their health status remained relatively unchanged.

## Health Status After COVID-19





## Conclusion & Recommendations for Recovery

The research findings demonstrate that women in the informal sector, particularly those engaged in the bushmeat trade, faced significant socioeconomic challenges prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges were exacerbated by the pandemic and its associated restrictions, disproportionately affecting women's livelihoods compared to their male counterparts. The pandemic also had adverse impacts on the physical and mental health of these women.

Despite the coping strategies employed by women, the absence of formal support structures and policies limited their effectiveness.

To support the recovery of women in the bushmeat trade, the following strategies are recommended:

**1. Formalization & Organization:**

Local District Assemblies should support the formation of a formal association for women bushmeat traders.

**2. Gender-Responsive Policies:**

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and other stakeholders should develop and implement gender-responsive policies and programs.

**3. Financial Support:**

Soft loan schemes and insurance should be provided to mitigate the impact of future shocks and sustain livelihoods.

**4. SSNIT Registration:**

Members should be registered with the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) to address future pension needs.

**5. Health Insurance:**

Women and their dependents should be encouraged to register with the National Health Insurance Scheme.

**6. LEAP Program Membership:**

Association members should be registered with and receive support from the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) program.

**7. Educational Support:**

District Assemblies should ensure that scholarship schemes are available for the children of women in the bushmeat trade.

# Acknowledgement

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Thank  
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