

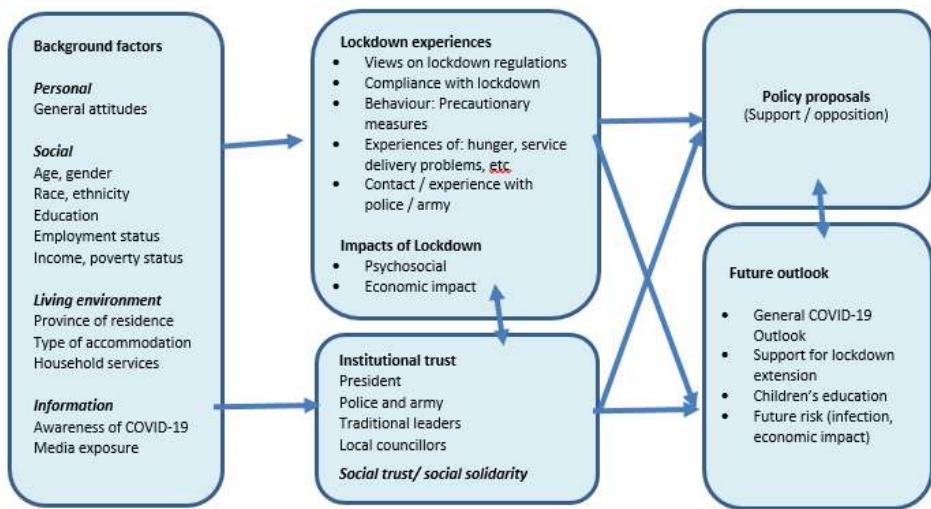
UJ Coronavirus Impact Survey Summary Findings

20 April 2020

1. Background

The University of Johannesburg's Centre for Social Change, with support from Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) Developmental, Capable and Ethical State (DCES) division, is conducting an ongoing online survey among South African adults to determine the social and economic impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, with a particular emphasis on lockdown experiences and attitudes.

The main aim of the Coronavirus Impact Survey is to determine public perceptions of the economic, social and political impact of Covid-19 on life across the country. Conceptually, the survey questionnaire has been designed to examine the themes and relationships illustrated in the conceptual diagram below



2. Survey methodology, characteristics and limitations

We are conducting the longitudinal online survey using a messaging platform called Moya, which is similar to WhatsApp and currently used by 4 million people across the country. Approximately 1,6 million people make use of the platform at least every month, and 800 000 of these use it every day. The platform is operated by biNu, which has collaborated with the HSRC on several surveys to date. Anyone with a mobile phone is able to receive and respond to the survey, whether or not they have airtime or data available.

Users of the Moya platform are predominantly younger South Africans aged less than 40, and mainly black or coloured. For this reason, we are also distributing a URL to the online survey by means of other media, to obtain responses from minority components of the population that are under-represented amongst users of the Moya platform. The responses are anonymous and we will not disclose the IP addresses from which we are receiving responses.

This report is based on 5,481 completed questionnaires. Findings have been weighted to match Statistics South Africa data on race, education and age, and can be regarded as broadly representative of the population at large. The distribution by gender was even and did not require weighting

The findings covers questionnaires completed between 13 April, when the survey was launched, and 18 April. The survey is expected to continue during the coming weeks, which will enable us to monitor any changes in sentiment that occur.

The survey is collecting responses about levels of awareness and information sources that are being used. We are asking whether people think the pandemic is being exaggerated, and whether people are prepared to sacrifice some of their human rights in the national fight against the spread of the virus. Amongst the other questions, we are testing the extent to which they trust the leadership of the President, the police and the army, in managing the situation, and the emotions that people are feeling as a result of the lockdown.

3. Coronavirus Impact Survey Results

COVID-19 awareness and information sources

- **Levels of awareness** about COVID-19 is widespread among South Africans, pointing to widespread policy and media coverage and uptake by the public. Three-quarters (**75%**) reported that they know a lot or a fair amount about the Coronavirus outbreak (29% and 46% respectively). By contrast, approximately a fifth (19%) said they know ‘a little’, while 2% reported that they ‘know nothing at all’ about the outbreak.
- In terms of the **main sources of information about Coronavirus**, the dominant channel by a significant degree is television (69%). This is followed, to a lesser degree, by news sites (either on the internet or newspapers)(44%), radio (38%), Government health officials (incl. Minister Mkhize) (35%). Slightly more than a third of respondents report relying on WhatsApp (32%) and social media (30%). Friends, family and colleagues are regarded as a key source of information by 26%, with circumscribed reliance on medical professionals (13%), and flyers, pamphlets or information sheets (11%)

General attitudes towards Coronavirus

- **Exaggerated threat of COVID-19:** Approximately a third of South Africans (31%) express the view that ‘the threat of Coronavirus is exaggerated’ (15% strongly

believe this). This is a substantial minority share of the adult public, and is likely to have an impact on adherence to lockdown restrictions in future if left unaddressed. A marginally larger share (33%) disagreed with this perspective, while 30% were either neutral or unsure in response.

- **Willingness to sacrifice some human rights to prevent virus spread:** 68% of survey participants agreed that they would sacrifice some human rights if it contributed positively towards the prevention of the spread of Coronavirus in the country. This is an encouraging message, especially given the lockdown extension decision.

Institutional trust in the handling of the COVID-19 response

- **Trust in government and other core political institutions** is regarded as a critical determining element in effective responses to the COVID-19 crisis. This includes a belief that government has the technical expertise, knowledge and capacity to make fair, effective decisions, as well as confidence in the President himself at the apex of the South African governance system.
- Fortunately the news is favourable in this regard. An estimated **73% believe that the President is doing a good job** in handling the Coronavirus outbreak.
- **More moderate evaluations are provided of the Police (43% good job) and the SANDF (39% good job)** enforcement of the lockdown regulations.
- In contrast to the positive evaluation received by the President, **only 25% thought their councillor was doing a good job.**

Lockdown experiences

- **Perceived harshness of lockdown restrictions:** Close to two-fifths (38%) of respondents believe that the lockdown restrictions are about right in character, while a further 27% believe that they are not harsh enough. A notable minority share (22%) however believes that the lockdown measures are too harsh. The remaining 13% were unsure or did not provide an answer.
- **Perceived adherence:** 75% believe that people across South Africa are not taking lockdown restrictions seriously enough. Only 6% felt that people are adhering in an appropriate way while 9% felt that the public was responding to the lockdown in too serious a manner.
- **Preventative measures:** Only 1% of respondents indicated that they had not adopted any preventative behaviours in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Staying in one's house (except for going out to for essential items) and washing hands more frequently and were measures adopted by close to eight in ten of the survey participants (78% and 77% respectively). Social distancing when outdoors and refraining from social gatherings and events was mentioned by between 66% and 64% of participants. Less common reported behaviours were the wearing of face

masks (37%), stockpiling of food and other essentials (31%), and the wearing of gloves (28%). Continued, clear messaging around masks and gloves may be required in coming days and weeks.

- **Alleged abuse of power by Police / Army:** Since the start of lockdown on the 26 March, 19% of respondents indicated that the police or army had stopped them to check why they were outside of your home. Alleged abuse of power by these authorities has received critical attention, and is the subject of investigation. From the public point of view, 6% of participants reported an alleged experience of direct harassment, conflict and/or violence at the hands of the police or army during the lockdown (4% by the police, 1% by the army, and 1% by both). A further 3% refused to disclose and 16% provided no answer.
- **Hunger:** This has become an increasing pressing issue in the South African lockdown experience. This theme came through strongly in the survey, with 28% of survey participants personally reporting that they had gone to bed hungry since lockdown, while 18% also indicated that someone else in household had experienced this. This is clearly an area requiring a broad-based and sustained emergency response by Government and civil society organisations in the coming weeks.
- **Other lockdown challenges:** ensuring reliable access to basic household services during lockdown has also been challenging for many, with 19% reporting electricity supply problems, and 8% battling with access to water. Getting public transport when needed was mentioned by 15% of respondents.

Emotional experiences

- **Dominant emotions experienced often in past week:** Respondents were asked to list which emotions they experienced on a regular basis in the week prior to interviewing. A list of nine different emotions was presented to choose from. **The most commonly experienced emotion was stress (57%).** This was following (in descending order) by boredom (45%), fear (43%) and frustration/irritability (34%). Depression was mentioned by 32%, sadness by 25%, loneliness by 26% and anger by 18%. By comparison, only 13% reported feeling frequently happy.

Economic impact

- While the general economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa has received much attention, what are the views of citizens about the financial consequences of the outbreak?
- **Strong economic concern:** 84% were very concerned about financial situation of all citizens, while 82% voiced strong concern for themselves.
- **Difficulties keeping up with expenses:** 66% reported that they were struggling paying for their expenses, given their financial situation under lockdown (49% expressed strong views in this regard).

- **Employment challenges:** 13% of participants reported being laid off or told not to work since the start of lockdown. In addition, 6% have continued working from home. While an equivalent share (6%) have not been able work but their employer is continuing to pay all or some of their salary. Furthermore, 4% have not been able to work and put on some form of leave by their employer; and 3% report that their employer has applied on the behalf to the UIF C19 TERS scheme. A large share (30%) reported that we were not working prior to the lockdown.

Social solidarity

- **Hope for social solidarity:** 39% feel the pandemic will make South Africans more united and supportive of each other; 26% adopt a more sceptical view (growing social distrust / self-interest); while the remaining 35% are neutral (8%), uncertain (15%) or did not provide an answer.

Lockdown extension

- **Support for lockdown extension:** 43% of respondents unconditionally support the extension; 37% support an extended lockdown with major regulation changes (conditional support); only 5% oppose the extension, while 3% were uncertain and 12% did not provide an answer. This is a robust endorsement for the President's decision to extend the lockdown beyond the initial 21 day period until the end of April, but the share reporting conditional support needs to be carefully watched in coming days and weeks.
- **Among those who had gone to bed hungry** during the lockdown, only 34% backed the lockdown unconditionally, compared to 48% for those who had not been to bed hungry.
- **Wealthier people are far more likely to give unconditional support** to the lockdown than those who are poor. The figures are 70% for those with a personal income between R20,001 and R40,000 and only 35% for those with a personal income of less than R1000 a month.
- **Young South Africans are far less likely to give unconditional support** to the lockdown than those who are older. Only 35% of 18-24 year-olds backed this option, compared with a figure of 62% for those over 55.

Views on policy options

- **Most favoured policy propositions:** Survey participants were provided with a set of 12 policy proposals and asked to indicate which they favoured. From this list, food parcels (71% support) was the top ranked policy option. This fits in with the emerging hunger situation that is developing under lockdown. This was following, in descending order, by the introduction of a basic income grant (BIG) (56%), guaranteeing worker wages during lockdown (54%), payment holiday on accounts, rent, taxes (52%), and increasing the value of social grants (52%). By contrast,

circumscribed support was evident for the removal of restrictions on alcohol (12%) and tobacco (17%) sales, wealth taxes (16%), and the removal of all restrictions on movement (6%).

Future outlook

- In terms of **short-term Coronavirus outlook** over the coming month, 49% believe the worst is yet to come, 18% believe the situation will remain the same, 17% feel that we are over the worst of it and that things will begin to improve, while 17% were unsure or unable to provide an answer.
- A growing issue is the impact on schooling, now that Term 2 of the school year and the new university semester is supposed to have begun after the Easter holidays. An estimated **81% of respondents with children of school-going age are very concerned about impact on children's schooling**, 8% are moderately concerned, while only 3% either not very or not at all concerned about schooling. The remaining 8% do not provide an answer.
- In terms of **future risk**, 22% believe that it is likely that they will contract the virus in the next few months, while **50% believe their personal financial situation will worsen** in next few months because of economic consequences of COVID-19.

Personal messages for the President

- As a final question in the survey, respondents were asked to provide, in their own words, a personal message for President Ramaphosa. Many provided messages they wished the President to hear. While we cannot detail all of these in this summary of findings, below are a few examples: -

"Dear Mr President, I go by the name of (NAME REMOVED). I am 21 years old, and am schooling at Unisa doing an education degree. This lockdown makes my life tough because I have been raised by a single parent. Sometimes we go to bed with an empty stomach because my mother is not able to go out and do some piece job. Everything has stopped in life. It's like we are sinking. Now we experience poverty worse than before lockdown. We depend on only one child social grant and it's little. It cannot be able to feed six people. Mr President, the decision that you have taken is correct, but what about us the poor people? We are struggling a lot every day. When I wake up I wish there was no tomorrow, because I know I will eat nothing at all. So please can you think of us, please. Today it is Covid19, tomorrow it will be malnutrition, because of the unhealthy food that we eat. I thank you, Sir"

"Please Mr President think about us during this time of lockdown we don't have food money to pay rent and to buy food."

“Mr Ramaphosa please think about us people from rural areas. We need water supplies and food as am a child headed household and am not able to work. That means no work no pay. Please Mr we need help”

“Thank you for all the relentless efforts you are putting Baba to control the spread of this pandemic. Maybe God help you with more wisdom and ideas to combat this. One thing I only ask Mr President is to directly address the situation of rents and similar bills because as poorer residents, this is our immediate concern because landlords need their money without compromise.”

“Dear Mr President what you have been doing so far is good Tata you are trying by all means to get your fellow South Africans safe from this virus i appreciate the lockdown idea even though people do not take it serious and they are not taking the virus seriously especially in rural Areas... my last words MR President Help the youth of S.A let them share their vision groom them cause they are the bulletproof of this country im deeply hurt to see us after matric we don't do anything we just stay at homes getting piece jobs there and there i wish i wasn't born from this place because life is moving slow at this age 25. I'm doing nothing I'm such a disappointment to my single mother who tried by all means for me to be the provider at ma home”

4. Next steps

Over the next two weeks, the project team will continue assessing the attitudes, behaviours and experiences based on weighted data from the online survey of South African adults, provided in-depth insight on specific aspects of the lived experience of Coronavirus-related lockdown in the country. Such information is going to be critical in providing social science evidence to inform ongoing national and more localised decision-making in response to the pandemic.

For those interested in completed the survey, the link can be found at:

<https://datafree.co/r/coidUJ>

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