



Lusaka, Zambia
9 March 2021

News release

Zambians approve of pandemic response but voice concerns about corruption and vaccines, Afrobarometer survey shows

A new Afrobarometer survey in Zambia shows that most citizens approve of the government's performance in managing the response to COVID-19.

But majorities also think that resources for the pandemic response were lost to government corruption and that the government cannot be trusted to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe.

Most citizens say the pandemic does not justify postponing elections or limiting political campaigning, a finding that is particularly important ahead of the country's general election scheduled for 12 August.

The study shows that despite mistrust of the government's ability to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe, more than half of Zambians say they are likely to try to get vaccinated when a vaccine becomes available.

Zambia has recorded more than 82,000 cases of COVID-19 to date, with 1,124 deaths as of 8 March.

Key findings

- More than three-quarters (78%) of Zambians approve of the government's performance in managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and an overwhelming majority (92%) say the government has done a good job of keeping the public informed (Figure 1).
 - But only about one-third (36%) of citizens say they trust official COVID-19 statistics.
 - And almost three-fourths (72%) believe that "some" or "a lot" of the resources available for responding to the pandemic were lost to government corruption.
- Most Zambians support partial lock restrictions (80%) and school closures (71%) put in place to limit the spread of COVID-19, although most respondents (79%) say schools should have reopened more quickly (Figure 2).
- Fewer than one in 10 citizens (7%) say their household received pandemic-related assistance from the government. A majority (70%) say government assistance was distributed unfairly (Figure 3).
- While fewer than half (45%) of respondents say they trust the government to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe, a majority (59%) say they are likely to try to get vaccinated when a vaccine becomes available (Figure 4).
 - Remarkably, rural residents (67%) and citizens with primary education or less (71%) are far more likely to say they will probably try to get vaccinated than are urban residents (50%) and Zambians with secondary (54%) and post-secondary (49%) schooling.

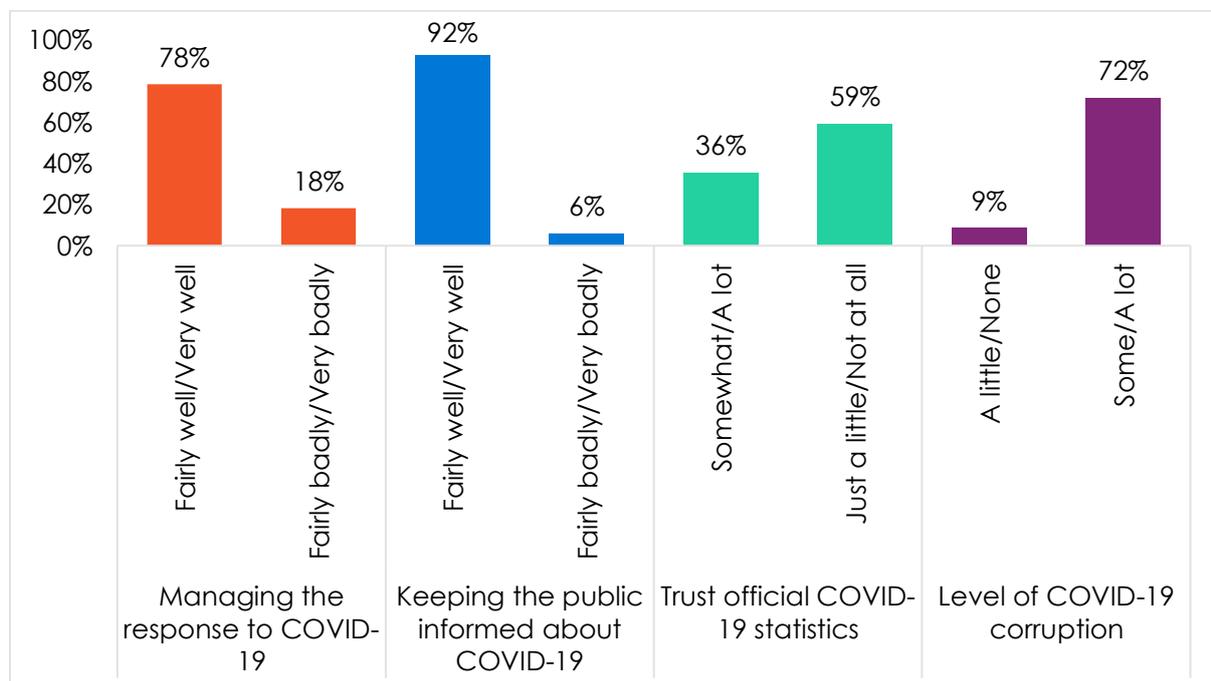
- Almost three-quarters (74%) of citizens say a pandemic would not justify postponing elections or limiting political campaigns (Figure 5). In contrast, a majority say a public-health emergency would justify censoring the media (53%) and using security forces to enforce public health mandates (69%).
- More than two-thirds (69%) of respondents also say they are worried that politicians in Zambia will use the pandemic as an opportunity to increase their power and authority.

Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Seven rounds of surveys were completed in up to 38 countries between 1999 and 2018, and Round 8 surveys (2019/2021) are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Zambia, led by the Institute of Economic and Social Research (INESOR), a research wing of the University of Zambia, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 Zambian adults in November/December 2020. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous standard surveys were conducted in Zambia in 2012, 2015, and 2017.

Figure 1: Assessment of government efforts during the pandemic | Zambia | 2020



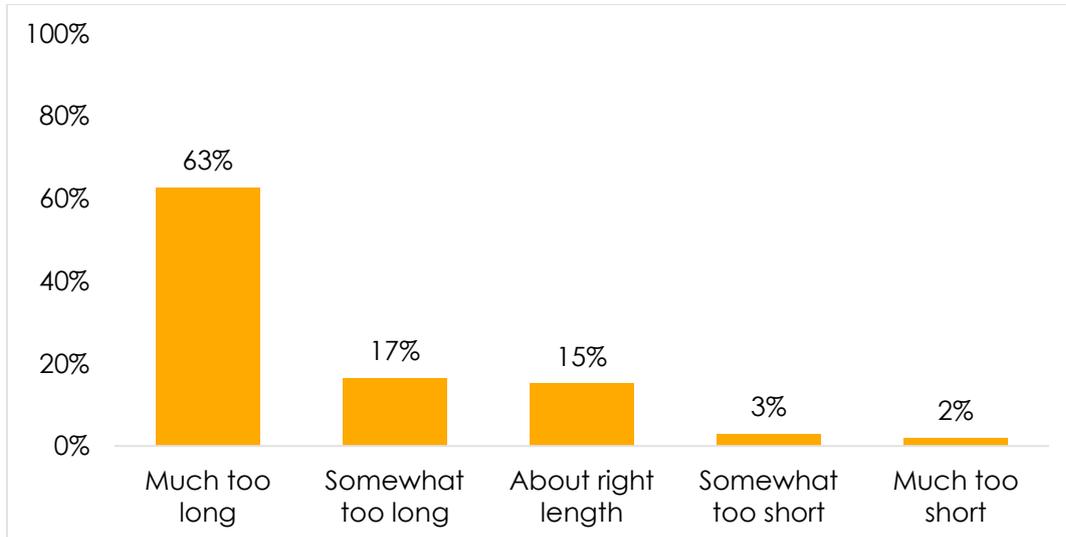
Respondents were asked:

How well or badly would you say the current government has handled the following matters since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, or haven't you heard enough to say: Managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic? Keeping the public informed about COVID-19?

How much do you trust the official statistics provided by government on the number of infections and deaths due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

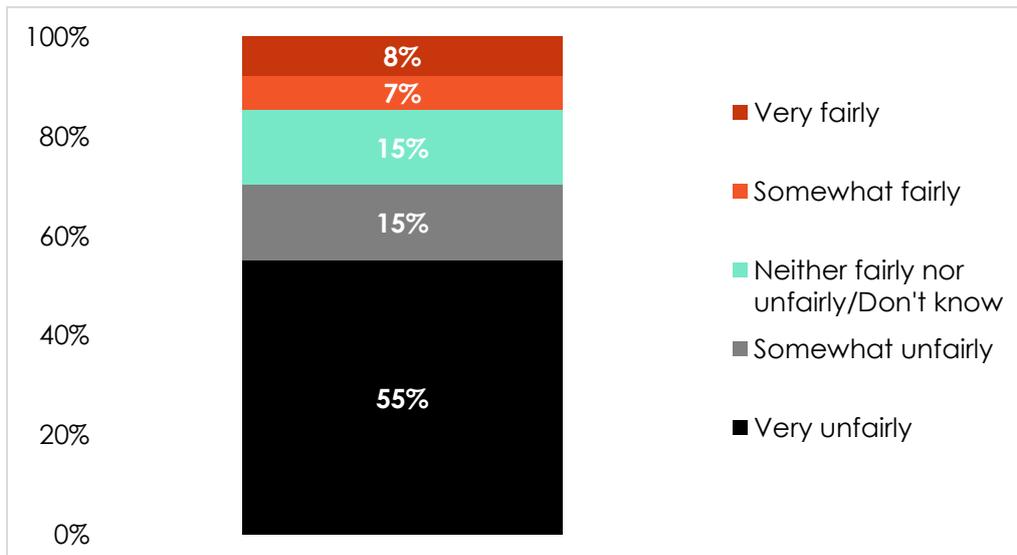
Considering all of the funds and resources that were available to the government for combatting and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, how much do you think was lost or stolen due to corruption among government officials?

Figure 2: Length of school closures | Zambia | 2020



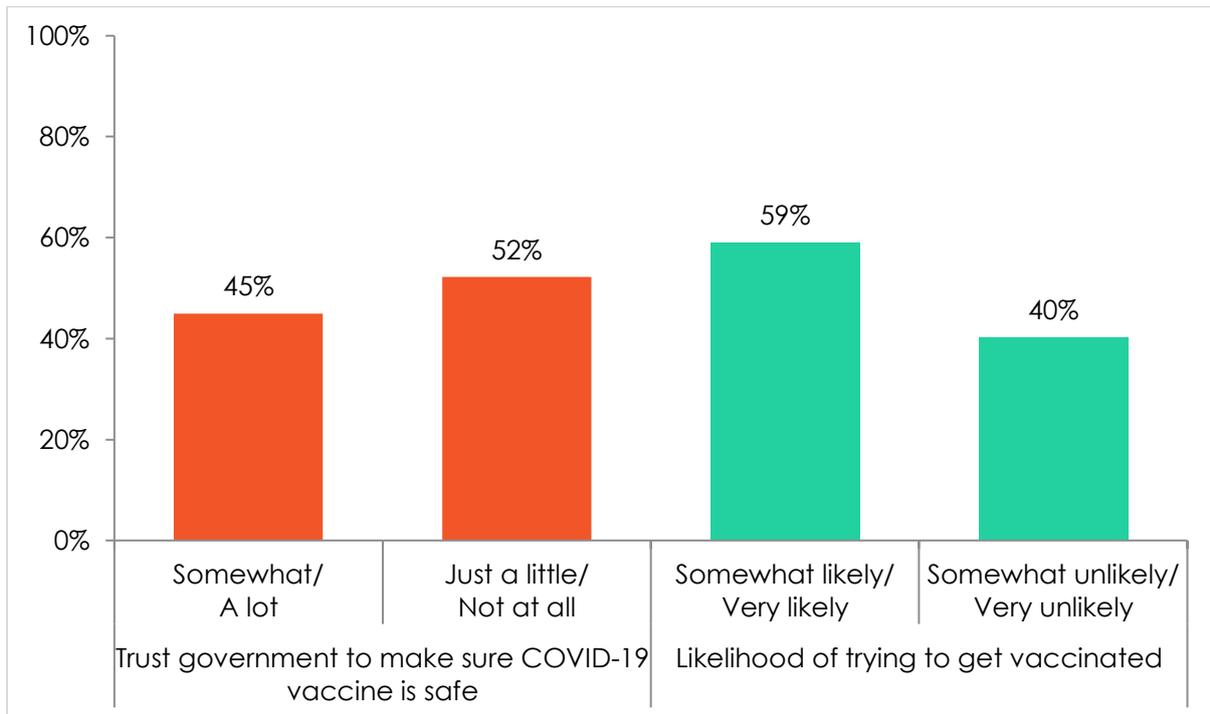
Respondents were asked: In your opinion, was the period during which schools were closed too long or too short?

Figure 3: Fairness of government assistance | Zambia | 2020



Respondents were asked: Do you think that the benefits of government programs to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example through food packages or cash payments, have been distributed fairly, or that the distribution was unfair, for example by favoring certain groups or regions?

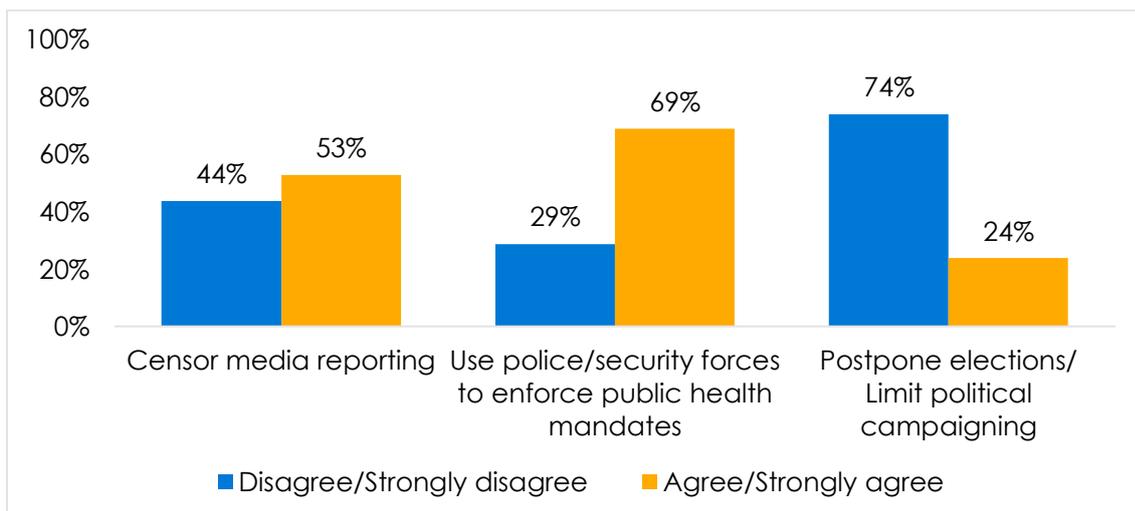
Figure 4: Attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccines | Zambia | 2020



Respondents were asked:

How much do you trust the government to ensure that any vaccine for COVID-19 that is developed or offered to Zambian citizens is safe before it is used in this country?
 If a vaccine for COVID-19 becomes available and the government says it is safe, how likely are you to try to get vaccinated?

Figure 5: Restrict freedoms during health emergency? | Zambia | 2020



Respondents were asked: When the country is facing a public health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic, do you agree or disagree that it is justified for the government to temporarily limit democracy or democratic freedoms by taking the following measures:

Censoring media reporting?
 Using the police and security forces to enforce public health mandates like lockdown orders, mask requirements, or restrictions on public gatherings?
 Postponing elections or limiting political campaigning?

For more information, please contact:

Edward Chibwili
Institute of Economic and Social Research, University of Zambia
Email: edward.chibwili@unza.zm

Visit us online at:
<https://www.unza.zm/institutes/inesor>
www.afrobarometer.org

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.

