

Mbabane, Eswatini
27 December 2021

News release

Emaswati support lockdowns and school closures for COVID-19 prevention despite difficulty complying

Most Emaswati support the government's lockdown restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 even though about half say they found it difficult to comply, the latest Afrobarometer survey shows.

Similarly, a majority of citizens endorse the government's decision to close the schools but think they should have reopened sooner.

To limit the spread of the coronavirus, government has instituted partial lockdown restrictions, including school closures that kept most students (particularly those enrolled in government schools) away from the classroom for much of 2020 and parts of 2021. While this year saw learners return to the classrooms following easing of the 'hard' restrictions of the previous year, outbreaks of subsequent COVID-19 waves and civil unrest yet again led to the shutting down of schools. The government has continued to gradually ease restrictions, allowing most business, including some of those most affected by the lockdowns such as the alcohol and entertainment industry, to begin the long journey to economic recovery. Most recently, the government announced the end of a curfew that has been in place for several months now.

Key findings

- Most Emaswati (78%) "agree" or "strongly agree" that lockdown restrictions were necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19 (Figure 1).
- About half (49%) say they found it "difficult" or "very difficult" to comply with the lockdown restrictions imposed by the government (Figure 2).
- Six in 10 Emaswati (60%) support the government's decision to close schools (Figure 3).
- But more than nine in 10 citizens (93%) think the schools should have reopened sooner, including 78% who say they were closed "much too long" (Figure 4).

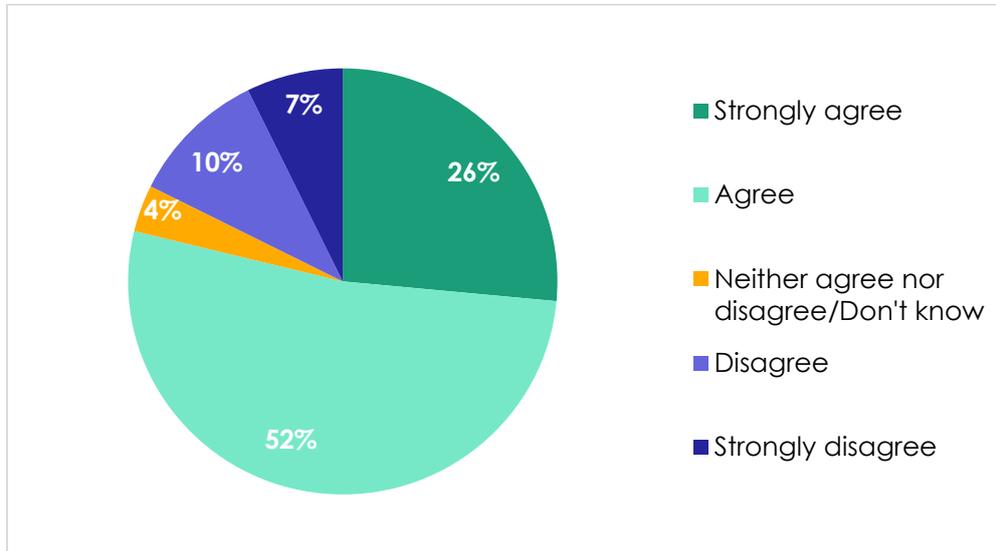
Afrobarometer surveys

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. Eight rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 39 countries since 1999. Round 8 surveys (2019/2021) cover 34 countries. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Eswatini, led by ActivQuest, interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult Emaswati in March-April 2021. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous surveys were conducted in Eswatini in 2013, 2015, and 2018.

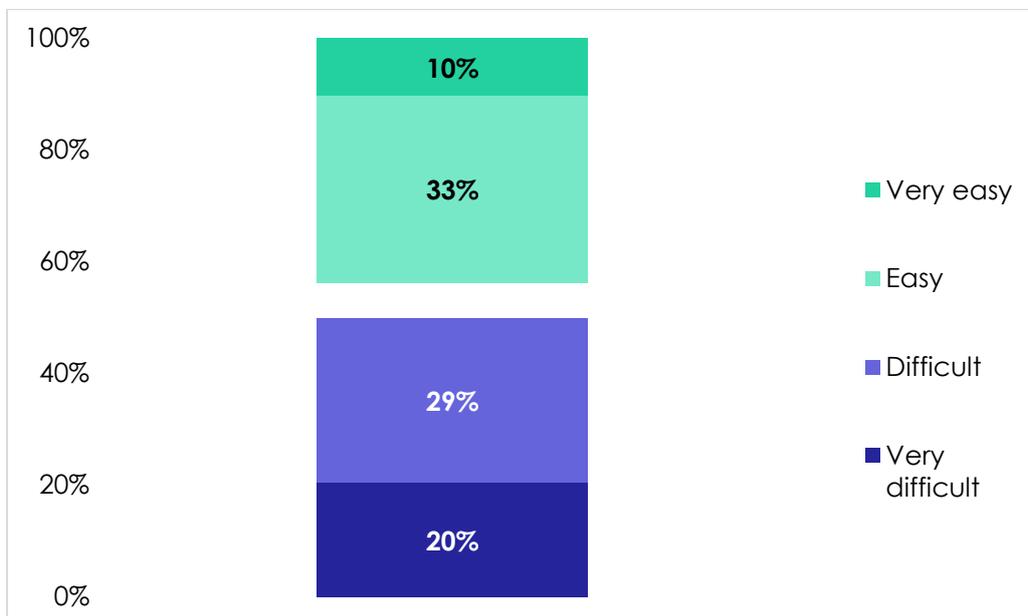
Charts

Figure 1: Support for lockdown | Eswatini | 2021



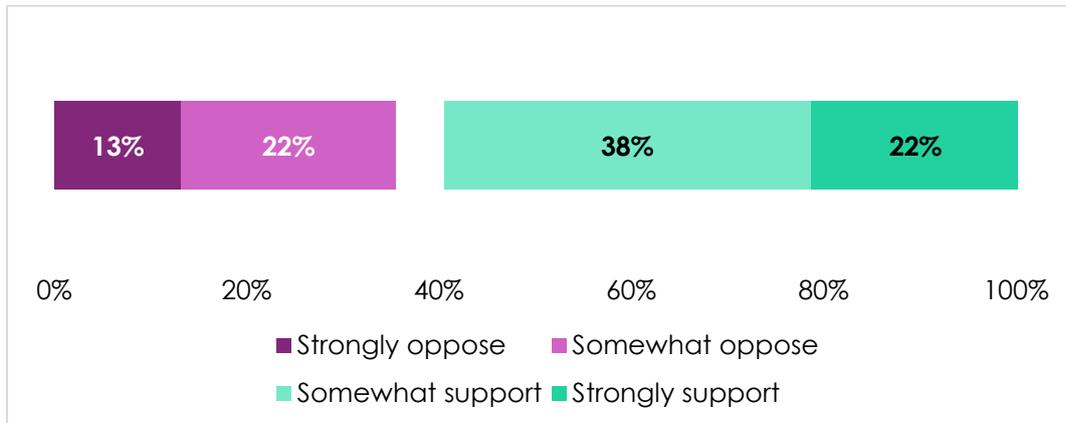
Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Even if the lockdown or curfew had negative impacts on the economy and people's livelihoods, it was necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19?

Figure 2: Difficulty of complying with lockdown | Eswatini | 2021



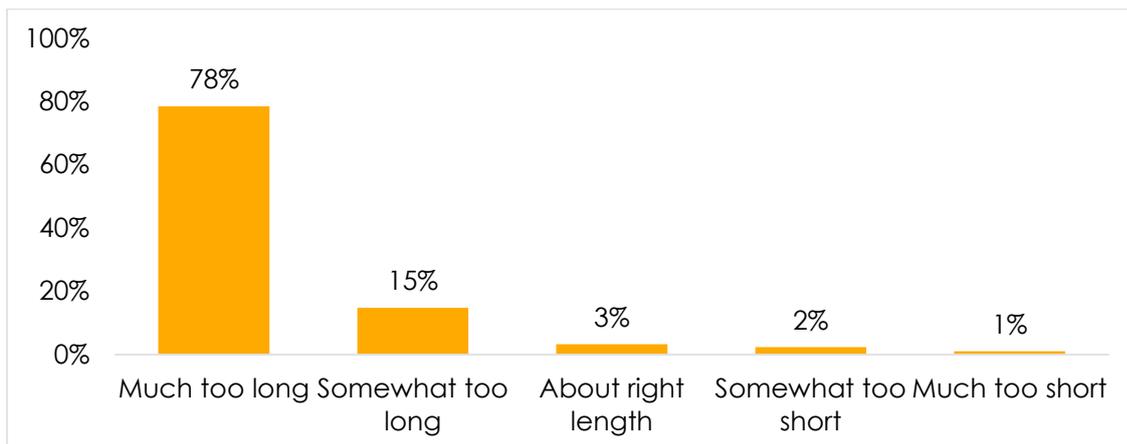
Respondents were asked: How easy or difficult was it for you and your household to comply with the lockdown or curfew restrictions imposed by the government?

Figure 3: Support for school closures | Eswatini | 2021



Respondents were asked: Did you support or oppose the government's decision to close schools in an effort to limit the spread of COVID-19?

Figure 4: Length of school closures | Eswatini | 2021



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

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