



Dispatch No. 490 | 16 November 2021

Moroccans embrace COVID-19 vaccination but are dissatisfied with pandemic assistance

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 490 | Maame Akua Amoah Twum and Lionel Ossé

Summary

Morocco has recorded more than 947,760 COVID-19 cases since 2 March 2020, second on the continent to South Africa. Deaths number more than 14,720 (WHO, 2021; BBC, 2021).

In response, the government declared a state of health emergency; closed schools, borders, mosques, and other public spaces except for commercial activities and vital services; banned public gatherings; and instituted mandatory face masking and a nightly curfew (Le Monde, 2020; International Organization for Migration, 2020). Economic support included monthly allowances for employees, cash transfers to families in the informal sector, and loan and tax deferrals for businesses (Institut Montaigne, 2020).

The government also launched a mass vaccination campaign that has fully inoculated more than 58% of Moroccans (Maroc.ma, 2021).

The vaccination campaign, thought to be Africa's most successful, has reduced the number of critical cases and deaths and allowed the easing of restrictions on citizens' movement (Delorme, 2021).

However, in October the government also introduced a "vaccine passport" that citizens must carry in their workplaces, in public spaces such as restaurants, and during domestic and international travel. This pass, which critics decry as overly restrictive and unconstitutional, has sparked a nationwide outcry and demonstrations in major cities (Associated Press, 2021; Mahmoud, 2021).

Findings from an Afrobarometer survey in February 2021 show that most Moroccans embrace vaccination against COVID-19 and trust the government to ensure that vaccines are safe. At the time of the survey – months before the introduction of the vaccine passport – a majority also applauded the government's performance in managing the response to COVID-19 and supported the lockdown to contain the spread of the virus.

While half of citizens report that they received special government assistance during the pandemic, the same proportion say that assistance was not distributed fairly, and a majority believe that at least some relief resources were lost to government corruption.

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 are currently underway. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

The Afrobarometer team in Morocco, led by Global for Survey and Consulting (GSC), interviewed 1,200 adult Moroccans in February 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 Afrobarometer surveys were conducted in Morocco in 2013, 2015, and 2018.

Key findings

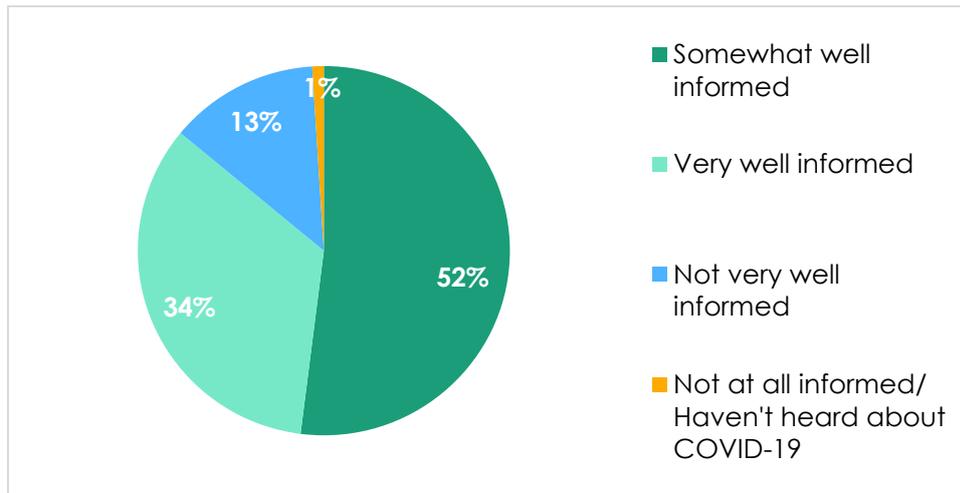
- Almost nine out of 10 Moroccans (86%) say they are “somewhat” or “very” well informed about the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to combat it.
- About one in seven citizens (13%) say they or a member of their family became ill with COVID-19, and four in 10 (40%) say their household lost a primary source of income because of the pandemic.
- Almost two-thirds (63%) of Moroccans say they found it difficult to comply with lockdown restrictions or curfews imposed by the government to limit the spread of COVID-19. But most (85%) say the lockdown was necessary, in spite of the toll it took on the economy and people’s livelihoods.
- Six in 10 (61%) support the closure of schools to limit the spread of the virus, but 71% think the schools should have reopened sooner.
- Half (49%) of Moroccans say they or their households received special government assistance during the pandemic.
 - Poor, less educated, and rural citizens were more likely to receive assistance than their wealthier, more educated, and urban counterparts.
 - But half (49%) of respondents say assistance was not distributed fairly.
- As of February 2021, large majorities said the government had done “fairly well” or “very well” in managing the response to the pandemic (77%) and keeping the public informed (86%).
 - But only about half (48%) say they trust official government statistics on COVID-19, and 62% believe that “some” or “a lot” of COVID-19 relief resources have been lost to government corruption.
- Three-fourths (74%) of Moroccans say they trust the government “somewhat” or “a lot” to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe, and eight in 10 (81%) say they are “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to try to get vaccinated.
 - Even so, more than half (53%) believe that prayer is more effective than a vaccine in preventing COVID-19 infection.
- Large majorities say that in times of a health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic, the government is justified in using the police or armed forces to enforce public health measures (89%), censoring media reporting (90%), and postponing elections or limiting political campaigning (70%).
- Only three in 10 respondents (29%) anticipate that the pandemic will be “somewhat serious” or “very serious” in Morocco over the next six months.
- But a majority (53%) say the government should invest more in preparing for health emergencies like COVID-19, even if it means fewer resources are available for other health services.

Awareness

More than eight in 10 Moroccans say they are “very well informed” (34%) or “somewhat well informed” (52%) about the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to combat it. Only 14% consider themselves “not very well” or “not at all” informed about the pandemic (Figure 1).

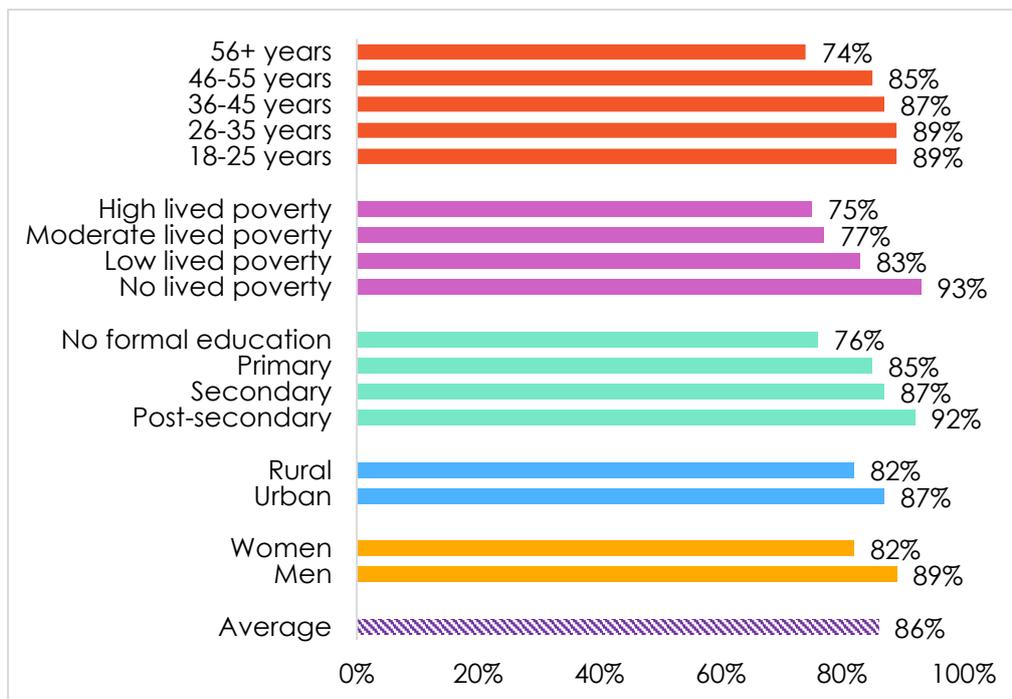
Awareness of the pandemic is fairly high across key socio-demographic groups, though somewhat weaker among older, poor, and less educated citizens, rural residents, and women (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Awareness of COVID-19 | Morocco | 2021



Respondents were asked: How well informed would you say you are about the coronavirus, or the COVID-19 pandemic, and efforts to combat it?

Figure 2: Awareness of COVID-19 | by socio-demographic group | Morocco | 2021



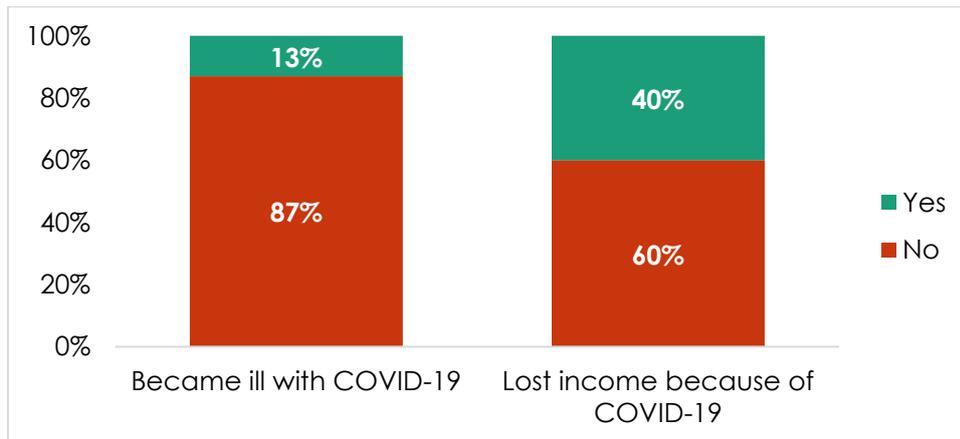
Respondents were asked: How well informed would you say you are about the coronavirus, or the COVID-19 pandemic, and efforts to combat it? (% who say “somewhat” or “very” well informed)

Impact

About one in eight citizens (13%) say they or a member of their household became ill with COVID-19, while 40% report that a household member lost a job, business, or primary source of income due to the pandemic (Figure 3).

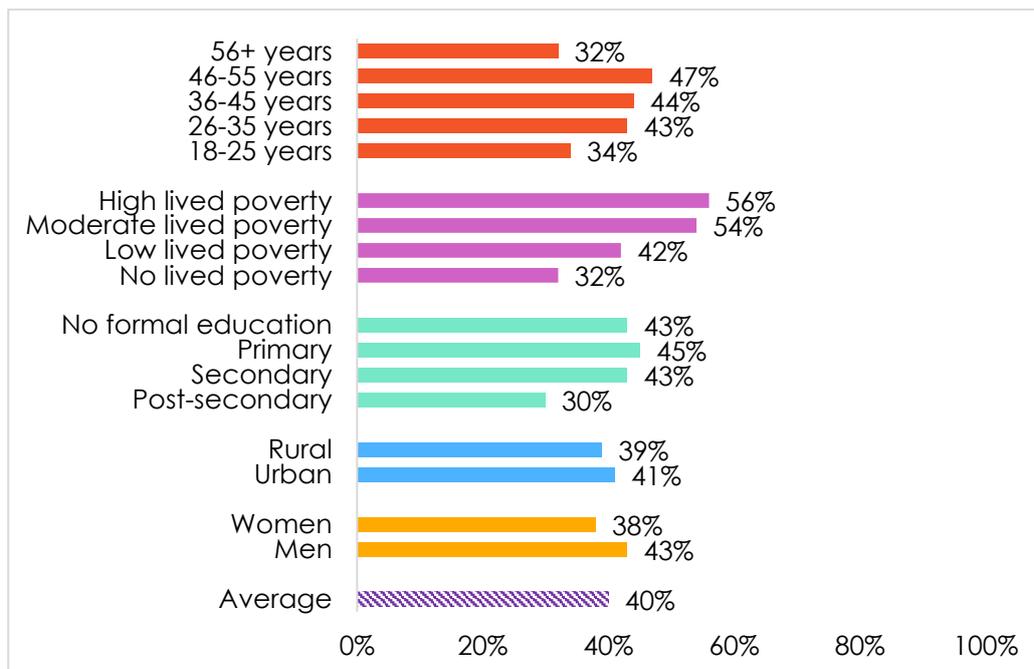
Loss of income was more common among economically disadvantaged citizens, ranging from 56% of those experiencing high lived poverty to 32% of those with no lived poverty (Figure 4). Similarly, less educated respondents were more likely than those with post-secondary qualifications to experience the loss of a major income source.

Figure 3: Impact of the pandemic | Morocco | 2021



Respondents were asked: Please tell me if you personally or any other member of your household have been affected in any of the following ways by the COVID-19 pandemic: Became ill with COVID-19? Temporarily or permanently lost a job, business or primary source of income?

Figure 4: Lost income due to the pandemic | Morocco | 2021



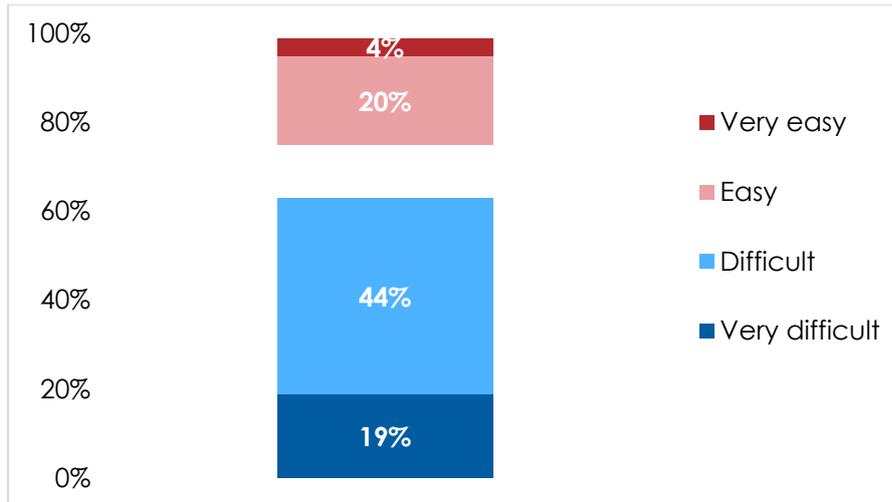
Respondents were asked: Please tell me if you personally or any other member of your household have been affected in any of the following ways by the COVID-19 pandemic: Temporarily or permanently lost a job, business or primary source of income? (% "yes")

Lockdowns and school closures

Almost two-thirds (63%) of Moroccans say they and their households found it “difficult” or “very difficult” to comply with lockdown restrictions imposed by the government to limit the spread of COVID-19, while only 24% report that it was easy (Figure 5).

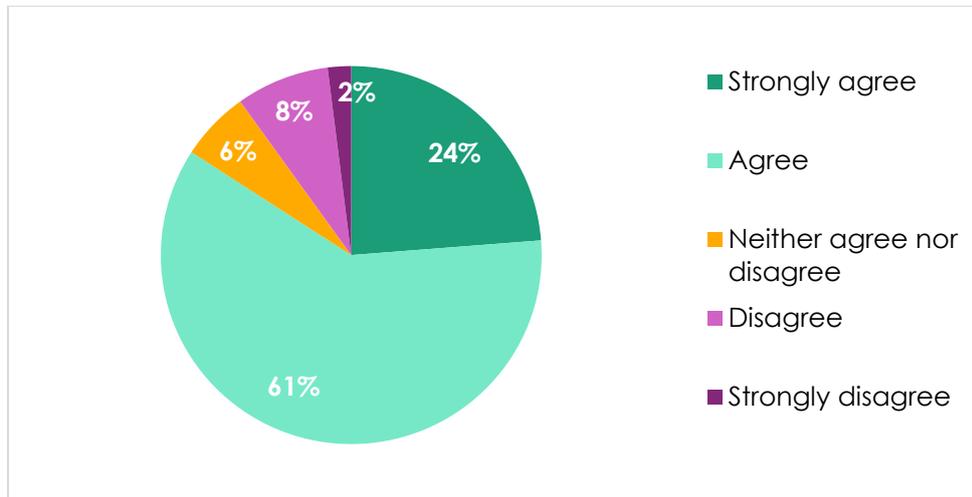
Despite the difficulty of complying with the restrictions, an overwhelming majority (85%) say they were necessary to limit COVID-19 infections (Figure 6).

Figure 5: Difficulty of complying with lockdown | Morocco | 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 6: Support for lockdown | Morocco | 2021

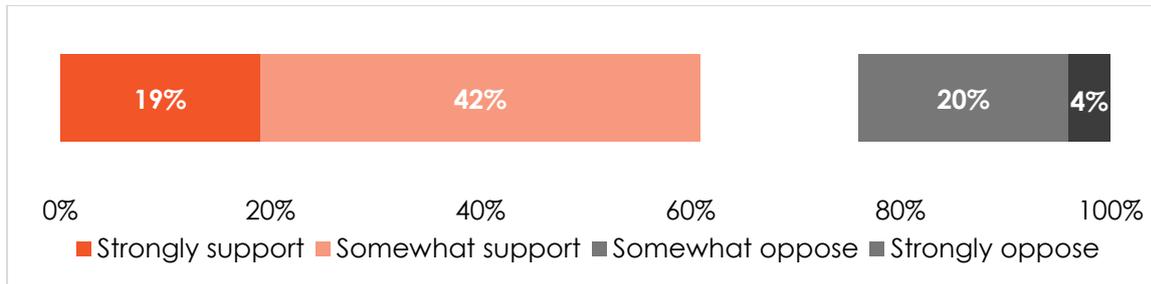


Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Even if the lockdown or curfew had negative impacts on the economy and people’s livelihoods, it was necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19?

A majority (61%) of citizens also support the decision to close schools during the pandemic, while just 24% disapprove (Figure 7).

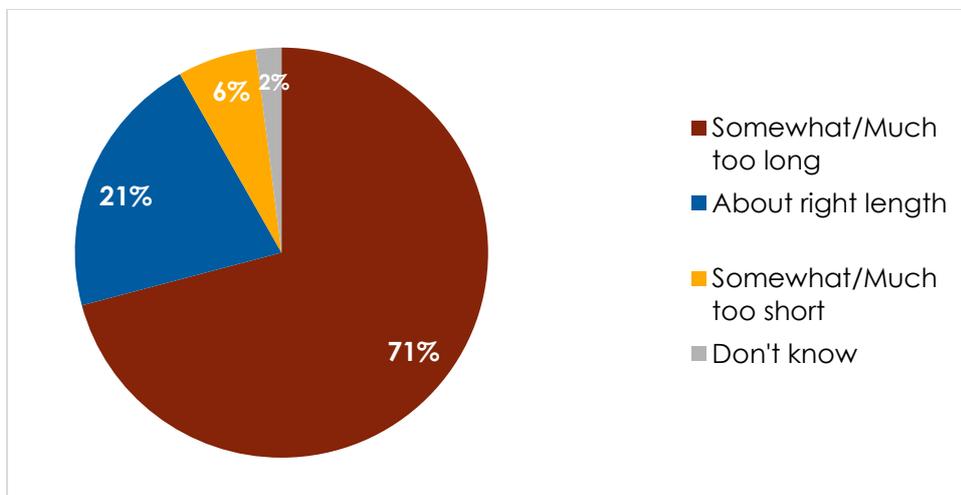
However, seven in 10 respondents (71%) think the school closure period was “somewhat” or “much” too long (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Support for school closures | Morocco | 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 8: Length of school closures | Morocco | 2021



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

Government assistance and performance

About half (49%) of Moroccans say they received special assistance from the government to help mitigate the effects of the pandemic (Figure 9).

Such assistance was more likely to go to vulnerable groups, such as those experiencing high lived poverty (62%, compared to 37% of the economically best-off group) and those with no formal education (62%, vs. 28% of those with post-secondary schooling) (Figure 10). Rural residents were more likely to receive government assistance than urbanites (62% vs. 43%).

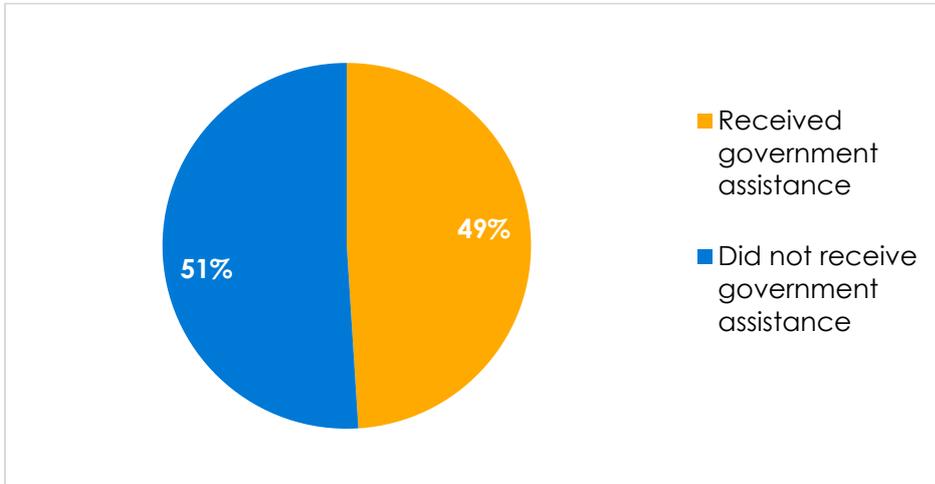
Even so, about half (49%) of respondents say the government distributed its assistance unfairly (Figure 11). Just 9% describe the distribution of relief as fair.

Overall, more than three-fourths (77%) of respondents say the government did "fairly well" or "very well" in managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, although it's worth noting that these data were collected in February 2021, several months before the government introduced its controversial vaccine pass. Most citizens (86%) say the government also did a good job of keeping the public informed about the pandemic (Figure 12).

However, fewer than half (48%) of respondents say they trust official government statistics on COVID-19 cases and deaths "somewhat" or "a lot," while 51% trust these numbers "just a little bit" or "not at all."

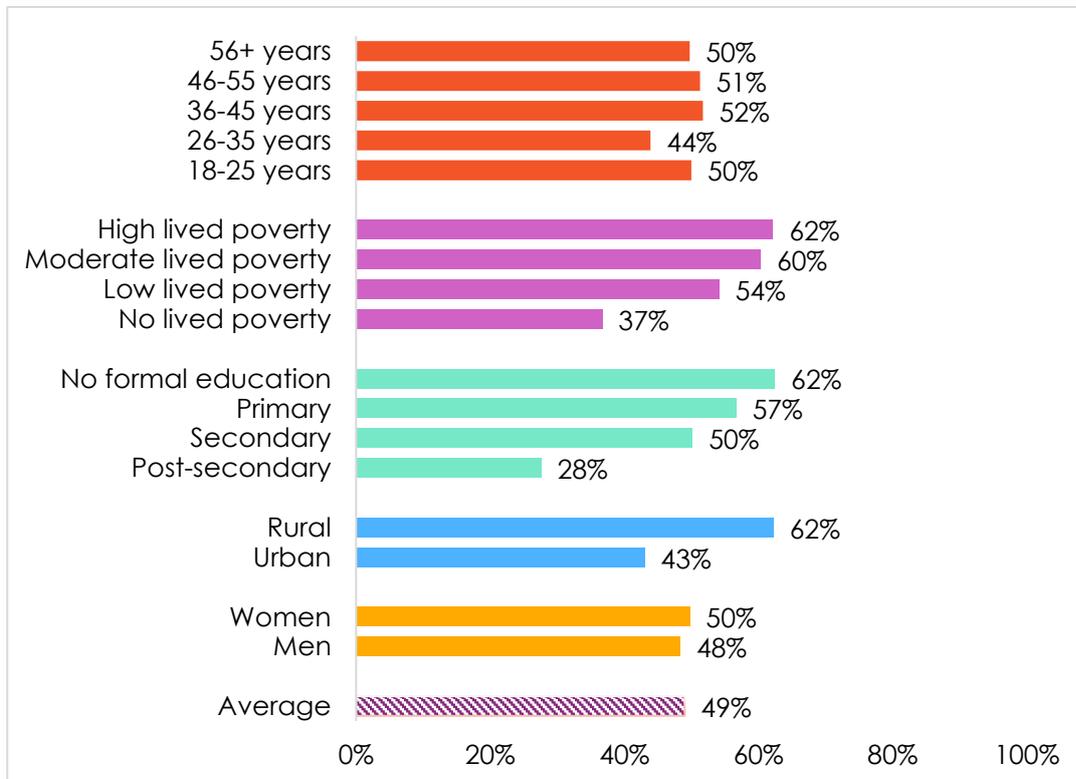
More than six in 10 citizens (62%) also believe that "some" or "a lot" of resources available for combating the pandemic were lost or stolen due to corruption among government officials.

Figure 9: Received government assistance | Morocco | 2021



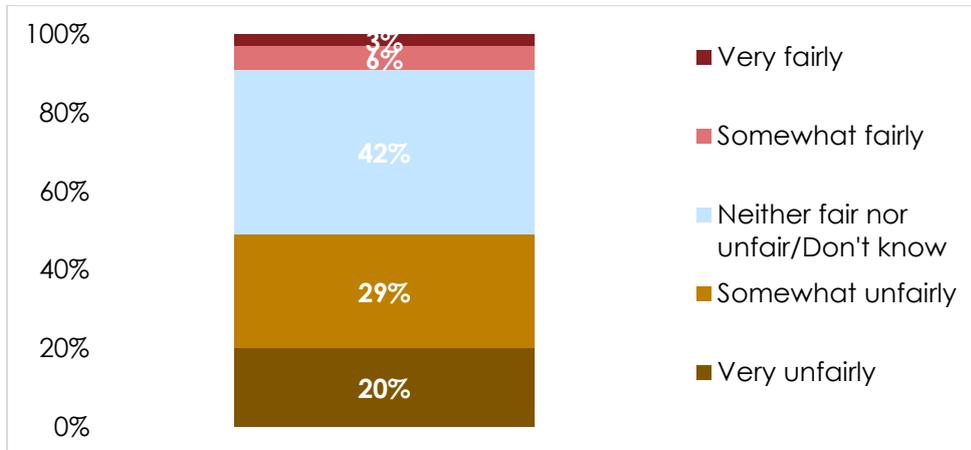
Respondents were asked: Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you or your household received any assistance from government, like food, cash payments, relief from bill payments, or other assistance that you were not normally receiving before the pandemic?

Figure 10: Received government assistance | by socio-demographic group | Morocco | 2021



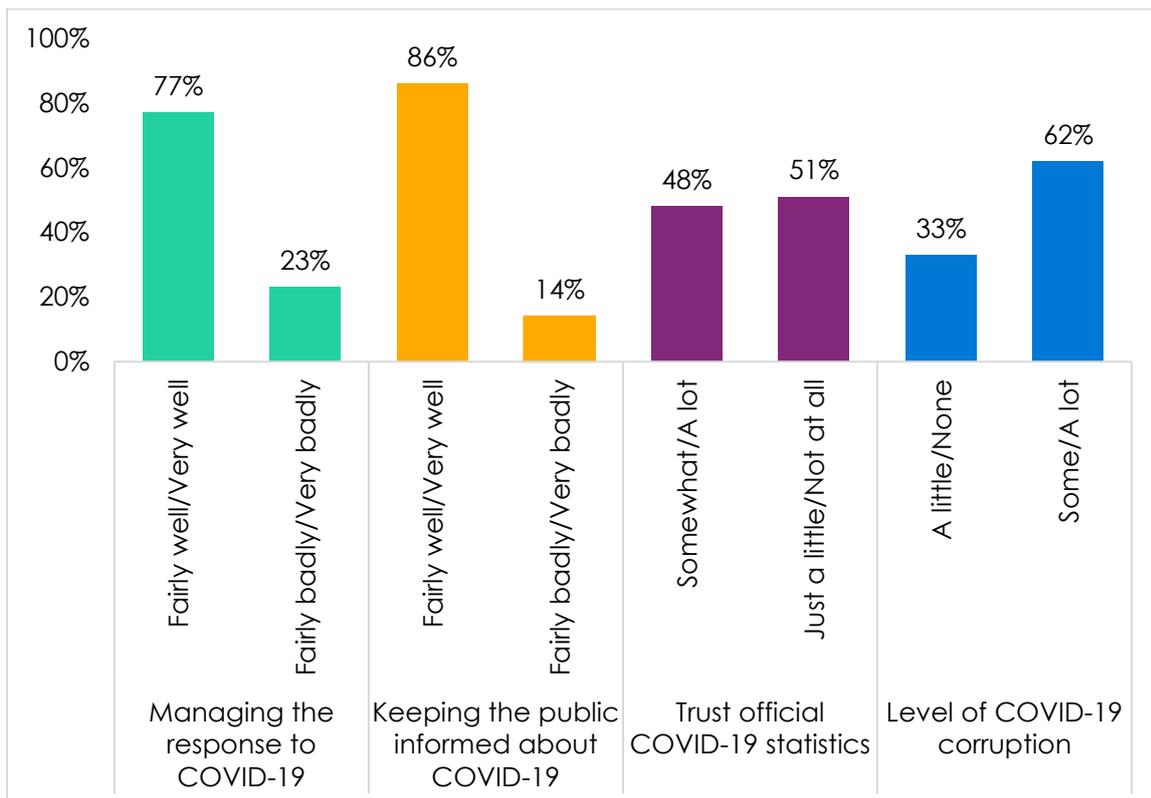
Respondents were asked: Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you or your household received any assistance from government, like food, cash payments, relief from bill payments, or other assistance that you were not normally receiving before the pandemic? (% "yes")

Figure 11: Fairness of government assistance | Morocco | 2021



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 favouring certain groups or regions?

Figure 12: Assessment of government efforts during the pandemic | Morocco | 2021



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?

Vaccines

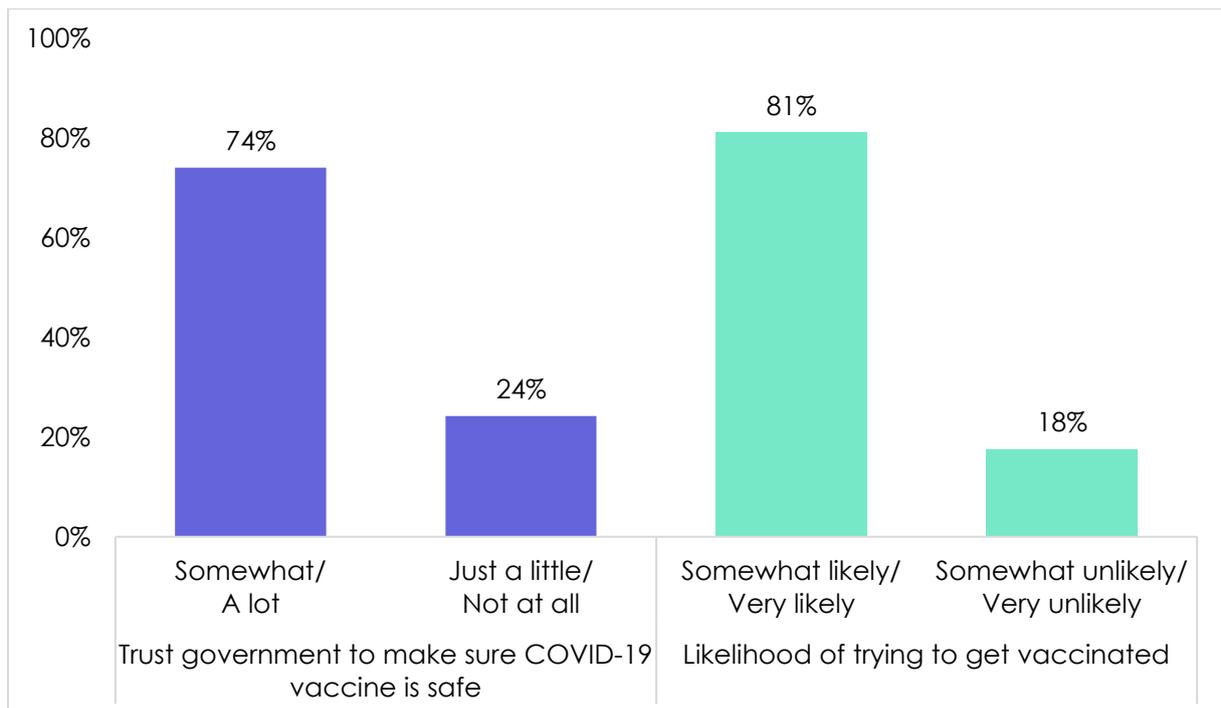
While popular trust in government statistics is fairly weak, three-fourths (74%) of Moroccans say they trust the government to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe before they are used in the country (Figure 13).

And an even larger majority (81%) say they are “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to try to get vaccinated. Only two in 10 citizens (18%) report that they are “somewhat unlikely” or “very unlikely” to do so.

Rural residents (88%) and women (84%) are more likely than urbanites and men (both 78%) to say they’ll try to get vaccinated (Figure 14). Willingness to get vaccinated increases with age and wealth, but not with education: Respondents with no formal education (90%) are more likely to say they’ll take the shot than their more educated counterparts (77%-81%).

Despite their strong endorsement of vaccines, more than half (53%) of respondents consider prayer to be more effective than a vaccine in preventing COVID-19 infection, including 25% who think prayer is “much more effective” (Figure 15). Only 31% believe that vaccines are more effective than prayer.

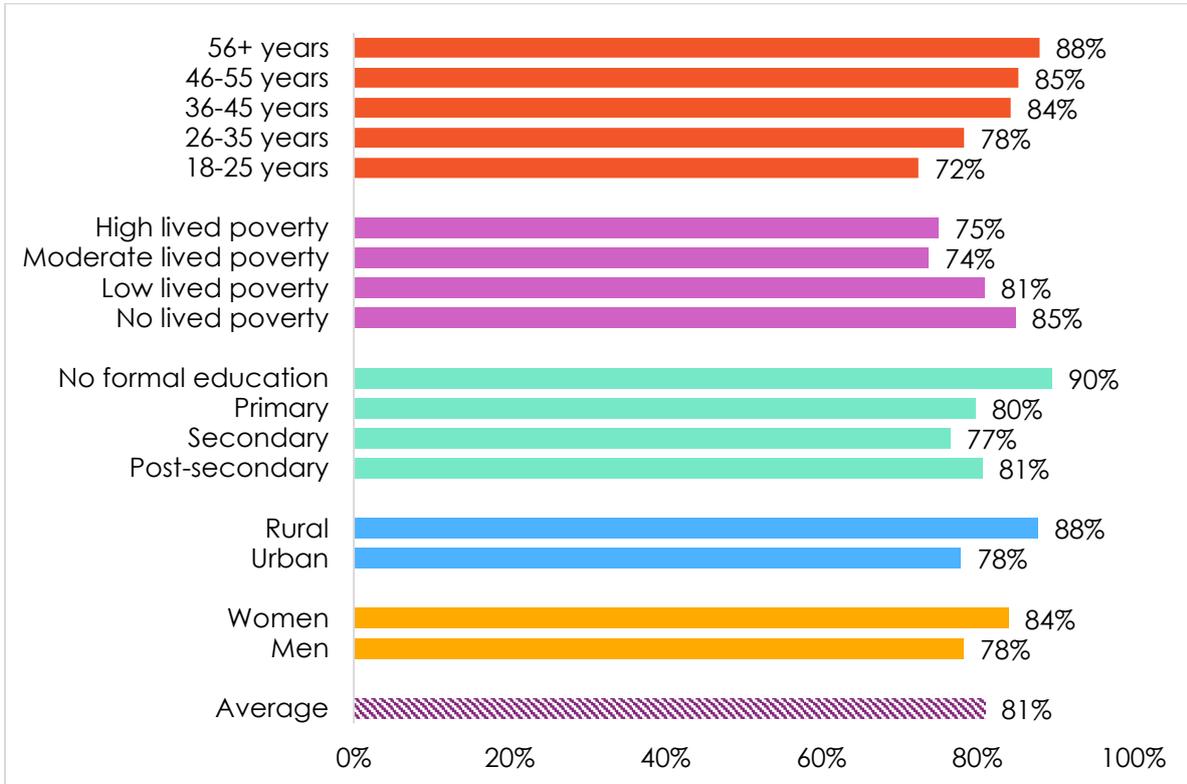
Figure 13: Attitudes toward COVID-19 vaccines | Morocco | 2021



Respondents were asked:

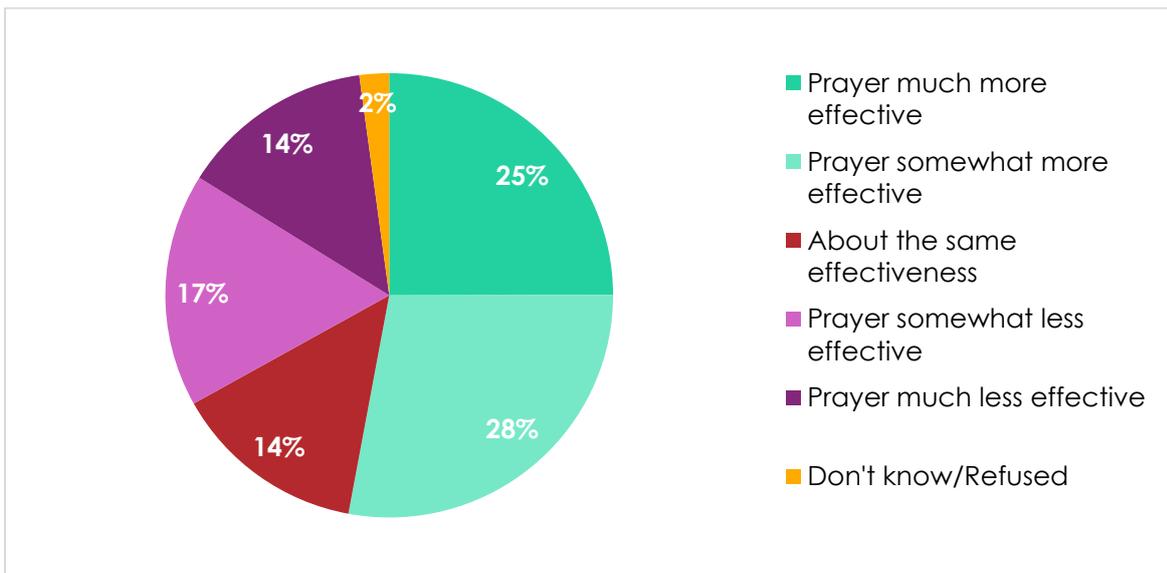
*How much do you trust the government to ensure that any vaccine for COVID-19 that is developed or offered to [Moroccan] citizens is safe before it is used in this country?
 If a vaccine for COVID-19 becomes available and the government says it is safe, how likely are you to try to get vaccinated?*

Figure 14: Likely to try to get vaccinated | by socio-demographic group | Morocco | 2021



Respondents were asked: *If a vaccine for COVID-19 becomes available and the government says it is safe, how likely are you to try to get vaccinated? (% who say "somewhat likely" or "very likely")*

Figure 15: Prayer vs. vaccine: Which is more effective against COVID-19? | Morocco | 2021

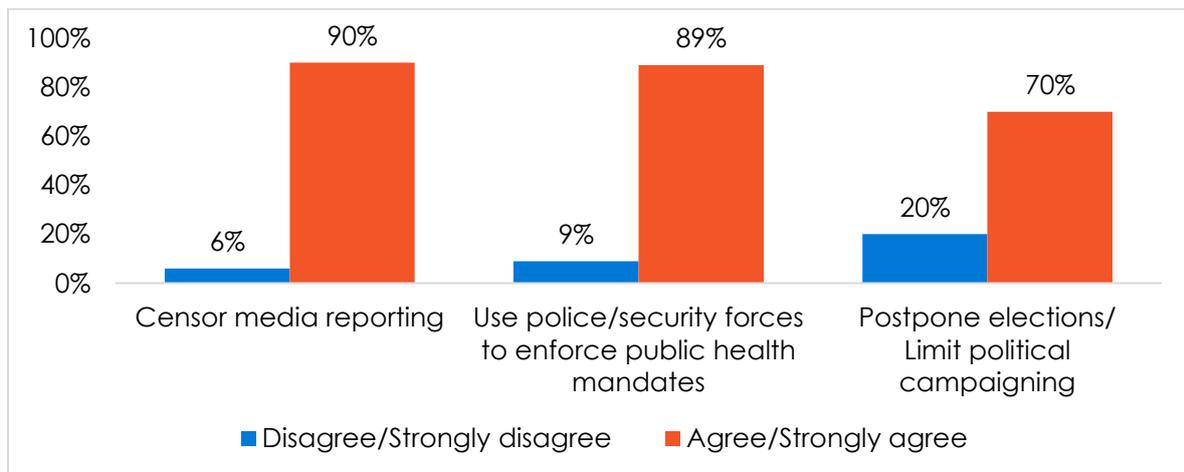


Respondents were asked: *Some people think that prayer is an effective way to alter events in the world. Others put more faith in science to solve problems. Some people believe in both. What about you? Do you think that prayer is more effective or less effective than a vaccine would be in preventing COVID-19 infection?*

Restricting freedoms and democracy?

By huge majorities, Moroccans are willing to relinquish some of their freedoms during a health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 16). Nine out of 10 (90%) “agree” or “strongly agree” that the government is justified in censoring media reporting during such a public health crisis. About the same proportion (89%) endorse the use of police or security forces to enforce public health measures, while 70% say that postponing elections and limiting political campaigning are justifiable under such circumstances.

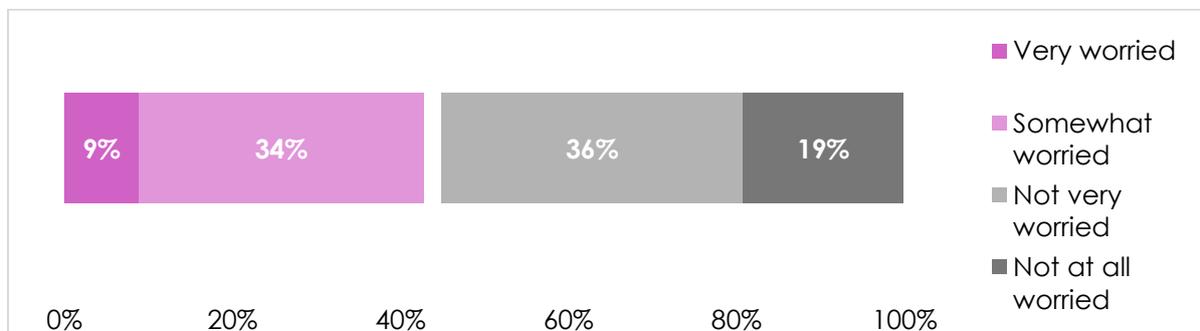
Figure 16: Restrict freedoms during health emergency? | Morocco | 2021



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?

More than four in 10 citizens (43%) say they are “somewhat” or “very” worried that Moroccan politicians might use the pandemic as an opportunity to increase their power and authority, but a majority (55%) express no such concerns (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Worried about politicians’ intentions? | Morocco | 2021



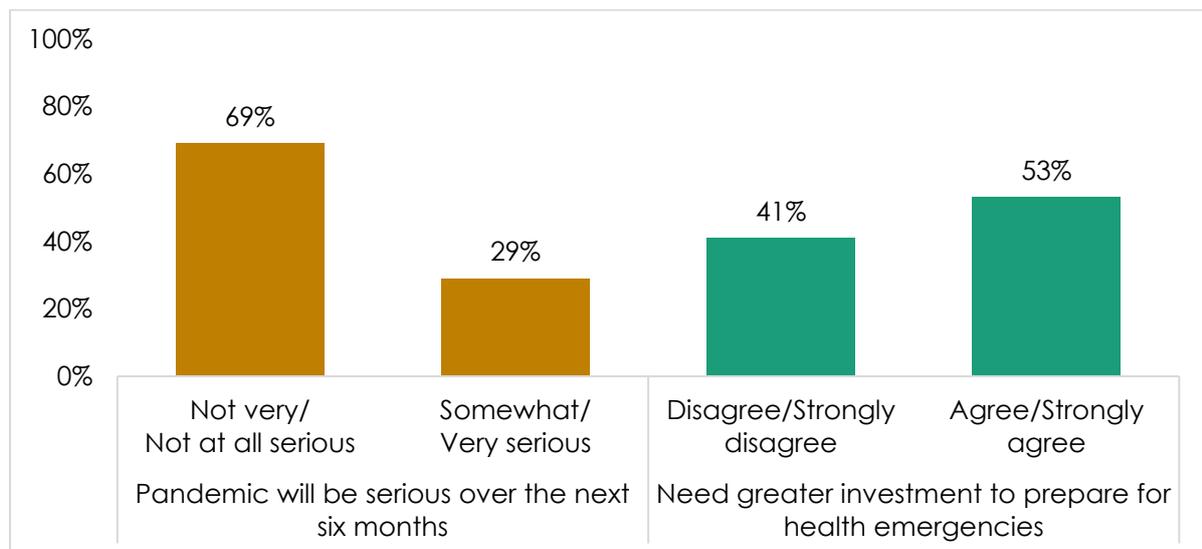
Respondents were asked: In some countries, people have been worried that governments and politicians are trying to take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to increase their wealth or power, or to permanently restrict freedoms or political competition. What about you? How worried are you, if at all, that the following things are taking place or might take place in Morocco: Politicians are using the pandemic as an opportunity to increase their power and authority?

Looking ahead

More than two-thirds (69%) of respondents believe that the COVID-19 pandemic will not be a very serious problem in Morocco over the next six months, while 29% expect it to be “somewhat serious” or “very serious” (Figure 18).

Despite their relatively positive outlook, more than half (53%) of citizens say the government should invest more in preparing to respond to health emergencies like COVID-19, even if it means fewer resources are available for other health services.

Figure 18: Future impacts of COVID-19 | Morocco | 2021



Respondents were asked:

Looking ahead, how serious of a problem do you think the COVID-19 pandemic will be for Morocco over the next six months?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Our government needs to invest more of our health resources in special preparations to respond to health emergencies like COVID-19, even if it means fewer resources are available for other health services.

Conclusion

Unlike many African countries, Morocco has a solidly vaccine-ready population. As of early this year, Moroccans were also largely satisfied with their government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, although the effect of the new vaccine passport on this assessment is unknown.

They endorse the pandemic lockdown and school closures as necessary steps, although many say the distribution of COVID-19 relief was unfair and believe that at least some resources intended for the pandemic response were lost to government corruption.

Despite an optimistic outlook on the future, a majority believe that the government needs to invest more in preparation for health emergencies.

Do your own analysis of Afrobarometer data – on any question,
 for any country and survey round. It's easy and free at
www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis.

References

- Associated Press. (2021). Moroccans protest vaccine pass required for work, travel. 31 October.
- BBC. (2021). Coronavirus: Suivi en direct des cas en Afrique à partir du 11-08-2021 20:33 GMT.
- Delorme, A.-C. (2021). Voyage au Maroc : Covid-19, vaccin, tests... Ce qu'il faut savoir. Voyage. 29 October.
- Institut Montaigne. (2020). Coronavirus et Afrique - Le Maroc, un modèle de gestion de la crise ? 15 May.
- International Organization for Migration. (2020). IOM Morocco: Report No. 4 COVID-19.
- Le Monde. (2020). Covid-19 : Le Maroc instaure un couvre-feu pour trois semaines. 22 December.
- Mahmoud, M. (2021). "Non au pass vaccinal" : De la rue au Parlement, levée de boucliers dès le premier week-end d'application. Telquel. 25 October.
- Maroc.ma. (2021). Le ministre de la santé: Covid-19... Le Maroc est passé au niveau vert grâce à l'amélioration de la situation épidémiologique. 29 October.
- WHO (World Health Organization). (2021). WHO coronavirus disease (COVID-19) dashboard.

Maame Akua Amoah Twum is Afrobarometer communications coordinator for anglophone West and North Africa. Email: maameakua@afrobarometer.org.

Lionel Ossé is Afrobarometer assistant project manager for anglophone West Africa and North Africa. Email: lessima@afrobarometer.org.

Afrobarometer, a nonprofit corporation with headquarters in Ghana, is a pan-African, non-partisan research network. Regional coordination of national partners in about 35 countries is provided by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in South Africa, and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Cape Town (UCT) provide technical support to the network.

Financial support for Afrobarometer Round 8 has been provided by Sweden via the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) via the U.S. Institute of Peace, the National Endowment for Democracy, the European Union Delegation to the African Union, Freedom House, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Uganda, GIZ, and Humanity United.

Donations help Afrobarometer give voice to African citizens. Please consider making a contribution (at www.afrobarometer.org) or contact Bruno van Dyk (bruno.v.dyk@afrobarometer.org) to discuss institutional funding.

Follow our releases on #VoicesAfrica.



Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 490 | 16 November 2021