

Despite doubts about government response to COVID-19, majority of Mozambicans want vaccination

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 496 | Sibusiso Nkomo

Summary

As of early December 2021, Mozambique has recorded 152,120 COVID-19 infections and 1,941 COVID-19 deaths since the pandemic began (Africa Centers for Disease Control, 2021).

The government declared a state of emergency from March to September 2020 and mandated a temporary lockdown. Some restrictions on movement and gatherings continue under a state of public calamity (U.S. Embassy Mozambique, 2021).

The government also promised measures to support businesses and vulnerable families, but critics say funds have not benefited small and medium-size enterprises or poor households (Centro para Democracia e Desenvolvimento Mozambique, 2020).

Mozambique has administered about 10.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines, or enough to fully vaccinate about 18% of the country's population (Reuters, 2021; World Health Organization, 2021).

A new Afrobarometer survey in Mozambique shows that most citizens are aware of COVID-19, and a majority approve of the government's overall response to the pandemic. But majorities also say that government assistance was distributed unfairly, that some officials steal resources intended for pandemic relief, that official COVID-19 statistics are unreliable, and that they don't trust the government to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe.

Even so, a majority of Mozambicans say they are likely to try to get vaccinated.

Citizens indicate a willingness to accept certain restrictions on their freedoms during a health emergency, including the use of the police and armed forces to ensure compliance with public health mandates and the postponement of elections.

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 Mozambique, led by Ipsos Mozambique, interviewed a sample of 1,200 adult Mozambicans between 3 May and 19 July 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 have been conducted in Mozambique in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, and 2018.

The weighted Mozambique Round 8 sample is nationally representative except that it excludes rural Cabo Delgado, comprising about 6.3% of the adult population of Mozambique. Insecurity in the area and resulting difficulties in obtaining necessary fieldwork clearances prevented Afrobarometer from collecting sufficient data in this area

Key findings

- Nearly eight in 10 Mozambicans (78%) say they are “somewhat well” or “very well” informed about the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Almost one-fourth (23%) of citizens say someone in their household lost a primary source of income because of the pandemic. Loss of an income source was about twice as common in cities (33%) as in rural areas (17%).
 - Fewer citizens (3%) report that a household member became ill with COVID-19.
- Six in 10 Mozambicans (60%) say they support the government’s decision to close schools to limit the spread of COVID-19. But 82% say the schools should have reopened sooner.
- Two-thirds (66%) of Mozambicans say their household needed government assistance to deal with the pandemic, but only 7% say they received such assistance.
 - Nearly seven in 10 (69%) say they the government’s assistance was distributed unfairly.
 - More than half (52%) believe that “some” or “a lot” of the resources intended for the pandemic response were lost to government corruption.
- A majority (56%) of citizens say the government has performed “fairly well” or “very well” in managing the pandemic.
- Fewer than half (45%) say they trust the government “somewhat” or “a lot” to make sure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe.
 - Still, about six in 10 (59%) say they are “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to try to get vaccinated.
- A majority of Mozambicans say that when the country faces a health emergency like COVID-19, the government is justified in using the police or armed forces to enforce public health measures (67%) and in postponing elections or limiting political campaigns (56%).
 - But they are almost evenly split as to whether a pandemic justifies censoring the media.
- Seven in 10 citizens (71%) say they are worried about politicians using the pandemic as an opportunity to increase their power.
- Looking ahead, about six in 10 (62%) say the government should invest more resources in preparing for future health emergencies.

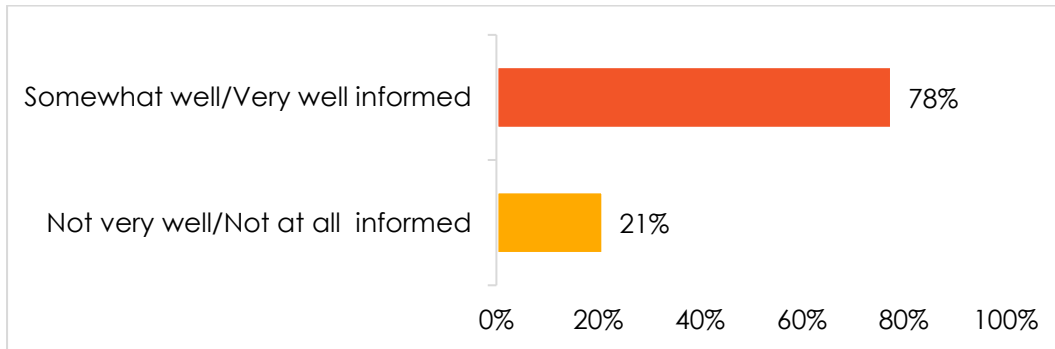
Awareness

Almost eight in 10 Mozambicans (78%) say they are well informed about COVID-19 and efforts to combat it (Figure 1).

Awareness of COVID-19 increases with respondents’ economic status and education level, reaching 88% among those with secondary or post-secondary qualifications (Figure 2). Urban

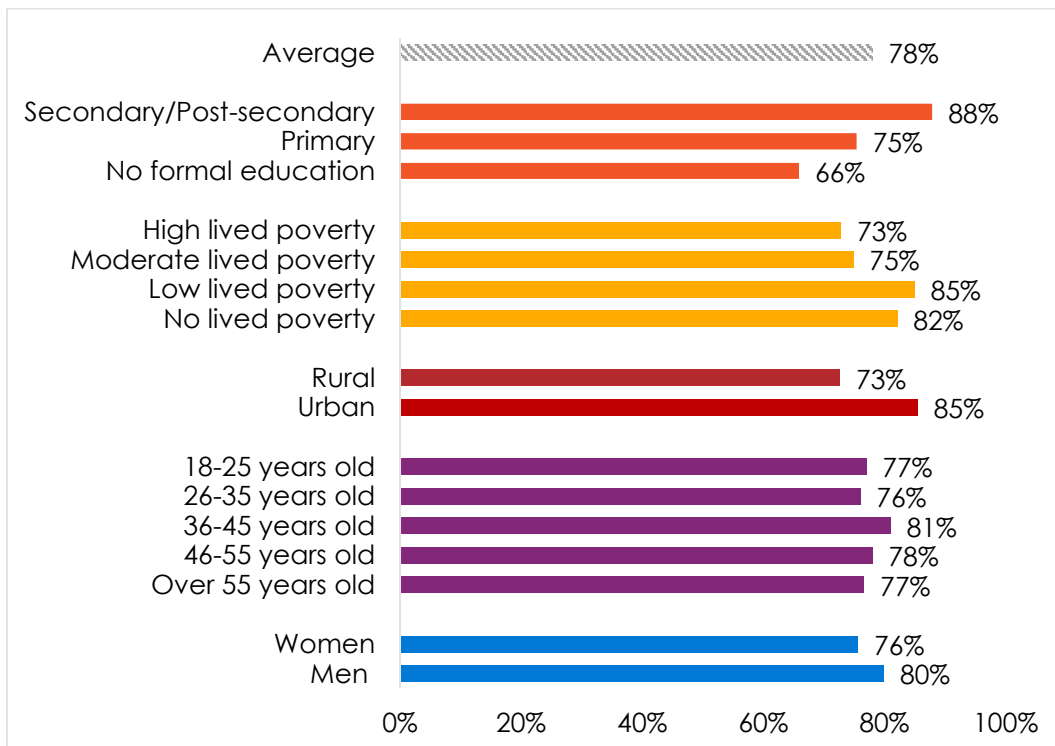
residents (85%) are more likely to be well informed about the pandemic than their rural counterparts (73%).

Figure 1: Awareness of COVID-19 | Mozambique | 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 | Mozambique | 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)

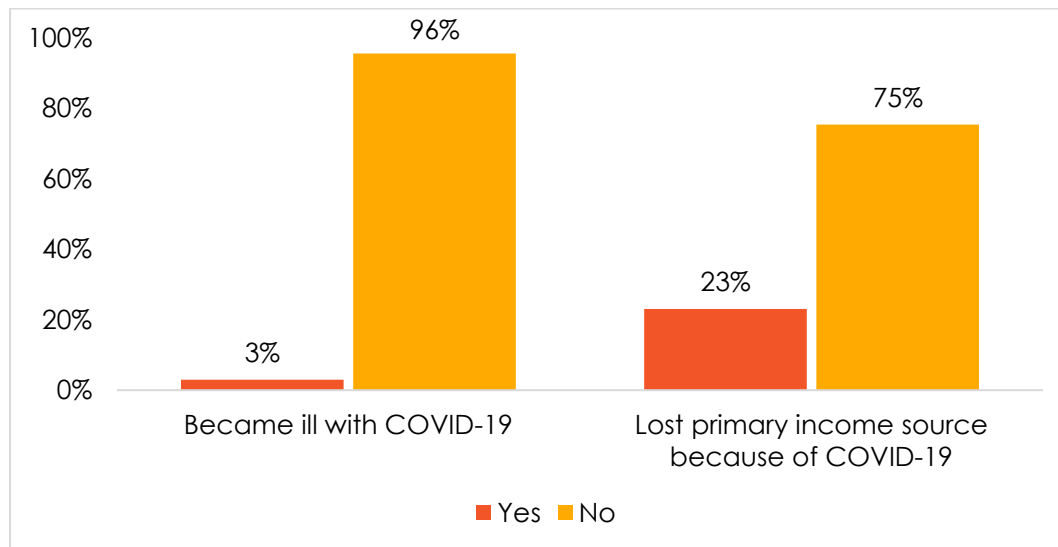
Impact

Almost one in four Mozambicans (23%) say they or a family member lost a job, business, or primary income source because of the pandemic. Far fewer (3%) report a household member becoming ill with COVID-19 (Figure 3).

Loss of an income source was about twice as likely in cities as in rural areas (33% vs. 17%) (Figure 4). The economically worst off (19%) and best off (11%) are less likely to have suffered

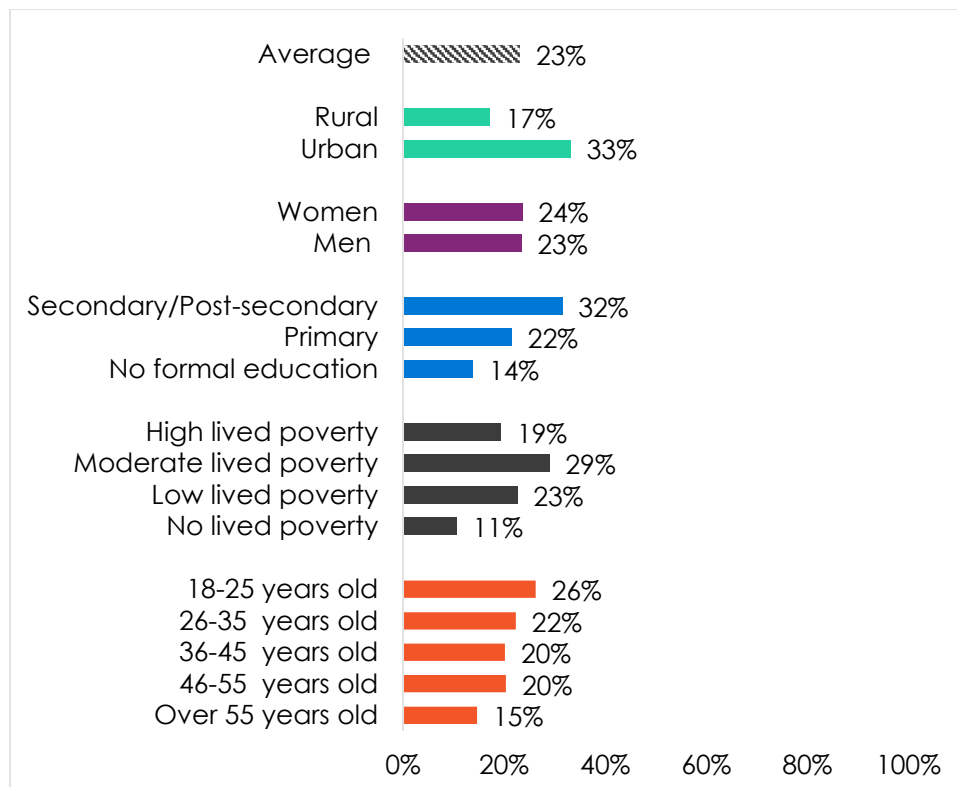
this financial blow than those in the middle brackets (23%-29%). But loss of a major income source hit the most educated (32%) harder than those with less schooling (14%-22%).

Figure 3: Impacts of the pandemic | Mozambique | 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 | Mozambique | 2021

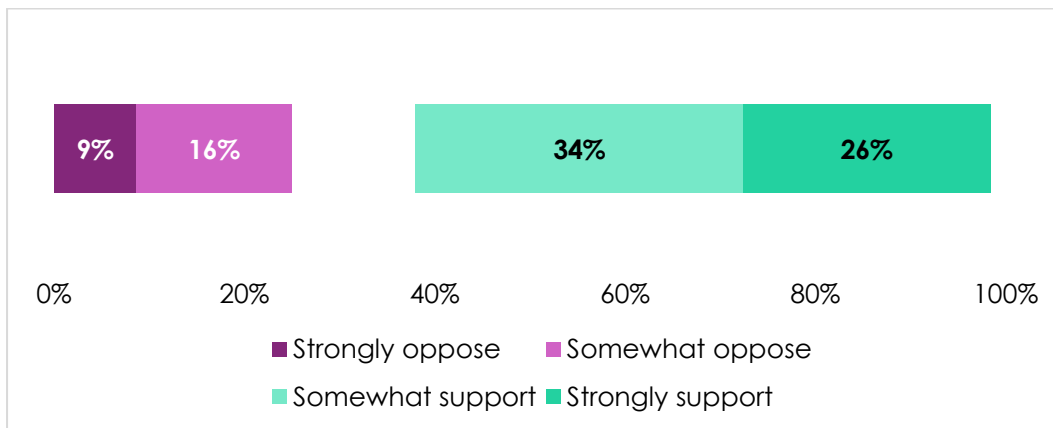


Respondents were asked: Please tell me if you personally or any other member of your household have been affected in any of the following ways by the COVID-19 pandemic: Temporarily or permanently lost a job, business or primary source of income? (% "yes")

School closures

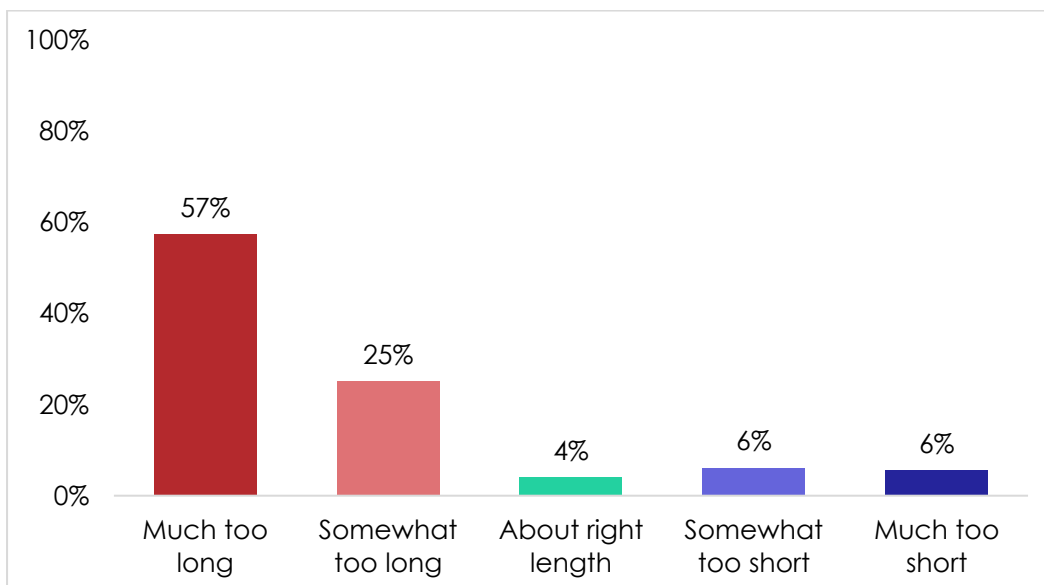
Six in 10 Mozambicans (60%) endorse the government's decision to close schools in an effort to limit the spread of COVID-19 (Figure 5). But 82% say the schools should have reopened sooner (Figure 6).

Figure 5: Support for school closures | Mozambique | 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 6: Length of school closures | Mozambique | 2021



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

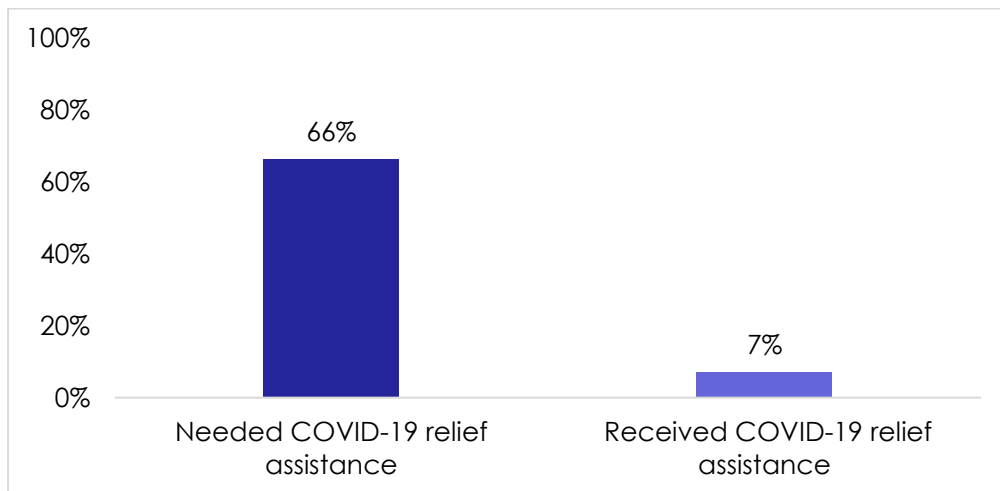
Government assistance and performance

Two-thirds (66%) of Mozambicans say their household needed assistance from the government during the pandemic, but only 7% say they received such assistance (Figure 7).

Urban residents (11%) are more likely than rural dwellers (5%) to report having received special government assistance. Among the poorest respondents, only 3% say they received assistance (Figure 8).

More than two-thirds (69%) of citizens say government assistance was not distributed fairly (Figure 9).

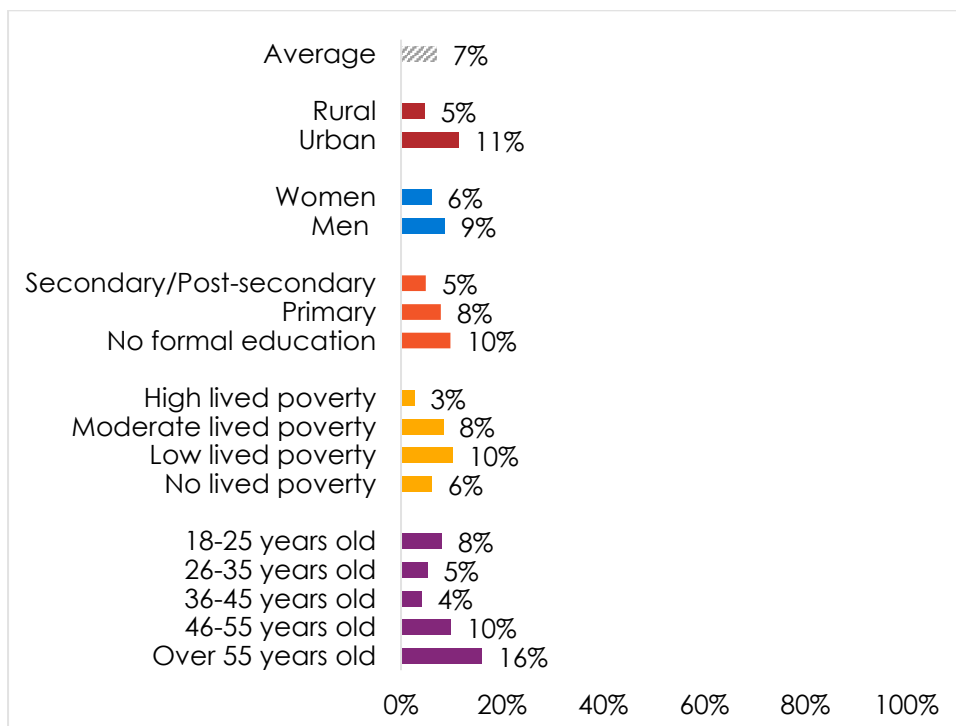
Figure 7: Received and required government assistance | Mozambique | 2021



Respondents were asked:

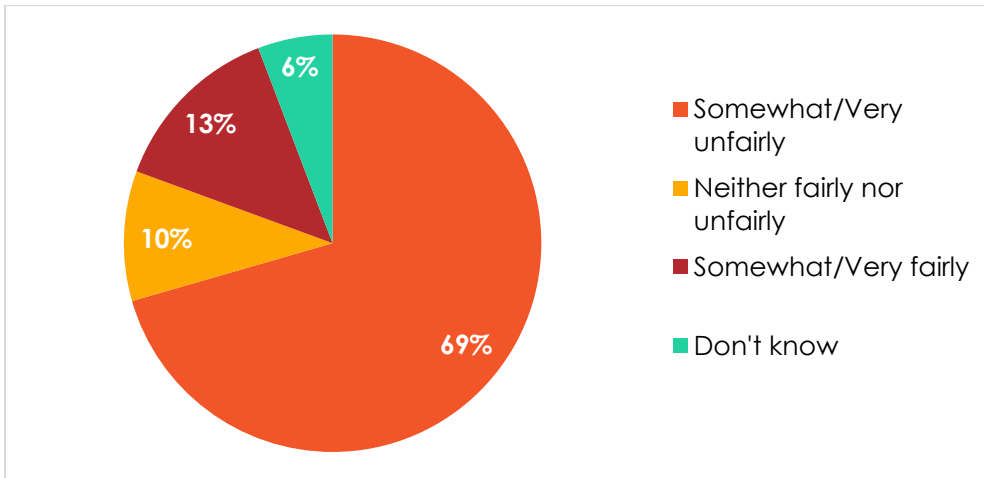
Did you or your household require any assistance from the government during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you or your household received any assistance from the government, like food, cash payments, relief from bill payments, or other assistance that you were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

Figure 8: Received government assistance | by socio-demographic group | Mozambique | 2021



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

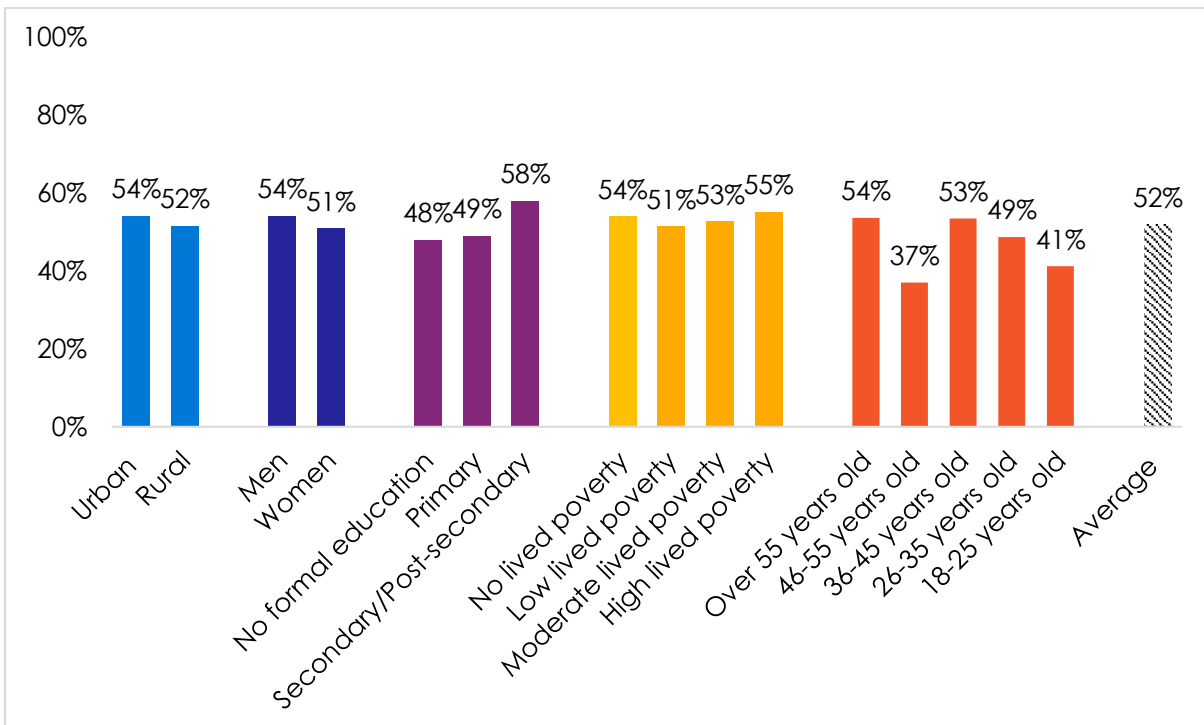
Figure 9: Fairness of government assistance | Mozambique | 2021



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?

In addition to widespread perceptions of unfairness in the distribution of assistance, more than half (52%) of Mozambicans believe that "some" or "a lot" of the resources intended for the pandemic response were lost or stolen due to corruption among government officials. This view is particularly common among citizens with secondary or post-secondary education (58%) (Figure 10).

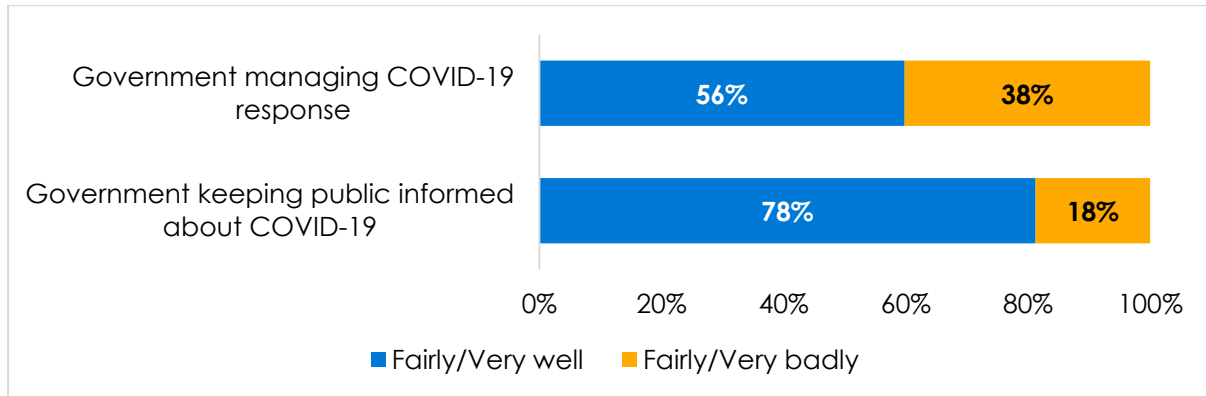
Figure 10: Loss of COVID-19 funds to corruption | Mozambique | 2021



Respondents were asked: Considering all of the funds and resources that were available to the government for combating and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, how much do you think was lost or stolen due to corruption among government officials? (% who say "some" or "a lot")

Overall, however, a majority (56%) of citizens say the government has performed “fairly well” or “very well” in managing the response to the pandemic. And nearly eight in 10 (78%) say it has done a good job of keeping the public informed about the pandemic (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Assessment of government handling of the pandemic | Mozambique | 2021

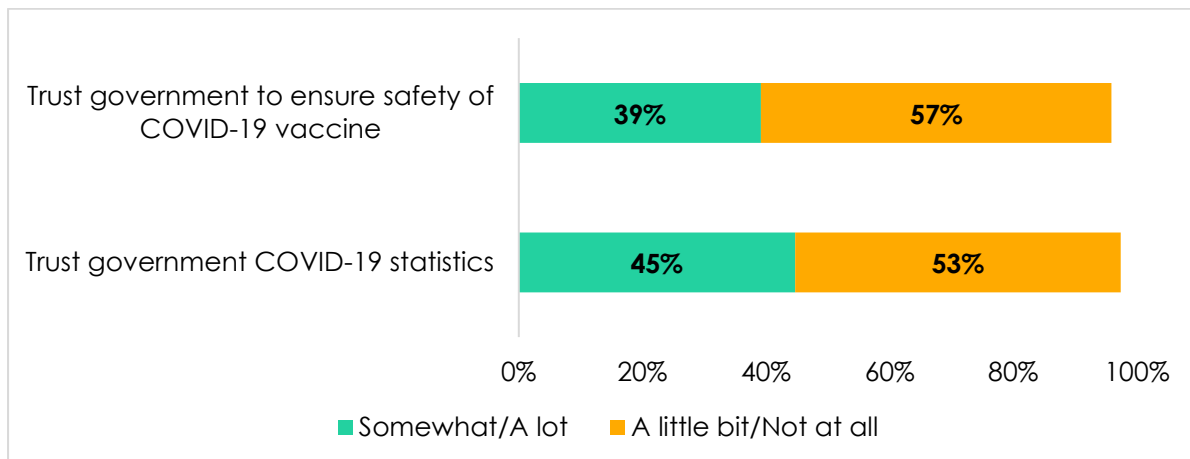


Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government has handled the following matters since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, or haven't you heard enough to say: Managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic? Keeping the public informed about COVID-19?

Trust in government and views on vaccines

Even though the government wins praise for keeping the public informed about the pandemic, only minorities say they trust the government “somewhat” or “a lot” to provide accurate statistics on the number of infections and deaths due to COVID (45%) and to ensure the safety of COVID-19 vaccines (39%) (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Trust of government efforts during the pandemic | Mozambique | 2021



Respondents were asked:

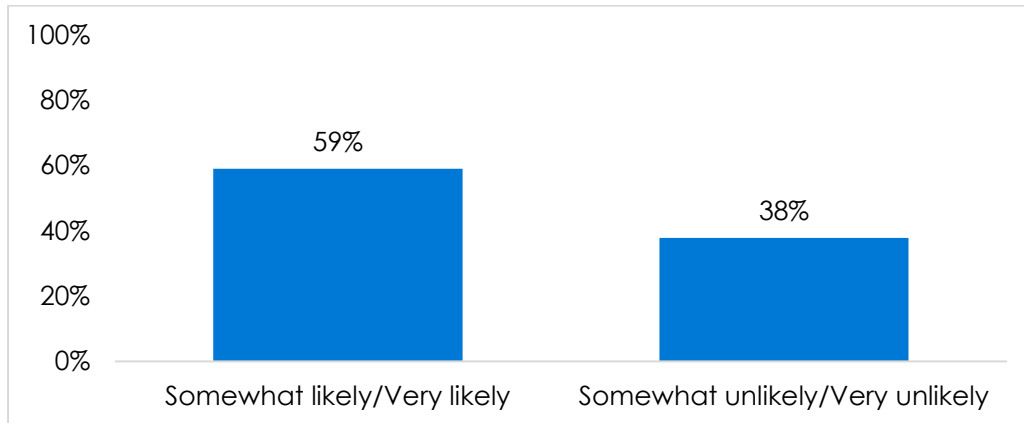
How much do you trust the official statistics provided by government on the number of infections and deaths due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

How much do you trust the government to ensure that any vaccine for COVID-19 that is developed or offered to Mozambican citizens is safe before it is used in this country?

Despite this mistrust, about six in 10 Mozambicans (59%) say they are “somewhat likely” or “very likely” to try to get vaccinated against COVID-19, while 38% say they “somewhat unlikely” or “very unlikely” to do so (Figure 13).

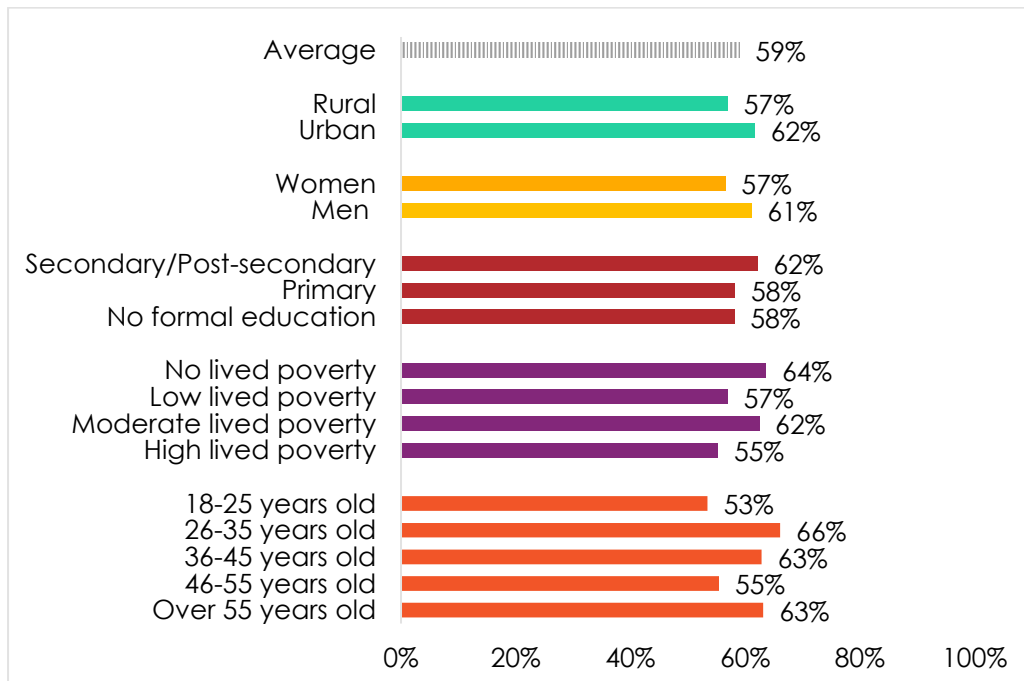
Respondents with secondary or post-secondary education are more likely to express a willingness to be vaccinated (62%, compared to 58% of those with less schooling) (Figure 14). The youngest respondents (53% of those aged 18-25) are the least likely age cohort to say they're likely to try to get the vaccine. Urban residents (62%) and men (61%) are somewhat more willing to be vaccinated than rural residents and women (57% each).

Figure 13: Likelihood of trying to get vaccinated against COVID-19 | Mozambique | 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?*

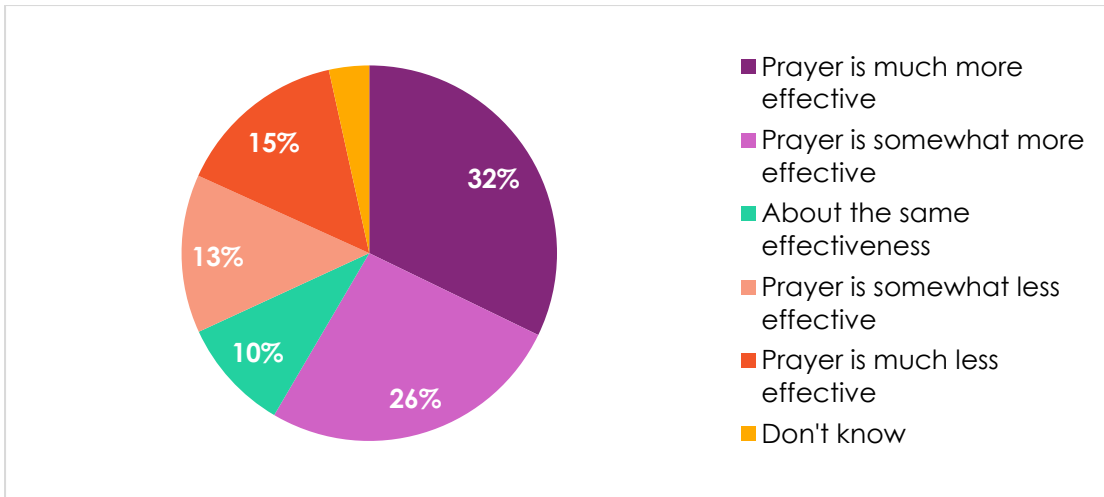
Figure 14: Likely to try to get vaccinated | by socio-demographic group | Mozambique | 2021



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")*

Almost six in ten respondents (58%) say they believe that prayer is "somewhat" or "much" more effective than a vaccine in preventing COVID-19 infection (Figure 15).

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

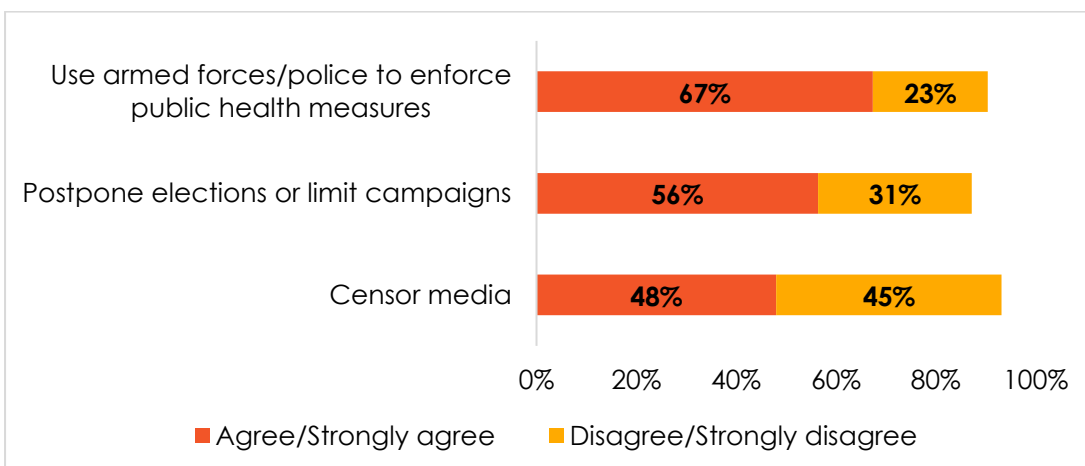


Respondents were asked: Some people think that prayer is an effective way to alter events in the world. Others put more faith in science to solve problems. Some people believe in both. What about you? Do you think that prayer is more effective or less effective than a vaccine would be in preventing COVID-19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

Restricting freedoms and democracy?

A majority of Mozambicans are willing to give up certain rights when the country is facing a health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 16). Two-thirds (67%) say that under such circumstances, the government is justified in using the police or armed forces to enforce public health measures. And a smaller majority (56%) endorse postponing elections or limiting electoral campaigning during a health crisis. But respondents are divided as to whether media censorship is justified during a health emergency: 48% say yes, 45% say no.

Figure 16: Restrict freedoms during health emergency? | Mozambique | 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:

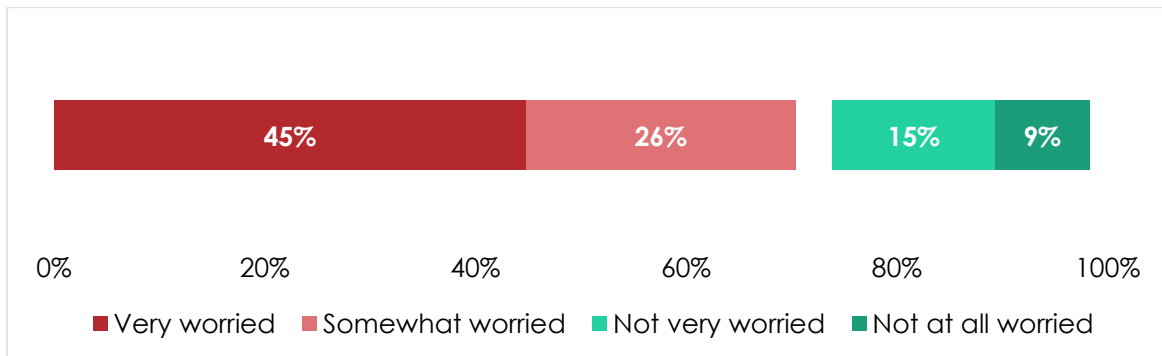
Censoring media reporting?

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?

Though willing to accept some restrictions on their rights during a health emergency, seven in 10 citizens (71%) also say they are "somewhat" or "very" worried that politicians are using or might use the pandemic as an opportunity to increase their power and authority (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Worried about politicians' intentions? | Mozambique | 2021



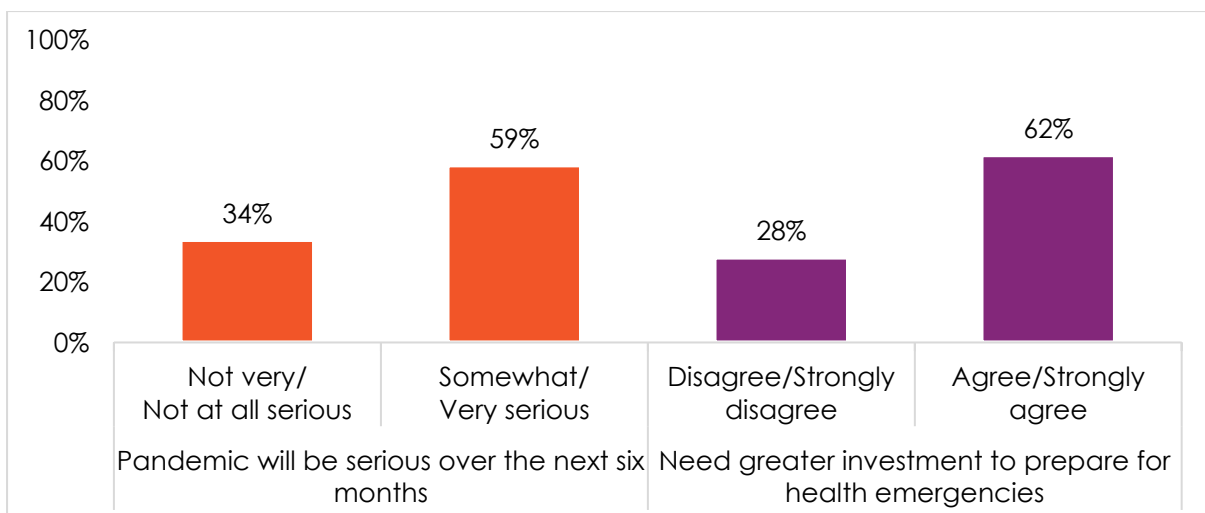
Respondents were asked: In some countries, people have been worried that governments and politicians are trying to take advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to increase their wealth or power, or to permanently restrict freedoms or political competition. What about you? How worried are you, if at all, that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

Looking ahead

Looking at what lies ahead, about six in 10 Mozambicans (59%) expect that the pandemic will be a "somewhat serious" or "very serious" problem for the country over the next six months (Figure 18).

And a similar majority (62%) say the government should invest more resources in special preparations to respond to health emergencies like COVID-19, even if it means fewer resources will be available for other health services.

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



Respondents were asked:

Looking ahead, how serious of a problem do you think the COVID-19 pandemic will be for Mozambique 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

Mozambicans are well aware of COVID-19. Many have felt its impact through the loss of income, and few report receiving government assistance to weather the pandemic.

Overall, a majority credit the government with a well-managed response to the pandemic, but majorities also point to shortcomings, including unfair distribution of assistance, corruption, unreliable COVID-19 statistics, and an inability to ensure the safety of COVID-19 vaccines.

A majority say they are likely to try to get vaccinated, but almost four in 10 citizens say they are not.

During a health emergency like COVID-19, Mozambicans are largely willing to accept the use of the police and armed forces to ensure compliance with public health measures, and think the government is justified in postponing elections and limiting political campaigning. But they are also worried about politicians' use of the pandemic as an opportunity to increase their powers.

A majority say the government should invest more to prepare for future health emergencies.

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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.

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