COVID-19, NHI and healthcare in South Africa

Findings from Afrobarometer 2021 survey in South Africa
**At a glance**

- **Government’s response to COVID-19:** Most South Africans agree that lockdown regulations and school closures were necessary, but it was difficult to comply with these restrictions.

- **Covid-19 vaccination:** A small majority of South Africans (54%) say they are either somewhat (12%) or very (42%) unlikely to get vaccinated.

- **National Health Insurance:** More than two-thirds of South Africans (69%) believe the government would be justified to increase taxes to fund the NHI.
What is Afrobarometer?

A pan-African, non-partisan, non-profit research network that measures citizen attitudes on democracy and governance, the economy, civil society, and other topics.


Goal: To give the public a voice in policymaking by providing high-quality public opinion data to policymakers, policy advocates, civil society organizations, academics, news media, donors and investors, and ordinary Africans.

A national partner in each country conducts the survey. In South Africa, the national partner is the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation.
Where Afrobarometer works
Methodology

Nationally representative sample of adult citizens

- All respondents are randomly selected.
- Sample is distributed across regions/states/provinces and urban/rural areas in proportion to their share in the national population.
- Every adult citizen has an equal chance of being selected.

Face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent’s choice.

Standard questionnaire allows comparisons across countries and over time.

Sample size in South Africa of 1,600 adult citizens yields a margin of error of +/-2.5 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

Fieldwork for Round 8 in South Africa was conducted between 2 May and 10 June 2021
## Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>52%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North West</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No formal education</th>
<th>3%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>69%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results
Awareness of Covid-19
Awareness of COVID-19 | South Africa | 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? (Due to rounding, totals for combined categories may differ by 1 percentage point from the sum of sub-categories (e.g. 51% “very well informed” + 25% “somewhat well informed” combine to 77% “well informed.”)
Impacts of COVID-19 | South Africa | 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?

- 19% became ill with COVID-19
- 34% lost income due to COVID-19
Effects of national lockdown
Support for lockdown | South Africa | 2021

Agree/Strongly agree that lockdown/curfew restrictions were necessary: 80%
Disagree/Strongly disagree: 13%
Neither/Don't know: 7%

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

- Somewhat/Strongly support closing schools: 72%
- Somewhat/Strongly oppose: 23%
- Neither/Don't know: 5%
Limiting democratic rights during pandemic | South Africa | 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?
Government assistance and performance
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?
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?
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?
Assessment of government response to COVID-19 | South Africa | 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?

Respondents' opinions were categorized into 'Fairly badly/Very badly' and 'Fairly well/Very well'.

Managing COVID-19 response: 64% felt fairly well/very well, 31% felt fairly badly/very badly.

Keeping public informed about COVID-19: 78% felt fairly well/very well, 19% felt fairly badly/very badly.
Respondents were asked: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: Even if the lockdown or curfew has negative impacts on the economy and people’s livelihoods, it was necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19?
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?
Covid-19 vaccines
Respondents were asked: How much do you trust the government to ensure that any vaccine for COVID-19 that is developed or offered to South African citizens is safe before it is used in this country?
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?
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”)
Is prayer more effective than COVID-19 vaccine? | South Africa | 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?
National Health Insurance
Covered by health insurance | South Africa | 2021

Respondents were asked: Are you currently covered by any kind of health insurance or some other kind of health care plan?

75% No, 24% Yes.
Respondents were asked: If no, there are many reasons that people do not have health insurance coverage. Would you say that you are currently uninsured because...

- Available options are too expensive: 45%
- You cannot find a plan that meets your needs: 8%
- You do not need or want coverage: 7%
- None of the above: 6%
- You do not know how to sign up: 5%
- Don’t know: 4%

Respondents were asked: If no, there are many reasons that people do not have health insurance coverage. Would you say that you are currently uninsured because...
Respondents were asked: When you need medical assistance, do you predominantly use public or private healthcare facilities? Which option do you use the most frequently?
Respondents were asked: Are you happy with the level of care you receive in [public or private] healthcare facilities?
Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree. The quality of healthcare should be based on what one can afford, even if this means people having different quality of services.
Government justified to levy taxes for NHI | South Africa | 2021

Respondents were asked: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree. Government would be justified to levy additional taxes to fund the National Health Insurance, in order to provide better quality healthcare services for all.
Conclusions
Conclusions

- Most South Africans believe that they are well informed about COVID-19 and that the government is handling the response to the pandemic well.

- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of South Africans say the lockdown restrictions were difficult to comply with and 72% believe schools were closed for too long. But most respondents agree these were necessary restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19.

- Three in ten South Africans received government assistance for the first time since March 2020, but most respondents believe that assistance was unfairly distributed and a lot of funds were lost to corruption.

- South Africans do not have a high degree of trust in their government to ensure the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine. A small majority report that they are unlikely to get vaccinated.

- A majority of South Africans believe it would be justified for the government to raise taxes to fund the National Health Insurance to provide better healthcare services for all.
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