

Responding to COVID-19: Highlights of a Survey in CAMEROON

Summary

- Almost all Cameroonians know about COVID-19 and basic understanding about transmission and the importance of regular hand washing is high. However, a sizeable minority seek more information, which may help address some misconceptions on avoidance and ‘cures.’
- Cameroonians’ view on the government’s response to date is ambiguous, but on balance they trust the information it provides on it.
- Cameroonians see the coronavirus as a threat to their country, while a sizeable minority consider themselves at high risk of infection. They are supportive of a wide range of personal and community non-pharmaceutical interventions (PHSMs) to help limit the spread of the coronavirus at this comparatively early stage of its spread in Cameroon.
- Such interventions may be difficult to comply with as current personal supplies of food and cash will not last much beyond one week and many do not have separate rooms at home to isolate those who may become infected. Effective risk management and relief measures are essential to ensure the successful implementation of public health measures.
- National and local TV and radio, along with social media, are the key information sources the public relies on.

Background

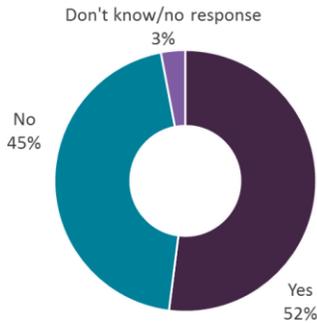
Public health social measures (PHSMs) are an important strategy to delay and reduce the magnitude of COVID-19. PHSMs particularly those that restrict movement or entail the closure of services, can place a significant burden on populations. The effective implementation of PHSMs will require public support and compliance. Hence, this survey was conducted to assess public support for, and the likely social impacts of PHSMs in Cameroon.

Key Findings of the Survey

Awareness of COVID-19 is high - but a sizeable minority seek more information and there is considerable misunderstanding on prevention and ‘cures’

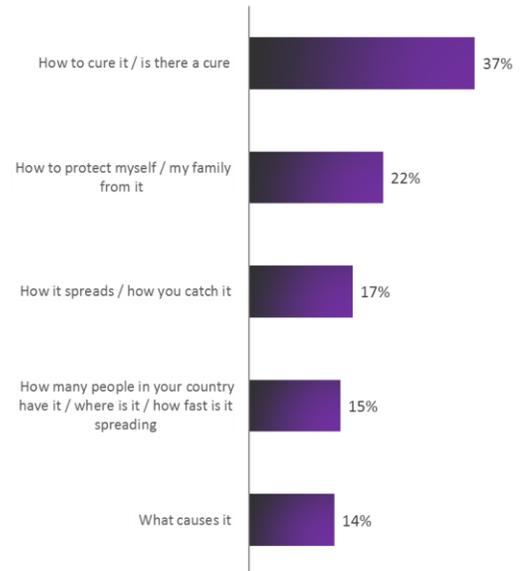
- Almost everyone has heard of COVID-19 (97%). More than four in five spontaneously associate the symptoms with dry cough (86%) or a fever (83%) with seven in ten citing cold/flu like sickness (68%). Nevertheless, almost half (45%) of Cameroonians feel they do not have enough information about it.
- More than a third would like more information on ‘how to cure it/is there a cure’ (37%); roughly one in five would be interested in finding out about ‘how to protect myself/my family from it’ (22%); and/or ‘how it spreads/how you catch it’ (17%).
- Three in five or more believe COVID-19 can be prevented by drinking lemon and Vitamin C (66%) or that hot climate prevents the spread (60%). One in two thinks that it can be cured with garlic (50%); one in five believes that Africans ‘can’t get it’ (22%); and one in 10 that it can be cured by drinking bleach (9%). The belief that ‘Africans can’t it’ increases with age and decreases with rising household income.

Q10. Do you feel you currently have enough information about the coronavirus/Covid-19 situation?



% who feel they have enough information	
Gender:	
Male	55
Female	50
Age:	
18-25 years	50
26-35 years	57
36-45 years	49
46-55 years	54
56 and older	57
Monthly Household Income:	
\$0-100	57
\$101-200	47
\$201-500	55
\$501+	54

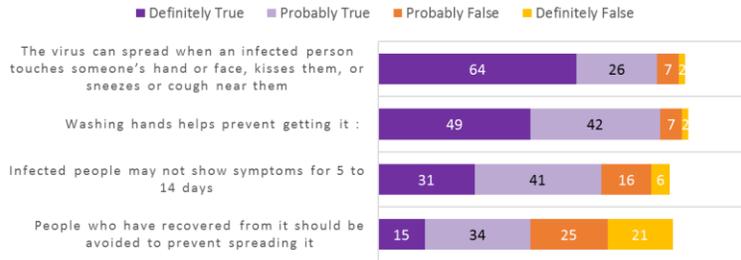
Q11. What are the two things about it that you would like most to have more information about? [Top five mentions]



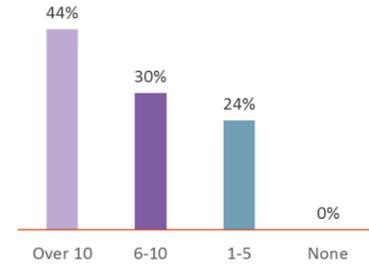
Nevertheless, the basic understanding of close contact transmission and the importance of hand-washing stands high

- Almost all think that washing hands helps prevent getting COVID-19 (91% including 49% ‘definitely true’) and that the virus can be spread by touch, kiss, sneeze, or cough (90%, including 64% thinking this is ‘definitely true’). Half (49%) thinks people who have recovered from it should be avoided due to risk spreading the virus.
- Almost twice as many stated they washed their hands 10+ times in the day prior to their interview compared with those who said they washed their hands 5 times or fewer (44% vs. 24%).

Q14. I'm going to read things people have said about coronavirus or Covid-19. Please tell me if you think each is definitely true, probably true, probably false, or definitely false. %



Q40. Yesterday, how many times did you wash your hands with soap or use hand sanitizer?

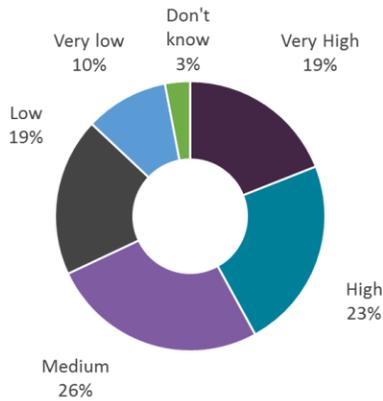


Q14. % who agree definitely/probably true	Male	Female	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	56 and over	\$0-100	\$101-200	\$200-500	\$501+
The virus can spread when an infected person touches someone's hand or face, kisses them, or sneezes or cough near them	91	89	96	87	92	83	85	89	89	94	92
Washing hands helps prevent getting it	92	89	91	91	92	88	88	88	92	92	97
Infected people may not show symptoms for 5 to 14 days	70	73	69	70	75	73	72	67	71	78	80
People who have recovered from it should be avoided to prevent spreading it	49	49	49	45	50	46	57	54	55	44	28

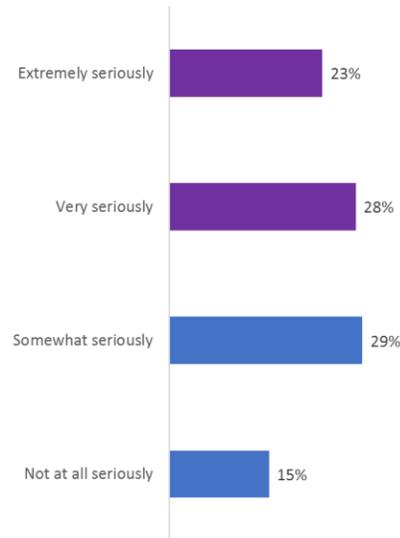
94% of Cameroonians believe that COVID-19 will be a big problem for their country; 42% believe they are at very high or high risk of infection.

- Cameroonians think that the coronavirus will be a problem for the country (70% thinking it will ‘a big problem’; an additional 24% think it will be big problem that will be dealt with).
- Four in 10 feel they are at high risk of catching the coronavirus compared to three in 10 who believe they are at low risk (42% high risk, including 19% ‘very high’ versus 29% low, including 10% ‘very low’). Women are marginally more likely than men to perceive their risk of infection as high (44% vs. 39%).
- Half believe than infection would seriously affect their health (51% ‘extremely/very seriously’ vs. 44% ‘somewhat/not very seriously’ – a finding with little variation across gender or age).
- Those who feel that COVID-19 would affect their health, most commonly say they feel so because ‘it could kill me/make me very sick’ (40%), followed by ‘it caused a lot of problems abroad’ (36%), ‘it can require hospitalization’ (16%), ‘it can cause pneumonia’ (15%).
- More than one-third of those who believe that the virus would not affect their health at all said this is due to them being strong, healthy and/or young (36%).
- Cameroonians are, on balance, optimistic about receiving help they would need to deal with the illness if they become infected – with three in five confident about being able to get immediate help and two in five not confident (59% vs. 38%). Those on household monthly incomes of under \$100 are marginally less confident, as are those aged 46-55 (both 51%).

Q5. Please indicate what you think your level of risk of catching coronavirus or Covid-19 is?



Q6. If you were infected by coronavirus or Covid-19, how seriously do you think it would affect your health?

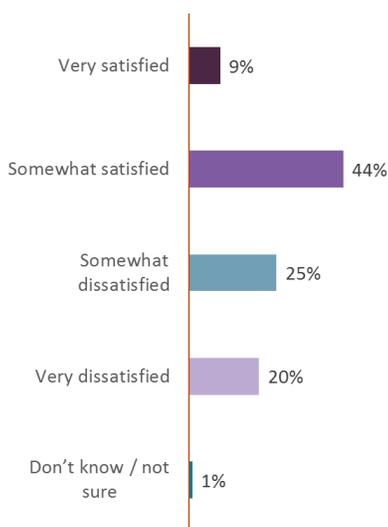


% who think coronavirus would affect their health extremely seriously/very seriously:	
Gender:	
Male	49
Female	53
Age:	
18-25 years	49
26-35 years	48
36-45 years	54
46-55 years	46
56 and older	56
Monthly Household Income:	
\$0-100	46
\$101-200	52
\$201-500	53
\$501+	57

Cameroonians' perceptions of the governmental response to COVID-19 are ambiguous

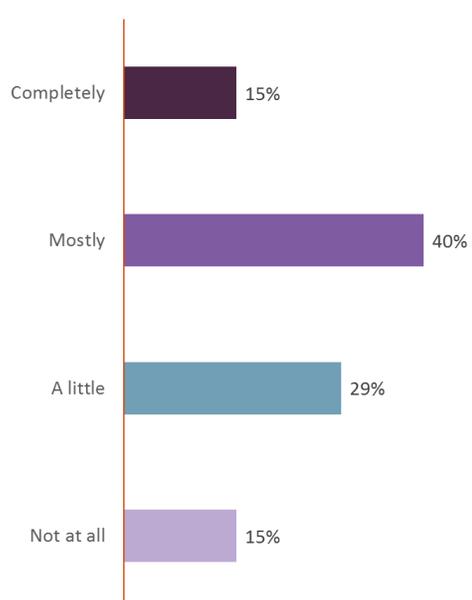
- Slightly more than half are satisfied with their government's response (53%; vs. 46% dissatisfied).
- Cameroonians are slightly more likely than not to trust the information provided by the government (55% including 15% 'completely trust' vs. 44% including 15% 'not at all').

Q12. How satisfied are you with the government's response to coronavirus or Covid-19?



% who are very/somewhat satisfied with government's response :	
Gender:	
Male	51
Female	55
Age:	
18-25 years	57
26-35 years	48
36-45 years	54
46-55 years	51
56 and older	54
Monthly Household Income:	
\$0-100	52
\$101-200	54
\$201-500	51
\$501+	55

Q13. How much do you trust information from the government about the coronavirus or Covid-19?



Support for personal public health social measures (PHSMs) runs high

- Almost all Cameroonians support stopping handshake/kiss greetings (95%); clear majority also support requiring those with COVID-19 to remain home until they are well (75%); and requiring those who have contact with infected people to self-isolate for two weeks (69%).

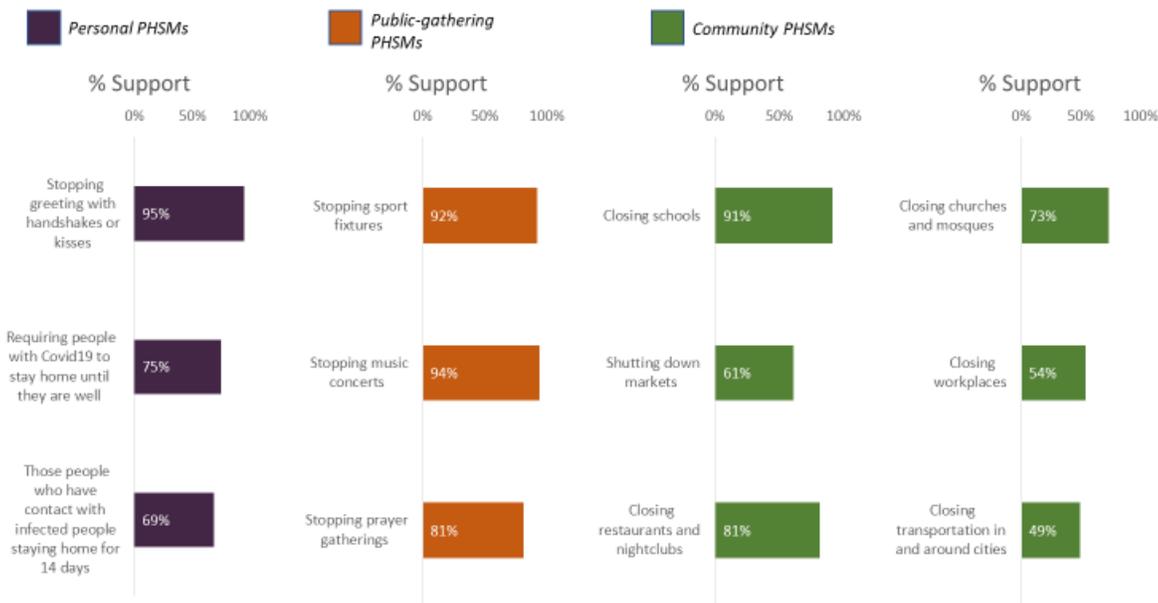
Cameroonians also support restricting public gatherings

- Support is almost universal for restricting public gatherings to help limit a COVID-19 outbreak by stopping music concerts (94%); sports fixtures (92%); and prayer gatherings (81%). Older people are less likely to support stopping of prayer gatherings. Many say that stopping prayer gatherings would be made easier by radio (47%) or TV/internet (44%) broadcast as well as prayer groups over phone or internet (37%) or having small groups instead of large gatherings (34%).

A clear majority of Cameroonians also support other temporary 'community PHSMs' to help slow the COVID-19 outbreak

- This includes closing restaurants/nightclubs (81%); churches and mosques (73%); and markets (61%). Younger Cameroonians (those aged 18-25) are less likely to support the latter.
- Around half would support closing transport between cities (55%); closing transport in and around cities (49%); and closing a city off for two weeks (49%).
- Nine in 10 (91%) would support school closures, regardless of whether, or not, they have children. Of those with children, only around three in 10 say they would have someone to look after them.

Level of support for Public health social measures (PHSMs) by type of intervention

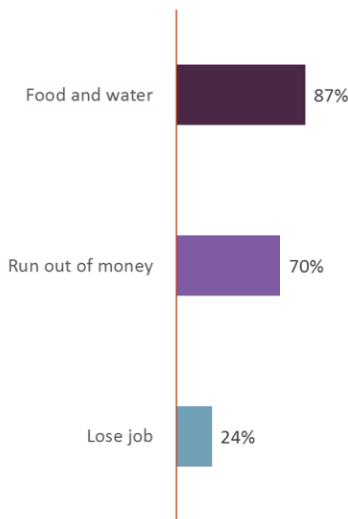


PHSMs will place a significant burden on many Cameroonians

- Significantly more work outside the home than in it to earn money (41% vs. 12%) and seven in 10 doubt that their workplace could accommodate staggered shifts (73%).

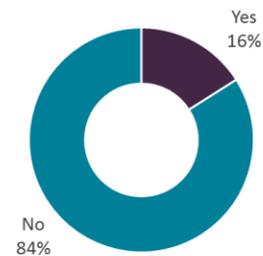
- The majority does not have a separate room to isolate someone who becomes sick (84%). Those living in informal housing are especially likely to cite this challenge.
- Asked about the biggest problems posed if asked to stay home for two weeks, most spontaneously talking about access to food and water (87%). Seven in 10 talk of running out of money (70%), while one in four say losing their job (24% - in particular, this is true for those with lower household income).
- If asked to stay at home, on median average, Cameroonians would need to get more food after 3 days and money after 2 days – unsurprisingly, this period is shorter for those with lower household income.

Q17: What would be the biggest problems for people like you to stay at home for 14 days?



Share who think the following would be the biggest problem...	Food and water	Running out of money	Losing your job
Gender:			
Male	86	70	23
Female	88	69	26
Age:			
18-25 years	79	66	19
26-35 years	88	68	26
36-45 years	91	76	27
46-55 years	91	75	28
56 and older	90	64	25
Monthly Household Income:			
\$0-100	91	72	27
\$101-200	89	71	29
\$201-500	85	72	18
\$501+	79	66	20

Q38: Would you have a separate room in your home to keep someone isolated if they are sick?



TV is the main source of information in Cameroon

- Over three-quarters of Cameroonians say they normally get their information on what’s happening in the country from local TV (78%); with sizeable reach also coming from international TV (28%), social media (20%) and radio (19%). For local news, local TV also provide for an important source of information (68%); along with social media (22%), local radio (21%) and family and friends (19%).

Technical Note

The fieldwork on this study was conducted by Ipsos with results based on 1,043 interviews with adults aged 18+ in Yaoundé. Fieldwork was administered by Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) using a random walk approach to household selection and Kish grid for respondent selection. Data are representative of the populations of the urban area (s) included and are unweighted. Fieldwork took place between March 31 and 3 April, 2020.

This program of research is an outcome of a partnership between Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies, Africa CDC, the World Health Organization’s African Regional Office (AFRO) and Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO), and the World Economic Forum to form a new public-private partnership to support evidence-based implementation of PHSMs to reduce COVID-19 transmission in African countries (“flattening the curve”) while working with governments to mitigate social and economic disruption and other unintended consequences.