Responding to COVID-19: Highlights of a Survey in CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Summary

- All Ivorians know about COVID-19 and most have a basic understanding about transmission and the importance of regular hand washing. However, a large minority seek more information, which may help address some misconceptions on avoidance, 'cures' and rumor. Patterns of handwashing frequency do not seem to match stated understanding of the importance of it.
- Ivorians are broadly positive about the government's response to date but a significant minority are dissatisfied and/or do not trust the information they receive on it.
- Ivorians believe that COVID-19 poses a big problem for their country and, more often or not, see a high personal risk of infection. They are broadly supportive of personal public health support mechanisms to help limit the spread of the coronavirus at this comparatively early stage of its spread in Côte d'Ivoire but support for several 'community PHSMs' is more limited, especially on closing city transport and workplaces.
- Such interventions may be difficult to comply with as current personal supplies of food and cash will run out within a week and many fears losing their jobs.
- National, local and international TV 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 Côte d'Ivoire.
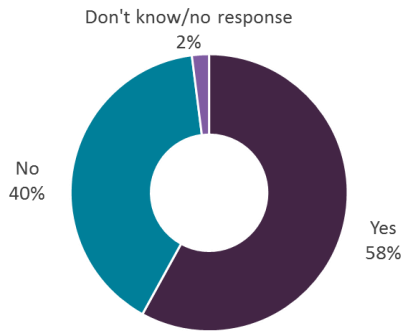
Key Findings of the Survey

Awareness of COVID-19 is universal. A large minority seek more information and there is some misunderstanding on prevention and 'cures' and belief in rumor
- Everyone has heard of COVID-19 (100%). Over four in five spontaneously associate the symptoms with a dry cough (84%) or fever (83%) with around three in five citing difficulty breathing (62%) or flu/cold-like symptoms (57%). Nevertheless, four in 10 (40%) of Ivorians feel they do not have enough information about it.
- Around one-third would like more information on 'how to protect myself/my family from it' (32%) and 'how to cure it/is there a cure' (32%), and one-quarter on 'how it spreads/how you catch it' (25%).
- Many believe that hot climate prevents the spread of COVID-19 (38%) or that it can be prevented by drinking lemon and Vitamin C (30%). Sizeable minorities think it can be cured with garlic (20%); that Africans can't get it (11%); or that drinking bleach cures it (5%). Around as many consider the statement that it is 'a germ weapon created by a government' to be true as believe it to be false (39% vs. 41%).
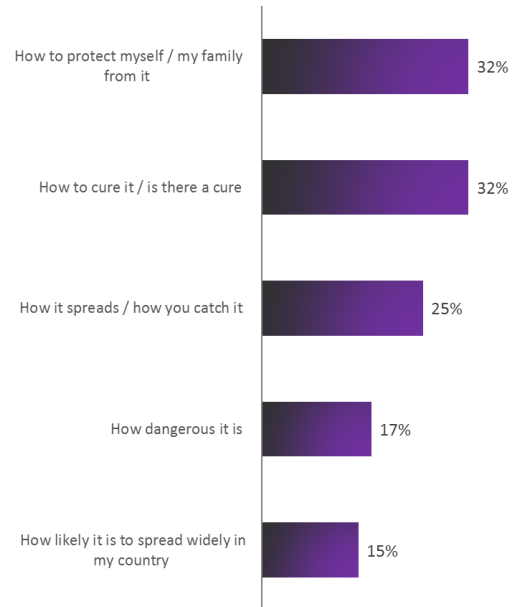
Q10. Do you feel you currently have enough information about the coronavirus/Covid-19 situation?

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

Don't know/no response 2%

No 40%

Yes 58%

% who feel they have enough information	
Gender:	
Male	60
Female	56
Age:	
18-25 years	49
26-35 years	58
36-45 years	63
46-55 years	65
56 and older	53
Monthly Household Income:	
$0-100	54
$101-200	55
$201-500	59
$501+	69

|	
How to protect myself / my family from it	32%
How to cure it / is there a cure	32%
How it spreads / how you catch it	25%
How dangerous it is	17%
How likely it is to spread widely in my country	15%

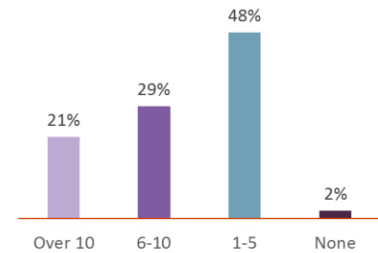**The basic understanding of close contact transmission and the importance of hand-washing stands high**

- Almost all think COVID-19 can be spread by touch, kiss, sneeze, or cough (94%, including 73% thinking this is 'definitely true') and that washing hands helps prevent getting it (92% including 68% 'definitely true'). Twice as many consider the statement that 'people who have recovered from it should be avoided to prevent spreading it' to be false as believe it to be true (62% vs. 33%).
- One in five stated they washed their hands or used hand sanitizer over 10 times in the day prior to their interview compared with more than twice as many saying 5 times or fewer (21% vs. 50%). Frequency of handwashing increases with rising household income. Whereas 30% of those with a monthly household income of $501 report washing their hands more than 10 times in the day prior to the interview, this figure falls to 12% among those with household incomes of $100 or less. Two-thirds of this group report handwashing between 1 and 5 times (67%). Those aged 18-25 and 56 and over are somewhat more likely to say they handwashed over 10 times than those in the middle age brackets.

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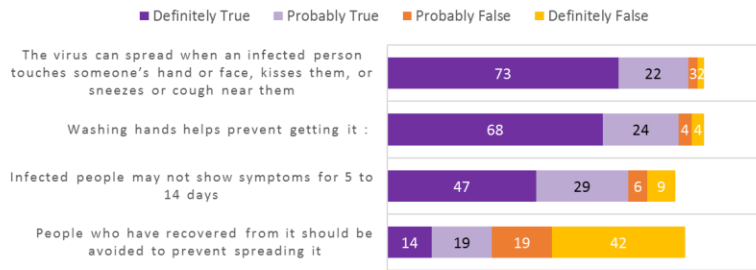
Q40. Yesterday, how many times did you wash your hands with soap or use hand sanitizer?

Legend: ■ Definitely True ■ Probably True ■ Probably False ■ Definitely False

Statement	Definitely True	Probably True	Probably False	Definitely False
The virus can spread when an infected person touches someone's hand or face, kisses them, or sneezes or cough near them	73	22	3	2
Washing hands helps prevent getting it :	68	24	4	4
Infected people may not show symptoms for 5 to 14 days	47	29	6	9
People who have recovered from it should be avoided to prevent spreading it	14	19	19	42

Q40 (handwashing):
- Over 10: 21%
- 6-10: 29%
- 1-5: 48%
- None: 2%

Q14. Share 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	$201-500	$501+
The virus can spread when an infected person touches someone's hand or face, kisses them, or sneezes or cough near them	93	96	93	95	95	92	95	98	93	94	96
Washing hands helps prevent getting it	91	93	88	88	95	95	94	92	91	94	91
Infected people may not show symptoms for 5 to 14 days	76	76	68	75	83	74	74	73	75	78	83
People who have recovered from it should be avoided to prevent spreading it	35	30	34	34	33	24	32	38	30	34	26

93% of Ivorians believe that COVID-19 poses a big problem for their country; 54% see a high personal risk of infection.

- Almost all Ivorians think that the coronavirus will be a problem for Côte d'Ivoire (93%, including 59% thinking it 'will become a big problem').
- Twice as many Ivorians feel they are at high risk of catching the coronavirus compared to low risk (54% high risk, including 31% 'very high' versus 25% low, including 11% 'very low').
- A slender majority believes than infection would seriously affect their health (58% 'extremely/very seriously'), while a sizeable minority thinks they would be less seriously affected (40% 'somewhat/not very seriously'). Those aged 26-45 are least likely, on balance, to expect the impact to be severe.
- The most commonly cited rationale for understanding the perceived effect on health is 'it could kill me/make me very sick' (47%), followed by 'caused a lot of problems abroad' (38%), and 'it can require hospitalization' (25%). Among those who perceive an infection would affect their health 'not at all seriously', the most common rationale is about being strong, healthy or young.
- Ivorians are, on balance, broadly optimistic about receiving help they would need to deal with the illness if they become infected – with twice as many confident about being able to get immediate help as not those not confident (65% confident, including 29% 'very confident' vs. 32% not confident, including 16% 'not confident at all'.

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

Don't know 3%
Very High 31%
Very low 11%
Low 15%
Medium 18%
High 24%
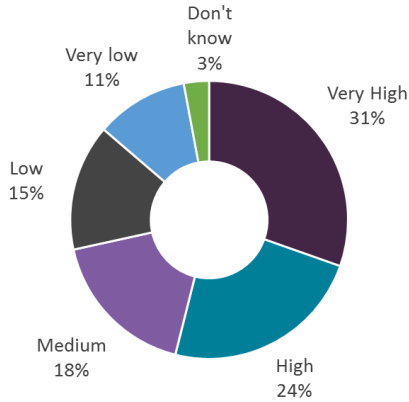
Q6.If you were infected by coronavirus or Covid-19, how seriously do you think it would affect your health?

Extremely seriously — 22%
Very seriously — 35%
Somewhat seriously — 21%
Not at all seriously — 18%
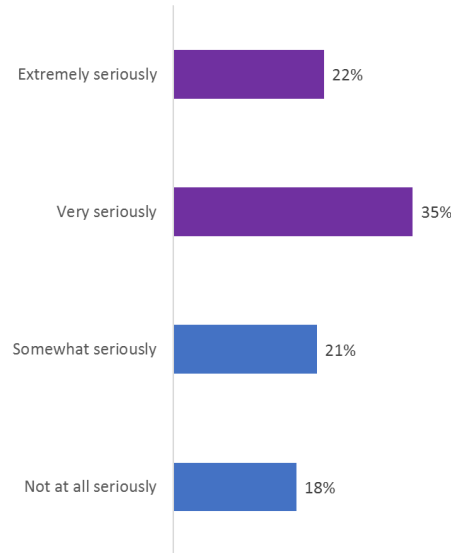
% who think coronavirus would affect their health extremely seriously/very seriously:	
Gender:	
Male	57
Female	58
Age:	
18-25 years	62
26-35 years	55
36-45 years	56
46-55 years	60
56 and older	61
Monthly Household Income:	
$0-100	57
$101-200	60
$201-500	57
$501+	57

Ivorians' perceptions of the governmental response to COVID-19 is broadly positive but a significant minority are dissatisfied and/or don't trust the information they receive on it

- The majority are satisfied with their government's response (62%; vs. 37% dissatisfied).
- Ivorians are also more likely than not to trust the information provided by the government (57% 'completely/mostly trust', including 28% 'completely trust' vs. 42% including 18% 'not at all').

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

Very satisfied — 21%
Somewhat satisfied — 41%
Somewhat dissatisfied — 14%
Very dissatisfied — 24%
Don't know / not sure — 1%
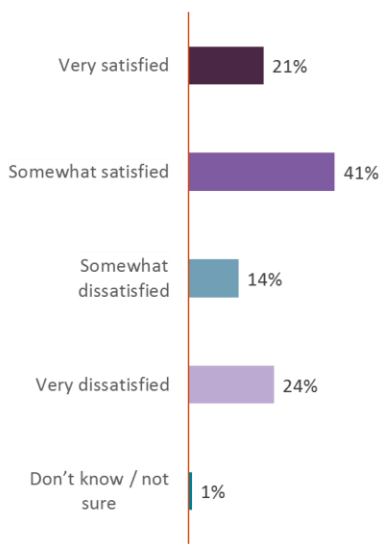
% who are very/somewhat satisfied with government's response :	
Gender:	
Male	61
Female	63
Age:	
18-25 years	69
26-35 years	60
36-45 years	61
46-55 years	58
56 and older	63
Monthly Household Income:	
$0-100	65
$101-200	64
$201-500	62
$501+	55

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

Completely — 28%
Mostly — 29%
A little — 24%
Not at all — 18%
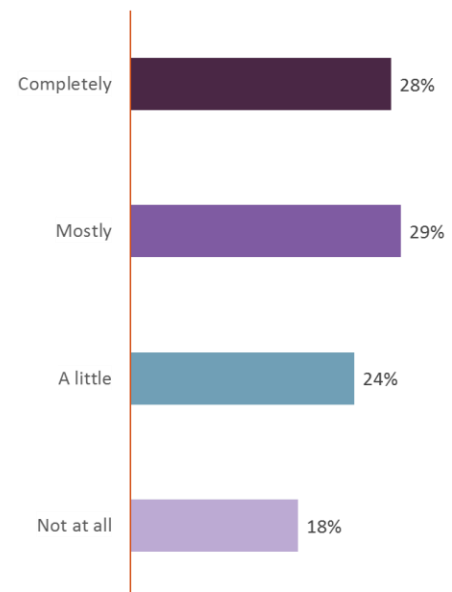
The majority support personal public health support mechanisms (PHSMs)
- Almost all Ivorians support stopping handshake/kiss greetings (96%); requiring those who have contact with infected people to self-isolate (76%) and requiring those with COVID-19 to remain home until they are well (74%). On the latter, opposition is marginally greater among those on monthly household incomes of $501+ (31% oppose) and those aged 18-25 (29%) than among those in other household incomes and age groups.

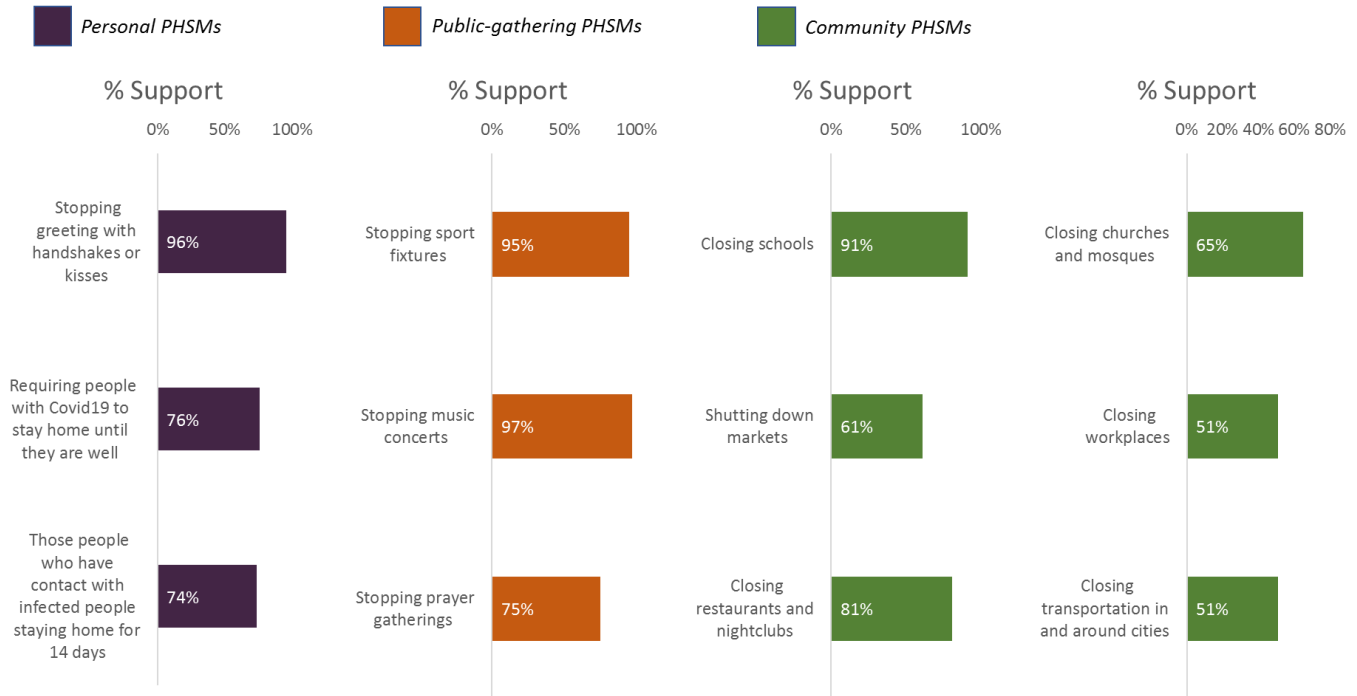**Ivorians also support restricting public gatherings**
- Support is almost universal for restricting public gatherings to help limit a COVID-19 outbreak by stopping music concerts (97%); sports fixtures (95%); and prayer gatherings (75%). The majority say that stopping prayer gatherings would be made easier by radio broadcast (58%), followed by TV/internet (48%). Many suggest having small groups instead of large gatherings (47%).

Support for other temporary 'community PHSMs' to help slow the COVID-19 outbreak is more limited – particularly on closing city transport and workplaces
- Nine in 10 (91%) would support school closures, regardless of whether, or not, they have children. Of those with children, only around half say they would have someone to look after them.
- Four in five support closing restaurants/nightclubs (81%); but more like three in five support closing churches and mosques (65% - broadly consistent across religious denomination); and markets (61%). On balance, women are marginally less inclined to support closing markets than men. Support, on balance is also lower among those aged 56 and over (53% support vs. 47% oppose) than among younger Ivorians.
- Three in five support closing a city off for two weeks (64%) or closing transport between cities (60%), while support for closing transport in and around cities is divided (51% support vs. 48% oppose – with very little difference by gender, age or household income).
- Opinion on closing workplaces is also divided (51% support, including 27% 'strongly support' vs. 49% oppose, including 32% 'strongly oppose'. Those working are more likely to oppose than those not, and those on household monthly incomes of $501+ are more likely to support this (59% support vs. 41% oppose) than those on $100 and under (48% support vs. 52% oppose).

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

■ Personal PHSMs   **■ Public-gathering PHSMs**   **■ Community PHSMs**

| % Support		% Support		% Support		% Support	
Stopping greeting with handshakes or kisses	96%	Stopping sport fixtures	95%	Closing schools	91%	Closing churches and mosques	65%
Requiring people with Covid19 to stay home until they are well	76%	Stopping music concerts	97%	Shutting down markets	61%	Closing workplaces	51%
Those people who have contact with infected people staying home for 14 days	74%	Stopping prayer gatherings	75%	Closing restaurants and nightclubs	81%	Closing transportation in and around cities	51%

PHSMs may place a significant burden on many Ivorians

- Half of Ivorians (50%) work outside the home to earn money compared to 10% working at home. The remainder say they are not working. Four in five do not have a separate room to isolate someone who becomes sick (79%). Almost half who work outside the home doubt that their workplace could accommodate staggered shifts (46%).
- Asked about the biggest problems posed if asked to stay home for two weeks, most spontaneously talk about access to food and water (90%) and four in five cite running out of money (80%). Over one third of those who work outside the home – that is half the adult population - losing their job (36%).
- If asked to stay at home, on median average, Ivorians would need to get more money after 5 days and food after 7 days.

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

Food and water — 90%

Run out of money — 80%

Lose job — 27%
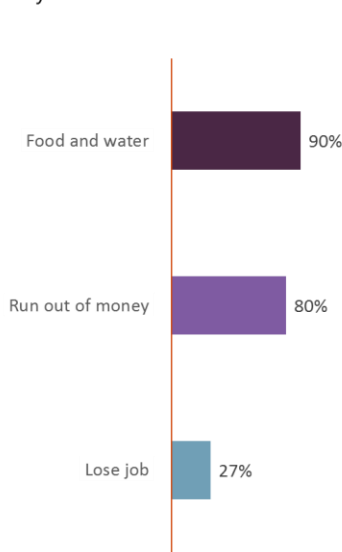
Share who think the following would be the biggest problem... (%)	Food and water	Running out of money	Losing your job
Gender:			
Male	90	80	32
Female	90	80	22
Age:			
18-25 years	86	77	24
26-35 years	90	81	30
36-45 years	93	83	31
46-55 years	92	76	19
56 and older	86	78	21
Monthly Household Income:			
$0-100	94	87	29
$101-200	94	81	24
$201-500	85	77	29
$501+	85	79	28

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

Yes 21%

No 79%
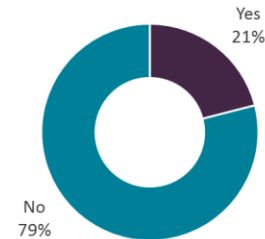
Mass media like local and international TV are relied on for national information, supplemented by social media and friends and family more locally, suggesting that multiple channels are useful for communicating COVID-19 information

- Two-thirds of Ivorians say they normally get their information on what's happening in the country from TV (65%); with sizeable reach also coming from international television channels (58%) and social media (27%). For local news, people also rely on local TV (59%), international TV channels (36%) and social media (24%), supplemented by friends and family (19%) and local radio (12%).

Technical Note

The fieldwork on this study was conducted by Ipsos with results based on 1,036 interviews with adults aged 18+ in Abidjan. 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 April 1 and April 4, 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.