

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

Summary

- All Tunisians know about COVID-19 and virtually all have a basic understanding about transmission and the importance of regular hand washing. However, a sizeable minority seek more information, which may help address some misconceptions on avoidance and ‘cures.’
- Most Tunisians are positive about the government’s response to date and trust the information it provides on it.
- Tunisians do not see the virus as a high personal risk but believe it will be a threat to their country. They are supportive of a wide range of personal and community interventions (PHSMs) to help limit the spread of the coronavirus at this comparatively early stage of its spread in Tunisia.
- PHSMs may place a significant burden on many Tunisians, and only two-thirds support closing workplaces at this time.
- TV and social media are the key information sources the public relies on.

Background

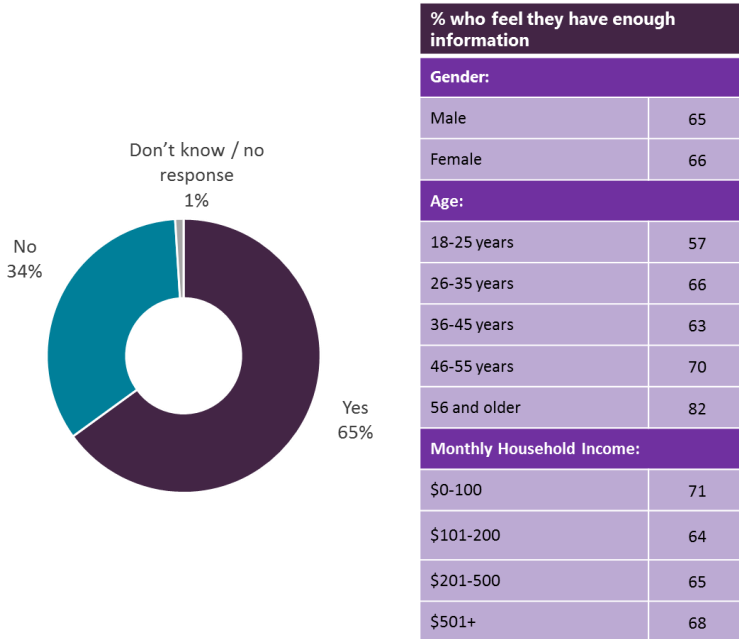
Public health social measures (PHSMs) are an important strategy to delay and reduce the magnitude of COVID-19. PHSMs particularly those that restrict movement or entail the closure of services, can place a significant burden on populations. The effective implementation of PHSMs will require public support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

Key Findings of the Survey

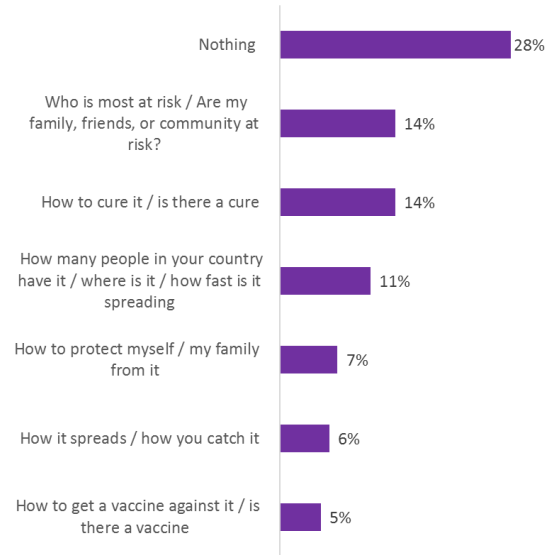
Awareness of COVID-19 is high - but a sizeable minority seek more information and there is considerable misunderstanding on prevention and ‘cures’

- Everyone in Tunisia has heard of COVID-19 (100%). The majority spontaneously associate it with the symptoms with fever (90%), dry cough (82%) and difficulty breathing/shortness of breath (56%). Nevertheless, one in three (34%) of Tunisians – younger ones in particular – feel they do not have enough information about it.
- Three in five believe that COVID-19 can be prevented by drinking lemon and Vitamin C (58%), two in five think that hot climate prevents the spread of the virus (41%) and one in five believe think it can be cured with garlic (19%). 13% believe that Africans can’t get it and 5% that drinking bleach cures it.

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



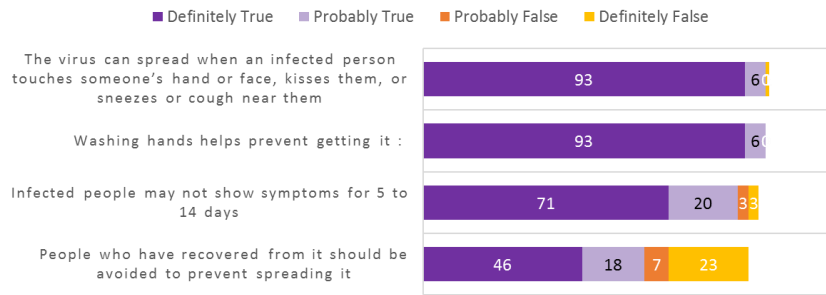
Q11. What are the two things about it that you would like most to have more information about?



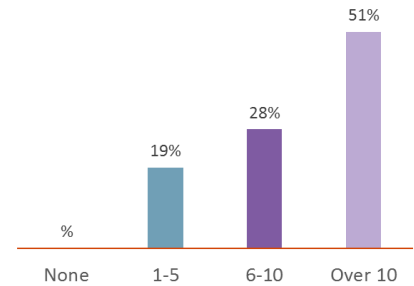
The basic understanding of close contact transmission and the importance of hand washing is very high among Tunisians

- Almost all are aware that COVID-19 can be spread by touch, kiss, sneeze, or cough (99%, including 93% thinking this is 'definitely true') and that washing hands helps prevent getting it (99% including 93% 'definitely true'). Two in three (64%) think people who have recovered from it should be avoided due to risk spreading the virus.
- Half stated they washed their hands or used hand sanitizer over 10 times in the day prior to their interview compared with one in five washing 5 times or fewer (51% vs. 19%). Older Tunisians tend to wash their hands more often.

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?

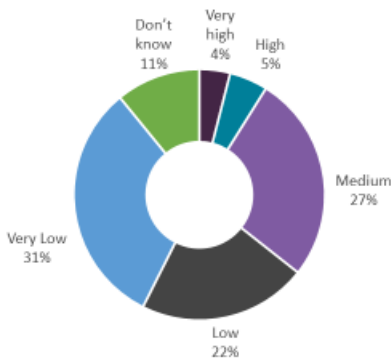


Q14. Share who agree definitely/probably true (%)	Gender		Age					Monthly Household Income			
	Male	Female	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	56 and over	\$0-100	\$101-200	\$201-500	\$501+
The virus can spread when an infected person touches someone's hand or face, kisses them, or sneezes or cough near them	98	99	97	100	99	99	99	100	99	98	99
Washing hands helps prevent getting it	99	100	100	98	99	100	100	100	99	100	100
Infected people may not show symptoms for 5 to 14 days	89	93	90	92	90	92	92	94	93	91	92
People who have recovered from it should be avoided to prevent spreading it	62	66	67	61	62	65	64	66	72	65	60

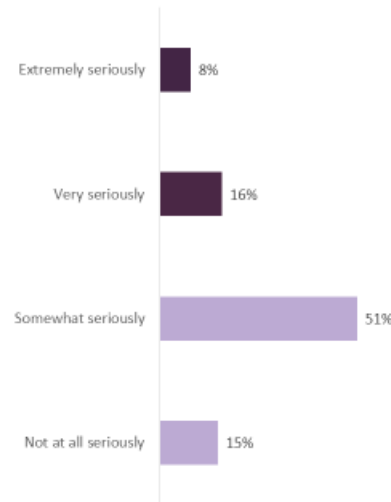
80% of Tunisians believe that COVID-19 poses a problem for their country as a whole; but very few (9%) see themselves at risk of contracting COVID-19.

- Almost all Tunisians think that the coronavirus will be a problem for Tunisia (80%, including 41% thinking it will become 'a big problem').
- Only one in 10 feel they are at high risk of catching the coronavirus (9% including 4% 'very high' risk) while over half believe they are at a low risk (54% low, including 32% 'very low').
- The clear majority believes than infection would not seriously affect their health (66% 'somewhat/not very seriously' vs. 24% 'extremely/very seriously').
- The most common rationale for believing that the virus would not affect personal health seriously is 'I am strong/healthy/young'. Those who feel that the virus would affect their health seriously at various degrees (ranging from somewhat seriously to extremely seriously) most commonly base this on the belief that 'I am at risk /old/preexisting condition' (36%).
- Tunisians are not overly optimistic about receiving help they would need to deal with the illness if they become infected – with 51% confident about being able to get immediate help vs. 44% not confident.

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?



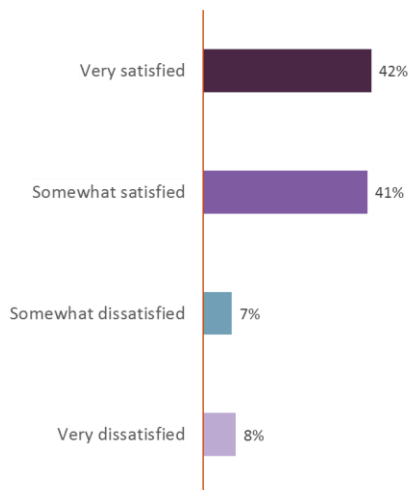
% who think coronavirus would affect their health extremely seriously/very seriously:

Gender:	
Male	20
Female	28
Age:	
18-25 years	22
26-35 years	27
36-45 years	23
46-55 years	20
56 and older	27
Monthly Household Income:	
\$0-100	14
\$101-200	35
\$201-500	22
\$501+	22

Tunisians' perceptions of the governmental response to COVID-19 is positive

- The majority is satisfied with their government's response (83%; vs. 15% dissatisfied).
- Tunisians are also more likely than not to trust the information provided by the government (69% including 36% 'completely trust' vs. 30% including 7% 'not at all').

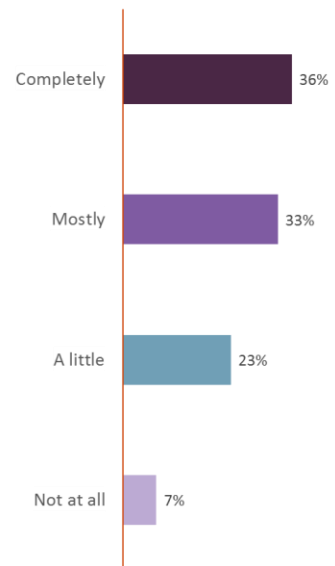
Q12. How satisfied are you with the government's response to coronavirus or Covid-19?



% who are very/somewhat satisfied with government's response :

Gender:	
Male	81
Female	85
Age:	
18-25 years	84
26-35 years	80
36-45 years	84
46-55 years	83
56 and older	89
Monthly Household Income	
\$0-100	80
\$101-200	80
\$201-500	85
\$501+	85

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



Support for public health social measures (PHSMs) runs high

- Almost all Tunisians support requiring those with COVID-19 to remain home until they are well (98%); stopping handshake/kiss greetings (92%); and requiring those who have contact with infected people to self-isolate (91%).

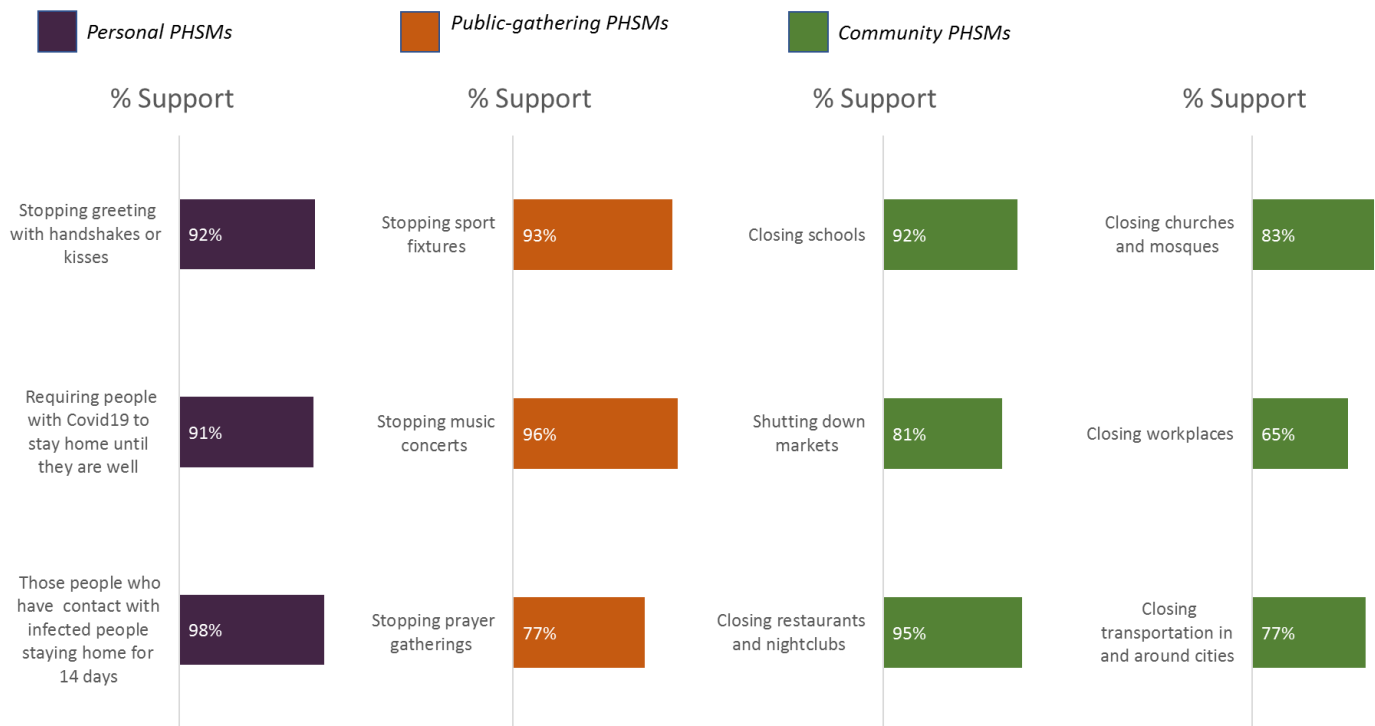
Tunisians also support restricting public gatherings

- Support is almost universal for restricting public gatherings to help limit a COVID-19 outbreak by stopping music concerts (96%); sports fixtures (93%); and prayer gatherings (77% - with women and older Tunisians more likely to be in favor). Seven in 10 or more say that stopping prayer gatherings would be made easier by TV/internet broadcast (77%); calls from a minister or imam (75%) or radio broadcasts (72%).

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

- This includes closing restaurants/nightclubs (95%); churches and mosques (83%); and markets (81% - with younger Tunisians more likely to express support).
- Most would support closing transport between cities (83%); closing transport in and around cities (77%); and closing a city off for two weeks (72%).
- Nine in 10 (92%) would support school closures. Of those with children, half say they would have someone to look after them.

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

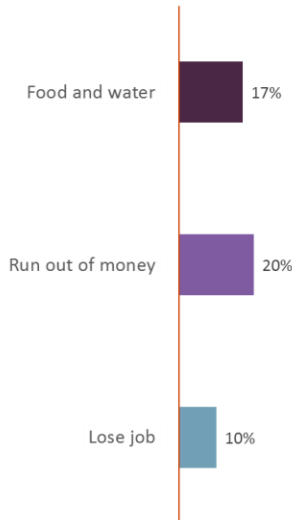


PHSMs may place a significant burden on many Tunisians

- Four in five have a separate room to isolate someone who becomes sick (79%).
- Asked about the biggest problems posed by staying at home for two weeks, most spontaneously talking about access to food and water (65%). Half talk of running out of money (51%), while more than one in 10 say losing their job (11%).

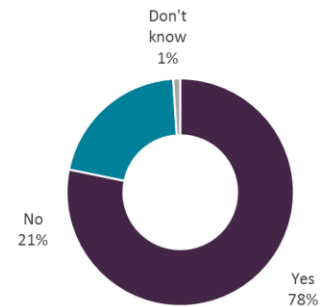
- If asked to stay at home, on median average, Tunisians would need to get food after 7 days and money after 14 days.

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	18	25	11
Female	17	15	9
Age:			
18-25 years	14	17	12
26-35 years	19	24	15
36-45 years	20	25	10
46-55 years	15	14	9
56 and older	16	9	0
Monthly Household Income:			
\$0-100	23	11	3
\$101-200	21	26	13
\$201-500	17	22	10
\$501+	16	15	10

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 relied on for finding out what is happening in the country, supplemented by social media and friends and family radio more locally

- More than half of Tunisians say they normally get their information on what’s happening in the country from local TV (63%) and social media (56%), with sizeable reach also coming from international TV channels (24%) and websites (17%). For local news, main source of information is social media (54%), followed by family and friends (41%) and local TV (23%).

Technical Note

The fieldwork on this study was conducted by Ipsos with results based on 1,004 interviews with adults aged 18+ in Tunis. Fieldwork was administered by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) using a Random Digit Dial (RDD) approach incorporating both landline and mobile sample. Data are representative of the populations of the urban area (s) included and are unweighted. Fieldwork took place from April 2 to 15, 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.