

# Report reveals how South Africans feel about lockdown

Right now, there are currently around 2.5 billion people around the world in some form of a Covid-19 lockdown, and millions more businesses are also shuttered and unable to trade or generate an income.

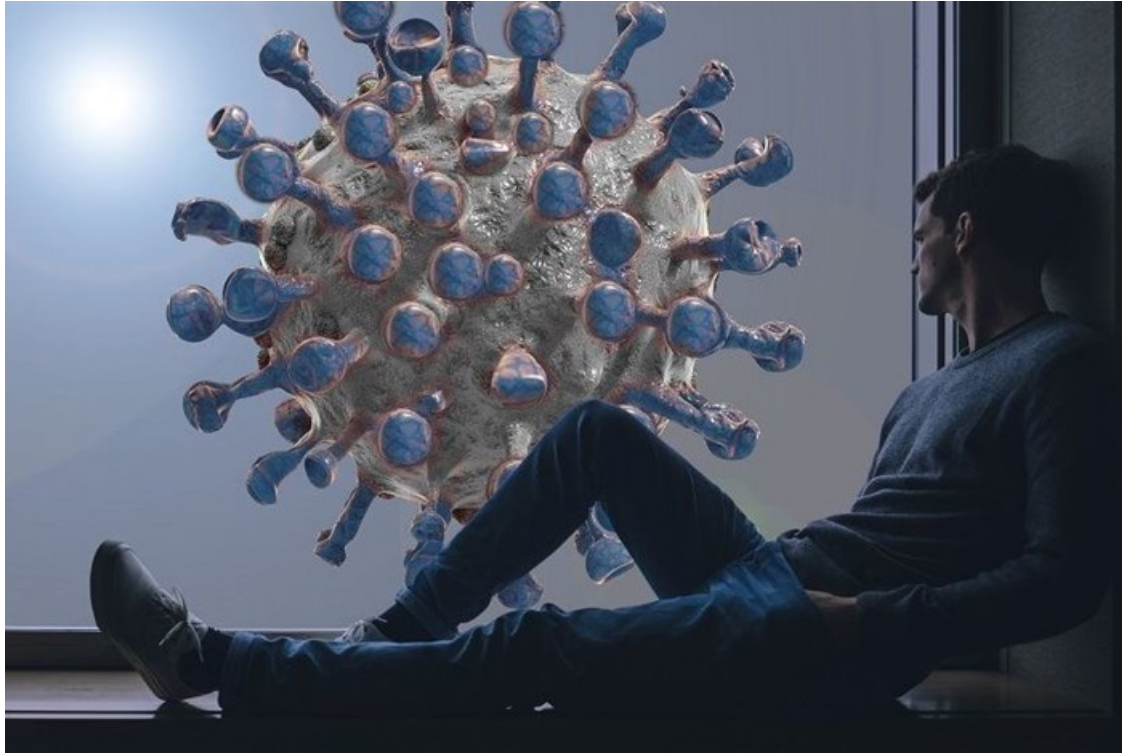


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The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is both staggering and alarming, and right now there isn't a single country around the globe that has not been impacted in some way. Life in a post-Covid world can and never will be the same again.

To get some insight into how South Africans are coping in terms of their work and home lives, their views on the handling of the Covid-19 lockdown by the Government, and their understanding of the disease, Consulta surveyed more than 1 000 South Africans who are part of its online research community - known as ConsultaPanel - between 6 - 10 April 2020.

These are the key take-outs from the online survey results:

## Views on the handling of the pandemic by the Government:

- 48% of respondents feel that the Government has handled the lockdown and pandemic crisis very well, while 52% believe it has not been handled well at all.
- Of those who feel that the Government is doing a good job, 72% said they feel the lockdown was the best possible option and feel it is being enforced appropriately. 10% are happy with the fact that more testing stations are being made available, particularly in high-risk areas. 9% mentioned that the regulations have been communicated clearly and widely.
- Of the 52% of respondents who feel the Government has not done a good job; 23% are concerned about the ability of our health system to handle the growing need when infections increase, while a further 23% feel that the lockdown regulations have not been well coordinated. 12% are unsure whether social distancing will be effective or even possible in densely populated areas. 10% are deeply concerned about the economic impact that the lockdown will have in the medium to long term.

#### **The impact of the lockdown measures on work:**

- 7 out of every 10 participants indicated that they would continue to work during the lockdown period (initially scheduled from 27 March to 16 April).
- Of the respondents who participated, 14% are employed in essential services in healthcare, pharmaceutical, financial services/banks, supermarkets, manufacturing and transport (of essential goods). These respondents also consider themselves to be the most at-risk group to contract the virus as a result of the work they do.
- 43% are working from home during this time, 7% are teachers waiting for normal schooling to resume (most of whom are using communications platforms to teach from home), while the remainder are employed in other industries, are retired or unemployed.
- 50% of all respondents expect a decline in their income during this time, while the other half are more optimistic, reporting that they expect their income to remain stable at least until the end of lockdown.
- Those who are self-employed believe that they will be most negatively impacted, which makes sense as they feel that they have to fend for themselves and do not necessarily have reserves to draw from, while they are also responsible for the income of their employees.
- Retirees do not share the same level of concern and believe their pay-outs will remain stable and have not been as drastically impacted by currency fluctuations in the market.

#### **What respondents require from their employers during the lockdown:**

- 60% of respondents feel that their employer has done a good job at implementing the necessary safety measures in place to protect them from contracting the virus in the workplace.
- 27% of respondents indicated that they needed their employers to provide the necessary tools to work remotely, such as internet connectivity, while 20% want their employer to demonstrate their duty of care by providing the necessary protective clothing and equipment to those who still need to work, such as protective gear and regular deep cleaning of the work environment.
- 12% want their income and job secured, while 11% mention the need to stay connected to co-workers and their

managers to provide the necessary direction during this time.

- It is interesting to note that 18% feel that nothing more needs to be done and that all necessary precautions are in place, indicating that a significant number of people are very comfortable with working remotely, and that this could potentially become more common once the lockdown is over.
- In a related question, respondents were asked what employers could do to show care and build trust during this time. Close to 40% mentioned that they need to stay connected during the lockdown period, making sure that everyone is clear about expectations and that all relevant new developments are shared continuously.
- However, not everybody feels this way – 6% said they want to be left alone to do their job, without someone checking over their shoulder.
- Another 35% mentioned that their employer needs to take care of the basics – by ensuring that they still have their job and income (19%) and that their health is taken care of by providing relevant protective equipment and necessities (16%).
- A further 12% want their managers to show clear direction and require more ‘human’ engagement by showing support in non-financial ways.

#### **On respondents’ general level of knowledge about the virus:**

- 4 out of every 5 respondents believe they have sufficient knowledge about the Covid-19 pandemic to keep themselves safe.
- The most prominent sources of information include TV (67%), Government websites (50%), the World Health Organisation website (48%), social media (46%), radio (37%) and newspapers/online news websites (35%).
- The fact that social media is such a popular source of information gives credence to concerns about the spread of fake news and people acting in ways that are not conducive to the effective management of the situation.
- Participants indicated that transfer of the virus takes place via coughing, sneezing or touching (96%) and not airborne transmission (36%), pets (2%) and bug bites (2%).
- The incubation period is anything between 3 to 14 days (91%) and symptoms include shortness of breath (95%), fever (90%), a dry cough (88%) and a sore throat (84%) – but not itchy eyes (19%), a stuffy nose (13%) or your face and lips turning blue (6%).
- Respondents indicated that the best ways to prevent the spread include washing and disinfecting your hands (100%), not touching your face with unwashed hands (99%), avoiding close contact with others (97%) – while taking a hot bath (15%) and drinking alcohol (1%) are not the way to go.

When asked specific details, respondents indicated the following (% indicates those that indicate ‘yes’):

- Does cold weather and snow kill the coronavirus: 2%
- People of all ages can be infected by the coronavirus: 98%
- Coronavirus can be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates: 73%
- Eating fresh garlic can help prevent infection with the coronavirus: 13%
- The coronavirus only affects old people: 3%

- Antibiotics are effective in preventing and treating the coronavirus: 8%
- The virus is just a mutated form of the common cold: 22%
- You can have the coronavirus and show no symptoms: 90%
- There is a cure / medication / vaccine to treat the coronavirus: 5%

#### **Personal experience with the virus:**

- 20% of respondents personally know someone that has tested positive for the virus, while only 3% have been tested themselves.
- 18% predict that they are at high risk for contracting the virus (these are primarily health workers and include older and sickly individuals) with 50% reporting that they have a relatively low risk as they are able to follow the lockdown requirements and stay at home.
- The remaining 32% are unsure at this stage as they do not know how the current situation will play out.

When asked when they think the pandemic will be over:

- 36% said they expect things to be back to normal in the next three months,
- 37% think it will only be over by next year, earliest, and
- 18% are not sure what to expect.

#### **What are respondents doing to stay busy during the lockdown period, and what do they have planned:**

- Working from home: 59%
- Cleaning and other housework: 59%
- Watching TV, movies or series: 59%
- Reading: 47%
- Spending time with family: 44%
- Social media, cooking and exercise: 42%
- Prayer and other spiritual pursuits: 19%
- Staying in touch with friends/family via communication channels: 17%

#### **On whether banks are doing enough to provide them with financial relief during the pandemic:**

- Absa Bank is leading the way in this regard, with 71% of their customers saying that the bank is doing enough to provide relief, compared to other banks:
- 65% - FNB
- 64% - Capitec
- 61% - Nedbank
- 59% - Standard Bank

This is based primarily on the perception of the degree to which these banks are acting in the best interest of their customers by providing payment holidays and putting other measures in place to be of help, providing enough

information and good service during this time.

- Complaints about banks not doing enough are centred around a lack of payment holidays, charging normal fees during this time, not sharing enough relevant information and a lack of support in general.
- The samples for other banks were too small to give a valid indication.

“Dealing with a pandemic of this magnitude is certainly uncharted territory for South Africans, and in fact the world – we cannot recall in history that the entire world economy, world of work, healthcare systems and social structures have all simultaneously faced such an unprecedented black swan event in modern times. Having gone through the survey results, it is still encouraging to see how hopeful South Africans are about the situation we find ourselves in, and we remain a resilient and optimistic nation.

Although many people expressed concern over the immediate situation, the overall sentiment is that we will get through this and that ‘this too will pass’. From Consulta’s perspective, and that of the ConsultaPanel Community, it is also clear that as South Africans, we view our circumstances as a collective, and that we are in this together. South Africans are sharply aware of the disparities in our country’s socioeconomics and the disproportionate negative impact on vulnerable communities.

On a daily basis, we see South Africans from all walks of life trying to do their bit to help each other out in the spirit of Ubuntu. We are all being challenged during this time, but we have proven time and again that we can do incredible things when stand together and look a common enemy in the eye,” says Charlene van Niekerk, project director at Consulta.

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