

Time for SA to put proactive and ambitious relief measures in place

By [Andrea Rademeyer](#), issued by [Ask Afrika](#)

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South Africans are paying a high price for the prolonged lockdown and consequent devastation of the local economy with levels of emotional distress nearly as high as at the start of the lockdown five months ago.



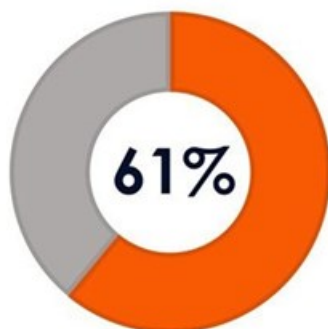
Andrea Rademeyer

In fact, levels of emotional distress are even higher than the levels of financial distress, which in itself are at alarming levels. A third of South Africans are temporarily not working due to the lockdown and 61% have experienced a loss of income. This is resulting in high levels of borrowings and many people trying to sell their personal assets in order to make ends meet. Despite the fact that a large proportion of the loans being taken out are for relatively small amounts – 45% are below the value of R1000 and only 12% are more than R3000 – 40% are not confident about their ability to repay these loans, and an alarming 54% are concerned about the level of food reserves in their homes. This points to an alarming trend which needs to be addressed before we end up with a humanitarian crisis.

These figures are derived from Ask Afrika's Covid-19 Tracker, which is a pro bono study we have been conducting since the first week of April in order to better understand the socio-economic impact that the coronavirus, lockdown and gradual re-opening of the economy has on South Africans. To date more

than 9000 interviews have been conducted, exploring different themes and topics each week in order to better understand the relevant issues and provide an immediate statistic.

Two in three respondents have experienced some form of income loss because of the lockdown including retrenchments, delayed payments, reductions or a lack of payment.



of respondents said the they are experiencing a loss of income due to the outbreak

Have you experienced or are you aware of any of the following in your organisation during the lockdown period?



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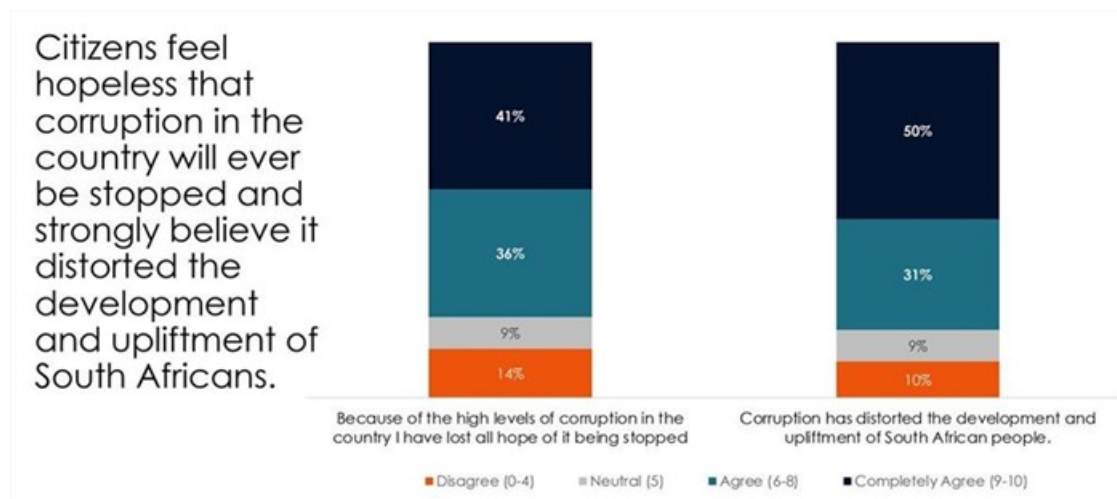
The Tracker study reveals that 50% of all South Africans are nervous about underlying conditions and are fearful about going to clinics and hospitals. They are falling behind with their medication and testing for underlying conditions. The consequences of this is that a second health crisis is almost certainly being created as a result of the lockdown.

The most prevalent fears currently are focused on contracting Covid-19 and the fear of unemployment, with the latter being

the greatest fear. Unfortunately, most South African's are moving slowly through the Kubler-Ross Grief stages with 41% still stuck in the phases of denial, anger and bargaining and only 23% accepting the current state of affairs. Interestingly, women have moved into an acceptance stage faster than most men.

The majority of South Africans – 71% - are concerned about the levels of corruption in healthcare with 69% believing corruption has increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. Around 76% of people believe that political criticism of corruption is all talk with no action. An alarming 76% of people believe corruption is so entrenched that they have lost all hope of it being halted. Just over half of the country's citizens (52%) believe President Ramaphosa has the power to curb corruption although only 47% believe he is taking active steps to put a halt to it.

A growing number of citizens – 81% - want to see an example being made of those guilty of corruption rightfully arguing that corruption has distorted the upliftment and development of the people of this country.



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Ambitious lockdown relief recommendations

The current national sentiment calls for a number of ambitious lockdown relief actions. If I were asked to make recommendations based on trends revealed by the Covid-19 Tracker study they would focus on three primary areas: health, the economy and building social capital.

As far as health is concerned we urgently need to run a communication campaign to encourage citizens with comorbidities to go to clinics and hospitals for testing and chronic medication. In addition, we need to co-ordinate a team of mental health experts to address the mental health of our citizens systemically. Simultaneously, we need to co-ordinate a team of addiction experts, focused specifically on alcohol, to address the addiction cycle of heavy drinkers. Both campaigns need strong scientific spokespeople given that these individuals are the most accepted by the general population when it comes to encouraging behaviour change.

In terms of the economy, cheap data needs to be made available to businesses both as a leg up for new start-ups and to assist existing businesses to weather the current economic crisis. Red tape for informal, SMME and SMEs needs to be reduced significantly to encourage entrepreneurial talent and to reduce the cost and administrative load of doing business. Tax holidays need to be provided for all newly registered entities to encourage the informal market – and especially the taxi industry – to enter the tax net.

We need to urgently create tax breaks for PPP involving civil society and remove regulations which unnecessarily raise the cost of PPP for the state. At the same time we need to launch a corruption watch which is controlled by members of civil society, business and government equally.

In order to build social capital the President and all ministers need to hold bi-monthly televised press conferences.

Furthermore, a team of gender-based violence (GBV) experts needs to be implemented to co-ordinate an effective victim protection system before Christmas. Simultaneously we need to launch a 10-year project with transparently reported milestones to eradicate GBV in South Africa.

For more information contact Andrea Rademeyer on andrea@askafrika.co.za or Jackie Kraft on jackie@askafrika.co.za for all media queries.



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Social research **decisions** are required around HIV/Aids and more recently, Covid-19. Educational and early childhood development, fair-trade shopping, media and financial research are some of the areas we love to work in. NGO's, public- and private sector clients choose to work with us to get the pulse of the nation.

Besides being decisioneers in brand and customer experience research, Ask Afrika is well known for creating some of the most useful, go-to industry benchmarks, including the Ask Afrika Orange Index®, the Ask Afrika Icon Brands®, the Ask Afrika Kasi Star Brands and the Target Group Index (TGI). Ask Afrika's knowledge of brands is extensive. The Target Group Index (TGI) survey, which measures psychographics, service, products, media and brands, has been used by the majority of the top 50 advertisers and media owners in South Africa for nearly two decades.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrea Rademeyer is the CEO and founder of Ask Afrika.

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