

'Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo' (You strike a woman, you strike a rock.)

Issued by [Ask Afrika](#)

8 Mar 2021

The Covid-19 pandemic has taken a toll on the women of South Africa emotionally, mentally, physically and socially. In the past year women have had to face a higher rate of unemployment than men, were more dependent on social grants to survive and struggled more than men to manage financially during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, despite these traumas, women continue to prove their resilience.

Women are adept at dealing with the Covid pandemic and subsequent impacts



According to Ask Afrika's Covid-19 Tracker Study Gender Report for SA, 58% fewer women assumed full-time jobs compared to men in 2020. They have also been more fearful about the pandemic, particularly the fear of losing their lives. As a result, about half of South Africans are suffering from one or more symptoms of depression although women are significantly more likely to admit to feeling this way. A total of 54% respondents said they experienced feelings of irritability, 52% had anxiety and worries, 50% had difficulty sleeping and 48% said they had fatigue or loss of energy.

In fact, the study found that all symptoms of social dysfunction have increased in 2021 compared to 2020, particularly for women. An alarming 56% of respondents said depression had increased, 54% said anxiety had increased, 46% said irritation had increased, 41% said substance abuse had increased and 40% said gender-based violence had increased. However, fear of the police remains an issue with 31% of respondents saying that they do not trust the police to assist victims.

"The fact that a large proportion of the population are feeling traumatised will undoubtedly have a long-term impact and, as such, should be of significant concern," says Andrea Rademeyer, founder and CEO of Ask Afrika and the project lead on the Covid-19 Tracker Study.

She points out, however, that crises can act as a trigger for psychological growth in people. "It is possible that the ubuntu value so prevalent in Black and rural communities provides the social resource to increase resilience in order to deal with the crisis constructively."

Although the ubuntu value has been in decline in wealthier and metropolitan areas, Rademeyer reveals a paradoxical increase in ubuntu-like collaboration between business, civil society and government. "That collaboration is a new shoot and illustrates the extent to which the Covid crisis has brought about constructive structural change to our society when the resources of large stakeholders are pooled."

The study's data shows quite clearly that women, although more stressed than men, have applied greater personal agency to sanitation behaviours, emotional support and accepting the reality of the pandemic, she reveals. According to the Covid-

19 Tracker Study, women are adhering to the recommended preventative measures including staying at home as much as possible, mask-wearing and washing hands regularly.

Women are significantly more likely than men to wear a mask when leaving home with 92% saying they always wear a mask when they leave home, 67% saying they wash their cloth masks regularly, 52% saying they throw their disposable masks away after use and don't re-use them.

They are also more likely to use alcohol-based sanitiser and wash their hands frequently than men. A total of 79% of women say they wash their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds, while 67% said they use alcohol-based sanitiser on their hands when they don't have access to soap and water. When experiencing Covid symptoms, women are more likely than men to seek medical attention. They are also more likely to take vitamins and minerals.

"Alcohol consumption and other substance abuses are both part of dysfunctional coping strategies – and while they are not exclusively employed by men – the stark rise in gender-based violence does point to men suffering from dysfunctional coping strategies, which includes disengagement, venting, denial, self-blame as well as alcohol and substance abuse," says Rademeyer, adding that women, on the other hand have used cooking and baking as a measure of survival in the past year.

Hope, she explains, is an important element during times of crisis. Globally, hope has been provided through the rapid development of vaccines to protect against Covid-19. The Covid-19 Tracker Study, however, has revealed that many women are concerned about getting vaccinated. Although women are more likely to trust the safety of Covid-19 vaccines than men, 20% of women who trust the safety of the vaccine are unsure of whether they will get vaccinated or not. On the upside, however, women are significantly more aware of the vaccine schedules than men.

One of the biggest learnings from the pandemic, maintains Rademeyer, is that despite being subjected to the same involuntary stress test during Covid as men, women have shown a significant degree of resilience. "During lockdown both men and women were subjected to job losses, home-schooling, reduced access to chronic medicine and food insecurity. However, women have the added burden of being subjected to more incidents of gender-based violence."

South Africa is not alone in having seen a rise in gender-based violence in the past year. A recent *Time* magazine article by Madeline Roache reported that calls for help from abuse victims doubled and even tripled in many countries as lockdowns trapped women at home with their abusers. More than 120 countries have, in response, put additional measures in place to support female survivors.

One exception to this, reports Roache, is Russia, which has denied that domestic violence is a problem, despite Russian organisations reporting a spike in calls for help. In response, a number of nonprofits – led by women – are working to fill the vacuum left by the state via a number of different initiatives including using social media and digital campaigns to change Russian minds about domestic abuse.

Rademeyer says that rather than take women's resilience for granted, South Africa too needs a collective attempt to model fairness and respect towards women and girls. "We urgently need to give women and girls a platform to speak about the social dysfunctionalities currently playing out in society, address the traumas and start the healing process. If South Africans were able to change their behaviours so quickly with regards to hygiene, health and social distancing, then we can certainly make the same changes required to build healthier relationships."

For more information on customised reports please contact us on connect@askafrika.co.za or visit www.askafrika.co.za

About Ask Afrika

*Ask Afrika is a **decisioneering** company. We support our clients' decisions through facts. Typically, our clients' require information around social research and philanthropy, experience measures and consulting, and brand dynamics.*

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. NGOs, 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.

Our clients operate across various industries, including retail, telecoms, finance, and the public sector. We offer tailor-made and ready-to-use offerings for all our clients regardless of the size of project.

In addition to being brave, agile, vibrant and experimental, we apply deep thinking to every research project. Our aim is to be great at everything we do and to make a meaningful impact.

Partner with Ask Afrika in order to confidently make game-changing business decisions that grow your business.

▪ **Challenging to achieve Ask Afrika Icon Brands status in the FMCG industry** 18 Mar 2024

▪ **The 2023/2024 Ask Afrika Icon Brands winners announced** 7 Feb 2024

▪ **Which brands are 2023/2024's most iconic?** 31 Jan 2024

▪ **Ask Afrika makes bold appointments for global expansion** 25 Jan 2024

▪ **Why winners win! CX, the big differentiator for RMB Private Bank in the 2023 Ask Afrika Orange Index** 26 Oct

2023

Ask Afrika



We believe that research is done for the greater good - through market research, we help companies and brands identify opportunities within their business to enable sustainable growth.

[Profile](#) | [News](#) | [Contact](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [RSS Feed](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>