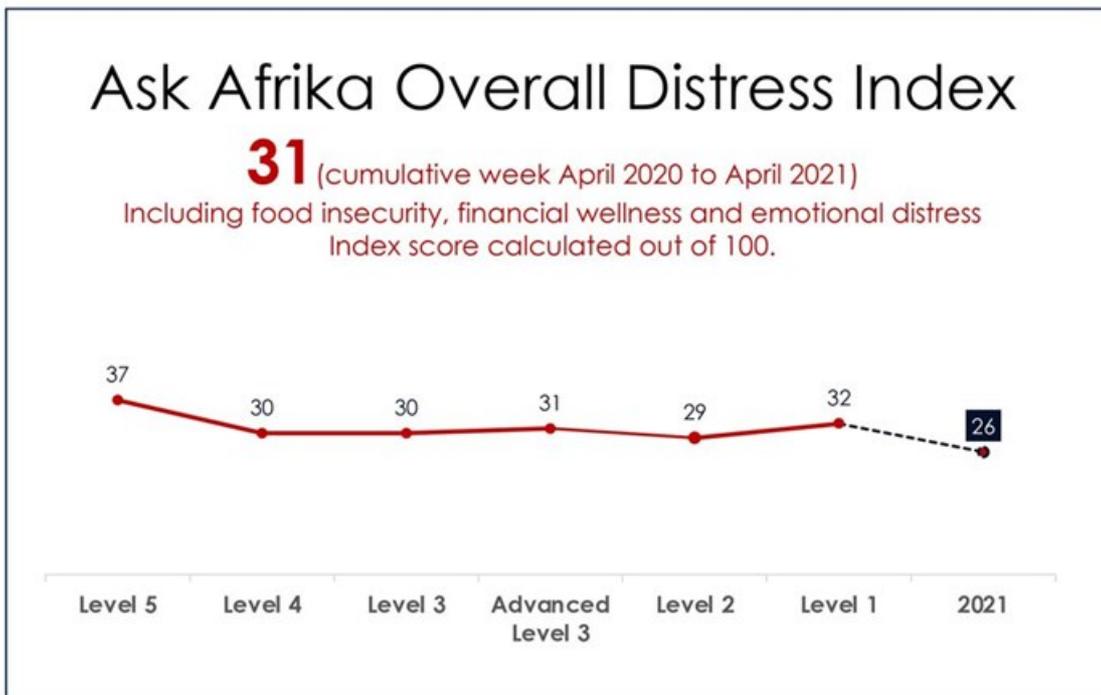


One year into the pandemic: SA shows small signs of recovery on most fronts

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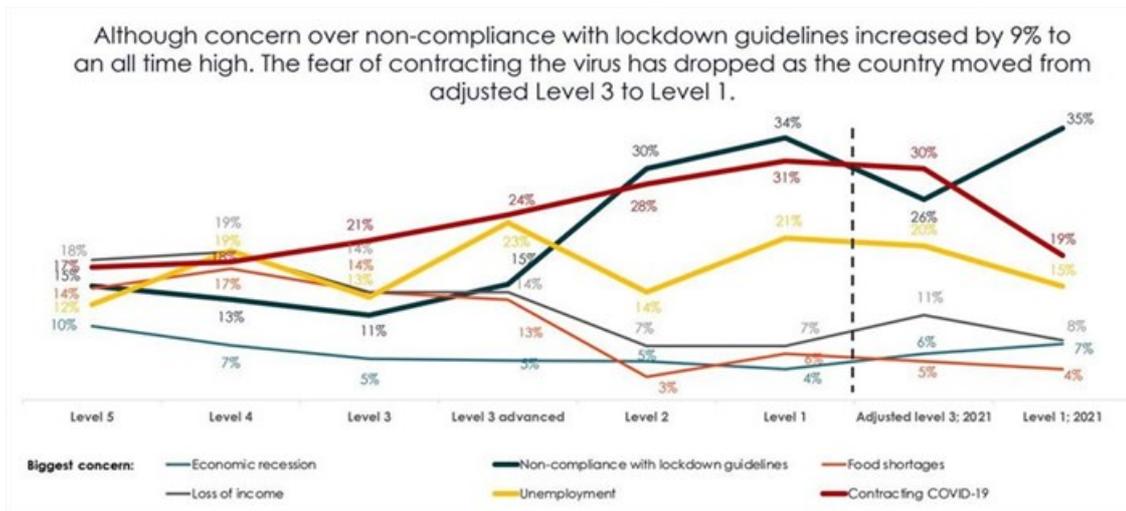
30 Apr 2021

The past year has been a traumatic one for many people. Encouragingly, however, overall distress levels are now at their lowest level since the start of the lockdown, driven by an increase in the number of people who report that they are now managing better emotionally, according to the latest report from Ask Afrika's Covid-19 Tracker study which compares the data collected between April and mid October 2020 to data collected between February and early April 2021. The provinces faring the best currently in terms of reduced distress levels are the Western Cape and Gauteng, while Limpopo and Northern Cape fare the worst.



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Ask Afrika launched the Covid-19 Tracker study in April 2020 at the start of the lockdown in South Africa. A pro-bono study, for the past year it has regularly canvassed the opinions of a demographically representative sample of South Africans in order to better understand the socio-economic impact that the coronavirus, lockdown and gradual re-opening of the economy has had on South Africans. The research, conducted with the same strong methodological rigour that Ask Afrika is renowned for delivering, has provided a platform for South Africans to give voice to their experiences since the onset of the pandemic.



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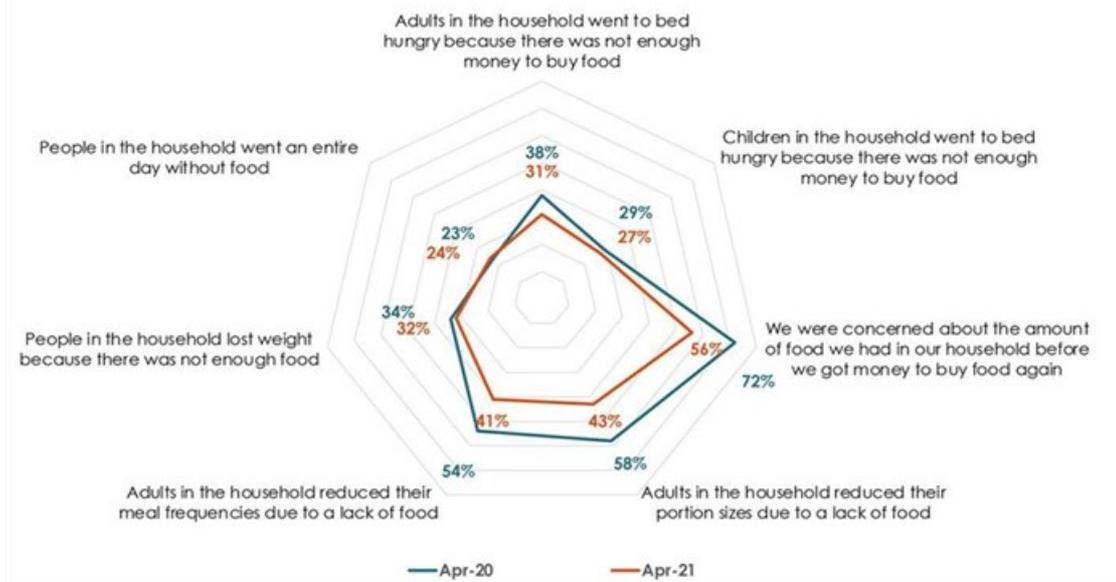
The latest results of the study reveal that the fear of fellow-citizen's non-compliance with lockdown guidance has increased by 9% to an all-time high. Fears around non-compliance in April 2021 are three times higher than in April 2020. In fact, non-compliance with lockdown guidelines has become the top concern (35% of respondents), followed by fears of contracting the virus (19%) compared to a year ago when loss of income was the main concern (20% of respondents) which was even greater than the fear of contracting the virus (17%). The highest level of fear regarding contracting the virus was in September and October 2020.

The pandemic has taken an emotional toll on South Africans with high levels of depression remaining consistent throughout the lockdown. One year into the pandemic, however, and less people are showing signs of depression as the country slowly turns the corner on emotional wellbeing. The study reveals that while citizens continue to be depressed, their fears have halved and there are tentative signs of an emotional recovery.

Although around 10% of South Africans continue to turn to dysfunctional coping mechanisms like drugs and alcohol, a third of citizens have strong awareness of coping mechanisms. The emotional wellbeing of women and youth aged 19 to 24 years old has shown a significant improvement compared to a year ago.

Food insecurity – or the fear of food shortages – has been a consistent theme throughout the pandemic. Encouragingly, this is now the lowest of all fears and is nearly a third of what it was a year ago. A year into the lockdown and there has been a significant drop in the number of adults who have reduced their meal frequency or portion sizes and fewer people going to bed hungry. Of concern, however, is the fact that half of respondents are still concerned about the amount of food in their homes, and one in four children continues to go to bed hungry. Overall, food security shows only a minimal improvement since April 2020.

Food insecurity remains high amongst South Africans.



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In order to cope financially, 58% of respondents have had to dip into their savings; 40% have borrowed money from family, friends or their employer; 39% have made arrangements for later payments; and 27% have cancelled non-essentials like car insurance. However, small shifts in household financial recovery are becoming apparent compared to April 2020. Overall, financial wellbeing shows a slightly higher improvement for women than men compared to a year ago.



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

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.

Including citizen research, Ask Afrika specialises in brand and customer experience research. We are 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. We measure psychographics, service, products, brands and media. Our data has been used by the majority of the top 50 advertisers and media owners in South Africa for nearly two decades.

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.

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

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