

Quantitative Study - Exploratory Analysis

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# Vendors and consumers facing COVID-19 in Abidjan

Attitudes, reactions and perspectives

May 25, 2020



# Context



Côte d'Ivoire

## Abidjan

This quantitative research is based on a sample of **500 residents of Abidjan and its suburbs**, who expressed their **reactions, fears and needs in the face of the coronavirus pandemic**.

The **Political Dialogue West Africa program (PDWA) of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)** commissioned **LOOKA, a market research service for Africa**, to carry out this study. Our report is made available free of charge as a contribution to the **combined efforts of the Ivorian government and civil society in the fight against the COVID-19**.

The PDWA hopes that the **data provided here** and its **analysis** will serve to guide existing initiatives and to spark new ones, as well as to favor public-private partnerships to **combat the spread of the coronavirus in Côte d'Ivoire and beyond**.



500 questionnaires (248 vendors, 252 consumers)



10 zones



9 surveyors



# Introduction

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To date, Côte d'Ivoire is among the African countries with the **highest toll of confirmed COVID-19 cases**, particularly in the economic capital **Abidjan** and its suburbs. However, the **case-fatality rate is below 2% and government restrictions have been partially lifted**.

The Ivorian government reacted quickly at the onset of the crisis. A state of emergency was declared on **March 23, while the country had only 25 confirmed cases**. By comparison, the United States had more than **1 500 confirmed cases** when the state of emergency was declared on March 13. With a dawn to dusk curfew, schools and airports closed, intra-regional travels in Côte d'Ivoire and gatherings banned, as well as restaurants and local "maquis" closed: **Ivorians were being asked to confine themselves**.

**Abidjan**, the country's largest city with about 5 million inhabitants, became the **epicenter of the pandemic** concentrating 98% of confirmed cases. Since April 21, 2020, no new cases have been recorded **in the interior of the country**. With an average of **300 tests daily**, the prevalence rate of the disease varies between 10% and 20% [1].

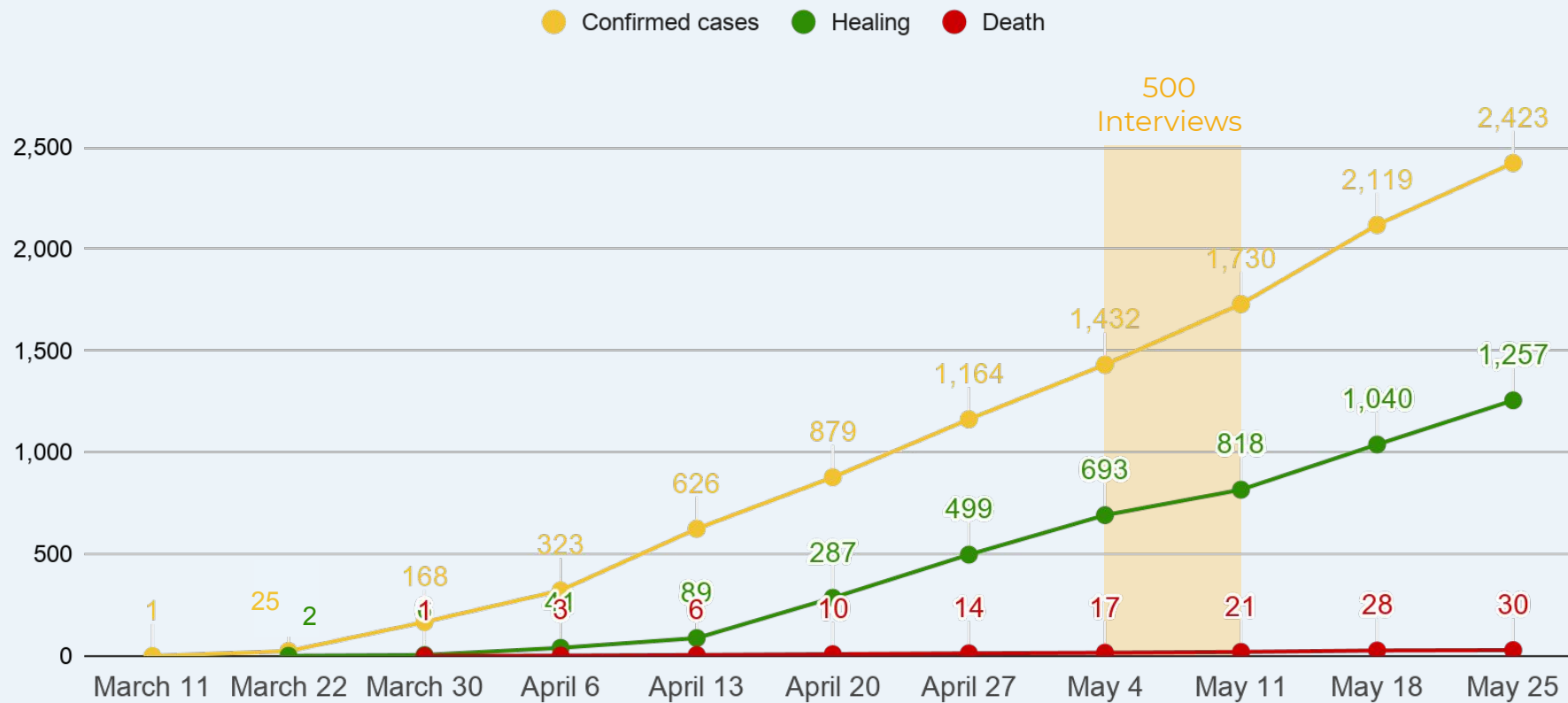
**With 2 423 cases and 30 deaths over the last two months, the dreaded "flare-up" has not occurred. However, between May 4 and 25 the number of cases rose from 1 432 to 2 423, this means there are 991 more cases and a 69% increase in three weeks.**

On May 15, President Ouattara announced a partial end to sanitary restrictions. **The curfew in Abidjan and its suburbs was lifted, restaurants and "maquis" reopened, as well as places of worship, and gatherings of less than 200 people were allowed.** Most sanitary measures in the rest of the country had already been lifted.

This study was conducted **from May 4 to the 11. After two months of a state of emergency, it provides a first assessment of the mindset in Abidjan:** the vendors and consumers interviewed voiced their reactions, choices and concerns, both with regards to public health and the socio-economic impact of the pandemic.



# COVID-19 curve Côte d'Ivoire



# Methodology

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The sample of respondents is as representative as possible, under current conditions of **social distancing** and **health concerns** for our surveyors.

A targeted sample drawn from the contacts of our investigators was interviewed according to **several criteria (age, gender, neighborhoods, and professional activity)**. Their answers **highlight trends** that reflect the demographics of the Ivorian population, without any pretension to be statistically representative at the national level.

## Demographic Information

- **Gender:** 51% female and 49% male.
- **Digitalisation:** Total of 72% smartphones, 12% of standard phones and 17% who own both.
- **Age:** 18 years old or above, 64% are under 35 years old
- **Socio-professional category:** 31% of employees, 26% of managers, 13% of students, 13% unemployed, 10% of freelancers, 7% of civil servants, and 1% retired.
- **Activities of vendors:** 31% food retail, 22% clothing and footwear, 17% cosmetics and jewelry, 16% hardware store, 8% electronics and 6% other activities.

## Data Collection

Our surveyors conducted **telephone interviews in Baoulé, Dioula, and French** using a directive questionnaire drawn up on our collection tool: the **LOOKA mobile application**.

Each questionnaire has been **validated by our Lab and Data Analyst**, based on our **questionnaire verification interface** developed for this purpose.

## Confidence Interval

The sample of 500 people represents the target population **at a confidence level of 95%** and a **4.4% margin of error**.

## Dates

**April 30:** Pre-tests — adaptation of the questionnaire  
**May 4 - 11:** 500 telephone interviews — 7 days



## 5 key findings

- **WORRIES DOWN (54%), CASES UP**  
54% are less worried now than two weeks ago, although cases are increasing by 20 to 30% each week
- **TELEVISION AS THE MAIN SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON COVID-19 (62%)**  
For 2 out of 3 people their main source of information is TV, though 89% own a smartphone
- **OVERALL, FOR 66% COVID-19 WAS CREATED IN A LABORATORY**  
In particular 81% of students share that belief
- **25% IN FAVOR OF A TOTAL QUARANTINE**  
1/4 of the respondents favor home quarantine for 2 to 3 weeks
- **A GREAT MAJORITY IN FAVOR OF A LOCKDOWN OF SCHOOLS (72%)**  
(The reopening of schools is planned for May 25)
- **FOR 21% OF VENDORS, INTRA-REGIONAL TRAVEL IS THE MOST URGENT NEED**  
For 81% among them their turnover has decreased







| Study scope



This study covers **10 communes** of Abidjan and its suburbs:

- Abobo
- Cocody
- Yopougon
- Koumassi
- Treichville
- Adjamé
- Port-Bouët
- Marcory
- Attécoubé
- Le plateau



# Perceptions & Awareness

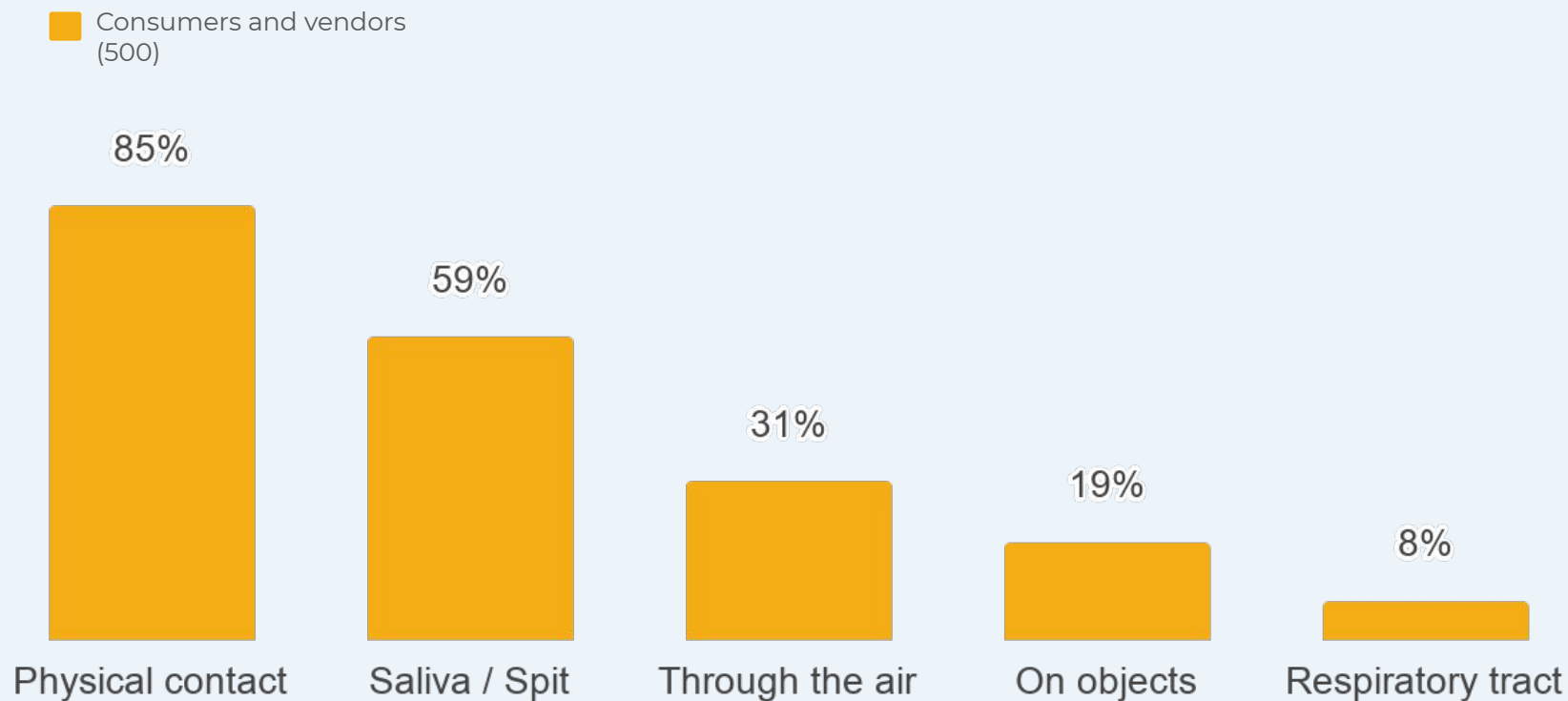
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## Vendors and consumers facing COVID-19 in Abidjan: Attitudes, reactions and perspectives

How is COVID-19 transmitted? (Multiple answers possible)



The **majority of the respondents, vendors as well as consumers, are knowledgeable** of the various ways by which COVID-19 is transmitted.

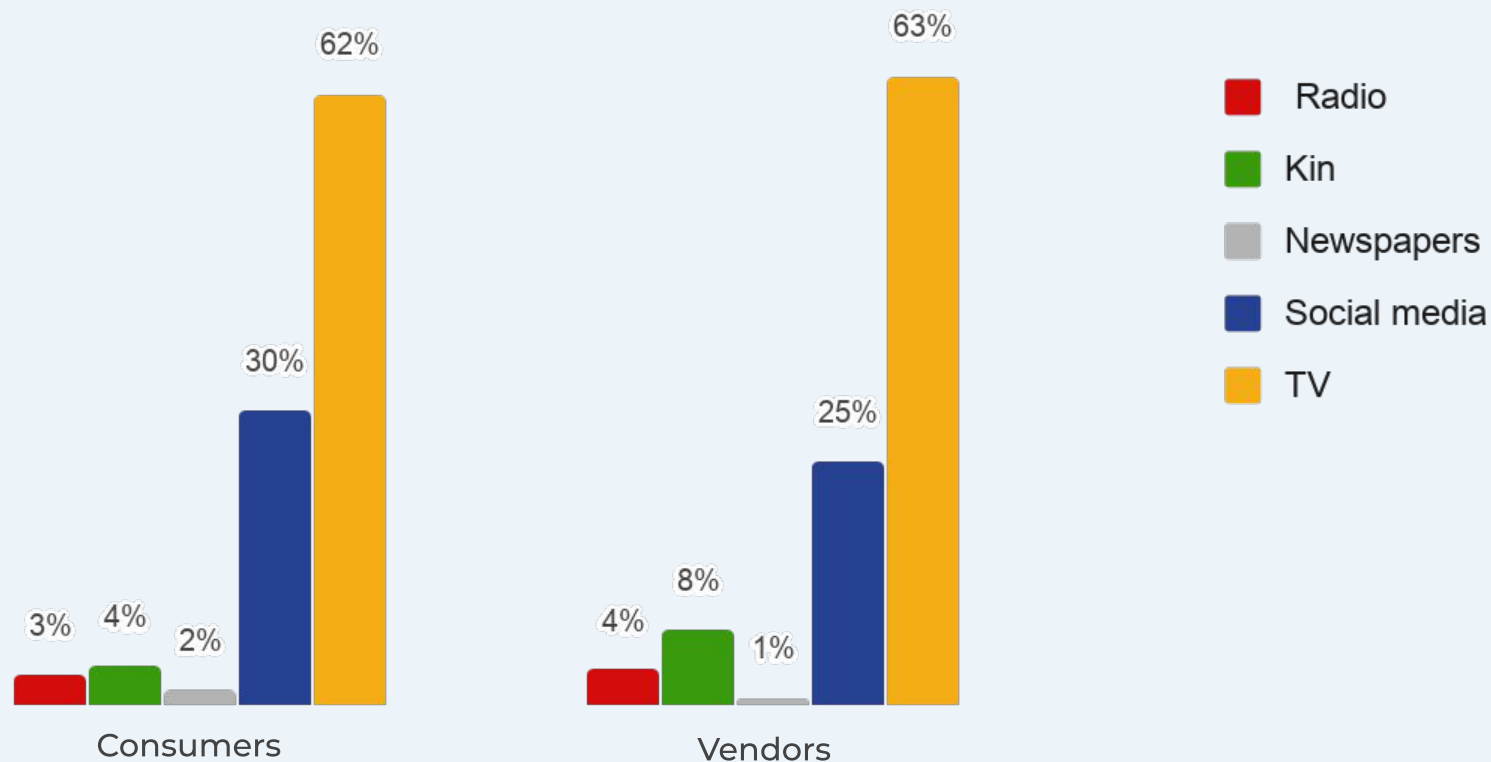
Since May 15, in Abidjan and its suburbs, **wearing masks** is mandatory in public.

8 out of 10 people know that the coronavirus is transmitted through "physical contact"





? What is your main source of information on COVID-19?



Only about 1 in 3 people get their information through social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook.

In total, 89% have a smartphone but many are afraid of "fakes news" and rely on the national broadcaster (Radio Télévision Ivoirienne).

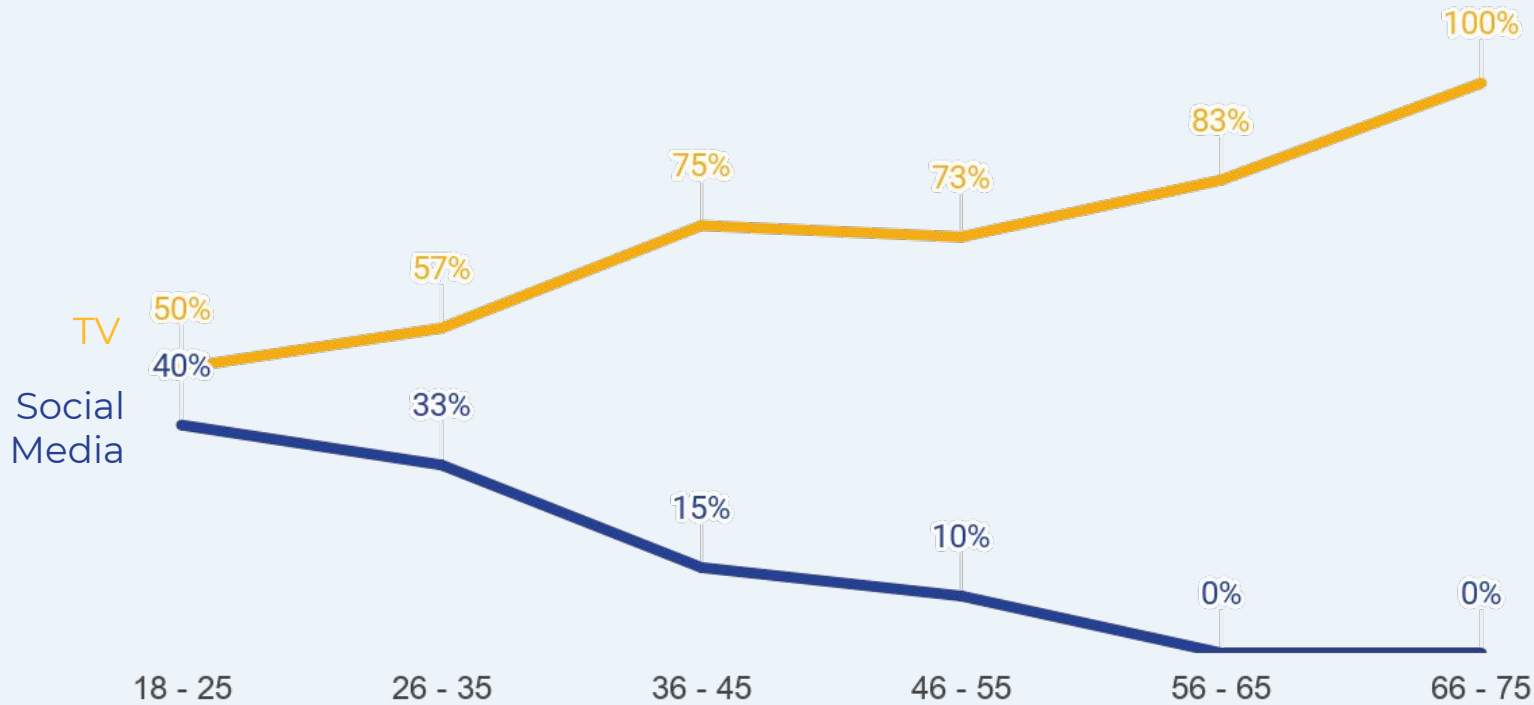
Their preference is a "direct" and "visible" contact with a governmental source on TV..

For 2 out of 3 people, TV is the main source of information on COVID-19





? What is your main source of information on COVID-19? (by age)



#### Statistical Correlations

The chi-square test reveals a **strong dependency between the main source of information and the age group.**

**Older people have more trust in television, while younger people tend to rely more on social media.**

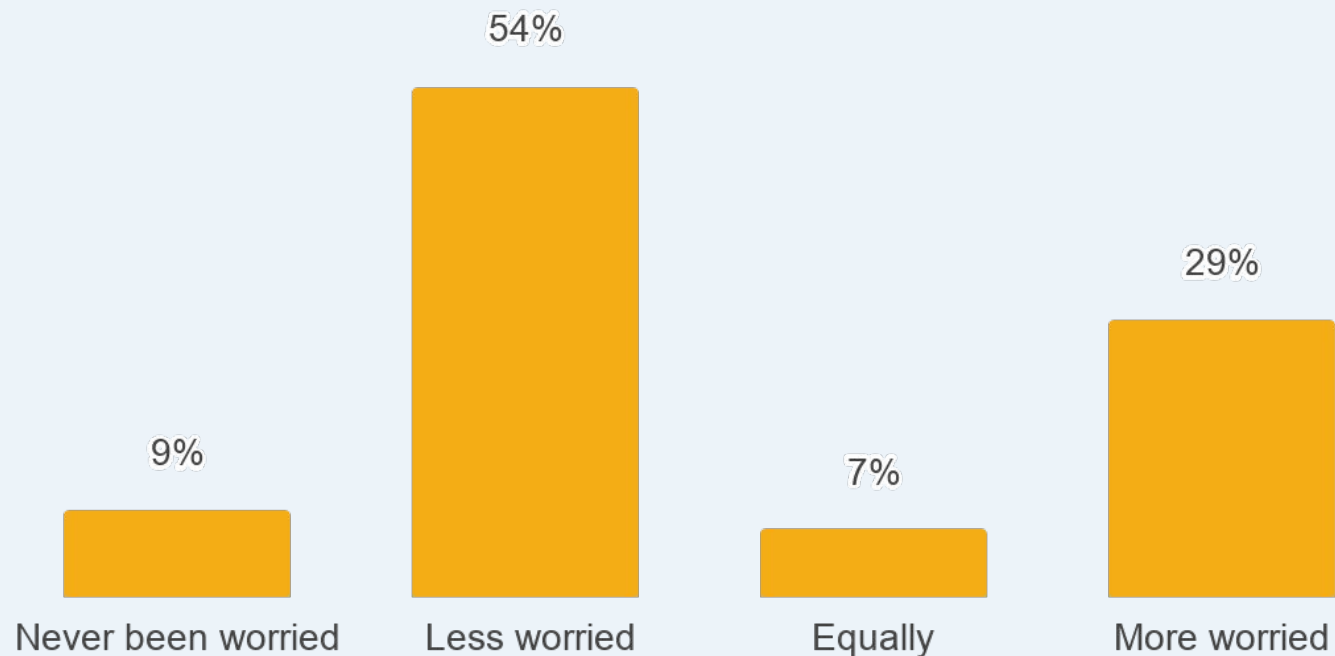
Only 13% of those aged 36-75 use social media as their main source of information



## Vendors and consumers facing COVID-19 in Abidjan: Attitudes, reactions and perspectives

Are you **more** or **less** worried today than you were two weeks ago?

Consumers and vendors  
(500)



More than 1 in 2 people are less worried today than they were two weeks ago



**"We have never seen cases, the government should show us sick or cured people on television."**



Many respondents express a drop in concerns due to the low **case-fatality rate (less than 2%)**. However, the number of cases is increasing between **20 and 30%** each week.

**36% are more or equally worried.**



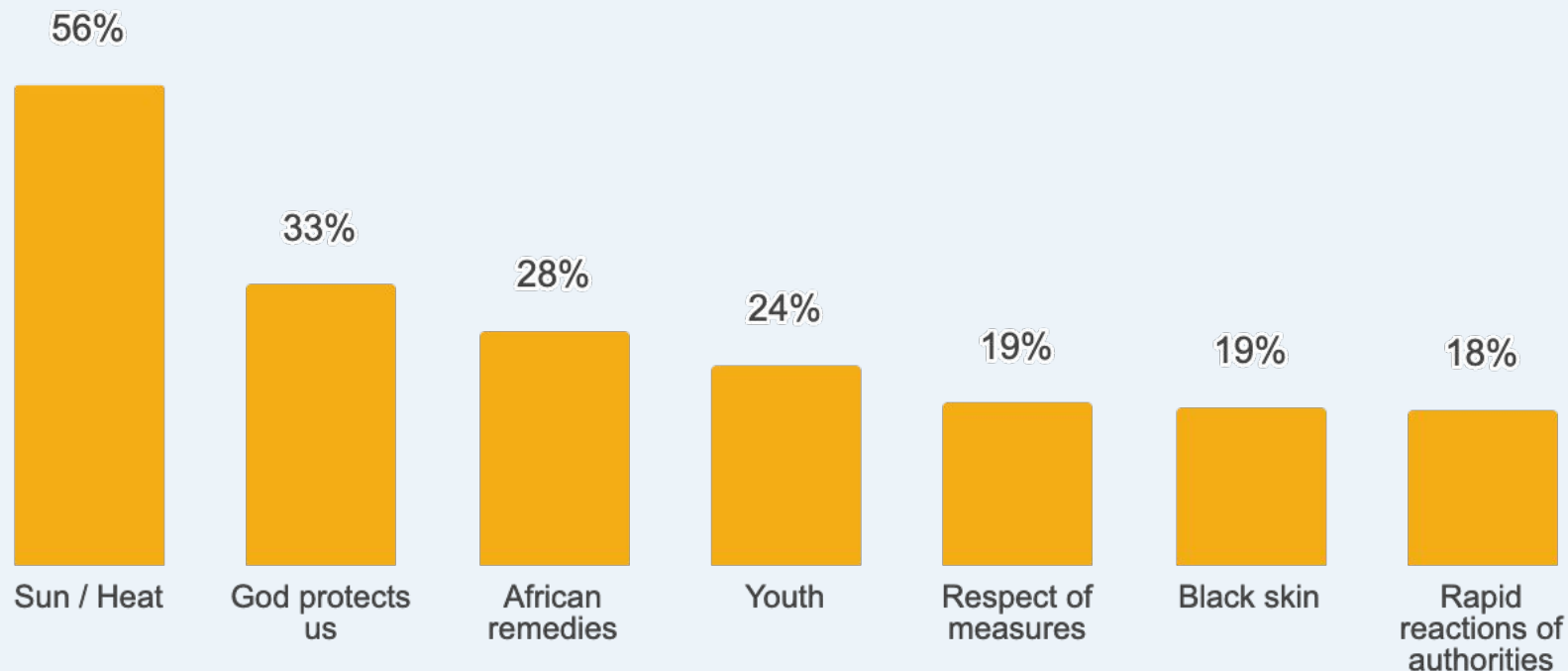
## Vendors and consumers facing COVID-19 in Abidjan: Attitudes, reactions and perspectives



Currently, Africa has fewer confirmed cases than other parts of the world. How do you explain it? *(Multiple answers possible)*



Consumers and vendors  
(500)



| 56% think that the sun/heat are protecting African populations



19% think **black skin** is a protective factor against the coronavirus.

**"African remedies" (28%) cited include:** chloroquine, neem leaves, as well as steam baths, artemisia, and herbal treatments by traditional practitioners.

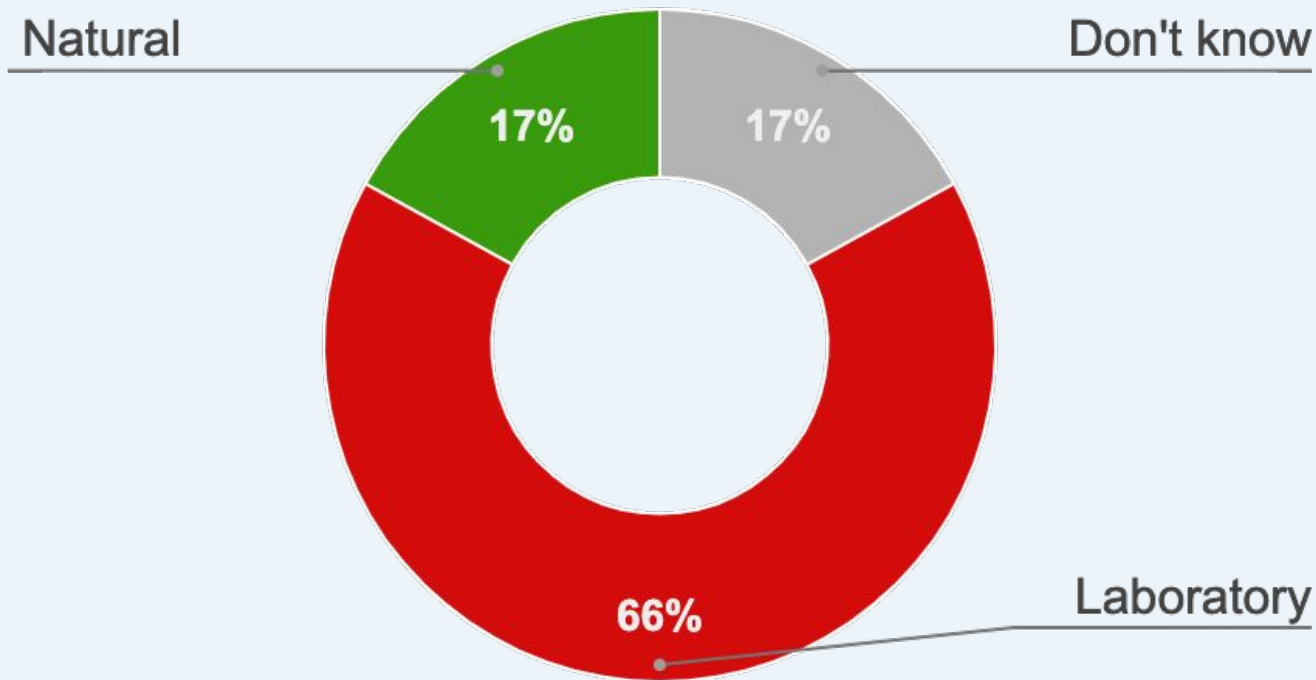
### Other responses:

- It's coming (6%)
- False numbers (6%)
- Don't know (6%)
- Strong immune systems (4%)





❓ In your opinion, was the virus born **naturally** or was it **created** in a laboratory?



| For 2 out of 3 people, the virus was created in a laboratory

#### Statistical Correlations

The chi-square test reveals a **strong dependency** between this question and the socio-professional category.

In particular, **students** respond differently:

- **81%** think that COVID-19 was created in a **laboratory**

**Conspiracy theories** related to the creation of the COVID-19 widely circulate on **social media** — and for **45% of interviewed students, social media is their main source of information.**



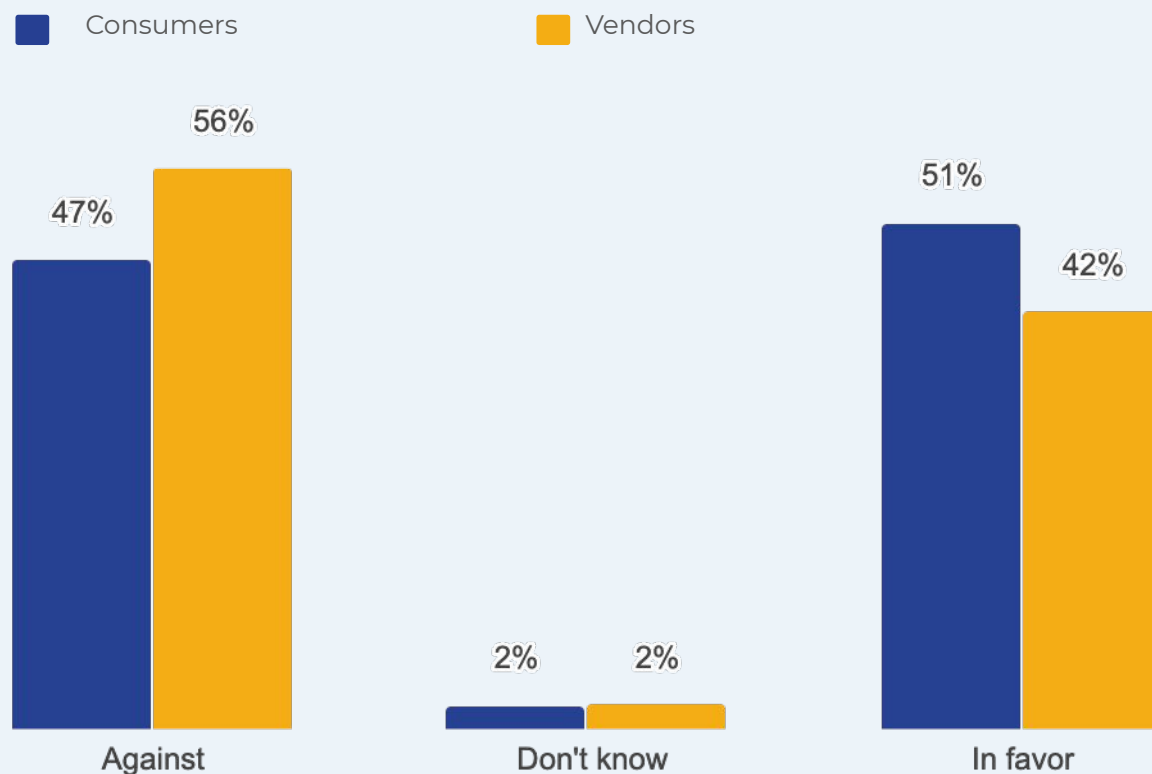


# Reactions to sanitary measures and the economic impact

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Are you **in favor** or **against** a curfew ?



| A total of 52% are against a curfew



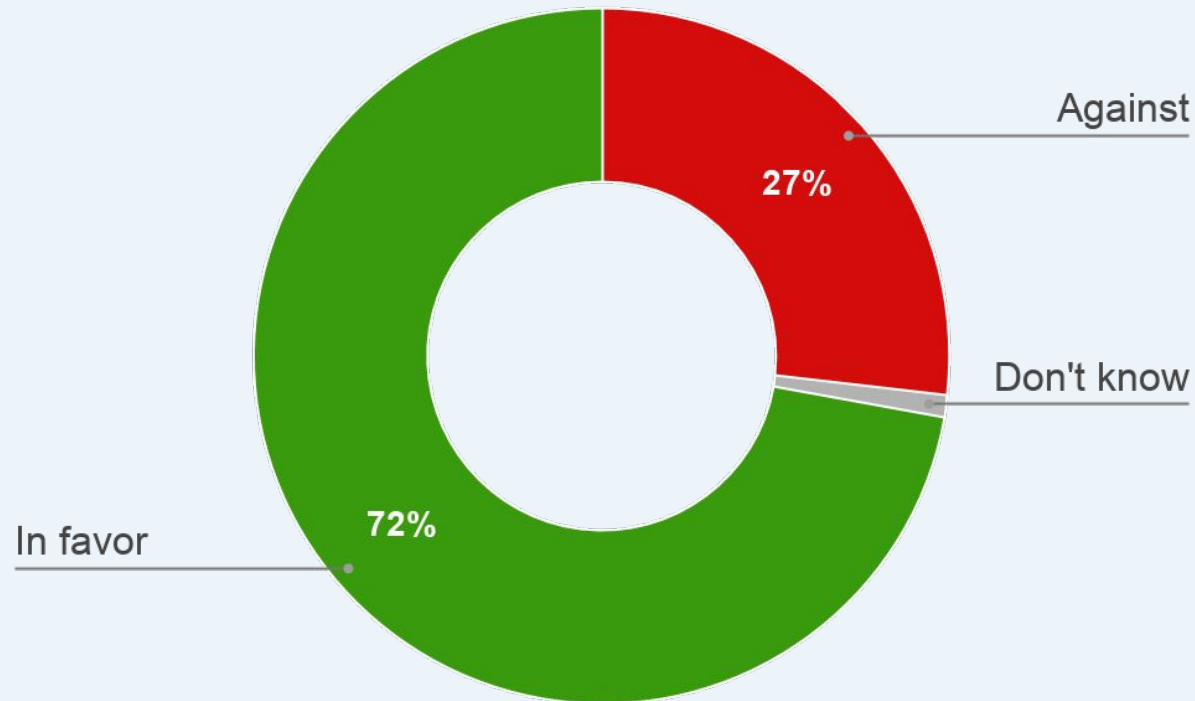
The chi-square independence test shows that these responses are independent of whether respondents are vendors or not.

A total of **46% are in favor** of a curfew, reflecting a split in options related to this measure.

**NB:** as of **Friday May 8, the hours were extended from 11pm to 4am** instead of 9pm to 5am. The curfew was lifted on May 15.



Are you **in favor** or **against** the lockdown of schools?



Despite a **decline in COVID-19 concerns**, a majority **do not want to send children back to school**.

The date for the **reopening of schools** was announced post-study for May 25.

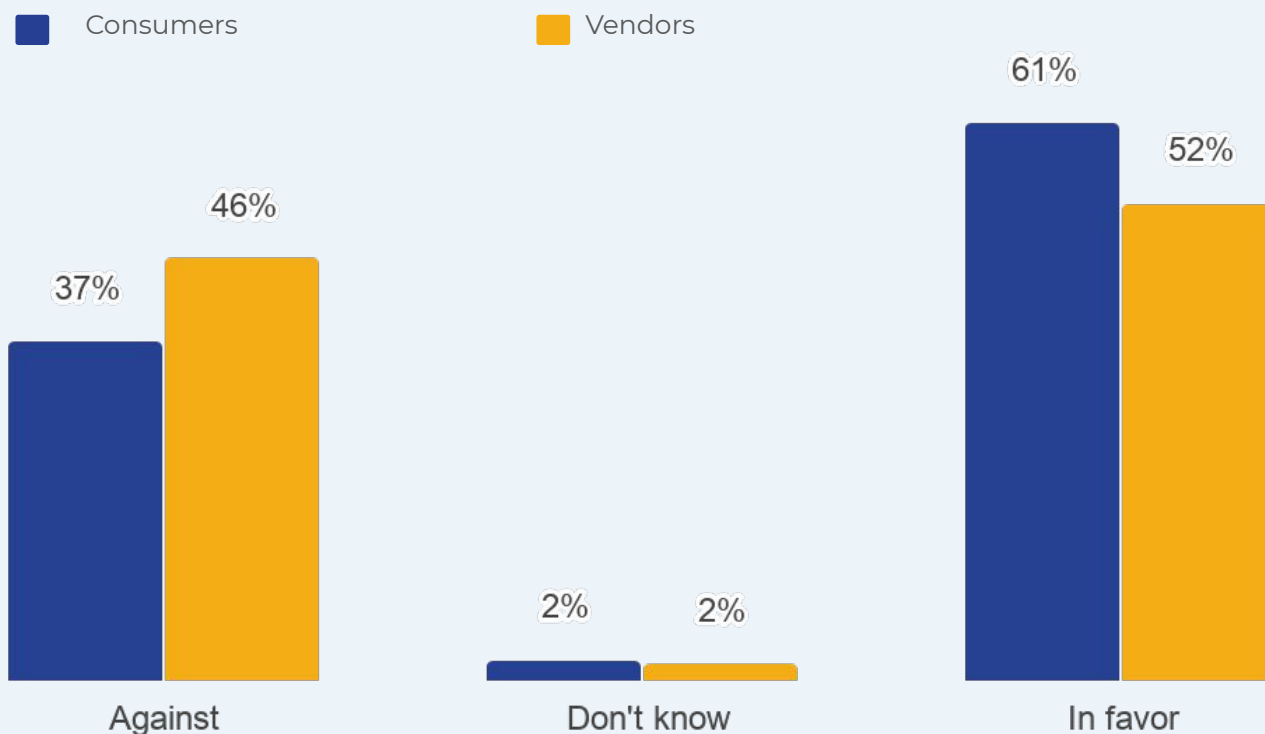
Schools have reopened in the **rest of the country** since May 8.

| *Nearly 3 out of 4 people are in favor of the lockdown of schools*



## Vendors and consumers facing COVID-19 in Abidjan: Attitudes, reactions and perspectives

Are you **in favor** or **against** the ban on intra-regional travels?



**46%** of vendors are **against** the ban on intra-regional travels.

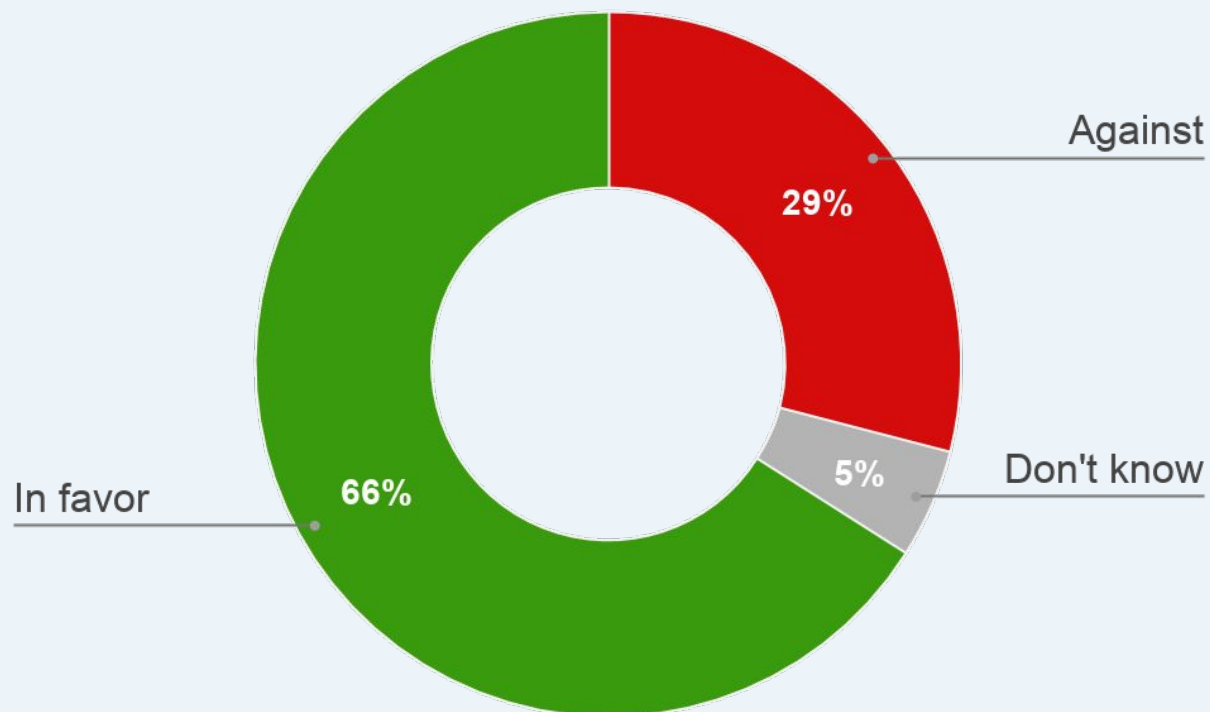
Despite the ban on the **movement of people** outside Abidjan, **goods** are allowed to circulate.

**NB:** since May 7, travels are permitted **between regions in the interior of the country**.

| A total of 56% are in favor of the ban on intra-regional travels



❓ Are you **in favor** or **against** the opening of screening centers in your neighborhood?



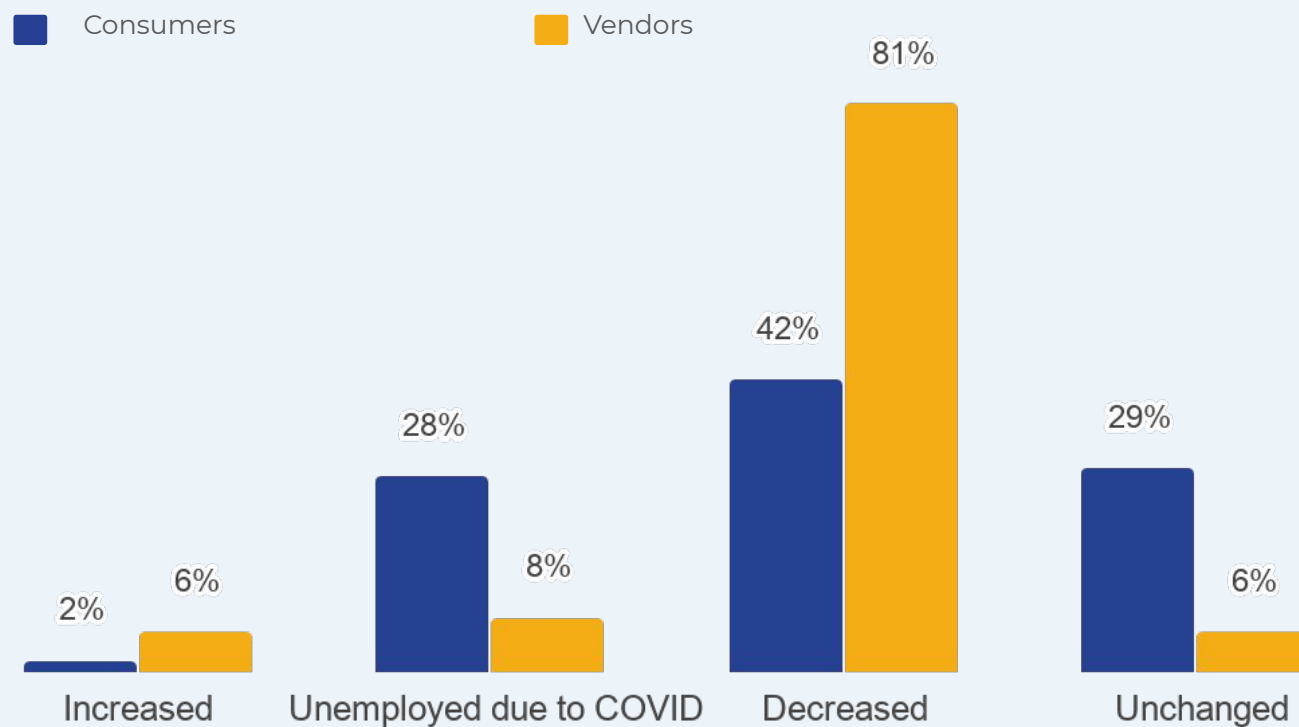
Despite upheaval in **Yopougon** on April 6th and the destruction of a screening center, **2 out of 3 people interviewed** are in favor of building such centers in their neighborhood (4 centers are already **operational**).

However, almost **1 in 3 people** are against, and rumor has it that centers are being set up to **vaccinate Ivorians without their consent**.

66% are in favor of opening screening centers in their neighborhood to test for COVID-19



? Has your income or turnover changed due to the COVID-19?



**28% of the unemployed** due to COVID-19 are **consumers**, three times more than **vendors** — **the latter are experiencing a drop in income but are adapting.**

The **majority of the unemployed** due to COVID-19 are:

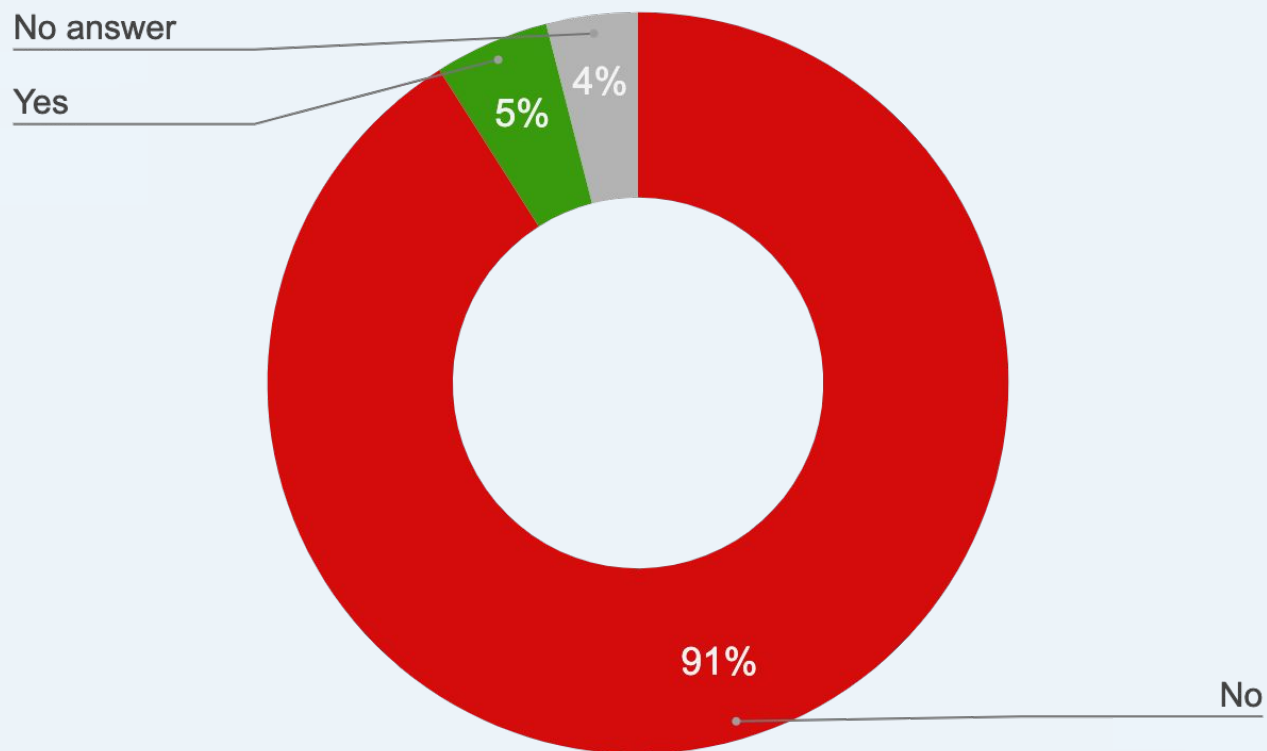
- 30% of employees
- 21% of students
- 10% of civil servants
- 7% of the self-employed

*89% of vendors have experienced a drop in their turnover or are unemployed due to the COVID-19*





Have you benefited from government economic aid?



Only 5% said they had received economic aid (26 people)



"You have to **keep an eye on the aid**, those who are meant to distribute it keep it to themselves and it becomes personal."

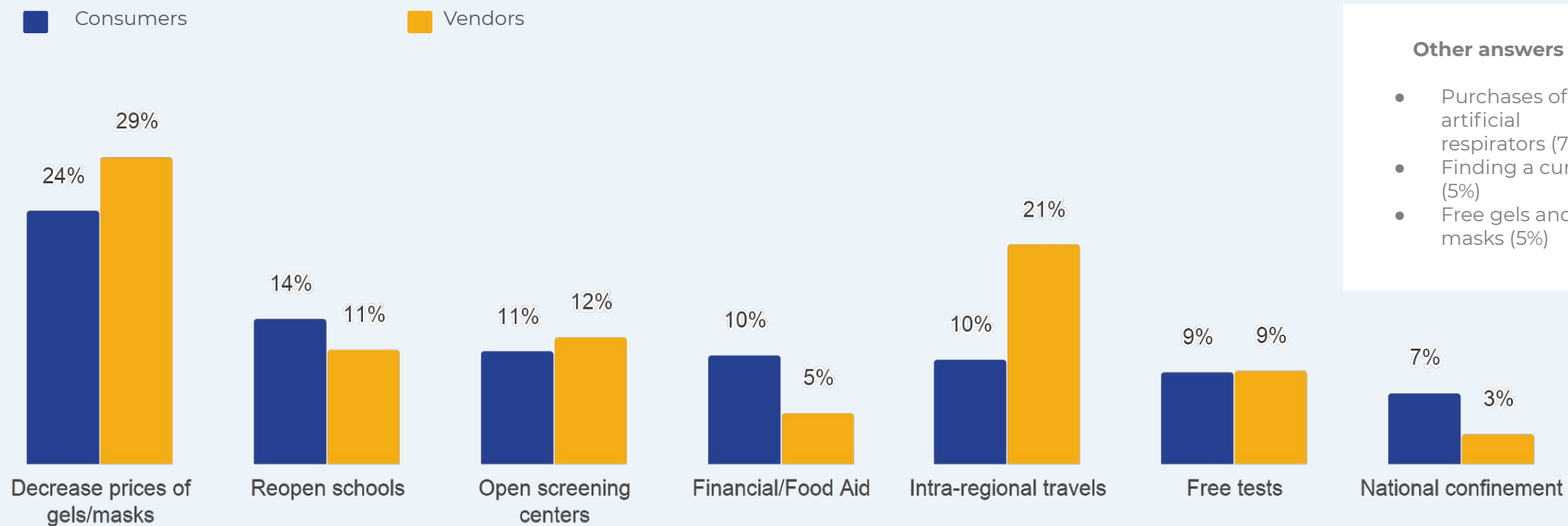


Respondents are **frustrated** by the distribution of aid, with many citing favoritism or not knowing how to obtain help.

Aid includes **stipends** for the most vulnerable, **food**, or the **deferral or bills (such as electricity)**.



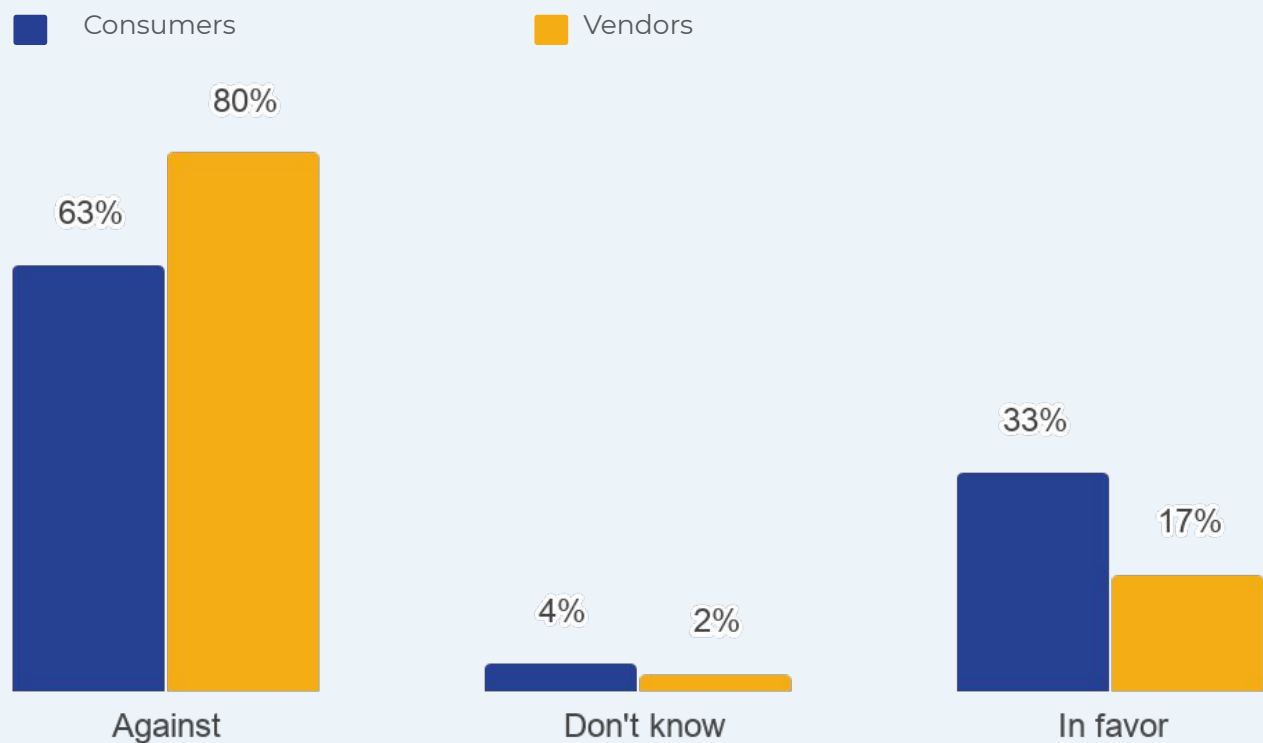
? What do you think is the most urgent need at the moment?



*The two emergencies for vendors are to lower the price of masks and gels, as well as to lift the ban on intra-regional travels*



Are you **in favor** or **against** a home quarantine of the population for 2 to 3 weeks?



**80%** of vendors are **against home quarantine**, mainly due to the potential **economic downfall on their activities**.

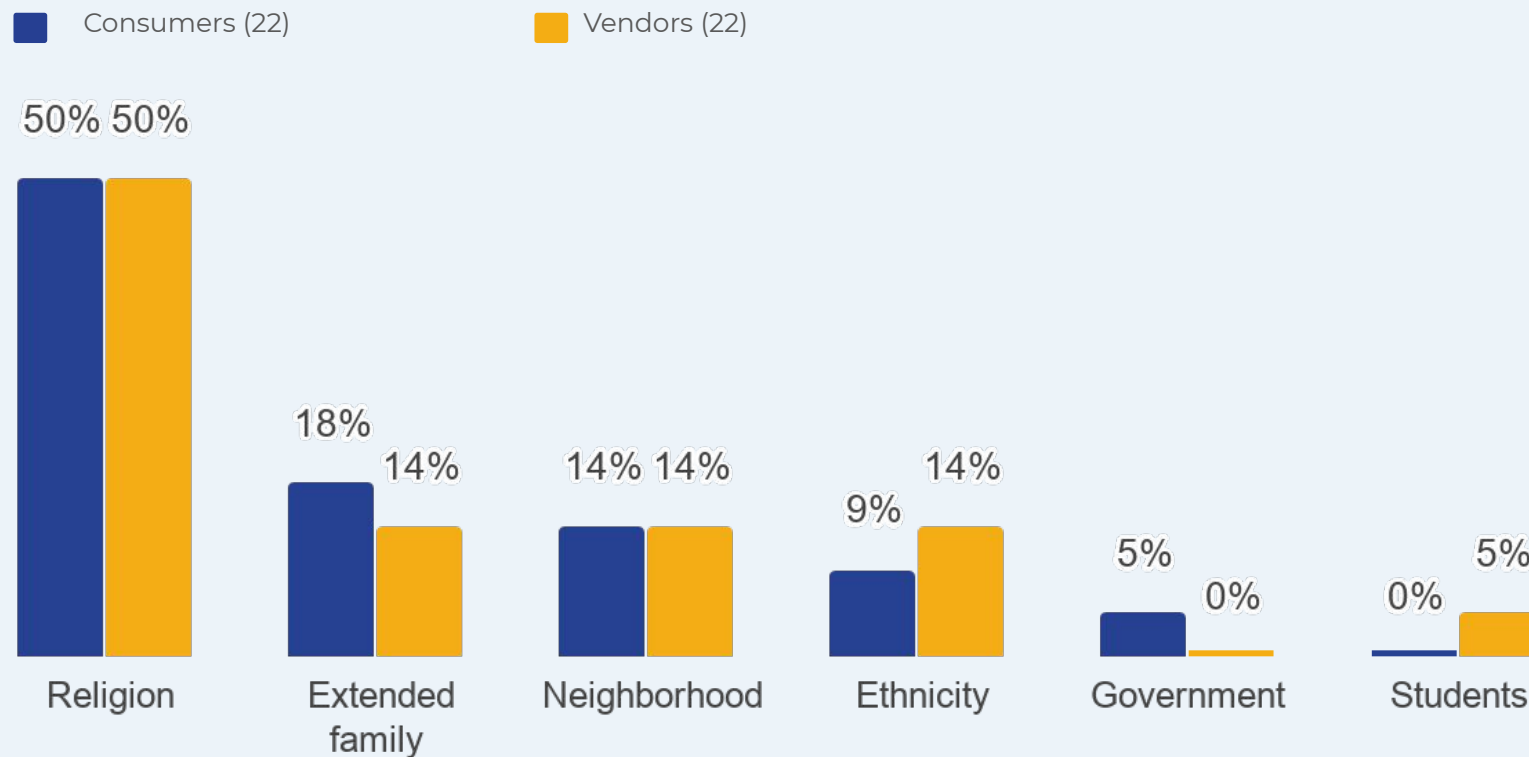
However, a total of **25%** of respondents are **in favor**.

| A total of 71% are opposed to a home quarantine



## Vendors and consumers facing COVID-19 in Abidjan: Attitudes, reactions and perspectives

? If you receive aid from a committee or association against COVID-19, on what basis are they organized?



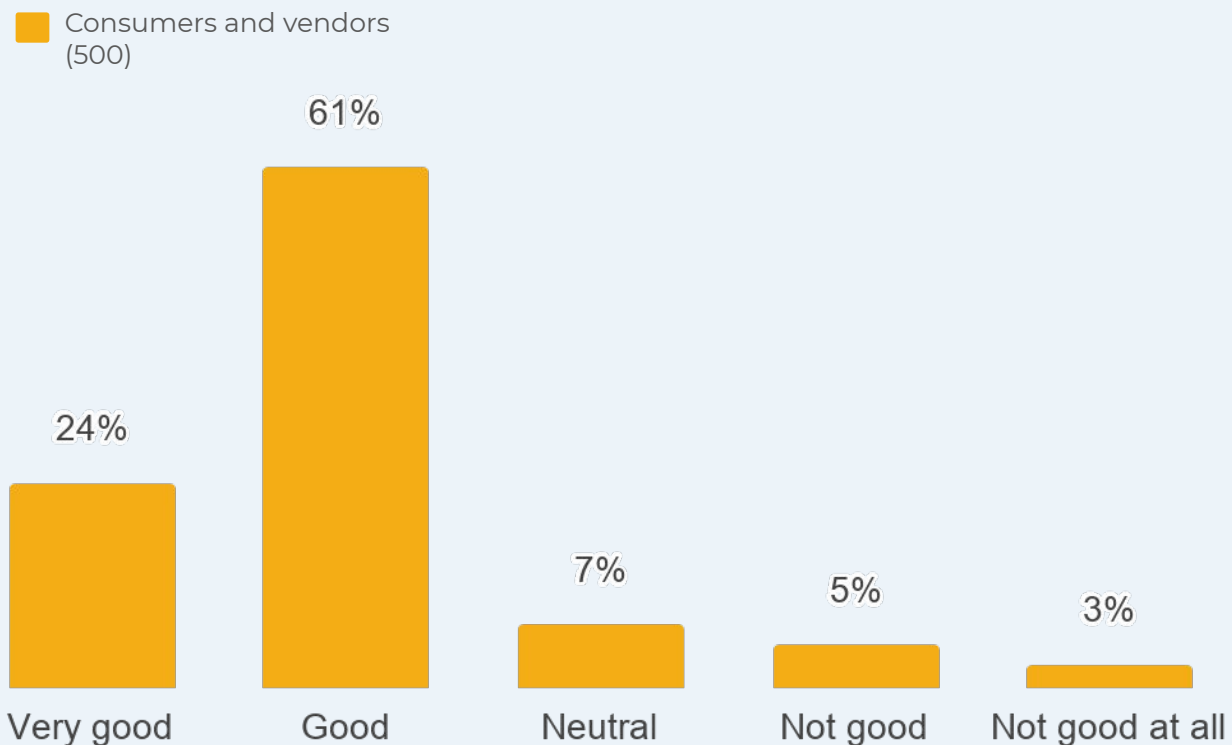
**NB:** Only **8% have benefited** from the help of a committee or association against COVID-19.

In total, **3% of respondents** belong to committees or associations **to help people in their village.**

Nearly 1 in 10 people have received help from committees/associations, half of which are based on religious affiliation



How did you feel during this interview?



| 85% felt good or very good during the interview



This question is inherent to all **LOOKA studies**, in order to take into account the well-being of respondents and to continuously **improve our methodology**.



🗨️ Any comments ? Something to add?

**“The academic levels of children are already very low, with the lockdown, how will our children know?”**

**“They should show us the sick people, we've never seen them and every time they say there are new cases.”**

**“The populations should respect social distancing measures, and the Government should distribute gels and masks freely.”**

**“Fund research to find a cure.”**





🗨️ **Vendors** : Any comments ? Something to add ?

“Lift the curfew, because there are night vendors.”

“My company sells goods all over Côte d'Ivoire, so I would really like Abidjan to be reopened.”

“I've lost my garba's clients.”  
*(popular Ivorian dish made of attiéké and tuna)*

“Let's learn to live with the COVID-19 while respecting sanitary measures.”



# Strategic Orientations

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### | Strategic orientations & initiatives



#### YOU NEED TO SEE IT TO BELIEVE IT: TELEVISED REPORTS OR TESTIMONIALS

Man-made virus and invisible victims? Respondents express a strong desire for "visual evidence".

Conspiracy theories widely circulate, and **66%** of respondents believe that the COVID-19 was created in a laboratory (p. 14). Others doubt the existence of the disease altogether. Despite the high penetration of smartphones (**89%**) and internet access, **62%** report a higher confidence in television as their main source of information on COVID-19 (p. 10) — particularly national TV (RTI).

Many expressed a desire to **see the ill and cured on television**. News reports and testimonies would help dispel conspiracy theories and convince residents in Abidjan of the reality of the disease in their country.



#### ECONOMY OF SCALE: JOINT ORDERS OF GOODS ON AN E-COMMERCE PLATFORM

For **21%** of vendors, the most urgent need is to allow intra-regional travels (p. 22). A trading platform for the **joint ordering of goods and products between vendors** of similar activities or living in the same neighborhood could reduce costs through "wholesale" orders, as well as a system of intra-regional "truck sharing".

This platform could also be **useful to consumers**, such as building leaseholders or occupants of shared courtyards, who want to pass a common order to obtain the best prices and goods from vendors. This low-cost home service could favor an economic revival while foster practices of solidarity that could be perpetuated beyond the COVID-19 crisis.



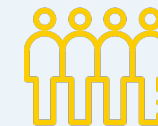
### | Strategic orientations & initiatives



#### COMPANY DISCOUNTS CONNECTING VENDORS TO EMPLOYEES WORKING FROM HOME

**8 out of 10 vendors** have seen their turnover decrease (p. 20). Since May 15, the partial lifting of measures such as the end of the curfew and the reopening of restaurants and maquis should lead to a tick up in their revenues. However, the situation remains precarious for them as well as for consumers.

In the age of working online, office automation and work supplies are often managed on an individual basis. By connecting to a company, a network of vendors can create a personalized service for employees, sponsored by the company. Vendors can offer "company discounts" to enable employees of the same company to benefit from a tailored on-demand service.



#### CREATION AND SUPPORT OF COMMUNAL GROUPS

The majority of respondents are in favor of the measures put in place by the Ivorian government — be it be the lockdown of schools (**72%, p. 17**), the opening of screening centers (**66%, p. 19**), or the ban on intra-regional travels (**56%, p. 18**). However, there is great frustration regarding the distribution of government aid, which **91%** say they have not received (p. 21).

How to distribute aid to the informal sector, which by definition is not regulated? **8%** obtain support from **committees or associations against COVID-19** (p. 24). Half of this aid is based on religious affiliation, **16%** family ties and **14%** neighborhood efforts. Only **3%** of respondents are part of committees helping people in their village against COVID-19. But the help may come from rural dwellers if Abidjan remains isolated (ex: bulk sending of food during harvests). WhatsApp groups linking urban and rural dwellers are common, and represent one opportunity to strengthen economic ties.



# Conclusion

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Two months into a state of emergency, this quantitative study highlights the attitudes, reactions and expectations of 500 vendors and consumers facing the COVID-19 pandemic in Abidjan and its suburbs.

The majority of respondents are in favor of government measures. Though the number of cases are on the rise, respondents are less worried, mainly because fatality rates are low.

Regarding the measures taken by the government, 72% of respondents are in favor of closing schools, 66% in favor of opening screening centers, 52% against a curfew (lifted after the study was conducted) and 56% in favor of banning intra-regional travels. 80% of vendors are against home quarantine for 2 to 3 weeks. Finally, a total of 91% of respondents have not received any government assistance and are greatly frustrated,

In terms of awareness, 62% of respondents trust TV as their main source of information on COVID-19 and the majority is aware of the different ways by which the coronavirus is transmitted. Nevertheless, doubts remain as to the existence of cases (sick, cured, deceased) and conspiracy theories abound — 66% believe that the COVID-19 was conceived in a laboratory purposefully, a figure that spikes amongst students (81%). For the majority of respondents, concern has declined over the past two weeks. 54% feel now less worried even though cases continue to increase by 20-30% each week.

At the economic level, 81% of the vendors state that their turnover has fallen since the beginning of the crisis. 27% of consumers and vendors express an urgent need to reduce the price of gels and masks, while 21% of vendors want intra-regional travels to be permitted.

The PDWA hopes that this study will provide guidance for existing initiatives and spark new ones in accordance with the revised sanitary measures, while remaining vigilant.





Freedom, justice and solidarity are the fundamental principles guiding the work of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). As a German political foundation, we want to encourage people to participate in shaping the future. Our focus is on people, in their unmistakable dignity, in their rights and in their duties. For us, it is the starting point for social justice, liberal democracy and a sustainable economy.

**Website:** [www.kas.de/westafrika](http://www.kas.de/westafrika)



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