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QUANTITATIVE STUDY - EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

Report July 2020

# Citizen views of the new normal in West Africa

COVID-19 Strategic Orientations based on case studies in Guinea, Benin and Togo



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## 6 key findings

1 **63%**  
do not know how  
to get tested for COVID-19

88% believe the COVID-19  
exists in their country

2 **47%**  
believe the worst  
of COVID-19 is to come

76% of Cotonou respondents  
believe the worst of COVID-19 is  
to come

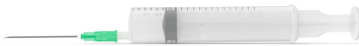
3 For **61%**  
the virus was  
created in a laboratory

19% are uncertain and 20% think it  
came about naturally



4 **49%**  
would be against getting  
vaccinated if it were available  
tomorrow

66% of those who believe the COVID  
was created in a laboratory would  
not be ready to take the vaccine



5 **57%**  
are in favor of reopening  
airports for international travel

69% are in favor of reopening  
terrestrial land borders



6 **71%**  
do not think African countries are  
showing solidarity to face the crisis

70% saw a decrease in income  
or turnover during the pandemic

## | Executive summary

After over three months of protective sanitary measures and relatively low number of cases compared to other regions of the world, African countries are increasingly lifting bans in an effort to revive their economies.

1,500 people in Conakry, Cotonou and Lomé were interviewed and asked to express their views on the handling of the COVID-19 crisis so far – what needs to improve? What are their expectations of the shape of things to come? This study builds on a previous report published in May on the reactions of 500 street vendors and consumers in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. It is part of ongoing efforts by the Political Dialogue West Africa program (PDWA) of the KAS destined to monitor citizen perceptions and needs in the face the COVID-19 crisis. Here are three essential findings to consider moving forward:

### 1 | Lacking information on testing sites and wary of a vaccine

42% of respondents get most of their COVID-19 information from social media, and amongst those, 86% go to either Facebook or Whatsapp for that information. While 88% believe the COVID-19 exists in their country and 43% are satisfied with information given by their government, 63% do not know how to get tested for the virus. Additionally, 42% do not trust the WHO and 49% would not be willing to get vaccinated if available tomorrow.

### 2 | In favor of easing restrictions for economic revival

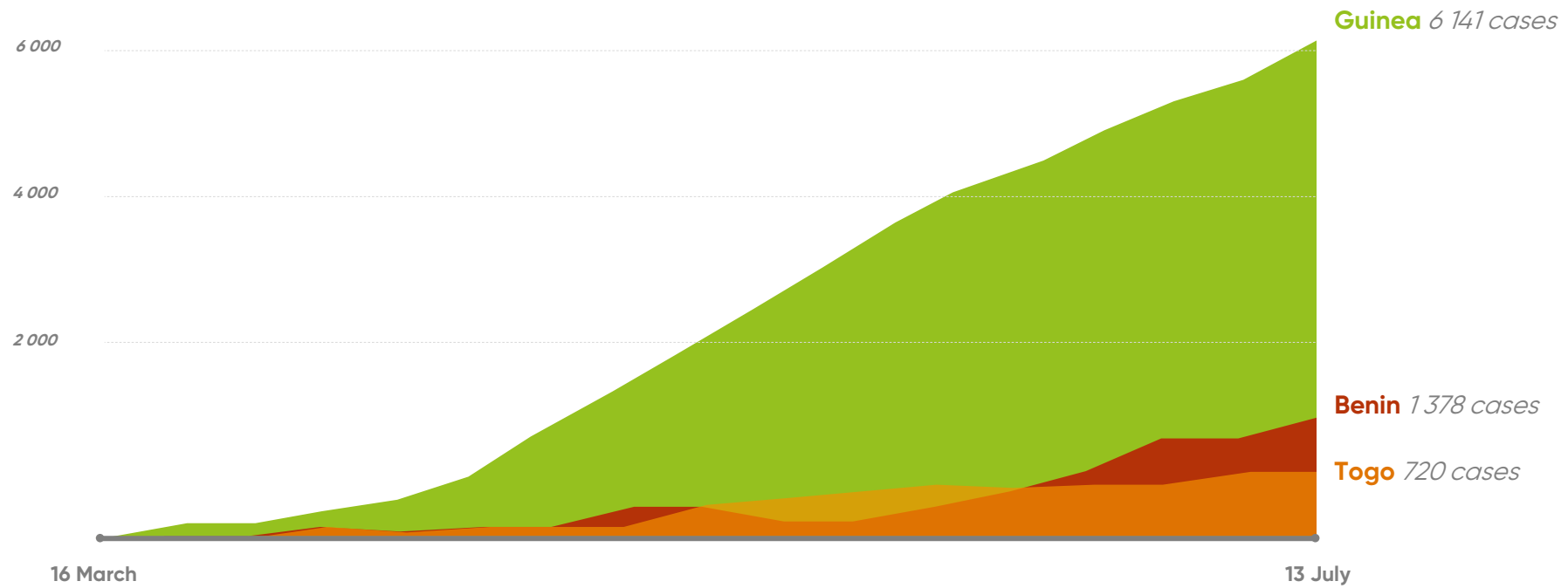
42% of citizens are satisfied with protective measures by their government since the start of the COVID crisis, but only 11% have received economic assistance from their government and 70% with an income or turnover have seen it drop. For 54% the emergency is to drop the prices of gas and transport while 33% hope for a decline in the price of food. 70% are now in favor of easing restriction measures in their country, while 47% remain wary that the worst of the pandemic is to come (some citing health concerns, while others economic struggles).

### 3 | Willingness to reopen borders with health safeguards

69% are in favor of reopening terrestrial land borders, despite 71% deploring the lack of African solidarity in the face of the crisis and 57% are in favor of airports reopening for international travels outside of Africa. The majority show a willingness to comply with potentially upcoming health measures such as 68% being in favor of compulsory national testing, 61% for border test screening and out of the 46% willing to be vaccinated, 74% would even pay for it.

# COVID-19 curve

Togo, Benin & Guinea



Sources : [worldometers.info](https://www.worldometers.info) for Benin, Togo, and Guinea

# | LOOKA Methodology

The sample of respondents was chosen according to several criteria (age, gender, and socio-professional activity). The answers highlight trends that reflect the demographics of the Guinean, Togolese and Beninese population with no claim to be statistically representative at the national level.

## Demographic information

- **Cities:** Conakry, Lomé, Cotonou
- **Gender:** 50% women and 50% men
- **Digitalization:** 65% smartphones in total, 12% standard phones, 17% have both, 5% own multiple smartphones and 2% have no phone
- **Age:** 18 years old or above, 74% are under 35 years old
- **Socio-professional categories:**
  - 32% self-employed (trader, craftsman, plumber, etc.)
  - 25% students
  - 22% employees (cleaning lady, private company, etc.)
  - 9% civil servants (professor, doctor, government official)
  - 9% unemployed
  - 3% retired

## Data Collection

Our surveyors conducted 143 pre-tests to adapt the questionnaire with key words and questions tailored to local contexts.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted by 30 surveyors in French; Soussou and Fulah in Conakry; Fon, Idaasha, Gun in Cotonou; Mina and Ewe in Togo, using a directive questionnaire written on our collection tool: the mobile application LOOKA.

Each questionnaire was validated by our Lab and Data Analyst using our questionnaire verification interface, developed for this purpose.

## Confidence Interval

The sample of 1500 respondents represents the target population at a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 2.5%.

## Dates

16-17 June: 143 pre-tests to adapt the questionnaire  
18 - 25 June: 1500 face-to-face interviews in 7 days

## I Introduction

Despite low rates of infection compared to other regions, the COVID-19 crisis has not spared African citizens economically. Cases are mounting at an increased rate but so is the economic pressure, governments are easing restrictions and life is kicking back up, while citizens learn to "live with the virus".

The Political Dialogue West Africa Program (PDWA) of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung commissioned LOOKA, a market research service for Africa, to shed light on how citizens are understanding and perceiving the pandemic, reactions to governmental measures, and in what areas they have been most negatively affected.

This report takes stock of the reactions of 1500 citizens in the cities of Lomé, Cotonou, and Conakry. These economic and political capitals serve as case studies to depict trends in West African countries with few confirmed cases (Togo), an average number of cases (Benin) and a country in the higher tier (Guinea-Conakry). All three countries reported their first cases in March and soon after Togo and Guinea declared a state of emergency which has yet to be lifted. All three countries closed their borders. Now times are changing and a new phase of coping with the virus is underway. On June 6, the Togolese government put an end to the curfew in Lomé. Benin lifted travel restrictions between cities in May and on June 2 gave permission to reopen places of worship and bars. Conakry eased its curfew from midnight to 4 AM and allowed markets to reopen.

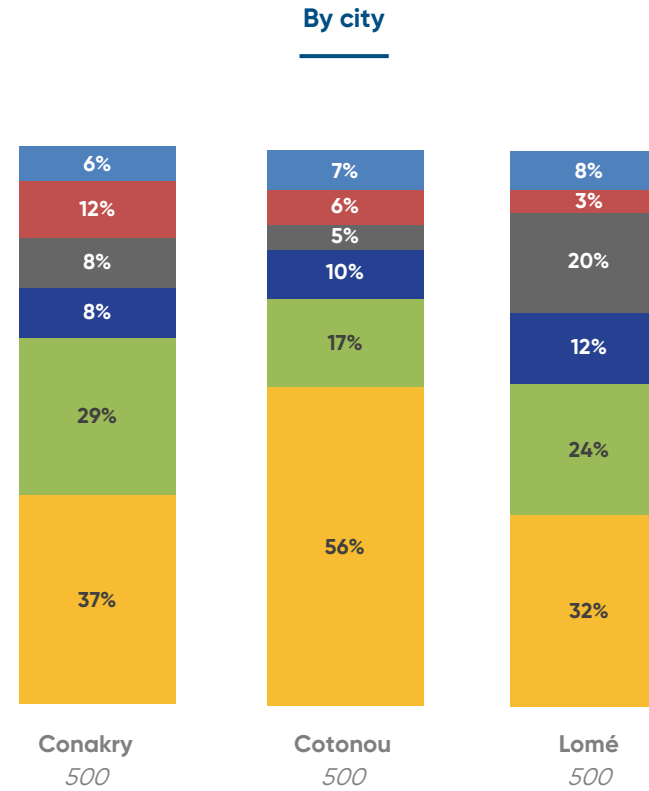
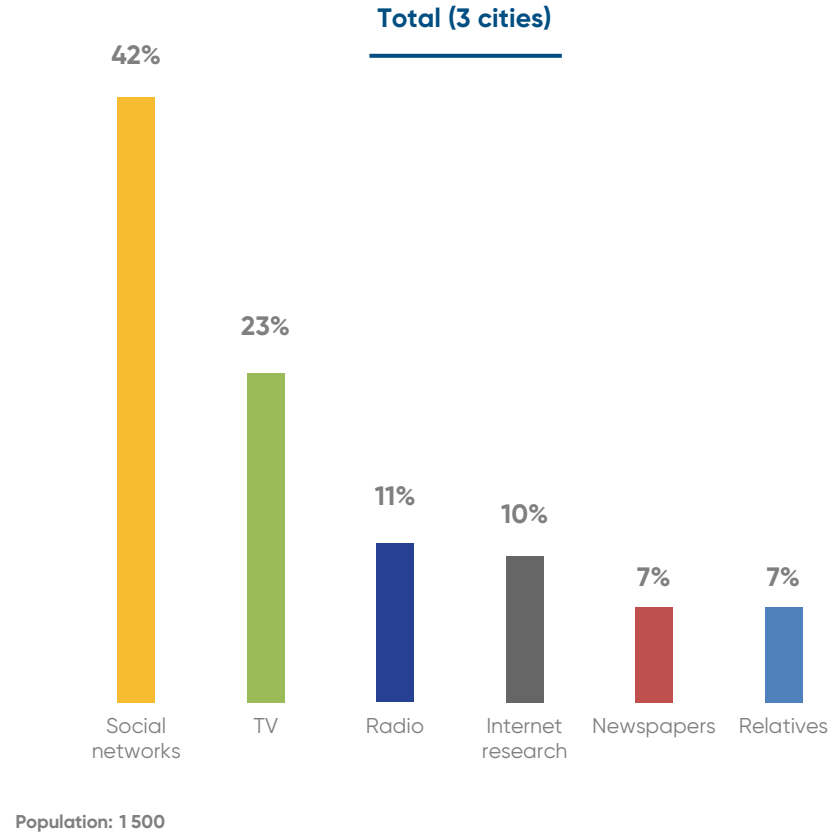
While the number of cases continues to rise at a sustained rate, fatality rates remain low. As of July 12, the virus had caused 15 deaths in Togo, 26 deaths in Benin and 37 deaths in Guinea-Conakry.

This research took place from June 16th to June 25th. During face-to-face interviews with 29 local surveyors on the ground, citizens revealed their sources of information and perceptions of the COVID-19, their urge for reopening of the economy and travel, and their broader opinions about general African collaboration in tackling the pandemic. Additionally, qualitative findings as well as correlations show demographics in need of most assistance.

The objective of this study is to provide a timely update at a turning point in the COVID crisis management. This report is a steppingstone for more in-depth studies in West Africa, and we hope that the information collected here can already inform governmental support measures as they transition towards a new phase in the fight against the COVID-19.

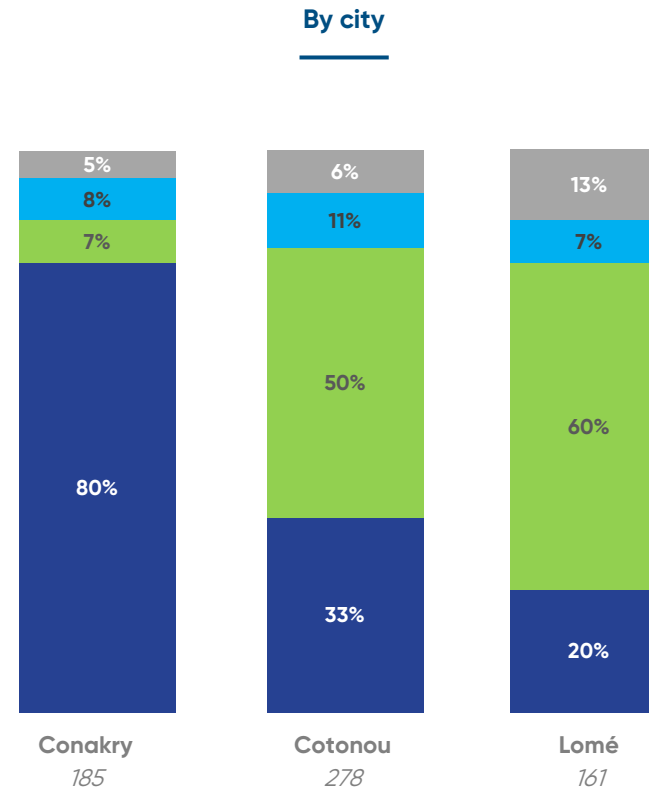
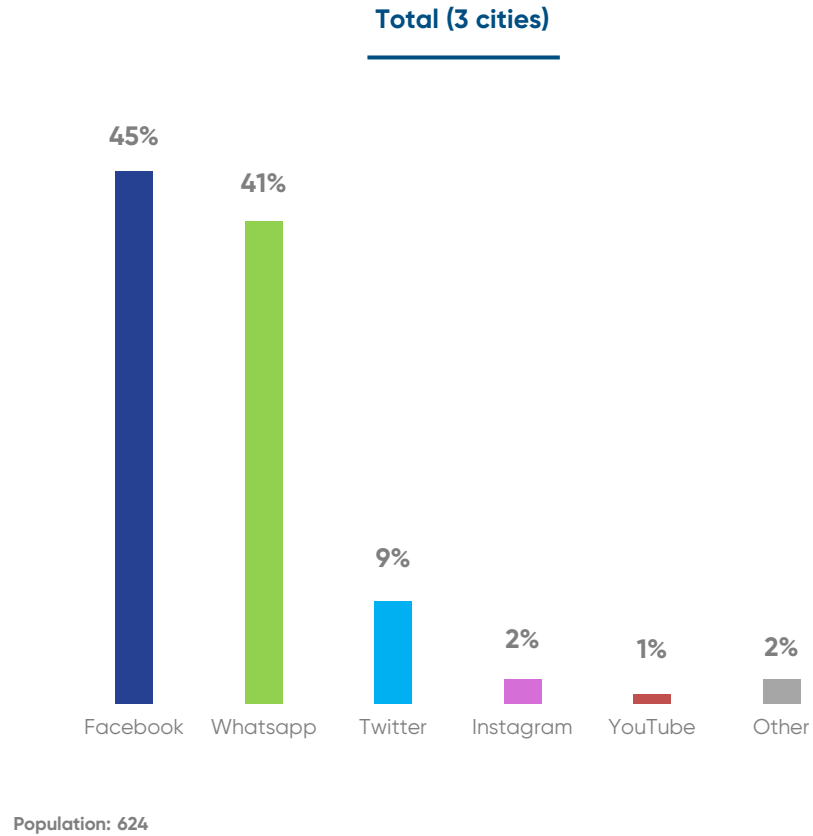
# Channels of Information

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





If your main source of information are social networks, which **one do you favor?**

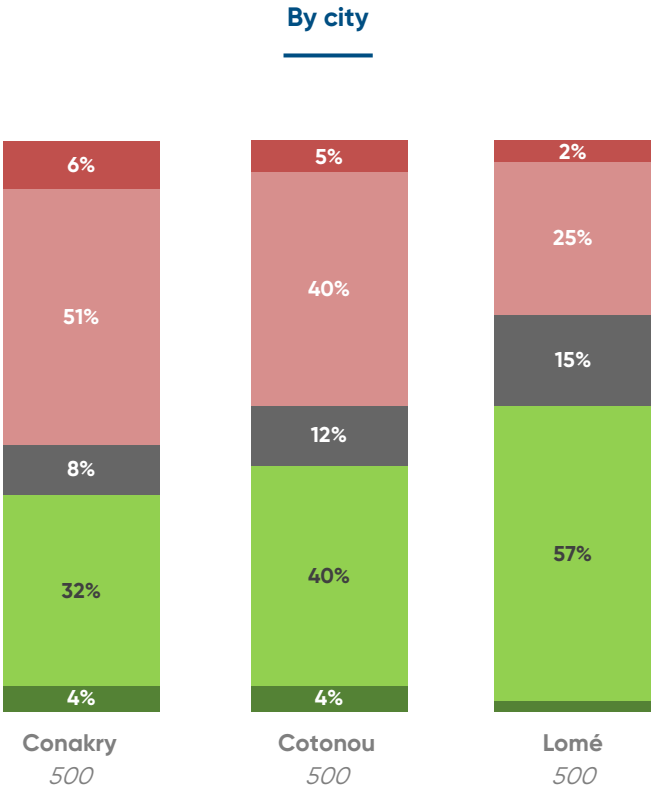
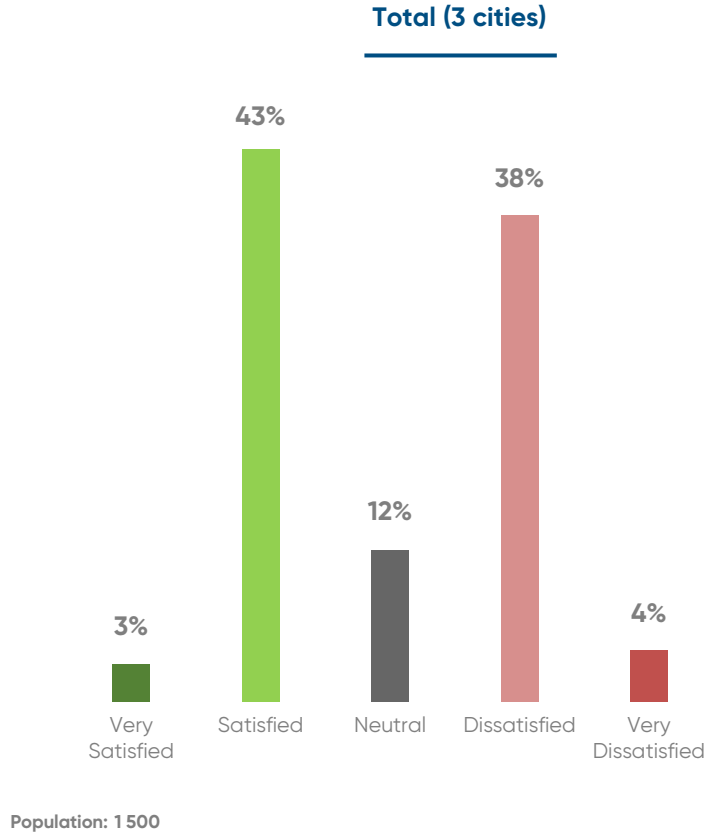


**80%** of respondents in Conakry favor **Facebook** as their main source of information on COVID-19. Many cited reading up on **online press articles** being shared on the social network.

Unlike in Lomé and Cotonou, in Conakry **WhatsApp is not a leading source of information** on COVID-19 even being surpassed by **Twitter**.

**42%** go to social networks as their main source of information, with **86%** favoring Facebook or Whatsapp

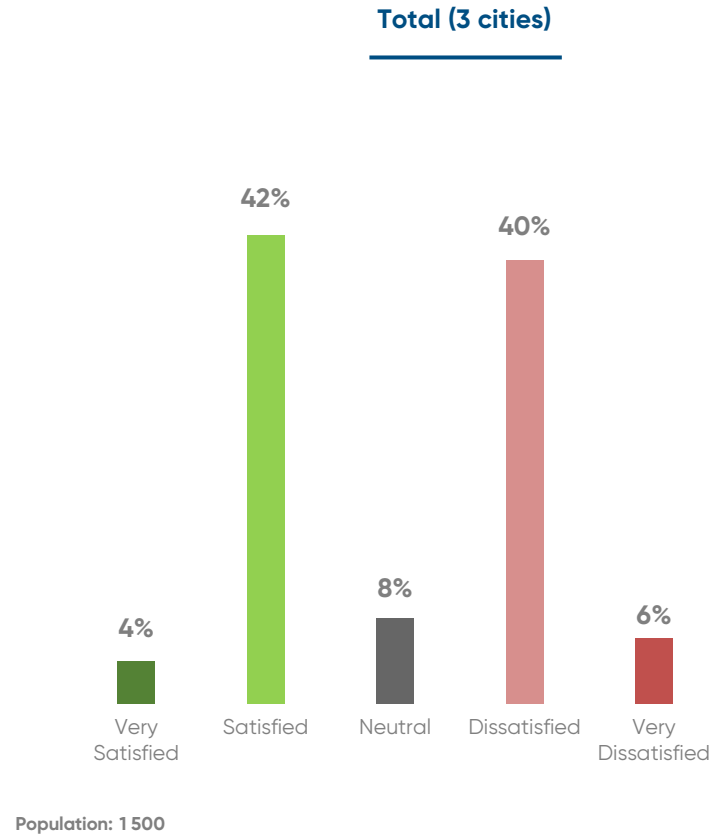
Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the **information** related to COVID-19 provided by your government?



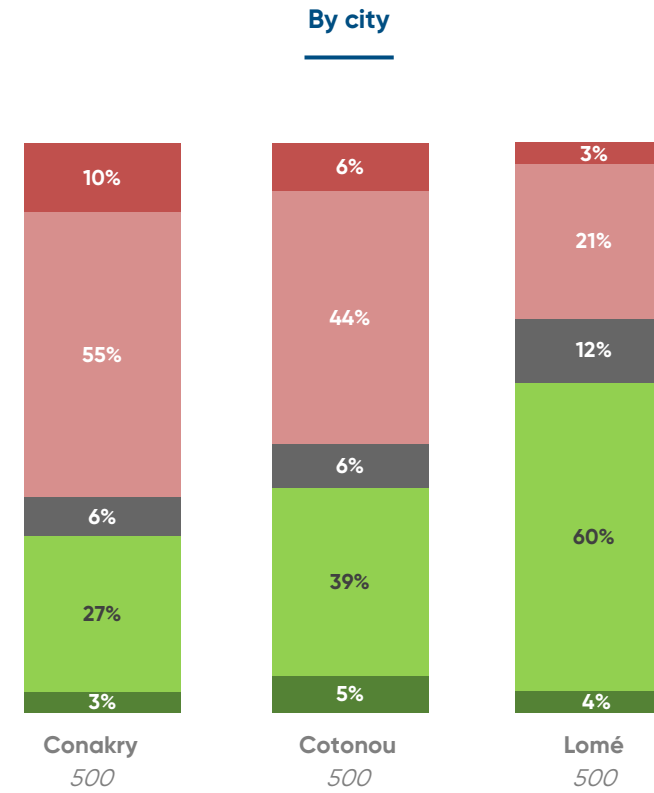
#### Cross-analysis

**48%** of respondents who get most of their information from **social media** are **dissatisfied with governmental measures**, that's **6% more than the average (42%)**.

Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the **measures taken by your government** since the start of the COVID-19 crisis ?



Satisfaction rates of governmental measures are evenly split amongst respondents (46% on both sides)



Out of the three cities, respondents in Conakry showed the **highest rates of dissatisfaction with governmental measures.**

On the opposite in **Lomé**, **57%** are satisfied with **government provided information** and **60%** are satisfied with **safety measures.**



Despite all the measures put in place by the government, the population still doesn't abide by them"

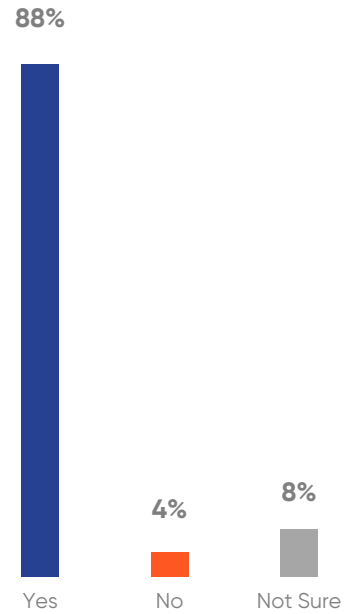
- Female student, Cotonou



# COVID Perceptions

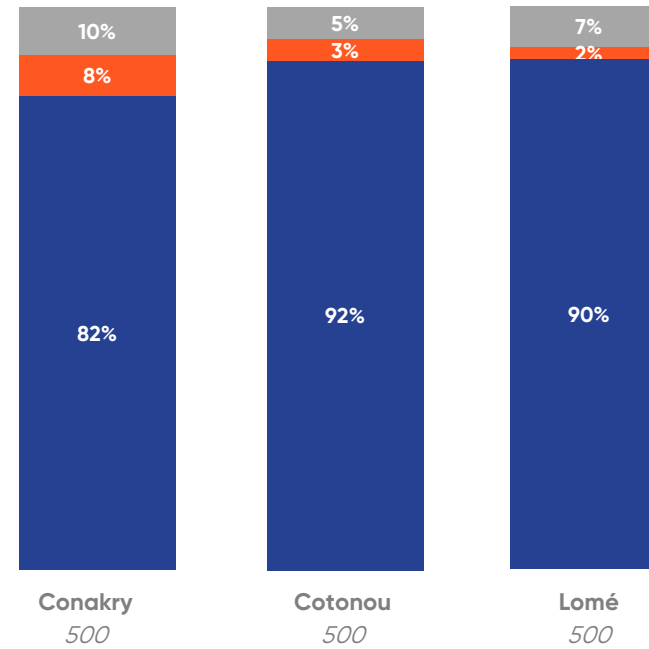
Do you think the **COVID-19 exists** in your country?

**Total (3 cities)**



Population: 1500

**By city**



**Yes:** The virus really exists; I believe the worst is yet to come given the neglect of the population."

- Male student, Cotonou

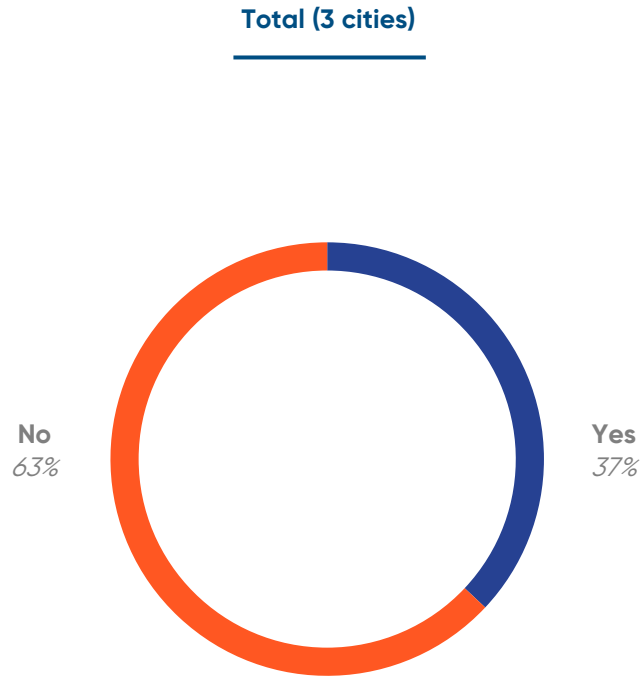


**No:** COVID-19 does not exist in Guinea; it is politics only."

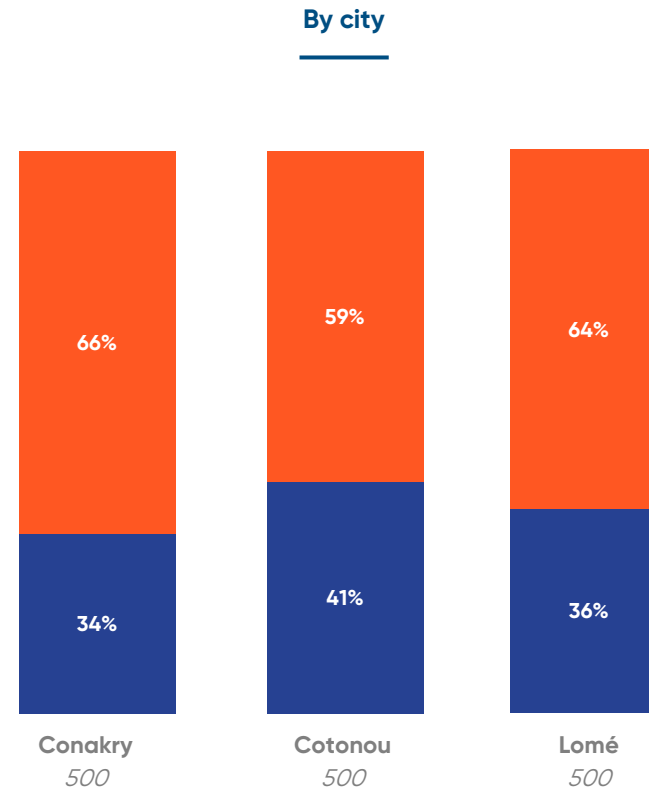
- Male student, Conakry



Do you know how to get tested?



Population: 1500



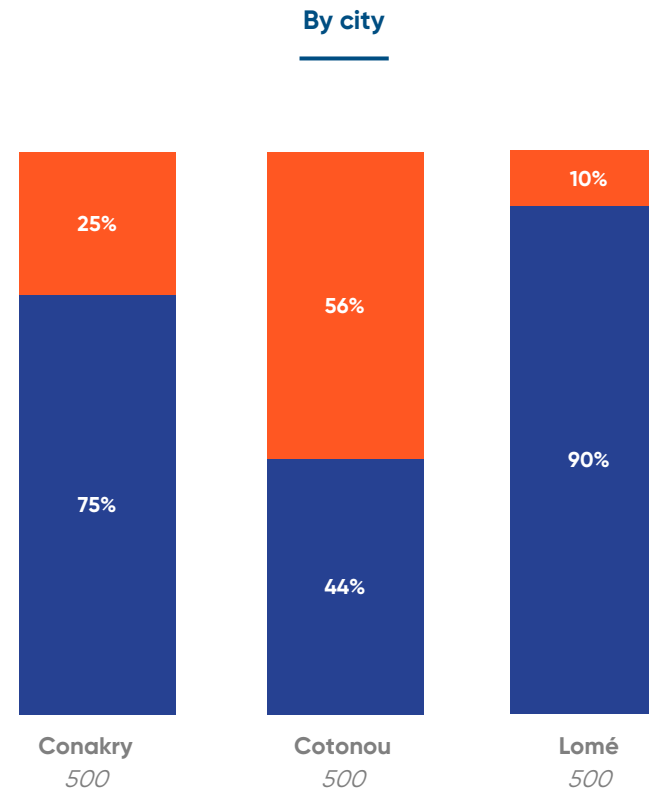
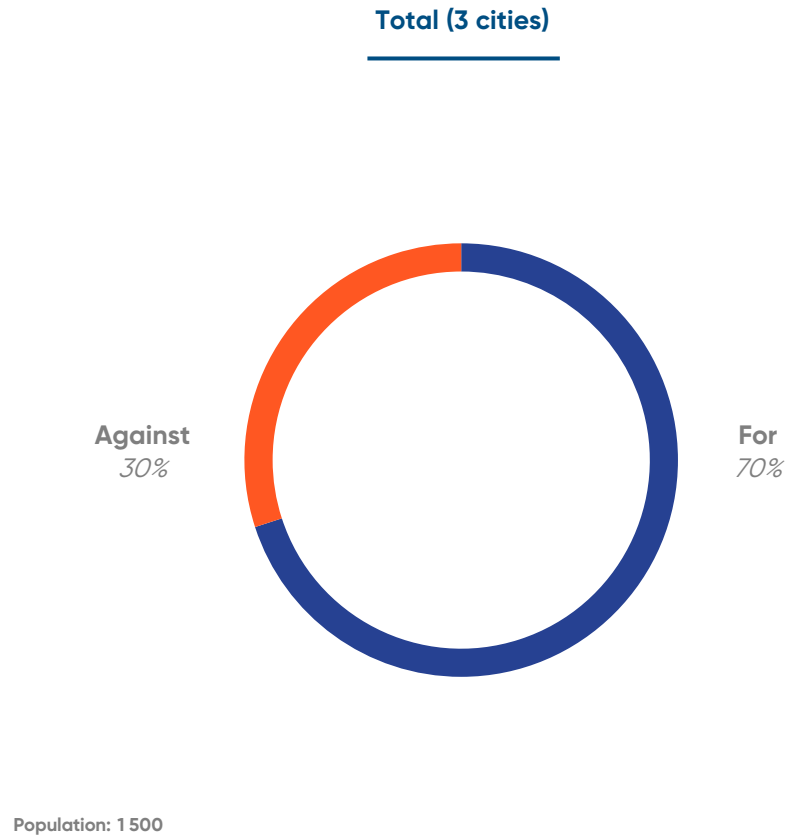
55% of respondents from 56-75 years old know how to get tested, which may be due to being the age group most at risk.

**NB:** Many respondents regret not knowing where to go to be tested and which procedures to follow.

Others mentioned **thermometers** as a sufficient test.

While 88% believe that the COVID-19 exists in their country, only 37% know how to get tested

Are you in favor or against **easing restrictive measures** in your country?

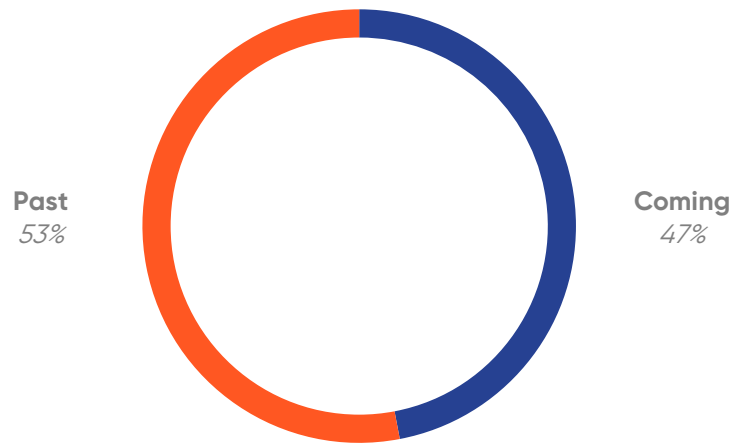


**80% of respondents without a professional activity are in favor of easing restrictions** making them the most in support of lifting bans.

While respondents in Cotonou are mostly against easing restrictions with many citing the rise in cases - **82% of respondents in Conakry and Lomé are in support of easing restrictive measures.**

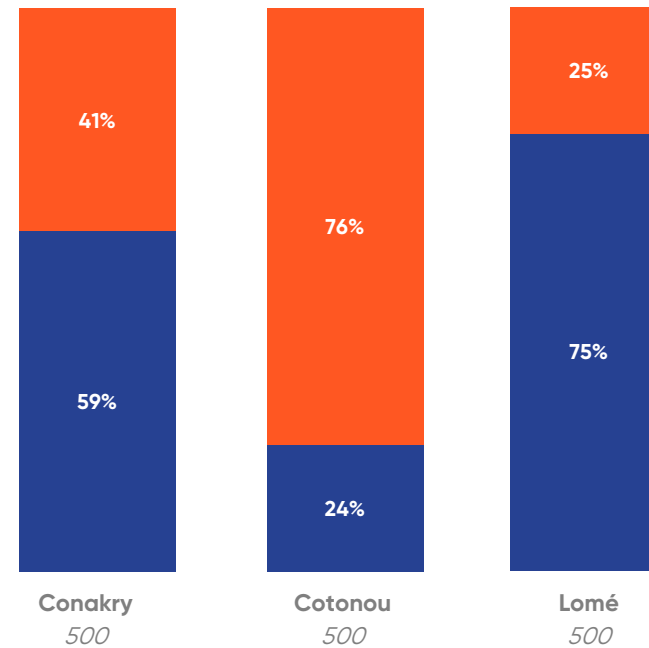
Is **the worst of the crisis** to come or has it passed ?

**Total (3 cities)**



Population: 1500

**By city**



**To come:** After the disease, we will face an economic crisis"

- Self-employed female, Conakry



**It has passed:** Because now we're careful and we respect barrier measures."

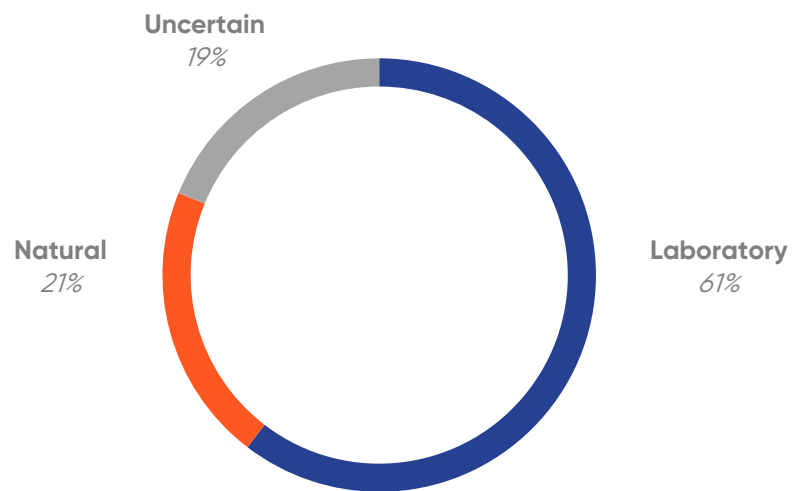
- Self-employed female, Lomé



**In Conakry and Lomé respondents are in favor of easing restrictions and believe the worst of the crisis has passed, while in Cotonou the majority believe the opposite**

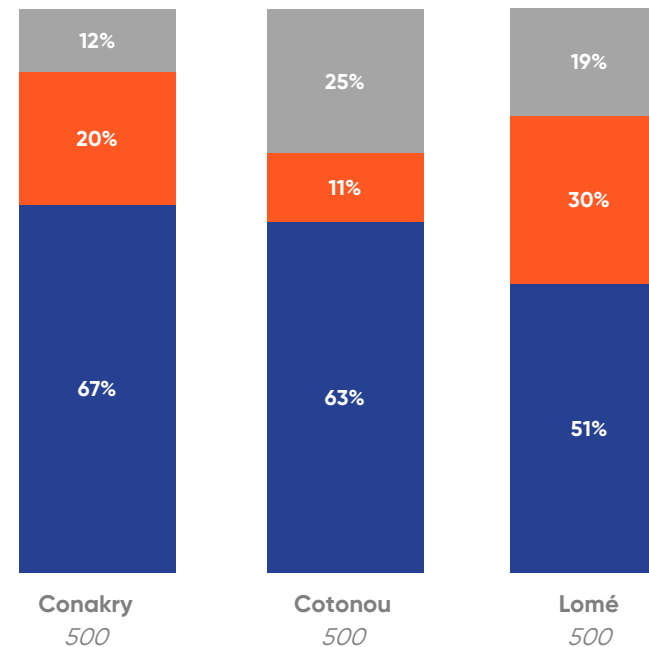
◁ In your opinion, was the virus born **naturally** or created in a **laboratory**?

**Total (3 cities)**



Population: 1500

**By city**



**Statistical correlation**

The chi-square test reveals a significant correlation between getting **most information from social media** and believing the virus was born in a laboratory.



**Laboratory:** Ever since I found out that the virus was created in a lab, it made me not want to even consider getting the vaccine"

– Male civil servant, Lomé

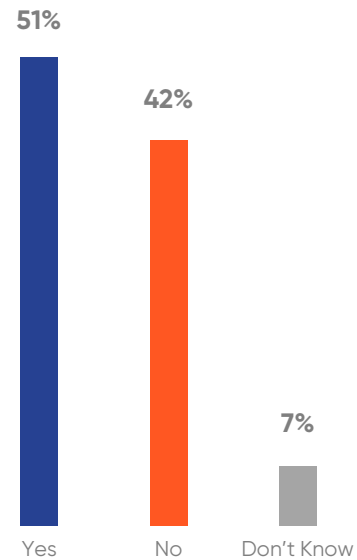


**6 out of 10 respondents believe that the COVID-19 was created in a laboratory**



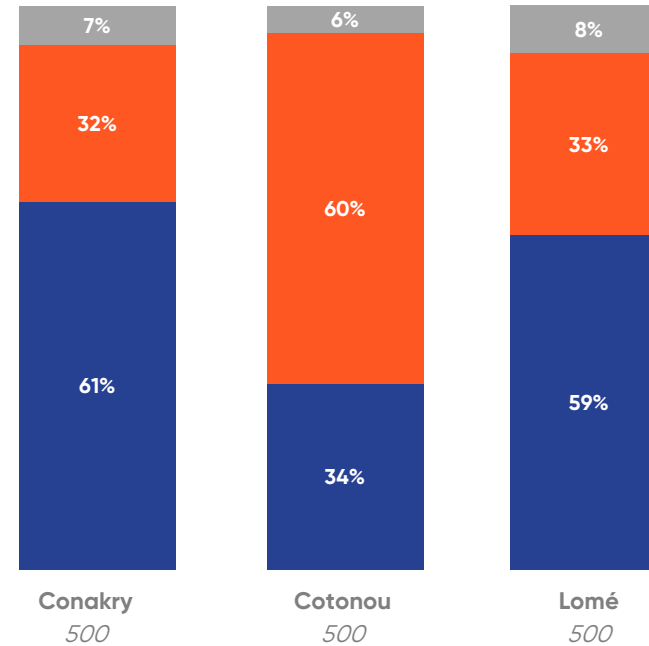
Do you trust the **WHO** (World Health Organization)?

**Total (3 cities)**



Population: 1500

**By city**



**No:** The vaccin is meant to be tested on Africans to decrease our population, so the WHO has no credibility"

- Self-employed male, Lomé



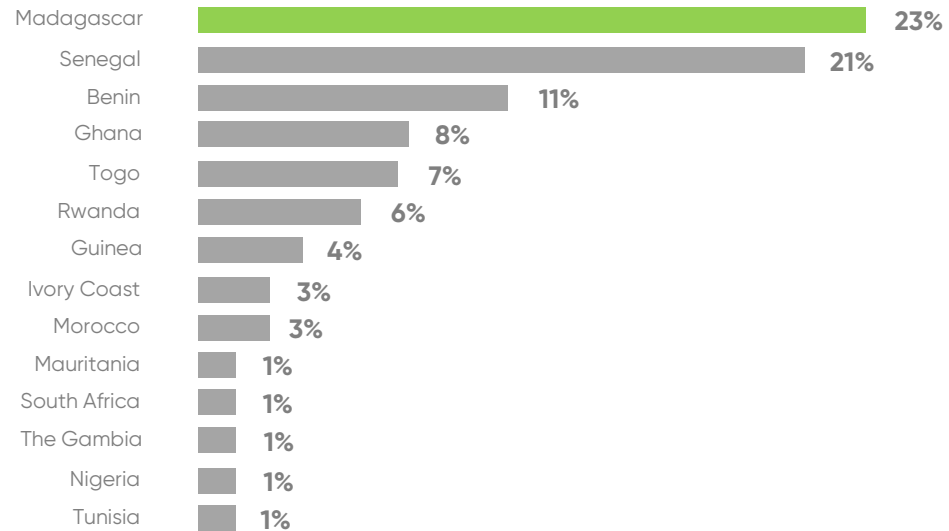
**Yes:** I trust the authorities and the WHO."

- Self-employed female, Lomé



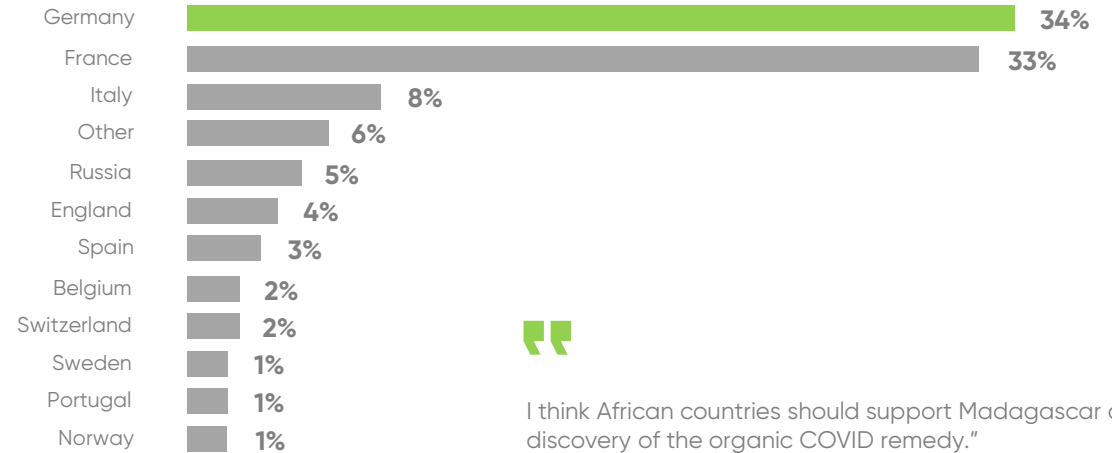
**Overall, a slim majority (51%) trust the WHO – yet 60% in Cotonou do not**

In your opinion, which **African country** is handling the crisis best?



Population: 1500

In your opinion, which **European country** is handling the crisis best?



I think African countries should support Madagascar on the discovery of the organic COVID remedy."

- Female student, Conakry



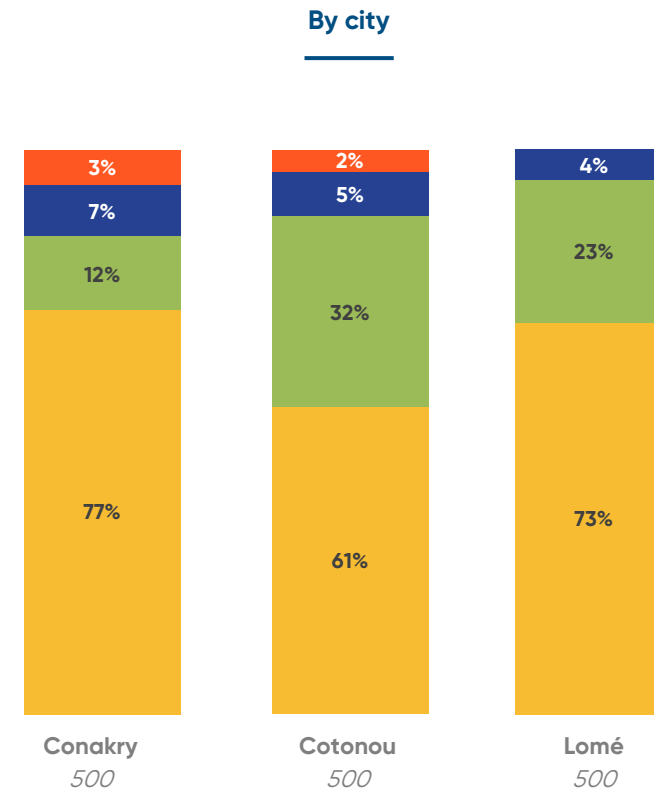
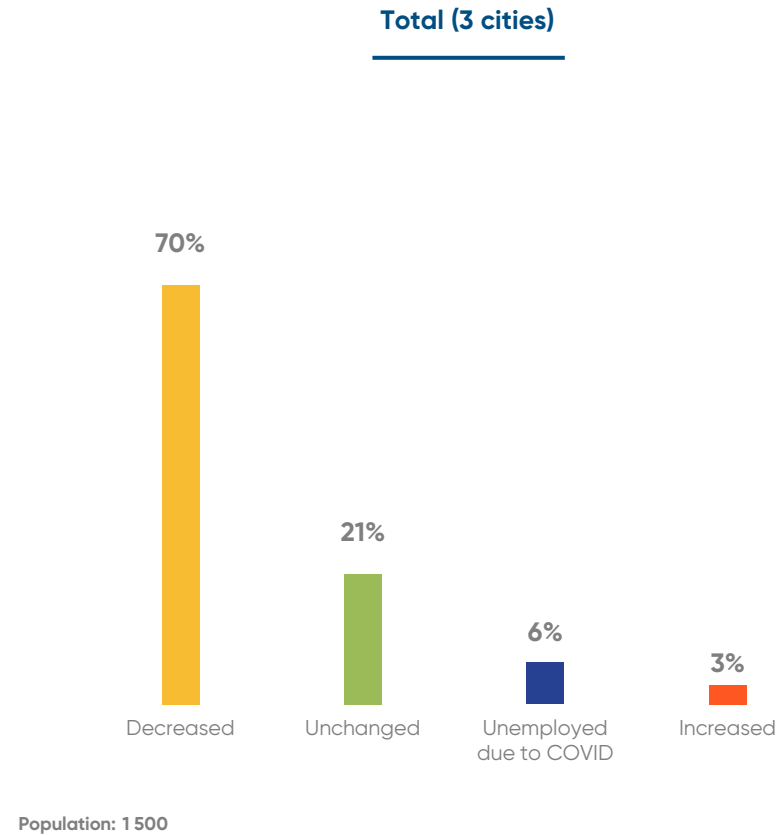
**NB:** On April 20th, the President of Madagascar announced a breakthrough artemisia based herbal for the COVID-19, "COVID Organics", based on traditional African medicine used against malaria.

This prompted sharp rebuke from the WHO yet remains lauded by many across Africa as shown by **23% of respondents in this study.**

**Madagascar and Germany have the best crisis-management perceptions for Africa and Europe respectively**

# Economic impact

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



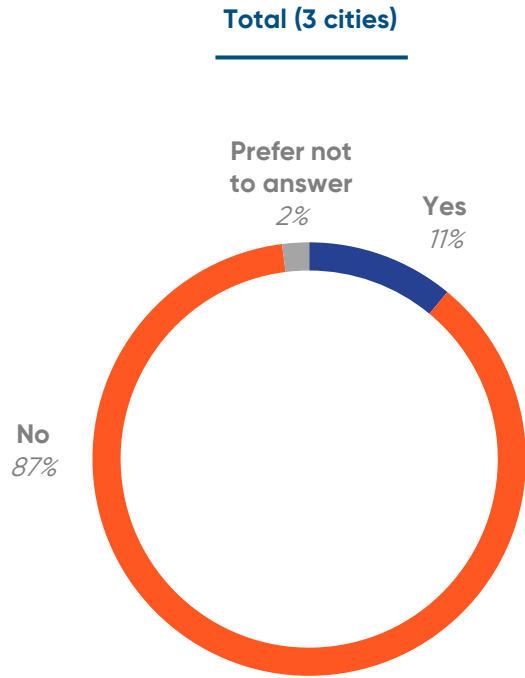
### Statistical correlation

**82%** of self-employed saw their income or turnover decrease. The chi-square test reveals a significant correlation between being self-employed and a **decrease in income or turnover**.

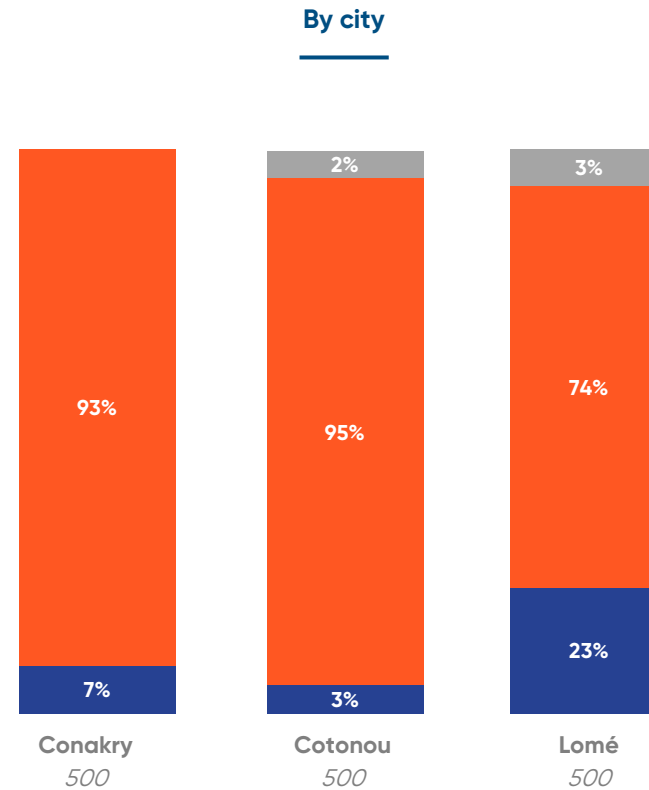
Additionally, **62%** of employees and **77%** of students with an income saw their income or turnover decrease.

**7 out of 10 respondents experienced a drop in income or turnover due to the COVID-19**

Have you benefited from **economic aid** measures from your government?



Population: 1500



#### Aid in Lomé for Informal Workers

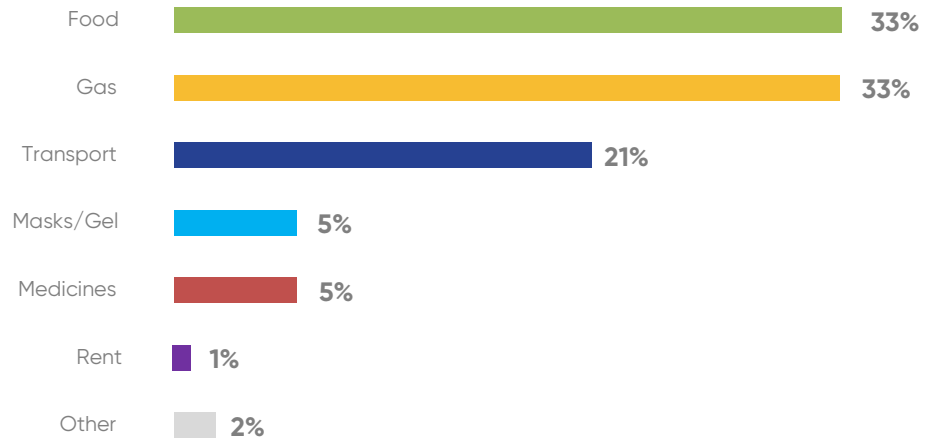
The "Novissi program" in Togo, is a mobile cash transfer effort by the government to provide **monthly financial aid** during the state of emergency (12 5000 for women and 10 500 CFA for men.)

Through **mobile money** transfers the program aims primarily to support **informal workers** who's daily revenue has been affected by the COVID-19

Close to 9 respondents out of 10 have not benefited from the economic aid measures of their government

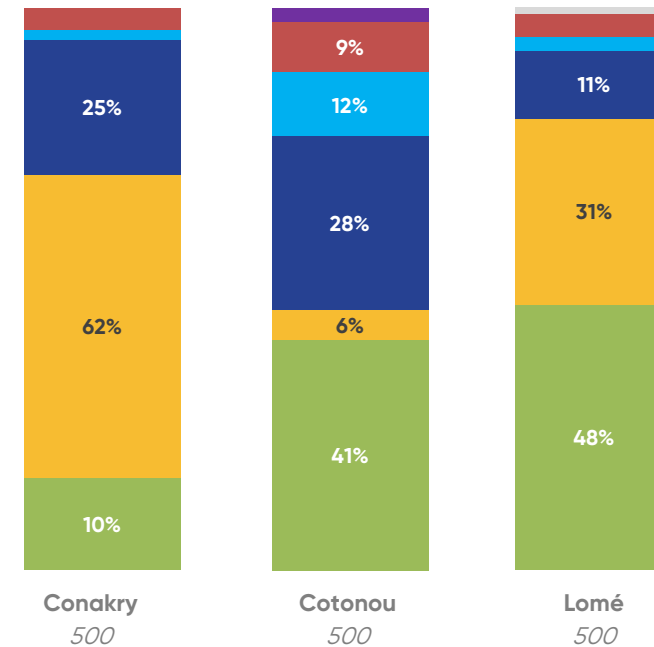
Out of the following answers, the **current emergency** is to drop the price of...  
(single choice response)

**Total (3 cities)**



Population: 1 500

**By city**



Prices of transports, particularly taxis and buses, have increased with the rise of **gas prices and measures restricting the number of passengers per vehicle.**

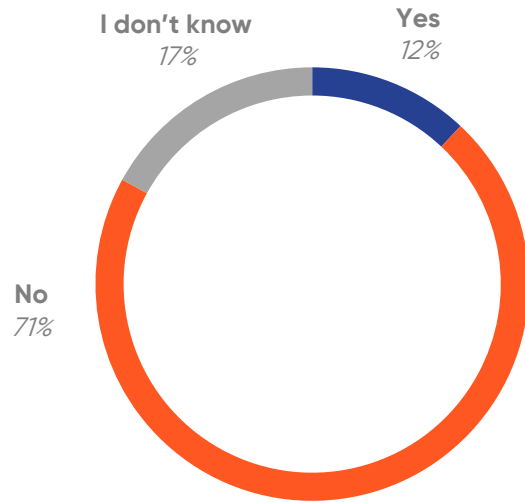
**"Other" Responses:**

- Opening of the borders
- Opening of the markets
- Subsidies for Companies
- Taxes

**For 87% the emergency is reducing the prices of food and transportation (gas and transport)**

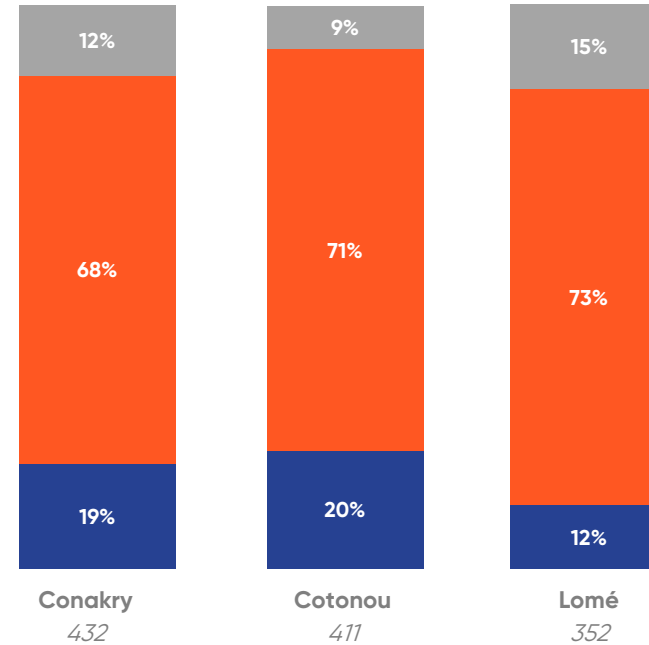
Do you think that there is **solidarity between African** countries in the face of the crisis?

**Total (3 cities)**



Population: 1195

**By city**



**No:** As we say, there is strength in unity, and therefore Africans must unite and think instead of waiting for the Westerners at all times."

- Male student, Lomé



**Yes:** We need to work together to build our own health organization"

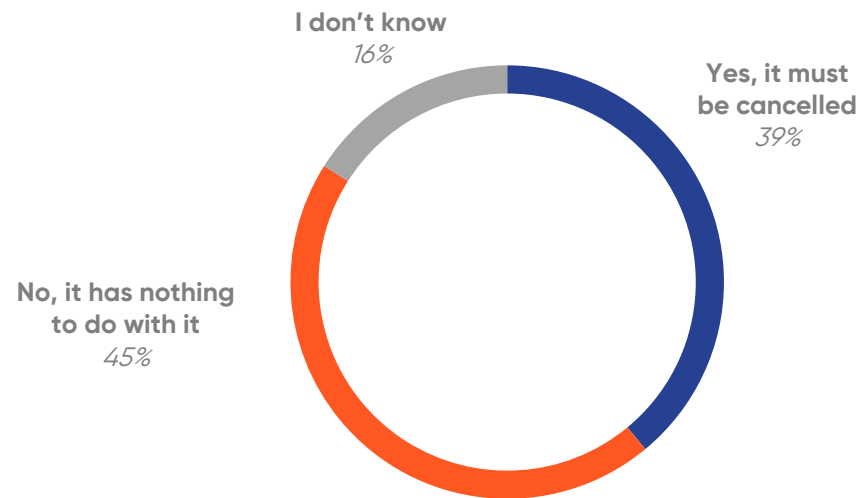
- Male student, Lomé



**71% believe that African nations are not showing solidarity to fight the crisis**

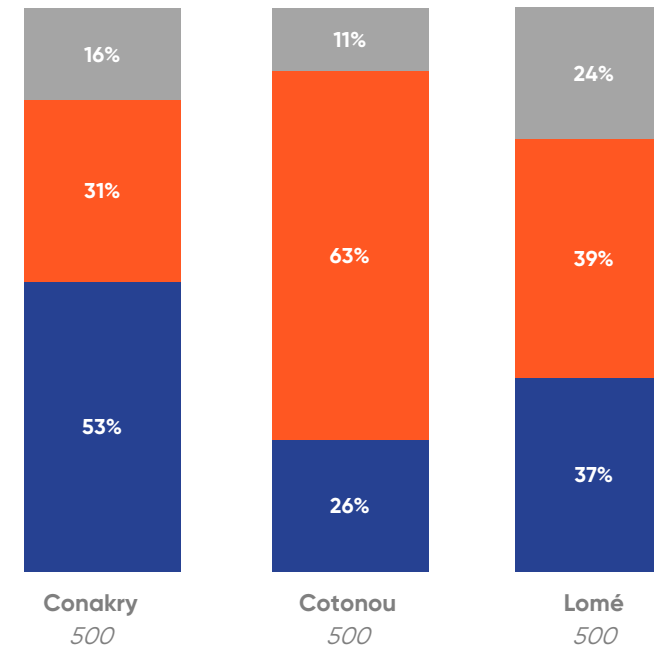
Do you think that the COVID-19 crisis should lead to the cancellation of the **African debt**?

**Total (3 cities)**



Population: 1500

**By city**



Cancelling the African debt would be a bad sign, as no one wants to lend to those who don't pay back"

- Self-employed male, Lomé

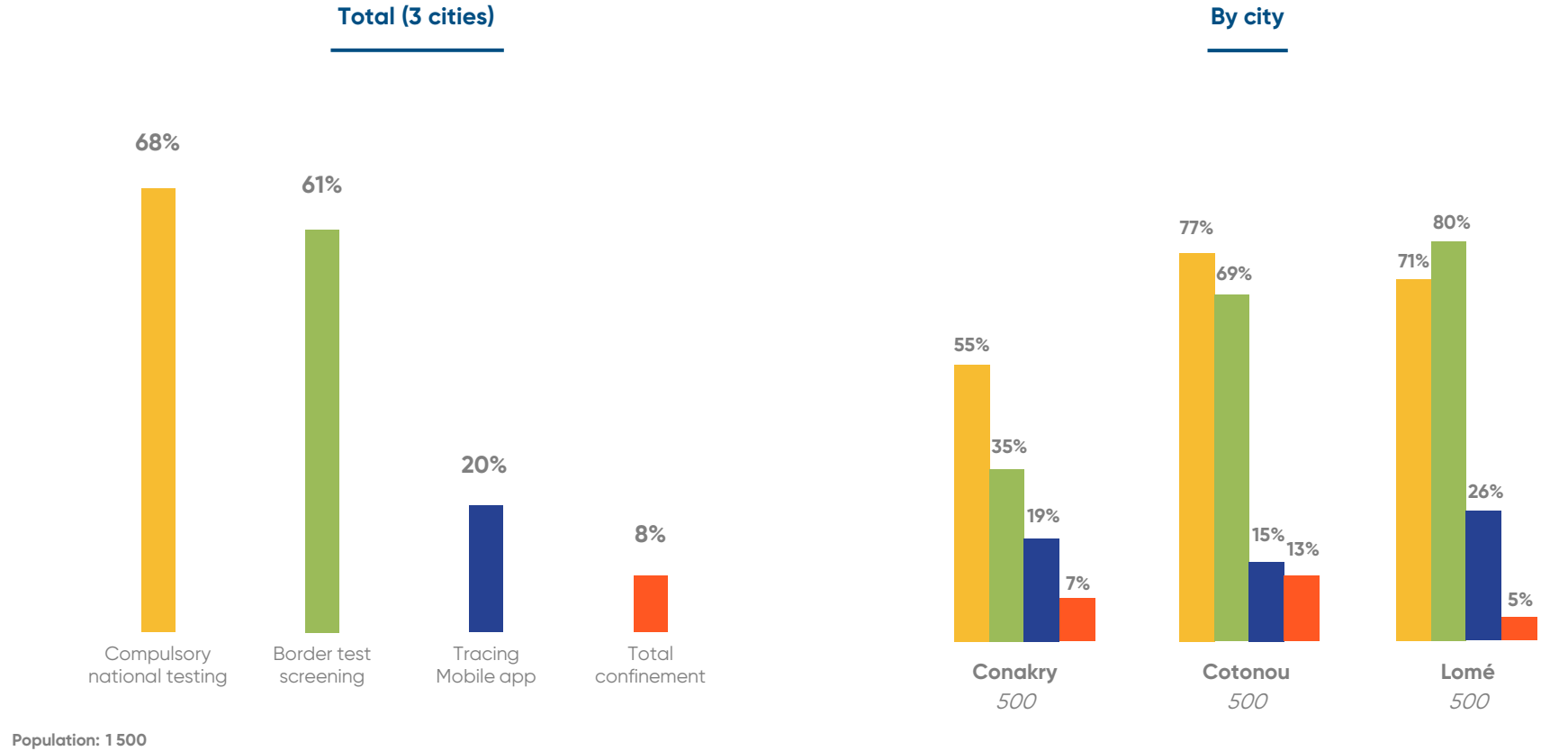


**NB:** On June 10, members of the G7 ruled in favor of debt cancellation for the 18 poorest countries in the World, among which 14 are in Africa.

**Overall 45% believe that the COVID-19 should not lead to cancelling the African debt, yet 53% think it should in Conakry**

# Road to reopening

Amongst the following measures, which would you be willing to **accept**?  
*(Multiple choice question)*

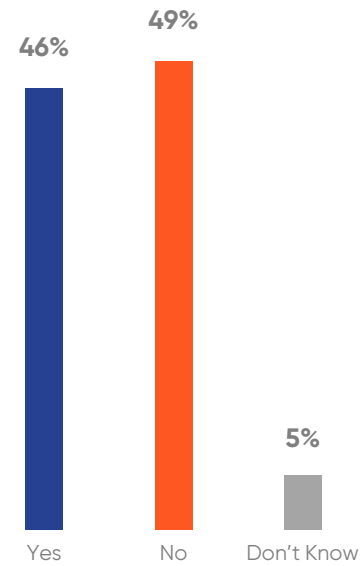


**Most would be willing to accept compulsory national testing and border test screening, but only 8% a total confinement**



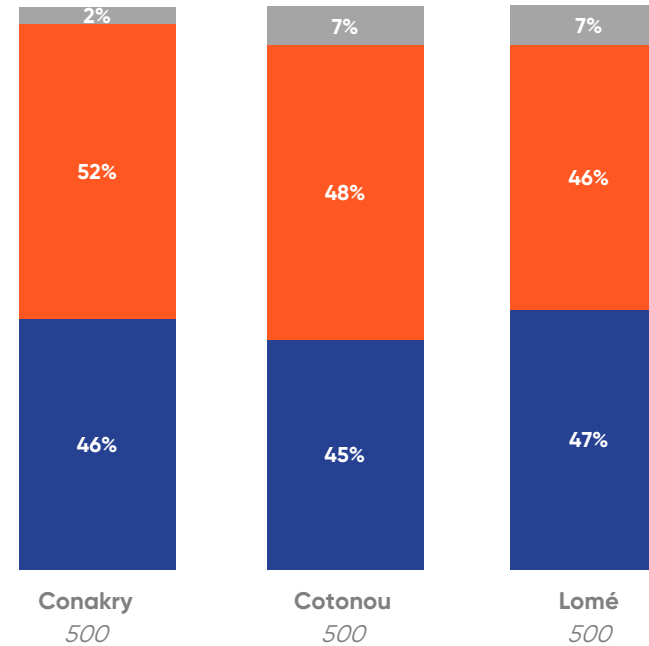
◀ If there was a vaccine tomorrow, would you be willing to get vaccinated?

**Total (3 cities)**



Population: 1500

**By city**



62% of respondents over 56 years old would be willing to be vaccinated if it were available tomorrow – showing a higher readiness among those facing greater risks of fatality due to their age.

◀ If there was a vaccine tomorrow, would you be willing to get vaccinated? **Why?**

## No

"I know the virus was created to **get rid of us.**"

- Employed female, Cotonou



"They want to **turn Africans into guinea pigs** to find the cure, I'm not sure I want to vaccinate myself."

- Self-employed female, Lomé



"Given the origin and evolution of the virus, it would be best to be **wary of anything coming from the West.**"

- Female student, Cotonou



## Yes

"Only if the vaccine has already **been administered to Westerners** because I have no confidence."

- Female student, Cotonou



"**Previous vaccines have saved us;** I hope this one will as well."

- Male student, Lomé

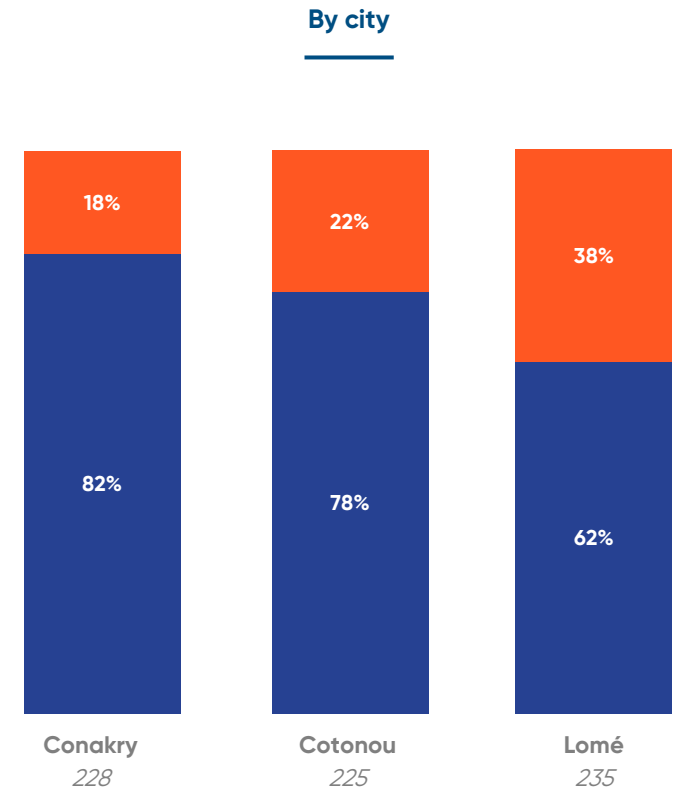
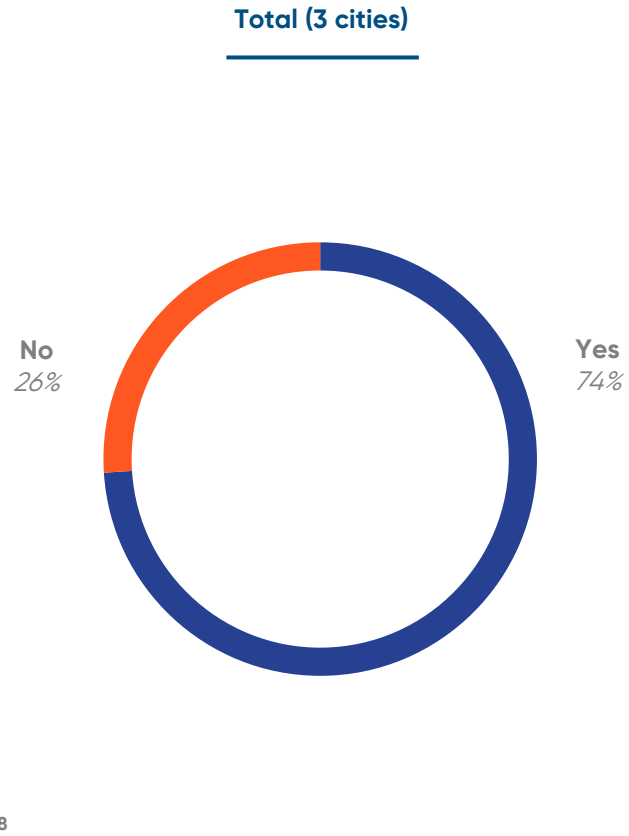


"I'll do it for my health, as long as the vaccin is **first tested in developed countries.**"


- Female civil servant, Conakry



If you are willing to get vaccinated, would you be ready to **pay for the vaccine**?

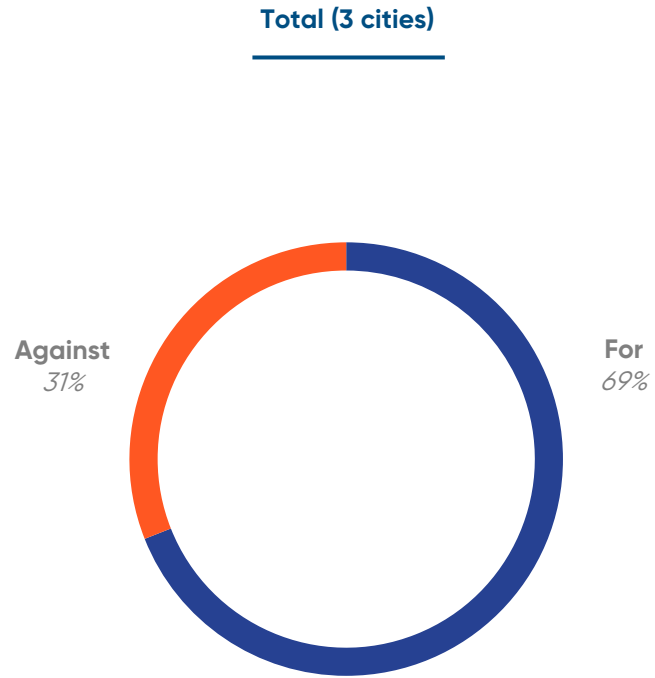


“The government should subsidize the vaccine”  
- Male student in Cotonou

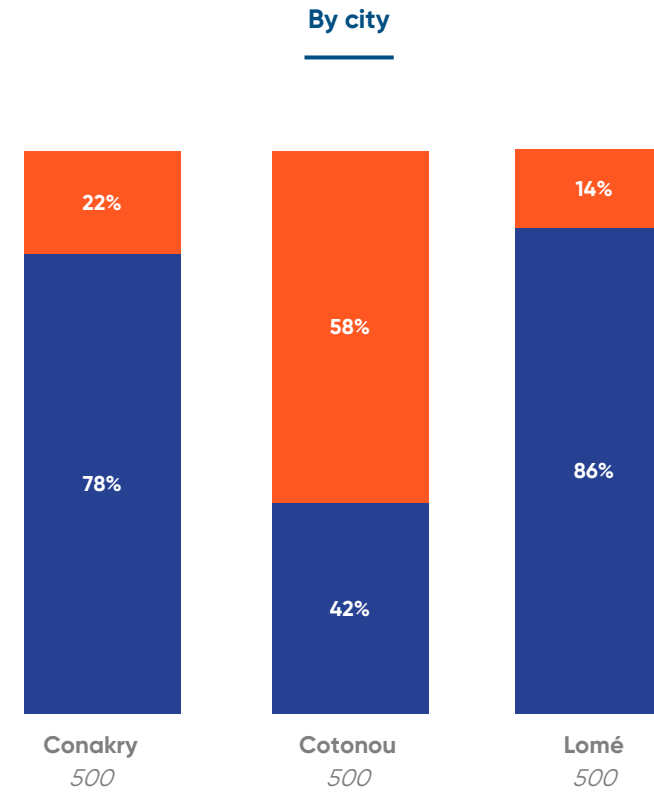


49% are not willing to get vaccinated, but amongst the 688 respondents who are – 74% are willing to pay for it

Are you in favor or against **reopening national land borders**?



Population: 1500



**Guinea Conakry currently has by far the most cases** compared to Benin and Togo

Despite this, **78% of respondents in Conakry are in favor of reopening national land borders** while **58% in Cotonou are against** with many fearful of contaminated foreigners.

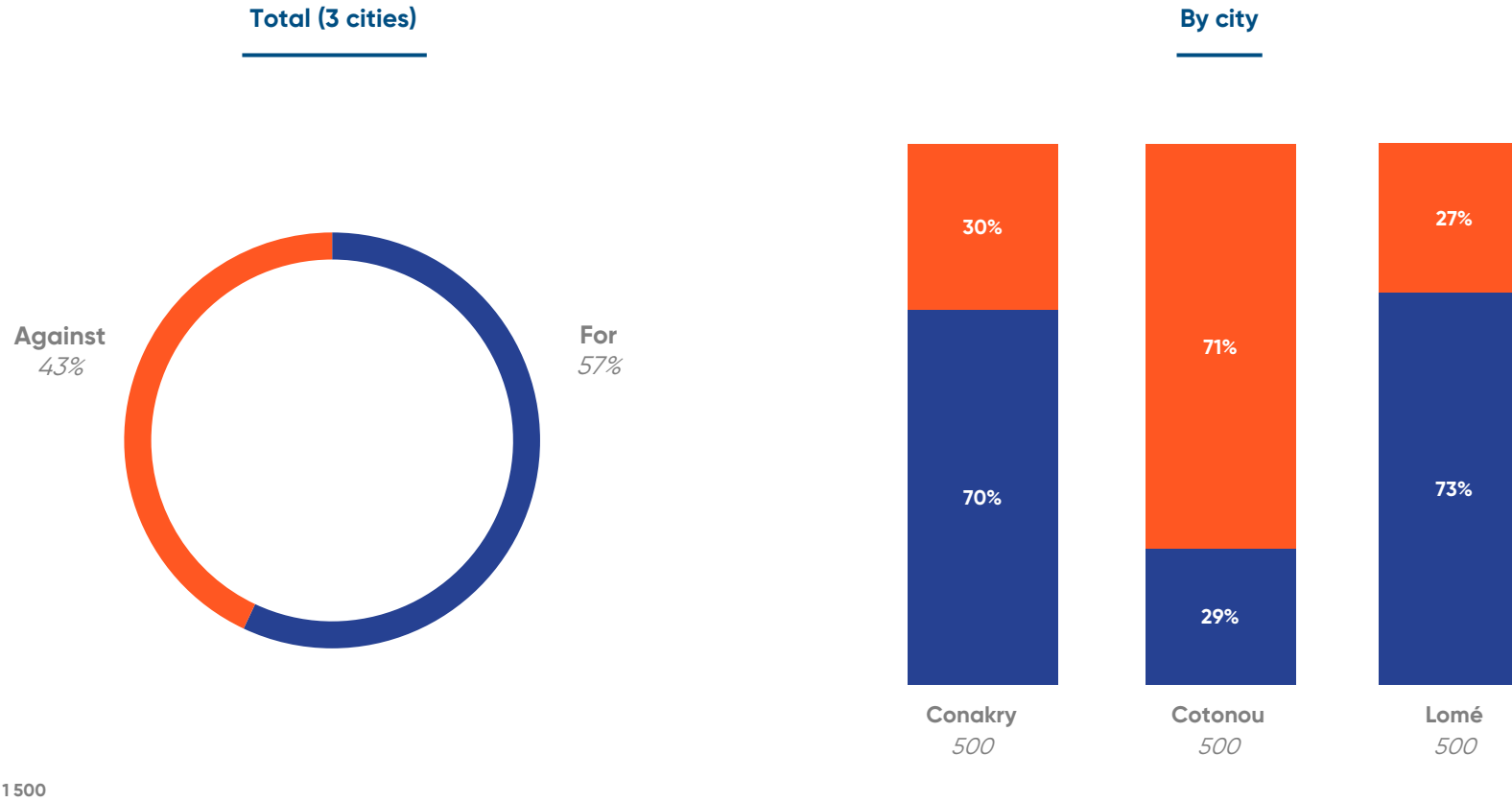


Open up borders so economic activities can pick up again"

- Self-employed female, Conakry

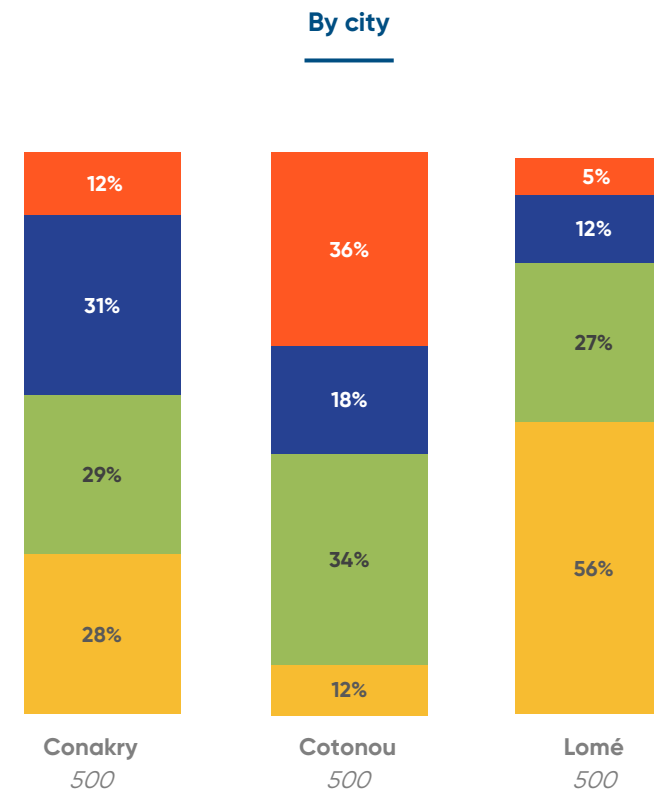
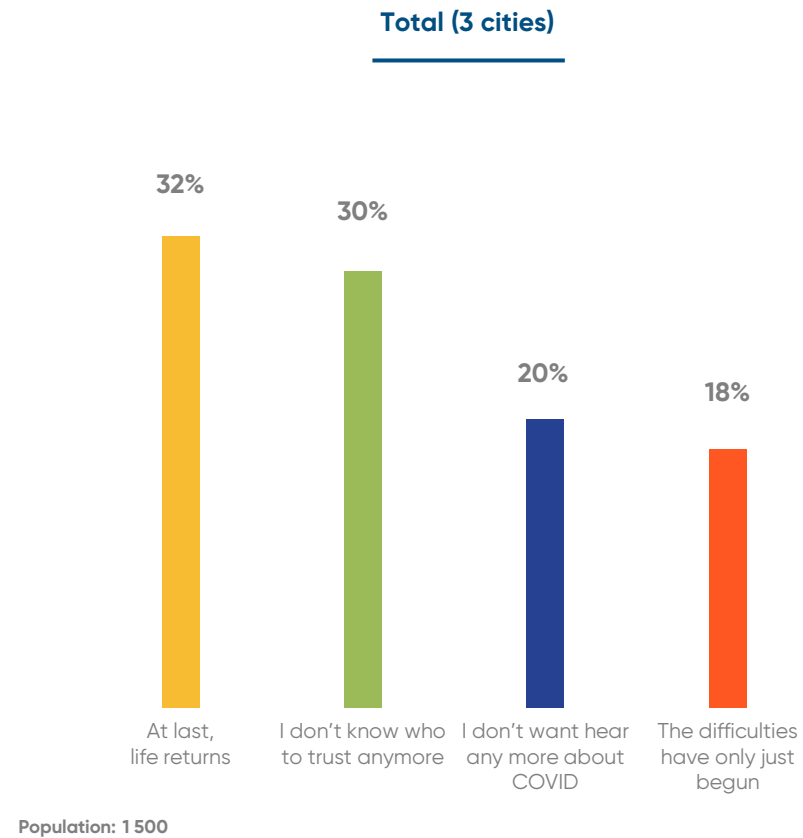


Are you in favor or against **reopening airports** for international travels (outside of Africa)?



82% of respondents in Lomé and Conakry are in favor of reopening national land borders and 71% airports for international travels, but the majority in Cotonou is opposed to both forms of border reopening

Among the following sentences, which best describes your **current feelings**?



#### Statistical correlation

From the results of a logistic regression, The chi-square test reveals **no significant correlation between social media consumption and knowing who to trust**. This means that the overflow of information on social media is not what is disillusioning citizens, and there are **other vectors of misinformation**.

**56% of those in Lomé believe "life returns" which is double that of Conakry and more than four times that of Cotonou where the majority leans for not knowing who to trust.**

**While overall 32% believe that "at last, life returns", almost as many "don't know who to trust anymore"**

Quotes

**"There's a psychosis around the coronavirus even though there are worst woes here"**

*- Employed male, Cotonou*



**"Let Africans make the effort to unite to create our own health organization instead of begging every time."**

*- Self-employed female, Lomé*



**"It's a disease we're going to live with, so we really have to respect the barriers and not be ashamed to report someone suspected having COVID-19. "**

*- Male civil servant, Lomé*



**"COVID-19 does not exist in Guinea; it is politics only. "**

*- Male student, Conakry*



**"Communication around the virus is not good, it only breeds fear. "**

*- Self-employed male, Cotonou*



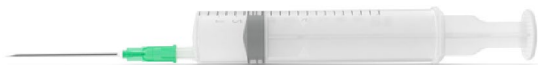
## | KAS Strategic Orientations and Initiatives



### Combating vaccin misinformation

Overall, 30% of respondents "do not know who to trust anymore" and 20% "don't want to hear anymore about COVID". Even if a vaccin were to be available tomorrow, 49% would not be willing to take it – many citing the fear of a foreign vaccine being meant to harm them.

For 42% of respondents the main source of COVID-19 information is social networks, close to twice more than television (23%), and amongst that segment 86% favor WhatsApp or Facebook (p. 9). Respondents express information fatigue related to the pandemic, as well as significant mistrust. 45% are dissatisfied with governmental information on COVID-19 (p. 11), 42% do not trust the WHO (p. 17) and 61% believe the virus was created in a laboratory (p.19).



### United African front to reopen commercial activities

71% believe African countries are not showing solidarity to fight the COVID-19, yet many respondents express that desire and the yearning to join forces for a cure to the disease.

69% are in favor of reopening national land borders (p. 28) and 57% favor reopening airports for international travel outside of Africa, many citing the need to revive their businesses (p. 29). Overall, 68% are in favor of compulsory national testing, 61% border screening (p. 24), and out of the 46% willing to be vaccinated, 74% would even pay for it. A notable 1 out of 5 respondents would also accept a contact tracing app.

Governments are taking steps to reopen their economies by easing restrictive measures, 70% of respondents in this study favor such initiative but 47% also think the worst is to come. This combined desire of economic uptake while respecting sanitary efforts, will greatly depend on solidarity across the region.



### Destigmatize testing and communicate on testing sites

While 88% believe that COVID-19 exists in their country, only a slim majority at 55% know how to get tested. Even among 56-75 years old, an age group at higher risk, only 45% know how to get tested.

So far, only those showing symptoms are meant to report for testing and stigma surrounds the procedure, even more so a positive result. As testing capacities continue to expand it will be important to destigmatize tests, so citizens understand that by getting tested they are acting in the best interest of their family and country, rather than bringing shame. For the time being, there's an urgent need to improve communication so citizens know the location of testing centers, the best times to get tested, the price of tests and steps taken to safeguard their privacy.



### Shifting needs: subsidies for transportation and food sector

While 70% have seen a reduction in either income or turnover, only 11% have received economic assistance from their government. 82% of the self-employed (vendors, craftsmen, plumbers, ...) experienced a drop in turnover or income, accounting for a statistically significant correlation or dependence between the two and revealing a greater economic impact on the informal sector.

Over three months into the crisis, respondents do not see a drop in the price of medicine (5%) or masks/gel (5%) as the current emergency. Rather 54% are voicing a need for a drop in the prices of gas and transport and 33% hope for a decline in the price of food (p. 21). There appears to be a shift in economic priorities from the early stages of the pandemic and subsidies for the transportation and food sector should directly reach the informal sector, such as market women, and as such support key sectors for economic revival in the region.



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.

