BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS ON COVID-19 IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

Monitoring knowledge, risk perceptions, preventive behaviours and trust to inform pandemic outbreak response

Round 1 of data collection December 2020

Summary: General Findings

For discussion and further analysis and interpretation

Knowledge and Perceptions

- Knowledge regarding COVID-19, protective measures, and government policy is high among the majority, but the number of those struggling with knowledge is significant
- Risk perceptions are relatively low, particularly for the perceived severity of infections
- The ability to avoid infections is substantially lower than the knowledge of protective behaviours

Individual Behaviours

- The uptake of protective behaviours is below desirable levels and risky behaviours such as not adhering to physical distancing or avoiding social events are common
- Vaccinations enjoy support among the majority of the population
- The ability to return to normal life is the biggest driver for vaccine support

Support for Policies

- The acceptance of policies and restrictive measures varies strongly with highest support for mask mandates and increased testing
- Lifting/reducing restrictions on restaurants and educational facilities are supported by the majority
- Strict restrictions on travel or reintroducing the state of emergency are highly unpopular

Economy and Wellbeing

- Worries about future economic impacts from the pandemic are very common among the respondents
- The pandemic has had a detrimental impact on healthy lifestyles, particularly exercise
- Avoiding health-care is significant and can have long-term public health consequences
- Avoidance of people by ethnicity is common

Методология
Данные собирались посредством компьютерного телефонного интервью (Computer-assisted telephone interviewing, CATI), в ходе которого было опрошено 1000 человек из всех семи областей Кыргызстана и двух основных городов - Бишкека и Оша. Сбор данных осуществлялся под руководством Министерства здравоохранения и социального развития КР и все данные, собранные в рамках этого проекта, принадлежат данному министерству.

SECTION 1:
Knowledge and Perceptions

Knowledge
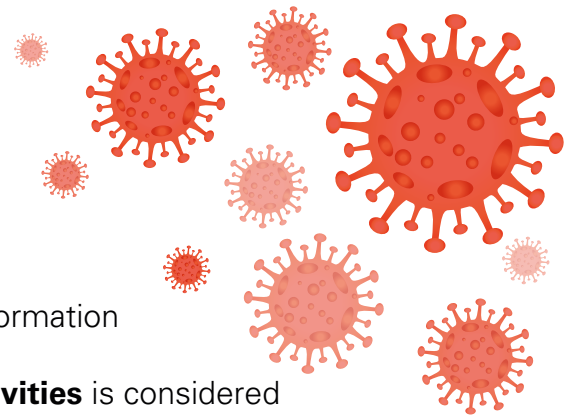
Findings

- The **majority** of the respondents **express strong health literacy**
- However, around **a third report difficulties** in finding information related to COVID-19 as well as recommendations
- **Following recommendations** on engaging in **social activities** is considered **more difficult** than understanding them
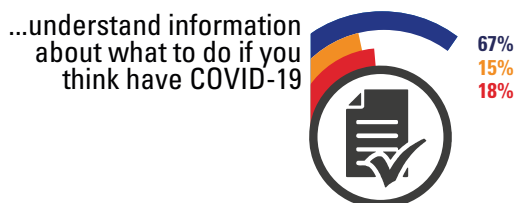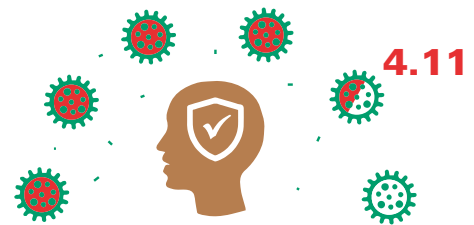- **Judging media reliability** is **difficult** for close to half **(45%)**

Although most of the respondents express strong health literacy, a large minority struggles with informing themselves as well as understanding and following recommendations. Consistent messaging and actionable recommendations can help increase these figures.

Predictors

- Respondents who are **female** and **highly educated** have **higher health literacy**
- Higher health literacy correlates with **lower perceptions of infection severity, higher trust in government,** and **higher perceptions that the virus is spreading fast**
- Perceptions of **media hype** around COVID-19 correlate with l**ower health literacy**

FEELINGS SURE ABOUT PROTECTIVE MEASURE TO AVOID AN INFECTION
Rated on scales ranging from 1 (very sure).
Mean values und 95% confidence intrevals

4.11

HEALTH LITEARCY

...to follow recomdations about when to stay at home
76%
12%
13%

(Rather) easy
somewhat difficult
(Rather) difficult

...find the information you need
66%
18%
16%

...to understand recondations sbout when to stay at hame
65%
15%
20%

...understand information about what to do if you think have COVID-19
67%
15%
18%

...to follow recommendations about whet to engage in social activities
63%
14%
23%

...to understand recommendations about when engage in social activies
66%
14%
20%

...judge if the information in the media is reliable?
55%
21%
24%

Risk perceptions

Findings

- Risk perceptions are relatively low with only **15%** of respondents expressing **high risk** whereas **22%** consider COVID-19 to pose **low risk**
- The majority of respondents **(63%)** see COVID-19 as **somewhat risky**
- The **lowest risk perceptions** among respondents relate to the **severity of a potential infection** with only **26%** thinking it is highly severe
- Larger portions consider themselves **highly susceptible (41%)** and **highly likely to get infected (36%)**

Risk perceptions overall are quite small driven particularly by low perceptions of infection severity among respondents. The higher levels of severity perceptions among people who are older and members of risk groups suggests understanding of main risk factors. However, the overall low perceptions of severity may contribute to reluctance in adhering to personal protective behaviours.

Predictors

- Risk perceptions are higher among respondents who are **older, female,** and parts of **risk groups**
- Those who have **higher** risk perceptions tend to **consume more media** and have higher perceptions of the **virus being close and spreading fast**
- Respondents who think COVID-19 has been **media hyped** have **lower** risk perceptions

PERCIVED RISK OF AN INFECTION
Mean score including susceptibility, probability an severity perceptions, each originally rated on scales ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (high)

- high risk (≥5)
- medium risk
- low risk (≤3)

41,0%

30,0%

29,0%
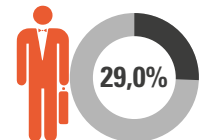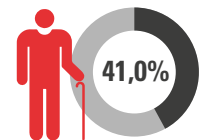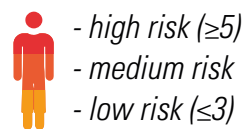
PERCEIVED SUSCEPTIBILITY
Grouped results, originally rated on scales ranging from 1 (not susceptible) to 5 (very susceptible)

NOT/LESS SUSCEPTIBLE

PARTLY SUSCEPTIBLE

29%

30%

41%

MORE / VERY SUSCEPTIBLE
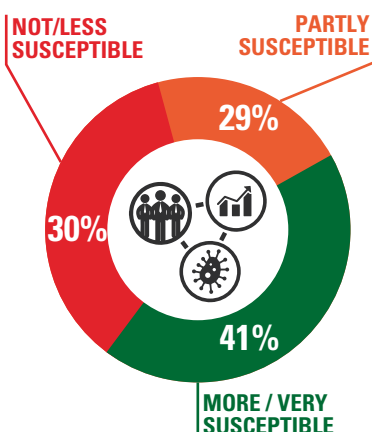
PERCEIVED PROBABILITY OF AN INFECTION
Grouped results, originally rated on scales ranging from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 5 (extremly likely)
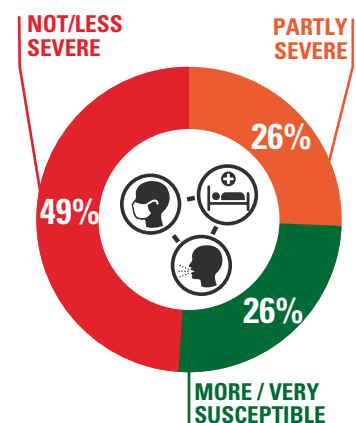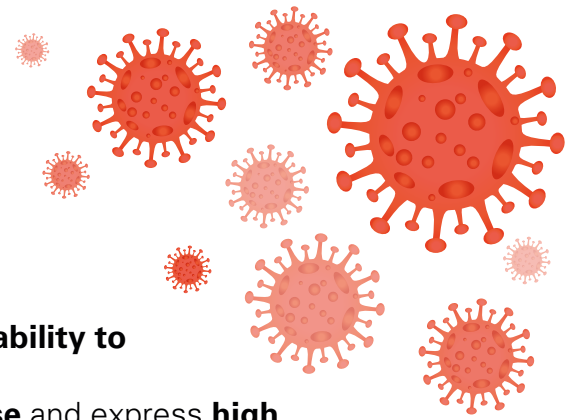
EXTREMELY UNLIKELY

PARTLY LIKELY

41%

23%

36%

EXTREMELY UNLIKELY
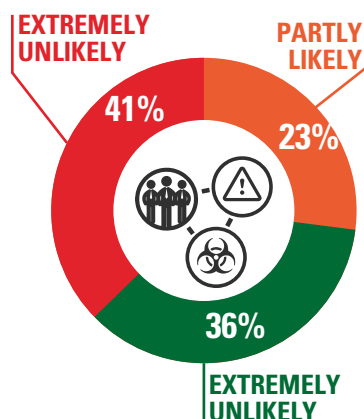
PERCEIVED SEVERITY OF AN INFECTION
Grouped results, originally rated on scales ranging from 1 (not severe) to 5 (very severe)

NOT/LESS SEVERE

PARTLY SEVERE

26%

49%

26%

MORE / VERY SUSCEPTIBLE

Perceptions and emotions

Findings
- The level of certainty expressed by respondents on their **ability to avoid an infection** is **3.23** (scale 1-5)
- Around **a third** of respondents perceive the **virus as close** and express **high levels of stress**
- Up to **46%** consider the virus as **very fear-inducing**

The level of certainty among respondents that they can avoid an infection is substantially lower than their level of certainty in their knowledge of protective behaviours. Feelings of helplessness may be growing and can contribute to complacency in protective behaviours in the future.
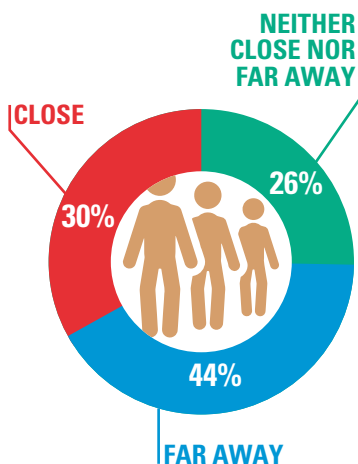
Predictors
- Negative emotions are reported more by respondents who are **older, female, dwelling in urban areas, living with children,** and **working in healthcare**
- Those who know **infected peers and consume media frequently** have **higher negative emotions** and perceive the **virus as being closer**
- **Healthcare workers** and members of **risk groups** feel the **virus as being closer**

FEELING ABLE TO AVOID AN INFECTION
Rated on scales ranging from 1 (difficult) to 5 (easy).
Mean values und 95% confidence intervals.

3.23

DISTANCE
To me, the novel coronavirus feels...

CLOSE 30%
NEITHER CLOSE NOR FAR AWAY 26%
FAR AWAY 44%

STRESS
For me the Corona virus is...

(VERY) STRESSFUL 34%
SOMEWHAT STRESSFUL 19%
(RATHER) NOT STRESSFUL 48%

FEAR
For me the Corona virus is...

(VERY) FEAR INDUCING 46%
SOMEWHAT FEAR INDUCING 18%
(RATHER) NOT FEAR INDUCING 35%
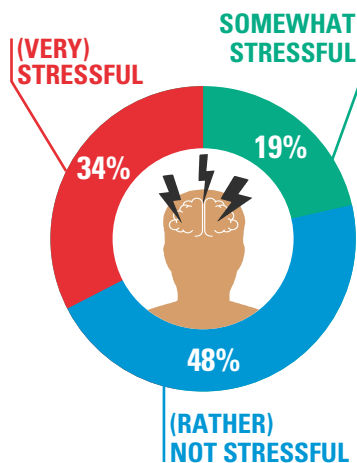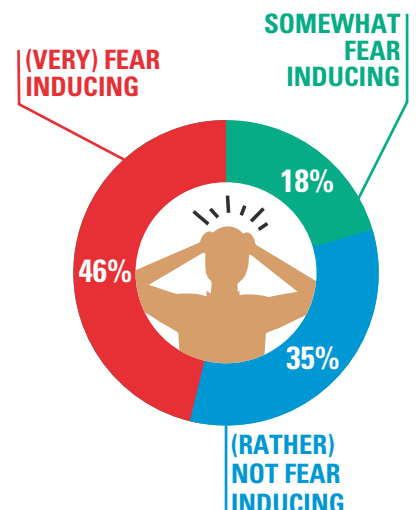
SECTION 2:
Individual Behaviours
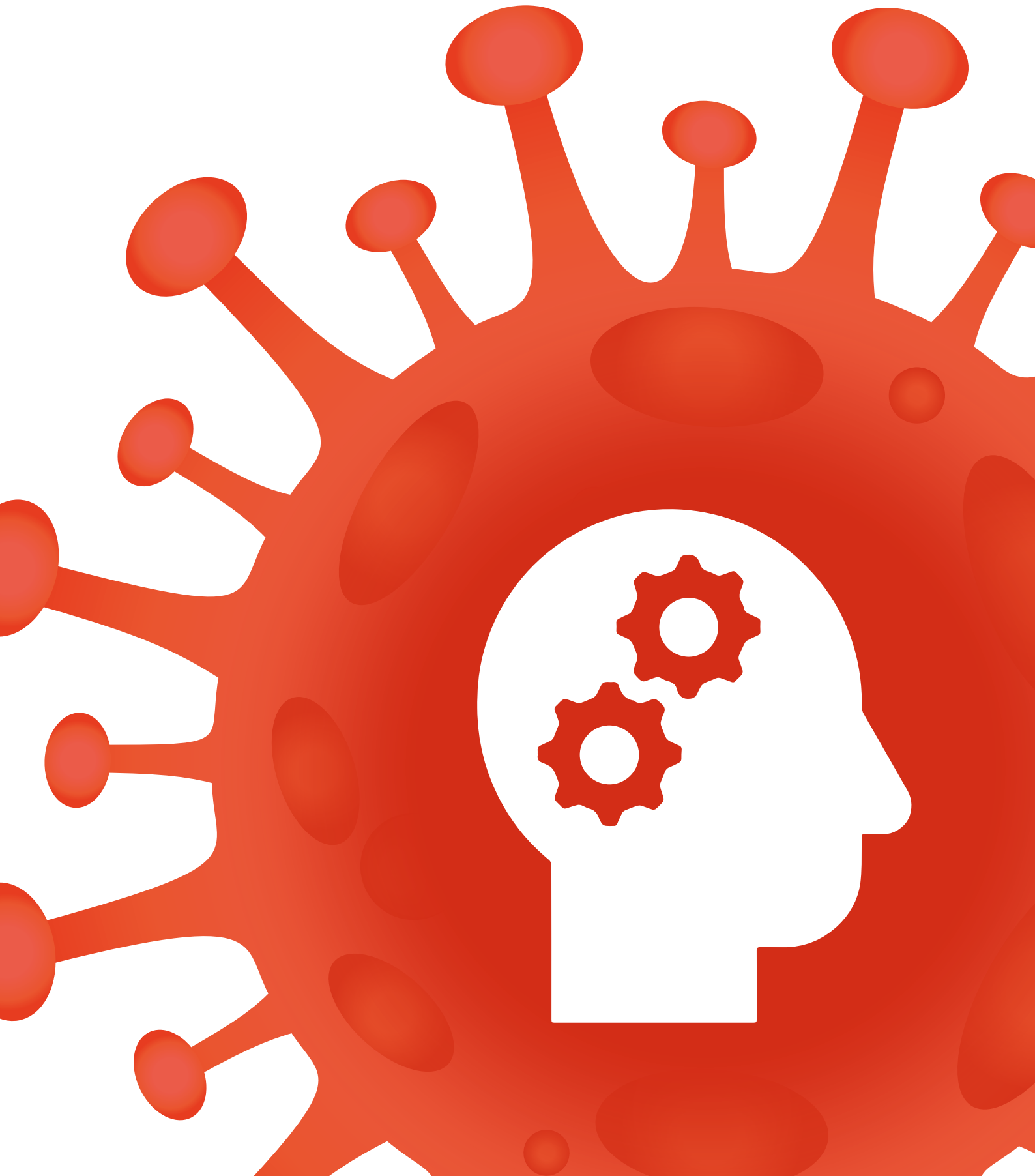
Protective Behaviours
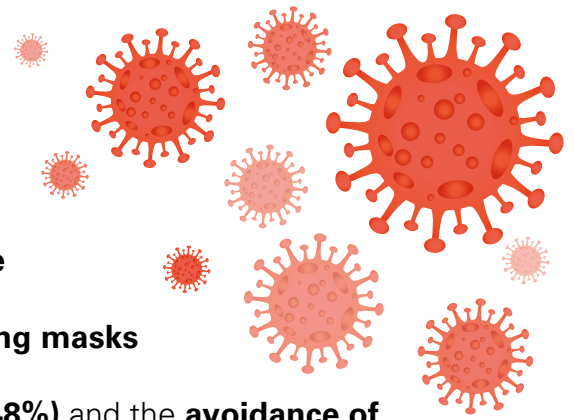
Findings

- The adoption of protective behaviours is **below desirable levels**
- Highest levels of compliance were measured with **wearing masks (80%)** and **hand sanitation (77%)**
- Lowest compliance relate to **staying home while sick (48%)** and the **avoidance of social events (34%)**

The uptake of protective behaviours leaves room for improvement as risky behaviours such as not adhering to physical distancing combined with not avoiding social events create large potential for viral transmission. Further improvements should also be possible in the wearing of masks and hand sanitation despite their relatively high levels. The lower levels in these measures for those who have high infection probability perceptions suggests fatigue and fatalism are affecting behaviour.

Predictors

- Compliance is higher among respondents who are **older, female, live in rural areas,** and **consume media frequently**
- Uptake of protective measures correlates positively with **trust in government** and **higher perceptions of viral spread**
- Having **infected peers** correlates negatively with the uptake of measures
- Higher perceptions of **infection probability** correlate **negatively** with **handwashing and physical distancing**

UPTAKE OF PROTECTIVE MEASURES

- *- No or less uptake*
- *- Medium uptake*
- *- Strong or very strong uptake*

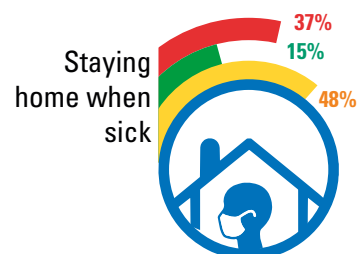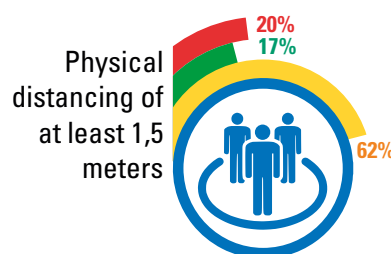**Washing hands for 20 seconds** — 12%, 10%, 77%

Disnfecting surfaces — 27%, 18%, 54%

Wearing face mask — 11%, 9%, 80%

Physical distancing of at least 1,5 meters — 20%, 17%, 62%

Staying home when sick — 37%, 15%, 48%

Using disinfectants — 10%, 13%, 77%

Avoiding to touch eyes, nose, mouth — 24%, 16%, 61%

Avoided a social event I wanted to attend — 18%, 48%, 34%
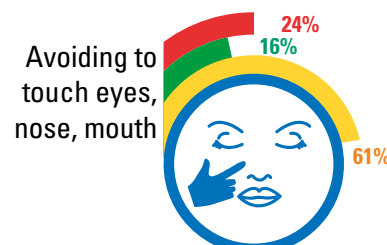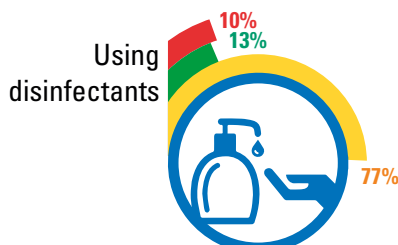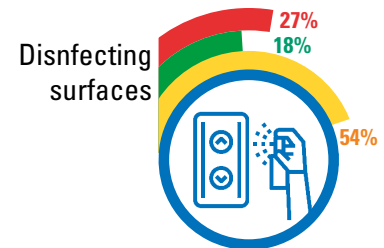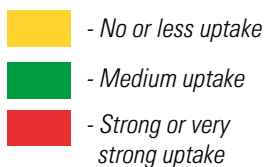
Vaccinations

Findings

- The **majority of respondents (59%)** would be **willing to get vaccinated** if a vaccine was available whereas only **29% are strongly against doing so**
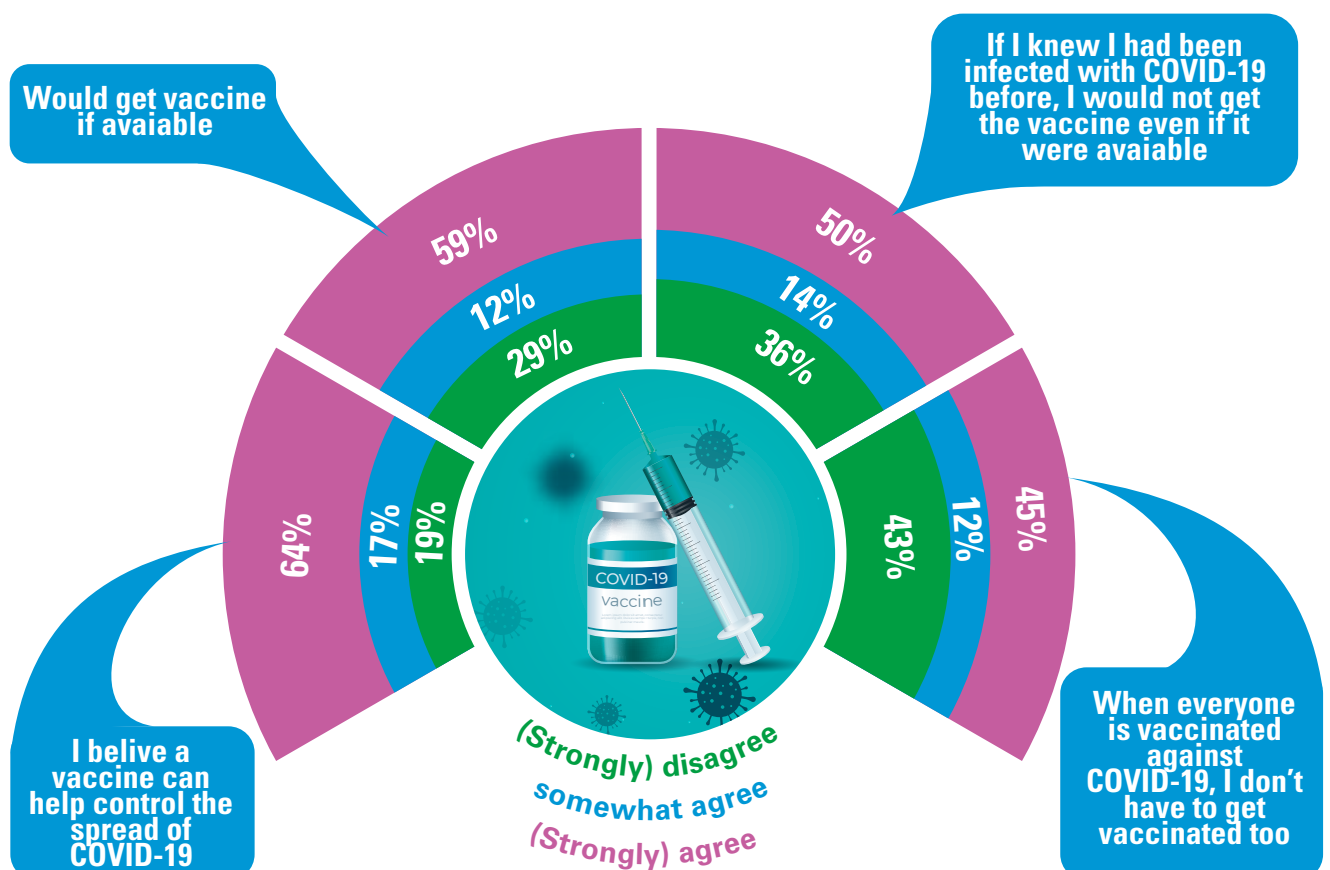- Around **two thirds** of respondents believe that a vaccine would be **effective in controlling the spread of COVID-19**
- A **half** of the respondents think that **if they had been infected before,** they would **not take a vaccine**
- **43%** believe they would **not need a vaccine** if **others have taken one**

Overall, the majority of respondents are positive towards vaccinations and willing to get vaccinated. More efforts are needed to alleviate concerns or increases perceptions of utility for groups that are more critical, particularly younger and female respondents.

Predictors

- Respondents more critical towards vaccines tend to be **younger, female, infrequent media consumers,** and have **higher education**
- Higher perceptions of **viral closeness and spread, worry about economic consequences,** as well as the risk it poses correlate with **higher willingness** to get vaccinated
- Trust in the government and medical sector are linked with **more positive** views on vaccinations

PLEASE SHARE YOUR POSITION ON A POTENTIAL FUTURE COVID-19 VACCINE:

Would get vaccine if avaiable

If I knew I had been infected with COVID-19 before, I would not get the vaccine even if it were avaiable

59%
12%
29%
50%
14%
36%
64%
17%
19%
43%
12%
45%

I belive a vaccine can help control the spread of COVID-19

When everyone is vaccinated against COVID-19, I don't have to get vaccinated too

(Strongly) disagree
somewhat agree
(Strongly) agree

Vaccination concerns
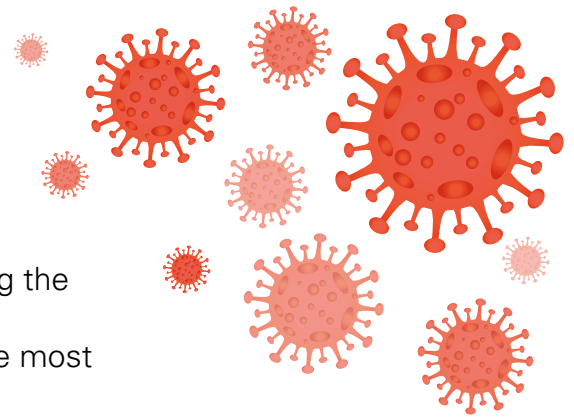
Findings

- **No measured concerns receive high levels** of responses in the survey with the **origin of the vaccine** being the highest concern **(31%)**
- The ability to **lift restrictions** due to the vaccine being the most commonly cited reason for getting it **(25%)**
- **18%** are worried about **side-effects**
- Recommendations are not cited as a large supporting factor, but **family doctors** are **more important** than **central institutions** such as the MoH **(19% vs 10%)**

Predictors

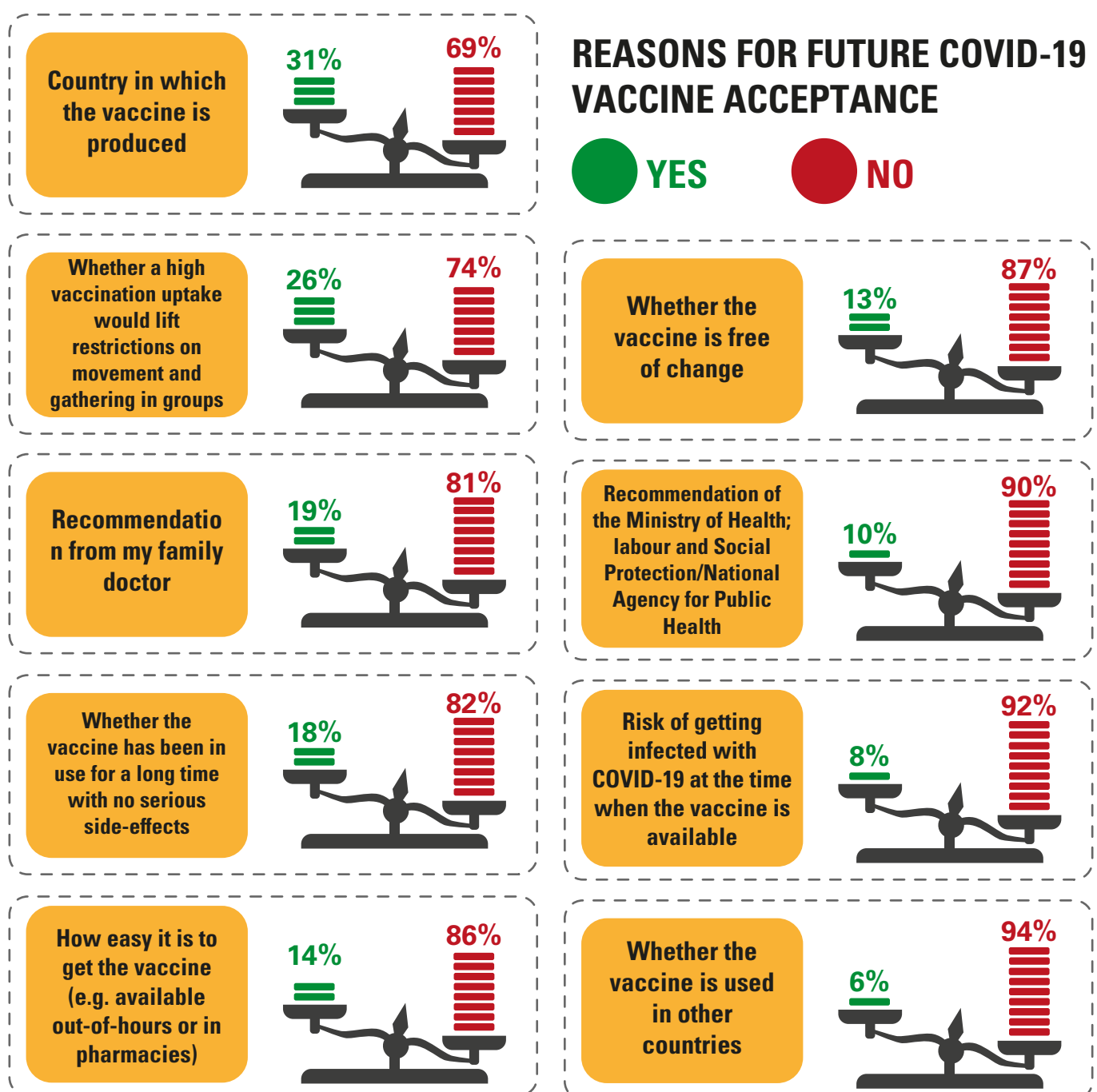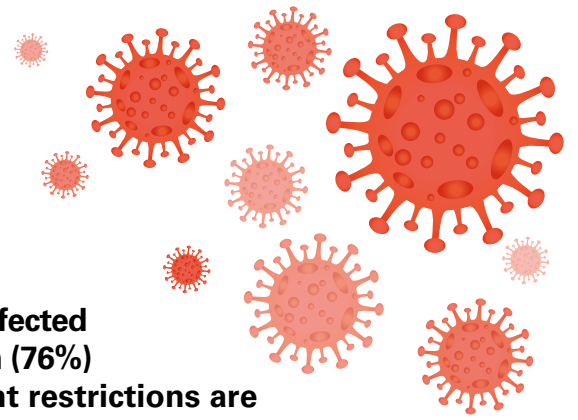- **Recommendations** from either family doctors or the MoH are more important to **older** and **urban** respondents
- The **ease of access** to vaccines is more important to **female** respondents and those who **worry about future economic consequences**

Country in which the vaccine is produced	31%	69%

REASONS FOR FUTURE COVID-19 VACCINE ACCEPTANCE

🟢 **YES**   🔴 **NO**

Whether a high vaccination uptake would lift restrictions on movement and gathering in groups	26%	74%

Whether the vaccine is free of change	13%	87%

Recommendation from my family doctor	19%	81%

Recommendation of the Ministry of Health; labour and Social Protection/National Agency for Public Health	10%	90%

Whether the vaccine has been in use for a long time with no serious side-effects	18%	82%

Risk of getting infected with COVID-19 at the time when the vaccine is available	8%	92%

How easy it is to get the vaccine (e.g. available out-of-hours or in pharmacies)	14%	86%

Whether the vaccine is used in other countries	6%	94%

SECTION 3:
Support for policies
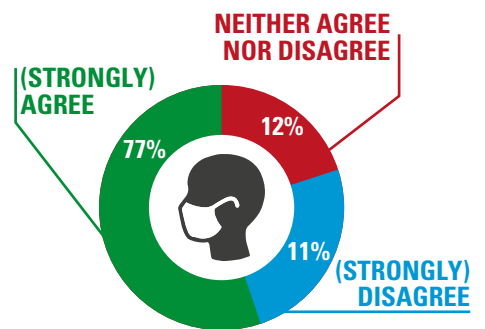
General policy perspectives

Findings

- Strong support was measured for enforced **isolations for infected individuals (79%)** and for **increased testing in the population (76%)**
- However, up to **46%** of respondents think that the **current restrictions are greatly exaggerated**
- **62%** of respondents accept **avoidance of people based on ethnicity**
- Up to **77%** would **continue to follow restrictions** after the peak of infection even after they are no longer formal requirements

The strong support for isolating infected individual and increased testing shows a good level of acceptance for targeted and preventative measures against COVID-19. However, the view that current restrictions are exaggerated is common. The level of avoidance based on ethnicity is high and should be better understood so it can be addressed.
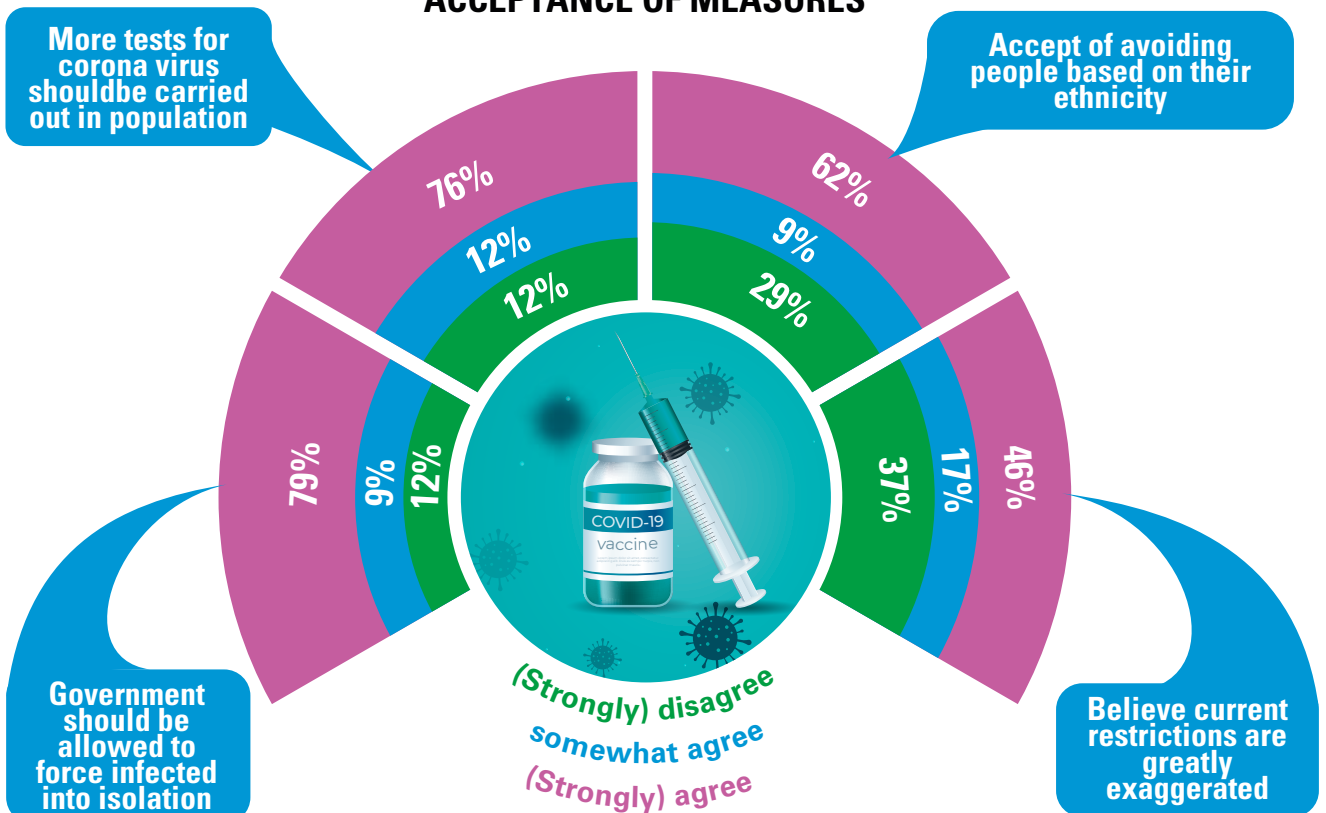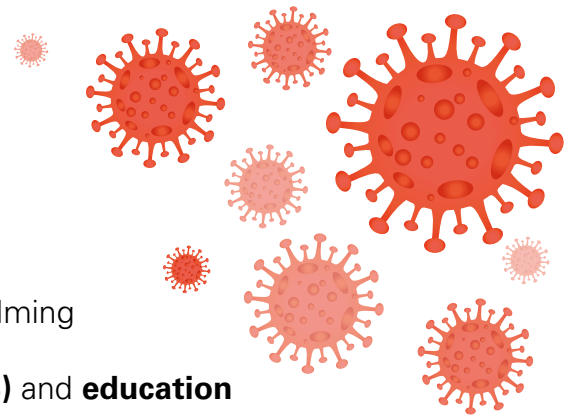
Predictors

- Enforced isolations are supported more among **older** respondents who have **high trust in government**
- Following restrictions beyond formal requirements is more common among **older** who have higher **risk perceptions** and **trust in government**
- Having **infected peers** correlates negatively with continuing to follow restrictions

VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE

NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

(STRONGLY) AGREE

77%

12%

11%

(STRONGLY) DISAGREE

ACCEPTANCE OF MEASURES

More tests for corona virus shouldbe carried out in population

Accept of avoiding people based on their ethnicity

76%

12%

12%

62%

9%

29%

79%

9%

12%

COVID-19 vaccine

37%

17%

46%

Government should be allowed to force infected into isolation

Believe current restrictions are greatly exaggerated

(Strongly) disagree

somewhat agree

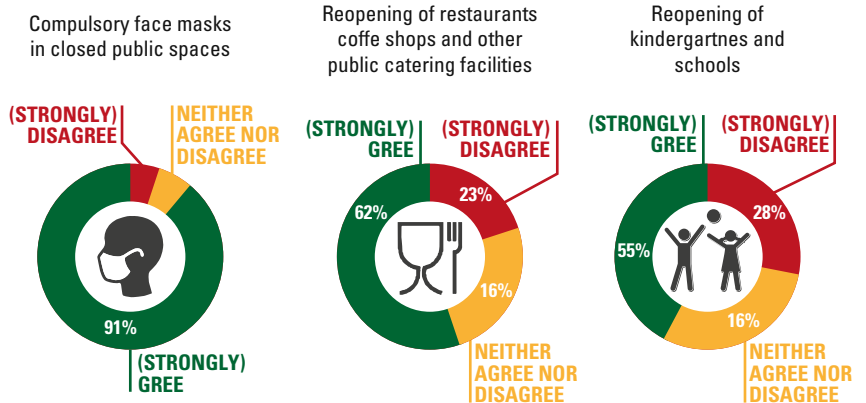(Strongly) agree

Support for specific policies

Findings

• **Mask mandates in closed public places** enjoy overwhelming support with **91%** expressing strong agreement

• The majority support **reopening restaurants/cafés (62%)** and **education facilities (55%)**

• **Mandatory testing for teachers** is supported by **76%**

• Bans on **interregional public transport** and **the reintroduction of the state of emergency** are **resisted by the majority** and only **32% and 26%** respectively strongly **support them**

• **Reopening borders** has **no clear** outcome as neither side has an absolute majority **(46% for and 33% against)**

Support varies greatly by different policies with strong support for masks and testing to continue or be introduced, but little appetite for the continued restrictions on restaurants and the education sector, and strong resistance towards strict restrictions of movement or state of emergency.
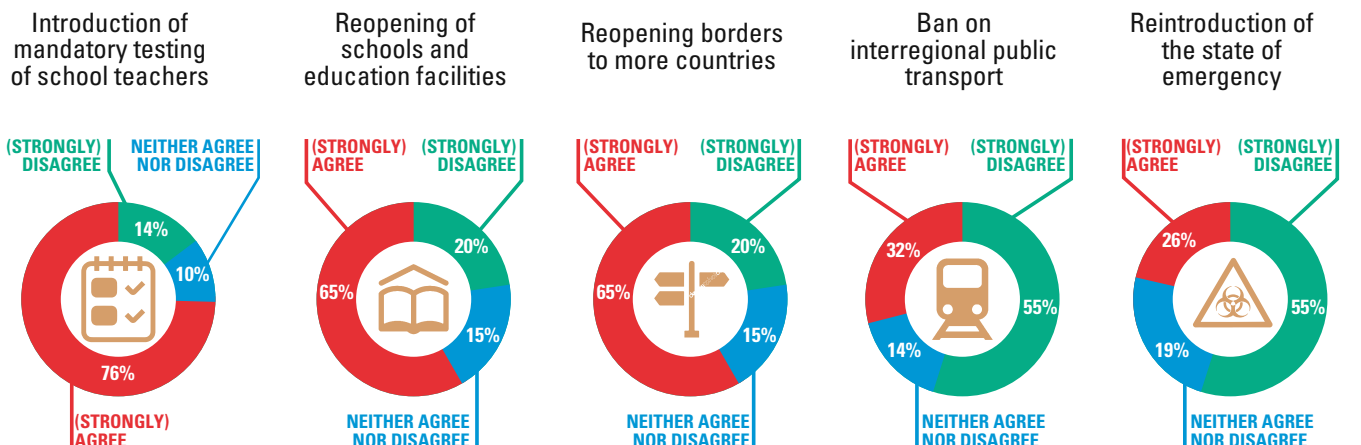
Predictors

• Those who disagree with mask mandates are more likely to be **male,** have **lower trust in the medical sector,** lower perceptions of **viral spread,** and **consume media less**

• Support for reopening schools is mor common among those with **high trust in government, frequent media** consumption, and higher perceptions of **infection probability**

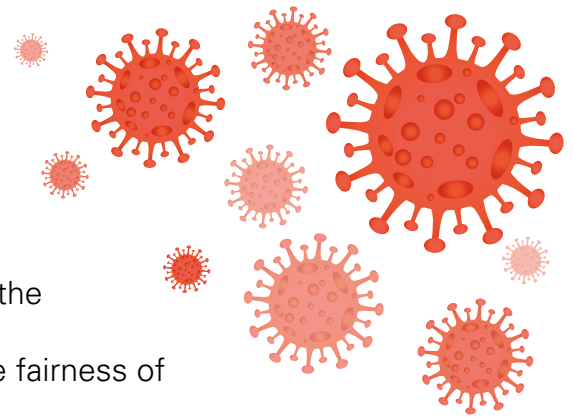## AGREEMENT WITH DECISIONS TAKEN

Compulsory face masks in closed public spaces

(STRONGLY) DISAGREE
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
91%
(STRONGLY) GREE

Reopening of restaurants coffe shops and other public catering facilities

(STRONGLY) GREE
(STRONGLY) DISAGREE
62%
23%
16%
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

Reopening of kindergartnes and schools

(STRONGLY) GREE
(STRONGLY) DISAGREE
55%
28%
16%
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

ACCEPTANCE FOR FUTURE RESTRICTIONS

Introduction of mandatory testing of school teachers

(STRONGLY) DISAGREE
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
14%
10%
76%
(STRONGLY) AGREE

Reopening of schools and education facilities

(STRONGLY) AGREE
(STRONGLY) DISAGREE
20%
65%
15%
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

Reopening borders to more countries

(STRONGLY) AGREE
(STRONGLY) DISAGREE
20%
65%
15%
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

Ban on interregional public transport

(STRONGLY) AGREE
(STRONGLY) DISAGREE
32%
55%
14%
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

Reintroduction of the state of emergency

(STRONGLY) AGREE
(STRONGLY) DISAGREE
26%
55%
19%
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

Fairness

Findings
- The majority of respondents consider the decisions made on COVID-19 to be fair (61%) and would convince others of the fairness (62%)
- Only 17%/18% of respondents disagree strongly with the fairness of decisions

The perceptions on fairness are positive in the majority. However, there are issues with these perceptions especially among the youth, likely due to the lower perceived personal risks and strong perceived impacts from restrictions.
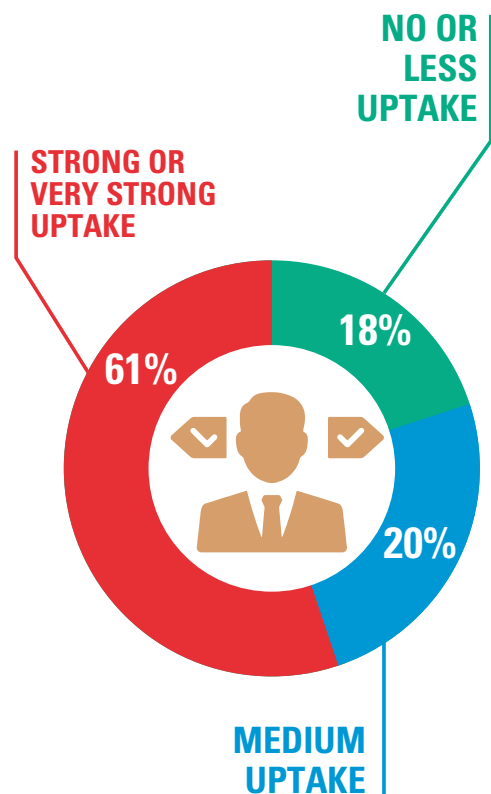
Predictors
- Fairness perceptions are lower among younger respondents living without children who know peers who have been infected
- Views on fairness correlate positively with trust in government, media consumption, and perceptions of fast viral spread
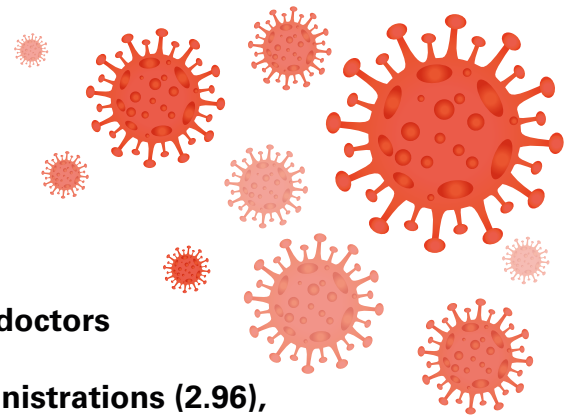
FAIRNESS

I would convince others that the decisions are right

NO OR LESS UPTAKE

STRONG OR VERY STRONG UPTAKE

62%

17%

21%

MEDIUM UPTAKE
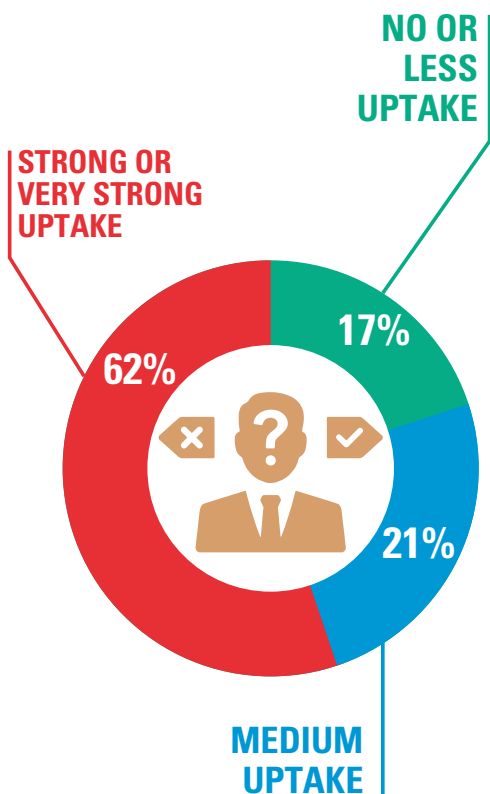
I think the decisions are fair

NO OR LESS UPTAKE

STRONG OR VERY STRONG UPTAKE

61%

18%

20%

MEDIUM UPTAKE

Trust in institutions

Findings
- Trust is **highest** towards the **medical sector,** including **hospitals (3.87),** the **Ministry of Health (3.61),** and **family doctors (3.47)**
- Lowest levels of trust were measured towards **city administrations (2.96), churches (3.01),** and **schools (3.18)**
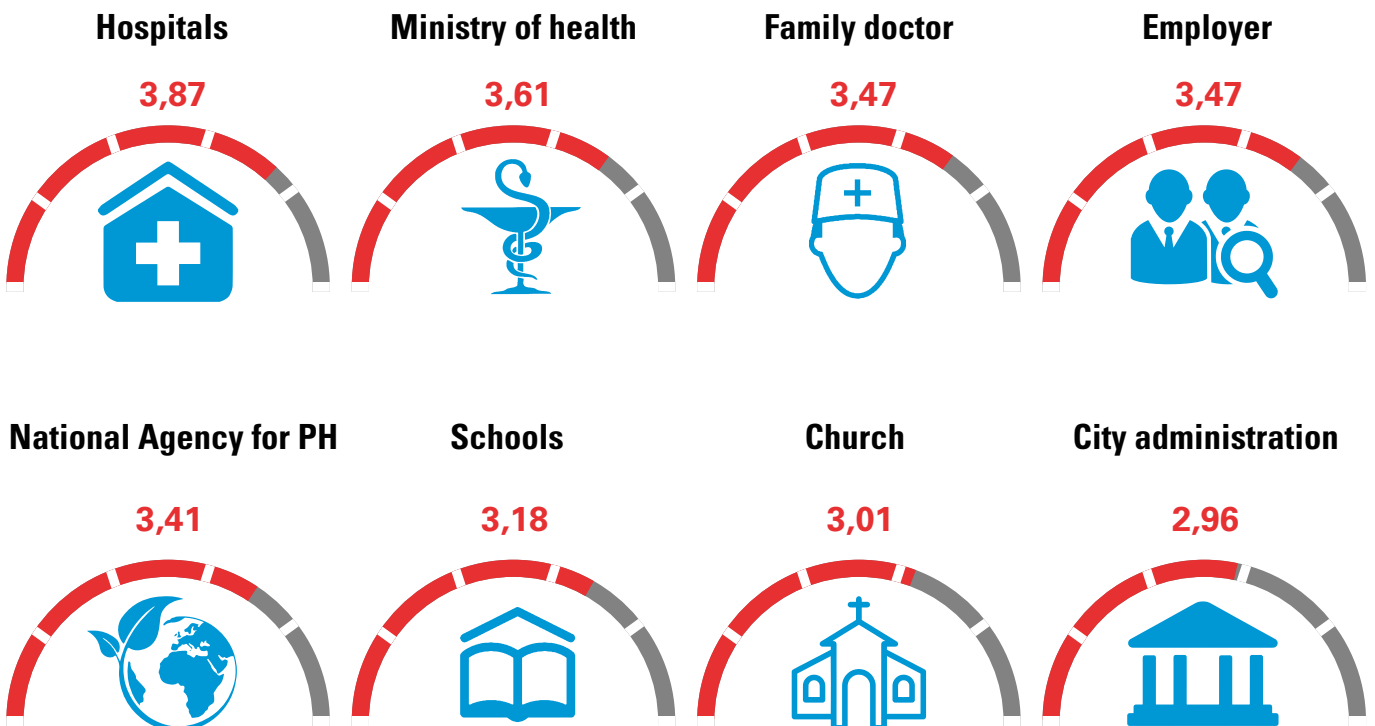
The higher trust enjoyed by the medical sector is a positive supporting factor in its ability to tackle the pandemic and engage in credible messaging.

Predictors
- **Trust** in institutions is stronger among **older respondents, healthcare workers,** and those who **consume media frequently**
- **Higher education, knowing infected peers,** and **belonging to risk groups** correlate **negatively** with trust
- **Female** respondents have higher trust in the **government**
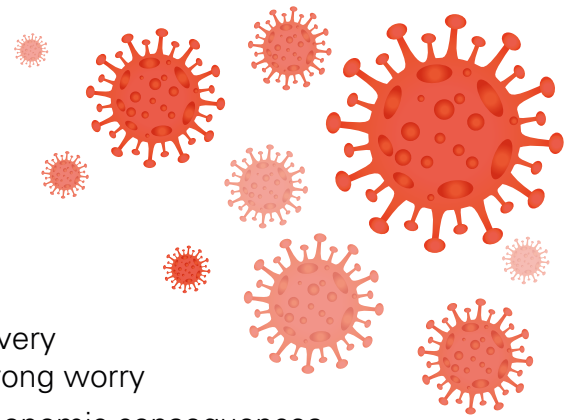
CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS
Rated on scales ranging from 1 (very low confidence) to 5 (very high confidence). Mean values and 95% confidence intervals

Hospitals	Ministry of health	Family doctor	Employer
3,87	**3,61**	**3,47**	**3,47**

National Agency for PH	Schools	Church	City administration
3,41	**3,18**	**3,01**	**2,96**

SECTION 4:
Economy and wellbeing

Economic impacts

Findings

- The worries about the future economic consequences is very common among respondents with up to 69% expressing strong worry
- Only 17% of respondents are not worried about future economic consequences

Worries about the future economic situation are extremely common and likely contributing to stress and fear related to the virus. Data from other countries suggests that suffering financial hardship can negatively impact uptake of protective behaviours and support for policies, so it is important to understand and address impacts as much as possible not only to protect livelihoods but also to tackle the pandemic.

Predictors

- Respondents who are older, live in rural areas, and frequently consume media are more likely to worry about the economic situation

WORRIES

Worries about future economic consequenses

NO OR LESS WORRY

17%

MEDIUM WORRY

14%

MUCH OR VERY MUCH WORRY

69%
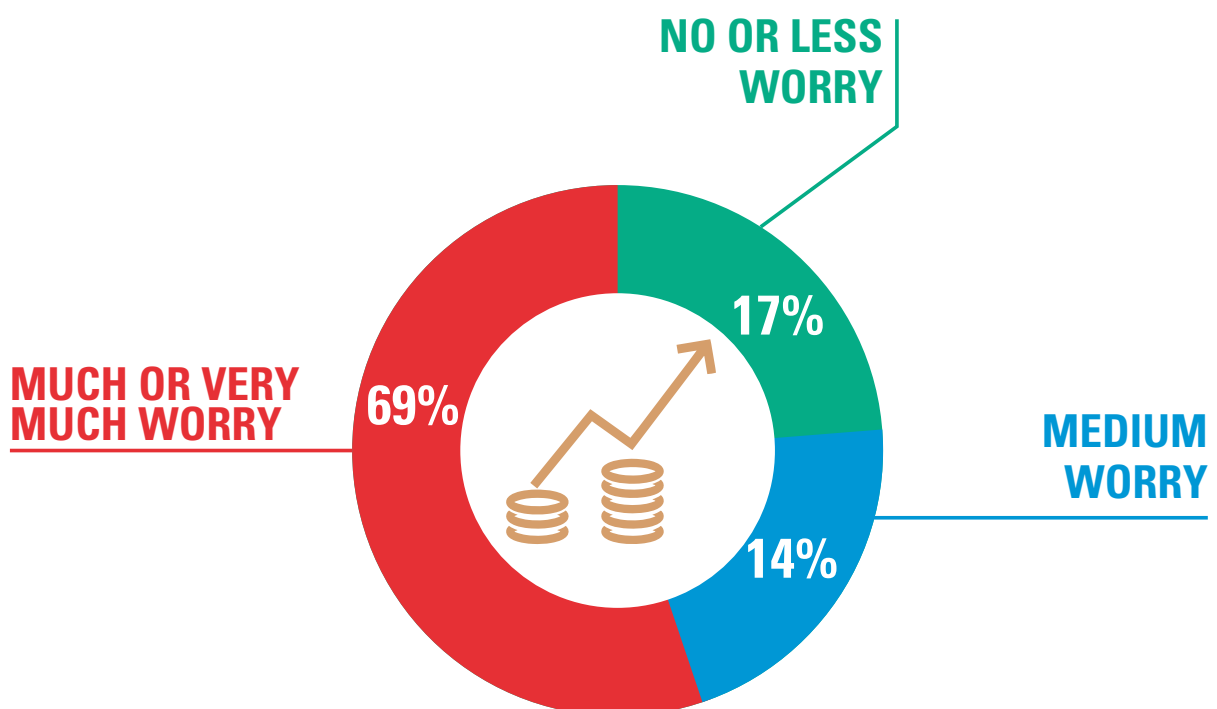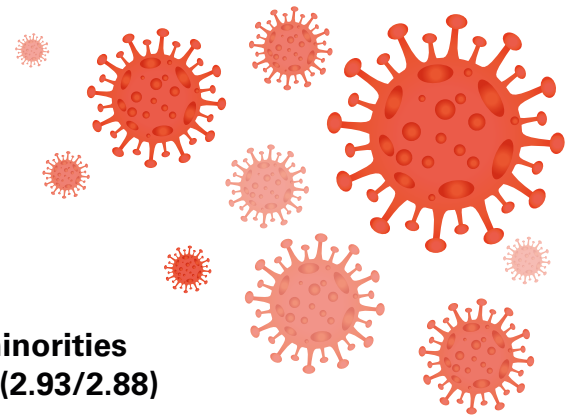
Resilience

Findings

- The **majority** of the respondents express **good resilience against stressful events (3.5),** but **significant minorities struggle** with **recovering from or coping with** bad events **(2.93/2.88)**

Maintaining good levels of resilience is important for people to cope with the stress of COVID-19 and the impacts of restrictions, especially for those who have had direct negative medical or economic impacts.
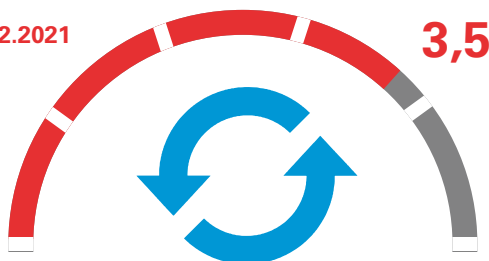
Predictors

- **Resilience** is **higher** among **rural** respondents
- Higher resilience correlates with **low trust in the medical sector** and **low media consumption**

RESILIENCE

Rated on scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
Mean values and 95% confidence intervals

It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event

01.12.2021   **3,5**

It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens
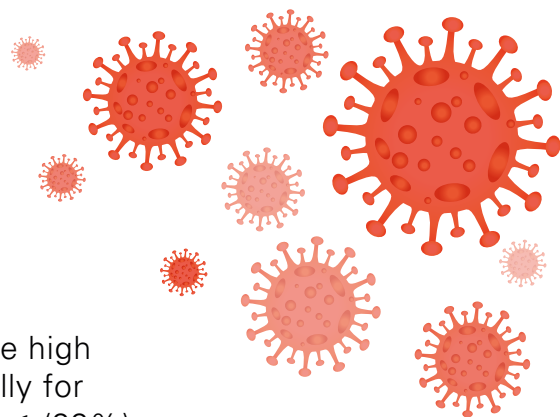
01.12.2021   **2,93**

I have a hard time making it through stressful events

01.12.2021   **2,88**

Negative pandemic behaviours

Findings
- The levels of **negative pandemic behaviours are** quite high
- Issues with less healthy lifestyles are present, especially for **exercising less** than normal **(45%)** and eating a **worse diet** (22%)
- The **avoidance of people based on ethnicity** is also very common **(42%)**
- **Postponing or avoiding vaccinations (28%)** and **doctors visits (25%)** are engaged in by significant minorities

Negative pandemic behaviours are high both in relation to less healthy lifestyles and health-seeking. These may have negative impacts on public health in the long term.

Predictors
- **Drinking** and **smoking** more than usual is **more common** among **male** respondents
- Unhealthier diets are more common in **urban areas**
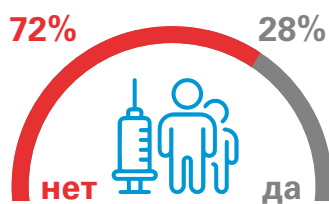- **Frequent media consumptions** correlates with **less exercise**

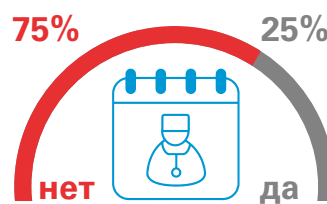## PANDEMIC BEHAVIOR
Results from recent survey
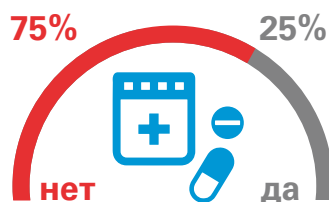
Exercise less than usual

55% нет   45% да
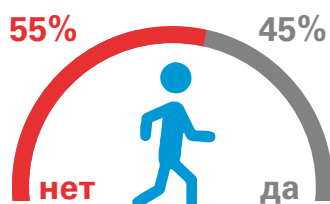
Postponed vaccination for myself or my child

72% нет   28% да

Avoid going doctor

75% нет   25% да

Buy drugs I heard helping against COVID-19

75% нет   25% да

Eat more unhealthy food than usual

78% нет   22% да

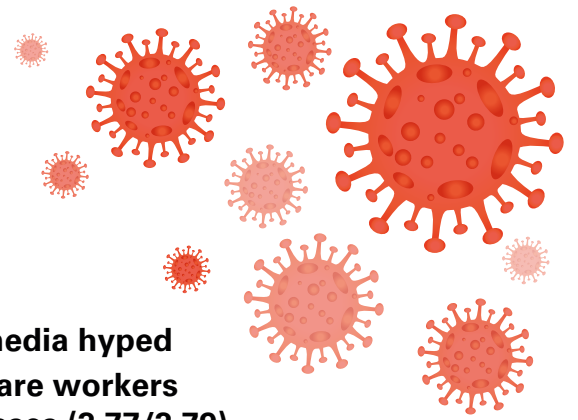**Smoke more**

92% нет   8% да
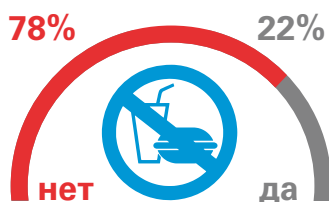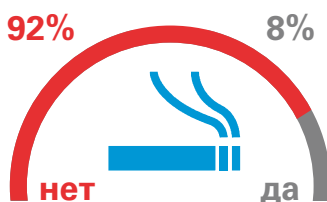
Drink more alcohol than usual

94% нет   6% да
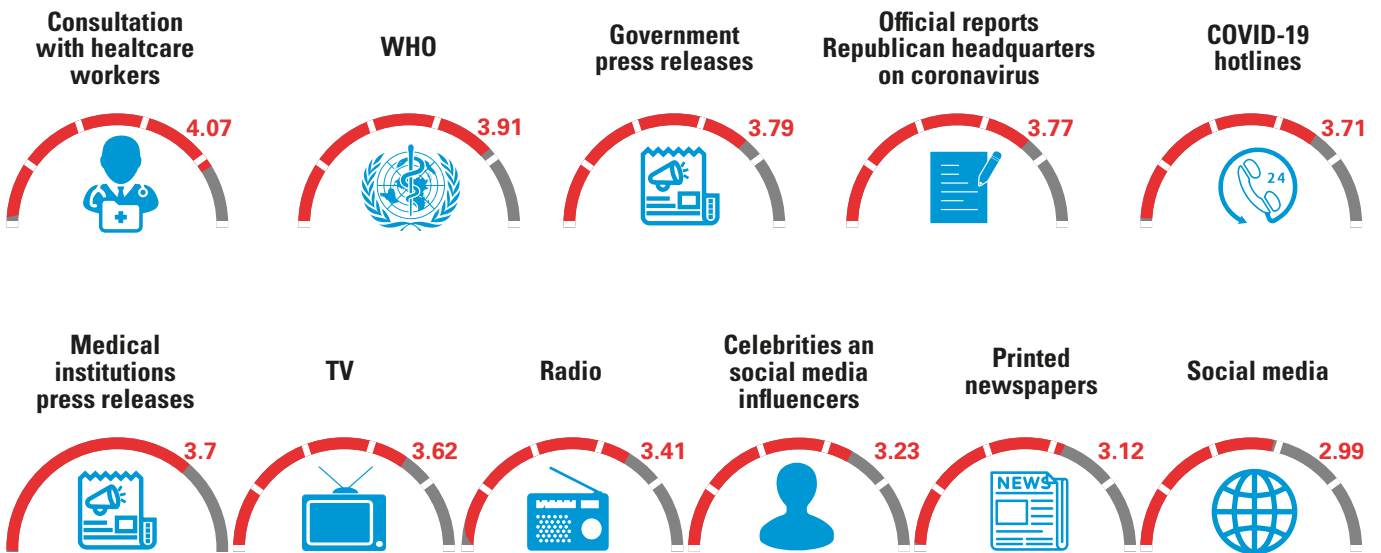
SECTION 5:
Media use and trust
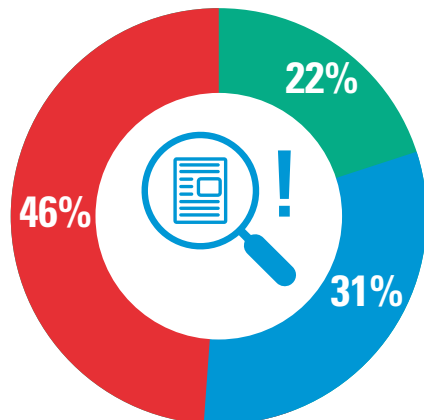
Information sources

Findings

- **Searching for information** about COVID-19 is **not common** as **46%** report doing so never or rarely
- Up to **40%** of respondents think that COVID-19 is **very media hyped**
- The most trusted sources of information include **healthcare workers** (4.07), the **WHO** (3.91), and **official reports and press releases (3.77/3.79)**
- The **least trusted** sources are **social media (2.99), newspapers (3.12),** and **celebrities/influences (3.23)**

TRUST IN INFORMATION SOURCES

Rated on scales ranging from 1 (very little trust) to 5 (great deal of trust).
Mean values and 95% confidence intervala

Consultation with healtcare workers	WHO	Government press releases	Official reports Republican headquarters on coronavirus	COVID-19 hotlines
4.07	3.91	3.79	3.77	3.71

Medical institutions press releases	TV	Radio	Celebrities an social media influencers	Printed newspapers	Social media
3.7	3.62	3.41	3.23	3.12	2.99

FREQUENCY SEARCHING FOR INFORMATIONS ABOUT CORONAVIRUS /COVID-19

22%
31%
46%

- No answer
- Never/rarely
- Sometimes
- Often/very often

MEDIA HYPE
For me the Corona virus is...

21%
40%
39%
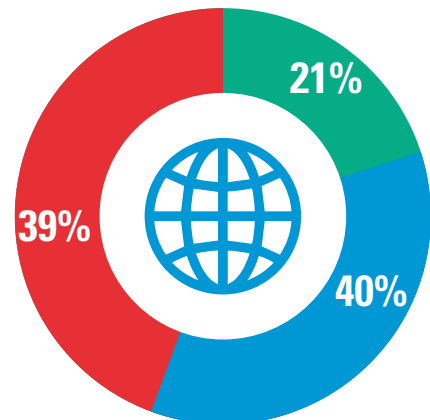
- No answer
- Somewhat media hyped
- (Rather) not media hyped
- (Very) media hyped