

Covid-19 preventative behaviours: A dangerous game of Russian roulette

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As the number of positive Covid-19 cases rises across the country, the fear of contracting the virus is growing amongst the citizens of South Africa. The majority of people have come to the conclusion that they are responsible for their own health and, as such, are committed to social isolation and playing their part to prevent the spread of the virus. However, the danger is that the longer the current status quo continues the less likely some South Africans will be to limit their social interactions.



Encouragingly, mask-wearing has become the new norm for most people when in public spaces, visiting stores and, for some, when using public transport. However, most people are wearing masks primarily for self-protection with the need to protect others only a secondary consideration, according to the most recent results of the Ask Afrika Covid-19 Tracker study for the period 23 to 30 June 2020. The main aim of the study is to understand the socio-economic impact that the coronavirus, lockdown and gradual re-opening of the economy has on South Africans.

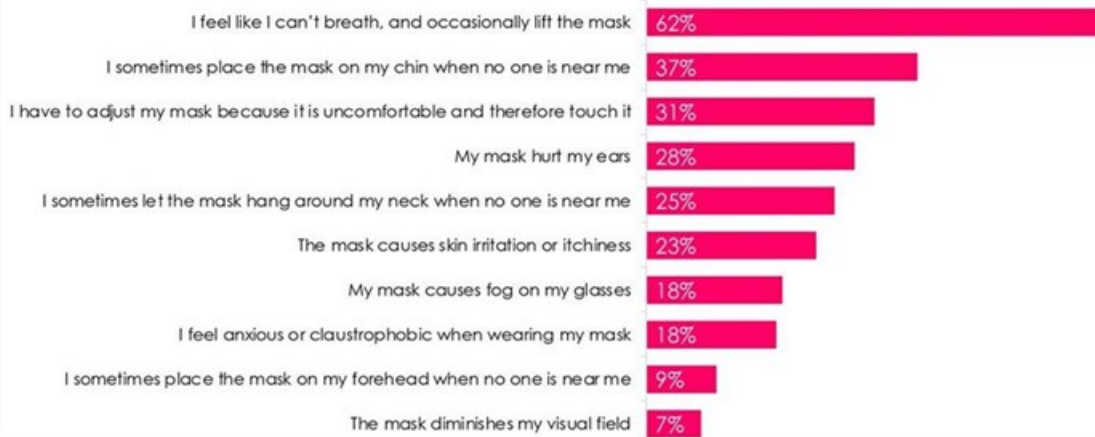
There appears to be a greater awareness amongst South Africans of how the virus spreads and what they can do to better protect themselves. Handwashing is on the rise with 84% of respondents confirming that they wash their hands more frequently now than in the past, 87% are committed to sanitising their hands whenever they leave home, while 76% saying they will continue to wear a mask.

The fact that most people claim that they will continue to wear a mask, wash their hands or sanitise surfaces – even when no one is watching – potentially points to the fact that these may be becoming entrenched behaviours. However, respondents say they are more likely to wear masks in public spaces (83%) and at stores (72%) than they are in familiar environments such as work (44%), socialising with friends (46%), at family gatherings (39%) and religious gatherings (37%). Alarming, only 59% of respondents say they will wear a mask in a taxi or bus.

The most common inhibitor to the wearing of masks is the feeling of not being able to breathe, said 62% of respondents. As a result they admitted to occasionally lifting their mask.

Factors inhibiting the use of face masks mostly include the feeling that one cannot breath and poorly fitting masks that increase a sense of uncomfortableness.

Experience when wearing a mask



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Despite a growing acceptance of the current situation there is a growing sense of frustration around ongoing lockdown regulations, which is leading to decreased compliance. According to the latest figures from the study, 70% of respondents are frustrated with lockdown regulations. Nearly 50% believe lockdown rules are too strict while 73% of respondents say people are breaking lockdown rules which is putting South African's at increased risk of contracting Covid-19.

Growing frustration levels means that people are less committed to isolating socially and staying at home compared to greater levels of commitment during level 4. Lower income groups, in particular, exhibit less commitment to social isolation. However, the majority argue that they have reduced their social interactions and have heeded the government's call to stay at home in order to curb the spread of the virus.

A total of 63% of respondents believe their community is complying with regulatory guidelines, although one in four, they argue, are not acting as responsible change agents.

While mask-wearing, hand-washing and sanitising looks to become a feature of normal life for the foreseeable future for many individuals, it appears unlikely that greeting people with elbows will become a similarly entrenched behaviour. The Ask Afrika study found that only 41% of people are likely to continue using the elbow greeting.

Until a vaccine is found, those individuals not taking every possible precaution to avoid contracting Covid-19 may be playing a dangerous game of Russian roulette with their health.

Ask Afrika's quantitative research is conducted via computer aided telephone and online interviews.

The research explores different themes and topics each week in order to better understand relevant issues and provide an immediate statistic. Companies are able to participate in the research to establish how the current situation is impacting their particular brands.

[Find out more - register today](#) for our free webinar on the socio-economic impact of this pandemic on South African citizens:

Employees and consumers are citizens too!

Understand the impact of Covid-19 on society to navigate the future with fact-based decisions

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Social research decisions are required around HIV/Aids and more recently, Covid-19. Educational and early childhood development, fair-trade shopping, media and financial research are some of the areas we love to work in. NGOs, public- and private sector clients choose to work with us to get the pulse of the nation.

Besides being **decisioneers** in brand and customer experience research, Ask Afrika is well known for creating some of the most useful, go-to industry benchmarks, including the Ask Afrika Orange Index®, the Ask Afrika Icon Brands®, the Ask Afrika Kasi Star Brands and the Target Group Index (TGI). Ask Afrika's knowledge of brands is extensive. The Target Group Index (TGI) survey, which measures psychographics, service, products, media and brands, has been used by the majority of the top 50 advertisers and media owners in South Africa for nearly two decades.

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