Dispatch No. 1018 | 14 July 2025

Burkinabè approve of COVID-19 response despite corruption, inadequate assistance

Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 1018 | Wallelign S. Hassen

Summary

On 18 March 2020, Burkina Faso reported sub-Saharan Africa's first coronavirus death, nine days after the country's first two cases were confirmed (Konaté et al., 2023; Asiedu, 2020). The government took prompt measures to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus, including shutting down schools, limiting public gatherings, and closing land, rail, and air borders (Zidouemba, Kinda, & Ouedraogo, 2020). The Ministry of Health elaborated a national emergency response plan with directives for the management of COVID-19 cases in early 2020 (Konaté et al., 2023).

The latest World Health Organization (2025) counts show 22,208 COVID-19 cases and 400 deaths in Burkina Faso. As of 31 December 2023, 29% of the population had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. The pandemic also worsened living conditions by exacerbating unemployment, internal displacement, and food insecurity (Eimieho, 2022; Parisotto & Elsheikhi, 2020; Zidouemba et al., 2020).

This dispatch reports on a special survey module included in the Afrobarometer Round 9 survey to explore the pandemic-related experiences and perceptions of citizens in Burkina Faso.

The findings show that one in six Burkinabè households lost a job, business, or primary source of income due to the pandemic. One-fifth reported that their household received pandemic-related assistance from the government, but most citizens said that assistance was distributed unfairly and that resources intended for the COVID-19 response were lost to corruption.

Even so, a majority of citizens approved of the government's performance in managing the response to the pandemic and said they think the government is prepared to deal with future public health emergencies.

Afrobarometer surveys

Afrobarometer is a pan-African, nonpartisan survey research network that provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life. Nine rounds of surveys have been completed in up to 42 countries since 1999. Round 10 surveys will be completed in mid-2025. Afrobarometer conducts face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

In Round 9, the Afrobarometer team in Burkina Faso, led by the Institut pour la Gouvernance et le Développement (IGD), interviewed a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample of 1,200 adult citizens in September-October 2022. A sample of this size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. Previous Afrobarometer surveys were conducted in Burkina Faso in 2008, 2012, 2015, 2017, and 2019.

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Key findings

- **Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic:**
  - One in six Burkinabè (16%) said a member of their household lost a job, business, or primary source of income due to the pandemic, while 1% said a household member became ill with COVID-19 or tested positive for the virus.

- **Attitudes toward vaccines:**
  - Six in 10 citizens (59%) said they had been vaccinated against COVID-19.
  - About one-quarter (23%) of respondents said they were unlikely to try to get vaccinated.
  - Among vaccine-hesitant citizens, most doubted the existence or serious nature of COVID-19 or expressed concerns about the safety of the vaccines.
  - A majority (55%) of Burkinabè said they trust the government to ensure the safety of COVID-19 vaccines.

- **Government response to COVID-19:**
  - Almost two-thirds (65%) of citizens said the government was doing "fairly well" or "very well" in managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - Clear majorities were also satisfied with the government's efforts to equip health facilities to respond to COVID-19 (64%) and to minimise disruptions to children's education (60%). But only 42% said the government had done a good job of providing relief assistance for vulnerable households.
  - Only one-fifth (20%) of respondents said their household received pandemic-related assistance from the government, and most said that assistance was distributed unfairly (72%). Two-thirds (67%) said that "some" or "a lot" of the resources intended for the COVID-19 response were lost to corruption.
  - In response to a public health emergency like a pandemic, a majority of citizens saw it as justified to postpone elections (64%) and to use the police or military to enforce public health mandates (60%). But views were split when it comes to censoring media reporting in response to a public health crisis.

- **Looking ahead:**
  - A majority (59%) of Burkinabè said they believe that their government is prepared to deal with future public health emergencies.
  - Fewer than half (41%) said the government needs to invest more in such preparations if doing so will reduce resources available for other health services.

Effects of COVID-19

One in six Burkinabè (16%) said a member of their household lost a job, business, or primary source of income due to the pandemic, while 1% said a household member became ill with COVID-19 or tested positive for the virus (Figure 1).

Key demographic groups show no significant differences in the frequency of illness or positive COVID-19 tests, but the economic effects of the pandemic varied by location, age, and economic status (Figure 2). Loss of a major income source was more common in cities than in rural areas (23% vs. 12%), and middle-aged individuals (19%-22%) were somewhat more likely to suffer a major financial loss than youth (12%-13%) or elders (14%). Citizens experiencing

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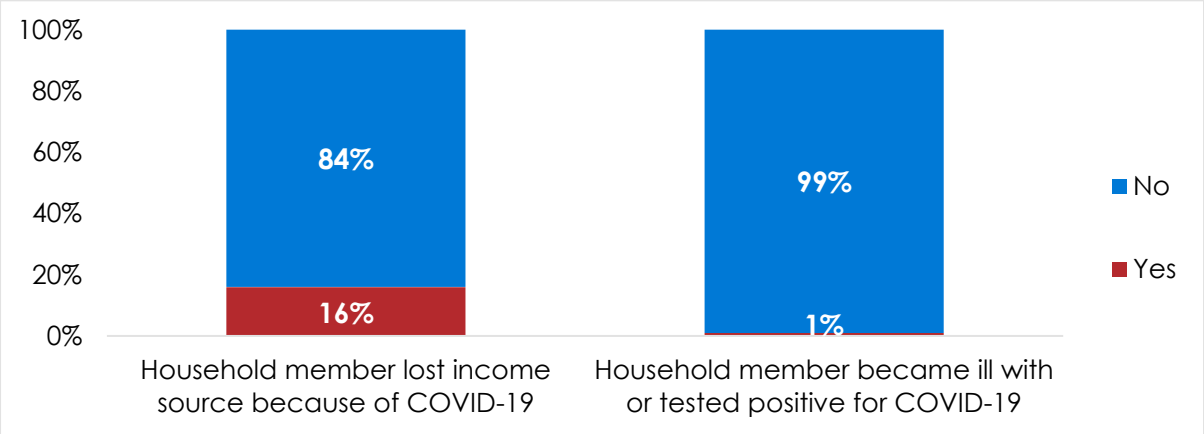
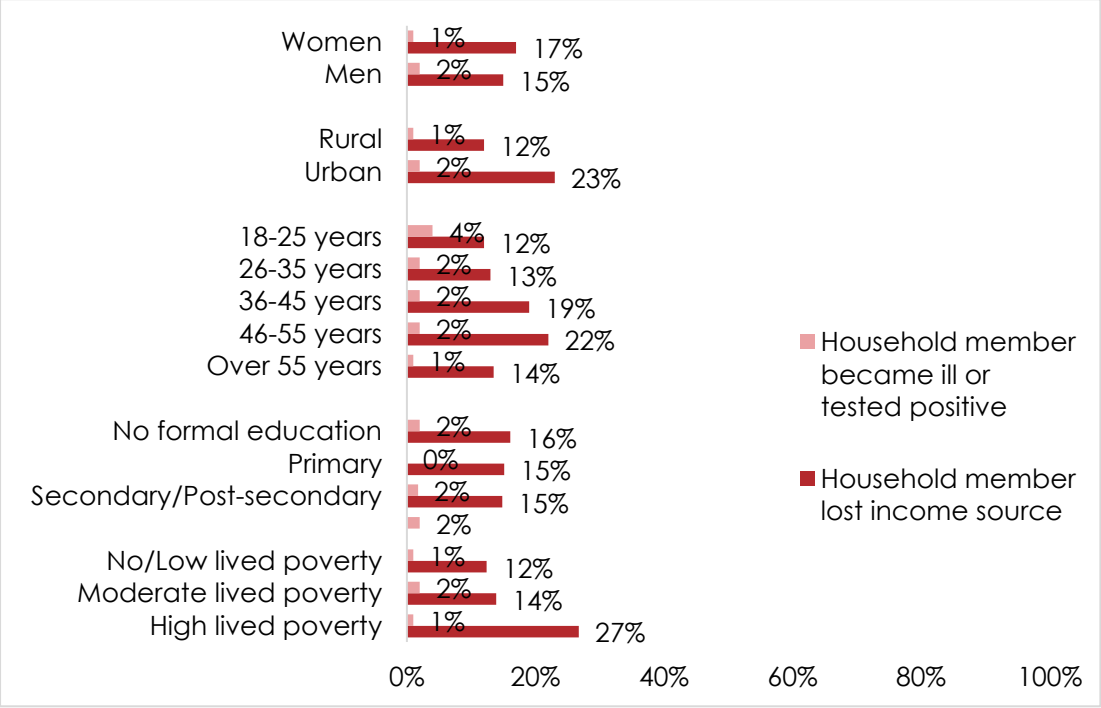
high lived poverty[1] (27%) were about twice as likely to report losing a main income source as their better-off counterparts (12%-14%).

Figure 1: Effects of COVID-19 | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *Please tell me whether you personally or any other member of your household have been affected in any of the following ways by the COVID-19 pandemic: Became ill with, or tested positive for, COVID-19? Temporarily or permanently lost a job, business, or primary source of income?*

Figure 2: Effects of COVID-19 | by demographic group | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *Please tell me if you personally or any other member of your household have been affected in any of the following ways by the COVID-19 pandemic: Became ill with COVID-19? Temporarily or permanently lost a job, business or primary source of income? (% who say "yes")*

[1] Afrobarometer's Lived Poverty Index measures respondents' levels of material deprivation by asking how often they or their families went without necessities (enough food and water, medical care, enough cooking fuel, and a cash income) during the past year. For more on lived poverty, see Mattes and Lekalake (2025).

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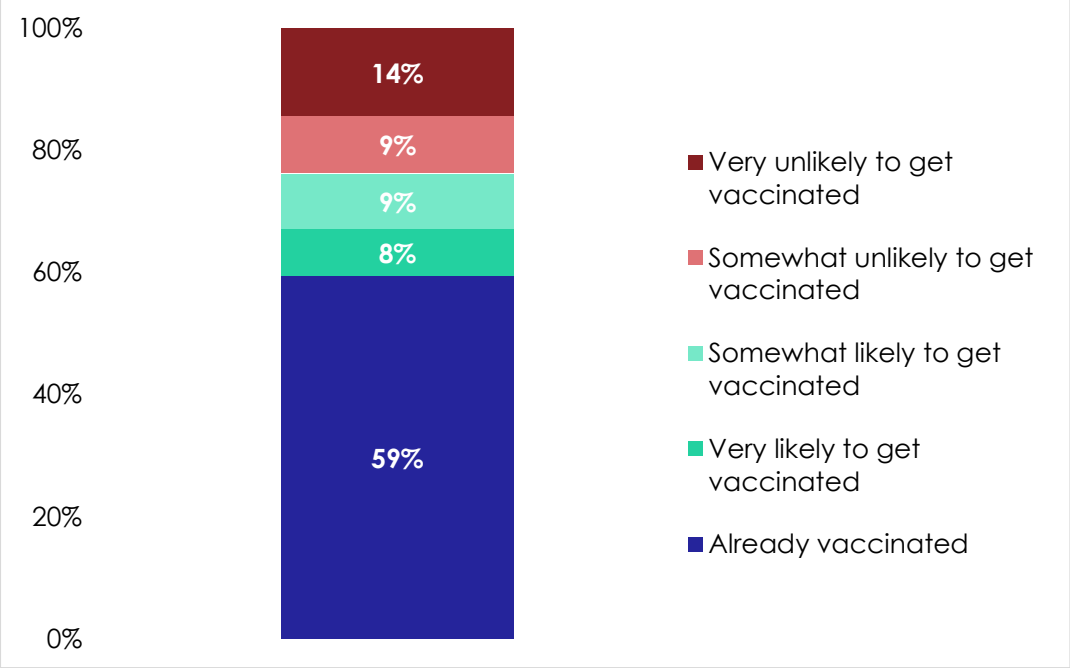
Attitudes toward vaccination

As of October 2022, six in 10 citizens (59%) reported that they had been vaccinated against COVID-19 (Figure 3). About one-quarter (23%) of respondents said it was "very unlikely" (14%) or "somewhat unlikely" (9%) that they would try to get vaccinated, while one in six described themselves as "somewhat likely" (9%) or "very likely" (8%) to do so.

Figure 3: Vaccination status | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *Have you received a vaccination against COVID-19, either one or two doses? [If "no":] If a vaccine for COVID-19 is available, how likely are you to try to get vaccinated?*

Self-reported vaccination rates were almost twice as high in rural areas (71%) as in cities (36%), where 41% said they were "somewhat" or "very" unlikely to try to get vaccinated (Figure 4). Vaccination rates decreased sharply, and vaccine hesitancy increased, as respondents' education level rose.

Among vaccine-hesitant citizens, four in 10 (38%) cited as their main reason either that COVID-19 does not exist (27%) or that it is not serious or life threatening (11%). About the same proportion were concerned about the safety of the vaccines: They didn't trust the vaccine or were worried about getting a fake or counterfeit vaccine (24%), they didn't think the vaccine was safe (5%), they feared that the vaccine might cause COVID-19 or bad side effects (5%), they didn't trust the source of the vaccine (3%), or they thought the vaccine was developed too quickly (1%) (Figure 5).

Others believed that they were at no or low risk of getting COVID-19 (8%) or that God would protect them (7%).

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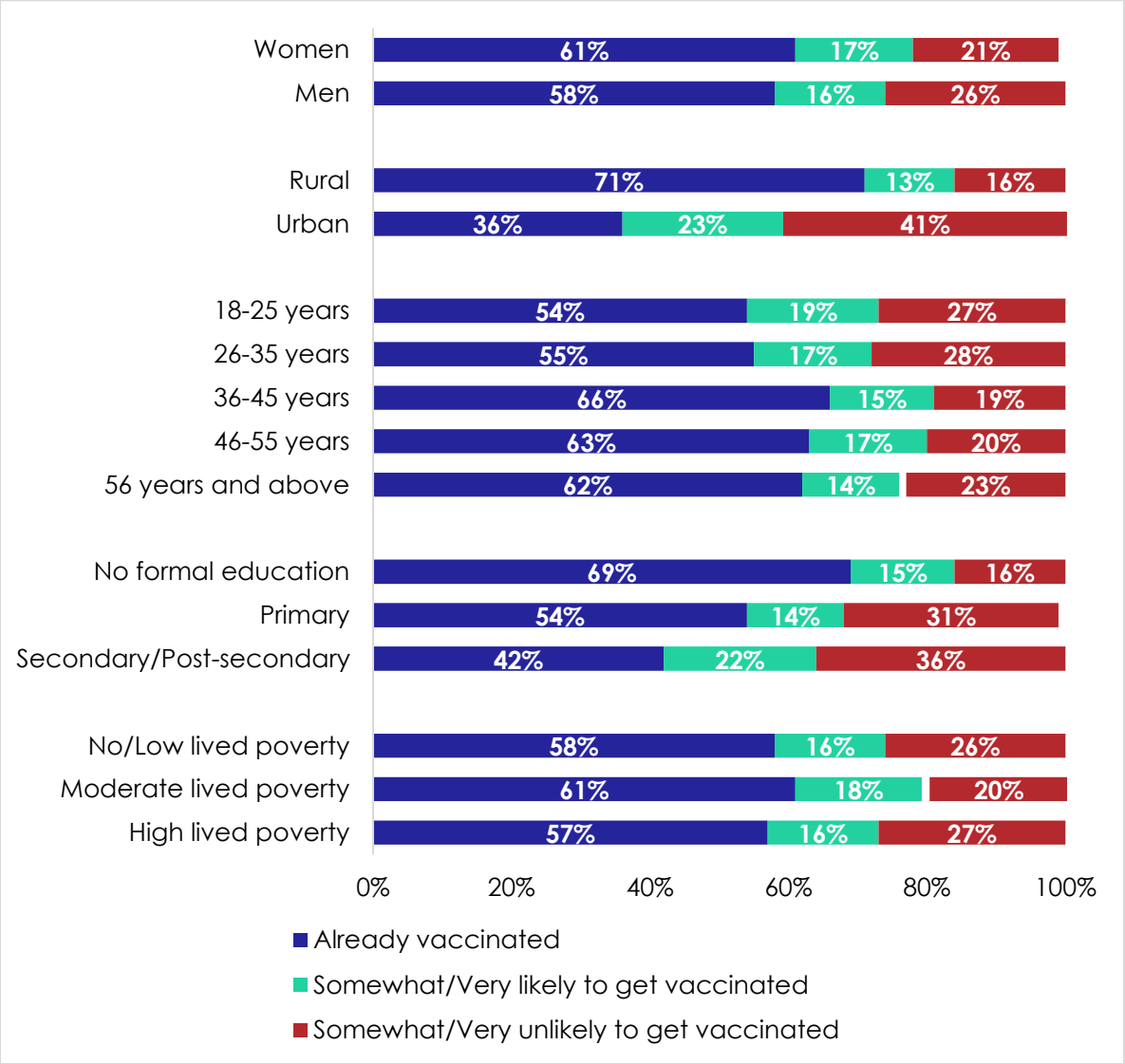
Figure 4: Vaccination status | by demographic group | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *Have you received a vaccination against COVID-19, either one or two doses? [If "no":] If a vaccine for COVID-19 is available, how likely are you to try to get vaccinated?*

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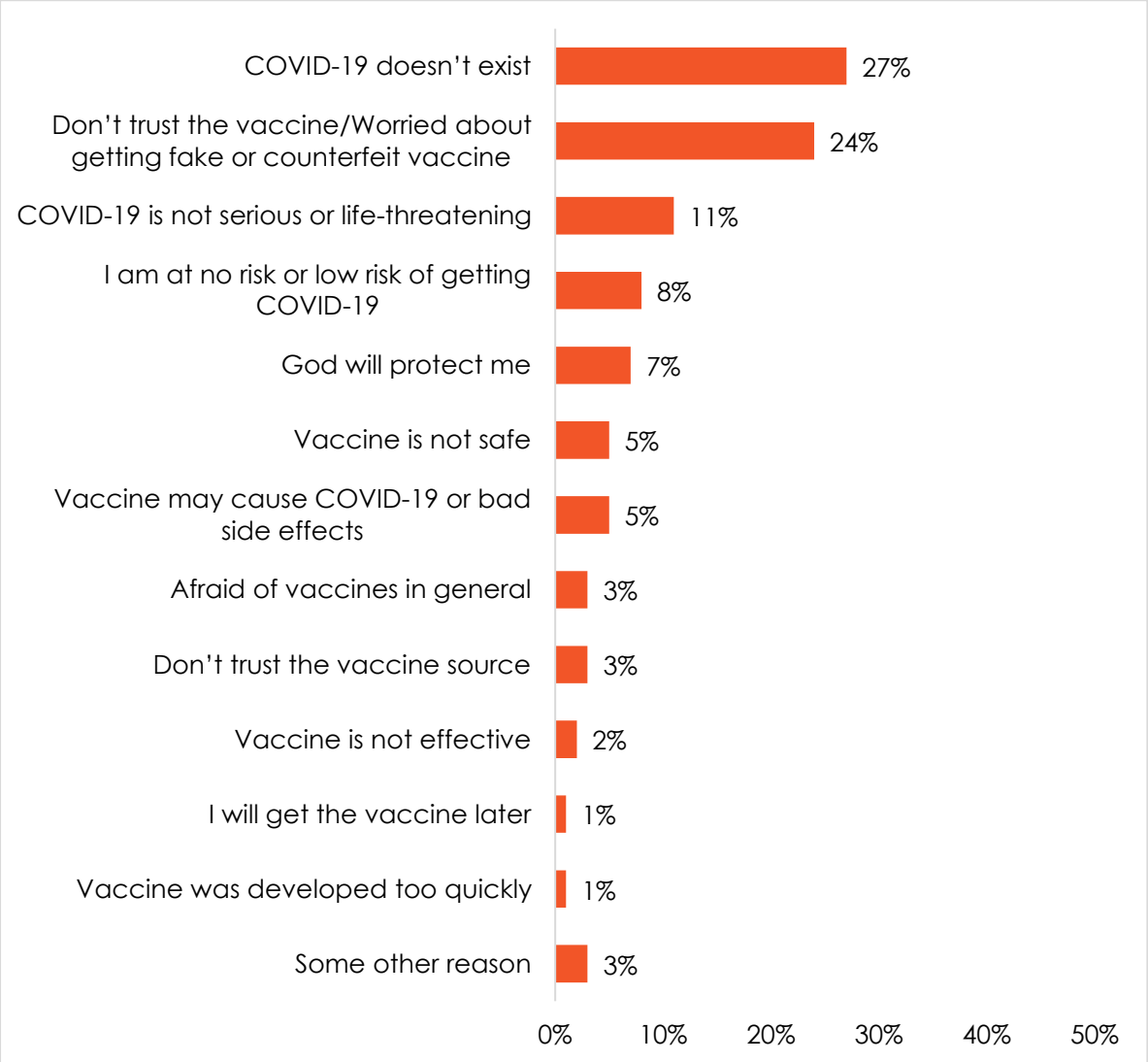
Figure 5: Main reason for vaccine hesitancy | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents who said they were not likely to get vaccinated were asked: *What is the main reason that you would be unlikely to get a COVID-19 vaccine?*

A majority (55%) of Burkinabè said they trust the government "somewhat" (28%) or "a lot" (27%) to ensure the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, while others expressed "just a little" trust (29%) or no trust at all (15%) (Figure 6).

Citizens' willingness to get vaccinated against COVID-19 was strongly correlated with their trust in the government's ability to ensure the safety of the vaccine (Figure 7). Citizens who trusted the government "a lot" to ensure vaccine safety were four times as likely to be vaccinated as those who expressed no trust at all (81% vs. 20%). Reluctance to get vaccinated was overwhelming (73%) among the "no trust" group, compared to 2% among the "trust a lot" group.

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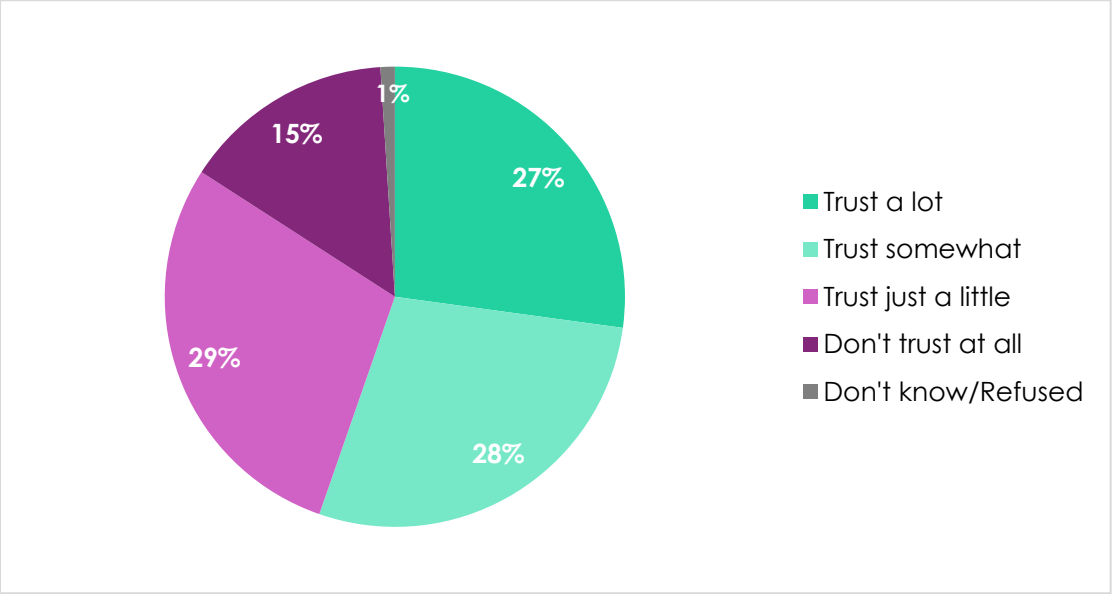
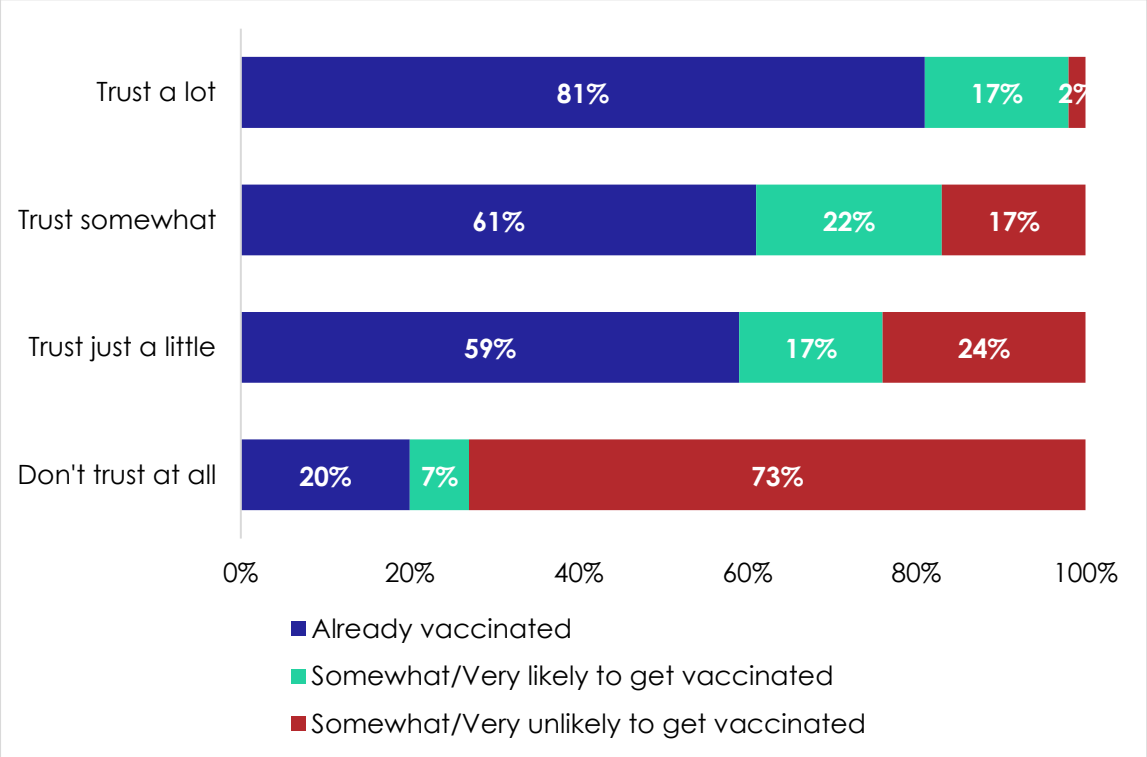
Figure 6: Trust government to ensure vaccine safety | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *How much do you trust the government to ensure that any vaccine for COVID-19 that is developed or offered to Burkina Faso citizens is safe before it is used in this country?*

Figure 7: Likelihood of trying to get vaccinated | by trust in government to ensure vaccine safety | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked:

If a vaccine for COVID-19 is available, how likely are you to try to get vaccinated?
How much do you trust the government to ensure that any vaccine for COVID-19 that is developed or offered to Burkina Faso citizens is safe before it is used in this country?

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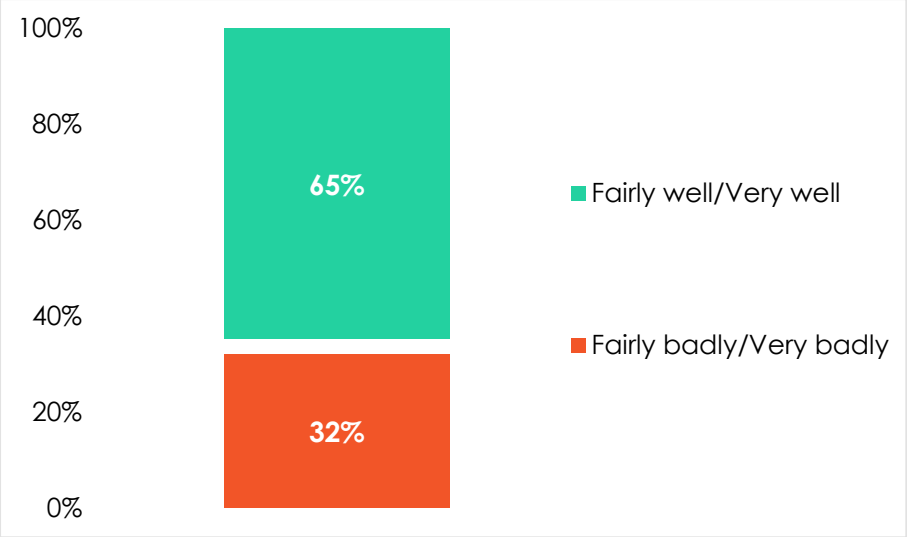
Government response to COVID-19

Overall, most Burkinabè pronounced themselves satisfied with the government's response to the pandemic. Almost two-thirds (65%) described the government overall performance as "fairly good" or "very good," while 32% said it was doing a poor job (Figure 8).

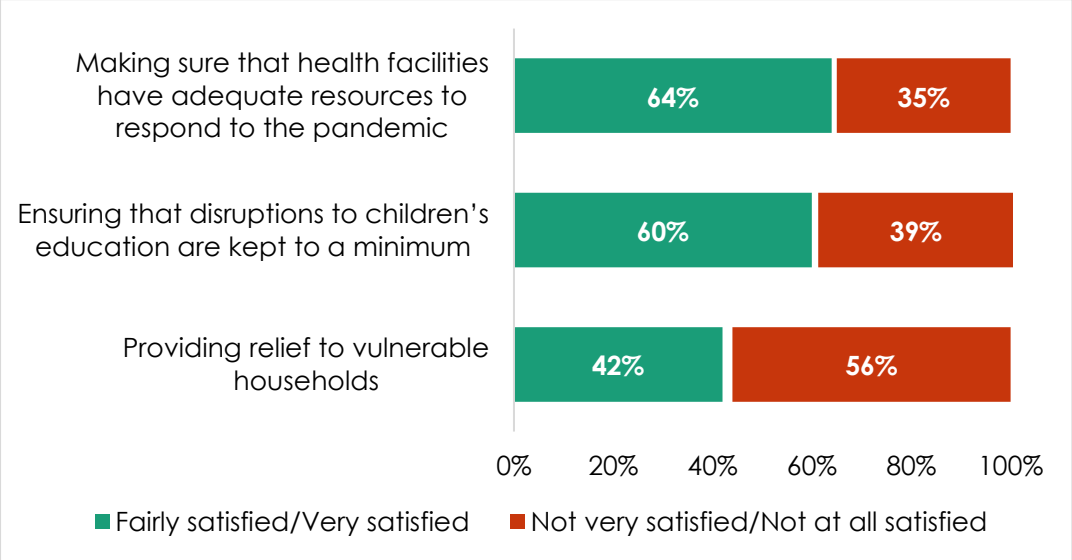
On specific aspects of the COVID-19 response, strong majorities also expressed approval of the government's efforts to ensure that health facilities were adequately resourced (64%) and to minimise disruptions to children's education (60%) (Figure 9). But only 42% thought the government had done a good job of providing relief assistance for vulnerable households.

Figure 8: Views on government response to COVID-19 | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *How well or badly would you say the current government has managed the response to the COVID-19 pandemic?*

Figure 9: Satisfaction with government actions during pandemic | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the government's response to COVID-19 in the following areas?*

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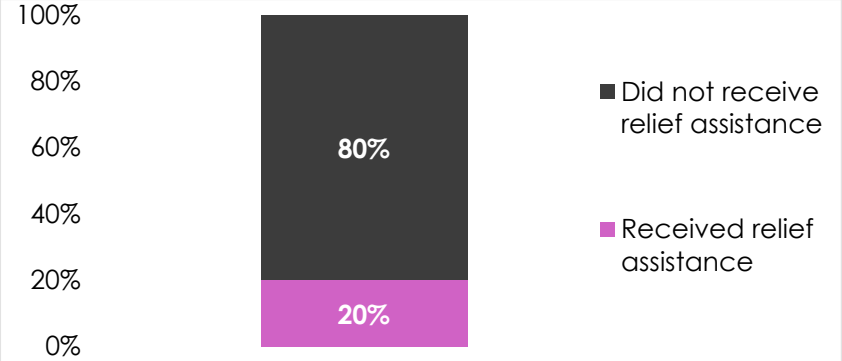
COVID-19 relief assistance

One-fifth (20%) of respondents reported that their household received pandemic-related assistance from the government, while 80% said they did not (Figure 10).

Women (18%) and the poorest citizens (17%) were somewhat less likely to report benefiting from government assistance than men (23%) and better-off respondents (20%-22%), but differences across key demographic groups were small (Figure 11).

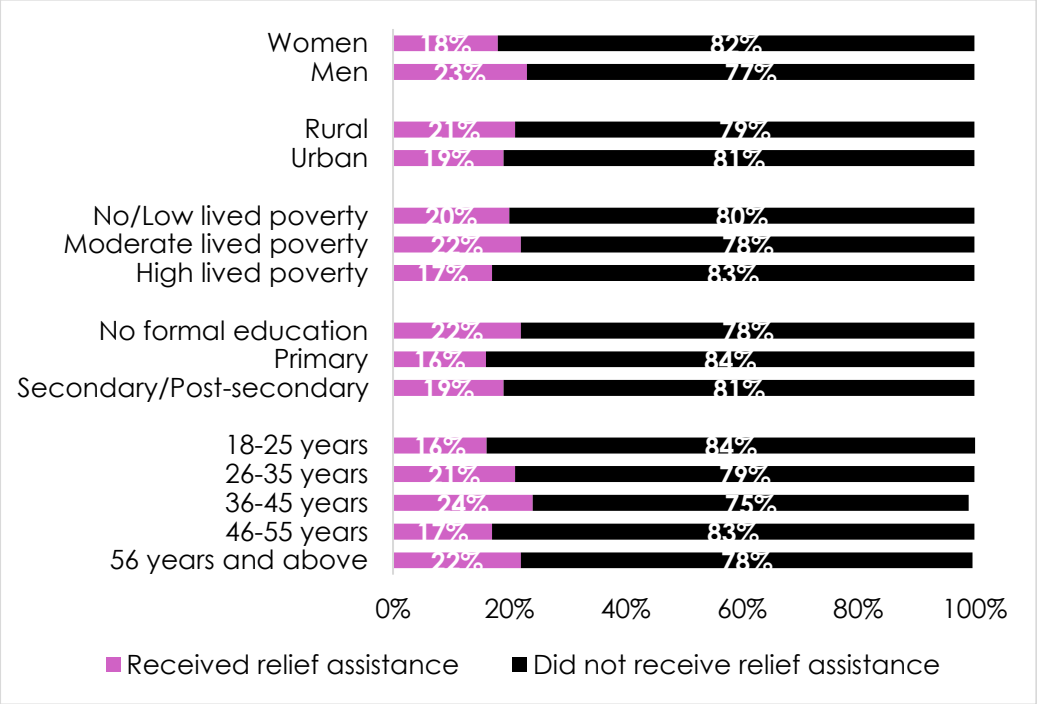
Most citizens said that assistance was distributed unfairly (72%) (Figure 12).

Figure 10: Access to COVID-19 relief assistance | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you or your household received any assistance from government, like food, cash payments, relief from bill payments, or other assistance that you were not normally receiving before the pandemic?*

Figure 11: Access to COVID-19 relief assistance | by demographic group | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you or your household received any assistance from government, like food, cash payments, relief from bill payments, or other assistance that you were not normally receiving before the pandemic?*

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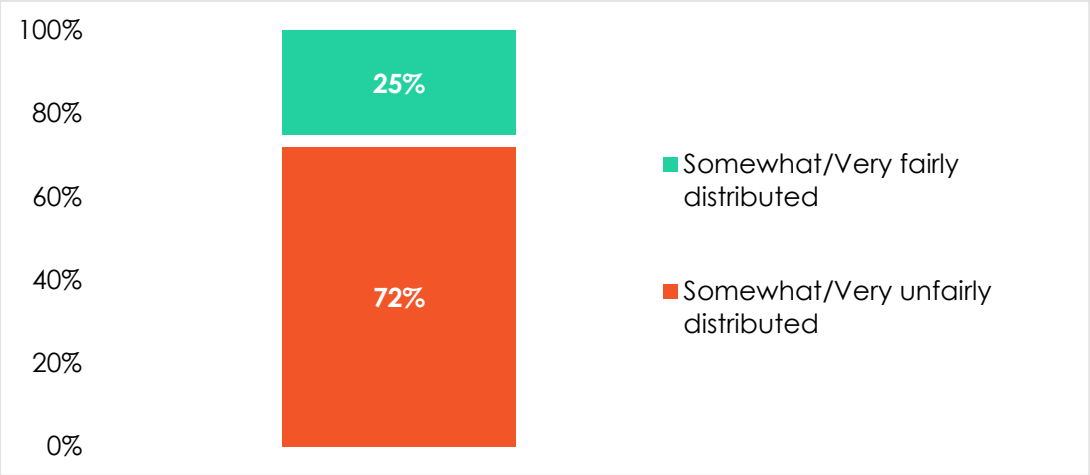
Figure 12: Was COVID-19 relief assistance distributed fairly? | Burkina Faso | 2022

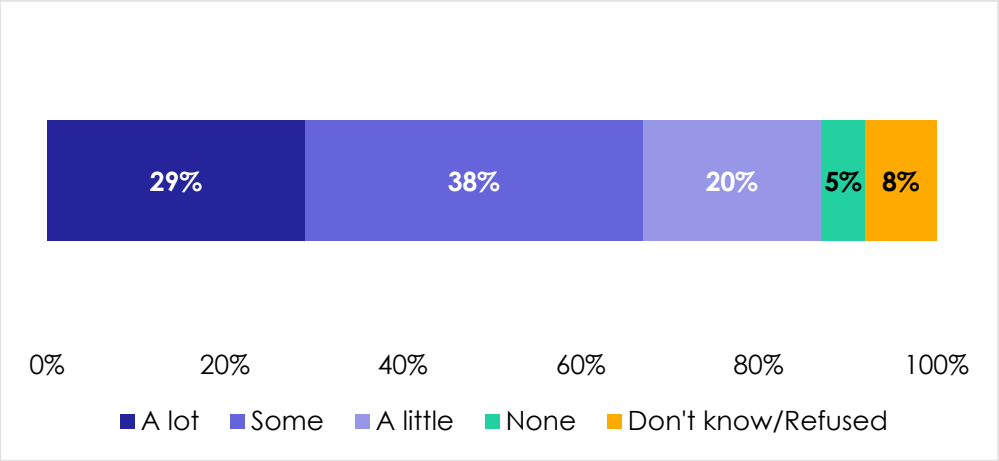


Respondents were asked: *Do you think that the distribution of government support to people during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example through food packages or cash payments, has been fair or unfair?*

Corruption related to COVID-19

Besides stating their discontent with government relief assistance, two-thirds (67%) of Burkinabè said they believed that "some" or "a lot" of the resources intended for the COVID-19 response were lost to corruption. Only one in 20 (5%) said none of these resources were misappropriated (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Perceived pandemic-related corruption | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *Considering all of the funds and resources that were available to the government for combating and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, how much do you think was lost or stolen due to corruption?*

Limit democratic freedoms during a pandemic?

Many governments imposed lockdowns or curfews during the worst days of the pandemic. These restrictions were topics of debate in many African countries, raising questions about the extent to which citizens are willing to forego certain freedoms, even temporarily, to protect public health.

In Burkina Faso, clear majorities said they see postponing elections (64%) and using the police or military to enforce public health mandates (60%) as justified measures during a public

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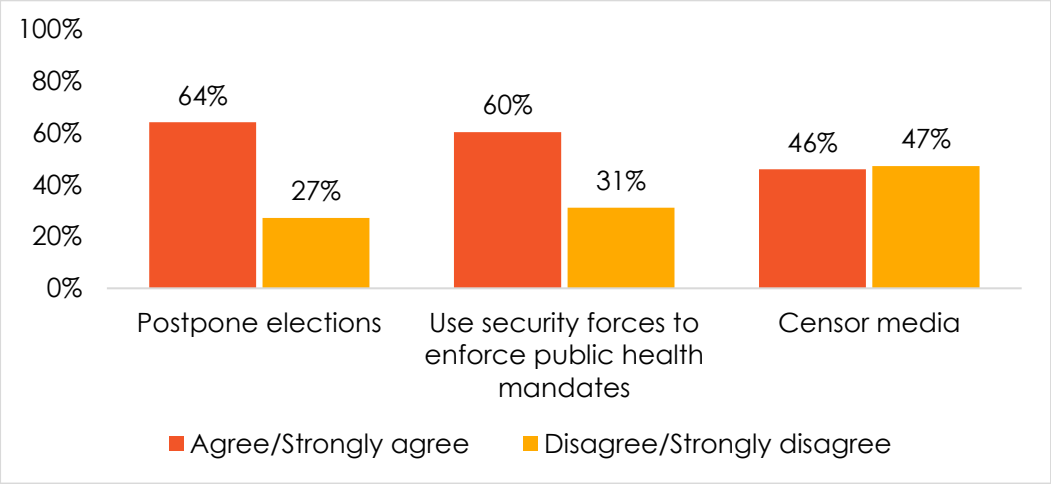
health emergency (Figure 14). But views are equally divided when it comes to censoring media reporting in response to a public health crisis.

Figure 14: Limit democratic freedoms during a public health emergency? | Burkina Faso | 2022



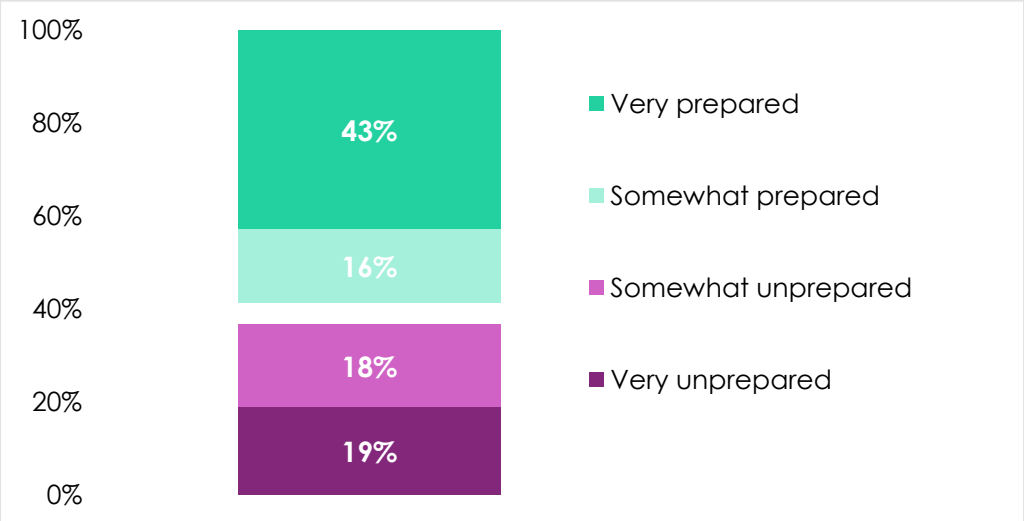
Respondents were asked: *When the country is facing a public health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic, do you agree or disagree that it is justified for the government to temporarily limit democracy or democratic freedoms by taking the following measures?*

Censoring media reporting?
Using the police and security forces to enforce public health mandates like restrictions on public gatherings or wearing face masks?
Postponing elections?

Looking ahead

Looking to the future, a majority (59%) of Burkinabè said they think their government is "somewhat prepared" (16%) or "very prepared" (43%) to deal with another public health emergency (Figure 15). Fewer than four in 10 (37%) expressed doubts about government's readiness.

Figure 15: Preparedness for future health emergencies | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *After experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic in Burkina Faso, how prepared or unprepared do you think the government will be to deal with future public health emergencies?*

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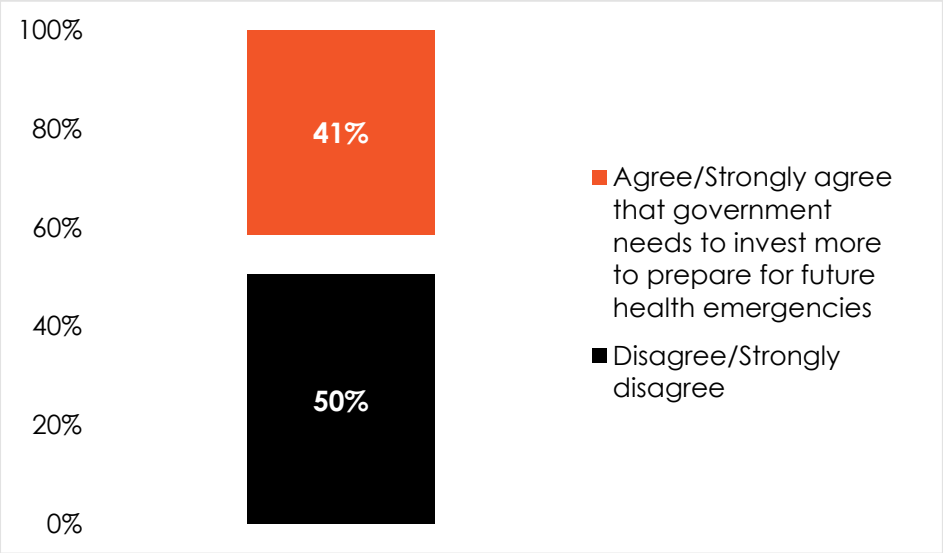
In line with these perceptions, half (50%) of all citizens disagreed with the idea that the government needs to invest more in special preparations to respond to health emergencies like COVID-19 even if it means fewer resources are available for other health services. Only 41% endorsed such a trade-off (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Invest more to prepare for future health emergencies? | Burkina Faso | 2022



Respondents were asked: *Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Our government needs to invest more of our health resources in special preparations to respond to health emergencies like COVID-19, even if it means fewer resources are available for other health services?*

Conclusion

Survey findings show that a majority of Burkinabè approved of the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic except for the provision of assistance to vulnerable households: Four out of five households did not receive any assistance, and a majority of citizens said that aid was distributed unfairly and that resources intended for the pandemic responses were lost to corruption.

Looking ahead, a majority of citizens said they think their government is at least "somewhat prepared" for future public health emergencies, and fewer than half saw a need for greater investment in special preparations if they would reduce resources available for other health services.

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Wallelign S. Hassen is a political science student at the University of Florida. Email: whassen@ufl.edu.

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