

Key Findings and Calls to Action

The COVID-19 pandemic will continue for the foreseeable future, and could become a virus that we encounter for decades. This fourth and final installment of PERC provides real-time data that decision-makers can use to develop mitigation strategies in AU Member States, including:

- **Individual public health and social measures (PHSMs), such as wearing face masks and social distancing, remain the measures with the lowest cost but highest impact**, and should be continually promoted by trusted institutions through accurate, reliable and trusted means of communication. Other, more restrictive measures should be targeted to specific, high-risk populations in order to mitigate their secondary impacts on access to livelihoods, income and essential health services.
- **Vaccine hesitancy is not a top challenge on the African continent.** The majority of survey respondents said they had gotten, or planned to get, a COVID-19 vaccine. Acceptance rates were influenced by trust in key people and institutions and their handling of the pandemic; the perceived risk of COVID-19 to oneself and one's country; age; trust in the vaccines; and the availability of information on vaccines and COVID-19.
- **COVID-19 continues to have a detrimental effect on access to essential health services.** The survey shows health facility disruption, cost and affordability are the primary barriers to care.
- **Income loss and food insecurity remain a widespread problem.** More than 70% of respondents were unable to buy the amount of food they would usually buy because the price was too high. More than three in four respondents reported losing at least some income since the start of the pandemic.

Based upon these findings, PERC authors recommend:

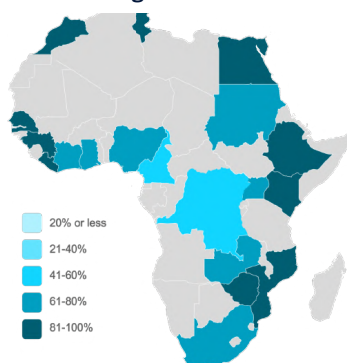
1: Governments should prioritize strengthening surveillance structures and health data systems.

Timely and complete data are critical to informing COVID-19 response, particularly given the possibility of emerging new variants, like Omicron. Such data also help improve the public's situational awareness and preparedness for future outbreaks.

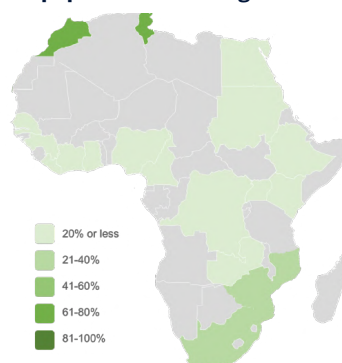
2: Reliable supply of safe, effective COVID-19 vaccines is necessary but not sufficient. The global community should support vaccine delivery with resources and expertise to ensure coverage.

The September 2021 PERC survey found a large gap between rates of vaccine acceptance and reported vaccine coverage in almost all AU Member States included in the survey, revealing a sizable unmet demand for vaccination. Unpredictable vaccine supply – in terms of volume, timing and shelf life, as well as unreliable supply of associated medical commodities – threatens states' ability to meet the demand needed for scaled vaccination campaigns. Even with sufficient vaccine supply, reported intention to get vaccinated does not always translate to vaccines in arms. Vaccine campaigns and donor support must address the various context-specific bottlenecks to eliminate barriers to access, especially where COVID-19 risk perception and institutional trust are low and secondary burdens are high.

Vaccination demand: percentage of survey respondents that intend to get the vaccine



Vaccination coverage: percentage of population receiving at least one dose

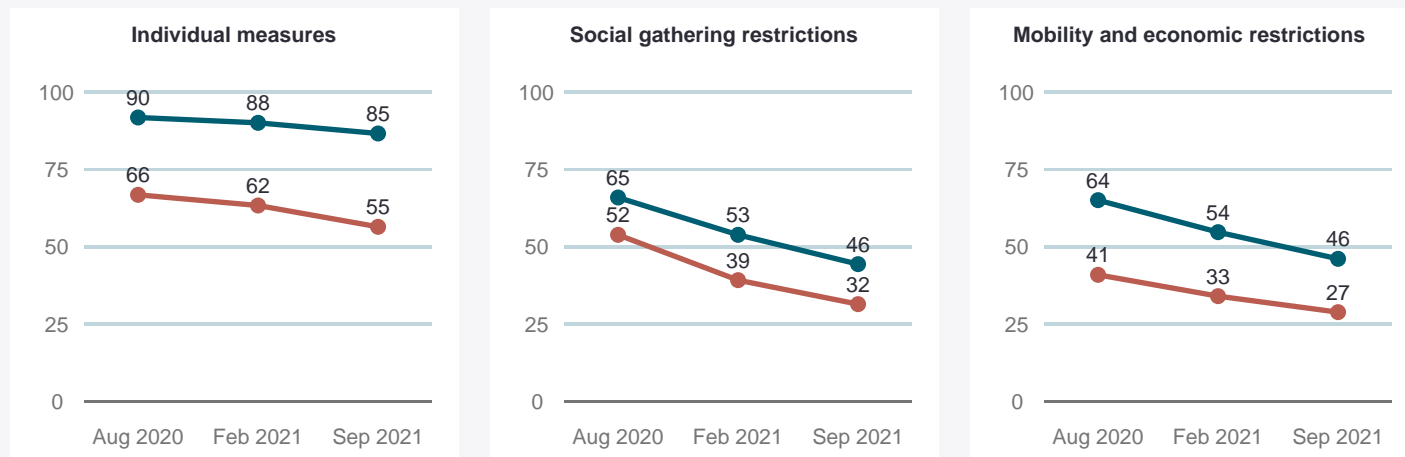


Percentage of population with at least one vaccine dose is displayed as of 1 December 2021. Grey indicates countries not surveyed by PERC.

3: Public health and social measures are critical tools for mitigating COVID-19 transmission, particularly as new, possibly more transmissible, variants emerge in under-vaccinated populations. Governments and public health partners should promote adherence to PHSMs as a top priority.

Individual PHSMs work, and 85% of the PERC survey respondents reported support for these measures. However, adherence has continued to decrease over time, underscoring the urgent need to strengthen risk communication strategies. To encourage large-scale adherence to PHSMs, it is imperative for governments to disseminate accurate information through trusted channels and offer support to mitigate the impact of secondary burdens, particularly as Africa enters a fourth COVID-19 wave.

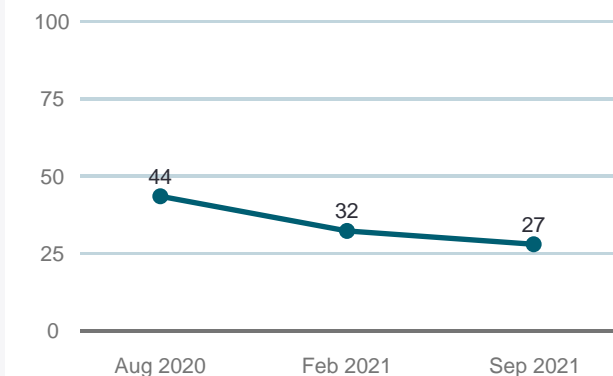
Trend in support for and adherence to all measures' composite scores



4: The global community and national governments should invest – to the fullest extent possible – in public health infrastructure and social protection programs that build and maintain resilience, in order to improve health and economic outcomes and reduce the opportunity costs of vaccination and PHSM adherence.

There is a window of opportunity now to invest in health care workers and public health infrastructure to support COVID-19 vaccine delivery, care and prevention in the near term, as well as repair and restore health service delivery and accelerate health care innovation and technology over the long term.

Trend in percentage of households skipping or delaying health care visits in the past six months



Trend in percentage reporting that cost is a barrier to food access

