COVID-19 IN AFRICA

What does it mean
for young people?
—
Now Generation Network
Survey - July 2020

Main Results

NOW GENERATION NETWORK

COVID-19 in Africa

What does it mean for young people?

—

Now Generation Network
Survey - July 2020

Main Results

Contents

Introduction

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation's Now Generation Network (NGN) currently consists of the Ibrahim alumni of fellows and scholars and the participants of the annual Now Generation Forum (NGF). They comprise a dynamic range of 237 young and mid-level career African citizens, nationals from 43 African countries and from various sectors and disciplines.

The Foundation set out to learn their perspectives on and assessment of the current challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis and on Africa's prospects post-pandemic. The survey was conducted from 12-25 June. Following its conclusion, NGN representatives took part in an online discussion on 8 July with MIF Board representatives Mo Ibrahim, Graça Machel, Jay Naidoo and Jendayi Frazer.

Of the 237 members of the NGN cohort, 143 responded to the survey with 105 completing it fully. Completed surveys come from citizens of 35 African countries, with an average age of 33 years, majority female (52%, and male 48%). Prior to the pandemic all survey respondents were occupied, predominantly in employment (57%), studying (15%), business owners (12%) or freelancing (10%). Pre-pandemic, most respondents earned between $1 to $9,999 per annum (40%).

"African governments should... ensure that their own citizens – our continent's greatest asset – have the education and economic opportunities they deserve. Now is the time to take action before it's too late for our young people."

Mo Ibrahim

Main findings of the survey appear to contradict current thinking that the COVID-19 health crisis is the greatest challenge of the time.

"We've gotten into a space where Africans don't think COVID-19 is that much of a crisis. If you go into the informal sector, into the slums — especially in the Kenyan context — they are like, I'm dying anyway because of poverty so there is nothing new you are telling me."

Natasha Kimani, Kenya, Ibrahim Academy Fellow

For a majority of these representatives of Africa's youth, the COVID-19 health risk ranks behind multiple, complex and larger structural concerns such as economic insecurity, other health priorities, democratic threat and the need to change the current economic model. The economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis are a major concern, with almost all respondents citing unemployment, food insecurity, increased criminality and gender-based violence as the main factors.

Agency and ownership feature strongly in the response to the pandemic and the search for solutions. Youth see a clear role for governments and institutions and articulate their recommendations and aspirations. They believe that governments are too concerned with prevention measures and are not paying enough attention to the necessary economic and social mitigation measures.

In spite of containment measures that restrict gatherings, socialising and public transportation, this cohort of representatives are engaged, active and acting in a coordinated way within their communities.

They think that the COVID-19 episode could be a tipping point that triggers a much-needed transformation of the economic model. They are cautiously hopeful for the continent's future post-pandemic, provided that certain key structural changes in current policies take place in respect to African ownership and self-sufficiency and a greener and more equitable economy.

Economic concerns dwarf all others

01

What do you consider to be your country's biggest challenge(s) during this pandemic?

● Biggest challenge(s)

Economic instability

79%

Food insecurity

43%

Unemployment

66%

Other (please specify)

15%

Containment of the virus

52%
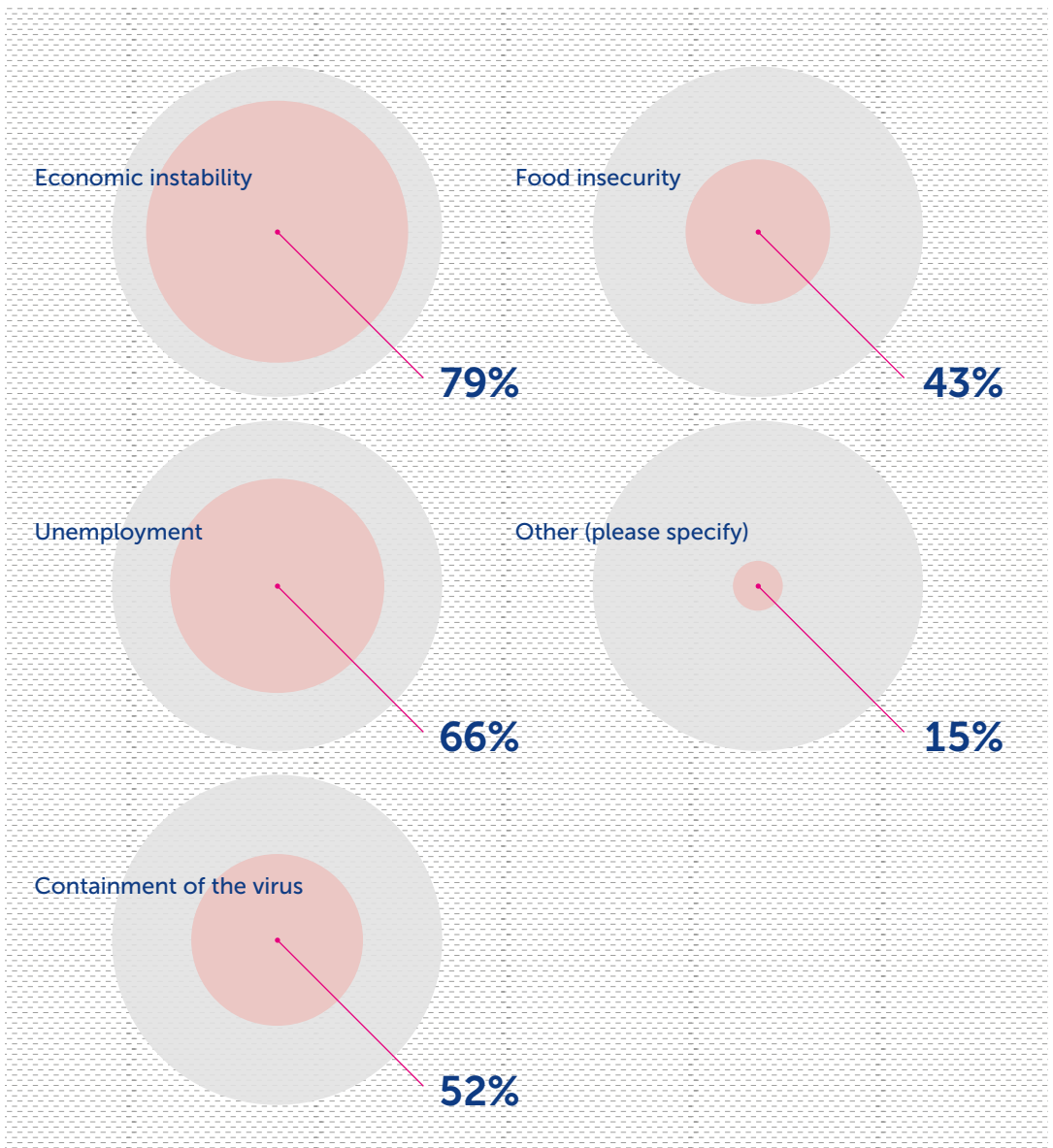
When asked about the biggest challenges currently facing their country more than 3/4 of respondents (79%) cite economic instability. Unemployment is the second biggest challenge for 2/3 (66%).

Other challenges mentioned, by order of importance:

- Governance and corruption
- Lack of transparency (government)
- Security and armed conflict
- Unequal access to medical care
- Accessible education
- Human rights violations and restrictions on freedom of information
- Lack of youth inclusion as part of the solution to the economic crisis - lack of focus on the informal sector as a potential sector to help solve this crisis.

One respondent claims:

"The crisis further illuminates my country's existing problems. Political instability and economic uncertainty, not COVID-19, are the biggest issues."

When asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their country, the respondents cited almost unanimously as the three main economic and social impacts:

- Unemployment (100%)
- Food insecurity/rising food costs (99%)
- Increased gender-based violence and crime (95%)

The Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) includes the indicator *Satisfaction with Employment Creation*, which assesses the extent to which the public is satisfied with how the government is handling job creation. Explore how African countries score, rank and trend at iiag.online.

2018 Ibrahim Index of African Governance

Health challenges and capacities: COVID-19 is NOT the biggest health challenge, and healthcare access and provision are structurally inadequate
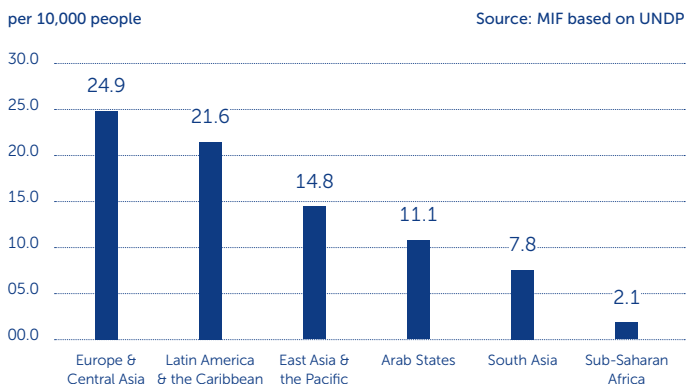
02

Less than half of respondents (48%) feel that the pandemic is the biggest health challenge in their country, while the other half (47%) do not.

When asked about the three health risks they would rank first, it is concerning to see that along with COVID-19 and the general inadequacy of health systems, they list mental health/stress and anxiety. They also mention malaria and malnutrition.

In view of the COVID-19 crisis, 58% of respondents consider healthcare access and provision in their country as mostly (34%), or even completely (24%) inadequate. They consider the following as the three main inadequacies:

- Lack of/inadequate health infrastructure
- Insufficient/inadequate medical supplies such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Lack of qualified healthcare workers

World regions: Average number of physicians (2010-2018)

per 10,000 people   Source: MIF based on UNDP

Region	Value
Europe & Central Asia	24.9
Latin America & the Caribbean	21.6
East Asia & the Pacific	14.8
Arab States	11.1
South Asia	7.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.1

COVID-19 in Africa: A call for coordinated governance, improved health structures and better data

As a proxy of the quality of healthcare in Africa, the average number of physicians per 10,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa is the lowest globally (2.1 physicians per 10,000 people for the years 2010-2018). All five worst performing African countries average less than 0.5 physicians per 10,000 people: Tanzania, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Malawi. At the same time, in too many African countries, there are more locally born physicians residing outside their country than in it. In 2015, 86% of all African-educated physicians working in the US were trained in Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa.

Additionally, they also mention poor leadership, corruption, and mismanagement of funds for health services.

More than half (52%) are not confident they can access healthcare when necessary during this pandemic. Furthermore, 51% of respondents do not trust the effectiveness of locally produced health provisions (tests kits, PPE, treatments).

In relation to PPE, almost all respondents (92%) have access to masks or face shields, as well as, to a lesser extent, hand sanitiser or soap (87%). Where available, most respondents say they had to buy these items (91%). Only a small number say PPE is provided by their local authority while gift/donation has the least responses (12%).

With their focus
on prevention,
government policies
are perceived almost
unanimously to unduly
limit civil society space
and democratic life

03

Virus containment policies put in place by governments include bans on large gatherings (90%) followed by restriction of outdoor and social activities (86%). They also refer to other measures including the enhancement of police powers such as roadblocks and the ability to stop gatherings in a private residence. Concerns were expressed about police brutality in enforcing containment measures. For more than half of the respondents (52%) social life has been limited by lockdown measures (unchanged, only 8%).

Other identified measures include mandatory face covering, the closure of schools and education centres, a ban on the sale of cigarettes, restriction on the sale of alcohol and a restriction on flights. Public transport is largely limited with strict rules (68%). Some respondents specifically mention that governments should have safer and comprehensive regulations for truck drivers.

Most of the respondents express their belief that the pandemic provides the means to limit civil society participation and freedom of assembly and consider it has an impact on human rights and civil liberties.

Indeed, as a continental average, IIAG's *Civil Society Participation* indicator is following a downward trend. Between 2008 and 2017, 27 governments have restricted the participation of civil society actors in the political process and diminished the freedom of NGOs. Almost three out of four of Africa's citizens (72.9%) have already seen their civil space shrink over that decade.

2018 Ibrahim Index of African Governance

Do you think the impact of COVID-19 is threatening human rights and civil liberties?

Within the responses there were several levels of agreement or disagreement (strongly, slightly, agree or strongly, slightly, disagree). Most respondents agreed.

● Responses

Agree

Responses out of 105

Disagree
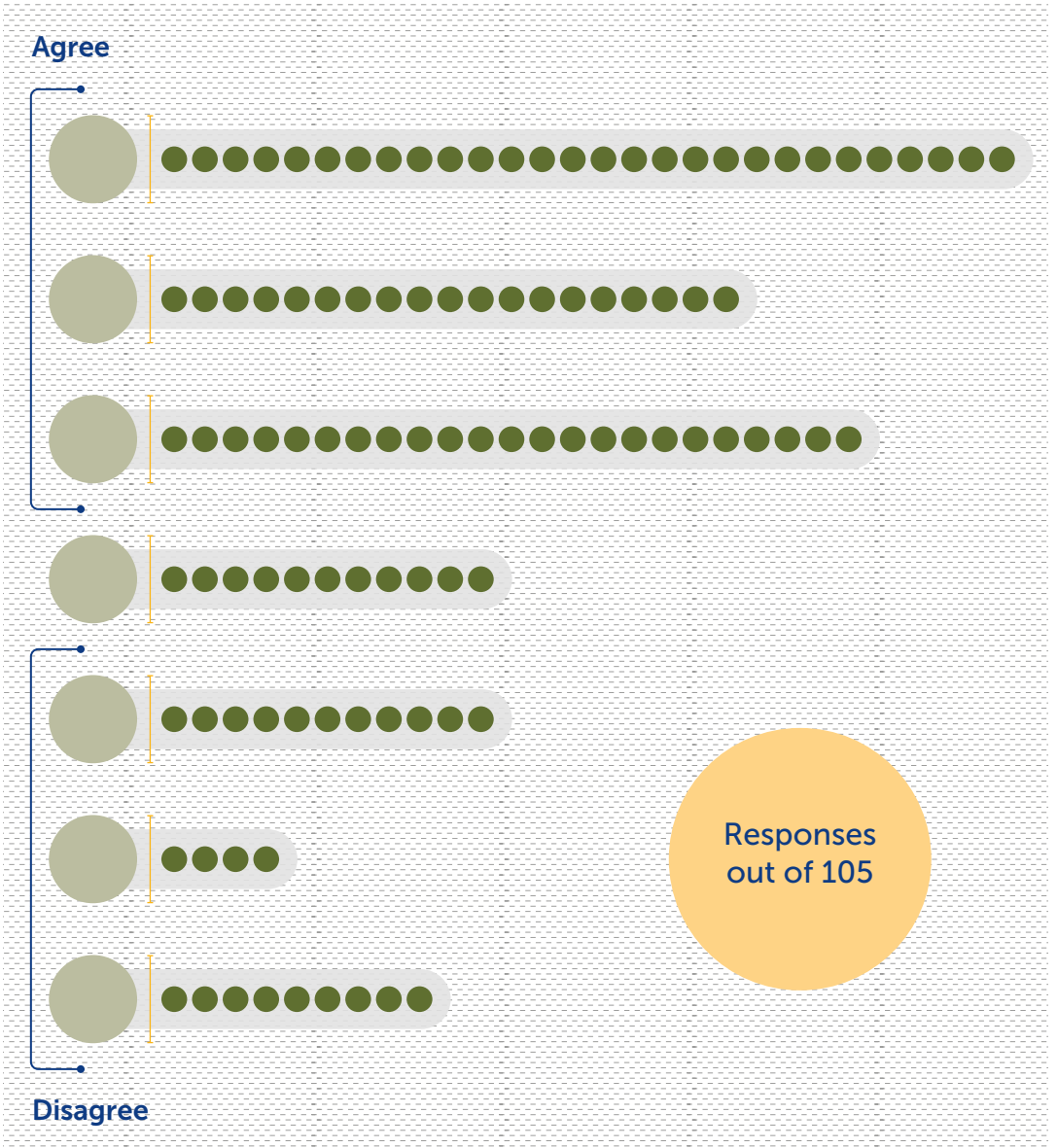
Meanwhile,
governments mostly
fail to mitigate
the economic
and social impact

04

How would you judge your government's response to the crisis?

Flexible working arrangements is the main type of support provided by government (44%). This, and more generally government's response to the crisis, is clearly deemed insufficient (52% of respondents).

● Responses   No opinion 0%

Excessive
4%

Sufficient
21%

Insufficient
29%

Somewhat sufficient
23%

Somewhat insufficient
23%
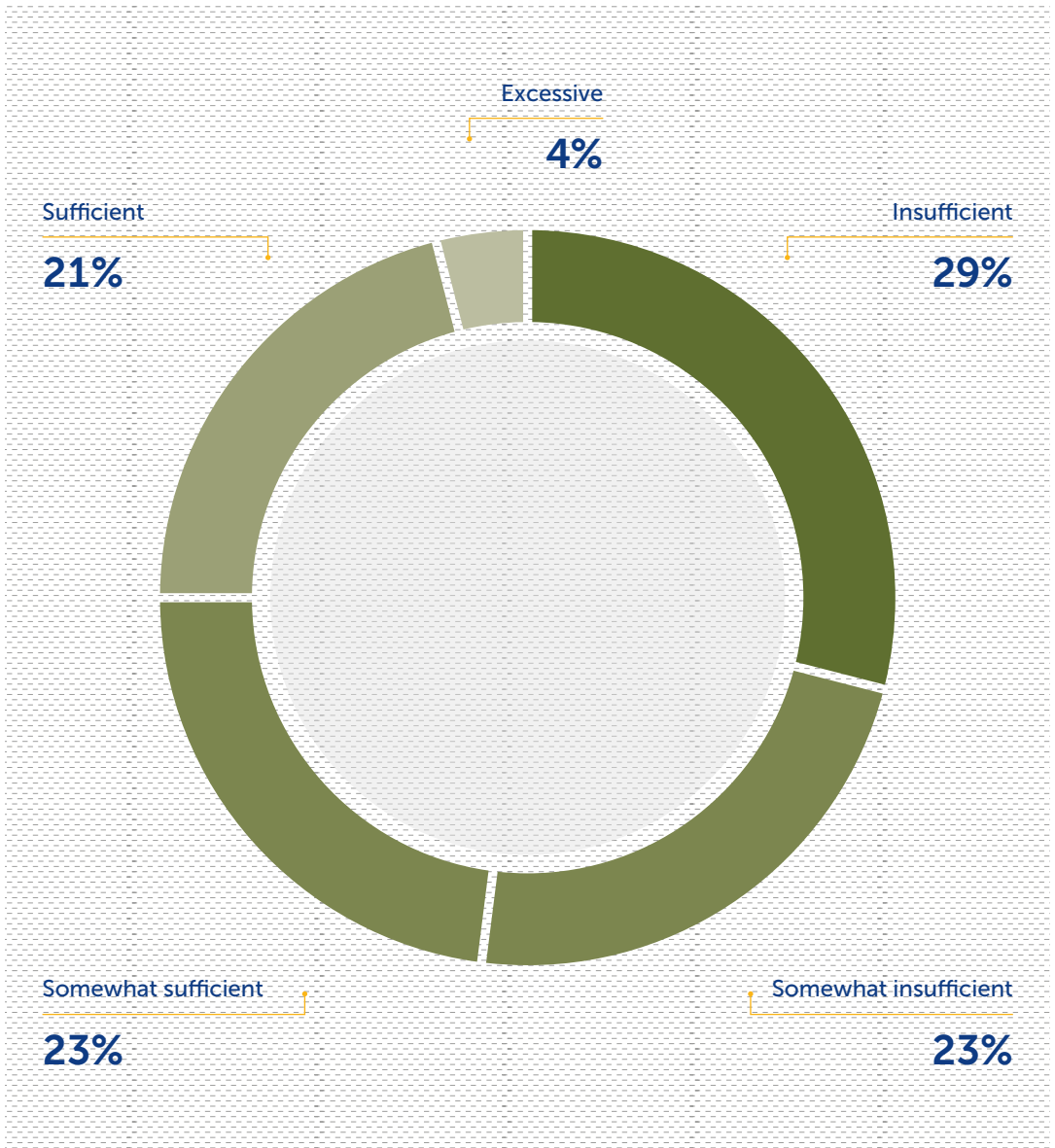
A large majority of governments have failed to take adequate measures to mitigate the heavy economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

The crisis has led to an immediate change in current circumstances for more than half (52%) of the respondents. The majority are now working from home (55%) or have seen work hours amended (35%).

"While government was focussing on how it could cushion those who were working it forgot those who are often invisible, living in informal settlements."

Natasha Kimani, Kenya, Ibrahim Academy Fellow

Where an employment situation has changed, most respondents (48%) cite family support as their chief source of income. More generally, economic and social support is mainly provided by a local philanthropic organisation/individual/civil society organisation (65%) or by local authorities (50%).

In 2019, 15.7 million young people in Africa, around 13.4% of the total labour force of 15-24 year olds, were facing unemployment. This rate is more than twice the unemployment rate of those aged 25+ (6.1%), underlining that unemployment on the continent is hitting the younger generation. Young women are more severely affected, with a rate of 14.7% compared to 12.3% for young men. In South Africa, the economy with the second highest GDP on the continent, 54.5% of young people are jobless, amounting to 1.4 million South Africans between 15-24 years.

2019 Ibrahim Forum Report, Africa's youth: Jobs or migration?

The respondents offer various additional measures, mainly related to mitigating the social and economic impact. In addition to quarantining those coming into the country from hot spot areas, they suggest social welfare policies, tax cuts, subsidies to mitigate the economic impact on citizens and businesses, and fully supporting vulnerable families with food supplies to enable them to stay at home.

Information on
COVID-19 is generally
reliable, but important
points are missing,
and traditional and
community leaders
could be put to
better use

05

Respondents are consumers of information, mostly in digital form via social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) (89%), followed by television (75%), online news portals (69%) and messaging apps (67%). 51% or less say they access information via radio, orally from family and friends, printed press, leaflets and email.

"If the internet is the medium that we use to communicate then we have a challenge because we continue to leave a good part of the African population out of information and most importantly, out of knowledge."

Carl Manlan, Côte d'Ivoire, Ibrahim Fellow

About 66% of African citizens are still offline. Also, of the 52 African countries for which the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has data on internet access at home in 2016, the five countries with the largest estimated proportion of households with access to internet were Morocco (68.5%), Mauritius (63.3%), South Africa (55.9%), Seychelles (55.2%) and Cabo Verde (48.8%). Meanwhile, the five countries with the smallest estimated proportion of households with access to internet were Liberia (3%), DRC (2.8%), Congo (2.7%), Guinea-Bissau (2.2%) and Eritrea (1.9%). Two key factors are mainly responsible for the global digital divide: the higher cost of capital and the lower digital readiness in terms of infrastructure, skills and customs and logistics. In 2013, the ICT basket price for sub-Saharan African countries was about 26% of Gross National Income (GNI), compared to 2.4% of GNI in Brazil, China and India.

2019 Ibrahim Forum Report, Africa's youth: Jobs or migration?

Over 90% of respondents say they find the information reliable, but they feel the following key points are missing:

- Local information that is detailed and well communicated
- Scientific information
- Government strategy

One of the respondents even called for

"Inclusion of traditional leaders in creating awareness among the population to increase acceptance of COVID-19 related messages."

Matakidi Patrick Anyama Godi, South Sudan, Peace Forum

While a majority are well aware of the international response (multilateral and partners), measures taken by African Union and RECS are mostly unknown, or when known, considered inadequate

06

Are you aware of measures taken at the following levels?

Most respondents are aware of measures taken at international institutional level (75%), but least aware of African Union measures (62%).
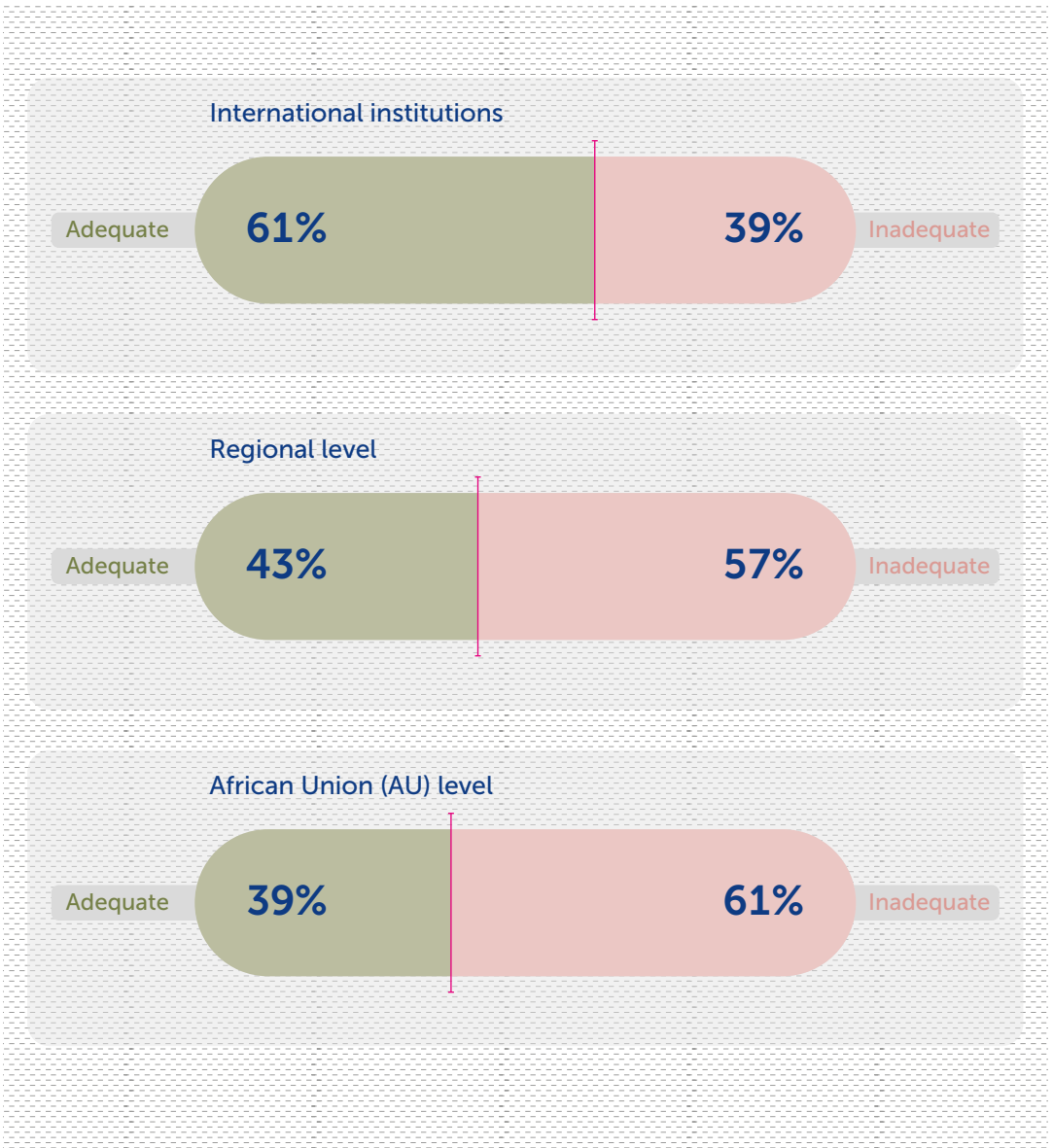
● Yes   ● No

International institutions

Yes | 75% | 25% | No

Regional level

Yes | 62% | 38% | No

African Union (AU) level

Yes | 38% | 62% | No
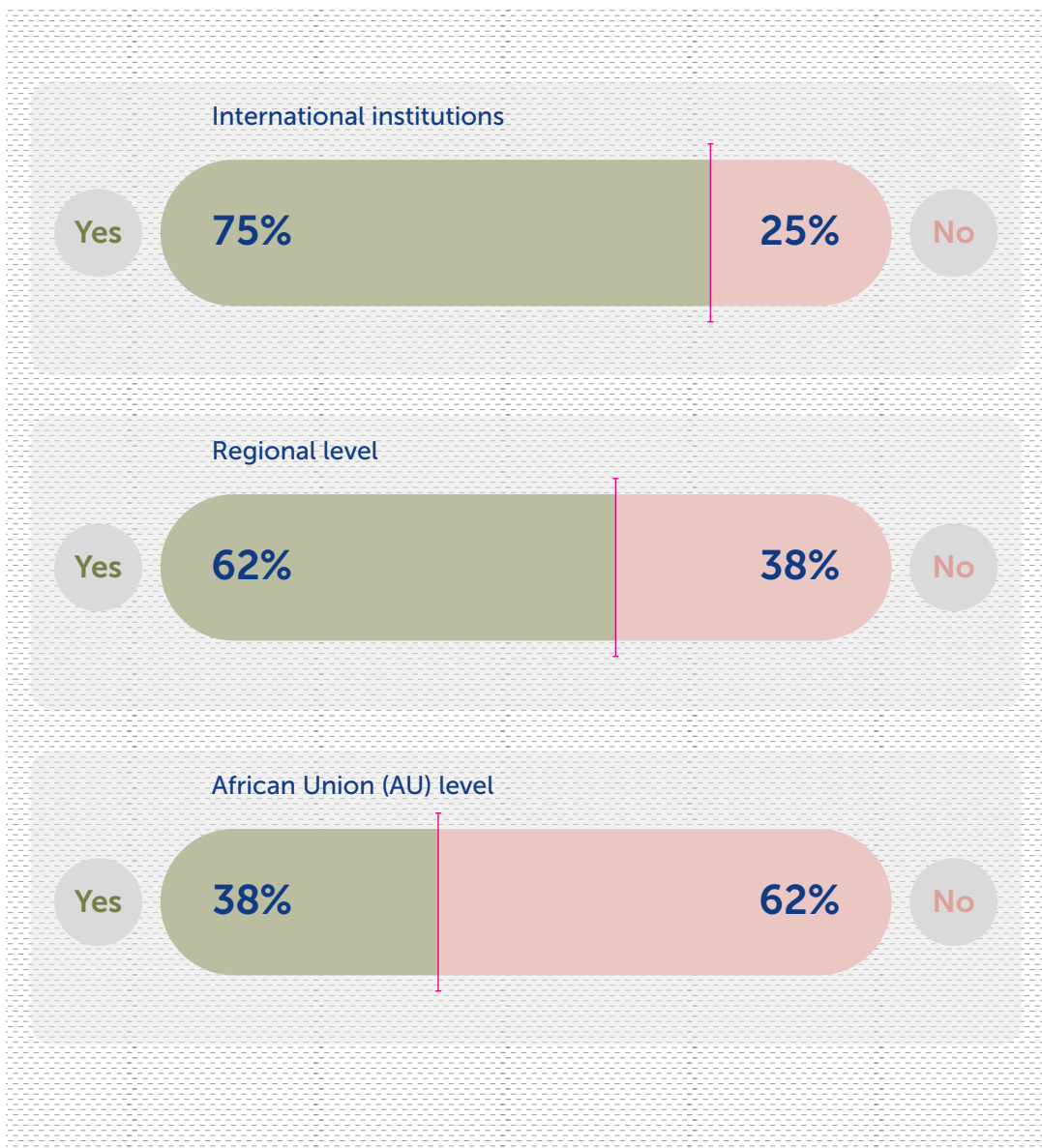
How would you judge them?

International institutions are viewed as more adequate by far (61%), in sharp contrast to the judgement of inadequacy expressed about regional institutions (57%) and the African Union (61%).

● Adequate ● Inadequate

International institutions

| Adequate | **61%** | **39%** | Inadequate |

Regional level

| Adequate | **43%** | **57%** | Inadequate |

African Union (AU) level

| Adequate | **39%** | **61%** | Inadequate |

Two points are made in specific reference to external interventions:

- There must be coordination of multiple stakeholders' interventions to avoid duplication of efforts and to allow rational allocation of resources where needed.

- Non-African stakeholders should consider African countries as partners who can contribute to the fight against COVID-19 and not just recipients who need economic aid.

"AU could do more to ensure different member countries develop specific capabilities [some produce ventilators, others develop medicines, all invest in medical training] so that the continent as a whole would be better prepared for future pandemics or at best would not rely too much on foreign support."

Fernandes Wanda, Angola, Ibrahim Scholar

Fully committed and active in the response to COVID-19, the young generation prefers to act as a collective group

07

Over half of the respondents (54%) are involved in initiatives to support the response to the pandemic. Just over one third (36%) do so individually, while almost two thirds (64%) choose to act in a collective group, citing, in order, civil society organisations (some of which are founded by them), academic institutions/alumni groups and religious institutions (churches).

While respondents are inspired by the many young people engaged in raising awareness (76%), volunteering (74%), and community support (70%), lobbying governments doesn't seem to be an activity performed by many (28%).

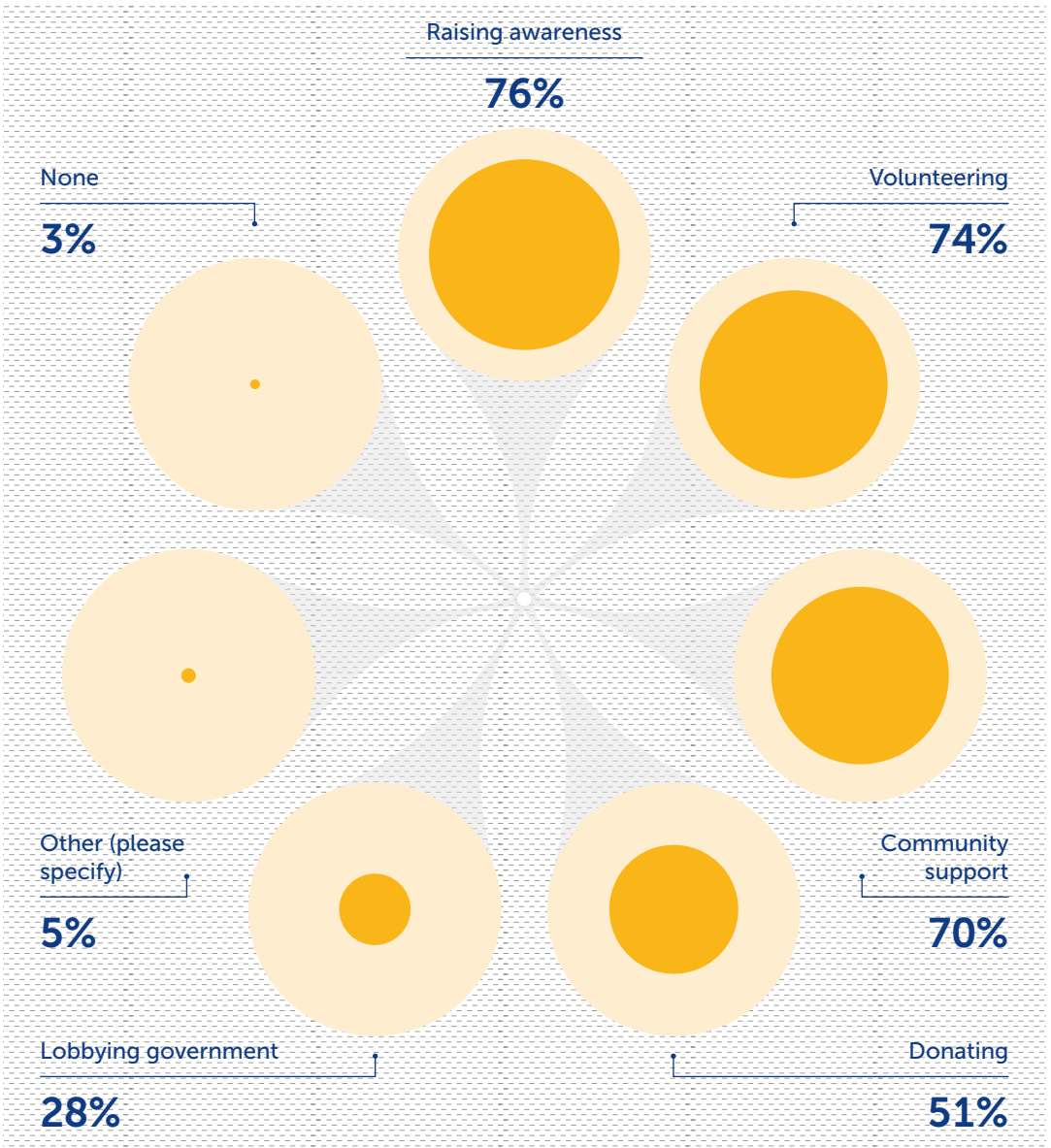Youth generosity is notable: 51% of respondents have seen young people donating.

Many of the respondents are also engaged in COVID-19-focussed production activities such as making masks to donate to the community and to hospitals, producing PPE, business creation and any revenue activities specific to the COVID-19 crisis and research.

Representation of Africa's youth is lacking in formal political institutions despite the fact that the vast majority of African countries have national authorities that are responsible for youth, such as a ministry, a department or an office. For the 29 African countries with data, the average percentage of Members of Parliament (MPs) aged 40 or under is 15.2%.

2019 Ibrahim Forum Report, Africa's youth: Jobs or migration?

What are the most inspiring ways you have seen young people involved in the fight against COVID-19?

● Responses

Raising awareness

76%

None

3%

Volunteering

74%

Other (please specify)

5%

Community support

70%

Lobbying government

28%

Donating

51%

Africa's prospects: cautious optimism and "a deep hunger for change"

08

The NGN members are neither too optimistic about their country's prospects post-pandemic (bouncing back stronger than ever, 7%) nor too pessimistic (permanent damage, 7%). Almost half (49%) feel their country will recover only after very hard times.

However, a large majority (84%) feel that this crisis could become an opportunity to amend current policies, be it a specific health policy or economic policy more generally.

Some believe this crisis could provide an opportunity to reform the whole economy for good, provided the state takes the right actions now. Most recommendations about policy change point to increased ownership and self-sufficiency, be it in agriculture, manufacturing or technology, as well as to increased youth involvement and empowerment, youth-centred policy in leading economic reforms.

"What young people are most excited about is that we feel that this pandemic has been such a large and violent shake to the system, that the government will finally have to respond and it will be more practical than the political interference that we are used to seeing."

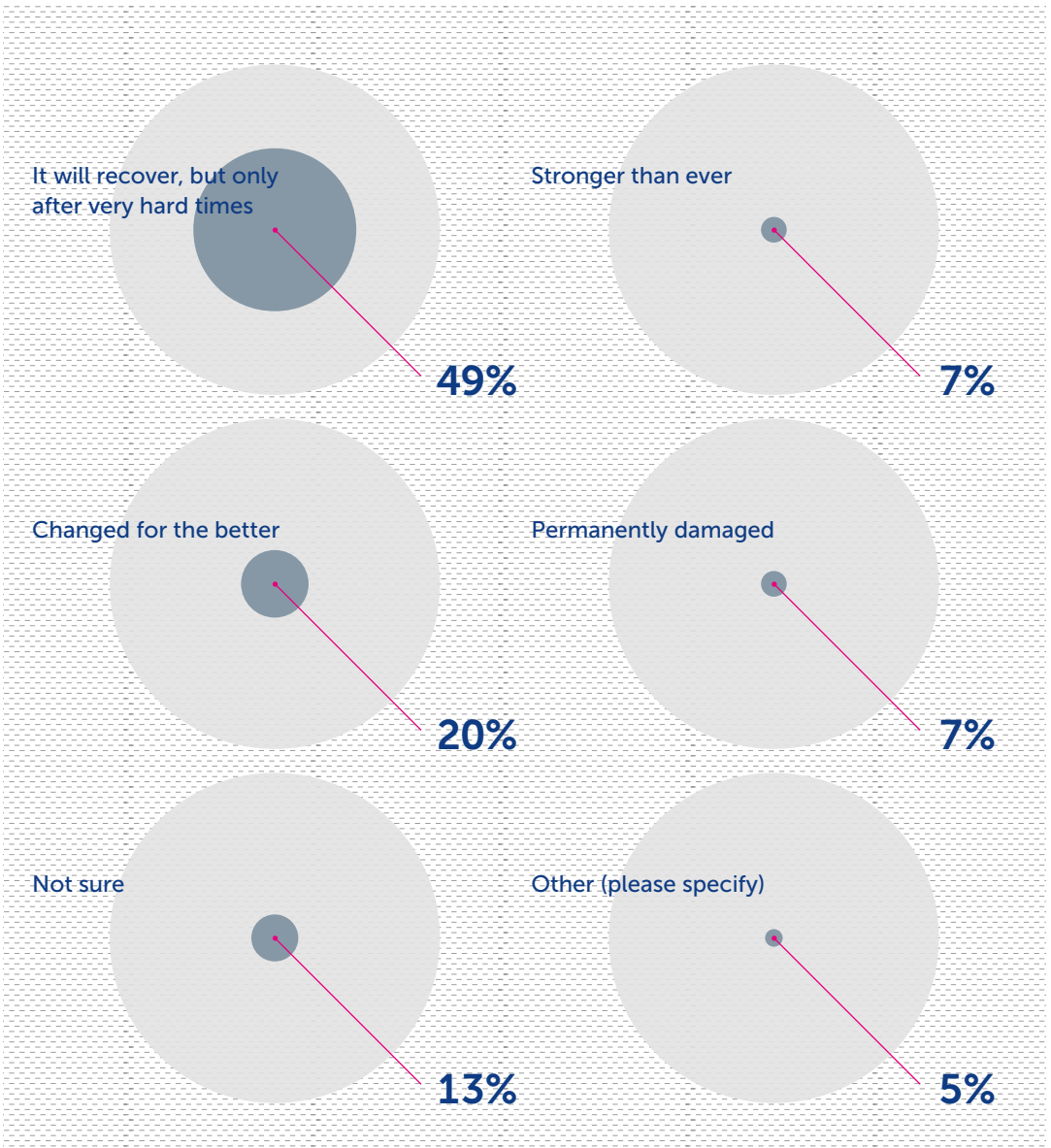Nasi Rwigema, South Africa, Ibrahim Scholar

The IIAG can provide insights into African governments' focus on youth in socio-economic policies and strategies using the indicator *Promotion of Socio-economic Integration of Youth*. Explore how African countries score, rank and trend at iiag.online.

2018 Ibrahim Index of African Governance

How do you think your country will emerge from this crisis?

● Responses

It will recover, but only after very hard times

49%

Stronger than ever

7%

Changed for the better

20%

Permanently damaged

7%

Not sure

13%

Other (please specify)

5%

Indeed, they come up with multiple suggestions, that go far beyond the treatment of the pandemic.

a. General economic and social

- Economic ownership: local manufacturing, local trade, less reliance on imports
- Structuration of the informal sector: a union would be essential, as well as an enabling business environment
- Specific support for SMEs
- Constitution of financial reserves to withstand future economic shocks
- Green economy
- Digitalisation: make internet cheaper and accessible (a basic need), exploring options to digitise education
- Social policy
  - Social support system for elderly, children and differently abled
  - Safety nets for frontline workers
  - "Gendered" economic and social policy change, gender sensitive responses to issues (COVID-19 exposed gender-based violence)

b. Healthcare

- Priorities are multiple: training, PPE, capacity building, development of a national health act, emergency preparedness, universal healthcare, primary care, research
- Promotion of local and traditional medicine

c. Food security

- Abolition of wet markets
- Local food promotion

"The pandemic is only going to escalate this food crisis... so it really places an emphasis on Africa being self-sufficient and investing in manufacturing, agriculture and supply chains to be more self-sufficient going forward."

Hanan Taifour, Sudan, Ibrahim Fellow

Concluding comments on the current crisis

"It's my hope that governments will finally see how years of corruption have eroded the basic infrastructure in their countries. As they are trapped without being able to travel to Europe for Medicaid they will steal less and spend more on home-grown resilience."

Naadiya Moosajee, South Africa, Co-Founder, Women in Engineering (WomEng), NGN cohort

"African governments should continue to reinforce the healthcare system and put in place policies and institutional and regulatory frameworks that will create a conducive environment for an inclusive development especially for the most vulnerable social class: women and youth."

Anonymous

"African governments must introduce welfare packages to protect the poor. Enough of the talk. Action is needed now."

Julius Karl D. Fieve, Ghana, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Global Arch Development Initiative (GADI), Ghana, NGN cohort

"It is time for African countries to have sound, responsive, transparent, effective and accountable policies to meet the needs of their populations."

Anonymous

"The global pandemic cannot be used by individual governments as a pretext to pass legislation that adversely impacts the essence of democracy. Information empowers people and communication of information has been critical during the government lockdowns, but it must not be used as a political tool or for government propaganda."

Adeelah Kodabux, Mauritius, Lecturer, Middlesex University, NGN cohort

"It is a massive opportunity to change our continent to the better if we act now."

Abdelrahman Omer, Sudan, Blavatnik School of Government alumni, NGN cohort

"A wake-up call for the African continent to do more and become significantly self-reliant."

Anonymous

"If Africa has ever needed to look internally for solutions, it's now. We need to improve on our healthcare policies but also on our education systems. We need to keep our talents and encourage them to work on this continent. We need to start thinking about climate change more seriously."

Gertrude Kitongo, Kenya, Ibrahim Scholar

Annex

Methodological notes: the COVID-19 in Africa Survey covered 8 thematic clusters of questions: health, economy, government's response, political life and participation, access to information and general challenges and prospects. These were a combination of closed questions with multiple choice answers and some open questions. As such the questions have inherent limitation and qualitative feedback was sought by offering respondents a chance to provide additional comments.

The survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey. Following ethical codes of conducting a survey, the polling was anonymous by default. Respondents were asked to consent and were given the option of leaving their details if they wished to provide further information and if they wished their answers to be attributed to them.

As the NGN live in Africa as well as the diaspora, we asked that answers are based on the African country they are a resident of. If not residing on the continent, we asked them to answer from the perspective of their country of origin. Survey questions are available upon request.

Data analysis of the survey results were mostly a simply count or a percentage of responses for the quantitative questions. Some survey questions had a Likert scale, providing respondents a rating scale from adequate, somewhat inadequate to inadequate; a few questions required binary yes or no answers but mostly the questions had multiple choice answers where respondents select one or more options from a list of answers we defined. A count or grouping of qualitative answers was applied where responses had more granularity in opinions expressed.

The sample composition is as follows: Of the 237 members of the NGN cohort, 143 responded to the survey with 105 completing it fully. Completed surveys come from citizens of 35 African countries, with an average age of 33 years, majority female (52%, and male 48%). Prior to the pandemic all survey respondents were occupied, predominantly in employment (57%), studying (15%), business owners (12%) or freelancing (10%). Pre-pandemic, most respondents earned between $1 to $9,999 per annum (40%).

COVID-19 in Africa:
Now Generation Network
Survey - Respondents
country of origin

15 7 5 4 3 2 1 0

References
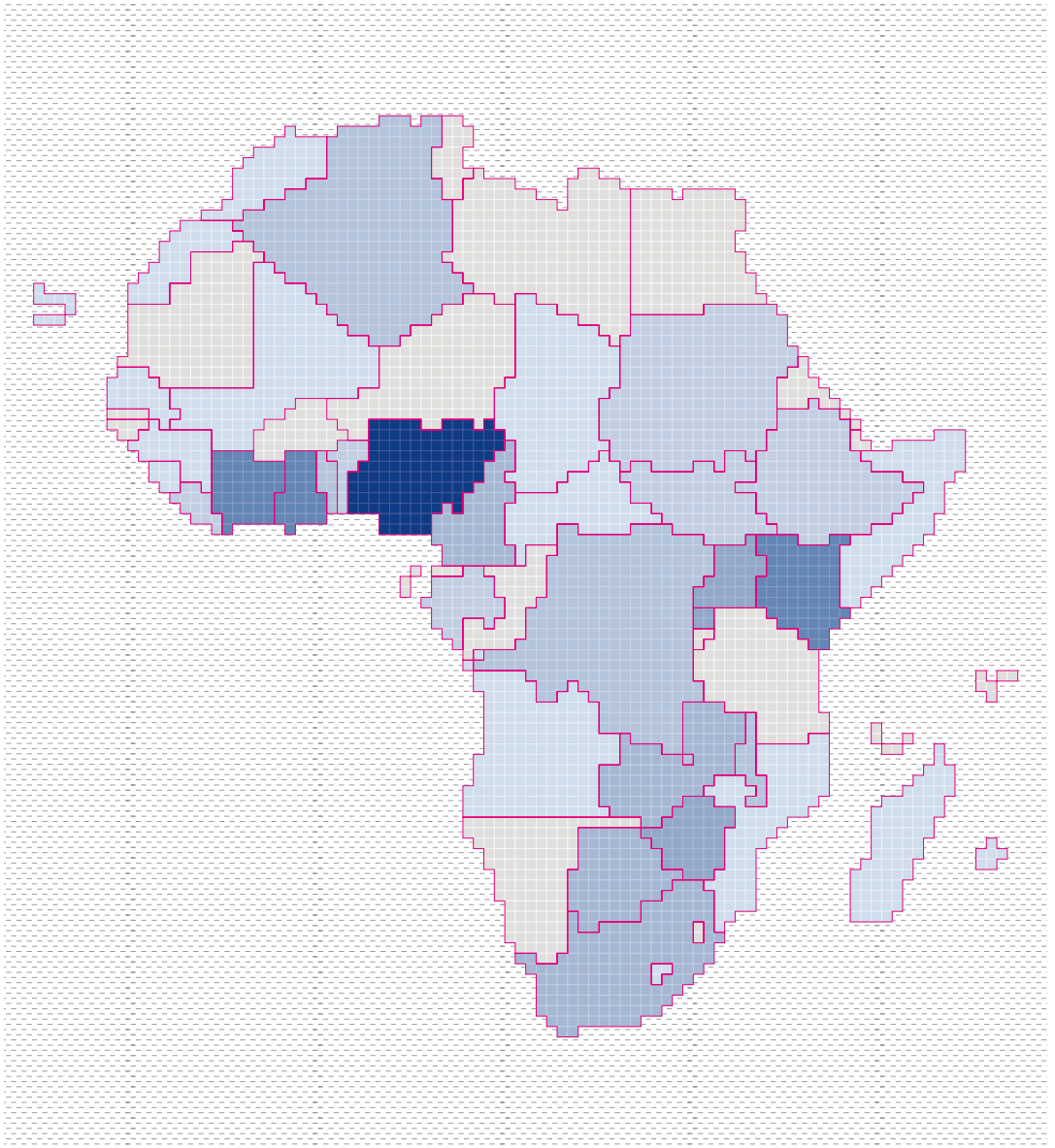
MIF (2020) 'COVID-19 in Africa: a call for coordinated governance, improved health structures and better data',
URL: mif.media/rp-covid19

MIF (2019) 'Ibrahim Forum Report', URL: mif.media/fr-2019

MIF (2018) 'Ibrahim Index of African Governance',
URL: mif.media/2018-iiag-report

Additional COVID-19 resources

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation is also publishing a daily summary of related news and analysis with a focus on the African continent. You can find this on mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2020/covid-19-africa and our social media channels.

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation has also published several research briefs on the impact of COVID-19 on the continent. You can find these on mo.ibrahim.foundation/about-us/our-research.

Learn more about the Mo Ibrahim Foundation:

- Online: mo.ibrahim.foundation
- Twitter: @Mo_IbrahimFdn
- Facebook: facebook.com/MoIbrahimFoundation
- YouTube: youtube.com/user/moibrahimfoundation
- Instagram: instagram.com/moibrahimfoundation
- LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/moibrahimfoundation

Project team

Foundation's Communications Team

Zainab Umar, Communications Manager
Thomas Preston, Digital Manager
Julia Liborio, Social Media Lead
Sibonile Mathe, Communications & Events Officer

Design Team

Maria Tsirodimitri, Head of Design
Styliani Orkopoulou, Graphic Designer

mo.ibrahim.foundation