

Collecting social data: adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic

Truth be in the field

Experiences and lessons from the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS)

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South African Social Attitudes



- HSRC SASAS series conducted **annually since 2003**
 - **Tool** for monitoring **evolving social** and **political values**
 - Round 17 was in the field but interrupted by COVID-19
- Modelled on longest standing social attitudes surveys
 - American **General Social Survey** (est. 1972)
 - **British Social Attitudes Survey** (est. 1983)
 - **German General Social Survey** (ALLBUS, est. 1980)
- **Primary aims**
 - Measure and produce rigorous data about changes in public attitudes and behaviour patterns over time
 - Develop reliable social indicators of national progress based on the attitudes and judgements of citizens
- Widely recognised for contribution of high-quality data for the social sciences



Methodological Overview

- **Sampling and weighting**
 - Nationally representative: 16+ years, private residence
 - Individuals selected by random probability methods
 - **Response rate:** Of 3,500 addresses issued, realisation rate >75% achieved (usually >80%); aim for a minimum effective achieved sample size of 2,500.
 - Substitution not permitted
 - Data benchmarked to mid-year population estimates
- **Mode:** F2F interview; transition PAPI to CAPI in 2018
- Strict **ethical protocols**
- **Quality control:** close fieldwork monitoring, back-checks
- Data freely available through HSRC data portal
- Strong focus on **cross-national collaboration** to deepen understanding of SA society



SASAS R17 Pre-lockdown field experiences

- **SASAS Round 17:** Fieldwork began late Feb 2020
- **5 March: first Covid-19 case;** New safety protocols had to be developed
- Daily executive meetings to review case numbers per province
- **About 40% through round** when fieldwork suspended 24 March (554 confirmed cases)
- **Response rates** were better than normal in urban areas, esp. metros
- **Police resistance** to survey team presence



SASAS R17 Lockdown



Weighing up risks

- Risk to interviewers and participants
- Reputational risk to funders and HSRC

Field staff under duress

- Provincial coordinators and field teams appealing for resumption, especially where case numbers relatively low

External funders

- Renegotiation of contract periods with.
- Some asked for presentation of interim (unweighted) results to give an indication of tendency

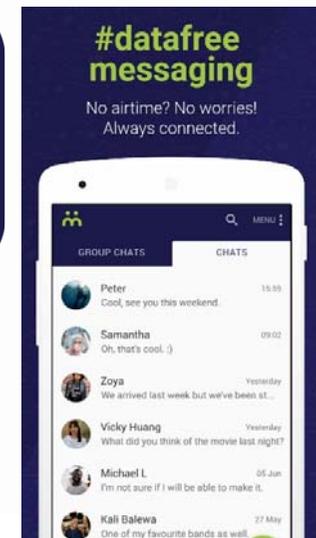
Surveying during the Covid-19 pandemic

UJ-HSRC Covid-19 Democracy Survey

- Round 1 (Apr 13 - May 11)
- Round 2 (8 July – mid-Aug)
- Moya Messenger platform
- <https://hsrc.datafree.co/r/ujhsrc>
- Convenience sample: non-probability sample, respondents opt-in
- Representiveness: undercoverage, nonresponse = bias
- Benchmark data to StatsSA population estimates; broad inference but generalised to the entire South African population.

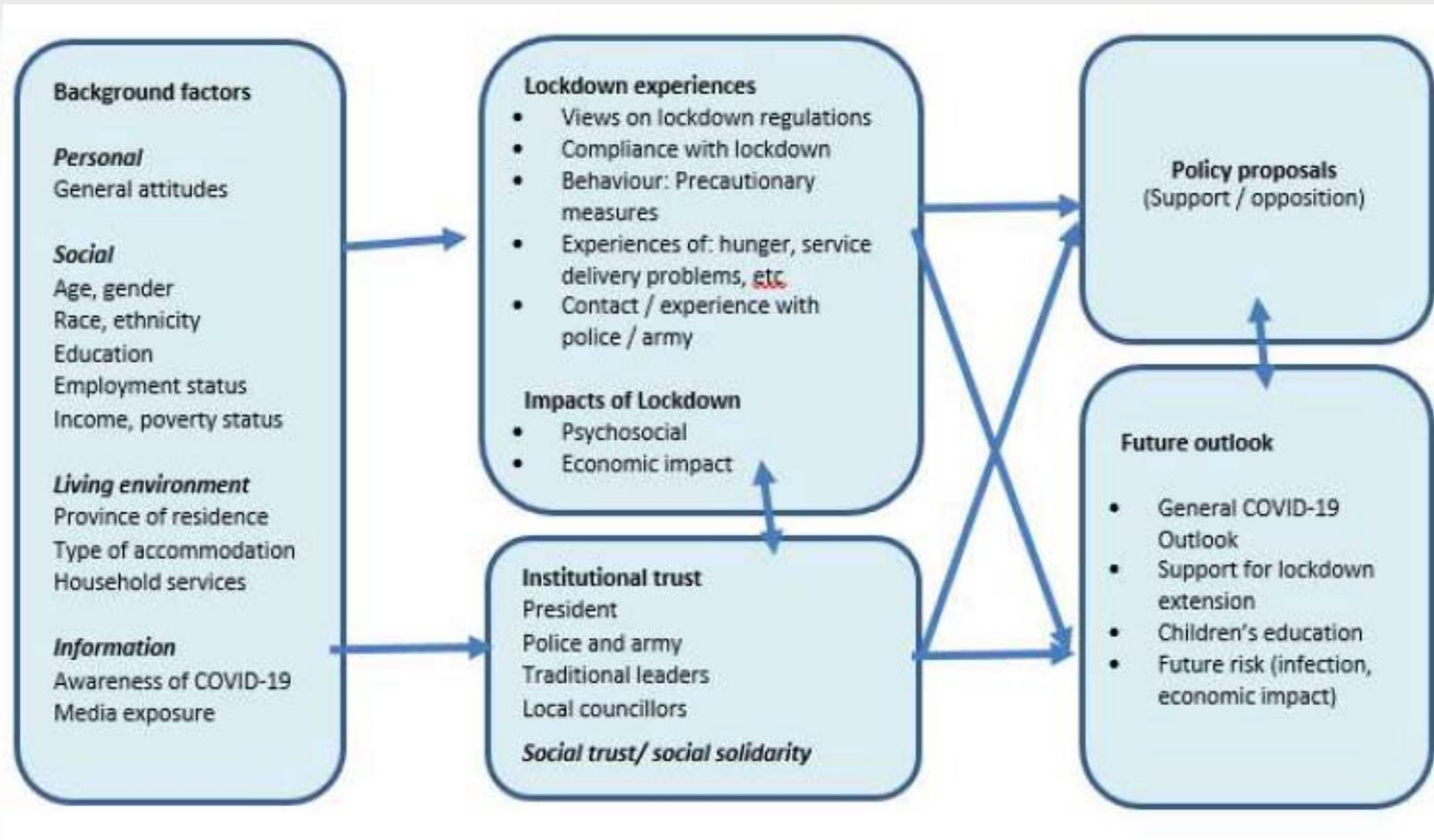
Other HSRC surveying undertaken

- Covid-19 health survey (Moya Messenger)
- Youth survey (Moya Messenger)



UJ-HSRC Covid-19 Democracy Survey

Conceptual overview



Global and regional studies

World Values Survey (WVS)

- **R7 (2017-21):** Data from 78 countries to be released end July (5 in Africa);
- **Postponement of fieldwork** completion to Jul 2021; second release afterwards
- **“Values in a crisis” panel:** 3-wave survey



Pew Global Attitudes Surveys (est. 2002)

- Suspension of most international survey work.
- Reason? Majority of surveys around the globe are still conducted face-to-face.
- Data collection placed interviewers and participants at risk of Covid-19.
- Polling in countries where surveys are conducted by phone is continuing
- U.S. polling continuing: conducted primarily online (American Trends Panel)

Pew Global Attitudes Project



Global and regional studies



- Round 10 (2020-21) of face-to-face data collection due to start Sep 2020
- Covid-19 impact: Core scientific team (CST) agreed countries should start fieldwork as close to 1 March '21 as possible (6mth delay)
- More flexible fieldwork period than usual: Start - 1 Sep 2020 to 1 Sep 2021; completion date (Dec 2021) to maintain comparability
- Concern over Covid-19 effect on response rates, face-to-face capacity
- Developing alternative methods for future
- Special open call for proposals on 10 Coronavirus questions for R10



South African research infrastructures



The Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (CRAM)

- Nationally-representative panel survey: 7,000 South African individuals conducted every month; NIDS sub-sample.
- Five waves planned (May to October 2020)
- Incentives: R20 airtime voucher per wave
- Aim: provide monthly nationally-representative data on key outcomes - unemployment, HH income, child hunger, access to government grants.



SA Population Research Infrastructure Network

- Covid-19: Developing a surveillance protocol
- Research involves ongoing telephonic interviews to screen for COVID symptoms in more than 60 000 rural households in MP, LP and KZN
- Monitoring impact of Covid-19, and 'lockdown' policies
- New DSS nodes in GP and WC

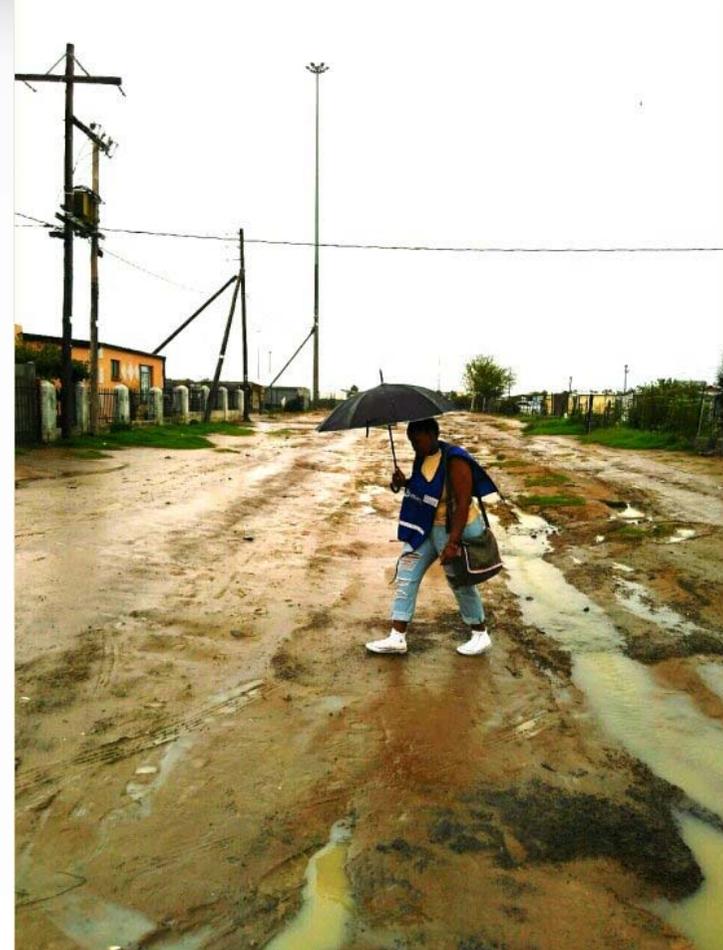
Moving Beyond The Great Disruption

HSRC REC: Advisory on fieldwork activities (Lockdown 3)

- Resumption of previously approved clinical trials
- Observational studies with no direct human contact
- Other studies involving human contact must be determined on case-by-case basis
- Unlikely to be before Lockdown L2

Research industry perspective

- SAMRA: face-to-face interviews can only commence from level 2 of lockdown
- Recommend prioritization of online and CATI (telephonic) research methodologies
- Community of practice: sharing lessons, experiences



Planned SASAS Pilot Panel



- ***Planned panel:*** build on back of an established probability-based national face-to-face survey: South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS).
- ***Sampling frame:*** to be recruited after participating in SASAS Round 18 or 19 (2020/21)
 - Target population: adults (16+) living in private households
 - Panel sample same as the main sample for SASAS F2F survey
- ***Recruitment and contract strategy***
 - SASAS interview serve as recruitment interview for the panel.
 - Contact information: telephone number, email address
 - Experiment in 2017: 38% agreed to be part of a panel (n=2526)

Concluding remarks and next steps

- **Next steps**

- HSRC will resume fieldwork when it is considered safe to do so, and under strict safety guidelines
- Resumption of fieldwork is subject to approval by the HSRC's Ethics Committee
- Intention: start up fieldwork in all provinces simultaneously (avoid context effects; comparability)



- **Opportunity**

- Pre- / post-lockdown data will allow us to test for the extent and nature of a Covid-19 effect on attitudes and behaviour
- Earnest discussion about multi-mode approaches, high-quality online survey panels recruitment on the back of existing national surveys



thank you

English	Thank you
Afrikaans	Dankie
Ndebele	Ngiyathokoza
Xhosa	Enkosi
Zulu	Ngiyabonga
Sepedi	Ke a leboga
Sesotho	Ke a leboha
Setswana	Ke a leboga
Xitsonga	Ndzi khense ngopfu
SiSwati	Ngiyabonga
Tshivenda	Ndi a livhuwa
Nama	Gangans

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