

Timeline

April-October 2020

Study Type

Descriptive / Surveillance

Article Link

<https://dec.ethz.ch/research/urban/socialdistancing.html>

Research Implemented by IPA

No

Managing the COVID-19 Pandemic in Poor Urban Neighborhoods

Researchers

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Abstract

Without a vaccine, keeping a safe distance is the most effective measure to contain the spread of COVID-19. Researchers conducted panel phone surveys with 1,400 poor households in two of the African cities with the most COVID-19 infections, Accra and Johannesburg, to analyze how the urban poor are practicing social distancing and personal hygiene. The project studied respondents' knowledge and perception of COVID-19 and the impact and perceptions of ongoing governments' policies—all factors that have an effect on people's intention to cooperate and to make the necessary behavioral changes to curb the spread of COVID-19. The researchers' objective was to identify policy measures that reduce COVID-19 transmission without a second drastic shutdown of public life which would have devastating effects on the economic and mental well-being of the urban poor. Researchers conducted a first survey at the end of April and two more waves in July and October 2020.

Project Outcomes of Interest

Social distancing and personal hygiene practices; knowledge and perception of COVID-19; impact and perceptions of ongoing governments' policies

Partners

[Nova Institute South Africa](#), [University of Ghana](#), [University of Pretoria](#), [ETH Zurich](#)

Key Findings

- 1,400 poor households in two major African cities were interviewed during lockdowns.
- The lockdown had a high economic impact in Ghana.
- In South Africa, COVID-19 had an adverse impact on the urban poor's mental health.
- Lack of information was an issue, while misinformation appeared to be limited.
- Stricter regulations do not always lead to higher compliance with social distancing.

Link to Results

[Link to a research article in *World Development* sharing the results of the study](#)

Impact Goals

- Keep children safe, healthy, and learning
- Reduce COVID-19 transmission rates

Project Data Collection Mode

- CAPI (Computer-assisted personal interviewing)

Results Status

Results