



COVID-19 REPORT

Target sarl / Copyright© July 2020

The pandemic of Covid-19 causes a major restructuring of Congolese spending

Since April 2020, TARGET has been monitoring the evolution of Congolese's perception of Covid-19, each time with a new theme to provide decision-makers and the public with reliable and independent statistics to better guide their response actions.

The July 2020 survey wave is devoted mainly to Congolese spending with a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies:

- A representative sample of 1,000 Congolese aged 18 to 65 of 6 provinces (Kinshasa, Kongo-Central, Kasai-Oriental, Haut-Katanga, Nord-Kivu and Sud-Kivu) interviewed by telephone using the quota method.
- Two focus-groups carried out on a digital platform (Zoom) and composed respectively of 10 Men and 10 women, all aged 25 to 40 years in order to deepen the results of quantitative survey and understand daily life of Congolese people.

The financial situation of Congolese people.

According to people interviewed during the group discussions, their financial situation has been negatively affected (reduced income, increased expenses) since the onset of the pandemic.

Maintaining the same lifestyle before the pandemic and providing for all family expenses becomes a real challenge. Focusing on useful and necessary expenses has become paramount. Some aspects noted:



• **Rising of food prices:** the depreciation of Congolese local currency has affected the costs of importing products. Importers pass on the additional costs to the selling prices.



• **The increase of number of dependents:** The lockdown has affected small informal traders; they now rely on those working to make ends meet.



• **Lower incomes:** this leads to budgetary restrictions in terms of purchases.

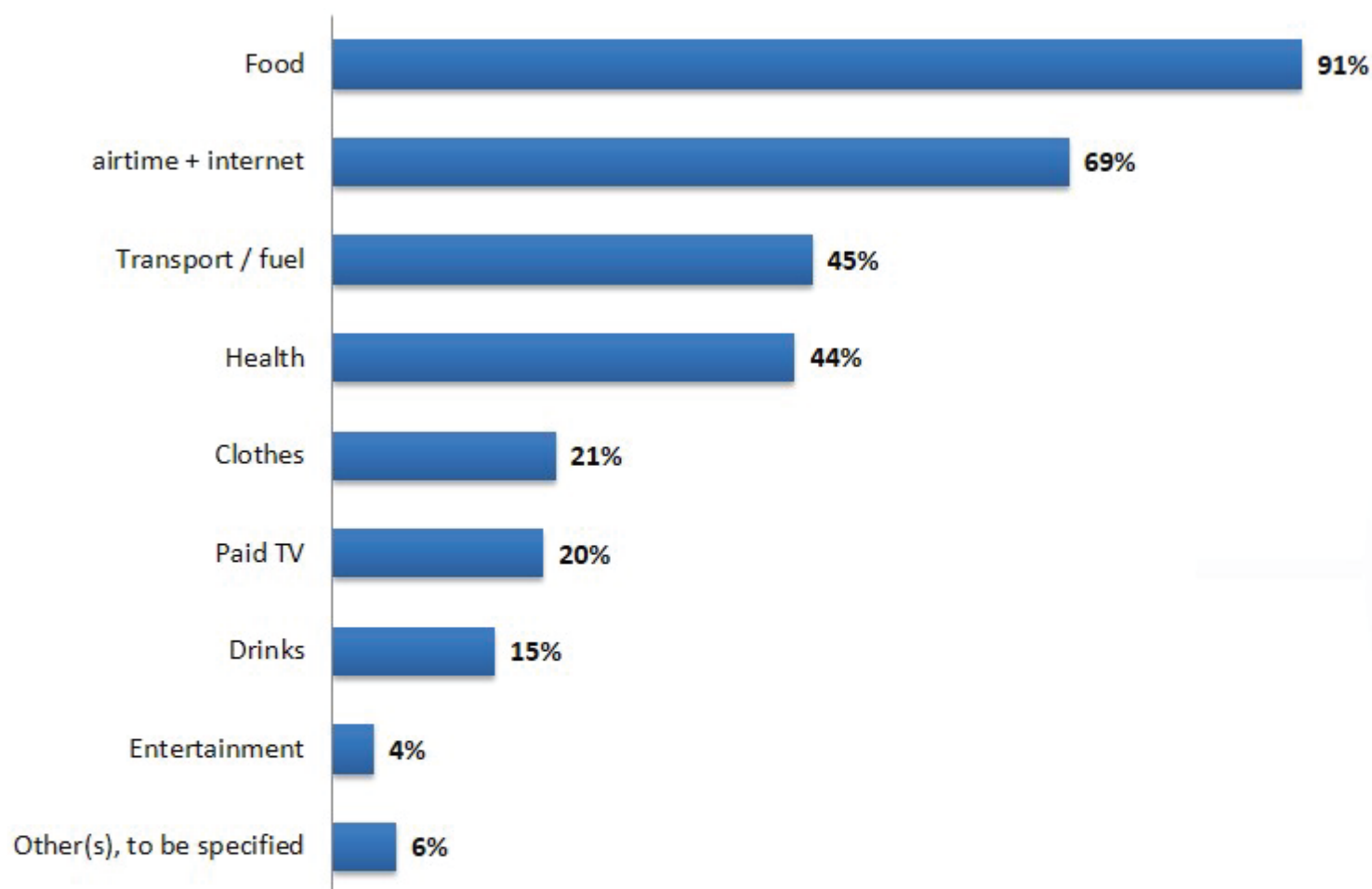


• **The mismatch of exchange rate for employees paid in local currency:** their income in local currency remained static while commodity prices rose.

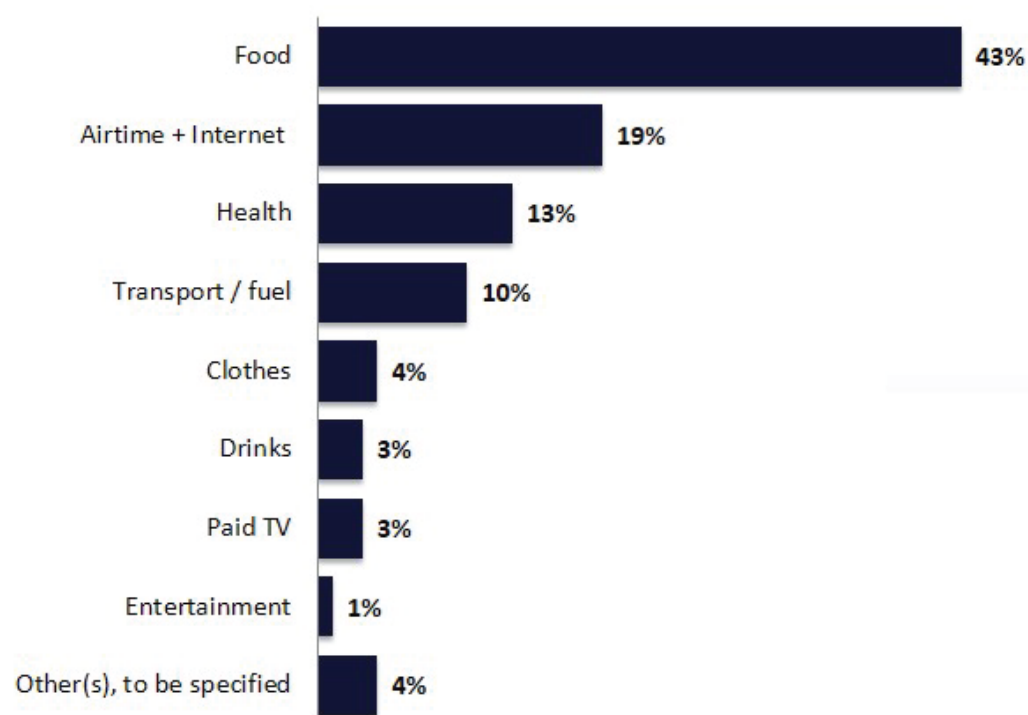


The main expenses of Congolese people

Food (91%) and communication costs (69%) are included in the vast majority of expense categories of Congolese respondents, while entertainment expense is found only among 4% of respondents. This trend is also confirmed in terms of priority spending with food, which comes in first place with 43% ahead of communication, i.e. airtime and internet (19%) health (13%). Entertainment, on the other hand, would be the least of concerns (1%).



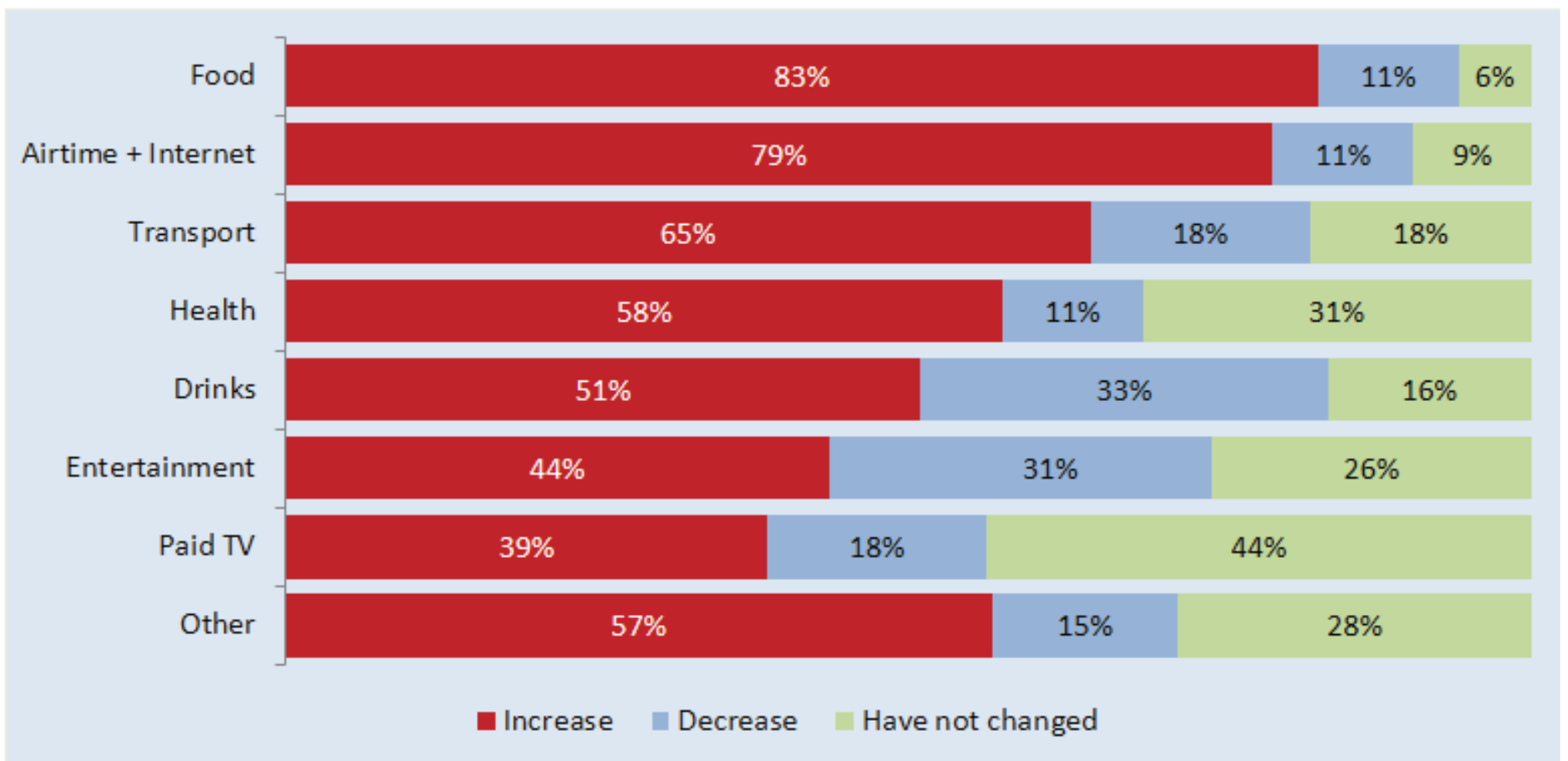
Question: What are the main topics of your personal expenses excluding rent, water and electricity bills?



Question: Of all these expenses, what is the first one you consider to be a priority?

Changes noticed in daily habits since Covid-19

Food (83%), airtime for communication (79%), transport (65%), health (58%) and drinks (51%) increased in terms of habits compared to the period before Covid-19. This has resulted in an increase in spending in these different categories, not to mention the depreciation of Congolese Franc against the U.S. currency which causes inflation (most prices of products sold in stores are indexed to changes in the exchange rate).



Question: Since the onset of Covid-19 in our country, what are the things that have changed in your daily habits

Food

Food expenses increased for 83% of respondents mainly due to the increase in the number of people present at home as a result of response measures against Covid-19 (Lockdown of Gombe Municipality, telework, closure of schools and universities, unemployment and technical leave). According to some respondents, physical inactivity affects consumption: *«Before the pandemic, everyone went out in the morning and some people at home only ate in the evening, but now we're all home, so the amount of food to eat has increased and we have to spend more»* stated one woman interviewed.

Airtime for communication

Spending on communication (buying airtime for communication and internet connection) increased for 79% of those interviewed. Basically, the concern to stay in touch with the outside world, to learn about the evolution of the pandemic, telework as well as online courses and/or homework for students. A man interviewed said: *« With boredom, I have to log in all the time to follow a movie, news, etc., and this has increased not only my internet consumption, but also the frequency with which I connect.»*

Transport

The distancing measures enacted to limit the spread of Covid-19 would have resulted in an increase in public transport expense among 65% of Congolese surveyed. The prices of some travel expenses had almost doubled in Kinshasa city. *«When we moved from Kintambo Magasin bus station to Gare Centrale Bus Station, we used to pay 500 FCD and now we pay 1000 FCD for the same route. There are even cases where taxi drivers practice half-race between certain routes such as Gombe - Bandalungwa, most of taxi drivers stop at Huileries Avenue which is half distance to the final destination »*

Health

When the onset of covid-19 was announced in DR Congo, people panicked. The perception that going to the hospital increases the risk of getting infected has been greatly increased. Avoiding going to hospitals for more or less minor diseases has developed, with the consequences of adopting practices that have a direct impact on the budget allocated to health :

Traditional treatments: : using preventive alternatives is a practice that has increased. Families paid money for medicinal plants or spices such as lemongrass, ginger, Vernonia Amygdalina locally called KONGO BOLOLO, Lippia multiplora locally called BULUKUTU, wild basil locally called LUMBA-LUMBA, etc.

Self-medication : a personal medical prescription to alleviate symptoms and soothe pain; pharmacist's prescriptions are also taken into account.

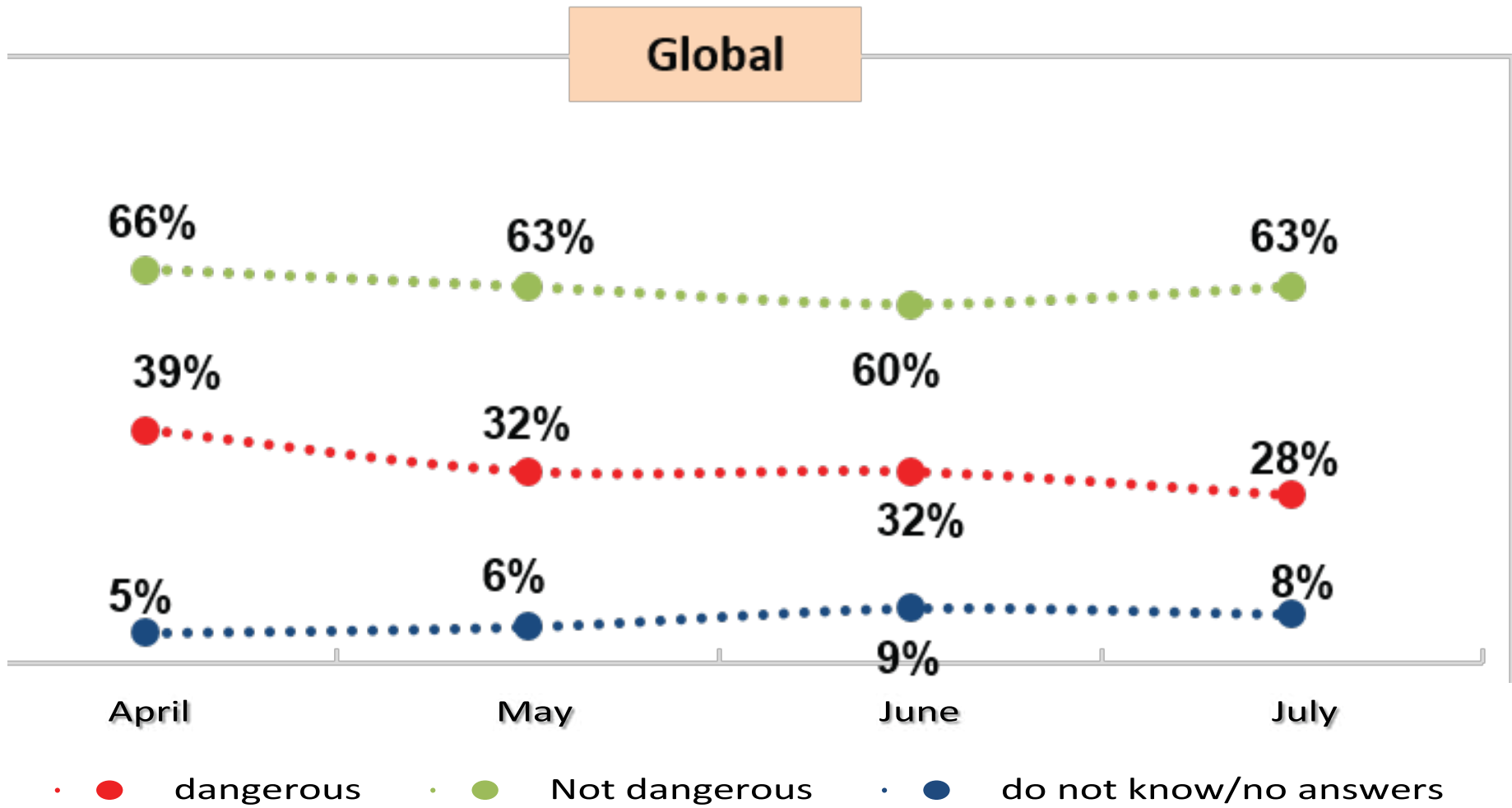
Panic : Some people, with the slightest symptoms (headache, sore throat, fever...) rushed to the pharmacy to buy drugs.

Drinks

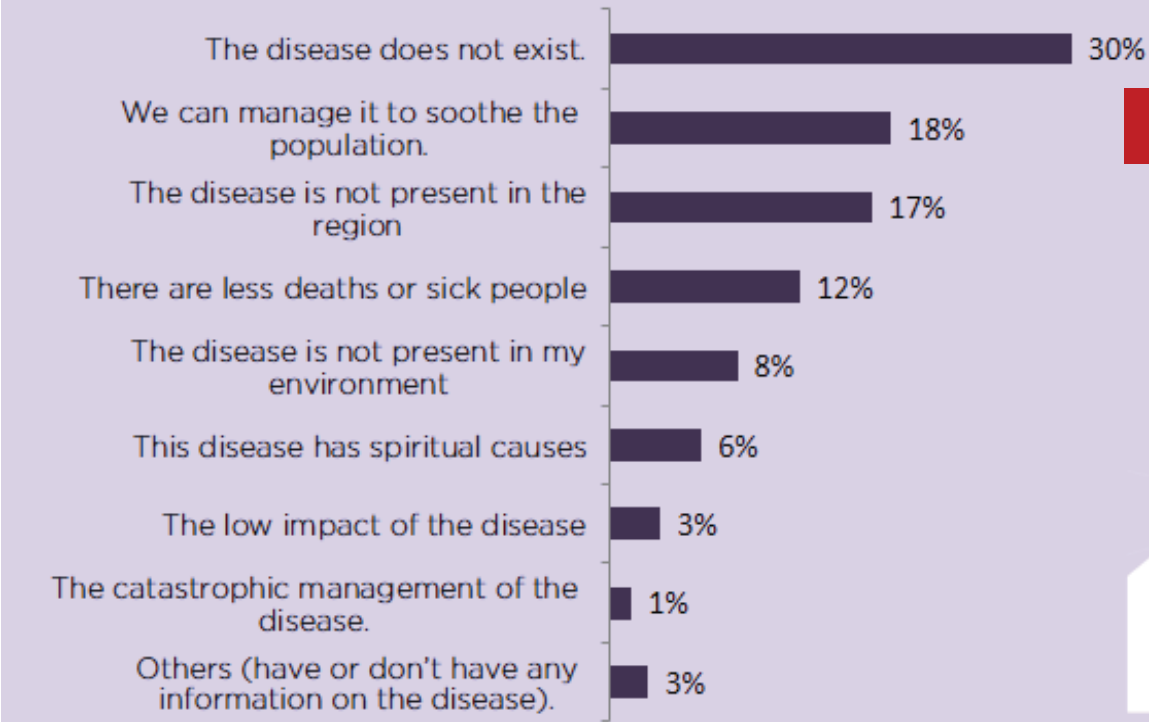
Consumption of beverages would have increased for some people (51%) either because of the desire to have fun and manage the lockdown stress, or because of the visits of relatives, although rare occasions, have become moments of pleasure to enjoy together an alcoholic or soft drink according to the tastes of each.

Perception of the disease

Despite the high number of cases in July 2020, 6 out of 10 Congolese are still not convinced of the severity of the disease on Congolese territory, mainly because of people infected in the immediate environment and the increasing number of cured people.



Question: At what level do you assess the severity of the Coronavirus outbreak in the province where you are currently?

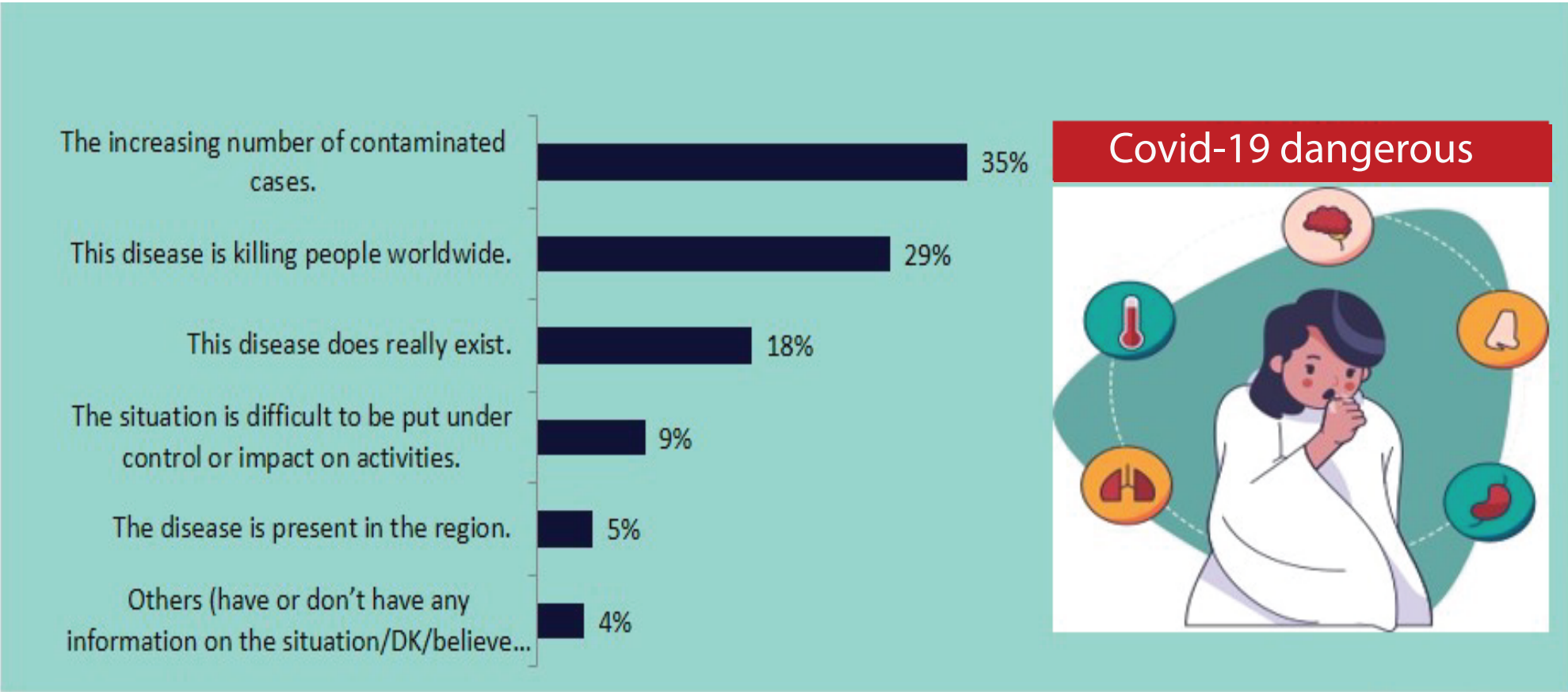


Covid-19 not dangerous



Question: Why do you think CORONA virus outbreak is not dangerous?

The rate of perception of the severity of Covid-19 is almost identical between men (29%) women (28%). On the other hand, there is a significant difference in the perception of the severity of Covid-19 between urban area (34%) and rural area (19%). 50% of opinion in Kinshasa believe that the disease is serious considering the increasing number of infected people.



Question: Why do you think CORONA virus outbreak is dangerous?

Key recommendations of the study

Apart from Government’s obligation to fight inflation and provide emergency assistance to the most vulnerable populations, including popular canteens and food distributions, the private sector could also make its contribution to relieve the population :



Brands (telecommunications, breweries, cosmetics, banks, etc.) that would like to gain loyalty from the large mass would benefit from launching promotions in which basic foodstuffs will be gifts (cornmeal, sugar, vegetable oil, salted fish, milk, etc.).



None-Telecom brands (none telecommunications-related) would also benefit from including megabytes/giga bytes as gifts for their promotions.



Brands can develop citizen messages in terms of tips for eating well by spending little (messages from stores that promote food products, buy in bulk and spend less, measure the cooked quantities to avoid waste, etc.)

Awareness messages should be more disseminated through local channels (church leaders, youth leaders, DJs in bars,...) and stress the need to prevent a second wave of contamination in DRC; this requires respect for barrier gestures in public areas (bars, churches, schools, supermarkets, etc.) and demonstrations (festivals, mourning,...).

For the full study with full results by age bracket, gender, occupation and provinces, write to info@target-sarl.cd or call **+243820001403 / +243970134454**