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A deserted quarantine centre in Blantyre, Malawi. File picture: Twitter @zodiakonline

Over 80% of Malawians fear hunger more than Covid-19, study shows

By Crispin Adriaanse  Jun 2, 2020



Cape Town – The majority of Malawians fear Covid-19 will lead to food insecurity and are also more worried about the social implications of having the virus, rather than being infected itself, a study shows.

The report by the Institute of Public Opinion and Research (IPOR) released on Monday shows that 81.78 percent of people in the country fear they will go hungry due to Covid-19, compared with 17.72 percent who do not.

Educated and older citizens are less likely to fear hunger due to the virus, while those living in southern parts of the country and who view themselves as outsiders are more likely to fear hunger.

This comes as no surprise considering that 3.3 million Malawians are in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification of high malnutrition, which leads to chronic poverty or a humanitarian catastrophe.

The IPOR poll -- conducted between May 7 and May 28 -- shows that 76 percent of Malawians fear the negative social sanctions associated with being infected with the virus, and that others will think poorly of them for having Covid-19.

Malawians are either very worried about being infected or not worried at all, as illustrated by a similar percentage of people who picked either option in the "56+" age group.

The largest proportion of people who are very worried about contracting Covid-19 are 18- to 35-year-olds and 36- to 55-year-olds.

Furthermore, the highest percentage of those who are very worried about infection live in northern Malawi, along the country's borders with Tanzania and Zambia.

IPOR is a research organisation based in Malawi's southern city of Zomba, and provides social science research as well as advisory and consulting services.

As of June 2, Malawi had recorded 336 confirmed cases of Covid-19, with four deaths, according to World Health Organisation data.

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