

## **SAMRA – RESEARCH DURING COVID 19**

### **The Research Industry and Covid-19**

On 26 March 2020, the South African government placed the country under lockdown level 5 after the Coronavirus pandemic began causing havoc in the country. This was government's effort to contain the spread of the Coronavirus. It has been over a year since the first lockdown, yet South Africa and countries across the globe continue to grapple with COVID-19. South Africa has recently been hit by a 3<sup>rd</sup> wave of the Coronavirus and on 15 June 2021, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that the country is now on Adjusted Alert Level 3 from 16 June 2021.

The battle with Coronavirus continues and as we all find ourselves in these unprecedented times in our history, many questions and concerns also arise within the Research Industry. One of the biggest questions is, how do we conduct research during COVID-19 pandemic? The reality is the pandemic has and will continue to alter our everyday lives and the way we behave as we go about our business.

SAMRA fully supports the decision taken by the South African government, tightening of restrictions comes amid the third wave of COVID-19 infections hitting the country. In the president's words: "The measures are appropriate to the level of risk and are necessary to save the lives of our people." It is against this backdrop that SAMRA urges all members and researchers across the country to work together and to act responsibly in these difficult times. All the COVID-19 rules, restrictions and regulations are mandatory and should be adhered to. SAMRA and the research industry are not immune to COVID-19 and therefore the Research Industry is not an exception to the government's prescribed restrictions.

This is a time that calls for research companies to come up with creative ways of doing research and/or to adjust their research approaches in line with the current gazetted regulations. We therefore recommend that online and CATI (telephonic) interviews be prioritised as opposed to face-to-face interviews (CAPI). Where face to face (CAPI) Interviews are inevitable, it is critical to follow the regulations as set in the Gazette. It is very crucial for individuals and research companies to read the Gazette in its entirety and to be familiar with the regulations gazetted in [Gazette 44715 of 15 June 2021](#).

Please note that it is the responsibility of the research company to take accountability. We are very aware that our industry is faced with difficulties and uncertain times, but we remain committed as we go through this challenging time together. Now more than ever our industry is instrumental in providing understanding and insight on how the attitudes and behaviours of decision-makers are being changed by the Covid-19 outbreak.

We understand that these are also desperate financial times for most companies in our industry, but we all must work together to prioritise the health and safety of employers, employees (staff, interviewers, etc) as well as those of consumers/respondents. In addition, research companies should maintain and strictly adhere to social distancing, sanitising and wearing of masks regulations.

Below are some useful links:

Adjusted Level 3 regulations as gazetted in [Gazette 44715 of 15 June 2021](#)

<https://www.gov.za/covid-19/about/alert-level-3-during-coronavirus-covid-19-lockdown>

World Health Organisation (WHO) Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public#:~:text=If%20COVID%2D19%20is%20spreading,where%20you%20live%20and%20work>

ESOMAR management of COVID-19 measures:

<https://www.esomar.org/uploads/public/knowledge-and-standards/documents/ESOMAR-Management-of-Covid-19-Measures.pdf>

[https://www.esomar.org/uploads/public/knowledge-and-standards/documents/ESOMAR\\_Statement\\_Impact-of-social-distancing-protocols-on-conducting-researchduring-COVID-19-crisis.pdf](https://www.esomar.org/uploads/public/knowledge-and-standards/documents/ESOMAR_Statement_Impact-of-social-distancing-protocols-on-conducting-researchduring-COVID-19-crisis.pdf)

**Disclaimer:**

It is important to note that SAMRA can only support the Government's efforts and advise the industry to adhere to all regulations set in the gazette. It remains the sole responsibility of the individual or business to adhere to regulations pertaining to the lockdown as determined by the government. Unfortunately, SAMRA is not in a position to relax the rules and make exceptions. This document reflects the best available information at the time it was prepared. SAMRA does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of its contents and assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions.

**Please stay safe, until we can meet again!**