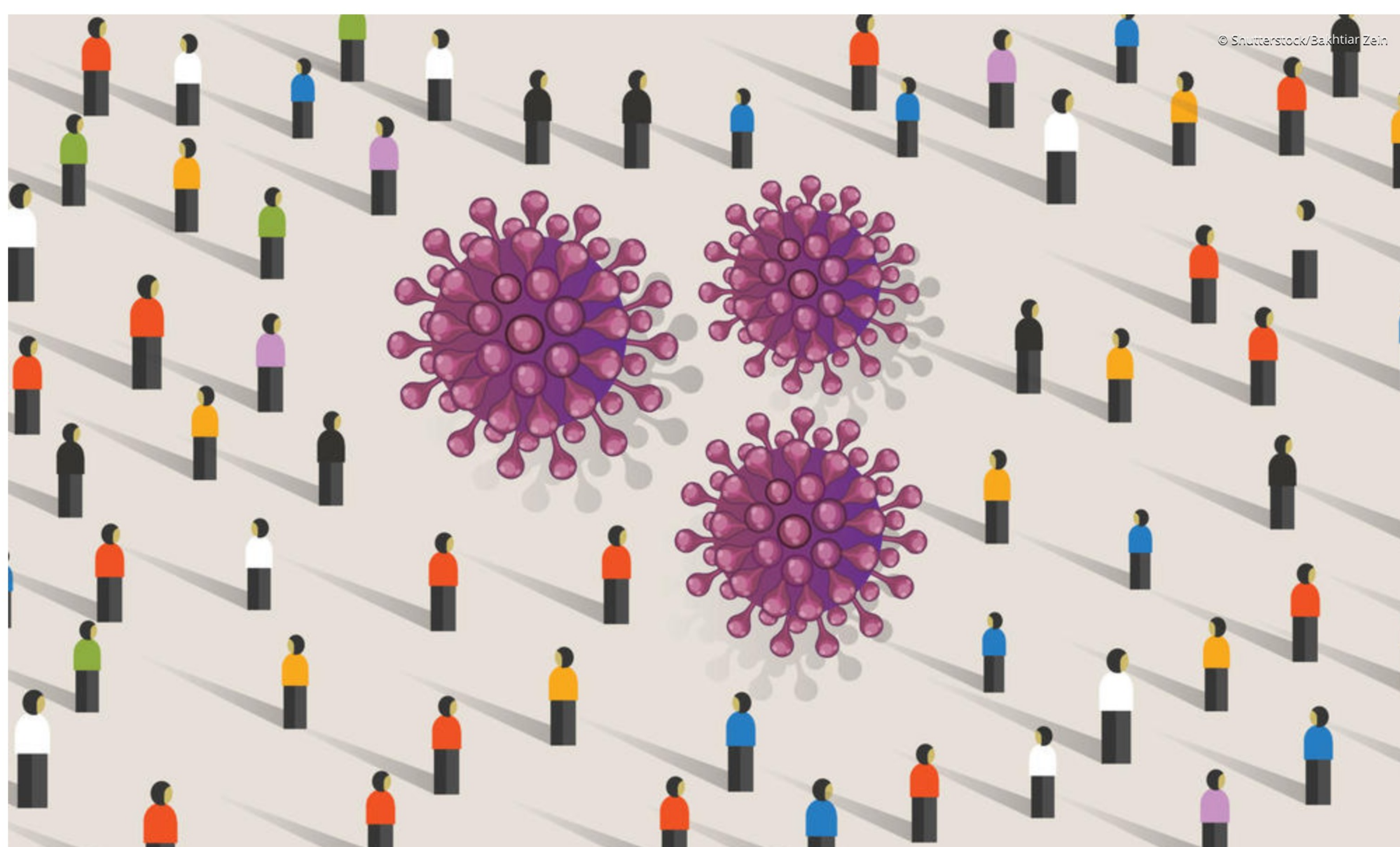


Why we must close high-risk wildlife markets



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The disease COVID-19 has caused a health crisis worldwide. We don't know the full and devastating reach of this pandemic yet, but we do understand how it underscores the destructive impacts of wildlife trade and consumption on human health and societies.

COVID-19, caused by the coronavirus, is a zoonotic disease, meaning it originated from an animal. The source of the outbreak is believed to have been a "wet market" in Wuhan, China, that sold live and dead wildlife and domestic animals, along with other foods for human consumption. Such markets can be a living petri dish, with viruses shed by stressed animals warehoused together mixing with other bodily fluids in unhygienic conditions. When these often new or unknown viruses jump to people, the results can be catastrophic.

The worst epidemics in recent history

The human life and economic costs of the main zoonoses of the last 50 years and their main host species



93%

The amount of respondents who would support efforts by their governments and health ministries to close all illegal and unregulated markets selling animals from the wild

Illegal and unregulated wildlife trade is widely known to be a major threat to the conservation of ecosystems, biodiversity, and endangered species. But the risks to people are not as well known by the general public. So, in many countries, high-risk wildlife markets can be found openly selling a myriad of species side by side for human consumption, traditional medicines, and luxury products.

Fortunately, the Chinese government took action after the COVID-19 outbreak to place a ban on wildlife consumption. If meaningfully enforced, the ban in China could be a game-changer. WWF urges other countries to quickly adopt similar prohibitions and regulations to reduce zoonotic disease risks and prevent future outbreaks. We are [calling for urgent action](#) to close high-risk markets and end illegal and unregulated wildlife trade that impacts biodiversity and threatens human health and our existence as we know it.

To gauge public opinion in places where such markets operate, WWF commissioned the GlobeScan market research firm to conduct a first of its kind [survey](#) among the general public in Hong Kong SAR, Japan, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. Between March 3 and 11, 2020, as COVID-19 was spreading globally, GlobeScan interviewed 5,000 respondents, surveying their sentiments on the coronavirus outbreak in their respective markets and their opinions on illegal and unregulated markets selling wildlife.

The results were overwhelming: **93% of respondents in the four regions with active wildlife markets—all locations surveyed except Japan (where there is less trade of wildlife for human consumption)—would support efforts by their governments and health ministries to close all illegal and unregulated markets selling wild animals.** Across all five markets, 79% felt that closing such illegal and unregulated markets, where wild animals are sold, would be effective at preventing similar pandemics from occurring in the future. And 84% said they were not likely to buy wildlife products from open wildlife markets in the future.

Ending the sale and consumption of high-risk and unsustainable wildlife products is critical to eliminating the root cause of the next pandemic. It will take a global concerted effort to mitigate these risks. Closing high-risk wildlife markets and stopping trade in high-risk species will help conserve biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of wild resources.

"Urgent action is paramount to curtail future pandemics," said Jan Vertefeuille, senior advisor, advocacy, WWF. "We know what needs to be done to help prevent future zoonotic pandemics, and we call on decision-makers everywhere to immediately and urgently undertake these steps to halt biodiversity loss and reduce the chances of another zoonotic pandemic."

Read the full report and/or summary: [Opinion Survey on COVID-19 and Wildlife Trade in Five Asian Markets](#)

Type of wildlife species purchased (by the respondent or someone known to them) in an open wildlife market in the past 12 months—Total 5 markets (443 respondents)

