

KNOX
your city

**Covid-19 Community
Impact Survey**
Wave 2 survey findings
July 2021



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
Survey coverage	6
Concerns	9
Top-of-mind Setbacks and improvements	10
Impacts of Covid-19	12
Health behaviours	13
Social isolation	14
Mental health	14
Exercise	15
Healthy eating	15
Alcohol consumption	15
Impacts on health	16
Financial vulnerability	16
Employment	17
Safety	18
Parenting and caregiving	19
Housing	19
Transport	19
Resilience	20
Vaccinations	21
Communications	23
Covid-19 restrictions during survey	24
Question alterations	25



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

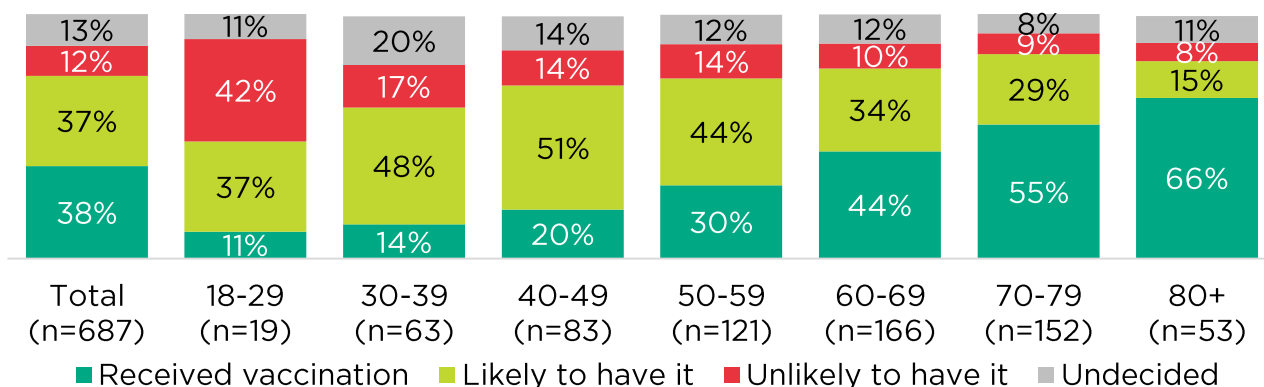
This report presents the findings from the second wave of Covid-19 community impacts research conducted in the City of Knox. This survey was in field from 20 May to 6 July 2021, and used representative random sampling of the rates database to achieve n=688 representative responses, alongside n=175 general community responses through distributing an online link and paper surveys through Council networks.

The aim of the research was to track how community experiences are changing through the pandemic. For most of the fieldwork period, metropolitan Melbourne was experiencing a lockdown due to Covid-19 cases (see [appendix](#) for details).

The main findings were:

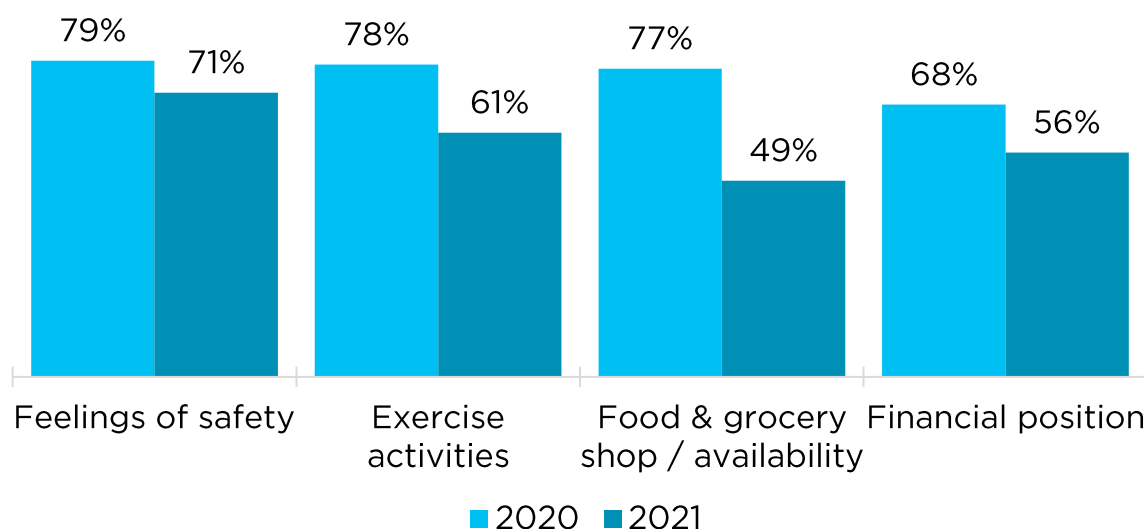
- People are keen to **start travelling** and having holidays without the risk of getting caught in snap lockdowns. Many are concerned that restricted travel options are going to be a long-term impact of the pandemic.
- **Vaccines** are the most salient issue for the community at the moment. Many have been vaccinated already, with high vaccination rates amongst older people. However, some have concerns about the long term impact, and many, particularly those who speak a language other than English, are undecided about whether they will get the vaccine (highlighting an opportunity for better communication with this segment).

Vaccinations by age



- The main recognised **opportunities for long-term improvements** from the Covid-19 experience are a shift towards more flexible work options for improved work life balance, better public hygiene practices, and social cohesion.

Covid-19 impacted on..



- Overall there is less widespread concern about getting sick when in public spaces, but there are still concerns about safety, with a shift towards perceptions of violence and crime cited as safety issues.
- While most of the community are still experiencing some impact on socialising, leisure, food availability, finances and work, fewer are experiencing a big impact in 2021 when compared to 2020.
- There are small yet growing segments experiencing big impacts on transport and housing.
- People are gradually returning to pre-Covid-19 levels in terms of exercise and talking to neighbours, but there hasn't been any shift towards healthier eating, and the incidence of people drinking more alcohol than pre-Covid-19 remains constant.
- Mental health impacts continue to be widespread, although the current survey does show some reduction in the proportion of people reporting anxiety.
- Fewer people are experiencing difficulty getting food and groceries, but that is not transferring into healthier eating.
- The extent of impact on finances and work is gradually declining, but there are still over half of the population experiencing an impact. Most of those who switched to working from home had returned to work for at least some of their working week, although 32% are reporting more flexibility (either still working from home or working from home some of the time).
- Resilience has had a slight improvement in line with a reduction in financial challenges, with fewer reporting that they couldn't access \$2,000 in a week for an emergency.
- When seeking out information, there has been a shift away from word of mouth and media sources, with more reliance on GPs.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the second wave of community impact surveying for Knox City Council.

This document shows how things have changed compared to the 2020 findings. Please see the 2020 research report for further detail, including analysis descriptions (thematic, statistical and weighting) and questions asked.

Methodology







For this research, respondents were sourced using two methods:

1. **Random proportional representative sampling of the rates database.** Selected addresses were matched against Council's contact database to source email addresses. Where an email address was available the household was sent an email invitation to the survey. If no email address was available they were posted a paper version of the survey (with an option to complete online included in the cover letter). This sample provides insights from across the municipality, rather than just those who are engaged with Council's communication channels and services and has been weighted in line with age and gender within each locality (interlocking).
2. **General access online survey.** This was distributed through Council networks and services, and a paper form was available upon request. This sample was completed by those who are engaged with Council and interested in the topic.

Some analysis presents **combined data**, showing responses across the whole sample.

Report design

Throughout this report, data has been colour-coded as follows (2021 is the darker shade):

2021	2020	
		Representative data
		General access data
		Combined data

Where statistically significant variations have been identified for 2021 when compared to 2020, this has been indicated with a ↓ to show significant reduction or ↑ to show a significant increase.

Survey timing

A lockdown was announced soon after commencement of the survey fieldwork period (survey period 20 May to 6 July, lockdown from 25 May). During the survey period the restrictions varied a number of times. Full details of dates and changes can be found [at the end of this document](#).

Weighting explained

The weight of each individual survey response towards the overall results is adjusted to balance out demographic variations in the sample. That way your results better represent the views of the overall population.

For instance, in the representative survey 5% of respondents were aged 18-34, whereas in the census 29% of the population is 18-34. Therefore the weighting means that each 18-34 year old in the sample acts as if it is 5.8 responses in the weighted results. Conversely, 44% of the representative sample was 65+ years old, compared to 20% in the census, so each 65+ year old in the sample acts like 0.45 responses in the weighted results.

We applied an interlocking weighting to the representative sample covering age, gender and region.

SURVEY COVERAGE

The response rate for the representative survey was slightly lower than the first round, likely due to 'covid-fatigue' (people are sick of talking about it). This is a finding in itself as it suggests that Covid-19 is less of a critical issue for some people. The final sample size for the representative sample (n=688) is robust enough to identify how community impacts are changing.

Representative survey mode	Returned	Sent	Response rate	2020 response rate
Mail out, online	41	4,760	10%	14%
Mail-out, paper	430			
Email	217	2,476	9%	13%

Email - 2,973 sent, 497 bounced. Mail - 4,828 sent, 68 return to sender

An invite was sent to those who registered for future participation during the round 1 research, achieving n=59. These have been included in the general access sample. The general access survey, distributed through Council networks, only achieved n=116 responses in 2021, which represents only 17% of the 2020 sample size.

The following tables show a summary of the distribution of respondents across locations and demographics, compared to the 2016 Census and the 2020 survey. In these tables the Rep column shows the representative sample results, while the GA column shows the 'General access' survey results.

Distribution of the survey across both sample sources is relatively in line with population distribution across the five Knox regions. Alignment of the representative survey component is slightly better in 2021 than the initial survey in 2020.

	2021			2020	
	Census	Rep	GA	Rep	GA
Boronia and Bayswater	22%	24%	22%	27%	19%
Wantirna and Wantirna South	21%	21%	23%	20%	19%
Rowville	22%	17%	17%	17%	17%
Ferntree Gully	17%	21%	22%	20%	25%
Knoxfield and Scoresby	9%	8%	9%	9%	10%
Hills	9%	10%	8%	7%	10%

It was possible to break out the representative data by ward (matching address to ward), as outlined in the following table (not weighted). However, there were no meaningful differences in findings when analysing data by ward.

Ward	Sample	Percent	Ward	Sample	Percent
Dinsdale	76	11%	Friberg	76	11%
Baird	78	11%	Scott	66	10%
Collier	75	11%	Taylor	61	9%
Chandler	100	15%	Tirhatuan	57	8%
Dobson	98	14%			

In the 2021 wave of surveying, the gender distribution of the representative survey is almost in line with the census. There is a notable under-representation of younger people, although this is typical of social research in the sector.

The representative survey also shows a slight under-representation of those who speak a language other than English and households with children; and an over-representation of people who own their home outright and couple households with with no children at home. These are similar distributions to those experienced in the first round of surveying.

	2021			2020	
	Census	Rep	GA	Rep	GA
Male	49%	44%	25%	41%	13%
Female	51%	54%	74%	57%	86%
18-34	29%	5%	15%	11%	19%
35-49	26%	20%	24%	22%	45%
50-64	26%	31%	32%	28%	22%
65+	20%	44%	29%	37%	13%
LOE	25%	13%	11%	18%	7%
Owned outright	33%	51%	43%	46%	25%
Mortgage	41%	31%	40%	35%	54%
Renter	17%	12%	11%	12%	15%
One person	20%	21%	16%	17%	8%
Children at home	50%	33%	48%	35%	61%
Couple no children	24%	38%	27%	36%	21%
Household income <\$650 per week	15%	21%	17%	22%	14%

CONCERNS

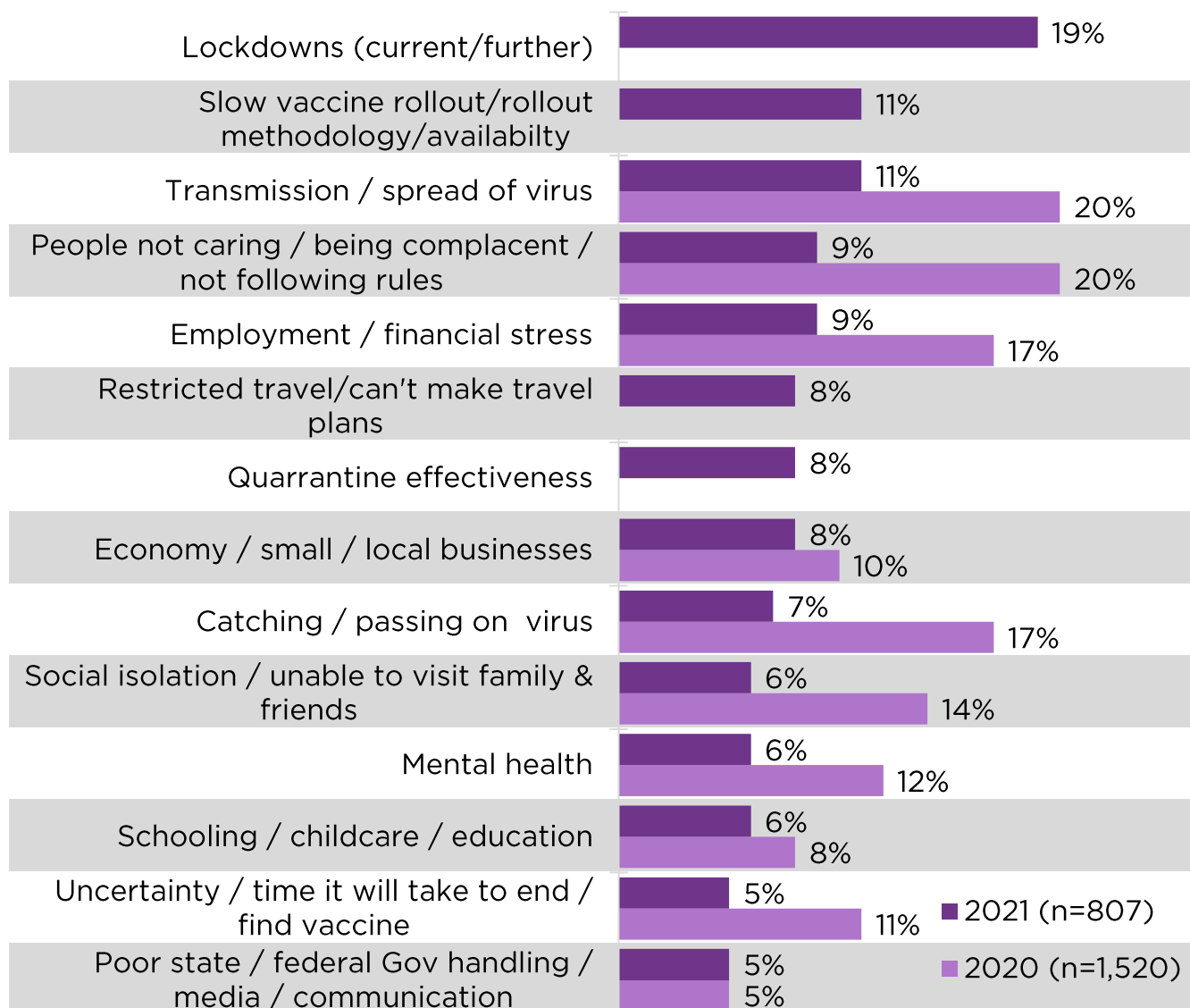
In 2020 the top two concerns being mentioned were relating to transmission of the virus and other people not following the rules. In 2021, whilst concern about the transmission of Covid-19 remains in the top 3, it is less commonly mentioned; instead there has been an emerging concern about ongoing lockdowns and their potential impact on business and the community.

In 2021 the vaccine has become one of the key concerns, specific to lack of availability, perceptions that the roll-out has been too slow, or that the methodology is flawed. A later section of this report explores [vaccines](#) in further detail.

The other key concerns to emerge in 2021 were relating to inability to make travel or holiday plans, and questioning quarantine effectiveness. Catching the virus and employment stresses were less salient in 2021.

Frequent lockdowns, restrictions to movement,, impact on business and lifestyle

Concerns



TOP-OF-MIND SETBACKS AND IMPROVEMENTS

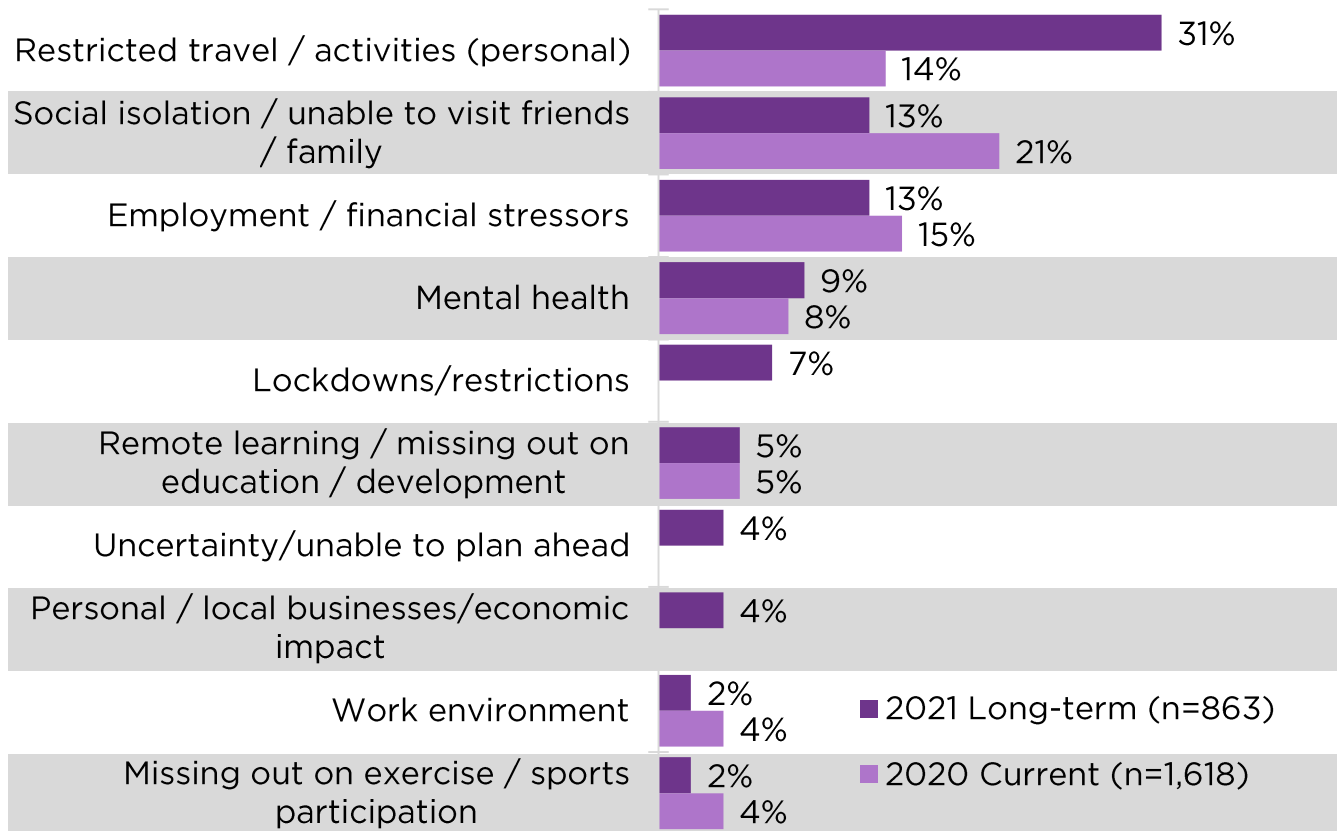
In 2020, respondents were asked to specify the current setbacks and improvements from Covid-19. In 2021, the question was revised to seek out perceived **long term impacts**. In 2021, 79% of respondents mentioned a potential long term setback and 62% suggested a long-term improvement.

Findings suggest that there is an expectation of long term setbacks relating to social isolation and employment / financial stress, factors that were also commonly being experienced in 2020. The stand out potential long term setback in 2021 relates to restricted travel due to restrictions and fear of getting stuck due to snap lockdowns; and the impacts that has on ability to see family and have holidays.

I stopped planning day trips and holidays simply because I might be cut off from returning to Melbourne if there is another unexpected lockdown.

limited travel, especially overseas traveling is the main concern from me. I can't see any possibility international travel will be back to normal in 2 years.

Setbacks



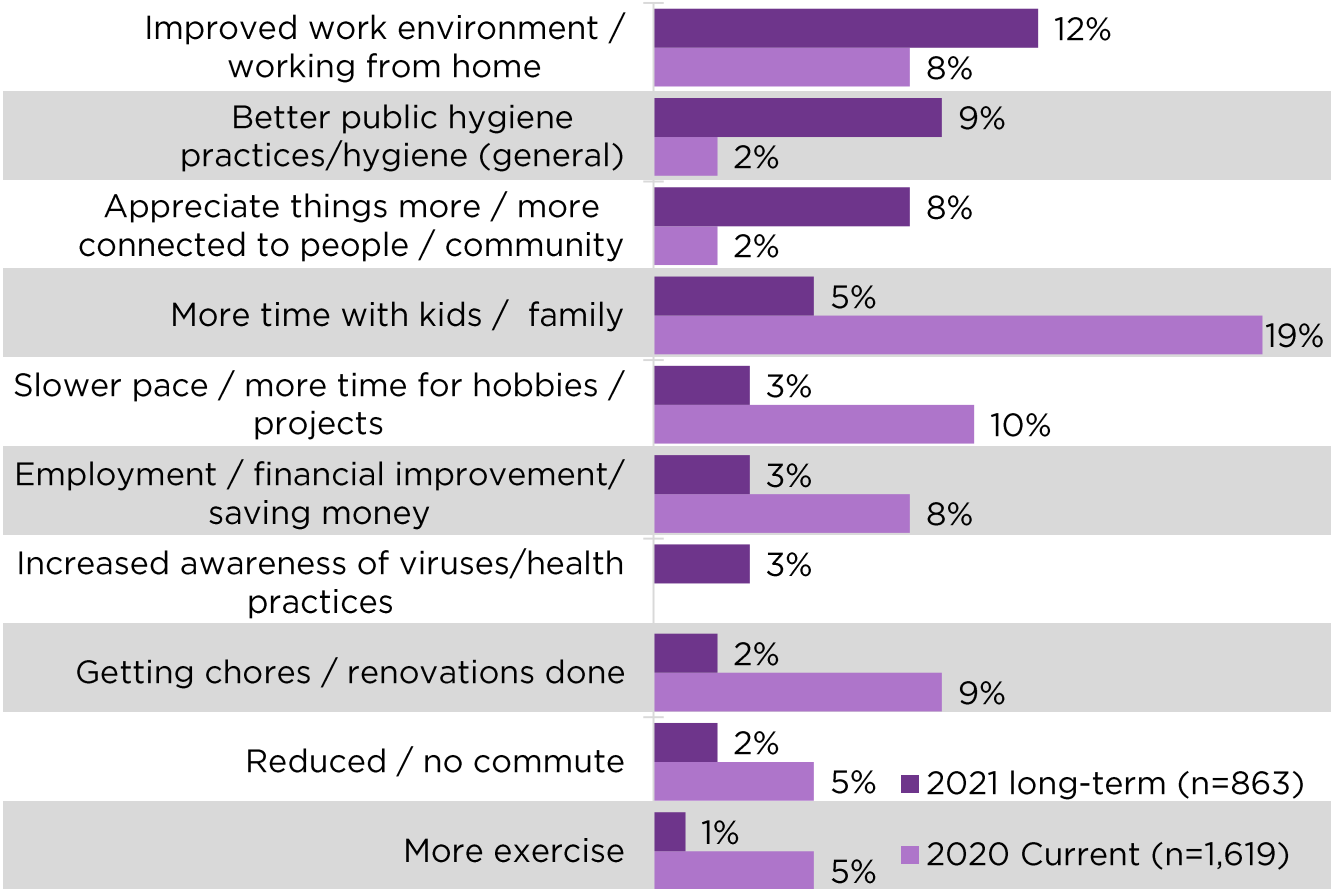
In 2020 the main immediate stated improvements were being able to spend more time with children and the family, and the slower pace. These are seldom put forth as a potential long-term improvements in 2021, as during much of the survey fieldwork period schools were back to on-site, and many had returned to their workplaces for at least some of their work hours (see [employment](#) section).

Instead, the main long-term improvements mentioned in 2021 were relating to the work environment (specifically the opportunity for more remote / flexible working), improved public hygiene and more community connections.

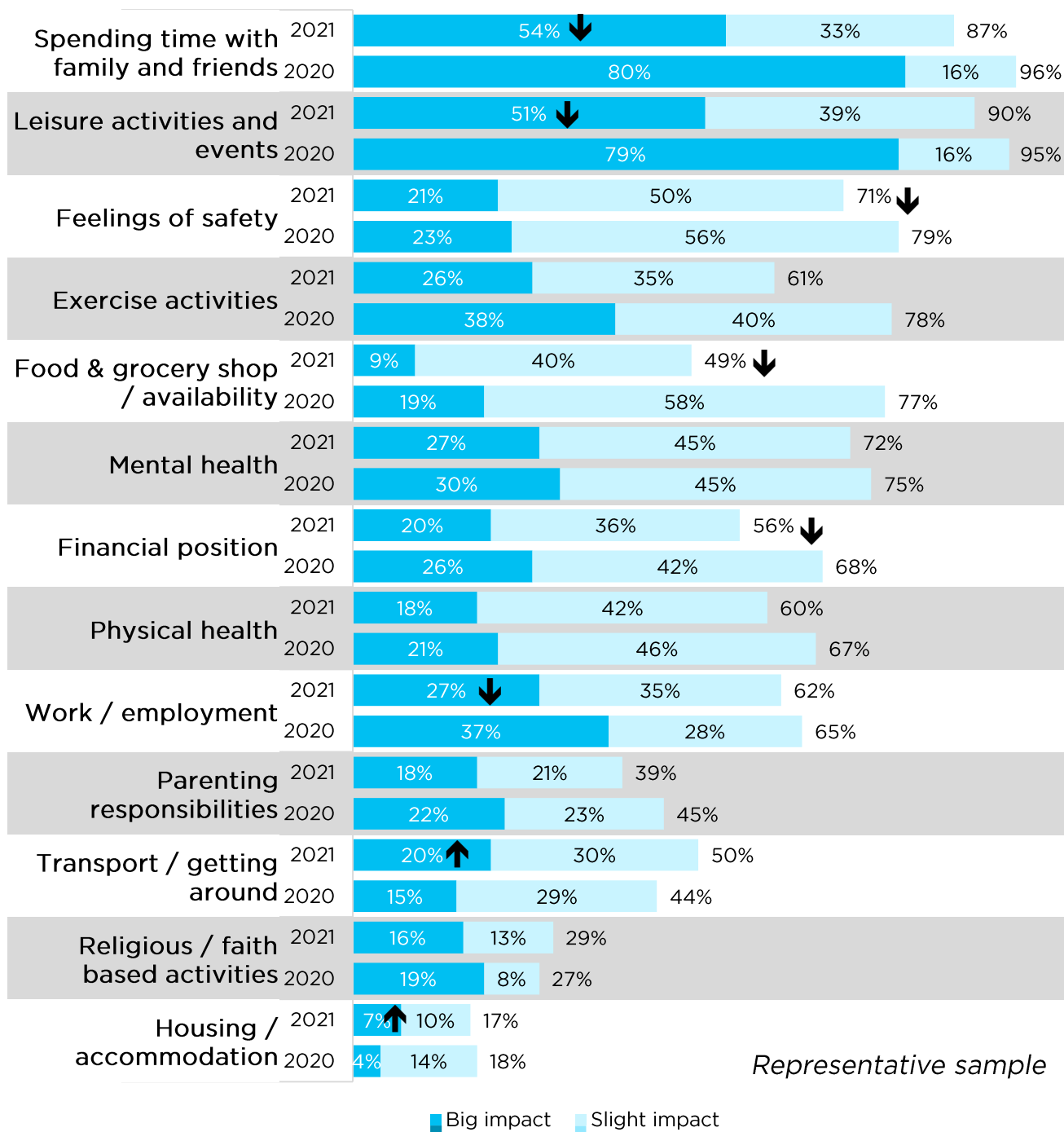
business - more meetings are conducted via internet - more efficient use of resources.

Working from home is so much safer, reducing the risk of bringing covid-19 back to the family (both the elderly and the young). In addition, more time can be put at work instead of travelling a total of about 3 hours daily. Going to the city takes approximately 50 minutes. With the daily traffic jams, travelling to work easily takes about 1.5 hours one way. All these time is now better spent.

Improvements



IMPACTS OF COVID-19

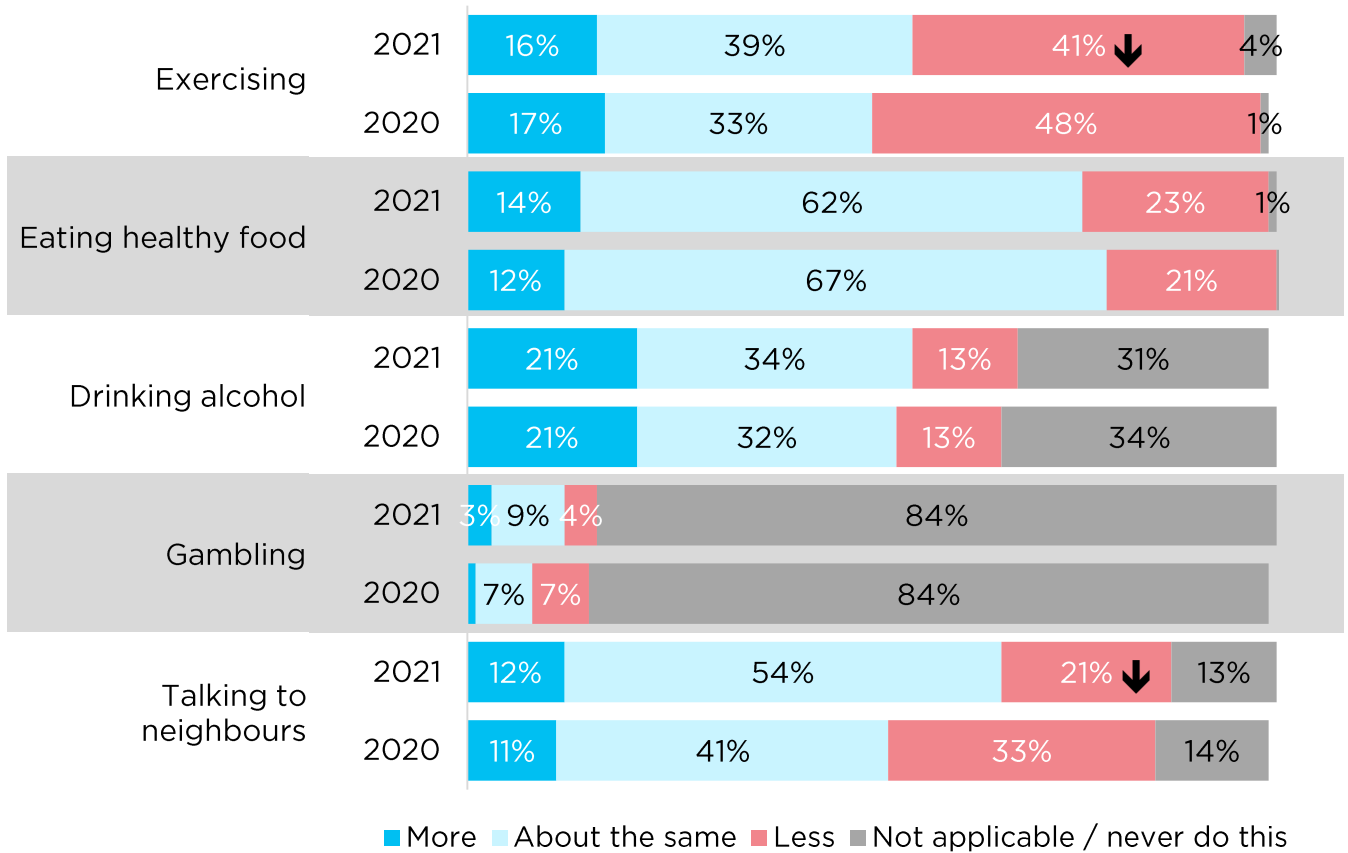


The main changes to impact measures in the last 12 months were:

- Although most are still experiencing impacts on socialising and leisure activities, the strength of these impacts has reduced.
- Far fewer residents are experiencing impacts on food and grocery availability.
- The impact of Covid-19 on financial position and work is less common now, although half are still experiencing impacts.
- Impact on mental health remains high, and has changed very little.

HEALTH BEHAVIOURS

Health behaviours

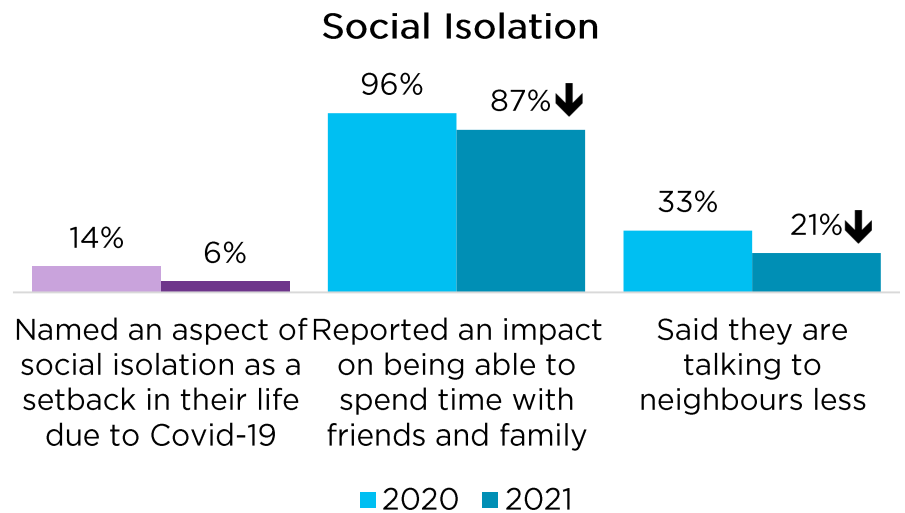


There has been a slight shift back towards pre-Covid-19 levels for exercising and talking to neighbours. However, there is still a segment of the community who is drinking more (unchanged proportion) and almost a quarter are still eating less healthy food than before Covid-19.

SOCIAL ISOLATION



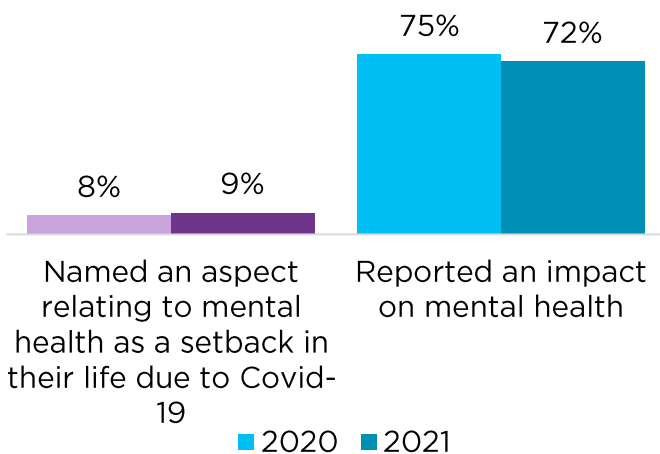
Social isolation is still the top impact being experienced by the community, although the proportion of the community being impacted by this has fallen slightly.



MENTAL HEALTH



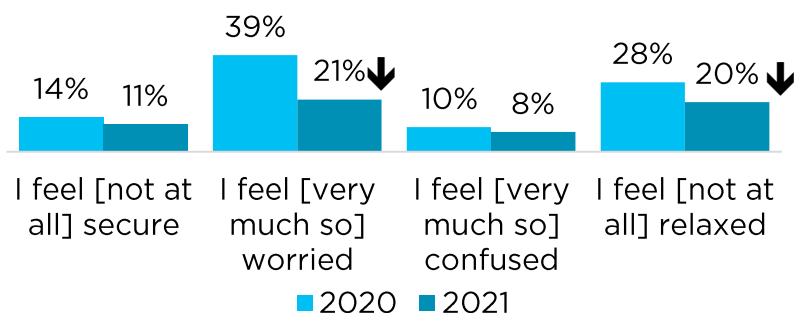
Mental Health



There has been no change in the proportion of residents reporting mental health challenges, suggesting that this is an issue that is going to persist throughout the duration of the pandemic. Males more commonly report no impact on mental health (31%, 23% females).

Individual anxiety levels have fallen slightly in 2021, although there are still 32% who experience one of these (a significant reduction from 49% in 2020). Males less commonly feel worried (21% not at all, 8% females).

Anxiety

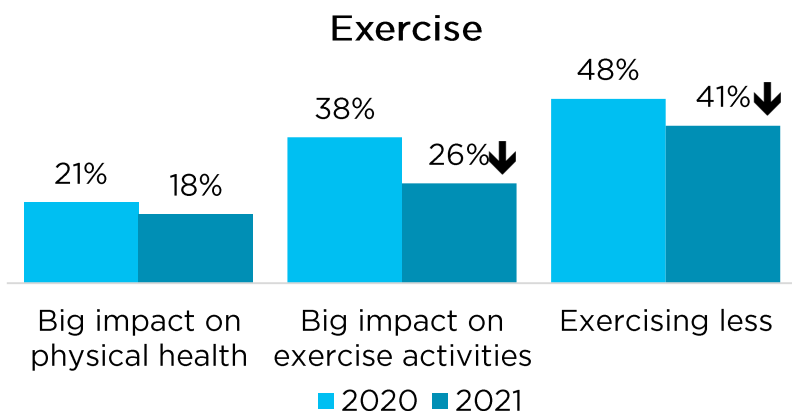


EXERCISE



Whilst the impact of Covid-19 on exercise has reduced slightly in the past year, there are still four in ten residents who are exercising less than before Covid-19.

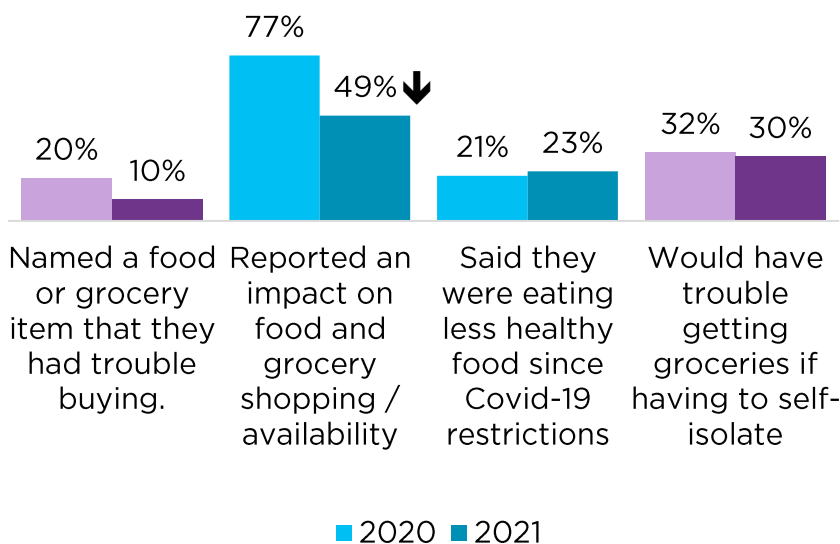
There was a higher level of optimism that in the future exercise would increase in 2020 (30%) than 2021 (23%).



HEALTHY EATING



Healthy Eating

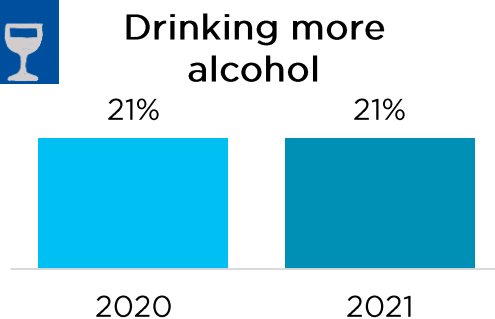


Covid-19 is having a less widespread impact on food and grocery shopping in 2021, however this has not translated to changes in healthy eating habits, with one in five continuing to eat less healthy food. 1.9% said they had accessed emergency food relief.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION



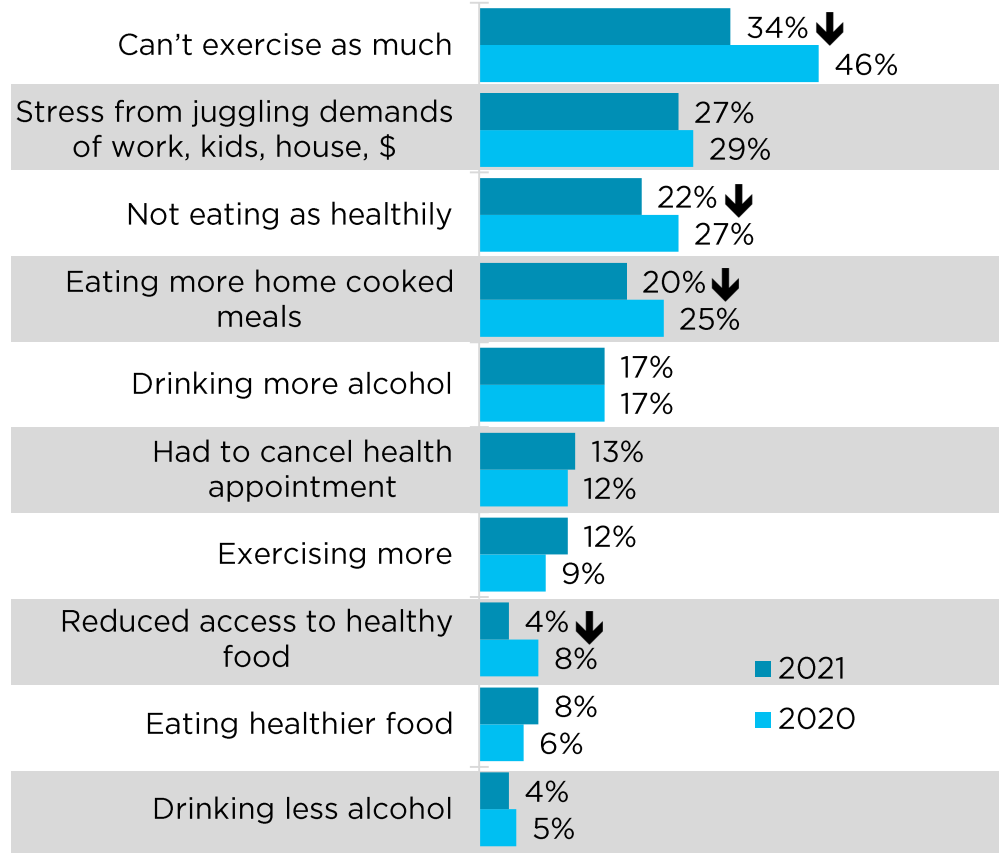
There has been no change in alcohol consumption behaviours in the last year.



IMPACTS ON HEALTH

The impact of Covid-19 on individual physical health behaviours is reducing over time, although more than a third are saying that they still can't exercise as much.

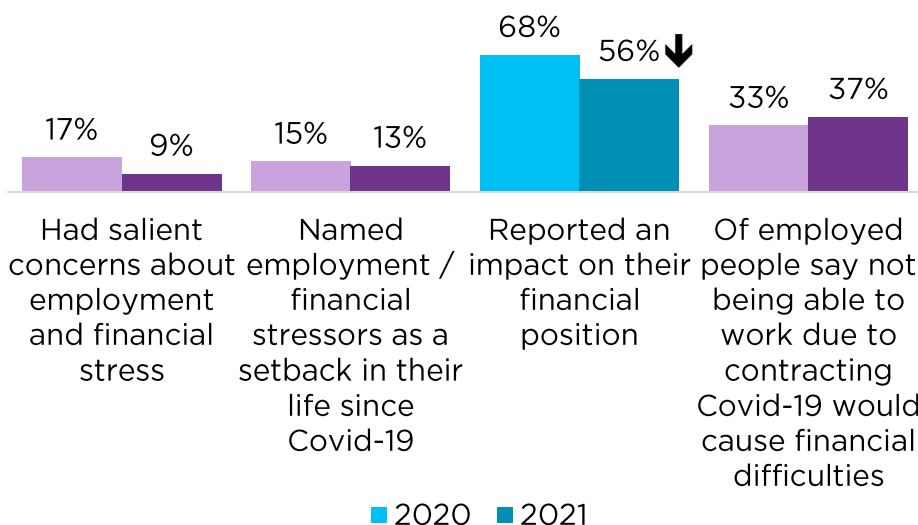
Impacts on physical health



FINANCIAL VULNERABILITY



Financial Difficulties



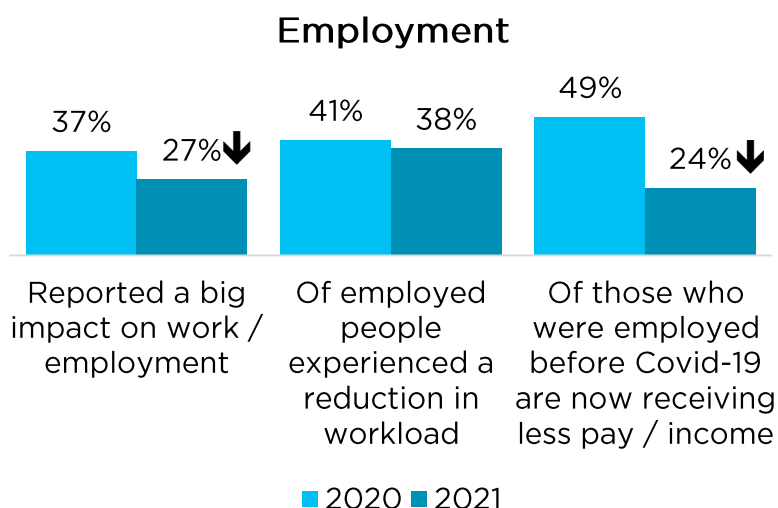
The impact of Covid-19 on financial position has declined slightly in the last year, although over half still experience an impact.

19% said they were on jobseeker or jobkeeper (23% in 2020). The removal of these supports has resulted in a reduction in wages for some people, with impacts such as not being able to pay bills or housing, and business closures.



The proportion of the population experiencing a big Covid-19 impact on work and employment has reduced when compared to 2020, with fewer receiving less pay.

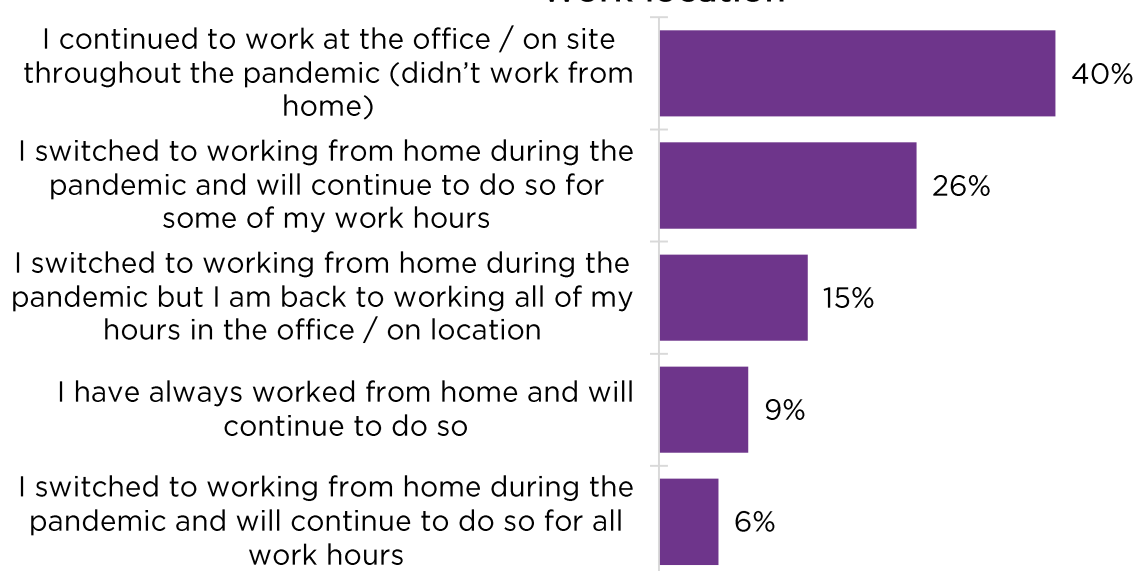
Whilst the proportion experiencing a reduction in workload hasn't changed, more have experienced an increase (31%, compared to 16% in 2020).



A new question was added in 2020 to understand how working environments have changed, and the rate of return to pre-Covid-19 work conditions. From the findings it is evident that:

- Almost half of workers switched to working from home during the pandemic, and most of these have returned to on-site working for at least part of their working week.
- Those with a hybrid work model are mostly working more than half their time at home (65%), with 38% working 50-69% of their time at home.

Work location



The proportion expecting to continue to work from home in the future fell to 13%, from 20% in 2020.

Of those who run a business (n=66), 12% said they have more staff than before Covid-19, whereas 14% said they have fewer. Most stated no change to staffing levels (68%).

SAFETY

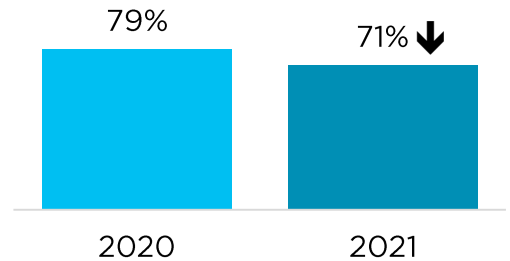


There has only been a minor reduction in the proportion of the community who report an impact of Covid-19 on their feeling of safety.

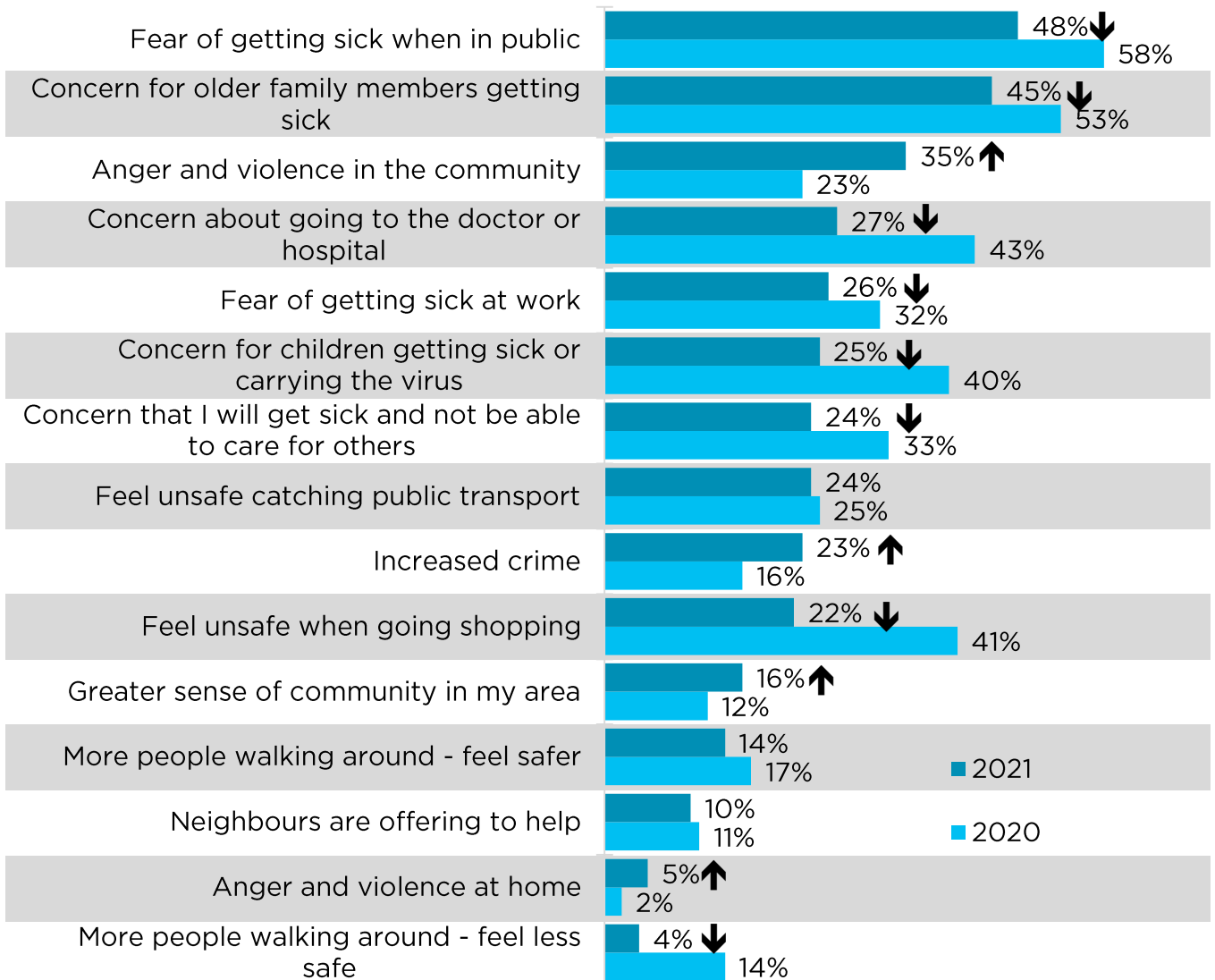
These perceptions of safety do seem to be shifting, however, away from fear of getting sick in public, and more so towards anger and violence in the community and crime.

Twice as many people mentioned anger and violence at home (family violence measure) in 2021 than in 2020.

Impact on safety



Impacts on perceptions of safety

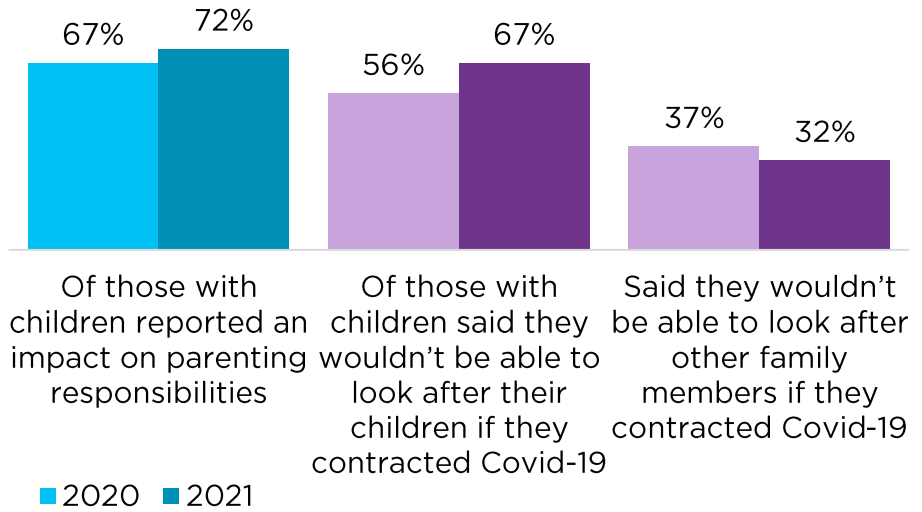


PARENTING AND CAREGIVING



Parenting and Carer Responsibilities

Covid-19 continues to place a significant burden on parents, with no easing of this impact when compared to this time last year.



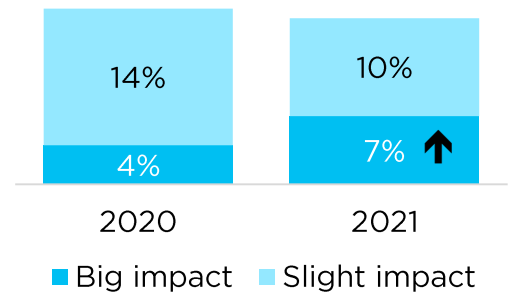
HOUSING



The overall proportion of the population experiencing impacts to their housing remains constant, although the percentage experiencing a big impact has almost doubled.

The main big impact is not being able to afford maintenance and repairs (36% of those experiencing a big impact).

Impact on Housing



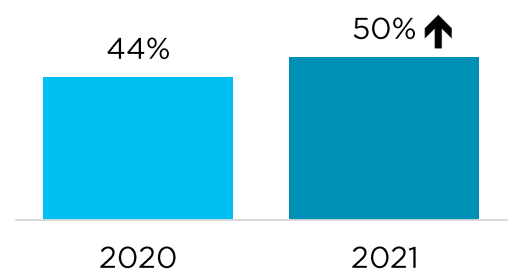
TRANSPORT



The proportion of the population experiencing an impact on transport is slightly higher in 2021 when compared to 2020.

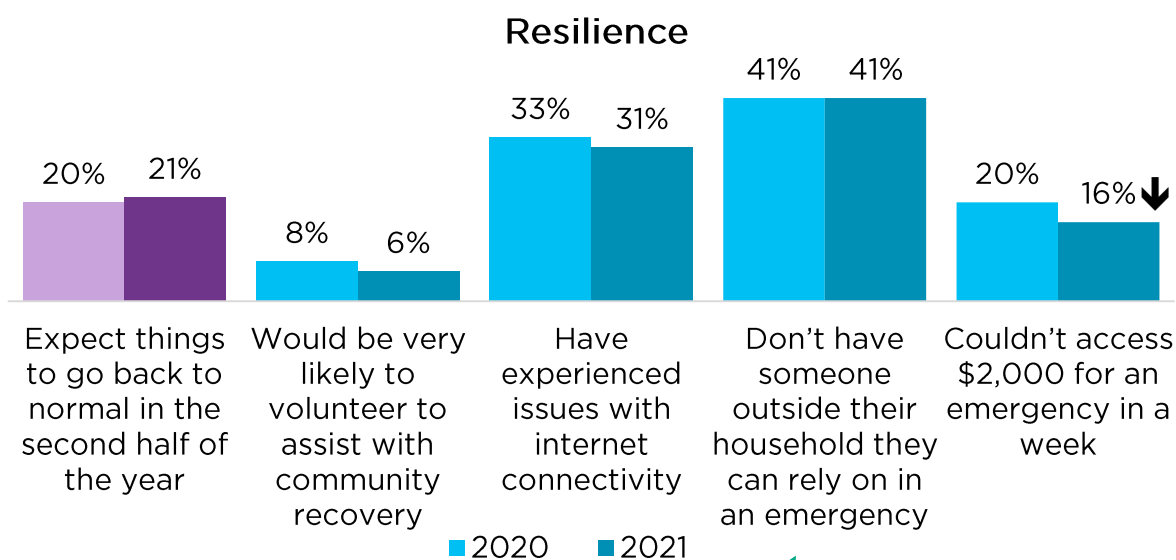
A follow-up question about transport impacts wasn't included in 2021, however based on other responses throughout the survey, it is likely this increase is due to travel restrictions (distance caps) and not being able to plan to travel for fear of not being able to return due to lockdowns.

Impact on Transport





There have been no changes in most resilience measures when comparing current data to that recorded a year ago. Although, there has been a slight decline in the proportion who couldn't access \$2,000 in a week in an emergency.



In the 2017 Victorian Population Health survey 7% of respondents said that they don't have someone outside of their household they can rely on in an emergency, compared to 41% in the Covid-19 surveys. This data isn't directly comparable as it employs a different methodology, however it is a notable difference beyond what one would expect from methodology variations (the question wording was the same). It may be that the context of the survey (relying on others during a pandemic) may be different to normal times and therefore influencing how respondents interpret the question.

VACCINATIONS

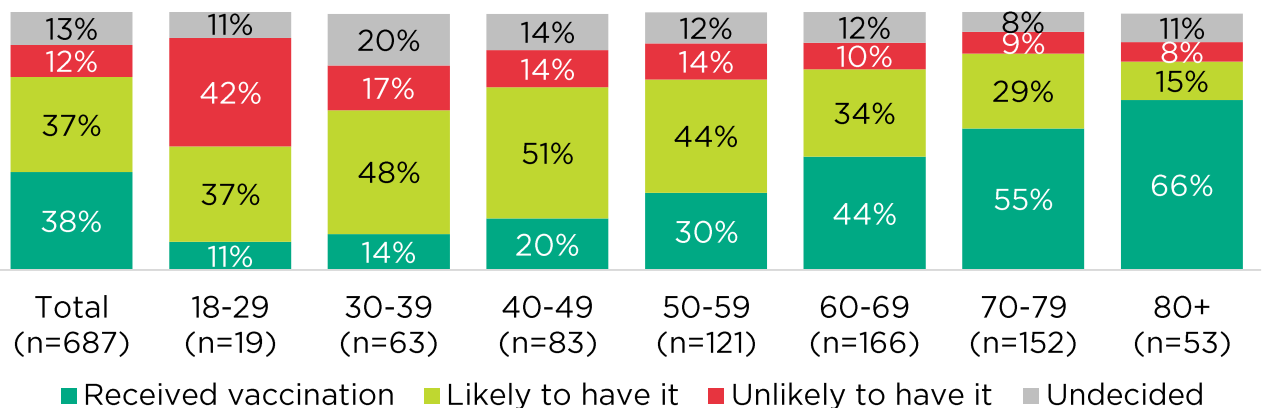


In the initial concerns question, vaccines featured prominently, with 11% mentioning the slow vaccine rollout, 4% mentioning vaccine hesitancy in the community, and 4% stating vaccine safety concerns.

Additional questions were included in 2021 to understand vaccine uptake and hesitancy, providing the following insights:

- Most of the community (75%) has either already received the vaccine (first or both doses) or intends to.
- Given the roll-out schedule focused on older adults, it is not surprising that coverage is higher amongst the older age groups.
- Around one in ten indicated they wouldn't be likely to have it, although this was mostly due to concerns about it being rushed; presumably they might be swayed further into the future, once their concerns about long-term side-effects can be addressed.

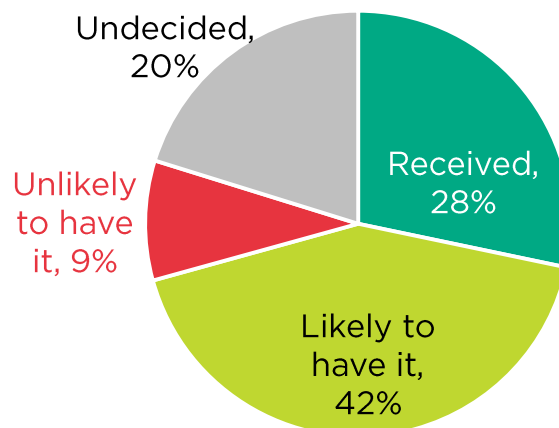
Vaccinations by age



Representative sample, unweighted

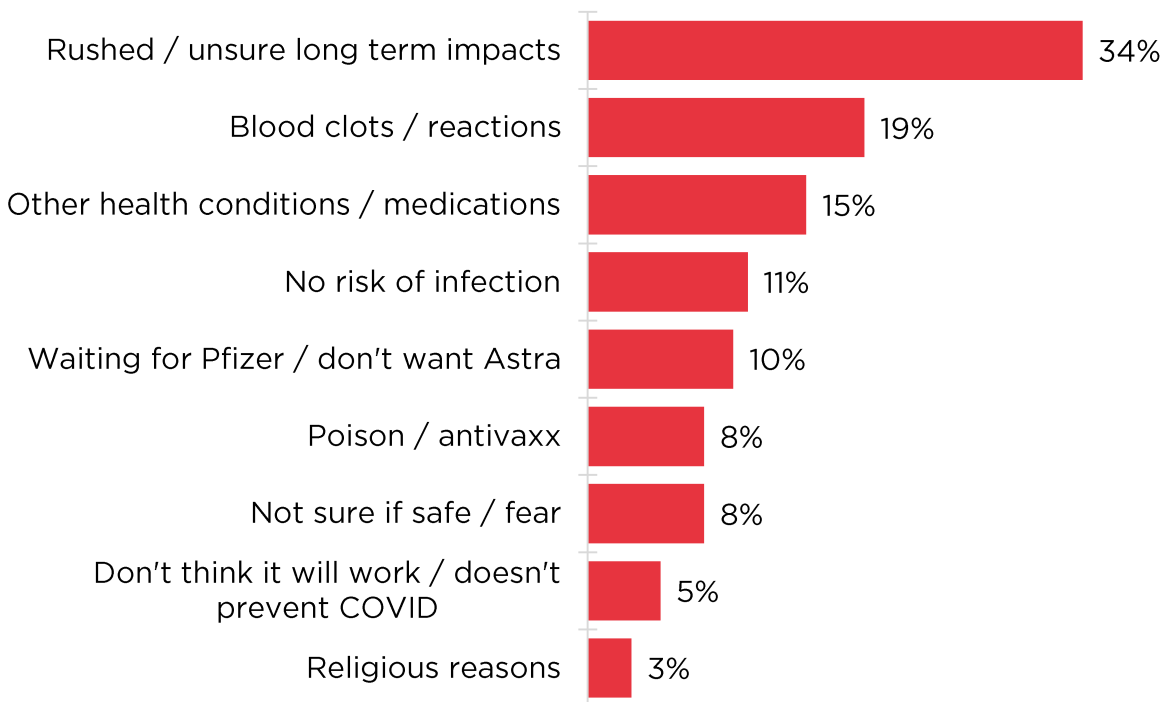
Language other than English (n=109)

Those who speak a language other than English show a high instance of being undecided (20%, compared to 10% English only speakers)



Vaccine hesitancy was mostly due to concerns about it being rushed; presumably they might be swayed further into the future, once their concerns about long-term side-effects can be addressed.

Reasons for being unlikely to have the vaccine (n=101)

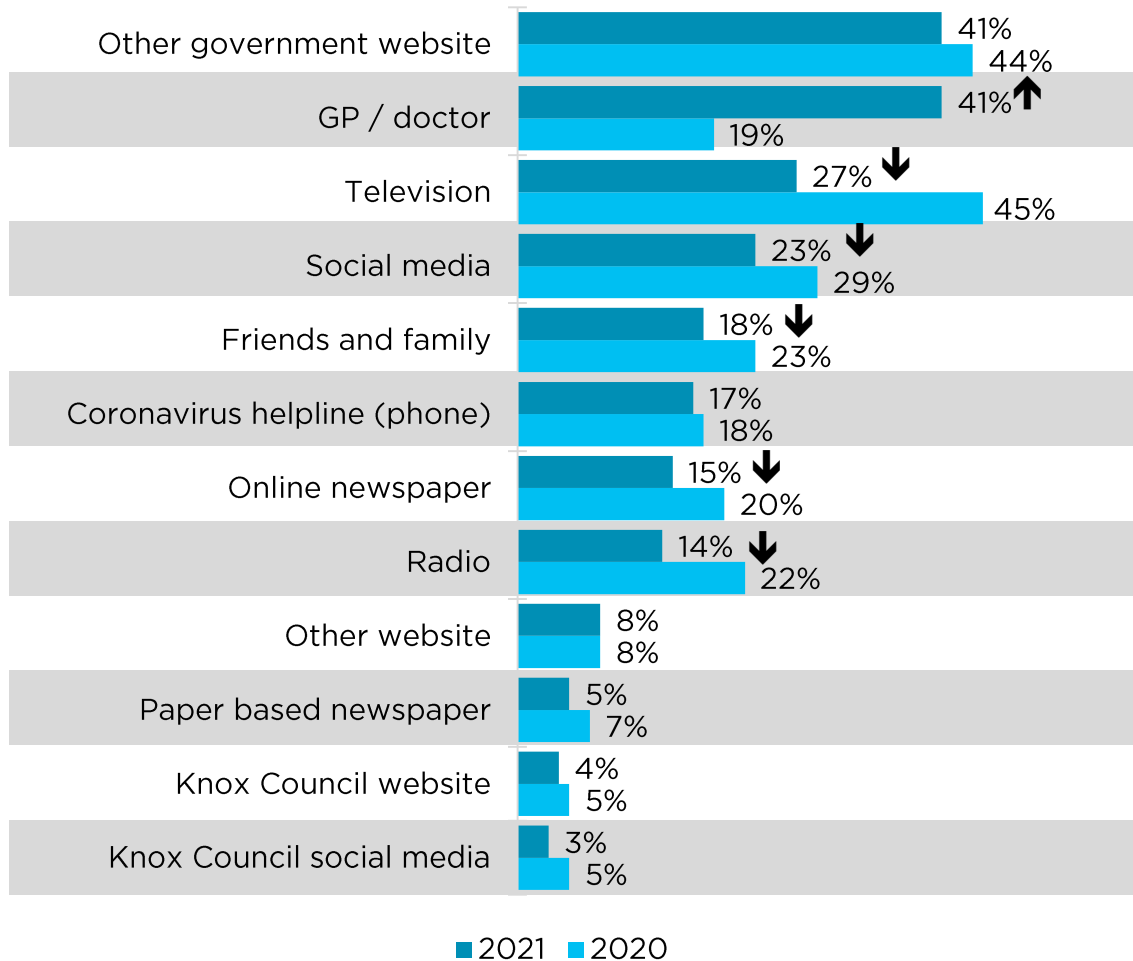


Concern that the vaccine was rushed is more prominent amongst young people (75% 19-29 year olds who are unlikely).



There has been a clear decline in relying on word of mouth or media sources for Coronavirus information. Instead there has been a shift towards seeking out information from medical professionals. This is likely due to the changing nature of information being sought towards vaccine information.

Sources people use for Coronavirus information



COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS DURING SURVEY

The first wave of surveying occurred in July to August 2020, whilst restrictions required mandatory face masks, only leaving the house for 4 reasons (shopping for food, outdoor exercise, medical care and study or work if it can't be done from home), and no visitors or public gatherings.

Since then, the Greater Melbourne region has gone through a prolonged stage 4 lockdown (with curfews and travel distance limits), followed by a period in early 2021 of no cases, and brief lockdowns to control small outbreaks.

This second wave of surveying occurred between 20 May to 6 July 2021. During this period the following restrictions were in place for metropolitan Melbourne:

- 25-27 May – 5 visitors in-home per day, public gathering limit of 30 people, face masks indoors, on-site work permitted, density limits for workplaces.
- 27 May – 3 June – stay at home except for 5 reasons (food shopping, authorised work, care, exercising up to 2 hours within 5km of home, vaccination), masks outside the home, no gatherings (public or private), school closures, and essential services only open.
- 3-10 June – Travel increased to 10km, Schools open for years 11-12, and mandatory QR check-in at retail.
- 10-17 June – Removed restriction on reasons to leave the home, schools open, eateries open with limits, outdoor gatherings of 10 people, facemasks indoors (outdoors not needed), and travel limit extended to 25km.
- 17-24 June – Removal of 25km travel limit, 2 visitors a day permitted in home, public gatherings outside of 20 people.
- 24 June onwards – 15 private visitors a day allowed in-home, 50 people can gather outside, increases in capacity limits for workplaces.

The requirement for masks indoors wasn't removed until 8 July (after the end of fieldwork period).

QUESTIONNAIRE ALTERATIONS

The full questionnaire script can be found in the appendix of the 2020 survey report.

The following alterations were made in the 2021 wave of surveying.

- Q1a wording altered from **If there have been any changes due to Coronavirus that have resulted in setbacks and/or improvements in your life, please tell us about them below to What do you think are likely to be the long term changes to your life as a result of the coronavirus pandemic?**
- Removal of question asking about transport impacts (K2).
- In 2011 the employment question (Q11) was separated into 3 sections: before, Covid-19 during Covid-19, and now.
- Q12 was revised in 2021 from **As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, has your number of working hours / workload...?** to **During the Coronavirus lockdown in 2020, did your number of working hours / workload...?**
- K3 was revised in 2021 from **Has your pay/wage changed?** to **How does your current wage compare to how much you were being paid before the Coronavirus pandemic?**
- New question added in 2021:
Which of the following best describes your work location?
I have always worked from home and will continue to do so
I switched to working from home during the pandemic and will continue to do so for all work hours
I switched to working from home during the pandemic and will continue to do so for some of my work hours [IF YES] Please specify % of work hours from home
I switched to working from home during the pandemic but I am back to working all of my hours in the office / on location
I continued to work at the office / on site throughout the pandemic (didn't work from home)
Other (specify)
Don't know
- New question added in 2021:
How do your staffing levels now compare to before the Coronavirus pandemic?
More staff now
No change
Fewer staff now
Something else (specify)

QUESTIONNAIRE ALTERATIONS

- Removed Q16 in 2021.
- K5 added row for Emergency food relief through a local organisation and then a follow-up question for those who answered yes: **Have you accessed / used emergency food relief in the last month?**
- New question added in 2021 for those who said they received jobseeker or jobkeeper:
What impact has the reduction of JobSeeker / JobKeeper ending had on you? (open ended)
- Q17, added an option for 'I received the vaccine'
- New question added in 2021 for those who hadn't received the vaccine:
How likely are you to have the Coronavirus vaccine?
Very likely
Quite likely
Neither likely nor unlikely
Quite unlikely
Very unlikely
Those who said unlikely were asked to type in why.
- Removed K7, Q26, K14 and K15.