

What young Tasmanians have to say about COVID-19...

Introduction

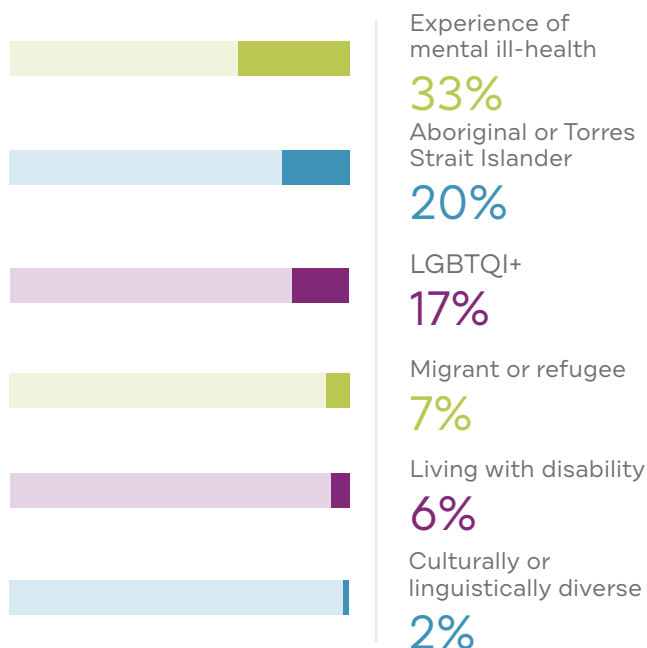
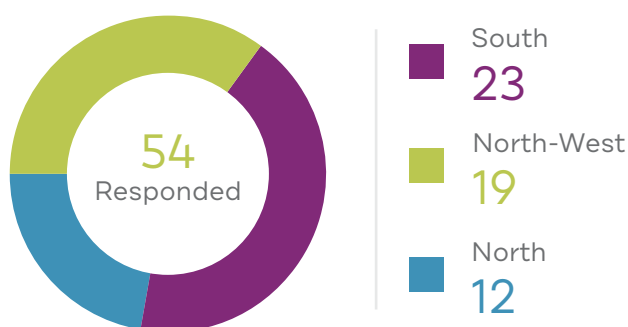
The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) asked young Tasmanians aged 12-25 years to have their say about COVID-19, the good and the bad, to hear how they are being impacted by this global pandemic. The survey was open from 15 April to 5 May 2020.

Key findings

- Young people are very concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their mental health, including exacerbating existing conditions and increasing feelings of worry, anxiety, and loneliness.
- Young people are confused, receiving mixed messaging, or simply want clearer directions to understand what they can and can't do, and where they can find help.
- Young people aged 18-25 years expressed great concern for the long-term social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and are very aware that they will bear the future financial responsibility of decisions made by government today.
- Young people are looking to government for strong leadership and clear communication. Many are very proud of the government's response to COVID-19 so far.
- Some of the concerns young people expressed, or gaps they identified, have been addressed by government or community. However, information has not filtered down to young people. Young people are not receiving accurate, consistent or timely messaging in a way that they can access.

Who responded?

54 young Tasmanians aged 12-25 years responded to the survey, statewide.



What is the biggest impact of COVID-19?

Key issues identified by survey respondents



Feeling isolated

Young people reported feeling isolated from their friends and family and miss visiting people such as their grandparents. They stated that they were complying with social distancing and public health measures, but to the detriment of accessing essential services. Young people reported barriers to accessing services including parental, health, cultural and social support services.

"Not seeing my close family or friends and not being able to continue to have my mental health support due to self isolation." Female, 13

Education

Many young people reported struggling with online learning and felt less productive at home due to distractions or limited technology to complete their studies. Some have had significant disruptions to their studies and practical placements and felt highly anxious regarding the uncertainty of what the future impacts would be.

"My TAFE course being moved to fully online and an expectation to study fully from home. I don't work well at home and as a result my motivation has plummeted." Male, 23

Employment

Young people stated that they are significantly impacted by job losses directly and indirectly. Those who are studying are feeling greater financial stress due to loss of hours or having their support person lose work. They are also worried about the length of time it will take them to find another job following the pandemic, particularly for those beginning their careers.

"My boyfriend getting let off work is making money really hard at the moment." Female, 22

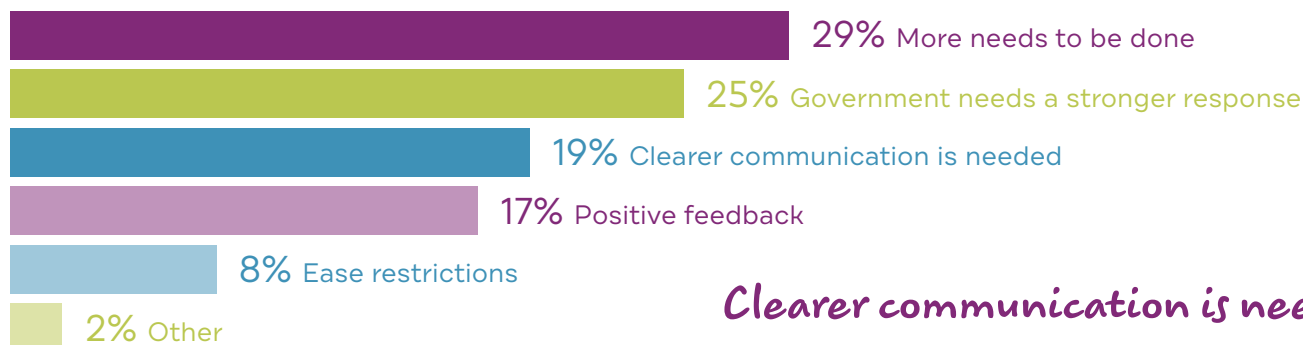
Mental health

In addition to the psychological distress they are experiencing, many reported that their existing mental health conditions are being exacerbated. Young people are unsure if they can access services and are generally struggling without the face-to-face support they would normally receive professionally and socially.

"The biggest impact has been the quarantining and being with my family 24/7. Not being able to get out and be away from each other has given me cabin fever, and has really affected my mental health." Female, 22

If you could tell the Government one thing...

Key issues identified by survey respondents



More needs to be done

Many young people stated that they wanted more to be done to ensure that all vulnerable people are supported, and that support is not removed prematurely. Young people want greater assistance for vulnerable people, including young carers, young people with a disability and young migrants. Young people also said that they wanted to see a permanent increase of Centrelink payments to support the 'older' young people who will struggle to find work following the pandemic.

"You have raised JobSeeker and other payments by \$550, which will lift millions out of poverty after April 27. Will you keep it as a permanent change?" Male, 23

Government needs a stronger response

Young people stated they were complying with government public health measures and were angry that young people were being perceived as not taking the issue seriously. They want government to be firmer with the community to ensure people follow the rules to keep everyone safe.

"They need to do more! There's still people shopping and been ignorant and this is making it go on longer which is affecting so many parts of people's lives, especially their mental health." Female, 21

Clearer communication is needed

Most young people surveyed asked questions such as: "When will this end? Can I visit a friend? When can I see my nan? What is the plan?"; and stated that they found the messaging confusing. Young people are not receiving relevant information in a clear and timely manner which is accessible to them.

"...I just wish that they could remove ambiguity and be more specific on what we can do and close down places that they don't consider essential so there can't be any confusion." Female, 22

Positive feedback

Many young people had positive feedback for government. They thanked the government for working to keep the Tasmanian community safe during these hard times. While they thought that more work needed to be done, they acknowledged that they would not want to make the hard, challenging and complex decisions that government has had to make.

"Despite it being really difficult for young people during isolation I believe the government is doing a fantastic job at containing the virus and flattening the curve." Female, 14

Ease restrictions

A small portion of young people said that they want the government to ease restrictions as a priority. They feel isolated and have had significant disruptions to their daily lives. They want to be able to return to a level of 'normality' where they can have some general routines returned including sporting, recreational and social activities. Young people said that they want to visit their family who they are being isolated from, due to travel restrictions or changes to service operations.

"Closing beaches to locals is not necessary." Male, 15

What is a positive experience because of COVID-19?

Key issues identified by survey respondents



Social impacts

While young people are grappling with psychological distress due to physical isolation, they report that they are conversely benefiting socially. Young people said that they are reaching out to friends more often, using technology to stay connected and are talking more about their personal wellbeing and mental health. While many are finding challenges with spending more time at home, they are appreciating this experience as an opportunity to connect with their immediate family.

"Young people are spending more time at home with their loved ones than i assume they would have before. It's a time to be grateful for our families and loved ones." Female, 20

Other benefits

Some young people have embraced COVID-19 as a time for moving forward and believe that it has forced our community to become innovative and more resilient to adapt to challenging times. Receiving greater financial support and rental assistance was also held in high regard and appreciated. Some also stated benefits to their work/life balance as a result of loss of employment, but noted that this would not financially viable for much longer.

"The virus makes us young people think about how we treat each other because it could be anyone's last day at anytime." Female, 12

No positive experience

Sadly, there was a portion of those surveyed who could not find any benefit to COVID-19. These young people were worried by the impacts of physical isolation and whether a loved one could become sick. They were also significantly concerned about the long-term social and economic impacts of pandemic.

"We need help and real action. We need to make sure that young people don't pay for these solutions for the rest of our lives. I'm worried about the future." Female, 24

Recreational

A small portion of young people said they have used this as an opportunity to learn new skills and find ways to stay relaxed at home. They were happy to have more time to spend recreationally at home and were focusing their attentions on cooking, exercise and gaming to stay distracted.

"People are being more creative, through cooking, art and so much more. It's awesome!" Male, 23