

# The Tasmania Project

Share your experience during COVID-19.

Photo: Tourism Tasmania and Chris Crerar.

## ‘A different Tasmania’: Hopes and concerns about the post-pandemic future

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Findings from The Tasmania Project show that while Tasmanians are adjusting to life during COVID-19, there are hopes for how a ‘new Tasmania’ might emerge from the pandemic.

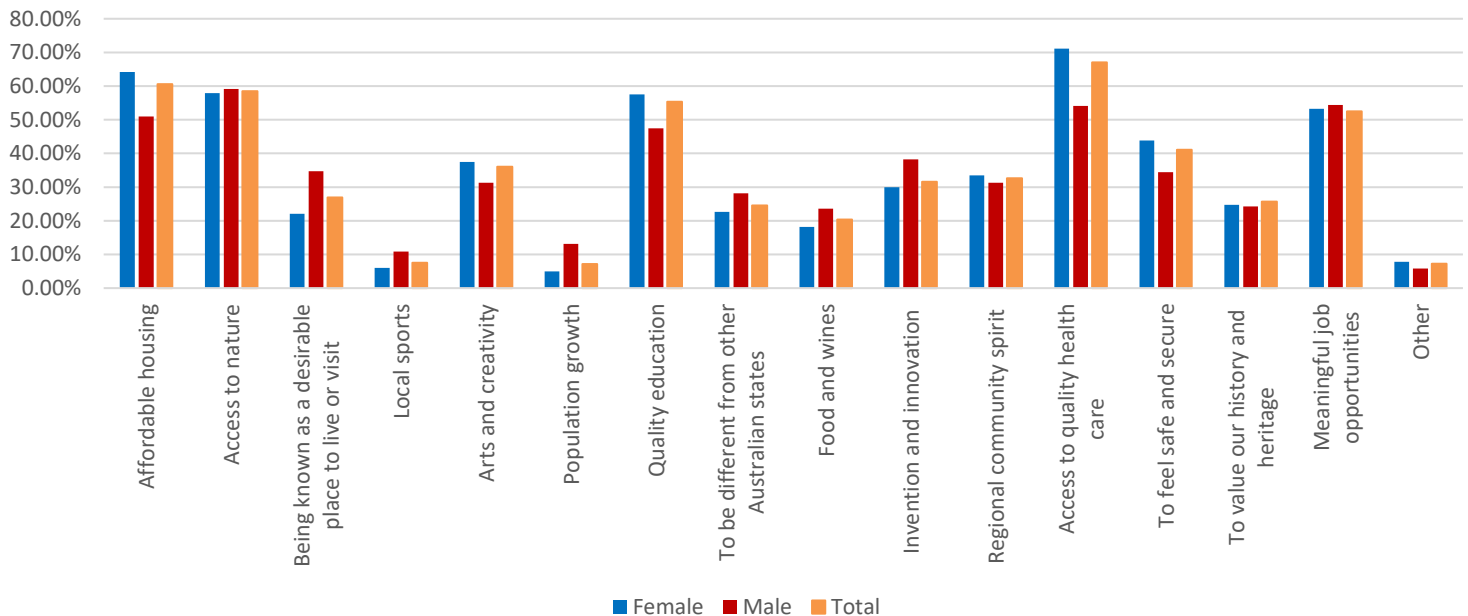
### Key findings

- Most respondents from the survey agreed they were adjusting to life during the pandemic and enjoying the slower pace of life.
- A majority also agreed that the wellbeing of people and the community was more important than their way of life.
- For survey respondents, top future priorities related to strong and affordable health, education and housing sectors.
- For the future, respondents wanted a different Tasmania to emerge.
- Interviewees’ hopes for this ‘different Tasmania’ included taking better care of the environment, being more empathetic to others, and more flexible work arrangements.

### Adjusting to life during COVID-19

While COVID-19 is undoubtedly presenting challenges for Tasmanians, the pandemic also offers opportunities for considering what we value about living in the state. Most survey respondents indicated they were adjusting to the new way of living in the pandemic (68%; agreement was higher for females aged 45 and above, but lower for single parents).

Most also agreed they were enjoying the slower pace of life due to pandemic restrictions (60%; females were more likely to agree, alongside the 25-44-year age group). While less than half agreed this new way of life was becoming easier the longer the pandemic lasted (48%), a higher proportion of females aged 18-24 years agreed (77%).



What respondents want for the future in Tasmania, percentage. The Tasmania Project

## Healthcare, housing and education

In general, participants disagreed that they were angry their way of life has been disrupted (71%), with females and older age groups less likely to be angry than males and younger age groups.

Further, a majority of survey respondents agreed that the crisis has shown us new ways of living well (83%), particularly females aged 25-44 years (89%) and those who live alone (89%).

This sentiment was also common amongst interviewees. Participants spoke of the “the breather that perhaps we needed” and society being able to ‘take a break’. Another participant described the pandemic as a ‘push’ toward where Australian society was already headed, with growing disillusionment surrounding the dominance of large corporations such as supermarkets. Other interviewees noted that the pandemic and social distancing rules have highlighted what ‘really matters’, such as face-to-face communication, and kindness and empathy for others.

## The wellbeing of people and the community

Respondents agreed that the wellbeing of vulnerable people in Tasmania is more important than their way of life (86%; females aged 18-44 years had the highest level of agreement at 92%, while 75% males in the same age range agreed). This was echoed in many of the concerns voiced by interviewees. Several participants spoke of their worries about those in precarious or dangerous living situations, while other interviewees described their concerns about elderly or isolated family members (you can read more about this in Report Number 11).

Interestingly, one elderly participant noted that he was more concerned for younger Tasmanians, as he felt he had already lived a full life. Other participants noted that the pandemic offers an opportunity for greater community connection, with one interviewee describing it as a “revolution in local community”.

Survey respondents were asked what they wanted most for Tasmania’s future. Continuing this theme of concern for others, most top responses related to the wellbeing of people and the community. Access to health care was the most common response, with 67% of all respondents selecting this, and females (71% compared with 54% of males), and older age groups (73% of 65 years and above compared with 61.3% of 25-44 years) most likely to choose this.

Younger respondents were more concerned about affordable housing (82% of 18-24-year olds compared with 61% of all respondents). Affordable housing was also a higher priority for respondents from the South (64%), compared with North (56%) and North-West and West (52%). Respondents living in other households (including group households) also prioritised affordable housing (71%), compared with couples with children (53%).

Quality education was also a top priority (55%), particularly for couples with kids (62%) and single parents (65%). Access to job opportunities in the future (53%) was significant for younger people (82% of aged 18-24 years) and respondents from the North (59%). Interviewees expressed concerns about Tasmania and Australia’s economic future, including for those working in precarious areas such as tourism and small businesses.

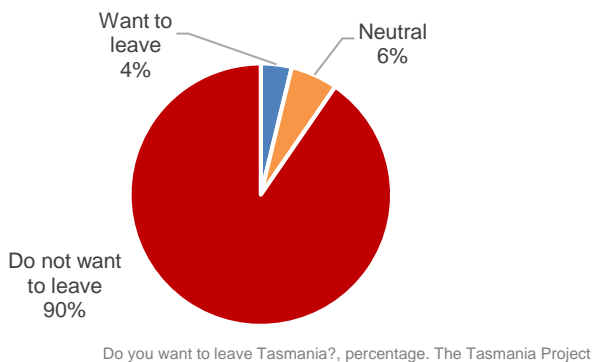
## Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic

A majority of respondents agreed they wanted a different Tasmania to emerge from this crisis (72%), with females aged 25-44 years most likely to agree, as well as respondents from the South (75%). The idea that the pandemic offers potential for new ways of living was very common in interviews. Several participants noted that the pandemic has had positive effects on the environment (such as less pollution) and highlighted their hopes that society will adopt more sustainable practices post-COVID-19. Some interviewees questioned neoliberalism and consumerist practices, describing the pandemic as an ‘opportunity’ for people to relate to one another with empathy, and to cultivate gratitude for what is positive about life. One participant noted that he is anxious about the future, due to his concern that this opportunity might be wasted.



Photo: Leah Kelley, Pexels

While a clear majority of respondents indicated they wanted to remain in Tasmania (only 4% of respondents agreed that wanted to leave Tasmania; 3% from the South, 6% from North, and 4% from North West and West), around half were not confident that the Tasmanian economy would fully recover from this crisis within five years. This concern was similar between males (51%) and females (49%) but more significant for younger people (81% of 18-24 years compared with only 46% of aged 45-64 years), and single parents (61%). While most agreed that what they valued about living in Tasmania would continue to exist (87%; 93% of females aged 25-44 years agreed), however only some agreed that life will be better for most Tasmanians after this crisis (28%). Younger people were less likely to agree with this statement (12% of 18-24-year olds) compared with older respondents (31% of 45-64-year olds).



Interviewees also noted a number of practical changes they hope to see in the future. This included greater awareness of hygiene during flu season, and vigilance regarding future pandemics.

Other participants noted that the pandemic had provided 'proof' that more flexible work arrangements (such as working from home) are possible, while some noted services – such as online health appointments and delivery services – that they hope will remain in place post-COVID-19. Overall, there was a strong sense amongst interviewees that the pandemic offers potential not only for Tasmanians to be grateful for what they have, but for a 'different Tasmania' to emerge.

## Where next?

As participants have noted, the pandemic provides a unique opportunity to reflect upon what Tasmanians value about life in the state, and what they hope for the future. We will be exploring these ideas in future TTP surveys, as we aim to better understand what life might look like as COVID-19 restrictions lift. As we move into the recovery phase, it is important for us to consider what changes Tasmanians would most like to see for post-pandemic life, and how we can build strong health, education and housing sectors to support our population.

We will also be exploring how the pandemic might shape the state's future through upcoming TTP interviews. How has COVID-19 shaped how Tasmanians assess or approach what is important in their own life, and how has it highlighted what we value about the Tasmanian community? The pandemic might also affect how people organise their working and social lives in the future. How might some Tasmanians negotiate working from home in the future? Are there services that have changed as a result of COVID-19 that Tasmanians would like to see continued after the pandemic? As the findings of the Tasmania Project highlight, the health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians is crucial to this post-pandemic vision.