

The Tasmania Project

Share your experience during COVID-19.

Photo: Laura Purcell.

Initial findings from the second general survey.

Report number: 19 | Date: 22 June 2020 | Author: Libby Lester

The Tasmania Project's second general survey closed on 17 June. More than 1500 Tasmanian residents aged 18 or over entered the survey, with 1258 completing all questions. Their responses form the sample for this report.

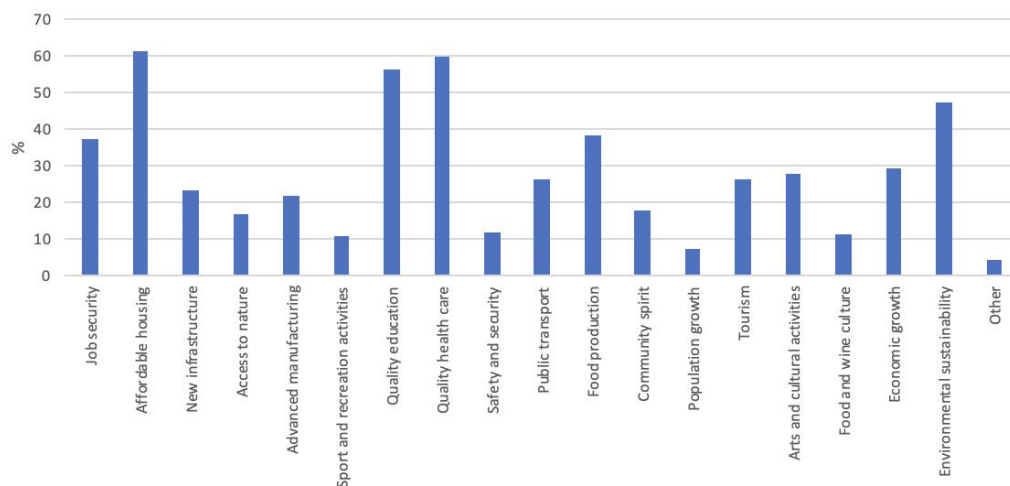
All local government areas of Tasmania are represented, with residents of Hobart, Kingborough, Launceston and Clarence forming 51 per cent of the total sample. Of our respondents, 61 per cent live in the south, 21 per cent in the north, and 18 per cent in the north-west and west. Respondents name 167 towns, suburbs or areas in which they live.

Of the 1258 respondents, 69 per cent are women and 30 per cent men, with 25 per cent in the 25-44 years age bracket, 49 per cent aged 45-64 and 24 per cent over 65 years. 2 per cent are aged 18-24. One quarter have a bachelor degree level education, 9 per cent have no post-school qualification, and 7 per cent have a doctorate. More than half are employed. Full details of the sample will be made available at the link below.

Key findings

- 11 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that 'The Tasmanian Government has been too slow to ease COVID-19 restrictions', with 71 per cent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.
- Between this and the first general survey, which closed on 10 May, there has been a slight decrease in the number of respondents who believe border restrictions should stay in place until COVID-19 is eradicated from Australia, down from 51 per cent to 45 per cent.
- 71 per cent strongly disagreed or disagreed with the assertion that 'Tasmania should reopen to tourism now'. Only 13 per cent agreed or strongly agreed.
- 25 per cent admit they do not always follow the physical distancing rules, up from 13 per cent in the first survey.
- 81 per cent of respondents believe future outbreaks of COVID-19 will be well managed.
- 85 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the assertion that the economy has been unnecessarily damaged.
- 5 per cent of all respondents said they had gambled less or much less during the close down, 5 per cent had gambled at about the same level, and 0.7 per cent had gambled more or much more.
- 37 per cent of respondents said that the experience of the pandemic had changed them as a person, and 33 per cent said it had changed their life priorities.
- 7 per cent have made early withdrawals of their superannuation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To improve life in Tasmania, which of the following do you think should be prioritised?



Official COVID-19 measures

In the first part of the survey, respondents were asked about how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements.

89 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that business and shops are generally complying with COVID-19 regulations, and 66 per cent said they were willing to provide personal information for contact tracing. 62 per cent said they felt comfortable telling people to comply with COVID-19 safe practices, with 16 per cent disagreeing.

Strong support continues for measures imposed by the Tasmanian Government, with 71 per cent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement that 'The Tasmanian Government has been too slow to ease COVID-19 restrictions', and only 11 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing. 45 per cent want the State's border restrictions to stay in place until COVID-19 is eradicated from Australia, down from 51 per cent in the first survey. However, 71 per cent strongly disagreed or disagreed with the assertion that 'Tasmania should reopen to tourism now'. Only 13 per cent agreed or strongly agreed.

There has been a decrease in the number of people finding the rules and regulations in relation to COVID-19 confusing, down from 36 per cent in the first general survey to 24 per cent in the latest. Most people (70 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the language used to explain COVID 19 has been too complex.

In terms of sources of information Tasmanians rely on for COVID-19 information, respondents mostly identified Premier Gutwein's media briefings (65 per cent), television news (57 per cent), the Tasmanian Government's coronavirus website (57 per cent), ABC radio (42 per cent) and the national Chief Medical Officer (29 per cent).

Source of information that were less relied on included mainstream newspapers (26 per cent), the workplace (25 per cent), social media/internet groups (25 per cent), the World Health Organization (22 per cent), the Prime Minister (20 per cent), local government (19 per cent), family, friends and colleagues (18 per cent), doctors or healthcare professionals (18 per cent), scientific literature (16 per cent), State Government advertising (15 per cent), commercial radio (8 per cent), information hotlines (7 per cent), printed leaflets (4 per cent), and community newspapers and radio (4 per cent).

The future in Tasmania

Respondents were more confident that the Tasmanian economy would fully recover in five years than they were in the first general survey, with 36 per cent, down from 50 per cent, not confident. 81 per cent believe that any future COVID-19 outbreaks will be managed well, and 11 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that Tasmania's economic future has been unnecessarily damaged.

In the first survey, 25 per cent agreed they were more concerned about the economic impacts than the health impacts. This dropped to 19 per cent in this survey.

In terms of supporting Tasmania's recovery, respondents identified the following industries/sectors for support by the State Government (when asked to select up to five): education and training (66 per cent), health care (65 per cent), tourism and hospitality (64 per cent), creative and cultural industries (45 per cent), agriculture, forestry and fishing (38 per cent), manufacturing (38 per cent), science research (35 per cent), construction (33 per cent), retail (26 per cent), energy (22 per cent), and police and emergency services (20 per cent).

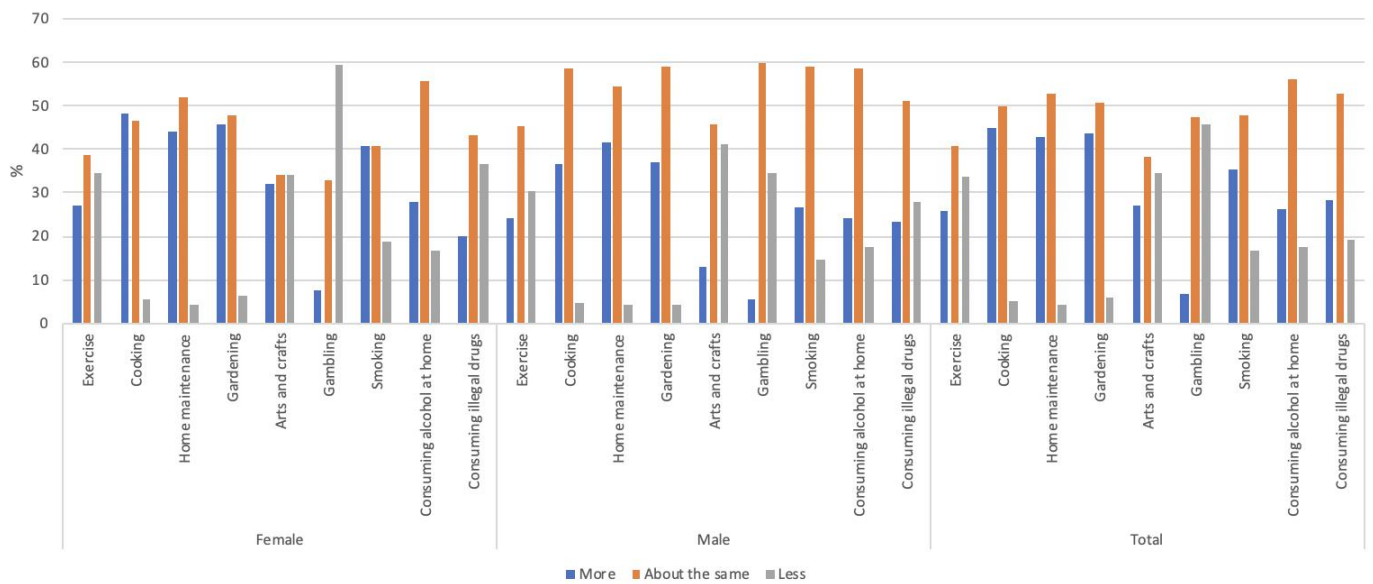
To improve life in Tasmania, respondents selected: affordable housing (61 per cent), quality healthcare (60 per cent), quality education (56 per cent), environmental sustainability (47 per cent), and job security (38 per cent). See figure 1 for a full list.

Wellbeing and concerns

Using a standard question, we found Tasmanians had generally been satisfied over the last week with their homes (89 per cent satisfied or very satisfied), life opportunities (76 per cent), financial situation (72 per cent), how safe they feel (89 per cent), feeling part of their local community (64 per cent), their health (75 per cent), the area where they live (81 per cent), their amount of free time (70 per cent) and their life, all things considered (84 per cent).

One-third considered themselves a 'vulnerable person' in terms of COVID-19, and 83 per cent would continue using telehealth and other online or telephone support services if still available if the future.

Level of participation in activities pre and during COVID-19



We asked Tasmanians to tell us that if they had participated in a range of activities prior to the pandemic, how their participation levels had changed over the past three months. With poker machines closed, 5 per cent said they had gambled less or much less, 5 per cent said they had gambled at the same level, and less than 1 per cent said they had gambled more or much more. Results are above in figure 2 as a total percentage and by gender of those who said they participated in activities prior to the pandemic.

To a series of statements, some of which were repeat questions from the first survey, we had the following responses: 62 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they were enjoying a slower pace of life, compared to 60 per cent in the first general survey; 25 per cent admitted to not always following social distancing rules, up from 13 per cent; and 82 per cent said they trusted government and health officials to provide reliable information about COVID-19, up from 75 per cent. 72 per cent of respondents said they were not going out as much as they used to despite restrictions easing; 21 per cent said they felt uncomfortable asking people to keep their physical distance; and 56 per cent said they felt safe in public or shared spaces.

In terms of testing, 3 per cent said they had not been tested because they did not want to be quarantined and 7 per cent they had not been tested because the 'test sounds unpleasant'.

Interestingly, 37 per cent of respondents said that the experience of the pandemic had changed them as a person, and 33 per cent said it had changed their life priorities.

Arts, culture and creativity

We asked Tasmanian residents a series of questions about how they value and engage with arts, culture and creativity, both in terms of participation in events and being creative themselves. 65 per cent said that cultural and arts activities and events had been important to some extent to maintaining their overall wellbeing during the pandemic, while 80 per cent described being creative as important to maintaining their wellbeing.

A large proportion of our sample reported having participated in a range of cultural events and activities in the 12 months prior to the pandemic hitting, including attending art exhibitions and galleries (84 per cent), museums (84 per cent), cultural festivals (86 per cent), and live music (70 per cent). Only 34 per cent had continued this engagement via online or broadcast media during the pandemic.

Work and employment

Respondents again reported a decrease in the number of hours they were working since the declaration in Tasmania of a state of emergency on 19 March, with 26 per cent said they were working less paid hours. 62 per cent reported no change. 27 per cent said their job situation had changed because of the pandemic. 10 per cent were receiving JobKeeper payments, and 5 per cent JobSeeker.

A large number of respondents said that as a result of the pandemic, they wanted or needed their job situation to change to: work more flexible hours (27 per cent of total sample), spend less time at their workplace (36 per cent), change their job within the same occupation (8 per cent), change occupation (8 per cent), study or retrain for a different occupation (7 per cent), find an additional job (6 per cent), move to more secure employment (7 per cent), relocate to a different part of Tasmania (2 per cent), move away from Tasmania (3 per cent), work remotely for an employer outside Tasmania (3 per cent), set up their own business (5 per cent), or change how their business operates (6 per cent).

To the question, 'If your job allowed you to work from home during the pandemic, how would you like to do your work into the future?', 15 per cent responded they would prefer to work from home, 10 per cent said they did not want to work from home, and 49 per cent said they would prefer a combination.

Financial wellbeing

Due to COVID-19, respondents said they have been unable to pay: electricity, phone, water and gas bills (4 per cent), mortgage or rent (3 per cent), car registration or insurance (4 per cent), insurance (3 per cent), or minimum payment on credit cards (2 per cent).

In terms of financial responses to COVID-19, 6 per cent have reduced home loan or rent payments, 10 per cent have drawn on accumulated savings or term deposits, 2 per cent have increased the balance owing on credit cards by \$1000 or more, 2 per cent have entered into a loan agreement with family or friends, less than 1 per cent have taken out a personal loan, 3 per cent have sold household goods or jewellery, 1 per cent have sold shares, stocks or bonds, 2 per cent have sold other assets, and 7 per cent have made early withdrawals of their superannuation.

More detailed focused reports of the findings from this and other surveys, and of interviews, will continue to appear on The Tasmania Project website in coming days.