

The Tasmania Project

Share your experience during COVID-19.

Photo: Tourism Tasmania and Chris Crerar.

Tasmanians' health and wellbeing concerns in the time of the pandemic

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The Tasmania Project has found that while many Tasmanians are concerned about the prospect of themselves or someone they know being infected by COVID-19, the vast majority of survey respondents reported confidence in knowing how to respond to such a situation.

When it comes to accessing health services and supporting good mental health, responses were mixed. Some interviewees voiced concerns about delayed access to health services, or about the mental wellbeing of friends and family. Conversely, some participants reported that they have been satisfied with their access to health services during the pandemic. Throughout both survey and interview responses, it is clear that Tasmanians' concerns about health are not only for themselves, but also for family, friends, and vulnerable members of the community.

Key findings

- Survey respondents reported being concerned but knowledgeable about COVID-19 infection.
- Interview participants discussed their concerns about COVID-19 infection, for both themselves and others.
- Around one-third of interviewees discussed accessing health services – mostly non-related to COVID-19 – during the pandemic, reporting positive and negative experiences.
- Approximately one-third of interviewees spoke of mental health issues. This was often in relation to managing their own mental health, but some Tasmanians are also helping to support the mental health of friends and family.



Photo: Bongkarn Thanyakij, Pexels

Health and wellbeing

Survey respondents reported being concerned but knowledgeable about COVID-19 infection. 48% stated that they are concerned (38%) or very concerned (10%) about being infected themselves, while 69% of respondents reported being concerned (48%) or very concerned (21%) about someone they know being infected. Further, 86% agreed or strongly agreed that 'the wellbeing of vulnerable people in Tasmania is more important than my way of life'.

Around one-third of interviewees expressed concerns about COVID-19 infection for both themselves and others. One participant explained that social and economic consequences were acceptable to ensure that his vulnerable parents had the best chance of remaining healthy. Another participant voiced his concerns about friends who live with physical disabilities, questioning how such conditions might affect the level of care they would be able to receive in the case of hospitalisation.

Survey respondents were overwhelmingly confident about what to do in the case of infection. 96% agreed or strongly agreed that they are aware of the symptoms of COVID-19, and 92% agreed or strongly agreed that they know what to do if they or someone in their household displays symptoms. Further, 74% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'I believe I will be able to access adequate testing and medical care in relation to COVID-19'.

Around one-third of participants discussed accessing health services during the pandemic, mostly in reference to non-COVID-19 health issues. Responses included one participant's concern about their daughter being unable to access IVF, while other participants described a postponed surgery and cancer trial, and missing prenatal classes. Other described their satisfaction with the availability of telephone and online appointments. A few participants noted concerns about the adequacy of healthcare and COVID-19 testing in regional areas, while a small number of survey respondents (14%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I have not been able to access the health and support services I need'. This suggests that access to healthcare is of major concern to only a small proportion of Tasmanians.

Mental health

Approximately one-third of interviewees discussed mental health issues, usually in relation to managing their own mental health. Participants described various coping mechanisms, including journaling, drinking alcohol, smoking, exercise, and accessing professional support. 35% of survey respondents reported that they were concerned or very concerned about the impact of isolation on their mental health. One interviewee reported that she had recently contacted a mental health hotline, but unfortunately found the service to be unhelpful. She was also hesitant to contact friends for fear of being a burden upon them.

Continuing the theme of concern for others' health, several participants described 'checking in' to help support the mental health of friends, and reported worrying about isolated relatives. Similarly, most survey respondents stated that they were concerned or very concerned about how their family (67%) and friends (72%) were coping during the pandemic.

Where next?

The responses from survey participants suggest that many Tasmanians feel confident about accessing healthcare during the pandemic, for both issues related and unrelated to COVID-19. It is important for us to continue to investigate how some Tasmanians' access to health services might differ from this experience. Are some Tasmanians experiencing barriers in accessing adequate healthcare, and are there regions where these barriers are more pronounced? Conversely, what is working well for those Tasmanians who feel that they are able to access satisfactory healthcare?

Responses from both the survey and interviews suggest that the pandemic is impacting the mental health of some Tasmanians. We need to understand not only what support Tasmanians need in managing their own mental health, but also in supporting the mental health of others. This might include understanding both the capacities and limits of people's abilities to address others' mental health needs.

The Tasmania Project – approach, method and limitations

The Tasmania Project includes a range of approaches and methods to understand how Tasmanians are experiencing and adapting to life during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

See a more detailed explanation of the Project's approach and method [here](#).