

# The Tasmania Project

Share your experience during COVID-19.

Photo: Laura Purcell.

## How are those with a disability faring during the COVID-19 pandemic in Tasmania?

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Respondents from The Tasmania Project who identified as having a disability were more likely to be more concerned about being infected with COVID-19, the health impacts of the pandemic and were less satisfied than the general population with most aspects of their lives, particularly their health and financial situation.

### Key findings

- Respondents who identified as having a disability were more likely to support official COVID-19 measures such as border restrictions and physical distancing rules.
- Most were more concerned about the health impacts than the economic impacts of the pandemic. This is likely because most who identified as a person with a disability also considered themselves a vulnerable person in terms of the health impacts of COVID-19.
- Respondents with a disability indicated they were less satisfied with their health and wellbeing compared with the full sample.
- Although respondents with a disability were more likely to support COVID-19 safety measures and were more concerned about their health in relation to COVID-19, they were less comfortable telling people to comply with COVID-19 safe practices or asking people to keep their physical distance.

*The Tasmania Project*  
For details of the study's approach and methods, see [here](#).

### Demographics

In The Tasmania Project's second general survey (TTP2), respondents were asked if they identified as a person with a disability. 8.3% of the sample selected yes (n=104) and 2.8% indicated they were on a Disability Support Pension (DSP) (n=35).

74% of those who identified as having a disability also considered themselves to be a vulnerable person in terms of the health impacts of COVID-19. 33.7% were employed, 7.7% were unemployed, and 58.7% indicated other (including retired and student).

47% of those with a disability were in the 45-64 years age bracket, 27% were over 65 years, 24% were 25-44 years and 2% were 18-24 years. Most lived in a household as a couple with no children (38.8%), followed by a one-person household (25.2%), family with dependent (7.8%) and non-dependent children (7.8%), and other (14.6%; including shared/group households and one parent family). 74.0% owned their dwelling, 11.5% rented from a private landlord, 7.7% rented from public housing and 6.7% selected other (including living at home).

### Official COVID-19 measures

Most of those who identified as having a disability agreed they would feel comfortable telling people to comply with COVID-19 safe practices (55%), however this figure was lower than the full sample (63%).

A majority disagreed that the Tasmanian Government has been too slow to ease COVID-19 restrictions (85%) which was higher than the full sample (80%). A high proportion of respondents with a disability disagreed that Tasmania should re-open to tourism now (77%), and just under half agreed the rules and regulations in response to COVID-19 are confusing (41%).

Over half (57%) supported Tasmania's border restrictions remaining in place until COVID-19 is eradicated in Australia, while less than half of the full sample (45%) supported the restrictions. Respondents with a disability agreed they were willing to provide personal information for contact tracing (63%) and were more concerned about health impacts than the economic impacts (70%).

## Sources of information

Respondents were asked to select the top five sources that they rely on for COVID-19 information. For those who identified as having a disability, the top five answers were:

1. TV News (56%)
2. Premier Gutwein's media briefings (58%)
3. State government COVID-19 website (53%)
4. Social media/internet groups (35%)
5. ABC radio (33%) / Mainstream newspapers (33%)

## The future in Tasmania

Participants were asked to specify what industries should be prioritised by the State Government for Tasmania's recovery. The top five answers for respondents were identified as having a disability were:

1. Health care and social assistance (75%)
2. Education and training (67%)
3. Tourism and hospitality (58%)
4. Science research development (49%)
5. Cultural and creative industries (42%)

Participants were also asked to specify what they thought should be prioritised to improve life in Tasmania. For those who identified as having a disability, the top five answers were:

1. Quality health care (73%)
2. Affordable housing (69%)
3. Quality education (63%)
4. Environmental sustainability (53%)
5. Job security (40%)

## Wellbeing and concerns

Survey participants were asked a series of questions relating to their level of satisfaction in different areas of their lives. Across all areas (except for amount of free time), those who identified as having a disability were less satisfied than the overall sample, particularly in terms of their health and financial situation.

	% satisfied n=104	% satisfied full sample n=1124
<i>The home in which you live</i>	76	89
<i>Your life opportunities</i>	53	77
<b>Your financial situation</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>73</b>
<i>How safe you feel</i>	79	89
<i>Feeling part of local community</i>	45	63
<b>Your health</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>76</b>
<i>The area in which you live</i>	79	91
<i>The amount of free time you have</i>	77	70
<i>Your life, all things considered</i>	65	84



Photo: Burst from Pexels.

Respondents were asked, if it were an option, whether they would use a health or support service (GP, psychologist, etc.) via the internet or telephone in the future. 89% of respondents with a disability selected yes.

Just over half of respondents with a disability were concerned about being infected with COVID-19 (57% compared with 40% of the full sample). A majority agreed that the wellbeing of vulnerable people is more important than their way of life (90%). Respondents with a disability were more likely to follow physical distancing rules (76% compared with 64% of the full sample) and were not going out as much as they used to (76% compared with 73% of the full sample).

One third of participants with a disability were concerned about the pandemic impacting on their mental health, compared with only around one quarter of the full sample. Participants with a disability felt as though they had less control over their life choices (62% compared with 78% of the full sample).

Even though respondents with a disability were more likely to support COVID-19 safety measures and were more concerned about their health in relation to COVID-19, they were less comfortable asking people to practice physical distancing (54% compared with 58% of the full sample).

## Digital access

Respondents with a disability also experienced some barriers to digital access. Only 55% agreed that they had a fast enough Internet connection and 63% agreed that their Internet connection was reliable enough (compared with 73% and 75% of the full sample, respectively). Only 52% agreed they had access to the most up-to-date digital devices they needed (compared with 68% in the full sample).

## Where next?

The findings highlight that vulnerable groups, such as those who identify as having a disability, are disproportionately impacted by the negative effects of the pandemic.

In particular, those who identified as having a disability in TTP2 were more concerned about the health impacts of COVID-19, were more likely to follow and support COVID-19 safety measures, and less satisfied with their health and wellbeing overall, when compared to the full sample. This is likely because a large majority of those who identified as having a disability also indicated they were a vulnerable person in terms of the health impacts of COVID-19.

Despite being more concerned about their health during this time, respondents with a disability were less comfortable asking other people to follow COVID safe rules. Findings point to the need for extra support for vulnerable Tasmanians during the pandemic and into recovery.