

The Tasmania Project

Share your experience during COVID-19.

Photo: Laura Purcell.

Sources of Information about COVID-19.

Report number: 30 | Date: 17 July 2020 | Author: Libby Lester

The Tasmania Project's second general survey asked respondents to identify the sources on which they most relied for COVID-19 information. They were provided with a list of 20 potential sources, plus the option of 'other, please specify'. Respondents were asked to select up to five options.

Key findings

- Media briefings by the Premier, Peter Gutwein, were identified by almost two-thirds of the survey's 1258 respondents as a source of COVID-19 information on which they most relied.
- The State Government Coronavirus website (coronavirus.tas.gov.au) was the third most popular source, just behind television news, indicating the trust in State Government sources that was identified in our first general survey continues.
- Respondents from the North-West and West region more commonly relied on Premier Gutwein and Prime Minister Morrison for information than respondents from the South or North of the State.
- Almost half of respondents in the 18-25 years age group selected social media/internet groups, compared to more than one third in the 25-44 years range and one-fifth in the 45-64 years range.

Preferred sources

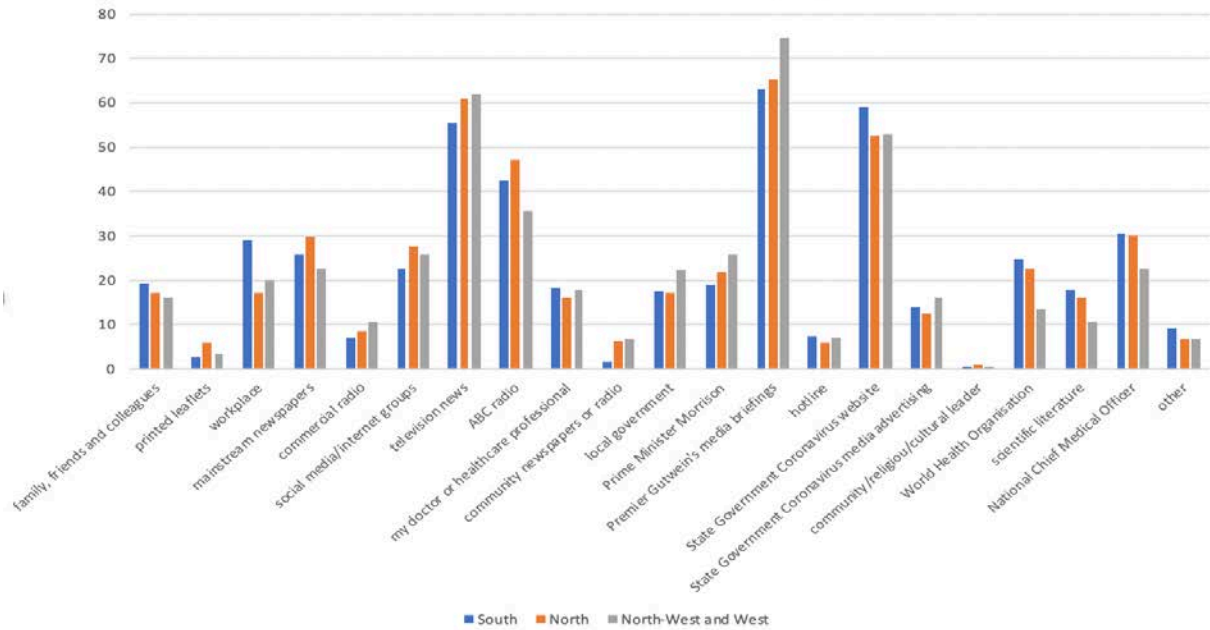
Overall, respondents' top five sources were Premier Gutwein's media briefings (65%), television news (57%), the Tasmanian Government's Coronavirus website (57%), ABC radio (42%) and the National Chief Medical Officer (29%).

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



A screenshot of the Premier of Tasmania Peter Gutwein's website

Sources on information on COVID-19 by region



While only 2% (n=24) of our total sample fell into the 18-24 years age bracket, it is worth noting the different responses we received between age groups on this question. This youngest group relied most heavily on the State Government Coronavirus website (71%), family, friends and colleagues (58%), television news (54%), and social media/internet groups and the workplace (both 46%). The next age bracket – 25-44 years – made up one quarter of our sample (n=268). This group's top five sources were the Premier's media briefings (65%), the State Government website (58%), television news (42%), social media/internet groups (36%) and the workplace (35%).

For respondents aged 45-64 years – almost half our sample at n=536 – the Premier's briefings (66%) were followed by the State Government website (65%), television news (58%), ABC radio (42%) and the National Chief Medical Officer (33%). For over 65's – almost one quarter of our sample (n=258) – the top five were television news (76%), the Premier's media briefings (67%), ABC radio (61%), the State Government's website (41%) and mainstream newspapers (46%).

Slightly more older respondents relied on their doctors or other healthcare professionals for COVID-19 information than younger people.

“There was little difference between age groups in terms of reliance on Prime Minister Morrison (20% in total)”

Education levels were not a significant factor in respondents' selections, except in relation to ABC radio (47% of respondents with university degrees selected this source compared to 29% of those who had finished formal education at high school), State Government media advertising (15% compared to 6%), the World Health Organization (27% compared to 13%) and scientific literature (21% compared to 8%).

The word cloud below is generated from the free-text responses from those who selected 'other, please specify' (8.4% or n=95), showing reliance on ABC health commentator Norman Swan, podcasts and the Guardian online news site among other sources.

Q5 Which of the following sources do you rely on for COVID-19 information? (please select up to 5)



Notable regional differences included the following: Printed leaflets were relied on most commonly in the North (6%, compared to 3.5% overall), commercial radio was more popular in the North-West and West (11% compared to 8% overall), community media were more important outside the South (2% compared to 6% in the North and 7% in the North-West and West), and local government was more relied on as a source of COVID-19 information in the North-West and West (22%) compared to 18% in the South and 17% in the North.

Considering oneself a 'vulnerable person' in relation to COVID-19 or living in a household with children were not significant factors in determining which sources of COVID-19 information respondents were most likely to turn to.

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

Where next?

The survey suggests age is more of a factor than education level, region of residence or vulnerability to the virus in determining which sources of COVID-19 information Tasmanians rely on overall. Nevertheless, differences are evident at these other levels, for example, regional differences on reliance on community media and printed leaflets. These can be critical sources of information for some local communities and individuals across the State during a crisis, and we will undertake further analysis of these findings in coming weeks.

The sample

The Tasmania Project's second general survey closed on 17 June 2020. More than 1500 Tasmanian residents aged 18 or over entered the survey, with 1258 forming the sample for this report after data cleaning removed incomplete answers.

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

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