

Living alongside COVID-19 survey

FINAL REPORT
19 August 2022



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Background

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, research has been undertaken via the YourSay Panel to understand community sentiment and behaviours to inform the public health response, recovery and associated messaging.

This latest round of research (Round 15) took place at the start of a third Omicron wave. The survey examined the community's use of face masks and take up of other COVID-smart behaviours, as well as attitudes to COVID testing and information needs going forward.

Methodological notes:

- All YourSay Panel members were invited to participate (n=6,016)
- The results have been weighted to reflect relative population proportions based on the ABS Census
- The methodology is biased towards those with internet and computer literacy
- In single choice questions, results may not add up to 100% due to rounding



How many?

2,024

Who?

Canberrans 16+

When?

8 – 18 July 2022

How long?

Avg. 6 mins

Key take outs

- On the whole, **Canberrans appear to be adjusting to living alongside COVID-19**, with many continuing to take steps themselves to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission while returning to everyday activities
- However, **Canberrans are yet to return to pre-pandemic lifestyle behaviours**. Many are participating in selected activities much less often including travel and public transport use; eating and drinking out; as well as attending fewer local events and activities
- Many **Canberrans have shifted to a 'new normal'** which involves working from home on a regular basis, shopping and accessing more services online, getting takeaway food, but also spending more time outdoors than before the pandemic
- Some raised concerns about their own mental and physical health. Typically, these **Canberrans reported feeling more worried and stressed than before the pandemic**, and are less focused on their own health and wellbeing

Doing less often



International travel



Domestic travel



Cafes, bars, restaurants



Local events and activities



Public transport



Local shops and services

Doing more often



Work from home



Online shopping & services



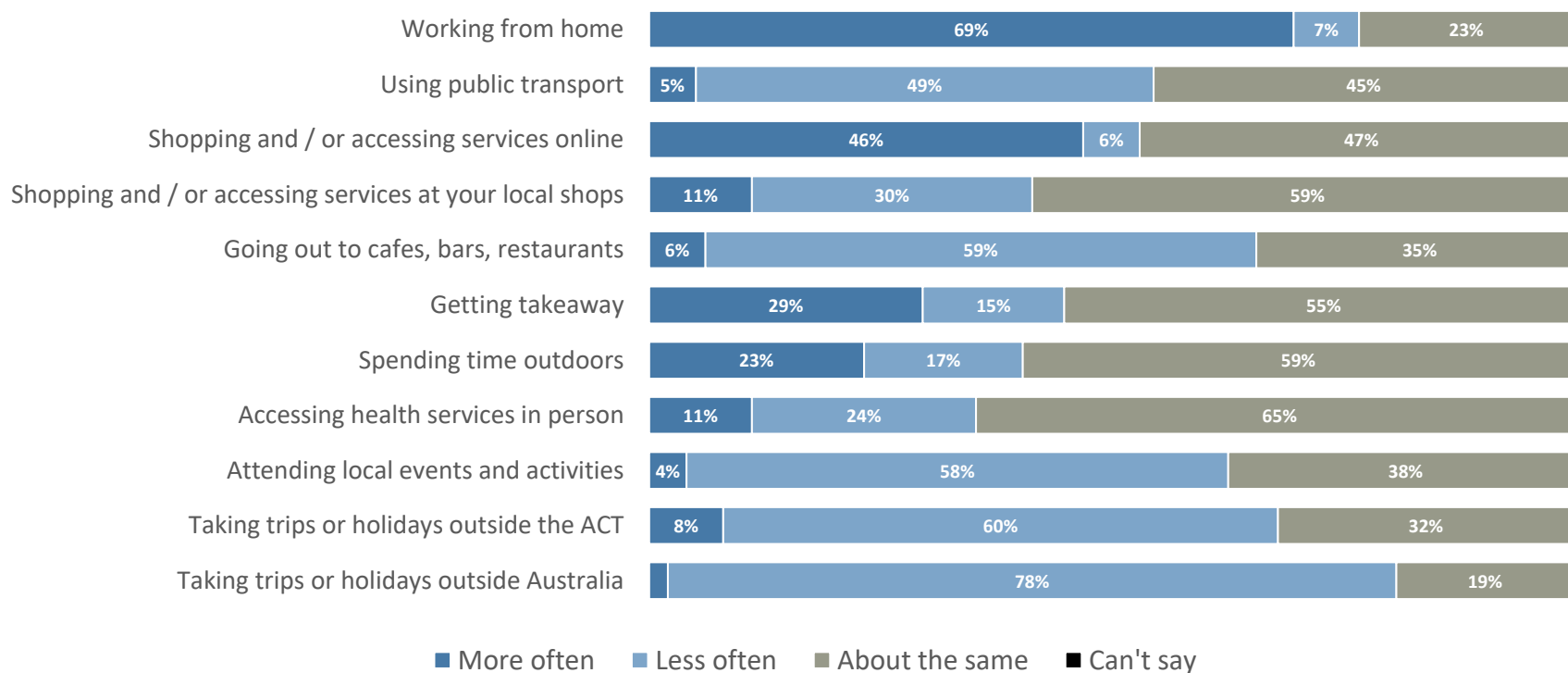
Getting takeaway



Spending time outdoors

Canberrans are leaving the home less often to eat out, shop, attend events, travel and use public transport

*Q. Compared to before the pandemic, are you doing the following things more or less often, or about the same?**





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Here is a selection of themes identified from the free text responses

Q. Is there anything else you are doing more or less of now than you were before the pandemic?

Reduced gym attendance and fitness activities

Visiting and hosting friends and family less in-person

Less community volunteering

Social events in open spaces preferred

Worrying more and less focused on my own health and wellbeing

Attending cinemas / shows less often and using streaming services and watching tv more often

More frequently sanitising hands, using masks and avoiding crowds

Leaving the house less often

COVID-smart behaviours



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Key take outs

- Reported **use of face masks remains high** with 66% 'always' or 'sometimes' wearing a mask in the past week. Use of face masks is highest amongst Canberrans aged 65+ years, with lowest use reported by the 25-34 years age group
- **Around three quarters are aware of ACT Health advice** on the use of face masks indoors. And those who are aware of the advice are almost twice as likely to 'always' wear a mask compared to those who are not aware
- Notably, 16% of respondents reported never wearing a face mask indoors in the past week even while aware of ACT Health advice
- **One third reported taking a COVID test in the past week**, with younger and middle aged Canberrans most likely to take a test
- And while nine in ten would take a COVID test if they develop cold or flu-like symptoms, **only 6% would be willing to pay for a PCR test**

Steps in past week

33%



TOOK A
COVID-19
TEST

66%



ALWAYS /
SOMETIMES
WORE A
MASK

Views on testing

Would take a COVID test if symptoms develop	91%
Would take a COVID test if exposed	86%
Confidence in being able to use a RAT	84%
Confidence in results from a RAT	42%
There's not much point in getting tested anymore	12%
Would be willing to pay for a PCR in future	6%

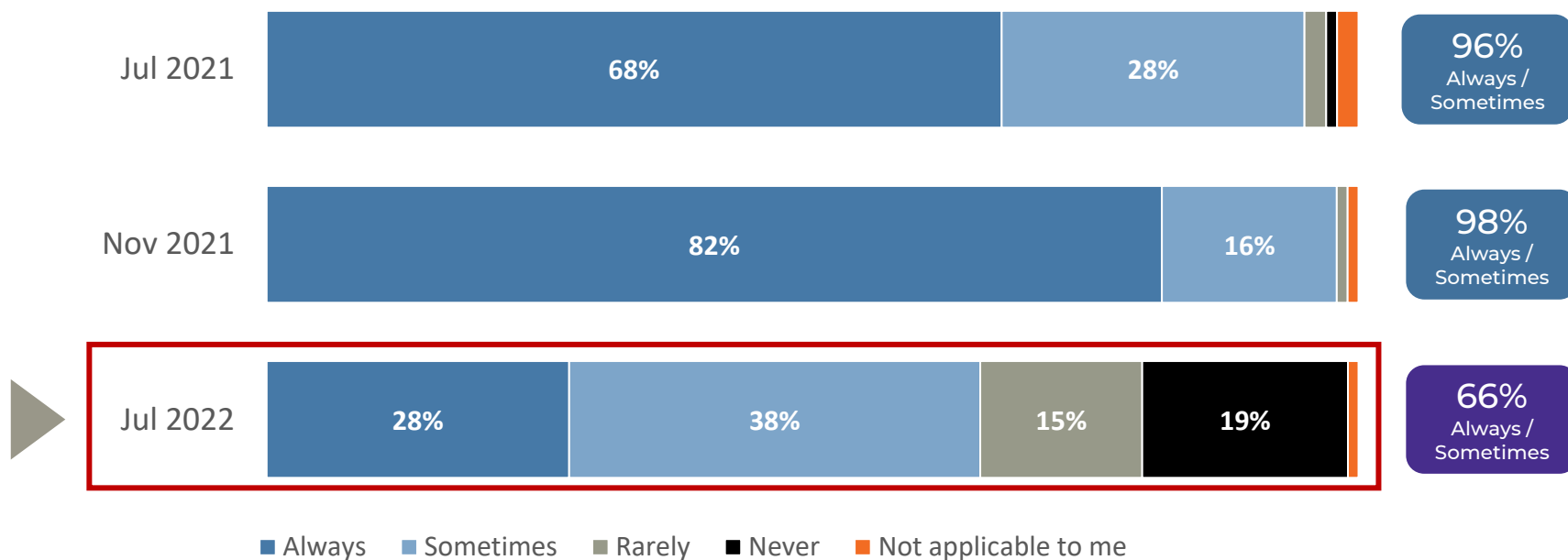


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Reported use of face masks indoors peaked during the first Omicron wave and has now dropped by one third

Q. How often in the past week have you worn a face mask when in indoor settings (excluding your own home)?



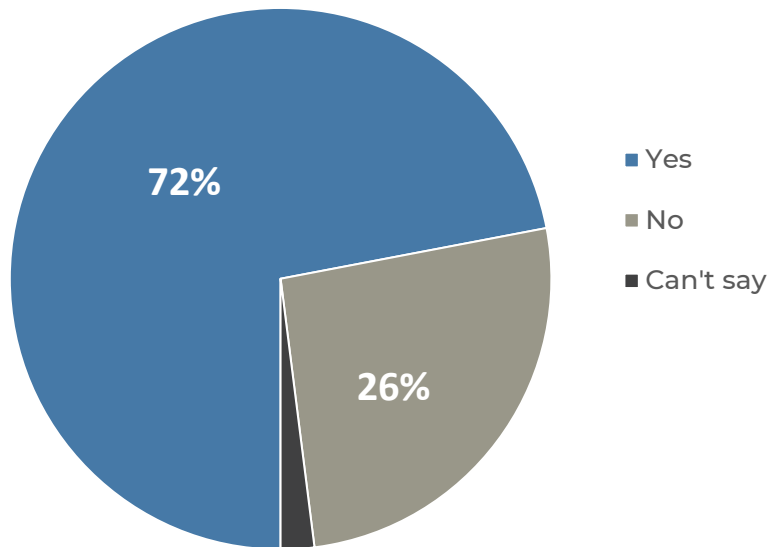


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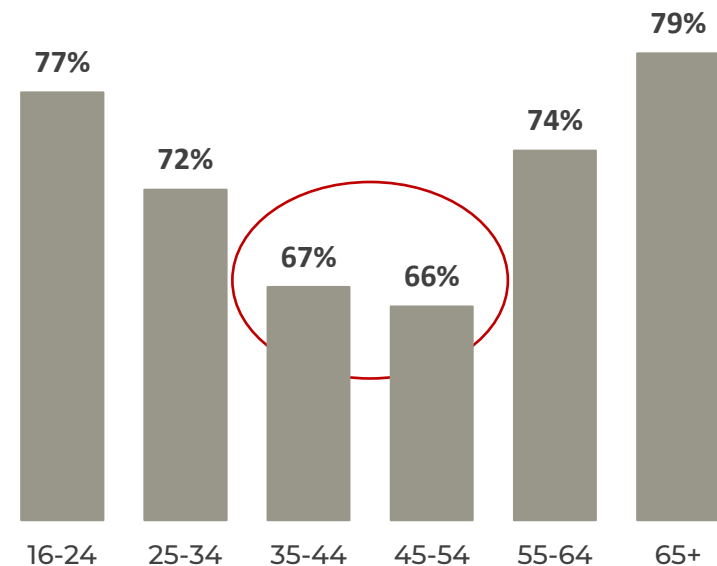
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Around three quarters are aware of current ACT Health advice on the use of face masks indoors

Q. And before today, were you aware that ACT Health strongly encourages people to wear a face mask when in a public indoor setting?



Awareness of ACT Health advice by Age Group



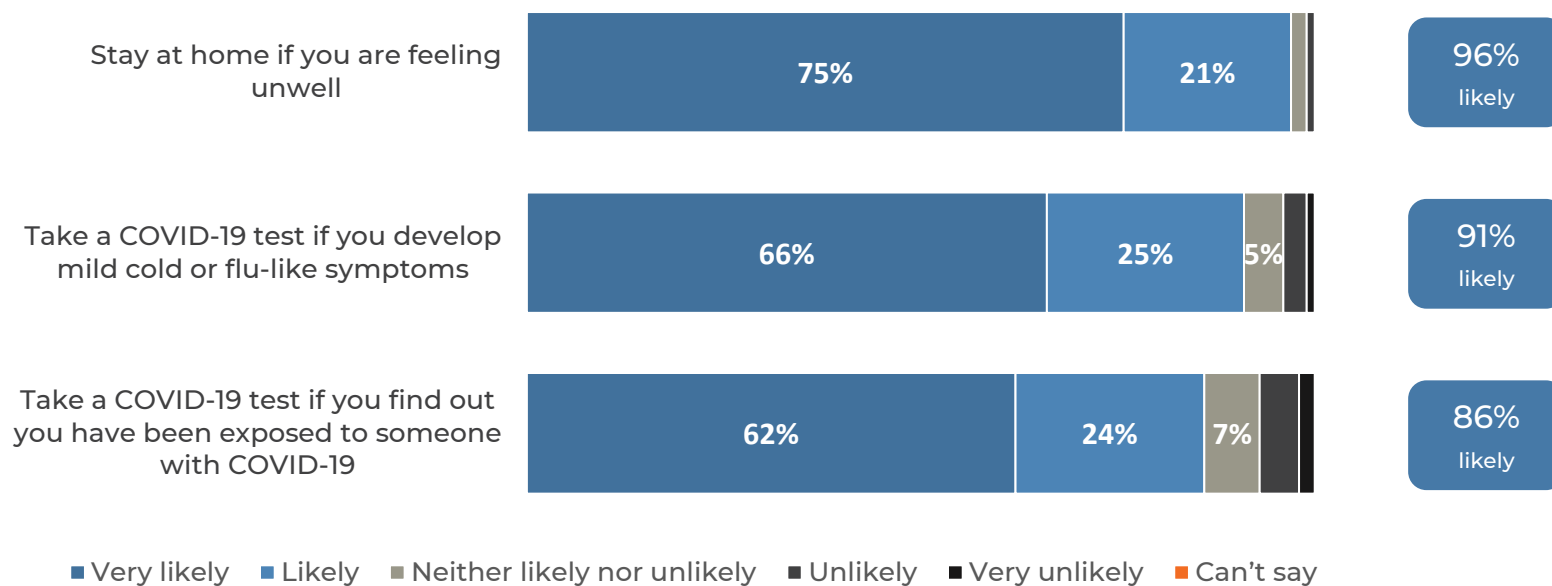


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COVID-smart behaviours that reduce transmission are still likely to be followed by the majority of Canberrans

Q. And how likely or unlikely are you to take the following actions to help reduce the spread of COVID-19?



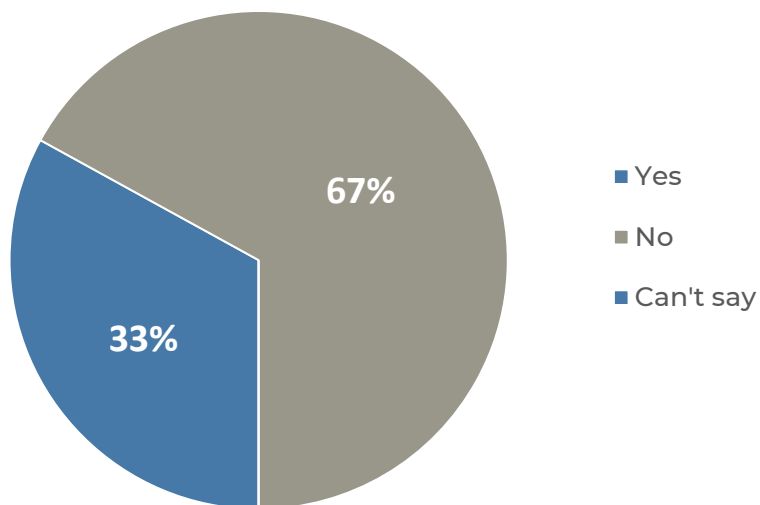


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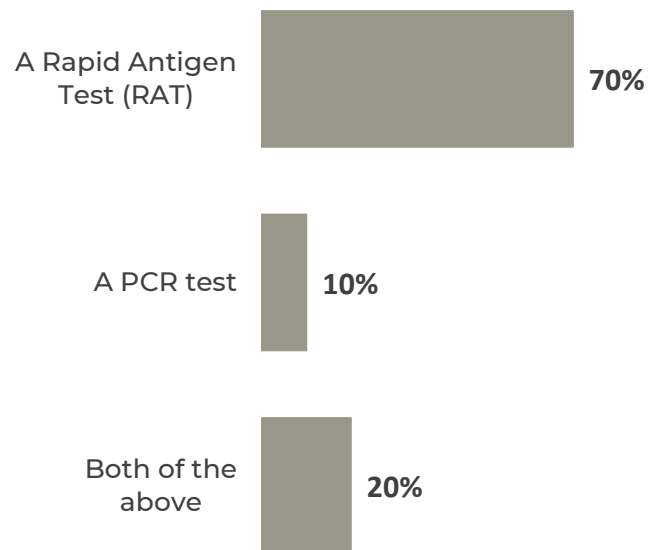
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One third took a COVID test in the past week, with the majority taking a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT)

Q. Have you taken a COVID-19 test in the past week?



Q. What type of test/s have you taken in the past week?



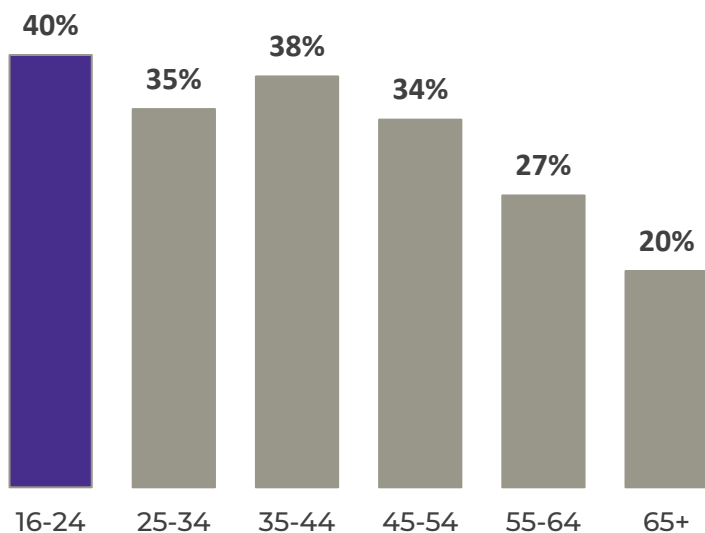


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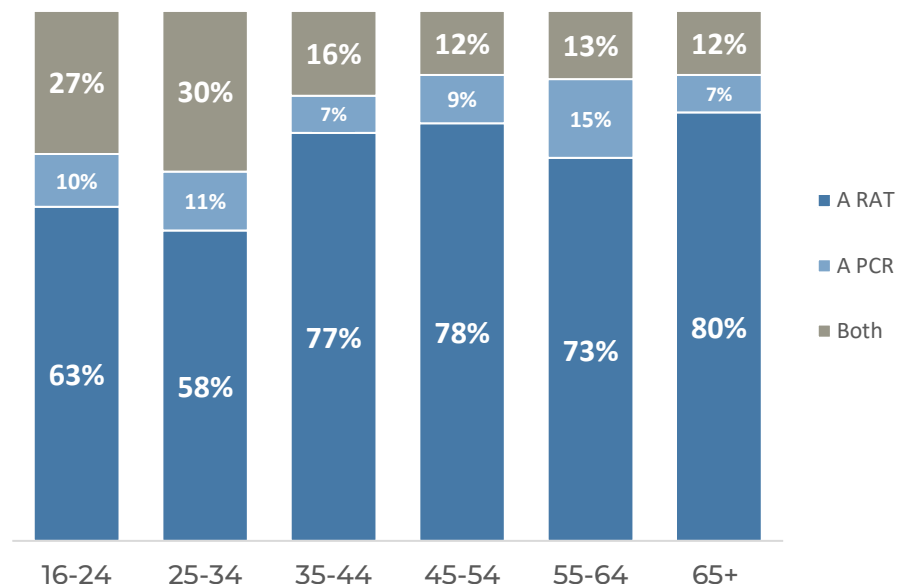
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Younger Canberrans were most likely to take a test in the past week, reflecting relative levels of exposure risk

Taken a COVID test in the past week
by Age Group

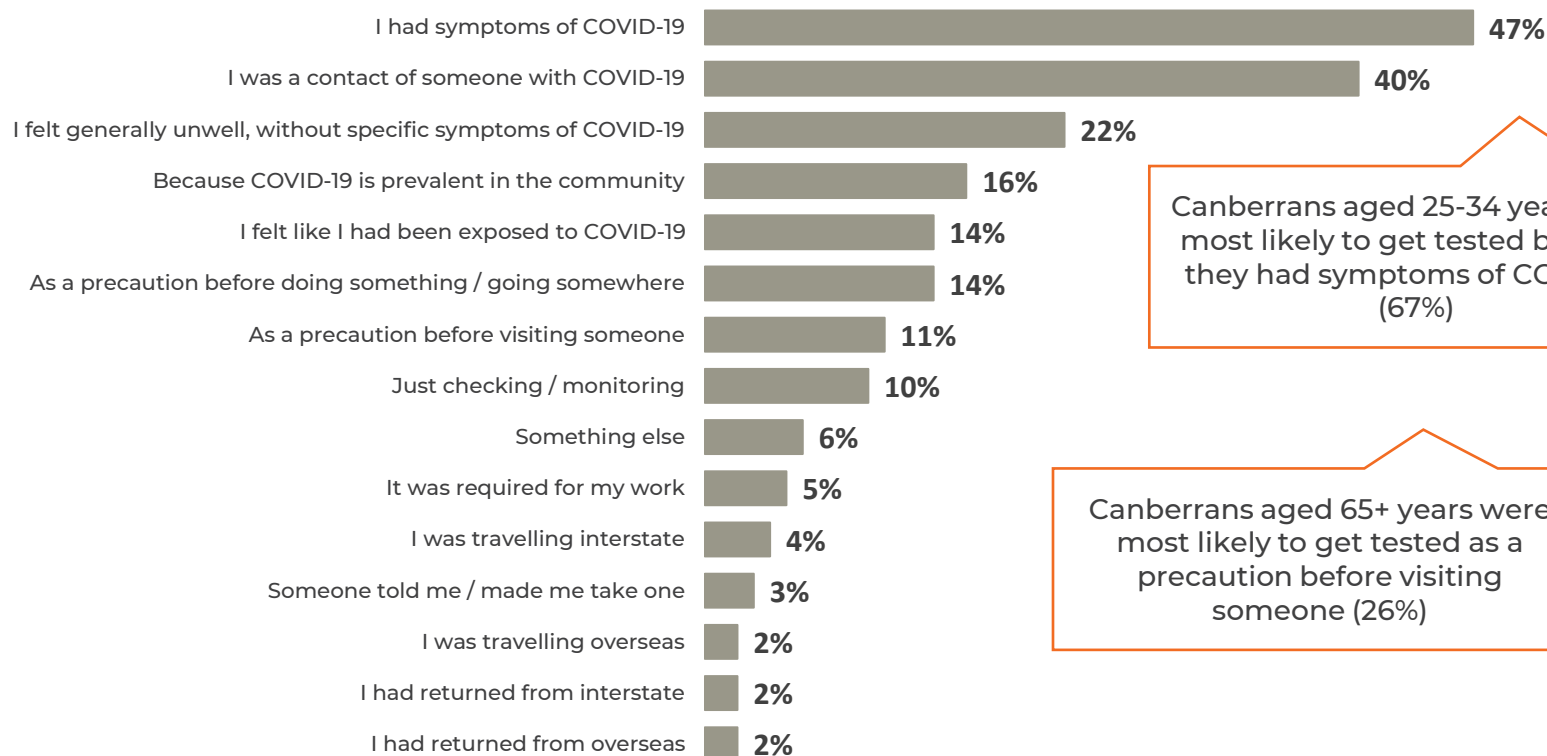


Type of COVID test taken
by Age Group



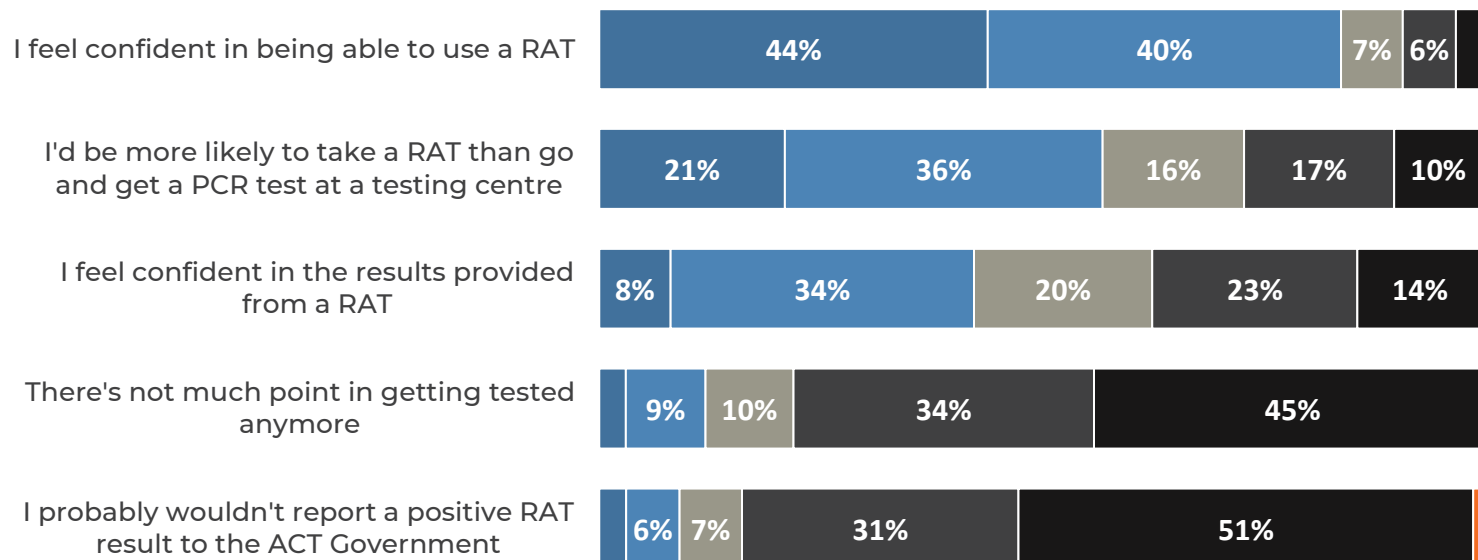
Reasons for getting tested predominantly involved exposure to COVID-19 in some way, rather than as a precautionary measure

Q. What prompted you to get tested?



Canberrans generally have a positive attitude towards COVID testing, but aren't entirely confident in RAT results

Q. Thinking in general about testing for COVID-19, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?



■ Strongly agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Can't say

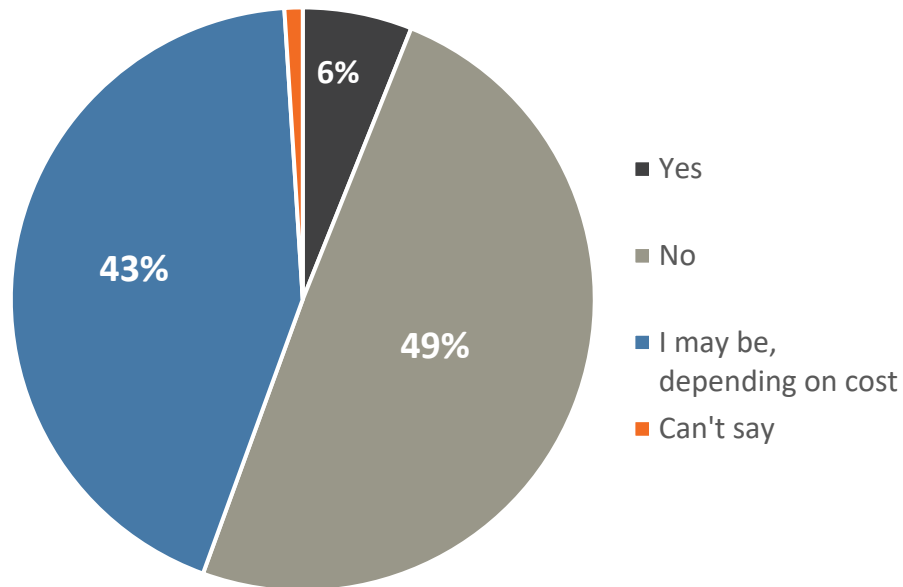


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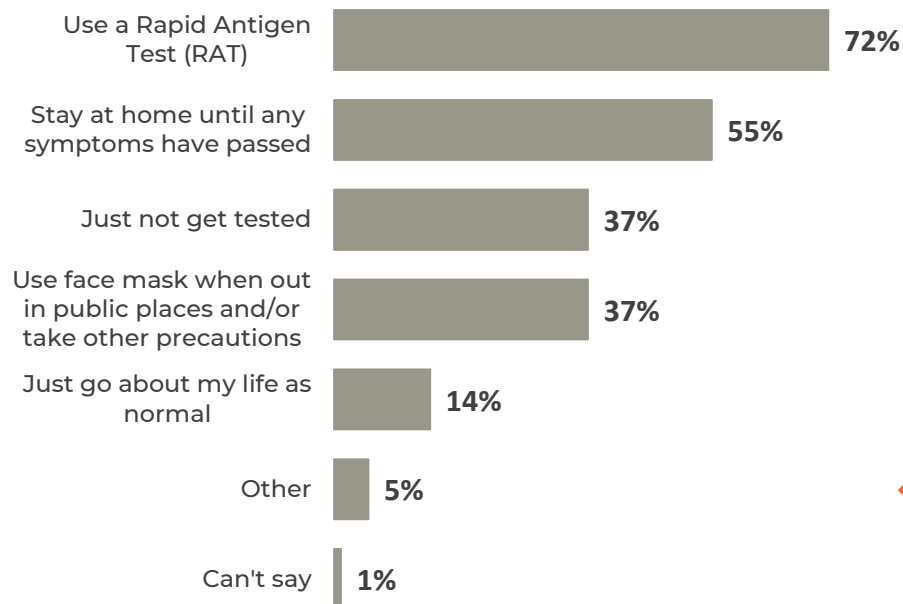
Very few would be willing to pay for a PCR test outright, with just under half willing to depending on the cost

Q. In future, would you be willing to pay for a PCR test if you required one?



Most who would not pay for a PCR would use a RAT instead and / or take other precautions

Q. And what would you do instead of paying for a PCR test?



Other feedback – main themes

- Cost should be covered by work, Medicare or private health insurance
- Given the requirement to report if you're COVID positive, PCRs should remain free
- If I can't trust RATs, then PCRs should be free
- PCR should be free given rising cost of living pressures
- Poor policy decision from the Government / Government not serious if PCRs not free
- Some Canberrans may be reluctant to pay
- The pandemic is not over

School disruption

Key take outs

- 504 parents, carers and guardians of a child/ren completed this part of the survey (432 weighted base)
- **74% reported that their child or children usually attend a Public School**, with 18% attending a Catholic School and 12% an Independent School
- **Parents, carers and guardians reported moderate to high levels of disruption during school Term 2**, with 69% indicating their child or children's school attendance was impacted by COVID-19
- Reported disruption was slightly higher in Public schools (73%) compared to Catholic (61%) and Independent (60%) schools
- **One in ten accessed a support service** including Telehealth (6%), Mental Health Illness Education (3%), Headspace (2%) or some other support (2%)

School term 2 disruption

Where attendance was impacted by COVID-19 during school term 2...

my child/ren was/were unable to attend due to testing positive to COVID-19 **51%**

my child/ren's school or class temporarily moved to remote learning **37%**

my child/ren was unable to attend due to being a close contact **32%**

I have been unwilling to send my child/ren to school due to COVID-19 **8%**

my child/ren have been unwilling to go to school due to COVID-19 **7%**

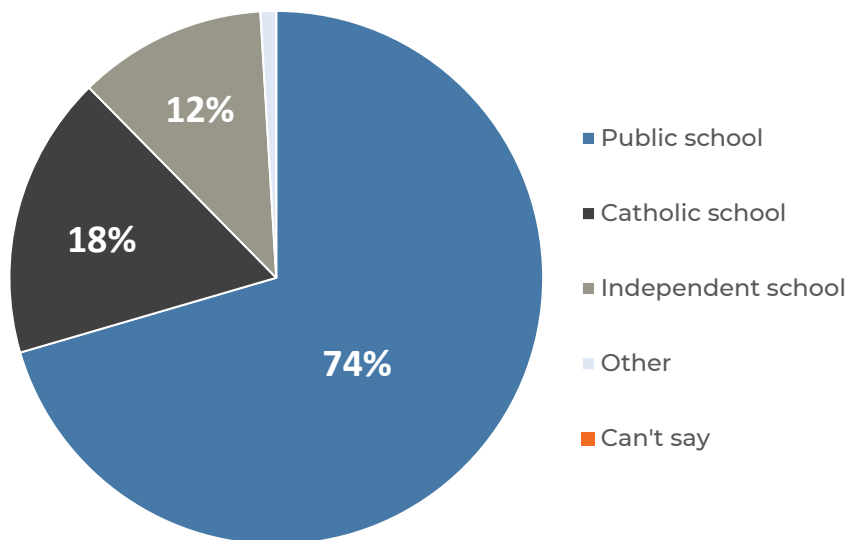


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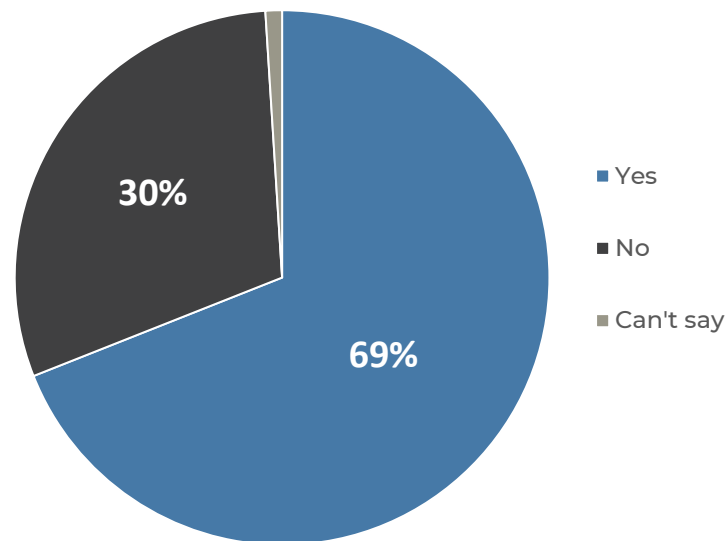
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Over two thirds of parents, carers or guardians had their child or children's attendance impacted by COVID-19 during term 2

Q. What school sector does your child or children usually attend?

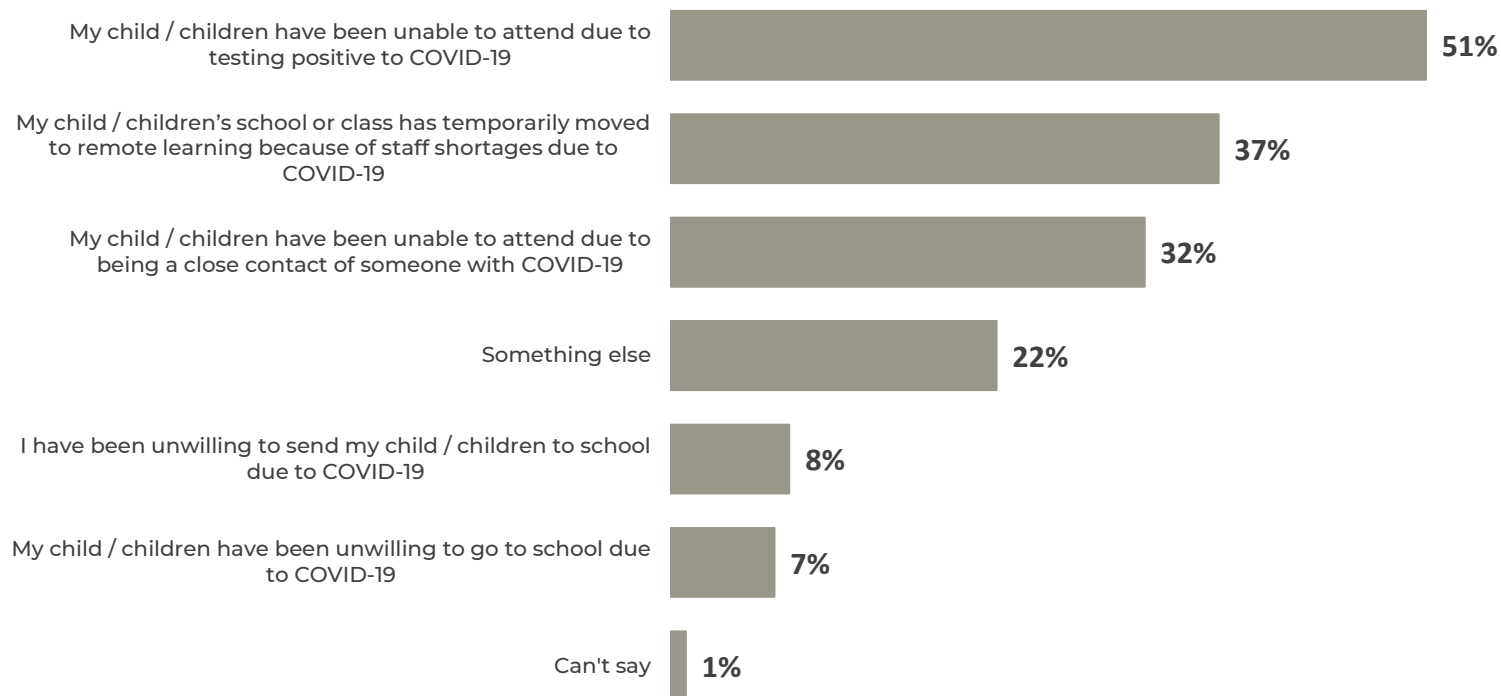


Q. In the past school term, was your child or children's school or preschool attendance impacted by COVID-19?



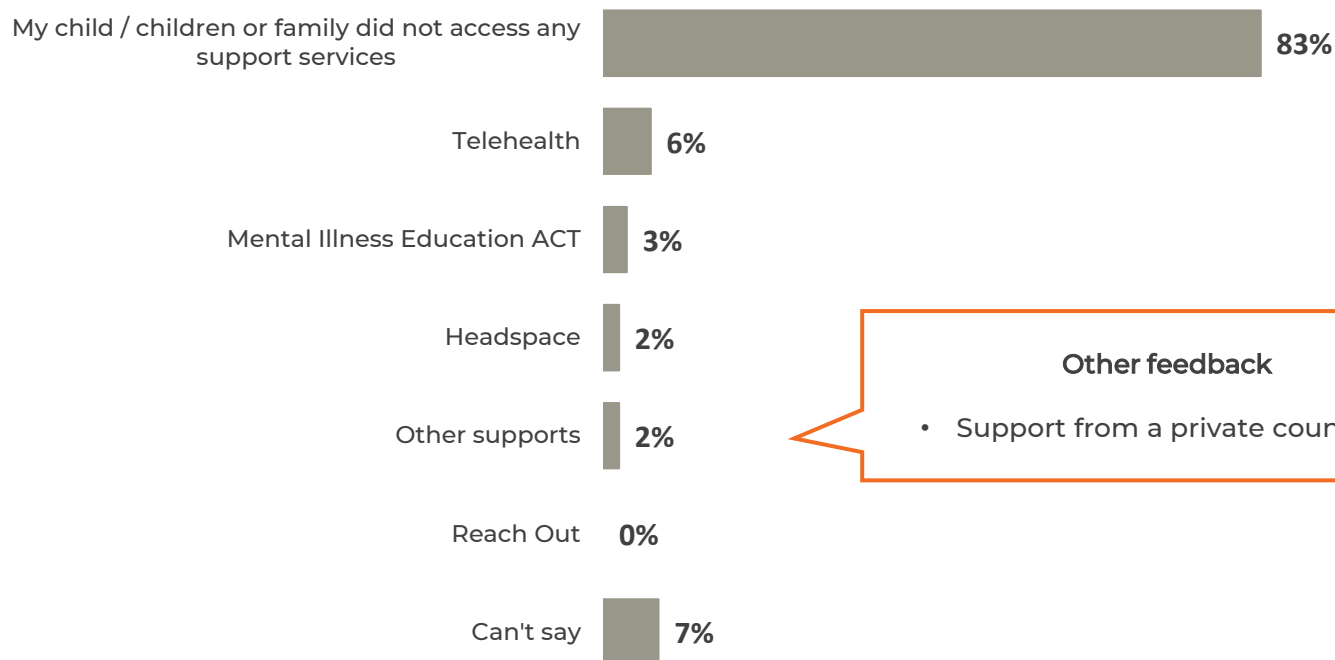
Attendance was most frequently impacted by a child or children testing positive to COVID-19

*Q. In what ways has your child or children's attendance been impacted?**



One in ten child/ren or families accessed a support service when their school or class moved to remote learning

*Q. Did your child / children or family access any of the following support services when school / class temporarily moved to remote learning?**



COVID-19 information

Key take outs

- There remains strong appetite for information on **COVID-19**, with 68% of Canberrans 'very or quite interested' in accessing or receiving information about COVID-19 from the ACT Government
- Overall, 29% of Canberrans want **COVID-19 case numbers, hospitalisations, ICU and death statistics**, with most using this information to help inform steps they take to minimise the risk of catching COVID-19
- In terms of other feedback, there was some **support for the return of face mask mandates** in all public indoor settings and enforcement in settings where face masks remain mandatory
- Some **older and more vulnerable Canberrans would like to see the return of other restrictions** and better promotion of ACT Health advice on the use of face masks indoors
- Some others **were concerned about the possibility of charging for PCR tests** and whether this would act as a barrier for some Canberrans or raise expectations around result turnaround times

Interest in information on COVID-19

68%

VERY / QUITE
INTERESTED

21%

SLIGHTLY
INTERESTED

11%

NOT VERY /
NOT AT ALL
INTERESTED

Preferred frequency of COVID statistics

Of those interested in accessing or receiving information on COVID-19...

Daily 38%

A few times a week 31%

Weekly 23%

Less often 9%

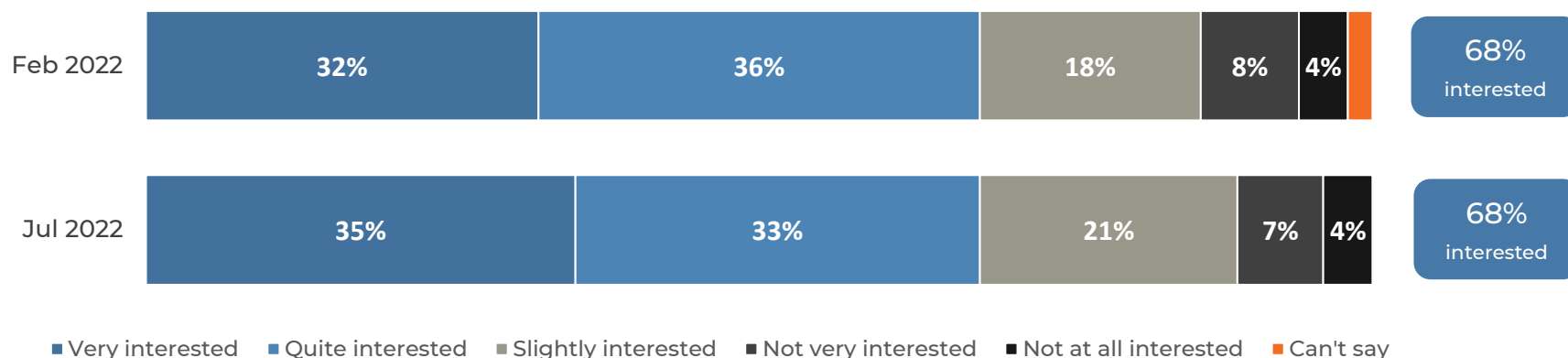


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Over two-thirds of Canberrans remain very or quite interested in receiving COVID-19 information

Q. How interested are you in accessing or receiving information about COVID-19 from the ACT Government?

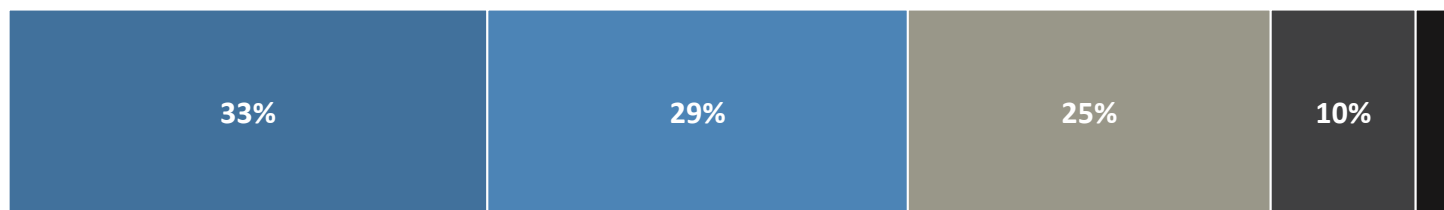


Interest in information from the ACT Government increases with age, ranging from 57% of 16-24 year olds being very or quite interested to 85% of those aged 65+ years

Canberrans who do not speak English as a first language are significantly more likely to be very interested (49%) compared to the broader population (33%)

There is still significant interest in receiving information about COVID-19 statistics, especially among older and more vulnerable Canberrans

*Q. And how interested are you in daily COVID-19 case numbers, hospitalisations, ICU and death statistics in the ACT?**



■ Very interested ■ Quite interested ■ Slightly interested ■ Not very interested ■ Not at all interested ■ Can't say

Interest in COVID-19 statistics increases with age, ranging from 53% of 16-24 year olds being very or quite interested to 75% of those aged 65+ years

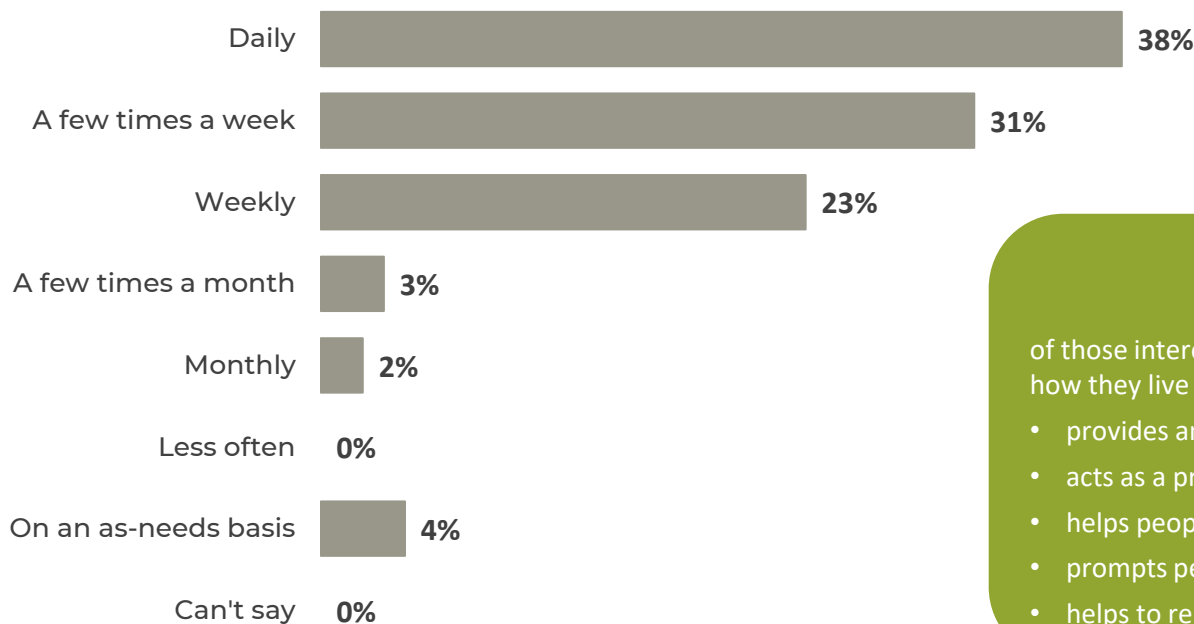


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Daily access to COVID-19 statistics preferred by those who are interested in this information

*Q. How often would you like to have access to this kind of information?**



86%

of those interested say this information influences how they live alongside COVID-19 as it:

- provides an indication of risk
- acts as a prompt to avoid crowded places
- helps people decide when to leave home
- prompts people to wear a face mask
- helps to reinforce COVID-smart behaviours



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Here is a selection of themes identified from the free text responses

Q. Do you have anything else you would like to tell us in relation to the topics covered in this survey?

Overall sense of disappointment / abandonment amongst elderly and more vulnerable individuals

Support for return of mask mandates, particularly in indoor settings and/or other restrictions

Its time to move on / we now need to accept the risks that come with living alongside COVID

The education sector is being significantly impacted

Introduce COVID-safe ventilation systems

General concerns for the health system and hospitals

Distrust towards RATs and their accuracy and concern about prospect of paying for PCRs

Government and society has given up on the pandemic / its not over yet

Appendix



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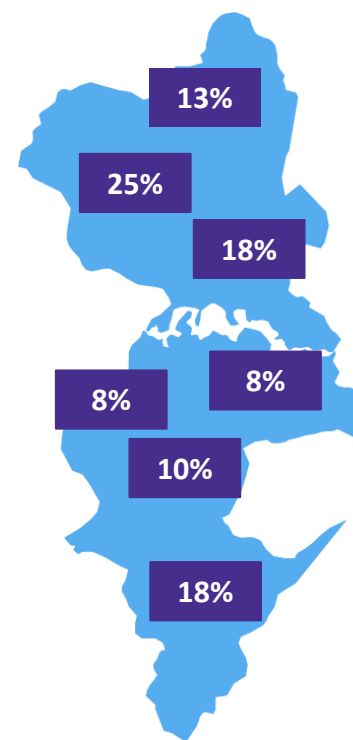
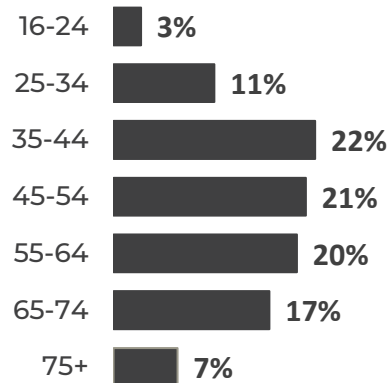
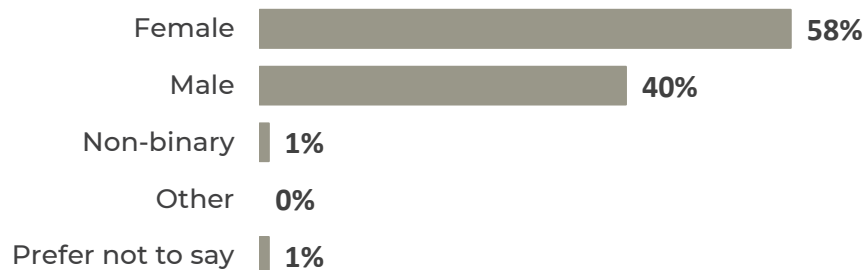
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Survey sample profile (unweighted)



About the YourSay Panel

- Around **6,000** Canberrans have signed up to have their say through the YourSay Community Panel
- The Panel captures the pulse of the community at a given point in time through regular online surveys about a range of topics
- Panellists are recruited through a mix of online and offline channels but must have internet access and an email account to take part
- The Panel closely resembles the overall ACT population by age, gender, region as well as a range of other demographic characteristics
- Members are invited to take part in approximately two activities per month and participation is completely voluntary
- The membership base is highly active with around 4 in 10 members completing each survey on average
- Regular checks are made to ensure results are accurate by comparing them to other independent survey research

6,016

Current members

33%

Survey response rate

50+

Major surveys
completed

18+

COVID-19 themed
surveys



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