

Easing of restrictions survey

FINAL REPORT
20 October 2021



YOUR SAY
PANEL

Background

Following up on the *Lockdown Wellbeing and Support Survey* in September 2021, the ACT Government again engaged the YourSay Panel to track developments in community wellbeing, support needs and perspectives relating to changing COVID-19 restrictions.

The research will be used to help inform ongoing Government planning around restrictions and the management of support and messaging as these ease.

Methodological notes:

- As a follow up, the survey was only open to Panel members who took part in the previous survey in September (n=2,602 were invited)
- 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, which may impact data relating to communication preferences
- In single choice questions, results may not add up to 100% due to rounding



How many?

1,900

Who?

Canberrans 16+
who also completed lockdown
wellbeing and support survey in
September

When?

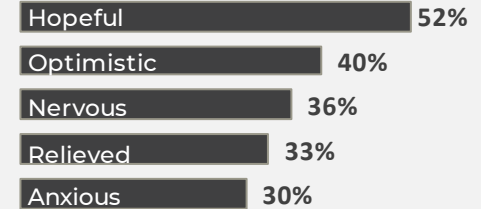
07 – 11 Oct 2021

In summary: easing of restrictions

- Around two-thirds of Canberrans say they know a lot or fair amount about the COVID-19 pathway forward
- There is greater positivity and optimism towards the easing of restrictions than in September, though substantial anxiety and concern remains, primarily due to expectations of increased cases in the community
- While most Canberrans recognise the likelihood of increased cases there is some uncertainty as to how this will be managed and the impact on the hospital system
- Consequently some caution exists in returning to activities when restrictions ease, though many (64%) have or will visit other households within a week and around four in ten Canberrans intend to access local businesses in the first week of restrictions easing
- Similarly, there is some caution and nervousness around the return to school, with three in ten parents feeling uncomfortable about the return to on-campus learning
- In this context, overall there is widespread belief that steps to manage COVID-19 should continue for some time to come, regardless of high vaccination rates



How feel about easing



Living with COVID

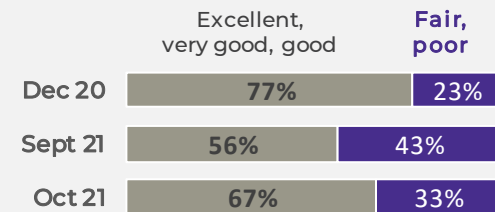


In summary: support and response

- The **self-rated mental health of Canberrans** has shown an **uptick** from September but remains worse than it was before the lockdown (33% fair or poor)
- Encouragingly, the **mental health of young people (16-24) is reported to have improved** considerably though this remains less positive than among older Canberrans
- Most mental health support has been sought from friends and family, while **one in ten Canberrans needing support have not accessed anything**
- Access of **financial support has increased, particularly for business owners** on the Panel, from 17% in September to 43% in October – this is largely in the form of Business Support Grants and the COVID-19 Disaster Payment
- There has been **little change in perceptions of both the community and ACT Government response** to COVID-19 since September, with more than eight out of ten Canberrans believing this to have been appropriate
- Further, continuing this largely positive reaction, **nine in ten Canberrans continue to feel well-informed** by the ACT Government in relation to COVID-19



Mental health



Financial support

| | USED |
|-------------|------|
| individuals | 26% |
| businesses | 43% |



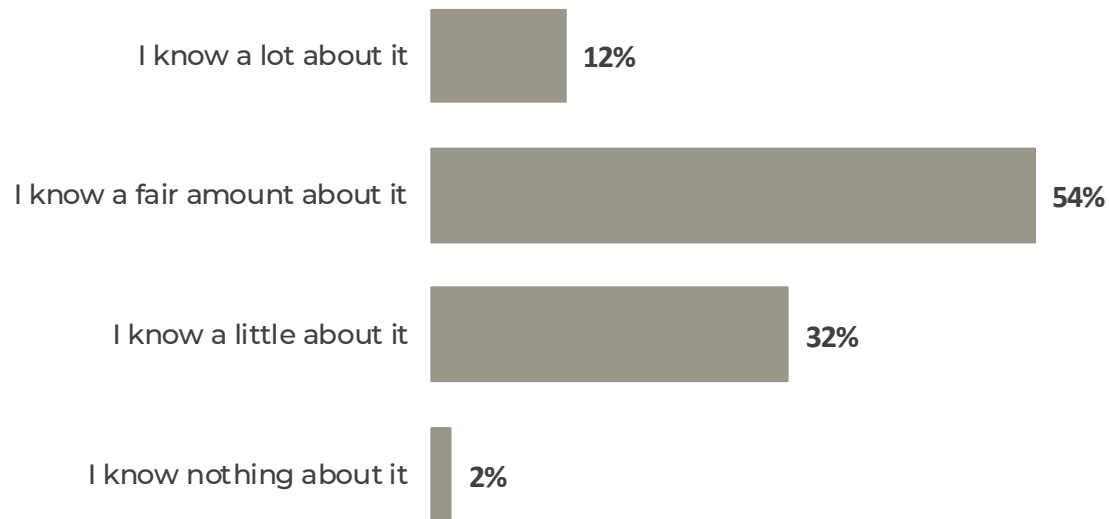
ACT Government response

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| % appropriate response | 86% |
| % feeling informed | 90% |

Easing of restrictions

Around two-third of Canberrans say they know a lot or fair amount about the COVID-19 pathway forward

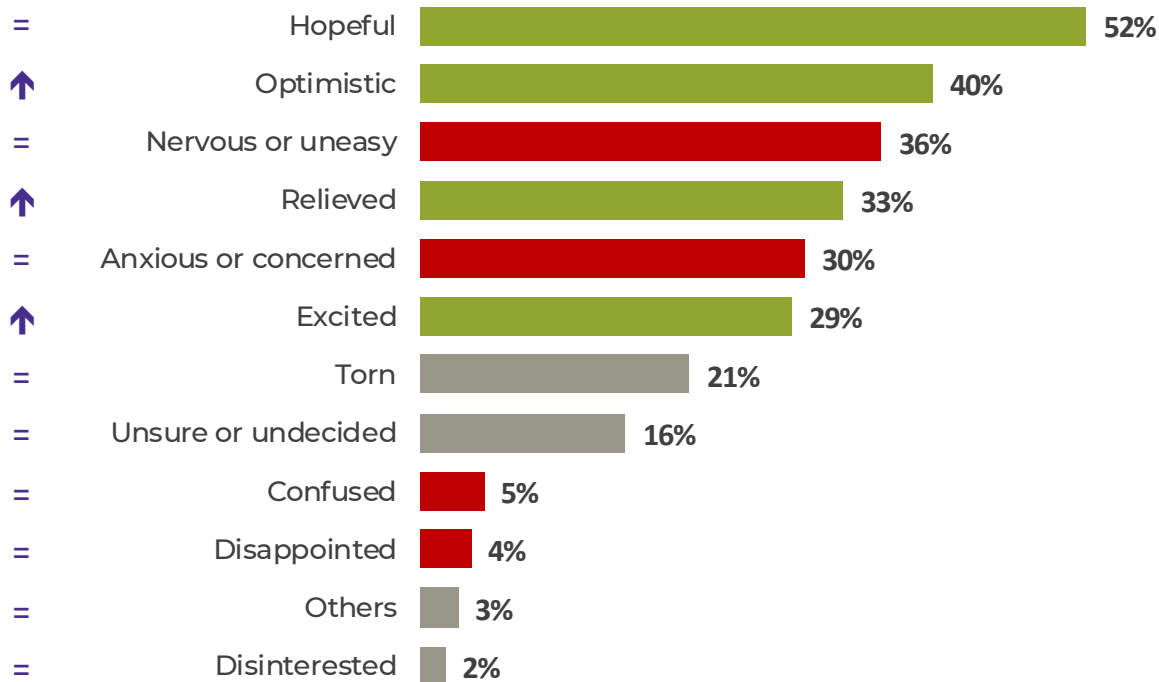
Q. The ACT Government recently released its COVID-19 pathway forward which outlines gradual and safe steps towards a COVID-normal life in the ACT. How much do you know about the ACT Government's COVID-19 pathway forward?



While caution remains, there has been increased optimism and excitement relating to the easing of restrictions

Significant
change from
Sept

Q. How are you feeling about the prospect of lockdown restrictions being eased in the ACT?





Anxiety and concern largely relate to the expectation of increased COVID-19 cases and potential impacts from this

Q. Please tell us what you are feeling excited about?

Time with family and friends

More mobility, travel, freedom

Experiences and 'treats' – e.g. haircut, cafes, gym, draught beer etc

A step back to normality, regular life

Kids returning to school

Q. Please tell us what you are feeling anxious or concerned about?

Catching COVID, am vulnerable / have pre-existing conditions

Rising case numbers

Unvaccinated children at risk

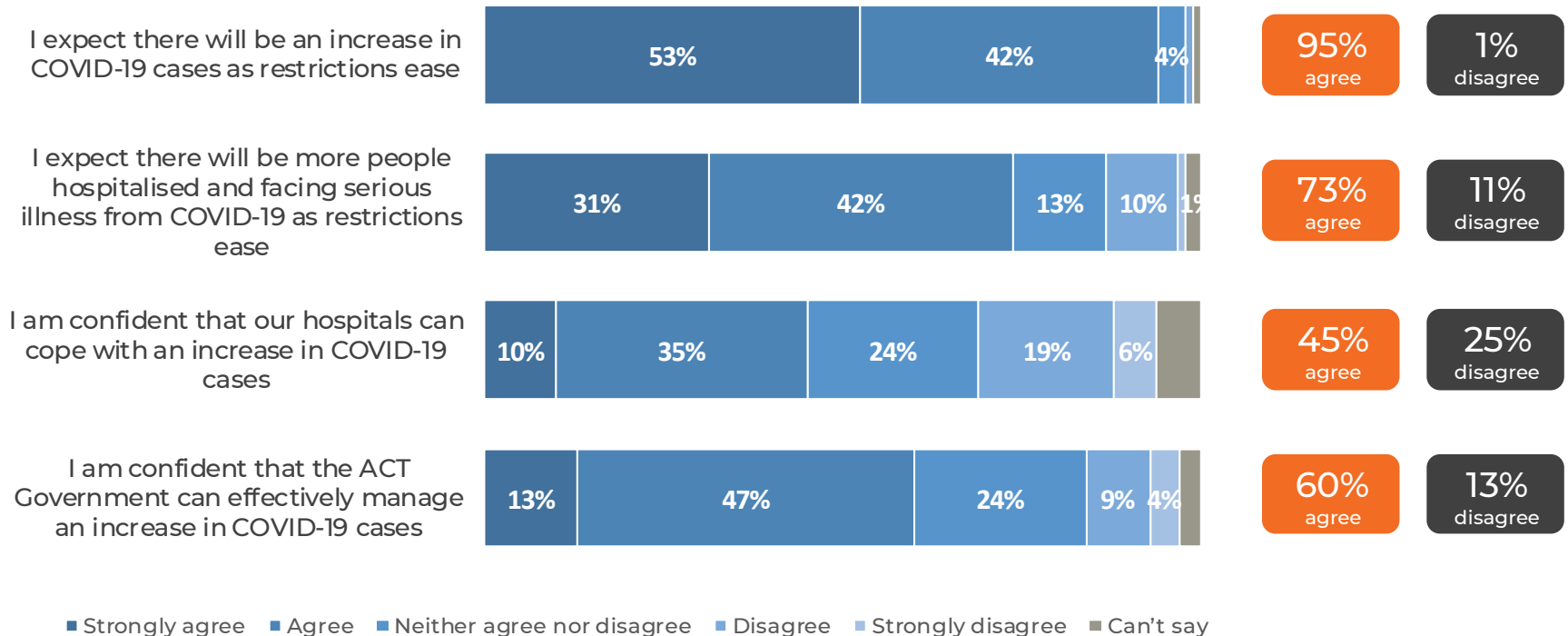
Health system being able to cope

People relaxing too much

Unchecked spread in NSW

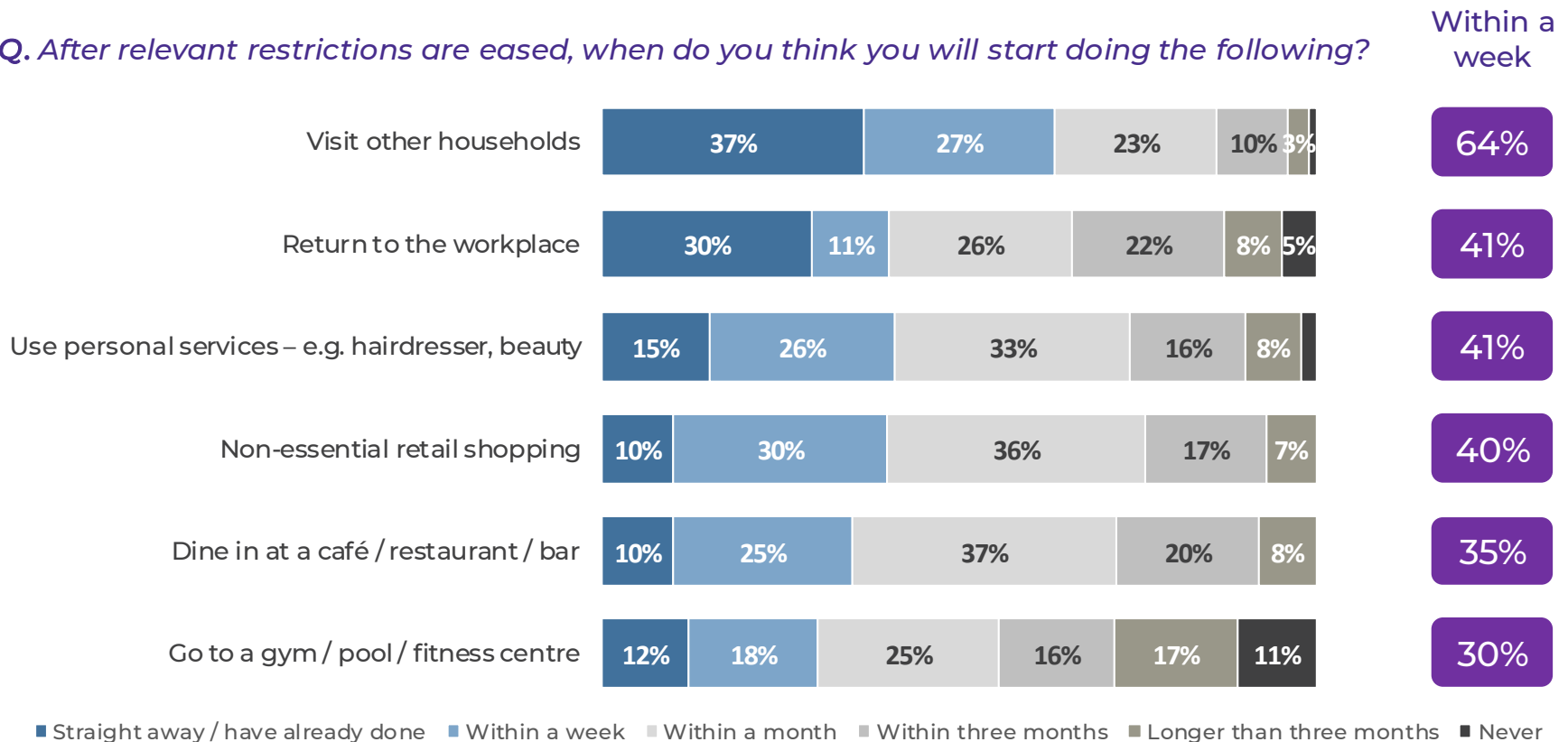
Most people anticipate an increase in cases and there is some uncertainty as to how this will be managed

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?



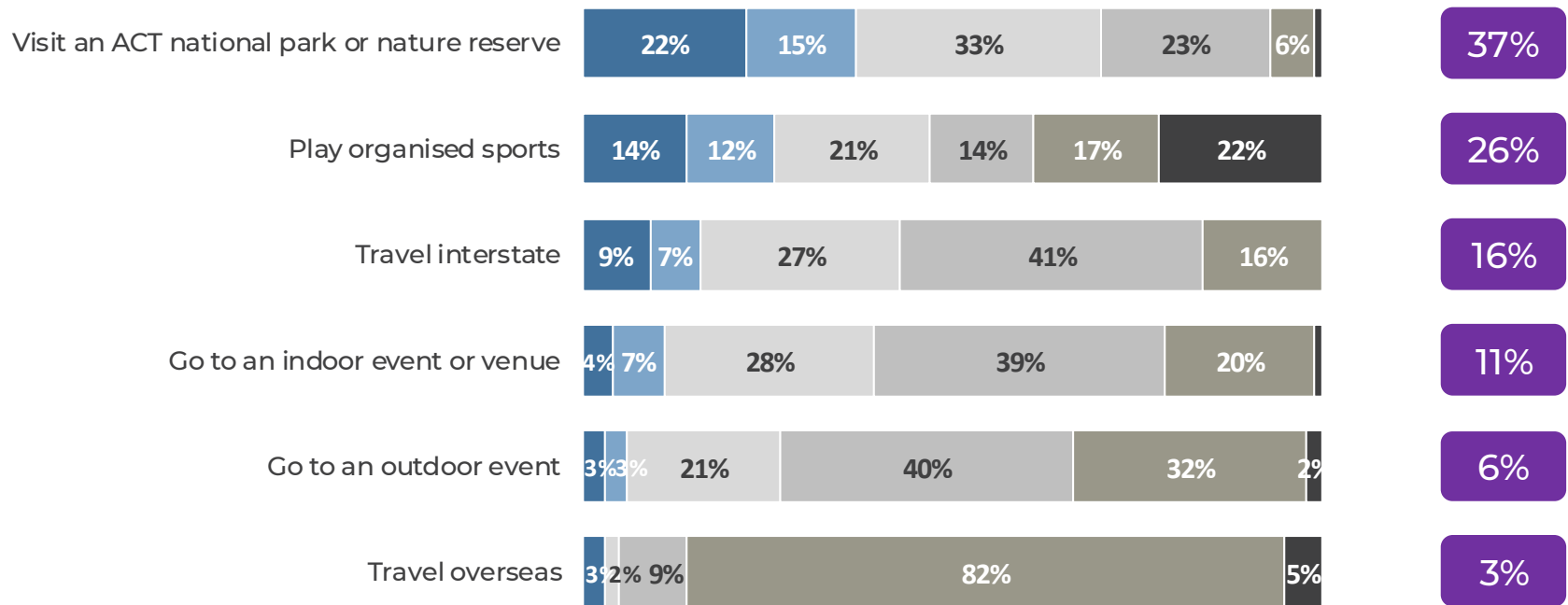
Around four in ten have or are set to return to workplaces and local businesses within a week of restrictions easing

Q. After relevant restrictions are eased, when do you think you will start doing the following?



Return to wider leisure and travel activity is likely to be more gradual and cautious in nature

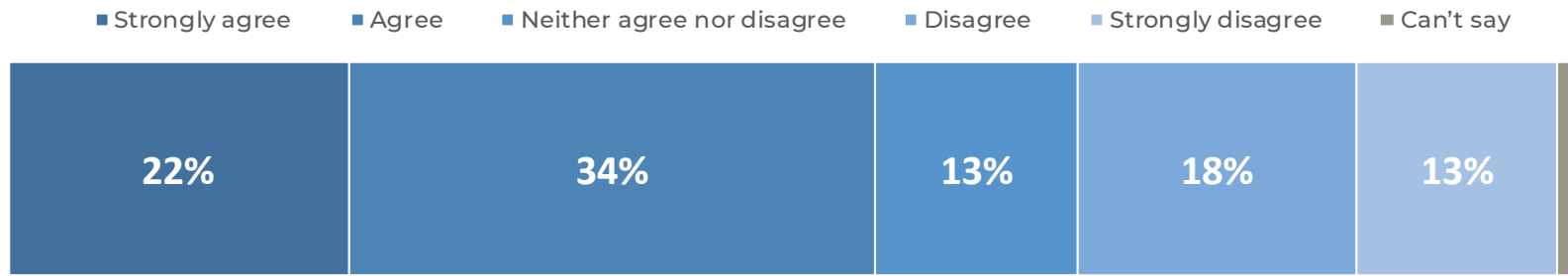
Q. After relevant restrictions are eased, when do you think you will start doing the following? Within a week



■ Straight away / have already done ■ Within a week ■ Within a month ■ Within three months ■ Longer than three months ■ Never

Meanwhile, three in ten parents express some concern with returning their children to on-campus learning

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following: I am largely comfortable with the prospect of my child / children returning to on-campus learning as planned



Q. Why not comfortable?

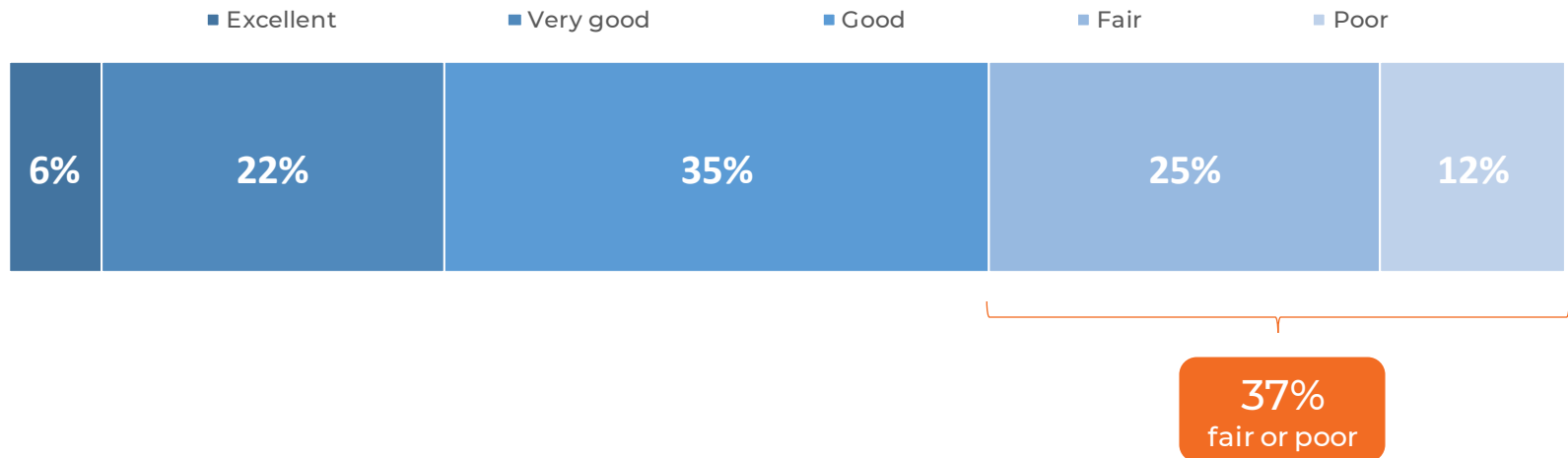
- Children are not vaccinated
- Cases of children getting sick with Delta
- Kids have underlying health conditions
- Schools are high-risk transmission sites
- Children don't take precautions

31%
disagree

Health, wellbeing and support

Around a third of Canberrans rate their physical health and wellbeing as fair or poor

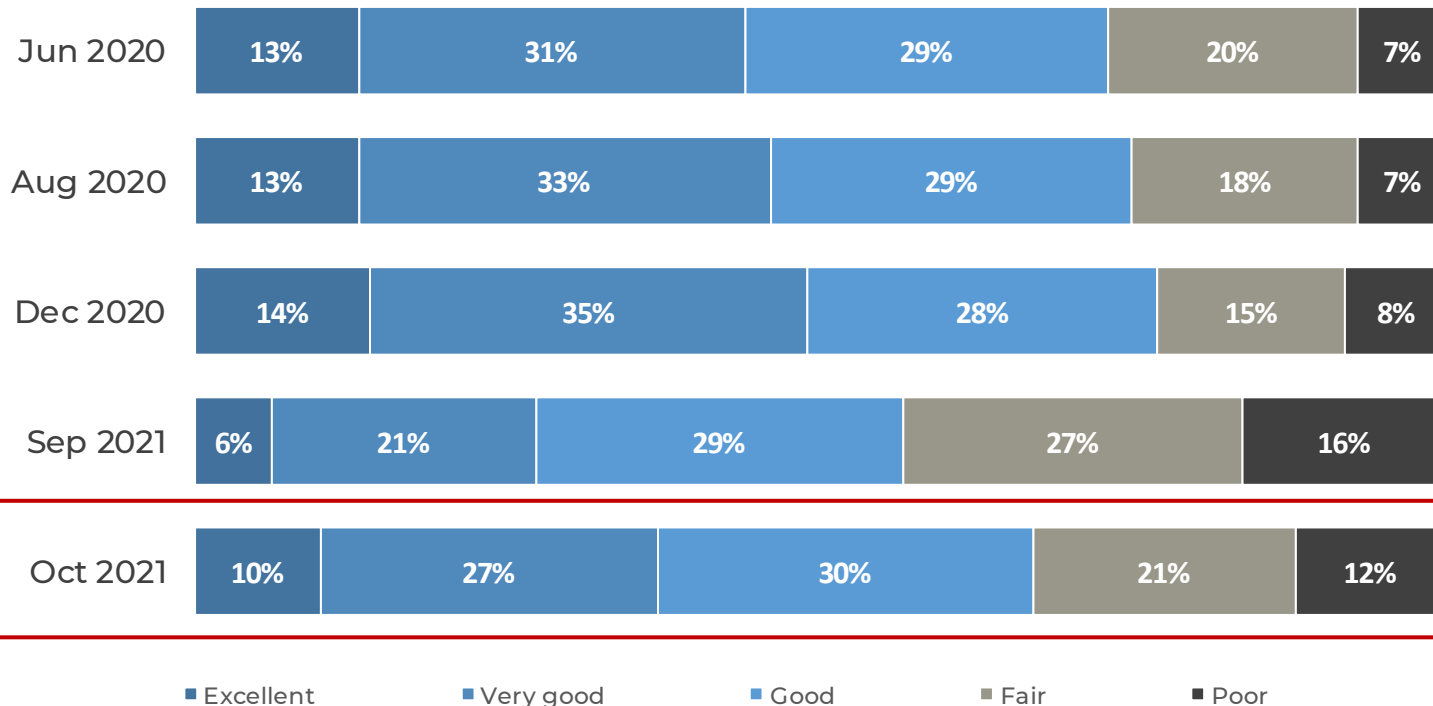
Q. How would you rate your current physical health and wellbeing?





Self-rated mental health has picked up since September but remains worse than pre-lockdown levels

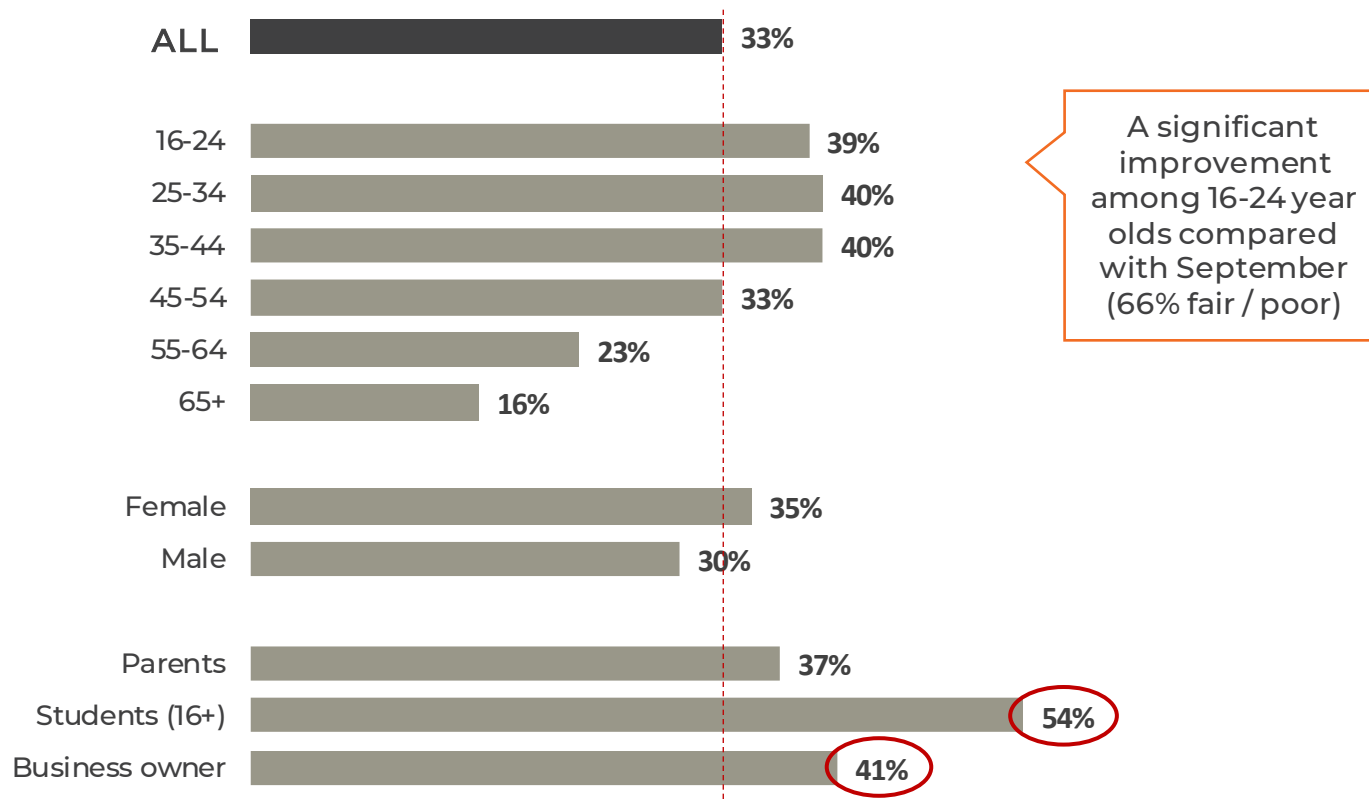
Q. Overall, how would you rate your current mental health and wellbeing?





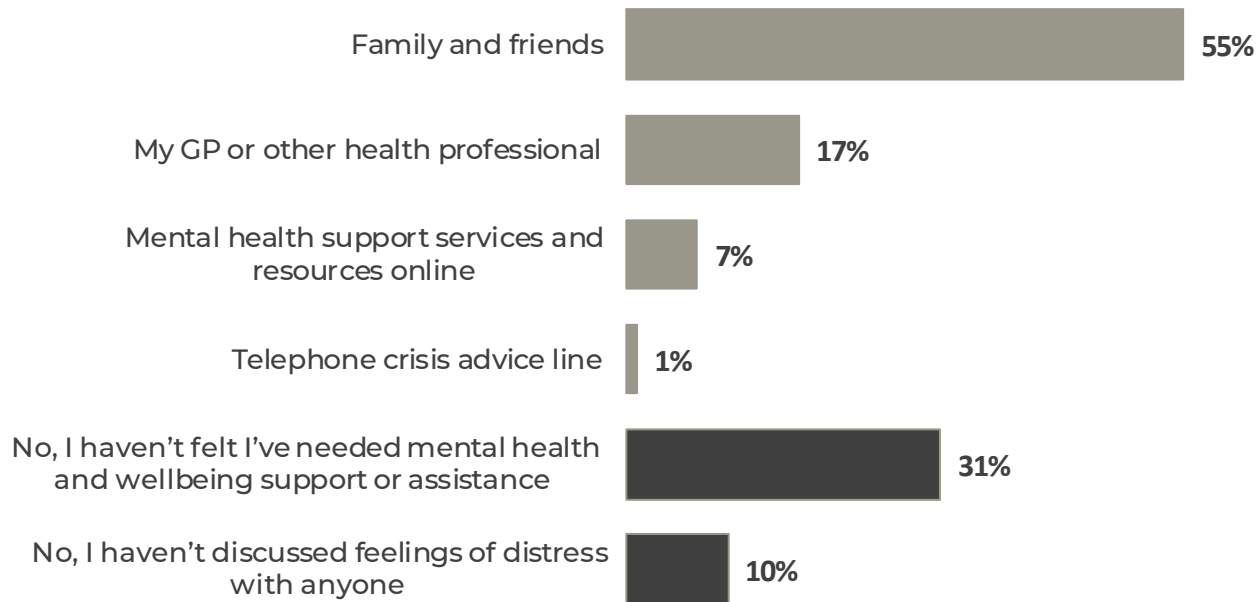
Younger Canberrans remain less likely to report positive mental health, but this gap has lessened since September

% rating current mental health as fair or poor



One in ten have not discussed feelings of distress with anyone, higher among males and those aged 65 or older

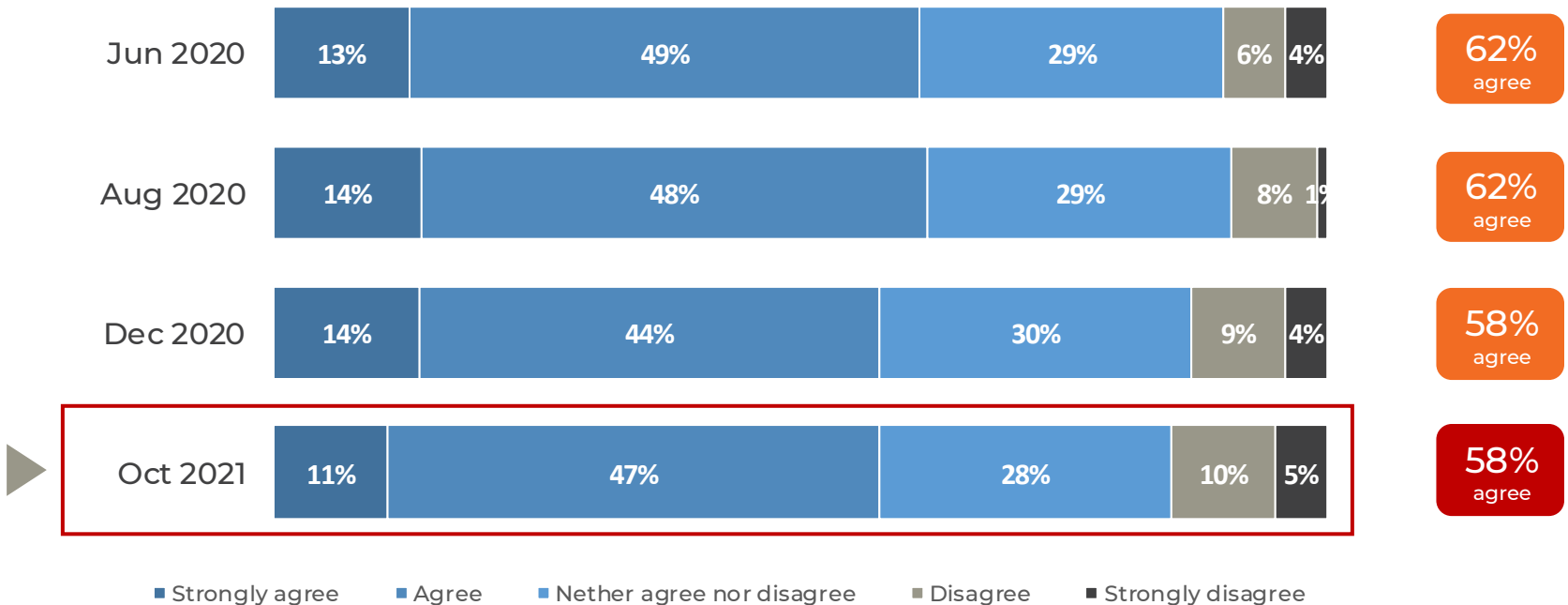
Q. Have you discussed feelings of distress due to COVID-19 with any of the following?





Access of support when needed is largely unchanged from before lockdown, with around 6 in 10 able to get this

*Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
I've been able to readily access mental health and wellbeing support information when I've needed it*





Comments and suggestions to support mental health

Q. Do you have any other comments or suggestions to help support mental health and wellbeing?

End lockdown,
open up

Greater certainty
around the future

Get the kids back
to school asap

Improve access
and availability
of services, wait
times etc

Funding /
cost of
services

Switch off
news, social
media, COVID
alerts

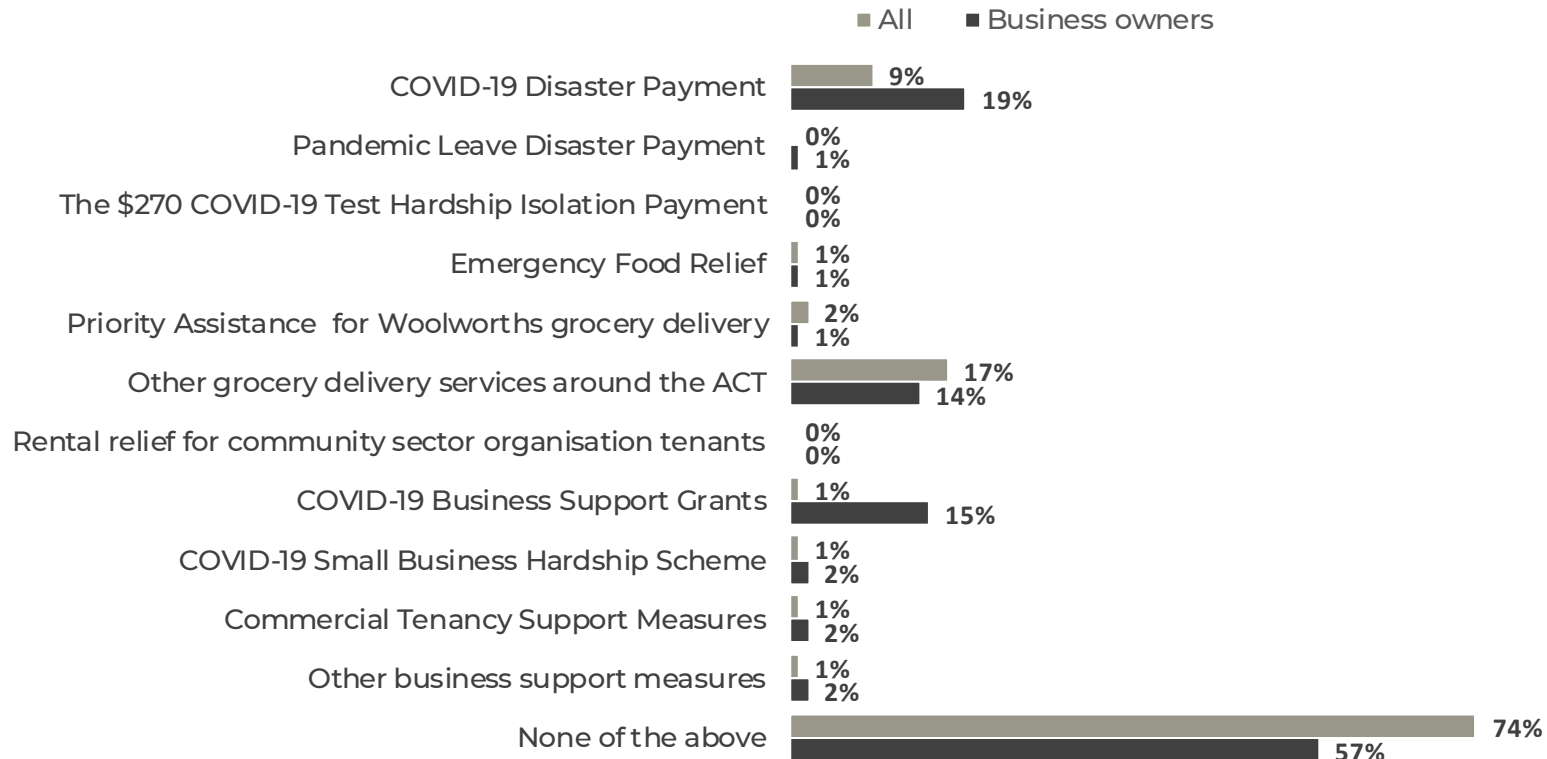
Acknowledge
it's okay to not
be okay, talk,
seek support

Get out and
about,
exercise

Engage,
connect with
community –
events,
services,
facilities etc

A quarter of people have accessed some form of financial support or assistance, higher among business owners *

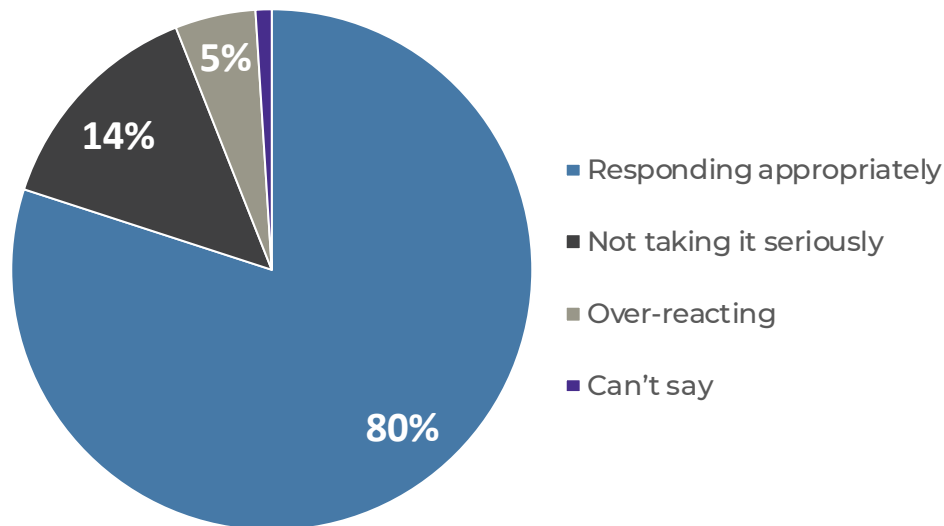
Q. Have you accessed any of the following support or assistance during the lockdown period?



COVID-19 Response

Eight in ten Canberrans feel that the community is responding appropriately to the current COVID-19 situation

Q. Overall, how would you describe the Canberra community's response to COVID-19?



Why not taking seriously?

- Non-compliance – masks, gatherings, lack of social distancing etc
- People not getting tested
- Too many people infectious in the community

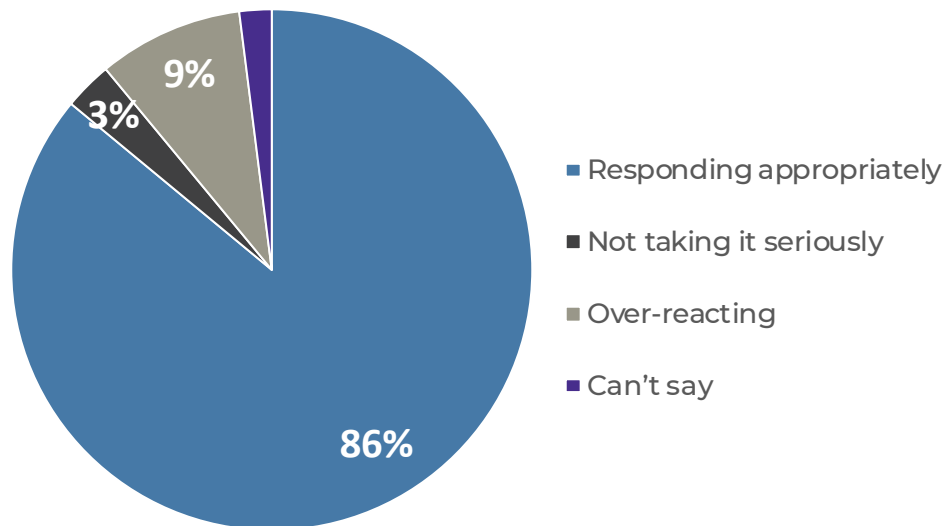
Why over-reacting?

- Lockdown gone on too long, need to live with COVID
- Economic and mental health impacts
- Very few cases
- Low risk / high vaccination



Nearly nine in ten feel that the ACT Government is responding appropriately to COVID-19

Q. Overall, how would you describe the ACT Government's response to COVID-19?



Why not taking seriously?

- Opening up with high cases
- Lack of compliance / enforcement
- Over-reliance on high vaccination rates, need to emphasise other measures

Why over-reacting?

- Low case numbers, low risk
- High vaccination rates mean lockdown unnecessary
- Fewer freedoms than NSW
- Business impacts

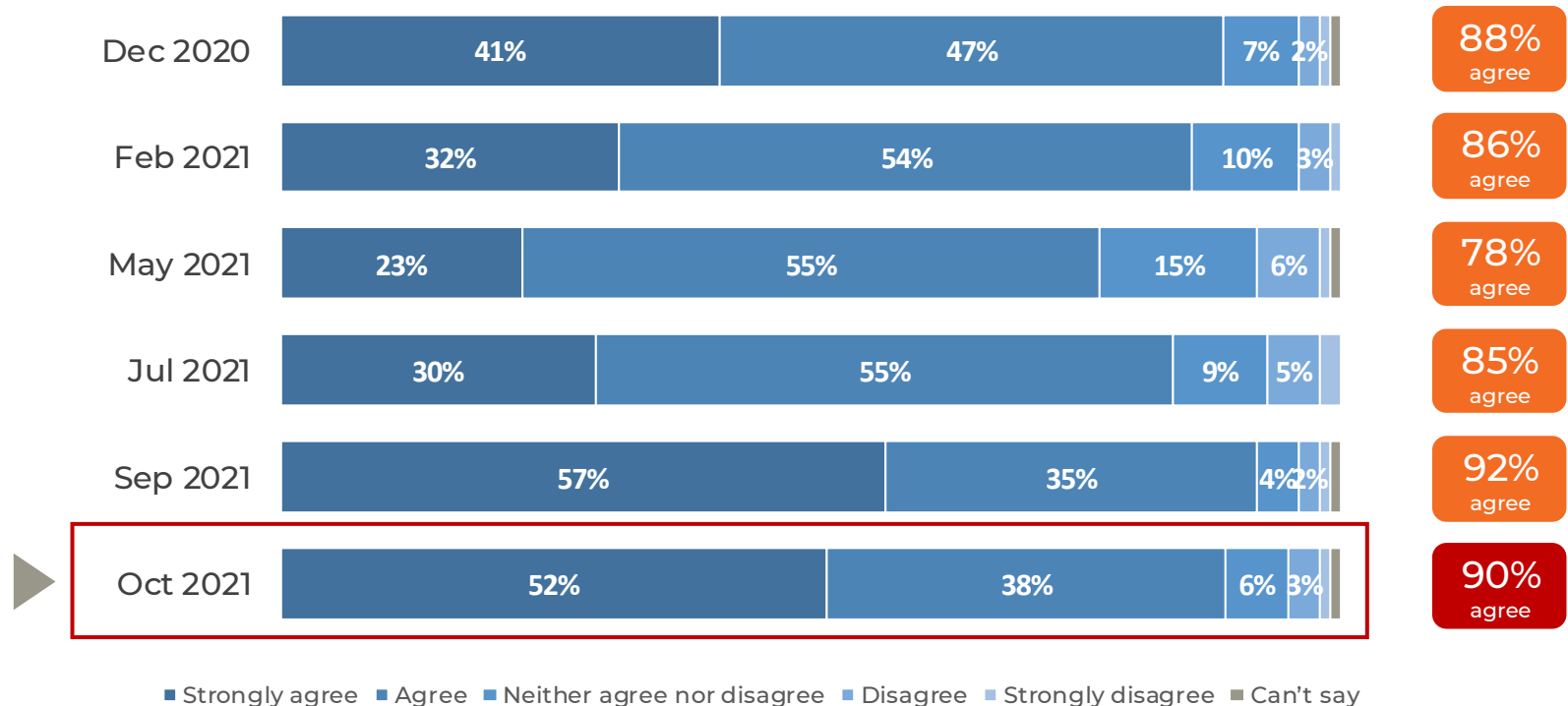


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A high proportion of the community continue to feel informed about COVID-19 from the ACT Government

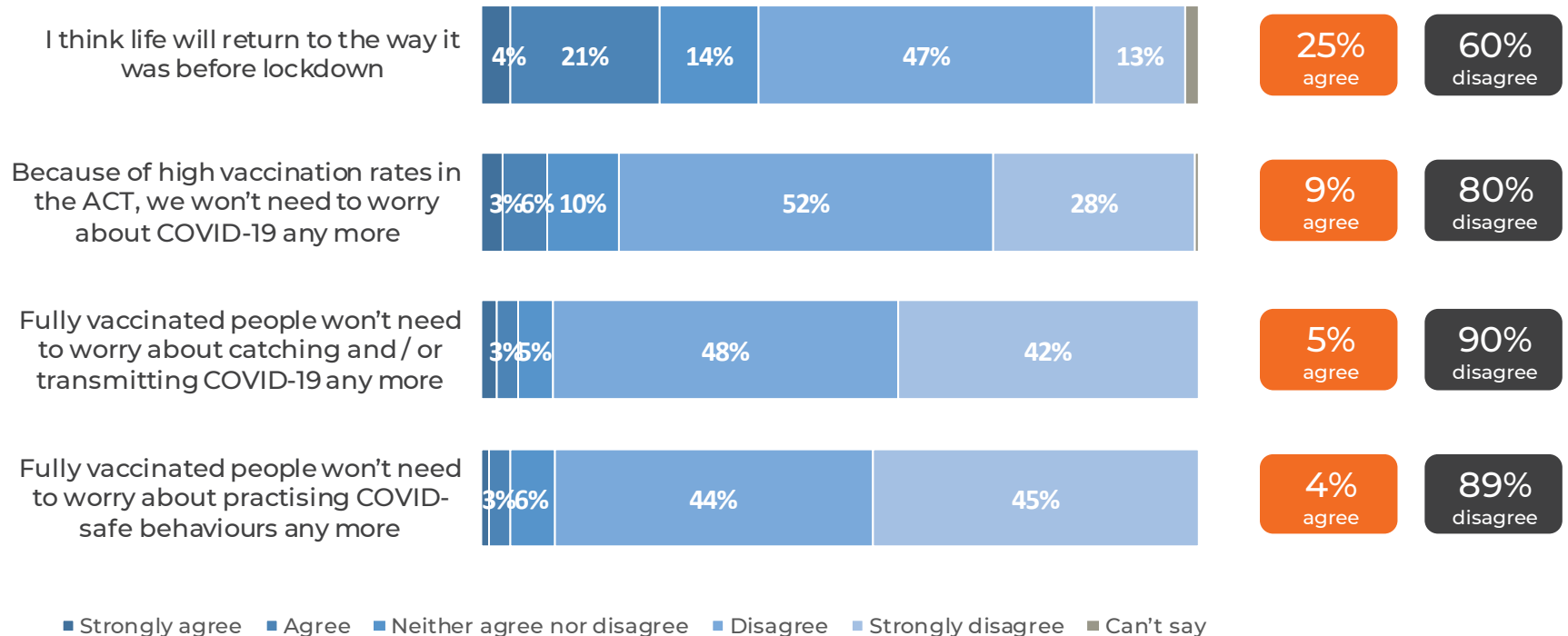
Q. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Overall, I feel I am being kept well informed about COVID-19 by the ACT Government.



Future outlook and response

Most people believe life will not return to how it was, with vaccination not necessarily precluding the need to act

Q. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

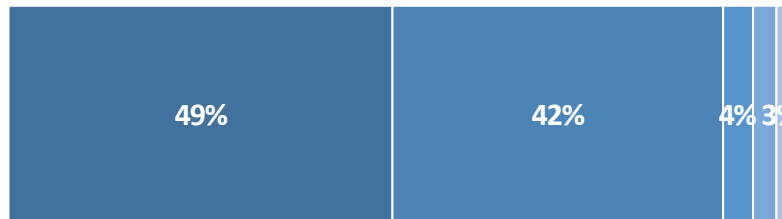




Consequently, almost all Canberrans foresee the need for continued measures personally and from governments

Q. And to what extent do you agree or disagree that...

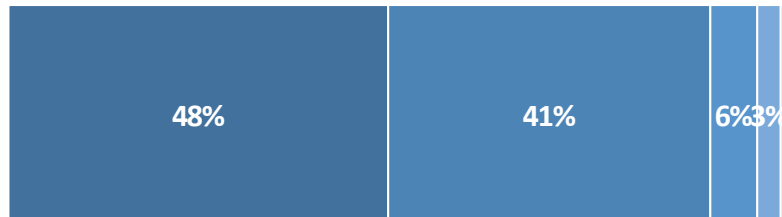
Governments will need to continue taking steps to manage the impacts of COVID-19 for some time to come (e.g. testing, contact tracing and community supports)



91%
agree

5%
disagree

I will need to continue taking steps to reduce the risks of catching or spreading COVID-19 for some time to come (e.g. use of face masks and social distancing)



89%
agree

5%
disagree

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



Other comments about easing of restrictions...

Q. Do you have anything else you would like to tell us about in relation to the topic?

Positive feedback on ACT Government response and communications

Gratitude for health workers / services

Question about boosters and child vaccination – info, steps, when etc

Questions / specific queries about pathway – what and when things are open

Concern with NSW outbreaks, cases, spread, approach

Worried about breakthrough cases despite vaccination

Questions about travel, borders, home quarantine

Need to live with it, get back to normal

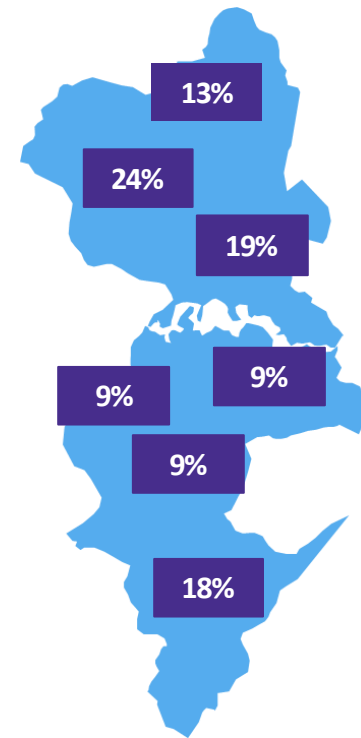
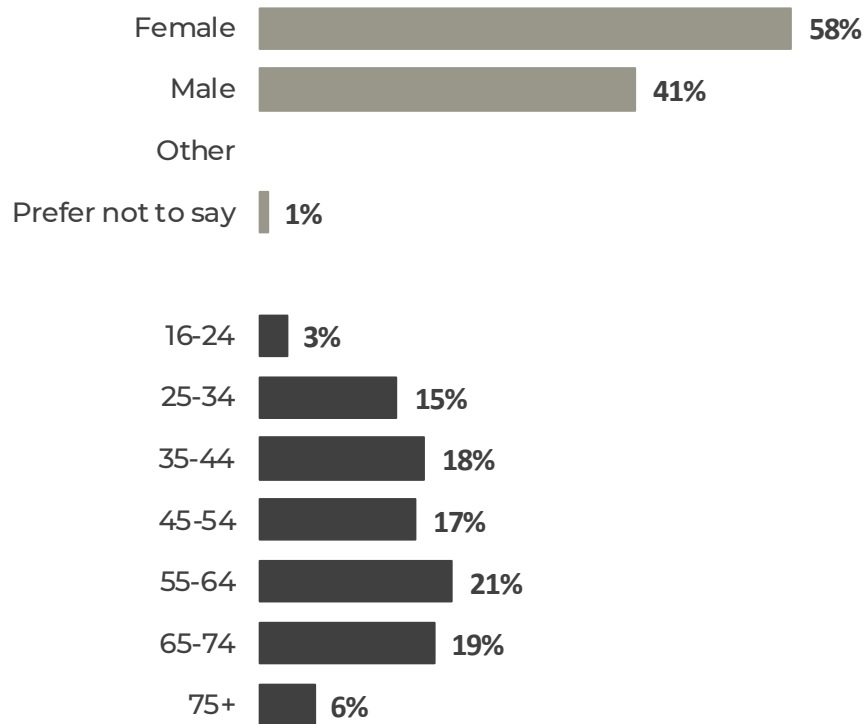
Concern with impact on vulnerable and the health system

Maintain precautions, TTIQ, masks etc

Appendix



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

5,698

Current members

50%

Survey response rate

40+

Major surveys
completed

12

Rounds of
COVID-19
tracking research



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