

2020

COVID-19 Community Survey

Research report



Mildura Rural City Council

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KEY FINDINGS




The timing of this survey was during the second lockdown in Victoria (November 2020), and the findings suggest that the community was particularly struggling with having to home school and travel limitations (particularly the border lockdown).

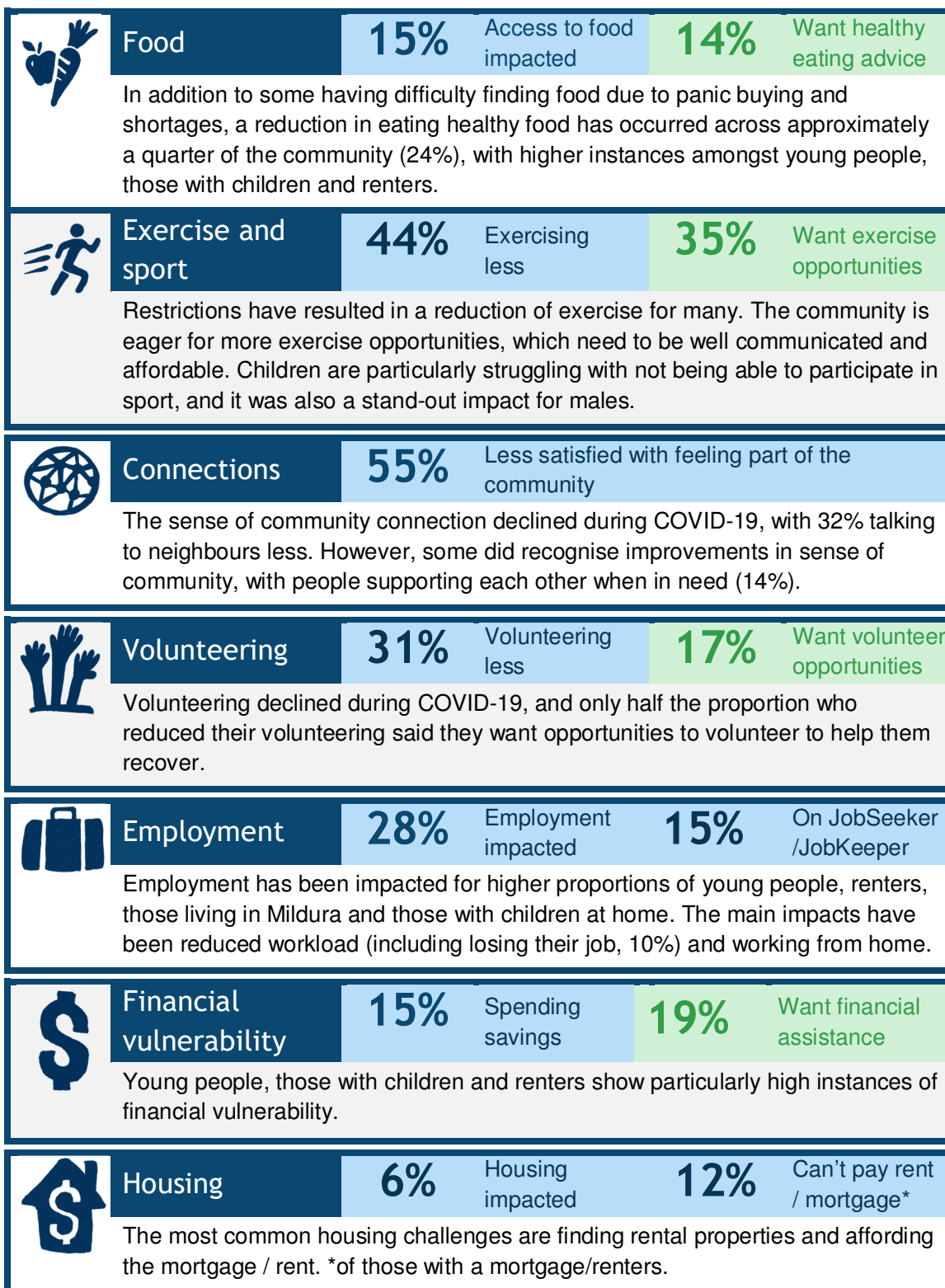
Some of the key insights from across the survey were:

- Border restrictions were having significant impacts on some communities' access to medical services and food.
- Getting sports back up and running was of particular importance to those in the rural areas of the municipality.
- The hardest hit segments of the community in terms of physical health, finances, and consequently mental health are young people, those with children, renters and females. Older adults (65+) are generally experiencing fewer changes to their lives (exercising and income mostly remained constant), and consequently fewer mental health issues.

The following section highlights the key findings by recovery category. All percentages are based on the whole sample, unless otherwise specified. Blue boxes show impacts and green boxes show requested support.

Social recovery

	Mental health	42% Mental health impacted	32% Want mental health support
Changes to mental health mainly stem from isolation and anxiety. Females and young people were more commonly experiencing mental health impacts. Most discourse around the topic of mental health referenced general feelings and concerns, with few specifically mentioning clinical / diagnosed conditions.			
	Child wellbeing	39% Of those with children said child wellbeing impacted	
The main child wellbeing impacts related to isolation and home-schooling. Children miss their friends and family and ability to do sports.			
	Physical health	48% Less satisfied with health	40% Worried about getting COVID-19
In addition to a decline in physical health due to reduced exercise, many (33%) were facing challenges with access to medical services to maintain their health. Access to medical services was hindered due to travel restrictions (SA border and Melbourne) as well as long wait times.			





Safety

32%

Less satisfied with how safe they feel

13%

Want crisis support

Feelings of safety are closely linked to a fear of getting sick from COVID-19. However, there are some who have noticed more anger and violence in the community (11%) and/or at home (family violence, 5%).



Below the poverty line

46%

Less satisfied with standard of living during COVID-19

27% of people who completed the survey were living below the poverty line. They more commonly faced challenges with loss of employment (16%) and household expenses (26%).

Business Recovery



Businesses - community

25%

Want support for business

Due to financial vulnerability in the community, more are switching to online purchasing (39%), buying from local businesses less (22%), and spending less money in general (29%); all which can have an impact on local businesses. There is a lot of support for a 'Buy local' campaign to help businesses get back up and running.



Business owners*

50%

Report a decrease in revenue

46%

Want support for business

*n=117 business owners completed the survey. Many businesses indicated they had adapted through changing their method of service delivery (34%) and/or changing the focus of the business (18%). 32% reported increased mental health challenges as a business impact and 38% want financial support for business.



Tourism & events

7%

Fewer events is a negative impact

50%

Want community events

Events are one of the main suggestions for ways to help the community build back better (17%). Some also recognise the importance of promoting the region to encourage tourism (2%).



Financial supports

19%

Want financial assistance for individuals

16%

Want financial assistance for businesses

Many indicated that financial support would help them or their family through recovery. Those facing more financial issues show higher instances of wanting financial assistance for individuals, particularly those who speak a language other than English (33%), those with a disability (32%), and renters (29%).

Recommendations

- Develop, facilitate, and/or provide grants for **community events** (in-person and online) to help foster connections. These could integrate recovery resources such as promotion of local crisis services and guides on accessing mental health resources within the community.
- Make **mental health services a priority** in terms of ensuring access across the community (both geographically and in terms of affordability) as well as advocating for/facilitating more services, and promoting what is currently available. For instance, educate the community on the steps to access mental health support through Medicare.
- Assist **local businesses** through the recovery with a “Buy Local” campaign, and potentially incentives.
- Facilitate **more exercise opportunities** for the community, be it through promoting opportunities already available, and/or delivering new programs.
- **Encourage local tourism**, both by promoting the region to the rest of Victoria, but also by encouraging locals to holiday locally.
- Target **renters and young people** with communications about mental health resources and financial assistance opportunities.
- If future state border restrictions are implemented it is recommended the Council **advocate for exemption arrangements** so residents can attend their usual locations for medical care and access to food.
- **Promote** available services.
- Make sure recovery activities and communications are appropriate for people who speak a **language other than English**, as take-up amongst this segment is likely to be higher, particularly with respect to assistance with finding employment.
- Provide **promotion assistance for community groups**.

METHODOLOGY

This report presents the findings of the 2020 Mildura COVID-19 Community Survey. The survey was in field from 2-27 November 2020, and achieved 857 completed responses.

The survey was promoted by Council through a range of channels, including:

- Social media;
- Community networks;
- Regional television;
- Radio;
- Newspapers; and
- Organisations in the social health and economic spaces.

In addition to residents completing a survey on behalf of themselves, some responses were collected via one-to-one interview, group interviews, and paper forms; and a range of stakeholders were targeted through the survey including community groups, children and businesses.

The final sample numbers were as follows:

Adult individuals (14+ years)	n=815
Children (9-13 years)	n=20
Community group	n=15
Group interviews	n=7

Sample coverage

When compared to the 2016 Census data for the Mildura Rural City Council local government area, there was under-representation of males within the sample. This is typical for online social research surveys. Given this sample was not collected in a way that was aimed to be representative of the broader community, no weighting correction has been applied to the data. As such, overall findings are likely to be skewed towards the experiences of females.

Gender	Count	%	Census
Male	211	25%	49%
Female	601	72%	51%
Self-describe	2	0%	
Prefer not to say	17	2%	

The survey achieved a good spread of responses across age ranges. When compared to the 2016 Census there is a slightly higher representation amongst 35-54 year olds, however this is typical of online social research open access surveys where no quotas have been applied.

Age	Count	%	Census
5-13	20	2%	12%
14-24	53	6%	15%
25-34	121	15%	13%
35-44	185	22%	12%
45-54	172	21%	14%
55-64	127	15%	14%
65+	153	18%	20%

Distribution within the sample for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally diverse, and vulnerable community members is in line with Census proportions, and provides large enough sample sizes for analysis by these characteristics.

Demographics	Count	%	Census
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	25	3%	3%
Language other than English	102	13%	10%
Disability	53	7%	7%
Under the poverty line (ACOSS)	221	27%	-

The sample has a higher representation of households who are paying off a mortgage, which aligns with the higher instances in the middle age brackets and households incomes are fairly well distributed.

Tenure	Count	%	Census
Owned outright	239	29%	30%
Owned with mortgage	318	39%	30%
Rented	191	24%	27%
Social housing	18	2%	2%
Other / DK / refused	48	6%	10%

Household income	Count	%	Census
Up to \$450 per week	118	15%	14%
451-\$650 per week	109	13%	10%
651-\$900 per week	93	11%	14%
\$901-\$2,000 per week	182	22%	32%
\$2,001-\$4,000 per week	70	9%	16%
\$4,000+ per week	8	1%	2%
Don't know / refused	134	29%	12%

There is a slight over-representation of households with children in the sample when compared to the 2016 Census, with a lower representation of lone person households.

Household structure	Count	%	Census
One person	157	20%	26%
Couple with children living at home	282	35%	26%
Couple without children living at home	224	28%	26%
Single parent	66	8%	11%
Group household	28	4%	3%
Other / refused	50	6%	9%

The locality of respondents was distributed as follows.

Region	Count	%
Mildura	465	56%
Irymple (Irymple and Nichols Point)	88	11%
Merbein and Millewa (Merbein, Merbein South, Meringur and Werrimull)	75	9%
Mallee Track (Murrayville, Ouyen, Underbool and Walpeup)	44	5%
Red Cliffs and surrounds (Red Cliffs, Colignan, Hattah, Cardross and Koorlong)	115	14%
Prefer not to say	18	2%
NSW / other	21	3%

Methodology considerations

Some of the key methods implemented through the survey were as follows:

- Children aged 9-13 were presented with a guardian consent question, with a link to a PDF version of the survey, so that parents could confirm participation. This consent was required to continue with the survey.
- The findings reported in this document are based on a sample of those who self-selected to participate in a survey, which was promoted through Council and community networks. This information cannot be interpreted as providing an incidence of impact across the community, but instead shows an incidence amongst those who responded to the survey. It is likely that it over-represents those within the community who have experienced more extreme impacts.
- Children under the age of 14 were presented with a different set of questions, and only answered the age, gender and location demographics.
- Community groups saw a different set of questions, and didn't answer the demographic questions.

Glossary

Base	The number of responses used to calculate percentages / statistics.
BBB	'Build Back Better'
n=	Number of people who responded to a question. Indicates the base number when calculating percentages.
Respondent	Those who participated in the survey.
Region	The grouped geographic areas for the purpose of analysis.
Sample size	The number of people who provided an answer to the question.
Statistically significant	Highlights a phenomenon / variation in the data that one can be confident is reflective of the entire target population. For more information see following.
Thematic analysis	Grouping of written comments into themes to assist in analysis. See section following.

Thematic analysis

For the questions collecting a written answer, responses have been grouped into meaningful themes to assist with analysis. Where relevant, individual comments have been assigned to multiple themes. An excel document with this thematic analysis has been provided separately and allows for filtering of comments by themes.

Statistical significance testing

Results have been tested for statistical significance using the Bonferroni method at 95% confidence level. Where a statistically significant variation has been identified in the analysis, this has either been included in a written comment or demonstrated in charts and tables with arrows denoting a significantly higher (↑) or lower result (↓). To ensure relevance and usefulness of this report, cross analysis of variables which do not yield any statistically significant insights have not been included in the written analysis.

All findings have had significance testing conducted based on:

- Gender;
- Age;
- Household structure;
- Tenure;
- Region;
- Poverty line;
- Speak a language other than English;
- Disability; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

OVERVIEW

The most common impacts being experienced by the community were:

- **Mental health** (42%) specific to isolation and anxiety. Including 32% of businesses reporting challenges with mental health in the workplace;
- Worried about **getting sick from COVID-19 in public** (40%);
- **Access to medical services** (33%) specific to long wait times and travel restrictions;
- **Employment** situation (28%) specific to reduction in hours / losing jobs, and switching to working from home;
- **Child wellbeing** (21%) specific to not being able to see their friends, mental health issues and home-schooling challenges;
- **Access to food** (15%), specific to food shortages and challenges affording food;
- **Exercising less** (44%);
- **Eating less healthy food** (24%);
- **Drinking more alcohol** (19%);
- **Talking to neighbours less** (32%);
- **Difficulty affording household expenses** (15%);
- **Spending savings** on day to day expenses (15%); and
- Business **reduction in revenue / sales** (50% of businesses).

Young people, renters and those with children are being disproportionately impacted by these things, while older adults (65+ year olds) more commonly report no impacts.

Some of the positive impacts were:

- Having **more time for hobbies and family** (40%);
- Spending **less money in general** (29%); and
- Saving **money on transport** (20%).

Anecdotally, the main impacts being observed in the community relate to (% shows those who thought to mention it rather than proportion who agree it is happening):

Negative

- Local businesses struggling / closed (23%);
- Social isolation (17%); and
- Negativity / division in the community (9%).

Positive

- Community cohesion (14%);
- Support for local business (7%); and
- More time with the family (4%).

The main ideas for building back better were (% shows those who thought to mention it not the proportion who chose it as an option):

- Support local businesses (19% personally, 9% in the community);
- Events and activities (4% personally, 18% in the community).

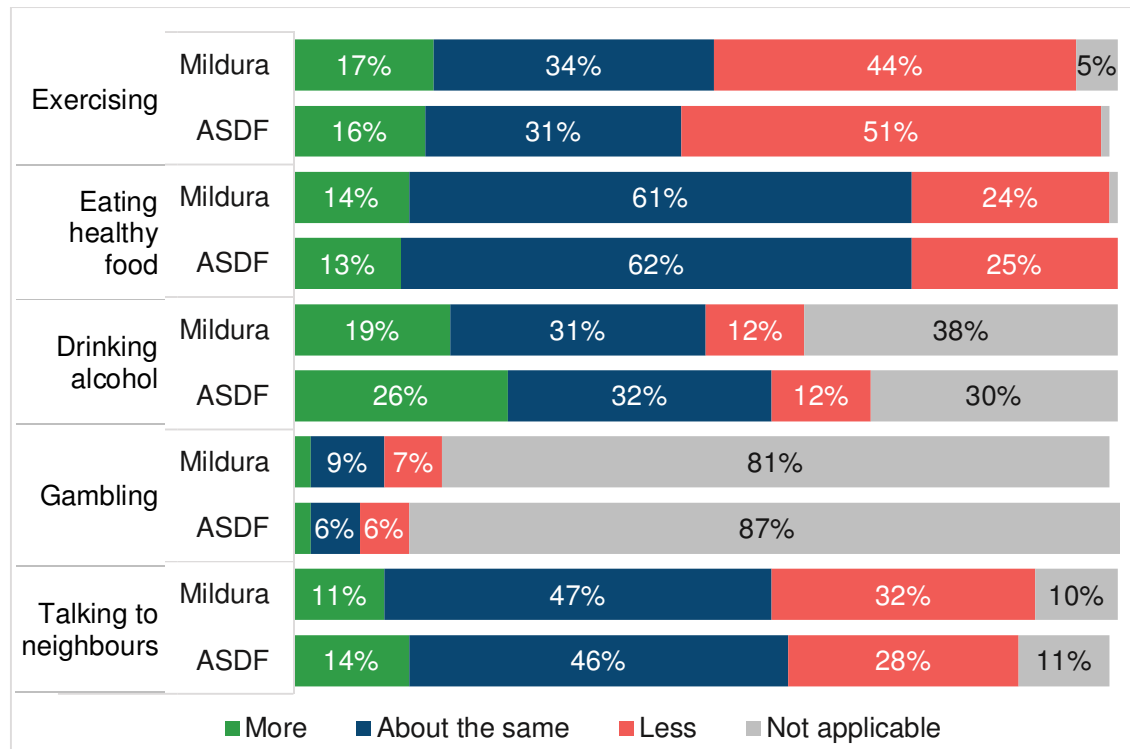
When prompted with a list of ideas for community supports, the most popular offerings to help people through recovery were:

- Community events (50%);
- More exercise opportunities (35%);
- Awareness of what services are available (33%);
- Mental health support (32%); and
- Support for businesses to get back up and running / new business (25%).

COMPARISONS

ASDF COVID-19 Survey

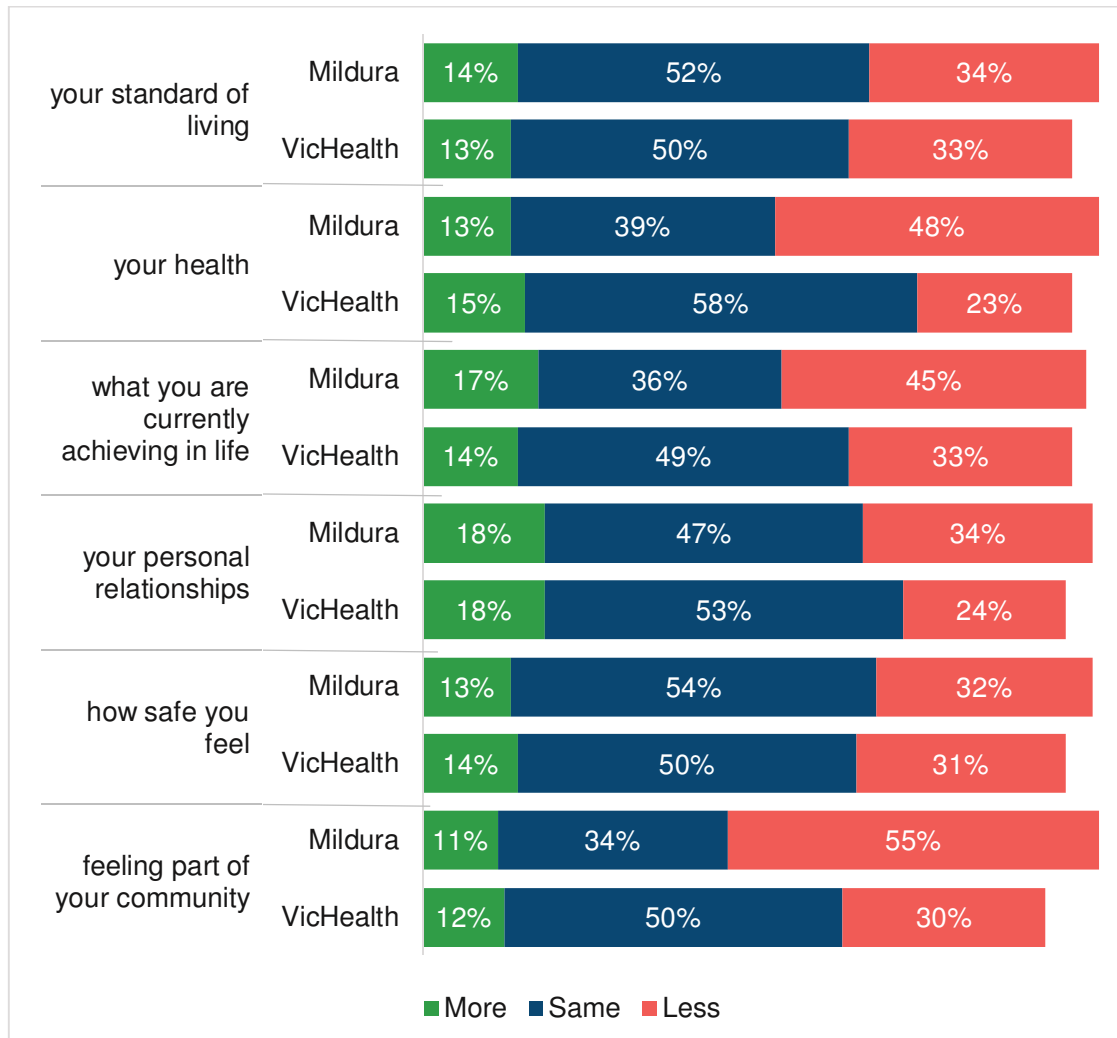
Parts of Q4 were also asked in the ASDF Research COVID-19 survey. To date, the ASDF Research survey data covers 5 Councils from across Victoria spanning from March to November 2020.



Experiences amongst the Mildura community in terms of health and wellbeing behaviour change during COVID-19 are similar to those recorded across the state.

VicHealth Survey

Ratings of change in satisfaction with a range of wellbeing measures since February 2020 are similar in Mildura to those recorded state-wide in the VicHealth survey.



The Mildura data shows slightly higher instances of feeling less satisfied with feeling part of the community, what you are currently achieving in life, and your health. This may be due to timing differences, as the VicHealth survey was conducted in the first lockdown. There were comments within the Mildura survey saying that people are struggling more during the second lockdown which may explain the variation. This has been supported by anxiety data tracked through the ASDF survey which shows a spike in anxiety levels during the second lockdown.

SOCIAL RECOVERY

Mental health and wellbeing

Mental health was the most commonly mentioned area where people have experienced changes as a result of COVID-19.

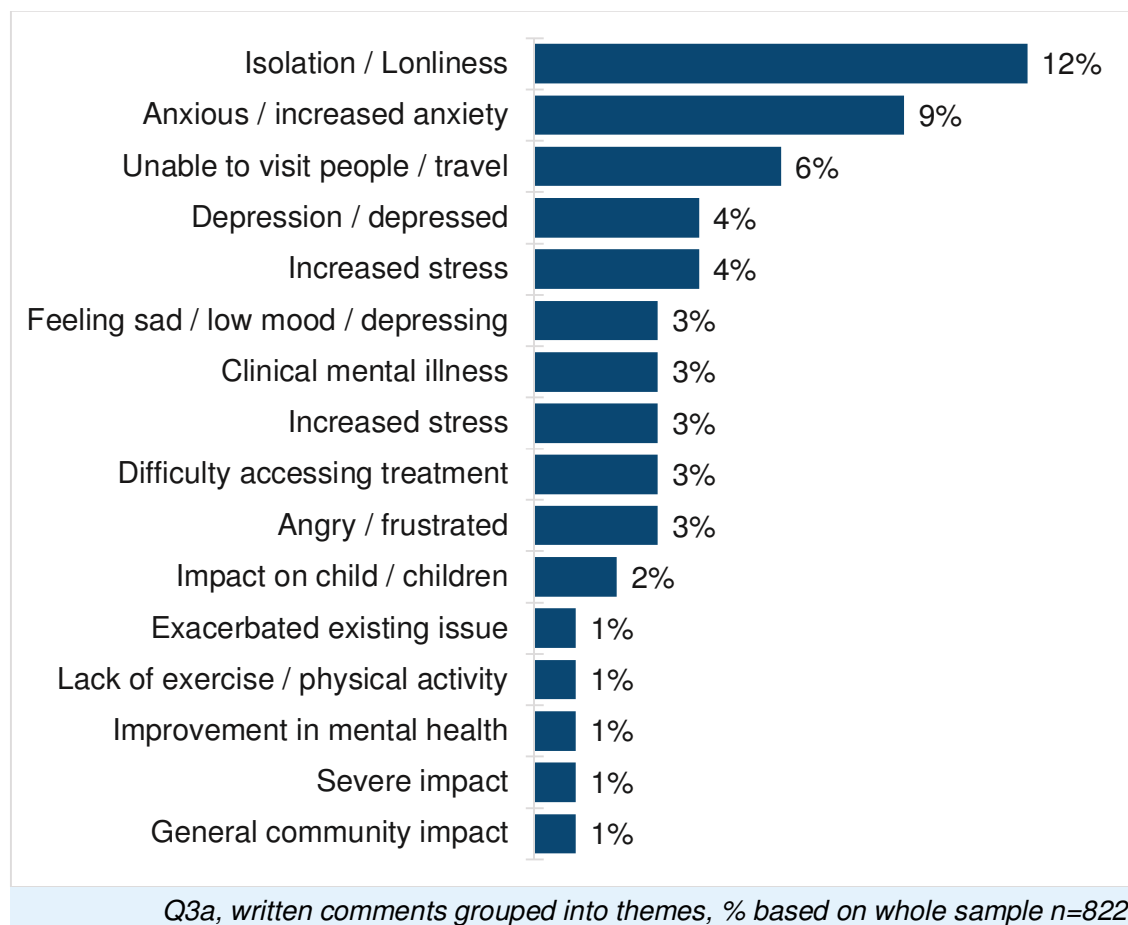
42% Said that they had **experienced changes to mental health** due to COVID-19.

Q2, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting a change to mental health was more common amongst:

- Females (45%, compared to 33% males); and
- Young and middle aged adults (52% 14-44 year olds, compared to 26% 65+ year olds).

When asked to write in the impacts they were experiencing relating to mental health, the most common experiences related to isolation / loneliness and anxiety. Only 3% provided a comment that could be interpreted as relating to a clinical / diagnosed mental illness.



People are feeling trapped and lonely and many are dealing with added difficulties of home-schooling and stress about their employment.

For the first time in my life I have started to suffer from anxiety. I thought I was having a heart attack and it turned out to be an anxiety attack. I have never had these before.
Female, 25-44, Mildura

Family strain due to not being able to visit other family members very much, restrictions in how we socialise is difficult. As business owners constant worry about whether our business may be closed again and revenue is limited- innovation fatigue.
Feeling much more worried, anxious, disconnected. Female, 25-44, Mildura

I feel more anxious and stressed about getting sick or losing my job. Quite often I feel angry and panicky. I also feel waves of sadness. These emotions come and go so it's like I'm on a permanent emotional rollercoaster. Female, 25-44, Irymple

Increase in anxiety and feeling depressed and isolated. Feeling guilty as I kept my job but finding it incredibly distressing with the increased workload and expectations from funding providers and management.
Female, 65+, Mallee Track

As I already suffer from mental health issues the covid isolation, loneliness and fear of contracting the disease has exacerbated my symptoms. Female, 45-64, Irymple

Before COVID-19 I used to socialise with family and friends on a regular basis however restrictions have prevented this or made this hard, feeling isolated and disconnected. Female, 25-44, Mildura

You feel as if people are not willing to be around you, its lonely, sometimes feel a little sad, sometimes haven't been able to see parents and they are the only people in my life, don't have friends. Female, 25-44, Merbein and Millewa

Isolation, I live on my own and new to community two years ago, All social activities I started to do have been banned most of the year. No travel allowed to see family and friends. Male, 25-44, Red cliffs and surrounds

Isolation. Less access to housing and employment. Children are isolated. Sports and physical exercise via going to gyms etc. impacted. Not able to travel. Less socialising. Female, 25-44

Overwhelmed with 4 young children at home. Increasingly frustrated. Went to the doctor for medication for anxiety. Female, 25-44

Furthermore, when asked to write in negative impacts of COVID-19 on the community, some mentioned impacts relating to mental health.

8%

Put forth a comment relating to **mental health as a negative community impact** of COVID-19.

Q9a, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Most of these comments related to a general perception that mental health was declining amongst the community without offering any specific examples, although a few did mention that they had seen people in public places acting in a way that suggested they were experiencing mental health challenges.

Everybody I've spoken to has experienced detrimental effects on their mental health. We need to spend time with other people. Our support networks or the perception of support has been cut off. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Loss of connection, no social events, general feeling of anger, apathy, upset. Female, 25-44, Mildura

There is fear and anxiety. There have been two recent youth suicides in our township. People lost hope during the second lockdown. Mental health has had an impact on many of my friends and those within the community. Female, 45-64, Red cliffs and surrounds

Lack of social supports for elderly severe impact on their mental health. Unable to get counselling appointments. Isolation for the elderly. Female, 45-64, Mildura

I feel there is a lot of mental health issues, not all people are happy with their own company so they find working from home hard. Female, 45-64, Red cliffs and surrounds

Child wellbeing

During the time period this survey was conducted, restrictions had required children to be home-schooled, not see their friends, and not participate in group activities such as sport. The survey sought to understand how these changes had impacted on children. Many adults recognised that their child's wellbeing had been impacted.

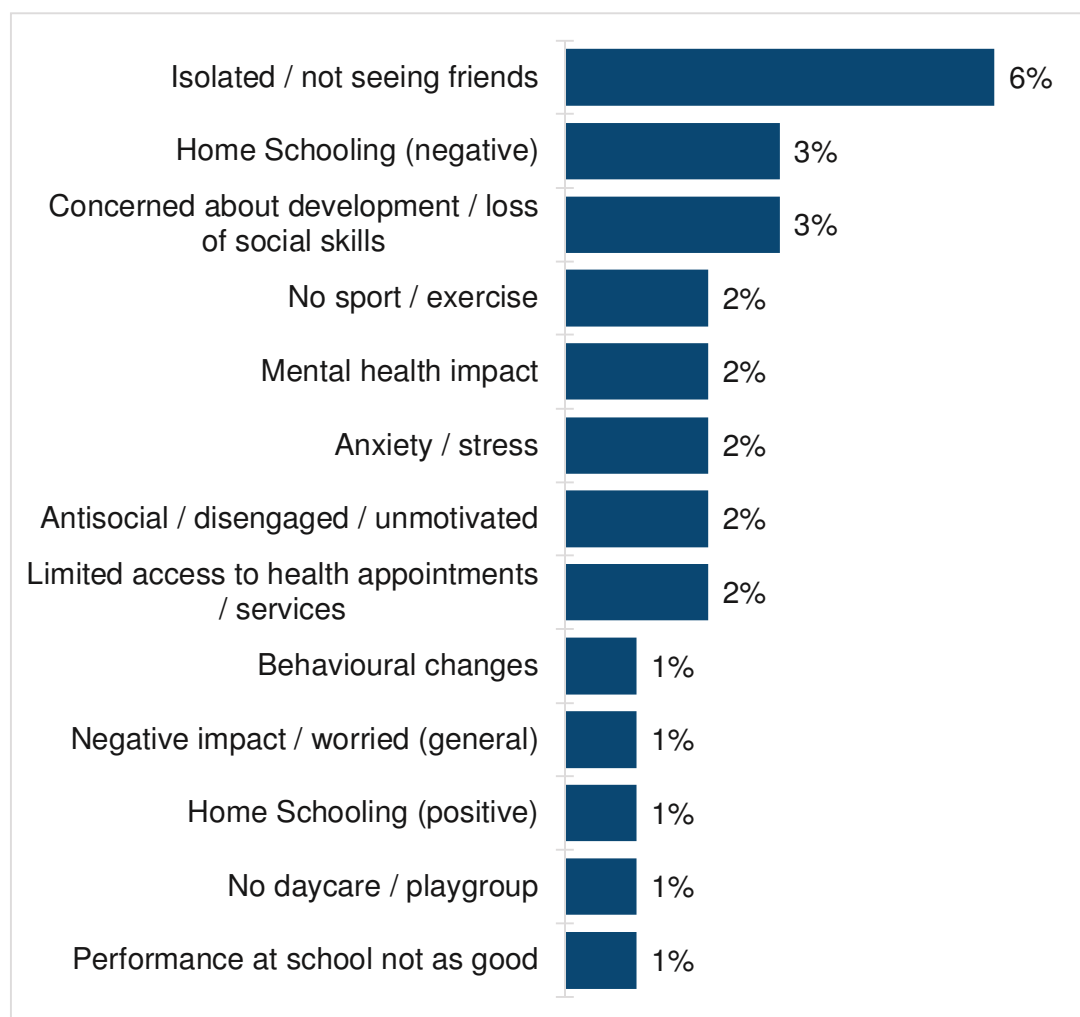
39% Of those with children reported that COVID-19 had **impacted on child wellbeing**.

Q2, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting a change to child wellbeing was more common amongst:

- Females (25%, compared to 9% males); and
- 35-44 year olds (34%, compared to 1% 65+ year olds).

When asked to write in which aspects of child wellbeing were being impacted, most mentioned something relating to the isolation and home-schooling impacts.



Q3d, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

My teenage daughter struggled with not seeing friends and my son who lives alone at uni went weeks without seeing another person!

Female, 45-64, Merbein and Millewa

Home schooling 3 children whilst trying to work full time has had a huge toll on all of us. This kids have HATED the second lockdown and even the most resilient child has struggled with separation from friends & peers. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Better child wellbeing due to being at home with each other. No colds due to not being around kids. Male, 45-64,

The children were impacted because of the social isolation of remote learning and not being able to visit family and friends. Using social media was helpful in the beginning but over the months and months of not seeing people made them sad, bored, unhappy. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Lack of solid friendship relationships being built due to lock downs.

Lack of quality education due to all schools taking remote learning on differently. Female, 25-44

I have an 18 month old and this has affected him in his social life. Unable to go out as much and be around other kids/people. This can effect kids for the rest of their life. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Cancellation or closing or restrictions imposed on maternal and child health services meant I am unsure my child is developing appropriately. Female, 25-44, Red cliffs and surrounds

I am very worried about the impacts I have seen Covid have on my children, particularly me eldest who has developed panic attacks and many different fears in general - which have very much been prompted by Covid. I cannot get him in to see a psychologist - been on a waiting list but will have waited 2.5 months for our first appointment - he needs more support than what the school wellbeing staff can provide. Female, 25-44, Mildura

I am a teacher and therefore deal with students who have been in Remote Learning and families in lockdown. There has been a significant increase in welfare issues over this period. Resettling the students back into schooling has been difficult as some are disengaged and disenchanted. Everyone is exhausted and the kids behaviour is very unsettled, this is a sign of how the families are also feeling. Female, 45-64, Mildura

When asked to write in negative impacts of COVID-19 on the community, 3% wrote in a comment relating to child development.

*Parents facing hectic schedules have found it hard to manage work and home schooling.
Kids are watching more TV and online games have increased during COVID-19.
Female, 25-44, Irymple*

There were 20 children aged between 9 and 13 who completed a different section of the survey specifically for them. Through these written answers it is clear that the greatest challenges for children (from their perspective) is not being able to see their friends.

When they realised we needed to go to home schooling because I liked to see my friends and I couldn't.

Nowhere to go with my friends. Not being able to see my friends every day.

The fact that I don't get to see everyone I would normally like my friends and family. FaceTiming just wasn't the same.

Not being able to see family was also put forth as a negative impact.

And we couldn't travel to see my family and I was so sad.

Not being able to travel overseas or see family in Melbourne.

Not being able to see my family in Melbourne and Adelaide was not good, I talked to them on the phone but real life is better.

I didn't like not being able to stay with my grandparents

Some also reported feeling sad and/or unmotivated or other mental health challenges.

Nothing I used to do is fun anymore because I've used it all up.

My Anxiety

It felt like there wasn't much purpose to anything, it was hard to like get out of bed in the morning during lockdown.

And there was mention of not liking home schooling.

School is just not the same sitting in front of a laptop. My bedroom turned into a classroom which was weird and confusing

Need to do a lot more work in school because we missed so much. Not as much time to prepare for the test we have had since returning.

I hated home schooling because it was so bad because my mum was working and we had some fights

Not being able to see my friends at school each day

Seven mentioned not being able to do sport or recreation as a negative aspect, as outlined in the Sport and recreation section.

There were some positive wellbeing outcomes as well, including:

- More time at home with the family (7 mentions);
- Having more play / recreation time, including gaming consoles and bike rides (6 mentions);
- Getting schoolwork done faster / learning more (5 mentions);
- Not having to get ready for school in the morning (2 mentions);
- Not having to go to school (2 mentions); and
- Spending more time with pets (2 mentions).

Realising what I have already got, like more time to sort myself out and creative time. It was good to just stop and get away from wanting the next thing, the cool thing and always trying to keep up. I wouldn't have discovered how much I love mountain bike riding. I became more aware of how other people have been affected by COVID-19 and other things. We have a lot more time to be a family and we have stopped rushing all the time.

Recovery

When presented with a list of potential community supports, mental health supports was the third most frequently selected support that might help individuals and families recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

32%

Said **mental health support** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Q10a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Findings suggest that some sectors of the community may have greater need of mental health services:

- Females (35%, compared to 24% males);
- Young people (42% 14-44 year olds), but not so much older people (15% 65+);
- Those with children (38%, compared to 28% of those without children); and
- Renters (38%, compared to 24% own outright).

Aspects of mental health were also mentioned as ways the community can build back better (1% of the sample mentioned an aspect relating to mental health). Some of the ideas include the following. In the most part related comments were very general without any specific examples or ideas:

- Mental health support;
- Improve access;
- Increase awareness; and
- Programs that address mental health.

Have a huge day in the mall with Mental Health activities, Suicide Prevention and Awareness and RU OK, Beyond Blue, Men's health, Lifeline, and our local help services. Give us the proper information and where to go for help and assistance for those who need it.

Female, 45-64

More resources and communication as to how to get resources such as accessing mental health services, crisis teams, making sure the disadvantaged are looked after and the services are used by them first instead of greedy people who just want to be comfortable. Female, 14-24, Red cliffs and surrounds

Not worrying so much about everything like not touching things, needing to wear a face mask, hand sanitising so I don't catch COVID-19. I'm looking forward to just doing something without worrying about COVID-19. Not being cooped up inside. Child

In the future, children are looking forward to being able to travel and go places again (12 mentions), activities with friends and family (6 mentions), being able to do sport again (5 mentions), not having to worry / hear about getting COVID-19 (2 mentions), and not having to wear masks (2 mentions).

Physical health

At the time of surveying (November 2020) there were a range of restrictions for regional Victoria that could have an impact on physical health:

- Up to two people visit you at home a day;
- Libraries open for up to 20 people indoors;
- No more than 10 people can gather in a space;
- One person per four square meter indoors;
- Indoor swimming pools have a limit of 20 patrons, subject to density limits;
- Outdoor swimming pools have a limit of 50 patrons, subject to density limits;
- Indoor non-contact sport and physical recreation for people under 18 permitted;
- Face masks must be worn; and
- Up to 10 people for indoor or outdoor fitness.

These restrictions were impacting on satisfaction with health for around half of the community.

48%

Said that they were **less satisfied with their health** during COVID-19 when compared to February 2020.

Q1, rating out of 5, n=822

Reporting a reduction in satisfaction with health was more common amongst:

- Females (49%, compared to 41% males); and
- Renters (56%, compared to 40% own outright).

40%

Said they were **worried about getting COVID-19 when in public**.

Q2, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting feeling worried about getting COVID-19 when in public was more common amongst:

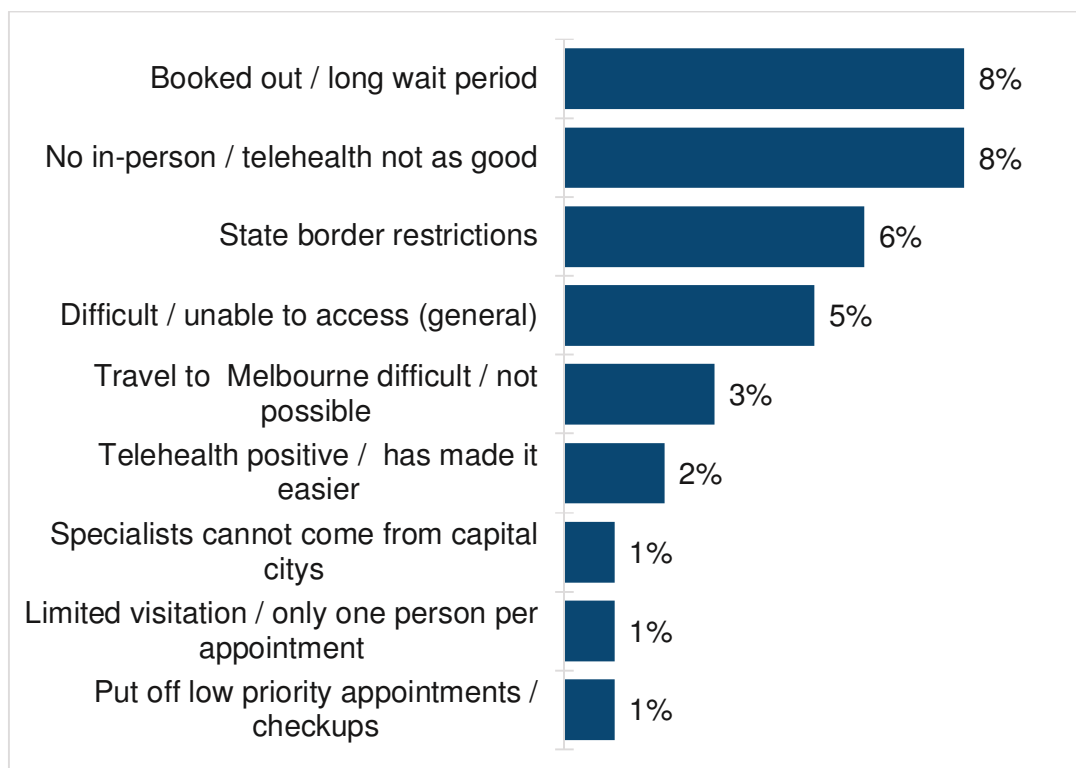
- 25-44 year olds (46%, compared to 29% 65+ year olds);
- Those with children at home (44%, compared to 32% lone person households); and
- Renters (50%, compared to 36% owners).

33%

Reported that COVID-19 had impacted on their **access to medical services**.

Q2, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

The incidence of being impacted in terms of access to medical services was consistent across all demographics and locations. The main impacts were relating to long waiting periods, not liking telehealth, and the impact of travel restrictions (state border and to Melbourne).



Q3f, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Despite this seeming dislike of telehealth, when asked later in the survey what supports might help them or their family recover from COVID-19, 17% mentioned online/telehealth. This is more popular amongst females (18%), 25-44 year olds (20%) and those not living below the poverty line (21%).

Simply needing to wait up to 3 weeks for an appointment with our GP. Having to wait a long time to get in to mental health services also. Family members are waiting for surgery and in pain waiting for the SA border to open. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Due to the amount of people waiting for and needing access to services we are on a waiting list when we need urgent help now! Female, 25-44, Mildura

Children when they are unwell are unable to see Dr and are expected to do over the phone consultation. The Dr can't see what is really wrong with the child over the phone. Female, 25-44, Merbein and Millewa

Medical appointments are generally tele health. I don't feel that I get as good a service that way as the doctor can't do hands on things like take my blood pressure and I can't see her face when talking to her, that I miss. If it was a video session instead of a phone call I'd be happier with the service. Female, 45-64, Mildura

My son has health issues and not being able to travel to SA for treatment has been distressing and impacting his current and future health. Female, 45-64, Mildura

Food

The survey sought to explore the extent to which the community was experiencing issues with access to food, and help understand the particulars of these experiences. At the time of surveying there was a food service being offered in the municipality by SMECC.

15%

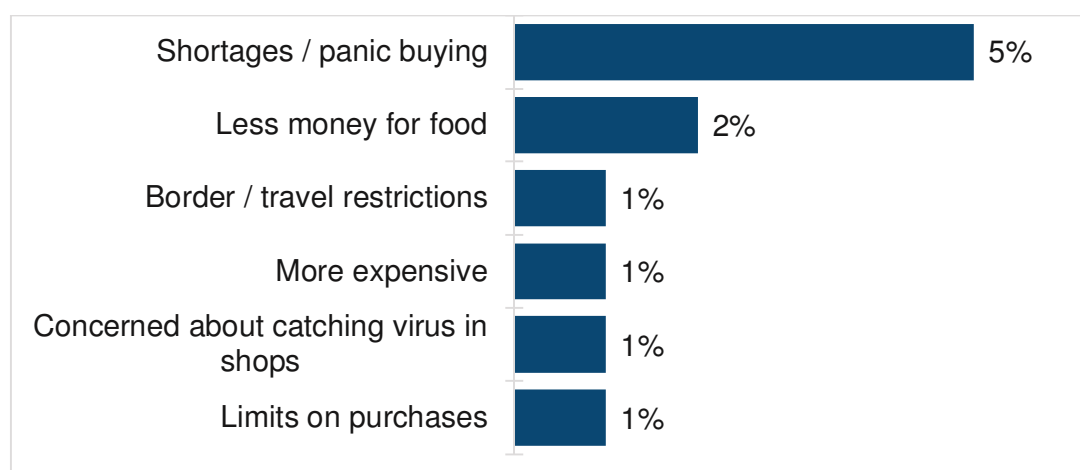
Reported that COVID-19 had impacted on their **access to food**.

Q2, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting a change in access to food was more common amongst:

- Renters (24%, compared to 11% owners).

Challenges with access to food were primarily due to shortages and panic buying, although there were also some who reported not being able to afford food.



Q3c, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Impact of food availability (shortages) and restrictions accessibility (e.g., in person and click-and-collect) and on what you could/could not buy (e.g. cannot buy milk and carnation milk for cooking together due to limits). Female, 25-44, Irymple

No access to fresh veg, very limited groceries items, pubs restaurants takeaways closed etc. because of border and restrictions. Female, 45-64

Some of the foods got high price compare as before and our money sometimes are limited so it was very hard to afford some items for me. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Food has become more expensive. You can't rely on supply. Meat, fruit and dairy supplies are inconsistent at times. Shopping on a budget has been harder. Having to rely on others just isn't good. Female, 65+, Mildura

A quarter said they have been eating less healthy food, while 14% have reported an increase in eating healthy food.

24%

Said they had been **eating less healthy food** since COVID-19.

Q4, rating of item as more, same or less, n=822

Reporting a reduction in eating healthy food was more common amongst:

- 14-24 year olds (38%, compared to 7% 65+ year olds);
- Those with children (30%, compared to 18% lone person households); and
- Renters (32%, compared to 10% own outright).

When asked whether they had been financially impacted by COVID-19 in a number of ways, 7% indicated that their financial situation had resulted in them having difficulty affording food.

7%

Said they have had difficulty **affording food** due to COVID-19.

Q5a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting difficulty affording food was more common amongst:

- Young people (17% 14-24 year olds, compared to 3% 65+ year olds); and
- Those with children (10%, compared to 4% couples without children and 3% lone person households);
- Renters (12%, compared to 3% own outright); and
- Those living below the poverty line (13%, compared to 4% of those living above the poverty line).

I walk around on a 25 acre block because there wasn't anything but my vegetable garden to do. And for all that walking I still gained weight because bread costs less than fresh fruit and vegetables. I have veg coming in season now but it's been difficult trying to eat properly between March and November 2020. Male, 45-64, Mildura

To address this reduction in healthy eating, some would welcome advice on healthy eating.

14% Said **healthy eating advice** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Q10a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

This increases to 17% amongst those who said they are eating less healthy food, and would also be of interest to many who said they are eating more healthy food already (20%).

Findings suggest that some sectors of the community may have greater need of healthy eating advice:

- Females (16%, compared to 8% males);
- Young people (34% 14-24 year olds, compared to 11% 45+ year olds and 5% 65+ year olds);
- Those who speak a language other than English at home (27%, compared to 12% who speak English only); and
- Renters (22%, compared to 6% own outright).

Exercise

A reduction in exercise can impact on obesity rates and a range of health risks which rely on high intensity exercise to mitigate (such as cardiovascular health). Physical exercise is also recognised as contributing to improved mental wellbeing¹.

More than two in five community members indicated that they had reduced the amount they exercise during COVID-19.

44%

Said they had been **exercising less** since COVID-19.

Q4, rating of item as more, same or less, n=822

Reporting a reduction in exercising was more common amongst:

- Renters (54%, compared to 36% own outright).

Not many people who come to personal training when we went into the first lockdown and it made it so hard it made me feel anxious about it and I was doing a lot of thinking too. Now after the 2nd lockdown it made me feel a lot stronger and more healthy and exercise too. Male, 25-44, Mildura

The senior citizens has been closed therefore enabling the companionship & exercise associated with indoor bowls to be missed greatly. Female, 65+, Mildura

Providing more exercise opportunities is one of the key opportunities to assist the community in the recovery period.

35%

Said **more exercise opportunities** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Q10a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Wanting more exercise opportunities was higher amongst:

- Females (37%, compared to 27% males);
- Young people (49% 14-24 year olds, compared to 25% 65+ year olds);
- Those with children (40%, compared to 27% lone person households); and
- Those not living under the poverty line (40%, compared to 30% of those living under the poverty line).

¹

https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/programsandprojects/physicalactivity/attachments/physical_act_fact.ashx

Sport and recreation

6%

Put forth a comment relating to **less / no sport** as a negative community impact of COVID-19.

Q9a, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Putting forth a comment relating to less/no sport as a negative aspect of COVID-19 was more common amongst:

- Males (10%, compared to 5% females);
- Those not living under the poverty line (10%, compared to 3% of those living under the poverty line); and
- Those who live in the Mallee Track region (20%, compared to 4% of those in Mildura.

Loss of sporting competitions and hence reduction in exercise options and great reduction in social interaction with the local and wider Sunraysia community. No demographics specified

Children/teenagers I have seen upset and angry. To be stripped of their friends and not allowed to play any sport was very heartbreaking to watch (all because of politics and the SA border closure). Female, 45-64

A general pall of sadness over the community. A sadness that so many activities have been cancelled. Theatre, sport events have all been abandoned which has impacted on many people. Female, Mildura

I am involved in sport and the number of kids that have spent the time at home on the couch playing video games is making it really difficult to reengage them in sport. Female, 45-64, Mildura

As a small town we already had limited facilities and have often felt forgotten. We relied heavily on our neighbouring town over the border. Unable to access even more facilities or having some hesitate when seeing us there is horrendous. We are the only Vic team in an SA league and already struggled as we couldn't get funding for anything as Vic sources said we don't qualify as we are in SA league and SA sources saying we don't qualify cause we are Victorian. It's even harder now as our league continues without us and we will struggle to re-join without major support. In a small town like ours, sport is the heart. Female, 25-44, Mallee Track

A number of the children who participated in the survey mentioned not being able to do sport as a negative impact of COVID-19 on their lives.



Five children mentioned they were looking forward to doing sport and recreation again once COVID-19 is over.

Alcohol

An increase in alcohol consumption can have a wide range of both short-term and long-term impacts on health, including reduced mental health, personal injury, and increase in risk of cancer, cardiovascular and brain related diseases².

19%

Said they had been **drinking more alcohol** since COVID-19.

Q4, rating of item as more, same or less, n=822

Reporting an increase in drinking alcohol was more common amongst:

- 25-44 year olds (23%, compared to 11% 65+ year olds);
- Those who only speak English at home (21%, compared to 6% of those who speak a language other than English); and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (36%, compared to 19% others).

² <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/alcohol/about-alcohol/what-are-the-effects-of-alcohol>

Connections

COVID-19 restrictions placed stringent limitations on the ability to connect with friends and family, with limits on number and duration of visits in the home, SA border and Melbourne travel restrictions, as well as limits on the number of people allowed in public indoor spaces. This inability to socialise has been one of the most significant changes to people's lives, and is having a flow-on effect on mental health (isolation / loneliness).

55%

Said that they were **less satisfied with feeling part of their community** during COVID-19 when compared to February 2020.

Q1, rating out of 5, n=822

Reporting a reduction in satisfaction with feeling part of their community was more common amongst:

- Families with children (57%, compared to 52% of couples without children).

Community connection

As a means for measuring community connection, the survey sought to understand if people had reduced their connection to their neighbours, with findings showing a third had reduced the amount they had been talking to their neighbours.

32%

Said they have been **talking to their neighbours less** since COVID-19.

Q4, rating of item as more, same or less, n=822

Reporting a decrease in talking to their neighbours was more common amongst:

- Renters (38%, compared to 29% owners); and
- Those living below the poverty line (38%, compared to 28% of those not in poverty).

Social isolation was the second most commonly mentioned negative community impact of COVID-19.

17%

Put forth a comment relating to social Isolation / limited socialising as a negative community impact of COVID-19.

Q9a, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Many elderly having to spend more time at home, often alone or with limited social interaction. Border crossing restrictions have affected ability to visit family and friends particularly in SA. Male, 65+, Mildura

The main impact is not being allowed to travel interstate because of the border closures. Due to the restrictions, we could not visit friends as we were used to, before. We gather regularly as we are sociable and talk to one another in our community. COVID-19 restrictions have heavily impacted us getting together and sharing with each other. Male, 45-64, Mildura

Less connection especially living remotely. Have gone a week without seeing anyone not living in my house. Isolation. No social supports for practical assistance or emotional assistance. Female, 25-44

Our whole social and support network collapsed. We kept in touch on Facebook etc. but still not good for mental health as well as physical health. I found a lot of my daughters friends ended up having major health problems to the extent that one became suicidal as she was not able to get the physical emotional support she needed at the time. Fortunately she was able to overcome it but it has been close a few times. Female, 45-64, Merbein and Millewa

At the start it was hard not being able to visit friends in Mildura. The number who could gather socially was restricted, therefore, it was difficult getting-together. When the restrictions were eased, still we are not visiting friends much, as we are trying to be careful and not get sick. Male, 45-64, Mildura

Despite these negative impacts on community connections, some did recognise some positive impacts in this area, mostly relating to how people are supporting each other and helping those with greatest need.

14%

Put forth a comment relating to community cohesion / supporting each other as a positive community impact of COVID-19.

Q9b, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Compassion & care for people in general. People helping people, especially reaching out to those in need from a distance. Female, 45-64, Mildura

I see more people communicating with each other and strangers striking up conversations even if it is in how angry they are about current shut downs. Female, 25-44, Mildura

People were more conscious of their neighbours and the elderly living on their own - they kept an eye out for them. Some people cooked meals for those who were lonely. No demographics

I've noticed a lot more people enjoying the simple things in life and outdoor activities. People have banded together and really support each other. Female, 25-44, Merbein and Millewa

When presented with a list of potential community supports and asked which might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19, a number of community connection related opportunities were identified.

50% Said **community events** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

13% Said **online social connection opportunities** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Q10a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Findings suggest that some sectors of the community may have higher levels of take-up of community connection opportunities:

- 25-44 year olds (61% community events, 19% online connections, compared to 38% and 8% respectively amongst 65+ year olds;
- Renters (19% want online connections, compared to 9% own outright); and
- Those not below the poverty line (56% want community events, compared to 44% of those under the poverty line).

Volunteering

31%

Said they had been **volunteering less** since COVID-19.

Q4, rating of item as more, same or less, n=822

Reporting a decrease in volunteering was more common amongst:

- Merbein and Millewa (46%, compared to 25% Red cliffs and surrounds and 27% Mildura).

When presented with a list of potential community supports, volunteering opportunities was selected by one in six as a support that might help individuals and families recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

17%

Said **volunteering opportunities** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Q10a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Findings suggest that some sectors of the community may show higher take-up of volunteering opportunities:

- Renters (24%, compared to 15% owners).

Volunteering was also mentioned by 2% of the sample as a potential way they or their family could help to build back better. Those who mentioned volunteering (15 comments) just mentioned volunteering without providing any further information to clarify the type of volunteering.

Community groups

There were 15 responses to the survey provided on behalf of community groups. Most of these were recreation groups (7) or children's services (3). A full list of groups who participated can be found in appendix 2.

Community groups are reporting having to significantly change their operations (9 mentions), with many not operating at all during the periods of strict restrictions.

We haven't been able to access our Mildura campus since March- it is located inside the Mildura South Primary School and they have closed to visitors. We can't even get in to get some of our toys out.

We were shut down completely for six weeks and allowed to play social golf only for another seven weeks. Numbers very limited in the clubhouse and take away beverages only.

Members of our group have not been able to meet weekly for indoor bowls.

Had to cancel finals last season Had to cancel presentation night last season Late start to season.

Those who have managed to stay operating have either changed their method of operation or faced challenges conforming to COVID-19 management requirements.

More preparations prior to start of season in planning and implementation... more preparation for start of each competition day... competition day taking longer, more arduous for the athletes ... added responsibilities/duties for Covid Safe Officers.

We have delivered a live online program, offered an alternate format of sessions and have done an excellent job of adapting to the circumstances.

Clubs fearful of stuffing something up and carrying responsibility.

The other main impact was financial (9 mentions), with community groups unable to recruit new members, gain income from facilities, or having to pause membership fees.

no school equipment hire, lost income \$7000 no coaching in schools (lost income \$1000).

Ongoing site rent costs whilst unable to receive income from Members or generate sales to public.

Loss of income from users of our facility.

we don't typically much if any support for delivery of projects, or allocation of funds for projects in our community. We have support from Council Community Futures which is fantastic We have to fight for any allocation of funds for Council.

We have not been able to recruit new members, raise any funds at all, or promote our sport in any way.

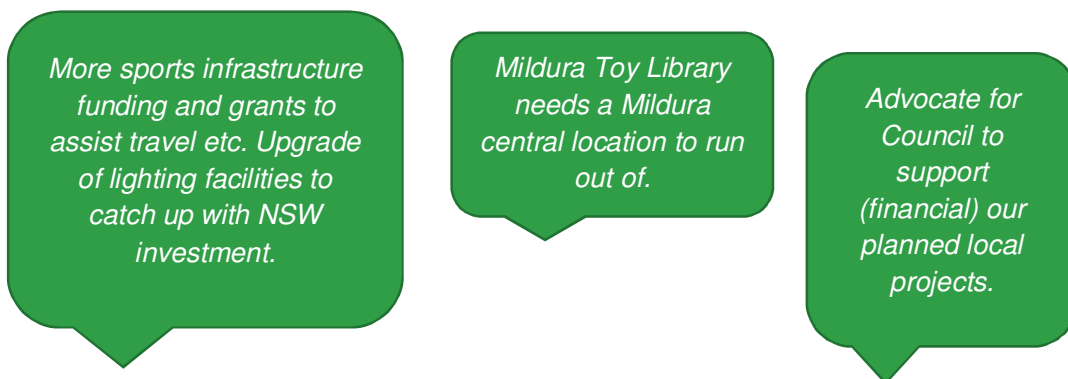
Wellbeing of members was another commonly stated impact (5 mentions).



To help build back better, community groups will be looking to promote their group and get new members (6 mentions).



Some will also need infrastructure support (5 mentions) or financial support (2 mentions).



Employment and education

Employment

Employment was one of the main impacts being experienced by the community, alongside mental health and social connections.

28%

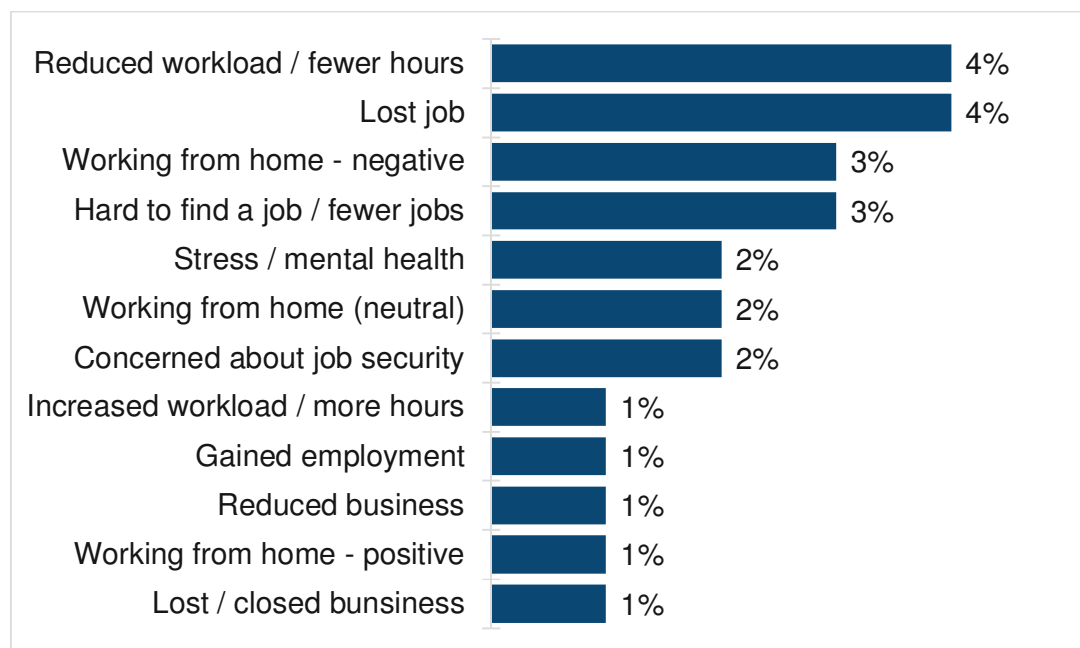
Reported that COVID-19 had impacted on their **employment situation**.

Q2, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting a change to an employment situation was more common amongst:

- Those in Mildura (30%, compared to 17% Red Cliffs and surrounds);
- Young people (38% 14-24, compared to 3% 65+ year olds);
- Those with children at home (32%, compared to 18% lone person); and
- Renters (34%, compared to 13% own outright).

When asked to write in how their employment had been effected, the most common impacts were a reduction in workload / work hours, losing their job, or having to work from home (with most comments about this being negative).



I lost my job in April. First time being unemployed in 23 years since my first job at 15. Took 7 months of applying for jobs to get one interview. I'm a highly skilled professional and couldn't even get a call back about admin or entry level roles.

Female, 25-44, Mildura

The dole doesn't cover bugger all. Especially now it's dropped in dollars and will drop again. I cannot see how I can continue with home mortgage & household bills. I've had to let my private insurance go, the car is on the cheapest insurance I could find.

Female, 45-64

Working from home has been challenging at times. It has its pros and cons. I'm lucky in my role, I have to be in the office sometimes, so I get a balance between working at home and being in the office. I have felt more isolated from my team, my superiors, and other colleagues.
Female, 45-64

Working from home can be a bit tough at times given the difficulty in switching off at the end of the working day. Male, 45-64, Mildura

Working from home is incredibly challenging when you also have children at home. More so when one of your children is mentally ill. My employer was good, however, the job still needs to be done.
Female, 45-64, Mildura

I have been working from home since March 2020. My desk is set up in my bedroom as there are no other areas I could utilise that ensured confidentiality of client work within my home. Work has been busier during COVID-19 and more stressful than usual on top of dealing with COVID-19 personally. Work has been as supportive as they can be, which I'm grateful for. Female, 25-44, Mildura

I was dropped down to minimum hours, although I am very lucky to have still had employment, it was hard with my income to budget for bills & mortgage as my hours we cut down by about 75%. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Only working 20 hours a week not 31 as I am part time and live by myself so am missing about half of my pay so am concerned about payment of bills etc. even though I am a good budget person. But there is only me I don't get or gave any assistance.
Female, 45-64, Mildura

Before the pandemic I was actively searching for new career opportunities. I have fewer options now. My jobs workload was doubled basically overnight. Working from home was difficult with very young children.
Female, 25-44, Red cliffs and surrounds

Doing more work and very tired for half the pay. Just about would have been better off to stop working!!! Female, 45-64, Merbein and Millewa

10%

Said they have **become unemployed** due to COVID-19.

Q5a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting that they have become unemployed was more common amongst:

- Young people (21% 14-24 year olds, compared to 12% 25-64 year olds);
- Renters (19%, compared to 4% own outright and 10% own with mortgage); and
- Those living below the poverty line (16%, compared to 4% of those not in poverty).

15%

Said they are receiving **JobKeeper or JobSeeker**.

Q5a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting that they were receiving JobKeeper or JobSeeker was more common amongst:

- 25-44 year olds (21%, compared to 15% 14-24 and 16% 45-64 year olds);
- Renters (17%) and those who own with a mortgage (19%, compared to 6% own outright); and
- Those with children (19%, compared to 10% lone person households).

8%

Put forth a comment relating to **loss of jobs / less work** as a negative community impact of COVID-19.

Q9a, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Mentioning something related to loss of jobs or less work as a negative impact of COVID-19 was more common amongst:

- Those who speak a language other than English (19%, compared to 7% of those who speak English only); and
- Those who live in Mildura (11%, compared to 2% Red Cliffs and surrounds).

17%

Said **help finding employment** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Q10a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Findings suggest that some sectors of the community may have greater need of help finding employment:

- Young people (26% 14-24 year olds and 23% 25-44 year olds, 6% 65+ year olds);
- Those with children (20%, compared to 11% lone person households); and
- Renters (30%, compared to 9% own outright).

Financial vulnerability

Throughout the survey there were a number of findings that clearly showed the financial vulnerability challenges being faced by the community.

15%

Said they were **spending their savings on day to day expenses** due to COVID-19.

Q5a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting that they are spending savings on day to day expenses was more common amongst:

- Young people (26% 14-24 year olds, compared to 5% 65+ year olds);
- Those with children at home (19%, compared to 12% couples with no children and 8% lone person households);
- Renters (22%, compared to 7% own outright); and
- Those living below the poverty line (20%, compared to 14% of those not in poverty).

6%

Said they had **accessed their superannuation** under the early access scheme due to COVID-19.

Q5a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting that they had accessed their superannuation was more common amongst:

- 25-44 year olds (10% 14-24 year olds, compared to 5% 45-64 year olds);
- Those with children at home (10%, compared to 3% other households); and
- Renters (11%, compared to 4% owners).

Furthermore, 4% had received financial support from service providers, and 4% had received financial support from family and friends.

When presented with a list of potential community supports, financial assistance for individuals was selected by 19% as a support that might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

19%

Said **financial assistance for individuals** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Q10a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Findings suggest that some sectors of the community may have greater need of financial assistance for individuals:

- 25-44 year olds (26%, compared to 14% 45-64 year olds and 10% 65+ year olds); and
- Renters (29%, compared to 15% owners).

11%

Said **budgeting advice** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Findings suggest that some sectors of the community may have greater need of budgeting advice:

- Females (12%, compared to 6% males);
- Young people (21% 14-24 year olds, compared to 8% 45+ year olds); and
- Renters (16%, compared to 8% owners).

Education

The COVID-19 restrictions required a change to study structure, with education mostly moving to online delivery. This had a variety of impacts, resulting in some people studying more, whilst others studied less.

13%

Said they have been **studying less** since COVID-19.

Q4, rating of item as more, same or less, n=822

Reporting a decrease in studying was more common amongst:

- Young people (36% 14-24 year olds, compared to 3% 65+ year olds); and
- Renters (22%, compared to 9% owners).

10%

Said they have been **studying more** since COVID-19.

Q4, rating of item as more, same or less, n=822

Reporting an increase in drinking alcohol was more common amongst:

- Females (12%, compared to 5% males); and
- Young people (23% 14-24 year olds, compared to 4% 65+ year olds).

I'm scared about how some of the younger community will cope with things like year 12. Female, 65+, Mildura

An alarming number of primary and secondary students disengaged from school having not returned to their respective school. This impacts on Year 6 students transitioning to secondary school, given some have not attended primary school since term 1. Female, 45-64, Mildura

Housing and accommodation

Whilst a relatively small proportion of those who answered the survey indicated that they had encountered issues with their housing, those who were facing impacts were at high risk of major life changes (e.g. homelessness) which could have flow-of effects to all aspects of wellbeing.

6%

Reported that COVID-19 had impacted on their **housing**.

Q2, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting an impact on housing was more common amongst:

- 14-24 year olds (15%, compared to 5% 45-64 year olds and 1% 65+ year olds);
- Renters (15%, compared to 2% owners).

When asked to write on housing impacts, most comments referred to the difficulty of finding rental housing (2% overall sample).

To get a house during anytime is hard but during covid its made it almost impossible. Female, 25-44, Red cliffs and surrounds

I had a son who returned home to live due to the breakdown of his marriage and I have been trying to find him accommodation and have had no success, so my lounge is now converted into a bedroom and home is fairly squashed now. Female, 45-64

There's nothing out there for rent, I'm unable to find something without being able to view the property. Female, 14-24, Mildura

I am just renting, had to move end of August as owner needed to move in but, as there is such a crisis shortage of basically decent housing, it was horrific trying to find anything decent to move into in time for owner to move back in. Female, 45-64, Mildura

My housemate moved out just prior to the pandemic. I've been unable to find a new housemate during this time and haven't been able to work extra hours due to my mental health. So I'm struggling financially. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Because of a lack of work opportunities (asylum seeker protection visa - bridging visa A) due to border closures... there's stress on paying the rent. There are six people living in three rooms. Female, 45-64, Mildura

12%

Said they had **difficulty paying mortgage/rent** since COVID-19 (13% renters, 11% those with a mortgage)

Q5a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting difficulty paying mortgage or rent was more common amongst:

- 25-44 year olds (12%, compared to 1% 65+ year olds); and
- Those who speak a language other than English (16% compared to 7% of English only speakers).

15%

Said they had **difficulty affording household expenses** (utilities, maintenance etc.)

Q5a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting a change to employment situation was more common amongst:

- Red Cliffs and surrounds (20% compared to 5% Irymple);
- Young people (25% 14-24 year olds, compared to 8% 55+ year olds);
- Those with children (19%, compared to 11% couples without kids);
- Renters (29%, compared to 10% owners);
- Those who speak a language other than English (15% compared to 13% of English only speakers);
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (40%, compared to 14% others); and
- Those living below the poverty line (26%, compared to 10% of those not in poverty).

Safety

Around a third of those who participated in the survey reported that they are less satisfied with their feelings of safety than before COVID-19. This mostly stems from a fear of getting sick in public (40%).

32%

Said that they were **less satisfied with how safe they feel** during COVID-19 when compared to February 2020.

Q1, rating out of 5, n=822

Reporting a reduction in satisfaction with how safe they feel was more common amongst:

- Those who speak a language other than English at home (49%, compared to 30% of those who only speak English);
- Those with a disability (45%, compared to 31% of those without a disability);
- Renters (46%, compared to 26% own outright); and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (48%, compared to 21% others).

Community safety

Within this survey the community safety indicator was 'more anger and violence in the community', for which one in ten reported an increase due to COVID-19.

11%

Reported that COVID-19 had impacted on **more anger and violence in the community**.

Q2, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Family violence

Within this survey the family violence indicator was 'more anger and violence at home', for which one in twenty reported an increase due to COVID-19.

5%

Reported that COVID-19 had impacted on **more anger and violence at home**.

Q2, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting more anger and violence at home was more common amongst:

- 14-44 year olds (8%, compared to 1% 65+ year olds);
- Those with children (7%, compared to 2% lone households); and
- Renters (10%) and those with a mortgage (7%, compared to 0% owners).

When asked to write in any negative impacts COVID-19 was having on the community, 1% mentioned family violence (10 comments). Many of these simply referred to an increase in "domestic violence" or "family violence".

So many people struggling with mental health and suffering severe financial hardship. Breakdown of family relationships - I know far too many families who have split or had family violence situations during lockdown. Female, 25-44, Mildura

*Those that experience family violence being trapped in their homes with their oppressors.
Male, 45-64, Mildura*

13%

Said **crisis support (family violence, housing etc.)** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Q10a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Findings suggest that some sectors of the community may have greater need of crisis support:

- Young and middle-aged people (17% 14-44 year olds, compared to 10% 45+ year olds and 5% 65+ year olds); and
- Renters (19%, compared to 8% own outright).

Segments

The following sections draw out variations by key segments within the community. Only items showing statistically significant variations have been shown. A ↑ next to the % means the result is significantly higher than the finding for the other demographic. For instance, in the example below the ↑ means a significantly higher percentage of males said their satisfaction with life as a whole hasn't changed when compared to females.

	Total	Male (n=199)	Female (n=593)
Satisfaction with life as a whole hasn't changed	33%	41%↑	30%

When there are more than two demographic variables, the arrows show which two figures are related. For instance, the example below shows us that when compared to 25-44 and 45-54 year olds, a significantly high proportion of 65+ year olds say their satisfaction with life as a whole hasn't changed. The 14-24 year old figure is on par with average (no arrow).

	Total	14-24 (n=53)	25-44 (n=306)	45-64 (n=299)	65+ (n=153)
Satisfaction with life as a whole is about the same	33%	38%	26%↓	30%↓	48%↑

Positive results have been highlighted in green, negative results have been highlighted in orange. For a full break-down please see the Excel crosstabs.

Gender equity

When drawing out the statistically significant variations by gender it is apparent that more **males** think that their life hasn't really changed since COVID-19; the only area where they show a higher incidence of recognising an impact was with regards to not being able to participate in sport. As a result they are more commonly focussed on the removal of restrictions as a solution.

Females are more commonly experiencing a range of impacts that are influencing their satisfaction with their health. In particular, females are disproportionately experiencing mental health challenges, and more commonly show concern for child wellbeing. However, they are more commonly finding time for personal hobbies, exercising and studying. They are more interested in most potential community supports, and have more ideas on how the community can build back better.

		Total	Male (n=199)	Female (n=593)
Q1a	Satisfaction with life as a whole hasn't changed	33%	41%↑	30%
Q1c	Less satisfied with health	48%	41%	49%↑
Q2	Personally experienced an impact related to mental health	42%	33%	45%↑
	Personally experienced more time for hobbies / family	40%	33%	42%↑
	Personally experienced an impact related to child wellbeing	21%	9%	25%↑
	Not experienced any changes as a result of COVID-19	12%	17%↑	10%

		Total	Male (n=199)	Female (n=593)
Q4	Exercising more since COVID-19	17%	13%	19%↑
	Studying more since COVID-19	10%	5%	12%↑
	Online shopping more since COVID-19	39%	32%	41%↑
	Online shopping less since COVID-19	9%	14%↑	6%
Q5a	Spending less money in general (e.g. food, household, entertainment etc.)	29%	23%	31%↑
Q7	Temporarily closed the business	20%	9%	26%↑
	N=	117	33	78
Q9a	Mentioned mental health as a negative impact on the local community	8%	3%	10%↑
	Mentioned less / no sport as a negative impact on the local community	6%	10%↑	5%
	Mentioned frustration at rules / government as a negative impact on the local community	4%	8%↑	2%
Q9b	Couldn't name any positive impacts on the community	47%	56%↑	45%
	Mentioned support for local businesses as a positive impact of COVID-19	7%	3%	9%↑
	Mentioned more people exercising / out and about as a positive impact of COVID-19	4%	1%	6%↑
Q10a	Chose mental health support / counselling as a needed community support	32%	24%	35%↑
	Chose budgeting advice as a needed community support	11%	6%	12%↑
	Chose healthy eating advice as a needed community support	14%	8%	16%↑
	Chose online / tele health service as a needed community support	17%	10%	18%↑
	Chose more exercise opportunities as a needed community support	35%	27%	37%↑
	Chose awareness of what services are available as a needed community support	33%	26%	35%↑
	Chose nothing, don't need any support as a needed community support	16%	22%↑	15%
Q10fam	Mentioned support / help others as something their family can do to BBB	6%	2%	7%↑
	Mentioned remove restrictions as something their family can do to BBB	4%	7%↑	3%
	Mentioned engage in local tourism / holiday/ travel as something their family can do to BBB	3%	1%	3%↑
	Mentioned support local businesses as something their family can do to BBB	9%	6%	11%↑

Age variations

There are clearly differences across three key age ranges: young people aged 14-24, middle-aged (often with children at home) aged 25-44, and older adults aged 65+.

Young people (14-24 year olds) more commonly experience a range of impacts, stemming from showing higher instances of becoming unemployed and the associated financial stresses (difficulty affording household expenses and food). This results in higher instances of reporting mental health and housing impacts of COVID-19. This group also shows higher instances of exercising less and eating less healthy food. This group would be highly receptive of mental health support, budgeting and healthy eating advice, exercise opportunities, crisis support and help finding employment.

25-44 year olds more commonly face challenges relating to managing children and show a high instance of wanting community events and more information about what services are available.

Whilst some **older adults** (65+ year olds) experience impacts from COVID-19, a large proportion of this age group report no changes to their lives, mostly due to them not relying on employment for their income, and having fewer ongoing expenses (mortgage/rent). Most report no changes to healthy eating, talking to neighbours nor buying local. As a result fewer reported needing support, and they seldom had ideas on how the community can build back better.

		Total	14-24 (n=53)	25-44 (n=306)	45-64 (n=299)	65+ (n=153)
Q1a	Satisfaction with life as a whole is about the same	33%	38%	26%↓	30%↓	48%↑
Q2	Personally experienced an impact related to mental health	42%	53%↑	51%↑	40%↓	26%↓
	Personally experienced an impact related to access to medical services	33%	19%↓	38%↑	33%	27%
	Personally experienced an impact related to employment situation	28%	38%↑	32%↑	32%↑	3%↓
	Personally experienced an impact related to child wellbeing	21%	11%↓	34%↑	18%↓	1%↓
	No changes	12%	9%	8%↓	10%↓	24%↑
	Personally experienced an impact related to housing	6%	15%↑	7%	5%↓	1%↓
	Personally experienced an impact related to more anger and violence at home	5%	8%↑	8%↑	5%	1%↓
Q4	Exercising less	44%	58%↑	46%	43%	37%↓
	Eating healthy food about the same	61%	45%↓	52%↓	63%↑	82%↑
	Eating healthy food less	24%	38%↑	33%↑	20%↓	7%↓
	Drinking alcohol more	19%	25%	23%↑	19%	11%↓

		Total	14-24 (n=53)	25-44 (n=306)	45-64 (n=299)	65+ (n=153)
Q4	Talking to neighbours about the same	47%	32%↓	43%↓	48%	60%↑
	Buying from local businesses more	22%	25%↑	28%↑	25%↑	7%↓
	Buying from local businesses about the same	52%	51%↓	44%↓	49%↓	73%↑
	Online shopping more	39%	47%↑	49%↑	37%	18%↓
	Online shopping not applicable	25%	9%↓	13%↓	21%↓	62%↑
Q5a	Receiving Jobkeeper/Jobseeker	15%	15%↑	21%↑	16%↑	3%↓
	Difficulty affording household expenses (utilities, maintenance etc.)	15%	25%↑	19%↑	12%	8%↓
	Spending my savings on day to day expenses	15%	26%↑	18%↑	14%↑	5%↓
	Become unemployed	10%	21%↑	12%↑	11%↑	1%↓
	Difficulty affording food	7%	17%↑	10%↑	3%↓	3%↓
	Earning more money	5%	11%↑	8%↑	2%↓	1%↓
Q10a	Chose mental health support / counselling as a needed community support	32%	42%↑	42%↑	29%↓	15%↓
	Chose community events as a needed community support	50%	43%	61%↑	46%↓	38%↓
	Chose budgeting advice as a needed community support	11%	21%↑	12%	8%↓	7%↓
	Chose healthy eating advice as a needed community support	14%	34%↑	18%↑	11%↓	5%↓
	Chose crisis support (family violence, housing etc.) as a needed community support	13%	17%↑	17%↑	10%	5%↓
	Chose more exercise opportunities as a needed community support	35%	49%↑	42%↑	30%↓	25%↓
	Chose help finding employment as a needed community support	17%	26%↑	23%↑	15%↑	6%↓
	Chose awareness of what services are available as a needed community support	33%	30%	40%↑	30%	24%↓
	Chose nothing, don't need any support as a needed community support	16%	11%	9%↓	18%↑	29%↑
	Don't know / None of anything that their family can do to BBB	40%	38%	40%↓	31%↓	56%↑
Q10fam						
Q10com	Mentioned events / activities as something the community can do to BBB	18%	21%	21%↑	17%	10%↓
	Jobs creation / employment as something the community can do to BBB	4%	11%↑	4%	3%↓	2%↓

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Despite a small sample size (n=25), statistical analysis shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more commonly experiencing impacts on mental health and

housing, in particular feelings of isolation and difficulty affording household expenses. A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated they have been drinking more alcohol since COVID-19, and/or gambling less, and a third said they want help finding employment and housing support.

		Total	Yes (n=25)	No (n=755)
Q1d	More satisfied in what they are currently achieving in life	17%	24%↑	17%
Q1f	Less satisfied in how safe they feel	32%	48%↑	31%
Q2	Personally experienced an impact related to mental health	42%	64%↑	41%
	Personally experienced an impact related to housing	6%	16%↑	5%
Q3a	Experiencing isolation / Loneliness	12%	24%↑	11%
	Experiencing anxiousness / increased anxiety	9%	20%↑	8%
	Experiencing depression / depressed	4%	20%↑	4%
	Experiencing clinical mental illness	3%	12%↑	3%
	Experiencing difficulty accessing mental health treatment / services	3%	12%↑	3%
Q3c	Experiencing food shortages / panic buying	5%	16%↑	5%
Q3d	Children experiencing anxiety / stress	2%	8%↑	2%
	Child welfare challenges due to no daycare / playgroup	1%	8%↑	0%
Q4c	Drinking more alcohol	19%	36%↑	19%
Q4d	Gambling less	7%	24%↑	6%
	Not gambling	81%	56%	82%↑
Q4f	Studying less	13%	28%↑	11%
Q4i	Online shopping less	9%	20%↑	7%
Q5a	Difficulty affording household expenses (utilities, maintenance etc.)	15%	40%↑	14%
	Accessed my superannuation under the early access scheme	6%	16%↑	5%
	Received financial support from family or friends	4%	12%↑	4%
Q10a	Chose online social connection opportunities as a needed community support	13%	28%↑	13%
	Chose crisis support (family violence, housing etc.) as a needed community support	13%	32%↑	12%
	Chose help finding employment as a needed community support	17%	32%↑	16%

People with a disability

People with a disability are more commonly experiencing changes to access to medical services and experiencing food shortages. They less commonly receive JobSeeker or JobKeeper, and are more commonly experiencing financial difficulties regarding affording food, and household expenses. Almost a third said financial assistance for individuals would assist them or their family.

		Total	Yes (n=53)	No (n=742)
Q1f	Less satisfied with how safe they feel	32%	45%↑	31%
Q2	Personally experienced changes in access to medical services	33%	47%↑	31%
	Personally experienced changes in access to food	15%	26%↑	13%
Q3a	Difficulty accessing mental health treatment / services	3%	13%↑	2%
Q3c	Experienced food shortages / panic buying	5%	13%↑	5%
Q5a	Receiving Jobkeeper/Jobseeker	15%	4%	16%↑
Q5a	Difficulty affording household expenses (utilities, maintenance etc.)	15%	26%↑	14%
	Difficulty affording food	7%	15%↑	6%
Q5b	Spending more / higher expenses	8%	17%↑	6%
Q10a	Chose financial assistance for individuals might support them or their family as a needed community support	19%	32%↑	17%

CALD

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) individuals were identified within the sample as those who speak a language other than English (LOE, n=102).

Despite generally showing higher instances of an increase in satisfaction with wellbeing, high proportions of LOE respondents said they were talking to neighbours less. LOE respondents also showed higher instances of reporting being worried about getting COVID-19 in public, experiencing impacts on employment and housing, and facing financial difficulties with becoming unemployed, difficulty paying rent / mortgage, and household expenses. This segment is more focussed on following of COVID rules, and finding employment is an important topic to help them recover. In general, this group is more commonly receptive to the range of recovery activities put forth in the survey.

		Total	LOE (n=102)	English (n=679)
Q1a	More satisfied with life as a whole	14%	20%↑	14%
Q1b	More satisfied with your standard of living	14%	22%↑	13%
Q1c	More satisfied with your health	13%	24%↑	12%
Q1e	More satisfied with your personal relationships	18%	25%↑	18%
Q1f	More satisfied with how safe you feel	13%	23%↑	11%
Q1g	More satisfied with feeling part of your community	12%	17%↑	10%

		Total	LOE (n=102)	English (n=679)
Q2	Personally experienced an impact related to worried about getting COVID-19 when in public	40%	57%↑	37%
	Personally experienced an impact related to employment situation	28%	39%↑	26%
	Personally experienced an impact related to housing	6%	14%↑	4%
Q3e	Hard to find a job / fewer jobs available	3%	15%↑	1%
Q4	Talking to neighbours Less	32%	43%↑	29%
	Online shopping less	9%	14%↑	7%
Q5a	Difficulty affording household expenses (utilities, maintenance etc.)	15%	25%↑	13%
	Become unemployed	10%	29%↑	8%
	Difficulty paying mortgage/rent	8%	16%↑	7%
Q9a	Social Isolation / limited socialising	17%	29%↑	15%
	Loss of jobs / less work	8%	19%↑	7%
	Mask wearing	6%	12%↑	5%
	Impacts on children / childhood development	3%	11%↑	2%
	Unable to attend church	2%	9%↑	1%
Q9b	More time with family / at home	4%	16%↑	3%
	People adhering to COVID rules / restrictions	4%	16%↑	3%
	Food relief	1%	4%↑	1%
	SMECC	1%	9%↑	0%
Q10a	Chose online social connection opportunities as a needed community support	13%	21%↑	12%
	Chose financial assistance for individuals as a needed community support	19%	33%↑	16%
	Chose healthy eating advice as a needed community support	14%	27%↑	12%
	Chose crisis support (family violence, housing etc.) as a needed community support	13%	21%↑	11%
	Chose volunteering opportunities as a needed community support	17%	25%↑	16%
	Chose assistance for vulnerable groups as a needed community support	19%	28%↑	16%
	Chose help finding employment as a needed community support	17%	46%↑	13%
Q10 fam	Mentioned follow COVID rules as something their family can do to BBB	7%	36%↑	3%
Q10 com	Mentioned support each other (general) as something the community can do to BBB	6%	16%↑	4%
	Mentioned be COVID safe / hygiene / follow rules as something the community can do to BBB	6%	25%↑	3%
	Mentioned jobs creation / employment as something the community can do to BBB	4%	13%↑	2%

Rural communities

It is clear from a regional analysis that negative business and employment impacts are more common in the township of **Mildura**. Border restrictions were impacting more so on **Mallee Track**, resulting in more online shopping and buying locally, and business in this area seldom reported a reduction in revenue/sales. **Irymple** region more commonly reports businesses closing, and residents in this area are shopping local less, but also shows a high instance of people mentioning buying local as a way to build back better. A high proportion of those in **Red Cliff and surrounds** indicated they are having trouble paying household expenses.

		Total	Mildura (n= 455)	Irymple (n= 83)	Merbein and Millewa (n= 72)	Mallee Track (n= 44)	Red cliffs and surrounds (n= 113)
Q2	Personally experienced an impact related to Employment situation	28%	30%↑	31%	25%	18%	17%↓
Q3c	Access to food - Border / travel restrictions	1%	1%↓	0%	0%	7%↑	0%
Q3d	Child wellbeing - No sport / exercise	2%	1%↓	4%	1%	9%↑	1%
Q3e	Employment - Concerned about job security	2%	1%↓	2%	0%	7%↑	3%
	Employment - Lost / closed business	1%	0%↓	4%↑	0%	0%	0%
Q3f	Access to medical services - State border restrictions	6%	5%↓	4%	3%↓	18%↑	4%↓
Q4	Exercising unchanged	34%	28%↓	37%	42%	48%	46%↑
	Volunteering less	31%	27%↓	34%	46%↑	41%	25%↓
	Buying local more	22%	22%↓	20%	14%↓	41%↑	21%
	Buying local less	22%	23%	29%↑	24%	7%↓	17%
	Online shopping more	39%	39%	34%	47%	55%↑	29%↓
	Don't do online shopping	25%	24%↓	24%	22%	23%	39%↑

		Total	Mildura	Irymple	Merbein and Millewa	Mallee Track	Red cliffs and surrounds
			(n= 455)	(n= 83)	(n= 72)	(n= 44)	(n= 113)
Q5a	No impact on me financially	30%	29%↓	30%	38%	52%↑	21%↓
	Difficulty affording household expenses (utilities, maintenance etc.)	15%	16%	5%↓	11%	9%	20%↑
Q7	Reduction in revenue / decrease in sales	50%	57%↑	56%	40%	8%↓	58%
	n=	117	54	18	10	12	12
Q9a	Local business struggling / closed	23%	23%↑	28%↑	19%	5%↓	24%
	Loss of jobs / less work	8%	11%↑	10%	8%	0%	2%↓
Q10fam	Mentioned support local businesses as something their family can do to BBB	19%	20%	28%↑	21%	5%↓	17%

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Businesses

The community widely perceived that local businesses had been struggling as a result of COVID-19, and see supporting these businesses through recovery as being one of the best ways to build back better.

23%

Put forth a comment relating to **local businesses struggling / closing** as a negative community impact of COVID-19. It was the most common response.

Q9a, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Putting forth a comment relating to local businesses struggling as a negative impact of COVID-19 was more common among:

- 14-24 year olds (36%, compared to 15% 65+ year olds);
- Those living above the poverty line (29%, compared to 18% of those living below the poverty line); and
- Those who live in Mildura (23%) or Irymple (28%, compared to 5% Mallee Track).

To understand how community buying behaviour was impacting on the economy, the survey sought to understand behaviours with regards to buying from local businesses. Equal proportions of the community indicated that they were buying local more and less.

22%

Of residents said they have been **buying from local businesses less** since COVID-19.

Q4, rating of item as more, same or less, n=822

Reporting a decrease in buying from local businesses was more common amongst:

- Residents in Irymple (29%, compared to 7% Mallee Track).

22%

Of residents said they have been **buying from local businesses more** since COVID-19.

Q4, rating of item as more, same or less, n=822

Reporting an increase in buying from local businesses was more common amongst:

- Residents in Mallee Track (41%, compared to 22% Mildura, and 14% Merbein and Millewa);
- Those who have a mortgage on their house (30%, compared to 16% of those who own outright); and
- Those with children (29%, compared to 17% couples without children and lone person households).

Another possible contributor to local businesses struggling could be people switching to purchasing online, which four in ten indicated they were doing more of since COVID-19.

39%

Of residents said they had been **online shopping more** since COVID-19.

Q4, rating of item as more, same or less, n=822

Reporting an increase in online shopping was more common amongst:

- Females (41%, compared to 32% males);
- Young people (47% 14-25) and 25-44 year olds (49%, compared to 18% 65+ year olds);
- Those who only speak English at home (41%, compared to 23% of those who speak a language other than English);
- Those who have children at home (46%, compared to 26% of lone person households);
- Those who are not living in poverty (48%, compared to 31% of those living under the poverty line); and
- Those who live in Mallee Track (55%, compared to 29% of those who live in Red Cliffs and surrounds).

In addition to these changes in purchasing style, almost a third said that they were generally spending less money, which could have an impact on local businesses.

29%

Said they had been **Spending less money in general (e.g. food, household, entertainment etc.)** since COVID-19.

Q5a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Reporting spending less money in general (e.g. food, household, entertainment etc.) is more common amongst:

- Females (31%, compared to 23% males).

Despite these challenges, there was some recognition that communities were showing support for local businesses.

7%

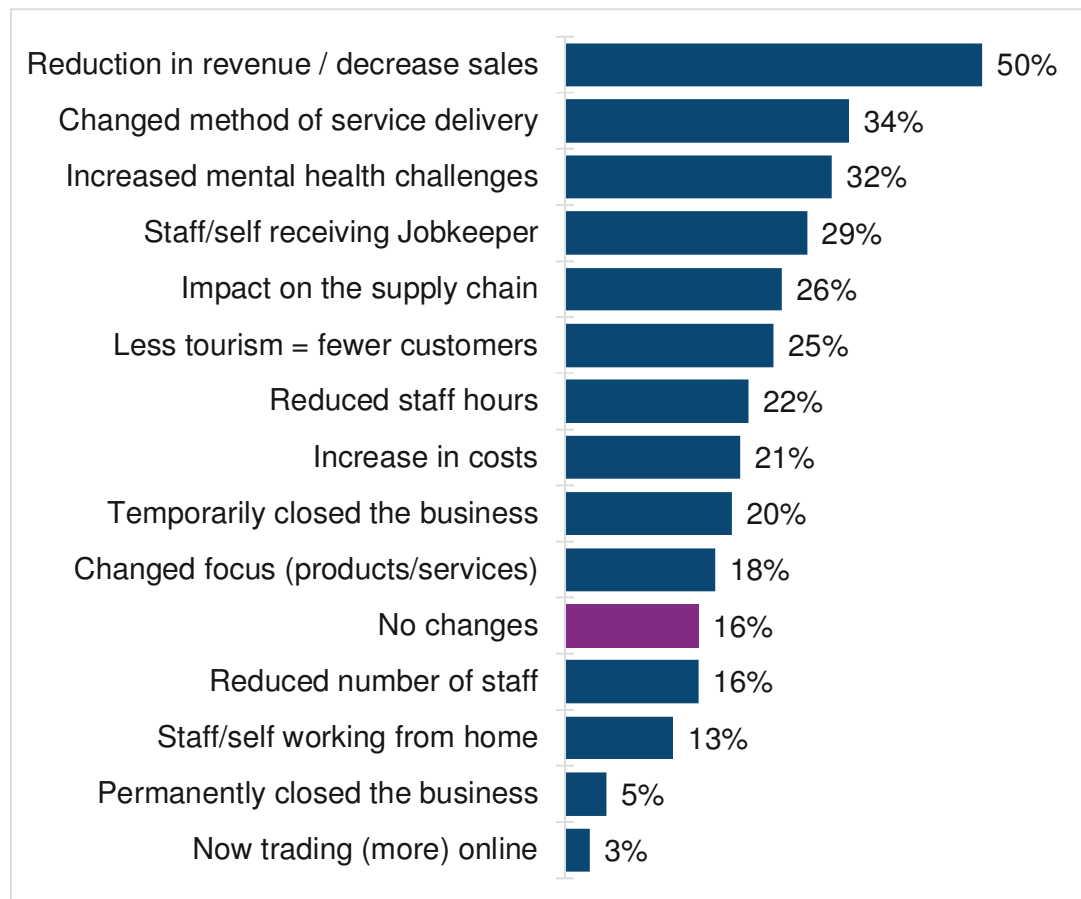
Put forth a comment relating to support for local businesses as a positive community impact of COVID-19.

Q9b, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

People are shopping locally - even going to coffee shops to get take aways to keep these businesses going. Female, 45-64, Red cliffs and surrounds

Focus on buying locally from locally owned & operated businesses. Female, 25-44, Mildura

One in seven respondents (14%, n=117) indicated that they were business owners, and were consequently asked how COVID-19 had impacted on their business. Only 16% of businesses reported no changes due to COVID-19. Many businesses indicated that they had innovated by changing the method of service delivery and/or changed the focus of the business.



Q8, selected from an on-screen list, Base: businesses n=117

Some notable variations in business impacts include:

- A high instance of reporting a reduction in revenue / decrease in sales occurred amongst respondents in Mildura (57%, compared to 8% Mallee Track);
- Females more commonly reported having to temporarily close their business (26%, compared to 9% males);
- Having a reduction in revenue / decrease in sales was more common amongst sole trader (53%), Tourism (89%) and food businesses (80%) and less common amongst agriculture and manufacturing (25%);
- Changing the method of service delivery was more common among Retail (73%) and food (60%) businesses and less common for sole trader (25%) and agriculture and manufacturing (9%);
- Less tourism resulting in fewer customers was more common amongst tourism (83%), retail (64%) and food (60%) businesses. These industries also showed the highest instances of reporting reduced staff hours (50%, 45% and 50% respectively);
- Half (50%) of food businesses indicated that they had temporarily closed the business;

- Reducing the number of staff was more common amongst tourism businesses (44%) and businesses that operate in varying locations (such as construction and transport, 43%);
- Over a third of office based businesses (38%) said their staff had switched to working from home; and
- Four in ten (41%) agriculture and manufacturing businesses said there had been no changes to their business.

It is broadly recognised that support for local business is a critical part of community recovery. This desire for support for businesses is at 46% amongst business owners (n=117).

25%

Said **Support for businesses to get back up and running / new business** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Q10a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

19%

Mentioned something relating to supporting local businesses as a way they or their family can help build back better.

9%

Mentioned something relating to supporting local businesses as a way the community can help build back better.

Q10fam/com, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Bring all council funded tourism/ marketing organisations (City Heart, Visitor Information Centre, Council Events Department, Mildura Arts, Mildura Regional Development) in under 1 banner, even if that means some of them are dissolved as they duplicate. This would better ensure they are all working together to one strategy for the benefit of Mildura. Male, 25-44, Mildura

Lower rates and try to incentivise new businesses to the mall to attract more foot traffic to the CBD which will increase spending in local businesses. Male, 25-44, Mildura

A commonly used term in these comments was to “Buy Local”

Get back to supporting local business when they are able to operate. Female, 65+, Mildura

Continue to support and buy from local businesses, visit local tourism attractions and use local support services. Encourage others to do the same and have the knowledge of what's available to pass onto people. Female, 25-44, Mildura

To give business to local shops, buy locally. Rather than meeting at home with friends - go out to a coffee shop and have coffee to give the small businesses some help. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Social opportunities, community events (free or low cost) try new things, commitment to supporting local, regional and Australian businesses, spending and travel. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Buy local as much as possible and if we are lucky enough to have secure employment get out and support the local cafes and restaurants who have been doing it tough. Female, 45-64, Mildura

Support local shops, go out for as much food and shopping as we can afford, or simply let the local shops keep the spare change once we've paid. Local shops can hand out 'gold stars' to the people who donate or are constant going back to the same shop and spending money. Male, 25-44, Mildura

Businesses being supported to opening up more job opportunities for locals to gain employment including apprenticeships and traineeships. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Get all businesses back on their feet and the local economy moving again. Look at what the farmers and growers need and help them get it. Find a way to quickly put people back into paid work so they can spend money again. Female, 65+, Merbein and Millewa

Tourism

Tourism businesses (including accommodation, arts and recreation, and tourism specific businesses) showed higher instances of a reduction in revenue / decreased sales (89%), fewer customers due to less tourism (83%), reducing staff hours (50%), and reducing staff numbers (44%).

2%

Put forth a comment relating to **encouraging tourism** as a way to help build back better in the community.

Q10com, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Have more local events, get tourists here again. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Better experience for tourist with flow on to community such as improving the river front arts centre area. Male, 45-64, Irymple

Encourage visitors from other regional centres. Female, 45-64, Merbein and Millewa

Local money scheme - town dollars to spend in our town promote travel to attract grey nomads and families. Female, 25-44, Irymple

Engage and promote the local activities and options. Look and promoting the local activities that you can be a tourist in your own town - as school holidays are right around the corner. Female, 25-44, Irymple

Advertise within our own community the activities we can offer, even if operators offer them at discounted rates for residents to encourage people to holiday at home. Female, 45-64, Red cliffs and surrounds

Promote Mildura as a domestic tourist destination to capitalise on this market. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Tourism needs to safely return. Apex Park is one of the most utilised free areas on the river in the area. The sand needs cleaning up and weeds etc. removed. The sand area needs to be constantly groomed. A safe swimming "cage" installed for children. The sandbar is large with no shade. Shade structures need to be erected for the use of public. Male, 45-64, Merbein and Millewa

Events

COVID-19 restrictions at the time of surveying prohibited any events from occurring. This was recognised by some in their comments within the survey.

7%

Put forth a comment relating to **fewer community events / activities** as a negative community impact of COVID-19.

Q9a, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Cancelling of events, not able to go out for dinner etc. to support local. Female, 25-44, Mildura

No sporting activities, little community cohesion or celebration, no community events. Female, 45-64, Mallee Track

Despite limited mentions in the open ended boxes, there was a very high level of stated need for community events to help families recover. Indeed it was the most popular option in the list provided in the survey.

50%

Said **community events** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Q10a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Selecting community events as a support to help them or their family recover was more common amongst:

- 25-44 year olds (61%, compared to 46% 55-64 year olds and 38% 65+ year olds);
- Those with children at home (58%, compared to 43% couple households with no children); and
- Those not living under the poverty line (56%, compared to 44% of those living under the poverty line).

18%

Mentioned **events and activities** as a way the community could build back better

Q10com, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Suggestions relating to events and activities were more often put forth by:

- Females (19%, compared to 13% males); and
- 25-44 year olds (21%, compared to 10% 65+ year olds); and
- Those with children at home (20%) or couple households with no children (19%, compared to 10% lone person households).

Some specific events and activity suggestions include:

- Markets (2%);
- Arts / theatre / music (2%).

Light up the Drive in for family movie nights. Multi-cultural days by the river again. Open the markets. Live children's and family entertainments similar to Wiggles. Reward the children for the shit they've been through. A huge NYE family night so we can blow away 2021. It's been such a terrible year for us all but let's reward the kids. Female, 45-64

The community can try keep local events going and try to adhere to Covid rules be followed without be over top. Male, 45-64, Irymple

Free outdoor events to encourage reconnection in a Covid safe way. Female, 45-64, Mildura

Local markets, public square events, street parties etc. Male, 45-64, Red cliffs and surrounds

Have activities for people with plenty of time slots so we don't have queuing. Female, 45-64, Red cliffs and surrounds

More 'covid safe' events like outdoor cinemas. Female, 25-44, Merbein and Millewa

Get our events schedule back on track - even in a limited capacity is better than cancelling major events. Each cancellation is another hit to the morale of the community when we desperately need something to look forward to. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Council offering free or heavily discounted facility rental to event organisers to encourage them to operate an event (maybe the first 15 events (500+ people) booked get this offer to ensure they make a decision. Male, 25-44, Mildura

A week-long open-mic variety show in the Mall (poetry, singing, music, etc.); a chance for individuals to share something with the community and feel connected again. People would queue (or take a number), get 10 minutes max on stage many others would put up a seat to watch, put some life into the mall without the need to obtain a street performer permit for specific pre-vetted material that they would have to pay for. Male, 25-44, Red cliffs and surrounds

Financial support

The survey results clearly show some sectors of the community were struggling financially (see [Financial vulnerability](#) section). The suggestion of providing financial assistance was well received, particularly amongst those segments facing the greatest financial difficulties.

19%

Said **financial assistance for individuals** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

16%

Said **financial assistance for businesses** might help them or their family recover from the impacts of COVID-19

Q10a, selected from an on-screen list, n=822

Selecting financial assistance as a support to help them or their family recover was more common amongst:

- 25-44 year olds (26%, compared to 14% 55-64 year olds and 10% 65+ year olds);
- Those who speak a language other than English at home (33%, compared to 16% of those who speak English only;
- Those who have a disability (32%, compared to 17% of those without);
- Renters (29%, compared to 11% of those who own their home outright);

5%

Mentioned **financial assistance** as a way the community could build back better

Q10com, written comments grouped into themes, % based on whole sample n=822

Lower the prices of things to a more day to day price everyone's trying to make a quick buck everything has gone up so us as a family cannot afford to go out for dinner. Female, 25-44

Make childcare free and accessible for all. This will ease the burden on parents and make things fairer for female parents who choose to pursue a career. Female, 45-64, Mildura

Council provides financial backing to ensure sporting leagues can operate in 2021 if they have financial difficulty (volunteer based only- not groups with paid employees or players). Male, 25-44, Mildura

Provide rates and fee relief to enable those that are struggling to get back on their feet. Support for those that have fallen through the cracks and are not eligible for any relief through existing government initiatives. Female, 25-44, Mildura

Households below the poverty line

Households below the poverty line were calculated using the household composition and household income questions, as aligns with the ACOSS poverty line definitions³.

This segment more commonly reported a reduction in satisfaction with standard of living and what they are achieving in life, and more often faced challenges with employment and household expenses. They were also less engaged with the community, with fewer talking to neighbours, and lower levels of interest in receiving support through community events and exercise opportunities.

		Total (A)	In poverty (n=221)	Not in poverty (n=312)
Q1b	Less satisfied with their standard of living	34%	46%↑	27%
Q1d	Less satisfied with what they are currently achieving in life	45%	53%↑	42%
Q4	Talking to neighbours less	32%	38%↑	28%
Q5a	Difficulty affording household expenses (utilities, maintenance etc.)	15%	26%↑	10%
	Become unemployed	10%	16%↑	4%
	Difficulty affording food	7%	13%↑	4%
Q10a	Would like support through community events	50%	44%	56%↑
	Would like support through online / tele health service	17%	12%	21%↑
	Would like support through more exercise opportunities	35%	30%	40%↑

This sector has a high level of need for assistance, particularly with food and household expenses, however they will be difficult to reach due to limited engagement with community.

Employment mental health

32%

Of businesses who completed the survey reported that there has been an **increase in mental health challenges** at their business.

Q7, selected from an on-screen list, n=117

³ Davidson, P., Saunders, P., Bradbury, B. and Wong, M. (2020), Poverty in Australia 2020: Part 1, Overview. ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership Report No. 3, Sydney: ACOSS http://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Poverty-in-Australia-2020_Part-1_Overview.pdf Table 1, page 20

APPENDICES

Questionnaire

Mildura Rural City Council together with partner organisations want to know how COVID-19 has impacted on you.

Findings from this survey will help identify supports needed, and to help the community recover and thrive.

We would appreciate you taking the time to please complete this 10-15 minute survey to help us understand what you need to make this happen.

Your answers are completely anonymous and your data will be managed in accordance with the researcher's collection statement [<https://Qre.host/collection> (OPENS IN NEW WINDOW)].

Mildura Rural City Council Privacy Collection Statement

Mildura Rural City Council collects Personal Information for municipal purposes as specified in the Local Government Act 1989 & Local Government Act 2020. The information collected in this form will be used for the purposes of community engagement in the development of a municipal COVID-19 Relief & Recovery plan. Your personal information will not be shared with third parties, however the de-identified results of your survey may be shared with external organisations associated with the development and provision of municipal Relief & Recovery services. If you require further information regarding Council's Privacy Policy please contact Council's Privacy Officer.

Given this survey is anonymous, we will not be able to use your responses to provide a direct response to your needs. If you need support in accessing meals, food, medicine or other support services, Council's Community Relief Service can help. Visit this page for all up to date information: [<https://www.mildura.vic.gov.au/Services/Emergency-Management/COVID-19-information-and-support/Community-Relief-Service> (OPENS IN NEW WINDOW)]

If you would like to complete the survey on paper or over the phone please call 03 5018 8254.

HQ1. Source. [THIS QUESTION IS HIDDEN AND WILL BE POPULATED BY A SPECIAL CODE IN THE URL]

- 1 – General public / self-complete
- 2 – Interview - completing on behalf of someone else / group
- 3 - CALD

[IF HQ1=2] S1. Are you completing this survey as yourself, or on behalf of someone else? [RADIO BUTTON]

- 1 - Completing the survey as myself
- 2 - Completing the survey on behalf of someone else (interviewing an individual)
- 3 – Completing on behalf of a community group / community organisation
- 4 – Completing on behalf of a group of individuals (*Specify number of people in the group*) [COMMENT BOX]

S1TEXT [IF COMPLETING ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE ELSE, S1=2 OR 4] Instructions for interviewers – DO NOT READ OUT:

- If you are doing a test run please write the word “TEST” in the box below so we know to delete it from the data file. Otherwise you can use this comment box to record any pertinent information about the response (e.g. ‘homeless’, ‘conducted in language other than English’ etc.).
- Please answer the demographic questions based on the characteristics of the person you are interviewing (not your own details).
- Do not read out the instructions in italics, they are to help guide how to answer the questions.
- The respondent can choose not to answer a question if they like.
- Please see the Conversations Guide for more detailed information on how to support your conversations (PDF).

[COMMENT BOX]

[IF S1=4 (GROUP)] D0. Please tick any key demographics covered in your group.

[MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

Males
 Females
 LGBTIQ+
 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people
 People with a disability
 People who speak a language other than English
 Home owners
 Renters
 Lone person households
 ONLY Children aged 14 or under
 Youth
 Families
 Older adults
 Low income households
 High income households
 People who own their home (owner occupiers)
 Renters
 Other *(please specify)*
 None [EXCLUSIVE]

[IF S1=3 (COMMUNITY ORGANISATION)] CG1. What is the name of the community group / community organisation are you completing this survey on behalf of? *You are welcome to leave this blank if you wish for this survey to remain anonymous. Previous statements of anonymity no longer apply if a group name is entered.* [OPEN ENDED]

[IF S1=3 (COMMUNITY ORGANISATION)] CG2. What type of community group / community organisation are you completing this survey on behalf of? [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
 Aged care
 Alcohol and drugs
 CALD (Culturally and linguistically diverse)
 Children’s services
 Community centre
 Disability
 Employment and education

Environment
Food relief
Legal
LGBTIQ+
Mental health
Neighbourhood Group
Recreation (including sport, music and art)
Volunteering
Vulnerable people (family violence, homeless, financial hardship etc.)
Youth
Other *(please specify)*

[HIDE IF S1=3 OR 4 (GROUP)] AGE. First, to help ensure you see questions that are relevant to you, how old are you? [DROP-DOWN]

5-9 [GUARDIAN CONSENT]
10-13 [GUARDIAN CONSENT]
14-17
18-24
25-29
30-34
35-39
40-44
45-49
50-54
55-59
60-64
65-69
70-74
75-79
80+
I'd prefer not to say

[IF D2 = 5-13] D2a. We need your parent/guardian to say it is OK for you to do this survey. Please ask them to put their first name in the box below to confirm it is OK. If they wish to see the survey questions beforehand a copy of the survey is here [LINK TO PDF (OPENS IN NEW WINDOW)].

Questions C1-C3 for 9-13 year olds only

[IF AGE = 5-13 OR D0=ONLY CHILDREN UNDER 14] C1. What things have been worse for you since COVID-19? [OPEN ENDED]

[IF AGE = 5-13 OR D0=ONLY CHILDREN UNDER 14] C2. What things have been better for you since COVID-19? [OPEN ENDED]

[IF AGE = 5-13 OR D0=ONLY CHILDREN UNDER 14] C3. What are you looking forward to when COVID-19 is over? [OPEN ENDED]

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE FOR ADULTS ONLY

[HIDE FOR COMMUNITY GROUP RESPONDENTS (S1=3)] **Personal impacts**

Q1. For each of the following, would you say you are more or less satisfied, or feel about the same, now – during COVID -19 restrictions, compared to February 2020? *Please select one*

answer per row

[GRID – ASKED IN VICHEALTH COVID-19 SURVEY]

		A lot more satisfied	A little more satisfied	About the same	A little less satisfied	A lot less satisfied	Don't know
a	your life as a whole	1	2	3	4	5	9
b	your standard of living	1	2	3	4	5	9
c	your health	1	2	3	4	5	9
d	what you are currently achieving in life	1	2	3	4	5	9
e	your personal relationships	1	2	3	4	5	9
f	how safe you feel	1	2	3	4	5	9
g	feeling part of your community	1	2	3	4	5	9

Q2. Have you personally experienced any changes due to COVID-19 in the following areas? These could be negative or positive changes. *Please read all options and select all that apply. You will have a chance to provide further detail for some of these in the next questions.* [MULTIPLE RESPONSE, RANDOMISE. THIS WILL BE ANALYSED BY DEMOGRAPHICS TO DETERMINE IMPACTS SPECIFIC TO YOUTH, GENDER, AGED COMMUNITY, ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY, CALD, PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY]

- Mental health
- Housing
- Access to food
- Child wellbeing
- Employment situation
- Access to medical services
- More anger and violence at home
- More anger and violence in the community
- Worried about getting COVID-19 when in public
- More time for hobbies / family
- Other (please specify) [COMMENT BOX]
- No changes [EXCLUSIVE]

Q3a. [IF SELECTED MENTAL HEALTH IN Q2] Please tell us about the impacts you are experiencing relating to mental health. [OPEN ENDED]

Q3b. [IF SELECTED HOUSING IN Q2] Please tell us about the impacts you are experiencing relating to housing. [OPEN ENDED]

Q3c. [IF SELECTED ACCESS TO FOOD IN Q2] Please tell us about the impacts you are experiencing relating to access to food. [OPEN ENDED]

Q3d. [IF SELECTED CHILD WELLBEING IN Q3] Please tell us about the impacts you are experiencing relating to child wellbeing. [OPEN ENDED]

Q3e. [IF SELECTED EMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN Q3] Please tell us about the impacts you are experiencing relating to your employment situation. [OPEN ENDED]

Q3f. [IF SELECTED ACCESS TO MEDICAL SERVICES IN Q3] Please tell us about the impacts you are experiencing relating to access to medical services. [OPEN ENDED]

Q3TEXT [IF SAY MORE ANGER AND VIOLENCE AT HOME] For 24/7 family violence support service please contact safe steps on 1800 015 188 or weblink.

Q3TEXT2 Given this survey is anonymous, we will not be able to use your responses to provide a direct response to your needs. If you need support in accessing meals, food, medicine or other support services, Council's Community Relief Service can help. Visit this page for all up to date information. [<https://www.mildura.vic.gov.au/Services/Emergency-Management/COVID-19-information-and-support/Community-Relief-Service> (OPENS IN NEW WINDOW)]

Q4. Since the restrictions, have you been doing the following more, about the same, or less? [ARRAY, RANDOMIZE ROWS – COMPARABLE TO ASDF COVID SURVEY]

	More	About the same	Less	Not applicable
a Exercising	1	2	3	9
b Eating healthy food	1	2	3	9
c Drinking alcohol	1	2	3	9
d Gambling	1	2	3	9
e Talking to neighbours	1	2	3	9
f Studying	1	2	3	9
g Volunteering	1	2	3	9
h Buying from local businesses	1	2	3	9
i Online shopping	1	2	3	9

[HIDE FOR COMMUNITY GROUP RESPONDENTS (S1=3)] **Financial impacts**

Q5a. How has COVID-19 impacted your life in a financial way? *Please select all that apply* [MULTIPLE RESPONSE, RANDOMISE]

- No impact [ALWAYS APPEAR FIRST ON THE LIST]
- Become unemployed
- Receiving Jobkeeper/Jobseeker
- Accessed my superannuation under the early access scheme
- Spending my savings on day to day expenses
- Difficulty affording household expenses (utilities, maintenance etc.)
- Difficulty paying mortgage/rent
- Difficulty affording food
- Received financial support from family or friends
- Received financial support from service providers
- Saving money on transport (not driving as much)
- Spending less money in general (e.g. food, household, entertainment etc.)
- Earning more money
- None of these [EXCLUSIVE]

Q5b. Are there any other ways that COVID-19 has impacted on you financially? [OPEN ENDED] [OPTIONAL]

Q6. Do you own or manage a business in the Mildura Rural City Council area? [RADIO BUTTONS]

Yes – My business is still operating (at full or reduced capacity)

Yes – My business is temporarily closed due to COVID-19

I did own/manage a business but I had to permanently close it due to COVID-19

No

Don't know

[IF Q6=1-3] Q7. What impacts, if any, has COVID-19 had on your business? *Please select all that apply* [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

Reduction in revenue / decrease in sales

Less tourism has resulted in fewer customers

Temporarily closed the business

Permanently closed the business

Reduced staff hours

Reduced number of staff

Staff/self receiving Jobkeeper

Staff/self switched to working from home

Had to change the focus of the business (different products or services)

Had to change the method of service delivery

Now trading (more) online

Increased mental health challenges

Impact on the supply chain

Increase in costs

Other (please specify) [COMMENT BOX]

No changes [EXCLUSIVE]

I'd prefer not to say [EXCLUSIVE]

[IF Q6=1-3] Q8. How would you classify your business? *You can choose more than one* [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

Sole trader / self-employed

Accommodation

Food services (cafés, restaurants)

Arts and recreation

Tourism

Retail store

Office-based business

Construction

Manufacturing

Health and personal care and social assistance

Transport and warehousing

Agriculture, forestry and fishing

Business services (including IT, scientific, and technical)

Education and training

Utilities

Banking and insurance

Wholesale trade

Repairs and maintenance

Government, police and security

Real estate

Other (please specify) [COMMENT BOX]

Don't know [EXCLUSIVE]

Community impacts

[IF S1=3] CG3. What impacts, if any, has COVID-19 had on your community group / community organisation? [OPEN ENDED]

Q9. What impacts have you noticed COVID-19 having on your local community? Please tell us about any negative impacts on the community that you have observed or experienced, as well as any examples where great things are happening in the community.

Negative impacts on the **local community** [OPEN ENDED]

Great things that are happening in the **local community** [OPEN ENDED]

Recovery

Q10. What do you think we need to do to build back better?

Things you and your family can do [OPEN ENDED]

[IF Q6=1-3] From the perspective of your business [OPEN ENDED]

[IF S1=3] From the perspective of your community organisation / group [OPEN ENDED]

Things that can be done in your community [OPEN ENDED]

[HIDE FOR COMMUNITY GROUP RESPONDENTS (S1=3)] Q10a. What types of community supports might you or your family need to recover from the impacts of COVID-19? *Please select all that apply. These may not necessarily be provided by Council, but can give service providers in the area an idea of what the community might need* [MULTIPLE RESPONSE, RANDOMISE]

Mental health support / counselling

Community events

Online social connection opportunities

Financial assistance for individuals

Financial assistance for businesses

Budgeting advice

Healthy eating advice

Crisis support (family violence, housing etc.)

Support for businesses to get back up and running / new business

Online / tele health services

Volunteering opportunities

Assistance for vulnerable groups

More exercise opportunities

Help finding employment

Awareness of what services are available

Other (please specify) [COMMENT BOX]

Nothing, don't need any support [EXCLUSIVE]

Don't know [EXCLUSIVE]

IF A GROUP INTERVIEW (S1=4) OR COMMUNITY GROUP (S1=3) SKIP
DEMOGRAPHICS

[DEMOGRAPHICS FOR INDIVIDUAL SURVEYS ONLY – SELF COMPLETE AND
THROUGH AN INTERVIEWER] Now some questions to help understand how well the

survey data is covering our community, and to help us group your responses with other people for analysis. Remember, your responses are completely anonymous.

[IF COMPLETING ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE ELSE] DTEXT *Please answer the demographic questions on behalf of the respondent (not your own details).*

[ASK ADULTS AND CHILDREN] D1. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Prefer to self-describe [COMMENT BOX]

I'd prefer not to say

D2. Are you Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

Yes

No

I'd prefer not to say

D3. Do you speak a language other than English at home?

No, English only

Yes – please specify language [COMMENT BOX]

I'd prefer not to say

D4. Do you have a disability where you need help with self-care, body movement or communication activities?

Yes

No

I'd prefer not to say

D5. Which of the following best describes your household structure?

One person

Couple with children living at home

Couple without children living at home (2 person household)

Single parent

Group household

Other [COMMENT BOX]

I'd prefer not to say

[IF D5 = CHILDREN] D6. How old are the children who live at home? [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

0-4 years

5-11 years

12-17 years

18 years or over

I'd prefer not to say

D7. At this point in time, what is your approximate monthly household income (after tax)? As a reminder, your responses are anonymous [WHEN COMBINED WITH D5 CAN CALCULATE HOUSEHOLDS BELOW THE POVERTY LINE AS PER ACOSS]

<\$1,860 per month (\$430 per week or less)

\$1,861-\$2,800 (\$451-\$650 per week)

\$2,801-\$3,900 (\$651-\$900 per week)

\$3,901-\$8,670 per month (\$901-\$2,000 per week)

\$8,671-\$17,300 per month (\$2,001-\$4,000 per week)
More than \$17,300 per month (\$4,000+ per week)
Don't know
I'd prefer not to say

D8. Is the place where you live...?

Owned outright
Owned with a mortgage
Rented
Social / public housing
Other
Don't know
I'd prefer not to say

[ASK ADULTS AND CHILDREN] D9. Where do you live? *We will ensure that any localities with small sample sizes are merged with neighbouring towns to maintain anonymity of your responses* [DROP DOWN LIST, PLUS OTHER AND IF PREFER NOT TO SAY]

Cardross
Colignan
Cowangie
Cullulleraine
Hattah
Irymple
Koorlong
Merbein
Meringur
Mildura
Murrayville
Nangiloc
Nichols Point
Ouyen
Red Cliffs
Underbool
Walpeup
Werrimull
Other [COMMENT BOX]
I'd prefer not to say

[SUBMIT]

Your survey responses have been received, thank you for your time.

Community groups

The following community groups participated in the survey

Christie Centre Inc

Council play group

Croatian Senior Citizen's Club

Mildura and District Little Athletics Centre

Mildura BMX Club

Mildura Toy Library

Mildura Woodturners and Woodworkers Club

Mulberry Tree Playgroup

Red Cliffs Cricket Association

Red Cliffs Golf Club

St Andrews Tennis Club

Sunraysia Baseball League

Walpeup Memorial Hall