

COVID Health Consumer sentiments Nov/Dec 2023

We asked people for their views on COVID in late November/December 2023. We also hosted a Consumer Update with the Chief Health Officer on 12 December. These insights come from the survey responses and the questions and issues raised in response to that community update. We have summarised responses in themes and included verbatim quotes from consumers.

At the time of writing, there were 32 survey responses and 64 people who registered for the event.

Key concerns relate to:

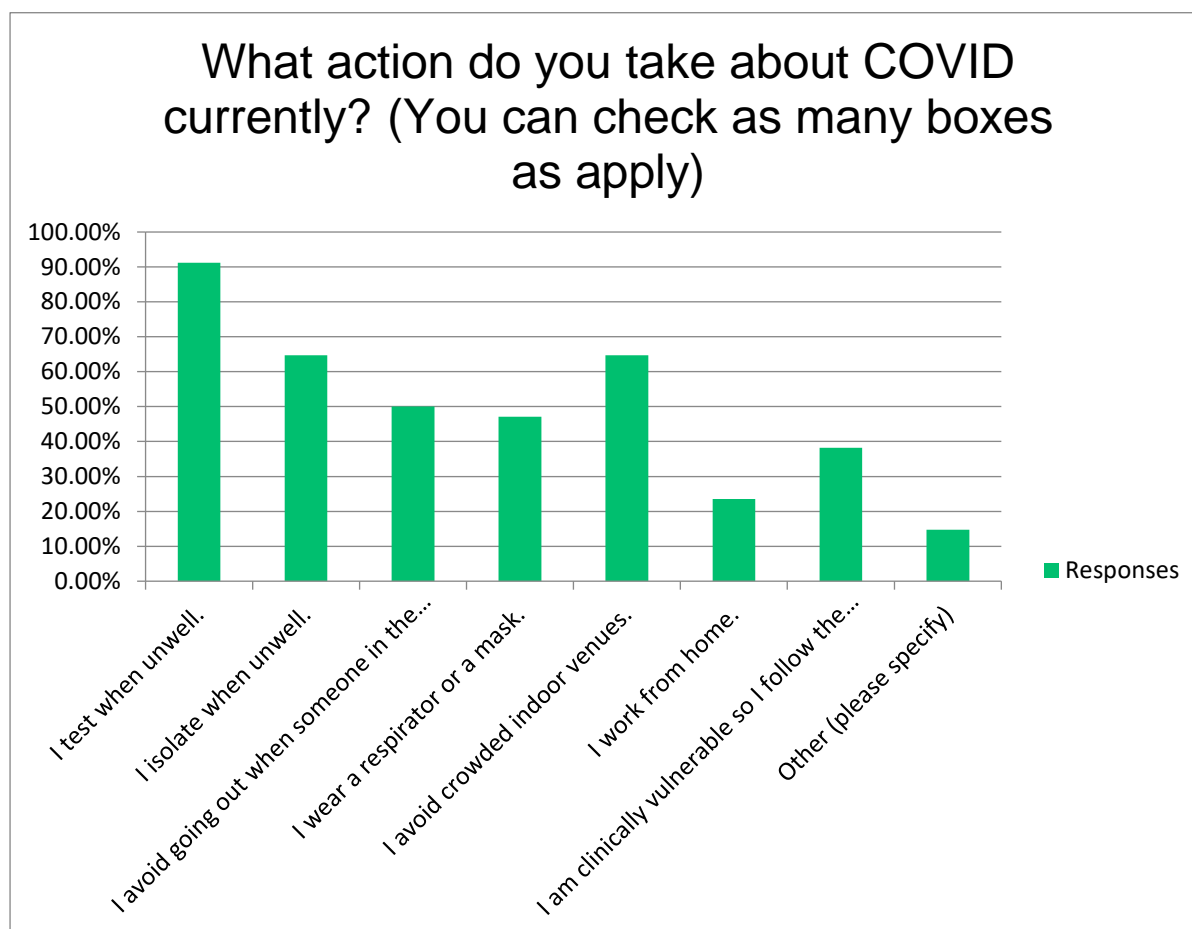
- Protecting people in hospital from contracting COVID, particularly people who are medically vulnerable
- Adequate and clear information about the ongoing risks of COVID, including the impact of multiple infections and long COVID
- Ensuring the risks of COVID for medically vulnerable people are well understood in the general population and amongst health professionals
- The challenges of accessing clear reliable information about COVID infections, vaccinations and other protections.

Health Consumers' Council will be hosting more community conversations on COVID in 2024. We will also continue to advocate for responses to consumer concerns on this issue.

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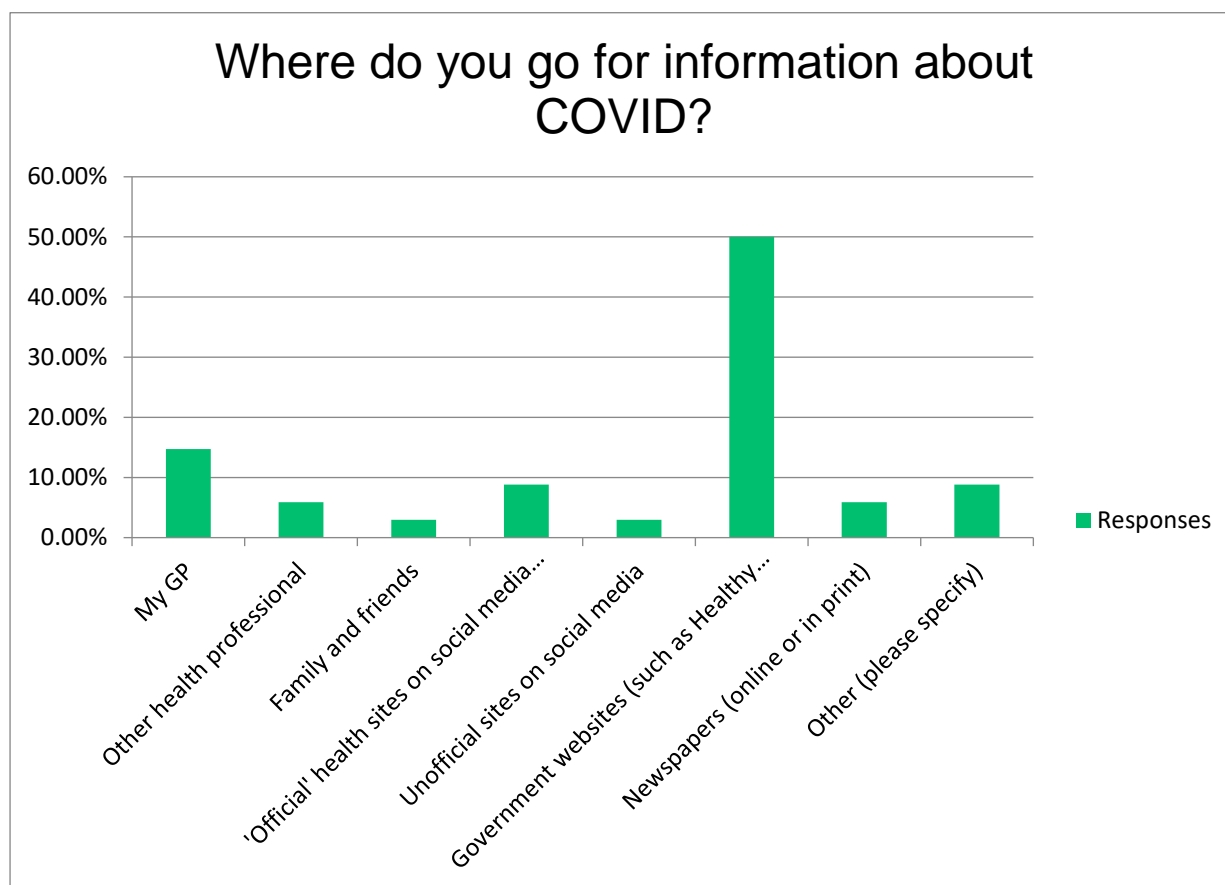
What action do you take about COVID currently?



I test when unwell.	91.18%
I isolate when unwell.	64.71%
I avoid going out when someone in the household has COVID.	50.00%
I wear a respirator or a mask.	47.06%
I avoid crowded indoor venues.	64.71%
I work from home.	23.53%
I am clinically vulnerable so I follow the advice of my health professional closely.	38.24%

“Apart from essential medical appointments and essential dental appointments, I have not left my house since April 2020 in order to avoid catching COVID. Prior to COVID, I used to leave my house 3 or 4 days every week to socialise, shop, etc.”

Where do you go for information about COVID?



My GP	14.71%
Other health professional	5.88%
Family and friends	2.94%
'Official' health sites on social media (Facebook, Twitter)	8.82%
Unofficial sites on social media	2.94%
Government websites (such as Healthy WA, WA Health, etc)	50.00%
Newspapers (online or in print)	5.88%

What are your main concerns and questions about COVID?

Testing and reporting:

- The accuracy of detection of numbers from wastewater
- Frustration about the inability to report positive cases
- Concerns about the lack of information about infection rates from PCRs and RATs now that reporting is no longer required
- Inquiries about the number of COVID cases in the community

“That my immunocompromised child will become ill with COVID and that it may result in serious harm or potentially death”

High-risk populations and vulnerability:

- Concerns about the transmission of COVID to vulnerable populations, including in hospital
- Anxiety about elderly family members getting infected
- Concerns about not being able to assert one's rights to infection control when staff who are asked to wear a mask refuse

"People being complacent and getting multiple infections developing long covid and spreading it to people. More people becoming disabled"

Multiple infections, Long COVID, and clinic closures:

- Many people are concerned about the risk of long COVID, and the impact of multiple infections
- Inquiries about reducing the risk of Long COVID after catching COVID
- Concerns about the closure of long COVID clinics amid growing demand

Variants and Vaccination:

- Questions about the severity of new strains and the frequency of vaccine boosters
- Questions about the transmission and impact of new variants
- Questions about the timing for the Omicron XBB.1.5 subvariant COVID vaccine in WA
- Questions on the frequency of booster vaccinations for carers of immunocompromised individuals
- Request for recent studies demonstrating the effectiveness of booster vaccinations
- Confusion about selecting the appropriate COVID vaccine online

"What vaccine I should be getting (when booking online I have to pick from about 4 and I don't know which one is best for me)."

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS):

- Concerns about the rights of individuals with chronic health conditions at work.
- Queries regarding organizations following proper Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) protocols.

"Is it ever going to be over for those family and friends who are at risk and vulnerable? Is life ever going to return to normal for them?"

Monitoring and information:

- Concerns about COVID-positive patients waiting in public hospital areas where masks are not being worn by other patients or staff

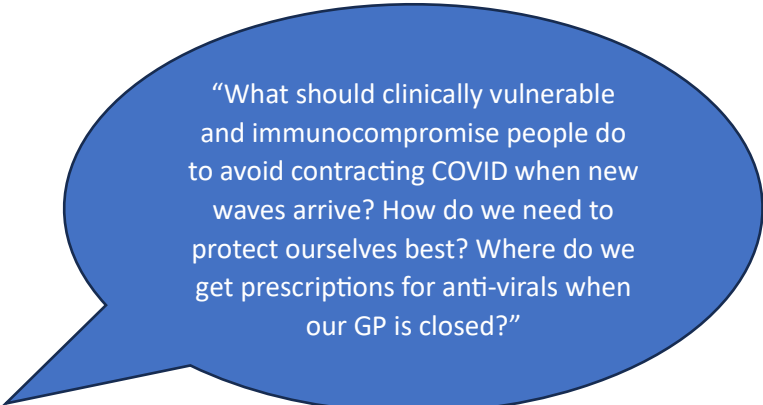
- Queries about managing COVID in hospitals and how this is reported
- Questions about the availability of home PCR testing
- Requests for updated information about symptoms as waves occur

Public health education and masking:

- Concern that public health messaging doesn't emphasise the airborne nature of COVID clearly enough
- Concerns about the inadequacy of public health education on effective masking for an airborne disease
- Questions about the removal of masks from healthcare and aged care settings

Protective and preventive measures and access to antivirals:

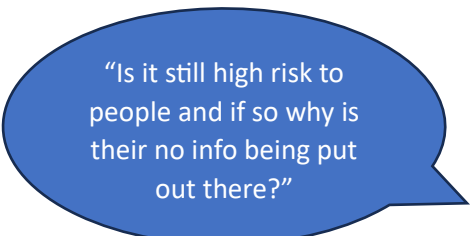
- Concerns about accessing antivirals and other protective options in rural/remote areas
- Questions about the potential risks of receiving too many vaccines
- Should antivirals be considered like an Epi-pen for people who are medically vulnerable?



"What should clinically vulnerable and immunocompromised people do to avoid contracting COVID when new waves arrive? How do we need to protect ourselves best? Where do we get prescriptions for anti-virals when our GP is closed?"

Government Communication and Action:

- Frustration about the perceived lack of understanding regarding the severity and dangers of COVID

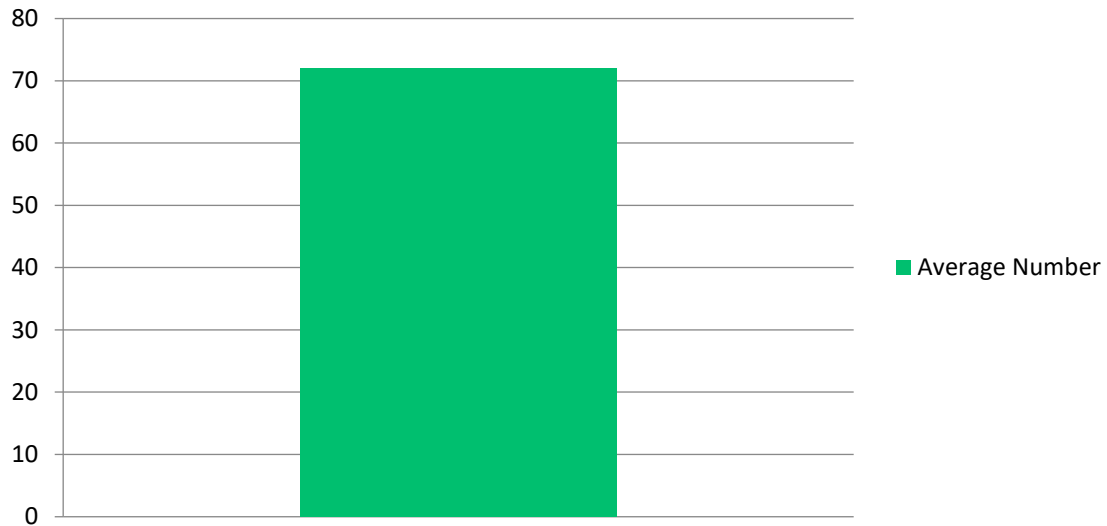


"Is it still high risk to people and if so why is there no info being put out there?"

- Questions about the government's messaging on COVID transmission and community precautions – and a concern it's insufficient for the level of risk
- Concerns about the perceived abandonment of disabled people by the government
- Desires for regular updates, statistics, and reminders

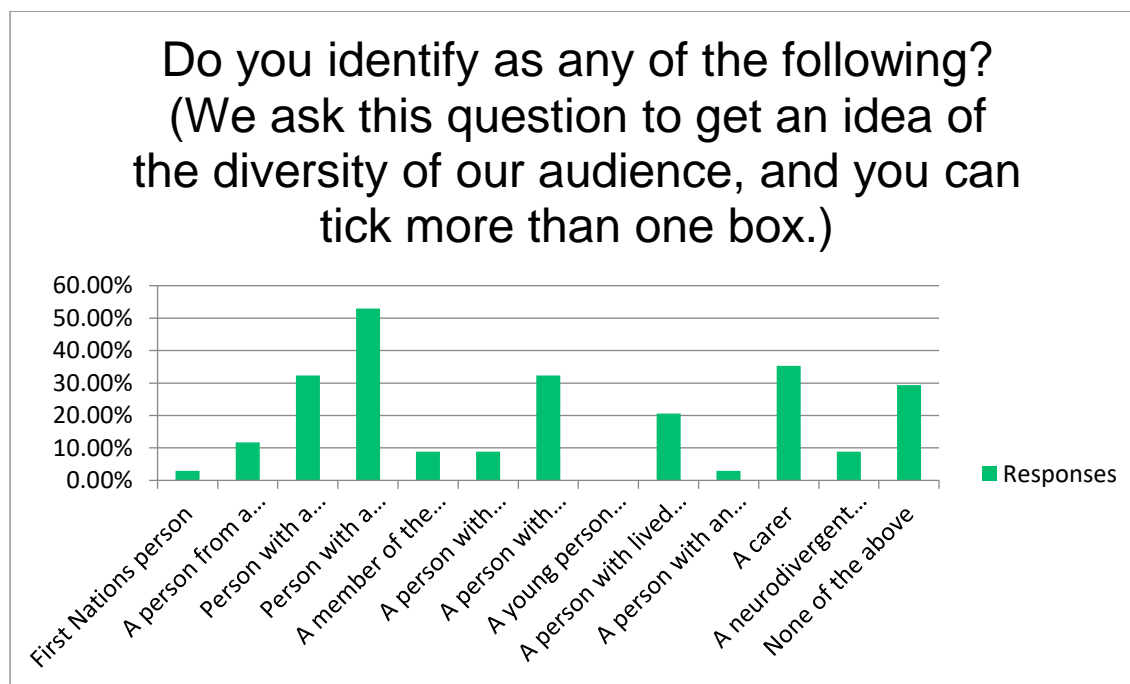
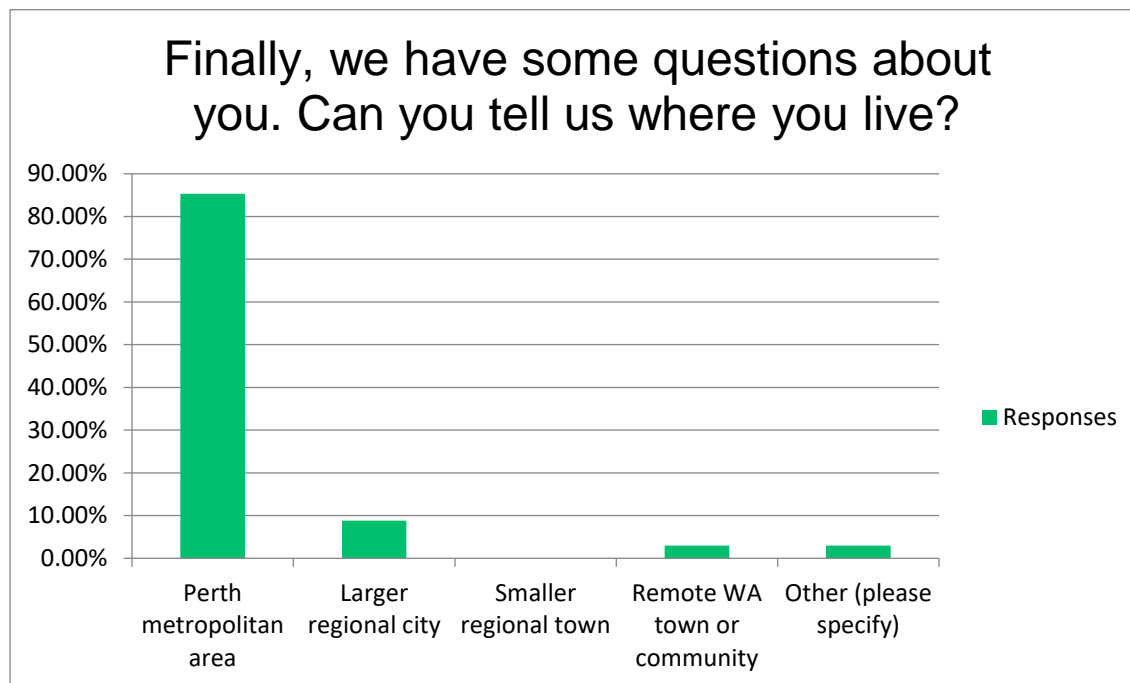
on news services

On a scale of 1 to 10, how concerned are you about COVID currently? (1 = not concerned at all; 10= extremely concerned)



Demographics

These were the people who responded to our survey up to 20 December 2023.



First Nations person	2.94%
A person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background	11.76%
Person with a disability	32.35%
Person with a chronic condition	52.94%
A member of the LGBTQIA+ community	8.82%
A person with experience of being unhoused	8.82%
A person with experience of low income	32.35%

A young person (under 25)	0.00%
A person with lived experience of mental health challenges	20.59%
A person with an experience of alcohol and other drug use	2.94%
A carer	35.29%
A neurodivergent person	8.82%
None of the above	29.41%