



LONDON COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE SURVEY: WEEK THIRTY TWO/THIRTY THREE

FIELDWORK 30th November –9th December 2020

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Community Response Survey

The COVID-19 Community Response Survey asks civil society organisations who work in London a small number of questions to understand the impact of COVID-19 and associated policy measures, such as social distancing, on vulnerable populations in the capital.

The first week of the survey focused on asking baseline questions to capture organisational profiles, and included a small number of questions relating to the immediate impact post-lockdown of COVID-19.

Surveys from week two onwards are shorter, and ask organisations a number of questions about changes they have seen in the last week.

This week's survey collected data over two weeks.

Results from the survey are shared with responding organisations and with decision-makers supporting the pan-London response to COVID-19.

Cohort details

The questions were sent to more than 360 Civil Society organisations who have agreed to take part. The organisations were recruited through existing contacts and mailing lists held by the GLA Community Engagement and Equality & Fairness teams.

In addition, larger organisations and infrastructure providers were asked to cascade the invitation down to their networks.

A total of 115 organisations responded in full or in part to the questions, which were live between Monday 30th November and Wednesday 9th December.

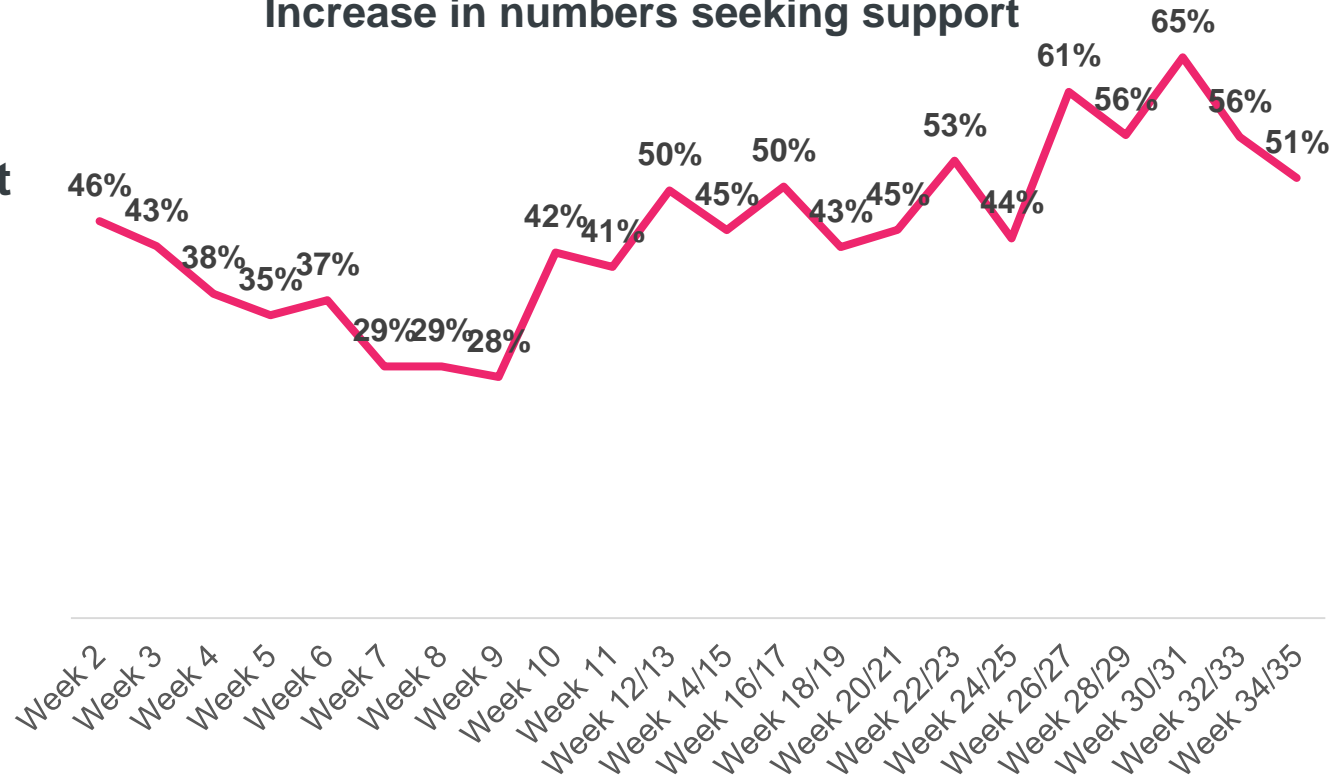
Note: due to the relatively small sample size and the targeted way in which recruitment was conducted, it is important not to extrapolate from any findings in the weekly survey to all civil society organisations in London or any particular population of Londoners. Results from the weekly survey should be used alongside other sources of intelligence to understand the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities.

CHANGE IN NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEKING SUPPORT

This week 51 per cent of responding organisations (57) saw an increase in the number of people seeking support in the last two weeks.

46% reported little change in numbers and 3 organisations reported a decrease.

Increase in numbers seeking support



CHANGE IN NUMBERS SEEKING SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC ISSUES

We asked responding organisations to tell us whether the number of people seeking support for a range of specific issues was higher, the same or lower compared to last week. We asked them to only answer if they deal with and have seen each of the issues. The issues with the highest proportion reporting higher demand are mental health, isolation, employment, housing and poverty.

Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses	Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses
Mental health	66%	74	Education	45%	47
Isolation and loneliness	65%	71	Immigration issues	41%	46
Employment	63%	56	Access to social care	40%	52
Housing	62%	50	Grief/bereavement	38%	37
Poverty	60%	48	Physical health	38%	48
Debt issues	56%	48	Domestic violence	36%	47
Access to health	53%	58	Capacity Building (organisations or volunteers)	33%	39
NRPF	53%	36	Childcare or Parenting	29%	31
Homelessness	51%	41	Substance misuse	28%	25
Access to benefits	51%	63	Discrimination	28%	36
Access to food	49%	70	Victim support	21%	28
Digital connectivity	48%	61	Youth violence	17%	24
Fundraising support	45%	38	Child abuse	12%	26
Mental health	66%	74	Education	45%	47

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOUR ORGANISATION IS FACING THIS WEEK?

We asked responding organisations to tell us the three biggest challenges they were facing in the last two weeks. The top challenges in week 34/35 were capacity to meet demand, planning for delivery over the next 6 months, funding sustainability beyond the crisis and staff wellbeing and mental health. Organisations working with BAME Londoners were more likely to cite funding sustainability as a main challenge. In contrast to the cohort average, the top challenges identified by organisations working young people were maintaining engagement with beneficiaries, returning to offices and working with local authorities.

Challenge	Number of organisations
Capacity to meet demand	38
Planning for delivery over the next 6 months	37
Funding sustainability beyond the crisis	32
Staff wellbeing and mental health	28
Delivering services whilst following social distancing guidelines	28
Reaching vulnerable groups	24
Funding until March 2021	17
Need to provide new or changed services	15
Returning to offices/community centres	15
Maintaining engagement and contact with beneficiary groups	12
Reduction in volunteers	12

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE LONDONERS ARE FACING THIS WEEK?

We asked responding organisations to tell us the three biggest challenges their beneficiaries were facing in the last week. This week the top issues were mental health, loss of jobs or lack of employment opportunities social isolation and financial insecurity.

- Top issues identified by organisations working with BAME Londoners were loss of job, financial insecurity and digital exclusion.
- Organisations that work with young people identified access to food and essentials, domestic violence and access to health care as the top challenges.
- Organisations working with asylum seekers identified digital exclusion, migration system and access to social care as the main challenges.
- Organisations working with older Londoners identified social distancing rules, access to benefits and access to health care as the top three challenges for their beneficiaries.

Challenge	Number of organisations
Mental health	56
Loss of jobs or lack of employment opportunities	43
Social Isolation	41
Financial insecurity	38
Access to food and essentials	20
Digital exclusion	17
Concern about Covid	11
Housing	9

WHAT HAS HELPED PEOPLE WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Regular contact and communication (40) was the most common response to this question. This includes befriending schemes, telephone check ins, and socially distant gatherings. A number of groups flagged that these helped, but were taking place in a context where statutory services were hard to access or missing.

“Older people using our Wellbeing Centre have been meeting in person in socially distanced support bubbles once a week, and this has been a lifeline to many facing severe isolation. Our Pandemic Stories research has identified that older people want more choice about the safeguarding they are subject to during the pandemic to balance prevention of infection with good mental health. The support bubbles show this approach in practice, where older Wellbeing Centre members co-designed support with us that balances good preventative measures with meaningful social contact.”

“Weekly human contact. We check in with our service users when we deliver weekly food and there has been one woman in particular who dresses for the occasion as she is otherwise lonely and isolated.”

“Staying in touch with them even when we can't offer them the training they need straight away. When we call them every couple of weeks, they're really appreciative that they haven't been forgotten. Also, passing on information about what they need to providers so that, again, they don't feel like a number. They feel like their individual needs are being taken into account.”

WHAT HAS HELPED PEOPLE WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Group activities and services was the second most common response (20)

“A routine including exercise, lessons and therapy, making time go quicker and diverting the mind for periods of time was helpful for the women and staff.”

“Being able to get outside - to help with social gardening projects.”

“counselling support activities (especially art group) one to one support(Carers assessments and health and wellbeing checks)”

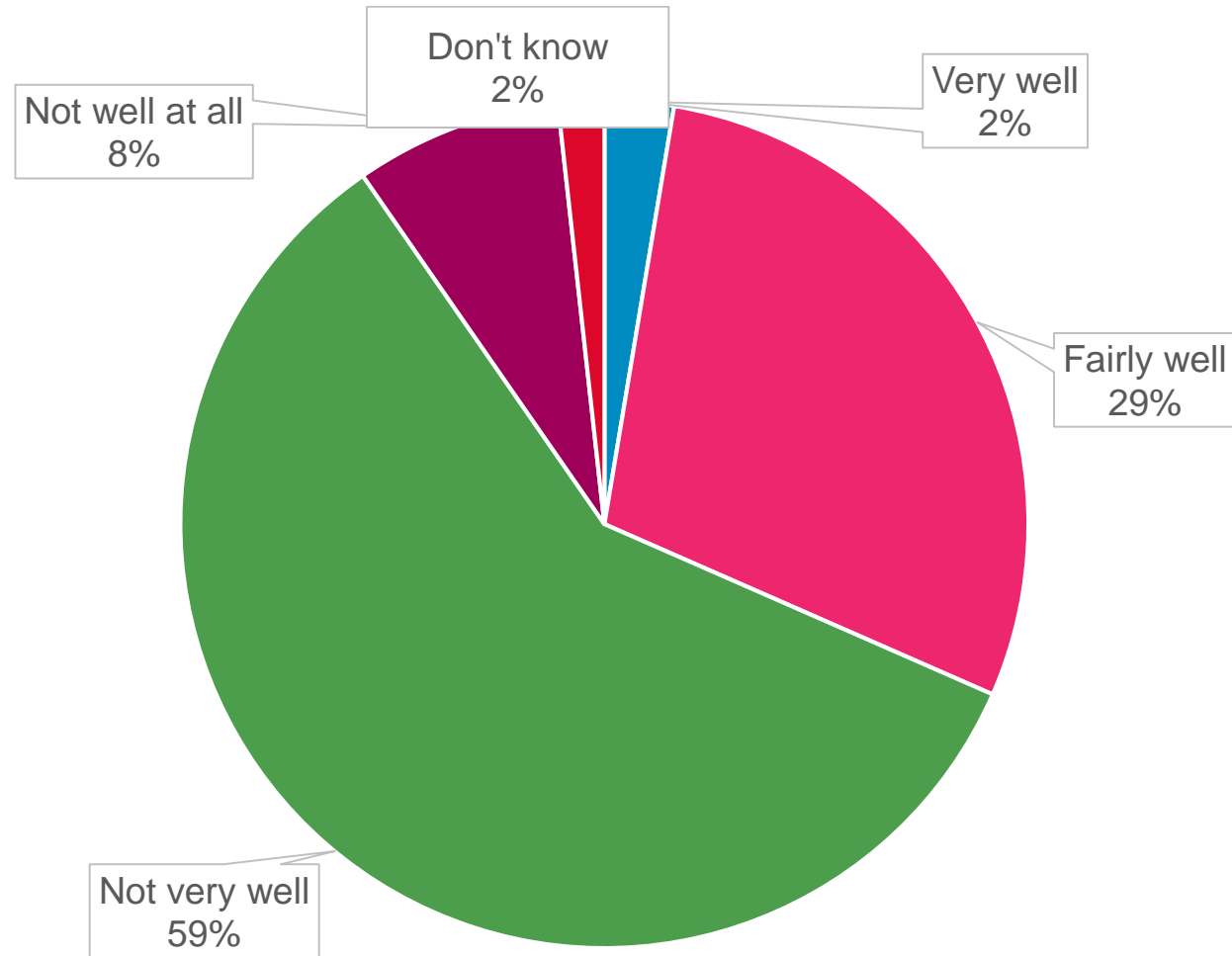
Followed by access to specialist support and information (19)

“Access to food, essential and PPE, A contact person they can call for a general chat, Someone people can contact with their questions, Support navigating employment issues.”

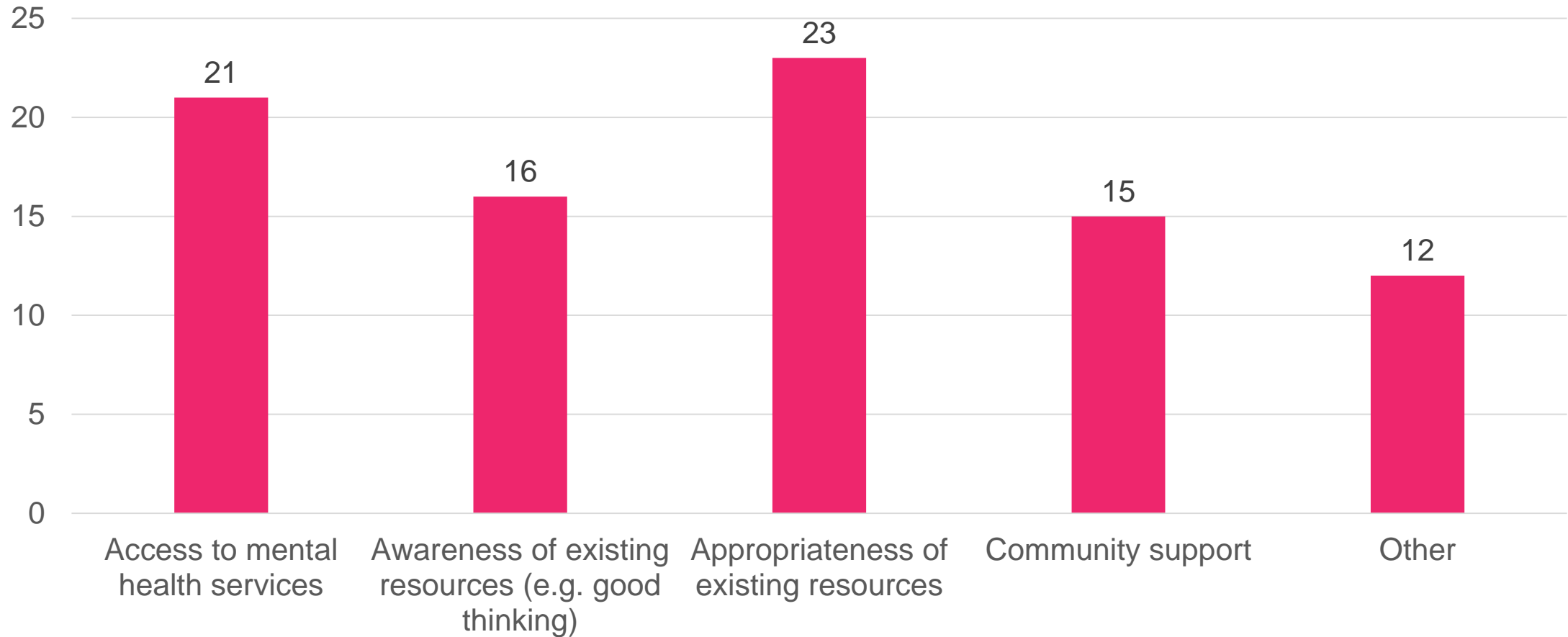
“Having sufficient information available to them about Covid (access to information), having stable and safe accommodation.”

“Being kept up to date with everything that's going on, both related and unrelated to the pandemic, by our dedicated youth work team; one on one mentoring and support being provided for them throughout.”

HOW WELL ARE PEOPLE YOU SUPPORT COPING WITH STRESS DURING THE PANDEMIC?



MAIN CHALLENGES IN RELATION TO MENTAL HEALTH



HOW THE SURVEY IS USED

In response to a question about how responding organisations use the survey, the following responses were most common:

- Shared with staff, trustees and funders
- Inform priorities
- Understanding regional picture
- Forward planning
- Improving services

Only 6 respondents said they did not use the results.

“Shared with staff to help them understand we are not alone in the response to covid”

“We look at trends across the sector to see if people are experiencing similar issues and try to identify issues that may be on the horizon for us”

“Stay informed of wider picture, putting our experiences in to context. Has also been useful to be reminded that we are all working on similar issues and coming up with relevant solutions”

“We use the results to inform Management Committee and inform discussions/decisions.”

“The survey questions are part of the agenda once a week at our support officer meetings. The results are used to pinpoint what projects to prioritize or funding to apply for. The survey has enabled us to set up: A telephone mentoring service, the commission of a play on bereavement, a project that provided 36 carers with a laptop as well as a days training session.”

ANY OTHER ISSUES OR GROUPS WHOSE NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET

A range of issues were raised this week by respondents. Three of the top risks raised related to support for women, needs of disabled Londoners not being met and increasing financial precariousness.

"Isolation is a huge problem for specific groups - such for elderly women; women and children who are survivors of domestic violence; women who are disabled who has little or no means to reach out."

"Lack of gendered support services, in safe women-only spaces. Lack of floating housing support."

Support for women

"More resources and helps are needed for migrant, new arrival refugees and No Resource to Public Fund women, especially single mothers subjected for domestic violence."

"older people, people with long enduring mental/physical disabilities, people who's first language isn't English."

"Physical activity for those with severe disabilities is not very accessible"

Needs of disabled Londoners

"The needs of deafblind people are not being highlighted, they rely on close contact as their language relies on using someone else's hand; this is resulting in extreme isolation."

"In terms of mental health, we want to flag that financial insecurity has been and will most likely continue to be a key cause of stress and anxiety. Through Pandemic Stories we have found: Uncertainty over future unemployment is causing anxiety Londoners are experiencing shame and sometimes a sense of worthlessness about having to go to foodbanks or apply for emergency grants, getting into debt, and not being able to support family/friends in need. Difficulty accessing a complicated benefits system is causing stress, and sometimes worsening overall mental health."

Financial insecurity

"A bigger divide between the haves and have nots, particularly around this time of the year. Loss of work which impacts on the whole family. Benefit caps. Seeing a lot of elderly people slipping through the net and being left without appropriate support."

"Debt issues are starting to grow and there is going to be a huge debt burden that has been hidden by the pandemic and this will have massive impact as debt recovery rolls out."



NEXT STEPS

The next survey will launch in January 2021 and cover two weeks, being in the field between 4th - 13th January.

Results available on Monday 18th January.