



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

FIELDWORK 25th January – 3rd February 2021

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 108 organisations responded in full or in part to the questions, which were live between Monday 25th January and Wednesday 3rd February 2021.

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.

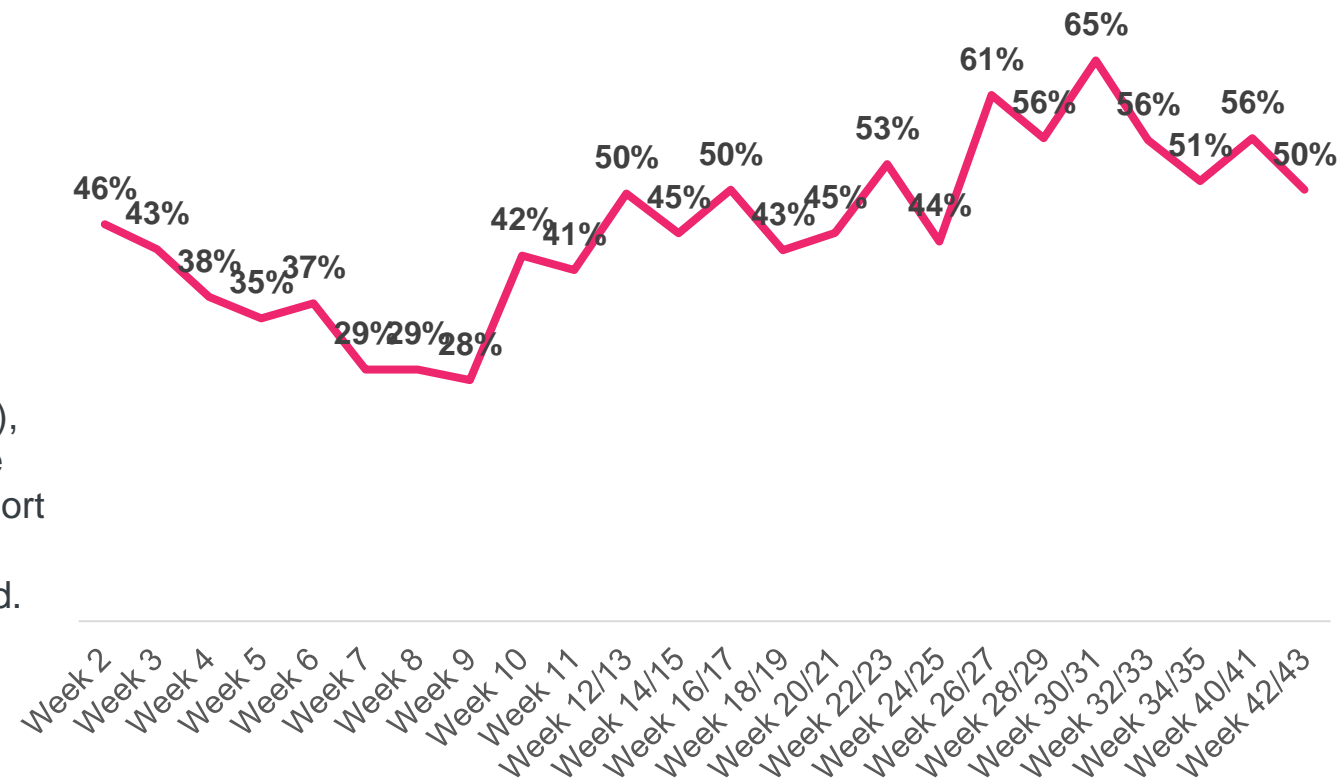
CHANGE IN NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEKING SUPPORT

This week 50 per cent of responding organisations (54) saw an increase in the number of people seeking support in the last two weeks.

41% reported little change in numbers and 10 organisations reported a decrease.

Organisations working with socially excluded Londoners (65%), BAME Londoners (61%) and migrant communities (60%) were more likely to see an increase in demand compared to the cohort average. Organisations working with young people (41%) and children (44%) were less likely to report an increase in demand.

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, grief/bereavement and digital connectivity. Organisations saw > 10pp increase in demand for support relating to domestic violence and immigration issues.

Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses	Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses
Mental health	73%	79	NRPF	50%	40
Isolation and loneliness	73%	71	Childcare or Parenting	49%	39
Grief/bereavement	65%	49	Physical health	48%	56
Digital connectivity	61%	70	Education	48%	50
Access to health	58%	60	Discrimination	46%	39
Poverty	57%	58	Immigration issues	45%	40
Fundraising support	57%	44	Access to benefits	45%	67
Debt issues	56%	57	Homelessness	43%	46
Access to food	55%	75	Access to social care	40%	57
Capacity Building (organisations or volunteers)	54%	52	Youth violence	32%	28
Employment	53%	59	Victim support	29%	28
Housing	52%	58	Hate crime	24%	33
Domestic violence	50%	40	Child abuse	23%	26

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 42/43 were planning for delivery over the next 6 months, staff wellbeing and mental health, funding sustainability beyond the crisis and delivering services whilst following social distancing guidelines. Organisations working with BAME Londoners identified funding until March '21 as their main challenge.

Challenge	Number of organisations
Planning for delivery over the next 6 months	47
Staff wellbeing and mental health	37
Funding sustainability beyond the crisis	35
Delivering services whilst following social distancing guidelines	28
Capacity to meet demand	26
Reaching vulnerable groups	22
Funding until March 2021	16
Maintaining engagement and contact with beneficiary groups	14
Need to provide new or changed services	11
Reduction in volunteers	11

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE LONDONERS ARE FACING THIS WEEK?

We asked responding organisations to tell us the three biggest challenges Londoners they work with were facing in the last week. This week the top issues were mental health, social isolation, financial insecurity and loss of jobs or lack of employment opportunities. Organisations working with migrant communities highlighted digital exclusion and multi-lingual support as the biggest risks facing their community. Organisations working with children identified following social distancing as one of the top three risks facing their community.

Challenge	Number of organisations
Mental Health	49
Social Isolation	45
Financial Insecurity	39
Loss of jobs or lack of employment opportunities	33
Access to food and essentials	23
Digital Exclusion	22
Concern about Covid	13
Social distancing rules	10

ANY OTHER ISSUES OR GROUPS WHOSE NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET

6 organisations wrote in to share the pressures food aid providers are currently facing, from personal risk to demand outstripping supply.

“Unfortunately this was not the worst. One of the volunteers, who had a very vulnerable partner, caught the virus, passed it to them in late December and they is now not expected to live. How do we deal with this? We have thought over and over - was there something we could have done better or differently? Was it this encounter that made us too close or that door knob, are we to blame? Should we stop? What do we say to the volunteer? Send a card? Send flowers? How to face them for a more positive outcome for everyone? And we have had to conclude that it is COVIDs fault. It is not anyone's fault. Blame is not useful but instinctive. We are all brave and taking a risk. We have tightened our procedures and our volunteer agreement but it is impossible to make a space inside virus free. It might happen again. How can we go on with that over our heads? But we look at the numbers of people we are helping and at the reality of closing and know that we have to go on. And take the risk.”

“Numbers of people "shielding" who don't want to come to us. This has put pressure on us to ensure we have enough volunteers to meet the demand in the community.”

“We are being supplied with less food than last year so are having to distribute it more thinly.”

5 organisations raised concerns about the ongoing gaps in support for asylum seekers and migrants. In particular the lack of multi-agency support for new arrivals.

“There is still huge uncertainty about move-on timescales for asylum seekers living in hotels providing initial accommodation; there is also an ongoing lack of clarity re coordination for support in these.”

“Number of new reports about large numbers of asylum seekers being dumped by the Home Office in hotels across London without notifying the authorities. Reports of inadequate food and no support.”

“As mentioned in last week's summary, we are increasingly concerned about the lack of multi-agency support for new arrivals in the migration system. This is a huge problem which needs more co-ordination centrally. Local independent charities are being overwhelmed by the level of need. Statutory providers are not ensuring adequate provision is given, and no-one is co-ordinating support for groups meaning some families get multiple agencies stepping in causing confusion, where others are left with no support at all. There is clear role for the GLA to lead here. I am aware of one co-ordinating meeting that was held by the GLA but the Home Office providers were not held to account and no actions have come from the meeting. Meanwhile families are left vulnerable and open to abuse.”



NEXT STEPS

The next survey will cover two weeks, being in the field between 8th – 17th February.

Results available on Monday 22nd February.