



LONDON COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE SURVEY: WEEK FORTY FOUR/FORTY FIVE

FIELDWORK 8th – 17th 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 95 organisations responded in full or in part to the questions, which were live between Monday 8th and Wednesday 17th 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.

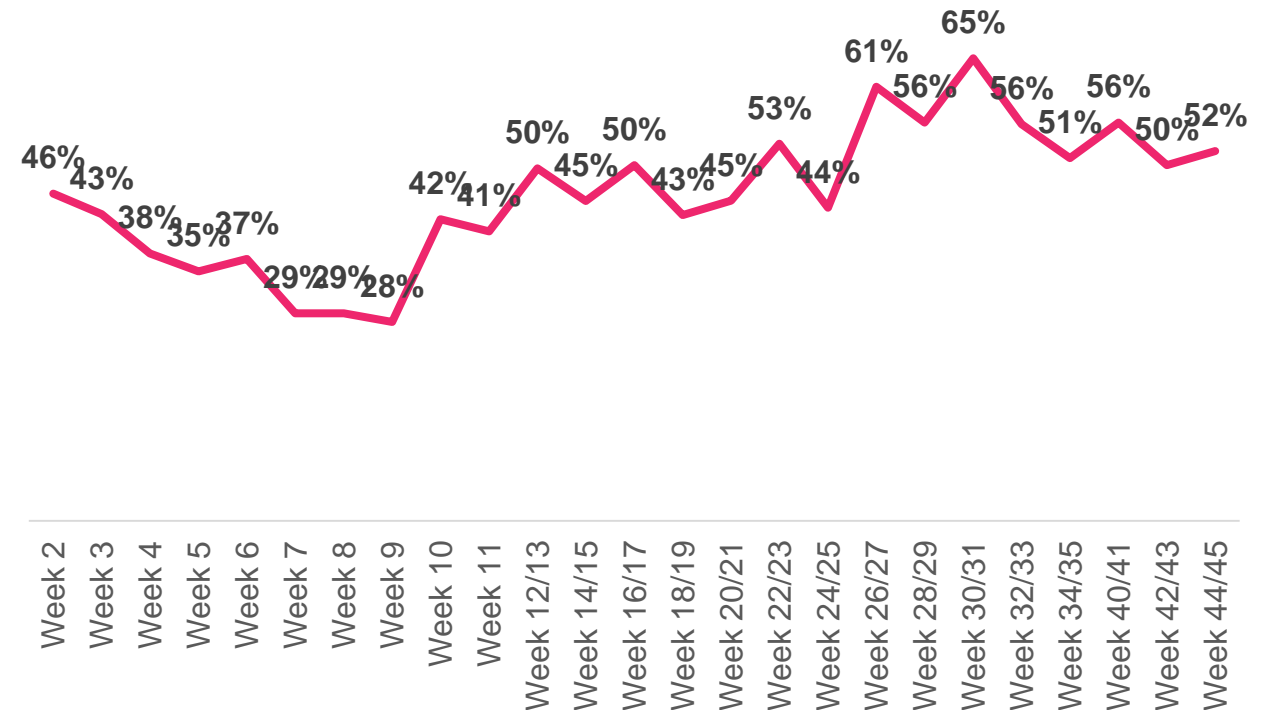
CHANGE IN NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEKING SUPPORT

This week 52 per cent of responding organisations (49) saw an increase in the number of people seeking support in the last two weeks.

40% reported little change in numbers.

Organisations working with BAME Londoners (65%) and young people (61%) were more likely to see an increase in demand compared to the cohort average.

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, poverty and access to food.

| Issue | Proportion reporting higher demand | No. of responses | Issue | Proportion reporting higher demand | No. of responses |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|---|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Mental health | 67% | 70 | Capacity Building (organisations or volunteers) | 45% | 40 |
| Isolation and loneliness | 64% | 64 | Domestic violence | 44% | 34 |
| Poverty | 61% | 49 | Access to benefits | 43% | 53 |
| Access to food | 55% | 65 | Fundraising support | 42% | 31 |
| Debt issues | 55% | 40 | Homelessness | 42% | 36 |
| Employment | 54% | 46 | Childcare or Parenting | 41% | 32 |
| NRPF | 54% | 28 | Immigration issues | 39% | 31 |
| Housing | 51% | 43 | Discrimination | 38% | 29 |
| Access to health | 50% | 48 | Access to social care | 30% | 47 |
| Grief/bereavement | 50% | 40 | Substance misuse | 24% | 25 |
| Education | 47% | 43 | Youth violence | 23% | 22 |
| Digital connectivity | 46% | 54 | Hate crime | 21% | 28 |
| Physical health | 45% | 51 | Victim support | 18% | 22 |

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 44/45 were capacity to meet demand, funding sustainability beyond the crisis, planning for delivery over the next 6 months and staff wellbeing and mental health. The top issues identified by organisations working with BAME Londoners and young people were broadly in line with the cohort average, organisations working with children were more likely to identify delivering services whilst following social distancing guidance as one of their top three issues.

| Challenge | Number of organisations |
|---|-------------------------|
| Capacity to meet demand | 36 |
| Funding sustainability beyond the crisis | 34 |
| Planning for delivery over the next 6 months | 33 |
| Staff wellbeing and mental health | 30 |
| Delivering services whilst following social distancing guidelines | 21 |
| Need to provide new or changed services | 17 |
| Reaching vulnerable groups | 16 |
| Reduction in volunteers | 13 |
| Funding until March 2021 | 11 |
| Digital or tech equipment (laptops, mobile phones or other devices) | 10 |
| Maintaining engagement and contact with beneficiary groups | 10 |

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 remained mental health, social isolation, financial insecurity and loss of jobs or lack of employment opportunities. Organisations working with BAME Londoners were more likely than the cohort average to identify digital exclusion as a main challenge.

| Challenge | Number of organisations |
|--|-------------------------|
| Mental health | 49 |
| Social Isolation | 45 |
| Financial insecurity | 27 |
| Loss of jobs or lack of employment opportunities | 26 |
| Concern about Covid | 15 |
| Access to food and essentials | 14 |
| Digital exclusion | 11 |
| Family tension | 10 |

ANY OTHER ISSUES OR GROUPS WHOSE NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET

Groups flagged the risk of unmet need building up, either as a result of Covid, awareness of what support services are open or digital exclusion.

“We are seeing an ongoing trend of lower than usual enquiries about benefits, financial wellbeing, income maximisation etc. We are concerned about this and think that a lot of people are putting off dealing with these issues because of lockdowns / Covid / etc. We think this is a 'ticking bomb' of need with potential knock on impacts on health, wellbeing, and care. We are planning a local 'don't put it off' campaign to encourage people to seek help now, and see if they have unknown eligibility.”

“There is a real problem that has increased over lockdown in getting any benefit and housing issues sorted out, especially for those who are digitally excluded.”

“I am still hopeful that the kind of collective community efforts we have seen throughout the pandemic, combined with the flexibility shown by funders, local authorities & other agencies to allow us all to 'get the job done' will continue post-covid and that new collaborative & powerfully impactful ways of working can be nurtured and supported... It feels very much like there is a tsunami of issues building up that will eventually come crashing down on London and we feel that the learning from Lockdowns should be put in to practice to enable effective partnerships to thrive and provide support to communities when they most need it.”

The impact of lockdown and digital exclusion on families, and in particular women, was flagged this week.

“Digital exclusion is not only stopping children schooling but also mums getting access to counselling and other essential services for themselves and their families.”

“Really concerned about the ongoing impact on women of balancing work, home childcare and educating their children and finances - it is very tough for a lot of low income women and many childcare organisations who might normally cannot”

The needs of asylum seekers and undocumented people continue to be flagged as an ongoing challenge.

“The need of undocumented people in the UK, continue to get worst and dire poverty and destitution. They have to get regularisation if they are to survive this pandemic.”

“Ongoing challenges of supporting people in initial accommodation in hotels; coordination is still very sporadic so people don't know where to go for help and advice. We are also aware of them being moved at extremely short notice, often without being told where they are going. There is a great deal of distress about this and it's very hard to support people through these transitions without good information before, during and after a move.”



NEXT STEPS

From March 2021 the survey will move to a monthly pattern. It will be open for responses for the first two weeks of each month, results will be available one week after the survey close.

The next survey will cover March 2021, being in the field between 1st – 12th March.

Results available on Monday 22nd March.