



LONDON COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE SURVEY: March 2021

FIELDWORK 1st – 19th March 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 three 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 91 organisations responded in full or in part to the questions, which were live between Monday 1st Friday 19th March 2021.

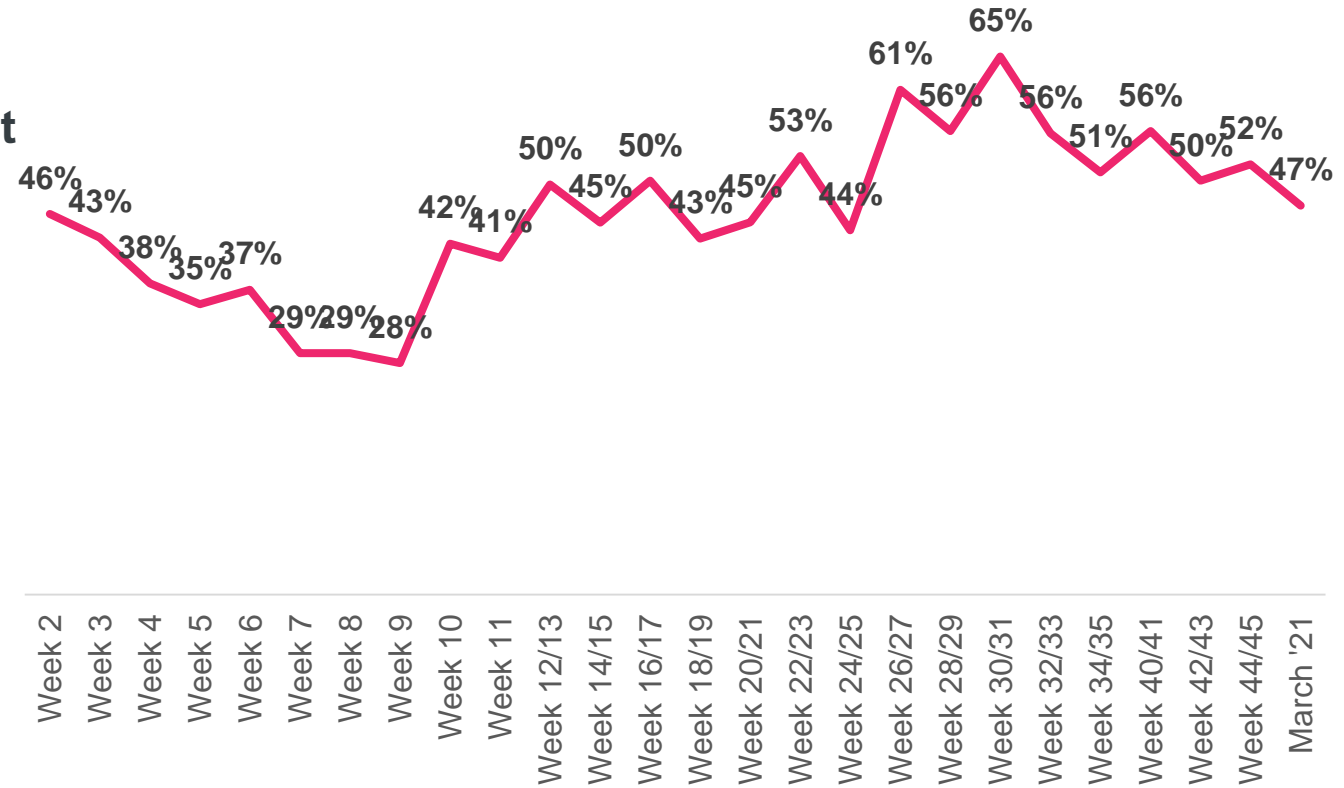
Note: due to the relatively small sample size and the targeted way in which recruitment was conducted, it is important not to extrapolate from any findings in the weekly survey to all civil society organisations in London or any particular population of Londoners. Results from the weekly survey should 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 47 per cent of responding organisations (43) saw an increase in the number of people seeking support in the last month.

51% reported little change in numbers.

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 month. 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 poverty, mental health, capacity building and isolation. We saw a larger than 10 percentage point increase in groups reporting higher demand for support with poverty, capacity building and youth violence.

Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses	Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses
Poverty	73%	44	Housing	43%	47
Mental health	64%	58	Education	41%	37
Capacity Building (organisations or volunteers)	58%	38	Homelessness	40%	35
Isolation and loneliness	56%	59	Immigration issues	39%	31
Employment	55%	49	Domestic violence	38%	34
Physical health	53%	40	Access to social care	37%	41
Digital connectivity	52%	44	Youth violence	33%	21
NRPF	52%	27	Victim support	32%	19
Access to food	52%	58	Childcare or Parenting	28%	25
Access to health	51%	43	Discrimination	28%	29
Debt issues	50%	38	Grief/bereavement	19%	31
Fundraising support	50%	28	Sexual exploitation	18%	17
Access to benefits	49%	49	Hate crime	17%	24

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOUR ORGANISATION IS FACED IN THE LAST MONTH?

We asked responding organisations to tell us the three biggest challenges they were facing in the last month. The top challenges in March were planning for delivery over the next 6 months, capacity to meet demand, staff wellbeing and mental health and funding sustainability beyond the crisis.

Challenge	Number of organisations
Planning for delivery over the next 6 months	42
Capacity to meet demand	26
Staff wellbeing and mental health	26
Funding sustainability beyond the crisis	26
Reaching vulnerable groups	17
Delivering services whilst following social distancing guidelines	16
Funding until March 2021	12

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE LONDONERS ARE FACING IN THE LAST MONTH?

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

Challenge	Number of organisations
Mental health	43
Financial insecurity	42
Social Isolation	37
Loss of jobs or lack of employment opportunities	33
Access to food and essentials	13
Digital exclusion	12

WHAT ARE THE KEY CHALLENGES FOR LONDONERS AS LOCKDOWN IS EASED?

The most common responses related to the financial and labour market impacts of the crisis. This included the impact of furlough ending, increased debt or lack of employment opportunities.

This was followed by high levels of anxiety and uncertainty about what 'return to normal' will look like and the speed at which things will be expected to change.

"Increasing levels of unemployment and reduction in job opportunities will make it harder to get interviews etc if unemployed."

"Furloughed staff in danger of losing jobs. Debt caused by furlough or loss of income."

"Committing to the return of services when so much is still uncertain."

"Expectation management of statutory stakeholders and beneficiaries. Expectation management of staff - Staff are keen to return location-based work with young people but it will not be possible for everyone to do this because of social distancing and Covid safety guidelines. A sense, also from some funders and statutory services, that everything is going 'back to normal' whereas in reality the systems supporting young people facing homelessness are much slower and more difficult to access, set also against increased demand."

"A risk to another lockdown due to a desire to 'get back to normal quickly'"

"Reducing anxiety and increasing confidence about returning to some form of normality. Taking things slowly and not going mad! Uncertainty, anxiety and mental health impact about what normality looks like."

"Economic reality of furlough scheme ending and businesses no longer being viable - resulting in rapid increase in redundancies and unemployment."

"Once the immediate health crisis is over there will be a longer term legacy of impact on finances, employment and mental health. Many voluntary sector organisations are stretched to their limits to change their provision and meet different and growing demand. There may not be the resilience or capacity to meet these longer term needs."

WHAT ARE THE PERSPECTIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE REGARDING THE VACCINE?

There is a diversity of views amongst young people, with some ready and willing to take the vaccine as the route back to normal, with others feeling like it is not relevant for them due to perceived lower risk.

“We find them generally willing to be vaccinated but they are getting frustrating with needing to wait. This is particularly the case for young people who might be in employment in frontline services such as supermarkets. We're also finding very significant variations across London in vaccination roll out”

“Some think it is dangerous or is to be used to spy on them, some are keen to have to protect the older people they live with. There is still misinformation circulating about negative effects on fertility which is putting some younger women off taking up.”

“Mixed messages continue to create confusion, Young people don't get Covid, but may be carriers. Sense that they are the least regarded in society, blamed for spreading on the one hand, not seen as a priority for vaccination on the other.”

“Those with health conditions are keen to have it and those that have viewed it as just a flu are less positive about the need to have a vaccine themselves.”

“majority accepting. Individual religious groups refusing. Worrying development of "why should I still bother as pandemic is almost over" attitude.”

“The young LGBTQ+ people we talk to say they would like it so they can get back to normal.”

ANY OTHER ISSUES OR GROUPS WHOSE NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET

A number of groups raised concern about individuals who are not reaching out for support from authorities or services. People who are slipping through the net.

The needs of Covid impacted adults and the importance of ensuring their complex needs were met was also raised.

“We are seeing more and more people access our food bank due to loss of work or benefit caps. Also seeing a number of people who seem to have slipped through the Council network and/or do not want to contact authorities who are facing severe challenges. Young people are struggling with their behaviour, which has become more challenging. We have seen a marked decline in the mental health of elder members of the community who have been shielding and we are concerned as to how they will cope moving forward.”

“We think single parent families on benefits are having a difficult time.”

“Residents with no recourse to public funds who have lost employment are in increasing desperate situations. As are migrants with precarious immigration status, who are terrified of seeking any help because of their status.”

“Again access to GP's is poor and complicated for Id adults to navigate.”

“We must find a sustainable and workable support system for Covid impacted vulnerable adults who are coming to us with complex issues that require often urgent attention. We can only do so much with the tools we have but we do want to be part of a sustainable solution”



NEXT STEPS

The next survey will cover April 2021, being in the field between 6th – 23rd April.

Results available on Monday 4th May.