



**Health  
Consumers  
Tasmania**

Building a Consumers Health Voice in Tasmania

## **Concerns and queries regarding COVID-19**

### **Survey 3**

conducted 28-29 April 2020

### **Executive Summary**

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## Executive Summary

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From 28 to 29 April 2020 Health Consumers Tasmania conducted a survey into Tasmanians concerns and queries about COVID-19.

A total of 435 people responded to the on-line survey. This is the third survey of its type; the most recent survey was run just prior to Easter (6-9 April) with 323 participating.

The survey was distributed through Health Consumers Tasmania stakeholders and networks, comprising patients, carers, health consumer representatives, community volunteers and health service employees. The survey sample was a self-selecting group and it strongly represents those who are involved with the Tasmanian health system in some form and thereby their collective views are critical as they are the most likely group within the community to be impacted by any changes to health system.

The attached report, prepared by Dr Susan Banks (UTAS), Dr Brendan Churchill (UMelb) and Dr Jack Leggett (UQ) provides important insights into the attitudes and concerns of Tasmanians as they experienced the COVID-19 pandemic post Easter.

Key conclusions are tabled below:

- On the whole, we can conclude that Tasmanians feel a little safer now compared to three weeks ago (before Easter).
  - When asked, around half (54%) said they felt the same level of safety, whilst approximately 35% said they felt more-safe compared to three weeks ago, reasons being
    - the general perception that Australia has successfully navigated the first wave of the virus, and
    - most people have done the right thing in staying at home – (both reasons were provided from the previous survey as a key source of anxiety).
  - Another way to look at this is to compare the results between the two surveys. Over three quarters (78.6%) felt safe or very safe now compared to (63%) three weeks prior, which is a significant improvement.
    - this is in spite of the cluster outbreak on the North West Coast of Tasmania.
  - Of concern
    - 1 in 10 (9.9%) indicated they felt less safe now compared to three weeks ago
    - those people with a pre-existing health condition or a disability also felt much less safe.

- Health Consumers Tasmania asked what restrictions should be lifted and those that should remain in their region after 15 May, the date the Premier indicated the Government may consider changes to the current suite of lockdowns.

The community's views on this issue are important as they will bear the social cost to any easing of restrictions, both with their mental health but also if these changes results in people contracting the virus down the track (a second wave). They have a view on what level of risk they are prepared to tolerate as the community emerges from the coronavirus.

- Firstly, the community advocates a cautious approach to easing the restrictions rather than lifting the restrictions.
- Secondly, as a broad summary of the comments, the community have indicated a desire to see a move back to being with family and friends in the first instance and to be able to enjoy Tasmania's natural environment hinting that this would help ease any anxiety associated with isolation.

The following list provides the State Government with a road map that outlines the order the community suggests is one they would endorse.

- There are two clear areas where the Government has strong support to ease restrictions over the coming weeks: namely allowing
  - more elective surgeries (75.2% - *yes to reduce*)
  - access to parks and reserves (73.5%).
- There is also an argument supporting the easing of restrictions in the following areas where around half those surveyed would support easing of restrictions and where the support for easing was greater than no change.
  - access to public beaches (58.1% - *yes to reduce*)
  - family gatherings (51.9%)
  - funerals and weddings (49.4%)
  - non-essential travel within your region (47.6%).
- On the other hand, there is little or no public support to ease restrictions for
  - non-essential travel around Tasmania (70% - *to no change*)
  - shopping – restaurants and cafes (69.7%)
  - age care (65.3%)
  - group exercise / sport (62.9%).
- The community is clearly divided on what to do with the restrictions for schools and other education services with a slightly greater number (41.7%) supporting the current restrictions compared to those who would like them eased (38.7%).
- There is a significant amount of uncertainty about what to do with the restrictions in place for schools and other education (19.6% - *didn't know*) and age care restrictions (16.4%). Not surprisingly, these are the two areas where the community have received mixed messages from the different levels of Government, and it appears to have only served to create more uncertainty within the community. For aged care at least, those surveyed held a firm view that there should be no change at present.

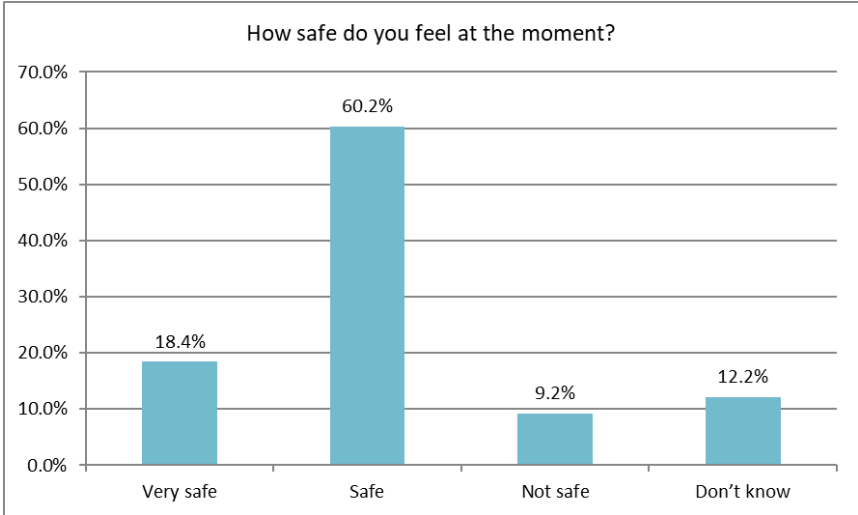
- The views expressed were quite definitive regarding the community's position on access to parks and beaches (5.2% - *didn't know*), access to public beaches (8.4%) and non-essential travel around Tasmania (7.9%).
- Tasmanians are on track to meet the Prime Ministers minimum target of 40% required to download Covidsafe app.
  - Approximately (44%) indicated that they have or will download the Covidsafe app while over half indicated they were either still undecided or would not download the app (55.5%).
  - There is a strong argument that the national Government has not provided sufficient information to around a quarter of the population (26%) to make an informed decision as they indicated they didn't know whether to download the app or not.
  - Nearly a third (30%) of those surveyed indicated they would not download the Covidsafe app which is considered significant in terms of what the Covidsafe app is designed to do. Reasons offered for not downloading the app mostly related to
    - lack of trust with the Government's ability to do the right thing
    - privacy concerns and Amazon storage
    - security
    - don't own the appropriate phone or software – technical issues
    - have concerns that the app will actually work (medical evidence that the 15 minute and 1.5m settings are correct).
  - People in the North West are most likely of all Tasmanians to use the Covidsafe app (50%) whilst those in the South are least likely to use the Covidsafe app.
  - A higher proportion of those in the North were still undecided or didn't know.
  - Of concern is that people with a disability (51%) were also more likely than other Tasmanians (30%) to not download the Covidsafe app.
- Tasmanians are turning to telehealth in significant numbers with over half of those surveyed (54.8%) indicated they would use telehealth if they need to see their GP or a doctor if they became sick over the next two weeks. This compares with 26.3% prior to the Easter period and this is considered a significant and positive change.
  - of those who used telehealth (113 people or 28% of respondents), they were either very satisfied (50%) or satisfied (39.2%) with only 9 people (8.0%) not satisfied.
  - overall, 88.6% indicated they would contact their doctor in person or via phone, which is positive result compared to around 70.1% prior to Easter.
  - only 6.5% indicated they wouldn't seek medical treatment as per normal compared to 30% three weeks ago. It appears that people's fears of picking up an infection from the GPs clinic have eased significantly.

- this result may correlate with some people now feeling more safe than prior to Easter, are becoming more confident and therefore don't fear moving about for essential services as much.
  - The higher the level of education a person had, the more likely they were of using telehealth compared to someone with less education even though as the level of education increased, contact of any kind with a GP decreased. This confirms the view that those in lower socio-economic groups find it harder to access medical treatment when they need it and more needs to be done to ensure telehealth is equally available to these groups.
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- There is also an improvement in the number of Tasmanians who cannot access medications, doctors and carers down from 17% to 8%. The reasons given for those not able to access services relate mostly to the service they required were either full, closed or cancelled.
  
  - A total of 6.8% of those surveyed have been tested for coronavirus (all negative).

**Finding 1 – Tasmanians are starting to feel more safe**

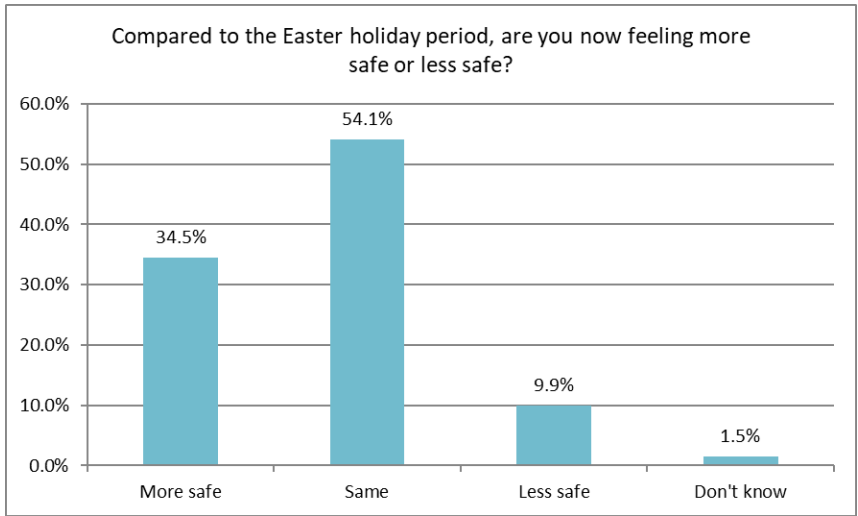
Tasmanians are now feeling a little safer than three weeks ago. There is a feeling of confidence that the peak of the virus has been successfully negotiated and that peoples fear of others not doing the right things has been unfounded.

Of concern are that people with a disability suggest that they are more likely to feel unsafe (60.61%) compared with non-disabled people (52.6%) and more certain of their view (a lower proportion answered “Don’t know”).



Respondents were asked to identify whether they were feeling more or less safe compared to three weeks ago. Over half indicated that they were generally feeling the same level of safety compared to the Easter period, whilst a third were now feeling more-safe.

Of concern, is that approximately 1 in 10 are now feeling less safe.



For those not feeling safe, they provided up to three reasons for not feeling safe, summarised below.

<b>Why do you not feel safe</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
I am worried about catching Coronavirus	27	75.0%
I am worried about someone I know (eg elderly parents, children) catching coronavirus	22	61.1%
I am worried about other people contracting Coronavirus	9	25.0%
My home does not feel safe	1	2.8%
My workplace does not feel safe	5	13.9%
Other people's behaviour is putting me at risk	14	38.9%
I am confused about the rules for what I can and cannot do	7	19.4%
I need to access health services/medications and am scared of catching Coronavirus	2	5.6%
I don't feel safe because I have lost my job	0	0.0%
I lack trust in government information – I don't think I have all the information	6	16.7%
I don't know	0	0.0%
Other (please specify)	7	19.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	

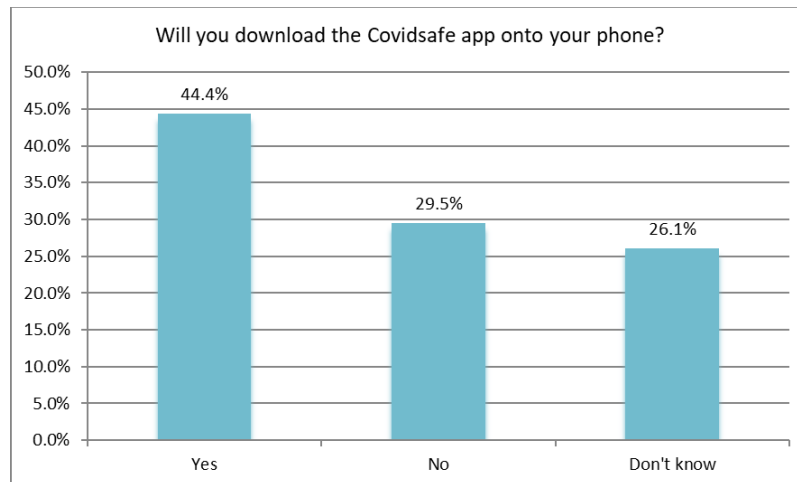
For those people who felt less safe (n=40), the reasons offered include:

- they were mostly worried about themselves or their family catching the coronavirus
- they were worried about kids going back to schools and
- people not social distancing (they were concerned about the behaviour of others).

## Finding 2 – Tasmanians on track to download the Covidsafe app

Approximately (44%) of those surveyed have or will download the Covidsafe app, nearly a third (30%) indicated they would not download the app whilst a quarter (26%) said they didn't know whether to download the app or not.

Of concern is the fact that those people with disability were also more likely to not download the app (51%) than other Tasmanians (27%), while non-disabled Tasmanians clearly favour using it (48%) compared to those with a disability (25%).



Reasons offered for not downloading the app include:

- **Privacy and trust**

“privacy and risk, it creates a false sense of security”

“I don't have confidence in where my personal data will be stored”

“It is too ambiguous. I don't trust it”

“I don't trust the government” and “Don't trust govt to keep data safe”

“Privacy concerns with data holding body”

“Privacy concerns about how data is stored and could be accessed or used at a later time”

- **Technology**

“I have an old phone that can't download the app”

- **More information required**

“They have not proved that the information will remain confidential”

“Until source code is cleared I won't look at it”

“The government is already using increasingly coercive language to pressure people to download it, they are not explaining what it can and can't do adequately”

“Because it does nothing to protect and potentially will encourage complacency. It is not going to pick up contacts unless they are within 1.5 metres for 15 minutes or more. Where is the scientific evidence that this is the level of exposure you need to catch COVID-19”



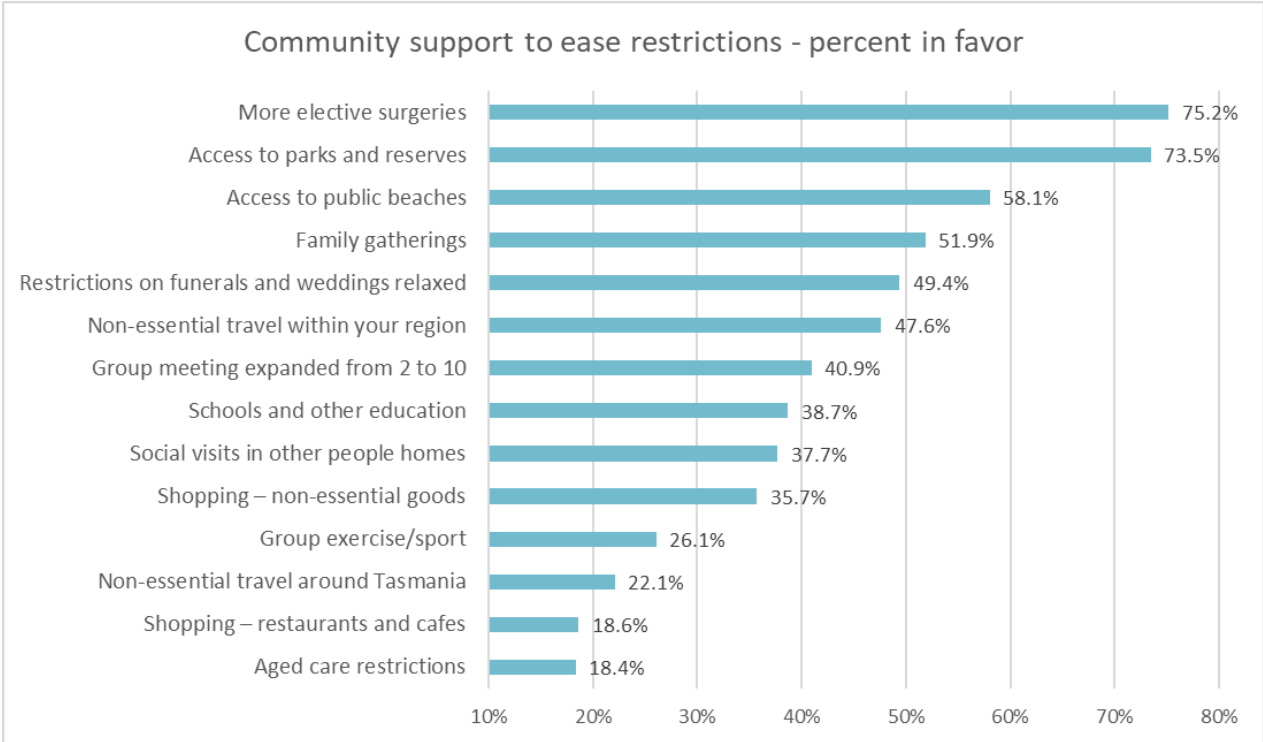
### Finding 3 – Tasmanians map a process to come out of lockdown

Health Consumers Tasmania asked what restrictions should be lifted in your region after 15 May, the date the Premier indicated the Government may consider changes to the current suite of lockdowns.

The following list provides the State Government with a road map that outlines the order the community suggests is one they would endorse.

Any easing of restrictions requires strong community support, and the feedback from the survey indicates that respondents are in favour of a cautious and phased winding back of the strategy, but they acknowledge that they expect restrictions to return in the case of another outbreak:

- “Restrictions should be relaxed rather than removed in some cases”
- “I think some relaxation but carefully monitored and knowing it may need to change back again”
- “If the cases remain as it is I would suggest to start lifting slowly but if they increase should place restrictions quickly”
- “I’d prefer to wait until we are a week clear before restrictions are lifted.
- “I still believe social distancing should stay the same”



Presence of disability were more supportive for easing the restrictions for social visits with 51% of people with a disability supported lifting this restriction (compared with 42% of people without a disability).

The following table breaks the type of current restrictions into four groups, namely, where:

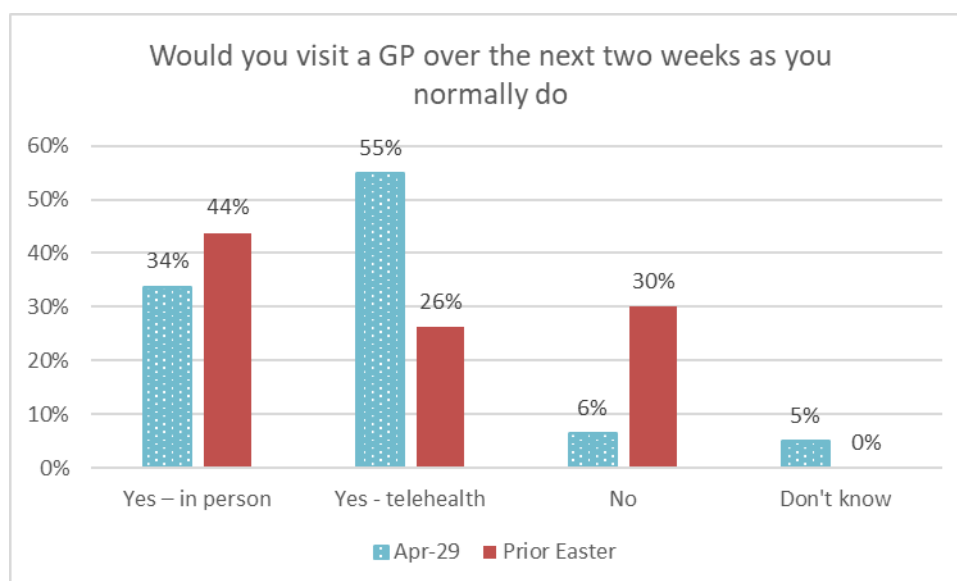
- there is strong community support to relax existing restrictions
- the support for relaxation outweighs the level of support to keep restrictions the same
- the support to keep restrictions the same outweighs the support to relax restrictions
- there is strong community support to keep the current level of restrictions in place.

Area of restriction	Yes (relax restrictions)	No (stay the same)	Don't Know	
More elective surgeries Access to parks and reserves	<b>75.2%</b> <b>73.5%</b>	13.7% 21.3%	11.2% 5.2%	Strong endorsement to relax restrictions
Access to public beaches Family gatherings Restrictions on funerals and weddings relaxed Non-essential travel within your region	58.1% 51.9% 49.4% 47.6%	33.5% 37.7% 37.0% 42.2%	8.4% 10.4% 13.7% 10.2%	Endorsement to relax restrictions is greater than those wanting no change
Group meeting expanded from 2 to say 10 Schools and other education Social visits in other people homes Shopping – non-essential goods	40.9% 38.7% 37.7% 35.7%	47.9% 41.7% 50.6% 52.6%	11.2% <b>19.6%</b> 11.7% 11.7%	Those wanting no change in the restrictions is greater than those wanting change
Group exercise/sport Non-essential travel around Tasmania Shopping – restaurants and cafes Aged care restrictions	<b>26.1%</b> <b>22.1%</b> <b>18.6%</b> <b>18.4%</b>	62.8% 70.0% 69.7% 65.3%	11.2% 7.9% 11.7% <b>16.4%</b>	Strong endorsement for no change in the current restrictions

## Finding 4 – Telehealth takes off in Tasmania

Tasmanians are turning to telehealth in significant numbers with over half of those surveyed (54.8%) indicated they would use telehealth if they need to see their GP over the next two weeks. This compares with 26.3% prior to the Easter period and considered a significant and positive change.

The uptake of telehealth has enabled the community to re-engage somewhat with their GP and they are now returning to seek care from the GP with 88.6% indicating they would contact their doctor in person or via phone, which is a positive result compared to around 70% prior to Easter.



Reasons given for not seeing a GP or doctor are given below:

Reasons for not visiting a doctor	Frequency	Percent
I want to avoid adding to strain on the health system	6	24.0%
I am putting off minor/less serious matters and visit for emergencies only	11	44.0%
I will not access because I am concerned about contracting Coronavirus	2	8.0%
Other (please specify)	6	24.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Those using telehealth are satisfied or very satisfied with the service.

Level of satisfaction of telehealth	Requency	Percent
Very satisfied	56	50.0%
Satisfied	44	39.3%
Not satisfied (please explain why)	9	8.0%
Don't know	3	2.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Finding 5 - Access to medications, doctors or carers.

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Approximately 8% of those surveyed cannot access medications, doctors and carers down from 17% prior to Easter.

<b>Able to access medications, carers and support</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	348	87.0%
No	32	8.0%
Don't know	20	5.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

The major reason given relate mostly to the service required is either full, closed or cancelled.

<b>Reasons for not being able to access medications or support</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
I cannot access what I need because of the lockdown	5	16.1%
The service I need is full, closed or cancelled	8	25.8%
I need/want a face to face service and can't access it	3	9.7%
There is a lack of supply of my medications	4	12.9%
I am concerned about contracting Coronavirus	1	3.2%
I will not need these things in the next two weeks	5	16.1%
Other (please specify)	5	16.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100%</b>