LONDON COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE SURVEY: April 2021

FIELDWORK 7th– 23rd April 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.

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 96 organisations responded in full or in part to the questions, which were live between Monday 7th Friday 23rd April 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.

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CHANGE IN NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEKING SUPPORT

This week 52 per cent of responding organisations (50) saw an increase in the number of people seeking support in the last month.

44% reported little change in numbers. Organisations working with young people and BAME Londoners saw a slightly higher increase in demand at 58%.

Increase in numbers seeking support

Source: COVID-19 Community Response Survey (n=96)

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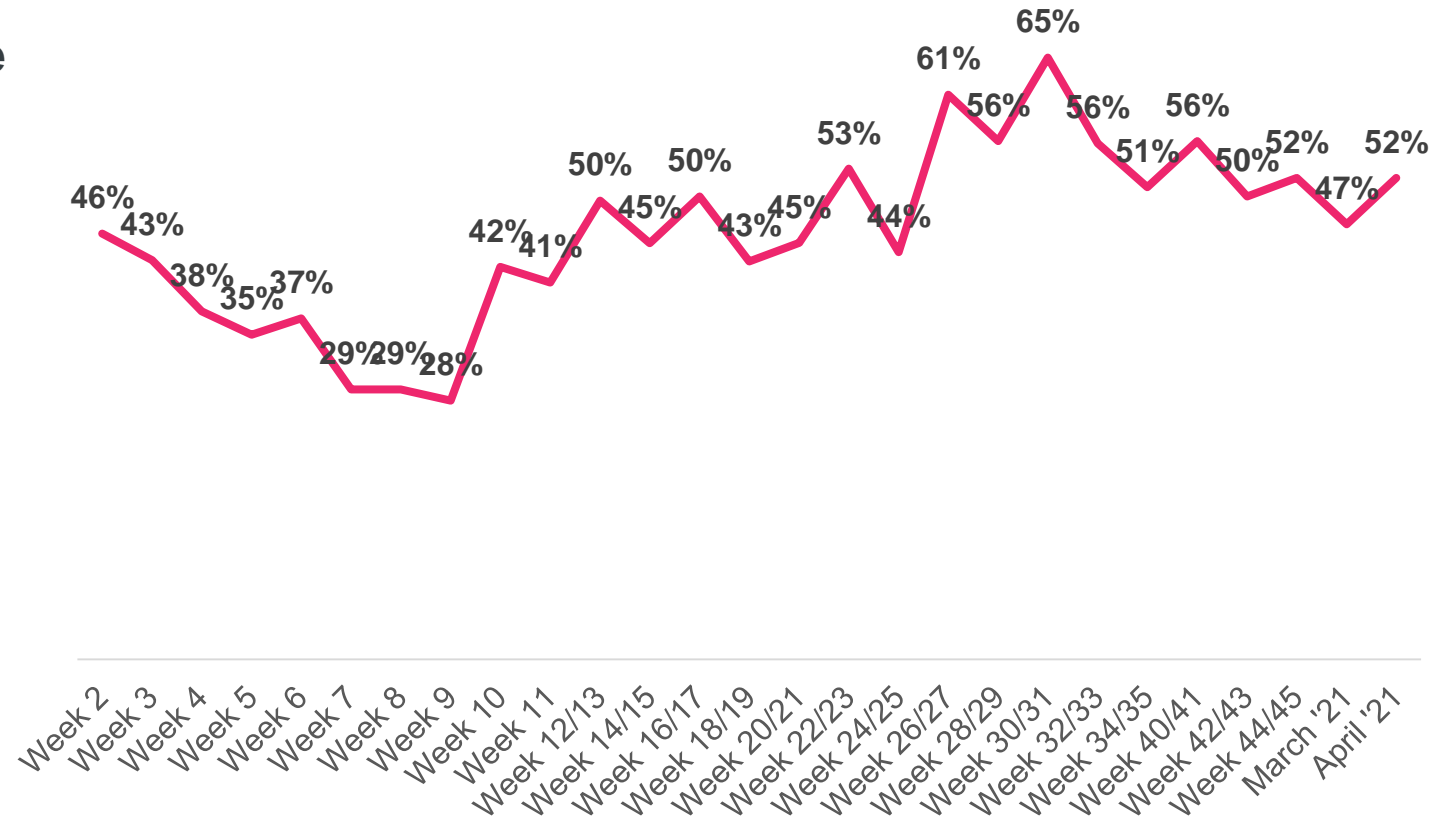
CHANGE IN NUMBERS SEEKING SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC ISSUES

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 mental health, poverty, employment and isolation. We saw a larger than 10 percentage point increase in groups reporting higher demand for support with housing, homelessness, domestic violence, grief/bereavement, immigration issues, childcare, discrimination, substance misuse, and hate crime.

Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses	Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses
Mental health	71%	70	**Immigration issues**	**48%**	**40**
Poverty	69%	48	Capacity Building (organisations or volunteers)	46%	41
Employment	63%	54	Education	46%	52
Isolation and loneliness	62%	61	Access to social care	45%	49
Housing	**60%**	**43**	Access to benefits	44%	50
Physical health	60%	52	Access to health	43%	56
Homelessness	**55%**	**38**	**Childcare or Parenting**	**41%**	**27**
Domestic violence	**54%**	**35**	**Discrimination**	**39%**	**31**
NRPF	53%	32	**Substance misuse**	**38%**	**24**
Digital connectivity	52%	56	Access to food	37%	63
Fundraising support	51%	37	**Hate crime**	**33%**	**30**
Grief/bereavement	**50%**	**38**	Youth violence	27%	22
Debt issues	49%	41	Sexual exploitation	26%	23

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 April were capacity to meet demand, funding sustainability beyond the crisis, planning for delivery over the next 6 months and staff wellbeing and metal health. There were no significant differences in main challenges for organisations working with BAME Londoners or Young people.

Challenge	Number of organisations
Capacity to meet demand	39
Funding sustainability beyond the crisis	38
Planning for delivery over the next 6 months	30
Staff wellbeing and mental health	25
Delivering services whilst following social distancing guidelines	19
Reaching vulnerable groups	14
Reduction in volunteers	14
Returning to offices/community centres	14
Need to provide new or changed services	12

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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. In April the top issues were mental health, loss of jobs or lack of employment opportunities, social isolation and financial insecurity. There were no significant differences in main challenges for organisations working with BAME Londoners or Young people.

Challenge	Number of organisations
Mental health	49
Loss of jobs or lack of employment opportunities	36
Social Isolation	31
Financial insecurity	30
Concern about Covid (including access to tests, fear of infection and confidence to leave home)	15
Access to food and essentials	10
Family tension	10

Source: COVID-19 Community Response Survey

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MOTIVATIONS FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY

"The surveys are used at team meetings as a way to collect current issues. In turn the results are used for monitoring and for grant applications. Receiving a copy of the actual sent survey would be very useful."

"We want to contribute to good data being gathered about the work across London and to have access to that data. What would increase our engagement with it is if we can work with you on the analysis and recommendations that come out of the data."

"We would like to ensure that voices from East and Southeast Asian communities are heard and support are provided to our community"

"What motivates me to complete this survey today is that there are other organisations working with a very restrictive or specific sector of the people we deal with and yet they speak is if they represent everyone - or they fill in these type of questionnaires because they have a dedicated individual for it. If only that information from certain organisations is considered then the end result could well be biased."

Informing internal and strategy, and London wide decision making

Ensuring diverse voices are represented

"Being part of this network and inputting data gives me an overall picture of London's needs and demands."

"The last few months have been super difficult and I'd imagine everyone is doing all the can to get through it. I still complete it because I understand the long term benefits and hope it can help."

"I want to know that my clients' difficulties are recorded. I come from a Citizens Advice background and my employer has no capacity for the social policy side of benefits advice."

"Our community continues to have unrecognised needs around which there is no comprehensive work. We are trying to address this gap and make it known given also how the community continues to be ignored by authorities."

"Keen to share information in the hope it will help drive more targeted support. Shared resource opportunities are great."

"I think people need to know how charities are struggling. It's easy to get on with things and not to voice what is going on but it needs to be said."

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ANY OTHER ISSUES OR GROUPS WHOSE NEEDS ARE NOT BEING MET

Groups are seeing an increase in family tension and domestic violence that went unreported during lockdown. Additionally carers are experiencing increased need without an adequate statutory response.

Concern about increasing health inequalities as a results of digital first pathways was raised, highlighting the many risks this creates for older Londoners in particular.

"Family tension is causing disturbances where either social services does not have the capacity to respond to or families are too scared to contact social services so are living with growing tension."

"Family tensions and domestic violence have been increasing over the pandemic - but people have not addressed or reported them. It is only when things reach crisis point and people have to leave their home that we are finding out."

"Issues relating to family carers do not appear to be fully addressed on a statutory level. Caring has increased but the level of support has not matched this. The levels of carers assessments carried out remains a big concern for our organisation at a local level. Carers assessments are carried out by the local authority but due to staffing issues and expertise shortages there is a significant backlog running into 10s of 100s."

"The needs of SEND adults and their carers remain high and it is important that future AEB commissioning takes this in to account."

"The problem with digital exclusion is much more complex and many sided than currently understood. Services which now have exclusively digital pathways are inadequate and discriminatory and this is going to increase health inequality and inequity. There is no privacy, no dignity, much misdiagnoses and no help if you are poor. You cannot adequately either diagnose medically or assess for social care virtually or by phone you have to have eyes on it. Digital education needs to be in the round and health/social care and the system as a whole needs to be much better – it's not just about educating residents. Relationships are disappearing from health and social care and being replaced by pathways and algorithms. Older people are genuinely terrified of this progression. Additionally we have connected many older people previously not on line but then they immediately become targets for scammers. Anecdotally from front line staff what is driving this is: Digital health services do not work for older people. Either they can't access, they find it so unhelpful they give up or they have to spend twice as long getting help. As a small example being asked to take a picture of a lump on your back when you are 90 and living on your own is not helpful (there are other words I could use!). Being sent links to YouTube videos is not going to be useful to people with no idea what YouTube is, don't have it downloaded and don't have clear enough vision to see it properly."

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NEXT STEPS

Following cohort feedback the survey has been redesigned to focus on more qualitative insight.

The next survey will cover May 2021, being in the field between 10th – 21st May.

Results available on Monday 1st June.

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