SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19

PENRITH
CITY COUNCIL

The Purpose of the Document

PURPOSE

1. Understand how businesses, the community sector and residents have been impacted by COVID-19
2. Identify key challenges and needs of the Penrith Local Government Area
3. Support informed decision making, service delivery and allocation of resources

METHODOLOGY

Businesses	Community Sector	Residents – Wave One	Residents – Wave Two
24 surveys and 20 interviews with local businesses	59 surveys with community sector workers	161 random phone surveys with residents	150 random phone surveys with residents
August 2021	August 2021	August 2021	October 2021

Summary of Key Challenges

Businesses
August

1. Business viability with reduced demand, patronage, foot traffic
2. Impact of cancelled activities, events, mass gatherings
3. Mental health of myself and/or staff
4. Increased overheads/costs
5. My obligations as an employer

Community Sector
August

1. Engaging service users
2. Funding to deliver services a nd meeting the needs of clients
3. Identifying the current needs of service users
4. Client access to the internet and/or data

Residents
August

1. Worrying about people who are important to me
2. Not being able to do activities that are important to me
3. Social isolation and feeling lonely
4. Wellbeing and mental health concerns
5. Loss of income/employment

Residents
October

1. Worrying about people who are important to me
2. Not being able to do activities that are important to me
3. Social isolation and feeling lonely
4. Wellbeing and mental health concerns
5. Loss of income/employment **AND** Worrying about the security of my job

Key Learnings to Guide Our Response Moving Forward

	Challenges	What we've learnt	Future considerations
Business	**Adapting to ongoing crisis under changing circumstances**	Business agility has been put to the test as organisations have constantly had to react and adapt to changing circumstances. Whilst government fiscal policies have had positive impacts on businesses, ongoing financial strain and pressures during these uncertain times have caused considerable stress and unease.	Repercussions from the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses, particularly small businesses, have the potential to last for years to come. Supporting local and small business will be vital in stimulating economic recovery.
Community Sector	**Digital access, inclusion and equity**	COVID-19 highlighted digital inequities within the community and accelerated the digitisation of services and communication. This presents barriers for participation and inclusion.	Moving forward, it is vital that all citizens can access, afford and have the skills/abilities to navigate these essential technologies.
Residents	**Access to public, open and shared spaces**	The pandemic has reinforced the importance of public, open and shared spaces as they support increased physical activity, promote healthy lifestyles, improve wellbeing and play a vital role in connecting communities (Greater Sydney Commission, 2020).	As density continues to increase, the importance and need for outdoor spaces continues to rise.
	Social isolation and loneliness	The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of social connections in times of crisis. Social capital helps build community resilience and collaboration which aid in enduring and recovering from shocks and stressors. People who feel well connected to their community are more likely to follow official orders and rebound quicker (Aldrich,D et al, 2020).	Building the social networks of the socially isolated and disengaged will be a crucial part of the recovery process. Existing social connections prior to shocks and stressors aids recovery and can prevent flow implications on health and wellbeing.
	Impacts on Quality of Life	COVID-19 and its restrictions have had notable and significant impacts on multiple factors which influence overall quality of life. From social and community connections, health (physical and mental), standard of living/financial circumstances, personal safety and future security. These factors have flow on implications which impact on demand and supply for community resources such as face masks, hand sanitizer, food, mental health support, information and service coordination.	Understanding how people were impacted by COVID-19, both negatively and positively, the needs and priorities of the community and methods/tools that were effective should guide responses not only for future crisis but also lead the short term prioritisation of recovery .

Timeline for Greater Sydney - 2020/2021

2019: October – December, bushfires. **2019/20:** Extreme heat summer.

2020

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

4 Jan: Penrith recorded over 50°C at 6 locations across Penrith.

9 Jan: World Health Organisation announces presence of Coronavirus related pneumonia in Wuhan, China.

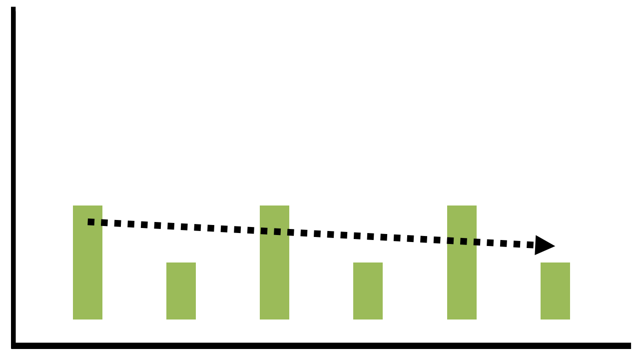
11 Mar: COVID-19 declared a global pandemic.

20 Mar: Australia's borders close to all non-residents.

21 Mar: Non-essential services and many schools closed.

Mid May: Easing of restrictions gradually introduced nationally.

June – Dec NSW COVID-19 cases remained low and stable.



24/25/26 Dec: Greater Sydney restricted to 10 house guests.

2021

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Jan – May NSW COVID-19 cases remained low and stable

March: Major flood of Nepean River and tributaries. Homes destroyed and damaged. People and businesses evacuated.

26 Jun: Stay at Home restrictions for Greater Sydney. No house guests and strong stay at home orders.

14 Jul: Stay at Home restrictions extended for Greater Sydney. Home based learning for school students continues.

8 Aug: 12 suburbs of Penrith LGA become areas of concern and are subject to further restrictions.

13 Aug: Greater Sydney residents require permit to leave the region amid growing case numbers

9 Sep: Roadmap to Recovery announced in anticipation of reaching vaccination targets in mid-October.

15 Sep: Curfews lifted for Sydney's LGAs of concern. NSW reached 70% 1st dose vaccination rate.

11 Oct: Greater Sydney reopens after reaching 70% double dose vaccination.

16 Oct: NSW reaches 80% double dose vaccination, allowing for further restrictions to ease.

2020 and 2021 Stay at Home Orders Comparison

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

2021 – More nuanced and targeted financial support

In 2021, **COVID-19 Disaster payment** (based on number of hours of work lost $200/$450/$750 flat rates, per week) and **Pandemic Leave Disaster payment** ($1,500 for 14 day self isolation period) replaced **JobKeeper payment** ($1,500, per fortnight) and **JobSeeker payments** (dependent on personal situation, paid fortnightly) that were introduced in 2020.

JobSaver assistance payments for eligible businesses and not-for- profit organisations were announced in July 2021. Eligibility requirements differ for each cohort.

RESIDENT NEEDS

2021 – Similar issues compounded by longer home based schooling and digital inequity

Feelings of social isolation, mental health concerns, financial pressures and access to community services remained consistent across both periods. However, in 2021, stress associated with home based schooling and access to technology or internet became increasingly prevalent.

COMMUNITY SECTOR CHALLENGES

2021 – Engaging people with layers of access barriers became a key challenge

Engaging services users and funding to deliver services were consistent challenges across the two periods. In 2021, engaging clients with access barriers (e.g. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, people with disabilities, without data or technology) become a key challenge.

Penrith Social Profile

Key statistics about our community

Estimated Resident Population

216,282

Source: Profile ID, as of 30 June 2020

Medium and high density housing

19%

Source: Profile ID, 2016

Speak Language Other than English at home

17%

Top 5 languages:
Filipino/Tagalog, Arabic, Hindi, Punjabi, Maltese

Source: Profile ID, 2016

Household Type

- Lone person Households: **18%**
- One parent families: **14.1%**
- Houses with 4 people or more: **32.9%**

Source: Profile ID, 2016

Households renting in the private market

24%

Source: Profile ID, 2016

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population

3.9%

- Greater Sydney: **1.5%**
- NSW: **2.9%**

Source: Profile ID, 2016

Median weekly household income

$1,655

- Greater Sydney: **$1,745**
- NSW: **$1,481**

Source: Profile ID, 2016

People with Disability

5.2%

Source: Profile ID, 2016

No access to internet connection at place of dwelling

12.5%

- Greater Sydney: **11.2%**
- NSW: **14.0%**

Source: Profile ID, 2016

Penrith Economic Profile

Key statistics about our local economy

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

63.9% full-time / 28.6% part-time

- Greater Sydney: **61.2% full-time / 30.9% part-time**
- NSW: **59.2% full-time / 32.7% part-time**

Source: Profile ID, 2016

LOCAL JOBS

71,819

Source: REMPLAN, March 2021

Gross Regional Product

$11.31 BILLION

- Greater Sydney: **448.87 billion**

Source: Economy ID, as of 30 June 2020

LOCAL BUSINESSES

16,165 (GST registered)

Source: Economy ID, March quarter 2021

Largest Employment Sectors

- Health Care & Social Assistance
- Retail trade
- Construction

Source: REMPLAN, March 2021

Job Seeker & Youth Allowance Recipients

9,483 OR 6.6%

- Greater Sydney: **5.2%**
- NSW: **6.1%**

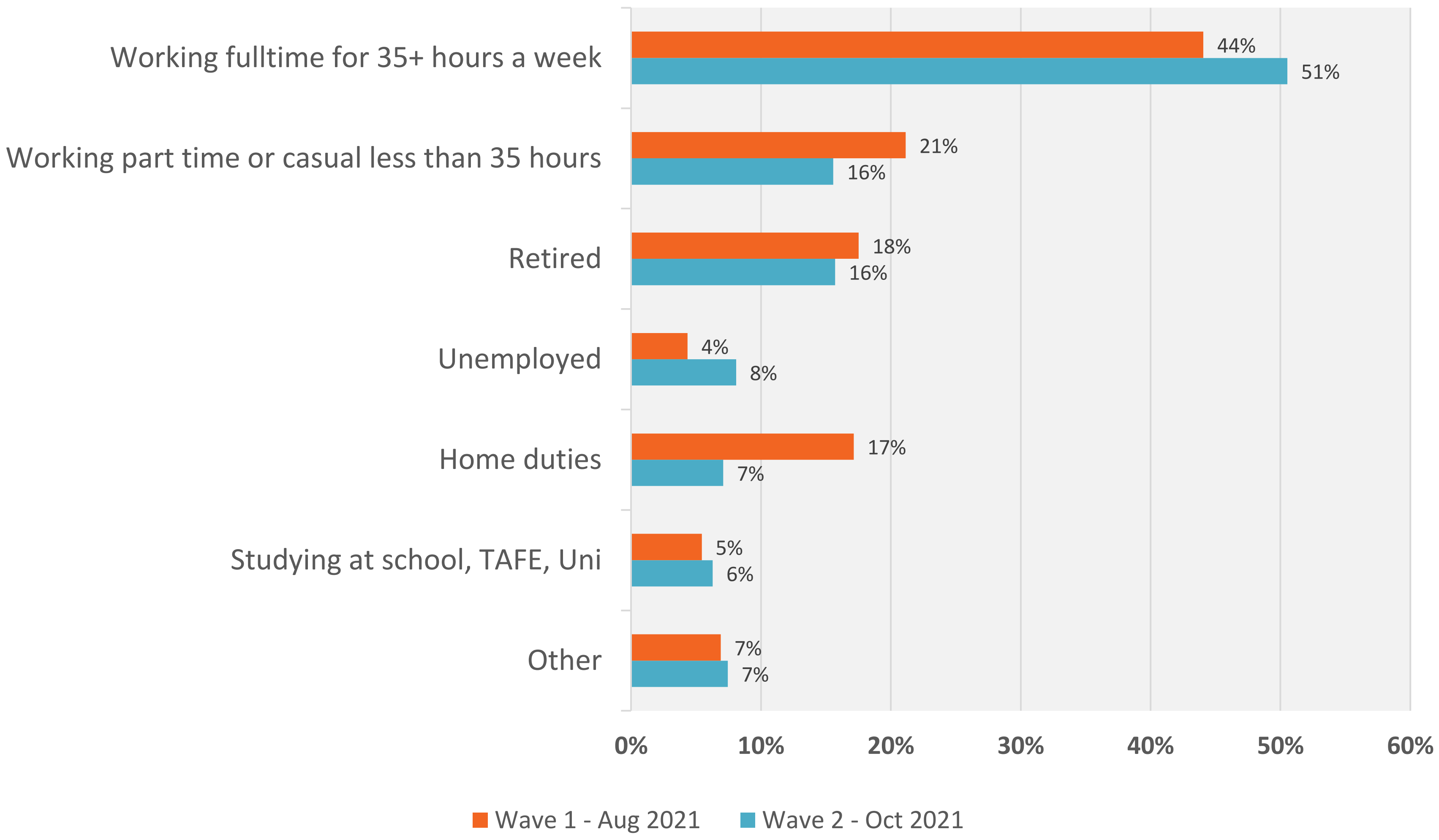
Source (Profile ID, September 2021)

BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

Impact on Employment – August and October Comparison

Q. What is your current work status?
If employed – How, if at all, have your work conditions been impacted by the current COVID-19 outbreak?

Work Status

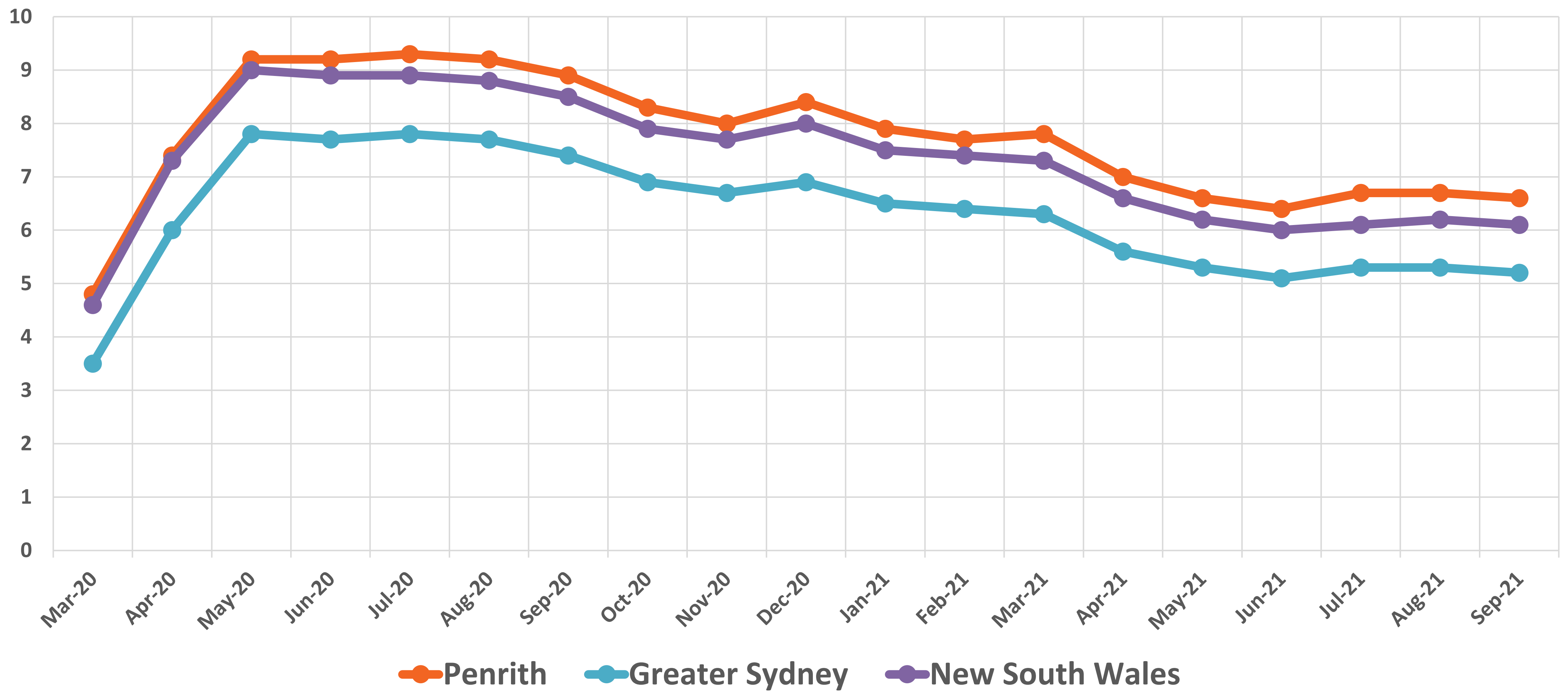


Compared to August, in October as restrictions eased there was an increase in full time employment, decrease in part time jobs, and a rise in unemployment.

Compared to August, in October there were slightly fewer residents that reported a reduction in hours/work opportunities due to COVID-19 and a slight increase in people working from home was noted.

JobSeeker and Youth Allowance

JobSeeker and Youth Allowance Recipients (%)



Since March 2020, Penrith consistently had a higher proportion of JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients than that of Greater Sydney and NSW, however, has followed the same trendline, with an overall decrease in the percentage of recipients between May 2020 and September 2021.

JobSeeker replaced the previous unemployment benefit formally known as Newstart in March 2020.

(Source Profile ID, September 2021)

What We Heard from Local Businesses

Findings from 24 surveys and 20 interviews of local businesses, conducted in August 2021

Top 5 impacts on small businesses over the past 12 months

1. Reduced operating hours
2. Reduced demands on goods or services or patronage
3. Partial loss of income/revenue
4. Complete closures
5. Financial pressures due to reduced cash flow

Impacts of greatest concern over the past 12 months

1. Business viability with reduced demand/patronage/foot traffic
2. Impact of cancelled activities/ events/mass gatherings
3. Mental health of myself and/ or employees
4. My obligations as an employer
5. Increased overheads/costs/ workload to meet social distancing requirements (cleaning/screens etc.)

Top positive impacts on organisations over the past 12 months

1. Access to Job Keeper
2. Access to Government Financial Support

Note: consultation occurred August 2021

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY SECTOR

Most Impacted in the Community

The local community sector indicated the following groups are particularly impacted:

Families in need of food, experiencing loss of work/finance or without data and devices	Children and young people, especially those with disability or disengaged from school	Seniors living alone or in hospital	
People with disabilities	Carers	Socio-economically disadvantaged communities	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities
People experiencing homelessness	LGBTQ+	People recovering from fires and floods	People who don't want to be vaccinated

Note: consultation occurred August 2021

What We Heard from the Community Sector

Findings from online survey with a range of community services, arts and cultural groups (59 responses in total, conducted in August 2021)

Key issues increased for clients during July

- Feelings of loneliness and social isolation
- Mental health concerns
- Financial pressures
- Access to community services
- Challenge or stress associated with home based schooling/ access to technology or internet/ unemployment and or loss of income

Top challenges for delivering services during July

- Engaging service users
- Funding to deliver services and meeting the needs of clients
- Identifying the current needs of service users
- Client access to the internet and/or data

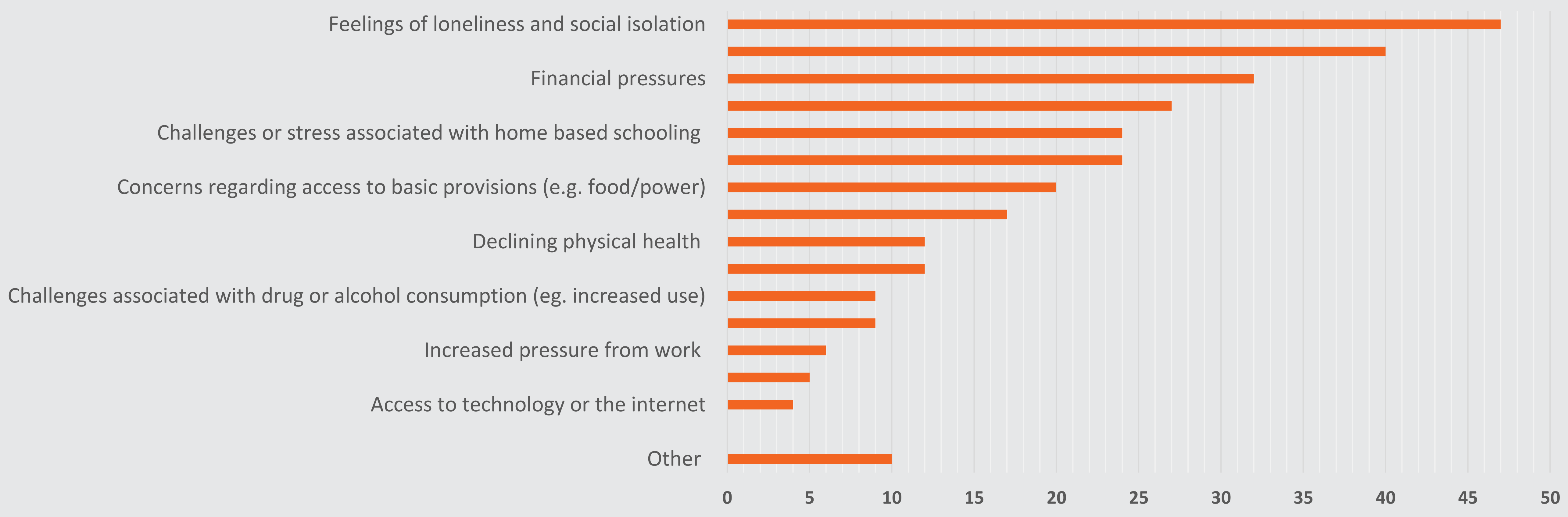
Anticipated needs of organisations over the coming months

- Supporting staff engagement and staff mental health
- Promoting the service
- Community engagement support
- Information about availability of local services
- Access to technology and/or data for clients

Note: consultation occurred August 2021

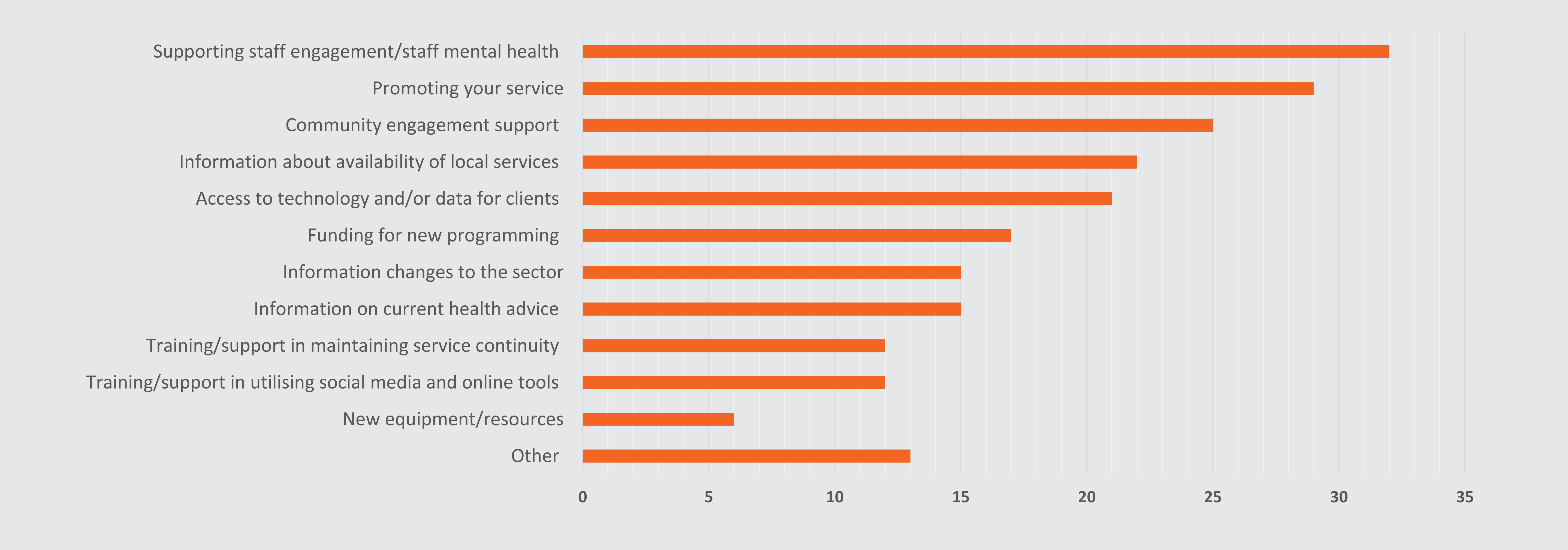
Community Sector

Key issues increased for clients during July 2021, reported August 2021



Community Sector

Anticipated needs for organisations in the coming months, reported August 2021



Community Sector

What do you see as a priority for your clients/customers over the coming months from August 2021?

27% of respondents identified mental health as an anticipated priority need

Community Sector

What has been the most significant source of support to your organisation during these challenging times?

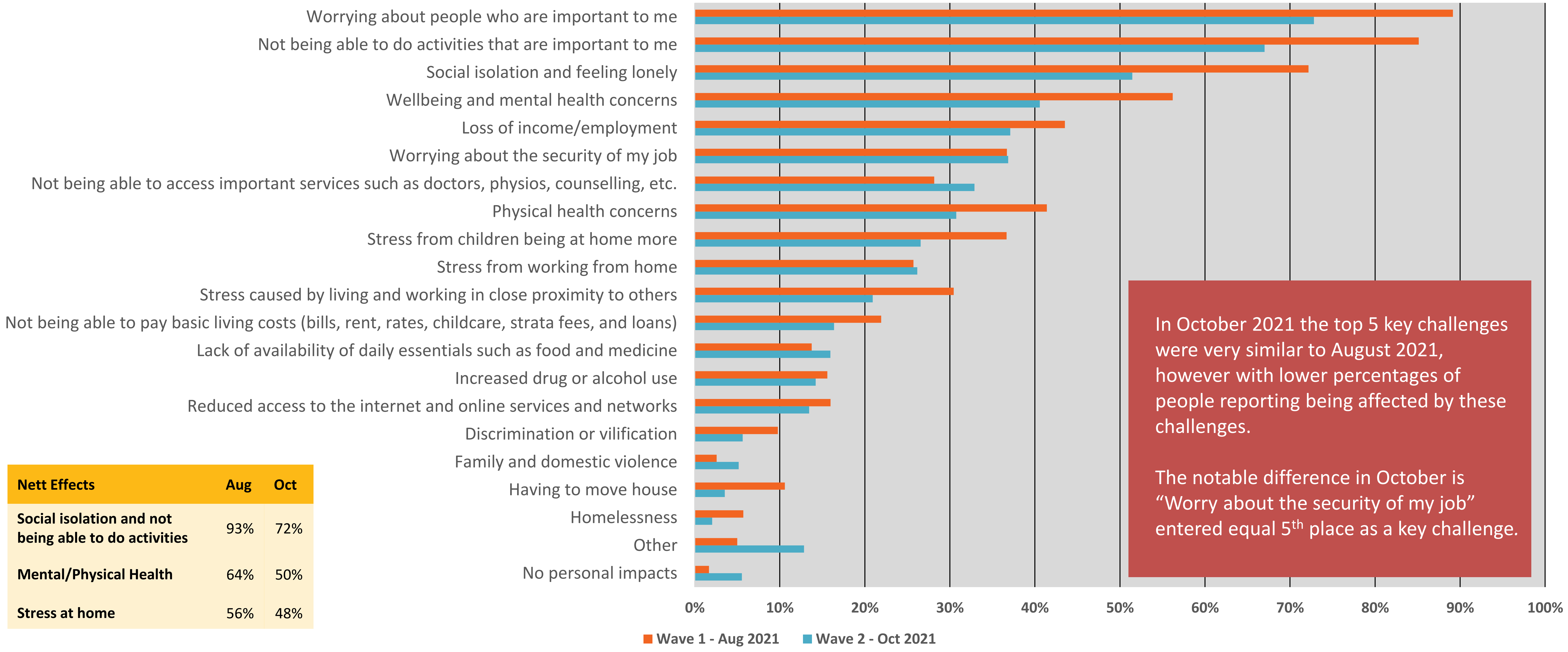
14% of respondents identified ‘updates’, ‘support’ and ‘team’

Note: consultation occurred August 2021

WHAT WE HEARD FROM RESIDENTS

Overall Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Residents

Q. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you?



In October 2021 the top 5 key challenges were very similar to August 2021, however with lower percentages of people reporting being affected by these challenges.

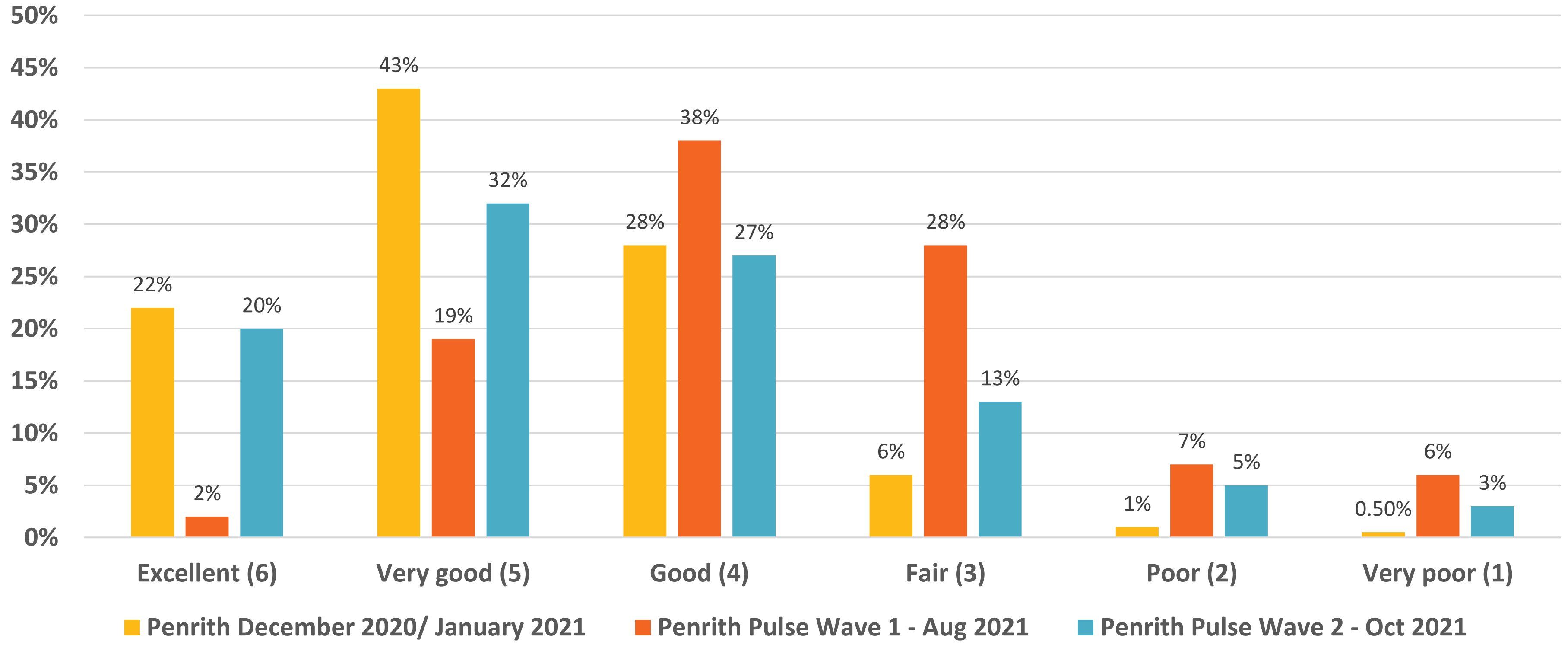
The notable difference in October is “Worry about the security of my job” entered equal 5th place as a key challenge.

Nett Effects	Aug	Oct
Social isolation and not being able to do activities	93%	72%
Mental/Physical Health	64%	50%
Stress at home	56%	48%

Quality of Life Changes March 2020 – October 2021

Q. Thinking about your life and personal circumstances, overall, how would you rate your quality of life at the moment?

	State Community Pulse Mar 2020	State Community Pulse May 2020	State Community Pulse Sep 2020	State Community Pulse Sep 2021	Penrith December 2020/ January 2021	Penrith Pulse Wave 1 - Aug 2021	Penrith Pulse Wave 2 – Oct 2021
Top 3 Box % (Good/very good/excellent)	85%	83%	83%	80%	93%	59%	79%▲
Base	1,728	1,142	1,146	1,148	452	161	150



Overall, perceived quality of life in Penrith is significantly higher for Wave Two (October 2021) than in Wave One (August 2021).

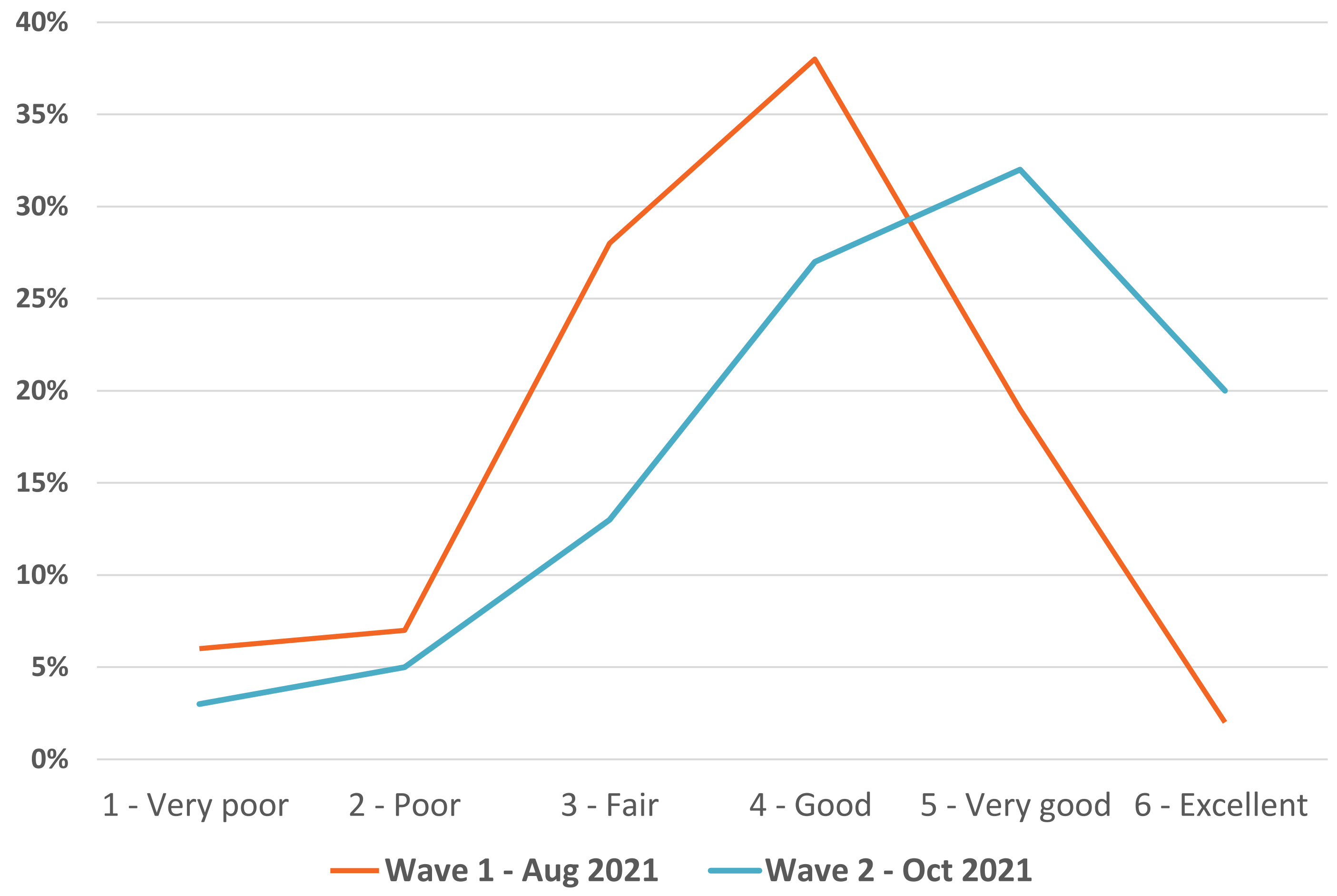
In October, 2021, 79% of Penrith residents rated their quality of life as being good, very good, or excellent compared to 59% of Penrith residents in August, 2021.

The Penrith October 2021 results are roughly on par with the state-wide survey conducted in September 2021.

The Penrith October 2021 quality of life results are still a little lower than state-wide quality of life results for March 2020.

Quality of Life

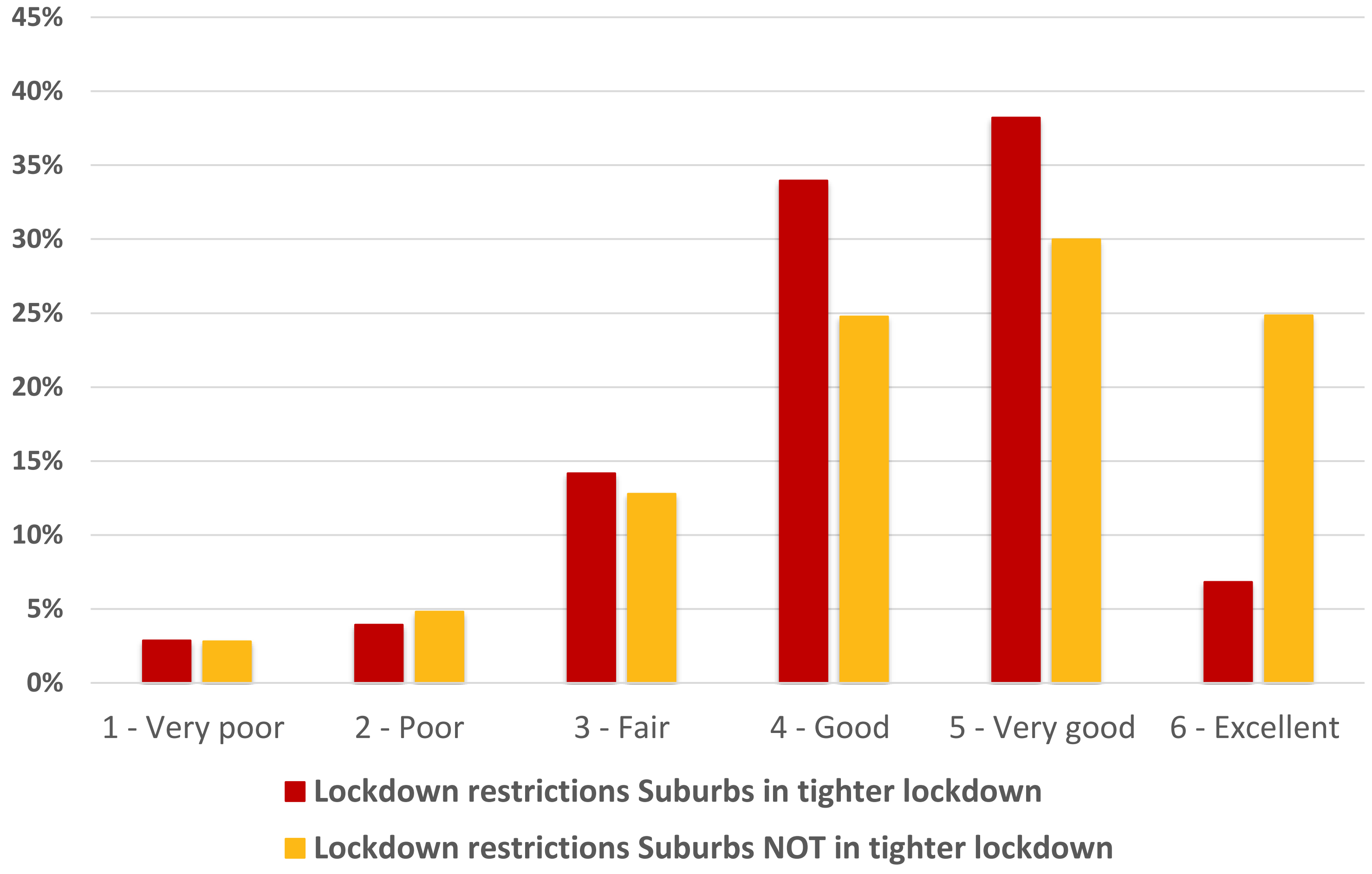
Quality of Life – August 2021 vs October 2021



Quality of life rating increased from 3.60 to 4.41 (out of 6) from August to October.

'Excellent' rating increased from 2% in August, to 20% in October.
'Very good' increased from 19% in August to 32% in October.

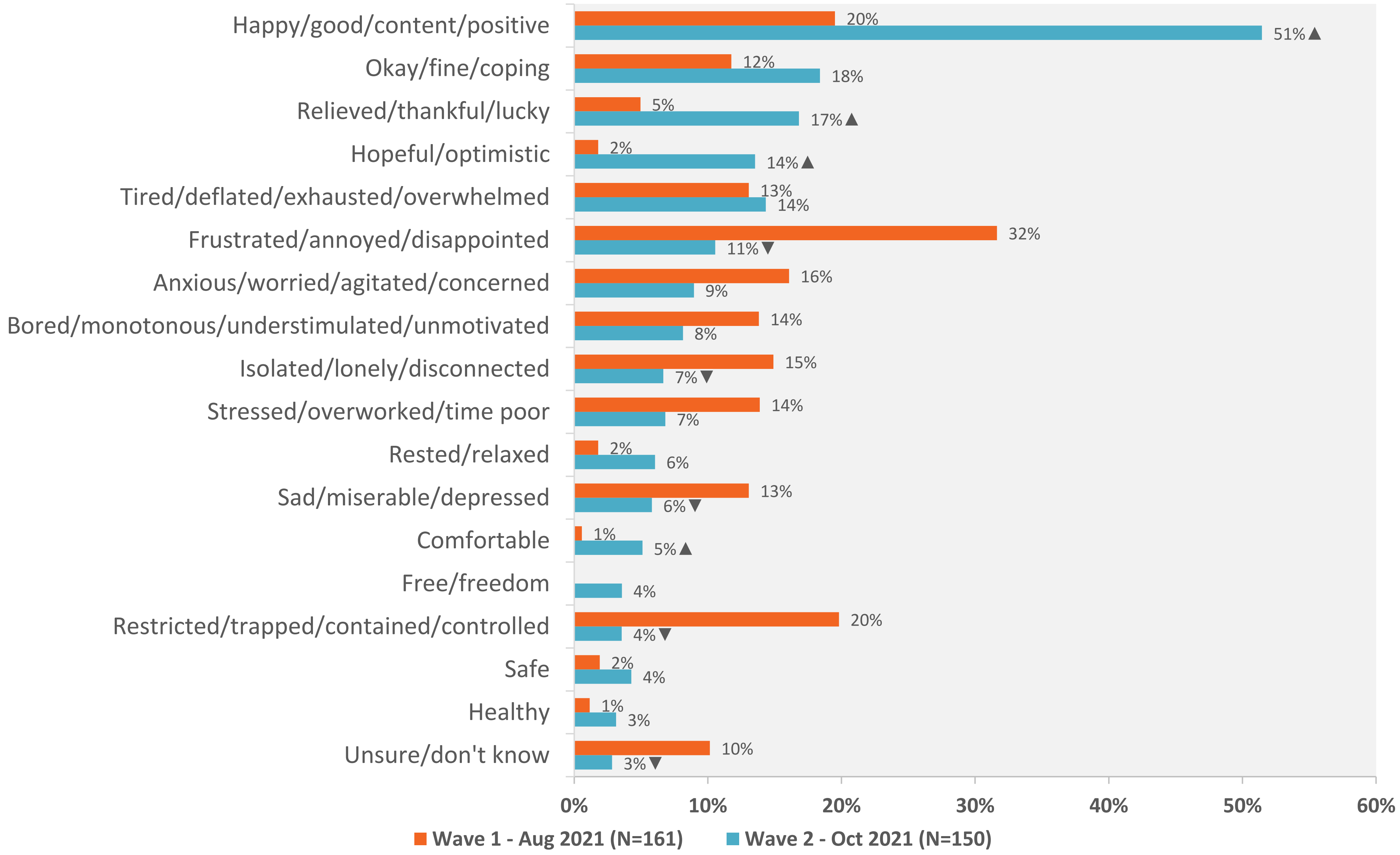
Impact on Quality of Life, Suburbs in Tighter Lockdown Restrictions and Suburbs Not in Tighter Lockdown Restrictions, October 2021



In October 2021 suburbs under tighter lockdown restrictions were less likely to report 'excellent' quality of life than suburbs not in tighter lockdown, although they were more likely to report food packages/support from organisations having positively impacted on their quality of life.

How Residents Feel – August 2021 and October 2021 Comparison

Q. What top 3 words would you use to describe how you're feeling at the moment?



In October residents are significantly more likely to report positive feelings such as **'happy/ good/content/positive'** or **'relieved/thankful/lucky'** than in August.

In October resident are less likely to suggest negative feelings such as **'frustrated/annoyed/ disappointed'** or **'restricted/ trapped/contained/controlled'** than in August.

Base: N=150

▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (compared to Wave 1 – Aug 2021)

Changes in Perception – August 2021 to October 2021

Overall Impacts of COVID-19

Residents are *significantly less likely* to mention the following impacts of COVID-19:

- Worrying about people who are important to me
- Not being able to do activities that are important to me
- Social isolation and feeling lonely
- Wellbeing and health concerns
- Having to move house

How Residents are Currently Feeling

Residents are *significantly more likely* to mention feeling:
- Happy/good/content/positive
- Relieved/thankful/lucky
- Hopeful/optimistic
- Comfortable

Residents are *significantly less likely* to mention feeling:
- Frustrated/annoyed/disappointed
- Isolated/lonely/disconnected
- Sad/miserable/depressed
- Restricted/trapped/contained/controlled

Positive Impacts on Quality of Life

Residents are *significantly* more likely to mention:
- Getting vaccinated

Residents are *slightly* more likely to mention:
- Getting outdoors to exercise
- Exercise with guidance online
- Food packages/support from organisations

Negative Impacts of Quality of Life

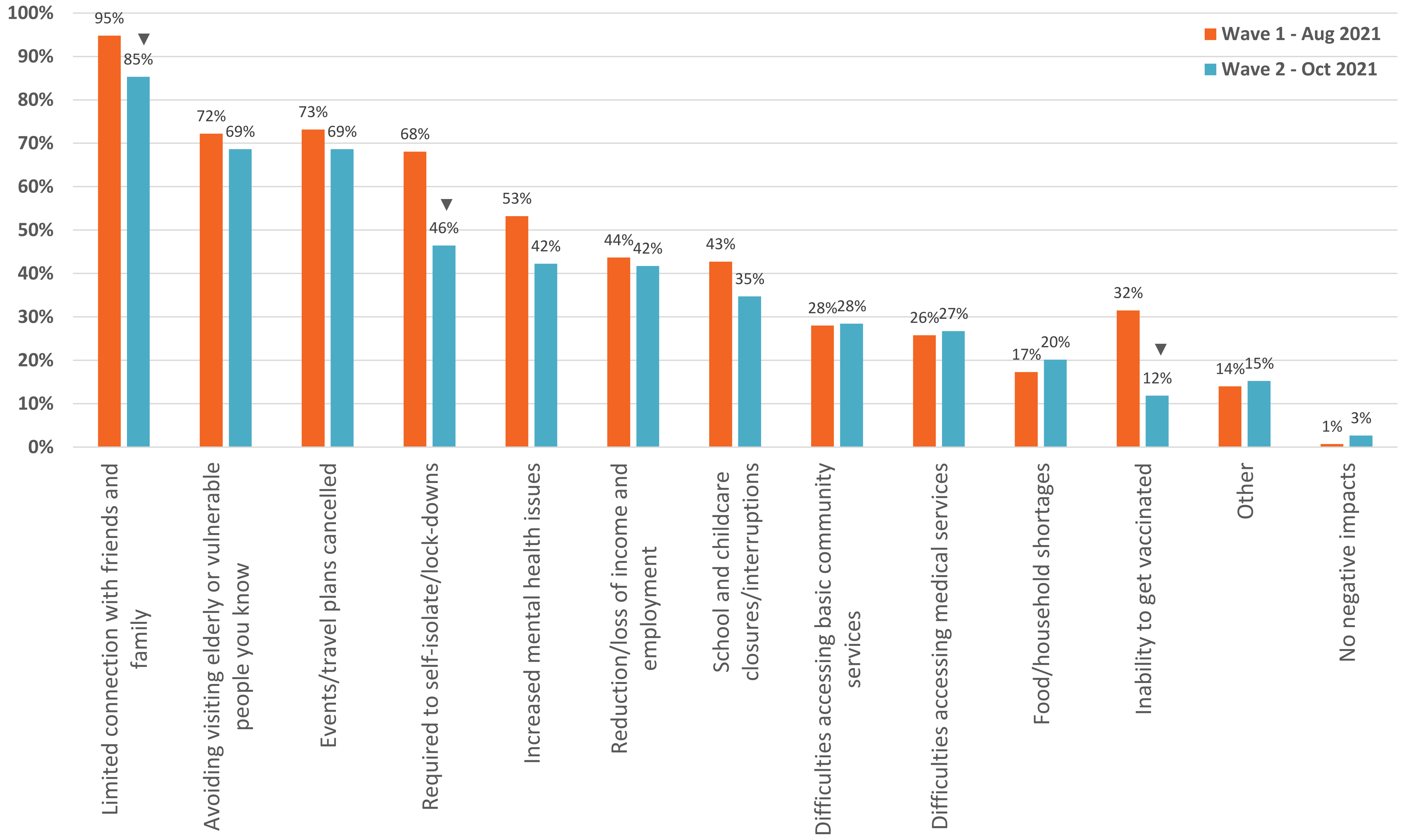
Residents are significantly less likely to mention:
- Limited connection with friends and family
- Required to self-isolate/lockdowns
- Inability to get vaccinated

Residents are *slightly less likely* to mention:
- Avoiding visiting elderly or vulnerable people you know
- Events/travel plans cancelled
- Increased mental health issues
- Reduction/loss of income and employment
- School and childcare closures/interruptions

Residents are *slightly more likely* to mention:
- Food/household shortages
- No negative impacts

Negative Impact on Quality of Life - August 2021 and October 2021

Q. Please indicate which of the following have negatively impacted on your quality of life?



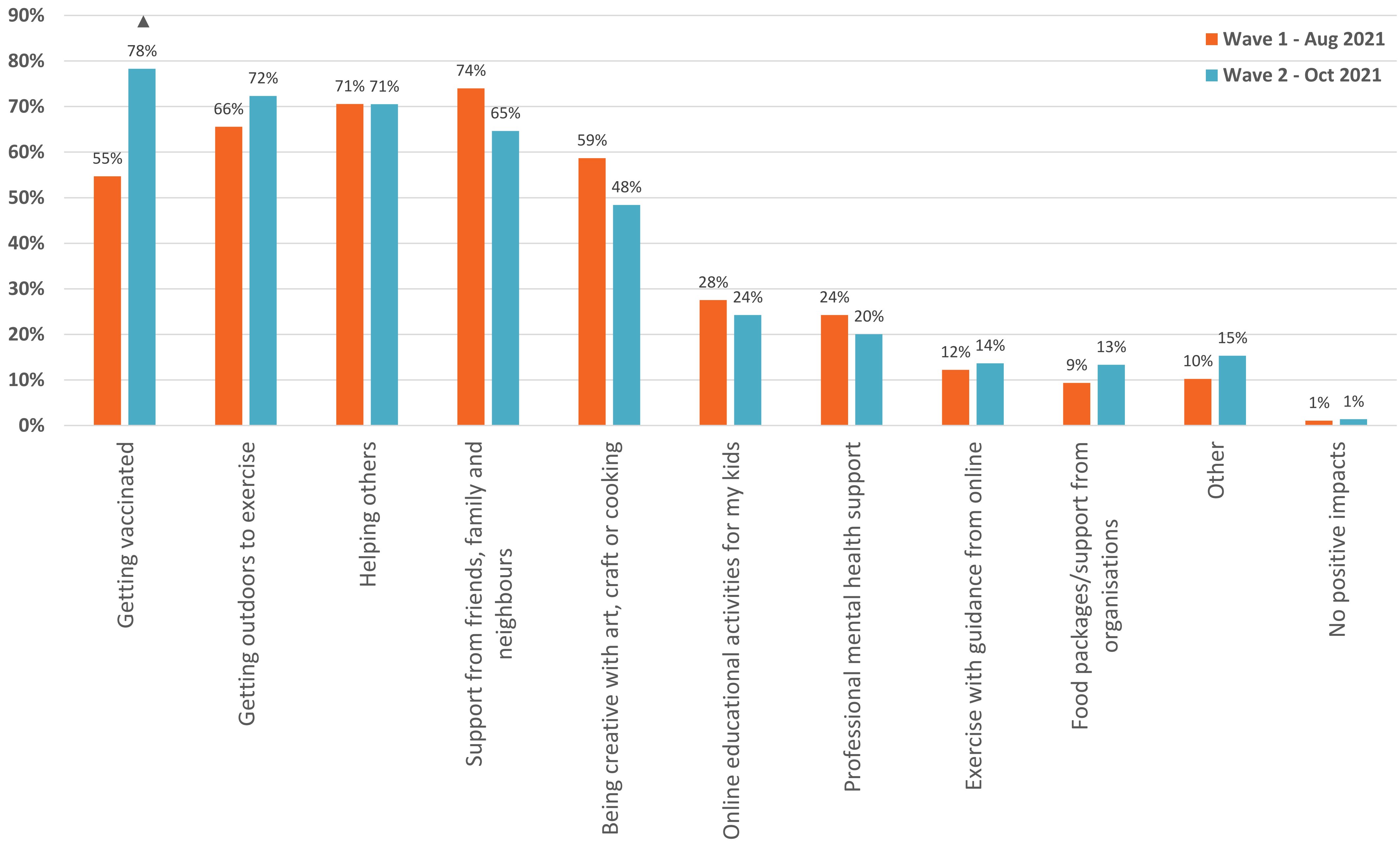
In October 2021 residents are significantly less likely to mention being negatively impacted by limited connection with friends and family, requirements to self-isolate/lockdown and an inability to get vaccinated compared to in August 2021.

Base: N=150

▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (compared to Wave 1 – Aug 2021)

Positive Impact on Quality of Life - August 2021 and October 2021

Q. Please indicate which of the following have positively impacted on your quality of life?



As vaccination rates improved between August 2021 and October 2021 there was a significant increase in residents who say getting vaccinated has had a positive impact on their quality of life.

Base: N=150

▲▼ = A significantly higher/lower percentage (compared to Wave 1 – Aug 2021)

Assistance and Support - August 2021 and October 2021

Q. If you needed support or assistance, do you have someone who you could contact to assist with the following?

Type of support	Wave One (August)	Wave Two (October)	Trend
Emotional support	86%	86%	–
Advice	87%	82%	↓
Maintaining family/work responsibilities	61%	77%	↑
Provide emergency food	70%	67%	↓
Provide emergency money	57%	64%	↑
No one to contact for support	7%	9%	↑

In August 2021 and in October 2021 the majority of residents have someone who they can rely on for support or assistance ranging from emotional support to emergency money.

With easing restrictions in October 2021 a higher proportion reported having someone to assist with maintaining family/work responsibilities and provide emergency money.

In October 2021 roughly 1 in 10 say they have no one to contact for support (9%). Whilst the increase of 2% from August 2021 is not statistically significant, it remains a notable consideration.

*Note: wording changed from '...do you have someone outside of your household who you could contact...' to 'do you have someone who you could contact...' in Wave 2

Resident Survey Results – Highlights

	Impacts	Key Groups Impacted August 2021	Key Groups Impacted October 2021
Negative Impacts	Food/household shortages	• **27%** Non-English speaking households • **25%** 18-34 age group • **20%** 35-49 age group • **23%** living at home with parents	• **33%** 18-24 age group • **32%** single parent with children • **29%** single with no children
	Reduction/loss of income or employment	• **78%** living at home with parents • **59%** 35-49 age group	• **55%** 18 – 24 age group • **60%** living at home with parents
	Increased mental health issues	• **68%** single parent families • **73%** extended family households	• **58%** 18-34 age group • **65%** group household • **62%** single with no children
	Difficulties accessing basic community services	• **46%** single parent families • **40%** 35-49 age group	• **45%** 18-34 age group • **43%** living at home with parents • **37%** in suburbs with tighter restrictions
	Difficulties access medical services	• **42%** single parent families • **42%** 35-49 age group	• **39%** 18-34 age group • **49%** single parent with children
Positive Impacts	Helping others	• **77%** 35-49 age group • **36%** singles (significantly lower than other cohorts)	• **80%** female • **79%** 18-34 age group • **93%** group household
	Food packages/support from organisations	• **28%** living at home with parents	• **51%** single parent with children • **26%** suburbs under tighter restrictions

Resident Survey Results – Highlights

	Impact	Key Groups Impacted Wave One (August 2021)	Key Groups Impacted Wave Two (October 2021)
Overall Impacts	Limited connection with family and friends	• **100%** 50-64 age group • **100%** single parent with children/ group household/extended family household	• **100%** 18-34 age group • **97%** single with no children
	Food/household shortages	• **27%** Non-English speaking households • **25%** 18-34 age group • **20%** 35-49 age group • **23%** living at home with parents	• **33%** 18-34 age group • **32%** single parent with children • **29%** single with no children • **28%** living at home with parents
	Ranking	**Key Groups Impacted Wave One (August 2021)**	**Key Groups Impacted Wave Two (October 2021)**
Quality of Life	‘Excellent’	• **3%** married/de facto with no children • **0%** speaks a language other than English • **0%** single with no children/living at home with parents/single parent with children/group household /Extended family household	• **35%** married/de facto with no children • **27%** 35-49 age group • **26%** 50-64 age group • **25%** suburbs not in tighter lockdown • **24%** female • **2%** language other than English • **0%** single parent with children /group household /Extended family household
	‘Very poor’	• **23%** single with no children • **7%** married/de facto without children/living at home with parents/single parent with children	• **11%** single parent with children • **11%** single with no children

SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES SO FAR

Examples of Successful Community Initiatives So Far

WestCare - 'Kidz Blitz'

In 2020, the WestCare 'Kidz Blitz Penrith' project provided high quality baby and infants clothing to a variety of local organisations to reach many of our city's most vulnerable families. The program was designed to supplement the vital work of social workers, case managers, domestic violence workers and others as they navigate their high-need clients through the challenging post-COVID season. The Nepean Young Pregnancy Support group from NCNS is one of the project partners, distributing the clothing items sized from 0000 upwards to group attendees.

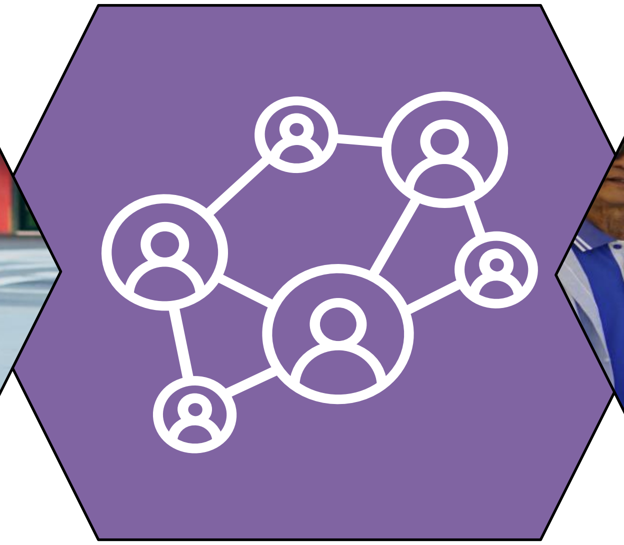
Active Care Network – 'Care and Repair'

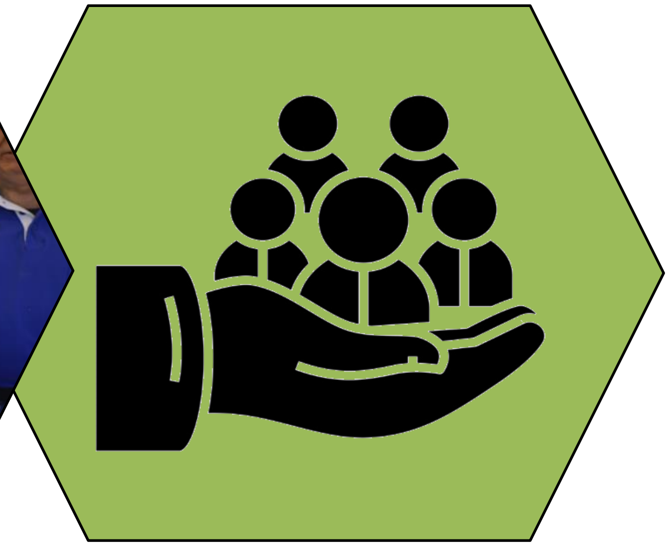
The Care and Repair project assisted some of the most isolated members of the community in 2020, including the elderly and those with disability, who are ineligible for other government subsidised garden and home supports. The project combats isolation and builds on the individuals' health, wellness and reablement outcomes, whilst also increasing the amenity of their homes.

Examples of Successful Council Initiatives So Far

Council has implemented a range of measures to help support and build a stronger and more resilient Penrith, including:







COVID Hardship Relief

Fund for those experiencing hardship as a result of the pandemic to gain fee relief, by application, on community and business fees

Tailoring Existing Programs

Tailoring existing grant programs, such as Magnetic Places, to address issues related to COVID-19

Increased Access to Information

Increasing information sharing through networks and inter-agencies on grant opportunities

Supporting Volunteering

Creating a Community Volunteer Programs webpage to promote local volunteer opportunities

New Community Support Services Guide

Creating a Community Support Services guide for the general public (and updates to this document on a regular basis)

Examples of Successful Council Initiatives So Far

Council has implemented a range of measures to help support and build a stronger and more resilient Penrith, including:

Library programs

Loved programs such as 'Storytime' and 'Babytime' moved to an online format.

Local Entertainment

Traditional Open mic nights have moved online to become 'Thursday Night Live: Lockdown Series' featuring a one hour gig from local talent each week

Access to Food

Drive and Collect Hamper Hub in St Marys provides much-needed relief for community members facing challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Run by Penrith City Council and delivered in partnership with local services including Community Junction, FoodBank and WestCare and supported by volunteer group Turbans 4 Australia.

Open Public Spaces

Improving access to public, open and shared spaces with extended lighting times and keeping playgrounds open.

Neighbourhood Support

The 'Good Neighbour' program has been modified to include neighbourly isolation cards and will soon be expanded.

Keep Up To Date

To view Penrith Council's Community Support Services guide

CLICK HERE

To stay up to date with the latest information and advice about COVID-19 for Penrith

CLICK HERE

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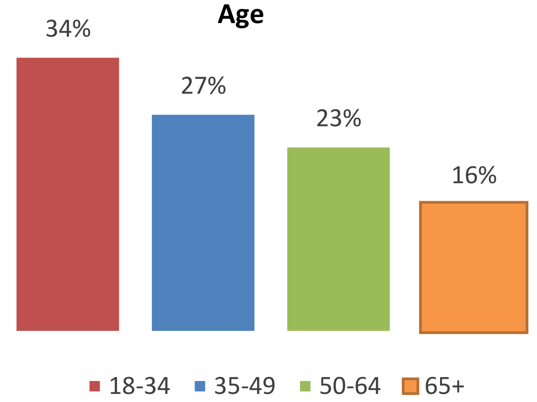
Appendix

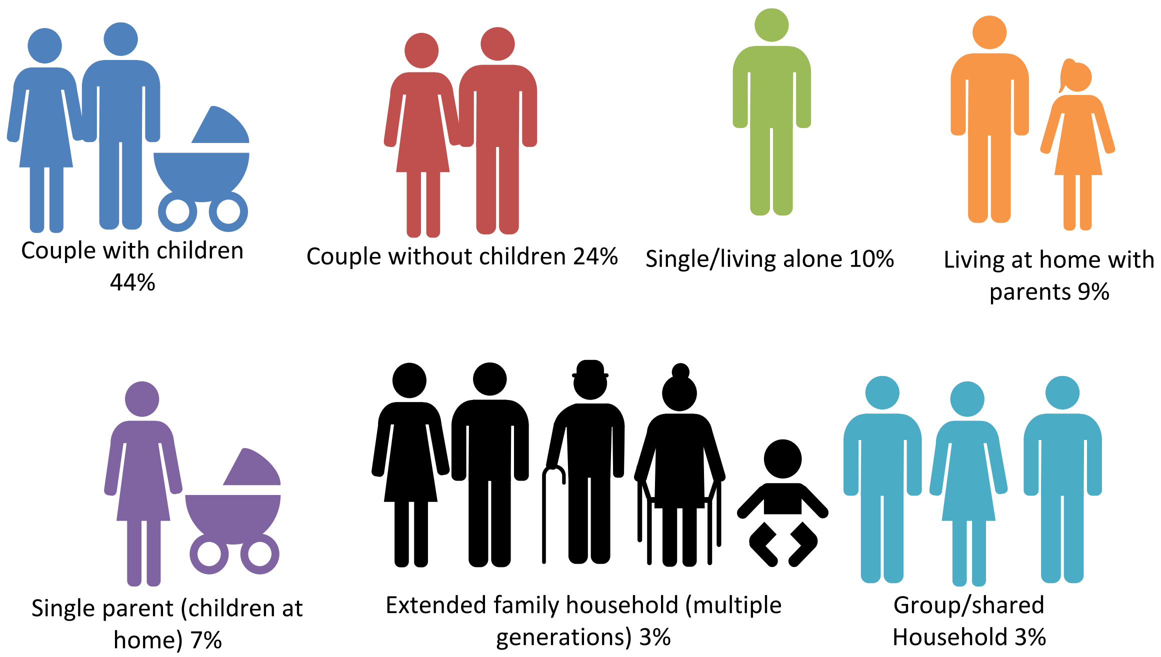
August Resident Survey – Respondent makeup

Gender

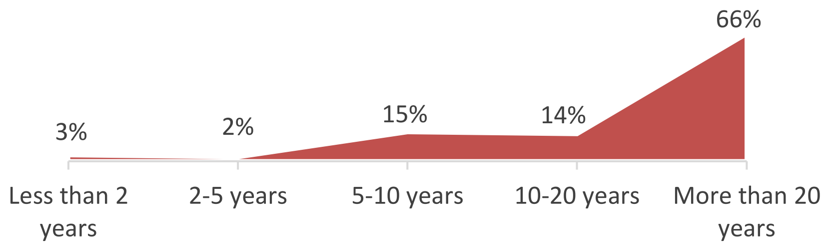
Age



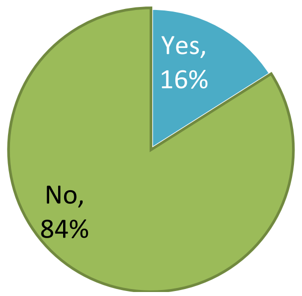
Household type



Time lived in the area



Language other than English

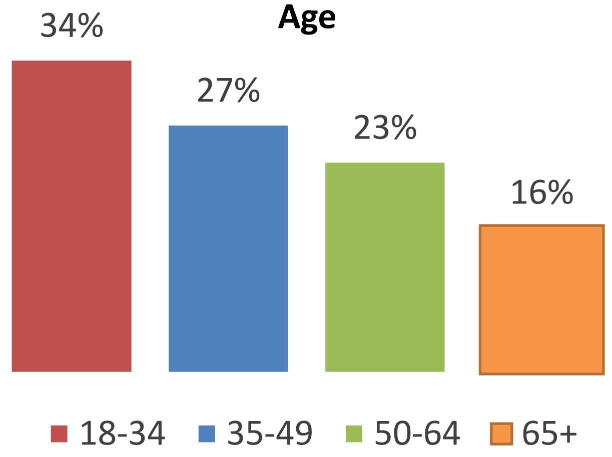


Base: N = 161

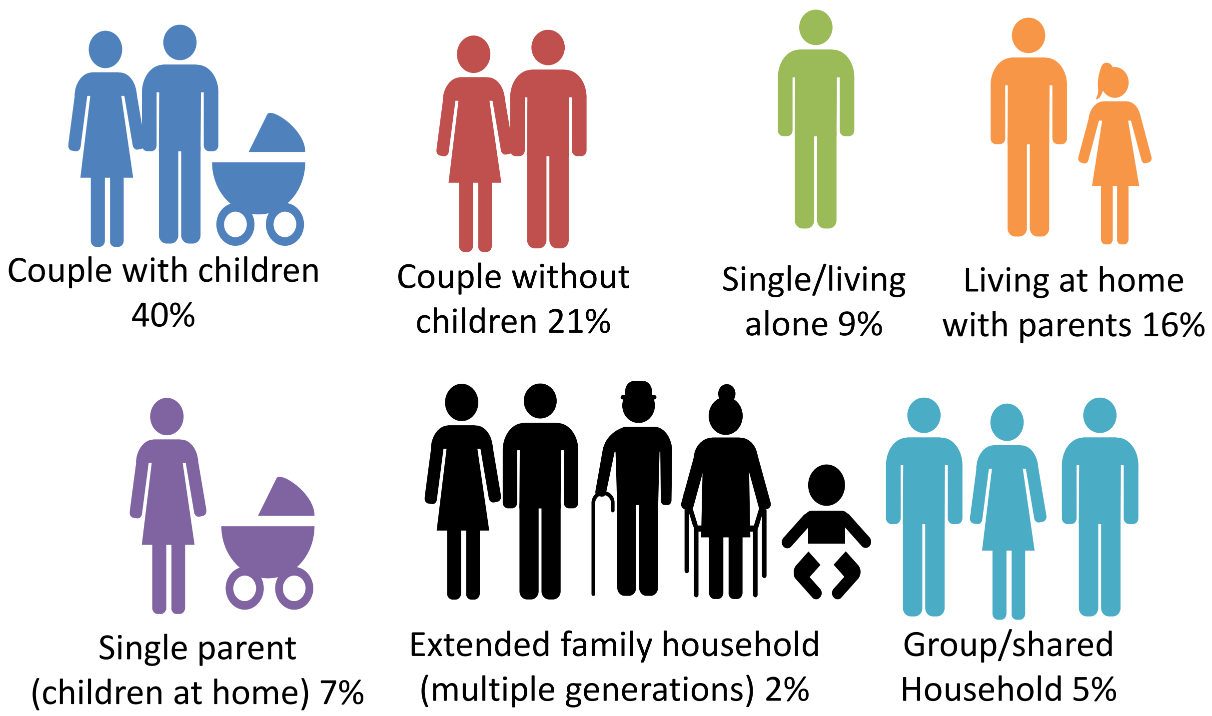
October Resident Survey – Respondent makeup

Gender

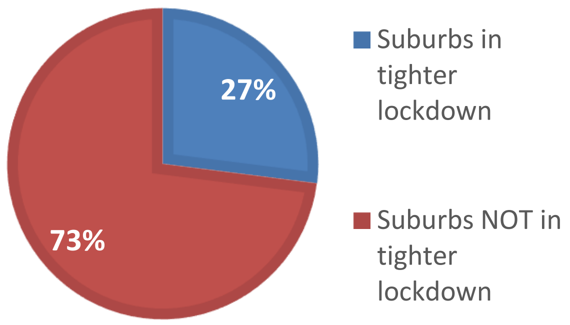
Age



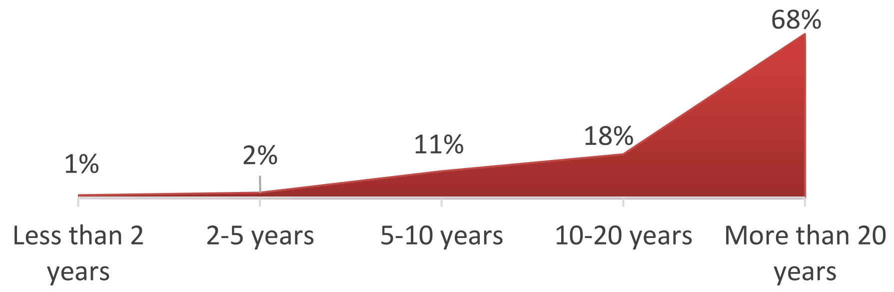
Household type



Lockdown Restrictions



Time lived in the area



Demographic makeup only slightly different to August sample.

Male/female split remained the same.
Age split remained the same.

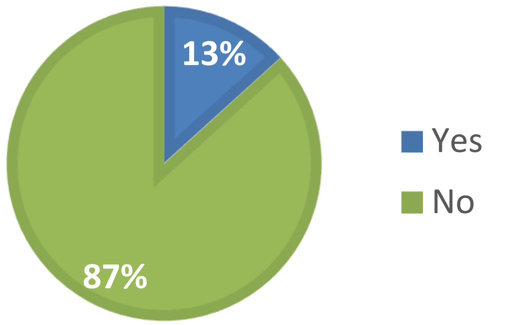
Household Type:

- Couples with children – slightly less than August (44%)
- Couples without children – slightly less than August (24%)
- Single/living alone – slightly less than August (10%)
- Living at home with parents – more than August (9%)
- Single parent (children at home) – same as August (7%)
- Extended family household – slightly less than August (3%)
- Group/shared household – slightly more than August (3%)

Language other than English:
Slightly less respondents that spoke a language other than English in August (16%)

October N = 150 August N = 161

Language other than English



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