



AGE CONCERN
WELLINGTON
REGION

LIVING WITH COVID IN THE COMMUNITY

2022 SURVEY OF SENIORS

INTRODUCTION

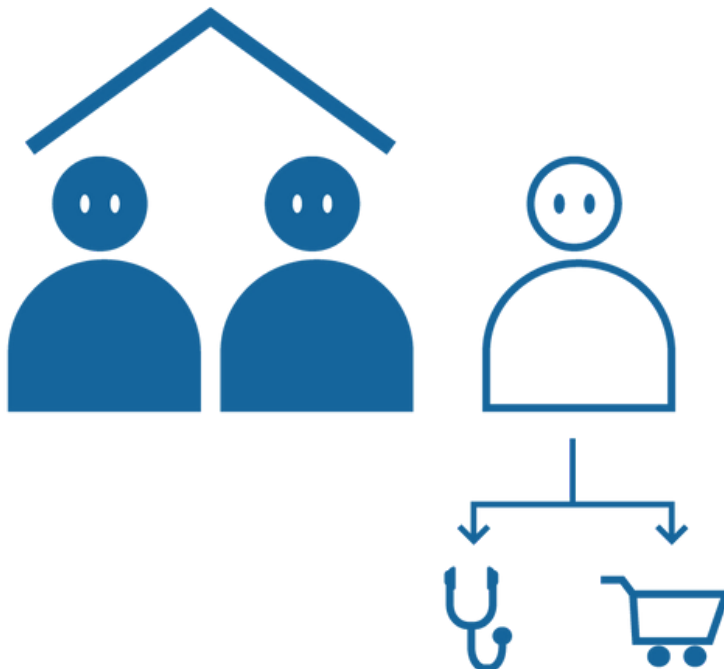
Since the reporting of New Zealand's first Covid-19 case on February 28, 2020, Covid-19 has forced New Zealanders to change the way they live. For many seniors, this disruption to normal life has been exhausting and stressful.

When the Omicron wave began to impact New Zealand in early 2022, we heard stories of many seniors staying home and isolating. We also heard of some seniors still keen to get out and about. We wanted to discover more about what was happening for seniors as large numbers of the population began to be impacted by Omicron. This survey represents a snapshot of the wellbeing of seniors in early March 2022.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Globally, seniors have been the hardest hit by Covid-19. While New Zealand has been relatively sheltered from the impact of the disease until now, our seniors have nonetheless been doing it tough. Multiple lockdowns and now the uncertainty of Covid-19 spreading rapidly in the community has meant many seniors have had to frequently hide themselves away from their communities as Covid-19 passes through. Our survey has shown that this is still the case, with almost two-thirds trying to stay home as much as possible. If seniors leave the house, it is most likely to get groceries or tend to health needs.

Two in three seniors are staying home as much as possible



Those that do leave the house go to get groceries or tend to health needs.

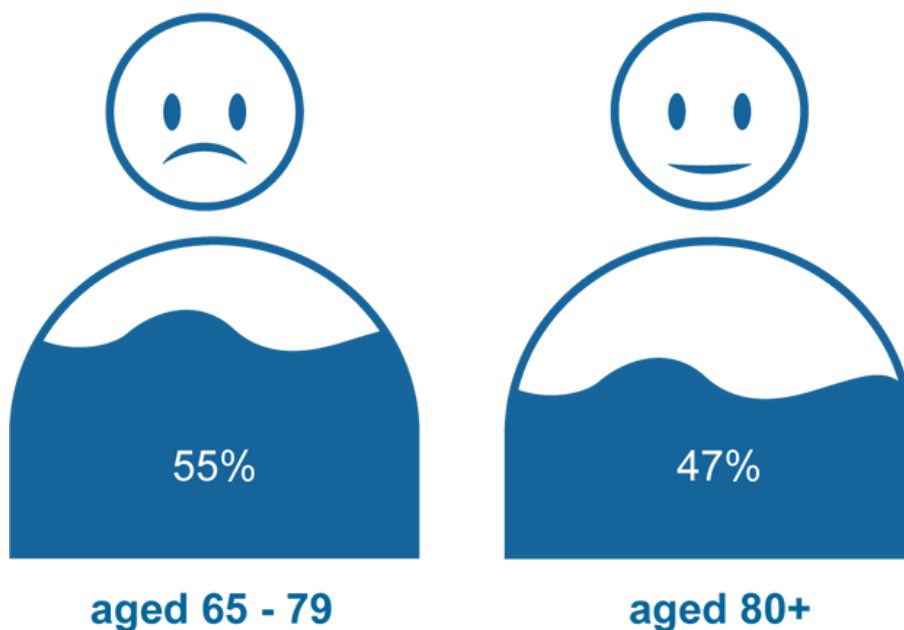
Fear and anxiety have driven the behaviour patterns of many seniors during the past two years. This fear and anxiety is still very present, with four in ten reporting to be more anxious now than at any other time during the pandemic.

Despite media and Government communications that Omicron is less severe than Delta, more than half of seniors in our survey are still very worried about catching Covid-19. Worry about getting sick from Covid-19 also topped the list of things seniors find the most difficult about the pandemic right now.

These results confirm anecdotal evidence gathered by our team through their day-to-day interactions with seniors. However, one surprising trend has emerged from this survey – the slightly less anxious state of mind of older seniors (80+) compared to those aged 65 - 79. There is a noticeable collective trend - less concerned about getting sick, less worried about going out and less likely to stay at home as much as possible.

Concern about catching Covid-19 by age

Those scoring between 7 and 10 on a scale, 10 being Very Concerned



In some cases, the difference is low, but it does raise some questions about why this could be. The 25-year difference between a 90-year-old (born in 1932) and a 65-year-old (born in 1957) is certainly significant in terms of lived experiences, values and generational upbringing.

We received more than 180 comments from respondents as part of the survey, some of which are in this report. Many expressed feeling alone and anxious about how they will cope with the disease. Others are confused by “ever-changing rules” and find it hard to remember masks and phones to scan in. Numerous respondents are concerned because they have other health conditions that make them more vulnerable than others in the wider population.

My main concern is that I might inadvertently spread the infection to family or friends.

Respondent

I think "aleness" is a worrying factor. If neighbours are home and friendly that obviously helps but the feeling that most are out all day at work is worrying if family are not nearby.

Respondent

My wife is my main concern as she has health problems that could make a covid infection very dangerous. For this reason I take all the precautions I can to avoid becoming infectious and putting her at risk.

Respondent

One has to just get on with life. I'm fully vaxed with an impaired kidney function so I'm careful, but it doesn't stop me doing what I need to do. However I'm only doing what is necessary.

Respondent

With so many seniors across the Wellington Region living alone, isolation is compounding the difficulties caused by the pandemic. One respondent sums this up particularly well; “For people like myself, living alone, with my family living overseas, there have been a few times when I would have appreciated a helping hand but of course my friends are of a similar age and need to look after themselves. Sometimes I'd just love a little pat on the back for coping so well with my home, garden and self.”

So, take this as your pat on the back seniors – you’ve done a great job coping with an upturned world over the past two years. Kiwis everywhere can learn from your resilience, fortitude and the kindness you show to others by wearing your mask, keeping your distance and looking out for one another.

The Age Concern Wellington Region team

METHODOLOGY

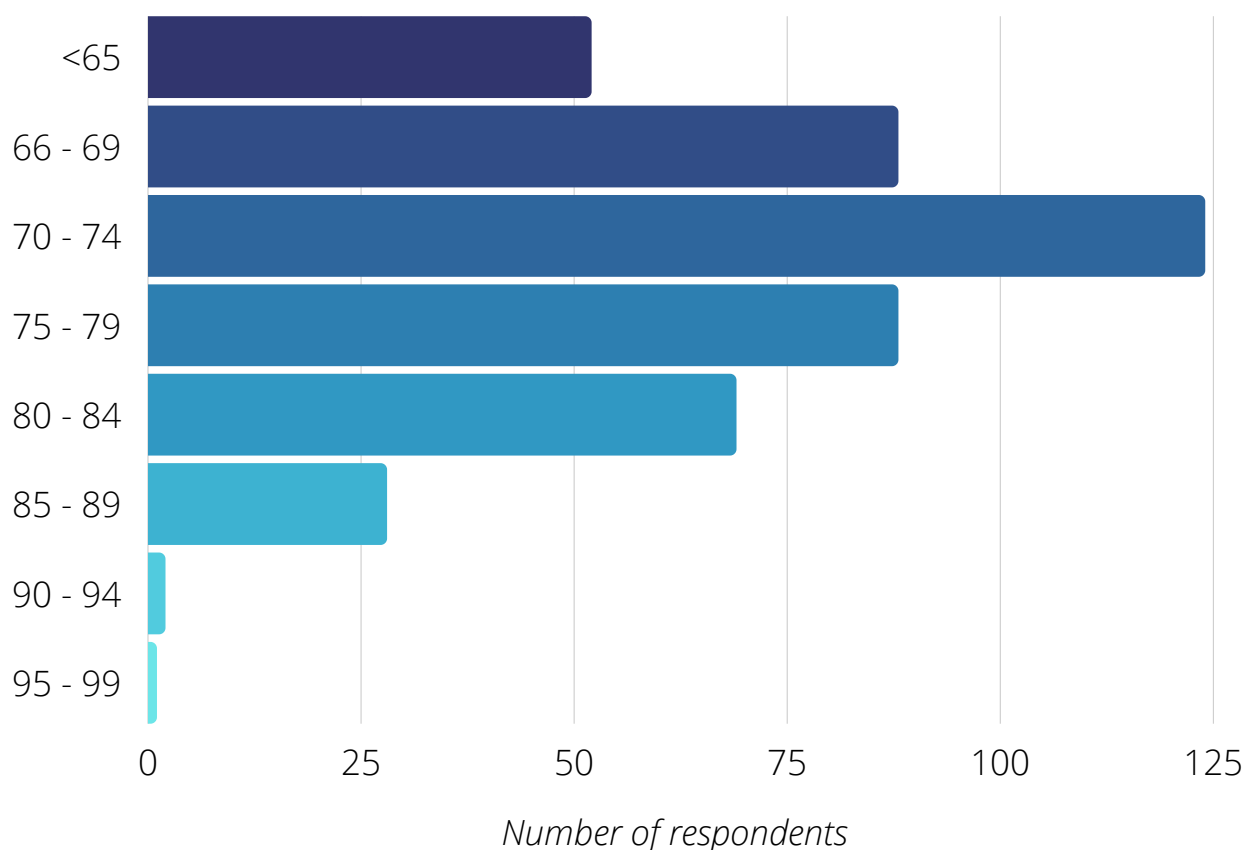
The survey was conducted from 28th February to 8th March 2022. In total, the survey was answered by 452 people, with 400 being over 65. This sample represents approximately 1% of the entire senior population of the Wellington Region. It is important to note the small size of the under 65 sample when considering comparisons in this report. However, we considered it still useful to draw conclusions about any differences between seniors and the wider population.

The survey was sent to Age Concern Wellington Region's database. However, it was also included in other organisations' email newsletters including SeniorNet Wellington, Community Networks Wellington, Wellington City Council and on social media.

This self-selecting sampling bias is also enhanced by the fact that the survey has only been completed by those with email and web functionality.

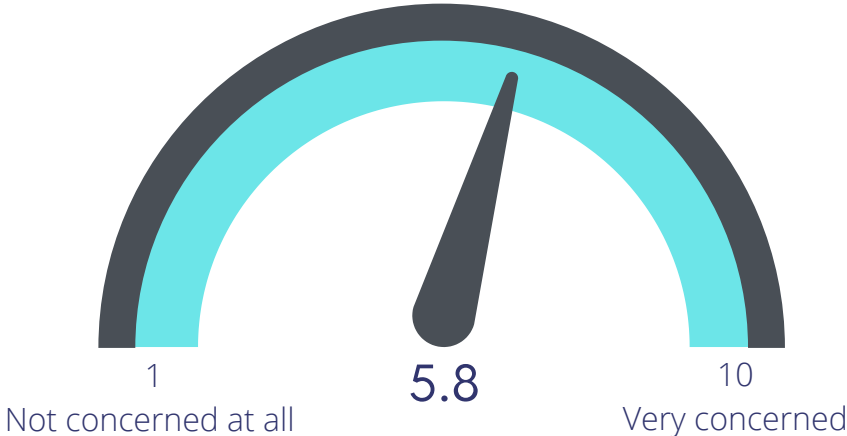
Although most of the respondents will live in the Wellington Region, some will be from beyond Wellington.*

AGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



*No location data was collected

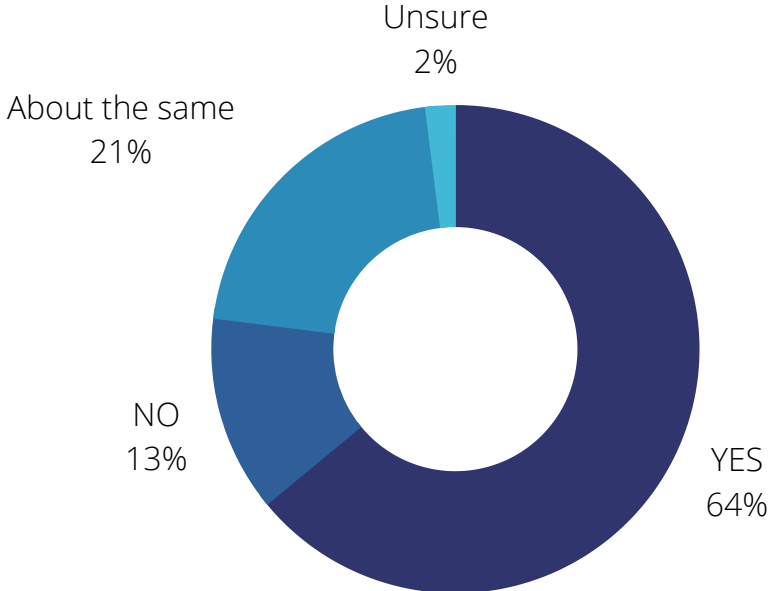
HOW CONCERNED ARE YOU ABOUT GOING OUT?



The average score from all seniors was 5.8 out of 10. Younger seniors (65-79) are more likely to be very concerned (33% scoring between 8 and 10) than older seniors (80+, 27%).

"I don't want to hibernate and realise care is also required to stay safe as possible, while keeping contact for mental health and wellbeing."
Respondent

ARE YOU TRYING TO STAY HOME AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE?

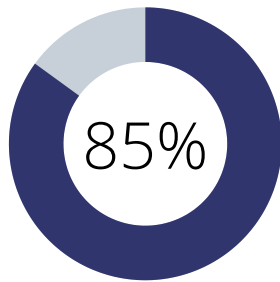


Nearly two-thirds of seniors are trying to stay home as much as possible. One in five have not changed their behaviour because of the pandemic.

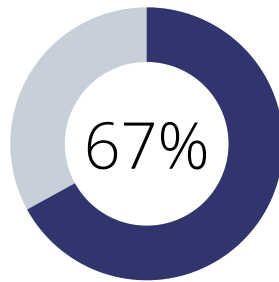
A lower percentage of people aged 80+ are trying to stay home (62%) compared to seniors under 80 (65%).

"I try to go only where I know people have been vaccinated but this is not possible at the supermarket."
Respondent

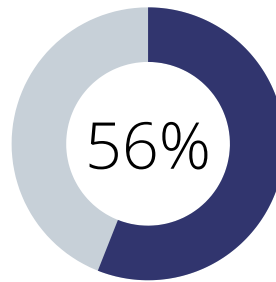
WHAT ACTIVITIES DO YOU LEAVE THE HOUSE FOR?



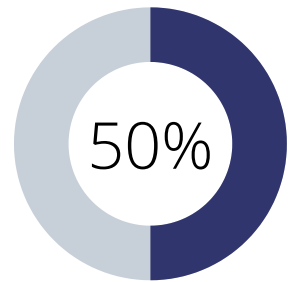
GROCERIES



PHARMACY



DOCTOR



VISIT FAMILY

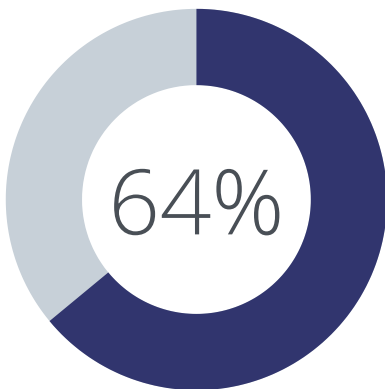
Respondents were allowed to select as many options as they liked. Only around one in three seniors are leaving the house to attend a social gathering (30%) or to do other shopping (33%).

It's important to note that many activities and events have been cancelled, which will affect responses to this question.

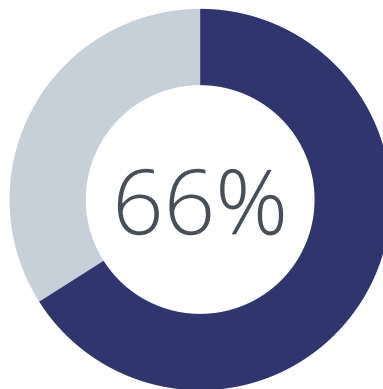
- Visit friends - 42%
- Library - 37%
- Other shopping - 33%
- Go to the park - 30%
- Social gathering - 30%
- Other recreation - 25%

HOW CONCERNED ARE YOU ABOUT CATCHING COVID-19?

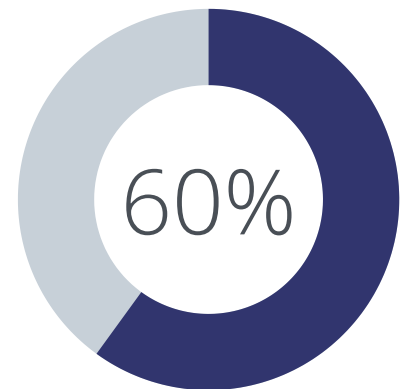
% scoring between 6 and 10 (10 being *Very Concerned*)



All seniors



65 - 79 yrs



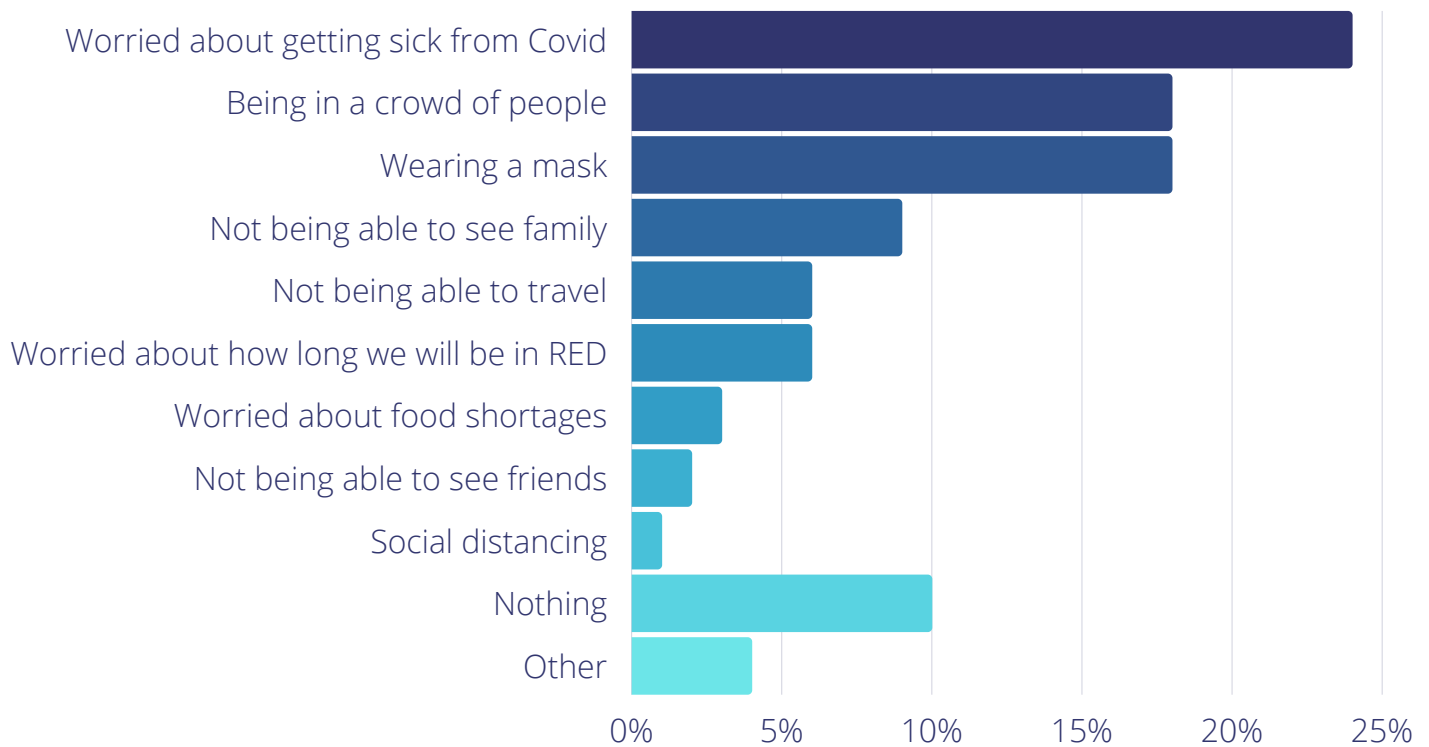
Over 80s

Overall, seniors are considerably worried about catching Covid, with nearly two-thirds scoring at least a 6 out of ten. But younger seniors are less concerned.

"I am no longer thinking that I can evade being infected, but hope not to get too ill."

Respondent

WHAT DO YOU FIND MOST DIFFICULT ABOUT THE PANDEMIC AT THE MOMENT?



Respondents could only select one option from the list. One quarter of seniors felt they are most concerned about getting sick from Covid. This rises to 33% in the under 65 age bracket. But seniors are more worried about being in a crowd of people (18%) compared to under 65s (10%).

Those over 80 are more worried about wearing a mask than younger seniors (26% compared to 15%) but are much less concerned about getting sick than the younger bracket (18% compared to 26%).

ABOUT AGE CONCERN WELLINGTON REGION

Age Concern Wellington is a registered charity providing services and support for people aged 65 and over in the Wellington, Porirua, Upper Hutt and Lower Hutt region.

Our vision is for our older population to be a thriving, respected and engaged part of our community.

Our services help older people live their best lives. This means:

- connecting people with each other and their communities,
- protecting people from avoidable harm,
- promoting health and wellbeing,
- enabling people to maintain their independence, and
- helping people find fulfilment.

As a member of Age Concern New Zealand, we work closely with a network of local Age Concerns providing similar services to older people throughout the country.



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