PENRITH

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19

PENRITH
CITY COUNCIL

The Purpose of the Document

PURPOSE

1. Understand how business, the community sector and residents are currently being 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

24 surveys and 20 interviews with local businesses

August 2021

59 surveys with community sector workers

August 2021

161 random phone surveys with residents

August 2021

Summary

Key Challenges for Businesses

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

Key Challenges for Community Service Providers

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

Key Challenges for Residents

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

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.

Timeline for Greater Sydney - 2020

January

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

March

11: COVID-19 declared a global pandemic

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

21: Non-essential services and many schools closed

22: Changes to unemployment benefits (new Jobseeker support) announced

April

15: JobKeeper payment legislation passed to support out-of-work Australians

May

Mid May: Easing of restrictions gradually introduced nationally

May - Mid December

NSW COVID-19 cases remained low and stable

December

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

Timeline for Greater Sydney - 2021

January - May

NSW COVID-19 cases remained low and stable

June

3: COVID-19 Disaster payment announced

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

July

7: Stay at Home restrictions for Greater Sydney extended

9: Tighter restrictions announced for NSW

13: COVID-19 financial relief packages announced

14: Stay at Home restrictions extended for Greater Sydney. Home based learning for school students to continue

17: 3 LGA's in Sydney become areas of concern and are subject to further restrictions. All non-essential retail and construction are closed

28: Stay at Home orders extended by another 4 weeks

29: 5 more Sydney LGA's become areas of concern and are subject to further restrictions, bringing the total to 8 LGAs of concern

August

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

12: 3 more Sydney LGA's subject to harsher restrictions bringing the total to 12

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

15: NSW enter state-wide Stay at Home orders

16: Greater Sydney residents only permitted to travel within 5kms of their home

20: NSW Stay at Home orders extended until late September

September

9: Roadmap to recovery announced in anticipation of reaching vaccination targets in mid-October

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

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 etc) 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

9,170 OR 6.5%

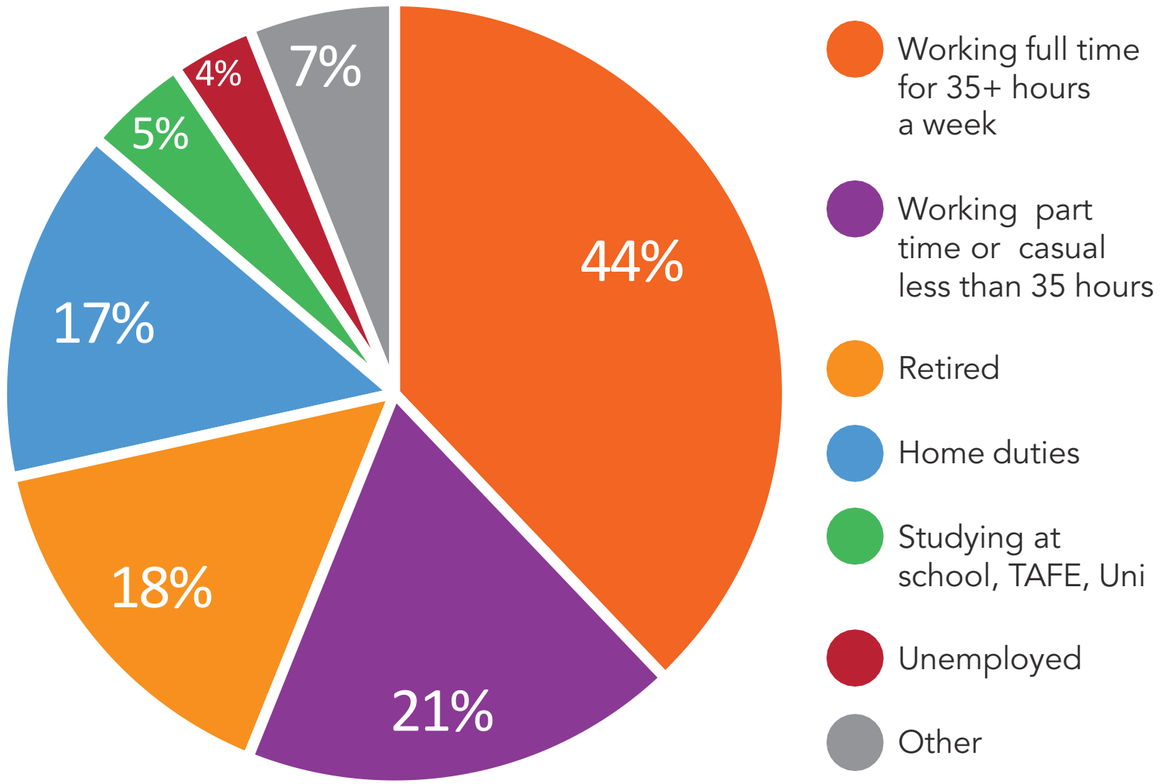
- Greater Sydney: **5.1%**
- NSW: **6.1%**

Source (Profile ID, June 2021)

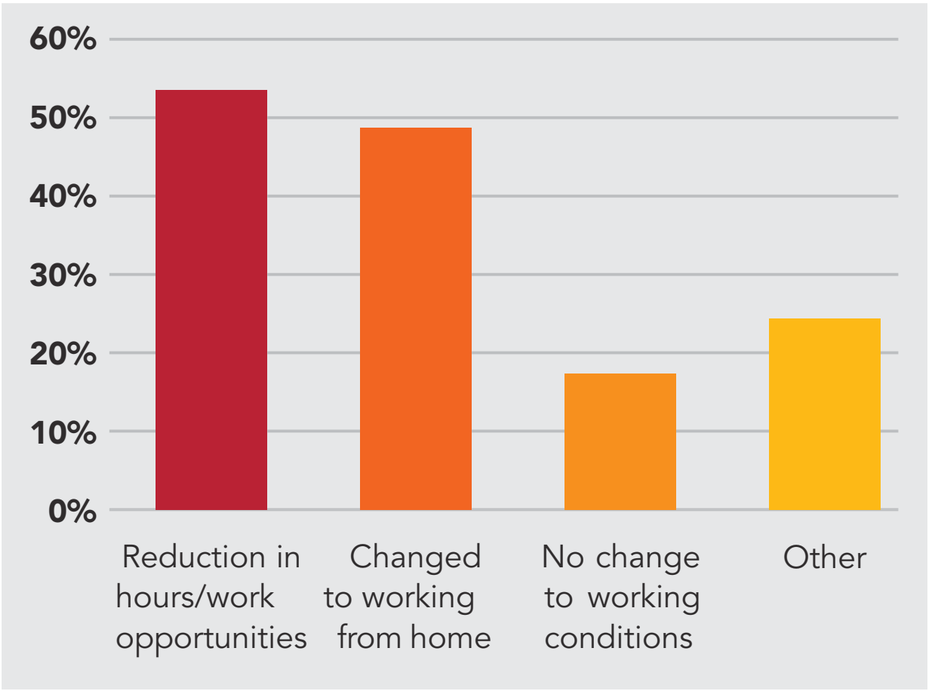
BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

Impact on Employment

Current Work Status (August 2021)

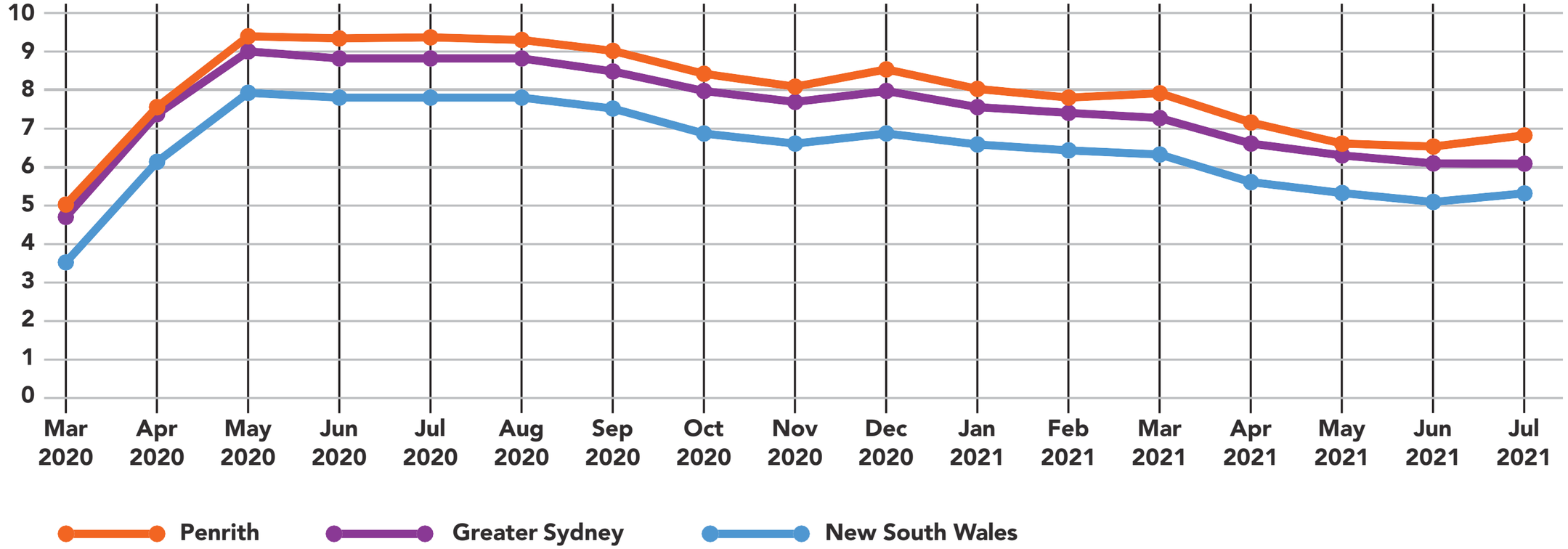


Changes to individual work conditions due to current COVID-19 outbreak



JobSeeker and Youth Allowance

JobSeeker and Youth Allowance Recipients (%)



Source: Profile ID https://profile.id.com.au/penrith/job-seeker?StartYear=202106

What We Heard from Local Businesses

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

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/income 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 & Linguistically Diverse communities
People experiencing homelessness	LGBTQ+	People recovering from fires and floods	People who don't want to be vaccinated

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

- 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 over the last month

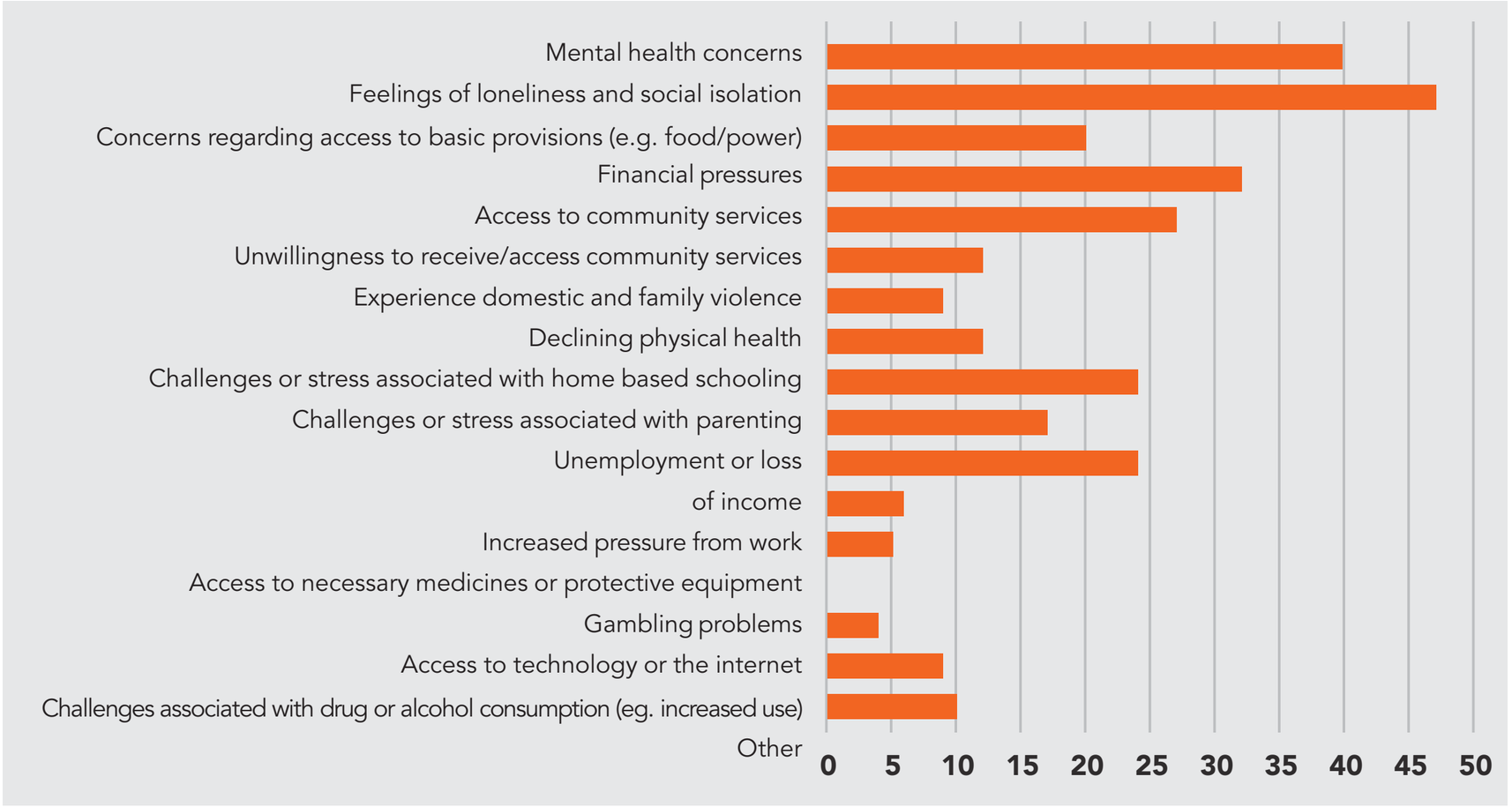
- Engaging service users
- Funding to deliver services and meeting the needs of clients
- Identifying the current needs of service users
- Client access to the internet and/or data

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

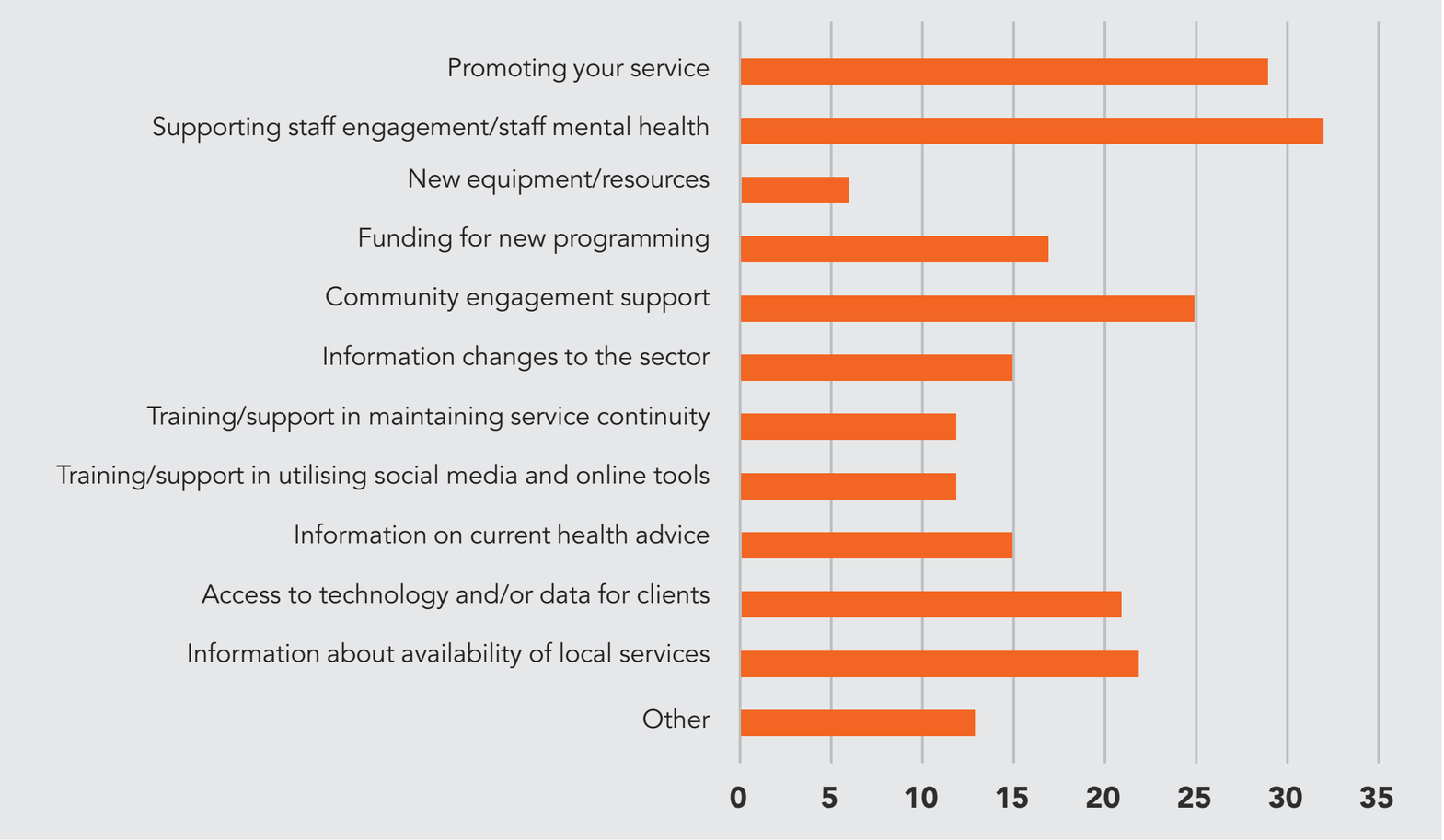
Community Sector

Key issues increased for clients during the past month



Community Sector

Anticipated needs for organisations over the coming months



Community Sector

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

- **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’

WHAT WE HEARD FROM RESIDENTS

What We Heard from Residents

Findings from random phone surveys with 161 residents in August 2021

Top 5 concerns/ challenges caused by the pandemic

- 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 mental health concerns
- Loss of income/employment

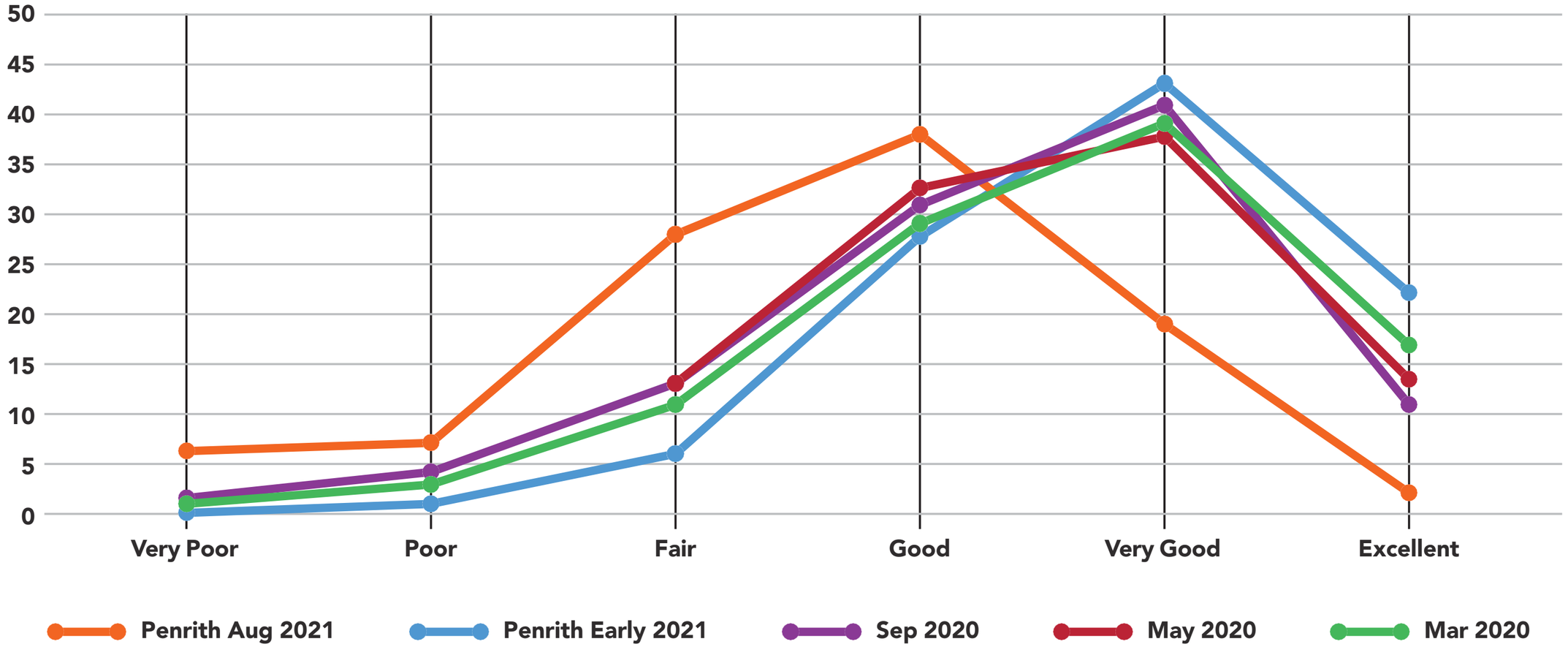
Top 5 factors negatively impacting residents quality of life

- Limited connection with family and friends
- Events/travel plans cancelled
- Avoiding visiting elderly or vulnerable people you know
- Required to self-isolate/lockdowns
- Increased mental health issues

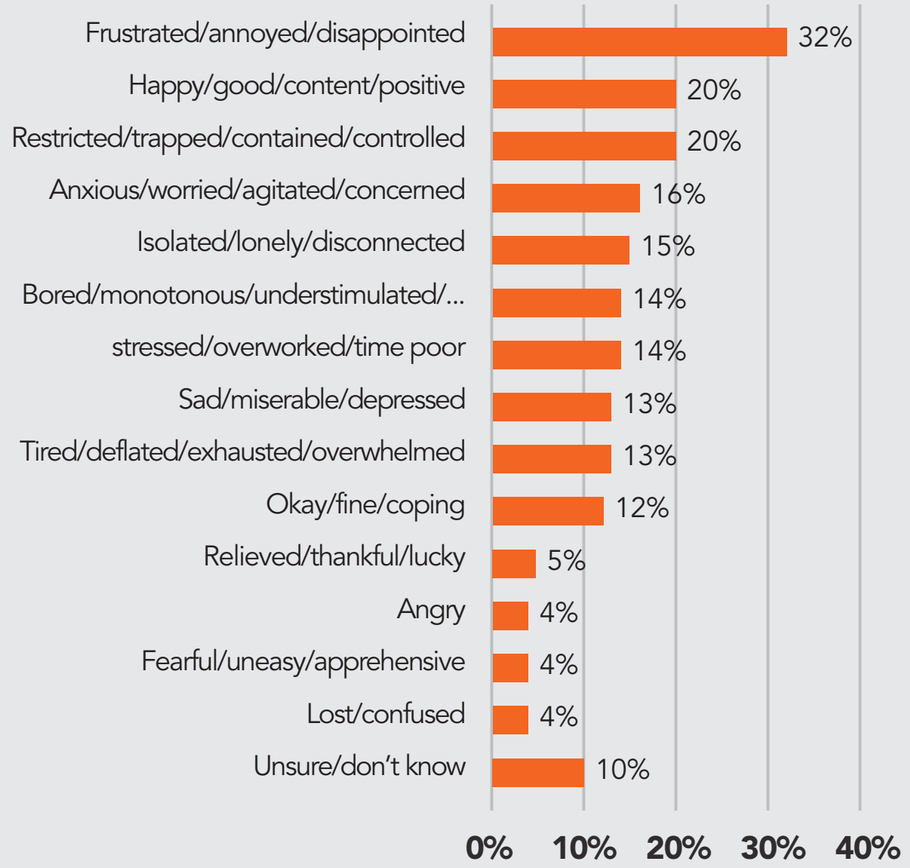
Top 5 factors positively impacting residents quality of life

- Support from friends, family and neighbours
- Helping others
- Getting outdoors to exercise
- Being creative with art, craft or cooking
- Getting vaccinated

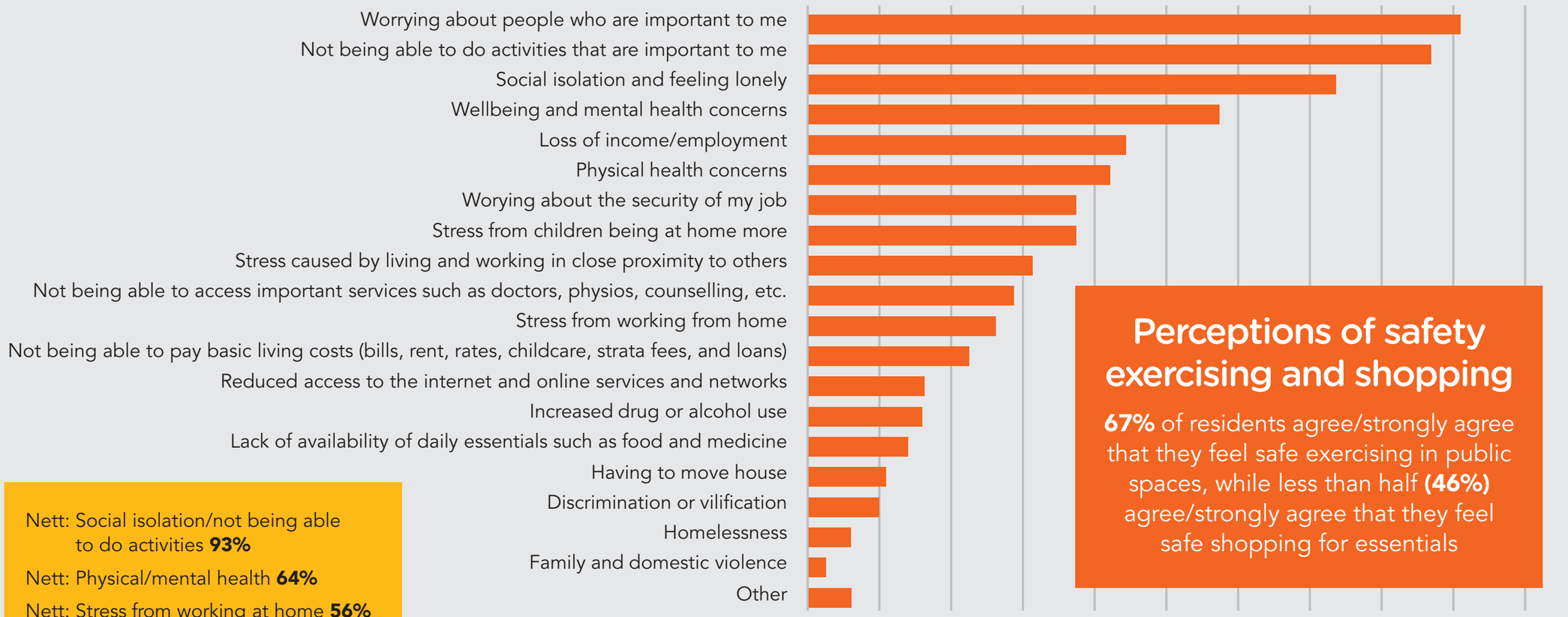
Quality of Life – Changes Since March 2020



How Residents Currently Feel



Overall Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Residents



Nett: Social isolation/not being able to do activities **93%**

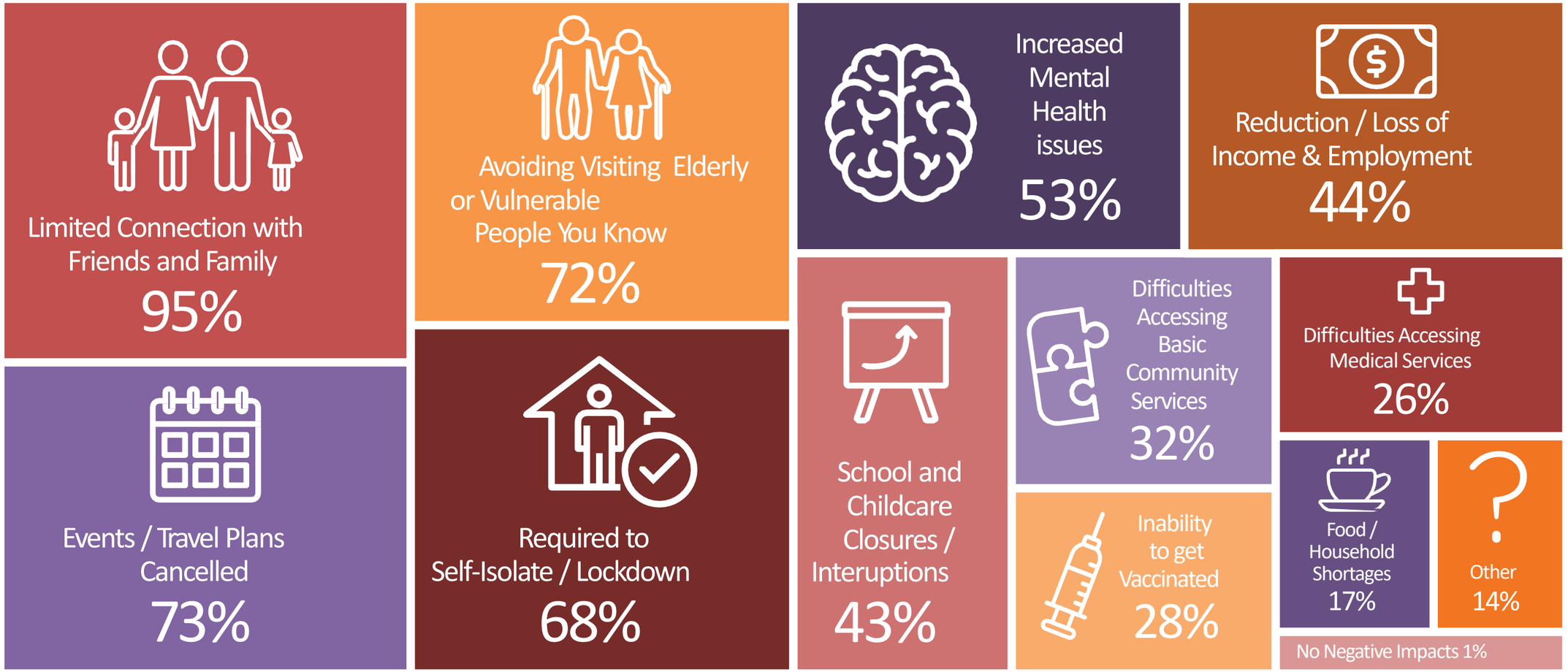
Nett: Physical/mental health **64%**

Nett: Stress from working at home **56%**

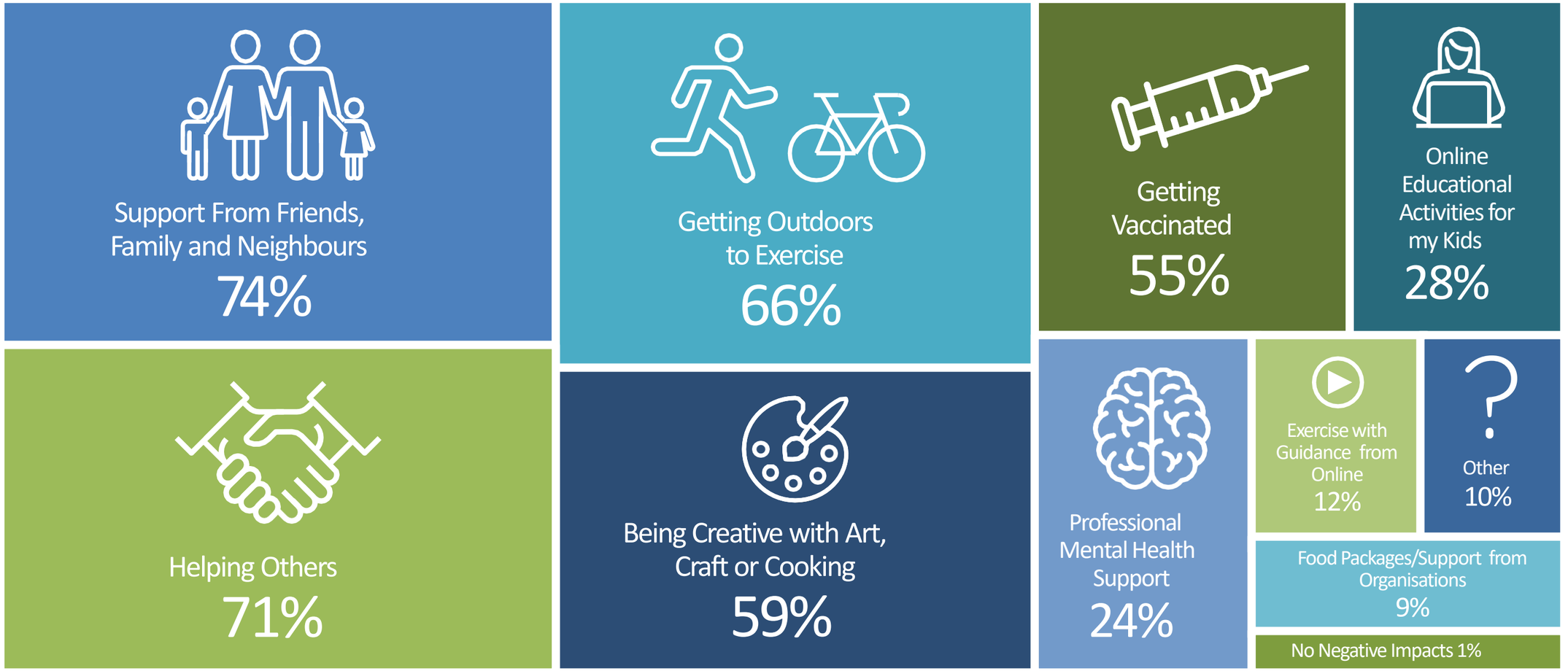
Perceptions of safety exercising and shopping

67% of residents agree/strongly agree that they feel safe exercising in public spaces, while less than half **(46%)** agree/strongly agree that they feel safe shopping for essentials

Negative Impact on Quality of Life

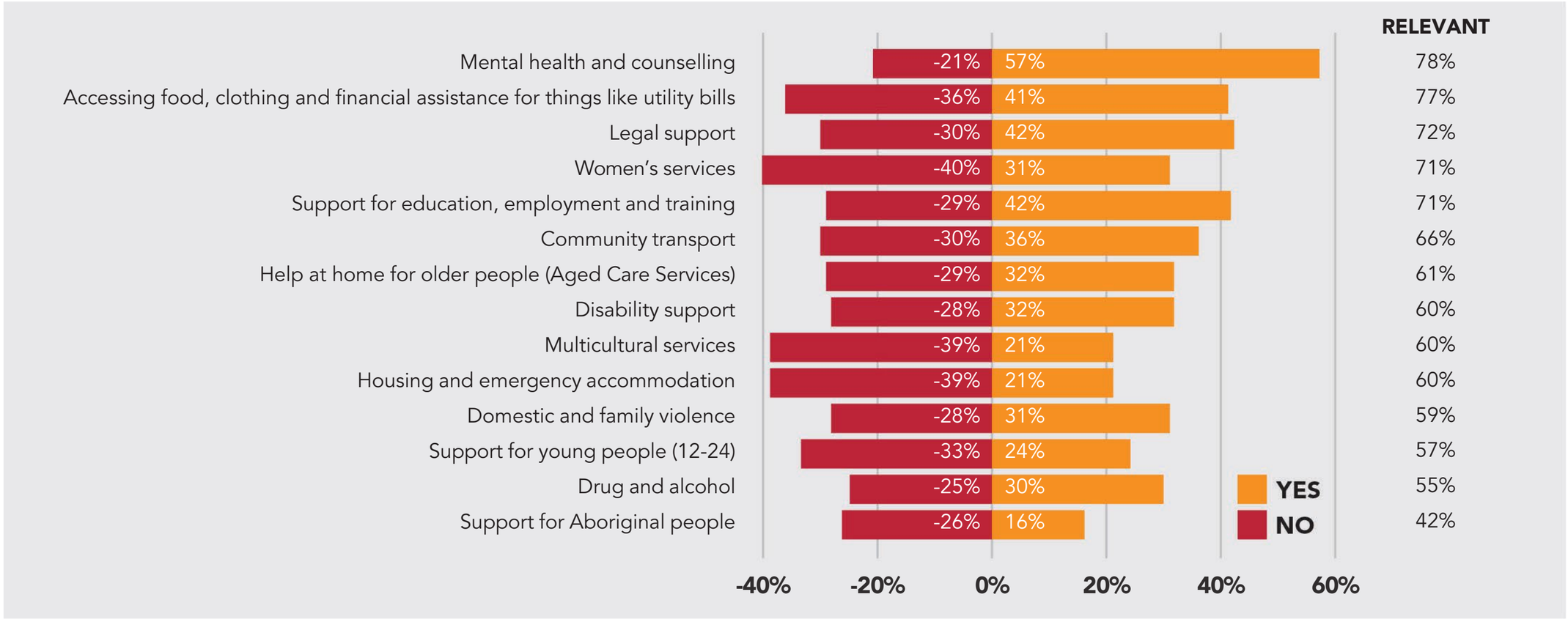


Positive Impact on Quality of Life



Access and Knowledge of Support Services

Do you know where to go for support in relation to the following:



Resident Survey Results - Highlights

	Impacts	Key groups impacted
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
	Reduction/loss of income or employment	• **78%** living at home with parents • **59%** 35-49 age group
	Increased mental health issues	• **68%** single parent families • **73%** extended family households
	Difficulties accessing basic community services	• **46%** single parent families • **40%** 35-49 age group
	Difficulties access medical services	• **42%** single parent families • **42%** 35-49 age group
Positive impacts	**Helping others**	• **77%** 35-49 age group • **36%** singles (significantly lower than other cohorts)
	Food packages/support from organisations	• **28%** living at home with parents

SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES SO FAR

Examples of Successful Initiatives So Far

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

- Establishing the COVID-19 hardship relief fund for those experiencing hardship as a result of the pandemic to gain fee relief, by application, on community and business fees
- Creating a **Community Support Services** guide for the general public (and updates to this document on a regular basis)
- Tailoring existing grant programs, such as Magnetic Places, to address issues related to COVID-19
- Creating a Community Volunteer Programs webpage to promote local volunteer opportunities
- Increasing information sharing through networks and inter-agencies on grant opportunities
- Improving access to public, open and shared spaces with extended lighting times, keeping playgrounds open Traditional Open mic nights have moved online to become **'Thursday Night Live: Lockdown Series'** featuring a one hour gig from a local talent each week
- The **'Good Neighbour'** program has been modified to include neighbourly isolation cards and will soon be expanded
- **Library programs** such as 'Storytime' and 'Babytime' have moved to an online format
- **Drive and Collect Hamper Hub, St Marys**
  A contactless Hamper Hub operating to provide 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

Examples of Successful 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.

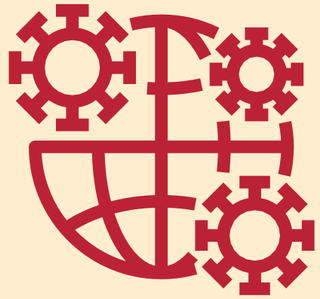
Active Care Network – ‘Care and Repair’

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.

Keep Up To Date

To view Penrith Council's Community Support Services guide (updated regularly)

CLICK HERE



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

CLICK HERE

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