

SUMMARY COVID-19 SENTIMENT

Sentiment and Behaviour – July update

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

This research was undertaken to continue to give us an overview of how New Zealanders are feeling in relation to COVID-19, and the associated behaviours required of them. These insights will assist us in continuing to evolve how we develop our messaging and campaigns.

This was a pulse check, following on from the full survey in May 2021. For this survey, a quantitative method was used, with a sample size of 827 New Zealanders aged 16 years and over. The research included key samples Māori n=70 & Pasifika n=50 and the data was post weighted to be representative of the NZ population. Margin of error is at 95% and confidence interval +/- 3.41%. Fieldwork ran from July 19 to July 29.

Note, when mentioning 'significant' increases or decreases – these are statistically significant.

FINDINGS

Sentiment & Future

- In May people were feeling quite passive about the COVID-19 situation, this is still the case but we starting to see sentiment drop slightly. While New Zealanders are wanting to see progress, we are also still concerned about anything that could risk our position.
- 'Neutral' 40% (vs 44% in May) continues to be the dominant emotion that people feel towards the COVID-19 situation in New Zealand, but we have seen a significant decrease in 'Joy' (23% vs 28%) and 'Pride' (7% vs 10%).
- Over two thirds believe we are going in the 'right direction' with the COVID-19 response. The belief that we are going in the 'right direction' has declined (69% vs 75%), while 'not sure' and 'wrong direction' have experienced an increase (+3% each).

- The speed of the vaccine rollout is the main driver behind those who believe we are heading in the wrong direction. Those with a negative sentiment (15%) are concerned by the speed of the vaccine rollout. 67% of these are likely to think the COVID-19 vaccine rollout is going badly with 34% also concerned that NZ is becoming more isolated.
- Two thirds of New Zealanders feel the vaccine rollout is going really well (14%) or okay (52%), but over a quarter think it is going badly (27%).
- There is a growing expectation that we will return to the pre COVID-19 state once the majority are vaccinated with 39% (vs 47%) expecting there will be some differences in day to day life compared to pre-COVID-19. There was an increase from 9% to 18% believing that return life to how it was pre-COVID-19. Although one third of New Zealanders are still realistic that COVID-19 health behaviours will be sticking around after the vaccination roll-out (36%, no change).
- While the impact on the NZ economy remains top of mind (49% vs 51% in May), concern around new COVID-19 variants has become significantly more top of mind (47% up 9%). We also see a significant increase in concerns around the financial impact of COVID-19 on businesses (40% vs 36%) and not knowing when we will return to normal (33% vs 29%).
- We are becoming more anxious about quarantine-free travel, particularly to Australia (worry up 22% to 58%), following the recent outbreaks. While Australia is the main concern, there is also concern about quarantine-free travel to and from the Cook Islands, and other countries.
- While travel intention to Australia is holding, expected travel timelines are longer. We have seen a significant decrease in the number of people who are intending to travel to Australia in the next 6 months. This is coupled with a significant increase in the number of people who are intending to travel after 2 years.

Vaccine intentions & Behaviours

- The COVID-19 vaccine is a key concern for New Zealanders. With the vaccination plan and rollout for New Zealand ranking #5 on the list of impacts of COVID-19 in New Zealand. 38% of New Zealanders are thinking about the COVID-19 vaccine plan and rollout.
- Overall, there is a positive view towards a world where the majority of New Zealanders are vaccinated. New Zealanders' top emotions are 'Joy' (43%) and 'Pride' (28%). Although, one in five New Zealanders are feeling neutral, we see very little negative emotion associated with a New Zealand where the majority are vaccinated against COVID-19.

- New Zealanders expect that 70% of the population will get vaccinated. Expectations of vaccine uptake are significantly higher for those who are already eligible for the vaccination: 55 years and over and Retired (both at 77%).
- Most New Zealanders intend to get vaccinated. 74% of New Zealanders over 16 years are either already vaccinated or likely to get vaccinated.
- While this is encouraging, there are 6% who are unengaged. They will be a difficult group to motivate – they are less engaged with information in general and are less likely to have a view of what the future will be like with vaccinations.
- The challenge will be influencing different age groups to get vaccinated when it's their turn.
 - 45 to 54-year olds have a less positive sentiment towards the vaccine than other age groups. They also have fewer information sources than other age groups.
 - 55 years and over are more motivated and have more concerns around COVID-19 generally.

Behaviours and compliance

- Even with slightly more concern, there hasn't been much change in willingness to comply with COVID-19 guidelines. Despite high willingness, compliance across all COVID-19 health behaviours could be more consistent. Particularly when it comes to using the NZ COVID Tracer app.
 - Staying home if you're feeling sick or unwell, including staying off work (72% down 3%)
 - Contacting Healthline or your doctor if unwell with COVID-19 symptoms (63% down 9%)
 - Using a mask on public transport (69% up 2%)
 - Using NZ COVID Tracer app to scan in (56% down 2%)
 - Get a COVID-19 test if unwell (56% - new measure)
- Financial implications and misinformation are thought to be key barriers to compliance with COVID-19 health guidelines. 44% of New Zealanders think misinformation impacts other New Zealanders compliance with COVID-19 health behaviours.
- Thinking it's the 'right thing to do' remains to biggest motivator (50% vs 56%) to following COVID-19 guidelines. This is followed by wanting to avoid another lockdown, protecting friends and whanau, and a sense of duty.

Brand and Information

- The Unite Against COVID-19 brand remains stable and strong (39% see it as a brand they trust – down 3%). The following groups have significantly lower trust of the UAC brand: Rural (28%), Upper North Island (30%), and in 'Vaccine segments': Unlikely (15%), Unengaged (11%), Rejectors (15%).
- 50% (down 4%) see the UAC brand as everywhere, 43% (down 1%) believing that the brand really stands for something and 36% (down 4%) see as making a difference.
- Communications around the COVID-19 vaccine are most prominent, with more New Zealanders saying they're seeing or hearing about it all the time. Whereas messaging around mask wearing has been less top of mind and less visible.
- New Zealanders mostly feel like they're getting the right amount of information; and overall access to information remains unchanged.
- Government and Healthcare Professionals remain the leading information source for New Zealanders.
- However, we have seen some significant declines since May in specific channels – Media briefings, the COVID-19 website and the Ministry of Health website. With no new COVID-19 outbreaks in New Zealand since March, it's unsurprising to see a decline in the reach of these channels.
- Meanwhile, non-Government and Healthcare professional sources are stable. Articles in the news and media remain the leading information source by far, followed by friends / family / whānau.
- Most influencers are stable, but we have seen some declines in reach for Ministry of Health and Healthcare Professionals.