

21/10/21 | Media Release – COVID-19 Survey of Young People

Commissioner surveys young people about COVID-19 vaccines and restrictions

South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly, has today released a summary report of key findings from a survey of young people aged 12-18 years about their views on COVID-19 vaccines and restrictions. As COVID-19 vaccines have now become available to all South Australians aged 12 and over, Commissioner Connolly felt it was an appropriate time to hear from young people so that their ideas and lived experiences could be factored into decision-making.

In addition to asking for their views on vaccines and restrictions, the survey also asked young people where they get their information from, and what they need from adults to feel better supported during the pandemic. Of the 506 young people who responded, 1 in 3 (33%) knew 'a little' or 'not much at all' about COVID-19 vaccines. Approximately one fifth (17%) had already had one or both doses of a vaccine, and two thirds (67%) said they were 'likely' or 'very likely' to get vaccinated within the next 12 months.

Some of the reasons young people gave for not being vaccinated included thinking it was unnecessary because of their low risk of getting COVID-19. Others were 'scared of needles' while some said they believed the risks of being vaccinated outweighed the risks of contracting the virus itself. They also raised concerns about the idea of introducing a vaccine passport, saying this might unfairly effect children and young people whose parents are not allowing them to get vaccinated.

Young people overwhelmingly understood the importance of getting vaccinated and of putting restrictions in place to prevent COVID-19 from spreading, but they also felt young people overall were being impacted by restrictions more than other age-groups. Young people reported feeling a range of emotions in response to the pandemic, from feeling lucky to be living in a state that has been relatively safe compared to other parts of Australia and the world, through to confusion, frustration, and sadness about the lack of information or appreciation for the unique and often disproportionate ways young people's day-to-day lives are being impacted.

To feel better supported by adults, young people recommended that they listen to what young people are saying about their unique experiences, reassure them more often, inform them with examples that are relevant, and include them in decision-making. They also said adults needed to be more flexible and to not place so much pressure on young people, to stop spreading misinformation, follow the restrictions, and provide better mental health support at school. They also wanted the government to continue to provide financial support for families who have lost work and are struggling because of the impact of the pandemic.

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Quotes attributable to Commissioner for Children and Young People, Helen Connolly:

The pandemic continues to affect the lives of everyone, regardless of age. It will continue to do so well into the future, especially for younger citizens. Despite this, the voices and rights of children and young people appear to be missing from conversations and decision-making around the pandemic. Despite feeling grateful in some respects, young people are also sick and tired of missing out on ‘everything’ that they thought they could expect to experience and enjoy as a young person at this time in their lives. They are aware they are growing up in a completely different world to previous generations, and the pandemic has not only disrupted their stability, relationships, and opportunities in the present, but has also cast significant doubt over their plans for the future.

What Young South Australians told the Commissioner:

“I guess it’s just really hard because I feel like we are losing what it means to be young, to go out and have fun. I feel like as a Generation we all really care about the community as we have a more humanistic rather than individual outlook - and we want to do all we can to support the Gov. and stop COVID. I know SO many people my age who have already gotten vaccinated or are booked. There’s not much I feel like the Gov. can do to support us, and how sad a lot of us feel about our youth right now.”

– 17 year old, Female, Onkaparinga

“The non-vaccines are selfish. Yeah, they have the right to be scared and not want to and have a voice, but it’s ultimately our future and when borders open, they are going to just ruin the situation. The vaccine is only like 70% effective and we can still get it, and if they are carrying it around us, then we will still get it despite doing the right thing.”

– 13 year old, Female, Norwood, Payneham and St Peters

“I feel the response from adults in terms of the pandemic could be described as unorganised and confusing. Though I understand that no-one has experienced something like this before, it has been confusing for me as a teenager to understand constantly changing guidelines and restrictions.”

– 15 year old, Female, Central Southern LGA

I think in South Australia the government is handling keeping covid out well. However, I don’t think it’s worth destroying business and livelihoods...I’m not saying the lives lost don’t matter. Of course they do, but this is going to end up being something we will all have to live with.”

– 17 year old, Female, Tea Tree Gully

Download a copy of the COVID-19 Survey: Key Findings [here](#)

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