

My Health Can't Wait

National Consumer Survey of Australians who have delayed care in the last 12 months due the COVID-19 pandemic

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Johnson & Johnson Medical Pty Ltd commissioned market research company The Online Research Unit (ORU) Pty Ltd to conduct a nationally representative survey of 1,058 Australians aged 18 years and over in January 2021. The aim of the survey was to understand whether Australians were still delaying their healthcare as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and if so, *why*. The survey also looked at telehealth and whether people were using this as an option to access needed care as the pandemic continues in 2021.

The findings from this survey are outlined below. All statistics are representative based on survey numbers.

KEY FINDINGS:

Nearly a quarter of Australians say their health has worsened since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic with this number the highest in states like Victoria and NSW, where the harshest lockdowns have been felt.

- 24.6% of Australians said their health had worsened since the start of the pandemic. This rises to over one third (31%) in those aged 35-44 years.
- 25.7% of those living in NSW and one in three (30.5%) in Victoria said their health became somewhat or much worse during the pandemic.
- A greater number of people in outer regional areas of Australia¹ reported their health had worsened (34%) than those living in metropolitan areas around Australia (24.7%).

Elective surgeries and medical procedures were put at the bottom of the list for nearly two-thirds of Australians, with younger Australians placing a greater priority on elective procedures than older Australians.

- 64.6% of Australians either did not see elective surgery as a priority or saw it as a low priority.
- For Australians aged 18-24, 15.2% saw elective surgery and medical procedures as a major priority, while only 9.5% of Australians aged 55 and above saw elective and medical procedures as a major priority.
- When it comes to pursuing elective surgery during the pandemic, around one in five admit that an increased risk of health complications due to other health conditions (18.6%), limited assistance with rehabilitation (19.6%) and the cost associated (21.1%) are the main concerns.

¹ Based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Remoteness Structure: [Remoteness Structure \(abs.gov.au\)](https://abs.gov.au/remoteness-structure)

In comparison, over two-thirds of Australians continued to prioritise preventative health care, however fewer Victorians identified preventative health care as a major priority compared to those states that didn't see a significant COVID-19 breakout, such as Tasmania and Western Australia.

- 70.1% of all Australians continued to identify preventative health care as a priority, however only 65.5% of Victorians saw preventative health as a major priority, compared to 73.3% in Tasmania and 71% in Western Australia.

Dental care and vision care, which both require close contact with a health care professional, were the most delayed or cancelled health care services due to COVID-19. For those who cancelled dental or vision care appointments, over two-thirds would wait for a month or more before re-booking.

- 30.7% of Australians delayed or cancelled their dental care, yet only 13.9% of Australians aged 65 and over delayed or cancelled dental care.
- 17.3% of Australians delayed or cancelled their vision care, yet only 11.7% of Australians aged 65 and over delayed or cancelled their vision care.
- 72% of Australians who delayed or cancelled a dental care appointment would wait for a month or more before rescheduling, while 2.5% said they did not plan on rescheduling.
- 68.3% of Australians who delayed or cancelled a vision care appointment would wait for a month or more before rescheduling, while 1.1% said they did not plan on rescheduling.

Over a third of Australians pursuing elective surgery or a medical procedure said they would be concerned about exposure to COVID-19 during surgery or in post-op, and more than 40% of Australians believe there is still a risk of contracting COVID-19 in a healthcare setting.

- 36.9% of Australians pursuing elective surgery or a medical procedure are concerned about being exposed to COVID-19 during surgery.
- 35.4% of Australians pursuing elective surgery or a medical procedure are concerned about post-operative exposure to COVID-19.
- 42.2% of Australians believe that there is still a risk of contracting COVID-19 in a healthcare setting.
- Nearly a fifth of Australians expressed concern in the ability for the health care facilities they visit to properly manage the risk of patient exposure to COVID-19, with 19% saying they were either not very confident or not at all confident.

The nation is putting its trust in a COVID-19 vaccine, with many Australians admitting a vaccine would make them more confident when pursuing elective surgery or other medical procedures during the pandemic.

- Over a third (38.5%) of respondents say that a COVID-19 vaccine would make them more confident when pursuing elective surgery or another medical procedure during the pandemic.
- Nearly a third (28.4%) said they would not be scheduling another healthcare appointment until a COVID-19 vaccine was available, with this sentiment slightly higher in men (24.3%) than in women (22.9%).

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- Those living in major metropolitan areas were more inclined to feel this way (30.3%) than those living in inner regional (20.8%) or outer regional (18%)² areas of Australia.

Over a third of total Australians surveyed said they would use telehealth (where possible) to consult with their healthcare professional. However, despite being an ‘at-risk’ group for COVID-19, people aged 65 years and over were less inclined to use telehealth, with just over 1 in 5 surveyed saying they would use this method of consultation.

- 34.3% of Australians have said they would use telehealth services where possible to consult with their healthcare professional.
- 38.2% of Australians aged between 18-64yrs would use telehealth where possible to consult with their professional, while only 17.9% of Australians aged 65 and over would use telehealth.
- Over half (51%) of Australians would opt to use telehealth services to avoid being in a waiting room where others could be sick.

The older generation is likely to be the hardest to convert to telehealth with Australians over the age of 65 less likely to use telehealth for appointments with their health care providers than those aged 18-24.

- Nearly a quarter (21.4%) of Australians aged 18-24 would prefer to use telehealth services for elective surgery or other medical procedures once the risk of COVID-19 has ended, compared to just 4% of Australians aged 65 and over.
- Nearly a third (29.5%) of Australians aged 18-24 would prefer to use telehealth services for sick care once the risk of COVID-19 has ended, compared to just 7.6% of Australians aged 65 and over.

Nearly a quarter of Australians said they were more likely to schedule a surgery or medical procedure if they were given the choice of using telehealth to stay connected with their health care provider.

- 24.8% of Australians were more likely to schedule a surgery or medical procedure if they had access to telehealth to stay connected with their healthcare provider before and after the procedure.
- Over a third (33%) of Australians aged between 25 and 44 were more likely to schedule a surgery or medical procedure if they had access to telehealth to stay connected with their healthcare provider before and after the procedure compared to just 11% of Australians aged 65 and over.

[ENDS]

² Based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Remoteness Structure: [Remoteness Structure \(abs.gov.au\)](https://abs.gov.au)