



## A survey of life in COVID times:

*Your hopes for the future and your views on the role of government*

### **Overview of the survey**

The survey was conducted by Professor Valerie Braithwaite between May and September 2021 under the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee Approval Number 2020/695.

The survey was presented as a 16 page self-completion printed questionnaire containing approximately 300 questions. The questionnaire contained many attitude scales measuring attributes of interest to the study. Just under a third of the questions focussed on various aspects of the respondent's experiences of COVID-19. The remainder of the questions had their origin in earlier studies, covering such topics as personal hopes and priorities, financial wellbeing, personal values, societal goals, views on Australian democracy; trust in organisations, and expectations of both federal and state governments. There was also a comprehensive selection of demographic and background variables.

### **Sample Coverage**

The survey coverage was limited to people living in Sydney and in Melbourne. For convenience and future comparison with census data the geographical areas selected for the survey were the Greater Melbourne and Greater Sydney Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSAs). Postcode boundaries were then examined and a list made of those either entirely or mostly within the GCCSAs. These postcodes then provided the link to the available sampling frame of addresses.

### **Sampling Frame**

The survey utilised Australia Post's Postal Address File<sup>1</sup> (PAF) as the sampling frame. This data is made available through commercial partners by Australia Post and contains addresses but no names. The PAF contains all addresses (delivery points) to which mail can be delivered in Australia. It includes delivery points which are dwellings as well as commercial premises such as shops, offices and factories and also public institutions such as schools, churches and hospitals. Within metropolitan areas this essentially includes all properties. The purchased file contained data flags purporting to identify private properties and commercial properties, however discussions with the data vendor revealed that this was not completely reliable. It was decided to include all addresses in the sample selection and to rely on a question included in the questionnaire to identify the address type where the survey was received. Responses from non-residential addresses could then be identified.

### **Sample Selection Process**

For reasons of practicality in obtaining the desired sample specification it was necessary to employ a two stage sampling procedure. In the first stage a large systematic random sample of NSW and Victorian addresses was purchased (see Table 1).

**Table 1. State address distribution and sample**

<u>Area</u>	<u>Total delivery points in PAF</u>	<u>Nominal systematic sampling fraction</u>	<u>Number of delivery points in purchased sample</u>
NSW / Greater Sydney	3,036,161	Every 31 <sup>st</sup> entry	97,941
Victoria/ Greater Melbourne	2,392,834	Every 25 <sup>th</sup> entry	95,714

<sup>1</sup> <https://auspost.com.au/business/marketing-and-communications/access-data-and-insights/address-data/raw-address-data>



The second stage sampling was conducted in-house and involved drawing a random sample including only delivery points with postcodes within the Greater Sydney and Greater Melbourne Statistical Areas. This was done with a selection probability proportional to the count of private delivery points by postcode.

A base sample of 8000 addresses in both Greater Sydney and Greater Melbourne was drawn from all the constituent postcodes in each area. Then supplementary samples were drawn, again with probability proportional to size for postcodes with high levels of COVID. The supplementary samples numbered: 1,700 in Greater Sydney and 2,700 in Greater Melbourne. Government statistics from each state were used to determine COVID levels by postcode. The COVID levels used were:

- a) NSW – 4,452 cases reported to 3 March 2021 of which the 1,854 locally acquired cases in Greater Sydney were used to determine high COVID postcodes.
- b) Victoria – 20,448 cases reported to 30 Jan 2021 of which the 17,230 locally acquired cases with valid Victorian postcodes within Greater Melbourne less the 1,905 cases of residents in nursing homes were used to determine the high COVID postcodes.

Ultimately, a total of 20,400 addresses were randomly drawn from the two areas, 9,700 in Greater Sydney and 10,700 in Greater Melbourne.

### **Survey distribution and follow-up of non-response**

The survey process was modelled on the Dillman Total Design Method (1978). The method provides for an attractive survey booklet with clear question layout and for multiple mailings following up non-respondents over a period of time. Two mailings were made during this survey in an effort to reduce non-response.

On 26 May 2021 the questionnaire package was posted to the 20,400 addresses in the sample. The DLX sized package contained the questionnaire with a covering letter on the 1<sup>st</sup> page, a Participant Information sheet and a reply-paid envelope. The covering letter explained the aims and sponsorship of the study. The outer envelope was addressed with “To the resident(s) at” as the first line of the address followed by the normal address text.

Eight days later, on 3 June 2021, a “Thank you / Reminder” postcard was sent to all 20,400 addresses. Potential respondents were encouraged to have their say and to respond as soon as possible.

The point was made in both mailings that because we don't have any names or contact details at all, but only randomly selected street addresses, respondents could be assured of total anonymity.

### **Response Rate**

By the end of October 2021 a total of 1883 responses had been received. This equates to an overall response rate of 9.2%. The response rate from Greater Melbourne was fractionally under 10% while that from Greater Sydney was just under 8.5%. The final number of responses classified by sample area is shown in Table 2.

Although responses were accepted until the end of October, most questionnaires were returned quite quickly. Using the postmark date of the return envelope, some 76.6% had been posted by 15 June, 95.3% had been posted by the end of June, 99.1% by the end of July and 99.8% by the end of August 2021.



The survey was directed at “the person in your household aged 18 years or over, who will have the next birthday”. A single response received from someone aged 17 years, has been retained in the data.

**Table 2. Number and percentage of responses classified by area**

<b>Sample area</b>	<b>Base sample</b>	<b>Supplementary sample of postcodes with high levels of Covid</b>	<b>Total sample</b>	<b>Completed questionnaires received</b>	<b>Response rate (%)</b>
Greater Melbourne	8,000	2,700	10,700	1064	9.94
Greater Sydney	8,000	1,700	9,700	815	8.40
Unknown	-	-	-	4	-
Total	16,000	4,400	20,400	1883	9.21