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Hidden Cost:

Young multicultural Victorians and COVID-19



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Centre for Multicultural Youth
joint report

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Introduction

The global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is having a substantial impact on all Australians across a range of social, economic, and health and wellbeing indicators. In Australia, in March 2020, State, Territory and Federal governments imposed a series of physical distancing and isolation measures which have resulted in Australians working, studying, and generally confined in their houses with limited opportunity for social interactions. Victoria, one of the hardest-hit states in Australia, was declared a 'State of Emergency' on March 16 2020.¹ Since March, the state has had varying degrees of isolation and physical distancing measures.

The Government's policy response to COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the lives of all Australians with young Victorians one of the hardest-hit groups.² They are experiencing a higher rate of job loss, financial and housing stress and education disruption, all substantially increasing the risk of population mental ill health.³ Over a three month period to May 2020, young people aged 18-24 were more likely to report their household financial situation had worsened and significantly less likely to say that their financial situation had improved when compared to other age groups.⁴ Young Australians are also reporting high rates of media consumption and COVID-19 health-related messaging which has been associated with reduced physical activity and increased depression and anxiety.⁵

In addition to the public health crisis of COVID-19 many countries around the world, including Australia, are experiencing a 'Second Pandemic' of racism.⁶ The 'Second Pandemic' is being used to refer to the global impact that racism has on multicultural and racially diverse populations.⁶⁻⁷ Early in the pandemic, reports of markedly increased racism towards Chinese and Asian Australians were reported. Racism towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has also been reported as increasing during the pandemic. Media discussions about racism have markedly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, with events such as Black Lives Matter protests drawing attention to systemic injustices and pursuing community action to respond, but also increasing the potential for chronic stress and racial trauma through vicarious exposure to racism.

Racism and racial discrimination have detrimental effects on health and wellbeing throughout the life-course. Experiences of racism are linked to adverse health and wellbeing outcomes in children and young people, with documented impacts on depression, anxiety, suicidality, as well as mental health risk factors such as sleep difficulties, asthma, inflammation and cardiometabolic risk markers.⁸ Negative mental health impacts have been shown for both direct experiences as well as vicarious exposure, including seeing racism online or in the media.⁸⁻⁹

Young people in Australia have drawn attention to the impact that racism is having on their lives during the COVID-19 crisis. The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) received feedback from young people, communities and workers, highlighting concerns about returning to school and study, due to fears of racial discrimination, as well as increasing racism online.

While there have been a number of opinion polls and surveys about young peoples' experiences and responses to COVID-19, to our knowledge none of these have been tailored specifically to young people from multicultural backgrounds nor have they addressed issues related to racism. Further information and reflection about experiences of racism and its impacts is needed to inform future service delivery and advocacy work.

To better understand the nature and impact of racism during COVID-19 on young people they work with, and how to respond, CMY conducted a rapid response in-house service improvement survey of young people in Victoria to examine their experiences throughout the COVID-19 crisis. CMY's survey explored the impact that COVID-19 is having on the lives of young Victorians and their experiences with racism and racial discrimination since the start of the pandemic and the impact these experiences and the COVID-19 crisis are having on their social and emotional wellbeing.

This study draws on the findings of CMY's survey to examine the effect that the COVID-19 crisis has had on the lives of young people (aged 16-25) living in Victoria, their experiences of racism and discrimination, and the effect the crisis is having on their mental health.

Methods

Data source

In June 2020, during Victoria's stage three lockdown, CMY conducted a cross-sectional survey of young people in Victoria. CMY designed their survey to help with their service delivery and advocacy work. Anonymous data was collected, from June 5 to June 28, 2020, from 376 participants. The target population was young people aged 16-25 who live, work or play in Victoria.

The survey was conducted online using Survey Monkey and was distributed to CMY's networks through social media and their monthly newsletter. The survey was not designed to be a representative sample but was to engage with members in the CMY network to understand young Victorians' experiences better.

The survey asked participants about their personal demographics, their physical and mental health, health behaviours, lifestyle changes due to COVID-19, and their experiences of racism and discrimination.

Selected items were used with permission from the Speak Out Against Racism (SOAR) survey, which was developed by a team led by the Australian National University.¹⁰ Other items were used from The CoRonaviruS Health Impact Survey (CRISIS). The CRISIS Survey was developed by the National Institute of Mental Health Intramural Research Program Mood Spectrum Collaboration and the Child Mind Institute and the New York State Institute for Psychiatric Research.^{11,12} More information on the CRISIS Survey can be found at <http://www.crisissurvey.org/>.

In addition, the Heightened Vigilance scale was adapted for Australia/COVID-19 from the Chicago Community Adult Health Study;¹³ the Vicarious Online Discrimination scale was adapted from an Online Victimization Scale for Adolescents.¹⁴

Based on feedback from young people and workers within their network, CMY also developed specific questions to better understand how experiences of racism and discrimination affect young people. CMY engaged a small group of young people to provide critical feedback on the initial survey to ensure appropriateness and test the language and framing of questions, this feedback resulted in numerous changes to the survey questions and structure.

Ethics approval was obtained from the Australian National Human Ethics Committee (2020/376) for the analysis of this data.

Measures

Socio-demographics

Gender

Participants were asked 'What is your gender?' Response options were 'Female'; 'Male'; and 'Other'.

Age

Participants were asked 'What is your date of birth?' This item was recoded to calculate participant current age, which was then recoded to create two age groups 'Over 18'; and 'Under 18'. Participants above the age of 26 were dropped from analysis (N = 1 above 25).

Ethnicity

Participants were asked to self-report their own racial, ethnic, or cultural background, with the option of selecting multiple categories. This ethnicity item and the corresponding response categories were developed for the SOAR survey.¹⁰

Participants were asked 'which of the following best describes your race, ethnicity, cultural background?' Participants could select from 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander'; 'Anglo-Celtic'; 'European- Southern'; 'European- Northern/Western/Eastern'; 'East Asian'; 'Southeast Asian'; 'South Asian'; 'Middle Eastern'; 'Pacific Islander'; 'Northern African'; and 'Southern African'. Participants were able to select multiple ethnicities.

Ethnicity was coded as 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander'; 'Anglo/European'; and 'Multicultural Backgrounds'. Following international guidelines,^{15,16,17} ethnicity was coded using a prioritisation method whereby the Anglo-European ethnicity coding does not include people who also identified as being from an additional ethnic/racial/cultural background. We recognise the considerable diversity among multicultural and ethnic minority groups, and that collapsing these groups into one larger category for statistical analysis has limitations. Additionally, due to the small number of participants from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds we were unable to include this group in the comparative analysis as a separate group (as shown in tables 6, 11, 13 and 16).

Participants could also provide any additional information about their background. 'Identity is very personal and unique to each of us – please use the text box below if you would like to tell us something further about your background.'

Religion

Participants were asked 'What is your religion, even if you are not currently practicing?' Response options including 'Anglican (Church of England)'; 'Baptist'; 'Buddhist'; 'Catholic'; 'Chaldean Catholic'; 'Christian'; 'Eastern Orthodox'; 'Greek Orthodox'; 'Hinduism'; 'Islam'; 'Judaism'; 'Lutheran'; 'Presbyterian'; 'Shia'; 'Other'; and 'No religion'. Due to the limited number of responses this variable was coded as 'Buddhist'; 'Catholic'; 'Christian'; 'Islam'; 'Other' and 'No Religion'.

Country of birth/length of time in Australia

Participants were asked 'In what country were you born?' Response options were 'Afghanistan'; 'Australia'; 'China (not including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan)'; 'Congo, Democratic Republic of'; 'England'; 'Ethiopia'; 'Hong Kong (SAR of China)'; 'India'; 'Indonesia'; 'Iraq'; 'Malaysia'; 'Myanmar'; 'New Zealand'; 'Pakistan'; 'Philippines'; 'Sri Lanka'; 'Syrian Arab Republic'; 'Thailand'; 'Vietnam'; 'Don't know / Prefer not to say'; and 'Other'. The country of birth item was coded as either 'Born in Australia'; and 'Born Overseas'. This item was taken from the SOAR Survey.¹⁰

If participants were born in Australia, they were asked, 'You told us you were born in Australia, were either of your parents born overseas?' Response options were 'Yes, both my parents were born overseas'; 'Yes, my mother was born overseas'; 'Yes, my father was born overseas'; and 'No'.

Both the country of birth and parent/s country of birth items were used to determine if participants were either 1st, 2nd, or 3rd generation Australian. The classifications for generations in Australia was taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, whereby 1st generation Australians are born overseas, 2nd generation Australians are born in Australia with at least one parent born overseas, and 3rd generation Australians when both their parents were born in Australia.¹⁸

If participants were born overseas, they were asked 'You told us you were born overseas, when did you arrive in Australia?' The length of time in Australia variable was coded as 'Less than five years'; 'Five to ten years'; and 'More than ten years ago'.

Language spoken at home

Participants were asked which language they spoke at home, and able to select multiple options. Participants were asked 'Which language/s do you speak at home?' Response options were 'English'; 'Aboriginal Language (Please tell us which language/s by selecting this option and the 'other' option below)'; 'Mandarin'; 'Cantonese'; 'Hindi'; 'Italian'; 'Arabic'; 'Greek'; 'Vietnamese'; 'Filipino/Tagalog'; 'Korean'; 'Samoan'; 'Turkish'; 'Punjabi'; 'Sinhalese'; 'Dari'; 'Karen'; 'Karen S'gaw'; 'Swahili'; 'Hegazi'; and 'Other'. This variable was coded as 'English only'; 'English and a second language'; and 'language other than English'.

Health and wellbeing

Participants were asked two questions relating to their health and wellbeing. 'How would you rate your overall mental/emotional health before the COVID-19 crisis?'; and 'Do you have a physical or health condition that keeps you from doing some things other people your age do (for example, school or study activities, sports, or getting together with friends)?' The response options for the first question were 'Excellent'; 'Very good'; 'Good'; 'Fair'; and 'Poor'. The response options are coded as 'Excellent/ Very good/ Good'; and 'Fair/ Poor'. These two items were taken from the CRISIS survey¹¹.

The response options for the item asking participants if they have a physical or health condition were 'No'; 'Yes, a physical disability (for example, hearing impairment, cerebral palsy, wheelchair, or something else)'; 'Yes, a long term illness (for example, depression, diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, or something else)'; 'Yes, something else (please describe)'. This variable was coded as 'Yes'; and 'No'. This item was taken from the SOAR Survey.¹⁰

Education

Participants were asked a series of questions relating to their education status and the impact that COVID-19 has had on their ability to undertake online learning.

Participants were asked about their education status: 'Are you enrolled in school, or university for this year?' Response options were 'Not in school/not studying or training'; 'High School'; 'TAFE'; 'University'; and 'Graduated'. This item was adapted to Australian wording from the CRISIS Survey.¹¹ Participants were also asked 'Are you an international student?' Response options were 'Yes'; 'No'; and 'Prefer not to say'.

Employment

Participants were asked about their current employment status and if the COVID-19 crisis had impacted on that. Participants were asked 'Are you currently employed?' Response options were 'Full time'; 'Part time'; 'Casual'; 'Self-employed'; 'Gig economy work (temporary/contract work)'; 'Carer/ home responsibilities'; 'Not employed but looking for work'; 'Not employed and not looking for work'; 'Prefer not to say'; and 'Other'.

[Demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.](#)

Exposure measures - COVID related stressors

Direct Racial Discrimination

Participants were asked eleven questions about their own personal experiences of racial discrimination. Participants were asked about their experiences of racial discrimination across three potential sources: peers (four items), school/work (three items) and community/society (four items). These questions were adapted from the SOAR survey.¹⁰ The questions in the racism scale followed the prompt: 'Below are some situations where other people said they were treated unfairly. We want to know if any of these things have happened to YOU. (These things could happen to you (in person) by another person or a group of people, or online, or using a mobile phone or the internet such as text messages, pictures, video clips, emails being sent to you or sent to others, about you).' The questions followed the sentence: 'Since the COVID-19 crisis began how often...' 'Were you called insulting names by others...'; 'Did others leave you out of their activities...'; 'Did people think you didn't speak English well...'; 'Did others spit on you, push you or hit you...'; 'Were you threatened by others...'; 'Did you get poor service at a restaurant or fast food place (e.g. being ignored)...'; 'Were you treated unfairly by a shop assistant or security guard...'; 'were you put in a lower ability class at school/uni or given a lower ability task at work...'; 'Were you disciplined unfairly...'; 'Were you given a lower grade or assessment of your work than you deserved...'; and 'Were you hassled by the police (or PSOs)...'. The response options for these eleven questions were 'Several times a week or more'; 'About once a week'; 'Every few weeks'; 'Once or twice'; and 'Never'.

A binary response ('Yes, at least once' and 'Never') was created for each item and across the three sub categories (Peers; School/Work; Community/Society). For example: participants who answered 'at least once' to any of the four items related to peer discrimination were considered as 'having ever experienced peer discrimination'. A composite scale of the total number of experiences variable was also created to count the number of experiences of direct racism (0-11 experiences).

[Results are presented in Table 2.](#)

Vicarious Racism

Vicarious racism, is second hand experiences of racism or discrimination. It differs from direct experiences of racism or discrimination, whereby people witness or hear about others' experiences rather than their own experiences.¹⁹ Experiences of vicarious racism were assessed using four items which were adapted from an Online Victimization Scale for Adolescents.¹⁴ These questions were preceded by the following prompt 'Below are some situations where other people said they were treated unfairly online. We want to know if you have witnessed any of these. Since the COVID-19 crisis began how often have the following things happened:' The four questions asked were: 'People have made jokes about people of my racial, ethnic or cultural group, online or in the media.'; 'People have said things that were untrue about people of my racial, ethnic or cultural group, online or in the media.'; 'I have witnessed people say rude or mean things about another person's racial, ethnic or cultural group, online or in the media.'; and 'My family or friends have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment online or in the media because of their racial, ethnic or cultural group.' The response options for these questions were 'Almost every day'; 'At least once a week'; 'A few times a month'; 'Less than once a year'; and 'Never'.

A binary response, 'Yes, at least once' and 'Never' was created for each item. These binary scores were also used to create a composite scale of the total variable to show the number of experiences of vicarious racism (0-4 experiences).

[Results are presented in Table 3.](#)

Hypervigilance scale

Participants were asked four questions in regard to the impact racism has on their social behaviours.¹³ These four questions were preceded with the following prompt: 'Since COVID-19 began we have heard increased reports of experiences of racism and discrimination. Knowing about increases in experiences of racism can impact how you behave, even if it hasn't happened directly to you. Since the COVID-19 crisis began how often have you done the following things.' The four questions asked were: 'Tried to prepare for possible insults from other people before leaving home.'; 'Felt that you always have to be careful about your appearance (for example, to get good service or avoid being harassed).'; 'Carefully watched what you say and how you say it.'; and 'Tried to avoid certain social situations and places.' The response options for these questions were 'Almost every day'; 'At least once a week'; 'A few times'; and 'Never'.

A binary response 'Yes, at least once' and 'Never' was created for each item. These binary scores were also used to create a composite scale of the total number of experiences of hypervigilance (0-4 experiences).

[Results are presented in Table 4.](#)

Worry about racism when re-engaging with public life

Participants were asked four questions about how worried they were about re-engaging with public life. This scale was used to assess participants' worries about experiencing racism and/or discrimination in their daily lives during COVID-19. This question was developed for the survey based on feedback CMY received that young people were worried about returning to school for fear of facing racial discrimination.

The prompt for this question was 'The COVID-19 response required all of us to socially isolate for many weeks. The following questions are about how you are feeling now that the 'lockdown' restrictions are easing.' All four questions fell under the same primary question: 'As we return to more daily activities, how worried are you about facing racism and/or discrimination in the following settings:' 'School or study'; 'Work or training'; 'Sports or recreation'; and 'Public spaces (e.g. libraries, parks, public transport, shopping centres)'. The response options for this question were 'Not at all'; 'Slightly'; 'Somewhat'; 'Very'; 'Extremely' and 'N/A'. A binary response ('Somewhat/ Slightly/ Very/ Extremely Worried'; and 'Not at all worried') was created for each item. These binary categories were also used to create two additional variables, a total number of experiences (1-4 experiences) variable to show the number of worries participants have about re-engaging with public life and 'Yes, at least one worry' and 'Not worried' variable to count the number of participants who had at least one experience.

[Results are presented in Table 5.](#)

Responding to racism and unfair treatment

Due to feedback from partners and young people, CMY created four items to see what actions young people were taking after experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment. Participants were asked the following prompt: 'The following questions are about how you responded to racism or unfair treatment, and the response and support you received. We recognise that you may have had more than one experience, and so may have reported some experiences and not others - please answer all questions relevant to your experiences.'

Participants were also asked 'When you experienced discrimination or unfair treatment because of your ethnicity, cultural background, religion or immigrant status what did you do?' The response options were: 'Ignored it'; 'Got angry'; 'Fought back'; 'Talked about it with friends or family'; 'Talked about it with a teacher, health professional or other workers'; 'Laughed about it'; 'Reported it'; and 'Other'; 'If you didn't report your experience of racism or unfair treatment, can you tell us why?' The response options were: 'I didn't know who to go to/ how to report it'; 'I didn't feel confident anything would be done/ there is no point'; 'I was worried reporting it might make it worse for me or my family/community'; 'I didn't think I would be believed'; 'I don't know'; 'I didn't want to talk about it'; 'Other'. Participants were further asked 'If you have reported your experience/s of racism or unfair treatment, how satisfied were you with what they did?' The response options were: 'Very satisfied'; 'Moderately satisfied'; 'Neutral'; 'Moderately unsatisfied'; 'Very unsatisfied'; and 'Not applicable'. Participants were also asked a follow-up question of 'Who did you report this experience to?' Lastly, participants were asked 'Following your experience of racism or unfair treatment, did you receive any support or help to cope?' The response options were: 'Yes, when I reported it I was offered support from a professional/service'; 'Yes, I reached out for support from a professional/service'; 'Yes, my friends/family offered me support'; 'No,

when I reported it I was not offered/referred to any support'; 'No, I did not know where to get help or support'; 'No, I didn't think I needed it'; and 'Other'.

[Results are presented in Table 7.](#)

Stressors related to COVID-19

Participants were asked a series of seven questions regarding changes to their lives since the COVID-19 crisis. The seven questions fell under the following leading sentences: 'COVID-19 has led to a lot of change in everyday life for young people. The following questions are about how your life has changed as a result of COVID-19.' Participants were then asked: 'In the last two weeks... how often are you getting outside your house for activities such as exercising, shopping for food, attending a medical appointment, work or school where necessary?' Response options were: 0='Several times a day'; 1='Once a day'; 2='Several times a week'; 3='Once a week'; and 4='Not at all'. Participants were then asked '...how stressful have the restrictions on leaving your house been?' Response options were: 0='Not at all'; 1='Slightly'; 2='Somewhat'; 3='Very'; and 4='Extremely'. Participants were then asked '...has the quality of your relationships with your family changed?' Response options were: 0='A lot better'; 1='A little better'; 2='About the same'; 3='A little worse'; and 4='A lot worse'. Participants were then asked '...has the quality of your relationships with your friends changed?' Response options were: 0='A lot better'; 1='A little better'; 2='About the same'; 3='A little worse'; and 4='A lot worse'. Participants were then asked '...how much have changes related to COVID-19 created financial problems for you or your family?'; 'How difficult has it been to access the supports and services (e.g. Centrelink/income support or health services) to meet your and/or your family's needs?'; and 'Did you worry whether your food would run out because of a lack of money?' Response options for the last three questions were 0='Not at all'; 1='Slightly'; 2='Somewhat'; 3='Very'; 4='Extremely'.

Participants were also asked two questions about life changes since the emergence of COVID-19. The following two questions came under: 'COVID-19 has led to a lot of change in everyday life for young people. The following questions are about how your life has changed as a result of COVID-19.' Participants were asked 'How much are you helping family, friends and community members understand information about COVID-19?' Response options were: 0='Never'; 1='Rarely'; 2='Occasionally'; 3='Often'; and 4='Most of the time'. 'How much are you having to care for family members, e.g. children, elderly relatives, compared to before COVID-19?' Response options were: 0='A lot less'; 1='A little less'; 2='About the same'; 3='A little more'; and 4='A lot more'.

Participants were asked two questions about life changes since the COVID-19 crisis began. The questions followed the prompt: 'COVID-19 has led to a lot of change in everyday life for young people. The following questions are about how COVID-19 has affected you. Since the COVID-19 crisis began...' Participants were then asked: 'How worried have you been about you or your family and friends being infected with COVID-19?'; and 'Have your worries for the wellbeing of friends or family overseas increased since COVID-19?'. The response options for these two questions were: 0='Not at all'; 1='Slightly'; 2='Somewhat'; 3='Very'; and 4='Extremely'.

Responses were scored on a 0-4 point scale with a higher number associated with a more negative impact on daily life. These responses were recoded to create two categories with the three more positive response options (0-3) combined to be recoded as '0', and the two more negative response options (3 & 4) recoded to be '1'. For example, the two questions asked about relationships were recoded to have the following categories: 'A lot better/ A little better/ About the same'; and 'A little worse/ A lot worse'.

These eleven recoded binary categories were also used to calculate a composite scale of the total number of stressors in the participant's lives (0-11 stressors).

Participants were asked about any positive changes. They were asked 'Has the COVID-19 crisis led to any positive changes in your life?' Response options were 'None'; 'Only a few'; 'Some'; and 'Many'. Participants were also provided with a free text box to provide examples of their positive changes.

Participants were also asked 'What is the most important issue facing you right now? (This could be an issue directly impacting you or your family, your facing your community, the country or the world- tell us what is most important to you right now.)' with a free text box response.

[Results are presented in Table 8.](#)

Education related stressors

Participants were also asked: 'In the past two weeks, how have your hopes for your education future changed?' Response options were: 'A lot more positive'; 'A little more positive'; 'About the same'; 'A little more negative'; 'A lot more negative'. Responses were coded as 'A lot more positive/ A little more positive/ About the same'; and 'A little more negative/ A lot more negative'.

Participants were also asked if they have been able to undertake their online learning and if they have had any difficulties accessing the resources or support they needed. The overarching item participants were asked was: 'If you have undertaken online learning since the COVID-19 crisis began, can you tell us how difficult it was/is for you to get the following things you need to participate in your classes/study:' with four concluding statements '...access to the internet?'; '... access to an appropriate computer/device?'; '... the support you need to participate in classes from your teacher/educator?'; '... the support you need to participate in classes from your parents/ family/ people in your household?' The response options for these four questions were 'Extremely difficulty'; 'Very difficult'; 'A bit difficult'; 'Not very difficult' and 'Not at all difficult'. These responses were recoded as: 'Extremely difficult/ Very difficult/ A bit difficult'; and 'Not very difficult/Not at all difficult'. These items were adapted from the CRISIS Survey.¹¹

[Results are presented in Table 9.](#)

Employment related stressors

Participants were asked about the impact the COVID-19 crisis is having on their employment status; participants were asked: 'Has COVID-19 impacted upon your employment or your search for employment?' Participants were able to select more than one of the following responses: 'No'; 'Yes, I've lost my job'; 'Yes, I have had my hours reduced'; 'Yes, I'm worried about my safety and/or my rights at work'; 'Yes, I have chosen to stop working'; 'Yes, I've stopped looking for work at the moment'; 'Yes, I have had to put my education or training on hold'; 'Yes, I am confused about what kind of work to look for'; 'Yes, I haven't had access to a computer/device or the internet to look for work'; and 'Yes, other'. These responses were coded as 'No' and 'Yes'.

Participants were also asked 'In the last two weeks, how have your hopes for your employment future changed?' Response options were 'A lot more positive';

'A little more positive'; 'About the same'; 'A little more negative'; 'A lot more negative'. Responses were coded as: 'A lot more positive/ A little more positive/ About the same'; and 'A little more negative/ A lot more negative'. These items were adapted from the CRISIS Survey.¹¹

[Results are presented in Table 10.](#)

Outcome variables

Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Participants were asked eight questions about their emotions and worries in the last two weeks. The social and emotional wellbeing scale was used from the CRISIS Survey.¹¹ These items were all scored on a 0-4 point scale with lower numbers associated with more positive emotions and a higher number associated with more negative emotions/ increased worries. These questions were taken from the CRISIS survey. Participants were prompted with: 'COVID-19 has led to a lot of change in everyday life for young people. The following questions are about how COVID-19 has affected you IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS...' The eight questions asked were: '...how worried were you generally?'; '... how happy or sad were you?'; '...how relaxed or anxious were you?'; '... how fidgety or restless were you?'; '...how fatigued or tired were you?'; '...how well were you able to concentrate or focus?'; '... how irritable or easily angered were you?'; and '...how lonely were you?'.¹¹

The emotional and worries items were recoded to be a three category coding for responses 0-1='Low/Very low'; 2='Moderate'; 3='High/Very High' (e.g. not/a bit/slightly negative response; neutral; very/extremely or a bit/ very positive response). These variables were also coded to be two different categories: 'Moderate- Very high' and 'high/ Very high', these two category variables were used to create a composite scale of the total score of emotional worries to show the number of participants who have multiple 'Multiple-Very high' emotional symptoms and multiple 'High/ Very high' emotional symptoms.

[Results are presented in Table 12.](#)

Support for emotional wellbeing

Participants were also asked if they had received any support for their emotional wellbeing. They were asked: 'COVID-19 has led to a lot of change in everyday life for young people. The following questions are about how COVID-19 has affected you. Since the COVID-19 crisis began: '... Have you reached out for support for your emotional wellbeing?' Response options were 'Yes, from family and friends'; 'Yes, from a professional/ service'; 'No, I didn't know where to go/ who to ask'; 'No, I didn't feel comfortable asking for support'; 'No, it was too difficult because of social distancing and staying at home'; and 'No, I didn't think I needed it.' 'No' responses to this item were combined to calculate a 'No, didn't reach out for support' category. This question was developed for the survey.

[Results are presented in Table 14.](#)

Health and wellbeing

Participants were asked three questions about changes to their daily behaviours, which were adapted from the CRISIS survey.¹¹ These items were scored on a five-point scale from 0-4 with a low score being associated with positive daily behaviours and a high score indicating poor behaviours. These questions followed the prompt 'COVID-19 has led to a lot of change in everyday life for young people. The following questions are about how your daily behaviours and routine have changed as a result of COVID-19. Participants were asked 'In the last two weeks... how would you rate your sleep quality'; '...how many days a week did you exercise (e.g. increased heart rate, breathing) for at least 30 minutes?'; and '... how many days per week did you spend time outdoors?'

The response options for the item about sleep were: 0='Very good'; 1='Good'; 2='Average'; 3='Poor'; and 4='Very poor'. These responses were recoded to be 'Very good/ Good'; and 'Average/ Poor/ Very poor'.

The response options for the two questions asking about exercise and spending time outdoors were 4='None'; 3='1-2 days'; 2='3-4 days'; 1='5-6 days'; and 0='Daily'. These were recoded to be 'None/ 1-2 days'; and '3-4 days/ 5-6 Days/ Daily'.

Participants were also asked to rate their health. 'How would you rate your overall physical health?' the response options were: 'Excellent'; 'Very good'; 'Good'; 'Fair'; and 'Poor'. These response options were recoded to be 'Excellent/Very good/Good'; and 'Fair/Poor'.

[Results are presented in Table 15.](#)

Results

A total of 376 responses are included in the analysis. Due to a high degree of missing data, results are presented as a proportion of the number of participants who answered at least one question from each scale or group of items. Sample characteristics (Table 1) are presented as proportions of the whole sample with all other results presented as proportions of those who answered the questions in the scale. Some scale scores still may not add up to 100% as there was still slight variability in the number of questions answered for each scale.

Table 1 Characteristics of the 'Racism during COVID-19' survey sample (N=376)

	n (%)
Age	
Under 18	95 (25.27)
Over 18	131 (34.84)
Gender	
Male	122 (32.45)
Female	246 (65.43)
Other	7 (1.86)
Ethnicity (Total Response)	
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	13 (3.46)

Table 1 Characteristics of the 'Racism during COVID-19' Continued

Anglo/European	181 (48.14)
Multicultural backgrounds	166 (44.15)
East Asian	29 (7.71)
Southeast Asian	66 (17.55)
South Asian	28 (7.45)
Middle Eastern	20 (5.32)
Pacific Islander	5 (1.33)
African	27 (7.18)
Language Spoken at home	
English only	208 (55.32)
English and a second language	120 (31.91)
Language other than English	47 (12.50)
Religion	
Buddhist	25 (6.65)
Catholic	83 (22.07)
Christian	55 (14.63)
Islam	25 (6.65)
No religion	101 (26.86)
Other	66 (17.55)
Generation in Australia	
1st Generation (Born OS)	134 (35.64)
2nd Generation (Born in Australia and parent/s born OS)	66 (17.55)
3rd Generation (Born in Australia and parents born in Australia)	171 (45.48)
Length of time in Australia	
Born in Australia	241 (64.10)
<5 Years	58 (15.43)
5-10 years	35 (9.31)
10+ years	38 (10.11)
Education	
High school	270 (71.81)
University	31 (8.24)
TAFE	12 (3.19)
Graduated	14 (3.72)
Not in Education or studying or training	17 (4.52)
International Student	
Yes	46 (12.23)
No	258 (68.62)
Employment	
Full time	11 (2.93)
Part time	47 (12.50)
Casual	106 (28.19)
Not employed but looking for work	85 (22.61)
Not employed and not looking for work	54 (14.36)
Other	15 (3.99)
Health	
Do you have a physical or health condition that keeps you from doing some things other people your age do	Yes 85 (22.61)
	No 260 (69.15)
Self-rated Mental Health pre COVID	Excellent/ Very good/ Good 252 (67.02)
	Fair/ Poor 95 (25.27)

Table 2: Direct experiences of racial discrimination (N= 264)

	Yes, At least once	Never
	n (%)	n (%)
Since the COVID-19 Crisis began how often:		
Peer		
Were you called insulting names by others?	128 (48.48)	136 (51.52)
Did others leave you out of their activities?	117 (44.32)	145 (54.92)
Did others spit on you, push you or hit you?	40 (15.15)	222 (84.09)
Were you threatened by others?	55 (20.83)	207 (78.41)
Any Peer discrimination	161 (60.98)	100 (37.88)
School/Work		
Were you put in a lower ability class at school/uni or given a lower ability task at work?	43 (16.29)	219 (82.95)
Were you disciplined unfairly?	63 (23.86)	200 (75.76)
Were you given a lower grade or assessment of your work than you deserved?	74 (28.03)	190 (71.97)
Any School/Work discrimination	100 (37.88)	162 (61.36)
Societal		
Did people think you didn't speak English well?	85 (32.20)	178 (67.42)
Were you treated unfairly by a shop assistant or security guard?	67 (25.38)	196 (74.24)
Did you get poor service at a restaurant or fast food place (e.g. being ignored)?	68 (25.76)	195 (73.86)
Were you hassled by the police (or PSOs)?	35 (13.26)	229 (86.74)
Any Societal discrimination	119 (45.08)	145 (54.92)
Any Discrimination	194 (73.48)	70 (26.52)
1- 6 experiences	143 (54.17)	
6 + Experiences	51 (19.32)	

Table 3: Vicarious experiences of racial discrimination (N= 273)

	At least once	Never
	n (%)	n (%)
Since the COVID-19 Crisis began how often have the following things happened:		
People have made jokes about people of my racial, ethnic or cultural group online or in the media.	162 (59.34)	109 (39.93)
People have said things that were untrue about people of my racial, ethnic, or cultural group online or in the media.	168 (61.54)	103 (37.73)
I have witnessed people say rude or mean things about another person's racial, ethnic or cultural group online or in the media.	235 (86.08)	38 (13.92)
My family or friends have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment online or in the media because of their racial, ethnic or cultural group.	147 (53.85)	125 (45.79)
<i>Any vicarious discrimination</i>	244 (89.38)	29 (10.62)
<i>1 experience</i>	49 (14.95)	
<i>2 experiences</i>	33 (12.09)	
<i>3 experiences</i>	51 (18.68)	
<i>4 experiences</i>	111 (40.66)	

Table 4: Hypervigilance (N= 267)

	At least once	Never
	n (%)	n (%)
Since the COVID-19 Crisis began how often have you done the following things:		
Tried to prepare for possible insults from other people before leaving home.	101 (37.83)	165 (61.80)
Felt that you always have to be careful about your appearance (for example, to get good service or avoid being harassed).	149 (55.81)	118 (44.19)
Carefully watched what you say and how you say it.	202 (75.66)	64 (23.97)
Tried to avoid certain situation and places.	193 (72.28)	74 (27.72)
<i>Any hypervigilance</i>	226 (84.64)	41 (15.36)
<i>1 experience</i>	29 (10.86)	
<i>2 experiences</i>	55 (20.60)	
<i>3 experiences</i>	62 (23.22)	
<i>4 experiences</i>	80 (29.96)	

Table 5: Worry about facing racism with return to more daily activities (N= 259)

	Somewhat/Slightly/ Very/ Extremely Worried	Not at all worried
	n (%)	n (%)
As we return to more daily activities, how worried are you about facing racism and/or discrimination in the following settings:		
School or study	116 (44.79)	138 (53.28)
Work or training	93 (35.91)	146 (56.37)
Sport or recreation	85 (32.82)	147 (56.76)
Public spaces	143 (55.21)	113 (43.63)
<i>Any worries</i>	164 (63.32)	95 (36.68)
<i>1 worry</i>	40 (15.44)	
<i>2 worries</i>	37 (14.29)	

Table 6: Prevalence of direct and vicarious racial discrimination, hypervigilance and worry, by gender, ethnicity, and generation in Australia

	Total	Male	Female	Anglo/ European	Multicultural background	1st Generation	2nd Generation	3rd Generation
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Direct Racial Discrimination (N=264)								
<i>No Discrimination</i>	70 (26.52)	18 (22.22)	50 (27.93)	46 (35.11)	18 (15.38)	14 (15.22)	11 (21.57)	45 (37.19)
<i>Any Discrimination</i>	194 (73.48)	63 (77.78)	129 (72.07)	85 (64.89)	99 (84.62)	78 (84.78)	40 (78.43)	76 (62.81)
<i>1-6 Experiences</i>	143 (54.17)	40 (49.38)	103 (57.54)	74 (56.49)	61 (52.14)	48 (52.17)	30 (58.82)	65 (53.72)
<i>6+ experiences</i>	51 (19.32)	23 (28.40)	26 (14.53)	11 (8.4)	38 (32.48)	30 (32.61)	10 (19.61)	11 (9.09)
Vicarious racial discrimination (N=273)								
<i>Any vicarious discrimination</i>	244 (89.38)	72 (84.71)	168 (91.30)	119 (87.50)	112 (92.56)	86 (90.53)	50 (96.15)	108 (85.71)
<i>1-2 experiences</i>	82 (30.04)	21 (24.71)	59 (32.07)	62 (45.59)	17 (14.05)	15 (15.79)	13 (25.00)	54 (42.86)
<i>3-4 experiences</i>	162 (59.34)	51 (60.00)	109 (59.24)	57 (41.91)	95 (78.51)	71 (74.74)	37 (71.15)	54 (42.86)
Hypervigilance scale N=276)								
<i>Any hypervigilance</i>	226 (84.64)	68 (81.93)	154 (85.56)	104 (78.2)	110 (93.22)	87 (93.55)	44 (86.27)	95 (77.24)
<i>1-2 experiences</i>	84 (31.46)	26 (31.33)	56 (31.11)	49 (36.84)	29 (24.58)	24 (25.81)	14 (27.45)	46 (37.40)
<i>3-4 experiences</i>	142 (53.18)	42 (50.60)	98 (54.44)	55 (41.35)	81 (68.64)	63 (67.74)	30 (58.82)	49 (39.84)
Worry about facing racism (N=259)								
<i>No worries</i>	95 (36.68)	29 (35.80)	64 (36.78)	74 (59.20)	16 (13.45)	14 (14.74)	13 (27.66)	68 (58.12)
<i>Any worries</i>	164 (63.32)	52 (64.20)	110 (63.22)	51 (40.80)	103 (86.55)	81 (85.26)	34 (72.34)	49 (41.88)
<i>1-2 worries</i>	77 (29.73)	21 (25.93)	54 (31.03)	27 (21.60)	44 (36.97)	33 (34.74)	17 (36.17)	27 (23.08)
<i>3-4 worries</i>	87 (33.59)	31 (38.27)	56 (32.18)	24 (19.20)	59 (49.58)	48 (50.53)	17 (36.17)	22 (18.80)

Direct experiences of racism

73% of participants have had at least one experience of direct racism or discrimination, (mean number of experiences 2.94 (95% CI 2.55, 3.32)) was the average number of experiences. Of the participants who reported experiencing discrimination, 19% had more than six experiences; 8% of participants had ten or eleven experiences. (See table 2)

Most (85%) of participants from multicultural backgrounds reported at least one direct experience of racial discrimination, with 32% having more than six experiences. This compared to participants from Anglo/European backgrounds, with 65% having at least one experience, and 8% having more than six experiences. The high proportion of young people from Anglo/European backgrounds reporting racial discrimination must be interpreted with caution. This finding may reflect that these young people are feeling discriminated against generally and misinterpreted the question. For example, they may be feeling discriminated against because of their age or for another reason. The finding may also reflect a feeling among some of so called 'reverse-racism' or of being discriminated against for being white, despite considerable evidence of the persistence of white privilege and dominance throughout society.

Level of direct racial discrimination experiences was also patterned by generational status. 85% of 1st generation Australians, 78% of 2nd generation Australians, and 63% of 3rd generation Australians had at least one experience of racial discrimination.

61% of the participants who experienced direct racial discrimination, experienced it from their peers. 48% of participants had been called names by others, and 44% of participants were left out of activities. 38% experienced discrimination at school/work, and 45% experienced societal discrimination in a public space.

Vicarious experiences of racial discrimination

273 participants answered at least one of the vicarious racism questions with results shown in Table 3.

89% of participants had at least one experience of vicarious racism since the COVID-19 crisis began. 59% had three or four of the four experiences. The average number of vicarious racism experiences participants had was 2.61 (95%CI 2.44, 2.78). Just over half (54%) of participants' friends or family have experienced unfair treatment online or in the media. Most participants (86%) witnessed others say rude things about another person's racial, ethnic or cultural group online or in the media.

A higher proportion of participants who identified as being from a multicultural background had experiences of vicarious racism, and those who did had a higher number of experiences when compared to participants from Anglo/European backgrounds. 93% of participants who identified as being from a multicultural background had at least one experience of vicarious racism, and 79% had 3-4 experiences. 88% of participants from Anglo/European backgrounds had at least one experience of vicarious racism and 42% having 3-4 experiences.

More than 90% of 1st and 2nd generation Australians have had at least one experience of vicarious racism (91% 1st generation; 96% 2nd generation), with three-quarters of 1st generation Australians having 3-4 experiences of vicarious racism and 71% of 2nd generation Australians having 3-4 experiences. A smaller proportion of 3rd generation Australians (86%) had any experiences and 43% had 3-4 experiences.

Hypervigilance scale

267 participants answered at least one of the hypervigilance questions (see Table 4).

85% of participants had changed their behaviour at least once since the COVID-19 crisis began. The average number of hypervigilance experiences that participants had was 2.41 (95%CI 2.25, 2.59). Just over half (53%) of participants reported they had 3-4 experiences. Just over three quarters (76%) of participants had carefully watched what they were saying and how they said it in public, and 72% of participants have avoided certain situations and places since the COVID-19 crisis began.

A higher proportion of participants who identified as being from a multicultural background had experiences of hypervigilance (93%) compared to participants who were from an Anglo/European background (78%). 69% of participants who identified as being from a multicultural background had 3-4 experiences of hypervigilance, with 41% of Anglo/European participants having 3-4 experiences.

Participants' generation in Australia was correlated with the proportion of participants who had at least one experience of hypervigilance, and with 3-4 experiences. 94% of 1st generation Australians had at least one experience, and 68% had 3-4 experiences; 86% of 2nd generation Australians had at least one experiences, and 59% had 3-4 experiences, and 77% of 3rd generation Australians had at least one experience, and 40% had 3-4 experiences.

Worried about re-engaging with public life

Participants were asked four questions to assess the impact racism and discrimination have on young people's worries about re-engaging with public life after the lockdown, with results shown in Table 5. 259 participants answered at least one of these questions about their worries of experiencing racism and discrimination.

63% of participants had at least one worry about experiencing racism or discrimination, with the average number of worries 1.69 (95%CI 1.49, 1.88). Over half (55%) were worried about facing racism or discrimination in public spaces, and 45% were worried about experiencing racism or discrimination at school. A third (33%) were worried about experiencing racism or discrimination within a sporting or recreation environment. A third (34%) of participants were worried about experiencing racism or discrimination in three or four of the locations.

87% of participants who identified as being from a multicultural background had at least one worry about experiencing racism or discrimination, and half (50%) were worried about experiencing racism or discrimination in 3-4 areas of public life. 41% of participants from an Anglo/European background reported they had at least one worry, and 19% had 3-4 worries.

Participants' generation in Australia was correlated with the proportion of participants who had at least one worry about re-engaging with public life, and with 3-4 worries. 85% of 1st generation Australians had at least one worry and 51% had 3-4 worries; 72% of 2nd generation Australians had at least one worry, and 36% had 3-4 worries, and 42% of 3rd generation Australians had at least one worry, and 19% had 3-4 worries.

Responding to Racism

238 participants responded to the question asking them what actions they took after experiencing racial discrimination, with participants able to select multiple options. Most participants (59%) ignored it. 29% of participants talked about it with friends or family. Only 6% of participants reported their experiences as shown in table 7.

218 participants responded to the question asking them why they didn't report their experience, with participants able to select multiple options. Just over a quarter (26%) of participants stated they didn't feel confident that anything would be done or there was no point, and 19% of participants stated they didn't know who to go to or how to report it.

Participants were also asked if they received any support after their experiences. 224 participants responded to this question, with participants able to select multiple options. 28% of participants received some form of support following their experience from either friends and family or from a professional service. 50% of participants stated they didn't think they needed any support.

Table 7: Responding to Racism

	n (%)
When you experienced discrimination or unfair treatment because of your ethnicity, cultural background, religion or immigrant status what did you do? (you can select multiple options) (N=238)	
Ignored it	141 (59.24)
Got angry	45 (18.91)
Fought back	27 (11.34)
Talked about it with friends or family	70 (29.41)
Talked about it with a teacher, health professional or other worker	17 (7.14)
Laughed about it	43 (18.07)
Reported it	15 (6.30)
Other	44 (18.49)
If you didn't report your experience of racism or unfair treatment, can you tell us why? (you can select multiple options) (N= 218)	
I didn't know who to go to / how to report it	41 (18.81)
I didn't feel confident anything would be done / there is no point	57 (26.15)
I was worried reporting it might make it worse for me or my family/community	30 (13.76)
I didn't think I would be believed	22 (10.09)
I don't know	64 (29.36)
I didn't want to talk about it	41 (18.81)
Other	56 (25.69)
Following your experience of racism or unfair treatment, did you receive any support or help to cope? (N= 224)	
Yes, when I reported it I was offered support from a professional/service/ yes, I reached out for support from a professional/service	18 (8.04)
Yes, my friends/family offered me support	50 (22.32)
No, when I reported it I was not offered / referred to any support/ No, I did not know where to get help or support	29 (12.95)
No, I didn't think I needed it	113 (50.45)
Other	34 (15.18)
<i>Yes to support</i>	63 (28.13)
<i>No to support</i>	161 (71.88)

Stressors related to COVID-19

317 participants answered at least one of the eleven questions about stressors related to COVID-19. Results are presented in table 8, with stressors by gender, ethnicity and generation in Australia presented in table 8.

84% of participants reported that the quality of their relationships with their family had either not changed or had improved, with 76% of participants stating their relationships with their friends had either stayed the same or improved.

21% of participants reported that they had to help family, friends and community members understand information about COVID-19 often/most of the time.

32% of participants were very/extremely worried about friends or family members being infected with COVID-19, and 29% of participants were very/extremely worried about the wellbeing of friends and family overseas.

85% of participants reported having at least one stressor, while just over half (51%) reported having 1-2 stressors, and a third (34%) reported having three or more stressors. The average number of stressors that participants had was 2.27 (95%CI 2.05, 2.48).

Table 8: Stressors related to COVID-19 (N=317)

	n (%)	n (%)
In the last two weeks...		
	Several times a week/Once a day/Several times a day	Once a week/Not at all
How often are you getting outside your house for activities such as exercising, shopping for food, attending a medical appointment, work or school where necessary?	228 (71.92)	89 (28.08)
	Not at all/Slightly/Somewhat	Very/Extremely
How stressful have the restrictions on leaving home been for you?	263 (82.97)	53 (16.72)
	A lot better/a little better/about the same	A bit worse/A lot worse
Has the quality of your relationships with your family changed?	265 (83.60)	51 (16.09)
Has the quality of your relationships with your friends changed?	240 (75.71)	76 (23.97)
	Not at all/Slightly/Somewhat	Very/Extremely
How much have changes related to the COVID-19 created financial problems for you or your family?	260 (82.02)	53 (16.72)
How difficult has it been to access the supports and services (e.g. Centrelink/income support or health services) to meet your and/or your family's needs?	279 (88.01)	37 (11.67)
Did you worry whether your food would run out because of a lack of money?	291 (91.80)	24 (7.57)
How has your life changed as a result of COVID-19?	Never/Rarely/Occasionally	Often/Most of the time
How much are you helping family, friends and community members understand information about COVID-19?	228 (71.92)	67 (21.14)

Table 8: Stressors related to COVID-19 continued

How has your life changed as a result of COVID-19?	A lot less/A little less/About the same	A little more/A lot more
How much are you having to care for family members, e.g. children, elderly relatives, compared to before COVID-19?	222 (70.03)	73 (23.03)
Since the COVID-19 Crisis began	Not at all Slightly/Somewhat	Very/Extremely
How worried have you been about you or your family and friends being infected with COVID-19?	175 (55.21)	103 (32.49)
Have your worries for the wellbeing of friends or family overseas increased since COVID-19?	183 (57.73)	93 (29.34)
<i>0 Stressors</i>		46 (14.51)
<i>1-2 stressors</i>		162 (51.10)
<i>3+ stressors</i>		109 (34.38)
Has the COVID-19 crisis led to any positive changes in your life? (N= 294)		
None		118 (31.38)
A Few		88 (23.40)
some		67 (17.82)
Many		21 (5.59)

A higher proportion of male participants had none (male 20% vs female 12%) or one stressor (male 59% vs female 47%), with a higher proportion of females having three or more stressors (female 41% vs male 21%).

A higher proportion of participants who identified as being from a multicultural background had three or more stressors (43%) compared to participants from an Anglo/European background (26%).

When comparing generations in Australia, 1st generation had the highest proportion with 3 or more stressors (46%), compared with 2nd generation Australians (38%), and 3rd generation Australians (24%).

In addition, participants were asked if they had any positive changes in their lives due to COVID-19. 294 participants answered this item, with 60% of participants stating they had at least a few positive changes. Participants were also asked to provide an example of these positive changes. These responses are included in Appendix B.

Education related stressors

301 participants answered at least one question about online learning, with results presented in table 9.

64% of participants had at least one difficulty with online learning, with 50% of participants reporting they found it a bit/very/extremely difficult to get support from their teachers or educators. 29% of participants reported they found it difficult to access a computer/device or the internet to complete their online learning.

Participants were also asked if their hope for their education future had changed due to the COVID-19 crisis, 337 participants answered this question. 72% reported that they felt about the same or more positive about their education future.

A higher proportion of males (78%) rated their hopes for the education future about the same or more positive when compared to females (67%). A higher proportion of participants who identified as being from a multicultural background (76%) reported their hope for their education future about the same or more positive compared to participants from an Anglo/European background (67%). Similarly a higher proportion of 1st generation Australians (76%) rated their hopes for their education future about the same or positive compared to 2nd generation (68%) and 3rd generation Australians (68%). (See Table 11)

Table 9: Education related stressors

	n (%)	n (%)
	A lot more positive/ A little more positive/About the same	A little more negative/ A lot more negative
In the past two weeks, how have your hopes for your education future changed? (N=237)	242 (71.81)	95 (28.19)
If you have undertaken online learning since the Covid-19 crisis began, can you tell us how difficult it was/is for you to get the following things you need to participate in your classes/ study: (N=301)	Not very difficult/ Not at all difficult	Extremely difficult/ Very difficult/ A bit difficult
Access to the internet?	226 (75.08)	67 (22.26)
Access to an appropriate computer/device?	245 (81.40)	46 (15.28)
The support you need to participate in classes from your teachers/educators?	145 (48.17)	150 (49.83)
The support you need to participate in classes from your parents or family/people in your household?	188 (62.46)	104 (34.55)
<i>Total Online Learning Difficulties</i>	0 difficulties	1 + Difficulties
	109 (36.21)	192 (63.79)

Employment related stressors

45% of participants reported the pandemic had not affected their employment. Of the participants whose employment had been affected, 22% had their hours reduced and 8% lost their jobs. (See table 10)

71% of participants reported that they felt about the same or more positive about their employment future.

Table 10: Employment related stressors

	n (%)	n (%)
In the last two weeks, how have your hopes for your employment future changed? (N=322)	A lot more positive/ A little more positive/ About the same	A little more negative/ A lot more negative
	229 (71.12)	93 (28.88)
Has COVID-19 impacted upon your employment or your search for employment? (N=276)		
No	125 (45.29)	
Yes, I've lost my job	22 (7.97)	
Yes, I have had my hours reduced	60 (21.74)	
Yes, I'm worried about my safety and/or my rights at work	17 (6.16)	
Yes, I've stopped looking for work at the moment	33 (11.96)	
Yes, I have had to put my education or training on hold	11 (3.99)	
Yes, I am confused about what kind of work to look for	28 (10.14)	
Yes, other	27 (9.78)	
1+ Yes	151 (54.71)	

Table 11: Stressors related to COVID-19, education and employment by gender, ethnicity and generation in Australia

	Total	Male	Female	Anglo/ European	Multicultural background	1st Generation	2nd Gen	3rd Gen
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Stressors due to COVID-19 (N=317)								
<i>0 stressors</i>	46 (14.51)	20 (19.80)	25 (11.85)	21 (13.29)	20 (14.49)	17 (15.04)	-	22 (14.77)
<i>1-2 stressors</i>	162 (51.10)	60 (59.41)	100 (47.39)	96 (60.76)	58 (42.03)	44 (38.94)	27 (49.09)	91 (61.07)
<i>3+ Stressors</i>	109 (34.38)	21 (20.79)	86 (40.76)	41 (25.95)	60 (43.48)	52 (46.02)	21 (38.18)	36 (24.16)
Education								
Online Learning difficulty (N=301)								
<i>0 difficulties</i>	109 (36.21)	37 (37.37)	70 (35.90)	55 (35.95)	46 (36.22)	36 (34.29)	21 (39.62)	52 (36.36)
<i>1+ difficulties</i>	192 (63.79)	62 (62.63)	125 (64.10)	98 (64.05)	81 (63.78)	69 (65.71)	32 (60.38)	91 (63.64)
Education Hopes (N=237)								
<i>About the same/A bit more positive/A lot more positive</i>	242 (71.81)	83 (77.57)	154 (68.75)	109 (66.87)	115 (76.16)	94 (76.42)	40 (67.80)	108 (69.68)
<i>A little more negative/ A lot more Negative</i>	95 (28.19)	24 (22.43)	70 (31.25)	54 (33.13)	36 (23.84)	29 (23.58)	19 (32.20)	47 (30.32)
Employment								
Employment impact (N=276)								
<i>Yes</i>	151 (54.71)	43 (50.00)	105 (57.07)	81 (56.25)	60 (54.05)	50 (55.56)	27 (57.45)	74 (53.24)
<i>No</i>	125 (45.29)	43 (50.00)	79 (42.93)	63 (43.75)	51 (45.95)	40 (44.44)	20 (42.55)	65 (46.76)
Employment Hopes (N=322)								
<i>About the same/A bit more positive/A lot more positive</i>	229 (71.12)	79 (75.96)	145 (68.72)	112 (70.44)	99 (70.71)	81 (71.05)	41 (71.93)	107 (70.86)
<i>A little more negative/ A lot more Negative</i>	93 (28.88)	25 (24.04)	66 (31.28)	47 (29.56)	41 (29.29)	33 (28.95)	16 (28.07)	44 (29.14)

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Symptoms

283 participants answered at least one of the social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) symptom questions with results shown in Table 12.

Almost all participants (97%) responded: moderate/high/very high to at least one of the questions, with 92% having two or more moderate/high/very high symptoms. Over half (56%) of participants had a high number of SEWB symptoms rated as moderate/high/very high (6 or more). The average number of SEWB symptoms for moderate/high/very high was 5.45 (95%CI 5.19, 5.17); and 2.64 (95%CI 2.41, 2.29) for high/very high symptoms. The count variable for SEWB symptoms is shown in Appendix A.

86% of participants had at least one SEWB symptom rated as high/very high, and 65% with two or more. 10% of participants had a six or more high/very high SEWB symptoms.

Between 30% and 40% of participants responded neutral or moderate for each of the questions. 19% of participants said they were very or extremely lonely; 48% of participants said they were a bit or very nervous/anxious.

Table 12: Social and Emotional wellbeing symptoms (N=283)

	n (%)
... how worried were you generally	
Not at all/ Slightly Worried	112 (39.58)
A Bit Worried	108 (38.16)
Very/ Extremely Worried	63 (22.26)
...how happy or sad were you?	
A bit/ Very Happy/ Cheerful	66 (23.32)
Neutral	98 (34.63)
A bit/ Very sad/depressed/ unhappy	119 (42.05)
...how relaxed or anxious were you?	
A bit/ Very relaxed/ calm	59 (20.85)
Neutral	84 (29.68)
A bit / Very nervous/ anxious	136 (48.06)
...how fidgety or restless were you	
Slightly/ not at all fidgety/ restless	77 (27.21)
Neutral	110 (38.87)
A bit / very fidgety/ restless	94 (33.22)
...how fatigued or tired were you?	
Slightly/ a bit fatigued/ tired	93 (32.86)
Moderately tired/ fatigued	89 (31.45)
Very/ Extremely Tired/ fatigued	100 (35.34)
...how well were you able to concentrate or focus?	
A bit/ very focused/ attentive	66 (23.32)
Neutral	81 (28.62)
A bit/ very unfocused/ distracted	135 (47.70)
...how irritable or easily angered were you?	
Slightly/ not at all irritable/ easily angered	107 (37.81)
A bit irritable/ easily angered	103 (36.40)
Very/ Extremely irritable/ easily angered	70 (24.73)

Table 12: Social and Emotional wellbeing symptoms continued**...how lonely were you?**

Slightly/ not at all lonely	130 (45.94)
A bit lonely	99 (34.98)
Very/Extremely Lonely	54 (19.08)
1+ symptoms moderate-very high	274 (96.82)
2+ symptoms moderate-very high	260 (91.87)
1+ symptoms high-very high	244 (86.22)
2+ symptoms high-very high	183 (64.66)

Table 13: Social and emotional wellbeing symptoms Moderate-Very high and High/Very High by age, gender, ethnicity, generation in Australia (N=283)

	Total	Male	Female	Anglo/ European	Multicultural background	1st Gen	2nd Gen	3rd Gen
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
<i>Social and Emotional Symptoms</i>								
1+ symptoms moderate-very high	274 (96.82)	84 (96.55)	186 (96.88)	142 (99.30)	115 (93.50)	92 (94.85)	49 (94.23)	133 (99.25)
2+ symptoms moderate-very high	260 (91.87)	82 (94.25)	174 (90.63)	134 (93.71)	110 (89.43)	86 (88.66)	48 (92.31)	126 (94.03)
1+ symptoms high-very high	244 (86.22)	78 (89.66)	162 (84.38)	127 (88.81)	102 (82.93)	83 (85.57)	44 (84.62)	117 (87.31)
2+ symptoms high-very high	183 (64.66)	53 (60.92)	127 (66.15)	102 (71.33)	69 (56.10)	56 (57.73)	32 (61.54)	95 (70.90)

Accessing support for emotional wellbeing

Participants were asked if they had reached out for support with their emotional wellbeing, with participants able to select multiple options. 276 participants answered this question, with results presented in Table 14.

Only 12% of participants reached out for support from a professional or service. 38% of participants received support from their friends and family.

54% of participants didn't reach out for support, 40% of participants said they didn't need any, and 15% said they didn't feel comfortable asking for support.

Table 14: Accessing Support (N=276)

	n (%)
Have you reached out for support with your emotional wellbeing?	
Yes, from family and friends	106 (38.41)
Yes, from a professional / service	34 (12.32)
No, I didn't know where to go / who to ask	13 (4.71)
No, I didn't feel comfortable asking for support	42 (15.22)
No, it was too difficult because of social distancing and staying at home	10 (3.62)
No, I didn't think I needed it	110 (39.86)
Any No	150 (54.35)

Health and wellbeing

Of the 348 participants who rated their overall physical health, 85% rated their health as good/very good/excellent (see table 15). Health and wellbeing measures by gender, ethnicity and generation in Australia are presented in Table 16.

291 participants answered at least one of the three health behaviour questions. Over two-thirds (66%) of participants rated their sleep as average/poor/very poor over the previous two weeks. A higher proportion of males (73%) reported their sleep as average/poor/very poor compared to females (62%). A higher proportion of participants from Anglo/European backgrounds (71%) reported their sleep as average/poor/very poor when compared to participants who identified as from a multicultural background (60%).

Two thirds (66%) of participants were not meeting national guidelines for required exercise, reporting they had exercised for at least 30 minutes on none or one to two days a week for the previous two weeks. 34% of participants exercised on three or more days a week, a higher proportion of males exercised on three or more days (38%) compared to females (32%).

59% of participants spent some time outdoors more than three days a week. A higher proportion of participants from Anglo/European backgrounds (64%) spent more than three days outside compared to participants who identified as from a multicultural background (56%).

Table 15: Health and wellbeing

	n (%)	n (%)
How would you rate your overall physical health? (N=348)	Excellent/Very Good/Good 299 (85.92)	Fair/Poor 49 (14.08)
Health Behaviours (N= 291)		
How would you rate your sleep quality?	Very good/Good 99 (34.02)	Average/Poor/Very poor 191 (65.64)
How many days a week did you exercise (e.g., increased heart rate, breathing) for at least 30 minutes?	3-4 days/5-6 days/Daily 98 (33.68)	None/1-2 days 192 (65.98)
How many days per week did you spend time outdoors?	171 (58.76)	118 (40.55)

Table 16: Health behaviours by gender, ethnicity and generation in Australia (N=291)

	Total	Male	Female	Anglo/ European	Multicultural background	1st Gen	2nd Gen	3rd Gen
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Health Behaviours								
Sleep Quality								
<i>Good/Very good</i>	99 (34.02)	24 (26.37)	74 (37.95)	43 (29.25)	50 (39.68)	38 (38.00)	19 (36.54)	42 (30.22)
<i>Average/ Poor/Very Poor</i>	191 (65.64)	66 (72.53)	121 (62.05)	104 (70.75)	75 (59.52)	61 (61.00)	33 (63.46)	97 (69.78)
Exercise								
<i>3-4/5-6 days a week/Daily</i>	98 (33.68)	35 (38.46)	63 (32.31)	49 (33.33)	43 (34.13)	36 (36.00)	15 (28.85)	47 (33.81)
<i>None/ 1-2 days a week</i>	192 (65.98)	56 (61.54)	132 (67.69)	98 (66.67)	83 (65.87)	64 (64.00)	37 (71.15)	91 (65.47)
Days outside								
<i>3-4/5-6 days a week/Daily</i>	171 (58.76)	52 (57.14)	117 (60.00)	94 (63.95)	70 (55.56)	51 (51.00)	30 (57.69)	90 (64.75)
<i>None/ 1-2 days a week</i>	118 (40.55)	39 (42.86)	77 (39.49)	53 (36.05)	55 (43.65)	48 (48.00)	22 (42.31)	48 (34.53)

Limitations

This study was conducted as a rapid response to the stage three lockdown in Melbourne in June 2020. The survey was developed as an in-house service improvement survey. This is the first time that some of the items have been used, primarily the items asking about worries with re-engaging with public life, and the items have therefore not been validated. Some of the items which were originally developed for the CRISIS survey have also been adapted to utilise Australian wording and have also not been validated with an Australian population or among multicultural young people.

This study included a relatively small sample size, which was not intended to be population representative. Findings do not indicate population prevalence but highlight areas for further investigation across a larger sample. Findings are also cross-sectional and casual estimates or directions of association between variables cannot be established without longitudinal data.

Due to the small sample size we were only able to use two ethnicity categories in analysis. Greater sample size is needed to reflect the heterogeneity and diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and within multicultural and ethnic minority groups.

Conclusions

This present study provides important data on young people's experiences of racism and discrimination and the impact of COVID-19 on their lives. The results show that most of the young Victorians who participated in this survey experienced many different impacts from the COVID-19 crisis.

This study has shown that a high proportion of the young people who responded to this survey have had experiences with racism and racial discrimination, and that most young people are not getting support after experiencing racism or discrimination. Young people reported they didn't know where to go for support or they didn't feel confident anything would be done. They also identified feeling there was no point in reporting, with other participants reporting they thought reporting racism might make it worse for themselves, their family or their community.

This study has shown that a high number of participants have at least one social and emotional wellbeing symptom, but that many young people are not getting help for their emotional wellbeing. Many participants reported that they didn't know where to go or that they didn't feel comfortable asking for support.

One of the initial driving factors for developing this survey was that CMY had been receiving feedback that young people were worried about returning to school after lockdown as they were worried about experiencing discrimination. These results showed that just less than two thirds of participants reported being worried about experiencing racism in at least one of the specified spaces.

Overall, the findings of this rapid response survey highlight the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people, particularly those from multicultural

backgrounds, those who are first generation Australians, and who are female. The high levels of racism and racial discrimination reported across direct and vicarious experiences, hypervigilance and worry about racism in public spaces, together with the low levels of reporting racism, are key issues to be addressed. High levels of COVID-19 related stressors reported by young people from multicultural backgrounds, those who are first generation Australians, and who are female, compared to their peers, also highlights the disproportionate burden of the pandemic on these groups of young people. High levels of social and emotional wellbeing symptoms, disrupted sleep, lack of physical activity and low levels of support for social and emotional wellbeing shown in this survey are also priority action areas.

The COVID-19 crisis, and our responses to it, have compounded existing inequities in our society and laid bare potential social and generational fault-lines for a post-COVID world. The findings help us understand the many and varied ways the crisis has impacted upon young Victorians - almost half of whom are from refugee and migrant backgrounds, and whose lived experiences include intersecting complexities associated with race and racism, culture, identity and belonging. The findings give us an insight into where we should be looking to target interventions, and further research, for young Victorians during the recovery and beyond, as well as the need for policy solutions that are flexible and responsive to the diverse needs of this generation in the long term.

Future work should aim to further understand young people's experiences, with a particular focus on overlapping forms of disadvantage and identification of the structural, systemic and social forces that exclude or diminish young people's capacity to participate and engage fully in Australia's social, economic and civic life, now and post-COVID-19. It should also look to co-design strategies to address young peoples' concerns and promote their wellbeing, with a focus on bringing young Victorians closer to the policy making process. This is a major priority given this survey was collected in June 2020 under the stage three lockdown and that Melbourne, and some of regional Victoria, has been under a more severe stage four lockdown since July 9th 2020. Emerging data suggests the impacts of the stage four lockdown on young people and on mental health are even more profound than those associated with the first lockdown.

Endnotes

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Appendices

Appendix A-Number of Social and Emotional symptoms- (N=283)

	Moderately/ High/ Very high	High/ Very high
	n (%)	n (%)
0 symptoms	9 (3.18)	39 (13.78)
1 symptom	14 (4.95)	61 (21.55)
2 symptoms	14 (4.95)	46 (16.25)
3 symptoms	18 (6.36)	46 (16.25)
4 symptoms	28 (9.89)	34 (12.01)
5 symptoms	42 (14.84)	29 (10.25)
6 symptoms	43 (15.19)	21 (7.42)
7 symptoms	53 (18.73)	7 (2.47)
8 symptoms	62 (21.91)	0 (0)

Appendix B- Free Text Responses

<https://www.cmy.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Hidden-Cost-report-Appendix-B-Free-text-responses.xlsx>