Governor’s Master Plan for Aging
COVID-19 Survey Results

August 2020
Overview of Survey and Respondents
Survey Overview

Survey Methods
- Online survey posted in English, Spanish, and Chinese on engageca.org
- Open July 10-July 27, 2020

Survey Topics
- Experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic
  - Challenges, including unfair treatment
  - Helpful experiences
  - Importance of the internet
  - Access to COVID-19 information
- Recommendations based on COVID-19 experience
Survey Respondents

• More than 900 total respondents (n=938)
• Most responses were provided in English (94.2%, n=884)
  • 3.5% responses provided in Chinese (n=33)
  • 2.2% responses provided in Spanish (n=21)
• Respondents most commonly described themselves as being
  • An older adult or person with a disability (43%) and/or
  • Employed or involved in the fields of aging and/or supporting persons with disabilities (47%)
How Respondents Describe Themselves

% of Respondents

- An older adult or person with a disability: 43%
- A caregiver for an older adult or person with a disability: 15%
- Employed or involved in the fields of aging and/or supporting persons with disabilities: 47%
- An otherwise interested member of the public: 17%
Survey Respondents

• Most respondents were age 55 or older (70%)
• Respondents live throughout California, but most commonly in
  • San Francisco/Bay Area (26%)
  • Southern California (18%)
  • North Coast/Northern California (16%)
  • Los Angeles (14%)
  • One respondent lived outside of California
Age of Respondents

- 18 - 24: 28.8%
- 25 - 34: 13.6%
- 35 - 44: 18.9%
- 45 - 54: 13.6%
- 55 - 64: 22.2%
- 65 - 74: 9.7%
- 75+: 6.3%
- 75+: 0.5%
Where Respondents Live

- Central Coast: 2.8%
- Central Valley and Sierras: 8.0%
- Inland Empire: 5.3%
- Los Angeles: 13.7%
- North Coast/Northern California: 15.5%
- Sacramento Region: 10.5%
- San Francisco/Bay Area: 25.9%
- Southern California: 18.4%
Key Takeaways

• Results about top challenges and top helpful experiences were in alignment
  • Isolation during COVID-19 was most frequently identified as “most” or “very” challenging (70%)
  • Experiences to address isolation – including various ways to connect to family, friends, and community – were identified as most helpful during COVID-19
• Nearly 9 in 10 respondents view the internet as essential during COVID-19 (86%)
Challenges during COVID-19
Challenges during COVID-19

- Isolation from family and friends is the top concern for all respondents
  - 70% of all respondents rated isolation as “most” or “very” challenging

- More than 1 in 5 respondents (22%) indicated they have been treated unfairly during the COVID-19 pandemic because of a health condition or disability, their age, their race or ethnicity, and/or the language they speak.
  - 14% of all respondents indicated they have been treated unfairly due to their age.
Challenges during COVID-19

- Access to medical care, supportive services, and other essentials are also a significant concern
  - About half (49%) of all respondents indicated that skipping or postponing medical care was “most” or “very” challenging
  - More than a third said “Getting supportive services, like in-home care, adult day centers, and senior centers” (41%) or “Getting food, medicine, and other essentials” (36%) was “most” or “very” challenging
Challenges Experienced during COVID-19 Pandemic (All Respondents)

- Isolation from family and friends
- Getting food, medicine, and other essentials
- Getting supportive services, like in-home care, adult day centers, and senior centers
- Having to skip or postpone medical care
- Issues with residential facilities, like nursing homes
- Income loss
- Illness or death of a loved one from COVID-19
- Personally contracting COVID-19

- Most challenging
- Very challenging
- A little challenging
- Not challenging
- Don't know
Do you feel that you have been treated unfairly during the COVID-19 pandemic based on your age?

- Yes, I have been treated unfairly because of this: 20%
- No, I have not been treated unfairly because of this:
  - 18 - 24: 80%
  - 25 - 34: 71%
  - 35 - 44: 78%
  - 45 - 54: 80%
  - 55 - 64: 73%
  - 65 - 74: 76%
  - 75+: 82%
- Not sure:
  - 18 - 24: 0%
  - 25 - 34: 17%
  - 35 - 44: 13%
  - 45 - 54: 10%
  - 55 - 64: 12%
  - 65 - 74: 4%
  - 75+: 8%
Share of Respondents Indicating Unfair Treatment Based On...

- Your age: 14%
- A health condition or disability: 11%
- Your race or ethnicity: 8%
- The language you speak: 5%
Helpful Experiences during COVID-19
Helpful Experiences during COVID-19

• Having access to family, friends, and information is most commonly identified as “most” or “very” helpful
  • Getting check in calls from family, friends, or an organization (75%)
  • Getting news and information (71%)
  • Video chatting with friends or family (71%)

• Remote access to health care, food, and other essentials is also helpful
  • Telehealth visits (by phone or video) with doctors, counselors, or other health care providers (61%)
  • Ordering groceries and other essentials online (59%)
What has been helpful to you, or to older adults and persons with disabilities that you know, during the COVID-19 pandemic? (All Respondents)

- Getting news and information: 32% Most helpful, 39% Very helpful, 8% A little helpful, 0% Not helpful, 0% Don't know
- Getting check in calls from family, friends, or an organization: 38% Most helpful, 37% Very helpful, 6% A little helpful, 0% Not helpful, 0% Don't know
- Video chatting with friends or family: 37% Most helpful, 34% Very helpful, 8% A little helpful, 0% Not helpful, 0% Don't know
- Ordering groceries and other essentials online: 30% Most helpful, 29% Very helpful, 7% A little helpful, 0% Not helpful, 0% Don't know
- Telehealth visits (by phone or video) with doctors, counselors, etc.: 30% Most helpful, 31% Very helpful, 6% A little helpful, 0% Not helpful, 0% Don't know
- Volunteering: 20% Most helpful, 13% Very helpful, 20% A little helpful, 20% Not helpful, 0% Don't know
- Interactive online activities, like classes or games: 22% Most helpful, 29% Very helpful, 17% A little helpful, 0% Not helpful, 0% Don't know
- Getting new or faster internet service or device: 20% Most helpful, 26% Very helpful, 16% A little helpful, 0% Not helpful, 0% Don't know
- Religious or spiritual practices: 23% Most helpful, 23% Very helpful, 15% A little helpful, 0% Not helpful, 0% Don't know
Share of Respondents Indicating Item as “Most” or “Very” Helpful (All Respondents)

- Getting check in calls from family, friends, or an organization: 75%
- Getting news and information: 71%
- Video chatting with friends or family: 71%
- Telehealth visits (by phone or video) with doctors, counselors, or other health care providers: 61%
- Ordering groceries and other essentials online: 59%
- Interactive online activities, like classes or games: 51%
- Religious or spiritual practices: 46%
- Getting new or faster internet service or device: 46%
- Volunteering: 33%
Staying Connected and Informed
Staying Connected and Informed

• Nearly 9 in 10 respondents view the internet as essential during COVID-19 (86%)

• Many of the most helpful experiences are internet-related
  • Video chatting with friends or family (71%)
  • Ordering groceries and other essentials online (59%)
  • Interactive online activities, like classes or games (51%)
  • Getting new or faster internet service or device (46%)

• About half of respondents “strongly agree” that they have the information they need to protect themselves and their family from COVID-19 (51%) and to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their community (53%).
How important, if at all, has the internet been for you personally during the COVID-19 pandemic? (All Respondents)

- Essential: 86%
- Important but not essential: 10%
- Not too important: 2%
- Not at all important: 0%
- I do not have regular access to the internet: 1%
- Don't know: 0%
I have the information I need to protect myself and my family from COVID-19. 51% 35%

I have the information I need to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in my community. 53% 31%
Qualitative Data:

Additional Responses from Respondents
Respondents’ Thoughts on Challenges During COVID-19

Sample Qualitative Responses
Challenges: Isolation & Engagement

• “Not being able to see friends & family. Not being able to have a meaningful life, not being able to breathe!”

• “I feel that it is extremely unfair that I am forced to remain very isolated because others are not wearing masks or distancing.”

• “Wish there were more ways to help virtually - maybe have older adults volunteer as tutors for elementary school children who will have to distance learn.”

• “Solitary confinement in a SNF My aunt died of COVID and no one could contact or communicate with her during her last week of life. It was devastating.”

• “I miss social gatherings playing table tennis and indoor pickleball.”
Challenges: Access to Essentials

• “Access to PPE and cleaning supplies. Where are they?”
• “Transportation: getting around on the bus due to reduced or discontinued service and the need to limit public exposure to COVID-19.”
• “I live alone and I need plumbing work but am afraid to have in a plumber.”
• “Access to agencies like SSA, Medicare, and County Public Benefit Programs”
• “Can't use EBT online, so have to go to stores.”
Challenges: Economic and Personal Well-Being

• “Paying rent now that my roommate has moved out and I must pay entire rent alone. It is more than my monthly SSI direct deposit.”
• “More expensive to live not being able to go to usual sales and discount stores.”
• “Costs rising mostly utilities and food NO increase in SS.”
• “I am looking for low income senior housing, but worry about safety. I am afraid also of contracting the virus from younger family members I live with.”
Challenges: Caregiving

• “Caring for so many of my friends and neighbors that have few social resources.”
• “Child care (we are raising a grandchild).”
• “Husband with dementia. Too risky to get in home care or consider a nursing home. No respite for me.”
• “Taking care of disabled daughter and my age.”
• “Caregivers of people with dementia are having a very difficult time without in-home care companions and adult day centers. Isolation is a problem.”
• “No leisure or free time. A wheelchair & without intermittent caregiver and housekeeper I'm in motion 16 hours a day.”
Challenges: Ageism & Ableism

• “COVID has made Ageism worse! The generic older adult is now seen as infirm.”
• “Not given the room to pass comfortably while traveling with my service dog when trying to practice physical distancing.”
• “Older people are invisible neither to be seen nor heard.”
• “My city pushed to reopen too quickly for young people and revenue. Ageism.”
Challenges: Access to Reliable Information

• “Mixed messages from Regional Centers and inability to contact key people, and receive pertinent information.”

• “Explaining to older adults how to stay safe when guidance on media has been so disorganized.”

• “Conflicting stories in the news.”

• “It is difficult to understand local restrictions of Counties located near me. I wish there was 1 source for up to the minute County COVID-19 rules.”

• “Mostly confusion over rules and protocols”

• “Changes to and inconsistent directions on what to do to keep oneself safe.”
Challenges: Health & Health Care

• “Getting the healthcare needs and management of health issues met at home.”

• “I have had chemotherapy until March and have not been able to see a Doctor in person since then.”

• “My mother’s hip replacement having to be postponed.”

• “My Mom was treated unfairly: she was admitted to hospital for non-COVID issue and was not allowed a support person, worsening her dementia and anxiety.”

• “Lack of access to dental and other services.”

• “Not having access to mental health professionals to help me deal with my anxiety and depression.”
Challenges: Technology

• “Older friends who do not have or don't know how to fully use "smart" technology.”
• “No electronic devices. No internet.”
• “Seniors suffer because so much is done through computers. Would be great to have home visitors help seniors with computer communications needs.”
• “Having to conduct life online.”
• “We experienced extremely slow or no service since the pandemic hit making online services harder to access.”
Challenges: Loss

• “Dealing with death of partner in memory care and unable to visit his final month of life.”
• “Solitary confinement in a skilled nursing facility. My aunt died of COVID and no one could contact or communicate with her during her last week of life. It was devastating.”
• “Not being able to travel for family funerals.”
Respondents’ Thoughts on Helpful Experiences During COVID-19

Sample Qualitative Responses
General Helpful Experiences

• “Honestly I've gotten more help and support than before covid”
• “Enjoyed the peaceful quiet of no traffic noise.”
• “Seeing neighbors (masked, at a distance) when walking outside”
• “Meal delivery twice a week”
• “Neighbors who drop off food”
• “Walking my dog or sitting outside enjoying the weather”
General Helpful Experiences

• “Having parks and streets reconfigured to encourage exercise and physical distancing”
• “Creative and artistic activities. Making things.”
• “mailing and receiving letters to stay in touch and have something to look forward each day”
• “We are part of a "Village" of older people who assist each other!”
• “I started sewing masks.”
Helpful Experiences: Technology

• “The AWESOME instructor from my gym doing their classes via Zoom!”
• “Teaching my grandchildren on zoom.”
• “Having our home church streaming on YouTube.”
• “reading the news from the county health officer. reading an accessible website for blind people with stats that read well for a screen reader user.”
• “Help with IT as a new user.”
• “Library login providing access to databases & entertainment.”
• “I live in a rural area and had to get satellite internet. So lucky to have the income to afford it.”
• “Running zoom groups for my church.”
Thank you!

Send questions to EngAGE@aging.ca.gov

Learn more about the Master Plan for Aging at ENGAGECA.org