

# ASTHMA AUSTRALIA

## 2021 COVID HEALTHCARE SURVEY

Asthma Australia disseminated a survey over a 2-week period in response to concerns raised by people with asthma about their access to healthcare, and to better understand attitudes towards the COVID-19 vaccination among people with asthma.

A total of 1,263 people responded to the survey, 89% were people with asthma and 11% completed the survey on behalf of someone they care for. Most respondents (87%) were female.

Figure 1: Age of person with asthma

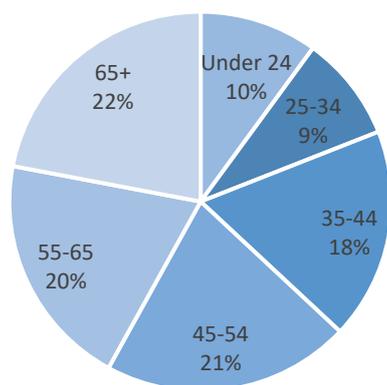
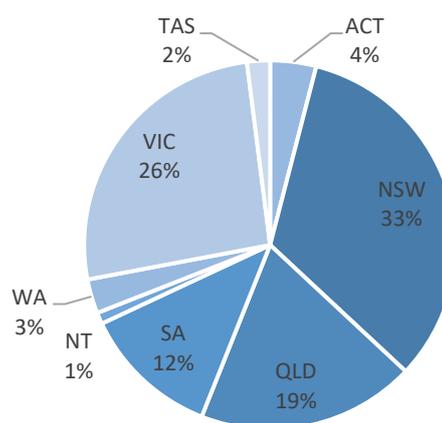


Figure 2: State



### Access to Healthcare

Respondents reported significant challenges accessing healthcare in the previous 3 months. Three quarters (75%) of respondents reported they had experienced at least one of the below challenges.

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30% had been unable to see their doctor in person until returning a negative COVID-19 test due to asthma symptoms looking like COVID-19.

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34% had been unable to see their doctor in person due to asthma symptoms looking like COVID-19.

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48% had put off going to my GP about their asthma due to asthma symptoms looking like COVID-19.

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28% had put off going to see my GP because they were required to get a COVID-19 test.

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Statement	NSW	QLD	SA	Victoria
Have been unable to see their doctor in person until returning a negative COVID-19 test due to asthma symptoms looking like COVID-19	34%	28%	34%	28%
Have been unable to see their doctor in person due to asthma symptoms looking like COVID-19	34%	35%	39%	35%
Have put off going to my GP about their asthma due to asthma symptoms looking like COVID-19.	50%	50%	51%	44%
Have put off going to see my GP because they were required to get a COVID-19 test	30%	25%	34%	25%

*When my kids get a sore throat, it is always a worry. It means going straight for a Covid test, sitting in a car, waiting, then calling a doctor with the promise of test results-and then dealing with the escalating asthma. Sitting in a car with feverish kids, tight chests, coughing and cold air is not ideal. Calling around for a willing doctor is tough as receptionists do not understand one fact: asthma does NOT wait for Covid results.*

*Yes I was made to get a Covid test as the doctor wouldn't put due to asthma on my doctors certificate for my work even when I pointed out that my symptoms were clearly from asthma. I was made to feel like a leper and I felt humiliated as the doctor wouldn't listen to me about my symptoms. Horrible experience and even though my asthma continues I'm quite reluctant to go back and see my doctor again. I'm battling through by myself.*

People with asthma continue to feel judged and isolated due to the cross over between asthma and COVID-19 symptoms. They report feeling frustrated, discouraged, embarrassed, anxious, let down, not listened to and like their asthma is not important. These experiences have led to delayed access to health care and people choosing to manage their asthma at home, where they would have usually sought professional care. People with asthma told us this has caused:

- More severe asthma symptoms or asthma symptoms worsening before they can access medical care,
- Symptoms last longer or taking longer to recover from asthma flare-ups, resulting in increased time off work and school, and
- Avoidable emergency department presentations or hospital admissions.

*Yes. My asthma has got worse. I visited the local hospital for a covid test and they didn't check my asthma. Told me to go to my doctor. When I went to doctor I was told I should not have come there until I received my covid test results. By then I could have been dead.*

*I ended up in emergency because I had been putting off going to the doc because of asthma symptoms. then ended up very unwell, asthma plan didn't work, nurse on call called ambos... spent over half a day in emergency.*

*I had severe asthma and had to wait to get a negative test result before seeing doctor. My asthma got worse resulting in a severe asthma attack.*

### Telehealth

Nearly half (45%) of respondents reported they had seen their doctor via telehealth (video or phone) for their asthma in the last 3 months. However, most people with asthma reported a preference for face-to-face consultations for their asthma, feeling this best allows their doctor to assess their asthma symptoms.

Statement	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	n/a
I prefer telehealth appointments for my asthma	54%	26%	15%	5%
All doctors' appointments about asthma should be in person	13%	24%	61%	1%

*I feel that because initially my first telehealth appointment was by phone my GP was not able to assess the severity of my asthma and thus it worsened.*

*Reduced medication and lack of proper treatment as a result of no person to person contact. They have been unable to listen too my chest adequately and as a result 3 hospital admissions.*