

## Participant Information Sheet

### Researcher:

This study is being conducted by a team of researchers from The Australian National University Research School of Psychology and Research School of Population Health, led by Dr Amy Dawel.

**Project Title:** The Australian National COVID-19 (new coronavirus) mental health, behaviour, and risk communication survey. Ethics Protocol number: 2020/152.

### General Outline of the Project:

- **Description and Methodology:** This study aims to improve understanding of the mental health and behavioural impacts of COVID-19 on the Australian community. The study also investigates how risk communication (e.g. in the media, or by politicians) impacts on people's emotions and decision-making. Overall, our aim is to discover what puts our community at risk during pandemics, what protects them, and what can be done to protect community mental health better in future—including improving communication by Governments and other organisations. The study is a longitudinal study, comprising an initial 20-30 minute survey, with six 15-20 minute follow-up surveys at two-week intervals (12 weeks total). It is also possible you will be contacted for further follow-ups once the COVID-19 pandemic is over. In each survey, you will be asked a number of questions, including about your demographics, mental and physical health, and responses to COVID-19, including media and other communication about COVID-19. All data will be collected anonymously, with no record of your name or date of birth.
- **Participants:** Participants will be a representative sample of approximately 1250 Australian adults aged 18+ who are recruited by Qualtrics Research Services.
- **Use of Data and Feedback:** The results of the study may appear in scientific publications and student theses, plus scientific conference presentations and academic seminars. Information about the study's outcomes will be posted at: <https://psychology.anu.edu.au/research/projects/australian-national-COVID-19-mental-health-behaviour-and-risk-communication-survey>
- **Project Funding:** This project is funded by The Australian National University (\$52,000).

### Participant Involvement:

- **Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal:** Your decision to participate in this research is entirely voluntary. You may decline to answer a question by choosing the "prefer not to say" option or you can leave the survey at any point. However, because your data is collected in an entirely de-identified way (i.e., it cannot be linked to you), it is not possible to withdraw your responses once you have entered the data and moved onto the next page. That is, clicking the arrow to move onto the next page will submit your responses and you will not be able to withdraw them thereafter.
- **What does participation in the research entail?** In the first survey, you will be asked to complete a series of questionnaire items that ask about: (a) demographic information (e.g. age, gender, living arrangements, ethnic background, employment); (b) history of physical and psychological conditions; (c) social and physical activities; (d) media consumption; (e) psychological well-being and difficulties, including thoughts about hurting yourself; (f) changes in your behaviour in response to COVID-19; (g) personality; (h) your emotions, including your responses to the types of pictures the media is showing in relation to COVID-19 (e.g. person sneezing); and (i) your responses to information about COVID-19 in hypothetical scenarios. The content of follow-up surveys will be similar, but briefer.

- **Location and Duration:** The survey can be completed online in a location of your choosing, anywhere within Australia. The study is a longitudinal study, comprising an initial 20-30 minute survey, with six 15-20 minute follow-up surveys at two-week intervals. Each survey should be completed in a single session. It is also possible you will be contacted for further follow-ups once the COVID-19 pandemic is over.
- **Remuneration:** Remuneration is as advertised by the service that recruited you.
- **Risks:** We recognise that many Australians are experiencing high levels of anxiety and concern at this time. The questions we ask about mental health and wellbeing may be particularly sensitive in this context. If you feel distressed by any of the questions, please discontinue the survey and contact relevant support services in your area. **These may include your GP or a mental health support service, or community services like Lifeline on 13 11 14, SANE Australia at <https://www.sane.org>, or Beyond Blue at <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> or 1300 22 4636.** For mental health advice specific to the COVID-19 outbreak, see <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf>
- **Benefits:** This study aims to increase our understanding of the mental health and behavioral impacts of COVID-19 and related risk communication on the Australian community. Knowledge gained from this research will be of practical use for supporting the community during COVID-19 and future crisis situations. It will also guide the development of policy concerning social distancing and self-isolation to ensure mental well-being is considered. The findings of this study are intended to be of practical use to policy makers, health professionals, and the community. Benefits will flow broadly to the Australian community, with potentially broader implications for global mental health policy.

#### **Exclusion criteria:**

- **Participant Limitation:** Participants must be: (a) living in Australia; (b) aged 18+ years; and (c) able to read and write in English well enough to complete the survey. These criteria will be applied by the service that recruited you to this survey, but please advise them if you find you do not meet these criteria.

#### **Confidentiality:**

- **Confidentiality:** Your confidentiality will be protected as far as the law allows. All data will be collected anonymously, with no record of your name or date of birth made by the researchers. Any identifying information that you provide to the service that recruited you to this survey is not available to the researchers, and cannot be linked to the data you provide in this survey. The service that recruited you will not be able to directly access the content of your survey responses, although they do screen response patterns to make sure all participants are responding genuinely (e.g. not just giving the same response to all items).

Any theses or scientific publications arising from the study will not include any identifying information about participants. The data may be made available to other scientific researchers, including researchers not on the original research team and new research students, who wish to undertake additional analysis of the data that is consistent with the original aims of this project. In data made available to other researchers, and in theses and scientific publications, individual participants will be referred to only by a

participant code (e.g. random number-letter string, such as Zky789nS2, or a number, such as "participant 1").

### **Privacy Notice:**

In collecting your personal information within this research, the ANU must comply with the Privacy Act 1988. The ANU Privacy Policy is available at [https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppi/document/ANUP\\_010007](https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppi/document/ANUP_010007) and it contains information about how a person can:

- Access or seek correction to their personal information;
- Complain about a breach of an Australian Privacy Principle by ANU, and how ANU will handle the complaint.

### **Data Storage:**

The de-identified collected from you will be stored on the collection platform and a secure server at the ANU. This data may be held indefinitely.

### **Queries and Concerns:**

For queries or concerns, please contact:

Dr Amy Dawel

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The Australian National University

e-mail: [amy.dawel@anu.edu.au](mailto:amy.dawel@anu.edu.au) (preferred method of contact)

tel: (02) 6125 4106

### **Ethics Committee Clearance:**

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research has been conducted, please contact:

Ethics Manager

The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee

The Australian National University

e-mail: [human.ethics.officer@anu.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics.officer@anu.edu.au) (preferred method of contact)

tel: (02) 6125 3427