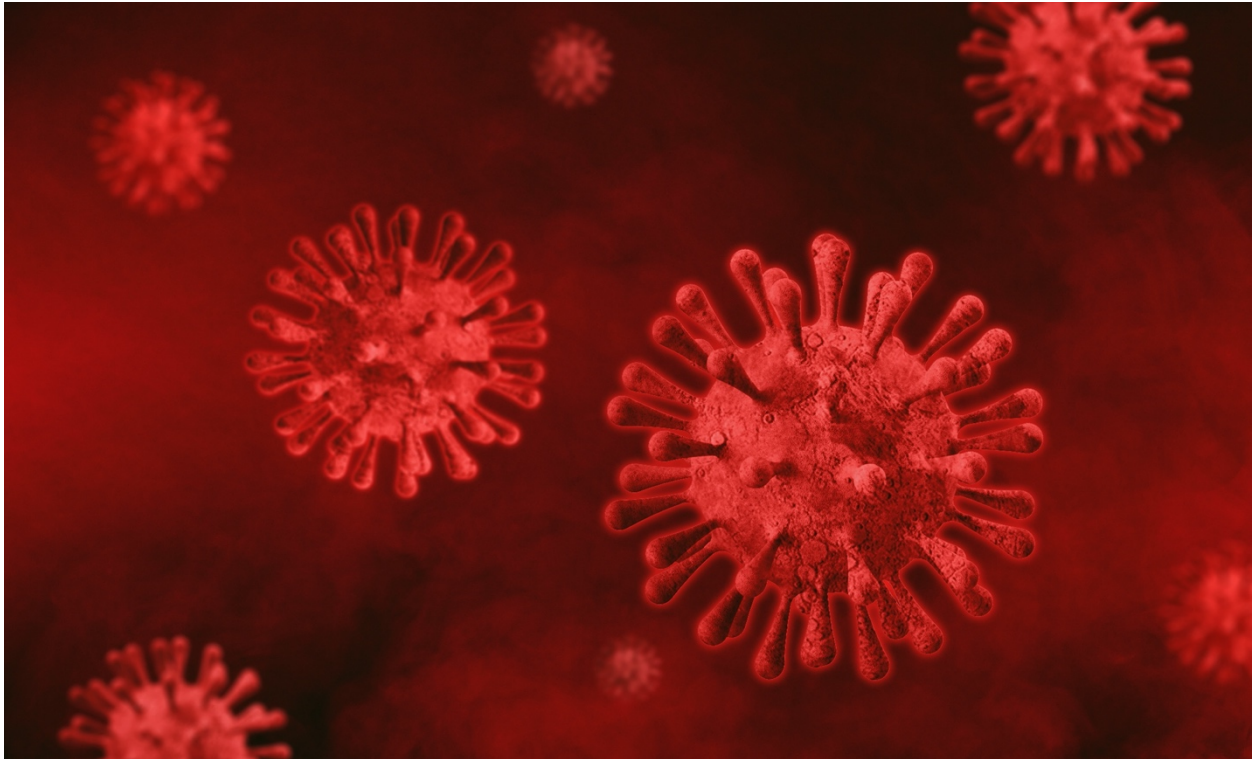


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COVID-19 Impact

# **SURVEY REPORT**



## **THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CANADIANS WHO ARE BLIND, DEAF-BLIND, AND PARTIALLY-SIGHTED**

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A Report Authorized by the Canadian Council of the Blind  
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APRIL 30, 2020

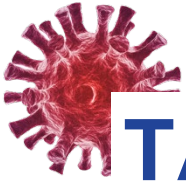


“What is affecting my mental health is this prolonged and extreme isolation. As a blind person I already live a fairly limited life when referring to freedom of movement and independence and now even that small wedge of my active life has been completely eradicated.”

Respondent 211

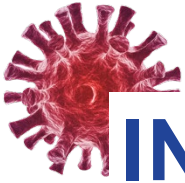






# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION:</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>METHODS:</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>RESULTS:</b> .....	<b>28</b>
1 Demographics .....	28
2 Access to Information .....	39
3 Knowledge of and Access to COVID-19 Testing Sites .....	43
4 Leaving Home .....	46
5 Shopping for Groceries, Medications, and Other Essential Supplies.....	51
6 Health Care Issues .....	58
7 Employment Issues .....	63
8 Financial Issues.....	73
9 Connecting with Family and Friends.....	79
10 Government Performance .....	80
11 Stress, Fear, and Apprehension .....	85
12 Special Needs .....	88
13 Special Concerns .....	91
14 Overall Impact on Daily Life.....	95
15 Differences Between the Way Older People and Younger People Are Coping with the Pandemic .....	99
16 Why People Are Feeling Stressed.....	101
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY:</b> .....	<b>105</b>
<b>AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY:</b> .....	<b>106</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:</b> .....	<b>106</b>
<b>SPECIAL APPRECIATION:</b> .....	<b>107</b>
<b>TODAY’S CCB:</b> .....	<b>108</b>
<b>CONTACT INFORMATION:</b> .....	<b>109</b>



# INTRODUCTION:

In these challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's not unreasonable to believe that all Canadians, both those with and those without disabilities, are looking at many more weeks, if not months, of sheltering in place.

We at the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) are mindful of the fact that federal, provincial, and municipal governments are all working to determine what policies may be necessary to best serve and provide assistance for those living with disabilities during these unprecedented times.

It's clear to us through contact with our members from coast to coast, along with other anecdotal evidence, that the vision loss community – that is, Canadians who are blind, deaf-blind, and partially-sighted – are being heavily impacted by COVID-19. It's further evident that there's a need for immediate action from all levels of government to provide support and solutions to help those living with vision loss get through these stressful times. The CCB sees the need for government to take positive actions that will give the most vulnerable amongst us the ability to maintain and continue carrying out the many aspects of their daily lives, which are already often very different from those of other Canadians and rarely barrier-free, including those same aspects of life a sighted individual may take for granted.

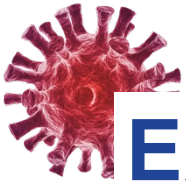
It became apparent to the CCB in late February and early March that the many government initiatives and programs being announced in response to pandemic-related challenges were, for the most part, not taking into account what we at the CCB see as the fundamental needs of not only our community, but all people with disabilities.

The CCB identified a number of the issues confronting Canadians with seeing disabilities as early as March 8<sup>th</sup>, asking the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion's office if they would address the following questions:

- Will those with seeing disabilities who are already economically distressed be captured by the federal government's income support measures for Canadians not eligible for EI sickness or other benefits?
- What guidelines can be provided on how people with seeing disabilities can best go about social distancing?
- What support mechanisms are in place to address the fact that those living with blindness will struggle to leave their homes?
- Are efforts being undertaken to ensure that COVID-19 testing is available for people with seeing disabilities and that testing sites are accessible?
- Are measures being considered or taken to arrange for transportation for all people with disabilities to get to and from testing sites?
- Is there consideration to accommodate the needs of the growing senior population with seeing disabilities identified as the most vulnerable demographic contracting COVID-19?
- Are government announcements and communications to the public regarding COVID-19 being provided in an accessible format for those living with blindness?

In late March, Louise Gillis, CCB National President, and the Board of Directors approved the conducting of a survey of the vision loss community to assist the federal government in answering these questions. It was determined that we had to identify what those living with blindness were currently experiencing due to the pandemic and what their specific needs were. We wanted to make sure that the vision loss community would be provided with the support they need to weather the COVID-19 pandemic and that they wouldn't be left behind or forgotten.

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, we began working on designing, developing, and disseminating a survey to the vision loss community designed to do just that. The survey's goal was to identify the challenges confronting those living with vision loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. The response to the survey was excellent and the information obtained enabled us to provide the information so desperately needed at this time. The consolidated results are reported below.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) conducted a survey of Canadians who are blind, deaf-blind, and partially-sighted during the week of April 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> in order to determine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the vision loss community.

The survey was conducted using the Survey Monkey platform. Respondents were solicited twice via direct email using the CCB email list and the survey was also distributed via the BALANCE for Blinds Adults' weekly e-newsletter, to the email list of the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, and to the email distribution list of Fighting Blindness Canada.

## 1 DEMOGRAPHICS

A robust sample of 572 responses was received, with responses coming from all provinces. 42% of respondents were over the age of 65, with 37% of all respondents self-identifying as blind, 60% as partially-sighted, and 3% as being deaf-blind. 28% of respondents said they had another disability in addition to their vision loss, with the main comorbidity being hearing loss. Respondents identified a wide array of diseases as the cause of their vision loss, with the main cause being retinitis pigmentosa (RP), accounting for 27% of responses. This number is thought to be much higher than the true prevalence in the population as a result of the survey having been sent to the Fighting Blindness Canada patient list, which is heavily weighted toward patients with RP.

Most respondents lived with someone else (family, friends, or roommates), with only 28% living alone. A mere 1% of respondents lived in retirement/nursing homes. This low number may have more to do with the lack of computers and computer skills in retirement homes than with the true percentage of people with vision loss who live in retirement homes.



For a comparison of demographic data from the CCB 2019 Survey and the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability and the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability, see the CCB's Supplementary Report to A Needs Report on Accessible Technology.<sup>1</sup>

## **2 ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

The main sources where respondents acquired their information were radio, television, and the internet, although there was a fairly high percentage of respondents who acquired their information from a wide array of sources, most notably social media. About two thirds of respondents (69%) had accessed government information on COVID-19, with only 54% of respondent saying that government announcements were fully accessible and a further 32% saying that they were only accessible sometimes. This result may reflect perception or difficulty with computer navigation, since government websites are almost all accessible.

About half of the deaf-blind community who responded to the survey indicated that they didn't have access to a deaf-blind interpreter. This likely makes this community particularly vulnerable at this time, as it's speculated that interpreters may be reluctant to come in close contact with others.

## **3 KNOWLEDGE OF AND ACCESS TO COVID-19 TESTING SITES**

Respondents reported a very low level of awareness of the locality of COVID-19 testing sites in general and accessible testing sites in particular, with 58% of respondents not being aware of where a COVID-19 testing site was in their neighbourhood, while a further 25% indicated that they knew where their local testing sites were but didn't know whether they were accessible. Only 15% of respondents said that they knew where an accessible local testing site was. The lack of awareness of where local testing sites are isn't dissimilar from that of the sighted community. If it's hard for a sighted person to obtain this information, it's going to be that much harder for a person with a seeing disability. Local and provincial governments need to find a better way to communicate this important information to the vision loss community.

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Council of the Blind. "Supplementary Report: A Needs Report on Accessible Technology." November 12, 2019. <http://ccbnational.net/shaggy/2019/12/06/ccbs-supplementary-report-on-accessible-technology/>

When asked how they would get to a testing site should the need arise, about one in five people (19%) said they didn't know and a further 22% said that they would take some form of public transportation. These responses identify the need for the provision of safe transportation to COVID-19 testing sites for the vision loss community should the need arise.

## **4 LEAVING HOME**

About a quarter of respondents (25%) said that they continued to leave home for essential work since the onset of the pandemic, and almost all respondents had left home for one reason or another since the shelter in place order, with the most common reasons being going for a walk (75%) and grocery shopping (57%).

Almost half the respondents (47%) said that they had a need for a sighted guide to assist them when they left home and 46% said they hadn't felt safe going outside the home since the shelter in place order.

## **5 SHOPPING FOR GROCERIES, MEDICATIONS, AND OTHER ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES**

About one third of respondents (34%) said that they were currently shopping in-store for groceries and other essentials themselves. Of those who did their own shopping in-store, 36% said that they weren't comfortable interacting with in-store staff. 35% of respondents said that they were shopping online for groceries, medications, and other essential supplies, over one third (38%) of whom were shopping online for the first time. Respondents who shopped online appeared to have different experiences with the accessibility of online websites, with 16% finding no websites to be accessible and 61% finding only some sites to be accessible. Over two thirds of respondents (68%) who shopped online experienced difficulty getting timely slots for pick-up and/or delivery.

## **6 HEALTH CARE ISSUES**

A large majority of respondents (86%) were aware that health care providers were providing services online. Almost three quarters of respondents (74%) said that they were worried about being able to see a doctor if they got sick, while 33% of respondents

were worried about arranging a telehealth appointment with their doctor should the need arise and 25% of respondents were worried about being able to get their prescriptions from the pharmacy. 42% of respondents were worried about their ability to have someone accompany them to a doctor and almost half (49%) were worried about their ability to get transportation to a doctor, hospital, or testing site. About one third of respondents (36%) said that they had had an important medical appointment cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

About half (51%) of the respondents had a personal care worker (PCW) coming into their home at this time. 40% of respondents who had a PCW coming into their home indicated that their PCW wasn't using the proper personal protective equipment (face masks, gloves, and, in some cases, gowns).

## **7 EMPLOYMENT ISSUES**

The percentage of people working full-time either in their usual workplace or at home has only decreased slightly, from 16% prior to the onset of the pandemic to 15% subsequent to its onset. The number of people working part-time either at their usual workplace or at home has decreased from 9% to 7%. Only 3% of respondents said that they had been laid off from work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequent to the onset of COVID-19, 78% of respondents who were still working full-time were working from home, while 55% of respondents who were still working part-time were working from home. Of the respondents who were still working, 69% said that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the way their employer was handling their work situation. Of those laid off, 20% said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the way their employer had managed their employment separation.

Almost half the respondents who were working from home said they had all the necessary accessible technology and devices to do their job from home, while an additional 30% said they had some of the technology required to work from home.

More than half the respondents (56%) who needed technology to work from home said that their employer wouldn't supply the accessible technology or devices for the employee to work from home and a further 20% said that their employer would only provide some but not all of the accessible technology or devices they needed. A large number of respondents self-funded the technology they need to work from home, with more than half of those self-funding (59%) having spent more than \$1,000.

## **8 FINANCIAL ISSUES**

Only about a third of respondents (33%) said that they anticipated accessing financial assistance. 19% of respondents said that they were concerned about their ability to pay for their groceries and other essential items, while 14% of respondents said they were concerned about their ability to pay their rent or mortgage; 14% were concerned about their ability to pay for their utilities; 18% were concerned about their ability to meet their financial obligations; and 25% were concerned about their ability to afford the internet as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

29% of respondents said that they were concerned that they may not have the financial capability to maintain their present standard of living without financial assistance.

## **9 CONNECTING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

The greatest majority of respondents (90%) said that they had the technology necessary to connect with family and friends.

## **10 GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE**

33% of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the performance of the federal government in keeping the vision loss community informed about the COVID-19 situation, compared with 22% who were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.

38% of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the performance of their provincial government in keeping the vision loss community informed about the COVID-19 situation, compared with 22% who were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.

27% of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the performance of their municipal government in keeping the vision loss community informed about the COVID-19 situation, compared with 31% who were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.

## **11 STRESS, FEAR, AND APPREHENSION**

Almost all respondents (90%) indicated that they were more apprehensive about the well-being of their family as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Just over half of respondents (53%) said that they were concerned that the additional stress from the COVID-19 crisis on their mental health may cause them to be overwhelmed. Asked to identify their current stress level on a scale of 1 to 10, 40% of respondents said they were experiencing more than moderate stress, with 29% rating their stress level at 7 or higher.

## **12 SPECIAL NEEDS**

Asked to identify any special needs they may have in an open-ended question, respondents expressed a need for technical and financial assistance. Many expressed difficulties with shopping and maintaining social distancing from others. They were also concerned that others may not engage in social distancing with them, in particular staff in stores. Some people are feeling lonely, isolated, and fearful. They're concerned that they may not be able to access their doctors and are unaware of where COVID-19 testing sites are. Some people have other disabilities that make things even more difficult for them and they're concerned about the use of public transportation if they have to go out. There are also individuals within the community who, for one reason or another, cannot work from home and others who have been laid off from work.

## **13 SPECIAL CONCERNS**

In answering another open-ended question regarding concerns about vision loss and general health, the vision loss community expressed fear that they might get the virus, fear of developing mental health conditions, and feelings of being alone and isolated. As expressed above, respondents said they were concerned about maintaining social distancing and having others maintain social distancing with them. They have concerns about finances, many have health issues, and many are concerned about potentially not being able to connect with a health care worker if the need arises. Many also have special concerns about treatment for their eye condition and are afraid that they may lose more vision.

## **14 OVERALL IMPACT ON DAILY LIFE**

In one overarching question, respondents were asked how they were handling the current situation and how much fear is impacting their daily life. Respondents expressed a large number of fears and concerns that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. On the positive side, people have developed coping strategies for getting through this period. From one of the comments we learnt that at least some of the online learning sites being used with stay-at-home students aren't accessible. A number of respondents have expressed concern over what would happen to their guide dog if they became sick.

## **15 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE WAY OLDER PEOPLE AND YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE COPING WITH THE PANDEMIC**

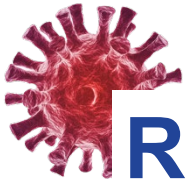
A chi-square analysis was used to see if there were any significant differences in the responses between respondents who were 65 years of age and older and those who were 64 and younger. The results showed that more younger respondents (those <65) had financial concerns related to their ability to pay for their groceries and other essentials; pay their rent or mortgage; pay for their utilities; and pay for their credit cards and other financial obligations. More younger people were also concerned about having the finances to maintain their standard of living without financial assistance. More younger respondents had a stress level  $\geq 7$  and more younger respondents were concerned that the effect of the added stress from the pandemic on their mental health may cause them to be overwhelmed.

## **16 WHY PEOPLE ARE FEELING STRESSED**

In order to ascertain whether there was an association between the level of stress people were experiencing and any particular concern, a chi-square analysis was conducted in which the responses of people who rated their stress level as 7 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10 were compared with those whose stress level was rated as less than 7.

A significantly higher percentage of respondents with a stress level  $\geq 7$  compared to those with a stress level  $< 7$  said:

- They didn't know how to get to the local COVID-19 testing site
- They didn't feel safe when they left their home
- They were worried about having someone accompany them if they had to go to a doctor or a hospital
- They were worried about getting transportation if they had to go to a doctor or a hospital
- They were working full-time before COVID-19
- They were working full-time from home since COVID-19
- They were working full-time in their usual workplace since COVID-19
- They had financial concerns related to their ability to:
  - ✓ Pay for groceries and other essentials
  - ✓ Pay their rent or mortgage
  - ✓ Pay for their utilities
  - ✓ Pay for their credit cards and other financial obligations
  - ✓ Have the finances to maintain their standard of living without financial assistance
- They were concerned that the effect of the added stress from the pandemic on their mental health may cause them to be overwhelmed.



# RECOMMENDATIONS:

## 1 RESPONDENTS' AGE AND ADDITIONAL DISABILITIES

Almost half the respondents (42%) were over the age of 65. They will need special care, as they're particularly at risk due to COVID-19. Since 28% of respondents live alone, **it's also recommended that all members of the vision loss community, particularly those with multiple disabilities, be contacted frequently by family members, friends, caregivers, service groups, or community members to give them COVID-19 updates and to make sure that they're healthy and not in need of anything essential.**

People who are deaf-blind get the majority of their information via deaf-blind intervenors. This survey revealed that there's a shortage of available intervenor services. **It's recommended that a special effort be made to ensure that all available intervenors are working at this time, and, if necessary, that a financial incentive be provided.**

## 2 SOCIAL DISTANCING AND THE VISION LOSS COMMUNITY

The survey revealed that almost everyone had left their home for one reason or another since the onset of the pandemic. One of the major concerns identified in both the quantitative and qualitative questions was that the vision loss community is unaware as to whether they're observing social distancing and that the sighted community is often not paying attention to the fact that they're unaware that they may be too close. As a result, the sighted community tends to come too close to people with vision loss. Almost half the respondents said that they haven't felt safe going outside their homes since the onset of the pandemic.



“As a totally blind individual I find that people whom I encounter while walking or shopping do not understand that I am unable to self distance from others. Firstly they regularly do not make me aware of their presence so that I can take the proper action. Secondly people often approach me closely not taking responsibility for self distancing to protect me. Thirdly the practice of controlling numbers in stores neglects the issue that I can not maintain proper self distancing when forced to line up either to enter the store or to reach a check out. There is no messaging on the media about considering how to help those who can not readily self distance due to a disability.”

Respondent 196

Almost half the respondents indicated that they needed a sighted guide to assist them when they went outside the home. The use of any sighted guide who isn't a spouse or family member would be in contravention of social distancing recommendations. This needs to be clarified. **It's recommended that an awareness campaign be conducted to enable the general community to better understand the special social distancing issues being experienced by people with vision loss. The sighted community also needs to learn how best to interact with people who are blind or partially-sighted at this time.**

### **3 KNOWLEDGE OF AND ACCESS TO COVID-19 TESTING SITES**

Three concerns were expressed by respondents with respect to COVID-19 testing sites: lack of knowledge as to the location of local testing sites, lack of accessibility of testing sites, and lack of transportation to get to testing sites. **It's recommended that there be an increase in communication, particularly by local governments, regarding the location of all testing sites within a given municipality and that all testing sites be made accessible to people with vision loss.** Furthermore, should the need arise, **it's recommended that safe, timely transportation be provided for members of the vision loss community to get to and from testing sites.**

## 4 HEALTH CARE ISSUES

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### 4.1 Access to health care

Respondents expressed a great deal of concern about being able to access a health care practitioner for their “normal” medical conditions, to have the necessary transportation to get to medical appointments, to know how to set up a telehealth appointment, to access their ophthalmologist to prevent further vision loss, and to access COVID-19 testing sites and treatment centres should they become infected with COVID-19. Many of these concerns are concerns that many people without disabilities have as well, but they’re more difficult for people with vision loss to cope with.

**It’s recommended that a “How to” document be developed and communicated via a central website to answer some of these questions for people with vision loss. The availability of this document should be coupled with the creation of a national help line which would answer questions that people have with respect to these issues.**

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### 4.2 Access to vaccinations in the home

The survey revealed that respondents are feeling a high degree of pandemic-related stress associated with the ability to access health care, the lack of transportation to doctors, and safety when leaving their homes. The survey also revealed that 42% of respondents were over the age of 65, and therefore more vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19 and any other impending viruses. For these reasons, and in consideration of necessary shelter in place guidelines and their impact on people with disabilities, particularly those living with vision loss, **it’s recommended that the Minister of Health mandate provincial governments to create and implement programs designed for these most vulnerable groups that will allow for the delivery of flu shots and, when available, a vaccine for COVID-19 to them in their homes.**

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### 4.3 Accessible transportation to doctors, hospitals, or testing sites

Accessible transportation for people with disabilities must be guaranteed now. Many people are unaware of how they can get to doctors, COVID-19 testing centres, and essential services. To combat these problems, including stress, anxiety, and isolation, and to ensure that those with vision loss can stay connected to people and amenities, **it's recommended that public transportation be available to people with vision loss if and when the need arises and that this transportation be safe, robust, affordable, and accessible.**

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### 4.4 Personal care workers

About half the respondents to the survey said that they had had a personal care worker (PCW) come into their home during the pandemic. Almost half of those who had a PCW coming into their home said that the PCW wasn't using the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) (face masks, gloves, and, in some cases, gowns). **It's recommended that all PCWs visiting people with vision loss be required to use the proper PPE.**

Some respondents to the survey also said that their regular PCW wasn't coming to their home during the pandemic. Envisioning and implementing support mechanisms for our support-providers has never been more important. This is particularly important at this time when it's especially difficult for people with vision loss to get PCWs to come into their homes. Stress, fatigue, financial stability, and mental health are fundamental concerns here. **It's recommended that we find the necessary solutions to mitigate these and other strains placed on the individuals who provide this valuable, irreplaceable care to the vision loss community.**

## 5 STRESS, FEAR, AND APPREHENSIONS

The survey showed that the vision loss community is currently under more than normal stress and is apprehensive that the future may overwhelm them. People with vision loss are having particular difficulties with shopping and maintaining social distancing from others. They're also concerned that others may not engage in social distancing with them, in particular staff in stores. Some people are feeling lonely, isolated, and fearful.

They're concerned that they may not be able to access their doctors and are unaware of where COVID-19 testing sites near them are located. Some people have other disabilities that make things even more difficult, and are concerned about the use of public transportation if they have to go out. The vision loss community is in need of support of all kinds – financial, governmental, and social/psychological. **It's recommended that all programs be developed with an inclusive design approach and that they be designed from the perspective of people with vision loss, not from the perspective of a sighted person.** For additional recommendations and insights regarding pre-pandemic concerns of people with vision loss, see the Canadian Vision 2020 Summit white paper Living with Vision Loss.<sup>2</sup>

**It's further recommended that there be engagement with the vision loss community to help allay fears and minimize the excessive stress that the community is experiencing at this time. It's essential that the psychosocial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people with vision loss be addressed as soon as possible.** Community and mentorship programs supported with health navigation services are vital to overcoming the dominant associated problems, as are online counselling services that connect individuals to resources and support mechanisms.

## **6 SHOPPING FOR GROCERIES, MEDICATIONS, AND OTHER ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES**

About a third of respondents to the CCB survey said that they did their shopping themselves. Currently, there's at least one supermarket providing a delivery service for people over the age of 70 or people with special needs. **It's recommended that all supermarkets provide a similar delivery service for people with vision loss.** Since people doing their online shopping also expressed difficulty accessing delivery time slots, **it's recommended that priority be given to delivery to people with vision loss.** Respondents shopping online indicated that not all websites were accessible. **It's recommended that the government require all online websites selling groceries and other essential supplies to be made accessible at the soonest possible time.**

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<sup>2</sup> Fighting Blindness Canada, the Canadian Council of the Blind, and the CNIB Foundation. Canadian Vision 2020 Summit. "Living with Vision Loss." <https://www.fightingblindness.ca/living-with-vision-loss-2020-vision-summit/>

About a third of respondents shopping in-store said that they weren't comfortable interacting with store staff at this time. **It's recommended that all retailers who are providing essentials at this time be advised on how best to support people with vision loss while still maximizing their safety.**

## 7 EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Although the survey results showed that only a small number of respondents had been laid off from their regular employment, **it's recommended that advice on how to access government funding to offset their loss in income be provided through an accessible website and that this link be provided by communication from government and patient groups.**

The survey showed that a large number of employers haven't provided accessible technology or devices for those required to work from home, and that people are spending a substantial amount of their income on purchasing the technology or devices that enable them to work from home. (For a list of devices used by people with vision loss, see, for example, the CCB's A Needs Report on Accessible Technology, Summary Report.<sup>3</sup>) Employers should be encouraged to support their blind and partially-sighted employees to enable them to acquire the necessary accessible technology and devices so that they can work from home. **It's recommended that the government provide financial support in the form of a subsidy for the acquisition of accessible technology for those who have self-financed their requirements.**

Many members of the vision loss community would like to see federal and provincial stakeholders develop initiatives that reward employers for meeting high standards in accessibility, for hiring employees with blindness or low vision, for implementing diversity agendas, and for achieving other progressive goals. To accomplish this, **it's recommended that the government and stakeholders investigate the creation of an affirmative action program to investigate the potential of this suggestion and to audit the effectiveness of present employment programs.**

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<sup>3</sup> Canadian Council of the Blind. "A Needs Report on Accessible Technology. Summary Report." April 9, 2019. [http://ccbnational.net/docs/A%20NEEDS%20REPORT%20\(GCV\)-april%2010-HR\[1\].pdf](http://ccbnational.net/docs/A%20NEEDS%20REPORT%20(GCV)-april%2010-HR[1].pdf)

## 8 FINANCIAL ISSUES

While the survey indicated that only a small percentage of respondents had financial concerns at this time, a sub-analysis by age revealed that the financial concerns were much higher in the working age population than in the over 65 age group. It's important that working age people with vision loss be advised of the financial grants that are available to them and be provided with the necessary support to apply for these grants. **It's recommended that subsidies be available for people who are also retired and who are in financial difficulty due to the COVID-19 pandemic and who represent almost half of the population of people with vision loss.**

## 9 COMMUNICATION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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### 9.1 Communication format

The results of the CCB survey showed that 32% of respondents over the age of 65 had another disability in addition to their vision loss, with the most common additional disability being hearing loss. **It's recommended that all information being communicated to the vision loss community be communicated in as many formats as possible** in order to maximize the possibility of people accessing the information. This is essential.

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### 9.2 Media

The survey revealed that most respondents were accessing their information via television and radio. We also know that there are a significant number of people without computers who were unable to respond to the online survey. For these reasons, **it's recommended that the primary method of communication on the COVID-19 pandemic to the vision loss community be via television and radio, and that any media initiatives include Accessible Media Inc.'s AMI-tv and AMI-audio.**

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### 9.3 Online communication and accessibility

The internet is also an important source of information for the vision loss community, with about half the respondents indicating that they acquired their information about the COVID-19 pandemic in some form via the internet. **It's recommended that all online communication on COVID-19 be accessible. This is also essential.** Only about half (53%) of respondents who accessed government announcements online said that they were fully accessible. This may be a perception more than a reality. A known audit of online federal government websites showed that for the most part they would identify as clearly accessible. **It's recommended that the federal government tag all documents available online as being accessible for those with seeing disabilities.**

At this point we don't have the necessary information to speak to provincial and municipal websites. **It's recommended that websites at all levels of government meet the four pillars of accessibility: that they're perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust. It's further recommended that these same governments ensure that their websites meet the highest recognized international (European) standard of accessibility.** Furthermore, **it's recommended that now may be the best time to create new accessibility standards.** As we move forward from today's pandemic circumstance to a time of new normalcy, **it's recommended that the vision loss community's employment challenges be recognized and accommodated with the design of a set of ethical standards for workplace accessibility tiered according to workplace size or category.** Most importantly, the details of these standards should be driven by the vision loss community.

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### 9.4 National communication strategy

Accepting that communicating with people with seeing disabilities is challenging even in normal times, in these times of a pandemic it's vital to get it right. **It's recommended that at this time there be an immediate, nationally co-ordinated strategy implemented to accomplish the dissemination of information for people with disabilities and, in this case, for people with vision loss.** Messaging must be clear, concise, and delivered in a fully accessible manner. This shouldn't include only national media vehicles but also PSAs, media releases, vision loss stakeholders like CCB, stakeholder newsletters, and social media platforms. **It's recommended that all initiatives be supported by a national COVID-19 information help line specifically dedicated to people with disabilities.**

## 10 GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

While most people seemed reasonably satisfied with the performance of the federal and provincial governments, there seemed to be a slight dissatisfaction with the performance of municipal governments. The difference here may be due to the higher visibility of the Prime Minister and federal cabinet ministers, as well as provincial premiers and provincial cabinet ministers, throughout the pandemic, but there may also be dissatisfaction over local governments not providing local information, such as on testing sites, the location of open medical clinics, transportation options, and special services available to people with disabilities. **It's recommended that municipal governments be fully informed as to the needs and problems being experienced by those living with vision loss in their jurisdictions so that they may become more actively involved, achieving the necessary ability to respond to these concerns of the vision loss community and ensure that they're addressed.** It should be noted that most grassroots charities and stakeholders like the CCB and others that represent people with disabilities and the seeing disabilities community sorely lack the necessary resources, funding, and workforce to effectively rally all provincial and municipal jurisdictions across Canada, thereby making the federal government's role crucial. Leadership must come from the top down. **It's recommended that the federal government take the lead role in providing the guidance and financial support to provinces. This could then be designed to each specific circumstance outlined above, allowing them to oversee the assistance necessary for Canada's municipalities and to provide quality programs, solutions, and functionality to their residents with disabilities.**

Some respondents to the survey said that some of the online learning sites whereby many students are being educated during the pandemic weren't accessible. **It's recommended that all online education websites be required to be accessible in order to ensure that children with vision loss or children of parents with vision loss have the same opportunity for education as sighted students at this time.**



# 11 THE ACCESSIBLE CANADA ACT AND THE MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND DISABILITY INCLUSION

It's clearly understood that these are unprecedented and busy times for the government. The COVID-19 pandemic is a major setback and is directly affecting people with disabilities, a community already recognized as being disadvantaged and vulnerable. The CCB survey revealed that the vision loss community is having challenges with accessibility at this time. Respondents to the survey said that they found government announcements weren't accessible. Many COVID-19 testing sites weren't accessible, many grocery and essential supplies online shopping websites weren't accessible, and many websites where they gleaned much of their information also weren't accessible.

With the passing of the Accessible Canada Act, followed closely by Minister Qualtrough being appointed the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, the blind, deaf-blind, and vision loss community seeks a renewed partnership with this government. **It's recommended that as we move to improve the Act, we continue dialogue and consultation at an accelerated pace and that any new regulations be applied not only more broadly but also more effectively.** This isn't the time to stop moving ahead with the implementation of the Accessible Canada Act. Rather, it's a time to prepare for full implementation of the Act as we get ready for the reopening of what will undoubtedly be a new Canada. **We strongly recommend that government avail itself of the expertise and lived experience of the vision loss community in all planning both related to the Accessible Canada Act and the management of the needs of the vision loss community during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

## 12 ASSISTANCE FOR VISION LOSS ORGANIZATIONS

We support the Emergency Coalition of Canadian Charities in its letter of March 25, 2020<sup>4</sup>, and those subsequent, to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Ministers “requesting urgent financial aid and federal action to prevent our organizations from suffering irreparable damage amid the COVID-19 pandemic.”

In 2017, the Canadian Survey on Disability<sup>5</sup> reported that one in five (22%) Canadians aged 15 years and over, or about 6.2 million individuals, had one or more disabilities. Of that group, 1.5 million Canadians are living with seeing disabilities.

The coalition of over 230 leaders from Canadian charities provides invaluable ongoing support to the 6.2 million Canadians living with disabilities. The resulting economic fallout from the COVID-19 crisis is a threat to Canada’s vital charitable sector and its ability to provide critical services to those who are most vulnerable.

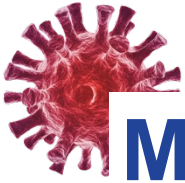
On April 21<sup>st</sup>, the government announced an investment of \$350 million in support of vulnerable Canadians served through charities and non-profit organizations.<sup>6</sup> This support is essential. While not all charities will qualify, many are expected to access the wage subsidy program to help hire back laid-off staff. While we acknowledge it’s a step in the right direction, the federal pledge falls short of the \$10 billion charities had been asking for as a stabilization fund. **It’s recommended that the government support the efforts of Canada’s charities to help us be there for those who need us most.**

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<sup>4</sup> Emergency Coalition of Canadian Charities. Emergency charity letter to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Ministers. March 25, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. “Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017.” November 28, 2018. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/181128/dq181128a-eng.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Press, J. (2020, April 21). Feds pledge \$350M to help charities plug holes in funding. Retrieved April 29, 2020, from <https://nationalpost.com/pm/news-pmn/canada-news-pmn/canadian-press-newsalert-feds-pledge-350m-to-help-charities-plug-holes-in-funding>



# METHODS:

The CCB's COVID-19 survey was comprised of 50 questions using the online Survey Monkey platform. It commenced on April 7<sup>th</sup> and closed April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The survey was conducted in English only and distributed to people in all provinces and territories.

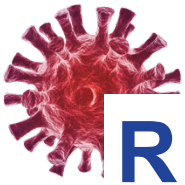
An email with an explanatory letter, including privacy information, was sent out to the full CCB email list on two occasions. The survey and accompanying letter were also included in the CCB's monthly e-newsletter, the BALANCE for Blind Adults' weekly e-newsletter, and sent to the email list of the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, and to the email distribution list of Fighting Blindness Canada.

The survey was distributed via direct email as this was the most efficient way of reaching responders in the shortest amount of time. It was recognized that by using email, the survey only reached those people with the ability to respond electronically. However, it was felt that the urgent need for the results of the survey far outweighed the bias that this might have added to the outcome.

Cross-tabulations were conducted using chi-square analysis using the chi-square calculator available from Social Science Statistics.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Social Science Statistics. Chi-Square Calculator.  
<https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/chisquare/default2.aspx>



# RESULTS:

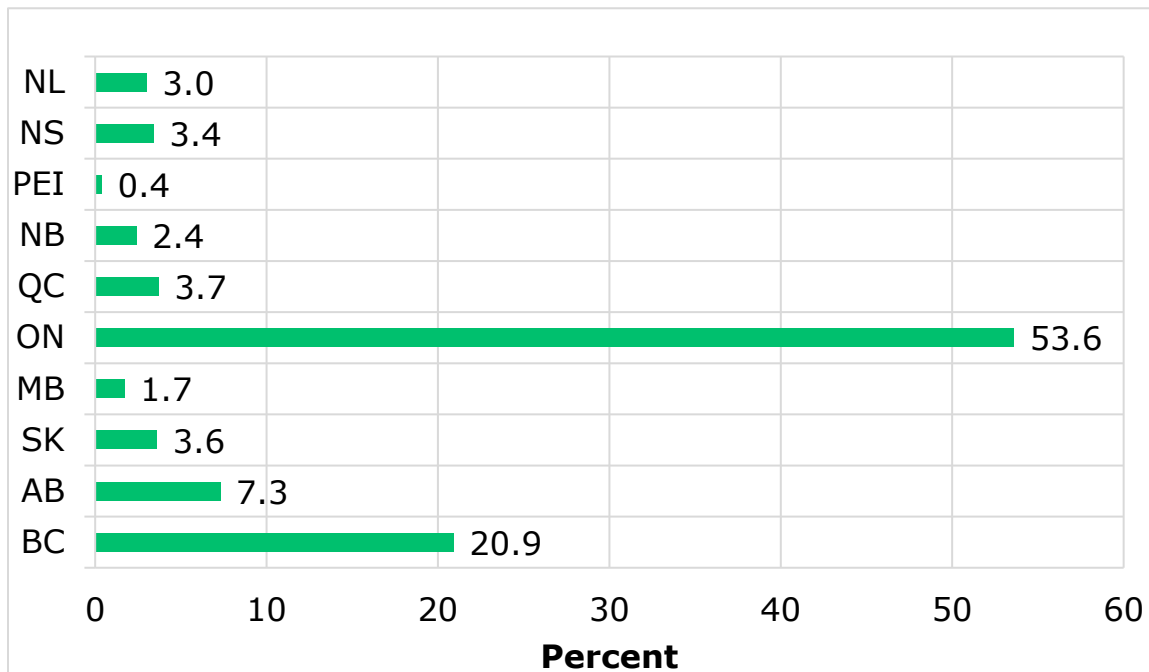
A robust sample, consisting of 572 responses, was received within the short period (7 days) during which the survey was open. Responses were received from all provinces. The survey averaged 81.7 daily responses over the week it was open. Respondents took an average of 20 minutes to complete the survey. The results, reported below, are grouped by subject theme. The number of respondents to each question is shown below the results for each question.

## 1 DEMOGRAPHICS

### 1.1 Respondents by province (Question 1)

The survey had a national reach, with most responses coming from the most populous provinces (Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta). The exception to this was Quebec, which had fewer responses than might be expected given its relative population. No responses were received from the territories.

Figure 1: Question 1. Respondents by province



539/572 Responding

**Table 1: Question 1. Respondents by province**

<b>Province</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
Newfoundland and Labrador	3.0
Nova Scotia	3.4
Prince Edward Island	0.4
New Brunswick	2.4
Quebec	3.7
Ontario	53.6
Manitoba	1.7
Saskatchewan	3.6
Alberta	7.3
British Columbia	20.9

## **1.2 Respondents by age (Question 2)**

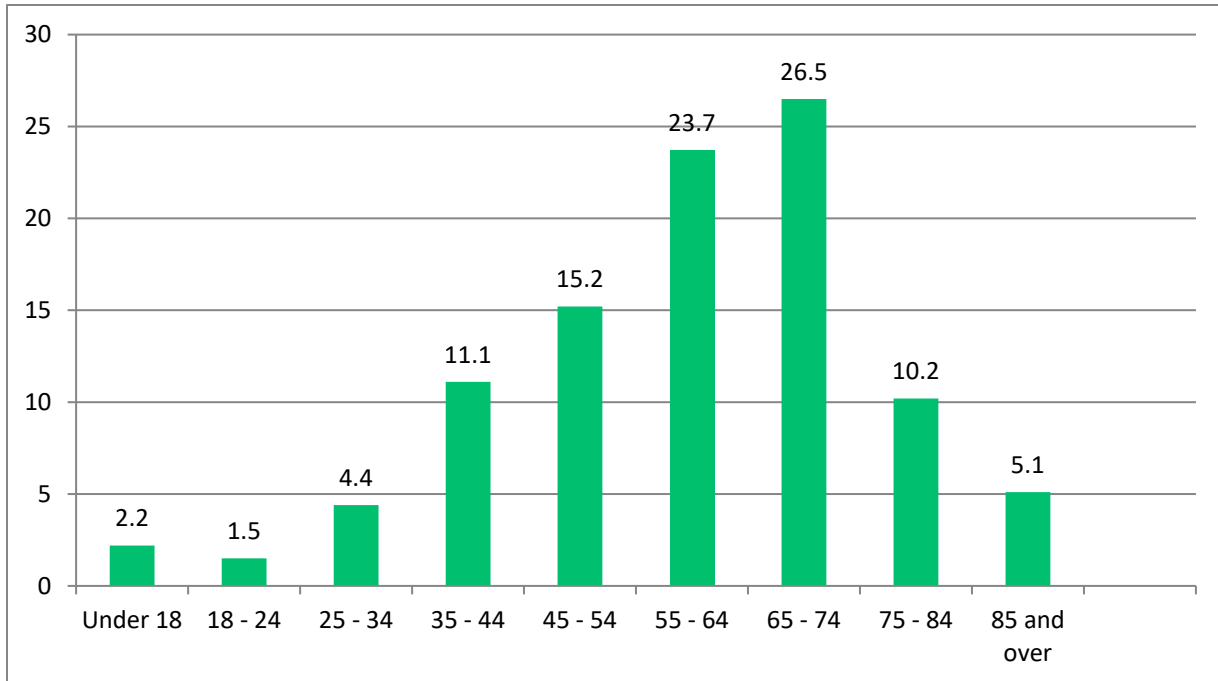
41.8% of respondents were over the age of 65, the age group most likely to have severe illness with COVID-19 according to Health Canada<sup>8</sup>, with 5.1% being over the age of 85. This profile means that people with vision loss are doubly at risk for COVID-19, both because of their age and their vulnerability to exposure due to their sight loss.

In order to determine if the issues and needs of older people are any different from those of younger people, comparisons of responses received from people aged 65 and over were compared with those of people under age 65. This sub-analysis is shown in Section 15 below.

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<sup>8</sup>Government of Canada. Epidemiological summary of COVID-19 cases in Canada. Available at:<https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.html#a3>

**Figure 2: Question 2. Respondents by age**



548/572 Responding

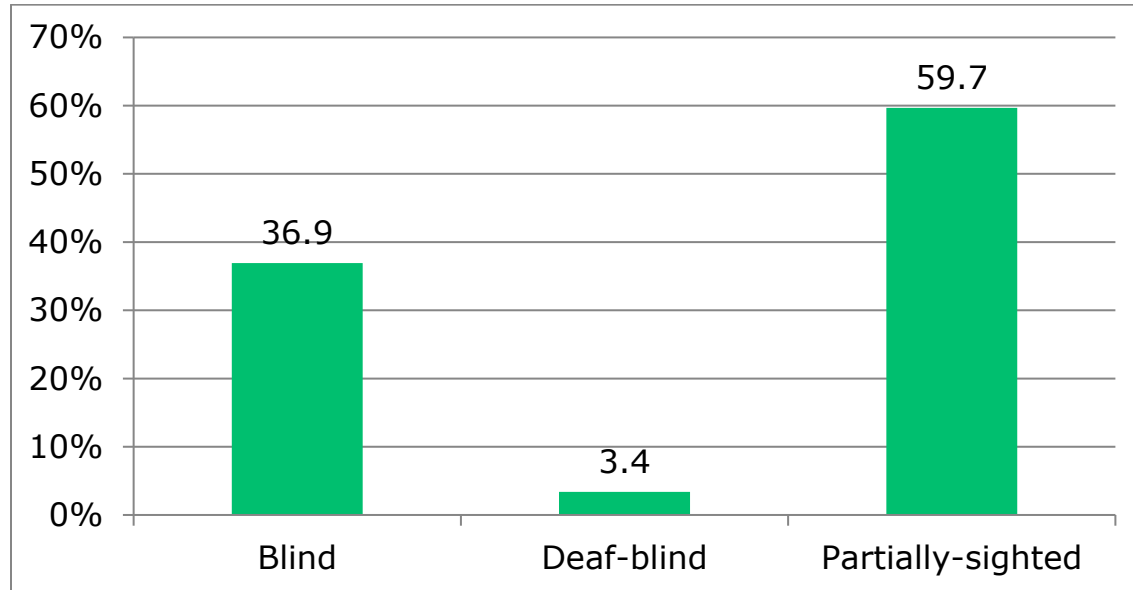
**Table 2: Question 2. Respondents by age**

Age	Responses %
Under 18	2.2
18 - 24	1.5
25 - 34	4.4
35 - 44	11.1
45 - 54	15.2
55 - 64	23.7
65 - 74	26.5
75 - 84	10.2
85 and over	5.1

### 1.3 Respondents by vision loss (Question 3)

Respondents self-identified their level of vision loss. No definition of vision loss was provided. 36.9% of respondents identified as being blind, with 59.7% being partially-sighted and 3.4% being deaf-blind.

**Figure 3: Question 3. Which of the following describes your vision loss?**



501/572 Responding

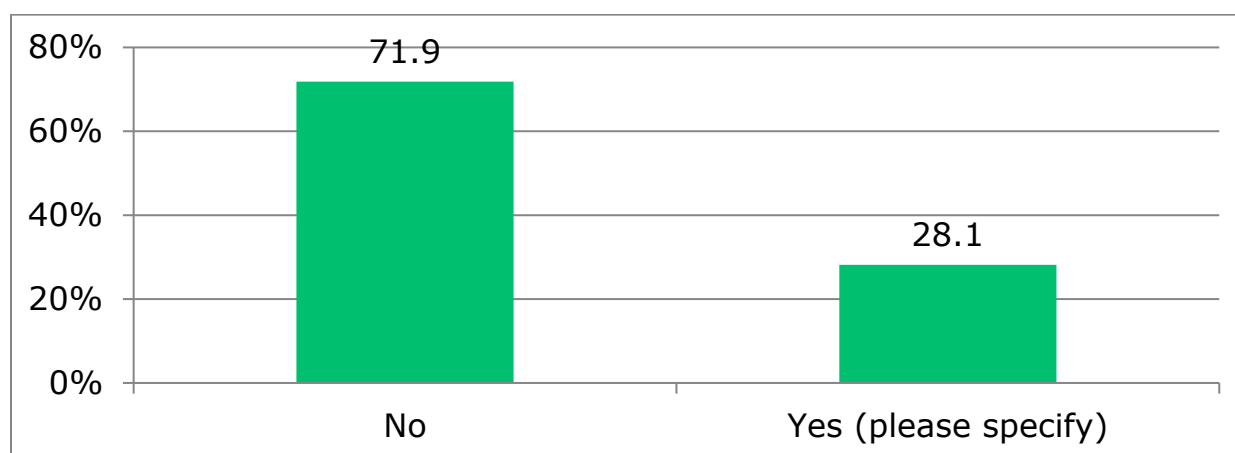
**Table 3: Question 3. Which of the following describes your vision loss?**

Level of Vision Loss	Responses %
Blind	36.9
Deaf-blind	3.4
Partially-sighted	59.7

## 1.4 Disabilities other than vision loss (Question 4)

The Canadian Survey on Disabilities 2012 reported that 89.5% of people with a seeing disability had at least one other type of disability<sup>9</sup>. In the current survey, only 28.1% of respondents said that they had a disability other than vision loss. An analysis of responses (Table 5) reveals the main comorbidity to be hearing loss, followed by arthritis and diabetes.

**Figure 4: Question 4. Do you have any disabilities other than vision loss?**



508/572 Responding

**Table 4: Question 4. Do you have any disabilities other than vision loss?**

Answer Choices	Responses %
No	71.9
Yes (please specify)	28.1

<sup>9</sup>Bizier, Christine, Ricardo Contreras, and Alyssa Walpole. "Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012 Seeing Disabilities among Canadians Aged 15 Years and Older, 2012." Statistics Canada, February 29, 2016. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2016001-eng.htm>



**Table 5: Question 4. Additional disabilities for people with vision loss**

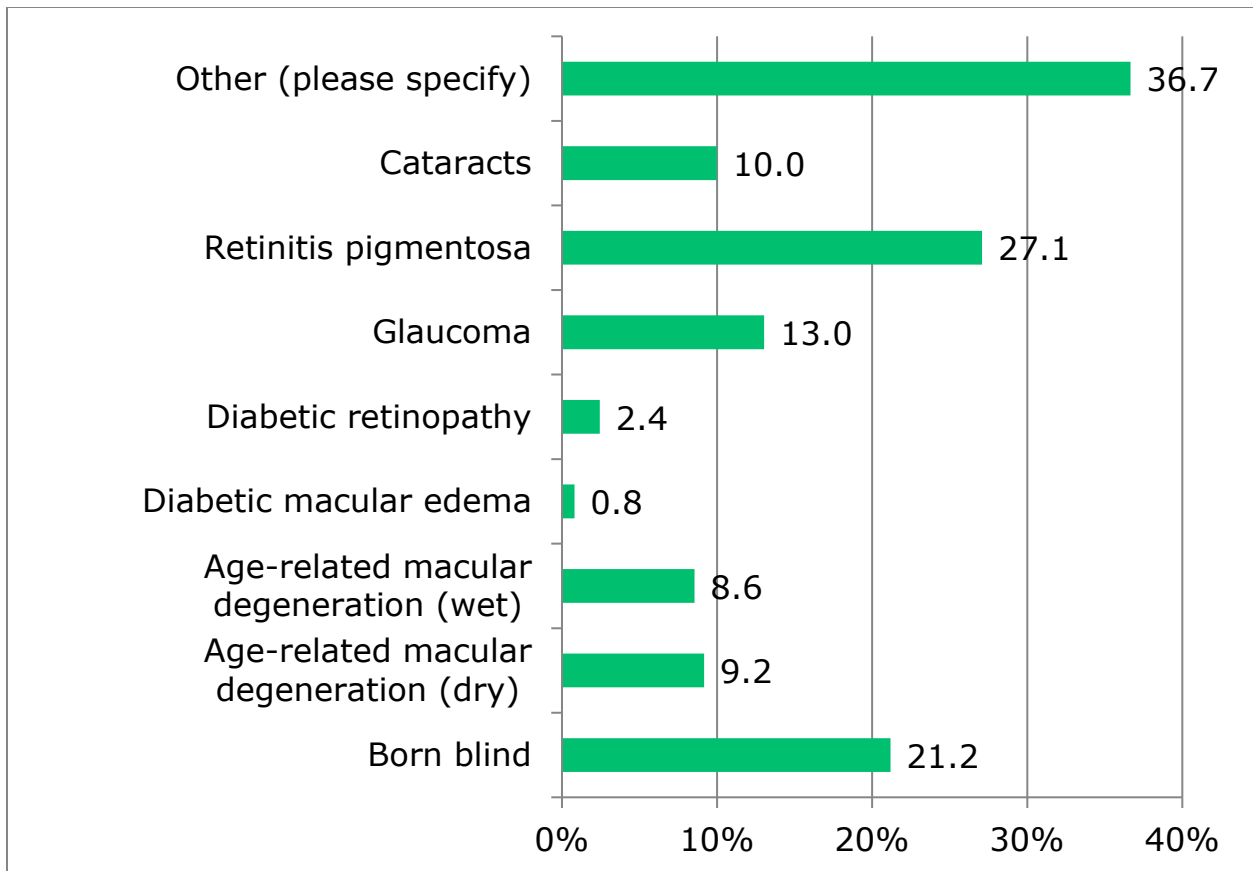
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
Hearing loss	28.8
Arthritis/mobility	14.4
Diabetes	10.1
COPD	6.5
Epilepsy	5.0
All other	36.7

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### **1.5 Eye diseases (Question 5)**

A complete spectrum of eye diseases was identified as the causes of vision loss in this population, with the number one cause being retinitis pigmentosa (RP), accounting for 27.1% of responses. This is a surprise, as the primary cause of vision loss in Canada among the population in general is age-related macular degeneration (AMD). This can be explained by the fact that one of the mailing lists used for this survey was that of Fighting Blindness Canada, which is known to include a large number of people with RP. The main cause of vision loss in the “all other” category is optic nerve disease and optic nerve damage, which accounts for 5.1% of all vision loss among this group of respondents (see Table 7).

**Figure 5: Question 5. Which eye disease is the cause of your vision loss?  
Please select all that apply.**



506/572 Responding

**Table 6: Question 5. Which eye disease is the cause of your vision loss?  
Please select all that apply.**

<b>Eye Diseases</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
Born blind	21.2
Age-related macular degeneration (dry)	9.2
Age-related macular degeneration (wet)	8.6
Diabetic macular edema	0.8
Diabetic retinopathy	2.4
Glaucoma	13.0
Retinitis pigmentosa	27.1
Cataracts	10.0
Other (please specify)	36.7

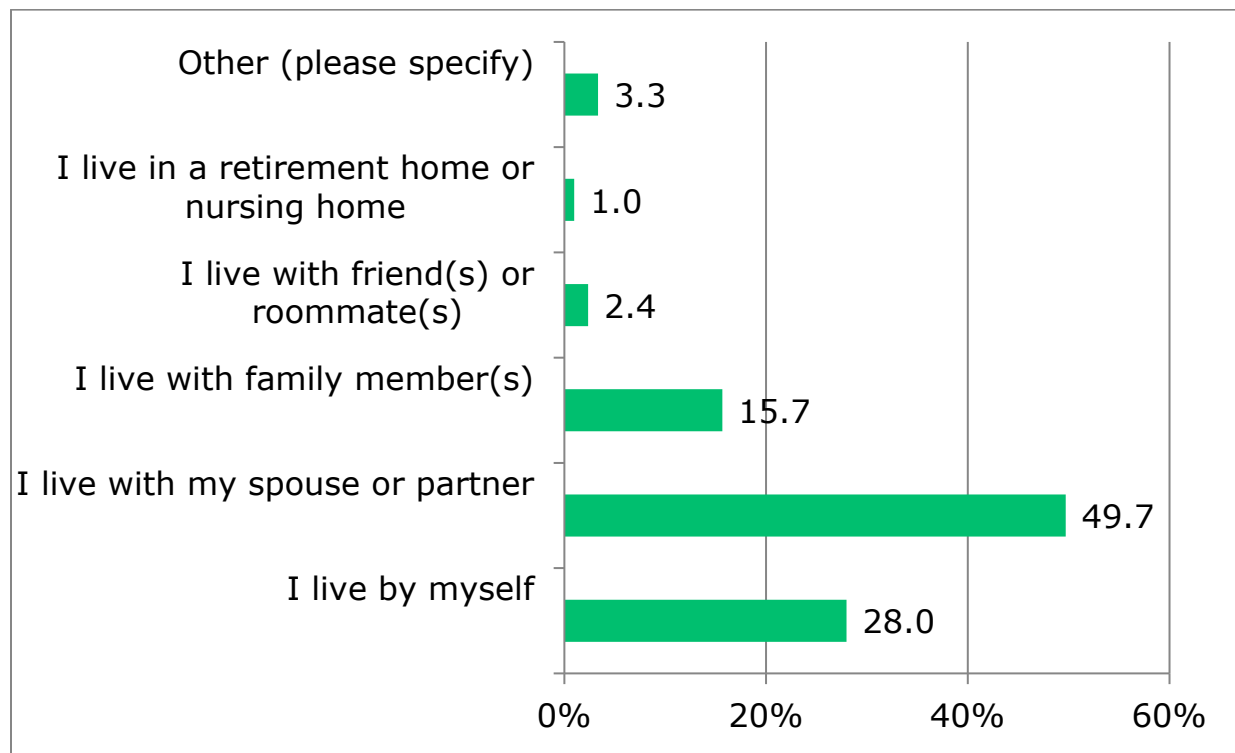
**Table 7: Question 5. Other causes of vision loss**

<b>Disease</b>	<b>% “Other” Respondents</b>
Optic nerve damage/disease	5.1
Retinopathy of prematurity	2.4
Stargardt Disease	2.2
Retinal detachment (from unknown cause)	1.6
Usher syndrome	1.6
Albinism	1.0
All other	22.8

## 1.6 Living situation (Questions 6 and 7)

Most of the respondents lived with someone else, with about half living with a spouse or partner. However, 28.0% of respondents lived alone, making them particularly vulnerable at this time. While it may appear that the high prevalence of COVID-19 cases in nursing homes and retirement homes may not be a concern for the vision loss community, it should be recognized that people in these homes may be less likely to have computer access or be inclined to fill out surveys at this time. Their advanced age and possible infirmity may also decrease the likelihood of their responding to a survey.

**Figure 6: Question 6. What best describes your living situation?**

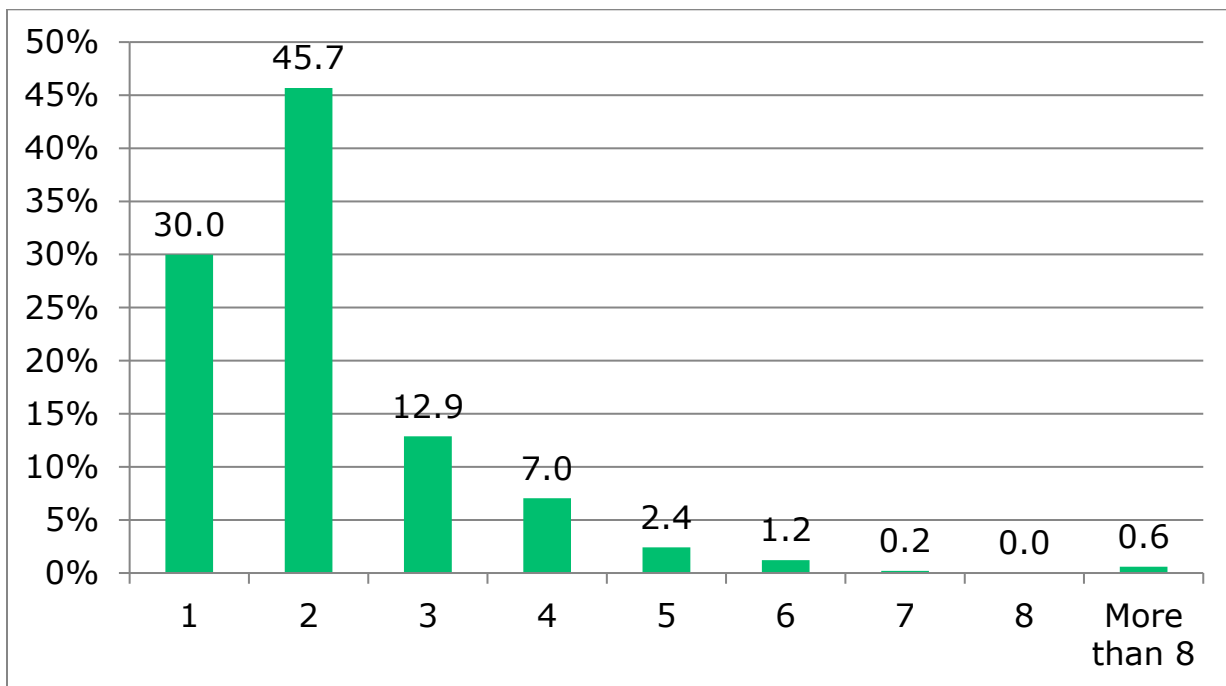


511/572 Responding

**Table 8: Question 6. What best describes your living situation?**

Living Situation	Responses %
I live by myself	28.0
I live with my spouse or partner	49.7
I live with family member(s)	15.7
I live with friend(s) or roommate(s)	2.4
I live in a retirement home or nursing home	1.0
Other (please specify)	3.3

**Figure 7: Question 7. Including yourself, how many people live in your home?**



497/572 Responding

**Table 9: Question 7. Including yourself, how many people live in your home?**

<b>No. of People in Home</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
1	30.0
2	45.7
3	12.9
4	7.0
5	2.4
6	1.2
7	0.2
8	0.0
More than 8	0.6

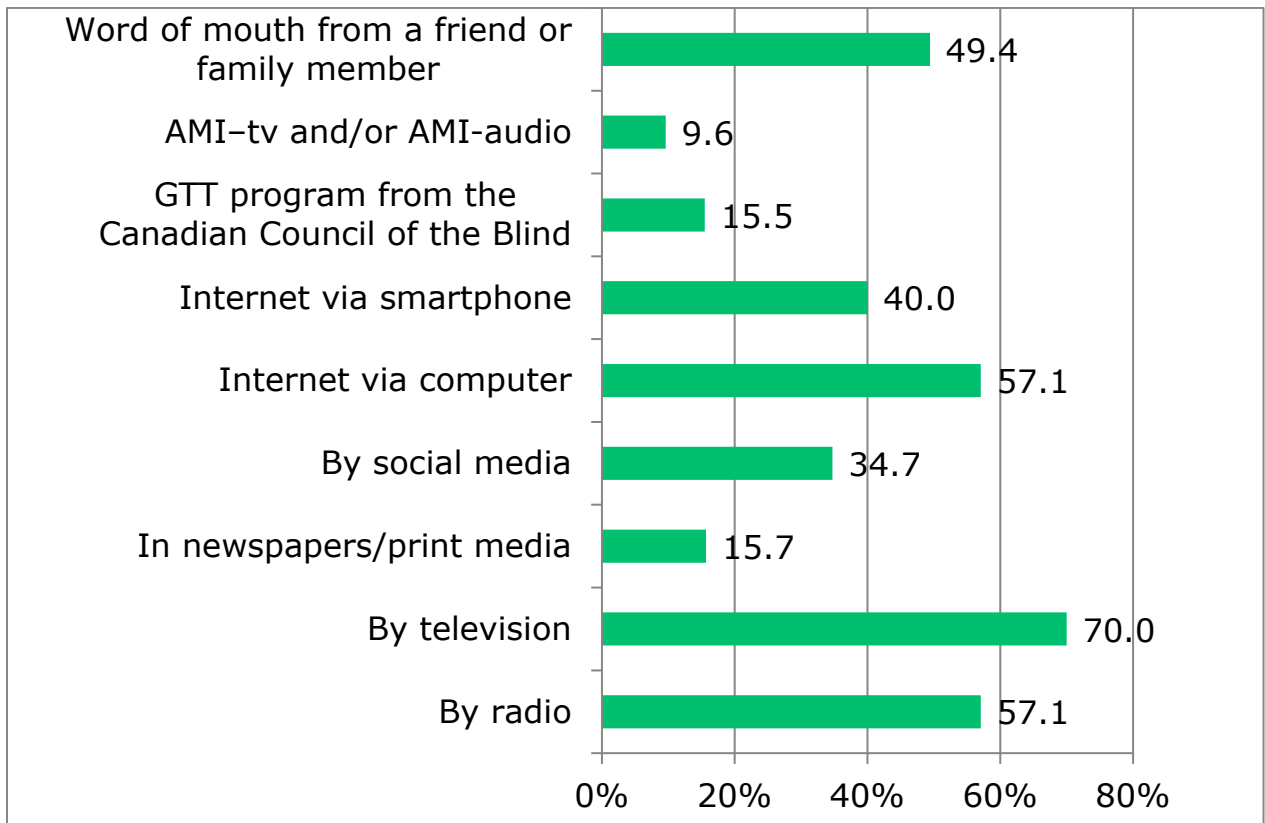
## 2 ACCESS TO INFORMATION

One of the primary goals of this survey was to gain an understanding of the way people in the vision loss community are accessing their information about COVID-19.

### 2.1 Sources of information on COVID-19 (Question 8)

The first question we asked in this regard was to understand where the vision loss community was getting its information. The results showed that television, radio, and internet were the three main methods by which people gained their information, although there was a large percentage of people accessing all other sources listed.

**Figure 8: Question 8. How have you accessed information on COVID-19? (Check all that apply)**



510/572 Responding

**Table 10: Question 8. How have you accessed information on COVID-19? (Check all that apply)**

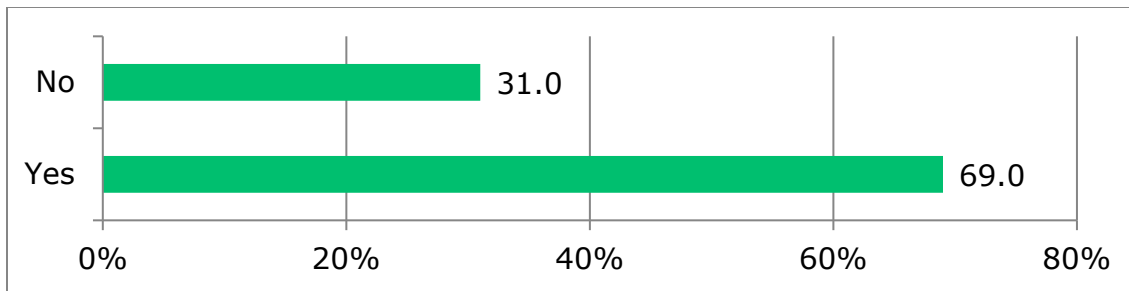
<b>Source of Information</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
By radio	57.1
By television	70.0
In newspapers/print media	15.7
By social media	34.7
Internet via computer	57.1
Internet via smartphone	40.0
GTT program from the Canadian Council of the Blind	15.5
AMI–tv and/or AMI-audio	9.6
Word of mouth from a friend or family member	49.4

## **2.2 Access to government information (Questions 9 and 10)**

Most governments have been prominent in the provision of information to the general public, mostly via frequent media conferences and announcements on television and via government websites. The CCB was interested in learning whether the vision loss community was accessing this information and whether government announcements were fully accessible to the community. The results showed that 69.0% of respondents had accessed a government announcement with only about half (53.9%) of the respondents indicating that online government announcements were fully accessible. For the safety of all members of the vision loss community, it's essential that the community have the same access as the sighted community.



**Figure 9: Question 9. Have you accessed government announcements about COVID-19?**

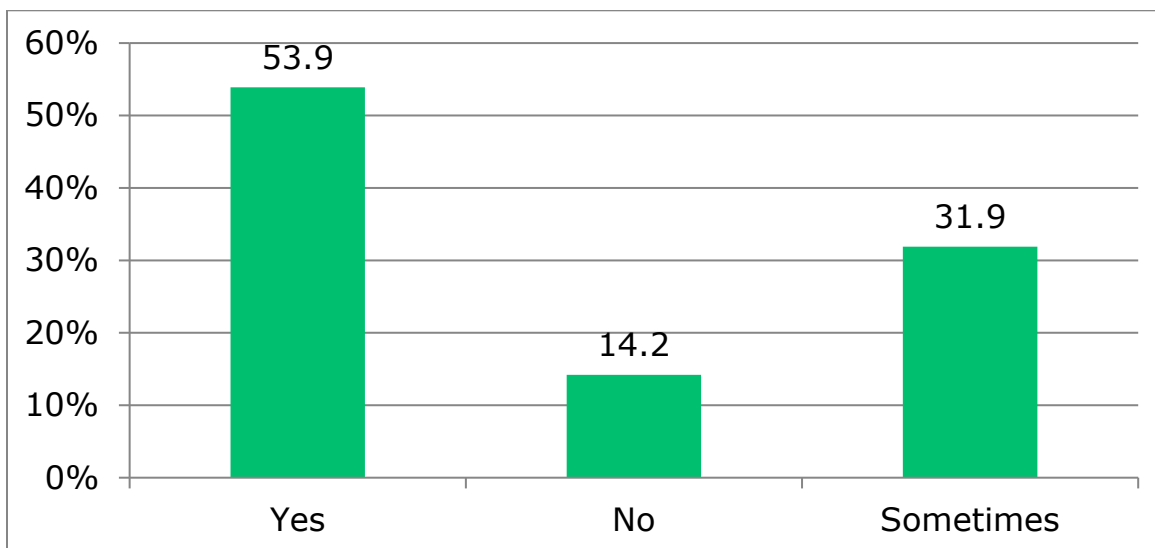


500/572 Responding

**Table 11: Question 9. Have you accessed government announcements about COVID-19?**

Answer Choices	Responses %
Yes	69.0
No	31.0

**Figure 10: Question 10. If you have accessed government announcements online, were they fully accessible?**



373/572 Responding

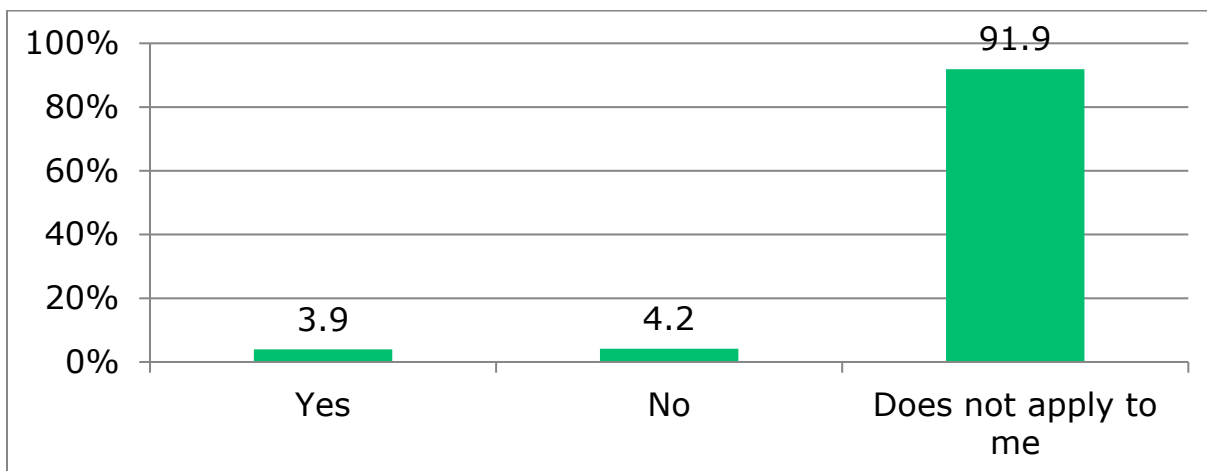
**Table 12: Question 10. If you have accessed government announcements online, were they fully accessible?**

Government Announcements Accessed	Responses %
Yes	53.9
No	14.2
Sometimes	31.9

### 2.3 Acquisition of information by the deaf-blind community (Question 11)

The deaf-blind community seems to be seriously at risk due to the pandemic. About half of the deaf-blind respondents indicated that they didn't have access to deaf-blind interpreters. It's essential to explore whether these services were in place prior to the pandemic or whether social distancing recommendations and/or fear of spreading the virus have decreased the availability of interpreters.

**Figure 11: Question 11. If you are deaf-blind, do you have access to captioning/interpreter services to enable you to participate in online social/learning/medical/training services?**



432/572 Responding

**Table 13: Question 11. If you are deaf-blind, do you have access to captioning/interpreter services to enable you to participate in online social/learning/medical/training services?**

<b>Access to Interpreter</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
Yes	3.9
No	4.2
Does not apply to me	91.9

### **3 KNOWLEDGE OF AND ACCESS TO COVID-19 TESTING SITES**

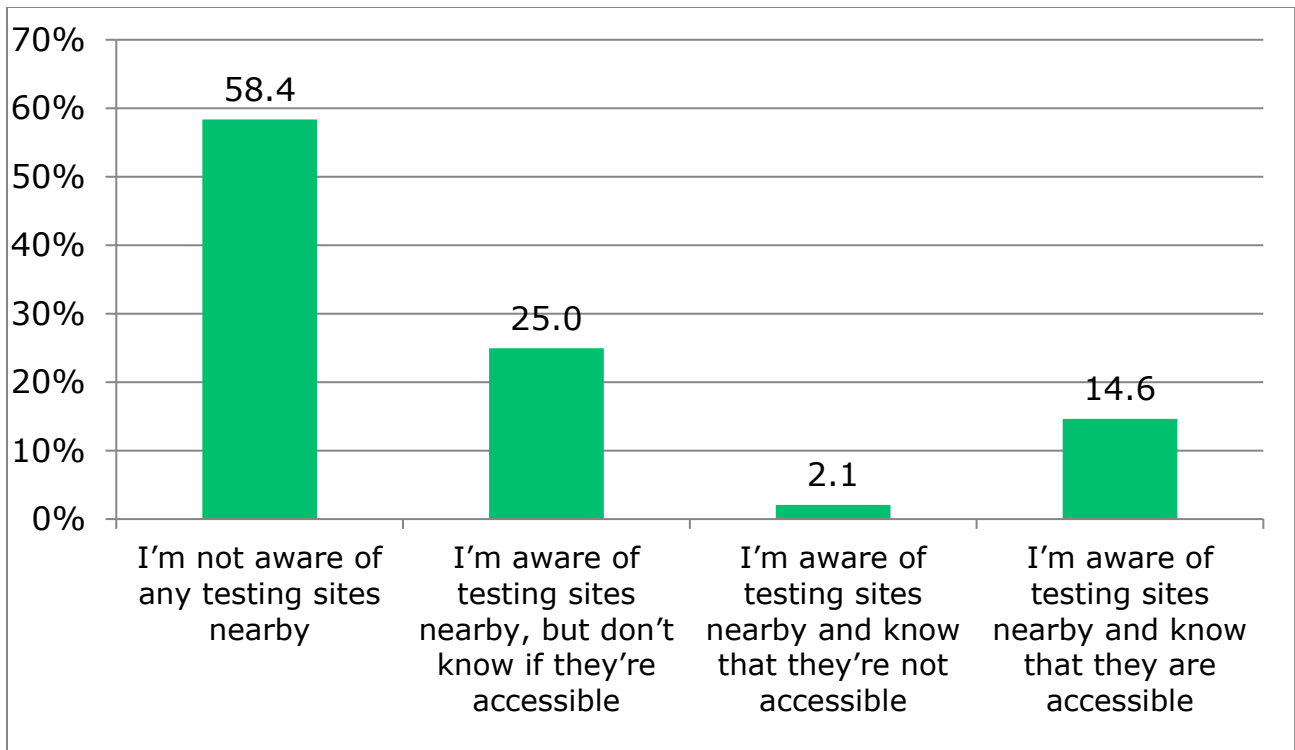
A number of concerns drove the questions related to COVID-19 testing sites. Firstly, there was a concern that the vision loss community may not have been aware of where their local testing sites were. Secondly, there was a concern that the testing sites may not be accessible to people with vision loss. Thirdly, there was a concern that the vision loss community may not be able to get to the testing sites and may have to access public transportation in the process, thereby putting both themselves and the public they would come into contact with at risk of acquiring the virus.

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#### **3.1 Awareness and accessibility of COVID-19 testing sites (Question 12)**

58.4% of respondents were not aware of where a COVID-19 testing site was in their neighbourhood, while a further 25.0% indicated that they knew where their local testing sites were but didn't know whether they were accessible. Only 14.6% of respondents said that they knew where an accessible local testing site was. Clearly, there's a need for information on testing sites to get to the vision loss community to protect them in the event that they need to be tested. Many people in the sighted community are also unaware of where their local testing site or treatment clinics are. If it's hard for a sighted person to obtain this information, it's going to be that much harder for a person with a seeing disability. This issue needs to be addressed right away by local and provincial/territorial governments.

**Figure 12: Question 12. If the need arises for you to get tested for COVID-19, are you aware of an accessible testing site nearby?**



485/572 Responding

**Table 14: Question 12. If the need arises for you to get tested for COVID-19, are you aware of an accessible testing site nearby?**

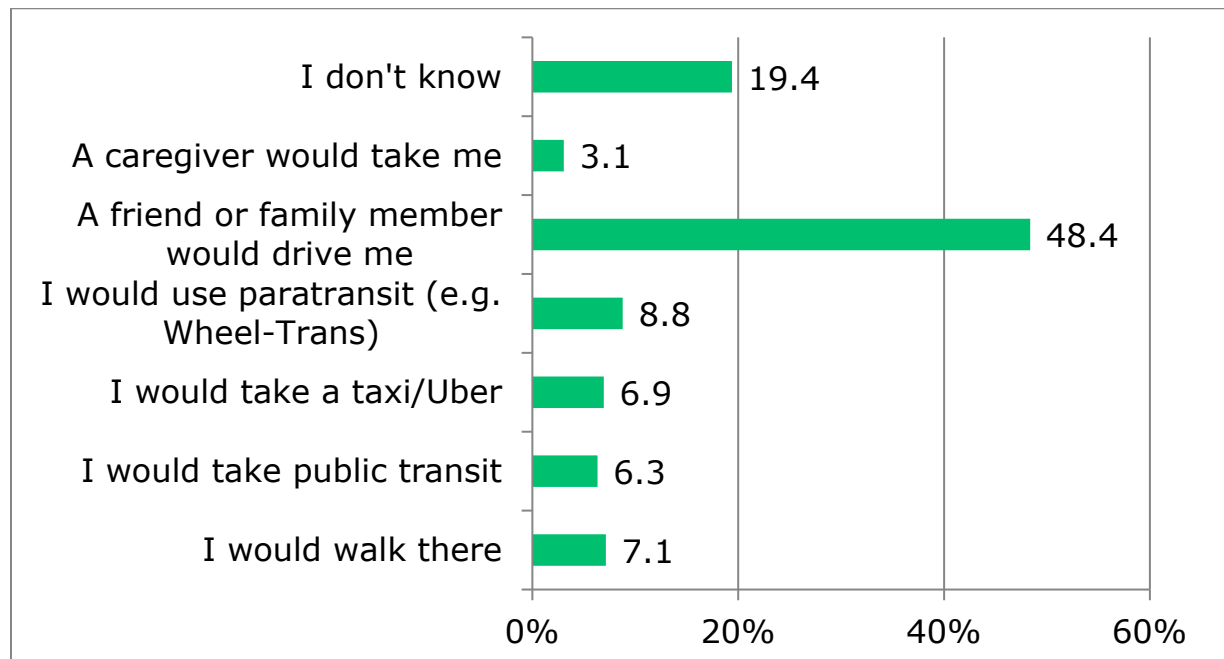
<b>Awareness of Testing Sites</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
I'm not aware of any testing sites nearby	58.4
I'm aware of testing sites nearby, but don't know if they're accessible	25.0
I'm aware of testing sites nearby and know that they're not accessible	2.1
I'm aware of testing sites nearby and know that they are accessible	14.6

### 3.2 Getting to a COVID-19 testing site should the need arise (Question 13)

About half of the respondents would get to a testing site through the assistance of a family member or caregiver. A further 22.0% of people would access some form of transportation – public transit, a taxi/Uber, or paratransit. For the reasons mentioned above, this would put both themselves and the people they come in contact with at risk of acquiring the infection. It's rather disturbing to see that about one in five people (19.4%) don't know how they would get to a testing centre should the need arise.

There's clearly work to be done to close the gap on the lack of knowledge of accessible testing centres, the lack of accessibility of the centres themselves, and the provision of transportation for the vision loss community should the need arise for them to go to a testing centre.

**Figure 13: Question 13. If the need arises for you to get tested for COVID-19, how would you get to the testing site?**



490/572 Responding

**Table 15: Question 13. If the need arises for you to get tested for COVID-19, how would you get to the testing site?**

<b>Transportation to Testing Site</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
I would walk there	7.1
I would take public transit	6.3
I would take a taxi/Uber	6.9
I would use paratransit (e.g. Wheel-Trans)	8.8
A friend or family member would drive me	48.4
A caregiver would take me	3.1
I don't know	19.4

## **4 LEAVING HOME**

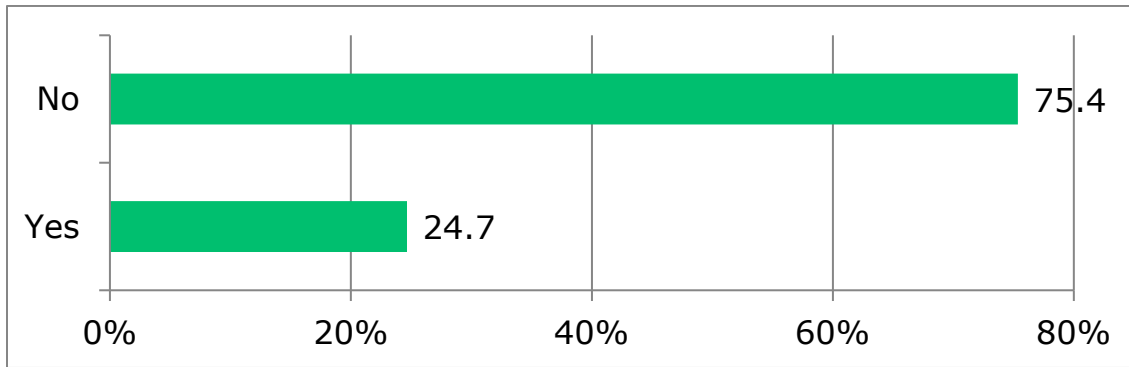
There were a number of reasons why the CCB felt it was necessary to explore whether people were still leaving their homes, and if they were, for what purposes they were doing so. Firstly, there was a concern that social distancing may be hard to achieve both for the person with vision loss and for members of the sighted community, who may be unaware that the person they're approaching wouldn't know whether they were within the two metre distancing guideline. Secondly, since many people with vision loss rely on a sighted guide to assist them with things like shopping, there was a concern that this support may no longer be available and, if it was, that social distancing would clearly not be observed between the sighted guide and the person with vision loss, thus putting both people at risk. Furthermore, if the sighted assistance was no longer being provided, were people able to cope through using alternative methods? Finally, since many stores have installed barriers to their cashiers and staff has been advised to maintain their distance from shoppers, there was a concern that the assistance that people with vision loss may normally get in a store would possibly not be available or may have become more difficult to obtain.

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## 4.1 Leaving home for work (Question 14)

About a quarter of respondents (24.7%) or someone they live with continued to leave home for essential work, thus putting themselves and the people they live with at risk.

**Figure 14: Question 14. Do you or anyone you live with continue to leave the home for essential work?**



503/572 Responding

**Table 16: Question 14. Do you or anyone you live with continue to leave the home for essential work?**

Leaving Home for Work	Responses %
Yes	24.7
No	75.4

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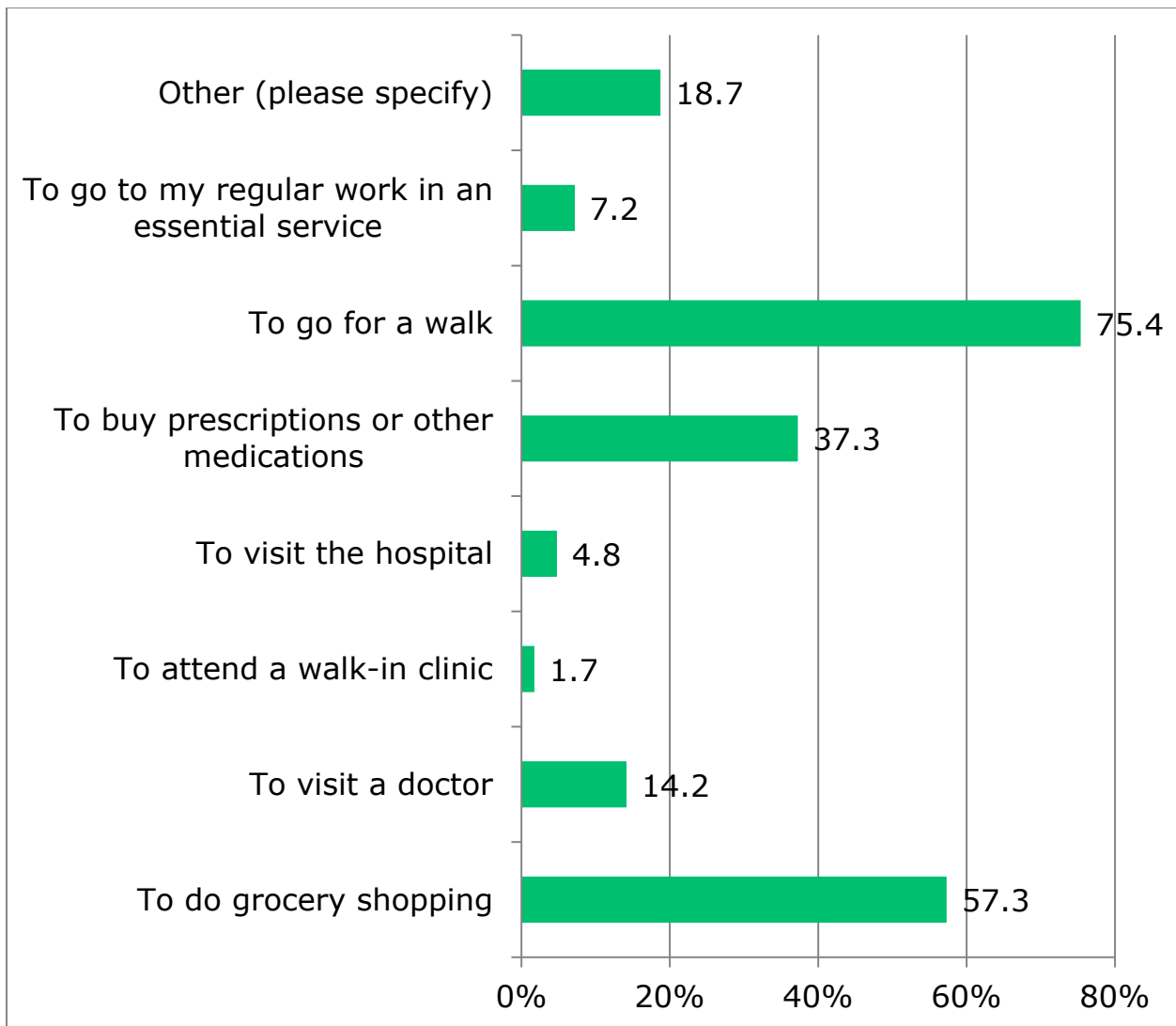
## 4.2 Leaving home for non-work-related reasons (Question 15)

More than half of the respondents (57.3%) indicated that they had been out of the home to do grocery shopping, a further 37.3% had left home to buy medications, and three quarters of the respondents had left home to go for a walk. 7.2% of respondents continued to leave home to work in an essential service.

18.7% of respondents indicated that they had been out of the home for reasons other than those listed in the questionnaire. The main reasons given in these responses were

taking the guide dog out or for a walk and going to the bank. A number of people also indicated that they had been out for a drive with family.

**Figure 15: Question 15. Have you been out of your home for any of the following reasons since the onset of the COVID-19 shelter-in-place order? (Check all that apply)**



459/572 Responding



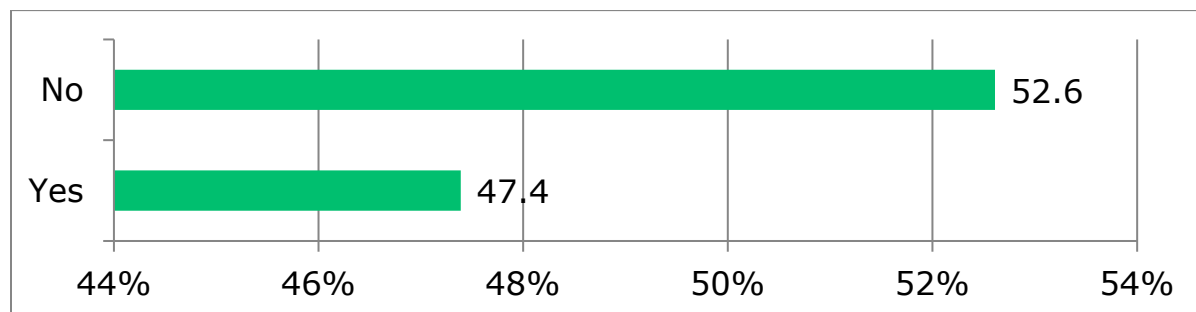
**Table 17: Question 15. Have you been out of your home for any of the following reasons since the onset of the COVID-19 shelter-in-place order? (Check all that apply)**

Reasons for Leaving Home	Responses %
To do grocery shopping	57.3
To visit a doctor	14.2
To attend a walk-in clinic	1.7
To visit the hospital	4.8
To buy prescriptions or other medications	37.3
To go for a walk	75.4
To go to my regular work in an essential service	7.2
Other (please specify)	18.7

### 4.3 Need for a sighted guide when leaving home (Question 16)

The vision loss community was asked whether they needed a sighted guide to assist them when they left home. Almost half (47.4%) said that they did. It was not clear whether or not the sighted guide was a family member. If this was not the case, clearly a lot of sighted guides are being put at risk through the necessary close interaction.

**Figure 16: Question 16. Do you need a sighted guide to navigate any of the tasks outlined in the previous question?**



479/572 Responding

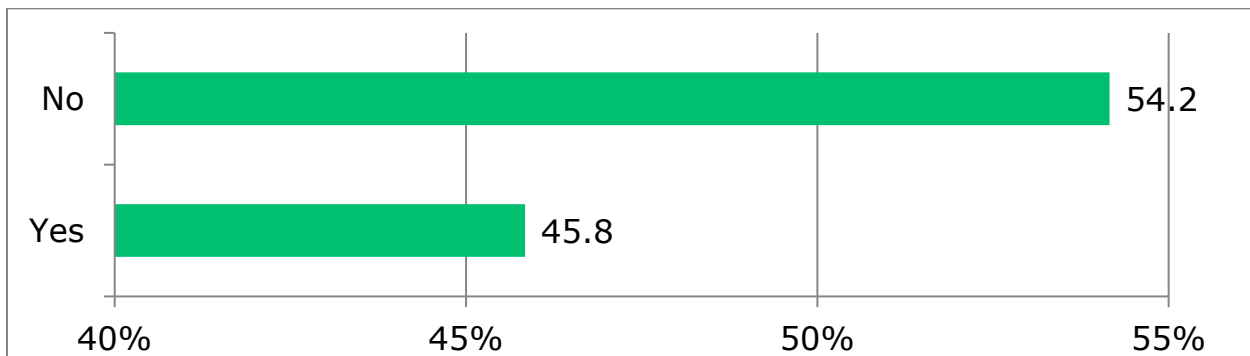
**Table 18: Question 16. Do you need a sighted guide to navigate any of the tasks outlined in the previous question?**

Sighted Guide	Responses %
Yes	47.4
No	52.6

#### 4.4 Safety outside the home (Question 17)

Almost half of the respondents (45.8%) said that they felt unsafe when going out of the home. While the exact reasons for this weren't explored here, later questions indicated that people were uncomfortable with a number of aspects related to difficulties in observing social distancing and interacting with store personnel.

**Figure 17: Question 17. Have you felt unsafe when going out of the home since the onset of the COVID-19 shelter-in-place order?**



469/572 Responding

**Table 19: Question 17. Have you felt unsafe when going out of the home since the onset of the COVID-19 shelter-in-place order?**

Feeling Unsafe	Responses %
Yes	45.8
No	54.2

## **5 SHOPPING FOR GROCERIES, MEDICATIONS, AND OTHER ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES**

It was deemed necessary to determine whether the vision loss community was experiencing extraordinary difficulty in acquiring their essential groceries, medications, and other necessary supplies, either in-store or online. If they were shopping in-store, it was deemed necessary to explore whether or not interactions with store staff were creating any special barriers.

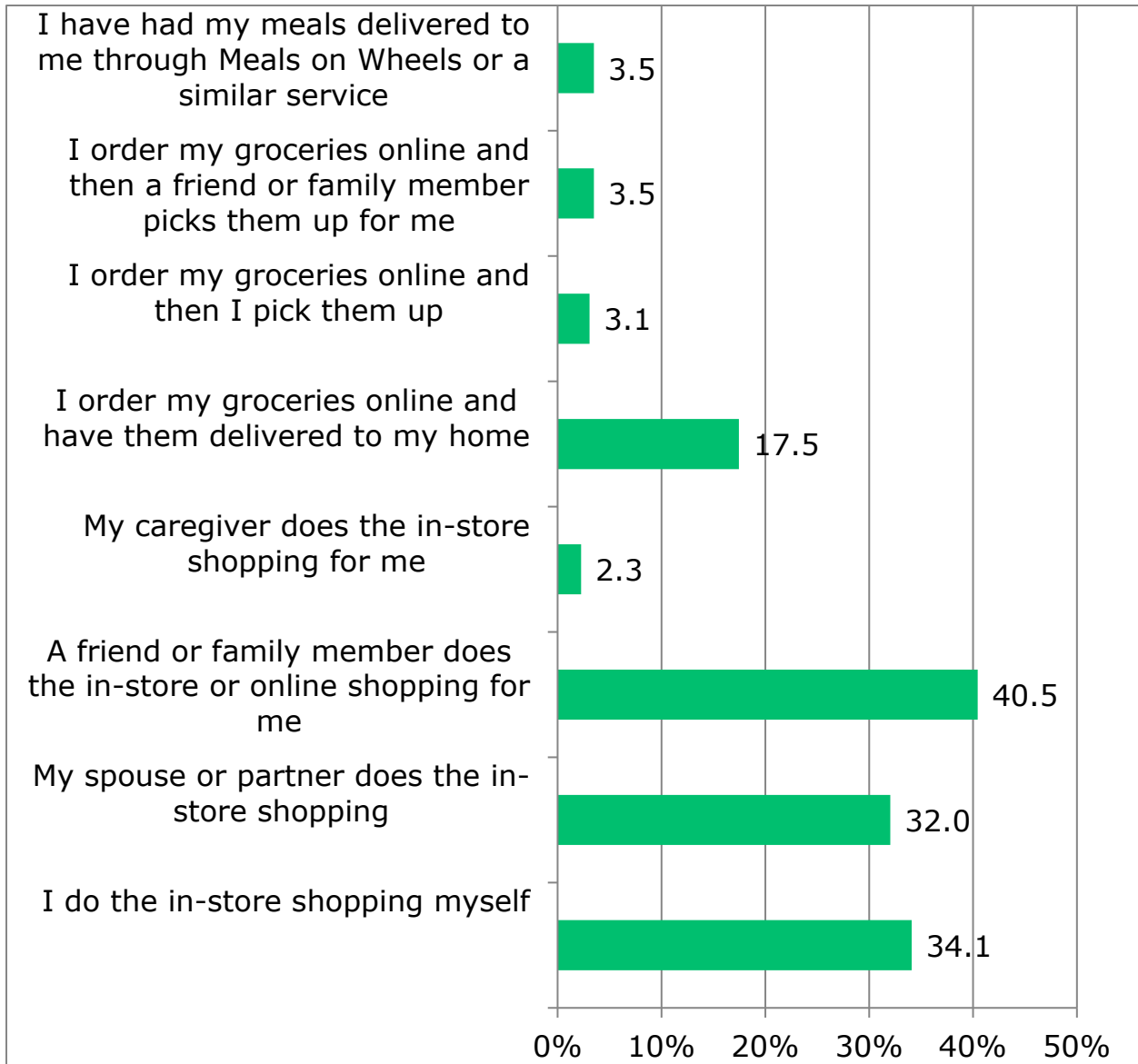
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### **5.1 Current shopping methods (Question 18)**

Respondents were asked how they were currently shopping for these essential items. About a third (34.1%) of respondents said that they were doing the in-store shopping themselves. This seems to be a very high percentage considering that there's no special allowance made for the difficulty people with vision loss may be experiencing in maintaining social distancing and due to the inability to get necessary help from store staff at this time.

The greatest majority of people were getting assistance from spouses or partners, friends, family members, or caregivers to acquire their essentials. Over 20% of respondents were doing their shopping online and either having their purchases delivered to their home or having them picked up by a friend or family member. A small percentage of respondents (3.5%) were ordering online and picking their groceries up themselves and about the same number of respondents were receiving their meals via a Meals on Wheels type of service. Clearly, there's a need for support for the people who are currently doing their own in-store shopping or picking up their own groceries that they've ordered online.

**Figure 18: Question 18. How have you been getting your groceries, medications, and other essential supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Check all that apply)**



487/572 Responding

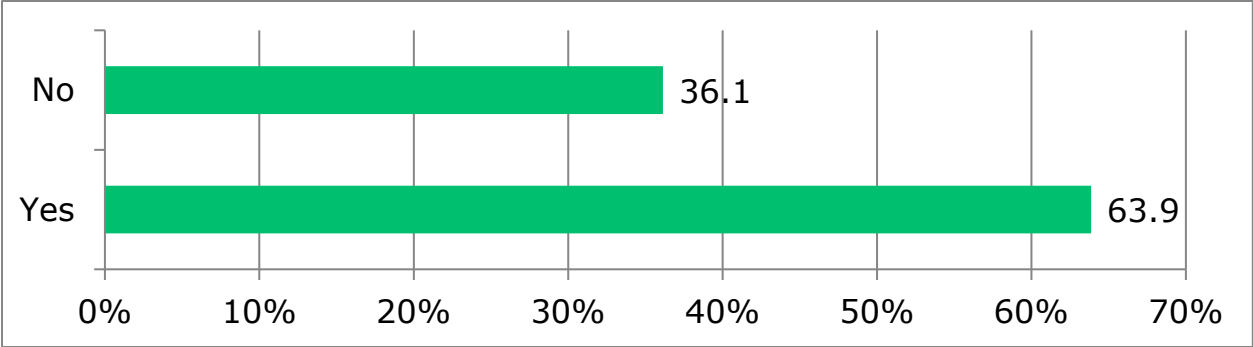
**Table 20: Question 18. How have you been getting your groceries, medications, and other essential supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Check all that apply)**

<b>Means of Acquiring Essentials</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
I do the in-store shopping myself	34.1
My spouse or partner does the in-store shopping	32.0
A friend or family member does the in-store or online shopping for me	40.5
My caregiver does the in-store shopping for me	2.3
I order my groceries online and have them delivered to my home	17.5
I order my groceries online and then I pick them up	3.1
I order my groceries online and then a friend or family member picks them up for me	3.5
I have had my meals delivered to me through Meals on Wheels or a similar service	3.5

## **5.2 Interacting with store staff (Question 19)**

To further explore whether people who shop in-store may be experiencing extraordinary difficulty due to the restrictions being placed on store staff, respondents were asked whether they were comfortable with the manner in which they must interact with store staff. About a third of respondents (36.1%) said that they weren't comfortable with the manner in which they have to interact with store staff. It would be useful to advise retailers who are providing essentials how best to support people with vision loss at this time while still maximizing their safety.

**Figure 18: Question 19. If you do your own in-store shopping for groceries, medications, and other essential supplies, are you comfortable with the manner with which you must interact with the staff in the stores?**



332/572 Responding

**Table 21: Question 19. If you do your own in-store shopping for groceries, medications, and other essential supplies, are you comfortable with the manner with which you must interact with the staff in the stores?**

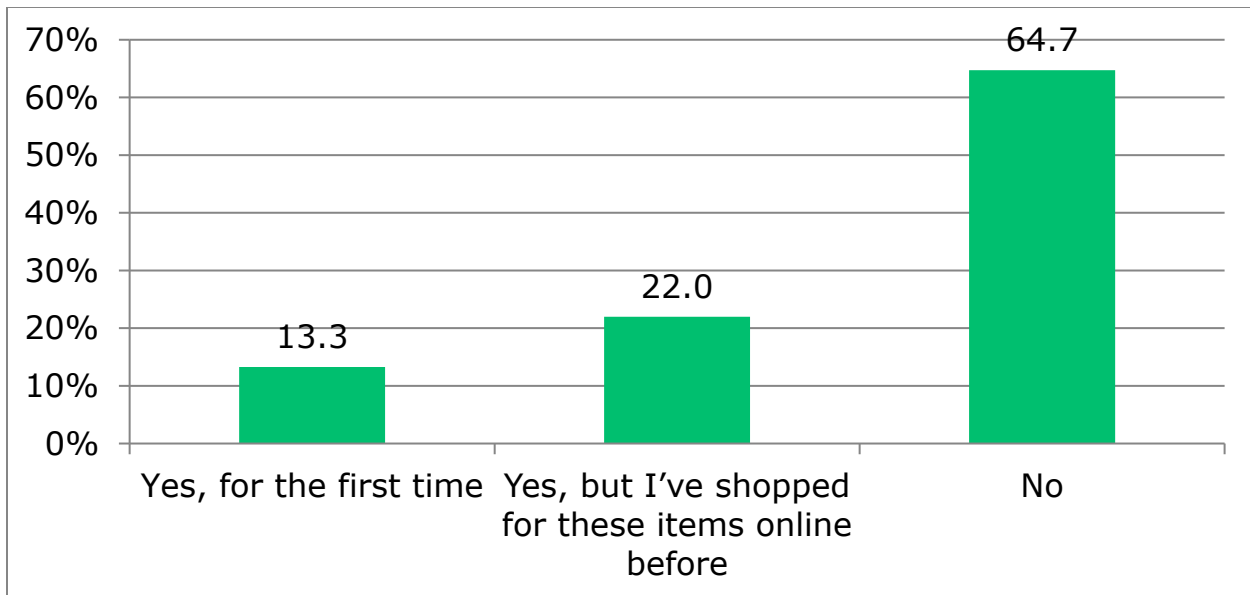
Comfortable Interacting with Store Staff	Responses %
Yes	63.9
No	36.1

### 5.3 Online grocery shopping (Questions 20, 21, and 22)

#### 5.3.1 Prevalence of online shopping (Question 20)

In Question 18, more than 20% of respondents said that they were buying their groceries and other essentials through online purchasing. In Question 20, respondents were asked whether they were doing online shopping and whether this was a new experience for them. About a third of respondents (35.3%) were doing online shopping. About a third of those doing online shopping (37.7%) were using online shopping for the first time as a result of the pandemic.

**Figure 19: Question 20. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are you using online shopping to access your groceries, medications, and other essential supplies?**



482/572 Responding

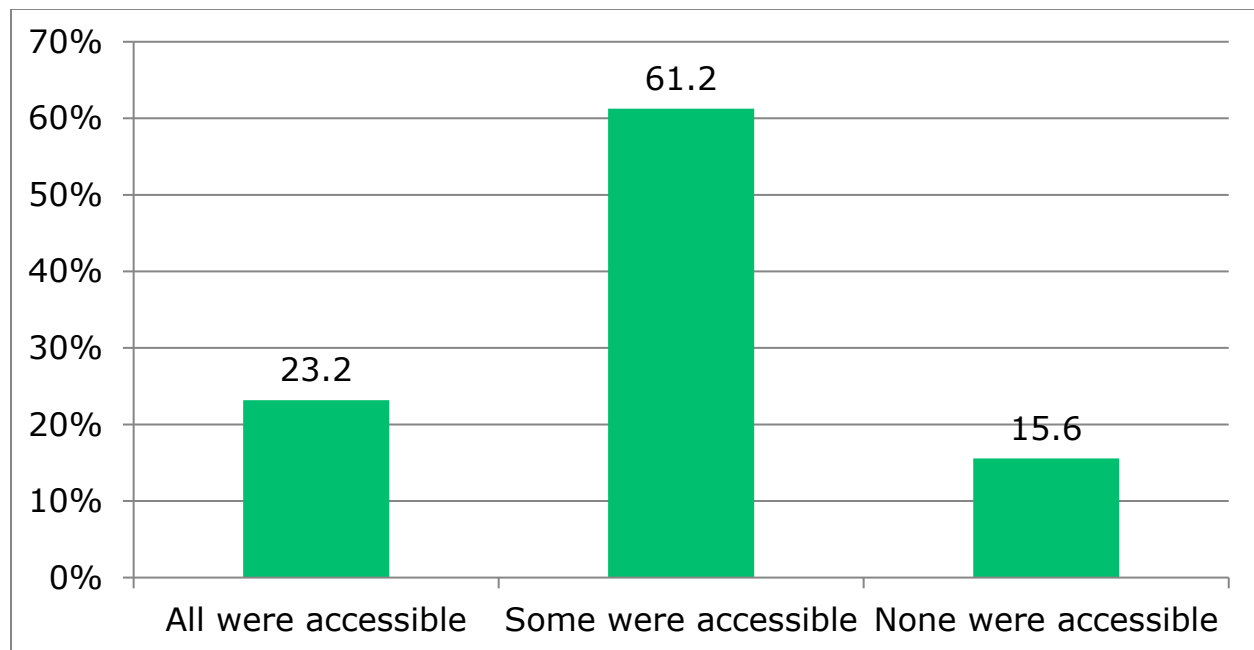
**Table 22: Question 20. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are you using online shopping to access your groceries, medications, and other essential supplies?**

Shopping Online	Responses %
Yes, for the first time	13.3
Yes, but I've shopped for these items online before	22.0
No	64.7

**i. Accessibility of online shopping websites (Question 21)**

Those people who were doing online grocery shopping were asked whether they found the shopping websites to be accessible. Only 23.2% of respondents said that all websites were accessible, while 61.2% said that only some were accessible and 15.6% said that none were accessible. This reveals a definite need to advocate for all retailers to make their websites fully accessible immediately in order to fully service the needs of the vision loss community.

**Figure 20: Question 21. When shopping online, did you find the website(s) you accessed to be accessible?**



289/572 Responding

**Table 23: Question 21. When shopping online, did you find the website(s) you accessed to be accessible?**

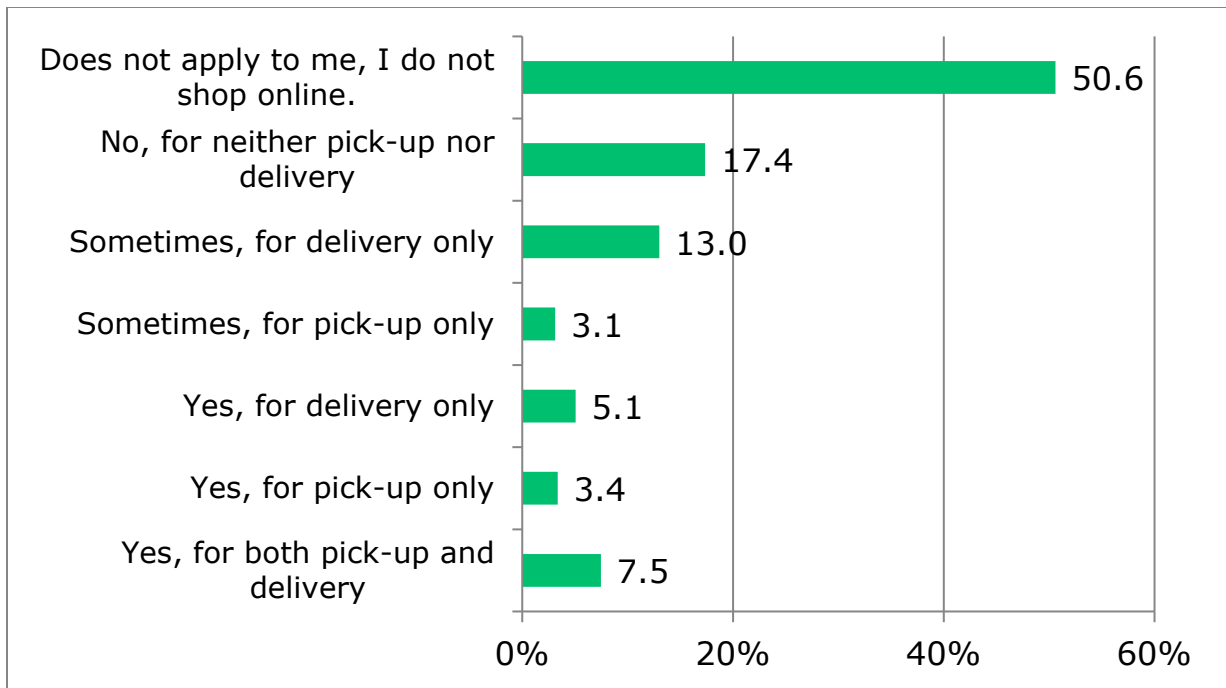
Shopping Websites Accessible	Responses %
All were accessible	23.2
Some were accessible	61.2
None were accessible	15.6

**ii. Availability of delivery and/or pick-up of groceries and other essentials (Question 22)**

Of those respondents shopping online, over a third (35.2%) said that they were unable to get timely slots for either pick-up or delivery and a further 32.6% could only get timely slots for delivery sometimes. Since the vision loss community usually cannot shop in-store unassisted and are therefore more reliant on online ordering for groceries, they're seriously disadvantaged by the lack of availability of pick-up and delivery timeslots.



**Figure 21: Question 22. When shopping online, were you able to get timely timeslots for pick-up or delivery?**



415/572 Responding

**Table 24: Question 22. When shopping online, were you able to get timely timeslots for pick-up or delivery?**

<b>Timeslots for Pick-Up and Delivery</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
Yes, for both pick-up and delivery	7.5
Yes, for pick-up only	3.4
Yes, for delivery only	5.1
Sometimes, for pick-up only	3.1
Sometimes, for delivery only	13.0
No, for neither pick-up nor delivery	17.4
Does not apply to me, I do not shop online	50.6

## 6 HEALTH CARE ISSUES

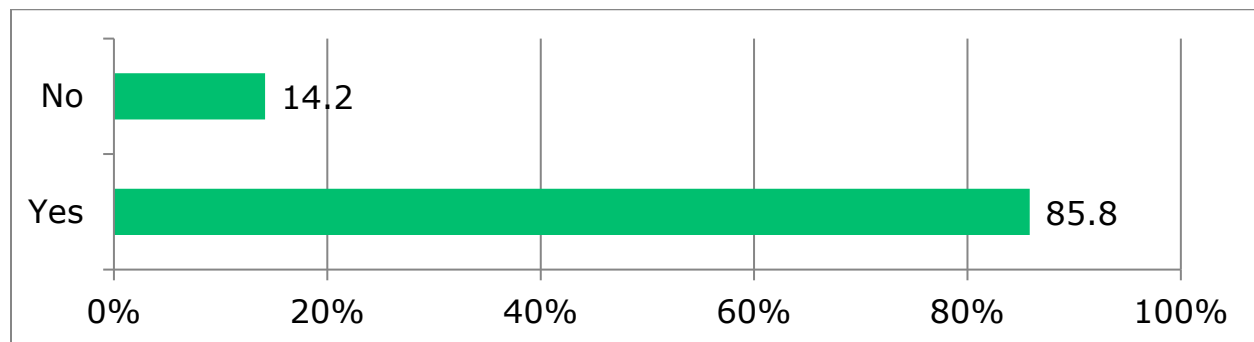
In Question 4, 28.1% of respondents indicated that they had a disability other than their vision loss, with conditions ranging from diabetes to epilepsy, COPD, and cardiac conditions. For this reason, it's important to make sure that the vision loss community feels comfortable that they'll be able to access their usual care and medications during this time.

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### 6.1 Awareness about meeting with health care providers (Question 23)

Since many doctors and other health care providers have switched to providing care online or by telephone, the CCB felt that it was important to determine whether this fact was generally known. Fortunately, only 14.2% of respondents said that they were unaware of this fact.

**Figure 22: Question 23. Are you aware that you can meet with health care providers online or by telephone?**



480/572 Responding

**Table 25: Question 23. Are you aware that you can meet with health care providers online or by telephone?**

<b>Aware of Online Health Care</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
Yes	85.8
No	14.2

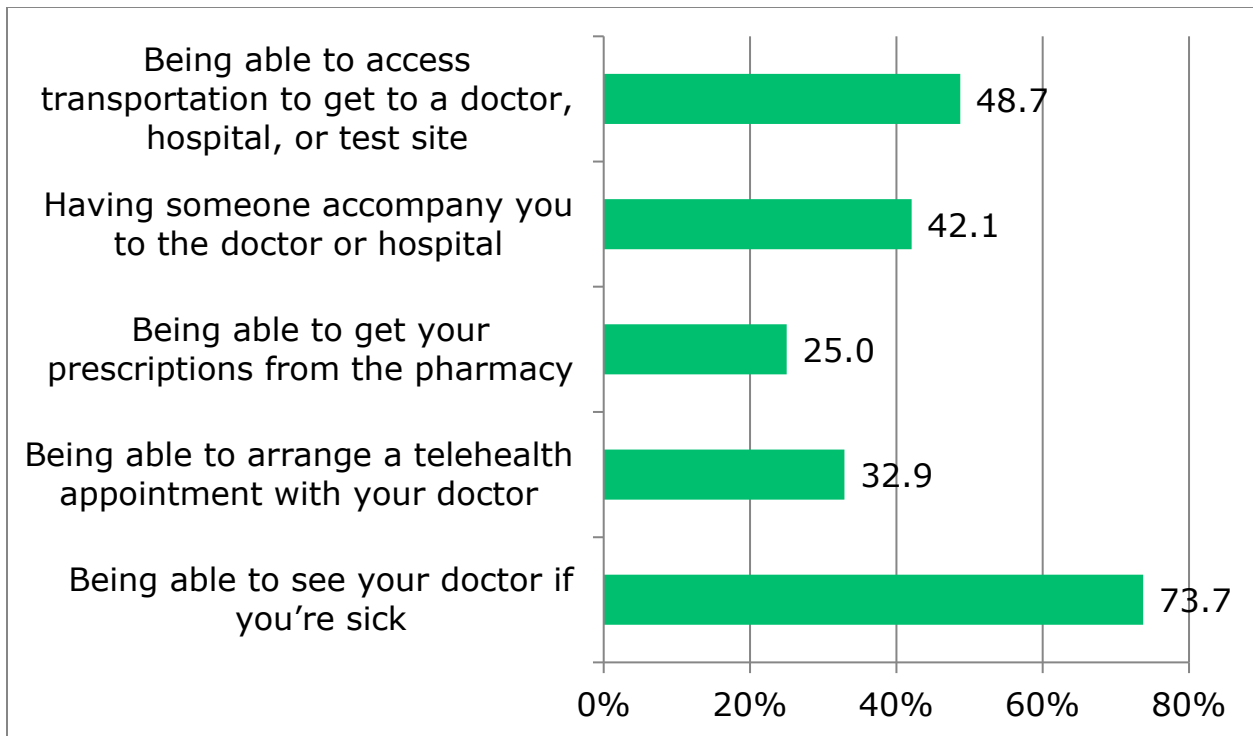
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## **6.2 Level of concern with respect to health care access (Question 24)**

This question was designed to assess the concern that people may be feeling about accessing their usual health care providers.

Almost three quarters of respondents (73.7%) said that they were worried about being able to see a doctor if they got sick, while 32.9% of respondents were worried about arranging a telehealth appointment with their doctor should the need arise and 25.0% of people were worried about being able to get their prescriptions from a pharmacy. 42.1% of respondents were worried about their ability to have someone accompany them to a doctor and almost half (48.7%) were worried about their ability to get transportation to a doctor, hospital, or testing site.

**Figure 23: Question 24. Are you worried about how you will accomplish any of the following during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Check all that apply)**



316/572 Responding

**Table 26: Question 24. Are you worried about how you will accomplish any of the following during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Check all that apply)**

Concern Over Access to Health Care	Responses %
Being able to see your doctor if you're sick	73.7
Being able to arrange a telehealth appointment with your doctor	32.9
Being able to get your prescriptions from the pharmacy	25.0
Having someone accompany you to the doctor or hospital	42.1
Being able to access transportation to get to a doctor, hospital, or testing site	48.7

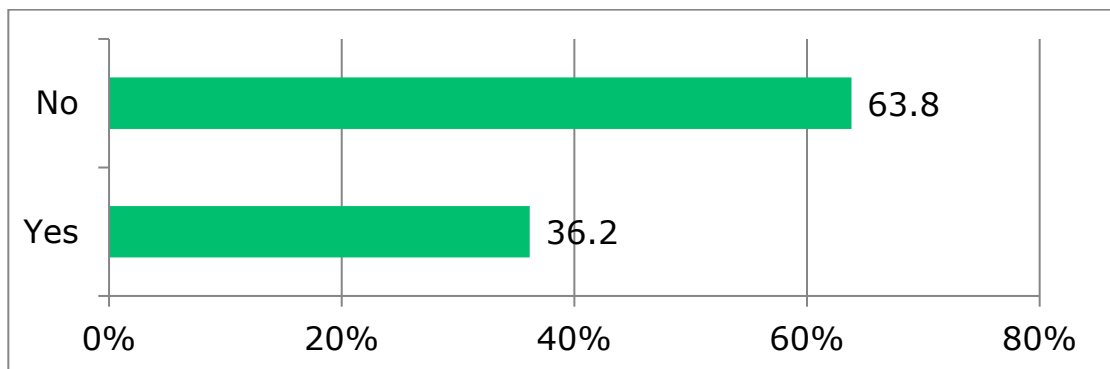
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## 6.3 Other health issues (Questions 25 and 26)

### 6.3.1 Cancellation of medical appointments (Question 25)

The responses to this question further reinforce the worry that respondents have about seeing a doctor if they got sick. When asked whether they'd had an important medical appointment, treatment, or surgery cancelled due to COVID-19, 36.2% said that they had.

**Figure 24: Question 25. Have you had important medical appointments, treatments, or surgery cancelled because of COVID-19?**



470/572 Responding

**Table 27: Question 25. Have you had important medical appointments, treatments, or surgery cancelled because of COVID-19?**

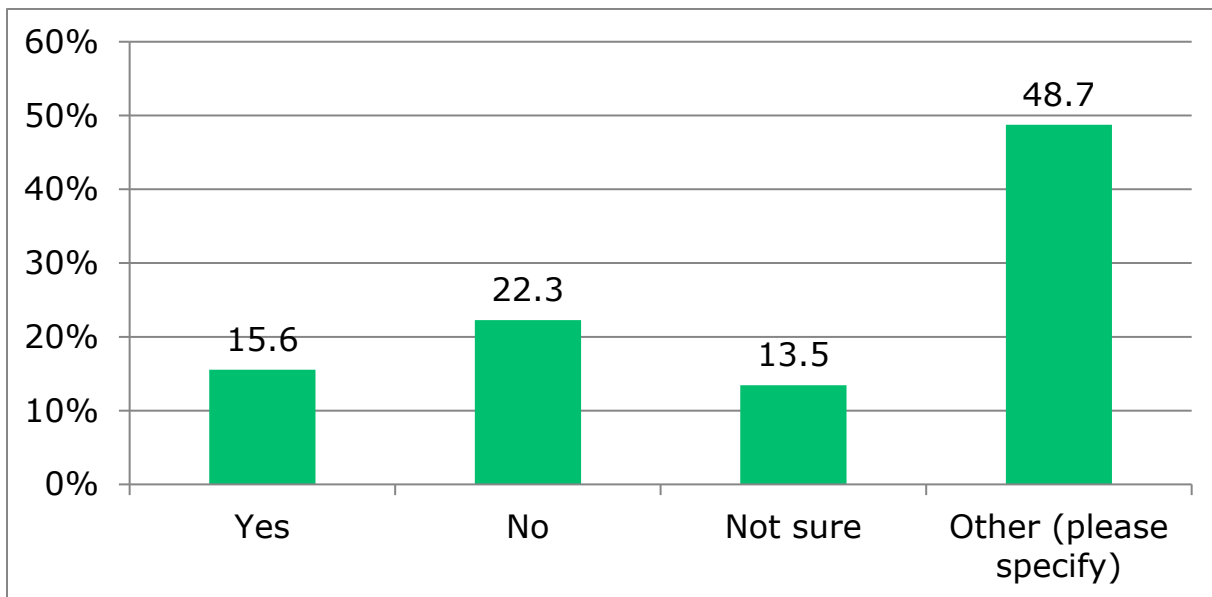
Medical Appointments Cancelled	Responses %
Yes	36.2
No	63.8

### 6.3.2 Personal protection equipment (PPE) being used by personal care workers (PCWs) (Question 26)

Since a large number of people in the vision loss community are assisted in their daily living by PCWs who come from outside the home, it's essential to understand whether these workers are using correct PPE in order to minimize the risk of transferring the novel coronavirus. About half (51.4%) of the respondents had a PCW coming into their

home at this time. 43.4% of respondents who had a PCW coming into their home indicated that their PCW was not using the proper PPE (face masks, gloves, and gowns if necessary), and a further 26.3% weren't sure if they were. This is of serious concern as this represents a major risk for people who need to access the services of a PCW. It's recommended that all PCWs visiting people with vision loss be required to use the proper PPE.

**Figure 25: Question 26. If you have a personal care worker coming into your home during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide assistance, are they using personal protective equipment (face masks, gloves, and, in some cases, gowns)?**



238/572 Responding

**Table 28: Question 26. If you have a personal care worker coming into your home during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide assistance, are they using personal protective equipment (face masks, gloves, and, in some cases, gowns)?**

PCWs Using PPE	Responses %
Yes	15.6
No	22.3
Not sure	13.5

PCWs Using PPE	Responses %
Other (please specify)	48.7

## 7 EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

These questions were designed to explore how many members of the vision loss community who were previously employed outside the home were now working from home or had been laid off. It was also of interest to understand whether the accessible technology being used by people from their homes was being provided by their employers or whether they were self-funding the technology and, in the latter case, how much this may have cost them.

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### 7.1 The effect of COVID-19 on employment status (Questions 27 and 28)

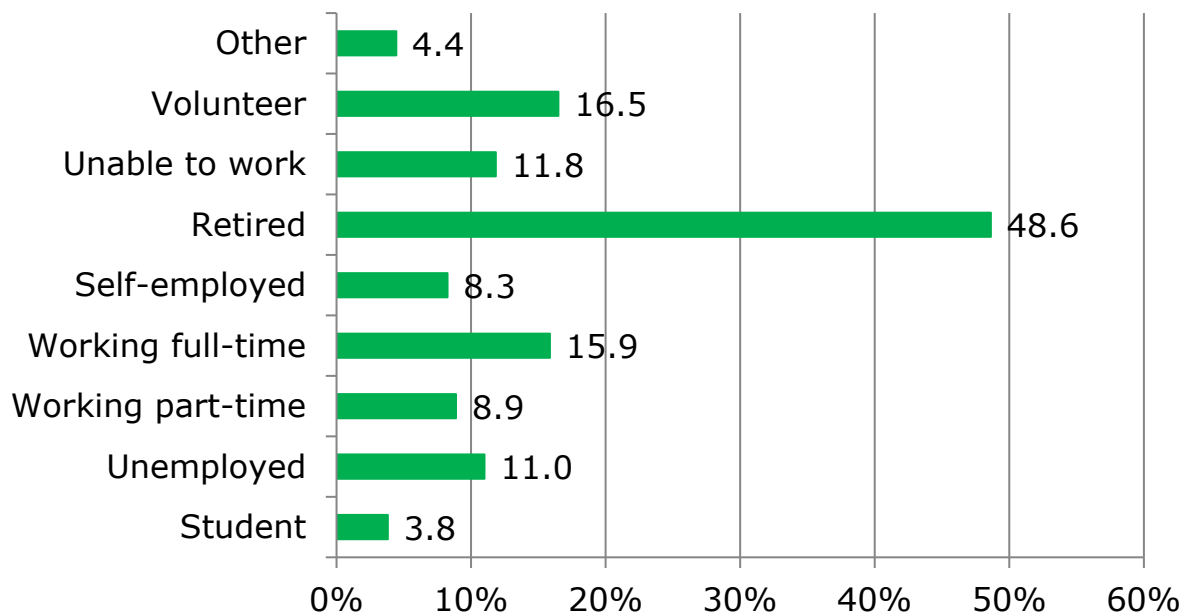
The results of these questions represent a fairly positive situation for those of the vision loss community who were working prior to the onset of the pandemic. The percentage of people working full-time either in their usual workplace or at home has only decreased slightly, from 15.9% prior to the onset of the pandemic to 14.7% subsequent to its onset. The number of people working part-time either at their usual workplace or at home has decreased from 8.9% to 6.7%.

Only 3.2% of respondents said that they had been laid off from work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Subsequent to the onset of COVID-19, 78.2% of respondents who were still working full-time were working from home, while 55.2% of respondents who were still working part-time were working from home.

(It's recognized that this is an approximation as no attempt was made to track individual responses from Question 27 to Question 28.)

**Figure 26: Question 27. What was your employment status before the March 1st onslaught of COVID-19 pandemic? (Check all that apply)**



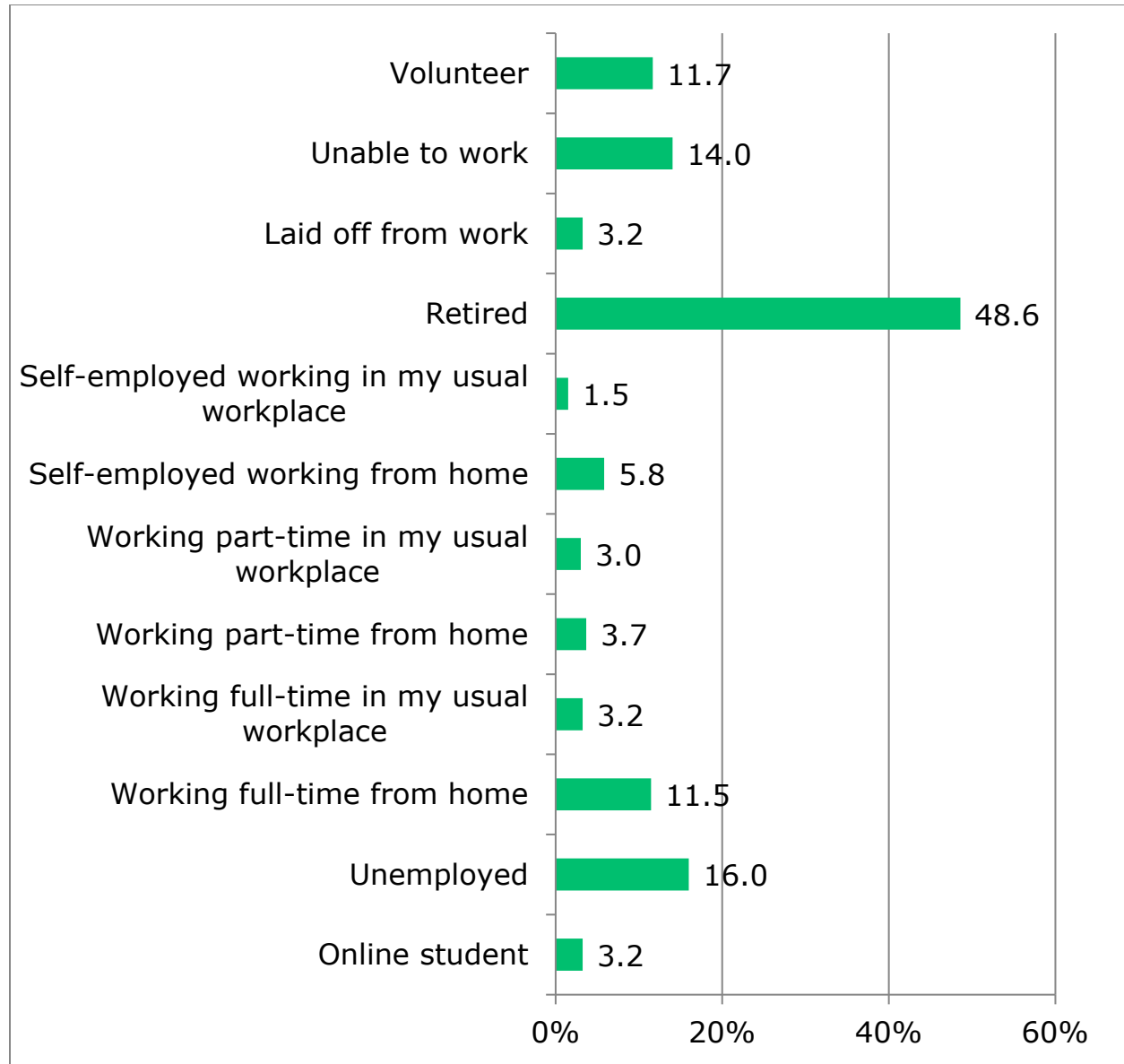
473/572 Responding

**Table 29: Question 27. What was your employment status before the March 1st onslaught of COVID-19 pandemic? (Check all that apply)**

Employment Status Pre-COVID-19	Responses %
Student	3.8
Unemployed	11.0
Working part-time	8.9
Working full-time	15.9
Self-employed	8.3
Retired	48.6
Unable to work	11.8
Volunteer	16.5
Other	4.4



**Figure 27: Question 28. What is your employment status since the COVID-19 pandemic started? (Check all that apply)**



463/572 Responding

**Table 30: Question 28. What is your employment status since the COVID-19 pandemic started? (Check all that apply)**

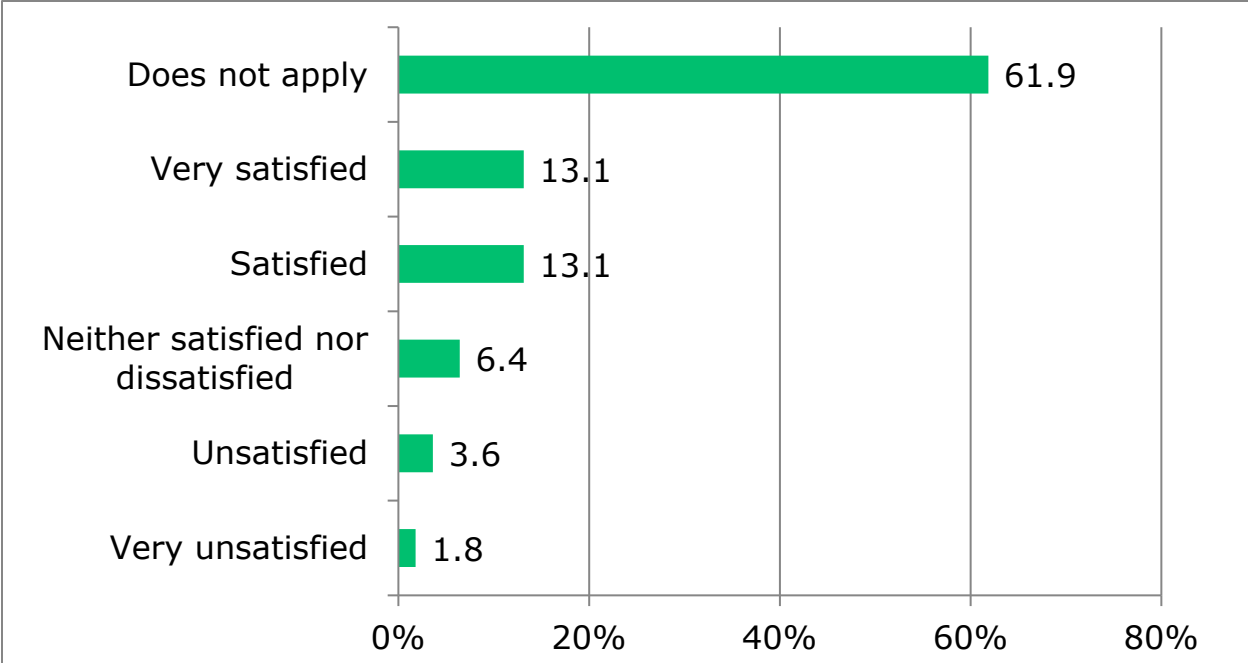
<b>Employment Status Post-COVID-19</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
Online student	3.2
Unemployed	16.0
Working full-time from home	11.5
Working full-time in my usual workplace	3.2
Working part-time from home	3.7
Working part-time in my usual workplace	3.0
Self-employed working from home	5.8
Self-employed working in my usual workplace	1.5
Retired	48.6
Laid off from work	3.2
Unable to work	14.0
Volunteer	11.7

#### 7.1.1 Support from employer (Questions 29 and 30)

In order to gauge whether employers are providing the necessary support to members of the vision loss community who were working prior to the onset of the pandemic, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the way their employer was handling their work situation either at home or in their usual workplace. Of the respondents who were still working, 68.8% said that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the way their employer was handling their work situation.

Those respondents who had been laid off were asked how satisfied they were with the way their employer had managed their employment separation. Of those laid off, 20.3% said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the way their employer had managed their employment separation while 12.7% said that they were either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the way their employer managed their employment separation. Most people were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied.

**Figure 28: Question 29. If you're still employed or volunteering, how satisfied are you with the way your employer is managing your work situation, whether in your normal workplace or at home, during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

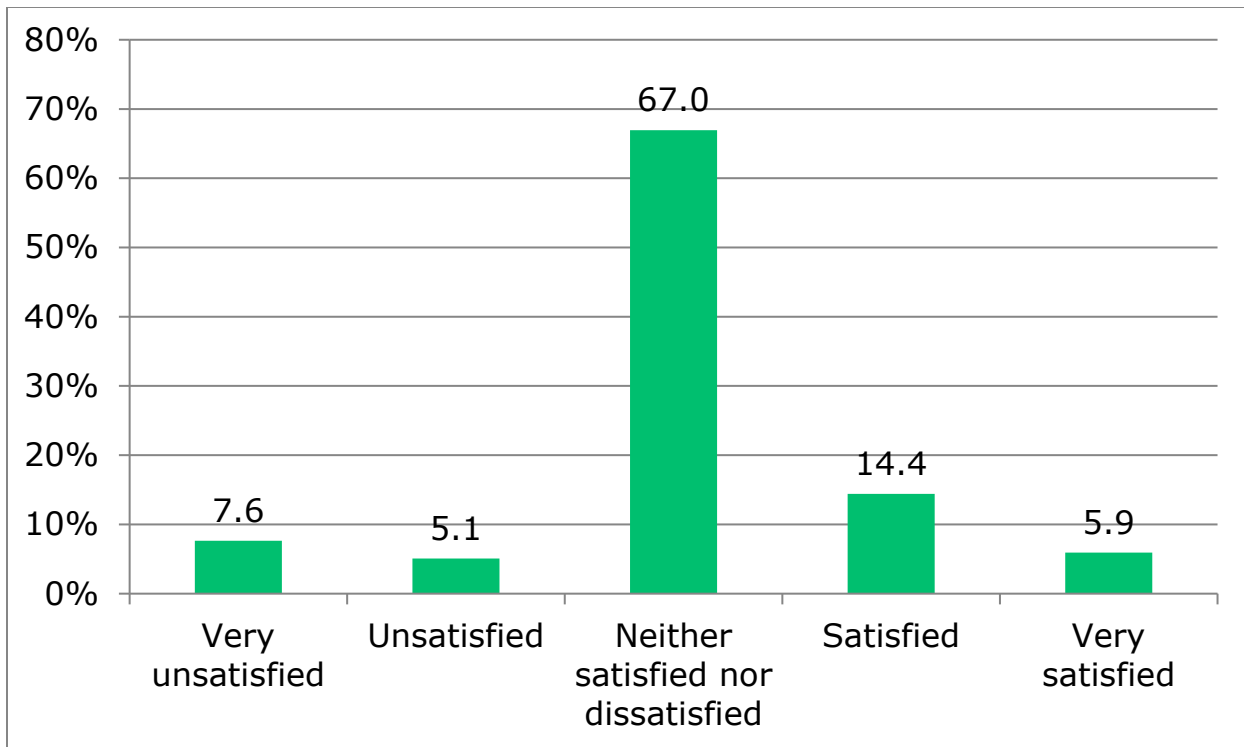


388/572 Responding

**Table 31: Question 29. If you're still employed or volunteering, how satisfied are you with the way your employer is managing your work situation, whether in your normal workplace or at home, during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Satisfaction with Current Employer	Responses %
Very unsatisfied	1.8
Unsatisfied	3.6
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	6.4
Satisfied	13.1
Very satisfied	13.1
Does not apply	61.9

**Figure 29: Question 30. If you've been laid off or terminated, how satisfied are you with the way your employer managed your employment separation?**



118/572 Responding

**Table 32: Question 30. If you've been laid off or terminated, how satisfied are you with the way your employer managed your employment separation?**

Satisfaction with Employer Handling of Layoff	Responses %
Very unsatisfied	7.6
Unsatisfied	5.1
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	67.0
Satisfied	14.4
Very satisfied	5.9

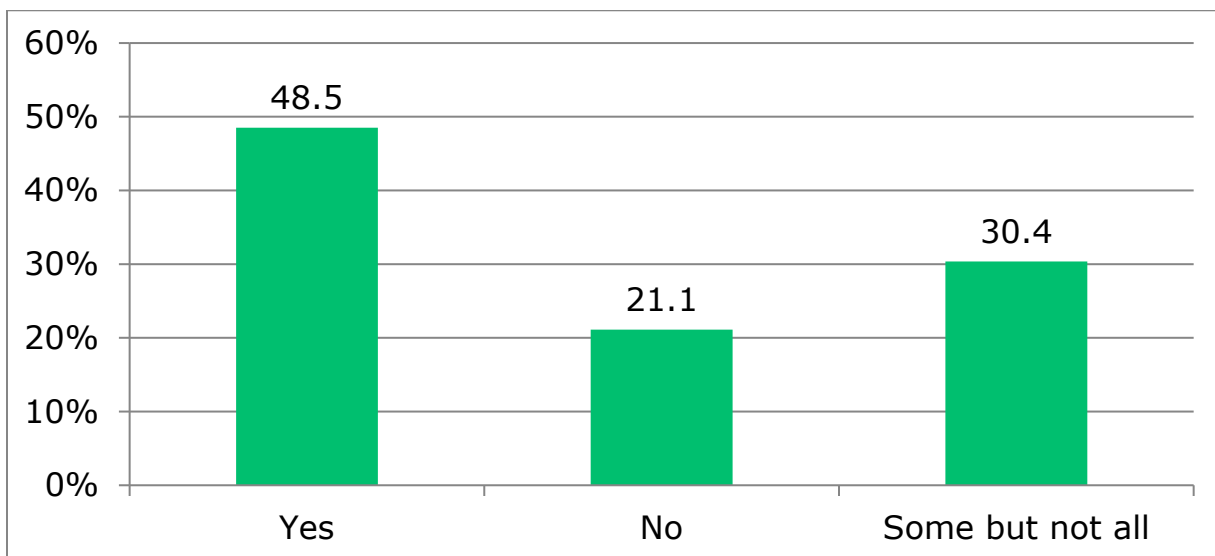
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## 7.2 Availability and financing of accessible devices at home (Questions 31 to 33)

### 7.2.1 Availability of accessible technology and devices at home (Question 31)

Question 28 revealed that most respondents who were still working were working from home. This being the case, it's important to know whether people who work from home, either full-time or part-time, have the accessible technology necessary to do the job from home, and whether they're getting the necessary financial support from their employer to enable them to acquire the accessible technology to work from home. Accordingly, Question 31 asked whether people had the accessible technology or devices necessary for them to do their job from home. About half (48.5%) said that they did, 21.1% said they didn't, and the remaining 30.4% said that they had some but not all the accessible technology and devices required.

**Figure 30: Question 31. If you weren't previously working from home, do you have the accessible technology or devices necessary to do your job from home?**



270/572 Responding

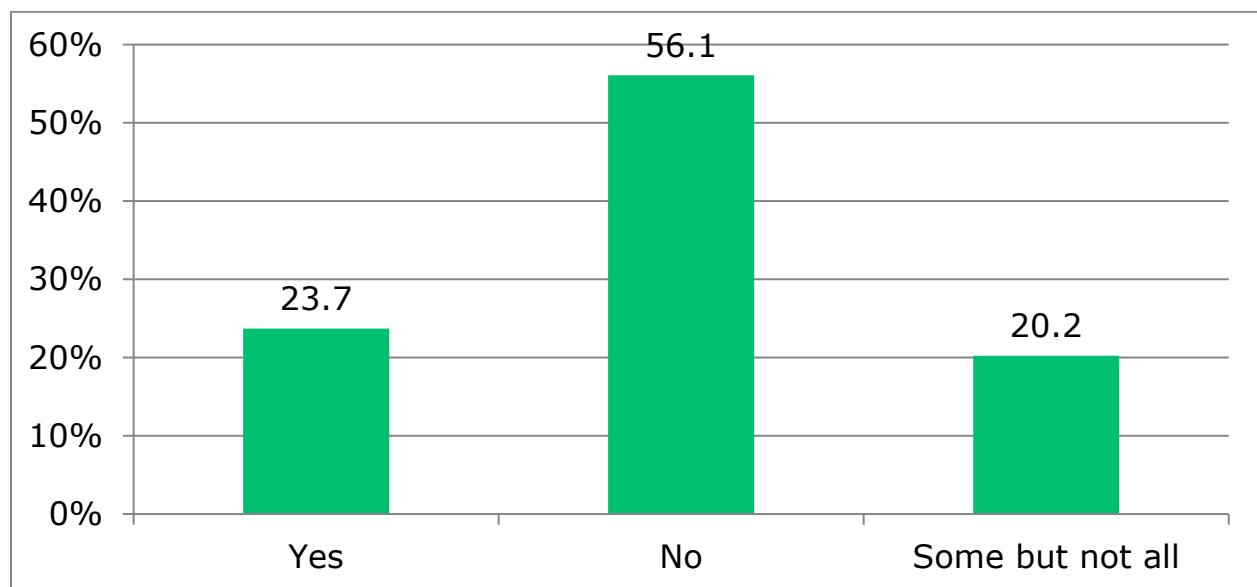
**Table 33: Question 31. If you weren't previously working from home, do you have the accessible technology or devices necessary to do your job from home?**

Availability of Accessible Technology at Home	Responses %
Yes	48.5
No	21.1
Some but not all	30.4

**7.2.2 Employer provision of devices (Question 32)**

People who required accessible technology or devices to work from home were asked whether their employer would provide the accessible technology or devices. An astounding 56.1% of respondents to this question said that their employer wouldn't supply the accessible technology or devices for the employee to work from home and a further 20.2% said that their employer would only provide some but not all of the accessible technology or devices they need. Only 23.7% said that their employer would provide them with all that they require.

**Figure 31: Question 32. If you don't have the necessary accessible technology or devices at home, will your employer supply them?**



173/572 Responding

**Table 34: Question 32. If you don't have the necessary accessible technology or devices at home, will your employer supply them?**

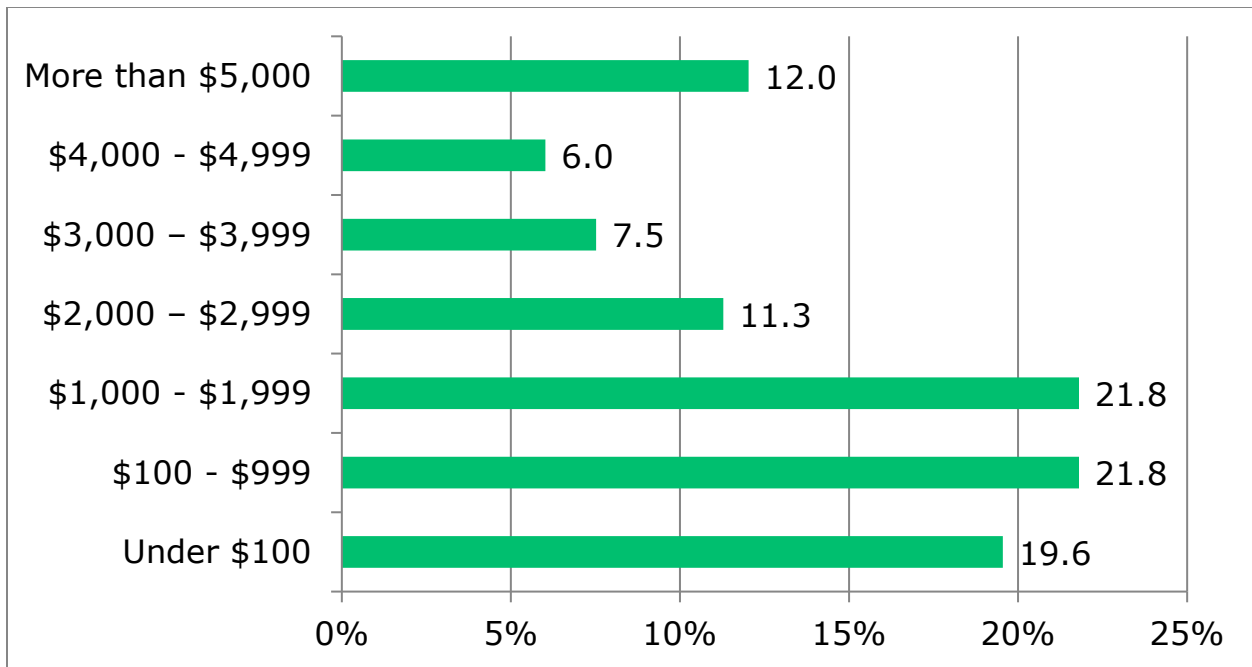
<b>Employer Supplying Accessible Technology</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
Yes	23.7
No	56.1
Some but not all	20.2

### 7.2.3 Financing of necessary accessible technology or devices (Question 33)

Question 32 revealed that there were a large number of respondents working from home who required accessible technology or devices to do their job from home who were not getting what they required from their employer. Question 33 goes on to ask how much the technology or devices were costing those who self-funded their technology and/or devices. There was a wide range of responses to this question, with 41.4% of respondents having spent under \$1,000. However, a lot of people appear to have spent large sums in order to fund the necessary requirements, with 12.0% of people having spent over \$5,000.

The answers to Questions 31 through 33 reveal the lack of financial support from employers and the resulting additional financial burden that has been incurred on members of the vision loss community as a result of their working from home due to COVID-19. Employers should be encouraged to support their blind or partially-sighted employees to enable them to acquire the necessary accessible technology and devices so that they can work from home. A government subsidy for the acquisition of accessible technology would be a welcome financial support for those who have self-financed their requirements.

**Figure 32: Question 33. If you self-funded the necessary accessible technology and devices to work from home, what was your cost?**



133/572 Responding

**Table 35: Question 33. If you self-funded the necessary accessible technology and devices to work from home, what was your cost?**

Cost of Self-Funded Technology	Responses %
Under \$100	19.6
\$100 - \$999	21.8
\$1,000 - \$1,999	21.8
\$2,000 - \$2,999	11.3
\$3,000 - \$3,999	7.5
\$4,000 - \$4,999	6.0
More than \$5,000	12.0



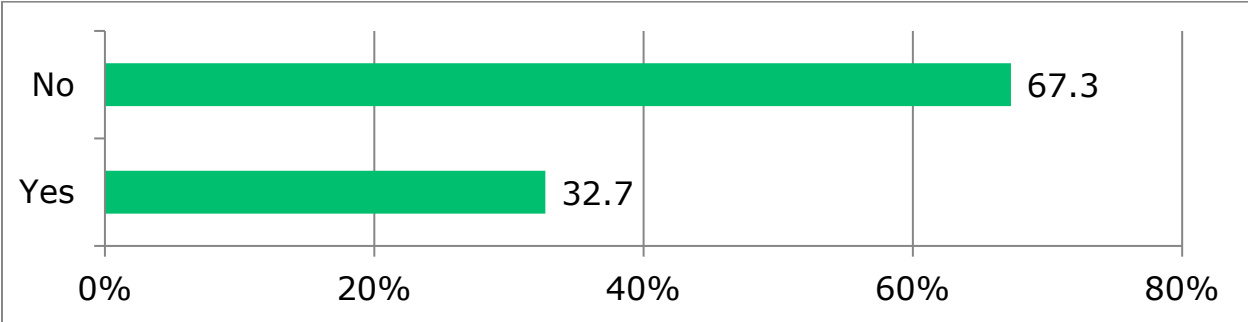
# 8 FINANCIAL ISSUES

Most Canadians are feeling the financial pressure at this time. This survey aimed to ascertain whether the vision loss community was particularly hard hit, whether they were aware of financial subsidies from governments that were available to them, and whether they were making use of these subsidies.

## 8.1 Government subsidies (Question 34)

This question asked whether people were anticipating accessing government assistance due to COVID-19. Only about a third of respondents (32.7%) said that they anticipated accessing assistance. It's not clear whether those who said they weren't going to access the assistance weren't eligible for the assistance or whether they had the means to support themselves without the assistance.

**Figure 33: Question 34. If you're experiencing a loss of income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, do you anticipate being able to access governmental financial assistance?**



269/572 Responding

**Table 36: Question 34. If you're experiencing a loss of income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, do you anticipate being able to access governmental financial assistance?**

Anticipate Government Assistance	Responses %
Yes	32.7
No	67.3

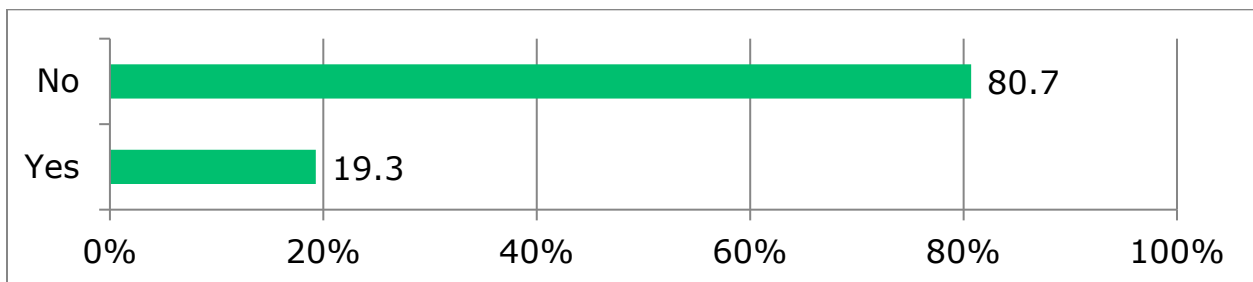
## 8.2 Financial concerns (Questions 35 to 40)

In order to ascertain how concerned respondents were with respect to their ability to meet their financial obligations, a series of questions were asked that addressed specific financial obligations.

### 8.2.1 Concern over ability to pay for groceries and other essential items (Question 35)

19.3% of respondents said that they were concerned about their ability to pay for their groceries and other essential items as a result of COVID-19.

**Figure 34: Question 35. Are you concerned that you won't be able to pay for groceries and other essential items due to the impact of COVID-19?**



451/572 Responding

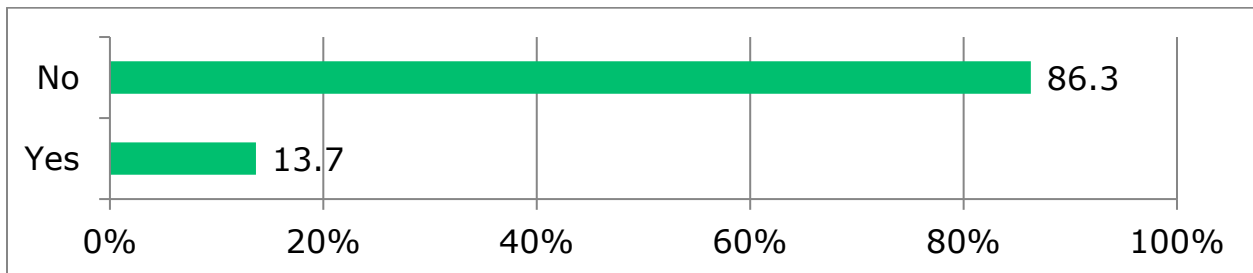
**Table 37: Question 35. Are you concerned that you won't be able to pay for groceries and other essential items due to the impact of COVID-19?**

Concern Over Ability to Pay for Groceries	Responses %
Yes	19.3
No	80.7

**8.2.2 Concern over ability to pay rent or mortgage (Question 36)**

13.7% of respondents said that they were concerned about their ability to pay their rent or mortgage as a result of COVID-19.

**Figure 35: Question 36. Are you concerned that you won't be able to pay your rent or mortgage due to the impact of COVID-19?**



453/572 Responding

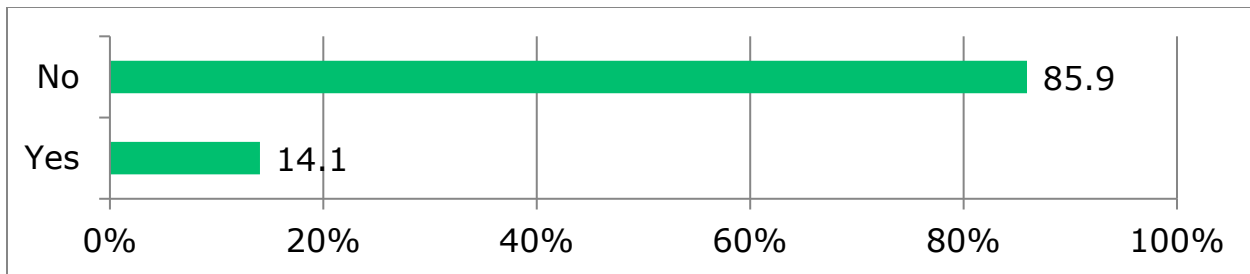
**Table 38: Question 36. Are you concerned that you won't be able to pay your rent or mortgage due to the impact of COVID-19?**

Concern Over Ability to Pay for Mortgage/Rent	Responses %
Yes	13.7
No	86.3

**Concern over ability to pay for utilities (Question 37)**

14.1% of respondents said that they were concerned about their ability to pay for their utilities (gas, electricity, oil, and/or water) as a result of COVID-19.

**Figure 36: Question 37. Are you concerned that you won't be able to pay for utilities (gas, hydro, oil, and/or water) due to the impact of COVID-19?**



448/572 Responding

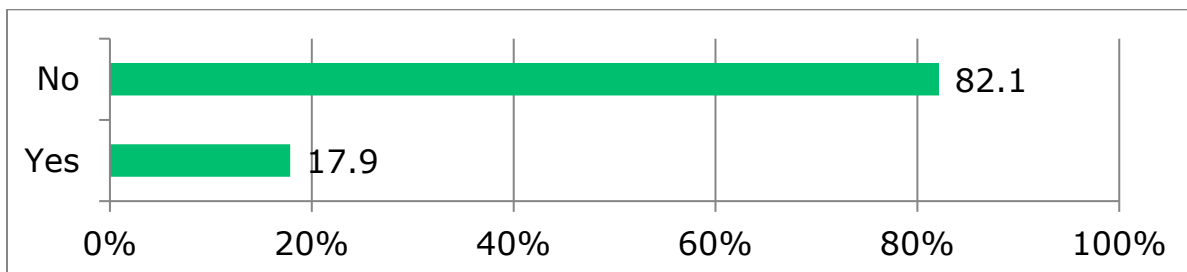
**Table 39: Question 37. Are you concerned that you won't be able to pay for utilities (gas, hydro, oil, and/or water) due to the impact of COVID-19?**

Concern Over Ability to Pay for Utilities	Responses %
Yes	14.1
No	85.9

### 8.2.3 Concern over ability to meet financial obligations (Question 38)

17.9% of respondents said that they were concerned about their ability to maintain an up-to-date status with bank loans, credit cards, and other financial responsibilities as a result of COVID-19.

**Figure 37: Question 38. Are you concerned that you won't be able to maintain an up-to-date status with bank loans, credit cards, and other financial responsibilities due to the impact of COVID-19?**



448/572 Responding

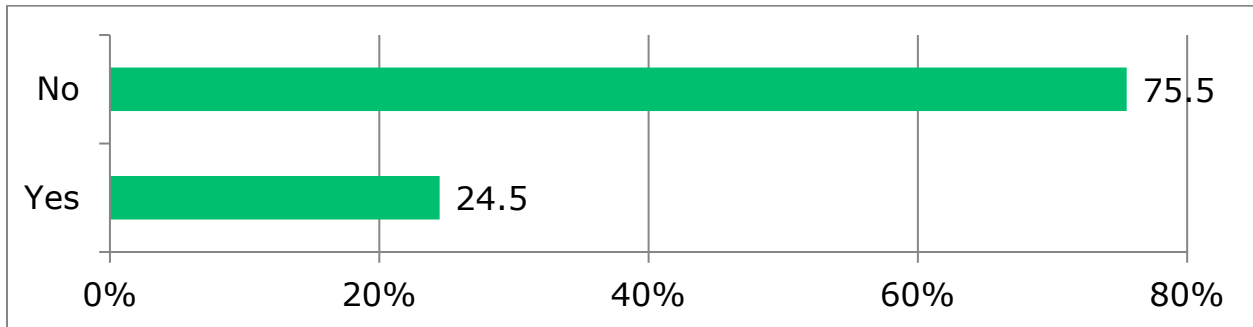
**Table 40: Question 38. Are you concerned that you won't be able to maintain an up-to-date status with bank loans, credit cards, and other financial responsibilities due to the impact of COVID-19?**

Concern Over Ability to Pay for Financial Obligations	Responses %
Yes	17.9
No	82.1

8.2.4 Concern over ability to afford the internet in the future (Question 39)

24.5% of respondents said that they were concerned they may not be able to afford the internet in the future.

**Figure 38: Question 39. If you rely on the internet for either work or social contact, are you concerned that you may not be able to afford it in the future?**



441/572 Responding

**Table 41: Question 39. If you rely on the internet for either work or social contact, are you concerned that you may not be able to afford it in the future?**

Concern Over Ability to Pay for Internet	Responses %
Yes	24.5
No	75.5

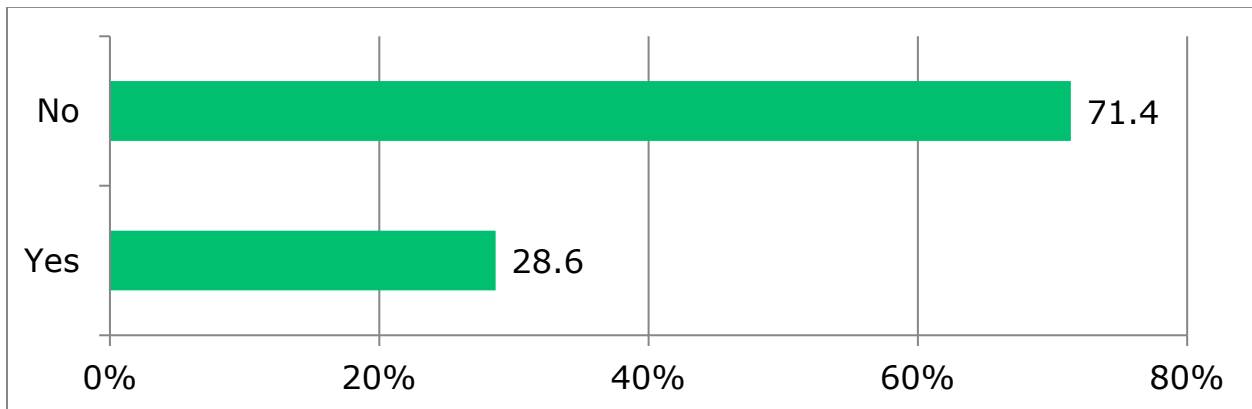
### 8.2.5 Concern over ability to maintain present standard of living (Question 40)

28.6% of respondents said that they were concerned that they may not have the financial capability to maintain their present standard of living without financial assistance.

To summarize the concerns in Questions 35 through to 40, most people aren't concerned with their ability to meet financial obligations, which means that assistance programs should aim to understand the needs of the most vulnerable respondents who are concerned about their ability to meet obligations and who need support at this time.

The sub-analysis of people who are overly stressed at this time reveals that there's an association between overall feelings of stress and concerns over meeting financial obligations. This will be discussed in Section 16 below.

**Figure 39: Question 40. Are you concerned that under the present circumstances, you won't have the financial capability to maintain your present standard of living without financial assistance?**



447/572 Responding

**Table 42: Question 40. Are you concerned that under the present circumstances, you won't have the financial capability to maintain your present standard of living without financial assistance?**

Concern Over Ability to Maintain Standard of Living	Responses %
Yes	28.6
No	71.4

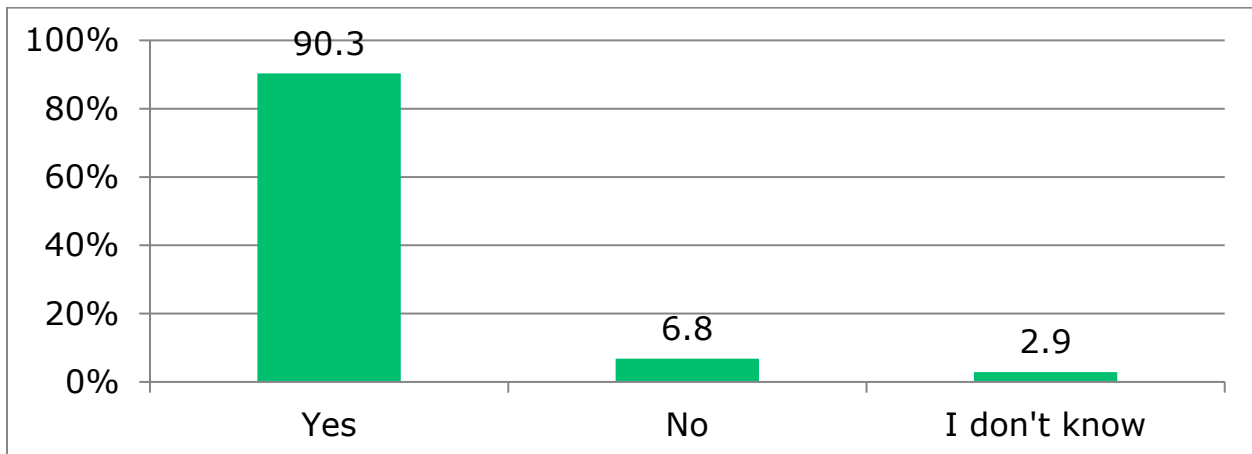
## 9 CONNECTING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

News reports indicate that many people have been able to maintain connection with family and friends via email, social media, video conferencing, and other similar technologies. It was deemed important to understand whether members of the vision loss community had the basic technology to enable them to connect electronically.

### 9.1 Technology to maintain social connections (Question 41)

90.3% of respondents said that they did have the necessary technology. Since the current survey was conducted electronically, this result may not be reflective of the vision loss community as a whole but can be interpreted as meaning that almost everyone who has a computer also has the necessary apps that allow them to connect with family and friends.

**Figure 40: Question 41. Do you have the basic technology (e.g. smartphone or computer with internet and video conferencing ability such as Skype or Zoom) to enable you to connect with family, friends, or others?**



455/572 Responding

**Table 43: Question 41. Do you have the basic technology (e.g. smartphone or computer with internet and video conferencing ability such as Skype or Zoom) to enable you to connect with family, friends, or others?**

<b>Have Basic Technology to Connect with Family/Friends</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
Yes	90.3
No	6.8
I don't know	2.9

## **10 GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE**

Federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments have all been extremely active in managing communication about COVID-19 for all of their citizens. The CCB felt that it was important to assess the vision loss community's level of satisfaction with governments' performance in terms of keeping them informed at this time.

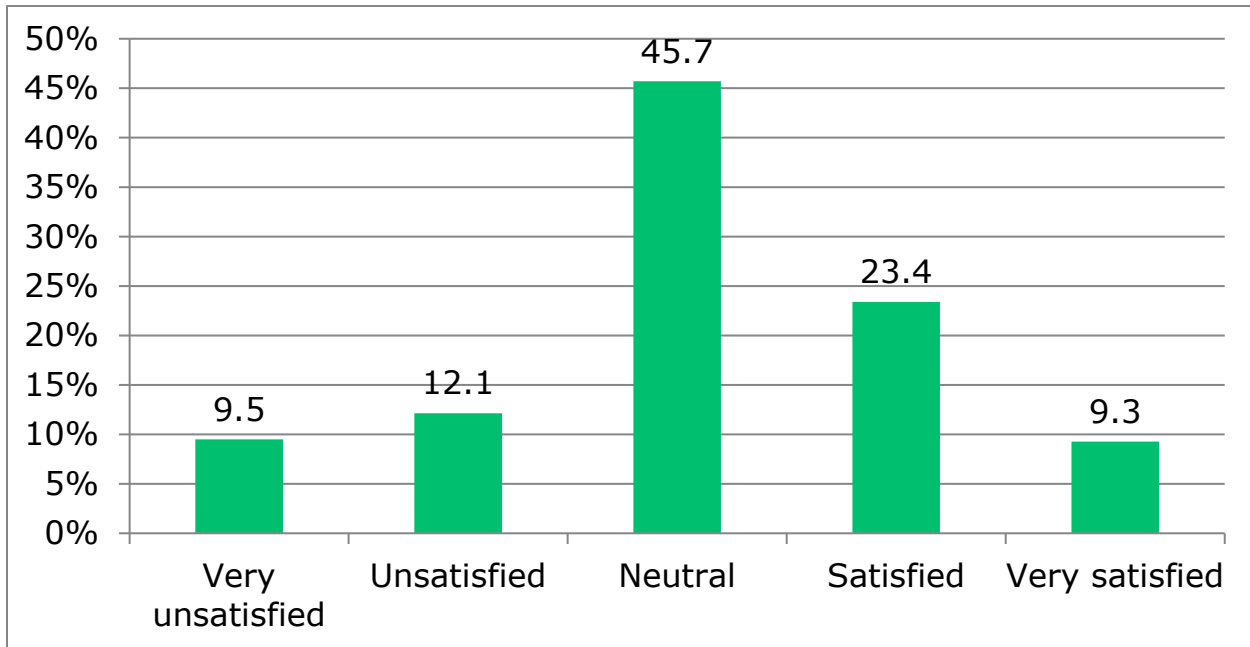
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### **10.1 Federal government (Question 42)**

32.7% of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied, compared with 21.6% of respondents who were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. The bulk of respondents were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied.



**Figure 41: Question 42. How would you rate the performance of the federal government in keeping the blind, deaf-blind, and partially-sighted communities informed about the COVID-19 situation?**



453/572 Responding

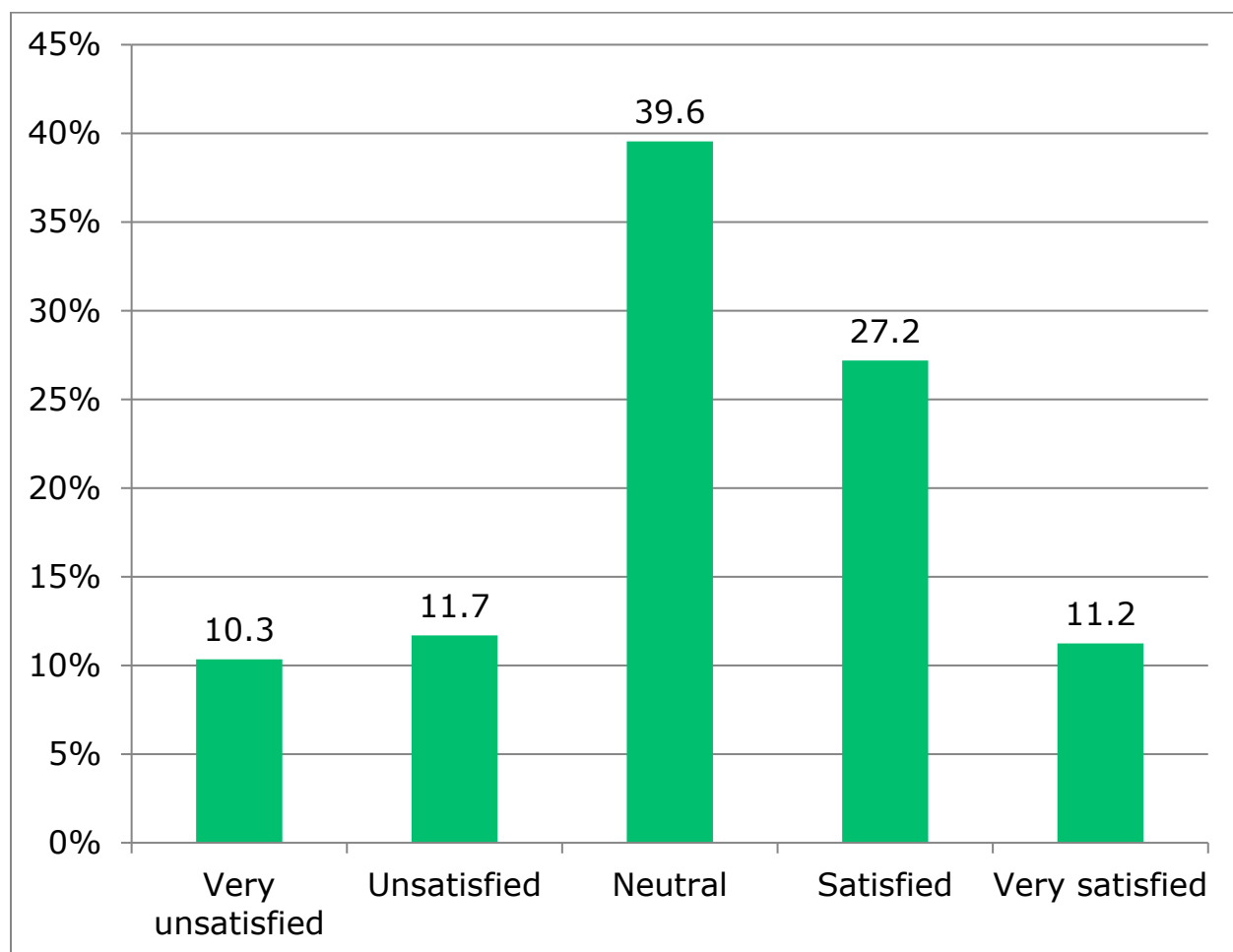
**Table 44: Question 42. How would you rate the performance of the federal government in keeping the blind, deaf-blind, and partially-sighted communities informed about the COVID-19 situation?**

Satisfaction with Federal Government Handling of COVID-19	Responses %
Very unsatisfied	9.5
Unsatisfied	12.1
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	45.7
Satisfied	23.4
Very satisfied	9.3

## 10.2 Provincial government (Question 43)

38.4% of respondents from all provinces said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the performance of their provincial government, compared with 22.0% of respondents who were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. Once again, the bulk of respondents were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied.

**Figure 42: Question 43. How would you rate the performance of the provincial government in keeping the blind, deaf-blind, and partially-sighted communities informed about the COVID-19 situation?**



455/572 Responding

**Table 45: Question 43. How would you rate the performance of the provincial government in keeping the blind, deaf-blind, and partially-sighted communities informed about the COVID-19 situation?**

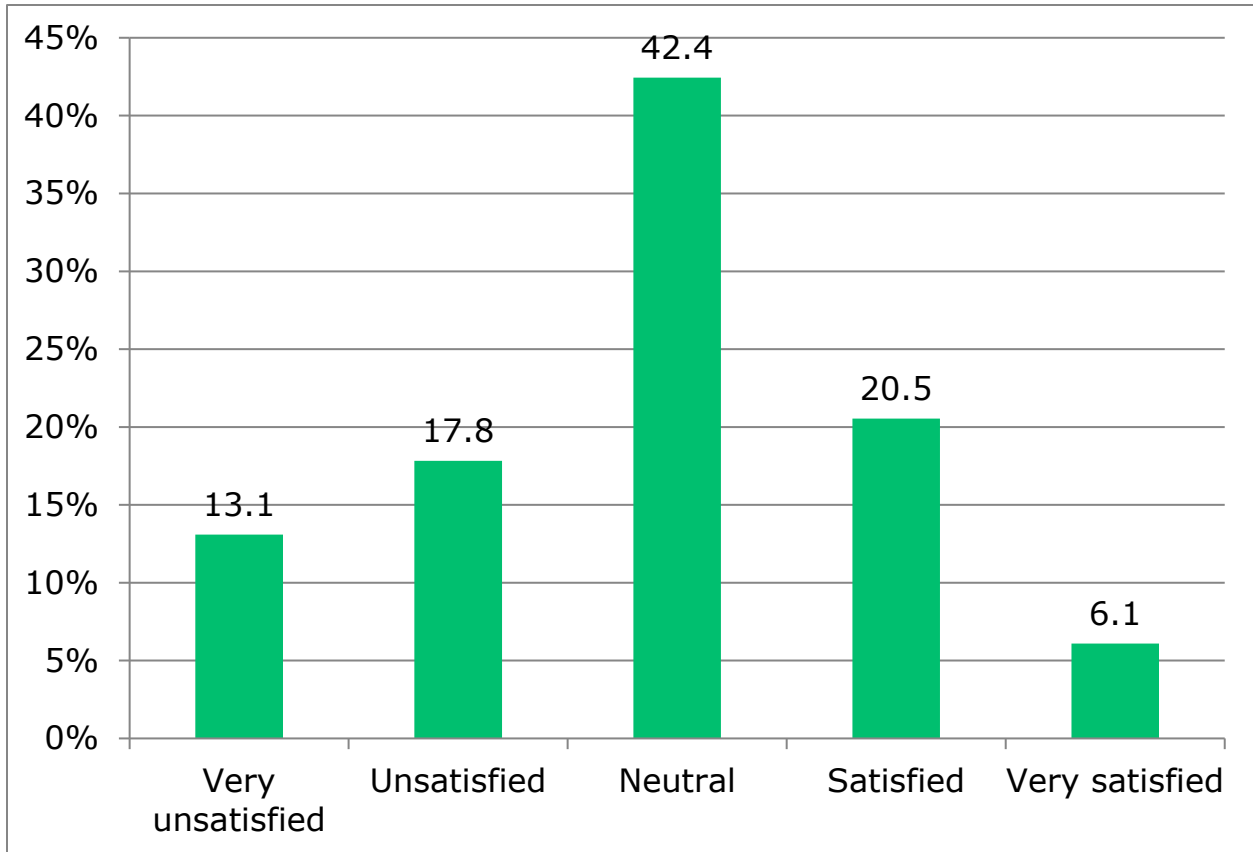
<b>Satisfaction with Provincial Government Handling of COVID-19</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
Very unsatisfied	10.3
Unsatisfied	11.7
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	39.6
Satisfied	27.2
Very satisfied	11.2

**10.3 Municipal governments (Question 44)**

26.6% of respondents from all municipalities said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the performance of their municipal government, compared with 30.9% of respondents who were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. Once again, the bulk of respondents were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied.

In summary, most people appear to be reasonably satisfied with the performance of the federal and provincial governments in terms of communicating with them at this stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. There’s a slight dissatisfaction with respect to the performance of municipal governments.

**Figure 43: Question 44. How would you rate the performance of your municipal government in keeping the blind, deaf-blind, and partially-sighted communities informed about the COVID-19 situation?**



443/572 Responding

**Table 46: Question 44. How would you rate the performance of your municipal government in keeping the blind, deaf-blind, and partially-sighted communities informed about the COVID-19 situation?**

Satisfaction with Municipal Government Handling of COVID-19	Responses %
Very unsatisfied	13.1
Unsatisfied	17.8
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	42.4
Satisfied	20.5
Very satisfied	6.1

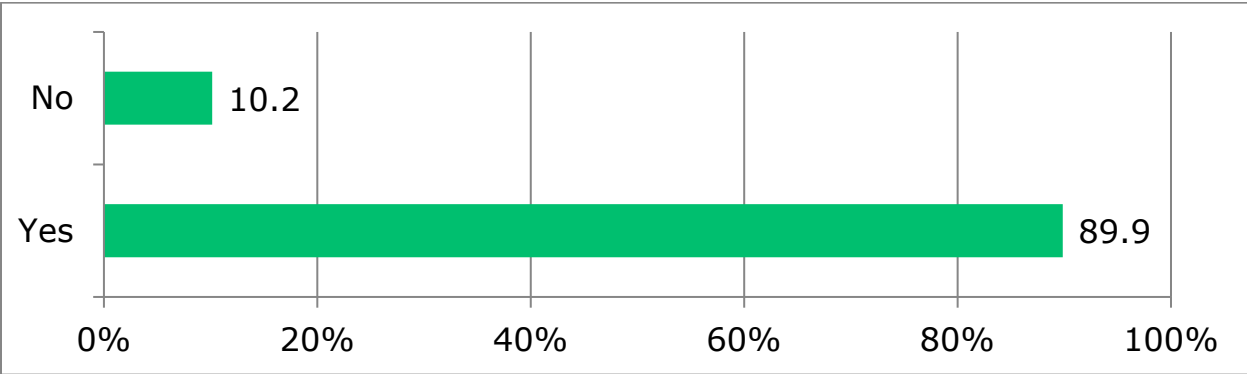
# 11 STRESS, FEAR, AND APPREHENSION

These questions were asked in order to assess the stress, fear, and apprehension that the vision loss community is experiencing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 11.1 Apprehension over well-being of family (Question 45)

Almost all respondents (89.9%) indicated that they were more apprehensive about the well-being of their family as a result of COVID-19.

**Figure 44: Question 45. Since the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, are you more apprehensive about the health and well-being of your family members, friends, and others close to you?**



453/572 Responding

**Table 47: Question 45. Since the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, are you more apprehensive about the health and well-being of your family members, friends, and others close to you?**

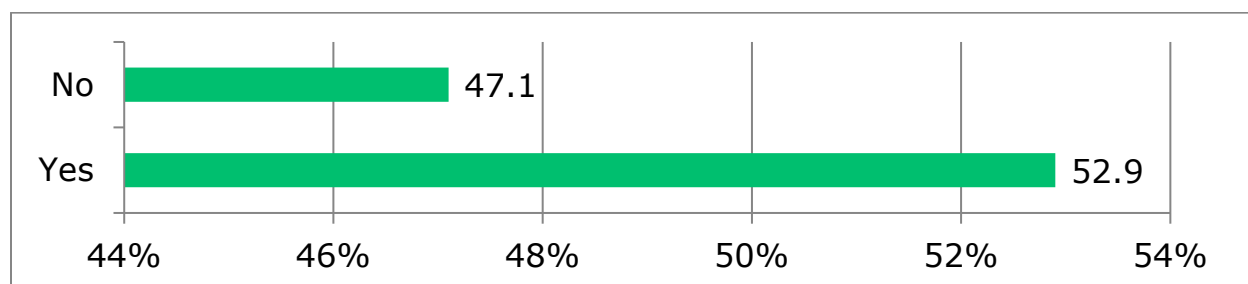
Apprehension Over Health/Well-Being of Family/Friends	Responses %
Yes	89.9
No	10.2

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## 11.2 Feeling overwhelmed (Question 46)

Just over half of respondents (52.9%) said that they were concerned that the additional stress from COVID-19 on their mental health may cause them to be overwhelmed. This response clearly identifies a need for support for the vision loss community in order to avoid their being overwhelmed by the gravity and magnitude of the pandemic.

**Figure 45: Question 46. Are you concerned that the effect of the added stress from the pandemic on your mental health may cause you to be overwhelmed?**



448/572 Responding

**Table 48: Question 46. Are you concerned that the effect of the added stress from the pandemic on your mental health may cause you to be overwhelmed?**

Concern Over Feeling Overwhelmed	Responses %
Yes	52.9
No	47.1

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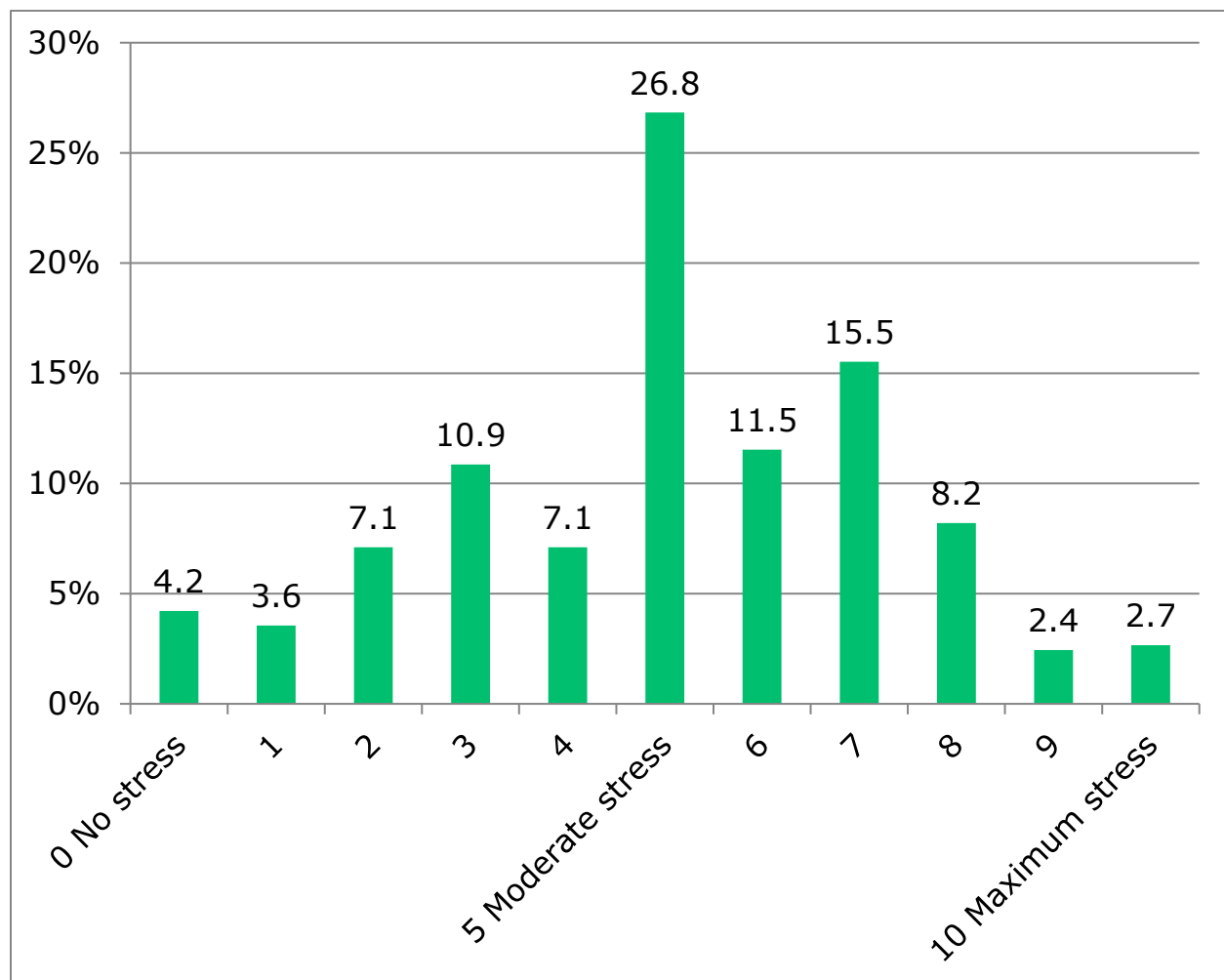
## 11.3 Current level of stress (Question 47)

While Question 46 identified that people might feel overwhelmed in the future, Question 47 was asked in order to identify the current levels of stress being experienced by the vision loss community. The responses varied widely, but of concern is that 40.3% of respondents said that they were experiencing more than a moderate level of stress, with 28.8% rating their stress level as 7 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10.

Questions 45 to 47 indicate that a large section of the vision loss community is currently under more than normal stress and is apprehensive that the future may overwhelm them. There's clearly a need to engage with the vision loss community to help allay fears and minimize the excessive stress that the community is experiencing at this time.

The main areas that are associated with this stress are in the sub-analysis shown in Section 16 below.

**Figure 46: Question 47. Can you identify the level of stress you're feeling currently with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, with 0 being no stress, 5 being moderate stress, and 10 being maximum stress?**



451/572 Responding

**Table 49: Question 47. Can you identify the level of stress you're feeling currently with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, with 0 being no stress, 5 being moderate stress, and 10 being maximum stress?**

<b>Current Level of Stress</b>	<b>Responses %</b>
0 No stress	4.2
1	3.6
2	7.1
3	10.9
4	7.1
5 Moderate stress	26.8
6	11.5
7	15.5
8	8.2
9	2.4
10 Maximum stress	2.7

## **12 SPECIAL NEEDS**

This question was designed to elicit all needs that hadn't been identified in previous questions. The answers were combined where common needs were stated, and are listed in Table 50.

The needs listed here reinforce some of the previous findings. The vision loss community has a need for technical and financial assistance. There are also individuals within the community who for one reason or another cannot work from home and others who have been laid off from work. People with seeing disabilities are having particular difficulties with shopping and maintaining social distancing from others. They're also concerned that others may not engage in social distancing with them, in particular staff in stores. Some people are feeling lonely, isolated, and fearful. They're concerned that they may not be able to access their doctors and are unaware of where COVID-19



testing sites are. Some people have other disabilities that make things even more difficult for them and they're concerned about the use of public transportation if they have to go out. The vision loss community is in need of support of all kinds – financial, governmental, and social/psychological.

## 12.1 Special needs not identified in the survey (Question 48)

**Table 50: Special needs not identified in survey**

148/572 Responding

Category	Needs and Concerns Identified
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video chatting services for working at home are inaccessible (i.e. Zoom, Skype)</li> <li>• Expensive assistive technology for telework</li> <li>• Additional assistive technologies for devices to navigate independently</li> <li>• Help with technology set-up for telework</li> <li>• Inaccessible internet</li> </ul>
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of living unsustainable</li> <li>• Increased price of necessities (groceries, hygiene products, etc.)</li> </ul>
Work/employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot work from home</li> <li>• Lost or cannot find work</li> </ul>
Shopping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inaccessible grocery pick-up or long wait times</li> <li>• Uncomfortable shopping for groceries in store</li> <li>• Concern for other family members running the errands</li> </ul>
Social distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to maintain social distancing due to vision impairment</li> <li>• Fear of close contact with medical professionals for unrelated COVID-19 conditions</li> <li>• Others need to learn to properly social distance themselves</li> </ul>
Fears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of developing mental health conditions or worsening conditions if this continues</li> </ul>

Category	Needs and Concerns Identified
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolation and loneliness</li> <li>• Need for support</li> </ul>
Personal/household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal grooming</li> <li>• House cleaning services cancelled</li> </ul>
Deaf-blind concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intervenors are no longer available for assistance</li> </ul>
Health concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other underlying conditions</li> <li>• Dependents with disabilities</li> </ul>
COVID-19 testing sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of information on COVID-19 testing sites</li> </ul>
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling forgotten by government</li> </ul>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public transit is the only option for some</li> <li>• Lack of accessible transportation</li> </ul>

### 12.1.1 Comments on special needs as relating to the impact of COVID-19:

Respondent 196: “As a totally blind individual I find that people whom I encounter while walking or shopping do not understand that I am unable to self distance from others. Firstly they regularly do not make me aware of their presence so that I can take the proper action. Secondly People often approach me closely not taking responsibility for self distancing to protect me. Thirdly the practice of controlling numbers in stores neglects the issue that I can not maintain proper self distancing when forced to line up either to enter the store or to reach a check out. There is no messaging on the media about considering how to help those who can not readily self distance due to a disability.”

Respondent 348: “The COVID19 measures advise us not to take public transit; public transit is the only option for most of us who are visually impaired; I feel that we are higher risk because of this”

Respondent 313: “The blind and partially sighted disabled I feel have no choice. Especially when they come back on funds! How can we get around when you don’t have any money. How do you try to get a part-time job to fill-in the funds. Difficult right now frustrating and depressing.”

Respondent 527: “Working from home requires me to update my assistive technology (computer, windows, jaws, etc.) in order to meet the security standard; staying home is also more expensive as everything now [has] to be ordered and any other service I need has to be paid; staying home all the time comes with another cost of supplements/vitamins to avoid to fall into depression especially when you have no family close by. I am working full-time but the cost of living in door has gone up [so much] that it is getting unsustainable”

Respondent 58: “Changing where you can get basic care done like closing of labs and having to go to unfamiliar parts of cities without any supports or technology is frightening. Also in rural areas there [are] no transportation services to get to the larger centres to receive medical attention. This has been a major issue across Canada and with Volunteer drivers unable to drive, people are at risk and not receiving medical care they need.”

Respondent 68: “I find it unfair that the government programs are not considering the needs of blind and visually impaired individuals. We need sighted guides to conduct any affairs outside the home, we need to be in touch with our environments and we need to be kept safe physically and financially. Most of us are usually unemployed or very underemployed. This causes discrepancies. I think that the governments should consider people with disabilities impact on our lives in the same way whether we are working or not- not all of us are on government subsidies and even so they are small amounts that were in need of being supplemented by other income. The federal I have not heard of any levels of government addressing the needs of blind or visually impaired individuals as well as those with other disabilities. We need jobs, we need groceries, to be able to live in dignity and to be considered.”

## **13 SPECIAL CONCERNS**

This question was designed to identify concerns – as opposed to needs – that the vision loss community might have at this time. However, there was a certain amount of overlap with the answers from the previous questions, so some of the issues are repeated here. The results were grouped and are available in summary in Table 51.

The vision loss community is afraid that they might get the virus, that they may develop mental health conditions, and of being alone and isolated. As expressed elsewhere, they’re concerned about maintaining social distancing and having others maintain social distancing with them. They have concerns about finances, many have health issues and

are concerned about potentially not being able to connect with a health care worker if the need arises, and many also have special concerns about treatment for their eye condition and are afraid that they may lose more vision.

They were concerned about the lack of accessible websites and the lack of accessible information from governments.

They were also afraid that they may not be able to get groceries and that there may be a food shortage and one respondent has identified a shortage of accessible thermometers.

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### **13.1 Particular concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic as it relates to vision loss and general health (Question 49)**

**Table 51: Particular concerns related to vision loss and general health**

451/572 Responding

Category	Concerns
Personal fears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of getting the virus</li> <li>• Fear that stress will worsen their other conditions</li> <li>• Concern and fear for family members, especially vulnerable groups</li> <li>• Developing or worsening mental health conditions (anxiety, depression, etc.)</li> <li>• Fear of going out alone</li> <li>• Fear of not maintaining a physically healthy lifestyle</li> <li>• Social isolation and loneliness</li> <li>• Uncertainty about the future</li> </ul>
Social distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to maintain social distancing due to vision impairment</li> <li>• Timeframe of social distancing</li> <li>• Others not keeping their distance</li> <li>• Fear of breaking the "rules" without knowing</li> <li>• Others not taking the virus seriously</li> <li>• Others not willing to help while shopping (staff, public)</li> </ul>
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of unfairness for the subsidies from the government</li> <li>• Standard of living unsustainable</li> <li>• Financial stresses and fears</li> </ul>
Shopping/food availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inaccessible grocery pick-up, not coming on time or at all</li> <li>• Shortage of food and where to get it</li> <li>• Accessibility barriers when shopping (signage, arrows, plexiglass, etc.)</li> </ul>

Health/personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to receive ongoing eye treatment</li> <li>• Fear of vision deteriorating</li> <li>• Fear of not knowing who to contact if they catch the virus</li> <li>• Drug shortage (new or refill prescription)</li> <li>• Need for house cleaning</li> </ul>
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not having accessible information from government</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intervenors for deaf-blind community are no longer available for assistance</li> </ul>
Blindness-related issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern about guide dog and who will take care of them if person catches virus</li> <li>• Concern about independence</li> <li>• Inability to help children with online schooling (accessibility barriers)</li> <li>• Websites not accessible (i.e. screen reader feature)</li> </ul>
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not knowing who to contact if need arises</li> <li>• Uncertainty of the duration of the pandemic</li> <li>• Reduced access to resources</li> </ul>

### 13.1.1 Comments on particular concerns regarding the impact of COVID-19 on vision and general health

Respondent 463: “Social distancing can and does result in people refusing to serve as sighted guides. Plexi-glass barriers at store checkout counters [make] it impossible for me to hear or interact with the person on the other side. Concerned that inadvertently getting too close to a person not living with me may get me fined for breaching social distancing guidelines/bylaws. also concerned about the reactions of others in that situation.”

Respondent 463: “I need injections every four weeks in order to maintain my current visual acuity. If I get sick and am unable to see my doctor or if my doctor gets sick and is not able to work during the period when I require the injection I am afraid my vision will deteriorate. I understand we need to keep healthy and keep each other healthy in my circumstances and for many others that my doctor will need to see for treatment in

the coming weeks and months. His work of doing injections for wet Macular degeneration is an ESSENTIAL SERVICE for me and for many others.”

Respondent 348: “Longer wait times for specialists as the health care system cancels all non-urgent cases and appointments; more mental health issues for an already marginalized community; more financial hardship for an already marginalized community.”

Respondent 348: “If I fall sick, I worry that I won't have the transportation to get tested or go to the hospital.... I'm afraid that HandyDart and taxis will not accept sick passengers. I am unwilling to risk the safety of family and friends unless my need for transportation is dire. I am afraid that I would only be able to access medical care if the situation were to become a true emergency. If testing sites are not in my neighborhood, I may have to forego testing unless my illness becomes severe. I would not be able to independently access drive-through Covid testing locations. Further, accessible versions of devices used to measure possible coronavirus symptoms such as thermometers and oximeters are nigh impossible to obtain right now. Talking or accessible Bluetooth thermometers are out of stock in many places, in-store and online.”

Respondent 68: “I am concerned that I can not easily go for groceries, shop for other essentials like drug store items/clothing or even simple things like getting a haircut. I am also concerned about not being able to go to a doctor when I need or have equal access to a virtual doctor appointment. I am also concerned that I am housebound not of my own choosing and must try to be creative when trying to practice social distance-being blind is isolating and even now that we must social distance- this does not work so well when you cannot see anything- it can be dangerous. I am also concerned about not being able to get needed supplies like sanitizing supplies and of course do not know if others are keeping their distance. I cannot easily use masks either.”

## **14 OVERALL IMPACT ON DAILY LIFE**

It was deemed important to measure the overall temperature of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the vision loss community by asking one overarching question on how people were handling everything.

The responses to this question are shown in Table 52. The respondents expressed a large number of fears and concerns that have arisen as a result of COVID-19. On the positive side, people have developed coping strategies for getting through this period.

Some of the comments of respondents are shown below. From one of the comments, we learn that at least some of the online learning sites aren't accessible. It should be essential that all educational materials are provided to students via accessible websites. This should be considered a basic right.

A number of respondents have expressed concern over what would happen to their guide dog if they became sick. Also, at least one respondent has observed a decline in guide dog skills due to lack of outdoor work (see quote below).

## 14.1 How people are handling the current situation and how much fear is impacting their daily lives (Question 50)

**Table 52: Impact of COVID-19 on daily life**

327/572 Responding

Category	Concern
Fears/concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial stress and fears</li> <li>• Concern and fear for family members, especially vulnerable groups</li> <li>• Being able to prioritize remaining healthy</li> <li>• Developing or worsening mental health conditions (anxiety, depression, etc.)</li> <li>• Fear of being laid off</li> <li>• Fear of bylaw officers not realizing they're blind (getting fined or being sent to jail)</li> <li>• Concern about receiving groceries</li> <li>• Fear about grocery shopping</li> <li>• Challenges of social distancing</li> <li>• Feeling trapped/helpless</li> <li>• Fear of getting and spreading the virus to others</li> <li>• Fear of being unable to work from home</li> <li>• Being forced to trust sighted people to practise social distancing</li> <li>• Concern over length of quarantine</li> <li>• Social isolation is becoming difficult to handle</li> </ul>



Category	Concern
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of motivation for personal activities, work, etc.</li> <li>• Family conflicts</li> <li>• Scared to go out</li> <li>• Feeling like a burden</li> <li>• Missing social activities (sports, seeing family, volunteering, church, etc.)</li> <li>• Fear that stress will begin worsening other conditions</li> <li>• Major impact on autonomy and self-confidence for the future</li> </ul>
What people are missing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing support groups</li> </ul>
How people are coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relying on friends and family for help</li> <li>• Staying physically active</li> <li>• Keeping busy</li> <li>• Communicating virtually with friends and family</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Following the advice of government and health experts</li> </ul>

#### 14.1.1 Comments on the overall impact of COVID-19 on daily life

Respondent 358: “Quite anxious about the concept of social distancing when walking and attempting to shop. With zero peripheral vision I'm nervous about peoples' responses if I inadvertently get too close to them. Just entering and exiting the elevator is now nerve wracking.”

Respondent 211: “Fear isn't governing my life nor am I overly fearful that I will get this form of extreme flu. I am taking all necessary precautions and hoping that sooner rather than later we can go back to living some sort of semblance of what we used to call a normal life. What is affecting my mental health is this prolonged and extreme isolation. As a blind person I already live a fairly limited life when referring to freedom of movement and independence and now even that small wedge of my active life has been completely eradicated. I am desperate to go to the gym, ride a computer bike and

have someone take me for a long walk...but I am losing hope that the measures we have to take will ever allow me to do those things again.”

Respondent 194: “Mentally very challenging. Under normal circumstances, in a hospital, Dr's office, and the staff finally click that I am blind and start asking how I can possibly live alone, is very upsetting. I let them know I just manage because I have to. Now I am forced to and I can't reach out for the help for people to come to my home to help me out. It feels like incarceration, not self-isolation.”

Respondent 516: “I'm apprehensive about shopping due to the challenges of social distancing when you are blind and can't see all the floor markings etc. also, sometimes need physical contact to assist me.”

Respondent 442: “I can only control what I do, and what precautions I take. The ignorance and carelessness of some members of the community regarding distancing etc. is disturbing and stressful.”

Respondent 317: “I am handling it well. I am more worried for my husband who is almost 80 years old and more at risk. I am somewhat concerned about who would look after my guide dog if we got sick.”

Respondent 150: “I am not getting regular exercise. I am not working my dog so her skills are deteriorating. I am worried my employer will not work out compatibility issues with technology and I will be laid off. I am worried that the people I rely on for help will get sick or need to self isolate. I am worried that I will not be able to get my medications due to shortages. I am using sick leave and vacation while compatibility issues are being addressed. Once they run out, I will not be paid if I am not working. While I am coping for the moment, this stress is building and I hope I will continue to be able to cope.”

Respondent 6: “I am lucky that I can work from home and stay home. I am somewhat fearful of getting the virus because as a blind person I touch surfaces all of the time,

when out, I do not know how far away I am from someone else. I cannot drive and easily get to appointments or to do shopping.”

Respondent 313: “I am overwhelmed with everything. It affects my health [and] it makes it worse the more I worry about it. I have difficulty going around with my vision loss and now I am concerned to not catch anything!”

## **15 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE WAY OLDER PEOPLE AND YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE COPING WITH THE PANDEMIC**

A chi-square analysis was used to see if there was any significant difference in the response rate between respondents who were 65 years of age and older and those who were 64 and younger.

The results showed that:

- More younger respondents had financial concerns related to their ability to:
  - ✓ Pay for groceries and other essentials
  - ✓ Pay their rent or mortgage
  - ✓ Pay for their utilities
  - ✓ Pay for their credit cards and other financial obligations
  - ✓ Have the finances to maintain their standard of living without financial assistance
- More younger respondents had a stress level  $\geq 7$
- More younger respondents were concerned that the effect of the added stress from the pandemic on their mental health may cause them to be overwhelmed

In summary, it appears that the younger people with vision loss are experiencing more stress than seniors with vision loss. The younger people appear to be more concerned over job-related issues and their financial responsibilities than the seniors. Younger people also appear to be more concerned over their mental health and the potential for feeling overwhelmed.

**Table 53: Cross-tabulation of responses by age**

	<b>Age ≥ 65 %</b>	<b>Age &lt; 65 %</b>	<b>X<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>p-Value</b>	<b>Significant Difference Yes/No</b>
Disabilities other than vision loss	31.8	25.6	1.3	.26	No
Live alone	24.8	30.0	0.89	.34	No
Not aware of any testing sites for COVID-19	58.1	59.1	0.01	.91	No
Don't know how to get to COVID-19 testing site	16.4	21.4	1.3	.26	No
Felt unsafe when out of home	40.0	49.1	1.4	.24	No
Awareness of possibility of meeting with health care provider online	86.5	85.4	0.014	.90	No
Worried about seeing a doctor if sick	79.1	69.8	0.48	.49	No
Worried about ability to get prescriptions	33.0	33.9	0.01	.92	No
Worried about someone accompanying you to doctor or hospital	36.5	45.0	0.88	.35	No
Worried about getting transportation to doctor or hospital	40.9	54.5	1.85	.17	No
Important medical appointments cancelled	43.5	31.3	3.5	.06	No
PCW not using PPE	24.1	22.5	0.05	.82	No
Concern over ability to pay for groceries	9.9	26.2	12.5	.0004	Yes

	Age ≥ 65 %	Age < 65 %	X <sup>2</sup>	p-Value	Significant Difference Yes/No
Concern over ability to pay for rent/mortgage	8.0	18.6	7.7	.0055	Yes
Concern over ability to pay for utilities	8.6	18.0	6.1	.014	Yes
Concern over ability to pay for credit cards and other financial obligations	9.9	23.7	9.8	.0017	Yes
Concern over having finances to maintain standard of living	14.1	39.9	19.6	.00001	Yes
Greater apprehension over well-being of family and friends	90.7	89.1	0.007	.93	No
Concern over feeling overwhelmed	42.6	62.1	5.0	.026	Yes
Stress level ≥7	20.8	35.8	6.5	.011	Yes

## 16 WHY PEOPLE ARE FEELING STRESSED

In order to see whether there was an association between the level of stress and the concerns asked about in the questionnaire, a chi-square analysis was conducted.

The results of this analysis shown in Table 54 compared the responses of people who rated their stress level as 7 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10 with those whose stress level was rated as less than 7.

A significantly higher percentage of respondents with a stress level ≥7 compared to those with a stress level <7 said:

- They didn't know how to get to the local COVID-19 testing site
- They didn't feel safe when they left their home
- They were worried about having someone accompanying them if they had to go to a doctor or a hospital

- They were worried about getting transportation if they had to go to a doctor or a hospital
- They were working full-time before COVID-19
- They were working full-time from home since COVID-19
- They were working full-time in usual workplace since COVID-19
- They had financial concerns related to their ability to:
  - ✓ Pay for groceries and other essentials
  - ✓ Pay their rent or mortgage
  - ✓ Pay for their utilities
  - ✓ Pay for their credit cards and other financial obligations
  - ✓ Have the finances to maintain their standard of living without financial assistance
- They were concerned that the effect of the added stress from the pandemic on their mental health may cause them to be overwhelmed

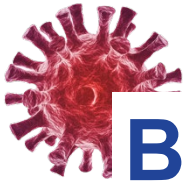
In summary, these results show that there's an association between stress level and concern over accessing the health care system, concern over ability to meet financial responsibilities, and job-related concerns. Higher stress was associated with a higher level of employment. Finally, the higher stress group was more concerned about their mental health and the potential for feeling overwhelmed.

**Table 54: Cross-tabulation of responses by stress**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Stress Level ≥7%</b>	<b>Stress Level &lt; 7%</b>	<b>χ<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>p-Value</b>	<b>Significant Difference Yes/No</b>
Disabilities other than vision loss	30.1	28.3	0.07	.79	No
Live alone	24.8	27.9	0.26	.61	No
Leaving home for essential work	32.6	21.5	3.50	.06	No
Not aware of any testing sites for COVID-19	64.3	55.5	0.74	0.39	No
Don't know how to get to COVID-19 testing site	26.2	15.2	4.8	.028	Yes
Felt unsafe when out of home	69.4	37.3	12.3	.004	Yes
Awareness of possibility of meeting with health care provider online	79.1	89.6	0.64	.42	No
Worried about seeing a doctor if sick	76.0	70.2	0.18	.67	No
Worried about ability to get prescriptions	28.9	22.5	0.86	.35	No
Worried about someone accompanying you to doctor or hospital	56.7	35.1	5.0	.025	Yes
Worried about getting transportation to doctor or hospital	66.4	40.8	5.6	.018	Yes
Important medical appointments cancelled	42.7	34.9	1.1	.29	No

<b>Response</b>	<b>Stress Level ≥7%</b>	<b>Stress Level &lt; 7%</b>	<b>χ<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>p-Value</b>	<b>Significant Difference Yes/No</b>
PCW not using PPE	28.8	20.1	1.22	.27	No
Working full-time before COVID-19	27	12.2	9.8	.0017	Yes
Working full-time from home since COVID-19	18.4	8.9	6.0	.014	Yes
Working full-time in usual workplace since COVID-19	8.0	1.6	10.1	.0015	Yes
Concern over ability to pay for groceries	34.4	12.6	16.8	.00004	Yes
Concern over ability to pay for rent/mortgage	30.0	8.0	24.1	.00001	Yes
Concern over ability to pay for utilities	26.8	8.6	17.3	.000032	Yes
Concern over ability to pay for credit cards and other financial obligations	30.0	12.7	11.9	.00056	Yes
Concern over having finances to maintain standard of living	46.3	20.9	14.5	.00014	Yes
Greater apprehension over well-being of family and friends	93.7	89.2	.12	.73	No
Concern over feeling overwhelmed	88.8	39.1	23.7	.00001	Yes





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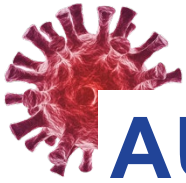
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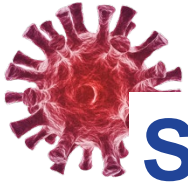
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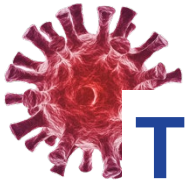


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# TODAY'S CCB:

The Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) is the Voice of the Blind™ in Canada and was founded 75 years ago in 1944 by returning blind veterans and schools of the blind. The CCB is a membership-based registered charity that brings together Canadians who are blind, deaf-blind, or living with vision loss through chapters within their own local communities that provide the opportunity to share common interests and social activities. The council works continuously to strengthen its membership, build on its 84 chapters across Canada, and promote a sense of purpose, self-esteem, and an enhanced quality of life amongst its members.

The CCB works tirelessly for people with vision loss through its advocacy, awareness campaigns, peer mentoring, sports adapted for people with vision loss, and the promotion of health and fitness. The CCB promotes peer support, as with its national Get Together with Technology (GTT) program, for those living with vision loss and provides programs and initiatives for the conservation of sight and the prevention of vision loss for all. This includes the CCB's Mobile Eye Clinics (MECs) and public awareness campaigns for vision health through regular eye exams. The CCB continues to grow and develop public awareness through White Cane Week, the Experience Expo, the Expo Panel Forum, *White Cane Magazine*, the Vision 2020 Gala, and the Vision 2020 Summit.

The CCB is proud of these efforts to change what it means to be blind and of its leadership role. It works collaboratively with stakeholder coalitions and key government agencies in attaining appropriate eye disease treatments in the prevention of blindness. The CCB leads initiatives that call for the provision of the very best in available medical treatments and the fostering of patients' rights for equal treatment with full disclosure, services, and rehabilitation for the blind, deaf-blind, and those with vision loss without limitation or discrimination, all while recognizing that blindness and vision loss are avoidable.

The CCB partners with government, several national organizations of and for the blind, health care organizations, various accessibility committees, and international organizations all dedicated to building public awareness and improving the well-being and quality of life of people with seeing disabilities. Acting both independently of and together with other stakeholders, the CCB monitors and advocates all levels of government on relevant legislation and services that affect the needs and interests of the vision loss community. It's through these relationships and efforts that the CCB is able to promote a better understanding of the barriers faced by those living with vision loss.

# WHITE CANE WEEK<sup>®</sup> 2021

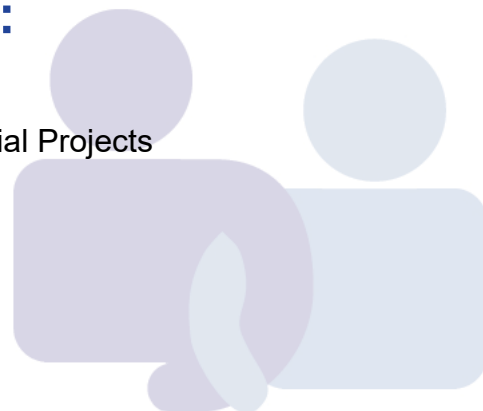
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