

THE COVID-19 SURVEY 2020

*How the international community in The Hague region is
dealing with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic*

This survey took place during in November/December 2020

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Introduction

ICAP was founded to build a bridge between the city's international community and government and civic organisations. In particular, ICAP has established an independent forum which represents and reflects the views of the international community on issues which have an impact on the attractiveness of the Netherlands as a place to live in and to do business.

In November 2020, The Hague International Centre asked ICAP to draw up a report based on ICAP's new survey to assess the way the international community is coping with the Covid-19 pandemic.

In particular, the survey looked at the impact of coronavirus on jobs and income, mental health and future plans.

Note: all the graphics and statistics in this report refer to respondents living in The Hague region only, unless otherwise stated.

In the press

Huurprijzen vrije sector Den Haag dalen door wegblijven expat

'No, expats are not leaving, but coronavirus has made it harder to move here'

Den Haag raakt door corona uit gratie bij expats

Baan kwijt, maar terug gaan naar huis can niet

Zo ervaren expats Nederland in coronatijd

Methodology

The research was commissioned to find out more about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the international community.

To this end, we approached dozens of groups, websites and other organisations with strong links to the international community and asked them to circulate the survey's website link.*

A number of organisations were approached personally by ICAP board members.

The survey was online for one month in late November, early December, to incorporate as many monthly newsletter schedules as well.

It was also circulated to the ICAP mailing list of over 2,700 people, who were also sent a reminder after two weeks.

*A full list is available on request

Methodology continued

Respondents

- In total, 2,376 people took part in the survey, 377 of whom lived in The Hague region as a whole. This is in line with what would be expected in the response rate, given the spread of the international community across the Netherlands.
- The survey looked at the The Hague respondents in general and carried out some comparisons between The Hague respondents and the total number of respondents, to assess if there were any main differences.
- Note: The demographic make-up of the respondents reflects earlier surveys but may not be representative of the international community as a whole in terms of age, nationality, income, duration of stay etc.

Questionnaire

- The survey was based on multiple choice, sliding scale and open questions. The questions were drawn up by ICAP, with input from IN Amsterdam.

Highlights: The Hague region

Almost a quarter of The Hague respondents said they had considered leaving the Netherlands because of coronavirus. Being with family in their home country was the main reason to want to leave.

62% said they were not aware of any international workers who had left the Netherlands because of coronavirus, 24% were aware of 'one or two'.

Just 16% say coronavirus is **not having** an impact on their mental health.

62% of The Hague respondents are worried about the impact of coronavirus on their household income, compared with 65% of total respondents and 70% of respondents living in Amsterdam.

Coronavirus has already had an impact on the household income of 36% of respondents. Of them, around 25% had lost at least 50% of their household income.

48% wanted the government and other organisations to provide more support via information and events. Travel was the most important topic requiring better information.

The respondents

In this section, we look at the demographics of the survey respondents.

Note: All the graphs refer to The Hague region respondents only, unless otherwise stated.

Who took part?

2,376 people completed the questionnaire, of whom 377 lived in The Hague region*.

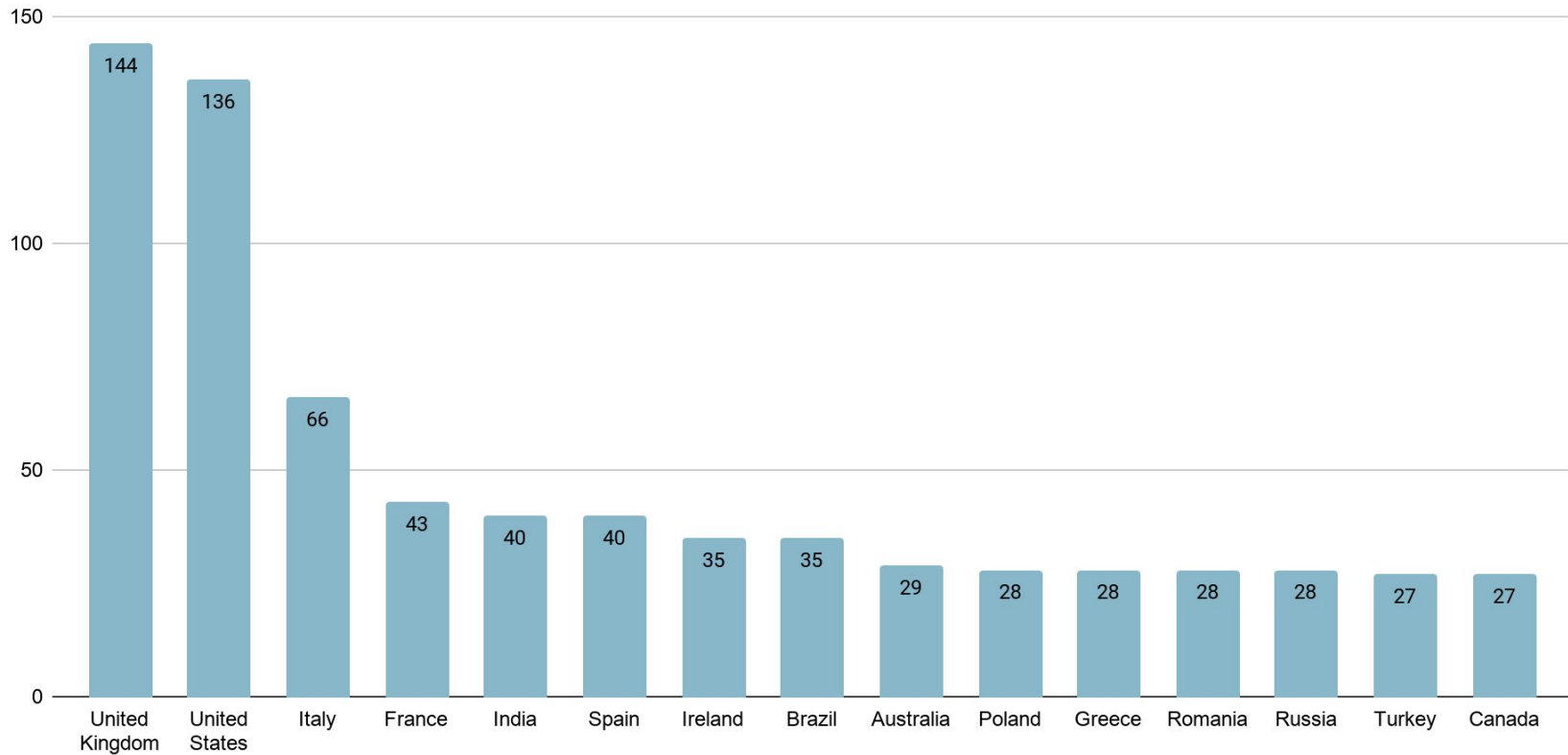
Of the The Hague respondents:

- 35% live with a partner, 35% with a partner and children and 19% live alone
- 16% had a household income of less than €3,000 gross a month and 22% have a household income of more than €8,000 gross per month
- 52% are from the EU, 23% have a five year or permanent residency permit, 7% have a highly-skilled migrants permit
- In total people from 62 different countries are included in The Hague results

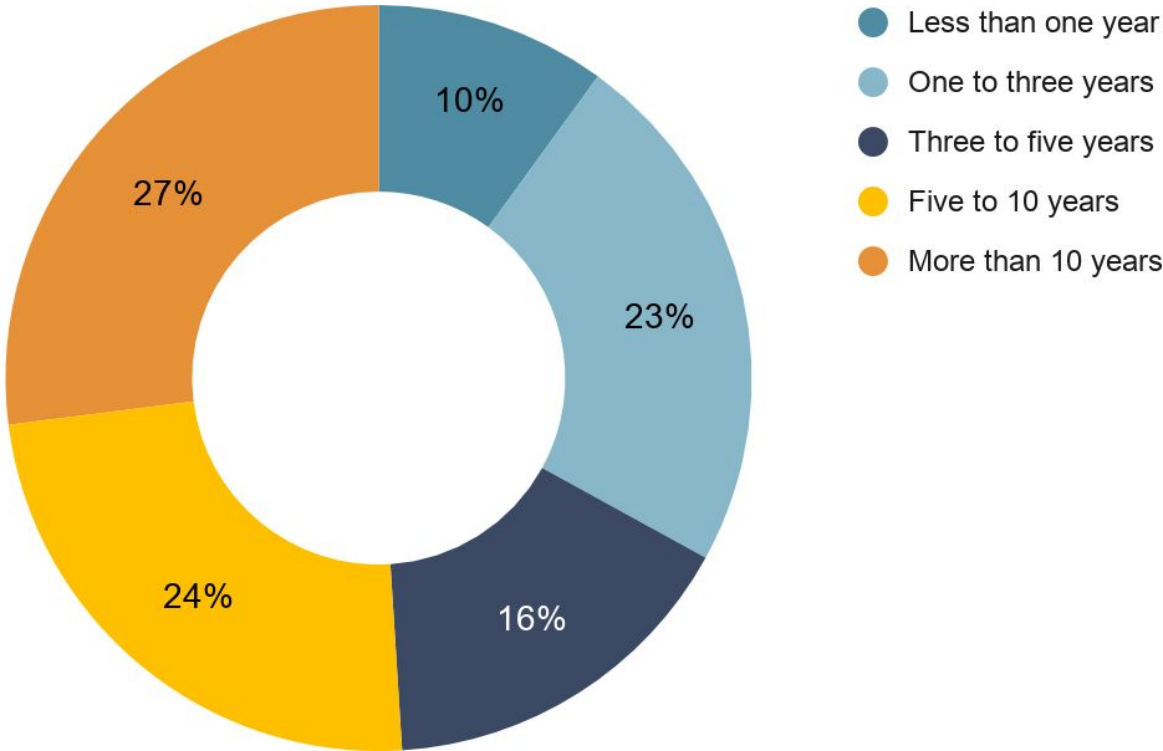
**The Hague, Wassenaar, Rijswijk, Delft, Leidschendam-Voorburg*

Where are you from?

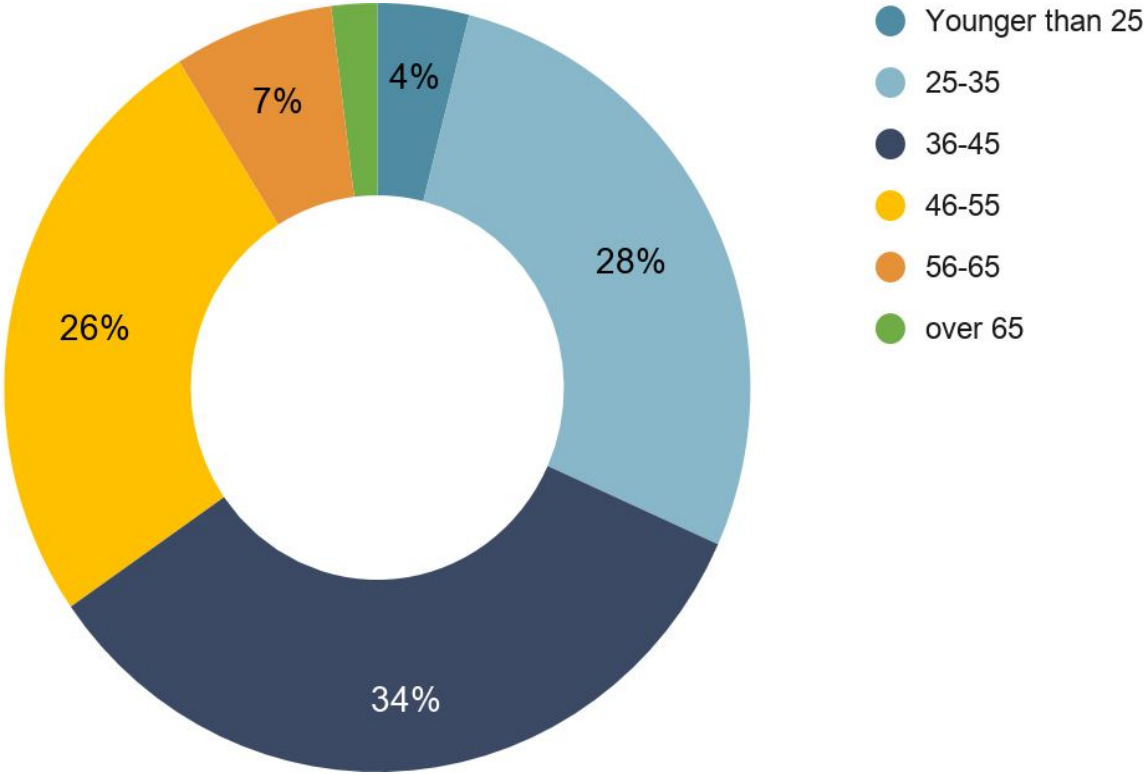
In total, people with 105 different nationalities took part in the survey. The Hague respondents came from 62 different countries.



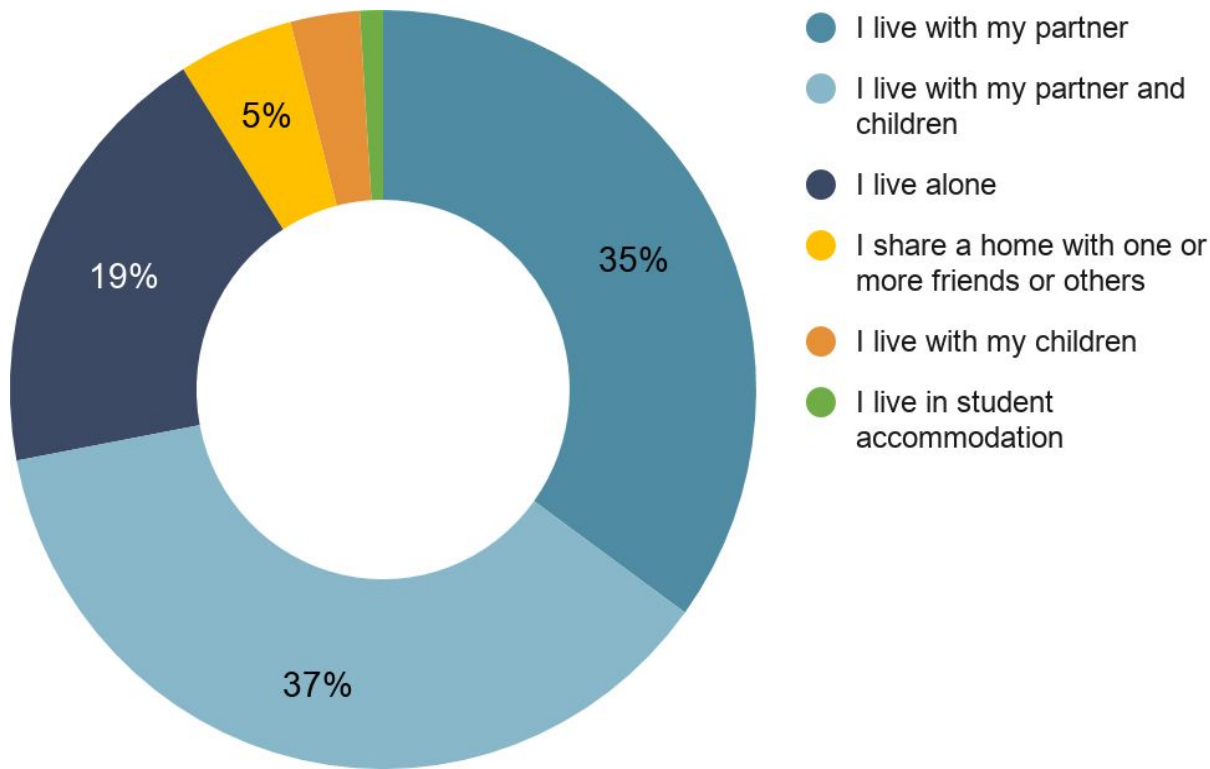
How long have you lived in The Netherlands?



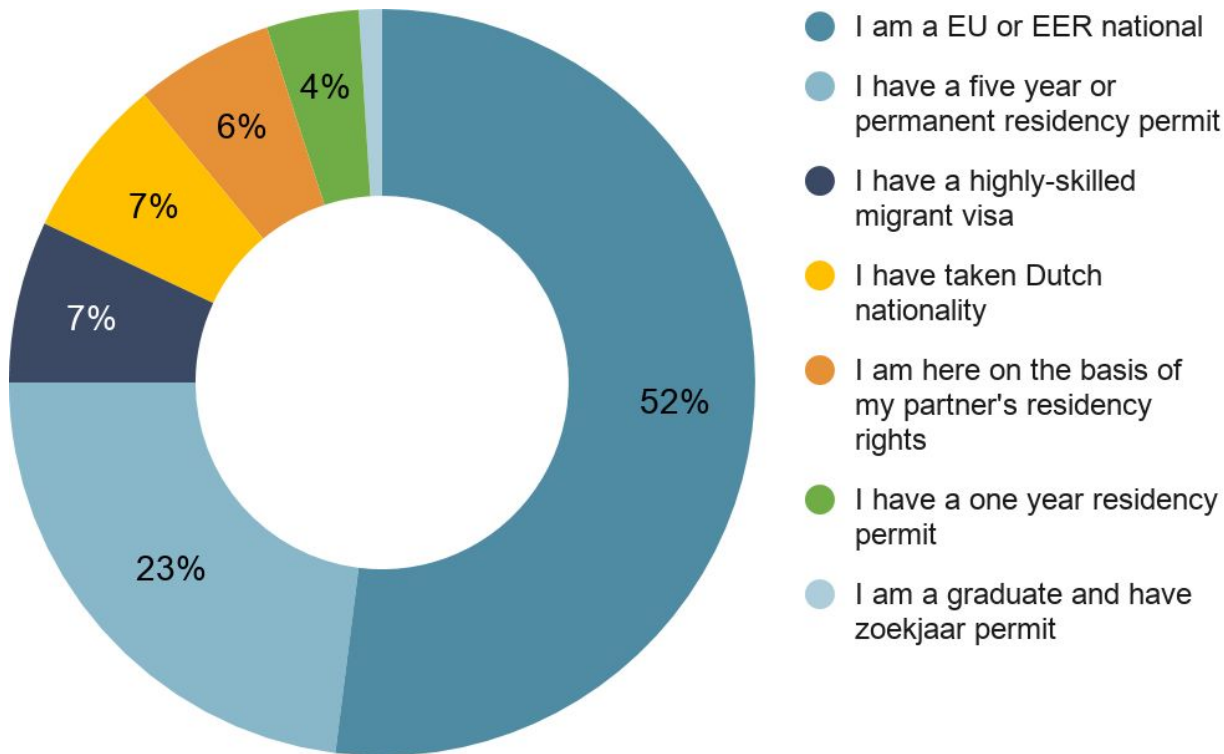
How old are you?



What is your household set-up?



What is your residency status?



Attitudes to Covid-19

In this section, we look at general attitudes to coronavirus within the international community in The Hague

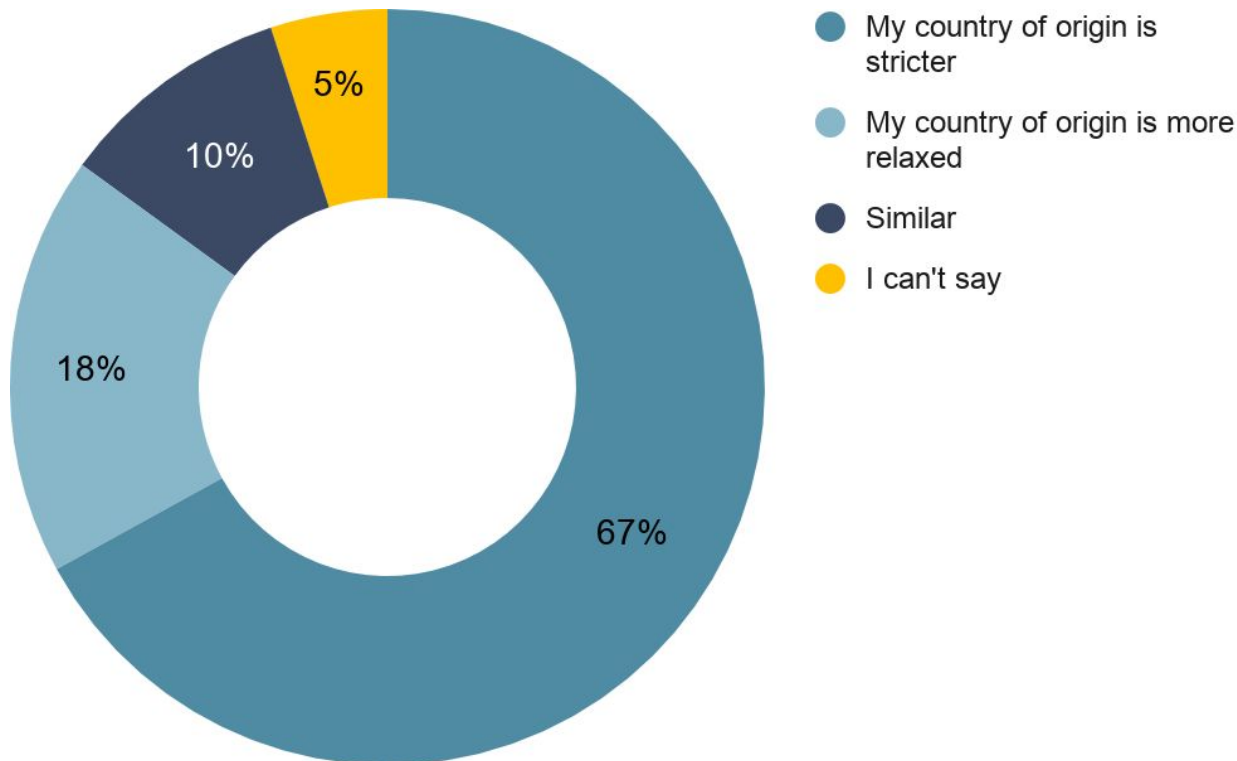
Key findings

- 67% of The Hague respondents said their country of origin is stricter in its approach to coronavirus than the Netherlands
- 49% said the Dutch government should be stricter in its approach than it currently is
- 39% said they had some or a lot of confidence in the Dutch government's handling of the second wave, but this is down from 44% during the first wave
- 37% have downloaded the CoronaMelder app
- In general, 41% say they understand why the government has acted as it has
- 48% would like more official information, with information about travel, including visiting family and friends abroad top of the wish list
- 'Expat' news sites were the most common source of information about the pandemic in the Netherlands.

The Dutch government's response

Just under half of respondents said they felt the Dutch government should be stricter in its approach to the pandemic

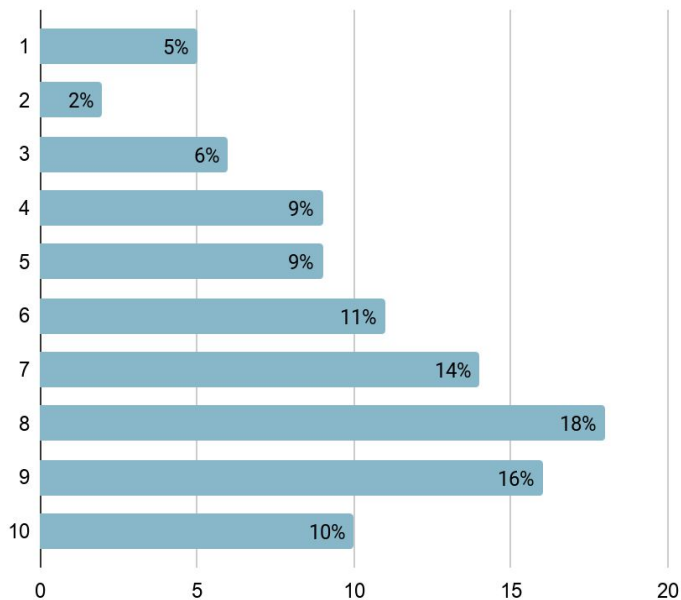
How does the Dutch response compare to that in your home country?



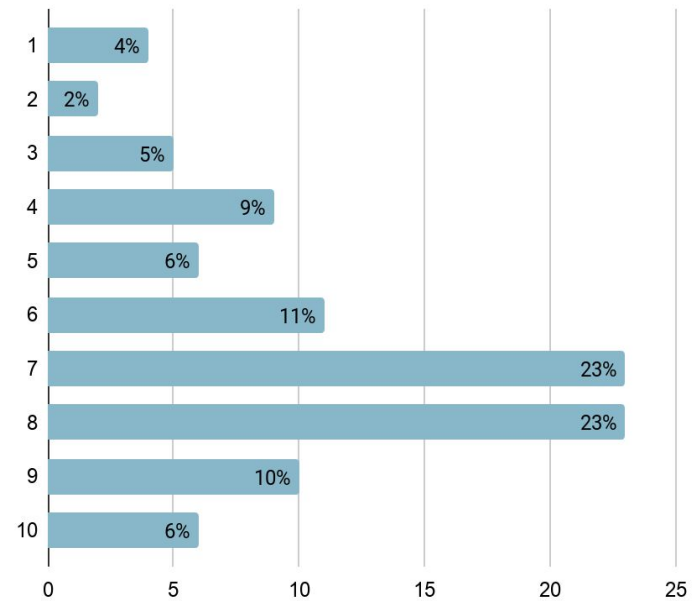
Rating the Dutch government

Respondents were asked how they rate the Dutch government's response at the start of the pandemic and now. *1 = very bad, 10 = excellent*

At the start of the pandemic

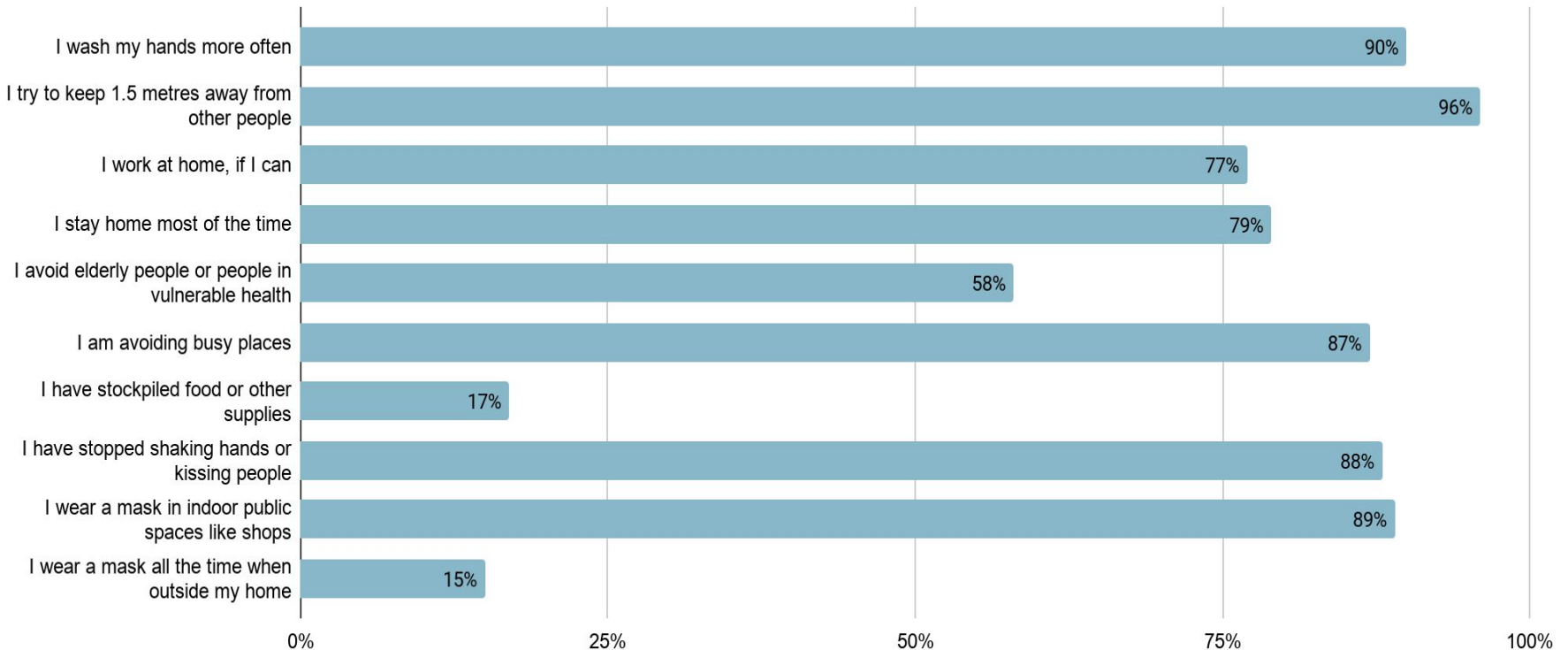


Now



Combating coronavirus

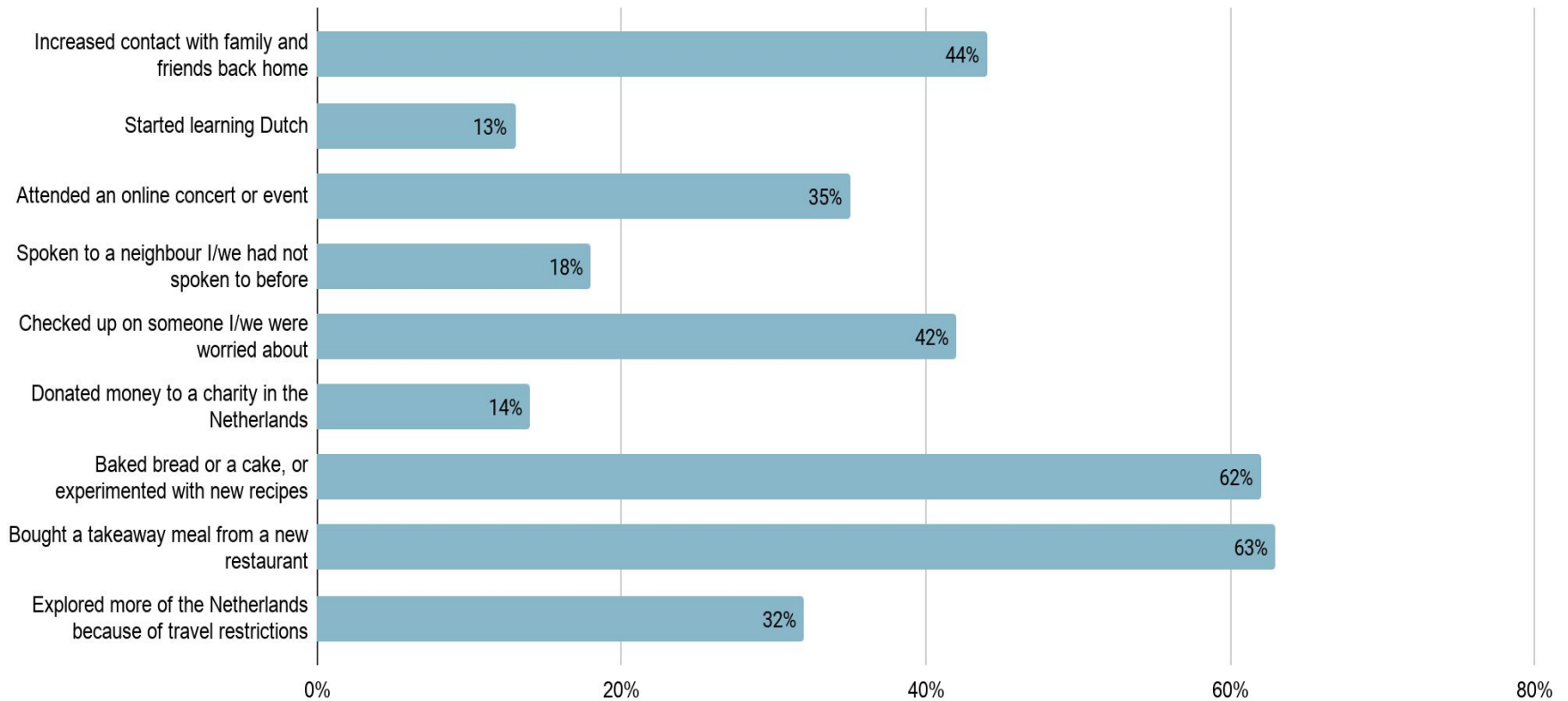
Respondents were asked what they were doing to keep coronavirus at bay*



*Respondents could tick more than one option

Coping strategies

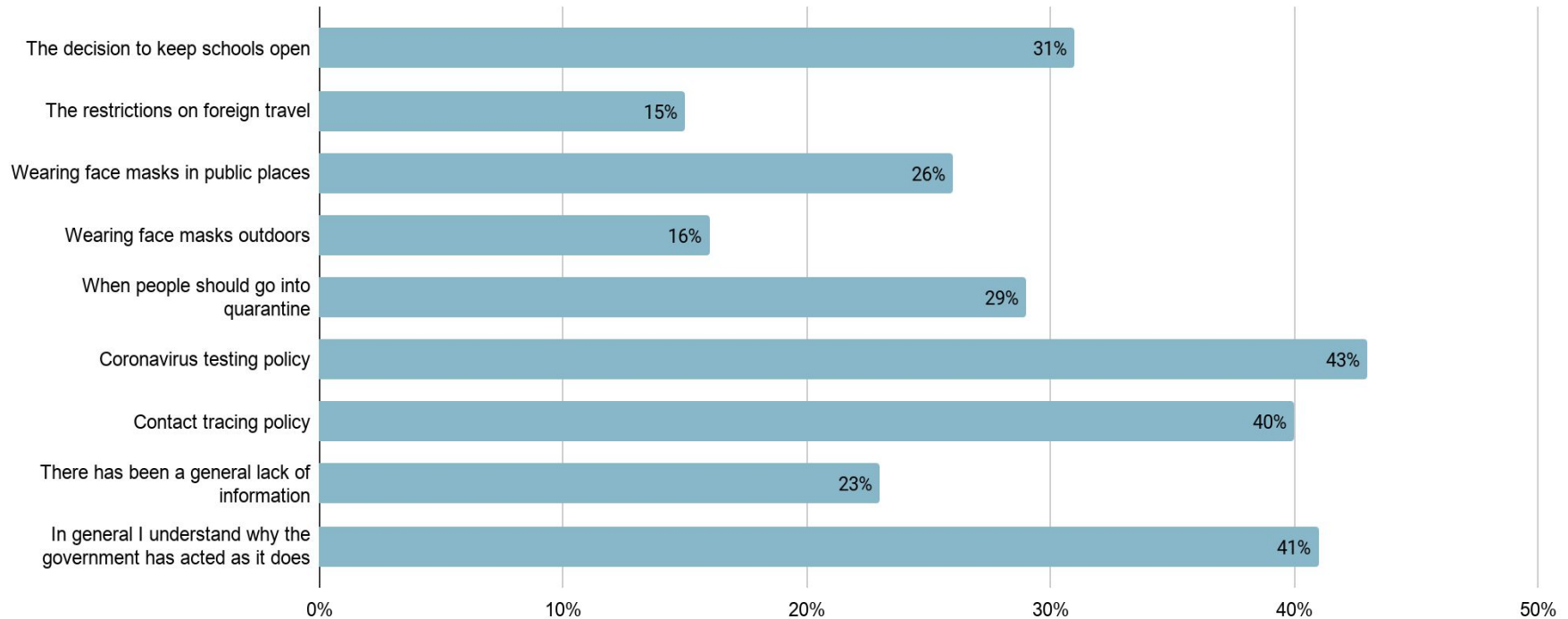
Respondents were asked what else they have been doing since the start of the pandemic*



*Respondents could tick more than one option

Does the Dutch strategy make sense?

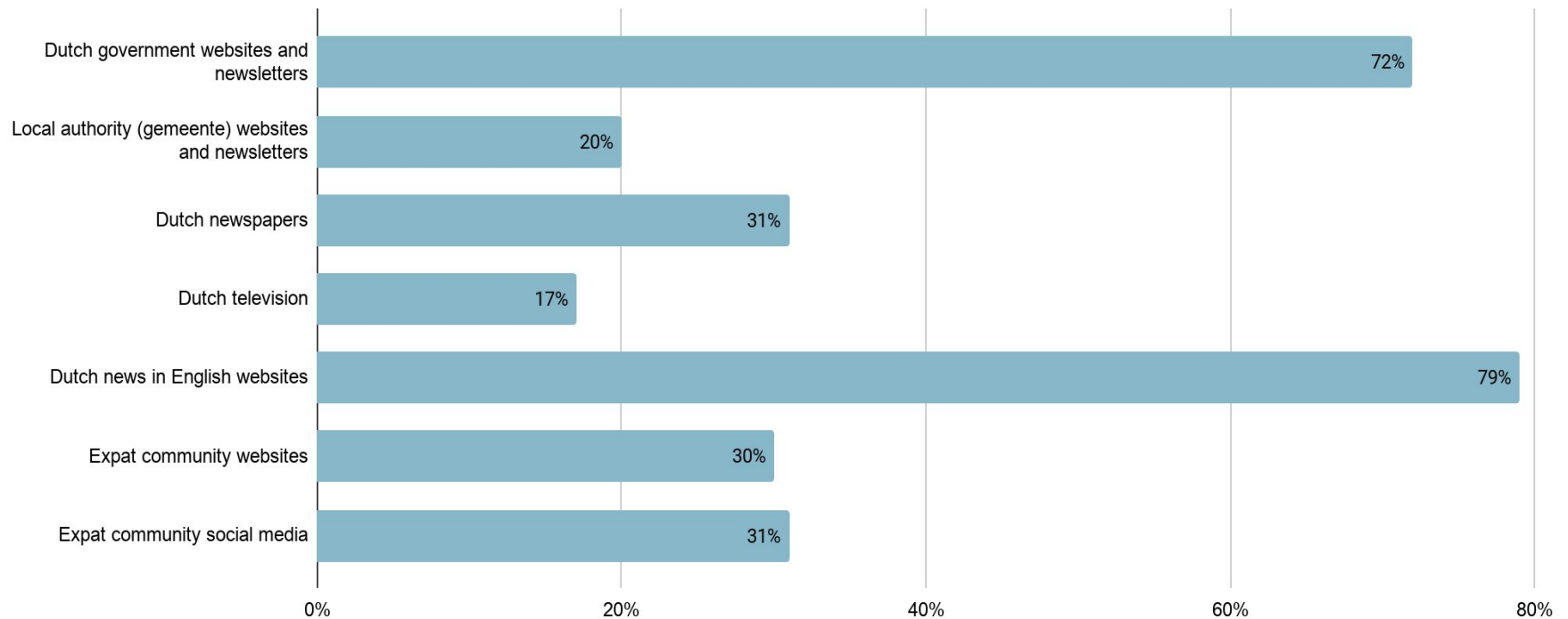
Respondents were asked what aspects of the Dutch government's approach to coronavirus they found it hardest to understand*



**Respondents could tick more than one option*

Where do you get your information?

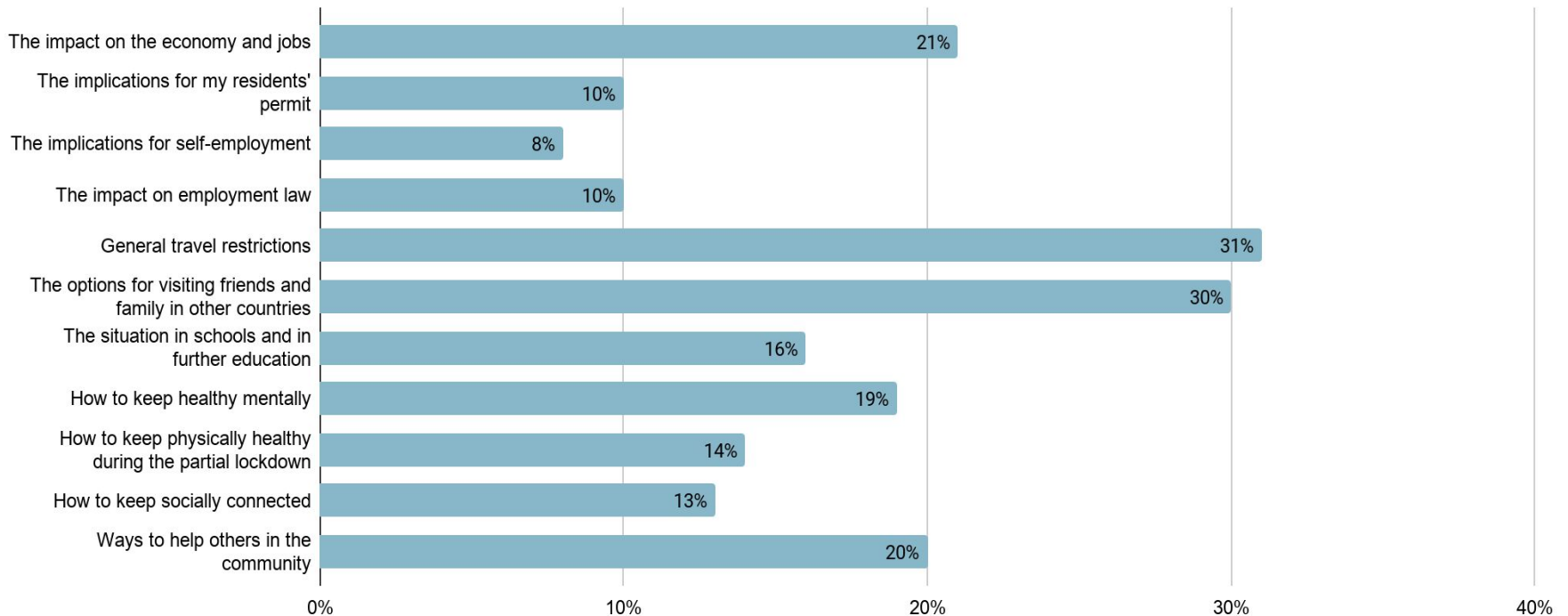
Respondents in The Hague were asked what were the main sources of information they used to find out about coronavirus in the Netherlands*



**Respondents could tick more than one option*

More information?

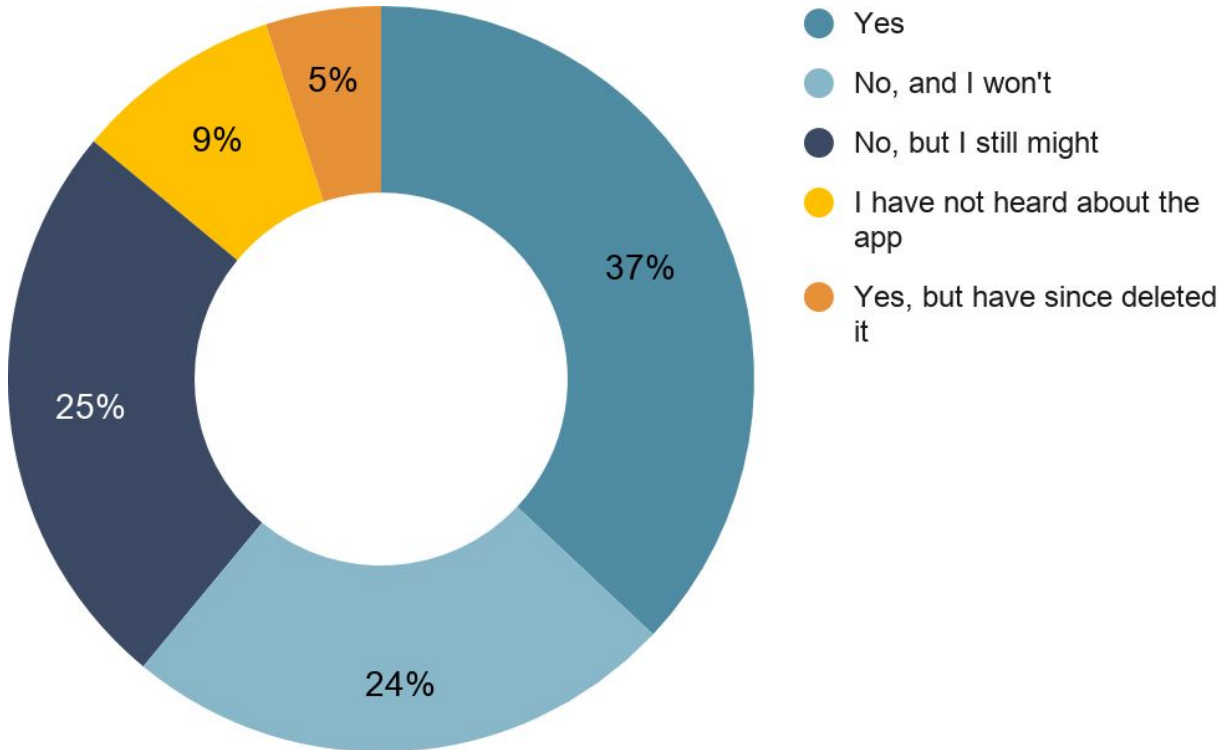
48% of The Hague respondents said they would like more information and help from official sources. Information about travel topped the list*



*Respondents could tick more than one option

The CoronaMelder app

Respondents in The Hague were asked if they were using the government's official CoronaMelder app to help track and trace potential coronavirus cases



Respondents in The Hague on the Dutch approach to the pandemic

‘I miss a sense of community from the Dutch people in general. There is no collective conscience that fighting the pandemic requires a joint effort in change of behavior.’

‘Stricter measures cause people do not follow the rules. There needs to be more controls and also mandatory mask wearing when indoors.’

‘Coronavirus has drastically slow down our integration into Dutch society as it is more difficult to socialise, practice Dutch and build up our network outside the expat community.’

‘The racism and generalisation against Asian faces have increased so much that it involves verbal and physical violence at times, but the negligent and “lukewarm” reaction from the police and the Dutch government have been highly disappointing. I no longer feel this country preserves the value of equality and diversity. As someone who has spent 1/3 of lifetime here, it saddens to see the change along with the government’s growing inaction, arrogance, ignorance and incompetence in decision-making for the public health and safety.’

Coronavirus and mental health

In this section, we look at the impact of coronavirus on the mental health of The Hague respondents

Key findings

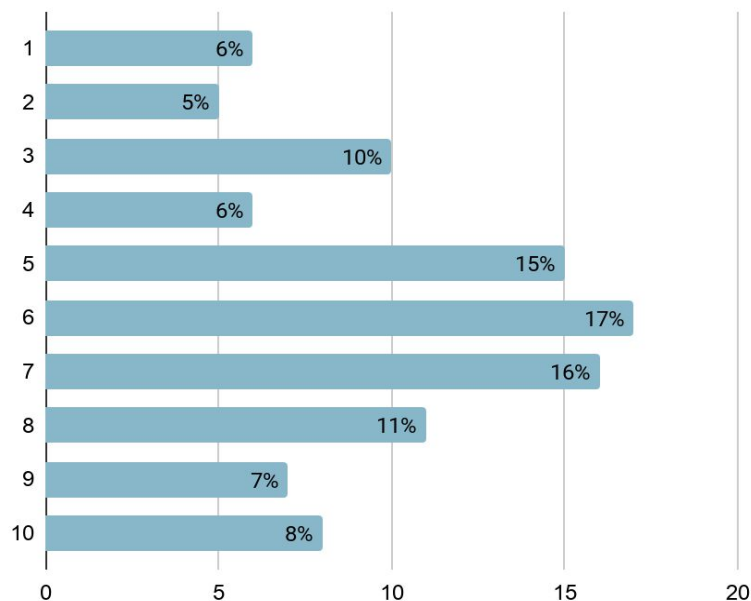
- 8% of The Hague respondents were extremely worried about the impact on coronavirus on friends and family in the Netherlands, but 23% were worried about the impact on friends and family abroad
- 72% of The Hague respondents said coronavirus is having an impact on their mental health
- Only 2% of respondents who are struggling with mental health issues had been helped by their employer
- Almost a quarter of The Hague respondents had considered leaving the Netherlands and 38% were aware of at least one other person or family who had done so

Who are you worried about?

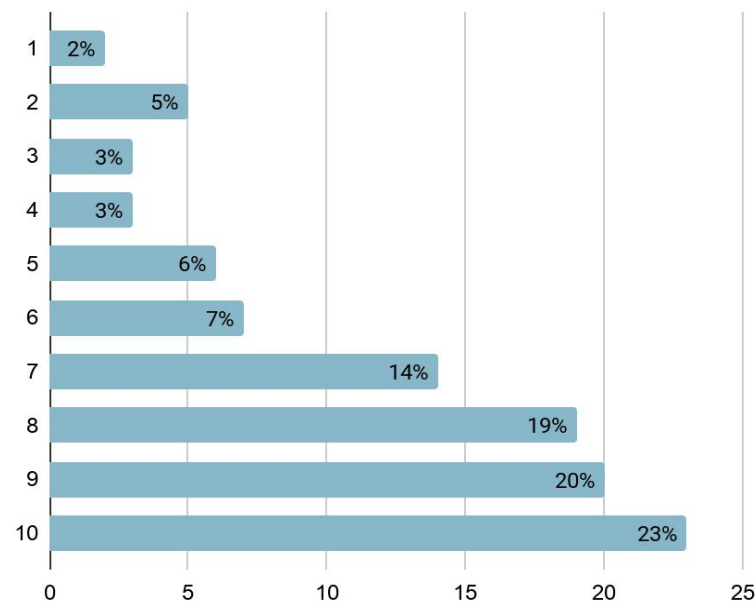
Respondents were asked if they were worried about friends and family both in the Netherlands and in their country of origin

1 = not at all worried, 10 = very worried indeed

In the Netherlands

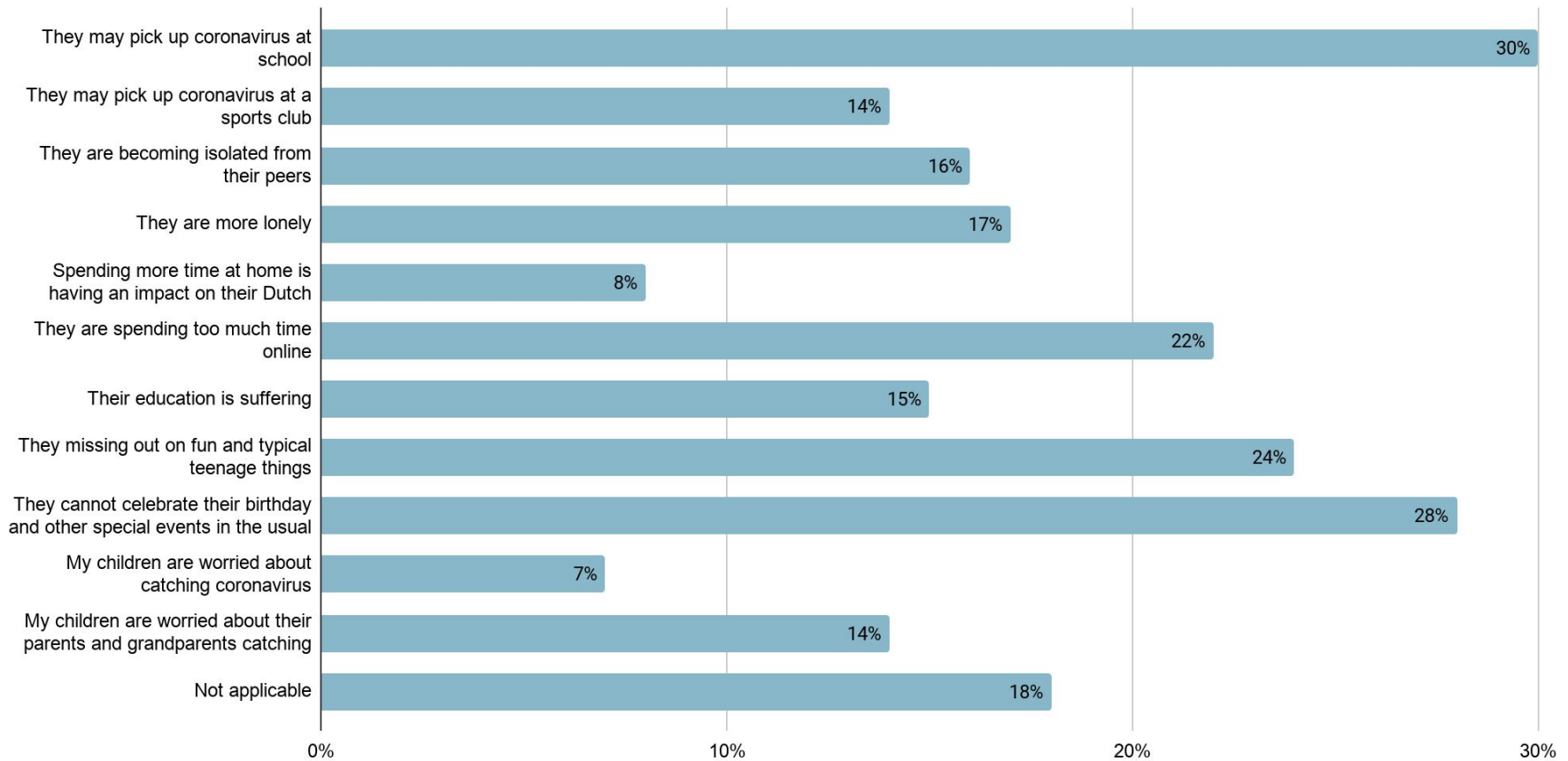


In your home country



Children and coronavirus

153 The Hague respondents had children with their own, specific concerns. Parents were asked what worried them*

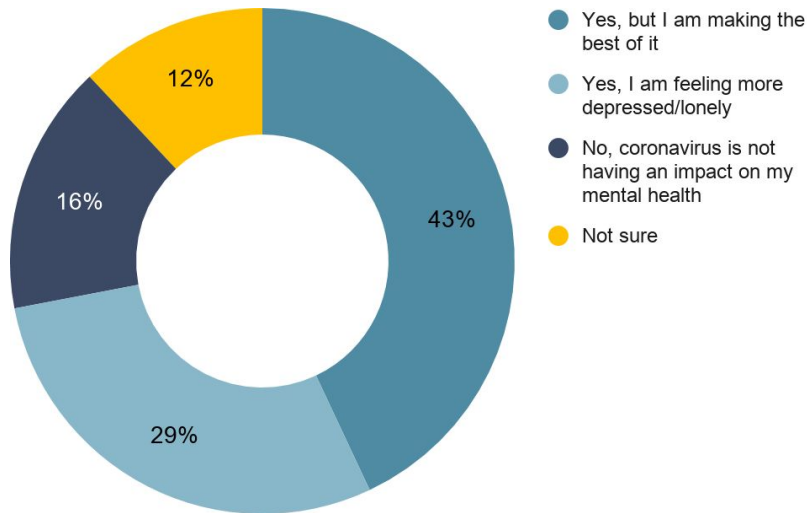


*Respondents could tick more than one option

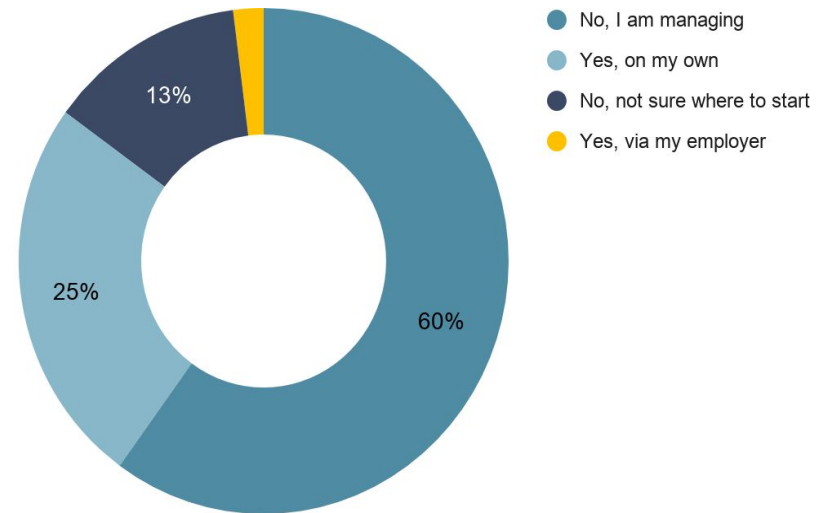
Coronavirus and the impact on mental health

Respondents were asked if Covid-19 was having an impact on their mental health and, if so, how they are tackling the issue.

Is coronavirus having an impact on your mental health?

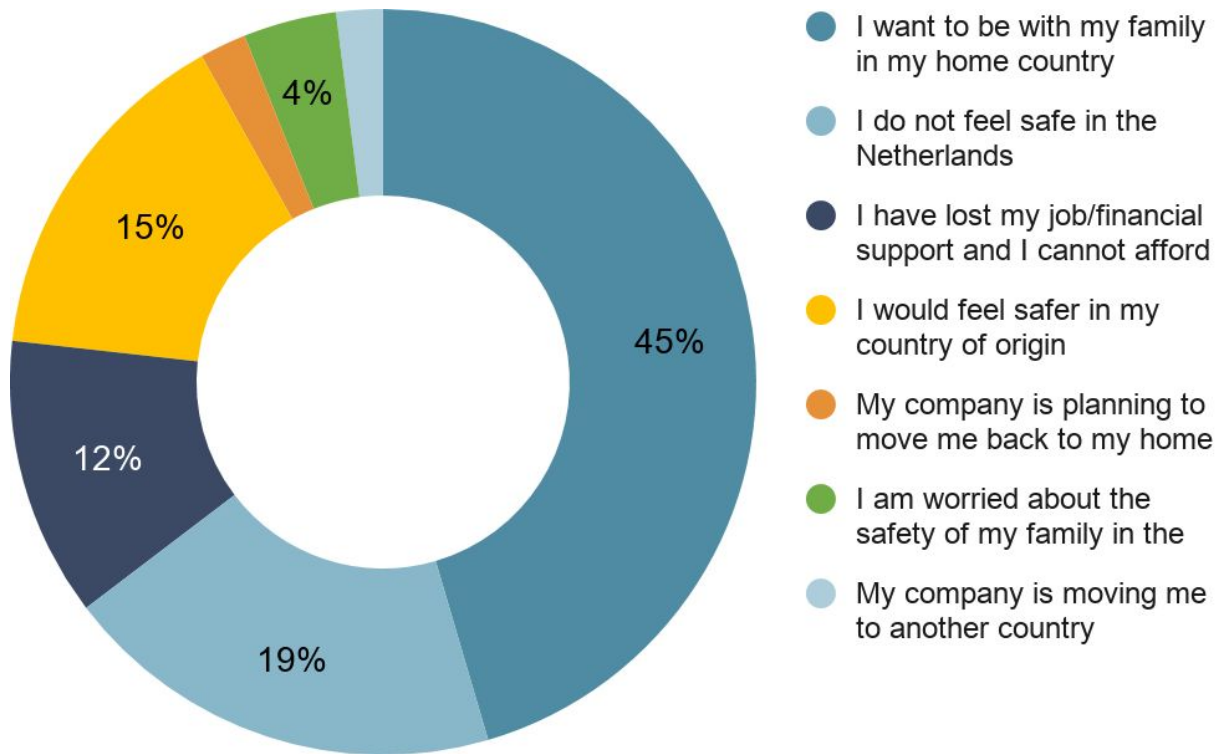


Have you sought help for your mental health?



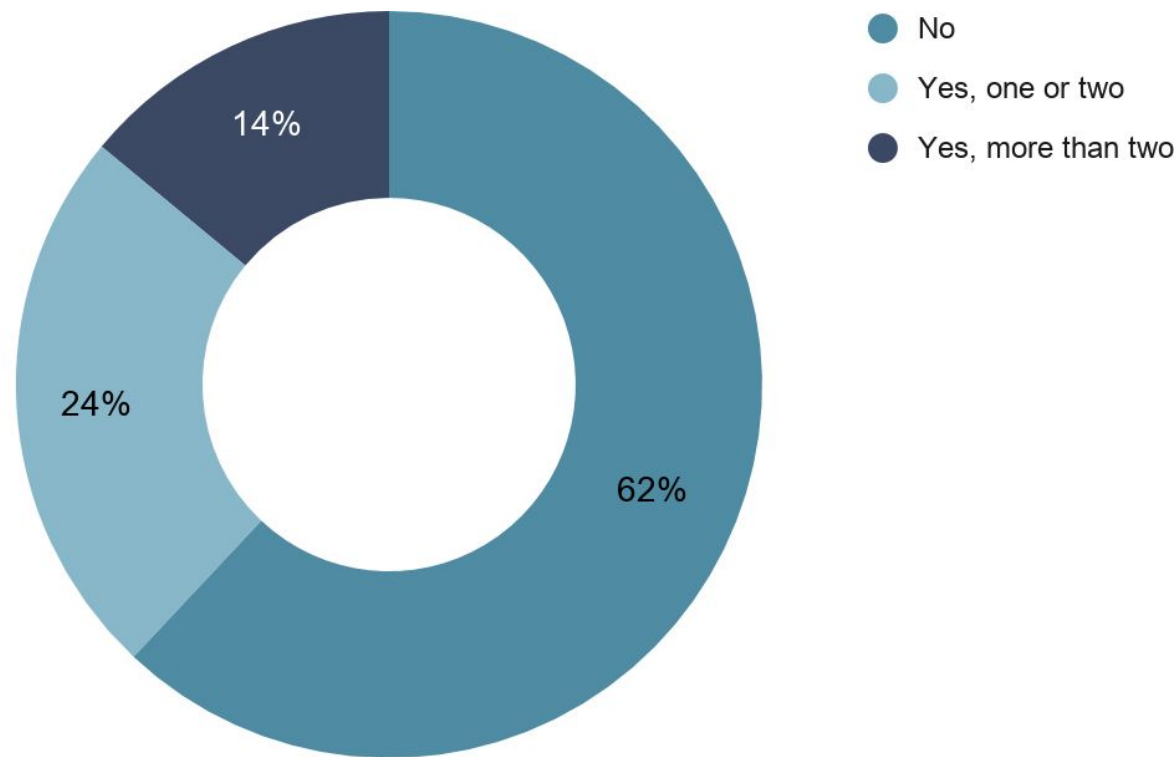
Leaving the Netherlands?

In total, 85 (23%) of The Hague residents said they had considered leaving the Netherlands. These are the main reasons:



Leaving the Netherlands?

Dutch newspapers have carried many articles about 'expats' leaving, based largely on anecdotal evidence. Respondents in The Hague were asked if they were aware of people who have left NL because of coronavirus



Respondents were asked about the impact on their mental health

‘The situation has really increased the division in society even further and I don’t feel welcome here anymore as an expat.’

‘Really difficult to be away from family. Being unable to travel is what is bothering me most. Work is depressing as all my colleagues are in the same position so morale and mental health is a problem.’

‘It has become more lonely and I feel less hopeful about my future career.’

‘I normally work from home as I have my own business but now I feel more isolated as previously I could meet up with friends more easily which helped with the balance.’

‘I am actually in a really good place to handle this pandemic compared to some unfortunate people who are either financially or work-wise unable to stay safe. So I don't think I should complain about it. But if you press me I might say I feel more isolated and its overall making me anxious.’

The financial impact of Covid-19

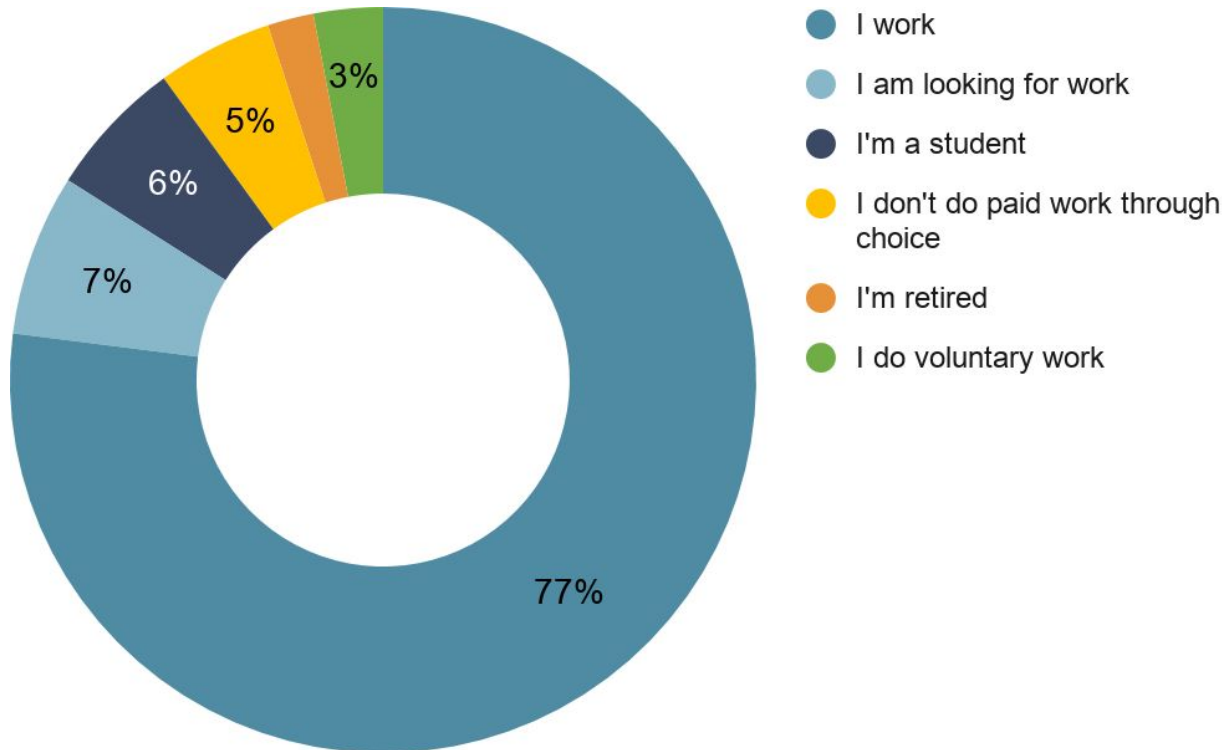
What impact is coronavirus having on the income and jobs of international workers in The Hague?

Key findings

- 62% of The Hague respondents are worried about the impact of coronavirus on their household income
- 36% say coronavirus has already had an impact on their income, and 25% have lost at least 50%
- 43% of those worried about their income say the sector they work in has been hard hit
- 38% are concerned their contract may not be renewed
- 62% of The Hague respondents have a permanent contract
- 17% work in IT, followed by the diplomatic service and ngos (15%) and oil/gas/chemicals (14%)
- Just 7% would like to work remotely in the Netherlands from their home country once the pandemic is over

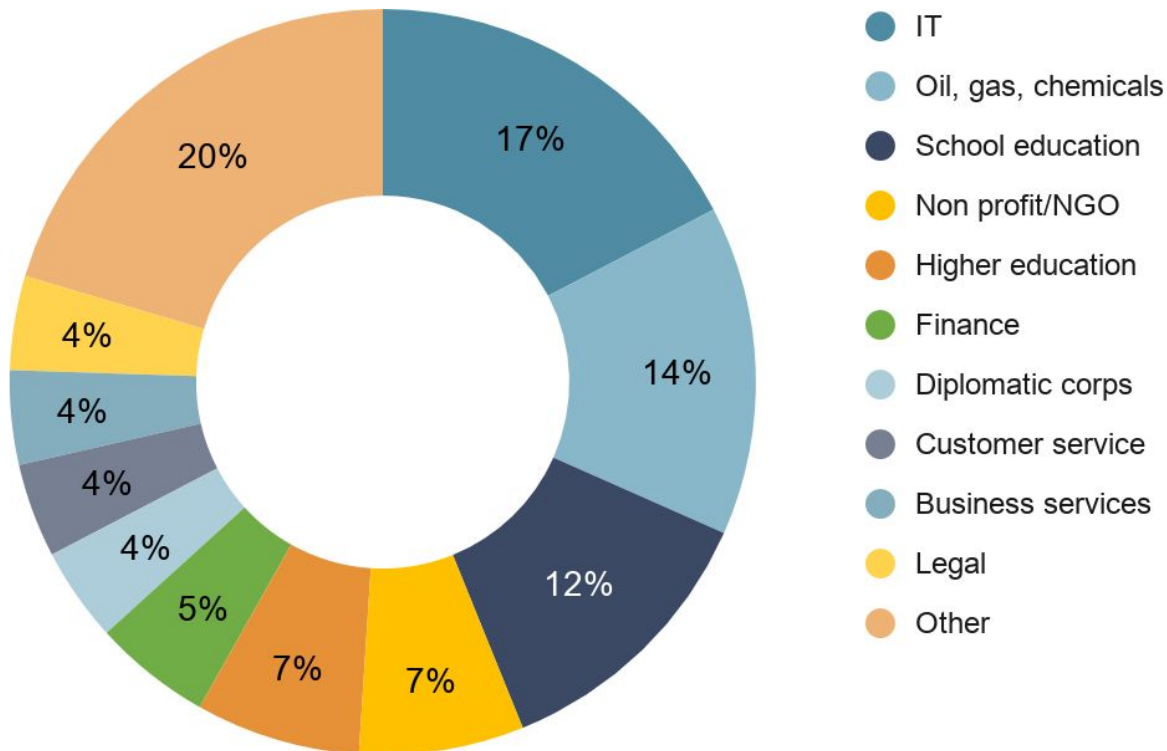
What do the respondents do?

Most The Hague respondents are in paid work.

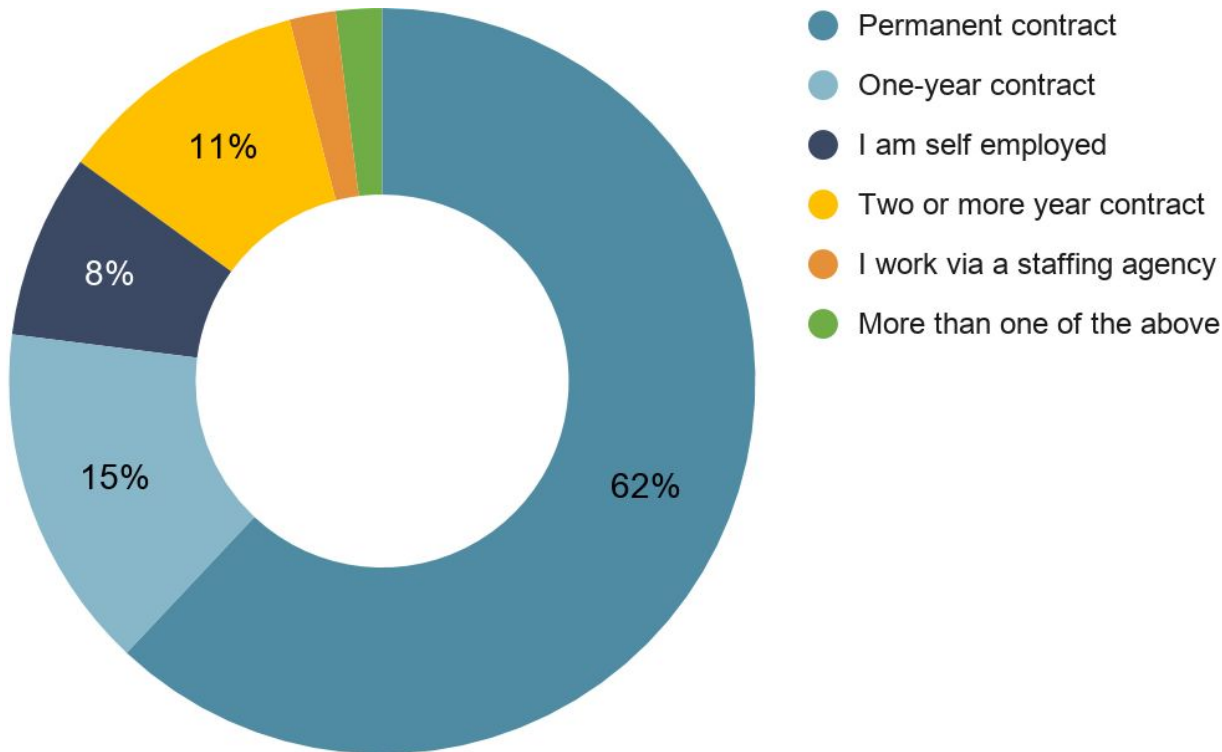


What sectors do they work in?

The Hague's respondents work across a wide variety of sectors



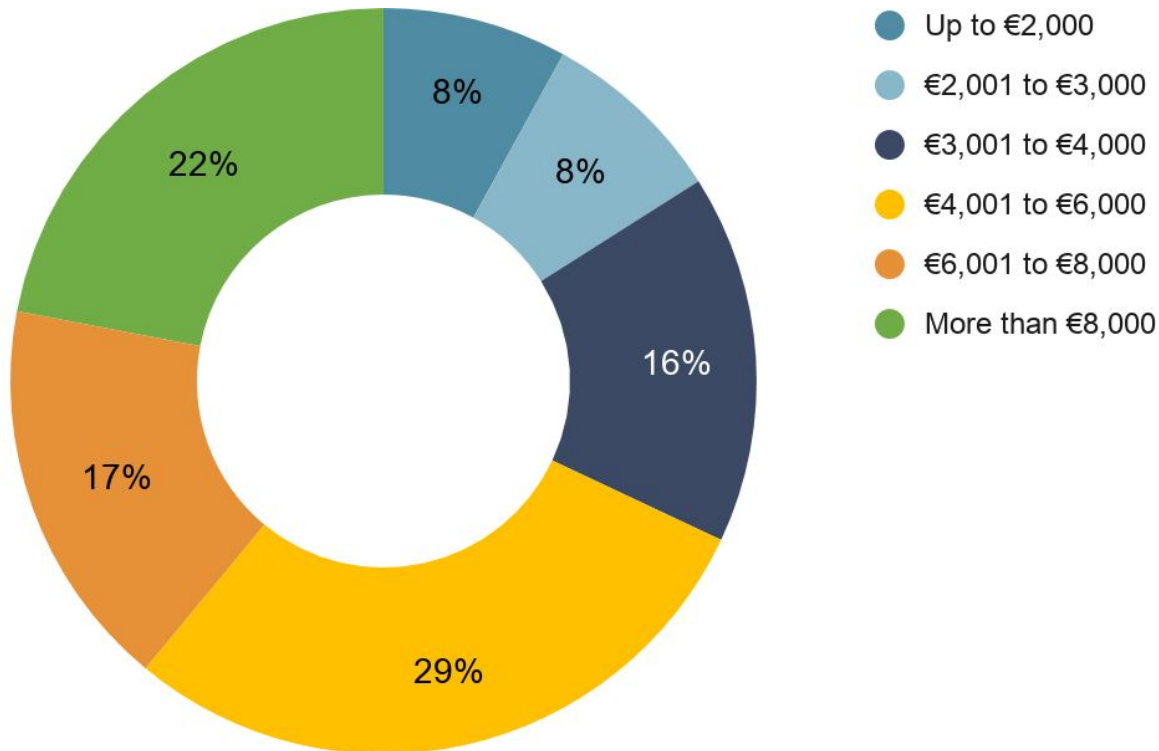
What sort of contract do The Hague's internationals have?



Household income

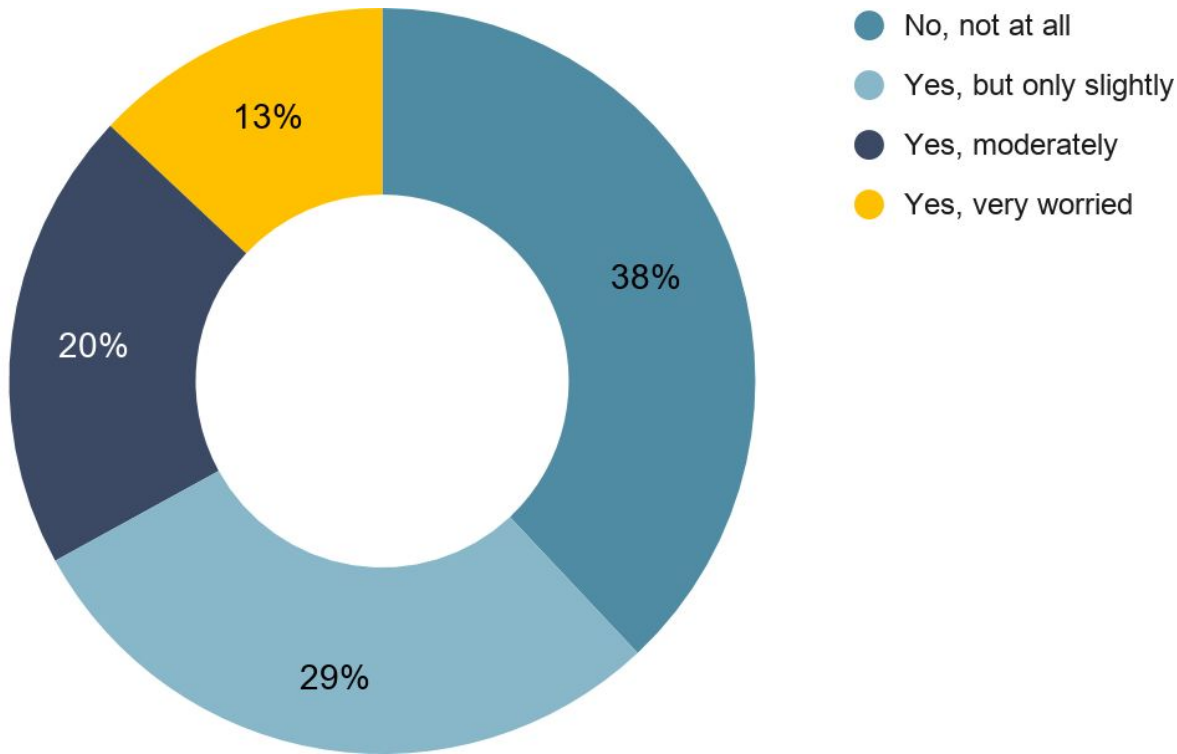
Almost two in five The Hague respondents were the sole earner in their household

Respondents were asked what is their gross household monthly income.



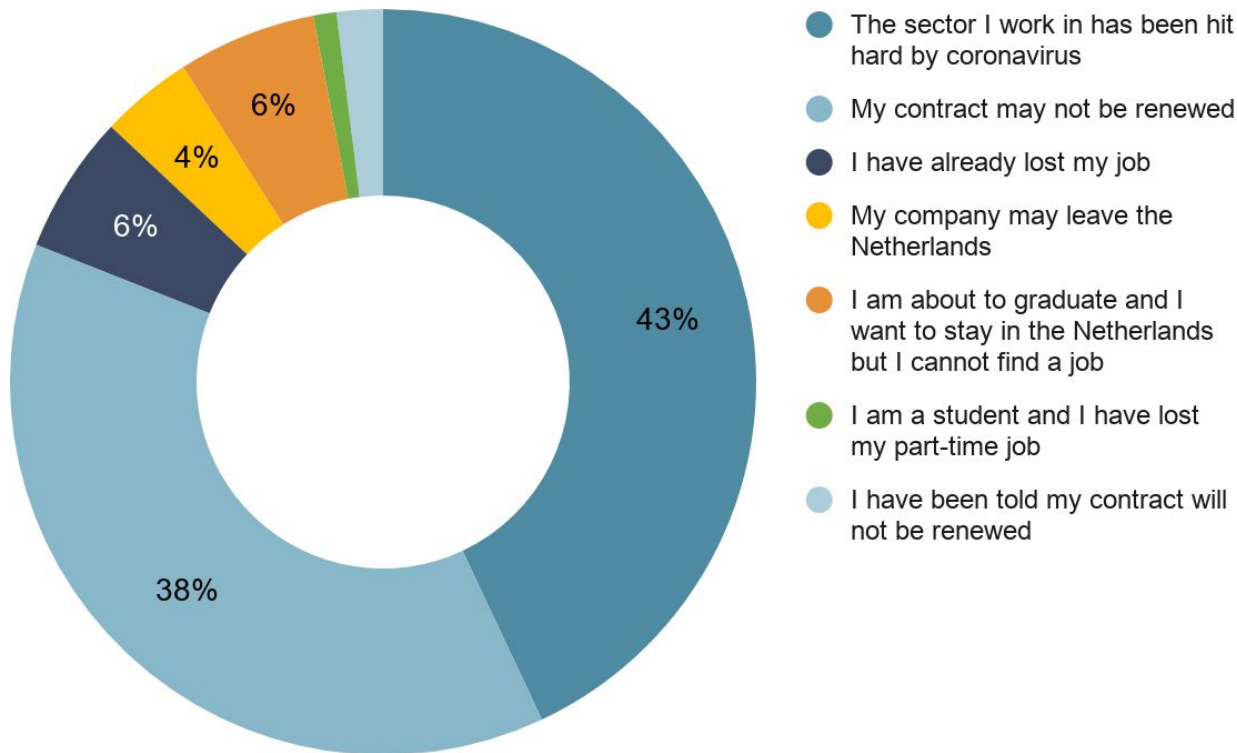
Financial worries

Respondents in The Hague were asked if they were worried about the impact of the crisis on their household income



Financial worries

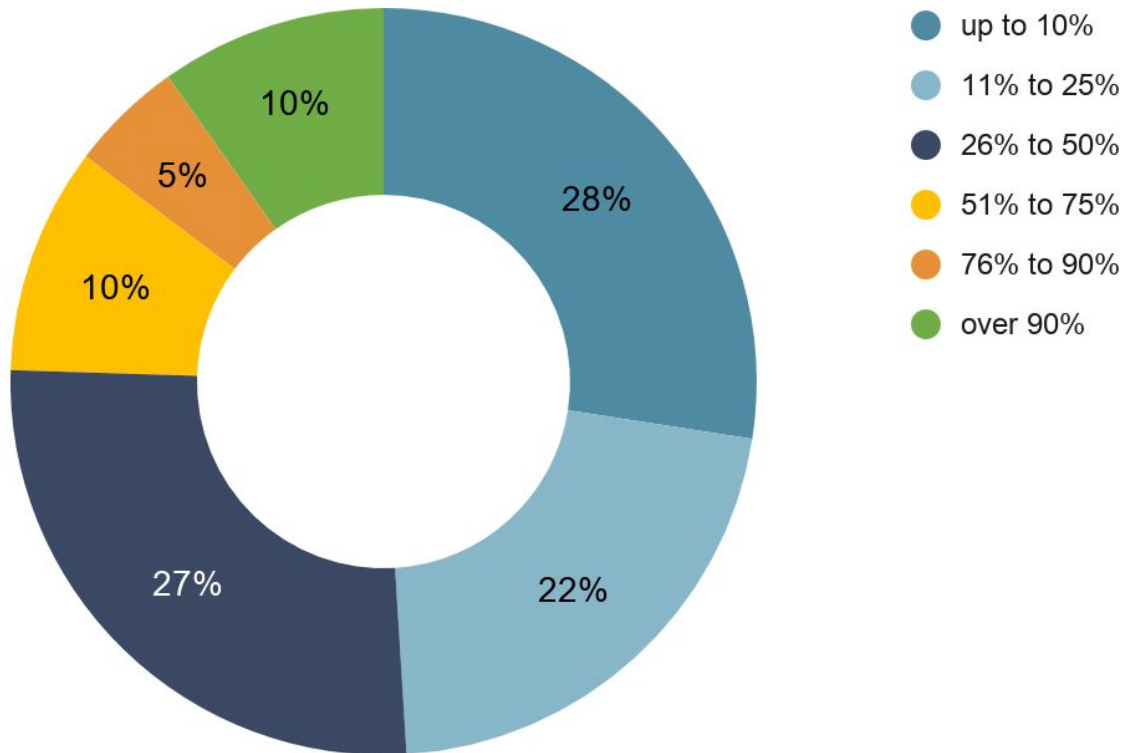
The Hague respondents have a variety of reasons for being worried about the impact of coronavirus on their household income



Financial worries

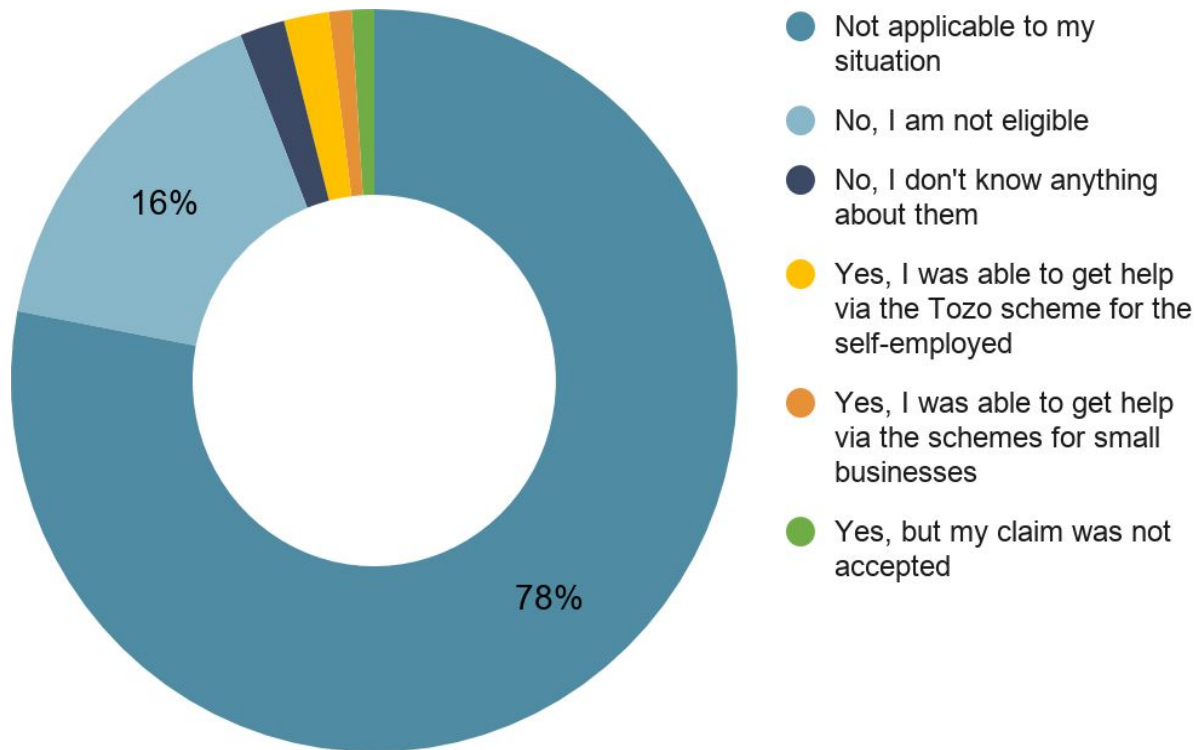
Some 36% The Hague respondents said that coronavirus had already had an impact on their household income.

How much of your household income have you already lost?



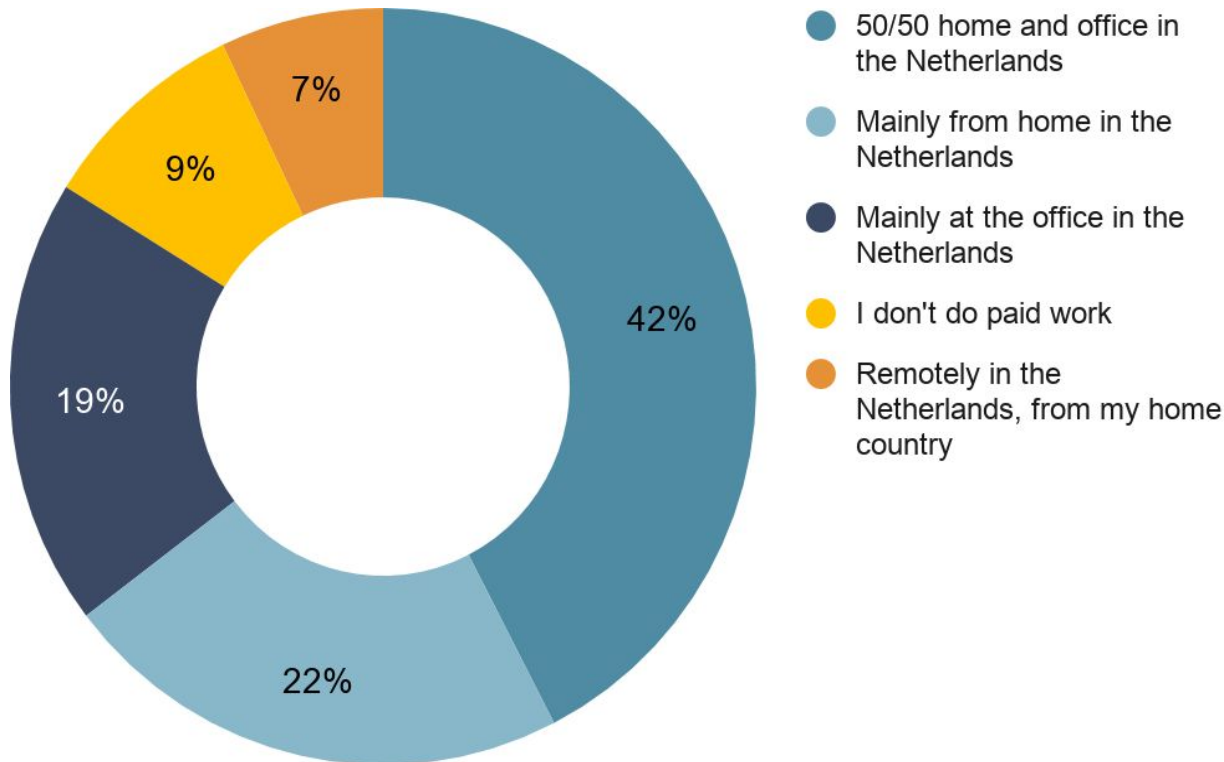
Government support

Most respondents (78%) said the various government support schemes were not relevant to their situation



Working from home

Respondents in The Hague were asked how they would like to arrange their working life once the pandemic is over and they can return to the office



Covid-19 and work/income

‘The job market has shrunk and there are insufficient measures to help from the gov’t especially for expats, who have been here for some time and maybe struggling with the residency permit issues as well.’

‘I could not apply for Tozo 2, because my boyfriend has an income. However we are not married nor have any registered partnership, and are financially independent. I didn't find it fair.’

‘I would like an explanation of why exactly I am not eligible to any help in any EU country while I have the years of working experience within Benelux.’

‘The economic disaster is not being addressed.’

‘It's harder to disconnect from work, and I miss the physical contact with colleagues. However, I feel less stressed generally from being at home and it allows more flexibility.’

Comparisons

Is the situation in the The Hague different to the rest of the country?

The situation facing new arrivals

Main differences

There is little statistical difference between The Hague respondents and those in the rest of the country. In particular, there is little difference between the impact of coronavirus on the mental health of respondents, or on their fears for friends, family and children

The differences there are tend to reflect the specific demographics of The Hague community as in family and work situation.

In particular, 40% of The Hague respondents are living with children, compared with 28% of Amsterdam respondents and 30% in the total survey.

The Hague residents are also less likely to be worried about the impact of coronavirus on their household income than internationals in Amsterdam (62% to 70%).

43% of The Hague respondents said the sector they worked in had been hard hit by coronavirus, compared with 42% in the survey as a whole, and 49% in Amsterdam

38% of The Hague respondents said coronavirus had already had an impact on their income, compared with 36% in the Netherlands as a whole and 40% in Amsterdam.

The experience of new arrivals

We have also looked briefly at the position of new arrivals, who do not have large support networks or whose jobs may be less secure.

In total, 827 of **all survey respondents** have been in the Netherlands for less than three years. We include the highlights of this research here.

- 56% would like more government or local authority information about coronavirus, compared with around 50% across the survey as a whole
- 48% have a permanent contract, compared with 62% of The Hague respondents
- 32% have gross household income of less than €3,000 a month, compared with 16% of The Hague respondents in general.
- Just 11% say the pandemic has had no impact on their mental health
- 36% say they work in a sector that has been hard hit by coronavirus and 36% say they are worried their contract will not be renewed

Concluding remarks

Concluding remarks

General

The international community in The Hague region is highly diverse but a clear majority say their home country is stricter than the Netherlands in terms of coronavirus measures. Around half felt the Dutch government could and should be stricter in their measures. A positive attitude towards local policies has been decreasing over time, and now 39% (versus 44%) have some or a lot of confidence in Dutch efforts.

Information

News websites targeting internationals and national government information sources are the main sources of information about Covid-19 in the Netherlands, but just under half of respondents wanted more information from official sources. This figure is slightly higher for new arrivals.

In particular, two-thirds of the respondents would appreciate better or more information about travel – especially as it relates to missing family and friends from back home.

This is one area where official information could be clearer and more targeted to internationals.

Concluding remarks

Mental health

The impact on the mental health of respondents is something to keep an eye on, in particular the 15% who are unsure where to turn for help.

Just 2% of people reported having help from their employers, something which HR departments could take on board.

The written responses to the survey show loneliness and isolation are major issues, particularly among people who moved to The Hague recently and do not have local networks.

Finances

The financial consequences of Covid-19 for the international community are serious. While 63% of The Hague respondents have permanent contracts, 36% have already experienced an impact on their household income, and 25% have lost at least half of their income.

In the longer term, nearly all respondents want to remain in the Netherlands, working partly from the office and partly at home.

About Stichting ICAP

ICAP is an initiative put together by four long-standing members of the international community to act as an independent bridge between the international community itself and government and civic organisations.

In particular, we aim to establish an independent forum which represents and reflects the views of the international community on issues which have an impact on the city's attractiveness as a place to live in and do business.

The city regularly scores very highly in international comparisons – facts which officials are keen to promote whenever possible. However, these glowing reports do not always reflect the reality on the ground. And Amsterdam lacks a broad framework for communicating with and receiving input/feedback from the international community and assessing its diverse needs and concerns. ICAP aims to change this.

www.icapnl.com