

Bringing the young voice to the table.

Why, how and where to next?

by Gizem Berberoglu & Dr. Archana P. Voola

The current Delta outbreak in NSW has had devastating consequences across different demographics but one segment of the population slipping through the cracks are young people from migrant backgrounds. Recent research on youth and COVID19 impacts documents 'labour market scarring', wherein young people's pandemic induced unemployment could be prolonged making it harder for them to re-enter the labour market.

Young people, including those born overseas, are bearing the brunt of COVID restrictions, particularly in the hospitality and retail sectors. In addition to the loss of jobs, lockdown restrictions and police presence, there is a vast amount of misinformation regarding vaccinations circulating in our youth communities. Direct engagement with youth, specifically in the South West Sydney region, highlighted the need for a platform where they could come to the table, register their concerns, get responses to their queries and be visible.

How does a CALD COVID-19 youth webinar come together?

A webinar designed to answer migrant young peoples' questions around COVID-19 directly from health professionals and community leaders was much needed.



The Iraqi Australasian Medical Association (IAMA) and Arab Council Australia came forward with the support of Western Sydney MRC to organise a 'Youth COVID-19 Vaccine Information Session'. Our collaborations with community leaders and sector experts are built on trust and deep community connections. Our community Development Coordinator Nadia Bouchti has been working on building and nurturing these connections. Bringing together medical experts who are culturally competent and linguistically diverse is no small feat. Such collaborations are built on trust and deep community connections which the local organisations have nurtured over the years.

Western Sydney
MRC team:
Archana, Gizem
and Nadia



The Panellists

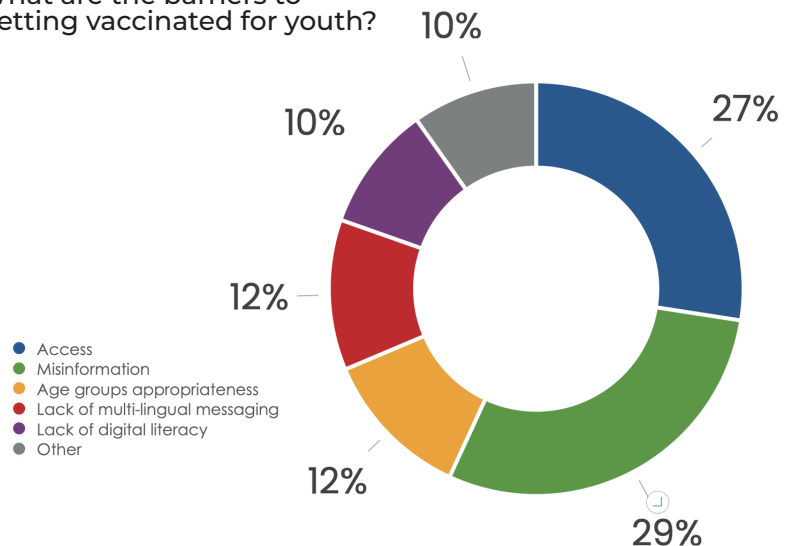
- Dr Ahmad Alrubaie
- Dr Emad Berro, Pathologist and Microbiologist
- Dr Zainab Ridha
- Joshua Karras
- Moderation provided by Wafa Jeha and Gizem Berberoglu.

What were the youth concerns?

Addressing vaccination-related issues focused on young people in Western Sydney has become very crucial. Since the beginning of the 2.0 lockdown, as a youth worker at Western Sydney MRC, Gizem has observed increasing concerns related to vaccinations during her interactions with the young people.

Young people are puzzled if the vaccination works or is even necessary. Due to some information circulating, they think people could get sick and die even though they get vaccinated. So, they say, "what is the point?", too much emphasis on the side effects. During the webinar we asked participants via a poll "What are the barriers to getting vaccinated for the youth"? The overwhelming response was misinformation alongside limited access to the vaccines.

What are the barriers to getting vaccinated for youth?



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The webinar was a fantastic opportunity for the youth to get accurate information from medical health professionals who work in the local areas such as Liverpool Hospital.

Questions asked included

- What is the best time to take the first vaccine dose after operation?
- Does the Pfizer affect young boys?
- and Can you mix vaccines if you have no medical concerns?

Although delivered on a weeknight, there was strong engagement from the attendees. Around 100 people attended and ended with 85 even after the webinar overran by 30 minutes. Clearly, there is a desire from the youth to connect and get accurate information about vaccinations and the social, psychological, and economic impacts of the pandemic.

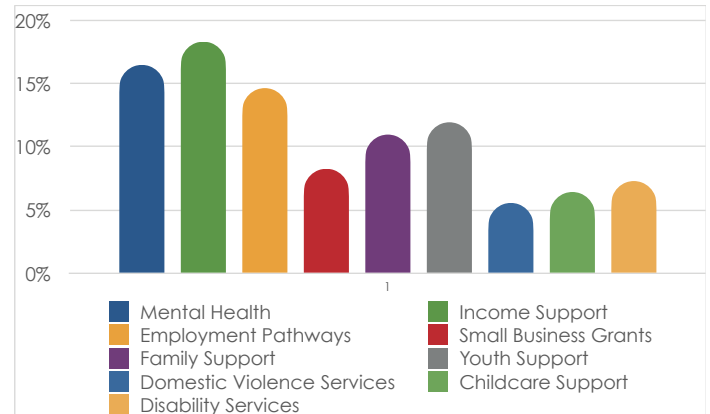
To gauge the participants, sense of what next, we asked,

“When we come out of the lockdown, what supports would youth require?”

and the three main supports they asked for were

- 1) Income supports
- 2) Mental Health and
- 3) Employment Pathways.

When we come out of the lockdown, what supports would youth require?



As a youth worker in South West Sydney, interacting primarily with migrant youth, Gizem said,

“ In order to increase the engagement, we need to design more interactive, to the point, and QA based webinars for young people.

As the esteemed panellists' have demonstrated, information needs to be simple, avoiding jargon, acronyms and abbreviation, since medical terminology can be confusing.

Lessons to scale

The primary takeaway from this youth engagement is the need for a platform to empower, inform and connect. We believe in the agency of the youth to make the best possible decision for themselves relying upon facts and figures rather than opinions and myths.

Enabling platforms specifically designed to address young people's concerns are much needed due to misinformation, disinformation and vast information coming from different directions. Therefore, having culturally competent and linguistically diverse professionals like doctors & mental health counsellors answering specific/ complex questions while providing explanations could be better understood during an online session. Bringing the youth voice to the table is essential as we start planning for life after lockdowns that is inclusive and just.

Link to recorded youth webinar



<https://youtu.be/hcUw8ULjOHM>