

# Australians managing COVID risks 'on their own'

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People are being forced to manage more risks on their own, according to new research from the ANU. Credit: Tracey Nearmy, ANU

Australia is entering a new phase in the pandemic where we are managing more risks on our own, according to a [new report by experts at The Australian National University](#) (ANU).

As the country faces [food shortages](#) from damaged supply chains,

widespread staff shortages and an insufficient supply of COVID tests, authors of the report Professor Kate Henne and Dr. Aleks DeeJay, said there are many similarities to how the United States has handled the pandemic.

"Our research shows that Australians, even those who struggled, felt confident they could manage different risks and challenges during the pandemic through last year. However, now we are entering a new phase—one that is looking increasingly like what we have observed in the US data since the beginning of the pandemic," Professor Henne said.

"Reduced government support has prompted public concerns that Omicron will have more harmful effects than Australia's lengthy lockdowns.

"Our research on experiences of the pandemic in Australia has shown [government support](#) has been incredibly important, not just in terms of providing resources, but also in terms of delivering reliable information.

"Without it, Australians are managing more risks on their own—something Americans have had to do throughout the pandemic."

Professor Henne said the skyrocketing spread of the Omicron variant threatens to exacerbate existing pandemic risks as Australians struggle to find reliable information and support.

"Confusing rules and a lack of resources undermine people's capacity to navigate the current crisis," she said.

"For example, the shortage of rapid antigen tests undermines the ability of individuals and businesses to make the informed decisions necessary to take personal responsibility as promoted by the NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet.

"It is essential for leaders to return to the core regulatory principles of bringing credible experts on board to recalibrate responses and to address public concerns.

"Conflicting messaging can cause people to look elsewhere for information and resources, which can cause people to doubt scientific sources and become more susceptible to misinformation."

This new report presents key findings from lengthy interviews conducted from October 2020 and throughout 2021 with 40 people with diverse experiences aged between 18–80.

The ANU report provides an overview of how participants coped during the pandemic and how they have sought resources during periods of disruption, isolation and quarantine. It also captures how practices and strategies varied among individuals and groups.

"Even when experiencing economic or social hardships during 2020 and 2021, study participants in Australia reported high levels of compliance and confidence in their ability to adapt to the changing circumstances of the pandemic," Professor Henne said.

The report also found that government approaches to the [pandemic](#) centered around leadership behavior and personality traits rather than on policies implemented.

Other aspects of the report looked at how people navigated information, services and technology.

The [report](#), "Navigating a Pandemic," is published [here](#) and is continuing a [comparative study](#) being carried out with an Arizona State University research team led by Dr. Kathleen Pine.

Provided by Australian National University

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