

Healthcare & Medical Research Study  
**Australian General Practitioners**  
May 2020



Immunisation Coalition

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# 1 Questions

# Commissioned Questions

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## Questions Included in the Research

- Q1. Have you had delays with these vaccines? a) 65+; b) Children's; c) Other at-risk group d) Private market
- Q2. Have you been receiving the quantity of vaccine you ordered?
- Q3. Do you pre-order private stock from wholesalers?
- Q4. Does storage space limit the amount of vaccine you can order?
- Q5. Would more frequent deliveries solve the problem?
- Q6. Have you shared your stock with other clinics to help them out?
- Q7. Are you satisfied with the communication from your health department?
- Q8. Do you feel you have adequate input into the distribution process?
- Q9. Do you have any suggestions on how the situation could be better managed?
- Q10. With regard to the COVID-19 restrictions, what impact has it had on your practice?

## 2 Methodology

# Overview

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## Sample

- National, representative sample of General Practitioners with interviews undertaken in all capital cities, main regional cities and a number of regional and rural towns in all states and territories.
- 378 respondents participated in the survey, apportioned as:
  - General Practitioners: 305
  - General Practitioner Clinic Managers: 42
  - General Practitioner Clinic Nurses: 31

## Methodology

- Online Survey:
  - n=286 (GP's n=237; Clinic Managers n=28; Clinic Nurses n=21)
  - Average of 17 minutes duration, respondents from all capital cities, main regional cities and a large number of regional and rural towns in all states and territories
- Telephone Survey:
  - n=92 (GP's n=39; Clinic Managers n=31; Clinic Nurses n=22)
  - Average of 19 minutes duration, respondents from all capital cities, main regional cities and a large number of regional and rural towns in all states and territories

## Data Collection

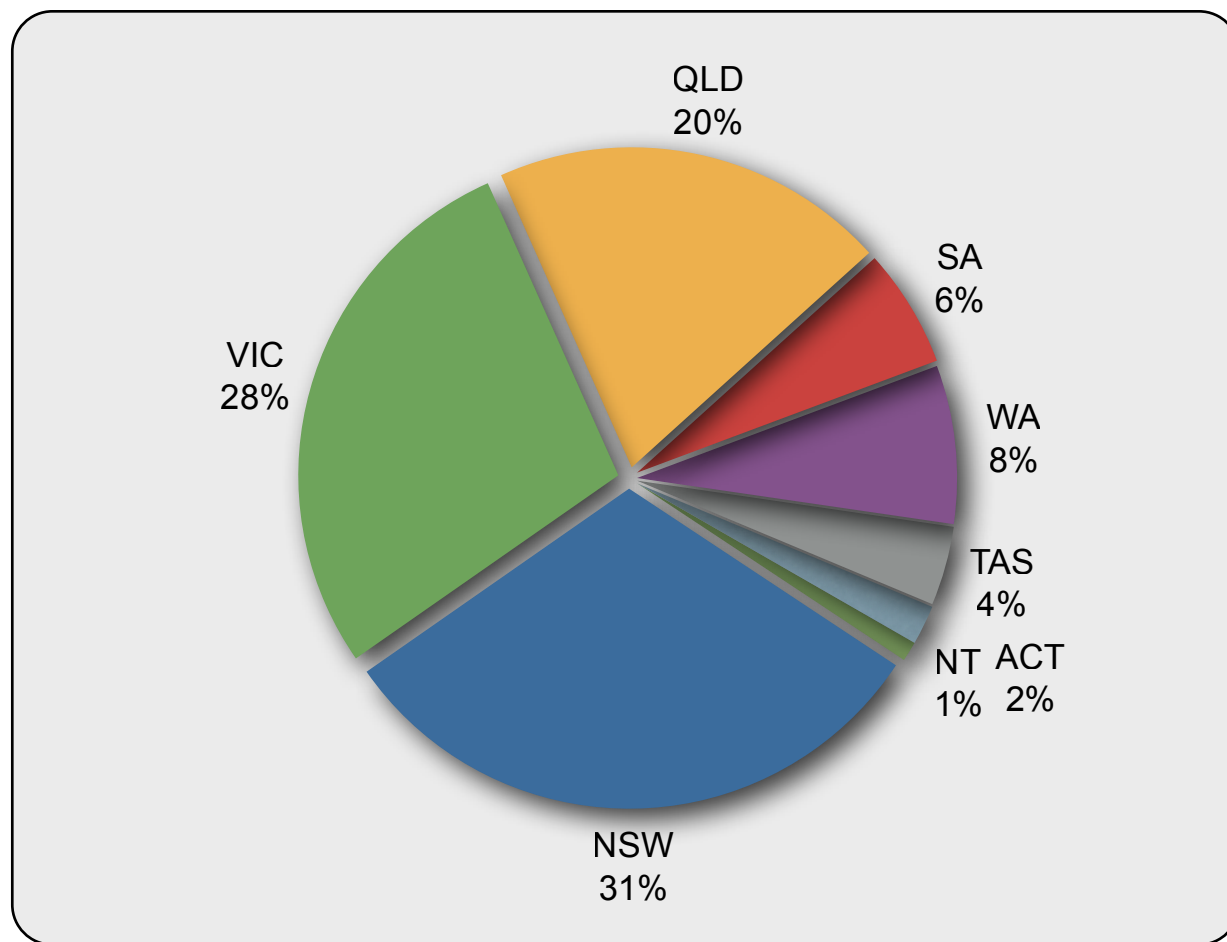
- Telephone & Online Survey:
  - 5th May to 14th May



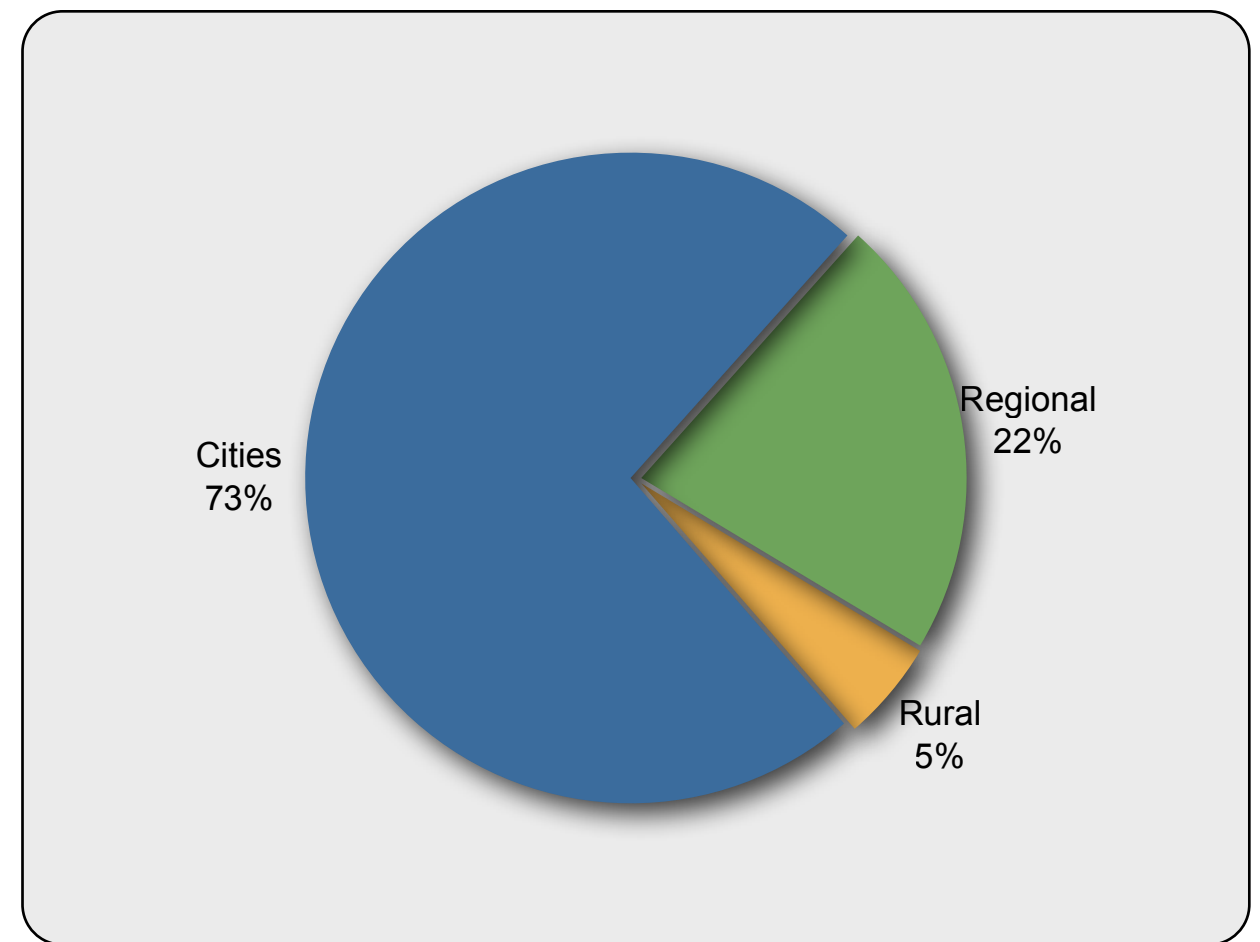
# Geographic Coverage

## National Representative Sample

- Interviews were undertaken in all capital cities, main regional cities and a number of regional and rural towns in all states and territories.
- The apportionment of interviews undertaken are illustrated in the charts below, presented amongst all states and territories and amongst capital cities, regional and rural areas.



Proportion of Sample: States & Territories

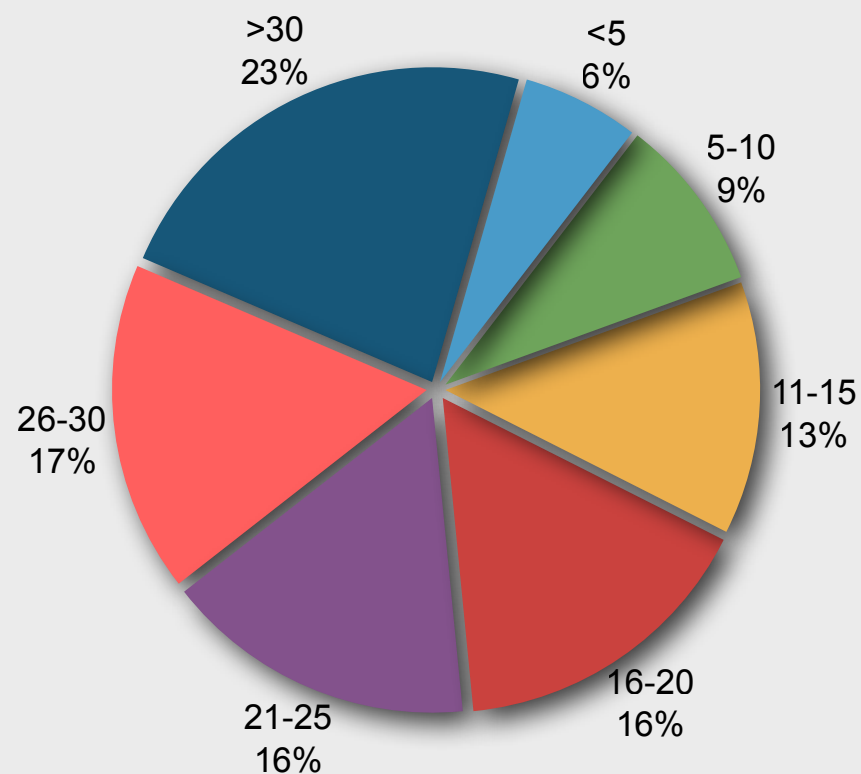


Proportion of Sample: Capital Cities, Regional & Rural Areas

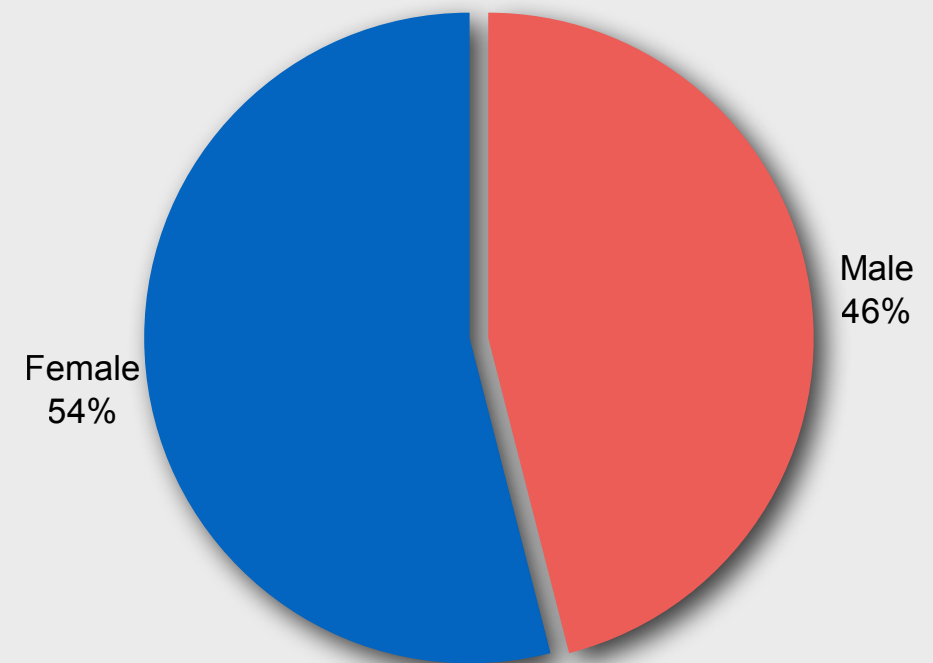
# Years in Practice & Gender

## National Representative Sample

- Interviews undertaken were amongst as close to a representative sample of the Australian General Practitioners as possible.
- The apportionment of interviews undertaken amongst the number of years in practice and gender are illustrated in the charts below.



Proportion of Sample: Years in Practice



Proportion of Sample: Gender



# 3 Research Findings

# Delays with vaccines

## ***Q1. Have you had delays with these vaccines?***

- The overall results to the question, as illustrated in the below right chart, were:
  - 7% had experienced delays with the “65+ Vaccine”
  - 4% had experienced delays with the “Children’s Vaccine”
  - 6% had experienced delays with the “Other at Risk Group’s Vaccine”
  - 62% had experienced delays with the “Private Market Vaccine”

## **Queensland, Regional & Rural Highest Delays**

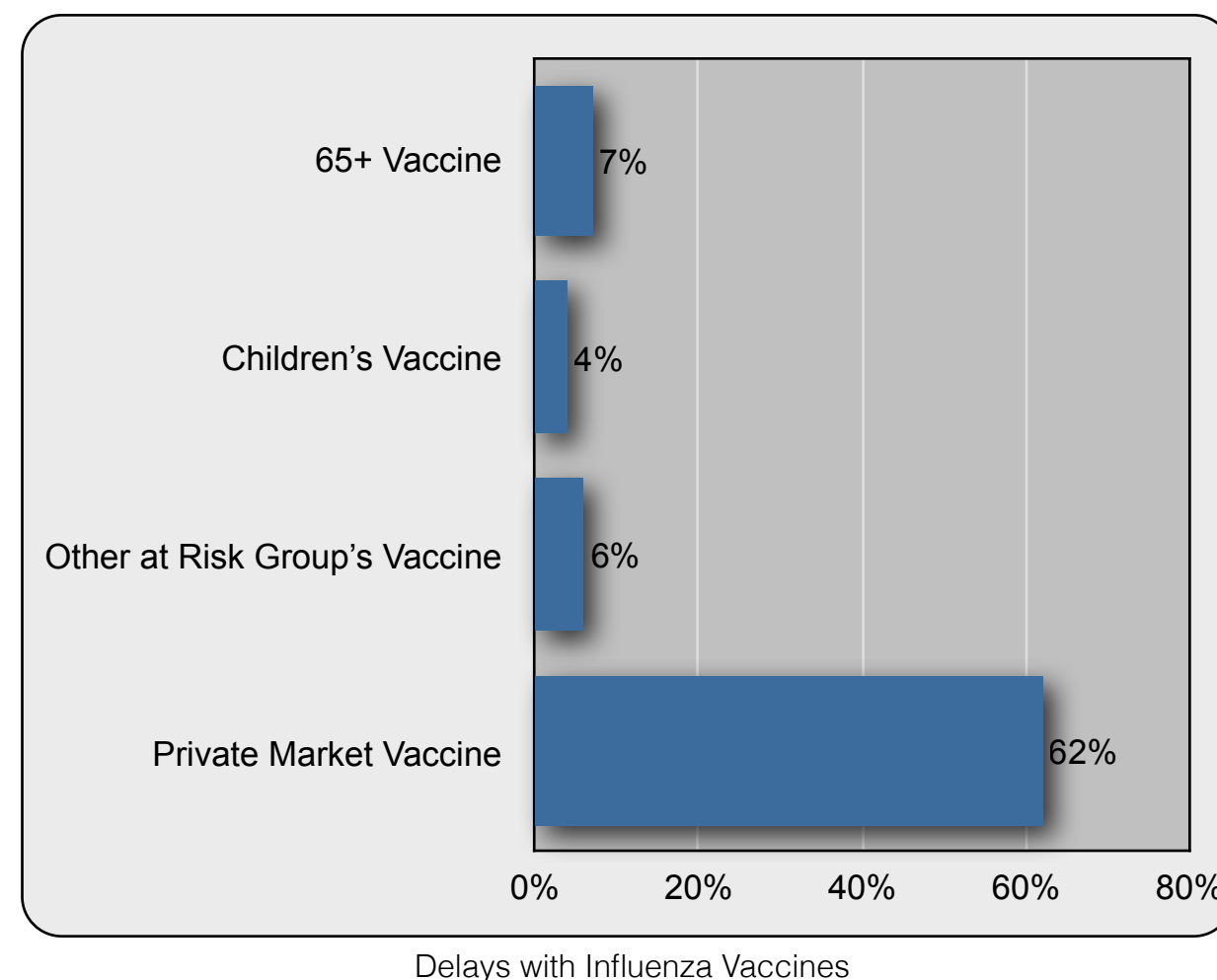
- GP’s who experienced the highest delays with the vaccines were those located in:
  - Queensland: 65+ (9%); Childrens (6%); Other at Risk (7%); Private Market (65%)
  - Regional: 65+ (8%); Childrens (6%); Other at Risk (8%); Private Market (66%)
  - Rural: 65+ (9%); Childrens (8%); Other at Risk (9%); Private Market (73%)

*“The delay is with the private market vaccine, if we order 50, we receive about 10, no reason is given for this despite our asking, all others (influenza vaccines) are normal in terms of their delivery compared to previous years.”*

*Ross, GP, Turramurra (Sydney), NSW*

*“Yes, I have had delays with the private market vaccine the most and also Fluad Quad (65+ vaccine).”*

*Pat, GP, Toowoomba, QLD*



# Receiving quantities ordered

## ***Q2. Have you been receiving the quantity of vaccine your ordered?***

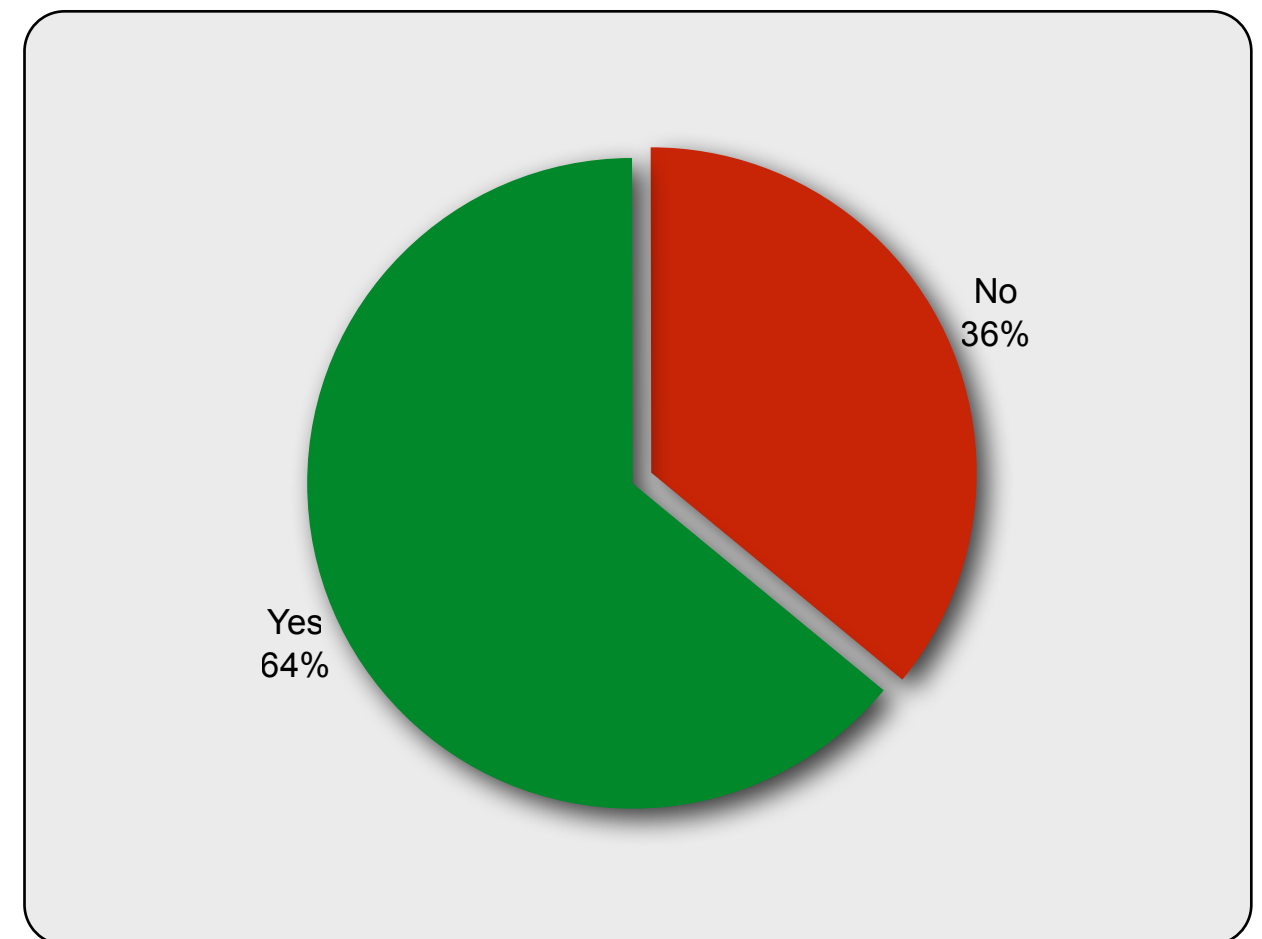
- The overall results to the question, as illustrated in the below right chart, were:
  - 64% answered “Yes”
  - 36% answered “No”

### **Tasmania, Queensland, New South Wales, Regional & Rural Highest in Not Receiving**

- GP’s who answered “No” where they have not been receiving the quantity of vaccine that they ordered, were highest amongst those located in:
  - Tasmania: 40% answered “No”
  - Queensland: 39% answered “No”
  - New South Wales: 38% answered “No”
  - Regional: 39% answered “No”
  - Rural: 41% answered “No”

*“No, we had a lot of trouble as did many throughout Tasmania over the last two months and it seems there are still supply problems for both the government-funded and private market vaccines.”*

*Anne, Clinic Nurse, North Hobart, TAS*



Receiving Quantity of Influenza Vaccines Ordered

# Pre-order stock from wholesalers

## ***Q3. Do you pre-order private stock from wholesalers***

- The overall results to the question, as illustrated in the below right chart, were:
  - 62% answered “Yes”
  - 38% answered “No”

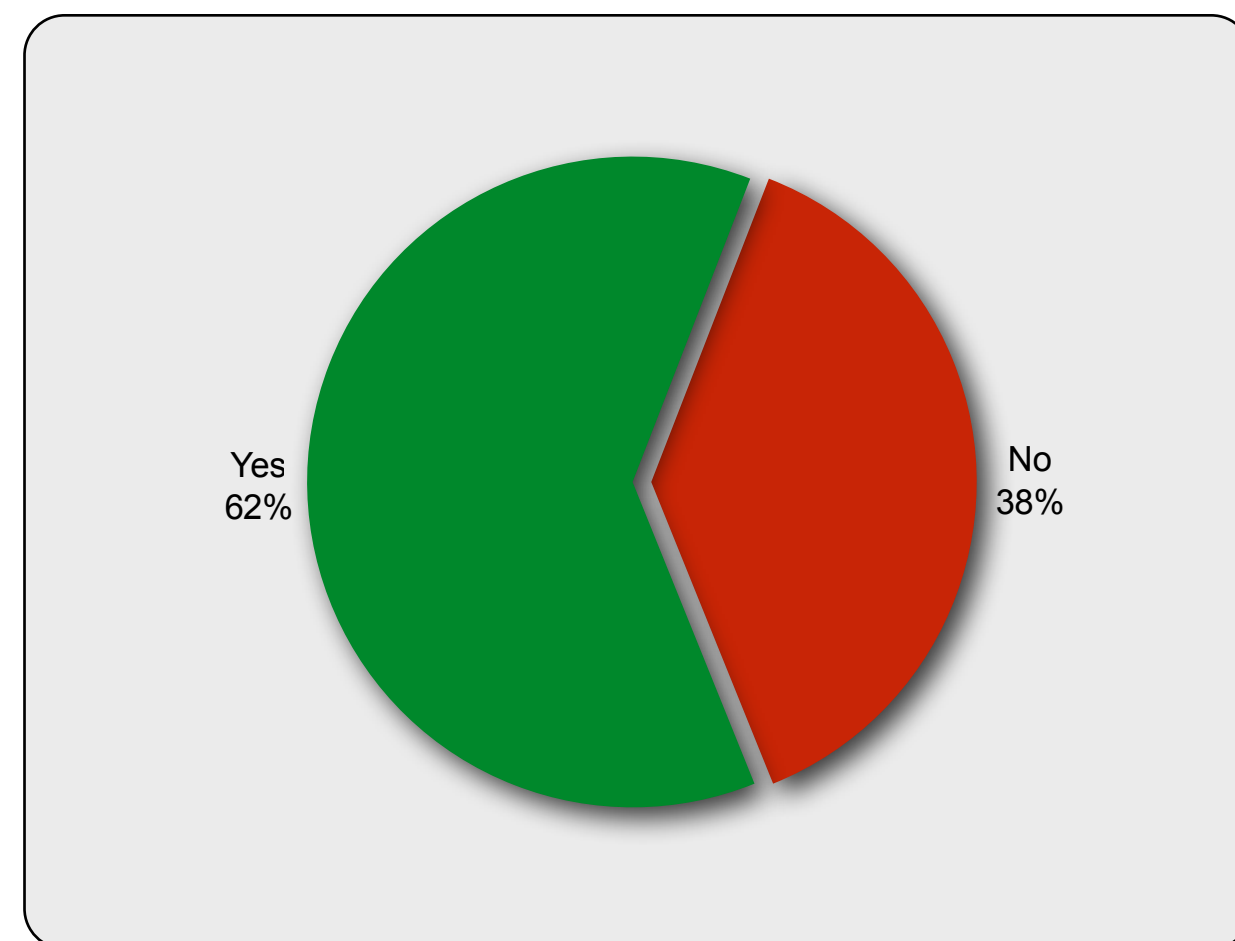
## **New South Wales & Queensland Highest States**

- GP’s who answered “Yes” where they pre-ordered stock from wholesalers, were highest amongst those:
  - New South Wales: 69% answered “Yes”
  - Queensland: 67% answered “Yes”
  - Victoria: 64% answered “Yes”

*“Yes, we get ours from Lavery because we also get our pathology services from them plus they are more reliable than NSW health.”*  
Michael, GP, Lane Cove (Sydney), NSW

*“Yes, we get the non-government funded ones from private suppliers .”*  
Roger, GP, Prahran (Melbourne), VIC

*“We just order from the Department of Health’s website (Western Australia) so no private wholesalers are involved.”*  
Ivy, Clinic Manager, Nedlands (Perth), WA



Pre-Order Private Influenza Vaccine Stock From Wholesalers

# Storage space limitations

## **Q4. Does storage space limit the amount of vaccine you can order?**

- The overall results to the question, as illustrated in the below right chart, were:
  - 81% answered “Yes”
  - 19% answered “No”

### **Minimal Differences Across GP’s**

- There were minimal differences in the responses across GP’s based on criteria capable of being segmented such as practice/clinic size, years in practice, geographic location.

### **Refrigeration Requirements**

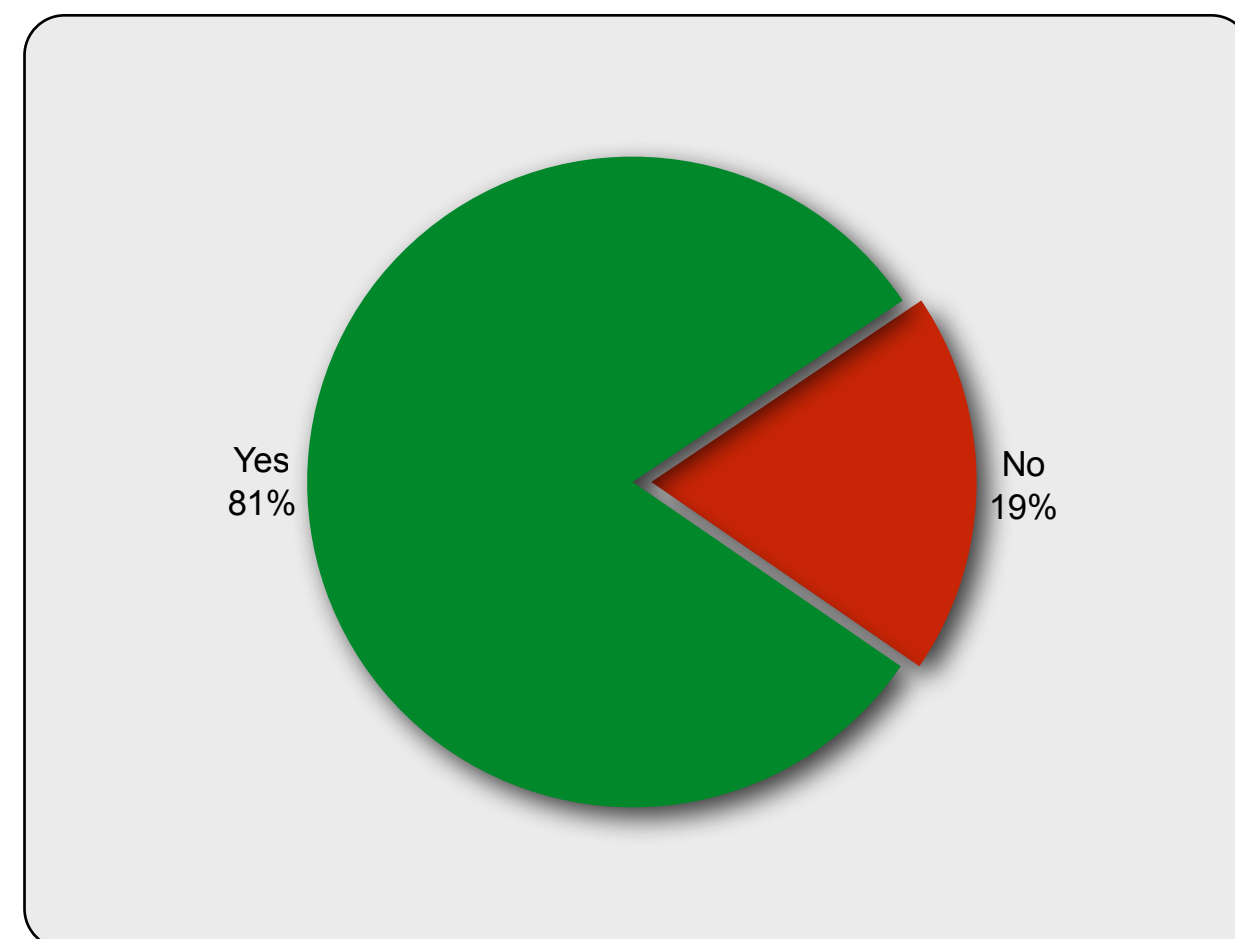
- Although qualitative insights were not explicitly asked in the question, many interviewees stated that the reason why storage space was a limitation on the amount of vaccine they can order was due to the requirement that it is refrigerated.

*“Yes, because we cannot hold more than around 200 vaccines with our storage capacity at the moment and because we have been having very high number of patients wanting the flu shot this year, coupled with not receiving the numbers of vaccines we order (sometimes 30-50 less or more) this fluctuation makes it difficult for us to store them.”*

*Marie, Clinic Nurse, Castle Hill (Sydney), NSW*

*“Yes, we will have to buy a new refrigerator, which we don't really have room for and I think we will need to have a backup power supply soon under cold chain regulations that are coming in to legally store vaccines in a refrigerator.”*

*Brian, GP, North Adelaide (Adelaide), SA*



Storage Space Limitations on Amount of Influenza Vaccines Can Order

# More frequent deliveries

## ***Q5. Would more frequent deliveries solve the problem?***

- The overall results to the question, as illustrated in the below right chart, were:
  - 84% answered “Yes”
  - 16% answered “No”

### **Minimal Differences Across GP's**

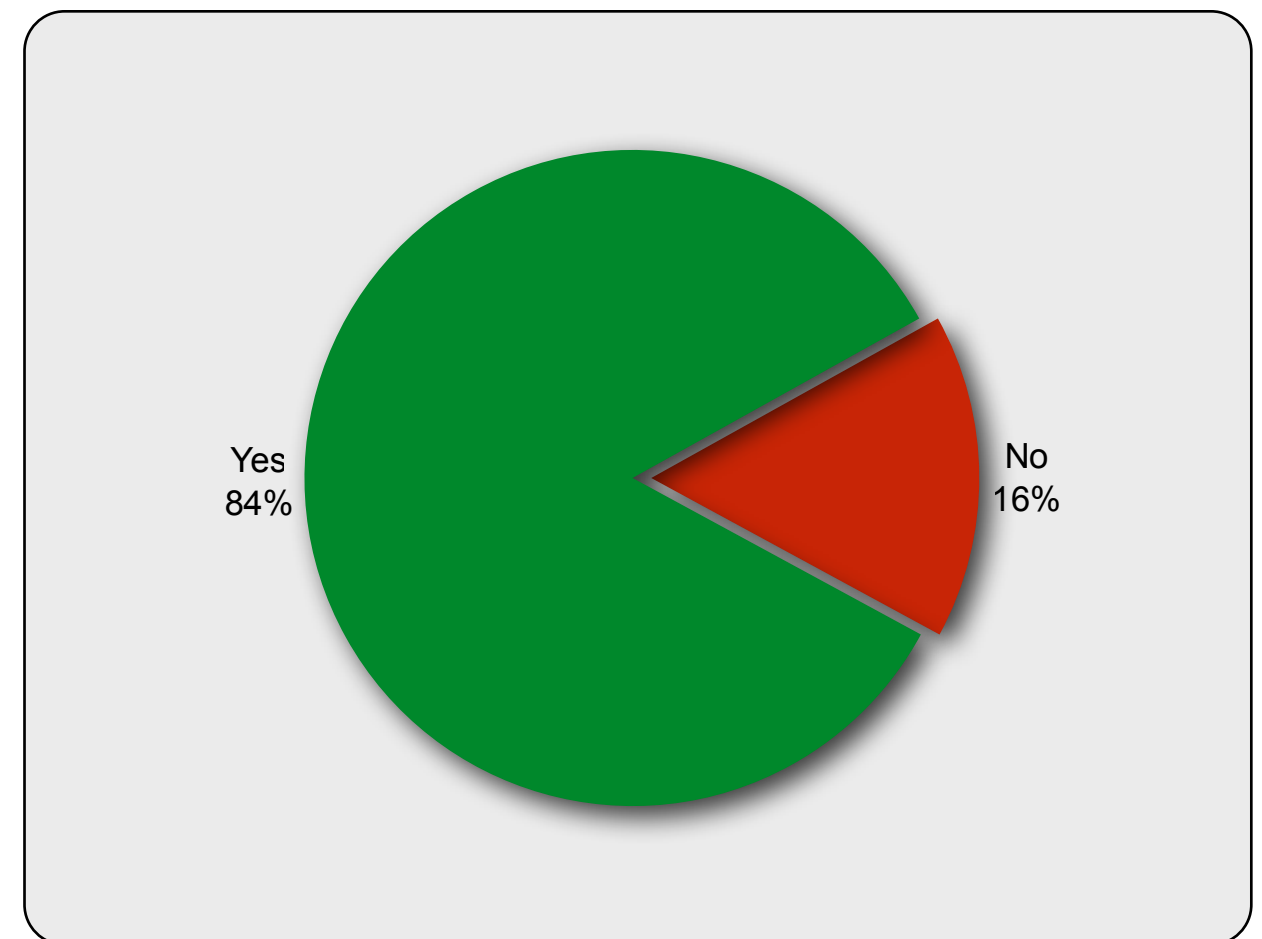
- There were minimal differences in the responses across GP's based on criteria capable of being segmented such as practice/clinic size, years in practice, geographic location.

*“Yes, that would help a lot, if we could get a delivery once per week, that comprises exactly what we order, everything would be fine.”*

*Hilary, GP, Ballarat, VIC*

*“More frequent deliveries would solve the problem for us, this year most of the problem has been not receiving the quantities that we order, for example we may order 25 each of the other 3 vaccines (65+, children's & other at risk groups) and 50 of the private market vaccine, once per week in April and May, but in reality we get the 3 vaccines (65+, children's & other at risk groups) but none or 10-20 of the private market vaccine, plus the deliveries lately are almost always delayed.”*

*Janet, Clinic Manager, Norman Park (Brisbane), QLD*



More Frequent Deliveries of Influenza Vaccines

# Shared stock with other clinics

## ***Q6. Have you shared your stock with other clinics to help them out?***

- The overall results to the question, as illustrated in the below right chart, were:
  - 7% answered “Yes”
  - 93% answered “No”

## **Sharing Higher Amongst Smaller GP Clinics and Those in Regional & Suburban Areas**

- GP’s who answered “Yes” where they had shared stock with other clinics to help them out, were highest amongst those:
  - Smaller GP Clinics with <5 GP’s: 11% answered “Yes”
  - GP’s located in regional & rural locations: 9% answered “Yes”
  - GP’s located in suburban locations in capital cities: 9% answered “Yes”

*“Yes, we did because another practice close by was short and we sometimes share stock with them and vice versa.”*

*Suhatha, GP, Randwick (Sydney), NSW*

*“We did with another surgery nearby, they had received a good delivery of the elusive private market vaccine and we got about 10 from them because we were having to cancel appointments due to not receiving it as we had ordered.”*

*David, GP, Launceston, TAS*



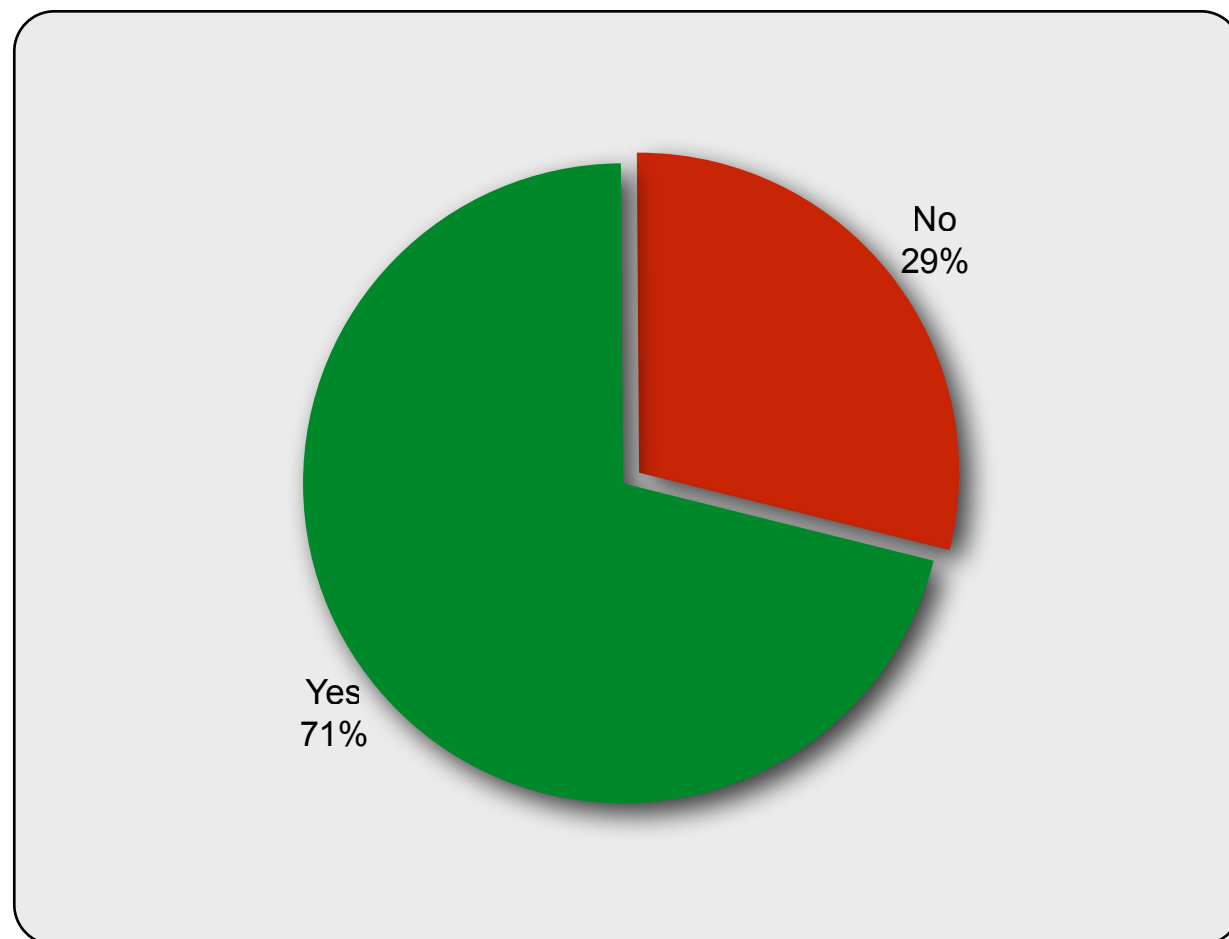
Shared Influenza Vaccines With Other Clinics



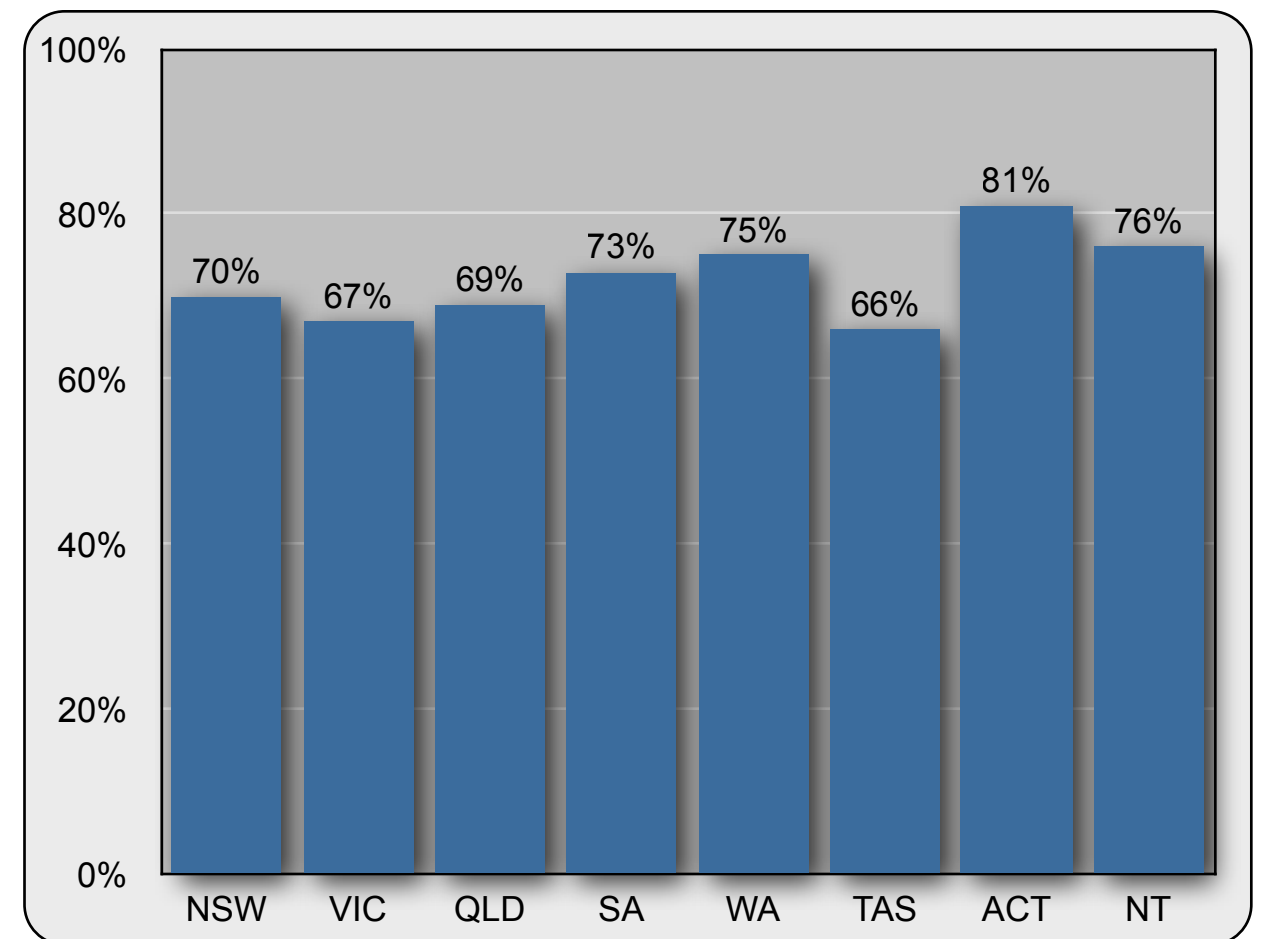
# Satisfaction with health department

## ***Q7. Are you satisfied with the communication from your health department?***

- The overall results to the question, as illustrated in the below left chart, were:
  - 71% answered “Yes”
  - 29% answered “No”
- The results to the question, by state and territory, is illustrated in the below right chart, where:
  - The highest “Yes” responses were from ACT (81%); WA (77%); NT (76%); SA (74%)



Overall Satisfaction With Communication From Health Department



Satisfaction With Communication From Health Department: State & Territory

# Input into the distribution process

## ***Q8. Do you feel you have adequate input into the distribution process?***

- The overall results to the question, as illustrated in the below right chart, were:
  - 19% answered “Yes”
  - 81% answered “No”

### **Minimal Differences Across GP's**

- There were minimal differences in the responses across GP's based on criteria capable of being segmented such as practice/clinic size, years in practice, geographic location.

*“We have no input, we are merely sent what is available, when it's available these days and it makes running a practice very difficult when you have patients that want to come in for a vaccination and you don't have any and can't get any for the peak times that you need them.”*

*Julia, GP, Mayfield (Newcastle), NSW*

*“I would say no because there isn't a procedure available to my knowledge where we can provide input...maybe the Department of Health (NSW) has a division that can do something but I haven't been bothered to check.”*

*Celeste, GP, Mount Gravatt (Brisbane), QLD*

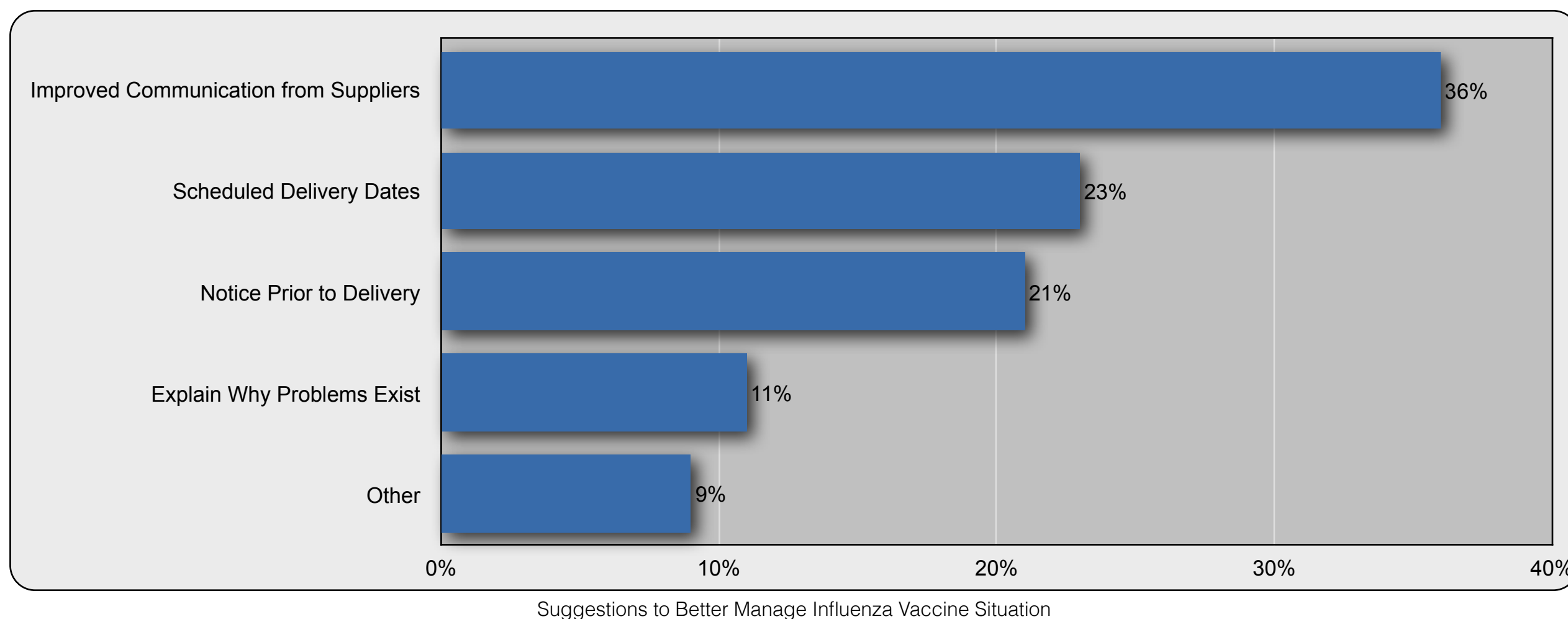


Adequate Input Into Distribution Process of Influenza Vaccine

# Better managing the situation 1/3

## ***Q9. Do you have any suggestions on how the situation could be better managed?***

- The main results to the question, are summarised in the below chart, where:
  - “Improved communication from suppliers” was the largest response (36%)
  - “Scheduled delivery dates” was the second largest response (23%)
  - “Notice prior to delivery” was the third largest response (21%)
  - “Explain why problems exist” was the fourth largest response (11%)
  - Other reasons given comprised the remaining 9% of responses



# Better managing the situation 2/3

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## Improved communication from suppliers

- This was the largest response given by 36%, where the main aspects were:
  - A large number of GP's stated that they have either none, or insufficient communication from suppliers after they place an order
  - Many GP's feel frustrated that at the time of ordering, they are not advised of the date that the vaccines will be delivered, or provided with an update as to the delivery date as the order is processed
  - When delays occur, as they have with the private market vaccine, there is no communication as to why the delay occurred or when delivery will be sent, often the vaccines "just arrive" in smaller quantities than what was ordered weeks later

*"The problem this year is worse than previous years because we are not being sent what we order and there are delays in receiving our orders...when we chase up what is happening with our orders, we are given the run-around and its only through complaining that we get what we need."*

*Sara, Clinic Manager, Burwood East (Melbourne), VIC*

*"I can understand to some extent that there is a supply problem, especially with the private market vaccine this year as demand is higher than forecast, but I cannot understand how there is a complete lack of communication pertaining to deliveries and we are forced to just accept that a delivery comprising half of what we ordered can just be appear without notice, weeks late."*

*Angus, GP, Wahroonga (Sydney), NSW*

## Scheduled delivery dates

- This was the second largest response given by 23%, where the main aspects were:
  - Many GP's complain that they cannot schedule delivery dates, instead vaccines are delivered when they become available and due to other criteria such as geographic location, size of order and when order was placed
  - GP's wish to be able to schedule guaranteed delivery dates so delivery of vaccines aligns with patient appointments

*"It would help us a lot if we could schedule when delivery dates will be when we place our order, then we could better manage our patients, knowing that we have sufficient stock for appointments during the busy flu shot period we are currently going through."*

*Katherine, GP, Leura, NSW*

# Better managing the situation 3/3

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## Notice prior to delivery

- This was the third largest response given by 21%, where the main aspects were:
  - A large number of GP's stated that they are inconvenienced that vaccine deliveries "just appear" without notice and are often late
  - Operationally, this affects their ability to schedule patients appointments to get vaccinations and also to manage storage of vaccine stock

*"We should be told when we will receive stock so we can make appointments with our patients, it is so inconvenient to try to run a practice when you are not told when vaccine stock will arrive."*

*Vanessa, GP, Geelong, VIC*

*"What would be great is being told a day in advance when an order will be delivered so we could arrange appointments with patients and also manage our storage."*

*Janet, Clinic Manager, Norman Park (Brisbane), QLD*

## Explain why problems exist

- This was the fourth largest response given by 11%, where the main aspects were:
  - A complaint by many GP's was that they were not told what the problems were with the delays in delivery, particularly with the private market vaccine delays which have been a problem for many
  - Many GP's said they would be more understanding if they were informed about what is causing the delays and apparent shortages

*"If it could be communicated to us why there are delays, that would at least pacify us, but not being told anything makes it all worse."*

*Ross, GP, Turramurra (Sydney), NSW*

*"There has not been a public announcement as to why there is a shortage this year, but it's clear that more people are getting the flu shot and earlier this year because of anxiety surrounding COVID-19 and priority has been given to pushing out the NIS (National Immunisation Scheme) stock over the private market stock."*

*Varsha, GP, Heathridge (Perth), WA*

# Impact of COVID-19

## ***Q10. Regarding the COVID-19 restrictions, what impact has it had on your practice?***

- The overall results to the question, as illustrated in the below right chart, were:
  - A lot less: 19%
  - Somewhat less: 34%
  - Same: 29%
  - Somewhat more: 11%
  - A lot more: 7%

### **Reasons for Impact**

- Some comments were made for the various reasons, which are best summarised by the below statements.

*"A lot of people have been avoiding coming to see us and other GP's for fear of being exposed to the coronavirus, I would say in the last month our patient appointments in surgery are down 30-40% which is a lot less."*

*Peter, GP, Forster, NSW*

*"Somewhat less would best describe our situation, overall we have seen a decrease of about 10-20% because people are staying home and especially don't want to come to a medical clinic and be surrounded by sick people who may have COVID-19."*

*Heather, Practice Manager, Tamworth, NSW*

*"About the same for us, due to about the same number of people not coming in for regular types of appointments have been matched with those coming in for flu shots and concerns about the coronavirus."*

*Rishikesh, GP, Hamilton (Brisbane), QLD*

*"We have had quite a large increase in people coming in to have the flu shot this year and this has more than made up for the slight decrease in those who have been staying away, so somewhat more I would say."*

*Hannah, GP, Camberwell (Melbourne), VIC*

