



neighbour day

EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT

Prepared by the Australian National university in
collaboration with Relationships Australia Inc.

September 2020



Australian
National
University

Neighbour Day is Australia's annual celebration of community, encouraging people to connect with those who live in their neighbourhood.

Find us on social media



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Introduction

EVALUATION TECHNIQUE

This evaluation report summarises an evaluation of the Neighbour Day Campaign (NDC) 2020 conducted by researchers at the Australian National University in collaboration with Relationships Australia.

This evaluation summary report seeks to provide an overview of the original report that explored the success of short, medium and long-term outcomes.

Short-term outcomes including increasing the awareness of Relationships Australia as the home of Neighbour Day and understanding Neighbour Day to be a catalyst to individual, family and community wellbeing; and increasing support of Neighbour Day from individuals and organisations.

Medium-term outcomes include achieving behavioural change and long-term sustainability through increased contact between neighbours and community and increased capacity to host events.

Long-term outcomes including building social capital and social inclusion in neighbourhoods.

Given that many aspects of daily life have been impacted by COVID-19, such as the ability to attend social gatherings, the key goal of this external evaluation was to understand whether taking action was protective of wellbeing and enhanced perceptions of the neighbourhood.

Relationships Australia
is the home of
Neighbour Day.

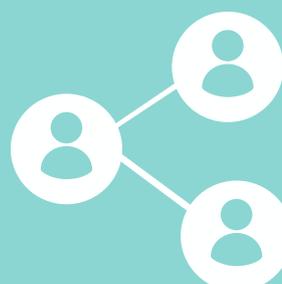


Neighbour Day
increases
community
wellbeing.



The NDC
increases
contact
between
neighbours.

The NDC gives
people more
capacity to
host events.



The NDC
increases social
capital for
individuals and
social inclusion in
neighbourhoods.

Introduction

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS NEIGHBOUR DAY?

Neighbour Day is a year-round grass roots community development campaign that aims to increase individual and community social connections, foster healthy relationships, reduce loneliness and promote social inclusion. The culmination of the Neighbour Day Campaign is celebrated on the last Sunday in March every year, with the aim of fostering strong personal connections that last year-round. People are encouraged to connect with their neighbours and the members of their local communities.

HISTORY

Neighbour Day was founded in Melbourne, Australia in March 2003 by Andrew Heslop after the remains of an elderly woman were found inside her suburban home. It was the widespread local and national media interest and coverage following the discovery of Mrs Elsie Brown that prompted Mr Heslop to suggest a 'National Check on Your Neighbour Day' in a letter to the editor of The Melbourne Age in 2003. Mr Heslop managed Neighbour Day with his own and in-kind resources until he handed over responsibility for Neighbour Day to Relationships Australia.

RELATIONSHIPS AUSTRALIA AS THE HOME OF NEIGHBOUR DAY

Since 2013, Relationships Australia has been the home of Neighbour Day. As an Australian, community-based, not-for-profit organisation with no religious affiliations, Relationships Australia provides services for all members of the community. Neighbour Day is a practical demonstration of Relationships Australia's organisational values in action. Neighbour Day provides Relationships Australia with the ongoing opportunity to highlight the importance of healthy relationships in all aspects of life and community.

NEIGHBOUR DAY CAMPAIGN

The Neighbour Day campaign aims to bring together like-minded people, resources, and organisations to grow stronger, well-connected communities. Relationship Australia utilises Neighbour Day as a community development tool to positively influence individual and community wellbeing. It operates similar to a backbone support organisation within a collective impact style framework. The Campaign relies on three key elements. These are:

- a stakeholder management framework;
- tools and materials to support Neighbour Day events and platforms; and
- a communication campaign



Key Findings

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The NDC 2020 operated against the backdrop of COVID-19. This provided a unique insight into the effect of restrictions on respondents. Between time-point 1 and time-point 2 (early March- April 2020) respondents reported:

- 1 A decreased sense of wellbeing**
- 2 An increased sense of loneliness**
- 3 An increased sense of neighbourhood satisfaction**

These results are consistent with other nationwide data.

Although COVID-19 adversely affected many respondents, the NDC 2020 was effective in the following ways:

1 Greater neighbourhood identification was associated with better mental wellbeing. This occurred in part due to greater perceived access to neighbours' support and reduced loneliness.

Being involved in multiple social groups was positively associated with mental wellbeing. This occurred in part due to greater perceived access to support from family & friends and reduced loneliness.

2

Increase in
neighbourly
support



Decrease in
loneliness



Increase in
mental
wellbeing



Methodology

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A two time-point quantitative study of Neighbour Day participants was conducted. Surveys were administered before Neighbour Day to 200+ respondents and post Neighbour Day to 200+ respondents, with 97 respondents providing complete data at both time-points. It should be noted that a third survey will be conducted 6 months after the post-survey to evaluate how these findings have endured.

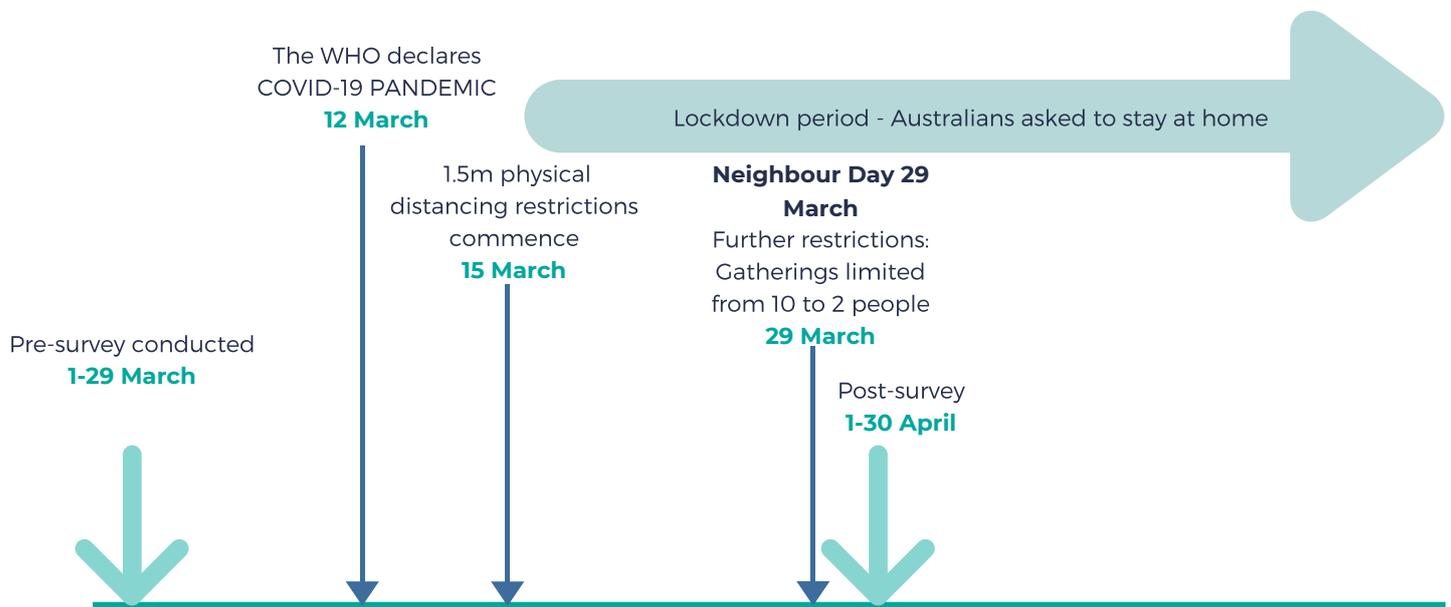


Figure 1. Timeline of NDC 2020 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

TIMEPOINT

1

March 1 - 29 2020
235 Responses

TIMEPOINT

2

April 1 - 30 2020
171 Responses

97 respondents provided complete data at both time-points

Neighbour Day 2020 Outcomes

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Via Invitation 16%

EVENT PROMOTION

25% Face-to-face

20% Posted on Facebook

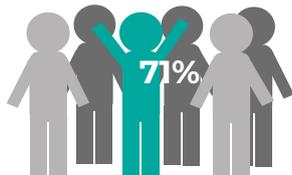
The most popular promotional materials provided by the NDC were invitations, 'how-to' guides and calling cards

A lot of knowledge 15.4% (Prior to Neighbour Day 2020)



Little knowledge 84.6% (Prior to Neighbour Day 2020)

RESPONDENT AFFILIATION



Most respondents were acting as individuals



Other respondents included community groups such as local community centres

1

Increased the capacity for hosts and attendees to connect through Neighbour Day materials and guides.

2

Increased the awareness of Relationships Australia as the home of Neighbour Day.

3

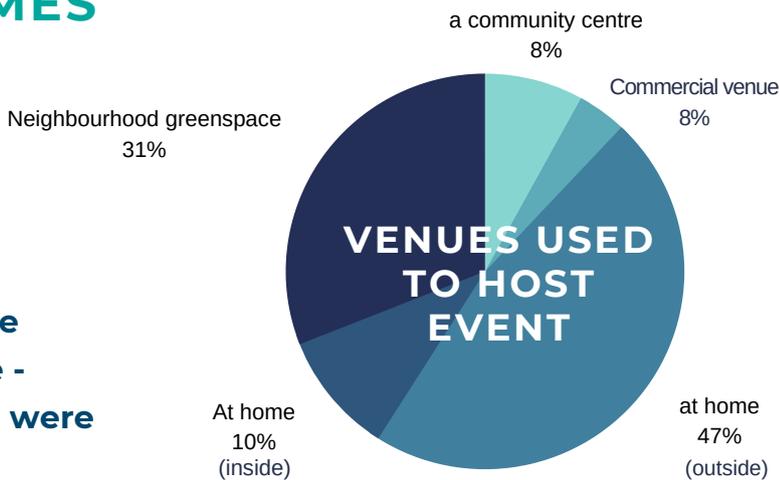
Increased support of Neighbour Day from individuals and organisations.

Neighbour Day 2020 Outcomes

MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES

11.48% increase from the reach of NDC 2019

ESTIMATED REACH
the estimated participation numbers* were predicted to be approximately 324,000 people - before the effects of COVID-19 were taken into account

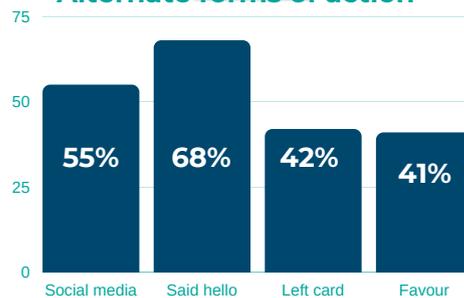


Of those who did manage to take action on NDC 2020, 82% indicated that their reach tended to be on a smaller scale and between 1-20 people.

FORMS OF CONTACT

Of those who planned a gathering event but had to postpone or cancel, 16% managed to take an alternate form of action

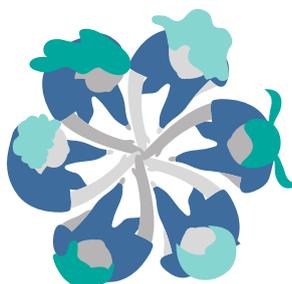
Alternate forms of action



BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION



Personal growth: such as physical health, mental health and feelings of safety or support

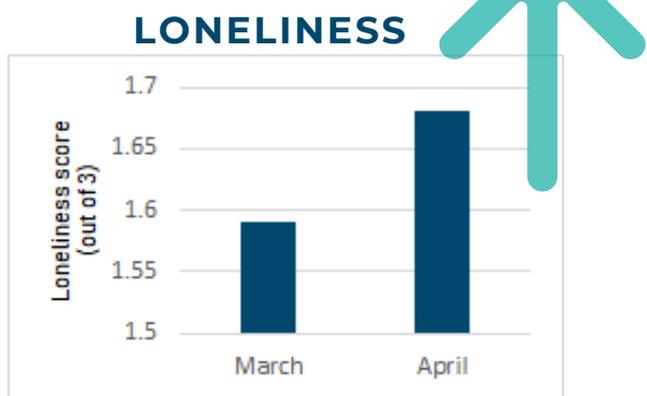
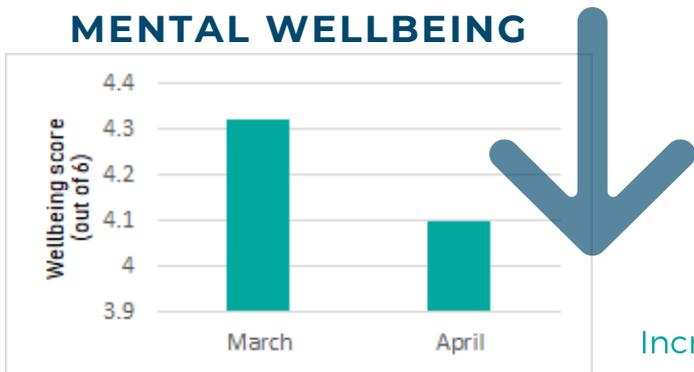


community wellbeing: such as helping create a strong community, showing support for others, connecting with elderly / vulnerable people

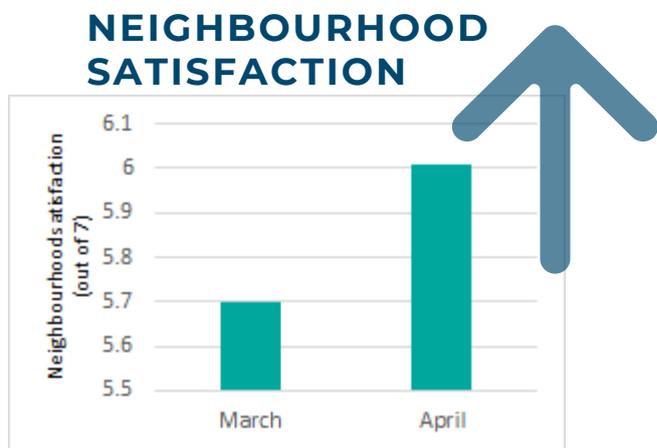
*based on number of unique downloads and the average number of people that attended each event as reported by respondents in the post survey in 2019.

Neighbour Day 2020 Outcomes

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES



Increased levels of loneliness and a decreased sense of wellbeing are consistent with other nationwide data and highlight the negative impact of COVID-19.



However, those involved in the NDC 2020 reported increased neighbourhood identification. Stronger neighbourhood identification led to greater levels of perceived support from neighbours. These people also reported lower levels of loneliness and an increased sense of wellbeing.



When people perceived greater levels of **neighbourly support**, they were less likely to report loneliness and more likely to report high levels of mental wellbeing.

Conclusion

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Continue to **promote creative ways** to connect with neighbours until the end of the pandemic. Continual promotion of creative and safe ways to connect with and support others will have benefits for both community and individual wellbeing.

2

Continue to **promote the importance of social connection with neighbours** throughout the year. Despite the personal burdens and sacrifices of unprecedented lockdown measures, there was evidence from respondents of their solidarity with their local community. Ongoing Neighbour Day Campaign promotion throughout the year would be ideal particularly during these uncertain times to support sustained community connection.

3

Increase awareness of **the importance of connecting with multiple groups**. Increase awareness of the importance of group-based connection for mental wellbeing. Positive sources of group connection include, but are not limited to, neighbourhood groups.

For more information please contact Relationships Australia on 02 6162 9300 or email us at natoffice@relationships.org.au.

Relationships Australia would like to thank the Australian National University for their work on this evaluation.