

COVID-19 testing among border workers

Project Summary



Outline of this summary report

Item

Purpose of project & background

Key take-aways from interviews

Key take-aways from KAP survey

Key take-aways from focus groups

Recommendations

Note that this is a **summary** of the Behavioural Insights Team's report on increasing COVID-19 testing among maritime border workers.

For more detail, please see the full report.



Purpose and background of project

This project was undertaken to investigate the factors that most influence COVID-19 testing among maritime border workers and provide solutions to increase adherence to the Required Testing Order (RTO).

Background:

- NZ's strict border control has played an important role in its elimination strategy
- Border workers are at higher risk of exposure to COVID-19
- **Stevedores** = maritime border workers who load and unload the ships
- **Required Testing Order (RTO)** - stevedores are required to get tested once every two weeks
- Initially only nasopharyngeal testing was available, but now saliva testing is available too.



Key research activities



Interviews with maritime border workers and PCBUs. We interviewed 10 stevedores and representatives from four PCBUs.



Knowledge, attitudes & practices survey. We surveyed over 600 maritime border workers to generate an understanding of behaviours and barriers surrounding testing.



Focus groups with maritime border workers. We facilitated two focus groups, each with 5-6 border workers, to sense-check the emergent themes from the survey and to develop solutions to improve COVID-19 testing behaviours.

Research activity findings

Key take-aways from interviews

The COVID-19 testing landscape for maritime border workers

- Testing stations for nasopharyngeal swabs are located at the ports, but open at different times
- Stevedores still need to get tested when they are not at work or on leave
- Stevedores know about the option of saliva testing but many have not taken it up
- Stevedores are technically allowed to get tested during work time but there is significant time pressure to load and unload the ships and therefore for stevedores to get tested on their breaks



Main enablers and barriers to regular testing

Enablers

- Testing stations are based at the ports
- Stevedores receive text message reminders when they are due for testing and if they are overdue for testing

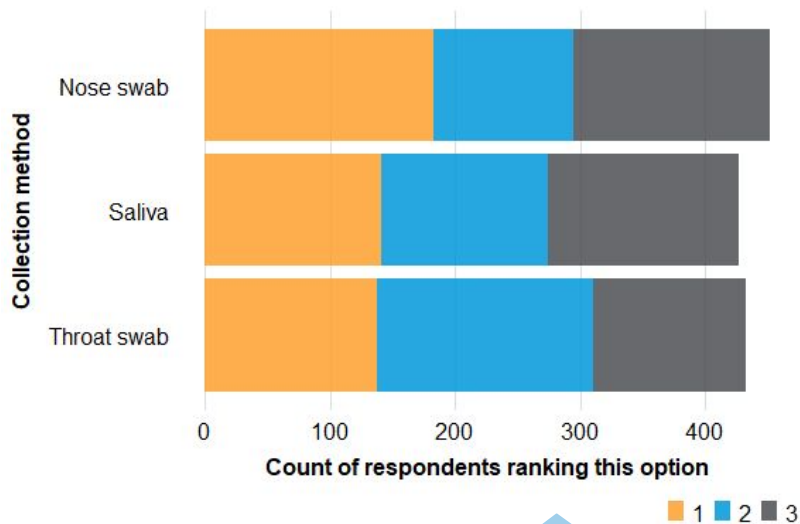
Barriers

- Having to travel to a testing station (when not at work)
- Waiting at the testing station to get the test
- The discomfort of getting (nasopharyngeal) test
- Having to get tested during break times
- Testing station not open when due to get tested
- Needing to make childcare arrangements
- Needing to remember to get tested
- Other people saying negative things about COVID-19 testing
- The length of time it takes to get a result
- Annoyance or resentment that the Govt made testing mandatory
- A fear of testing positive to COVID-19 or the treatment of others



Key take-aways from the survey

Nose swabs are the preferred testing method, but most are ambivalent



Stevedores have a slight preference for nasal/throat swabs over saliva testing

Saliva tests are perceived as a convenient testing option, but there are barriers to access

Saliva tests are convenient

“Currently the saliva testing program has been by far the most convenient way of ensuring I keep up with regular testing. As a shift worker, the nasal swab via testing stations was difficult at times to adhere too whilst maintaining my work commitments.”
“Doing Saliva test 3 times a week, nothing could be easier!”



Access to saliva drop-off stations is a barrier

“I guess I would get saliva tested but I don't know where all the drop off points are”
“Having more saliva drop off points”
“Being able to do saliva test on site would make things easier”
“making saliva testing collection points more flexible”
“Lack of saliva testing facilities if I'm away on holiday in a remote area.”

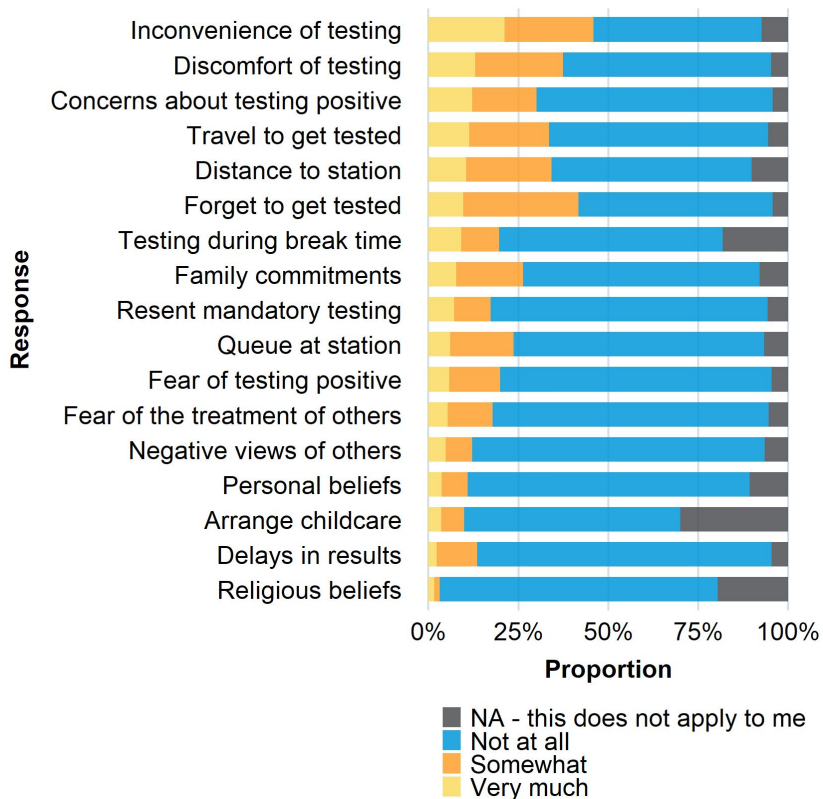


Frequency of saliva testing is a barrier

“saliva that had same frequency as nasal swab”
“Saliva testing should be fortnightly or weekly”
“If saliva testing was available for regular fortnightly tests.”

The most common barriers to regular testing are difficulty getting tested outside of work; needing to remember; test discomfort; and distance from testing venues

Barriers to regular COVID-19 testing



Māori respondents are more likely to endorse barriers relating to:

- Concerns of testing positive
- Family/whānau commitments
- Testing during break time
- Resentment of mandatory testing relative to NZ European respondents



Compliance with the testing order, and responsibility to family/whānau are strong motivators for regular COVID-19 testing

I get tested for COVID-19 regularly because...

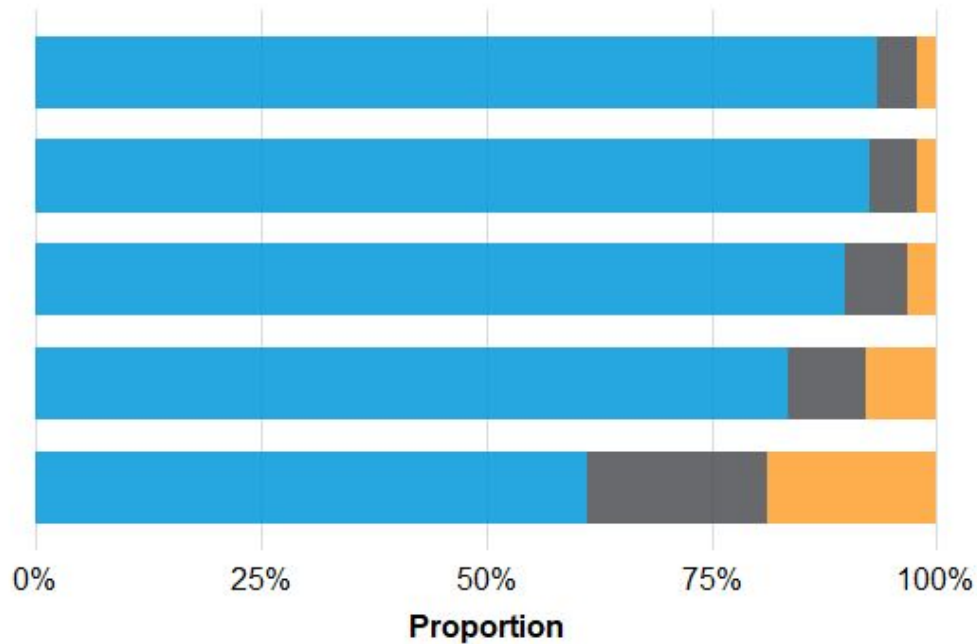
‘It is my responsibility to my family/ whānau/ community’

‘I want to make sure I am COVID-free’

‘The Testing Order requires me to get tested regularly’

‘I am worried about giving my family/whānau COVID-19’

‘I am worried about getting COVID-19’



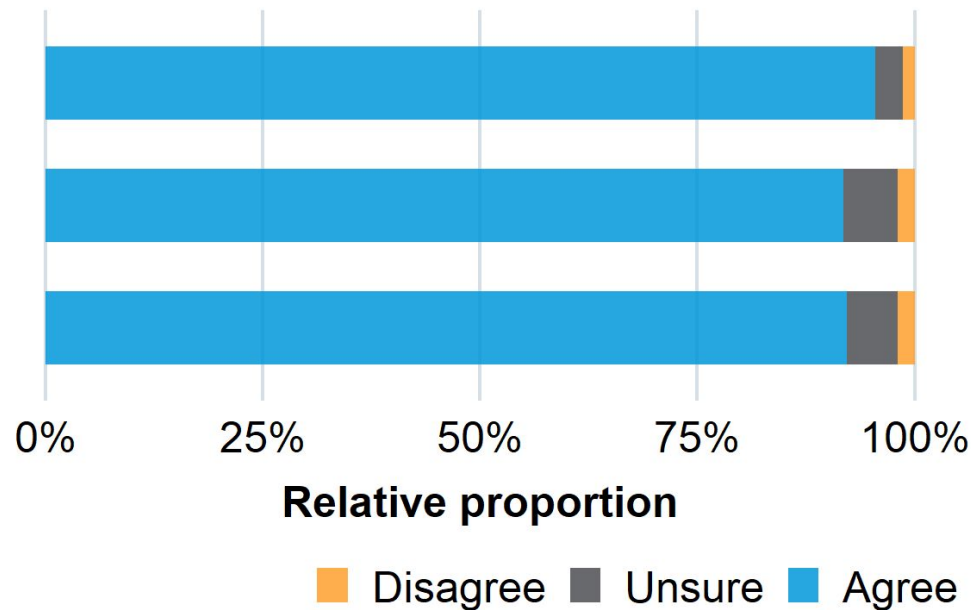
Most respondents understand why, where, and when to get tested

I know ...

‘why I need to keep getting tested even when I am fully vaccinated.’

‘where I can get tested if I am not at work.’

‘when to get tested if I am not at work’



n = 505



Key take-aways from the focus groups

1. Nasal swabs are preferred over saliva testing, but not by much

Understanding the finding

Nasal testing

- Stevedores are in the habit of nasal testing once a fortnight & it is convenient for them
- Nasal testing can take 20-30 mins, and smoko is all used up

Saliva testing

- Saliva testing is more frequent (twice a week)
- Those choosing saliva method do so to avoid the discomfort of nasal testing
- Drop-off boxes for saliva testing - not enough or locations unknown
- Extra IT stuff required for saliva testing, ie scanning barcode on phone

Possible solutions

Nasal testing

- PCBUs to 'allow' testing outside of smoko breaks
- Make testing mobile: Have a testing station on the way into work
- Make clearer the need to keep getting tested when fully vaccinated

Saliva testing

- PCBUs could promote saliva testing more
- Emphasise that choosing saliva testing would take the burden off nurses
- Supply more drop-off boxes for saliva testing
- Supply workers with saliva testing tubes



2. Common barrier to testing - concerns about testing positive

Understanding the finding

Concerns about:

- Stigma - “*being that person with COVID*”
- Health issues and protecting vulnerable whānau members - “*you might die*”
- What to expect if receive a test positive
- Different stories in the media & messages constantly changing
- MIQ being like a remand centre
- Going into isolation and potentially being away from whānau
- Losing money if you test positive because can't work

Possible solutions

- PCBU/DHBs to give greater clarity regarding the process following a positive test
- Govt to give MIQ a friendlier name
- Incentives: “*An open bar (in MIQ) would help*”
- ACC could cover salary if you can't work because of COVID



3. Common motivation to get tested - responsibility to whānau

Understanding the finding

Motivations: Compliance or adherence?

- In the absence of a major outbreak, stevedores get tested mostly because it is a requirement for work; need to provide for their families & whānau
- But if major outbreak, then testing becomes more of an active choice; want to prevent others getting infected
- Lack of acknowledgement of stevedores as a workforce protecting the border
- Motivating to get timely test results; demotivating if test results are late
- Inconsistent messaging from management and misinformation on social media

Possible solutions

Increasing motivation:

- Increase ease, convenience, and comfort of testing
- Increase speed and reliability of sending test results
- Pay stevedores to get tested
- Give greater acknowledgement to maritime border workers
 - *“Pizza/BBQ/shouts - Gotta give something to look forward to”*



4. Most border workers know where and when to get tested

Understanding the finding

Do stevedores really know where to get tested?

- Stevedores do generally know where and when they need to get tested at work
- But they don't necessarily know the closest testing station or drop-off box to their home
- Some stevedores rung Healthline or asked their GP to find the closest testing station to their home

Possible solutions

- Make sure all stevedores know where the closest testing station or drop-off box is to their home



Solutions Workshop and Recommendations



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Solutions Workshop

In November 2021, we conducted a 2-hour online solutions workshop to generate solutions to increase maritime border worker testing. The solutions were generated based on:

- Explore research
- Evidence from the behavioural sciences literature

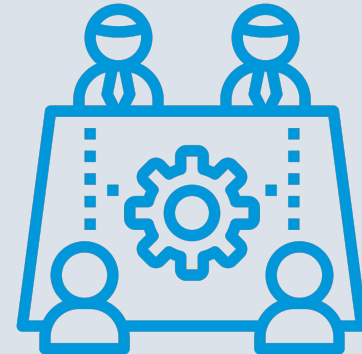
Workshop participants split into breakout rooms to focus on how we could facilitate border worker testing by brainstorming and prioritising possible solutions, including those suggested by stevedores in the interviews and focus groups.

Workshop participants then discussed how their chosen solution (or solutions) could be implemented, and how BI principles could be applied to enhance implementation.

Participants at the Solutions Workshop were representatives from:

- NZ Ministry of Health;
- NZ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE);
- Maritime New Zealand;
- the Ministry for Primary Industries;
- the Ministry of Transport;
- NZ Customs

The Behavioural Insights Team, Dr Maria Baker, and Gavin Faeamani facilitated the workshop.



Recommendations: Solutions that apply to both nasopharyngeal and saliva testing

	A1: Increase the convenience of testing for border workers and their knowledge of testing locations	A2: Provide operational transparency surrounding the COVID-19 testing process and what workers can expect if they test positive
Description	<p>Increase the ease and convenience of testing for border workers and ensure that all border workers know where the closest testing station or drop-off box is to their home by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making the port-based testing stations mobile. • Providing more drop-off boxes for saliva testing in convenient locations • Telling all border workers where the nearest drop-off box or testing station is to their home. 	<p>Provide maritime border workers with greater information and operational transparency surrounding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The testing process and what they can expect on each testing occasion; • The reason for delays in the receipt of results (if there are any); • What they can expect if they test positive to COVID-19.
Feasibility and Impact	<p>Feasibility: Medium Impact: Medium</p>	<p>Feasibility: Low Impact: Low</p>
Rationale	<p>Explore research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stevedores know where to get tested at work, but not when they're at home - and testing is often due when they are not at work • The testing process at ports is lengthy, often taking up the workers' break times. <p>BI Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making a behaviour easier can facilitate that behaviour 	<p>Explore research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maritime border workers were concerned about delays in receiving test results • Border workers are motivated to get tested by a sense of responsibility to family, whānau and community. <p>BI Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational transparency can increase trust and engagement with government



Recommendations: Solutions that apply to both nasopharyngeal and saliva testing

	A3: Publicly acknowledge the contributions that maritime border workers are making to keep New Zealand safe	A4: Facilitate competitions and leaderboards within and across PCBUs to make testing more attractive and social
Description	<p>Explicitly and frequently acknowledge the role that maritime border workers play in providing critical services to the New Zealand community and keeping New Zealand safe via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly newsletters to PCBUs • Ministry of Health communications • Press conferences 	<p>Use friendly competitions among PCBUs, and small incentives for winning these competitions. This can be achieved via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitions across PCBUs, that are visible to all maritime border workers • Providing rewards as incentives for participation
Feasibility and Impact	<p>Feasibility: High Impact: Low</p>	<p>Feasibility: Low Impact: Medium</p>
Rationale	<p>Explore research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border workers feel their contributions and sacrifices to keeping New Zealand safe have been largely ignored, despite increasing pressures of their job <p>BI Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of effort builds rapport, which is important to influence behaviour change • Recognition of an employee's efforts can increase productivity, engagement and motivation 	<p>Explore research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers were motivated to get tested by the provision of kai. <p>BI Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitions and leaderboards reinforce social norms surrounding specific behaviours, leading to behaviour change.



Recommendations: Solutions to increase the uptake of saliva testing

	B1: Clearly communicate the benefits of saliva testing and provide a rationale for the desired behaviour	B2: Reduce the required frequency for saliva testing
Description	<p>Communicate the benefits of saliva testing to maritime border workers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a rationale for the desired behaviour • Developing a mnemonic to support memory of the steps involved in saliva testing 	<p>Reduce the frequency necessary for saliva testing, including undergoing the required policy changes. When implementing this, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The timing and the broader context of testing for border workers • Alignment with the National Testing Strategy
Feasibility and Impact	<p>Feasibility: High Impact: Medium</p>	<p>Feasibility: Low Impact: High</p>
Rationale	<p>Explore research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A key barrier to saliva testing is the increased frequency, relative to nasopharyngeal swabs <p>BI Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have limited cognitive capacity, and simplifying processes can support behaviour change • Social norms and reciprocity are powerful motivators of behaviour • We are most likely to act on a message delivered by a messenger who we perceive as “like me” 	<p>Explore research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border workers perceive saliva tests as convenient, however because they are more frequent, are seen as a less desirable testing method <p>BI Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the burden of an alternative option makes it more likely for someone to move to the alternate option • Saliva testing has been shown to be as effective and sensitive as nasopharyngeal testing.





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