

What is this study about?	<i>CommunityMATTERS</i> is an initiative of the University of Wollongong's Illawarra and Shoalhaven Social Research and Education Enterprise (ISSREE). The study focuses on the perceptions people have about the region and their local community, as well as their experience of accessing local services. It is our goal to help local, state and federal government better plan for the needs of our community.
Who is conducting this study?	This research is being conducted by staff and students at the University of Wollongong. The research team includes Professor Jason Payne (issree-team@uow.edu.au , +61 4239 4301), Dr Delia Rambaldini-Gooding, Dr Natalia Hanley and Mr Cameron Langfield.
Who will participate?	<i>CommunityMATTERS</i> is a survey of residents who live in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven region. Invitations have been distributed to a random selection of households. Participants must be 18 years or older.
What are participants asked to do?	Participation involves the completion of a simple and easy to use online survey, accessed using the QR code that was supplied with this letter. In addition, participants will be asked whether they wish to join a panel of community members that we contact every year, or to contribute a more detailed account of their experiences in a follow-up interview. The <i>CommunityMATTERS</i> survey takes about 25 minutes to complete.
What types of questions will be asked?	Participants will be asked a series of questions about their experiences and perceptions of living in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven region. This includes questions about their local neighbourhood, as well as questions about their personal experience of accessing key health and social services across the region. Example questions include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How much do you agree that Wollongong is a good place for people of your age? 2) When something bad happens, are people like you the first to be questioned? 3) In the last 12 months, have you postponed or delayed seeing a doctor?
Are there any risks?	This study has been specifically designed to minimise risks. However, depending on your own personal circumstances there is a small chance that some questions might be upsetting to you. If this happens, we encourage you to exit the survey immediately and, if you feel necessary, reach out to Lifeline on 13 11 14. We will remind you of this as the survey progresses, and we will provide you with follow-up information at the end, just in case you need it.
Are there any benefits?	Your contribution to this study is important. It will help us to better understand the diverse experiences and needs of the Illawarra and Shoalhaven region. To thank you for your participation, we are offering every participant the chance of winning an electronic gift voucher. Four \$50 vouchers are drawn at the end of September 2022 and then again at the end of April 2023. The final prize draw (two \$500 vouchers) is drawn at the end of April 2023.
What happens with the results?	The data collected by <i>CommunityMATTERS</i> will be analysed by the research team and used in a range of publications and presentations. When available, these publications can be accessed at uow.info/issree .
Do I have to participate?	No. Participation in <i>CommunityMATTERS</i> is voluntary and you can choose to withdraw from the study at any time without anything happening to you. If you decide to withdraw before submitting your survey responses, you can do so at any time before pressing the 'submit' button simply by exiting the survey. Un-submitted responses are deleted. Once you have submitted your responses, they cannot be deleted or withdrawn.
How is my data used and how is my privacy protected?	The data for this study will be securely and permanently stored at UOW and later archived with the Australian Data Archive. It will be used to generate research products and to comprise a long-term information database. A small part of the data that does not say who you are will be available to UOW students for teaching and learning purposes. Other researchers may apply to access the de-identified data, subject to additional Human Research Ethics Approval. Participant responses are treated as strictly confidential. This means that we will never give information to anyone that could be used to identify you. You can choose to complete this survey without giving your name or other information that tells us who you are, simply by skipping any question that asks for your contact details.