Evolving the Dept of Health Covid Tracker Survey to align with WHO survey tool for behavioural insights

Context
The Department of Health has run a nationally representative Covid Tracker Survey twice weekly since 16 March 2020. The survey measures adherence to public health messages, awareness of communications, risk perception, and emotional wellbeing.

The tracker and the frequency by which it was implemented, were appropriate during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic when public perception of, and knowledge about, Covid-19 was evolving rapidly.

As we begin to ease restrictions, and public opinion becomes more stable, it is appropriate to review the methods being employed, the data being captured, and the opportunities that exist for national and international comparison.

Next Steps
The WHO have recently published the WHO tool for behavioural insights on COVID-19 which is broadly similar to survey questionnaire employed in the DoH Covid Tracker Survey.

The Communications Unit are working with Research Services Unit to incorporate elements of the WHO tracker to facilitate international comparison, while maintaining the continuity of the existing data.

Existing topics covered in both surveys
- Awareness and adoption of safe behaviours to protect from Covid-19
- Emotional wellbeing – experience of positive and negative emotions during Covid-19
- Risk perception - levels and source of worry, perception of the pandemic
- Policy – interventions and preference on restrictions
- Information - sources of information and frequency of consumption of information
- Trust in institutions

New topics to be incorporated include:
- Direct experience of Covid-19 - have you or friend/family been infected with Covid-19?
- Preparedness and ability to cope - knowledge of symptoms, how to prevent the spread of Covid-19, how to protect oneself from Covid-19
- Resilience – capacity to sustain behaviours

It is anticipated the new survey, which will run weekly, will commence from mid-June.