R U OK? Quarterly Tracker
June 2018-September 2019

Corey Fisher, Managing Director
Amber-Marie Bedwell, Consultant
October 2019
Background and Methodology.
Background

R U OK? is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to inspiring people to really talk and help build more connected communities to prevent suicide. The vision of R U OK? is a world where we’re all connected and protected from suicide. R U OK? work alongside other mental health and suicide prevention organisations to ensure those who are struggling find the care and support they need. R U OK? has a wide variety of initiatives aimed at building connection between people, but the most high-profile and iconic of these initiatives is R U OK?Day, where people are encouraged to ask each other “R U OK?”. R U OK?Day has been run since 2009, and continues to grow in recognition and in raising awareness of the importance of connecting with others to prevent suicide.

Since 2013, Colmar Brunton has partnered with R U OK? to conduct research to measure the impact of R U OK?Day on the Australian population. This research has historically consisted of two paired online surveys: a “pre-campaign” survey conducted in June each year, and a “post-campaign” survey conducted in late September, soon after R U OK? Day is held. These surveys were only focused on collecting data connected with R U OK?Day (before and after the event).

The current program now examines how people are connecting with each other all through the year by conducting online surveys every quarter.
Research objectives

The current program was designed to:

- Measure and track participation in help-giving behaviours that promote connection and support from others;
- Measure and track awareness and understanding of R U OK? throughout the year;
- Measure and track levels of participation in R U OK? activities and promotions throughout the year (including R U OK? Day);
- Measure perceptions of the R U OK? brand;
- Obtain a deeper understanding of what happens after someone is asked “R U OK?”;
- Evaluate areas such as Mental Health Status and Perceptions of Stigma; and
- Investigate other topical ad hoc issues that may arise during the year.
Key findings for September 2019 in a nutshell.
About R U OK?

77% recognised R U OK?
10% additionally aware once prompted
23% participated in R U OK? activities
31% likely to participate in the next year
60% feel that the R U OK? campaign makes people feel more connected

Talking/Mental health

81% had engaged in at least one form of supportive behaviour towards someone else in the month prior to the survey
62% asked someone face-to-face if something was troubling them in the last month
67% felt that if someone close to them seemed troubled that they should or definitely should ask about it
57% find it easy to ask someone if they are okay
78% have the ability to get support from family, friends and colleagues if they need it

*September 2019 data only*
What do you think R U OK? is about?

“Annual Day to raise awareness about mental illness in society.”

“It’s about promoting taking to people and also ask them if they’re ok. Starting a conversation can save someone’s life.”

“It is about showing you care...just asking if the person is ok if u notice they seem to be worried about something. It is about preventing suicide. Helping the person get help if they need it.”

“A day designed to reach out to friends and family to see how they are going in life.”

“Taking the time to think about people and the indicators that someone may show if they aren’t ok - as well as taking the time to practice the act of asking if you’re OK.”

“Opening up dialogue between people so that those who are struggling with mental health issues have an opportunity to get the support they need, ultimately reducing the possibility of suicide.”

“Reminding people to look around them at work and elsewhere - have they noticed anyone who does not seem to be happy or look worried or are they acting a bit out of character? Ask them if they Ok as you have noticed they are not their usual self?”

“Taking the time to think about people and the indicators that someone may show if they aren’t ok - as well as taking the time to practice the act of asking if you’re OK.”

“Checking in with mates to see if they're doing okay. Taking direct action by asking those around you if they're struggling with mental health.”

“A day designed to reach out to friends and family to see how they are going in life.”

“Taking the time to think about people and the indicators that someone may show if they aren’t ok - as well as taking the time to practice the act of asking if you’re OK.”

“Opening up dialogue between people so that those who are struggling with mental health issues have an opportunity to get the support they need, ultimately reducing the possibility of suicide.”

“Reminding people to look around them at work and elsewhere - have they noticed anyone who does not seem to be happy or look worried or are they acting a bit out of character? Ask them if they Ok as you have noticed they are not their usual self?”

“Taking the time to think about people and the indicators that someone may show if they aren’t ok - as well as taking the time to practice the act of asking if you’re OK.”

“Opening up dialogue between people so that those who are struggling with mental health issues have an opportunity to get the support they need, ultimately reducing the possibility of suicide.”

“Reminding people to look around them at work and elsewhere - have they noticed anyone who does not seem to be happy or look worried or are they acting a bit out of character? Ask them if they Ok as you have noticed they are not their usual self?”

“Taking the time to think about people and the indicators that someone may show if they aren’t ok - as well as taking the time to practice the act of asking if you’re OK.”

“Opening up dialogue between people so that those who are struggling with mental health issues have an opportunity to get the support they need, ultimately reducing the possibility of suicide.”

“Reminding people to look around them at work and elsewhere - have they noticed anyone who does not seem to be happy or look worried or are they acting a bit out of character? Ask them if they Ok as you have noticed they are not their usual self?”
Conclusions and recommendations (September 2019 vs 2018).
Conclusions and recommendations

Awareness
Total awareness of R U OK? peaked in September 2019 at 87% and was significantly higher than in September 2018 (80%).

- The significant increase in total awareness in September 2019 is driven by a significant increase in those who had unprompted recognition of R U OK? compared to September 2018 (77% and 70% respectively).
- The difference between total awareness of R U OK? before R U OK? Day and after the event has increased in the year 2019 (13%) when compared with 2018 (5%).

These encouraging findings on the 7% growth in total awareness in September 2019 compared with September 2018 highlight the success and impact of this years R U OK? campaign in raising the profile of the organisation amongst the general public.

Likewise, where awareness unsurprisingly increased again after R U OK? Day in 2019, the difference in awareness results before the campaign to afterwards has increased to 13% in 2019 from 5% in 2018. This indicates that the campaign of 2019 had a particularly significant impact in raising overall awareness of R U OK?, resulting in the highest total awareness figures to date. The challenge for R U OK? now will be to continue to maintain this increase in awareness and grow on this success throughout the rest of the year.
Conclusions and recommendations

Demographic awareness

When looking at differences among demographics, in September 2018 men were significantly less aware of R U OK? (74%) compared to women (85%). Meanwhile in September 2019 there were no significant differences across the demographics. This suggests that the campaign in 2019 has helped to raise the awareness of R U OK? among men to be similar to that of women, the effect of which can be seen in the increase of total awareness in September 2019 (87%).

When looking at the period of June 2018 to September 2019 as a whole, combined total awareness was high at 79%. However, it was significantly lower for men (73%) compared to women (84%). It was also significantly lower for those aged 55 and over (74%) compared with 16-34 year old's and 35-54 year old's (82% and 81% respectively). When looking across the states, those in Victoria were significantly less aware of R U OK? (74%) compared with other regions.

Therefore, focussing on raising awareness of R U OK? among men, those aged 55 and over and those living in Victoria should be continued to ensure that total awareness remains high. However, as there were no significant differences across demographics in September 2019, this suggests that the recent campaign is having an impact on targeting these demographics which should be continued.
Conclusions and recommendations

Participation
Participation rates in R U OK? activities in the past year among those aware of R U OK? increased by 4% in September 2019 from September 2018 (23% and 19% respectively). This improvement is encouraging however as total awareness of R U OK? in September 2019 was 87%, it is apparent that there is further scope to encourage the 64% who are aware of R U OK? but not yet participating in any activities.

When looking at intention to participate in the future, results were fairly consistent across the two waves, with around a third (31% in September 2019 and 33% in September 2018) of those aware of R U OK? say they would be likely to participate in the next year.

Demographic cohorts with lower participation rates
Older people (aged 55 and over) have significantly lower participation rates in September 2019, while those aged 16-34 have significantly higher participation rates. Those aged over 55 also reported to be significantly less likely to participate in the future when compared with the other age groups in both waves. Therefore, those aged 55 and over should continue to be a key focus for future campaigns to increase overall participation.

Encouragingly, no significant differences were observed by gender in current or future participant rates for both September 2019 and 2018.
Conclusions and recommendations

Reasons for and against future participation

Key reasons for future participation for both September 2019 and September 2018 were ‘I think the message is important’ (61% and 59% respectively), ‘It helps people’ (56% and 56% respectively), and ‘I think asking “are you ok?” can make a difference to people who are troubled’ (56% and 53% respectively). These reasons have remained key consistently wave on wave and therefore they remain to be key messages for R U OK? to focus on.

The main reasons for both of the two waves that people were unlikely to participate the next year included: ‘I just haven’t thought about it’ (35% in September 2019 and 32% in September 2018) and ‘I don’t know enough to participate’ (17% in both September 2019 and September 2018).

Future campaign messages from R U OK? could continue to address these barriers through further messages about the importance of checking in on the individuals in people’s lives and the benefits of doing so. More communication with further detail about R U OK? activities, or promoting more messages with information of this nature may benefit the 17% from both September 2019 and 2018 who don’t know yet enough to participate.

In both September waves, there was no differences across demographics for the reasons for not participating.
Conclusions and recommendations

Conversation and talking behaviours
Positively, in September 2019 and September 2018 the two most selected answers for the most likely behaviour on encountering a very/possibly troubled friend was to ‘ask them if they are okay’ and ‘ask them to talk about what was troubling them’ in line with R U OK? objectives of encouraging people to ask the question.

Respondents in September 2019 were significantly more likely in this period to feel that they should ask someone who appeared troubled what’s troubling them (67%) compared to September 2018 (58%). Likewise, although not significant, in September 2019 there was a 5% increase in those who found it easy to ask someone about their wellbeing when compared to September 2018 (57% and 52% respectively).

Demographics
Males and younger people (aged 16-34) answered in September 2018 that they found it significantly less easy to ask others about their wellbeing than other groups and were significantly less likely to feel that they should ask someone what’s troubling them. Although males continued to respond in this way in September 2019, those aged 16-34 responded similar to other age groups indicating that there has been a positive shift for younger people on these aspects this year.

Males would continue to benefit from more information from R U OK? on how to approach discussions on this topic and may require further persuasive communication on the importance of this.
Respondent Profiles.
Respondent Profile - September 2019

- 35% working full time
- 13% working part time
- 5% working casually
- 6% self employed
- 23% retired
- 5% students
- 5% home duties
- 5% unemployed

- 47% male
- 53% female
- 1% identify as LGBTQI
- 31% 16-34
- 30% 35-54
- 38% 55 years +
- 2% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 2% Metro
- 80% Regional

- 34% Living with partner - no children at home
- 22% Living with partner - children at home
- 22% Single - living alone
- 10% Living with parents
- 6% Unrelated adults share house
- 4% Single parent household

- 30% TAFE/diploma/certificate
- 26% Undergraduate Degree
- 15% Postgraduate degree
- 27% High school (Yr10 to 12 or equivalent)

- 12% Under $30,000
- 19% $30,000 to under $60,000
- 17% $60,000 to under $90,000
- 16% $90,000 to under $120,000
- 10% $120,000 to under $150,000
- 11% $150,000 or more

- 74% Born in Australia
- 15% Born overseas in an English speaking country
- 10% Born overseas in a Non-English speaking country

Base: All respondents, September 2019 (n=883)