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APPLIED ECONOMIC &
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Research Insights

Taking the Pulse of the Nation

Australians not helping as much outside their own households, but those who have shown prosocial behaviour are doing more now than the time before the pandemic.

Melbourne Institute’s Survey of the Impact of COVID-19 in Australia

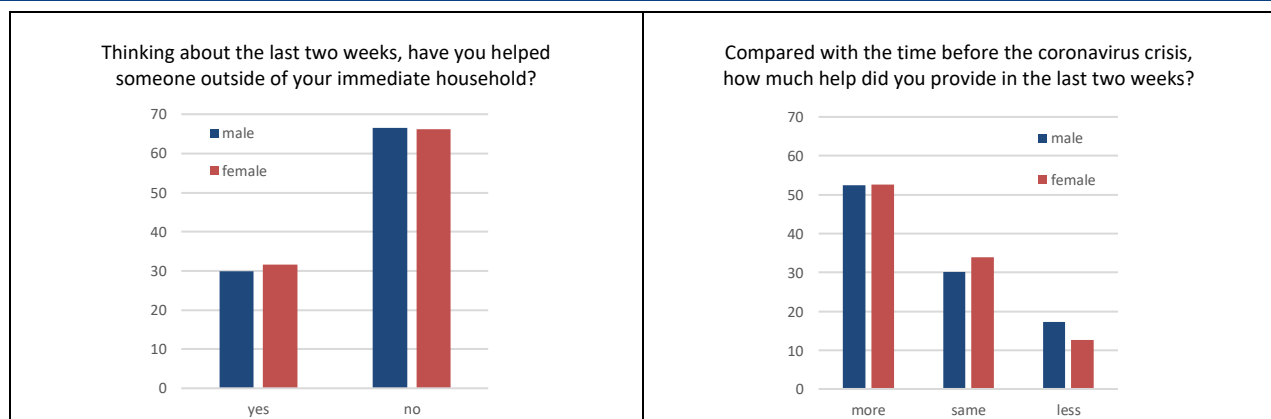
Survey Results*: Wave 6 (11-15 May 2020)

Amongst those who have shown prosocial behaviour, there is more “lending a helping hand” now than in the time before the pandemic.

- The wave 6 survey was conducted in the days after the Friday 8 May announcement of the 3-step plan to open Australia. As expected with the easing in restrictions, there was a fall in the proportion of people reporting that most to all people in their neighbourhood kept a physical distance between themselves. However, while this was the case in all mainland States, physical distancing was perceived to have risen in WA, along with the opinion that government restrictions on social activity (such as dining in restaurants and going to the cinema) should be eased within one month (this proportion shot up from 16% in wave 5 to 39% in wave 6). SA was the only state which showed a decrease in the proportion who think that restrictions should be eased within one month (from 31% to 23%).
- With the flattening of the coronavirus curve and the beginning of easing restrictions, Australians are turning their attention to the path to economic recovery. Satisfaction with government economic policies to support jobs and keep people at work has been steady throughout the 6 waves of this survey (average of 66%). Wave 6 showed a slight shift in the expected duration of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic – the proportion expecting it to last for six months increased (by 4 percentage points) while the proportion expecting it to last for more than 12 months fell (by 4 percentage points).
- Comparing wave 6 with wave 5, there has also been a marginal shift in the financial conditions of the survey respondents with a slight increase in the proportion of those financially stressed along with a marginal decline in the financially comfortable. The change in the proportion experiencing mental distress is negligible.
- In wave 6, a question about prosocial behaviour was included. An overwhelming number of respondents reported that they have not helped someone outside of their immediate household (such as picking up groceries for a neighbour or helping a friend with expenses). However, amongst those who said they have helped, a higher proportion reported having done more in the past 2 weeks compared to the time before the coronavirus pandemic. The behavioural pattern is similar for males and females.

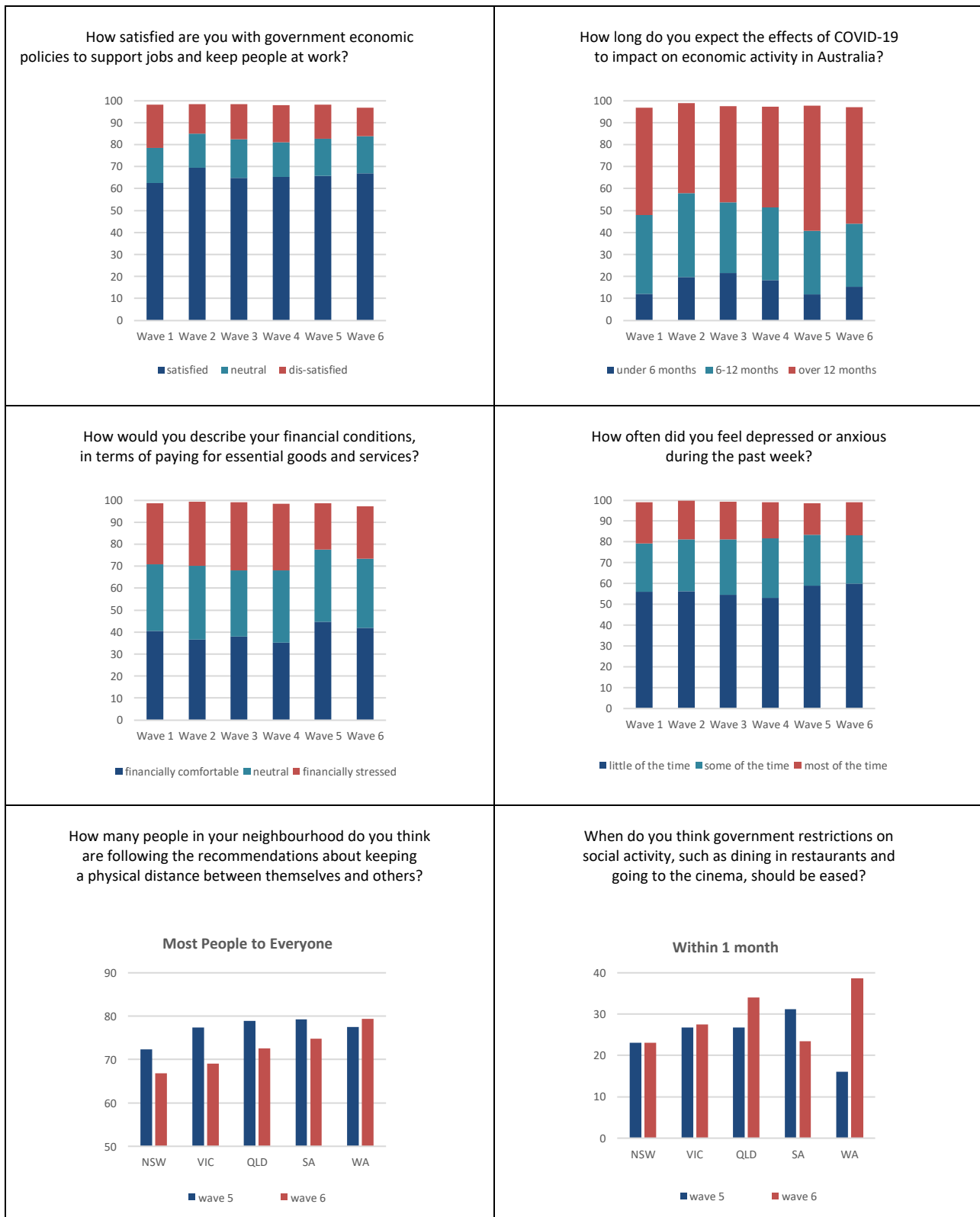
Figure 1: Lending a helping hand

Survey Wave 6: 11-15 May 2020



* The survey contains responses from 1200 persons, aged 18 years and over. The sample is stratified by gender, age and location to be representative of the Australian population. The vertical axis in the figures indicates the proportions (%) based on weighted responses.

Figure 2: How are Australians coping with COVID-19?
6 waves of surveys from April 6 to May 15



+ The question about feeling depressed is about assessing symptoms/experiences and not about assessing the presence of a clinical diagnosis or disorder. The proportion in the “don't know/refused” category, is very small and has been excluded from the figures.

Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research

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About the survey

These results have been drawn from *Taking the pulse of the nation* - Melbourne Institute's survey of the impact of COVID-19. The aim of the weekly survey is to track changes in the economic and social wellbeing of Australians living through the effects of the coronavirus pandemic whilst adapting to various changes in Federal and State government policies.

The survey contains responses from 1200 persons, aged 18 years and over each week. The sample is stratified by gender, age and location to be representative of the Australian population.

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