

Research Insights

Taking the Pulse of the Nation

Many Australians are experiencing mental distress as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the proportion of reported distress varying across industries

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

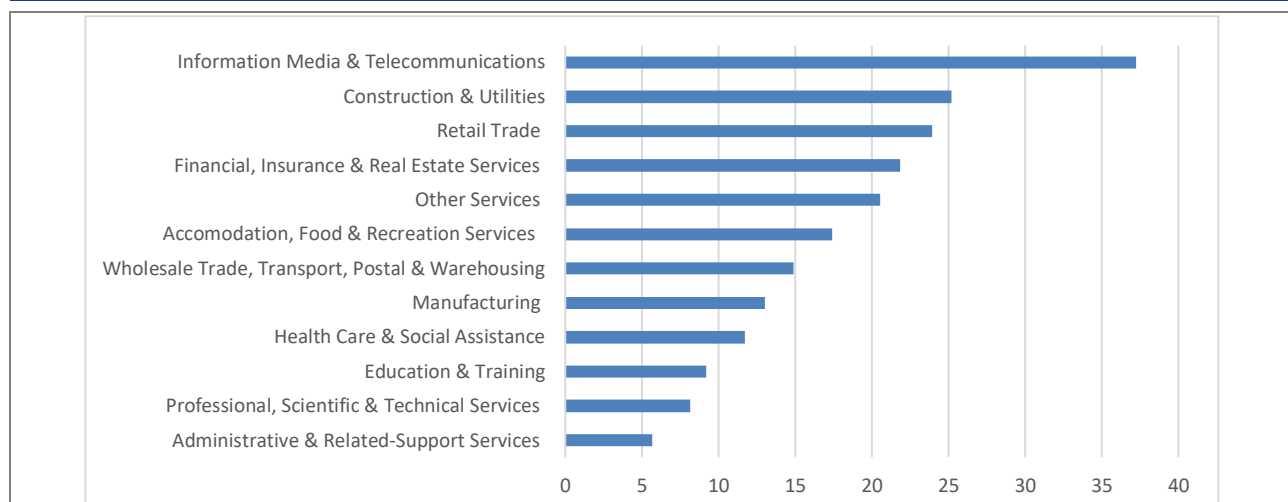
Survey Results*: 27-30 April 2020

About 17% of Australians reported mental distress a lot of the time during the past week, with the proportion varying markedly across industries.

For survey results, see Figures 1 and 2.

- More than 40% of Australians interviewed say that they are likely to download (or have already downloaded) the **COVIDSafe** app. However, the proportion who are unlikely to download, is also high, varying between 35% in Queensland to 42% in New South Wales.
- Across the States, satisfaction with government economic policies to support jobs and keep people at work remained at 65%. But there is a noticeable difference in the perception of the duration of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on economic activity. Respondents in NSW and VIC are more optimistic that the duration of the impact will be shorter compared to respondents in SA and WA.
- The proportion of all survey respondents reporting being financially stressed (in terms of paying for essential goods and services) remained at around 30%. However, on balance, nationally, the proportion of financially comfortable (35%) outweighed the proportion of financially stressed by 5 percentage points. Across the States, the on-balance measure for SA (16 percentage points) is well above the national average.
- Australia-wide, the proportion who felt depressed and anxious, during the past week, was about 17%, with some, but not huge, variation across the States (QLD at 14% and WA at 21%).
- However, a different perspective about mental distress ("feeling depressed or anxious") is revealed in the responses of employees in different industry groups (see Figure 2). It is important to bear in mind that the Industry classification is broad and that respondents select the category themselves. Nevertheless, it would appear that 37% of employees in Information Media & Telecommunications experienced mental distress compared to 6% in Administrative & Related Support Services. The proportion in the industry group – Accommodation, Food & Recreation Services – was spot on the national average of 17%.

Figure 1: Industry Groups: Proportion of Employees reporting being depressed or anxious during the past week (Survey: April 27-30)



* 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.

Figure 2: How are Australians Coping with COVID-19?

Across the States: New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia



+ 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. The sample is stratified by gender, age and location to be representative of the Australian population.

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