

## Research Insights

# Taking the Pulse of the Nation

Majority of Australians are willing to wear masks, quarantine for 14 days, and restrict capacity on public transport, but about one in three are unwilling or uncertain about closure of non-essential businesses, weekly testing and use of phone data to contact trace.

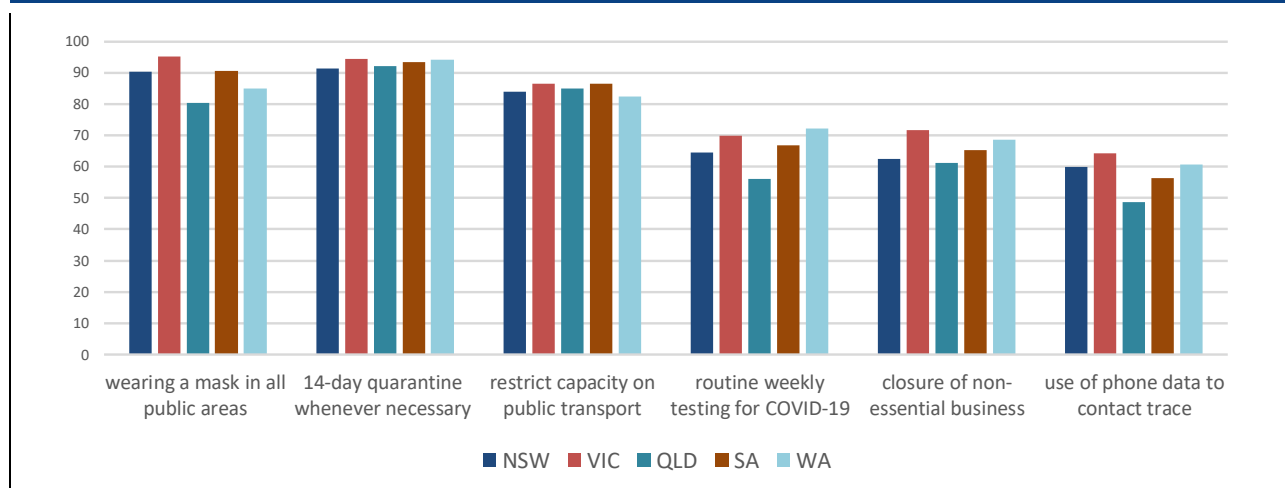
## Melbourne Institute's Survey of the Impact of COVID-19 in Australia

### Survey Results\*: Wave 16 (3-8 August 2020)

*Almost 90% of Australians are willing to wear masks, quarantine for 14 days, and accept restricted capacity on public transport. However, about one in three Australians are unwilling or uncertain about closure of non-essential businesses, routine weekly testing and use of mobile phone data to contact trace.*

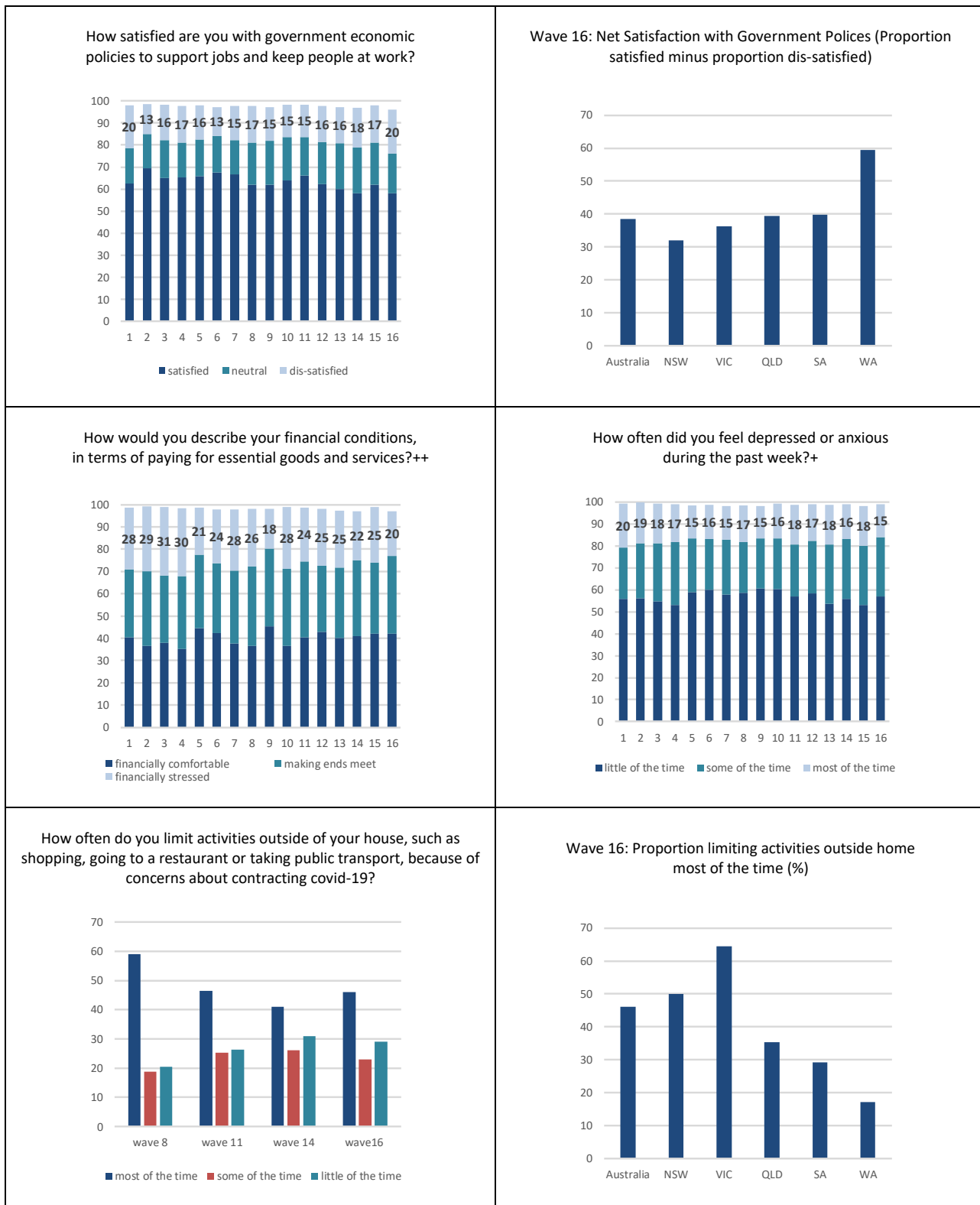
- It has been more than four months since Australia entered a lockdown to combat the spread of COVID-19 and many Australians are realising that the pandemic is far from over. There is an increase in the proportion saying they will limit their activities outside their home (increase of 5 percentage points between waves 16 and 14, when it was last asked), but this change is most noticeable for Victoria and New South Wales (up by seven and 14 percentage points respectively).
- In this survey, respondents were asked to consider what mandatory regulations they will accept to allow a return to normal activities. We asked six questions – wearing masks in public areas, imposing quarantines, restricting capacity on public transport, closing non-essential businesses, testing on a regular basis, allowing contact tracing.
- It appears that preferences for Victorians, despite the emergence of a second wave averaging 462 new cases of infections per day (in the week of the survey), are similar to the views of the rest of Australia. However, while a marginally larger proportion of Victorians are willing to accept mandatory regulations, there is a noticeably smaller proportion of Queenslanders willing to accept these requirements as mandatory regulations (Figure 1).
- There also appears to be two groups of responses. Australians are quite willing to wear masks in all public areas (89%), quarantine for 14-days whenever necessary (92%) and accept restricting capacity on public transport (85%). However, a smaller proportion are willing to accept routine weekly testing for COVID-19 (65%), the closure of non-essential services (66%) and the use of mobile phone data for contact tracing (59%). [In late April, wave 4, the proportion of people saying they were unlikely to download the COVIDSafe app was 39%].
- A supplementary question about masks revealed that only 78% were confident that masks were effective, yet 89% were willing to wear masks in public places. This speaks well about pro-social behaviour.
- Between waves 15 and 16, satisfaction with government policies to support jobs and keep people at work fell from 62% to 58% while dis-satisfaction increased from 17% to 20%. This pattern was across all States, notwithstanding the emergence of new cases in Victoria. Focusing only on wave 16, and the net situation (proportion of people satisfied, less proportion dis-satisfied), WA stands out as the State with the highest approval rating.
- The extension of government support had a positive effect on financial stress and mental distress. The proportion having difficulties paying for essential goods and services has improved (it fell from 25% in wave 15 to 20% in wave 16); likewise the proportion experiencing depression and anxiety most of the time also improved (it fell from 18% in wave 18 to 15% in wave 16).

**Figure 1: Proportions (%) willing to accept mandatory regulations to allow a return to normal activities**



\* 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?**  
16 waves of surveys from April 6 to Aug 8



+ 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.  
++ Financial stress refers to the situation of having difficulties paying for essential goods and services while financial vulnerability refers to being in financial stress or making ends meet.

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## About the survey

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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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