

## Research Insights

# Taking the Pulse of the Nation

Younger Australians perceive fewer people in their neighbourhood are practising social distancing and feel restrictions should last longer.

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

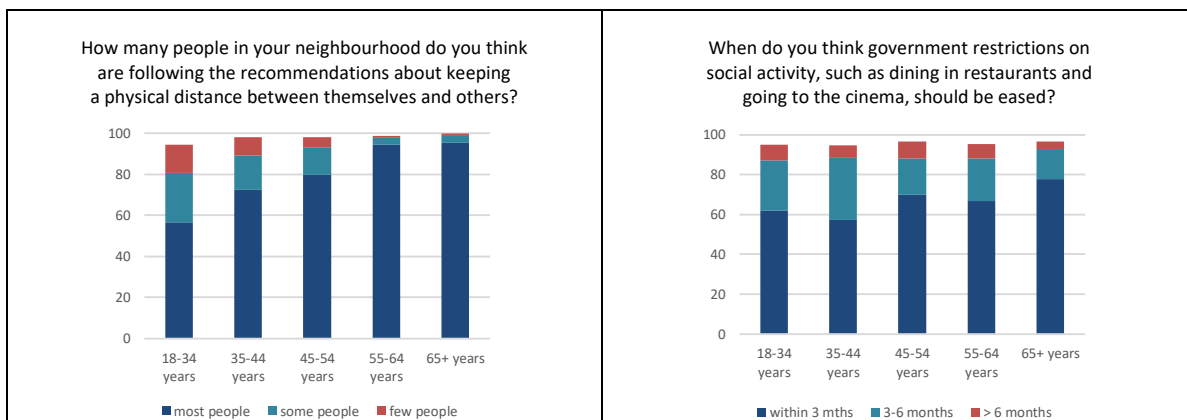
Survey Results\*: 4-8 May 2020

*Almost 80% of Australians said people in their neighbourhood practise social distancing, with the proportion varying across the age-groups from around 60% by the younger cohorts to almost 95% by the older cohorts.*

- This week’s survey was conducted in the days before the Friday 8 May announcement of the 3-step plan to open Australia. The paced easing corresponds well with the responses to the survey question about easing restrictions. While 25% suggested that government restrictions on social activity, such as dining in restaurants and going to the cinema, should be eased immediately or within the next 4 weeks, 42% said it should be between 1-3 months.
- The proportion of Australians interviewed who are satisfied with government economic policies to support jobs and keep people at work remained around 65%. However, there was a surprising uptick in the proportion expecting the impact of the coronavirus pandemic to last for more than 12 months, jumping from 46% in wave 4 to 57% in this wave. Recent news about huge job losses in the US, forecasts of deep recessions by the IMF and other organisations, may be generating concerns about the recovery process to re-open the economy.
- The proportion of survey respondents reporting being financially stressed (in terms of paying for essential goods and services) has fallen from 28% in wave 1 to 21% in the latest wave 5 of the survey in May. The proportion experiencing mental distress (in terms of feeling depressed and anxious most of the time, during the past week) has also fallen from 20% in the first wave to 15% in this survey.
- When asked about their perceptions of social behaviour, the proportion of Australians that thought that “most people” to “everyone” in their neighbourhood, practise social distancing has remained stable, varying between 76-78% over 5 waves. However, the perception (and possibly the practise) of social distancing behaviour varies by ages, with the proportion being around 60% for those under 34 years and almost 95% for those aged over 55 years.
- It is also interesting to note that the younger age-groups think that restrictions should be eased later (greater than 3 months) rather than sooner (within 3 months).

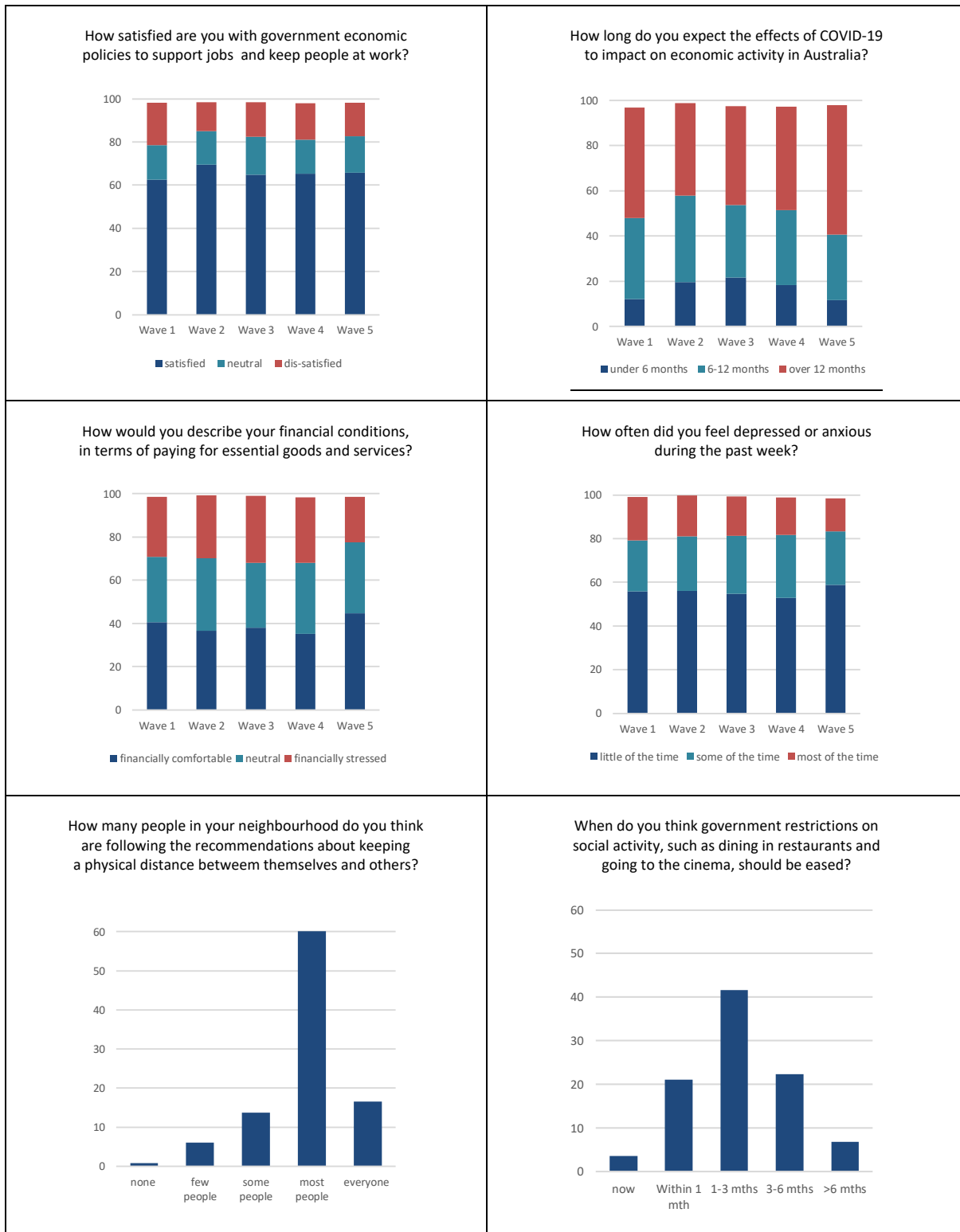
**Figure 1: Age groups: Social Distancing and Easing Restrictions**

Survey Wave 5: 4-7 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.

**Figure 2: How are Australians Coping with COVID-19?**  
5 waves of surveys from April 6 to May 7



+ 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

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

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