

Research Insights

Taking the Pulse of the Nation

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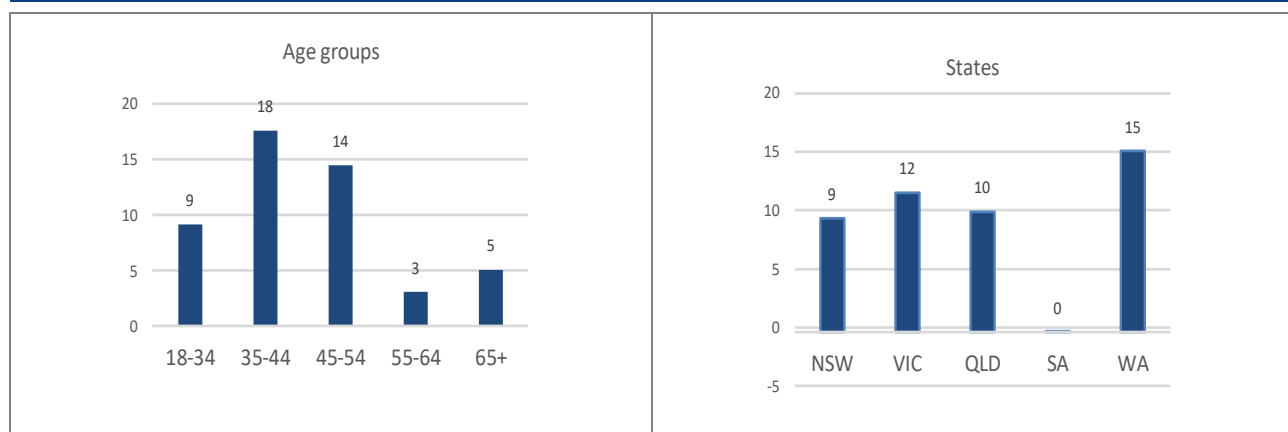
Melbourne Institute's Survey of the Impact of COVID-19 in Australia

Survey Results*: Wave 10 (8-12 June 2020)

More Australians expect the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on economic activity to last for less than 12 months, but financial stress has increased for the working age group (35-54 years).

- Consumer confidence in Australia plummeted in April but rebounded in May and June, and is now roughly at the level before the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in January 2020. Although the majority of Australians remain pessimistic about the state of the economy, expectations are shifting towards a return to a “new normal” sooner rather than later. In wave 10, the proportion of Australians expecting the effect of the coronavirus pandemic to affect economic activity for longer than 12 months fell from 55% to 48% while the proportion expecting the duration of impact to be less than 12 months increased from 41% to 49%. Satisfaction with government policies remained roughly unchanged.
- As social and economic interactions increase, the proportion reporting that many people in their neighbourhood follow recommendations on physical distancing fell from 71 per cent in wave 8 to 59 per cent in wave 10. This has prompted discussions about ways to track and trace, including whether it should be mandatory to wear a mask to mitigate the effects of a second wave of coronavirus infections.
- In this survey we asked respondents for their opinions about whether people should wear a face mask in various public places. Twice as many respondents were in favour of the wearing masks on public transport (58% yes to 28% no) and in cinemas and theatres (58% to 31%). In contrast, twice as many respondents were against the wearing of masks in parks and beaches (27% yes to 63% no). The respondents were roughly evenly divided when it came to the relevance of wearing masks in the workplace and in supermarkets and shopping centres.
- In wave 10, the proportion experiencing mental distress increased a little, but the proportion of Australians reporting financial stress increased by a substantial margin, reversing the drop recorded in wave 9. The increase in the proportion of Australians reporting financial stress was across all the mainland States, except SA.
- A closer look at financial stress across various age groups showed that the working age groups 35-44 and 45-54 years were particularly concerned, with the proportions reporting difficulties paying for essential goods and services increasing by 18 and 14 percentage points respectively. A probable proximate cause could be the recognition that work may be at less than full capacity for a while and that employers and employees need to adjust to post-subsidy conditions, following official reiterations that the JobKeeper, boost to JobSeeker and childcare support schemes are only temporary measures.

Figure 1: Change in the proportions reporting being financially stressed (Percentage point differences between wave 9 and wave 10)



* 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?
10 weeks of surveys from April 6 to June 12



+ 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.

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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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