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Research Insights

Taking the Pulse of the Nation

Despite satisfaction with government economic policies to keep people connected to work, negative economic conditions appear to be impacting people's finances.

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

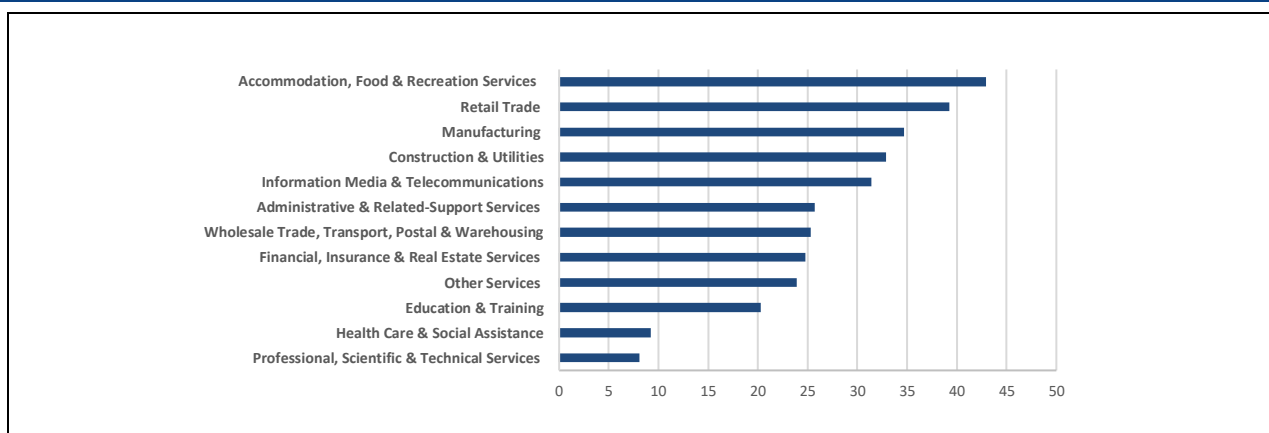
Survey Results*: Wave 7 (18–22 May 2020)

The proportion of Australians reporting financial stress has increased with around 40% of workers in Accommodation, Food & Recreation Services and Retail Trade expressing concerns about paying for essential goods and services.

- Since the announcement of the easing of restrictions on Friday 8 May 2020 (before the start of wave 6 of the survey), the proportion of Australians expecting the effect of the pandemic on economic activity to last for more than 12 months has fallen from 57% in wave 5 to 53% in wave 6, and then to 50% in wave 7.
- The wave 7 survey also asked how much longer the respondents expect to be personally affected by the pandemic in terms of their home activities, employment situation and social interactions. Forty per cent (40%) of respondents expect to be affected for at least another 6 months, while 20% expect to be affected for more than 12 months.
- As economic activities and social interactions increase over the coming weeks, attention has turned to the importance of contact tracing and the take up of the COVIDSafe app. In wave 4 (27–30 April), the survey showed that 11% had already downloaded the app, 32% said they were likely or very likely to download it but have not done so yet and 39% said they were unlikely or very unlikely to download it. Recent estimates from another source indicate an uptake of 23% (40% is the target**).
- The proportion of Australians experiencing mental distress most of the time has been around 15% for the 3 survey waves in May, but the situation is quite different for financial stress. Despite satisfaction with government economic policies to support jobs and keep people at work, negative economic conditions appear to be impacting financial conditions. The proportion of people feeling financially stressed has increased in the last 3 waves from 21% to 24% to 28%.
- Figure 1 shows the proportions reporting feeling financially stressed (in terms of paying for essential goods and services) by workers in various industry groups. Around 40% of workers in Accommodation, Food & Recreational Services and Retail Trade report being financially stressed, possibly reflecting the high number of job losses in those industries.

Figure 1: Proportion of Financially Stressed Workers Across Industries

Survey Wave 7: 18–22 May 2020

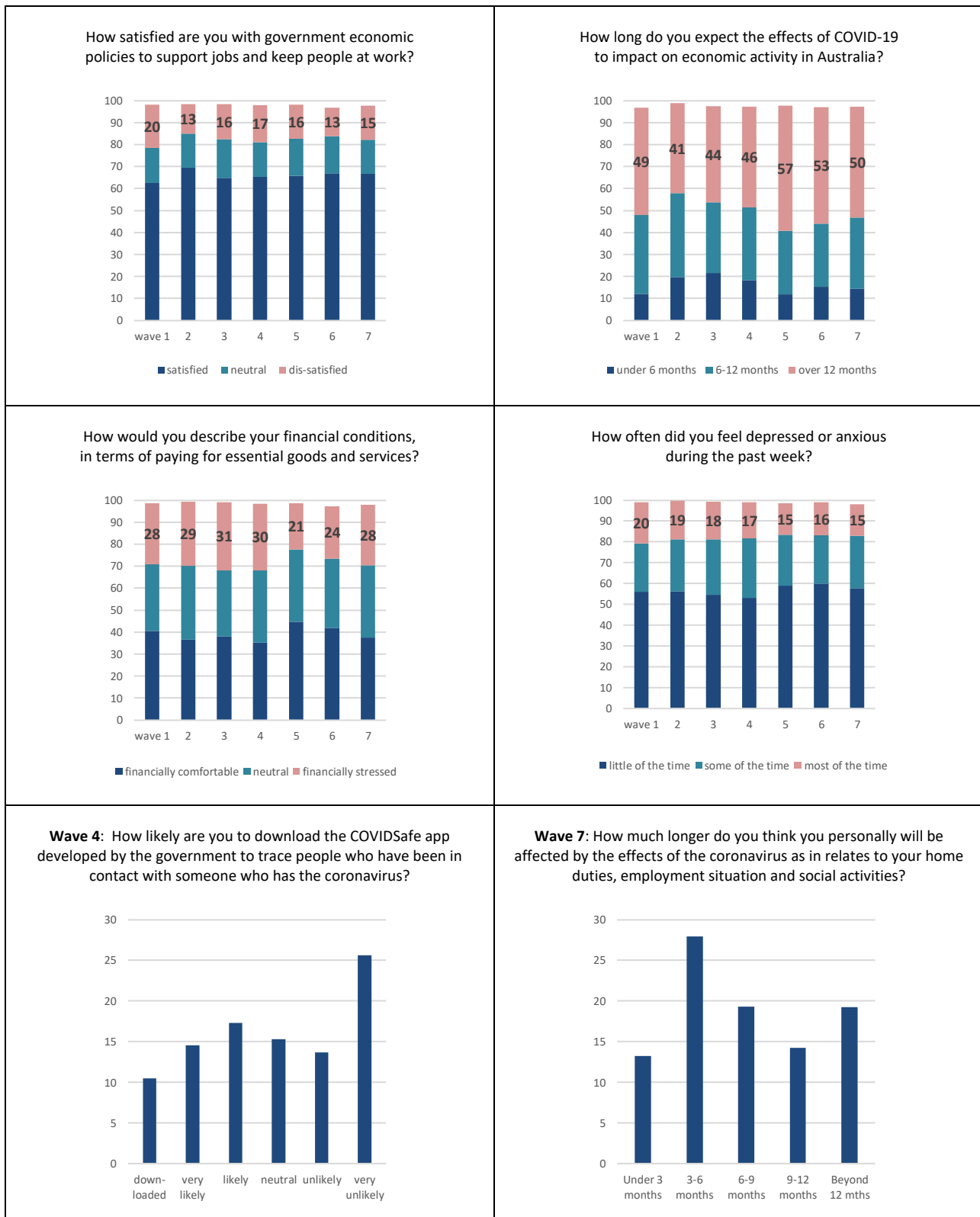


* The survey contains responses from 1200 persons, aged 18 years and over. The sample is stratified by gender, age and location to be representative of the Australian population. The vertical axis in the figures indicates the proportions (%) based on weighted responses.

** For more on this, see the Melbourne Institute [Research Insight](#) 'How can technology help prevent a second wave of COVID-19?' by Y.Zhang.

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

7 waves of surveys⁺ from April 6 to May 22



+ 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. Wave 7 also included the question “How willing are you to donate blood, if you learned that there is a shortage of blood needed by hospitals for transfusions?” The survey results in wave 7 are similar to the results in wave 3.

Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research

The Melbourne Institute applies cutting-edge statistical and econometric methodologies to develop primary and secondary user-ready data sets, and conducts research to inform government, education, business and community organisations. For more information, see: melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au.

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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