

# The Essential Report

23 March 2020



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**Date:** 23/03/2020

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**Prepared By:** Essential Research

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**Data Supplied by:**



**AMSRS** 

Our researchers are members of the Australian Market and Social Research Society.



## About this poll

This report summarises the results of a fortnightly omnibus conducted by Essential Research with data provided by Qualtrics. The survey was conducted online from 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 and is based on 1,034 respondents.

The methodology used to carry out this research is described in the appendix at the end of the report.

Note that due to rounding, not all tables necessarily total 100% and subtotals may also vary.

## Coronavirus concerns

Q To what extent are you concerned about the threat of the Coronavirus in Australia?

	22/03	09/03	10/02
Very concerned	<b>39%</b>	27%	25%
Quite concerned	<b>43%</b>	36%	43%
Not that concerned	<b>14%</b>	28%	26%
Not at all concerned	<b>4%</b>	9%	6%
Base (n)	<b>1,034</b>	1,096	1,057

	Total	Age group			Location	
		18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Very concerned	<b>39%</b>	36%	39%	41%	40%	36%
Quite concerned	<b>43%</b>	43%	44%	43%	43%	45%
Not that concerned	<b>14%</b>	18%	12%	12%	13%	26%
Not at all concerned	<b>4%</b>	4%	5%	4%	5%	3%
Base (n)	<b>1,034</b>	342	327	365	703	331

- Concern about the threat of the Covid-19 virus has increased this week as the impact of the outbreak affects more of the country. 39% are now very concerned by the threat (up from 27% at the start of the month), while 43% say they are quite concerned (up from 36%).
- Concern is highest among over 55 year olds (41% very concerned) and those in capital cities (40% concerned)



## Likelihood of developing Coronavirus

Q How likely do you think it is, that you will develop Covid-19?

	22/03	09/03
Very likely	8%	7%
Somewhat likely	34%	24%
Somewhat unlikely	45%	43%
Very unlikely	13%	26%
Base (n)	1,034	1,096

	Total	Age group			Location	
		18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Very likely	8%	10%	8%	5%	9%	5%
Somewhat likely	34%	35%	36%	32%	34%	35%
Somewhat unlikely	45%	43%	43%	49%	43%	49%
Very unlikely	13%	12%	13%	14%	14%	11%
Base (n)	1,034	342	327	365	703	331

- There has been an increase in the likelihood of developing Covid-19 during the last fortnight. 42% now say it is somewhat or very likely that they will develop Covid-19 (up from 31%).
- Younger people (aged 18-34, 10% very likely to develop Covid-19) and those living in capital cities (9%) are more likely to expect to develop the virus than older people (55+) and those living in regional areas.



## Reaction to Covid-19

Q Which of the following is closer to your personal views of the Covid-19 outbreak?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
There has been an over-reaction to the threat of Covid-19	<b>33%</b>	36%	30%	39%	37%	23%	34%	30%
The response to the threat of Covid-19 is about right	<b>39%</b>	40%	39%	40%	33%	44%	39%	39%
The threat of Covid-19 has been under-estimated	<b>28%</b>	24%	32%	21%	30%	33%	27%	31%
Base (n)	<b>1,096</b>	<b>519</b>	515	342	327	365	703	331

- A third of people believe there has been an over-reaction to the threat of Covid-19. Men (36%) and those aged 18-34 (39%) are more likely to think there has been an over-reaction than women (30%) and those aged 55+ (23%).
- 39% think the reaction has been proportionate to the threat and 28% believe the threat has been under-estimated.
- Those who think there has been an over-reaction are less concerned about the threat of Covid-19 (69% very/somewhat concerned, compared to 92% who think the threat has been under-estimated) and think they are less likely to contract the virus (38% to 49% very/somewhat likely to catch Covid-19).
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## Government response to Covid-19

Q Overall, how would you rate the Government's response to the Covid-19 outbreak?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Very poor	<b>9%</b>	11%	7%	10%	11%	6%	10%	8%
Quite poor	<b>20%</b>	19%	21%	28%	20%	14%	23%	15%
Neither good, nor poor	<b>26%</b>	26%	26%	30%	31%	18%	25%	27%
Quite good	<b>33%</b>	32%	34%	25%	28%	44%	31%	36%
Very good	<b>12%</b>	11%	12%	7%	10%	17%	11%	13%
NET: Poor	<b>29%</b>	30%	29%	38%	31%	20%	32%	24%
NET: Good	<b>45%</b>	44%	46%	33%	38%	62%	43%	49%
Base (n)	<b>1,034</b>	519	515	342	365	324	703	331

- 45% of people rate the performance of the government to the threat has been quite or very good. Those aged over 55 are more likely to rate the performance as good (62%).
- Those aged 18-34 were most likely to rate the performance as poor (very/quite poor, 38%).
- Those who think the threat of Covid-19 has been under-estimated have a low rating of government performance (46% very/quite poor).

## Information about Covid-19

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the information you've received about the Covid-19 outbreak?

	NET: Agree	NET: Disagree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel informed about the situation and the impact on me and my family	64%	14%	18%	46%	22%	9%	5%
I trust the Government to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	56%	20%	19%	37%	24%	12%	8%
The information I've received has been clear and consistent	51%	24%	15%	37%	25%	17%	7%
I trust the media to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	35%	40%	7%	27%	26%	23%	17%

- Around two-thirds of people agree that they feel informed about the situation (64%) and over half (56%) trust the government to provide honest and objective information about the outbreak.
- Half think the information they've received has been clear and consistent (51%).
- Those who think the threat of Covid-19 has been under-estimated are more likely to disagree that they feel informed of the situation (22%), that the information they've receive is clear and consistent (33%) and they trust the government to deliver honest and objective information (34%).





NET: AGREE	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
I feel informed about the situation and the impact on me and my family	<b>64%</b>	63%	65%	58%	59%	73%	65%	61%
I trust the Government to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	<b>56%</b>	57%	54%	48%	51%	66%	57%	53%
The information I've received has been clear and consistent	<b>51%</b>	53%	50%	49%	47%	58%	54%	47%
I trust the media to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	<b>35%</b>	38%	32%	31%	35%	37%	36%	32%
Base (n)	<b>1,034</b>	519	515	342	327	365	703	331

- Those aged over 55 are more likely to agree that they feel informed about the situation (73%), that they have trust in the information from the government (66%) and that the information they've received has been clear and concise (58%).
- People in non-capital areas are less likely to agree that the information they have received has been clear and consistent (47%) compared to those in capital cities (54%).



## Changing behaviour due to Covid-19

Q Have you changed your behaviour in any of the following ways since the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Increased personal hygiene measures (e.g. hand washing)	<b>72%</b>	70%	74%	72%	67%	76%	73%	70%
Limited attending social spaces, shops, restaurants or group events	<b>60%</b>	56%	63%	60%	58%	61%	61%	56%
Stopped physical greetings (e.g. shaking hands, kissing, hugging)	<b>60%</b>	57%	63%	57%	57%	65%	60%	60%
Bought additional groceries to stock-up	<b>33%</b>	32%	35%	38%	36%	27%	37%	25%
Reduced use of cash to pay for purchases	<b>23%</b>	20%	25%	30%	23%	17%	24%	19%
Changed working patterns (e.g. changed hours, or working from home)	<b>20%</b>	24%	17%	33%	24%	6%	23%	14%
None of these	<b>12%</b>	13%	11%	8%	15%	13%	10%	16%
Base (n)	<b>1,034</b>	519	515	342	327	365	703	331

- Since the start of the Covid-19 outbreak, a majority of people have increased their personal hygiene (72%), limited their social interactions (60%) and reduced physical greetings (60%). A third of people say they have stocked up on groceries (33%).
- Younger people aged 18-34 were more likely to have changed their working patterns (33%) and reduced using cash for payments (30%)
- Just 12% of people say they have not changed their behaviour as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

## Financial situation during Covid-19 outbreak

Q Which of the following best describes your financial situation during the Covid-19 outbreak?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
I do not expect the Covid-19 will impact my income	<b>24%</b>	22%	26%	16%	18%	37%	22%	28%
I have sufficient savings to deal with a short-term loss of income	<b>26%</b>	29%	22%	19%	26%	31%	28%	21%
I will struggle with a short-term loss of income, but will get by	<b>29%</b>	30%	28%	40%	28%	20%	31%	26%
I will be in serious financial stress with short-term loss of income	<b>21%</b>	18%	24%	25%	28%	11%	19%	25%
Base (n)	<b>1,034</b>	519	515	342	327	365	703	331

- One in five people expect to be in serious financial stress due to a loss of income (21%), a further 29% say they will struggle.
- Women (24%), those aged 18-34 (25%) or 35-54 (28%) and those living in non-capital areas (25%) are most likely to be in serious financial stress.
- Around half people say they either have sufficient savings to manage a loss of income (26%) or will not suffer a loss of income as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak (24%).
- Those aged over 55 are more likely to be in a strong financial position, with 37% not expecting their income to be impacted and 31% having sufficient savings to manage a short-term loss of income.



	Total	Household		Employment		
		Have dependent children	Do not have dependent children	In paid employment	Not in paid employment	Retired
I do not expect the Covid-19 will impact my income	<b>24%</b>	18%	28%	12%	31%	41%
I have sufficient savings to deal with a short-term loss of income	<b>26%</b>	23%	27%	27%	14%	36%
I will struggle with a short-term loss of income, but will get by	<b>29%</b>	32%	27%	37%	25%	17%
I will be in serious financial stress with short-term loss of income	<b>21%</b>	26%	18%	23%	30%	7%
Base (n)	<b>1,034</b>	372	662	519	255	228

- A quarter of families with dependent children in the household expect to be in serious financial stress with a short-term loss of income.

## Federal opposition during Covid-19

Q Which of the following is closest to your view on the role of the Federal Labor opposition during the response to the Covid-19 outbreak?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Federal Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Coalition	Labor	Greens	NET: Other
Opposition should accept the Government recommendations to ensure decisions are made quickly	<b>49%</b>	52%	45%	46%	46%	54%	66%	40%	35%	49%
Opposition review and challenge Government decisions to ensure the best decisions are made	<b>33%</b>	35%	31%	33%	30%	36%	24%	45%	41%	33%
Unsure	<b>19%</b>	13%	24%	21%	24%	10%	10%	15%	25%	18%
Base (n)	<b>1,034</b>	519	515	342	327	365	324	344	108	126

- Half of people (49%) prefer decisions to make quickly by to Government to react to the Covid-19 outbreak. This is highest among Coalition voters (66%).
- A third (33%) want decisions reviewed and challenged by the opposition.



## Appendix: Household income definitions\*

NET: Lower Income	Up to \$51,999 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)
NET: Mid Income	\$52,000 to \$103,999 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)
NET: High Income	More than \$104,000 per year Total of all wages/salaries, government benefits, pensions, allowances and other income that your household usually receives (GROSS – before tax and superannuation deductions)

## Appendix: Methodology, margin of error and professional standards

The data gathered for this report is gathered from a fortnightly online omnibus conducted by Qualtrics.

Every two weeks, the team at Essential considers issues that are topical, and a series of questions are devised to put to the Australian public. Some questions are repeated regularly (such as political preference and leadership approval), while others are unique to each week and reflect current media and social issues.

The response rate varies each week, but usually delivers 1000+ interviews. In theory, with a sample of this size, there is 95 per cent certainty that the results are within 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire population had been polled. However, this assumes random sampling, which, because of non-response and less than 100% population coverage cannot be achieved in practice. Furthermore, there are other possible sources of error in all polls including question wording and question order, interviewer bias (for telephone and face-to-face polls), response errors and weighting.

The online omnibus is live from the Wednesday night and closed on the following Sunday. Incentives are offered to participants. Essential Research uses the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to analyse the data. The data is weighted against Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data.

All Essential Research staff hold Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) membership and are bound by professional codes of behaviour.

