

The Essential Report

30 March 2020



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Prepared By: Essential Research

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 26th March 2020 to 29th March 2020 and is based on 1,086 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?

	29/03	22/03	09/03	10/02
Very concerned	53%	39%	27%	25%
Quite concerned	35%	43%	36%	43%
Not that concerned	10%	14%	28%	26%
Not at all concerned	3%	4%	9%	6%
Base (n)	1,086	1,034	1,096	1,057

	Gender			Age Group			Location	
	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Very concerned	53%	49%	56%	50%	54%	54%	56%	46%
Quite concerned	35%	37%	32%	35%	35%	35%	33%	37%
Not that concerned	10%	10%	9%	12%	9%	9%	9%	13%
Not at all concerned	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383	727	359

- Concern about Covid-19 has increased this week, with 53% now very concerned (up 14pts from last week).
- This is driven by more women saying they are very concerned about Covid-19 (up 8pts from last week) and capital city residents increasing concern (also up 8pt).



Likelihood of developing Coronavirus

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

	29/03	22/03	09/03
Very likely	8%	8%	7%
Somewhat likely	36%	34%	24%
Somewhat unlikely	45%	45%	43%
Very unlikely	12%	13%	26%
Base (n)	1,086	1,034	1,096

	Total	Age group			Location	
		18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Very likely	8%	11%	8%	5%	8%	6%
Somewhat likely	36%	37%	42%	29%	37%	34%
Somewhat unlikely	45%	39%	41%	54%	43%	49%
Very unlikely	12%	13%	10%	12%	12%	11%
Base (n)	1,086	341	362	383	727	359

- Individual likelihood of developing Covid-19 is on par with last week, 8% of participants believe it's very likely they will develop Covid-19, compared to 12% who think it's very unlikely.
- Participants over 55 believe that they are unlikely to develop Covid-19 (66% somewhat/very unlikely) than those between 18-34 (52% unlikely).



Reaction to Covid-19

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

	29/03	22/03
There has been an over-reaction to the threat of Covid-19	18%	33%
The response to the threat of Covid-19 is about right	39%	39%
The threat of Covid-19 has been under-estimated	43%	28%
Base (n)	1,086	1,034

	Total	Gender		Age Group		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
There has been an over-reaction to the threat of Covid-19	18%	20%	17%	24%	19%	12%
The response to the threat of Covid-19 is about right	39%	42%	36%	39%	39%	39%
The threat of Covid-19 has been under-estimated	43%	39%	47%	37%	42%	49%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383

- Now 43% of participants believe the threat of Covid-19 has been under-estimated compared to 28% who said the same last week.
- Women (47%) and participants over 55 years old (49%) are more likely say the treat has been under-estimated than men (39%) and 18-34 year olds (37%).



Truth in statements about Covid-19 spread

Q How confident are you that the following statements about Covid-19 are true?

	NET: True	NET: Not true	Definitely true	Probably true	Probably not true	Definitely not true	Unsure
Even if children and young people tend to be less affected by Covid-19, they can still catch it and pass it on to others	88%	8%	62%	26%	6%	2%	4%
It's possible for people to have the virus and be contagious even if they don't feel sick in any way	88%	8%	61%	26%	6%	3%	4%
You can still catch Covid-19 even if you have a face mask	82%	12%	50%	32%	9%	3%	6%
People are buying up and hoarding large amounts of medicines and toilet paper so they can sell them for inflated profits	74%	20%	38%	36%	16%	5%	5%
Busloads of outsiders have been observed coming to small-town supermarkets and buying up most of their stock in response to the Covid-19 outbreak	73%	17%	39%	33%	13%	4%	10%
It's no more dangerous than a typical winter flu	31%	61%	16%	15%	17%	44%	8%

- More than four in five participants believe the three statements about the spread of Covid-19 to be true.



NET: True	Total	Gender		Age Group		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Even if children and young people tend to be less affected by Covid-19, they can still catch it and pass it on to others	88%	85%	92%	81%	88%	95%
You can still catch Covid-19 even if you have a face mask	82%	80%	85%	77%	81%	88%
Busloads of outsiders have been observed coming to small-town supermarkets and buying up most of their stock in response to the Covid-19 outbreak	73%	70%	75%	65%	70%	81%
People are buying up and hoarding large amounts of medicines and toilet paper so they can sell them for inflated profits	74%	71%	77%	69%	70%	82%
It's no more dangerous than a typical winter flu	31%	34%	28%	38%	30%	26%
It's possible for people to have the virus and be contagious even if they don't feel sick in any way	88%	84%	91%	82%	88%	92%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383



Government response to Covid-19

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

	29/03	22/03
Very poor	11%	9%
Quite poor	21%	20%
Neither good, nor poor	24%	26%
Quite good	34%	33%
Very good	11%	12%
NET: Good	45%	45%
NET: Poor	31%	29%
Base (n)	1,086	1,034

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Very poor	11%	12%	10%	10%	12%	10%	10%	12%
Quite poor	21%	22%	20%	24%	21%	17%	23%	16%
Neither good, nor poor	24%	22%	25%	32%	26%	14%	23%	24%
Quite good	34%	35%	33%	27%	31%	42%	33%	36%
Very good	11%	10%	13%	6%	10%	18%	11%	12%
NET: Good	45%	44%	46%	33%	40%	60%	44%	48%
NET: Poor	31%	33%	29%	35%	33%	26%	33%	28%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383	727	359



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	29/03	22/03
I feel informed about the situation and the impact on me and my family	63%	64%
I trust the Government to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	56%	56%
The information I've received has been clear and consistent	47%	51%
I trust the media to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	42%	35%
Base (n)	1,086	1,034

	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	63%	17%	6%	11%	20%	44%	19%
I trust the Government to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	56%	22%	8%	14%	23%	37%	19%
The information I've received has been clear and consistent	47%	30%	10%	20%	23%	32%	15%
I trust the media to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	42%	33%	14%	19%	26%	32%	10%



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?

	29/03	22/03
Increased personal hygiene measures (e.g. hand washing)	79%	72%
Limited attending social spaces, shops, restaurants or group events	75%	60%
Stopped physical greetings (e.g. shaking hands, kissing, hugging)	73%	60%
Bought additional groceries to stock-up	41%	33%
Reduced use of cash to pay for purchases	43%	23%
Changed working patterns (e.g. changed hours, or working from home)	33%	20%
None of these	5%	12%
Base (n)	1,086	1,034

- Now 95% of participants claim that their behaviour has changed since the Covid-19 outbreak (up from 88% last week).
- All the measures aimed at reducing the spread of the virus have increased observation compared to last week.

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Increased personal hygiene measures (e.g. hand washing)	79%	74%	84%	72%	80%	85%	79%	80%
Limited attending social spaces, shops, restaurants or group events	75%	68%	83%	66%	77%	82%	75%	76%
Stopped physical greetings (e.g. shaking hands, kissing, hugging)	73%	69%	78%	60%	73%	85%	73%	74%
Bought additional groceries to stock-up	41%	39%	43%	43%	43%	38%	44%	36%
Reduced use of cash to pay for purchases	43%	40%	47%	44%	44%	42%	44%	42%
Changed working patterns (e.g. changed hours, or working from home)	33%	33%	32%	47%	36%	17%	37%	24%
None of these	5%	7%	3%	5%	4%	6%	5%	5%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383	727	359

- Women and participants over 55 years olds are more likely to have changed their behaviour since the Covid-19 outbreak, than men and 18-34 year olds.



Support for restrictions to reduce the spread of Covid-19

Q To what extent do you support or oppose the following the following measures which have been implemented or suggested, to reduce the spread and transmission of Covid-19?

	NET: Support	NET: Oppose	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Neither support nor oppose	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose
Closing Australia's borders to other countries	88%	5%	74%	13%	7%	3%	2%
Making direct payments to people who have lost work due to Covid-19	82%	5%	57%	25%	13%	3%	2%
Closing pubs, clubs, restaurants and cafes	81%	8%	57%	24%	11%	5%	3%
Closing borders between Australia's states and territories	80%	9%	55%	24%	11%	6%	3%
Making direct payments to small and medium business who have lost income due to Covid-19	80%	7%	51%	29%	14%	4%	3%
Closing schools	69%	13%	43%	26%	18%	8%	4%

- More than 80% of participants support five of the six implemented or suggested measures to stop the spread of Covid-19 – closing schools is the only measure with lower support (69% support).

NET: SUPPORT	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Closing Australia's borders to other countries	88%	82%	93%	77%	88%	96%	86%	91%
Making direct payments to people who have lost work due to Covid-19	82%	79%	85%	74%	82%	90%	81%	84%
Closing pubs, clubs, restaurants and cafes	81%	76%	87%	73%	80%	90%	81%	82%
Closing borders between Australia's states and territories	80%	73%	86%	74%	78%	86%	79%	81%
Making direct payments to small and medium business who have lost income due to Covid-19	80%	75%	84%	71%	78%	89%	78%	84%
Closing schools	69%	63%	75%	71%	69%	67%	69%	70%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383	727	359

- Women and participants over 55 years olds are more supportive of all the listed measures than men or participants 18-34 years old.



NET: SUPPORT	Total	Household	
		Have dependent children	Do not have dependent children
Closing Australia's borders to other countries	88%	85%	89%
Making direct payments to people who have lost work due to Covid-19	82%	78%	84%
Closing pubs, clubs, restaurants and cafes	81%	79%	83%
Closing borders between Australia's states and territories	80%	80%	80%
Making direct payments to small and medium business who have lost income due to Covid-19	80%	76%	82%
Closing schools	69%	69%	69%
Base (n)	1,086	713	373

- There is no difference in support for closing schools between participants with dependent child and those without (both 69%).

New Covid-19 restrictions

Q You may be aware, on Tuesday 24 March Scott Morrison announced that from midnight Wednesday 25 March new restrictions will apply to a range of services including funerals, weddings, open houses, auctions, galleries and libraries. Although some states have decided to bring school holidays forward, Scott Morrison’s announcement said that schools should stay open.

Which of the following best describes how you feel about these new restrictions to reduce the spread of Covid-19?

	Total	Gender		Age Group		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
The new restrictions go too far	10%	13%	7%	12%	11%	6%
The new restrictions are just right	54%	55%	53%	56%	49%	56%
The new restrictions don't go far enough	36%	32%	40%	32%	39%	38%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383



Support for non-permanent residents accessing Australian government support

Q You may be aware that non-permanent residents in Australia (such as skilled migrants, New Zealand citizens, people on temporary visas and refugees) are not currently eligible for most government benefits, such as Jobseeker Allowance. Non-permanent residents can't return to their home countries as Australia has closed its international borders.

To what extent do you support or oppose, non-permanent residents being able to access Australian government support if they lose their jobs as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Strongly support	25%	26%	24%	29%	27%	20%	27%	22%
Somewhat support	29%	29%	29%	29%	27%	31%	30%	26%
Neither support, nor oppose	24%	22%	25%	22%	23%	26%	21%	28%
Somewhat oppose	12%	12%	12%	12%	10%	13%	12%	12%
Strongly oppose	10%	11%	10%	8%	13%	10%	10%	11%
NET: Support	54%	55%	53%	58%	54%	51%	57%	48%
NET: Oppose	22%	23%	22%	20%	23%	23%	22%	24%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383	727	359

- 54% of participants support non-permanent residents accessing Australian government support if they lose their jobs as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.
- Capital residents are more likely to support this measure than non-capital residents (57% compared to 48%).



Employment situation during Covid-19 outbreak

Q Which of the following best describes the impact of Covid-19 on your work:

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
I wasn't in paid work before the Covid-19 outbreak	41%	34%	47%	27%	27%	65%	37%	48%
I was in paid work before the Covid-19 outbreak but am not now	19%	20%	17%	32%	17%	9%	20%	16%
I'm still in paid work but am worried about losing my job because of the Covid-19 outbreak	25%	28%	22%	31%	34%	11%	28%	18%
I'm still in paid work and am not worried about losing my job because of the Covid-19 outbreak	16%	18%	14%	11%	22%	14%	15%	17%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383	727	359

- 25% of participants are worried about losing their job because of the Covid-19 outbreak and another 19% were in paid employment before the outbreak, but now are not.
- 32% of 18-34 year olds say they were in paid work before the Covid-19 outbreak but am not now – this is higher than 35-54 year olds (17%).



Financial situation during Covid-19 outbreak

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

NET: Agree	29/03	22/03
I do not expect the Covid-19 will impact my income	26%	24%
I have sufficient savings to deal with a short-term loss of income	32%	26%
I will struggle with a short-term loss of income, but will get by	23%	29%
I will be in serious financial stress with short-term loss of income	20%	21%
Base (n)	1,086	1,034

	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	26%	31%	20%	23%	21%	32%	27%	22%
I have sufficient savings to deal with a short-term loss of income	32%	31%	33%	40%	33%	23%	32%	30%
I will struggle with a short-term loss of income, but will get by	23%	20%	25%	27%	30%	12%	24%	21%
I will be in serious financial stress with short-term loss of income	20%	18%	22%	10%	16%	32%	17%	26%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383	727	359



	Household		Employment			
	Total	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	26%	22%	27%	27%	17%	32%
I have sufficient savings to deal with a short-term loss of income	32%	33%	31%	36%	32%	18%
I will struggle with a short-term loss of income, but will get by	23%	27%	21%	25%	33%	4%
I will be in serious financial stress with short-term loss of income	20%	18%	21%	11%	18%	46%
Base (n)	1,086	713	373	567	274	202



Relative concern for the climate change

Q Considering everything which has happened so far this year, are you now more or less concerned about the impact of climate change than you were a year ago?

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
More concerned about the impact of climate change	31%	32%	30%	41%	27%	27%	34%	25%
No more or less concerned about the impact of climate change	53%	49%	56%	45%	56%	56%	50%	58%
Less concerned about the impact of climate change	16%	19%	14%	14%	17%	17%	16%	17%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383	727	359



Addressing Climate Change

Q As far as you know, do you think Australia is doing enough, not enough or too much to address climate change?

	Mar'20	Nov'19	Mar'19	Dec'18	Oct'18	Sep'17	Aug'16
Doing enough	23%	22%	27%	24%	23%	20%	22%
Not doing enough	55%	60%	51%	53%	56%	56%	52%
Doing too much	9%	8%	11%	9%	7%	8%	8%
Don't know	13%	10%	12%	14%	13%	16%	18%
Base (n)	1,086	1,083	1,089	1,032	1,027	1,011	1,022

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Voting Intention			
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Labor	Coalition	Greens	NET: Other
Doing enough	23%	26%	21%	19%	24%	26%	18%	36%	8%	20%
Not doing enough	55%	51%	59%	63%	54%	49%	66%	37%	86%	52%
Doing too much	9%	12%	5%	7%	6%	13%	5%	13%	2%	15%
Don't know	13%	11%	16%	12%	15%	12%	11%	14%	4%	14%
Base (n)	1,086	539	547	341	362	383	328	372	95	146



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.

