

# The Essential Report

13 April 2020



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**Prepared By:** Essential Research

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**Data Supplied by:**



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**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 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020 to 12<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and is based on 1,068 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 Covid-19 (coronavirus) in Australia?

	13/04	06/04	29/03	22/03	09/03	10/02
Very concerned	<b>45%</b>	51%	53%	39%	27%	25%
Quite concerned	<b>43%</b>	37%	35%	43%	36%	43%
Not that concerned	<b>9%</b>	10%	10%	14%	28%	26%
Not at all concerned	<b>3%</b>	2%	3%	4%	9%	6%
Base (n)	<b>1,068</b>	1,069	1,086	1,034	1,096	1,057

	Total	Age group			Location	
		18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Very concerned	<b>45%</b>	45%	47%	45%	47%	42%
Quite concerned	<b>43%</b>	43%	40%	44%	43%	43%
Not that concerned	<b>9%</b>	9%	10%	8%	8%	12%
Not at all concerned	<b>3%</b>	2%	3%	3%	2%	4%
Base (n)	<b>1,068</b>	343	340	385	722	346



- Concern about the threat of Covid-19 has lessened this week, with 45% saying they are very concerned (down from 51% last week). The proportion of people who say they are Quite concerned has increased by the equivalent amount from 37% to 43%).
- The proportion of over 55s saying they are very concerned has decreased from 54% to 45, while concern in both capital and regional areas has eased (those very concerned in capital cities has fallen from 53% to 47%, while in regional areas it has moved from 48% to 42%).



## Specific Covid-19 concerns

Q To what extent are you concerned about these possible impacts of the Covid-19?

	Very concerned	Quite concerned	Not that concerned	Not at all concerned	Unsure
The Australian economy as a whole	<b>45%</b>	40%	10%	3%	2%
General unemployment if companies are forced out of business	<b>39%</b>	40%	12%	5%	4%
The physical health of close family members	<b>32%</b>	41%	19%	6%	3%
My economic situation if I lose my job or have less work	<b>32%</b>	26%	16%	19%	7%
The impact on my superannuation, savings or investments	<b>31%</b>	32%	18%	12%	7%
My physical health and catching the virus	<b>27%</b>	35%	26%	8%	3%
My close family members' mental health	<b>24%</b>	38%	24%	11%	3%
My ability to buy food and essential items if stores run out	<b>23%</b>	35%	26%	12%	3%
Children's development by missing out on school	<b>21%</b>	31%	23%	17%	8%
My mental health as a result of social distancing	<b>18%</b>	29%	28%	22%	3%

- Economic issues are seen as most concerning when thinking about the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis. 45% say they are worried about the economy as a whole and 39% are very concerned about general unemployment.

- The top concern for 18-34 year olds was their financial position if they lose a job or work (40% said this was very concerning). The economy (37%) and general unemployment (36%) were also main concerns for this age group. Those aged 18-34 were more likely than other age groups to be concerned about the impact on their mental health (25% to 15%), and that of their families (30% to 21%).
- Concern for children is highest among those in households with dependent children (30% are very concerned).



## Likelihood of developing Coronavirus

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

	13/04	06/04	29/03	22/03	09/03
Very likely	5%	8%	8%	8%	7%
Somewhat likely	28%	33%	36%	34%	24%
Somewhat unlikely	49%	45%	45%	45%	43%
Very unlikely	18%	14%	12%	13%	26%
Base (n)	1,068	1,069	1,086	1,034	1,096

	Total	Age group			Location	
		18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Very likely	5%	8%	8%	1%	6%	3%
Somewhat likely	28%	32%	26%	25%	28%	27%
Somewhat unlikely	49%	39%	49%	58%	48%	52%
Very unlikely	18%	20%	17%	16%	17%	18%
Base (n)	1,068	343	340	385	722	346





- Catching Covid-19 is seen as less likely this week, with fewer people saying they are very or somewhat likely to contract the virus (33%, down from 42% last week). The biggest decreases in likelihood were in Queensland (from 44% to 28%) and WA (from 38% to 26%).
- The perceived threat of catching Covid-19 among Greens voters dropped from 56% who thought they were very/somewhat likely to catch Covid-19 (the highest of voter IDs last week) to 35% - which is now in line with voters of other parties.



## Reaction to Covid-19

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

	13/04	06/04	29/03	22/03
There has been an over-reaction to the threat of Covid-19	13%	17%	18%	33%
The response to the threat of Covid-19 is about right	59%	46%	39%	39%
The threat of Covid-19 has been under-estimated	29%	37%	43%	28%
Base (n)	1,068	1,069	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	13%	16%	10%	19%	13%	7%
The response to the threat of Covid-19 is about right	59%	58%	60%	52%	63%	60%
The threat of Covid-19 has been under-estimated	29%	26%	31%	29%	23%	33%
Base (n)	1,068	537	531	343	340	385

- Over half of people (59%) now believe the reaction to the threat of Covid-19 has been about right.



## Economic expectations

Q Which of the following is closer to your expectations of what will happen to the economy following the Covid-19 situation?

	13/04	06/04
The economy will rebound within 2-3 months and grow just as strong or stronger than before Covid-19	12%	11%
The economy will be impacted for 6-12 months or longer and will stagnate or show slow growth thereafter	49%	51%
Covid-19 will have long lasting impact on the economy and the country will fall into a lengthy recession	27%	29%
Unsure	11%	9%
Base (n)	1,068	1,069

	Total	Gender		Age Group		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
The economy will rebound within 2-3 months and grow just as strong or stronger than before Covid-19	12%	13%	11%	12%	13%	11%
The economy will be impacted for 6-12 months or longer and will stagnate or show slow growth thereafter	49%	51%	48%	52%	49%	48%
Covid-19 will have long lasting impact on the economy and the country will fall into a lengthy recession	27%	26%	29%	23%	28%	30%
Unsure	11%	10%	13%	12%	10%	11%
Base (n)	1,068	537	531	343	340	385



- Little change in the economic expectations from last week, with half of people (49%) think Covid-19 will impact the economy for up to a year, with slow growth following. A further 27% believe the impact will be even more devastating, with long-lasting impact and recession.



## Government response to Covid-19

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

	13/04	06/04	29/03	22/03
Very poor	6%	6%	11%	9%
Quite poor	12%	15%	21%	20%
Neither good, nor poor	20%	21%	24%	26%
Quite good	40%	37%	34%	33%
Very good	23%	21%	11%	12%
NET: Poor	17%	21%	45%	29%
NET: Good	63%	58%	31%	45%
Base (n)	1,068	1,069	1,086	1,034

	Total	Gender		Age Group			Location	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Capital	Non-Capital
Very poor	6%	7%	4%	8%	7%	3%	5%	6%
Quite poor	12%	13%	11%	22%	7%	7%	12%	10%
Neither good, nor poor	20%	19%	21%	28%	23%	11%	20%	21%
Quite good	40%	39%	40%	35%	42%	42%	41%	38%
Very good	23%	22%	24%	8%	22%	37%	22%	25%
NET: Poor	17%	19%	15%	30%	14%	10%	18%	16%
NET: Good	63%	61%	64%	43%	64%	79%	63%	63%
Base (n)	1,068	537	531	343	340	385	722	346



- The perception that the Government improved for the second week in a row. 63% now think the Government has done a good job (Very/somewhat) in handling the crisis.
- The ratings have increased most among people aged 35-54 (55% to 64%), and 55+ (68% to 79%).
- Increases in the government's rating were also seen among WA residents (increased from 60% to 74%), Labor voters (from 49% to 58%) and those in capital cities (increased from 55% to 63%).



## State Government response to Covid-19

Q How would you rate your state government's response to the Covid-19 outbreak?

	Total	NSW	VIC	State		
				QLD	SA	WA
Very poor	<b>5%</b>	6%	4%	6%	3%	3%
Quite poor	<b>11%</b>	15%	5%	16%	7%	8%
Neither good, nor poor	<b>20%</b>	23%	15%	27%	19%	11%
Quite good	<b>38%</b>	38%	42%	33%	38%	36%
Very good	<b>26%</b>	18%	33%	19%	33%	43%
NET: Poor	<b>16%</b>	21%	10%	21%	10%	11%
NET: Good	<b>64%</b>	56%	76%	52%	72%	79%
Base (n)	<b>1,068</b>	328	272	222	87	110

- Across the country, the overall perception of states' handling of the crisis is in line with government 64% rating their own state's handling as Very/Quite good (compared to 63%).
- Victoria and Western Australia have the highest rating of their state government, while this is lower for Queensland (52%) and NSW (56%).

## Managing Physical Isolation

Q How are you managing with the physical isolation rules imposed due to the Covid-19 outbreak?

	Total	Gender		Age Group		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
I have no concerns about reduced physical contact with friends and family	<b>26%</b>	27%	25%	17%	29%	31%
I'm coping with seeing less of friends and family, but may start to miss them in the future	<b>26%</b>	26%	25%	31%	25%	21%
I'm missing seeing friends and family, but am able to continue with day-to-day-life	<b>37%</b>	35%	38%	34%	33%	42%
I'm feeling isolated or struggling to maintain my daily routines	<b>12%</b>	12%	12%	18%	13%	6%
Base (n)	<b>1,068</b>	537	531	343	340	385

- Over one-in-ten people are already struggling with the physical isolation restrictions (12%). They are most likely to be people aged 18-34 (18%) and people not in paid employment (18%)
- Those aged 55 and over are most likely to say they have no concerns about the physical isolation restrictions (31%).





## Social Activities during Physical Isolation

Q Are you doing any of the following to compensate for spending less time with friends and family since the start of physical isolation rules?

	Total	Gender		Age Group		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
I spend more time contacting people by text messaging, phone calls or online chats	57%	50%	64%	61%	53%	58%
I've participated in online group catch ups	28%	29%	26%	43%	28%	14%
I've sent gifts to friends and family	14%	14%	13%	19%	13%	11%
I've started online activities with friends and family (e.g. online fitness, education classes)	21%	22%	20%	38%	20%	8%
None of these	28%	33%	23%	16%	30%	35%
Base (n)	<b>1,068</b>	537	531	343	340	385

- Staying in touch with people by telephone or messaging is the most popular way to overcome issues about social isolation, being used by 57% of people. Since the physical isolation restrictions, 28% have participated in group catch-ups in lieu of physically meeting, and 21% have started online activities such as fitness sessions or online education classes.
- Women were more likely than men to be calling or texting friends and family (64% to 50%).
- 84% of those aged 18-34 have engaged in some activity to overcome the isolation. This is higher than those aged over 55 (65% have completed some activity).



## Financial situation during Covid-19 outbreak

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

NET: Agree	13/04	06/04	29/03	22/03
I do not expect the Covid-19 will impact my income	23%	24%	26%	24%
I have sufficient savings to deal with a short-term loss of income	29%	28%	32%	26%
I will struggle with a short-term loss of income, but will get by	33%	31%	23%	29%
I will be in serious financial stress with short-term loss of income	16%	16%	20%	21%
Base (n)	1,068	1,069	1,086	1,034

	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	23%	15%	27%	13%	19%	49%
I have sufficient savings to deal with a short-term loss of income	29%	30%	29%	32%	20%	34%
I will struggle with a short-term loss of income, but will get by	33%	39%	29%	41%	34%	11%
I will be in serious financial stress with short-term loss of income	16%	17%	15%	13%	27%	6%
Base (n)	1,068	362	706	543	254	225

## 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	13/04	06/04	29/03	22/03
I feel informed about the situation and the impact on me and my family	71%	70%	63%	64%
I trust the Government to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	65%	63%	56%	56%
The information I've received has been clear and consistent	58%	52%	47%	51%
I trust the media to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	42%	51%	42%	35%
Base (n)	1,068	1,069	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	71%	13%	24%	47%	16%	8%	4%
I trust the Government to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	65%	17%	24%	41%	18%	11%	6%
The information I've received has been clear and consistent	58%	21%	19%	39%	21%	14%	6%
I trust the media to provide honest and objective information about the Covid-19 outbreak	42%	31%	12%	30%	27%	20%	11%



## 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?

	13/04	06/04	29/03	22/03
Increased personal hygiene measures (e.g. hand washing)	<b>76%</b>	78%	79%	72%
Limited attending social spaces, shops, restaurants or group events	<b>76%</b>	82%	75%	60%
Stopped physical greetings (e.g. shaking hands, kissing, hugging)	<b>75%</b>	78%	73%	60%
Bought additional groceries to stock-up	<b>37%</b>	38%	41%	33%
Reduced use of cash to pay for purchases	<b>52%</b>	50%	43%	23%
Changed working patterns (e.g. changed hours, or working from home)	<b>32%</b>	33%	33%	20%
None of these	<b>5%</b>	3%	5%	12%
Base (n)	<b>1,068</b>	1,069	1,086	1,034



## Happiness

Q How happy or unhappy are you with each of the following parts of your personal situation? Average rating (out of 10)

	Total	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	May'19
<b>My life overall</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.7</b>
My personal/family life	7.0	7.1	6.9	6.9	6.8	7.2	7.1
My spiritual life	6.4	6.4	6.5	6.2	6.4	6.6	6.3
My social life	5.9	6.1	5.8	6.1	5.8	6.0	6.2
My work life	5.7	6.0	5.4	5.3	5.7	6.1	5.3
My financial situation	5.6	5.8	5.4	5.3	5.6	5.8	5.2



## 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.

