



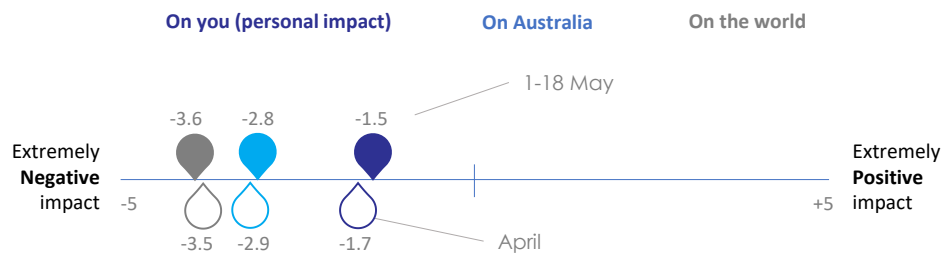
Late May sees Australian leaders and Australian society contemplating a path towards the easing of many of the restrictions we have been living with. There is a strong sense of ‘waiting to see’, with diverse personal views on how quickly and widely this should happen. While we hold our collective breaths, it seems that the day-to-day experience of living with COVID-19 is becoming less unusual for many people. Despite being a disease, for most Australians COVID has been an economic and social impact, and not something they have experienced first hand from a health perspective. Perhaps not surprisingly, the future impacts they are thinking about are also mostly economic and social.

## Australians continue to feel the impact of COVID-19 on their lives

While Australia’s situation overall has improved statistically, people continue to feel negatively impacted in May – and not much differently to how they felt in April overall.

The most negative impacts – on jobs, mental health and safety – have become a little less severe.

What do you feel is the current impact of the COVID-19 situation?



Data source: nationally representative surveys (n=1390 April, n=1131 May)

Source: ORIMA.com.au

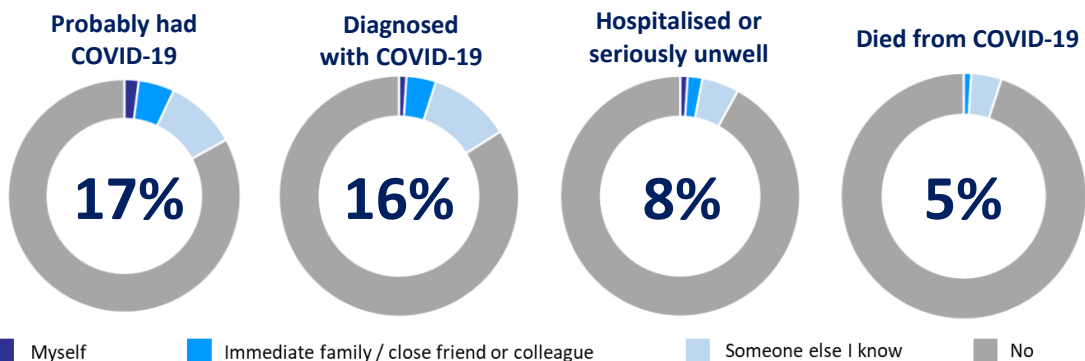
However, at the same time some of the compensating positives people initially felt in April – a sense of support and purpose and making a contribution - have also diminished. It appears that the sense of novelty and immediate impact, both better and worse facets, may be wearing off for some people.

## Few people have first-hand experience of COVID-19 as a disease

While almost all Australians have felt some effects of COVID-19, for the most part these have been social and economic effects – not health effects. In fact, very few Australians have had first-hand experience of COVID-19 as a disease. Overall, 66% of people who have responded to the survey in April and May have had no personal experience of COVID-19 as a health condition, and less than 1-in-10 know of anyone who has been seriously unwell or hospitalised. Even for those who have, for the most part this has been someone from their extended networks, rather than someone close to them.

Only 1% of people reported they had been diagnosed with COVID-19, and only 2% suspected that they had probably had it at some stage.

% personally know someone who has:



Data source: open-link community survey. n=995.

Source: ORIMA.com.au

## This is starting to feel more like what normal is now

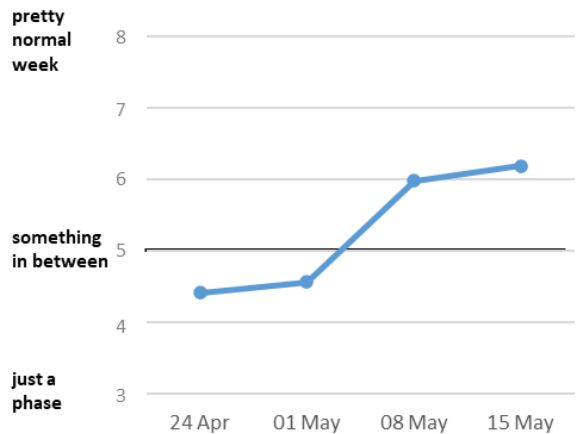
Both the most and least negative personal impacts are starting to move towards each other in May, looking like they may converge around *moderately negative* impacts – which aligns with the overall sense of moderately negative impact.

As the newness of the impact wears off, it suggests things may just be beginning to feel a bit more ‘normal’ to people. Maybe not exactly like what *used* to be normal, but perhaps more like what normal is going to be a for a while.

This suggestion is reinforced in how people describe their weeks. On a scale from zero being *just a phase* through to 10 being a *pretty normal week*, in the last four weeks we have seen more movement on this measure than any other.

A month ago people felt more like they were just in a phase, but by mid-May there is now of a sense of this moving towards being more like a normal week. The overall impact indicators tell us this new normal is mostly seen as a somewhat negative one compared to before COVID, but with both good and bad impacts becoming less differentiated, it makes sense for the ‘newness’ or ‘strangeness’ of the situation to also be wearing off.

### This past week feels more like...

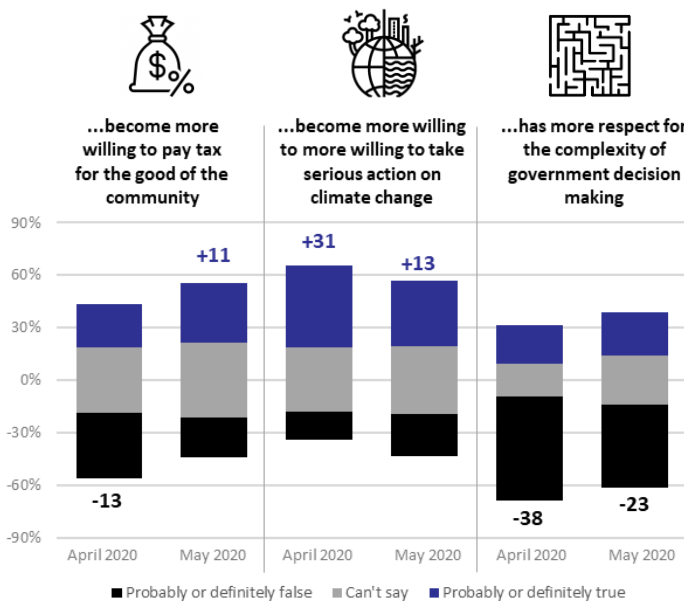


Data source: open-link community survey. Weekly samples n=53-239. Source: ORIMA.com.au

## Looking to the future...

While overall impacts on people and the country are considered to be negative, there are some interesting perceptions of how COVID might change Australia – and these are seemingly quite dynamic.

### As a result of COVID-19 Australia has...



Data source: open-link community survey. April n=352, May n=535

Source: ORIMA.com.au

From April to May people are feeling Australians may be more willing to contribute to the tax system, and may have more respect for the complexity of government decision making. However, at the same time, their expectation that the country may be more willing to take serious action on climate change has diminished a little.

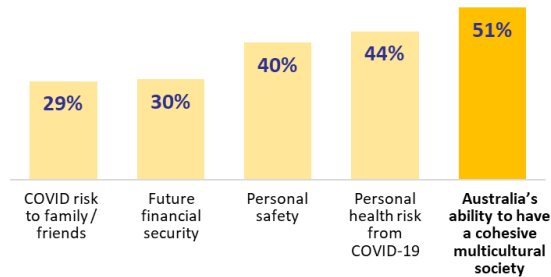
Given the general narrative in that month has moved from discussions of suddenly better air quality to the pragmatics of economic stimulus, perhaps these changes are not surprising. What is clear though is that many people think it plausible that COVID is having a substantive impact on society.

## Concerns about multicultural Australia

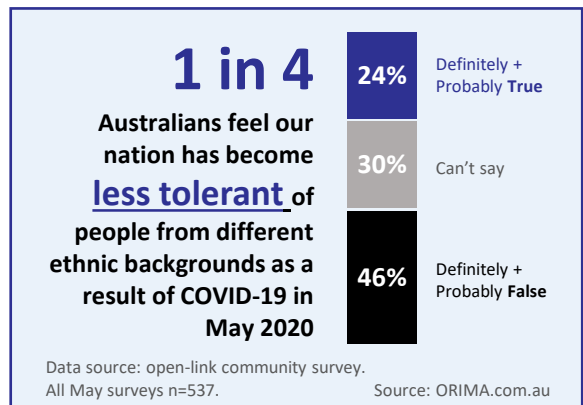
While Australian multiculturalism has never been without challenges, it is one of the more multicultural societies on the planet, and for many people this is one of the great features of our country and community. However, there are concerns about the impact of COVID on our society and into the future.

Around half of all the people who completed the CRT survey in May said they were at least quite concerned about the future of Australia's ability to have a cohesive multicultural society, and around 1-in-4 thought it was definitely or probably true that Australia has become less tolerant of people from different ethnic backgrounds as a result of COVID-19. Both of these figures declined slightly from April, but it will be important to watch these indicators over the coming months and years.

### % Quite or Extremely concerned about...



Data source: open-link community survey. All May surveys n=537.  
Source: ORIMA.com.au



## SUMMARY

May results from the various data streams that feed into the COVID-19 Recovery Tracker (CRT) project suggest that Australian's are entering into a period that is beginning to feel less unusual. Overall the impact of COVID-19 continues to be seen quite negatively, especially at a national and global level, and in general terms this has not changed greatly from April to May in terms of magnitude.

The *feel* though seems a bit different. The more negative personal impacts are felt less widely, but the more positive (perhaps compensatory) social effects people felt in April are also wearing off. People are starting to describe the feel as less like *just a phase* and more like *a pretty normal week*. There is still a long way to go before we would describe the situation as 'normal' – but it is clear that it is starting to feel less unusual to many people.

## COVID-19 RECOVERY TRACKER

The CRT project will continue to gather data across different surveys and sources, to track the impact of the pandemic on Australians, and to look for signs that we may be entering the recovery phase. The next update is expected in early June.

CRT data is aggregated from a range of national and more targeted surveys, and from an open-link community survey which can be completed online by anyone ([do the survey here](#)). Participants who register for the survey can ask to be advised when results are updated, or to be reminded to do the survey every 1, 2 or 3 months. Volume 3 is based on n=1,501 responses to nationally representative online surveys, and n=1,021 responses to the open link survey during April and May 2020. Data is classified into weeks defined from Friday midnight to Friday midnight.

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