

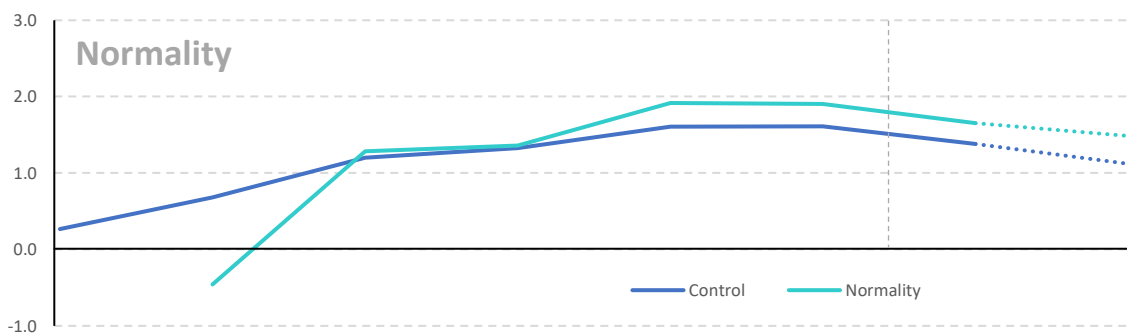
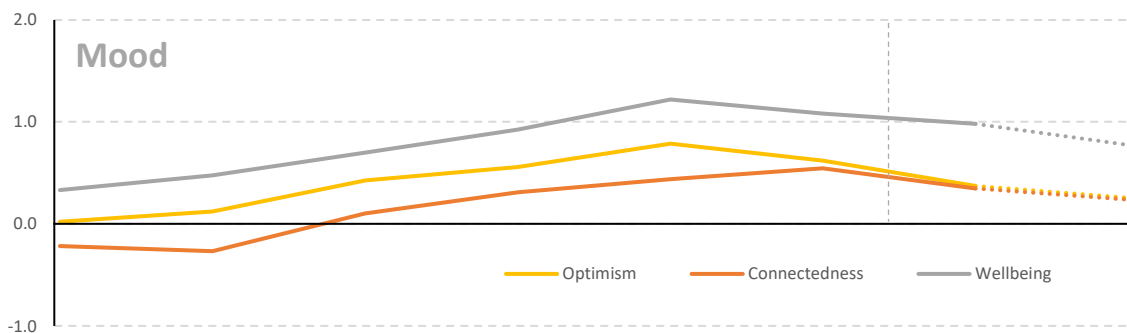
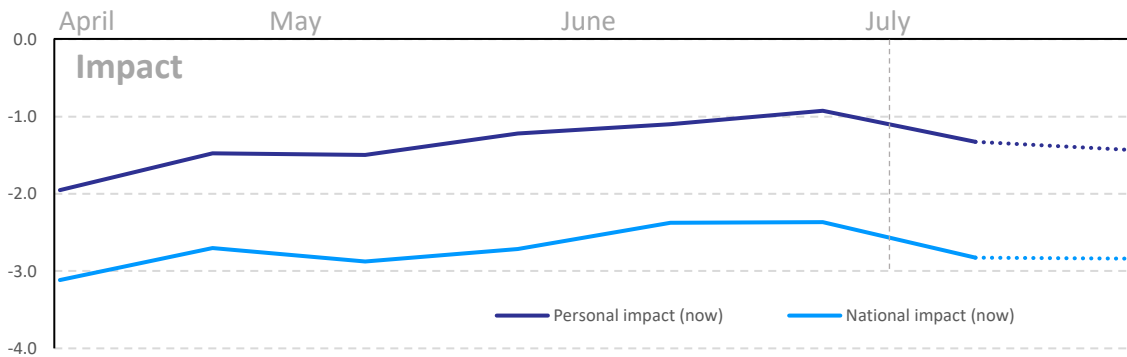


Even before the advent of COVID-19, 2020 was being considered as an unpredictable and challenging year. The pandemic has only magnified those feelings for many people. Through May and June the CRT had tracked generally positive changes in the Australian community – a sense of reduced negative impact of COVID-19, a more positive mood, and a sense of normality returning.

However, the rapidly deteriorating situation in Melbourne and Victoria, and potentially other parts of the country, has seen all these positive movements rapidly reversed, with all key measures falling backwards in the mid-July data. The partial data from late July also suggests that many will decline further from here.

What we all know about July 2020, in charts

After several months of slow but steady improvements in the mood of the country, a reduced sense of impact from COVID-19, and a return to a feeling of normality - July has seen all of this reverse. We have probably all sensed this change in recent weeks, and the data graphically shows the reality of that feeling. The charts below track fortnightly aggregate data, and the inflection in July is starkly obvious.



Data source: Fortnightly aggregate data. Fortnightly sample sizes n=544 –1,442. Final fortnightly period incomplete. Source: ORIMA.com.au

Since the start of April, when the COVID-19 Recovery Tracker (CRT) surveys began, almost all results showed slow but steady gains through May and June. While we noticed a reduction in the prevalence of some of the supportive and protective community responses seen in the first weeks of the pandemic (such as sense of making a contribution, ability to deal with stress, sense of support, and feeling part of the community), it seemed that the worst of the impacts were also fading. Mood indicators were all slowly climbing into positive territory, and our weeks were beginning to feel increasingly more 'normal'.

The winter of our discontent

2020 has not been a year for making predictions, and it seems tracking charts are no safer than travel plans in that respect. Extrapolating from the charts through May and June, we might have optimistically anticipated a second half of the year that was, in the context of a year without obvious comparisons in our lifetimes, reasonably liveable and reassuring.

The shape of those charts has changed from late June into early July, with the sudden and distressingly virulent re-emergence of COVID-19 in Victoria, and the emerging expectation of this unfolding in other locations. The speed and magnitude, and indeed the different nature of the virus' contagion has been impossible to ignore in the news coverage and in personal conversations. As we prepare this report, one of the two lead researchers on the CRT is back in serious lockdown in Melbourne, while the other contemplates what is sensible precautionary planning from Canberra.

It seems the rest of the country is joining us in feeling anxious, frustrated and uncertain. In the first two weeks of data from July, we see every major indicator in the CRT reverse course and head downwards. This is not especially surprising, but the hard data confirms what we all likely suspected. Negative impact at a personal and national level has dipped sharply, and mood has followed.

- ⊙ The **only time the perceived negative national impact** (currently $-2.8_{/5.0}$) **was lower** was in the very first wave of the survey in **early April**. **Personal impact** ($-1.3_{/5.0}$) is **at levels last seen in mid-May**.
- ⊙ **Mood indicators** have not fallen as much, but **all are down**. Interestingly, optimism and wellbeing actually started to fall from mid-June, though that early decline may have been more to do with a sense of frustration more so than actually anticipating the re-emergence of the virus to such an extent, and the return to restrictions and concerns it has prompted.
- ⊙ The **sense of returning to normality** has also **taken a hit in July**, after building steadily in May and June. Normality and a sense of control have mirrored each other in recent times, and both have fallen back a little from late June.

The impact in Victoria



As might be anticipated, some impacts on Victorians have been stronger.

Victorian July results are relatively low on most indicators, but especially in terms of: **Sense of control** **Feeling isolated** (rather than connected)

South Australians and Tasmanians also feel quite negative, while West Australians are generally feeling the most positive in July.

CRT data is aggregated from a range of national and targeted surveys, and an open-link community survey which can be completed online by anyone ([do the survey here](#)). Volume 5 is based on n=6,632 responses. Data is classified into weeks defined from Friday midnight to Friday midnight. The next CRT update is expected in early August.

COVID-19
RECOVERY
TRACKER



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