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RESEARCH & METHODS

# Tracking outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic (May 2020) – Job and income losses halted and confidence rising

## ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods

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## Abstract

In order to monitor the impacts of COVID-19, the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods has established a COVID-19 impact monitoring survey program. Data collected using Life in Australia™ is still the only longitudinal survey of a large, representative sample of Australians with information from the same individuals prior to and during the Coronavirus pandemic. The data summarised in this paper comes from the second wave of the COVID-19 monitoring surveys collected in May 2020. It gives an indication that economic circumstances may have stabilised, and that subjective wellbeing outcomes for Australians are improving. Australians are far less anxious and worried about COVID-19, less likely to think they are going to be infected, are less lonely, and have higher levels of life satisfaction. There has been neither an improvement nor a worsening in labour market outcomes, but Australians are far more positive about their labour market prospects in the future. There has been a continued decline in the per cent of Australians who think they could not get by on their current income, and small increases in income, particularly for those who were at the bottom of the income distribution prior to the spread of COVID-19.

## Acknowledgements

The May ANUpoll was partially funded by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the authors would like to thank Matthew James and Cathy Claydon for the considerable input into the design of the survey, as well as comments on an earlier draft of this paper. The ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods will be collaborating with AIHW on future outputs from the survey, with a focus on mental health; housing circumstances; service usage; and the consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs. The authors would also like to thank a number of people who were involved in the development of the April 2020 ANUpoll questionnaire, including Diane Herz, Dr Benjamin Phillips, Dr Paul Myers, Matilda Page, and Charles Dove from the Social Research Centre, as well as Professor Ian McAllister from the ANU.

## 1 Introduction and overview

In order to monitor the impacts of COVID-19, the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods has established a COVID-19 impact monitoring survey program. It builds upon data collected in January and February 2020 prior to COVID-19 restrictions being implemented, thereby following the same group of individuals prior to and through the COVID-19 pandemic period. This program provides population level estimates of the impact of COVID-19 and allows measurement of the variation in and the determinants of the change in outcomes for Australians.

The surveys include a core set of questions on attitudes to COVID-19, labour market outcomes, household income, financial hardship, life satisfaction and mental health. In addition, each survey contains some specific questions of particular policy interest at the particular point in time in which the data was collected. The first wave of the COVID-19 monitoring surveys was conducted in April and the most recent survey conducted in May 2020. A number of additional waves of data will be collected throughout 2020 and 2021, with data from these surveys made available from the Australian Data Archive as soon as possible after the data collection has finished.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact across the world, it is becoming increasingly clear that Australia has escaped the worst of the initial wave of infections. As of the time of writing this paper on May 25<sup>th</sup>,<sup>1</sup> there were 7,109 confirmed infections in Australia, with 102 confirmed deaths. This is far lower than most developed countries in *per capita* terms, with Australia amongst a small group of countries including Japan, Greece, New Zealand, and Taiwan with high rates of testing, but low rates of infection and mortality.

The restrictions on travel and the physical distancing and isolation measures that have been implemented are having major negative effects on the Australian economy. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) April 2020 *Labour Force Survey* (ABS 2020a) estimates that seasonally adjusted employment fell by a little under 600,000 people between March and April 2020, with much of those who left employment leaving the labour force entirely, rather than becoming unemployed. The ABS *Labour Force Survey* also found a large decline in hours worked for those who stayed employed.

Preliminary ABS for April 2020, shows that seasonally adjusted retail trade fell 17.9% from March to April 2020, the largest month-on-month fall in the history of the data series (ABS 2020b).<sup>2</sup> Using payroll data released from Single Touch Payroll (STP) data, which is provided to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) by businesses the ABS found that 'Between the week ending 14 March 2020 .... and the week ending 2 May 2020: Payroll jobs decreased by 7.3%; Total wages paid decreased by 5.4%' (ABS 2020c).

Since the ABS data referred to above was collected there has been a gradual relaxing of physical distancing measures, albeit at different rates across Australia's States and Territories.<sup>3</sup> The first step, which for the most part has been implemented across Australia, allows for an increase in the number of visitors to homes, limited opening of cafes and restaurants, as well as a relaxation of local and regional travel. Some (but not all) states and territories began easing restrictions on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May.

On the day after restrictions began to be eased (12<sup>th</sup> of May), respondents on Life in Australia<sup>TM</sup> were invited to participate in the May 2020 ANUpoll (the 38<sup>th</sup> wave of data collection from the Life in Australia Panel). This paper provides a summary of data from the 34<sup>th</sup> ANUpoll, collected

between 12<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2020. It adds another month's data to the first longitudinal survey data on the impact of COVID-19 (Biddle et al. 2020) with respondents to the May 2020 ANUpoll also interviewed in January, February and April 2020.

The May 2020 ANUpoll collected data from 3,219 respondents aged 18 years and over across all eight States/Territories in Australia, and is weighted to have a similar distribution to the Australian population across key demographic and geographic variables. Data for the vast majority of respondents was collected online, with a small proportion of respondents enumerated over the phone. About half of respondents (1,555) completed the survey on the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> of May.<sup>4</sup>

While most of the changes to physical distancing regulations were in the process of being implemented and would not have had time to have a measurable impact when the majority respondents completed the May ANUpoll, respondents would generally have been aware of the easing of restrictions. This paper provides a summary of changes in outcomes for Australians since February 2020, focusing on views and attitudes directly related to COVID-19 (Section 2); changes in employment and hours worked (Section 3); changes in income and financial stress (Section 4); and changes in wellbeing (Section 5). The final section of the paper concludes.

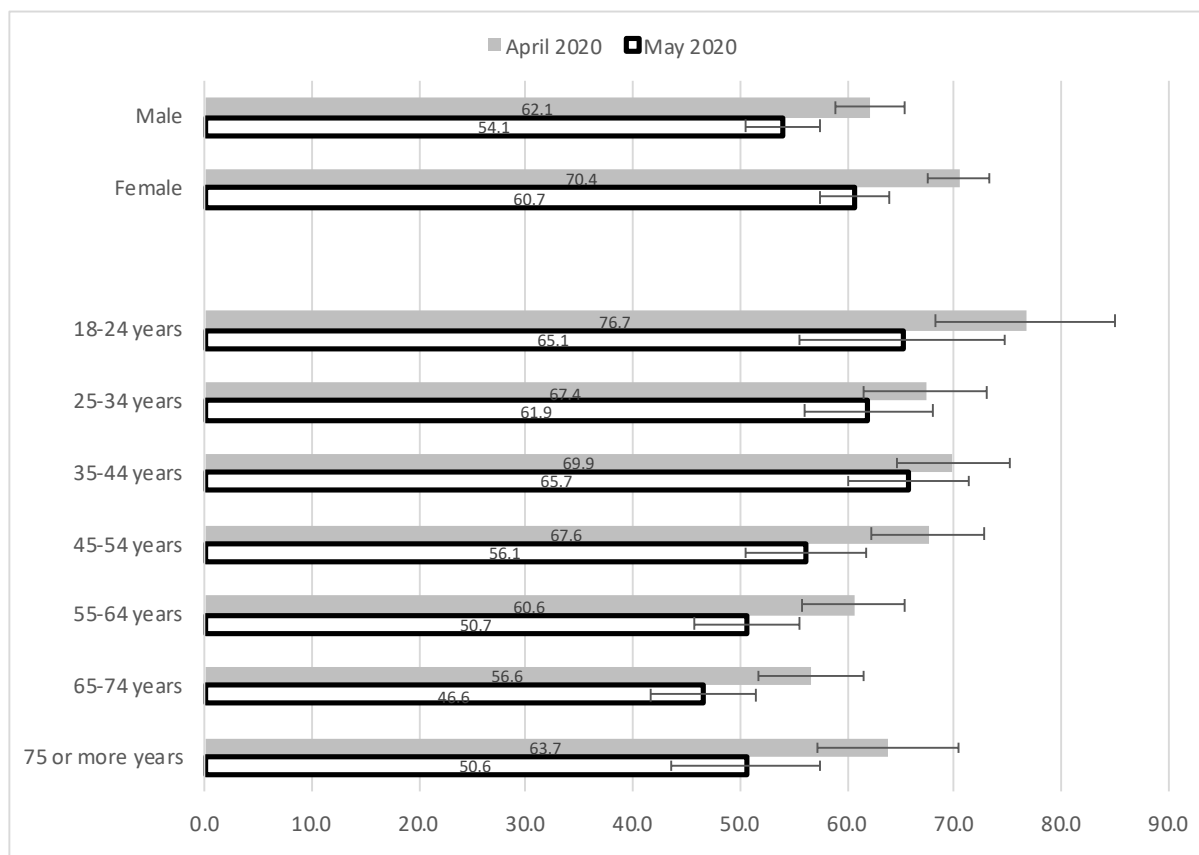
In order to make results available in a timely manner, we focus on data items that were asked across at least two waves of data collection, limiting the sample to those who completed at least the April and May ANUpolls (and occasionally additional waves where noted). Probability weights were used from the April ANUpoll survey. Point in time estimates may therefore vary slightly from those in the cross-sectional reports published previously for April 2020, or which will be published subsequently for May 2020 and beyond.

The data summarised in this paper is only a small component of the questions asked for the May 2020 ANUpoll, and we have focused mainly on those questions that were asked in April 2020, as well as February and/or January. The full set of questions from the May 2020 ANUpoll include data on mental health outcomes, housing circumstances, relationship status, and substance use. This full set of data will be released in due course.

## 2 Views on COVID-19

Australia continues to experience high rates of anxiety and worry due to COVID-19, albeit with significant declines from earlier in the COVID-19 pandemic. More than half of Australians (57.4 per cent) in the linked April-May ANUpoll samples reported that they were anxious and worried in May 2020, a significant decline from April 2020 (66.4 per cent). There were declines in anxiety and worry about COVID-19 for both males and females, and for all age groups (Figure 1). The biggest declines were for females compared to males, as well as for the relatively young and the relatively old.

**Figure 1** Per cent of Australians who reported anxiety and worry due to COVID-19 by age and sex, April and May 2020



Notes: The “whiskers” on the bars indicate the 95 per cent confidence intervals for the estimate. Restricted to those who completed both the April and May 2020 surveys.

Source: ANUpoll, April and May 2020.

While the difference between males and females in levels of anxiety and worry about COVID-19 reduced between April and May 2020, there were widening differences between people living in capital cities and those living in other areas of Australia. Both groups experienced significant reductions in anxiety and worry, but those outside capital cities experienced a more dramatic improvement. Specifically, in April 2020, those who lived outside a capital city had a slightly lower level of anxiety and worry about COVID-19 (64.3 per cent reported anxiety and worry due to COVID-19) compared to those living in a capital city (67.4 per cent), a gap of 3.1 percentage points. By May 2020, however, the gap had widened to 7.2 percentage points with 59.8 per cent in capital cities feeling anxious and worried compared to 52.6 per cent of those outside of capital cities.

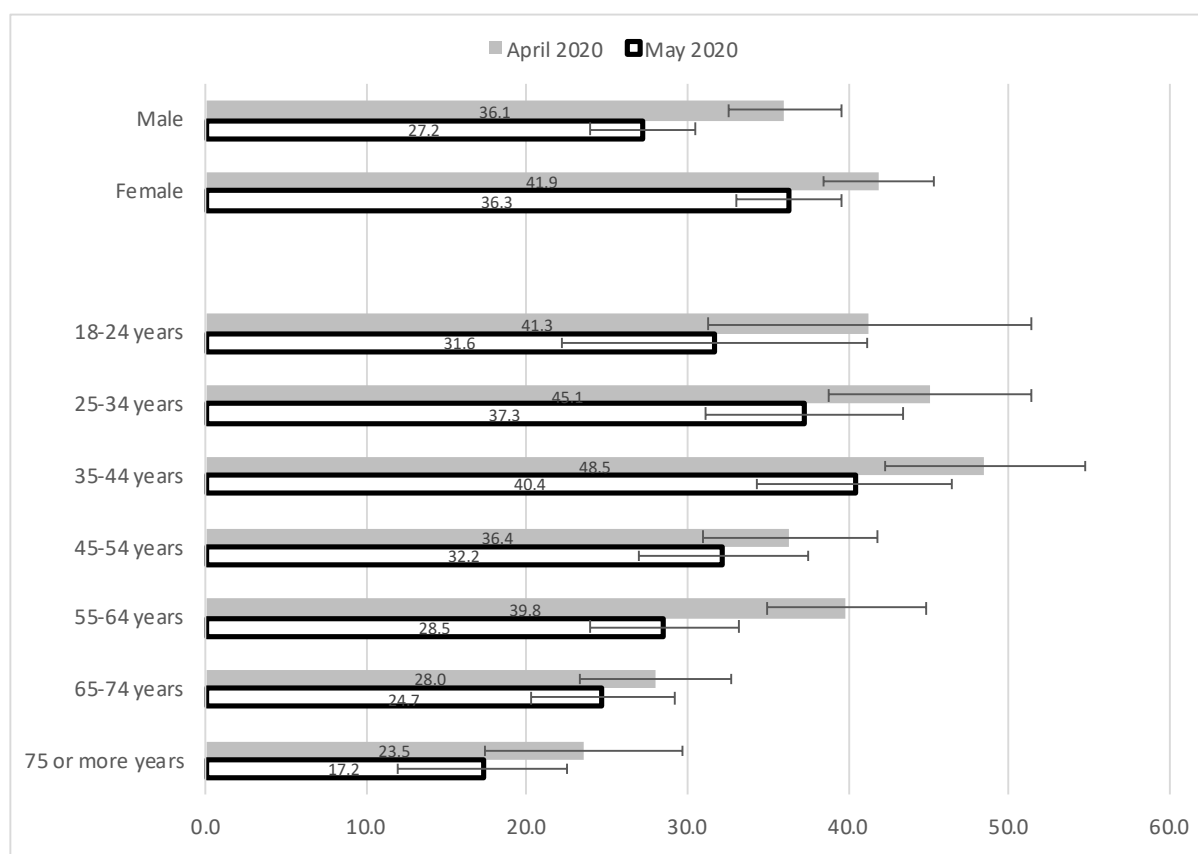
In April and May 2020 respondents were asked about how likely it would be that they would become infected by COVID-19 over the next six-months. There has been a fall in the percentage of Australians who think that it is likely or very likely that they will catch COVID-19 from 39.0 per cent in April to 31.7 per cent in May 2020.

Data for the May 2020 survey was collected over a two-week period during which time the number of positive tests for COVID-19 continued to fall and the number of people who had recovered from COVID-19 increased. People who completed the questionnaire earlier in the survey period reported a higher expected likelihood of being infected by COVID-19 than those

who completed it later in the survey period. While there may be some selection effects related to which “types” of respondents completed the survey earlier during the survey period (i.e. more conscientious respondents) and those who completed in later in the survey period, it is consistent with a reduction of active COVID-19 cases during the survey period.<sup>5</sup> We estimate that the expected likelihood of infection declined from 0.337 for the first full day of data collection (12th of May) to 0.248 for those who completed the survey on the last full day of data collection (the 24th of May).

Returning to our full longitudinal sample, the fall in the percentage of Australians thinking that it is likely or very likely that they will be infected by COVID-19 over the next six-months was greater for males (36.1 per cent to 27.2 per cent) than females (41.9 per cent to 36.3 per cent) (Figure 2). There were falls in the proportion thinking it is likely or very likely that they will be infected by COVID-19 for all age groups with the largest falls being for those aged 18-24 years (from 41.3 to 31.6 per cent) and those aged 55-64 years (39.8 to 28.5 per cent).

**Figure 2** Per cent of Australians who think it likely or very likely that they will be infected by COVID-19 in next 6 months by age and sex, April and May 2020



Notes: The “whiskers” on the bars indicate the 95 per cent confidence intervals for the estimate. Restricted to those who completed both the April and May 2020 surveys.

Source: ANUpoll, April and May 2020.

### 3 Employment and hours worked

The declines in employment and hours worked experienced by Australia during the early stages of the COVID-19 policy response (February to April) were unprecedented in Australia's modern economic history. Using data from the cross-sectional February 2020 and April 2020 waves of data collection, it was estimated that there was a drop in employment of about 670,000 in net terms (Biddle et al 2020), results which were very similar to that from the ABS Labour Force Survey estimates (ABS 2020a).

Following the massive loss of jobs between February and April 2020, the May 2020 ANUpoll estimates are that there were no further net job losses between April and May with the employment rate being 58.3 per cent in April and 58.0 per cent in May 2020 for the linked sample. This very small net change masks a slightly larger number of people who lost their job between April and May (6.4 per cent of those who were employed in April 2020) and a small number of people who became employed (8.4 per cent of those who were not employed in April 2020). Furthermore, although there were significant differences in employment rates by age and sex at each point in time, there were no significant changes in employment rates between April and May 2020 within these sub-groups (that is, the differences stayed consistent).

Following a substantial fall in average hours worked between February and April 2020, there was a small increase in average hours worked by the employed between April and May 2020 from 32.3 to 32.8 hours per week in May 2020 (based on the linked sample), that was not statistically significant.

The economic protection measures implemented by the government, including the JobKeeper payment and various other policies designed to assist employers continuing to pay their staff, combined with some easing of the physical distancing requirements seem to have prevented further losses of jobs or reductions in hours worked between April and May.

The fact that employment outcomes have not continued to worsen appears to have translated into a more positive outlook for the future within the Australian workforce. The probability of expected job loss over the next twelve-months averaged over all employed respondents fell from 24.4 to 20.6 per cent between April and May 2020. While this is substantially higher than the level of job insecurity reported since 2001 and during the pre-COVID-19 period<sup>6</sup>, the Australian workforce appears to be substantially less pessimistic about their job security than they were one-month earlier. This more positive view appears to be driven, in part, by an increase in the number of people who assessed the chance of job loss as being zero from 34.6 per cent in April to 39.2 per cent in May 2020.

Perceived job insecurity has fallen by more outside of capital cities. In non-capital cities, the average expected probability of losing one's job was only 16.3 per cent in May 2020, down from 21.9 per cent in April 2020. For capital cities there was a smaller decline and a more pessimistic view towards the future – 22.6 per cent average in May 2020 compared to 25.6 per cent average in April 2020. These changes are statistically significant and match ABS employment data up until April 2020, using the larger sample in the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Falls in the employment rate from the LFS were faster in capital cities, particularly Sydney, than they were in other areas (ABS 2020d).

## 4 Income and financial stress

### 4.1 Income

Data from the February and April 2020 surveys produced an estimate of a reduction in average household after-tax income of 9.1 per cent and a reduction in per person income of 10.4 per cent (Biddle et al. 2020).<sup>7</sup> This reduction in income was the result of the large number of jobs lost, substantial reduction in hours worked and reductions in investment incomes between February and April 2020. These effects were also combined with the partially offsetting impacts of the very large increases in cash payments by the Federal Government. These include the Economic Support payment of \$750 for existing social security payment recipients and the provision of a \$550 per fortnight Coronavirus Supplement to new and existing eligible income support recipients (including those receiving student support payments, Jobseeker Payment (unemployment benefit or Parenting Payment)).

In addition to the above payments made mostly to those who were not employed, the JobKeeper payment of \$1,500 per fortnight for each eligible employee to employers to enable them to continue to pay their employees was paid to businesses from the first week of May. Many employees will have continued to receive their wages from employers prior to then (including in the April ANUpoll), in anticipation of the payment.

Consistent with the data that there were no further net job losses or reductions in hours worked between April and May 2020 and the introduction of the JobKeeper payment there was a small (1.8 per cent) but not statistically significant increase in household after tax income from \$1,622 in April to \$1,652 in May 2020. Per person income also was steady between April and May, \$692 and \$699 respectively (difference not statistically significant).

Table 1 shows the change in income for those who were at different points on the income distribution as of February 2020 (that is, by decile). It shows an estimated increase in income between February and May for those who were at the bottom of the income distribution in February, and declines in income for those who were at the top of the distribution. The very large increases in income at the bottom of the income distribution between February and April have increased even further with the per person household income of the lowest income decile increasing by 3.8 per cent between April and May 2020, for an overall increase of 38.9 per cent between February and May 2020.

Income of the second and third income deciles had increased by 6.5 per cent and 13.5 per cent respectively by May and the income of the fourth income decile had increased by 4.9 per cent. There was only a very small decrease in income for the fifth income decile and then falls in income for the top half of the income distribution ranging from declines of 4.1 per cent for the sixth income decile up to 19.8 per cent for the highest income decile. In contrast to the continued increases in income in the bottom half of the income distribution between April and May, there was little change in average income between April and May in the top-half of the income distribution.



**Table 3** Per person after-tax household income, February, April and May 2020

	Per person household income (\$/week)			\$ change		% change	
	February	April	May	April to May	Feb to May	April to May	Feb to May
Income decile (February 2020)							
Decile 1 (lowest)	\$161	\$215	\$223	\$8	\$62	3.8%	38.9%
Decile 2	\$292	\$302	\$311	\$9	\$19	3.0%	6.5%
Decile 3	\$358	\$391	\$406	\$15	\$48	3.8%	13.5%
Decile 4	\$448	\$452	\$470	\$18	\$22	4.0%	4.9%
Decile 5	\$571	\$572	\$565	-\$7	-\$6	-1.2%	-1.1%
Decile 6	\$647	\$615	\$621	\$6	-\$27	1.0%	-4.1%
Decile 7	\$796	\$699	\$705	\$6	-\$91	0.8%	-11.5%
Decile 8	\$971	\$869	\$880	\$11	-\$90	1.3%	-9.3%
Decile 9	\$1,265	\$1,133	\$1,129	-\$4	-\$136	-0.4%	-10.8%
Decile 10 (highest)	\$2,113	\$1,684	\$1,694	\$10	-\$419	0.6%	-19.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$767</b>	<b>\$697</b>	<b>\$704</b>	<b>\$7</b>	<b>-\$63</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>-8.2%</b>

Notes: Analysis is restricted to those who responded to the February, April and May 2020 surveys.

Source: ANUpoll, April and May 2020 and Life in Australia Wave 35, February 2020.

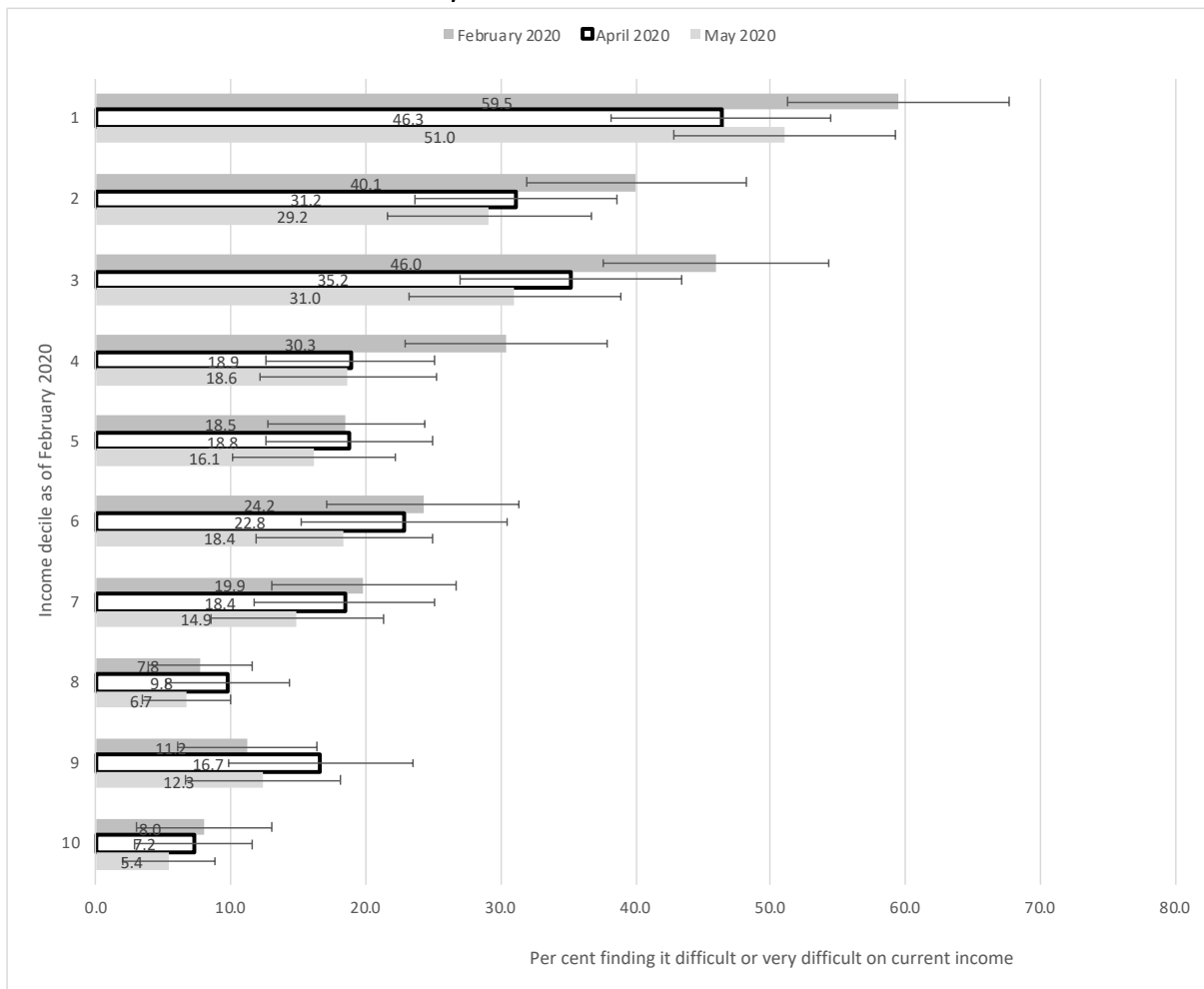
#### 4.2 Financial stress

In February, April and May 2020, respondents were asked about how comfortably they could live on their household's present income. Response options were living comfortably, coping, finding it difficult and finding it very difficult. The proportion of Australians saying that they were finding it difficult or very difficult on their present income fell from 26.7 per cent in February to 22.9 per cent in April and fell even further to be 20.8 per cent in May 2020. The decline in the percentage of people finding it difficult was almost exclusively found at the bottom end of the income distribution.

In February 2020 59.5 per cent of those in the bottom decile of the income distribution reported that they are finding it difficult or very difficult (Figure 4). Looking at the same individuals in April 2020 (that is, keeping income decile fixed to the February 2020 values), this had declined to 46.3 per cent.<sup>8</sup> Although the difference wasn't statistically significant, there may have been a small increase in this measure of financial stress for the bottom income decile between April and May 2020. There were also declines for the second, third and fourth income categories, but very little change across the rest of the distribution.

Those on lower income are still most likely to find it difficult to cope on their income. However, the reductions in the proportion finding it difficult or very difficult is consistent with the increases in income experienced by the lower income groups. If you take someone not having enough income to meet their needs as subjective measure of financial stress, then the income support packages implemented to address economic upheaval caused by COVID-19 by multiple levels of government appear to have significantly reduced financial stress for those at the bottom of the distribution.

**Figure 3** Per cent of Australians who report that they are finding it difficult or very difficult on their current income, February, April and May 2020, by income decile as of February 2020



Notes: The “whiskers” on the bars indicate the 95 per cent confidence intervals for the estimate. Restricted to those who completed the February, April and May 2020 surveys.

Source: ANUpoll, April and May 2020 and Life in Australia Wave 35, February 2020.

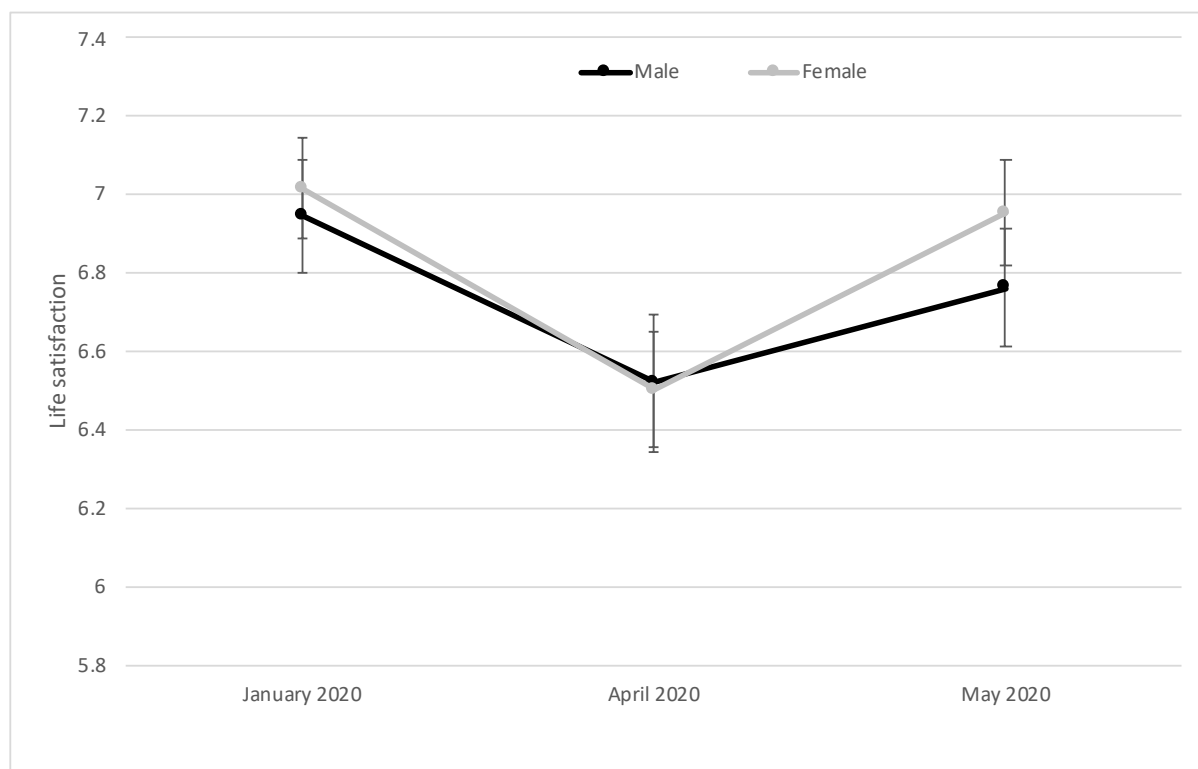
## 5 Life satisfaction and loneliness

### 5.1 Life satisfaction

The steady rate of employment, hours worked, income (including increases in the bottom half of the income distribution), improvement in respondents’ self-perceived prospects of retaining their job, and reductions in anxiety and worry about COVID-19 appear to have led to a dramatic improvement in life satisfaction between April and May 2020. Indeed, life satisfaction appears to be almost back to what it was prior to the spread of COVID-19 in Australia; albeit at a time when life satisfaction was already slightly reduced due in part to the 2019/20 Summer Bushfires. For the linked sample, life satisfaction was 6.98 in January 2020, 6.51 in April 2020, and 6.86 in May 2020 (on a scale from 0 to 10).

The changes in life satisfaction across the first few months of 2020, while in the same direction, are greater for females than males (Figure 4). For females, average life satisfaction declined from 7.02 in January 2020 to 6.50 in April 2020, but by May 2020 it had increased back up to 6.95 (the fall and subsequent increase were both statistically significant). For males, life satisfaction started off a little lower (6.95 in January 2020), declined by slightly less between January 2020 and April 2020 (to 6.52) and increased by far less between April 2020 and May 2020 (to 6.76). It would appear that females were impacted more by the initial spread of COVID-19, but their life satisfaction has rebounded quicker as physical distancing restrictions begin to be eased.

**Figure 4** Life satisfaction by sex, January, April and May 2020



Notes: The “whiskers” on the bars indicate the 95 per cent confidence intervals for the estimate. Restricted to those who completed the January, April and May 2020 ANUpolls.

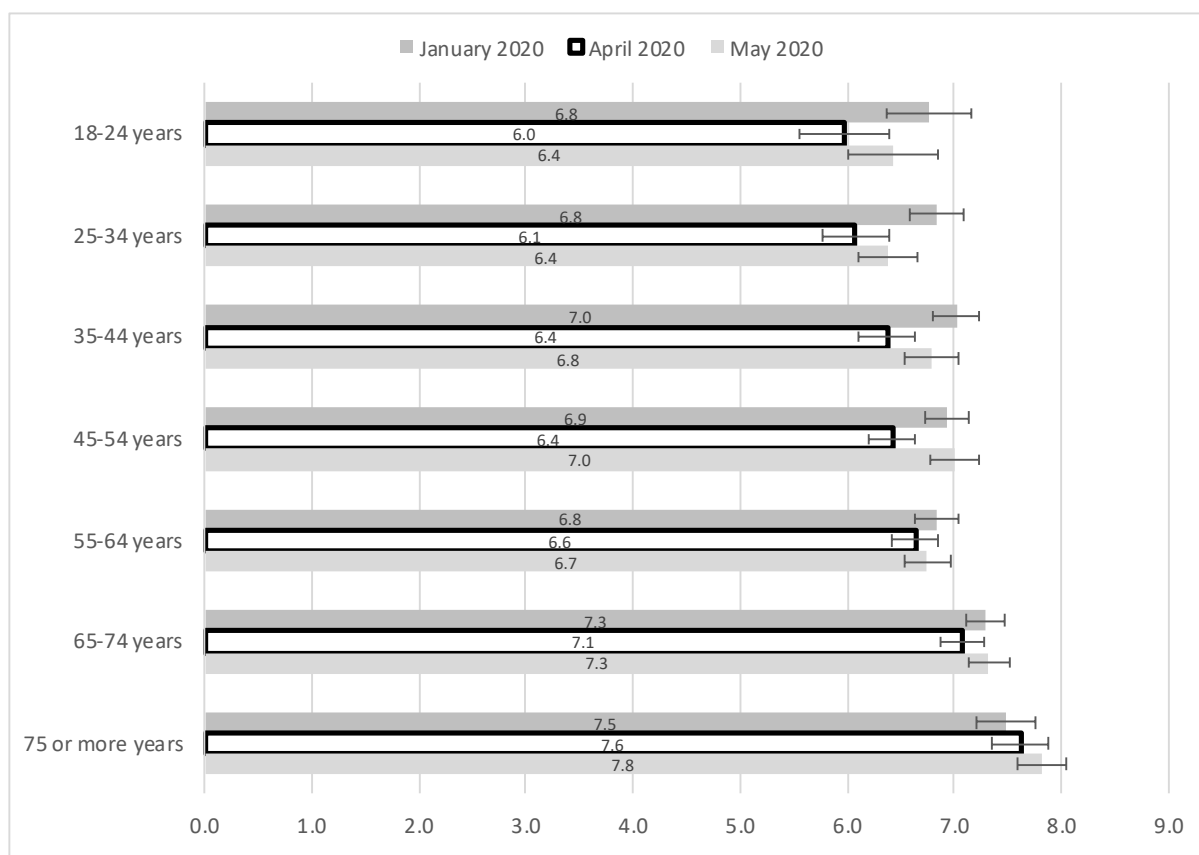
Source: ANUpoll, January, April and May 2020.

The impact of COVID-19 on life satisfaction varies for people of different ages (Figure 5). For the relatively young, there was a very large drop in life satisfaction between January 2020 and

April 2020, equivalent to 0.6 to 0.8 points out of 10 for the first three age groups (18 to 24 years, 25 to 34 years and 35 to 44 years). For these three age groups, there appears to have been an increase in life satisfaction between April and May 2020, but still to levels that are substantially below those of January 2020.

For the next three age groups (45 to 54 years, 55 to 64 years, and 65 to 74 years), there were smaller declines between January 2020 and April 2020, and life satisfaction has more or less returned by May to those in January. For the final age group, however, there was a small increase in life satisfaction between January 2020 and April 2020, and another increase between April 2020 and May 2020. Looking at both ends of the distribution, the **decline** in life satisfaction between January 2020 and May 2020 of 0.4 points for those aged 18 to 24 years is similar to the **increase** in life satisfaction over the same period for those aged 75 years and over.

Figure 5 Life satisfaction by age, January, April and May 2020



Notes: The “whiskers” on the bars indicate the 95 per cent confidence intervals for the estimate. Restricted to those who completed the January, April and May 2020 surveys.

Source: ANUpoll, January, April and May 2020.

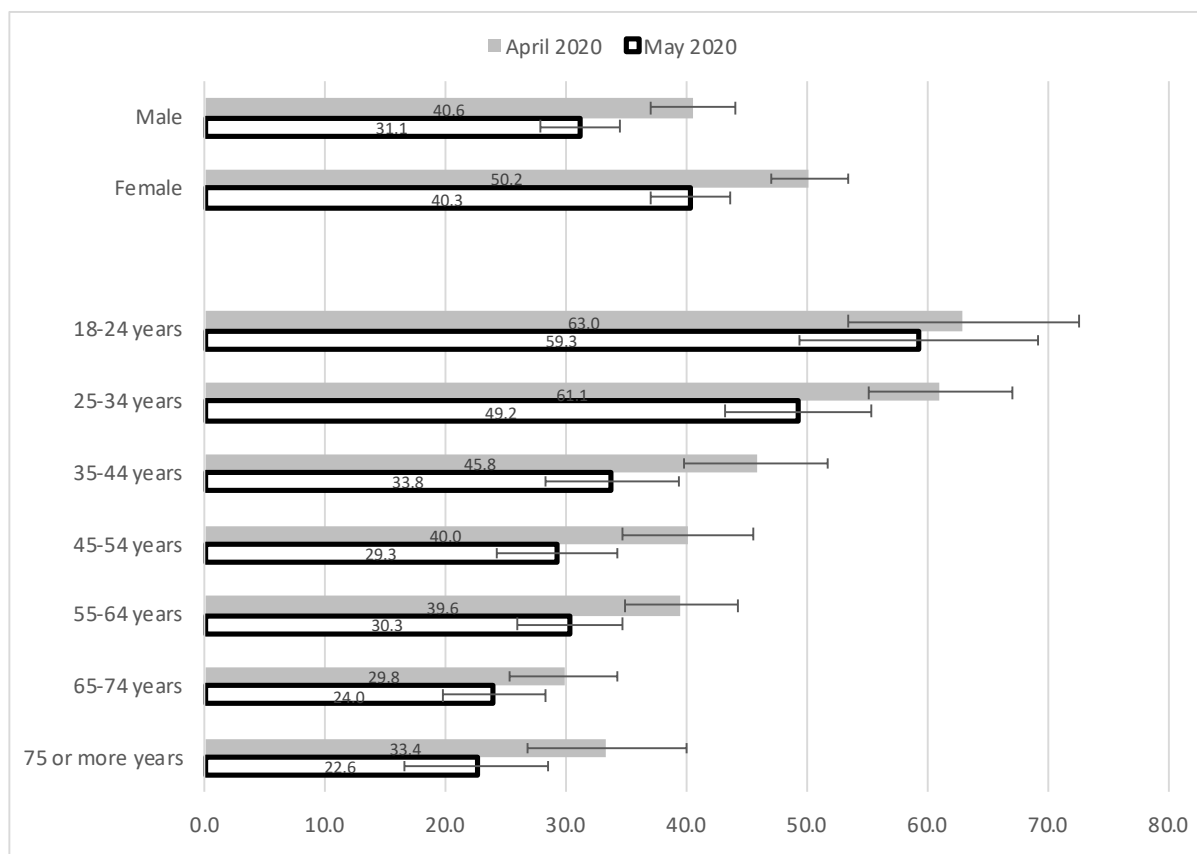
## 5.2 Loneliness

One of the potential reasons for the improvement in life satisfaction between April 2020 and May 2020 is the large decline in loneliness reported by Australians over this period. In April 2020, 45.5 per cent of the (linked) sample reported that they were lonely at least some of the time. By May 2020, this had declined to 35.8 per cent.

We do not have data from prior to April 2020 on loneliness for the survey respondents.<sup>9</sup> However, between April 2020 and May 2020, the declines are reasonably consistent by sex,

but are not uniform across the age distribution (Figure 6). Males had lower rates of loneliness in April 2020, but similar declines between April and May 2020 as females. The only group in the sample that had relatively high rates of loneliness in April 2020 and small declines between April 2020 and May 2020 were those aged 18 to 24 years, whose percentage only declined from 63.0 per cent to 59.3 per cent amongst the linked sample.

**Figure 6** Per cent of Australians who reported feeling lonely at least some of the time by age and sex, April and May 2020



Notes: The “whiskers” on the bars indicate the 95 per cent confidence intervals for the estimate. Restricted to those who completed both the April and May 2020 surveys.

Source: ANUpoll, April and May 2020.

The change in life satisfaction between April 2020 and May 2020 correlated very highly with the change in loneliness. For those who reported loneliness in April 2020 but not in May 2020 (16.0 per cent of the sample), the average improvement in life satisfaction was 0.55 points. For those who went in the opposite direction, that is the 6.3 per cent of the sample who became lonely over the period, the change in life satisfaction was only 0.07 points, and not significantly different from zero. For those who remained not lonely (48.2 per cent of the sample) the change in life satisfaction was 0.28 points whereas for those who stayed lonely (the remaining 29.5 per cent of the sample) the change in life satisfaction was 0.32 points. The difference between those whose loneliness levels didn’t change was not statistically significant

It would appear from this data, that those who have been able to reduce their level of loneliness have had a larger increase in life satisfaction than the remainder of the sample, with those who have become lonely over the period not experiencing the overall improvement in life satisfaction observed in the sample.

## 6 Concluding comments

Countries across the world are grappling with the health, economic, social, and political fallout from the spread of COVID-19 with all developed countries experiencing some form of economic slowdown.

In order to monitor the impacts of COVID-19, the ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods has established a COVID-19 impact monitoring survey program. As far as we are aware, this is the only longitudinal survey of a large, representative sample of Australians with information from the same individuals prior to and during the Coronavirus pandemic. Analysis of data from the April COVID-19 monitoring survey showed ‘large declines in employment and income ... significant increases in psychological distress and large drops in subjective wellbeing.’ We also concluded though that ‘... not all the results ... are negative. We observe improvements in confidence in governments and the public service, enhanced satisfaction in the direction of the country, large increases in social trust, and significant observance of physical distancing measures.’ (Biddle et al. 2020).

The data summarised in this paper comes from the second wave of the COVID-19 monitoring survey, collected in May 2020. The data shows that economic circumstances may have stabilised, and that subjective wellbeing outcomes for Australians are improving. We show that, compared to April 2020, in May 2020 Australians are less anxious and worried about COVID-19, less likely to think they are going to be infected, are less lonely, and have higher levels of life satisfaction. That does not in any way mean that Australia has returned to a pre-COVID-19 world. More than half of the Australian population are still anxious and worried about COVID-19. Almost a third of Australians think it likely or very likely that they will be infected by COVID-19 in the next six months and loneliness was experienced by more than a third of the population.

There has been neither an improvement nor a worsening in labour market outcomes, but our respondents are far more positive about their labour market prospects in the future than they were just one month prior. We find a continued decline in the per cent of Australians who think they could not get by on their current income, and slight further increases in income at the bottom end of the distribution.

There continues to be large differences in outcomes by demographic and geographic characteristics. Life satisfaction is substantially lower for young adults in Australia compared to older Australians. Females are lonelier than males, and are more anxious and worried about COVID-19. Those who live in capital cities are far more likely to think they will lose their job over the next 12 months. For some of these outcomes there has been a convergence since April 2020 across key population groups, but for other outcomes there has been a significant divergence. The young have not seen as large a drop in loneliness as older Australians with roughly three out of every five Australians aged 18 to 24 years old experiencing loneliness at least some of the time in the week prior to the May 2020 survey.

COVID-19 was expected to impact older Australians far more than any other age cohort. While a disproportionate number of deaths was amongst the elderly, Australia has fortunately been spared the high mortality rates of the US, UK, Italy, and Spain. However, the data presented in this paper and previously has shown that the economic, social and mental health impacts of COVID-19 have been spread across the population in quite different ways. As physical distancing measures continue to be eased and the focus turns to economic recovery, it is

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important that the outcomes of different groups in Australia who have fared poorly, in particular young Australians, continue to be tracked and monitored.

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## Endnotes

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- 1 <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-data#tests-cases-and-deaths>
- 2 The seasonally adjusted estimate fell 17.9% (-\$5,383.3 million) from March 2020 to April 2020. This result is the strongest seasonally adjusted month-on-month fall in the history of the series.
- 3 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-08/coronavirus-national-cabinet-restrictions-three-stages-explained/12228288>
- 4 Of those who completed the May 2020 wave of data collection, 2,986 individuals (91.9 per cent) also completed the April 2020 ANUpoll (the 37th wave of data collection). Of those who completed both the April and May surveys, there were 2,810 respondents (94.1 per cent) who also completed the February 2020 survey (35th wave of data collection).
- 5 Using a simple probit model with time as the only explanatory variable, and the probability of thinking it likely or very likely as the dependent variable, the coefficient for time is -0.022 with a p-value of 0.043. When combined with the constant (-0.399), this gives a predicted probability of thinking it likely or very likely that a person will be infected of 0.337 for the first full day of data collection (12th of May) but a probability of 0.248 for those who completed the survey on the last full day of data collection (the 24th of May). As there is no relationship between the date on which someone completed the May 2020 survey and their self-reported likelihood of being infected in April, we expect that this decline across the May survey window reflects at least in part a continued decline in expected likelihood of becoming infected with COVID-19 throughout the month.
- 6 Based on data from the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey reported in Foster and Guttman (2018).
- 7 The specific income question that we asked in February, April and May 2020 was ‘Please indicate which of the following describes your household's total income, after tax and compulsory deductions, from all sources?’ The income categories were: \$0 to \$24,554 (\$0 to \$472 weekly); More than \$24,554 to \$38,896 (more than \$472 to \$748 weekly); More than \$38,896 to \$52,884 (more than \$478 to \$1,017 weekly); More than \$52,884 to \$69,524 (more than \$1,017 to \$1,337 weekly); More than \$69,524 to \$88,452 (more than \$1,337 to \$1,701 weekly); More than \$88,452 to \$109,304 (more than \$1,701 to \$2,102 weekly); More than \$109,304 to \$134,784 (more than \$2,102 to \$2,592 weekly); More than \$134,784 to \$168,688 (more than \$2,592 to \$3,244 weekly); More than \$168,688 to \$222,300 (more than \$3,244 to \$4,275 weekly); or More than \$222,300 (more than \$4,275 weekly). Respondents are then asked to choose from one of ten income categories. These categories have been converted into a continuous income measure using interval regression. The natural log of the lower and upper bound of the income categories is the relevant dependent variable, and using the same demographic, socioeconomic and geographic measures in the regression equations up until now as explanatory variables. The predictions from the model are constrained to be in the same income category as they are observed to fall into.

- 8 The per cent of people in the bottom decile based on April 2020 income who reported that they were finding it difficult or very difficult in April 2020 was 51.4 per cent.
- 9 There is a question on the May 2020 ANUpoll that asks the respondent whether the 'the amount of time you feel lonely and isolated increased, decreased or has there been no change?' Using weights from Wave 37, 40.1 per cent of the linked sample reported that their loneliness had increased, 55.4 per cent said it had stayed about the same, and only 4.4 per cent said that it had decreased.