

Stress and finances worse off during pandemic, study shows

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Almost one in two Australians, 47 per cent, say they are more stressed because of the COVID-19 crisis, according to [new data](#) from The Australian National University (ANU).

The findings also show three in 10 Australians say their finances have

worsened during the pandemic.

The report is based on a survey of over 3,200 Australians and led by the ANU Center for Social Research and Methods.

Co-author, Professor Nicholas Biddle, says the pandemic has also worsened Australians' outlook for the future, with 40 per cent feeling downbeat. Meanwhile, 43 per cent of Australians are feeling lonely or isolated due to the crisis and related lockdowns.

The study also examined how Australians felt about their relationships, with almost one in five females (17.6 per cent) and males (17.5 per cent) saying they were worse off.

However, three in ten females (30.8 per cent) said their relationships had improved, compared to around one in four males (24.9 per cent).

Younger Australians were more likely to report their relationships were worsened (24.1 per cent), while those aged 75 years or older were least likely (7.5 per cent). The age group with the most improved relationships were 35 to 44 year olds (32.9 per cent).

Australians with partners in their household or who were parents of a child in their household were more likely to say their relationships had improved compared to those without partners or children in the household.

"For those with partners, 30.7 per cent said their relationships had improved, compared to 22.2 per cent of those without partners," co-author Professor Matthew Gray said.

"And 32.7 per cent of Australians who are a parent of a child in their household said their relationships were better. In contrast, 24.9 per cent

of Australians who weren't the parent of a child in their household said relationships had improved."

In other key findings, only 22.5 per cent of the population are estimated to have not experienced any of these negative changes during the COVID-19 period compared to 51.6 per cent who reported no improvements in the same measures.

"This is all taking a major toll on Australians' mental health," Professor Biddle said.

"Australia has been very fortunate during the COVID-19 period with low rates of infection and mortality. However, that does not mean that there have not been large negative effects on other important outcomes, like our relationships, sense of financial security, stress, and loneliness."

The analysis confirms that while there has been a significant improvement in Australians' mental health compared to April 2020, [younger people](#) were still under serious psychological distress.

"For those Australians under the age of 45, psychological distress is still at a higher level than it was prior to the spread of COVID-19. The mental health impacts of the pandemic may have eased somewhat, but they are still present," Professor Biddle said.

Professor Biddle also said that the longitudinal data released today shows that deterioration in relationships and increases in loneliness were directly associated with worsening in [mental health](#), explaining much of the differences across the age distribution.

"We need to make sure those Australians who are feeling worse off due to the COVID-19 crisis are given the support they need."

Provided by Australian National University

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