



## Digital Consumer Trends 2020

Unlocking lockdown

Australian edition



**MAKING AN  
IMPACT THAT  
MATTERS**  
*since 1845*

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# Introduction

**When we finalised our 2019 Mobile Consumer Survey, we were rounding out an incredible decade for mobility. Mobile technology had become a dominant force in our world, and while the future of mobile was still taking shape, we knew the impact would continue to be pervasive.**

Standing there, at the end of one decade and looking into the next, we expected our 2020 report to be a brief update on the themes of the previous year: 5G's growing uptake, the interest in wellness wearables, the screen addiction balancing act, and looming ethical questions about privacy and security. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit – and Australia, like most of the globe, moved into lockdown.

The events associated with the global pandemic have accelerated or altered these trends – in some cases, irreversibly. While we expect these trends to continue to evolve, they've been knocked off course and the future will unfold from a new starting point.

It seemed fitting to give our survey a new starting point too. The Mobile Consumer Survey is in its 10th year globally and seventh in Australia. Over that time, mobility has begun to intersect with other areas of our digital lives too.

For this reason, our report has evolved to focus on these digital consumers, the enabling technologies in their lives and how their consumption and behaviours are developing. These ideas are found here, in our very first Digital Consumer Trends report.

This year's survey took place over June and July, which is important given the backdrop at the time. Most of Australia was coming out of our first lockdown and experiencing ongoing movement restrictions. Between the months of March and July, mobility in major cities like Sydney and Melbourne reached as low as 10% of usual travel.<sup>1</sup> Instead of seeing friends, going to work, taking in the sights or enjoying events – activities we took for granted – Australians found themselves at home. Digital became our window to the outside world and each other.

The survey provides a glimpse of this unique, unprecedented moment in time. But more than that – it provides the thread from which a raft of future consumer behaviours will be traced. The extreme events of this pandemic will spawn the digital trends of tomorrow.

Right now, there are more questions than answers. Has being less mobile made us less attached to our mobile devices? Is working from home driving renewed interest in connected home devices? Has more time indoors brought families together around shared devices like the TV – or are we all closing our doors and putting our headphones on? Has lockdown made us more excited for 5G? And are we more or less inclined to share our data for the greater good (or bad)?

It is clear that digital has cemented itself as a bigger presence in our lives through the pandemic. How this unfolds in the future remains to be seen.

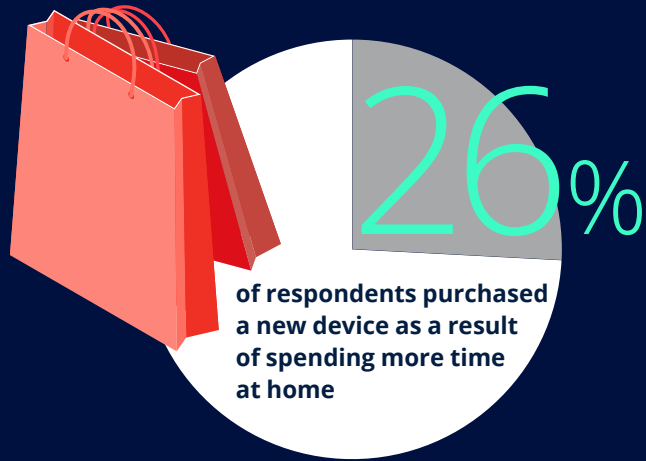


# ① Consumer snapshot



# Consumer snapshot

## Pandemic purchasing

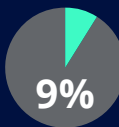


Laptop and smartphone purchases during COVID-19 were most likely upgrades, but smart TVs were clearly new additions to the smart entertainment set up.

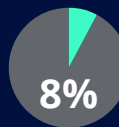
Do you have access to the following?



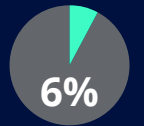
purchased a new **laptop**



purchased a new **smartphone**



purchased a new **television**



purchased a new **game console**



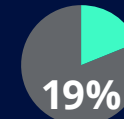
purchased a new **tablet**

## Telehealth

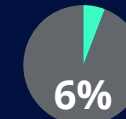


22%

of respondents have used more telehealth services since the beginning of lockdown



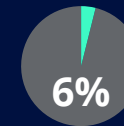
had a **phone appointment** with medical staff



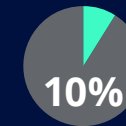
had a **video appointment** with medical staff

8%

of respondents said they will continue using telehealth services at heightened levels when the pandemic is over



of under 44s



of over 45s

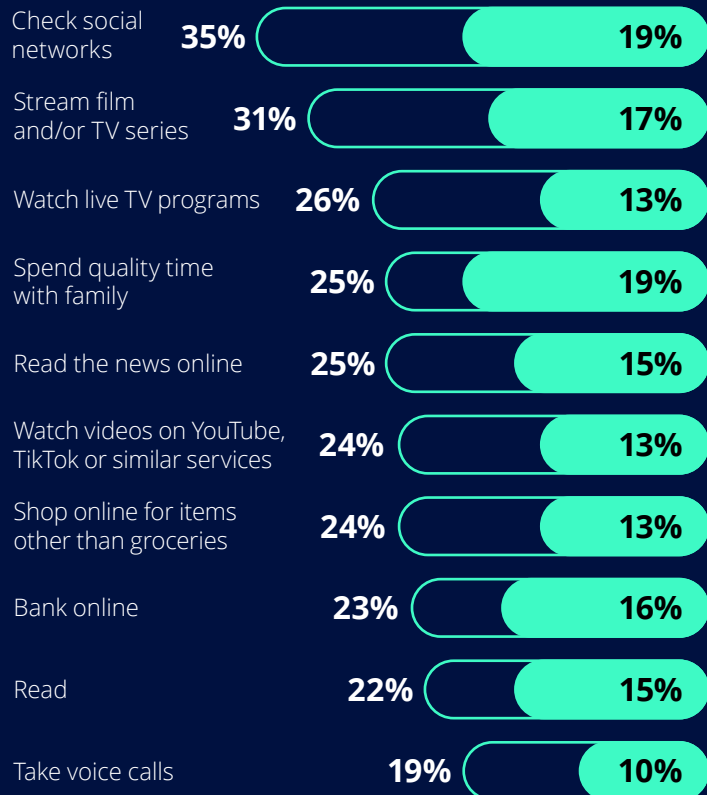


# Consumer snapshot

## Lockdown lifestyles

○ Increase in activity during lockdown

● Intention to continue after lockdown



52%



believe that their smartphone has helped them to feel less isolated during the pandemic

52%



have used their smartphone more during the pandemic

35%



have been checking social media networks more during the pandemic



Age in years

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-75
Purchased a new device as a result of lockdown	47%	38%	27%	20%	13%	13%

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-75
Increase in online banking activity during lockdown	21%	25%	26%	22%	19%	24%

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-75
Used a smartphone more during the COVID-19 pandemic	68%	67%	57%	45%	37%	34%

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-75
Used a smartphone to address feelings of isolation from family and friends during the pandemic	68%	64%	55%	43%	35%	42%

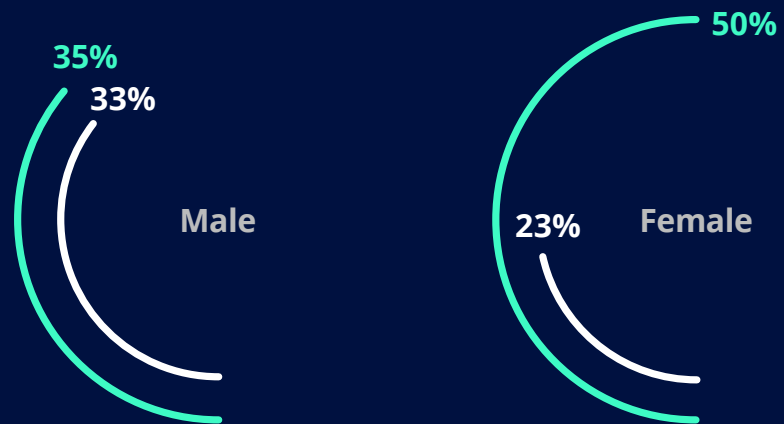
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-75
Found it more difficult to work from home during the coronavirus pandemic	37%	32%	29%	21%	24%	23%

# Consumer snapshot

## Working from home is working out

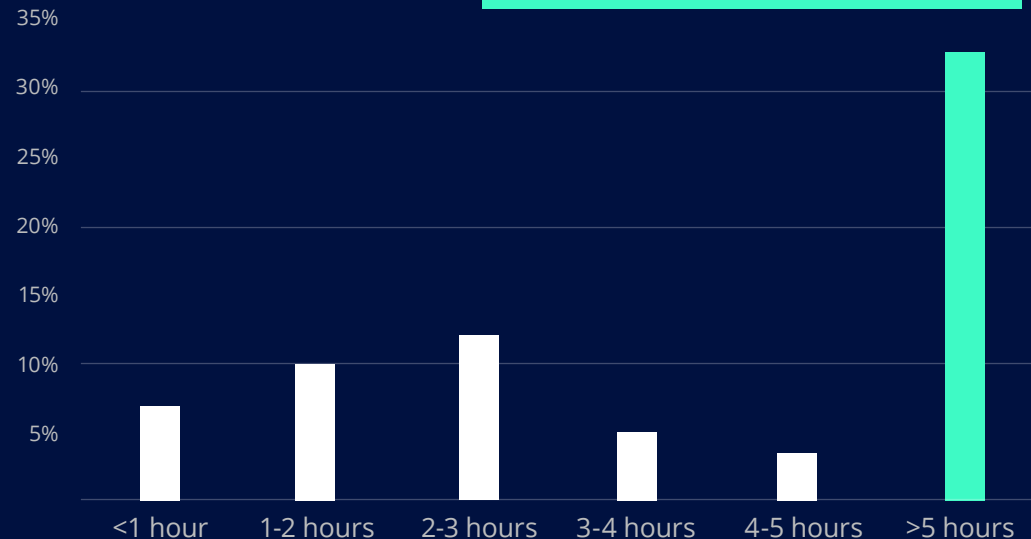
To what extent have you found it easy or difficult to work from home during the pandemic?

● Easier ● More difficult



45%  are able to work more flexibly

How much time do you save in a typical working week when you don't have to travel to meetings or commute to and from work?

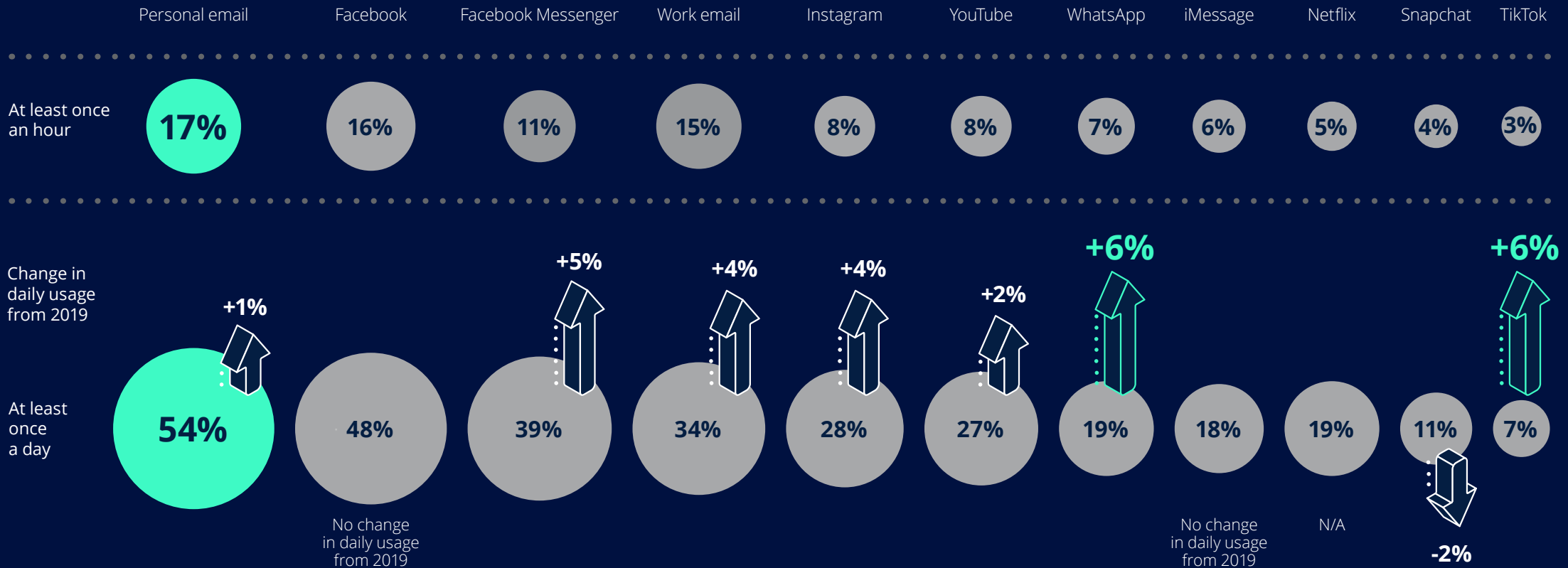


# Consumer snapshot



## Smartphone use

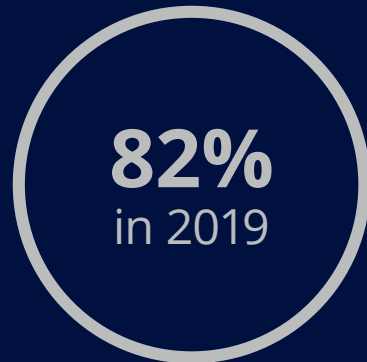
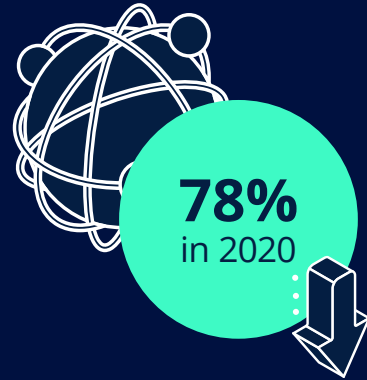
### Top apps used on smartphones



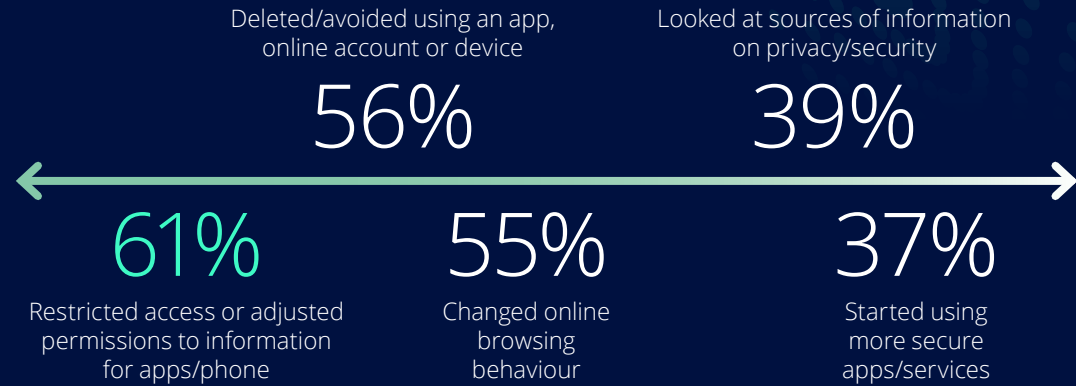


# Consumer snapshot

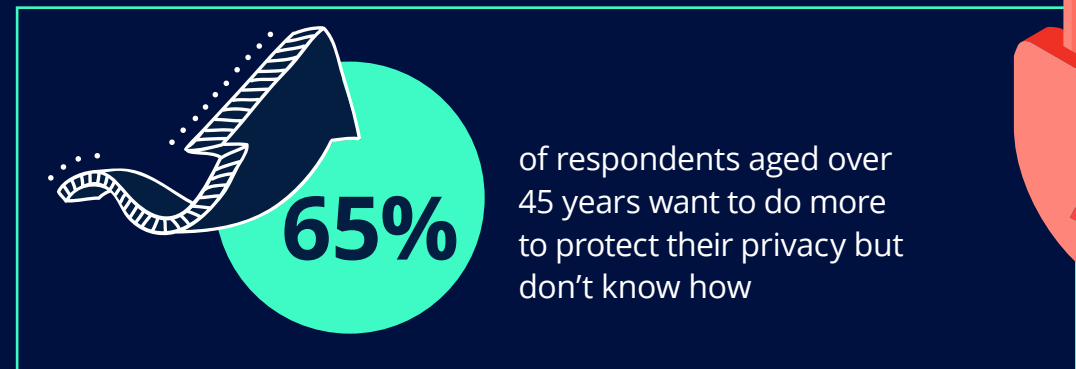
## The privacy paradox



Are concerned about how companies use their personal data



### Actions taken by respondents because they are worried about data privacy or security

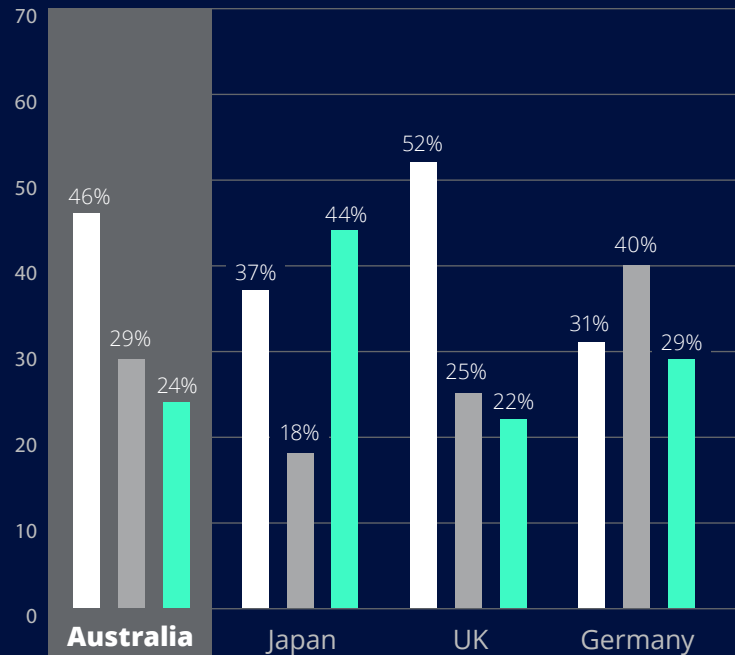


# Consumer snapshot

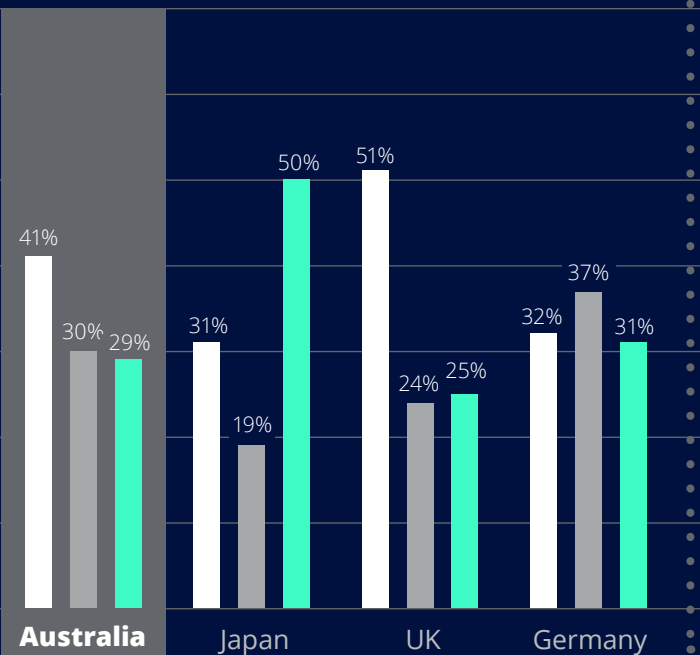


## Contact tracing – country comparison

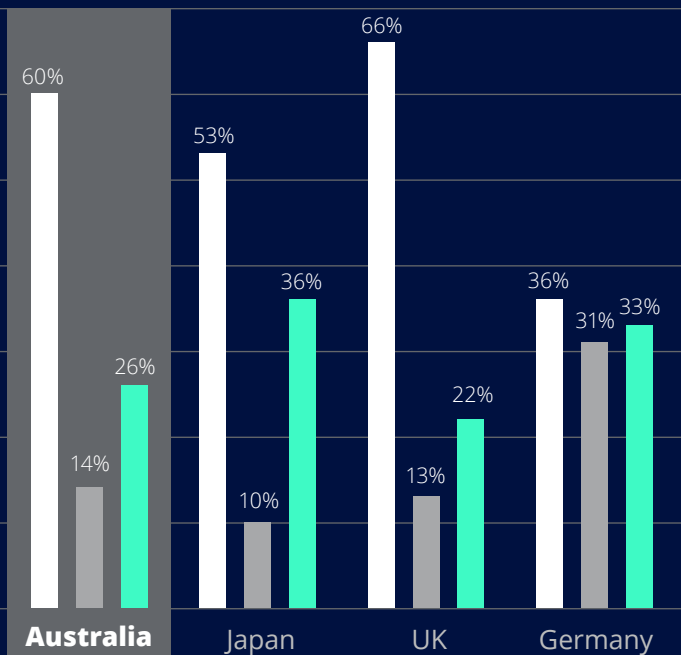
Using information generated by your smartphone or other devices (e.g. smart bracelets) to track your location and who you have been in contact with, so they can be automatically notified if you become infected



Using information generated by your smartphone or other devices (e.g. smart bracelets) to establish your level of risk in catching or spreading the virus, and restricting your movements accordingly



Using heat-sensitive cameras in well-populated areas to identify those with high temperatures and ensure quarantine rules are being followed



● Support ● Oppose ● No opinion

# Consumer snapshot

## Driving the need for 5G

61%

of respondents believe they do not know enough about 5G



56%

are not willing to pay any extra for 5G (57% in 2019)

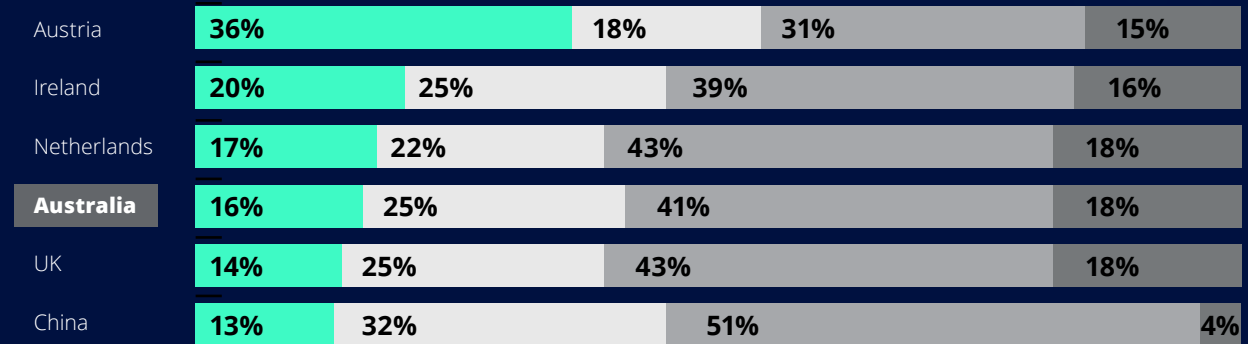
43%

believe they will have better connectivity if they move to 5G



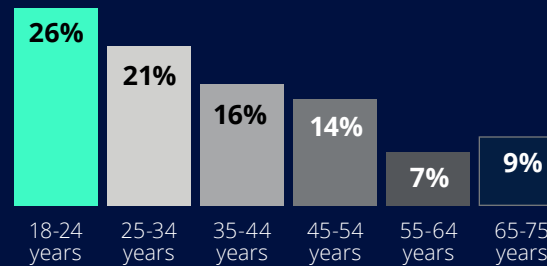
### Agreement with the statement:

"I believe there are health risks associated with 5G."

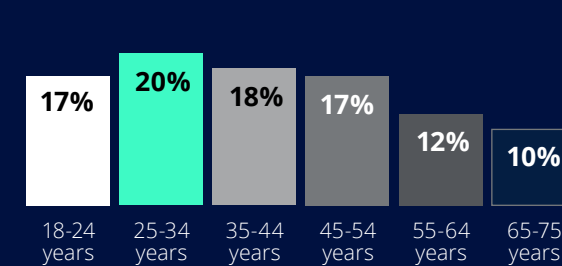


● Agree ● Neutral ● Disagree ● Don't know

### Those that would switch to 5G as soon as it became available in their region (by demographic)



### Believe there are health risks associated with 5G (by demographic)



## ② Pandemic purchasing

As Australia's economy plunges into its first recession in nearly 30 years, consumer spending has fallen too. However, our investment in devices is bucking the trend, highlighting just how integral they are to our lives.<sup>ii</sup>



# Pandemic purchasing

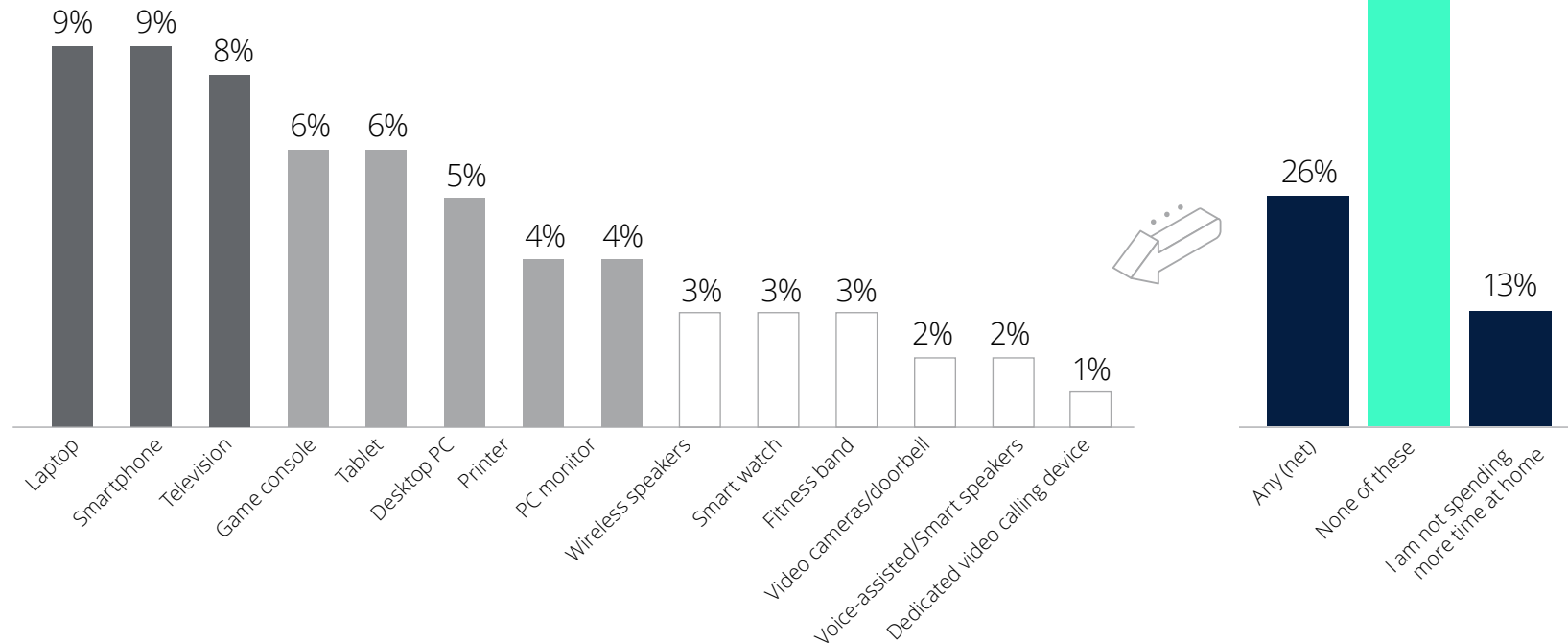
## Quick upgrade

Bare shelves and frustrated shoppers became a familiar sight as Australia's lockdown beckoned. While footage of panic buying in supermarkets dominated the nightly news, spending wasn't limited to the grocery aisle. Twenty-six percent of respondents picked up a new tech device as a direct result of being at home through the pandemic.

The biggest increase in one-off purchases were for laptops, smartphones and televisions, with close to 10% of respondents shelling out for these devices. Despite this, access to technology has remained stable year on year, with 92% of respondents having a smartphone (91% in 2019) and 79% having a laptop (79% in 2019). This suggests most of these pandemic purchases were upgrades, rather than new additions.

## Which, if any, of the following devices have you purchased as a result of spending more time at home because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Base: All respondents aged 18-75 years, 2020 (2,000)

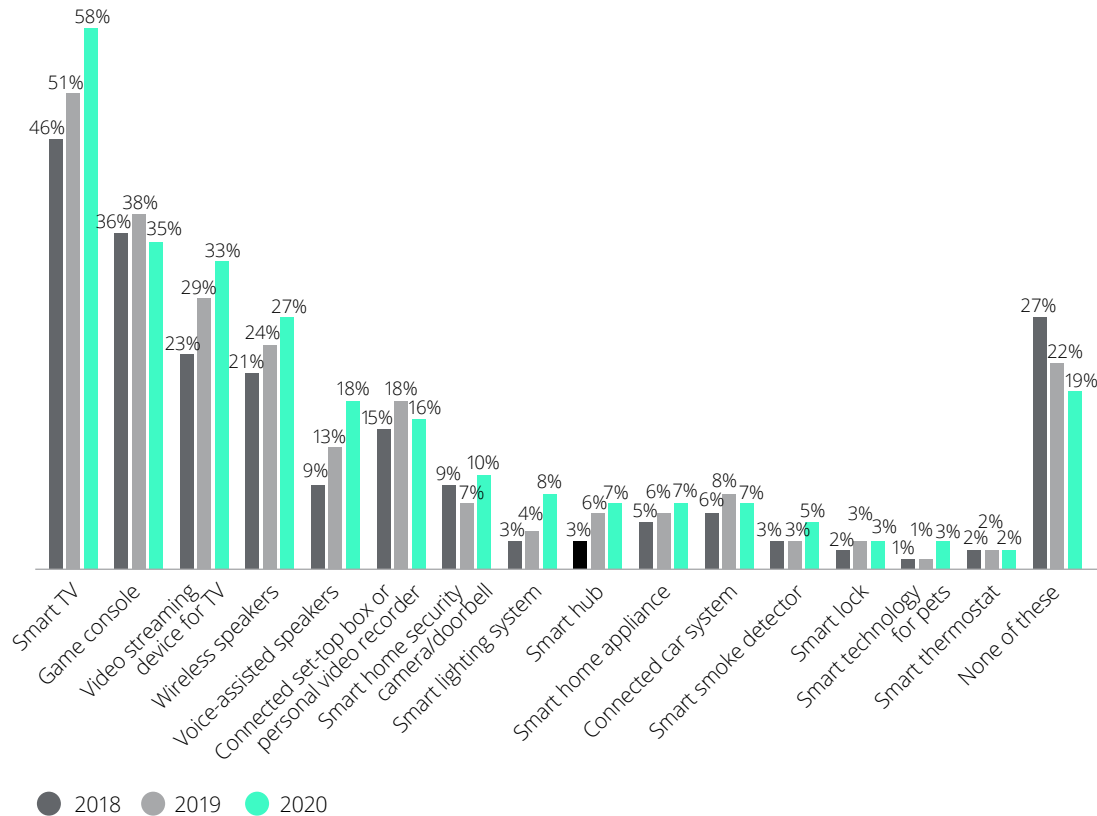


# Pandemic purchasing

## Switched on to smart TVs

Which, if any, of the following connected devices do you own or have ready access to?

Base: All respondents aged 18-75 years, 2018 (2,000), 2019 (2,000), 2020 (2,000)



More time at home has turned into more spending on the digital technology within it. **Eighty-one percent of survey respondents now have access to at least one connected device in their home, an increase from 78% in 2019.**

Entertainment-based purchasing has soared as consumers spend more time staying in, justifying increased investment on home entertainment experiences. Fifty-eight percent of respondents now have access to a smart TV, up from 51% this time last year. Other entertainment devices followed a similar trend, with the use of video streaming devices and wireless speakers (with no voice assistant) increasing 4% and 3% respectively when compared to the year prior.

Voice-assisted speakers continue to experience strong growth, with 18% of respondents now owning one compared to only 13% last year. Vendors are also pushing the boundaries of design and capability, as seen with the fourth-generation Amazon Echo's spherical shape and on-device recognition module, which provides faster responses.

81%

of survey respondents have access to **at least one** connected device in their home



# Pandemic purchasing

## The young and the restless

The majority of pandemic purchasing has been driven by three groups: students and young people, home workers, and technology enthusiasts.

Students and young people are driving a disproportionate amount of spending on devices. Forty-seven percent of people aged between 18-24 years purchased a new device, declining to 13% for those aged between 55-75.

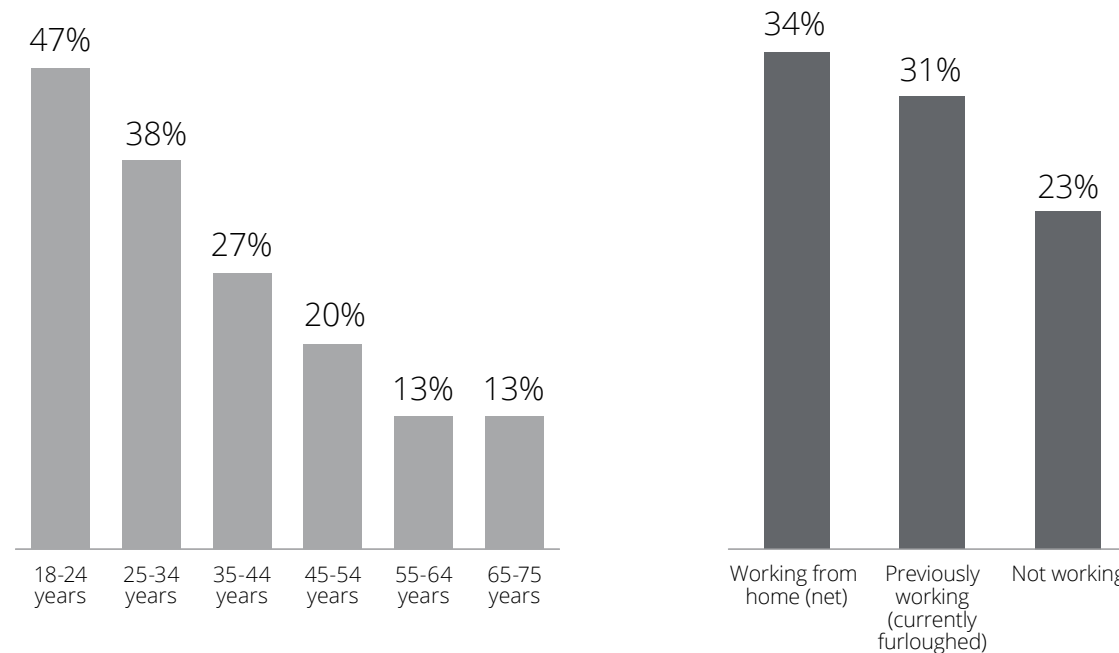
Employment is also a major factor in pandemic purchasing. Most respondents who purchased a digital device are working from home (34%) or furloughed due to lockdown restrictions (31%), compared to 23% who are not working at all.

Technology enthusiasts are also maintaining their high willingness to spend. Fifty-one percent of those who own a voice-assisted speaker, home hub or another connected home device purchased a new device as a result of the pandemic.

### What percentage of respondents purchased a new device as a result of spending more time at home through the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Base:** All respondents aged 18-75 years, 2020 (2,000)

**Devices include:** laptops, smartphones, televisions, game consoles, tablets, desktop PCs, printers, PC monitors, wireless speakers, smart watches, fitness bands, video cameras/doorbells, voice-assisted/smart speakers and dedicated video calling devices.



47%

of Australians aged between **18-24 years** have purchased a new device during the pandemic



### ③ Lockdown lifestyles

Locked down and living it up: Australians made the most of stay-at-home restrictions by flocking to entertainment. But it wasn't all fun and games. Digital has helped us stay connected – whether it's through social media with friends, keeping across the news or conferencing for work.



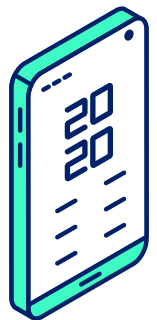


# Lockdown lifestyles

## Antidote to isolation

**Humans are social beings – but through lockdown, our connection with others was curtailed. A combination of boredom and loneliness through the pandemic has driven us to our smartphones as we seek new ways to reach out to others. While we might be socially distant, technology is proving we can still connect.**

More than half of us say we used our smartphones more during lockdown, primarily for communication or entertainment. Respondents spent more time checking social networks (35%), streaming films or TV series (31%) and watching live TV programs (26%).



## More than half

of us say we **used our smartphones more** during lockdown

The rise in the number of people using social media can be partly explained by lockdown. More than 50% of us believe our smartphones have made us feel less isolated, solidifying our connection with both the device itself and the social media platforms we access on it.

But clearly, our feelings towards smartphones are complicated. In the 2019 Mobile Consumer Survey, 60% of Australians said they wanted to limit their mobile phone use. While we appear to have compartmentalised our concerns about smartphone addiction, this may return with a vengeance after the pandemic.

## Bigger screens, collective experiences

**Each year, we ask users what their preferred device is for a range of activities. Over time, we have watched a trend towards smartphones, starting with younger age groups and working its way up through the demographics.**

At its heart, the smartphone is a personal and mobile device – which is why COVID-19 has tested its dominance. Locked up and lonely, have our behaviours shifted from the phone to larger, stationary screens?

Women prefer their smartphones for every activity except making online purchases. Men prefer a mix of devices, and this hasn't changed through the pandemic.

However, we have seen a shift in gaming, with Australians aged 25-34 switching their device preference to consoles this year. COVID-19 has driven an uptick in gaming purchases as we seek out experiences where we can escape reality.

Nintendo has seen sales of its Switch device and Animal Crossing simulation game soar through the pandemic.<sup>iii</sup> We expect next generation PlayStation and Xbox consoles to do well in a market that has found COVID-19 relief in the virtual world of video games.

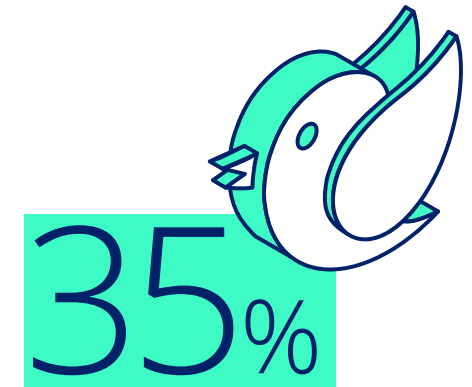
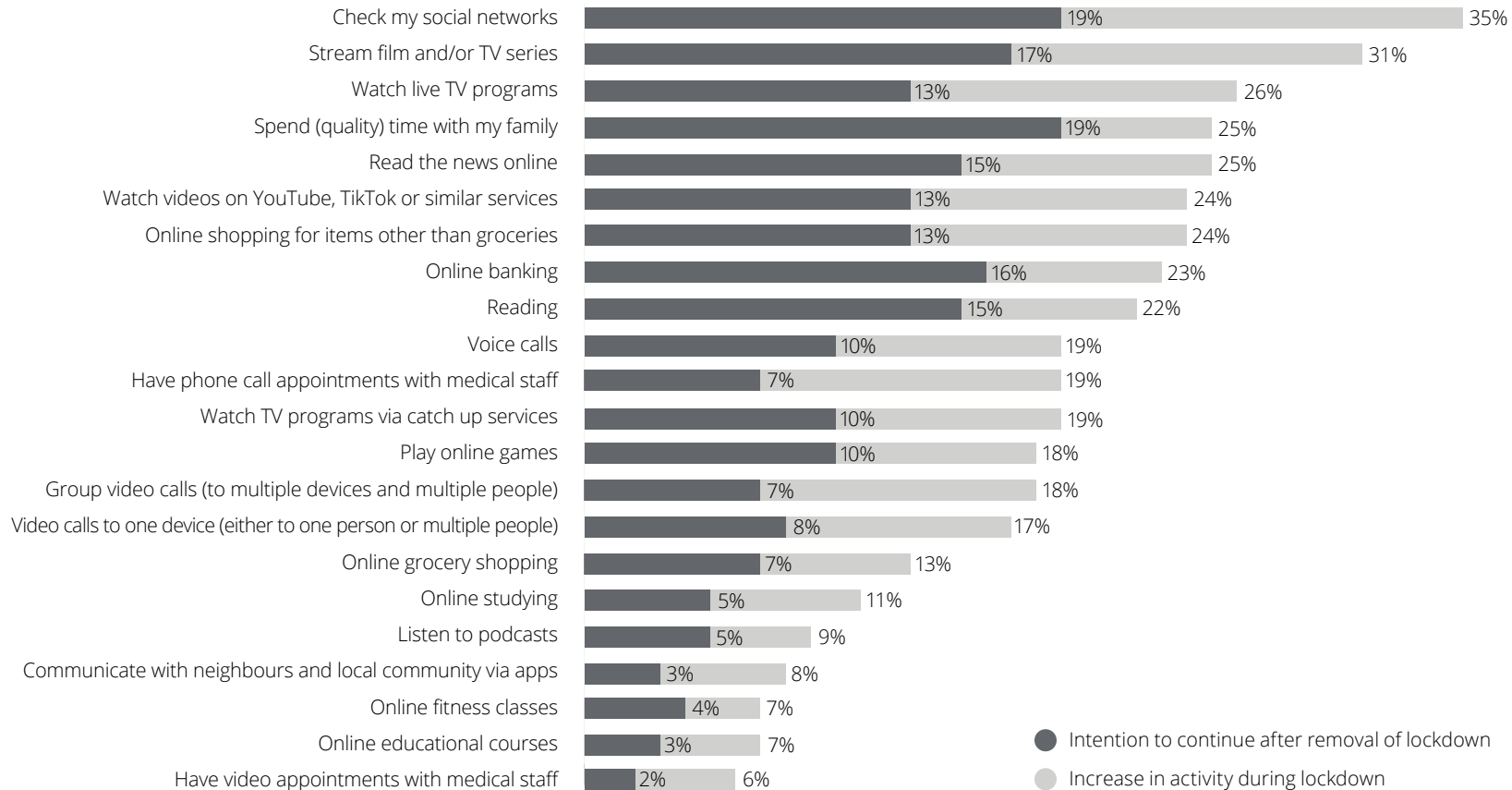
In addition, Australians aged 25-34 have switched to making online purchases on their laptops rather than smartphones, while TV has made a comeback as the preferred video streaming device for those aged 18-24. As our lives open up, we expect the smartphone to resume its ascent as our preferred device. But for the time being, bigger screens and collective experiences are having a revival.



# Lockdown lifestyles

## Which of the following activities have you increased as a result of staying at home through the COVID-19 pandemic?

Base: All respondents aged 18-75 years, 2020 (998)



35% of survey respondents are **checking their social networks more frequently** as a result of staying at home during lockdown



# Lockdown lifestyles



## Which, if any, is your preferred device for each of the following activities?

**Base:** All smartphone owners aged 18-75 in 2020, total (1,839), male (905), female (934), 18-24 (239), 25-34 (333), 35-44 (350), 45-54 (350), 55-64 (318), 65-75 (248)

Australia	Total	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-75
Browse shopping websites	Laptop	Laptop	Phone (was laptop)	Laptop	Phone	Phone	Laptop	Laptop	Computer
Make online purchases	Laptop	Laptop	Laptop	Laptop	Laptop (was phone)	Laptop	Laptop	Laptop (was computer)	Computer
Online search	Phone (was laptop)	Laptop	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Laptop	Laptop	Computer
Watch short videos	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone (was laptop)	Computer (was laptop)	Computer
Check bank balances	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone (was computer)	Computer
Video calls	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Laptop
Check social networks	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Computer
Read the news	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone (was laptop)	Computer
Play games	Phone	Gaming console	Phone	Phone	Phone/ Gaming console (was phone)	Phone	Phone	Tablet (was phone)	Computer
Voice calls using the Internet (VoIP)	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone
Take photos	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone
Record videos	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone	Phone
Stream films and/or TV series	TV	TV	TV	TV (was laptop)	TV	TV	TV	TV	TV
Watch TV programs via catch-up services	TV	TV	TV	TV	TV	TV	TV	TV	TV
Watch live TV	TV	TV	TV	TV	TV	TV	TV	TV	TV

# Lockdown lifestyles

## Hung up on a stream

**As the pandemic keeps us at home, we're seeking out more activities we can do together, with 25% of us spending more quality time with family. Streaming is emerging as a solution, as lockdown restrictions coincide with the golden age of TV content.**

There has been a 15% upswing in the number of video on-demand and music subscriptions in the past 12 months, with 55% of respondents having at least one paid video streaming service in their household.<sup>iv</sup> Disney+ is a noteworthy new entrant to the market.

Most of us are choosing to stream our favourite TV shows and films on the big screen – television – rather than on smaller devices. There was a 39% increase in the hours spent watching pay TV and movie streaming services during lockdown restrictions.<sup>v</sup>

We also expect gaming subscriptions to continue to rise in prominence. Unique offerings are likely to be tempting for consumers, such as Telstra's exclusive Xbox All Access subscription, which includes both next generation console hardware and a selection of games.

However, with stadiums shuttered and live events on ice, one genre we're streaming less of is live sport. Australia's sport consumption dropped over lockdown, from approximately six hours per week prior to COVID-19 to less than three hours during restrictions.<sup>vi</sup> Combined with more Australians streaming movies and TV through the lockdown period, it highlights that live sport, at least for now, isn't the major draw card for pay TV that it once was.

## Unique gaming offerings

are likely to be tempting for consumers, such as **Telstra's exclusive Xbox All Access subscription**



# Lockdown lifestyles

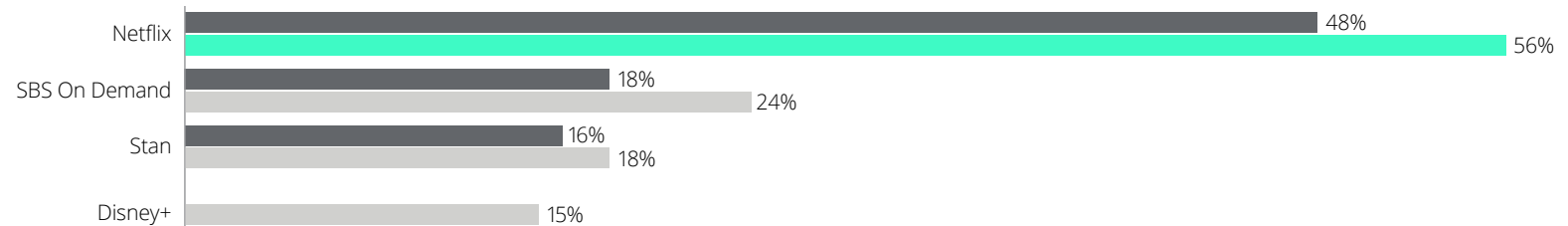


## Which, if any, of the following subscription services do you have access to?

Base: All respondents aged 18-75 years, 2019 (2,000), 2020 (2,000)

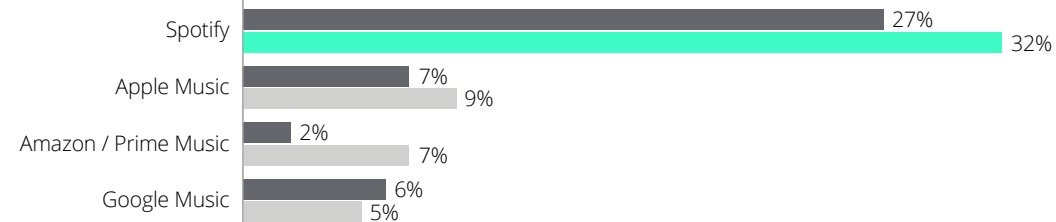
### Video on-demand

71% in 2020  
62% in 2019



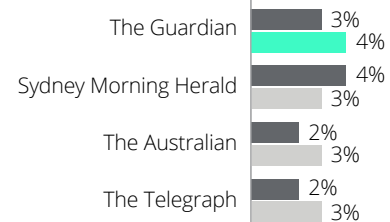
### Music streaming

42% in 2020  
36% in 2019



### Newspapers/magazines

19% in 2020  
16% in 2019



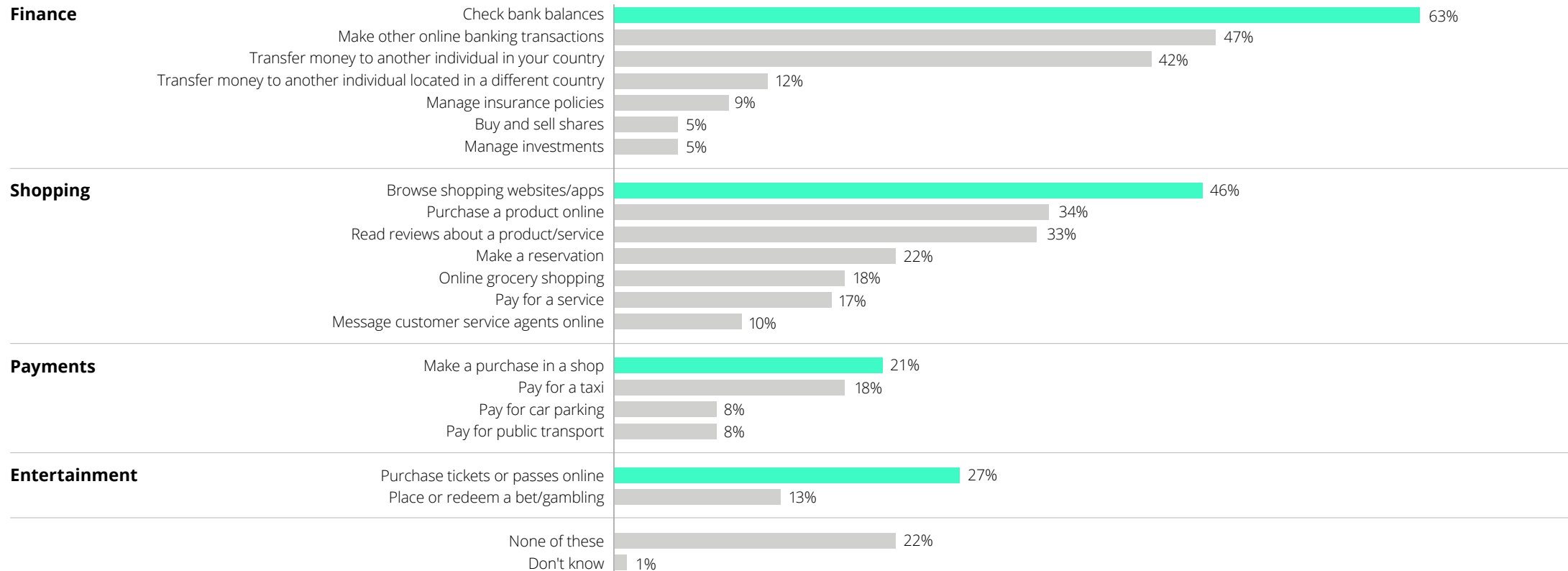
● 2019  
● 2020

# Lockdown lifestyles

## Old dogs, new tricks

Below is a list of activities that you may do on your mobile phone. Which, if any, do you do regularly?

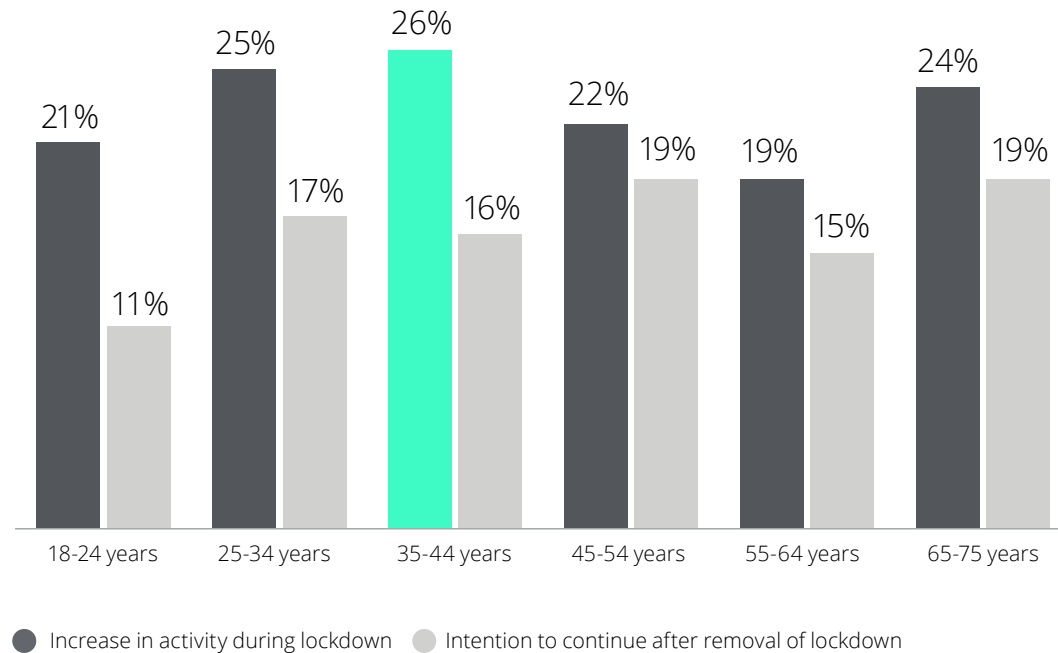
Base: All respondents aged 18-75 years who have a phone or smartphone, 2020 (954)



# Lockdown lifestyles

## Have you done more online banking as a result of staying home during the COVID-19 pandemic? Will you continue to do online banking as frequently as you do now, once social distancing restrictions are lifted?

Base: All respondents aged 18-75 years, 2020 (998)



**The way we pay has changed – and the pandemic has accelerated this shift. At the counter, more Australians are swiping or tapping to pay, with handling cash seen as an activity fraught with risk. ATM withdrawals in April were down 30% compared to March and down 40% from the prior year.<sup>vii</sup>**

This has also translated into more Australians accessing banking services on smartphones, with 63% of respondents regularly checking their bank balances. Specifically, older generations (55+ years) are embracing the push towards online banking, with 80% of those who increased their use of online banking through lockdown intending to continue once it's over.

As we try to keep our distance through the pandemic, more Australians are logging on to shop. During lockdown, 24% of respondents said they spent more time buying non-grocery items online, with 55% stating this behavioural

shift is permanent. Laptops have taken over as the dominant device for online purchases, as we perhaps squeeze in a quick shop between video calls. But 46% of respondents are also using smartphones to regularly browse shopping websites and apps, with 34% regularly purchasing a product via their mobiles.

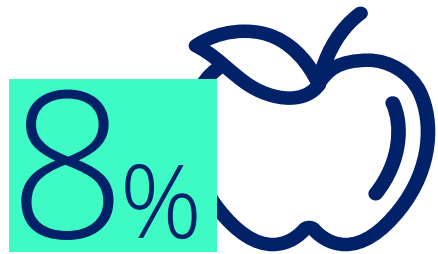
The pandemic has not only made Australians more comfortable with online shopping but could pave the way for digital interactions to become our default. Physical sales and service channels aren't going anywhere soon – but their role in the customer journey could be reimagined.



# Lockdown lifestyles

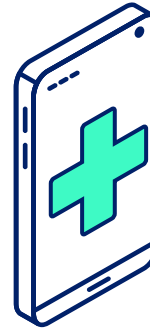
## Telehealth – a supplement?

**Necessity is the mother of invention – and it’s taken a public health crisis to push telehealth into the limelight. A surge in virtual appointments, digital scripts and online health classes has been born out of requirement, but are these activities here to stay?**



Even when the pandemic is over, older demographics (55+ years) are more likely to continue using telehealth services at the same frequency as they have throughout it. However, only 8% of Australians across all age groups would be willing to use telehealth services at these elevated pandemic levels once life returns to near normality. So, what’s holding us back?

Most of this reticence is driven by the limitations of the service. It is estimated only 40% of consultations can be done appropriately over telehealth, with many providers not having access to the right infrastructure.<sup>viii</sup> The pandemic has driven a need for investment in this technology to provide a seamless experience. Once these teething issues improve, it is likely consumer interest in telehealth will too, particularly the emergence of subscription services for direct-to-home delivery of medications.<sup>ix</sup>



of respondents have **utilised telehealth services more** since the beginning of lockdown





## ④ Working from home is working out

No longer a luxury or work perk – working from home has become the norm for many Australians as the pandemic closed offices around the country. While mainly a white-collar trend, the normalisation of the home office could be a turning point for the way we use technology at work.



# Working from home is working out

## Home is where the heart is

While it was once a recruitment drawcard for start-ups and tech companies, working from home has been adopted en masse through the pandemic. Thirty-seven percent of working Australian survey respondents are now working from home.

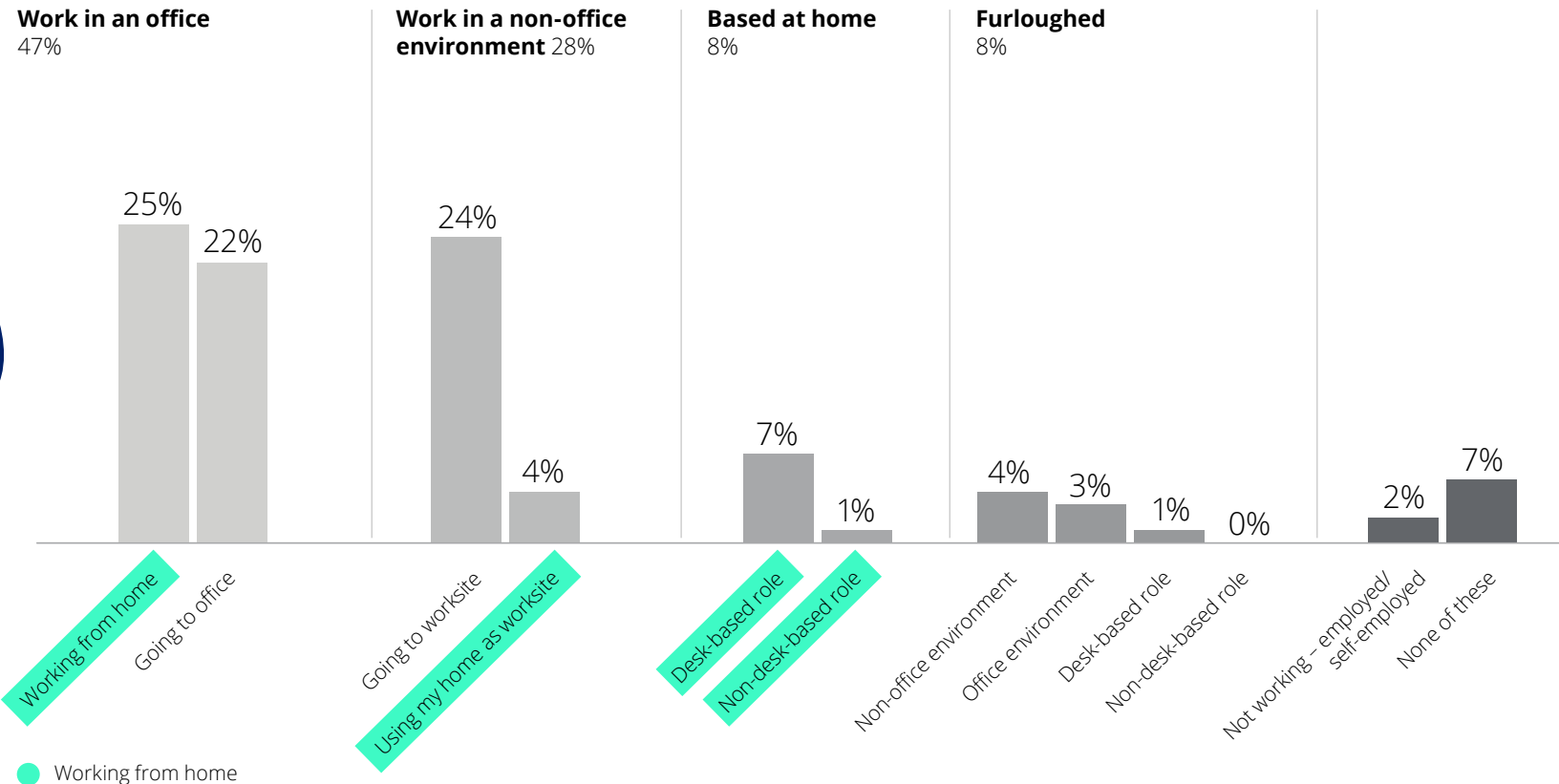
**37%**

of working Australian survey respondents are **now working from home**



### Which of the following best describes your work situation?

Base: All adults 18-75 years who are working



# Working from home is working out

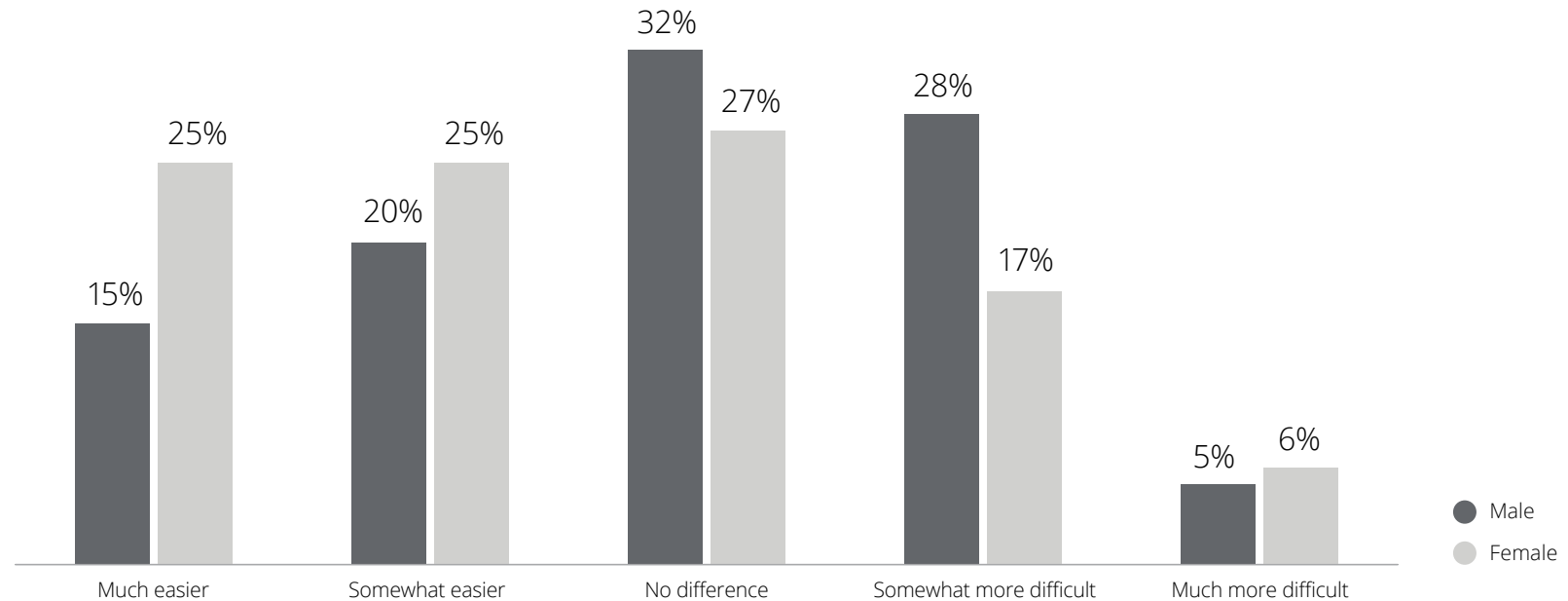
## Wonder women

Not all of us are enjoying the change. Some home workers are feeling disconnected from colleagues, struggling to maintain productivity without the tools available in the workplace or finding it hard to balance their home and work responsibilities. But overall, most of us are feeling positive about the shift, with more survey respondents finding the experience of working from home easier (41%) than harder (28%) to manage.

There is one clear trend in the data: female respondents appear to have an easier working from home experience (50%) than their male counterparts (35%). It not only suggests they may be more adept at the art of flexible working, but could be more likely to continue it after the pandemic too.

### Compared to being at work, to what extent have you found it easy or difficult to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, or has it made no difference?

Base: All adults 18-75 years who are working from home



# Working from home is working out

## Commuter relief

Whether it's more time spent with the kids or fitting in a quick surf before the workday starts, 45% of us say working from home is providing greater flexibility.

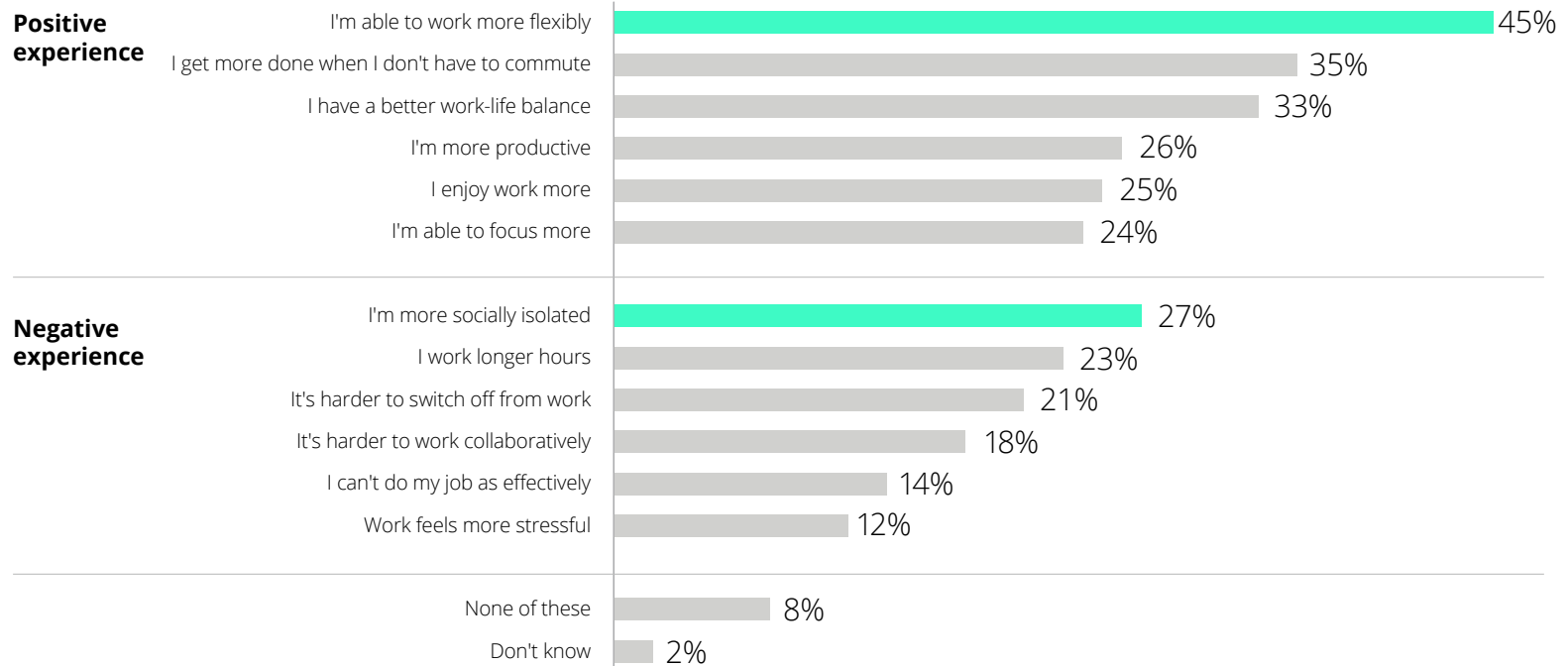
It's also improving our perception of our jobs overall. Twice as many respondents say they enjoy work more as a result of working from home, compared to those who find it more stressful.

The other big lifestyle improvement comes from ditching the commute to the office. More than 90% of Australians are benefitting from reduced travel needs, with a third gaining nearly a whole productive day back per week.

But for some of us, the time saved from the commute is simply feeding back into our working hours. Twenty-three percent of respondents spend more time working as a result of working from home. As our work and home lives blend together, getting off the clock is no longer as easy as stepping out of the office.

## On balance, which, if any, of the following statements apply to you?

Base: All adults 18-75 years who work from home at least once a month

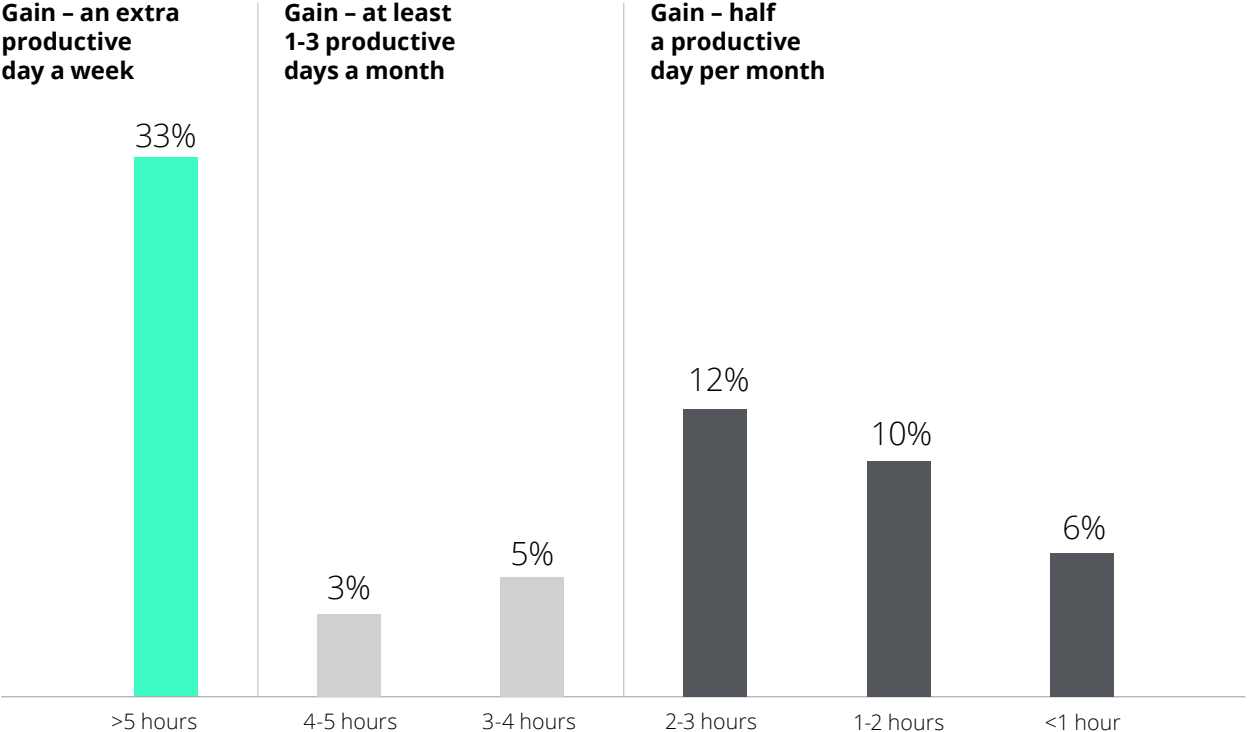


# Working from home is working out



**On average, how much time do you save in a typical working week when you don't have to travel to meetings or commute?**

**Base:** All adults 18-75 who ever work from home



**341** mins  
is saved per **working week**  
on average

# Working from home is working out

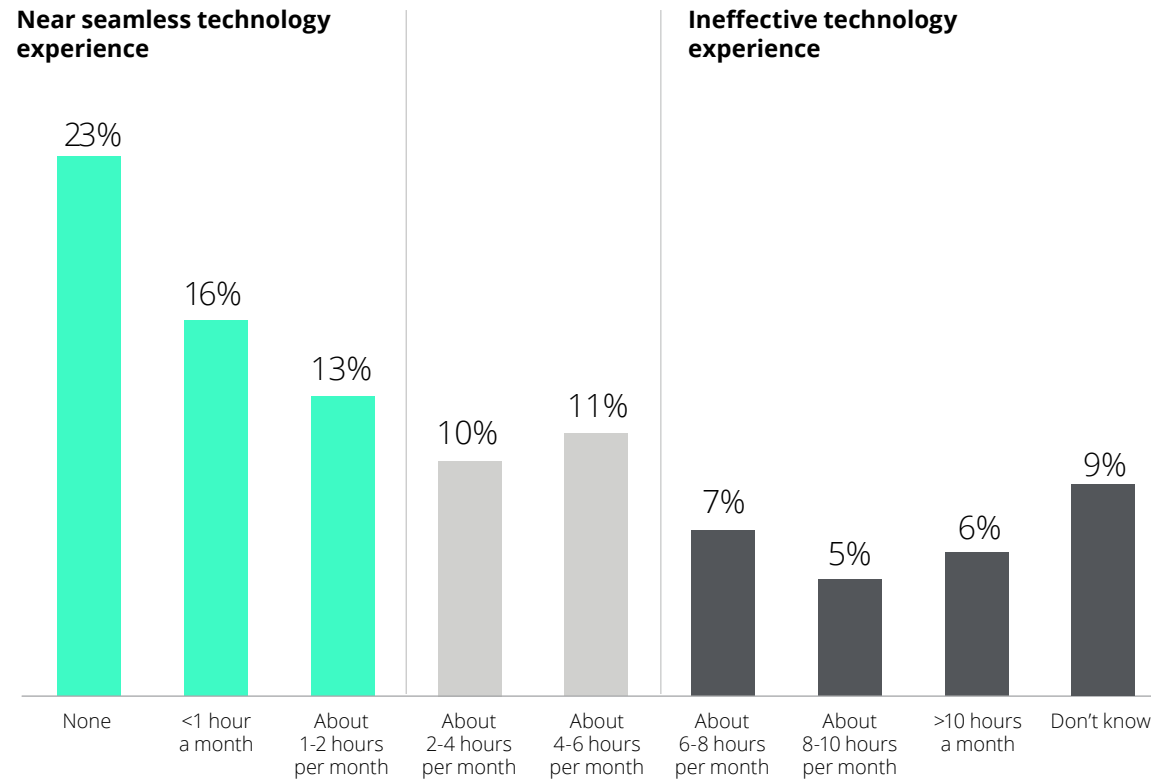
## Tech in check

The small silver lining in this pandemic is its timing. Today, the technology exists to virtualise white-collar office environments. And while it has taken a huge mindset shift from the workforce to make it happen successfully, the technology underpinning it appears to be holding up. More than half of Australians who work from home have had an almost seamless experience from a technology perspective.

But it hasn't been smooth sailing for all respondents – one in five said they lose a productive day a month due to ineffective tech. And without access to the office, technology issues can be hard to remedy.

### When working from home, approximately how many hours per month are wasted because technology is not working effectively?

Base: All adults 18-75 years who work from home at least once a month



# Working from home is working out

Access to either the right equipment or required documents make up two of the most commonly cited tech troubles. Nineteen percent of respondents said they need a larger computer monitor and 11% have been unable to obtain the files they need for work.

While, 'You're on mute' could well be 2020's phrase of the year, virtual meeting technology has largely gotten the thumbs up from Australians, with only 7% of users citing problems with calls dropping. If anything – it's working too well. Nineteen percent of respondents said the effectiveness of virtual meetings was impeded by spending too much time on calls.

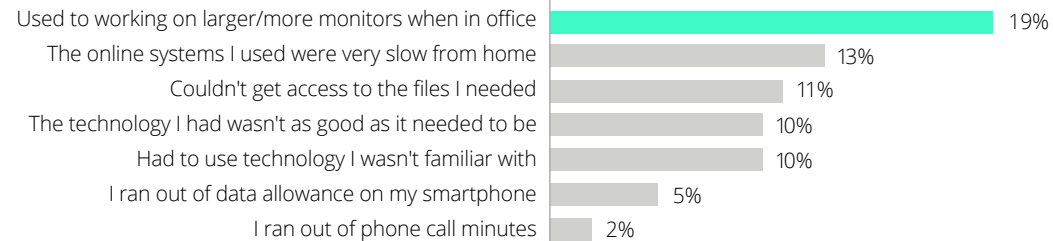
Despite the rave reviews, it's not quite a replacement for the water cooler. Twenty-three percent of respondents are finding the lack of face-to-face conversations in their workday hard to manage. Virtual meetings are certainly emerging as a tool for better workplace experiences, but clearly there is room for improvement.

## Which of the following applied to you while working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Base: All adults 18-75 years who ever work from home

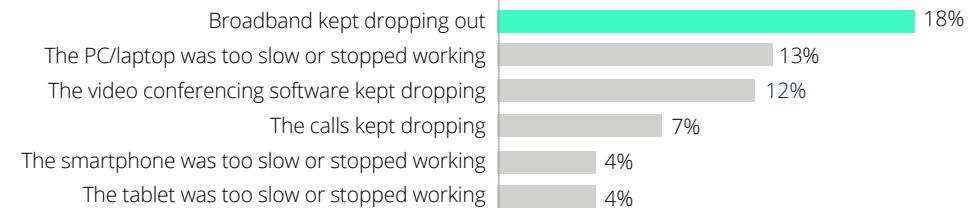
### Access to tech

42%



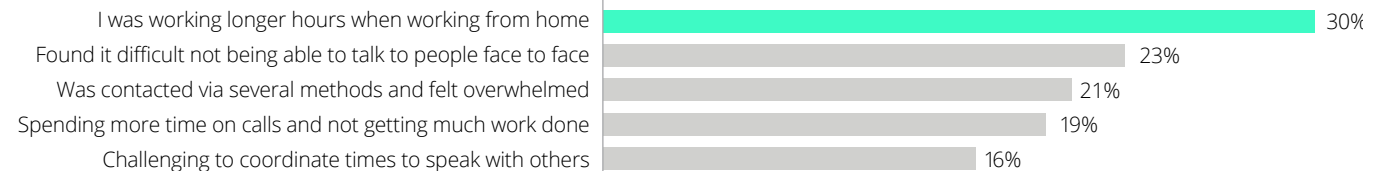
### Tech reliability

37%



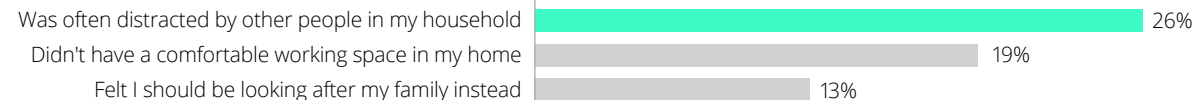
### Effectiveness

62%



### Environment

44%



# Working from home is working out

## Blurred lines

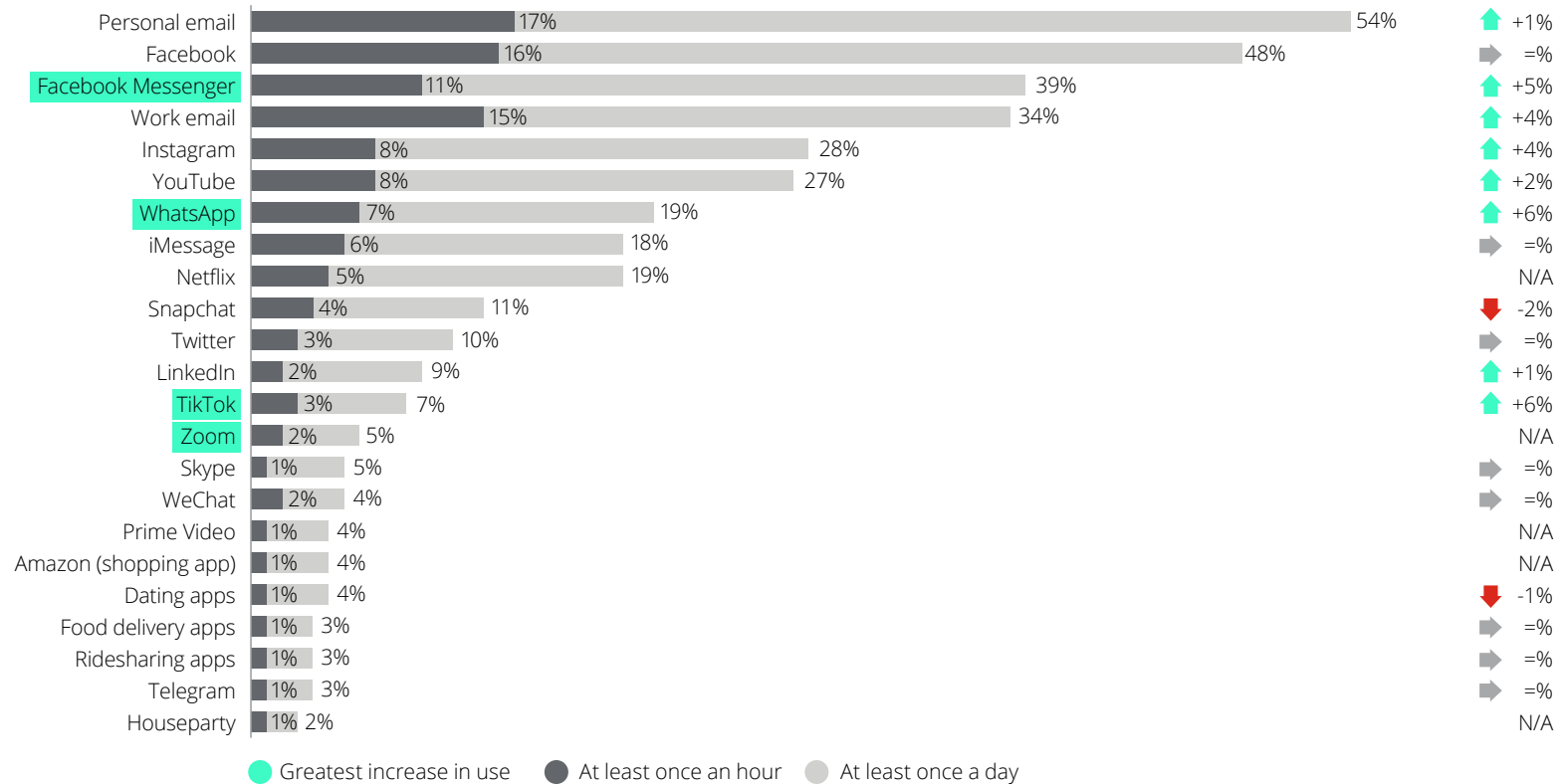
As the barriers between work and home erode, so have the lines between work and play on our smartphones. Australians are using productivity tools, connecting on social media (increasingly WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and TikTok) and even streaming TV, all on this singular device.

The use of Zoom has increased through the pandemic from an almost non-existent base, with 7% of us now using it daily. Equally, using our smartphone for email has become mainstream across Australia. Messaging apps are being used more frequently and it is likely this usage is no longer strictly personal, such as using WhatsApp for work-related chat.

We're using our smartphones for even more recreational activities, including viewing short videos, reading the news and streaming music. With back-to-back video calls on the agenda for most home workers, regular checks of Twitter or TikTok may be serving to break the monotony.

## How often, if at all, do you use each of these apps on your mobile phone?

Base: All respondents who have access to a smartphone, 2019/2020 (1,826/1,830)



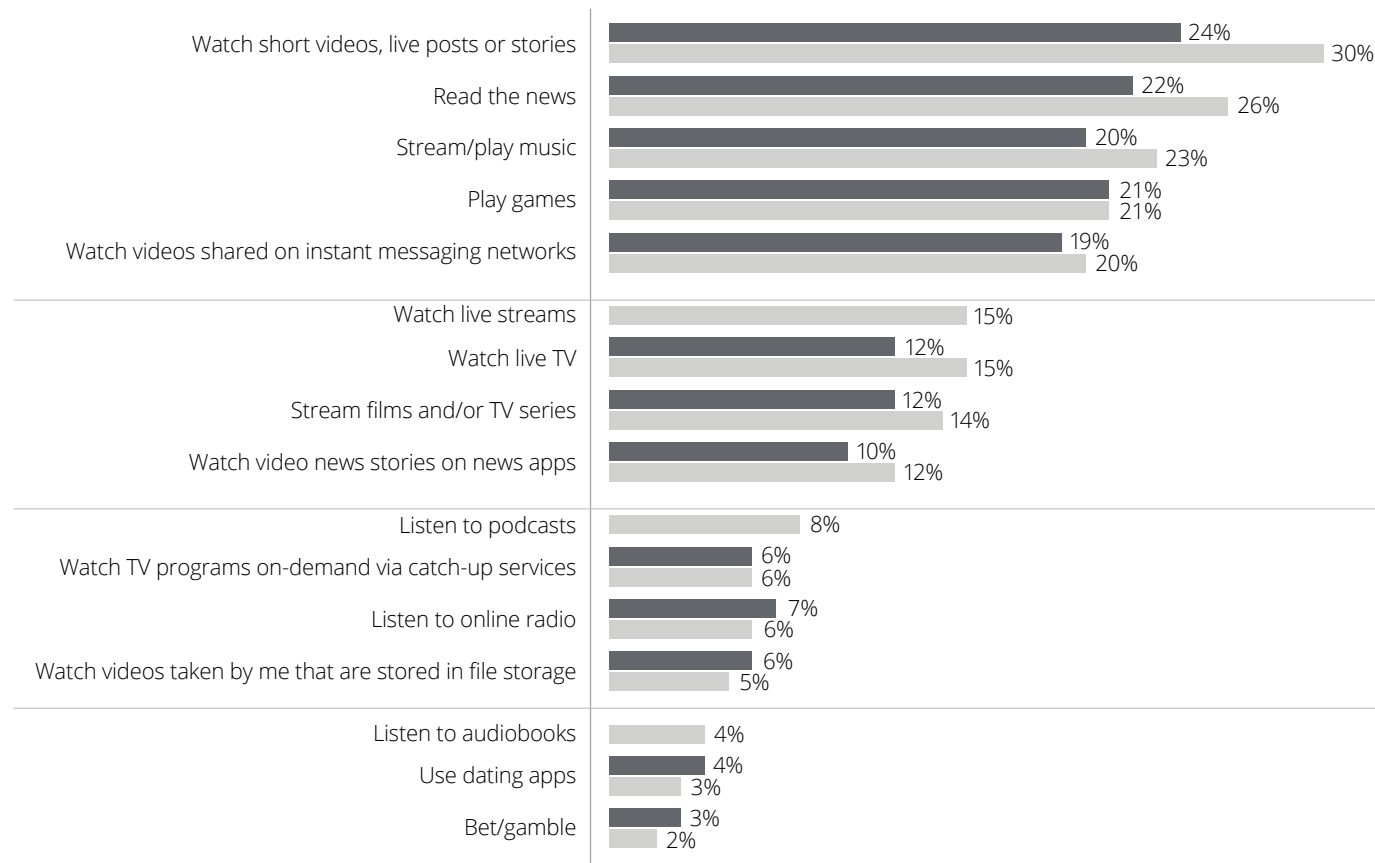


# Working from home is working out



## Which activities do you do daily on your mobile phone?

Base: All smartphone owners aged 18-75 years, 2019 (1,826), 2020 (1,830)

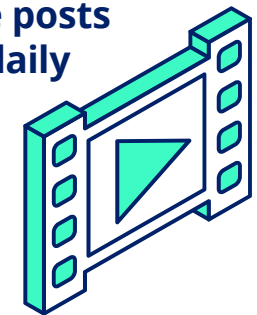


## What activities have you ever done on your mobile phone?

Activity	2019	2020
Watch short videos, live posts or stories	70%	74%
Read the news	57%	63%
Stream/play music	57%	63%
Play games	54%	54%
Watch videos shared on instant messaging networks	54%	67%
Watch live streams	62%	58%
Watch live TV	N/A	41%
Stream films and/or TV series	37%	48%
Watch video news stories on news apps	43%	49%
Listen to podcasts	45%	41%
Watch TV programs on-demand via catch-up services	N/A	42%
Listen to online radio	38%	31%
Watch videos taken by me that are stored in file storage	32%	43%
Listen to audiobooks	42%	24%
Use dating apps	N/A	15%
Bet/gamble	15%	23%

30%

of Australians are  
**watching short  
videos, live posts  
or stories daily**



● 2019  
● 2020

## ⑤ The privacy paradox

Contact tracing apps, QR codes and temperature checks – technology is helping us stay one step ahead in the fight against COVID-19. But it's coming at a cost to privacy. While right now, Australians see the greater good in using their personal data for health outcomes, this collectivist impulse is unlikely to outlive the crisis.



# The privacy paradox

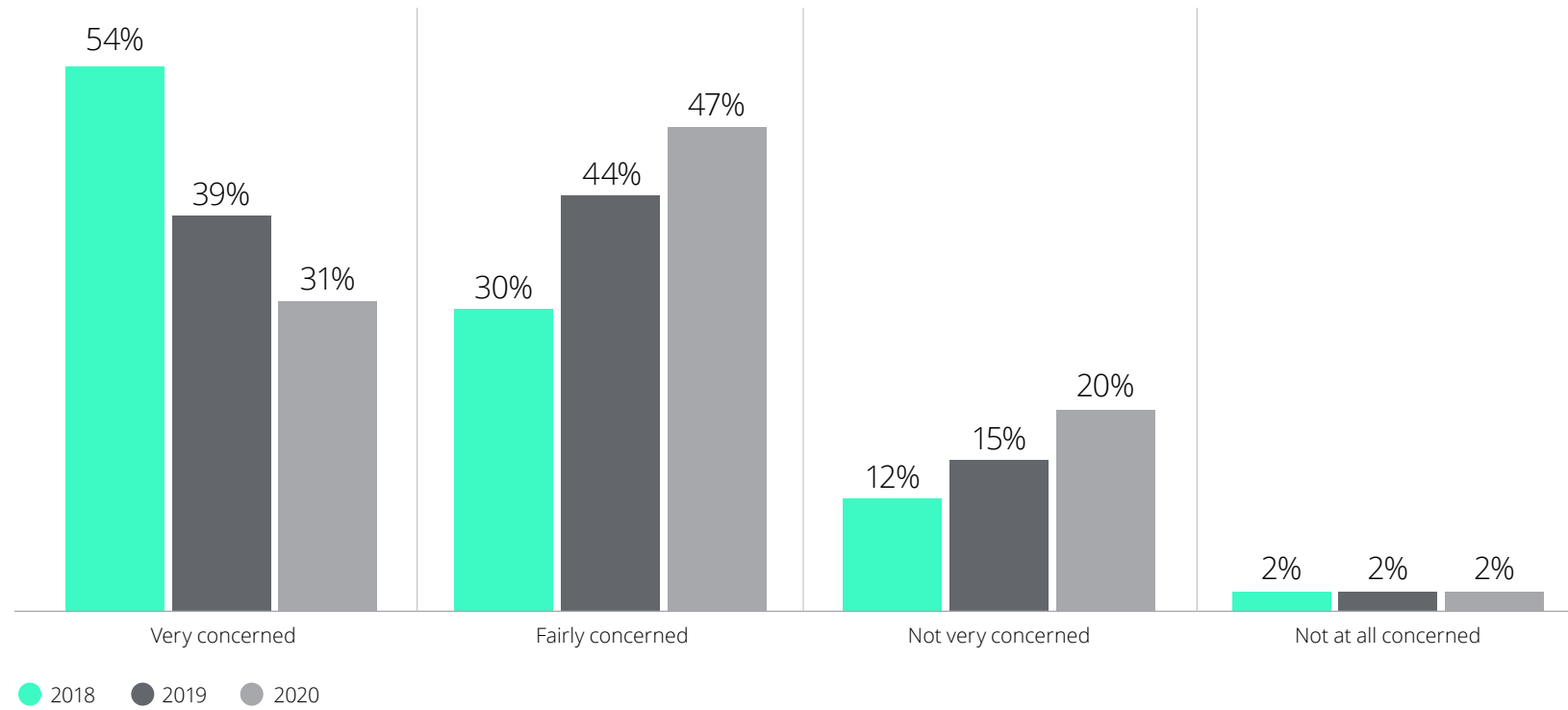
## Reluctant acceptance

Australians are more aware of privacy than ever. Eighty percent of us believe the companies we interact with use our data. One in five Australians have discussed concerns over data privacy and security on smartphones with friends and family.

But while we know about the issues surrounding the use of personal data, we're not overly concerned. Only 31% of respondents were significantly worried about the use of personal data by companies they interact with online, a decline from 54% in 2018.

### To what extent, if at all, would you say you are concerned about how companies you interact with online use your personal data?

Base: All adults aged 18-75 years who think companies use or share their personal data (half sample).



# The privacy paradox

## Powerless to the platforms

**We may be less concerned with how our data is used, but we're proactive about protecting it from breaches and attacks – especially as we spend more of our time online through the pandemic. During lockdown, Australians relied on platforms to stay connected, entertained and productive. But 56% of us would still close or avoid using a company's app, online account or device if we were worried about data privacy or security.**

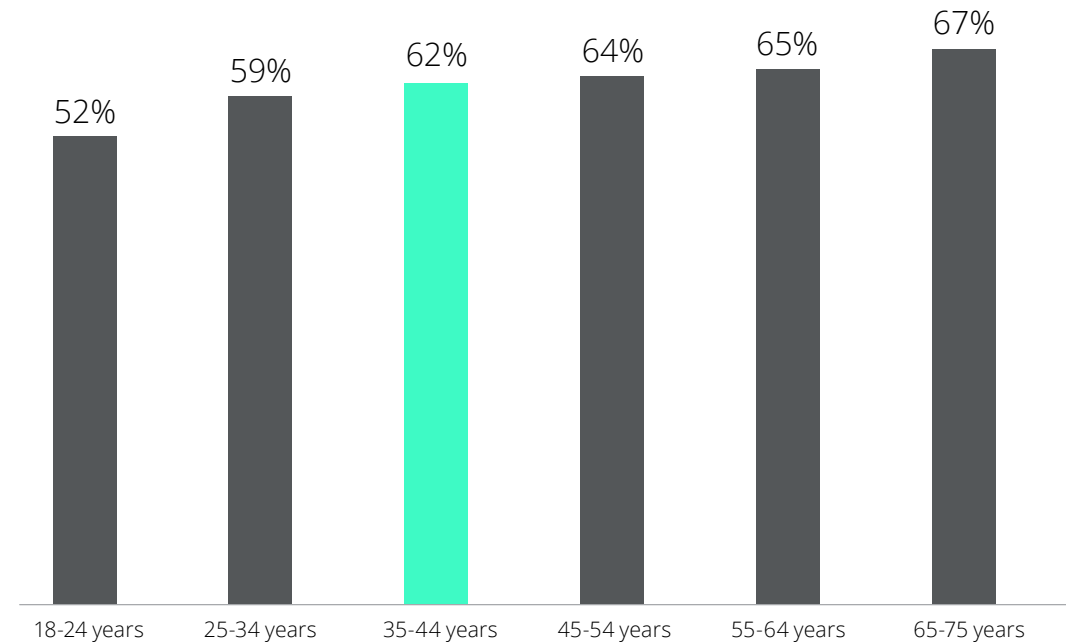
Young Australians (aged 18-24 years) feel the most empowered to protect their data privacy, with 87% reporting that they had taken at least one action to do so, such as avoiding the use of an account. Perhaps due to this greater sense of control, young Australians are twice as likely as those aged over 45 to strongly agree that the benefits of sharing their data with companies trump any privacy concerns.

Approximately two-thirds of Australians aged over 45 years want to do more to protect their privacy but don't know how. Lower digital fluency amongst older Australians is likely to be driving this sense of powerlessness. Australians aged 65-75 years have consistently reported some of the highest levels of concern regarding their data privacy since 2019.

Despite the increased use of online services through COVID-19, almost half of Australians aged 45-75 years still believe their data privacy concerns outweigh any potential benefits from interacting with companies online. While older Australians might find online engagement convenient, brands still have more to do to gain their trust. By empowering this group to choose how much of their data is collected and used by companies, they'll be more comfortable interacting online – and experience the benefits of doing so.

## Agreement with the statement: I would like to restrict the use of my data when I use online services, but I don't know how

**Base:** All adults aged 18-75 years (half sample).



# The privacy paradox

## Data for the greater good

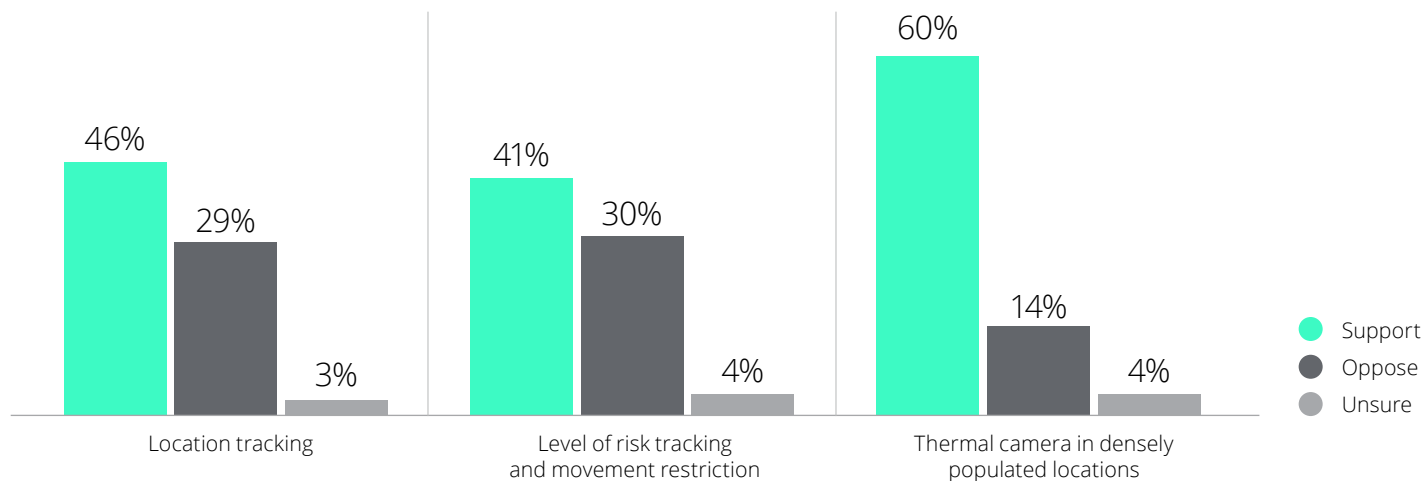
While privacy is usually seen as a right, there has been a shift through the pandemic. This view, that prioritising privacy over public health outcomes is selfish, has driven tacit approval for activities like location tracking.<sup>x</sup> Sixty percent of Australians support the installation of thermal cameras in densely populated public places, and nearly half of us support government-organised location tracking if it means a lift in restrictions.

While this seems like good news for the uptake of COVIDSafe, the Federal Government's contact tracing app, only six million Australians had downloaded it as of June 2020, representing 35% of our relevant\* population.<sup>xi</sup> When COVIDSafe was released, the media buzz around it centred on privacy concerns: what data it collected, who could access it and how it would be used.<sup>xii</sup> These privacy concerns weighed heavily on a public well aware of the importance of data privacy.

\* 'Relevant population' refers to Australians aged 18-75 with access to a smartphone.

## To what extent would you support or oppose the government's use of technology and surveillance if it meant government restrictions could be lifted?

Base: All adults aged 18-75 years.



Only 30% of us think the government should be able to monitor personal health data without our permission for the purpose of lifting restrictions more quickly.

The pandemic has changed the way many Australians think about the role of government in our personal lives and our health. Though some

of us are – in this moment – willing to sacrifice privacy for greater public health outcomes, many are not. While there will be many lasting impacts stemming from the pandemic, broader support of the government tracking our health and location data is unlikely to be one of them.



## ⑥ Driving the need for 5G

Pandemic conspiracy theories, a dip in consumer confidence and changes in network infrastructure priorities have hampered the rollout and uptake of 5G. But as digital connection becomes even more important to Australians, we anticipate a turn in the tide.



# Driving the need for 5G

## No great expectations

With the buzz surrounding its launch, 2019 became known as the 'Year of 5G' in Australia and abroad. But in the year that followed, demand has been modest with only 6% of respondents using a 5G service. Younger Australians are driving this interest, with 63% of users between the ages of 18-34.

General attitudes towards 5G remain cautious. Only 15% of respondents say they are willing to switch as soon as 5G becomes available in their region. Most respondents are ambivalent or uninterested; 31% would probably switch eventually, and 19% only when 5G was the standard offering and there was no alternative.

This may be driven by the general public's poor understanding of the technology with 61% of respondents saying they do not know enough about 5G. A lack of knowledge is also likely to be a primary driver behind consumers' lack of interest in paying more for 5G services (56% this year and relatively unchanged from 57% in 2019).

It points to a huge opportunity for networks to engage Australians and highlight the benefits of 5G to their lives – particularly at a time when digital connection has never been more important. While the majority of consumers know little about 5G, 43% believe it provides better mobile connectivity. Capitalising on this feature could be key to its uptake.

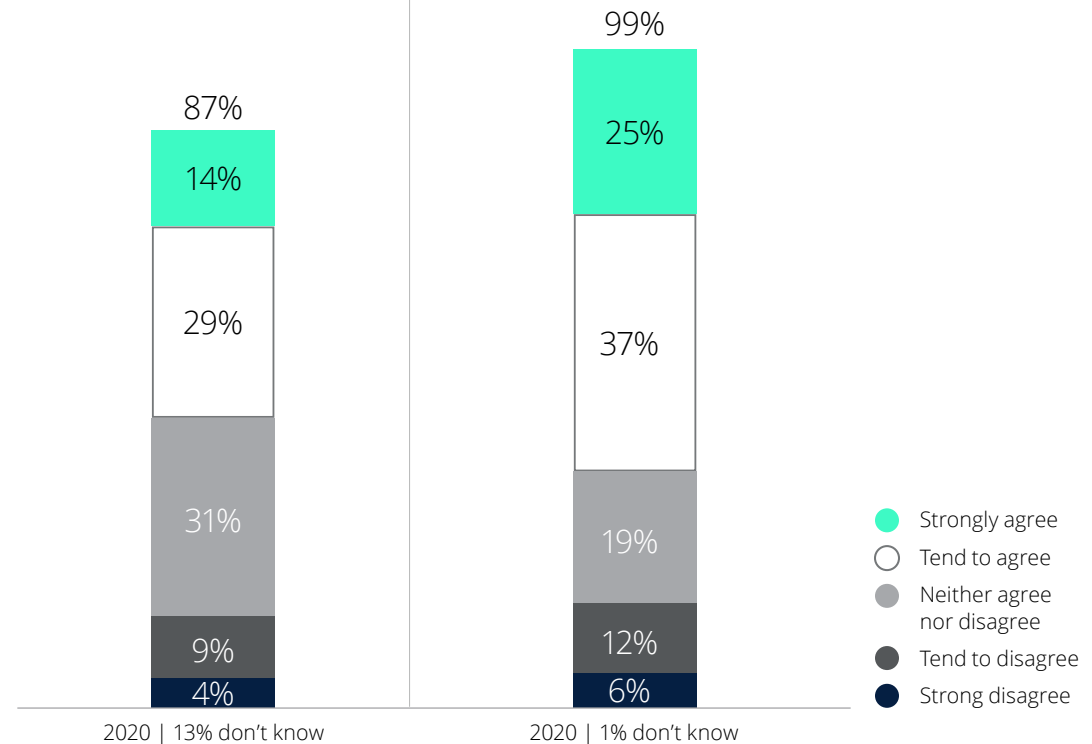
As society adjusts to a new way of living due to COVID-19 and with an additional need for fast internet, we expect marketing and advertising material on the benefits of 5G to increase heavily over the coming 12 months.

## Agreement with the following statements about 5G:

Base: All adults 18-75 years who have a phone or smartphone

I think I'll have better mobile connectivity if I move to 5G

I do not know enough about 5G



# Driving the need for 5G

## The truth is out there

Another concern is the increase in conspiracy theories linking 5G to health risks and the spread of COVID-19. While dismissed by most as a fringe view, 16% of respondents believe there are health risks associated with the technology. Younger Australians are the most likely to believe these risks exist (20% of those aged 25-34 and 18% of those aged 35-44), whereas older age groups are more likely to admit they are unsure.

Worries about health impacts from radio waves have always existed, flaring up at the launch of 3G, 4G and Tetra networks. Despite no evidence that 5G poses any health risks, misinformation is more easily amplified than ever before, due to the ubiquity of search and sharing on the web.

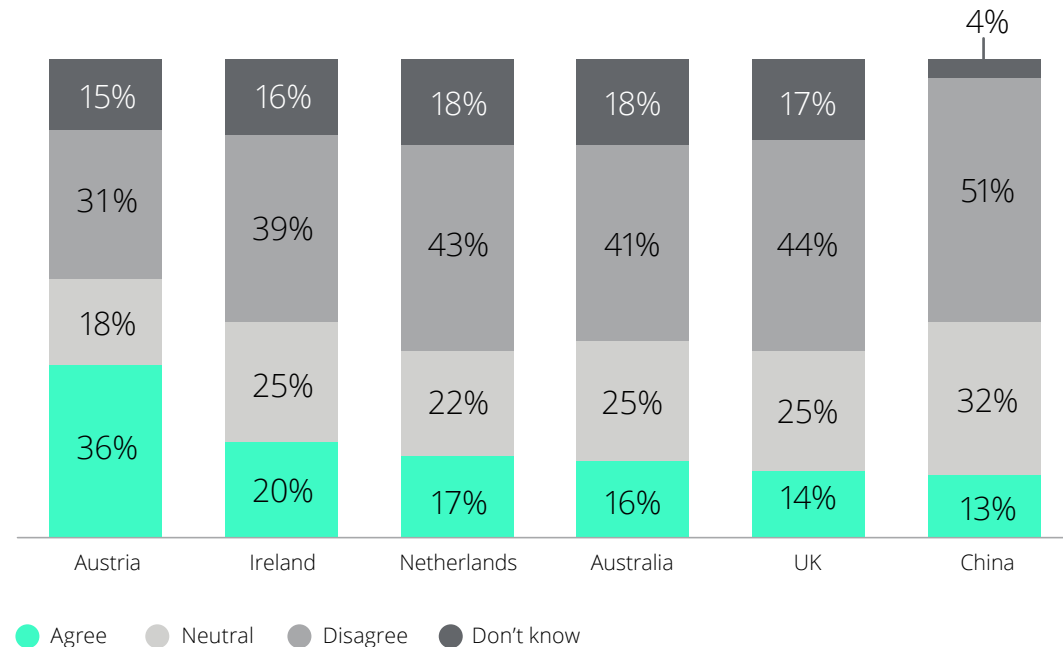
Health concerns are not isolated to Australia, with respondents from countries such as Austria (36%) and Ireland (20%) showing a higher

proportion of their populations believe these risks exist. However, Australia is at the other end of the spectrum with countries such as the UK (14%) and China (13%), which appear to be doing a better job in educating the public.

5G misinformation has become such an issue that local and global health authorities, such as the World Health Organisation and the Australian Chief Medical Officer, have released official statements attempting to quash concern, while social media companies such as YouTube and Twitter are banning incorrect 5G content. The Australian Government has also agreed to spend \$9 million over four years on a public education campaign, acknowledging that *"community confidence in 5G has been shaken by extensive misinformation."*<sup>xiii</sup>

## Reflecting on the 5G rollout, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I believe there are health risks associated with 5G.

Base: All respondents 16-75 years who have a phone or smartphone





# Driving the need for 5G

## Building for the future

Although consumer attitudes towards 5G are cautious at this early stage of its rollout, network operators remain committed to its implementation and product testing with many carriers making recent announcements on accelerating infrastructure spend. Consumer uptake of 5G will not only require attitude changes and infrastructure but the removal of other barriers such as device availability and affordability.

Device availability is critical for 5G adoption. The recent launch of Apple's 2020 flagship devices, which are compatible with the next generation network, will remove yet another barrier to consumer adoption with approximately 42% of respondents owning an Apple smartphone (up 4% from 2019). The focus will then turn to getting these new devices into the hands of consumers.

With low consumer confidence, an uncertain economic future and people holding onto their devices longer (81% of respondents are using a phone that is more than a year old, compared to 76% in 2018), networks are likely to push trade-in and upgrade programs to encourage Australians to adopt the latest technology. Additionally, we expect an influx of mid-tier devices that are 5G compatible, which may be tempting for consumers worried about spending in a recession.



81%

of respondents are using a phone that is **more than one year old**, compared to **76% in 2018**



# Conclusion

**COVID-19 has been a time of immense disruption for Australians. As a result, there have already been changes in our digital behaviour that will endure beyond the pandemic.**

This first edition of the Digital Consumer Trends report will be a baseline of sorts, tracking the behaviours cemented by the extreme events of 2020. It provides a snapshot of a moment where our physical lives became smaller overnight, and our digital ones far, far larger.

While forced isolation and closed borders could have created a more insular society, we've seen a focus on connection through the pandemic; over Zoom, through email, via networked gaming and by plugging into pop culture. A lasting legacy of this pandemic will be a greater awareness of the preciousness of human-to-human contact – whatever form it takes. This focus on connection is likely to persist, along with the technologies that make it possible.



**A lasting legacy of this pandemic will be a greater awareness of the preciousness of human-to-human contact – whatever form it takes.**



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