COVID-19 and Consumers: *from crisis to recovery*

Monthly Insights Report
JULY 2020

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Contents

1. Background

The Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC) is an independent, non-profit consumer research and policy organisation. CPRC aims to create fairer, safer and inclusive markets by undertaking research and working with leading regulators, policymakers, businesses and community advocates.

CPRC is partnering with Roy Morgan Research to conduct monthly surveys measuring the financial impacts and consumer experiences of COVID-19 across essential and important services markets, including housing, energy, telecommunications, credit and insurance.

Objectives

With governments, regulators, business and the broader policy community challenged to provide sufficient support for consumers during the COVID-19 economic crisis and into recovery, the objectives of this research are twofold:

- To **better understand the impact** that COVID-19 is having on Australian consumers' experiences, behaviours and expectations across essential and discretionary products and services markets, now and into recovery.

- To **provide policy and program insights** on how consumer experiences of COVID-19 should inform the design of support measures that aim to meet the various needs and expectations of consumers.

Research approach

We are gathering data from May to at least October 2020, using online and telephone surveys. As the impacts of COVID-19 unfold over this period, we will drill down and analyse consumer experiences in managing household expenses and within essential service markets. The survey tracks key subgroups of consumers and experiences across markets and provides insights into:

- what interventions are needed to support consumers during the initial stages of the health and economic crisis
- how these interventions may need to adapt as events evolve
- what policies and support programs will help build consumer resilience and deliver good consumer outcomes as we move toward economic recovery.

The research is conducted using online surveys via Computer Aided Web Interviews (CAWI) and telephone interviews via Computer Aided Telephone Interviews (CATI). In July, 1,413 online surveys (including a boost of 350 extra respondents in Victoria), and 50 additional telephone surveys with low or non-internet users, combined to a total of 1,463 completed surveys.

2. COVID-19 - what happened in July?

In July, the experiences of consumers in different states began to diverge as a result of the vastly different COVID infection rates and contexts.

The increasing number of cases in Victoria towards the end of June saw targeted stage 3 restrictions reimposed in hotspot Melbourne suburbs. As numbers continued to grow the border between NSW and Victoria was closed and the remainder of metro Melbourne and Mitchell Shire returned to stage 3 restrictions. In mid-July, wearing face masks became mandatory in Victoria and by the end of the month Victoria recorded the highest nationwide daily increase to date.

Conversely, Queensland opened borders to all states early in July (other than Victorians), but later restricted access for NSW residents from hotspot suburbs, proposing stricter border controls towards the end of the month. In other states, relaxed restrictions meant many businesses continue to reopen/remain open with certain social distancing measures in place.

Figure 1: Timeline of key COVID-19 events, July 2020

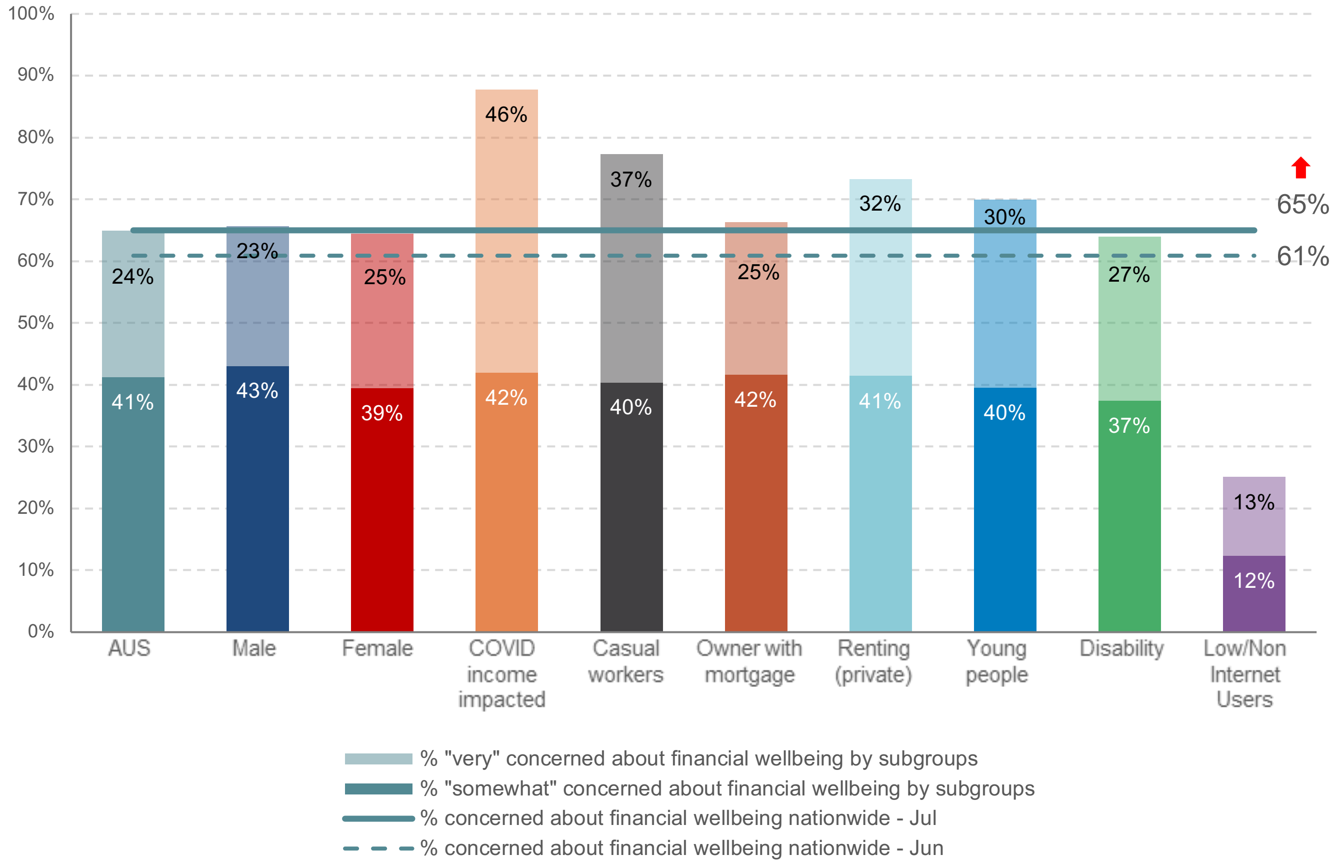
Date	Key Events
2nd Jul	VIC – 36 hotspot suburbs enter stage 3 restrictions
7th Jul	VIC and NSW border closes
9th Jul	VIC – Metro Melbourne and Mitchell Shire all move into Stage 3 lockdown
10th Jul	QLD opens its borders for all states except VIC
14th Jul	QLD blocks NSW hotspot residents
17th Jul	NSW cases spike, tighter restrictions introduced
23rd Jul	VIC – Face masks become mandatory
27th Jul	VIC – More than 500 new cases recorded
29th Jul	QLD announces that Sydney residents will not be able to cross the border
31st Jul	VIC records highest daily increase to date nationwide

3. Key survey findings

Concerns about financial wellbeing jumped in July, particularly among those with incomes affected by COVID-19, casual workers, renters and young people

In July, 65% of Australians felt very or somewhat concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their financial wellbeing, an increase from the level of concern in June (61%), as restrictions were re-introduced in parts of the country and further economic impacts of COVID-19 became evident.

Figure 2: Increased levels of consumer concern regarding financial wellbeing in July



QTN: How concerned are you about the impact of COVID19 on your own financial wellbeing?
Red arrows: Survey results significantly higher/lower than previous month
Grey scores in bracket show result for previous month

Looking at the levels of concern amongst subgroups shown in Figure 2 (see definitions of subgroups in Table A in the **Appendix**) we can see:

- people whose income was impacted by COVID-19 had the greatest concern about their financial wellbeing at 88%, including 46% who were very concerned[1]
- casual workers (77%), renters (73%), young people (70%) and mortgage-holders (67%) had above average levels of concern
- renters were more concerned than mortgage-holders
- similar levels of concern between males (66%) and females (64%)
- low or non-internet users, who tended to be older Australians, were considerably less concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their financial wellbeing (25%).

Comparing our June and July results, there was a significant increase in the proportion of Australians who were "very" concerned about their financial wellbeing across the total population (24% up from 20% in June), among females (25% up from 20% in June), mortgage-holders (25% up from 18% in June) and young people (30% up from 24% in June).

Housing costs and energy bills are causing more widespread concerns

Concern about affordability of different household costs also jumped across all sectors from May to July. There were particularly notable increases in the number of consumers reporting they were either "somewhat" or "very" concerned about affordability of rent (49% up from 37% in May), mortgage payments (35% up from 27% in May), energy bills (34% up from 27% in May) and insurance (31% up from 25% in May). Smaller increases were reported about affordability of telco bills (25% up from 20% in May), groceries (29% up from 25% in May) and credit (26% up from 22% in May). Nonetheless, sizeable proportions of consumers remain concerned about these costs.

"If we go back into lockdown I have serious concerns about my job and ability to pay bills, rent, etc."

Female, 55-64, Perth, casual employee, owner-occupier with a mortgage

Consumers continue to draw down savings buffers or rely on credit cards or buy-now-pay-later to manage household expenses

More than half of Australians (57%) reported taking steps[2] to manage their household expenses in July. Almost a third of Australians (29%) dipped into their savings, reflecting an ongoing trend seen in May (29%) and June (30%). Likewise, a similar proportion of Australians took on debt in July compared with June, with over a quarter (26%) using a credit card or buy-now-pay-later to manage expenses.

[1] COVID Income Impacted are a group of people who had an income source before COVID-19 (either Full-time employee, Part-time employee, Casual employee, Self-employed / own business, or Investment income) and have now sought or received JobKeeper, JobSeeker or other government benefits, or now have no income.

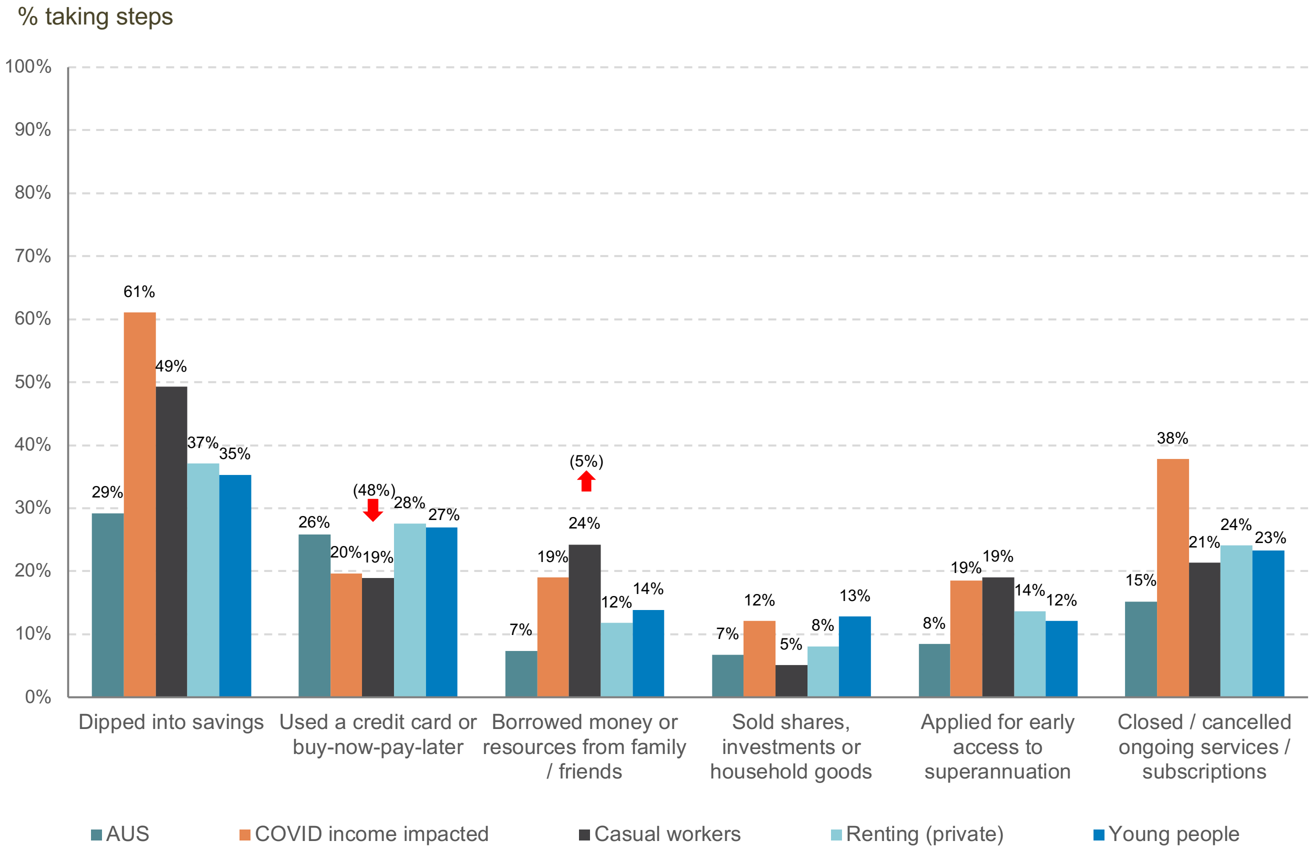
[2] Steps taken include: Dipped into savings; took out a loan from a bank or financial institution; took out a loan from a payday lender / consumer lease; used a credit card or buy-now-pay-later; drew down on home equity / interest offset account; borrowed money or resources from family / friends; sold shares, investments or household goods; applied for early access to superannuation; accessed community help / emergency relief; closed / cancelled ongoing services / subscriptions

Others borrowed against their future or turned to informal channels. 8% of people applied for early access to superannuation (8%), while 7% of Australians sold shares, investments or household goods to help get by, and 7% borrowed money or resources from family or friends.

"COVID-19 has reduced my earning power, thus I am uncertain for the future in paying my mortgage long term which will result in me having to sell my home."

Female, 65+, Hobart, casual employee, owner-occupier with a mortgage

Figure 3: Common steps taken to manage household expenses, July 2020



QTN. In the past month, have you taken any of the following actions to manage your household expenses?
Red arrows: Survey results significantly higher/lower than previous month
Grey scores in bracket show result for previous month

Our data from July reveals some consumer subgroups continue to be more reliant on their savings or increasing debt to manage their household expenses:

- people with incomes affected by COVID-19 dipped into savings at more than double the national rate (61% compared to 29%), and almost half (49%) of casuals workers drew down on their savings – both trends that continued from June
- almost a quarter (24%) of casual workers borrowed money or resources from family or friends, up from 5% in June
- early access to super was much more common among some subgroups, including casual workers (19%), those with incomes affected by COVID-19 (19%), renters (14%) and young people (12%).

A significant number of Australians also closed or cancelled ongoing services in July, including those with incomes affected by COVID-19 (38% compared to 15% nationally), renters (24%) and young people (23%).

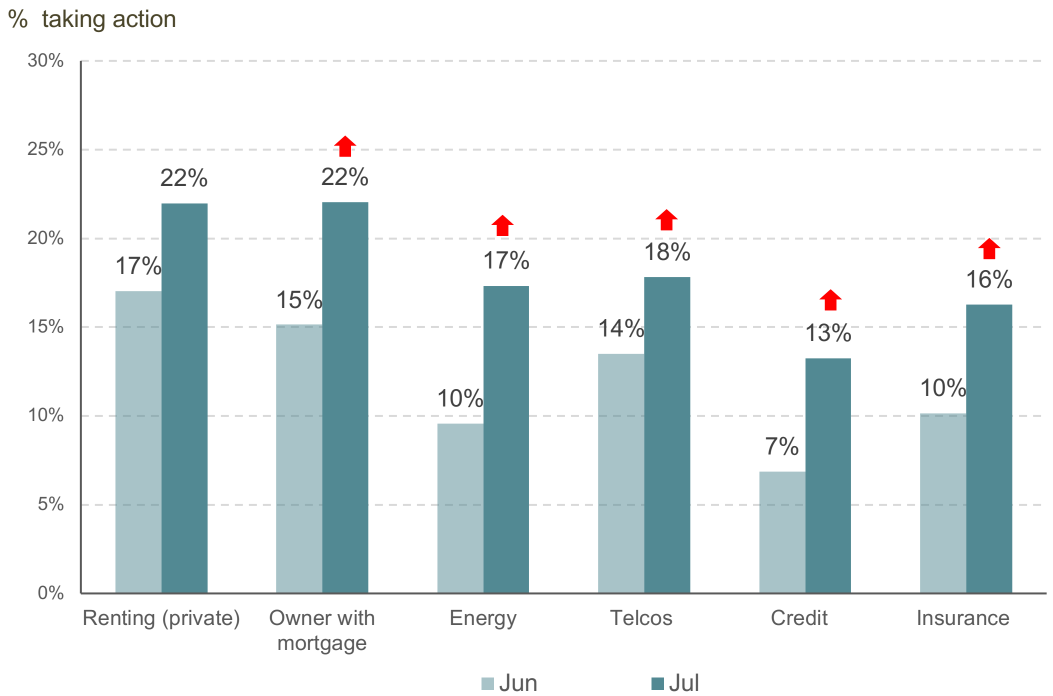
"Paying for services when I don't have an income. Currently using savings which will not last much longer."

Female, 50-64, Sydney, no income, owner-occupier with a mortgage

Increasing bill concerns are resulting in more actions to manage payments

Across all sectors, there was a jump in the number of Australians taking action (such as switching plan/provider or refinancing, asking for payment assistance, cancelling a contract, etc.) to manage bill payments in July compared with June (Figure 4).[3] The energy sector saw the largest increase in July, with 17% of Australians more active in managing energy bills, compared to 10% in June. There was also a significant rise in the number of mortgage-holders acting to manage mortgage payments in July (22% up from 15% in June), and consumers acting to taking action in relation to credit (13% up from 7% in June) and insurance (16% up from 10% in June) payments.

Figure 4: Consumers are far more active in engaging providers to manage payments in July



QTN. Thinking about your (service provider), have you attempted any of the following in the last 4 weeks?
Red arrows: Survey results significantly higher/lower than previous month

[3] Consumer actions to manage payments include: refinancing a mortgage/loan/credit card with the same or a different provider; moving house or rental property; reducing mortgage payments to interest only amount; switching plan or provider; asking for payment assistance; applying for a government concession; and ending a contract.

Analysis by consumer subgroups (not shown in Figure 4) found:

- approximately a third of young people took action across each sector to manage household costs during July (see *In Focus* section: Figure 7)
- approximately one in four people with disability actively managed household bills across different sectors, and at a higher proportion than the national rate (energy 27%, telco 25%, credit 24% and insurance 27%)
- a quarter of renters (24%) actively managed their energy bills and a quarter (25%) managed their telco payments
- a quarter (24%) of casual workers took action to manage their energy bills while one in five were active to manage credit and telco payments
- people with low or no internet use were unlikely to have acted to manage payments (e.g. 3% with their energy payments, and 5% with their telco payments).

Across the sectors, the number of consumers switching plan or provider increased significantly from June to July:

- 10% switched their energy plan or provider, up from 4% in June
- 7% refinanced a personal loan or credit card with their current or new provider, up from 2% in June
- 10% switched their insurance plan or provider, up from 6% in June
- 13% switched their internet/mobile plan or provider, up from an already high 10% in June.

However, a growing number of consumers also missed payments across different sectors – 5% of renters missed a payment in July (up from 1% in June), while 5% of consumers missed an energy payment (up from 2% in June). Concerningly, a significantly larger number of young people missed payments across all sectors compared with the broader population (see our *In Focus* – p.13).

"Communicating - finding how to contact the organisation, navigating their website, finding their contact details (it's obvious they really don't want you to call them), then talking to someone who I can understand without a strong accent as I am hearing impaired – I hate the whole experience. I want to deal with people in Australia, I want to look up a phone number easily and call it and understand the person I am talking to!"

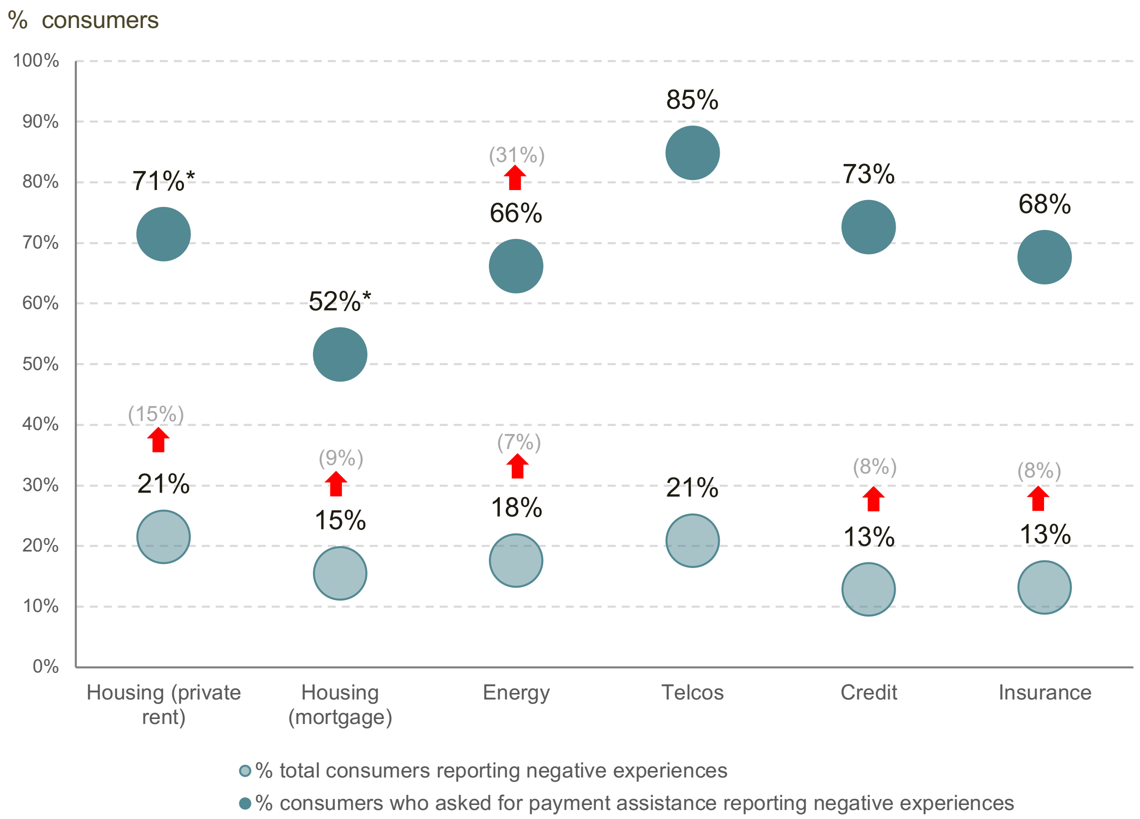
Female, 50-64, Sydney, full-time employee, owner-occupier with a mortgage.

As more consumers take action to manage household payments, negative experiences with service providers are on the rise

Negative experiences have increased across most sectors from June to July (see Figure 5) including energy (7% to 18%), credit and insurance (both 8% to 13%), rental housing (15% to 21%) and mortgage providers (9% to 15%).[4] One in five Australians (21%) had negative experiences with telco providers in July, a continued trend from June (21%). Analysis of our results found over 30% of consumers reported some type of negative experience with at least one service provider across the previous 4 weeks when asked in July.

[4] Negative experiences include: Could not understand how to contact my provider / resolve my issue; could not navigate the website / phone system; Wait times on the phone / live chat / email were too long; Provider was unhelpful / I received poor service; Felt misled by the information provided by my supplier; There was an unfair term/condition in my agreement; or "other" type of negative experience

Figure 5: Negative experiences were far more common for consumers seeking payment assistance across every sector



QTN. Thinking about any interactions with your service providers in the last 4 weeks, which, if any of the following have you experienced?
* Base n<50, results are indicative only
Red arrows: Survey results significantly higher/lower than previous month
Grey scores in bracket show result for previous month

Although results are based on low sample sizes, people seeking payment assistance were notably more likely to have negative experiences. This was particularly the case in telecommunications, where 85% of those seeking payment assistance reported a negative experience. Though down from June (89%), 71% of renters in July encountered difficulties when seeking payment assistance from a landlord or property manager. A significantly larger proportion of consumers seeking payment assistance from their energy retailer had a negative experience in July (66%) compared with June (31%).

"Non-essential items have been put off being purchased until our refinance comes through. Have had to arrange payment plans with most providers."

Female, 35-49, Perth, casual employee, owner-occupier with a mortgage

Some sectors continue to do better than others in offering proactive assistance to consumers, with mortgage providers most active

During July, positive actions (such as offers of payment assistance, helpful information or reduced costs) from service providers were most commonly reported by consumers in relation to their mortgage provider (26%). Notably, there was a significant increase in positive actions taken by energy retailers, reported by 20% of consumers compared with 10% in June (see Figure 6). In particular, 10% of consumers reported energy providers proactively provided information about managing payments (up from 5% in June).

An increase in proactive payment assistance (payment plans or deferrals) and waiving of late fees was reported across energy, credit and insurance, though the proportion of consumers reporting this remains small. An increase in offers of support to help access government assistance measures was also reported by renters, mortgage-holders and energy consumers, though again this support is relatively rare.

We also saw a jump in negative actions reported by consumers, particularly in the energy sector (11% up from 5% in June and also telco (9% up from 5% in June), credit (9% up from 3% in June) and insurance (10% up from 6% in June).[5] We saw a slight increase in the proportion of consumers reporting unsolicited pressure-sales/cold calls across essential services, debt collection to recover missed payments across virtually all sectors, and energy, credit and insurance providers taking steps to stop providing the service and landlords to evict renters. Though the proportion reporting these negative actions is small and should be treated as indicative, any continuing trend should be monitored closely with the continuing impact of COVID, and difficulties of some groups to make ends meet.

"Mortgage is the biggest [challenge]. I have currently deferred these payments for 6 months but I will struggle once this finishes."

Female, 25-34, Melbourne, full-time employee, owner with a mortgage

"Feeling overwhelmed at the number of services I'm currently subscribed to that I need to cancel. Feeling overwhelmed at the challenge of wanting to change energy and insurance providers for a better deal but not knowing who to switch to."

Male, 25-24, Adelaide, full-time employee, renting from private landlord

[5] Negative actions include: Increased cost of service / cost of rent or loan fees / charges; made unsolicited pressure-sales/ cold calls to you; issued repayment ultimatum via notice or phone call; engaged debt collection to recover missed payment; stopped providing you the service / took steps to evict you or repossess your house

Figure 6: Most commonly reported actions taken by essential service providers, July

	Rent	Mortgage	Energy	Telcos	Credit	Insurance
Base n=	*499*	*335*	*1,463*	*1,463*	*1,238*	*1,383*
Total took actions	**23%**	**28%**	**26%** ↑ (14%)	**18%**	**17%** ↑ (13%)	**19%**
Total positive actions	**16%**	**26%**	**20%** ↑ (10%)	**14%**	**12%**	**13%**
Provided helpful advice/information about managing payments during COVID-19	6%	10%	10% ↑ (5%)	6%	4% ↓ (7%)	5%
Proactively offered payment assistance (payment plan / deferral)	5%	8%	5% ↑ (3%)	4%	5% ↑ (3%)	4% ↑ (2%)
Waived fees or late charges	3%	4%	3% ↑ (1%)	3%	3% ↑ (2%)	3% ↑ (1%)
Proactively offered support to access government assistance to pay rent or mortgage	2% ↑ (0%)	6% ↑ (3%)	4% ↑ (2%)	3%	na	na
Reduced cost of service / rent or cost of mortgage payments / provided a discount	4%	9%	5% ↑ (3%)	4%	3% ↑ (1%)	5%
Total negative actions	**12%**	**5%**	**11%** ↑ (5%)	**9%** ↑ (5%)	**9%** ↑ (3%)	**10%** ↑ (6%)
Increased cost of service / cost of rent or loan fees / charges	4%	1%	5% ↑ (3%)	3%	2% ↑ (1%)	5%
Made unsolicited pressure-sales/ cold calls to you	4%	2%	4% ↑ (1%)	3% ↑ (2%)	3% ↑ (1%)	2% ↑ (1%)
Issued repayment ultimatum via notice or phone call	3%	1%	2% (1%)	2%	2%	2% ↑ (1%)
Engaged debt collection to recover missed payment	3% ↑ (0%)	1%	2% ↑ (0%)	2% ↑ (1%)	3% ↑ (1%)	2% ↑ (1%)
Stopped providing you the service / took steps to evict you or repossess your house	2% ↑ (0%)	1%	2% ↑ (0%)	2%	2% ↑ (1%)	2% ↑ (1%)
None of the above	**69%**	**65%**	**61%** ↓ (74%)	**72%**	**72%** ↓ (77%)	**71%**
Can't say / don't know	**8%**	**7%**	**13%**	**10%**	**11%**	**10%**

QTN. Which, if any, of the following actions have any of your (service providers), taken in the last 4 weeks?

Red arrows: Survey results significantly higher/lower than previous month
Grey scores in bracket show result for previous month

4. In focus in July – young people

Young people (those aged 18 to 34 years) have been affected particularly badly by COVID-19. As previously outlined, young people are more likely to be concerned about COVID-19's impact on their financial wellbeing than the general population (70% vs 65%).

Young people are more likely to be taking on debt and using savings to get by

More than two thirds (71%) of young people took steps to manage their household expenses in July, well above the 57% of the general population. Compared with other Australians, young people were more likely to have:

- dipped into savings (35% vs 29% nationally)
- taken out a payday loan or consumer lease, at three times the national rate (6% vs 2% nationally)
- taken out a personal loan, at twice the national rate (6% vs 3% nationally)
- applied for early access to super (12% vs 8% nationally)
- turn to informal resources such as borrowing from family/friends (14% vs 7% nationally), selling investments or household goods (13% vs 7%), and accessing emergency relief or community help (7% vs 3% nationally).

Many of these actions suggest some young people are already experiencing high financial stress, and are having to use finite resources and supports that are unsustainable long term.

Bill concerns are rising among young people, particularly about housing

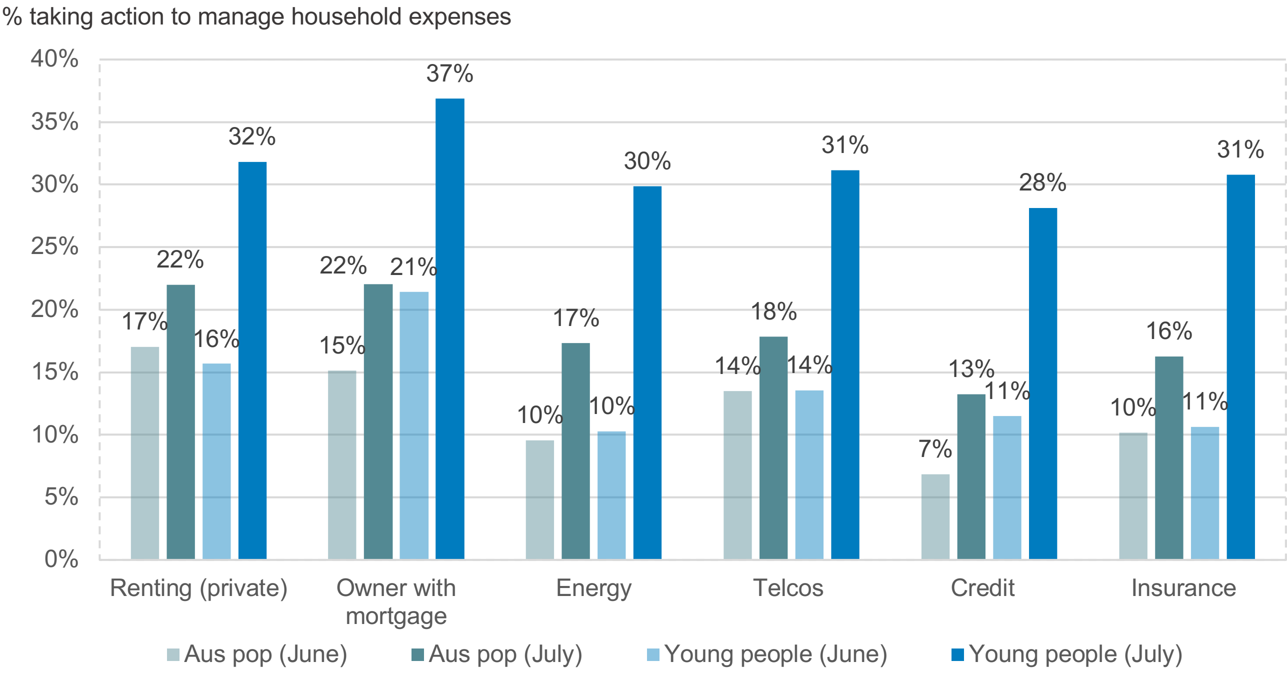
Young people raised concerns about affordability of all household expenses. Just over half of young renters are concerned about rental payments (52% up from 41% in May), and just under half of young mortgage holders are concerned about mortgage payments (45% up from 21% in May). More than two in five young people also raised concerns about:

- energy bills (44% up from 30% in May)
- grocery costs (41% up from 29% in May)
- insurance payments (41% up from 23% in May).

Young people are much more likely to take action to manage bill payments

Widespread bill concerns seem to be translating into much more action by young people to manage payments across all sectors, well above national rates (Figure 7). The proportion of young people taking action in July trebled in sectors such as energy (30% up from 10% in June) and insurance (31% up from 11% in June). Twice as many young renters were active in managing rental payments (32% up from 16% in June), and twice as many young people acted to manage telco payments (31% up from 14% in June).

Figure 7: Young people far more active than average population in engaging providers to manage household expenses in July



QTN: Thinking of your (household bills), have you attempted any of the following in the last 4 weeks?

Young people were particularly active in switching plans or service providers in July:

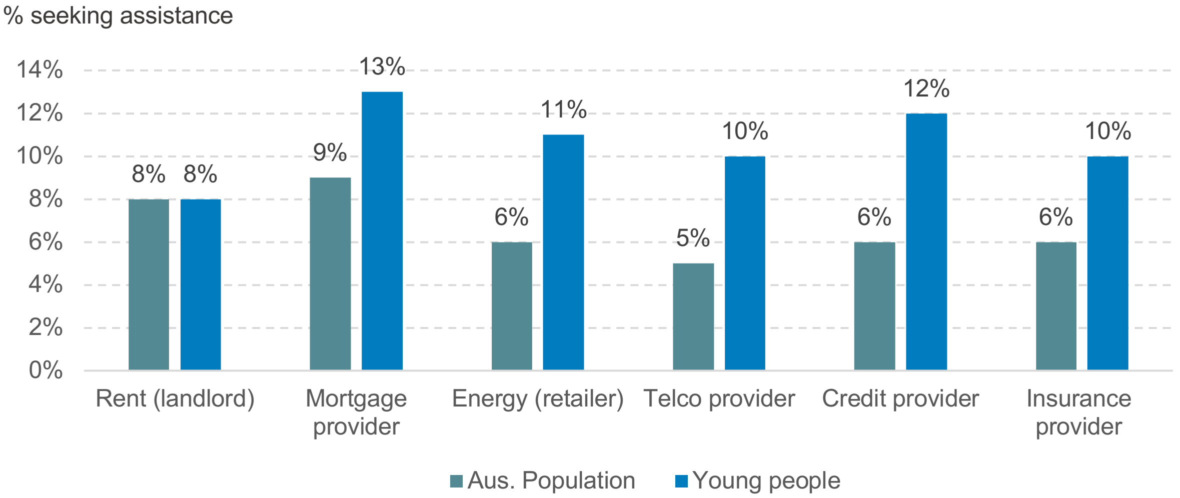
- 17% refinanced their mortgage with their current bank or a different bank
- 11% switched their energy plan and 9% switched energy retailer
- 14% switched their telco plan and 7% switched telco provider.

Twice as many young people cancelled credit cards, personal loans or buy now pay later accounts (7% vs 3% nationally) and twice as many young people cancelled an insurance plan (10% vs 5% nationally).

Young people are seeking payment assistance more than others

More than one in ten young people sought payment assistance across most sectors, well above national rates, reflecting growing financial difficulties among this group (see Figure 8). Twice as many young people sought payment assistance compared with the broader population to manage their telco bill (10% compared with 5% nationally), to manage the cost of credit (12% compared with 6% nationally), and almost twice as many young people their energy bills (11% compared with 6% nationally).

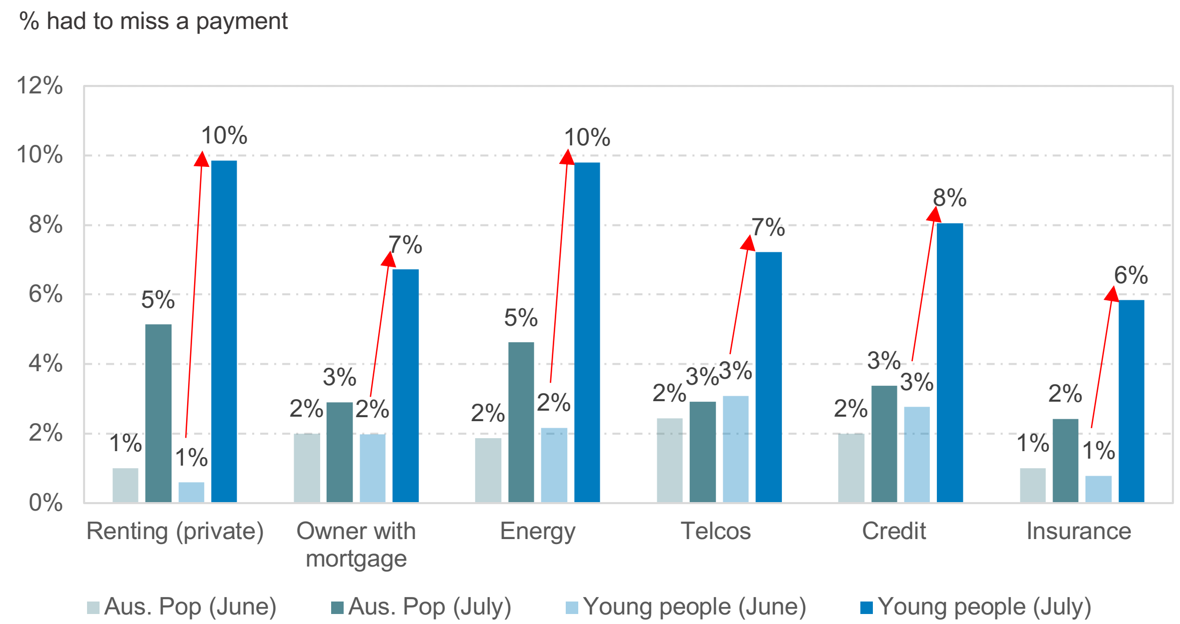
Figure 8: Spike in young people seeking payment assistance in July



QTN: Thinking of your (household bills), have you [*asked for payment assistance from your service provider/landlord*] in the last 4 weeks?

Most concerning was the jump in the number of young people missing payments across all sectors from June to July, at two to three times the rate of the wider population (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Significant jump in young people missing household bill payments in July



QTN: Thinking of your (household bills), have you [*had to miss a payment*] in the last 4 weeks?

One in ten missed a rental payment (up from 1% in June) or an energy bill in July (up from 2% in June). In other sectors, the proportion of young people missing payments more than doubled:

- 7% of young mortgage-holders missed a mortgage payment (up from 2% in June)
- 7% missed a telco payment (up from 3% in June)
- 8% missed a credit/debt payment (up from 3%)
- 6% missed an insurance payment (up from 1% in June).

5. Consumer policy implications

In each edition of the Monthly Insights Report we highlight some key consumer policy implications, drawn from the survey results, to help inform consumer support and recovery measures during COVID-19.

CPRC's Consumers and COVID-19: from crisis to recovery report (Chapter 5) sets out 'building blocks' policymakers and industry can adopt to support consumers during the uncertain journey from crisis through to recovery, including:

Help consumers cope with the shocks

Sustain, adapt and adjust consumer support measures

Build resilience through fairness and inclusion in recovery

Consumer vulnerabilities are expanding

From June to July we saw a significant increase in concern about financial wellbeing, as well as concern about managing household expenses across all essential services sectors as well as groceries. Increasing concern may be driven by continued need to draw down on dwindling savings or to borrow further on credit or buy-now-pay-later services to make ends meet, against a backdrop of the second wave of COVID-19 infections in Victoria and potentially other states, along with the return to social distancing restrictions and a dismal economic outlook.

Widespread financial concerns may leave consumers more vulnerable to bill payment stress – our data reflects the higher rate of borrowing from friends and family. Increasing payment difficulties may also result in consumers turning to more exploitative/high-cost lending – extrapolating out our survey data to the broader population suggests more than 300,000 young people took out a consumer lease or payday loan in July.

Service providers must deliver the support that customers have a right to access

It appears that more widespread concern about affordability has translated into more consumers taking action to manage household expenses, with elevated levels of switching plans and providers recorded in July. We also saw an increase in the number of consumers contacting providers for payment assistance to manage expenses – though there is still a gap between the level of concern and level of action. While our data indicates an increase in proactive assistance among energy retailers, there was little change across other sectors with less than one in five reporting positive actions.

Proactive steps to ensure consumers remain connected to services need to be taken, recognising that some consumers may be facing high financial stress and across multiple sectors. This requires:

- service providers to take proactive steps to ensure consumers are aware of the available supports
- multi-channel approaches to communications to reach consumers who might be encountering difficulty navigating website/phone systems, or may be facing crisis
- building transformative outreach partnerships across government, community sector and industry to inform consumers about their rights and supports available.

The growing rates of missed payments across different sectors among certain subpopulations should raise some concerns policymakers and service providers alike, especially if this trend continues and spreads among the broader population.

"[I'm experiencing] anxiety contacting providers"

Male, 25-34, Brisbane, applied for /receiving JobSeeker, owner with a mortgage

Immediate consumer supports need to be sustained, adapted and adjusted over the longer-term

Our data suggests that particular consumer cohorts – young people, casual workers and renters – are already increasingly vulnerable, encountering difficulty meeting payments across all sectors, but particularly housing costs. Continued drawing down of finite resources is likely to see needs increase and more problems in the coming months – though we are already seeing a jump in missed payments among certain groups and taking on risky debt to manage finances. This has implications for key supports such as temporary payment deferrals and income support, and may require extensions or alterations to these support measures to avoid a "cliff" where supports rapidly drop off, resulting in significant hardship or crisis.

Long-term distributional impacts must be addressed in economic recovery

Evolving consumer protections, supports and economic recovery measures need to be based on evidence of consumers' lived experience. As outlined in our In Focus section, the overwhelming majority of young people took some kind of action to manage their household expenses this month.

Younger Australians have been behind from the very start of the crisis. A recent Productivity Commission report found that unlike other age groups, the incomes of younger Australians have been declining since the Global Financial Crisis on average, resulting in a 'lost decade' of income growth.[6]

[6] Productivity Commission, *Why did young people's incomes decline?,* July 2020. Available online: https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/youth-income-decline

The ANZ – Roy Morgan Financial Wellbeing Index found that almost half of young Australians financially impacted by COVID-19, with young people and young families more likely to have low savings before COVID-19 making them immediately vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19.[7] With younger people exhausting their financial buffers, this may explain the higher number turning to risky payday lenders, borrowing from family and friends, seeking emergency relief or missing payments for essential services.

These insights should be driving policymakers to adopt protections against risky products in the marketplace. The Stop the Debt Trap alliance has been raising concerns about the risks of high cost fast loans, calling for stronger protections to ensure borrowers are not overburdened and pushed into a debt spiral.[8]

[7]ANZ Roy Morgan Financial Wellbeing Indicator, *Quarterly Update 2020,* 23rd July 2020, [available online]: https://media.anz.com/posts/2020/07/almost-half-young-australians-financially-impacted-by-covid-19--?adobe_mc=MCMID%3D55003270636043828851645833941947711271%7CMCORGID%3D67A216D751E567B20A490D4C%2540AdobeOrg%7CTS%3D1597898987

[8] Consumer Action, *Stop the Debt Trap!* https://consumeraction.org.au/policy-campaigns/stop-the-debt-trap/

Appendix

Table A: Survey definition key

Sectors	Definition
Housing (mortgage)	Housing expenses / services from: mortgage providers to consumers who are an "owner-occupier with a mortgage" for their main place of residence.
Housing (private rent)	Housing expenses / services from: private landlord / real estate agency / property manager to consumers "renting from a private landlord/ real estate agency" for their main place of residence.
Energy	Electricity / gas services.
Telcos	Internet and mobile / telephone services.
Credit	Credit card / personal loan / buy now pay later services.
Insurance	Insurance providers (e.g., vehicle, health, home, travel).
Consumer Subgroups	**Definition**
COVID income impacted	Consumers who had an income source before COVID-19 (either Full-time employee, Part-time employee, Casual employee, Self-employed / own business, or Investment income) and have now sought or received Jobkeeper, JobSeeker or other government benefits, or now have no income.
Casual workers	Casual employee (as opposed to a Part-time or Full-time employee).
Renters	Renting from a private landlord / real estate agency for their main place of residence.
Youth	18-34 years of age.
Disability	Consumers who reported that a disability restricts them in their everyday activities, and this has lasted or is likely to last for 6 months or more.
Low/no internet use	Consumers who reported that they used the internet (in any device) less than once a day (either a few times a week, less often, or not at all). This subgroup was comprised mostly of people aged over 50 years.