



The Australian Seniors Series: Connectivity in the Age of COVID-19

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About the report

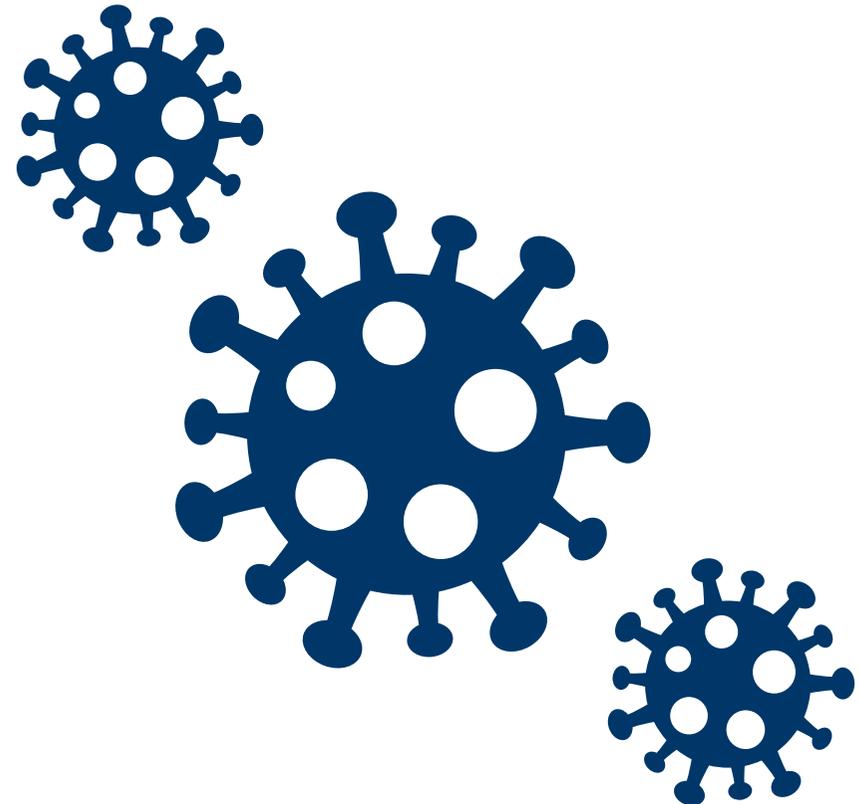
The Australian Seniors Connectivity in the Age of COVID-19 report forms part of the Australian Seniors Research Series. In its latest instalment, this in-depth study explores how Australia's over 50s are adapting to the 'new normal', remaining connected in a time of increasing isolation and loneliness, becoming more connected and how the role of grandparenting is being reinvented.

The report is compiled based on research commissioned by Australian Seniors and conducted by CoreData between 16 April and 1 May 2020. The research was conducted via a quantitative online survey, gathering 5,003 responses from Australians aged 50 and above.

The sample is representative of the general senior population of Australians in terms of age, gender, wealth, and state/territory.

Important things to note about the charts

*Footnotes directly underneath the charts in this report primarily differentiate the types of questions asked. For instance, *Multiple answers allowed' appears when the question called for more than one answer from the respondent.*





Key findings

Key findings

The COVID-19 crisis has disrupted our daily lives, but adapting to the 'new normal' may not be as daunting as it sounds

- 9 in 10 are finding themselves adapting to the current health crisis surprisingly well (89.9%). Nearly all seniors believe society as a whole needs to do more to ensure that all generations are adapting to new conditions and that nobody is left behind (96.9%).
- Seniors think Gen Y (31.6%) and Gen Z (29.7%) are the generations finding it hardest to adapt. Meanwhile they think Baby Boomers are actually working the hardest to adapt (33.5%).

With social activities restricted, many have been finding new ways to take care of themselves – especially their physical health

- Physical health has become increasingly important. However the threat of COVID-19 has made it challenging for seniors to maintain their outdoor activities and exercise routines. For those who have attempted new ways of exercising, going for walks is the most common choice (74.9%) followed by exercising in the home (44.4%).
- Close to 1 in 4 are actively trying to take better care of their mental health (23.9%). Popular ways of maintaining mental health include staying connected with family and friends by phone (73.1%), focusing on hobbies and personal interests (64.5%) and maintaining positive thinking (63.7%).

While most seniors surveyed retired prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of those who are still working have been actively looking for new opportunities

- Approximately 1 in 3 are still working, either outside the home (15.5%) or from home (13.7%). More than 4 in 5 (81.5%) believe others their age have been reinventing their businesses to adapt to new conditions.
- Nearly 3 in 5 (57.0%) are looking for new opportunities for work or generate an income online, including trading goods online for profit (33.2%), sharing skills with others online (22.1%) and providing consultation services from home (14.3%).
- The large majority (85.5%) agree that businesses have been reinventing themselves to cater to senior employees who have been unable to leave their homes, on the contrary 90.6% also believe that big companies and businesses need to do more to support the vulnerable.

To some seniors, the lockdown period has provided a window for them to pursue self-improvement

- 2 in 5 (40.0%) find that they have been motivated to self-improve, making full use of what life has to offer, despite of all the restrictions.
- The most popular self-improvement activities include developing hobbies (48.4%), cooking (46.4%) and making extra efforts to connect with friends and family (34.3%).

Key findings

Digital technologies play an important role in lockdown entertainment and keeping people connected

- Many have been relying on their technological devices to inform them (68.0%) and distract them (56.7%).
- A quarter are browsing the web more and 1 in 5 (19.8%) are using video streaming services such as Netflix, Stan etc. more.
- Over 1 in 4 have joined a chat or video conference group (typically family or friends) since lockdown restrictions have been put in place (26%).

Family behaviours have also changed during the crisis, although not by choice. While many families are not able to bond in traditional ways, many seniors have found that having to spend so much time together could also be nerve-racking

- More than 2 in 5 (42.6%) were unable to celebrate Easter with family this year because of restrictions. However, 12.5% organised video conferences to bond with family members and 10.0% made efforts to catch up in person with their friends or family while practicing safe social distancing.
- 8 in 10 seniors (83.1%) are sorely missing being able to see their children and/or grandchildren in person.
- Although many are missing their loved ones, almost half of seniors (48.1%) feel isolation and spending so much time with family is starting to grate on everyone's nerves.

Social isolation has resulted in less frequent and lower quality contact with friends and local communities

- Over half (56.2%) are isolating with a partner, just under a quarter (24.3%) are doing it alone and 1 in 5 (20.4%) are isolating with their children.
- Many are in less frequent contact with their friends and family (62.3% and 38.7% respectively) as well as their local community (61.7%). The quality of contact has also been impacted with almost half (48.7) saying the quality of contact they have with friends is not as high as it once was, and almost a third (31.8%) saying the same about their family.
- More than 1 in 3 (35.8%) are feeling lonelier due to isolation with a lack of physical contact or face-to-face company (72.3%), inability to see family (65.1%) and friends as frequently/at all. But many have also found ways to stave off loneliness such as discovering and developing new hobbies (42.8%).

From crisis comes opportunities and gratitude

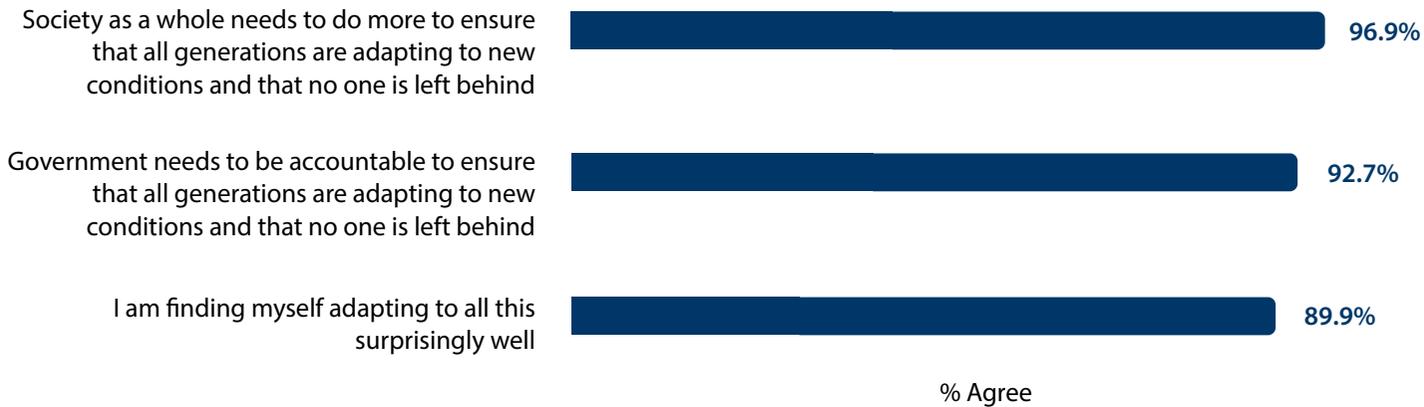
- Almost all seniors believe that the COVID-19 crisis may open everyone's eyes to the importance of sufficiently funding health and education (93.1%) and of other global threats and our capacity to act on them (90.4%).
- They also believe that COVID-19 triggered them to reflect and re-evaluate what is important and unsurprisingly, the majority have developed greater appreciation for the role of the health care workers, teachers and other essential roles in our society (70.2%).



Adapting to the 'new normal'

Adapting to the 'new normal' appears to be an overestimated challenge

How much do you agree with the following statements about the needs to adapt to, and grow from the current health crisis?

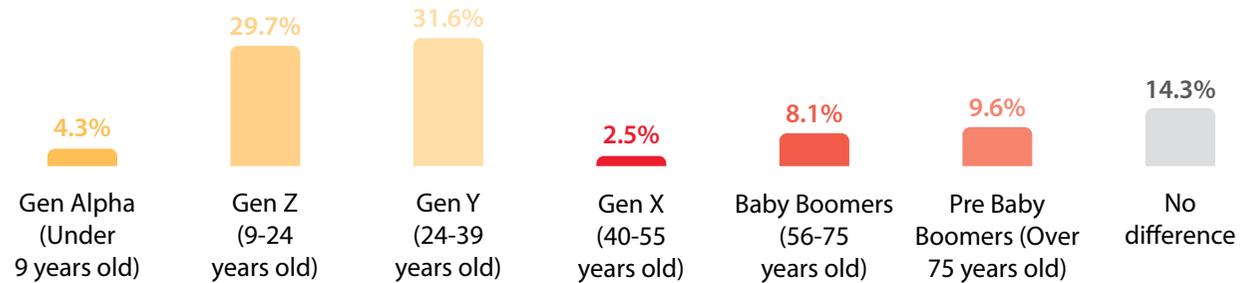


An overwhelming majority (89.9%) see themselves as readily and surprisingly adaptable in this time of crisis.

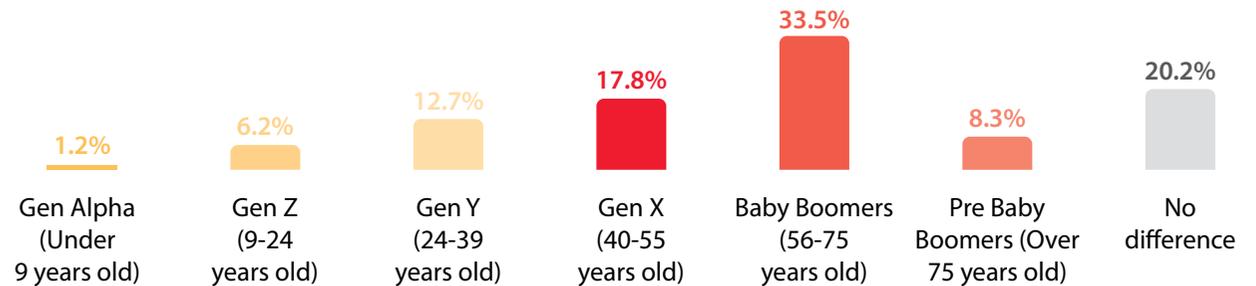
But, even more feel that governmental (92.7%) and societal (96.9%) accountability are key in ensuring that everyone else can cope. 4 in 10 (41.7%) strongly agree that society needs to be doing more to ensure that all generations can cope, and that no one is left behind.

Seniors think that they work the hardest to adapt to the 'new normal'

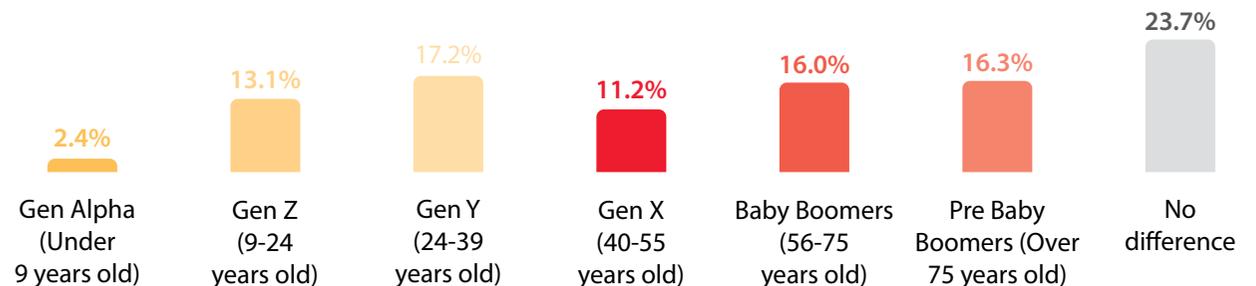
Which generation do you think is finding it hardest to adapt to recent changes in the way we live?



Which generation do you think is now working the hardest to adapt to recent changes in the way we live?



Which generation do you think will ultimately be worse off when we are on the other side of this health crisis?



Gen Z and Y are the generations who are seen to be struggling most in adapting to the 'new normal' (29.7% and 31.6% respectively).

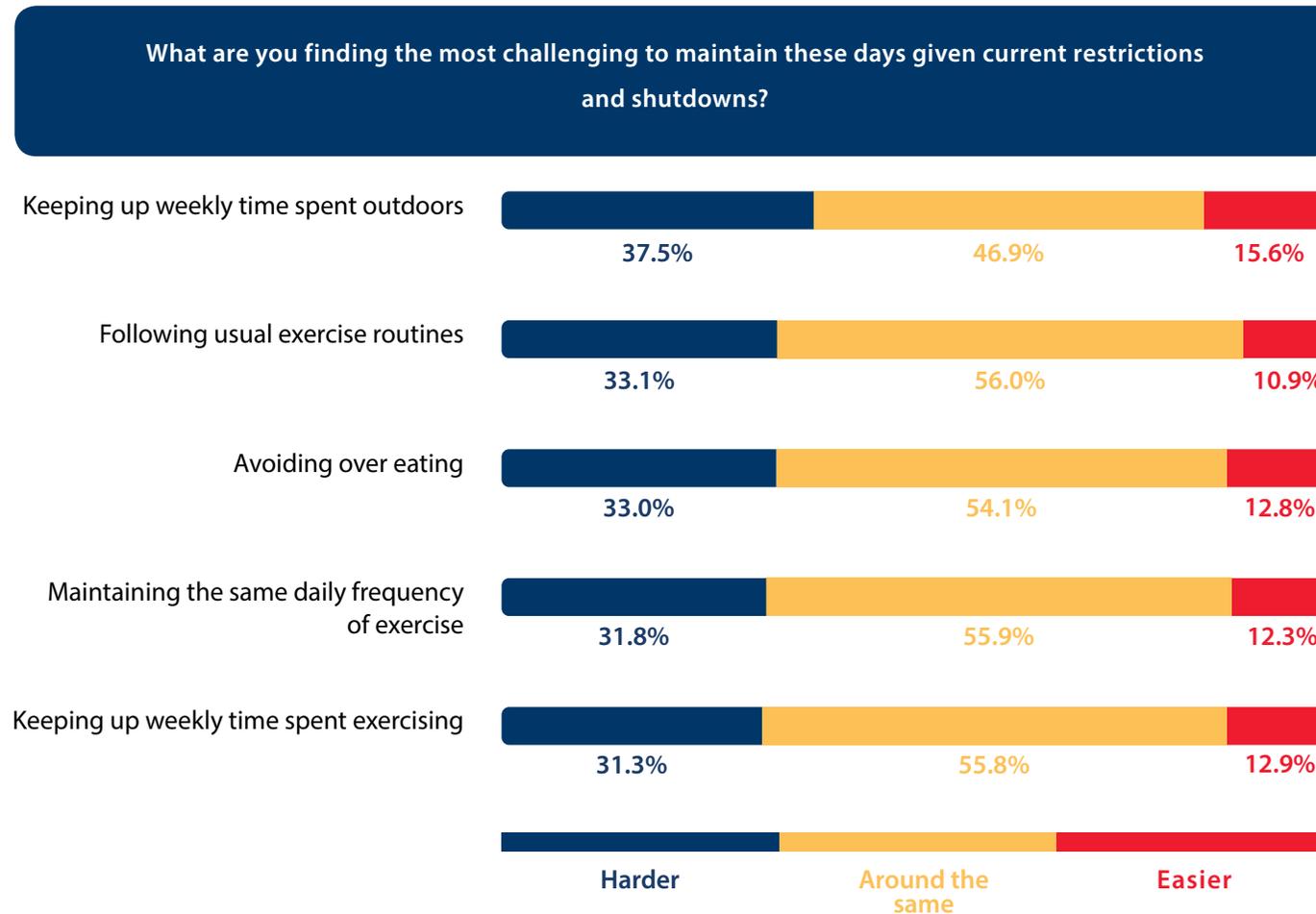
In terms of effort in adaptation, answers are mixed but just over a third (33.5%) are feeling that it's the Baby Boomers that are working the hardest to adapt. Despite being seen as struggling most, Gen Y (6.2%) and X (12.7%) are both barely thought to be working the hardest to adapt.

When asked which generation will be ultimately worse off from the health crisis, the responses were fairly evenly spread across the groups.



Staying physically and mentally healthy

Restrictions have made exercise routines more challenging



During this pandemic, Australians are finding it more difficult to allocate time to certain key wellbeing practices.

Over a third of seniors are finding it harder to keep up with time spent outdoors (37.5%) or to avoid overeating (33.0%).

Seniors are finding new ways of maintaining physical health

With gyms, group training and sporting activities on-hold are you trying any new ways of getting your exercise?



**Multiple answers allowed
Top 5 answers only

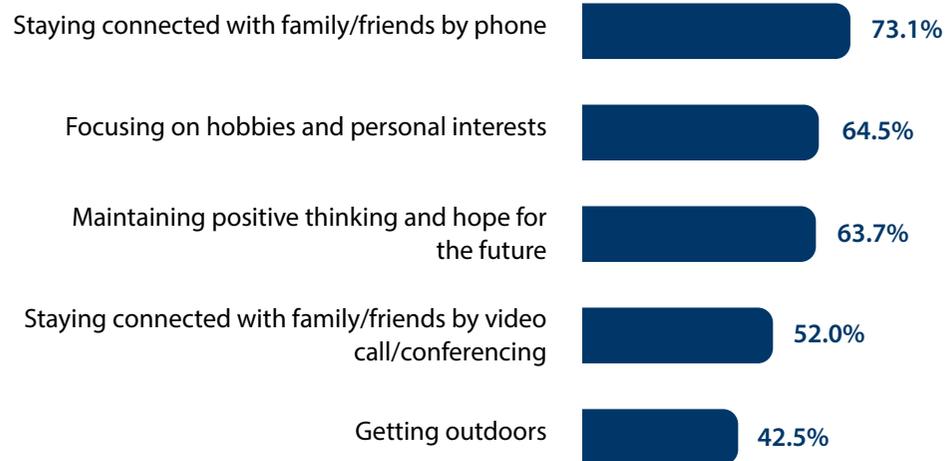
Australia is a resilient nation, and many are looking for new ways to take care of their physical health. Over two thirds (68.3%) aren't able to exercise as they were before the pandemic.

Of those, less than 1 in 10 (7.7%) are looking for new ways of getting exercise, and almost 1 in 5 (18.1%) are already trying new ways of exercise.

When asked what these new exercises were, almost 3 in 4 (74.9%) said going for walks. Other popular answers include at home routines (44.4%) and equipment (23.6%), as well as videos (18.7%) and online classes (15.7%).

Some have made extra efforts for their mental health

Are you doing anything in particular to take better care of your own mental health these days?



Despite a major focus on physical health, not many (23.9%) seniors are taking the time to help their mental wellbeing during this pandemic.

Of those who are devoting time to their mental health, the top avenues include phoning family/friends (73.1%), focusing on hobbies (64.5%), and maintaining a positive outlook (63.7%).



*Multiple answers allowed
*Top 5 answers only



Working in a time of crisis

Working seniors are adapting to new business conditions

How much do you agree with the following statements about how working life is, and needs to adapt to the current health crisis?



Business adaptation is going to be a key focus for the post COVID-19 climate in Australia, and this is reflected in the responses of seniors.

An overwhelming majority (90.6%) agree that big companies need to support the vulnerable more, and a similar proportion (85.5%) think businesses will need to reinvent themselves to cater to senior employees unable to leave their homes.

A lot of older Australians are looking to source an alternative income, in fact under 1 in 4 (39.3%) agree they're finding new opportunities for work or generating an income online.



Many have been actively looking for new opportunities

Australians are dynamic with their skills, and ready to apply them in different spheres – like online – to create alternate income streams in times of crisis.

Of the proportion of seniors who are looking for (or the smaller proportion who have found) new opportunities for work/income online, the most popular stream is e-selling and buying (33.2%).

Other popular revenue sources are sharing skills online (22.1%), consulting or marketing online (14.3%) and setting up online stores (10.6%).



What kind of new opportunities for work/generating income online are you looking at, have recently begun or are doing more of these days?

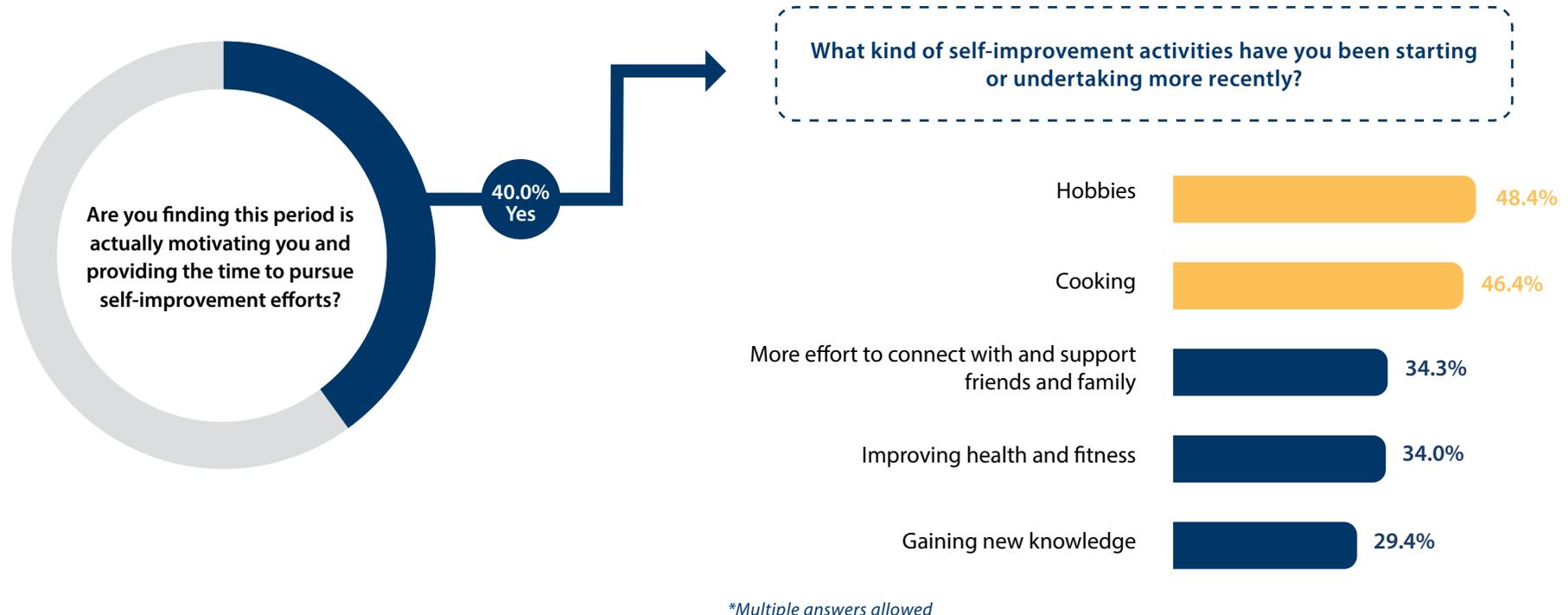


*Multiple answers allowed



Self-improvement over the course of COVID-19

Despite all the restrictions, some are finding the time to self-improve



Exactly 4 in 10 (40.0%) have found this period to be a motivator for self-improvement.

Seniors are undertaking more hobbies (48.4%), cooking (46.4%), family time (34.3%), fitness (34.0%) and learning (29.4%) as a result of the extra time and motivation that isolation has brought.

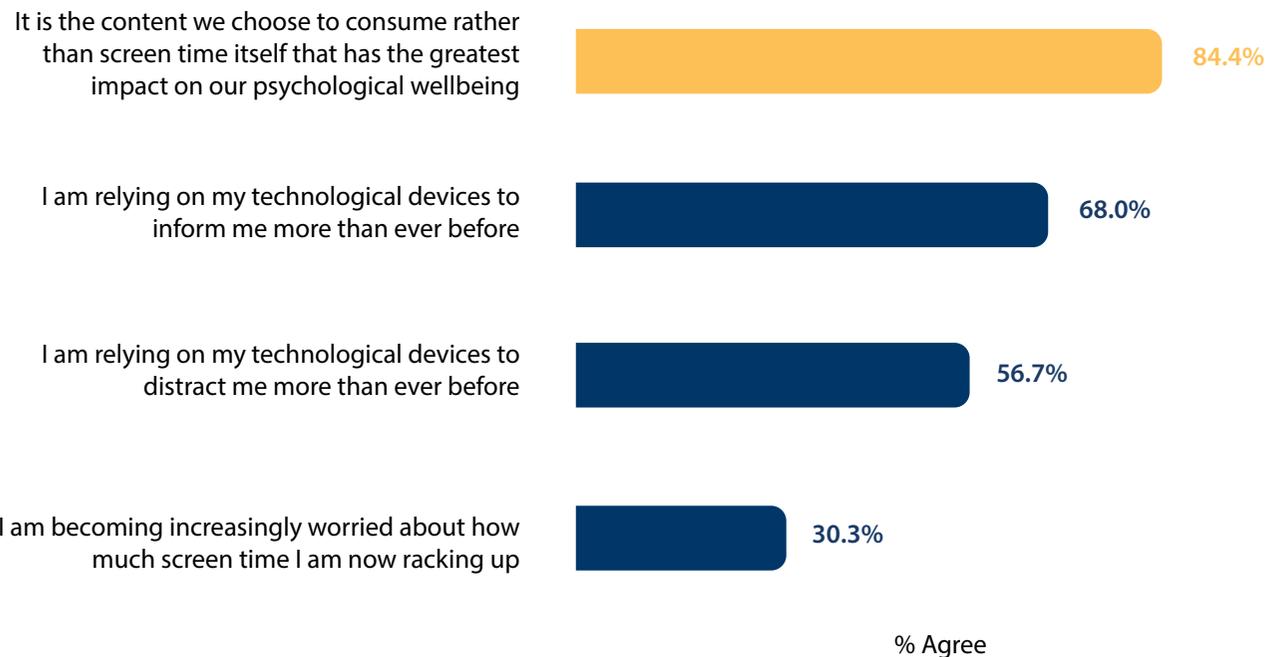
This is a strong silver lining in a time full of fairly negative news, as many can now expect to emerge from the pandemic as improved versions of themselves.



**The impact on tech
consumption**

There is an increasing reliance on technological devices for information and entertainment

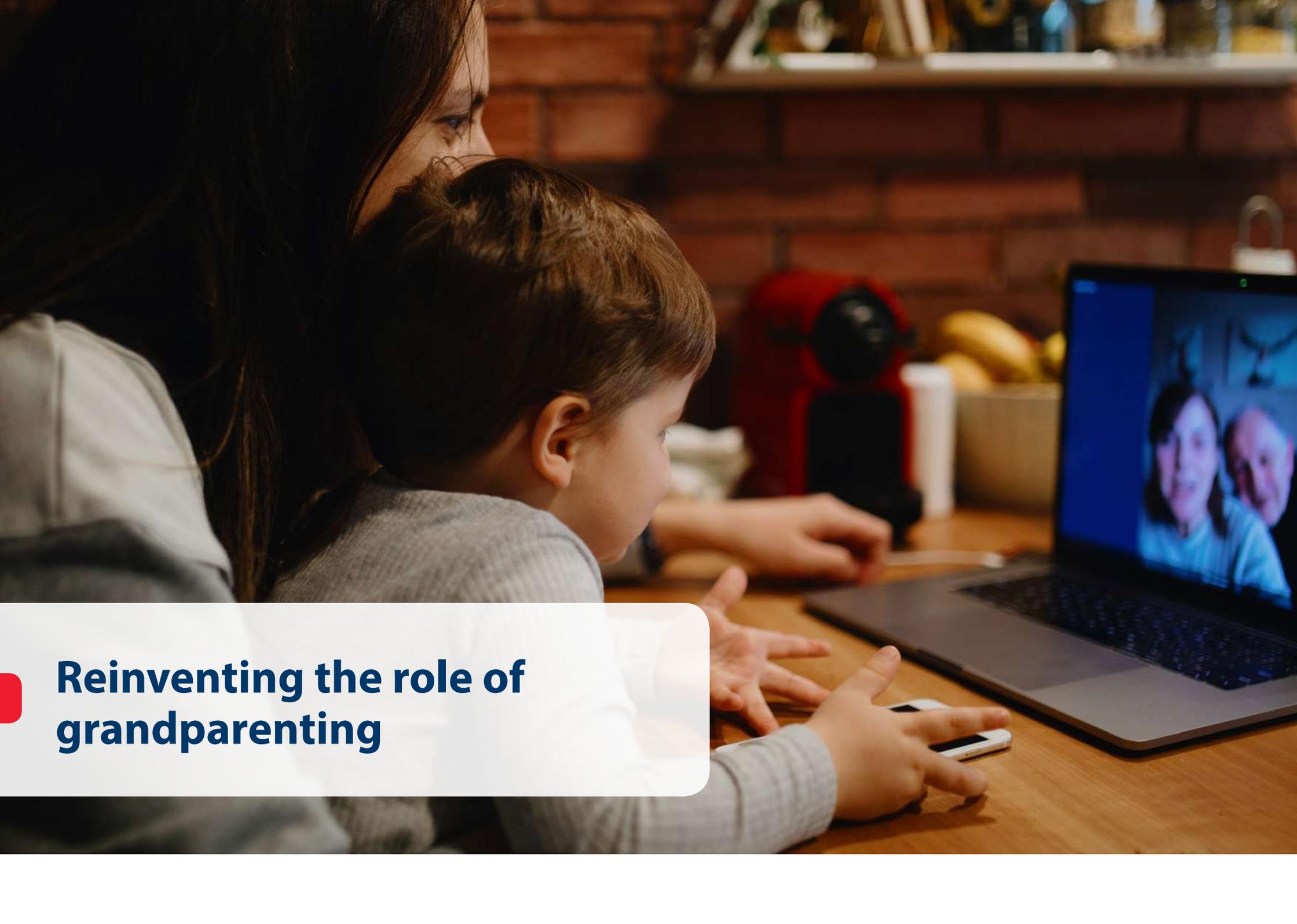
How much do you agree with the following statements about reliance on technological devices during this crisis?



Technology has had an undeniable impact on the way that all Australians deal with major global events, and the COVID-19 pandemic only serves to further reinforce this point.

Many seniors are relying on devices for information (68.0%) and distraction (56.7%) more than ever before.

With that being said, a large majority (84.4%) blame the content, rather than the devices themselves, for any negative psychological impacts that stem from tech use.



Reinventing the role of grandparenting

Family behaviours have changed, but not by choice

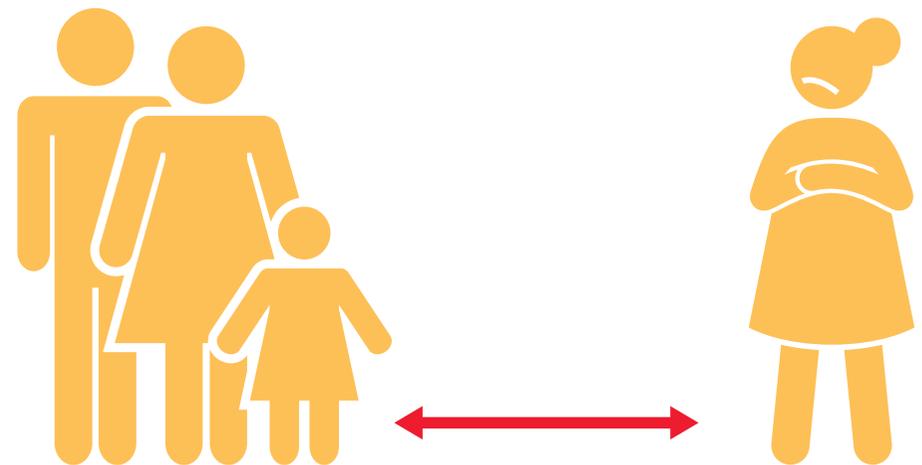
How did you celebrate the Easter break this year with family (including your parents if you usually celebrate with them)?



The COVID-19 pandemic unfortunately started to accelerate in seriousness around the Easter holidays. As a result, many seniors were unable to celebrate with their family.

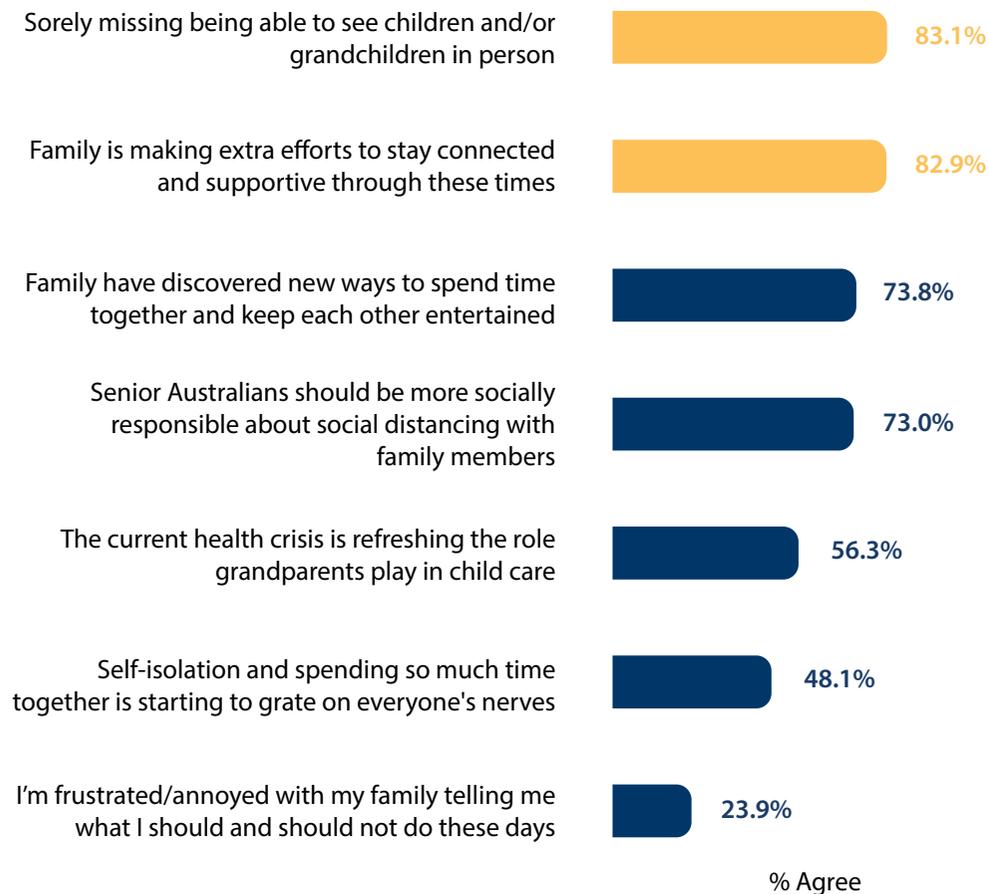
A majority (78.4%) would usually celebrate with family at this time, but this year more than half of them (54.3%) were unable to do so at all.

For those that could, 12.5% did so over video conferencing systems.



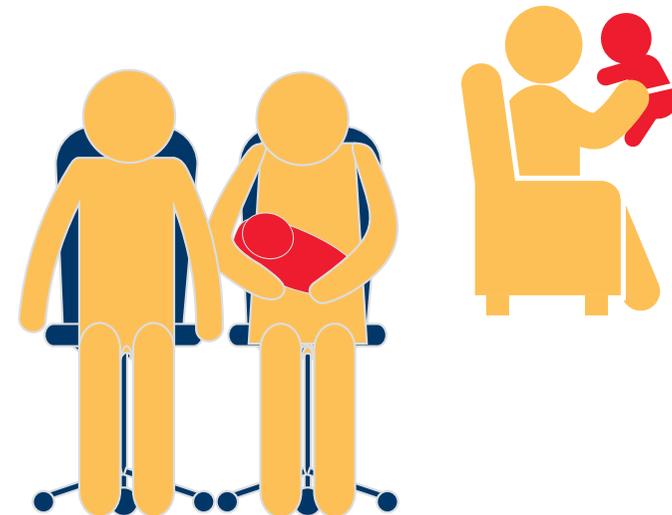
While some miss the old days of family gatherings, some say there can be too much of a good thing

How much do you agree with the following statements about changes to family behaviour during this crisis?



One of the hardest impacts of the pandemic has been the effect of isolation, especially on more vulnerable Australians. A majority (83.1%) sorely miss being able to see their children and grandchildren in person. A similar proportion (82.9%) say their family is having to make an extra effort to connect and be supportive.

With that being said, some are feeling on edge – with almost half (48.1%) saying that spending so much time with isolation companions is starting to grate on peoples' nerves. Almost a quarter (23.9%) also agree that they're growing frustrated with their family dictating what they can do.





Social isolation and loneliness

Loneliness has been exacerbated by COVID-19



Over a third (35.8%) of Australian seniors report that they have been feeling more lonely since the pandemic hit. This increase in loneliness has been attributed to a number of factors such as: lack of physical contact and face-to-face company (72.3%), inability to see family (68.5%), friends and neighbours (65.1%), a disengagement from community (46.2%), and more time to reflect and get lost inside one's head (43.6%) are all notable contributors.

Over half (56.2%) are isolating with a partner, just under a quarter (24.3%) are doing it alone and 1 in 5 (20.4%) are isolating with their children.

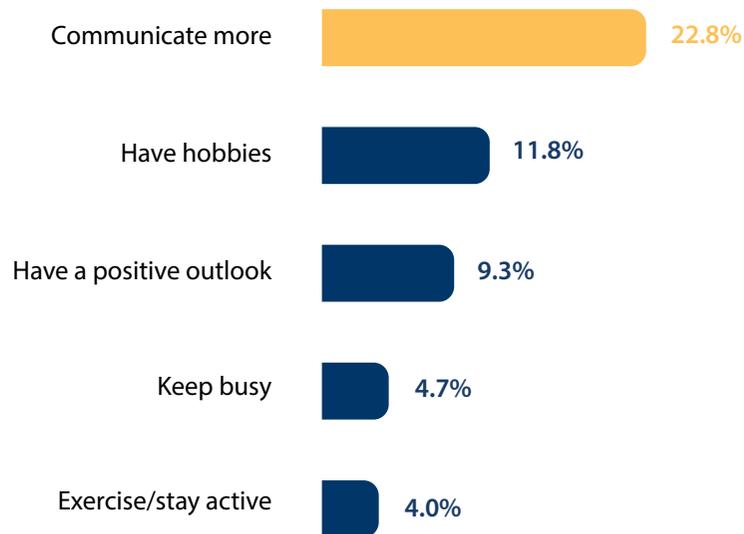
What are the biggest reasons you are now feeling lonelier?



*Multiple answers allowed
*Top 5 answers only

Communication is key in combating loneliness

What tips would you give other older Australians to help combat loneliness, negative feelings and despair through the current period of social isolation measures?



*Top 5 answers only

As social isolation draws on, Australian seniors have found different tactics to help combat the negative impacts.

Communication (22.8%) is top of the list, followed by having hobbies (11.8%) and an optimistic outlook (9.3%).

“
 Find something that makes you happy and do it. Reach out and let people know how you are feeling.
 - 56 year old Female from New South Wales
 ”

“
 Even if you don't feel like it and are able to, get outside for even half an hour - walking around the garden, gardening, sitting in a tidy spot and reading. Be more proactive in being active and don't fret.
 - 67 year old Female from New South Wales
 ”

“
 Think about what activities and hobbies relax you and give you comfort or gratification in your life and engage in these activities and hobbies.
 - 62 year old Male from Western Australia
 ”

“
 Book times with family members and friends to have phone calls. Be sure to spread them out throughout the day, evening.
 - 50 year old Male from New South Wales
 ”

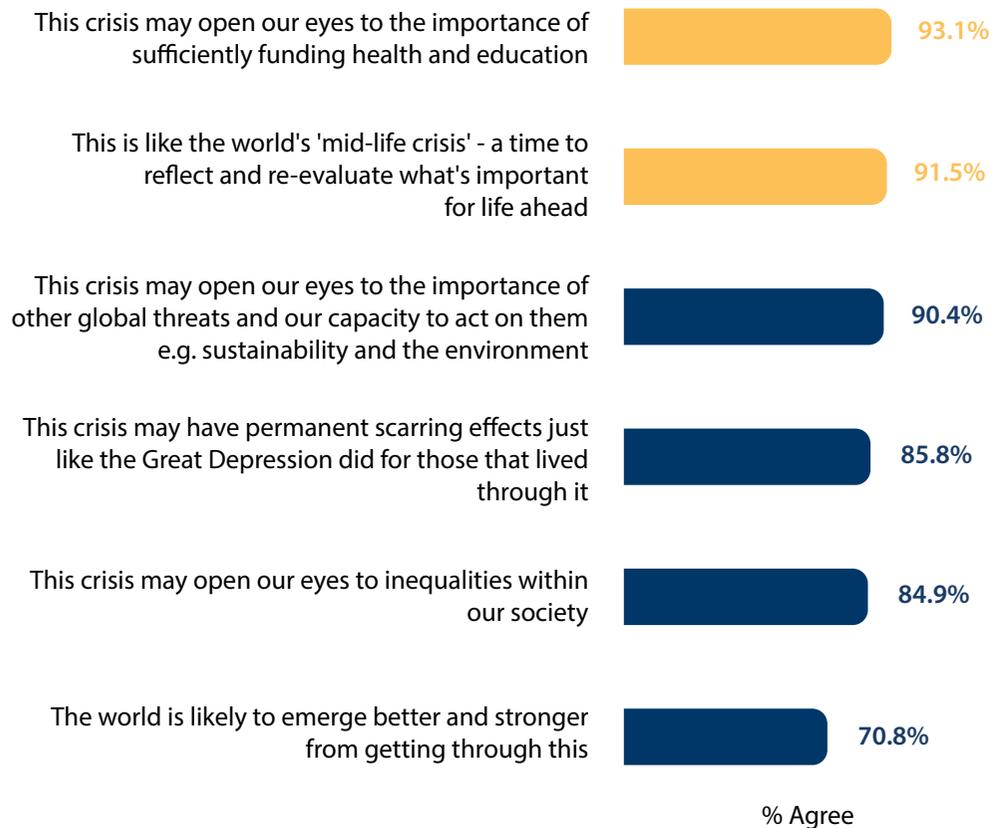
“
 Try to have some kind of contact each day either phone call or just waving to people passing.
 - 67 year old Female from Queensland
 ”



**Big picture impacts of
COVID-19**

Importance of funding health and education at the forefront

How much do you agree with the following statements about the impact this crisis has had on the world?



It's not all doom and gloom, a vast majority agree that the COVID-19 pandemic will result in positive impacts in the long-term.

For instance, almost all (93.1%) agree that this pandemic will open our eyes to the importance of education and health funding. A similar proportion (91.5%) agree this is a time where the world can reflect and reprioritise what's ahead.



The glass is always half full, even in times of crisis

What do we want to keep when COVID-19 is over?



*Multiple answers allowed

Despite the inherent negativity around COVID-19 and its impacts, there are always positives that can be taken from a situation.

In this instance, Australian seniors truly believe they'll emerge with a greater appreciation for essential workers (70.2%), more random acts of kindness and compassion will occur (66.0%) and the nation will pay more attention to the standard of care for our oldest and most vulnerable people (66.0%).



More of the Australian Seniors Series coming soon...



About Australian Seniors

Australian Seniors launched in 1998 to meet the needs of the often-ignored over 50s market. Since then, we've helped countless Australians protect the most important things in life – whether it's their family's future, valuable assets, or even their long-planned retirement.

We strive to be different through the diverse offering of our funeral insurance, home and contents insurance, landlords insurance, travel insurance and pet insurance products. By carefully selecting underwriters that share our vision of providing insurance that's simple, easy to understand, and affordable. That's why our policies have helped everyone from hard-working over 50s to self-funded retirees take control of the things that matter most.