

COVID-19 Customer Vulnerability

Customer Research
Insights Report
Wave 3, Q2, June 2021

Research was conducted to understand the degree of customer vulnerability, as well as customers' consumption and sentiment towards energy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Energy Charter

Survey conducted April 28th to May 3rd 2021
N=3012, representative of the age & gender of the Australian population
People refers to respondents of the research

Collaboration across supply chain

This 12 months' research by Deloitte into customer vulnerability through COVID-19 is a collaboration between Energy Charter signatories Jemena, ActewAGL, Energy Queensland, Essential Energy and Powershop Australia, together with Simply Energy.



35% of people are optimistic about Australia's economic direction



45% of people agreed that COVID-19 had increased their stress levels



56% of people on JobSeeker reported a decrease in household income



31% of people indicated that they are spending more on energy bills over the last 3 months

Key themes from the COVID-19 Customer Vulnerability Research

Respondents wellbeing continue to trend upwards across the entire sample population, suggesting a continued trajectory of recovery

- An increase of 3% in respondents who are optimistic about Australia's economic direction (compared to Wave 1)
- A decrease of 5% in those who reported reduced working hours due to COVID-19 (compared to Wave 1)
- A decrease of 7% and 10% respectively, amongst those reporting a reduction in individual and household income (compared to Wave 1)
- For those categories where household spending had fallen, there has also been a turnaround. A 17% improvement in Recreation spend (e.g. entertainment or holidays), and a 20% improvement in Transport spend (compared to Wave 1)

Whilst JobSeekers have improved since Wave 2, the ending of income supplements may amplify their vulnerability over the coming months

- Young Adults (18-24), Renters and JobSeekers continue to be the 3 primary vulnerable groups as they are being impacted more significantly than the broader population. Whilst all three groups have shown improvement, the ending of Coronavirus and JobKeeper payments may lead to the gap between these groups and the broader population widening in Wave 4
- The need for hardship support was consistently higher amongst these vulnerable groups when compared to the broader population
- Respondents belonging to these three groups were also more likely to be experiencing financial stress

Pandemic induced stress has improved as the COVID-19 situation becomes more manageable across the country, however figures remain high

- 45% of respondents agreed that COVID-19 had increased their stress levels, a reduction from the 51% recorded in Wave 2
- 61% of respondents are highly concerned about the lasting impacts of COVID-19, which is lower than the 69% recorded in Wave 2
- Bill related stress has restabilised down to Wave 1 numbers, as 26% stated that they were worried about being able to pay their bills (compared to 29% in Wave 2)
- 51% of young adults reported that COVID-19 has increased their stress levels, a large improvement from Wave 2 (61% of respondents). This however still represents a large proportion of Young Adults.

The proportion of respondents needing hardship support has persisted since Wave 2.

- Consistent with Wave 1, Energy Bills remain the category where household spending has increased the most, with 31% of respondents indicating they are spending more
- At 16%, energy bills and medical expenses are the household spending categories where the most respondents are receiving support. A further 15% stated that they may need energy bill support in the next 3 months (May - Jul), which is consistent with Wave 2 results

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