



Real Family Concerns

September 2021



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About the report

The *Real Family Concerns* report forms part of the Real Insurance Research Series and is a follow on from the [Real Concerns of Parents 2020](#) and [Real Concerns Index 2019](#). In its latest instalment, this study explores various concerns of parents across several categories such as family, finances and children's online security, and in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

The report is compiled based on research commissioned by Real Insurance and conducted by CoreData between 20 and 26 July 2021. The research was conducted via a quantitative online survey, gathering **1,359** responses from Australians who have at least one child under 18 years old living at home with them.

This research explores the concerns that families experience ranging from online concerns to financial concerns. COVID-19 has been particularly challenging for many and has had a big impact on the concerns of families. It's important to keep that in mind when reading this report.

The report also compares results to those gathered previously in the following reports:

- [Real Concerns of Parents \[December 2020\]](#) – 1,207 responses
- [Real Concerns Index \[May 2019\]](#) – 2,099 responses (parents subset)
- [Real Family Protection \[May 2017\]](#) – 1,032 responses
- [Real Kids and Technology \[March 2017\]](#) – 1,074 responses

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

Important things to note about the charts and references

- ! Footnotes directly underneath the charts (e.g.* Respondents working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic) mainly refer to the sampling involved per question. This is to differentiate who was asked that particular question in the survey.
- ! Any chart without a specific note on its sampling was asked to all respondents.
- ! It also differentiates the types of questions asked. For instance, *Multiple answers allowed' appears when the question called for more than one answer from the respondent.
- ! Some references are made based on wealth segments which is based on the declared household's annual income, including all wages, salaries, pensions and other income, before tax:

Mass market - \$75,000 or less	Core affluent - \$150,001 to \$250,000
Mass affluent - \$75,001 to \$150,000	High Net Worth - More than \$250,000





Key findings

Key findings

More parents are worried about protecting their family, with COVID-19 the biggest concern

- 9 in 10 parents (89.7%) worry about protecting their family, which has increased from the 2017 research (80.4%).
- The top perceived threats include the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (63.1%), mental health/wellbeing issues (57.8%) and financial hardship (52.0%).
- Many are worried about the economic impact that COVID-19 will or has had on the global and local economy, more than 3 in 5 (61.9%) are considerably or very strongly concerned.

Screen time has increased with children prompting online concerns for parents

- More than 1 in 2 (54.9%) parents report their children are now spending more (non-educational) time in front of screens than in 2019.
- Parents' concerns about online threats are many and varied but online predators (59.3%), exposure to bullying (54.1%), online scams (52.0%), online addiction (51.5%) and porn (48.3%) are in the top 5.
- More than 1 in 3 (35.7%) parents report that their children have actually experienced concerning online threats, with rates being similar between pre-teens and teens.
- Around 4 in 5 parents have discussed key online threats with their children. Many are actively trying to teach their children how to manage these threats. Imposing strict limits is more common for pre-teen children while teens are more often being taught responsible use online by parents.

Schools should educate students about online safety

- 9 in 10 parents feel that education regarding online safety for children should be added into the curriculum in every year of schooling.
- Parents of children who attend private school are more likely to rate their school's performance in education of online safety as good or excellent when compared to public schools.



Key findings

Financial concerns still prevalent, but has eased since 2020

- The majority of parents are at least reasonably concerned about household spending, the rising cost of living and the ability to cover emergencies, however it has improved since 2020, during the initial COVID-19 outbreak.
- Concern about covering day-to-day expenses has slightly improved from 2020 with fewer families feeling considerably or very strong concern (32.6% vs. 47.1%).
- Concerns about the rising cost of living have improved with fewer families feeling considerable or very strong concern when compared to 2019 (51.5% vs. 69.3%).
- More than 2 in 5 (43.5%) say that they worry about or feel very little job security, which means not being able to plan annual holidays (38.2%), relationship impacts (35.9%) and ability to pay for school fees (35.8%).
- Parents' concerns about having enough money to cover emergencies or unexpected costs have also improved from 2020 (45.6% vs. 57.9%) and returned to levels similar to 2019 (48.4%), before COVID-19.

Increasing concern for insurance coverage

- More than 3 in 5 parents (63.8%) are at least reasonably concerned that they may not have sufficient insurance cover.
- Confidence in having sufficient life insurance cover has dropped significantly since 2017 (16.7% vs. 33.2%).

Saving for retirement a significant concern for parents

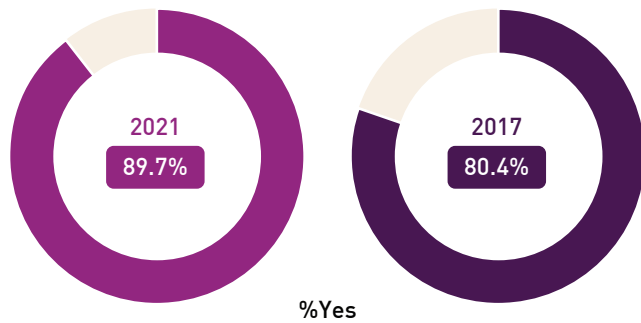
- 3 in 4 parents are at least reasonably concerned if they are putting enough money away for retirement. Little change observed since we last asked this in 2019 where slightly less than 3 in 4 (73.6%) reported they were at least reasonably concerned about having put away enough for retirement compared to 2021 (75.7%). In fact, only 1 in 4 feel they are on track for a retirement they feel they will be happy with. This drops to 1 in 5 for females and 1 in 6 for mass market parents.



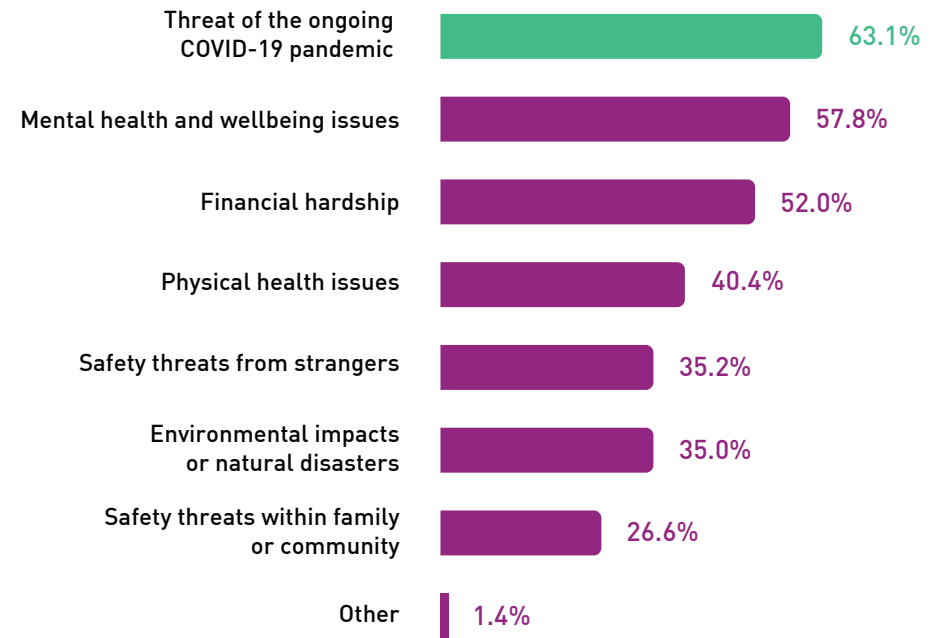
Greatest family concerns

The greatest threats to family

Do you worry about protecting your family?



What do you see as the greatest threats to your family?



Multiple answers allowed

9 in 10 parents (89.7%) worry about protecting their family. This level of worry has increased significantly for parents from 2017 (80.4%).

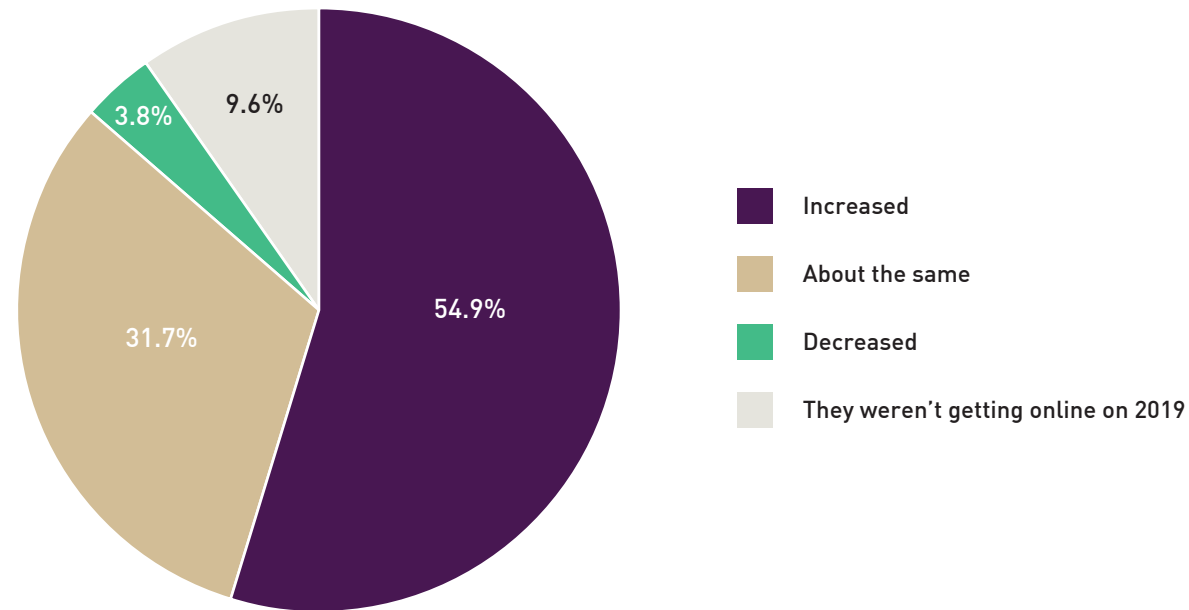
The top perceived threats include the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (63.1%), mental health/wellbeing issues (57.8%) and financial hardship (52.0%). Females are more likely to be concerned than males across these threats but most markedly for financial hardship, mental health and wellbeing issues.



Online concerns

Children's online activity

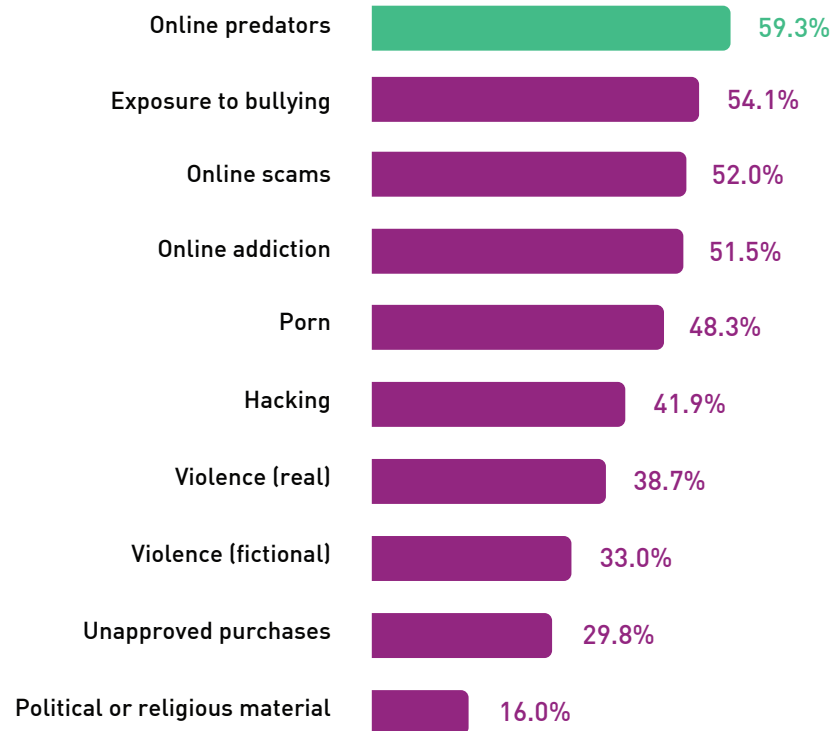
Has the time your children spend online with social media, gaming, and non-educational activities increased or decreased compared to pre-pandemic (i.e. 2019)?



54.9% of parents report increased time spent online by their children with social media, gaming, and non-educational activities compared to 2019. Only 3.8% observed this screen time had decreased. A further 16.0% report their children increased screen time last year but have now returned to 2019 levels. Only 15.7% were able to maintain consistent screen time over this period.

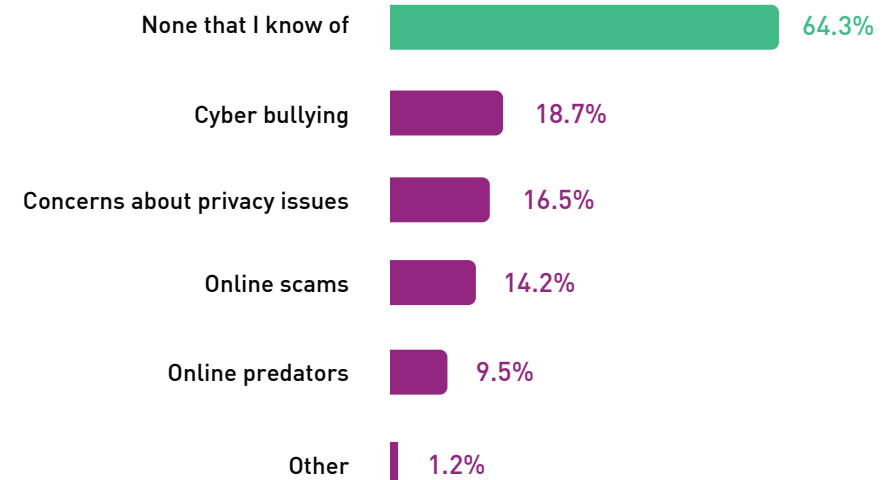
Exposure to possible online danger

What are you most concerned your child will be exposed to through technology? (Top 10 answers)



Multiple answers allowed
Top 10 answers only

Have your children experienced any concerning online privacy issues, scams or cyber bullying?



Parents' concerns about online threats are many and varied but online predators (59.3%), exposure to bullying (54.1%), online scams (52.0%), online addiction (51.5%) and porn (48.3%) round out the top 5.

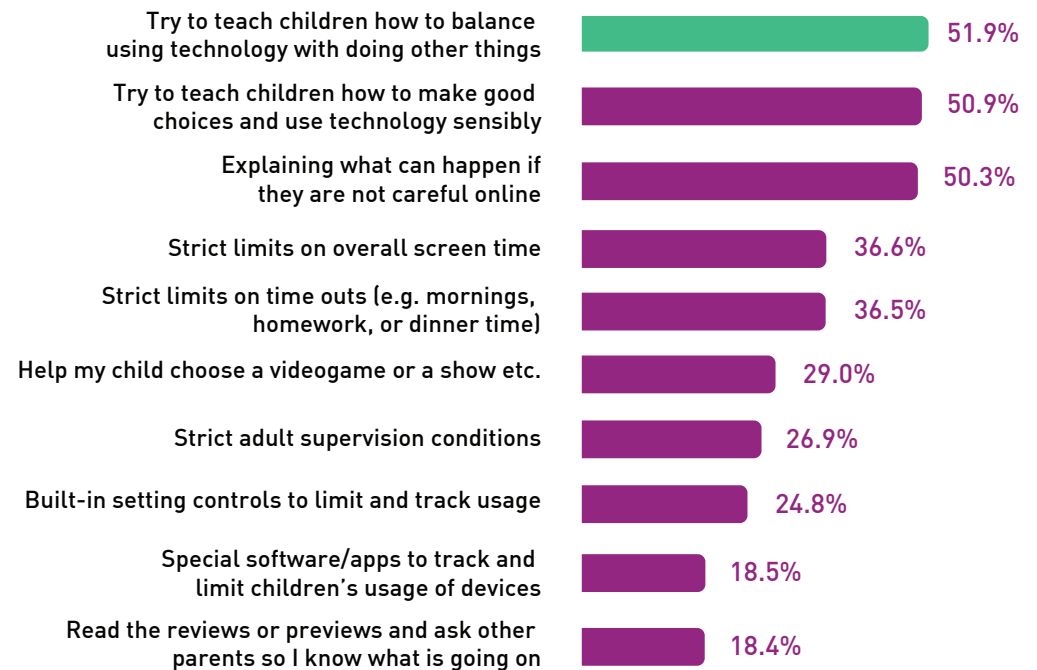
More than a third (35.7%) of children as reported by parents have experienced either online privacy issues, scams or cyber bullying. Perhaps surprisingly we found that the rates were similar for pre-teens (32.4%) and teens (35.5%). This is not just a real problem for teens and the real dangers are being realised at even younger age.

Strategies to reduce online threats and risks

Have you discussed the following with your child at all?

	Pre-teen	Teen
Not talking to strangers	78.2%	95.3%
How much screen time is too much	79.1%	90.0%
Understanding that some material is not appropriate for them	76.5%	93.9%
The physical impacts of too much screen time	74.3%	89.9%
Importance of protecting personal information	69.1%	94.3%
Not making in-app game purchases without parents' approval	69.9%	89.9%
The mental health impacts of social media and cyber bullying	61.5%	89.1%

Which of the following do you do to help avoid some of the negative effects of your children using technology?



Multiple answers allowed

Around 4 in 5 parents have discussed key online threats with their children. Many are actively trying to teach their children how to manage these threats. Much fewer are actually imposing strict limits, actively controlling or supervising their children's technology usage.

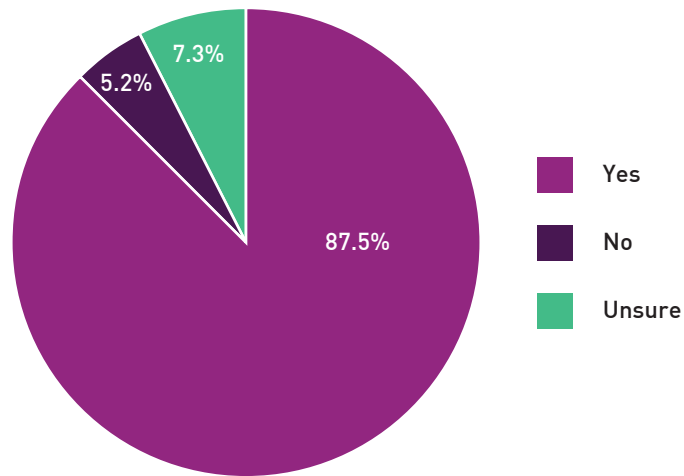
The older children are, the more likely that parents have important discussions about online safety. Parents of younger children tend to focus most on screen time discussions, not talking to strangers and understanding that some material is not appropriate for them. Younger children are more likely to have strict limits whereas older children are much more likely to have been taught to make good choices, balance using technology and how to keep safe.



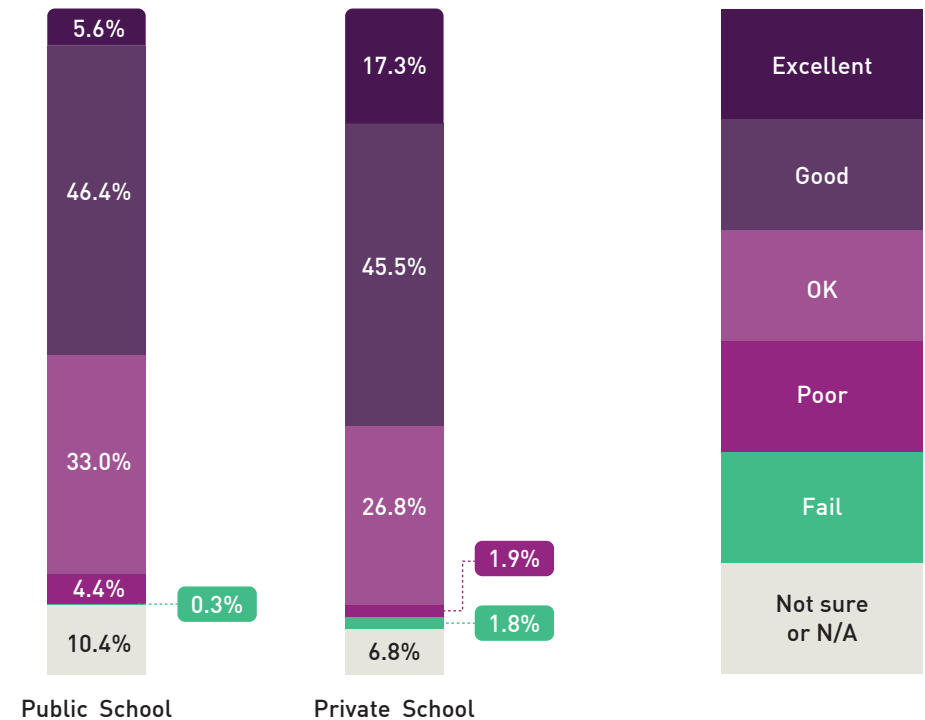
School education in online safety

School's performance in online safety education

Do you feel that education regarding online safety for children should be added into the curriculum in every year of schooling?



How would you rate your children's public/private school's performance in educating students about online safety and effectively managing the risks?



Almost 9 in 10 (87.5%) parents feel that education regarding online safety for children should be added into the curriculum in every year of schooling.

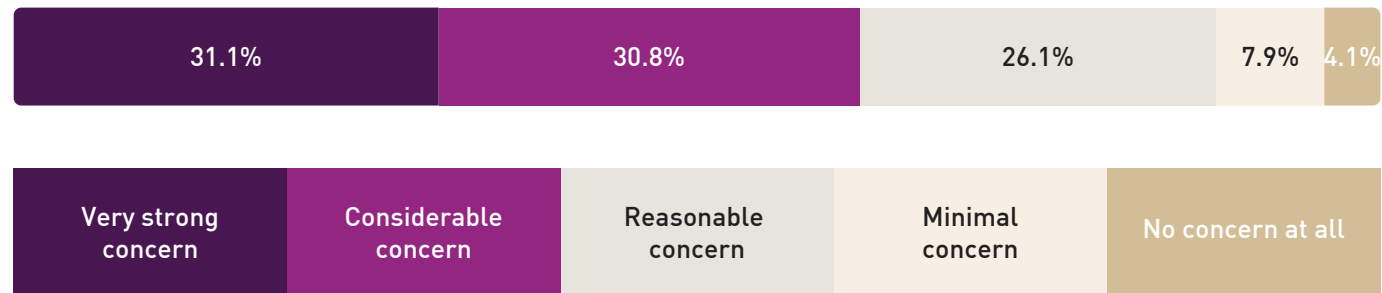
Ratings of school's performance in educating students about online safety and effectively managing the risks sees private schools ahead of public schools (61.4% vs. 48.9%) in terms of Excellent and Good ratings. Public school parents are also more likely to be unsure how their school performs.



Financial concerns

The COVID-19 pandemic is a significant concern for parents

How concerned are you about COVID-19's effect on the global and local economy?

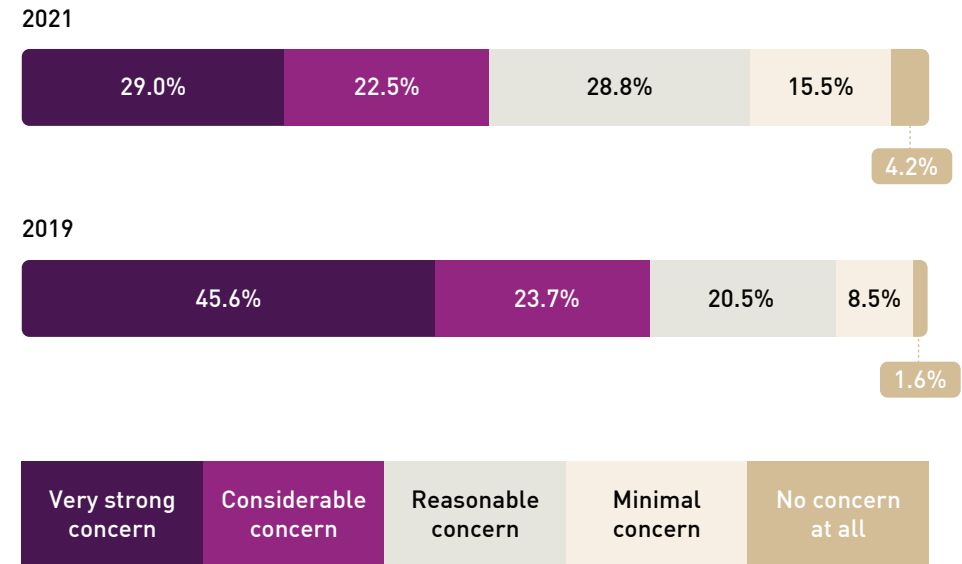
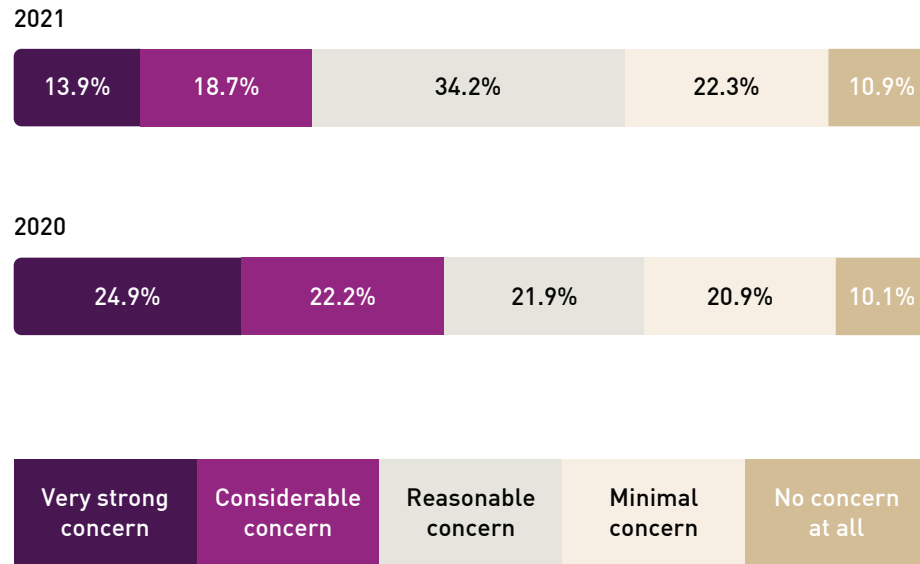


COVID-19 was the greatest concern, with over 3 in 5 (61.9%) considerably or very strongly concerned about the continued economic impact of COVID-19 (with 9 in 10 at least reasonably concerned).

Day-to-day expenses and the rising cost of living

How concerned are you about covering day- to- day expenses, bills and debts for your family?

How concerned are you about the rising cost of living (i.e. general expenses and utilities etc.)?



66.8% of parents are at least reasonably concerned about covering day-to-day expenses, bills and debts for their family. On a positive note it has slightly improved from 2020 with fewer families feeling considerably or very strongly concerned (32.6% vs. 47.1%).

4 in 5 (80.3%) are at least reasonably concerned about the rising cost of living. However fewer families feel considerable or very strong concern when compared to 2019 (51.5% vs. 69.3%).

Rainy day fund

How concerned are you about having enough money to cover emergencies or unexpected costs?

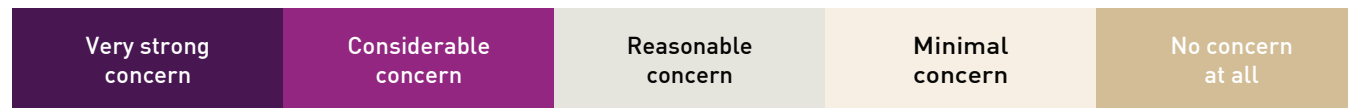
2021



2020



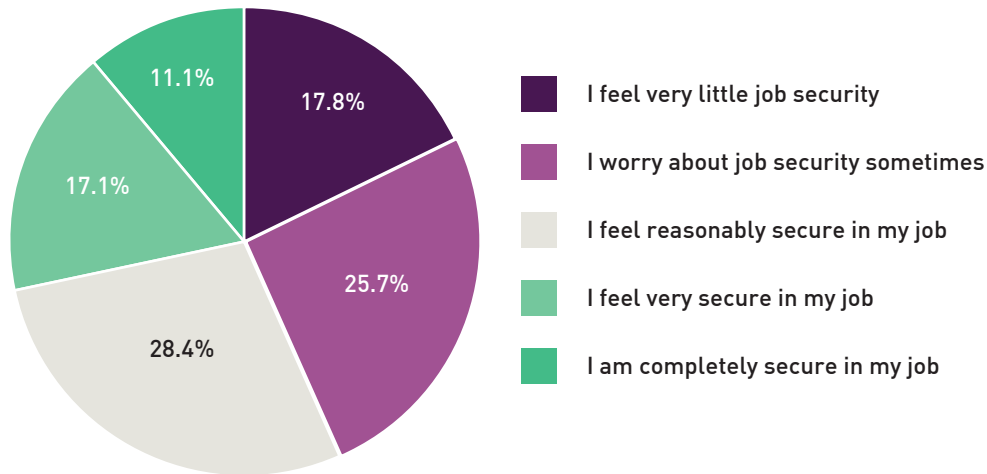
2019



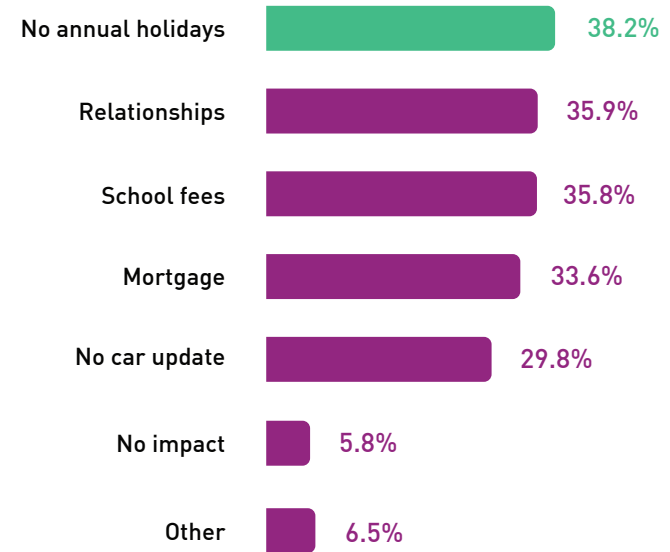
Almost 3 in 4 (72.7%) parents have concerns about having enough money to cover emergencies or unexpected costs. Those with considerable and very strong concerns has improved from 2020 (45.6% vs. 57.9%) and returned to levels similar to 2019 (48.4%), before COVID-19.

The impact of job security concerns

How much job security do you feel in your current work?



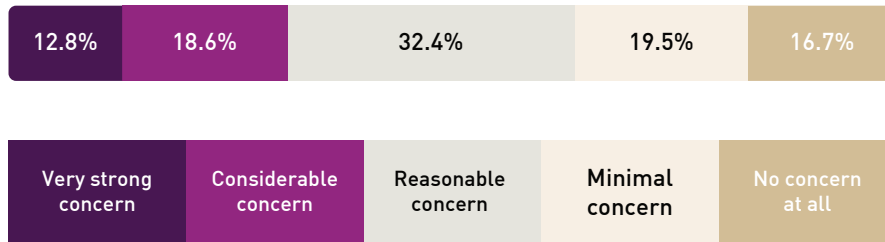
How do concerns around job security impact your family?



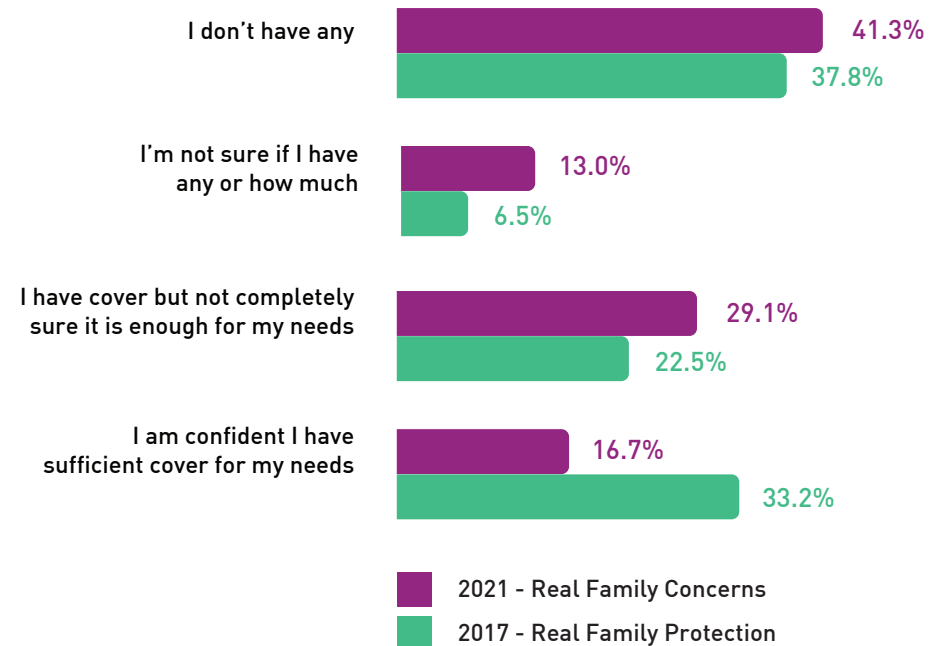
More than 2 in 5 (43.5%) parents say that they worry about or feel very little job security. This is something that is more concerning for females when compared to males (47.4% vs. 39.8%). A concern for job security means not being able to plan annual holidays (38.2%), relationship impacts (35.9%) and ability to pay for school fees (35.8%).

Insurance cover concerns

Overall how concerned are you that you may not have sufficient insurance cover to ensure the protection of your family?



What best describes how you feel about your life insurance cover?



More than 3 in 5 (63.8%) are at least reasonably concerned that they may not have sufficient insurance cover to ensure the protection of their family. Less than 1 in 5 (16.7%) have no concerns at all.

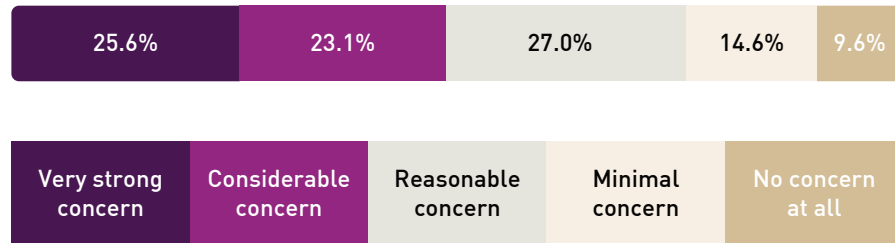
Confidence in having sufficient life insurance cover to protect the family has dropped significantly since 2017 (16.7% vs. 33.2%).



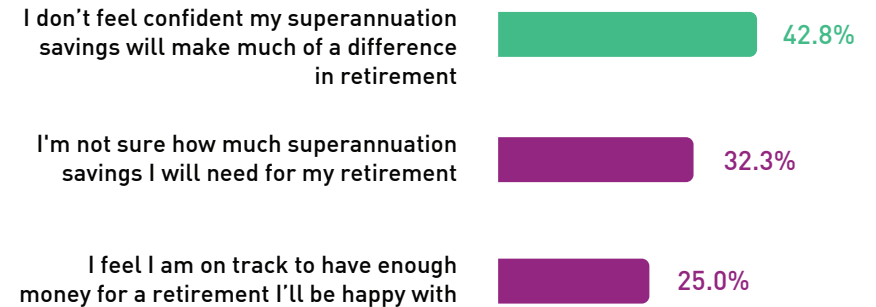
Retirement concerns

Putting enough money away for retirement

How concerned are you about putting enough money away to last your whole retirement?



What best describes how you feel about your superannuation?



3 in 4 (75.5%) parents are at least reasonably concerned if they are putting enough money away for retirement. Interestingly there is not much difference between males and females, it's a concern they both share equally.

Only 1 in 4 (25.0%) feel they are on track for a retirement they feel they will be happy with. However in this case, females are less likely to feel on track when compared to males (19.4% vs. 30.5%).

More research from Real Insurance coming soon...

About Real Insurance

Real Insurance is an award-winning Australian Insurer specialising in life, funeral, pet, car, home, and bike insurance. In the market since 2005, Real Insurance has protected the quality of life of many Australians, through the delivery of innovative and affordable products. Real Insurance has been the recipient of the Feefo Gold Trusted Service Award 2019, Readers Digest Quality Service Award in the life and funeral categories 2019. Real Insurance is a trading name of Greenstone Financial Services Pty Ltd and The Hollard Insurance Company Pty Ltd.

