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COVID-19 movement case study shows supermarket traffic remains steady during pandemic: Melbourne

A special analysis of movement data in indicative locations around Australia reveals that despite massive drop-offs in movement throughout Australia's major cities [Sydney](#) and [Melbourne](#), supermarkets have seen only a small impact.

Supermarkets have played a key role in the national conversation over the last couple of months as 'panic buying' of many essential goods took hold. Research firm Roy Morgan has partnered with leading technological innovator UberMedia to analyse movements at specific supermarket locations within each of the two cities. The results show only small changes in number of visitors to these supermarkets during the pandemic lockdown compared to January and February.

Analysing the movement at Coles Williamstown in Melbourne's Inner Western suburbs shows panic buying peaking on the weekend before the first restrictions were introduced on Sunday March 15. Visitor numbers have declined gently over the weeks since this peak and are now tracking slightly below average levels of movement seen earlier in the year. (The plunge in movement on Friday April 10 signifies the Good Friday public holiday and the beginning of the Easter weekend.)

The data has been aggregated from tens of thousands of mobile devices in order to assess the impact of new Government regulations on social distancing designed to slow the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus throughout Australia.

Michele Levine, CEO of Roy Morgan, says the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic has been severe, with the Australian economy facing its biggest shock since World War II. However as essential suppliers, supermarkets have fared well as Australians hunkered down:

"Australians have dealt with an unprecedented restriction on freedom of movement over the last month to slow down the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus – and these efforts are bearing fruit. .

"Analysing movement at suburban supermarkets such as Coles in Williamstown shows directly how the increasing concerns about COVID-19 led to a spike in movement in mid-March. Movement peaked from Friday March 13 (when the Melbourne Grand Prix was called off) to Tuesday March 17, the day after restrictions were first introduced.

"Unlike movement data for the Melbourne CBD, which showed a changing composition of those going into the city compared to normal patterns, our analysis shows that the customers of Coles Williamstown are largely the same ones who generally shop there. The prosperous [100 Leading Lifestyles](#) Helix Personas community comprises the bulk of around 70% of those shopping at this store – a number that has barely changed over the last few months.

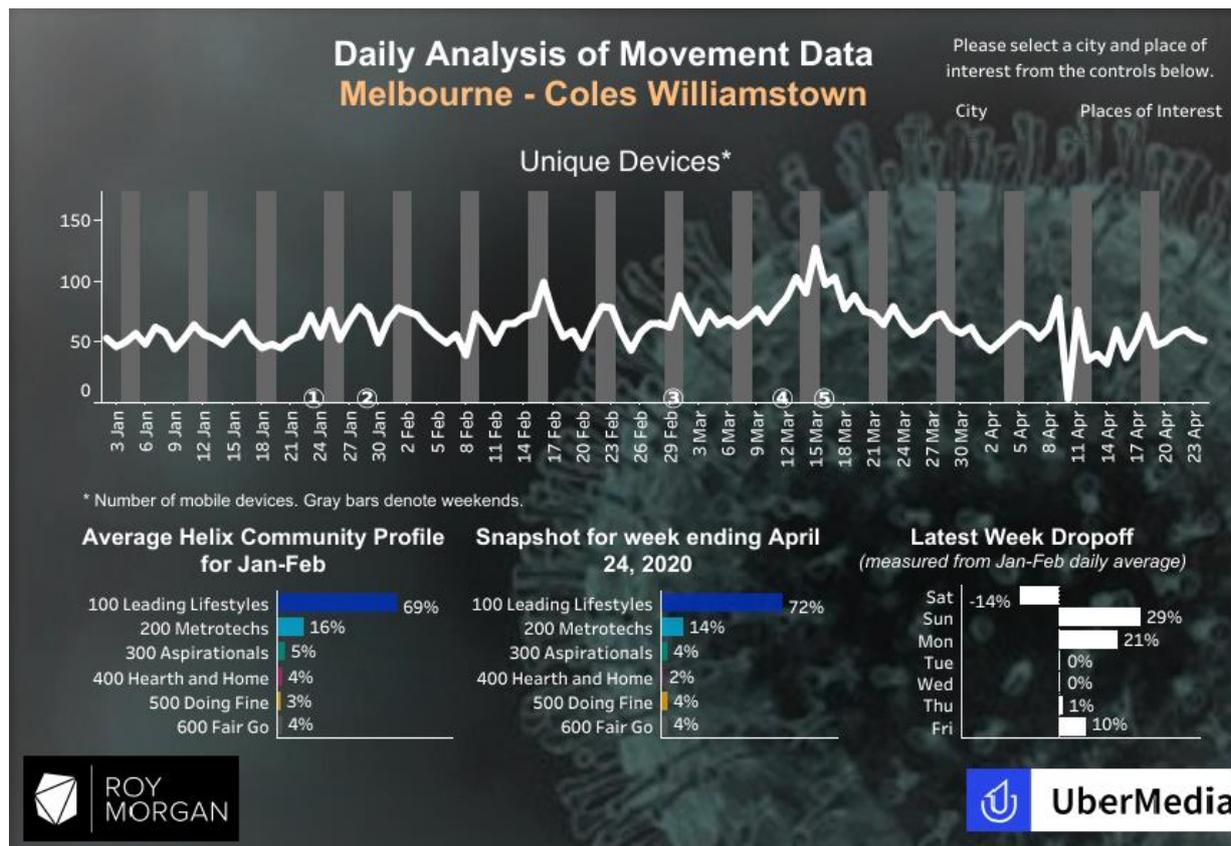
"Governments around Australia have announced plans to begin a relaxation of restrictions over the next few weeks as the 'curve has flattened'. Lifting restrictions will see greater movement in our cities, although with social gatherings still to be limited to ten or fewer people, many businesses such as restaurants, clubs, bars, cinemas and theatres are set to remain closed.

"Keeping close track of the way lifting social distancing restrictions impacts on movement around Australia's cities, including shopping precincts, will provide useful information in assessing what further measures must be undertaken to revitalise communities hard hit by the economic contraction."

MORE INFORMATION

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Daily Analysis of Movement Data for Coles Williamstown in Melbourne in 2020



Source: Roy Morgan collaboration with UberMedia who provide anonymous aggregated insights using mobile location data.

Visit the Roy Morgan website: www.roymorgan.com to gain access to the interactive dashboard.

In contrast to the Coles in Williamstown, we have noticed sharp drop-offs in movement data for several key locations around Melbourne including the airport, Arts Centre, Botanic Gardens, Chinatown, Federation Square, Flinders Street Station, Museum and Exhibition Buildings, Southern Cross Station, Williamstown Beach Station and the Zoo. There have also been rapid declines in movement data for several key general shopping destinations including Chadstone, Highpoint, Southland, The Glen, Werribee Shopping Centre and Costco Docklands.

The aggregate data compiled allows governments and health agencies to assess what types of Australians are visiting places of interest including key landmarks, business districts, shopping centres and even specific retail outlets such as supermarkets via integration of the movement data with the in-depth psychographic profiling capabilities of Roy Morgan Helix Personas (www.helixpersonas.com.au).

About Roy Morgan

Roy Morgan is Australia's largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state, as well as in the U.S. and U.K. A full-service research organisation, Roy Morgan has over 75 years' experience collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

About UberMedia

UberMedia provides the highest quality mobile data solutions to creatively solve businesses persistent challenges. The company's products process billions of social, demographic, and location signals daily across retail, automotive, and entertainment to better understand modern consumers with the most accurate business decision science.

Roy Morgan Helix Personas



100 Leading Lifestyles

Focused on success and career and family, people in the Leading Lifestyles Community are proud of their prosperity and achievements. They are big spenders and enjoy cultured living to the max.

Explore



200 Metrotechs

Socially aware, successful, career focussed and culturally diverse, Metrotechs are trend and tech focused. They are committed experience seekers, willing to spend big on the best of city life and thrive on being out and about in the world.

Explore



300 Aspirationals

Driven by dreams of a big future, Aspirationals are highly ambitious and culturally diverse up-and-comers. Careful spenders, they're working hard today to create a more successful tomorrow.

Explore



400 Hearth and Home

Closest to the average Australian, life revolves around the home for these contented Australians who embrace conventional family life. Perennial home improvers, they see their homes as an expression of their status and achievements.

Explore



500 Doing Fine

Modest but contented, people in the Doing Fine Community are happily making their way through life and value simple pleasures. Price sensitive and light spenders, they take a pragmatic approach to what they buy.

Explore



600 Fair Go

Struggling to make ends meet, looking for a better deal in life, making the best of things or simply pessimistic, cynical and likely to feel they get a raw deal out of life; the Fair Go community are lower income Australians.

Explore

Learn more by visiting www.helixpersonas.com.au.