

Thursday, 28 January 2021

Movement in Melbourne CBD down 72% from a year ago in first half of January; Sydney CBD down 66%

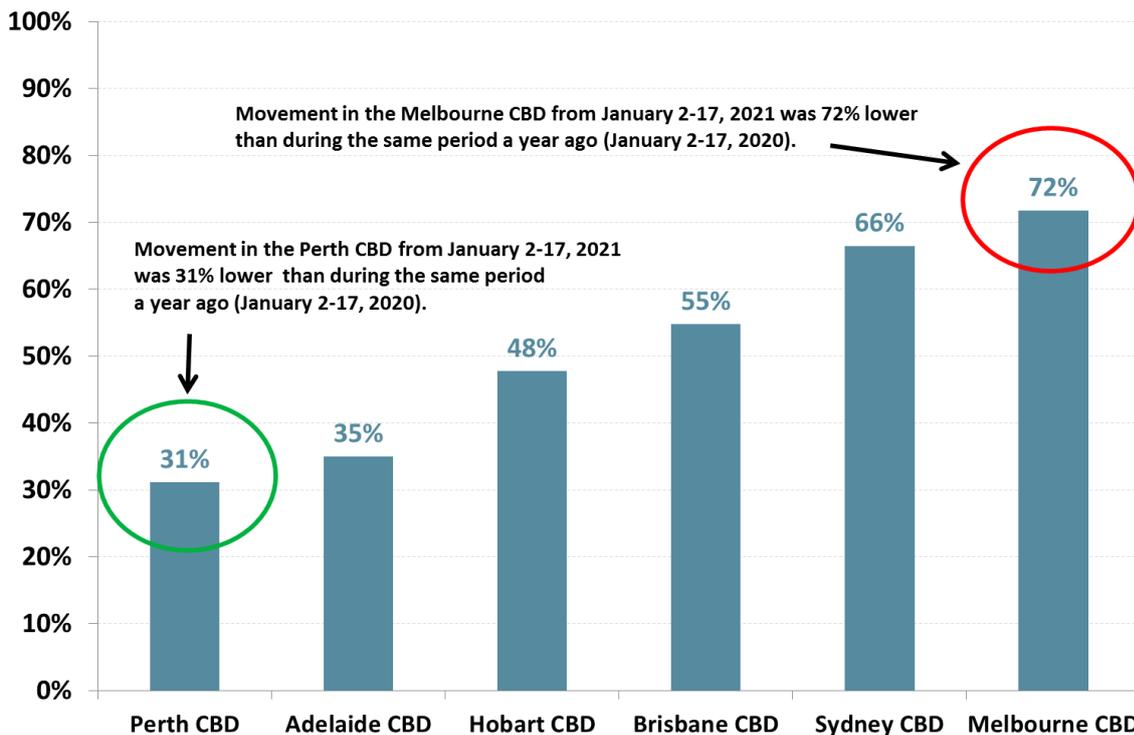
A special analysis of movement data in Australia's Capital City CBDs during January 2021 shows movement levels in the first half of the month are well down on the same period a year ago – by as much as 72% in the Melbourne CBD and 66% in Sydney CBD.

Both cities have been under restrictions during the early part of the year with mandatory mask wearing on public transport and in shopping centres and supermarkets as well as restrictions on the size of gatherings allowed in people's homes and at entertainment and sporting venues. For much of this period the Northern Beaches local council area in Sydney with a population of over 250,000 was also under a harsh stay-at-home lockdown.

Also under restrictions during this period have been millions of people in the Queensland capital which went into a brief city-wide lockdown for three days from January 8-10. Despite this lockdown of millions of Brisbanites movement in the Brisbane CBD during the first half of January is only down by just over half, registering a 55% decline.

Once again the two star performers when it comes to returning to a 'pre-COVID normal' are the Perth CBD, with movement down only 31% on a year ago, and the Adelaide CBD for which movement is down only 35% compared to the first half of January 2020.

% decline in movement in Australian Capital City CBDs during the first half of January 2021 (Jan. 2-17, 2021) vs. first half of January 2020 (Jan. 2-17, 2020)



Source: Roy Morgan collaboration with UberMedia who provide anonymous aggregated insights using mobile location data. **Note:** Movement data for the Capital City CBDs excludes the residents of the respective CBDs.

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Roy Morgan has partnered with leading technology innovator UberMedia to aggregate data from tens of thousands of mobile devices to assess the movements of Australians as we deal with the restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The interactive dashboard available on the website tracks the movement data for those visiting the Capital City CBDs during 2020, excluding the CBD residents of each city. Movement data from several key locations around Australia is also available to view by using the interactive dashboard.

Michele Levine, CEO of Roy Morgan, says Australian cities are slowly returning to normal with city workers returning to the office, however movement in Capital City CBDs remains well down on a year ago – particularly in Australia’s largest cities of Melbourne and Sydney:

“Australia has handled the COVID-19 pandemic very well over the past year and it’s now more than three months since anyone in Australia has died with a COVID-19 infection. Nevertheless, there have been sporadic outbreaks of the virus particularly in the Northern Beaches of Sydney, the Berala ‘cluster’ in Western Sydney and a number of cases connected with a Thai Restaurant in Melbourne’s Black Rock in late December/ early January.

“These outbreaks have caused continuing disruptions including many border closures, localised lockdowns and also mandatory mask wearing in Australia’s major cities and prevented a sustained return to normality.

“Given where these outbreaks have occurred it is no surprise to see that the latest movement data for the first half of January shows the Melbourne CBD has experienced the biggest decline compared to a year ago – down by a large 72% on the first half of January 2020. Although movement in the Melbourne CBD does remain low the good news is that it has more than doubled compared to the low-points during August – October 2020 ([covered here](#)).

“The comparison is only slightly better in the Sydney CBD with movement data down 66% on the same period a year ago. Despite enduring a three-day city-wide lockdown on January 8-10 movement in the Brisbane CBD is 55% lower during the first half of January this year compared to a year ago.

“These results show that although Australia’s management of COVID-19 has been widely lauded it will be sometime before movement of people around Australia’s Capital City CBDs returns to pre-COVID levels. Even the best performed Perth CBD has movement levels down 31% on the same period a year ago despite not having a local case of COVID-19 for more than 9 months since April 2020.

“Vaccines for COVID-19 are due to be rolled out in Australia beginning in late February and a large majority of [79% of Australians according to a special Roy Morgan SMS survey](#) say they are willing to get the vaccine when publicly available.

“However, even once a majority of Australians have been vaccinated later this year it is unlikely there will be unrestricted international travel which means there will be a continuing lack of tourists visiting Australia’s Capital City CBDs. Prior to COVID-19 international visitors were a large, and big spending, segment of the customers frequenting Capital City CBD retailers.

“Given these hurdles it is vital that office workers in the Capital City CBDs are encouraged to return to the office as soon as it can be done without risking negative health outcomes. The impending end of the Federal Government’s JobKeeper wage subsidy in the next few months adds extra urgency to returning our Capital CBDs to a COVID-normal as soon as possible.”

View the latest Roy Morgan UberMedia movement data for Australian Capital City CBDs including the [Melbourne CBD, Sydney CBD, Perth CBD, Adelaide CBD and Hobart CBD here](#).

MORE INFORMATION

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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, Aspirationalists 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.