

COVID-19

Australians are spending more time at home: watching TV, and in many cases eating too much or exercising too little

8 April 2020

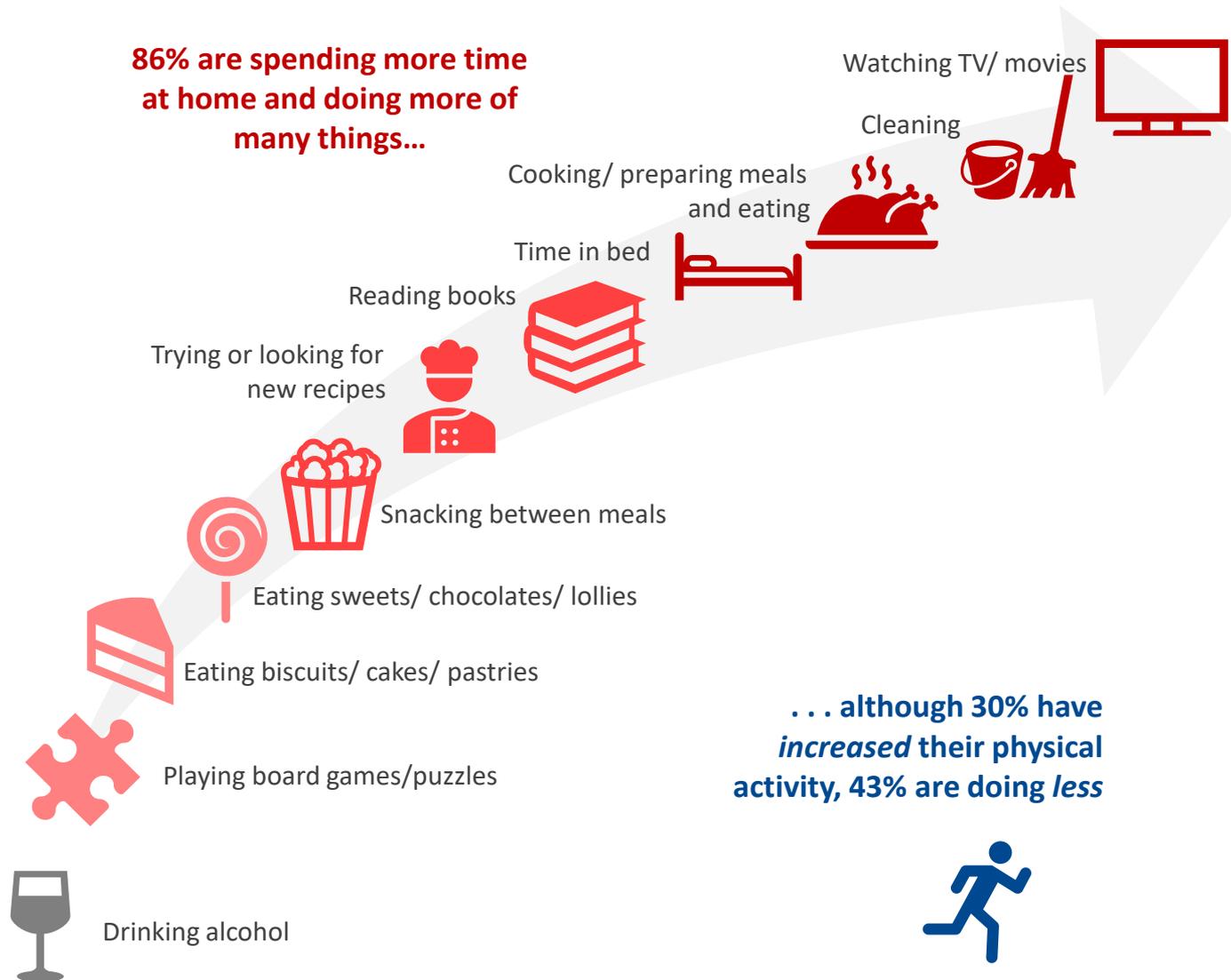


The bottom line

- With elevated social distancing measures, 86% of Australians are currently spending more time at home.
- Over the last couple of weeks, more people say they are feeling bored or isolated, while fewer are feeling scared or helpless. There are also signs of a little more optimism.
- At home people are tending to watch more TV, clean their home more, spend more time in bed and cook/eat more. Although 30% have *increased* their level of physical activity, 43% are doing *less*.

Methodology: Conducted nationally online over the period April 7-8, 2020, among a sample of 318 people aged 18 years and over. Results were post-weighted to reflect the population distribution for age, sex and area.

86% are spending more time at home and doing more of many things...



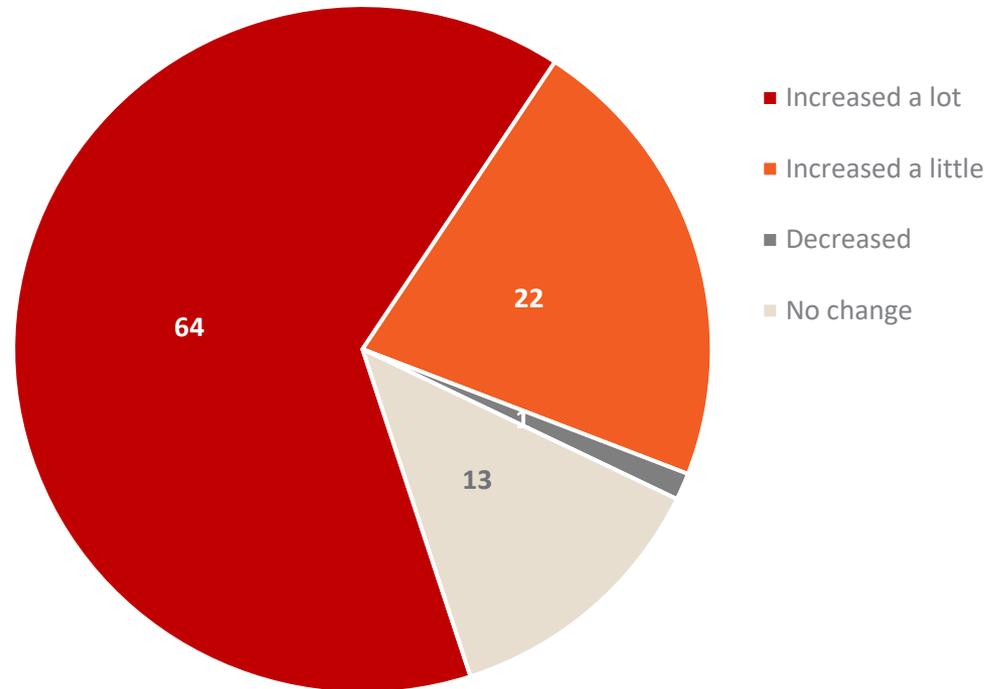
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Spending more time at home**

86% are spending more time at home

%



** Question:

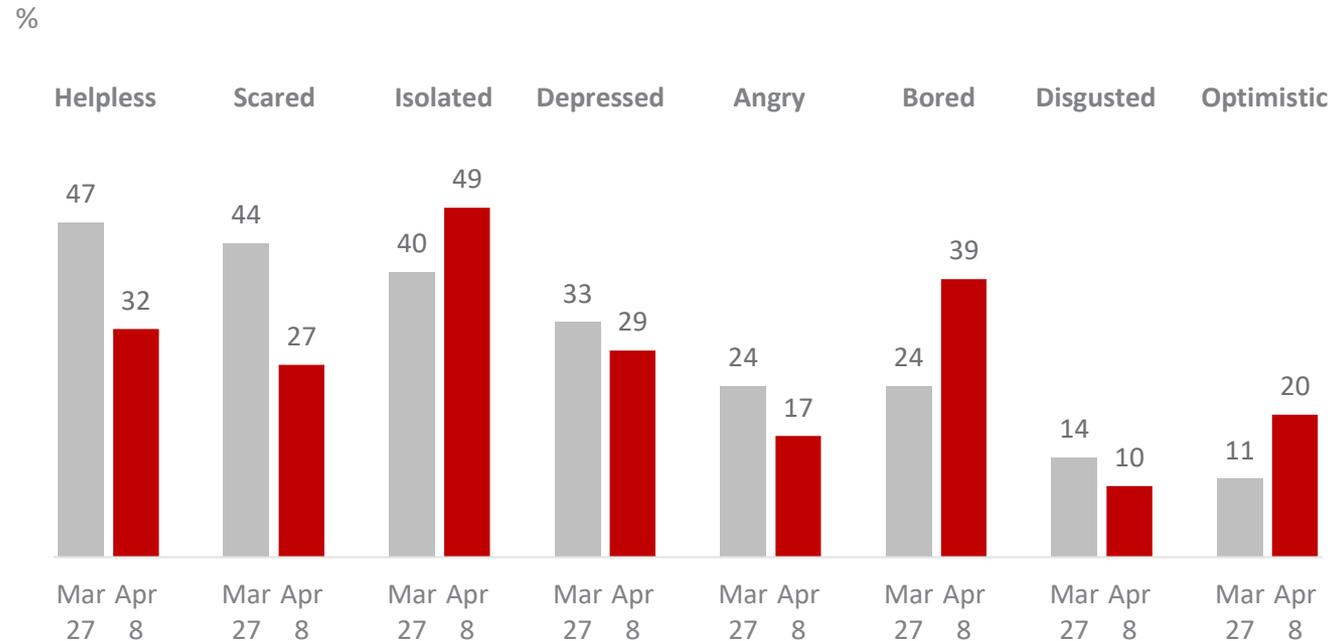
Thinking about your life **now** compared with your 'normal' life **before** the COVID-19 situation.

Compared with what you normally do, would you say each of the following has **increased**, **decreased**, or has there been **no change** for you?

■ With elevated 'social distancing' measures, many businesses closing and many people working from home, the vast majority of Australians, 86%, are spending more time at home than usual - including two-thirds spending a *lot more* time at home.

The things people are *feeling***

Feelings in past week because of COVID-19 situation



- Compared with two weeks ago, there are changes in the feelings/ emotions Australians are experiencing during the COVID-19 situation.

- Fear and helplessness have given way to **boredom** and more heightened feelings of **isolation**. Yet there is also some evidence of green shoots in optimism.

- Speculatively, it's conceivable that fewer people feeling scared, and some feeling more optimistic may be connected with:

- news about the positive impact of social distancing measures; and,
- government financial support measures.

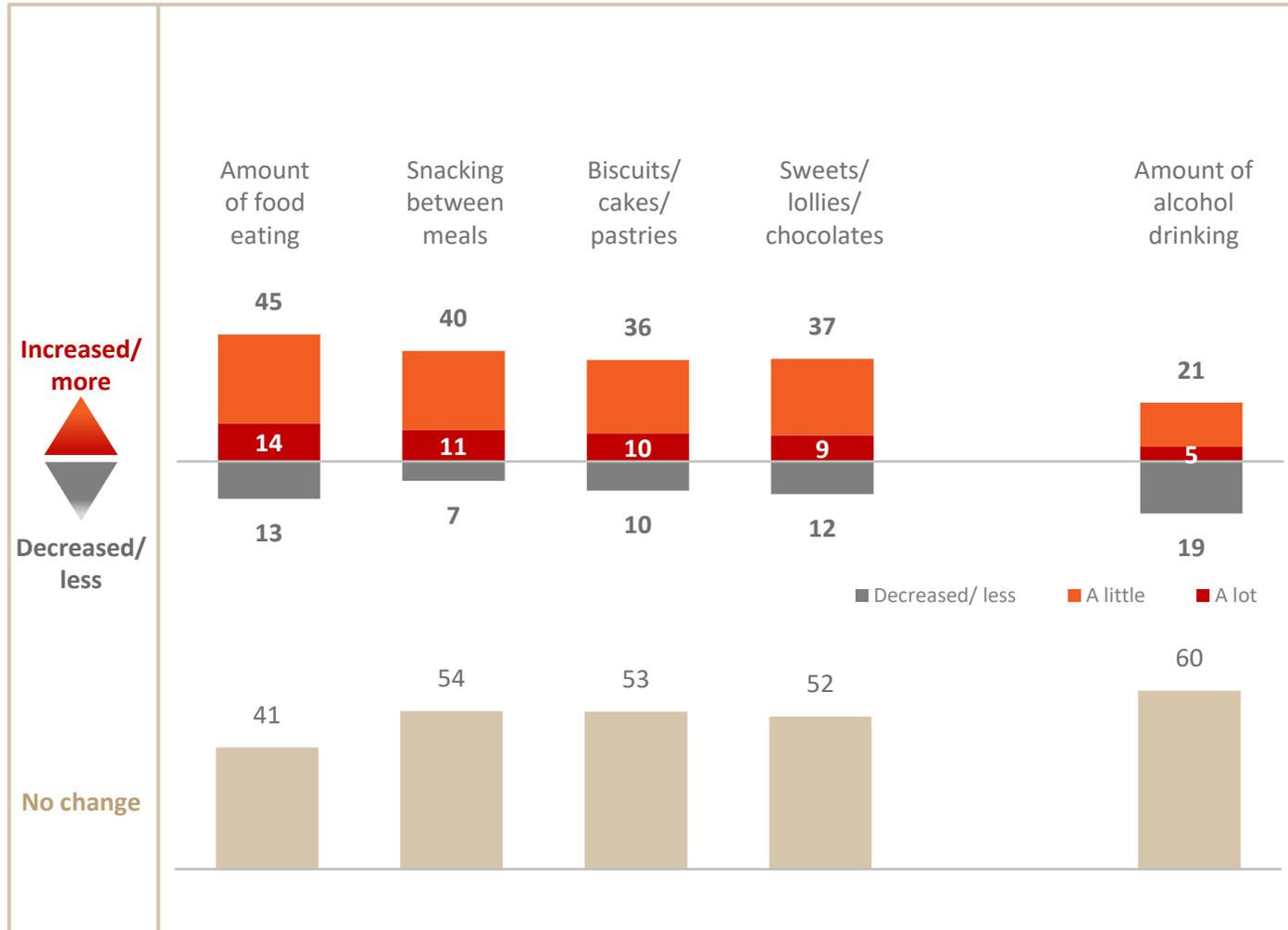
** Question: The COVID-19 situation has affected Australia and Australians in many ways. In the past week, which of these have you felt because of the COVID-19 situation?

Eating and drinking**

■ Dietary habits appear to one of the casualties of people spending more time at home.

- 45% of Australians say they are eating more food, with 40% snacking between meals more often
- Around 35% are giving in to their sweet tooth through increased consumption of biscuits/ cakes/ pastries or sweets/ lollies/ chocolates.

■ As far as alcohol is concerned, there are as many people who say they are drinking *more*, 21%, as those who say they are drinking *less*, 19%.



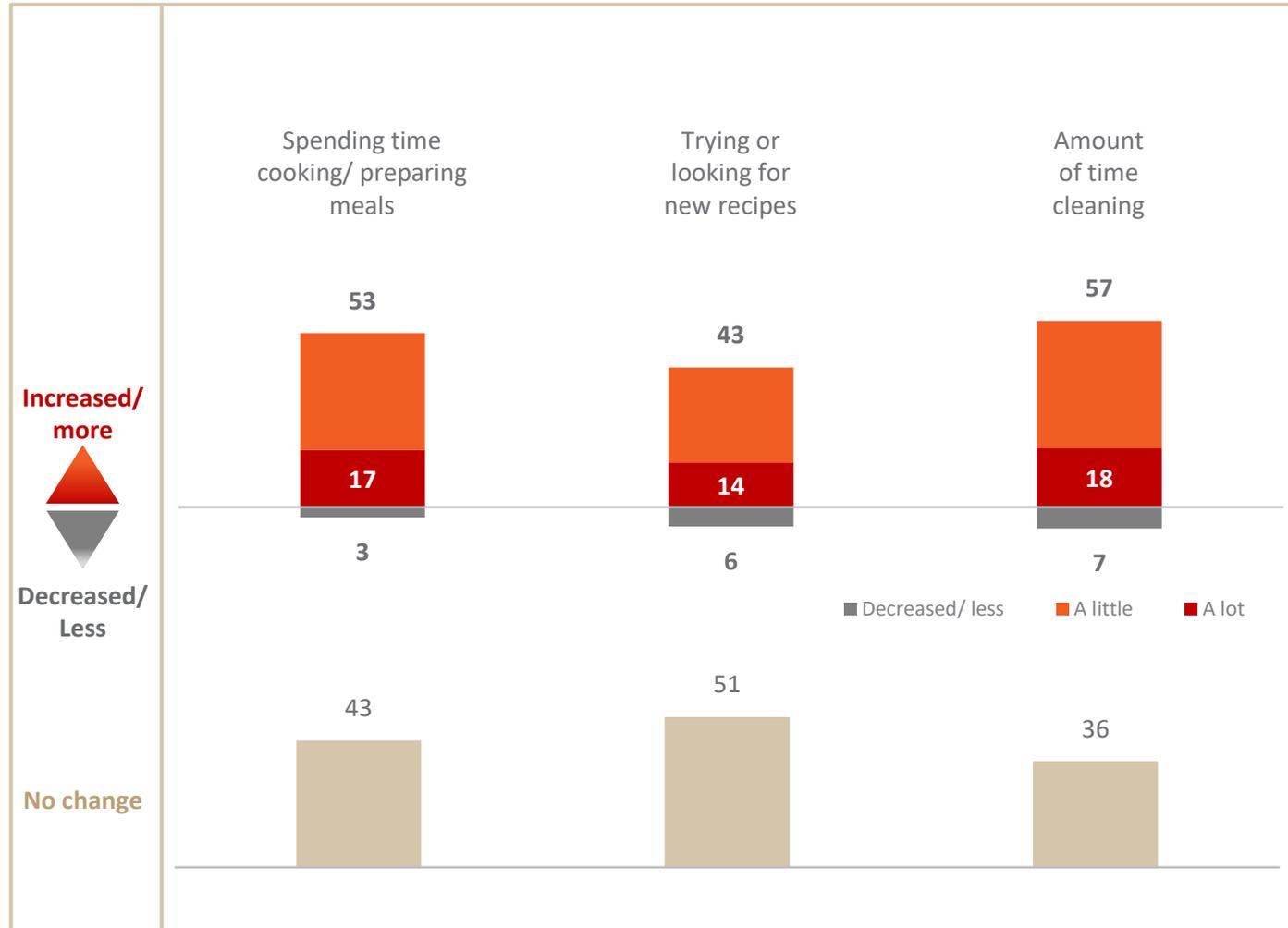
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And for each of the following, are you currently doing **more** than you usually do, **less** than usual, or has there been **no change** for you?

In the kitchen and around the home**

- With more people at home throughout the day, many Australians are spending more time **cooking or preparing meals**.
- But it's not always just the 'same old stuff' – many are looking for inspiration with 43% **trying or looking for new recipes**. This may not only reflect more time to experiment, but in some cases a little more pressure from the family to offer up something different.
- Spending more time **cleaning** is also prevalent.



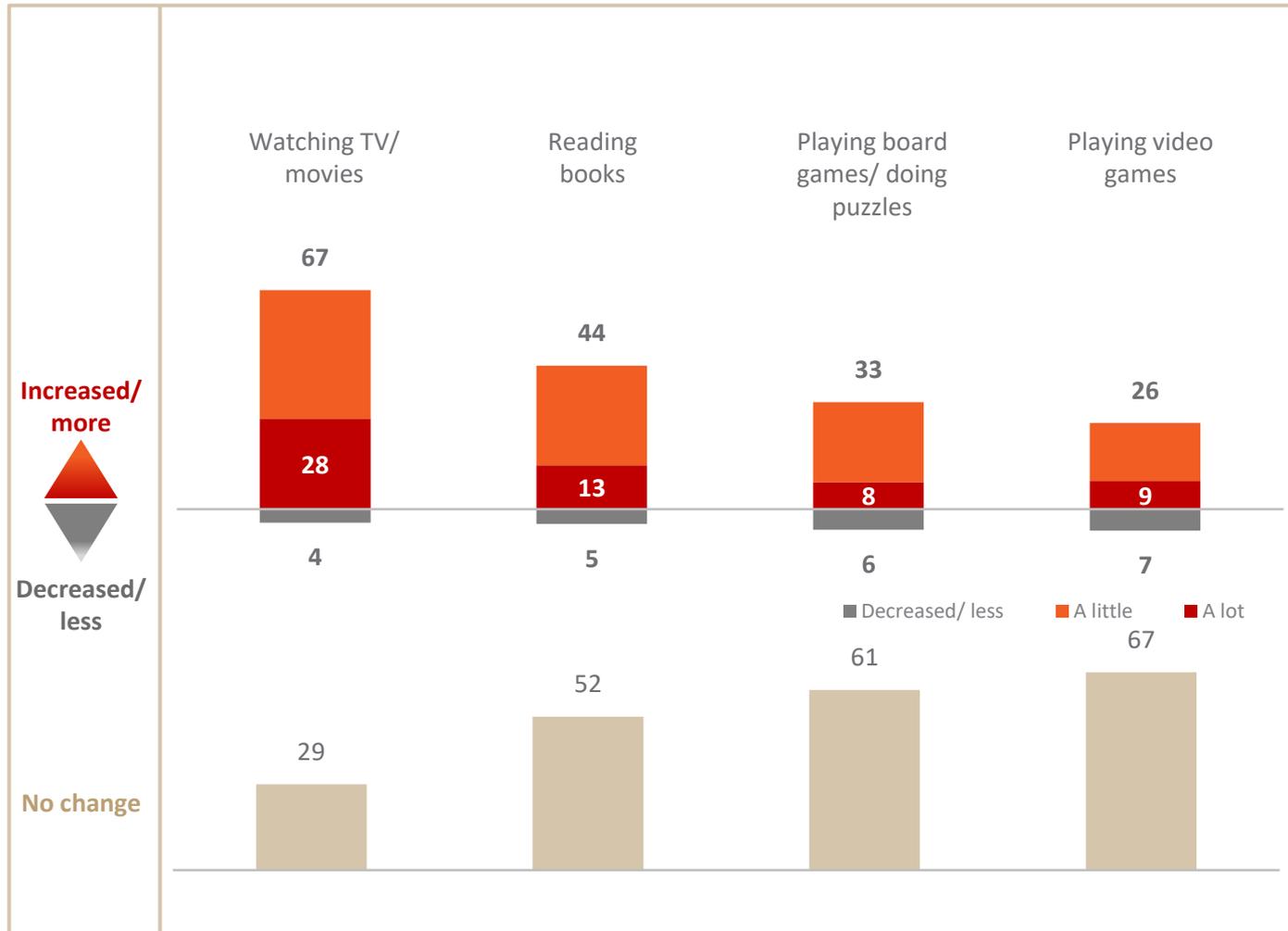
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Amusements to fill in the time**

- Watching TV/ movies is the way to fill in the extra time for a large majority of Australians, around 70%.
- But a very substantial 44% are turning to the joys of reading a good book.
- Increased playing of board games or doing puzzles is also quite prevalent, even more so than video games. Board games are no doubt a great way for families to spend time together.



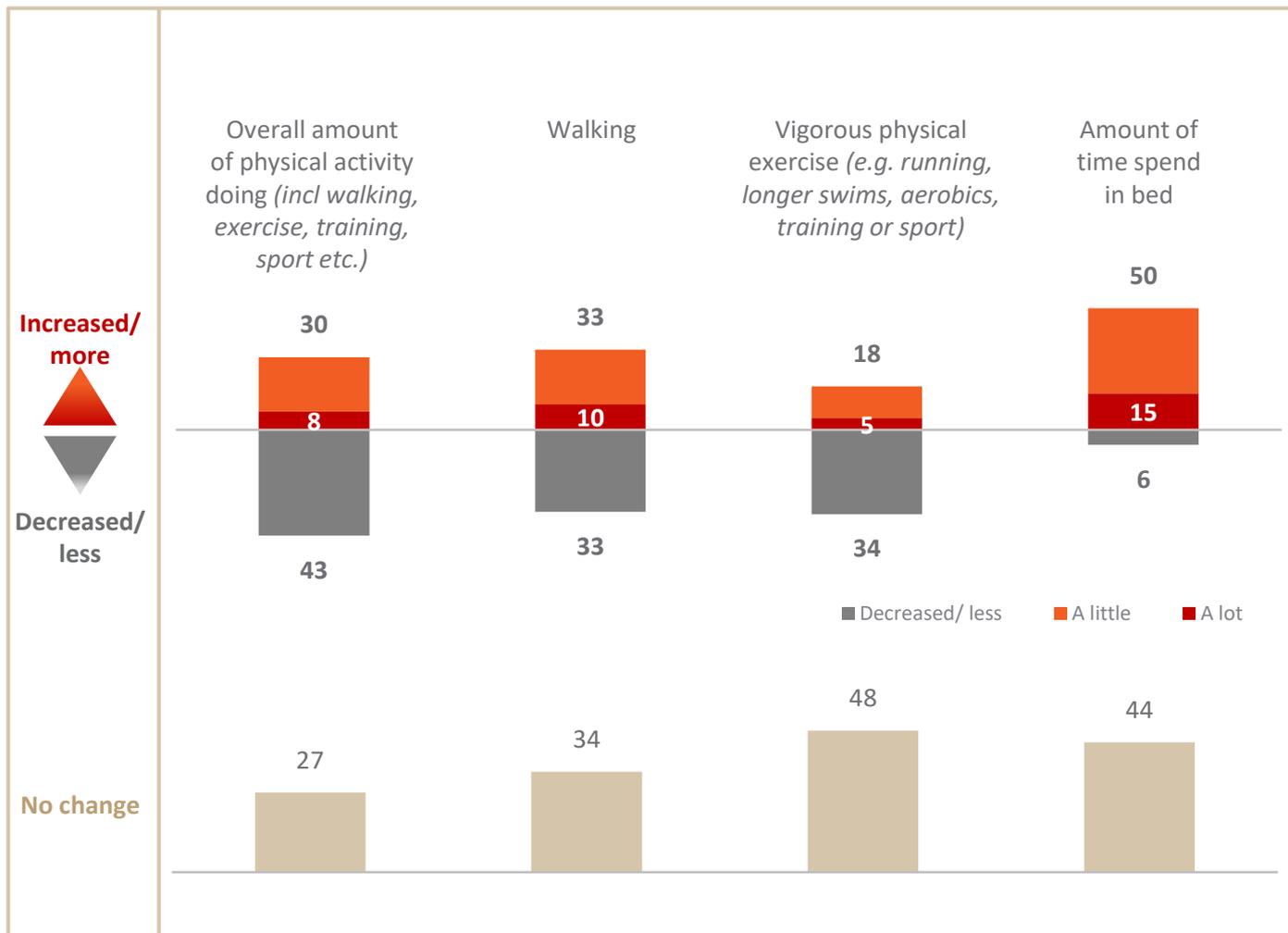
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Physical activity**

- A lot of people are spending more time in bed, which could range from simply being able to sleep in because there's no need to commute to work through to a bit more than that!
- As far as physical activity is concerned, the vast majority of Australians have changed their behavior:
 - on the one hand, 30% have *increased* their activity, either to beat boredom/ 'cabin fever' or to take the opportunity to get a little fitter
 - however many more, 43%, have *reduced* their activity.
- The proportion of reduced activity vs. increased activity is more marked for vigorous physical activity than walking.



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Where to from here and implications

- The current situation has changed behaviours very quickly. As social distancing measures are relaxed, many behaviors may revert to 'normal' reasonably quickly, at least for a proportion of people.
- However it's entirely conceivable some behaviours may be longer lasting. For example, sometimes a bad eating habit can be hard to stop, or it may be hard to get motivated to restore exercise/ training activities. There is also the issue that Australia is likely to experience a recession, or worse. When people have less money to spend, or are simply more cautious about spending, there are obvious potential consequences, for example, delaying or cancelling major purchasing decisions, or going out less to eat or be entertained. In that context, more home cooking may very well be a feature in Australian households for a while, albeit not to the extent of the current period of mass-imposed home confinement.
- There are implications or potential opportunities for probably many organisations contemplating 'where to next' in the short or medium term. For example:
 - *Health promotion agencies*: Is there a role to play in helping to address some of the adverse health behaviours evident in the findings?
 - *Food marketers*: Booming supermarket sales suggest many food marketers are probably experiencing buoyant sales. But is there an opportunity for communication to help improve longer term brand positions?
 - *Health clubs*: A mixed bag of opportunities and threats to consider after social distancing is relaxed.
 - *Book sellers*: The opportunity presented by 44% of people reading more books at the moment.