



TRUE ISSUES®

**FIND OUT
WHAT THEY'RE
THINKING.**

August 2024



J W S R E S E A R C H



Contents

<u>Key findings</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>What are the issues Australians care about?</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Are we headed in the right direction?</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>How does the Australian Government perform on top issues?</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>How are government, business and industry performing?</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Survey methodology</u>	<u>18</u>



Cost of living still the biggest deal but new survey design highlights housing supply, aged care and NDIS concerns



In August 2024, cost of living remains by far the dominant issue Australians want the Federal Government to focus on. Unprompted, half of Australian adults (49%, down a significant 6 percentage points since May) name **cost of living** in their top three most important issues or concerns, and 71% (down 9 points) place cost of living in their top five from a prompted list.

To reflect the evolving public policy debate, aged care, interest rates and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) are now discreet issues for survey participants to select, instead of being subsumed in broader portfolio categories. This change may be the cause of nominal importance drops in some other prompted issues, including cost of living concerns.

However, it is notable that cost of living has decreased by 6 points on the unprompted list of most important issues, suggesting cost of living pressures have eased somewhat since the May 2024 True Issues survey.

The two next highest issues on the prompted list are **hospitals and healthcare** (51%) and **housing supply and affordability** (46%). When ageing was previously aggregated with hospitals and health it was a top five issue for 58% and when housing was previously combined with interest rates 55% said it was top five.

Aged care is now a top five prompted issue for the first time in True Issues for a substantial 19% of the population. Meanwhile, **the NDIS** is selected as top five by 7% of the community, with provision of public services (where NDIS was previously subsumed) now at 14% instead of 22% as it was in previous surveying.

Two issues experienced statistically significant drops in prompted importance since May. Population growth has reduced by 4 points to 12% and community, family and social services has reduced by 5 points to 9%.

Despite the methodology changes, the significance of both **cost of living** and **hospitals and healthcare** remains around the same level of concern as it has been previously for certain demographics. 78% of those aged 35-54 see cost of living as a top issue, the same percentage as those from lower income households on \$50,000-\$100,000 a year.

Hospitals and healthcare is a top five issue for 58% of women, 62% for those aged over 55 years and 60% of Australians living in our regions. This is higher than the overall result for the larger issue portfolio when it also included aged care back in May (56%).

Housing supply and affordability is an even higher rated issue for those who rent their homes (63%) by some 17 points compared to the overall result (46%).

Pessimism the national economy is on the wrong track is 2:1 against those who think it's headed the right way



Pessimism that **the national economy is headed in the wrong direction** has deteriorated 2 points in August to now sit at net negative -22 points, its equal lowest point in over a decade. Worry that the economy is on the wrong track sits negative at a ratio of 2:1, with 40% of the population believing it is on the wrong track, compared to 18% thinking it is on the right path. 34% feel the national economy is static and neither heading the right or wrong way.

A clear divide exists on the economy based on education, with 46% of those **without a university education** feeling more pessimistic about it, significantly above average.

When asked about their **own personal financial situation**, one in three (34%) see it heading the right way, with a large 42% saying neither the right or wrong way and 19% feeling their personal situation is now deteriorating. A perception that their situation is getting worse is significantly higher than average among families (27%) and those aged 35-54 years (25%).

Views on **state and territory economies** vary, with 33% in WA believing their economy is headed in the right direction (compared to the national average of 19%). In contrast, pessimism is more pronounced in Victoria, where 44% feel things are heading in the wrong direction (compared to 36% nationally).

The performance of the Australian Government continues to bounce around the mid-40s on the True Issues performance index. In August 2024, the national government's score rates 46 – sitting right between the February and May results of 45 and 47.

The Australian Government's performance on **cost of living** remains a weakness, with an index score of only 28, and an even worse rating of 25 among the non-university educated.

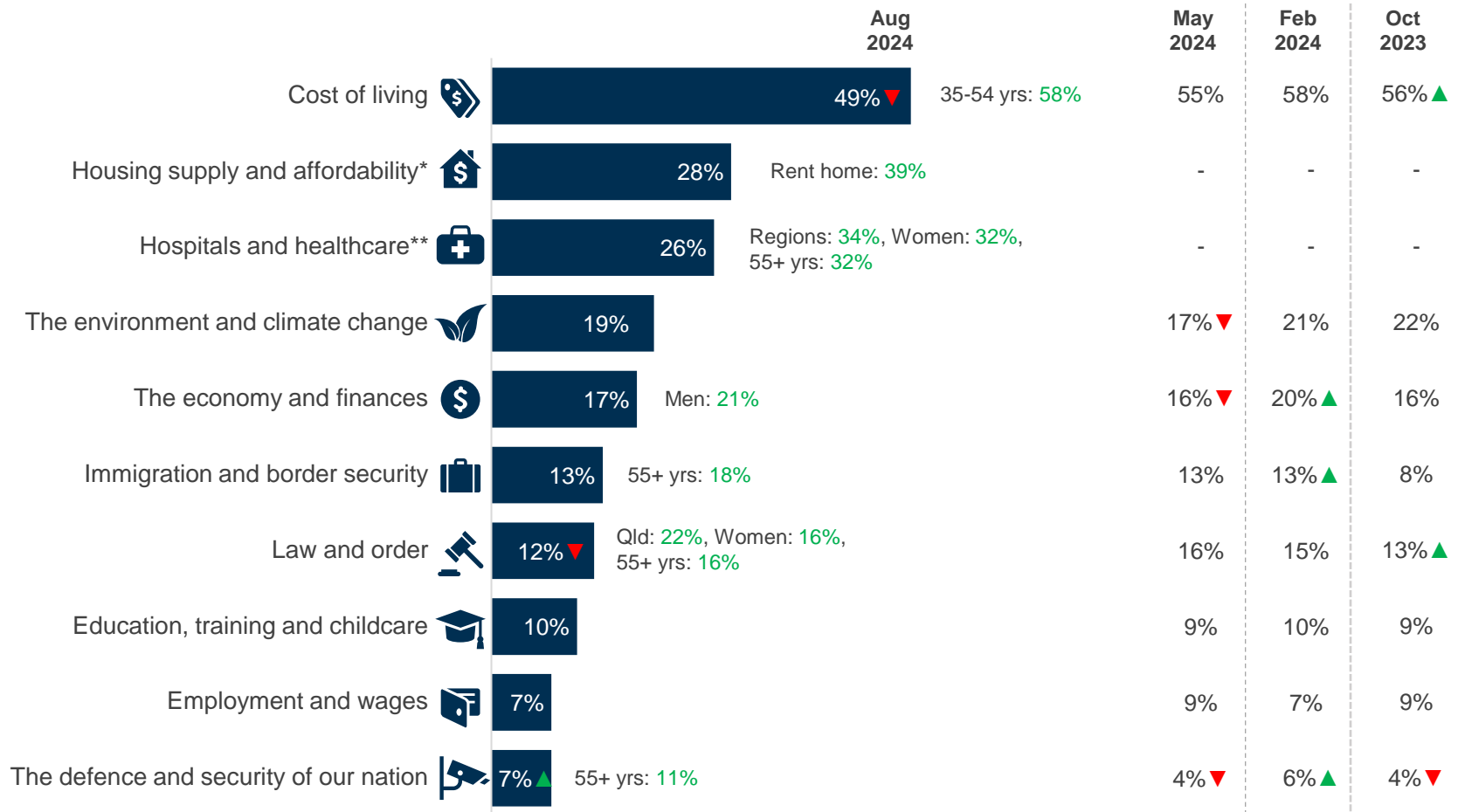
Housing and interest rates has now been separated out into two distinct issue areas of performance, yet both receive poor report cards. **Housing supply and affordability** is regarded as the second worst area of national government performance, with an index rating of 29, while **interest rates** is seen as the next worse overall with a rating of 37.

Hospitals and healthcare gets a performance rating of 39 for the Federal Government and **aged care** a slightly better rating at 41. Subgroups who are significantly more frustrated by the government's performance on hospitals and healthcare are women (index rating of 36), those aged over 55 years (35) and South Australians (30). Australians over 55 years are also more likely to rate the government's performance significantly lower on aged care (37 compared to 41 overall) and the NDIS (37 compared to 41 overall).

Cost of living remains leading concern by over 20 points but does moderate as an unprompted nomination



Most important issues the Australian Government should focus on
(Up to 3 issues – unprompted^)



^ Note: Issues mentioned among fewer than 7% not shown. *Previously 'Hospitals, healthcare and ageing'. ** Previously 'Housing and interest rates'. Significantly higher than the national total at the 95% confidence interval. Significantly ▲ higher / ▼ lower than previous True Issues wave at the 95% confidence interval. Q. What are the most important issues that you think the Australian Government should focus on? These would be the issues or problems that personally interest or concern you the most. Please describe up to three separate issues in the text boxes below. Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

More issue options to consider sees big issues like cost of living, health, aged care and housing offer new insights



Most important issues the Australian Government should focus on (Top 5 most important – prompted)

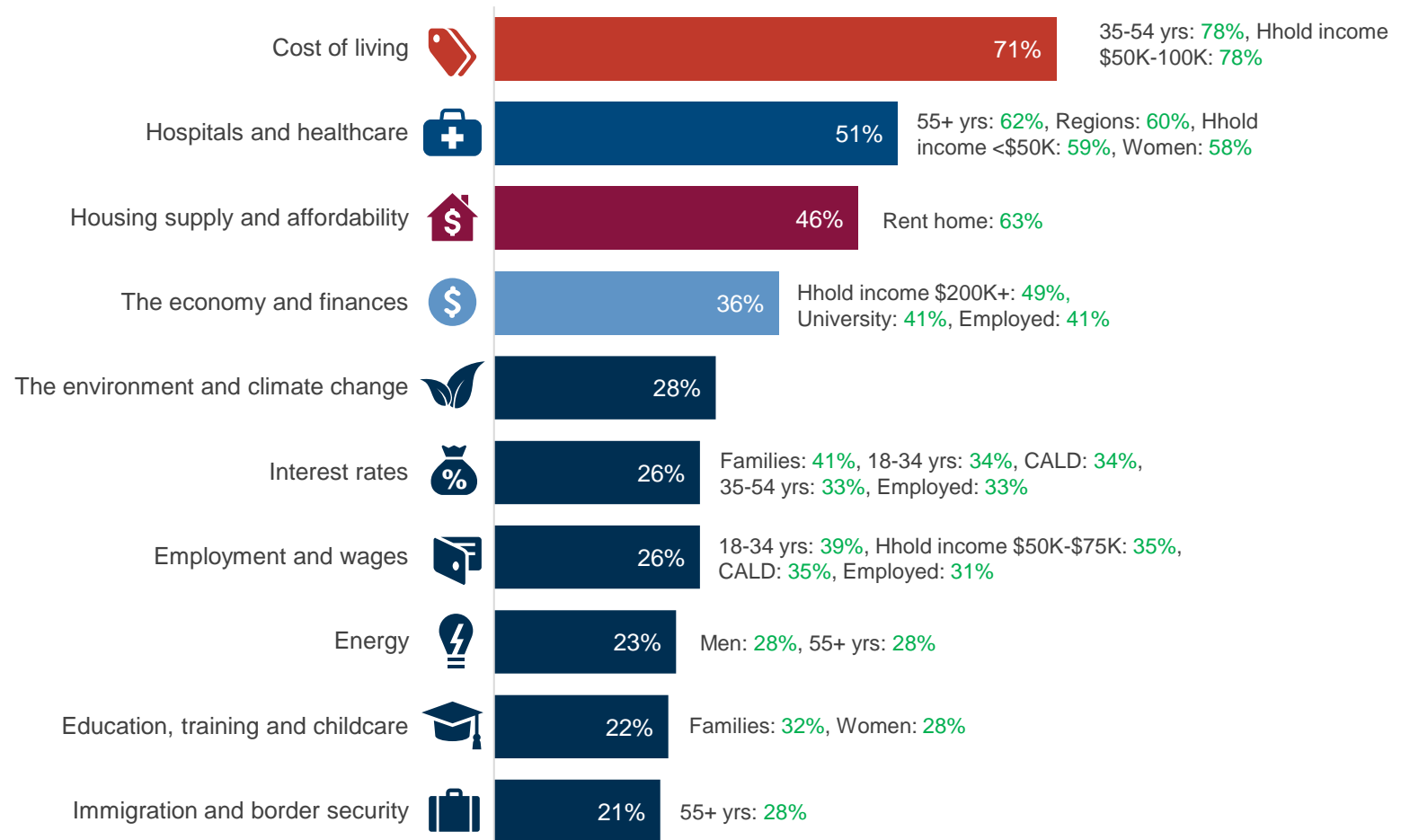


^Added in August 2024. * Previously 'Hospitals, healthcare and ageing', 'Housing and interest rates', 'Provision of public services (e.g. Centrelink, Medicare, NDIS, the ATO, passports and immigration, employment and other support services, etc.)'. Significantly ▲ higher / ▼ lower than previous True Issues wave at the 95% confidence interval.
Q. From the following list, please select the five most important issues you think the Australian Government should focus on.
Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

Middle aged particularly concerned about COL while young adults concerned about employment and interest rates



Highest ranked issues the Australian Government should focus on
(Top 5 most important – prompted)



Significantly higher than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
Q. From the following list, please select the five most important issues you think the Australian Government should focus on.
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Reasons why cost of living, hospitals and healthcare, housing, and the economy and finances require focus



“It is affecting every single Australian. Interest rates keep increasing along with food, but our wages are not increasing. wages need to increase significantly, or the government needs to investigate why prices are really skyrocketing. We do not see fuel stations or grocery stores going broke.”

“They give a little hand up and then everything goes up like the phone/internet, rates, electricity, gas, all of the food, a little here and there but it all adds up, so we have to cut back on food to pay our bills that have gone up.”

“If people cannot afford the basics, they lose incentive to live or work, which leads to higher unemployment, mental health issues, increase crime rates, which ultimately will cost the country a lot more.”

“So many people are struggling to find affordable and safe housing, both public and private. Too much foreign investment and not enough priority for Australians. Too many multi-house homeowners. Too many empty houses. Too much greed.”

“It is critical for people to know they can have a roof over their head for themselves and family. It is also critical for young people to have an affordable goal of house ownership.”

“Housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable for so many Australians. Even people in the middle-income bracket are struggling. The Federal Government needs to focus on attracting housing developments and supporting state governments with public housing projects.”

“Hospitals all over the country are under extreme stress brought about by chronic underfunding, insufficient medical and nursing staff and in rural and remote areas insufficient local GPs. This has led to long waiting lists for essential medical services resulting in poor community outcomes.”

“The waiting list for the hospitals and getting into a GP are way too long. The cost to go to a GP is horrendous. The care that’s being given isn’t good enough there are too many people dying from things being missed.”

“The problem with lack of services (e.g. GPs and regional hospitals capabilities) and ambulance ramping is very concerning. We need the emergency department to be able to handle the number of patients coming in and have ambulances available to go rescue people.”

“A stable and prosperous economy is the foundation of a nation, allowing citizens to enjoy life and make choices.”

“Small businesses are collapsing. People are losing homes. Government should initiate cutting the taxes, encouraging investments, supporting small businesses, creating employment, otherwise I do not see a brighter future any time soon.”

“It sits at the heart of everything. If the economy and finances are in control and going well, we can go a long way to addressing issues in the other spaces.”

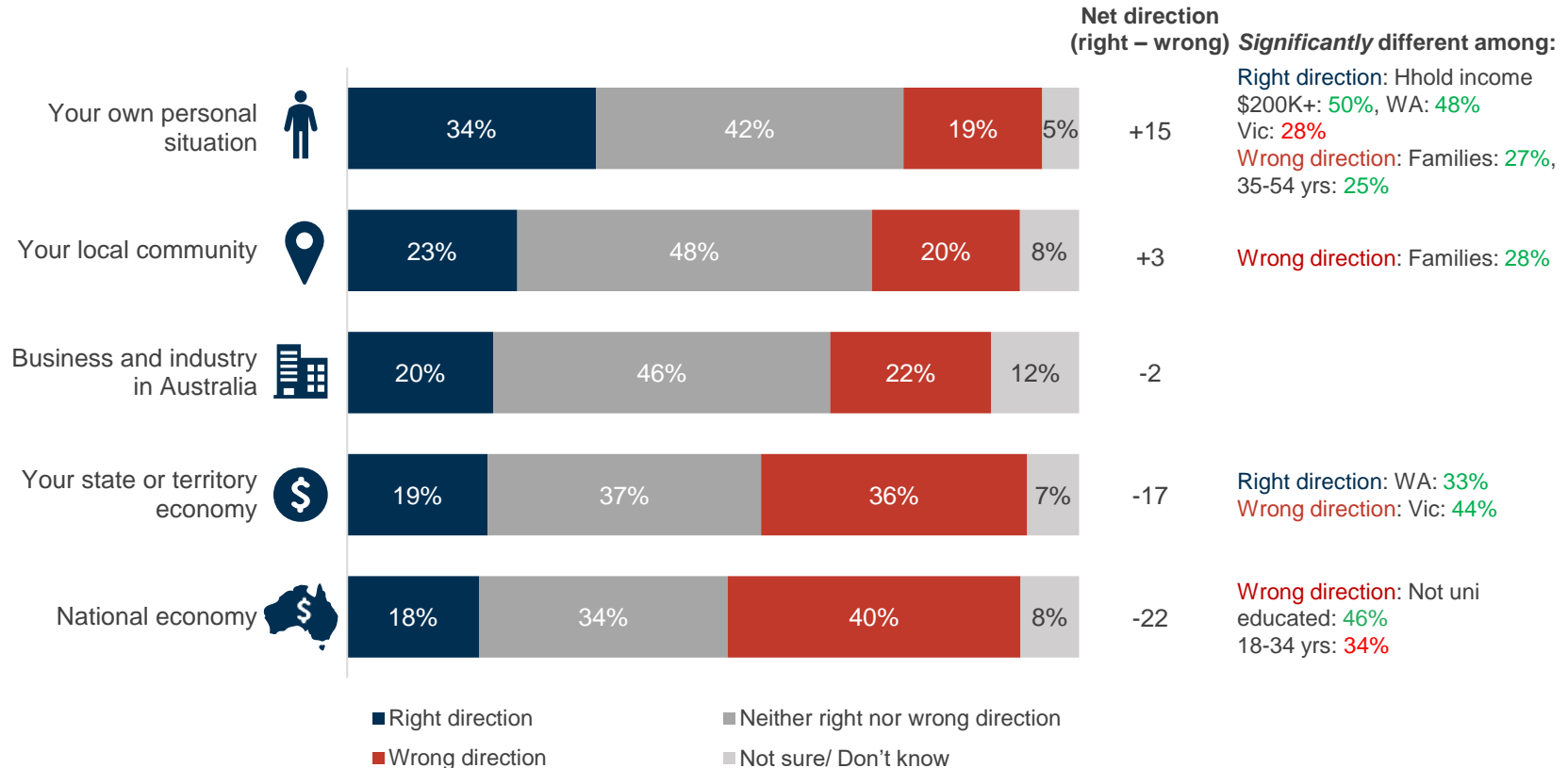


**Are we headed in
the right
direction?**

Australians pessimistic about economic direction but comparatively optimistic about their own situation



Direction of organisations and groups in Australia

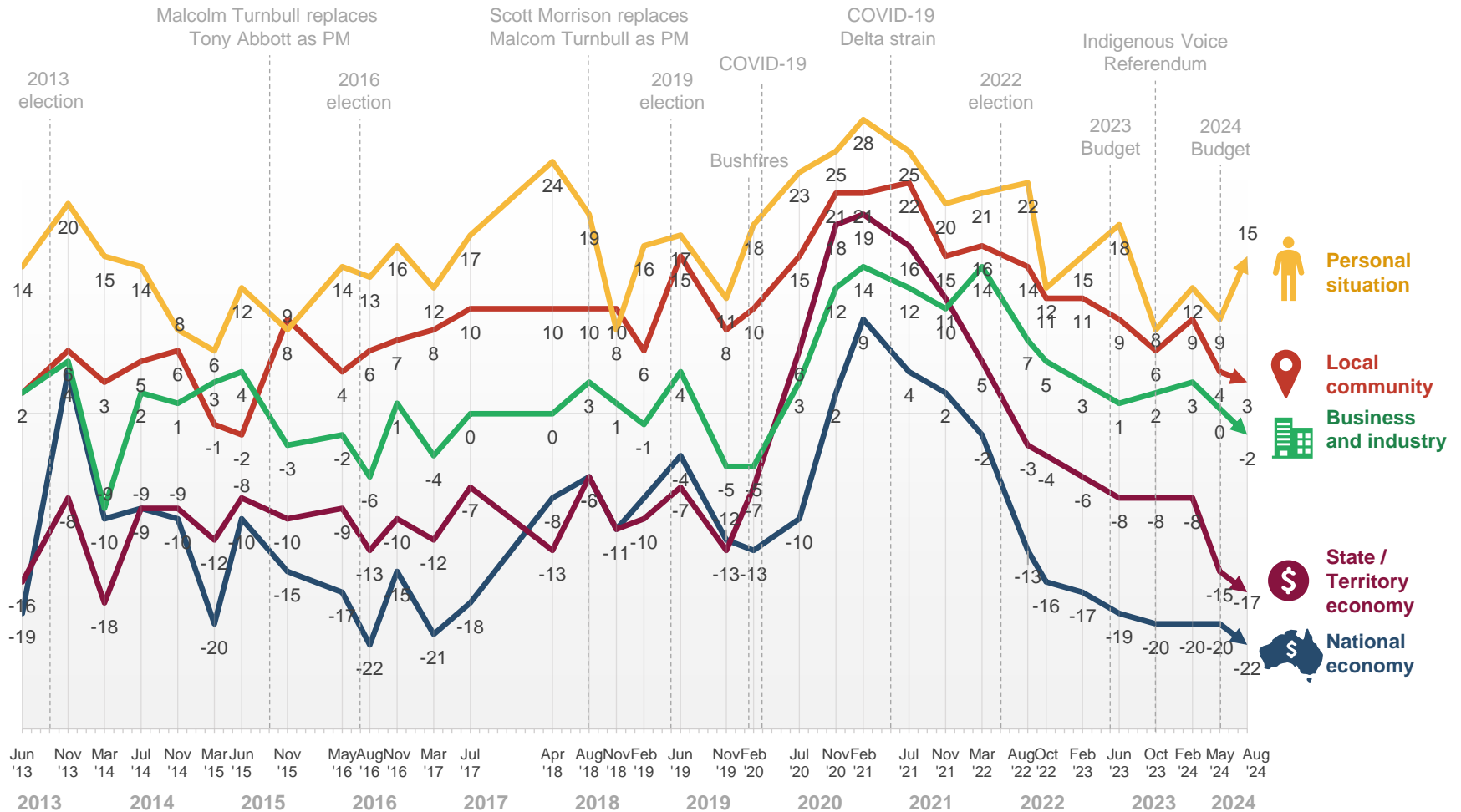


Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
 Q. Do you think each of the following is generally headed in the right or the wrong direction?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Sense the national economy and state/territory economies are on the wrong track further worsens



Direction of organisations and groups in Australia
 Net direction trend (% right direction - % wrong direction)



Q. Do you think each of the following is generally headed in the right or the wrong direction?
 Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

The background features a collage of financial data and charts. On the left, a smartphone screen displays a table with columns for 'Index', 'Daily', and 'US Sp'. The table includes numerical values such as 1.11, 1.99, 31.42, 1.79, 2.05, 43.66, 5.7, 3, 1.8, 6.94, 2.86, 50, 4.02, 1.02, 1.24, 1.4, 4.58, 7.85, 1.4, 33.44, 6.94, and 3.4%. In the center, a line graph shows an upward trend. On the right, a laptop screen displays a bar chart with blue bars and a numerical value of 16.17. The overall theme is financial analysis and data visualization.

How does the Australian Government perform on top issues?

Housing access, interest rates, health, NDIS and aged care separated out for testing in government performance



Australian Government performance on issues (Performance index#)

		Aug 2024	May 2024	Feb 2024	Oct 2023
The defence and security of our nation		51	51	53	55
Mining and resources		51	52	52	51
Foreign affairs and trade		51	50	51	52
Innovation, science and technology		50	52	53	53
Business and industry		49	50	51	51
Terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism		49	49	52	54
Provision of public services*		49	-	-	-
Education, training and childcare		48	47	47	48
Indigenous issues**		48	48	46	44
Community, family and social services		47	47	47	49
Agriculture and regional development		46	49	47	50
Transport and infrastructure		46	48	47	47
Employment and wages		45	45	44	45
The environment and climate change		44	46	45	45
Immigration and border security		44	42	46	49
Population growth		42	43	41	44
National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)^		41	-	-	-
The economy and finances		41	41	40	42
Vision and leadership		41	42	41	43
Aged care^		41	-	-	-
Energy		40	41	40	39
Hospitals and healthcare*		39	-	-	-
Interest rates^		37	-	-	-
Housing supply and affordability*		29	-	-	-
Cost of living		28	26	25	27

Top results

For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report

^Added in August 2024. *Previously 'Hospitals, healthcare and ageing', 'Housing and interest rates', 'Provision of public services (incl. NDIS)'.
** 'including The Voice' added June-October 2023.

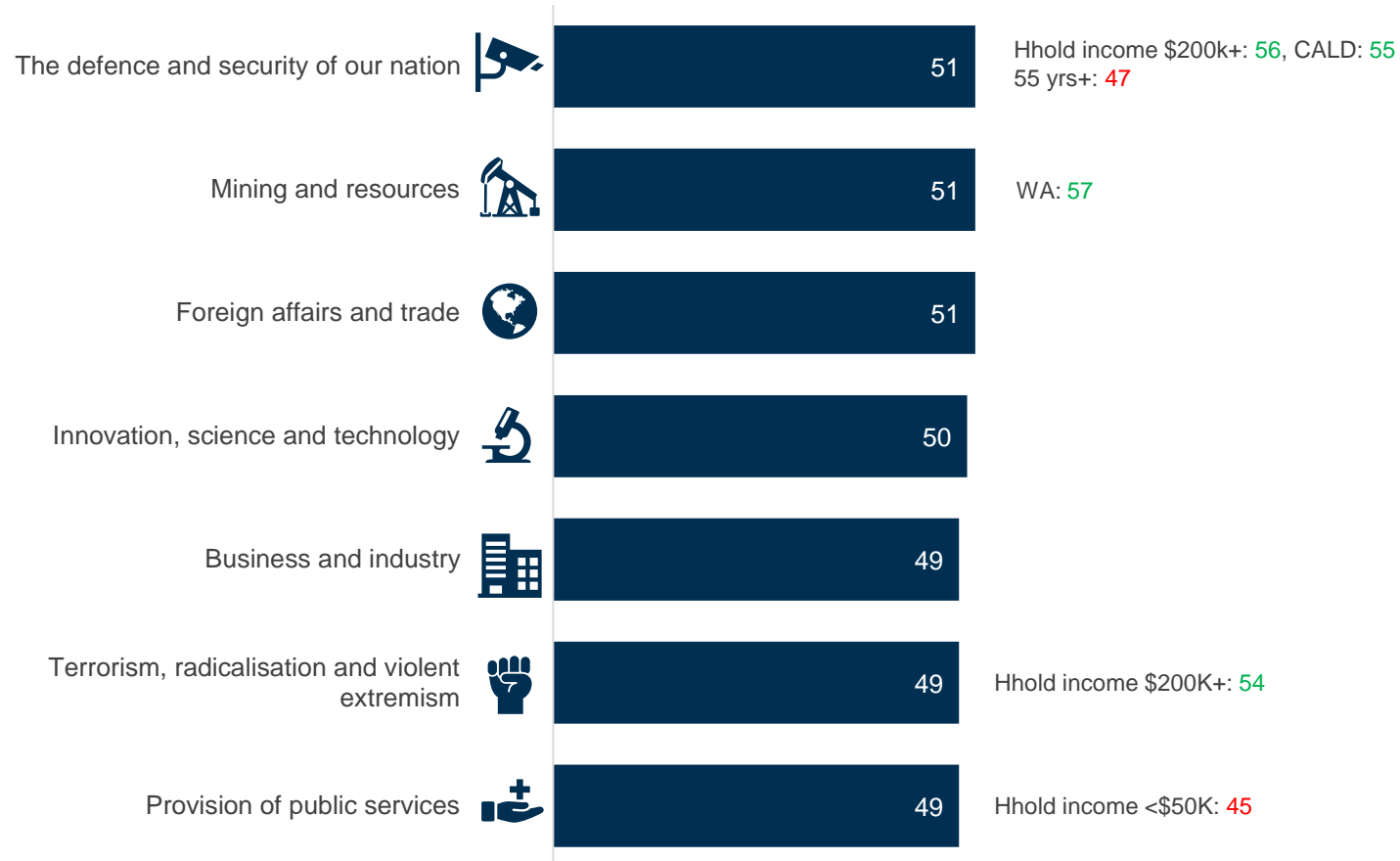
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

Internationally oriented portfolios seen among the better areas of national government performance



Top ranked issues for Australian Government performance (Performance index#)

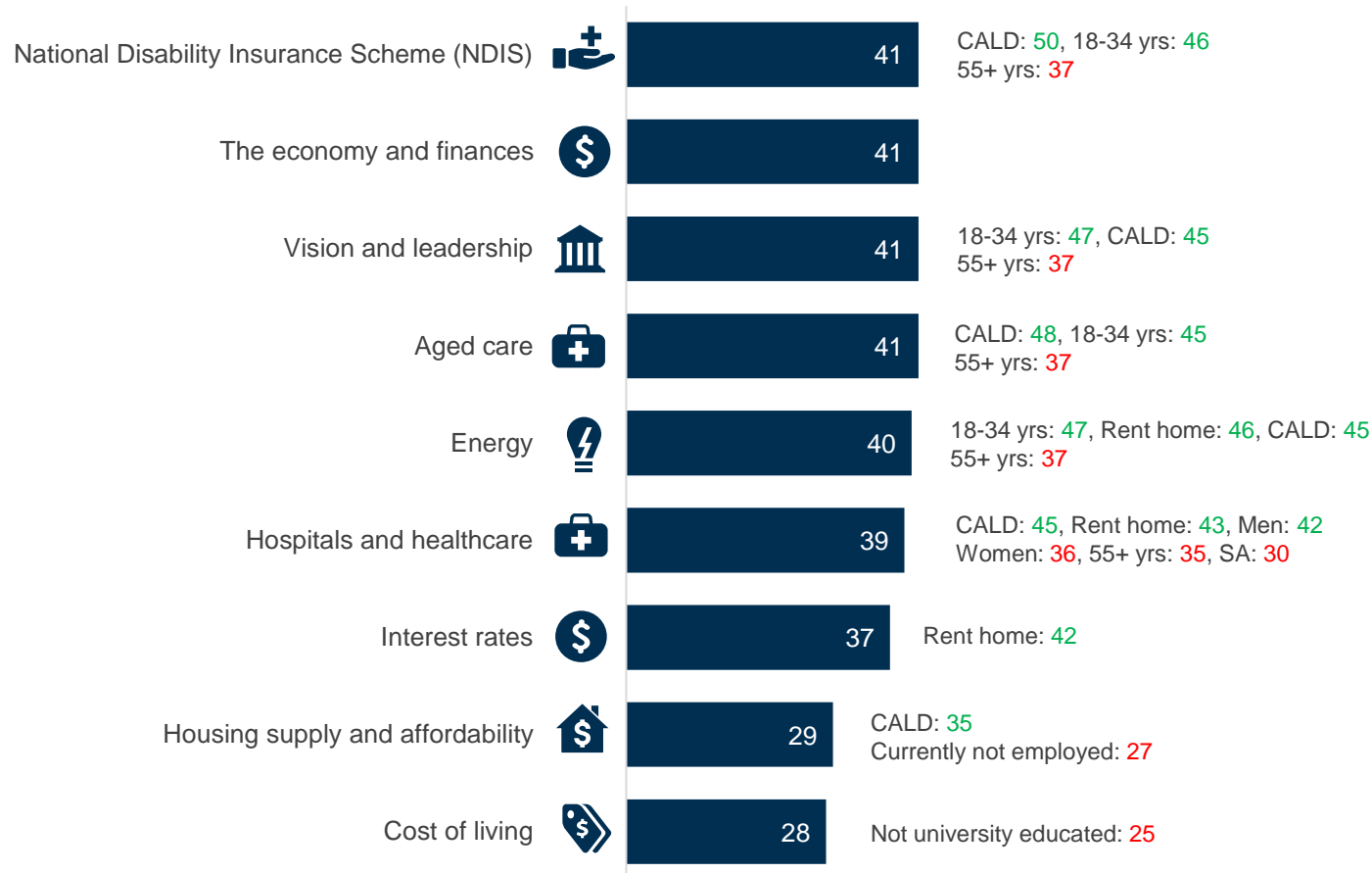


For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.
Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Cost of living and housing supply and affordability the Government’s two worst areas of performance



Bottom ranked issues for Australian Government performance (Performance index#)



For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.
 Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
 Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

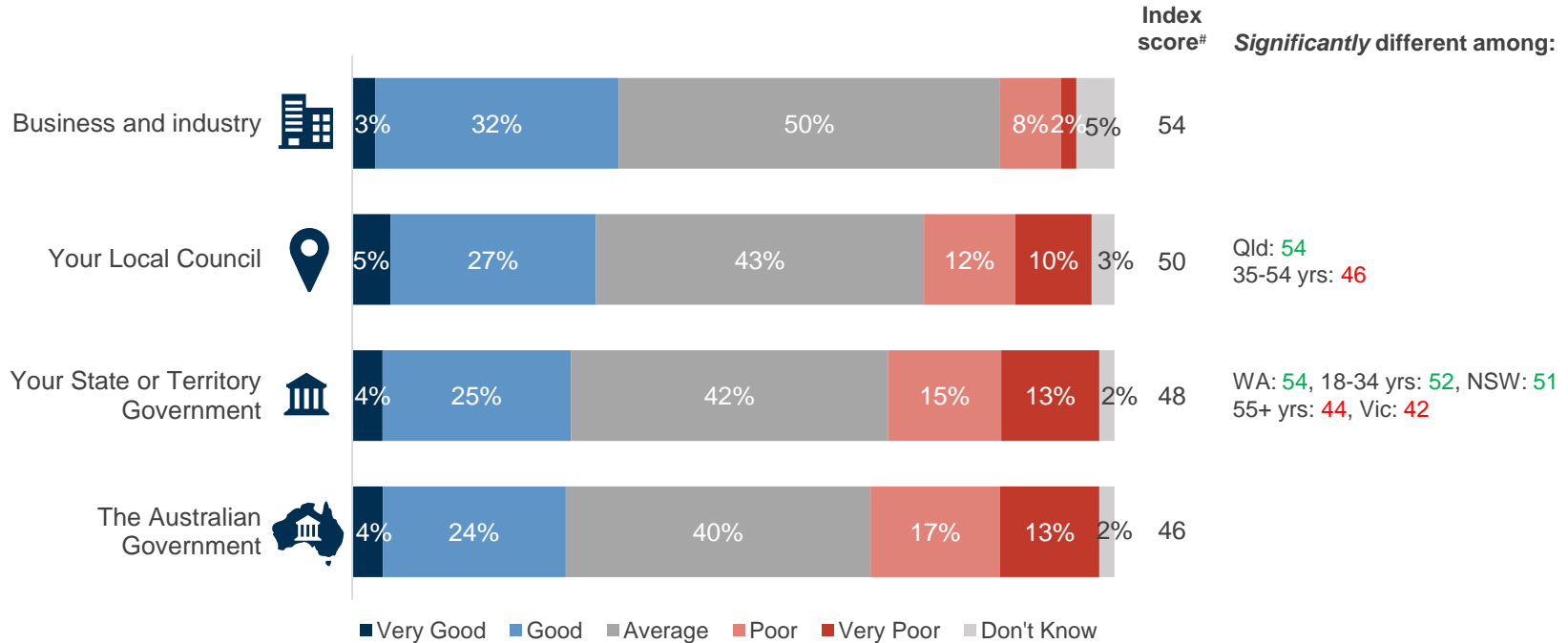


**How are
government,
business and
industry
performing?**



Business continues to outperform all levels of government

Performance of organisations and groups in Australia

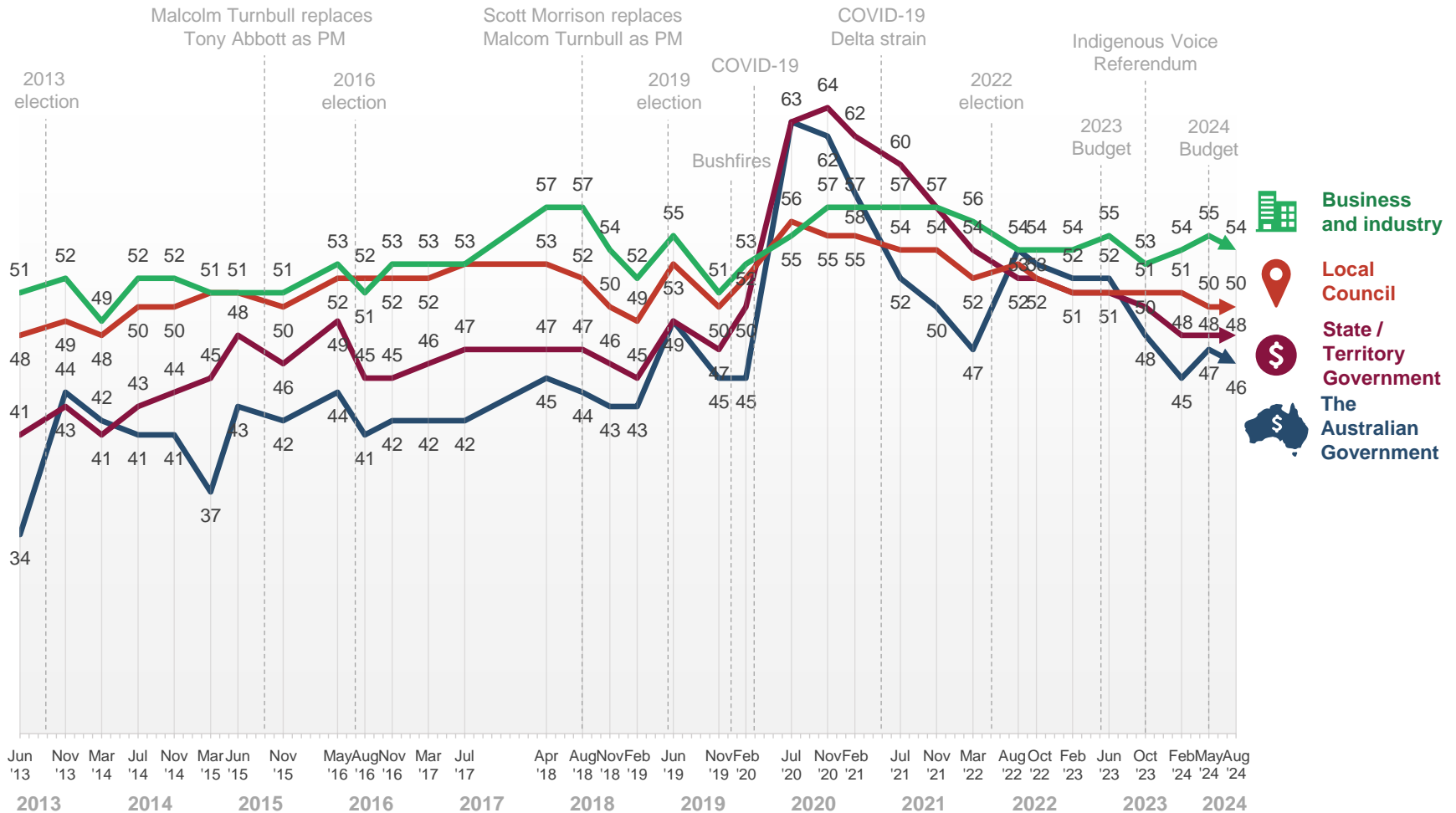


[#] For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the research methodology section of this report. Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.
 Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in Australia?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Federal and State/Territory Government performance continue to be rated below par



Performance of organisations and groups in Australia
Index score trend#



For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.
Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in Australia?
Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).



Survey methodology



National Online Survey

n=1,000 Australian adults

- Conducted Friday 9th – Monday 12th August 2024.
- Sample quotas on age, gender and location, with post-survey weighting to actual age / gender / location proportions from Census data.
- Maximum margin of error on n=1,000 is +/-3.1% at the 95% confidence level.
- Differences of +/-1% for net scores are due to rounding.

Explanation of index scores:

To facilitate ease of reporting and comparison of results over time, an **index score** has been calculated for performance measures (*very good to very poor* ratings).

The index score is represented as a score out of 100.

To calculate this score, the **survey percentage result** for each scale category (excluding 'don't know' responses) is multiplied by an **index factor** to produce an **index value** for each category. These values are then summed to produce the **index score**, equating to 43 in this example.

Rating category	Survey percentage	Index factor	Index value (percentage x factor)
<i>Very good</i>	5%	100	5
<i>Good</i>	17%	75	13
<i>Average</i>	40%	50	20
<i>Poor</i>	19%	25	5
<i>Very poor</i>	15%	0	0
<i>Don't know</i>	4%	-	-
Index score			43

**THERE ARE
OVER
27 MILLION
PEOPLE
IN AUSTRALIA...**

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