



# True Issues<sup>®</sup>

November 2024

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# Living costs lead priorities but a majority also want action on housing and healthcare as low-income households fall behind

In November 2024, heading into the summer break and a federal election year, **cost of living** remains the dominant issue Australians want the Federal Government to focus on. Unprompted, six in ten adults (61%) name cost of living in their top three most important issues or concerns – its highest level yet. Eight in ten (80%) select it in their top five from a prompted list, also significantly increased since August.

Despite a deceleration in cost of living increases for the September quarter, this remains the leading concern across all age and income groups as Australians continue to adapt their spending and savings habits to meet living expenses.

**Housing supply and affordability** and **hospitals and healthcare** remain the next most important issues (52% and 51% prompted mentions, respectively), with housing also now a greater priority than three months ago (up from 46%). Amid ongoing concerns about limited supply and worsening affordability for both buyers and renters, housing remains the second highest unprompted issue (32%), ahead of hospitals and healthcare (25%).

These two priorities split along generational lines with a majority of 18 to 34 year olds looking for government action on housing, while a majority of older adults (55 years and over) prioritise healthcare. The related area of aged care is also a key concern for one in three older adults. In contrast, both housing and healthcare are equally important to 35 to 54 year olds as these older Millennials and Gen-X adults navigate the needs of both growing families and ageing parents.

As the national economy continues to slow, the **economy and finances** (39% prompted mentions) remains a key issue across all age groups. However, the economy continues to trail concerns about employment and wages among 18 to 34 year olds as slow wage growth hampers their efforts to achieve key milestones (e.g. moving out of home, buying property) and the living standard enjoyed by previous generations.

Addressing the **environment and climate change** has declined as a community priority over 2024 (24% prompted mentions, down from 28% in August and 33% in February). It now sits behind **employment and wages** (27%) and **interest rates** (25%). However, with mortgage rates on hold for the past year and no cuts expected until at least February, interest rates are a key concern for one in three 18 to 54 year olds.

On other issues, fewer Australians see **defence and national security** (14% prompted mentions, down from 18%) and **terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism** (10%, down from 15%) as key priorities for government attention compared with three months ago.

Amid strong community concern about living and housing costs, interest rates and wages, just one in three Australians (34%) think their **personal situation** is heading in the right direction. More believe they are heading in the wrong direction than in August (24%, up from 19%) and this view is more prevalent among renters (32%) and households earning less than \$50K p.a. (31%). Optimism increases with income – over 40% of those in households earning above \$100K p.a. see themselves as heading in the right direction.

# Government fails to gain traction on voters' key priorities as pessimism around the national economy increases

Heading into its 2025 re-election campaign, the **Australian Government's** performance continues to rate below 'average' (i.e. index score below 50), both overall and across most individual issues measured.

After slightly higher performance index scores in May and August (47 and 46, respectively), the Albanese Government's overall rating has returned to its February low point of 45. This is lower than the Morrison Government's March 2022 score of 47, prior to its May election loss.

Since August, improvements for the Albanese Government have mainly occurred in its better performing areas, such as **innovation, science and technology** (index score of 54, up four points), **defence and national security** (index score of 54, up three points) and **agriculture and regional development** (index score of 49, up three points).

In contrast, Government performance has declined on issues most important to the community but where it already rated poorly. This includes **cost of living** (index score of 24, down four points), **housing supply and affordability** and **interest rates** (index scores of 27 and 35, respectively, down two points each), and **the economy and finances** and **employment and wages** (index scores of 40 and 44, respectively, down one point each).

Confidence in the **national economy** continues to decline. More than twice as many Australians see this heading in the wrong direction (43%,

up slightly from 40%) as see it heading in the right direction (18%). This net difference (-25) has declined five points since the May budget (-20) and is the largest recorded for this measure since *True Issues*<sup>®</sup> began in June 2013.

However, Australians continue to be more positive about **business and industry**, rating its performance (index score of 55) ahead of all levels of government, and slightly more adults see business heading in the right direction (24%, up from 20%) than in the wrong direction (22%).

At state level, rated performance of the **WA and SA Governments** remains most positive (index scores of 59 and 58, respectively), and more residents see these state economies as heading in the right direction, than in the wrong direction.

**NSW Government** performance rates just above 'average' (index score of 51), while the **Queensland and Victorian Governments** rate below 'average' (index scores of 47 and 40, respectively). More residents see these state economies as heading in the wrong direction, than in the right direction.

There is optimism at community-level, with **local council** performance rated slightly above 'average' (index score of 51) and more Australians still of the view that their **local community** is heading in the right direction (29%) than heading in the wrong direction (21%).

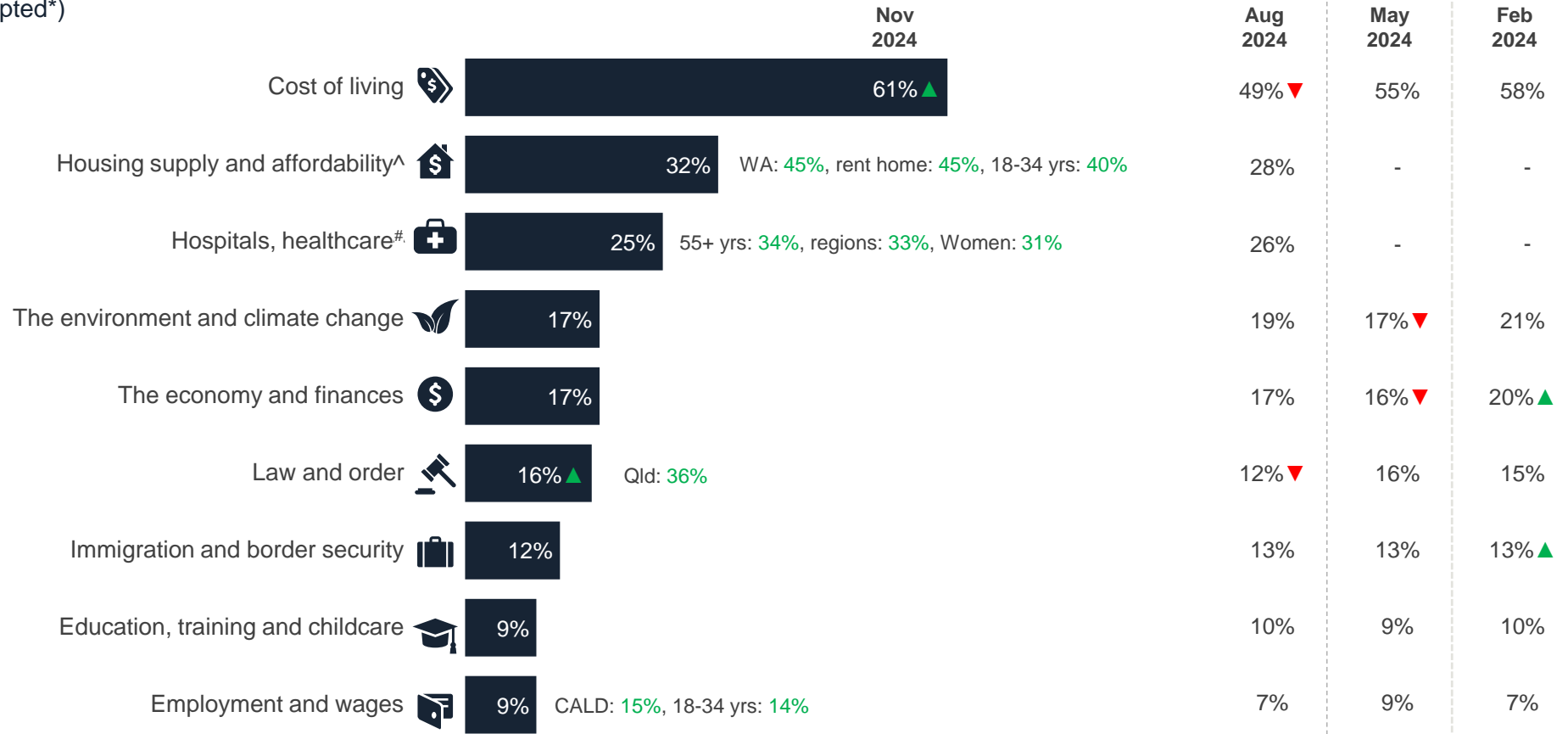
# What are the issues Australians care about?



# Cost of living concerns more top of mind than ever at six in ten Australians followed by housing and healthcare

## Most important issues the Australian Government should focus on

(Up to 3 issues – unprompted\*)



\*Note: Issues mentioned among less than 9% not shown. <sup>^</sup>Previously 'Housing and interest rates'. <sup>#</sup>Previously 'Hospitals, healthcare and ageing'.

Significantly higher than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.

Significantly ▲ higher / ▼ lower than previous True Issues wave at the 95% confidence interval.

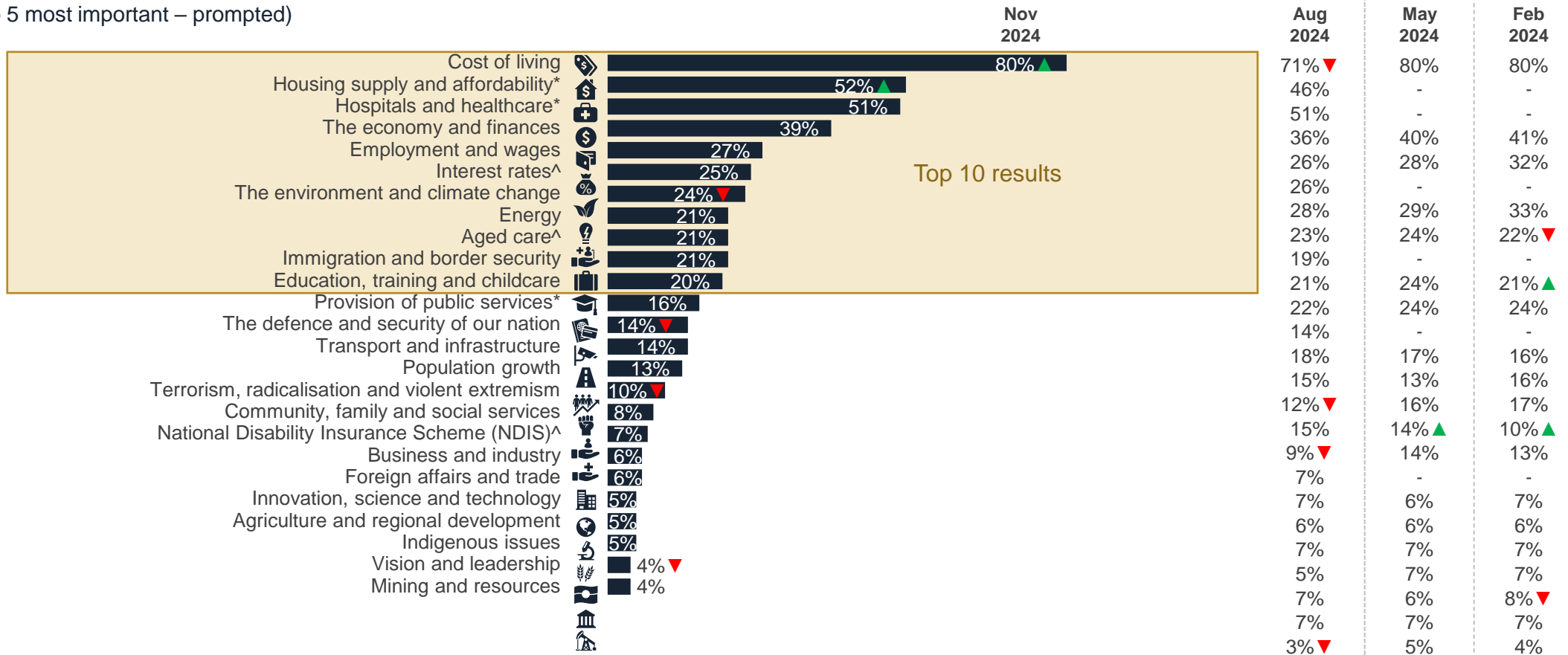
Q. What are the most important issues that you think the Australian Government should focus on? These would be the issues or problems that personally interest or concern you the most.

Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave).

# Housing supply and affordability a rising contender as priority issue of concern but cost of living still leads

## Most important issues the Australian Government should focus on

(Top 5 most important – prompted)



^Added in August 2024. \*Previously 'Housing and interest rates', 'Hospitals, healthcare and ageing', '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 level.

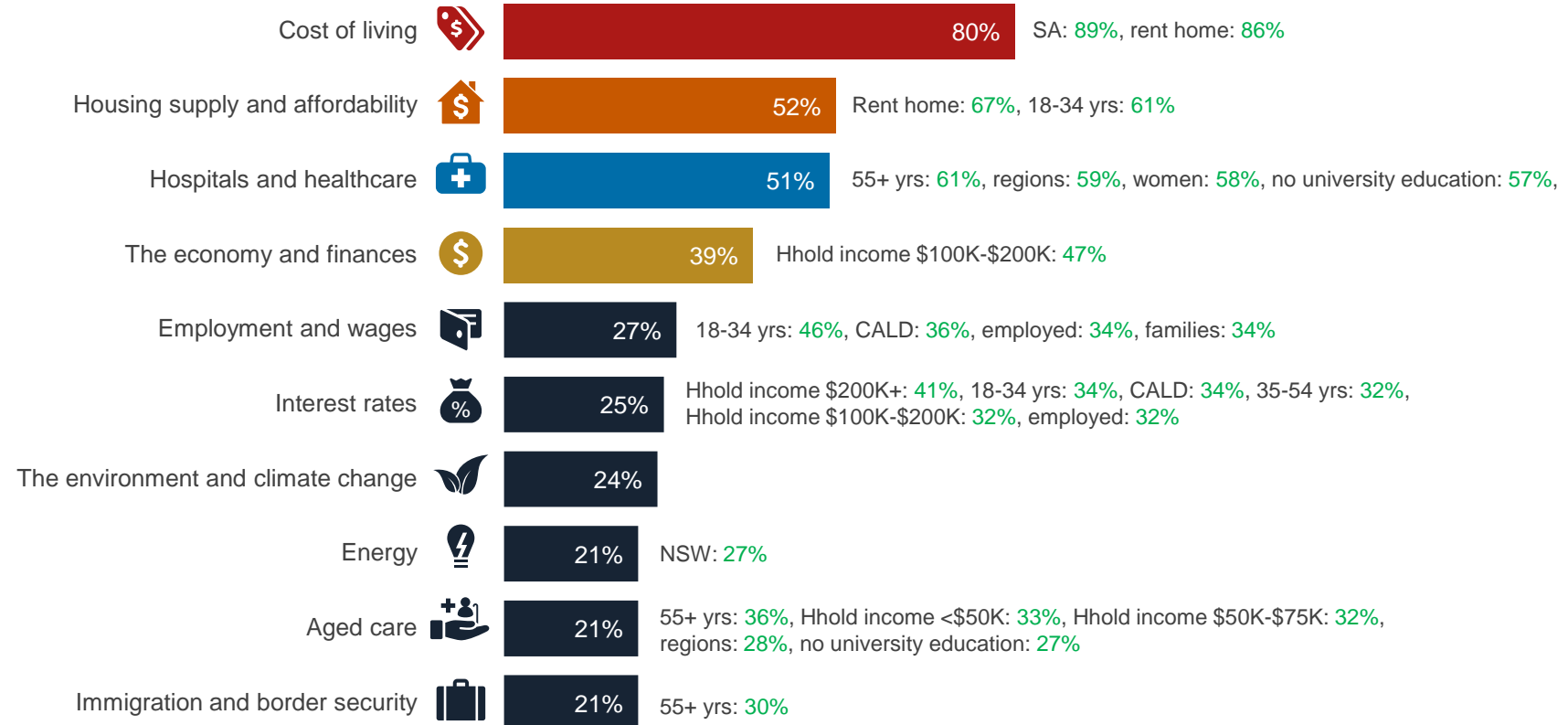
Q. From the following list, please select the five most important issues you think the Australian Government should focus on.

Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave).

# Living costs lead concerns across all groups but a majority of young adults want action on housing, older adults on healthcare

## 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).



# Australians struggle to balance household budgets amid cost of living and housing crises

## Key issues or concerns about **cost of living** and **housing supply and affordability** – selected verbatims

*“It is crippling. I work two jobs just to cover the bills and it's affecting my health.”*

*“You don't have money left to save. Just very worried if something unexpected comes up. We need to lower the interest rate. It is killing everyone.”*

*“As everything has doubled in price – groceries, then utility pricing – people haven't any disposable income.”*

*“I can't afford it. I simply spend more a month than I earn. My credit card interest rate was increased in the last 60 days to 22%. Since COVID 2020 / 2021 my savings disappeared as did my very meagre superannuation... no chance of replacing those funds under the current conditions.”*

*“Having to watch every cent spent with extreme caution I'm finding it increasingly difficult to budget for basics for my family... there appears to be absolutely no control on prices at any level.”*

*“It's causing struggle with our family and many other families. Costs keep going up and it's just a struggle to get ahead. Government needs to step in and slap companies, governments, councils and the private sector into line.”*

*“My wages don't go far enough to purchase the things I used to at the supermarket.”*

*“Prices of groceries have been increasing considerably over the years and the wages stay the same. It is hard to have a balanced diet.”*

*“I would like to be able to afford a house but, unfortunately, the way things are it's going to be a lot more difficult than it should be. The Government should be coming up with realistic solutions to the housing crisis.”*

*“How expensive houses are compared to my income. It seems impossible, where it once would have been on a job like the one that I have. Even if I were to continue saving it's very likely the prices will just continue rising and I'll just need an even bigger deposit.”*

*“It's almost impossible to get a rental property at a fair price due to inadequate supply to meet rising demands and being a homeowner is a distant dream for most.”*

*“It directly impacts me as I currently rent in Sydney and can only afford a small studio apartment. I would like to be able to buy an affordable place to live that is bigger than 20 square metres but not so far away that my quality of life gets worse.”*

*“I have 6-9 people staying with me in a 2-bedroom house. We need houses for long term renters... not Airbnb.”*

*“No actions to stop rapid housing and rental price increases. People cannot afford houses and delay or stop forming families.”*

*“There is a shortfall of houses. The market cannot accommodate the people trying to get a house, let alone afford the market price.”*

Q. Please tell us a little about why a focus on [FIRST ISSUE SELECTED / 'MOST IMPORTANT IN Q3'] is most important to you. What are your key issues or concerns about this, at the moment? How do things need to change?  
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

# Australians frustrated with overstretched health services and concerned about the health of our economy

## Key issues or concerns about hospitals and healthcare and the economy and finances – selected verbatims

*"I am a person with chronic health issues, and it is so difficult to be seen by a GP at short notice or to be seen in the emergency room in a timely manner. Not to mention how stretched medical professionals are with lack of trained staff and underpayment."*

*"Health is the number one issue for all people, whether in good health or not. It is vital that healthcare is available equally to all people when needed, regardless of wealth or position. The waiting lists and delays and ramping of ambulances is not acceptable."*

*"Since COVID we have lost a lot of good frontline workers, which has put even more pressure on the health and hospital system, including aged care. It is important for every Australian to receive immediate care when needed. Preparation is key if another crisis ever happens again."*

*"Health services in each state / territory seem to be breaking down, with critical errors occurring as well. More money needs to be invested in the system Australia-wide to cover recruitment of more staff and the training of both new and existing staff. Also there needs to be a more efficient approach to the supply and maintenance of equipment."*

*"Need to attract more healthcare professionals to provide necessary staffing at hospitals. Also need to make bulk billing more attractive for GPs to offer."*

*"The healthcare system is under enormous pressure, e.g. long waiting lists for procedures, under-staffing (leading to overstressed staff). Greater investment is needed to alleviate pressure, e.g. increasing number of staff, paying staff more, having more hospital beds available."*

*"Over the last two and a half years, the Australian economy has been struck by a continuous set of external economic shocks."*

*"The whole country is dependent upon the economy moving in the right direction – need to keep it growing and create jobs."*

*"It filters down to the common man via different ways – interest rates, wage hikes, the union problems and the final cost to me."*

*"The Government is spending too much to have lower interest rates and has policies which reduce productivity, which is already low."*

*"The current economy has made it hard for the average family to be financially secure."*

*"I personally feel like the pandemic and other recent global events has drastically impacted the economy in Australia and feel as though the Government could be doing more to improve it for Australians and their businesses."*

*"Australia needs a healthy economy. It means all Australians have a better life and lifestyle."*

*"Government debt, lower inflation, money for future generations."*

Q. Please tell us a little about why a focus on [FIRST ISSUE SELECTED / 'MOST IMPORTANT IN Q3'] is most important to you. What are your key issues or concerns about this, at the moment? How do things need to change?  
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

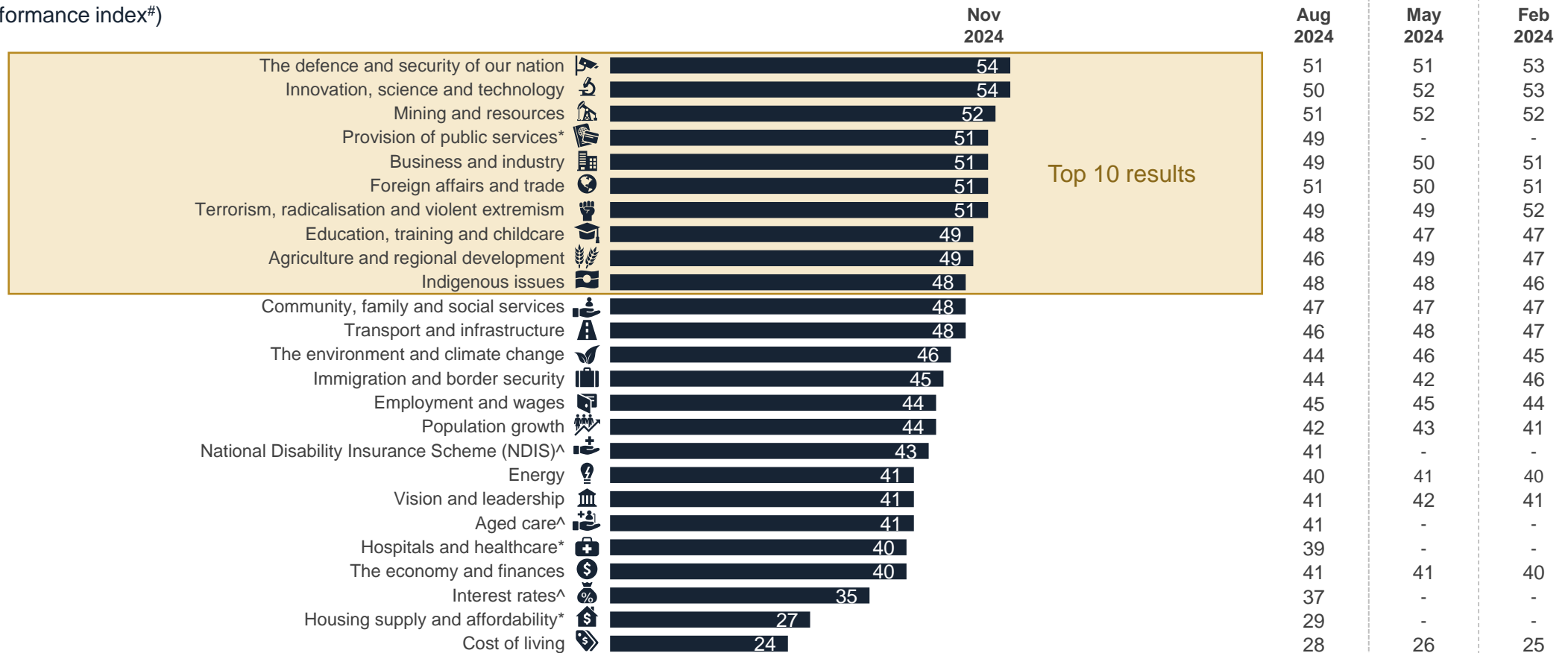
# How does the Australian Government perform on top issues?



# Government improves its performance on innovation, defence and agriculture but declines on living costs, housing and rates

## Australian Government performance on issues

(Performance index#)



# 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 (e.g. Centrelink, Medicare, NDIS, the ATO, passports and immigration, employment and other support services, etc.)'

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).

# Young adults and WA residents are more positive about Government performance on key issues

## 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.

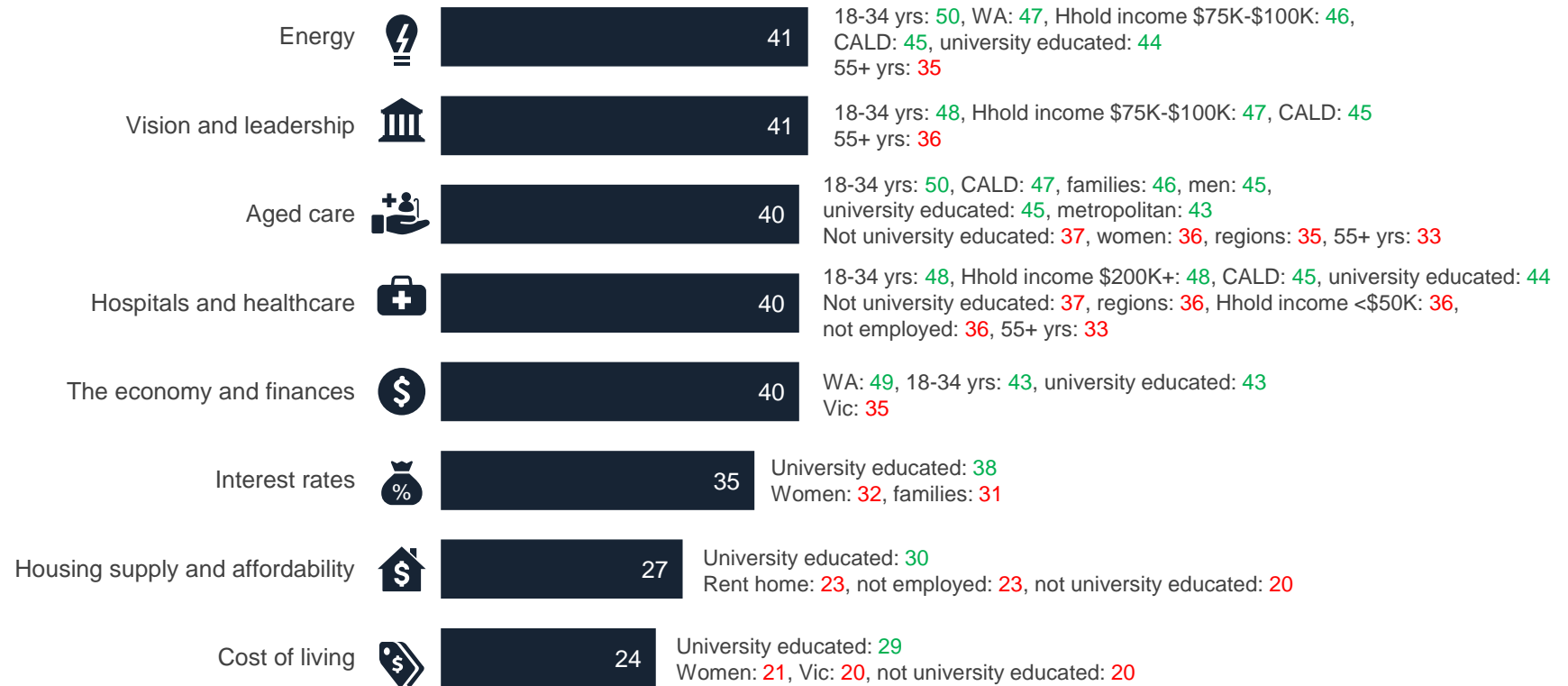
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

# Older adults and adults who did not attend university are more critical of Government performance on key issues

## Bottom ranked issues for Australian Government performance

(Performance index#)



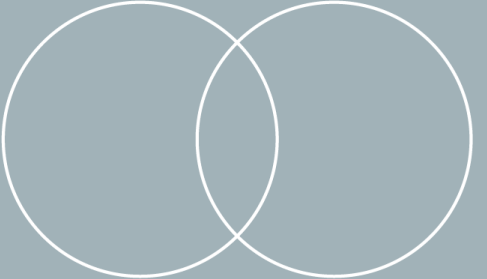
# For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.

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?

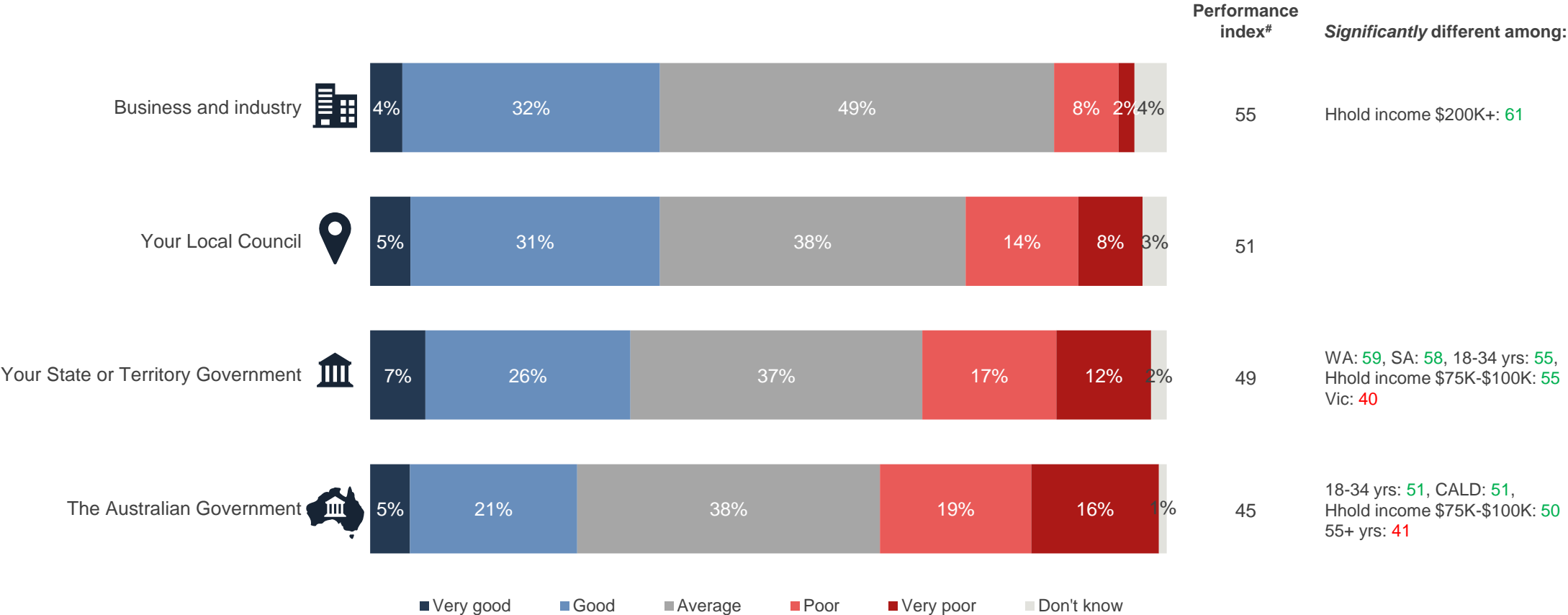
Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

# How are government, business and industry performing?



# Business continues to outperform all levels of government

## Performance of organisations and groups in Australia



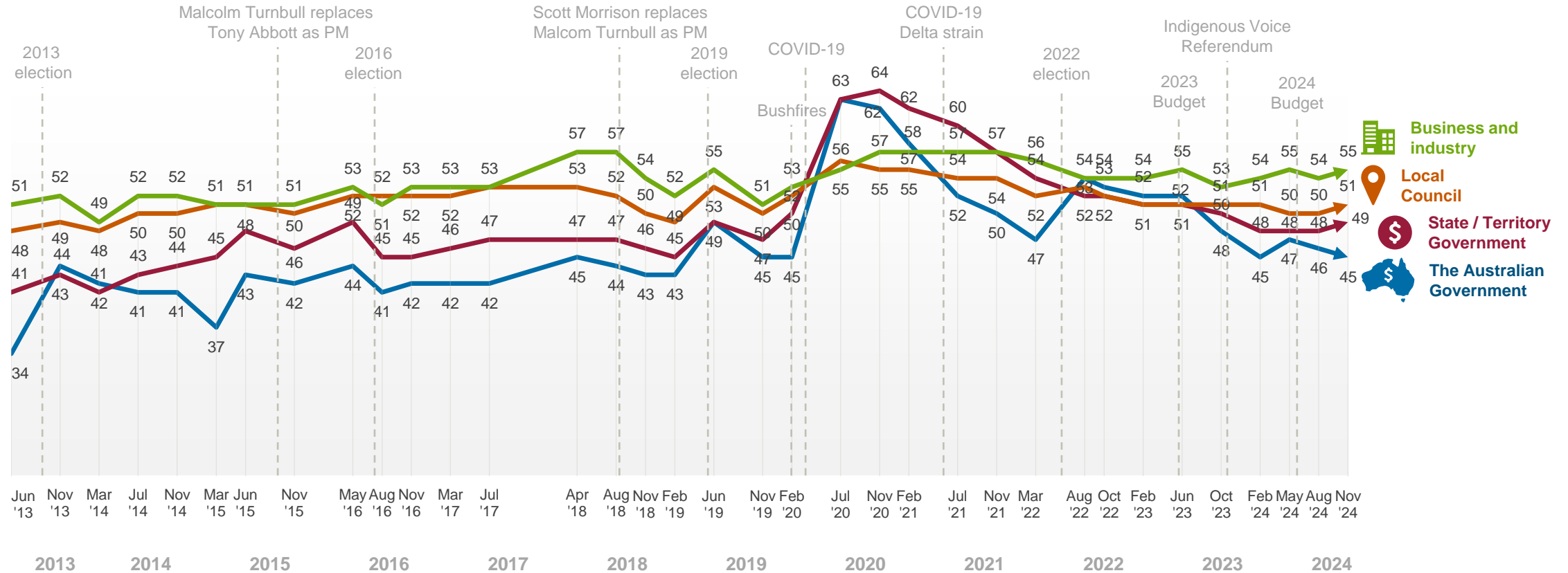
# For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the research methodology section of this report.  
 Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.  
 Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in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



# Federal Government performance edges lower amid a slight uptick for business and other levels of government

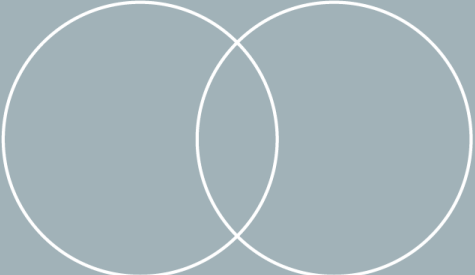
## Performance of organisations and groups in Australia

(Performance index#)



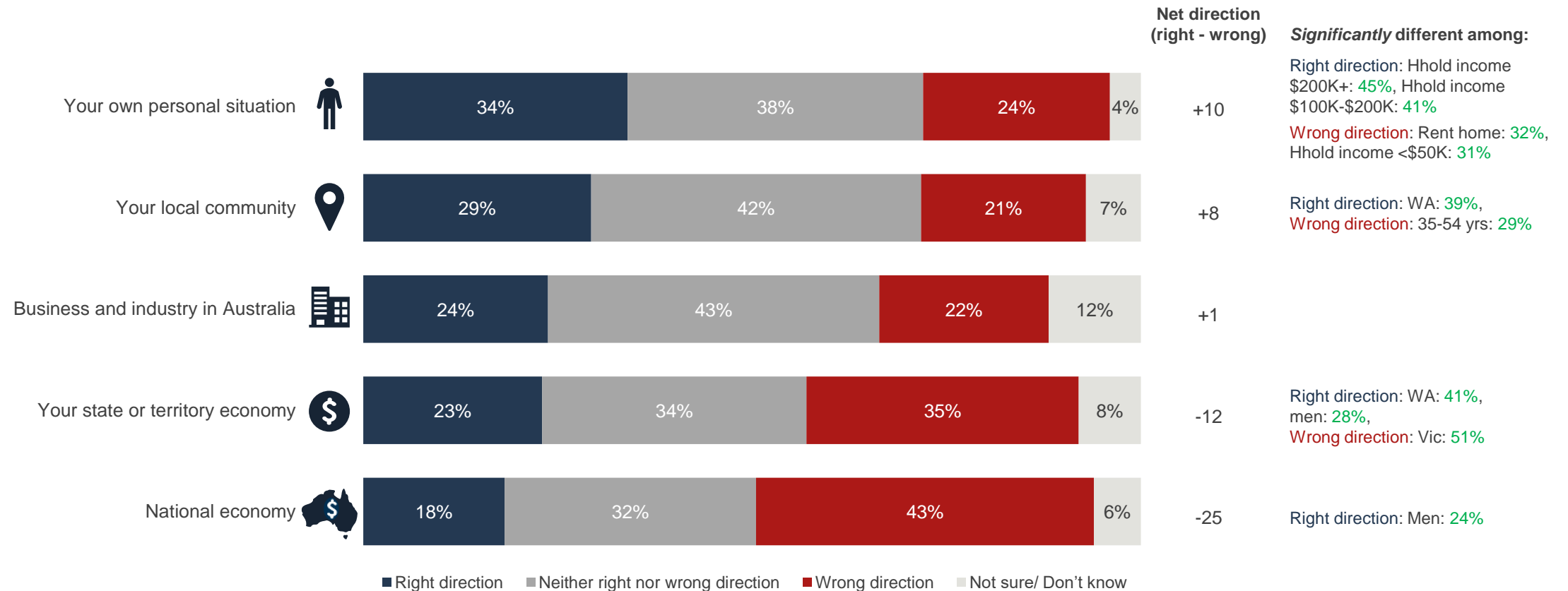
# For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the survey methodology section of this report.  
 Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in Australia?  
 Base: All respondents (approximately n=1,000 per wave, n=1,225 in June 2023).

# Are we headed in the right direction?



# Australians are pessimistic about economic direction but optimistic about their own situation and community

## Direction of organisations and groups in Australia

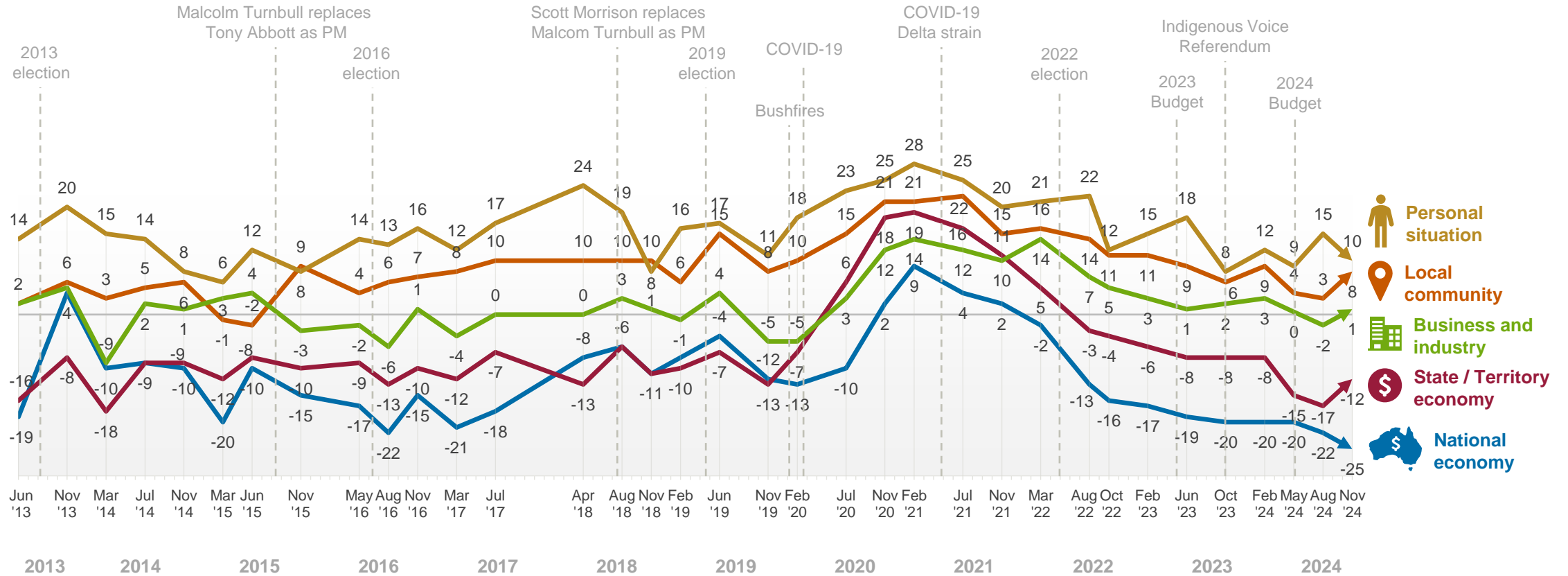


Significantly **higher** than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.  
 Q. Do you think each of the following is generally headed in the right or the wrong direction?  
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

# Confidence in the national economy declines to a series low

## 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).

# Survey methodology

## National Online Survey

### n=1,000 Australian adults

- Conducted Friday 8th – Monday 11th November 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.



The research was conducted in compliance with AS-ISO 20252.

### 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)
Very good	5%	100	5
Good	17%	75	13
Average	40%	50	20
Poor	19%	25	5
Very poor	15%	0	0
Don't know	4%	-	-
<b>Index score</b>			<b>43</b>



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in Australia...

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