



True Issues[®]

**Special Release: Living standards, housing,
HECS and the broader political environment**

November 2024

Decline in living standards felt across the Australian population, even among higher income households

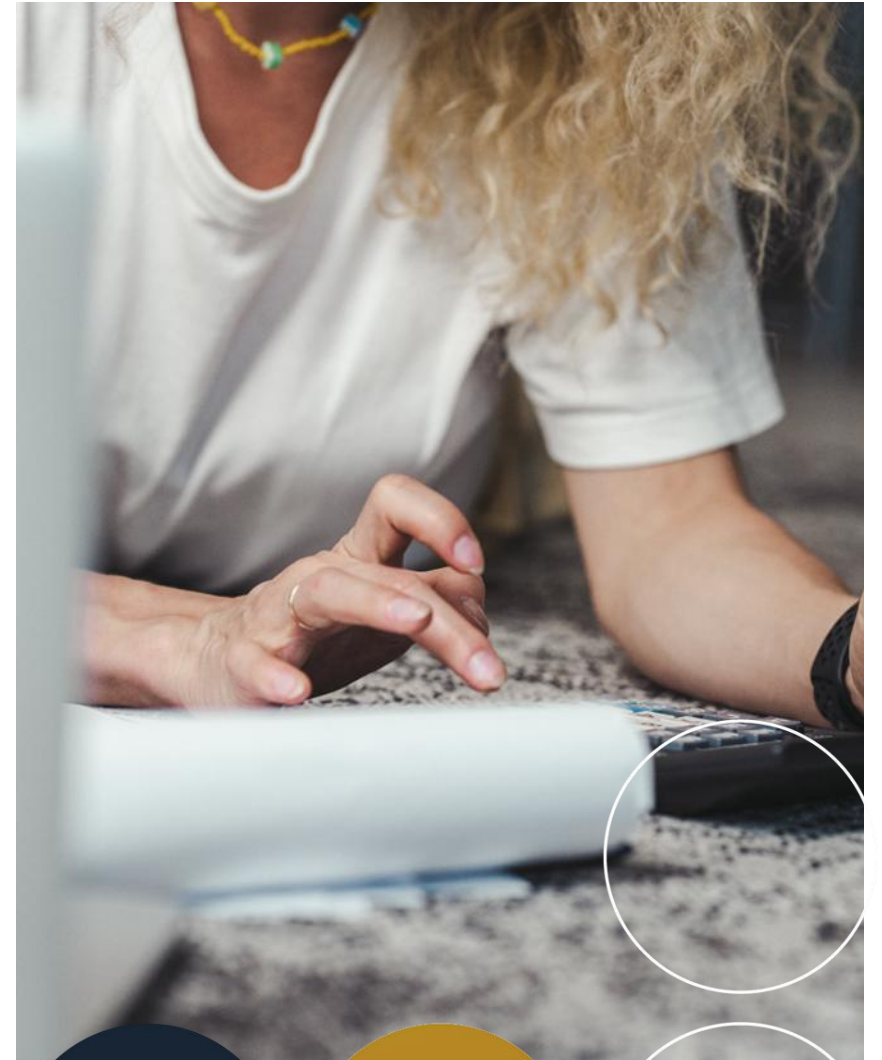
When Australians consider their **current overall standard of living** including things like living costs, where they live, congestion and getting around, waiting periods for services, and access to leisure activities, just four in ten adults (41%) rate their living standard as good. Almost as many rate this as just average (37%) and around one in five Australians rate their living standard as poor (22%).

Perceptions differ significantly by household income, home ownership and political support. Relative to other groups, households earning over \$100K p.a., ALP voters, and homeowners are significantly more likely to think they have a good standard of living. However, even among households earning in excess of \$200K p.a., few believe they have a ‘very good’ living standard.

In contrast, minor party and independent voters and more vulnerable cohorts, such as the unemployed, renters and low income households (earning under \$50K p.a.), are significantly more likely to view their living standard as poor.

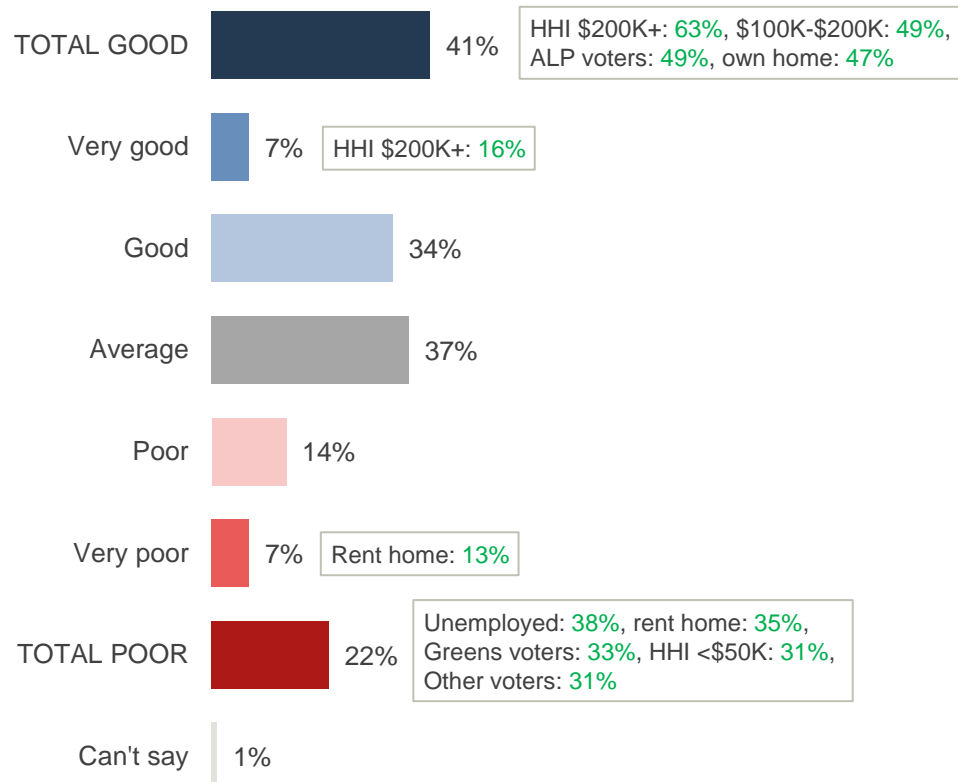
More than twice as many Australians rate their current standard of living as worse (43%) **compared to two years ago**, than rate it as better (19%), with around one in three (36%) rating it as about the same.

Across key demographic groups, more see their living standard as having declined over the last two years than see it as improved – except among households earning above \$200K p.a., where it is a fairly even split (34% better vs 31% worse). Notably, a majority of minor party and independent voters (excluding Greens voters) and around half of women rate their living standards as worse than two years ago.

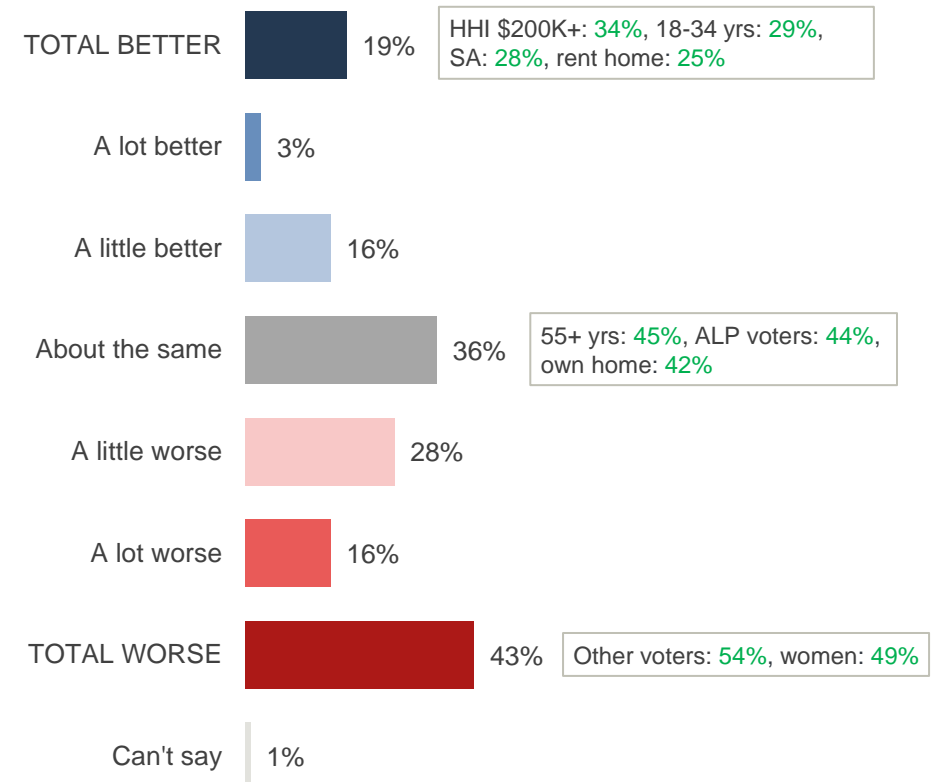


One in five Australians view their current living standard as poor and two in five see it as worse than two years ago

Perception of current standard of living



Perception of standard of living compared to two years ago



Significantly **higher** than the total at the 95% confidence level.

Q. Thinking about your overall standard of living, including living costs and satisfaction with things like where you live, the time it takes to get around, experience of congestion, waiting periods for health services, types of food you eat, and choice of leisure activities. Overall, how would you rate your current standard of living? / Q. How would rate your current standard of living compared to two years ago?

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

Broad support for potential policy responses to the national crisis in housing supply and affordability



Most Australian adults agree **housing access and affordability has now reached the point of being a national crisis** (78%), including almost half (45%) who 'strongly agree' with this.

Across each key demographic group, more than 70% view housing in Australia as at crisis point, regardless of gender, age, location, socioeconomic or home ownership status, or political support – and this view is held most strongly among minor party and independent voters (excluding Greens voters), South Australians and renters (66%, 59% and 55%, respectively, 'strongly agree').

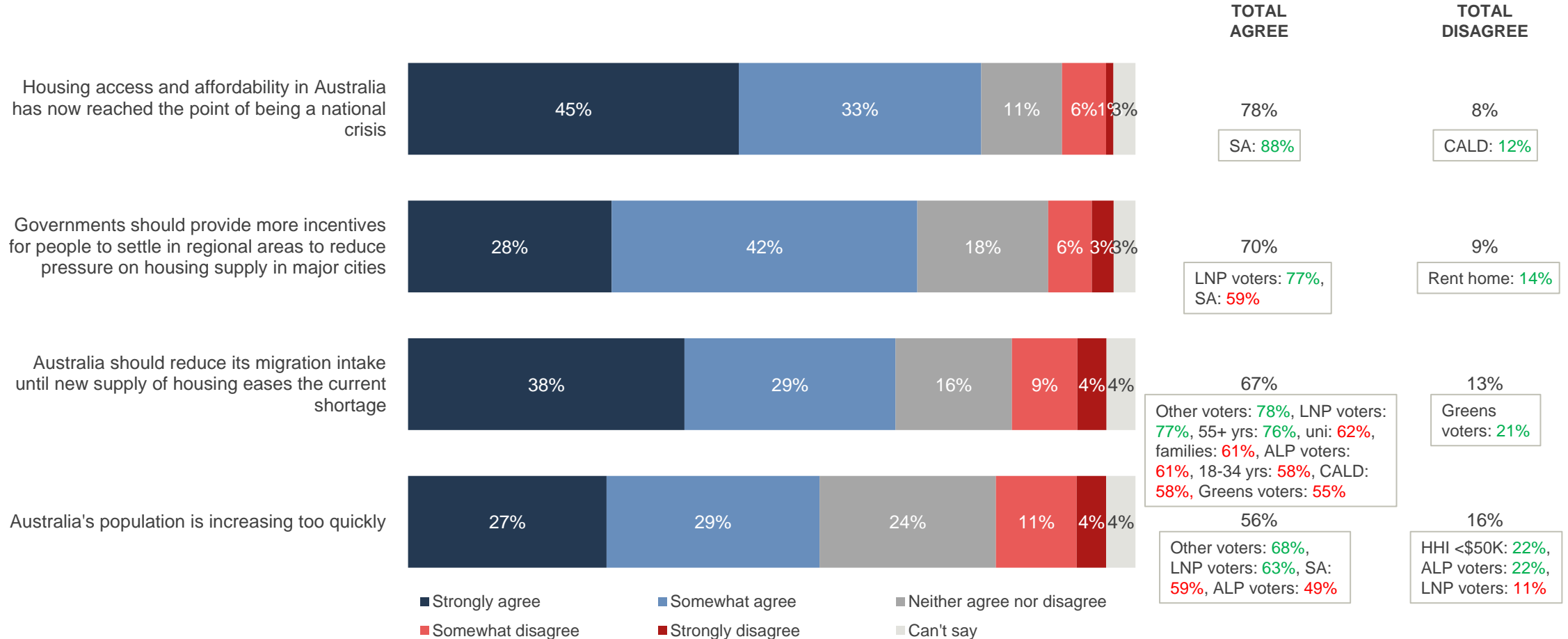
As to how pressure on supply could be reduced, a majority of Australians agree that **governments should provide more incentives for people to settle in regional areas** (70%, including 28% 'strongly agree') and **Australia should reduce its migration intake** (67%, including 38% 'strongly agree'). A majority (56%) of adults agree **Australia's population is increasing too quickly** (56%, including 27% 'strongly agree').

Regional incentives and migration cuts have broad appeal, with majority agreement across key demographic groups.

However, relative to other groups, fewer South Australians agree with a regional push – and, while older adults (55 years and over), LNP and minor party and independent voters (excluding Greens voters) are most on board with migration cuts, 18 to 34 year olds, CALD adults and Greens voters are least likely to agree with this. Agreement with reducing migration is also softer among university educated adults, families and ALP voters.

Most Australians see housing as a national crisis and are open to incentives to settle in the regions and migration cuts

Agreement with statements



Significantly higher / lower than the total at the 95% confidence level.
 Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Limited community support for using taxpayer funds to reduce student debt

Almost one in five Australian adults (18%) **currently have a HECS-HELP debt** for post-school study they have undertaken.

However, this type of debt is disproportionately skewed towards some of the more vulnerable demographic groups in the current cost of living and housing crises: 18 to 34 year olds, households earning \$75K to \$100K p.a. and renters.

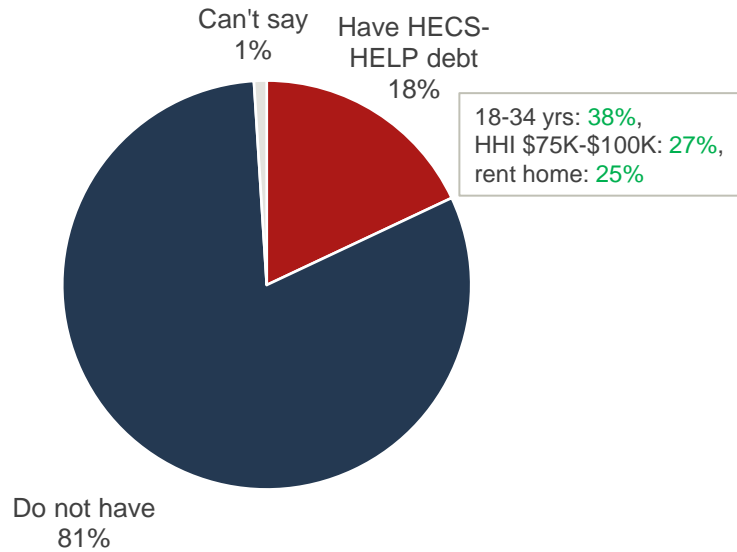
Despite this, community sympathy appears to have its limits. While most HECS-HELP debt holders support **Federal Government plans to spend \$16 billion on wiping 20% off student debt** owed through the scheme (80%, including 48% who 'strongly support' this), just 43% of adults who do not have a HECS-HELP debt are supportive – and almost as many (37%) oppose this use of taxpayer funds.

Opinion is also divided by age and political support. While two-thirds of 18 to 34 year olds and Labor and Greens voters support this Albanese Government plan, more than four in ten oppose it among older adults (55 years and over) and Coalition, other minor party and independent voters.

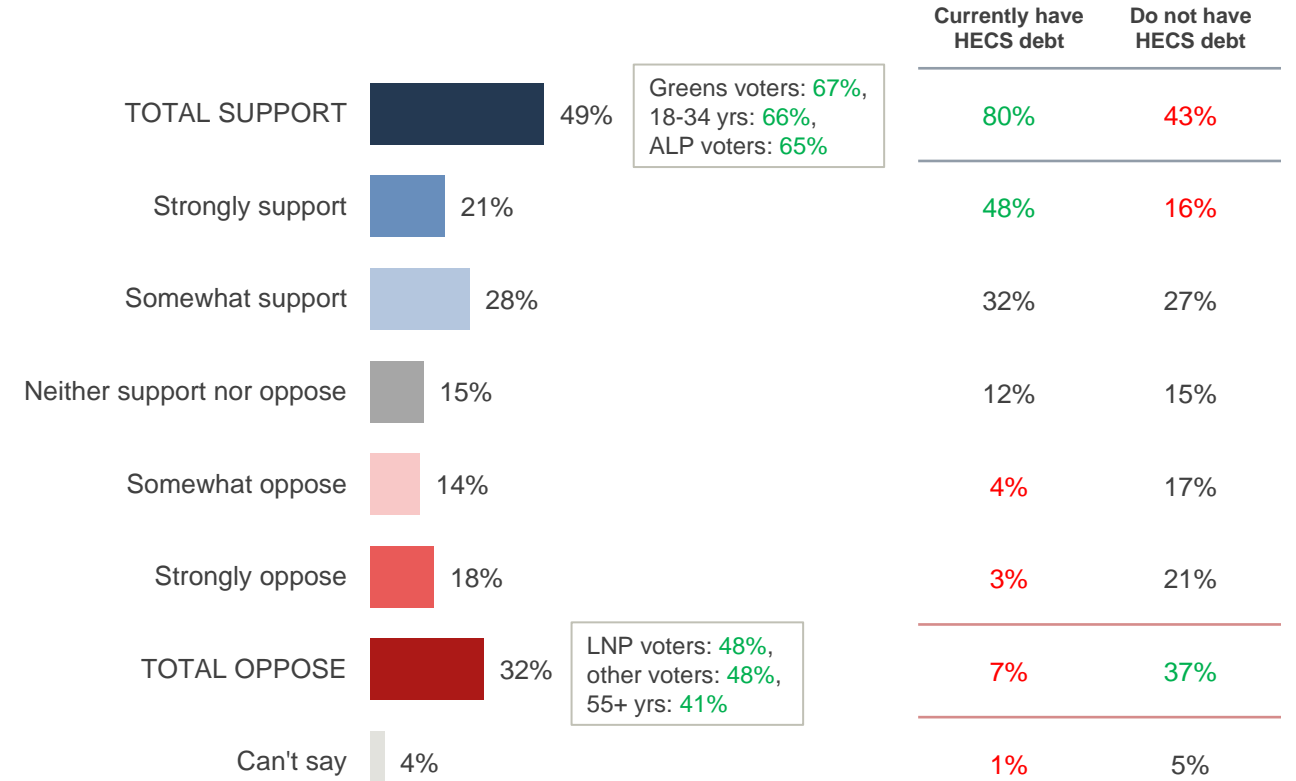


HECS-HELP debt relief resonates with graduates but receives a mixed response among other Australians

Current HECS-HELP debt status



Support for Federal Government's \$16 Billion HECS-HELP Debt Reduction Plan



Significantly **higher** / **lower** than the total at the 95% confidence level.

Q. The Federal Government has announced plans to spend \$16 billion on wiping 20% off student debt owed through the HECS-HELP scheme. Do you support or oppose this use of taxpayer funds? /

Q. Do you currently have a HECS-HELP debt for any post-school study you have undertaken?

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

Many Australians frustrated with the current state of politics and government

In assessing the health of our democracy, it is noteworthy that two-thirds of Australians agree **politicians treat politics as a game** and not as something that directly affects ‘people like me’ (67%, including 30% who ‘strongly agree’). Also, that a third (33%) of adults **don’t pay attention to politicians and political debate** because they don’t speak ‘my language’. Heading into a federal election year, this is a sizeable proportion of the electorate switching off because of their experience of the language of political debate.

Twice as many Australians disagree (45%) that **leaders of major political parties have a well thought-out vision for the nation** than agree (21%) that they do, with minor party and independent voters and older adults (55 years and over) most critical of this. More adults also disagree (38%) that their **local Federal MP can relate to ‘my hopes and needs’** than agree (22%), indicating some disconnect between elected representatives and the priorities of their constituents.

Many Australians see election candidates as **motivated by more than just the perks** of being an MP (45% agree). However, amid ongoing debate about MP travel and other perks, most adults agree **MPs should not be able to receive gifts, free tickets or upgrades from companies or individuals**, even if publicly declared (71%, including 49% who ‘strongly agree’). This may indicate some community appetite for reform in this space. Among minor party and independent voters, a majority ‘strongly agree’ these gifts to MPs should not be allowed.

Australians value co-operation and progress on important issues, with a majority agreeing that **a party’s focus on issues that ‘matter to me’ is more important** than the personal characteristics of its leader (64%), and that **politicians compromising to get things done is more important** than blocking policies based on party ideology (61%). Notably, these views are most prevalent among older adults and LNP voters.

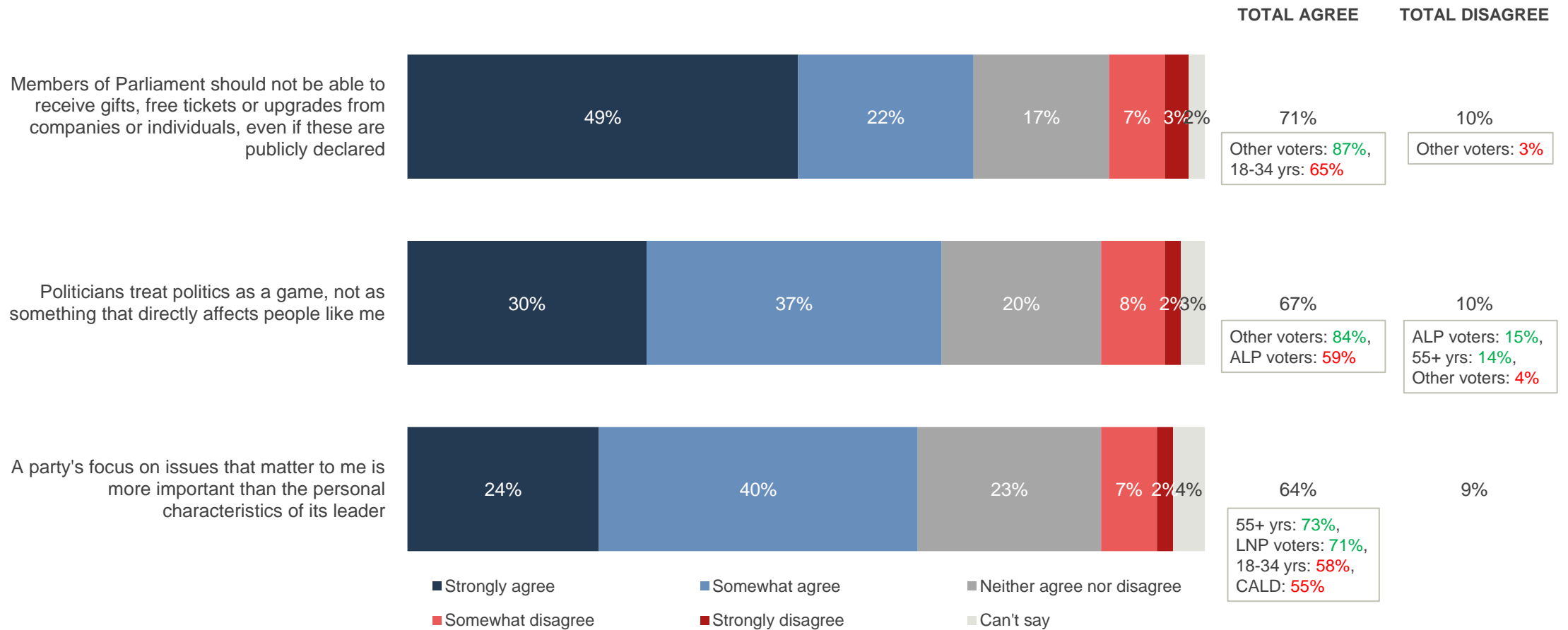
However, there are limits to the progress Australians would support, with very mixed views on whether **everyday Australians should be prepared to accept some financial pain** to help fund reforms that improve our national budget and reduce debt (34% agree versus 34% disagree, 33% neither / undecided).

On other issues, with the final weeks of the US Election campaign still fresh in many Australians minds, a small but clear majority (55%) believe **Australian politics is becoming more and more like politics in America** – and this view is held most strongly by minor party and independent voters (excluding Greens voters).

Australians have more mixed views on whether **social media is good for democracy** because ‘it gives everyone access to information and an opportunity to have a say’ (33% agree versus 32% disagree, 35% neither / undecided). Positive perceptions decline with age. While almost half of 18 to 34 year olds agree social media is good for democracy, just one in four adults 55 years and over hold this view.

Australians critical of gifts to MPs and politician behaviour, and prioritise issues over leader personalities

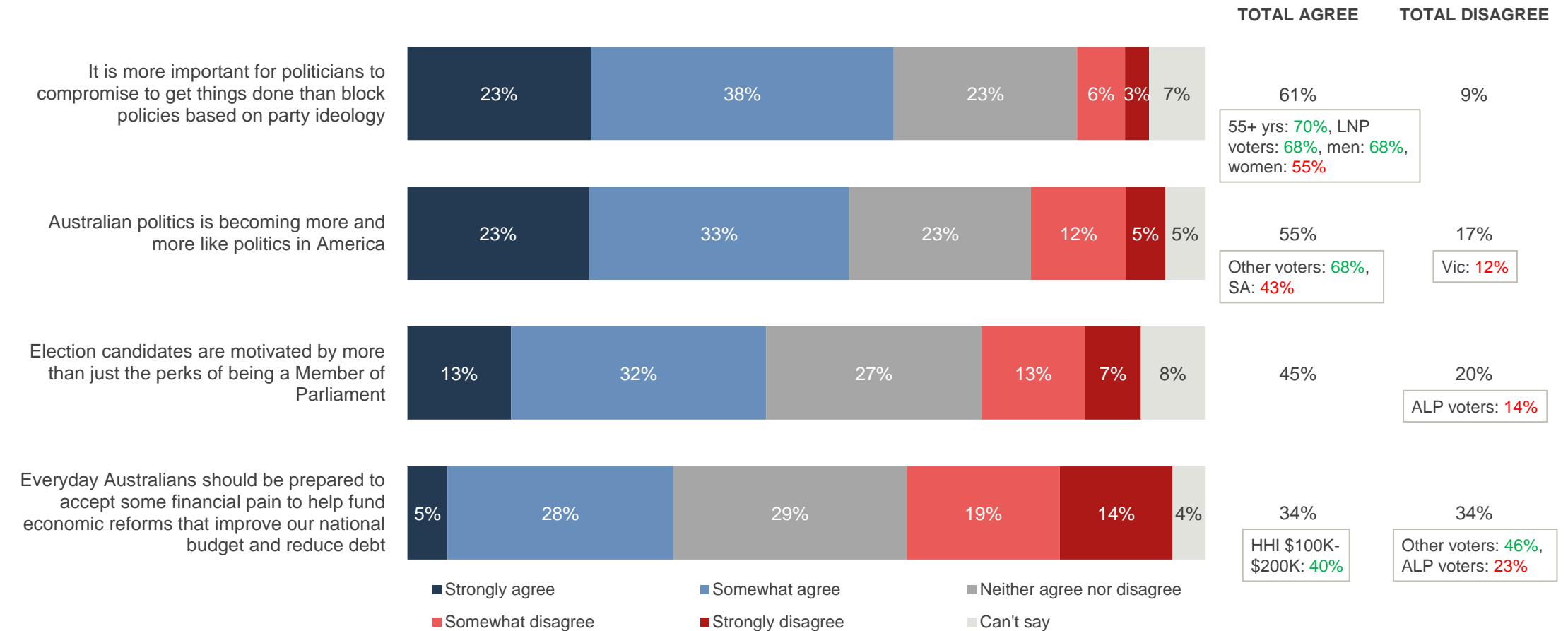
Agreement with statements about politics and government in Australia



Significantly *higher* / *lower* than the total at the 95% confidence level.
 Q. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following in relation to politics and government in Australia?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Australians value political compromise to get things done and many see our politics becoming more like the US

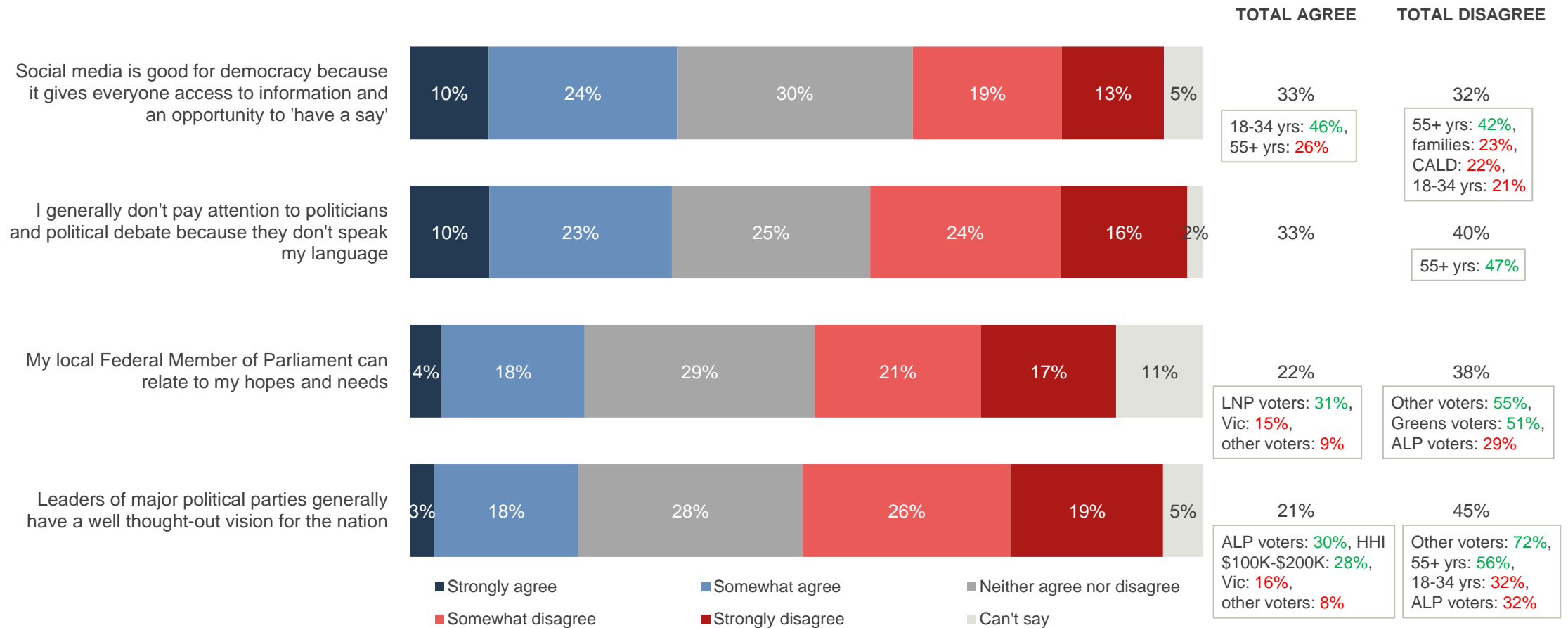
Agreement with statements about politics and government in Australia (cont'd)



Significantly higher / lower than the total at the 95% confidence level.
 Q. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following in relation to politics and government in Australia?
 Base: All respondents (n=1,000).

Politicians failing many Australians on national vision, connection with the electorate and language of political debate

Agreement with statements about politics and government in Australia (cont'd)

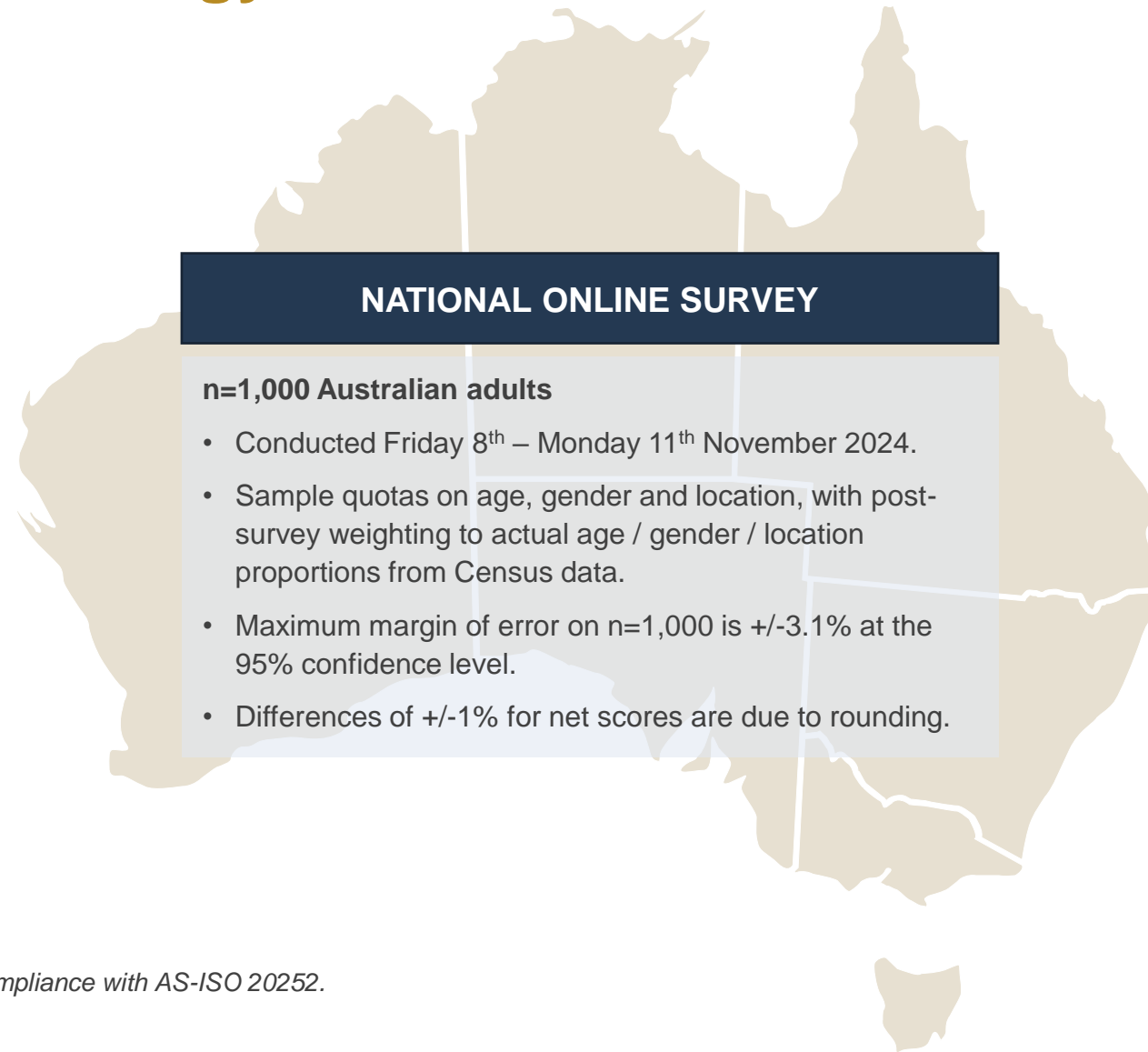


Significantly higher / lower than the total at the 95% confidence level.

Q. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following in relation to politics and government in Australia?

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

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.



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in Australia...

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 **Contact us**
03 8685 8555

 **Follow us**
@JWSResearch

John Scales
Founder
jscales@jwsresearch.com

Mark Zuker
Managing Director
mzucker@jwsresearch.com

Katrina Cox
Director of Client Services
kcox@jwsresearch.com

Jessica Lai
Senior Research Director
jlai@jwsresearch.com

Tom Cameron
Business Development Manager
tcameron@jwsresearch.com

jwsresearch.com
+61 3 8685 8555