



# TRUE ISSUES®

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

June 2023



J W S R E S E A R C H

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# Cost of living still leads community concerns but a majority now want Government action on housing and interest rates



Amid rising food and energy costs, and with continued interest rate rises plunging more households into mortgage stress, cost of living remains the most important issue Australians want the Federal Government to focus on in June 2023.

Unprompted, four in ten Australians (43%) continue to name **cost of living** in their top three most important issues or concerns, similar to February and October but higher than August (38%). Similarly, from a prompted list, three-quarters (75%) of adults continue to select cost of living in their top five issues, little changed over the last year. Living costs remain the dominant issue for 18-54 year olds.

**Hospitals, healthcare and ageing** continues to be the second most important issue to Australians, prompted (58%), but is now slightly less top of mind (26% unprompted, down from 31%). Health remains the leading issue among older adults aged 55+ years, slightly ahead of living costs.

Amid ongoing coverage of the impacts of rising mortgage rates and the rental 'crisis', the importance of addressing **housing and interest rates** records its second consecutive increase (from 26% to 33% unprompted, 46% to 53% prompted), overtaking health as the second highest top of mind concern.

The **economy and finances** (17% unprompted, 41% prompted, down from 46%) remains a leading concern across all age groups – but the related issue of employment and wages continues to be more important to 18-34 year olds.

Addressing the **environment and climate change** (20% unprompted, 33% prompted) and **employment and wages** (9% unprompted, 32% prompted) are other community priorities, with jobs outweighing environmental concerns among 18-34 year olds.

These are followed by **energy** issues (8% unprompted, 29% prompted), which remain well below the peak levels recorded last October (17% and 39%, respectively) amid intense debate around energy supply and costs.

After its first year in Parliament, the **Australian Government** maintains its positive overall performance rating (index score of 52, unchanged since February and similar to 53 in October and 54 in August).

Areas where the new government continues to perform well include **terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism** and managing the **COVID-19 pandemic** (index score of 56 for each), the **defence and security of our nation** and **foreign affairs and trade** (index score of 55 for each).

# Overall Government performance steady but increased pessimism about business and national economy



Foreign affairs and trade (index score of 55) has been a key area of improvement since the Albanese Government took office. Amid efforts to strengthen our key bilateral relationships, community perceptions of performance have steadily improved since the previous Government (index score of 49 in March 2022).

However, the Labor Government has yet to make any headway on the top issues Australians want them to address, with its performance rated below ‘average’ (i.e. index score of below 50) on **cost of living** (29, down from 31), **housing and interest rates** (30, down from 33 in February and 36 in October) and **hospitals, healthcare and ageing** (40, unchanged).

Other key areas of concern, where Australians see substantial room for improvement from government, are **energy** (index score of 41), the **economy and finances** (index score 42), and the **environment and climate change** and **employment and wages** (index score of 46 for each).

Similarly, amid talk of an impending recession, Australians have limited confidence in the future of our economy and finances – twice as many continue to see the **national economy** heading in the wrong direction (38%) as see it heading in the right direction (19%).

Australian **business and industry** performance continues to rate ahead of government, little changed over the past year at a positive index score of 55. However, as lower consumer spending creates more difficult business conditions, the same proportion of Australians rate business as heading in the wrong direction (22%) as heading in the right direction (22%).

At state level, the **WA Government** (index score of 67) continues to significantly outperform other states. The **SA and NSW Governments** rate slightly above ‘average’ (index scores of 57 and 52, respectively), an improvement for NSW. However, the **Victorian and Queensland Governments** rate slightly below ‘average’ (index scores of 48 and 46, respectively), a decline for Victoria. Overall, more in the eastern states see their state economy as heading in the wrong direction than in the right direction.

At a local level, **council** performance continues to rate slightly above ‘average’ (index score of 51) as more Australians see their **local community** heading in the right direction than the wrong direction.

Despite difficult economic conditions, looking ahead, more Australians see their **own personal situation** as heading in the right direction (37%) than in the wrong direction (19%), continuing the steady recovery in sentiment after a sharp decline in October 2022.

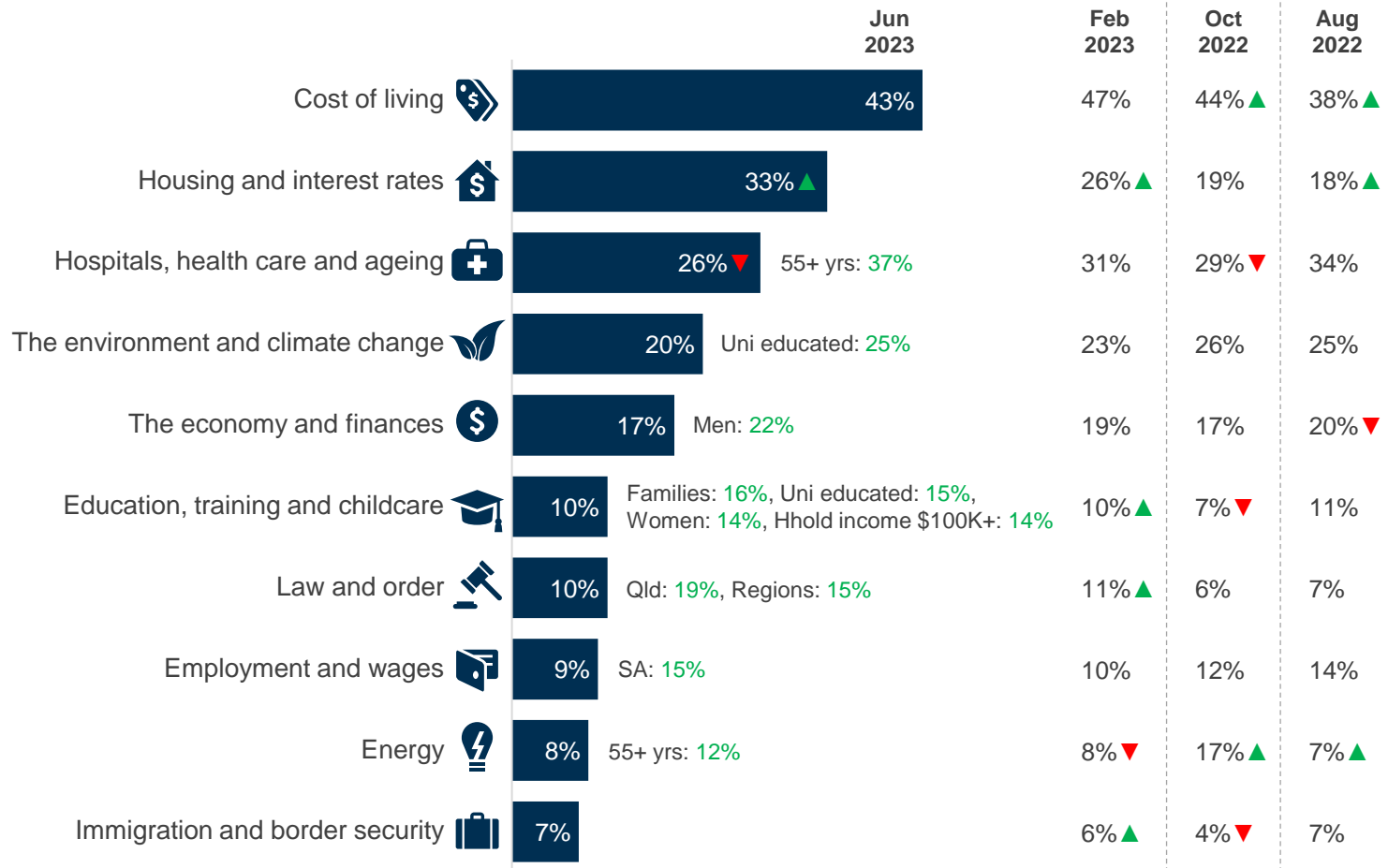


**What are the  
issues  
Australians care  
about?**

# Cost of living still tops unprompted concerns, as housing and interest rates overtakes health



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



^ Note: Issues mentioned among fewer than 7% not shown.

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 – June 2023 (n=1,225), previous waves (approximately n=1,000 per wave).

# Living costs and health remain leading prompted issues as concern about housing and interest rates continues to rise



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



\* 'including The Voice' added in June 2023.

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

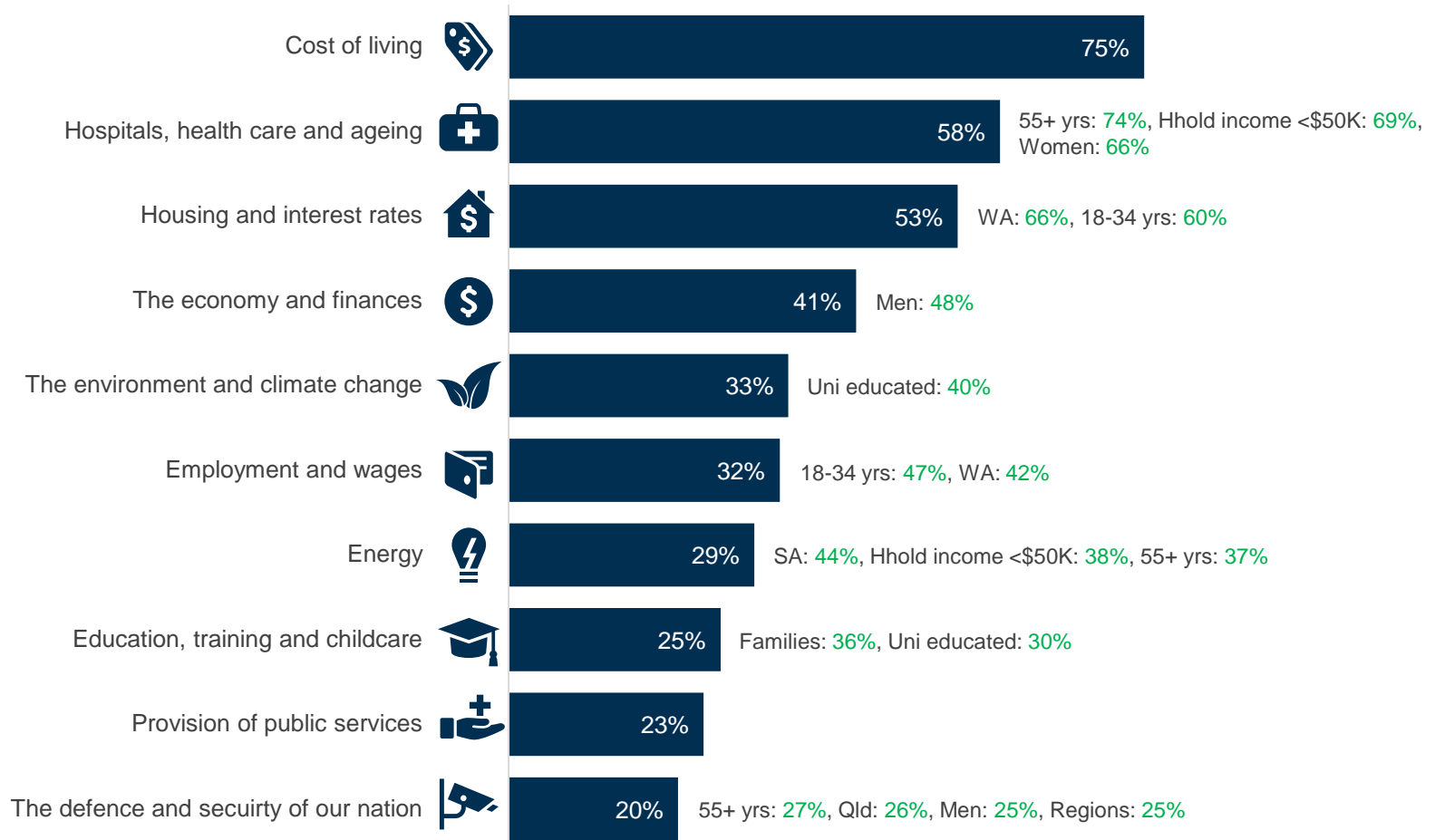
Q. From the following list, please select the five most important issues you think the Australian Government should focus on.

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

# Six in ten 18-34s concerned about housing and interest rates and almost half concerned about jobs and wages



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



\* Added in August 2022, previously 'Defence, security and terrorism'  
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=1,225).



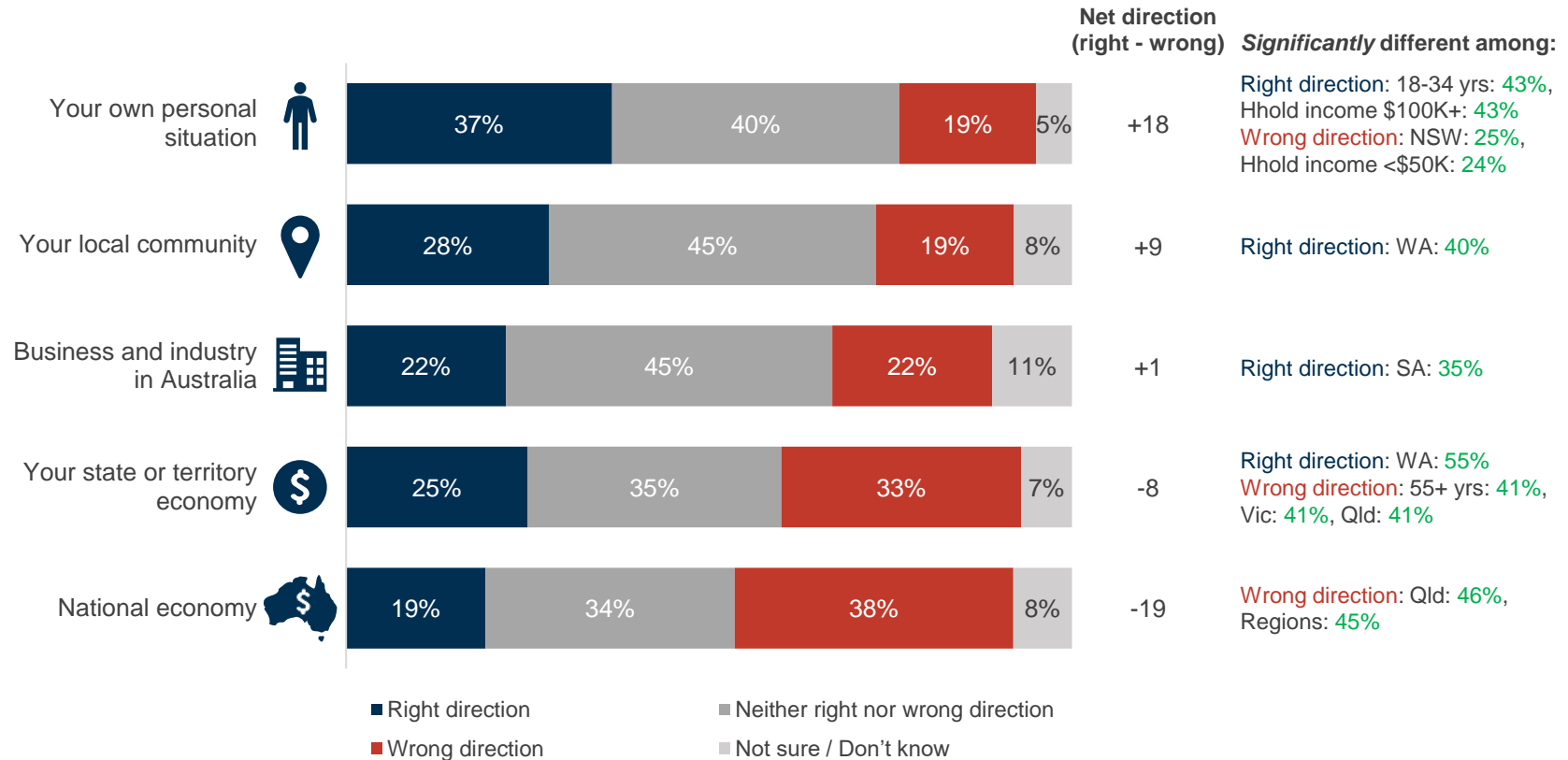


**Are we headed in  
the right  
direction?**

# Australians still most optimistic about their own situation and community, most pessimistic on the national economy



## Direction of organisations and groups in Australia

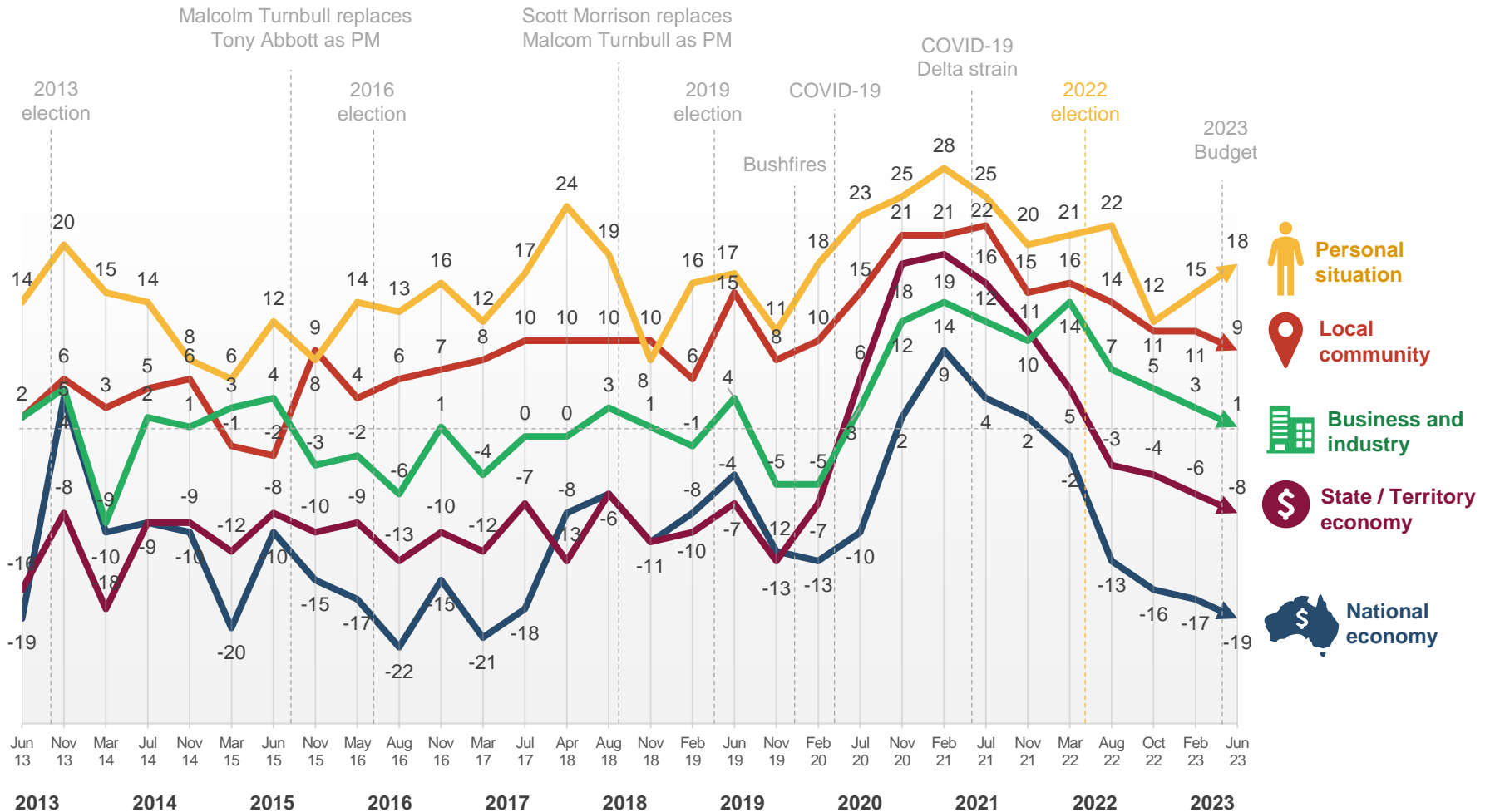


Significantly higher than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.  
 Q. Do you think each of the following is generally headed in the right or the wrong direction?  
 Base: All respondents (n=1,225).

# Confidence about personal situation continues to rise but falls further for business and economies



**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: respondents – June 2023 (n=1,225), previous waves (approximately n=1,000 per wave).

# How does the Australian Government perform on top issues?

# Government rates well on security, COVID-19, foreign affairs and innovation but poorly on living costs and interest rates

## Australian Government performance on issues (Performance index#)

	Jun 2023	Feb 2023	Oct 2022	Aug 2022
Terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism	56	55	55	56
The COVID-19 pandemic	56	56	53	54
The defence and security of our nation	55	55	55	55
Foreign affairs and trade	55	54	52	50
Innovation, science and technology	54	52	53	53
Business and industry	52	52	52	52
Mining and resources	52	52	51	52
Immigration and border security	51	51	52	52
Education, training and childcare	50	49	51	51
Agriculture and regional development	50	49	51	49
Indigenous issues (including The Voice)*	49	52	51	53
Provision of public services	49	49	51	51
Transport and infrastructure	49	49	49	50
Community, family and social services	49	48	50	49
Vision and leadership	47	47	48	49
Population growth	46	49	48	49
The environment and climate change	46	45	46	48
Employment and wages	46	45	45	46
The economy and finances	42	44	45	45
Energy	41	40	38	41
Hospitals, healthcare and ageing	40	40	40	40
Housing and interest rates	30	33	36	37
Cost of living	29	31	32	31

Top 10 results

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

\* 'including The Voice' added in June 2023.

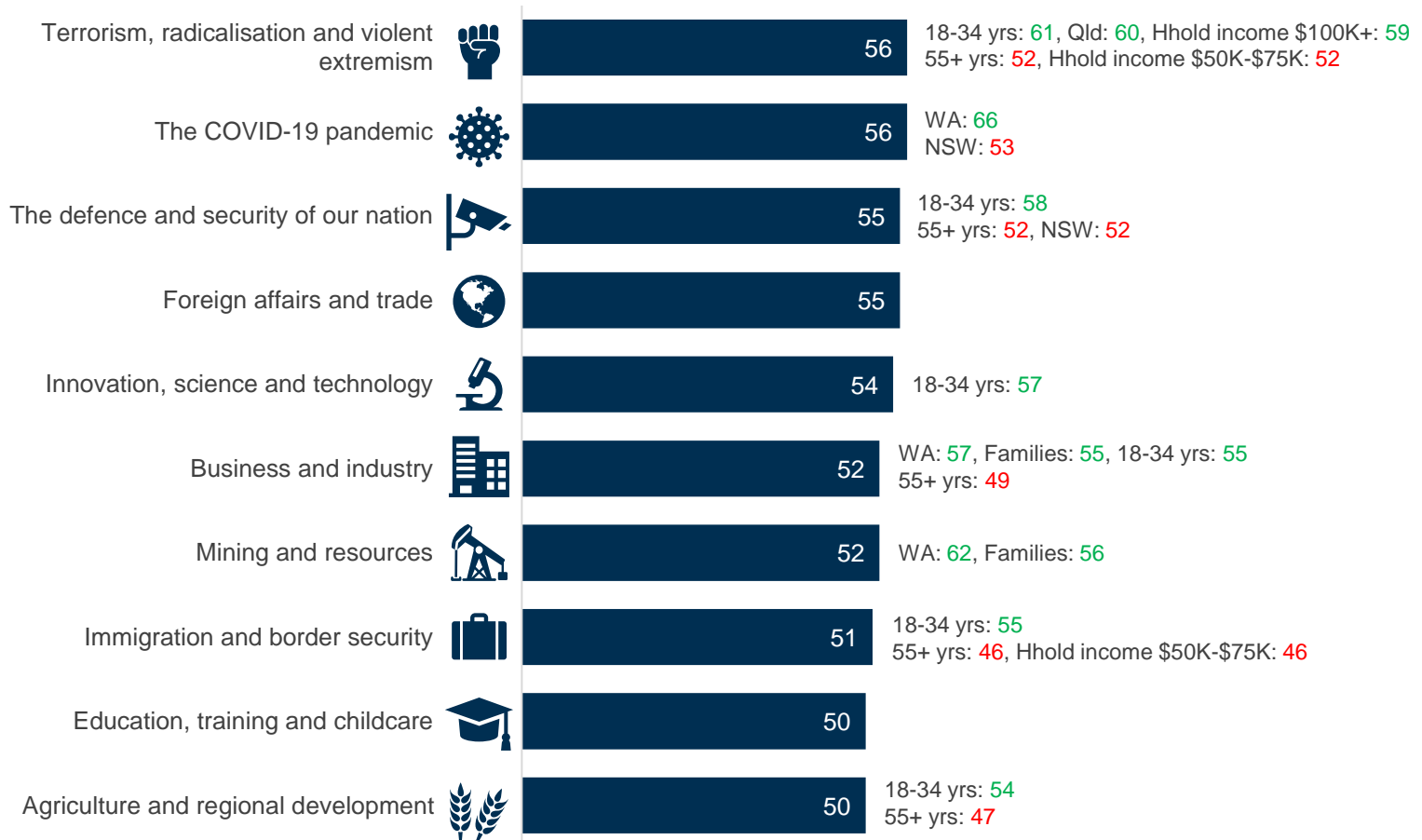
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

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

# Young adults more enthusiastic about Federal Government performance, over 55s less so



## 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.

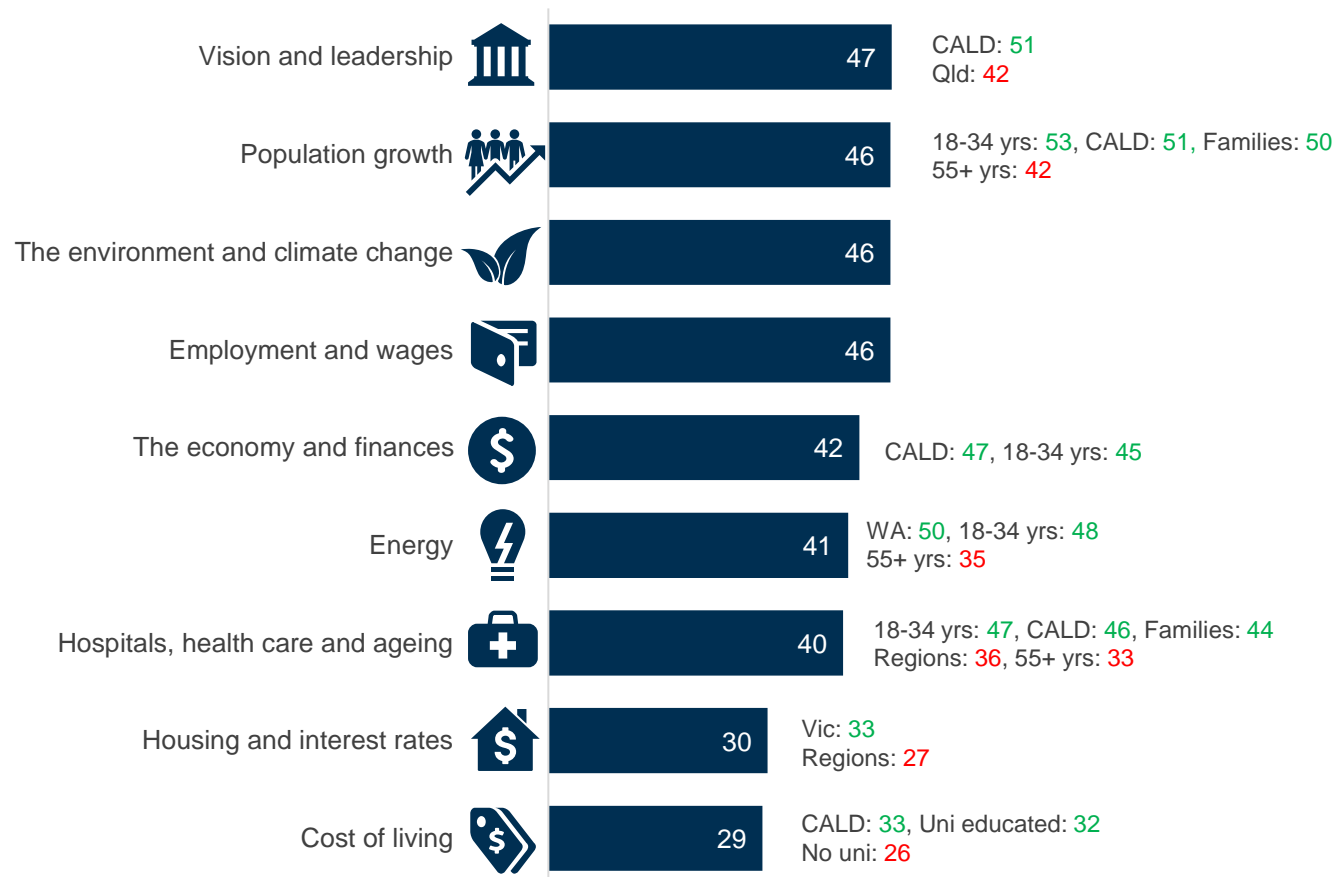
Q. How would you rate the performance of the Australian Government on each of the following issues?

Base: All respondents (n=1,225).

# CALD adults more positive about Government performance in weaker areas of living costs, health, economy, growth



## 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=1,225).



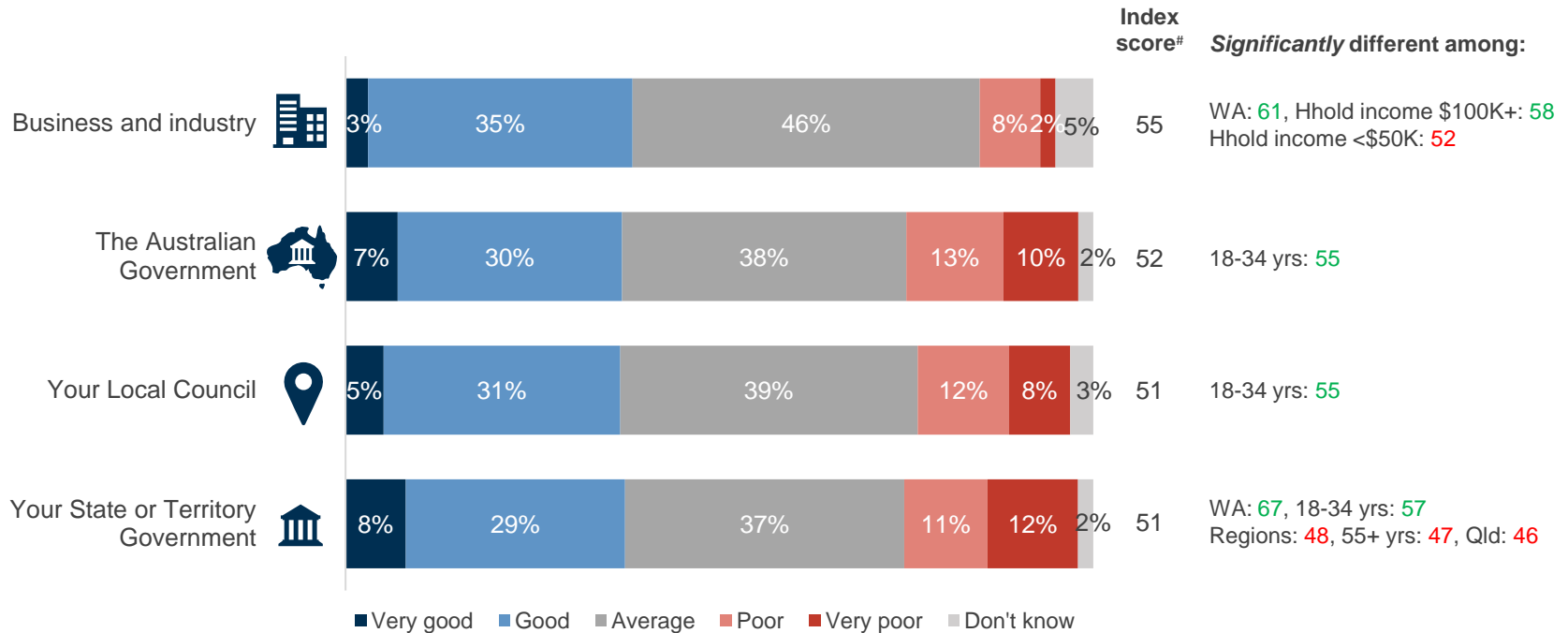
**How are  
government,  
business and  
industry  
performing?**



# Business continues to outperform government at a national level but WA Government still rates best overall



## Performance of organisations and groups in Australia

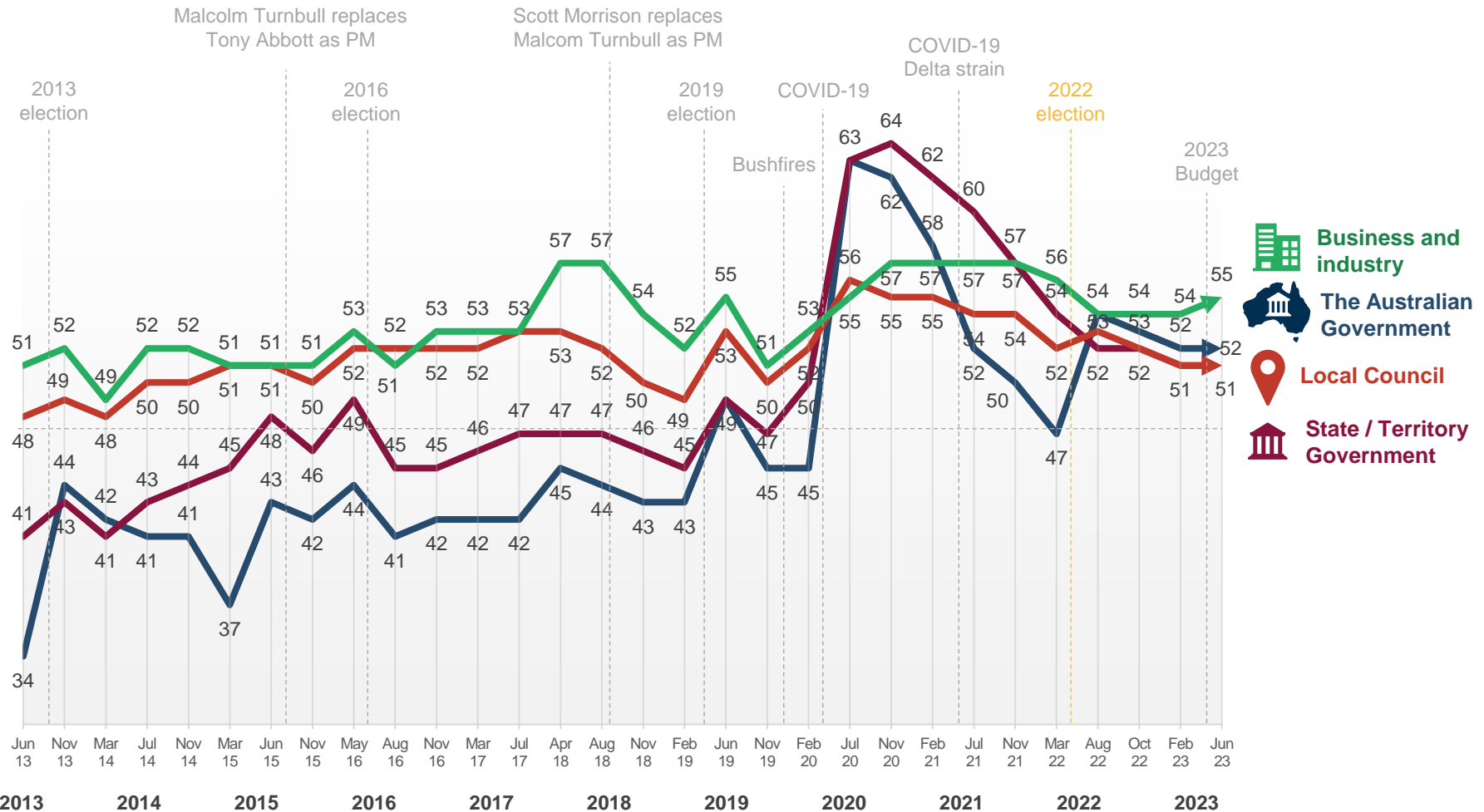


<sup>#</sup> For an explanation of how index scores are calculated refer to the research methodology section of this report. Significantly higher / lower than the national total at the 95% confidence interval.  
 Q. How would you rate the current performance of each of the following organisations or groups in Australia?  
 Base: All respondents (n=1,225).



# Government and business performance relatively stable

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: respondents – June 2023 (n=1,225), previous waves (approximately n=1,000 per wave).



## Survey methodology



### National Online Survey

#### n=1,225 Australian adults

- Conducted Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> - Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023.
- 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=1,225 is +/-2.8% 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%	-	-
<b>Index score</b>			<b>43</b>

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

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THINKING.**



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